



**MELKRIDGE HOUSE,
95 GILESGATE, DURHAM.**

Grid Ref NZ 2848 4279

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF DURING EXCAVATIONS FOR
FOUNDATIONS OF A NEW GARAGE**

**ARCHAEO-ENVIRONMENT LTD
For Gwendolynn Heley.**

Fieldwork June 2009

Report Date December 2009

AE Report No. AE-0066/09

Site Code (GWH09)



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A Watching Brief at Melkridge House, Gilesgate, Durham. 2009.

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF DURING EXCAVATIONS
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SITE CODE GWH09. (AE PROJECT 0066/09).

Summary

Archaeo-Environment Ltd, were commissioned by Gwendolynn Heley to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches for a new garage and workshop to the rear of Melkridge House, number 95 Gilesgate to the east of Durham City. The requirement for archaeological monitoring of the work had been identified by the Archaeology Section of Durham County Council and imposed as a condition by the planning authority, Durham City Council.

Gilesgate is of some considerable historic significance as a medieval suburb of Durham City, probably originating from 1112 when the Hospital of St.Giles was founded. The Hospital church of St.Giles still survives and became the parish church for a two row settlement arranged either side of a road and green which was the main approach from the east into Durham City. Either side of this green properties can be seen to have evolved with a narrow end to the street frontage where dwellings are likely to have been situated, behind which is a long thin burgage plot or croft for cultivation and small holding activities. Beyond these would have been the medieval open field system. Although the surrounding area, especially to the north has been substantially developed since the mid 19th century, the form of Gilesgate and its burgage plots is still well defined.

Melkridge House is a handsome double fronted property built around 1840, facing on to the north side of Gilesgate. It has a rear wing and a number of smaller more recent extensions which are separated from the garden which occupies the medieval burgage, plot by a parking area accessed from a small back lane running to the west. The new garage-workshop is located on the north side of this parking area, and forms an 'L' shape to accommodate a large, handsome copper beech tree.

The development works consisted of removal of turf within the footprint of the new building and the excavation of a number of strip foundations together with a service trench. Spoil from the excavation was used on-site to fill in a recent and redundant garden pond feature.

In summary, the watching brief provided no evidence of in-situ archaeological deposits of any significant antiquity, only revealing various layers of garden soil which from a small assemblage of pottery appeared to be of mid 19th century date and later.

This watching brief has however allowed a report to be produced and lodged with the County Historic Environment Record both to inform future planning in the area and to be available to anyone wishing to study the history and archaeology of the area.

In the light of these results it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required on the archive from these observations and that further excavation within the immediate area of garden of Melkridge House would be of limited value due post medieval disturbance of the area most likely associated with construction of the house itself around 1840.

Acknowledgements

Archaeo-Environment would like to thank Gwendolynn Heley for commissioning the work, and Lee White of Durham County Council Archaeology Section for requesting and specifying the work via the development control process.

Author: Niall Hammond

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeo-Environment Ltd (AE) were commissioned by Gwendolynn Heley to undertake a controlled archaeological watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches for the construction of a new garage-workshop to the rear of Melkridge House, Gilesgate, Co. Durham.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was initiated by Ms Heley in response to advice from the Archaeology Section of Durham County Council and an imposed planning condition for the garage development by Durham City Council the planning authority. Lee White of DCC Archaeology Section had provided a brief for the work which had informed a site specific Written Scheme of investigation prepared by Archaeo-Environment for Ms Healy. This WSI was submitted to DCC Archaeology and agreed before works commenced on site. The WSI is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.3 AE attended site on the 26th of June 2009, the turf outline of the trenches had been removed with agreement prior to the arrival of the archaeologist on site (figure 2). Excavation of the foundation trenches began once the archaeologist was on site.
- 1.4 All trenches were excavated by hand and spoil remained on site, being used to infill a recent and now redundant garden pond feature immediately north-east of the new building.
- 1.5 Neither trench contained any deposits of archaeological interest which pre-dated the construction of Melkridge House around 1840. Those deposits observed were all associated with garden activity.
- 1.6 This report has been written to provide basic details of an essentially negative result, in that no archaeological remains were identified in the trenches observed. The report will be submitted to the Durham Historic Environment Record to act both as a record of the event and to guide future planning decisions regarding the need for archaeological work in the immediate area Gilesgate.

