

**MOTE HILL, WARK-ON-TYNE
PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Archaeological Evaluation

July 2013



Prepared for Bordercraft Homes by:

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Site Name: Mote Hill Plots 1 and 2

Proposed Development: Construction of Two Residential Dwellings

Client: Bordercraft Homes/Affordable Architecture

NGR: NY 861 768

Site Code: MHW 13 (Mote Hill Wark 2013)

OASIS Ref: alanwill1-148887

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Boulder clay is also exposed in the base of the trench

SUMMARY

Pre-determination archaeological evaluation was carried out by Alan Williams Archaeology for Bordercraft Homes across two proposed residential development plots at Mote Hill, Wark-on-Tyne, Northumberland during July 2013.

Justification for the archaeological input, requested by the County Archaeologist for Northumberland County Council, was based on documentary sources which indicate that a castle was built on Mote Hill in the 12th century and that it was in complete decay by the 16th century. Further historical accounts of the site suggest that earthworks at Mote Hill were once extensive and that the present farmhouse occupied the site of the castle motte, later the site of a bastle-type structure. However, despite previous archaeological interventions for earlier developments on the hill (beyond the current proposed development area), no archaeological remains could be cited as evidence for medieval occupation of the site.

Archaeological evaluation comprised the excavation of three trenches, all excavated to subsoil, covering a total area of 120m square or c.5% of the development area. They provided no evidence for the survival of archaeological earthworks, structures, deposits or artefacts from the medieval or any earlier periods across the eastern half of the hill.

Despite considerable documentary evidence for medieval occupation somewhere on Mote Hill, given the negative results of the current evaluation - and the negative results of previous archaeological interventions in the vicinity - it is recommended that no further archaeological work will be required on the current site prior to or during development.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Proposed Development at Mote Hill

Bordercraft Homes propose to build two new three-and-four-bed residences on Mote Hill at Wark-on-Tyne. The buildings would occupy the north-eastern quadrant of the plateau and the garden of plot 1 extend to the south edge of the plateau (see figure 2). The development would involve substantial terracing of that part of the plateau.

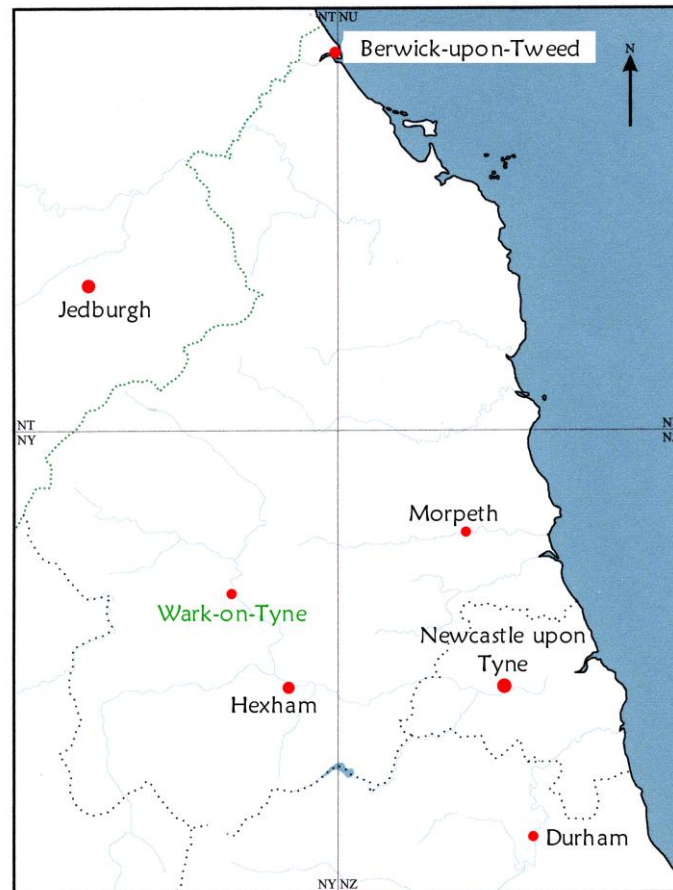


Figure 1: Wark-on-Tyne within Northumberland

1.2 Location of Mote Hill

The Northumberland village of Wark-on-Tyne lies on the west bank of the River North Tyne about eight kilometres to the north-west of Hexham and three kilometres south of Bellingham. Mote Hill Farm, a cluster of now re-developed stone buildings around two long yards, sits on a prominent natural plateau formed of Boulder Clay and Glacial Drift at the southern edge of the village at NY 861 768. Just to the south of Mote Hill is the confluence of the Warks Burn with the North Tyne. The plateau has escarpments on all four sides - the steepest to the north-west.

