



Bowman's Mill, Ickleford, Herts.

Written Scheme of Investigation

Archaeological Evaluation

Client: Hill Residential Ltd

Local Planning Authority: North Hertfordshire District Council

Planning Reference: 17/01955/1

NGR: TL 18246 31289

Provisional Site Code: ICKE 26 (TBC)

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Prospect Archaeology has been commissioned The Hill Group to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation of land at the former Bowman's Mill Ickleford in advance of residential development.
- 1.1.2 The works will be undertaken in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (DCMS 2025). All works will be conducted in accordance with the ClfA's Code of Conduct (ClfA 2014a, revised 2025), Standard for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2023) and Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2023).

1.2 Site Location and Description

- 1.2.1 Ickleford is a large village situated on the northern outskirts of Hitchin close to the Bedfordshire border. The parish lies in the valley of the River Hiz, which forms its boundary on the east and its southern boundary with Hitchin partially follows the course of the River Oughton. Bowman's Mill lies at the south end of the village on the banks of the River Oughton on the west side of Arlesley Road.
- 1.2.2 The solid geology consists of Gault Formation - Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 100 to 112 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. No superficial deposits are recorded in this area (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). However, localised alluvial deposits along the banks of the River Oughton are likely to be present. The Site occupies an area of flat ground which lies at c.52.5m OD.

2.0 Planning Background

- 2.1.1 This WSI has been prepared to accompany the Reserved matters application for appearance, landscaping, layout and scale in relation to erection of 55 dwellings and associated access, car parking, garages, landscaping and open space including demolition and removal of all existing structures, buildings and hardstanding pursuant to the outline planning permission 17/01955/1 which was approved in 2024. Conditions 25-27 of the outline permission specified the requirement for archaeological investigation and recording.

25. Prior to the demolition of the old Mill Building on the site as identified on plate 7 of the submitted Heritage Statement by Prospect Archaeology, a Historic Building Recording Survey shall be undertaken and submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

No development (other than demolition phase works) shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:

- 1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording*
- 2. The programme for post investigation assessment*
- 3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording*
- 4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation*
- 5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation*
- 6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.*

Reason: To ensure the protection of heritage assets of archaeological interest

26. The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 25

Reason: to ensure the protection of heritage assets of archaeological interest

27. The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 26 and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.

Reason: To ensure the protection of heritage assets of archaeological interest

- 2.1.2 Discussions with the Planning Officer and the Senior Historic Environment Advisor (Hertfordshire LEADS) has established that the scope of work will comprise evaluation trenches and building recording. This WSI covers proposals for the evaluation trenching element of the scheme. Building recording of the site has been completed.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

- 3.1.1 In general terms the purpose of the evaluation will be to

- establish the presence or absence, quality and extent of archaeological remains and their location within the development area
- gather sufficient information to enable an assessment of the potential significance of any archaeological remains to be made and the impact which development will have upon them

- To assess the artefactual and environmental potential of the archaeological deposits encountered
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- enable an informed decision to be made regarding the future treatment of any archaeological remains and consider any appropriate mitigatory measures to be undertaken either in advance of and/or during development
- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Hertfordshire HER.

4.0 Scope of Works

- 4.1.1 A structural report on the mill buildings was received on November 19th 2025 which has advised that many of the buildings on the site are unsafe and should be demolished immediately (Superstructures 2025). This work will be undertaken prior to evaluation trenching.
- 4.1.2 Four trenches measuring 20m x 1.8m will be excavated concentrating on the east side of the site where the ground has not been so disturbed and may reveal the presence of earlier mill structures. The westernmost trench has been positioned to cross the route of the mill leat shown on early OS maps. Ground to the north of the site has been edged in depth to create a level surface for new buildings and ground to the west is crossed by numerous foul water drains. Other services may be present

5.0 Background

- 5.1.1 A fuller account of the archaeological and historical background to the area can be found in the Desk Based Assessment prepared by Prospect Archaeology (Field 2017). A summary is provided here.
- 1.1.1 There are no known archaeological sites or finds of any period from within the application site. Four Palaeolithic handaxes (one from Ickleford Pit) (MHT313) and six flint scrapers and several Acheulian flints, some of them much water-worn (MHT 314) were recorded as having been found in Ickleford by Sir John Evans (1897). A fragment from a single Bronze Age flint flake was found during evaluation on land to the rear of 34 Arlesley Road (MHT 13274) where most of the features were medieval and post-medieval in date.
- 5.1.2 In 2008 evaluation of the area between Bygrave Road and the railway line close to the presumed line of the Icknield Way found Roman remains, but not the road itself (MHT

4182). Roman pottery is thought to have been found near Hyde Mill east of the site (MHT1190). Sir John Evans noted that 'Roman coins are frequently found here [Ickleford] (MHT 1234).

