
86-88 FRONT STREET
BEDLINGTON
NORTHUMBERLAND

~ ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ~

NOVEMBER 2020



Prepared for: <i>J&W Lowry Ltd.</i>	By: <i>The Archaeological Practice Ltd.</i>
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BEDLINGTON
NORTHUMBERLAND

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Prepared by:

The Archaeological Practice Ltd.



Frontispiece: Vertical view of the site in November, 2020.

Grid Reference: NZ 26132 81827
Client: J&W Lowry Ltd.
NCC Planning Ref.: 17/02932/FUL
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Prepared by The Archaeological Practice Ltd., 18th July, 2019

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SUMMARY

This document reports on a process of archaeological monitoring conducted in November 2019 and November 2020, to mitigate the impact of development works (centred upon NGR NZ 26132 81827), on the north side of Bedlington High Street, in the heart of the medieval and later town.

The groundworks comprised the removal, in stages, of the surface overburden down to the level of sub-soil, in the process revealing archaeological features in some parts of the site, which were recorded appropriately.

Analysis of the results of archaeological watching brief suggest that several phases of activity have taken place on the site of 86-88 Front Street, represented by the walls, surfaces and sparse artifactual finds of medieval, post-medieval and later character.

The earliest phase of activity on the site is suggested by remains of walls in the south-eastern part of the site and extending along and underneath its western border, which are of medieval or early post-medieval character, although the lack of dating evidence means that this conclusion is not definitive.

Further east, remains of walls and well-built surfaces in the eastern part of the western (no. 87-88) plot have destroyed any pre-existing remains of earlier origin there and are themselves of later, 19th and 20th century character. Likewise, in the western plot (no. 86), the construction there of a 1970s building has disturbed and truncated the original ground surface there, in doing so removing all or most traces of earlier activity.

The groundworks reported here, which have removed surface deposits from the greater part of the site, have revealed features of moderate archaeological interest, but only local significance. In doing so, the works have reduced the remaining archaeological potential of the site to a very low level and established that there are no archaeological constraints on development.

In the absence of significant residual archaeological potential, no further archaeological fieldwork is considered necessary on this site.

1. PURPOSE OF WATCHING BRIEF

1.1 This document, prepared by the Archaeological Practice Ltd., has been commissioned by J&W Lowry Ltd. to report on a process of archaeological monitoring, conducted in November 2019 and November 2020, to mitigate the impact of groundworks on the site of 86-88 Front Street, Bedlington (*centred on Grid NZ 26132 81827*), during site clearance and surface excavation works prior to the development of the site for residential use. At the time of the works reported here, the site was a vacant plot of approximately 600 square metres, the eastern part of which (no. 86) had until recently been occupied by a 1970s building latterly used by a music instrument retailer.

1.2 The site, which slopes gently away to the north from Front Street, is located within the medieval core of Bedlington (*Illus. 01-03*) which was certainly established by 1069 when the body of St. Cuthbert is recorded as resting there *en route* to Holy Island. The first detailed description of the settlement is provided by the Boldon Book of 1183, which records a Bishop's Hall and Court, a mill, fishery and tenants. The core of the medieval town developed along the north and south sides of Front Street East and Front Street West, as revealed by early maps (see *Illus. 04-08*) but only limited archaeological investigation has been carried out in this area so the level of survival of medieval settlement remains there is largely unknown.

1.3 Given the potential archaeological sensitivity of the site, the Northumberland County Council Assistant Archaeologist requested that a programme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken prior to the determination of planning consent in order to evaluate the nature of any archaeological remains found to exist there. This work was duly carried out in 2018, prior to the demolition of the Music Shop occupying the eastern half of the area, when three trenches were opened.

1.4 The results of evaluation excavations indicated that whilst the site was heavily truncated by modern overburden and structures of 18-19th century date, the lower course of an earlier undated wall may preserve the line of a medieval boundary running parallel with the street frontage, though medieval pottery was recovered from the site in residual contexts only. The presence/absence and significance of any archaeological features and deposits on the site of no. 86 Front Street East was not assessed because at the time of evaluation it remained occupied by a standing building (no. 86).

1.5 Whilst the archaeological evaluation did not conclusively identify medieval or otherwise significant archaeological remains on the vacant plot at no. 87-88, the extent of works was insufficient to prove that significant archaeological features or deposits did not survive in the north part of that area or below the existing building at no. 86. Based on the location of the site (within the core of the medieval settlement) and the results of previous programmes of excavation in similar locations in Bedlington, the site was considered to retain potential for significant unrecorded archaeological remains, including evidence of medieval settlement. In these circumstances, whilst granting planning permission for the development, Northumberland Conservation considered it appropriate to take a precautionary response by conditioning a programme of archaeological mitigation to be undertaken in association with groundworks for the development.

1.6 The archaeological watching brief requested by Northumberland County Council was carried out on the basis of the following Planning Condition:

A programme of archaeological work is required in accordance with the brief provided by Northumberland Conservation (NC ref 17/02932/FUL, dated 11/07/2018). The archaeological scheme shall comprise three stages of work.

Each stage shall be completed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before it can be discharged.

a) No development or archaeological mitigation shall commence on site until a written scheme of investigation based on the brief has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

b) The archaeological recording scheme required by the brief must be completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.

c) The programme of analysis, reporting, publication and archiving if required by the brief must be completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.

Reason

The site is of archaeological interest

1.2 Geology and Topography

The solid geology of the area is typical of the Northumberland Coalfield, being underlain by coal measures of the Upper Carboniferous age. These consist mainly of mudstones and sandstones with numerous coal seams. These bedrocks are heavily mantled by glacial debris up to 20m thick, mainly boulder clay or till, deposited from ice sheets which covered the area during the last glacial period. These deposits typically give rise to a relatively featureless till plain landscape.

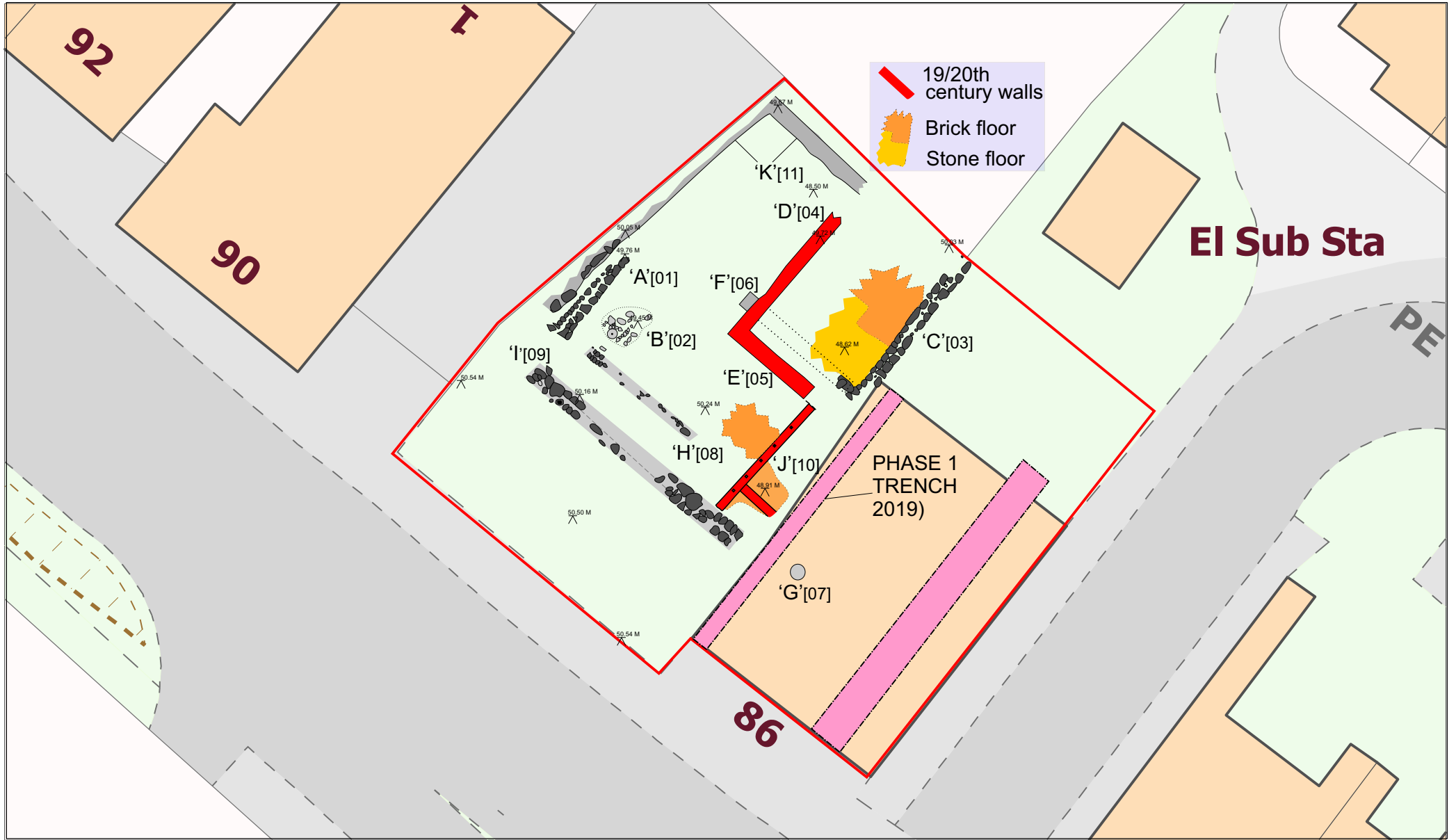
Topographically, the site is situated within of the coastal lowlands of south-east Northumberland and slopes gently away to the north from Front Street.



