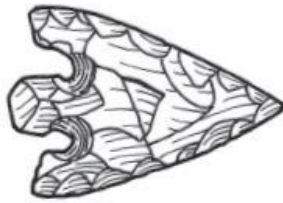


# RoCAS



ROSS & CROMARTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

## Plot 1, Former Sandpit, Windhill, Beauly Erection of house and associated access



## Trial Trenching Evaluation Data Structure Report

|                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| HC Planning Reference   | <b>11/02706/FUL</b>             |
| National Grid Reference | <b>NH 53005 48133 (centred)</b> |
| Site Code               | <b>WHB12</b>                    |
| RoCAS Report            | <b>2012-17/WHB12</b>            |
| OASIS Number            | <b>rosscrom1-134350</b>         |
| Client                  | <b>Mr &amp; Mrs N. Aburrow</b>  |
| Author                  | <b>Lynn Fraser</b>              |
| Date                    | <b>25-09-2012</b>               |

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## Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was carried out by Lynn Fraser. We wish to thank Mr & Mrs Aburrow for commissioning the work. All mapping, unless otherwise stated, is reproduced by permission of Landmark Information Group under RoCAS license LIG1044.

## SUMMARY

*This report summarises the results of an archaeological trial trenching evaluation for three new house sites on land located at the former sandpit, Windhill, Beauly. The trial trenching is a requirement of the Highland Council Planning Department prior to development of the site.*

*No features or finds of archaeological significance were uncovered. No further work is recommended as a result of this evaluation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 General information

An archaeological trial trenching was conducted by Ross and Cromarty Archaeological Services (RoCAS) on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012 in advance of development of three new house sites at land located at the former sandpit, Windhill, Beauly (centred on NGR NH 53005 48133). The work was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Aburrow in order to fulfil a planning condition requirement (Highland Council Ref: 11/02706/FUL) for the development.

### 1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The purpose of the trial trenching evaluation was to identify and record any features or finds of archaeological interest in order to assess the nature and extent of the archaeological potential of the site prior to development, while minimizing any delays or disruptions to the project<sup>1</sup>. The aim was to evaluate the likely impact of the development on any identified archaeological remains to aid the planning authority's decision making process. The *Scottish Planning Policy 2010* describes how archaeology should be managed when considering planning decisions and determining conditions for developments that have an impact on the historic environment<sup>2</sup>.

1.2.2 The specific objectives are:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area
- To remove by hand any overburden in order to expose the archaeological deposits
- To excavate, sample and record any features or to propose arrangements for their safeguarding, where possible
- To make recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development

## 2 SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 The proposed development site is centred at approximately Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 53005 48133 at Windhill, Beauly, which lies on the west side of the A862

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<sup>1</sup> Highland Council 2012.

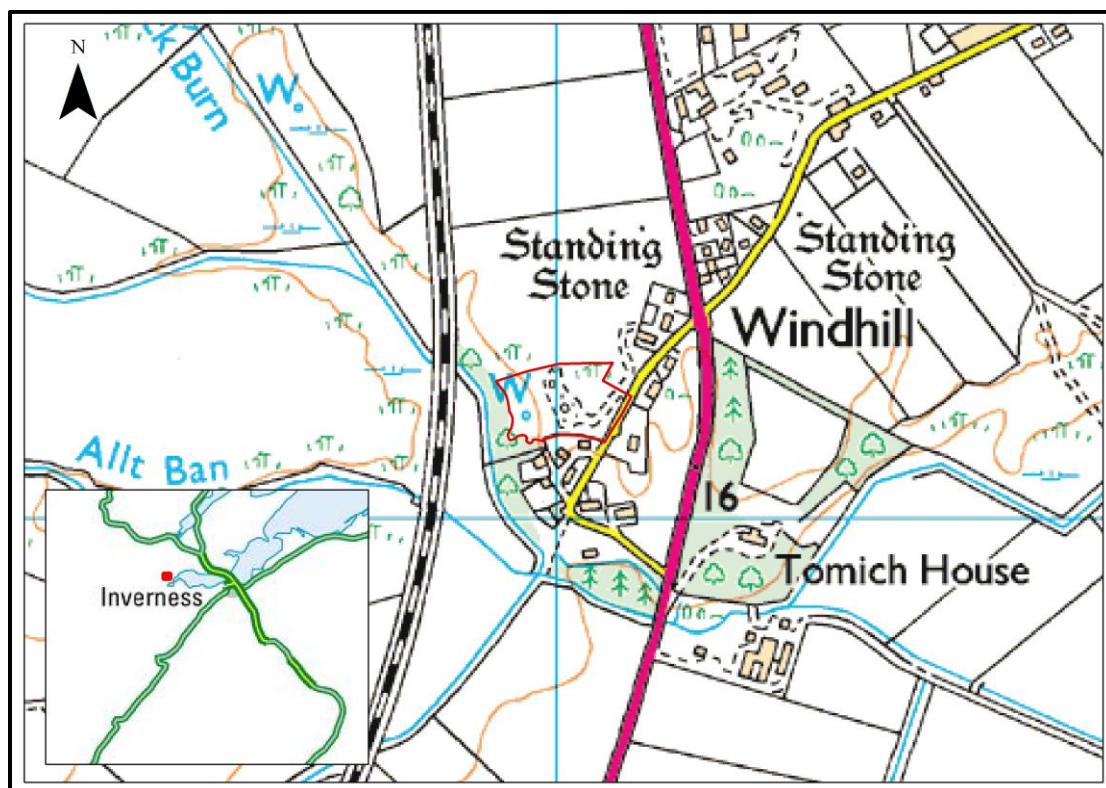
<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government 2010.

