

# REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT BEAN'S HILL, WESTFIELD, MILLTIMBER, ABERDEEN

NGR NJ 8466 0348



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## SUMMARY

In March 2009, a representative of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring on excavations for a trackway at Bean's Hill, Westfield, Milltimber, Aberdeen (NGR NJ 8466 0348). The site is located within an area that is rich in archaeological remains across a number of periods, the earliest of prehistoric origin (Stones 2008; Appendix 1). This was highlighted most recently by an archaeological survey on the very same site (Cameron 2009), which revealed a number of archaeological features within the site boundary, and which recommended a watching brief on the excavations for the trackway, outlining a route to provide least archaeological damage. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with the specification for archaeological fieldwork outlined as a condition of planning consent for the trackway (Appendix 1).

The watching brief monitored the excavation of the track, recording any features uncovered during the groundworks and checking that the track followed the designated route outlined by previous work on-site (Cameron 2009).

Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, the watching brief did not encounter any archaeological features. This is explained by previous archaeological work on-site, which located the best route, least likely to damage archaeological deposits.

No further archaeological work is required at this site, in relation to the present development. However, the whole area remains rich in archaeology of several periods, and it should be noted that the final decisions on such matters, and future development, rest with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit would like to thank the client for commissioning the project. In addition, further thanks are extended to the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council for all advice relating to the project, and to all Westfield Estate on-site staff for all their help and information.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cat Peters. The project was managed by Alison Cameron, Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Aberdeen City Council has approved an application for the excavation of a new track at Bean's Hill, Westfield, Milltimber, Aberdeen. The development site, centred on NGR NJ 8466 0348, was subjected to a recent archaeological survey (Cameron 2009), and is within an area rich in archaeological remains. As a result, a condition of the planning permission was that all excavation works undertaken should be monitored by an archaeologist, adhering to a specification provided by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council (Stones 2008; Appendix 1), and a route suggested by the results of the survey (Cameron 2009), and approved by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council. This scheme of works is in line with government advice as set out in the National Planning Policy Guideline No. 5, Archaeology and Planning. All stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IFA 2002).
- 1.1.2 This report comprises the results of the archaeological monitoring of the relevant groundworks associated with the development, as outlined in the specification.
- 1.1.3 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design, and with current UKIC (1990). The archive will be deposited at Aberdeen City Council in the first instance, and a copy of the report given to Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY**

2.1.1 The site is centred upon National Grid Reference NJ 8466 0348 on the Westfield Estate, to the north of Milltimber, Aberdeen. The site lies in an area of rough ground near the summit of Bean's Hill, approximately 146m AOD.

### **2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

2.2.1 A large number of known archaeological features are known from the environs of the development site, outlined in the specification (Stones 2008; Appendix 1). These include circular earthworks, hut circles and cairns, as well as a march stone within the field where the track was inserted. A survey undertaken in 2009 (Cameron 2009) highlighted a total of 43 possible archaeological features within 50m of the track. This report located the route least likely to have direct impact on these archaeological features.



## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was carried out on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009. It monitored the excavation of the track, checking that the route adhered to what was approved by the Keeper of Archaeology, all in accordance with the specification (Stones 2008; Appendix 1).
- 3.1.2 The track followed a roughly east to west alignment across the southern part of the field, before taking a sharp north-western alignment to end at the field boundary in the north-west corner (see Appendix 2). All excavations were undertaken by mechanical excavator with a ditched toothless bucket.

### 3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.2.1 The maximum width of the excavations for the new access track was 3m, and the maximum depth revealed was 0.7m (Plate 1).



Plate 1: View of easternmost part of excavation facing west

- 3.2.2 The excavations revealed a very dark brown loose topsoil which in thickness varied from between 0.2m and 0.4m. This overlay a light to mid-orange sandy natural with occasional clay inclusions (Plate 2).





