FAS HERITAGE

# SOMERTON CASTLE

## THE STUDIO AND ENERGY CENTRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Reference: SOMC 24

Version 1.1

Date: 15/02//2024

# 1 Introduction

This document presents a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a programme of archaeological excavation and monitoring at Somerton Castle and has been prepared by FAS Heritage for Hoare, Ridge and Morris LLP. The excavation and monitoring has been designed in response to proposals for the construction of a new studio and energy centre. The WSI has been prepared in support of Scheduled Monument Consent and planning application. The WSI has been guided by Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook (2016), and the Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct (2021) and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological excavation (2023).

## 1.1 Location and land use

Somerton Castle lies c.3km west of the hamlet of Boothby Graffoe, c.12km south of Lincoln (NGR: SK 955 586; Figure 1). The site consists of a farmhouse and outbuildings, formed partly within the remains of the quadrangular 13th-century castle, set in a moated platform. The grounds are primarily lawned, including the earthwork remains, with scattered trees.

The archaeological programme will be undertaken to the northwest of the inner court largely within the footprint of a mid-20th-century Dutch barn (Figure 2; Plate 1).

**Plate 1** Aerial view of Somerton Castle showing location of Dutch barn and proposed studio

### 1.1.1 Statutory designations

Somerton Castle is a Scheduled Monument (National Heritage List No: 1005015) and Grade I Listed Building (NHLE 1268966).

