

Archaeological Recording Action: Guidance Document

April 2024

1. SUMMARY OF BRIEF:

- 1.1 This generic advice note provides the outline framework for a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for a programme of archaeological investigation to MOPPHE specifications covering a timetabled programme of archaeological investigation, recording analysis and publication as required by conditions on a planning application. This WSI must be agreed with County Archaeological Services in advance of any work being undertaken. Oxfordshire County Council aim to respond to such WSIs within 21 working days.
- 1.2 Where the written scheme of investigation is not produced by the company undertaking the fieldwork then a further specification from the archaeological contractor will need to be agreed in advance of the work being undertaken.
- 1.3 An initial archaeological field evaluation has established the presence of archaeological features within a specific area of the application site. The application has been approved with conditions attached that require a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of the development.

2. BACKGROUND:

2.1 Site Location and Description

- 2.1.1 The planning and geographical background can be set out in a site-specific brief upon request. There is no charge for this brief and for planning related work applicants are advised to contact us to request a site-specific brief. The planning background will need to be set out in the WSI.

2.3 Archaeological Background

- 2.3.1 The WSI will need to set out the archaeological background to the project. Where a project has had an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) produced, in line with an agreed written specification, then this will form the basis of the archaeological background. Where a DBA has not been undertaken then the background will need to be based on data obtained from the Historic Environment Record. There is a charge for this data.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- 3.1 This integrated programme of archaeological mitigation work has been required in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and has been secured through a negative condition attached to the planning permission. The archaeological works will be carried out in accordance with a Project Design that shall provide a comprehensive mitigation strategy and project planning programme to English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) standard based on clearly defined research objectives.

- 3.2 The mitigation strategy will seek to alleviate damage to significant archaeological deposits/features, and the developer will be responsible for ensuring this by:-
- a) implementing a full set-piece excavation to deal with all significant remains. If areas of low significance are revealed during the programme these may be dealt with, if agreed by the planning archaeologist, through selective recording action or smaller scale sampling. This will be determined during the initial site visit following the stripping and planning phase. A watching brief may also be implemented during construction if deemed necessary on smaller, limited works such as cable trenches.
 - b) and where practical and feasible, or where the status and survival quality of the remains is deemed to be of national importance (using the Secretary of States Non-Statutory Criteria), physical preservation in situ.
- 3.3 The aims and objectives for the archaeological works must take account of the material contained within the Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (<https://library.thehumanjourney.net/2597/>). In particular the themes and questions in the Research agendas for periods should be included where relevant.

This is as required by the Universal guidance for archaeological evaluation, 2023, (ClfA 2023, para 2.45).

- 3.4 A programme of public engagement will be required and the mitigation will need to consider a wide range of outreach activities appropriate to the scale of the project. Consideration should be given to site visits from the community and schools as well as public talks and exhibitions. The specification will need to set out the proposed outreach. Where outreach is not considered appropriate then the specification will need to clearly set out the reasons why this is not considered appropriate.

4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

- 4.1.1 The mitigation will require an area or area to be formally stripped down to the archaeologically relevant level under constant archaeological supervision. The areas that will need to be subject to the archaeological mitigation will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services before the production of a WSI. Prior to development the area or areas will be stripped of overburden under archaeological supervision. The area will be cleaned, and all features will be recorded on plan.

This plan will need to be provided to County Archaeological Service ahead of any site visit.

The following sampling percentages are to provide an indication of the level of sampling that will be required through this iterative approach. The actual sampling levels will be determined following a site visit with County Archaeological Services. Any changes to this strategy should be subject to the agreement of County Archaeological Services and the Project Manager of the archaeological contractor undertaking the recording.

Whilst this brief sets out the archaeological investigation required to meet the planning condition it will be the archaeological contractor's responsibility to ensure that any works are undertaken in line with the site health and safety requirements.