Plate 2: Typical section through excavation, facing south-west

3.2.3 The north-west to south-east aligned final stretch of the excavation, in the north-western corner of the field, had the potential to encroach on known rig and furrow features. However, it seems that the excavations were just to the west of these, as no traces were revealed in the section (Plate 3).



Plate 3: South-west facing section through potential rig and furrow area



- 3.2.4 Of most interest archaeologically, was an area revealed at the far north-western extent of the excavation, at the end of the new access track. Here the topsoil was up to 0.5m in thickness, beneath some stones, in a rounded scoop, which lined up with the above surface remains of a pre-existing field boundary which separated two differently aligned sets of rig and furrow. This suggests an abutting of topsoil in this area to create the bank for the boundary, with stones set on top (Plate 4). A more modern fence line is the present field boundary, which lies at a steeper south-west to north-east alignment to the north.



Plate 4: South-west facing section through old field boundary

## **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, the watching brief did not encounter any archaeological features. This is probably as a direct result of the pre-development archaeological survey, which helped to make sure no archaeological remains were damaged by the development. The location of all groundworks monitored during the watching brief has been included within this report, and an archive has been kept for future reference.

### **4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.2.1 This watching brief has formed the final stage of archaeological works required on site in relation to the present development. As no further work is planned, no archaeological monitoring is required. Decisions on any future potential work within the area rests with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

## 5. REFERENCES

- Cameron, A. (2009) 'Report on archaeological survey, Westfield, Aberdeen'. *Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit: Unpublished report.*
- IFA (2002), *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- MCG (1992), *Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections*
- Stones, J. (2008) 'Westfield, Contlaw Road, Milltimber, Aberdeen, Specification for Archaeological Fieldwork' *unpublished project design by Aberdeen City Council (reproduced as Appendix 1)*
- UKIC (1990), *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage*

# APPENDIX 1: SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES CENTRAL AREA

### MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Westfield, Contlaw Road, Milltimber, Aberdeen

#### Summary

This specification outlines the historic importance of this area and indicates the works which will be required to ensure that historic and archaeological features are identified, recorded and protected prior to and during development work.

#### 1.0 Site Location and Description

The area of the site (NJ8466 0348) is shown on the enclosed map extract. It lies in an area of rough ground near the summit of Bean's Hill, in a location that is rich in archaeological remains of various periods from prehistory onwards – see attached map. The development takes the form of the preparation of a new track to facilitate the transfer of stock between landholdings.

#### 2.0 Planning Background

The request for this archaeological fieldwork is made in the context of National Planning Policy Guideline no 5, Archaeology and Planning, which states that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed. In paragraph 14, planning authorities are advised that they should ensure that archaeological factors are fully considered in both the development planning and development control processes. Paragraph 16 urges planning authorities to regard archaeological remains as a finite and often highly fragile resource vulnerable to needless or thoughtless damage or destruction. Paragraph 25 states that the implications of development proposals for ancient monuments and their settings should be considered at the outset of the development control process. It is appropriate for planning authorities to request, where appropriate, the prospective developer to arrange for archaeological fieldwork and ensure that relevant information on the cultural heritage is taken into account in any environmental assessment that may be necessary (paragraph 24). National Planning Policy Guideline 18, Planning and the Historic Environment, paragraph 52 states that 'in cases of demolition or significant alteration of historic buildings, structures or streetscape, planning authorities are encouraged to make it a condition of consent that applicants arrange suitable programmes of recording features that would be destroyed in the course of the proposed works...'

#### 3.0 Historical and Archaeological Background

There has been little archaeological fieldwork in this area, but a large number of features of various prehistoric and historic periods have been identified and are recorded on Aberdeen City Council's Sites and Monuments Record. The features in the general area of the present site are shown on the attached map.

#### 4.0 Previous Archaeological Work

There has been no previous archaeological work at this site.

