DigVentures

Greta Bridge

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Prepared on behalf of:

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Purpose of document

This document has been prepared as an Archaeological Watching Brief Report for Mr WHT Salvin, Historic England (HE) and Durham County Council Archaeology Section (DCCAS). The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive account of the watching brief at land off the A66 at Greta Bridge, Rokeby, County Durham.

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Project summary

OASIS ID	digventu1-405855
DV project code and type	GB20 Watching Brief
National Grid Reference	NZ 08909 13145
County	Durham
Title:	Greta Bridge Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s):	Stuart Noon MCIfA Ben Swain
Origination date:	11/12/2020
Circulation:	WHT Salvin MRICS Lee McFarlane, Historic England David Mason, Durham County Council Section
Reviewed by:	Joshua Hogue DPhil
Approval:	Manda Forster MCIfA, PhD

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Acknowledgements

We would like to begin with a sincere thank you to Mr WHT Salvin MRICS for inviting us to undertake this project, and to Historic England and Durham County Council Archaeology Section for advice and support. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ben Swain, the project was managed for DigVentures by Stuart Noon, with Lisa Westcott Wilkins in the role of Project Executive.

Executive summary

DigVentures Ltd was appointed by Mr WHT Salvin (hereafter 'the Client') to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief at land off the A66, Greta Bridge, Rokeby, County Durham (hereafter "the Site") on 1st December 2020. Under the management of Robert Walton, Walton Groundworks, the reduction of land by a maximum of 200mm was undertaken along with minor re-fencing with replacement gates at an existing egress and access onto the A66. This impinged on a small area of the Scheduled Monument of Greta Bridge Roman fort, vicus and road (HE List Entry No. 1019074) (Figure 2). All works were undertaken according to specifications outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by DigVentures and the requirements of Durham County Council Archaeology Section and Historic England (Noon and Hogue 2020).

Results Summary

This report constitutes compliance with Historic England's requirement for an archaeological watching brief during groundworks and is subject to their approval. The groundworks comprised the reduction of ground levels by no more than 200mm to facilitate terram to be laid and then a stone surface to protect any below ground deposits from rutting by heavy machinery use. The replacement fence posts were pile driven and no holes were excavated. The site boundary impinges on the southeast corner of the Scheduled Ancient Monument area of Greta Bridge Roman Fort, Vicus and Section of Roman Road (HE List Entry No. 1019074) and, as such, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) for the works was requested and provided by the Secretary of State (S00240321, 14 October 2020).

Monitoring of the groundworks revealed no significant archaeological finds or features. The remains of a post-medieval disused stone field boundary was uncovered. The access is to be utilised to and from the A66 for heavy agricultural machinery and as a holding pen for sheep and cattle. Car wheel-trims, a car badge, plastic bottles, a wooden plank, gate fitting and a horseshoe were present in some of the observed deposits. All of which are considered to be modern in date. No archaeological features were identified linked to the Roman fort, vicus or road.

The absence of any significant features may be because of the shallow depth of the excavated deposits (200mm maximum). No evidence of the Roman fort, vicus or road was encountered, although due to the shallow depth of the excavations it does not discount the possibility that features associated with Roman settlement or occupation are located in the area. No further works are recommended, subject to approval by Durham County Council Archaeology Section and Historic England.

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1.1 Project background

1.1.1 DigVentures Ltd was appointed by Mr WHT Salvin (hereafter 'the Client') to undertake an archaeological watching brief at land off the A66, Greta Bridge, Rokeby, County Durham (hereafter "the Site") (Figure 1) on 1st December 2020. Under the management of Robert Walton, Walton Groundworks, the reduction of land by a maximum of 200mm was undertaken along with minor re-fencing with replacement gates at an existing egress and access onto the A66. This impinged on a small area of the Scheduled Monument of Greta Bridge Roman fort, vicus and road (HE List Entry No. 1019074) (Figure 2).

1.1.2 The site is a Scheduled Monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (Historic England List Entry No. 1019074). Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was provided in advance of the works on the 14th October 2020 by the Secretary of State at Department of Culture Media and Sport (Reference No. S00240321).

