

James Williams Street, Sunderland

Report on an Archaeological Evaluation



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# James Williams Street, Sunderland

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## Report on an Archaeological Evaluation

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*This report has been prepared by Solstice Heritage LLP on behalf of Fit-Out Yorkshire Ltd. to confirm the results of an archaeological evaluation. The evaluation was required by Sunderland City Council as a requirement for a planning application (ref. 19/O1559/FUL) for the development of the site for housing. The design of the scheme of evaluation was based upon a brief produced by Tyne and Wear Archaeology Service.*

*The two trenches were laid out in the locations directed in the brief for the work and excavations were undertaken and completed on the 4th September 2020. Unfortunately, due to the mature scrub vegetation across most of the northern half of the site, Trench 1 was abandoned, whilst Trench 2 was moved southward and was also shortened in length.*

*The excavated trench has shown that the site contains a depth of demolition debris across most of its area, which has no meaningful archaeological potential. Unfortunately, due to the uncompacted nature of the debris, and its depth, it was not possible to ascertain the archaeological potential of the deposits beneath this layer. As such, the unknown nature of those deposits is a limitation on the value of the evaluation exercise, which should be borne in mind when considering the need for any further work. Although the very northern part of the site could not be evaluated, the shape of the ground was noted, and it is considered highly likely that the same deposit sequence observed within the evaluation trench will be present there.*

*The site contains the demolition debris from the former school buildings on the site. This debris forms a thick capping, perhaps around 2 m in thickness, across much of the site area. This layer is considered to be of little archaeological interest, and so no further action would be required to mitigate potential impacts to it. Due to the constraints this uncompacted material imposed on evaluation of the site, it is not possible to comment on potential impacts to any deposits which lie beneath it, as these could not be observed during the evaluation works.*

*Depending upon the nature and scale of the groundworks required for the proposed development, further works may be considered necessary to evaluate the archaeological potential of any deeply-buried deposits which lie beneath the demolition debris encountered during this phase of evaluation works. No further work is considered to be necessary to further establish the archaeological potential of the demolition layer.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This report has been prepared by Solstice Heritage LLP on behalf of Fit-Out Yorkshire Ltd. to confirm the results of an archaeological evaluation. The evaluation was required by Sunderland City Council as a requirement for a planning application (ref. 19/O1559/FUL) for the development of the site for housing. The design of the scheme of evaluation was based upon a brief produced by Tyne and Wear Archaeology Service (Laidler 2020).

## 1.2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

The proposed development is centred at NGR NZ 40440 57290, to the south of the River Wear within Sunderland City Centre, at an altitude of c. 14 m aOD (Figure 1). The proposed development site is a vacant plot of waste land, thickly overgrown with scrub vegetation, located at the northern end of James Williams Street. The potential for remains associated with medieval and post-medieval use were previously identified through desk-based assessment (The Archaeological Practice 2007).

The archaeological works were intended to comprise:

- Excavation of 2 no. 10 m x 1.5 m archaeological evaluation trenches within the proposed development area (Figure 2).

## 1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Archaeological field evaluation is defined as:

“A limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts and their research potential, within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, reports on them and enables an assessment of their significance in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.” (ClfA 2020, 4).

The overarching aim of the evaluation was:

- To gather information about any archaeological resources within the site, to assess its merit in the context of the proposed development.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To attempt to establish the date, character, and significance of any archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits, including in relation to other similar features within the area.
- The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation, or management of the archaeological resource.
- The formulation of a strategy to mitigate the threat to the archaeological resource.
- The formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation, if required.
- To ensure there is a permanent record of the work undertaken deposited with the local Historic Environment Record (HER) and made available online
- To ensure all work is undertaken in compliance with the *Code of Conduct* of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA) (2019) and the *ClfA Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (2020).
- To produce a report on the findings of the site.



