

Archaeological Watching Brief of land south of
Great West Autos, Manston Court Road,
Ramsgate, Kent

NGR 634544 166781
Site Code: MCR/WB/13
Planning Application: F/TH/12/0722
Date: 22/03/2013



Report for Vogt Solar Ltd

SWAT. ARCHAEOLOGY

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SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief of land at Manston Court Farm, Manston, Kent. A planning application (F/TH/12/0722) for the construction of a solar array park at Manston Court Farm (Fig. 1) whereby the Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the construction work on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with consultations with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, KCC. The archaeological investigation consisted of monitoring of the excavation of topsoil for temporary haul roads (Plate 2) excavation of site compound and of trenches for electric cabling (Plate 3) linking the ends of solar panel arrays and the main cable run (Plate 4) between the site and the main electric grid. A scan of the excavated spoil from the ground-works with a metal detector was also done. The programme of archaeological works revealed no archaeology. The Archaeological Watching Brief has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives set by the Senior Heritage Officer in an Archaeological Specification dated 2nd November 2011.

INTRODUCTION

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned by Vogt Solar Ltd, St John's Innovation Centre, Cowley road, Cambridge Road, CB4 0WS to carry out an archaeological watching brief at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with consultation with the Senior Archaeological Heritage Officer, KCC, and the written archaeological specification. The watching brief was carried out from 8th January to 23rd March 2013.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located on land south of Great West Autos, Manston Court Road, Ramsgate, Kent (Fig. 1). The site is situated in a field east of Manston Court Road, just north of Manston Court and is about 13 hectares in area. The site centre is at NGR: 634544 166781.

According to the online geological maps of the British Geological Survey (1:50,000) the sites lies on Chalk with Thanet Beds to the north east. These are overlain by Head deposits. Inspection of the excavated trench runs revealed a common stratigraphy across the site of 30-35cm of topsoil overlaying brick earth. The deepest trench excavated was about 1.25m which revealed outcrops of Chalk (Plate 4).

PLANNING

The site has planning permission for the Solar Array from Thanet District Council. The planning reference is F/TH/12/0722 whereby the Senior Heritage Officer requested that an archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to monitor specific ground works associated with the solar array.

The following Condition was attached to the planning permission.

3. No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is in an area of considerable archaeological potential relating to known discoveries close-by. Thanet is generally rich in archaeological remains and this site lies within an area of particular archaeological interest. There are numerous crop marks in the vicinity which probably indicate areas of activity dating from the Prehistoric Period onwards. However, there are no recorded crop marks on the development site itself. Bronze Age flints were found in 2005 in the vicinity of the site (TR 36 NW 487) and Late Iron Age and Roman features were found in 2003 close to the site when a pipeline excavation was being watched (TR 36 NE 169). Manston Court Farm is possibly of medieval origins (TR 36 NW 22) and remains may be found in the western corner of the development site. Further information on the potential of this area is provided in the County Historic Environment Record held in the Heritage Conservation, Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone, ME14 1XX (telephone 01622 221536).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The County Archaeologist has advised that the watching brief should be targeted at three aspects:

1. The stripping of ground deposits (topsoil and subsoil) to create a foundation base for an inverter housing. These excavations should be carried out with a flat bladed bucket under the direction of the supervising archaeologist and in a manner that would allow any archaeology present to be properly exposed, identified and investigated before subsequent disturbance by construction.
2. The archaeologist should then record and investigate any archaeology visible before stripping to full construction depth is completed.
3. Monitoring of the excavation of the trenches for electric cabling linking the ends of the solar panel arrays and main cable run between the site and the main electric grid (Plate 3).

METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the ground works. Stripping for access roads and compounds were watched (Plates 2 & 5) but were of insufficient depth to impact on the geology or buried archaeological features. No inverter housings were installed on site, cable runs went direct to the farm where the inverter switchboard was situated.

Trenching was carried out 12th January to 23rd February 2013, with the excavation of four trenches for the cable runs measuring 0.65m in width and about 40m in length. Trench location was to an agreed plan carried out by the solar array contractors (Fig. 2).

The trenches were scanned for finds during and after excavation. Excavation was carried out using a 3 ton mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket for the cable runs and removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, or natural, under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The trench was subsequently inspected to identify any exposed features in plan and carefully selected cross-sections through the features would have been excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary. The short run spurs to connect the cable runs to the solar panels were undertaken with a smaller machine with a toothed bucket (Plate 3).

Unfortunately no archaeology was revealed in the cable runs or solar array area.

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the KCC Archaeological Specification (2012).

MONITORING

No site visits by the Heritage Officer (KCC) were carried out.

RESULTS

The first activity on site was the construction of temporary access roads (Plate 2) followed by the piling of the solar array galvanised steel uprights by the ground contractors followed closely by the excavation of the cable runs (Plates 3 & 4). Work started on this phase of development whilst SWAT Archaeology was present on site.

The Archaeological Watching Brief continued for the rest of the groundwork's but no archaeology was revealed. Geology revealed was constant across the site and comprised topsoil- a grey brown sandy clay loam of about 35cm thick overlaying a dark grey brown sandy stiff clay (Brick earth). Outcrops of Chalk strata were revealed at about 1.20m (Plate 4). A metal detector survey was carried out but the ferrous and non-ferrous material recovered was modern and mostly fastenings discarded by the solar array contractors.

FINDS

No finds were retrieved

CONCLUSION

The archaeological Watching Brief has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site comprising topsoil **(01)** overlying subsoil **(02)** sealing Head Chalk **(03)**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT would like to thank Vogt Solar Ltd for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Simon Mason, Senior Heritage Officer, Kent County Council for his advice and assistance.

