



Watching Brief Report

Land North of Rushmoor Lane

17/12/2015



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Neo Environmental Ltd

Scottish Office (Head Office)

Wright Business Centre.

1 Lonmay Road.

Glasgow.

G33 4EL

T 0141 773 6262

E: info@neo-environmental.co.uk

English Office:

Valiant Suites.

Lumonics House, Valley Drive,

Swift Valley, Rugby,

Warwickshire, CV21 1TQ

T: 01788 297012

E: info@neo-environmental.co.uk

ROI Office:

Johnstown Business Centre,

Johnstown House,

Naas,

Co. Kildare,

T: 00 353 (0)45 844250

E: info@neo-environmental.ie

NI Office:

Premier Business Centre

20 Adelaide St, Belfast,

Northern Ireland

BT2 8GD

T: 02890 517 092

E: info@neo-environmental.co.uk

Prepared For:

Sunsave 38 (Cheshire Coppice) Ltd



Prepared By:

Sean Rice BA (Hons)

Robert McMorran MA (Hons), MA, MCifA

	Name	Date
Edited By:	Michael Briggs	17/12/2015
Checked By:	Susan Bell	17/12/2015
	Name	Signature
Approved By	Paul Neary	

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Neo Environmental was commissioned by Sunsave 38 (Cheshire Coppice) Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Land North of Rushmoor Lane, Bratton, Telford, Shropshire (NGR E362203 N314428) (Figure 1). The watching brief was undertaken to address Condition 13 of the decision notice (Planning Reference TWC/2015/0560) for the development which states:

The development hereby approved shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the recommendations of the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Team.

Reason: The site is known to be in an area of archaeological importance.

- 1.2. The development site is situated in the administrative borough of Telford and Wrekin Council, approximately 1.2km to the northwest of Bratton. The development site is located within an area of agricultural land comprising two fields; one rectangular in plan and the other larger field irregularly shaped. The land is bound by hedgerows and post and wire fencing.

2. SCOPE & AIMS OF THE PROJECT

- 2.1. A watching brief is defined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standards and guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief (December 2014)¹ as a formal programme of observation and investigation that will define as far as reasonably possible the nature, depth and preservation of archaeological materials encountered during any operation conducted for non-archaeological reasons.
- 2.2. The broad aims of the project as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by Neo Environmental (McMorran 2015)² were to:
- Monitor all invasive relevant ground-works (i.e. those penetrating more than 200mm below the present ground surface) during the construction phase of the solar farm.
 - Locate any archaeological features and deposits within the investigated areas;

¹ Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014). *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. Reading

² McMorran, R. (2015). *Written Scheme of Investigation – Land North of Rushmoor Lane, Bratton, Telford*. Neo Environmental Ltd.

- Assess the survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures within the investigated areas;
- Identify and recommend options for the management of the archaeological resource, including any further archaeological provision where necessary.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1. The watching brief was carried out between Nov. 2015 to Dec. 2015 and was undertaken in accordance with the WSI (McMorran 2015)³. The project followed current best archaeological practice, embodied in the by-laws, codes of professional conduct, and standards and guidance (specifically that for archaeological watching brief) of the CfA.
- 3.2. Written records in the form of site notes and annotated sketches were made and high resolution digital photographs taken to show specific stages of fieldwork and the layout and relationship of archaeological features or deposits. Scales were included within the photographs where appropriate.

4. RESULTS

SUBSTATION AND CABLE TRENCH ONTO RUSHMOOR LANE

- 4.1. Machine excavation for an electricity substation and a cable trench from the substation to Rushmoor Lane was monitored on 4/11/15 and 5/11/15. Foundations for the substation were excavated to a depth of 1.06m below ground level (Plate 1). The depth of top soil was a maximum depth of 0.15m and was a mid greyish brown clay silt with frequent inclusions of modern ceramic building material (brick, tile and cinder block) below which was a large dump of modern household rubbish and debris including glass, ceramic, tin and plastic packaging dating to the 1960s and 1970s (both pre and post decimalisation) (Plate 2). The landowner informed the author that the land was occupied by “squatters” for several decades after the Second World War and that the ground was cleared some 30 years ago. This account is consistent with the age and nature of the material recovered. No earlier archaeological features or deposits were identified during monitoring.

³ McMorran, R. (2015). *Written Scheme of Investigation – Land North of Rushmoor Lane, Bratton, Telford*. Neo Environmental Ltd.

