



LS Archaeology

Acomb Chiropractic Clinic, York Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief



January 2018

Site	60a York Road, York YO25 4NW
Site Codes	ACC17
County	North Yorkshire
NGR	SE 57346 51419
Planning Application No	DC/17/01994/FUL
Development	Change of use of rear clinic rooms (use class D1) to commercial office (use class B1) with kitchen,WC and additional parking
Date of Issue	02/01/2018
Site Dates	18/12/2017
Project by	lsarchaeology@gmail.com www.lsarchaeology.co.uk
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Client	Mr. Brack
<p>Summary</p> <p>LS Archaeology was commissioned in December 2017, by Mr Brack to undertake a watching brief at The Acomb Chiropractic Clinic, 60a York Road, York. A small redevelopment was occurring at the property consisting of the change of use of rear clinic rooms (use class D1) to commercial office (use class B1) with kitchen, WC and additional parking.</p> <p>An archaeological condition was attached to this development due to the site being located within an Area of Archaeological Importance; the potential to disturb deposits dating to the medieval and Roman periods was good to high.</p> <p>On this occasion, the minimal ground reduction, required to facilitate the creation of additional parking, did not impact upon any archaeological deposits. During the watching brief, no archaeological features were encountered.</p>	

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following archaeological watching brief report has been prepared for Mr. Brack and aims to comply with the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (Chartered Institute for Field Archaeologists 2014).

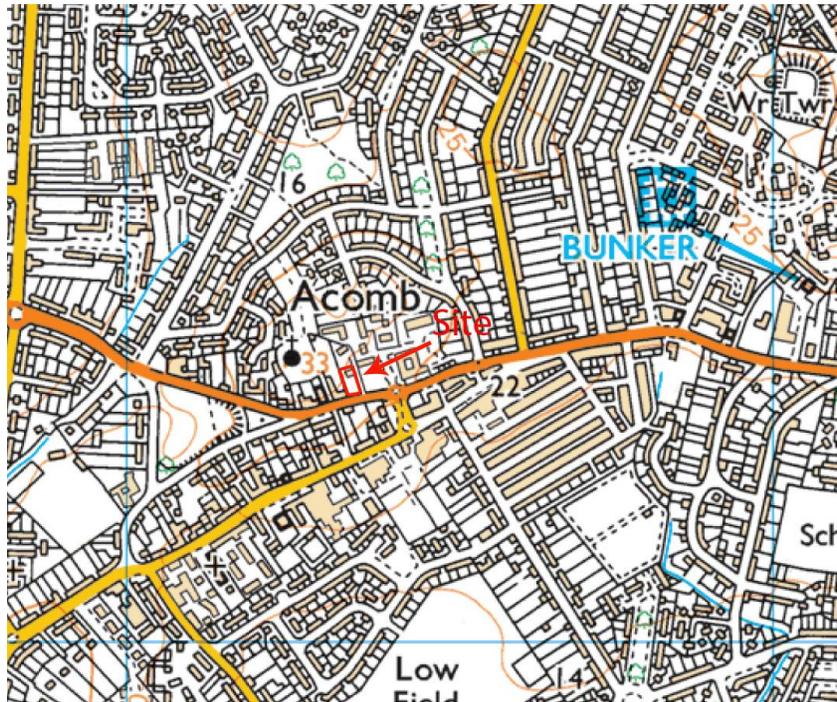


Figure 1: Location of site within Acomb, York.

The objective during the Archaeological watching Brief was to record any deposits, features or buried structures of archaeological interest encountered during the ground works related to the development. This included the monitoring of the ground reduction required to facilitate the creation of additional parking.

SITE LOCATION

The property boundary fronts the York Road (B1224) and bounds the property of Macmillan House to the west and 60b York Roads Drive way and Elm Tree Garden retirement flats to the east.

Topographically, the site is situated on higher than average ground compared to the relatively low-lying centre of York. The locations broad type is that of a village however to the east it bounds modern development. To the west is Acomb Green, St Stephen's Church is less than

100m to the north-west and three kilometers to the east is the centre of York.

The bedrock geology consists of Sherwood Sandstone Group - sedimentary bedrock fluvial in nature with overlying Poppleton Glaciofluvial Member – sand and gravel being glacial in origin.

Potential archaeological implications of this soil type:

- Good preservation of archaeological features within sand and gravel occurs due to favourable drainage conditions (Arnold, 2005).
- The acidity in these types of soil can erode iron and dissolve bone moreover good drainage can cause accelerated decomposition of organic materials.



Figure 2: Site plan

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

The City York Historic Characterisation Project Statement for Archaeological Significance in Acomb suggests:

The designated Area of Archaeological Importance (a sub-division of the main city wide AAI) signifies high archaeological potential both as a medieval village and as a possible important Roman route and settlement. Significant archaeological deposits representing a valuable finite resource may be present here, often at sufficient depth to be protected from development. These potentially rich deposits are one of the principal characteristics of York. (Claire MacRae 2013).