1.1.3 All works were undertaken according to specifications outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by DigVentures and the requirements of DCCAS and Historic England (Noon and Hogue 2020).

1.2 Scope of document

1.2.1 This report summarises the aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief, sets out the strategy and methodology by which the fieldwork was delivered and presents the findings of the investigation. In format and content, it conforms with current best practice and to the guidance outlined the Management of Archaeological Research Projects in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015a), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (2014) and the North East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment (Petts and Gerrard 2006). Draft Resource Assessments (NERFF 2020), and Standards for Archaeological Work in County Durham and Darlington (DCCAS 2019).

1.3 Dissemination

1.3.1 Copies of this report will be distributed to the client, Historic England and the Durham County Council Historic Environment Record (HER), and a digital copy will be uploaded to the OASIS (digventu1-405855).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location, geology and background

2.1.1 The Site lies at grid reference NZ 08909 13145 and is situated in the parish of Brignall, Rokeby in the south of County Durham located to the north, south and east of the Morritt Arms Hotel which is a Grade II listed building (List entry no: 1121699), (Figure 1). The proposed development area is an existing access onto the A66 across the edge of the scheduled monument (Figure 3).

2.1.2 The monument lies within an area of sedimentary bedrock of the Alston Formation formed between 337 and 328 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The bedrock constituents vary from bioclastic limestones, sandstones, mudstones, siltstones and rare coals typically in regular cyclothemic sequence. The superficial geology comprises river terrace and glaciofluvial sheet deposits comprising gravel, sand and silt formed since the Last Glacial Maximum (BGS, http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk).

2.1.3 Greta Bridge is the focus of considerable historic and archaeological interest. It is the site of a well preserved Roman fort, an associated civilian settlement or vicus and a section of the Roman road which linked Dere Street at Scotch Corner to Carlisle across the Stainmore Pass. The monument is contained within three separate areas of protection (Historic England, List Entry 1019074).

2.1.4 A comprehensive archaeological and historic background to the site is provided by Archaeoenvironment Ltd (2012). The fort covers an area of 3.5 acres and may have been known in Roman times as Maglona. The first construction of the fort is thought to date to the late 1st century AD, the period of Agricola's northern campaigns. A dedication slab to Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD) discovered near the north gate in 1793 suggests occupation at least up until the mid 2nd century AD. An inscription, (now lost), found in 1727 suggests the presence of a beneficiarii consularis at Greta Bridge in the 3rd century whose function would have been to provide surveillance for the civil settlement (NAA 1997, p.1).

2.1.5 The north defences are now largely lost beneath the Morritt Arms Hotel but excavation in the 1990s at Burns Cottage (south of the garage) identified substantial surviving buried remains of the ditch and stone buildings with suggestions of occupation from the early 2nd to the late 4th century AD. In addition, a previous rear extension on the north side of the Morritt Arms uncovered parts of the north gate (Porta Praetoria) and rampart (NAA 1997 Section 3 and Casey 1998, p.111).

2.1.6 Excavations some distance to the north of the proposed development during the construction of the A66 by-pass in 1973-74 revealed the complete plan of a burned-out timber courtyard building likely to have been a mansio, an official wayside inn for those on government business, of Trajanic or Hadrianic date. The rooms were sealed by deposits of a late 3rd to early 4th century date. Twelve or more strip houses of a pre-4th century date were also recorded (Casey 1998, 129-131and NAA 1997, section 3).

2.1.7 The main civil settlement appears to have taken the form of a ribbon development on both sides of the Stainmore road immediately north of the fort itself, extending across both the River Greta and the Tutta Beck for a total of approximately 600metres (Casey et al 1998, p.122).

2.1.8 The Roman road survives as a cambered gravel surface 6m wide, later replaced in stone, and flanked by stone lined drains. The road is thought to be of first century date but it remained an important arterial route, especially in the middle and later third century (Historic England, List Entry 1019074). A link connecting the fort to the arterial road together with building and road foundations of 2nd century date outside the fort gate, was observed during earlier road works in 1929 just in front of the hotel and a road with side ditches was observed in 1972 (NAA 1997, p.2).

