



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

**ON LAND FOR A SOLAR FARM AT
LANGLEY HALL FARM, NEWINGTON**

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 6230 9620

On behalf of

Lark Energy

JUNE 2014

REPORT FOR	Lark Energy Unit 11 Spitfire Business Park Northfield Road Market Deeping PE6 8GY
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Summary

A watching brief conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the construction of a solar farm on land between the villages of Newington and Chalgrove failed to reveal any archaeological remains. The site's distance from the villages, and high, exposed location made for a less than desirable location for settlement.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site was located in a field which is part of Langley Hall Farm, Chalgrove (SU 6230 9620), in the parish of Newington at approximately 75m AOD. The proposed site area is currently in agricultural use. The underlying geology of the site is Gault Clay.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission was granted by South Oxfordshire District for the creation of a solar PV development consisting of mounted solar panel modules, power inverter/transformer systems, power lines and connections, fencing and associated access way in a field part of Langley Hall Farm, Chalgrove (P13/S1885/ULF). Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) recommended a condition be attached for a programme of archaeological investigation. OHaNET produced a Design Brief covering their requirements. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* outlining the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve by record archaeological remains of significance was prepared by JMHS.

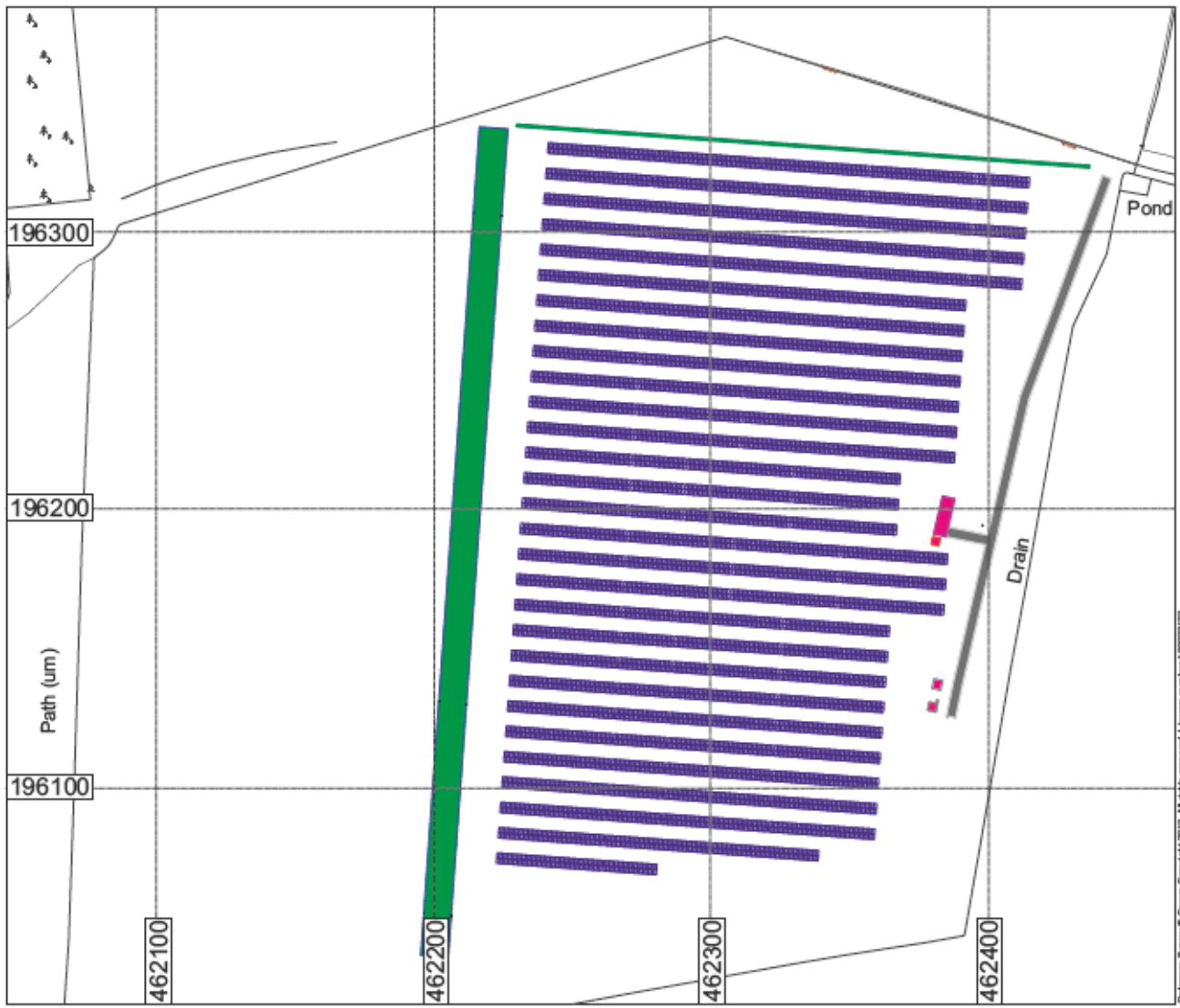
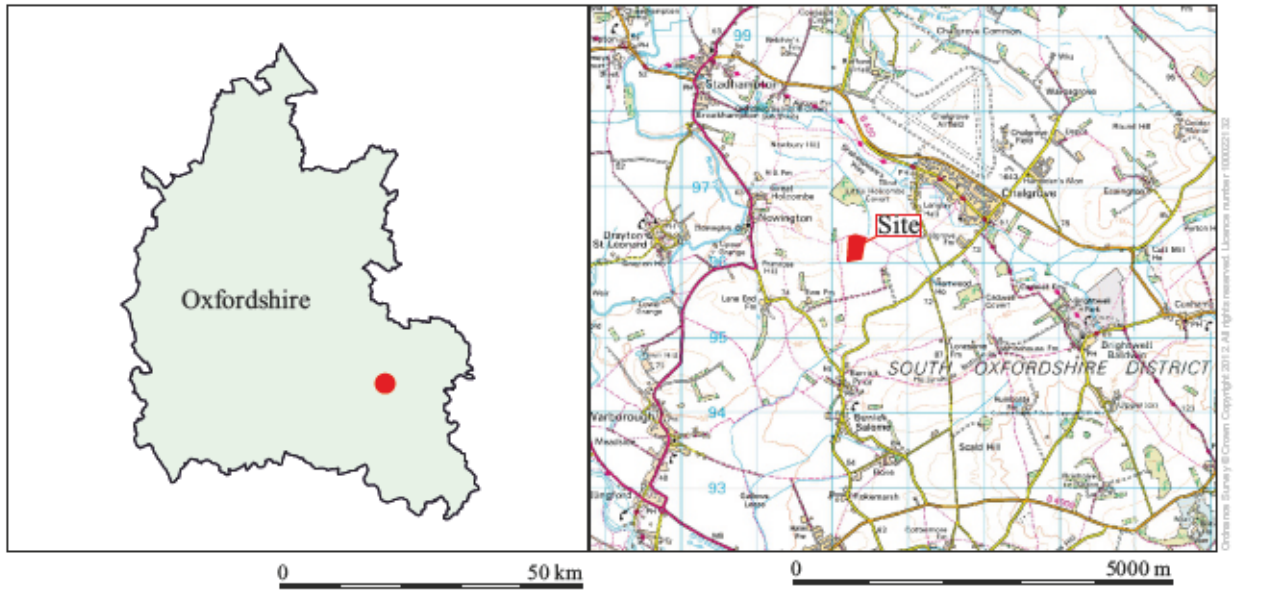
1.3 Archaeological Background