Illus. 01: The location of the evaluation site (highlighted in red) opposite St. Cuthbert's Church in Bedlington, Northumberland.



Illus. 02: The position of the development site (highlighted in red) Front Street East



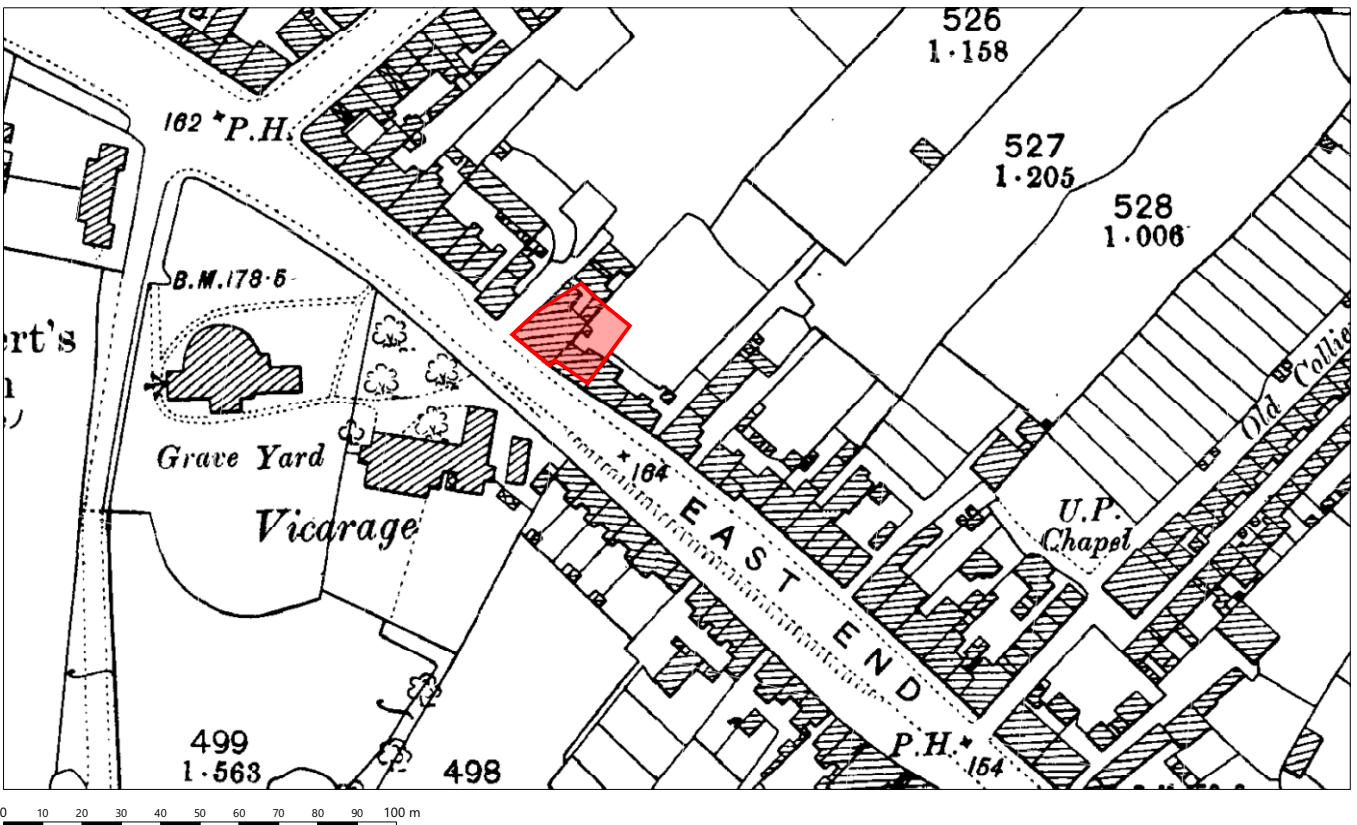
Illus. 03:
 Plan showing the arrangement of the development site (red outline) at Nos. 86-88 Front Street East, Bedlington and principal features revealed by groundworks.



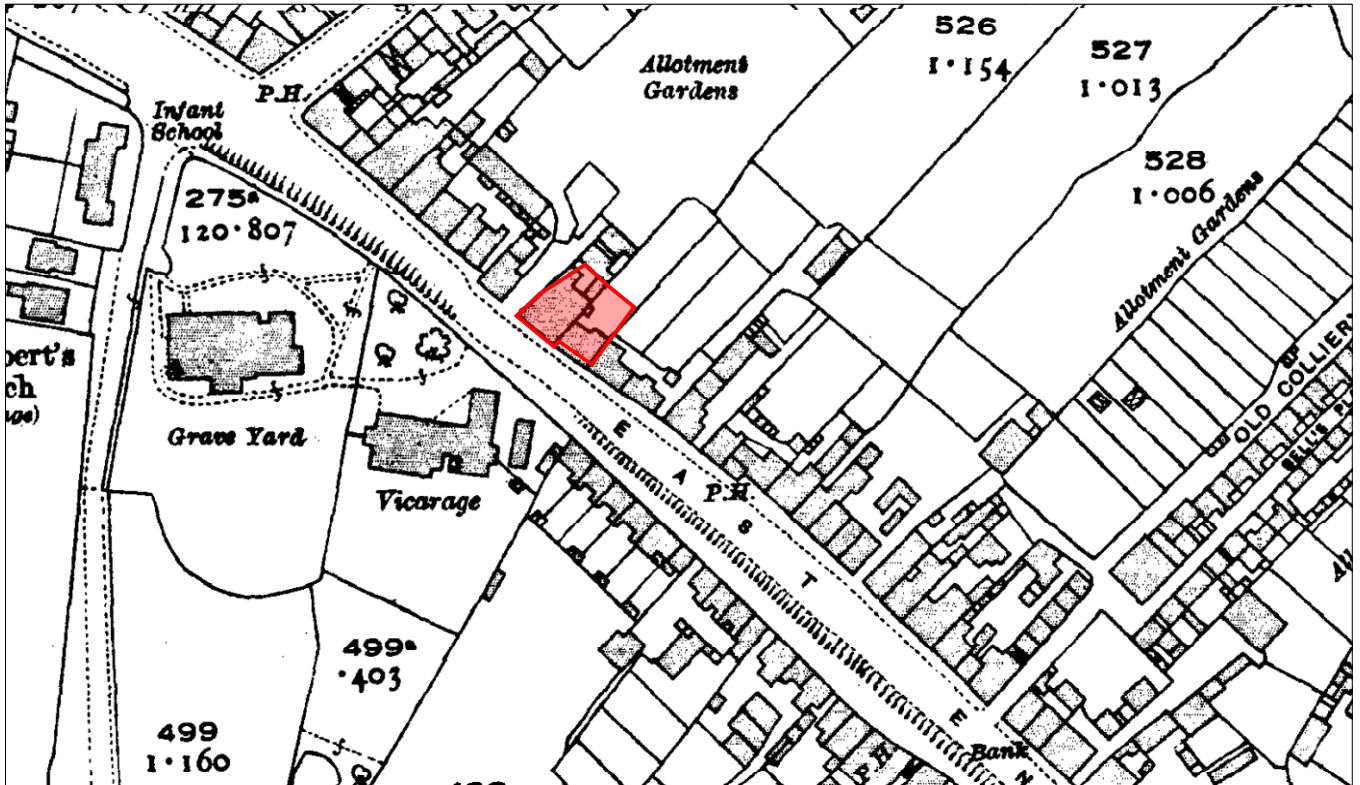
Illus. 04: Extract from the Bedlington Tithe Map of c.1843, with the development site highlighted in red.



