

AD363

**Mount Pleasant Farm, Foxton Road, Alnmouth
Northumberland**

Archaeological Watching Brief



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AD Archaeology on behalf of Coastal Designs Ltd at Mount Pleasant Farm, Alnmouth during improvements to the access road at the point at which it intersected with Foxton Road.

The northern arm of Mount Pleasant Enclosure (HER 5700; Scheduled Ancient Monument ND13) lies 15m south-east of the area of the access road improvements. It was noted that the field in which the upstanding remains of the enclosure lie is situated at a significantly higher level than Foxton Road, which has been constructed in a deep cutting. Whilst the western arm of the enclosure may previously have run, in least in part, along the line taken by the present road, there is little doubt that the extensive groundworks associated with the construction of the latter would have removed all trace of a western bank along the course of the road.

No significant archaeological features were located during the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AD Archaeology on behalf of Coastal Designs Ltd at Mount Pleasant Farm, Alnmouth during improvements to the access road at the point at which it intersected with Foxton Road. At the junction with the road, new kerbs were laid in 0.50m wide and 0.30-0.40m deep foundation trenches. An archaeological watching brief was maintained on these groundworks due to the proximity of Mount Pleasant Enclosure (HER 5700) which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 3rd October 2022.

2 SITE LOCATION (Figs. 1-2)

2.1 The site is located at Mount Pleasant Farm, Foxton Road, Alnmouth (NZ NU 2456 1099). The development consists of the demolition of existing agricultural buildings and the construction of three dwellings to the west of the existing farmhouse. The focus of the watching brief lies 100m north-east of the Farm, where groundworks associated with access improvements (at NU2472 1104) had the potential to impact on features associated with a scheduled monument known as Mount Pleasant Enclosure and "The Norse Camp" (HER 5700). The scheduled monument (ND13) consists of an earthwork enclosure but its date and function remain uncertain.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Mount Pleasant Enclosure (HER 5700) is located 100m to the east Mount Pleasant Farm and consists of an earthwork enclosure which is possibly of prehistoric, medieval or early post-medieval date. The groundworks relating to improving the access to the site from Foxton Road are situated in the vicinity of the projected western side of the enclosure. The earthwork c 90m by 70m in size, consists of an irregular enclosure bounded by an earth bank on all sides except on the west where the modern road is located. The enclosure is unlikely to have been built to serve as a defensive camp as it is overlooked by Beacon Hill immediately on its eastern side; there are no indications of any central buildings or dwellings and it is not possible to determine its use with certainty. However its construction and its position at the entrance to the village of Alnmouth suggests that it may represent a stock enclosure, perhaps of medieval date. A function perhaps reflected by one of its traditional names as 'Night Folds'. It is an enigmatic site and it has not been subject to invasive archaeological investigation which would help to interpret its date and function. The interior of the site was utilised for the construction of the eleventh green for Alnmouth Golf Course, with associated bunkers and tee which may also complicate the interpretation of internal features. A geophysical survey carried out

on the site in 1993 appeared to identify the presence of hut circles while a field walking survey also in 1993 recovered a number of worked flints.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the approved written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix 2), with a drawn, written and photographic record being made.

5 RESULTS (Fig 2 and Plates 1-6)

5.1 Two curvilinear trenches (referred to as western and eastern trenches) were cut on either side of the entrance representing foundation trenches for the kerb stones. Both trenches were 0.50m in width and varied in depth between 0.30-0.40m. Natural subsoil was not encountered in either of the trenches.

5.2 In the westernmost trench grey loam topsoil (1000), up to 0.12m in depth overlay a yellow clayey sand (1001), which extended beneath the base of the trench (29.80mAOD). A number of pre-existing service trenches ran across the base of the trench.

5.3 In the easternmost trench, the tarmac surface of the road (1002) and the access road to the farm overlay a 0.30m deep road foundation of compacted sandstone fragments in a matrix of sandy clay and gravel (1003). The road foundation overlay a brown-grey sandy clay (1004) exposed on the base of the trench (29.80mAOD).