- 4.1.2 All structural features or those relating to a specialised activity will be subject to a 100% sample.
- 4.1.3 All post and stake holes that relate to specialised activities will be subject to a 100% sample. Others will be subject to a 50% sample.
- 4.1.4 A 50% sample of all pits will be undertaken. In some instances 100% excavation may be requested depending on the nature of the feature/deposit.
- 4.1.5 A minimum of 20% or 10 metres, whichever is greater, of all linear features will be sampled.
- 4.1.6 If burials and or cremations are revealed Ministry of Justice licence under Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 will be obtained. All exhumation and post excavation treatment will be carried out in accordance with published guidelines. County Archaeological Services will need to be informed of any human remains encountered.
- 4.1.7 All kilns and hearths etc. will be sampled and excavated.
- 4.1.8 Occupation deposits/stratified layers – needs to identify hand excavation of any stratified layers in 2.5m or 1m systematic and gridded squares to be agreed on the basis of the complexity/extent of such layers with County Archaeological Services. This should include for provision for on-site sieving of occupation levels and/or building fills for small artefacts/ecofacts.
- 4.1.9 No archaeological deposits or features should be investigated by machine without the agreement of County Archaeological Services.
- 4.1.10 All intersections of features are to be examined in order to fully understand date and phasing.
- 4.1.11 Features of possible geological origin should also be sampled until confidence can be established as to their non-archaeological origin.
- 4.2 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) should be submitted to County Archaeological Services for written approval in advance of the commencement of any excavations.
- 4.3 Research aims should be in line with the Solent-Thames Research Framework and should aim to investigate and inform our understanding of the wider historical landscape.
- 4.4 Summary reports of each phase should be submitted in pdf form to the planning archaeologist and the HER in digital form within twelve months of the completion of fieldwork within each phase of extraction.

- 4.5 Provision should be made for taking environmental/organic samples where appropriate. An environmental sampling strategy will need to be agreed between the environmental specialist and County Archaeological Services once the fieldwork is underway
- 4.6 No parts of the excavation areas will be handed back to the developer until written confirmation that they have been signed off is obtained from County Archaeological Services. A post excavation plan showing the features and interventions along with grid references will need to be provided for any sign off areas in advance of this written confirmation.

5. PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION:

- 5.1 All stages of the project shall be carried out in accordance with the procedures laid down in English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE).
- 5.2 The project shall be under the control of a named, qualified archaeologist. The excavation should be undertaken in accordance with the ClfA's Standard and Universal guidance for archaeological excavation, 2023.

[ClfA Code, regulations and standards & guidance | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists](#)

- 5.3 The data collection strategy should be part of a structured academic research agenda based on local and national research priorities. Data management, recovery and recording levels should be clearly defined and should be appropriate to the particular stratified deposits under investigation. This Selection Strategy and Data Management Plan should be specifically set out in the written scheme of investigation.
- 5.4 Include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds and advise, or report on, other aspects of the investigation including environmental sampling and analysis. An agreed allowance should be made for their fees. The WSI should also state that where additional specialists are used then these will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services.
- 5.5 Topsoil stripping, under the supervision of a competent archaeologist, shall be taken down to the significant archaeological horizon in level spits. Spoil will be monitored in order to recover artefacts. Metal detectors should be used to recover metal finds from the spoil. Metal detectors should be used to recover metal finds from the spoil.
- 5.6 Appropriate machinery must be used, with an appropriate bucket e.g. a 360° excavator with a toothless ditching bucket/blade. Choice should be influenced by prevailing site conditions, and the machine must be able to carry out a clean job.
- 5.7 Should any human remains be encountered, they shall only be removed in accordance with the relevant Home Office regulations. OCAS will need to be informed of any human remains encountered.

6. MONITORING AND LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS:

- 6.1 Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services Officers, shall monitor progress and standards throughout the project. To facilitate this, the Project Design will include, in addition to a full projected timetable, staffing details etc.
- 6.2 OCAS shall be notified of the official start date at least 2 weeks **prior to the commencement of work**, following the agreement of a written scheme of investigation, in order to arrange a date for monitoring visits. A number of site visits will be required, and any areas of excavation will need to be formally signed off in writing before any development commences.
- 6.3 A charge of £290 will be made per monitoring visit. This will be charged to the archaeological consultant who arranged the site meeting. If the archaeological consultant or contractor's client wishes to pay this monitoring fee directly, they will need to contact us in advance of the site visit. A purchase order to this amount will need to be provided in advance of the agreement of any site visits and there may be an additional fee to cover the cost of adding them to our invoice system.

