

NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES LTD

LOWHILLS, PETERLEE, COUNTY DURHAM

Negative Watching Brief Report

Site name: Lowhills, Peterlee

Grid reference: NZ 4195 4275

Parish: Easington

County: County Durham

Administrative authority: Durham County Council

Client: Theakston Land/Lichfields

Planning application reference: PL/5/2013/0106

Site supervisor: Steven Collison

Project manager: Matthew Town

Fieldwork Date(s): 11–12 April 2018

NAA project number: 1124

Site code: LOP18

NAA report number: 18/34

Report date: 13 April 2018

Reasons for watching brief

This report concerns Phase 1a of development at Lowhills, Peterlee, specifically the construction of a new access road off the roundabout at Little Thorpe and its junction with Andrew's Lane (Figure 1). Previous phases of site investigation have identified widespread archaeological remains within the development boundary (GSB 2013; NAA 2015). As such, a planning condition outlining a programme of archaeological monitoring was included in the planning permission granted by Durham County Council. This watching brief was intended to address the planning condition and was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) submitted to, and approved by, Durham County Council (NAA 2018).

During a programme of targeted archaeological trial trenching in 2015, archaeological features were identified in trenches 48–50 (NAA 2015) in proximity to the footprint of the new access road. A full archaeological background and results of the archaeological trial trenching are available within the evaluation report (*ibid.*).

Results

The topsoil and subsoil stripping were undertaken on the 11th of April using a back acting mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, which was under the supervision

of the attending archaeologist at all times. The stripped area was between 7.1m and 7.4m wide and curved from the north-west corner of the field before returning towards the junction of Andrew's Lane and the Little Thorpe roundabout for a total of 60m (Figure 2). The stripped area did not impact on an 11m strip running along the northern boundary of the development area. This area was left undisturbed to be completed at a future date and included the hedge line that forms the northern boundary, a verge and a strip of scrub grass within the field.

The surrounding field was waterlogged, and, upon removal of subsoil, water immediately began pooling in the stripped area, which necessitated quick investigation and interpretation of any possible features.

The topsoil (1) was consistently 0.3m in depth across the stripped area. An agricultural subsoil (2) increased in depth from 0.15m in the northwest to between 0.35m-0.4m in the southeast; it was a light grey brown sandy silt. The natural (5) consisted of stony yellow-brown boulder clay in the northwest, changing to bright reddish-yellow silty sand in the south east. A single linear feature (4) was recorded cutting the natural in the southern part of the stripped area. This linear feature, aligned east to west, was visible for 10.7m, up to 1.2m wide, and filled with light grey brown silty clay (3) up to a depth of 0.10m. Two French drains ran across the northern part of the stripped area on an east-southeast to west-northwest alignment.

Conclusion

No significant archaeological features were observed within the stripped area. The single linear feature that was excavated and recorded (4) is highly likely to be part of the medieval ridge and furrow system noted by the earlier works and is therefore of low intrinsic value. This watching brief met the condition outlining archaeological monitoring for Phase 1a, although further monitoring will be required when the stripped area is extended to link up with Andrew's Lane and the Little Thorpe Roundabout.

Documentation: 1 trench sheet, 2 drawing sheets, 18 digital photographs.

Archive deposition: Internally at NAA.

References

GSB (2013) *Lowhills, Peterlee, Co. Durham*. GSB Prospection Ltd Report G1319.

NAA (2015) *Lowhills, Peterlee, County Durham: Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpublished Northern Archaeological Associates Report No. 15/90.

NAA (2018) *Lowhills, Peterlee, County Durham: Written Scheme of Investigation*. Unpublished
Northern Archaeological Associates Report No. 18/17.

Plates



Plate 1: View of stripped area, facing north-west.



Plate 2: Furrow (4), 2 x 1m scales, looking west.