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 No significant archaeological features were located during the watching brief. The northern arm of Mount Pleasant Enclosure (HER 5700; Scheduled Ancient Monument ND13) lies 15m south-east of the area of the access road improvements. It was noted that the field in which the upstanding remains of the enclosure lie is situated at a significantly higher level than Foxtan Road, which has been constructed in a deep cutting. Whilst the western arm of the enclosure may previously have run, in least in part, along the line taken by the present road, there is little doubt that the extensive groundworks associated with the construction of the latter would have removed all trace of a western bank along the course of the road.

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT LIST

Context	Depth	Description
1000	0.12m	westernmost trench – topsoil
1001	0.30m+	westernmost trench – yellow clayey-sand
1002	0.08m	easternmost trench –road surface
1003	0.30m	easternmost trench–road foundation layer
1004	0.10m+	easternmost trench- layer

APPENDIX 2

Application ref: 19/00442/FUL

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT MOUNT PLEASANT FARM, FOXTON ROAD, ALNMOUTH

1 Introduction

1.1 This written scheme of investigation represents a method statement for undertaking an archaeological watching brief at Mount Pleasant Farm, Foxton Road, Alnmouth (NZ NU 2456 1099). The development consists of the demolition of existing agricultural buildings and the construction of three dwellings to the west of the existing farmhouse. The focus of the watching brief lies 100m north-east of the Farm, where groundworks associated with access improvements have the potential to impact on features associated with a scheduled monument known as Mount Pleasant Enclosure and “The Norse Camp” (HER 5700). The scheduled monument (ND13) consists of an earthwork enclosure but its date and function remain uncertain.

1.2 Policy relating to the assessment and mitigation of impacts to the heritage resource is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework identifies that the planning system should perform ‘an environmental role’, contributing to and protecting the built and historic environment and that the pursuit of ‘sustainable development’ includes seeking improvements to the built, natural and historic environment. The Framework further clarifies that, in circumstances where heritage assets will be damaged or lost as a result of development, Local Planning Authorities should require developers to record and advance the understanding of the asset to be lost in a manner appropriate to the significance of the asset. The evidence (and any archive) generated as part of the process should be made publically accessible; copies of the evidence generated should be deposited with the relevant Historic Environment Record and archives with the relevant museum.

1.3 Having assessed the potential impact of the development on the archaeological resource, Northumberland Conservation has advised Northumberland County Council (NCC) Development Management Team that a condition should be attached to the permission requiring a programme of archaeological watching brief consistent with the objectives of paragraphs 141; 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.4 An archaeological watching brief is required to ensure that a record is made of any significant archaeological features exposed during the groundworks in proximity to Mount Pleasant Enclosure (HER 5700). Groundworks in the area of the access road leading from Foxton Road have the potential to impact on archaeological associated with the scheduled monument. This document sets out the methodology

for undertaking the archaeological mitigation at the site and the subsequent reporting of the results.

2 Archaeological Background

2.1 Prehistoric

2.1.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the area consists of a number of worked flint tools (HER 5712) of the Mesolithic period. A bronze spear (HER 5695) was found 930m north-west of Mount Pleasant Farm. Stone-lined coffins containing Bronze Age burials have been located at Buston 2.5km to the south-west of the site. A possible cup and ring marked stone (HER 5730) was located 500m to the east of Mount Pleasant Farm, which may derive from a Bronze Age cairn. No remains of Roman date are known in the vicinity of Alnmouth.

2.1.2 Prehistoric settlement and activity is widespread through the North-East Region and this is particularly evident close to the coastline. It is possible therefore that features of prehistoric date may be encountered.

2.2 Early-medieval

2.2.1 In the early medieval period it seems most likely that there would have been an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Alnmouth, known as Twyford. Bede records that in AD 684, a church meeting was held at the place with two fords at the mouth of the river Aln. The meeting may have occurred close to Church Hill, where the remains of a 10th Century carved stone cross (HER 5705) were found which marks the likely site of an Anglo-Saxon church, 900m to the south of Mount Pleasant Farm.

