

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

Project specification for an archaeological excavation

25th March 2026



Ref: 25s98exc

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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 to the findings of the initial phase of works – an archaeological evaluation, an archaeological excavation has been requested to target the area where features and deposits of archaeological interest have been revealed. This is in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2025) and the District's policies on archaeology. This is also in line with the consultation advice, provided by Mr Nick Truckle (advising the District council).

2.3 This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) is for the second component of work; namely a field investigation by means of archaeological excavation. The excavation is to take place according to this document, approved by Nick Truckle as advisor to the District Council. Where appropriate and relevant, the recommendations in *Sussex Archaeological Standards* (ESCC 2019) will be followed.

2.4 Contingency for extension has been included within the project design should the archaeology extend beyond the initial excavation area. This would be determined through consultation with the archaeological advisor to Horsham District Council.

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. Evaluation of the site itself (Learey 2026) revealed archaeological features representing the presence of a rural settlement of early Roman date with some limited early post-medieval activity and prehistoric struck flints in seven of the nine trenches.

4.0 Aims and Objectives

4.2 General Objectives:

The general objectives of the project are to:

- Excavate and record archaeological deposits within the excavation area;
- Produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site;
- Establish the character of these deposits in an attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc;

Produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

4.3 The excavation and post-excavation project will:

- Set out the archaeological background to the site drawing together the results of previous archaeological work in the vicinity of the site;
- Complete a site archive of all project records, artefacts, ecofacts, any other sample residues and summaries of the context, artefact and environmental records;
- Complete an assessment report on the site archive and its potential to answer the research questions and for further analysis.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 It is proposed to excavate one area measuring c. 1740 sq m for archaeological investigation, targeting the location of trenches 8 and 9 as shown in Figure 2 of this WSI document.
- 5.1.2 The excavation area will be stripped of topsoil and overburden using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. If wheeled plant (dumpers) are to be used to remove spoil these will not be allowed to track over un-stripped areas of the site during wet weather when deep rutting may occur. Provision will be made for dumpers to use haul roads, or a causeway constructed to remove rutting of the subsoil. Bulldozers may be used to remove spoil in wet conditions.
- 5.1.3 The area will then be hand-cleaned by archaeological staff as appropriate, to expose any potential features. Machines will not be allowed to track over the stripped area until the fieldwork has been completed. Spoil will be stored close to the excavation area, as decided by the client.

5.3 Excavation Methodology

- 5.3.1 All archaeological features will be planned and sectioned as a minimum objective.
- 5.3.2 Full excavation of isolated, discrete features such as pits and postholes (less than 2 sq m in area) not belonging to structures or activities discussed in paragraph 4.3.4 (below) will take place following half-sectioning and recording.
- 5.3.3 Sampling of linear features such as ditches and gullies relating to settlement activity (ie rich deposits) will be a minimum of 25%. Other linear features such as field boundaries will be sampled at a minimum of 10%. The linear features will be excavated in 1-3 m. wide slots. All termini and intersections will be examined. Sampling of large features such as quarry pits will be by machine, but will be carried out in consultation with the client and the archaeological advisor to the District Council.
- 5.3.4 Any deposits relating to funerary/ritual activities such as burials and cremation deposits and domestic/industrial activity such as walls, postholes, floors, middens, walls, hearths, ring gullies, or sunken featured buildings will be fully excavated. Discrete features such as cremation deposits will be 100% sampled for subsequent analysis. Discrete features of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date will be fully excavated.
- 5.3.5 Discovery of any human remains will be reported to the coroner. Any subsequent excavation of human remains will be carried out following receipt of the appropriate Ministry of Justice licence. Recovery and

recording methodologies for human remains will follow standard procedures identified by Mitchell and Brickley (2017) and TVAS Field Recording Manual (9th edition 2021). Any human remains that have to be removed will not be reinterred. They will be retained and securely stored by TVAS until deposited with Horsham Museum.

