



**SOLARPLICITY**

**LAND AT MOOR FARM**

**BASCHURCH**

**SHROPSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**July 2016**

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## SOLARPLICITY

**Land at Moor Farm, Baschurch, Shropshire**

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION  
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY  
TOPOGRAPHIC AND LANDSCAPE SURVEY  
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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## SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) was commissioned by the client, Solarplicity, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land at Moor Farm, Baschurch, Shropshire (NGR: SJ 4168 2332). The watching brief was required as a fulfilment of a condition of planning consent during the construction of a proposed solar development at the site (Planning Ref: 15/01805/FUL). The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) developed in consultation with Andy Wigley, Historic Environment Manager at Shropshire Council.

The watching brief monitored the excavation of linked trenches across the eastern half of the proposed development area. The trenches exposed a uniform deposit of plough soil above a patchy subsoil, and a varied sandy/ gravel natural geological deposit. No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the groundworks. The watching brief monitored all groundworks to be excavated beyond the depth of the topsoil, so any archaeology which may survive in the field would be recorded.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) thanks Mark Manley of Solarplicity for commissioning the project, and for all their assistance throughout the work. WAA also thank Andy Wigley, Historic Environment Manager, at Shropshire County Council for his assistance.

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology also thanks the teams from both GAD Groundworks and Building Contractors, and GEO Metris Surveying and Consulting Engineers, for their help during this project.

The watching brief was undertaken, and the report written, by Sue Thompson. The figures were produced by Helen Phillips. The project was managed by Martin Railton, who also edited the report.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Circumstances and Planning Background**

1.1.1 Between June and July 2016, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) undertook an archaeological watching brief on land at Moor Farm, Baschurch, Shropshire (NGR: SJ 4168 2332). It was commissioned by the client, Solarplicity, who intends to construct a solar development at the site for which a planning consent has been granted by Shropshire County Council (Planning Reference: 15/01805/FUL).

1.1.2 The proposed development is not considered to contain any known archaeological remains, however, the presence of prehistoric activity in the local vicinity suggested that there may have been archaeological remains present within the development area, the heritage significance of which could be affected by any groundworks associated with the development.

1.1.3 A watching brief is defined as a programme of ‘monitoring and investigation carried out during a non-archaeological activity within a specified area of land or development where construction operations may disturb or destroy archaeological remains’ (CIfA 2014a).

### **1.2 Project Documentation**

1.2.1 The project conforms to advice provided by the archaeological planning advisor Andy Wigley, Historic Environment Manager at Shropshire County Council. A WSI was then produced to provide a specific methodology based on the consultation for a programme of archaeological mitigation implemented via a watching brief (WAA 2015a). This was approved by the archaeological planning advisor prior to the fieldwork taking place. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

1.2.2 This report outlines the work undertaken on site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this watching brief.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Standards and guidance**

2.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014a), and in accordance with the WAA fieldwork manual (2015b).

2.1.2 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (CIfA 2014a) and the Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (CIfA 2014b).

### **2.2 Documentary Research**

2.2.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment was previously prepared by Wardell Armstrong LLP (Wardell Armstrong 2015), which set out the archaeological and historical background of the site, and provided an assessment of the significance of all known and potential heritage assets up to 1km from the area of investigation.

### **2.3 The Watching Brief**

2.3.1 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of all intrusive works associated with the current development, this comprised the excavation of trenches c.0.70m in width and up to 100m in length, in the eastern half of the development area.

The general aims of these investigations were:

- to determine the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains within the proposed development site
- to determine the character, date, extent and distribution of any archaeological deposits and their potential significance
- to determine levels of disturbance to any archaeological deposits
- to investigate and record all deposits and features of archaeological interest within the areas to be disturbed by the current development
- to determine the likely impact on archaeological deposits from the proposed development
- 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

- to disseminate the results of the fieldwork through an appropriate level of reporting.
- 2.3.2 Deposits considered not to be significant were removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to maximise the chance for identification of archaeological remains should they be present. All intrusive groundworks were monitored under close supervision by a suitably trained archaeologist. No archaeological remains were noted during the groundworks.
- 2.3.3 No significant finds were recovered during the watching brief, and no environmental samples taken.
- 2.3.4 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project specification, and the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive will be deposited with Shropshire Archives with copies of the report sent to Shropshire HER, available upon request. The project archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier (WAA16/MFB-A CP11566).
- 2.3.5 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology supports the Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (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 WAA as a part of this national project. The OASIS reference for the project is: wardela2-257039



### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Location and Geological Context**

3.1.1 The site is located at SJ 4168 2332. The site's environs comprise arable farmland c.9km northwest of Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The site is surrounded by arable fields, with the eastern extent bounded by the route of a single track lane between Baschurch, roughly 1km to the south, and Stanwardine in the Fields roughly 500m to the north. The area of investigation lies at a height of c.96m aOD (above Ordnance Datum) with the ground sloping down gently to the west.

