

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
LAND OFF HEXHAM ROAD, WARK-ON-TYNE

Archaeological Evaluation

April 2015



Prepared for Weightman Commercial Investments by:

Alan Williams Archaeology
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Site Name: Land East of Warkburn House, Hexham Road, Wark-on-Tyne
Proposed Development: New-Build Construction of 10 Bungalows
Client: Weightman Commercial Investments
NGR: NY 8618 7671
Site Code: HRW 15 (Hexham Road Wark 2015)
Planning Ref: 14/03674/FUL
Oasis Ref: alanwill1-210469

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SUMMARY

Archaeological trenching of the site of a proposed residential development to the south of the village of Wark-on-Tyne, Northumberland, was carried out for Weightman Commercial Investments by Alan Williams Archaeology in April 2015 as pre-application evaluation requested by the planning authority, Northumberland County Council. The site lies adjacent to Mote Hill, the presumed location of a medieval castle, and within a general scatter of prehistoric sites in and around the valley of the River North Tyne.

Evaluation involved the excavation of seven trenches covering 5% of the development area.

- Six of the seven trenches excavated contained no archaeological features. Trench 6 contained what is considered to have been two post-medieval clearance banks;*
- No artefactual material other than of modern date (fragments of clay pipe stem and of brown-glazed cooking pots and whitewares) was recovered from topsoil within the trenches;*
- The evaluation has strongly suggested there are no significant archaeological remains within the PDA.*

Given the negative results of the evaluation, it is recommended that there should be no requirement for further archaeological input as the development goes ahead.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Proposed Development and Site Location

Weightman Commercial Investments has lodged a planning application (14/03674/FUL) with Northumberland County Council for the construction of 10 new-build bungalows on land off Hexham Road immediately to the south of the Northumberland village of Wark-on-Tyne.

The proposed development area (PDA) consists of a single field covering approximately 6000m² and presently in rough pasture on the east side of Hexham Road (B6320) to the south of the village and west of the River North Tyne at NY 8618 7671 (figure 1).

