

Access Road, Gillingham SSA, Gillingham,
Dorset:

Project design for an archaeological excavation

NGR: ST82037 25400 to ST80992 25317

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On behalf of:
Dorset Council
Highways Dept

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AC archaeology

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Project Design sets out the methodology for undertaking a programme of archaeological excavation and reporting associated with the construction of an access road for a new housing development at New House Farm and Ham Farm, Gillingham, Dorset (NGR eastern end ST 82037 25400, western end ST80992 25317). The road will extend from Shaftesbury Road in the eastern part of the site area to New Road at the western end. This document has been prepared by AC archaeology Ltd on behalf of Dorset Council, who are the highways authority. The site location is shown in Fig. 1.

1.2 The archaeological excavations have been required as part of the approved mitigation strategy to meet a condition of planning consent granted by Dorset Council (ref: 2/2018/0036/OUT). The condition states:

No works shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant to, and approved by the Planning Authority. The scheme will cover archaeological fieldwork together with post-excavation work and publication of the works.

1.3 The scope of the work has been agreed in consultation with the Dorset Council Senior Archaeologist (DCSA) and AC archaeology through the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) issued by Dorset Council (2020). This Project Design is based on the WSI and provides additional information regarding professional standards and staffing details, including finds and environmental specialists.

1.4 Since the WSI was prepared, there have been revisions to the development programme and one area planned for investigation, a site compound, has now been moved to a new area. As a result, Area B, as outlined in the WSI, is no longer included in the proposals for the new road and has been excluded from the current works.

1.5 The topography varies across the site from approximately 77m at its southern extent to 66m where the road joins New Road, near the River Lodden. The underlying geology comprises Kimmeridge Clay Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed during the Jurassic Period.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 There have been four previous stages of archaeological work undertaken in relation to the proposed housing development associated with the current road scheme. In 2017 an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site, along with a geophysical survey were undertaken (WYG 2017 and Headland Archaeology 2017) and in 2019 a programme of archaeological trial trenching was implemented (Robinson 2019). The trial trenching report also

includes details of an earthwork survey that was carried out across five areas within the overall site. This information is derived from an Analytical Earthwork Survey which is included in the project archive (Corney 2019).

- 2.2** The geophysical survey results identified anomalies of archaeological potential in the south-west extent of the overall site area. This included evidence for a complex of features indicative of late prehistoric or Romano-British settlement, comprising two probable enclosures and a number of linear anomalies.
- 2.3** The 2019 trial trench evaluation required the excavation of a total of 183 trial trenches across the full development area and revealed six areas considered to be of high archaeological interest, and for which archaeological mitigation will be required. Two of these fall within boundaries of the new access road (denoted Areas A & C on Fig. 1).

Area A

- 2.4** The western part of the road cuts through the southern part of Area A, which extends north of road. This area contained evidence for a low status Romano-British enclosure that was probably an animal pen or compound dating from the mid 1st century AD to the late 4th century AD. Although there was little artefactual evidence or other forms of features, it is possible that settlement activity is located within this overall area.
- 2.5** A small contingency area has been identified at the southern end of the proposed excavation area, where there is uncertain survival of archaeological deposits. This will be included in the excavation works if it can be shown that significant deposits extend into the area.

Area C

- 2.6** Area C is located in close proximity to the junction with Shaftesbury Road at the eastern end of the planned road. The road cuts through the northern part of Area C.
- 2.7** Two enclosures survive as earthworks (see Fig. 8b; Survey Area 2 in Robinson 2019). The northern enclosure is triangular in plan and defined by a shallow ditch on the west and south, with a slight north facing scarp defining its northern side. Immediately to the south-east and separated by a 4.5m wide ditch is a second enclosure that is trapezoidal in plan measuring 33m by 20m. The east, south and west sides are defined by simple scarps standing up to 0.3m high. The northern side is contiguous with the ditch that forms the south side of the northern enclosure. A short extension of the eastern scarp may represent elements of a third enclosure, or an annexe to the second enclosure. A possible field boundary with an associated ditch extends in a north western direction from the northern enclosure. These earthworks have been interpreted as marking the site of a small medieval farming settlement.
- 2.8** Two trial trenches excavated within this area did not locate any features or deposits of archaeological interest, although a sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered from overburden deposits.

3. EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Aims

- 3.1** The principal aims of the programme of archaeological investigation are:

- to meet the requirements of the planning consent for the access road;
- to establish the presence/absence, extent, date, nature, function and phasing of the archaeological remains present within the targeted areas and to make a full and detailed archaeological record;
- to recover ecofactual and environmental information in accordance with a palaeo-environmental sampling strategy;
- to contribute to archaeological research framework questions, particularly with regard to those outlined in the South West Archaeological Research Framework (Somerset County Council 2012).
- to produce a durable archive of results and a report for dissemination that provides a synthesis of the results.