between Muir of Ord and Beauly (Figure 1). The proposed site is located on and to the west of land that was formerly quarried for sand; more recently the former quarry has been used to dump a variety of domestic and building refuse (Figures 2 and 3).

- 2.2 The underlying geology is Black Isle Sandstone comprising sandstone, mudstone and siltstone. The superficial deposits are gravel, sand and silt<sup>3</sup>.

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Both Muir of Ord and Beauly have a rich prehistoric and more recent history. The prehistoric presence is evidenced by the number of standing monuments in the area. A priory was founded in Beauly by monks of the Valliscaulian order in 1230, which continued in use until the Reformation in the early 1500s. Bridges built by Thomas Telford in 1814 over the Beauly and Conon Rivers brought increased traffic to the area. The flat land between Muir of Ord and Beauly became the location of huge trysts or cattle markets from about 1820.
- 3.2 To the north and north-west of the site are two standing stones and cropmarks, which suggest prehistoric occupation in the area<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.3 To the immediate north-west of the site, a cist was found in 1934 during sand digging, which apparently contained an unaccompanied inhumation<sup>5</sup>.



**Figure 1:** Site location – the site is shown in red.

<sup>3</sup> BGS, 2010

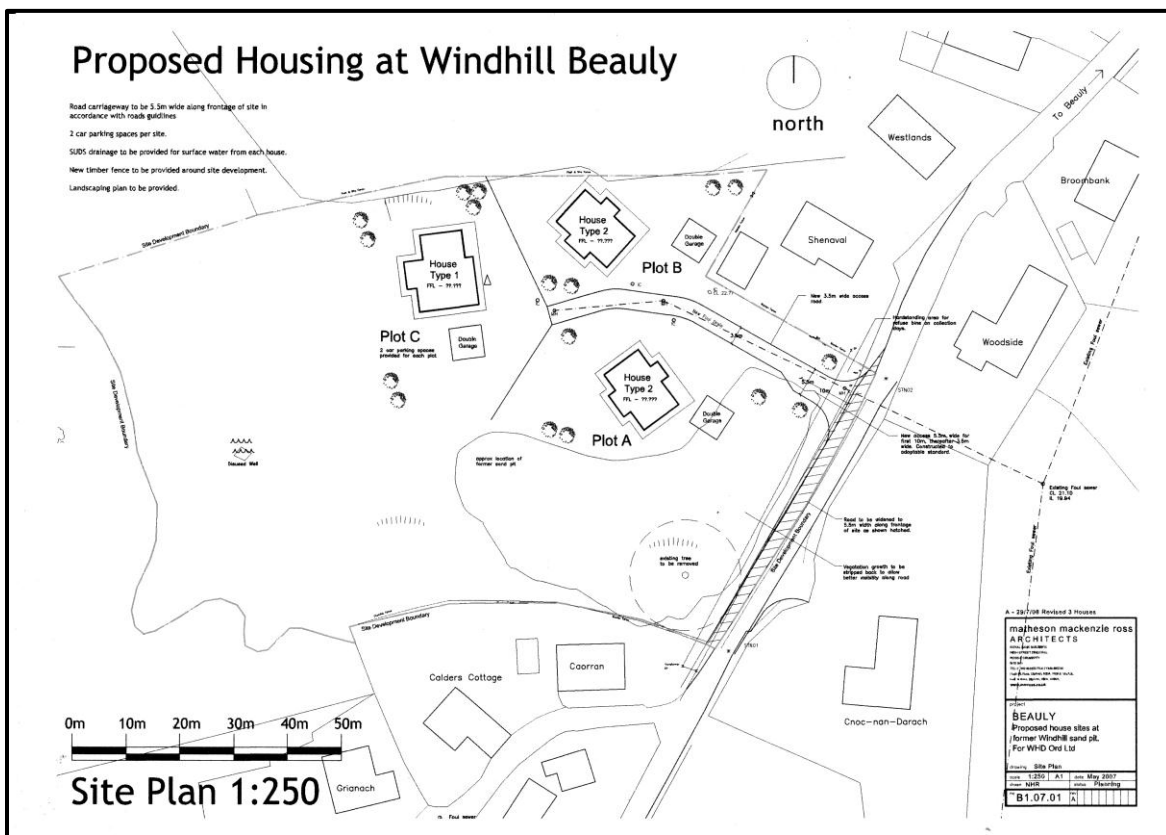
<sup>4</sup> HHER 2012

<sup>5</sup> MHG40888, HHER 2012





**Figure 2:** Aerial image of the site showing the sand/gravel pit. Imagery reproduced under ESRI licensing and provided by Microsoft Bing Maps.



**Figure 3:** Site plan as supplied by the client.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Desk-based assessment

- 4.1.1 A desk-based assessment was conducted prior to commencement of the evaluation in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation. The purpose of the desk-based assessment (DBA) was to understand the historical context of the site and assist in the formulation of a strategy for the archaeological fieldwork<sup>6</sup>.