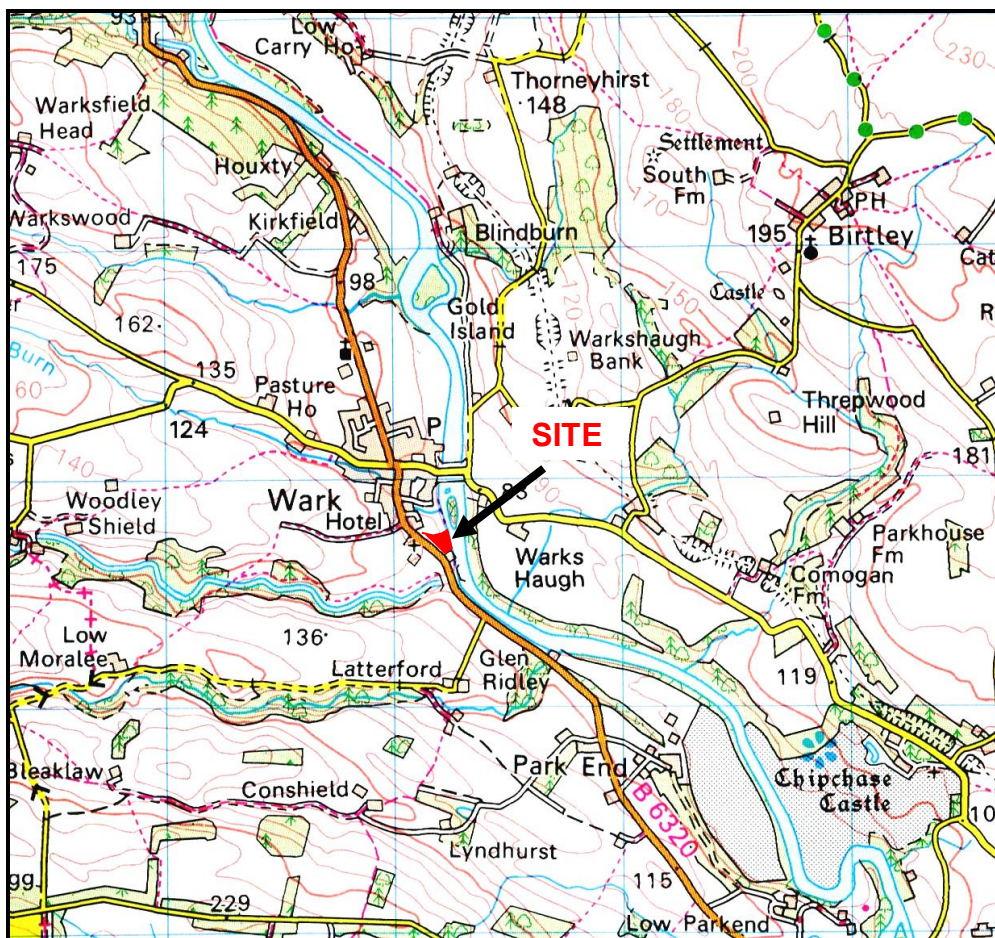


Figure 1: Location of the site (in red and arrowed) immediately to the south of Wark-on-Tyne and on the west bank of the River North Tyne.

1.2 Archaeological Potential and Preparation of Assessment

Because of the archaeological potential of the site - it lies next to the presumed medieval castle at Mote Hill and there is a broad scatter of prehistoric sites, especially of the Bronze Age, in the wider area - Northumberland County Council Conservation Team requested that an archaeological assessment should be prepared to collate and assess existing information

about the site and determine as fully as possible from documentary evidence and visual inspection its archaeological potential. This report was prepared by Alan Williams Archaeology in April 2015.



Figure 2: Location and extent of the site as-existing (in red outline) to the south of Mote Hill, Wark-on-Tyne. North to top. 100m grid squares.

The assessment showed that:

- No designated or protected archaeological sites lie within or in the vicinity of the PDA;
- No previous archaeological investigation has taken place within the site, nor is it thought that metal detecting has been carried out across the area;
- No aerial photographs inspected (including material from the NMR, Northumberland HER and Google Earth) show cropmarks suggesting the presence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- No historic maps or plans inspected show buildings within the development area;
- There is no evidence on the ground for earthworks suggesting substantial underlying structural remains;

- There is slight evidence for 19th century steam-ploughing which can be seen on a number of aerial photographs.



Figure 3: proposed development plan (grey background) of the PDA with evaluation trench locations (1 to 7) in red. All trenches are 25m long by 1.6m wide. Area in pink tone shows modern trackway cut through bank. Brown tone shows modern spoil heap from developments on Mote Hill.

2. REQUIREMENT FOR EVALUATION

The assessment was submitted to the NCC Assistant County Archaeological Officer on April 14th who requested that because the physical archaeological potential of the site remained untested, pre-determination evaluation should be carried out in order to establish:

- the presence and nature of any archaeological remains on the site;
- the requirement for any mitigation works.

Evaluation requested was for the excavation of seven trenches, each 25m long by 1.6m wide (totalling 280m², just under 5% of the area of the PDA). A written scheme of works was prepared by AWA (Appendix 1), detailing the scale and methodology of the evaluation. This was approved by NCC Conservation Team.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Slight variations in nominal locations of trenches 3, 4 and 6 were made to avoid a spoil heap on the field (see figure 3). Trenches were cut by machine excavator with a smooth 1.6m wide ditching blade either to subsoil or to the first archaeological deposit. For six of the seven trenches, 1 to 5 and 7, this involved excavation directly to subsoil as no archaeological deposits were identified. In Trench 6, what has been tentatively identified as post-medieval clearance banks, were exposed towards the centre of the trench and were excavated manually. All spoil heaps were checked for metal objects with a detector during the fieldwork. No material was located.

Trench 1: 25m long by 1.6m wide and a maximum of 1.10m deep. Located at the base of the eastern slope of Mote Hill and running NE to SW and on the level along this slope. Level 89m aOD at ground surface; at base 87.9m aOD. No archaeological features located. Developed soils consisted of a grey-brown sandy loam topsoil, a maximum of 0.2m deep above ginger-brown sandy loam with much gravel and small cobbles to a maximum of 0.9m deep. This last layer was thicker than developed soils seen elsewhere on the site other than in the adjacent trench 2, a product of hill wash from the adjacent slope. A few pieces of clay pipe stem and a sherd of brown-glazed C19 cooking pot was recovered from topsoil and this deeper soil. Geology consisted of banded superficial materials: For 11m from the west end of the trench was an orange-brown gravel with a yellow-buff clay-sand extending from this to the eastern end of the trench.

