

Project name:

Westcott Venture Park Solar Extension

Client:

Oxford Archaeology

May 2015

Job ref: J8237

Report author:

Thomas Richardson MSc ACIfA

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

Project name:

Westcott Venture Park Solar Extension

Client:

Oxford Archaeology

Gradiometry



Job ref: Field team:

Joshua Jones BSc (Hons) PCIfA, Ben Stevens,

Stephen Weston BA (Hons)

Techniques: Project manager:

Detailed magnetic survey – Simon Haddrell Beng(Hons) AMBCS PCIFA

Survey date: Report written By:

15th-22nd April 2015 Thomas Richardson MSc ACIFA

Site centred at: CAD illustrations by:

SP 707 170 Thomas Richardson MSc ACIFA

Post code: Checked by:

HP18 0XB Peter Barker C.Eng MICE MCIWEM MCIFA FCInistCES

Job ref: **J8237** Date: **May 2015**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LI	LIST OF FIGURES2					
1	SUI	JMMARY OF RESULTS	3			
2	INT	TRODUCTION	3			
	2.1	Background synopsis	3			
	2.2	Site location	3			
	2.3	Description of site	3			
	2.4	Geology and soils	3			
	2.5	Site history and archaeological potential	3			
	2.6	Survey objectives	4			
	2.7	Survey methods	4			
	2.8	Processing, presentation and interpretation of results	4			
	2.8	8.1 Processing	4			
2.8.2 Presentation of results and interpretation						
3 RESULTS						
	3.1	Probable Archaeology	5			
	3.2	Possible Archaeology	5			
	3.3	Medieval/Post-Medieval Agriculture	6			
	3.4	Other Anomalies	6			
4	DA	ATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT	7			
5	CO	ONCLUSION	7			
6	REF	FERENCES	8			
APPENDIX A – METHODOLOGY & SURVEY EQUIPMENT9						
APPENDIX B – BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MAGNETIC SURVEY10						
ΔΙ	APPENDIX C – GLOSSARY OF MAGNETIC ANOMALIES					



Geophysical Survey Report
Project Name: Westcott Venture Park Solar Extension
Client: Oxford Archaeology Job ref: **J8237**Date: **May 2015**

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 01	1:1750	Site location, survey area & referencing
Figure 02	1:1750	Colour plot of gradiometer data showing extreme values – overview
Figure 03	1:1000	Colour plot of gradiometer data showing extreme values – west
Figure 04	1:1000	Colour plot of gradiometer data showing extreme values – east
Figure 05	1:1750	Plot of minimally processed gradiometer data – overview
Figure 06	1:1000	Plot of minimally processed gradiometer data – west
Figure 07	1:1000	Plot of minimally processed gradiometer data – east
Figure 08	1:1750	Abstraction and interpretation of gradiometer anomalies – overview
Figure 09	1:1000	Abstraction and interpretation of gradiometer anomalies – west
Figure 10	1:1000	Abstraction and interpretation of gradiometer anomalies – east



Job ref: **J8237** Oxford Archaeology May 2015

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A detailed gradiometry survey was conducted over approximately 27 hectares of grassland. The survey has not identified any probable archaeology. Areas of ridge and furrow cultivation confirm the evidence from the desk-based assessment suggesting that the area was used for agriculture during the medieval period. There are some possible archaeological anomalies, however these could all equally be modern in origin. A number of former airfield features can be seen across the area, along with more modern features. These include underground services, land drains, scattered magnetic debris, ferrous objects, and magnetic disturbance from runways and fencing.

2 **INTRODUCTION**

2.1 **Background synopsis**

Stratascan were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey of an area outlined for a solar farm. This survey forms part of an archaeological investigation being undertaken by Oxford Archaeology.

2.2 Site location

The site is located to the west of Westcott, Buckinghamshire at OS ref. SP 707 170.

2.3 Description of site

The survey area is approximately 27 hectares of grassland, split over six fields at a former airfield. The site is flat, with a small fenced off area in the centre of the site that could not be surveyed.

2.4 Geology and soils

The underlying geology is West Walton Formation – Mudstone (British Geological Survey website). There is no recorded drift geology (British Geological Survey website).

The overlying soils are known as Denchworth which are typical pelo-stagnogley soils. These consist of clayey soils with similar fine loamy over clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 4 Eastern England).

2.5 Site history and archaeological potential

Extract from 'Westcott Solar Farm Extension Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment' (Oxford Archaeology 2014):

No heritage assets have been recorded within the Site or the wider Study Area that date between the Palaeolithic and Bronze Age periods. The potential for such assets occurring within the Site is considered to be low. An Iron Age settlement has been recorded c 0.5km to



Job ref: **J8237** Oxford Archaeology May 2015

the north of the Site and further settlements in the immediate area are considered to be a possibility. The potential for Iron Age assets to exist within the Site is considered to be medium - low. The major Roman road of Akeman Street passes within 120 metres to the north east of the Site, while evidence for Roman settlement and trackways was recorded in Westcott village during excavations at The White Swan public house in the mid-2000s. The potential for Roman assets to exist within the Site is considered to be medium. No early medieval assets have been recorded within the wider Study Area and the potential for such assets to occur within the Site is considered to be low. In the later medieval period the Site appears to have been covered by open fields that served the village of Westcott to the south east. Some fragments of the ridge and furrow agriculture associated with these pre-enclosure field systems survives within the Site and therefore the potential for later medieval features within the Site is known to be high. There is no evidence for any post-medieval development within the Site and the potential for such assets is low.

The Site was developed as part of Westcott Airfield in the early 1940s and in the post-war era became part of the Royal Ordnance Site that tested ballistic missile rocket engines. Six of these former test stands survive and are preserved as Listed Buildings (three Grade II*, three Grade II). While the construction of the two airfield runways is likely to have impacted upon subsurface archaeological features, the remaining parts of the Site appear to have remained relatively undisturbed, apart from some limited service trenching.

2.6 Survey objectives

The objective of the survey was to locate any features of possible archaeological origin in order that they may be assessed prior to development.

2.7 Survey methods

This report and all fieldwork have been conducted in accordance with both the English Heritage guidelines outlined in the document: Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation, 2008 and with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists document Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey.

Given the potential for Iron Age and Roman activity, detailed magnetic survey (gradiometry) was used as an efficient and effective method of locating archaeological anomalies. More information regarding this technique is included in Appendix A.

2.8 Processing, presentation and interpretation of results

2.8.1 Processing

Processing is performed using specialist software. This can emphasise various aspects contained within the data but which are often not easily seen in the raw data. Basic processing of the magnetic data involves 'flattening' the background levels with respect to adjacent traverses and adjacent grids. Once the basic processing has flattened the background it is then possible to carry out further processing which may include low pass filtering to reduce 'noise' in the data and hence emphasise the archaeological or man-made anomalies.



Geophysical Survey Report

Job ref: **J8237** Project Name: Westcott Venture Park Solar Extension Oxford Archaeology

The following schedule shows the basic processing carried out on all minimally processed

1. Destripe (Removes striping effects caused by zero-point discrepancies

between different sensors and walking directions)

May 2015

2. Destagger (Removes zigzag effects caused by inconsistent walking speeds

on sloping, uneven or overgrown terrain)

2.8.2 Presentation of results and interpretation

gradiometer data used in this report:

The presentation of the data for each site involves a print-out of the minimally processed data both as a greyscale plot and a colour plot showing extreme magnetic values. Magnetic anomalies have been identified and plotted onto the 'Abstraction and Interpretation of Anomalies' drawing for the site.

RESULTS 3

The detailed magnetic gradiometer survey conducted at Westcott Venture Park has identified a number of anomalies that have been characterised as being of a possible archaeological origin.