- 4.1.2 The drawings of the area, as supplied by the client, were checked in detail against the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Map, the Highland Council's Historic Environment Record (HER), the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), the Highland Council Archives and Historic Scotland's records of scheduled monuments and listed buildings. Online aerial photographs were checked and the map collections of the National Library of Scotland (NLS) were studied on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2012. Other literary sources were also consulted.

### 4.2 Trial trenching

- 4.2.1 Nine trenches totalling 79.4 m<sup>2</sup> were excavated (Table 1) across the site where there was a possibility that the ground was undisturbed by quarrying and dumping activity. Trenches 1 - 7 were positioned to take account of the locations of house plots B and C; house plot A is located entirely on ground disturbed by quarrying and dumping activity. Trenches 8 and 9 are located to the south of the house plots, but were included at the request of the client as that area has the potential to be used as a house plot in the future (Figures 3 and 4). The positions and sizes of the trenches took into account proximity to fences, disturbed ground, trees and topography.
- 4.3.2 Topsoil and modern deposits were removed by an earth-moving machine equipped with a flat-bladed ditching bucket to reveal the subsoil surface where possible. This activity was conducted under constant archaeological supervision. Trenches were backfilled upon completion of excavation.

All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with *Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct*<sup>7</sup> and Highland Council's *Standards for Archaeological Work*<sup>8</sup>.