2.0 LOCATION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

2.1 *Location*

Gilesgate is an historic suburb of Durham City and situated approximately 1 Km to the east of the Peninsula. Melkridge House sits on the north side of the settlement and the development was located at NZ (4)2848 (5)4279 (Figure 1).

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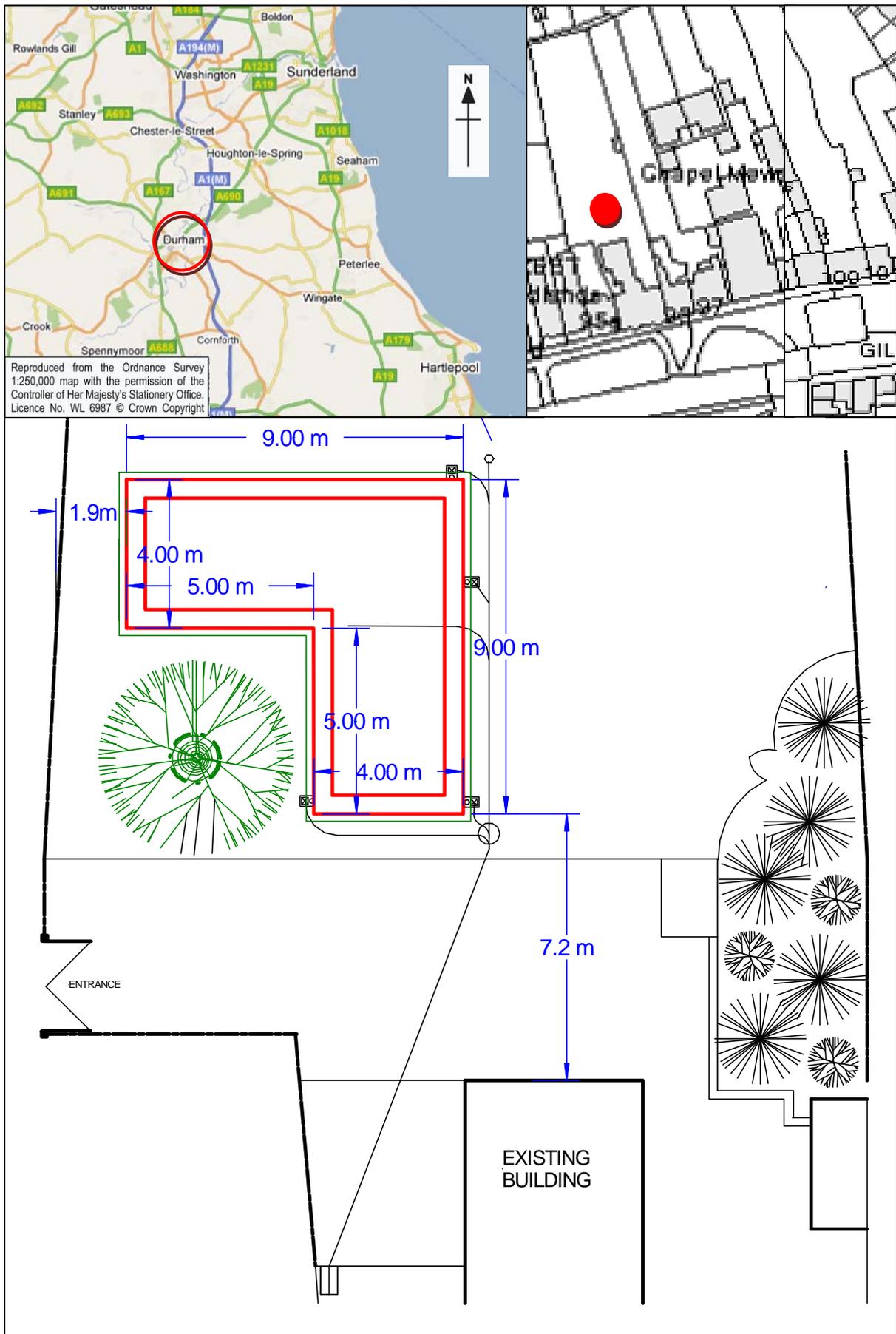