The site was located in an area of archaeological potential immediately south of a deserted farmhouse or shrunken settlement at Little Holcombe (County Historic Environment Record PRN 973). There has been little formal archaeological recording for the immediate area and therefore there is a lack of archaeological information for the vicinity although prehistoric and Roman settlement is recorded for the wider area.

A Roman coin-hoard was discovered approximately 600m east of the proposal site (PRN 16778) and Iron Age and Roman settlement including a cremation burial was encountered during the Chalgrove to Ilsley Pipeline 1km south east of the proposal (PRN 26008). A later prehistoric structure thought to be a possible kiln or oven and probably dating to the Iron Age or Roman period was recorded 1km to the south of the site (PRN 17282).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:



- Key:**
- Solar panel
 - Proposed planting areas
 - Access road
 - Transformer/inverter area

Figure 1: Site location

- to make a record of any archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the OHaNET. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

Several methodologies were proposed to mitigate various potential impacts (Moore 2013). In the event only a watching brief exercise was undertaken on the location of the transformer/inverter station and along the length of the access route and cable runs.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999).

3.2 Methodology

Cable runs and the access road were monitored where appropriate, and the site of the transformer/inverter was stripped ahead of groundworks.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. A general description of the feature fills is given.



Figure 2. Transformer/inverter station; looking northeast.

4.1 Field Results

Natural orange brown clay sand (103)/(106) was present across the intervention area. This was sealed by friable mid grey brown sandy silty loam with some rare stone (102)/(105) measuring between 0.15m and 0.3m thick; it was a buried soil horizon. Topsoil, a friable mid grey brown sandy silt loam with rare inclusions of small flint pebbles (101)/(104) between 0.1m and 0.2m thick, sealed the subsoil (102)/(105).

This sequence was along monitored along the access route to the northeast corner of the site as well as in the L-shaped open area (Fig. 2) for the inverter station and access to it measuring 10m × 1.6m (north/south) and 13m × 1.6m (east/west), yielding an open area of approximately 34m².

The same sequence was present during the excavation of the cable runs (Fig. 3). In places the natural (103)/(106) was overlain by a firm layer of orange brown clay sand (107), which was around 0.2m thick. Context (105), which was the same as (102), yielded a small piece of baked daub with brush marks.

4.2 Reliability of results and methodology

The watching brief was carried out between January 14th-16th and again January 30th, February 3rd-5th with a final visit on April 1st. The results are felt to be representative.



Figure 3. Cable runs; looking west.

5 FINDS

5.1 Finds

A single fragment of daub was recovered from the buried soil horizon (105), in a cable run.

5.1 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken as the remains encountered did not warrant sampling.

6 DISCUSSION

Despite opening an area for the location of a transformer/inverter, no archaeological remains were present.

The site is located near the crest of a hill which may well explain the lack of settlement or pre-modern farming activity. The presence of a small fragment of daub may well be a result of modern manuring or other accidental introduction.

Little Holcombe, located 150m west of the site, is in a southwest facing hollow in the landscape and would have been better-protected from the elements, unlike the site. Little Holcombe was occupied until the late 1970s at least. It is now a pheasant covert and building rubble is visible around the site of the former farmstead.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief. Revised Sept 1999

Moore, J., 2013 *P/13/S1885/FUL – Field Part of Langley Hall Farm Between Chalgrove and Newington (Chalgrove Solar PV Development) Archaeological Evaluation, Excavation and Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation*