



Bankhead Farm, Dalswinton, Dumfries

Archaeological Watching Brief



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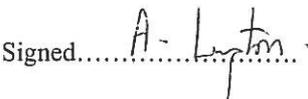
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SUMMARY

Planning permission has been granted for the erection of an agricultural building at Bankhead Farm, Dalswinton, Dumfries (NGR NX 9340 8475), with a condition to undertake all groundworks for the construction of the building under permanent archaeological presence. The site lies within an area of high archaeological potential with two Roman forts positioned immediately to the north and west of the farm (SM 2560), and a Roman camp approximately 300m to the south of the farm (SM 4343). A Roman road may also run along the north-eastern edge of the development site. Furthermore, to the immediate north-east of the site is an undated enclosure, seen as a cropmark on aerial photographs, and to the south-east is a second cropmark indicating the site of a ploughed Bronze Age barrow.

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Capita Symonds, on behalf of their client, to undertake a watching brief, which was carried out over three days from 7th to 11th August 2008. The works involved a complete topsoil strip over the site of the proposed building, followed by the excavation of postholes for structural purposes.

A possible field boundary, **1007**, was recorded, but there was no dating evidence retrieved. The area was also heavily disturbed by more recent farming activity, including the installation of modern services, together with carcass pits and silage dumps. A rubble trackway was also observed across the southern end of the site, and two heavy machine wheel ruts were noted. There were no other archaeological features, structures or deposits of significance seen during the watching brief, and no finds were recovered. The groundworks did not impact upon any features of archaeological value and, therefore, no further archaeological work is recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Elaine Watson and Iain Wilson of Capita Symonds for commissioning the project on behalf of their client, Peter Landale, and to Jane Brann, the Council Archaeologist for Dumfries and Galloway.

Gemma Jones and David Bonner undertook the watching brief. Elizabeth Murray wrote this report. Alix Sperr produced the drawings. The project was managed by Emily Mercer, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

1.1.1 Planning permission has been granted for the erection of an agricultural building at Bankhead Farm, Dalswinton, Dumfries. Two Roman forts lie immediately to the north and west of the farm (SM 2560), with a Roman camp approximately 300m to the south of the farm (SM 4343), and a Roman road possibly along the north-eastern edge of the proposed development. In addition, an undated enclosure, seen as a cropmark on aerial photographs, lies to the immediate north-east of the site, and to the south-east is a further cropmark indicating the site of a ploughed Bronze Age barrow. Slightly further afield, a stone-lined pit containing two Bronze Age cremation pots was discovered at Bankhead in the eighteenth century (Jane Brann pers comm).

1.1.2 Therefore, due to the high archaeological potential of the area, the proposed construction works may potentially impact upon any surviving archaeological remains. In mitigation of the construction work, a condition has been attached to the planning permission requiring a programme of archaeological investigation, in the form of a permanent archaeological presence, to be carried out during groundworks. Consequently, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by Capita Symonds, on behalf of their client Peter Landale, to undertake the work, which was carried out over three days from 7th August to 11th August 2008.

1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 Bankhead Farm is situated on the eastern valley bank of the River Nith, approximately 6 miles to the north-west of the town of Dumfries and to the west of Dalswinton, in Dumfries and Galloway (NGR NX 9340 8475; Fig 1). The solid geology of the Dumfries area consists mainly of Sandstone bedrock. The surface deposits are mapped as relatively minimal deposits of sand and gravel (www.bgs.ac.uk).

1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 Approximately 1km to the south-east of the site at Bankhead Farm lies a prehistoric Scheduled Monument known as Dalswinton Mains (SM 5662, Fig 2), which comprises a double row of pits and an adjacent ring ditch. These features represent elements of a prehistoric ritual and funerary site, indicating that there may be potential for other prehistoric sites within the vicinity (www.historic-scotland.gov.uk).

1.3.2 A number of Roman sites are located in the environs of Bankhead Farm. The most significant is Bankhead Roman fort (SM 2560, Fig 2), an Agricolan fort dated to the late first century AD, situated to the north and west of the Bankhead Farm. Originally constructed around AD 80 (Salway 1993), the site had a number of phases of construction and re-building with the original fort being levelled shortly after construction and a new one built slightly further to

the north-east of the complex. It was, eventually, a relatively large fort apparently designed to hold two cavalry units (*ibid*) and likely to have been the Roman military headquarters in the south-west of Scotland. It was burnt down at the turn of the second century AD, thought to be either as part of a strategic withdrawal from the area or due to an attack from hostile locals (*op cit*, 165).

- 1.3.3 To the south of Bankhead Farm, on the east bank of the River Nith, lies Bankfoot Roman fort and camps (SM 4343). This was a sizeable fort with a number of surrounding temporary military camps. A number of other small forts and military camps also exist along the bank of the River Nith making the potential of Roman activity on the site relatively high (*ibid*).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.1.1 A programme of field observation recorded accurately the location, extent and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits exposed during the course of the excavation. The work comprised the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.
- 2.1.2 All groundworks on the site were conducted under constant archaeological supervision and comprised the mechanical-excavation of topsoil and natural geology to a maximum depth of 0.3m. All exposed soil horizons were examined and described, and spoilheaps were carefully checked for any unstratified finds.
- 2.1.3 A daily record of the nature, extent and depths of groundworks was maintained throughout the duration of the project. All archaeological contexts were recorded on OA North's *pro-forma* sheets, using a system based on that of the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A monochrome and digital photographic record was maintained throughout and, where appropriate, profiles were produced of archaeological features at a scale of 1:20.

2.2 ARCHIVE

- 2.2.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with current IFA guidelines. The paper and digital archive will be submitted to the National Monuments Record for Scotland on completion of the project.

3. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the initial topsoil strip of the site. The groundworks comprised the strip of the entire working area in which the building was to be positioned (Figs 1 and 3). Natural geological deposits were reached across the entire site, at depths varying between 0.25m and 0.3m below the modern ground surface. No features of archaeological significance were observed, and no finds or dateable evidence were recovered. A summary of the results has been provided below, with a more detailed list of the contexts in *Appendix 2*.

3.2 RESULTS

3.2.1 An area of approximately 87m x 50m was stripped using a mechanical excavator to a depth of 0.5m below the modern ground level (Plate 1). The topsoil, a loose mid brown sandy-silt, **1000**, was removed to a maximum depth of 0.25m. Underlying this was a thin subsoil/interface layer, a light brown sandy-silt **1001**, that was less than 0.05m in depth. This in turn overlay natural geological deposits of a mid orange firm sandy-clay. Very few features of potential archaeological significance were observed and a number of services and modern features were noted. In particular, in the centre of the stripped area were numerous undefined carcass pits. These remained unexcavated due to their lack of archaeological significance and health and safety concerns. Two silage dumps were also noted, one to the north and one to the south of the stripped area, and a rubble trackway across the southern end of the site (Fig 3 and Plate 2)

3.2.2 Two parallel linear depressions, **1003** and **1005**, were recorded on the western edge of the excavated area and running north-west/south-east (Fig 3). They appeared to be wheel ruts from a machine, probably generated in waterlogged conditions. They are similar in size and depth, at approximately 0.6m wide and 0.13m in depth, and parallel to one another, being 1.2m apart. These features are most likely associated with the site's current agricultural use.

3.2.3 To the north of the wheel ruts was a larger ditch, **1007**, extending in from the west side of the site for approximately 14m-18m (Figs 3 and 4). It was 1.15m wide and 0.29m in depth and had a singular poorly sorted fill. There were no finds recovered from this feature so no date can be attributed. The size and shape of the feature make it unlikely to be associated with the Roman activity in the area, but it could potentially be a field boundary.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 The topsoil strip over the footprint of the proposed building reduced the site to natural geological deposits. Very few features were observed, the majority of which were clearly identifiable as modern, including modern service trenches, carcass pits, silage dumps and two distinct and quite recent wheel ruts. A possible field boundary was observed but it contained no dating evidence.

4.2 IMPACT

- 4.2.1 Any further work on the site of the proposed building would have no impact on the archaeological record, as the groundworks were observed down to natural geological deposits.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey www.bgs.ac.uk

Salway, P, 1993 *The Oxford Illustrated History of Roman Britain*, Somerset

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Plan showing the location of the watching brief

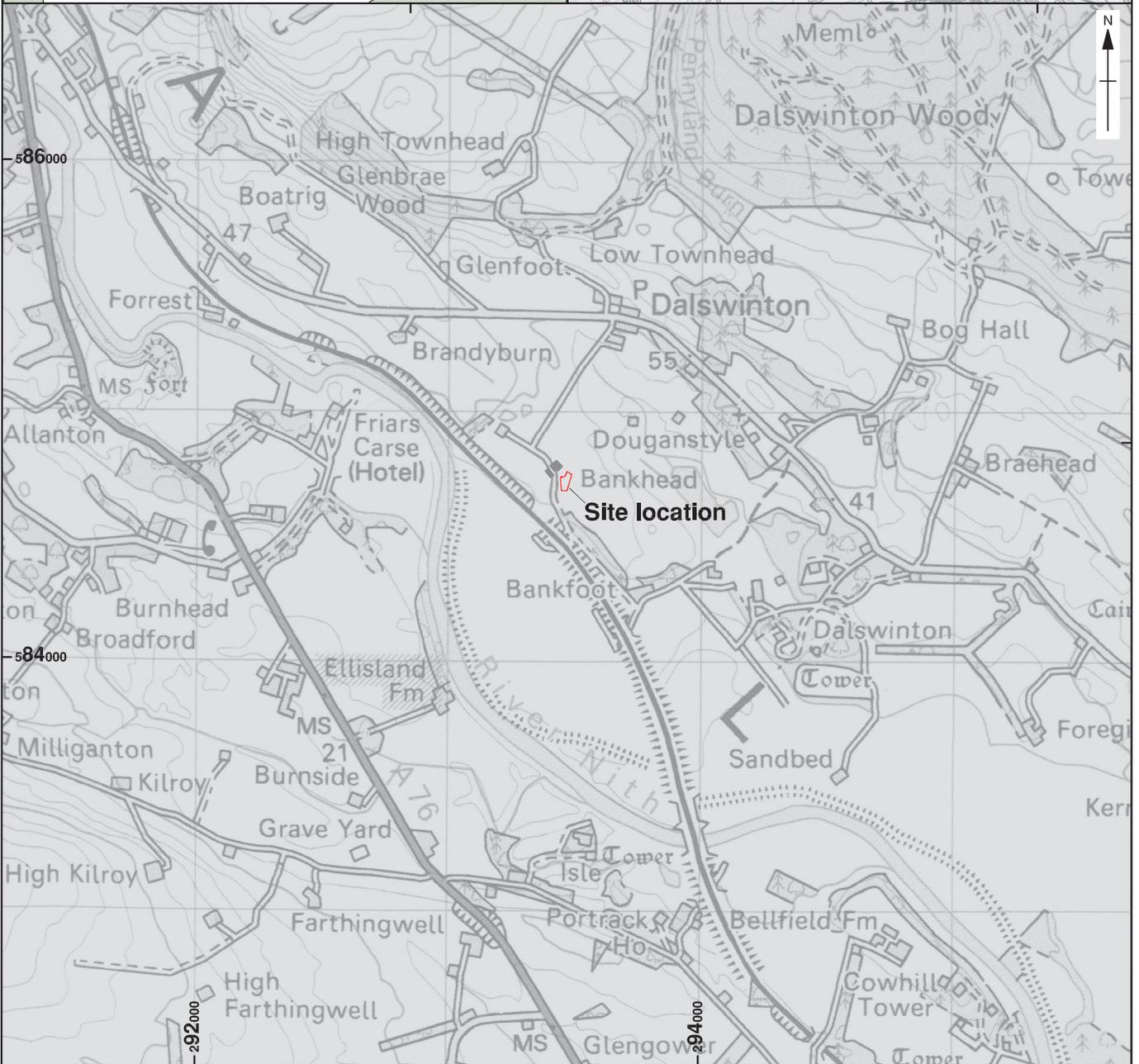
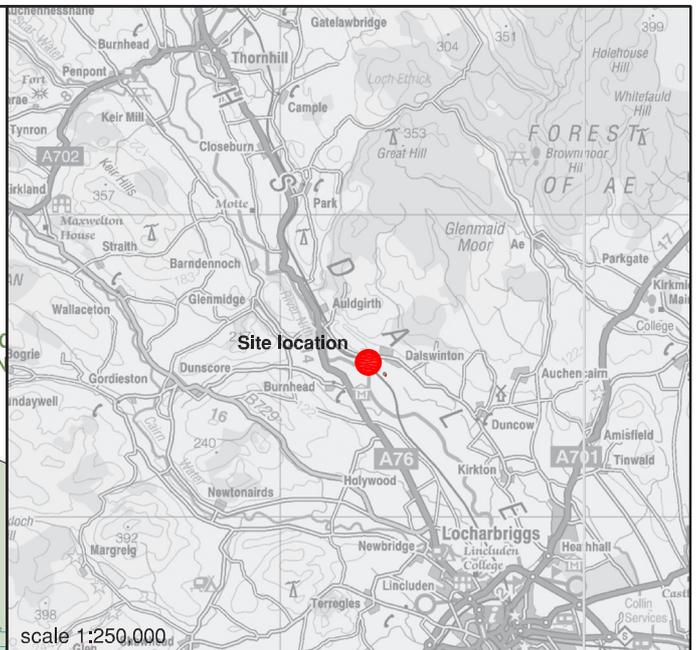
Figure 3: Plan of stripped area showing location of features