5.1.3 A manorial estate map dated 1771 shows a mill on the site of Bowman's mill, straddling the stream west of Arlesley Road. A single narrow building in the north-west corner of the field a little distance from the mill buildings is the only other structure within the red-line boundary on that map. Land to the north is described as 'Ploughed Coneygrass'. The possibility of archaeological remains of this mill surviving is unknown as there have been no investigations on the site but something may survive beneath the concrete hardstanding on the north side of the present river. The diversion of the river southwards means that the filled-in or culverted course of the river may also be present.

5.1.4 The water mill was replaced in the 1830s and the extant old mill building was constructed in 1857 and continued to expand in the 20th century. The mill was an important employer in the area until its closure in 2016. The oldest buildings on the site consist of the mill built in 1857 see Fig. 2 below (12), the contemporary Mill House (1) and the East Lodge to the north of the mill. An internal inspection was made of these buildings in November 2016.

5.1.5 The present mill site is covered in reinforced concrete hardstanding surrounding the standing buildings. Modern services criss-cross the open yard areas. Large 20th-century warehouses on north side of the site have been built on levelled platforms cut into the slope of the land and the ground investigations show that there is no surviving topsoil in this part of the site (Enzygo 2024, WS22-27). If there had been any archaeology present it is likely that it was removed.

5.1.6 Locations close to water courses were favoured in the prehistoric period so there is low potential for the presence of such remains on this site though there are no known recorded remains. The site is located at the edge of the parish and the potential for medieval settlement remains is very low.

6.0 Programme & Staffing

6.1.1 The contractor is to be confirmed.

6.1.2 Senior Historic Environment Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS, will be given at least 10 working days' notice of the proposed start date for the project and regular site meetings will be arranged.

6.1.3 Variations to the proposed scheme will only be made following discussion with and written confirmation from the Senior Historic Environment Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS.

7.0 Method

7.1.1 Following agreement of the Project Design or WSI, organisations wishing to deposit an Archaeological Archive will notify the Accredited Museum through submission of the Project Notification Form.

8.0 Reporting

8.1.1 Copies of the report will be supplied to the client, North Hertfordshire Council Planning department and a .pdf copy of the report will be deposited with the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (NHHER). A digital copy of the report will also be sent to the English Heritage Science Advisor for the region and with the ADS.

8.1.2 The report will contain the following sections:

- Executive Summary, brief summary of the reasons for the work, methods used and results.
- Introduction, describing the scope and circumstances of the work, archaeological background and structure of the report
- Methodology
- descriptive account of the recording methods used and the results, together with an assessment of their archaeological importance, their possible relationship to relevant known features adjacent to the Development Site and estimated reliability of the results
- a phased interpretation of the features
- specialists' reports on all categories of artefacts recovered (except modern items). Full archive lists will accompany the specialists' finds reports.
- specialists' reports on environmental samples taken
- Discussion of the results and their significance in relation to local, regional and national sites, as appropriate
- Conclusions

- a complete context list with short description
- Illustrations and plates as appropriate. Illustrations to be included are: a detailed location map, a detailed site plan showing all trenches, all trench plans and sections and detailed plans and sections of features, select artefact illustrations and a selection of scanned photographs; an overall site plan showing all (phased) archaeological features will also be included.
- References
- OASIS summary

8.1.3 In the event that no further fieldwork takes place on the site, a full programme of post excavation analysis and publication of artefactual and scientific material from the evaluation must be completed, as appropriate. Due attention must be paid to artefact retrieval and conservation, illustration of ceramics and artefacts, ancient technology, dating of deposits, and scientific analysis of soils, sediments, biological remains, ceramics and stone.

8.1.4 If a mitigation phase of archaeological investigation is required then more detailed analysis of artefacts may be held over and included with material from the mitigation as conclusions drawn from a small sample of material from evaluation may not remain valid when amalgamated with larger samples from excavation.

