Castle Garth
Thirsk
North Yorkshire
Monument Number 20454

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

SE 4287 8196

Authorised by .....

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Archaeological Recording Brief Report

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Archaeological Recording Brief Report

Non-technical Summary

An Archaeological Recording Brief was conducted by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd at Castle Garth, Thirsk, North Yorkshire (SE 4287 8196) on the 14th July 2008. The work involved monitoring the groundworks associated with the removal and replacement of an existing interpretation panel and the erection of a new fence.

This location is within the area scheduled as the remains of Thirsk castle, and the Recording Brief was carried out as a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent.

Two of the fence-posts cut into the spread bank of the rampart, otherwise no archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered during the Recording Brief.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the results of an Archaeological Recording Brief that was conducted on the 14th July 2008 by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. at Castle Garth, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, (SE 4287 8196, Figs.1 and 2). The work was undertaken in order to fulfil an archaeological condition attached to the Scheduled Monument Consent (dated 4th April 2008) for the removal of failed fencing and replacement with new, and relocation of interpretation panel.

1.2 All work was funded by Thirsk Town Council.

1.3 The project was allocated the MAP Site Code 02.07.08.

1.4 All maps within this report have been produced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright, Licence No. AL 50453A.

2. Site Description

2.1 Castle Garth covers an area approximately 130m x 70m in size and is situated to the west of Kirkgate and to the north of Westgate, within the town of Thirsk (SE 4287 8195). It is bounded by commercial properties on the west and south sides, residential properties on the east side, and by Masonic Lane to the north.

2.2 The site lies on soils of the Newport 1 Association, which are characterised by deep well-drained sandy soils over a geology of glaciofluvial drift (Mackney 1984, p. 249).

2.3 Castle Garth exists as an open area of grassed parkland, crossed by asphalt paths. The only structures within this area are a single-storey hut used for cadet training in the east and an electricity substation in the south-eastern corner.

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

3.1 The name Thirsk derives for the Old Swedish *Thraesk*, meaning lake or fen (Ekwall 1936). The town is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Tresche*. There were two manors at the time of Domesday, one held by the king and the other by Hugh FitzBaldrick (Williams and Martin 2003). The twin manors are reflected in the growth of the town, which developed as Old Thirsk, to the east of the Cod Beck, and New Thirsk, to the west of the river.

3.2 Roger de Mowbray's charter of foundation of the Priory of Newburgh suggests that a borough had been founded at Old (East) Thirsk by 1145 AD (Beresford and Finberg 1973). A market was established on St James' Green, to the east of the current

development, but it is thought that the establishment of Thirsk Castle on the opposite side of Cod Beck stimulated the development of New Thirsk, the growing economic importance of which was reflected in change of focus of the market to its present location in Market Place.

3.3 Thirsk castle was built around 1092 as a motte and bailey, but it was destroyed in 1176. A manor house was then built on the site, but was also destroyed (by the Scots) in 1322. From 1376, the site was used as a garden. The only visible remains are the well-spread ramparts running north to south across the western part of Castle Garth, which are believed to enclose the probable counterscarp of a ditched motte. Elsewhere, all above-ground traces have been removed by modern development (www.pastscape.org).

3.4 The 1856 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows the site as open land or gardens.

3.5 There have been a number of archaeological interventions within Castle Garth. In 1994 MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd, carried out an excavation in the south-east of the area prior to the construction of an electricity sub-station and the installation of cables (MAP 1995). A cemetery of at least ten graves was excavated, dating to the first half of the 6th century. A number of pits, slots and a cobbled surface pre-dated a spread clay bank, which was interpreted as the 11th century rampart. A deep modern cut was identified on the western side of the rampart, representing a Second World War anti-tank ditch.

3.6 Two Watching Briefs recorded no significant archaeological activity. The first of these was by MAP in 2002 during the installation of cables (MAP 2002), the second by WYAS on the replacement of 'kissing gates' to the three entrances to Castle Garth in 2005 (McCluskey 2005).

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1 The aims of the Archaeological Recording Brief were to record and recover any archaeological remains that might be affected by the groundworks, and to prepare a report summarising the results of the work.

