

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Grange Care Home in Rennington, Northumberland.



The development site, looking west

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by JWL Management to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Grange Care Home in Rennington, Northumberland. The monitoring was carried out during groundworks for an extension to the north east of the existing building.

The watching brief was undertaken on excavations for a single trench measuring $4.5 \times 0.5\text{m}$ and a test pit that measured $1.5 \times 1.5\text{m}$. The trench was located to the north east of the existing building where the proposed development will extend to. The test pit was located approximately 2m to the north east of the existing building. The purpose of the test pit was to establish the depth of the topsoil.

The test pit was dug through topsoil and did not extend beyond this. The trench was dug through a thin layer of topsoil that covered a flower bed before a dark subsoil was encountered. The limits of the excavation did not extend beyond the level of the subsoil. There were no surviving archaeological remains in the area of the watching brief.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1. In July 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by JWL Management to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Grange Care Home in Rennington, Northumberland (Fig. 1). The work was carried out during the excavation of a foundation trench and a test pit. The trench measured 4.5 x 0.5m and the pit measured 1.5 x 1.5m. The test pit was dug to establish the depth of the topsoil and was located approximately 2m to the north east of the existing building.

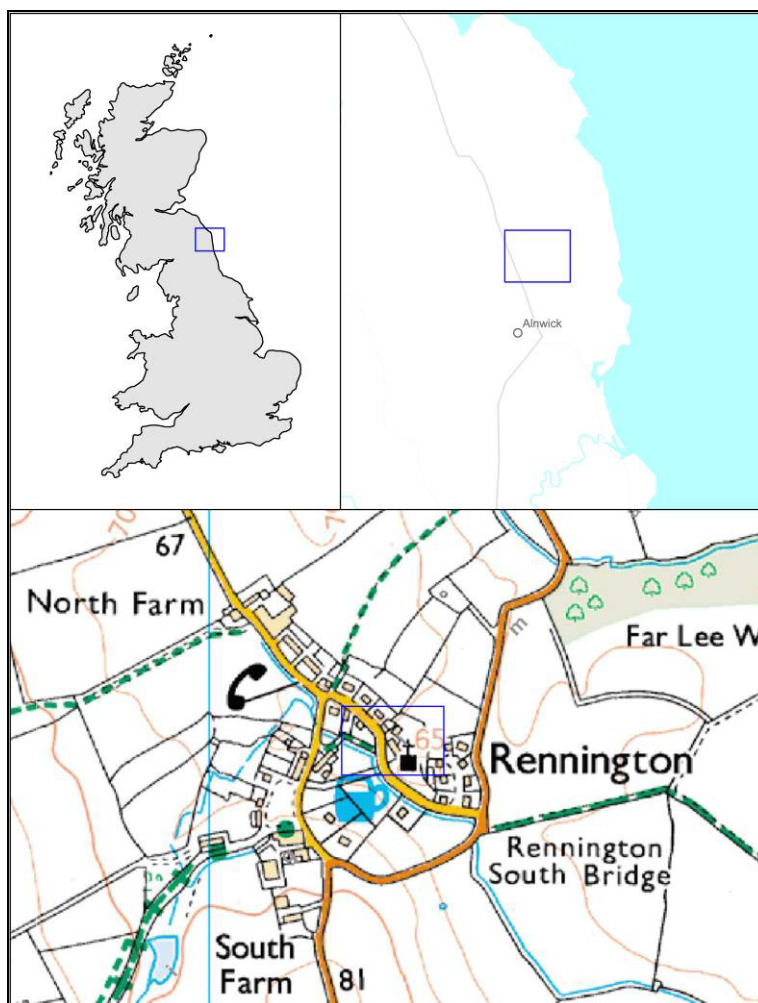


Fig. 1 Site location

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1.2 Location and topography

The village of Rennington is situated approximately 3.7 miles north east of Alnwick. The study area lies to the north east of the village and is centred at NU 213 185. The geology of the area is Carboniferous Red Sandstone overlain by sub-glacial undifferentiated drift, fluvio-glacial gravels and Holocene alluvium (British Geological Survey, 1978).

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The specification required that a watching brief should be carried out to observe any excavations taking place in order to identify any potential archaeological remains. This involved monitoring the excavation of a foundation trench measuring 4.5 x 0.5m and a test pit that measured 1.5 x 1.5m
- 2.2 The trench and the pit were dug using a mechanical digger and a back acting toothless ditching bucket that measured 0.5m wide. The trench was located to the north east of the existing building, where the proposed development will extend to, and the pit was located approximately 2m to the north east of the existing building.
- 2.3 A single context recording system was employed. Each layer encountered was given a unique context number and a full written description (a Harris matrix is shown in Appendix II and a full context register is shown in Appendix III). A series of digital photographs were taken throughout the watching brief.