The difference between probable and possible archaeological origin is a confidence rating. Features identified within the dataset that form recognisable archaeological patterns or seem to be related to a deliberate historical act have been interpreted as being of a probable archaeological origin.

Features of possible archaeological origin tend to be more amorphous anomalies which may have similar magnetic attributes in terms of strength or polarity but are difficult to classify as being archaeological or natural.

The following list of numbered anomalies refers to numerical labels on the interpretation plots.

3.1 Probable Archaeology

No probable archaeology has been identified within the survey area.

3.2 Possible Archaeology

1 Areas of wide, parallel linear anomalies in the north-east and south-west of the site. These may relate to archaeological features ploughed out by ridge and furrow cultivation.



Project Name: Westcott Venture Park Solar Extension Job ref: J8237
Client: Oxford Archaeology Date: May 2015

2 Small discrete positive anomalies across the north of the site. These are indicative of small backfilled cut features, such as pits, and may be of archaeological or modern origin.

A negative linear anomaly in the west of the site. This is indicative of a former bank or earthwork feature, and may be of archaeological or modern origin.

3.3 Medieval/Post-Medieval Agriculture

4 Areas of widely spaced, parallel linear anomalies in the west of the site. These are indicative of ridge and furrow cultivation.

3.4 Other Anomalies

- Areas of magnetic disturbance related to former airfield features. These are visible as parch marks in aerial photography.
- Areas of magnetic disturbance across the site. These may relate to former airfield features, or other modern activity.
- A positive linear anomaly in the south-west of the site. This is indicative of a former cut feature, likely relating to a former airfield feature or other modern activity.
- **8** High amplitude bipolar linear anomalies across much of the site. These are indicative of underground services.
- **9** Weak bipolar linear anomalies across the site. These are indicative of land drains.
- An area of scattered magnetic debris in the north-east of the site. This is likely to be modern in origin.
- Areas of magnetic disturbance are the result of substantial nearby ferrous metal objects such as underground services and runways. These effects can mask weaker archaeological anomalies, but on this site have not affected a significant proportion of the area.
- A number of magnetic 'spikes' (strong focussed values with associated antipolar response) indicate ferrous metal objects. These are likely to be modern rubbish.



Job ref: **J8237** Oxford Archaeology Date: May 2015

DATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

Magnetic survey can generally be recommended over sedimentary geologies such as that seen across the Westcott Venture Park site. The detection of ridge and furrow cultivation suggests that the survey has been effective. Whilst there is a large amount of modern activity relating to the airfield and underground services, the majority of this is over relatively small areas or along linear routes. This makes it unlikely that any archaeological features are going to be completely masked by the disturbance.

5 CONCLUSION

The survey at Westcott Venture Park has not identified any probable archaeology. Although the site has a medium-low potential for Iron Age activity and a medium potential for Roman activity, there are no known features recorded within 100m of the site. The survey therefore suggests that none of this activity extends into the site. Areas of ridge and furrow cultivation confirm the evidence from the desk-based assessment suggesting that the area was used for agriculture during the medieval period. There is some possible ploughed out archaeology, as well as a number of pits and linear anomalies, however these could all equally be modern in origin. A number of former airfield features can be seen across the area, along with more modern features. These include underground services, land drains, scattered magnetic debris, ferrous objects, and magnetic disturbance from runways and fencing.



6 **REFERENCES**

British Geological Survey South Sheet, 1977. Geological Survey Ten Mile Map, South Sheet First Edition (Quaternary). Institute of Geological Sciences.

British Geological Survey, 2001. Geological Survey Ten Mile Map, South Sheet, Fourth Edition (Solid). British Geological Society.

British Geological Survey, n.d., website:

(http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html?Accordion1=1#maps) Geology of Britain viewer.

Chartered Institute For Archaeologists. Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey. http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/nodefiles/Geophysics2010.pdf

English Heritage, 2008. Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation.

Oxford Archaeology, 2014. Westcott Solar Farm Extension Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983. Soils of England and Wales, Sheet 4 Eastern England.



Job ref: **J8237** Oxford Archaeology May 2015

APPENDIX A – METHODOLOGY & SURVEY EQUIPMENT

Grid locations

The location of the survey grids has been plotted together with the referencing information. Grids were set out using a Leica 705auto Total Station and referenced to suitable topographic features around the perimeter of the site or a Leica Smart Rover RTK GPS.

An RTK GPS (Real-time Kinematic Global Positioning System) can locate a point on the ground to a far greater accuracy than a standard GPS unit. A standard GPS suffers from errors created by satellite orbit errors, clock errors and atmospheric interference, resulting in an accuracy of 5m-10m. An RTK system uses a single base station receiver and a number of mobile units. The base station re-broadcasts the phase of the carrier it measured, and the mobile units compare their own phase measurements with those they received from the base station. A SmartNet RTK GPS uses Ordnance Survey's network of over 100 fixed base stations to give an accuracy of around 0.01m.

Survey equipment and gradiometer configuration

Although the changes in the magnetic field resulting from differing features in the soil are usually weak, changes as small as 0.2 nanoTeslas (nT) in an overall field strength of 48,000nT, can be accurately detected using an appropriate instrument.

The mapping of the anomaly in a systematic manner will allow an estimate of the type of material present beneath the surface. Strong magnetic anomalies will be generated by buried iron-based objects or by kilns or hearths. More subtle anomalies such as pits and ditches can be seen if they contain more humic material which is normally rich in magnetic iron oxides when compared with the subsoil.

To illustrate this point, the cutting and subsequent silting or backfilling of a ditch may result in a larger volume of weakly magnetic material being accumulated in the trench compared to the undisturbed subsoil. A weak magnetic anomaly should therefore appear in plan along the line of the ditch.

The magnetic survey was carried out using a dual sensor Grad601-2 Magnetic Gradiometer manufactured by Bartington Instruments Ltd. The instrument consists of two fluxgates very accurately aligned to nullify the effects of the Earth's magnetic field. Readings relate to the difference in localised magnetic anomalies compared with the general magnetic background. The Grad601-2 consists of two high stability fluxgate gradiometers suspended on a single frame. Each gradiometer has a 1m separation between the sensing elements so enhancing the response to weak anomalies.

Sampling interval

Readings were taken at 0.25m centres along traverses 1m apart. This equates to 3600 sampling points in a full 30m x 30m grid.

Depth of scan and resolution

The Grad 601-2 has a typical depth of penetration of 0.5m to 1.0m, though strongly magnetic objects may be visible at greater depths. The collection of data at 0.25m centres provides an optimum methodology for the task balancing cost and time with resolution.

Data capture

The readings are logged consecutively into the data logger which in turn is daily down-loaded into a portable computer whilst on site. At the end of each site survey, data is transferred to the office for processing and presentation.



Client: Oxford Archaeology Date: May 2015

APPENDIX B – BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MAGNETIC SURVEY

Detailed magnetic survey can be used to effectively define areas of past human activity by mapping spatial variation and contrast in the magnetic properties of soil, subsoil and bedrock.

Job ref: **J8237**

Weakly magnetic iron minerals are always present within the soil and areas of enhancement relate to increases in *magnetic susceptibility* and permanently magnetised *thermoremanent* material.

Magnetic susceptibility relates to the induced magnetism of a material when in the presence of a magnetic field. This magnetism can be considered as effectively permanent as it exists within the Earth's magnetic field. Magnetic susceptibility can become enhanced due to burning and complex biological or fermentation processes.

