

# WATERDITCH SOLAR FARM, LOWER WATERDITCH, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET

(CENTRED ON NGR SZ 1780 9510)

## Results of an archaeological watching brief

Planning ref. Christchurch Borough Council 8/14/0226,  
condition 5

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Prepared by  
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On behalf of  
Canadian Solar Solutions Inc.

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AC archaeology

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Waterditch Farm, Christchurch, Dorset (NGR SZ 1780 9510) by AC archaeology in January and February 2015 during the construction of a photo-voltaic solar farm. There were no heritage assets previously recorded within the application site.*

*The archaeological work comprised the monitoring of groundworks associated with cable trenches, access tracks and ancillary buildings. Groundworks exposed consistent subsoil and topsoil layers overlying the natural geology. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed, and no finds recovered.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION (Figs 1-2)**

- 1.1** An archaeological watching brief was carried by AC archaeology in January and February 2015 during the construction of a photo-voltaic solar farm at Waterditch Farm, Christchurch, Dorset (centred on NGR SZ 1780 9510; Fig. 1). The archaeological works were commissioned by Canadian Solar Solutions Inc. and required under condition 5 of the grant of planning permission by Christchurch Borough Council (planning reference 8/14/0226) for the "erection of 18MW (approx.) solar farm including inverter buildings, transformers and associated equipment including underground cable to connect to existing transmission line".
- 1.2** The site is located 3.2km northeast of Christchurch and 1.3km to the east of the village of Burton. It comprises five fields totalling approximately 34ha on relatively flat land at around 10m aOD that rises up slightly to the east. The underlying geology comprises Palaeogene sand of the Boscombe Sand Formation overlain by Quaternary fifth river terrace deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2015).
- 1.3** The archaeological monitoring work carried out is depicted on Fig. 2 and comprised monitoring of both shallow excavations, such as for the haul road and temporary compound, with deeper excavations to potential archaeological levels for the cable trenching and ancillary building footprints.

### **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** A desk-based heritage assessment for the development was prepared by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (Tabor 2013). This established that the site contained no recorded heritage assets, and that there are few recorded heritage assets within the study area, with the majority of them relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 2.2** Historic map regression undertaken as part of the assessment noted that the fields containing the development site were formerly subdivided, and that the present arrangement of larger fields mainly derives from 20th-century removal of field boundaries.

### **3. AIM**

- 3.1** The principal aim of the project was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the scheme.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1** The work was carried out in accordance with a Project Specification prepared by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS 2014) and approved prior to commencement on site by the Archaeology Officer, Dorset County Council. Prior to development commencing AC archaeology was appointed to carry out the monitoring and recording, which was conducted in accordance with this Project Specification and AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* using the standard AC archaeology *pro-forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records.
- 4.2** All groundworks were excavated using 360° tracked machines fitted with toothless grading and ditching buckets. The lines of cable trenches were either 0.60m (LV, DC and CCTV) or 1.10m (HV) wide depending on the cable type. These were initially stripped onto the top of the natural geology and then excavated to full depth. Groundworks were directly supervised by the attending archaeologist.

## **5. RESULTS (Plates 1-3)**

- 5.1** The cable trenches formed the deepest excavations, generally being a maximum of 1.25m below existing levels (Plates 1-2). These were excavated into natural orange-brown gravelly-sand containing natural flint inclusions (1002), which occurred at a depth of between 0.35m to 0.7m below ground level. The geology was overlain by up to 0.35m of subsoil consisting of friable mid grey-brown silty-clay with occasional natural flint inclusions (1001). This was under 0.15-0.30m of friable light-mid grey-brown silty-clay topsoil containing occasional natural flint inclusions (1000).
- 5.2** Shallow excavations for the route of the haul road and temporary compound were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.1m below existing levels (Plate 3). This level was maintained within the ploughsoil and did not extend into the subsoil or indeed the natural geology beneath, i.e. the level of potential archaeological features.
- 5.3** No archaeological features were exposed within any of the monitored trenches, including those that crossed the line of historic field boundaries. In these locations, no evidence for associated drainage ditches was present.
- 5.4** No finds were recovered from the excavated deposits in any of the trenches.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1** The monitoring of the groundworks did not record any archaeological features or deposits. The overlying soil sequence across the site was broadly consistent, comprising a simple subsoil and ploughsoil over the natural geology.

## **7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS**

- 7.1** The archive will initially be stored at the offices of AC archaeology in Bradninch, but will ultimately be deposited under the relevant accession number at the Dorset County Museum.
- 7.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 206270 which includes a digital copy of this report.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The archaeological works were commissioned by EDP Ltd on behalf of Canadian Solar Solutions Inc. and managed for them by Matt Morgan, and for AC archaeology by Simon Hughes. The on-site monitoring was carried out by Gareth Holes. The report was written by Andrew Passmore with the illustrations prepared by Sarnia Blackmore.

