CONDOVER AIRFIELD SOLAR FARM

PITCHFORD

SHROPSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

CP. NO: 11104/14

02/06/2015

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Quality Assurance

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology on the preparation of reports.

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PREPARED BY:	Adam Slater		
POSITION:	Project Officer		
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SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd, to undertake a desk-based assessment, geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation at Condover Airfield, Pitchford, Shropshire (NGR SJ 5117 0437). This work follows a planning application for the construction of a solar farm. Shropshire County Council granted planning consent for the development, on the condition an archaeological evaluation be undertaken.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken over five days between the 29th September and 5th October 2014. The evaluation involved the excavation of seven trenches, totalling 273m^2. No archaeological remains were noted.

As this archaeological evaluation was conducted as part of a condition in association with the development of a new Solar Farm, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the high archaeological potential of the area, it is recommended that any future work be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology would like to thank Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work. Wardell Armstrong Archaeology would also like to thank Andy Wrigley Historic Environment Manager at Shropshire County Council, for his assistance throughout the project.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Adam Slater with assistance from Rob Barnett and Rick Buckle. The report was written by Adam Slater and the drawings were produced by Adrian Bailey. The project was managed by Nick Daffern, Project Manager for WAA. The report was edited by Richard Newman, Post-excavation Manager for WAA.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 In September 2014, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology were invited by Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd, to undertake a archaeological evaluation at Condover Airfield, Pitchford, Shropshire (NGR SJ 5117 0437; Figure 1), prior to the development of a Solar Farm. An archaeological and cultural heritage scoping document (Wardell Armstrong 2014) and geophysical survey (Wardell Armstrong 2014) have demonstrated the area to have a potential for archaeological remains. As a result Andy Wrigley, Historic Environment Manager, Shropshire County Council requested a programme of archaeological investigation, prior to the development taking place. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

1.1.2 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken following approved standards and guidance (CIfA 2008), and was consistent with the specification provided by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (Daffern 2014) and generally accepted best practice.

1.1.3 This report outlines the evaluation works undertaken on-site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological works.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in response to a request by Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd, for an archaeological evaluation of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by Andy Wrigley, Historic Environment Manager, Shropshire County Council, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008), and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 THE FIELD EVALUATION

2.2.1 The evaluation consisted of the excavation of seven trenches covering 273m^2 of the proposed 46.3ha development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being located to target geophysical anomalies. All work was conducted according to the recommendations of the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

2.2.2 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.3.3 Turf, topsoil and subsoil was removed by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recorded according to the Wardell Armstrong Archaeology standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2012).

2.3.4 All finds encountered were retained, including those from excavated topsoil, and were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of Megan Stoakley, WAA Finds Officer.

2.3.5 All deposits encountered were deemed unsuitable for environmental sampling, and therefore no samples were retained.

2.3.6 The seven evaluation trenches were scheduled to be backfilled at the discretion of the client, following excavation and recording.

2.3.7 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out by English Heritage in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE 2006).

2.4 THE ARCHIVE

2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive will be deposited within Shropshire Museum Service at Telford and Wrekin, with copies of the report sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier WAA14, CAL-A, CP 11104/14.

2.4.2 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology, and Shropshire County Council, support the **O**nline **A**cces**S** to the **I**ndex of Archaeological Investigation**S** (**OASIS**) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology, as a part of this national project.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

3.1.1 Condover Airfield lies to the east of Pitchford and immediately east of Berriewood Stud Farm, north of Condover Industrial estate and south of Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The site lies at a height of approximately 120m AOD. The proposed development area has previously been developed as a WW2 airfield, and consists of an elongated parcel of land forming the eastern end of one of three runways, with notable downward slopes to the immediate north, east and south. The airfield runway was removed in the late 20th century, and the land is currently utilized for grazing.

3.1.2 The underlying geology comprises mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate known as the Salop Formation with superficial glacial till deposits (British Geological Survey 2001).

