

Woollam Park, North St. Albans, Hertfordshire
Archaeological Evaluation Written Scheme of Investigation
July 2025

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Report

Archaeological Evaluation
Written Scheme of Investigation

Site

Woollam Park, North St. Albans, Hertfordshire

Client

Hallam Land Management

Planning Authority

St Albans City and District Council

Grid Reference

TL 15366 09775

Prepared By

Becky Ryan BA MCIfA

Approved By

Dr Rob Smith MCIfA

Report Status

FINAL

Date

July 2025

Orion Reference

PN1875/Eval WSI/1

QA Ref

RQA-01121

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1.0 Introduction

Background

1.1 This document is a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for undertaking a programme of archaeological evaluation at land at Woollam Park, north of St. Albans, Hertfordshire (hereinafter referred to as the 'Site').

1.2 The site is located to the north of St. Albans and comprises enclosed agricultural land, immediately east of the A1081 Harpendon Road, with Sandridgebury Lane running through its centre. It is centred on TL 15366 09775 (Figure 1). The solid geology comprises the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation which is partly overlain with superficial deposits of Clay-with-flints Formation and the Kesgrave Catchment Subgroup (BGS 2025).

1.3 A hybrid planning application has been submitted for full planning permission for the relocation and replacement of existing playing fields and erection of pavilion annex and outline planning application for the construction of up to 1000 new homes, care homes, primary school, green infrastructure, new access and alterations to existing access (St. Albans City and District Council ref: 5/2024/2271).

1.4 Comments on the application have been provided by the St Albans Archaeological Advisor (hereinafter referred to as the "Archaeological Advisor") which recommended that a programme of archaeological trial trenching follow by an open area excavation of significant deposits identified is required. The following conditions were recommended to be attached to planning permission, should it be granted:

1a No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until a programme of archaeological investigation has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been submitted by the applicant, for approval by the Local Planning Authority.

1b No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the completion of the programme of archaeological evaluation identified in the WSI defined in Part 1 and confirmed by the archaeological advisors to the Local Planning Authority.

1c No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the submission of a mitigation WSI detailing the excavation/ preservation strategy informed by the trial trenching for approval by the Local Planning Authority.

1d No development or preliminary groundworks can commence on those areas containing archaeological deposits until the satisfactory completion of fieldwork, as detailed in the mitigation WSI, and approved by the Archaeological Advisors to the Local Planning Authority.

2. Publication and Dissemination Following the completion of the fieldwork and the post-excavation assessment in Condition 1, appropriate resources will be agreed with the Local Planning Authority for the post-excavation project generated by the archaeological work. This will include all necessary works up to and including an appropriate publication and archiving and will include an agreed timetable and location for that publication. Consideration should also be given to the enhancement/promotion of Beech Bottom Dyke.

1.5 Further comment on the scope of evaluation has been provided by the Archaeological Advisor on 08/07/2025 which advised that a 4% sample of the site should be evaluated, with an additional 1% being available for extra trenches, or the extension of existing trenches. Trenches should be 30m x 2m.

1.6 A Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (Orion Heritage 2024) and geophysical survey (SUMO 2024) have been carried out for the site. These reports provide comprehensive archaeological baseline data and should be read in conjunction with this WSI.

1.7 In summary:

- The desk-based assessment concluded there was a low-medium potential for prehistoric and Roman remains and a low potential for archaeological remains dating to all other periods;
- The geophysical survey did not identify responses interpreted of being definite archaeological interest although response of uncertain origin cannot be discounted of archaeological origin, although the majority are likely due to natural and agricultural processes.

1.8 The scope of any mitigation works will be informed by the evaluation trial-trenching results. A separate Mitigation Strategy will be prepared to scope those works, should they be required.