Figure 1. Melkridge House, 95 Gilesgate, Durham City. Location and plan of area of excavation.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The limited scope of this work does not permit or indeed warrant a detailed archaeological and historic background to be provided in this instance. Sufficient to say that Gilesgate is a medieval suburb of Durham City and of high archaeological potential for remains principally of the Norman period up to the present day. Several watching briefs and small excavations have been undertaken nearby including an evaluation at 78 Gilesgate in 2006 which identified deposits of potential medieval date (DHER 9542).

4.0 AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 The primary **aim** of the watching brief was to determine the presence and record any archaeology associated with the medieval and later occupation of Gilesgate.

4.2 The **objectives** of the watching brief are summarised as follows;

- 'To identify any surviving archaeological remains within the development ground works and to investigate and record any revealed archaeological remains or deposits'.
- To establish the location, date and nature of any areas of archaeological activity and assess the degree of preservation of any remains encountered.
- To identify to what extent any of the archaeological deposits uncovered might contribute towards our understanding of the archaeology of Gilesgate.
- To prepare a report on the results of the watching brief and any significant archaeological remains to be published in a local, regional or national journal as appropriate making appropriate reference to any other pertinent archaeological observations/recording in the near vicinity.

4.3 The **Methodology** for the work was as follows. All excavation was to be under archaeological supervision, and all trenches were excavated by hand by the contractor to remove material down to a level at which either significant archaeological remains were first identified or down to the required construction level, whichever came first. Once an archaeological horizon had been identified the methodology required that all deposits were hand excavated by the supervising archaeologist to an appropriate level to understand the stratigraphic relationship of any features.



Figure 2. Area prior to excavation looking south to Melkridge House.



5.0 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 5.1 Archaeological observation was undertaken over a single day on June 26th 2009, when all necessary excavation was completed. On the following day it is understood that mini-piles and foundations were laid, this was not monitored by the archaeologist.
- 5.2 A number of linear trenches were hand excavated marking the perimeter of the new building and internal structural elements as shown in figure 1. The trenches were approximately 400mm in width, and between 400mm and 500mm in depth. An extension of the trench ran to the south-west to connect up with existing services (figure 4).



Figure 3. Completed excavation of foundations.

- 5.3 [001] Within the footprint of the new building, the immediate layer of turf and top soil was observed to be a maximum of 150mm deep. This was composed of a moderately compact silt/sand/clay matrix (30/30/40%), with moderate inclusions of small fragments of buff stone and occasional fragments of glass, burnt shale, glazed and un-glazed pottery. This was clearly a garden soil and contained no structures.
- 5.4 [002] Beneath the topsoil [001], there was a further layer of soil and composed of similar material; silt/sand/clay (30/40/30%) and of a uniform depth of 120mm when

seen in section. This layer was more compact than [001] and contained frequent inclusions of coal, ceramic building material and stone.

- 5.5 [003] Beneath the subsoil [002], this layer was very compact and composed of coarse sand/fine sand/Clay (50/10/40%). It included frequent inclusions of coal fragments and flecks up to 80mm in diameter.
- 5.6 [004] This context formed the upper levels of the service trench and represented modern brick sets over a crushed dolomite aggregate sub base. This was very compact and a maximum of 170mm in depth, beneath which was context [002].



Figure 4. Service trench running south-west from new garage-workshop to connect with existing services.