It is possible that there was a Roman route passing through Acomb, however that is not conclusive. Roman items such as a mosaic, pottery and stone coffins (Onsite 2007) have been found within the area, however evidence of a place with a more formal existence can be observed through the name 'Acomb'.

Etymological evidence suggest that the name 'Acomb' is derived from the Anglo Saxon 'Akum' meaning oak and 'um' which creates a plural. Only one other Acomb exists in the north and that is located close to Hexham in Northumbria. The Anglo Saxon period is one of interest in terms of trying to potentially shed light on Acomb's past.

Archaeological research, targeted at revealing evidence of Acomb's early origins as an Anglian or Anglo-Scandinavian settlement as well as clarifying the presence or absence of a significant Roman routeway is encouraged (Claire MacRae 2013).

Acomb's role during the Anglo Saxon period and the potential to shed conclusive evidence of the presence of a Roman route would be of interest if archaeological deposits were encountered.

The Domesday records of 1086 indicate that the at this time Acomb was under ownership of St Peters (York Minster); at that time St Peters yielded enormous power over York thus potentially hinting at the significance given to the area of Acomb at that time.

Archaeological evidence of the later medieval period has been observed during other evaluations, notably at 12-24 The Green (MAP 1999) and Ebor Carpet Warehouse (Onsite, 2007). Both these evaluations took place to the south of the development site and are located in an area that gently slopes towards an area of historic flood plains. Other archaeological evidence, located 80m due north-west, was derived from Church View (YAT, 2007) This watching brief yielded evidence of a potential boundary ditch of unknown date due to lack of dateable finds.

MAP REGRESSION

The village of Acomb which is large and respectable, is pleasantly situated about 2 ¼ miles west from York and is much frequented by invalids. The North eastern Railway passes near it. Several good residences in the village and its vicinity are occupied by families of the first respectability (Sheahan and Whellan, 1856).



Figure 3: Ordnance Survey Map 1853

The 1853 ordnance survey map of the area depicts Acomb as a linear village with properties along Front Street and the York Road owning long large gardens hinting at early medieval croft and toft settlement design. In 1853 the development site is identified as gardens possibly associated with 'The Cottage' or the unnamed structure to the immediate west.

The general location of the site is within an area of high status and formal gardens most notably comprising of St Stephens Church and associated Vicarage as well as Blue Hall. Blue Hall was originally built in 1780 and eventually served as a Maternity Hospital then geriatric unit which closed in 1976. The modern retirement flats now occupying the land retains the heritage of the space being a place of 'care'.

The following two ordnance survey maps dating from 1910 and 1950 respectively, show continuity with the development site; indicated as open space of unknown use.



Figure 4: Ordnance Survey Map 1910

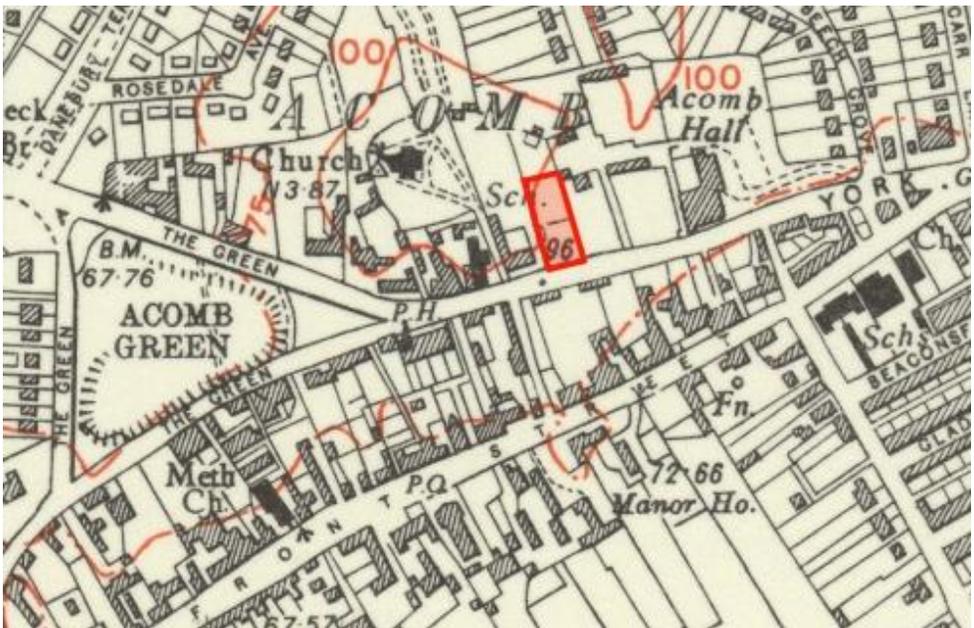


Figure 5: Ordnance Survey Map 195

POTENTIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

Prior archaeological activity within Acomb has been evaluated through the use of the online City of York's Historic Environment Records. As mentioned above later medieval deposits and a potential boundary ditch of unknown date have been observed within proximity to the development site. The natural soil has been consistently identified as being a mid-brown yellow sand with at times a dark grey silty sand being present indicative of hill wash (MAP 1999).

