

**Natural History Museum Access Road, Reading,
Berkshire**

**Written Scheme of Investigation for an
Archaeological Evaluation**

**NGR 474481 169366
(SU 74481 69366)**

Wokingham Borough Council

Planning Ref: 232995

Site Code: BHI24

ASE Project No. 240058

February 2024

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Prepared by:	Ian Hogg	Project Officer	
Reviewed and approved by:	James Alexander	Project Officer	
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, have been commissioned by RPS Consulting Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'The Client') to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of an access road for the Natural History Museum Access Road, Reading, Berkshire, hereafter referred to as 'the site'. The site is centred on National Grid Reference 474481 169366 and its location is shown in Figure 1.
- 1.2 The site comprises an irregularly shaped, portion of trackway, road, agricultural land and woodland measuring approximately 3.5Ha. It is bound to the south-west, south-east and north by agricultural land and woodland owned by the University of Reading. It is bound to the north-west by Cutbush Lane which it partly occupies.
- 1.3 The site is located at the south of Reading. The site is relatively flat at c. 45 m above Ordnance Datum. Beyond Cutbush Lane East levels rise towards Reading on higher ground, visually separated from the study site by the M4 motorway. The River Loddon runs to the south of the site from south-west to north-east.
- 1.4 According to the British Geological Survey, the bedrock geology of the study site is the London Clay Formation – Clay, Silt and Sand. Superficial deposits of Brickearth – Clay, Silt and Sand – are present throughout most of the site. In a small area to the north of St John's Wood, there are also deposits of Sand and Gravel (River Terrace Deposits 2). Historic maps suggest that gravel extraction has occurred to the north-west of the site, in an area known as Brown's Green.
- 1.5 Planning permission has been sought for the construction of an extension to the Thames Valley Science Park spine road to provide access to a proposed new building for the Natural History Museum (separate application), landscaping, surface water attenuation and other associated works (planning ref 232995). An archaeological desk-based assessment was compiled in support of the application (RPS2023) and described the site as having a low potential for archaeological remains of early prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval, and negligible potential for remains from all other period. The north-western part of the site lies within an Area of High Archaeological Potential associated with a series of cropmarks.
- 1.6 In light of these findings, it was decided to conduct a programme of archaeological evaluation to inform on the potential for further archaeological work.
- 1.7 Accordingly, this Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological trial trench evaluation of the site has been produced to satisfy the first part of

the condition. It has been prepared in accordance with relevant Standards and Guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014; 2019; 2020; 2022) and Berkshire Archaeology (2021). All work will be reported upon in line with guidelines set out in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE; Historic England 2015). It will be submitted to all parties for approval prior to the commencement of work at the site.

- 1.8 All work will be carried out in accordance with this document, as well as with the relevant Berkshire Archaeology guideline (2021) and the Standards and Guidance: Archaeological Evaluations of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014), and other codes and relevant documents of the CIfA (CIfA 2020 and 2022; CIfA 2019).
- 1.9 It should be noted that further work may be required if significant archaeological remains are found during the evaluation. In the event that further archaeological excavation is required a supplementary WSI will be prepared detailing the proposed work and submitted for approval.

2.0 Archaeological Background

- 2.1 The following archaeological background summary is drawn from the DBA (RPS 2023) and from the evaluation report for the neighbouring Natural History Museum site (Wessex Archaeology 2023; Figure 3). For the full background please refer to these documents.

Prehistoric

- 2.2 There is a general paucity of prehistoric remains within the area. Five pieces of worked flint, all in relatively fresh condition, were recovered from three trenches at Shinfield Studios (MRM18543). They are likely to be of Mesolithic or early Neolithic date, but there was very little other evidence of archaeological activity encountered during the evaluation as mentioned above.
- 2.3 Areas of cropmarks identified from historic aerial photography on the site of the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection Facility (MRM18312) were tested with both geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation, but no archaeological features were recorded.
- 2.4 The Area of High Archaeological Potential crossed by the site contained cropmarks previously interpreted as representing Late Iron Age or Early Roman settlement activity. However, subsequent geophysical survey and trial trenching, and more recently drone survey, over part or all of it did not identify any significant evidence of human land use or occupation.