3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Prehistoric

- 3.1.1 Two Bronze Age burial sites have been found in the parish of Rennington. One of these, excavated in 1921 revealed a cist and some pottery.

3.2 Romano-British

- 3.2.1 The oldest settlement near the study area is a possible Iron Age Settlement at Cold Embleton. The settlement may have remained into the Roman period although no Roman remains have been discovered.

3.3 Medieval

- 3.3.1 The earliest reference to the shrunken medieval village of Rennington is in 1267 when a number of small hamlets and villages appeared in the area. To the south east of the development area previous archaeological work has revealed evidence for the 13th century chapel and settlement.

3.4 Post-Medieval

- 3.4.1 During the post-medieval period a number of the villages were replaced with farm developments, such as those at Rennington Moor, as agriculture in the area progressed. South east farm and north farm are also examples of farms that were built during the post medieval period. This may have been when the village of Rennington was altered to its current shape and orientation.

4. RESULTS

- 4.1 A foundation trench measuring 4.5 x 0.5 m and a test pit measuring 1.5 x 1.5m were both dug in an area to the north east of the present building.
- 4.2 The test pit was dug to establish the depth of the topsoil to the immediate north east of the current building where the area had been levelled at the time when the care home was constructed. The test pit was dug to a depth of 1.1m through made ground and did not extend beyond this level. The made ground consisted of dark brown (10yr 4/1) silty clay soil (001).
- 4.3 The foundation trench was located to the north east of the care home where the proposed development will extend to. The trench was dug through a thin layer of dark brown/black (10yr 2/1) silty sandy topsoil (002) on a flowerbed through to a dark brown (10yr 3/2) silty clay subsoil (003). The limits of the excavation did not extend beyond the subsoil.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 There was no evidence of the 13th century chapel and village of Rennington revealed during the watching brief and there were no other surviving *in-situ* archaeological remains recovered.

6. PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT

- 6.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- 6.2. Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

7. STATEMENT OF INDEMNITY

- 7.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

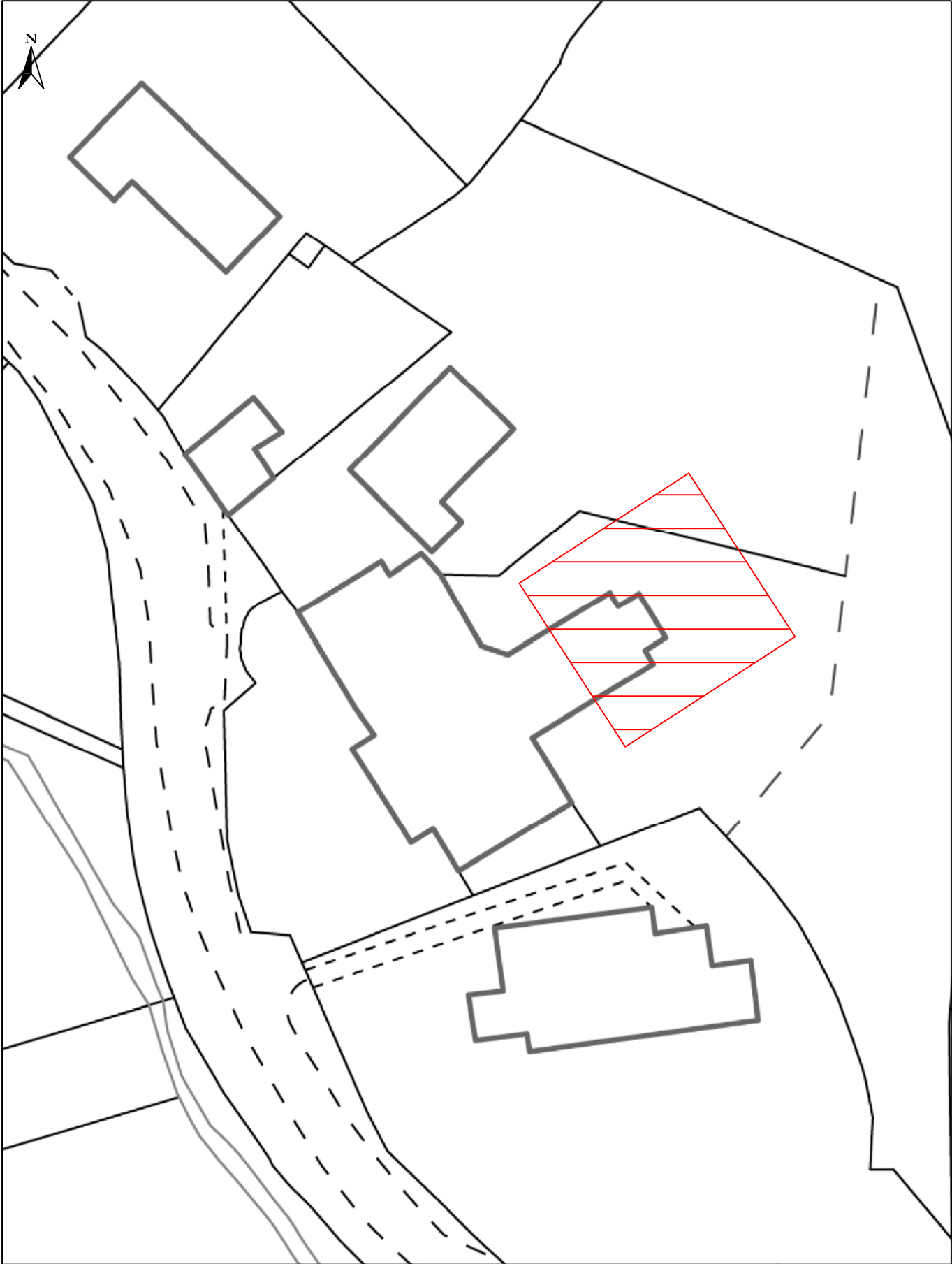
- 8.1. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to express special thanks to JWL Management.

9. REFERENCES

Websites

<http://www.keystothepast.info/>

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/>



<p>Archaeological Research Services Ltd Baltic Business Centre Saltmeadows Road Gateshead NE8 3DA</p>	<p>Title: Figure 2: Plan of Watching Brief area</p>	<p>Key:</p> <div data-bbox="767 1921 914 2069"></div> <p>Area of Watching Brief</p>	<p>Copyright/ Licencing This Drawing © A.R.S. Ltd</p> <p>Ordnance Survey data if applicable © Crown Copyright, all rights reserved reproduction with permission. Licence No. 100045420</p>
<p>Site Code: GRAN09 Drawing Ref: Report Fig. 2 Date: 8 July 2009 Drawn: PC Scale: 1:500 at A4</p>	<p>Notes:</p>		



Fig 3. The development site, looking west

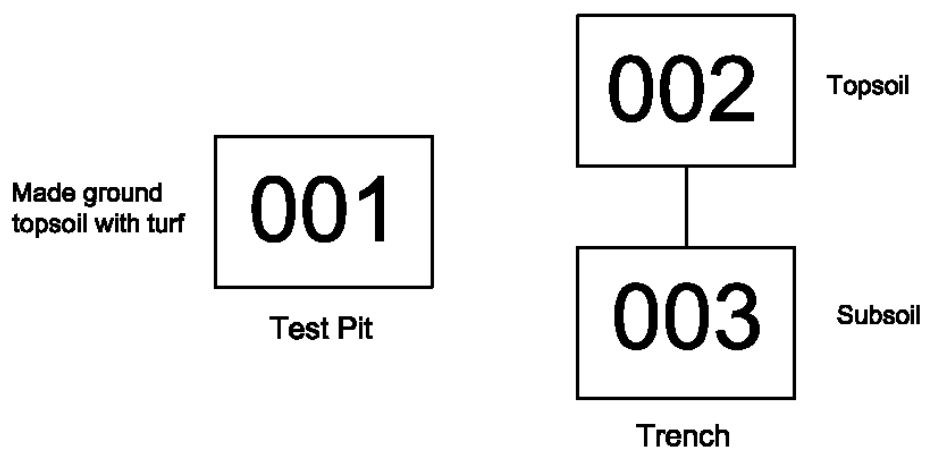


Fig 4. Test pit



Fig 5. Foundation trench

APPENDIX II: HARRIS MATRICES



APPENDIX III: REGISTERS

Context register

Context No.	Trench No.	Description
001	Test pit	Made ground, topsoil with turf
002	Trench	Dark brown/ black topsoil
003	Trench	Dark brown subsoil

APPENDIX IV: WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

Archaeological Watching Brief, Grange Care Home, Rennington, Northumberland

Planning Ref: A/2009/0125

NCCT Ref: S32/1 9317

1. Introduction

- 1.1. A planning application has been made for an extension to the care home to provide three bedrooms, a dayroom and further parking facilities. There are documentary references to a settlement at Rennington from 1267. The current village is constructed on a different orientation to the earlier village and consequently cannot be used as an indication of the nature, extent and location of the earlier village. Previous archaeological work, undertaken *c.* 200m south-east of the development area have produced significant evidence for the 13th century settlement and chapel of Rennington. As a result of this and given the nature, extent and position of the groundworks required for this application, Northumberland Conservation has advised that an archaeological watching brief is required on all groundworks on site.
- 1.2 This written scheme of investigation details the works to be undertaken during an archaeological watching brief at the site in accordance with the brief prepared by Karen Derham, Assistant County Archaeologist for Northumberland.