#### 5.0 Requirement for Work

An archaeologist acceptable to the Aberdeen City Council Planning Authority must walk over the proposed line of the track, which is indicated approximately on the attached map, before any development commences. It is understood that the new track is intended to be 4 metres wide, but the proposed line must be checked with the developer before the walk-over takes place. During the walk-over, the archaeologist must identify and record any archaeological sites which are apparent. The main purpose of the walk-over is to ensure minimum damage from track building to archaeological features. If archaeological features are identified during the walkover on the line of the proposed track, then a mitigation scheme must be developed by the archaeologist in conjunction with the developer. That scheme may include moving the line of the track, or creating a surface that minimises potential damage. That strategy must be acceptable to the Keeper of Archaeology. If it is impossible to find a route or construction method that protects archaeological features, then it may be necessary to undertake some limited archaeological excavation prior to development. It is the developer's responsibility to ensure that all archaeological works are undertaken, including any post-excavation or publication aspects. After the route has been agreed and development commences, the archaeologist must undertake a watching brief over work in progress and record any additional archaeological features which become apparent during soil-moving.

#### 6.0 Timetable

A timetable must be agreed for the various stages of work so that provision can be made for monitoring by the Keeper of Archaeology.

#### 7.0 Staff Structure

A list of key project staff with qualifications and experience will be submitted by the contractor. The use of unwaged staff will not normally be acceptable.

### **8.0 Health and Safety /PLI**

Such concerns and responsibilities are primarily a matter for the archaeological contractor who must submit evidence of conformity to the Health and Safety at Work Act and possession of public liability insurance to Aberdeen City Council.

### **9.0 Watching Brief**

- 10.1 An appropriate machine must be used to minimise damage to underlying archaeological deposits
- 10.2 All machine work must be carried out under the direct supervision of an archaeologist acceptable to the planning authority and the Keeper of Archaeology.
- 10.3 All excavation, both by machine and by hand, must be undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features or deposits which appear to be worthy of preservation *in situ*.
- 10.4 Any human remains which are encountered must initially be left *in situ*. Their removal will be a matter of discussion with the Keeper of Archaeology (who must be notified within 12 hours of their discovery) and will comply with the provisions of Scots Law.

### **11.0 Recording Systems**

These must be specified and should include the structure for site record.

### **12.0 Monitoring Arrangements**

It is necessary for the planning authority to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the archaeological work in order to ensure the proper execution of the specification and therefore conformity to the brief. Stages at which monitoring is appropriate will be agreed between the archaeological contractor and the Keeper of Archaeology. The possibility of random inspections should not be excluded.

### **13.0 Reporting Requirements for Watching Brief**

Provision must be made for:

- 13.2 Specialist examination of animal and human bone and of any preserved or organic material.
- 13.3 Specialist conservation and examination of artefacts found during the fieldwork
- 13.4 Preparation of plans, sections and finds drawings to publication standards.
- 13.5 The sorting and analysis of records and the production of a written report on the work, published in a manner appropriate to its scale.
- 13.6 The preparation of a catalogued archive and its deposition in the City Council's Sites and Monuments record and the National Monuments Record of Scotland within six months of the end of the fieldwork.
- 13.7 Copies of all reports should be sent to the Keeper of Archaeology, the applicant and the planning authority. A brief survey of results should be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, along with the appropriate fee. An OASIS report must also be provided.

### **14.0 Small finds**

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and Bona Vacantia and reported by the archaeological contractor to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel (Nicholas Holmes, National Museums of Scotland, Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JD) for disposal to an appropriate museum.

### **15.0 Timescale**

The walk-over and watching brief reports must be produced within four weeks of the end of the field work. Any finds of major significance must be reported to the Keeper of Archaeology immediately.

### **16.0 Further Information**

Additional information about the site, or this brief, can be obtained from the Keeper of Archaeology, Whitespace, 60 Frederick Street, Aberdeen, AB24 5HY Tel (01224) 523658.

