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PERSIMMON HOMES DURHAM

**LAND AT THE FORMER DURHAM JOHNSTON SCHOOL
WHINNEY HILL, DURHAM**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

November 2017

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PERSIMMON HOMES

Land at the former Durham Johnston School, Whinney Hill, Durham

Watching Brief

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DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
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HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
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SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong Ltd was commissioned by Persimmon Homes Durham to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land at the former Durham Johnston School, Whinney Hill, Durham (NGR: NZ 2806 4191). The watching brief was required as a fulfilment of a condition of planning consent and was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) produced in response to advice given by Nick Boldrini acting as the archaeological planning advisor on behalf of Durham County Council.

The watching brief was undertaken over three days between 11th October – 17th November 2017 and covered three areas totalling 2,180m². The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record any archaeological features encountered during the removal of topsoil from these areas prior to construction.

No archaeological features were observed in any of the three areas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong Ltd thank Persimmon Homes Durham for commissioning the project and for their assistance throughout the work. Thanks are also extended to Nick Boldrini at Durham County Council for his assistance.

The watching brief was undertaken by Adrian Bailey who also wrote the report and produced the figures. The project was managed by Frank Giecco who also edited the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Circumstances and Planning Background

1.1.1 Between October and November 2017 Wardell Armstrong Ltd undertook an archaeological watching brief at the site of the former Durham Johnston School, Whinney Hill, Durham (NGR: NZ 2806 4191). The watching brief was commissioned by Persimmon Homes Durham who intend to develop the land for housing for which a planning consent has been granted by Durham County Council (planning reference: DM/16/03751/FPA).

1.1.2 A watching brief is defined as a programme of 'monitoring and investigation carried out during a non-archaeological activity within a specified area of land or development where construction operations may disturb or destroy archaeological remains' (CIFA 2014a).

1.2 Project Documentation

1.2.1 The project conforms to advice provided by Nick Boldrini, HER Officer, Durham County Council (email dated 2nd March 2017). A Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2017) was then produced to provide a specific methodology based on the advice for a programme of archaeological mitigation implemented via a watching brief. This was approved by the archaeological planning advisor prior to the fieldwork taking place. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

1.2.2 This report outlines the work undertaken on site and the results of the watching brief.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards and guidance

2.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014a), and in accordance with the WA fieldwork Manual (2017).

2.2 The Watching Brief

2.2.1 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of all intrusive works associated with the current development. This comprised the excavation of topsoil in areas thought to have previously been undisturbed

2.2.2 The general aims of these investigations were:

- to allow the monitoring archaeologist to signal that an archaeological find has been made before it is destroyed
- to provide the opportunity for appropriate resource allocation if the archaeological find cannot be dealt with under the watching brief remit
- to determine the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains within the proposed development site
- to determine the character, date, extent and distribution of any archaeological deposits and their potential significance
- determine levels of disturbance to any archaeological deposits from past land use
- investigate and record all deposits and features of archaeological interest within the areas to be disturbed by the current development
- to determine the likely impact on archaeological deposits from the proposed development
- to disseminate the results of the fieldwork through an appropriate level of reporting.

2.2.3 Deposits considered not to be significant were removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to maximise the chance for identification of archaeological remains should they be present. All intrusive groundworks were monitored under close supervision by an experienced archaeologist.

2.2.4 No artefacts were observed or recovered. No environmental samples were taken.

2.2.5 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project specification, and the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown

2011). The archive will be deposited with at Bowes Museum, County Durham with copies of the report sent to the Durham County Council HER, available upon request. The project archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier WA17/CL11993/DJS-A.

- 2.2.6 Wardell Armstrong supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by WA as a part of this national project. The OASIS reference for the project is: wardella2-302030.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Location and Geological Context

3.1.1 The development area is located to the southeast of Durham city centre, south of a loop of the River Wear, and centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference NZ 2806 4191 (Figure 1). The site occupies approximately 2.6ha of land bounded to the west by houses and gardens on Whinney Hill, to the east and north by sloping woodland and to the south by woodland and pasture. The solid geology of the site comprises Pennine Middle Coal Measures, overlain by Devensian glaciofluvial deposits (BGS online 2017).

3.1.2 The site is currently occupied by a number of the former Durham Johnston School buildings, including some temporary classrooms, access roads, tarmac tennis courts, paths and gardens, with a wooded area at the southern extent (Figure 2). The buildings occupy different levels, terraced into the sloping ground of Whinney Hill, and are currently being demolished under the scheme to be followed by the construction of 75 dwellings with associated services, landscaping and car parking.

