



Alderholt Meadows Fordingbridge, Dorset

Overarching Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Programme

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Unit R6
Sheaf Bank Business Park
Prospect Road
Sheffield
S2 3EN

www.wessexarch.co.uk

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Client name Intelligent Land Ltd
Address The Studio
Ferndown Forest Golf Club
Forest Links Road
Ferndown
BH22 9PH
National Grid Location SU 12018 11797
Document compiled by Andrew Reid

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Alderholt Meadows, Fordingbridge, Dorset

Overarching Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Programme

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Intelligent Land Ltd on behalf of Dudsbury Homes (the Client) to prepare an Overarching Written scheme of investigation for Alderholt Meadows, Fordingbridge, Dorset (hereafter 'the Site') centred on NGR SU 12018 11797.
- 1.1.2 Proposals for the Site comprise an outline application for a mixed use development of up to 1700 dwellings including affordable housing and care provision; 10,000sqm of employment space in the form of a business park; village centre with associated retail, commercial, community and health facilities; open space including the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG); biodiversity enhancements; solar array; and new roads, access arrangements and associated infrastructure. (All matters reserved apart from access off Hillbury Road).
- 1.1.3 This document will be submitted as a Technical Appendix (12.4) with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Site as part of larger suite of documents.

1.2 Scope of document

- 1.2.1 This document sets out an overarching strategy that will specify the principles of a phased approach to a programme of archaeological investigation and recording post outline planning consent.
- 1.2.2 It is intended that each development phase will be carried out in accordance with a separate, detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), and the results of each phase will be used to inform the subsequent phases, in terms of scope and methodology as appropriate. These specific WSIs may relate to specific locations or to a specific mitigation strategy.
- 1.2.3 This Overarching WSI will be submitted to the County Archaeologist for Dorset County Council, archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), for comment and consultation prior to submission and will be directly referenced, as required, in any planning conditions attached to a positive determination for the outline application.

1.3 Location, topography and geology

- 1.3.1 The Site comprises an area of 122 ha of arable/pasture immediately to the south of Alderholt. While the majority of Alderholt falls into Dorset, Hillbury Road forms the boundary into Hampshire. The Site is broadly split into two parts with the smallest area between Hillbury Road and Ringwood Road, and the largest area between Ringwood Road and Cranborne Common. The existing solar farm to the north of Alderholt Common is not included in the Site boundary.
- 1.3.2 The Site is broadly bounded by the village of Alderholt to the north, roads to its east, extensive woodland to its south and Cranborne Common to its west. The topography within



the areas immediately surrounding the Site and the village are relatively level but the land rises to the woodland and commons to the north, south and west. Alderholt forms a promontory into Hampshire and the ground towards the county slopes to c. 28 m towards the A338 to the east.

- 1.3.3 Broadly, the Site undulates from c. 60 m OD from the northern extent of the larger area to c. 50 m OD towards Warren Park Farm to the south. The smaller area broadly rises east to west from c. 51 m OD to c. 55 m OD.
- 1.3.4 The underlying bedrock of the Site varies between the Parkston Sand Member (sand), which covers the majority of the Site, and the Broadstone Clay Member (clay, silty), recorded along Ringwood Road and at the Site's most western boundary (British Geological Survey, 2022). Superficial river terrace deposits (sand and gravel) are recorded within three clusters spread across both parts of the Site.

1.4 Construction programme

- 1.4.1 The construction programme has not yet been confirmed but will depend on the final project design and the construction strategy. Following consent being granted for the outline application, timescales to undertake the archaeological evaluation works, and any potential mitigation ahead of construction, will be confirmed and agreed. At the time of writing, a phased approach to the development of the Site is proposed. Each phase of archaeological evaluation work will be completed within an appropriate and agreed timescale as per any detailed condition.
- 1.4.2 An updated version of this document will be issued should the current working programme of construction phases change.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was assessed in a prior desk-based assessment (DBA: Wessex Archaeology 2022) which considered the recorded historic environment resource within a 1 km study area of the proposed development area. A summary of the results is presented below, additional sources of information are referenced, as appropriate.

