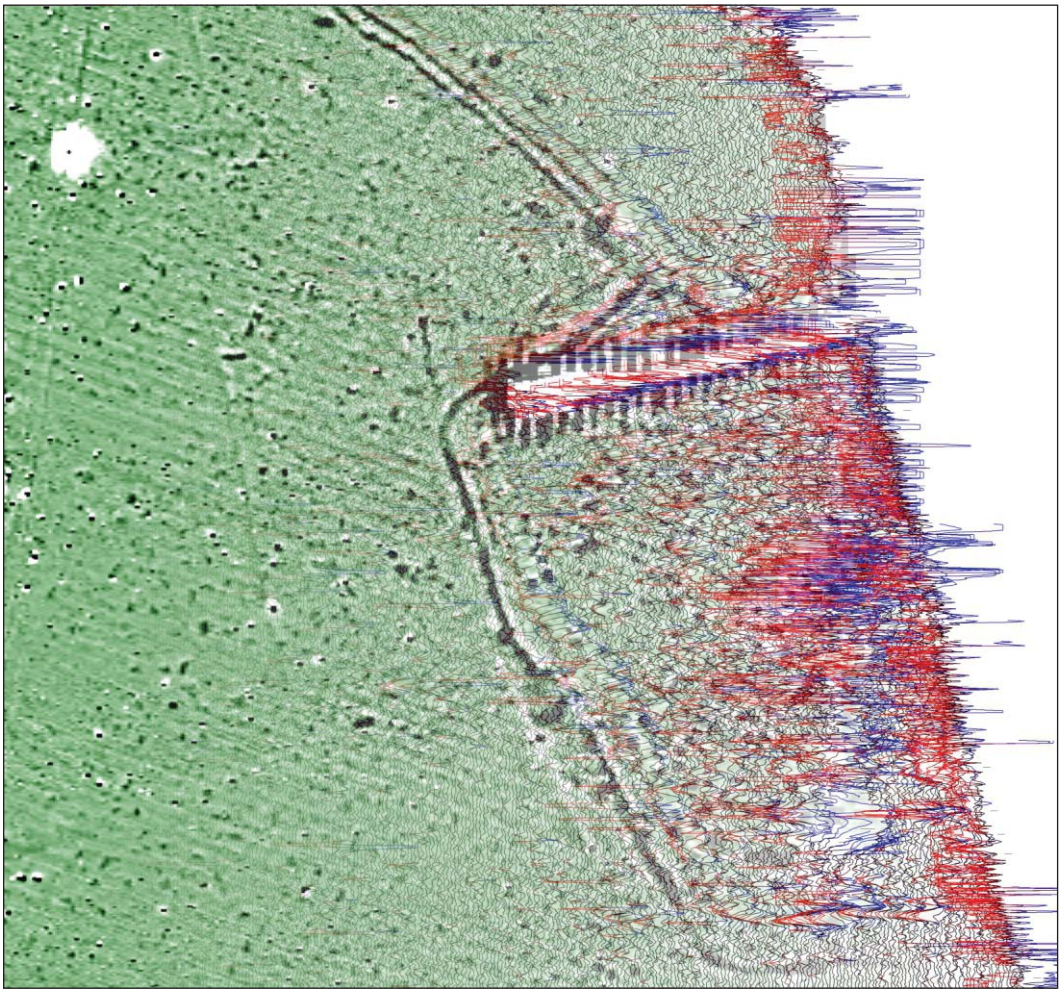
making sense of heritage

Land Adjacent to Boscombe Airfield Idmiston, Wiltshire

Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report



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May 2014

geoservices

Land Adjacent to Boscombe Airfield
Idmiston, Wiltshire

Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report

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* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

Land Adjacent to Boscombe Airfield Idmiston, Wiltshire

Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report

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Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report

Summary

A detailed gradiometer survey was conducted over land adjacent to Boscombe Down Airfield, near Idmiston, Wiltshire. The project was commissioned by Lark Energy with the aim of establishing the presence, or otherwise, and nature of detectable archaeological features on the site ahead of a proposed solar farm development.

The site comprises two arable fields outside the perimeter fence of the airfield but is located in between the two main runways, approximately 2.2km northwest of Idmiston. The site occupies a dry valley to the northwest of the River Bourne. The gradiometer survey covered 36.4 ha and has demonstrated the presence of anomalies of likely, probable and possible archaeological interest within the survey area, along with regions of increased magnetic response and a modern service.

The main concentration of archaeological features lies at the centre and east of the site with an enclosure, former field boundaries, several large pits and a possible track defined by a double ditch detected. It seems likely that other features have been obscured by ferrous responses from services and fences belonging to the nearby airfield.

