

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
ON B6318 SIGNING IMPROVEMENTS AT
STANLEY PLANTATION AND EAST WALLHOUSES,
NEAR HALTON SHIELDS,
NORTHUMBERLAND**

JUNE 2011



**An Archaeological Watching Brief on B6318 Signing Improvements at
Stanley Plantation and East Wallhouses, near Halton Shields, Northumberland**

National Grid Reference: NY 9703 6905 – NZ 0497 6834

Site Code: WHS 11

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1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 An archaeological monitoring and recording exercise was conducted in association with groundworks undertaken for signing improvements to the B6318, the Military Road, in the vicinity of Halton Shields, Northumberland. The overall scheme of work was conducted along a stretch of the road between its junctions with the C239 in the west and the B6309 in the east. The two main locations for the work were, in the east, East Wallhouses (National Grid Reference NZ 0497 6834) and, in the west, Stanley Plantation (National Grid Reference NY 9703 6905).
- 1.2 The archaeological investigation was commissioned by Highways and Transport, Northumberland County Council, and was undertaken on 11 April 2011 by Pre-Construct Archaeology.
- 1.3 The archaeological investigation was undertaken as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent for the signing improvement scheme as the work was undertaken in two sections of the B6318 that have statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, part of the Hadrian's Wall frontier. The importance of the archaeological resource is reinforced by the fact that the entire Hadrian's Wall Corridor forms part of the UNESCO transnational World Heritage Site 'Frontiers of The Roman Empire'.
- 1.4 The archaeological investigation involved monitoring and recording of groundworks associated with the excavation of five foundation pits (FPs 1-5) for new traffic signs. All the foundation pits were sited within the highway verge of the B6318, three (FPs 1-3) in the vicinity of East Wallhouses, c. 3km east of Halton Shields, the other two (FPs 4 and 5) at Stanley Plantation, c. 1.8km west of Stagshaw Roundabout, where the B6318 has its junction with the A68.
- 1.5 As a consequence of the limited depths of the groundworks the natural sub-stratum was exposed only within the base of Foundation Pit 5, the westernmost pit to be excavated at Stanley Plantation, with the yellowish brown silty clay representing the glacial 'drift' geology of the area. Directly overlying the natural sub-stratum in FP 5 and forming the basal deposit in FPs 3 and 4 was an undated sub-soil horizon.
- 1.6 Archaeological remains of potential significance were encountered in FPs 1 and 2, sited on the northern verge of the B6318, and in FP 3, sited on the southern verge of the B6318, all at East Wallhouses. Undated sandstone rubble layers exposed within the bases of FPs 1 and 2 could potentially represent demolition material associated with Hadrian's Wall. However, both pits were sited within close proximity to a stone property boundary wall and the material may in fact have been associated with the construction of the wall in more recent times.
- 1.7 An undated sandstone rubble layer overlying the subsoil in FP 3 could also potentially represent demolition material associated with Hadrian's Wall. Alternatively, and possibly more likely, the deposit may in fact represent 'made-ground' associated with construction of the B6318 in the modern era.
- 1.8 Topsoil and its developed turf line formed the existing ground surface along the verge of the B6318 at all locations.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 General Background

- 2.1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological monitoring and recording exercise (hereafter 'watching brief') conducted in association with groundworks for a traffic signing improvement scheme on the B6318 (the Military Road) in the vicinity of Halton Shields, Northumberland (Figures 1, 2a & 2b). Highways and Transport, Northumberland County Council (NCC) commissioned the work, which was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) on 11 April 2011.
- 2.1.2 The watching brief was required as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) granted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), advised by English Heritage. In the vicinity of Halton Shields, the B6318 closely follows the line of Hadrian's Wall and the signing improvement scheme was undertaken in sections of the road that have statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). Accordingly, a programme of archaeological work was required by DCMS, a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for which had to be approved by English Heritage in advance of the work. PCA compiled the required WSI document.¹
- 2.1.3 The groundworks involved hand excavation of five foundation pits for new traffic signs. The main aim of the archaeological element of the project was to mitigate the impact of the works on archaeological deposits or evidence of the SAM through archaeological supervision and recording.
- 2.1.4 The completed Site Archive, comprising written, drawn and photographic records, will be deposited at the Great North Museum, under the site code WHS 11. The Online 'Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations' (OASIS) reference number for the project is: preconst1-102265.

2.2 Site Location and Description

- 2.2.1 The 'site' comprised two main locations along the B6318, the Military Road, between its junctions with the C239 to Oakwood in the west and the B6309 at Whittle Dene in the east (Figure 1). The hamlet of Halton Shields lies approximately at the midpoint of this c. 10km stretch of the road. To the east, the first main location was East Wallhouses, c. 1.2km west of the B6318/B6309 junction, at central National Grid Reference NZ 0497 6834. To the west, the second main location was Stanley Plantation, c. 1.8km west of Stagshaw Roundabout, the junction of the A68 and the B6318, at central National Grid Reference NY 9703 6905.
- 2.2.2 The groundworks for the signing improvement scheme were undertaken on the grassed highway verges of the carriageway of the B6318 (Figures 2a and 2b).

¹ PCA 2010. This is included as Appendix C to this report.

2.3 Geology and Topography

- 2.3.1 The B6318 in the Halton Shields area runs along the northern edge of the Tyne Gap, a distinctive lowland corridor that separates the North Pennines from the Border Moors and Forests. The solid geology of the Halton Shields area is characterised by sandstone of the Stainmore Formation, which is of Namurian age, *i.e.* the middle part of the Carboniferous Period.²
- 2.3.2 The landscape of the Tyne Gap has been greatly influenced by the passage of ice sheets moving across it from southern Scotland and the Lake District during the last glacial period, with boulder clay or till deposited over much of the area. The river valley landscape owes much to the legacy of Pleistocene glaciation and thick glacial, periglacial and glaciofluvial deposits mantle hill slopes and infill valley floors.³
- 2.3.3 On its route westwards out of Newcastle and toward the River North Tyne, the B6318 runs along high ground on the north side of the Tyne Valley, a broadly variable landscape formed by a mosaic of arable and pasture fields, conifer plantations and well-wooded valley sides, as typified by land in the Halton Shields area. More open semi-improved agricultural land occurs at higher elevations, along with expanses of rough moorland, which become more predominant further west, beyond the River North Tyne, where the Whin Sill, a tabular layer of igneous dolerite, outcrops in an almost continuous rugged north-facing escarpment; the naturally defensive opportunities of this feature were readily exploited by the builders of Hadrian's Wall.⁴

2.4 Planning Background

- 2.4.1 The importance of the archaeological resource at the site herein described is underlined by the fact that the Hadrian's Wall Corridor forms part of the UNESCO transnational World Heritage Site 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire'.
- 2.4.2 Statutory protection for archaeological remains is principally enshrined in the 1979 *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act*, as amended by the *National Heritage Acts of 1983 and 2002*. Nationally important sites are listed in a schedule of monuments maintained by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and are accorded statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs).
- 2.4.3 Substantial lengths of the Hadrian's Wall Corridor in Northumberland have SAM status, including the route of the B6318 in the vicinity of Halton Shields. English Heritage advises DCMS on all development proposals within the vicinity of scheduled portions of the Hadrian's Wall Corridor and all intrusive groundworks in scheduled areas require SMC prior to their undertaking. Thus the groundworks in the vicinity of Halton Shields required SMC, for which Highways and Transport, NCC duly applied.

² The *British Geological Survey* website.

³ Passmore and Macklin 1997.

⁴ Johnson 1997.