2.1.9 A watching brief in the area immediately to the east of the vicus produced some evidence of cremation burials; the existence of burials, which are normally located beyond the limit of the settlement, is thought to indicate that this is the eastern limit of the vicus at Greta Bridge. The full extent of the vicus is not yet understood and further remains may survive beyond the area of protection (Historic England, List Entry 1019074).

2.2 North-East Regional Research Framework

2.2.1 A watching brief at Greta bridge held some potential to address some of the research themes and questions posed in the North-East Regional Research Framework (NERRF, Petts and Gerrard 2006), as well as those raised more recently as a result of developer-led archaeology. Investigation had the potential to address some of the following themes highlighted within the NERRF:

2.2.2 Transport and communication - Being critical to the expansion of and success of settlement in the North East in more recent times, industry and transport was likely an important aspect of the region since at least Roman times. Apart from two main north-south roads, the other major axis of communication is west across the Pennines into Westmoreland. The route used by the Romans ran over the Stainmore Pass, and roughly followed the route of the modern A66. As well as the military activity on Stainmore itself, there were two forts on this route at Greta Bridge and Bowes. The fort at Greta Bridge, as the name suggests, was situated at a crossing point on the River Greta. The A66 passes through Greta bridge linking the Roman forts and settlements of Cumbria with the Roman forts and settlements of North Yorkshire, passing by through the vicus (or village) that lay just outside the Roman Fort of Bravoniacum, which lies below modern-day Kirkby Thore. Although the basic routes of all the main Roman roads are known, there are still stretches where the precise course remains conjectural (Petts and Gerrard 2006, p. 46-51).

2.2.3 Settlement, military infrastructure and native communities – Roman military infrastructure was unsurprisingly, closely linked to the road network within Country Durham. Although many of the county's forts have seen archaeological excavation, there has been little significant work since the 1970s, and this has been carried out in a development-control context (Petts and Gerrard 2006, p. 51). Apart from a small, recent evaluation excavation in the north-west corner of the fort (NAA 1996), there has been little work on the fort itself, though excavation has taken place on its related vicus (Casey and Hoffman 1998). Work is required to assess the nature of the system

of forts, roads and towns, and the relationship of these 'Roman' elements of the landscape to the native populations who continued, on the whole, to live in a variety of traditional settlement types (Petts and Gerrard 2006, p. 54).

2.2.4 Material culture - The great number of military sites in the North-East has, unsurprisingly, produced large amounts of Roman pottery. The quality of publication of these assemblages is, however, variable. Whereas more recent publications are strong, many of the older site reports are of limited use (Petts and Gerrard 2006, p. 57). Pottery may facilitate the recognition of possible external ethnic groups; it has been suggested that' Housesteads Ware' may have been made by Frisian units stationed on the Wall, and Vivien Swan has suggested that it may be possible to recognise African troops on the basis of locally made ceramics with North African affinities (Swan 1992; 1999).

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Watching brief

3.1.1 The principal aim of the watching brief was to provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains and to investigate and record any archaeological remains within the area of the groundworks. This will included:

- Verifying the archaeological potential of the site.
- Identify the potential for remains not anticipated by previous research or record.

3.1.2 The Site is located at the edge of the scheduled area on the line of the A66 at an existing access point and comprises of minor works in the form of the imposition of new access gate at a depth of 200mm. The principle archaeological question during works at the site was to establish to what extent do the works impinge on the Scheduled Monument and if any Roman remains can be identified and recorded.