2.2 Previous investigations

- 2.2.1 The geophysical survey did not identify any anomalies which could be confidently asserted as representing archaeological remains. Several anomalies have, however, been interpreted as representing possible archaeological remains although their provenance is unclear and may be attributable to another source.
- 2.2.2 The largest concentration of anomalies associated with possible archaeological remains is located within the southern section of the Site adjacent to Ringwood Road. Anomalies that may indicate medieval ploughing patterns and modern services have been identified in the land between Ringwood Road and Hillbury Road, and an area of possible ridge and furrow appears to be located within the southern land parcels.
- 2.2.3 The survey report concludes, however, that due to the uncertainty of their provenance these could relate to enclosure from the Bronze Age onwards, and could equally represent geological variations or modern agricultural activity.



- 2.2.4 The survey results in this area have, however, been subject to magnetic interference which could be the result of successive agricultural practices. Due to the seemingly straight and close lines of the ridge and furrow, it is unlikely that the ridge and furrow is of earlier than 18th century date. Both the ploughing patterns and ridge and furrow could relate to the non-designated post-medieval area of ridge and furrow located to the north of the farmhouse (MDO39456).
- 2.2.5 The survey also recorded a series of pits scattered across the Site which are thought to be of natural or geological origin, although a potential archaeological origin has also been suggested. To the west of the solar farm a magnetic response indicates the presence of the remains of man-made lay down areas or spoil, possibly associated with the construction of the solar farm.
- 2.2.6 To the north/north-west of the existing solar farm a possible trackway was identified. The trackway could be related to the medieval non-designated trackway (MDO39444) recorded by the Dorset Historic Environment Record (DHER), however, if not, it further corroborates that this area formed part of a medieval/post-medieval agricultural landscape located to the south of the solar farm.
- 2.2.7 Within the approximate centre of the Site, to the north of Warren Park Farm, the remains of a possible former field boundary have been identified in addition to services associated with the farmhouse.

2.3 Archaeological and historical context

Prehistoric (970,000 BC–AD 43)

- 2.3.1 Taking into consideration general trends across the country, the higher ground at Alderholt would have been attractive for prehistoric activity, with activity from the Mesolithic period onwards recorded within the Study Area. The village sits on top of Pleistocene River Gravel Terrace 6 on the western bank of the Avon Valley, an area which has proven to hold potential for Palaeolithic archaeology (including geoarchaeological) remains of interest. Indeed, recent works on dating the Terrace 6 and Terrace 7 gravels along the Avon Valley by Egberts have shown how much Palaeolithic archaeological potential such deposits hold (Egberts et al 2019; 2020). Indeed, outside of the Study Area, c. 3km south of the Site at Nea Farm, Somerley, a Late Glacial Upper Palaeolithic site was found upon the gravel terrace surface (Barton et al 2009), a rarity as there are only four known sites within the region.
- 2.3.2 In terms of Mesolithic to Neolithic activity, this is largely represented by flint scatters which appear to focus on the area between the River Avon and Hillbury Road with the exception of a possible occupation site of the same date range (Hampshire Historic Environment Record (HHER) 29742) just within the eastern extent of the Study Area (to the east of Lomer Lane). Further flint finds have been recovered at Warren Farm which lies just outside the southern bounds of the Site, however, their exact date is unknown and they are recorded as 'prehistoric' only (MDO5399, MDO05400). A prehistoric stone adze (MDO29018) and a stone axe (MDO29019) have been found in the same area.
- 2.3.3 While there is limited Bronze Age settlement activity within the Study Area, aside from the presence of a ditch (HHER 71917) and an enclosure (HHER 70446) within the Hampshire part of the Study Area, the Study Area is rich in funerary activity represented by barrows, in addition to multiple findspots denoting the recovery of stone axes and flints.



- 2.3.4 Comparatively, there is relatively little Iron Age evidence, indicating that there might have been little continued occupation within the area. Only the site of a pit (HHER 21528) and a pottery scatter (HHER 29709) are located within the Hampshire part of the Study Area.

Romano-British (AD 43–410)

- 2.3.5 Aside from a Roman pottery scatter (HHER 29739, HHER 29799), a coin hoard (HHER 70401) and a corn drier (HHER 70590) in the area where Bronze Age and Iron Age activity has also been noted, little other Roman activity has been recorded within the Study Area.

Saxon (AD 410–1066) and medieval (AD 1066–1500)

- 2.3.6 Alderholt was not established as a parish until the late 1840s and formed part of Cranborne until then. No settlement is recorded at Cranborne in the Domesday Book Survey, and the closest known settlement appears to have been at Midgham, c. 1 km east of the Site which formed part of Fordingbridge Hundred at the time. The condition and use of the Site at the time of the Domesday Book record is unknown, however, it is possible that it was wooded during the early medieval period.