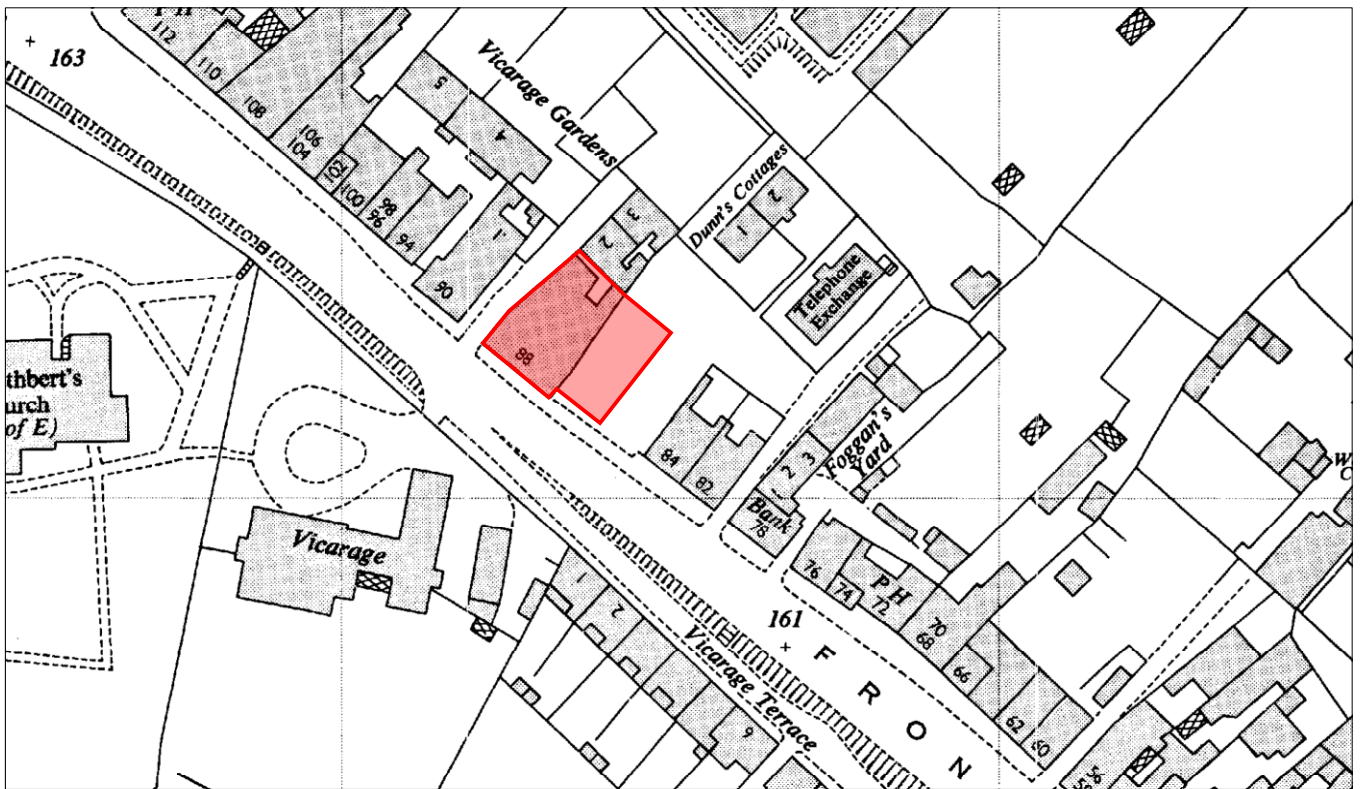
Illus. 05: Extract from the 6 inch 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Plan c.1864, showing 86-88 Front Street (highlighted in red).



Illus. 06: Extract from the 1:2500 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Plan c.1890s, showing the site (highlighted in red).



Illus. 07: Extract from the 1:2500 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Plan c.1920s, showing the site (highlighted in red).



Illus. 08: Extract from the 1:2500 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Plan c.1960s, showing the site (highlighted in red).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

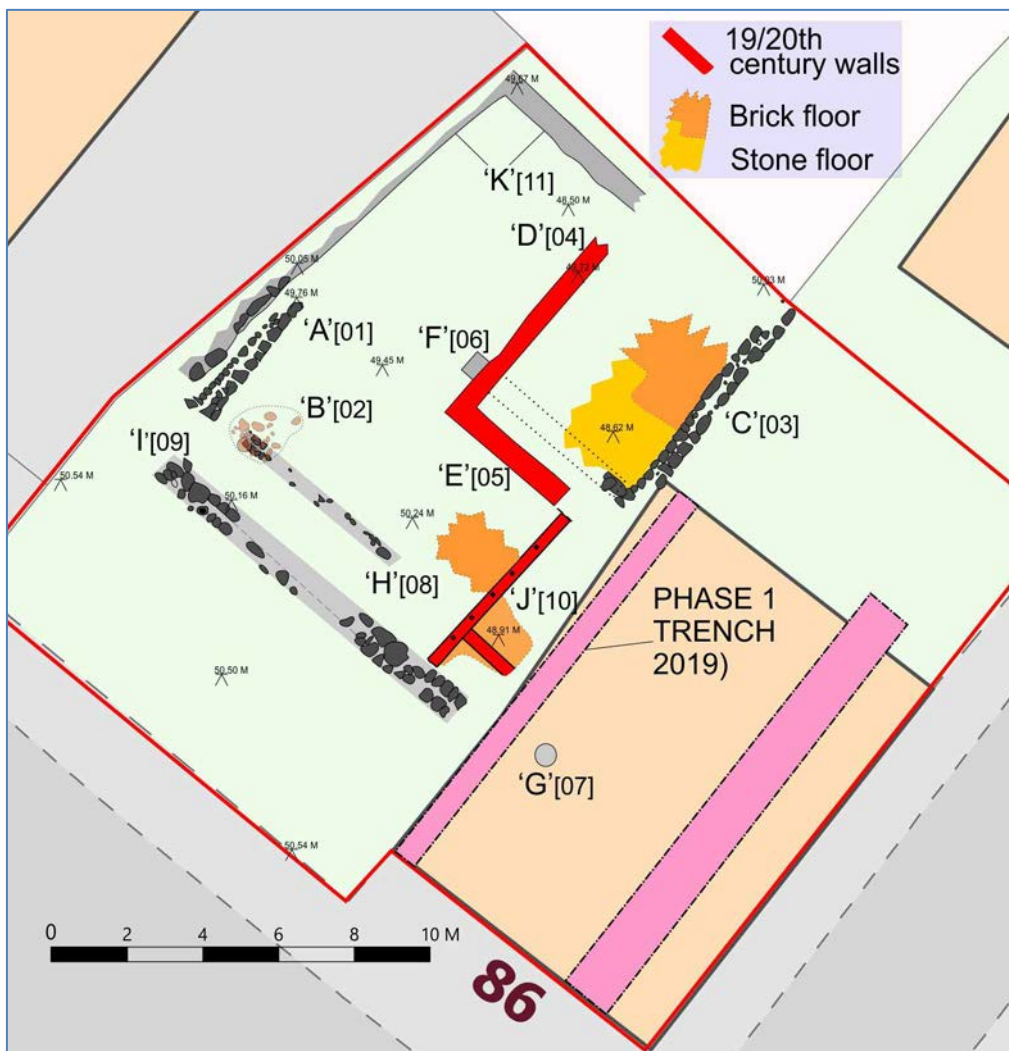
2.1 The watching brief took place in two phases. The first phase, carried out in November 2019 (see *Illus. 09*), involved monitoring the excavation of a service trench excavated north-south in the west part of the former no.86 Front Street plot, hitherto occupied by a 1970s building that was demolished after the 2018 evaluation excavations carried out on the adjoining site of nos. 87-88 Front Street. The excavation of this service trench, monitored to sub-soil levels, provided the first opportunity to investigate this part of the site and, although formally a monitoring exercise, effectively served to evaluate this area in advance of the subsequent phase of comprehensive excavation detailed below.