- 2.4.4 The groundworks associated the signage improvement scheme lay within two scheduled sections of the B6318 (Figures 2a & 2b). To the east, at East Wallhouses, is SAM No. 26043 'Hadrian's Wall and Vallum between the B6309 and the B6321 in Wall miles 16, 17 and 18'. In this section the surface of the roads, all field boundaries, overhead electricity supply poles, telegraph poles and road signs are excluded from the scheduling, but the ground beneath all these features is included. To the west, at Stanley Plantation, is SAM No. 26048 'Hadrian's Wall and Vallum between the track to Portgate Cottage and the field boundary east of milecastle 24 in Wall miles 22 and 23'. In this section all road surfaces and field boundaries are excluded from the scheduling but, as with SAM No. 26043, the ground beneath them is included.
- 2.4.5 In accordance with the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport consulted with English Heritage before deciding whether or not to grant SMC. English Heritage considered the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be works that would not significantly diminish the visual amenity of the monument but would cause significant damage to the monument's archaeological deposits or evidence. However, English Heritage considered that this could be acceptably mitigated by conditions or safeguards to ensure archaeological supervision and recording.
- 2.4.6 Accordingly, SMC was granted (letter from English Heritage North East Region for and on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, dated 30 November 2010) subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological work to be commissioned, and then undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State, advised by English Heritage, in advance of the proposed works. The scheme was to cover an archaeological 'watching brief' on all excavations associated with the proposed works. PCA compiled the required WSI prior to the commencement of work, on behalf of Highways and Transport, NCC.
- 2.4.7 In advance of the work, Highways and Transport, NCC discussed the intended scope of works with PCA in order that an appropriate programme of archaeological monitoring could be agreed and implemented. Failure to ensure an adequate level of archaeological supervision and recording during the works would have constituted a breach of SMC.

2.5. Archaeological and Historical Background

Hadrian's Wall: General

- 2.5.1 The main archaeological potential for the stretch of the B6318 in the vicinity of Halton Shields relates to the Roman period due to its location within the Hadrian's Wall Corridor and its close proximity to Hadrian's Wall. The course of the Wall spanned the Tyne-Solway isthmus extending westwards from *Segedunum* Roman fort at modern day Wallsend to the shore of the Solway Firth.

- 2.5.2 The significance of the Hadrian's Wall Corridor in archaeological terms lies both in its complexity and the degree of survival of Roman military and civilian remains. This was recognised by UNESCO through the designation of the Hadrian's Wall Military Zone as a 'World Heritage Site' in 1987. A management plan produced by English Heritage in 1996,⁵ identified the 'archaeological core' of Hadrian's Wall and Vallum (the World Heritage Site itself), the surrounding 'buffer zone' and the outer 'visual envelope' as the main distinct areas. A second management plan was produced in 2002.⁶ In 2005 UNESCO amalgamated the Hadrian's Wall and the German Limes World Heritage Sites into the transnational World Heritage Site named 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire'.
- 2.5.3 Although Hadrian's Wall and its associated vicinity were subject to many phases of construction and changes in design and plan, the general character of the frontier is summarised as follows. Construction of the Wall between Newcastle and the River Irthing began in AD 122 upon the order of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. The foundations were consistently 3m wide although the Wall itself was not always completed to this width and it varies in width between 1.8m and 3m. Its face was built to neat courses constructed from carefully cut and shaped stone and bedded into a coursed rubble core set in puddled clay or capped with mortar. Located c. 6m to the north of the Wall was an associated ditch.
- 2.5.4 Sometime after the initial construction of the 'Broad Wall' a series of forts were added. Attached to the southern side of the Wall small fortlets were constructed, these evenly spaced at mile intervals (milecastles). The milecastles initially would have held the bulk of the forces stationed at the Wall, however upon the decision to construct forts along the Wall the function of the milecastles changed, with several providing evidence for changes to the system of gates along the frontier in the AD 180's. Between each pair of milecastles there was planned to be two equally spaced towers (turrets), approximately a third of a Roman mile apart.
- 2.5.5 A further earthwork defensive element, known as the Vallum, was added to the frontier after the Wall forts were under construction. The Vallum comprised a broad flat-bottomed ditch flanked by a pair of linear banks to the south of the Wall, sometimes following the course of the Wall, in other places up to 1km to its south. The Roman road known as the Military Way ran along the corridor between the Wall and the Vallum, linking turrets, milecastles and forts.

Hadrian's Wall: the vicinity of Halton Shields

- 2.5.6 The Roman fort *Onnum* (Haltonchesters) lay on the line of Hadrian's Wall c. 2km to the west of the hamlet of Halton Shields. 'Volume I, Resource Assessment' of *Frontiers of Knowledge*,⁷ the research framework for Hadrian's Wall, states that the fort appears to have been constructed to maintain a regular spacing of forts, lying between *Vindobala* (Rudchester) and *Cilurnum* (Chesters).

⁵ English Heritage 1996.

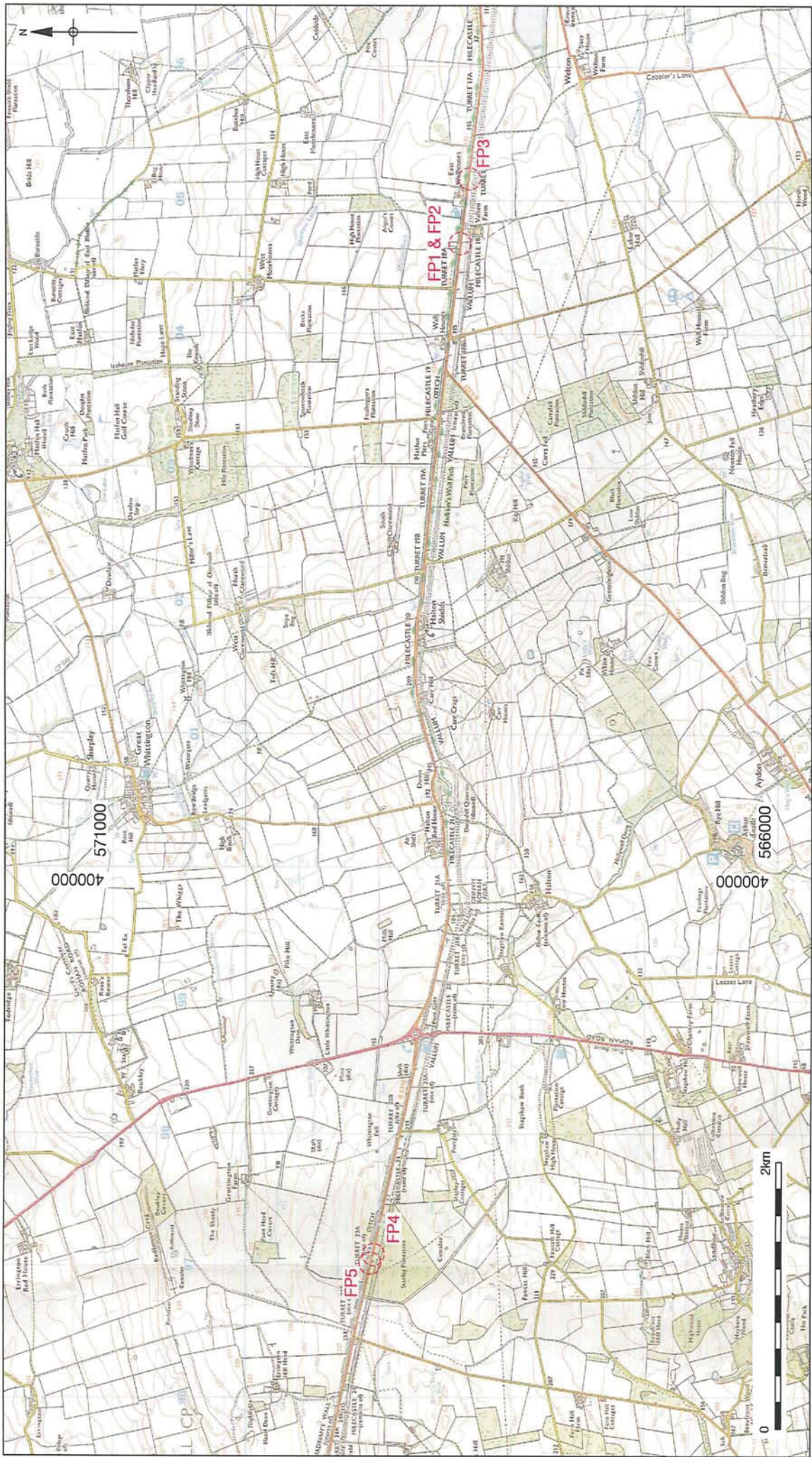
⁶ English Heritage 2002.

⁷ Symonds and Mason (eds.) 2009.