SITE ENTRANCE AND ACCESS TRACK

- 4.2. Machine excavation of the site entrance adjacent to Rushmoor Lane and the access track was monitored from 16/11/15 to 19/11/15. The pre-existing entrance was made up of modern hardcore (stone and ceramic building material) with a thin layer of overlying topsoil to a maximum depth 0.1m which was scraped off to leave the hardcore intact. The 4m wide access track was excavated to a depth 0.3m (Plates 3, 4 & 5). This was mostly topsoil and some underlying yellowy grey clay natural. The clay was very sterile with no inclusions or any evidence of plough scars. A total of four 0.8m trenches were machine excavated through the access track to allow for cable ducting beneath the track (Plate 6). This was carried out as the track was being excavated. These deeper trenches only revealed more sterile clay natural with no archaeological features or deposits identified.

INVERTERS A, B AND C

- 4.3. The three inverters were machine excavated on the morning of 23/11/15. The inverters were located adjacent to the western extent of the access track. These were dug to a depth of 0.4m, with a maximum 0.15m of topsoil, below which was the same yellowy grey clay natural (Plates 7 & 8). No archaeological features or deposits identified.

CABLE TRENCHES

- 4.4. Machine excavating of the cable trenches was monitored from 30/11/15 to 10/12/15.
- 4.5. Trenches varied in width from 0.3m to 1.3m in width and 0.3m to 1.2m in depth. Clay land drainage pipes were frequently encountered all over the site and these varied in depth from 0.6m to over 1m below ground level (Plates 9, 10 & 11). An oval brick structure was discovered to the south of the access track (NGR E362265 N314365). The structure looks like a crudely built well (Plates 12 & 13). Oval in plan (0.9m x 0.75m) and at least 1.2m in depth. The structure is built of 9"x4.5"x2.75" red clay bricks with no mortar bonding and is capped with rough cut blocks of red sandstone. The bricks are unfrosted. Due to the ad hoc nature of the structure it is presumed to be associated with the activities of "squatters" which were present on the site to provide a supply of drinking water. Despite the bricks being unfrosted it is not thought that the structure derives from an earlier period, however, a well and two rectangular structures, presumably buildings, adjacent to Rushmoor Lane, are depicted on the 1902 OS map of the site; the well may be related to these structures but it is more likely, given the lack of mortar in its construction and improvised nature, that the well is associated with recent activity on the site. The structure was not significantly damaged during machine excavation and remains *in situ*. No other archaeological features or deposits were encountered during monitoring.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. In conclusion, no archaeological deposits were encountered during the construction phase of the development. The well encountered in the southeastern portion of the site is likely to be of recent date but there is a possibility that it may have been related to built structures adjacent to Rushmoor Lane but this interpretation is unlikely.

6. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – FIGURES

Figure 1 – Site Location

APPENDIX B – PLATES

Plate 1. Foundation pit for substation



Plate 2. Foundation pit for substation showing modern rubbish and debris



Plate 3. Site entrance and access track



Plate 4. Terminus of access track facing southeast



Plate 5. Section of access track facing west



Plate 6. One of four trenches excavated through access track for cable ducting



Plate 7. Inverter base adjacent to access track



Plate 8. Inverter bases A and B



Plate 9. Cable trench adjacent to inverters



Plate 10. Cable trench facing north



Plate 11. Cable trench facing south-southeast



Plate 12. Brick well adjacent to cable trench



Plate 13. Brick well facing south





HEAD OFFICE

Wright Business Centre, 1 Lonmay Road, Glasgow G33 4EL | T: 0141 773 6262 | W: www.neo-environmental.co.uk

KILDARE OFFICE

Johnstown Business Centre
Johnstown House, Naas
Co. Kildare
T: 00 353 (0)45 844250
E: info@neo-environmental.ie
W: neo-environmental.ie

BELFAST OFFICE

Premier Business Centre
20 Adelaide St, Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT2 8GD
T: 02890 517 092
E: info@neo-environmental.co.uk