Thermoremanence is a permanent magnetism acquired by iron minerals that, after heating to a specific temperature known as the Curie Point, are effectively demagnetised followed by re-magnetisation by the Earth's magnetic field on cooling. Thermoremanent archaeological features can include hearths and kilns and material such as brick and tile may be magnetised through the same process.

Silting and deliberate infilling of ditches and pits with magnetically enhanced soil creates a relative contrast against the much lower levels of magnetism within the subsoil into which the feature is cut. Systematic mapping of magnetic anomalies will produce linear and discrete areas of enhancement allowing assessment and characterisation of subsurface features. Material such as subsoil and non-magnetic bedrock used to create former earthworks and walls may be mapped as areas of lower enhancement compared to surrounding soils.

Magnetic survey is carried out using a fluxgate gradiometer which is a passive instrument consisting of two sensors mounted vertically 1m apart. The instrument is carried about 30cm above the ground surface and the top sensor measures the Earth's magnetic field whilst the lower sensor measures the same field but is also more affected by any localised buried field. The difference between the two sensors will relate to the strength of a magnetic field created by a buried feature, if no field is present the difference will be close to zero as the magnetic field measured by both sensors will be the same.

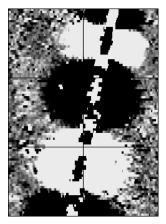
Factors affecting the magnetic survey may include soil type, local geology, previous human activity, disturbance from modern services etc.



pject Name: Westcott Venture Park Solar Extension Job ref: J8237
ent: Oxford Archaeology Date: May 2015

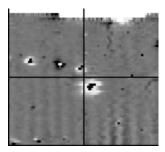
APPENDIX C – GLOSSARY OF MAGNETIC ANOMALIES

Bipolar



A bipolar anomaly is one that is composed of both a positive response and a negative response. It can be made up of any number of positive responses and negative responses. For example a pipeline consisting of alternating positive and negative anomalies is said to be bipolar. See also dipolar which has only one area of each polarity. The interpretation of the anomaly will depend on the magnitude of the magnetic field strength. A weak response may be caused by a clay field drain while a strong response will probably be caused by a metallic service.

Dipolar

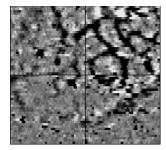


This consists of a single positive anomaly with an associated negative response. There should be no separation between the two polarities of response. These responses will be created by a single feature. The interpretation of the anomaly will depend on the magnitude of the magnetic measurements. A very strong anomaly is likely to be caused by a ferrous object.

Positive anomaly with associated negative response

See bipolar and dipolar.

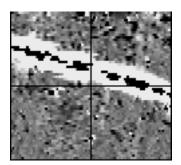
Positive linear



A linear response which is entirely positive in polarity. These are usually related to in-filled cut features where the fill material is magnetically enhanced compared to the surrounding matrix. They can be caused by ditches of an archaeological origin, but also former field boundaries, ploughing activity and some may even have a natural origin.

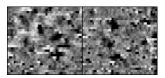


Positive linear anomaly with associated negative response



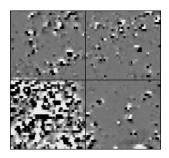
A positive linear anomaly which has a negative anomaly located adjacently. This will be caused by a single feature. In the example shown this is likely to be a single length of wire/cable probably relating to a modern service. Magnetically weaker responses may relate to earthwork style features and field boundaries.

Positive point/area



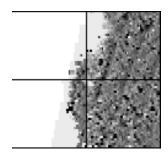
These are generally spatially small responses, perhaps covering just 3 or 4 reading nodes. They are entirely positive in polarity. Similar to positive linear anomalies they are generally caused by in-filled cut features. These include pits of an archaeological origin, possible tree bowls or other naturally occurring depressions in the ground.

Magnetic debris



Magnetic debris consists of numerous dipolar responses spread over an area. If the amplitude of response is low (+/-3nT) then the origin is likely to represent general ground disturbance with no clear cause, it may be related to something as simple as an area of dug or mixed earth. A stronger anomaly (+/-250nT) is more indicative of a spread of ferrous debris. Moderately strong anomalies may be the result of a spread of thermoremanent material such as bricks or ash.

Magnetic disturbance

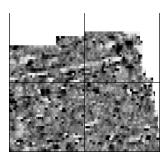


Magnetic disturbance is high amplitude and can be composed of either a bipolar anomaly, or a single polarity response. It is essentially associated with magnetic interference from modern ferrous structures such as fencing, vehicles or buildings, and as a result is commonly found around the perimeter of a site near to boundary fences.



May 2015

Negative linear



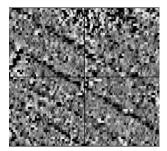
A linear response which is entirely negative in polarity. These are generally caused by earthen banks where material with a lower magnetic magnitude relative to the background top soil is built up. See also ploughing activity.

Job ref: **J8237**

Negative point/area

Opposite to positive point anomalies these responses may be caused by raised areas or earthen banks. These could be of an archaeological origin or may have a natural origin.

Ploughing activity



Ploughing activity can often be visualised by a series of parallel linear anomalies. These can be of either positive polarity or negative polarity depending on site specifics. It can be difficult to distinguish between ancient ploughing and more modern ploughing. Clues such as the separation of each linear, straightness, strength of response and cross cutting relationships can be used to aid this, although none of these can be guaranteed to differentiate between different phases of activity.

Polarity

Term used to describe the measurement of the magnetic response. An anomaly can have a positive polarity (values above OnT) and/or a negative polarity (values below OnT).

Strength of response

The amplitude of a magnetic response is an important factor in assigning an interpretation to a particular anomaly. For example a positive anomaly covering a 10m² area may have values up to around 3000nT, in which case it is likely to be caused by modern magnetic interference. However, the same size and shaped anomaly but with values up to only 4nT may have a natural origin. Colour plots are used to show the amplitude of response.