- 5.7 A brief reconnaissance of flower beds and other exposed areas of ground within the garden failed to identify any pottery or finds which pre-dated the mid 19th century.

6.0 DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

- 6.1 The impact of the development on the archaeological resource of Gilesgate has been negligible. No pre 19th century archaeological deposits of either in-situ stratigraphy or previously disturbed and re-deposited material were identified.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 No further work is required on the limited archive.
- 7.2 Further requests for monitoring work to the rear of Melkridge House (95 Gilesgate), should take account of the depth of Victorian and later garden soil (up to 500mm) when considering the need for any further archaeological intervention.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 Although clearly within the boundaries of a medieval burgage plot, the watching brief provided no evidence of either in-situ archaeological deposits or re-deposited artefactual material which pre-dated the mid 19th century and the construction of Melkridge House. While it is possible that the observed stratigraphy represents a large and homogenous dumping deposit overlying earlier medieval deposits, it seems more likely that the site preparation and construction of Melkridge House around 1840 has removed all earlier material from the area of observation.

9.0 ARCHIVE

9.1 The small amount of mid 19th century pottery retrieved from the watching brief has been assessed and considered to have little value for further study. The material has been returned to the owners of Melkridge House. In the light of these results it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required on the archive from these observations.

REFERENCES

Published sources

Aalen.F.H. (2006) *England's Landscape: The North East*. English Heritage.

Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*.

Pevsner, N. (1990). *The Buildings of England. County Durham*. Penguin.

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Watts, V. (2002). *A Dictionary of County Durham Place Names*. English Place Name Society Popular Series Volume 3.

White, L (2009) *Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief, 95 Gilesgate, Durham City, Durham, Co. Durham, DH1 1JA*

Appendix 1.

WSI for a watching brief at Melkridge House, 95 Gilesgate Durham City.

95 GILESGATE, DURHAM CITY, DURHAM, DH1 1JA

**WATCHING BRIEF
WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document has been prepared by Archaeo-Environment Ltd (AE) on behalf of our client, Gwendolynn Healy, and presents a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for undertaking an Archaeological Watching Brief during the construction of a garage to the rear of 95 Gilesgate, Durham City (NZ 2848 4279).
- 1.2 The site lies on the north side of Gilesgate, within the heart of the medieval settlement, and is located to the rear of a mid 19th century, Grade II listed building. An online check of historic Ordnance Survey maps shows no obvious structures within the building footprint. However, previous archaeological assessment work and evaluation has uncovered documentary and material evidence of medieval activity within the immediate vicinity of the site (White 2009, 2).
- 1.3 Planning permission has been granted by Durham City Council for the construction of the garage on the condition that an archaeological watching brief is carried out during all groundworks. These will comprise the hand excavation of shallow strip foundations (shown on Figure 1), measuring 0.50m wide, down to a depth of 0.60m below the present ground surface. A total of 17 minipiles will then be driven down to stable clay (estimated to be approximately 1m below current ground surface), or bedrock (estimated to be 5m below current ground surface), depending on the stability of the underlying material.
- 1.4 In addition to the foundations, a single service trench will be excavated as shown on the accompanying plan (Figure 1). This will be 0.60m wide and extend no more than 0.60m below the current ground surface; although this may be increased by an estimated 0.30m if obstacles are encountered. All three services – drainage, water and electrics – will be laid in the same trench. The trench will be excavated predominantly through made-ground laid down when the existing paved area was constructed. All services will link in with existing drainage chambers.
- 1.5 In accordance with the above planning condition a specification detailing the required works was provided by the Durham County Council Assistant Archaeology Officer (White 2009). This WSI has been prepared in accordance with this specification and with standards and guidance published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) (IFA 2001).

Designations

1.6 95 Gilesgate is a Grade II listed building.

Previous archaeological works

1.7 There has been no previous archaeological work on the site although excavations and assessments have taken place within the wider area (White 2009, 2).