Preliminaries

- 3.2** Fig.1 shows the excavation areas. Area A comprises an area of c. 1,202m² while Area C comprises c 4,120m².
- 3.3** Overburden that can be shown to be of modern date will be removed in level spits of no more than 200mm using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Mechanical excavation will cease either at the top of archaeological deposits or at the surface of the natural geology if no archaeological deposits are encountered.
- 3.4** Topsoil will be stored on site outside of the excavation areas at a safe distance from the limit of the excavations, in positions to be confirmed, separated from any subsoil removed.
- 3.5** Following completion of the soil strips, or as soon as safe working allows, the areas will be cleaned by hand, where necessary, in sufficient detail and extent to identify the presence or absence of subsoil archaeological features. The DCSA will be invited to attend a site meeting to discuss the excavation strategy based on this initial exposure.

Sampling of archaeological features

- 3.6** All archaeological features and deposits will be excavated by hand, using appropriate tools. Sampling levels will be as follows:
- Full (100%) excavation of any deposits related to funerary/ritual activity; e.g. burials, cremations;
 - Full (100%) excavation of any deposits related to industrial/domestic activity; e.g. furnaces, hearths, ovens;
 - A minimum of 50% of any structural features; e.g. beam slots or ring ditches, although surviving structural elements, such as walls, collapsed rubble and debris fields, just require exposure, cleaning and preservation for sampling in more appropriate circumstances;
 - A minimum of 50% excavation of pits and post-holes (c. 50% of features present);
 - A minimum of 10% excavation of linear features, as well as all intersections and terminals.
- 3.7** Subsequent site meetings will be held with the DCSA, as required, during the excavation programme, where sufficient interventions have been completed to allow an understanding of the nature of any archaeological features and the relationships between them. The meetings will establish and confirm the suitability of the proposed methodology and the scope of any further work required to discharge the planning condition.

Contingency

- 3.8** In addition to the Area A contingency, if more extensive archaeological remains are identified which clearly extend beyond the limits of the proposed excavation areas, the need for further extension of the archaeological works will be authorised by the DCSA.

Archaeological recording

- 3.9** All artefacts and/or deposits revealed will be recorded using the AC archaeology's *pro forma* recording system (which is based on the Museum of London Archaeological Recording Manual), comprising written, graphic and photographic records. A series of overall area location plans, along with detailed plans of individual archaeological features and deposits, will be prepared at appropriate scales. Representative sections and site matrices showing the full layer sequences across the excavation areas will also be produced.
- 3.10** All site levels will be related to Ordnance Datum and the excavation area locations will be geo-referenced to the Ordnance Survey grid, via the use of a survey-grade GNSS instrument with horizontal precision of c. 20mm or better.
- 3.11** An adequate photographic record of all archaeological deposits will be made in both plan and section. This will comprise digital photographs only (minimum of 10 megapixels), illustrating in both detail and generally the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operations mounted; this may include, where appropriate, high level overview photographs.

Finds

- 3.12** All pre-modern (pre-1850) finds will be retained. The presence of later material will be noted, but examples will not be retained except where they are items of intrinsic interest, or their further examination is considered necessary for the dating of specific features or deposits.
- 3.13** All finds of gold and silver, or other items considered to be Treasure, will be moved off site to a safe place and reported to the client in the first instance. The archaeological contractor will then inform the Coroner's Office and the county Finds Liaison Officer, according to the procedures set out in the Treasure Act 1996. Where removal cannot be completed on the same working day as the discovery, suitable security measures will be taken to protect the artefacts from theft or damage.
- 3.14** Any human remains that are encountered will initially be left *in situ* and will be reported to the archaeological contractor's project manager, who will inform the DCSA. The contractor will then confirm the antiquity of the remains and obtain a licence for removal from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Removal and storage of the remains will be undertaken in accordance with the MoJ Licence and current archaeological best practice.
- 3.15** Necessary conservation work, including any on-site emergency conservation actions, will be undertaken by AC archaeology's conservation specialist (Wiltshire Council Conservation Laboratory).
- 3.16** All artefacts recovered are to be washed (where the condition of the material allows) and marked. Finds will be bagged, boxed, labelled and stored in accordance with current ClfA (2014) guidelines and procedures outlined by Watkinson and Neal (1997). Appropriate separation will

be maintained of bulk finds from those small or delicate objects requiring special treatment or packaging.