A curving field system was observed running through the centre of the survey area that appears to follow the contours of the dry valley and there is a possibility that a double ditched feature detected may relate to the Wessex linears that are recorded close to the survey area. The enclosure at the far east lies on the edge of an area of dense Iron Age and Romano-British settlement activity within the airfield; this enclosure appears to fit into this dense area of occupation and may be contemporary to some of these known settlement areas.

Land Adjacent to Boscombe Airfield Idmiston, Wiltshire

Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report

Acknowledgements

The detailed gradiometer survey was commissioned by Lark Energy. The assistance of Duncan Blom is gratefully acknowledged in this regard.

The fieldwork was directed by Jennifer Smith and assisted by Rachel Chester, Clara Dickinson and Rachel Williams. Laura Andrews processed the geophysical data which was interpreted by Ross Lefort. This report was written by Ross Lefort. The geophysical work was quality controlled by Ben Urmston. Illustrations were prepared by Kenneth Lymer. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Ben Urmston.

Land Adjacent to Boscombe Airfield Idmiston, Wiltshire

Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Lark Energy to carry out a geophysical survey of land close to Boscombe Down Airfield, near Amesbury, Wiltshire (**Figure 1**), hereafter "the Site" (centred on NGR 418425, 139150). The survey forms part of an ongoing programme of archaeological works being undertaken ahead of proposed development of a solar farm at the Site.

1.1.2 The aim of the geophysical survey was to establish the presence/absence, extent and character of detectable archaeological remains within the survey area.

1.1.3 This report presents a brief description of the methodology followed by the detailed survey results and the archaeological interpretation of the geophysical data.

1.2 Site Location, Geology and Soils

1.2.1 The survey area comprises two arable fields located just outside of the perimeter fence of Boscombe down airfield, between the two main runways. The Site is located some 3.1km southeast of the centre of Amesbury and 2.2km northwest of Idmiston (**Figure 1**). Detailed gradiometer survey was undertaken over all accessible parts of the Site, a total of 36.4 ha.

1.2.2 The Site occupies the head of a dry valley close to the River Bourne (located to the southeast). The highest part of the Site lies at a height over 110m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to the west and east with the lowest area in the dry valley in the centre less than 100m aOD. The survey area is defined by field boundaries that form the limit of the proposed development area.

1.2.3 The solid geology on site is recorded as upper chalk with flints (Cretaceous); no superficial deposits are recorded although some thin alluvial or colluvial deposits may exist within the dry valley (Ordnance Survey 1976).

1.2.4 The soils underlying the Site are likely to be brown rendzinas of the 343h (Andover 1) association (SSEW 1983). Soils derived from such geological parent material have been shown to produce magnetic contrasts acceptable for the detection of archaeological remains through magnetometer survey.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The detailed magnetometer survey was conducted using a Bartington Grad601-2 dual fluxgate gradiometer system. The survey was conducted in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (2008).

2.1.2 The geophysical survey was undertaken by Wessex Archaeology's in-house geophysics team between 9th and 18th December 2013. Field conditions at the time of the survey were good with firm ground under foot.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Individual survey grid nodes were established at 30m x 30m intervals using a Leica Viva RTK GNSS instrument, which is precise to approximately 0.02m and therefore exceeds English Heritage recommendations (2008).

2.2.2 The magnetometer survey was conducted using a Bartington Grad601-2 fluxgate gradiometer instrument, which has a vertical separation of 1m between sensors. Data were collected at 0.25m intervals along transects spaced 1m apart with an effective sensitivity of 0.03nT, in accordance with EH guidelines (2008). Data were collected in the zigzag method.

2.2.3 Data from the survey was subject to minimal data correction processes. These comprise a zero mean traverse function (±5nT thresholds) applied to correct for any variation between the two Bartington sensors used, and a de-step function to account for variations in traverse position due to varying ground cover and topography. These two steps were applied to all survey areas, with no interpolation applied.

2.2.4 Further details of the geophysical and survey equipment, methods and processing are described in **Appendix 1**.

3 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The gradiometer survey has been successful in identifying anomalies of definite, probable and possible archaeological interest across the Site, along with a modern service. Results are presented as a series of greyscale and XY plots, and archaeological interpretations, at a scale of 1:2000 (**Figures 2** to **7**). The data are displayed at -2nT (white) to +3nT (black) for the greyscale image and ±25nT at 25nT per cm for the XY trace plots.

3.1.2 The interpretation of the datasets highlights the presence of potential archaeological anomalies, ferrous/burnt or fired objects, and magnetic trends (**Figures 4** and **7**). Full definitions of the interpretation terms used in this report are provided in **Appendix 2**.

3.1.3 The archaeological interpretation has been presented alongside the planned extents of the proposed solar array development (**Figures 8** and **9**).

3.1.4 Numerous ferrous anomalies are visible throughout the detailed survey dataset. These are presumed to be modern in provenance and are not referred to, unless considered relevant to the archaeological interpretation.