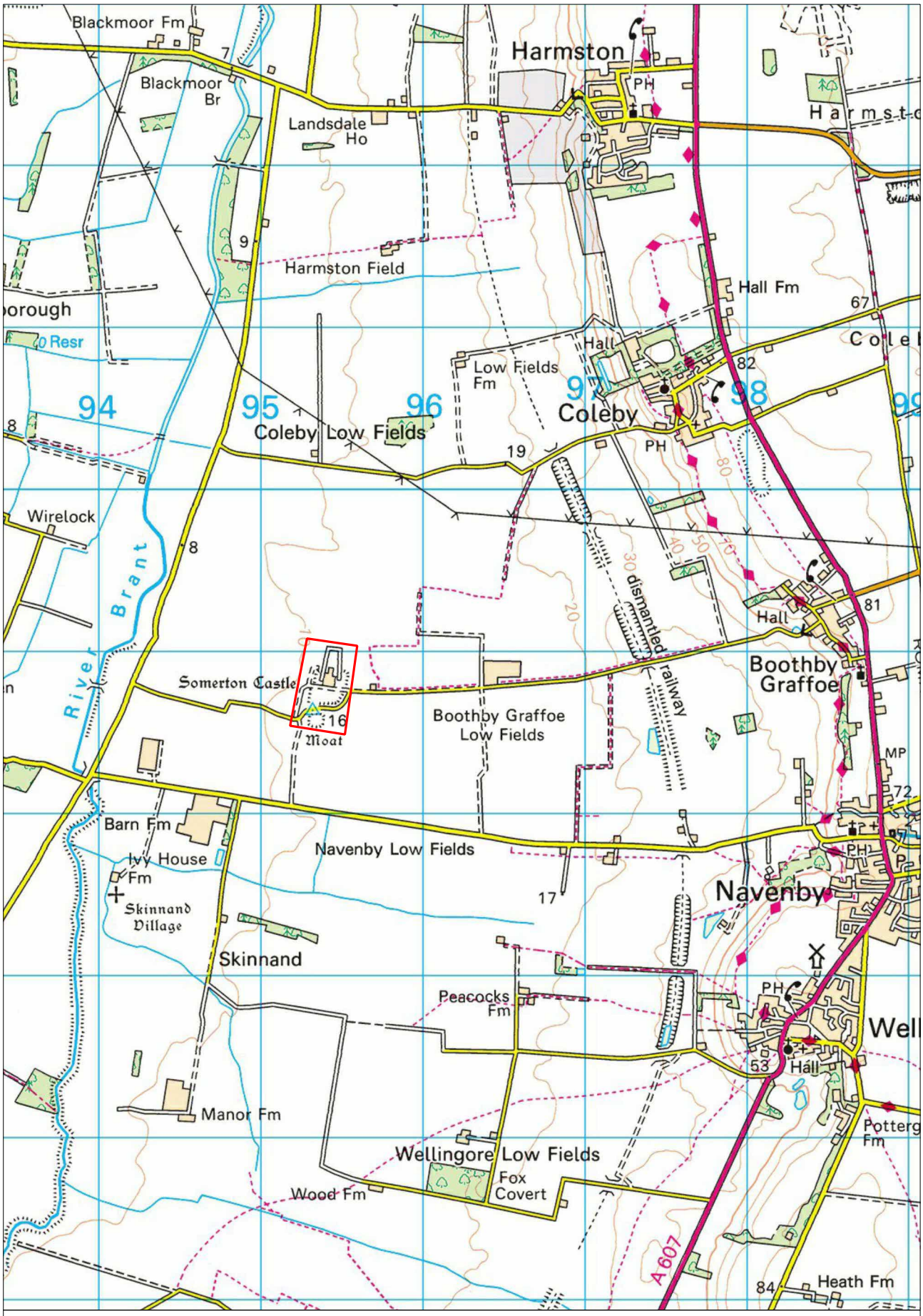


**Figure 1** Location of Somerton Castle Scale 1:30000@A4

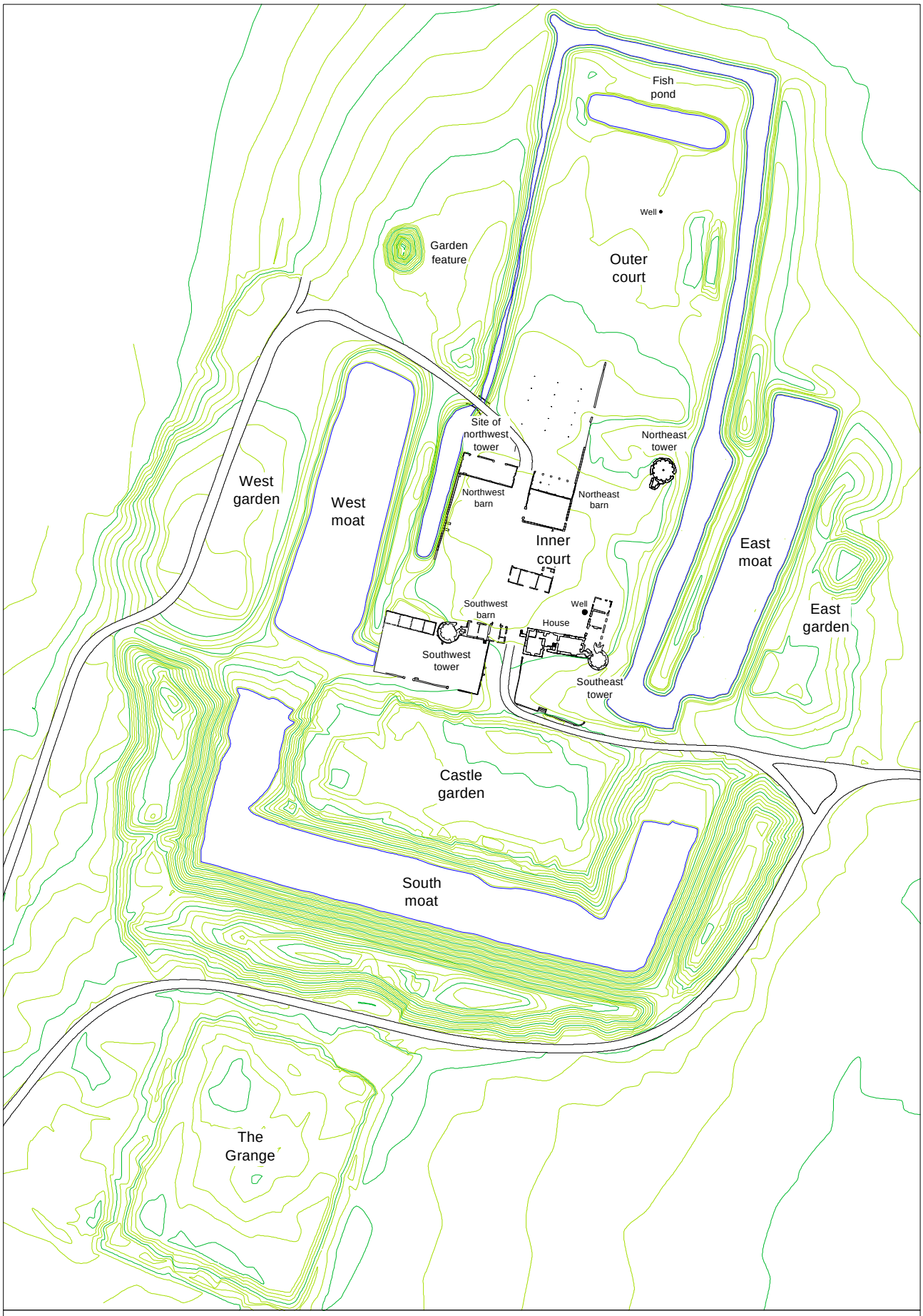


**Figure 2** Plan of Somerton Castle

Scale 1:2000@A4

## 1.2 Aims and objectives

The objective of the archaeological excavation and monitoring is to allow the in situ preservation of important archaeological remains (where this is feasible and desirable) and to preserve by record any archaeological remains to be impacted by the construction of the studio. The WSI has been prepared in support of Scheduled Monument Consent and planning application.

