

**Report on the Watching Brief at 2 Whitton Park
(Braemar), Milfield, Northumberland**

(August 23, 2004)

By: Kristian L.R. Pedersen

Client:	Mr. Michael Madden
Planning Application No.:	04/B/0007
OASIS Reference No.:	bibliore1-4193

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1. Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at 2 Whitton Park (Braemar), in Milfield on August 23, 2004 in fulfillment of planning stipulations made by Northumberland County Council. This work was conducted on behalf of Michael Madden, the owner and developer of the land, in advance of the erection of a new garage on his property. As the footings for the structure were dug by the mechanical digger, signs of archaeological deposits were sought as the topsoil was removed. In total, four footing trenches were dug: two measuring 8.5 metres in length and 0.85 metres wide; two measuring 6 metres in length, and again 0.85 metres wide. No archaeological features were observed in any of the trenches. The stratigraphic succession consisted of a thick topsoil layer, followed by a culturally sterile deposit of sand and gravel probably of Late Glacial age.

2. Introduction

2.1 This excavation was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by Northumberland County Council Conservation Team (Appendix 1). It comprised the archaeological recording of the footing trenches for a garage whilst they were being dug by a mechanical digger. The work was carried out during on 23 August 2004 at the request of the developer, Mr. Michael Madden, the owner of the land.

2.2 The site of 2 Whitton Park (Braemar), Milfield, is situated at the edge of Milfield village (NT 9355 3380) between an open field to the west and between existing properties to the east, south and north (Fig. 1). It comprises an area that was formerly occupied by a small garage, which was demolished by the owner for the construction of the new structure. The land surface was covered by grass and low vegetation. Although the ground rises at the north side of the plot, the development area generally lies at 45.5m above Ordnance Datum.

3. Background

3.1 The Braemar, Whitton Park development area lies within an area that is exceptionally rich in archaeological remains dating from the Mesolithic through to Mediaeval times. The site lies on a raised fluvio-glacial sand and gravel terrace and these landforms have shown to be the most sensitive archaeological areas in the valley (Passmore & Waddington 2002). Indeed these terraces host the highest density of archaeological remains anywhere in Northumberland. with the majority dating from the Neolithic-Early Bronze Age and early Mediaeval periods. The site lies at the north end of a prehistoric 'ritual landscape' which includes a series of henge and henge-related monuments, an avenue, ring ditches and 'pit' and settlement sites (Harding 1981; Miket 1981, 1985; Waddington 1999). Some of these features are known to have been re-used in Anglo-Saxon (early Mediaeval) times (Scull & Harding 1990).