3.2 Gradiometer Survey Results and Interpretation

3.2.1 The greatest concentration of archaeological features is situated towards the eastern edge of the survey area. This area is visible as a trapezoidal shaped enclosure at **4000** to **4005**; large parts of the eastern ditch of the enclosure are obscured by ferrous responses with only short ditch segments visible at **4004** and **4005**. The enclosure is oriented NNW to SSE and measures approximately 160m in length along the shorter western side and is over 190m long along its longer eastern edge; the width is approximately 95m wide towards the middle and tapers slightly at both the north and south ends. The ditch segments are defined in the geophysical data as fairly strong positive anomalies with

magnetic values over +5nT in the strongest places. There are numerous breaks in the line of the ditches as is the case at **4001**, **4002**, **4003**, south of **4004** and two around **4005**. These breaks may represent entrances into the enclosure but could also represent areas of low contrast in the data; the largest breaks around **4001** and **4005** are considered to represent the most promising cases for entrances.

3.2.2 The interior of the enclosure is partially obscured by ferrous responses from the fence surrounding Boscombe Down Airfield and a modern service visible at **4006**. The visible areas of the interior are dominated by a dense cluster of positive anomalies, most of which have magnetic values over +3nT. There are a few linear ditch segments inside such as at **4007** and a segmented ditch at **4008** that may form internal sub division. The majority of responses inside are sub-oval to irregular in shape and measure more than 2m in length such as those at **4009**; these anomalies are considered to represent cut features such as pits. The ditch segments and pits have been variously classed as archaeology or probable archaeology based on

3.2.3 There is one group of anomalies inside the enclosure around **4010** that are particularly peculiar. There are some large positive anomalies (over +3nT) in the centre that are interpreted as archaeology, these large pit-like anomalies are surrounded by a sub-annular shaped negative anomaly approximately 15m in diameter. It is not clear if this negative is a feature itself or is an effect of the larger positive anomalies within; because of this uncertainty this feature has been interpreted as probable archaeology. This feature is considered to either represent a single large pit with variable magnetic values across it or a closely spaced cluster of multiple pits. It should be noted that the close proximity of this feature to the airfield may suggest this feature could possibly be of a more recent date.

3.2.4 There are a few small groups of pit-like anomalies outside of the enclosure such as those at **4011** and **4012**; both of these examples are located within areas of increased magnetic response. There are also ditch segments such as at **4013** that extend a short distance from the enclosure exterior. Even with these small clusters of pits and ditch segments it is clear that the interior has the greatest concentration of activity. All of these anomalies have been interpreted as probable archaeology.

3.2.5 There is a double-ditched feature running northwest from the northern corner of the enclosure at **4014**-**4016**. The best defined stretch of this feature lies close to the enclosure at **4014** with magnetic values over +3nT; the two ditches are spaced just over 3m apart at this point. Further to the northwest at **4015** the ditches appear as very weak features with magnetic values around 0.5nT although the separation between the ditches remains 3m; the ditches are defined as trends in this area due to their weak values. The strength of the magnetic values in the ditches increases slightly further to the northwest at **4016**; the width between the ditches changes in this area with the gap appearing to widen to over 8m. This feature is considered to represent a field boundary and/or a track although the date of this feature is unknown although it does appear to be contemporary with the enclosure discussed above.

3.2.6 There are a number of ditch segments running both parallel and perpendicular to the double ditch at **4017**-**4019**. They have positive values ranging from +0.5nT to over +5nT and extend to the south on a curve at **4020**-**4024**. This whole group appears to form a curving field system that follows the base of the dry valley. These ditch segments are variously classed as archaeology and probable archaeology depending on magnetic values.

3.2.7 There are a number of weaker positive and negative linear and curvilinear anomalies running through and close to this curving field system at **4025**-**4031**. They have magnetic values ranging from -2nT to +2nT and have diffuse edges. These features may represent weak ditches but some may represent lynchets. These anomalies have been classed as possible archaeology.

3.2.8 There are four large sub-oval pits visible in the data at **4032**-**4035**; they have magnetic values over +3nT and range in size from 7.5m to over 15m in length. There does not appear to be any surrounding features relating to them and the closest two pits are over 90m apart. These features have been classed as archaeology.

3.2.9 There are numerous trends scattered throughout the data, most of these relate to ploughing activity but others such as **4036** may relate to a weak archaeological feature. There are a number several areas of concentrated bipolar and dipolar anomalies (black and white in the greyscale), some such as **4037** may relate to a spread of anthropogenic material such as ceramic and metallic debris.

3.2.10 The remaining anomalies are a number of small sub-oval and sub-circular positive anomalies spread right across the data. Most have fairly diffuse edges and are considered to represent either small pits or natural features such as tree throws. Previous experience has shown that it is not easy to differentiate between tree throws and pits due to the high magnetic values possessed by tree throws in this geological setting. As a result of this uncertainty and the lack of any significant patterning in spatial distribution these anomalies have been classed as possible archaeology.

