

Charity Farm (Phase 2)
Stonesfield
Oxfordshire
Archaeological Evaluation



for
Pye Homes Ltd

CA Project: 6303
CA Report: 17609
Site Code: CFMS 17
Accession No. OXCMS: 2017.96

November 2017



Charity Farm (Phase 2) Stonesfield Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	4
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	6
4. METHODOLOGY	6
5. RESULTS (FIGS 2–4).....	7
6. DISCUSSION.....	7
7. CA PROJECT TEAM.....	8
8. REFERENCES.....	8
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS	10
APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM.....	11

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)
- Fig. 2 Trench location plan showing geophysical survey results and Phase 1 evaluation trenches (1:2000)
- Fig. 3 Photograph: Trench 2, looking north (1m scales)
- Fig. 4 The site from the location of Stonesfield Villa, looking north



SUMMARY

Project Name:	Charity Farm (Phase 2)
Location:	Stonesfield, Oxfordshire
NGR:	439837 217081
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	16–18 October 2017
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Planning Ref:	17/01966/FUL
Accession Number:	OXCMS: 2017.96
Site Code:	CFMS 17

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in October 2017 at Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire. Six trenches were excavated.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified during the evaluation, despite its proximity to Stonesfield Roman Villa. A dry valley between the site and the villa probably formed the northern boundary of the villa buildings.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2017 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Pye Homes Ltd at Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire (centred at NGR: 439837 217081; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application, which has been submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC; ref. 17/01966/FUL) for a residential development on the site. Hugh Coddington, Archaeology Team Leader, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), the archaeological advisor to WODC, recommended that an archaeological evaluation was required prior to the determination of any planning application.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the spirit of *Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation: Land at Charity Farm, Stonesfield* (OCC 2015) which referred to Phase 1, immediately to the north-west of the current site and with a subsequent detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2017) and approved by Hugh Coddington. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014). It was monitored by Hugh Coddington, including a site visit on 17 October 2017.

The site

- 1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 1.4ha, and comprises a single pasture field. The site is bounded to the north-west by the Phase 1 development, to the south-west by properties fronting on to Combe Road, to the south-east by a dry valley and the site of Stonesfield Villa, and to the north-east by agricultural fields. At the north of the site the ground level is approximately 110m AOD, sloping down to 107m AOD at the south of the site.
- 1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as White Limestone Formation limestone of the Jurassic period with no superficial geological deposits (BGS 2017). The evaluation exposed limestone brash at the north of the site, with more degraded limestone sandy clays as the land drops away in the south of the site.



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The site, and its immediate vicinity, has been the subject previously of a *heritage desk-based assessment* (CA 2014) and a geophysical survey (EH 2013). In addition, the field immediately to the north-west of the site (Phase 1) was subject to a geophysical survey (PCG 2015) and an archaeological evaluation (CA 2015). The following section is summarised from these sources.

Prehistoric

2.2 An archaeological evaluation of the field immediately to the north-west of the site (Phase 1) identified a curvilinear ditch, within the terminus of which was an intact pottery vessel dated to the Middle to Late Iron Age. The vessel appeared to contain burnt bone and was not excavated as a possible cremation burial, although the date and form of the pottery would have been highly unusual for a cremation urn (CA 2015). An undated pit was located in close proximity to the ditch and may have been contemporary.

2.3 Further Iron Age features were identified during development of land immediately to the west of the site and an Iron Age coin was reportedly found in the field immediately to the east of the site (CA 2014).

Roman period

2.4 Akeman Street runs on a south-west to north-east axis c. 250m to the south-east of the site. This was one of the principal roads of the Roman province and linked the important towns of Cirencester (*Corinium*) and St Albans (*Verulamium*).

2.5 The Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 336649) *Stonesfield Roman Villa* lies adjacent and to the south-east of the site (Fig. 2). Stonesfield Villa was first identified in the early 18th century when elaborate mosaics and a hypocaust were discovered (Salzman 1939). The villa was established soon after the Roman conquest and continued to be occupied through until at least the 4th century.

2.6 A geophysical survey of the villa site has clearly defined a large double-ditched enclosure containing the main villa building along with ancillary buildings, possibly industrial in function, abutting a linear anomaly that was probably the course of Akeman Street (see Fig. 2).

