

Requirements for a Trenched Archaeological Evaluation (updated September 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. If in doubt, clarification should be sought from SCCAS.

SCCAS require that ten working days' notice of the commencement of any phase of archaeological fieldwork at the site is given, **once an approved WSI is in place**.

1. General Management Requirements

- 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. The parish code must be used as the site code.
- 1.2 A timetable for fieldwork and post excavation stages of the project must be presented in the WSI and agreed with SCCAS before the fieldwork commences.
- 1.3 A detailed risk assessment and management strategy must be presented for this project in the WSI.
- 1.4 A data management plan should be included in the WSI. Details on creating a digital management plan can be found in SCCAS [Guidelines for Archive Preparation and Deposition](#).
- 1.5 The WSI must state the security measures to protect the site from vandalism and theft, and to secure deep any holes.
- 1.6 The composition of the project staff must be detailed and agreed (this is to include any subcontractors). For the site director and other staff likely to have a major responsibility for the fieldwork and post-excavation processing of this excavation there must also be a statement of their responsibilities or a CV for post-excavation work on other archaeological sites and publication record. Ceramic specialists, in particular, must have relevant experience from this region, including knowledge of local ceramic sequences.
- 1.7 Monitoring of the archaeological work will be undertaken by SCCAS. A decision on the level of monitoring required for the fieldwork will be made by SCCAS, in consultation with the project manager and once the fieldwork has commenced. Any unexpected discoveries, or on-site complications, should be communicated to, and discussed with, SCCAS.

- 1.8 The WSI should be approved before costs are agreed with the commissioning client, in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' guidance. Failure to do so could result in additional and unanticipated costs. It is the archaeological contractor's responsibility to ensure that adequate resources are available to fulfil the Brief.
- 1.9 A physical copy of the approved WSI must be available on site for the Project Officer/Supervisor.
- 1.10 Provision should be included in the WSI for public benefit in the form of outreach activities, for example (and where appropriate), open days/guided tours for the general public, local schools, local councillors, local archaeological and historical societies and for local public lectures and/or activities within local schools. Provision should be included for local press releases (newspapers/radio/TV). Where appropriate, information boards should be also provided during the fieldwork stage of investigation. The archaeological contractor should ascertain whether their client will seek to impose restrictions on public access to the site and for what reasons and these should be detailed in the WSI.
- 1.11 Suitable arrangements should be made with the client, and stated in the WSI, to ensure the site is appropriately closed after the completion of the excavation (and provision for infilling of dangerous holes during fieldwork) to comply with health and safety regulations. The site, and any deep and dangerous holes, should be only backfilled with the prior approval of SCCAS.
- 1.12 Following satisfactory completion of the fieldwork, SCCAS will advise the LPA that the fieldwork has been completed and that no further on-site work is required. Full construction work must not begin until archaeological excavation has been completed and formally confirmed in writing by the LPA.

2. Fieldwork Requirements

- 2.1 As a baseline, SCCAS expect a minimum of 5% trenching to give a statistically viable survey of a site. The amount of trenching will, however, be confirmed in a project brief on a case by case basis, taking into consideration the nature of the site, the development impacts and other investigation techniques used, as well as accessibility of areas. Please note that on urban sites, the percentage trenching specified may be significantly higher in order to best characterise a site. Contingency will also be specified to allow for further judgmental trench use or deposit testing during the evaluation work in discussion with SCCAS, if unclear archaeological remains or geomorphological features present difficulties of interpretation, or to assist with the formulation of a mitigation strategy.
- 2.2 Trenches should be a maximum of 30m in length, unless discussed with SCCAS. If excavation is mechanised a toothless 'ditching bucket' 1.80m wide must be used.
- 2.3 Trenches will not be backfilled without the approval of SCCAS. Suitable arrangements should be made with the client to ensure trenches are appropriately backfilled, compacted and consolidated in order to prevent subsequent subsidence.