- 5.3.6 In general, all finds and artefacts will be retained. At the post-excavation stage (see 4.7 below) some classes of building material, such as brick and tile or flint nodules may be discarded after recording with only a representative sample being retained. The discarding of materials will only be undertaken with the consent of the relevant specialist and the approval from the archaeological advisor to the District Council.
- 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 40L depending on the size of the feature examined. This will take place after a consultation with our environmental specialists and the archaeological advisor to the District Council. Where appropriate, the advice of the Historic England regional science advisor will be sought. Sampling will take place according to Historic England guidance (HE 2015a).
- 5.3.9 It is possible that unusual or important deposits (such as peat or waterlogged deposits) will be encountered in deep features. 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. Where appropriate, the advice of the Historic England regional science advisor will be sought.
- 5.3.10 Metal detectors will be used by in-house staff or locally approved metal detector clubs to enhance the recovery of metal finds. All gold and silver, prehistoric base metal and any associated objects will be removed to a safe place and reported to the client, local coroner, county finds liaison officer and archaeological advisor to the District Council, 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.

5.4 Recording Methodology

- 5.4.1 A single context recording system will be used in accordance with the TVAS Field Recording Manual (9th edition 2021). 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 using a Korec real time GPS unit with sub decimetre accuracy. Where more complex archaeological features or deposits are encountered such as (but not limited to) wood, structures or skeletal remains, additional hand planning will be undertaken on drafting film at an appropriate scale. These hand planned areas will then be tied in to the general plan using specific geo-located planning points. Sections of all archaeological features will be drawn at a scale of 1:10 on drafting film.
- 5.4.3 Heights above OD will be taken and recorded on plans and sections. Heights will be taken using a Korec real time GPS unit with sub decimetre accuracy during the planning process (see 4.4.2).
- 5.4.4 Where appropriate, significant finds will be recorded in 3D. This will consist of multiple photos taken in appropriate lighting/weather conditions at different heights and angles to give good coverage of the entire object. The photos will then be stitched together using an appropriate photogrammetry programme allowing a 3D reconstruction of the object.
- 5.4.5 The location of the excavation areas, and of all plans and sections will be tied into the National Grid.

- 5.4.6 The photographic record will consist of digital images. 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' and, where applicable, aerial photographs to illustrate the nature of the archaeological fieldwork programme.
- 5.4.7 All feature shots will include appropriate scales and a photo board, the latter positioned in such a way that the writing is legible and including the context number and site code. Digital images are taken on Canon EOS 4000D cameras with APS-C sensors taking 16-megapixel images. Digital working shots will also be taken during the fieldwork 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 Following the ordering of the site archive, a short summary will be prepared giving a preliminary account of the excavation findings and brief outlines of the artefactual and environmental data collected, as set out in MoRPHE (HE 2015a). Post-fieldwork will be completed according to TVAS post-fieldwork manual (6th edition 2013).
- 5.5.2 Discussion will take place between all specialist members of the Project Team (see 7.0 below), to assess the quality, character, and significance of the various data collected, and the degree to which it will enable the research aims to be addressed.
- 5.5.3 At this stage it may be possible to identify classes of material which will not fulfil their potential for information retrieval and allow resources to be re-allocated where they will be most beneficial.
- 5.5.4 Formal post excavation assessment documents or interim reports will be produced following completion of the fieldwork depending on the scale of any findings made.
- 5.5.5 A digital (pdf) version will be supplied to Wiltshire HER on the understanding that the report can be copied for *bona fide* research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. Non-published report(s) will be made available for inspection or download on the TVAS web site.
- 5.5.6 A digital version of the report will be provided to the OASIS project.

