

Elms Farm Grove, Wantage Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
Aton Energy Solar UK 2 Ltd

CA Project: 5077
CA Report: 15099

March 2015



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Grove, Wantage
Oxfordshire

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Elms Farm
Location:	Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire
NGR:	SU 41608 89720
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	30 January-27 February 2015
Planning Reference:	P14/V1135/FUL
Location of Archive:	Oxfordshire Museums Service
Site Code:	GFSE 14

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a New Solar Park at Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire.

A pit or posthole and a ditch were identified in the north-eastern corner of the site. Both archaeological features were undated but sealed by the subsoil. A probable modern boundary ditch was observed in the west of the site. No further archaeological features or deposits were identified.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January and February 2015 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Aton Energy Solar UK 2 Ltd at Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire (centred on NGR: SU 41608 89720; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for a new Solar Park (Planning ref: P14/V1135/FUL).
- 1.2 The condition for a watching brief was requested by Mr. Hugh Coddington, Oxfordshire County Council Principal Archaeologist, archaeological advisor to Vale of White Horse District Council. The watching brief was carried out according to the methodology of a *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)* produced by CA (2014) and approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) acting on the advice of Mr. Coddington. The fieldwork also followed the standard industry standards contained within: *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014); the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991); and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006).

The site

- 1.3 The site is located to the north-east of Wantage, Oxfordshire, c. 350m to the east of Grove and the A338 and c. 740m to the north-east of the hamlet of Charlton. The site is located within farmland. The site's northern boundary is defined by the disused Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal. The remaining boundaries of the site are demarcated by vegetation, including trees, hedges and tree plantations, with a trackway running along the western boundary. The majority of the site is situated at an elevation of approximately 70m above Ordnance Datum. The southern part of the site occupies gentle north-facing hill slopes overlooking the valley. The land rises to c. 90m above Ordnance Datum along the southern boundary of the site.
- 1.4 The site occupies an irregular parcel of land measuring approximately 67ha and comprising three large arable fields.
- 1.5 The solid geology within the site comprises mudstone of the Gault Formation formed approximately 100 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. In the central and northern parts of the site, the mudstone is overlaid by superficial deposits

comprising Quaternary sands and gravels of the Summertown-Radley and Northmoor Sand and Gravel Members. White gravels and sands within a greyish clay matrix were encountered on site.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 An archaeological desk-based heritage assessment (CA 2014a) has previously been undertaken to assess the nature and extent of 'heritage assets' within the site. The results are summarised below.

2.2 There is a low potential for early prehistoric activity within the site. During the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods, the site was situated on the periphery of a succession of settlement sites on Crab Hill, c. 680m to the south-west. It is unlikely that any of this settlement activity extended into the site, due its predominantly low-lying character and propensity to become waterlogged. It is more probable that the site fell within the rural hinterland of the settlements and may have been utilised for agriculture.

2.3 The analysis of aerial photographs indicated earthworks within the south-eastern part of the site which are thought to have been associated with a settlement of medieval or post-medieval date. Remains of these earthworks were also observed during the walkover survey. The remainder of the site is believed to have been in agricultural use from at least the medieval period, as remains of ridge and furrow cultivation have been observed on aerial photographs.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:

- to monitor groundworks and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks; and
- at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results and of the project and the conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded archaeological data.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2014b). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising the excavation of foundations for transformers and cable trenches (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 The archive from the watching brief is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, the site archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)

- 5.1 The natural geological substrate consisting of gravels and sands within a clay matrix was revealed in all the observed groundworks at an average depth of 0.55m below present ground level. This was overlain by subsoil averaging 0.4m in thickness, which was in turn sealed by 0.15m of topsoil.
- 5.2 Two undated archaeological features were identified close to the north-eastern limit of the excavated cable trench (see Fig. 2). Pit or posthole 103 cut the natural gravels and measured 0.21m in width and 0.18m in depth (Fig 3; section 1.1). This feature contained a single fill 104 and was overlain by subsoil. No artefacts were recovered from fill 104. A modern ceramic land drain was observed cutting through the subsoil to the north of pit/posthole 103. This was sealed by topsoil. To the north of the cable trench, the natural substrate was cut by an approximately east-west aligned ditch 105. The ditch measured 1.21m in width, 0.29 in depth and contained a single fill 106 which contained no finds (Fig 3; section 1.2). The ditch fill was sealed by subsoil and topsoil.

