



Residential Development, Great Ness, Shropshire.

November 2014

V 1.0

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Project Code: A0047.1

Report no. 0049



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Project Code: A0047.1

Date: 17/11/2014

Client: Welsh Oak Frame

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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by Welsh Oak Frame to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land at Great Ness, Shrewsbury, Shropshire during the groundworks associated with the construction of two new dwellings.

The results of the archaeological watching brief at Great Ness are considered to be somewhat disappointing, with no archaeological remains or artefacts being uncovered. The field plot lies within the centre of the historic core of the village and is generally flat, dry and conducive to habitation. Moreover, the northern limit of the field is demarcated by a rather substantial sandstone wall which suggests that the site had previously been occupied by a dwelling, although the result of the watching brief has shown that this was not the case.

Lying to the east of the site is a large country house constructed from red-brick and it may be the case that a sandstone structure had once occupied that site. If the sandstone building had been demolished to make way for the brick-built house it may explain the reuse of sandstone blocks to create the wall at the northern end of the site.

Due to the complete lack of any archaeological remains or artefacts at the site it is not recommended that any further archaeological mitigatory work is undertaken as part of this development.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by Welsh Oak Frame to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land at Great Ness, Shrewsbury, Shropshire as a condition of full planning permission (14/02165/FUL).

The archaeological work was undertaken as part of mitigatory works during the groundworks associated with the construction of two new dwellings on land currently utilised for grazing and within the centre of the village (**centred on NGR SJ 39824 18891**) (figure 1).

A mitigation brief was not prepared for this work by the Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service, but the following statement was made a condition of full planning permission:

No development approved by this permission shall commence until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI). This written scheme shall be approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.

The reason for this condition is:

The site is known to hold archaeological interest.

The proposed development site lay within the core of the historic village of Great Ness, and within a part of the settlement that was likely to have been inhabited since the medieval period. Historic editions of the Ordnance Survey map indicated that the site remained undeveloped throughout the 19th century; although the form of the land parcel suggested that it may have been occupied by buildings in earlier centuries. It is therefore possible that archaeological features and deposits relating to the medieval and later development of the village would have been present on the proposed development site. As such the site was believed to have a moderate-high archaeological potential for preserved buried remains.

It was agreed with the Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service that the watching brief would be carried out on an **intensive** basis during the excavation of the access splay and foundation footings for the new development. Archaeological monitoring would initially be limited to the northernmost half of the field, the results of which would inform the requirement for any further associated mitigatory works as required.

The work undertaken adhered to the guidelines specified in Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (Institute for Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001 and 2008).

3.0 PROJECT AIMS

The aim of the watching brief works was to characterise the known, or potential, archaeological remains uncovered during groundworks associated with the construction of two new dwellings at the site.

The broad aims of the archaeological watching brief were to:

- To determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains on the site, the integrity of which may be threatened by development at the site.
- To establish the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusion to sub-surface deposits and, where the data allows, assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits of archaeological significance.
- To allow the Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service to make an informed decision on the need for and scope of any further archaeological works that may be required on future projects within proximity to the scheme.

The detailed objectives of the archaeological watching brief were to:

- Insofar as possible within methodological constraints, to explain any temporal, spatial or functional relationships between the structures/remains identified, and any relationships between these and the archaeological and historic elements of the wider landscape.
- Where the data allows, identify the research implications of the site with reference to the regional research agenda and recent work in Shropshire.

An Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was written by Aeon Archaeology and submitted to Welsh Oak Frame and the Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service in August 2014. This formed the basis of a method statement submitted for the work. The detailed archaeological record and watching brief were executed in accordance with this WSI.

The management of this project has followed the procedures laid out in the standard professional guidance *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006), and in the Institute for Archaeologists *Archaeological Evaluation* (Institute for Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001 & 2008). Five stages are specified:

Phase 1: project planning

Phase 2: fieldwork

Phase 3: assessment of potential for analysis and revised project design

Phase 4: analysis and report preparation

Phase 5: dissemination

The current document reports on the phase 4 analysis and states the means to be used to disseminate the results. The purpose of this phase is to carry out the analysis identified in phase 3 (the assessment of potential phase), to amalgamate the results of the specialist studies, if required, with the detailed site narrative and provide both specific and overall interpretations. The site is to be set in its landscape context so that its full character and importance can be understood. All the information is to be presented in a report that will be held by the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) so that it

can be accessible to the public and future researchers. This phase of work also includes archiving the material and documentary records from the project.



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Figure 01: Location of residential development at Great Ness (shaded in red).
Scale 1:5,000 at A4.