- 2.4 The method of overburden removal will be detailed in the archaeological contractors Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), which will include:
- 2.4.1 Topsoil, subsoil and/or overburden of recent origin will be mechanically removed (unless otherwise agreed) using a machine of an appropriate size, with a back acting arm and fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, operated by a driver with suitable qualifications and experience. The machine strip will be to the top of the first archaeological horizon or surface geology (commonly described as 'natural'). All machine excavation is to be under the direct control and supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The topsoil, subsoil and/or overburden should be examined for archaeological material.
 - 2.4.2 Topsoil, subsoil and archaeological deposits are to be kept separate during excavation to allow sequential backfilling of excavations.
 - 2.4.3 The WSI should contain provision for the investigation and excavation of colluvial and alluvial deposits.
 - 2.4.4 Trench bases should be the length of trenching defined and agreed with SCCAS and as stated in the WSI, any ramping/stabilisation will be in addition to the agreed length of the trench. Any changes to trench lengths and dimensions must be agreed with SCCAS.
- 2.5 The top of the first archaeological deposit may be cleared by machine but must then be cleaned off by hand. There is a presumption that excavation of all archaeological deposits will be done by hand unless it can be shown there will not be a loss of evidence by using a machine. Where there is potential for relatively complex stratigraphy, a machine may be used for the removal of modern surfacing and overburden demonstrably not of archaeological interest, but underlying deposit horizons should be hand cleaned and assessed for features, with appropriate hand excavated samples. The decision as to the proper method of excavation will be made by the senior project archaeologist about the nature of the deposit, in discussion with SCCAS.
- 2.6. In all evaluation excavation there is a presumption of the need to cause the minimum disturbance to the site consistent with adequate evaluation; that significant archaeological features, e.g. solid or bonded structural remains, building slots or postholes, should be preserved intact even if fills are sampled. For guidance:
- 2.6.1 For linear features, 1.00m wide slots (min.) should be excavated across their width;
 - 2.6.2 Slots should be placed to best allow understanding of the relationships between features and deposits (including appropriate relationship sections).
 - 2.6.3 For discrete features, such as pits, 50% of their fills should be sampled (in some instances 100% may be requested).
 - 2.6.4 Large or deep features may be excavated in quadrants in the first instance unless otherwise agreed with SCCAS, or in other such gridded or systematic excavation as may be appropriate to the feature type in agreement with SCCAS.

- 2.6.5 All features should be investigated and recorded unless agreed with SCCAS, features which may be geological should also be sampled until confidence can be established.
- 2.6.6 Provision should be made to fully investigate the depth of sequences and the depth of archaeological features. This may involve the use of stepping or shoring.
- 2.6.7 Appropriate provision should be made for extracting water from sites and features.
- 2.6.8 Hand auger or a power auger (where appropriate) is recommended to gain information from very deep features so a safe excavation strategy can be designed and implemented in discussion with the SCCAS.
- 2.6.9 Machine/mechanical assistance may only be used for very large/deep features, following agreement with SCCAS.
- 2.7 There must be sufficient excavation to give clear evidence for the period, depth and nature of any archaeological deposit. The depth and nature of colluvial or other masking deposits must be established across the site.
- 2.8 Any natural subsoil surface revealed should be hand cleaned and examined for archaeological deposits and artefacts. Sample excavation of any archaeological features revealed may be necessary in order to gauge their date and character.
- 2.9 Metal detector searches must take place at all stages of the evaluation by a named and experienced metal detector user, including reference either to their contributions to the PAS database or to other published archaeological projects they have worked on. Metal detecting of trench locations should be carried out before trenches are cut, with trench bases and spoil scanned once trenches have been opened.
- 2.10 All finds will be collected, bagged by context and processed, unless variations in this principle are agreed with SCCAS during the course of the evaluation. The finds recovery policy should be addressed in the WSI, there should be no onsite discard policy unless otherwise agreed with SCCAS.
- 2.11 Environmental Sampling techniques should follow guidance outlined in [Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation](#) (2025 Historic England) and other relevant guidance.
 - 2.11.1 The WSI must provide details of a comprehensive sampling strategy for flotation, assessment and analysis of biological remains by a named environmental specialist (for palaeoenvironmental and paleoeconomic investigations and also for absolute dating), and samples of sediments and/or soils (for micromorphological and other pedological/sedimentological analysis).
 - 2.11.2 Bulk samples must be a minimum of 40 litres. If a feature is too small to produce this size of sample (e.g. a post hole) then 100% of the feature should be retained for processing.
 - 2.11.3 All samples should be retained until their potential has been assessed and until a retention strategy has been agreed with SCCAS. Where necessary, advice on the