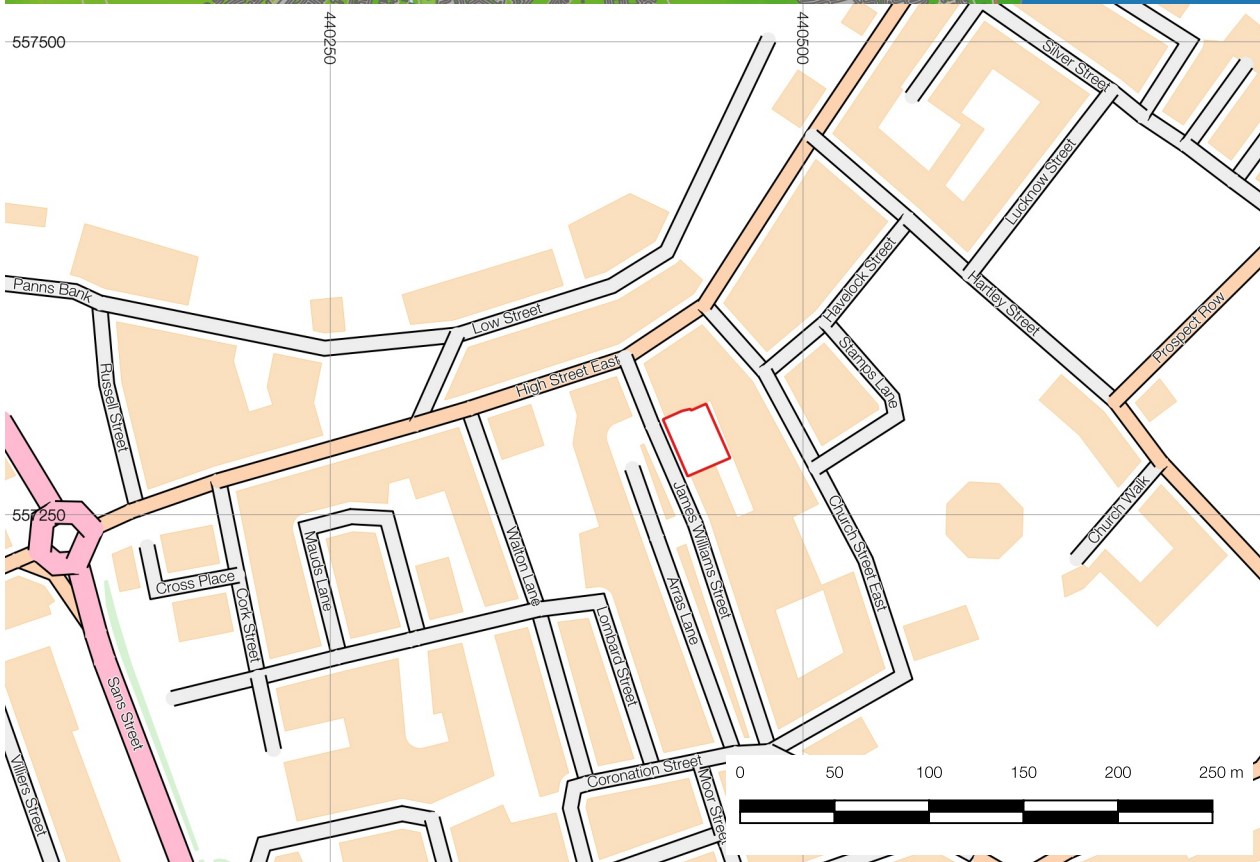


Figure 1 Site location



## **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY**

The proposed development sits within the 'Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau' National Character Area (NCA). The Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau is an open, agricultural landscape with sharply defined boundaries in the form of a steep limestone escarpment to the west and a dramatic coast of limestone cliffs, headlands and bays to the east. The River Wear cuts across the north of the area, flowing into the sea at Sunderland, and the River Skerne drains into the Tees Lowlands to the south (NE 2013, 3).

The underlying bedrock geology is dolostone of the Roker Formation, with a superficial geology formed of glaciolacustrine deposits of clay and silt (BGS 2020). Online mapping provided by the UK Soil Observatory (2020) characterises the soils across the area of proposed development as 'slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils'.

### **2.2 PREVIOUS WORK**

The Archaeological Practice undertook a Desk-based Assessment (The Archaeological Practice 2007) for the site, which suggested that areas within the site untouched by former cellars may have the potential to host remains relating to medieval or post-medieval settlement remains.

### **2.3 POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Potential evidence relating to medieval and post-medieval settlement would potentially be of local significance.

