

Grove Service Station, Old Bath Road, Charvil, Berkshire

Project specification for an archaeological watching brief

25th July 2025



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Grove Service Station, Old Bath Road, Charvil, Berkshire Project specification for an archaeological watching brief

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The site comprises a 0.5ha plot of land at Old Bath Road, Charvil, Wokingham, Berkshire (SU 7815 7603).
- 1.2 Planning permission (250959) is being sought for demolition of two existing buildings and a garage and the change of use from service station to a fuel oil storage and distribution facility including the recladding of the existing building, installation of 8 no. fuel oil storage tanks, refurbishment of hardstanding, car parking and associated works.
- 1.3 Any consent gained is expected to include a condition which requires a programme of archaeological work to be carried out. It is anticipated that a watching brief, which would be carried out during groundworks due to the potential for below-ground archaeological deposits having survived on the site would be required. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2024).
- 1.4 The significance of the site stems from its location within the Loddon Valley, part of the wider archaeologically rich Thames Valley. The archaeology of the valley is relatively well known from a variety of sources such as those recorded through aerial photographs (Gates 1975), dredging of the Thames (Chappell 1987), mineral extraction (Barnes and Cleal 1995), field survey (Ford 1987; 1993) and fieldwork carried out as part of the planning process (Barnes *et al.* 1997; Preston 2003)
- 1.5 The general environs of Charvil have a number of notable sites, to the northwest is a Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial complex at Sonning, visible as cropmarks from the air (Gates 1975); recent survey work on the monument has extended knowledge of the monument and identified associated features (Dawson 2012). To the east and north east field surveying has revealed a number of sites dating from the Mesolithic through to the Saxon period, with the Mesolithic site at Whistley Green, Twyford being subsequently excavated (Harding and Richards 1993). Excavation to the northeast of the proposal site have revealed evidence of prehistoric use from the Upper Palaeolithic through to the Iron Age (Lovell and Mepham 2003; Taylor 2022).
- 1.6 Archaeological trial trenching (Mundin and Weale 2008) and a subsequent watching brief (Mundin and Weale 2009) on a plot adjacent to 4 Old Bath Road identified three linear features and a single modern gully, but with no new discoveries on an adjacent site (Manisse 2025).
- 1.7 The site's underlying geology is mapped as Seaford Chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation – Chalk with overlying superficial deposits of Alluvium – Clay, silt, sand and gravel (BGS 2000) and it lies at a height of *c.*36m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

2.0 Requirement for Work

- 2.1 As a condition of the planning consent a programme of archaeology is required, as set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2024) and the Council policies on archaeology. This entails a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.
- 2.2 These works are to take place according to a written scheme of investigation approved by the Local Planning Authority (Wokingham Borough Council) as advised by Berkshire Archaeology.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The aims of the project are to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks associated with the new development. This is expected to involve monitoring of demolition, excavation of cellular attenuation tanks, a new sewage treatment system, drainage and service trenches, foundation trenches and other intrusive groundworks.

3.2 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 as necessary such as the Solent Thames Research Agenda (Hey and Hind 2014).

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

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Archaeological deposits which are threatened by groundworks will be excavated and recorded. Sufficient time will be allowed to carry this out within the groundworkers’ schedules. If plant is used to dig i.e. the foundation and service trenches, it will be fitted with a toothless bucket. On the discovery of archaeological deposits, machine excavation will cease and the archaeological features will be dug by hand.

4.2 In general, all finds and artefacts will be retained. All but a sample of some classes of building material will be discarded after recording. The categories of artefacts to be discarded will be discussed with the recipient museum and the archaeological advisor to Wokingham Council.

4.3 Conservation on site will follow guidelines in First Aid for Finds with any other specialist conservation work subcontracted to the project conservator (see project team below).

4.4 A programme of environmental sampling will take place should sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits be located. Typically, this involves samples of 40l depending on the size of the feature examined. These will be sampled in consultation with our environmental consultants and the archaeological advisor to the Wokingham Council. Sampling will take place according to Historic England (HE 2015b).

4.5 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 Council. Human remains will be treated following the guidelines in (Mitchell and Brickley 2017) and TVAS Field Recording Manual (8th edition 2018).