Paul Wilkinson supervised the fieldwork, assisted in the field by Mike Robson on metal detector. Illustrations were produced by Jonny Madden for Digitise This.

Dr Paul Wilkinson MIfA

February 2013



Plate 2. Access road construction with ditching bucket (looking east)



Plate 3. Cable runs being connected to solar panels (looking west)



Plate 4. Main cable runs excavated with ditching bucket (looking north)



Plate 5. Compound being stripped and covered with Type 2 hardcore

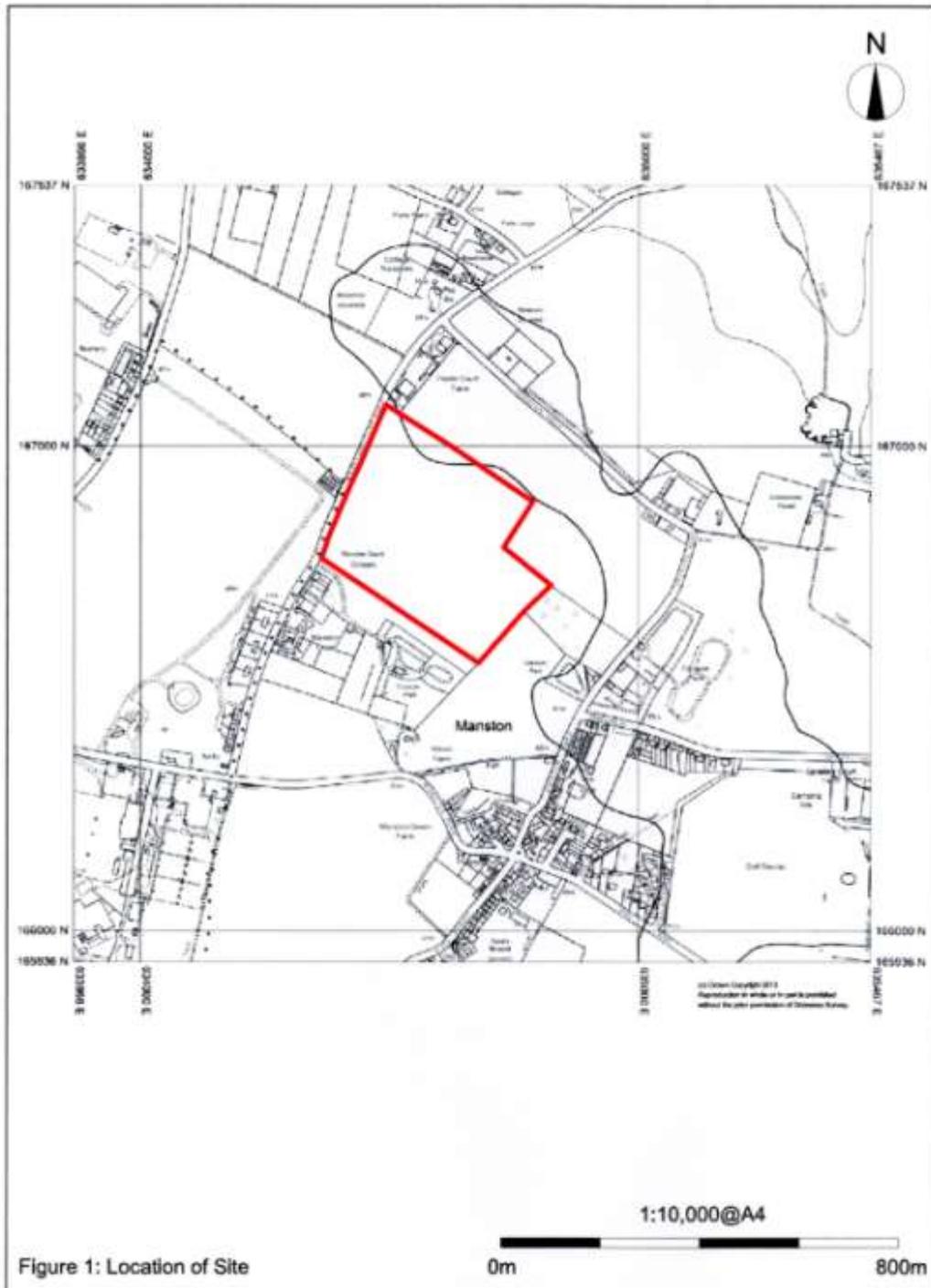




Fig. 2 Location of temporary access roads – in beige- and compound (south-west corner). Location of cable runs in pink.

APPENDIX 1 – Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: <i>Manston Court Farm site,</i>	
SWAT Site Code: <i>MCR/WB/13</i>	
Site Address: <i>Manston Court Farm, Manston, Kent</i>	
Summary: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at Manston Court Farm. A planning application for the construction of a new solar array at the above site was submitted to Thanet District Council (TDC) whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Thanet District Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2012) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.</i> <i>The Archaeological Watching Brief consisted of watching four trenches which encountered no archaeological features.</i>	
District/Unitary: <i>Thanet</i>	Parish: <i>Manston</i>
Period(s): Tentative:	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs): <i>NGR 634544 166781</i>	
Type of archaeological work (delete) <i>Watching Brief</i>	
Date of Recording: <i>Jan-Feb 2013</i>	
Unit undertaking recording: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)</i>	
Geology: <i>Brick earth over outcropping Upper Chalk</i>	
Title and author of accompanying report: <i>Wilkinson P. An Archaeological Watching Brief at Manston Court Farm, Manston, Thanet, Kent</i>	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) <i>As above</i> <p style="text-align: right;">(cont. on attached sheet)</p>	
Location of archive/finds: <i>SWAT</i>	
Contact at Unit: <i>Paul Wilkinson</i>	Date: <i>25th Feb 2013</i>