

RHWG13



## **Rye Hill, Watford Gap: Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation**

*Prepared for Fisher German LLP*

*On behalf of Northingworth Farm Partnership*

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

HA Job no.: RHWG13-002

NGR: SP 6014 6722

Parish: Welton

Council: Northamptonshire

OASIS ref.: headland4-165495 (1)

HER enquiry number.:

Archive will be deposited with: Retained by Headland until suitable store available

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*Signed off by*



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*Date:... 2 December 2013*

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# RYE HILL FARM, WATFORD GAP, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

## Archaeological Evaluation

*Headland Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation on land selected for a proposed wind turbine at Rye Hill Farm, Watford Gap, Northamptonshire. The evaluation took the form of trial trenching, designed to provide information on its archaeological potential. No significant archaeological remains or finds were revealed.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Fisher German (the client) has submitted a planning application for the construction of a single wind turbine plus associated access and infrastructure, at Rye Hill Farm, Watford Gap (PDA).

Daventry District Council, the local planning authority (LPA), is advised on archaeological matters by the Archaeology Officer at Northamptonshire County Council (AO). Due to the archaeological potential of the PDA the AO has instructed that intrusive archaeological trial trenching would be required prior to construction of the development. This work is requested in accordance with government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012).

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned to carry out the trial trench evaluation. Following completion of trial trenching and submission of a report (this document), the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeological Officer (AO) will have all the necessary information with which to make their recommendations on the application.

### 2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site lies in open countryside in west Northants around 1 km south of Watford Gap services (Illus 1). The proposed development site is a field positioned between the A5 to the west and M1 / railway to the east (NGR SP

6014 6722). The proposed turbine will be positioned in approximately the centre of an arable field some 600m south of Watford Gap, 175m to the west of the M1 and 250m to the east of the A5. Access is proposed to be from the A5, running along the southern boundary of the field, around the eastern side of the farmyard buildings, and northwest to meet the turbine.

The site is underlain by a mixture of mudstones of the Charmouth Formation and siltstones and mudstones of the Dyrham Formation; superficial deposits are Diamicton tills and glaciofluvial sands and gravels of the mid-Pleistocene period (British Geological Survey website; <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>). While setting up, it was noted that the red-brown clayey sand which made up the topsoil had frequent inclusions of flint, although no worked flint was recovered. The site lies at around 100m OD at the proposed turbine locating, with higher ground to the northeast but falling to the south and west towards the Grand Union Canal.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies some 500 metres from the route of Roman Watling Street, an axis of movement and transport which has continued in use to the present day, with the Grand Union Canal, mainline rail services and the M1 all within 1 kilometre of the PDA.

A desk-based assessment (DBA; Headland Archaeology 2013) has been undertaken and concluded:

*The application site contains known heritage assets of local importance (post-medieval enclosure, medieval ridge and*

*furrow remains and earlier enclosures/features) and has high potential for further buried remains of local importance. Pre-determination evaluation work is often required in Northamptonshire for developments of this type and would take the form of trial trenching to investigate the archaeological potential of the application site and further inform the application.*

## 4 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In general, the purpose of the investigation was to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that might be affected by the relevant proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset). This was to be achieved by determining and understanding the nature, function and character of any remains on the site, in their cultural and environmental setting.

The local and regional research objectives are provided by *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper, NJ 2006) supplemented by Knight, D; Vyner, B; Allen, C (2012) *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*. The National Research objectives are derived from *Exploring Our Past (English Heritage 1991)*, and *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda* (English Heritage 1997). Any evidence retrieved during the works will be analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

Specifically the aims of the investigation include:

- establishing the depth and character of archaeologically 'sterile' overburden;
- identifying, characterising and dating any potential archaeological remains within the site; and
- defining any constraints encountered during the evaluation and any potential constraints for further archaeological fieldwork (e.g. areas of disturbance, service locations, etc.)