Trench 2: 25m long by 1.6m wide and a maximum of 0.8m deep. Located at the base of the eastern slope of Mote Hill and running NE to SW (aligned with Trench 1). Ground surface at west end 88.7m aOD, at east end 88.26m aOD. Base of trench in centre 88.5m aOD. No archaeological features were located in the trench. Modern topsoil was grey-brown sandy loam, no more than 0.10 to 0.15m deep. This lay above an earlier developed soil, c. 0.7m deep, umber-brown very sandy silt with much small gravel and some larger stones and occasional cobbles towards the base. Superficial geology at the base of the trench consisted of a yellow-buff clay sand throughout. No artefactual material was located from the soil layers.

Trench 3: 25m long by 1.6m wide by 0.5m deep. Located beyond the south slope of Mote Hill. Aligned E to W and sloping very slightly to the east. Ground surface at west end 88.2m aOD, at east end 87.8m aOD. Base of trench in centre 88m aOD. No archaeological features were located in the trench. A few pieces of clay pipe stem were recovered from soil layers. Modern topsoil was a grey-brown sandy loam 0.10m deep above an earlier developed soil 0.4m deep consisting of umber-brown very sandy silt with gravel and some larger cobbles towards base. Geology was an orange-brown gravel.

Trench 4: 20m long by 1.6m wide and a maximum of 0.8m deep (shortened slightly to avoid a modern spoil heap along the west edge of the field). It was located centrally in the field running NE/SW and on the level; ground surface along the trench was a near constant 87.9m aOD, its base between 87.10m and 87.6m aOD. No archaeological features were located within the trench and no artefactual material from soil layers. Topsoil was a grey-brown sandy loam 0.10 – 0.15m deep above an earlier developed soil 0.4m deep consisting of umber-brown very sandy silt with gravel and some larger cobbles towards base. Geology was an orange-brown gravel.

Trench 5: 25m long by 1.6m wide and a maximum of 0.4m deep. Aligned NW/SE and with a fall to south-east (from 88m to 87.6m aOD). No archaeological features or artefacts were located in the trench. Modern topsoil was a medium grey-brown loam 0.15m deep. This lay over a developed soil of umber-brown sandy silt with much gravel and occasional larger cobbles towards the base. Geology was an orange brown gravel with some larger cobbles and fragments of stone.

Trench 6: 25m long by 1.6m wide with a central area of 9m widened to a maximum of 2m. Aligned E/W with a fall to the east, ground surface at the centre of the trench was 88.8m aOD. Subsoil at the centre of the trench was at 86.5m aOD.

Two features (6.1 and 6.2) were located within Trench 6. Both were formed of randomly placed stones, some very large, some small, all unworked and typical of the geology of the area, in irregular alignments across the trench (figure 3). There was no evidence that they had been set into subsoil (Subsoil was cut back on either side of the features but there was no evidence for foundation cuts). Clay pipe was recovered from the matrix of 6.2. No artefactual material was recovered from 6.1. Although there was undoubtedly some human input in the formations, the character of the features suggested they represented clearance of large stones perhaps during the episode of post-medieval ploughing on the site rather than any attempt to form discrete walls or barriers. No features were seen in adjacent trenches to suggest any continuation of the features.