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4.0 METHODOLOGY – ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 Watching Brief

The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) defines an archaeological watching brief as:

‘A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.’ (IfA 1994, rev. 2008)

The Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service requested (pers. comm) that an **intensive** watching brief be maintained during the groundworks associated with the construction of two new dwellings at the site. This level of watching brief entailed that an appropriately qualified archaeologist was present during all associated ground disturbance.

All soil removal was undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. A photographic record was maintained throughout, using a digital SLR camera (Canon 550D) set to maximum resolution and any subsurface remains were to be recorded photographically, with detailed notations and measured drawings being undertaken if required.

In the event of archaeological discovery features were to be excavated by hand and fully recorded using Aeon Archaeology pro-formas, digital photographs, and plan and section drawings taken at a suitable scale (usually 1:20 for plan drawings and 1:10 for section drawings).

The archive produced is held at Aeon Archaeology under the project code **A0047.1**.

4.2 Data Collection from Site Records

A database of the site photographs was produced to enable active long-term curation of the photographs and easy searching. The site records were checked and cross-referenced and photographs were cross-referenced to contexts. These records were used to write the site narrative and the field drawings and survey data were used to produce an outline plan of the site.

All paper field records were scanned to provide a backup digital copy. The photographs were organised and precisely cross-referenced to the digital photographic record so that the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) can curate them in their active digital storage facility.

4.3 Artefact Methodology

All artefacts were to be collected and processed including those found within spoil tips. They would be bagged and labelled as well as any preliminary identification taking place on site. After processing, all artefacts would be cleaned and examined in-house at Aeon Archaeology. If required artefacts would be sent to a relevant specialist for conservation and analysis.

The recovery policy for archaeological finds was kept under review throughout the archaeological watching brief. Any changes in recovery priorities would be made under guidance from an appropriate specialist and agreed with the Client and the Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service.

There was a presumption against the disposal of archaeological finds regardless of their apparent age or condition.

4.4 Environmental Samples Methodology

The sampling strategy and requirement for bulk soil samples was related to the perceived character, interpretational importance and chronological significance of the strata under investigation. This ensured that only significant features would be sampled. The aim of the sampling strategy was to recover carbonised macroscopic plant remains, small artefacts particularly knapping debris and evidence for metalworking.

Advice and guidance regarding environmental samples and their suitability for radiocarbon dating, as well as the analysis of macrofossils (charcoal and wood), pollen, animal bones and molluscs would be obtained from Oxford Archaeology if required.

4.5 Report and dissemination

A full archive including plans, photographs, written material and any other material resulting from the project was prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions were labelled, and cross-referenced, and will be lodged within a suitable repository to be agreed with the archaeological curator within six months of the completion of the project.

A draft copy of the report has been sent to the client and upon written approval from them paper and digital copies of the report will be sent to the regional HER, the Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service, and will be logged with the online OASIS database. Copies of all notes, plans, and photographs arising from the watching brief will be stored at Aeon Archaeology under the project code **A0047.1** with the originals being lodged in a suitable repository to be agreed with the archaeological curator.

5.0 QUANTIFICATION OF RESULTS

5.1 The Documentary Archive

The following documentary records were created during the archaeological watching brief:

Watching brief day sheets	2
Context sheets	2
Digital photographs	6

5.2 Environmental Samples

No environmental samples were taken as part of the watching brief as no suitable archaeological deposits were encountered.

5.3 Artefacts

No artefacts were recovered during the archaeological watching brief.