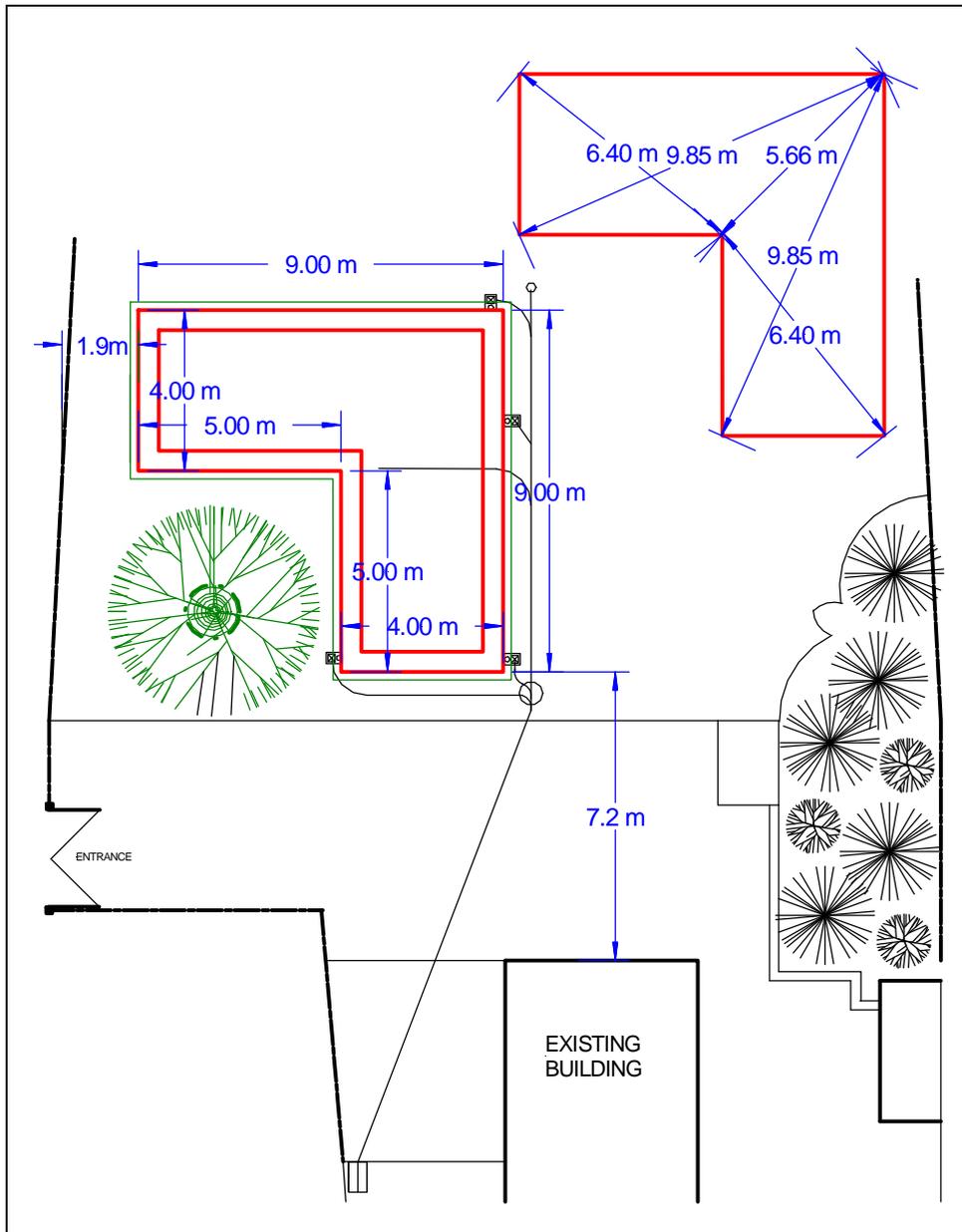


Figure 1: showing plan of intended foundation and service trenches.

