

ANSH17



# A90/A96 HAUDAGAIN IMPROVEMENTS, ABERDEEN

## ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF TRIAL TRENCHING



commissioned by Jacobs (UK) Ltd  
on behalf of Transport Scotland

November 2017

# JACOBS™





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This report adheres to the quality standard of ISO 9001:2008

### PROJECT INFO:

HA Project Code **ANSH17** / NGR **NJ 91159 09133** / Parish **Aberdeen** / Local Authority **Aberdeen City Council** / OASIS Ref. **headland1-291789** / Archive Repository **NRHE at HES**

### PROJECT TEAM:

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook a programme of trial trenching at Middlefield, Aberdeen in advance of road junction improvements between the A90 and A96 trunk roads. Five trenches were excavated to the rear of existing tenement housing to target buildings depicted on historical mapping as Middlefield House. Within three of the trenches remains thought to relate to these 19th century buildings were recorded. The remains comprised cobbled surfaces, a wall cut and a metalled surface.

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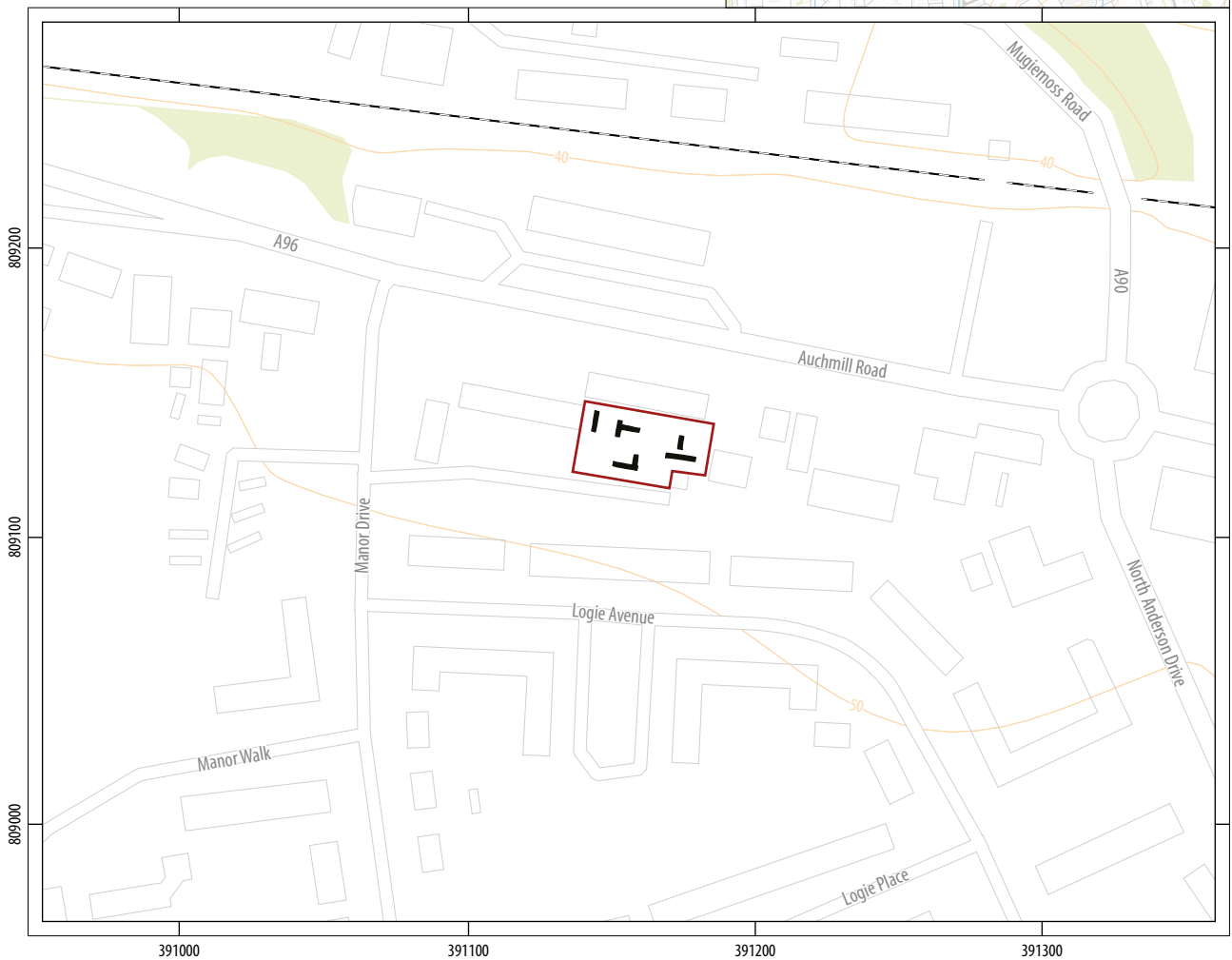
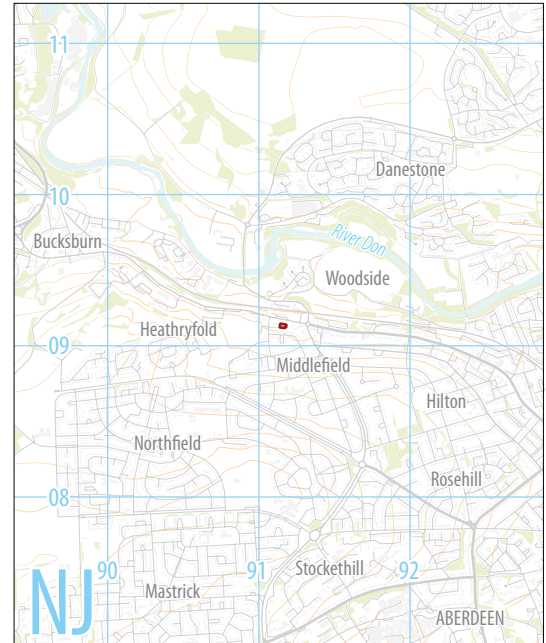
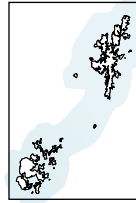
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ANSH/01