- 2.5.7 Approximately 1km west of Haltonchesters the Roman road known as Dere Street (which ran from York into Scotland) crossed the line of the Wall; the modern A68 follows the line of Dere Street along this part of its course. An excavation in 1966 revealed that where Dere Street crossed the Wall, a gatehouse – the Port Gate - had been constructed, this comprised substantial masonry blocks projecting northwards from the Wall.
- 2.5.8 In 1745, General Wade constructed a new lateral road (the Military Road) to link Newcastle and Carlisle to improve the efficiency of troop movements in response to the Jacobite rebellion. This road is believed to have utilised the levelled foundations and lower courses of Hadrian's Wall for most of the first 30 miles out of Newcastle, including the stretch in the vicinity of Halton Shields where the work herein described was undertaken.

Hadrian's Wall: Scheduled Ancient Monuments 26043 and 26048

- 2.5.9 Wall Houses, and its associated hamlet East Wallhouses, lie adjacent to SAM No. 26043 'Hadrian's Wall and Vallum between the B6309 and the B6321 in Wall miles 16, 17 and 18'. The Wall most likely survives as buried remains below the road surface of the B6318 throughout the length of this section. The Wall ditch survives as an earthwork to the north of the road for most of the length of this section (averaging c. 1.40m deep). The course of the Military Way is not confirmed in this section. The easternmost element (Foundation Pit 3 at NZ 0519 6831, as described below) at the main eastern location for the signage improvement works lies on the B6318 at East Wallhouses between Milecastles 17 and 18, in the vicinity of Turret 17b. This turret survives as a buried feature beneath the B6318 at East Wallhouses, 320m east of the Robin Hood Inn. The ground slopes upwards to the west while to the east the ground is fairly level. It was partly excavated, along with Turret 17a, in 1931 when both were shown to have doors in their south-west corners and ladder platforms in their south-east corners. Approximately c. 0.5km to the west along the B6318, at East Deneside, Wall Houses, is the location of the westernmost elements (Foundation Pits 1 and 2 at NZ 0468 6840, as described below), at the main eastern location for the signage improvement works. These are located in the vicinity of Milecastle 18, which occupies a position on a gentle west-facing slope on the south side of the road and while there are no visible remains of the structure above ground, it was partly excavated in 1931, when its walls were found to be c. 2.5m thick.
- 2.5.10 Stanley Plantation, the site of the main western location (Foundation Pits 3 and 4 at NY 9703 6905, as described below) for the signage improvement works, lies adjacent to the B6318 west of its junction (Stagshaw Roundabout) with the A68 and c. 0.5km to the east of its junction with the C239 to Oakwood. This portion of the B6318 is SAM No. 26048 'Hadrian's Wall and Vallum between the track to Portgate Cottage and the field boundary east of Milecastle 24 in Wall miles 22 and 23'. The Wall runs beneath the B6318 for the entire length of SAM No. 26048 and the Wall ditch and upcast mound to the north survive well as upstanding earthworks for most of the length of this section, with the ditch averaging 2m deep throughout, but up to 2.80m deep in places. The upcast mound – the 'glacis' - survives up to a maximum height of 1m to the north of the ditch. The Vallum runs parallel to the Wall throughout this section. The signage improvement works adjacent to Stanley Plantation probably lie in the vicinity of Turret 23a, which, if the normal spacing is observed, should be sited c. 260m east of the west edge of the plantation.



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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:40,000 at A4

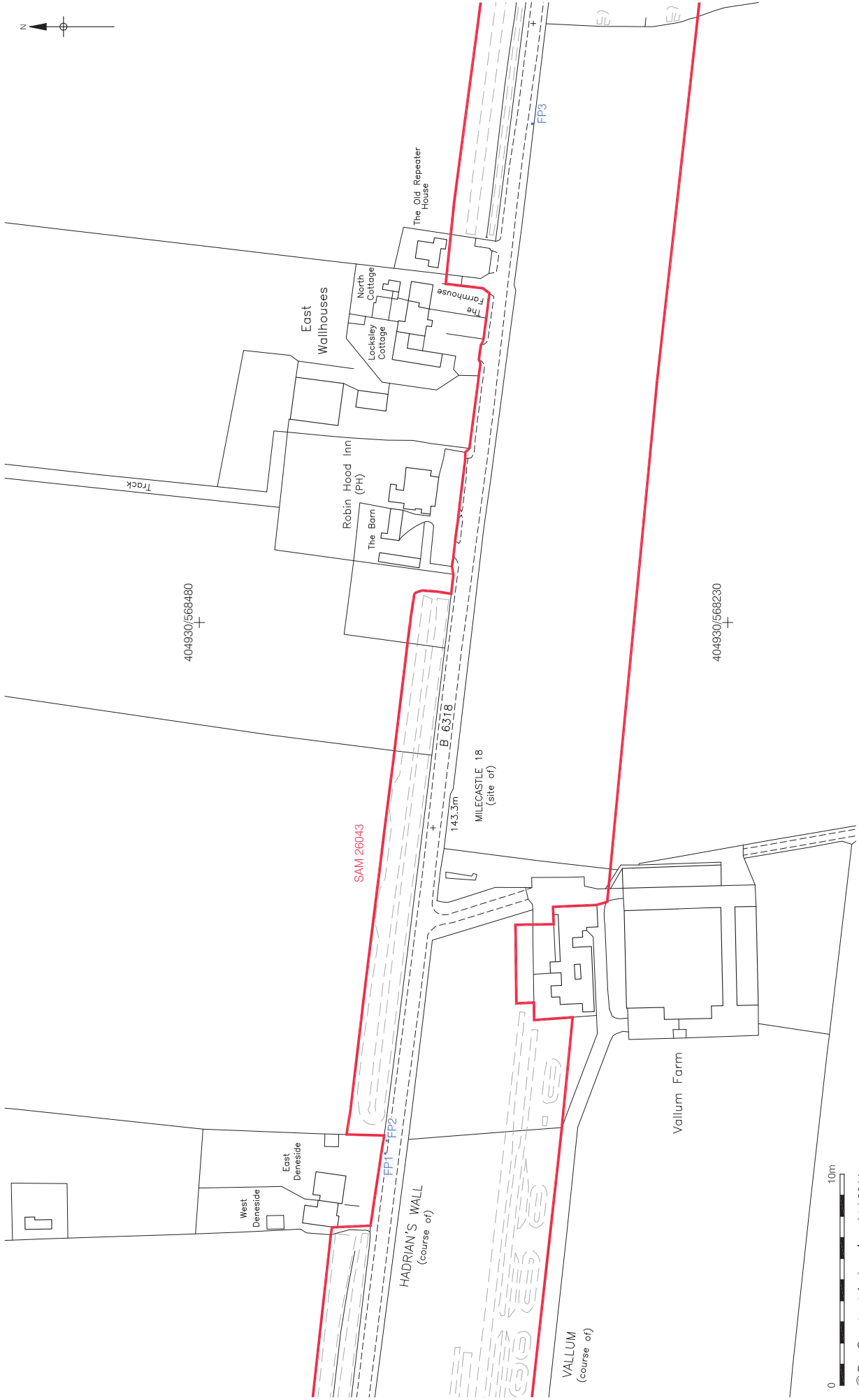
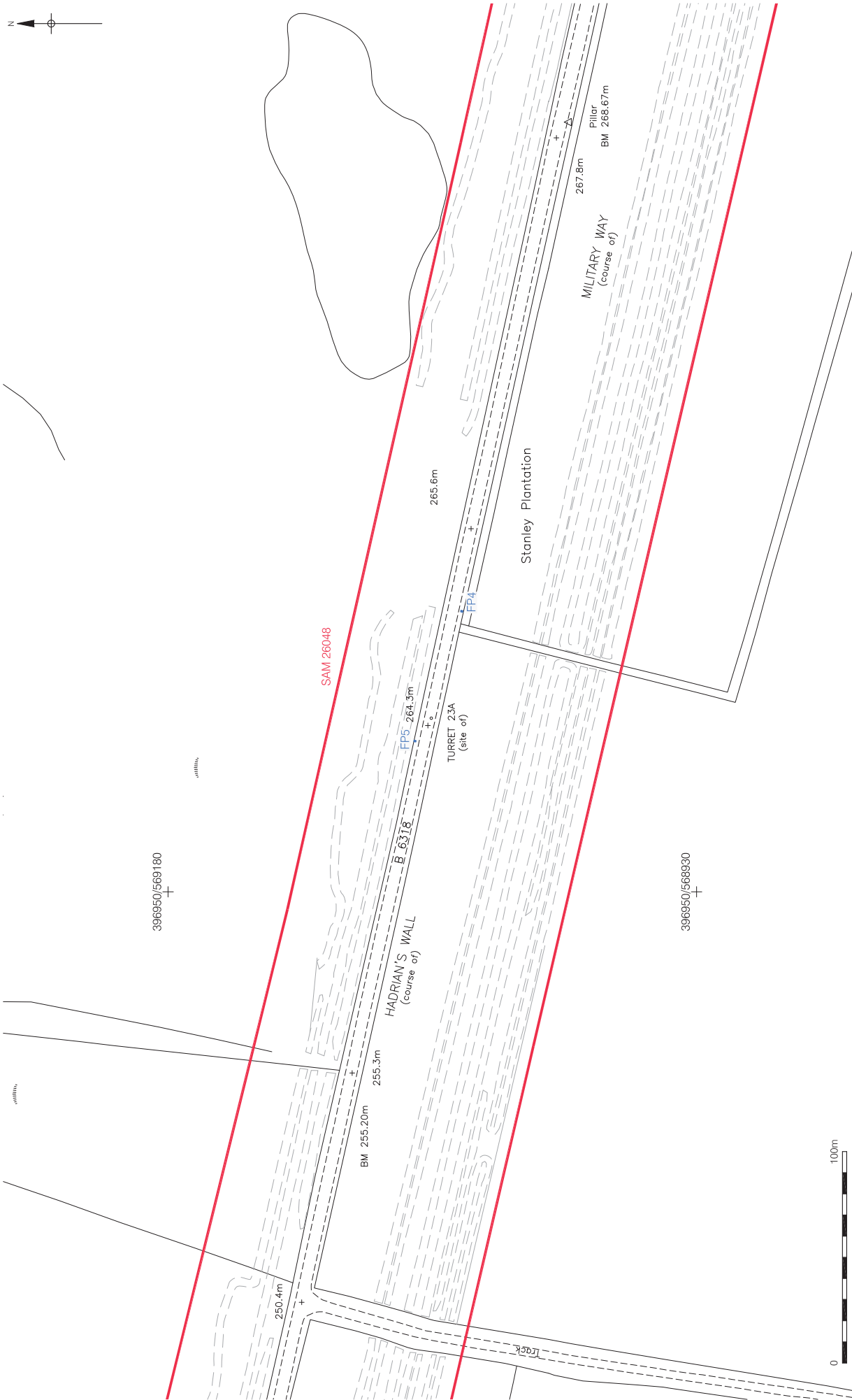