6.0 Report and Dissemination

- 6.1 A full report on the results of the excavation should be available within 2 years of completion of the fieldwork. This will incorporate the detailed results of the evaluation where coincident with the excavation areas, with a summary of the results of other evaluation trenches
- 6.2 The reports 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 reports will include a front sheet providing the following information:
- *Site name
 - *District and Parish
 - *Planning reference
 - *Grid reference
 - *Site activity (e.g. 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
- *Plans showing the locations of all features excavated
- *Detailed plans of areas of interest and/or complexity
- *Sections of a representative range of features in general including any of particular interest and/or complexity
- *Detailed plans of inhumation burials
- *Distribution maps of various artefact classes as appropriate

6.6 Catalogues giving descriptions of archaeological features and artefacts will be contained in a series of appendices alongside full descriptions contained within the main body of the report.

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 prior evaluation archive will be integrated with the excavation archive prior to deposition.

8.0 Project Team

Project Management Dr. Steve Ford, Andy Taylor or David Sanchez

Fieldwork director (from one of) Mr Andrew Taylor, Dr. Steve Ford, Dr Pierre Manisse, Mr Mark Learey, Ms Maisie Foster, Mr Jamie Williams, Ms Sophie Peng, Mr. Tom Stewart or Ms Emily Gibson

Pottery Specialist	Dr. Jane Timby, Ms Sue Anderson, Mr Rob Perrin, Mr. Luke Barber, Ms Lorraine Mephram, Dr Barbara McNee (consultants) or Dr Cristina Mateos-Leal(TVAS)
Struck Flint Specialist	Dr. Steve Ford
Stone Specialist	Dr. Kevin Haywood (Consultant)
Metalwork Specialist	Ms Sophie Peng (TVAS) or Dr. Robin Taylor (consultant)
Carbonised Plant Remains	Professor Mark Robinson (University of Oxford) or Rossy McKenna (consultants) or Ms Molly Larkin (TVAS)
Mollusc Remains	Professor Mark Robinson, (University of Oxford)
Faunal Remains	Dr Matilda Holmes (consultant) or Ms Harriet Wright (TVAS)
Human Remains	Dr Ceri Falys (TVAS)
Pollen Remains	Quest, (Reading University)
Soil Micromorphology	Quest, (Reading University)
Radiocarbon dating	Queens University, Belfast
Archaeomagnetic dating	Bradford University
Stable Isotopes	Ms Mikaila Walker (consultant)
Conservation	Wiltshire County Council Conservation Centre

9.0 General Items

9.1 Health and Safety

All site operations will be carried out in a safe manner in accordance with TVAS health and safety policy and current Health and Safety legislation. A risk assessment will be prepared before commencement on site.

9.2 Professional standards

The project will be carried out in accordance with the CIFA Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation (2020b) and Code of Conduct (2019) and the quality control mechanisms set out in the TVAS fieldwork and post-fieldwork manuals.

9.4 Insurance Cover

Insurance cover comprises £10m for public liability, £10m for employee liability, cover for any hired-in plant and professional indemnity cover for £5m.

9.5 Press Release

Should any significant archaeological deposits be located, a press release will be prepared in consultation with the County archaeological advisor and the client.