4.6 All gold, silver, prehistoric base metal and any associated objects will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner and county liaison officer according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act (1996) and its 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.

4.7 In the unlikely event of an unexpected discovery of exceptional archaeological findings, such as extensive human remains or other complex archaeological deposits, this may require an additional level of mitigation to enable preservation in-situ (such as by a modification to the groundworks scheme) or further archaeological recording. The scope of this mitigation will have to be determined in consultation with the client and Berkshire Archaeology. In such circumstances a modest delay to the works on site may ensue whilst this consultation and resultant mitigation takes place.

5.0 Recording Methodology

5.1 A single context recording system will be used in accordance with the TVAS Field Recording Manual (8th edition 2018). Descriptions of individual deposits and features will be recorded on pro-forma context recording sheets.

5.2 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.

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

5.4 The locations of the trenches, and of all plans and sections will be tied into the National Grid.

5.5 The photographic record will consist of digital image. 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.

6.0 Post-fieldwork

- 6.1 Finds and sample processing and analysis will commence immediately following the completion of the fieldwork in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015a), CIIfA guidance (CIIfA 2020a) and TVAS post-excavation procedures (6th edition 2013).
- 6.2 Artefacts/ecofacts will be cleaned, conserved and prepared for long term museum storage.
- 6.3 Specialist reports will be prepared on the artefacts recovered. Particular attention will be paid to correlating the pottery recovered with local or regional fabric type sequences.
- 6.4 Specialist analysis and reporting will be carried out by the following specialist staff or consultants as appropriate:

Pottery Specialists	Dr Jane Timby, or Ms Sue Anderson, Mr Luke Barber, Dr Barbara McNee (consultants) or Dr. Cristina Mateos-Leal (TVAS)
Later Prehistoric Struck Flint	Dr Steve Ford (TVAS)
Stone Specialist	Dr Kevin Hayward (consultant)
Slag Specialist	Dr David Dungworth or Mr. Luke Barber (consultant)
Metalwork specialist	Ms Sophie Peng (TVAS) or Dr Robin Taylor (consultant)
Charred Plant Remains	Professor Mark Robinson (Oxford University) or Ms Rosalind McKenna (consultant) (TVAS)
Faunal Remains	Dr Matilda Holmes (consultant) Dr Ceri Falys (TVAS)
Human Remains	Dr Ceri Falys (TVAS)
Pollen Remains	Quest (Reading University)
Conservation	Wiltshire County Council Conservation Service

7.0 Report and Dissemination

- 7.1 A report on the results of the fieldwork should be available within two to three weeks following completion of the fieldwork.
- 7.2 The report will follow our established format, comprising a descriptive text, illustrations and catalogues in appendices as appropriate.
- 7.3 The text will address the aims and objectives of the project, 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.
- 7.4 The report will include a front sheet providing the following information:
 - Site name
 - Grid reference
 - Site activity (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
- 7.5 The illustrations will include:
 - A site location plan
 - A plan of archaeological deposits
 - Profiles/sections of excavated features

- Photographs of the fieldwork

- 7.6 Any findings even if negative will be published as a note in any round-up contributions in an appropriate journal such as *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*.
- 7.7 Both digital and paper copy of the results will be supplied to the Berkshire HER. Non-published report(s) will be made available for inspection or download on the TVAS web site. GIS shapefiles of the trench plans will be submitted to the HER.
- 7.8 A digital version of the report will be provided to the OASIS project.
- 7.9 Copies of digital images will be supplied to Berkshire HER for publicity or lecture purposes (if requested).

8.0 Archive Deposition

- 8.1 The finds and site archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015a), CIIfA guidance (CIIfA 2020a) and after consultation with the recipient museum.
- 8.2 The site and finds archive will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository or the Archaeology Data Service.
- 8.3 With the consent of the landowner, the site finds will be deposited with a local museum prepared to accept the material.

