

1EW03 – Enabling Works Central

AWHh Summary Report for Phase 1 Woodlands Evaluation

**Site Code: 1C20JHWHL,
1C20WIFHL, 1C20FCWHL,
1C20HACHL, 1C20FCGHL,
1C20WIHHL**

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1 Summary

1.1.1 During November 2020 to May 2021 Phase 1 of an Archaeological Evaluation was undertaken to investigate woodland history and the pre-woodland land use potential of six areas of woodland (hereafter referred to as 'the Site(s)'), the Sites were all within the HS2 Phase 1 Central Route.

1.1.2 The six woodland areas forming the Site (3 no. Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland sites, 3 no. other) encompasses six parcels of land measuring 10.06ha in total spread across four counties (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire) and four Community Forum Areas (CFA10,14-16), and were selected for investigation because they were proposed for removal/translocation. Each of the Sites was allocated a unique site code for the work.

- C21022 Jones Hill Wood, Buckinghamshire (Site code: 1C20JHWHL);
- C25071 Widmore Farm, Oxfordshire (Site code: 1C20WIFHL);
- C30027 Halse Copse Farm, Northamptonshire (Site code: 1C20HACHL);
- C30031 Fox Covert Whitfield, Northamptonshire (Site code: 1C20FCWHL);
- C32030 Windmill Hill Spinney, Warwickshire (Site code: 1C20WIHHL); and
- C32033 Fox Covert, Northamptonshire (Site code: 1C20FCGHL).

1.1.3 The Sites were required to enable the construction of the rail alignment formation, Windmill Hill Cutting, Heave Cutting, Boddington Cutting, Barton to Mixbury Cutting, temporary stockpile areas, mitigation landscape and hedgerow planting. The locations for the woodland evaluation were selected to address construction programme risk to land required for the proposed development.

1.1.4 Phase 1 of the woodland evaluation was undertaken prior to woodland clearance and comprised for each Site a Test Pit Survey, Topographic Survey, Woodland Survey (aboricultural and botanical survey) and Dendrochronological Survey, however dendrochronology at C30027 (Halse Copse Farm) was descoped due to lack of suitable samples.

C21022 (Jones Hill Wood)

1.1.5 No evidence for pre-woodland archaeology was identified. The Topographic Survey recorded a number of mounds which are probably associated with post-medieval quarrying. The Woodland survey identified a number of Ancient Woodland Vascular Plants (AWVPs) which confirms the understanding of the woodland as Ancient Semi-Natural woods. It recorded limited evidence of more recent woodland management with the presence of beech stumps from past felling. Following, and informed by the topographic survey a total of ten test pits were excavated, targeted on LiDAR anomalies, these recorded a bank likely associated with 19th century quarrying and part of a probable medieval or post-medieval woodland bank forming the western

edge to the woodland, of probable medieval or post-medieval date. The dendrochronology survey showed the oldest tree sampled originated during the early 19th century.

C25071 (Widmore Farm)

- 1.1.6 No evidence for pre-woodland archaeology was identified. The Woodland survey and Topographic Survey both provided information regarding the extent, condition, and management of the wood, although evidence for woodland management appears to be for its more recent management and planting regime. The evidence accords with the understanding of the woodland as recent historic or modern conversions of former fields. The dendrochronology survey broadly supports the understanding of the woodland as a conversion from agricultural land, but a mid-18th century date for two of the samples could indicate one or both of the fields were wooded for a period of time before being converted to plantation/woods. Following, and informed by the topographic survey a total of ten test pits were excavated, targeted on LiDAR anomalies but no archaeological features were revealed except for a drainage ditch within one test pit, and no artefacts were recovered

C30031 (Fox Covert Whitfield)

- 1.1.7 No evidence for pre-woodland archaeology was identified except for possible evidence for part of a furrow in one of the test pits. The Topographic survey and Woodland survey both recorded physical evidence of the historic parish boundary that runs between Whitfield and Radstone. The Topographic survey also recorded two small previously unrecorded banks attached to or adjacent to this boundary. The Woodland survey characterised the current condition of the wood but could not be conclusive about its management cropping regime. There was one AWVP identified, this probably originates from the historic parish boundary. The dendrochronology survey has provided the date for the earliest oak tree samples as being c. 1865. Combined with the known history of the Site, it seems possible that this would suggest a mid-19th century date of origin for the woodland. A total of five test pits were excavated; no previously unknown archaeological features were revealed except for possible evidence for a furrow.

C30027 (Halse Copse Farm)

- 1.1.8 No evidence for pre-woodland archaeology was identified. the Woodland and Topographic Survey both provided information regarding the condition of the wood, its recent use and recorded woodland boundary features within the western part of the Site. There were no AWVPs identified in the Woodland survey. Following, and informed by the topographic survey a total of six test pits were excavated; no archaeological features were revealed. The dendrochronology survey originally set out in the Project Plan was descoped due to an absence of suitable trees for sampling.

C32033 (Fox Covert – Glyn Davies Wood)

- 1.1.9 No evidence for pre-woodland archaeology was identified. The Woodland survey and Topographic Survey both provided information regarding the extent, condition, and

management of the wood, although evidence for woodland management appears to be for its more recent management and planting regime. There was one AWVP (bluebell) identified along the south-western edge of Site. This was near to a trackway and modern pond, and the AWVP might have colonised the later woodland as it developed. The dendrochronology survey has provided the date for the earliest oak tree sampled as belonging to the mid-19th century, but the age of the woodland, certainly its south-western part would probably be much older. Following, and informed by the topographic survey a total of nine test pits were excavated, targeted on LiDAR anomalies but no archaeological features were revealed.

C32030 (Windmill Hill Spinney)

- 1.1.10 No evidence for pre-woodland archaeology was identified. The Woodlands survey and Topographic survey both provided information regarding the extent and condition of the wood and identified some earthwork features of archaeological origin comprising parts of former woodland boundaries. The northern boundary to the woodland likely originates from a pre-woodland field boundary. There was one small bank outside of the woodland probably representing a roadside boundary, south-east to the woodland Site. Other earthworks described within the woodland seem likely to be natural weathered outcrops of geology. The evidence accords with the understanding of the woodland spinney as recent historic conversions of former fields. The oldest tree sampled by dendrochronology was dated to the mid-19th century, this broadly accords with the historic map evidence showing the Site as wooded on the 1838 Tithe Map. Evidence for earlier woodland management practices was not identified by the Woodlands survey but did identify one AWVP (bluebell) that likely colonised part of the woodland from an older hedgerow. Following, and informed by the topographic survey a total of six test pits were excavated, targeted on LiDAR anomalies but no archaeological features were revealed.