- 2.5 A single struck flint of broadly prehistoric date was recovered during the recent evaluation on the neighbouring site (Wessex Archaeology 2023).

Romano-British

- 2.6 A section of Roman road (BHER MM34) is theorised to lie 350 m to the north and 420 m to the west of Site, however, it is noted in the BHER that this is based on conjectural evidence and the precise route of the road is unknown. Late Iron Age/Roman pottery was recovered during archaeological works at Shinfield Studios.
- 2.7 The recent evaluation on the neighbouring site (Wessex Archaeology 2023; Figure 3) found evidence of a possible Romano-British field system with nine ditches recorded within the trenches. Only one of these contained dating evidence and it is possible these features were not contemporary.

Early medieval and medieval

- 2.8 No archaeological finds or features dating to the early medieval period have been identified in the area. It is believed that the name Shinfield is Saxon in origin. By the publication of the Domesday Book in 1086, Shinfield had a population of fifteen households, and consisted of sixteen acres of meadow, ninety swine renders of woodland, one mill and five fisheries.
- 2.9 Arborfield, to the south of the site, is not mentioned in the Domesday Book directly, but is included in the lordship of the Bishop of Sonning. The place-name '*Edburghfeld*' may mean "the field of Hereburg" (a woman's name) or possibly derived from the Old English '*eorpburg*' meaning "earth fortification". Some sources also attribute the name to Saxon origins.
- 2.10 The River Loddon was the medieval boundary of Windsor Forest during this period, and remains the boundary between Arborfield and Shinfield parishes today.
- 2.11 Shinfield settlement is well established by the medieval period, and its historic core is situated to the west of the site. This area of the site is likely to have been an area of agricultural activity and/or woodland.
- 2.12 Probable medieval ridge and furrow earthworks were observed within the wooded area adjacent to Badger (now Cutbush) Farm (MWK1114), identified by the LPA as an Area of High Archaeological Potential.
- 2.13 Medieval documentary sources (EWK11) suggest a manor and associated settlement. The manor house was demolished in 1804 when Ducketts Farm was built. Although a number of settlement *foci* are

identified within the area, these lie off site and it is suggested that historic land-use of this area of the site is dominated by agriculture.

- 2.14 An L-shaped pond (MWK1113) of probable post-medieval date is noted (see below). That site was visited and seventeen ridges approximately 6m apart in area of orchard, with a possible headland to the east, were interpreted as pre-dating the earthworks associated with the pond (MWK1114). The Grade II listed buildings at Badger Farm are the associated sixteenth century barn and farmhouse, but the ridge and furrow may pre-date those buildings.

Post-medieval

- 2.15 Cutbush Lane East (MWK15639) is known to be at least eighteenth century in date, and it is depicted on the 1756 estate map. This map, prepared for the Earl of Fingal illustrates the site in considerable detail, and shows this area of the study site consisting of a number of arable fields, orchards and pasture.
- 2.16 An L-shaped feature representing a fishpond or possible moat (MWK1112, MWK1113) dating to the medieval or post-medieval period, is situated immediately beyond the southern limit of the site. The feature is present on the 1838 Tithe Map (Figure 3) but is not shown on the 1756 Estate Map suggesting a likely post-medieval date. That area is identified by the LPA as an Area of High Archaeological Potential.
- 2.17 Shinfield Grange, shown on the 1756 estate map, is a building built of brick and set within its own grounds (MWK15636). Post-medieval ditches, undated linear features, a pit and possible postholes were revealed during archaeological investigations on land either side of Cutbush Lane, to the east and north of Shinfield Grange (MRM18541).
- 2.18 The Earl of Fingal's 1756 Estate Map also depicts a pond to the north of Cutbush Lane East, within a triangular area of common or 'green'. However, this may represent early gravel extraction, as the area is later as Brown's Green Gravel Pit in early OS Mapping. 4.39 The 1836 Tithe Map shows the removal of field boundaries and the amalgamation of fields within the area of the site. The accompanying tithe apportionment shows that the names listed correlated strongly with those identifiable on the 1756 estate map. Many of the field names incorporate the Middle English word '*pightle*' meaning small field or enclosure.
- 2.19 Ordnance Survey mapping shows that field boundaries within this area of the site have been removed and additional buildings have been constructed at Badger Farm between the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. The 1938 OS map shows further changes in boundaries, with many now disappearing, and Badger Farm is now labelled Cutbush.