3.3 Gradiometer Survey Results and Interpretation: Modern Services

3.3.1 There is one service present at **4006** that appears to be a pipe made up of segments made from ferrous material. It passes from the airfield area straight through the archaeological enclosure and stops at an abandoned building within the survey area. The probable pipe sits on a roughly north to south alignment.

3.3.2 It is not clear from the geophysical data whether the service identified is in active use. It should also be noted that gradiometer survey may not detect all services present on site. This report and accompanying illustrations should not be used as the sole source for service locations and appropriate equipment (e.g. CAT and Genny) should be used to confirm the location of buried services before any trenches are opened on site.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1.1 The detailed gradiometer survey has been successful in detecting anomalies of definite, probable and possible archaeological interest within the Site, in addition to regions of increased magnetic response and one modern service.

4.1.2 The densest concentration of archaeological features has been detected in the east of the survey area; here a roughly trapezoidal shaped enclosure was detected with a high concentration of pit-like anomalies within. The area of low ground running through the centre of the Site to the west of this enclosure contains a curving field system with ditches, possible lynchets and tracks present. The western area of the site by contrast is relatively clear of definite archaeological features aside from a few large but isolated pits

4.1.3 It is considered likely that the archaeology detected through this geophysical survey continues in nearly all directions with the densely populated central region of the survey area extending further to both the north and south of the survey area. The enclosure

identified in this data lies close to a number of Iron Age and Romano-British settlement features identified within the airfield area further east. Pit clusters, enclosures, ditches and burials have been identified in high concentrations here that suggest this area was densely occupied in this period (MWI10460, MWI10461, MWI10462, MWI10463, MWI10469 and MWI10470).

4.1.4 The double ditched feature at **4014**-**4016** may prove to relate to a wider system of landscape divisions known as 'Wessex Linear Ditches'. These divisions date to the Iron Age and can be formed by one or more parallel ditches, often extending for significant distances across the landscape. A section of a Wessex linear has been recorded further north (MWI10468) and other segments have been identified in geophysical data by Wessex Archaeology further west (WA 2012).

4.1.5 The complex arrangement of enclosures, tracks and field systems suggests that areas of this dry valley were carefully divided into areas of specialised activity. Whilst geophysical survey cannot determine conclusively what functions were carried out on site, the strong magnetic values obtained from enclosure ditches suggest activity was intense within the eastern area of the Site and to a lesser degree towards the northeastern edge. A series of shallow depressions and low mounds to the east of the farm track are likely to be associated with the geophysical anomalies there.

4.1.6 The greatest area of uncertainty in the assessment of this data lies in the interpretation of the numerous small positive anomalies interpreted as possible archaeology. Geophysical surveys carried out by Wessex Archaeology nearby have revealed similar anomalies and follow up excavation has shown that most are tree throws although a very small number were revealed to be of archaeological significance (WA 2012, 2013). It is concluded that the vast majority of these responses relate to natural tree throws although a very small number may prove to be isolated pits or may be tree throws that contain deliberately placed anthropogenic deposits. It simply isn't possible to differentiate between natural tree throws, tree throws from human deforestation or pits that happen to possess similar dimensions in this particular geological setting from geophysical data alone.

4.1.7 The remaining features detected relate to more recent use of this area with ploughing trends, spreads of magnetic debris and one modern service detected. The regions of increased magnetic response may be associated with archaeological deposits that have been disturbed through ploughing, although it is conceivable that these magnetic enhancements are the result of changes in the near-surface geology; this is particularly the case towards the northeastern extent of the survey.

4.1.8 The relative dimensions of the modern services identified by the gradiometer survey are indicative of the strength of their magnetic response, which is dependent upon the materials used in their construction and the backfill of the service trenches. The physical dimensions of the services indicated may therefore differ from their magnetic extents in plan; it is assumed that the centreline of services is coincident with the centreline of their anomalies, however. Similarly, it is difficult to estimate the depth of burial of the services through gradiometer survey.

4.1.9 It should be noted that small, weakly magnetised features may produce responses that are below the detection threshold of magnetometers. It may therefore be the case that more archaeological features may be encountered than have been identified through geophysical survey.

5 REFERENCES

5.1 Bibliography

English Heritage, 2008. *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Research and Professional Service Guideline No 1, 2nd edition.

Wessex Archaeology, 2013. *Amesbury, Phase 4: King's Gate (658 Unit) Area: Archaeological Evaluation Report*. Report reference: 65537.04

Wessex Archaeology, 2012. *Amesbury, Phase 4: King's Gate (658 Unit) Area: Recorded Scanning and Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report.* Report reference: 65537.01

5.2 Cartographic Resources

Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales), 1976. *Sheet 298, Salisbury (Drift)*. Ordnance Survey: Southampton.