2.0 SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 The project comprises:

- i. Continuous archaeological monitoring during the hand excavation of the strip foundation trenches.
 - ii. Continuous archaeological monitoring during the hand excavation of the service trench.
- 2.2 A watching brief during the pile driving is not anticipated. Piles will be driven using a mini-digger which will cause on minimal ground disturbance.
- 2.3 If archaeological remains are found then the archaeologist onsite will be given the opportunity of excavating and recording the remains before they are destroyed. Based on the significance, the Assistant County Archaeologist will be contacted to discuss any further mitigation requirements. However, given the depth of the intended groundworks, this is not anticipated.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The purpose of the watching brief will be to record any as yet unknown archaeology which may be uncovered during the excavation of the building foundations or service trench. Any remains would be assessed, evaluated and interpreted with regards our wider understanding of the development of medieval Gilesgate and Durham.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 An archaeologist will be onsite at all times during the excavation of the foundation and service trenches.
- 4.2 All trenches will be dug by hand. The piles will be driven in using a mini pile driver which will create minimum surface impact. The pile driver will track only across existing paving and the immediate area surrounding the building footprint.
- 4.3 The excavation work will be undertaken under the supervision of the onsite archaeologist who will be able to stop work for recording whenever necessary. Good communication will be retained between the client and the AE archaeologist. As the work will be taking place within the grounds of the client property, no communication issues are envisaged. The archaeologist will have clear access to all areas of the site.
- 4.4 A sufficient sample of exposed archaeological features and deposits will be excavated in an archaeologically controlled and stratigraphic manner to fulfil the purpose of the project. If features are encountered then a small area outside the footprint of the foundations might be exposed in order to understand the nature of the archaeology, but this would be kept to a minimum.

- 4.5 Any human remains encountered will be accurately recorded, including an *in-situ* examination by a palaeo-pathologist, but not removed from site until a Section 25 licence has been obtained from the Department of Constitutional Affairs. Both the client and the DCC Assistant Archaeology Officer will be informed if human remains are found.
- 4.6 A full record of excavated features will be made using AE's single context planning system. All archaeological features will be photographed and recorded at an appropriate scale. Sections will be drawn where necessary although these are not anticipated given the extent and depth of the planned works. However, a sample section of the trench will be drawn if it reveals any important information on the nature of the archaeological deposits. This will be drawn at 1:10, and plans at 1:20. All levels will be tied into Ordnance Datum and the trenches accurately located with the National Grid.
- 4.7 Photographic records will use black and white prints and 35mm colour slide and prints. Suitable digital images for inclusion on the Keys to the Past website will be included with the report.
- 4.8 Pottery and animal bone will be collected as bulk samples by context. Significant small finds will be three dimensionally located prior to collection. All finds will be processed to MAP2 standards and subject to specialist assessment. No palaeo-environmental samples are anticipated given the depth of excavations, but should suitable deposits be encountered then samples will be taken. All relevant procedures relating to artefacts which fall under the Treasure Act (1996) will be adhered to.

5.0 REPORT AND ARCHIVE PREPARATION

- 5.1 A watching brief report will be produced which will include a summary of the work, location information, details of findings, specialist reports, illustrations and photographs. If no archaeological material is encountered then a negative watching brief report will be completed providing details of the work and location of the site.
- 5.2 The final report will include:
- Summary
 - location plan and other references/details
 - nature and extent of the proposed development, including client details
 - description of the site location and geology
 - geo-referenced site plan to a suitable scale

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- 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
- recommendations regarding the need for, and scope of, any further archaeological work
- bibliography
- Appendices (Project Spec/ Approved WSI)

5.3 All drawings will be produced in AutoCAD and archived as both DWG (DXF) and PDF files.

5.4 PDF copies of the report will be prepared for the client (hard copies available if required). A bound paper copy of the report, and a PDF on CD-ROM with digital images (JPEG's), will be sent to the Archaeology Section, Durham County Council for inclusion into the County Durham Historic Environment Record (HER)

5.5 An OASIS report will be completed following the publication of the final report. In addition, a précis of the archaeological works will be submitted to the DCC Archaeology Section. This will be no more than 500 words in length and it accompanied by TIFF images of 300dpi where appropriate.

