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NUVU DEVELOPMENT LIMITED

LAND AT LICKERS LANE, HALSNEAD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING REPORT

MARCH 2025

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**VISTRY MERSEYSIDE AND CHESHIRE WEST
ON BEHALF OF NUVU DEVELOPMENT LIMITED**

**LAND AT LICKERS LANE, HALSNEAD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING REPORT**

MARCH 2025

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APPENDICES

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FIGURE	TITLE	SCALE
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Figure 1: Archaeological Watching Brief Location1:2,000

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SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong LLP (WA) was commissioned by the Vistry Merseyside and Cheshire West on behalf of Nuvu Development Limited, to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Lickers Lane, Halsnead, centred at National Grid Reference (NGR): 347131 390498. The work was required as a condition of planning consent. The programme of archaeological recording and monitoring was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced in response to advice given by Alison Plummer, Planning Archaeologist on behalf of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

The programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken over nine days between the 17th May 2024 and the 31st October 2024. No evidence of archaeological remains were observed during the investigation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong LLP (WA) thanks Vistry Merseyside and Cheshire West on behalf of, Nuvu Development Limited for commissioning the project, and for all their assistance throughout the work. Also, WA thanks Alison Plummer, Planning Archaeologist, the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) for her assistance.

The programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was supervised by Kelly Griffiths and Mike Fitzmaurice and the report written by Molly Agnew-Henshaw. The figures were produced by Ege Kachmaz. The project was managed by Mike Birtles who also edited the report.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Between May and October 2024, Wardell Armstrong LLP (WA) undertook a programme of archaeological recording and monitoring, formerly known as a watching brief at Land at Lickers Lane, Whiston, centred at National Grid Reference (NGR): 347131 390498.. It was commissioned by the Client for the proposed development of 277 residential properties as well as an apartment development, for which a planning consent has been granted by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (planning reference: 20/00399/OUT).

1.1.2 Condition 7 of the grant of planning permission by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, August 2023 stated that:

Prior to the commencement of any part of the development approved as part of any subsequent reserved matters, or phase of development as previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (including site clearance), a written scheme of investigation for archaeological work shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The agreed details shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved programme.

Reason: To record the undesignated heritage assets prior to loss of original features

1.1.3 This planning condition was in line with advice provided to Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council by Alison Plummer of the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) in correspondence dated 10/10/23.

1.1.4 The proposed development is thought to contain the archaeological remains of post medieval and industrial coal mining industries, of which the presence has been confirmed with historic mapping and ground investigations, the heritage significance of which may be affected by the application.

1.1.5 The area has been separated into two phases, Phase 1 and Phase 2 (Fig. 1). Phase 1 was stripped at the present, with Phase 2 due to be stripped at a later date.

1.2 Project Documentation

1.2.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Podbury 2024) was produced to provide a specific methodology based on the brief for a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording. This was approved by the archaeological planning advisor

prior to the fieldwork taking place. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (MHCLG 2024).

- 1.2.2 This report outlines the work undertaken on site, and the results of this scheme of archaeological monitoring and recording.

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2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards and Guidance

All archaeological works were supervised by appropriately qualified professionals with relevant experience, who are members of the ClfA at a commensurate level.

- 2.1.1 The programme of archaeological watching brief (watching brief) was undertaken following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for an archaeological monitoring and recording* (2023), and in accordance with the WA excavation manual (2020).

2.2 Documentary Research

- 2.2.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment was prepared by LP Archaeology (Matthews 2020), which set out the archaeological and historical background of the site, and provided an assessment of the significance of all known and potential heritage assets up to 1km from the area of investigation.
- 2.2.2 A Historic Impact Assessment was prepared by WA (Buschmann 2023) in order to update the previous desk-based assessment with current and updated guidelines.
- 2.2.3 A written scheme of investigation was produced by WA (Podbury 2023; 2024) in order to state the programme of works to be completed in the archaeological evaluation and subsequent archaeological monitoring.

2.3 Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

- 2.3.1 The archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken to monitor the removal of topsoil across Phase 1 of the proposed development area. in advance of the development of residential properties and associated infrastructure. This compromised of one area, Phase 1 (Fig 1.).

The programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was aimed to interpret and characterise archaeological remains, where present, and to:

- Determine the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains; in particular the shafts identified by the developers survey and evidence for any associated infrastructure associated with winding and haulage. The mining features of the site that are thought to date to the post-Medieval period or the Industrial period.

- Determine the character, date, extent and distribution of any archaeological deposits and their potential significance; and
- Disseminate the results of fieldwork through an appropriate level of recording (Podbury 2024).

2.3.2 Deposits considered not to be significant were removed by a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. All possible features or deposits were inspected, and selected deposits were excavated by hand to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples. Once completed all features were recorded according to the WA standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (WA 2020).

