

Highland Heritage

Archaeological Consultancy



*Professional Archaeological & Heritage Advice
Desk-based Assessment & Evaluation
Field Survey & Watching Briefs
Database & GIS design*

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Report on Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, Walk Over Survey and Trial Excavation

at

*House Plot 2 Moyness Road,
Meadowfield, Auldearn,*

HCAU Planning Brief 05/00147/FULNA

Aspire Project UID HH/2006/06

for

*Mr & Mrs Alastair Williamson
of 8 Battle Hill,
Auldearn*

Archaeological Evaluation, House Plot 2, Meadowfield, Auldearn

**Archaeological Evaluation, House Plot 2 Moyness Road, Meadowfield, Auldearn,
HCAU Planning Brief 05/00147/FULNA, for Mr & Mrs Alastair Williamson of 8 Battle Hill,
Auldearn.**

Summary

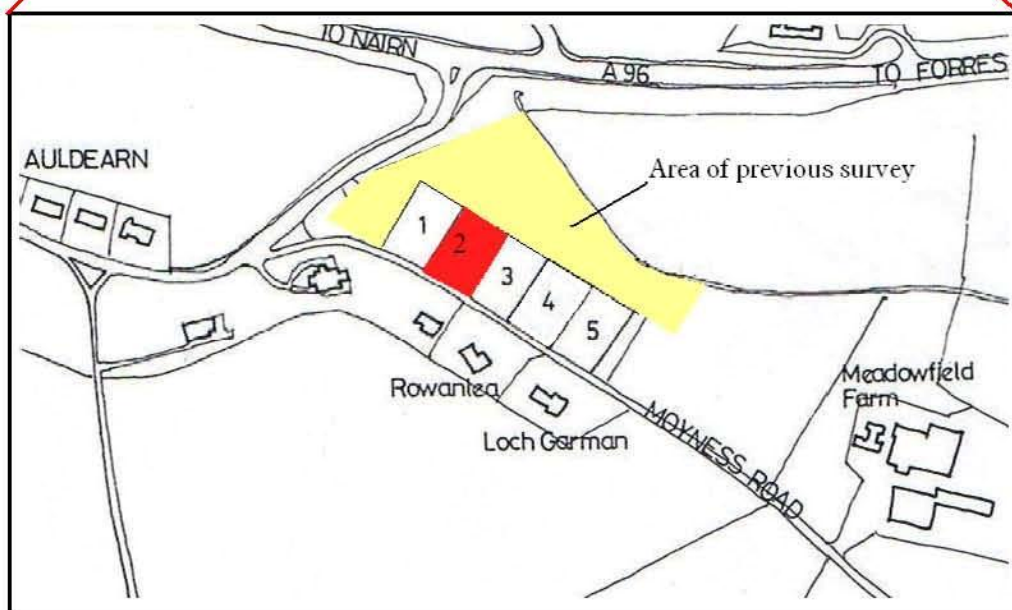
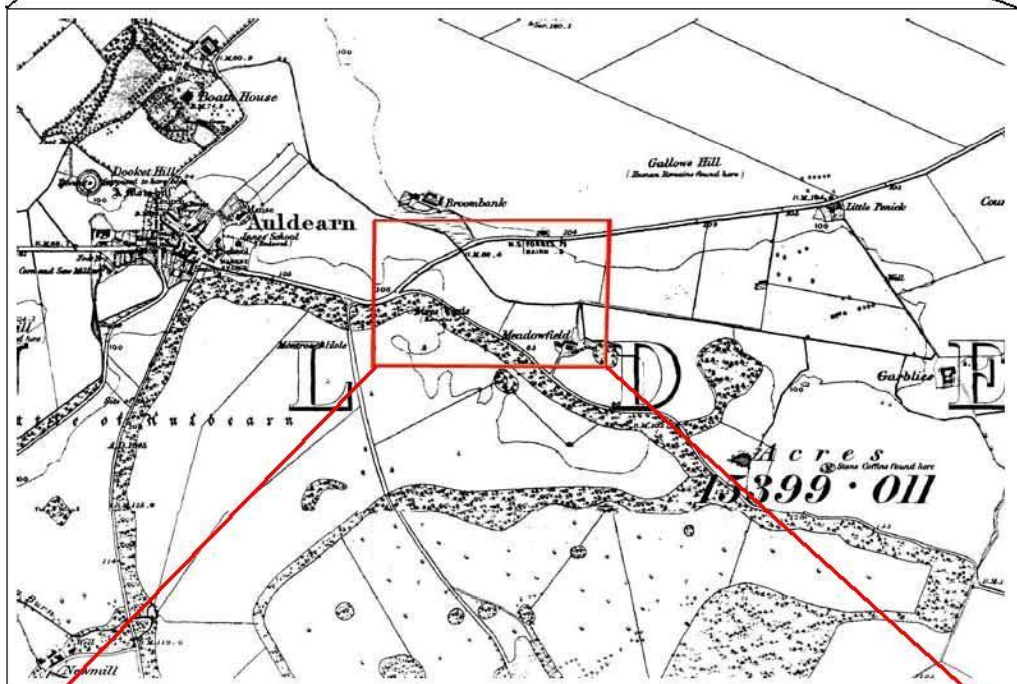
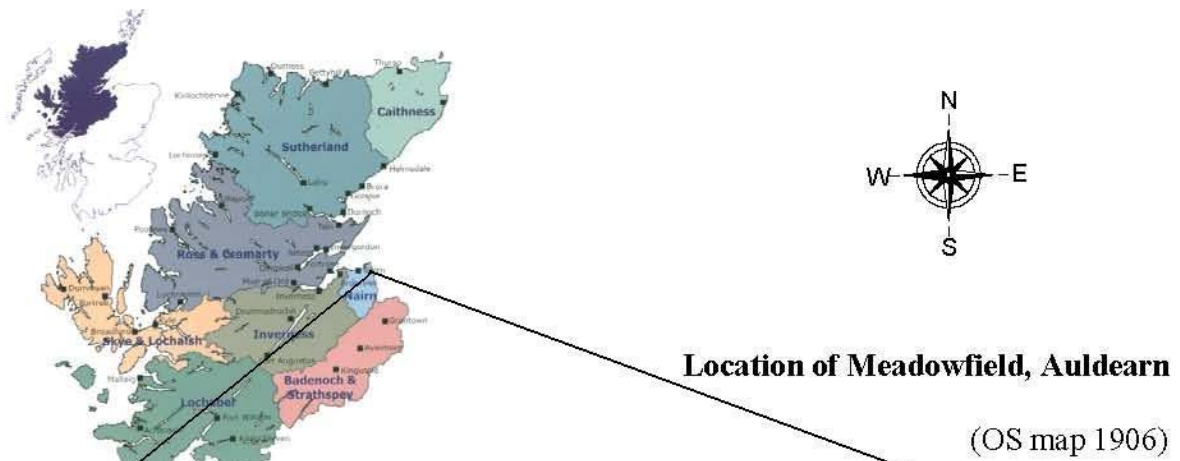
An Archaeological Evaluation, including desktop survey, walkover survey and trial trenching, was conducted on the house building plot number 2 at Meadowfield, Auldearn in an area with known archaeological remains - **no archaeological features that would be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development were discovered and no further archaeological investigation is considered to be necessary.**

Background

This house plot is one of five on farm land at Blackpark, Auldearn (centred on NH 92685530). Conditional Planning consent was originally granted to the land owner, Mr Macintosh of Auldearn, in December 2005 providing that trees were planted in the northern part of the plot to screen the development from the adjacent A97 Trunk Road. The Highland Council Archaeology Unit (HCAU) considered that the project may have impacted on features of historic and archaeological importance and specified an Archaeological Evaluation including trial trenching (brief dated 18.10.05, no reference number). Dr H. Robinson of Highland Heritage Archaeological Consultancy was contracted for the Archaeological Evaluation (completed 7.12.2005) and no archaeological features that would be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development were discovered.