3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area. References to the County Historic Environment Recod (HER) are included where known.

3.2.2 *Prehistoric:* There is some evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity in the form of a possible sub-circular enclosure near Park Stile to the northwest of the proposed development area (HER 28653), whilst two areas of similar cropmarks (HER 02063 & 02340) located to the south and southeast of the site have not been investigated.

3.2.3 *Iron Age and Romano-British:* A rectangular earthwork, described as '[A]bendigo rectangular cropmark enclosure' of rectangular raised platform surrounded by a substantial earthen bank and ditch with straight sides and rounded corners, is recorded as being located in the northern part of the proposed development area (HER 02692) although it is also noted that this was reputedly destroyed during airfield construction in the 1940's. A similar Iron Age or Romano British enclosure has been identified to the south of the proposed development area (HER 02314).

3.2.4 *Medieval:* It is suggested that Condover was a Manorial demense and 'head of the Hundred' during the early Medieval period (Shropshire Archives 1992). The settlement names of both Condover and Pitchford are recorded in the Domesday Book and continued to be documented in subsequent centuries (Bowcock 1923). Although the specific purpose of the site during the Medieval period is not recorded, it is probable that it comprised of woodland.

3.2.5 *Post-medieval and Modern:* There is evidence for settlement in the vicinity of the proposed development area from the 16th century onwards; Wheathall, a late 14th or 15th century farmhouse located approximately 1km to the west of the site has surviving tenant and land records, including one for Burywood Hellde and Woodlands. A farmouse at Lightgreen Coppice, immediately to the south of the

proposed development area was first recorded in the 16th century and in the 18th century recorded as being of cruck construction (HER 14928).

3.2.6 The Condover Tithe Map of 1840 depicts the land owned by 'Berwood' (the current Berriewood Stud Farm) forming the western end of the current area of investigation to be under a mix of arable cultivation and pasture (Wardell Armstrong 2014).

3.2.7 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1890 shows area around the proposed development area to be within several fields actual site of the current evaluation to be within one large field. It is this map that depicts a roughly square area within the northern part of the site that may correspond with the probable Iron Age or Romano-British '[A]bendigo' enclosure recorded in the HER. This feature appears more clearly defined in the Ordnance Survey map of 1903.

3.2.8 The site formed part of the former RAF Condover and Prisoner of War Camp, which was a Royal Air Force flying Training Command airfield and air navigation training school between August 1942 and June 1945. The airfield comprised of three newly inserted concrete runways, with substantial drains running alongside and designed to accommodate both fighters and bombers. The current area of investigation was located at the eastern end of one of these runways. The airfield was originally designed as a Relief landing Ground (RLG) associated with RAF Atcham, but by the time it was completed the war had progressed and it was instead utilized as a satellite airfield of RAF Shawbury, although the airfield saw some dramatic episodes during its operational life it remained mostly under-utilised through its existence (Neal 2005, Sturivant 2007).

3.2.9 A large number of the original buildings remain, including the old control tower, a hangar and various ruins. The main runways were torn up and used as hard-core ballast during the building of the M54 motorway and the extension to the A5 through Shrewsbury, but some of the airfield's perimeter track remains. For the past forty years most of the airfield has been used for grazing by horses from the nearby Berriewood stables and riding school, with its cross country competition course.

3.3 PREVIOUS WORK

3.3.1 Whilst there are no records of previous archaeological interventions within or close to the proposed development area, an Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment was undertaken by Wardell Armstrong LLP (2014).

3.3.2 A geophysical survey was undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in 2014, and on the field included in the current works. The survey revealed frequent anomalies associated with the remains of the runway of RAF Condover, as well as several possible roughly east to west aligned linear features and a curvilinear area of disturbance. Two linear parallel features potentially relating to the remains of the 'Abendigo' Rectangular Enclosure (HER 02692) were identified to the north of the surveyed area (Railton 2014).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The evaluation was undertaken between 29th September and 3rd October 2014 and comprised of seven trenches, located to target anomalies identified during the geophysical survey (Figure 2).

