Land off Watmore Lane, Winnersh, Berkshire

Project specification for an archaeological evaluation

3rd March 2026

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1.0 Background

1.1 Planning permission (260224) is being sought from Wokingham Borough Council for the erection of 111 dwellings. Outline planning permission 230280 (as amended by 250640) has been gained at Land off Watmore Lane, Winnersh, Berkshire (SU 7904 7068) (Fig. 1). Due to the potential disturbance of below-ground archaeological features, an archaeological evaluation (trenching) has been requested in order to inform the planning decision.

1.2 The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in an archaeological desk-based assessment (Archer 2023). In summary the site underwent a magnetometer survey in 2013, no archaeological features were detected. A previous desk-based assessment has been undertaken to the immediate south of the site alongside a geophysical survey which again identified no features of clear archaeological origin.

1.3 The earliest archaeological find is a cordate or ovate Palaeolithic hand axe was found in the garden of 442 Reading Road, *c.*850m west of the site, a small number of Palaeolithic flints hand axes have been found in the area to the south-east of Reading, but in low densities. There are no Neolithic or Bronze Age sites or finds recorded within the site, but a Neolithic arrowhead was found during works at Winnersh Primary School 400m to the north west, two Bronze Age urns were found near Merryhill Green, 250m to the north of the site and a further two urns were recorded at Sadler's End 1.5km to the south west.

1.4 Excavations at Matthewsgreen Farm, 1lm to the east of the site revealed archaeological deposits of Middle Iron Age to early – middle Roman date. The unenclosed site centred on a ring gully with adjacent pits, postholes and a second gully complex. A possible Roman road on a ENE-WSW alignment is 1.1km to the north west of the site and it has previously been suggested that Davis Street, 500m to the west of the site may be Roman in origin. A few Roman pottery sherds were found during fieldwalking 650m north of the site, and some Roman coins were found at Toutley Road, 950m to the east.

1.5 The only evidence for Saxon/Early Medieval activity, is a pit used for charcoal production at Sadler's End, 1.5km to the south east of the site. Similar pits were found at Matthewsgreen Farm, at the south eastern boundary, which were radiocarbon dated to AD1042-1218. Evidence for the Medieval period, is limited to pottery sherds found 400m to the north of the site at Winnersh Primary School and through fieldwalking exercises at Matthewsgreen Farm, and Sadler's End. Two likely post-medieval, but possibly medieval parallel ditches were recorded during archaeological works at Hewdon Depot 600m to the south, and a ditch containing a single sherd of probable medieval pottery was recorded during an evaluation at Toutley Road.

1.6 The site comprises a 4.9ha plot of land laying at a height of between 46m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay Formation-Clay, silt and sand with overlying River Terrace Deposits, 2-Sand and gravel superficial deposits along the eastern side of the site and London Clay Formation-Clay, silt and sand along the western side (BGS 2000)

2.0 Requirement for Work

2.1 As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site, a field evaluation has been requested by Wokingham Council as advised by Berkshire Archaeology and as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2025) and Wokingham Borough Council policies on archaeology.

2.2 At this stage a single component of archaeological work is proposed in the form of a field evaluation by means of machine-dug trenching. The results of the field evaluation will inform Berkshire Archaeology whether further mitigation works is required. Any further archaeological works will be governed by a separate WSI.

2.3 Where appropriate and relevant, the recommendations in the 'Berkshire Archaeology general standards for archaeological fieldwork projects (April 2021)' will be followed.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

3.1 The aims of the evaluation will be to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development.

3.2 The specific research aims of this project are to:

a) Determine if archaeologically significant levels have survived on this site;

b) Determine whether any archaeological deposits of any period are present;

c) Inform a strategy for mitigation if required.

3.3 The potential and significance of any such deposits located will be assessed according to the research priorities such as set out in Historic England Research Agenda (HE 2017) or any more local or thematic research priorities such as identified in the Solent Thames Research Agenda (Hey and Hind 2014) as necessary. The watching brief will be carried out in accordance with the relevant guidelines issued by Berkshire Archaeology and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2022).

