

Land North of Oliver's Road, Middlezoy, Somerset

Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report

Document Ref.: 276580.03 Feb 2023

wessexarchaeology



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Document Information

| Document title Document subtitle Document reference | Land North of Oliver's Road, Middlezoy, Somerset Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report 276580.03 |
|---|--|
| Commissioned by Address | Kier Infrastructure Hawthorn House Emperor Way Exeter Business Park Exeter EX31 3QS |
| Site location | Oliver's Road Middlezoy TA7 0PH |
| County | Somerset |
| National grid reference | 337659, 134365 (ST 37659 34365) |
| Planning authority | Somerset County Council |
| WA project name WA project code Date of fieldwork Fieldwork directed by Project management by Document compiled by Contributions from | Land North of Oliver's Road, Middlezoy, Somerset 276580 10/02/2023 Pamela Warne Tom Richardson Lydia Jones & Patricia Edwards |
| Graphics by | Lydia Jones & Patricia Edwards |

Quality Assurance

| Issue | Date | Author | Approved by |
|-------|------------|--------|-----------------|
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Summary

A detailed gradiometer survey was conducted over Land North of Oliver's Road, Middlezoy, Somerset (centred on NGR 337659, 134365). The project was commissioned by Kier Infrastructure with the aim of establishing the presence, or otherwise, and nature of detectable archaeological features in support of a planning application for a stockpile to support the improvement works for the Wessex Reservoirs Scheme

The site comprises an arable field located 1 km north of the village of Middlezoy and 6.1 km to the east of Bridgwater, in the county of Somerset, covering an area of 2.5 ha. The geophysical survey was undertaken on 10 February 2023. The detailed gradiometer survey has demonstrated the presence of a number of anomalies relating to the post-medieval hamlet of Langacre including roadways, ditches, field boundaries, buildings and drains. These features correspond with features identified on historical OS mapping. Many of these features are represented as strong magnetic disturbance indicating disturbed ground and spread of demolition or infilling material.

Several less well-defined areas of magnetic disturbance have been identified across the site and correspond with areas of buildings and associated boundaries, and orchards recorded on historical OS mapping.

One possible archaeological feature has been identified in the centre of the site. It is similar in morphology, orientation and magnetic signal to other previously mapped field boundaries and is considered likely to be an unmapped field boundary.

Numerous magnetic trends have been identified in the north and south of the site. These are likely to relate to agricultural activity and drainage features.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Kier Infrastructure for commissioning the geophysical survey. The assistance of Darren Bayntun-Norman is gratefully acknowledged in this regard.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Pamela Warne and Callum Jervis. Lydia Jones processed and interpreted the geophysical data and wrote the report. Lydia Jones and Patricia Edwards prepared the illustrations. The geophysical work was quality controlled by Patricia Edwards. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Tom Richardson.

Land North of Oliver's Road Middlezoy, Somerset

Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Infrastructure to carry out a geophysical survey at Land North of Oliver's Road, Middlezoy, Somerset (centred on NGR 337659, 134365) (Figure 1). The survey forms part of an ongoing programme of archaeological works being undertaken in support of a planning application for a stockpile to support the improvement works for the Wessex Reservoirs Scheme

1.2 Scope of document

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

1.3 The site

- 1.3.1 The site is located 1 km north of the village of Middlezoy and 6.1 km to the east of Bridgwater, in the county of Somerset.
- 1.3.2 The survey comprises 2.5 ha of agricultural land, currently utilised for arable. The site is bounded by continuing arable field and woodland to the north, a farm and access track to the east, and further trackways and agricultural land to the south. To the west the site is bounded by Westonzoyland Airfield and further agricultural land.
- 1.3.3 The site is on a slight incline sloping from between 9 10 above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the western edge to 7 m aOD at the north-eastern edge.
- 1.3.4 The solid geology comprises Mudstone and Halite-stone of the Mercia Mudstone Group with overlying superficial geological deposits of sand and gravel of the Burtle Formation (BGS 2023).
- 1.3.5 The soils underlying the site are likely to consist of light sand-rich, and medium sandy-loam layered river terrace sands and gravels. 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 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was assessed in a prior Heritage and Archaeological background (Atkins 2023), which considered the recorded historic environment resource in the immediate environs of the proposed development. This report used information from the Somerset County Council Historic Environment Record (HER). Additional sources of information are referenced, as appropriate. The findings of the archaeological and historical background are summarised below.