2. Site Specific Requirements

- 2.1. The client for this work is JWL Management.
- 2.2 The work to be undertaken is an archaeological watching brief which aims to ascertain whether there are any archaeological constraints which may affect the proposed development. This will be done by establishing the presence or absence of archaeological remains, their quality, depth and preservation. The overall aim of the watching brief will be:
 - to establish the presence/absence, nature, depth and character of any possible archaeological features
 - to make suggestions, where possible, about further mitigation which may be necessary to preserve archaeological features *in situ*, or
 - to make suggestions to preserve archaeological features by record, where necessary
 - to determine if further archaeological interventions are required
- 2.2. Should archaeology be discovered a course of action will be discussed with Karen Derham, Assistant County Archaeologist and approved prior to further work being undertaken on the site. A contingency for this has been set at up to 50 person days.

3. Project Management and Standards

- 3.1. The project will be carried out in compliance with the codes of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) (2000) and will follow the IFA Standard and Guidance for Excavations (1995).
- 3.2. All staff employed on the project will be suitably qualified and experienced for their respective project roles and have practical experience of archaeological excavation and recording. All staff will be made aware of the archaeological importance of the area surrounding the site and will be fully briefed on the work required by this specification. Each member of staff will be fully conversant with the aims and methodologies and will be given a copy of this written scheme of investigation to read. All members of staff employed by Archaeological Research Services Ltd are fully qualified and experienced archaeologists, this will ensure that appropriate decisions regarding environmental and dating sampling will be made in the field.

4. Methods

- 4.1. The purpose of this work is to ensure that important archaeological remains are not destroyed without first being adequately recorded. The proposed development has the potential to disturb important archaeological remains associated with the medieval settlement at Rennington. The watching brief will cover the following groundworks for the development:

- Groundworks associated with the construction of the extension
- Excavations for the provision of services
- Groundworks associated with site clearance and car parking
- Landscaping activities

Should the groundworks not exceed modern disturbance or equally should they exceed the depth at which archaeological remains are present, Northumberland Conservation will be contacted in order to establish whether the watching brief need continue in these specific areas.

- 4.2. Unstratified modern material will be removed by a machine using a 1m wide, toothless ditching bucket, under continuous archaeological supervision. The topsoil or recent overburden will be removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon in successive level spits. No machinery will track over areas that have been stripped. The trenches will be cleaned using appropriate hand tools in order to expose surviving archaeological features and deposits.
- 4.3. All archaeological features and deposits will be recorded on a pre-excavation plan before excavation, sampling and recording.
- 4.4. All features exposed will be excavated by hand. Sampling will typically comprise 50% of every discrete feature; 25% of linear/curvilinear features with non-uniform fill and 10% of linear features with a uniform fill.
- 4.5. In the event of human burials being discovered, they will be left *in-situ*, covered and protected and the coroners' office informed. If removal is essential, work will comply with relevant Home Office regulations.

- 4.6. Appropriate procedures under the relevant legislation will be followed in the event of the discovery of artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasures Act 1996.
- 4.7. Deposits that have the potential for providing environmental or dating evidence will be assessed while the work is in progress. An environmental sampling strategy has been agreed with the English Heritage Scientific advisor for North-East England, Jacqui Huntley. The sampling strategy comprises the following:
 - All intact archaeological contexts will be sampled. Small pit features will be 100% sampled while bulk samples of 40 litres will be taken from larger feature contexts, such as linear ditch fills.
 - Any samples recovered will be floated on site in graduated sieves with the smallest being 500µm and the flots and residues collected. Samples will be analysed by B Johnson of Archaeological Research Services Ltd and an assessment report prepared in accordance with Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (HBMC 1991).
- 4.8. During and after the excavation, all recovered artefacts and environmental samples will be stored in appropriate materials and storage conditions to ensure minimal deterioration and loss of information (this will include controlled storage, correct packaging, regular monitoring of conditions and immediate selection for conservation of valuable material).