4.0 Methodology

4.1 We propose to dig 49 trenches, 25m long and 1.8-2m wide, the trenches will be distributed in a stratified random layout across the site as shown in Figure s 2-4 in order to accurately investigate the archaeological potential of the site. The trench positions are indicative only and may need to be moved or subdivided to avoid obstacles or services.

4.2 A contingency of 100m of trench is included within the proposal should this be required to clarify the results of the initial trenching.

5.0 Excavation Methodology

5.1 Topsoil and other overburden will be removed by a 360°-type tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. This will take place under constant archaeological supervision.

5.2 Trenches will be excavated to the first archaeologically relevant horizon, or to the level of the natural geology.

5.3 Where archaeological features are certainly or probably present, the stripped areas will be cleaned using appropriate hand tools.

5.4 Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed will be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief. This work will be carried out in a manner which will not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

5.5 In general, all finds and artefacts will be retained, though all but a sample of some classes of building material will be discarded after recording.

5.6 Conservation on site will follow guidelines in First Aid for Finds with any other specialist conservation work subcontracted to our conservation advisor (see below).

5.7 A programme of environmental sampling will take place should sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits be located. Typically, this involves samples of up to 40*l* depending on the size of the feature examined. Bulk waterlogged samples with organic preservation will be of the order of 1*l*. These will be sampled in consultation with our environmental consultants and the archaeological advisor to

Wokingham Borough Council. Sampling will take place according to Historic England guidance (HE 2015a).

5.8 Discovery of any human remains will be confirmed by minimal excavation but no further action will be taken as part of the evaluation exercise, unless requested as additional work by the client in consultation with the archaeological advisor to Wokingham Borough Council. Human remains will be treated following the guidelines in (Mitchell and Brickley 2017).

5.9 Spoil heaps will be searched for finds including use of a metal detector.

5.10 All gold and silver, prehistoric base metal and any associated objects will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner and county finds liaison officer according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act (1996) and subsequent amendments. Where removal cannot be affected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft. No title will be assumed by the finder of any items of value.

5.11 Following completion of all excavation and recording, the trench will be efficiently backfilled but will not be resurfaced. No liability is accepted for damage to any services unless a plan of these is provided by the client.

6.0 Recording Methodology

6.1 A single context recording system will be used in accordance with the TVAS Field Recording Manual (9th edition 2020). Descriptions of individual deposits and features will be recorded on pro-forma context recording sheets.

6.2 All archaeological deposits exposed will be planned at a scale of 1:20 and sections drawn at a scale of 1:10. All site drawings will be by pencil on drafting film.

6.3 Heights above OD will be taken and recorded on plans and sections.

6.4 Where appropriate, significant finds will be recorded in 3D.

6.5 The locations of the trenches, and of all plans and sections will be tied into the National Grid using Trimble GPS systems with sub-decimetre accuracy.

6.6 The photographic record will consist of digital images. It will record the principal features and finds discovered, both in detail and in their general context. The photographic record will also include 'working shots' and, where applicable, aerial photographs to illustrate the nature of the archaeological fieldwork programme. All feature shots will include appropriate scales and a photo board, the latter positioned in such a way that the writing is legible and including the context number and site code. Digital images are taken on Canon EOS 4000D cameras with APS-C sensors taking 16-megapixel images.

7.0 Post-fieldwork

7.1 Finds processing, sieving of bulk samples (including flotation and the sorting of residues) and analysis will commence immediately following the completion of the fieldwork in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015b), and TVAS post-excavation procedures (6th edition 2013).

7.2 Artefacts will be cleaned, conserved and prepared for long term museum storage.

7.3 Specialist reports will be prepared on the artefacts and ecofacts recovered; particular attention will be paid to correlating the pottery recovered with local or regional fabric type sequences.