- 2.7 The villa complex was similar in size to the nearby villa at Ditchley Park, 2km to the north, although its proximity to the road may indicate that it functioned as a *mansio* or similar roadside structure. The geophysical survey and fieldwalking carried out by English Heritage indicate that below ground structural remains associated with the villa extend beyond the south-eastern boundary of the Scheduled area (EH 2013).
- 2.8 In addition to the villa at Ditchley Park, other nearby Roman villas have been identified at North Leigh c. 1.5 km to the south, Oaklands c. 1.5 km to the west, Fawler c. 2 km to the west and Callow Hill c. 2 km to the north-east.
- 2.9 Two isolated finds of Roman date were also identified within the wider landscape. These comprise part of a gypsum statue found c. 200m to the north of the site and a Roman coin from the centre of Stonesfield c. 300m to the west of the site (CA 2014).

Medieval to modern

- 2.10 Numerous stone workings have been identified in the valley sides around the village seen as open quarries and adits with associated spoil tips and chipping banks. A number of hitherto unidentified stone workings have also been identified just to the south of the site within the western section of the Scheduled Monument (EH 2013). Quarrying at Stonesfield declined from the early 20th century onwards and has now been entirely abandoned.
- 2.11 The earliest clear mapping of the area available is the Davis Map of Oxfordshire dating to 1794 which shows the site as lying within the agricultural hinterland to the east of the village. This does not depict the present road alignment to the north of the site, which must therefore post-date it. A routeway is, however, clearly marked following the line of the Roman Akeman Street to the south-east of the site. The parish was enclosed in 1804 although no surviving enclosure map exists alongside the award. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1880) shows that the site as farmland on the edge of the village, with the routeway to the north of the site by then established, in preference to the earlier route following Akeman Street in Bagg's Bottom (CA 2014).



3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality, in accordance *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014). This information will enable WODC to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of six trenches, each 30m long and 1.8m wide, in the locations shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual*.
- 4.2 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate. Where possible archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* and no deposits were identified that required sampling. No artefacts were identified during the works.
- 4.4 The site archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service under accession number OXCMS: 2017.96. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2–4)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in Appendix A.
- 5.2 The natural geological substrate, comprising limestone brash on the high ground in the northern part of the site and degraded limestone sandy clays in the southern part (see Fig. 3), was encountered in all trenches at a typical depth of 0.4m below present ground level. This was covered by a thin interface layer of weathered natural, which was in turn sealed by up to 0.31m of topsoil.
- 5.3 No features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified during the evaluation.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The results of the evaluation correspond well with those of the preceding geophysical survey, which characterised the site as forming part of the agricultural hinterland of Stonesfield Roman Villa and later the medieval and post-medieval settlement at Stonesfield (EH 2013). Parallel linear geophysical anomalies on a broadly east/west alignment and only visible on the greyscale plot were not identified in Trenches 1 and 3 and were probably shallow, modern agricultural features, wholly contained within the topsoil. An area of generally positive magnetic response in the northern and southern parts of the site (m5 on Fig. 2) broadly corresponds with the location of the limestone brash natural.
- 6.2 Despite the excavation of Iron Age features during archaeological works immediately to the north-west of the site (see Archaeological Background, above) there were no features of this date identified during the evaluation. As the geophysical survey also detected no evidence for features, it is likely that the Iron Age activity did not extend as far as the site.
- 6.3 A broad, diffuse geophysical anomaly on a north-east/south-west alignment ran through the south-eastern corner of the site (m4 on fig. 2). This anomaly corresponded to a visible depression in the landscape representing a dry valley.

6.4 The Scheduled Ancient Monument of Stonesfield Roman Villa is located immediately to the south of the site. The previous excavation and geophysical survey of the villa have defined a large rectangular double-ditched enclosure occupying land between Akeman Street and the south bank of the dry valley. The roadside nature of the villa suggests that it may have been a *mansio*; however this layout may simply have been due to the local topography and the limited space between the dry valley and the Roman road. The main villa building appears to have occupied a plateau of higher ground on the south bank, with the land sloping down to the possibly industrial roadside buildings below. The dry valley, which may have contained an active channel in the Roman period, appears to have formed a natural northern boundary to the villa complex, with no indication of any structures or associated features extending to the land on the north bank of the dry valley.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Christopher Leonard and Gary Baddeley. The report was written by Christopher Leonard. The illustrations were prepared by Esther Escudero. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2017 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 20 October 2017

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014 *Land at Charity Farm, Stonesfield, West Oxfordshire: Heritage Desk-Based Assessment*. CA Report No. **14142**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 *Land at Charity Farm, Stonesfield, West Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation*. CA Report No. **15264**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 *Land at Charity Farm (Phase Two), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*

