

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment: Guidance Document

April 2024

1. SUMMARY OF BRIEF:

- 1.1 This document provides the outline framework on which a detailed specification of work should be based. In line with Chartered Institute for Archaeologists guidance for desk based assessments we require the submission of a written scheme of investigation for our approval in advance of an assessment being submitted as part of a planning application. Oxfordshire County Council aim to respond to such WSIs within 21 working days.
- 1.2 The Desk-Based Assessment will aim to determine (as far as is reasonably possible from existing records) the nature of the archaeological resource within the specified area using appropriate methods of study which satisfy the stated and implied aims of the project. This evidence will form the basis of any proposals for further investigation or appropriate mitigation measures that may seek to limit the damage to significant archaeological deposits.

2. REQUIREMENT FOR WORK:

- 2.1 Desk-based assessment may be required in accordance with the NPPF (2019) because of the presence of known sites of archaeological interest within the immediate vicinity of the development. It is advisable to consult us as to whether or not an assessment will be required for a specified development.
- 2.2 The assessment is the first stage of a process designed to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within those areas affected. The report produced will present a digest of information on the character and significance of the deposits under review and this report will form the basis of any proposals for appropriate further action. An interpretation of the collated information and an accompanying risk assessment of the archaeological implications will be an essential requirement.

3. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS SURVEY:

- 3.1 It is advisable to contact Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services to ascertain whether there are any specific requirements or data sources that will need to be included in the assessment.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION:

1. The assessment will need to be undertaken in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists standards and guidance for desk-based assessment including the submission of a written scheme of investigation.
2. **Desk-Based Assessment**

In undertaking the assessment the following sources should be examined for the whole study area:-

- a) the County Historic Environment Record (HER);
- b) the National Heritage List for England held by Historic England;
- c) Designated assets such as Scheduled Monuments, Battlefields and Listed Buildings;
- d) all Ordnance Survey maps (19th and 20th century) at 1:10000, 1:10560, 1:2500 and 1:1250 scales;
- e) tithe maps (and apportionments), estate maps and any other relevant historical maps within the relevant County Record Office (parts of Oxfordshire were formerly part of Berkshire and may still be covered by the Berkshire Record Office), or readily available elsewhere;
- f) English Place Name Society volumes or similar authoritative works covering place names of the study area;
- g) geological maps of the study area;
- h) geotechnical reports where such evidence is not being separately assessed;
- i) previous archaeological evaluation and excavation records relating to sites in and immediately adjacent to the study area;
- j) such other published works, reports and other information relevant to the desk-based assessment;
- k) air photographic collections by Historic England Swindon and such other collections as are held by Oxfordshire County Council within the HER for the area of study (beyond the specific development area);
- l) An assessment of any Lidar holdings held by the Environment Agency for the study area (beyond the specific development area).
- m) The Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation data (provided as part of the HER consultation).
- n) National Mapping Programme Data where available.
- o) Portable Antiquities Scheme data, available from the PAS website.

REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION:

1. The report should include as a minimum.
 - a) a statement of the objectives and methods of the study;

- b) identification of areas of known and possible archaeological or historic landscape interest, together with brief justification of such identification, and a preliminary indication of their likely importance including areas of multiple cultural heritage interest. The non-statutory criteria of Secretary of State for the National Heritage regarding the scheduling of ancient monuments should be used to assess the archaeological importance of any archaeological remains discovered;
 - c) the anticipated degree of survival of any archaeological site or area so identified;
 - d) summary maps at an appropriate scale;
 - e) plans at a scale of 1:2500 or another appropriate scale of the study area maps on which are plotted basic data related to the study in question.
 - f) a comprehensive bibliography of sources of information consulted, including those with no useful information;
 - g) consideration of the evidence assembled within a wider landscape setting;
 - h) a critical review of the effectiveness of the methodology employed.
 - i) a list of aerial photographs consulted and a plan showing the plotting's of any cropmarks identified from the aerial photographs for the entire study area. The assessment will need to identify whether or not the area is covered by a National Mapping Programme and if available include the plotting's of this survey for the study area. This will need to be obtained from the Historic England archives.
 - j) The assessment should identify whether Lidar data exists for the study area. Where this data is available the assessment will need to contain hillshade visualisations taken from a number of separate azimuths (or a composite image taken from multiple azimuths) along with any other relevant visualisations for the study area. The assessment should make clear where the data was obtained and how it has been processed.
 - k) The plotting's of the Historic Landscape Characterisation and an assessment of the impact of any development on the landscape character.
1. A digital copy of the desk based will be supplied to the County Historic Environment Record (HER) 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).
 3. All archaeological organisations should ensure that an abstract containing the essential elements of the results precedes the main body of the report.
 3. 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.

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 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 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Agreement of WSI | 21 days | free | within 3 days | 300 | |