7.4 Specialist analysis and reporting will be carried out by the following specialist staff or consultants as appropriate:

Project management	Dr Steve Ford or Mr Andy Taylor
Project coordination	Mr David Sanchez or Ms Danielle Milbank

Fieldwork supervisor	(one of) Dr Steve Ford, Dr Pierre Manisse, Ms Maisie Foster, Ms Beth Tucker, Ms Emily Gibson, Ms Sophie Peng or Mr Jamie Williams
Post excavation	Mr Steve Preston
Finds coordination	Dr Cristina Matteos-Leal
Pottery specialist	Dr Jane Timby, Ms Sue Anderson, Ms Lorraine Mepham, Mr Luke Barber (consultants) or Dr Cristina Mateos-Leal (TVAS)
Environment (general)	Professor Mark Robinson (Oxford University)
Brick and tile	Ms Danielle Milbank (TVAS)
Carbonised botanical remains	Professor Mark Robinson (Oxford University), Ms Rosalind McKenna (consultant) or Ms Molly Larkby (TVAS)
Faunal remains	Dr Matilda Holmes (consultant), Dr Ceri Falys or Ms Harriet Wright (TVAS)
Human remains	Dr Ceri Falys (TVAS)
Coins	Dr Pierre Manisse (TVAS)
Metalwork	Dr Robin Taylor (consultant), or Ms Sophie Peng (TVAS)
Pollen	Quest (Reading University)
Wood	Ms Rosalind McKenna (consultant)
Slag	Dr David Dungworth or Mr Luke Barber (consultants)
Archaeomagnetism	Bradford University
Radiocarbon dating	Queens University, Belfast
Conservation	Wiltshire County Council Heritage Centre

8.0 Report and Dissemination

8.1 The reports on the results of the evaluation and should be available within 2-3 weeks of completion of the fieldwork.

8.2 The reports will follow our established format, comprising a descriptive text, illustrations and catalogues in appendices.

8.3 The text will address the aims and objectives of the evaluation, the methodology employed, describe the basic nature of the archaeological deposits discovered, and report on the artefacts recovered. It will then attempt to place the significance of the findings in their local, regional and national setting if appropriate.

8.4 The reports will include a front sheet providing the following information:

*Site name
*Grid reference
*Site activity (e.g. evaluation trenching, geophysical survey, fieldwalking, watching brief, excavation etc.)
*Date and duration of project
*Site code
*Area of site
*Summary of results
*Monuments identified (referenced to the RCHME Thesaurus of Monument Types)
*Location and reference of archive

8.5 The illustrations will include:

*A site location plan
*A trench layout plan
*Trench plans and sections
*Profiles/sections of a selection of excavated features
*A selection of colour photos of significant findings

8.6 Catalogues giving descriptions of trenches, archaeological features, and artefacts will be contained in a series of appendices.

8.7 Any findings of national or special local significance will be published as a dedicated report in an appropriate journal such as *Berkshire Archaeological Journal.* Otherwise, a summary will be produced for publication in 'round up' sections in publications such as period specific national journals like *Medieval Archaeology*.

8.8 Copies of the results will be supplied to Berkshire HER in digital format. Non-published report(s) will be made available for inspection or download on the TVAS web site. The trench plans in GIS Shape file format will also be supplied to the HER.

8.9 A suitable museum or repository has not yet been designated for the deposition of the site archive, therefore, the archive will remain at TVAS Reading until an appropriate museum or repository has been allocated.

9.0 Archive Deposition

9.1 The finds and site archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015b), CIfA guidance (CIfA 2020), TVAS Data Management Plan 2024-6 (TVAS 2024) and after consultation with the recipient museum.

9.2 The site and finds archive will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority).

9.3 With the consent of the landowner, the site finds will be deposited with a local museum prepared to accept the material.

9.4 A digital version of the report will be provided to the OASIS project.

10.0 General Items

10.1 The project will be managed on a regular basis by a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Dr S. Ford, Mr A. Taylor or Mr. D. Sanchez) with an appropriate area of competence.

10.2 The project will be carried out in accordance with the CIfA Standard and Universal Guidance for archaeological evaluation (CIfA 2023a, 2023b) and Code of Conduct (CIfA 2022) and the quality control mechanisms set out in the TVAS fieldwork and post-fieldwork manuals.

10.3 Safe working practices as set out in TVAS health and safety manual will be adopted and current health and safety regulations will be adhered to. If the site is accessible to the public, the trenches will be fenced with barrier mesh/bunting and road pins or Heras fencing as necessary.