5. Recording

- 5.1 The site will be accurately tied into the National Grid and located on a 1:2500 or 1:1250 map of the area.
- 5.2 A full and proper record (written, graphic and photographic as appropriate) will be made for all work, using pro-forma record sheets and text descriptions appropriate to the work. Accurate scale plans and section drawings will be drawn at 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 scales as appropriate.
- 5.3 The stratigraphy of the trenches will be recorded even where no archaeological deposits have been identified.
- 5.4 All archaeological deposits and features will be recorded with above ordnance datum (AOD) levels.
- 5.5 A photographic record of all contexts will be taken in colour transparency and black and white print and will include a clearly visible, graduated metric scale. A register of all photographs will be kept.
- 5.6 Where stratified deposits are encountered, a 'Harris' matrix will be compiled.

6. Access

- 6.1 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will give the Assistant County Archaeologist 10 working days (or less if so agreed) notice of the commencement of fieldwork.
- 6.2 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will afford access to the Assistant County Archaeologist or their representative at all times, for the purposes of monitoring the archaeological evaluation.
- 6.3 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will maintain regular communication with the Assistant County Archaeologist to ensure that the project aims and objectives are met.

7. Finds Processing and Storage

- 7.1. All finds processing, conservation work and storage of finds will be carried out in compliance with the IFA guidelines for Finds Work (2001) and those set out by UKIC (1990).
- 7.2 Artefact collection and discard policies will be appropriate for the defined purpose.
- 7.3 Bulk finds which are not discarded will be washed and, with the exception of animal bone, marked. Marking and labelling will be indelible and irremovable by abrasion. Bulk finds will be appropriately bagged, boxed and recorded. This process will be carried out no later than two months after the end of the excavation.
- 7.4 All small finds will be recorded as individual items and appropriately packaged (e.g. lithics in self-sealing plastic bags and ceramic in acid-free tissue paper). Vulnerable objects will be specially packaged and textile, painted glass and coins stored in appropriate specialist systems. This process will be carried out within two days of the small find being excavated. Prehistoric pottery will not be cleaned or be subject to any abrasion or loss of adhering residues.
- 7.5 During and after the excavation all objects will be stored in appropriate materials and storage conditions to ensure minimal deterioration and loss of information (including controlled storage, correct packaging, and regular monitoring, immediate selection for conservation of vulnerable material). All storage will have appropriate security provision.
- 7.6 The deposition and disposal of artefacts will be agreed with the legal owner and the Museum of Antiquities prior to the work taking place. All finds except treasure trove are the property of the landowner.
- 7.7 All retained artefacts and ecofacts will be cleaned and packaged in accordance with the requirements of the recipient museum.

8. Site archive

- 8.1 The archive will be compiled in an orderly fashion to the standards and format set out in Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (HBMC 1991) and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage (UKIC 1990). The archive will be deposited with the Museum of Antiquities within 6 months of the fieldwork once all post-excavation work is completed and the final report produced.

9. Report

- 9.1 One copy of the report will be submitted to the client, and two hard copies (one bound and one unbound) and one digital copy will be submitted to the Northumberland SMR within fourteen working days of the completion of the fieldwork. Each report will be bound with each page and paragraph numbered and will include as a minimum the following:

- executive summary
- a site location plan to at least 1:10,000 scale with 10 figure central grid reference
- contractor's details including date work carried out
- nature and extent of the proposed development, including developer/client details
- description of the site location and geology
- trench plans to a suitable scale and tied into the national grid so that features can be correctly orientated
- discussion of the results of field work
- context & feature descriptions
- features, number and class of artefacts, spot dating & scientific dating of significant finds presented in tabular format
- plans and section drawings of the features drawn at a suitable scale
- additional plans/map extracts to display noted and recorded archaeological features as appropriate
- recommendations regarding the need for, and scope of, any further archaeological work, including publication
- bibliography

11. OASIS

- 11.1 ARS Ltd will complete an on-line OASIS form for this evaluation. ARS Ltd is a registered contractor on the OASIS system and has uploaded archaeological reports before.

12. Dissemination/Publication

- 12.1 A summary will be prepared for 'Archaeology in Northumberland' and submitted to Liz Williams by the beginning of December of the year in which the work is completed.
- 12.2 A short article will be prepared for a local journal if appropriate.

13. References

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1995. *Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation.*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2000. *Code of Conduct.*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2001. *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.*

UKIC (United Kingdom Institute for Conservation). 1990. *Guidelines for the Preparation of Archives for Long-Term Storage.*