

Land to the east of Stane Street, Billingshurst, West Sussex

Project specification for an archaeological evaluation

**5th November 2025
Revised 19th November 2025**



Ref: 25s98ev

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The site is located to the east of Stane Street (A29) and south of New Road, on the northern margins of Billingshurst, West Sussex (TQ 0937 2660) (Fig. 1). The development site is currently an irregular shaped pasture field, bounded by residential development to the south, and to the north, a small commercial development.

2.0 Planning Background

2.1 Planning consent (ref DC/25/0458) has been gained from Horsham District Council for the construction of a workshop and storage buildings, with associated parking and access, at the site. The consent is subject to a condition (4) requiring a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in advance of development.

2.2. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development of the site, it is proposed to carry out a field evaluation on the site as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the District's policies on archaeology, to determine the archaeological potential of the site and to help formulate a mitigation strategy as necessary. This is also in line with consultation advice, provided by Mr Nick Truckle (advising the District Council).

2.3 A single component of work is therefore proposed at this stage; namely field investigation by means of machine trenching. The evaluation is to take place according to a written scheme of investigation approved by Nickle Truckle as advisor to the District Council. Where appropriate and relevant, the recommendations in *Sussex Archaeological Standards* (ESCC 2019) will be followed.

2.4 Dependent on the findings of this evaluation, further archaeological work may be requested, as will be determined through consultation with the archaeological advisor to Horsham District Council. This document is concerned with the initial phase of archaeological works, and any additional work will be governed by a separate written scheme of investigation.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The archaeological potential of the site has been considered in a desk-based assessment (ACD 2021). In summary the archaeological potential stems from its location adjacent to Stane Street which was the Roman Road from London to Chichester on the south coast. The site also lies within an 'archaeology notification area' within the local plan. The site lies well to the north of the historic (Medieval) core of Billingshurst but with a few late post-medieval buildings and sites of buildings in areas nearby. Fieldwork c.50m to the southwest of the site recovered a small collection of prehistoric flintwork. A recent geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation to the north of the site (Sumo 2017, Rouard 2019) revealed a small number of geophysical anomalies, though no archaeological features were identified in the subsequent trenching.

4.0 Aims and Objectives

4.1 The aims of the investigation will be to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the proposed area of development.

4.2 This work will be carried out in a manner which will not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation in-situ, or might be better studied under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

4.3 The work will be carried out in accordance with the relevant guidelines of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA 2014a).

4.4 The specific research aims of this project are;

- a) To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.
- b) To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
- c) To provide information in order to draw up an appropriate mitigation strategy if required.
- d) The potential and significance of any such deposits located will be assessed according to the research priorities such as set out in English Heritage Research Agenda (EH 2005), or any more local or thematic research priorities such as the *South-East Research Framework Resources Assessment and Research Agenda* (SERFA 2019) as necessary.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Trench Layout

5.1.1 We propose to dig 9 trenches, each 25m long and 1.6m to 1.8m wide. The trenches will be located as close as possible to the positions shown on Figure 1. They may need to be moved or subdivided to avoid any constraints such as buried services, protected trees and ecological exclusion zones.

5.2 A contingency for the equivalent of an additional 50m length of trenching is included within the proposal, should this be required to clarify any deposits found in the initial trenching.

5.3 Excavation Methodology

5.3.1 Topsoil and any other overburden will be removed by a 360° type machine. A toothless ditching bucket will be used to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. Machine excavation will be undertaken in spits, to enable the recovery of artefactual and ecofactual remains from individual layers. The excavation will be carried out under constant archaeological supervision.

5.3.2 Where archaeological features are certainly or probably present, the stripped areas will be cleaned using appropriate hand tools.

5.3.3 Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed will be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief, without compromising the objective set out in 3.2. The proportion of deposits investigated will be discussed with the archaeological advisor to the District Council and follow the Sussex Archaeological Standards 2019 Annex C.

5.3.4 A proportion of archaeological features, structures and deposits exposed within the trial trenches shall be partially excavated by the Archaeological Contractor by hand. Partial excavation will be defined as follows:

- All linear features will be sampled, using a minimum 1-metre-long slot
- Sampling of linear features to be at 10-metre intervals or totalling 10% of the length of the linear cut feature (whichever is the greater)
- All discrete features will be half sectioned until sufficiently characterised.