## 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Somerton Castle was built for Antony Bek, Bishop of Durham, in the late 13th century; he was granted a licence to crenellate in 1281 by Edward I. The castle was built on land belonging to Somerton Grange or Manor. Somerton Manor lay in the hands of Alfred de Lincoln who died without issue in 1257 when the land passed to the de Greys in 1257; Robert de Grey was Bek's grandfather and his mother, Eva de Grey passed the property to Bek (Porter 2023, 3-6).

The castle was built as a quadrangular fortification based on circular corner towers connected by a curtain wall within a moated platform. The castle plan followed aspects of the Welsh castles built by Edward I and his architect Master James of St George in the late 13th century, particularly Beaumaris and Harlech; there is strong evidence that Master James of St George lies behind the design of Somerton Castle.

Bek subsequently presented Somerton Castle to Edward II in 1309 and the castle remained largely in the hands of the Crown until the early 17th century. Various repairs and additions to the castle were made throughout the 14th century, documented in the Exchequer Rolls, including those made by the Constable of Somerton, John Crabbe from 1333.

Crabbe, a Fleming, is perhaps one of the more colourful characters associated with Somerton, with a career that had encompassed piracy, commerce and war. He had made himself indispensable to the Scottish Crown in its wars with the English, as a purveyor of military supplies (largely stolen), plunderer of English property on land and sea and defender of Berwick in 1318-19. His luck appeared to have run out after leading a small fleet of Flemish ships unsuccessfully against English ships in the Firth of Tay, fleeing to Berwick, before being captured in a Scottish attack on the English held Roxburgh. However, Crabbe's fortunes reversed when he found favour with Edward III for his services in a subsequent siege of Berwick; he had effectively switched sides and, in 1333, was granted the life office of constable of Somerton Castle in reward. For his continued military assistance to Edward III he was granted 'the custody of the castle with the lands, rents, liberties, and all other profits pertaining to the castle' in 1340. Crabbe died in 1352 having spent many years in retirement at Somerton Castle.

Somerton was subsequently used as a place of custody of the French king, John the Good, between July 1359 and March 1360. Henry VII transferred Somerton to the estates of the Duchy of Lancaster and by the early years of the 16th century the castle was described 'wholly decayed'.

The Duchy might have initiated the construction of a house for the local farmer in the castle ruins shortly after 1601. However, the property was purchased by Thomas Disney of Carlton le Moorland in 1629, who appears to have been living at Somerton several years previously, and the house appears to have been further developed in this period.

Of the castle's four towers, only the southeast remains wholly extant although the remains of all were extant up to the mid-19th century; the northwest tower was dismantled in 1849, while the ground floors of the northeast and southwest towers still remain. Extensive earthworks, moats and fishponds associated with the medieval castle remain around the site. Attached to the southeastern tower is an early 17th-century south range attributed to the Disney family with a slightly later western wing, all latterly converted into a farmhouse during the 19th century.

## 1.4 Work to date

Prior to work associated with the restoration of Somerton Castle which commenced in 2013, previous archaeological work at the site consisted of a geophysical survey undertaken in 2008 over the south lawn and in the orchard to the north of the house. The survey identified several anomalies which were thought to be either structural remains and/or garden features including the possible course of the curtain wall (Grid Nine Freelance Archaeological Geophysics 2009).

### 1.4.1 Current archaeological programme

To date, archaeological work associated with the restoration of Somerton Castle has consisted of an iterative programme of evaluation followed by archaeological mitigation in response to the conservation and adaptation of the site and its structures. A total of 29 interventions have been undertaken at the site, beginning with evaluation in the form of test pit excavation or evaluation excavation (Table 1; Figure 3). Evaluation was undertaken of the main house, the four circular corner towers of the medieval castle and across a range of internal targets within the inner court. The evaluation programme allowed a scheme of archaeological mitigation to be designed in response to the installation of site-wide infrastructure, conservation and repair of extant medieval structures and impact on surviving below-ground archaeology. Mitigation consisted of preservation by record and was implemented as a watching brief or strip, map and record or mitigation excavation as appropriate.