5. Methodology

5.1 The groundworks associated with the relocation of the interpretation panel consisted of the mechanical breaking of the concrete around the existing posts, followed by the manual excavation of two new postholes, both 0.50m square and 0.65m deep, approximately 5m west of the original position.

5.2 At the south-west corner of Castle Garth, the concrete posts of the redundant fence were pulled down by a 360^0 mechanical mini-excavator, which was also used to clear away the superficial vegetation and rubbish that had accumulated at the fence's base.

5.3 The new fence was supported by four posts, for which holes were manually excavated, each being 0.25m square and 0.60m deep (apart from Posthole 4, which was only 0.40m deep). The postholes were placed approximately 2.80m apart.

5.4 All work was carried out in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct (IFA 1998).

5.5 A photographic record of the monitored groundworks was maintained throughout the Watching Brief on a digital camera.

6. Results (Pls. 1 to 4)

6.1. The removal of the posts for the existing interpretation panel merely revealed deposits relating to its original erection. The two new postholes both revealed an assumed natural deposit of yellowish brown sandy silt (context 1001) at a depth of 0.60m from the present ground surface. The apparent natural deposit was overlain by a

homogenous layer of dark brown sandy loam (context 1002), which was capped by the present turf. No archaeological features or finds were present.

6.2 The four postholes for the new fence at the southwest corner of the site cut into the western side of the earthwork rampart. The two southernmost postholes (Postholes 1 and 2) showed a similar stratigraphy, their bases being occupied by a deposit of dark yellowish brown silty clay with pebbles, extending up to 0.30m from the surface (context 1003), after which point they were filled with dark greyish brown sandy loam (context 1004).

6.3 Postholes 3 and 4 were entirely filled by brown sandy silt, possibly the remains of a disused recent planting bed (context 1005). Posthole 4 was shallower, and its base terminated at a modern asphalt surface.

7. Conclusions

7.1. No archaeological features or finds were encountered during the Recording Brief, this being a reflection of the small area available for observation. However, *in situ* deposits were noted in the postholes for the new interpretation panel and in Postholes 1 and 2 for the new fence.

7.2 At the location of the new interpretation panel, natural silty sand deposits were overlain by brown sandy loam whose nature suggested a period of long, even accumulation. At the southern end of the new fence Postholes 1 and 2 cut into the earthwork rampart, which was composed of dark yellowish brown silty clay with pebbles.

7.3 Clearly, where they have not been disturbed by later structures (the cadet hut and electricity sub-station) or other intrusions (cabling runs and footpaths) much of the sub-surface archaeology at Castle Garth remains intact. The Recording Brief thus illustrated that potentially significant and interesting deposits can be revealed by relatively small-scale interventions.

8. Bibliography

Beresford, M & Finberg, H P R 1973 English Medieval Boroughs: A Handlist.

Mackney, D. et al. 1983 Soils of England and Wales. Sheet 1: Northern England. Soil Survey of England and Wales.

MAP 1995 Thirsk Castle, Thirsk, North Yorkshire. SAM No 2054. Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief.

MAP 2002 Castle Garth, Thirsk, North Yorkshire. Archaeological Watching Brief.

McCluskey, B 2005 Castle Garth, Thirsk, North Yorkshire. Archaeological Watching Brief Report. *Archaeological Services WYAS, Report No 1493.*

Williams, A & Martin, G H 2003 Domesday Book: A Complete Translation.