4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 ***Trench 1a:*** Trench 1a was 26m in length, located toward the western extent of the evaluated area, was aligned roughly south-west to north-east and was located to investigate a sub-circular anomaly identified during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m revealing firmly compacted gravelly-clay till with a large area of firmly compacted sand and mudstone, located centrally within the trench and representing a localized geological event (**102**). The geological natural lay below c0.14m of moderate to firmly compacted mid to light grey-brown sand- clay subsoil (**101**) and *c*.0.07m of dark grey brown silty topsoil (**100**) (Plate 1). No archaeological features were noted.

Plate 1: Trench 1a facing west

4.2.2 ***Trench 1b:*** Trench 1b was 26m in length, located toward the northern extent of the evaluated area, was aligned roughly south-west to north-east and was located to investigate a curvilinear anomaly identified during the geophysical survey (Figure

2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.45m revealing firmly compacted reddish brown gravelly-clay with sand patches (**102**) below c0.3m of moderate to firmly compacted mid to light grey-brown sand- clay subsoil (**101**) and *c*.0.05m of dark grey brown silty topsoil (**100**) (Plate 2). No archaeological features were noted.

Plate 2: Trench 1b facing north-east

4.2.3 ***Trench 2a:*** Trench 2a was 30m in length, located toward the northern extent of the evaluated area, was aligned roughly west to east and was located to investigate a linear anomaly identified during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.45m revealing firmly compacted orangey-brown gravelly-clay (**102**) below c0.3m of moderate to firmly compacted mid to light grey-brown sand-clay subsoil (**101**), 0.4m of firmly compacted mid reddish-orange silty clay upper subsoil (**108**) and *c*.0.25m of dark grey brown silty topsoil (**100**) (Plate 4). No archaeological features were noted.

Plate 3: Trench 2a facing north-east

4.2.4 ***Trench 2b***: Trench 2b was 30m in length, located toward the north-eastern extent of the evaluated area, was aligned roughly west to east and was located to investigate a linear anomaly identified during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.98m in the eastern extent and 0.34m in depth in the western extent revealing firmly compacted browny-grey sandy clay (**102**) below c0.3m of moderate to firmly compacted mid to light grey-brown sand-clay lower subsoil (**101**) and an upper subsoil deposit 0.4m in thickness of moderate to firmly compacted mid to light grey-brown sandy-clay subsoil with occasional orangey brown clay lenses (**101**) and *c*.0.2m of dark grey brown silty topsoil (**100**) (Plate 3). No archaeological features were noted.

Plate 4: Trench 2b facing north-east

4.2.5 ***Trench 3:*** Trench 3 was 15m in length, located in the south-east of the evaluated area, was aligned roughly north to south and was located to investigate two linear anomalies and irregular area of disturbance identified during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m in its southern extent and 0.45m in its north revealing firmly compacted light to mid browny-grey silty clay (**102**) below c0.3m of moderate to firmly compacted mid to light grey-brown sand-clay lower subsoil (**101**), an upper sub-soil of mid brown, firmly compacted sandy clay, maximum of 0.26m in thickness (**109**) and *c*.0.2m of dark grey brown silty topsoil (**100**) (Plate 5). No archaeological features were noted.

Plate 5: Trench 3 facing north-east

4.2.6 ***Trench 4***: Trench 4 was 40m in length, located in the west of the evaluated area, was aligned roughly north to south and was located to investigate linear anomalies identified between the surviving runway drains during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.3m revealing firmly compacted mid reddy-brown clay (**102**) below c0.06m of moderate to firmly compacted-brown sand-clay subsoil (**101**), and *c*.0.08m of dark grey brown silty topsoil (**100**) (Plate 6).