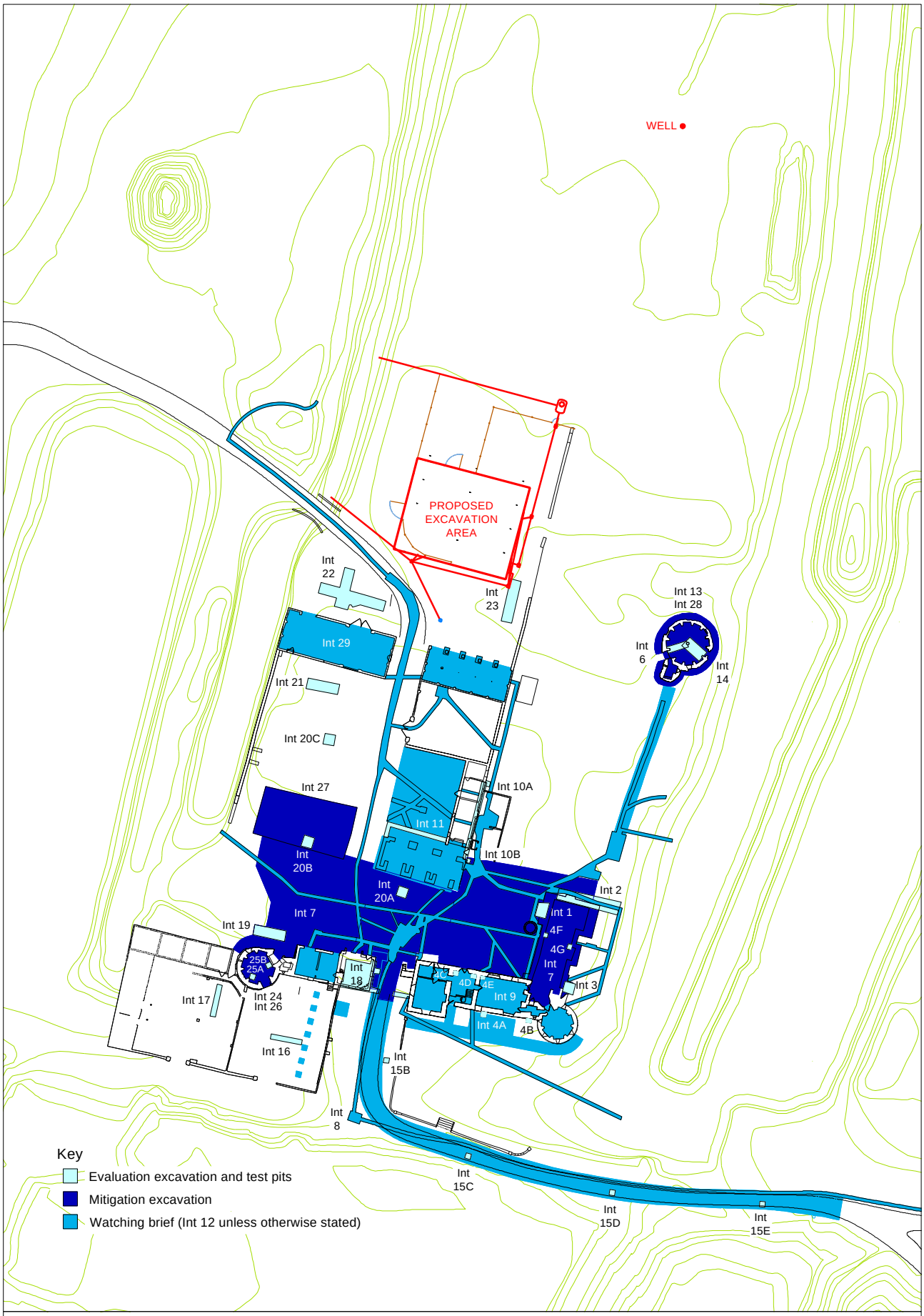


**Figure 3** Location of Interventions

Scale 1:1000@A4

Table 1 Index of interventions

| Int. No. | Location | Activity | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | W. of kitchen | Evaluation excavation | 10-11/13 |
| 2 | N. of kitchen | Evaluation excavation | 10-11/13 |
| 3 | E. of kitchen | Evaluation excavation | 10-11/13 |
| 4a | S. of house | Test pit | 10-11/13 |
| 4b | S. of house | Test pit | 10-11/13 |
| 4c | Hall of house | Test pit | 10-11/13 |
| 4d | Hall of house | Test pit | 10-11/13 |
| 4e | Main reception | Test pit | 10-11/13 |
| 4f | W. of snug | Test pit | 10-11/13 |
| 4g | E. of snug | Test pit | 10-11/13 |
| 5 | SE Tower | Watching brief | 10-11/13 |
| 6 | NE Tower | Evaluation excavation | 10-11/13 |
| 7 | Kitchen range & courtyard | Mitigation excavation & strip and map | 11/14 - 02/15 |
| 8 | S. access | Watching brief | 11/14 |
| 9 | House | Watching brief | 02/15 |
| 10 | Inner court | Test pits | 03/15 |
| 11 | Inner court | Evaluation excavation | 03/15 |
| 12 | All areas | Watching brief | 02/15 - |
| 13 | NE Tower, GF | Excavation | 07/16 |
| 14 | NE Tower, FF | Excavation | 04/17 |
| 15 | N. and S. access | Test pits | 07/17 |
| 16 | S. of SW Tower | Evaluation excavation | 07/17 |
| 17 | S. of SW Tower | Evaluation excavation | 07/17 |
| 18 | S. entrance | Excavation | 07/17 |
| 19 | N. of SW Tower | Evaluation excavation | 07/17 |
| 20 | Courtyard | Evaluation excavation | 07/17 |
| 21 | N. courtyard | Evaluation excavation | 07/17 |
| 22 | NW Tower | Evaluation excavation | 08/17 |
| 23 | N. curtain wall | Evaluation excavation | 08/17 |
| 24 | SW Tower, FF | Excavation | 03/18 - 08/18 |
| 25 | SW Tower, GF | Test pits | 03/18 |
| 26 | SW Tower, GF | Excavation | 07/18 |

| Int. No. | Location | Activity | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | Courtyard | Excavation | 08/18 |
| 28 | Northeast Tower | Excavation | 04/21 |
| 29 | Northwest barn | Watching brief | 05/21 |
| 30 | Studio and Energy Centre | Excavation and watching brief | 2024 |

The accumulative results of the archaeological programme have transformed understanding of the medieval castle complex, its significance, and also allowing a detailed castle layout to be compiled (Figure 4).