9.6 Monitoring

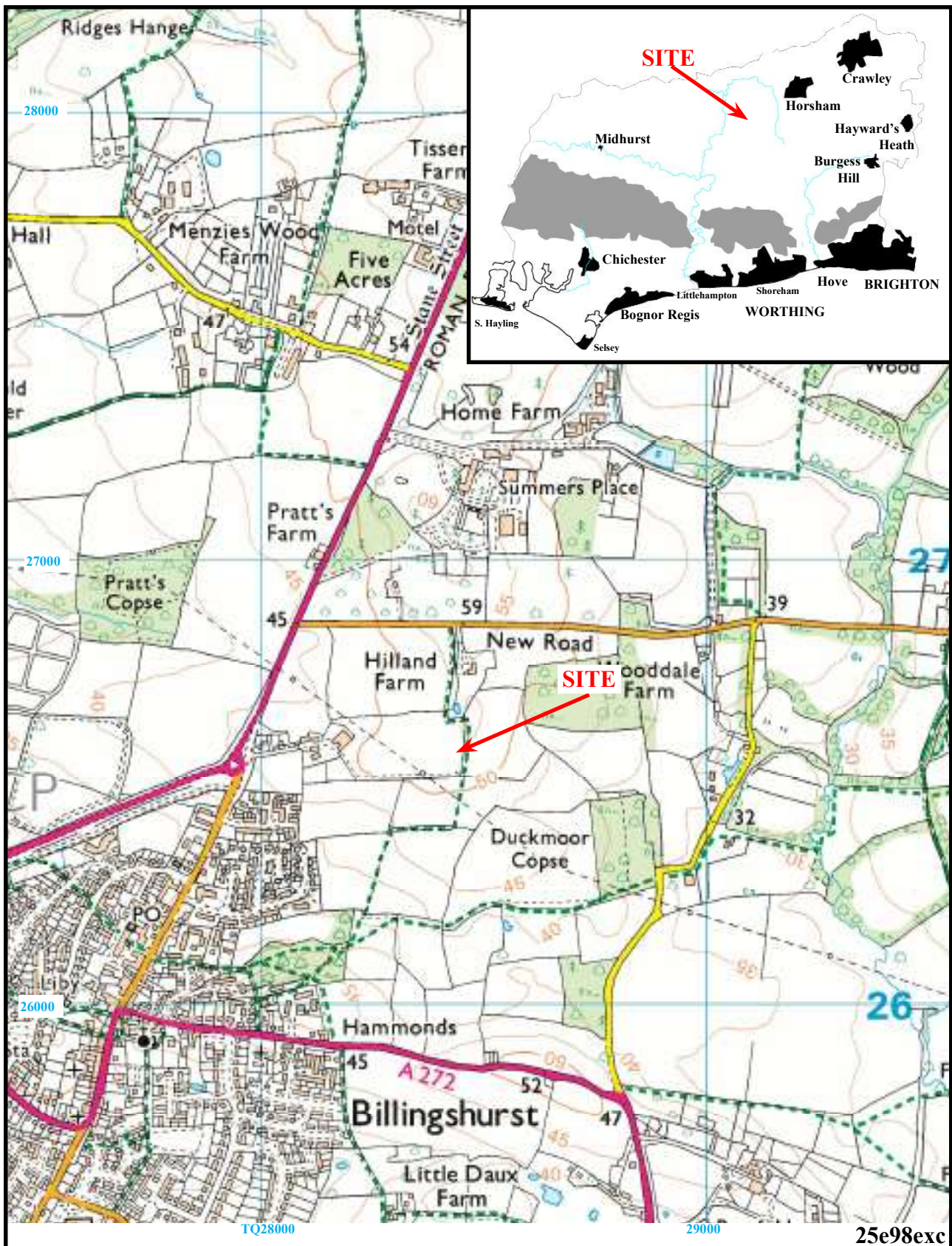
The fieldwork and post-fieldwork will be monitored by BSA Heritage and the archaeological advisor to Wiltshire Council and all reasonable access will be provided to the works. The archaeological advisor to the Council will be contacted both prior to work commencing on site, and during the recording action itself, to arrange a site monitoring visit.

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10.0 References

ACD 2021, Phase 3, Land north of Billingshurst West Sussex, Archaeology and heritage assessment, ACD Environmental, Malmsbury

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- McKinley, J I and Roberts, C, 1993, *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains*, IFA Techn Pap **13**, Reading.
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- Rouard, O, 2019, Land North of Billingshurst, West Sussex, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 19/98, Reading