9.0 General Items

- 9.1 The project will be managed on a regular basis by a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists with an appropriate area of competence (S. Ford, A. Taylor or D. Sanchez). The fieldwork will be supervised and carried out by staff of other categories of membership of the CIIfA.
- 9.2 The project will be carried out in accordance with the CIIfA Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs (2020b), Code of Conduct (2022) and the quality control mechanisms set out in the TVAS fieldwork and post-fieldwork manuals.
- 9.3 The fieldwork and post-fieldwork will be monitored by the archaeological advisor to the Council (Berkshire Archaeology) and all reasonable access will be provided to the works. Any changes in the agreed project design will be discussed and agreed with the archaeological advisor to the Borough Council before implementation. The archaeological advisor to the Borough Council will be contacted both prior to work commencing on site, and during the fieldwork itself, to arrange monitoring, in person or remotely via telephone/video call. Five days notice will be given.
- 9.4 Safe working practices will be adopted as set out in the TVAS health and safety manual and current health and safety standards will be adhered to.
- 9.5 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.

10.0 References

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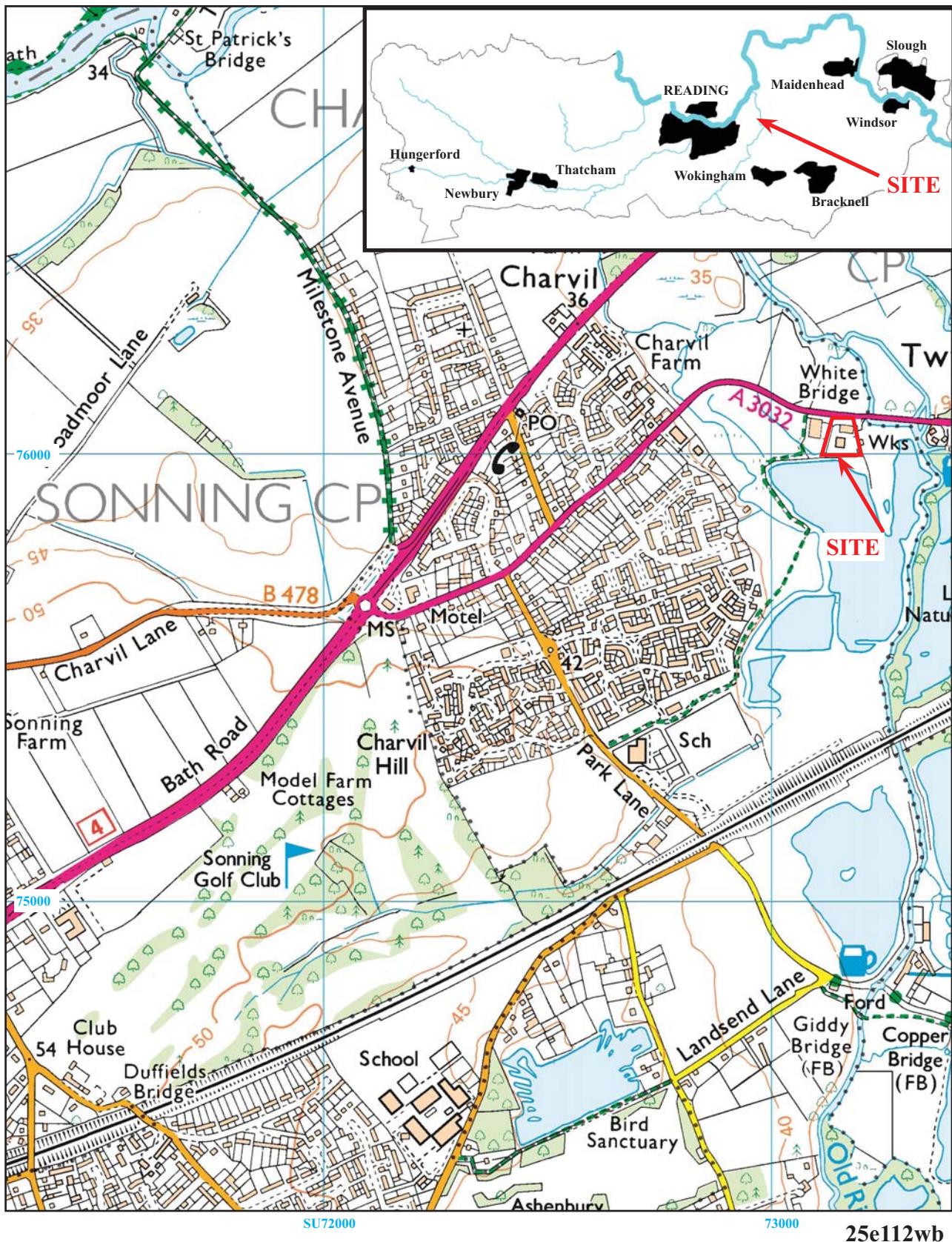
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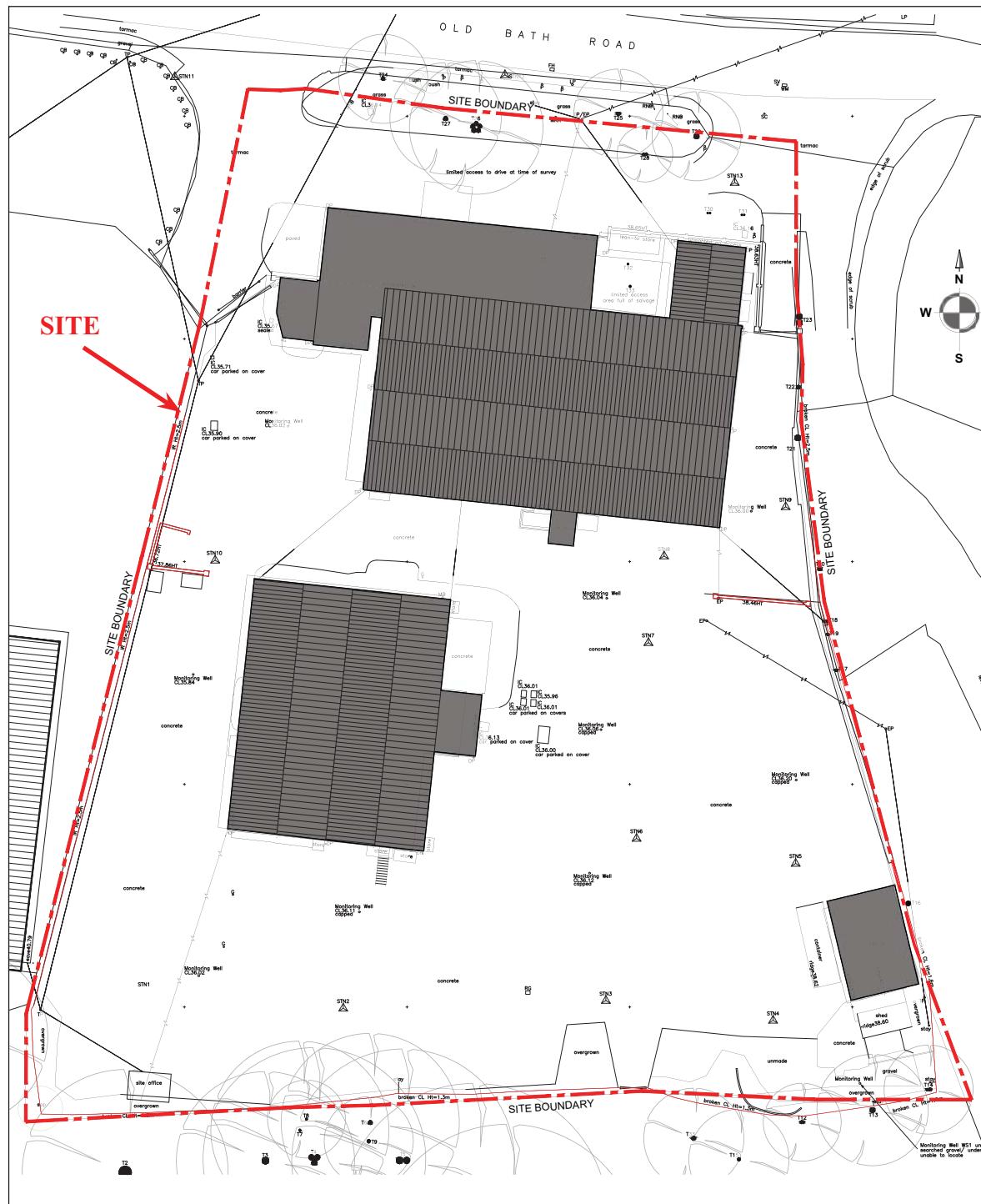
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**Grove Service Station, Old Bath Road,
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Proposal for an Archaeological Watching Brief
 Figure 1. Location of site within Charvil and Berkshire.