3.1.2 The site is approximately 6.3 hectares in size and is located within the northeast corner of a larger field at Ordnance Survey grid reference SJ 4168 2332. At present the site comprises arable farmland.

3.1.3 The underlying solid geology within the area of investigation comprises mudstone known as Bollin Mudstone Member. This sedimentary bedrock was formed approximately 237 to 246 million years ago on the Triassic Period. This is overlain by superficial deposits of glaciofluvial deposits of sands and gravels formed up to 2 million years ago in the quaternary period. (BGS 2012). The natural substrate observed during the current phase of works comprised mixed sands and gravels, consistent with the mapped geologies above.

#### **3.2 Historical and Archaeological Background**

3.2.1 A desk-based assessment was produced to summarise the known historical and archaeological background of the site and the surrounding landscape to a distance of 1km (Wardell Armstrong 2015). It is not intended to repeat that information here and what follows is a brief overview, for further details please refer to the original document.

3.2.2 This report identified that there were no designated heritage assets within the site boundary, however there is evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity, in the form of crop marks, identified using aerial photography. Baschurch to the south has medieval origins, and activity continued throughout the post medieval period, although there is no suggestion that the development site was anything other than agricultural in nature.

3.2.3 The desk-based assessment concluded that there was a reasonable possibility that archaeological remains of prehistoric date may be present within the proposed development site.

### 3.3 Previous Archaeological Work

- 3.3.1 A geophysical survey was undertaken within the development area was undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (Railton 2015). A number of anomalies were detected, but were interpreted as being of agricultural origin.

## 4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken on three separate days between the 6<sup>th</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The archaeological watching brief monitored all excavations associated with the construction of a solar development at Moor Farm, Baschurch (*Figure 1*).

- 4.1.2 The development groundworks required the excavation of foundation trenches for two substations on site, and a system of linked trenches to allow the laying of cables connecting these two areas. The excavations consisted of trenches measuring 0.70m wide to a depth of up to 1.20m, exposing only topsoil, subsoil, and the natural substrata of sands and gravels. No archaeological remains were encountered.

### 4.2 Results

- 4.2.1 Trenches 1 and 2 were dug in the north east of the development site and measured 13 x 0.70m (*Figure 2*). They were 1.20m in depth and c.2.40m apart. Trenches 3 and 4 were then excavated mid-site measuring 7 x 0.70m, again 1.20m deep and 2.40m apart (Plate 1). These trenches were filled with concrete to provide foundations for the substations.

- 4.2.2 A system of linked trenches (Trenches 5 – 12, *Figure 2*) was excavated, each 0.70m wide and 1.10m deep and to house cables connecting the solar panels and substations (Plate 1 and 2). These trenches exposed a uniform 0.40m of dark grey brown sandy silt topsoil (**100**), which overlaid varying amounts of a loose mid orange brown silty sand subsoil (**102**). The subsoil was an average of 0.40m with frequent rounded stones up but was not seen consistently throughout the field, and in fact it was more common that there was no separate subsoil above the geological deposits (**100**) comprising loose sandy gravels and sands, with frequent rounded to sub-rounded sandstone cobbles.

- 4.2.3 No archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief.

### 4.3 **Archaeological Finds and Environmental Sampling**

- 4.3.1 A single clay pipe stem sherd weighing 3g was recovered from the topsoil towards the southern end of Trench 8 during the watching brief. It is likely to be of 19<sup>th</sup> century date but is of limited interest and does not add to the archaeological importance of the site. It was not retained with the archive. No environmental samples were retained during the groundworks.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Interpretation**

5.1.1 The archaeological watching brief monitored all excavations which exceeded the depth of the topsoil associated with the development. It was noted that the natural geological substrata varied within short distances.

5.1.2 No features or finds of archaeological significance were found during the watching brief.

### **5.2 Development Impact**

5.2.1 No archaeology was seen during the archaeological watching brief. The development will have a negligible impact any archaeological remains which may survive within the area.