The resulting archive (finds and records) will be organised and retained until such time as a registered museum is able to accept the archive. Ultimately, the archive will be made available to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2013. A total of 3 trenches were excavated amounting to 37 linear meters at 1.8m wide. The trenches were laid out in order to cover the extents of the turbine base and the likely route of the haul road. The stakeout of Trench 3

was altered, shifting 5 meters south, in order to preserve a pre-existing access track, while still presenting a representative sample of the ground affected by the improvement of the haul road (Illus 1).

A JCB backhoe excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket was used to remove topsoil under direct archaeological control. Excavation continued until clean geological sediments or significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

Further investigation, required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation, was continued by hand. A representative sample, sufficient to meet the objectives of the evaluation, of identified features was investigated by hand and all features were recorded. The stratigraphy of each trench was recorded in full.

### 5.1 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). The trench and contexts were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was compiled. The site plan was accurately tied in to the National Grid and a scale version is shown in Illus 1.

A digital photographic record was taken and a metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs.

### 5.2 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to the OASIS database (headland4-165495 (1)).

There resultant archive will be deposited when an appropriate recipient can be found. All archive preparation will be undertaken in accordance with guidelines published by the IfA on behalf of the Archaeological Archives Forum (July 2007).

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Discussion

Detailed records of the excavated trenches are available in appendix 1. The locations of trenches are shown in illustrations 1 and 2. The single feature excavated is also

shown in plan on illustration 2, and in section, with appropriate reference to the Ordnance Datum, in illustration 3.

Plough truncation was noted in all of the three trenches, with plough scars across the natural subsoil down to a depth of 0.35- 0.45m.

A single negative feature was recorded in the centre of Trench 2. The form and fill of this feature was diffuse; amorphous in plan, it has several offshoots which appeared to be connected to voids in the ground. The base of the feature was also pitted with several voids. When the section was cleaned back, there was an obvious slump in the plough soil over the feature, suggesting that it too had been a void, and had collapsed (Illus 2, 4).

This feature was interpreted as a likely animal burrow, possibly taking advantage of a pre-existing tree-bole. No archaeological material was recovered from the fill, which might provide dating for this feature.

All trenches were cleaned by hand, before being photographed and recorded. No other archaeological features or material was recovered during fieldwork.

Table 1: Significance of Heritage Assets

Description of Heritage Asset	Trench Number	Feature Number/s	Significance of heritage asset on Local, Regional, National, International scale
n/a	-	-	None

## 6.2 Conclusion

No evidence of significant archaeological remains was found within the DA. Plough truncation is likely to have affected any pre-existing archaeology, removing shallow features such as spreads and small postholes from the archaeological record. However, deeper features like pits and ditches would have been observed after machining, had they been present within the sampled areas.

Trenches 1 and 2 have provided roughly a 30% sample of the turbine base, returning no archaeological features. The balance of probability suggests that this area is therefore archaeologically sterile.

Table 2: Impact on Heritage Assets (HA)

HA	Development impact	Significance of heritage asset on Local, Regional, National, International scale	Impact of development on heritage asset (None, Low, Medium, High)
n/a	Construction of Wind Turbine base	-	None

## 7 REFERENCES

### 7.1 Bibliographic sources

British Geological Survey (Website) <<http://bgs.ac.uk/>> accessed May 2013.

Communities and Local Government 2012 National Planning Policy Framework, Government National Planning Policy.

Cooper, NJ 2006 The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda

English Heritage, 1991 *Exploring Our Past*,

English Heritage, 1997 *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda*

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd 2013 Rye Hill, Watford Gap: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

IfA Standards and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation (revised October 2008).

Knight, D; Vyner, B; Allen, C (2012) East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (University of Nottingham/York Archaeological Trust).