Figure 2a
 (East) East Wallhouses
 Locations of Foundation Pits 1, 2 & 3
 1:2,500 at A4



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Figure 2b
 (West) Stanley Plantation
 Locations of Foundation Pits 4 & 5
 1:2,500 at A4

3. PROJECT AIMS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

3.1 Project Aims

3.1.1 English Heritage considered that the proposed works could potentially cause significant damage to nationally important archaeological deposits or evidence related to the Hadrian's Wall frontier. Therefore, it was stipulated that if intact archaeological remains were encountered during intrusive groundworks then either the level of excavation should be limited so that any surviving archaeological remains were left *in situ* or the sign location would be moved to a different location where groundworks would not impact on archaeological remains.

3.1.2 Therefore, the main aim of the archaeological element of the project was to mitigate the impact of the works on nationally important archaeological deposits or features through a programme of archaeological supervision, or watching brief, as set out as a condition of SMC.

3.2 Research Objectives

3.2.1 'Volume II, Research Agenda and Strategy' of the aforementioned *Frontiers of Knowledge* identifies and prioritises key themes for future research for the Wall. The following Research Strategy objective is of relevance to this project:

- **S.4. The Wall.** Sub-section '4.1 *Understanding the Wall*' describes the importance of establishing the course and survival of the Wall and sub-section '4.4 *Examining the context of the smaller structures*' underlines the importance for developing knowledge of the extramural activity related to milecastles and turrets.

3.2.2 Specific research objectives for the project also arise with reference to *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (NERRF).⁸ The following NERRF research priorities for the Roman period are of direct relevance to the project:

- **Rii. Roads and communication.** '*The Roman communication network in the region is only superficially understood and a greater understanding of its development is a priority.*'
- **Riii. The Roman military presence.** '*Despite [Hadrian's Wall] focal role in archaeological research in the Roman period in the region, reflected in its inscription as a World Heritage Site, further research is required.*' '*There is also potential for previously unrecognised contiguous elements of the Wall system to be discovered.*'

⁸ Petts and Gerrard 2006.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork

- 4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken on 11 April 2011. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the relevant standard and guidance document of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA),⁹ of which PCA is a Registered Organisation (RO 23). The WSI complied by PCA in advance of the work should be consulted for full details of methodologies employed regarding archaeological recording and sampling.
- 4.1.2 The groundworks involved hand excavation of five foundation pits (FPs 1-5) in advance of the installation of new traffic signs on the B6318. Each sign was to be mounted on a 76mm diameter tubular steel post housed within an approximately 600mm square concrete foundation. Three foundation pits were excavated in the vicinity of East Wallhouses (FPs 1-3; Figure 2a) and two foundation pits (FPs 4-5; Figure 2b) at Stanley Plantation. Initially a third location was to be monitored on the southern verge of the B6318 at Wall Houses, c. 2.0km east of Halton Shields, however it proved possible to mount new signs on existing posts at this location, thereby obviating the need for intrusive foundation excavations. All intrusive groundwork undertaken was subject to continuous monitoring by the attendant archaeologist.
- 4.1.3 FPs 1 and 2 - within SAM No. 26043- were located within close proximity of each other (at National Grid Reference NZ 0468 6840), on the northern highway verge of the B6318, west of the hamlet of East Wallhouses and adjacent to a residential property, East Deneside, Wall Houses. FP 1 measured 0.46m north-south by 0.40m east-west and was 0.41m deep; FP 2 measured 0.40m north-south by 0.44m east-west and was 0.33m deep. FP 3 - also within SAM No. 26043 - was located on the southern highway verge of the B6318 (at National Grid Reference NZ 0519 6831), c. 0.58m east of East Wallhouses. It measured 0.96m north-south by 0.50m east-west and was up to 0.56m deep.
- 4.1.4 FPs 4 and 5 - within SAM No. 26048 - were located within close proximity of each other (at National Grid Reference NY 9703 6905), but on the southern and northern verges of the B6318, respectively, in the vicinity of Stanley Plantation, west of the junction with the C239. FP 4 measured 0.80m north-south by 0.60m east-west and was 0.60m deep; FP 5 measured 0.84m north-south by 0.53m east-west and was 0.53m deep.
- 4.1.5 'Test Pit Recording Sheets' were used to record the stratigraphy within each foundation pit. Archaeological deposits and features were recorded on *pro forma* 'Context Recording Sheets'. A photographic record was compiled during the watching brief.

4.2 Post-excavation

- 4.2.1 The stratigraphic data for the project comprises written, drawn and photographic records. A total of 12 archaeological contexts were defined during the watching brief (Appendix B). Post-excavation work involved checking and collating site records, grouping contexts and phasing the stratigraphic data (Appendix A). A written summary of the archaeological sequence was then compiled, as described below in Section 5.

⁹ IfA 2008a.

- 4.2.2 No artefactual or organic material was recovered during the fieldwork and no suitable archaeological deposits were encountered to warrant the recovery of bulk environmental samples.
- 4.2.3 The complete Site Archive will be packaged for long-term curation. The Site Archive has been prepared using relevant documents referenced in the 'Archaeological Archives Forum Guidelines',¹⁰ in particular the 'United Kingdom Institute for Conservation' document¹¹ and a recent IfA publication.¹² No material was recovered that required specialist stabilisation or an assessment of potential for conservation research. The depositional requirements of the receiving body, in this case the Great North Museum, Newcastle, will be met in full.

¹⁰ Brown 2007.

¹¹ Walker 1990.

¹² IfA 2008b.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

During the watching brief, separate stratigraphic entities were assigned unique and individual 'context' numbers, which are indicated in the following text as, for example [1], [2], etc. The archaeological sequence is described by placing stratigraphic sequences within broad phases, assigned on a site-wide basis in this case. An attempt has been made to add interpretation to the data, and correlate these phases with recognised historical and geological periods.