2.2 Phase 2, carried out in November 2020, involved the stripping of remaining surface deposits from the site down to sub-soil level, focussing on the western part of the plot where some potential remained for the survival of archaeologically-significant features. These groundworks were carried out as the first step in the creation of an underground car park area which will covering the entire site as part of its redevelopment.

2.3 The aims of the watching brief, as set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) document prepared by The Archaeological Practice Ltd. and agreed with Northumberland County Council Conservation Team, were to identify and determine the character of any remains uncovered during groundworks on the site, and to make an appropriate record of such finds by photographic and other means.

2.4 Accordingly, the excavations were closely monitored, and significant results recorded, by suitably trained and experienced archaeologists from The Archaeological Practice Ltd., the surface stripping was carried out by mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.

3. RESULTS



Illus. 09: Site plan, showing the area subject to groundworks and monitored by watching brief in 2019 and 2020, with significant features highlighted.

3.1 PHASE 1: November 2019

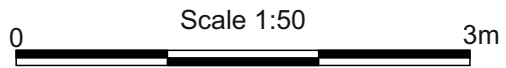
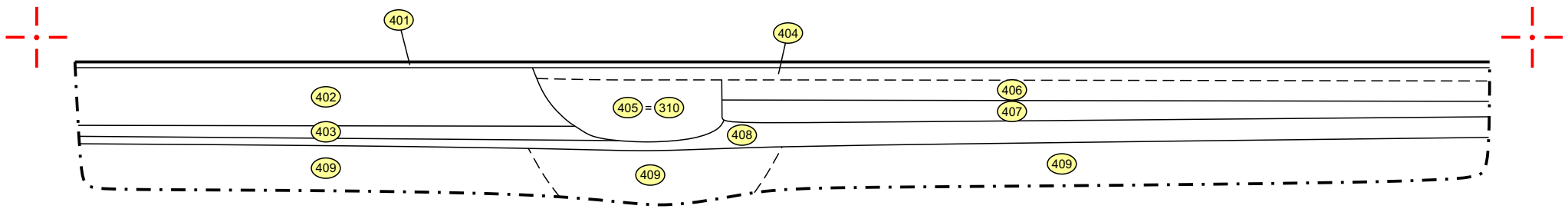
3.1.1 Location and Dimensions (see Illus. 09-10; Photos. 01-02)

The service trench was aligned south-west to north-east and followed a line extending from points just inside inside the south-west and north-east corners of the former music shop building (no. 86 Front Street), a distance of approximately 12.2 metres.

The dimensions of the trench were as follows:
12.20 m (length) x 0.65 m (width) x 1.25 m (max depth).

3.1.2 Stratigraphy and Archaeological Interpretation

The stratigraphic composition of the ground within the trench was observed to be heavily truncated by the foundation levels of the recently demolished 1970s building. However, a disturbed area of sandstone within the SE facing section of the trench, was identified as the probable truncated remains of Wall [310] recorded in the 2018 evaluation and identified from



Illus. 10: South-east facing section of 2019 Trench, 86-88 Front Street East, Bedlington.

historic mapping as an 18th-19th century boundary wall defining the rear plot of former cottage terrace.

No significant archaeological remains were observed, or are likely to survive within, the pad of the former 1970s building, the construction of which resulted in the truncation of the ground to natural levels.

3.1.3 Context List (these contexts numbers follow those of the evaluation phase during which three trenches were excavated, this being the fourth in that sequence)

- [401] Concrete surface pad.
- [402] Dolomite, observed towards the south end of the trench to a depth of 0.55 m bgl.
- [403] Mixed s/s rubble observed beneath dolomite [402].
- [404] Concrete/cement laminations below the concrete pad [401].
- [405] Equal to Wall [310] from the 2018 evaluation. Truncated rubble s/s wall demolition, observed only in the SE facing section, apparently truncated by the construction of the 1970s recently demolished building. Identified from historic mapping as an 18th-19th century boundary wall defining the rear plot of former cottage terraces.
- [406] Brick rubble demolition across the northern end of the trench.
- [407] Dolomite bedding below [406].
- [408] Disturbed clay natural, mixed with ash coal waste.
- [409] Natural, observed from approx. 0.70 m below ground level. Mixed in nature. At the south end of the trench, it comprised of light grey-brown firm clay; in the central portion of the trench, it contained inclusions of reddish sand and outcropping of yellow s/s; at the north end of the trench, it comprised of mid reddish-brown, more friable, sandy-clay.



(above left) Photo. 01: The excavation of Trench 4 in Phase 1 of the watching brief)

(above right) Photo. 02: Trench 4, part of the west-facing section in November, 2019

3.2 PHASE 2: November 2020



Photo. 03: Vertical view of the site at an early stage in groundworks carried out in November, 2020

3.2.1 Interpretive description (see Illus. 09 and Photos 03-16)

In the west part of the site, beneath the upper layers of modern demolition material and brown loam, two sandstone walls, Wall H [08] & I [09], also seen in the 2018 evaluation (104) & (105)), were encountered at depths between 0.20-0.50 m below present ground level, along with a possible truncated stone floor surface [02] (2018 [107]) sitting on earlier topsoil deposits immediately north of the northern wall. The better-preserved southern wall 'I', 0.45-0.52 m wide, sat upon sub-soil and bedrock and comprised roughly faced, unbonded sandstone blocks, incorporating on its south side the broken remains of a roughly-made stone trough of pre-modern, quite possible medieval origin. Its reused position in a wall foundation suggests that the wall is of much later origin than the trough, but no evidence for absolute dating was available in the form of artifacts or ecofacts.

Between the two walls and to the south (road-side) of Wall 'I' [09] were shallow, mixed deposits sitting directly upon the natural sub-soil and bedrock, which outcropped within [09] and to the south. North of Wall 'H' [08], below possible surface fragment [02] were deep deposits of black garden soil containing some burnt material and residual coal, but no artifacts of any description. The dark soil containing fragments of coal was interpreted as a post-medieval or relatively recent infill deposit, though whether carried out in a single phase and related to some industrial practice, or carried out over a longer period and associated with domestic waste disposal, was unclear. The presence of an unstratified quern- or millstone in an *ad hoc* surface above this fill suggests the possibility of light industrial activities such as a bakery on the site, although its lack of context and associated dateable finds makes any such assertion highly tenuous. The black loam-based deposit was bounded on the west (actually north-west) side by another sandstone wall, Wall A [01] which, although of similar build to [08] and [09], survived to a greater depth, sitting upon the natural boulder clay on ground sloping to the north-east - the surface of the natural boulder clay at the north end of the site being c 1.7 m lower than the boulder clay deposits and sandstone outcrop at the south end of the site. Wall 'A' [01] was slightly askew to the more recent west boundary wall of the site [11] - which sat at a higher level and crossed over it some 8 m from the north-west corner of the site - but appears associated, in character and orientation, with walls [08] and [09] which together appear likely to have formed the sides

of a building, or perhaps building and rear yard. Wall [09] continued across most of the south part of the site while [08], parallel with it, was more difficult to trace and had been impacted by more recent buildings [10] in the east.