The southern area of the plot where the five houses are to be built was not part of this previous brief although the plot owners were aware that they would probably have similar planning restraints and it was suggested that they contact me if or when they received planning briefs: this was done on 21.03.2006 by Mr Torrance (plot 4) and Mr Mackintosh (plot 1) who proposed that all five plots could be assessed together and the costs could be split between the five owners. This proposal was acceptable to me and was agreed by Mr David Hodgson of the HCAU on 7.04.2006 that all five plots were to have a 10% sample trenching: this was done on 25.04.2006.

The area covered by this assessment is Plot 2 identified on plan 1 (page 2, also showing the area of the previous assessment) and it was clearly marked out on the ground by posts. It is a roughly rectangular plot approximately 20 m east-west and a maximum of 30 m north-south, covering about 600 sq m. The plot is one of five in an area that slopes gently from Moyness Road in the south down towards the fenced burn to the north; and slopes from the highest point in the west, where the soil is very sandy, down to the field bottom in the east. The field is rough grazing and has not been ploughed in living memory. It is well drained except for an area by the east boundary.



Plan 1: Location of house plots 1-5 showing extent of area surveyed.

Archaeological Evaluation, House Plot 2, Meadowfield, Auldearn

The application area lies to the east of the historic settlement of Auldearn. From the number of known sites (surviving above ground or reported from aerial photographs and finds discoveries) it appears that the area was heavily occupied in the prehistoric periods. A number of the sites are deemed to be of national importance. A stone circle, probably a ritual site of the Bronze Age, survives a little to the south of the application area. This is one of a number of important prehistoric sites that lie to the east of Auldearn and it has been suggested that they may have been located as part of a wider “ritual landscape” and located around a cursus monument that would date to the Neolithic period. However, many of the archaeological sites that once lay in the area may have been truncated by later agriculture and other practices and it is not possible to predict their location, extent and survival.

Archaeological recording was therefore needed because of the potential for finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest to be discovered and damaged during site works, ensuring that they can be preserved or recorded before destruction with the minimum delay or disruption to the development. It included an initial Desk-based Assessment, followed by a walkover survey and then a sample excavation of 10% of the development area.

Desk-based Assessment

A check of the relevant archaeological and historical records, maps and aerial photographs was undertaken, including:

- The Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).
- The National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS)
- Historic Scotland’s databases of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and monuments proposed for scheduling.
- The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland (1988).
- Relevant Local and Structure Plans.
- Vertical and stereo aerial photographic coverage held by RCAHMS and the Highland Council Archaeology Unit.
- Ordnance Survey map coverage from 1850 onwards, and any other readily available early cartographic sources held at the National Library of Scotland Map Library.
- Bibliographic references and early parish accounts.
- The Highland Council Archives

Archaeological Evaluation, House Plot 2, Meadowfield, Auldearn

Summary of Desk-based Assessment

There are no Scheduled or listed monuments in the near vicinity of the development site: the Gazetteer of sites (Appendix I) details the following five sites in the area:

1 - Auldearn - Possible Stone Circle or Clava Ring-Cairn : Neolithic (4000-2400 BC);

SMR no. NH95NW0002 - NMRS no. NH95NW 2 - NGR: NH 9247 5530

2 - Meadowfield - Plantation Banks

SMR no. NH95NW0032 - NMRS no. NH95NW 36 - NGR: NH 9270 5514

3 - Broombank - Residential House

SMR no. NH95NW0055 - NMRS no. NH95NW 43 - NGR: NH 92490 55564

4 - Meadowfield - Farm Buildings/ Farmhouse; Farmstead

SMR no. NH95NW0063 - NMRS no. NH95NW 49 - NGR: NH 9283 5521

5 - Kinstearny - Possible Barrow

NMRS no. NH95NW 63 - NGR: NH 9242 5544

Of these, sites 1 & 5 are of particular relevance to the assessment of the potential for sub-surface remains in the development area. Little now remains of the Possible Stone Circle or Clava Ring-Cairn (site 1). The possible Barrow is shown on aerial photographs across the road to the west of the site, 130m NW of Kinstearny: it is roughly circular in shape, about 10 m diameter, with an indeterminate mark visible in the interior that may represent a burial pit.