Figure 4: Plan and section of ditch **1007**

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: View of the site, facing north-east

Plate 2: East-facing view showing possible disturbance by modern trackway



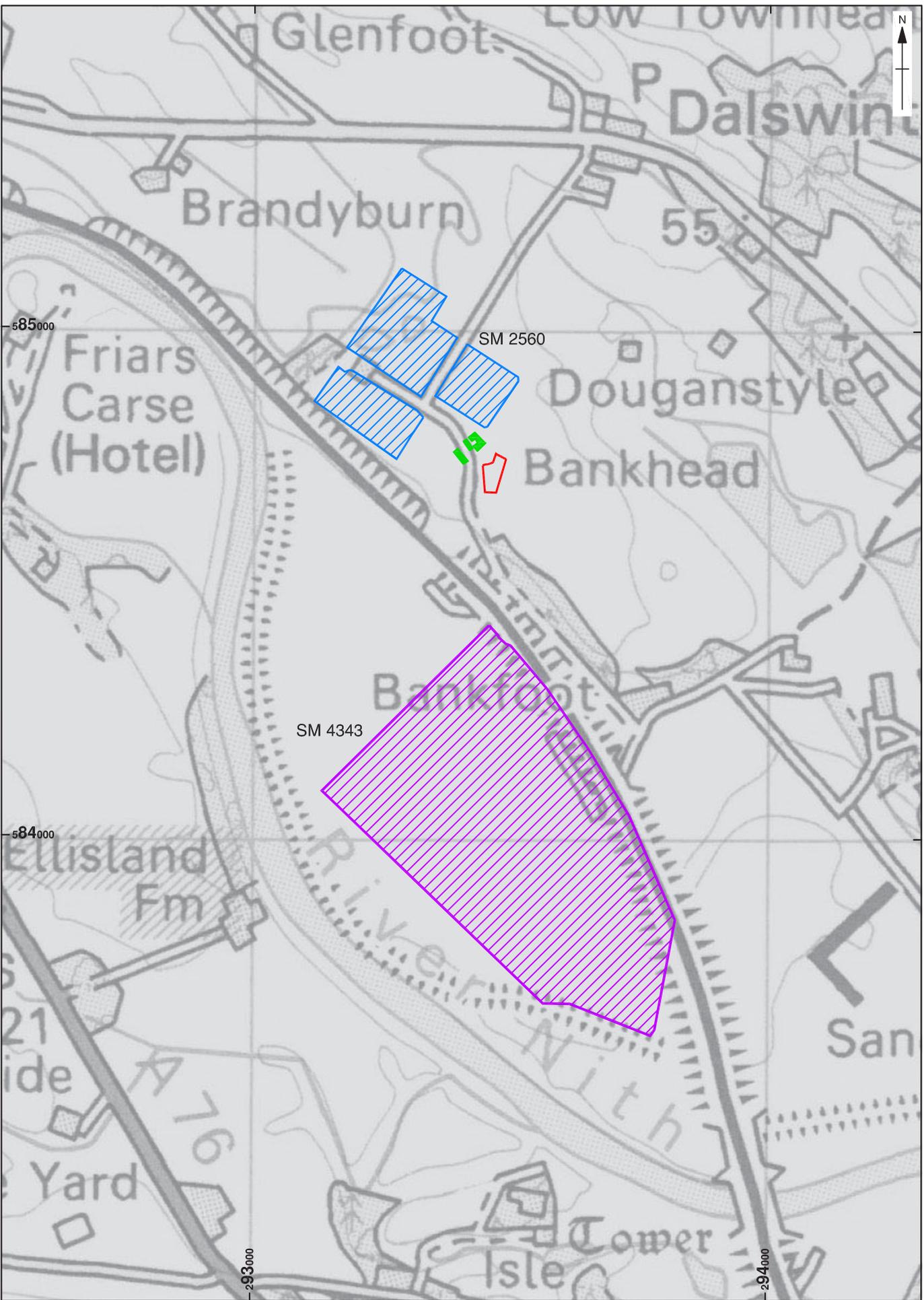
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Figure 1: Site location