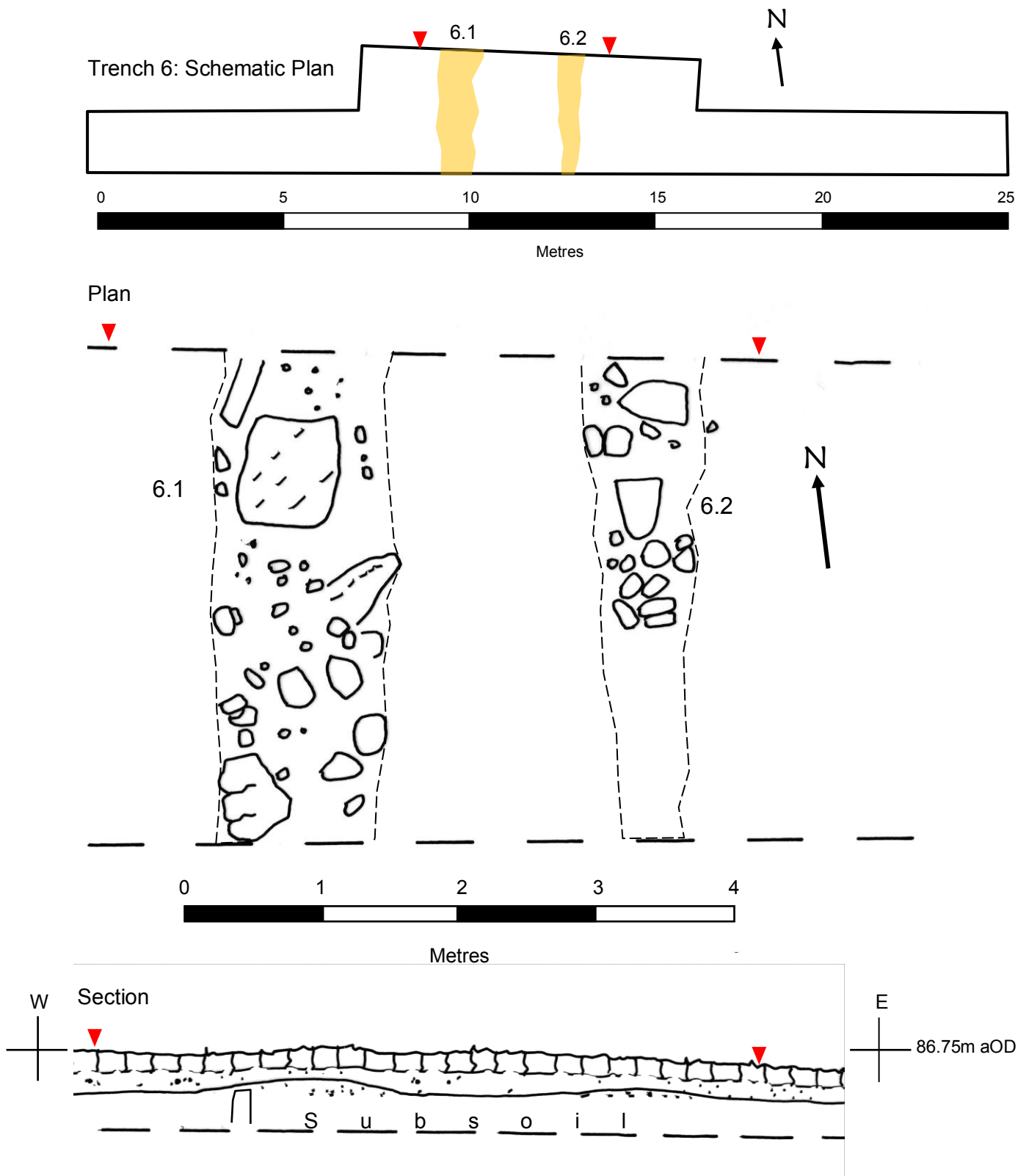


Figure 4: Post-medieval features in Trench 6: Schematic plan of trench (top) and plan and section (both 1:40 scale) of features 6.1 and 6.2.

Trench 7: 25m long by 1.6m wide and a maximum of 1.4m deep. Located at the south end of the field and running NE/SW with a slight fall to the south-west along its length (at the

centre of the trench, ground surface was 86.85m aOD). At the same point in the trench, subsoil was reached at 86.45m aOD. No archaeological features were located in the trench.

Developed soils consisted of a grey-brown sandy loam topsoil, a maximum of 0.25m deep above umber-brown sandy loam with much gravel and small cobbles to a maximum of 0.5m deep. A few pieces of clay pipe stem were recovered from topsoil and this deeper soil. Geology consisted of banded superficial sands, clays and gravels.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Six of the seven trenches excavated contained no archaeological features. Trench 6 contained what is considered to have been post-medieval clearance banks.

4.2 No artefactual material other than of modern date (fragments of clay pipe stem and of brown-glazed cooking pots and whitewares) was recovered from topsoil.

4.3 The evaluation has strongly suggested there are no significant archaeological remains within the PDA.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Given the negative results of the evaluation, it is recommended that there should be no requirement for further archaeological input as the development goes ahead.