- 5.3 A probable modern boundary ditch 303 was also observed within the western extent of the site. This ditch corresponds with a field boundary depicted on historic mapping. The ditch was cutting through the natural substrate, was north-south orientated and measured 1.9m in width. No datable evidence was recovered from its single fill 304. The ditch fill was sealed by subsoil and topsoil.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The archaeological features encountered during the works comprised a probable pit or posthole and a ditch identified close to the north-eastern limit of the cable trench. Given the limited exposure and lack of artefactual material, little further comment can be made on this activity.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Orellana, Chris Morley and Luke Brannlund. The report was written by Jonathan Orellana. The illustrations were prepared by Rosanna Price. The archive has been compiled by Jonathan Orellana, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Alan Ford.



8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey), 2014 *Geology of Britain Viewer*. Online resource at http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html Viewed August 2014

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014a *Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Heritage Desk Based Assessment*. CA Report No. **13699**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014b *Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Written scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth /thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		topsoil	mid blackish grey silty clay		0.8	0.15	
1	101	Layer		subsoil	light yellowish grey silty clay		0.8	0.4	
1	102	Layer		natural substrate	firm white gravel within a grey clay matrix		0.8		
1	103	Cut		pit/posthole	steep U shaped sides, flat base		0.21	0.18	
1	104	Fill	103	fill of pit/posthole	dark greyish black silty clay		0.21	0.18	
1	105	Cut		ditch	E/W orientated, moderate sloping sides, flat base	>0.8	1.21	0.29	
1	106	Fill	105	fill of ditch	mid greyish blue silty clay	>0.8	1.21	0.29	
2	200	Layer		topsoil	dark mid brown sandy clay	6	4.6	0.25	
2	201	Layer		subsoil	mid greyish orange silty clay	6	4.6	0.37	
2	202	Layer		natural substrate	firm greyish clay with gravel patches	6	4.6		
3	300	Layer		topsoil	mid brown sandy clay	6	4.6	0.1	
3	301	Layer		subsoil	light brown clay	6	4.6	0.21	
3	302	Layer		natural substrate	mid greyish green clay with gravel patches	6	4.6		
3	303	Cut		ditch	N/S orientated, steep V shaped sides	>2	1.9	>0.5	
3	304	Fill	303	fill of ditch	light brown sandy clay	>2	1.9	>0.5	
4	400	Layer		topsoil	mid brown sandy clay	6	4.6	0.11	
4	401	Layer		subsoil	light brown clay	6	4.6	0.23	
4	402	Layer		natural substrate	mid greyish green sandy clay with gravel patches	6	4.6		
5	500	Layer		topsoil	dark brown silty clay	6	4.6	0.18	
5	501	Layer		subsoil	light greyish brown sandy clay	6	4.6	0.25	
5	502	Layer		natural substrate	firm greyish green sandy clay	6	4.6		
6	600	Layer		topsoil	dark brown silty clay	6	4.6	0.3	
6	601	Layer		subsoil	mid greyish orange silty clay	6	4.6	0.3	
6	602	Layer		natural substrate	firm greyish green sandy clay	6	4.6		
7	700	Layer		topsoil	dark brown silty clay		0.4	0.19	
8	800	Layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown silty clay		1	0.2	
8	801	Layer		subsoil	mid orange brown clay		1	0.4	
8	802	Layer		natural substrate	firm mid orange brown clay with gravel patches		1		

APPENDIX E: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a New Solar Park at Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire.</p> <p>A pit or posthole and a ditch were identified in the north-eastern corner of the site. Both archaeological features were undated but sealed by the subsoil. A probable modern boundary ditch was observed in the west of the site. No further archaeological features or deposits were identified.</p>	
Project dates	30 January-27 February 2015	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	Desk-Based Assessment (CA 2014)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire	
Study area	67ha	
Site co-ordinates	SU 41608 89720	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Oxfordshire County Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Alan Ford	
Project Supervisor	Jonathan Orellana	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	
Physical		
Paper	Oxfordshire Museums Service	Trench recording forms, context sheets
Digital	Oxfordshire Museums Service	Digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 <i>Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> . CA typescript report 15099		