10.4 Our insurance cover comprises £10 million for public liability, £10 million for employee liability, cover for any hired-in plant, and professional indemnity cover of £5m.

10.5 The archaeological advisor to Wokingham Borough Council will be contacted both prior to work commencing on site, and during the evaluation itself, to arrange a site monitoring visit. Any changes in the agreed project design will be discussed and agreed with the project consultant and the archaeological advisor to the Council before implementation.

11.0 References

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Hey, G and Hind, J, 2014, *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment: Resource Assessments and Research Agendas*, Oxford Wessex Monogr **6**, Oxford

Mitchell, P D, and Brickley, M (eds), 2017, *Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains*, CIfA and BABAO, Reading

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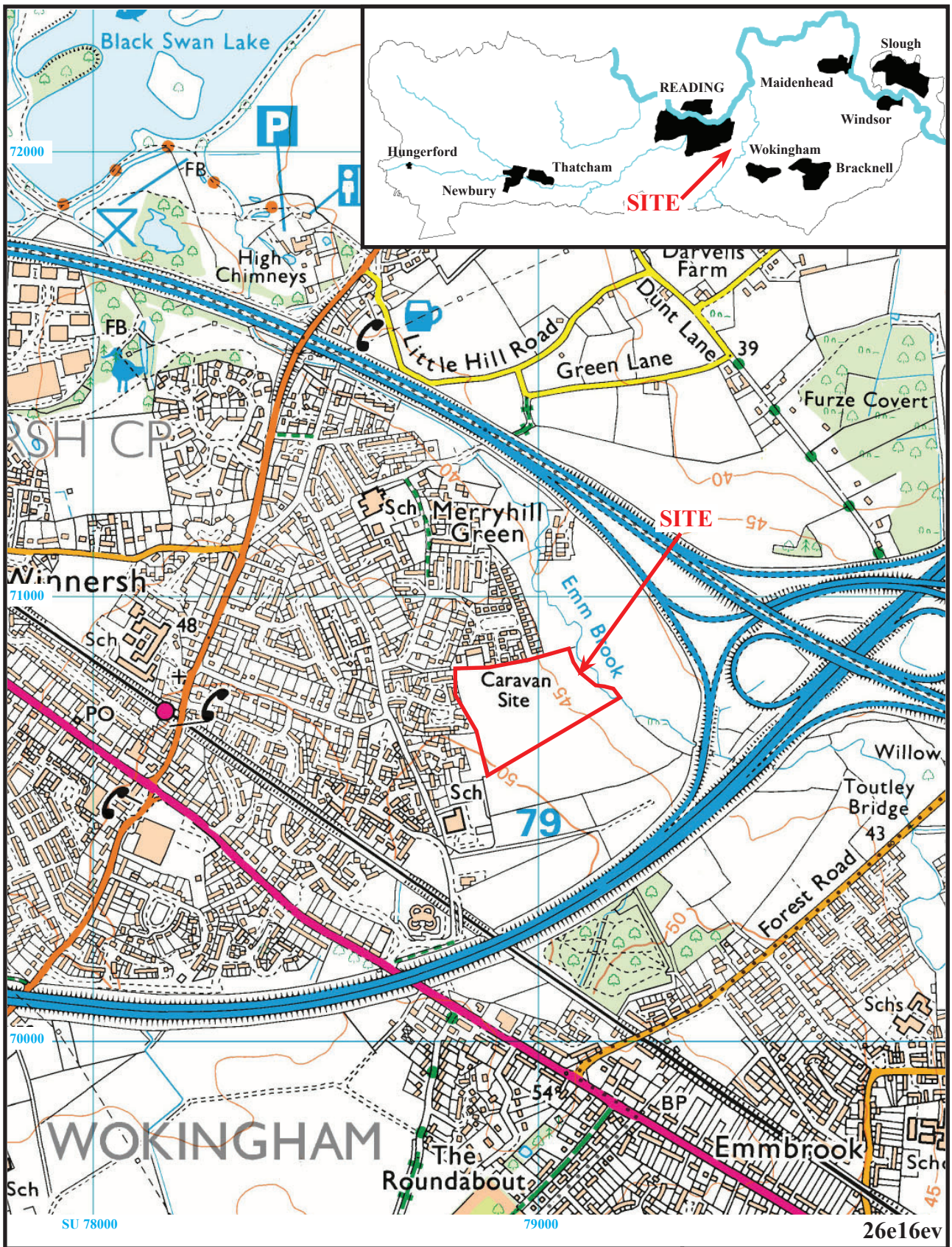