2.3 Medieval

2.3.1 Alnmouth was formally established by William de Vesci, the then local Norman magnate who was granted a charter in 1152 to hold court and establish a settlement on a 120ha spit of land, presumably to establish a viable seaport. In a charter of 1147 the new borough is first mentioned and the tithes of a church were granted to Alnwick Abbey. The church (HER 5704) was situated on Church Hill (900m south of the site), being extended in the late 13th /early 14th Century but erosion caused by the river led to it being in ruins by the 18th Century.

2.3.2 Alnmouth became an important regional settlement during the course of the medieval period (HER 5718). The settlement had a safe natural harbour and in the medieval period the town was a thriving port. Stone and grain were exported as well as wool, sheepskins and leather; fishing was also an important industry. Trade was particularly helped, when the Earls of Northumberland made Alnwick, their main centre. The plan of Alnmouth follows a conventional medieval pattern of a central road (now Northumberland Street) with long thin burgage plots running at right-angles to it. Mayson's Map of 1614 is the earliest known map of the village and it

shows it as a little larger than its present size. Most of the street system as shown remains the same and in some places the boundaries of burgages can be traced.

2.3.3 In an excavation of 2012 Archaeology Services Durham University located medieval building remains (HER 25331; Event 15364) at allotments east of Foxton Road, 150m south-east of the site. Pottery of 12th-15th century was recovered from the excavation.

2.3.4 Mount Pleasant Enclosure (HER 5700) is located 100m to the east Mount Pleasant Farm and consists of an earthwork enclosure which is possibly of medieval or early post-medieval date. The groundworks relating to improving the access to the site from Foxton Road are situated in the vicinity of the projected western side of the enclosure. The earthwork c 90m by 70m in size, consists of an irregular enclosure bounded by an earth bank on all sides except on the west where the modern road is located. The enclosure is unlikely to have been built to serve as a defensive camp as it is overlooked by Beacon Hill immediately on its eastern side; there are no indications of any central buildings or dwellings and it is not possible to determine its use with certainty. However its construction and its position at the entrance to the village of Alnmouth suggests that it may represent a stock enclosure, perhaps of medieval date. A function perhaps reflected by one of its traditional names as 'Night Folds'. It is an enigmatic site has not been subject to invasive archaeological investigation which would help to interpret its date and function. The interior of the site was utilised for the construction of the eleventh green for Alnmouth Golf Course, with associated bunkers and tee which may also complicate the interpretation of internal features. A geophysical survey carried out on the site in 1993 appeared to identify the presence of hut circles while a field walking survey also in 1993 recovered a number of worked flints.

2.3.5 There has been some discussion about whether the road to the immediate west of the scheduled monument overlay the western side of the enclosure and whether the features represents a prehistoric enclosure or a medieval stock enclosure. The North East Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment (NERCZA) undertook a rapid assessment of the enclosure in 2010. The survey interpreted the earthworks as three separate elements comprising a track, post-medieval quarry and golf course green and bunker. The position of the enclosure was also questioned, as the hilltop would make a more suitable (and traditional) location, rather than the base of the slope where it is sited. The NERCZA suggested that it is more likely to be a medieval or earlier boundary which demarcated different land holdings or perhaps medieval parkland and continued to the north-west following the same contour, but no longer visible to the north of the road due to later ploughing.

2.3.6 The area of the site lies beyond the limits of the medieval village and it is unlikely therefore that domestic structural medieval features will be encountered. However, it is possible that features associated with outlying agricultural processing or craft activities may be encountered.

2.4 Post-medieval

2.4.1 A raid by the Scots in 1336 and the generally poor economic conditions over the whole country at this time, sent Alnmouth into a long period of depression. Trade died down in the later 16th and 17th centuries, but revived again in the 18th century, when Alnmouth exported grain and imported goods from London and Holland, and wood from Norway. Many new buildings were built at this time, including several large stone granaries. The grain trade revived Alnmouth's economy which is reflected in the rebuilding in stone which began then, recorded by the six lintels on village buildings carved with dates from 1713 to 1736.