### **2.4 RELEVANT RESEARCH AGENDA**

Given the limited potential for archaeological remains relating to medieval and post-medieval settlement in the proposed development area, the evaluation has some potential to provide information to address a variety of gaps in knowledge identified in the North East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment (Petts and Gerrard 2006). Given the limited archaeological understanding of the nature of deposits contained within the site, it remains uncertain as to which areas of research may best be addressed by investigation of the site.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Results of the evaluation are presented here by trench, with a note on general, site-wide stratigraphy.

#### 3.2 GENERAL STRATIGRAPHY

The excavated trench has shown that a deep layer of demolition material, almost certainly arising from the former school buildings located on the site, has been placed across the majority of the site area and topped with a thin layer of topsoil. As this demolition debris was not penetrated by excavation, it is not possible to comment upon the general character or archaeological potential of the deposits beneath it.

#### 3.3 TRENCH 1

Trench 1 could not be excavated as its planned location was covered by a thick stand of semi-mature woodland vegetation which has developed across the northern third of the site. Given the available space left on the site, the locations of former buildings and the area of Trench 2, it was not considered feasible to relocate the trench to a workable location within the area of the site which was thought to have some archaeological potential. As such, excavation of this trench was abandoned altogether.

#### 3.4 TRENCH 2

Trench 2 was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east. The trench was moved 3 m south-east of its planned location and was shortened by a metre in length due to the presence of thick vegetation on the site which constrained excavation works. The trench measured 8 m x 1.5 m in plan and was excavated through a mid-greyish-brown, sandy silt topsoil spread (200) which measured 0.12 m thick. The topsoil (200) overlay a layer of crushed yellow dolomite/stone (201), which also measured 0.12 m in thickness. This stone (201) overlay a thin spread of mixed, mid-grey-brown silty clay (202), which had a thickness of 0.15 m. Beneath (202) was a thick deposit of demolition debris (203), made up of mostly of brick building rubble, including intact sections of brick walling with very large sandstone window sills and quoins, glazed bricks, metal pipe and timber also present. Given the size and shape of the bricks, it seems likely that they primarily date to the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, which would be contemporary with the development of the former school buildings. This deposit was excavated to a depth of 1.1 m within the trench, before excavation was ceased for safety reasons. The unconsolidated nature of this demolition deposit meant that the sides of the trench were liable to collapse and deeper excavation would have been unduly hazardous.

All of the deposits within the trench are thought to relate to the clearance of the school buildings formerly present on the site. (203) is considered to be made up of the demolished remains of these buildings, whilst the deposits above (200, 201, 202) are considered to be capping deposits of made ground, intended to consolidate the demolition material below and promote the growth of grass over it. No other archaeological features or deposits were present.



Figure 3 Trench 2 facing south-south-east. Scale 1 x 2 m



Figure 4 Trench 2 section, facing west-south-west. Scale 1 x 1 m

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY

The evaluation did not encounter the natural substrate within the site.

### 4.2 MODERN

The thick layer of demolition debris encountered within Trench 2, which included later 19<sup>th</sup> century red and glazed brick, as well as other building fragments seems obviously to have come from the former school buildings once present on the site. Given that the majority of the site lies at almost 2 m above the adjacent road, it seems equally clear that the presence of this material is the reason for this substantial difference in height. As much information remains about the former school buildings, and the demolition debris is almost certainly derived from them, there is considered to be little archaeological value contained within this material.

Unfortunately, as it was not possible to examine any deposits underlying the demolition debris, the evaluation has not been able to characterise these deposits or consider their archaeological potential.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 CONFIDENCE, CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The excavated trench has shown that the site contains a depth of demolition debris across most of its area, which has no meaningful archaeological potential. Unfortunately, due to the uncompacted nature of the debris, and its depth, it was not possible to ascertain the archaeological potential of the deposits beneath this layer. As such, the unknown nature of those deposits is a limitation on the value of the evaluation exercise, which should be borne in mind when considering the need for any further work. Although the very northern part of the site could not be evaluated, the shape of the ground was noted, and it is considered highly likely that the same deposit sequence observed within the evaluation trench will be present there.