land adjacent to A96  
Auchmill Road  
Aberdeen

0 200km  
1:10,000,000 @ A4



0 50m  
1:2,500 @ A4

archaeological site boundary  
 trench location

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ILLUS 1 Site location



# A90/A96 HAUDAGAIN IMPROVEMENTS, ABERDEEN

## ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF TRIAL TRENCHING

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned to undertake a programme of trial trenching in advance of the proposed A90/A96 Haudagain improvement. This will comprise the construction of a new road link between the A90 and A96 trunk roads at Middlefield, to the north-west of Aberdeen city centre. The evaluation trenches were targeted on the location of a series of buildings depicted on historical mapping and identified in the Environmental Statement (ES; Jacobs 2015). The buildings are believed to be part of Middlefield House, which had been present on the site from at least the early 19th century. The works were carried out in accordance with a specification set by Jacobs (2017). The work took place between 25th and 27th July 2017 in wet weather conditions.

The trenches were positioned on the grass lawn to the rear of tenement housing, located to the east of Manor Drive and north of Logie Avenue, centred on NGR: NJ 91159 09133 (Illus 1). The site lies at approximately 48m AOD. The area was bounded to the north by tenement housing and to the south by a tarmac access road and parking area (Illus 2). To the west further lawns were present and to the east a tall hedge and stone wall formed the boundary to the site.

The superficial geology comprises alluvium, river terrace deposits and Devensian glacial till with sands and gravels below the made ground. The bedrock geology comprises Aberdeen Pluton Granite. Depth to bedrock is thought to be greater than 12m based on existing borehole information from an area outwith the archaeological investigation area (Jacobs, 2014).

### 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The cultural heritage chapter of the ES (Jacobs 2015) identified a number of heritage assets in the surrounding area of the proposed

road development. This included tentative evidence for prehistoric activity within the area, comprising a find of a bronze spearhead in 1898 (ES No. 49; National Record of the Historic Environment: NJ90NE 96). The exact location of the find spot and the current whereabouts of the spearhead are unknown.

Evidence for post-medieval settlement activity within the general area as identified in the ES included the site of: Woodside House Building (ES No. 25), the Middlefield Buildings (ES Nos 42–44), the Great Northern Road Inn (ES No. 47), Denhead Gasworks (ES No. 41) and the Gatelodge to Woodside House (ES No. 66). These buildings were all identified on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (1867). With the exception of one of the Middlefield Building (ES No. 44), all these buildings have been removed by later development.