3.1.3 Although the size of the development was limited, if identified any Roman remains may have had the potential to address some of the research aims of the NERRF (Petts and Gerrard 2006).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1.1 The work was undertaken on 1st December 2020 by Ben Swain on behalf of DigVentures. An archaeological presence was maintained during all groundwork on the Site. All works were undertaken in accordance with the standards set out within the WSI provided by DigVentures and the requirements of DCCAS and Historic England (Noon and Hogue 2020). The Client provided reasonable access in order that all features and deposits revealed during groundwork could be fully investigated and recorded appropriately

4.1.2 An archaeological watching brief was carried out on commencement of groundwork. The works involved the reduction of the existing ground level using mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket up to a depth 200mm to facilitate laying of terram and a stone surface to protect below ground deposits from rutting at the access point for heavy machinery from the A66 (Figure 2). No archaeological features were observed.

4.1.3 All work was completed under strict archaeological observation, with regular stops to enable examination of the exposed deposits. The methodology was designed to allow a sufficient sample of each feature type/deposit to be examined in order to establish the nature, extent and condition of the archaeological remains.

4.1.4 All recording was undertaken using DigVentures pro forma recording system, supported by a digital photographic record conforming to standards outlined by Historic England (2015b).

5 RESULTS

5.1.1 An area of land that formed part of the existing egress and access point to the A66 located within the Schedurea, measured 23.00m long and between 7.80m and 13.80m in width, reduced to a minimum depth of 0.05m and to a maximum depth of 0.20m (Figure 2).

5.1.2 Excavation revealed a topsoil layer of dark greyish brown sandy silt with occasional small and medium sized sub-rounded sandstone fragments to a maximum depth of 0.15m (1001). Underneath this was a layer of dark yellowish brown silty sand (subsoil) with occasional small to medium sized sub-angular sandstone fragments (1002) excavated to a maximum depth of 0.05m (Figure 4e).

5.1.3 Close to the roadside entrance point the topsoil had been eroded by heavy agricultural machinery that had been consolidated by a layer of very compacted dark grey asphalt hardcore (1003) placed on top of the subsoil (1002). This was removed during excavation and measured between 5.00m to 7.00m in length, 7.80m in width and 0.12m thick (Figure 3c).

5.1.4 At the centre of the reduced area a linear feature was uncovered visible as an earthwork NE-SW aligned continuing beyond the limit of excavation. Excavation revealed a layer of dark greyish brown sandy silt with inclusions of frequent medium and large sub-rounded sandstones set around the edge, measuring 8.00m long, 1.50m wide and 0.15m thick (1004). This represents the remains of a disused field boundary of probable post-medieval origin (Figure 3d). The replacement gate and fence posts were pile driven and the holes were not excavated.

5.2 Archaeological finds

5.2.1 A small quantity of finds material was recovered from the layer (1001) during removal of the topsoil. This material comprised mid-20th century to early 21st century AD finds, including a car wheel-trim, car badge, plastic bottle, wooden plank, gate fitting and a horseshoe. The finds confirm the relatively modern date of the topsoil layer and do not contribute further to the research aims and objectives identified. The finds were observed on site and not retained.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1.1 This report constitutes compliance with Historic England's recommendations for archaeological observation during groundworks consisting of the reduction of land to improve an agricultural access point to the A66.

6.1.2 Monitoring of the groundworks revealed no significant archaeological finds or features. A linear stone faced bank NE-SW aligned and visible as an earthwork continuing beyond the limit of excavation was interpreted as a post-medieval disused field boundary. The finds such as car wheel trims and plastic bottles confirm that the deposits excavated were modern in date. No archaeological remains were identified linked to the Roman fort, vicus or road.

6.1.3 The absence of any significant features can be explained by the shallow depth of the excavated deposits (0.20m maximum). No evidence of the Roman fort, vicus or road was encountered, although due to the shallow depth of the excavations it does not discount the possibility that activity relating to these features are located in the area. Subject to approval by Historic England's (HE) Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Lee McFarlane and Durham County Council's Archaeology Service (DCCAS), no further works are recommended.

7 RECOMMENDATION AND ARCHIVE

7.1 Preparation and deposition

7.1.1 As no finds or significant features from archaeological deposits were observed during the watching brief, no physical archive (aside from the information detailed in full in this report) was produced. The project archive, consisting of this report and associated digitised records, will be uploaded to OASIS. A digital and hard copy of this report has been sent to the Client, Historic England and the DCC HER. This report will be appended to the OASIS record. Subject to approval by Durham County Council's Archaeology Service (DCCAS) and Historic England, given the absence of archaeological remains, no further works are recommended.