1.3 Historical and Physical Background

A castle is thought to have been built on Mote Hill by Prince Henry of Scotland shortly after he was created Earl of Northumberland in 1139. Wark became the head of a lordship or regality and the castle had a prison belonging to the King of Scotland, mentioned in 1279. Following the confiscation of all the Scottish Royal lands in the north of England in 1286, the castle passed to English owners and by Tudor times it was held by the crown, although whatever buildings had once sat on the site were in complete decay. Historical accounts of the site (noted in Ryder 2002 and 2003) suggest that earthworks at Mote Hill were once extensive and that the farmhouse occupied the site of the castle motte which became the site of a bastle-type structure.

Of the numerous scarps and hollows evident on the plateau and over the slopes at Mote Hill, none have been particularly helpful in suggesting the nature of any medieval defensive earthworks or buildings. The County HER entry for Mote Hill (HER No. 7746) describes two visible fragments of bank – one to the north of the wall surrounding the former stackyard, the other at the south-east corner of the plateau. The HER entry also states that the ditch between motte and bailey could be traced as a shallow depression crossing the farmyard. Ryder (2003, 12) noted that although there was no evidence for this ditch in 2003, two buildings in the ranges had cracked at points possibly overlying an infilled ditch. Ryder also mentions that ‘most sources are agreed that the motte itself has been levelled and its site occupied by the present farm buildings’.

If the above were true – that the motte of a timber castle had been reduced and spread over the plateau in the area of the farm buildings, it would seem unlikely that in-situ evidence of contemporary structures built on the earthworks would have survived. However, features around or below the motte may have survived this process. Potential survivals could include structures within a ‘bailey’ at the bottom of the motte, or could relate to the construction of the motte itself, such as strapping or revetting. It is also possible that archaeological features earlier than any castle may survive; a defensible plateau adjacent to a river crossing may have been occupied successively in the past.

2. PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INPUT

Border Craft Homes carried out residential developments at Mote Hill Farm between 2003 and 2005. These involved conversion of the disused farm ranges into residential dwellings and the new build of one dwelling. The converted and new-build houses extend across the north-west quadrant of the plateau (see figure 2).

Conclusions drawn following the negative archaeological results of monitoring and evaluation on the site were that either any medieval remains below or adjacent to the farm ranges had been completely erased or the site of the castle lay elsewhere on the plateau.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

The proposed development area, currently under rough pasture, can be divided into a raised sub-circular platform to the north with a prominent lip c 1m high along its south edge merging into a terraced bank along the eastern edge of the Pole Barn property [1]; a flattish central area falling gently to the south and east [2]; an east-west bank or ridge running along the south edge of the plateau c.1.5m high and c. 8-9m wide [3]; a slight defile dropping to the east adjacent to the bank [4].

No ground investigations had been carried out in the area of the proposed development to determine its archaeological potential although Ryder prepared a sketch plan of Mote Hill in 2003 showing topographic features and earthworks then visible (see WSI, appendix 1). Ryder's plan differs with regard to the aspect of the current development area in that:

1. The garden area of the re-developed Pole Barn property extends to the south edge of the plateau. This has been levelled and is flanked along much of its eastern boundary with a low terraced bank ([4] on figure 2)
2. A bank or ridge lies along the south edge of the plateau ([3] on figure 2), possibly a modern feature.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

4.1 Requirements

The current application for residential development on Mote Hill relates to an area which has not been tested by archaeological evaluation. The scale and nature of the proposed development is such that any archaeological remains surviving within the development area would probably be destroyed.

The County Archaeologist for Northumberland therefore requested that a scheme of pre-determination archaeological evaluation should be carried out. This would initially involve the excavation of three trenches to test the potential of the area:

Trench 1: 25m long by 2m wide and cut to subsoil running east-west across Plot 2;

Trench 2; 25m long by 2m wide and cut to subsoil running approximately north-south across Plot 1; Trench 3: 10m long by 2m wide across the bank [3] abutting the southern boundary of Plot 1.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Excavation of Trenches

Trenches were stripped by machine excavator fitted with a smooth ditching blade. Initially, topsoil was removed and the stripped surfaces inspected for archaeological features. Because underlying deposits, comprising boulder clay and glacial sands and gravels, were amorphous and possibly disturbed by human activity, all trenches were then stripped more deeply until it was felt that undisturbed drift geology had been reached. In the cases of trenches 1 and 2, both cut against the contour, this seemed securely established when discrete bands of gravels, sands and boulder clay were identified. Trench 3 was cut on the horizontal through the bank or ridge at the south edge of the plateau. This was cut only into boulder clay which was noted in all trenches as the most superficial deposit.