1.9 This document conforms to the requirements of current national and local planning policy (including *National Planning Policy Framework 2024*). It has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice, and the appropriate national and local standards and guidelines, including:

- *Management of Recording Projects in the Historic Environment: MORPHE* (English Heritage 2006);
- *Code of Conduct* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists [‘CIfA’] Revised October 2022);
- *CIfA 2023 Standard for Archaeological Evaluation*
- *CIfA 2023 Universal Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*

2.0 Aims and Objectives

2.1 The principal aims of the archaeological investigation are to:

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains;
- Determine the character, extent, date, complexity, integrity, state of preservation and quality of any archaeological remains present, therefore ensuring their preservation by record; and
- To provide robust baseline information to inform the scoping of a mitigation strategy, should this be required.

2.2 The general objectives are to ensure:

- The protection and recording of archaeological assets discovered during the archaeological works;
- That any below-ground archaeological deposits exposed are promptly identified; and
- The recording of archaeological remains, to place this record in its local context and to make this record available.

2.3 Further, more detailed, research aims may be generated from the results of the evaluation and specifically in relation to the Archaeological Strategy for the East of England Regional Research Framework These will be reviewed during an on-site meeting with the Archaeological Advisor.

3.0 Archaeological Background

- 3.1 A Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (Orion Heritage 2024) has been completed for the site which utilised a 1km search area for data from the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). The bracketed numbers below refer to the HER reference numbers.
- 3.2 Evidence of prehistoric activity across the search area comprises the find spots of Palaeolithic flint tools (1052) and handaxe (13540), as well as an assemblage of Neolithic worked flint (9607). The site lies c. 250m north of the Iron Age territorial boundary known as Beech Bottom Dyke (1019136), thought to be the boundary of a substantial estate and other evidence of Iron Age activity includes features and features north of the dyke (29870) and the find spot of a cooper alloy mount (24875), although this may also date to the medieval period.
- 3.3 The site is located c. 1.8km north of the Roman town of *Verulamium*, with the site being located to the east of Watling Street, although the road from *Verulamium* to Braughing passes c. 100m to the south of the site, as does a possible crossing of the road to Colchester with Beech Bottom (14627). An assemblage of tile (656) may suggest the presence of Roman building. Other evidence of Roman activity comprises the find spots of pottery (30061, 20708, 10722), coins (14549, 19542, 29874) and a brooch (19542).
- 3.4 Evidence of early medieval and medieval activity includes an area of wastes (12409), woodland earthworks (16528) and the find spot of a strap-end (28864).
- 3.5 Post-medieval to modern assets recorded within the search area include Childwickbury Park and Garden (9568), the 19th century estate of Marshalswick (15775) as well examples of numerous industrial and agricultural assets.
- 3.6 Cartographic evidence indicates the site has remained in largely agricultural use from at least the 19th century.
- 3.7 Fieldwalking undertaken across the site recorded 70 sherds of pottery, eight fragments of iron and 2265 fragments of undiagnostic ceramic building material, although no concentrations of material were indicative of sub-surface features.
- 3.8 The geophysical survey did not identify responses which were interpreted as definite archaeological interest, although numerous trends and discrete responses are of uncertain origin. Although the uncertain anomalies are likely of agricultural or natural origin, an archaeological origin cannot be ruled out (SUMO 2024).

4.0 Methodology

Programme of Archaeological Works

4.1 The archaeological programme of works will comprise:

- A 4% sample archaeological trial-trench evaluation, comprising the excavation of 335 trenches, each measuring 30 m long x 2 m wide; the evaluation trial-trench locations are shown on Fig. 2;
- A 1% contingency; and
- Post-excavation research, analysis, report and archive production.

4.2 Forty trenches will be undertaken in Phase 1, with the remainder undertaken as a second phase of work.

4.3 If required, prior to implementation of the archaeological programme of works, the appointed archaeological contractor will produce a detailed document specifying the methodology, including for example the sampling strategies and specialist personnel to be employed. All work will be undertaken to the satisfaction of the Archaeological Advisor.

4.4 The trenches will be backfilled after sign off by the Archaeological Advisor.

Recording

4.5 The areas subject to archaeological investigation will be accurately tied into the National Grid, preferably by GPS and will be located onto a 1: 2,500 map of the area.