EH (English Heritage 2013) *Stonesfield Roman Villa, Oxfordshire, Report on Geophysical Surveys, September 2013*. Research Report Series **59-2013**

OCC (Oxfordshire County Council) 2015 *Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation: Land at Charity Farm, Stonesfield*

PCG (Pre-Construct Geophysics) 2015 *Land at Charity Farm, Stonesfield, West Oxfordshire: Archaeological Geophysical Survey*

Salzman L (ed) 1939 *The Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire Vol 1*

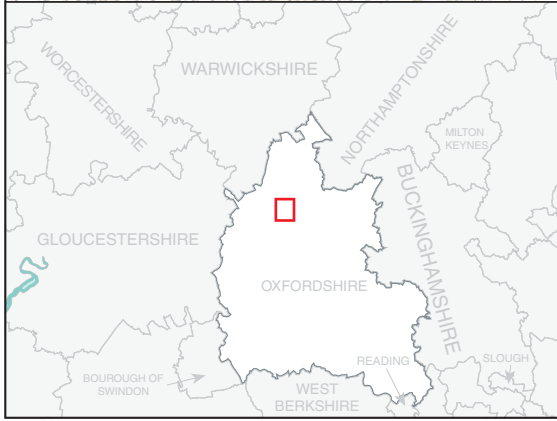
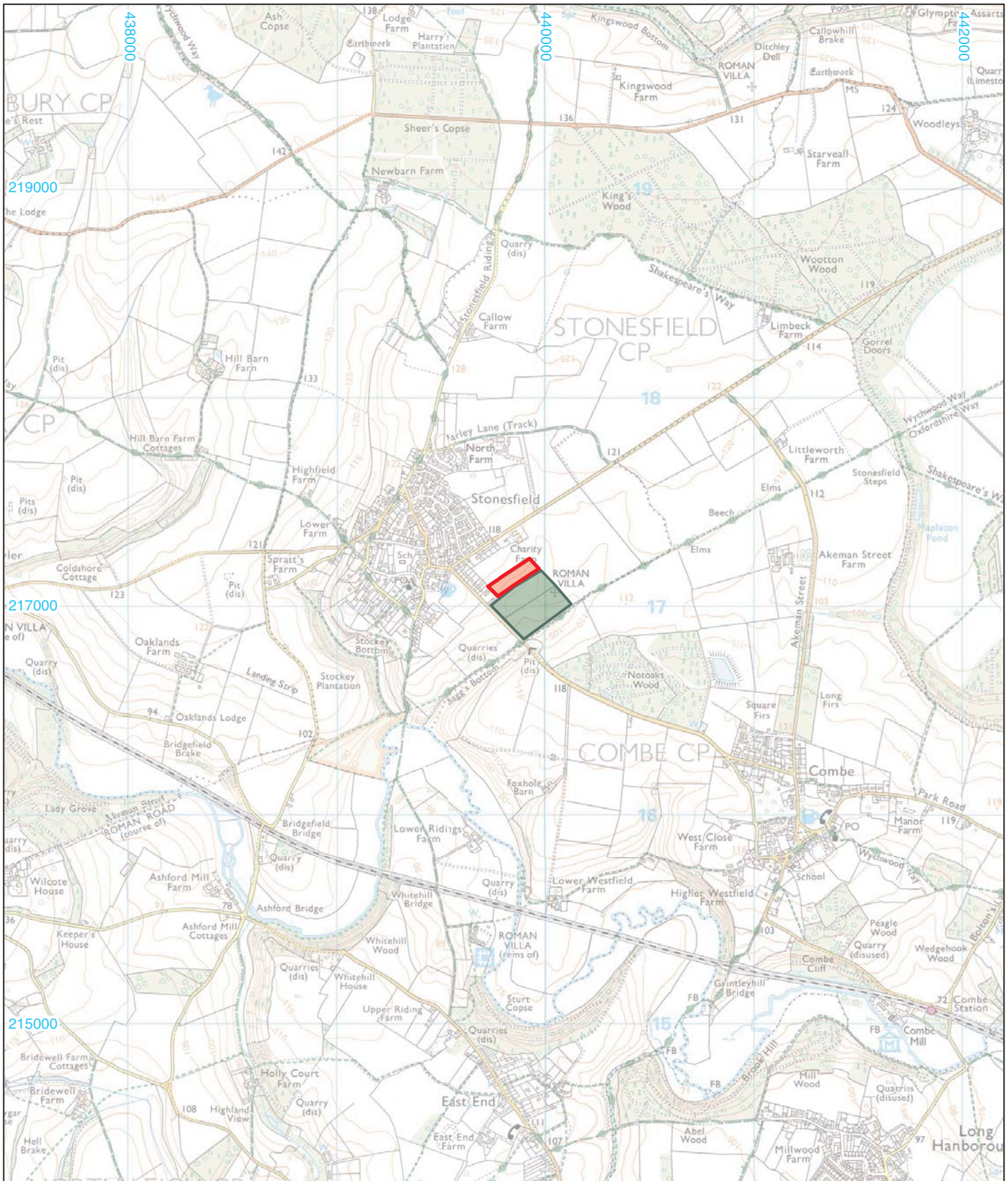


APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	Thickness (m)
1	100	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown silty clay. Occasional limestone fragments	0.3
1	101	Layer	Subsoil	Weathered natural. Mid orange brown silty clay. Frequent limestone fragments	0.13
1	102	Layer	Natural substrate	Limestone brash at northern 10m of trench, degraded light yellow grey sandy clay degraded limestone at southern 20m	
2	200	Layer	Topsoil	Same as 100	0.3
2	201	Layer	Subsoil	Same as 101	0.13
2	202	Layer	Natural substrate	Limestone brash	
3	300	Layer	Topsoil	Same as 100	0.25
3	301	Layer	Subsoil	Same as 101	0.11
3	302	Layer	Natural substrate	Limestone brash at northern 20m of trench, degraded limestone at southern 10m	
4	400	Layer	Topsoil	Same as 100	0.24
4	401	Layer	Subsoil	Same as 101	0.14
4	402	Layer	Natural substrate	Limestone brash	
5	500	Layer	Topsoil	Same as 100	0.21
5	501	Layer	Subsoil	Same as 101	0.17
5	502	Layer	Natural substrate	Limestone brash at northern 24m, degraded limestone at southern 6m	
6	600	Layer	Topsoil	Same as 100	0.31
6	601	Layer	Subsoil	Same as 101	0.13
6	602	Layer	Natural substrate	Limestone brash	

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire	
Short description	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in October 2017 at Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire. Six trenches were excavated. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified during the evaluation, despite its proximity to Stonesfield Roman Villa. A dry valley between the site and the villa probably formed the northern boundary of the villa buildings.	
Project dates	16–18 October 2018	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical survey (English Heritage 2013) Desk Based Assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2014)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Stonesfield, Oxfordshire	
Study area	1.4ha	
Site co-ordinates	439837 217081 SP 39837 17081	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Oxfordshire County Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Young	
Project Supervisor	Christopher Leonard	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	-	-
Paper	Oxfordshire County Museum Service/ OXCMS: 2017.96	Trench recording forms, photographic register
Digital	Oxfordshire County Museum Service/ OXCMS: 2017.96	Database, digital photos etc
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 <i>Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report 17609		