Figure 1: Location Map

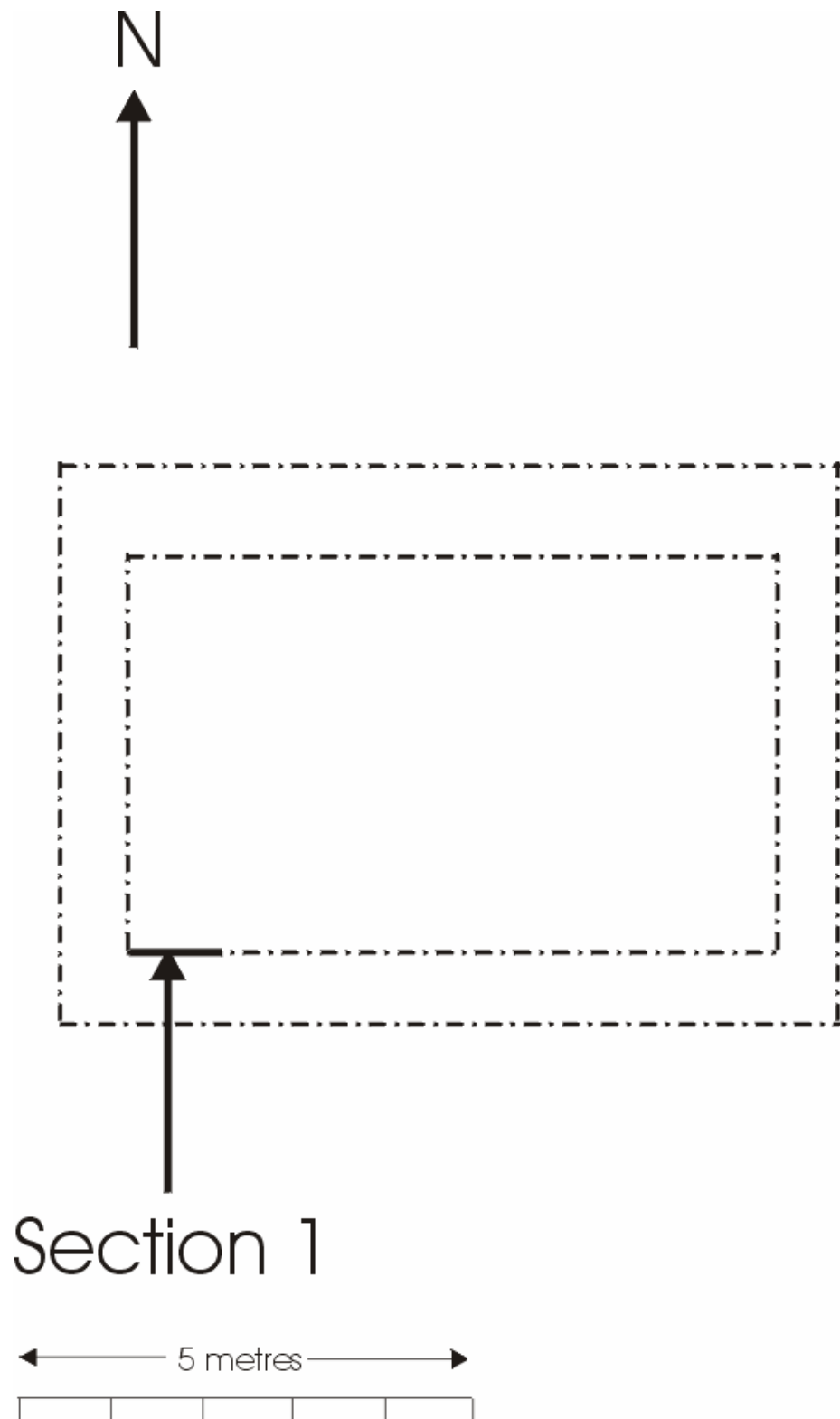


Figure 2: Plan of Footing Trenches Showing Representative Section

3.2 To the south-east of the development site, at a distance of 700 metres, lies the Milfield South Henge (Harding 1981; Scull & Harding 1990) in a field that has produced one of the highest densities of surface lithic artefact scatters anywhere in the basin (Waddington 2001), that date to the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods. The henge has been dated to the Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age, but also contained pagan burials belonging to the early Mediaeval period. Due east of the site, also at a distance of 700 metres, are the remains of the royal Anglian township of Maelmin dating from the 7th and 8th centuries AD. The site includes a large settlement consisting of houses, a large hall and sunken featured buildings that are enclosed by a double palisade (Gates & O'Brien 1988). Both the henge and Maelmin sites are scheduled ancient monuments. The Neolithic 'avenue' or 'droveway' passes within 400 metres of the site where it is crossed by the A697 road on its course towards the Meldon Burn to the east of Milfield village. The nearest known monument to the site, however, is a sub-circular enclosure, probably a late prehistoric palisaded site, that lies 400 metres east of the development site partly below the A697 trunk road on a bluff next to the Meldon Burn next to the old 'Glendale Engineering' site. The whole area falls within an archaeological landscape of national importance with sites dating from a wide range of periods. A recent evaluation undertaken at a contiguous plot of land, lying 400 metres to the southeast, revealed the existence of a series of later Neolithic pits which contained Impressed Ware ceramic material (Waddington 2004).