Evidence for structures belonging to the medieval castle have been recorded across the site. Three of the circular corner towers remain partly extant and evaluation and excavation within their ground and sometimes first-floor level as well as in their immediate vicinity provided insight into room function, status, and articulation with other structures including the inner court curtain wall. Below-ground remains belonging to the medieval castle were also frequently identified, most commonly in the form of wall foundation makeup or robber trenches. This has allowed the form of the inner court to be defined including the lost northwest tower, as well as a number of building ranges across the court. The north, south, east and west building ranges identified can be related to documentary records which provide further insight into layout and function. Further features, such as a stone-built oven, rare surviving floor surfaces with occupation deposits and wells provide new information about lifeways in the castle. Most notably, the base of a possible spiral stair contained within a corner turret close to the north curtain wall - belonging to the lost ‘great gate’ mentioned in documentary records - allows a more complete ground plan of Somerton to be understood and placed in its international context. Medieval material assemblages include building materials, pottery, animal bone and plant remains, and provide further detail on lifestyle and the appearance of the castle buildings. Ceramic roof coverings included glazed tiles and ornamental glazed ridges, while an unusual ceramic tracery screen has also been evidenced.

The demise and demolition of the medieval castle is also represented in the excavated archaeology in the form of notably fragmentary survival of stone-built fabric and comprehensive robbing for stone salvage that often extended deep into foundation make-up. Dateable material is scarce, but some indication for robbing points to late medieval/early post-medieval demolition and stripping out, with foundation robbing signalled from the 17th to 19th centuries. Adaptation of the medieval castle complex in the post-medieval period is best evidenced in the surviving house.

Activity of 19th-century date was recorded across the site in the form of a range of agricultural buildings and associated service infrastructure.