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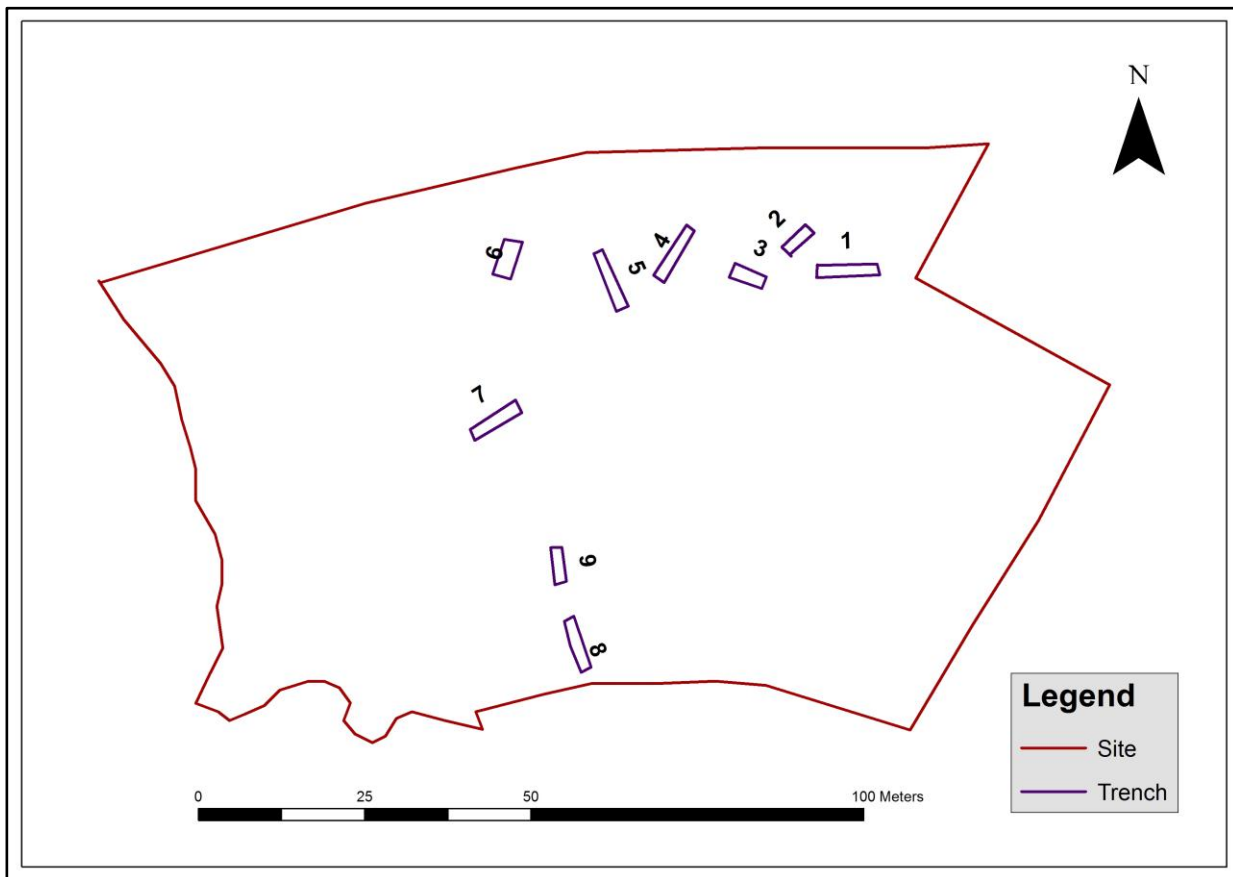
<sup>6</sup> IfA, 2008(b).

<sup>7</sup> IfA, 2010

<sup>8</sup> Highland Council 2012

**Table 1: List of trenches**

| WHB12: List of Trenches |           |                |                        |            |          |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------------|------------|----------|
| Trench                  | Alignment | Dimensions (m) | Area (m <sup>2</sup> ) | Depth (m)  | Features |
| 1                       | E-W       | 5 x 1.6        | 8                      | 0.4 - 1.0  | -        |
| 2                       | NE-SW     | 4 x 1.6        | 6.4                    | 1.1        | -        |
| 3                       | WNW-ESE   | 4 x 1.6        | 6.4                    | 1.1        | -        |
| 4                       | NNE-SSW   | 8 x 1.6        | 12.8                   | 1.1        | -        |
| 5                       | NNW-SSE   | 7 x 1.6        | 11.2                   | 0.4 - 1.0  | -        |
| 6                       | N-S       | 4.5 x 3.2      | 14.4                   | 0.2 - 0.75 | -        |
| 7                       | NE-SW     | 7.5 x 1.6      | 12                     | 1.6        | -        |
| 8                       | NNW-SSE   | 7 x 1.6        | 11.2                   | 0.3        | -        |
| 9                       | N-S       | 5 x 1.6        | 8                      | 0.3        | -        |



**Figure 4:** Location of the trenches within the proposed development site.

#### 4.4 On-site recording

- 4.4.1 All on-site recording was carried out according to standard IfA procedures<sup>9</sup>, using written records and drawn plans where required.
- 4.4.2 Trench positions and all archaeological features were plotted using ArcPad GIS software and GPS with sub-metre accuracy on a handheld Windows Mobile-based computer.