Of the assets identified in the ES, the evaluation was centred over the location of the Middlefield buildings (Nos 42–44). These buildings, as depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (Illus 3), comprised Middlefield House and a cottage named Middlefield. The house (ES Sites 42 and 43) seemed to comprise of a series of inter-connected buildings probably forming a main house with associated farm buildings, such as stables, workshops and out-buildings. The buildings probably all date to the 19th century although the place name 'Middletown' is depicted on Taylor and Skinner's 1776 road map in this location. Unfortunately the detail on this map is poor and it is not certain if it represents the area depicted on the later maps. The majority of the complex that formed Middlefield House is now occupied by the present tenements, although below ground remains relating to the Middlefield House may survive below the present ground surface to the south of these tenements. Sites 42 and 43 represent the location of two parts of the house that may have survived below the areas of lawn to the rear of the present buildings. At least one of the buildings marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey, Middlefield Cottage (Site 44), survives to the east of the evaluation area.



**ILLUS 2** View of the evaluation area facing NE

### 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aims of the archaeological trial trenching were:

to gather additional information on the extent, condition, depth, character, quality, and date of archaeological remains within the site, as identified in Jacobs specification.

The specific aim was to:

- › identify, where possible, the presence of any archaeological remains that may be impacted on by the scheme and to provide data to inform the scope of any requirements for further archaeological mitigation.

Objectives for the archaeological trial trenching were:

- › to identify the presence or absence of any buried archaeological remains associated with the Middlefield Buildings;
- › to identify, investigate and record any such archaeological remains to the extent possible by the methods put forward in the specification;
- › to establish the preservation of any buried remains and provide a chronology of the archaeological phasing; and
- › to disseminate the results through reporting that will inform the requirement for further work.

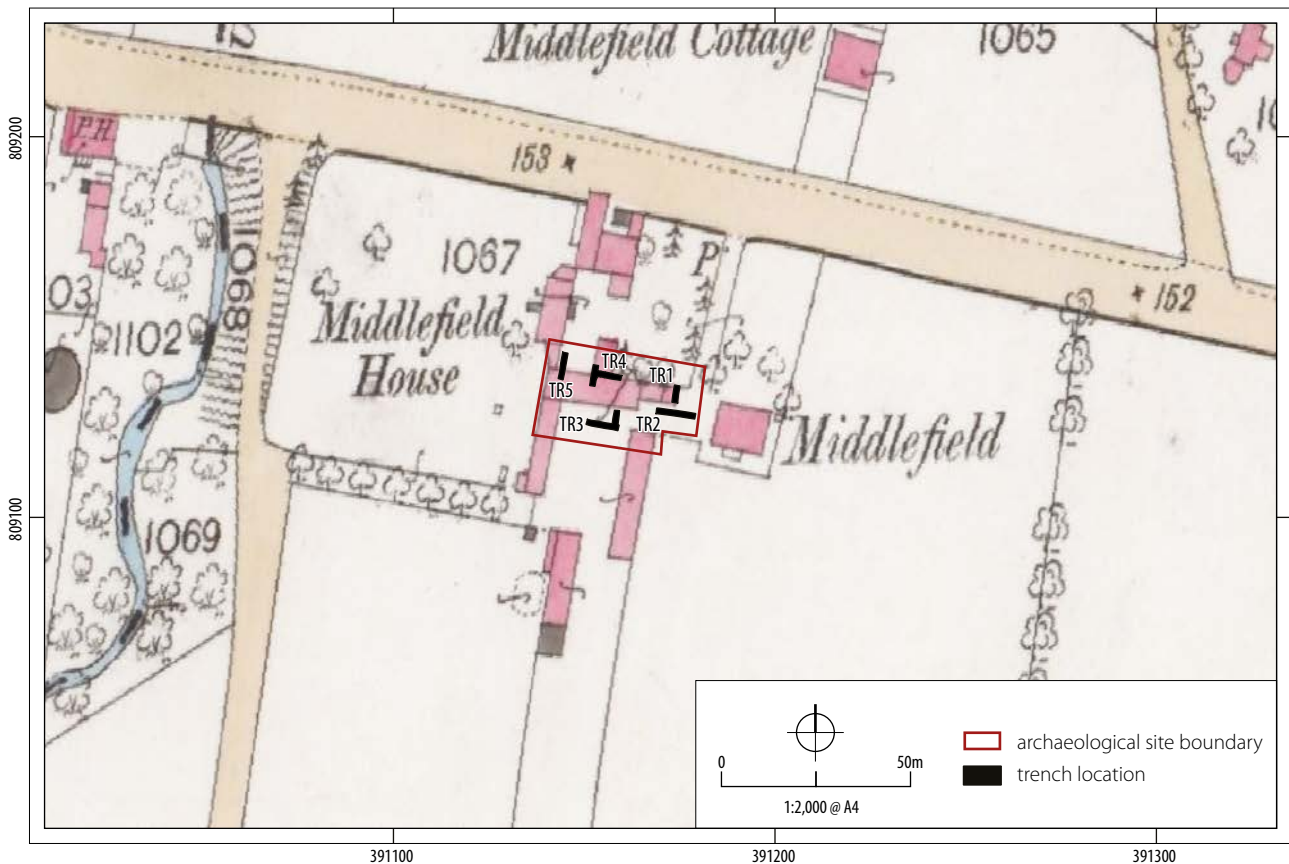
Objectives of any potential archaeological mitigation would be to undertake a full excavation of all surviving archaeological remains to mitigate the impact of the proposed route option on the archaeological deposits recorded. Possible research objectives this mitigation would be to attempt to identify at what date the Middlefield Buildings were first established and identify any earlier 18th century activity, as potentially indicated by the mapping evidence. Any dating of the site would primarily be based on artefact retrieval from the site. A further objective would be to research the history of the area to establish any other relevant information related to Middlefield.