6.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

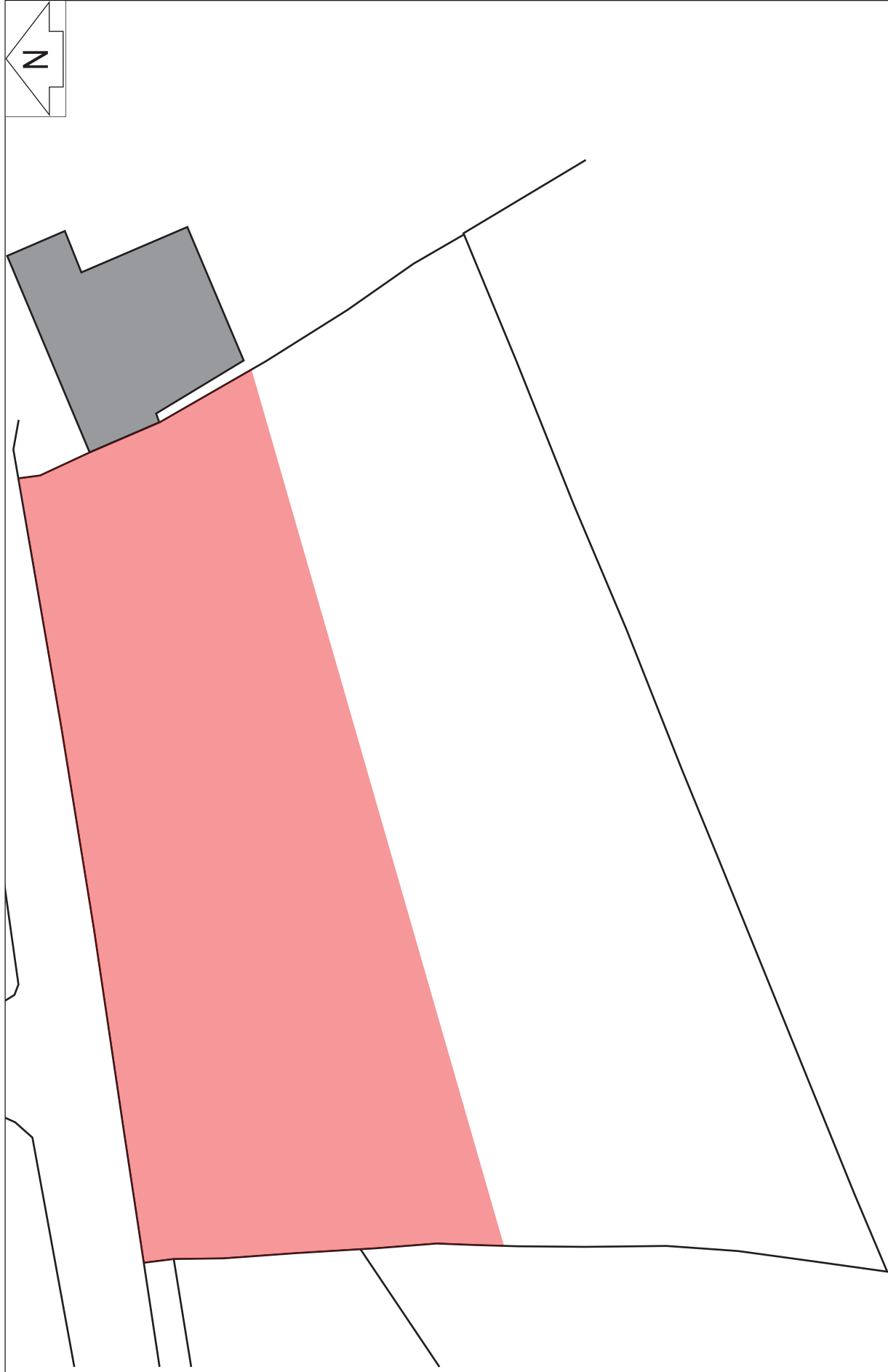
6.1 Land at Great Ness, Shropshire (figures 2 and 3; plates 1-3)

The archaeological watching brief was maintained on an intensive basis by Richard Cooke BA MA MifA, archaeological contractor and consultant at Aeon Archaeology. The site was attended from 11th-12th November 2014 and the weather conditions varied from bright sunshine to periods of prolonged rainfall.

A strip of land at the northern half of the field plot measuring 20.0m in width by 66.0m in length, orientated east to west was stripped of topsoil and subsoil over the course of two days. The topsoil was a 0.2m deep layer of dark grey-brown silt-clay which lay above a 0.2m deep layer of mid grey-brown silt-clay subsoil. Both soil horizons were carefully stripped away using a mechanical excavator with toothless ditching bucket in spits of approximately 0.05m-0.1m. The stripping was monitored the entire time by the archaeologist but no archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were observed.

The entire strip was then reduced on to the natural glacial horizon which consisted of a light orange-brown slightly sandy-clay with frequent small angular pebble inclusions. This reduction was also monitored by the archaeologist with particular attention being paid to any possible cut features such as foundation trenches, ditches or pits. No archaeological features were observed and no archaeological artefacts recovered.

Upon completion of the site striping in the northern half of the field plot the Shropshire Archaeological Planning Service was contacted and informed of the results of the watching brief. It was agreed with the Development Control Archaeologist (Dr. Andrew Wigley) that due to the absence of any archaeological or artefactual remains that there would not be a requirement for any further archaeological monitoring at the site.