The building remains grouped as site J [10] comprise a main north-south wall and another adjoining at right angles with, on the west and east sides of the main wall areas of brick flooring a metre or so below current ground level. These features, partially exposed in 2018, are interpreted as modern remains dating to the 19th or early 20th century, although again they were associated with few, if any artifacts to allow close dating. The fact that the main N-S wall of group [10] ends at the north face of wall [09], as if abutting it, suggests that the latter was in existence when Building J [10] was constructed, probably forming part of the same ensemble.

Further north, similar wall and floor arrangements are represented by well-built sandstone walls [03], [04] and [05], as well as floor surfaces [12] & [13], which seems to have comprised a single building of similar date to that represented by [10]. Their construction, however, appears to have removed another NW-SE wall parallel with [08] and [09], the remains of which are apparent as stub F [06] on the west side of wall D [04], which also incorporates part of the *in situ* fabric of the latter in its foundation course.

No other features of note were recorded on the site, the area between and south of Walls [08] & [09] being of shallow deposits on sub-soil and bedrock, the area to the north being dark garden soil above sub-soil, and most of the east side of the western part of the site (Nos. 87-88) occupied by later building remains which have removed any earlier features.

The eastern part of the site (no. 86), meanwhile, was investigated by means of two linear trenches, cut SW-NE, prior to further ground reduction. Both the exploratory trenches - one opened in Phase I and the other in Phase II of the ground reduction groundworks - produced no finds of note, exposing only fairly shallow mixed deposits over natural sub-soil. During subsequent ground reduction, however, an arrangement of flat stones [07] was encountered close to the western boundary of no. 86 and roughly on line with Wall H, which could be interpreted as an isolated post-pad, but without associated features is considered of little significance.



Photo 04: Wall A and underlying wall K from SE



Photo. 05: Possible surface B from SW



Photo 06: Wall C and related surfaces from SW. Photo. 07: Wall C during excavation, from SW



Photo 08: Wall C detail, including tooling Photo. 09: Wall D during excavation, from south



Photo 10: Wall E during excavation, from SW. Photo. 11: Possible post-pad 'G'



Photo 12: West part of Walls H & I from south-east. Photo. 13: West part of Wall I from SE



Photo 14: Feature J from the north. Photo 15: Feature J seen from the west



Photo 16: Detail of railings settings, Feature J



Photo. 16: Perforated stone - probably a quern- or mill-stone, but potentially a grindstone, fly-whel or press - in medium-yellowish sandstone. Peck or chisel marks visible on both faces, which perhaps counters the quern/millstone option. Central perforation sub-circular. Dimensions: 0.50 m diam; 0.09 m high



Photo. 17: Stone trough or mortar in a coarse sandstone, reddish in colour and friable (as if burnt). Four straight-sides of uneven length with rounded, or perhaps eroded, corners and a circular bowl showing signs of pecking internally. Dimensions: 0.38 m max. length; 0.25 m high; 0.20 m bowl diam. at opening; 0.12 m interior bowl depth.

3.2.3 Context List

[01] **Wall A** on site plan. Remains of an unbonded sandstone wall beneath the west boundary wall 'H'. Built of reasonably well-faced quarried sandstone, surviving up to five courses to a maximum height of 0.60 m.

[02] **Hard-standing B** on site plan. An area of hard standing underlying wall 'H' (2018 [105]; possibly the same as [107] recorded in the 2018 evaluation. Built of flat sandstone pieces and riverine cobbles and incorporating a large quern- or mill-stone (*Photo. 17*).

[03] **Wall C** on site plan. A wall abutting the east side of a flagged sandstone and brick floor, continuous with a N-S boundary on the north side of the current north site boundary wall. Built of well-faced quarried sandstone blocks in random courses, bonded with a coarse pale mortar, it survives up to 0.50 m high. Wall C sits on the grey silty-loam also observed beneath wall A.

[04] **Wall D** on site plan. A wall of quarried s/s in random courses, bonded with off-white hard mortar. It rests on the demolition material of wall F.

[05] **Wall E** on site plan. A wall of similar build character to Wall 'D', which it joins, but slightly thicker.

[06] **Wall F** on site plan. The fragmentary remains of wall of quarried sandstone 0.56 m. wide, a stub of which survives on the east of (and incorporated in the lower course of) wall 'F', but which has been removed to the east.

[07] **Foundation G** on site plan. A possible post-pad foundation set into the natural sub-soil, sub-rectangular and 0.40 x 0.60 m in plan, comprised of flat sandstone pieces.

[08] **Wall H** on site plan. Sandstone wall ([2018 [105]) located 1.32 m south-west of and parallel to wall 'I', aligned SE-NW, built of roughly hewn stones and small boulders, it is 0.65 m wide and one-course deep, double-skinned with no core material. A reused socketed stone was present in the centre of the south face. Built upon a natural outcrop of sandstone bedrock [109], traces of the wall can be seen extending across most of the south part of the site. The west end of the wall sits upon a roughly-made floor, or sub-base - hard-standing area 'B', above - which includes a probable quern- or mill-stone (see *Photo. 16*). The 1st Edition OS map of c.1864 suggests this wall ('H') formed the north wall in a range of possible 18th-19th century terraced cottages located here.

[09] **Wall I** on site plan. A 0.45-0.52 m wide, fragile sandstone rubble wall, double-skinned with remnants of lime bonding, but with no core material, aligned SE-NW (parallel with wall H). Up to two courses survive. No obvious sign of this wall can be traced on historic maps.

[10] **Building J** on site plan J. Modern, mortar bonded sandstone walls, 0.35 and 0.45 m wide, surviving up to 1.3 m high above brick and flagstone floors.

[11] **Wall K** on site plan. The site boundary wall, 0.56 m wide in the north, built of mortar-bonded sandstone and surviving up to 0.75 m along the west site boundary.

[12/2018-205] Sandstone flags of varying size forming a single coursed even floor surface, located towards the SW side of Trench 2 and continuing/intersecting with brick surface [206] to the NE. Observed at a depth of 1.15m below present ground level. Dimensions: 2.60m (max width) x 1.60m (length = full width of trench). Interpreted as probable floor or yard surface associated with small building observed from 2nd Ed OS c.1890s onwards until c.1970s – perhaps originally serving as an outhouse or store to rear of main property.

[13/2018-206] Fragmentary brick floor surfaces seen in association with relatively modern (19/20th century) walls in the east part of the western plot; the northern fragment conjoining with flagged surface [12] seen at a depth of 1.15 m below present ground level. Interpreted as probable floor or yard surface associated with small building observed from 2nd Ed OS c.1890s onwards until c.1970s – perhaps originally serving as an outhouse or store to rear of main property.

3.3 Summary discussion

3.3.1 The groundworks carried out at 86-88 Front Street have revealed a variety of features, representing three or more different phases, below surface deposits of mixed rubble derived from the relatively demolition of No. 88 Front Street East. However, very little artifactual or other evidence was found to allow close dating of any of these features.

3.3.2 In the western plot are three, parallel sandstone walls [06], [08] and [09], observed at depths between 0.20-0.50 m along with possible remains of a roughly-constructed floor [02] at a depth of up to 0.75 m. The narrower wall [08] does not appear on historic maps and has been interpreted as either a partition wall within the demolished No. 88 Front Street East, or more likely, given its absence from historic maps and the presence within its sub-base of a re-used millstone of pre-modern origin, as an earlier wall belonging to a hitherto unknown structure. The broader wall [09], which survives for a longer stretch to the south-east, seems to be shown on the 1st Edition OS map of c.1864 which suggests that it formed the north wall in a range of possible 18th-19th century terraced cottages, perhaps built on much older footings. Also likely associated with these walls - either as part of the same building or a rear yard wall - is wall [01] set slightly askew to the western boundary of the site below the more recent boundary wall [11]. The quern- or mill-stone found in stone floor [02] below wall H [08] suggests that light industrial activities may have taken place on the site - in keeping with its location within the presumed commercial heart of the medieval and later settlement - as does the deep deposit of black, loam-based infill behind (north of) wall [08], but the unstratified context of the stone makes further speculation unhelpful. It is notable, however, that very few artifacts were recovered from the site, suggesting that it was not a site given over primarily to domestic activity throughout most of its history. While all of the above features are of medieval character, most would also sit well in post-medieval contexts and there is simply not enough dating evidence to determine whether they are part of the earliest known period of settlement at Bedlington, or perhaps part of later incarnations of settlement activity on the same, town centre site.