## 8 APPENDICES

### 8.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

Trench no.	Alignment	Length
001	NE-SW	10m
002	NW-SE	12m
003	NE-SW	15m

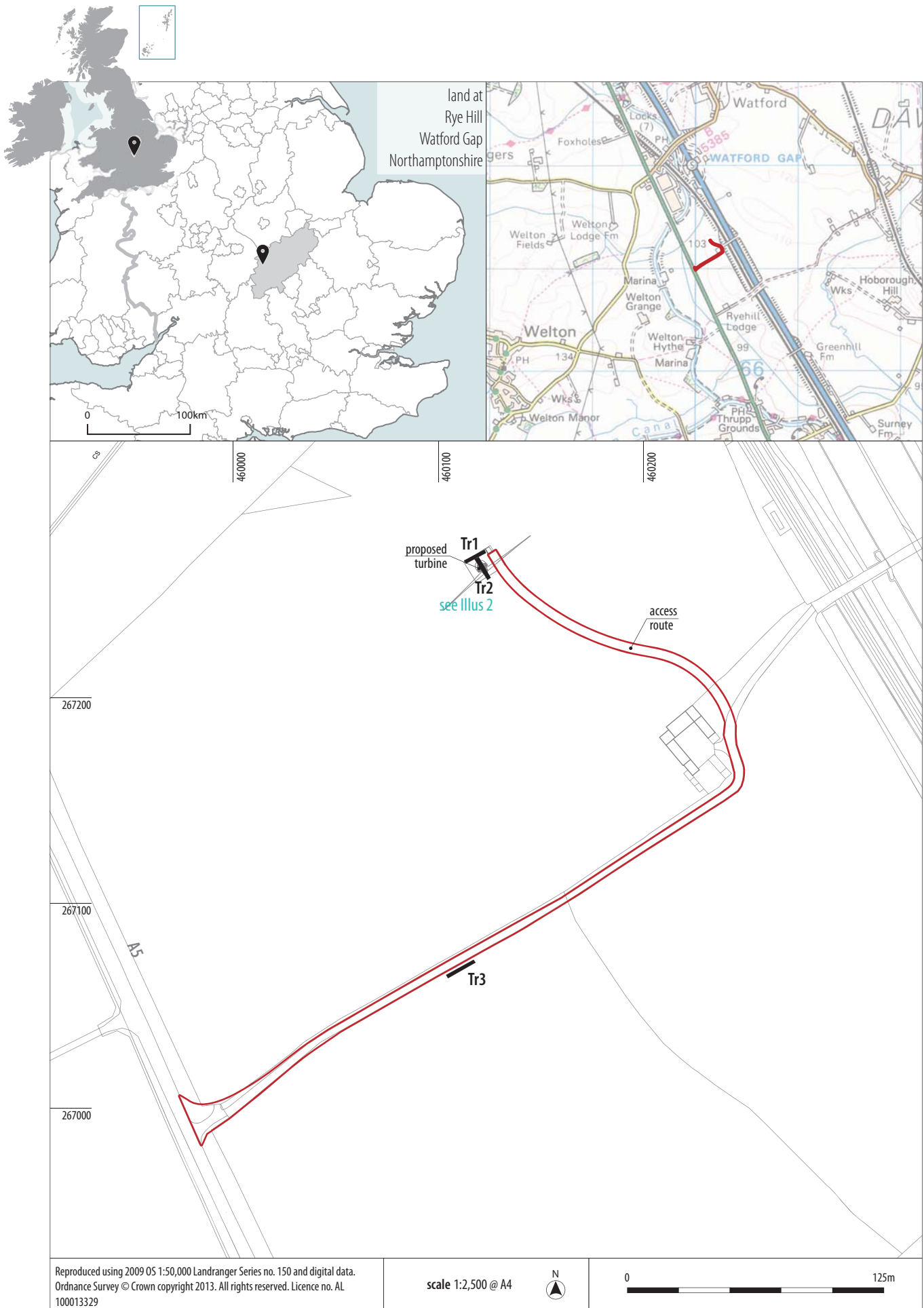
Frame no.	C/S no.	Direction	Description
001		NW	Pre Ex Shot of Turbine Base Area
002			Registration Shots
003		NW	Post Ex Shot of Trench 2
004		NW	Post Ex Shot of Trench 2
005		NE	Post Ex Shot of Trench 1
006		NE	Post Ex Shot of Trench 1
007		SE	Post Ex Shot of Feature [204]
008		SE	Post Ex Shot of Feature [204]
009		NW	Post Ex Shot of Trench 3
010		NW	Post Ex Shot of Trench 3