- 2.3.7 There appears to have been medieval activity within the Site based on the presence of a group of medieval to post-medieval pillow mounds (DHER MDO39447, DHER MDO39448, DHER MDO39450, DHER MDO39446, DHER MDO39445) likely in use as rabbit warrens and historic trackways thought to be of a similar date (DHER MDO39444). To the north and west of the Site, further medieval activity is noted in the form of further trackways (DHER MDO39469, DHER MDO39470, DHER MDO39443, DHER MDO39440), which appear to concentrate on the Cranborne Common area, and a deer park (DHER MDO5393) with which the scheduled deer park bank and ditch is associated (NHLE 1002394).

- 2.3.8 Based on the presence of the trackways and the pillow mounds, it is likely that some woodland clearance commenced in the medieval period, however, the extent of this is currently not understood.

Post-medieval (AD 1500–1800) - Modern (AD 1900–present day)

- 2.3.9 Based on late 19th century maps showing the extent of Alderholt, the settlement was mainly centred on Sandleheath Road, c. 800 m north of the smaller Site area, with winding lanes and isolated cottages and farmstead and small irregular fields surrounding it.

- 2.3.10 The HERs show a prevalence for widespread post-medieval activity which shows how the village and its surrounding landscape developed as an agricultural community during this period. A series of post-medieval ridge and furrow areas are noted to the north, north-east and south-west of the village (DHER MDO39460, DHER MDO39458, DHER MDO39459, DHER MDO39457, DHER MDO39456, DHER MDO39463, DHER MDO39464) and some of it even falls into the Site to the west of Ringwood Road (DHER MDO39456).

- 2.3.11 In addition to be above, evidence of extraction activities is also widespread within the Study Area, with the majority of such activities just to the north and north-east of the village (DHER MDO39466, DHER MDO39467, DHER MDO39473, DHER MDO39474), even though some is also noted within and just to the south of the Site (DHER MDO39455, DHER MDO39454, DHER MDO39453, DHER MDO39451, DHER MDO39452). Based on the presence of pottery kilns recorded along Daggons Road (c. 230m north from the Site) identified from historic mapping, it is suggested that the material extracted related to pottery production.



3 STRATEGY OVERVIEW

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The proposed development will involve groundworks initially comprising the removal of topsoil and subsoil from all areas where house-building and related infrastructure is proposed. The stripping of sub-soils for infrastructure works, and the excavation of foundations and service trenches may result in the truncation and destruction of any archaeologically significant buried features or deposits present within the footprint of the working areas.
- 3.1.2 Works involved in the establishment of green infrastructure intended to provide community amenity facilities (e.g. hard and soft landscaping, planting, construction of paths, installation of services / SUDS) may also have the potential to impact on buried archaeological remains.
- 3.1.3 Potential impacts to archaeologically significant remains can be addressed via the principles of:
- *Preservation in situ – removing any risk of impact through design changes and / or the implementation of an effective strategy and procedure for their protection and management prior to, during and post-construction; or*
 - *Preservation by record – mitigation of impact through the application of a range of archaeological techniques prior to and during construction.*
- 3.1.4 This Overarching WSI for archaeological programme forms part of an ongoing process to identify the components of the archaeological resource that will be affected by the proposed development and their significance, and to propose either to mitigate or to safeguard against any impact that may occur due to its implementation in line with national and local planning policy.
- 3.1.5 The overall strategy will evolve as future stages of archaeological work are carried out, the results of which will inform the requirement for and scope of any subsequent work. This Overarching WSI for the scheme sets out the scope and nature of the archaeological programme and how each phase of archaeological works will be accommodated at each phase of development.