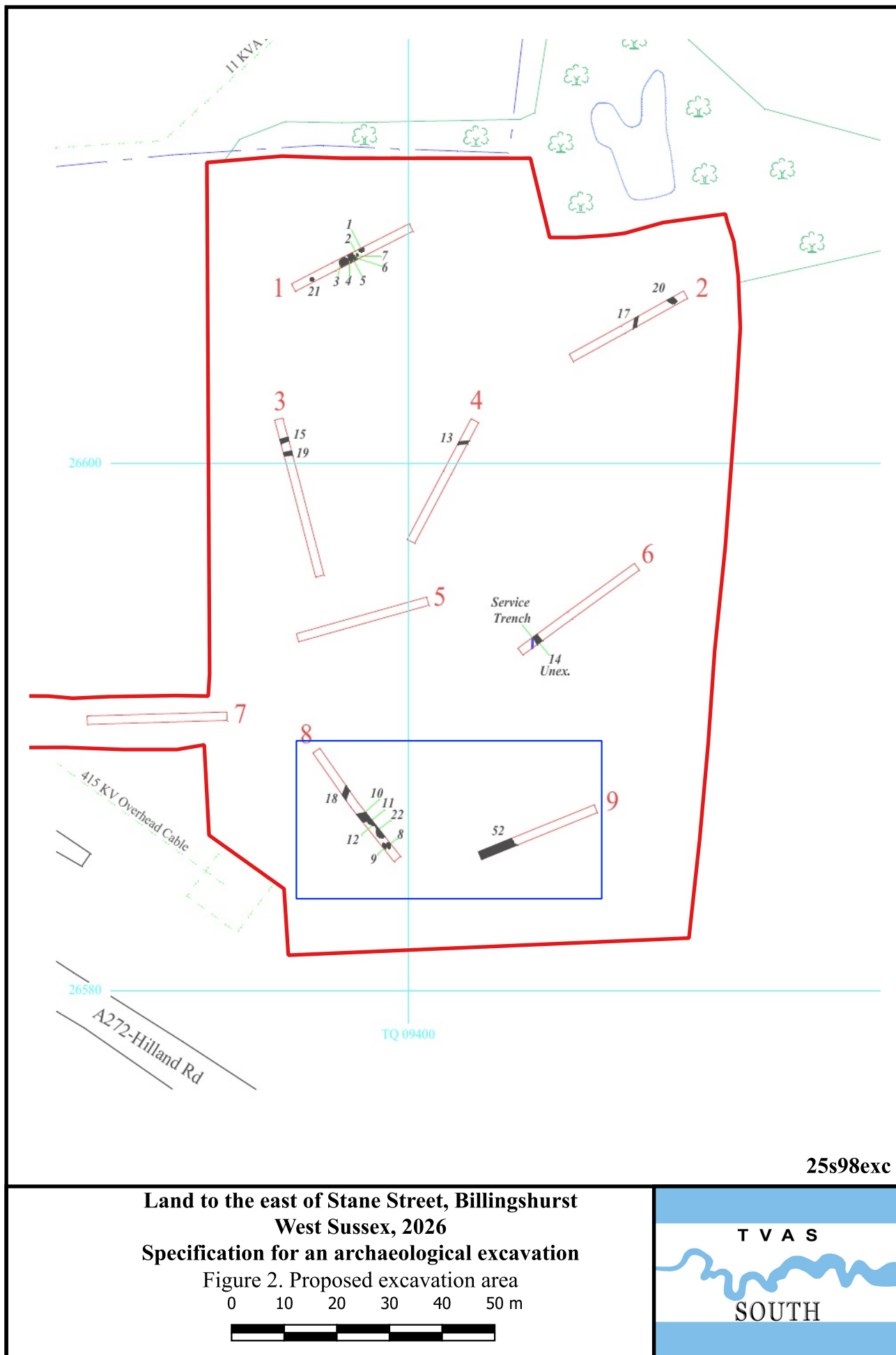
Land to the east of Stane Street, Billingshurst,
West Sussex, 2025

Proposal for an Archaeological Excavation

Figure 1. Location of site within Billingshurst and West Sussex.

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Specification for an archaeological excavation

Figure 2. Proposed excavation area

0 10 20 30 40 50 m