4. Method Statement

4.1 A mechanical digger removed the topsoil using a toothed bucket. Four trenches were dug: two measuring 8.5 metres in length on the northern and southern sides of the development area, and two measuring 6 metres in length at the eastern and western sides. Each of these trenches measured 0.85 metres in width, this being governed by the dimensions of the bucket used by the mechanical digger. As the material was removed, the underlying sand-gravel layer was observed for any signs of archaeological features. Moreover, the topsoil was periodically explored to see if there were any diagnostic artefacts in this deposit. A plan of the footing trenches was made at 1:20 scale (Figure 2), and a representative section of 1 metre was photographed, drawn, and recorded on the plans. The deposits were recorded in a section drawing at a scale of 1:10 and described on pro-forma context sheets. All this material comprises the archive and shall be deposited at the Museum of Antiquities in Newcastle-upon-Tyne along with this report.



Figure 3: The Development Area, Facing West



Figure 4: The Digger Commencing Work



Figure 5: A View of the Northernmost Footing Trench, Facing East

5. Stratigraphic Succession

5.1 The stratigraphic succession on the site consisted of two deposits: the first was a topsoil of varying thickness, being between 20 cm and 40 cm. It was thickest towards the northwest portion of the site. The landowner mentioned that the previous owner of the property had his garden landscaped, and that topsoil was brought in from elsewhere. Moreover, the field to the northeast of the site was apparently used as a rubbish tip in living memory according to local informants. This was corroborated indirectly by the presence of large quantities of modern pottery, china, porcelain, metal, plastic, and other refuse in the topsoil. Further rubbish was introduced to the topsoil by the rubble associated with the demolition of the garage that was being replaced by the new construction.

5.2 The second deposit consisted of fluvio-glacial sand and gravel. The sand was coarse and loose, with a red-brown colour, and the gravel was occasionally commingled with pebbles and cobbles. Such sand and gravel deposits comprise the terraces surrounding the Milfield Basin and are often rich in Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age material (Passmore & Waddington 2002). No archaeological features were cut into this deposit, nor were any artefacts observed therein.