3.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

3.2.1 The archaeological potential of the development area is currently uncertain. The earthworks of an Iron Age promontory fort, known as Maiden Castle, lie 200m to the southeast of the site. An archaeological and heritage impact assessment has been produced (ASDU 2016) which has identified the possible exploitation of the area in the late prehistoric and Roman periods, although it is uncertain whether this may have extended into the proposed development area given that the site topography would not have been favourable for settlement. The assessment also determined that there is no evidence for occupation of the site in the medieval or post-medieval periods.

3.2.2 Construction of the school began in 1930 (opened in 1932) when it was known as the Durham City Senior School, later to become the Durham City Boys Senior School and Durham City Girls Senior School. In 1979 was it amalgamated with other schools in the area and became part of Durham Johnston School (Robson 1998). The school closed in the spring of 2009 leaving the buildings on the site vacant. The school buildings have previously been recorded in detail (Tyne & Wear Museums, 2007).

3.2.3 No previous archaeological works have been undertaken at the site.

4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken over three days between 11th October – 17th November 2017 and covered three areas totalling 2,180m² (Figure 2). The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record any archaeological features that may have been encountered during the removal of topsoil in these areas prior to construction.
- 4.1.2 The development groundworks consisted of the removal of topsoil in the three areas to a depth of up to 0.2m, exposing only made ground and the natural substrata.
- 4.1.3 **Area 1**, in the north of the site, measured 694m². Due to tight restrictions on site for spoiling, three trenches were placed in this area (Figure 2) to evaluate the potential for archaeology. Two of these were placed east-west measuring 19m x 1.8m, and one was placed north-south measuring 15m x 1.8m. Beneath the former tennis court tarmac surface, which had been previously removed without archaeological supervision, lay a loose dark grey brown levelling deposit **(004)** which was excavated to a depth of 0.2m to reveal the natural sandy clay **(003)**. No archaeological features were noted in these trenches.
- 4.1.4 **Area 2**, situated immediately to the south of Area 1, occupied an area of terracing to the north of the school buildings and measured 1178m². The removal of the topsoil **(001)** revealed a substantial loose mid/dark grey brown levelling/landscaping deposit **(002)**. This was largely made up of a clayey sand and included frequent brick fragments, concrete and mortar deposits with occasional pockets of river cobbles. This deposit had a thickness of up to 1.1m, with this depth determined by the excavation of two test pits (Figure 2) to reveal the natural sandy clay **(003)**. No archaeological features were noted in this area.
- 4.1.5 **Area 3** was situated in the east of the site behind the former school building. This covered an area of 307.25m² and comprised the removal of a dark grey brown clay sand topsoil **(005)**. The removal revealed a modern concrete base **{007}** measuring 1.6m x 1.6m. The purpose of this base is unknown but can only be associated with the former school. A mid orange brown natural sand **(006)** lay beneath. No archaeological features were encountered in this area.

4.2 Results

- 4.2.1 No archaeological features were encountered within any of the areas during the groundworks.

4.3 Archaeological Finds and Environmental Sampling

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

CONCLUSIONS

4.4 Interpretation

4.4.1 The archaeological watching brief monitored the excavations associated with the development of the former Durham Johnston School, Whinney Hill, Durham. The excavations were devoid of any archaeological features or historical remains.

Development Impact

4.4.2 The development will have a no impact on any features of archaeological significance and no further archaeological monitoring at the site is deemed necessary.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Area	Description
(001)	Deposit	Area 2	Topsoil
(002)	Deposit	Area 2	Landscaping deposit for terracing
(003)	Deposit	Area 1/2	Natural clayey sand drift geology
(004)	Deposit	Area 1	Levelling deposit for former tennis courts
(005)	Deposit	Area 3	Turf/topsoil
(006)	Deposit	Area 3	Natural layey sand drift geology
(007)	Deposit	Area 3	Modern concrete hardstanding

APPENDIX 2: PLATES



Plate 1: View of Area 1 during watching brief (looking northwest)



Plate 2: View of Area 2 during topsoil strip (looking west)



Plate 3: View of Area 3 during topsoil strip (looking south)