3.3.3 The building remains grouped as site J [10] comprise a main north-south wall and another adjoining at right angles with, on the west and east sides of the main wall areas of brick flooring a metre or so below current ground level. These features, partially exposed in 2018, are interpreted as modern remains dating to the 19th or early 20th century, although again they were associated with few, if any artifacts to allow close dating. The fact that the main N-S wall of group [10] ends at the north face of wall [09], as if abutting it, suggests that the latter was in existence when Building J [10] was constructed, probably forming part of the same ensemble.

3.3.4 Further north, similar wall and floor arrangements are represented by well-built sandstone walls [03], [04] and [05], as well as floor surfaces [12] & [13], which seems to have comprised a single building of similar date to that represented by [10]. Their construction, however, appears to have removed another NW-SE wall parallel with [08] and [09], the remains of which are apparent as stub F [06] on the west side of wall D [04], which also incorporates part of the *in situ* fabric of the latter in its foundation course.

3.3.5 No other features of note were recorded on the site, the area between and south of Walls [08] & [09] being of shallow deposits on sub-soil and bedrock, the area to the north being dark garden soil above sub-soil, and most of the east side of the western part of the site (Nos. 87-88) occupied by later building remains which have removed any earlier features.

3.3.6 Elsewhere, later buildings 'J' and walls 'C' [03], 'D' [04] and 'E' [05], associated with sandstone flag and brick surfaces [12] & [13], observed at a depths of over a metre bgl are clearly

of later character, probably 19th and early 20th century in origin, and have destroyed any earlier remains in that area - as seen by the fragmentary survival of Wall 'F' [06]. Walls 'C', 'E' & 'D' are best interpreted as a probable floor or yard surface associated with a small building seen on the 2nd edition OS plan of the 1890s, which survived until the later 20th century as an outhouse or store to the rear of No. 88 Front Street East. In building complex 'J'[10] the broader wall extending NW-SE is seen on the 1st edition OS map (c.1864) as the north wall in a range of 18th-19th century terraced cottages, while a narrower, orthogonal wall containing railing sockets is seen on the same maps as a property boundary to the rear of a terrace fronting the street. The wall may have been integrated into both earlier features, as suggested by its relationship to wall 'I'[09], and later structures which occupied the site from the later 19th century onwards. The brick and flagstone surfaces [12] & [13] seen in association with these walls are clearly well-constructed cottage or yard surfaces suggestive of a social status slightly above the norm for the period.

3.3.7 The remains encountered at 86-88 Front St, Bedlington suggest that the site has been intensively occupied and repeatedly modified since medieval period, with the majority of surviving remains dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. A surviving wall of rough sandstone construction running parallel with the street frontage appears to define the limits of the area within which significant archaeological remains might be expected to occur; beyond the north face of this wall the depth of infill over an apparently truncated natural land surface increases to the north, but neither infill nor surface of the underlying sub-soil contained either finds or features of note. The presence in association with the early wall features in the south-west part of the site - though in unstratified contexts - of a pre-modern stone trough and a quern- or mill-stone is not enough to prove that the surviving built features are of medieval origin, but, along with the almost-complete absence of other artifactual remains, does suggest the use of the site for commercial rather than purely domestic activities over the course of its history.

4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The results of watching brief, considered in the light of earlier site assessment and evaluation, suggest that several phases of activity have taken place on the site of 86-88 Front Street, represented by the walls, surfaces and sparse artifactual finds reported here.

4.2 The earliest phase of activity on the site is suggested by remains of walls in the south-eastern part of the site and extending along and underneath its western border, which are of medieval character, although the lack of dating evidence means that this conclusion is not definitive.

4.3 Further east, remains of walls and well-built surfaces in the eastern part of the western (no. 87-88) plot have destroyed any pre-existing remains of earlier origin there and are themselves of later, 19th and 20th century character. Likewise, in the western plot (no. 86), the construction there of a 1970s building has disturbed and truncated the original ground surface there, in doing so removing all or most traces of earlier activity.

4.4 The groundworks reported here, which have removed surface deposits from the greater part of the site, have revealed features of moderate archaeological interest, and in doing so have reduced the remaining archaeological potential of the site to a very low level.

4.5 In the absence of significant residual archaeological potential, no further archaeological fieldwork there is considered necessary.

APPENDIX: 86-88 FRONT STREET EAST, BEDLINGTON, NE22 5AB, NORTHUMBERLAND:
Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief, *Prepared by The Archaeological Practice Ltd., 18th July, 2019*

NCC Planning Ref. 17/02932/FUL

INTRODUCTION

This document, prepared by the Archaeological Practice Ltd., commissioned by Mr Stephen Foster of J & W Lowry Limited, provides a methodology for carrying out archaeological mitigation work to satisfy the terms of a planning condition on consent for the proposed demolition of an existing building and construction of a new building comprising of 11 independent living bedrooms, with associated car parking, at 86-88 Front Street, Bedlington, Northumberland.

The archaeological Condition relates to the mitigation of impacts to the archaeological resource and requires that:

A programme of archaeological work is required in accordance with the brief provided by Northumberland Conservation (NC ref 17/02932/FUL, dated 11/07/2018). The archaeological scheme shall comprise three stages of work.

Each stage shall be completed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before it can be discharged.

a) No development or archaeological mitigation shall commence on site until a written scheme of investigation based on the brief has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

b) The archaeological recording scheme required by the brief must be completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.

c) The programme of analysis, reporting, publication and archiving if required by the brief must be completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.

Reason

The site is of archaeological interest

This document (the 'Written Scheme of Investigation'), setting out a programme of archaeological mitigation works, has been submitted to satisfy the requirements of the Condition.

2. SITE LOCATION

The proposed development site is located on the north side of Front Street East, Bedlington (*centred on Grid Reference: NZ 26132 81827*) covering an area of approximately 600 square metres. It comprises a vacant plot (no. 88), which constitutes the greater part of the area, and a 1970s building (no. 86) currently used by a music instrument retailer.

3. NATURE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

The proposed development includes the demolition of an existing building and construction of a new building comprising 11 independent living bedrooms, with associated car parking, on the street-frontage site in the historic core of Bedlington.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS WORK

The proposed development is located within the site of the medieval and later town centre of Bedlington.

Partial archaeological evaluation of the present site was undertaken during 2018, when three trenches were opened. Trench 1 revealed two sandstone walls and, to the north, a badly truncated stone floor of rather ad hoc construction at a depth of 1 m. The narrower wall [104] has been interpreted, given its absence from historic maps and the presence within its footings of a re-used stone trough of pre-modern origin, as belonging to a hitherto unknown structure. The broader wall [105] extending to the south-east and also observed in Trench 3 is shown on the 1st Edition OS map of c.1864 forming the north wall in a range of possible 18th-19th century terraced cottages. Trench 2 revealed a level sandstone flag and brick surface [205]-[206] observed at a depth of 1.15m, interpreted as a probable floor or yard surface associated with a small building shown on the 2nd Ed OS c.1890s. Trench 3 revealed four sandstone walls and two brick floor surfaces, all but one of which are of 18th-19th century origins, with evidence of bedding material for an additional floor to the south-west. The narrower wall [303] is probably contiguous with Trench 1 wall [104].

The remains encountered suggest that the site has been intensively occupied and repeatedly modified since medieval period, with the majority of surviving remains dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. These dates are corroborated by the recovered pottery assemblage which is almost exclusively later 18th century and 19th century in origin, with a residual medieval component. Narrow surviving wall of rough sandstone construction running close to and parallel with the street frontage appears to define the northern limits of the area within which significant archaeological remains might be expected to occur; beyond the north face of this wall the depth of infill over an apparently truncated natural land surface increases to the north, but neither infill nor surface of the underlying sub-soil contained either finds or features of note sufficient to suggest surviving archaeological potential. The area south of the southern wall of possible earlier origins contains relatively shallow overburden over bedrock; the presence within the wall of a small, pre-modern trough in a re-used context and the presence of a limited assemblage of medieval pottery suggests residual archaeological potential in that area. It is suggested that the narrow wall [104] & [303] is likely to be of 18th century or earlier origin, potentially medieval, and that cut features may yet survive to the south of it in parts of the site proposed for removal as part of the development which were not exposed during the evaluation process.