### 4 METHOD

An eight ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator, fitted with a 1.6m (minimum) flat-bladed ditching bucket, was used to remove the turf, topsoil and made-ground under full archaeological supervision. Excavation then continued until the first archaeologically significant horizon was encountered or the absence of such a horizon was adequately demonstrated. Exposed archaeological surfaces were cleaned by hand and investigated to establish their nature extent and date.

#### 4.1 RECORDING

All excavated contexts were fully recorded by detailed written context records giving details of location, composition, shape,



**ILLUS 3** Extract from 1869 Ordnance Survey Map 25 inch 1st edition, Aberdeen Sheet LXXV.2

dimensions, relationships, finds, samples, cross-references to other elements of the record and other relevant contexts, etc.

All features and deposits were recorded on at least one plan at 1:20 scale, and at least one section drawing at 1:10 scale. A complete post-excavation plan and long section of each trench at an appropriate scale has been recorded. All drawings include such co-ordinate data as is necessary for the accurate location of the area planned or the section drawn and spot-heights related to the Ordnance Survey Datum accurate to two decimal places. All survey was carried out using a dGPS.

All excavated features and deposits have been recorded photographically using high resolution digital photography, employing a camera with a minimum field of 10 megapixels. A full photographic record, detailed trench descriptions (including a trench Harris matrix) and context records can be found in Appendix 1.

The recording followed standards and guidance set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014). All works were carried out in accordance with current Health and Safety legislation. A pre-condition photographic record of the site was undertaken (see photographic record in Appendix 1) and the trench locations were scanned with a CAT scanner and a Ground Penetrating Radar to identify buried services prior to the evaluation.