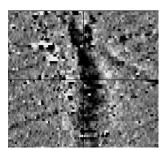


Job ref: **J8237** Oxford Archaeology Date: May 2015

Thermoremanent response

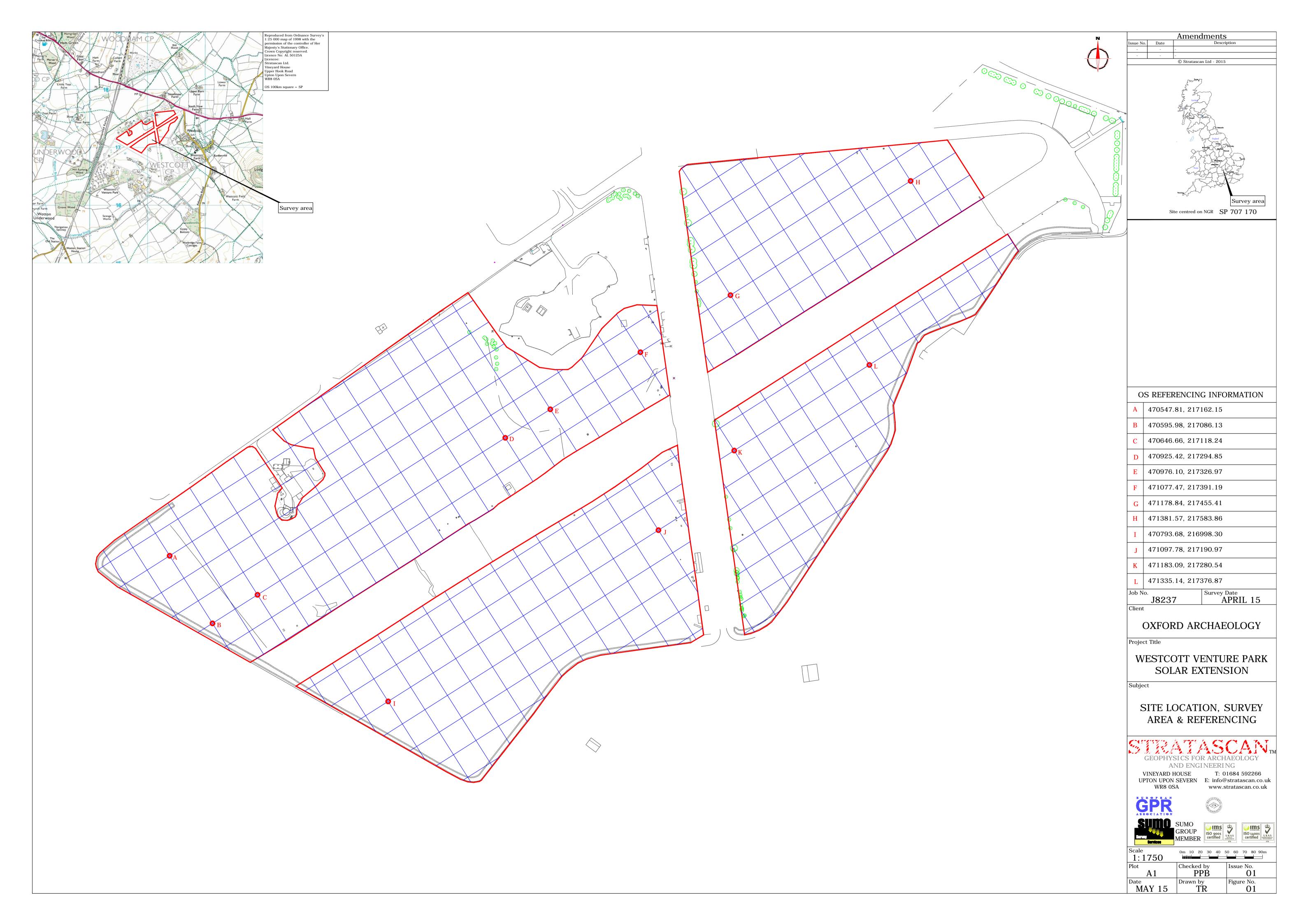
A feature which has been subject to heat may result in it acquiring a magnetic field. This can be anything up to approximately +/-100 nT in value. These features include clay fired drains, brick, bonfires, kilns, hearths and even pottery. If the heat application has occurred in situ (e.g. a kiln) then the response is likely to be bipolar compared to if the heated objects have been disturbed and moved relative to each other, in which case they are more likely to take an irregular form and may display a debris style response (e.g. ash).