Walkover survey

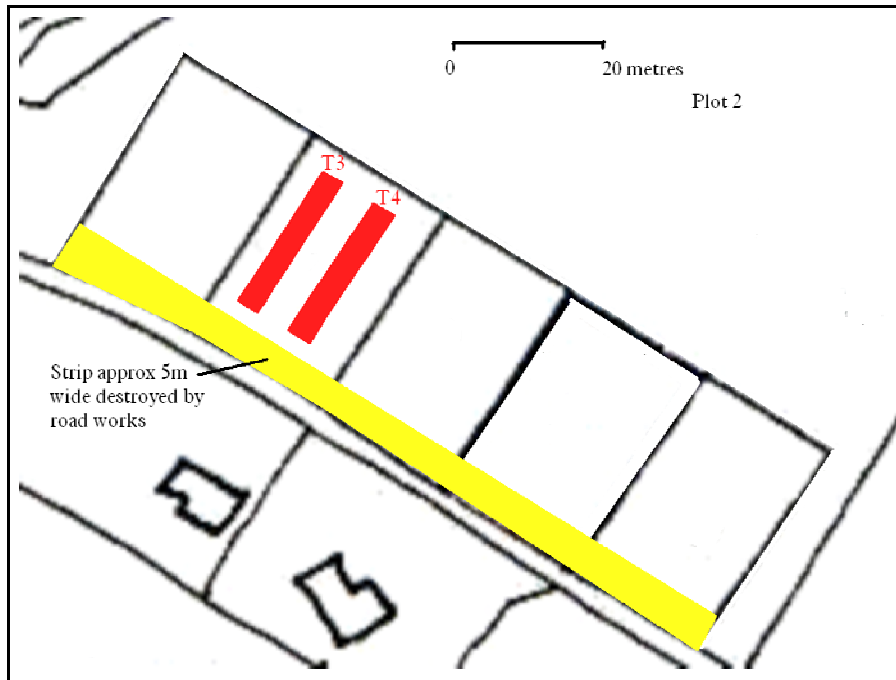
A field reconnaissance survey was conducted to assess the presence or absence, character, extent and condition of sites, monuments and landscape features identified by the desk-based assessment: it did not identify any further features of cultural heritage interest not detected from the desk study.

Trial Trenching

Before work began on trenching I found that a related project to upgrade Moyness Road by the contractors JOB was nearing completion and had encroached into the area of the plots which extend to the road (plan 2 page 5, photo 1 page 6). Although no actual construction was involved, they had dug a 5 m wide access trench through each plot and laid a water pipe. I was able to gain access to most of this trench and observed no archaeological remains in the section or the spoil heap: the trench had been filled in and the area levelled by the end of the day. I spoke to the JOB Site Supervisor who informed me that he was unaware of any planning constraints in this area. As the work near completion there was little that could be done other than inform him that it would be included in my report. While my inspection can be classed as a belated watching brief, the area involved was not included in the calculations for the actual sampling scheme.

Archaeological Evaluation, House Plot 2, Meadowfield, Auldearn

The trenching scheme was designed to provide a sample of at least 10% of each house plot, to cover the whole development area and target potential archaeological features - beginning and concentrating in the west closest to the cropmark site noted above. The trenches were marked off and stripped of topsoil and overburden under the direction of the Dr H. Robinson. Work began at 8 am on a bright and dry day ideal for archaeology. A JCB with back acting straight edged bucket was provided by the plot owners, and the driver proved to be very skilled and efficient. Ten linear trenches were cut, two in each house plot (photo 2): The location of trenches T3 and T4, each 20.0 m long and 1.5 m wide, are marked on site plan 2 below: these total 60 sq m which is a 10% sample of the total plot area of 600 sq m.



Plan 2
Location of trenches
T3 and T3 in Plot 2

Results of Trial Trenching

No objects (no worked flint or pottery other than several modern china sherds) or features (no charcoal traces or soil markings) of a historical or archaeological nature were found.