4.2.7 A single large sub-circular pit [**107**] was located in, and extended beyond the southern end of Trench 4. [**107**] was cut through subsoil (**101**), was 5m in exposed diameter, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m due to safety concerns. Fills (**103**), (**104**), (**105**) & (**106**) comprised of a mixture of broken concrete, firmly compacted sandy gravels and redeposited topsoil and subsoils. Although devoid of datable material culture, it is likely that [**107**] either dates to the initial construction of the airfield or to the removal of the runway material.

Plate 6: Trench 4 facing north-east [107] in foreground

4.2.7 ***Trench 5:*** Trench 5 was 15m in length, located in the south of the evaluated area, was aligned roughly north to south and was located to investigate a curvilinear anomaly identified during the geophysical survey (Figure 2). The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.48m revealing firmly compacted mid orangey-brown clay (**102**) below c0.2m of moderate to firmly compacted mid to light grey-brown sand-clay lower subsoil (**101**), an upper sub-soil of mid brown, firmly compacted sandy clay with high quantities of angular and sub-angular rubble and broken concrete, a maximum of 0.3m in thickness (**110**) and *c*.0.2m of dark grey brown silty topsoil (**100**) (Plate 7). No archaeological features were noted. It is likely that the upper subsoil (**110**) relates to the removal of the runway in the late 20th century.

Plate 7: Trench 5 facing south

4.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

4.4.1 No archaeological finds were recovered, and no environmental samples were retained during the groundworks.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1 During the archaeological field evaluation at Condover Airfield, Pitchford, Shropshire seven trenches were excavated, covering 273m^2 of the proposed 46.3ha development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being located to target geophysical anomalies. All trenches were excavated down to the top of the natural substrate.

5.1.2 Trenches 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3 & 5 were devoid of any archaeological features or significant archaeological deposits, whilst Trench 4 revealed a large pit filled with concrete fragments potentially associated with either the preparation of the ground as a WW2 airfield or post-war removal of the runway.