4.6 Topsoil and subsoil will be machine-excavated using a flat toothless bucket under continuous archaeological supervision to expose the uppermost horizon of archaeological remains or, where absent, the upper interface of geological deposits. Topsoil and subsoil will be stockpiled separately and trenches will be backfilled in reverse order.

4.7 The excavated trenches will be cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features and a base plan will be produced at a suitable scale using a Global Positioning System ('GPS').

4.8 All structures, deposits and finds will be recorded according to accepted professional standards and to sufficiently characterise and date them. This may include half-sectioning small pits and post-holes, quarter sectioning pits larger than 1m, and excavating a 1m sample of linear features. Complex archaeological deposits will not be sampled until a methodology is agreed with the Archaeological Advisor.

4.9 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features exposed or excavated will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets. Sample recording sheets, sample registers, finds recording sheets, access catalogues, and photo record cards will also be used.

- 4.10 Plans indicating the location of all archaeological features encountered will be drawn at an appropriate scale. The location and extent of archaeological features will be recorded by GPS.
- 4.11 Archaeological features will be plotted on an overall plan at a scale of either 1:100 or 1:50. Areas of significant remains or areas of complex stratigraphy will be planned in greater detail at 1:20 or 1:10 scale as appropriate. Plans and sections will include context numbers and Ordnance Datum ('OD') spot heights for all principal strata and features.
- 4.12 A digital photographic record of the project will be maintained. The images will illustrate the detail and context of the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the progress of the programme of archaeological works.

Finds and Samples

- 4.13 A high priority will be given to dating any finds exposed. All artefactual and ecofactual material revealed during the excavation will be retained for recording and assessment and, where appropriate, further analysis and will be treated in accordance with the ClfA *Guidelines for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological material* ([revised edition] 2014).
- 4.14 Environmental samples up to 40 litres in volume will be taken from suitable deposits. A sub-sample of the most productive looking samples will be selected by the archaeological contractor's environmental specialist for processing, sorting, assessment and discussion in the evaluation report, with a statement as to the potential for further analysis. The Regional Science Advisor for Historic England will be consulted, as appropriate.
- 4.15 All finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guidelines set out in the UK Institute for Conservation's *Conservation Guideline No 2* (1983). Appropriate guidelines set out in the Museums and Galleries Commission's *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (1991) will also be followed.
- 4.16 Should finds and features be made that might constitute 'Treasure' under the definition of the *Treasure Act* (1996), these will, if possible, be archaeologically excavated and removed to a safe place. Such finds will also be reported immediately to the local coroner (within 14 days, in accordance with the Act).
- 4.17 Any human remains that are discovered will initially be left in-situ, covered and protected. If removal is necessary, this will comply with the relevant legislation, any Ministry of Justice and local environmental health regulations, and the appropriate Historic England advice.

Report and Archive

- 4.18 Details of style and format will be determined by the archaeological contractor. In any event, it will include:

- A summary of the project's background
- Description and illustration of the site location
- A methodology of the works undertaken
- Plans and reports of all documentary and other research undertaken
- A description of the project's results
- An interpretation of the results in the appropriate context
- A summary of the contents of the project archive and its location (including summary catalogues of finds and samples)
- A site location plan at an appropriate scale on an Ordnance Survey, or equivalent, base-map
- A plan showing the location of the trenches and exposed archaeological features and deposits in relation to the site boundaries
- Plans of each trench, or part of trench, in which archaeological features are recognised along with adequate OD spot height information. These should be at an appropriate scale to allow the nature of the features exposed to be shown and understood. Plans must show the orientation of trenches in relation to north; Section drawing locations will be shown on these plans. Archaeologically sterile areas need not be illustrated unless this can provide information on the development of the site stratigraphy or show palaeoenvironmental deposits that have influenced the site stratigraphy
- Section drawings of trenches and features, with OD heights, at scales appropriate to the stratigraphic detail to be shown and must show the orientation of the drawing in relation to north/south/east/west. Section drawings should also illustrate the stratigraphy adjacent to the feature for distance of at least 1m;
- Section drawings through features should be undertaken wherever possible at the edge of the trench to illustrate the overlying stratigraphy and depth below topsoil. If this is not possible then the depth of topsoil and over burden will need to be projected onto the section drawing
- Archaeologically sterile trenches need not be illustrated unless they can provide information on the development of the site stratigraphy or show palaeoenvironmental deposits that have influenced the site stratigraphy
- Detailed plans of areas in which archaeological features are recognised along with adequate OD spot height information. These should be at an appropriate scale to allow the nature of the features exposed to be shown and understood. Plans must show the orientation of north. Section drawing locations must be shown on these plans
- Site matrices where appropriate
- Photographs showing the general site layout and exposed significant features and deposits that are referred to in the text. All photographs should contain appropriate scales, the size of which will be noted in the illustration's caption
- A consideration of evidence within its wider context
- A summary table and descriptive text showing the features, classes and numbers of artefacts recovered and soil profiles with interpretation
- Specialist assessment or analysis reports were undertaken
- An evaluation of the methodology employed and the results obtained (i.e. a confidence rating).

4.19 The report will include a finds report, including: all pottery, glass and clay tobacco pipes discovered during the works, as well as all other artefacts that may be discovered. A specialist report on all animal or human bone discovered during the excavation will be included. Pottery and ceramic building material will be recorded by sherd count and

weight, by ware type, and if appropriate, from within context groups, in line with the relevant fabric series.

- 4.20 The discussion of the archaeological potential of the site will include reference to the potential indicated by finds and environmental evidence.
- 4.21 A digital copy of the report will be submitted to St Albans City and District Council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the archaeological programme of works. A digital copy of the report will be provided to the Historic Environment Record ('HER') and will also be uploaded as part of the Archaeology Data Service Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations ('ADR OASIS') database record.
- 4.22 The site archive, to include all project records and cultural material produced by the archaeological works, is to be prepared in accordance with guidance issued by the Archaeological Archives Forum ('AAF') (*Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* [Brown 2011]). An accession code from the relevant Museum will be obtained prior to the deposition of the archive.
- 4.23 The archive will also be prepared in line with the CfA *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* ([revised edition] 2014) and in consultation with the relevant Museums Service.

Consideration of Outreach and Engagement

- 4.24 It is considered that outreach and engagement is not appropriate for this phase of archaeological investigation due to the uncertainty of archaeological remains being present on site.
- 4.25 Archaeological reports will be made publicly accessible via the County HER and via OASIS.
- 4.26 This approach to outreach will be reviewed should archaeological remains be recorded on the site which require mitigation excavation.

Public Benefit

- 4.27 Whether or not there is a public outreach programme or not for this piece of archaeological investigation, all archaeological investigation have an intrinsic public benefit through the furthering of archaeological knowledge and understanding. This even applies where an evaluation has negative results as the absence of archaeology is an important factor in understanding how people lived and interacted with the landscape in the past.

5.0 Timetable and Personnel

- 5.1 The first phase of 40 trenches will be undertaken in September, with the remainder of trenches to be completed in a second phase of work, date to be confirmed.
- 5.2 Canterbury Archaeological Trust have been instructed to undertake the work as set out in this Written Scheme of Investigation. Tania Wilson MA MCIfA will act as the Project Manager and Katie Potter BA the site supervisor. The proposed specialists are listed below:
- CAT Finds and Archive Manager, Osteoarchaeologist – Adelina Teoaca PCIfA.
 - CAT Environmental Manager – Enid Allison B.Sc, D. Phil, MCIfA.
 - CAT Roman Pottery – Martha Carter BA (Hons) MA.
 - CAT Registered Finds – Rich Best
 - External specialists:
 - Prehistoric Pottery – Dr Barbara McNee
 - Post-Roman Pottery & CBM – Luke Barber
- 5.3 The archaeological works will be undertaken under the overall supervision of Rob Bourn (Managing Director, Orion Heritage). Rob is a ClfA Member and Orion Heritage is a Registered Archaeological Organisation with ClfA.
- 5.4 Curriculum Vitae of key personnel will be provided to the Archaeological Advisor in advance of the archaeological works commencing, if required.