Land off Watmore Lane,
Winnersh, Berkshire, 2026
Proposal for archaeological evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Winnersh and Berkshire.

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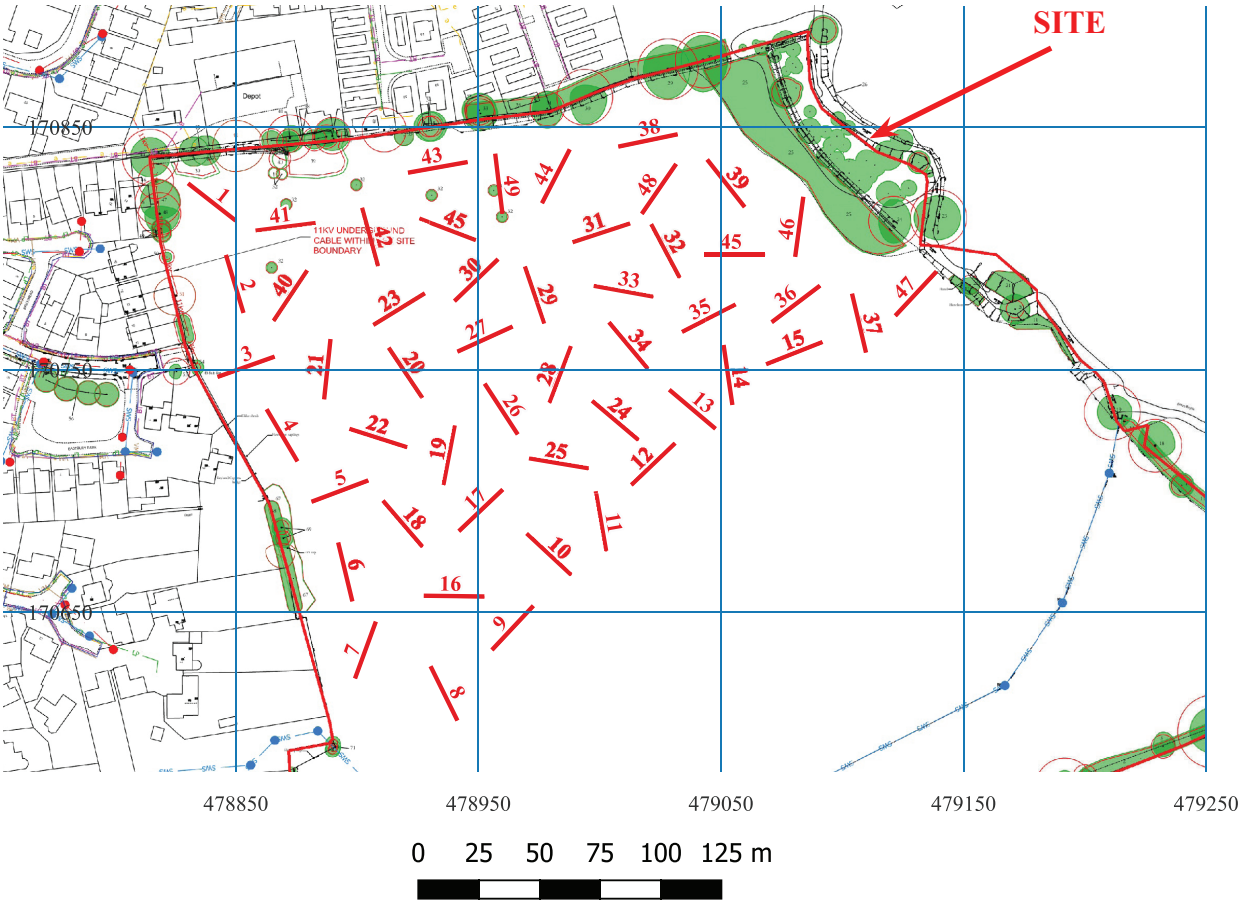