- 2.20 By 1965 most of the area comes into the ownership of the University's agricultural land holding. Between 1965 and 1975, the M4 is constructed to the north of the site, and more field boundaries are removed.

Undated

- 2.21 Two historic roadways are undated but marked on the 1756 estate map. Hollow Lane to the west of the site, and Cutbush Lane / Cutbush Lane East (MWK15639) at the north of the site. Linear cropmarks (MWK1810, MWK1809), enclosures (MWK1806, MWK1807, MWK1811), trackway features (MWK1805) and a pit cluster (MWK1808) were identified in aerial photography at the site of the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection. Geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation (see above) found no evidence for an archaeological origin for these features, and postulates that they represent variations in the natural drift geology (MWK1804).

Previous Work

- 2.22 The recent archaeological evaluation on the neighbouring site (Wessex Archaeology 2023). Nine machine dug trenches were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.40m deep. The trenches recorded *"a total of nine ditches were encountered along with a further two small pits. It was considered possible that the majority of these ditches form part of a Romano-British agricultural field system, although the only secure dating for this hypothesis was recovered in the form of 17 grams of Roman greyware in ditch 104, at the north-west end of the site. The two small pits were both encountered in the western part of the site, within Trenches 1 and 3. Unfortunately no dating evidence was recovered from either feature, but the burnt flint and charcoal deposits within their fills do suggest that the shallow features were used as refuse dumps for fire debris."*
- 2.23 Considerable investigation has occurred in the fields 200m to the east of the site, where the British Museum's ARC facility has now been constructed. It had long been suspected that these fields have archaeological potential, as a network of cropmarks had been documented within them. This included two parallel, linear cropmarks, interpreted to be a potential road (BHER MWK1805), off which were further features that were interpreted as enclosures (BHER MWK1804, MWK1805, MWK1806, MWK1807) and pits (BHER MWK1808). A geophysical survey undertaken by Wessex Archaeology found a large, curvilinear anomaly through the centre of the northern field, and a cluster of pit-like anomalies in the southern field (2018; BHER ERM2164). A full-scale evaluation was then undertaken by AOC Archaeology in 2018 (BHER ERM2230). Aside from modern ceramic field drains, no archaeological features were observed, and it is suggested that natural

variations in the geology may account for the cropmarks and geophysical anomalies.

3.0 Research Aims and Objectives

3.1 The general aims of the archaeological investigation are to ascertain:

- Whether archaeological remains are present on the site and if so to assess their location including depth below ground level, nature, date, survival, and significance;
- How they might be impacted by the development of the site;
- To enable the LPA's Archaeological Advisor to make an informed decision as to the requirement for any further archaeological work either in advance of, or during, the development.

3.2 Site specific research aims are defined as follows:

- Is there any evidence for Romano-British activity?
- Is there any evidence for medieval or post-medieval agricultural activity?

3.3 The project also has the potential to inform on the following areas of research from Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment. Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (Oxford Wessex Monograph No. 6, 2014):

Romano-British Berkshire

- Did some field systems support a number of farms and if so, were these in a formal economic relationship? Did the layout of new field systems in the first century imply a change in social organisation?