5.1 Phase 1: Natural Sub-stratum

5.1.1 Phase 1 is the natural geological sub-stratum. The earliest deposit encountered within the base of FP 5 (at Stanley Plantation) was a layer, [12] (Figure 7). This comprised firm light yellowish brown silty sand with occasional small angular and rounded stones throughout and likely represents the glacially-derived 'drift' geology of the area. The deposit was encountered at a depth of 0.43m below present ground level. The natural sub-stratum was not encountered within any other foundation pits due to the limited depths of the excavations required.

5.2 Phase 2: Undated Sub-soil

5.2.1 Phase 2 is an undated sub-soil horizon. In FP 5, the sub-soil layer, [11], overlay the aforementioned natural sub-stratum. Up to 0.35m thick, it was encountered at a depth of 0.18m below ground level (Figure 7). In FP 3 and FP 4 (at East Wallhouses and Stanley Plantation, respectively), similar layers, [7] and [9], respectively, were the basal deposits to be exposed (Figures 3, 6 and 7). Layers [7], [9] and [11] generally comprised friable light to mid greyish brown sandy silt. Sub-soil layer [7] was only partially exposed within the base of FP 3. At least 0.32m thick, continuing below the basal limit of excavation, it was encountered at a minimum depth of 0.24m below present ground level (Figures 3 and 5). In FP 4 sub-soil layer [9] was at least 0.10m thick and was encountered at a depth of 0.50m below present ground level (Figure 6).

5.2.2 No artefactual material was recovered from any of the layers representing the Phase 2 sub-soil, therefore its period of origin is uncertain. It is probably of ancient origin and probably accumulated over a substantial period of time, although it is likely to have been reworked if the land was utilised for agricultural purposes.

5.3 Phase 3: Post-medieval? Activity

5.3.1 Phase 3 is undated but probably post-medieval activity. Deposits assigned to this phase were recorded within FP 1, FP 2 and FP 3.

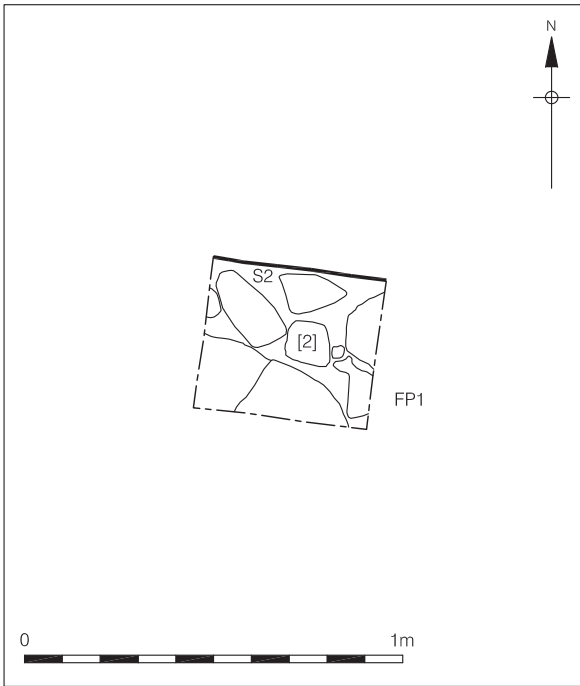
5.3.2 Sandstone rubble layers, [2] and [4], recorded as the basal deposits in FP 1 and FP 2 (at East Deneside, Wallhouses), respectively, comprised fragmented sandstone, up to c. 200mm x 100mm, within a friable dark grey silty matrix (Figures 3 and 4). These deposits were encountered at depths of 0.41m and 0.33m below present ground level in FP 1 and FP2, respectively, and were preserved *in situ* at the base of each foundation pit.

5.3.3 Due to the limited degree to which it was possible to expose and examine these layers, definitive interpretation is impossible. They could conceivably represent demolition material associated with Hadrian's Wall, or alternatively, and perhaps a more likely interpretation, is that they derive from the construction of the dry stone wall that forms the property boundary of East Deneside and are therefore of probable early modern or modern origin.

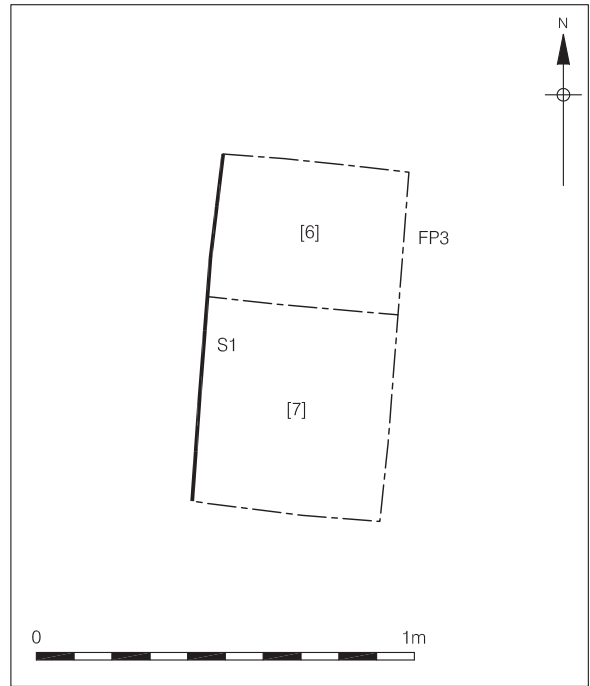
5.3.4 A sandstone rubble layer, [6], recorded within FP 3 (at East Wallhouses) comprised fragmented sandstone, up to c. 150mm x 100mm, within a firm mid yellowish brown clayey silt matrix (Figures 3 and 5). This deposit was only partially exposed within the northern half of the foundation pit, at a depth of 0.27m below present ground level. It was at least 0.26m thick at its northern extent, lensing out to the south. As with the similar deposits recorded in FP 1 and FP 2, definitive interpretation is impossible due to the constraints of the excavation. Again the deposit could represent demolition material associated with Hadrian's Wall but it may in fact be related to construction of the B6318, this being the preferred interpretation.

5.4 Phase 4: Modern Topsoil

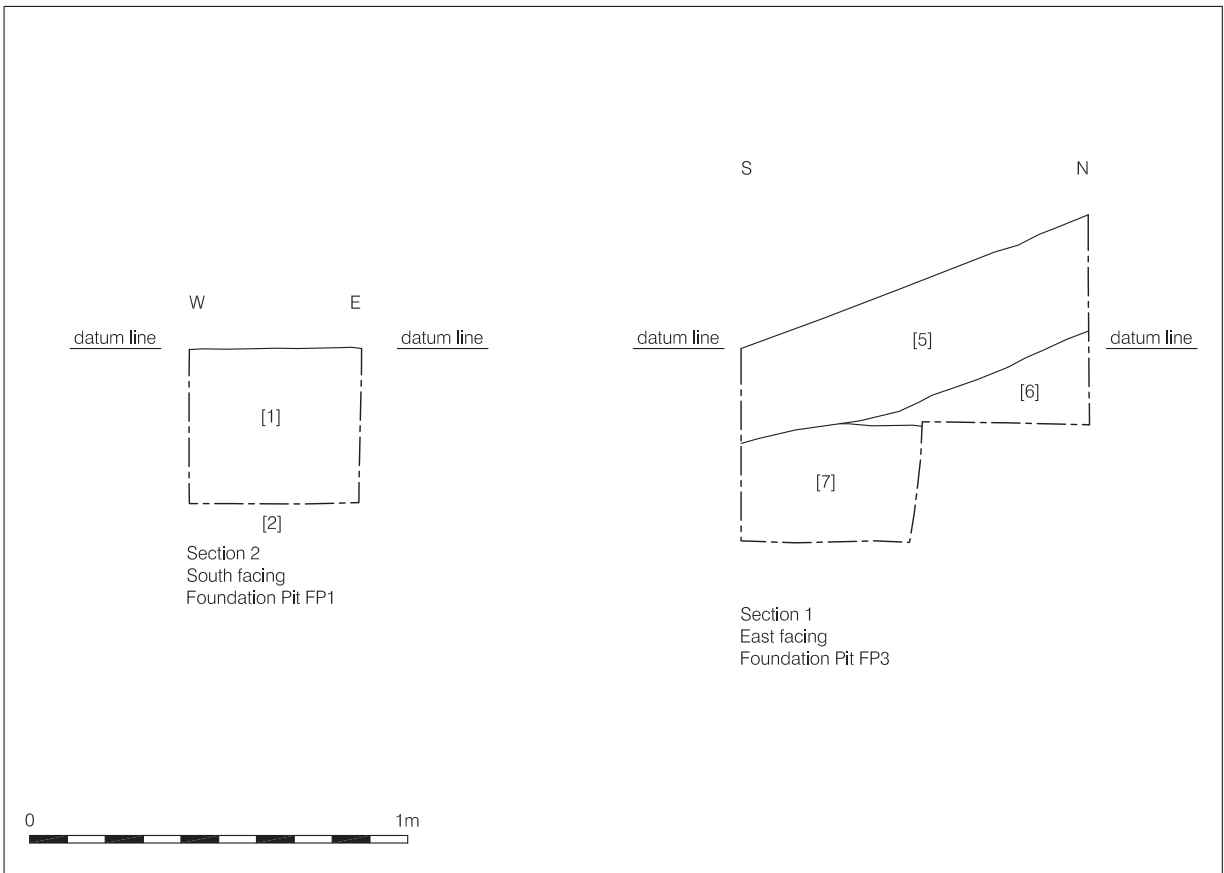
5.4.1 Topsoil was recorded in within each foundation pit (FP 1 [1]; FP 2 [3]; FP 3 [5]; FP 4 [8]; FP 5 [10]) and comprised friable dark grey or greyish brown sandy silt. The maximum recorded thickness was 0.41m, this in FP 1 and the minimum recorded thickness was 0.18m, this in FP 5. The topsoil had a developed turf line, this forming the existing ground surface of the B6318 verges at all locations.