6.0 Monitoring

- 6.1 The aim of monitoring is to ensure that the archaeological works are undertaken within the limits set out in this WSI, and to the satisfaction of St Albans City and District Council.
- 6.2 Rob Bourn (Managing Director, Orion Heritage) will monitor the implementation of the archaeological works on behalf of the developers.
- 6.3 Representatives from St Albans City and District will be free to visit the site by prior arrangement to assess the work being undertaken on site against the methodology detailed in this specification.
- 6.4 Any alterations to this document should be agreed in writing with the relevant parties prior to commencement of on-site works, or at the earliest available opportunity thereafter.

7.0 Other Matters

Contractor

- 7.1 The field team deployed by the contractor will include only full time professional archaeological staff. All staff in supervisory positions should be members of the CifA at the appropriate level.
- 7.2 The composition of the project team must be detailed and agreed in advance with Orion Heritage (this is to include any subcontractors).

Communication

- 7.3 All queries and communications are to be directed through Orion Heritage. No comment is to be made about this Specification or project to the media or other parties.

Copyright

- 7.4 It is recognised that the copyright of written, graphic and photographic records and the report rests with the originating body. However, Orion Heritage and their client require an agreement to facilitate the copying and use of any or all materials resulting from this project.

Codes of Practice

- 7.6 The following statutory provisions and codes of practice are to be adhered to where relevant:

- All statutory provisions and by-laws relating to the work in question, especially the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct; and
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology.

Variations

- 7.7 Variations to the Specification or Project Design that the contractor may wish to make must be approved, in advance, by Orion Heritage and the Archaeological Advisor.

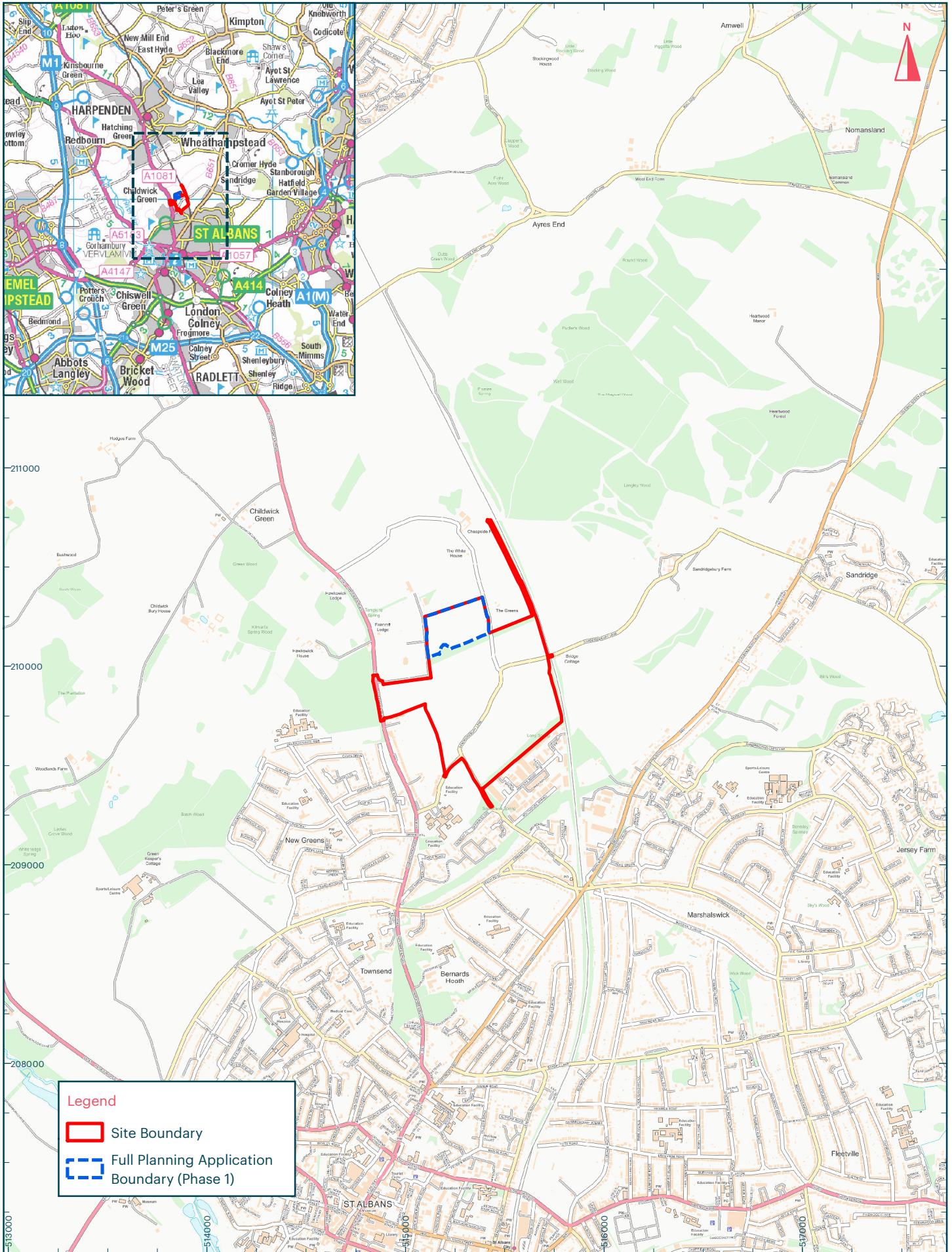
Insurance

- 7.8 Both Orion Heritage and the nominated archaeological contractor can produce evidence of Public Liability, Professional Indemnity Insurance and/or general 'all risk' insurance.

Health & Safety

- 7.9 All works will follow the *Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)*, applicable regulations and codes of practice.
- 7.10 All archaeological staff will undertake their operations with safe working practices.
- 7.11 All staff will be made aware of the hazards and any necessary measures which need to be taken regarding those hazards.
- 7.12 A site-specific Risk Assessment will be prepared and submitted, if requested.

- APABE 2017 Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England
- Brown D H 2011 Archaeological Archives A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation
- CifA 2020 Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives
- CifA, 2022 Code of Conduct.
- CifA 2023a Standard for archaeological field evaluation
- CifA 2023b Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation
- East of England Regional Research Framework -
<https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>
- Historic England 2011 Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (2nd ed).
- Historic England 2015a Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment
- Historic England 2015b Digital Images Capture and File Storage
- Orion Heritage 2024 *Woollam Park, North St Albans, Herts: Heritage Desk-Based Assessment*
- Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993 Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections.
- SUMO 2024 *Geophysical Survey Report: Woolam Park, North St Albans, Herts*
- United Kingdom Institute for Conservation 1983, Conservation Guidelines No.2
- United Kingdom Institute for Conservation 1990, Guidance for Archaeological Conservation Practice