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Figure 2. Site location plan with trenches

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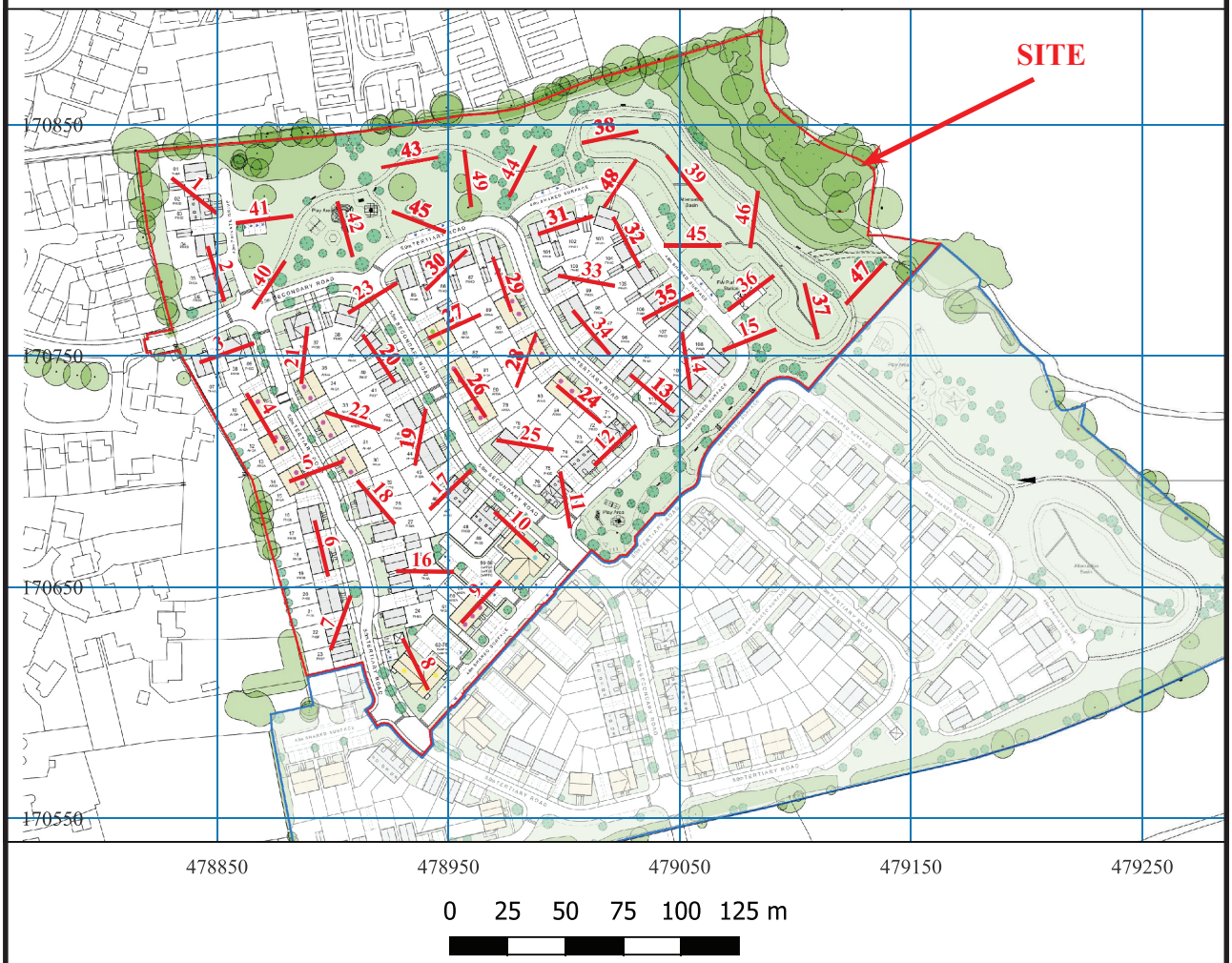

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Figure 3. Proposed site plan and trenches.