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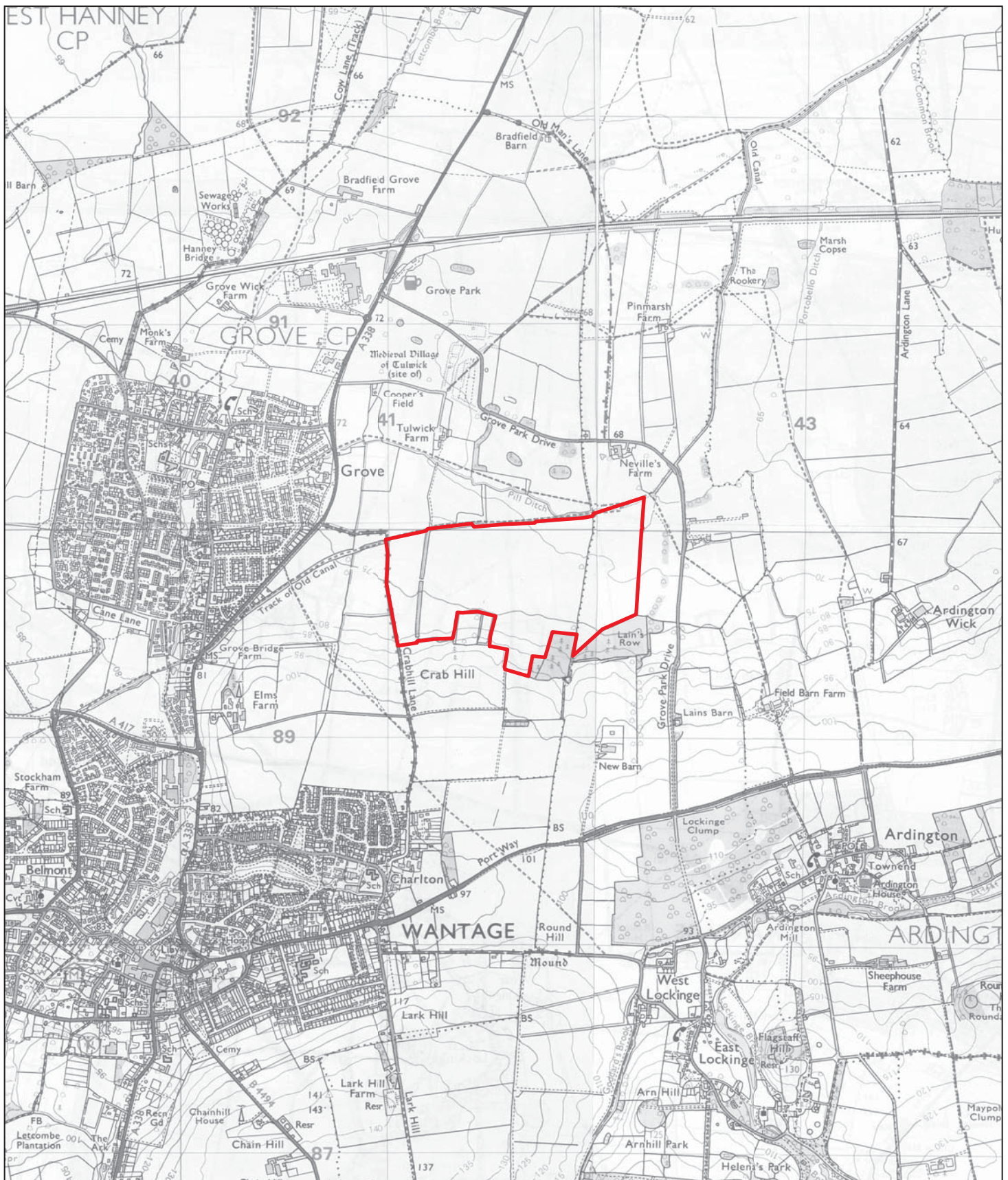
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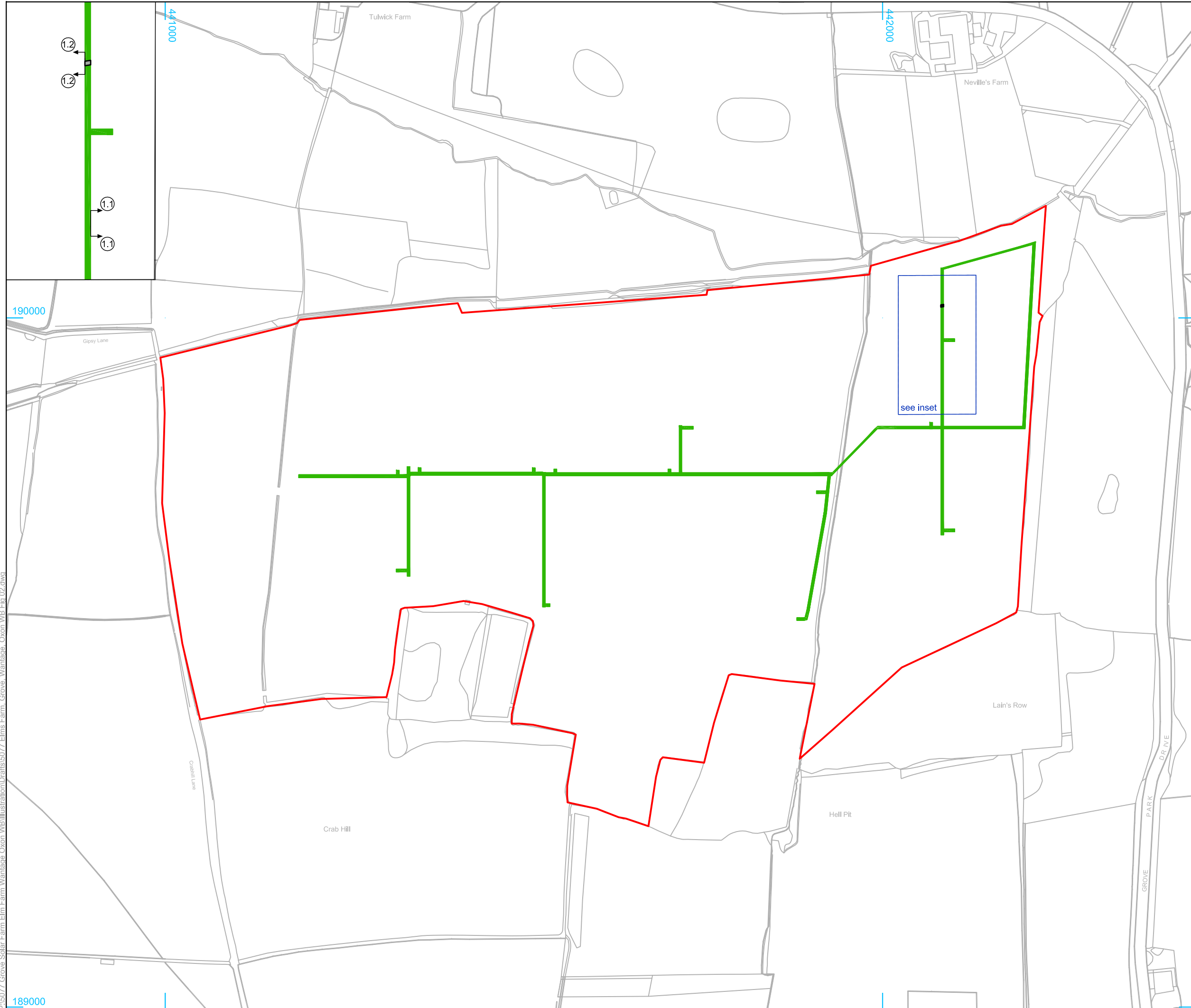
PROJECT TITLE
 Elms Farm, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan



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DRAWN BY	RP	PROJECT NO.	5077	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	JB	DATE	09.03.15	
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- site boundary
- observed groundworks
- archaeological features
- section location



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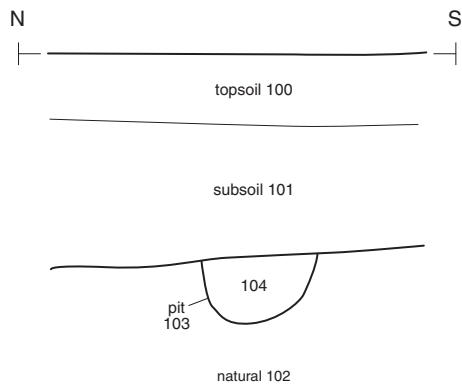
FIGURE TITLE
The site, showing observed groundworks

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CHECKED BY	JB	DATE	10.03.15	2
APPROVED BY	AF	SCALE@A3	1:5000 & 1:2500	

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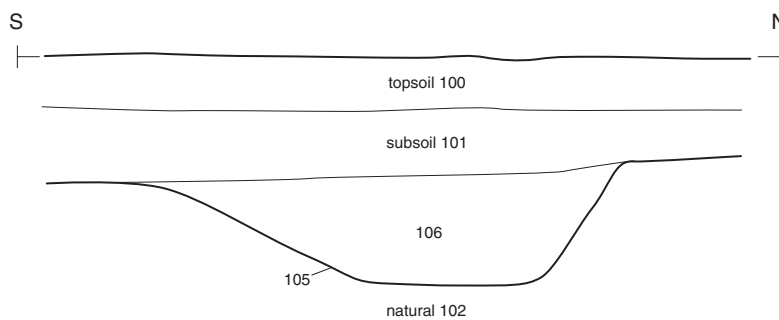
189000

Section 1.1



Pit/posthole 103, looking east (scale 40cm)

Section 1.2



Ditch 105, looking west (scale 1m)



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FIGURE TITLE

Sections and photographs



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 CHECKED BY JB DATE 10.03.15
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FIGURE NO.

3