## 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Professional Guidance

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<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>, British Geological Survey, accessed (07/07/2016)

## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

<i>Context Number</i>	<i>Context Type</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Description</i>
100	Deposit	Across site	Topsoil
101	Geological Deposit	Across site	Coarse sands and gravels
102	Deposit	Patchy across site	Subsoil

## APPENDIX 2: PLATES



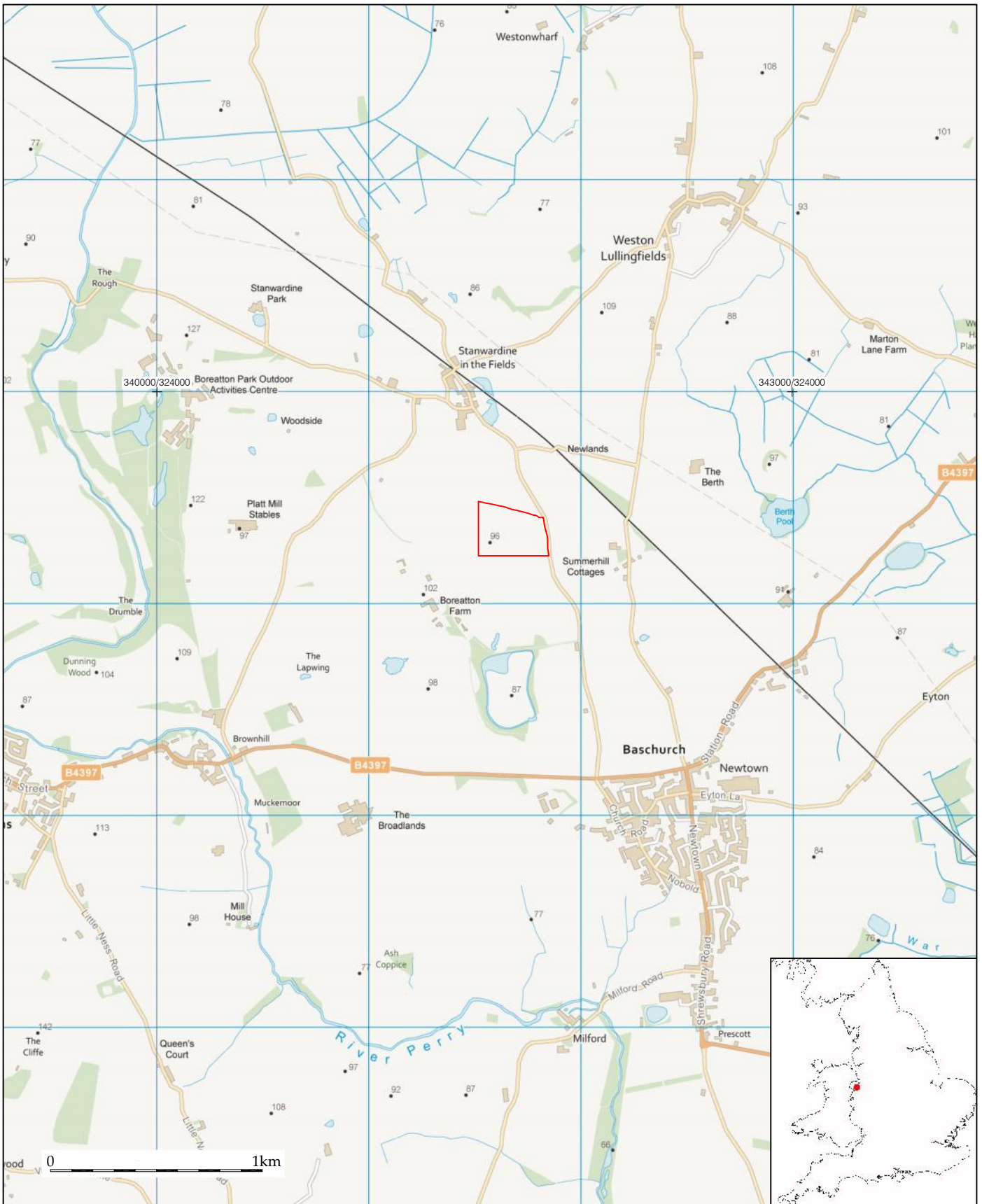
*Plate 1; Trenches 3, 4 and 6 looking west*



*Plate 2; Trench 12 looking south west*

### APPENDIX 3: FIGURES








 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2016</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at Moor Farm, Baschurch, Shropshire</p> <p>SCALE: 1:25,000 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP11566</p> <p>CLIENT: Solarplicity</p> <p>DRAWN BY: MDR</p> <p>DATE: July 2016</p> <p>FIGURE: 1</p>	<p>KEY:</p>  Site location	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512</p>
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Figure 1: Site location