### 5.2 RESEARCH POTENTIAL

It is not considered that this evaluation has the potential to address any of the research priorities set out in *Shared Visions: The North- East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (Petts & Gerrard 2006).

### 5.3 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

The site contains the demolition debris from the former school buildings on the site. This debris forms a thick capping, perhaps around 2 m in thickness, across much of the site area. This layer is considered to be of little archaeological interest, and so no further action would be required to mitigate potential impacts to it. Due to the constraints this uncompacted material imposed on evaluation of the site, it is not possible to comment on potential impacts to any deposits which lie beneath it, as these could not be observed during the evaluation works.

### 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Depending upon the nature and scale of the groundworks required for the proposed development, further works may be considered necessary to evaluate the archaeological potential of any deeply-buried deposits which lie beneath the demolition debris encountered during this phase of evaluation works. No further work is considered to be necessary to further establish the archaeological potential of the demolition layer.

### 5.5 PROJECT ARCHIVE

The physical and digital archive for this project is currently held by Solstice Heritage LLP pending a decision on the requirement for any future work on the site.

## 6. SOURCES

### 6.1 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### 6.2 WEBSITES

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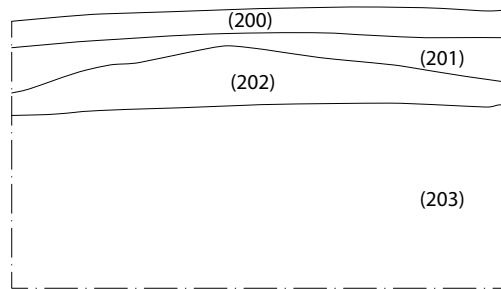
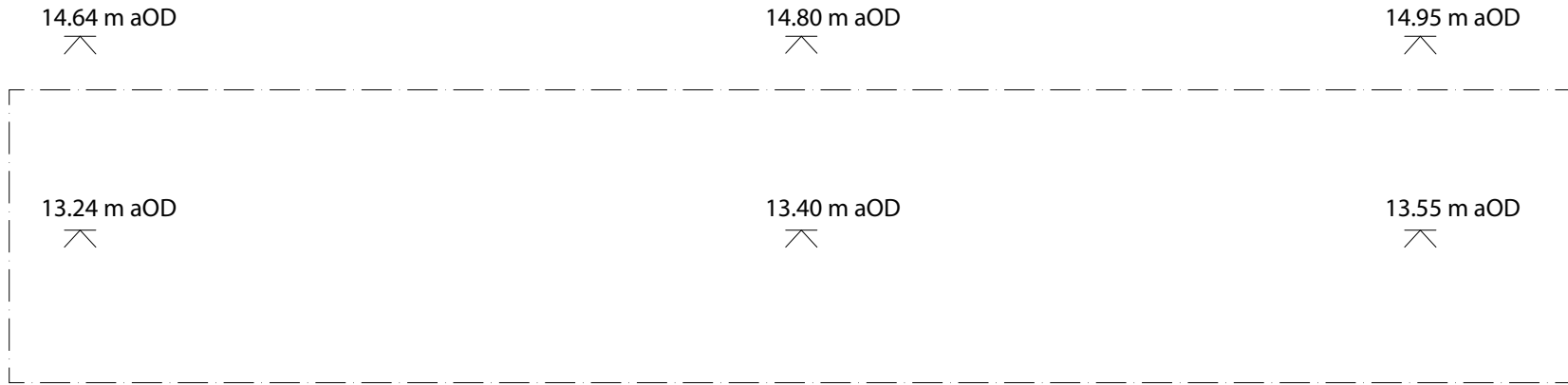
UK Soil Observatory (UKSO). 2020. *UKSO Map Viewer*. Available from: <<http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/ukso/home.html>>. Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020.





## APPENDIX 1 – PLANS AND SECTIONS





James Williams Street, Sunderland

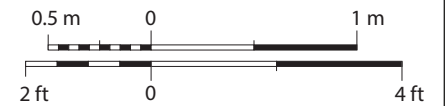
NGR NZ 40440 57290



Fieldwork: CS  
Drawn: SW

Drawing Version: 1.0

Trench plan and section



This drawing is for planning purposes and is not considered to be a construction drawing.  
Do not scale to this drawing. All dimensions are to be checked on site prior to commencement.  
This drawing is copyright Solstice Heritage. The underlying survey is copyright JohnsonClark.