2.2 Summary of the archaeological resource

- 2.2.1 There are no designated heritage assets within the site or within 1 km of its boundary.
- 2.2.2 The site is situated within the Somerset levels which is a historic wetland separated by ridges and islands. Westonzoyland itself is an area known to have been a raised island within the levels and so is an area classed as of High Archaeological Potential. Some areas between these ridges and islands also contain deposits of peat which are the remains of buried land surfaces inhabited when these areas were less wet. Peat is especially good at preserving organic matter and two thirds of all prehistoric trackways recorded within the UK are located in Somerset.
- 2.2.3 To the south of the site, close to the access trackway which joins to Oliver's Road, are cropmarks showing natural variations, ditches, pits, enclosures, and ring ditches which may be prehistoric and/or Roman in date (SOMHER 10579). Linear banks and ditches (SOMHER 11908) visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs are recorded over Westonzoyland airfield 500 m to the west of the site. Cropmarks showing three double ditched trackways, dated as either Prehistoric or medieval are located 100 m to the north of site (SOMHER 18916).
- 2.2.4 At 1 km and more distance from the site to the north, north-west, north-east, and west of the site are various areas of extensive but fragmentary landscape remains including field systems, trackways, and settlements (SOMHER 11250). These have been assigned dates between the Bronze Age and medieval periods.
- 2.2.5 Three flint scrapers (SOMHER 11763) were found 500 m to the south-east of the site.
- 2.2.6 The Hamlet of Langacre, dating to 1609 or earlier, is recorded as within the site (centred on ST 3768 3436) and survives as visible cropmarks showing enclosures, field boundaries, possible stack stands and housing plots (SOMHER 44994). The hamlet is visible on the 1887 OS mapping (25 inch, Somerset LX11.2) however has disappeared by the 1962 OS mapping (1:10,000, ST33SE) and it is recorded as having been removed by the airfield during the Second World War. Map regression shows significant change within the site itself during the post-medieval period. The site changes from multiple differing sized fields with various buildings and two north-south orientated roads as shown in the 1840 pre-Somerset Enclosures map, to the one larger field as it is today.
- 2.2.7 The site is within the recorded extent of Wetonzoyland Airfield. This is the remains of a military airfield with buildings originating in 1926. It was expanded in WWII and decommissioned in 1958 (SOMHER 11275). A compound for the airfield (SOMHER 16508) is recorded 280 m to the south of the site.
- 2.2.8 Cropmarks showing undated enclosures and frost polygons have been recorded in the north-west corner of the site (SOMHER 10578).

2.3 Recent investigations in the immediate vicinity

2.3.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in 2003 and discovered a substantial Mesolithic flint assemblage 900 m to the south-east of the site.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The geophysical survey was undertaken by Wessex Archaeology's in-house geophysics team on 10 February 2023. Field conditions at the time of the survey were dry throughout the period of survey. An overall coverage 2.13 ha was achieved, with 0.49 ha unsurveyable due to the presence of a large manure pile in the south, a pond in the north-western corner, and some overgrown and tracked areas in the north and south of the site.
- 3.1.2 The methods and standards employed throughout the geophysical survey conform to that set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Wessex Archaeology 2023), as well as to current best practice, and guidance outlined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA 2014) and European Archaeologiae Consilium (Schmidt *et al.* 2015).

3.2 Aims and objectives

- 3.2.1 The aims of the survey comprise the following:
 - To determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the nature of the detectable archaeological resource within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices; and
 - To inform either the scope and nature of any further archaeological work that may be required; or the formation of a mitigation strategy (to offset the impact of the development on the archaeological resource); or a management strategy.
- 3.2.2 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the geophysical survey are:
 - To conduct a geophysical survey covering as much of the specified area as possible, allowing for on-site obstructions;
 - To clarify the presence/absence of anomalies of archaeological potential; and
 - Where possible, to determine the general nature of any anomalies of archaeological potential.

3.3 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.3.1 The cart-based gradiometer system used a Carlson BRX7 RTK GNSS instrument, which receives corrections from a network of reference stations operated by the Ordnance Survey (OS). Such instruments allow positions to be determined with a precision of 0.02 m in real-time and therefore exceeds European Archaeologiae Consilium recommendations (Schmidt *et al.* 2015).
- 3.3.2 The detailed gradiometer survey was conducted using four SenSys FGM650/3 magnetic gradiometers fixed horizontally 1 m apart on a non-magnetic cart with an effective sensitivity of 0.03 nT.