5.3.5 Once this has been achieved a lower sample of cut features may be considered appropriate subject to agreement with the Archaeological Adviser.

- Undated features should be rapidly fully excavated for finds retrieval
- Where three or fewer pits or probable pits, whether or not evidently datable or ancient (excepting evidently modern features), occur in any trench, all those features will be sampled. Priority is to be given to features with more charcoal-rich fills or anticipated dating evidence
- Should five or fewer archaeological features of any kind, discrete or linear, be revealed within any one trench, all those features will be sampled
- Where two or fewer buried pottery vessels are present, buried upright or inverted, both should be lifted and removed from site;

- If such vessels are believed to be human cremation burials (e.g. because of visible remains of burnt or cremated bone in their contents), a Licence from the Ministry of Justice, permitting their removal, must first be obtained
- Other probable cremation vessels or unburnt human remains should be left in situ after recording their visible portions.

5.3.6 At the post-excavation stage (see 5.5 below) the collection policy of the recipient museum will be followed and which may involve the discarding of some classes of building material, such as brick and tile or flint nodules after recording with only a representative sample being retained.

5.3.7 Conservation on site will follow guidelines in First Aid For Finds with any other specialist conservation work subcontracted to our conservation advisor (see below).

5.3.8 A programme of environmental sampling will take place should sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits be located. Typically this involves samples of up to 40L depending on the size of the feature examined. A programme of environmental sampling will take place, if any significant deposits are encountered. These will be sampled in consultation with our environmental consultants and the archaeological advisor to the District Council. Sampling will take place according to Historic England guidance (HE 2015a).

5.3.9 It is not envisaged that unusual or important deposits (such as peat or waterlogged deposits) will be encountered. However, should these be present, a programme of sampling under the guidance of our specialists will take place in consultation with the archaeological advisor to the District Council.

5.3.10 Discovery of any human remains will be reported to the coroner but no further action will be taken as part of the evaluation exercise, unless too fragile to survive reburial or if requested as additional work by the client in consultation with the archaeological advisor to the District Council. Any subsequent excavation of human remains will be carried out following receipt of the appropriate Ministry of Justice license. Recovery and recording methodologies for human remains will follow standard procedures identified by McKinley and Roberts (1993), Brickley and McKinley (2004), and the TVAS Field Recording Manual (8th edition 2018). Any human bone recovered of archaeological significance will be deposited with the appropriate museum in due course, and will not be reinterred in earth.

5.3.11 Spoilheaps will be searched for finds including use of a metal detector.

5.3.12 Metal detectors will be used by in-house staff to enhance the recovery of metal finds as the overlying layers are removed. All gold and silver, prehistoric base metal and any associated objects will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner and county finds liaison officer according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act (1996) and subsequent amendments. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft. No title will be assumed by the finder of any items of value. Metal detectors will primarily be used to search hand excavated spoil, although site surveys may also be undertaken, with a log kept of any features surveyed and the results.

5.3.13 Following completion of all excavation, recording and monitoring, the trenches will be efficiently backfilled but not resurfaced, re-turfed or reseeded.

5.4 Recording Methodology

5.4.1 A single context recording system will be used in accordance with the TVAS Field Recording Manual (8th edition 2018). Descriptions of individual deposits and features will be recorded on pro-forma context recording sheets.

5.4.2 All archaeological deposits exposed will be planned at a scale of 1:20 and sections drawn at a scale of 1:10. All site drawings will be by pencil on drafting film.

5.4.3 Heights above OD will be taken and recorded on plans and sections.

5.4.4 Where appropriate, significant finds will be recorded in 3D.

5.4.5 The location of the trenches, and of all plans and sections will be tied into the National Grid.

5.4.6 A full photographic record will be made of the evaluation project, consisting of high-resolution digital photographs. It will record the principal features and finds discovered, both in detail and in their general context. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted. Digital working shots will also be taken during the evaluation, which will be forwarded to West Sussex County Council and Horsham District Council for training and outreach purposes if requested.

5.5 Post-fieldwork

5.5.1 Finds processing, sieving of bulk samples (including flotation and the sorting of residues) and analysis will commence immediately following the completion of the fieldwork in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE, 2015b). Post-fieldwork will be completed according to TVAS post-fieldwork manual (6th edition 2013).