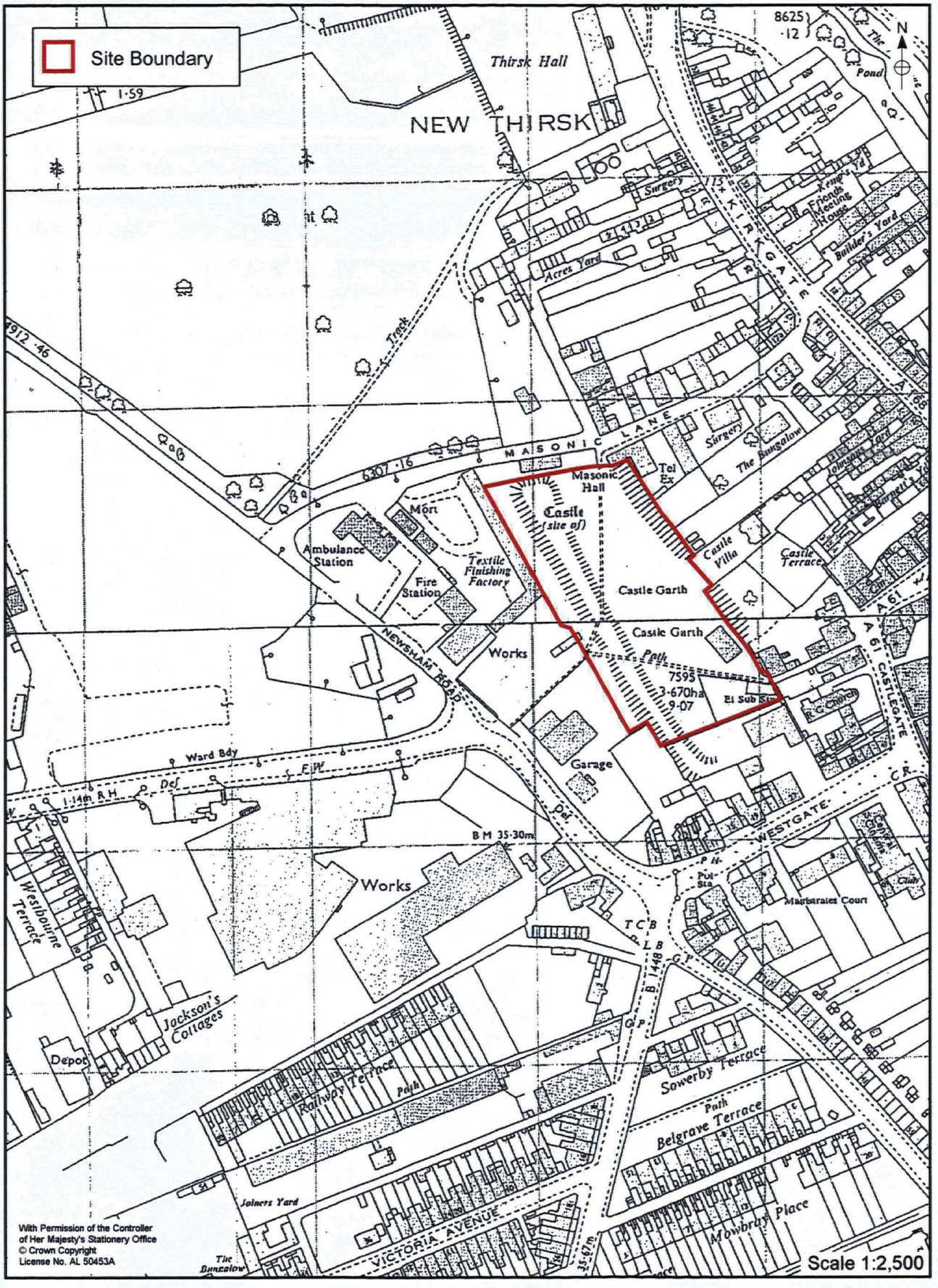

Figure 1: Site Location

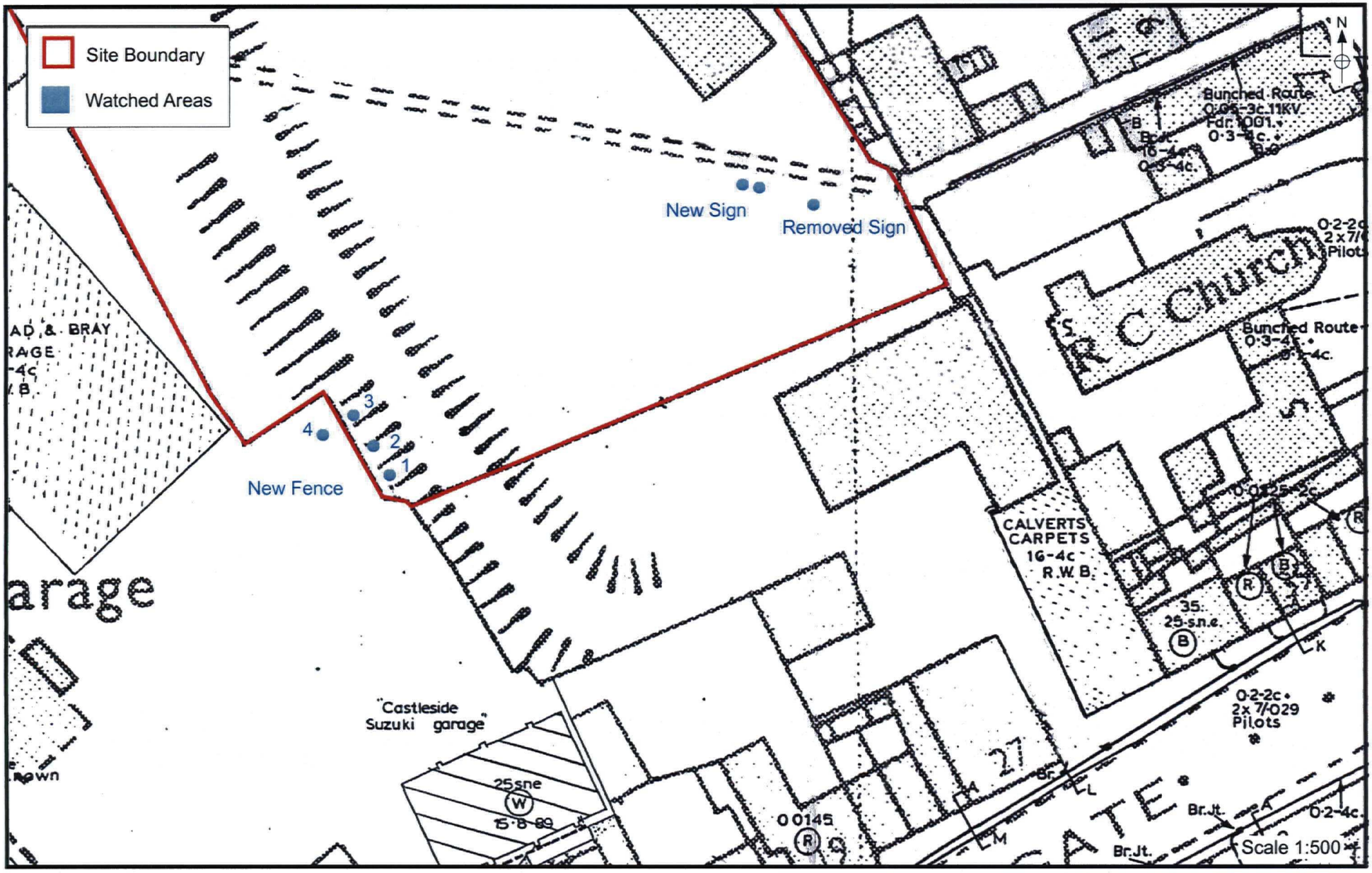

Figure 2. Area of Recording Brief

Plate 1: Installation of New Interpretation Panel. Facing South-west.

Plate 2: Posthole for New Interpretation Panel. Facing South.

Plate 3: Clearance of Old Fence. Facing South.

Plate 4: Fence Posthole 1. Facing West.

APPENDIX 1

Context Listing

Castle Garth, Thirsk 02.07.08

Context	Description	
1001	Deposit	10 YR 4/6 sandy silt (natural)
1002	Deposit	10 YR 4/2 sandy loam (topsoil)
1003	Deposit	10 YR 4/6 silty clay (rampart material)
1004	Deposit	7.5 YR 4/2, sandy loam (?cultivation layer)
1005	Deposit	10 YR 4/3 sandy silt (?planting bed)

APPENDIX 2

Photographic Archive Listing

Digital

Frame	Description	Scale	Facing
1	Removal of old interpretation panel	N/A	North-east
2	Old interpretation panel holes	N/A	South
3	Location of new interpretation panel	N/A	North-west
4	New interpretation panel posthole	0.5m	South
5	New interpretation panel posthole	0.5m	South
6	Clearance of old fence	N/A	North
7	Clearance of old fence	N/A	South
8	Fencepost 1	0.5m	West
9	New Fence	N/A	North-west
10	New Fence	N/A	South

APPENDIX 3

Project Team Details

Fieldwork
Mark Stephens

Post-excavation
Report - Mark Stephens
Figures - Nigel Cavanagh
Editing - Nigel Cavanagh

STANDARD WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION (WSI) FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING ("RECORDING BRIEF")

Castle Garth, Thirsk, Monument Number 20454

Following the granting of Scheduled Monument Consent (4th April 2008), an Archaeological Recording Brief will be undertaken on behalf of Thirsk Town Council during the removal and replacement of an existing interpretation panel, and the erection of a new fence at the above site.