3.4 Data processing

- 3.4.1 Data from the survey were subjected to minimal correction processes. These comprise a 'Destripe' function (±5 nT thresholds), applied to correct for any variation between the sensors, and an interpolation used to grid the data and discard overlaps where transects have been collected too close together.
- 3.4.2 Further details of the geophysical and survey equipment, methods and processing are described in **Appendix 1**.



4 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The detailed gradiometer survey has identified magnetic anomalies across the site, suggestive of possible historic landscape and possible archaeological features, old field boundaries along with a large amount of magnetic disturbance caused by demolition and clearance. Drains and ferrous responses have also been identified. Results are presented as a greyscale plot and archaeological interpretation at a scale of 1:1000 (**Figures 2** to **3**). The data are displayed at -2 nT (white) to +3 nT (black) for the greyscale image.
- 4.1.2 The interpretation of the datasets highlights the presence of potential archaeological anomalies, ferrous responses, burnt or fired objects, and magnetic trends (**Figure 3**). Full definitions of the interpretation terms used in this report are provided in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.1.3 Numerous ferrous anomalies are visible throughout the dataset. These are presumed to be modern in provenance and are not referred to, unless considered relevant to the archaeological interpretation.
- 4.1.4 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 present than have been identified through geophysical survey.
- 4.1.5 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.

4.2 Gradiometer survey results and interpretation

- 4.2.1 The geophysical survey has identified various anomalies that have the potential to be the remains of the post-medieval hamlet of Langacre. They are located across the site and are associated with large linear features which broadly follow the plans of the village identified on historical OS mapping from 1887 and 1904. They are typically surrounded by broad amorphous areas of strong magnetic anomalies which could indicate a spread of rubble and or infilling associate with demolition of the hamlet. The intense spread of highly magnetic material throughout the site has made defining these features' exact size and morphology problematic in places.
- 4.2.2 A strong positive and negative L-shaped linear anomaly has been identified in the west of the site at 4000. It is 50 m from south to north, where it turns east for a further 40 m, with an average width of 3 9 m. In general it well defined and indicates highly magnetic material. Further to the south two smaller weaker anomalies have been detected at 4001 and 4002 which likely represent a continuation of this feature. They are 17 m and 12 m in length and 2 m wide. These anomalies correspond with a road recorded in historical OS mapping 1887 (25 inch, Somerset LX11.2) & 1904 (Six Inch, Somerset LXII.NW).
- 4.2.3 Located across the site are a series of conjoined strong positive and dipolar linear anomalies (**4003 4004**) on a co-axial north south by east west orientation. They are between 52 m and 76 m long and vary in width (4 13 m). The location of these anomalies corresponds with drainage ditches that were utilised as field boundaries recorded in historical OS mapping (1887, 25 inch, Somerset LX11.2). The broad and highly magnetic response seen suggests demolition material or rubble infilling, meaning it is possible that the drainage ditches were infilled post-use with material from the structures that once stood in the surrounding area.