5.5.2 Artefacts/ecofacts will be cleaned, conserved and prepared for long term museum storage.

5.5.3 Specialist reports will be prepared on the artefacts recovered. Particular attention will be paid to correlating the pottery recovered with local or regional fabric type sequences that have already been established for this area.

5.5.4 Specialist analysis and reporting will be carried out by the following specialist staff or consultants as appropriate:

pottery - Dr J Timby, or Mr. Luke Barber (consultants) or Mr R Tabor (TVAS)

stone - Dr D Williams (Southampton University)

bone - Ms S Hamilton-Dyer, Dr M Holmes,(consultants) or Ms C Falys(TVAS)

human bone - Dr C Falys (TVAS)

later struck flint - Dr S Ford (TVAS)

charred plant remains/environment - Professor M Robinson (Oxford University) or Ms R McKenna (consultant)

metalwork- Dr R Taylor or Dr D Dungworth (consultants)

ceramic building material - Ms D Milbank (TVAS)

slag- Dr D Dungworth (consultant)

pollen- Mr Dan Young or Mr Chris Green (Quest, Reading University)

radiocarbon- Queens University, Belfast

conservation- Wiltshire County Council Conservation Centre

6.0 Report and Dissemination

6.1 A full report on the results of the evaluation should be available within 2-3weeks of completion of the fieldwork.

6.2 The report will follow our established format, comprising a descriptive text, illustrations and catalogues in appendices.

6.3 The text will address the aims and objectives of the evaluation, the methodology employed, describe the basic nature of the archaeological deposits discovered, and report on the artefacts recovered. It will then attempt to place the significance of the findings in their local, regional and national setting if appropriate.

6.4 The report will include a frontsheet providing the following information:

*Site name

*District and Parish

*Planning reference

*Grid reference

*Site activity (eg. evaluation trenching, geophysical survey, fieldwalking, watching brief, excavation etc.)

*Date and duration of project

*Site code

*Area of site

*Summary of results

*Monuments identified (referenced to the RCHME Thesaurus of Monument Types)

*Location and reference of archive

6.5 The illustrations will include:

- a site location plan
- a trench layout plan
- trench plans and sections
- profiles/sections of a selection of excavated features
- a selection of colour photos of significant findings

6.6 Catalogues giving descriptions of trenches, archaeological features, and artefacts will be contained in a series of appendices.

6.7 Any findings of academic merit will be published as a note in an appropriate journal such as *Sussex Archaeological Collections* or the CBA South East newsletter. Non-published report(s) will be made available for inspection or download on the TVAS web site.

6.8 The results will be supplied to the West Sussex HER in digital form on a CD. The CD will include a copy of the report in (.pdfA) format, along with a selection of photographs and any relevant GIS data. A copy of the report will also be forwarded to the local planning authority. A selection of digital images documenting the project will also be supplied to the HER if requested.

6.9 Details will be supplied to the OASIS project.

6.10 Information will be made available to interested local historical or archaeological societies, along with members of the local community, including the opportunity to visit the fieldwork should this be requested, although due to health and safety considerations, and the possible issue of commercial confidentiality, any dissemination of information or arranging of site visits will only take place following consultation with the client and the archaeological advisor to the District Council.

7.0 Archive Deposition

7.1 The finds and site archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015b). The guidelines issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA 2014b) will also be followed.

7.2 The preferred depository for the site and finds archive is Horsham Museum, but unfortunately, they are not accepting new material at the present time. The archives and finds will therefore be held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services until a suitable depository can be found.

7.3 The records will be copied onto microfiche for the National Archaeological Record.

8.0 General Items

8.1 The project will be managed on a regular basis by a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (S. Ford, J Pine or S Wallis) with an appropriate area of competence.

8.2 The project will be carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct (CifA 2014c).

8.3 Safe working practices as set out in TVAS health and safety manual will be adopted and current health and safety regulations will be adhered to. A risk assessment for the project will be prepared prior to commencement of fieldwork. If the site is accessible to the public deep trenches will be fenced with barrier mesh/bunting and road pins or Heras fencing as necessary.

8.4 Our insurance cover comprises £10 million for public liability, £10 million for employee liability, cover for any hired-in plant, and professional indemnity cover of £5m.

8.5 The fieldwork and post-fieldwork will be monitored by the archaeological advisor to the District Council and all reasonable access will be provided to the works. Any changes in the agreed project design will be discussed and agreed with the archaeological advisor to the District Council before implementation.