Figure 6: The Representative Section

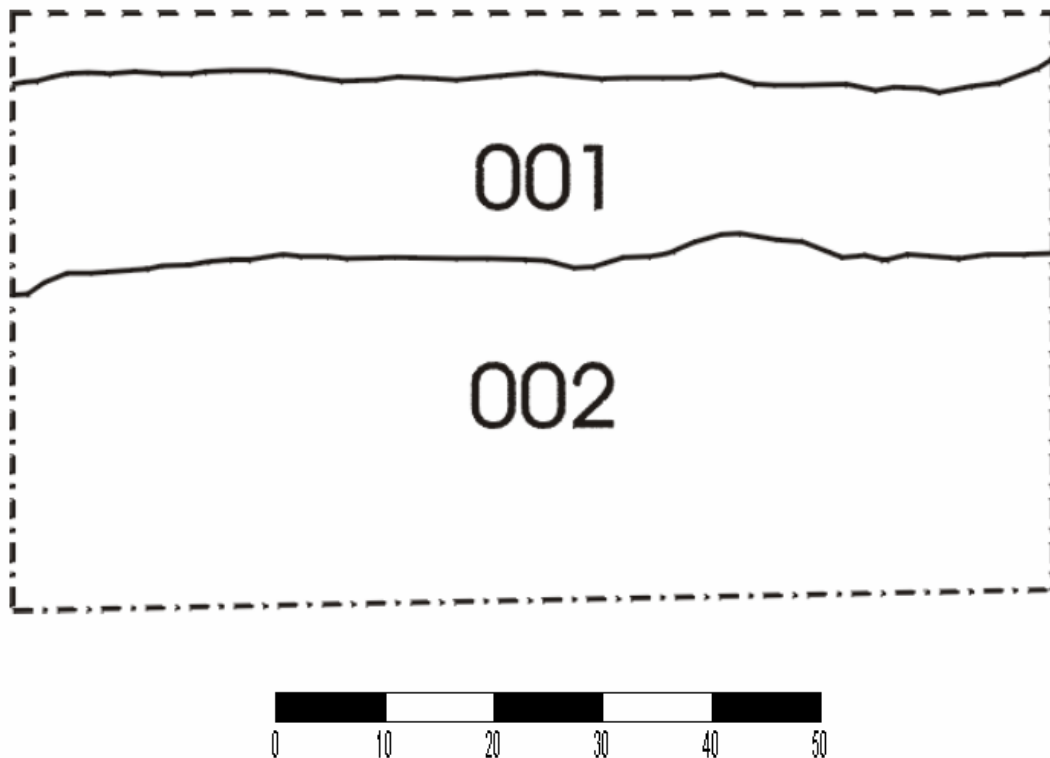


Figure 7: Drawing of the Representative Section (Scale in centimetres)

Context	Description	Minimum Thickness	Maximum Thickness
001	Medium brown colour, loose compaction. Filled with modern refuse and rubble	20 cm.	40 cm.
002	Red-brown coarse sand and gravel deposit. No cultural material.	NA	NA

Table 1: The Stratigraphic Succession at Braemar, Whitton Park, Milfield

6. Conclusions

6.1 No archaeological deposits were observed during the digging of footing trenches at 2 Whitton Park (Braemar), Milfield. The topsoil did not provide any archaeological significant material, either: all of the cultural material observed was of recent date and probably represents a combination of rubble from the demolition of the former garage and domestic refuse strewn on the land.

7. Acknowledgements

7.1 We wish to extend our thanks to the following individuals for the assistance in the undertaking of this work, and in the preparation of the report: to

the landowner, Michael Madden, for his generosity and assistance whilst on the site; to Karen Derham for her freely given advice and patience with many inquiries; to Clive Waddington, for kindly providing me with a copy of his recent work in the vicinity. All shortcomings, omissions and errors nevertheless remain the sole responsibility of the author.

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9. Appendix: Archaeological Specification for 2 Whitton (Braemar), Milfield

Planning ref: 04/B/0007
Our ref: B31/7; 2955
Grid ref: NT 9349 3378

LAND AT 2 WHITTON PARK, MILFIELD, NORTHUMBERLAND

Specification for archaeological watching brief on development works to satisfy a planning condition

Introduction

Planning permission has been sought for the construction of a double garage at 2 Whitton Park, Milfield (Fig 1). Milfield is located in a prehistoric ritual landscape whose remains include a Neolithic avenue that became associated with a number of early Bronze Age henge monuments and barrows. Some of the prehistoric features were reused in the Saxon period, when the Maelmin Saxon palace site was constructed to the immediate east of the village.

Recent archaeological excavations at Woodbridge Quarry have revealed evidence of Neolithic settlement activity which has been preserved *in situ* due to its importance. Building Plot 3 immediately to the east of 2 Whitton Park has been subject to an archaeological evaluation in 1993 and excavation last month. The archaeological investigations revealed evidence of a Neolithic building c.0.4m below current ground level.

The proposed development has the potential to disturb important archaeological remains associated with Neolithic and later settlement. As a consequence and in keeping with previous recommendations, an archaeological condition has been attached to the planning permission requiring that the groundworks should not exceed 0.4m below current ground level and will be subject to an archaeological watching brief. The archaeological watching brief will be undertaken on the construction works, to allow any archaeological remains disturbed to be recorded prior to their destruction.

Sufficient detail has been included in this document to allow it to be submitted to archaeological consultants and contractors for tenders or quotations.

Response

The appointed archaeological consultant or contractor **must** confirm in writing to the Assistant County Archaeologist that they accept all the requirements of the specification and have consulted the English Heritage Scientific Advisor for

North East England on an appropriate environmental strategy for this site (see section 6.5). Any variations should be discussed with the Assistant County Archaeologist before the commencement of work. No work should commence prior to the receipt of this letter.