- 4.2.4 In the north of the site is a linear anomaly oriented east west t **4005**, measuring 9.4 m in length and 2.5 m in width. 16 m to the east of this anomaly is a wider, more amorphous anomaly at **4006** oriented north south, measuring 34 m long and 3 12 m wide. Both anomalies have a strong negative and positive response and correspond with buildings, associated boundary walls, and potentially former field boundaries as recorded in historical OS mapping (1887 25 inch, Somerset LX11.2 & 1904 Six Inch, Somerset LXII.NW).
- 4.2.5 In the east of the site a rectangular anomaly measuring 12 m x 8 m has been detected at **4007**. This consists of strong negative and positive magnetic signal and corresponds with a building recorded on the historical OS mapping.
- 4.2.6 Several positive and negative linear anomalies have been identified across the north of the site (**4008 4012**) which correspond with former field boundaries recorded on historical OS mapping (1887 25 inch, Somerset LX11.2 & 1904 Six Inch, Somerset LXII.NW).
- 4.2.7 A positive linear anomaly has been identified in the centre of the site at **4013** oriented east west. It is 47 m long and 1.5 m 4 m wide. It is similar in form and geophysical properties to a former field boundary (**4008**) identified in the north of the site. Furthermore, it is similarly aligned to a historical field boundary identified to the west of the site, beyond the survey boundary. It likely relates to a ditch associated with a previously unrecorded field boundary.
- 4.2.8 Amorphous areas of strong dipolar magnetic anomalies have been detected throughout much of the site. These have been interpreted as increased magnetic response as they likely indicate a spread of highly magnetic material, such as rubble. This interpretation is further strengthened by the fact that they are located surrounding features of the former hamlet of Langacre and likely reflect the demolished remains of roads and buildings. The clearest example of these areas of rubble spread are located in the east of the site at **4014** and **4015** where an area of 101 m x 76 m is noted. The anomalies present at **4014** and **4015** correspond with former orchards, ditches, and a building noted on historical OS mapping (1887 25 inch, Somerset LX11.2 & 1904 Six Inch, Somerset LXII.NW).
- 4.2.9 Several narrow linear positive and dipolar anomalies have been detected in the north of the site. These are likely related to agricultural or settlement activity at Langacre hamlet such as drains or ditches. However further investigation would be required to fully understand these features as they could equally relate to modern agricultural activity as well.
- 4.2.10 Several narrow dipolar linear trends have been detected in the south of the site and are considered likely to be clay land drains. They are orientated north south and east west. In the south-west of the site at **4016** one of the drains, aligned on a north south orientation, appears to lead into **4000** and may be a drain associated with the former Langacre hamlet.

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 The detailed gradiometer survey has been successful in detecting the remains of the mapped post-medieval hamlet of Langacre including roadways, ditches, field boundaries, buildings, and drains. These features correspond with features identified on historical OS mapping. Many of these features are represented as strong magnetic disturbance indicating disturbed ground and spread of demolition or infilling material.
- 5.1.2 Several less well-defined areas of magnetic disturbance have been identified across the site and correspond with areas of buildings and associated boundaries, and orchards recorded on historical OS mapping. These anomalies are considered to represent the



disturbed ground and material left behind by the removal of the orchards, and demolition or falling into disrepair of the other built features.

- 5.1.3 One possible archaeological feature has been identified in the centre of the site. It is similar in morphology, orientation, and magnetic signal to other previously mapped field boundaries and is considered likely to be an unmapped field boundary.
- 5.1.4 Numerous magnetic trends have been identified in the north and south of the site. These are likely to relate to agricultural activity and drainage features.



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Online resources

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Historic England (HE) https://historicengland.org.uk (accessed February 2023)

Heritage Gateway website https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/ (accessed February 2023)

National Library of Scotland (NLS) https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/ (accessed February 2023)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Survey equipment and data processing

Survey methods and equipment

The magnetic data for this project were acquired using a non-magnetic cart fitted with four SenSys FGM650/3 magnetic gradiometers. The instrument has four sensor assemblies fixed horizontally 1 m apart allowing four traverses to be recorded simultaneously. Each sensor contains two fluxgate magnetometers arranged vertically with a 0.6 m 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 $\pm 8 \ \mu T$ over $\pm 1000 \ nT$ range. All of the data were then relayed to a CS35 tablet, running the MONMX program, which is used to record the survey data from the array of FMG650/3 probes at a rate of 20 Hz. The program also receives measurements from a GPS system, which is fixed to the cart at a measured distance from the sensors, providing real time locational data for each data point.

The cart-based system relies upon accurate GPS location data which is collected using a Carlson BRX7 system. This receives corrections from a network of reference stations operated by the Ordnance Survey, allowing positions to be determined with a precision of 0.02m in real-time and therefore exceed the level of accuracy recommended by European Archaeologiae Consilium recommendations (Schmidt *et al.* 2015) for geophysical surveys.

Post-processing

The magnetic data collected during the survey is downloaded from the 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.

Typical data and image processing steps may include:

- GPS DeStripe Determines the median of each transect and then subtracts that value from each datapoint in the transect within the defined window. May be used to remove the striping effect seen within a survey caused by directional effects, drift, etc.
- Discard Overlaps Intended to eliminate a track(s) that have been collected too close to one another. Without this, the results of the interpolation process can be distorted as it tries to accommodate very close points with potentially differing values.
- GPS Base Interpolation Sets the X & Y interval of the interpolated data and the track radius (area around each datapoint that is included in the interpolated result).

Typical displays of the data used during processing and analysis:

• 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 four main categories: archaeological, modern, agricultural, and uncertain origin/geological.