6. SOURCES

Alan Williams Archaeology (2015) *Proposed Residential Development off Hexham Road, Wark-on-Tyne: Archaeological Assessment* for Weightman Commercial Investments.

7. PLATES



Plate 1: Trench 1. Looking west.



Plate 2: Trench 1. South-facing section at centre of trench.



Plate 3: Trench 2. Looking east.



Plate 4: Trench 2. South-facing section at centre of trench.



Plate 5: Trench 3 Looking north-west.



Plate 6: Trench 3: South-facing section at centre of trench.



Plate 7: Trench 4. Looking south-west.



Plate 8: Trench 4. South-east facing section at centre of trench.



Plate 9: Trench 5. Looking north-west.



Plate 10: Trench 5. South-west facing section at centre of trench.



Plate 11: Trench 6. Post-medieval clearance bank (6.1) with parallel feature (6.2) to rear. Looking south-east.



Plate 12: Trench 6. Post-medieval clearance bank (6.1) with parallel feature (6.1) to rear. Looking east.



Plate 13: Trench 6. Feature 6.2, looking north.



Plate 14: Trench 7. Looking north-east.



Plate 15: Trench 7. North-west facing section at centre of trench.

APPENDIX 1:

LAND OFF HEXHAM ROAD, WARK-ON-TYNE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation

April 2015

Prepared for Weightman Commercial Investments by:

Alan Williams Archaeology
53 Derwentdale Gardens, High Heaton
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7QN

Site Name:	Land East of Warkburn House, Hexham Road, Wark-on-Tyne
Proposed Development:	New-Build Construction of 10 Bungalows
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3. METHODOLOGY
4. ARCHIVE AND REPORT

FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of the Site

Figure 2: Extent of the Site

Figure 3: Proposed Developments and Evaluation Trench Locations

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Proposed Development and Site Location

Weightman Commercial Investments has lodged a planning application (14/03674/FUL) with Northumberland County Council for the construction of 10 new-build bungalows on land off Hexham Road immediately to the south of the Northumberland village of Wark-on-Tyne.

The proposed development area (PDA) consists of a single field (covering an area of approximately 6000m²) presently in rough pasture on the east side of Hexham Road (B6320) to the south of the village and west of the River North Tyne at NY 8618 7671 (figure 1).