4.0 Methodology

4.1 26 trenches measuring 30m long by 1.8m wide will be excavated as shown in Figures 2-3. A contingency for a further 1% trenching is available if required following consultation between RPS Consulting and the Berkshire Archaeology (BA) Archaeology Officer.

4.2 The trenches will be accurately laid out using a GPS survey system or total station and tied into the National Grid. Some modification to the suggested trench positions may be necessary due to obstructions. Significant variations to the trench layout will be discussed with RPS Consulting and the BA Archaeological Officer.

4.3 The trenches will be scanned prior to excavation using a CAT scanner. The trenches will be excavated using a suitable mechanical excavator (360° excavator) equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.

- 4.4 Only undifferentiated topsoil, subsoil and overburden of recent origin will be removed by machine and will be kept separately. The excavation will be taken down to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the top of the underlying 'natural', whichever is uppermost. Due to Health and Safety considerations the trench will not be excavated beyond a safe working depth (generally c. 1.2m) unless suitable precautions (i.e. stepping or battering of trench edges, and /or shoring) have been implemented; the indicative depth of 1.2m may be reduced if the trench sides appear to be particularly unstable. All machining will be undertaken under the supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist.
- 4.5 On conclusion of the excavation, the spoil will be backfilled by ASE's plant. No formal reinstatement to previous condition (i.e. re-turfing) will be undertaken.
- 4.6 A Risk Assessment will be produced and agreed with the client prior to the commencement of the work.

5.0 Excavation and Recording Techniques

- 5.1 All exposed archaeological features and deposits will be cleaned by hand, planned and recorded. All discrete cut features will be sampled as a minimum by half section (i.e. 50% of feature excavated). At least 25% of any linear feature will be sectioned to produce a vertical section where practicable. A minimum 50% of structural features (beamslots, ring ditches) - actual surviving structural elements (walls, collapse/debris fields) will be exposed, cleaned and preserved for excavation in more appropriate circumstances. 50-100% domestic/industrial working features (hearths, ovens) - unless large & structural, in which case see above. All features will be planned at the scale of 1:20 in relation to the trench outline. Further plans at the scale of 1:20 and sections at the scale of 1:10 will be drawn as necessary. Plans will be drawn on plastic film. Comparative site levels will be recorded for each feature or important context with reference to an OS benchmark, or if unfeasible to an arbitrary on-site datum.
- 5.2 All archaeological features and deposits will be recorded using the standard context record sheets used by Archaeology South-East, UCL. A metal detector will be used to scan all excavated material.
- 5.3 A full photographic record comprising colour digital images will be made. The photographic record will aim to provide an overview of the excavation and the surrounding area. Each trench will be individually photographed as will representative trench sections. A representative sample of individual feature shots and sections will be taken, in addition to working shots and elements of interest (individual features, group and general shots). The photographic register will include: film number, shot number, location of shot, direction of shot and a brief description of the subject photographed.

- 5.4 The client and the BA Archaeological Officer will be informed immediately of any archaeological features or deposits worthy of preservation in situ, and generally of any high quality archaeological remains in order that this written scheme of investigation can be reviewed if necessary.
- 5.5 The strategy for sampling archaeological and environmental deposits and structures encountered during any stage of archaeological fieldwork (which can include soils, timbers, animal bone and human burials) will be developed with reference to English Heritage guidelines for environmental archaeology (English Heritage 2011) and waterlogged wood (English Heritage 2010) and in consultation with the English Heritage regional advisor or relevant specialists. Samples will be collected from suitable excavated contexts, including dated/datable buried soils, well-sealed slowly silting features, sealed hearths, sealed features containing evident carbonised remains, peats, water-logged or cess deposits.
- 5.6 Bulk soil samples (of 40 litres where possible or 100% of the context if smaller) will be taken to target the recovery of plant remains (including wood charcoal and macrobotanicals), fish, bird, small mammal and amphibian bone, and small artefacts. Specialist samples may also be taken to target recovery of pollen (using monolith tins), fish and small bone, molluscs, foraminifera, parasites and insects (in small <20 litre samples) or large mammal bones and marine molluscs (in large samples of ~80-100 litres). When taken, large samples will be extracted wholesale from deposits to maximise the range of bone recovered. As a general rule waterlogged wood specimens will be photographed and recorded in detail in their original location prior to being lifted or sampled for more detailed assessment. Other scientific dating and geoarchaeological techniques will be considered and employed where appropriate.
- 5.7 In the event that human remains are discovered the BA Archaeological Officer will be informed. No human remains will be lifted at evaluation stage unless it is unavoidable and only with the appropriate licence from the Ministry of Justice.
- 5.8 Finds believed to fall potentially within the statutory definition of Treasure, as defined by the Treasure Act 1996 (amended 2003), shall be reported to the local Finds Liaison Officer. Should the find's status as treasure be confirmed the Coroner, the landowner and the County Archaeologist will also be informed. A record shall be provided to the Coroner and to the County Archaeologist of the date and circumstances of discovery, the identity of the finder, and the exact location of the find(s) (OS map reference to within 1 metre, and find spot(s) marked onto the site plan).