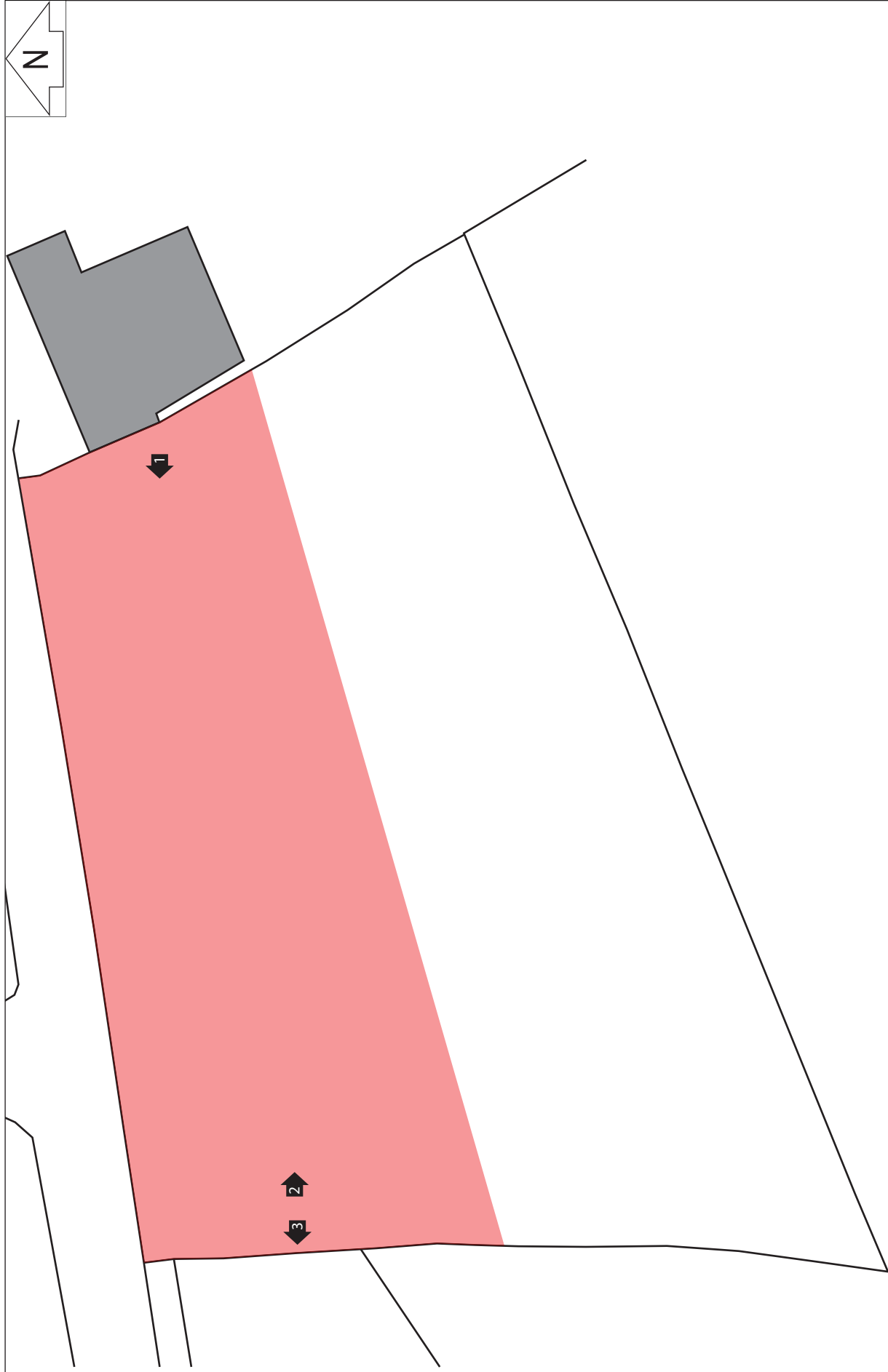


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Figure 02: Location of residential development at Great Ness and area monitored by archaeological watching brief (shaded in red). Scale 1:400 at A4.

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Figure 03: Location and orientation of photographs (numbered arrows refer to plate number). Scale 1:400 at A4.



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Plate 02: Area monitored by watching brief at Great Ness, from the west. Scale 1.0m.



Plate 03: East facing section of area monitored by watching brief at Great Ness, from the east. Scale 0.5m.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the archaeological watching brief at Great Ness are considered to be somewhat disappointing, with no archaeological remains or artefacts being uncovered. The field plot lies within the centre of the historic core of the village and is generally flat, dry and conducive to habitation. Moreover, the northern limit of the field is demarcated by a rather substantial sandstone wall which suggests that the site had previously been occupied by a dwelling, although the result of the watching brief has shown that this was not the case.

Lying to the east of the site is a large country house constructed from red-brick and it may be the case that a sandstone structure had once occupied that site. If the sandstone building had been demolished to make way for the brick-built house it may explain the reuse of sandstone blocks to create the wall at the northern end of the site.

Due to the complete lack of any archaeological remains or artefacts at the site it is not recommended that any further archaeological mitigatory work is undertaken as part of this development.

8.0 SOURCES

Sources

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