#### 4.5 Photography

The proposed development site was recorded using high resolution digital photography prior to the start of works and throughout the trial trenching evaluation. An Index of Photographs is included in this report.

### 5 RESULTS

#### 5.1 Desk-based assessment

##### 5.1.1 Historical mapping

Historical maps, unless otherwise stated, were consulted at the National Library of Scotland online<sup>10</sup>.

- 5.1.1.1 The early maps such as Pont (1580s – 1590s) and Blaeu's Atlas of Scotland 1654 do not extend to include the Beauly area. Herman Moll's map of 1745 does not depict the study area in sufficient detail to note particular features. Roy's Military Survey of Scotland 1747-54 depicts a small amount of settlement and cultivation at Rheindown in the Windhill area. John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland 1832 also depicts Rheindown and Beauly but no other detail.

##### 5.1.1.2 Ordnance Survey Six-inch to the mile maps

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6 inch-to-the-mile map (*Inverness-shire (Mainland), Sheet II, surveyed 1872*)<sup>11</sup> depicts Windhill. The gravel pit is not shown, however, until the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, which was revised in 1902.

##### 5.1.2 Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER)

The Highland Historic Environment Record was consulted online<sup>12</sup> and the following sites or events were recorded within the landscape surrounding the development area:

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<sup>9</sup> IfA (b), 2008

<sup>10</sup> NLS, 2012

<sup>11</sup> NLS, 2012

<sup>12</sup> Highland HER, 2012







Top row from left to right: **Plate 1:** Trench 1; **Plate 2:** Trench 5; **Plate 3:** Trench 8 with Trench 9 in the background.

Bottom left: **Plate 4:** Trench 2

## 6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Despite the location of the development site close to a cist found at the edge of the present sand pit and evidence of prehistoric occupation of the area through aerial photography, the site was devoid of any buried archaeological remains. The site has been heavily disturbed through quarrying activities and the later dumping of industrial and domestic refuse; rubbish has been both buried in specifically dug pits and dumped on the surface, some of which is now covered with vegetation. It was exceedingly difficult to find ground that remained undisturbed and such ground when found was located around the periphery of the site.

## **7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Nine trenches were excavated across the proposed development site totalling 79.4m<sup>2</sup>, all of which were archaeologically sterile. There are no further recommendations for this site.

## **8 REPORTING**

- 8.1 This report will be disseminated to the contractor/developer, the Highland Council Planning and Buildings Standard Department, Highland Council HET and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.
- 8.2 A digital report will be submitted with digital copies of the site photographs and georeferenced site plans in ESRI shapefile format. Ross and Cromarty Archaeological Services will retain copyright of this report.
- 8.3 A summary of the watching brief will be submitted for publication in Archaeology Scotland's annual journal, *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*. An OASIS entry has been completed (rosscrom1-134350).
- 8.4 The archive, which consists of plan drawings, photographs and digital site records, is held by RoCAS at Ryefield, Tore, Ross-shire and will be submitted to RCAHMS.

## 9.0 REFERENCES

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Roy, William, 1747-55. *Military Survey of Scotland*

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**Appendix 1: Index of Photographs**

| <b>WHB12: Index of Photographs</b> |                         |                    |  |                 |             |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>No.</b>                         | <b>Direction Facing</b> | <b>Feature No.</b> | <b>Description</b>                         | <b>Taken By</b> | <b>Date</b> |
| 1                                  | WSW                     | -                  | Pre-excavation shot of the site            | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 2                                  | W                       | -                  | Trench 1                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 3                                  | E                       | -                  | Trench 1                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 4                                  | WNW                     | -                  | Trench 3                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 5                                  | SW                      | -                  | Trench 2                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 6                                  | SSW                     | -                  | Trench 4                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 7                                  | SSE                     | -                  | Trench 5                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 8                                  | S                       | -                  | Trench 6                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 9                                  | NNE                     | -                  | Trench 6                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 10                                 | SW                      | -                  | Trench 7                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 11                                 | NNW                     | -                  | Trench 8                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 12                                 | N                       | -                  | Trench 9                                   | LF              | 19/09/2012  |
| 13                                 | NW                      | -                  | Shot of the site following trial trenching | LF              | 19/09/2012  |