Title:
Figure 1: Site Location

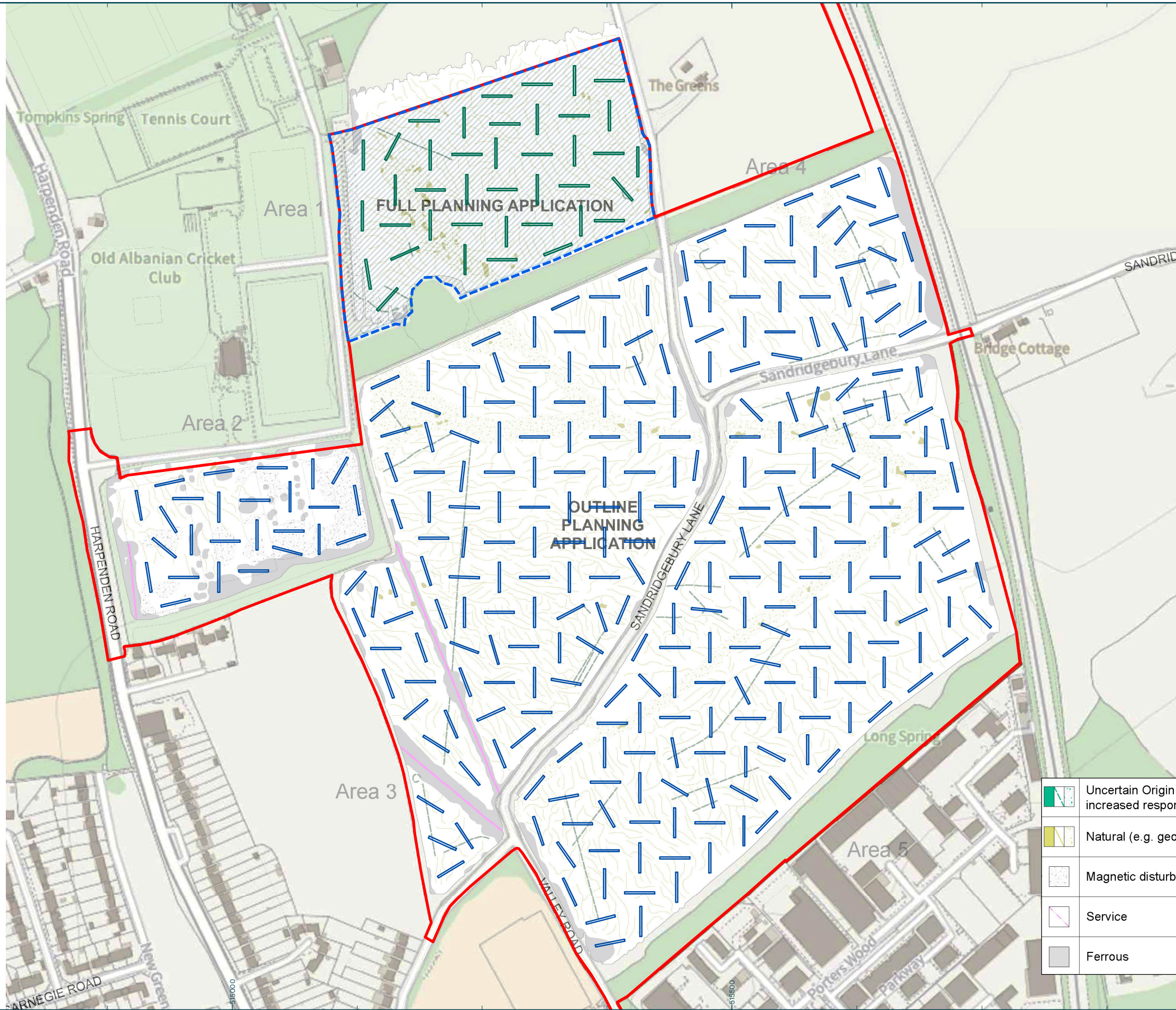
Address:
Woollam Park, North St Albans






Scale at A4: 1:25,000



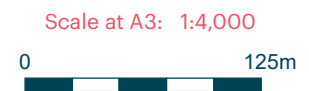
Legend

-  Full Planning Application Boundary (Phase 1)
-  Site Boundary
-  Proposed Trench Location (Phase 1)
-  Proposed Trench Location (Phase 2)