Broadly, these results identified that whilst this site is also heavily truncated by modern overburden and structures of 18-19th century date, the lower course of an earlier undated wall may preserve the line of a medieval boundary. Medieval pottery was recovered from the site in residual contexts only. Part of the site is currently occupied by a standing building (no. 86) and as such was not available to evaluation. The presence/absence and significance of any archaeological features and deposits which may be present below no. 86 Front Street East has therefore not been assessed.

Whilst the archaeological evaluation did not conclusively identify medieval or otherwise significant archaeological remains on the vacant plot at no.87-88, it cannot be assumed that significant archaeological features or deposits do not survive below the existing building at no.86. Based on the location of the site (within the core of the medieval settlement) and the results of previous programmes of excavation in similar locations in Bedlington, the site is considered to retain potential for significant unrecorded archaeological remains, including evidence of medieval settlement. In these circumstances Northumberland Conservation considers it appropriate to take a precautionary response. It is considered appropriate, therefore, for a programme of archaeological mitigation to be undertaken in association with the proposed development.

5. MITIGATION SCHEME

The standing buildings occupying the site of 86 Front Street East and modern post-medieval overburden recorded by the evaluation at 87-88 Front Street East are not considered to be historically or archaeologically significant. It has been agreed, therefore, that these structures and deposits can be demolished to ground level without archaeological monitoring.

The Northumberland assistant county archaeologist has stipulated in planning advice that archaeological monitoring must commence following the demolition of the standing buildings at no.86, and following the removal of modern overburden elsewhere on the site.

Taking into account the significance of the potential archaeological resource and the scale of development proposed, it is considered that in this instance an **archaeological watching brief** is an appropriate mitigation response.

6.4 WATCHING BRIEF

6.4.1 Accordingly, the Field Investigation will be carried out by means of an Archaeological Watching Brief; all work will be carried out in line with the Institute for Archaeologists *By-Laws – Code of Conduct* (IFA 2010) and the *Yorkshire, The Humber and the North East Regional Statement of Good Practice for Archaeology in the Development Process* (2009).

6.4.2 All archaeological staff will be suitably qualified and experienced for their project roles. Before commencement of work they will have been made aware of what work is required under the specification and they will understand the aims and methodologies of the project.

6.4.3 In order for the Archaeological Watching Brief to be successfully implemented, the developer will keep the archaeological contractor fully apprised of the timetable for groundworks, including any changes to the schedule and will notify the contractor when the various stages of the groundworks are about to commence so that visits can be timetabled accordingly. The archaeological contractor will, in turn, keep the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team apprised of any significant discoveries.

6.4.4 A constant presence will be maintained during the following intrusive works:

- Groundworks following the demolition of the standing buildings at no.86, and following the removal of modern overburden construction elsewhere, including excavations for the provision of services.

6.4.5 All sections and deposits exposed during construction operations will be systematically examined to identify, excavate, sample and record, as appropriate, any previously unidentified archaeological features which survive within the area of excavation and which are threatened by development works.

6.4.6 Any archaeological deposits encountered will be recorded photographically. Photographic recording shall also be undertaken where no archaeological features are encountered, and include general working shots.

6.4.7 Should any archaeological features be identified, sufficient time will be allowed to investigate and record these features within practicable operational parameters.

6.4.8 In the event of the discovery of archaeological remains which are of greater significance than anticipated, work will cease and the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team and a representative of the developer will be notified. An assessment will be made of the importance of

the remains and a mitigation strategy for recording or preservation *in situ*, as appropriate, will be agreed upon by all the parties.

6.4.9 In the event of human burials being discovered, the archaeological contractor will procure and comply with all statutory consents and licences under the Burial Act 1857. Where any part of a human burial is disturbed the whole burial will be archaeologically exhumed. Excavated human remains (see sections 3.2-3.5) will be treated in accordance with the guidance set out in McKinley & Roberts 1993 *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains* Institute of Field Archaeologists Technical Paper No. 13 and English Heritage/The Church of England 2005 *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* English Heritage.

6.4.10 Appropriate procedures under the relevant legislation will be followed in the event of the discovery of artifacts covered by the provisions of the Treasure Act 1996.

6.5 Recording Strategy

Archaeological stratigraphy revealed by sample excavation or watching brief will be recorded by the following means:

6.5.1 Written descriptions. Each archaeological context will be recorded on a pro-forma sheet. Minimum recorded details will consist of the following: a unique identifier; an objective description which includes measurements of extent and details of colour and composition; an interpretative estimate of function, clearly identified as such; at least one absolute height value; the identifiers of related contexts and a description of the relationship with such contexts (for preference, executed as a mini Harris matrix); references to other recording media in which representations of the context are held (plans, sections, photographs).

6.5.2 Measured illustrations. Detail plans and sectional profiles of archaeological features will be at appropriate scales (1:20 or 1:10). Archaeological contexts will be referenced by their unique identifiers. All illustrations will be properly identified, scaled and referenced to the site survey control.

6.5.3 Photographs. Any features of archaeological note will be recorded using colour transparencies along with black and white film stock. Digital photographs will be taken as a backup for the entire record. A system will be used for identifying the archaeological features photographed.

6.5.4 An appropriate control network for the survey of any archaeological remains revealed in excavation will be established.

6.5.5 The survey control network will be related to the OS grid.

6.5.6 The survey control network and the position of recorded structures, features and finds will be located on a map of an appropriate scale (1:2500 or 1:500)

6.5.7 At least one absolute height value related to OD will be recorded for each archaeological context.

6.5.8 All processing, storage and conservation of finds will be carried out in compliance with the relevant IFA and UKIC (United Kingdom Institute of Conservation) guidelines.

6.5.9 Portable remains will be removed by hand; all artifacts encountered will be recovered.

6.6 Environmental Sampling and Scientific Dating

6.6.1 The investigations will be undertaken in a manner consistent with “The Management of Archaeological Projects”, English Heritage 1991 and with “Archaeological Science at PPG16 Interventions: Best Practice for Curators and Commissioning Archaeologists”, English Heritage, 2003. The following strategy for environmental sampling will be confirmed with Jacqui Huntley, English Heritage Regional Advisor for Archaeological Science (0191 3341137 or 07713 400387) before the excavation begins.

6.6.2 Deposits/fills with potential for environmental evidence will be assessed by taking up to two bulk samples of 30 litres from any context selected for analysis by the excavator from suitable (i.e. uncontaminated) deposits. Deposits/fills totalling less than 30 litres in volume will be sampled in their entirety. Samples which are judged to be most suitable on grounds of being derived from uncontaminated and reasonably well-dated deposits and/or recognisable features will be selected for full analysis, reporting and publication. In the event of a large number of deposits potentially being available for sampling, the advice of the English Heritage Regional Science Advisor will be sought.

6.6.3 Deposits will be sampled for remains of pollen, food residues, microfossils, small boned ecofacts (e.g. fish & insects/micro-fauna), industrial residues (e.g. micro-slugs - hammer-scale and spherical droplets), cloth and timber. Flotation samples and samples taken for coarse-mesh sieving from dry deposits will be processed at the time of fieldwork wherever possible.

6.6.4 Any significant ecofactual assemblages will be assessed by a recognised specialist.

6.6.5 Deposits will be assessed for their potential for radiocarbon, archaeo-magnetic and Optically Stimulated Luminescence dating. As well as providing information on construction techniques, timbers will be assessed for their potential for dendrochronology dating, in which case sampling will follow procedures in *Dendrochronology: guidelines on producing and interpreting dendrochronological dates* (Hillam 1998) and *Guidelines on the recording, sampling, conservation and curation of waterlogged wood* (R. Brunning 1996). A maximum of 5 samples of material suitable for dating by scientific means (e.g: Radiocarbon, Luminescence, Remnant Magnetism, etc.) will be collected.