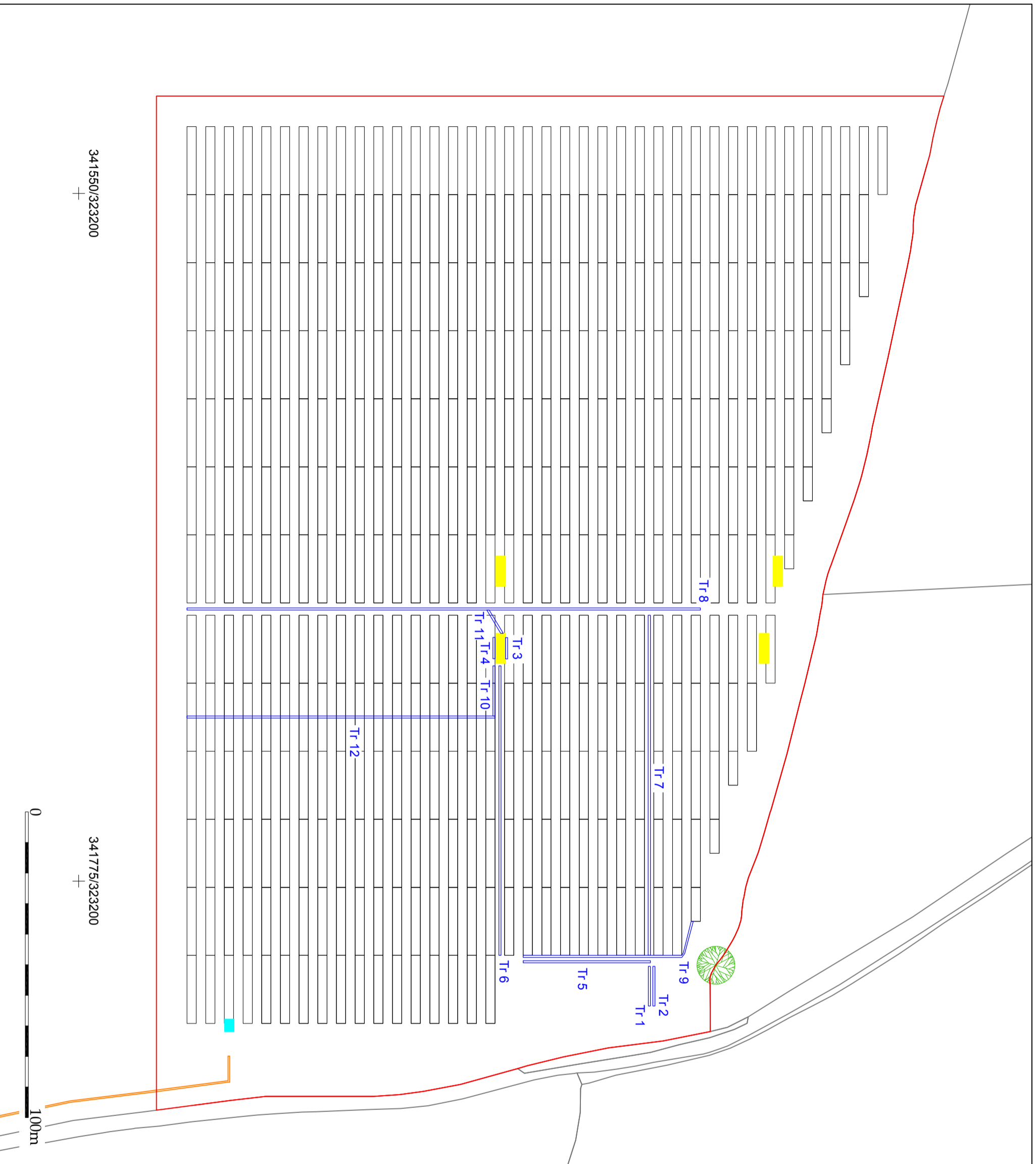







Figure 2: Trench location plan.

 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2016</p>	
<p>PROJECT: Land at Moor Farm, Baschurch, Shropshire</p>	
<p>CLIENT: Solarplicity</p>	
<p>SCALE: 1:1,250 at A3</p>	
<p>DRAWN BY: HP</p>	
<p>CHECKED BY: HP</p>	
<p>DATE: July 2016</p>	
<p>KEY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Site boundary</li> <li> Trenches monitored during watching brief</li> <li> Proposed solar panels</li> <li> Proposed cable route</li> </ul>	
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