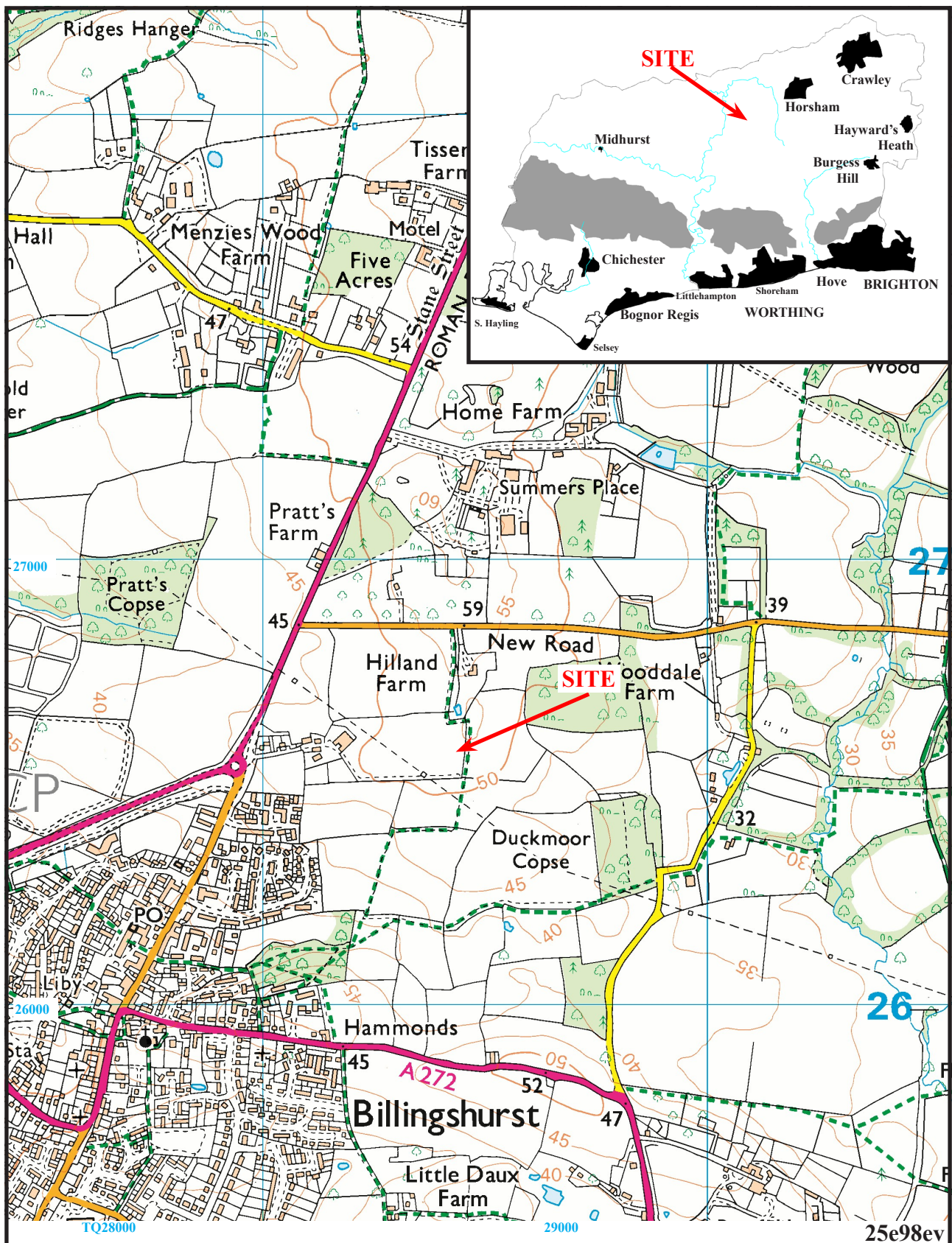
8.6 No liability is accepted for damage to any services unless a plan of these is provided in advance by the client or their agent.

9.0 Resources

It is anticipated that 10 staff days will be required on site, with a similar number for post-fieldwork.