Conclusion

From the number of known sites around the historic settlement of Auldearn it appears that the area was heavily occupied in the prehistoric periods and the area of this development to the east of Auldearn has been suggested was part of a wider “ritual landscape” located around a cursus monument dating to the Neolithic period. Many of the archaeological sites that once lay in this area may have been truncated by agriculture and other practices and it is not possible to predict their location, extent and survival. In this evaluation no archaeological features that would be damaged or destroyed by the development were discovered and no further archaeological investigation is



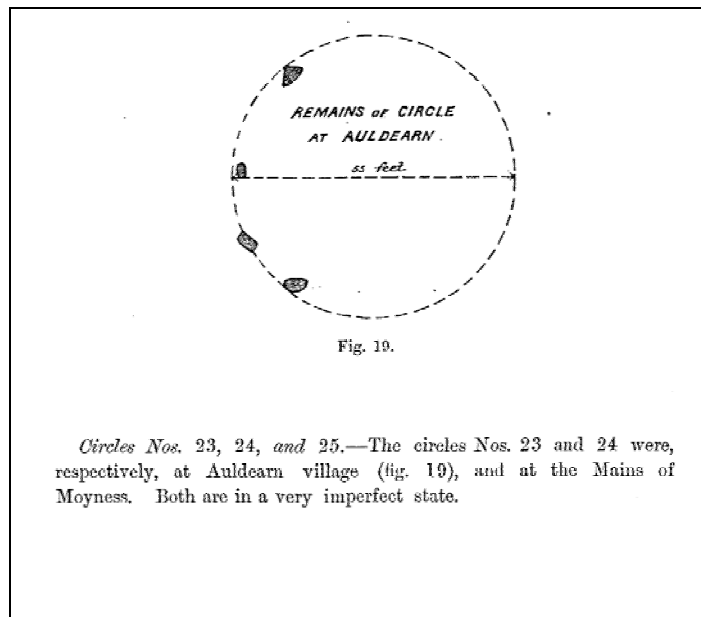
Photograph 1
Access road through plot 2
looking east



Photograph 2
Digging Trench T4

Appendix I : Gazetteer of Sites, Bibliography and summary of Aerial Photographs

1 - Auldearn - Stone Circle (Possible); Ring-Cairn (Possible) : Neolithic (4000-2400 BC);
SMR no. NH95NW0002 - NMRS no. NH95NW 2 - NGR: NH 9247 5530



Stone Circle (Remains of) marked on 1st and 2nd edition OS maps (1871 & 1906), the northern part in the belt planting and the southern portion in open field - HAW 2/2003.

This site was included by Fraser (1884, 352, no. 23 fig 19) in his list of Clava-type cairns, but there is now nothing to indicate whether the remaining stones are the remnants of a kerb or part of a stone circle. There were formerly four stones, set in a diameter of roughly 55 ft but the southernmost (not the northernmost, as stated by Henshall after her visit in 1957) has disappeared (Henshall 1963, 387). The north stone is 3 ft 3 inch high, the centre stone is almost

flush with the ground, and the south stone is 2 ft 3 inch high. The stones are conglomerate sandstone. Re- surveyed at 1/2500 by OS 1965. Three stones set in a private garden are all that remains of what may have been a Clava cairn (RCAHMS visit 1978).

2 - Meadowfield - Plantation Banks

SMR no. NH95NW0032 - NMRS no. NH95NW 36 - NGR: NH 9270 5514

Two features are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1871, Nairnshire sheet II) which were identified as Plantation Banks and not of archaeological origin (G M Walsh 1994). This plantation bank is situated 150 m WSW of Meadowfield farmsteading (NH95NW 49). It is oval in shape and measures about 60-65m NW-SE by 45m transversely. Immediately to the NE a linear cropmark of a second plantation bank is visible. It encloses an area 35-40 m wide and at least 700 m long following a road SE of Auldearn (RCAHMS 1999).

NMRS Archive no. MS/712/17 - from Aberdeenshire Archaeological Service (formerly Grampian Regional Council): air photographs AAS/96/05/G15/7-9. (Bound typescript A4) catalogue of photographs aerial reconnaissance, 1996.