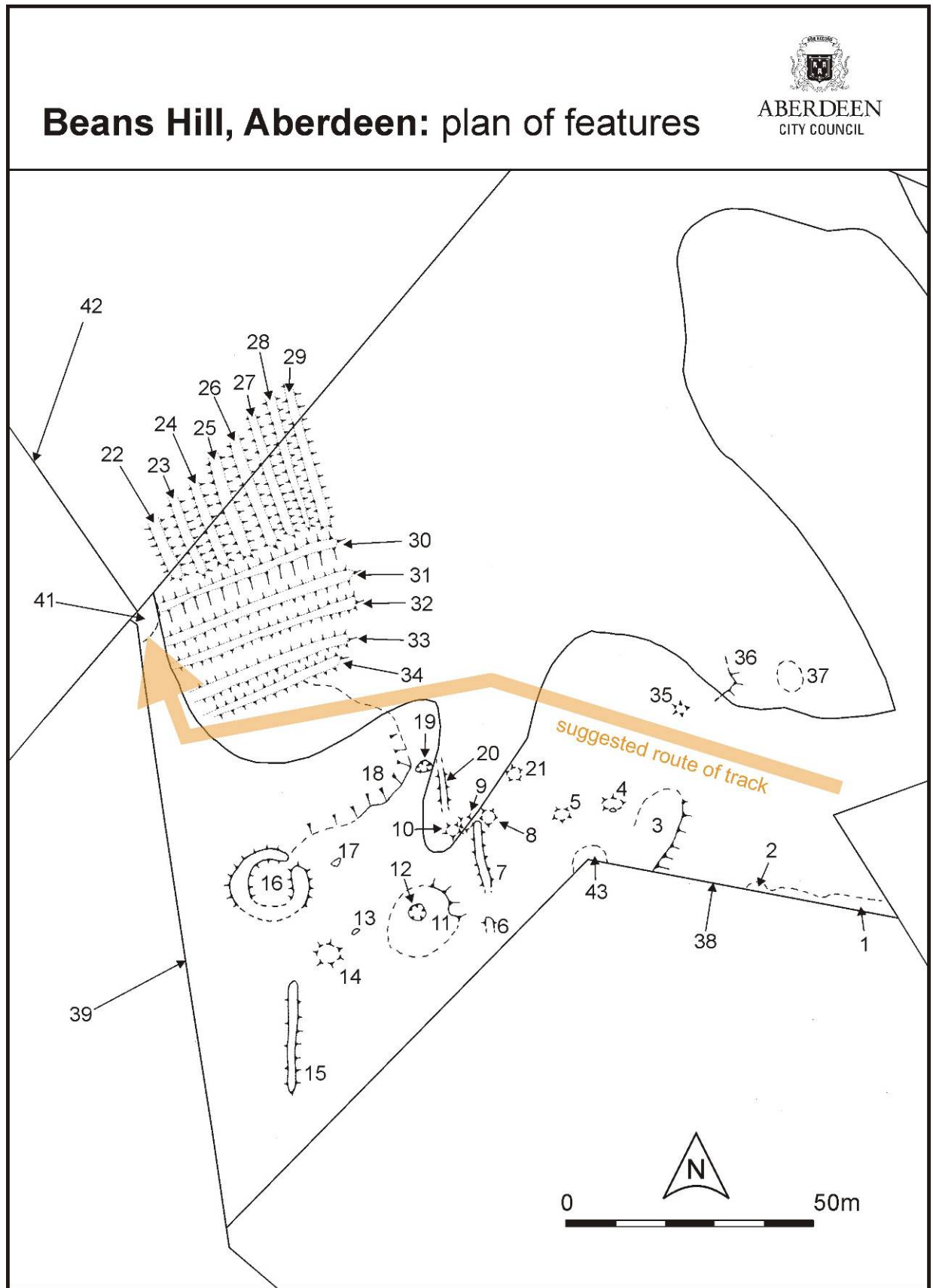
### **17.0 Conclusion**

The archaeological work is to be carried out in compliance with this brief and in the context of NPPG 5 and NPPG

18. The selection of any contractor will be subject to approval of the Keeper of Archaeology. Work should be carried out in close liaison with the Keeper of Archaeology.

September 2008.

## APPENDIX 2



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