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983. *Sheet 5, South West England*. Ordnance Survey: Southampton.

5.3 HER Records

MWI10460 – Early Iron Age settlement

MWI10461 – Iron Age settlement

MWI10462 – Iron Age bivallate enclosure (possible hillfort)

MWI10436 – Iron Age settlement

MWI10468 – Wessex linear

MWI10469 – Romano-British cemetery

MWI10470 – Romano-British settlement (3rd to 4th Century AD)

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY EQUIPMENT AND DATA PROCESSING

Survey Methods and Equipment

The magnetic data for this project was acquired using a Bartington 601-2 dual magnetic gradiometer system. This instrument has two sensor assemblies fixed horizontally 1m apart allowing two traverses to be recorded simultaneously. Each sensor contains two fluxgate magnetometers arranged vertically with a 1m separation, and measures the difference between the vertical components of the total magnetic field within each sensor array. This arrangement of magnetometers suppresses any diurnal or low frequency effects.

The gradiometers have an effective resolution of 0.03nT over a ±100nT range, and measurements from each sensor are logged at intervals of 0.25m. All of the data are stored on an integrated data logger for subsequent post-processing and analysis.

Wessex Archaeology undertakes two types of magnetic surveys: scanning and detail. Both types depend upon the establishment of an accurate 20m or 30m site grid, which is achieved using a Leica Viva RTK GNSS instrument and then extended using tapes. The Leica Viva system receives corrections from a network of reference stations operated by the Ordnance Survey and Leica Geosystems, allowing positions to be determined with a precision of 0.02m in real-time and therefore exceed the level of accuracy recommended by English Heritage (2008) for geophysical surveys.

Scanning surveys consist of recording data at 0.25m intervals along transects spaced 10m apart, acquiring a minimum of 80 data points per transect. Due to the relatively coarse transect interval, scanning surveys should only be expected to detect extended regions of archaeological anomalies, when there is a greater likelihood of distinguishing such responses from the background magnetic field.

The detailed surveys consist of 20m x 20m or 30m x 30m grids, and data are collected at 0.25m intervals along traverses spaced 1m apart. These strategies give 1600 or 3600 measurements per 20m or 30m grid respectively, and are the recommended methodologies for archaeological surveys of this type (EH, 2008).

Data may be collected with a higher sample density where complex archaeological anomalies are encountered, to aid the detection and characterisation of small and ephemeral features. Data may be collected at up to 0.125m intervals along traverses spaced up to 0.25m apart, resulting in a maximum of 28800 readings per 30m grid, exceeding that recommended by English Heritage (2008) for characterisation surveys.

Post-Processing

The magnetic data collected during the detail survey are downloaded from the Bartington system for processing and analysis using both commercial and in-house software. This software allows for both the data and the images to be processed in order to enhance the results for analysis; however, it should be noted that minimal data processing is conducted so as not to distort the anomalies.

As the scanning data are not as closely distributed as with detailed survey, they are georeferenced using the GPS information and interpolated to highlight similar anomalies in adjacent transects. Directional trends may be removed before interpolation to produce more easily understood images.

Typical data and image processing steps may include:

- Destripe – Applying a zero mean traverse in order to remove differences caused by directional effects inherent in the magnetometer;
- Destagger – Shifting each traverse longitudinally by a number of readings. This corrects for operator errors and is used to enhance linear features;
- Despike – Filtering isolated data points that exceed the mean by a specified amount to reduce the appearance of dominant anomalous readings (generally only used for earth resistance data)

Typical displays of the data used during processing and analysis:

- XY Plot – Presents the data as a trace or graph line for each traverse. Each traverse is displaced down the image to produce a stacked profile effect. This type of image is useful as it shows the full range of individual anomalies.
- Greyscale – Presents the data in plan view using a greyscale to indicate the relative strength of the signal at each measurement point. These plots can be produced in colour to highlight certain features but generally greyscale plots are used during analysis of the data.

APPENDIX 2: GEOPHYSICAL INTERPRETATION

The interpretation methodology used by Wessex Archaeology separates the anomalies into two main categories: archaeological and unidentified responses.