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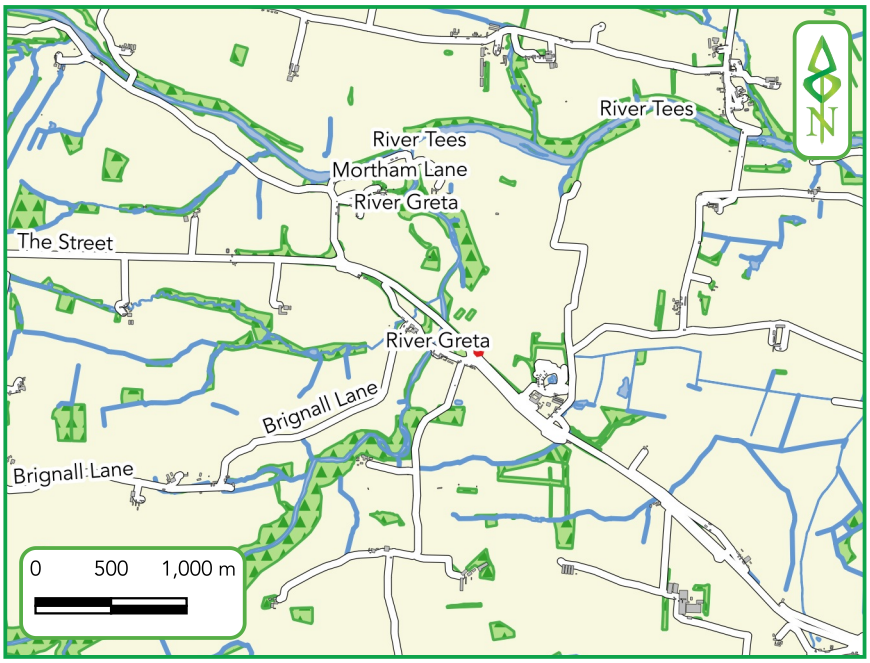