appropriateness of the proposed strategy should be sought from the Historic England Regional Advisor the Archaeological Science (East of England).

2.11.4 Samples of burnt flint retained for lipid analysis should not be washed.

2.12 If human remains are encountered, SCCAS must be contacted immediately in order to agree an excavation strategy. The expectation at evaluation stage is, where possible, that human remains should be minimally disturbed and left in situ. However, it is expected that any human remains which have been more extensively exposed will need to be fully excavated and recorded in accordance with [Historic England](#) and [ClfA](#) guidance. Full excavation may also be necessary should remains be at imminent risk if left in situ, or to provide information to guide ongoing mitigation strategies. The archaeological contractor should make provision for encountering human remains in the WSI and ensure compliance with the provisions of Section 25 of the [Burial Act 1857](#).

2.12.1 Where human remains are excavated then the following will apply:

2.12.1a The archaeological contractor will ensure that a licence to excavate the human remains has been obtained from the Ministry of Justice.

2.12.1b Human remains are to be treated at all stages with care and respect and are to be dealt with in accordance with the law. They must be recorded in situ and subsequently lifted, packed and marked to the standards compatible with those described in current guidance from [ClfA](#), [Historic England](#), [Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England](#) APABE and the [British Association of Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology \(BABAO\)](#).

2.12.1c Where inhumations are encountered, provision should be made for the following:

- Sites where furnished burials are known, anticipated, or identified, should comply with SCCAS guidance note [Excavating Inhumations for Mineral Preserved Organics \(2026\)](#). SCCAS should be consulted with regards to the most appropriate mitigation approach and amendments to the existing WSI may be necessary.
- A sampling strategy which should include provision for retrieval of small bones in the head area (e.g. inner ear bones), torso/pelvic area (foetal remains, gall/bladder stones, hand bones depending on position), and the feet.
- A sampling strategy for evidence of intestinal parasites in accordance with [Historic England](#) and [ClfA](#) guidance and in discussion with appropriate specialists.
- A sampling strategy for pollen in accordance with [Historic England](#) guidance and in discussion with appropriate specialists. Grid sampling over the whole body zone should be employed to sample for stomach and intestinal contents, votive flowers and other sources such as textiles.

- Destructive sampling of human remains for scientific analysis including stable isotopes, radiocarbon dating, and aDNA in accordance with APABE guidance [Science and the Dead: Destructive Sampling of archaeological human remains for scientific analysis \(2023\)](#).

2.12.1.d Where cremations are encountered, provision should be made for the following:

- Where un-urned cremations are suspected or discovered, these will be 100% excavated, with 100% retention of all contents with spits taken from every 5cm interval until the entire cremation has been excavated.
- Urned cremations will be block lifted to allow for X-radiography and excavation under laboratory conditions.
- Following the recovery of human bone, cremation deposits should be subject to sampling and assessment for charcoal, charred plant remains, artefacts, molluscs and pollen.

2.13 The WSI should include provision for scientific analysis (including scientific dating) which may be a requirement to provide dating evidence to inform a mitigation strategy. The archaeological contractor's scientific specialist will provide advice and guidance throughout the project and should consult the Historic England Regional Science advisor. Scientific dating techniques - As a baseline the WSI will include provision for the following:

2.13.1 Radiocarbon (C-14) dating and Bayesian chronological modelling in accordance with Historic England guidance [Radiocarbon Dating and Chronological Modelling: Guidelines and Best Practice](#) (2022).

2.13.2 Luminescence dating (optically stimulated luminescence or OSL) ([Historic England guidance forthcoming](#)).

2.13.3 Archaeomagnetic dating for in situ fired material such as kilns or ovens and waterlogged deposits ([contact Historic England](#)).

2.13.4 Dendrochronology, see Historic England guidance [Dendrochronology: Guidelines on producing and interpreting dendrochronological dates](#) (1998).

2.14 The WSI must include provision for a reburial strategy for the site which may be a requirement if archaeological remains are encountered which require short-term preservation in situ or long-term preservation in situ. The strategy must be developed in accordance with Historic England guidance [Preserving Archaeological Remains](#) (2016), specifically Appendix 5 - [The Reburial of Archaeological Sites](#).

3. Recording Requirements

3.1 The archaeological contractors WSI will contain detailed methodologies for the production of hand-written and drawn records and photography in accordance with professional guidance and good practice.

- 3.2 Proposals to use digital plan and section drawing must be discussed and agreed with SCCAS prior to its inclusion in a Written Scheme of Investigation. If digital recording is used, the WSI must state the digital recording methodology and details on storage of the site records and backups.
- 3.3 Recording is to be consistent with the requirements of the Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER) and compatible with the archive for deposition. Methods must be specified in the WSI and agreed with the SCCAS.
- 3.4 Plans of archaeological features on the site are to be drawn at 1:20 or 1:50, depending on the complexity of the feature/s being recorded.
- 3.5 Sections of features are to be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20, depending on the complexity of the feature/s being recorded.
- 3.6 Sample sections of trench sides should be drawn and photographed. Where complex deposits are present, provision should be included in the WSI for full cleaning, photography and recording of long sections and/or all trench sections where appropriate.
- 3.7 A sufficient number of levels will be taken across the excavation to gain an understanding of subsurface topography, all levels should relate to Ordinance datum.
- 3.8 All features should be recorded using RTK GPS survey equipment or Total Station (as appropriate) and site plans should be provided to the SCCAS on a regular basis.
- 3.9 A photographic record of the work is to be made, consisting of high-resolution digital images. All cameras must have sensors of APS-C (or larger) and all images must be at least 10 megapixels in size. This rules out most compact, bridge and mobile phone cameras.
- 3.10 All digital images for archiving purposes must be high quality non-altered RAW files (.DNG) or TIFF images. JPG images must not be used for archiving.
- 3.11 Scale bars should be of an appropriate size and placed in an appropriate position relative to the subject and not obscure any significant element of the subject.
- 3.12 Provision should be made for the use of photogrammetry for 3-dimensional recording of features such as burials, structures, and industrial features. See Historic England [Photogrammetric Applications for Cultural Heritage Guidance for Good Practice](#) (2017).
- 3.13 Provision should be made for artefact distribution modelling on industrial production sites and of flint assemblages. See Historic England guidance [Managing Lithic Sites: Archaeological guidance for commercial and research projects, planning authorities, land management agencies and developers](#) (2024).

4. Artefact Requirements

- 4.1 The retrieval, conservation and analysis of archaeological artefacts will be detailed in the archaeological contractors WSI.

- 4.2 All artefacts will be collected and bagged by context.
- 4.3 All small finds will be GPS plotted so the find can be 3-Dimensionally located within its context and the site.
- 4.4 Treasure will be reported to the SCCAS immediately and the county Finds Liaison Officer (FLO). The Archaeological Contractor will comply with the provisions of the [Treasure Act](#). Findings will be reported to the Coroner within 14 days.
- 4.5 Finds that are suspected to contain preserved organic residues will not be cleaned in accordance with [Historic England](#) Guidance.
- 4.6 In accordance with NPPF, the contractor must get the agreement of the landowner to the deposition of the site archive, and transfer of title, with SCCAS County Archaeology Store. The intended depository should be clearly stated within the archaeological contractors WSI.