3.2 Archaeological programme

- 3.2.1 The initial aim of the programme of investigations is not to mitigate, but to more accurately establish the potential for the presence/absence of archaeologically significant remains, allowing a detailed and site-specific mitigation programme to be created, and thus to be undertaken prior to the submission of detailed plans.
- 3.2.2 It is anticipated that the trial trench scheme of investigations will be undertaken in two separate phases, as areas are brought forward for development. Each phase of archaeological works will be carried out well in advance of construction to allow sufficient time to plan and undertake any subsequent mitigation works that may be required.
- 3.2.3 Three potential outcomes can be predicted, following each phase of the scheme of investigations:
- *No further work will be required – the County Archaeologist for Dorset County Council is satisfied that no significant archaeological remains meriting subsequent mitigation or preservation in situ are identified;*



- *Additional mitigation is required by the County Archaeologist for Dorset County Council – significant archaeological remains requiring preservation by record are identified; or*
- *Preservation in situ is proposed – significant archaeological remains are identified that merit preservation in situ, to be achieved by detailed design to accommodate the archaeological remains to avoid any harm.*

3.2.4 Following the completion of each phase of the investigations, consultation will be undertaken with the LPA to agree the need for and scope of any works that will be required to mitigate the impacts of the development on the archaeological resource.

3.2.5 Any decisions regarding preservation *in situ* of archaeological remains identified during the evaluations will be made via consultation between the Client or their representatives and the County Archaeologist for Dorset County Council.

3.2.6 In addition to the above, considering the potential for Palaeolithic archaeology and/or geoarchaeological remains, provision for appropriate sampling and investigation will need to be made. The detailed scope of such works will need to be agreed in consultations with both the Archaeological Curator and Historic England's Regional Science Advisor and will therefore be subject to a separate WSI.

3.2.7 At present, it is anticipated that the scope of such works could broadly comprise soil stripping, sieving and recording in addition to geoarchaeological investigations, such as, for example, monitoring of GI works by a geoarchaeology specialist (if required and suitable). Existing guidance on relevant site investigation approaches should be considered and adopted where suitable and proportionate for the proposed development and likely resource, including the *New Forest Archaeological Research Framework* (NFNPA 2017), Historic England's *Research and Conservation Framework for the British Palaeolithic* (2008, published under English Heritage) and Historic England's *Curating the Palaeolithic* (2023).

3.2.8 It is understood that the typical approach in the region is that, where prehistoric archaeology in the form of lithic scatters may be present, a 2% sampling where geophysical survey has occurred is appropriate. Where no geophysical survey has been conducted, a 3% sample may be more appropriate.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 General aims

4.1.1 The general aims of the archaeological evaluation and assessment of Palaeolithic archaeology and/or geoarchaeological works, in compliance with the ClfA' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), are:

- *to provide information about the archaeological potential of the site;*
- *to inform detailed design in order to mitigate against any potential harm, should this be deemed necessary; and*
- *to inform either the scope and nature of any further archaeological work that may be required; or the formation of a mitigation strategy (to offset the impact of the development on the archaeological resource); or a management strategy.*

4.2 General objectives

4.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the general objectives of the archaeological evaluation and assessment of Palaeolithic archaeology and/or geoarchaeological works are:



- *to determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified area;*
- *to establish, within the constraints of the evaluation, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;*
- *to test the results of the geophysical survey (Wessex Archaeology 2018);*
- *to place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and*
- *to make available information about the archaeological resource within the site by reporting on the results of the evaluation.*

4.3 Specific objectives

4.3.1 Based on the known archaeological resource within the Site, identified within the DBA, HEDBA and geophysical survey, the archaeological evaluation and assessment of Palaeolithic archaeology and/or geoarchaeological works will be undertaken with a view to contributing to relevant research objectives as set out below (N.B. further research questions may be added to the specific WSIs where these are identified following further archaeological works):

5 ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMMUNICATION

5.1 Schedule

5.1.1 Following the submission of an agreed WSI for archaeological investigation for each phase of construction:

- *the works must be completed and reported on in time to inform the final scheme design and archaeological mitigation strategy for each phase of the development;*
- *each phase of the evaluation works will be subject to a reporting process and results fed back into the subsequent evaluation and mitigation strategies to allow for changes in methodologies/sampling strategies etc., for forthcoming works to be set out;*
- *a final schedule for the phased evaluation will be developed following consent of the outline application and production of a construction programme, once known; and*
- *each phase of archaeological evaluation work will be completed as per any detailed condition of consent.*

5.2 The Client

5.2.1 Dudson Homes will remain the overarching stakeholder throughout the development process and will ensure that this Overarching WSI is embedded within the Construction Management Plan (CMP) for the proposed development. Any Developer, Contractor or Sub-contractor undertaking work within the Site will be made aware of the archaeological requirements as set out within this Overarching WSI, in accordance with the wording of the relevant planning conditions.