Sampling for palaeo-environmental and scientific dating analysis

- 3.17** All deposits with palaeo-environmental potential (e.g. containing carbonised and/or water-logged remains) will be bulk sampled (minimum 40 litres) as appropriate and in accordance with Historic England (formerly English Heritage) guidelines (2011). The selection of suitable deposits for sampling will be determined at the site review meetings, and as advised by AC archaeology's specialist environmental specialist (Dr Mike Allen).
- 3.18** The objectives of the palaeo-environmental sampling programme will be to establish the potential of the site to answer the following questions:
- What was the environmental setting and land use of the site prior to and during its use?
 - What agricultural activities were taking place on the site during each phase represented?
 - What was the environmental setting of each phase of any settlement?
 - Is there evidence for differential food preparation or rubbish disposal? and
 - Is there evidence for the social status of any phase of the site?
- 3.19** Suitable carbonised (or other) material will be identified and sampled for radiocarbon dating, where appropriate. Other deposits will be identified that may provide suitable material for thermo-remnant archaeomagnetic dating.

4. POST-EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Assessment of the site archive

- 4.1** The archive will be prepared to the standards outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991), and in accordance with the guidelines published in *Guidelines for the preparation of Excavation Archives for long-term storage* (United Kingdom Institute for Conservation 1990) and *Standards in the Museum care of archaeological collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992). Deposition shall take place as soon as practicable after the site works and any subsequent mitigation activities and in any case within 12 months of the completion of the project.
- 4.2** Subject to the formal agreement of the landowner, it is intended that the finds together with the site archive will be deposited with Dorset County Museum. All materials will be marked, packaged and presented in accordance with their standard requirement. Security copies of paper records in digital format will be maintained and stored at the archaeological contractor's offices prior to deposition.

Assessment report and updated project design

- 4.3** A post-excavation assessment report will be prepared following completion of site work, in accordance with the Appendix 4 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* and the ClfA *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2020), and will be sent to the DCSA for his approval. This document will form the basis of further work, for example processing environmental or C14 samples and will include methodologies for undertaking reviewing the stratigraphic evidence as well as appropriate methods for the analysis of all finds evidence collected. This work would be undertaken by AC archaeology's nominated specialists. The report

will form part of the project archive. It will include a statement of the quantity and perceived quality of the data in the site archive, and recommendations on the analysis and data storage and curation requirements

4.4 Following the initial assessment by AC archaeology's Finds Officer the following specialists (as required) will undertake various components of the report:

- an initial report on any pottery will be carried out by Dan Carter AC archaeology;
- a report on prehistoric pottery will be carried out by Dr Imogen Wood, freelance specialist;
- a report on any Romano-British pottery will be carried out by Mark Corney, freelance specialist;
- a report on the animal bone will be undertaken by Royston Clark AC archaeology;
- identification of worked flint will be carried out by Royston Clark AC archaeology;
- a report on metal objects and metalworking residue will be undertaken by in-house staff of AC archaeology;
- coins will be identified by Mark Corney, freelance specialist;
- assessment of palaeo-environmental samples will be undertaken by Mike Allen, freelance specialist;
- Scientific dating (Carbon-14) will be undertaken by Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC).

4.5 The assessment report will include an updated project design for further analysis and publication. As a minimum, a short note on the circumstances and nature of the project will be provided for publication in the county journal within one year following completion of the site work.

4.6 Copies of the assessment report will be supplied to the client, the planning officer and the Dorset Historic Environment Record. An OASIS record will be completed.

5. MONITORING

5.1 The DCSA will be invited to inspect and advise on the work during all stages of the archaeological investigations.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY AND COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

6.1 Archaeological staff will operate under AC archaeology's Health and Safety Policy and in accordance with current Health and Safety legislation, to include (but not exclusively rely on upon) the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*, the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992* and the *Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015*.

6.2 Archaeological staff will acquaint themselves with 'AC archaeology Ltd: Risk Assessment for Coronavirus – COVID-19 for Wessex Water archaeological fieldwork projects: April 2020' and will follow all the procedures and guidelines outlined in this document, including those that relate to travelling to and from site. Any further Wessex Water health and safety requirements in relation to COVID-19 will also be followed.

6.3 Archaeological staff will not work within the reach of the excavator arm on mechanical plant and would be at a safe distance should the quick hitch device fail. The machine operator will ensure that all necessary parts of the plant are fully functional and properly maintained.

- 6.4** In accordance with the provisions of the AC archaeology Health and Safety Policy, the site archaeologist will be responsible for ensuring that operations under their control are carried out in accordance with the AC archaeology RAMS document (ref ACW1250/2/0) .
- 6.5** Archaeological staff will not work in unsafe conditions; even where not to do so will result in the possible under-recording of the archaeological resource.
- 6.6** All site staff hold Construction Industry CSCS accreditation.