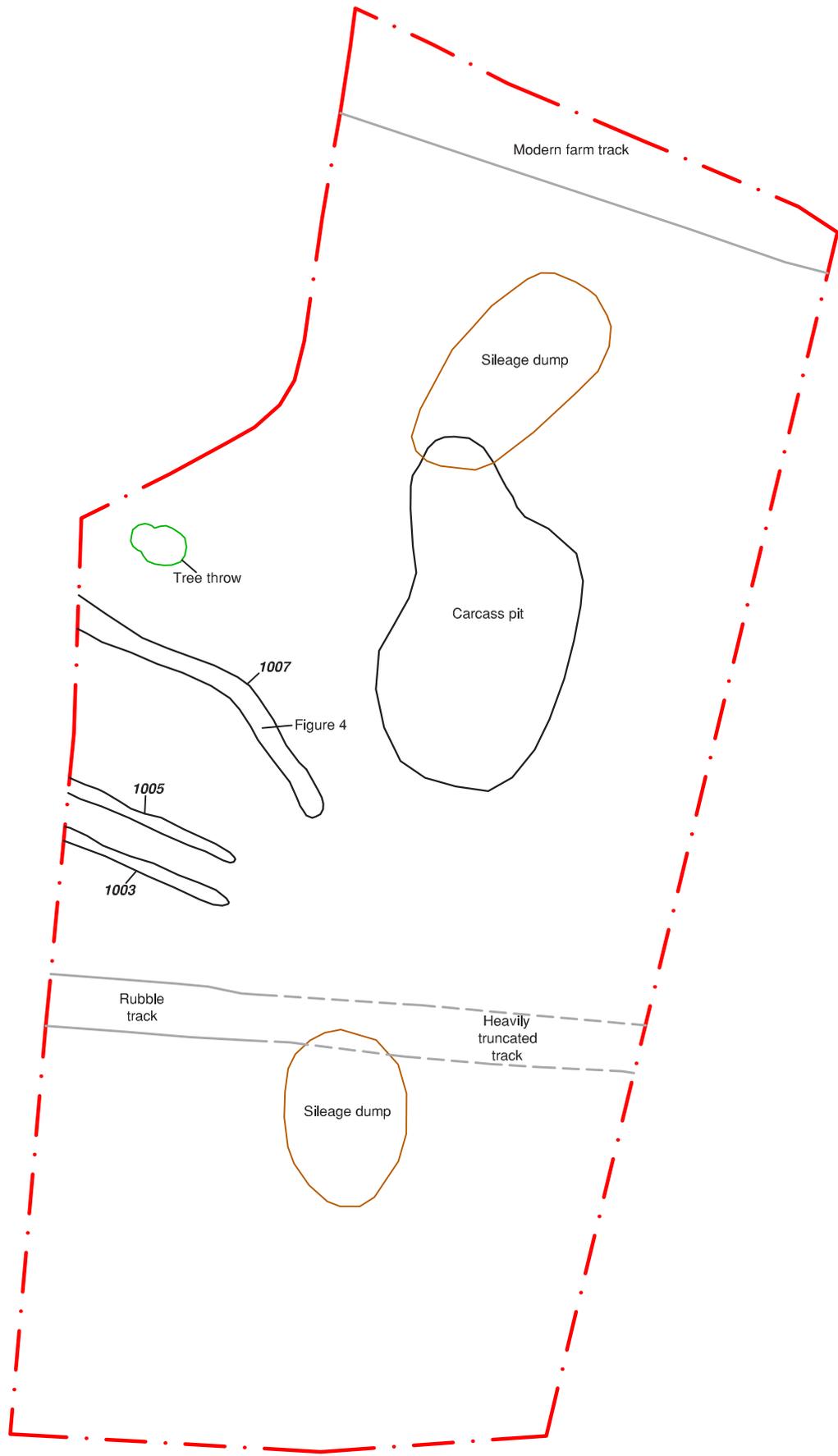
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	Area of watching brief		Bankhead farm buildings
	Roman camp		Roman fort

0 250 m
1:10,000 @ A4

Figure 2: Locations of Scheduled Monuments



- LOE
- Cut
- Silage dump
- Tree throw
- Track



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Figure 3: Plan of stripped area showing location of features