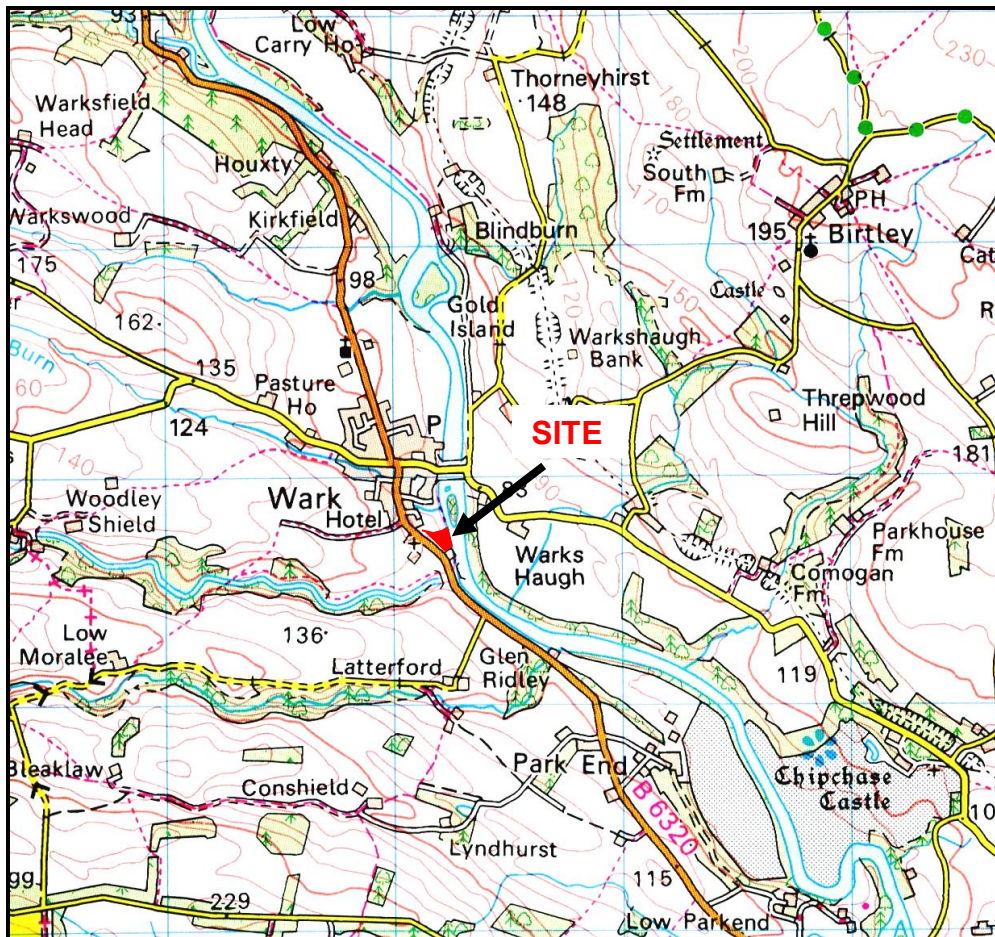


Figure 1: Location of the site (in red and arrowed) immediately to the south of Wark-on-Tyne and on the west bank of the River North Tyne.

1.2 Archaeological Potential and Preparation of Assessment

Because of the archaeological potential of the site - it lies next to the presumed medieval castle at Mote Hill and there is a broad scatter of prehistoric sites, especially of the Bronze Age, in the wider area - Northumberland County Council Conservation Team requested that an archaeological assessment should be prepared to collate and assess existing information about the site and determine as fully as possible from documentary evidence and visual inspection its archaeological potential and to allow the scope and nature of any future archaeological work to be ascertained (Alan Williams Archaeology April 2015).