6.0 Processing and identification of recovered material

- 6.1 All pottery, bone and worked flint recovered from the excavation will be washed and marked with an appropriate code to identify the site and context. Most ceramic and other building material (not including significant diagnostic material) and burnt flint will be identified, counted, weighed and discarded. Samples will be retained as appropriate. Finds will be bagged in polythene bags according to type and context.
- 6.2 The lithic and ceramic finds will be identified by specialists within Archaeology South-East, and preliminary identification of faunal remains may be undertaken if the nature of the deposits justifies such study. All finds in an unstable condition will be stabilized using passive conservation techniques where appropriate before being deposited with the receiving museum.
- 6.3 Environmental samples will be processed using tank flotation unless considered detrimental to the samples or recovery rate (such as for waterlogged samples). Bulk samples will target recovery of plant remains (charcoal and macrobotanicals), fish, bird, small mammal and amphibian bone, and small artefacts. Waterlogged samples will be wet sieved through nested sieves and stored in wet, cool conditions or dried if considered an appropriate form of conservation for the remains. Specialist samples may also be taken from dry or waterlogged contexts. Such samples will target recovery of pollen (using monolith tins), molluscs, foraminifera, parasites and insects. Larger samples (80-100 litres) will be extracted wholesale from deposits rich in marine molluscs and large mammal bones. As a general rule waterlogged wood specimens will be recorded in detail in their original location. If removed they will be cleaned, photographed and a thin section sample will be taken for identification. Specimens will either be stored in wet cool conditions or dried if considered appropriate for the material. In all instances deposits with clear intrusive material shall be avoided.

7.0 Reporting

- 7.1 Reporting will be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out in the *Berkshire Archaeology General Standards for Historic Environment Projects (2021)*.
- 7.2 Within six weeks of the completion of the fieldwork a full report on the results of the field evaluation will be submitted. It will include the local geology and archaeological evidence. It will describe the work undertaken and results of elements described above. It will include a description of archaeological features and tabulated details of finds from each context. A list of environmental samples and any geoarchaeological, palaeoenvironmental or scientific dating samples will be included. The report will set out the potential of geoarchaeological, palaeoenvironmental or scientific dating samples for further study but

this will not be undertaken as part of this phase of works. The report will include a plan showing the trench locations. Further plans, sections and photographs of features located and excavated will be included as necessary.

- 7.3 A draft report will be submitted to the client in the first instance, then to the BA Archaeological advisor for approval. Once any necessary changes have been made, the approved final report will be submitted to the client and should be passed to the local planning authority with a further copy submitted to Berkshire Archaeology so that the results may be added to the Historic Environment Record. A short summary of the work will be prepared for the relevant local archaeological journal.
- 7.4 A further digital copy of the report (including plans, illustrations and photographs) will be supplied to Berkshire Historic Environment Record in pdfa format.