## 4.2 REPORTING AND ARCHIVES

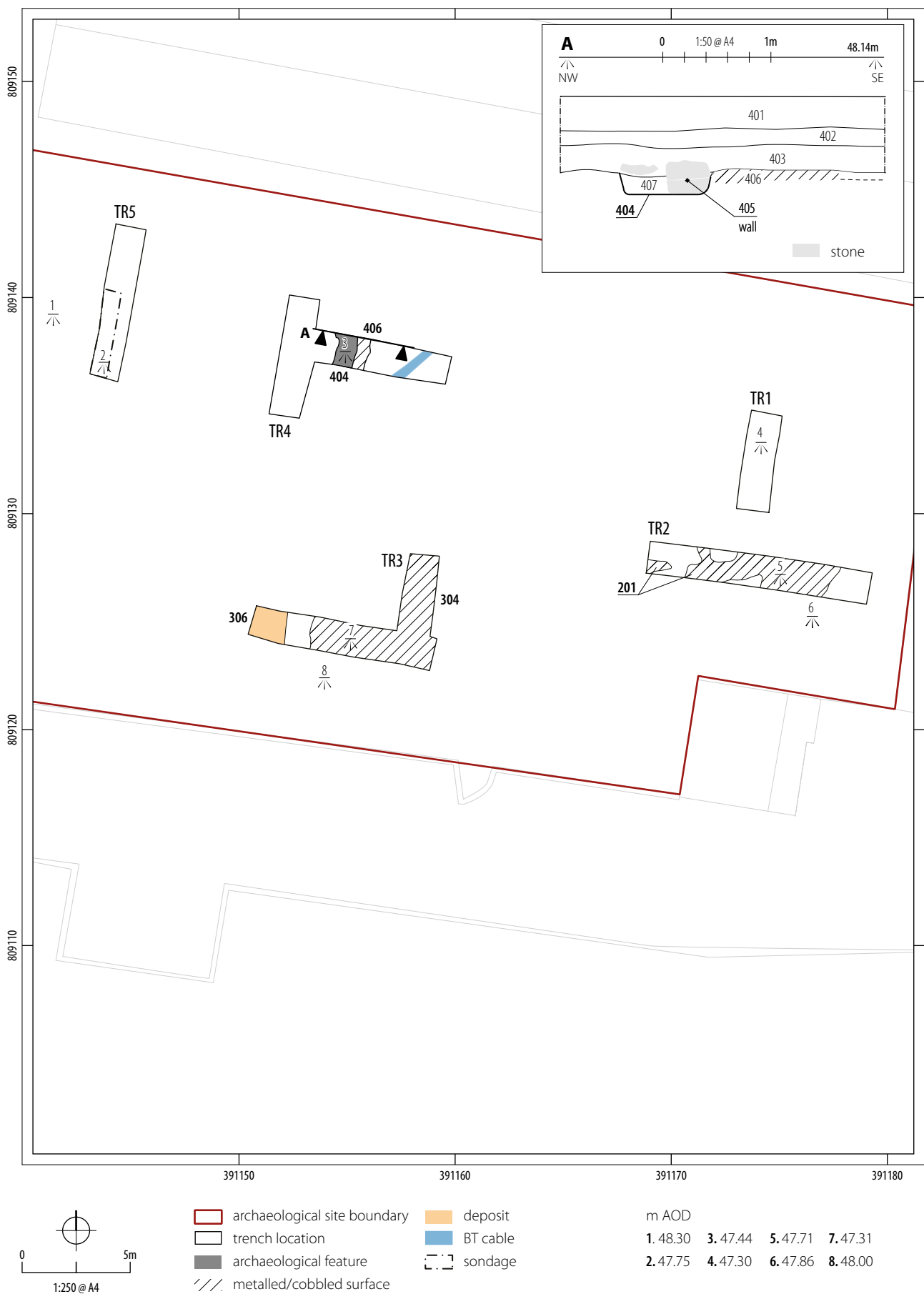
The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to Discovery and Excavation in Scotland (Appendix 2) and the OASIS database (headland1-291789).

The complete project archive will be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland within six months of the completion of the project. The records (paper and digital) will be archived according to best practice guidelines set out by the Archaeological Archiving Forum (2011).

## 5 RESULTS

A total of five trenches were excavated, each measuring 1.6m wide and between 4.5 and 10m long (Illus 4). They were primarily located to target the Middlefield House buildings (Sites 42 and 43) identified from historic mapping, and to avoid any identified services. Full trench details are tabulated in Appendix 1.

The topsoil across the site comprised a dark grey silty sand between 0.20–0.35m thick and the natural geology (where exposed) comprised a mid-greyish-orange clayey sand. A subsoil/B-horizon was observed in Trench 1 comprising a mid-brownish-orange clayey sand 0.35m thick. Further deposits of made ground were identified within the remaining four trenches and are described in more detail below.



ILLUS 4 Trench and feature plan





**ILLUS 5** View east of metallised surface (202) in Trench 2     **ILLUS 6** View south of cobbled surface (304) in Trench 3

## 5.1 TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was aligned north to south and located to the east side of the evaluation area. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.70m, exposing the geological subsoil below 0.30m of topsoil (101) and between 0.35m and 0.40m of subsoil (102). No archaeology was observed.

## 5.2 TRENCH 2

This trench was aligned east to west and located immediately south of Trench 1. In comparison to the other four trenches Trench 2 was much shallower, with a maximum depth of 0.20m. A layer of small pebble stones (202) 0.1m thick, forming the remains of a possible metallised surface, was recorded below 0.2m of topsoil (201) throughout this trench. The surface was patchy in nature and in places the geological subsoil (203) was exposed (Illus 5). The stones appear to have been pressed into the natural below and formed a flat but uneven surface.