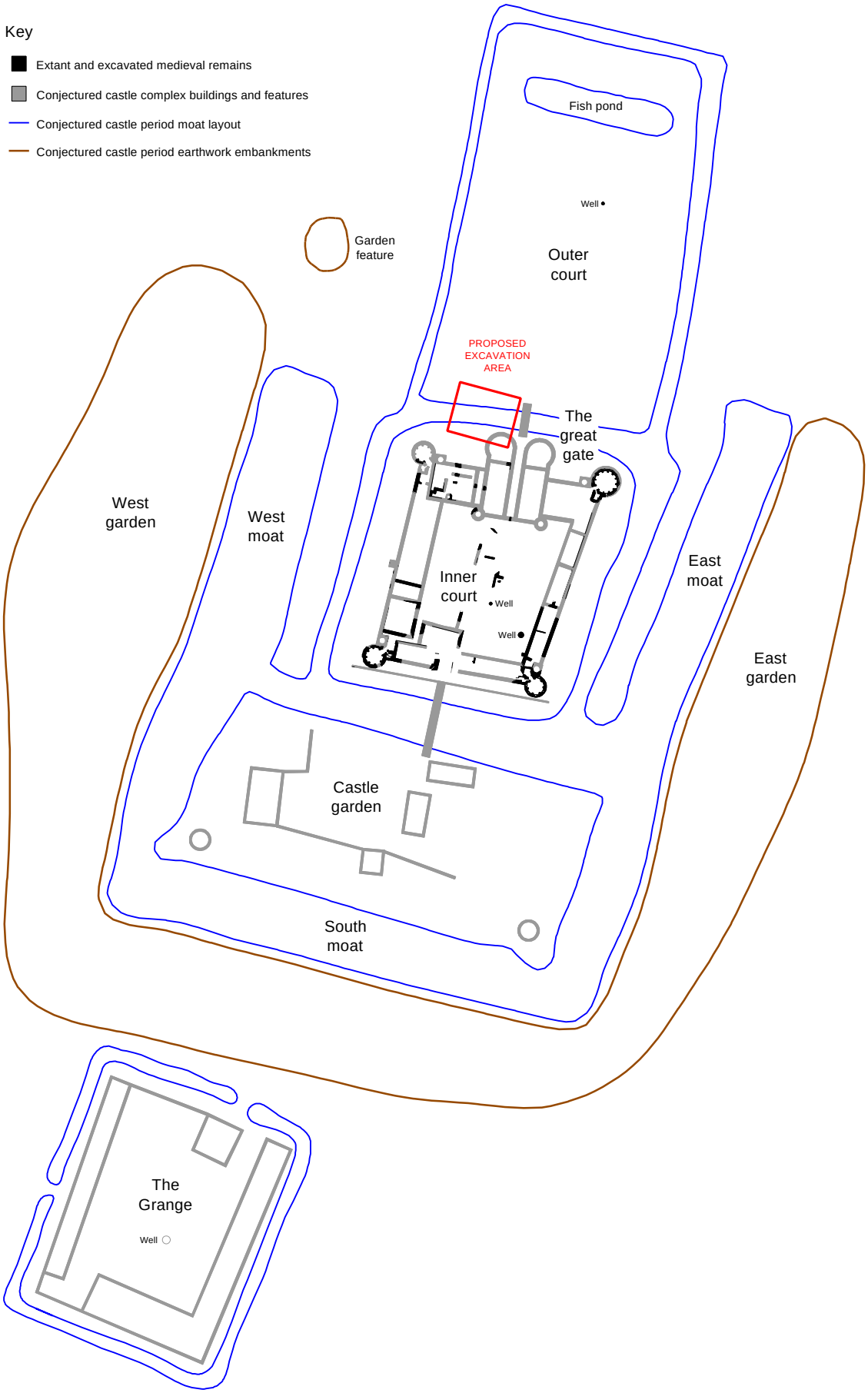


**Figure 4** Reconstructed plan of castle complex Scale 1:2000@A4

# 2 Methodology

## 2.1 General standards

FAS Heritage will comply with the codes of conduct of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The archaeological programme will be carried out in accordance with the following:

CIfA, Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation, 2023
CIfA, Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording, 2023

## 2.2 Fieldwork procedure

The proposed development is largely confined to the footprint of the Dutch barn; the area to be excavated in advance of construction has been assigned Intervention 30, while the archaeological monitoring of excavation for service infrastructure and work to consolidate and protect a well in the Outer Court will retain assignment as part of Intervention 12 (see Figure 3). This proposed development is positioned close to Intervention 23, an evaluation trench targeted at the location of the great gatehouse frontage (FAS Heritage 2023). The features and deposits within Intervention 23 suggest that Roman buried soil, and negative medieval features including robber trenches lie in this zone. Historic accounts of the Outer Court mention ranges of buildings, though these are likely to have been thoroughly robbed from the late medieval period onwards.

Intervention 30 will be undertaken as a strip, map and record operation across the footprint of the studio which measures c.17.0 x 10.0m. The removal of the concrete floor of the Dutch barn will be archaeologically supervised. The new building will have strip foundations and a floor raft; where features can be left in situ this will be prioritised. Where features and deposits will be impacted by required construction depths, they will be excavated in advance. Should medieval stone-built remains be encountered, consultation with Historic England will be undertaken in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed building. The area of paddock yard to the west of the studio measuring 16.5 x 10.0m will not be impacted by deep groundworks and archaeology will be mapped and sampled across the area.