Plans of Foundation Pit 1



Plans of Foundation Pit 3



Sections 1 & 2



Figure 4 Layer [2] in Foundation Pit 1, looking north (1m scale)



Figure 5 Overview of Foundation Pit 3, looking west (1m scale)



Figure 6 Overview of Foundation Pit 4, looking east (1m scale)



Figure 7 Overview of Foundation Pit 5, looking west (1m scale)

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 Geological deposits and archaeological deposits encountered during the watching brief have been assigned to four phases of activity:

- Phase 1. As a consequence of the limited depths of all the excavations, the natural substratum was only encountered in FP 5 (Stanley Plantation), where it was recorded at a depth of 0.43m below present ground level.
- Phase 2. A sub-soil was recorded in FP 3 (East Wallhouses), FP 4 and FP 5 (both Stanley Plantation). The maximum recorded thickness was 0.35m, this in FP 5 and the depth at which it was encountered below present ground level ranged from a minimum of 0.24m in FP 3 to maximum of 0.50m in FP 4.
- Phase 3. A sandstone rubble deposit directly overlay the sub-soil in FP 3 (East Wallhouses), and similar material was recorded as the basal deposits in both FP 1 and FP 2 (both at East Deneside, Wallhouses). Essentially undated, these deposits could conceivably represent material derived from Hadrian's Wall. Alternatively, however, the deposits in FP 1 and FP 2 probably more likely represent material derived from the construction of an adjacent stone wall, while the deposit in FP 3 may be related to construction of the B6318, and therefore all are probably of relatively recent origin,
- Phase 4. Modern topsoil was the uppermost deposit recorded at all locations, ranging in thickness from 0.18m to 0.41m.

6.1.2 In sum, the work recorded no conclusive archaeological evidence of the Roman frontier. Stone deposits of possible Roman date, but more probably of more recent origin, were recorded in three foundation pits, with all being retained *in situ* at the base of each excavation.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 No further work is required on the information recovered during the watching brief, with the Site Archive, including this report, forming the permanent record of the strata encountered.

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8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

Acknowledgements

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The curatorial role of Mike Collins, Historic Environment Advisor Archaeology (Hadrian's Wall), English Heritage is acknowledged.

PCA Credits

Fieldwork: Aaron Goode

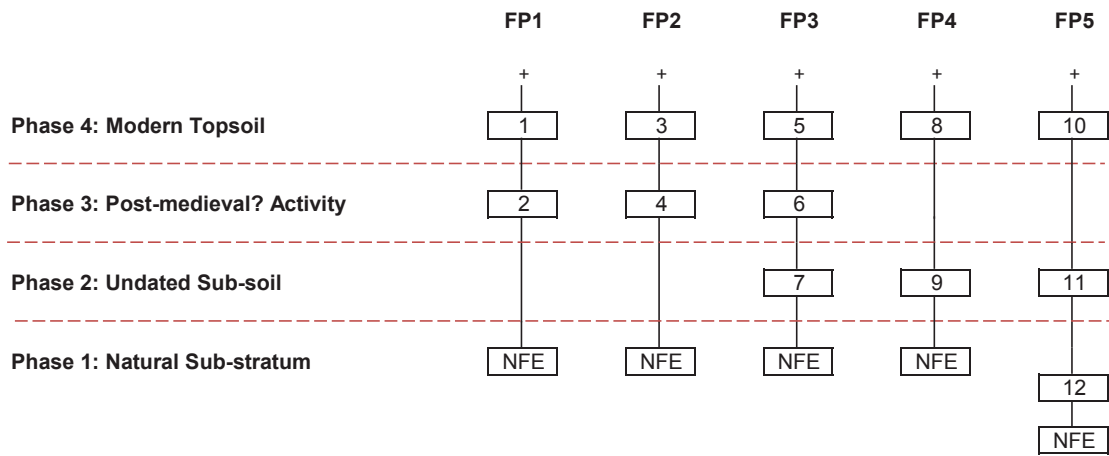
Report: Aaron Goode

Project Management: Robin Taylor-Wilson

CAD: Hayley Baxter

**APPENDIX A
STRATIGRAPHIC MATRIX**

WHS 11: STRATIGRAPHIC MATRIX



NFE = No Further Excavation

**APPENDIX B
CONTEXT INDEX**

WHS 11: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Foundation Pit	Phase	Type 1	Type 2	Interpretation
1	1	4	Deposit	Layer	Topsoil
2	1	3	Deposit	Layer	Sandstone rubble
3	2	4	Deposit	Layer	Topsoil
4	2	3	Deposit	Layer	Sandstone rubble
5	3	4	Deposit	Layer	Topsoil
6	3	3	Deposit	Layer	Sandstone rubble and clayey silt
7	3	2	Deposit	Layer	Sandy silt sub-soil
8	4	4	Deposit	Layer	Topsoil
9	4	2	Deposit	Layer	Sandy silt sub-soil
10	5	4	Deposit	Layer	Topsoil
11	5	2	Deposit	Layer	Sandy silt sub-soil
12	5	1	Deposit	Layer	Natural sub-stratum

APPENDIX C
WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON
B6318 SIGNING IMPROVEMENTS (AT STANLEY PLANTATION, WALL HOUSES
AND EAST WALLHOUSES), NEAR HALTON SHIELDS, NORTHUMBERLAND**

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

Prepared on behalf of

***Highways – Design Section, Street Scene, Northumberland County Council by
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited***

18 March 2011

Reference: PCA/WHS11/WSI DOC 1

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 New road traffic signs are to be erected along the B6318, the Military Road, at two locations in the vicinity of Halton Shields, Northumberland. The work will be undertaken in sections of the road that have statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs).
- 1.2 Previous interventions on the B6318 in Northumberland have demonstrated that structural remains of Hadrian's Wall and associated features survive immediately below the existing road surface. Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) has been granted for the work, subject to conditions and safeguards to ensure archaeological supervision and recording during intrusive groundworks.
- 1.3 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) has been contracted by the Highways – Design Section, Street Scene, Northumberland County Council (NCC) to undertake archaeological supervision and recording in association with the work on the B6318. The first stage of this involves the compilation of this Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), the purpose of which is to set out the aims and methodologies for the required archaeological investigation.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is the stretch of the B6318, the Military Road, on which Halton Shields lies, that is between the junction with the C239 to Oakwood in the west and the junction with the B6309 at Whittle Dene in the east, within the county of Northumberland.
- 2.2 The signage improvement works are being undertaken at the following three National Grid References: NY 9703 6905 (at Stanley Plantation, c. 1.8km west of Stagshaw Roundabout, the A68 and B6318 junction); NZ 0384 6848 (at Wall Houses, c. 2.0km east of Halton Shields); and NZ 0532 6830 (at East Wallhouses, c. 1.2km west of the B6318 and B6309 junction).
- 2.3 The grassed highways verges of the B6318 comprise the area of investigation at each location.

3. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Much of the Military Road in Northumberland has SAM status and thus has statutory protection under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*. Accordingly, any intrusive groundworks in the road corridor require SMC from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) prior to their undertaking.
- 3.2 The proposed works will comprise erection of a small number of new road traffic signs in the highway verge, with each sign to be mounted on a 76mm diameter tubular steel post housed within an approximately 600mm square concrete foundation. SMC is required due to the intrusive nature of the groundworks for these foundations; therefore the Highways – Design Section, NCC made an application to DCMS for the proposed works.
- 3.3 The proposed works affect two scheduled areas ‘Hadrian’s Wall and Vallum between the B6309 and the B6321 in Wall miles 16,17 and 18’ (SAM No. 26043) and ‘Hadrian’s Wall and Vallum between the track to Portgate Cottage and the field boundary east of milecastle 24 in Wall miles 22 and 23’ (SAM No. 26048). In SAM No. 26043, the surface of the roads, all field boundaries, overhead electricity supply poles, telegraph poles and road signs are excluded from the scheduling, but the ground beneath all these features is included. In SAM No. 26048, all road surfaces and field boundaries are excluded from the scheduling, but the ground beneath them is included.
- 3.4 In accordance with the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport consulted with English Heritage before deciding whether or not to grant SMC. English Heritage considers the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be works that would not significantly diminish the visual amenity of the monument but would cause significant damage to the monument’s archaeological deposits or evidence. However, English Heritage considered that this could be acceptably mitigated by conditions or safeguards to ensure archaeological supervision and recording.
- 3.5 Accordingly, SMC was granted (letter from English Heritage North East Region for and on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, dated 30 November 2010) subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological work to be commissioned, and then undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State, advised by English Heritage, in advance of the proposed works. The scheme will cover an archaeological ‘watching brief’ on all excavations associated with the proposed works. PCA has compiled this document prior to the commencement of work on behalf of the Highways – Design Section, NCC to represent the required WSI.
- 3.6 The Highways – Design Section, NCC has discussed the intended scope of works with PCA in order that an appropriate programme of archaeological monitoring can be agreed and implemented. Failure to ensure an adequate level of archaeological supervision and recording during the works would constitute a breach of SMC.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 No archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken ahead of the proposed works.
- 4.2 The traffic signage improvements are to be undertaken along the stretch of the B6318, the Military Road, on which Halton Shields lies, that is between the junction with the C239 in the west and the junction with the B6309 in the east, all within the Hadrian's Wall Corridor. Hadrian's Wall is part of the defensive system of the northern frontier of the Roman Empire in Britain. The Wall and its associated features represent the best-preserved frontier of the Roman world and consequently the Hadrian's Wall Corridor has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Substantial lengths of the Hadrian's Wall Corridor in Northumberland have SAM status, including the sections along the B6318 at which the signage improvements are proposed.
- 4.3 Although the Wall and its associated features were subject to many phases of construction and changes in design and plan, the general character of the frontier can be summarised thus. The Wall was constructed between Newcastle and the River Irthing on the orders of the Roman Emperor Hadrian from AD 122. Although foundations 3m wide were laid, the Wall itself was not always completed to this width and in many places a narrower gauge wall stands on this broad initial foundation. In places it does measure the full 3m, in others it is nearer 2.5m, and at its narrowest it measures 1.8m. The facing stones of the Wall were carefully cut and shaped, allowing them to be set in neat courses. They were bedded into a coursed rubble core set in puddled clay or capped with mortar. To the north of the Wall, at a distance of around 6m, was a deep ditch.
- 4.4 The decision to add a series of forts along the line of the Wall was made some time after parts of the 'Broad Wall' had been laid out and constructed. A small walled fortlet was constructed every mile (milecastle), attached to the southern side of the Wall and normally containing two gates. Prior to the decision to construct forts along the Wall, the milecastles were planned to have held the bulk of the forces stationed at the Wall. The 'fort decision' created a change in the function of the milecastles, with several providing evidence for changes to the gate system along the frontier in the 180's. Between each pair of milecastles there was planned to be two equally spaced towers (turrets), approximately a third of a Roman mile apart.
- 4.5 After the forts were under construction, a further defensive element was added. This earthwork, known as the Vallum, comprised a broad flat-bottomed ditch flanked by a pair of linear banks. It was located to the south of the Wall, sometimes following the course of the Wall, in other places up to 1km to its south. The Roman road known as the Military Way ran along the corridor between the Wall and the Vallum linking turrets, milecastles and forts.
- 4.6 In 1745, General Wade constructed a new lateral road (the Military Road) to link Newcastle and Carlisle to improve the efficiency of troop movements in response to the Jacobite rebellion. This road is believed to have utilised the levelled foundations and lower courses of Hadrian's Wall for most of the first 30 miles out of Newcastle, including the sections at which the works herein described are to be undertaken.

- 4.7 The Roman fort of *Onnum* (Haltonchesters) lay on the line of the Wall c. 2km to the west of the village of Halton Shields, which itself lies c. 2.20km west of the hamlet of Wall Houses, where two of the three signage improvement works are to be undertaken. 'Volume I, Resource Assessment' of *Frontiers of Knowledge* (Symonds and Mason, eds., 2009), the recently published research framework for Hadrian's Wall, states that *Onnum* fort appears to have been constructed to maintain a regular spacing of forts, lying between *Vindobala* (Rudchester) and *Cilurnum* (Chesters).
- 4.8 Wall Houses, and its associated hamlets South Wallhouses and East Wallhouses, lies within SAM No. 26043. 'Hadrian's Wall and Vallum between the B6309 and the B6321 in Wall miles 16, 17 and 18'. The Wall most likely survives as buried remains below the road surface of the B6318 throughout the length of this section. The Wall ditch survives as an earthwork to the north of the road for most of the length of this section (averaging c. 1.40m deep). The course of the Military Way is not confirmed in this section. The easternmost of the three locations for the signage improvement works lies on the B6318 between Milecastles 17 and 18, in the vicinity of Turret 17b. This turret survives as a buried feature beneath the B6318 at East Wallhouses, 320m east of the Robin Hood inn. The ground slopes upwards to the west while to the east the ground is fairly level. It was partly excavated, along with Turret 17a, in 1931 when both were shown to have doors in their south-west corners and ladder platforms in their south-east corners.
- 4.9 Approximately c. 1.5km to the west is the second of the three locations for the signage improvement works, this on the B6318 between Milecastles 18 and 19, in the vicinity of Turret 18b. This turret is located on an east facing slope, 50m to the east of Welton Burn at Wall Houses. There are no visible remains of the feature, which was partly excavated in 1959 when animal bones and pottery were discovered.
- 4.10 The third location for the signage improvement works is at Stanley Plantation, more than 6km to the west along the B6318. Specifically it lies west of the junction (Stagshaw Roundabout) with the A68 and c. 0.5km to the east of the junction with the C239 to Oakwood and within SAM No. 26048, 'Hadrian's Wall and Vallum between the track to Portgate Cottage and the field boundary east of Milecastle 24 in Wall miles 22 and 23'. The Roman road known as Dere Street (which ran from York into Scotland) crossed the line of the Wall in the adjacent scheduled area (SAM No. 26047) and the modern A68 follows the line of Dere Street along this part of its course. An excavation in 1966 revealed that where Dere Street crossed the Wall, a gatehouse – the Port Gate - formed of massive masonry blocks which projected northwards from the Wall had been constructed.
- 4.11 The Wall runs beneath the B6318 for the entire length of SAM No. 26048 and the Wall ditch and upcast mound to the north survive well as upstanding earthworks for most of the length of this section, with the ditch averaging 2m deep throughout, but up to 2.80m deep in places. The upcast mound – the 'glacis' - survives up to a maximum height of 1m to the north of the ditch. The Vallum runs parallel to the Wall throughout this section. The signage improvement works adjacent to Stanley Plantation will probably lie in the vicinity of Turret 23a, which, if the normal spacing is observed, should be sited c. 260m east of the west edge of the plantation.

