

Archaeological Assessment

Purpose:

The purpose of an Archaeological Assessment is to ensure archaeological resources on site are evaluated, documented, and mitigated prior to land disturbance/site development.

Where an Archaeological Assessment is required, the Assessment shall be undertaken in accordance with criteria established by the Province. There are four stages of Archaeological Studies. The requirement to proceed to a higher stage of study shall be determined by Provincial Guidelines and in consultation with the City. The following describes the study requirements by stage;

Stage 1: Background Study and Property Inspection

The archaeologist determines whether there is potential for archaeological sites on the property. They review geographic, land use and historical information for the property and the relevant surrounding area, visit the property to inspect its current condition and contact the ministry to find out if there are any known archaeological sites on or near the property. A Stage 2 assessment is required when the consultant archaeologist identifies areas of archaeological potential. Stage 1 may only be used to recommend exempting a property from Stage 2 assessment where it has been confirmed through a property inspection that potential for the entire project has been removed by extensive and deep ground disturbance. (ie. In accordance with 2011 S&G s. 1.4.2, recommending no further concern must be verified in person and cannot be a desktop study only).

Stage 2: Property Assessment

The archaeologist surveys the land to identify any archaeological resources on the property. For a ploughed field, they will walk back and forth over it looking for artifacts on the surface. In forests, overgrown pasture areas or any other places that cannot be ploughed, they will dig parallel rows of small holes, called test pits, down to sterile subsoil at regular intervals and sift the soil to look for artifacts. They may use other strategies if properties are paved, covered in fill or have deeply buried former topsoils (such as floodplains or former sand dunes). The archaeologist will determine whether any archaeological resources found are of sufficient cultural heritage value or interest to require Stage 3 assessment.

Stage 3: Site-specific Assessment

The consultant archaeologist determines the dimensions of the archaeological site, evaluates its cultural heritage value or interest and, where necessary, makes recommendations for Stage 4 mitigation strategies. To this end, they conduct further background research and fieldwork that expands the information gathered in Stage 2. They map the spatial limits of a site and acquire further information about the site's characteristics by excavating one-metre by one-metre square test units across the site. Based on circumstances, some sites (for example, ones that have been paved or are deeply buried) may require specialized methods of assessment. The archaeologist will determine whether any archaeological sites have sufficient cultural heritage value or interest to require Stage 4 mitigation of development impacts.

Stage 4: Mitigation of Development Impacts

This stage involves implementing conservation strategies for archaeological sites. Determining the best approach for conserving the site may include reviewing possible strategies with the development proponent, the municipality or other approval authority, Indigenous communities, and other heritage stakeholders. Conserving archaeological sites does not mean stopping development. Conservation can involve putting long-term protection measures in place around an archaeological site to protect it intact. The site is then avoided while development proceeds around it. This is called protection in situ and is always the preferred option for mitigation of development impacts to a site. If protection is not viable, mitigation can involve documenting and completely excavating an archaeological site before development takes place.

Where an Archaeological assessment predates the 2011 Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologist, the applicant can choose to conduct a new assessment or submit the study to the City of Windsor Planning Department, who will then forward the assessment to the Ministry for acceptability or not. The Ministry shall hold the final decision on the acceptability of the Report.

No land disturbance shall be permitted until notification has been received from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism that the property has been cleared of archaeological concerns.

Qualifications:

An Archaeological Assessment must be completed by a professional Archaeologist, licensed in the Province of Ontario, to the satisfaction of the City.