Site Location

The development site is situated adjacent to 2 Whitton Park, which is located to the rear of the Milfield Café, Milfield (Fig 1). The site is centred on NGR NT 9349 3378. Access arrangements will presumably be from the access road although this should be confirmed with the commissioning client. The application area is shown on figure 2.

Historical and Archaeological Background

Milfield lies in north Northumberland on the north-east side of the Milfield Basin comprising a series of sand, gravel and clay terraces. Although a small parish, it is exceptionally rich in outstanding archaeological remains from the Neolithic/Bronze Age and the Anglo-Saxon periods, which extend into the neighbouring parishes of Ewart and Akeld. The Milfield Basin is one of the best known prehistoric landscapes in the county, if not the country.

Recent fieldwalking of much of the parish has revealed signs of a Mesolithic presence in this area. It is likely that the relic of a former lake, known as Lake Ewart, that once filled the Milfield Basin, would have been an attractive environment for Mesolithic people.

A number of ritual prehistoric sites run along the edge of the Milfield Basin and appear to be linked by a drove road. These sites include three henges at Milfield North Henge, Milfield South Henge and Whitton Hill Henge. The ritual and ceremonial importance of the Milfield area continued into the Bronze Age with more religious sites on the fringe of the Milfield Basin at Whitton Hill site 1 and Whitton Hill site 2. Archaeologists have excavated at both of these sites, revealing cemeteries with cremated human remains placed in pots and interred without cists. Pit alignments have also been discovered by aerial photography and excavated and divide the land physically and symbolically. Excavations around Milfield are increasingly revealing evidence of Neolithic settlement activity, which is discussed in section 5.

There is very little evidence of Iron Age and Roman activity around Milfield although a probable souterrain was uncovered at Milfieldhill in the 19th century.

Milfield flourished again in the early medieval period. The royal Anglo-Saxon palace of Maelmin is located to the north-east of the present village. It is thought to have been founded here in the 7th century as a successor to Ad Gefrin, which lay a few

kilometres to the south under the shadow of Yeavinger Bell. The palace remains are only visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs and appear to represent a royal palace, rectangular buildings, small enclosures and a large palisaded area. The full extent of the Saxon settlement is not known, however, buildings have been found as far east as Kimmerston Road End. Anglo-Saxon people are known to have re-used earlier ritual sites for their own cemeteries at Milfield South Henge and the henge North-east of Milfield Hill.

Little is known of the medieval settlement activity in this area and the earliest historical record of Milfield village is not found until 1541. Traces of medieval ridge and furrow field systems have been recorded recently across the Milfield Basin but few of these earthworks have survived intensive modern farming.

Previous Archaeological Investigations

Increasing amounts of archaeological work are being carried out in this part of Northumberland. This specification is limited to the recent intrusive archaeological investigations in the immediately surrounding area.

Woodbridge Quarry has been the subject of a series of archaeological investigations since 1993, which have revealed early Neolithic to Bronze Age settlement activity, comprising pits, postholes and gullies. Two areas were retained *in situ* due to the density and importance of the archaeological remains which were revealed.¹

An archaeological evaluation at Whitton Hill Farm, Milfield in 1996 did not reveal any archaeological remains.² In comparison an archaeological evaluation on land to the east of the Maxway factory site in 1997³ revealed a series of prehistoric plough marks and land boundaries. These remains seem to have been truncated at some stage in the past, and were in a poor state of preservation, but are still considered to be remains of some importance because of their relative scarcity in Northumberland.

An archaeological evaluation at 3 Whitton Park, Milfield in 1993 revealed undated structural remains thought to be of Neolithic or Anglo-Saxon date at least 0.4m below current ground level.⁴ The site has been the subject of an archaeological

¹ Wardell Armstrong, 2004. 'Woodbridge Quarry, Northumberland. Scheme of Archaeological Work to discharge condition 30.' Unpublished report

² Archaeological Services, University of Durham, 1996. 'An archaeological evaluation at Whitton Hill Farm, Milfield, Northumberland.' Unpublished report

³ Geoquest Associates, 1997. 'Archaeological Evaluation at the Maxway Production Facility, Milfield, Northumberland'. Unpublished Report for Charles Clements Consultants.