6.6.6 In the event that hearths, kilns or ovens (of whatever period, date or function) are identified during the watching brief, provision will be made to collect at least one archaeo-magnetic date to be calculated from each individual hearth surface (or in the case of domestic dwellings sites a minimum of one per building identified). Where applicable, samples will be collected from the site and processed by a suitably trained specialist for dating purposes. In the event that such deposits or structures are identified, Northumberland Conservation will be contacted to discuss the appropriate response.

6.6.7 Information on the nature and history of the site, aims and objectives of the project, summary of archaeological results, context types and stratigraphic relationships, phase and dating information, sampling and processing methods, sample locations, preservation conditions, residuality/contamination, etc. will be provided with each sample submitted for analysis.

6.6.8 Laboratory processing of samples shall only be undertaken if deposits are found to be reasonably well dated, or linked to recognisable features and from contexts the derivation of which can be understood with a degree of confidence.

6.6.9 Human remains will be treated with care, dignity and respect, in full compliance with the relevant legislation (essentially the Burial Act 1857) and local environmental health concerns. If found, human remains will be left in-situ, covered and protected, and the police, coroner and County Archaeologist informed. If it is agreed that removal of the remains is essential, the Archaeological Practice Ltd, will apply for a licence from the Home Office. Analysis of the osteological material will

take place according to published guidelines, *Human Remains from Archaeological Sites, Guidelines for producing assessment documents and analytical reports* (English Heritage 2002).

6.6.10 If anything is found which could be Treasure, under the Treasure Act 1996, it is a legal requirement to report it to the local coroner within 14 days of discovery. The Archaeological Practice Ltd. will comply with the procedures set out in The Treasure Act 1996. Any treasure will be reported to the coroner and to The Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer, Rob Collins (0191 2225076 or Robert.Collins@newcastle.ac.uk) for guidance on the Treasure Act procedures. Treasure is defined as the following:

- Any metallic object, other than a coin, provided that at least 10% by weight of metal is precious metal and that is at least 300 years old when found
- Any group of two or more metallic objects of any composition of prehistoric date that come from the same find
- All coins from the same find provided that they are at least 300 years old when found, but if the coins contain less than 10% gold or silver there must be at least ten
- Any object, whatever it is made of, that is found in the same place as, or had previously been together with, another object that is Treasure
- Any object that would previously have been treasure trove, but does not fall within the specific categories given above. Only objects that are less than 300 years old, that are made substantially of gold or silver, that have been deliberately hidden with the intention of recovery and whose owners or heirs are unknown will come into this category

6.7 Analysis and Reporting of Recovered Data

6.7.1 Following the completion of the Field Investigation and before any of the archaeological post-excavation work is commenced, an archive (the Site Archive) containing all the data gathered during fieldwork will be prepared. This material will be quantified, ordered, indexed and rendered internally consistent. It will be prepared according to the guidelines given in English Heritage's MAP 2 document, Appendix 3 (English Heritage 1991).

6.7.2 Following completion of the Field Investigation, a report will be prepared collating and synthesizing the structural, artefactual and environmental data relating to each agreed component part of the evaluation and recording process.

6.8 Production of Final Report

6.8.1 Copies of the report will be provided within two months of the completion of fieldwork to the developer and the NCC archaeologist.

6.8.2 Three copies of the report will be provided. Each will be bound, with each page and heading numbered. Any further copies required will be produced electronically. The report will include as a minimum the following:

Oasis and planning reference numbers.

A summary statement of methodologies used.

A location plan of the site and any archaeological discoveries of note.

A summary statement of results.

Conclusions

A table summarizing the deposits, features, classes and numbers of artefacts encountered and spot dating of significant finds.

6.8.5 Following completion of the analysis and publication phase of the work, an archive (the Research Archive) containing all the data derived from the work done during the analysis phase will

be prepared. The archive will be prepared to the standard specified by English Heritage (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute of Conservation guidelines.

6.8.6 Arrangements will be made to deposit the Site Archive (including Finds) and the Research Archive with the designated curatorial authority, the Great North Museum Newcastle upon Tyne, within 6 months of the end of the fieldwork.

6.9 Dissemination and Publication of Results of Archaeological Works

6.9.1 An entry for inclusion in the Northumberland County Sites and Monuments Record will be prepared and submitted.

6.9.2 Summary reports of the project will be prepared, if necessary, for inclusion in the appropriate Notices, Annual Reviews, Reports, etc.

6.9.3 In particular a summary of the results of the investigation will be prepared for *Archaeology in Northumberland* and submitted to the Northumberland HER Officer, by December of the year in which the work is completed.

6.9.4 A short report on the work will be submitted to a local academic journal if appropriate.

6.9.5 OASIS: The Archaeological Contractor will complete the online form for the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations Project (OASIS), following consultation with the Northumberland HER Officer. The Contractor agrees to the procedure whereby the information on the form will be placed in the public domain on the OASIS website, following submission of the final report (see 3.6) into the Northumberland County HER.

7. EXECUTION OF THE SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

7.1 The Developer has appointed The Archaeological Practice Ltd. as a professionally competent Archaeological Contractor, on agreed terms, to execute the scheme as set out in the brief supplied by the NCC Archaeologist.

7.2 The present project design must be submitted for approval and, if necessary, modification by the NCC Conservation Team before work on-site can proceed.

7.3 The Developer will allow the NCC Conservation Team and the appointed contractor all reasonable access to the site for the purposes of monitoring the archaeological scheme, subject only to safety requirements.

7.4 The archaeological contractor appointed to manage the execution of the scheme shall ensure that:

7.4.1 The appropriate parties are informed of the objectives, timetable and progress of the archaeological work

7.4.2 The progress of the work is adequately and effectively monitored and the results of this are communicated to the appropriate parties.

7.4.3 Significant problems in the execution of the scheme are communicated at the earliest opportunity to the appropriate parties in order to effect a resolution.

7.5 The archaeological contractor will carry, and will ensure that other archaeological contractors involved in the scheme carry appropriate levels of insurance cover in respect of Employers Liability, Public and Third Party Liability & Professional Indemnity.

7.6 The archaeological contractor will liaise with the appointed CDM Planning Supervisor and prepare or arrange for the preparation of a Safety Plan for the archaeological work.

7.7 At or before the commencement of the scheme the Developer, the appointed Archaeological Contractors, the County Archaeological Officer and other appropriate parties will agree arbitration procedures to be followed in the event of any unresolvable difficulties or disputes arising from the scheme

7.8 Careful assessment has led to the definition of a number of research objectives which identify with a high degree of likelihood the kind of archaeological deposits which the investigation will encounter. Nevertheless, it is possible that discoveries will be made which could not reasonably have been foreseen on the basis of all the information currently available. Any difficulties arising from unforeseen discoveries will be resolved by discussion between all parties involved.

7.9 The Archaeological Contractor(s) appointed to execute the scheme will procure and comply with all statutory consents and licences under the Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act 1981 regarding the exhumation and interment of any human remains discovered within the site, and will comply with all reasonable requirements of any church or other religious body or civil body regarding the manner and method of removal, re-interment or cremation of the human remains, and the removal and disposal of any tombstones or other memorials discovered within the site. The Developer will incur all costs resulting from such compliance.

8. TIMETABLE AND STAFFING

8.1 Phase III

Fieldwork will be required to monitor groundworks elsewhere on the site in the form of a watching brief. A constant presence will be maintained during the following intrusive works:

- Groundworks associated with the construction of the new build, excavations for the provision of services and groundworks associated with site clearance and landscaping activities.

8.2 Reporting and analysis

Following the completion of on-site work, further time will be required to produce an appropriately illustrated report on the work.

The potential requirement for specialist analyses is an unavoidable risk in all such excavations. The scientific investigation of any features/deposits which are considered significant will be undertaken as a non-negotiable part of this programme. Any such analyses would be carried out by specialists and priced to the client on a costs only basis.

8.3 Personnel:

Archaeological Practice

PM: Project Manager
(Richard Carlton)

PO: Project Officer (Marc Johnstone)

Sub-Contractors

Environmental analysis: ASUD

Finds analysis:

RY: Rob Young

LAJ: Lindsay Allason-Jones