One full-length section of each trench was then cleaned manually and recorded. The bases of each of the trenches were shovel-scraped and then trowelled where any deposits were considered potentially archaeological.

Trench 1 (25m by 2m by a maximum of 1.5m deep)

This was cut on a north-south orientation across the footprint of property 1 from the top of the plateau across the flat gently sloping ground to the south. Grey-brown mineralic topsoil, between 0.2m and 0.30m deep overlay a drift geology formed of bands of boulder clay and sand and sand and gravel. No archaeological features were seen within the trench other than an area of modern disturbance at its southern end, presumably a substantial pit, containing corrugated iron sheeting, timbers and other modern waste materials. The only other finds material from the trench was a few sherds of C18-C19 pottery and clay pipe stems from topsoil. No medieval pottery was recovered.

Trench 2 (25m by 2m by a maximum of 1m deep)

This was cut on a north-west - south-east orientation across the footprint of property 2, from the top of the plateau downslope to a sharp break of slope at its eastern edge. A medium grey-brown friable mineralic topsoil, c. 0.2m deep, overlay superimposed layers of (from the

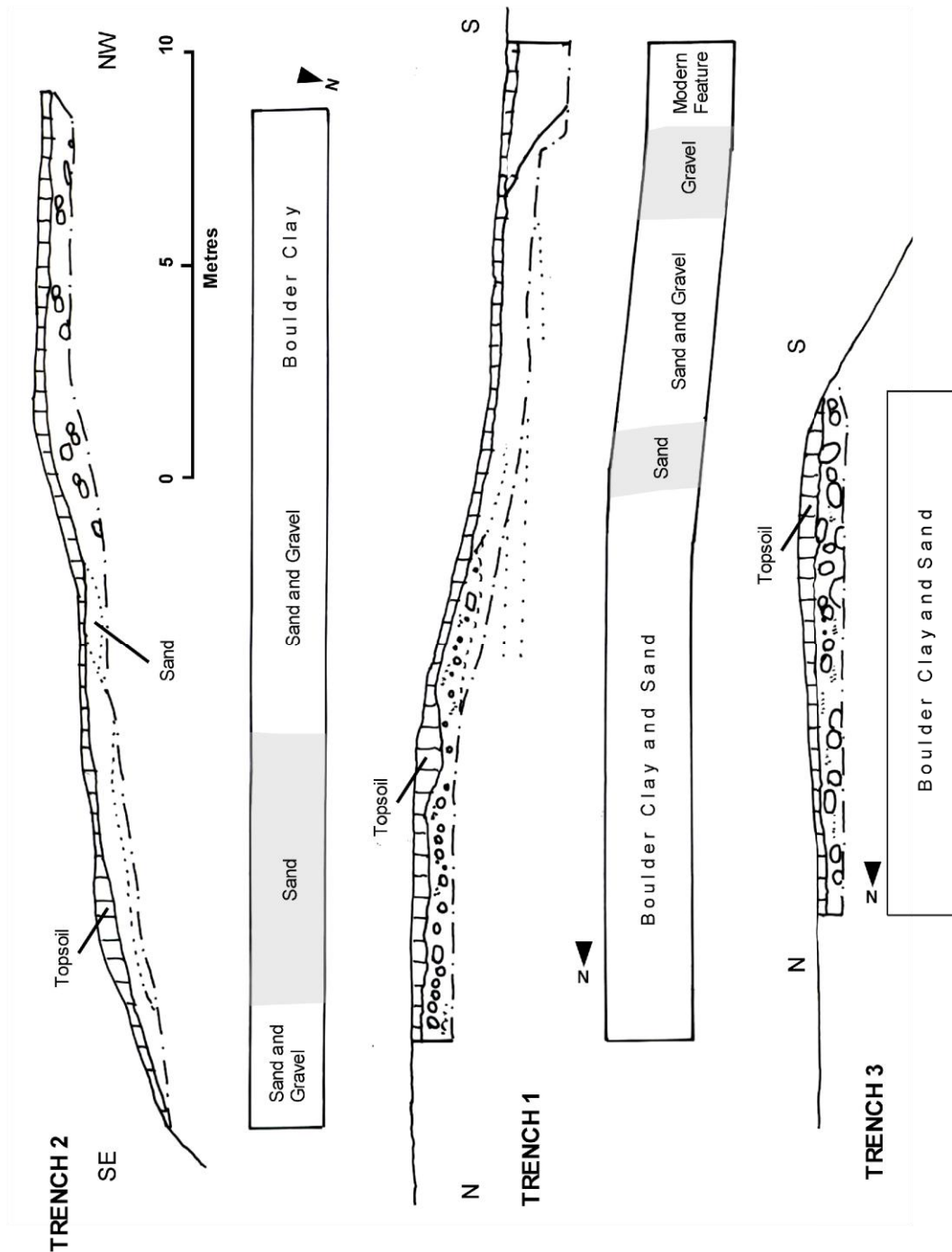


Figure 3: Sections and plans of Trenches 1, 2 and 3. In all cases, stratigraphy consisted of topsoil directly overlying varied drift-geology.

top of the plateau down to the south-east) boulder clay and sand; fine gravel; sand and gravel. No archaeological features or structural remains were identified to interrupt the sequence between topsoil and drift geology. Artefactual material recovered consisted of a

few small sherds of C18-C19 domestic pottery and a few clay pipe stems. No medieval pottery was recovered.

Trench 3 (12m by 1.8m by a maximum of 0.6m deep)

This was cut on a north-south orientation through the broad ridge or bank at the south edge of the plateau. Grey-brown topsoil, c0.2m deep overlay boulder clay incorporating patches of compacted orange sand. This was consistent throughout the trench. No finds were recovered during the excavation. The boulder clay seen in the trench was similar in nature to deposits seen in trenches 1 and 2. Presumably, the area to the north has been reduced in fairly modern times leaving a lip or ridge along the edge of the plateau in this area. There was no indication that any of the boulder clay and sand had been re-worked or dumped.