The purpose of the work is to record and recover archaeological remains, which could be affected by proposed development. The area is to be stripped under archaeological supervision and any features/deposits exposed excavated and recorded to correct archaeological standards

1. The work should not require the construction programme or development to be held up while archaeological investigation takes place, although some developers may give such a facility.

2. The WSI represents a summary of the broad archaeological requirements needed to comply with an archaeological planning condition. The scheme does not comprise a full specification, and the County Council makes no warranty that the works are fully or exactly described. The details of implementation must be specified in a contract between the developer and the selected archaeological contractor.

3. The removal of overburden (that is vegetation, turf, loose stones, rubble, made ground, Tarmac, concrete, hardcore, building debris and topsoil) should be supervised by the Archaeologist contracted to carry out the WSI. The Archaeologist should be informed of the correct timing and schedule of overburden removal.

4. Removal of overburden by machine should be undertaken using a back-acting excavator fitted with toothless or ditching bucket only. Where materials are exceptionally difficult to lift, a toothed bucket may be used temporarily. Subsoils (B horizons) or deep, uniform fills of features may also be removed by back-acting excavator but only in areas specified by the Archaeologist on site, and only with archaeological supervision. Bulldozers or wheeled scraper buckets should not be used to remove overburden above archaeological deposits. Where reinstatement is required, topsoil should be kept separate from other soil materials.

5. Metal detecting within the development area, including the scanning of topsoil and spoil heaps, should only be permitted subject to archaeological supervision and recording such that metal finds are properly located, identified, and conserved. All metal detection should be carried out following the Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice.

6. Where structures, finds, soil features and layers of archaeological interest are exposed or disturbed by construction works, the Archaeologist should be provided with the opportunity to observe, clean, assess, excavate by hand where appropriate, sample and record these features and finds. If the contractors or plant operators notice archaeological remains, they should immediately tell the Archaeologist. The sampling of deposits for palaeo-

environmental evidence should be a standard consideration, and arrangements should be made to ensure that specialist advice and analysis are available if appropriate.

7. Heavy plant should not be operated in the near vicinity of archaeological remains until they have been recorded, and the Archaeologist on site has allowed operations to recommence at that location. Sterile subsoils (C horizons) and parent materials below archaeological deposits may be removed without archaeological supervision. Where reinstatement is required, subsoils should be backfilled first and topsoil last.

8. Upon completion of fieldwork, samples will be processed and evaluated, and all finds cleaned, identified, assessed, spot-dated, and properly stored. A field archive will be compiled consisting of all primary written documents, plans, sections, and photographs. The Archaeologist will arrange for either the County Archaeologist or an independent post-excavation specialist to inspect the archive before making arrangements for the transfer of the archive to an appropriate museum or records office.

9. A report will be produced following NYCC guidelines on reporting. The report will contain planning or administrative details of the project, a summary of works carried out, a description and interpretation of the findings, an assessment of the importance of the archaeology including its historical context where appropriate, and catalogues of finds, features, and primary records. All excavated areas will be accurately mapped with respect to nearby buildings, roads and field boundaries. All significant features will be illustrated with conventionally scaled plans, sections, or photographs. Where few or no finds are made, a summary report the form of a letter with plans will be submitted.

10. Copies of the summary report will be provided to the client(s), the County Heritage Unit (SMR), to the museum accepting the archive, and if the works are on or adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument, to English Heritage.

11. The County Archaeologist will be informed as soon as possible of the discovery of any unexpected archaeological remains, or changes in the programme of ground works on site. Any significant changes in the archaeological work will be specified in a variation to the WSI to be approved by the planning authority. If human remains are encountered, they will be exhumed subject to the conditions of a Home Office licence.