⁴ Archaeological Services, University of Durham. 1993. 'Whitton Park Plot 3, Milfield, Northumberland: An Archaeological Field Evaluation'. Unpublished Report for Robson Design

excavation last month which revealed more of the structure and recovered late Neolithic pottery and charcoal from the fill of the postholes.⁵ This is an important discovery showing that Neolithic settlement activity extends into the area immediately around the present village.

Recommended Course of Action

The purpose of this work is to ensure that important archaeological remains are not destroyed without first being adequately recorded.

The proposed development is located in an area with a high archaeological potential, shown by the recent excavation of a Neolithic structure c.65m south-east of the proposed development area. Based on the results of an archaeological evaluation at 3 Whitton Park, Northumberland County Council Conservation Team has advised that **all** groundworks should not exceed 0.4m below current ground level, thereby preserving important archaeological remains in situ.

It is considered that in this case a watching brief will still be required in order monitor the deposits revealed during groundworks and prevent damage to important archaeological remains. The watching brief should cover the all groundworks for the development including:

- Ground reduction for a raft foundation for the garage and the driveway
- Excavations for any drainage or provision of services
- **No work should exceed 0.4m in depth below current ground level**
- **Important archaeological remains revealed at less than 0.4m below current ground level should be recorded and preserved in situ, where appropriate**

Further details on the location of the various elements within the proposed scheme can be gathered from the commissioning client.

The archaeological contractor should note that the formulation of an appropriate environmental sampling strategy is a mandatory part of this project. Advice on such a strategy must be obtained from the English Heritage Scientific Advisor for North East England, Dr Jacqui Huntley, Department of Archaeology, University of Durham, Science Laboratories, South Road, Durham. Tel. 0191 374 3643.

The watching brief should conform to the following standard:

General Standards

- i) All work should be carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and should follow the IFA Standards for Watching Briefs.
- ii) All staff must be suitably qualified and experienced for their project roles.

⁵ Archaeological Research Services, In Prep, *'Plot 3 Whitton Park, Milfield, Northumberland. Archaeological Excavation'*.

- iii) All staff must familiarise themselves with the archaeological background of the site, and the results of any previous work in the area, prior to the start of work on site. All staff must be aware of the work required under the specification, and must understand the projects aims and methodologies.
- iv) This observation shall involve the systematic examination and accurate recording of all archaeological features, horizons and artefacts identified.
- v) **If archaeological remains are uncovered, the archaeologist should be given the opportunity of excavating and recording the remains before they are destroyed.**
- vi) A full and proper record (written, graphic and photographic as appropriate) should be made for all work, using pro forma record sheets and text descriptions appropriate to the work. Accurate scale plans and section drawings should be drawn at 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 scales as appropriate. Where skeletons are encountered, they should be recorded by photography and the use of pro forma skeleton recording sheets.
- vii) The area watched by the archaeologist should be accurately tied into the National Grid and located on a 1:2500 or 1:1250 map of the area. All archaeological deposits and features and at the top and base of all groundworks must be recorded with an **above ordnance datum (aOD)** level.
- viii) A photographic record of all contexts should be taken in colour transparency and black and white print and should include a clearly visible, graduated metric scale. A register of all photographs should be kept.
- ix) In the event of human burials being discovered, the archaeologist will procure and comply with all statutory consents and licences under the Burial Act 1857.
- x) **Where any part of a human burial is disturbed, the whole burial must be archaeologically excavated.**

Finds Storage

During and after the excavation, all recovered artefacts must be stored in the appropriate materials and storage conditions to ensure minimal deterioration and loss of information (this should include controlled storage, correct packaging, regular monitoring of conditions, immediate selection for conservation of vulnerable material).