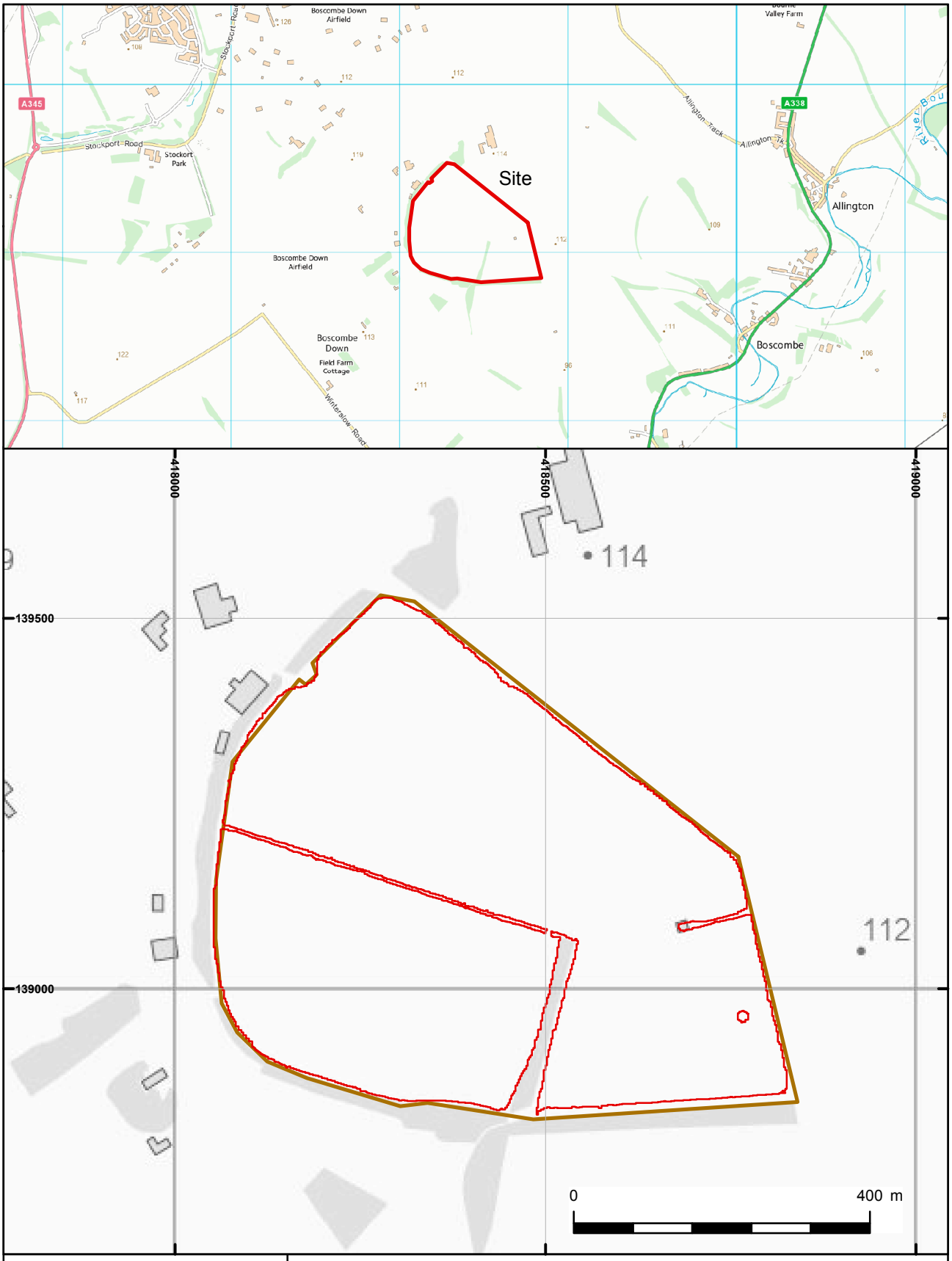
The archaeological category is used for features when the form, nature and pattern of the anomaly are indicative of archaeological material. Further sources of information such as aerial photographs may also have been incorporated in providing the final interpretation. This category is further sub-divided into three groups, implying a decreasing level of confidence:

- Archaeology – used when there is a clear geophysical response and anthropogenic pattern.
- Probable archaeology – used for features which give a clear response but which form incomplete patterns.
- Possible archaeology – used for features which give a response but which form no discernible pattern or trend.

The unidentified category is used for features when the form, nature and pattern of the anomaly are not sufficient to warrant a classification as an archaeological feature. This category is further sub-divided into:

- Increased magnetic response – used for areas dominated by indistinct anomalies which may have some archaeological potential.
- Trend – used for low amplitude or indistinct linear anomalies.
- Ferrous – used for responses caused by ferrous material. These anomalies are likely to be of modern origin.

Finally, services such as water pipes are marked where they have been identified.