## 5.3 TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was L-shaped and located to the south side of the evaluation area, to the west of Trenches 1 and 2. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.95m (at the north end only). A layer of large rounded cobbles (304) (Illus 6) overlying the natural geology (305) was recorded within this trench. These were 0.75m below the surface extending beyond the trench boundaries to the north, south and east. Towards the west end of the trench an uneven break was recorded in the cobble surface (304) and the geological subsoil was exposed. The cobble surface did not continue to the west of this break. Instead a thin layer of ash rich loam (306) was located at the west end of the trench at the same level as the cobbles. The 1m wide area of exposed geological subsoil between the cobbles to the east and layer of loam to the west was initially interpreted as the potential location of a wall that had subsequently been removed, the cobbles to the east representing either an internal or external floor surface. No evidence of a cut was identified either in plan or in section and no stones forming the remains of a wall were observed. It was therefore unlikely that the break in the cobbles represented an extant wall line. The cobbles were overlain by a compact thin layer of cinders and pea gravel (303). In turn this was overlain by a 0.35m layer of made ground (302) comprising dark grey silty sand

containing fragments of modern glass and pottery above which was 0.35m of topsoil.

## 5.4 TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was T-shaped in plan and located to the north side of the evaluation area. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.7m, through 0.35m of topsoil (401) and two further layers of made ground (402) and (403). At the centre of Trench 4, at a depth of 0.5m below the surface, a shallow 1m wide wall foundation cut [404] 0.2m deep was recorded cutting the geological subsoil (408). In the south-facing section of the cut two large stones (405) 0.5m wide were recorded, although the remainder of the cut was filled with a deposit of mixed loam, small poorly sorted stones, brick fragments and tile (407). Immediately east of the cut, a layer of cobbles (406) was recorded (Illus 7) forming an edge at the top of the cut. The cobbles were exposed for a further 2.5m to the east and potentially continued beyond this. The cut and cobbles were overlain by a 0.3m thick dark brown loam deposit (403) containing fragments of modern pottery, glass, brick and stone. This in turn was overlain by a thin layer of light yellow sand (402) forming a levelling layer, which was overlain by topsoil (401).

## 5.5 TRENCH 5

Trench 5 was located to the north-west corner of the evaluation area and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m. At a depth of 0.3m the trench contained a 0.6m thick layer of concrete, sand and building rubble (502) overlying the natural geology (503). This deposit was thought to be the remains of building materials used during the construction of the present tenements in the 1950s. The depth of this material in the area suggested that any underlying ground surface had been truncated during this construction phase; as such no archaeology was observed.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation has indicated that the survival of remains associated with the Middlefield House buildings (ES Sites 42 and 43) is poor. The results identified little evidence of any upstanding walls although in-situ cobble floor surfaces are present, indicating that the area was not completely truncated by the construction of the tenements.



**ILLUS 7** View south of cobbled surface (406) and foundation cut [404] in Trench 4

Although a number of features were recorded across the area their purpose was not always clear. The alignment of the wall cut in Trench 4 mirrored the alignment of the break in the cobbles recorded in Trench 3 to the south. Initially this was interpreted as representing the same feature, specifically a north/south aligned wall foundation. When the trenches are placed over the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of the Middlefield buildings (See Illus 3) no buildings are present in Trench 3 and the potential wall cut in Trench 4 is not in alignment with any outer walls. This would imply that neither of these features were structural wall foundations. In the case of Trench 4 given the shallow depth of the cut the feature may represent the remains of an internal wall or even a curb. The break in the cobbles in Trench 3 is more difficult to explain and may just be the result of later disturbance. Certainly no wall or kerb stones were present.

From the evidence of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map the cobble floor in Trench 3 is likely to represent the remains of an external ground surface, whilst the cobble floor in Trench 4 seems to represent an internal surface. The large cobbles forming this internal floor surface may indicate that the building had been a workshop or stable block, as it would have been unusual to have such a floor surface in a domestic building. The metallised surface in Trench 2 has been interpreted as the remains of an external road linking the surviving Middlefield cottage (871 Great Northern Road) and the demolished buildings. The presence of modern pottery in the made-ground layers above these surfaces represent deposits associated with the construction of the housing development in the 1950s.