2.3.3 No finds were encountered on site.

2.4 Site Archive

2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project specification, and the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive will be deposited with Liverpool Museum, with copies of the report sent to the Merseyside HER, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier **WA24 / GM11373 / LLW-B**.

2.4.2 Wardell Armstrong LLP supports the **Online Access** to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by WA as a part of this national project. The OASIS reference for the project is: wardella2-532257

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Location and Geological Context

- 3.1.1 The site is located at National Grid Reference (NGR): 347131 390498. The site's environs comprise of a wooded area to the north, and a shallow ditch to the north and west. The south of the site is bounded by an open undeveloped field, and a caravan park. It is located within the former Halsnead Park, within Whiston. The land slopes roughly to the west, though it is uneven across site as noted from previous investigations (Fitzmaurice and Vernon 2024).
- 3.1.2 The site is approximately c9.5 ha in size and is undeveloped land, consisting of a large, formerly arable field with an area of rough scrubland to the east.
- 3.1.3 The underlying solid geology within the area of investigation is mapped as bedrock geology of the Pennine Middle Coal Measure, comprising of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone which was deposited during the Carboniferous period 318-309.5 million years ago. This is overlain by superficial deposits of Devensian Glacial Till, deposited 116-11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary Period (BGS 2023). The natural substrate observed during the previous phase of works comprised of loose sand deposits to the east with hard sandstone deposits, and firm clay to the west, with occasional sand banding, which is consistent with the mapped geologies above (Fitzmaurice and Vernon 2024).

3.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

- 3.2.1 A desk-based assessment was produced to assess the known historical and archaeological background of the site and the surrounding landscape to a distance of 1km (Matthews 2020). It is not intended to repeat that information here and what follows is a brief overview, for further details please refer to the original document.
- 3.2.2 A further heritage impact assessment report was produced by WA in August 2023, to reference the updated guidance from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as updated in 2024 (MHCLG 2024) as well as the updated standards and guidelines from ClfA (ClfA 2023).
- 3.2.3 This report identified that there were no designated heritage assets within the site boundary, however there are a further number within the wider search area of 1km (Buschmann 2023; Matthews 2020).

- 3.2.4 There are no heritage assets designated as scheduled ancient monuments recorded within the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 3.2.5 There are 175 non-designated heritage assets recorded within the immediate vicinity of the site. The development would introduce further change to the former Halsnead Park, which has already experienced extensive change, due to the location of the M62 and the construction of the caravan park. Woodland lies beyond the site boundary and shields buildings nearby from the development. Due to this, it is determined that the new residential development would have a minor adverse impact to the asset's significance (Buschmann 2023; Matthews 2020).
- 3.2.6 The desk-based assessment, geophysical survey and evaluation suggests that there was a reasonable likelihood that archaeological remains of 20th century date may be present within the proposed development site.
- 3.2.7 **Prehistoric and Romano British:** There are no known prehistoric assets within the site boundary.
- 3.2.8 Similarly, no Romano-British findspots or sites have been recorded in the surrounding area; however, several Roman finds have been recovered further afield within Knowsley.
- 3.2.9 **Early Medieval and medieval:** The settlement origins of Whiston are thought to have begun in the 6th to 7th century (MEAS 2011). The early settlement (**HER MME18263**) is thought to lie 500m to the north of the Site, though little further information of the early settlement is known. During the medieval period there were several small hamlets within the Knowsley area, including Halsnead in the township of Whiston. In the late 13th century the boundaries of Halsnead are believed to be located within the current Halsnead Park. The western boundary of Halsnead was recorded as 'following a deep clough (ravine) as far as the Casselache in the north'. It is thought to be located to the west of Halsnead Hall, running on a north to south orientation to the west of the Site (*ibid*).
- 3.2.10 Several medieval non-designated heritage assets have been recorded within the wider area, including 13th to 14th century pottery sherds that were recovered during a programme of fieldwork in along Lickers Lane (**HER MME15823**). To the south-west of the Site, a watching brief (**HER EME2390**) and trial-trench evaluation (**HER EME2384**) provided evidence of medieval ridge and furrow, a clay floor (**HER MME15679**), sandstone wall (**HER MME15678**) and late medieval pottery (**HER MME15680**).