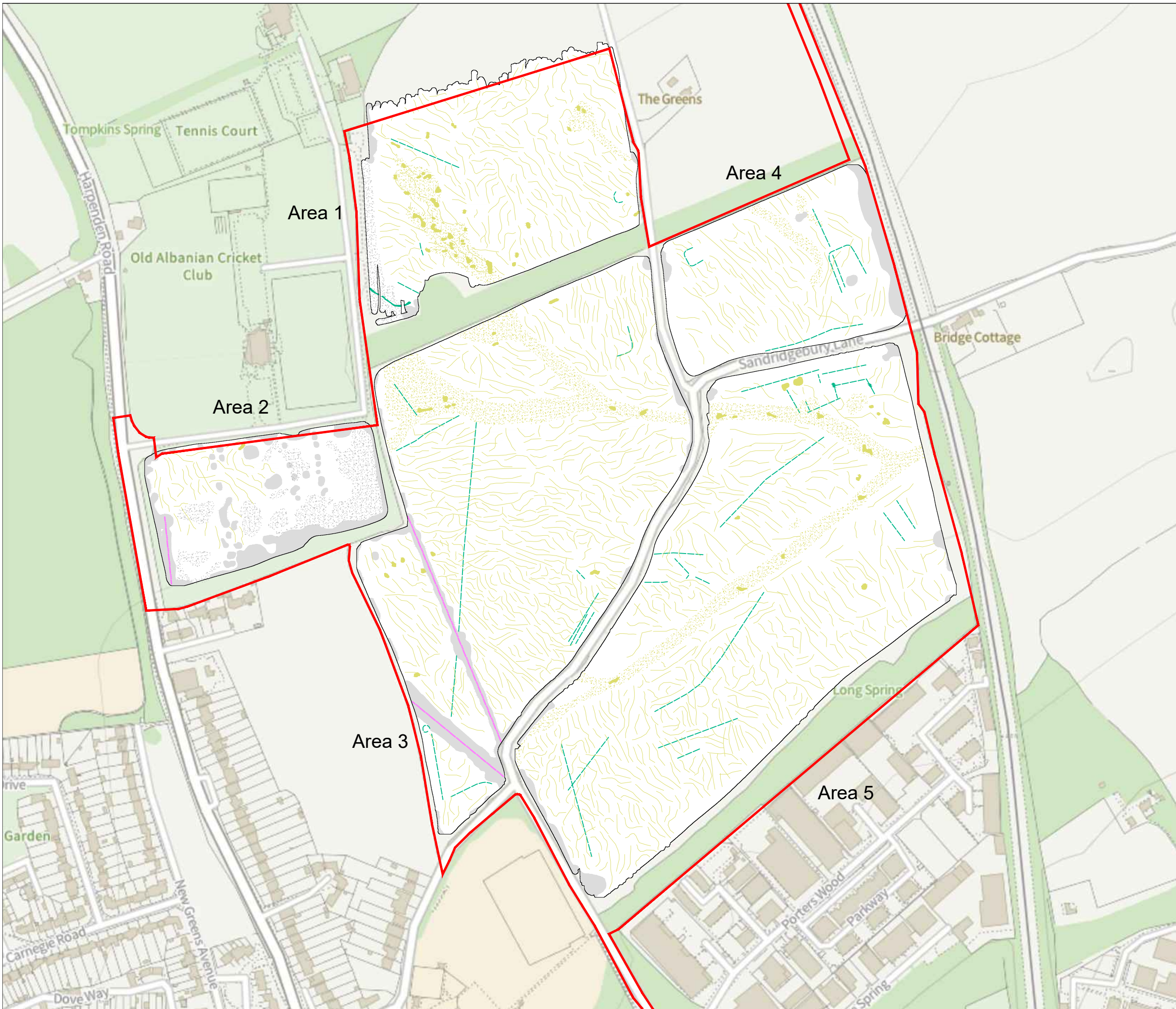


	Uncertain Origin (discrete anomaly / trend / increased response)
	Natural (e.g. geological / pedological)
	Magnetic disturbance
	Service
	Ferrous






Title:
Figure 2: Trench Layout Plan
Address:
Woollam Park, North St Albans



Geophysical Survey Interpretation Figure (SUMO 2024)



KEY

	Uncertain Origin (discrete anomaly / trend / increased response)
	Natural (e.g. geological / pedological)
	Magnetic disturbance
	Service
	Ferrous



Title: Magnetometer Survey - Interpretation

Client: Orion Heritage Ltd

Project: 18646 - Woolam Park, North St Albans, Herts

Scale: 0 metres 200
1:4000 @ A3

Fig No: 04