3 - Broombank - Residential House

SMR no. NH95NW0055 - NMRS no. NH95NW 43 - NGR: NH 92490 55564

NGR corrected to above from 1st ed OS map (1871). House to W of large range of outbuildings around court to E - HAW 2/2003.

4 - Meadowfield - Farm Buildings/ Farmhouse; Farmsteading

SMR no. NH95NW0063 - NMRS no. NH95NW 49 - NGR: NH 9283 5521

5 - Kinsteary - Barrow (Possible)

NMRS no. NH95NW 63 - NGR: NH 9242 5544

The cropmark of a possible barrow has been revealed by oblique aerial photography (RCAHMSAP 1995) 130m NW of Kinsteary Cottage at the E side of Auldearn. It is roughly

Appendix I : Gazetteer of Sites, Bibliography and summary of Aerial Photographs

circular in shape, measuring about 10 m diameter, with an indeterminate mark visible in the interior that may represent a burial pit (RCAHMS 1999).

Bibliography

Fraser, J (1884) 'Descriptive notes on the stone circles of Strathnairn and neighbourhood of Inverness', Proc Soc Antiq Scot, 18, 1883-4, 352
Henshall, A S (1963) The chambered tombs of Scotland, 1, Edinburgh
Archive no. NND 13/1 Plan. After Fraser (PSAS 18) Keiller Collection

Previous Surveys

Two archaeological surveys of the general area are recorded in the HCSMR, neither of which suggest any archaeological remains within the project area:

S. Farrell, 2002, ref 977, Memorial Survey: Auldearn War Memorial, 9.10.2002
C.Dagg, 2003, ref 1061, Walkover Survey Auldearn and Geddes, Urchany Water mains rehabilitation, 5.3.2003

Aerial photographs (Archive number, Caption & Date of Original)

Meadowfield - Plantation Banks - SMR no. NH95NW0032 - NMRS no. NH95NW 36

B 92002 PO Aerial photograph 1978
B 92003 PO Aerial photograph 1978

oblique aerial views of the cropmark :

C 53633	from the NNE, centred on the cropmarks of two plantation banks 10.8.1995.
C 53634	from the NW, centred on the cropmarks of two plantation banks 10.8.1995.
C 53635	from the W, centred on the cropmarks of two plantation banks 10.8.1995. Meadowfield farm is visible in the top centre half of the photograph.
C 53636	from the SSW, centred on the cropmarks of two plantation banks 10.8.1995.
C 53637	from the SE, centred on the cropmarks of two plantation banks 10.8.1995.
C 72888	from the SE, centred on the cropmarks of a plantation bank 16.07.1996.
C 72889	
C 72890	from the N, centred on the cropmarks of a plantation bank 16.07.1996.
C 72891	from the NW, centred on the cropmarks of a plantation bank 16.07.1996

Kinstearry - Barrow (Possible) - NMRS no. NH95NW 63 - NGR: NH 9242 5544
oblique aerial views of the cropmark of a possible barrow:

C 53639	from the NE, centred on the cropmark 10.8.1995.
C 53638	from the SE, centred on the cropmark 10.8.1995.
C 53640	from the N, centred on the cropmark 10.8.1995.

MR + MRS A. Williamson

Brief for archaeological work at:

Plot 2 Moyness Road, Auldearn, Nairn
(05/00147/FULNA)

WATCHING BRIEF

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE**

Archaeology Unit

DOROTHY MAXWELL MCA

KIRSTY CAMERON

HILARY WHITE

ANDREW PULS - SMR DEV OFFICER.

DAVID HODGSON - SMR ASS.

01463 702250

1) Background

The site lies within a Landscape rich in prehistoric remains. To the north aerial photography has identified the remains of a possible Barrow and to the west there is a standing stone arrangement that probably represents the remains of a cairn. Each of these features are generally associated with other features in the landscape some of which may survive below the top soil in the development area.

An archaeological watching brief is required at this site because there is a potential for finds or features of interest to be discovered during site works. A watching brief enables any discoveries to be recorded quickly and efficiently as they appear with minimum delay or disruption to the development.