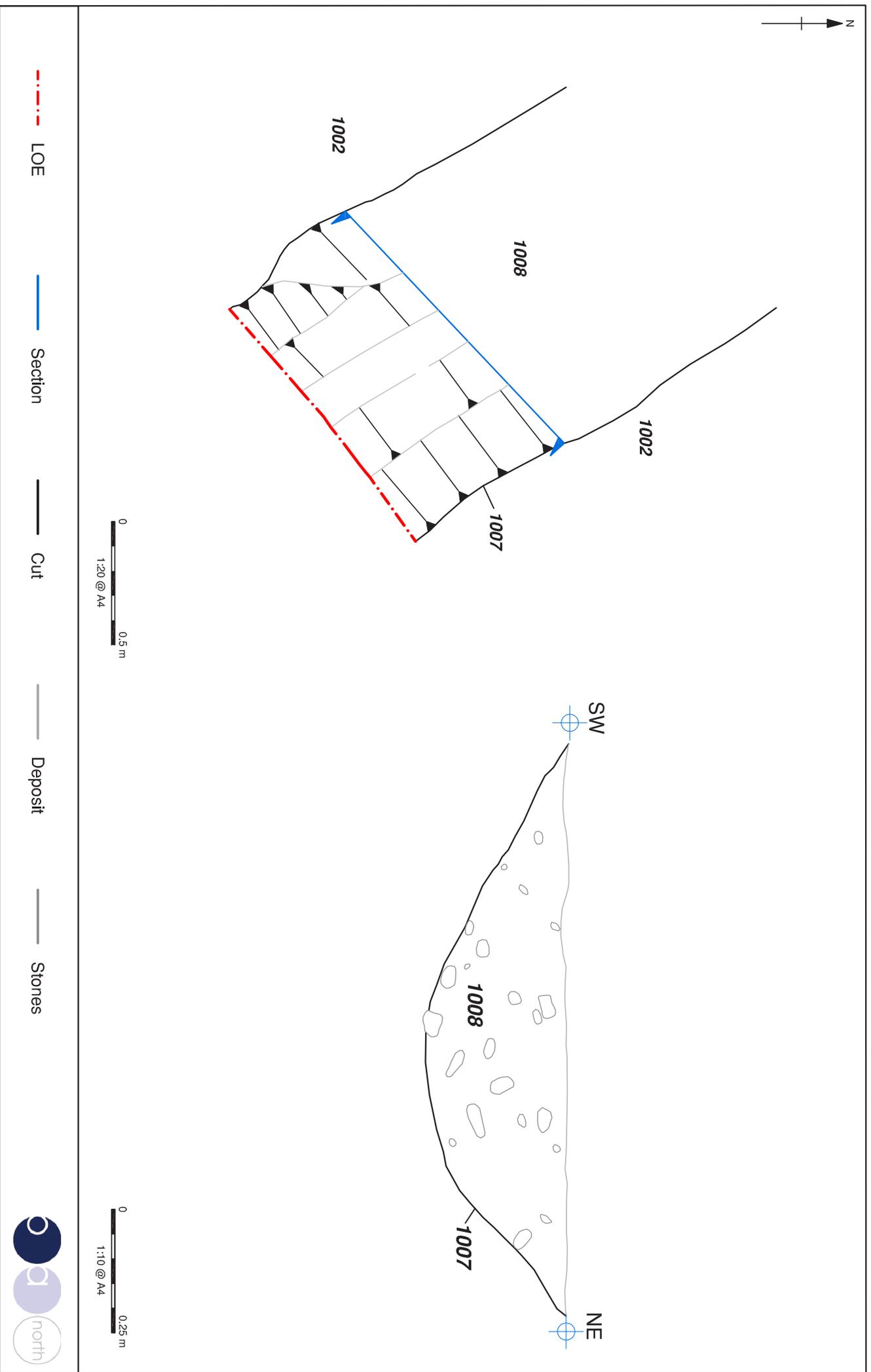


Figure 4: Plan and section of ditch 1007



Plate 1: View of the site, facing north-east



Plate 2: East-facing view showing possible disturbance by modern trackway

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Capita Symonds (hereafter the client) has requested Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land at Bankhead Farm, Dalswinton, Dumfries (NGR approx. NX 9340 8475). Two Scheduled Roman forts lie immediately to the north and west of the farm (SM 2560), with a Roman camp approximately 300m to the south of the farm (SM 4343), and a Roman road possibly along the north-eastern edge of the proposed development. Therefore, the site lies within an area of high archaeological potential. Planning permission has been granted for the erection of an agricultural building with a condition that an archaeological watching brief is maintained during groundworks.

1.2 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.2.1 Oxford Archaeology North has considerable experience of excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past 30 years. Evaluations, assessments, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the planning process and according to any statutory constraints, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.

1.2.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The following programme has been designed to identify any surviving archaeological deposits or features and provide for accurate recording of any archaeological remains that are disturbed during groundworks and in mitigation of the development.

2.2 *Watching brief:* to carry out a permanent presence watching brief during the groundworks for the proposed agricultural building, to determine the quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains on the site strategy (in accordance with the IFA standards (2001)).

2.3 *Report and Archive:* a report will be produced for the client within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced in accordance with the UKIC (1990) guidelines, and IFA guidelines (1997).

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.1.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). OA North will liaise with the client to ensure all health and safety regulations are met. A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works. It is assumed that any information regarding health and safety issues on site will be made available by the client to OA North prior to the work commencing on site.

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF

3.2.1 *Methodology:* a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within the proposed ground disturbance. This work will comprise observation during the groundworks, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.