A range of service trenches to and from the new building will be required including the provision of power and fresh water and the discharge of foul water. This will require the excavation of service trenches and the installation of a klargester sceptic tank; all groundworks will be monitored by an archaeologist.

Fieldwork will commence following removal of the Dutch barn and its concrete raft by the principal contractor. Excavation with a small mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket will

follow and will be used to undertake post-demolition definition and will cease at the first archaeological horizon. All further excavation will be carried out by hand in a controlled and stratigraphic manner. Features and contexts will be sample-excavated as appropriate; structural remains will be left in situ.

The discovery of human remains is unlikely, but it does remain a possibility. In the event, FAS Heritage would notify the Ministry of Justice and client of the presence of human remains at the earliest opportunity. Removal and recording would be effected in accordance with:

> Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England (English Heritage 2005)
> a conditioned licence issued by the Ministry of Justice and Environmental Heath Directorate
> Human Bones from Archaeological Sites: Guidelines for Producing Assessment Documents and Analytical Reports (English Heritage 2004)

## 2.3 Recording procedure

The existing FAS Heritage site grid based on the Ordnance Survey Datum will be used for recording purposes. Survey stations will be set out around the excavation area using a total station theodolite (TST).

A full written, drawn and photographic record will be made of all strata encountered during the course of the excavation. Archaeological deposits, features and structures will be recorded using a standard system of context and other record forms. A series of indexes, capable of interrogation, will be maintained for all site records. The planning of features will be at scales of 1:10 or 1:20; a long trench section will be recorded at a scale of 1:10. The photographic record will consist of 35mm colour and monochrome photography. Monochrome photography will be undertaken using silver-based film to ensure archival stability.

The excavation and recording system employed by FAS Heritage during fieldwork is based on a set of principles designed by Professor Martin Carver known as Field Research Procedure (FRP)(Carver 1999; 2009). FRP encourages the preparation of a robust design procedure that matches objectives and thereby provides structure to archaeological research. The accompanying recording system is based on a single-context record, but goes further and structures excavation data in an hierarchical system: deposits defined during excavation, which are considered to have been formed by a single action, are defined as ‘contexts’ (standard stratigraphic units); sets of contexts are defined as higher order stratigraphic units defined as ‘features’; groups of features can be defined as belonging to ‘structures’. Thus, where appropriate, contexts are grouped during excavation as ‘features’, and similarly, features into groups called ‘structures’; feature records are additional to, not alternative to, context records (Carver 1999, 158).

In addition to the hierarchical recording system, predetermined recovery levels are employed ranging from Recovery Level A to E, representing increasing levels of investment and intensity of investigation. Recovery Level A represents a minimum standard of recording and is applied to deposits with negligible archaeological research potential normally excavated mechanically, while at the other end of the spectrum Level E represents block-lifting of earth for excavation in a laboratory. This approach allows a flexible response to the deposits encountered and ensures that recording is not dogmatic and automated but tailored directly to the intrinsic research potential of each archaeological unit.

## 2.4 Environmental strategy

Based on the results of the evaluation it is anticipated that the excavation will encounter dry archaeological deposits containing moderate assemblages of biological material. The environmental programme will seek to characterise the nature of deposits and environmental assemblages, from different periods and context types, with an emphasis on establishing the environmental setting of settlement and industrial activity, understanding food preparation, rubbish disposal strategies, and the identification of social status.

A systematic environmental sampling method will be employed. Deposits which are clearly of a mixed/secondary origin such as make-up layers or deposits, which display a high degree of residual/intrusive artefactual material would not be the subject of environmental sampling unless a specific question relating to function or social status can be addressed. Where deposits are thought to be of primary origin and have potential to contain biological remains, the following sampling regime will be undertaken:

Coarse sieving samples will be collected from deposits which appear to contain primary and useful vertebrate and invertebrate assemblages, and sieved using 10mm mesh to enhance recovery. An appropriate sample will be set ranging from 10-100% of the excavated deposit.

Flotation samples will be collected from deposits which appear to contain small vertebrate and invertebrate assemblages, charred plant remains, organic plant remains, cess and insect remains. Samples of 40 litres will be collected and processed using a water-recycling tank with rapid water-flow washover. A 1mm mesh will be used to recover the dense residue and a 300 micron mesh will be used to recover light fractions. 10 litres (GBA) will be retained for sub-sampling for paraffination for insects remains, and other specialist analyses (eg parasites, pollen etc), where deemed appropriate.

Block samples (spitted soil columns, monoliths or kubienas) will be collected from undisturbed sequences which appear to have the potential for a dateable environmental sequence or information about deposit origin, grain structure and condition.