Site boundary

Geophysical survey extents

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Site location and survey extents

Figure 1

418200

418400

139400

139200

139000

+3nT

-2nT

0

100 m

Site boundary

Geophysical survey extents

Date:	21/01/14	Revision Number:	0
Scale:	1:2000 at A3	Illustrator:	RL/KL
Path:	X:\PROJECTS\102550\GIS\FigsMXD\Fig02.mxd		

Greyscale west

Figure 2

418200

418400

139400

139200

139000

+25nT

-25nT

0

100 m

Site boundary

Geophysical survey extents

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XY trace west

Figure 3

Archaeology
Probable archaeology
Possible archaeology
Modern service
Ferrous
Trend
Ploughing
Increased magnetic response
Superficial geology

418200
418400
139400
139200
139000

4016
4025
4017
4019
4026
4015
4027
4018
4034
4033
4037
4028
4032
4020
4021
4022
4035
4029
4031
4030
4023
4024

0
100 m

Site boundary
Geophysical survey extents

Date:	21/01/14	Revision Number:	0
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Intrepretation west

Figure 4

418400

418600

418800

139400

139200

139000

138800

+3nT

-2nT

0

100 m

Site boundary

Geophysical survey extents

Date:	21/01/14	Revision Number:	0
Scale:	1:2000 at A3	Illustrator:	RL/KL
Path:	X:\PROJECTS\102550\GIS\FigsMXD\Fig05.mxd		

Greyscale east

Figure 5

418400

418600

418800

139400

139200

139000

138800

+25nT

-25nT

0

100 m

Site boundary

Geophysical survey extents

Date:	21/01/14	Revision Number:	0
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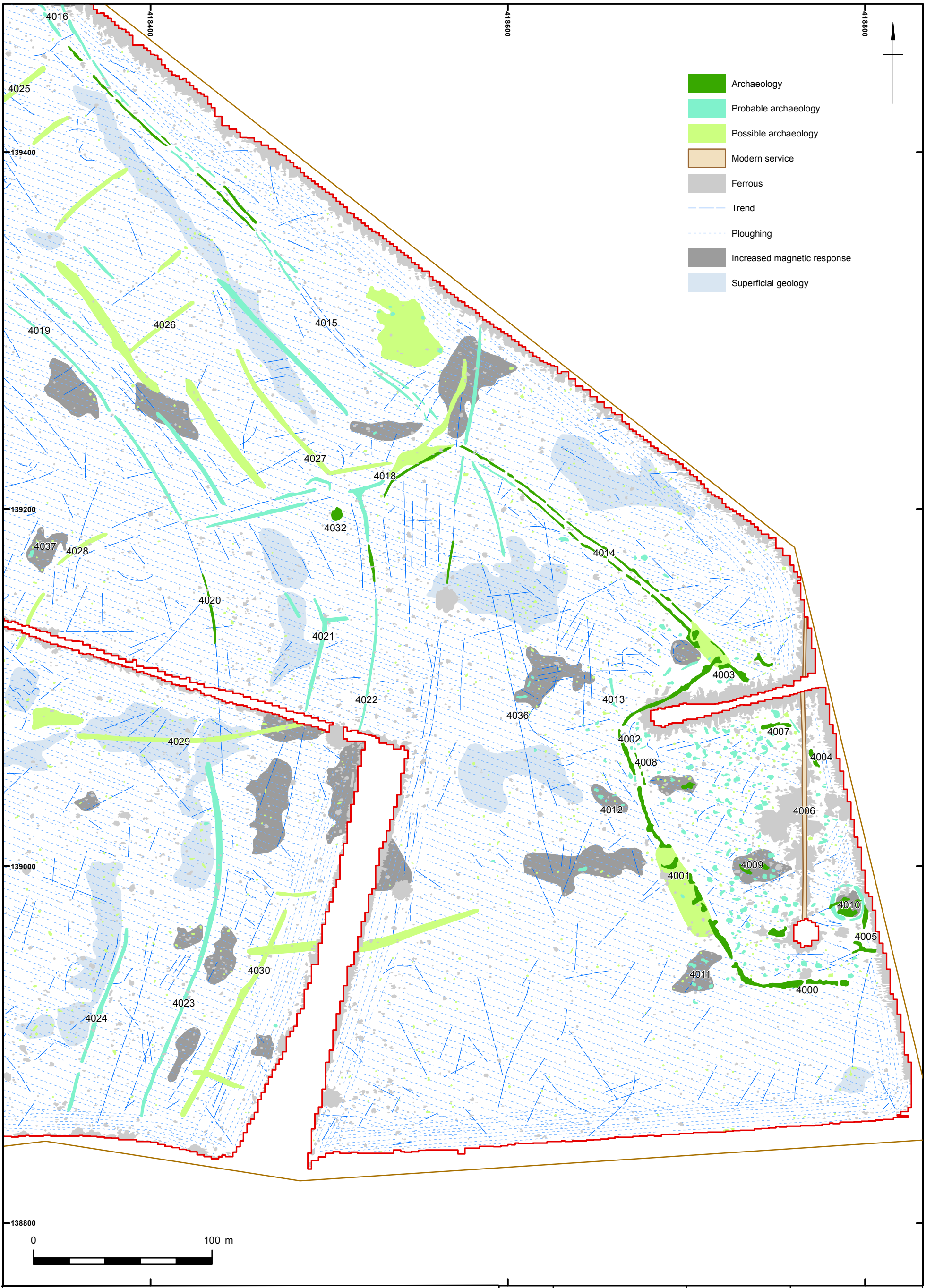
XY trace east