5.3 Archaeological Curator(s)

5.3.1 The Archaeological Curator for the Site is as follows:

- *County Archaeologist for Dorset County Council.*



5.3.2 During the project, communication with the Archaeological Curator(s) will be undertaken via email and/ or telephone contact. Specific WSIs for each phase of the archaeological works will be submitted to the Archaeological Curator(s) for comment/ approval. During any fieldwork, the Archaeological Curator(s) will be afforded site monitoring visits as required. After construction has been completed, the final archaeological report(s) or publication(s) for this project will be submitted to the Archaeological Curator(s).

5.4 Archaeological Contractor(s)

5.4.1 Archaeological Contractor(s) will be appointed to carry out specific packages of work. The Archaeological Contractor(s) may be appointed by the Developer or their appointed representatives (the Client, or other contractors/ sub-contractors). In these instances, the Client will have a coordinating role, ensuring works are specified, planned, undertaken and reported in accordance with this Overarching WSI, and undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel.

5.5 Responsibilities

5.5.1 The responsibility for implementing the Overarching WSI programme and subsequent agreed WSIs related to each phase of development rest with the Developer and their appointed representatives (including their Contractors).

5.5.2 The Developer and / or their appointed representatives, or any archaeological body they may appoint to manage the implementation of the Overarching WSI, will seek curatorial advice from the Archaeological Curator(s) as appropriate.

5.5.3 Interaction with the Archaeological Curator(s) will be administered by the Developer and/ or their appointed representatives. Should newly identified archaeological deposits be discovered during construction, the Archaeological Curator(s) will be contacted immediately.

5.5.4 The Developer and/ or their appointed representatives will ensure that Contractors make project personnel aware of this Overarching WSI programme and subsequent agreed WSIs related to each phase of development.

6 STRATEGY

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 In line with the information gathered during the DBA and the data collected during the geophysical survey, the following strategy has been produced (**Figure 1 and 2**).

6.2 Pre-construction

6.2.1 Where geophysical survey has been undertaken, a sample of 2% would be sufficient to determine the veracity of the results, with a sample of trenches placed in 'blank' areas to identify any other potential archaeological remains not previously identified.

6.2.2 This would comprise the excavation of evaluation trenches, each measuring 50 x 2 m. The final number and specific locations of the trenches would be determined in consultation with the Archaeological Curator(s) and set out within the relevant specific WSI.

6.2.3 In addition to the above, pre-construction archaeological works may also include a geoarchaeological element, such as monitoring of ground investigation (GI) works,



however, the scope of this would need to be agreed with the Archaeological Curator(s) and Historic England's Regional Science Advisor.

- 6.2.4 Within those areas not covered by the geophysical survey, in order to adequately define the presence, nature and significance of any potential archaeological remains a greater percentage of sampling will be required. Here, a 3% sample would be sufficient to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, given the general low potential identified in the DBA.
- 6.2.5 This would comprise the excavation of evaluation trenches, each measuring 50 x 2 m. The final number and specific locations of the trenches would be determined in consultation with the Archaeological Curator(s) and set out within the relevant specific WSI.
- 6.2.6 The results of each phase of the evaluation will inform the requirement for subsequent stages of mitigation within discrete areas of the Site.
- 6.2.7 This may take the form of area excavation (e.g. strip, map and sample) to deliver preservation by record by way of mitigation for the loss, be it partial or total, of any identified archaeological remains deemed to be of sufficient significance.
- 6.2.8 Any such works will also take place prior to construction.

6.3 During construction

- 6.3.1 No further works are anticipated to be required within the evaluation areas during the construction phase, excepting where a programme of archaeological monitoring of groundworks (via watching brief) is required to be undertaken as mitigation.
- 6.3.2 Should any archaeological remains identified during the trial trench evaluations be proposed for preservation *in situ*, a strategy for the protection of the remains during construction will be required.

6.4 Post-construction

- 6.4.1 In general, no further archaeological works are anticipated to be required within evaluation areas post-construction, following the implementation of any required programme of mitigation.
- 6.4.2 The only exception to this would be where archaeological remains identified during the evaluation are proposed to be preserved *in situ*, in which case, a strategy for the long-term management of the remains will be required.

7 COPYRIGHT

7.1 Third party data copyright

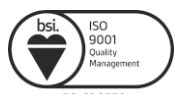
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Wessex Archaeology Ltd registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB
Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk



FS 606559