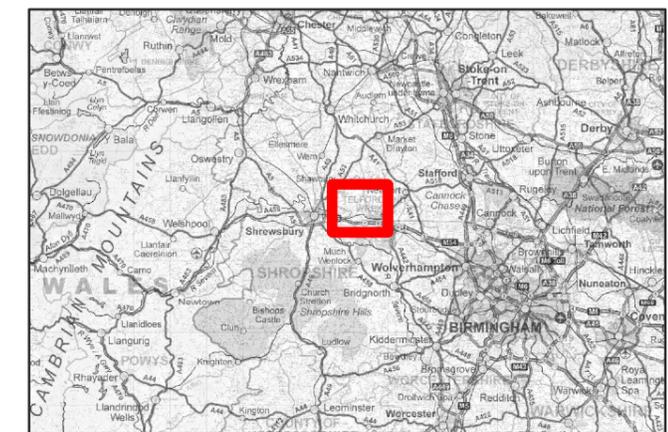
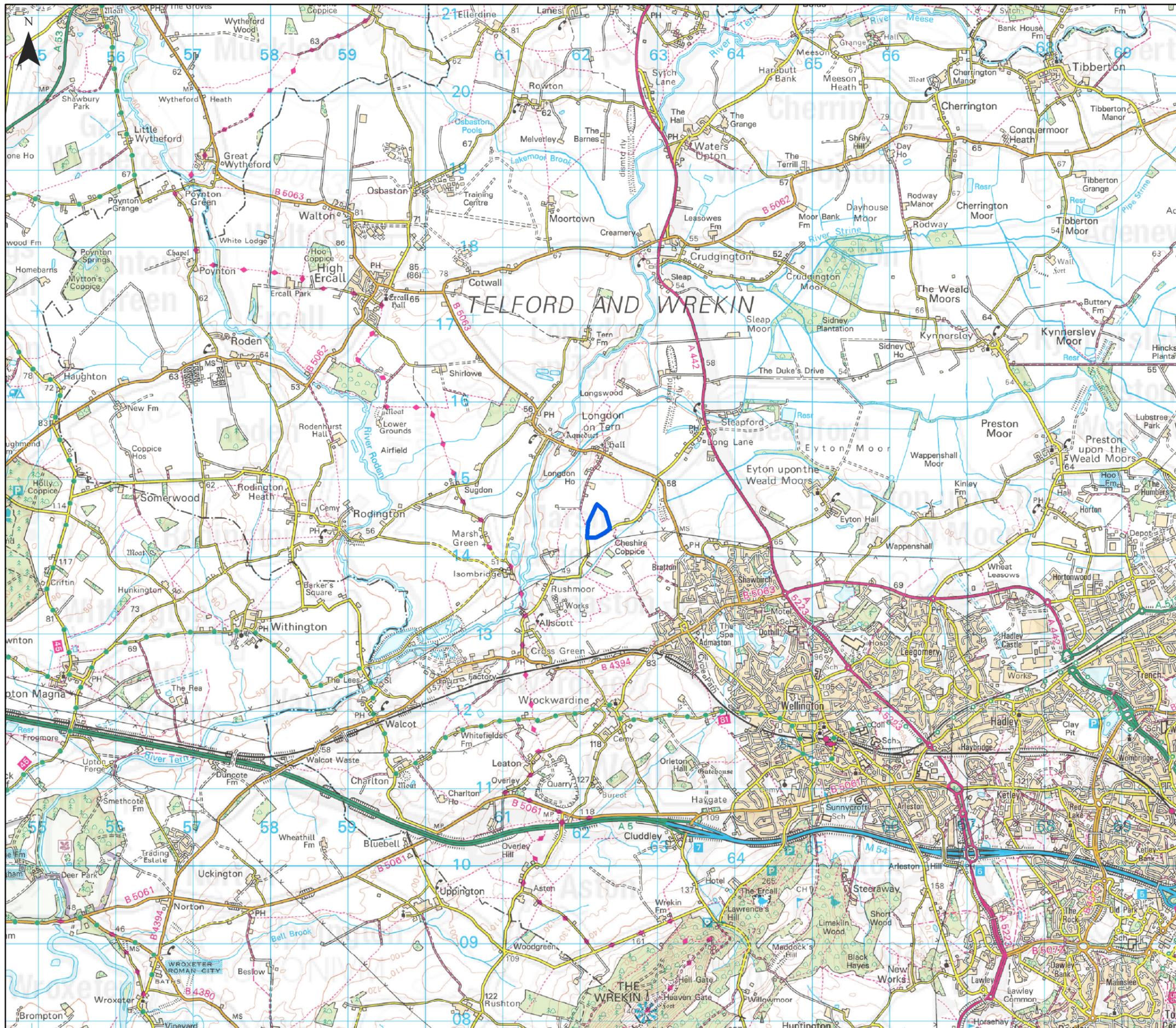
WARWICK OFFICE

Valiant Office Suites
Lumonics House, Valley Drive,
Swift Valley, Rugby,
Warwickshire, CV21 1TQ
T: 01788 297012
E: info@neo-environmental.co.uk

Land North of Rushmoor Lane Site Location Figure 1

Key

 Site Boundary



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Date: 11/09/2015
 Drawn By: RM
 Scale (A3): 1:50,000
 Drawing No: NEO00105/001/1a

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