## 7 REFERENCES

- Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF) 2011 *Archaeological Archives A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (2nd edn) (ClfA: Reading) [http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/aaf\\_archaeological\\_archives\\_2011.pdf](http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/aaf_archaeological_archives_2011.pdf) accessed August 2017
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- Jacobs 2017 *A90/A96 Haudagain Improvement: Invitation to Tender – Phase 1 Archaeological Trial trenching Contract Part II – Specification* [unpublished client document] Ref. B1557630/CH/WSI-002
- Ordnance Survey (OS) (1869) 'Aberdeen Sheet LXXV.2' (surveyed 1867, published 1869) <http://maps.nls.uk/view/74477964> accessed August 2017

Taylor G & Skinner A (1776) 'The Road from Aberdeen to Huntly; the Road from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh' *Survey and maps of the roads of North Britain or Scotland* Plate 56 <http://maps.nls.uk/atlas/taylor-skinner/rec/1097> accessed August 2017

Wilson D 2017 *A90/A96 Haudagain Improvements, Aberdeen: Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation* [unpublished client document] Headland Archaeology, Ref. ANSH17



## 8 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 SITE REGISTERS

#### Appendix 1.1 Trench register

TR	Orientation	Dimensions (m)	Max. D (m)	Description
1	N-S	W1.6 X L4.5	0.7	Dark grey silty sand topsoil 0.3m thick overlying a mid-brownish-orange clayey sand subsoil 0.35m to 0.4m thick which overlies natural geology. No archaeology observed
2	E-W	W1.6 X L10	0.2	Dark grey silty sand topsoil 0.2m thick overlying a metalised surface pressed into natural geology
3	E-W and N-S	W1.6 X L8.5, W1.6 x L5.1	0.8	Dark grey silty sand topsoil 0.35m thick overlying a made-ground deposit 0.35m thick which overlies a cinder layer 0.02m thick. This overlies a cobbled surface
4	E-W and N-S	W1.6 X L7.9, W1.6 x L5.6	0.7	Dark grey silty sand topsoil 0.25m thick overlying a thin light yellow sand layer, which overlies a made ground layer. This in turn seals a cobble surface which abuts the cut for a robbed out wall to the east. The partial remains of the wall were recorded in the south facing section of the trench.
5	N-S	W1.6 X L7.1	1.1	Dark grey silty sand topsoil 0.3m thick overlying a concrete and building rubble layer

#### Appendix 1.2 Context register

Context	Description	Th (m)
101	Topsoil – dark grey silty sand with occasional modern pottery fragments	0.3
102	Subsoil/B-horizon – mid-brownish-orange clayey sand	0.35
103	Natural geology – mid greyish orange clayey sand	–
201	Topsoil – dark grey silty sand with occasional modern pottery fragments	0.2
202	Metallised surface formed of small rounded stones pressed into the natural. The surface is uneven and patchy below the topsoil	0.1
203	Natural geology – mid greyish orange clayey sand	–
301	Topsoil – dark grey silty sand with occasional modern pottery fragments	0.35

Context	Description	Th (m)
302	Made-ground. A dark grey firm silty sand with moderate stone inclusions and modern pottery fragments. Below (301) and above (303).	0.35
303	Cinder layer overlying cobbles made up of compacted mid-grey cinders and pea-gravel. Below (302) and over (304).	0.05
304	Cobbled surface 0.7m below the surface made up of large sub-rounded but poorly sorted cobble stones forming a slightly uneven surface. Below (303) and above (306).	0.2
305	Natural geology – mid greyish orange clayey sand.	–
306	Layer of made-ground to west of the break in the cobble surface (304). It was formed of dark-grey firm silty sand with moderate stone inclusions and modern pottery and glass fragments. Below (302) and over (305)	(unknown)
401	Topsoil – dark grey silty sand with occasional modern pottery fragments.	0.35
402	Sand layer forming a levelling layer below (401) and above (403).	0.15
403	Brown loam layer forming a layer of made ground containing stone brick and modern pottery and glass. Below (402) and above (405) and (406).	0.3
404	A N/S aligned cut of wall foundation, linear in plan and 0.8m wide partially filled with in-situ stones (405) and backfill (407). The west side of the cut is uneven in plan but vertical against the cobbles to the east.	0.2 deep
405	Remains of a stone wall formed of large sub-rounded stones 0.4 x 0.2 x 0.1 bonded with a pale yellow lime mortar. Only seen in the S facing section. Within cut [404] forming a wall 0.5m wide.	0.1
406	A layer of compacted rounded cobbled stones to the east side of wall cut [404]. Forms a rough floor surface below (403) and above the natural.	(unknown)
407	A very dark grey brown soft mixed loam with stone, brick and tile fragment inclusions. Forming the backfill to a robbed out wall cut [404]. Below (403).	0.2 deep
408	Natural geology – mid greyish orange clayey sand	–
501	Topsoil – dark grey silty sand with occasional modern pottery fragments	0.3
502	A deposit of concrete, sand and building materials overlying the natural.	0.6
503	Natural geology – mid greyish orange clayey sand	–