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 subdivided into three groups, implying a decreasing level of confidence:

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

The modern category is used for anomalies that are presumed to be relatively modern in date:

- Ferrous used for responses caused by ferrous material. These anomalies are likely to be of modern origin.
- Modern service used for responses considered relating to cables and pipes; most are composed of ferrous/ceramic material although services made from non-magnetic material can sometimes be observed.

The agricultural category is used for the following:

- Former field boundaries used for ditch sections that correspond to the position of boundaries marked on earlier mapping.
- Ridge and furrow used for broad and diffuse linear anomalies that are considered to indicate areas of former ridge and furrow.
- Ploughing used for well-defined narrow linear responses, usually aligned parallel to existing field boundaries.
- Drainage used to define the course of ceramic field drains that are visible in the data as a series of repeating bipolar (black and white) responses.

The uncertain origin/geological 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:

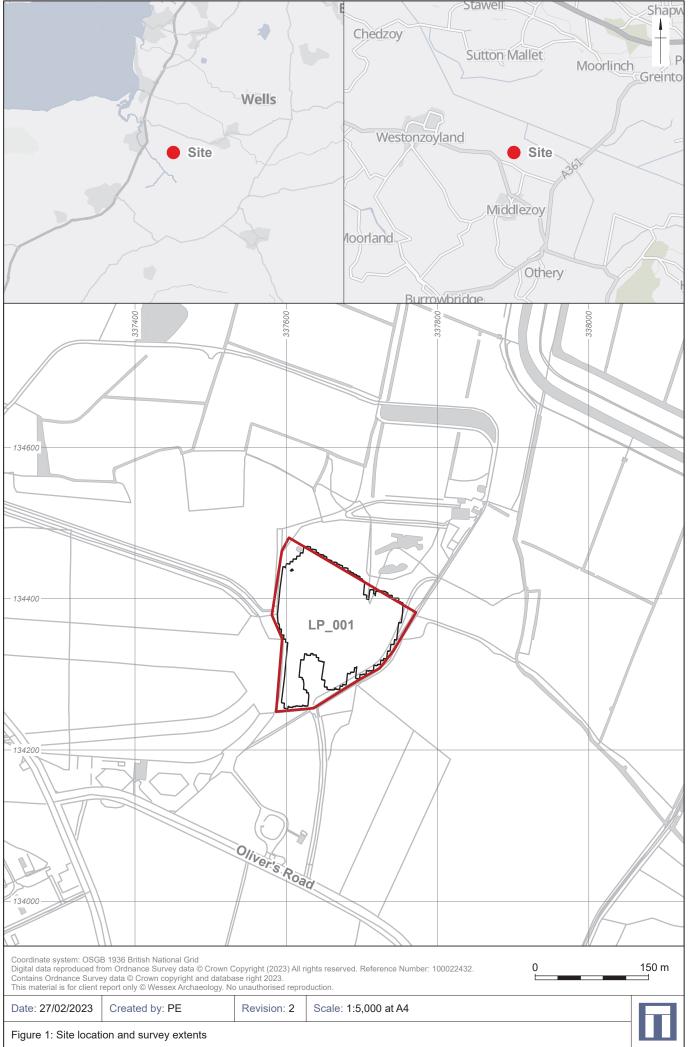
- Increased magnetic response used for areas dominated by indistinct anomalies which may have some archaeological potential.
- Trend used for low amplitude or indistinct linear anomalies.
- Superficial geology used for diffuse edged spreads considered to relate to shallow geological deposits. They can be distinguished as areas of positive, negative, or broad bipolar (positive and negative) anomalies.