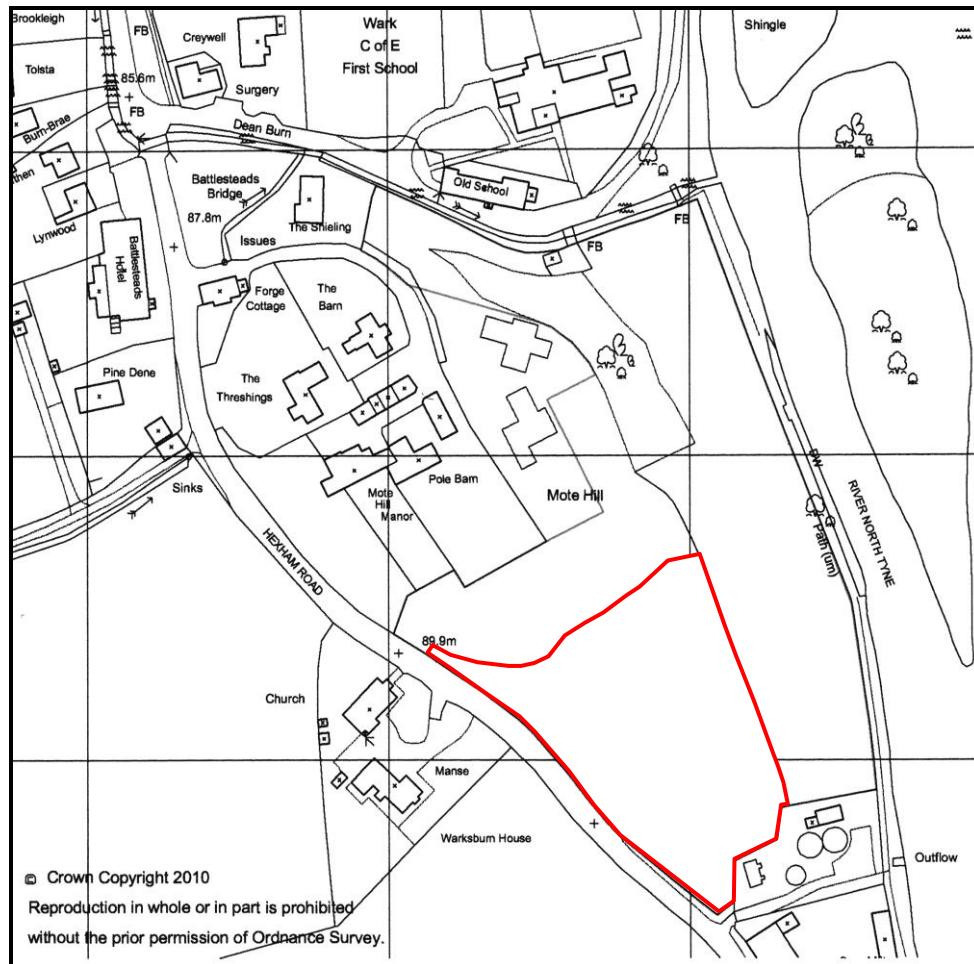


Figure 2: Location and extent of the site as-existing (in red outline) to the south of Mote Hill, Wark-on-Tyne. North to top. 100m grid squares.

The assessment showed that:

- No designated or protected archaeological sites lie within or in the vicinity of the PDA;
- No previous archaeological investigation has taken place within the site, nor is it thought that metal detecting has been carried out across the area;
- No aerial photographs inspected (including material from the NMR, Northumberland HER and Google Earth) show cropmarks suggesting the presence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- No historic maps or plans inspected show buildings within the development area;
- There is no evidence on the ground for earthworks suggesting substantial underlying structural remains;
- There is slight evidence for 19th century steam-ploughing which can be seen on a number of aerial photographs.

Given the results of the assessment, it was considered that:

- The likelihood of the PDA containing early prehistoric remains is **low**.
- Wark and its surrounding area holds considerable evidence for discrete Bronze-Age burial and ritual sites. The likelihood of Bronze Age activity within the PDA is **moderate**.
- The likelihood of Iron Age or Romano-British activity within the PDA is low.
- Adjacent Mote Hill is the putative site of a medieval castle. Although no remains of this structure have been located during previous archaeological monitoring and evaluation on the hill, the reason for this absence (extensive demolition, re-shaping of the hill or genuine historic absence) is not clear. The results of these works and the preparation of the current

assessment have not precluded the presence of associated remains on the PDA. The potential for medieval archaeology to survive within the site boundary is **moderate/high**.

2. REQUIREMENT FOR EVALUATION

The assessment was submitted to the NCC Assistant County Archaeological Officer on April 14th who requested that because the physical archaeological potential of the site remained untested, pre-determination evaluation should be carried out to establish the presence and nature of any remains on the site and the requirement for any mitigation works.

Evaluation requested involves the excavation of seven trenches located as per figure 3. All trenches will be 25m long by 1.6m wide (280m², just under 5% Of the area of the PDA).

Should the prescribed trenching fail to determine the nature and context of archaeological remains identified, an additional contingency of up to a maximum of 60m² of trenching will be utilised.