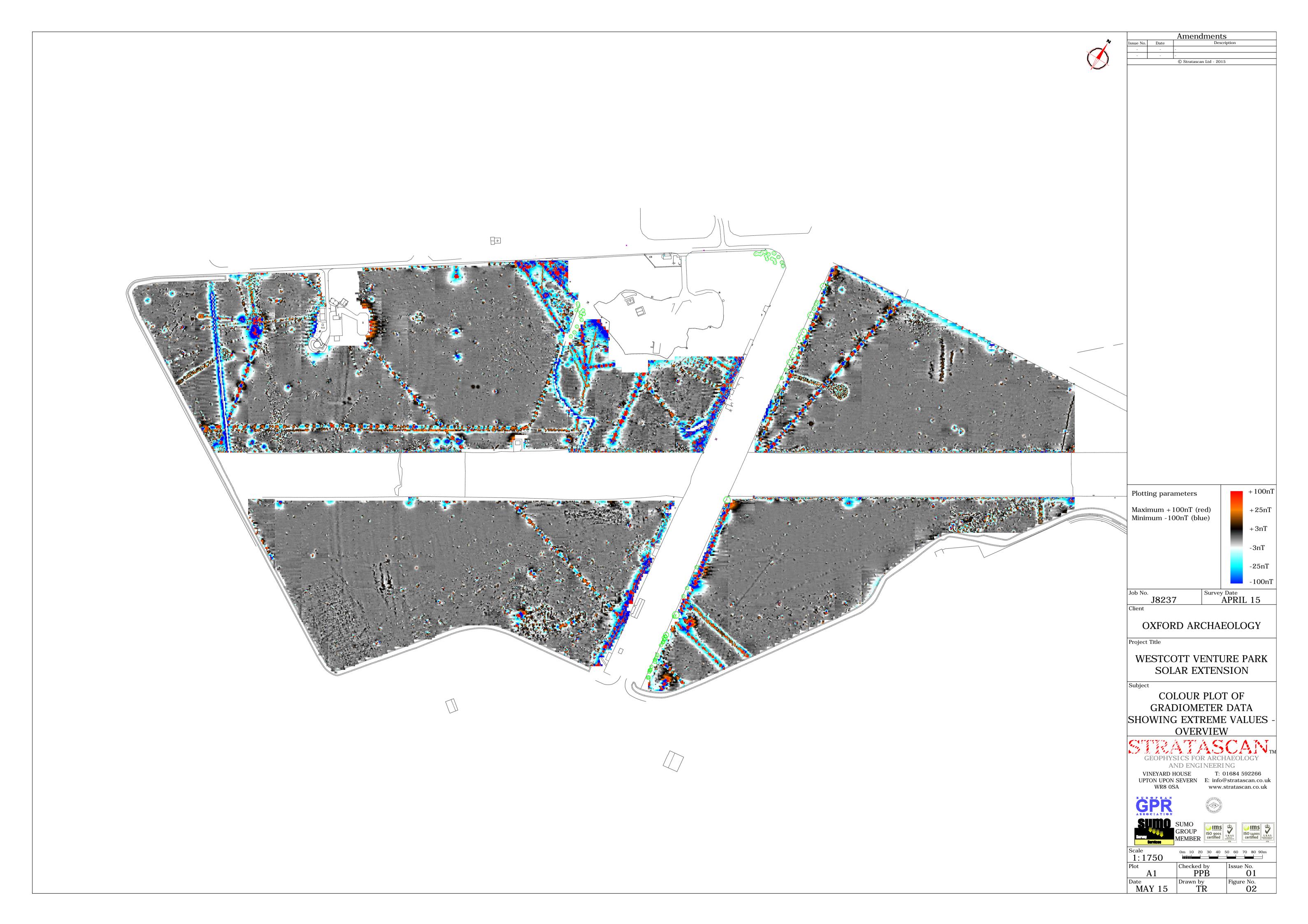
Weak background variations

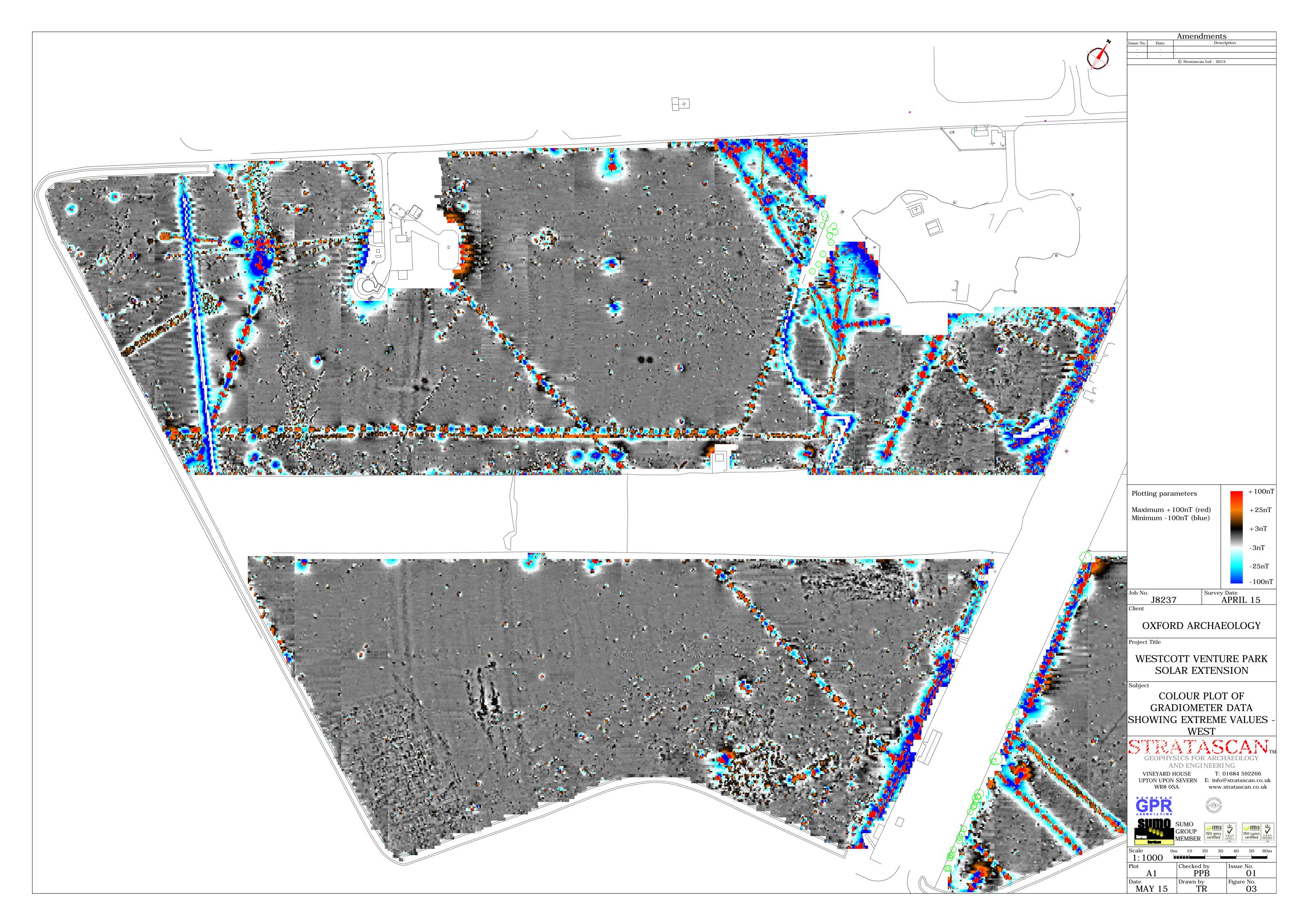


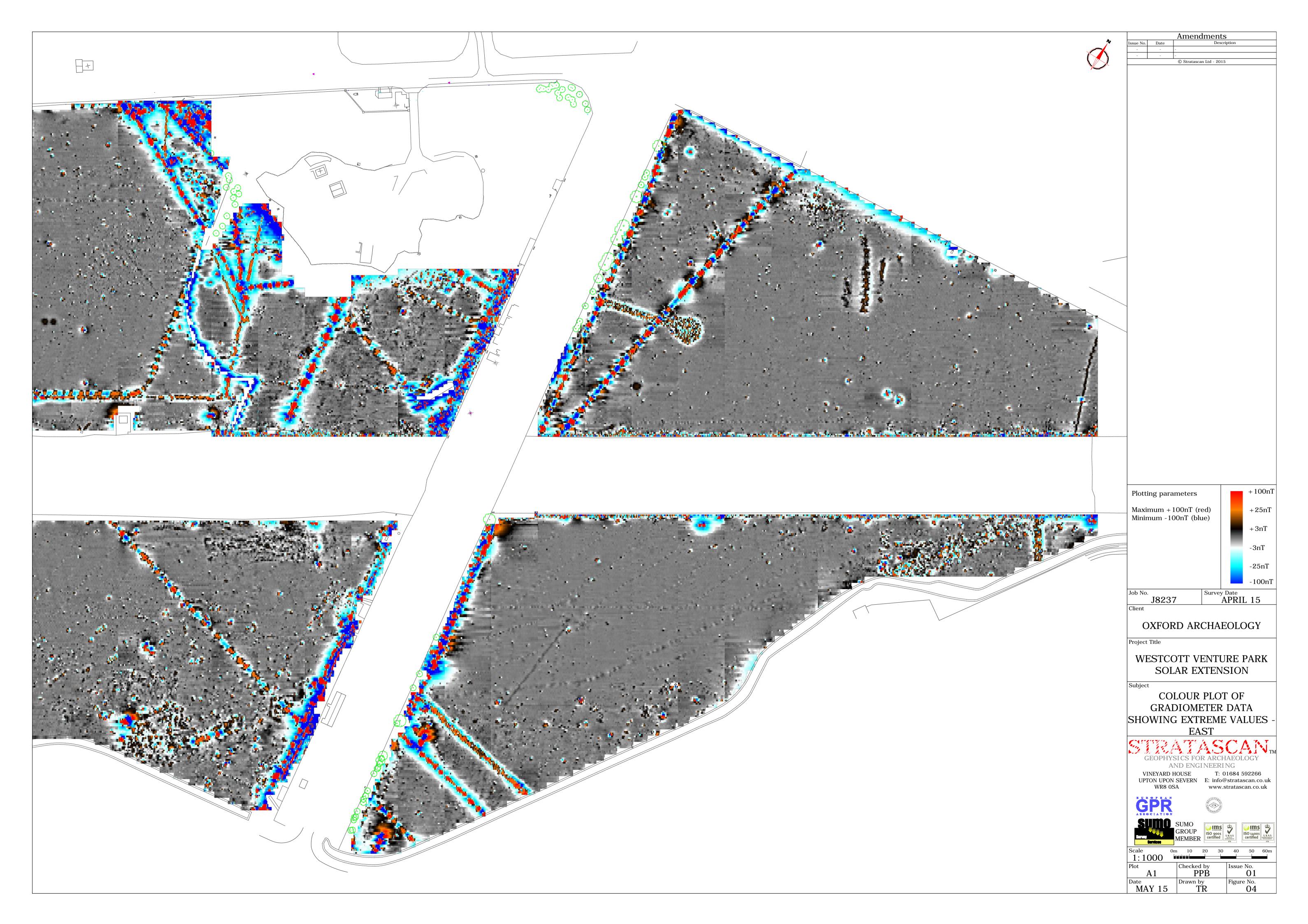
Weakly magnetic wide scale variations within the data can sometimes be seen within sites. These usually have no specific structure but can often appear curvy and sinuous in form. They are likely to be the result of natural features, such as soil creep, dried up (or seasonal) streams. They can also be caused by changes in the underlying geology or soil type which may contain unpredictable distributions of magnetic minerals, and are usually apparent in several locations across a site.