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Despite a number of documentary accounts of medieval activity on Mote Hill, the evaluation provided no evidence for the survival of archaeological earthworks, structures, deposits or artefacts from the medieval or any earlier periods across the eastern half of the hill. Archaeological trenching sampled about 5% of the area.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the negative results of the current evaluation - and the negative results of previous archaeological interventions in the vicinity - it is recommended that no further archaeological work will be required on the current site prior to or during development.

8. SOURCES

RYDER, P. 2002. *Mote Hill Farm, Wark-on-Tyne: An archaeological assessment of the site and buildings* unpublished report

RYDER, P. 2003. *Mote Hill Farm, Wark-on-Tyne: An archaeological assessment of the site and buildings* unpublished report updated version

WILLIAMS, A. 2003. *Mote Hill Farm, Wark-on-Tyne, Northumberland: Archaeological Evaluation*

9. PLATES



Plate 1: Trench 1, looking south



Plate 2: Gravels and sand below topsoil exposed in the central part of the west-facing section of Trench 1



Plate 3: Trench 2, looking north-west. Gravels and sands exposed in the base



Plate 4: Boulder clay, sand and gravel below topsoil in the northern section of Trench 2



Plate 5: *The west facing section of trench 3: Boulder clay below a thin topsoil.
Boulder clay is also exposed in the base of the trench*

APPENDIX 1: WSI

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT MOTE HILL, WARK-ON-TYNE, NORTHUMBERLAND

Archaeological and Planning Background and Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation

July 2013

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Plate 3: The present aspect of Mote Hill from the field south of the Manse along Hexham Road. The Pole Barn is the only property visible on the skyline

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Proposed Development at Mote Hill

Affordable Architecture Ltd proposes to build two new three- and four-bed residences at Mote Hill within garden plots. The buildings would occupy the north-eastern quadrant of the plateau and the garden of plot 1 would extend to the south edge of the plateau (see figure 2). The development would involve substantial re-modelling of that part of the plateau.