7. POST-EXCAVATION/SITE ARCHIVE REQUIREMENT:

- 7.1 All post excavation/site archive work shall be carried out according to the standards and procedures defined in MoRPHE. The post excavation analysis should consider the full range of scientific analysis of the remains including, but not limited to, radiocarbon dating, isotope analysis, residue analysis etc. As the full extent of what may be encountered on site is not likely to be fully understood in advance of the full excavation then the WSI must make clear that this will be assessed by appropriate specialists and reported in the post excavation assessment and updated project design which will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services.
- 7.2 This Post Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design must be sent to County Archaeological Service for verification and comments.
- 7.3 The developer shall be responsible for all processing, research, analysis, and investigative/stabilising conservation necessary to prepare the site archive for preservation and storage in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication. All conservation shall be carried out to U.K.I.C. Guideline Standards, and the site archive will be prepared according to the procedures specified in "Required Procedures for Transference of Archaeological Archives to Oxfordshire Museums; 1995".

8. ARCHIVE DEPOSITION:

- 8.1 The contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that the full integrated site archive including all finds shall be deposited after completion of post-excavation work with the County Museums Service (Oxfordshire Museums) unless another repository is indicated. A Transfer of Title form must be signed by the land owner and the report should clearly indicate whether or not this has been done.

Where such a transfer of title has not been agreed then this may affect the acceptance of the report and the discharge of any planning conditions.

- 8.2 If, during the course of excavation, items are found that may be potentially defined as 'Treasure' under the Code of Practice for the Treasure Act 1996, the archaeological contractor will be responsible for ensuring that the County Coroner is

informed. County Archaeological Services and the Finds Liaison Officer will also need to be informed of any possible treasure finds.

- 8.3 Oxfordshire Museums requires that deposited archives from developer-led archaeological work shall be accompanied by funding as outlined in the Transfer. Archaeological organisations shall therefore include an estimate of the costs of deposition for this project in their tender. The estimated cost will be clearly shown and shall be calculated in accordance with the procedures set out in 'Requirements for Transferring Archaeological Archives 2023 - 2024.
- 8.4 The contracted archaeological organisation will be responsible for ensuring that all digital data generated by the excavation is archived with the [Archaeological Data Service](#) (ADS) and an [OASIS](#) record (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS) created.
- 8.5 In the event of the legal owner(s) resolving to retain all or part of the site archive, they shall be responsible for the future preservation and maintenance of any material element of that archive. That part of the site archive in question, shall be transferred to the legal owner only after; all necessary processing, research, analysis and investigative/stabilising conservation and correct packing necessary to prepare the archive for preservation and in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication, has been completed. The owner shall ensure that all necessary provision is made for the long-term preservation of the archive in a satisfactory environment, and that it is accessible for future research. The contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that a proper record of material is kept by the landowner shall be included in the written archive and public record. The explicit (written) permission of the owner shall be obtained for the latter in order that the *Data Protection Act 1984* is not contravened.
- 8.6 A draft digital copy of the publication report (either in pdf or .doc format) shall be supplied to the office of the County Archaeological Officer for verification and assessment by the CAO or his representative prior to a final copy being produced or submitted for planning purposes; when the report has been agreed a final digital copy will then be supplied to the County Historic Environment Record (HER), along with a selection of digital images showing the main features, at archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk on the understanding that it will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months).
- 8.7 Details of archive deposition shall be submitted to the County HER.
- 8.8 **GIS (shape) files of the final phased excavated site plan should be provided to the office of the County Archaeological Officer.**
- 8.9 The County Museums Service shall be notified of the fieldwork and an accession number obtained within one month of the commencement of fieldwork and should be informed of the expected time limits for deposition of the archive.
- 8.10 The accession number should be included in the draft fieldwork reports.

9. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION:

- 9.1 Full publication of the results should be guaranteed and should take place within a reasonable length of time (normally not more than five years after completion of the

work). Style and format to be determined by the archaeological organisation, with regard to agreed standards of archaeological publication, and the house style of the appropriate local, regional or national publication.

- 9.2 The report should state the location of the archive and acknowledge the curatorial role played in the project by Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services. It should also acknowledge any provision of information from the County Historic Environment Record which is copyright of Oxfordshire County Council. Any secondary reports or articles generated by this project shall similarly acknowledge County Archaeological Services and the HER.
- 9.3 With regard to publication; the level of the report should take into account the scale of the project, the overall importance of the site based on Historic England guidance, and its status within local and regional research strategies. It should also be commensurate with the level of results obtained. The proposed publication should be set out in the post excavation assessment and updated project design and will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services.

County Archaeological Services

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL Contacts

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES CONTACTS: DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Email: archaeologydc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Lead Archaeologist: Richard Oram

Tel: 07917001026

Email: Richard.oram@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters for West Oxfordshire and OCC.

Planning Archaeologist: Steven Weaver

Tel: 07526972981

Email: steven.weaver@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters for South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse.

Planning Archaeologist: **Victoria Green**

Tel: 07922848811

Email: victoria.green@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters for Cherwell.

(All other dealings with national and regional bodies/utility Companies are shared on a District basis).

County Historic Environment Record

Email: archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk

County Historic Environment Record Officer: Jacqueline Pitt

Tel: 07741607816

Email: archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for management, development and access to the HER.

Archaeologist: Robbie Luxford

Tel: 07785453287

Email: Robbie.Luxford@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for assisting the HER and DC Officers and invoice issues.

COUNTY MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE STORE

Witney Road, Standlake, Oxon OX8 7QG

Archaeological Curator: Angie Bolton - Angie.Bolton@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

01865 300557

Conservation Laboratory:

01865 300937

Finds Liaison Officer:-

edward.caswell@oxfordshire.gov.uk

01865 300557

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Charging policy.

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (OCAS) has a varied and demanding caseload and in order to deal efficiently with these demands operates a policy of aiming to respond to all consultations within 21 working days. We also specify that we need to be contacted about site visits at least 10 working days in advance as our diaries are often fully booked within this period.

We do recognise however that there are some occasions outside of our control where circumstances mean that this can cause delays to developments. As such we have agreed a set of charges for a priority DC service to deal with exceptional circumstances.

There will be no charge for agreeing reports and WSIs within our standard 21 working day timeframe.

The priority service will be provided subject to availability and will need to be agreed with OCAS either direct with the relevant case office or by emailing Archaeologydc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The new priority DC charges are as follows,

Type	Standard Timeframe	Standard Charge £	Priority offered	Charge £ (up to)	notes
Monitoring Visit	10 days	290	within 5 days	1200 (a)	
Agreement of WSI	21 days	free	within 3 days	800 (b)	
Reviewing wb report	21 days	free	within 3 days	800 (c)	
reviewing small eval report	21 days	free	within 3 days	400	1-50 houses
reviewing medium eval report	21 days	free	within 3 days	700	50-200
reviewing large eval report	21 days	free	within 3-5 days	2700	200+
Post excavation assessments	21 days (+ for larger sites)	free	within 5 days	3600	need to be by arrangement

a, For monitoring visits this would depend on the notice period given.

1 day	£1200
2 days	£1000
3 days	£900
4 days	£800
5 days	£700
5-10 days	£500

- b, will depend on the nature of the WSI, simple (Geophysical survey, desk-based assessments and small fieldwork projects such as watching briefs, when based on a brief) - £300, medium (small evaluations and excavations where based on a brief) – (£500) and complex (large projects, overarching schemes and WSIs not based on a brief) - £800.
- c, will depend on the size of the report, small (up to a single house) - £300, medium (up to 5 houses) – (£500) and large (complex or large projects such as linear schemes) - £800.