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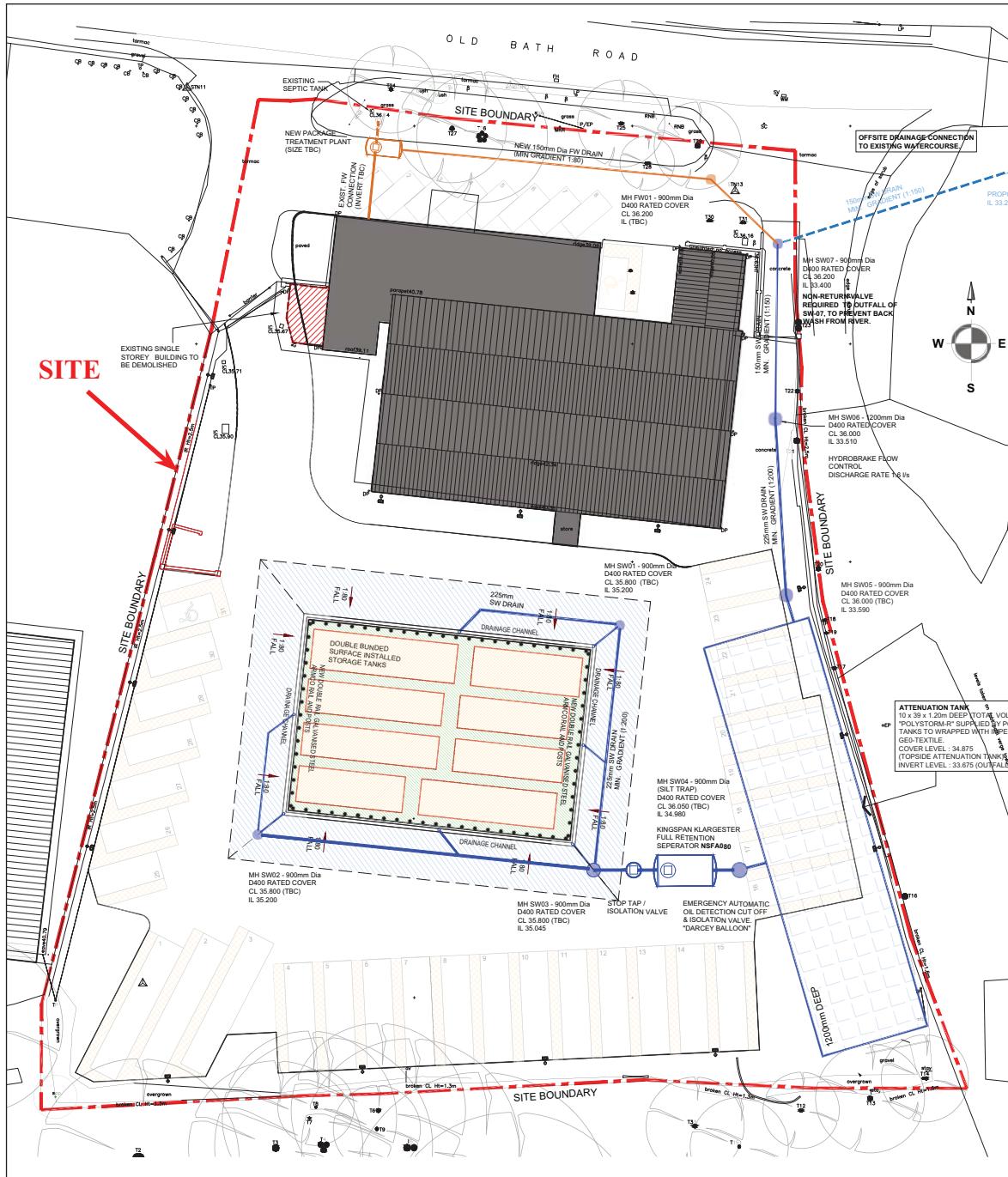
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Figure 3. Proposed Site Plan

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