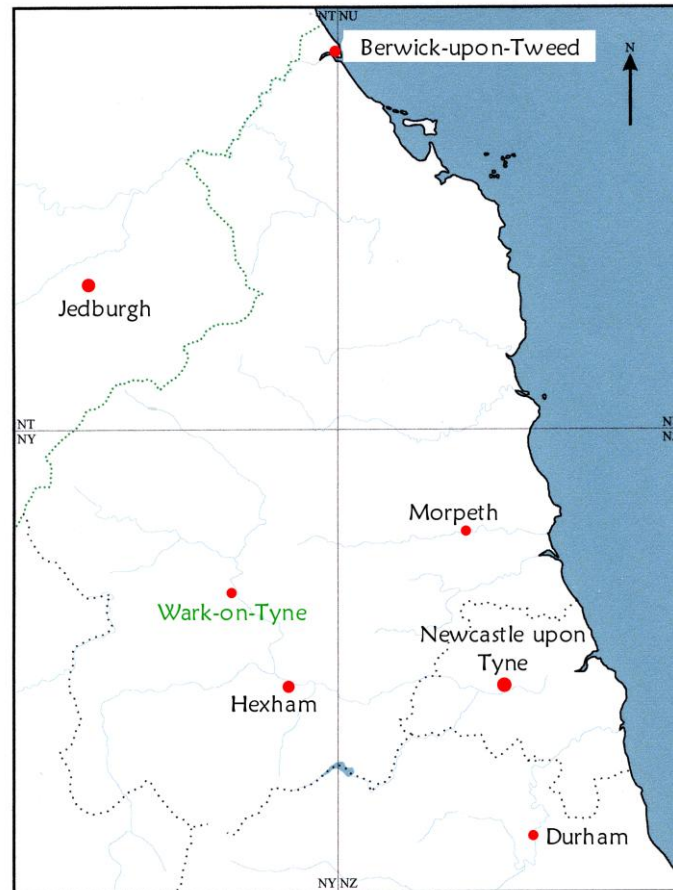


Figure 1: *Wark-on-Tyne within Northumberland*

1.2 Location of Mote Hill

The Northumberland village of Wark-on-Tyne lies on the west bank of the River North Tyne about eight kilometres to the north-west of Hexham and three kilometres south of Bellingham. Mote Hill Farm, a cluster of now re-developed stone buildings ranged around two long yards, sits on a natural plateau formed of Boulder Clay and Glacial Drift at the southern edge of the village at NY 861 768. Just to the south of Mote Hill is the confluence of the Warks Burn with the North Tyne. The plateau has escarpments on all four sides - the steepest to the north-west.

1.3 Historical Background

A castle is thought to have been built on Mote Hill by Prince Henry of Scotland shortly after he was created Earl of Northumberland in 1139. Wark became the head of a lordship or regality and the

castle had a prison belonging to the King of Scotland, mentioned in 1279. Following the confiscation of all the Scottish Royal lands in the north of England in 1286, the castle passed to English owners and by Tudor times it was held by the crown, although whatever buildings had once sat on the site were in complete decay. King James I granted the site to the Howard family, who passed it on to Francis Radcliffe. The Radcliffes were involved in the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion, and their lands were first confiscated by the state and then passed on to Greenwich Hospital, who in turn sold the site at Mote Hill to the Duke of Northumberland.

1.4 Evidence for a Castle at Mote Hill

Historical accounts of the site (noted in Ryder 2002 and 2003) suggest that earthworks at Mote Hill were once extensive and that the farmhouse occupied the site of the castle motte which became the site of a bastle-type structure.

Of the numerous scarps and hollows evident on the plateau and over the slopes at Mote Hill, none have been particularly helpful in suggesting the nature of any medieval defensive earthworks or buildings. The County HER entry for Mote Hill (HER No. 7746) describes two visible fragments of bank – one to the north of the wall surrounding the former stackyard, the other at the south-east corner of the plateau. These are not now obvious. The HER entry also states that the ditch between motte and bailey could be traced as a shallow depression crossing the farmyard. Ryder (2003, 12) noted that although there was no evidence for this ditch in 2003, two buildings in the ranges had cracked at points possibly overlying an infilled ditch. Ryder also mentions that ‘most sources are agreed that the motte itself has been levelled and its site occupied by the present farm buildings’.

If the above were true – that the motte of a timber castle had been reduced and spread over the plateau in the area of the farm buildings, it would seem most unlikely that any in-situ evidence of contemporary structures built on the earthworks would have survived. However, features around or below the motte may have survived this process. Potential survivals could include structures within a ‘bailey’ at the bottom of the motte, or could relate to the construction of the motte itself, such as strapping or revetting. It is also possible that archaeological features earlier than any castle may survive; a defensible plateau adjacent to a river crossing may well have been occupied at many periods in the past.

2. PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INPUT

Border Craft Homes carried out residential developments at Mote Hill Farm between 2003 and 2005. These involved conversion of the disused farm ranges into residential dwellings and the new build of one dwelling. The converted and new-build houses extend across the north-west quadrant of the plateau (see figure 2).