8.0 Preparation and deposition of the finds and archive

- 8.1 The site archive will be assembled in accordance with the guidelines set out in: 'Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice' (AAF 2011); 'A Standard and Guide to best practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe' (EAC 2013); and 'Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections' (SMA 2020).
- 8.2 Permission will be sought from the landowner to deposit finds and paper archive in an appropriate local museum.

9.0 Health and Safety

- 9.1 A risk assessment for the project will be prepared prior to the commencement of work. All relevant health and safety regulations will be adhered to.

10.0 Insurance

- 10.1 Archaeology South-East is insured against claims for: employer's liability to the value of £50,000,000 each and every loss, any one occurrence; primary public/products liability to the value of £50,000,000 any one occurrence and in the aggregate for products liability, with an extension for no-fault compensation up to £15,000,000 in the aggregate; professional indemnity to the value of £15,000,000 any one occurrence and in the aggregate.

11.0 Specialists to be used as necessary:

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------------|---|
| 11.1 | Animal bone including fish | Emily Johnson, Hayley Forsyth-McGee (ASE) |
| | CBM | Rae Regensberg (ASE) |
| | Charcoal and waterlogged wood | Lucy Allott, Angela Vitolo (ASE). |
| | Clay Tobacco Pipe | Elke Raemen (ASE) |
| | Coins | Trista Clifford (ASE) |
| | Conservation | Alastair Threlfall (ASE) |
| | Fired Clay | Stephen Patton, Trista Clifford, Elke Raemen (ASE) |
| | Geoarchaeology | Matt Pope, Ed Blinkhorn, Letty Ingre, Alice Dowsett (ASE) |
| | Geological material/worked stone | Luke Barber (external) |
| | Glass | Elke Raemen (ASE) |
| | Human bone inc cremated bone | Lucy Sibun (ASE) |
| | Macro-plant remains | Lucy Allott, Angela Vitolo, Elsa Neveu (ASE) |
| | Marine shell | Elke Raemen (ASE); David Dunkin (external) |
| | Metalwork | Trista Clifford, Elke Raemen (ASE) |
| | Pottery, prehistoric and Roman | Anna Doherty, Kayt Hawkins, Stephen Patton (ASE) |
| | Pottery, post-Roman | Sue Anderson (external), Helen Walker (external: Essex), Luke Barber (external) |
| | Registered Finds | Elke Raemen, Trista Clifford (ASE) |
| | Slag | Luke Barber (external); Trista Clifford (ASE) |
| | Treasure administration | Trista Clifford (ASE) |
| | Worked Flint | Karine Le Hégarat (ASE) |
- 11.2 These are the most commonly required specialisms. Should other specialists be required they will be appointed as necessary to the satisfaction of ASE Quality Assurance procedures and those of BA.

12.0 Monitoring

- 12.1 Provision will be made at all stages of the project for the client and the BA Archaeological Officer to monitor progress and standards. Adequate provision will be made available by ASE for the BA Archaeological Officer to make site monitoring visits at agreed and specified times or alternative arrangements made for remote monitoring.

References

Archaeological Archives Forum 2011, *Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice*

ASE 2023 *Post-Excavation Manual 2: POST-EXCAVATION ANALYSIS AND REPORTING GUIDELINES*

Berkshire Archaeology 2021 *General Standards for Historic Environment Projects*

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ClfA, 2019. *Selection Toolkit for Archaeological Archives*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

ClfA, 2020 (revision), *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

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<https://www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa>
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Europae Archaeologiae Consilium 2013, *A Standard and Guide to best practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe*

Historic England 2015: *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*

Historic England 2010: *Waterlogged Wood: Guidelines on the recording, sampling, conservation and curation of waterlogged wood*. English Heritage

Historic England 2011 *Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (second edition)*