Figure 1 - Greta Bridge: Site location

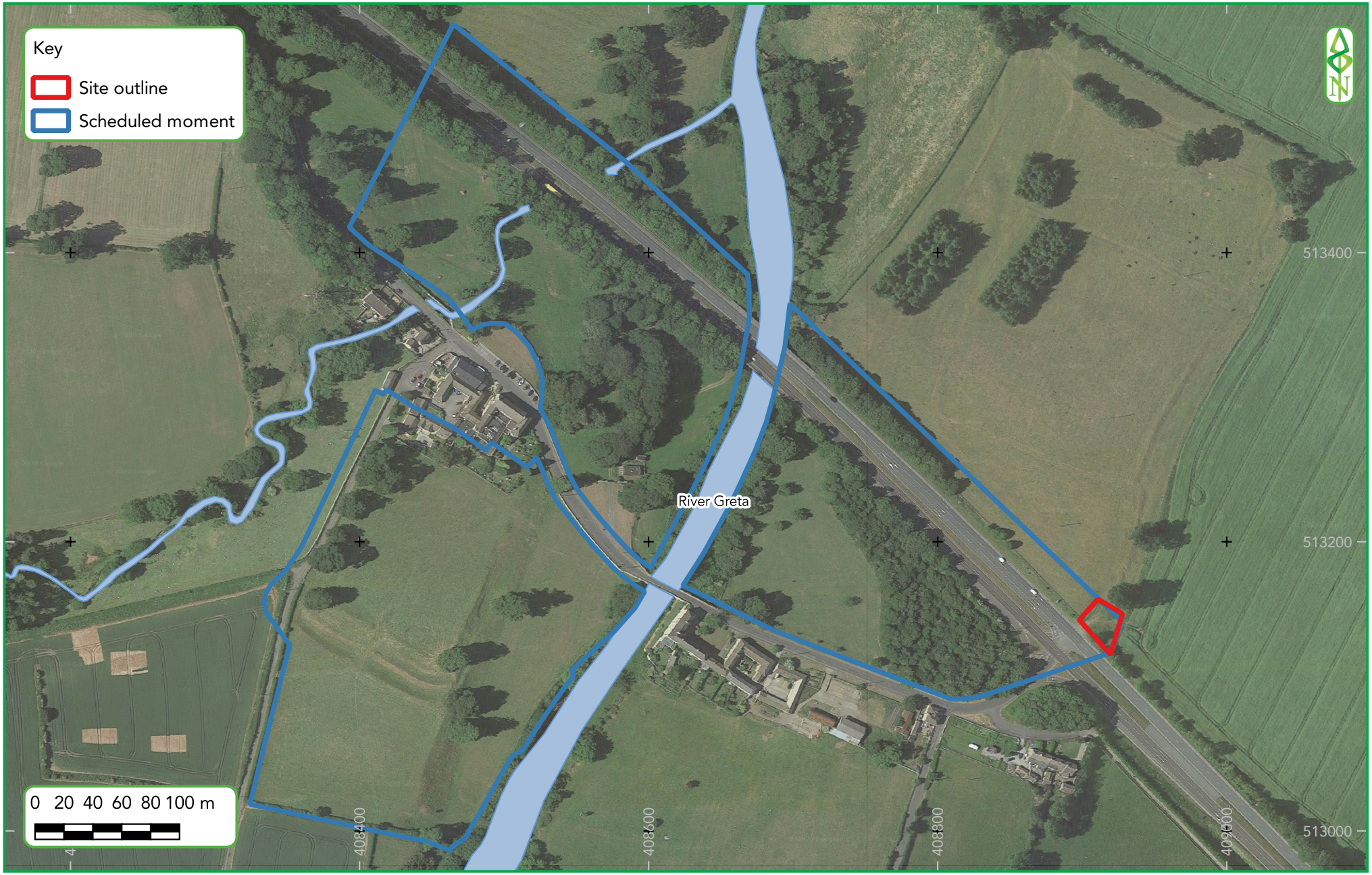

Figure 2 - Greta Bridge: Extent of scheduled area Roman Fort showing location of proposed works