2.4.2 Despite the success of its trading links the town was increasingly troubled by the river and harbour silting up, making it difficult for ships to dock. In 1806 a storm changed the entire course of the river, which began to flow between Church Hill and the main town. The storm also finally destroyed the surviving remains of the medieval church. During the 19th-20th Century the town became a coastal resort.

2.4.3 A number of HER features of post-medieval/modern date are located within a c250m radius of the site within the northern half of the town. These consist of allotments (HER 25331), a demolished clubhouse (HER 27579), a Wesleyan Chapel (HER 29317) the Duchess Bridge (HER5733; Grade II listed), a well (HER 5739; Grade II listed), a War Memorial (HER 25469; Grade II listed) and a drinking fountain (5743; Grade II listed). Further to the south lining Northumberland Street are a number of listed buildings. A beacon was sited on the upper part of Beacon Hill or Watch Hill (HER 5699) 300m east of the site.

2.4.3 There are numerous world war II defensive features in the Alnmouth area including gun batteries, pill boxes and anti-tank obstacles.

3 Scope of Works

3.1 The development consists of the demolition of existing agricultural buildings and the construction of three dwellings, 15m south-west of Mount Pleasant Farm. No archaeological watching brief will be required on the construction of the new buildings. The proposals also involve the widening of the site access road leading from Foxton Road with modification of ground levels to required sightlines, resurfacing and kerbing. There have been a number of theories about whether the scheduled area associated with Mount Pleasant Enclosure originally had a western side broadly running under the road or whether a medieval boundary bank ran from the scheduled monument into the field to the north-west in this location. The groundworks required for this work to the access road require an archaeological watching brief as they have the potential to impact on archaeological associated with the scheduled monument.

3.2 Compacted modern material can be initially removed mechanically using a toothed bucket provided care is made not to damage underlying deposits. Other unstratified modern material can be removed mechanically by a machine using a toothless blade. The topsoil or recent overburden will be removed in successive level spits down to the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural subsoil, whichever is encountered first. Intrusive groundworks will be undertaken under the

supervision of an archaeologist. Provision should be made within the project timetable to excavate and record any archaeological features exposed by the groundworks associated with the construction work. If considered necessary due to potential archaeological sensitivity the archaeologist can hand-excavate deposits during the works.

4 Methodology

4.1 All work will be carried out in compliance with the Regional Statement of Good Practice and codes of practice of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and will follow the CIfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.

4.2 All staff will be suitably qualified and experienced for their project roles

4.3 All staff will familiarise themselves with the results of previous assessments, watching briefs and excavations in the immediate area prior to the start of work. All staff must be aware of the work required under the specification, and must understand the project aims and methodologies.

4.4 This observation shall involve the systematic examination and accurate recording of all archaeological features, horizons and artefacts identified. If archaeological remains are uncovered, the archaeologist should be given the opportunity of excavating and recording the remains before they are destroyed. Should significant archaeological features be exposed samples up to 30 litres in volume will be taken, and selected 5-litre samples will be submitted to a recognised specialist for micro- and macro-fossil analysis. This general sampling strategy has been discussed previously on similar projects with Don O'Meara, Historic England's Scientific Advisor.

4.5 Provision will be made within the project timetable to excavate and record any archaeological features exposed by the groundworks associated with the construction work.

Recording

4.6 A full and proper record (written, graphic and photographic as appropriate) will be made for all work, using pro forma record sheets and text descriptions appropriate to the work. Accurate scale plans and section drawings will be drawn at 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 scales as appropriate. The areas observed will be surveyed with a Total Station/GPS and tied into the national grid and located on a 1:2500 or 1:1250 map. In the event of human burials being discovered, they should be left in situ and covered. If removal is essential, a license will be obtained from the Ministry of Justice with work being undertaken under appropriate environmental health regulations. Where skeletons are encountered, they will be recorded by photography and the use of pro forma skeleton recording sheets. In the event of the discovery of human burials, the archaeologist will procure and comply with all statutory consents and licenses under the Burial Act 1857. Where any part of a human burial is disturbed, the whole burial must be archaeologically excavated.