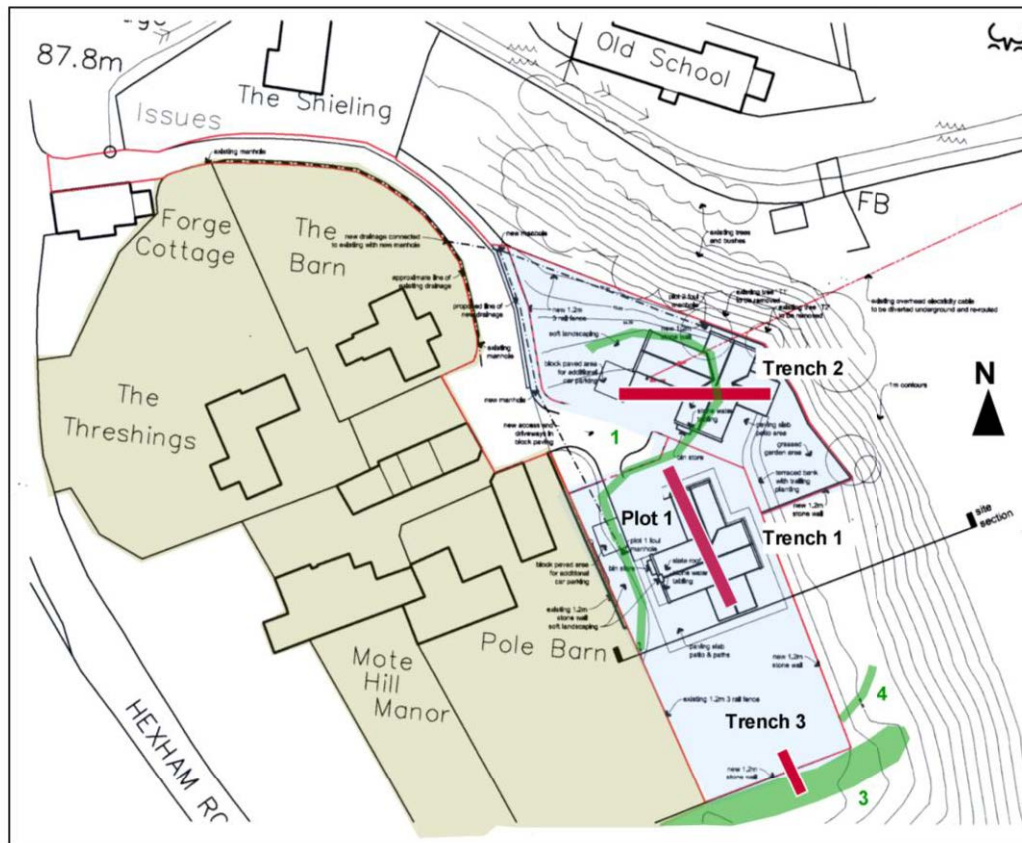


Figure 2: Developments at Mote Hill. The area in brown tone shows properties developed between 2003 and 2005; the area in pale blue covers the current proposed developments (plots 1 and 2) including the outlines of the new-build structures. Earthworks are shown and numbered in green (see section 4.1 and figure 3). Suggested evaluation trench locations are in red.

In 2002, to allow an informed planning determination on the proposed conversions and new build, an archaeological assessment of the overall site and its standing structures was requested by Tynedale District Council and prepared by Peter Ryder (2002; 2003). This report detailed the architectural and historical evidence for the site. In addition to this assessment, pre-determination archaeological evaluation was carried out across the site of the new build dwelling in 2003 by Alan Williams Archaeology. The evaluation located no features or artefactual remains of any historic significance. Recording of 'Building B', a putative bastle structure, and archaeological monitoring of ground-works on the site, was carried out between 2003 and 2005 by Alan Williams Archaeology as development work progressed. As with the evaluation of 2003, no medieval features were seen or medieval artefactual material recovered.

2.1 Conclusions

Conclusions drawn following the negative archaeological results of monitoring and evaluation on the site were that either any medieval remains below or adjacent to the farm ranges had been completely erased or the site of the castle lay elsewhere on the plateau in an unidentified location.

3. CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

As noted, Affordable Architecture Ltd. propose to build two new three- and four-bed residences at Mote Hill within garden plots (see figure 3). The buildings would occupy the north-eastern quadrant of the plateau and the garden of plot 1 would extend to the south edge of the plateau (see figure 2). The developments would involve substantial re-modelling of the top of the hill as indicated by design drawings.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

The proposed development area, currently utilised as rough pasture, can be divided into a raised sub-circular platform to the north with a prominent lip c 1m high along its south edge merging into a terraced bank along the eastern edge of the Pole Barn property[1]; a flattish central area falling gently to the south and east [2]; a substantial east-west bank running along the south edge of the plateau c.1.5m high and c. 8-9m wide [3]; a slight defile dropping to the east adjacent to the bank [4].