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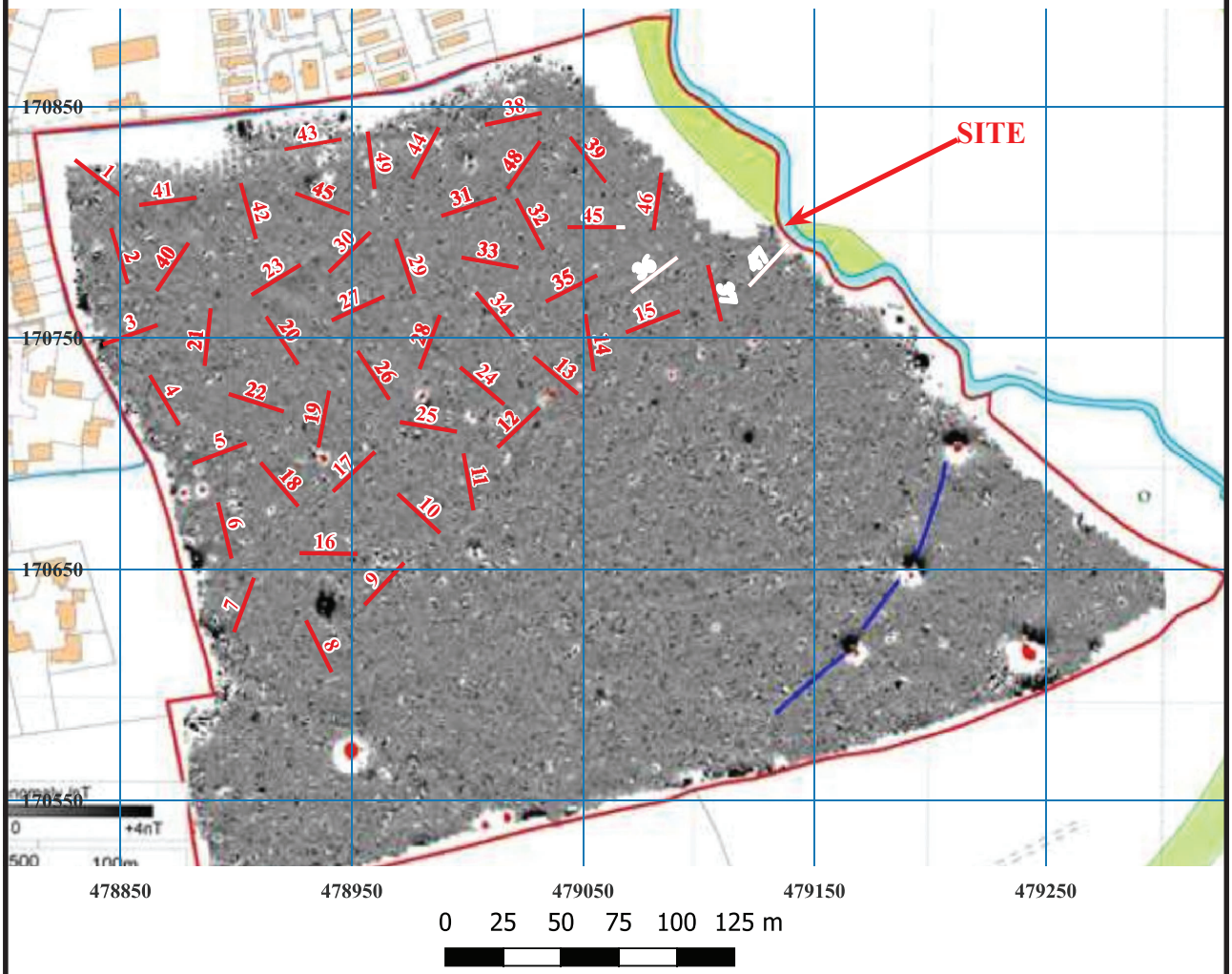

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Figure 4. Geophysical Survey results with trenches.

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