Appropriate procedures under the relevant legislation must be followed in the event of the discovery of artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasure Act 1996.

4.7 All deposits and features encountered as well as the base of the trench will be adequately levelled. The depth at which the highest point of each context will be recorded both in terms of AOD and depth beneath present ground level.

4.8 A digital photographic record of all archaeological features will be taken, both in detail and in a wider context. Digital archiving will be with the Archaeology Data Service. Their requirements for depositing data; are that files are in the correct format; that proper file naming conventions are used; and that they are accompanied by appropriate documentation. For this project vector graphics will be supplied in CAD- DWG with documentation in the form of accompanying captions. Images will be in Uncompressed Baseline TIFF v.6 –TIF with accompanying captions. Text will be in Word DOC format.

4.9 In the event that hearths, kilns or ovens (of whatever period, date or function) are identified during the watching brief, provision should be made to collect at least one archaeo-magnetic date to be calculated from each individual hearth surface (or in the case of domestic dwellings sites a minimum of one per building identified). Where applicable, samples to be collected from the site and processed by a suitably trained specialist for dating purposes. In the event that such deposits or structures are identified, the Conservation Team will be contacted to discuss the appropriate response.

Contingency arrangements

4.10 In the event of the discovery of archaeological remains which are of a greater number or extent than anticipated, work will cease and Northumberland Conservation and a representative of the developer will be notified. An assessment will be made of the importance of the remains and any provision for their recording or preservation in situ as appropriate. The contingency for this project has been set at up to 30 person-days.

Report Preparation

4.11 On the completion of the fieldwork an Archive Report will be prepared, which will be submitted by the archaeologist to Northumberland Conservation within two months of completion of the work. The Archive Report will detail the stratigraphical history of the site and will contain a full textual account setting out the significance of the structural, artefactual and paleoenvironmental evidence.

4.12 The report shall be bound with each page and paragraph numbered, and include as a minimum the following:

- Northumberland Conservation reference, OASIS number and an 8 figure grid reference
- A location plan of the site

- A location plan of the trenching within the site. This must be to a suitable scale, and located with reference to the National Grid, to allow the results to be accurately plotted on the Sites and Monuments Record. The trench must be located using a Total Station/GPS
- Plans, sections and photographs of archaeology located
- A summary statement of the results
- A table summarising the deposits, features, classes and numbers
- of artefacts encountered and spot dating of significant finds.
- Photographs of all features of interest and general photographs to illustrate conditions under which work took place.
- Plans and sections of any archaeological features observed with above Ordnance Datum levels
- A copy of this Written Scheme of Investigation

4.13 A short report of the work shall also be submitted to a local or national journal if appropriate, with a summary to Archaeology in Northumberland.

4.14 If the results of the archaeological mitigation are of sufficient interest an appropriate level of publication will be agreed with the Northumberland Conservation Team and will be prepared in line with the approved project design and Historic England's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment.

4.15 Information about projects carried out in Northumberland is normally submitted to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The overall aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of the advent of large scale developer funded fieldwork. AD Archaeology will complete the online OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>. Once a report has become a public document by submission to or incorporation into the HER and NMR, the information will also be incorporated into the English Heritage Excavation Index, hosted online by the Archaeology Data Service.

Finds / archive policy

4.16 Any finds, including any such items affected by the Treasures Act, will remain the property of the landowner (in the case of the highway, the Highways and Transportation Departments of Northumberland County Council). A formal request to the relevant landowner will be made once the fieldwork commences recommending that the material be deposited with Great North Museum for eventual curation, storage and archiving upon the completion of the project.