4.1 Review of Ryder's 2003 Sketch Plan of Mote Hill (figure 3)

No ground investigations have been carried out in the area of the proposed residential development to determine its archaeological potential although Ryder prepared a sketch plan of Mote Hill in 2003 showing topographic features and earthworks then visible (figure 3). Ryder's plan differs with regard to the aspect of the current development area in that:

1. The garden area of the re-developed Pole Barn property extends to the south edge of the plateau. This has been levelled and is flanked along much of its eastern boundary with a low terraced bank ([4] on figure 2)
2. A prominent bank lies along the south edge of the plateau ([3] on figure 2). Presumably, this is a modern feature.

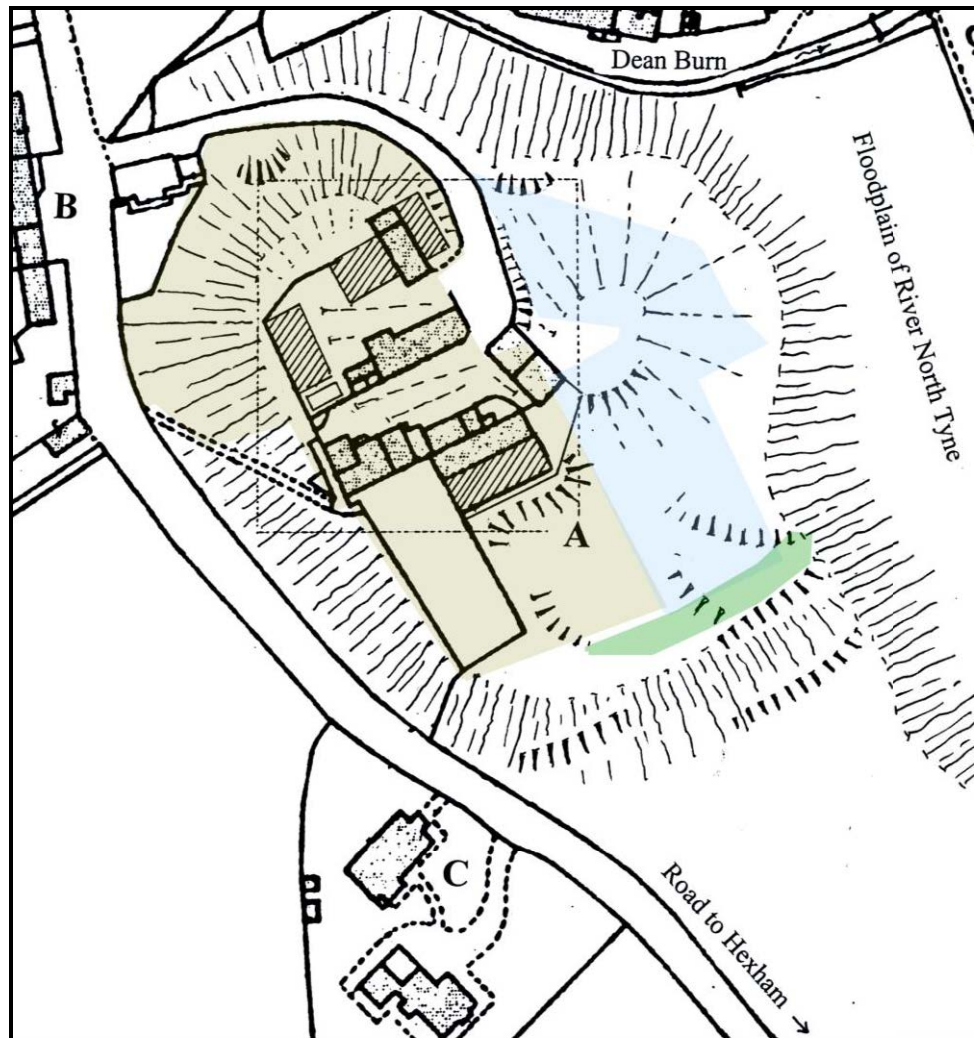


Figure 3: Peter Ryder's 2003 earthwork sketch of Mote Hill. It is annotated with the extent of the hill developed between 2003 and 2005 in brown and proposed development area in pale blue. The green area marks the approximate location of bank 3 along the southern edge of the plateau.