- 4.12 'Volume II, Research Agenda and Strategy' of *Frontiers of Knowledge* identifies and prioritises key themes for future research for the Wall. Research Strategy 'S.4. The Wall' includes sub-section '4.1 Understanding the Wall', which describes the importance of establishing the course and survival of the Wall, while sub-section '4.4 Examining the context of the smaller structures' highlights the importance of developing knowledge of extramural activity related to milecastles and turrets.

5. PROPOSED SCHEME OF WORKS

5.1 Project Specific Aims and Objectives

- 5.1.1 The main aim of the archaeological element of the project is to mitigate the impact of the works on the archaeological deposits or evidence of the SAM through archaeological supervision and recording.

- 5.1.2 While English Heritage considers that the proposed works will not significantly diminish the visual amenity of the monument, it is considered that they could cause significant damage to its archaeological deposits or evidence. However, it has been decided that this impact can be acceptably mitigated by archaeological supervision and recording ('watching brief') as set out as a condition of SMC.

- 5.1.3 The watching brief will cover groundworks described in the following documentation relating to the excavation of holes to house approximately 600mm square concrete foundations for a series of new traffic signs:

- Plan HF 106539/-/B6318. B6318 0.5km East of C239 Oakwood Road. Additional Traffic Signs.
- Plan HF106537/-/B6318/01. B6318 Wallhouses/C247 Junction. Provision of Nameplate Signs.

- 5.1.4 English Heritage have stipulated that if intact archaeological remains are encountered during intrusive groundworks then the groundworks team of NCC must *either*:

- limit the level of excavation to preserve the archaeological remains, for instance by using a more extensive, but no deeper than the level of surviving archaeological remains, concrete pad

or:

- move the sign location (within the parameters allowable for such important safety signage) to a different location until a location is found which would not have such an impact on surviving archaeological remains

- 5.1.5 It was on this basis that English Heritage determined the application for SMC.

5.2 Fieldwork: General Standards

- 5.2.1 All archaeological work at the site will be carried out in compliance with the codes and practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and will follow the *IfA Standard and guidance: for archaeological watching brief* (IfA, 2008).

- 5.2.2 All archaeological staff will be suitably qualified and experienced for their project roles.

- 5.2.3 All staff will be aware of the work required under the proposed scheme of works, and will understand the aims and methodologies of the project.

5.3 Archaeological Methodology

- 5.3.1 Proposed locations of the works are shown in Highways – Design Section, NCC drawings HF 106539/-/B6318 and HF106537/-/B6318/01 (as provided with the Scheduled Ancient Monument consent application).
- 5.3.2 The attendant archaeologist will observe all invasive groundworks.
- 5.3.3 All non-archaeological groundworks will be the responsibility of NCC. Any mechanical excavation will be undertaken under archaeological supervision, but all plant and associated works, including traffic management and welfare, will be provided or co-ordinated by NCC. NCC will have responsibility for all issues related to traffic management, as well as any issues relating to temporary alterations to pedestrian routes (including appropriate barriers and signage). NCC will have responsibility for any backfilling, surface reinstatement and removal of excess material.
- 5.3.4 As described in 5.1.4, if intact archaeological remains of significance are encountered then NCC must **either** limit the level of excavation to preserve the archaeological remains **or** move the sign location (within the parameters allowable for such important safety signage) to a different location until a location is found which would not have such an impact on surviving archaeological remains. Thus all significant archaeological remains will be preserved *in situ*.
- 5.3.5 All exposures will be recorded on *pro forma* PCA recording sheets. If appropriate, plans will be drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10. Photographs on both colour slide and black and white print will be taken, again as appropriate. A 'Harris' matrix will be compiled where non-archaeologically significant stratified deposits are encountered.
- 5.3.6 All artefacts and finds recovered will be retained. Given the mitigation measures to be implemented, as described in 5.1.4, any such items should only be from non-archaeologically significant deposits, although there is the possibility of artefacts being encountered at the depth at which archaeological remains of significance are exposed. Specialist assessment of any such recovered material would be a requirement and this will include a basic quantification of the material, a statement of its potential for further analysis and recommendations for such work. All finds will be treated in a proper manner and will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guidelines set out in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal, 2001, 3rd Edition, Revised) and the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC), Archaeology Section's *Conservation Guidelines No.2. Packaging and storage of freshly excavated artefacts from archaeological sites* (1983).
- 5.3.7 Preliminary conservation and stabilisation of all objects would be undertaken as soon as possible during or upon completion of the fieldwork. Vulnerable materials that require immediate specialist archaeological conservation would be transported to appropriate facilities without delay. There would be an assessment of long term conservation and storage needs of all excavated material. All metal objects would be X-rayed and then selected for conservation. All iron objects will be X-rayed, along with a selection of non-ferrous artefacts (including all coins).

- 5.3.8 All gold and silver would be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner, according to the procedures relating to the *Treasure Act 1996*.
- 5.3.9 All processing of artefacts will be undertaken away from the site. Assessment of artefactual material will be undertaken by suitably qualified personnel.

5.4 Site Archive

- 5.4.1 The undertaking of the watching brief will, through data collection, as defined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (English Heritage, 2006), result in the establishment of a Site Archive. In line with *MoRPHE. PPN3: Archaeological Excavation. Appendix 1*, the Site Archive will include all materials recovered (or a comprehensive records of such materials) and all written, drawn, and photographic records generated during data collection. Preparation of the archive will include the indexing, ordering, quantification and checking for consistency of all original context records, object records, bulk find records, sample records, skeleton records (if compiled), photographic records, drawing records, photographs and negatives, drawings, level books, site note-books, spot-dating records and conservation records. It will also contain a site matrix, a site summary and brief written observations on the artefactual and environmental data.
- 5.4.2 In preparing the Site Archive for deposition all relevant standards and guidelines documents referenced in the Archaeological Archives Forum guidelines document *Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation transfer and curation* (Brown 2007) would be adhered to, in particular *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (IFA forthcoming) and *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (Walker, UKIC 1990).
- 5.4.3 The Site Archive will be ultimately deposited at a location agreed with the Great North Museum, Newcastle. Copyright of the written archive will be vested in that body unless otherwise determined.
- 5.4.4 The 'finds' from all archaeological investigations provide an immensely valuable research archive, but the bulk of the material is of little or no financial worth. The owner of the site (and hence of any finds recovered) is urged to donate all 'finds' to the relevant museum as part of the site archive. Appropriate guidance set out in the Museum and Galleries Commission's '*Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections*' (1992) and the Society of Museum Archaeologist's draft '*Selection and Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections*' (1992), will be followed in all circumstances.
- 5.4.5 Pursuant to these agreements the Site Archive will be presented to the archive officer or relevant curator within 6 months of the completion of fieldwork, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed in writing with English Heritage.

5.5 Reporting

- 5.5.1 A report on the watching brief will be prepared, whatever the findings, and this will include:
- an introductory section;
 - a section outlining the perceived archaeological background to and potential of the area in which the work was undertaken;

- a section describing the aims and methods adopted in the course of the watching brief;
- a section detailing the nature, extent, date, condition and significance of any archaeological remains exposed during the work.

5.5.2 The report will include a location plan of the site tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid at an appropriate scale. The report will also include a plan showing the location and layout of areas of investigation at a suitable scale, with illustrations of exposures, at suitable scales, as appropriate.

5.5.3 The report will list the dates when the fieldwork was undertaken and name the individual(s) who undertook the fieldwork and wrote the report.

5.5.4 The report will include a statement regarding the location of the Site Archive at the time of writing, and the intended depository of the finds and archive.

5.5.5 The report will contain full details of any dating analysis that has been undertaken, along with a non-technical summary of these findings.

5.5.6 Copies of the report will be sent to Highways – Design Section, NCC, the NCC Conservation Team and English Heritage.

5.6 OASIS

5.6.1 Northumberland County Council supports the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) Project. An online OASIS form will be completed within 3 months of completion of the work.

5.7 Health & Safety

5.7.1 All relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice will be respected.

5.7.2 PPE will be used by all archaeological personnel, as appropriate.

5.7.3 On-site welfare facilities will be provided by NCC.

PCA

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