5.1.4 The results obtained during the present evaluation suggest that the study area has been intensively affected by the construction of the WW2 airfield. The redeposited subsoil horizons within trenches 2b, 3 and 5 are contra-positional to the increasingly deep 'natural' substrata; whilst Trenches 1a, 1b, 2 and 4 were very shallow, with hardly any surviving subsoil, suggesting extensive terracing of a previously more undulating landscape: The geophysical anomalies targeted within Trenches 2a and 2b and the southern end of Trench 3 correspond with the increase in depth of the original substrata to both the east and south.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2.1 As the purpose of this archaeological field evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground remains within the proposed development area as specified by Andy Wrigley, Historic Environment Manager, Shropshire County Council, no further work is deemed necessary associated with the present study. However, given the significance of previous archaeological discoveries within the immediate vicinity of the study area, it is recommended that any future invasive work be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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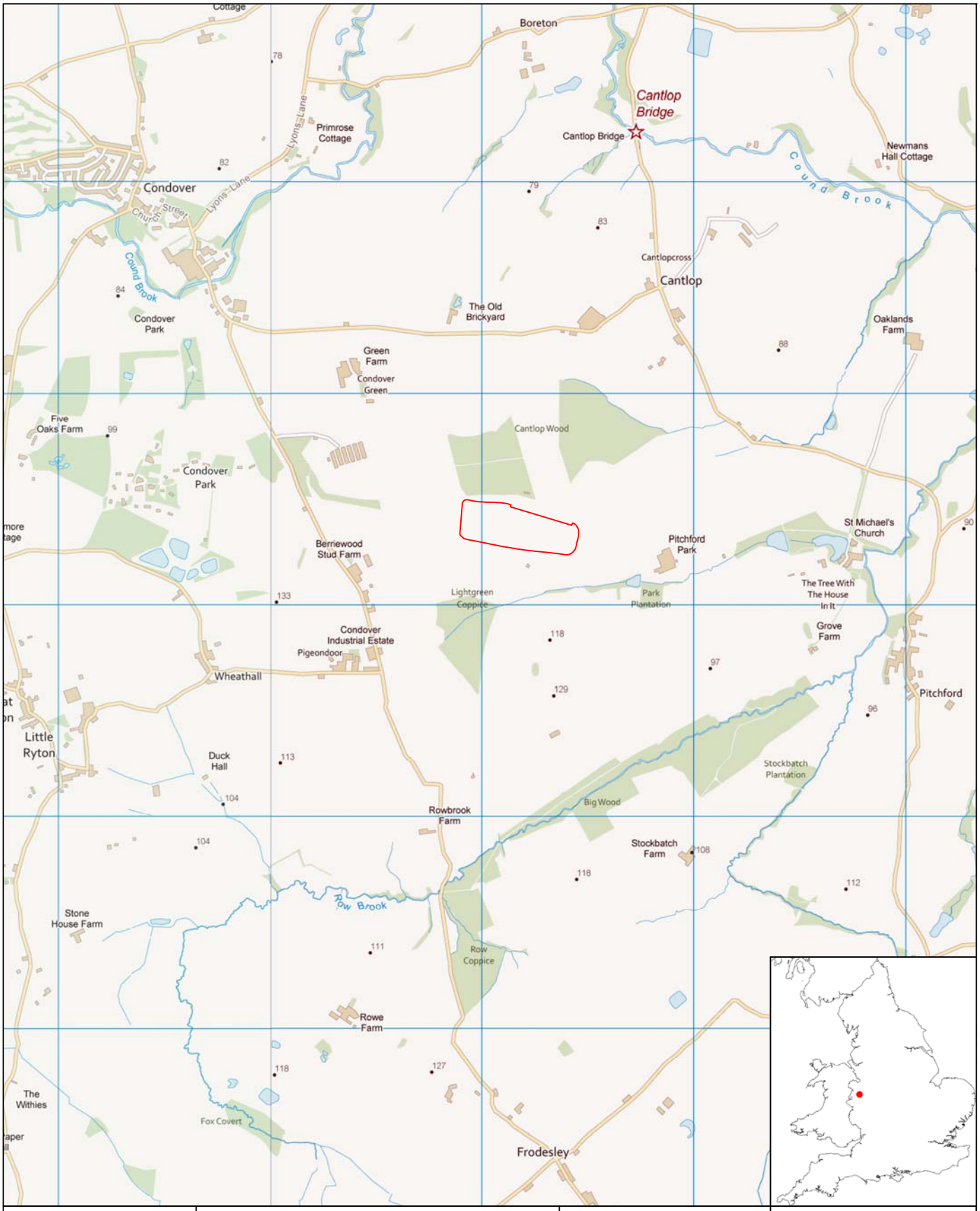
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Deposit	Subsoil
102	Deposit	Natural
103	Fill	Fill of [107]
104	Fill	Fill of [107]
105	Fill	Fill of [107]
106	Fill	Fill of [107]
107	Cut	Cut Large 20th Century Pit in Trench 4
108	Deposit	Redeposited Natural Upper Subsoil in Trench 2b
109	Deposit	Redeposited Natural Upper Subsoil in Trench 3
110	Deposit	Redeposited Natural Upper Subsoil in Trench 5

Table 4: List of Contexts issued during Watching Brief

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES



wardell armstrong archaeology	PROJECT:	Condover Airfield Solar Farm, Pitchford, Shropshire
	SCALE:	1:25,000 at A4
	REPORT No:	CP11104
	CLIENT:	Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd
	DRAWN BY:	AB
	DATE:	October 2014
	FIGURE:	1

KEY:

Site location

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2014

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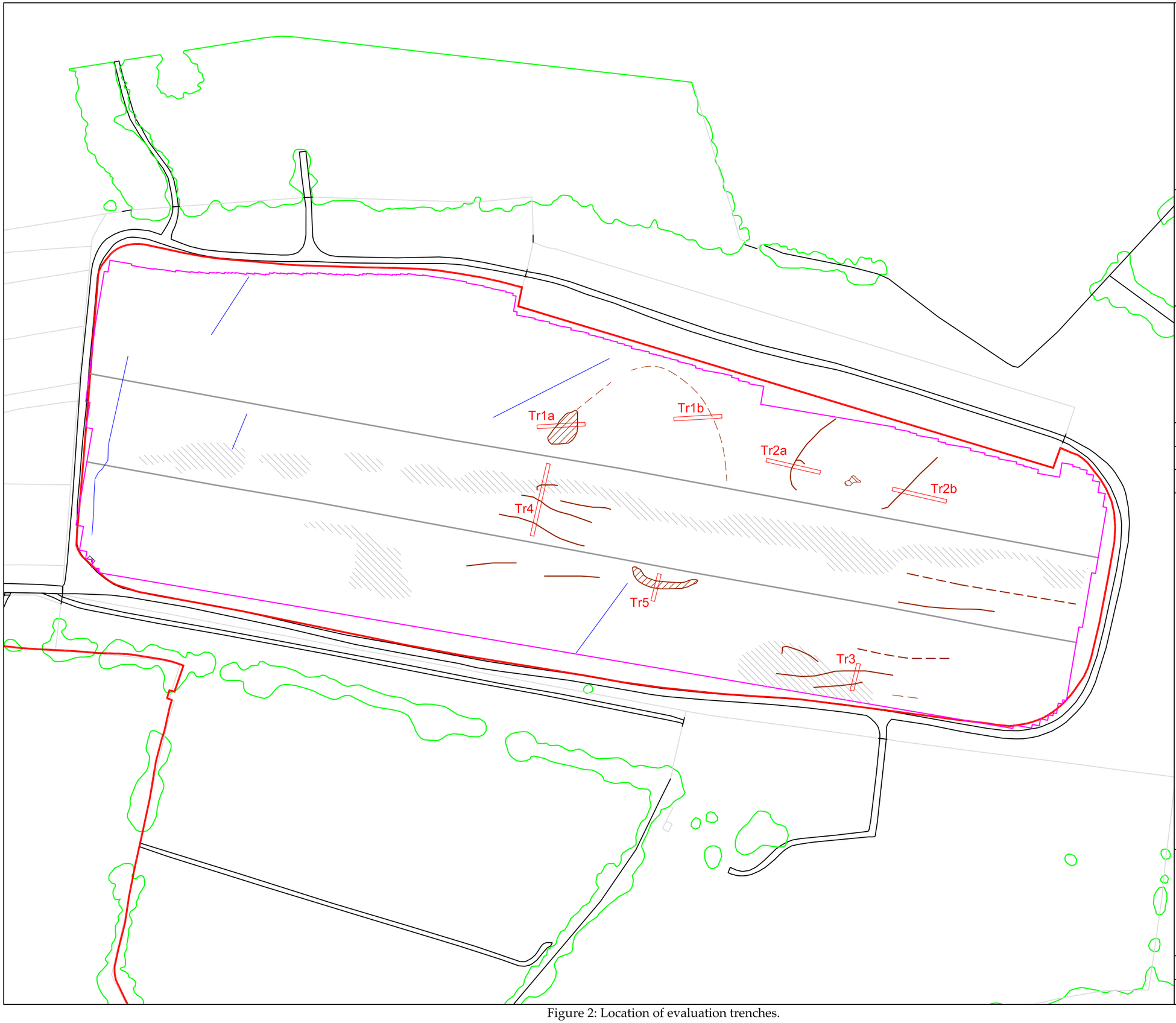
Figure 1: Site location.



Wardell Armstrong
Archaeology
2014

PROJECT:

Condover Airfield Solar Farm,
Pitchford, Shropshire

CLIENT:

Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd

SCALE: 1:2,000 at A3

DRAWN BY: AB

DATE: October 2014

KEY:

- Outline of proposed development area
- Outline of geophysical survey area
- Possible land drains
- Possible soil-filled features
- Edge of former runway
- Possible runway deposits
- Evaluation trenches

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FIGURE: 2

Figure 2: Location of evaluation trenches.