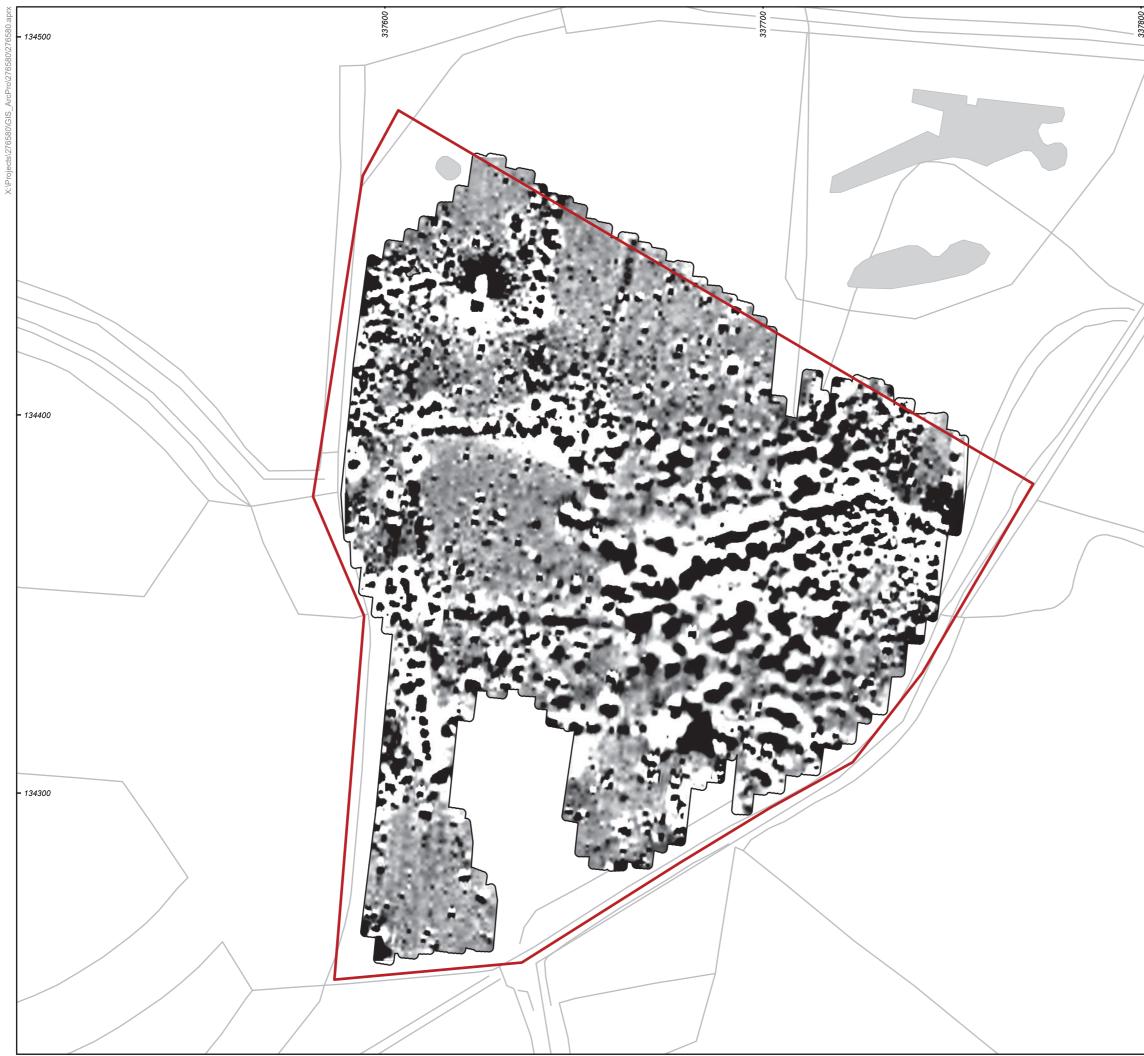
Appendix 3 OASIS form

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| Project name | 9 | Land North of Oliver's | Road, Mic | dlezoy, Somers | et | | | |
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| Type of proje | ect | Detailed gradiometer survey | | | | | | |
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| Future work | | N/A | | | | | | |
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| Code: | | NMR no. | | N/A | form ID: | : | | |
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| Planning Application Ref. | | N/A | | | | | | |
| Site Status | | None | | | | | | |
| Land use | | Arable farming | | | | | | |
| Monument ty | /pe | | | Period | | | | |
| Project Locat | ion: | · | | | | | 1 | |
| Site Address | Oliver's Road, M | iddlezoy | | | Postcode | | TA7 0PH | |
| County | Somerset | District | Sedgen | noor | Parish | | Middlezoy | |
| Study Area | 2.13 ha | Height OD | 7 - 10 m | n aOD | NGR | | 337659, 134365 | |
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| Project Manager | | Tom Richardson | | Project Supervisor | | Pamela Warne | | |
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| | Scale: 1:1,000 at A3 | | Revision: 2 | | |
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| | unauthorised reproduction. Date: 27/02/2023 | Create | ed by: LJ | |
| | Scale: 1:1,000 at A3 | | Revision: 2 | |
| | Figure 3: Detailed grad | iometer ir | | |
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