Context no.	Area	Description	Depth
(101)	1	<b>Topsoil</b> Mid red-brown silty sand, friable	0.00 - 0.35
(102)	1	<b>Subsoil</b> Mid Brown Red Clay Silt -friable	0.35 - 0.55
(103)	1	<b>Natural</b> Light Brown Red Clayey Sands and Gravels	0.55 -
(201)	2	<b>Topsoil</b> Mid red-brown silty sand, friable	0.00 - 0.35
(202)	2	<b>Subsoil</b> Mid Brown Red Clay Silt -friable	0.35 - 0.65
(203)	2	<b>Natural</b> Light Brown Red Clayey Sands and Gravels	0.65 -

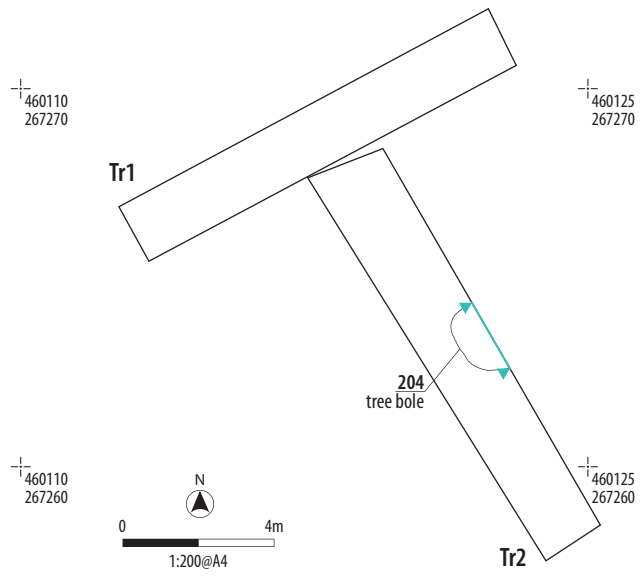


[204]	2	Cut of Tree Bole. Shallow sides, concave base, single fill (205) 2.03m long, 0.60m wide. Max Depth = 0.21m	0.21
(205)	2	Fill of tree bole [204], mid red brown sandy silt with occasional gravel fragments. Max depth = 0.21m	0.21
(301)	3	<b>Topsoil</b> Mid red-brown silty sand, friable	0.00 - 0.38
(302)	3	<b>Subsoil</b> Mid Brown Red Clay Silt -friable	0.38 - 0.47
(303)	3	<b>Natural</b> Light Brown Red Clayey Sands and Gravels	0.47 -



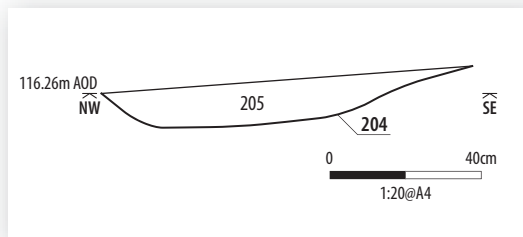


**Illus 1**  
Site location



**Illus 2**

*Detail of Trenches 1 and 2 showing excavated feature*





**Illus 3**

*Post-ex – SW facing section through tree bole  
[204]*



**Illus 4**

*Pre-ex shot of turbine base area*



**Illus 5**

*NE facing post-ex shot of Trench 1*



**Illus 6**

*NW facing post-ex shot of Trench 2*





**Illus 7**

*SW facing post-ex shot of Trench 3*