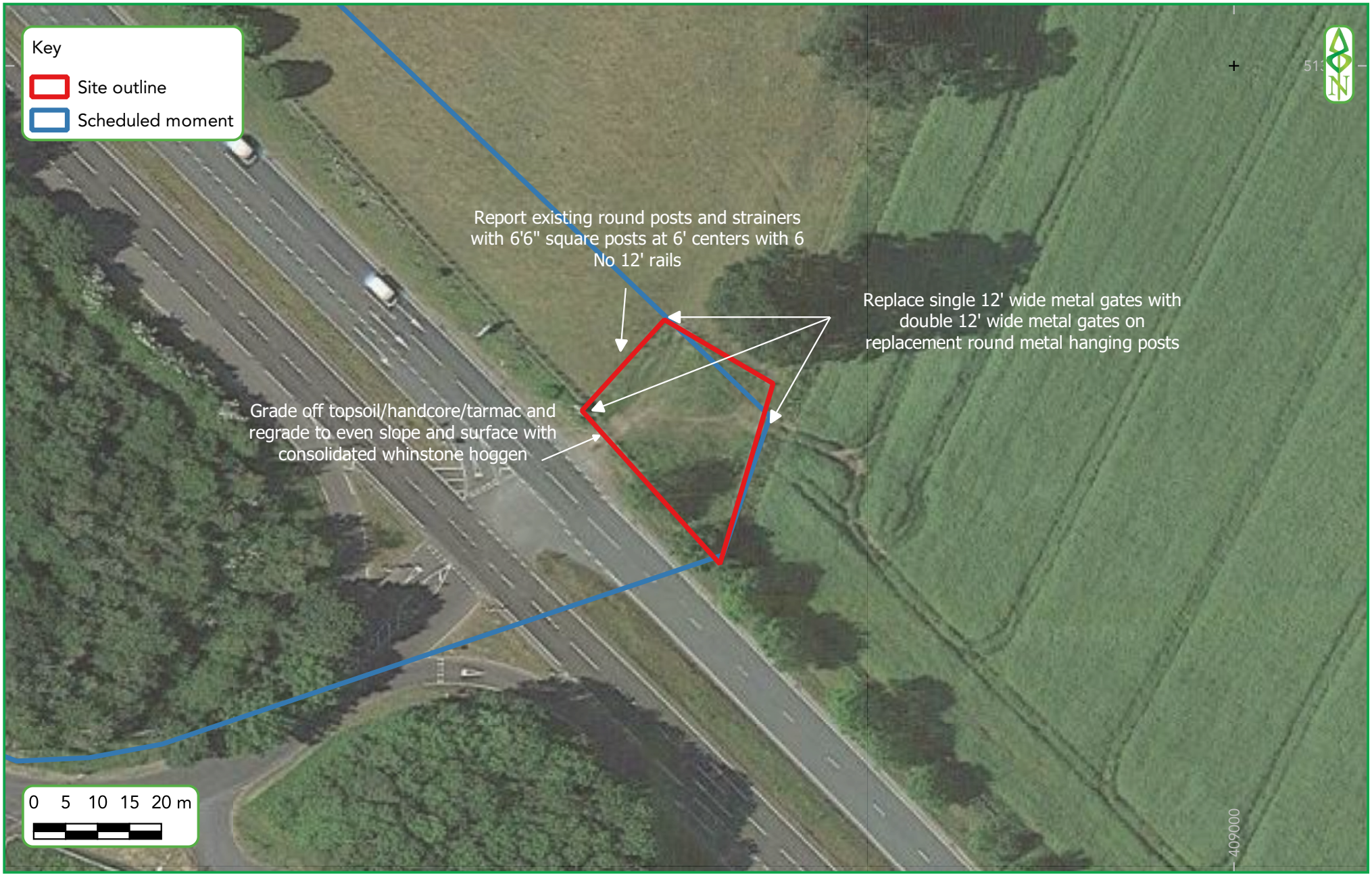

Figure 3 - Greta Bridge: Proposed access alterations showing site outline and extent of scheduled area

Figure 4c. SW-facing plan shot of area of reduced land showing (1003). 1m and 2m scales.

Figure 4d. NE-facing shot of section showing disused field boundary (1004). 2m scale.

Figure 4a. SE-facing plan shot of area of reduced land showing (1001) and (1002). 1m and 2m scales.

Figure 4b. NE-facing plan shot of area of redyced land showing (1002). 1m and 2m scales.

Figure 4e. NW-facing shot of representative section showing (1001) and (1002). 2m scale.

APPENDIX 1 – CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Table 1: Contexts

Trench 1	Dimensions: 23.00m x 13.80m				
	Orientation: Approx NE-SW				
	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks involving the reduction of land as part of improvements to an agricultural access point to the A66				
Context	**Description**	**Interpretation/ Process of deposition**	**Dimensions (m)**		**Feature**
1001	Moderately loose dark grey brown sandy silt with occasional 5% inclusions of small sub rounded sandstones with inclusions of car debris, plastic bottles and a horseshoe	Topsoil	Length	23.00m	n/a
			Width	13.80m	
			Thickness	0.15m	
1002	Moderately firm, dark yellow brown silty sand with 5-10% small to medium sized sub-angular sandstone fragments.	Subsoil	Length	23.00m	n/a
			Width	13.80m	
			Thickness	0.05m to LOE	
1003	Very compacted dark grey asphalt hardcore	Eroded layer of hardcore originally deposited to improve access conditions	Length	7.00m	n/a
			Width	7.80m	
			Thickness	0.12m	
1004	Moderately compacted dark grey brown sandy silt, 40-50% inclusions of medium to large sub-rounded sandstones.	Disused post medieval field boundary visible as an earthwork beyond LOE.	Length	8.00m	n/a
			Width	1.50m	
			Thickness	0.15m	