The strategy would be implemented in accordance with:

Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (English Heritage, Centre for Archaeology Guidelines 2011)
Environmental Archaeology and Archaeological Evaluations: Recommendations concerning the environmental archaeology component of archaeological evaluations in England (Association of Environmental Archaeology 1995)

## 2.5 Finds recovery and treatment

All finds identified during excavation would be hand-collected and processed. The recovery of metalwork will be enhanced by the use of a metal detector operated by an experienced user. Finds treatment and archive preparation would be undertaken in accordance with:

Lincolnshire County Council Archaeological Handbook 2019
Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (Walker 1990)
First Aid for Finds (Watkinson and Neal 1998)
Waterlogged organic artefacts: guidelines on the recovery, analysis and conservation (English Heritage 2012).

Residues recovered as part of the Environmental Evaluation Strategy will be routinely sorted for cultural material and scanned with a magnet for small ferrous objects and hammerscale. Where deemed appropriate, coarse sieving (10mm mesh) or bulk samples (1mm mesh) will be collected specifically for finds recovery, particularly for industrial residues. All metalwork and a sample of metallurgical residues will be submitted for X-radiography prior to assessment.

The terms of the Treasure Act 1996 would be followed with regard to any finds which might fall within its purview. Any such finds would be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner as required by the procedures as laid down in the “Code of Practice”. The Portable Antiquities Scheme Officer would also be notified. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery, suitable security measures would be taken to protect the finds from theft.

## 2.6 Archive preparation

The project will be archived under the site code SOMC13 (LCNCC: 2013.171) with individual interventions clearly structured within the archive. After completion of the field investigation all records and material will be curated in accordance with the Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook (2019) and will be indexed, ordered, quantified and checked for consistency. Context, finds, sample and other paper-based records will be transferred to an integrated computer based system. The

drawn record will be digitised in an appropriate format that will permit the output of standard AutoCAD type DXF files.

The archival record will include all material relating to the site and its excavation including correspondence, written, drawn and computerised records. As part of the preparation for the post-excavation programme, the material archive will be quantified and described.

The digital archive will be provided in a non-magnetic storage medium using generic file formats including PDF.

Preliminary conservation and stabilisation of objects will be undertaken prior to an assessment of long-term conservation and storage needs.

## 2.7 Post-excavation and reporting procedure

Upon completion of the fieldwork, all finds, samples and stratigraphic information will be assessed for their potential for further analysis. A post-excavation report will be prepared to include the archaeological and historical background, fieldwork procedure, the results of the excavation, the results of the specialist assessment, interpretation and phasing, illustrations (photographs, plans and sections) and assessment, conclusions and recommendations. Historic England and the Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire will be provided with copies of this report.

# 3 Publication and dissemination

An OASIS record will be initiated at the outset of the project and the report will enter the public domain via OASIS as well as the LHER. A note will be prepared on the results of the excavation for publication in an appropriate journal.

# 4 Company personnel

Excavation Director, Justin Garner-Lahire BA

Post-excavation Manager, Cecily Spall BSc MA MCIfA

Project Officer, Richard Jackson BA

## 4.1 Project Specialists

Jane Young, Ian Rowlandson and Johanna Gray (pottery, ceramic building material and clay pipe)

Karen Barker (Conservation)

Cecily Spall (Small Finds)

Hugh Willmott (Glass)

Craig Barclay (Coins)

# 5 Monitoring arrangements

The work will be monitored by Tim Allen, Historic England and the Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire (archaeological advisors to North Kesteven District Council), who will be notified prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

# 6 Health and safety

FAS Heritage will operate with due regard for Health and Safety regulations, and will ensure that all relevant requirements are met with regard both to site personnel and to members of the public. A Risk Assessment will be prepared, in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Regulations prior to the start of the site investigation.

# 7 Insurance

FAS Heritage carry appropriate levels of Public Liability, Employers Liability and Professional Indemnity insurances.

# 8 Timetable

The proposed work will take place in 2024; exact dates to be confirmed.

# 9 References

2009 Archaeological Geophysical Survey Report, Somerton Castle, Boothby Graffoe, Lincolnshire (Technical Report, dated February 2009, by Grid Nine Freelance Archaeological Geophysics)

2019 Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook, available at: Archaeological handbook for Lincolnshire (accessed 06/02/2024)

2021 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct: professional ethics in archaeology, available Microsoft Word - Code of conduct revOct2022 (archaeologists.net), accessed 06/02/2024

2023 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation

FAS Heritage 2023 Somerton Castle, Archaeological Investigation (unpublished technical report)

Porter G 2023 The Origins of Somerton Castle (G E Porter Limited)

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