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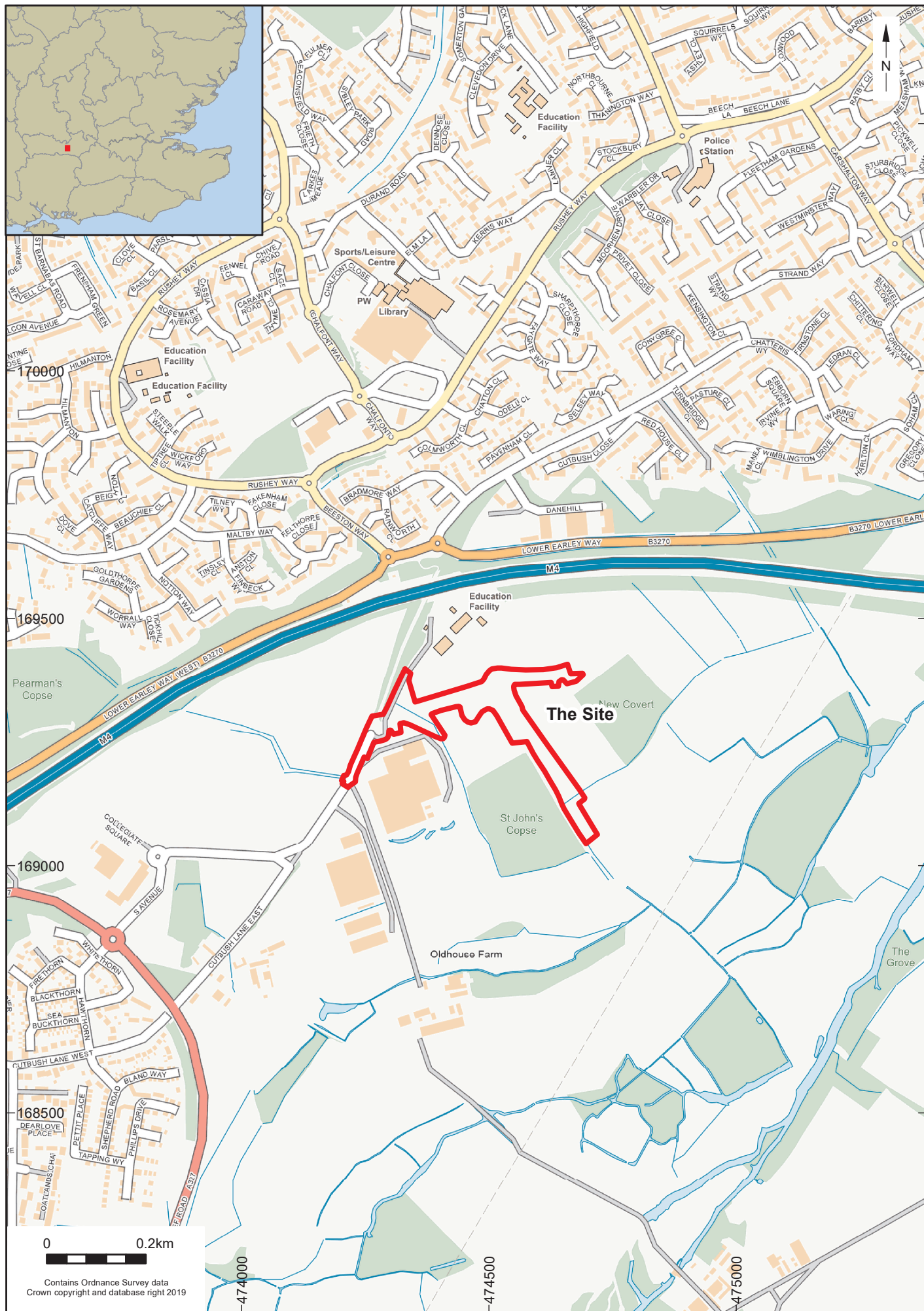
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Archaeology South-East

6th February 2024



© Archaeology South-East		Natural History Museum Access Road, Reading	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 240058	Feb 2024	Site location	
Report No:WSI	Drawn by: APL		