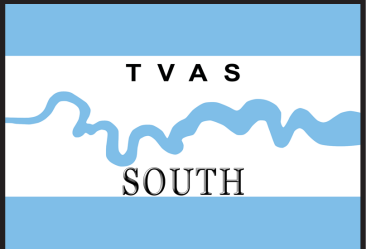
10.0 References

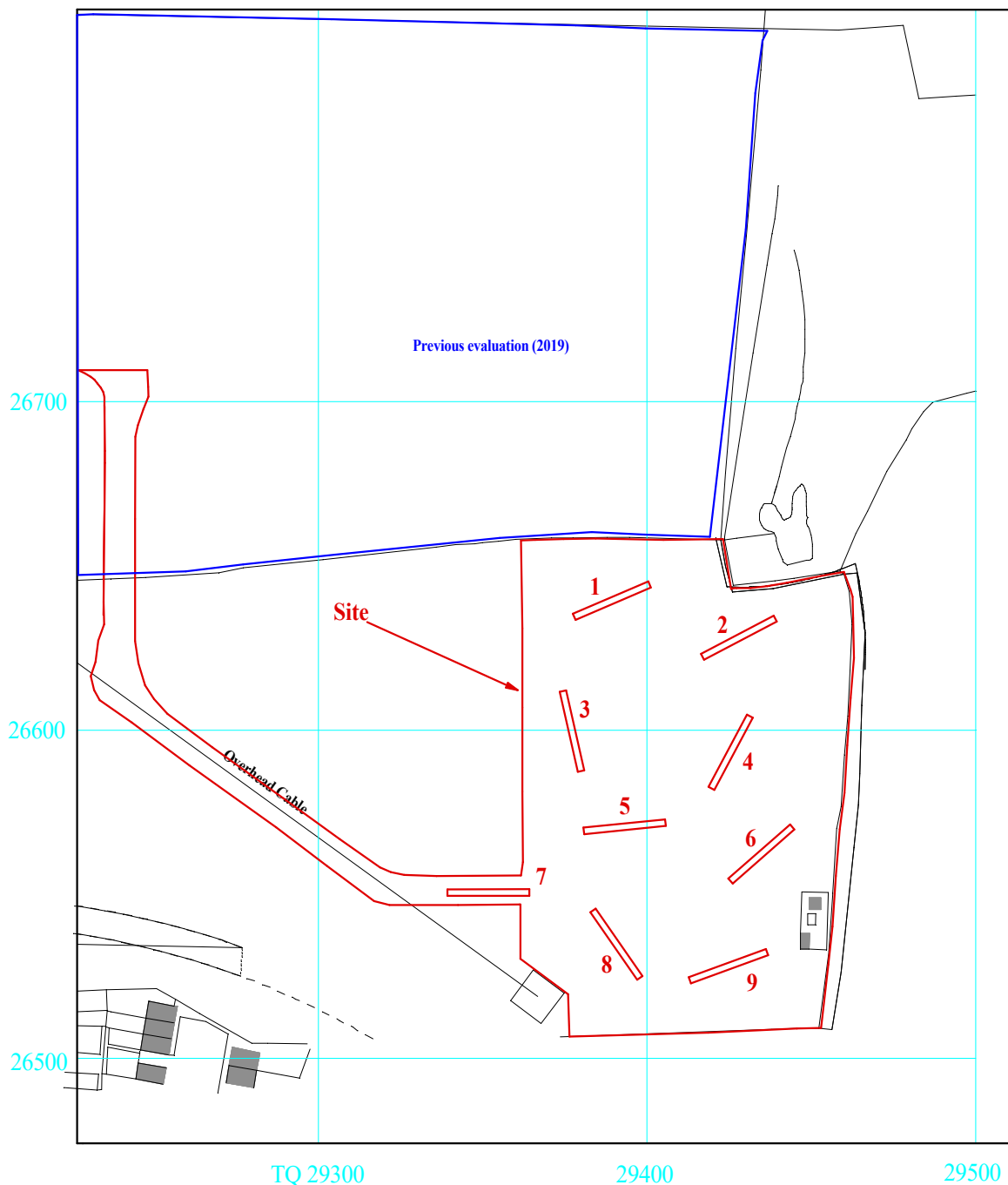
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Land to the east of Stane Street, Billingshurst,
West Sussex, 2025
Archaeological Evaluation
Figure 1. Location of site within Billingshurst and West Sussex.

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**Land to the east of Stane Street, Billingshurst,
West Sussex, 2025
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site showing site area and proposed trenches (red)
and previous evaluation area (blue)