#### Appendix 1.3 Photographic register

Photo	Direction	Description
01	E	Pre-excavation condition view
02	E	Pre-excavation condition view
03	SE	Pre-excavation condition view
04	SE	Pre-excavation condition view



Photo	Direction	Description
05	N	Pre-excavation condition view
06	W	Pre-excavation condition view
07	SW	Pre-excavation condition view
08	E	Pre-excavation condition view
09	E	View of Herras fencing erected
10	NW	View of Herras fencing erected
11	N	View of Herras fencing erected
12	SW	Working shot - opening first trench
13	W	View of Trench 2
14	S	View of Trench 3
15	S	View of possible wall cut and North-facing section in Trench 3
16	E	View of Trench 3
17	E	View of Trench 2
18	S	North-facing section and metallised surface in Trench 2
19	N	View of Trench 1
20	W	East-facing section in Trench 1
21	N	View of Trench 5
22	W	East-facing section of Trench 5
23	S	North-facing section of Trench 4 showing cobbles [406] and cut [404]
24	N	South-facing section of Trench 4 showing cobbles [406] and cut [404]
25	NE	View of BT cable
26	SW	View of BT cable
27	NW	View of BT cable
28	N	View of Trench 4
29	E	View of Trench 4
30	E	View of cut [404] and cobbles [406] in Trench 4
31	W	View of cut [404] and cobbles [406] in Trench 4
32	W	View of cut [404] in Trench 4
33	N	South-facing section of Trench 4 with [4004], [4005] and [406]
34	E	Working shot
35	SE	Working shot
36	S	Working shot
37	NE	Working shot
38	SW	Working shot of backfilling
39	NE	View of site post reinstatement
40	E	View of site post reinstatement
41	SE	View of site post reinstatement

Photo	Direction	Description
42	W	View of site post reinstatement
43	NW	View of site post reinstatement
44	N	View of site post reinstatement showing path
45	S	View of site post reinstatement showing path
46	S	View of site post reinstatement showing path
47	NE	View of site post reinstatement
48	NW	View of site post reinstatement
49	W	View of site post reinstatement
50	W	View of site post reinstatement
51	W	View of site post reinstatement
52	W	View of site post reinstatement
53	NW	View of site post reinstatement showing path
54	NE	View of site post reinstatement showing path

Appendix 1.4    Harris Matrix

TR1		TR2	
	101		201
	102		202
	103		203
TR3			
	301		
	302		
	303		
	304	306	
	305		
TR4			
	401		
	402		
	403		
	407		
	405	406	
	404		
	408		
TR5			
	501		
	502		
	503		

## APPENDIX 2 DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND ENTRY

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Aberdeen
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	A90/A96 Haudagain, Aberdeen
PROJECT CODE:	ANSH17-001
PARISH:	Aberdeen
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Donald Wilson
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Evaluation
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NJ 91159 09133
START DATE (this season)	25/07/2017
END DATE (this season)	26/07/2017
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook a programme of trial trenching at Haudagain, Aberdeen in advance of road junction improvements between the A90 and A96 trunk roads. Five trenches were excavated to the rear of existing tenement housing targeting known buildings depicted on historical mapping as Middlefield House. Within three of the trenches remains thought to relate to the 19th century buildings present on these maps was recorded. The remains comprised cobbled surfaces, a wall cut and a metal surface.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	Unknown
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Jacobs (UK) Ltd
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	13 Jane Street, Edinburgh EH6 5HE
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	NRHE at HES





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