Figure 6



Site boundary

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Interpretation east

Figure 7

Lark Energy - Proposed Solar Array
Archaeology
Probable archaeology
Possible archaeology
Modern service
Ferrous
Trend
Ploughing
Increased magnetic response
Superficial geology

418200
418400
139400
139200
139000

0
100 m

Site boundary
Geophysical survey extents

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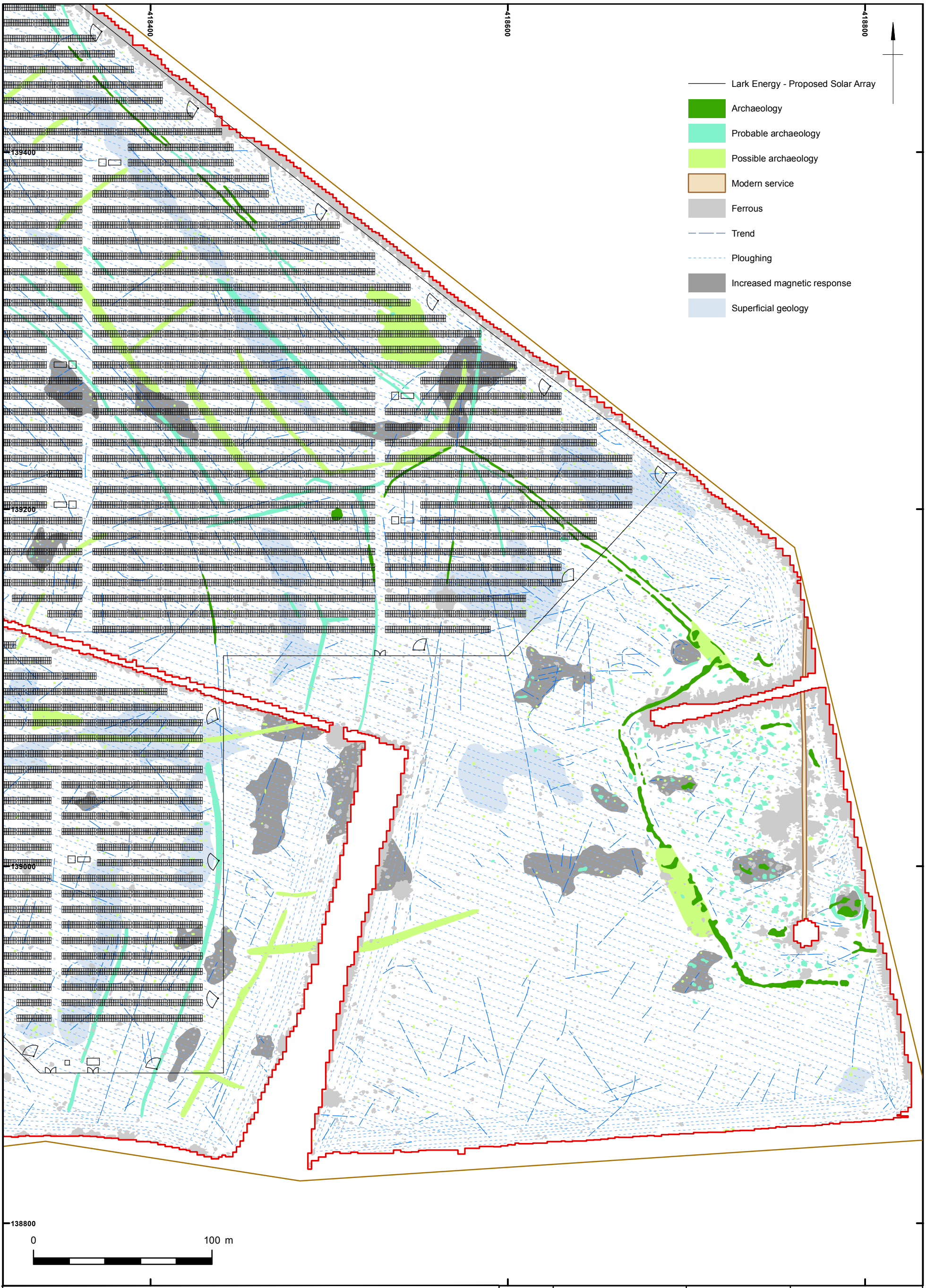
Intrepretation west with proposed solar array

Figure 8



Site boundary

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Path:	X:\PROJECTS\102550\GIS\FigsMXD\Fig09.mxd		

Interpretation east with proposed solar array

Figure 9

wessex archaeology

salisbury rochester sheffield edinburgh

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