4.17 The site archive will consist of all paper records created during the project and will be sent to the Great North Museum.

Storage

4.18 During and after the Watching Brief, any objects will be temporarily stored in the appropriate materials and storage conditions to ensure minimal deterioration and loss of information (this will include controlled storage, correct packaging, regular monitoring of conditions, immediate selection for conservation of vulnerable material). All storage will have appropriate security provision.

Finds Processing

4.19 Any finds processing, conservation work and storage of finds will be carried out in compliance with the IfA Guidelines for Finds Work and those set by UKIC

4.20 Artefact collection and discard policies will be fit for the defined purpose.

4.21 Any bulk finds which are not discarded will be washed and, with the exception of animal bone, marked. Marking and labelling will be indelible and irremovable by abrasion. Bulk finds will be appropriately bagged and boxed and recorded. This process will be carried out no later than two months after the end of the Watching Brief.

4.22 All small finds will be recorded as individual items. All small finds will be appropriately packaged. Vulnerable objects will be specially packaged, and textiles, painted glass and coins stored in appropriate specialist systems. This process will be carried out within two days of the small find being excavated.

4.23 Assessment and analysis of artefacts and environmental samples will be carried out by an approved named specialist listed below.

Roman Pottery – Alex Croom (TWAM)
 Medieval Pottery – Andy Sage
 Prehistoric Pottery – Rob Young
 Animal bone – Louisa Gidney (Univ. of Durham)
 Environmental material – Duncan Hale (ASUD)
 Conservation – Karen Barker (TWAM)

Any other classes of artefact will be dealt with by appropriate specialists approved by Northumberland Conservation Team.

Site Archive

4.24 The archive and the finds will be deposited at the Great North Museum (GNM) within **6 months** of completion of the post-excavation work and report. The GNM will assign a specific accession number upon the deposit of the archive. Digital archiving will be with the Archaeology Data Service. Their requirements for

depositing data; are that files are in the correct format; that proper file naming conventions are used; and that they are accompanied by appropriate documentation. For this project vector graphics will be supplied in CAD- DWG with documentation in the form of accompanying captions. Images will be in Uncompressed Baseline TIFF v.6 –TIF with accompanying captions. Text will be in Word DOC format.

4.25 Archiving work will be carried out compliance with the IfA Guidelines for Archiving .

The data will be collected in a format suitable for integration into the Berwick Urban Deposit Model.

4.26 The site archive will be prepared to the standard specified in Management of Archaeological Projects, appendix 3 (HBMC 1991) and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage (UKIC 1990). This 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 recovered), photographic records, drawing records, photographs, drawings, level books, site note-books, spot-dating records and conservation records. It will be ensured that all artefacts and ecofacts recovered and retained from the site are packed and stored in the appropriate materials and conditions and that all their associated records are complete. This will be completed by the end of the field work. A summary account of the context record will be included and written by the supervising archaeologist.

4.27 The archive will be submitted to the relevant local museum (GNM) within 6 months of the end of the fieldwork. The Great North Museum has been contacted archiving of the project. Digital archive will go to ADS.

5 Monitoring

5.1 Reasonable access to the site will be afforded to the County Archaeologists or his/her nominee at all times, for the purposes of monitoring the archaeological evaluation. Up to 2 monitoring visits will be made by the County Archaeologists or his/her nominee, any further visits will be made at the request of the client. The first site monitoring visit will be free and those after that will be charged for time and travel by NCCCT.

6 Staff

6.1 Overall project management of the scheme will be undertaken by Mr. J McKelvey, while the field staff will be professionally qualified field staff of AD Archaeology: *Curricula vitae* available on request.