- 3.2.11 There is medium potential for archaeological features of the medieval period within the Site (*ibid*).
- 3.2.12 **Post-medieval, Industrial Period and Modern:** Halsnead Park (**HER MME15147**) in which the Site is located, is thought to date to the late 18th century, first seen on the 1818 Greenwood Map. The Hall (**HER MME6856**) was built in 1684 by Thomas Willis and became known as the 'red hall' as a result of the red sandstone it was built from, it was later modified in 1789 and demolished in 1932. Halsnead Park Wall (**HER MME15681**) lies along the northern, eastern and western boundaries of the park. Surviving elements of the Halsnead Park landscape have been identified in the *Halsnead Garden Village Masterplan* (Knowsley Council 2017). Within the Site extant elements of the parkland include the area of woodland along the northern edge of the Site and the curving boundary with Princes House on the western boundary (*ibid*).
- 3.2.13 From the 16th century small scale coal mining was also taking place in Whiston. Shallow pits were dug to locate coal seams near the surface, with steeper 'adits' sunk into the steep banks and hills. Shafts were used for deeper seams and abandoned when they flooded or collapsed, or when working techniques of this period prohibited any further exploitation of the coal seams. There was a large concentration of collieries within Whiston, with the immediate and surrounding area undergoing extensive mining in the 18th and 19th century. Shafts were sunk in the 1760s at Carr Collier; 1802 at Whiston Colliery (**HER MME6301; MME6302; MME13097; MME15270**) which closed in 1890; Halsnead colliery (**HER MME6306; MME13104; MME13102**) 1802 and closed 1895 and Cronton Colliery 1913 which closed 1984 (MEAS 2011), Houghton's Hey Colliery (**HER MME6299; MME6300**) at Stadt Moers Park; Hig Hey Colliery (**HER MME6303; MME6304**) and Prescott Colliery (**HER MME16658**) on Dragon Lane. Stadt Moers Park and Halsnead Park (former Crontons Colliery) became Tushingham's Brickworks (**HER MME10037**), which was built in the 1890s to 1976. They became used as a landfill site and since 1983 have undergone regeneration and landscaping to transform them into country parks (MEAS 2011).

3.3 Previous Work

- 3.3.1 Numerous archaeological investigations have taken within the development area consisting of a geographical survey in 2018, which identified a potential sub-circular enclosure and a possible industrial kiln complex (Matthews 2018, 2020).

An archaeological evaluation consisting of 34 trenches was undertaken by WA in 2024. Archaeological remains were found in 15 trenches, with industrial activity to the northern and western areas of the site. This consisted of extraction pits, mine shafts and industrial waste dumps. Non-industrial activity was found to the southeast of the site (Fitzmaurice and Vernon 2024).

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4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken between the 17th May 2024 and the 31st October 2024, with the removal of topsoil to the subsoil to reveal any archaeological features or deposits.

4.2 Results

- 4.2.1 **Phase 1 (Figure 1).** Topsoil **(10000)** comprising of mid-dark greyish-brown, silty-sand was removed to a depth of 0.31 to 0.52m to reveal the natural geological substrate **(10001)** mid orangey-brown sandy-silt, mottled with mid yellowish-brown. This had a surface spread of industrial waste and coal, indicative of the coal mining taken place in the area. Part of the area of Phase 1 was unable to be stripped due to the proximity to woodland. Phase 1 was devoid of archaeological features.

4.3 Archaeological Finds and Environmental Sampling

- 4.3.1 No archaeological finds were recovered, and no environmental samples were retained during the groundworks.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Interpretation

- 5.1.1 During the archaeological monitoring and recording at Lickers Lane, Halsnead, topsoil covering Phase 1 of the proposed c.9.5ha development area was stripped. The purpose of the archaeological monitoring and recording was to monitor all topsoil removal during groundworks related to the proposed development as set out in the planning application 20/00399/OUT.
- 5.1.2 The excavation area was excavated down to the top of the subsoil level for the construction of residential properties as well as an apartment development.
- 5.1.3 The development area was devoid of archaeological features and deposits. No finds were recovered, and no environmental samples were taken.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
10000	Layer	Friable, mid-dark greyish-brown, silty sand	0.31-0.52m	Topsoil
10001	Layer	Friable. Mid-orangey-brown, mottled with yellowish-brown, sandy silt. Surface spread of coal and industrial waste, particularly to the South of the Area	/	Natural geological substrate

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APPENDIX 2: PLATES



Plate 1; Area strip, no scale.

APPENDIX 3: FIGURES

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KEY

Site Boundary

Notes:

Boundaries are indicative. Aerial imagery shown for context purposes only.

REVISION	DETAILS	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D	APP'D
CLIENT					
COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIPS MERSEYSIDE AND CHESHIRE WEST					
PROJECT					
HALSNEAD GARDEN VILLAGE					
DRAWING TITLE					
WATCHING BRIEF LOCATION PLAN					
DRG No.		REV		SUIT. CODE	
GM13232-015		P0.01		--	
DRG SIZE		SCALE		DATE	
A3		1:2,000		24/03/2025	
DRAWN BY		CHECKED BY		APPROVED BY	
EK		--		--	