## APPENDIX 2 – POLICY AND GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK

### LEGISLATION

National legislation which applies to the consideration of cultural heritage within the development and the wider planning process is set out in Table 1 below.

Title	Key Points
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (amended by the National Heritage Act 1983 and 2002)	Scheduled Monuments, as defined under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), are sites which have been selected by a set of non-statutory criteria to be of national significance. Where scheduled sites are affected by development proposals there is a presumption in favour of their physical preservation. Any works, other than activities receiving class consent under The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1981, as amended by The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1984, which would have the effect of demolishing, destroying, damaging, removing, repairing, altering, adding to, flooding or covering-up a Scheduled Monument require consent from the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	Buildings of national, regional or local historical and architectural importance are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Buildings designated as 'Listed' are afforded protection from physical alteration or effects on their historical setting.
Hedgerows Regulations 1997	The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) include criteria by which hedgerows can be regarded as historically important (Schedule 1 Part III).

Table 1 Legislation relating to relevant cultural heritage in planning

### POLICY

The principal instrument of national planning policy within England is the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) (MHCLG 2019) which outlines the following in relation to cultural heritage within planning and development:

Paragraph	Key Points
8	Contributing to protecting and enhancing the historic environment is specifically noted as being a part of one of the key objectives contributing to sustainable development.
189	During the determination of applications "local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting". This information should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and only enough to "understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance".
190	Paragraph 190 identifies that Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise.
193	'Great weight' should be given the conservation of a designated heritage asset irrespective of the level of 'harm' of a proposed development. However, the more important the asset, the greater the weight given.
194	'Harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage assets...should require clear and convincing justification'. In terms of the levels of designated heritage assets, substantial harm to Grade II listed buildings and parks and gardens should be exceptional, and to all other (the highest significance of) designated assets wholly exceptional.
195	Substantial harm to a designated heritage asset will be refused unless it is outweighed by substantial public benefits.

Paragraph	Key Points
196	Where there is 'less than substantial harm' to a designated heritage asset, the decision will weigh this harm against the public benefit of the proposal 'including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.
197	For decisions affecting non-designated heritage assets 'a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'.

Table 2 Key passages of NPPF in reference to cultural heritage (archaeology)

## LOCAL

Under planning law, the determination of an application must be made in the first instance, with reference to the policies of the local development plan. For the proposed development, this comprises the *Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033*, adopted in January 2020 (Sunderland City Council 2020), which outlines the following in relation to cultural heritage within planning and development:

Policy	Key Points
BH7 Historic Environment	<p>The council will ensure that the historic environment is valued, recognised, conserved and enhanced, sensitively managed and enjoyed for its contribution to character, local distinctiveness and sustainable communities by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. giving great weight to the conservation of heritage assets (designated and non designated) based on their significance in accordance with national policy;</li> <li>2. supporting new development which makes a positive contribution to the character and townscape quality of the historic environment;</li> <li>3. supporting and developing innovative initiatives that identify, maintain, conserve and sustain or return to beneficial usage designated or non-designated heritage assets;</li> <li>4. capitalising in an appropriate and sensitive manner on the regeneration and tourism potential of heritage assets;</li> <li>5. taking a positive and proactive approach to securing the conservation and re-use of heritage assets at risk, including working with owners and partner organisations to develop schemes that will address the at-risk status of the assets and exploring opportunities for grant-funding to deliver viable schemes;</li> <li>6. reviewing existing local heritage designations, such as conservation areas, and making new designations to protect and conserve built heritage assets, where justified, by appropriate surveys and evidence;</li> <li>7. using Article 4 Directions, where appropriate, to protect features of historic/architectural importance; and</li> <li>8. improving access and enjoyment of the historic environment where appropriate, by supporting proposals that retain, create or facilitate public access to heritage assets to increase understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of their significance, special qualities and cultural values.</li> </ol>