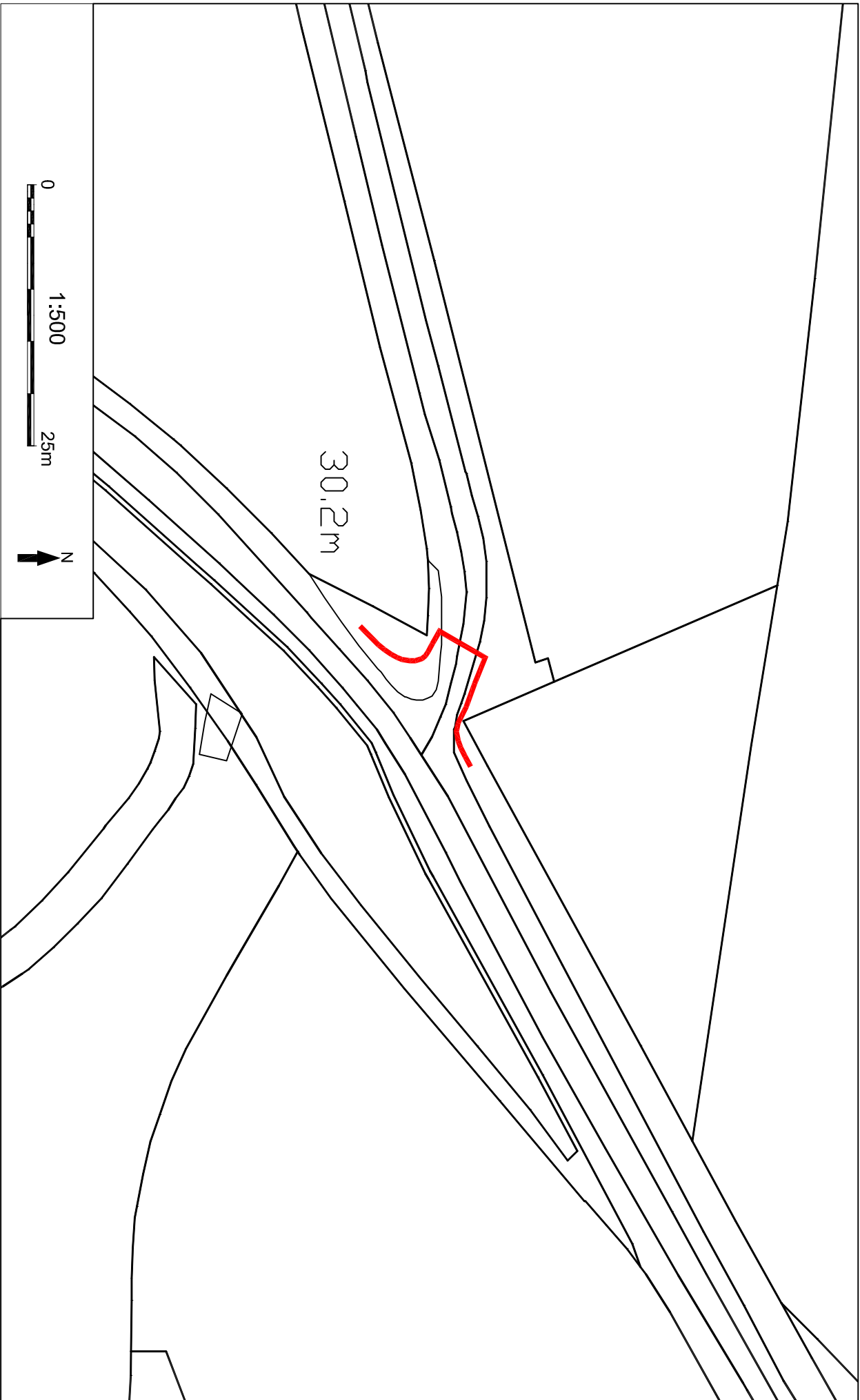
7 Further Information

7.1 This specification may only be varied by agreement with the developer and the Northumberland Conservation Team.



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Figure 1: General location of works



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Figure 2: Detailed location of works



Plate 1: Overall view of works looking north-west



Plate 2: View of works looking north-east



Plate 3 Western trench looking south-west



Plate 4 Western trench looking north-west



Plate 5 Eastern trench looking south-west



Plate 6 Eastern trench looking north-east