5. Reporting and Archival Requirements

- 5.1 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, find and samples relating to the work.
- 5.2 The WSI must reference SCCAS [Guidelines for Archive Preparation and Deposition](#) (2026) and all archive production must comply with these guidelines.
- 5.3 An archive of all records and finds is to be prepared, consistent with the principles of [Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment \(MoRPHE\)](#) (Historic England e 2015). It must be adequate to perform the function of a final archive for deposition in the Archaeological Service's County Store (see [Archaeological Archives Forum: a guide to best practice](#), 2011). The Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group/Study Group for Roman Pottery/Medieval Pottery Research Group [A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology](#) (2016) should be adhered to and ceramics should be assessed with regard to the Suffolk fabric series for post-Roman pottery.
- 5.4 Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with guidelines from [The Institute of Conservation \(ICON\)](#).
- 5.5 It is expected that the entire archive will be deposited as a whole with SCCAS County Archaeology Store. Where finds of treasure (as defined by the Treasury Act 1996) will not form part of the finds archive then provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, photogrammetry, illustration, scientific analysis) as appropriate.
- 5.6 The project manager should consult the SCCAS Archaeology Store before the archive is prepared regarding the specific requirements for the archive deposition and curation, and regarding any specific cost implications of deposition. A clear statement of the form, intended content, and standards of the archive is to be submitted for approval as an essential requirement of the WSI.

- 5.7 For deposition on the County Archaeological Store, the archive should comply with SCCAS Archive Guidelines.
- 5.8 Archive deposition charges will be charged prior to the planning conditions for the site being discharged. If a site does not require further work following the completion of the evaluation, then SCCAS expects the charge to be paid at evaluation reporting stage. In accordance with NPPF paragraph 211, transfer of ownership must be completed at this stage prior to discharge of condition.
- 5.9 If a site does not require further work following the completion of the evaluation, the evaluation report should state proposals for the deposition of the digital archive relating to this project with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), adhering to the requirements for digital archives set out in SCCAS Guidelines for Archive Preparation and Deposition 2026, and allowance should be made for costs incurred to ensure proper deposition (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/policy.html>).
- 5.10 A report on the fieldwork and archive, consistent with the principles of MoRPHE, must be provided. Its conclusions must include a clear statement of the archaeological value of the results, and their significance in the context of the [Regional Research Framework](#) (see also East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers [3](#), [8](#) and [24](#)).
- 5.11 The results should be related to the relevant known archaeological information held in the SHER. It should include examination of all readily available cartographic sources (e.g. those in the County Records Office) and Lidar and aerial photographs to record evidence for historic or archaeological sites and history of previous landuses. Where permitted, photographs, photocopies or traced copies should be presented in the report. It should also incorporate an assessment of the potential for documentary research that would contribute to the archaeological investigation of the site.
- 5.12 Any reference to HER records in any WSI's or reports should be made using the Parish Code (XXX 000) and NOT the MSF0000 number.
- 5.13 A copy of the WSI should be included as an appendix to the report.
- 5.14 A copy of the report, clearly marked DRAFT, must be presented to SCCAS for approval within six months of the completion of fieldwork unless other arrangements are negotiated. 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 be 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.
- 5.15 Where appropriate, digital vector plans of trial trenches, recorded archaeological features and excavated sections, should be provided as georeferenced (EPSG: 27700) ESRI shape or QGIS GPK files. These files should have the relevant attributes attached to them including; HER Parish Code, Primary Reference Number e.g. (Section Number; Context Number; Sample Number; Small Find Number; etc); Group or Feature Number; Archaeological Periods and Phases. These GIS files should be provided to the Suffolk HER following approval of the final report.

- 5.16 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.
- 5.17 All Suffolk sites will be accessed via an ADS Suffolk Landing Page. Therefore, when depositing data from Suffolk sites, ADS will need to be informed that the site will need to be added to the Suffolk page.
- 5.18 Where positive results are drawn from a project, a summary report must be prepared, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History. It should be included in the project report, or submitted to SCCAS, by the end of the calendar year in which the work takes place, whichever is the sooner.
- 5.19 Where a Scheduled Monument is involved, a copy of the approved report should be sent to Historic England.