Policy	Key Points
BH9 Archaeology and recording of heritage assets	<p>1. Development which adversely affects the archaeological interest or setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (or non designated heritage asset of equivalent significance) will be refused planning permission unless exceptional circumstances exist that satisfy the requirements of the NPPF.</p> <p>2. The council will support the preservation, protection and where possible the enhancement of the city's archaeological heritage by requiring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. applications that may affect buried archaeological remains must be supported by an archaeological desk based assessment and evaluation reports where appropriate;</li> <li>ii. where development affects heritage assets of archaeological interest, preference will be given to preservation in situ. However where loss of the asset is justified in accordance with national policy, the remains should be appropriately archaeologically excavated and recorded, the findings assessed and analysed, the resulting archive report deposited with the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record and the physical archive deposited with the relevant collecting museum. Significant findings will also be published in an archaeological journal to make them publicly accessible and to enhance understanding; and</li> <li>iii. where demolition or part demolition of a designated built heritage asset or non designated building of significance has been justified, or substantive changes are to be made to the asset, works must not commence until archaeological building recording of the asset has been carried out and the results deposited with the Historic Environment Record and Tyne and Wear Archives.</li> </ul>

Table 3 Summary of relevant local planning policy

## GUIDANCE

During the assessment and preparation of this document, the following guidance documents have been referred to, where relevant:

Document	Key Points
Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England 2008)	This document sets out the guiding principles of conservation as seen by English Heritage and also provides a terminology for assessment of significance upon which much that has followed is based.
Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (Clfa revised 2014b)	This document represents non-statutory industry best practice as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. This work has been undertaken to these standards, as subscribed to by Solstice Heritage LLP.

Table 4 Guidance documentation consulted

## APPENDIX 3 – METHODOLOGY

### FIELDWORK

The two trenches were laid out in the locations directed in the brief for the work (Laidler 2020) and excavations were undertaken and completed on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Unfortunately, due to the mature scrub vegetation across most of the northern half of the site, Trench 1 was abandoned, whilst Trench 2 was moved southward and was also shortened in length. The work was undertaken by Chris Scott and Clare Henderson of Solstice Heritage LLP. All trenches were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision, and any features were further investigated and excavated with hand tools. All mechanical excavation (through overburden and non-anthropogenic levelling layers) was undertaken with a back-acting, toothless ditching bucket under constant supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist.

Where archaeological features and deposits were encountered, these were recorded to the standards outlined in the agreed WSI and the relevant CIfA Standard and Guidance. All features and deposits were recorded on *pro forma* record sheets, drawn in plan and section at a suitable scale, and photographed. In addition to any specific features or deposits, a general record of the trench stratigraphy was made on *pro forma* record sheets, a plan and section of each trench was made at a suitable scale and photography was completed.

### POST-FIELDWORK

The primary site archive comprises site records and digital photography on CD. This has been used to compile this report, all of which will be deposited with a local repository museum in digital and paper format as the principal record of the evaluation work. The physical archive comprises primary field records and advice will be sought on the detailed requirements for retention and deposition. An OASIS record has been completed for this work, including a digital version of this report, the reference for which is **solstice1-403083**. Deposition of the physical archive has been delayed until a determination is made on the need for, and scope of, any further work. In this instance then a single archive will be compiled and deposited.

### CHRONOLOGY

Where chronological and archaeological periods are referred to in the text, the relevant date ranges are broadly defined as follows:

- Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age): 1 million–12,000 BP (Before present)
- Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age): 10000–4000 BC
- Neolithic (New Stone Age): 4000–2400 BC
- Chalcolithic/Beaker Period: (2400–2000 BC)
- Bronze Age: 2000–700 BC
- Iron Age: 700 BC–AD 70
- Roman/Romano-British: AD 70–410
- Early medieval/Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-Scandinavian: AD 410–1066
- Medieval: AD 1066–1540
- Post-medieval: AD 1540–1900
  - » Tudor: AD 1485–1603
  - » Stuart: AD 1603–1714
  - » Georgian: AD 1714–1837
- Industrial: 1750–1900
  - » Victorian: AD 1837–1901
- Modern: AD 1900–Present

### QUALITY ASSURANCE

Solstice Heritage LLP commits all fieldwork and post-fieldwork assessment, analysis, reporting and dissemination to be undertaken to the standards stipulated by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The project has been managed by Chris Scott, who is a fully accredited member of CIfA (MCIfA level).