N

Site boundary

Scheduled Ancient Monument 336649

0 1km

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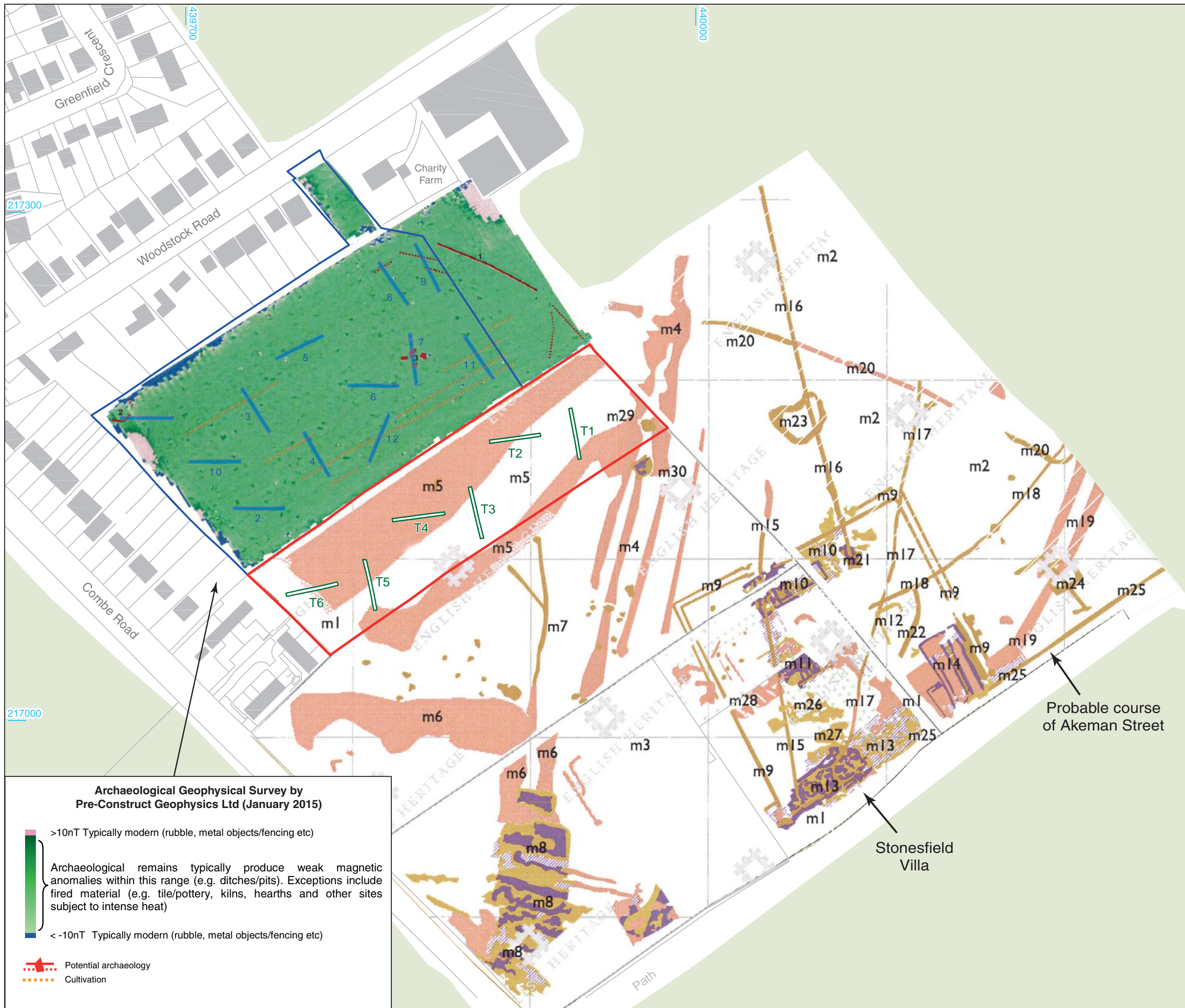
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PROJECT TITLE
Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan

DRAWN BY EE	PROJECT NO. 6303	<i>FIGURE NO.</i>
CHECKED BY DJB	DATE 19/10/2017	1
APPROVED BY RY	SCALE @A4 1:25,000	



- Site boundary (phase 2)
- Evaluation trench
- Site boundary (phase 1)
- Previous evaluation trench (CA 2015)

- English Heritage 2013 Geophysical Survey results:**
- strongly magnetic
 - raised magnetic
 - positive magnetic
 - agricultural / ferrous noise
 - strong negative magnetic
 - negative magnetic



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PROJECT TITLE
 Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan showing geophysical survey results and Phase 1 evaluation trenches

DRAWN BY EE **PROJECT NO.** 6303 **FIGURE NO.**
CHECKED BY DJB **DATE** 19/10/2017 **2**
APPROVED BY RY **SCALE@A3** 1:2,000

Archaeological Geophysical Survey by Pre-Construct Geophysics Ltd (January 2015)

>10nT Typically modern (rubble, metal objects/fencing etc)

Archaeological remains typically produce weak magnetic anomalies within this range (e.g. ditches/pits). Exceptions include fired material (e.g. tile/pottery, kilns, hearths and other sites subject to intense heat)

< -10nT Typically modern (rubble, metal objects/fencing etc)

Potential archaeology

Cultivation



Trench 2, looking north (1m scales)



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PROJECT TITLE

Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield,
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FIGURE TITLE

Trench 2, photograph

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FIGURE NO.

3



The site from the location of Stonesfield Villa, looking north



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PROJECT TITLE

**Charity Farm (Phase 2), Stonesfield,
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FIGURE TITLE

The site, photograph

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CHECKED BY **DJB** DATE **19/10/2017**
APPROVED BY **RY** SCALE@A4 **NA**

FIGURE NO.

4

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