5. REQUIREMENT FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

The archaeological and planning background of Mote Hill, Wark on Tyne is set out in the preceding report. The current application for residential development on the site relates to an area which has not been tested by archaeological evaluation. The scale and nature of the proposed development is such that any archaeological remains surviving within the development area would probably be destroyed.

The County Archaeologist for Northumberland has therefore requested that a scheme of pre-determination archaeological evaluation should be carried out. This evaluation would initially involve the excavation of three trenches to test the potential of the area:

Trench 1: 25m long by 2m wide and cut to subsoil running east-west across Plot 2;

Trench 2; 25m long by 2m wide and cut to subsoil running approximately north-south across Plot 1;

Trench 3: 10m long by 2m wide across the bank [3] abutting the southern boundary of Plot 1.

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1 Trenches will be excavated by machine excavator with a smooth ditching blade either to subsoil or to the first archaeological deposits. Archaeological deposits will be excavated manually. A sufficient portion of each feature will be excavated to determine the nature and if possible the chronology of the feature.

6.2 A record of all features excavated will be produced using appropriate archaeological context recording. All features will have a full written and drawn record. Measurements will be expressed in metres. Plans and sections will be produced at 1:10 or 1:20 scale using repeatable control points. Photographic recording will be by digital SLR camera. A digital and colour print archive will be prepared with prints archived in wallets and in ring binder.

6.3 All pottery, metalwork and animal bone will be retained and located by context. Modern material will be discarded subsequent to the completion of fieldwork. Finds of significance will be deposited with the GNEM as agreed with Mr Andrew Parkin.

6.4 Loose architectural fragments will be treated as small finds and recorded individually (with reference to the appropriate repository standards and guidelines). The find location will be recorded three dimensionally.

6.5 Final drawings will be provided as ink on drafting film.

6.6 The potential requirement for specialist analyses is an unavoidable risk in all excavations. The scientific investigation of any features/deposits which are considered significant will be undertaken as a non-negotiable part of this programme. Any such analyses would be carried out by specialists and priced to the client on a costs only basis

6.7 Environmental samples will be taken from sealed and dateable deposits to elucidate the agricultural/ecological regime on the site over the period. Deposits/fills with potential for environmental evidence will be assessed by taking bulk samples of 30 litres from contexts selected for analysis. Deposits/fills totalling less than 30 litres in volume will be sampled in their entirety. Samples will be processed and analysed by Dr Charlotte O'Brien of Archaeological Services University of Durham.

6.8 A maximum of 2 samples of material suitable for dating by scientific means (eg: Radiocarbon, Luminescence, Remnant Magnetism, etc.) will be collected if deemed appropriate and of archaeological value.

6.9 On completion of the fieldwork, samples will be processed and artefacts cleaned, conserved, identified, labelled and packaged. An appropriate programme of analysis and publication of the results will be completed if no further archaeological investigations are to be carried out.

7. ARCHIVE AND REPORT

7.1 The site archive will be prepared to the standards specified in the Management of Research

Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE), English Heritage, 2006. Archive preparation and deposition will be undertaken with reference to the repository guidelines and standards, and where necessary the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC), United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) standards and guidelines.

7.2 An illustrated report will be supplied within 4 months (or shorter period by mutual agreement) on completion of the fieldwork. A copy of the report will be sent to the client and the County HER. The National Monuments Record will be asked if they wish to receive copies of the archive and report. The report will contain as a minimum:

- Non-technical summary
- Introductory statement
- Aims and objectives
- Methodology
- Results
- Index and location of archive
- References and bibliography
- Copy of project design

7.3 If appropriate, arrangements will be made to publish the results of the investigations through a local or national journal.

7.4 AWA supports the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS). 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. The online OASIS form will be completed at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>.

8. HEALTH AND SAFETY

8.1 AWA will comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act and subsequent additions and amendments.

8.2 If the Provisions of Construction, Design and Management (CDM) Regulations 1994 are appropriate the employer will appoint a Planning Supervisor who will prepare a Health and Safety Plan which will be made available to the archaeological contractor prior to the commencement of work.

9. SOURCES

RYDER, P. 2002. *Mote Hill Farm, Wark-on-Tyne: An archaeological assessment of the site and buildings* unpublished report

RYDER, P. 2003. *Mote Hill Farm, Wark-on-Tyne: An archaeological assessment of the site and buildings* unpublished report updated version

WILLIAMS, A. 2003. *Mote Hill Farm, Wark-on-Tyne, Northumberland: Archaeological Evaluation*