8.1.5 If a decision is taken not to proceed with any further fieldwork or analysis, the evaluation results may still be of sufficient significance to merit publication in their own right. Allowance must be made for the preparation and publication in a local and/or national journal of a short summary on the results of the evaluation and of the location and material held within the site archive.

8.1.6 Should further archaeological excavation be undertaken, a synopsis of the results of the evaluation shall be prepared for publication with the final results of any further fieldwork.

9.0 Publication

9.1.1 On completion of the report and archive an electronic data submission form will be completed for the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations (OASIS), to enable information about the site to be accessible to the wider archaeological community and the public.

- 9.1.2 Digital copies of the final report will be supplied to the client, the Historic Environment Officer. Hard copies of the report will be subject to a cover charge of £15.00.

10.0 Archiving

- 10.1.1 Following approval of the report a Project Review form will be submitted to the North Hertfordshire Museum at Hitchin. The Project Review form will detail the basic information about the Preserved Archive and the proposed timescale for the completion of the deposit. Archive deposition will be arranged in consultation with the Museum will take account of the requirements and the relevant guidelines relating to the preparation and transfer of archives. Provision for deposition of the site archive has been made within the project budget.
- 10.1.2 A fully indexed field archive will be compiled in accordance with the requirements of the Hertfordshire Museums Standard (2025) comprising
- List of all plans, elevations and sections
 - All primary written documents
 - All plans and sections
 - List of all photographic digital images
- 10.1.3 A Data Management Plan will be completed as defined in ADS Guides to Good Practice. Digital Archiving will comply with '*Dig Digital, A guide to managing digital data generated from archaeological investigations*' (Historic England, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and Dig Ventures 2019).
- 10.1.4 On completion of the archive an electronic data submission form will be completed for the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations (OASIS), to enable information about the site to be accessible to the wider archaeological community and the public. The digital archive will be deposited with ADS.
- 10.1.5 Written confirmation of the date and place of deposition must be sent to the Hertfordshire HER, together with an index to the contents of the archive.

10.2 Dissemination

- 10.2.1 Digital copies of the report will be supplied to the client and to the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record.
- 10.2.2 The deposition of a copy of the report at the HER will be deemed to put all information in the public domain, unless a request is made for confidentiality. If material is to be held in

confidence a timescale must be agreed with HER. In normal circumstances the agreed term does not usually exceed six months.

11.0 Copyright

- 11.1.1 The archaeological contracting company and its sub-contractors shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports or other project documents, including all data, text and graphics, (in accordance with ClfA guidelines) under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides a licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Specification. The HER will be given a licence to make all reasonable professional use of this material, granted that copyright is acknowledged.

12.0 Copyright, Confidentiality and Publicity

- 12.1.1 Unless the individual/organisation commissioning the project wishes to state otherwise, the copyright of any written, graphic or photographic records and reports rests with the originating body (the archaeological organisation undertaking the fieldwork and analysis). Agreements on copyright should be agreed with the commissioning body at the outset of the project.
- 12.1.2 The circumstances under which the report or records can be used by other parties should be identified at the commencement of the project, as should the proposals for distribution of the report (see above). All archaeologists undertaking work must respect the commissioning body's requirements over confidentiality, but the archaeologist must endeavour to emphasise their professional obligation to make the results of archaeological work available to the wider archaeological community within a reasonable time.
- 12.1.3 The archaeologist undertaking the work has a duty of confidence to the client commissioning the work. All aspects of publicity must be agreed at the outset of the project between the commissioning body and the archaeological organisation or individual undertaking the project.

13.0 Health and Safety

- 13.1.1 All site work will be carried out in accordance with the relevant current Health and Safety legislation. A copy of the contractor's Health and Safety Document should be supplied to

the client along with copies of relevant insurance policies and RAMS documentation prior to commencement of work on site.

13.2 Insurance

PA and its sub-contractors are fully covered by Employers and Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurances, copies of which are available for inspection on request.

14.0 References

Carr, C. 2025 *Ickleford Mill, Building Inspections Superstructures*. report for Hill Group.