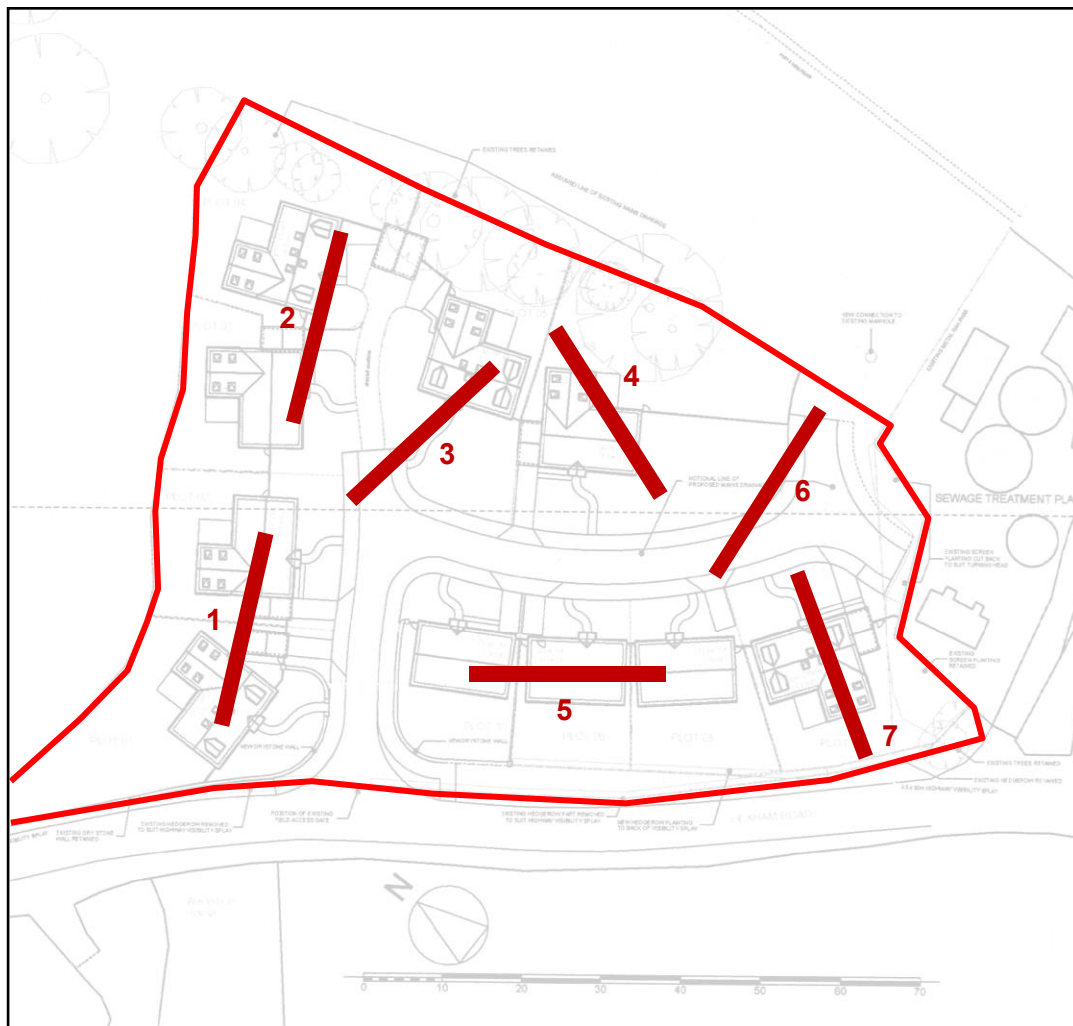


Figure 3: proposed development plan (grey background) of the PDA with evaluation trench locations (1 to 7) in red. All trenches are 25m long by 1.6m wide.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Trenches will be excavated by machine excavator with a smooth ditching blade either to subsoil or to the first archaeological deposit. 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.

3.2 The stratigraphy of all trenches will be recorded even where no archaeological deposits have been

identified.

3.3 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.

3.4 All pottery, metalwork and animal bone will be retained and located by context. Modern material will be discarded subsequent to the completion of fieldwork.

3.5 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.

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

3.7 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.

In the event that hearths, kilns or ovens are identified, provision will be made to collect at least one Archaeomagnetic date from each hearth or in the case of domestic structures, one per building. As appropriate, samples will be collected and processed by a suitable specialist for dating purposes.

Where such dating techniques are required NCC Conservation should be contacted to discuss the appropriate response.

3.8 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.

3.9 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.

3.10 The Archaeological Officer for NCC will be informed of the evaluation timetable and allowed access to the site at all reasonable times.

4. ARCHIVE AND REPORT

4.1 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.

The digital archive (photographs) will be deposited with ADS. Other materials will be deposited with the GNEM at Newcastle upon Tyne.

Northumberland Conservation will require confirmation that the site archive has been deposited in a satisfactory form to the designated archives/museum.

4.2 An illustrated report will be supplied within 4 months (or shorter period by mutual agreement) on completion of the fieldwork. Plans and sections within the report will be at a recognisable planning scale. 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

4.3 If appropriate, arrangements will be made to publish the results of the investigations through a local or national journal. A summary report will be prepared for *Archaeology in Northumberland* and submitted to Liz Williams, HER Officer by December of the year in which the work is completed.

4.4 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/>.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

5.2 If the Provisions of Construction, Design and Management (CDM) Regulations 2007 are appropriate the employer will appoint a CDM Coordinator who will prepare a Health and Safety Plan which will be made available to the archaeological contractor prior to the commencement of work.

6. SOURCES

Alan Williams Archaeology (2015) *Proposed Residential Development off Hexham Road, Wark-on-Tyne: Archaeological Assessment* for Weightman Commercial Investments.