Archive

5.6 A properly ordered and indexed project archive will be prepared in accordance with English Heritage guidelines and, subject to the agreement of the landowner, deposited at the Fulling Mill.

6.0 PERSONNEL

6.1 Penny Middleton will have overall responsibility for coordinating and undertaking the watching brief and the production of the subsequent report.

6.2 **Penny Middleton** is the Senior Archaeologist at AE with over fifteen years experience in commercial archaeology. She has an MA in British Archaeology from Reading University and a post-graduate diploma in Architectural History from the University of Oxford. She has extensive excavation experience in addition to the running and management of a large number of fieldwork projects. She has worked across the country, initially for Oxford Archaeology (South) and subsequently as a Senior Project Officer for Northern Archaeological Associates (NAA) before joining Archaeo-Environment.

7.0 SUB-CONTRACTED STUDIES

Specialist studies

7.1 Although the range of artefacts that may be recovered cannot be accurately predicted at this stage, the most common specialist requirements are listed below, indicating the nature of the material, the name of the specialist and the organisation if applicable. Each of the specialists listed below has a proven record of expertise in both their particular field of work and the geographical area. Specialist work and sampling strategies where necessary will be undertaken in consultation with the appropriate specialists as agreed with the DCC Assistant Archaeologist.

7.2 Further details of all the individuals and organisations listed can be supplied if additional information is required.

Material Specialist

Worked flint	Peter Makey
Prehistoric pottery	T G Manby
Iron Age & RB pottery	Peter Didsbury
Anglo-Saxon pottery	Jane Young
Med & Post Med pottery	Peter Didsbury
Metalwork, leather & Worked Bone	Jonathan Watt
Human bone	Malin Holst
Animal bone	Deborah Jaques (Palaeoecology Research Services)
Palaeobotanical remains	John Carrott (Palaeoecology Research Services)
Molluscs	John Carrott (Palaeoecology Research Services)
Insect remains	John Carrott (Palaeoecology Research Services)
Conservation	Jennifer Jones (University of Durham)
Worked timbers	Carol Morris
Dendrochronology	Ian Tyres

8.0 PROGRAMME

8.1 Work is anticipated to commence as soon as WSI is approved.

9.0 CONFIDENTIALITY, COPYRIGHT AND PUBLICITY

9.1 The results of the work will remain confidential – initially being distributed only to the client, and DCC – and will remain so until such time as all conditions on the present development proposals are discharged. The results will then be deemed to have entered the public domain and will be entered on OASIS (the reports entered as full PDFs subject to the permission of the client) and on to AE's web site. No publicity will be entered into with respect to the results of the work during the course of any investigations without the express consent of the client

9.2 The copyright of any written, graphic or photographic records and reports will rest with AE.

10.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

10.1 The firm complies with the 1974 Health and Safety Act and its subsequent amendments in all its operations. In this respect the SCAUM manual on archaeological health and safety is followed for all site work, and as normal practice, First Aid boxes, an Accident Book and a telephone is provided for each project. Where required, safety helmets and reflective jackets are also provided. It is normal policy for a vehicle to be available on site for emergency purposes and site staff will be appropriately equipped in terms of bad weather gear. For each project a list of contact names and telephone numbers is provided for Accident and Emergency units, doctors, and dentists, together with appropriate site identification. Penny Middleton will be the site safety officer; she has undertaken a first aid training course. Information on service locations will be obtained and a Risk Assessment to HSE requirements will be prepared in advance of the commencement of site works.

REFERENCES

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- English Heritage (1995) *A Strategy for the Care and Investigation of Finds Ancient Monuments Laboratory*
- English Heritage (2002) *Environmental Archaeology - a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* Centre for Archaeology Guidelines **02.01**
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