7. INSURANCE

- 7.1** AC archaeology carries Public Liability Insurance cover to £5,000,000, Employer's Liability to £10,000,000 and Professional Indemnity cover to £5,000,000.

8. COPYRIGHT

- 8.1** AC archaeology Ltd will provide Dorset Council with unrestricted permission to use the report resulting from the archaeological investigations, but will retain, along with its specialist contributors, the copyright of the report and all associated archive material.

9. REFERENCES

Corney, M 2019. *Analytical Earthwork Surveys of at Land South of Gillingham, Dorset*. Unpublished client report

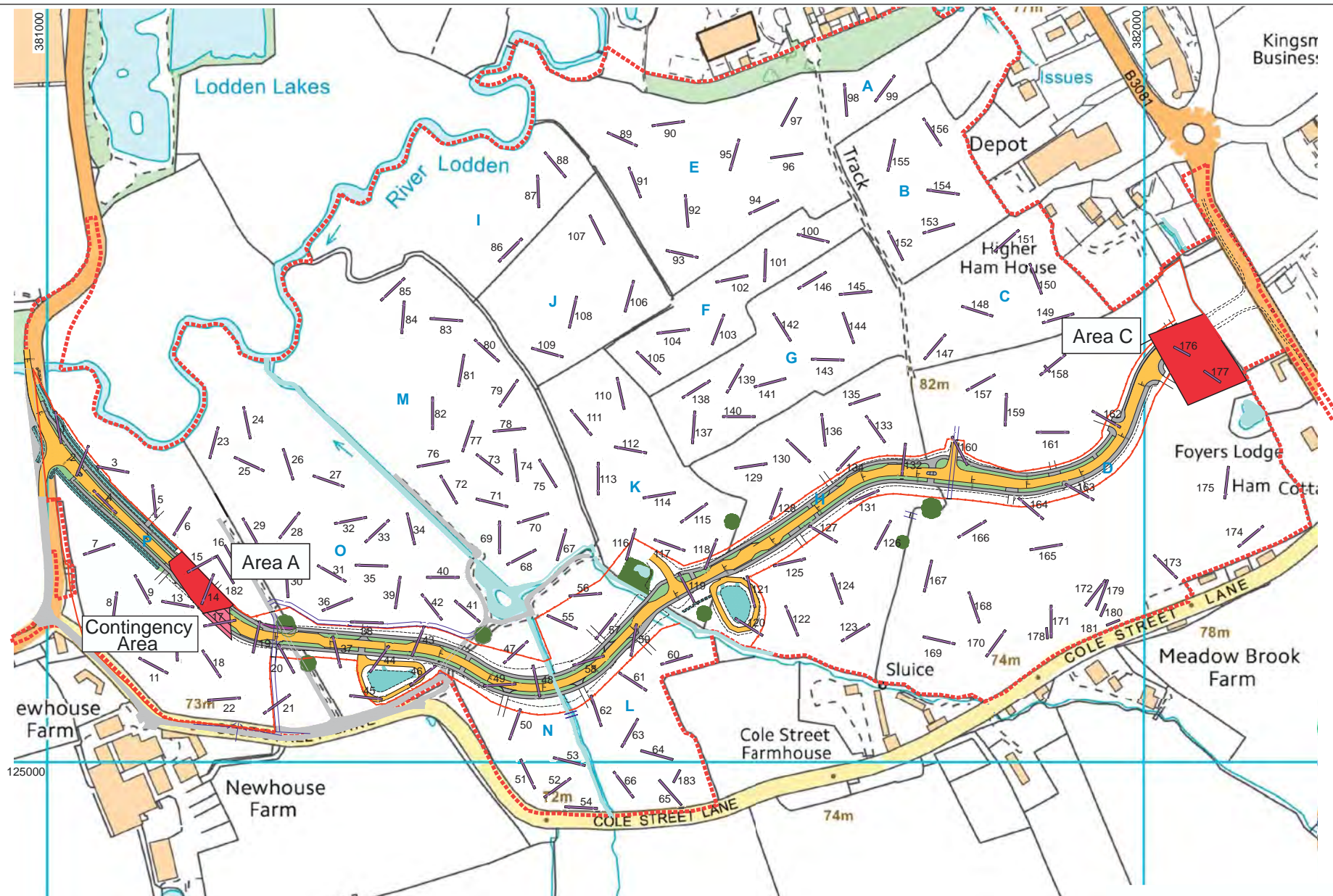
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WYG, 2017. *Land at Park Farm, Gillingham Proposed Residential Development*. Unpublished Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment, Setting Assessment and Geophysical Survey.



Key:

- Area to be excavated
- Contingency area
- Application area

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