- 3.2.2 The watching brief will be maintained during the effecting of groundworks for the development, and will comprise observation during the excavation for these works, including clearing of any demolition rubble, floor slabs/coverings, excavation of building foundation trenches and service trenches, and other earthmoving activities.
- 3.2.3 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand using trowels and, where appropriate, sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (ie. selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).
- 3.2.4 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the client.
- 3.2.5 A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously of features and finds, and of general working shots. This will entail monochrome contact prints with replica digital photographs for presentation purposes.
- 3.2.6 A plan will be produced of the areas of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced, where appropriate.
- 3.2.7 **Contingency plan:** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with the Council Archaeologist, as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design. In the event of environmental/organic deposits being present on site, it would be necessary to discuss and agree a programme of palaeoenvironmental sampling and or dating with the Council Archaeologist.

3.3 ARCHIVE/REPORT

- 3.3.1 **Archive:** the results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the Dumfries and Galloway Council Sites and Monuments Record (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects (paper, magnetic and plastic media) with the relevant County Record Office, and a full copy of the record archive (microform or microfiche) together with the material archive (artefacts, ecofacts, and samples) with an appropriate museum.
- 3.3.2 As part of the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (*OASIS*) project, the online OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis> will be completed as part of the project.
- 3.3.3 **Report:** one bound copy and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the client, together with a copy each to the Dumfries and Galloway Council Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record of Scotland within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. Any finds recovered will be assessed with reference to other local material and any particular or unusual features of the assemblage will be highlighted. The report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived.
- 3.3.4 **Confidentiality:** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.

4 OTHER MATTERS

4.1 PROJECT MONITORING

4.1.1 Although the work will be undertaken for the client, all aspects will be monitored by the Dumfries Council Archaeologist on behalf of the local planning authority.

4.2 WORK TIMETABLE

4.2.1 The duration of the archaeological presence for the watching brief will be dictated by the client's schedule of groundworks.

4.2.2 The client report will be completed within approximately eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

4.3 STAFFING

4.3.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Emily Mercer BA (Hons) MSc AIFA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

4.3.2 The watching brief and any subsequent excavation will be supervised in the field by an OA North project supervisor.

4.3.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North's in-house finds specialist **Chris Howard-Davis** (OA North project officer). Chris acts as OA North's in-house finds specialist and has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods.

4.4 INSURANCE

4.4.1 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.

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IFA, 2001 *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief*, unpubl

IFA, 1997 *Archaeological Documentary Archives*, IFA Paper 1, Manchester

SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers), 1997 *Health and Safety Manual*, Poole

United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC), 1990 *Guidelines for the preparation of archives for long-term storage*, London

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT REGISTER

CONTEXT NO.	THICKNESS	DESCRIPTION
1000	0.2m-0.25m	Topsoil. Mid dark brown, loose sandy-silt with frequent inclusions of rubble and building debris (0.05m-0.4m diameter).
1001	>0.05m	Subsoil. Mid light brown, loose sandy-silt with frequent inclusions of small-large rounded pebbles (0.05m-0.4m) and roots.
1002	-	Natural. Mid orange, fine sandy-clay deposit with gravel and stone inclusions.
1003	0.12m	Cut for wheel rut, 9m x 0.61m. Aligned north-west/south-east, parallel to similar feature 1005 and probably made by a tractor.
1004	0.12m	Fill of wheel rut 1003 . Similar to topsoil (1000) and fill of 1005 . Mid brown sandy-silt.
1005	0.14m	Cut for wheel rut, 9m x 0.55m. Aligned north-west/south-east, parallel to similar feature 1003 and probably made by a tractor.
1006	0.14m	Fill of wheel rut 1005 . Similar to topsoil (1000) and fill of 1003 . Mid brown sandy-silt.
1007	0.29m	Cut of small linear ditch (possible boundary). Aligned north-west/south-east and 1.15m wide. No finds and therefore updateable.
1008	0.29m	Fill of ditch 1007 . Mid orangey-brown silty-sand with 40% medium to large rounded pebbles.