CIfA 2014a (updated 2025) *Code of Conduct: professional ethics in archaeology*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

CIfA 2014b (updated 2020) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigations and Recording of Standing Buildings and Structures*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

CIfA 2014c (updated 2020) *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*

Enzygo 2024 Geoenvironmental Report Ickleford Mill, Ickleford SG5 3UN Report ref. RM.1027.189.GE.R.001.A

Field, Naomi 2017 *Bowman's Mill, Ickleford, Herts. Heritage Assessment*. Prospect Archaeology report LPA/133 for Jas. Bowman & Sons Ltd

Hertfordshire Museums 2025 *Hertfordshire Archaeological Archive Standards: Countywide Standard for the Creation, Compilation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives in Hertfordshire*

NPPF 2025 *National Planning Policy Framework*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

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15.0 Digital Data Management Plan

To be supplied by appointed contractor

16.0 Figures

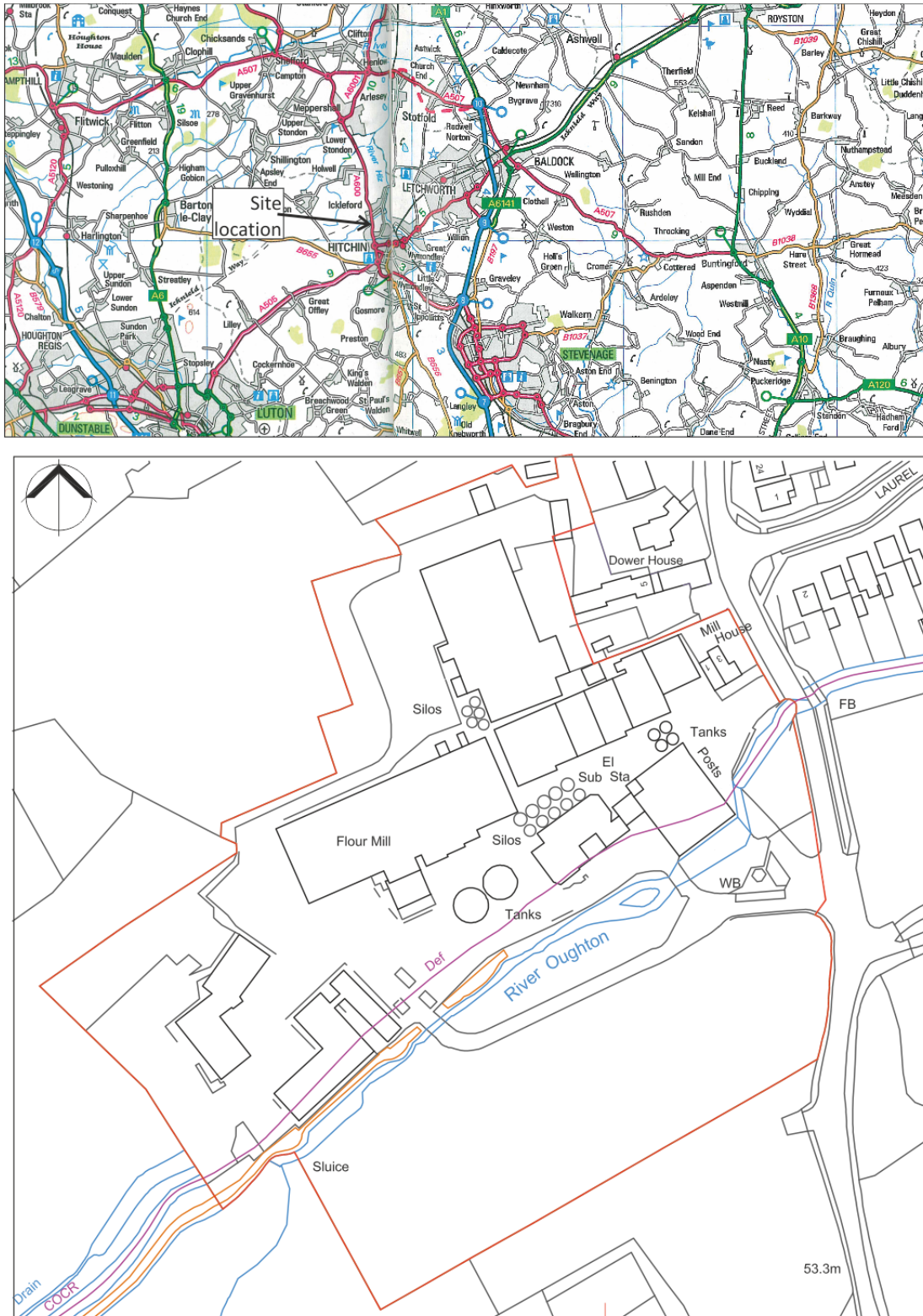


Fig. 1 Bowman's Mill, Ickleford, Herts. Site location and redline boundary

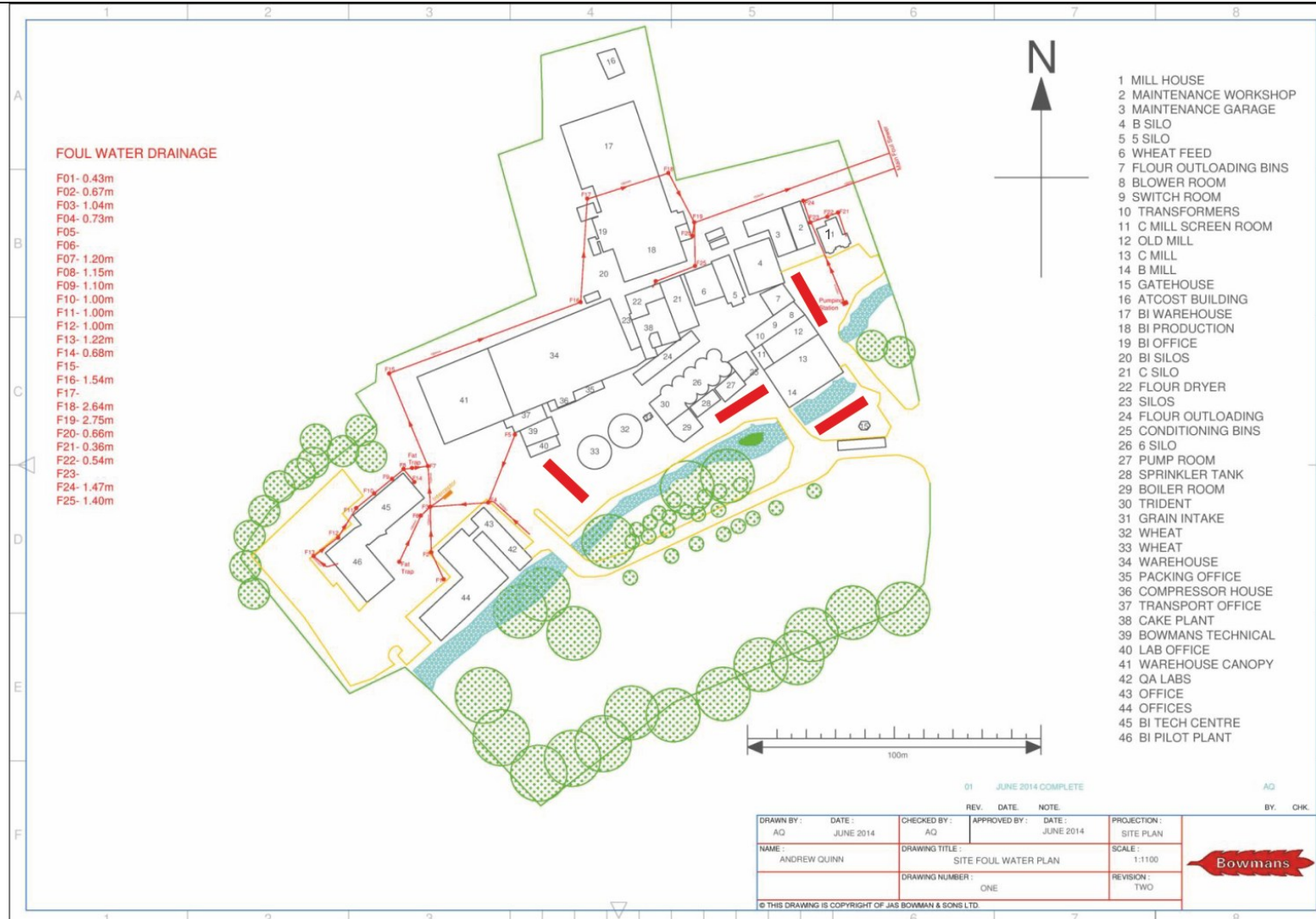


Fig. 2 Proposed trench plan 4no. 20m x 1.8m subject to avoiding modern service trenches