APPENDIX 3: FIGURES






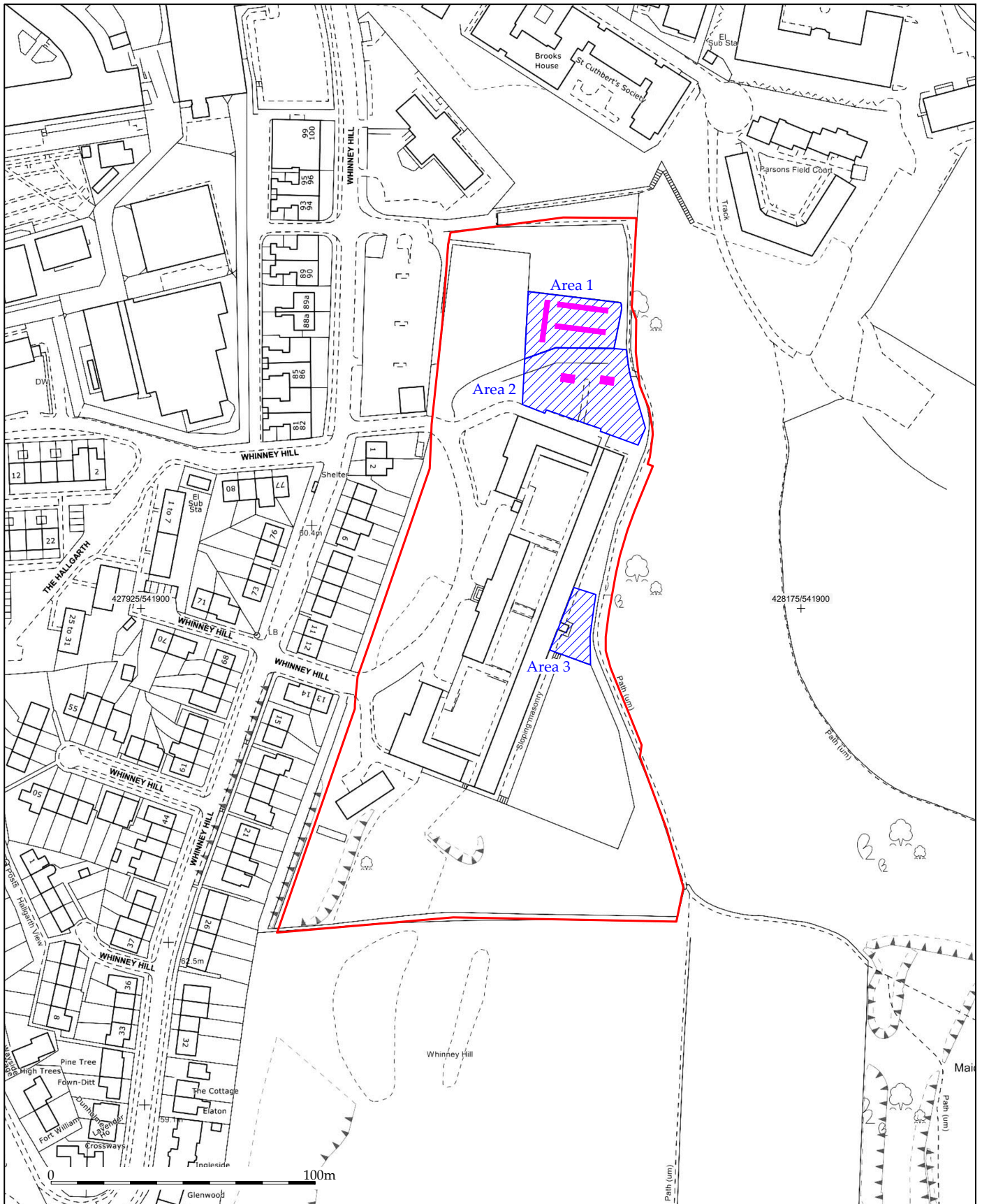
 <p>Wardell Armstrong Ltd 2017</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at the former Durham Johnston School, Whinney Hill, Durham</p> <p>CLIENT: Persimmon Homes Durham</p> <p>SCALE: 1:25,000 at A4</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>CHECKED BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: November 2017</p> <p>REPORT No: CL11993</p>	<p>KEY:</p>  <p>Site boundary</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100058076.</p>
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Figure 1: Site location.








 <p>Wardell Armstrong Ltd 2017</p>	<p>PROJECT: Land at the former Durham Johnston School, Whinney Hill, Durham</p> <p>CLIENT: Persimmon Homes Durham</p> <p>SCALE: 1:2,000 at A4</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>CHECKED BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: November 2017</p> <p>REPORT No: CL11993</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Site boundary  Areas monitored during watching brief  Test trenches 	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100058076.</p>

Figure 2: Location of watching brief.

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