## 9. REFERENCES

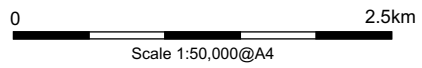
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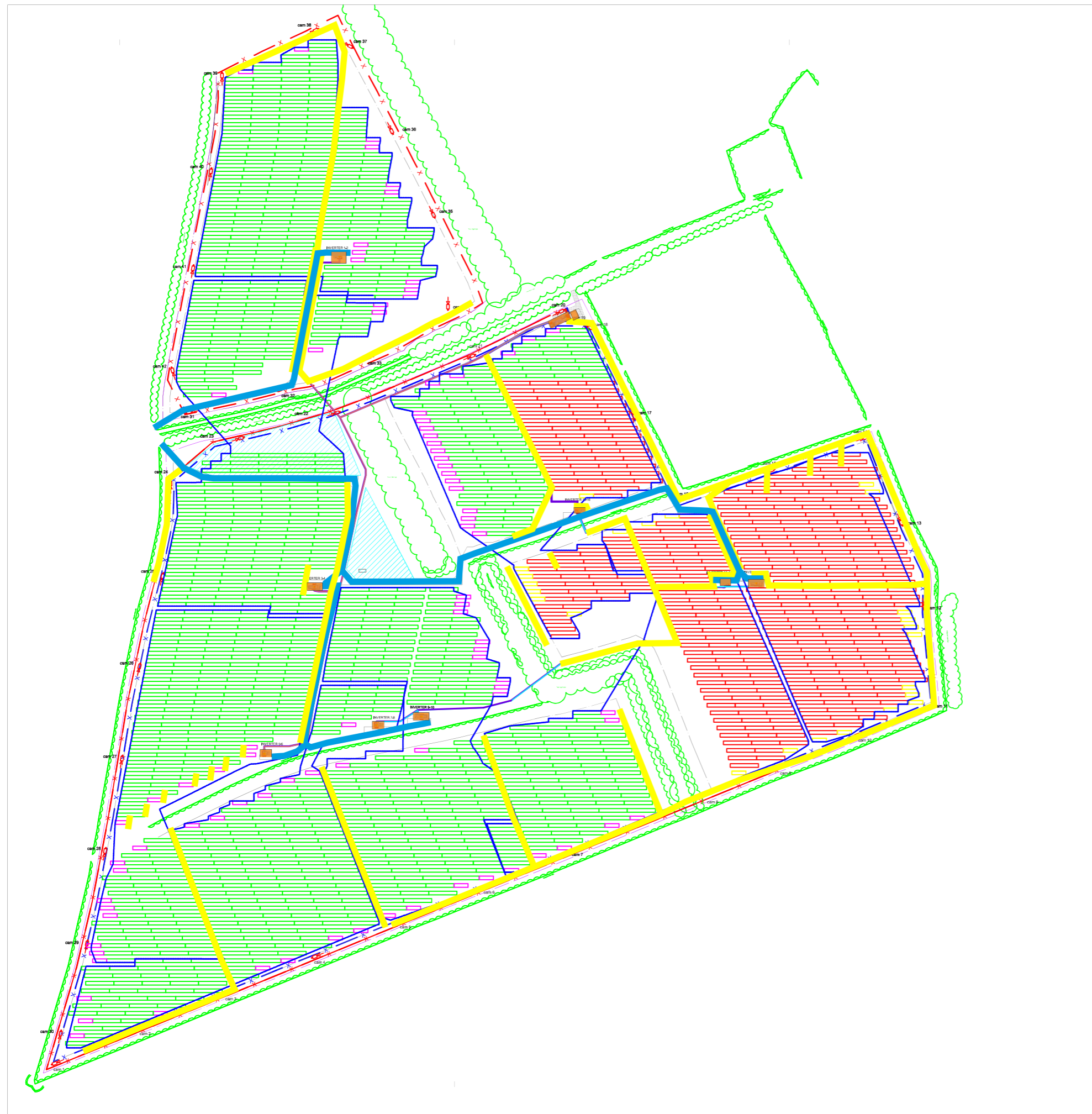
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PROJECT  
**Waterditch Farm, Christchurch, Dorset**

TITLE  
**Fig. 1: Site location**





Annotation	
	Fence
	4m easement from hedges & trees
	10m easement from hedges & trees
	4m distance from Fence
	String Box (2 x 24 x 255)
	String Box (1 x 24 x 255)
	String Box (2 x 24 x 250)
	String Box (1 x 24 x 250)
	Permanent Road
	Compound Area
	DNO
	Client Substation
	Communication Substation
	Container Spare Parts
	Production Substation
	Transformer
	Inverter
	Camera
	Gate 5m

- Monitored access tracks
- Monitored cable trenches
- Monitored ancilliary buildings

PROJECT  
Waterditch Farm, Christchurch, Dorset

TITLE  
Fig. 2: Development plan with location of areas monitored shown



Plate 1: General view of the cable trench excavations, looking southwest



Plate 2: Southeast-facing section of a cable trench. 1m scale



Plate 3: General view of topsoil stripping for a haul road, looking northeast



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