Suffolk County Council

The Archaeological Service

Requirements for a Geophysical Survey (updated April 2026)

An outline specification, which defines certain minimum criteria, is set out below. These requirements accompany, and should be used in conjunction with, the project brief.

General Requirements

1.1. Geophysical surveys must be undertaken in compliance with the standards and guidelines set out by Historic England (2008), Historic England/EAC (2015) and CIfA (2020).

Additional Requirements for Reporting and Archiving

1.1. The project manager must consult the Suffolk HER Officer to obtain a parish code for the work before commencement. These numbers will be unique for each project or site and must be clearly marked on all documentation relating to the work.

1.2. The survey methodology should be set out carefully and explained as appropriate. It must include a non-technical summary to make the report intelligible to both specialists and non-specialists.

1.3. The report must include details of how the survey was geolocated, the instrument used for the survey, its configuration and the sampling intervals used.

1.4. The report must list the types of process which have been applied to the geophysical survey data and for each operation state relevant parameters (e.g. the cut-off threshold for despike).

1.5. The report must include images of both unprocessed (without smoothing or filtering) and also processed data, as well as interpretative plans (accompanied by a full key).

1.6. Greyscale plots should use an appropriate data range and a scale must be included on plans.

1.7. Digital copies of geophysics greyscale and interpretation plots should be provided as georeferenced (EPSG: 27700) ESRI shape or QGIS GPK files. These GIS files should be provided to the Suffolk HER following approval of the final report.

1.8. The results of the geophysical survey should be easily related to present-day landscape features and the National Grid.

1.9. The objective account of the evidence must be clearly distinguished from its archaeological interpretation.

1.10. SCCAS supports the OASIS project, to provide an online index to archaeological reports. At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record must be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms. When the project is completed, all parts of the OASIS online form must be completed and a copy must be included in the final report and also with the site archive. A pdf version of the entire report should be uploaded to the OASIS website.

1.11. Upon completion of fieldwork, a draft report should be submitted to SCCAS for approval. The report should clearly state the author(s) and archaeological contracting unit who produced the document. Following acceptance, a digital copy of the approved final report should be submitted to the Suffolk HER. Provision should also made for a hard copy report to be submitted, however, the need for this should be discussed and agreed with SCCAS who will advise on a case-by-case basis.

Additional note

UAV-borne geophysical data will be accepted only as preliminary evidence of subsurface anomalies and will not be used to inform archaeological planning decisions. Any data derived from UAV-borne geophysical survey **must** be validated by walked or cart-based survey before it can be used to make planning decisions or to determine the timing and scope of intrusive archaeological evaluation.
To maximise the quality of UAV-borne geophysical data, surveys must use a low constant flight altitude, minimise the platform's magnetic signature, suspend sensors appropriately and include radar altimetry or accurate survey height data.