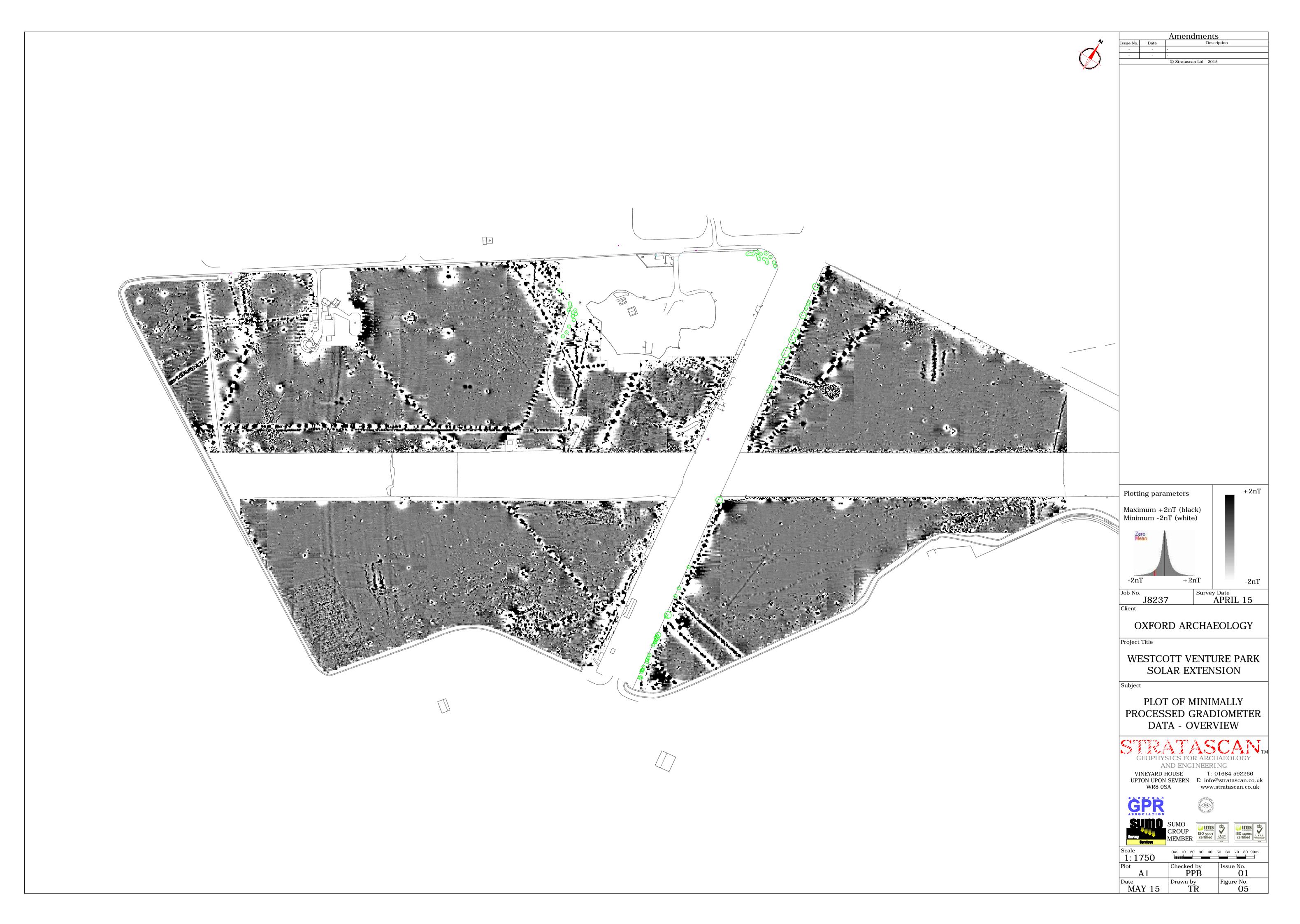


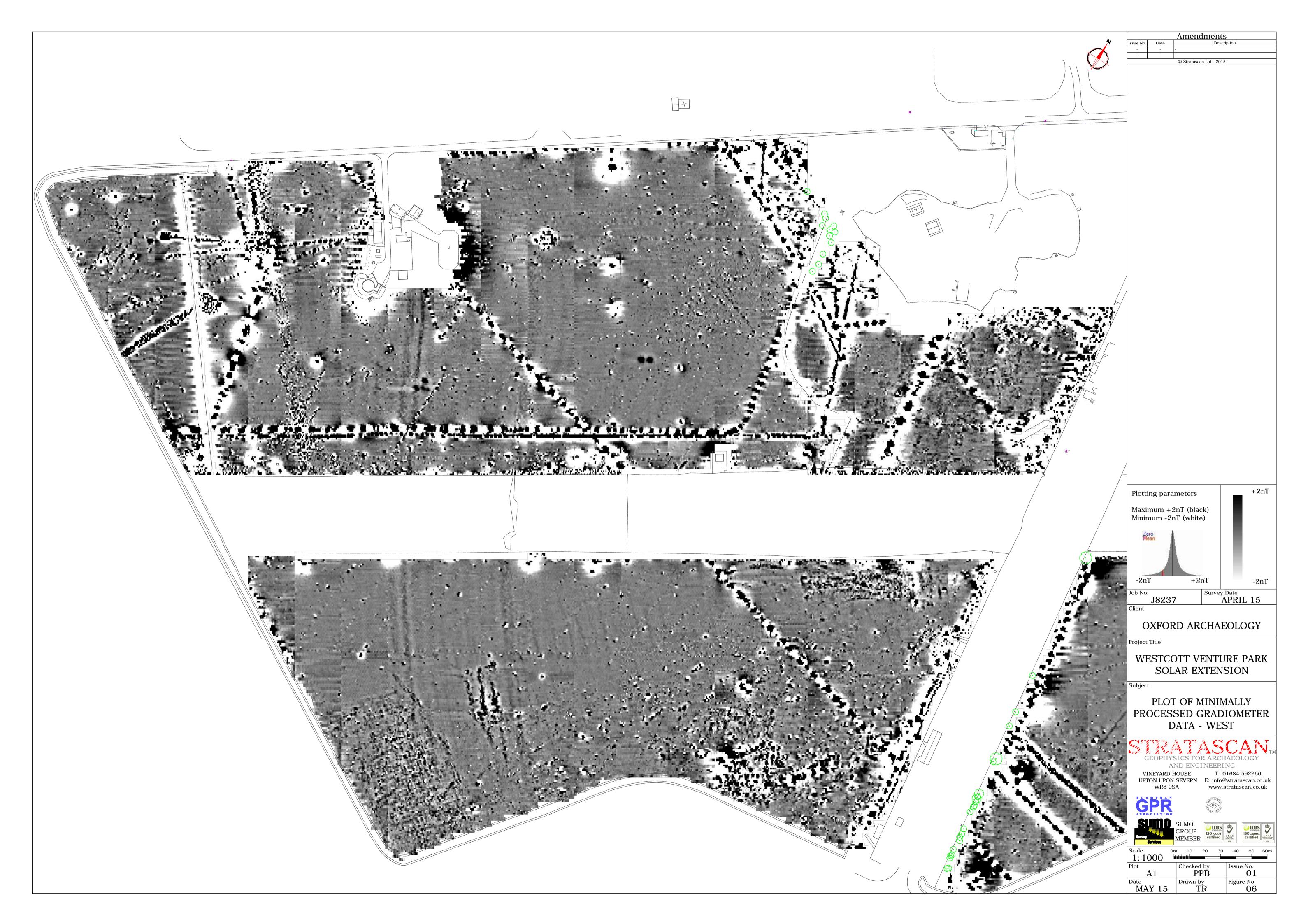


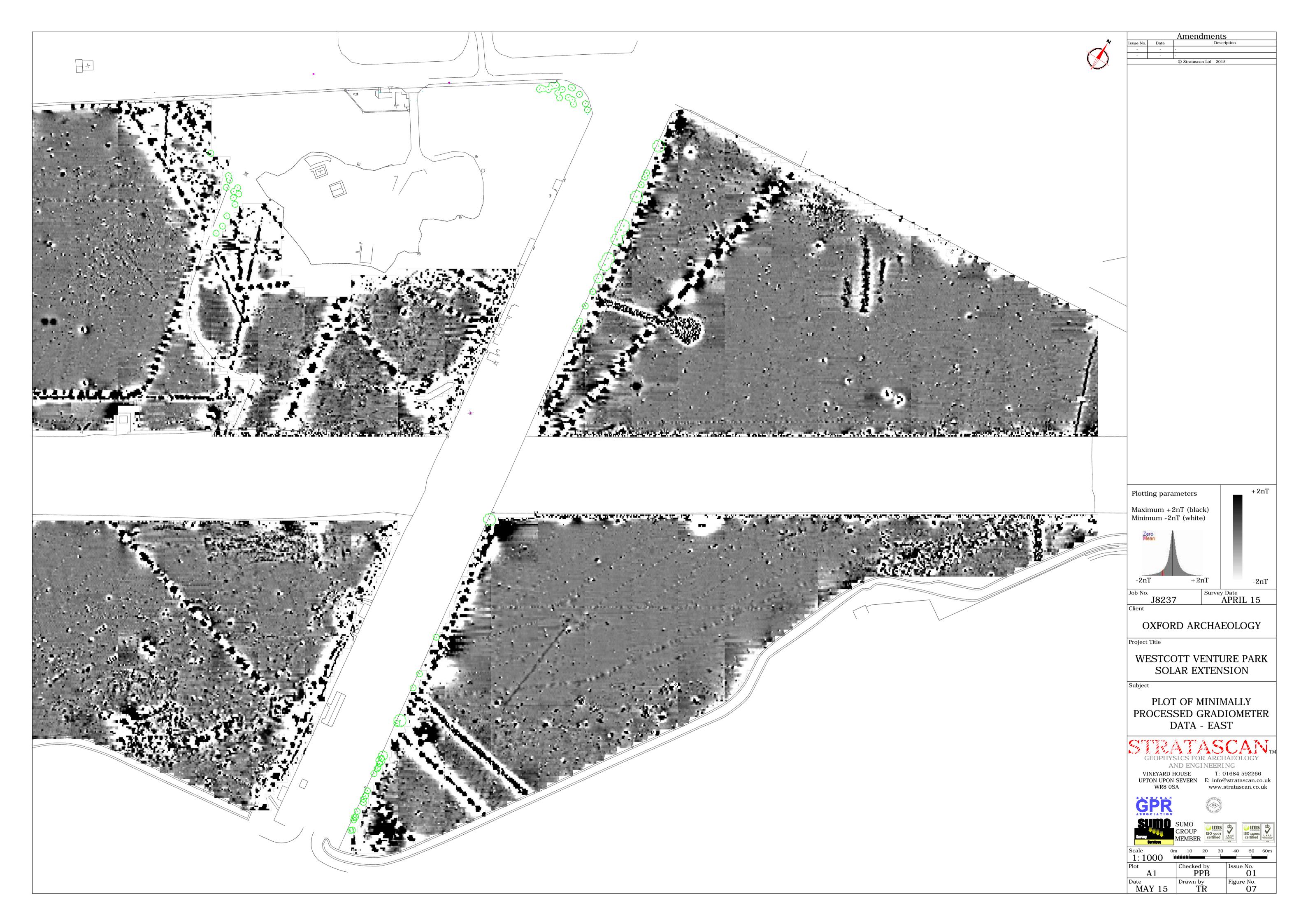


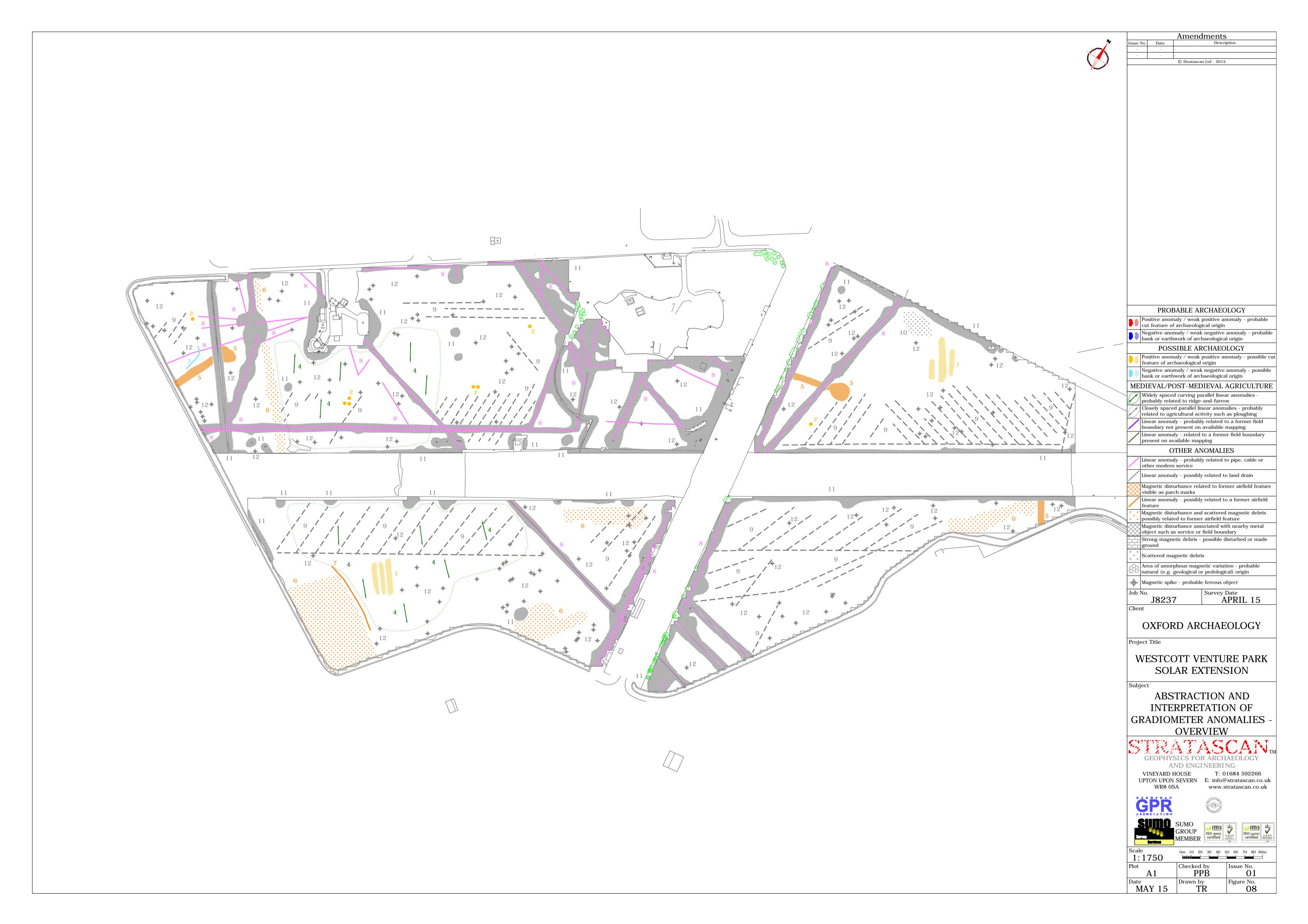


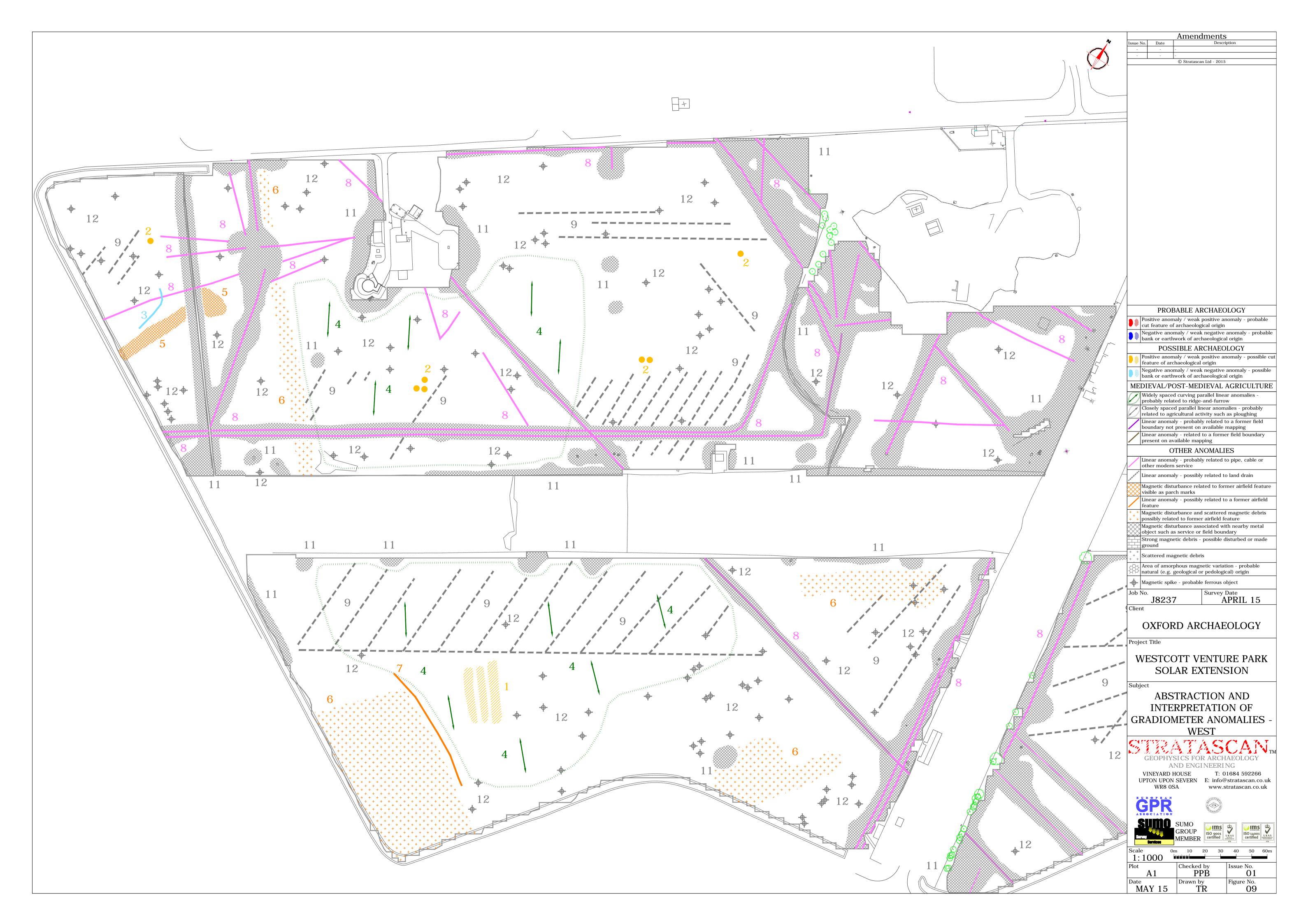


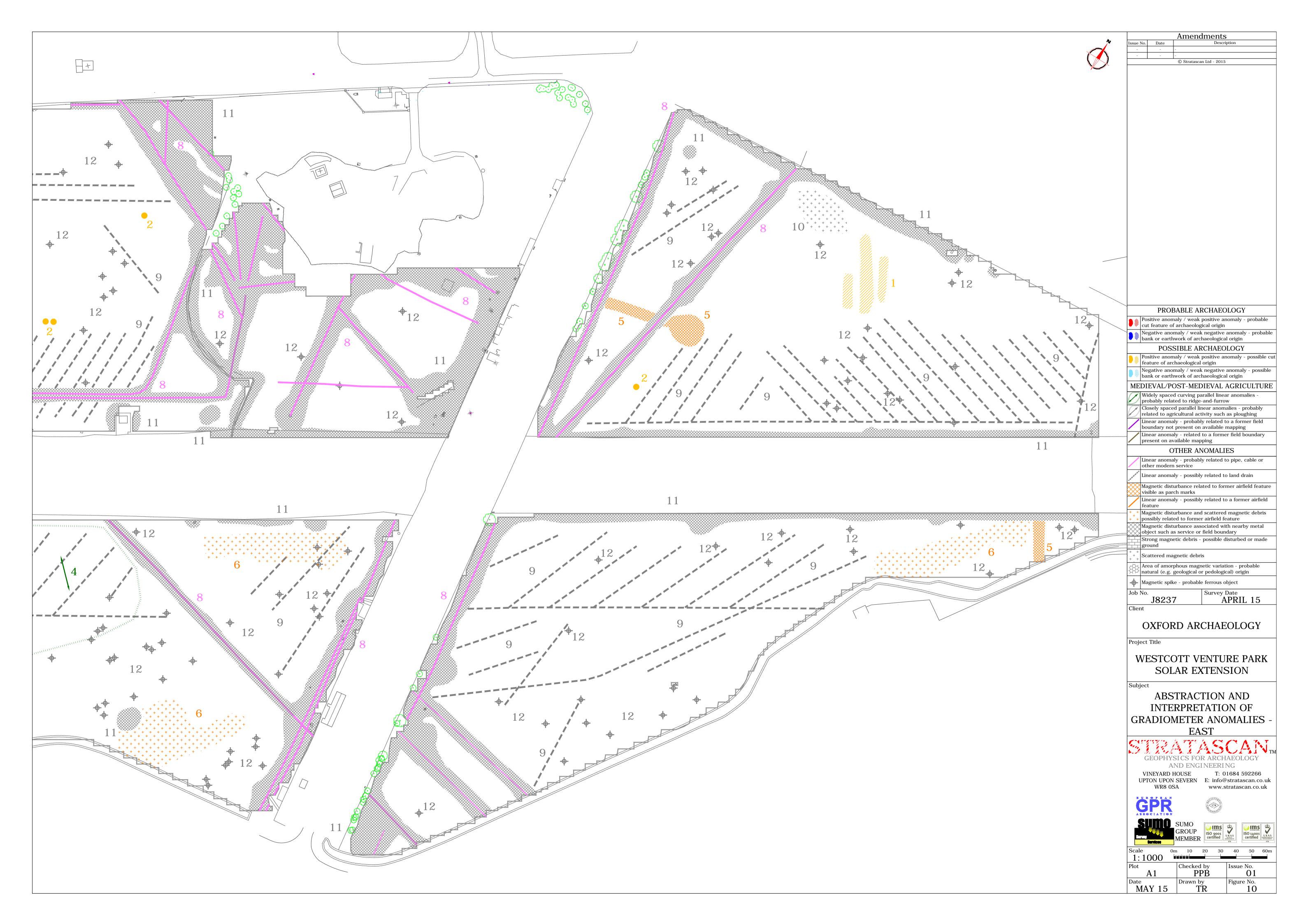












Your Survey Partner

For a complete and complementary range of survey services

Survey services you can rely on

Archaeological **As Built Records BIM Ready 3D Models Boundary Disputes CCTV** Geophysical **Laser Scanning Measured Building Pipeline Routes** Railway Retrofit **Setting Out Statutory Plan Collation Topographic Utility Mapping UXO Detection Void Detection**

STRATASCAN LTD

Vineyard House Upper Hook Road Upton upon Severn Worcestershire WR8 OSA United Kingdom

T:01684 592266 F: 01684 594142 info@stratascan.co.uk www.stratascan.co.uk