Archaeological data regarding deposit depths and soil type was extracted from:

- York Archaeological Trust (2007) Watching Brief at 2 Church View, Acomb.

Archaeological investigations at this location revealed the following:

- Natural was encountered at 0.40-0.90m. Above this lay approximately 0.50m of topsoil.

It would be likely that archaeological deposits may be present above 0.40-0.90m. Natural mid brown yellow sand may range from 0.40-0.90m.

Results from archaeological investigations at 23 The Green Acomb (YAT, 2017) were also consulted, however this site showed extensive evidence of landscaping, meaning consistent deposit depths were too ambiguous for use in this instance.

METHODOLOGY

As no archaeological features were encountered, the recording took the form of written notes and measured sketches supplemented by colour digital photographs.

The archaeological watching brief consisted of monitoring the ground reduction of circa 0.6m in depth.

All archaeological deposits and features were to be planned at a scale of 1:20 on drafting film (permatrace). All sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10, including heights above Ordnance Datum. Due to the lack of archaeology, a system of notes and sketches was instead used.

A back-acting mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket was used at all times for all excavations, to assist the identification of archaeology.

A standard single context recording system was adopted to keep a record of all archaeology encountered.

The mitigation strategy and methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation,

was adhered to throughout the project.

2. RESULTS

The groundworks consisted of initial ground reduction across the site by 0.30m, by removal of all the garden soil and associated plants, exposing the sandy natural deposit, followed by an additional 0.30m ground reduction of the area impacted by the new car park.

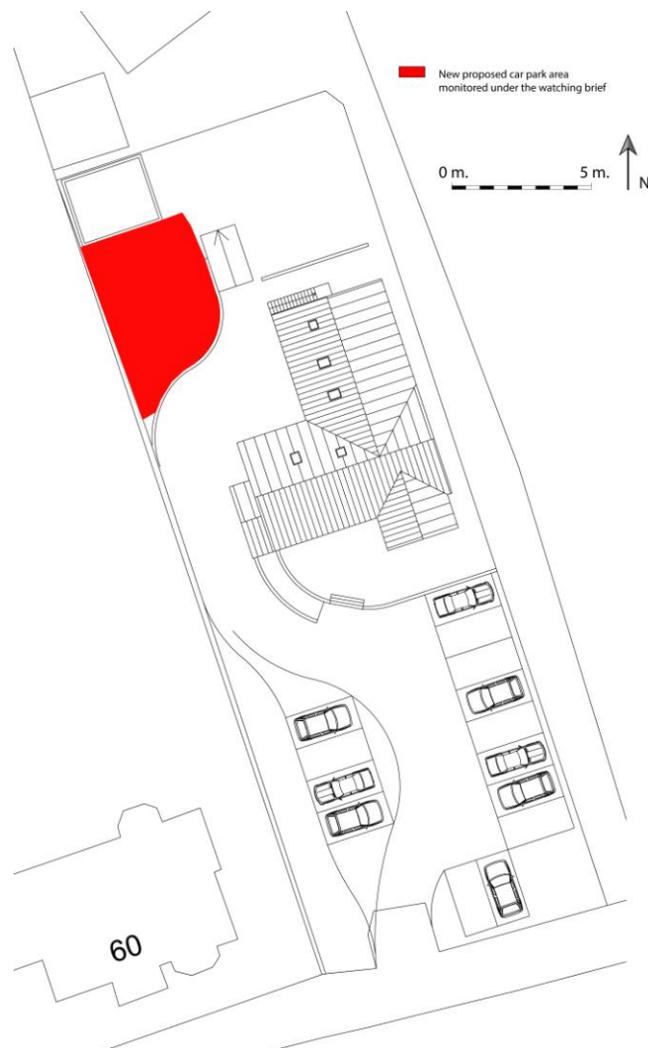


Figure 6: Site plan showing the area monitored (in red)

The ground was initially **reduced by 0.30m** removing all the garden soil and plants. The removal of the top soil, revealed a compact, strong brown sandy deposit, identified as the natural.



Photograph 1: The removal of the garden / top soil. Facing west

Further ground reduction occurred in spits of 0.15m, during which no archaeological deposits were observed. At a depth of 0.6m natural was still present consisting of a strong brown sandy deposit.

No archaeological features were present within the monitored area, the only feature observed was the modern gully associated with the electrical cables that traversed the site (**Photograph 3**).



Photograph 2: View of the site after removal of the top soil, showing the natural sandy surface, facing southeast



Photograph 3: Showing the remains of the former electrical cables, and the sandy natural deposit

CONTEXT DATA

Context Number	Context Type	Identified As	Description
1	Deposit	Top soil	Very dark brown (10YR2/2) sandy silt material which contains small tree roots and gravel (0.3m deep). Identified as garden soil
2	Deposit	Natural	Strong brown sand (7.5YR4/6) mixed with 5% small gravel only excavated to a depth of 0.6m from ground surface.

3. CONCLUSION

No archaeological features related to possible early activity on the site were encountered during the groundwork's associated with the new extension at Acomb Chiropractic Clinic, York. The only occupational evidence seen on site consisted of modern electric cable gully, associated with the property.

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