All storage must have appropriate security provision.

Contingency arrangements

In the event of the discovery of a greater number of unexpected archaeological remains which cannot be dealt with as part of the watching brief, work will cease and the County Archaeological Officer and a representative of the developer

will be notified in order that an assessment of the importance of the remains and any provision for their recording may be made.

The contingency for this project has been set at 10 person-days.

Post excavation work, archive, and report preparation

Finds Processing

- i) All finds processing, conservation work and storage of finds must be carried out in compliance with the IFA Guidelines for Finds Work and those set by UKIC.
- ii) Artefact collection and discard policies must be fit for the defined purpose.
- iii) The deposition and disposal of artefacts must be agreed with the legal owner and recipient museum prior to the work taking place. Where the landowner decides to retain artefacts adequate provision must be made for recording them.
- iv) All retained artefacts must be cleaned and packaged in accordance with the requirements of the recipient museum.

Site Archive

The archive and the finds must be deposited in the appropriate local museum, within 6 months of completion of the post-excavation work and report.

Before the commencement of fieldwork, contact should be made with the landowners and with the appropriate local museum to make the relevant arrangements. Details of land ownership should be provided by the developer. Details of the appropriate museum can be provided by the Assistant County Archaeologist.

Northumberland County Council will require confirmation that the archive had been submitted in a satisfactory form to the relevant museum before recommending to the local planning authority that the condition should be fully discharged.

Report

The archaeological consultant or contractor must submit a copy of the report to their client and Northumberland County Council Conservation Team within 2 months of completion of the work.

The Conservation Team require two copies of the report (one bound and one unbound)

Northumberland County Council Conservation Team will need to approve the report before discharging the condition on the planning permission

The report should be bound, with each page and paragraph numbered

The report should include as a minimum the following:

- i) Planning application number, Northumberland County Council Conservation Team reference, OASIS reference number and an 8 figure grid reference
- ii) A location plan of the site at an appropriate scale of at least 1:10 000
- iii) A location plan of the extent of the watching brief within the site. This must be at a recognisable planning scale, and located with reference to the national grid, to allow the results to be accurately plotted on the Sites and Monuments Record
- iv) Plans and sections of archaeology located at a recognisable planning scale (1:10, 1:20, 1:50 or 1:100, as appropriate)
- v) A summary statement of the results
- vi) A table summarising the deposits, features, classes and numbers of artefacts encountered and spot dating of significant finds
- vii) **Any variation to the above requirements should be approved by the planning authority prior to work being submitted**

OASIS

Northumberland County Council Conservation Team and SMR support the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) Project. 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 archaeological consultant or contractor must therefore complete the online OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>. Contractors are advised to contact Northumberland SMR prior to completing the form. Once a report has become a public document by submission to or incorporation into the SMR, Northumberland SMR will validate the OASIS form thus placing the information into the public domain on the OASIS website. The archaeological consultant or contractor must indicate that they agree to this procedure within the specification/project design/written scheme of investigation submitted to Northumberland County Council Conservation Team for approval

Publication

A summary should be prepared for 'Archaeology in Northumberland' and submitted to Liz Williams, Northumberland SMR Officer, by December of the year in which the work is completed.

A short report of the work should also be submitted to a local journal if appropriate.

Monitoring

Reasonable access to the site for the purposes of monitoring the archaeological scheme will be afforded to the County Archaeologist or his/her nominee at all times.

Regular communication between the archaeological contractor, the County Archaeologist and other interested parties must be maintained to ensure the project aims and objectives are achieved.

Further Information

Any variation to this specification must be agreed with the Assistant County Archaeologist.

Guidance on the archaeological action recommended and any further information can be gained from:

Karen Derham
Assistant County Archaeologist
Planning and Environment Department
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland

Tel 01670 534057

14/7/04

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COUNTY COUNCIL MUST BE RETURNED TO THEM ON COMPLETION OF THE
PROJECT**