2) Terms of Reference

This brief specifies what is considered to be the minimum acceptable standard of work; proposals that present a higher standard may be offered and accepted. It is assumed that this will form the basis of an agreed approach unless changes are agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Unit in writing before the start of any site works.

This brief has been produced for Mr A Williamson, who will be responsible for the work, including any tendering and contractual arrangements. It sets out in detail who is responsible for what, as well as the terms of reference, objectives, method, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The area to be covered by this assessment will be the entire development area: including any proposed services, access roads, works compounds, borrow pits or other ancillary works.

Where archaeological work fails to meet the standards set out here, the applicant will be in breach of any archaeological planning condition until matters are rectified. The Planning Authority reserves the right to refuse to accept work from, or otherwise take action against, archaeologists who fail to carry out work to these standards. The work will be carried out by, or under the immediate direction of, a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists to ensure that work is carried out to professional standards.

The Archaeology Unit can comment on tenders submitted in confidence. Tenders should be accompanied by a project design, statement and evidence of competence, including the CV of the Project Director.

The brief has been produced specifically for this scheme based on documents supplied at the time it was issued. It is valid for one year from the date of issue.

Before site works start, the proposed arrangements, including a timetable for the work should be agreed with the Highland Council Archaeology Unit in writing.

3) Objectives

To identify and record any features or objects of archaeological importance that could be damaged or destroyed by this development, while minimising any delays or disruption to the development project.

4) Method

a) Desk-based Assessment

A check of all relevant archaeological / historical records, maps and aerial photographs should be undertaken. At least the following sources should be checked:

- The Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). *Please note - the online SMR 'Am Baile' is not designed for use in development control or for constructing management policy of sites. In order to source the full SMR information required for such studies all consultants should approach the Highland Council Archaeology Unit directly.*
- The National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS)
- Vertical stereo aerial photographic coverage held by RCAHMS and the Highland Council Archaeology Unit.
- Ordnance Survey map coverage from 1850 onwards, and any other readily available early cartographic sources held at the National Library of Scotland Map Library.
- Bibliographic references and early parish accounts.

a) Watching Brief

A watching brief will be conducted by the Archaeological Contractor on all site ground-works, so that any finds or features of importance can be recorded to professional standards. The Archaeological Contractor will endeavour wherever possible to work with the contractor to ensure that any recording required is done with minimum delay to the site works.

Important Note for architects, builders and site contractors

Those carrying out site clearance and excavation works will need to work closely with the archaeologist and provide all necessary access and other arrangements. They may need to use differing work practices on site than usual to enable the archaeologist to complete the work. For example:

- Where excavating machinery is used, a straight-edged bucket must be used on a back-acting machine. Care will need to be taken to avoid over excavation, and the advice of the archaeologist on-site should be adhered to on this.
- Archaeologists may need to get quickly into recently cleared areas and this may mean that drivers of excavators may sometimes need to wait briefly, or switch to working other areas.
- Each excavating machine needs to be watched by at least one archaeologist at all times (1:1 ratio). Work should not begin on site until this cover has been set up.
- Because the archaeologist must be able to record any archaeological remains encountered during the work to professional standards, site clearance works may take slightly longer than normal. This should be allowed for in the development project timetable. Occasionally, more extensive excavation may be needed since there will be limited opportunities to preserve features *in situ*. If discoveries are made that would cause significant delays, see paragraph 5 below.
- Human remains must be immediately reported to the local police and to the Highland Council Archaeology Unit and should not be excavated as part of this work.

Once areas have been cleared, and any archaeology recorded, there should be no need for further archaeological work in these areas.

5) Report

A report must be produced which sets out the results of the work and makes recommendations for any required further work.

The Council will assume author's copyright unless advised otherwise. However, HCAU reserves the right to make the report available for reference and research purposes, either on paper, or electronically. The completed report will be made available for immediate public consultation for research purposes at the Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record, and through the public library service. The Archaeology Unit will acknowledge copyright in all cases.

a) Content

The report must include as a minimum:

- Location plan (bound into the report) showing the project area; area of watching brief; and relevant archaeological sites and features in the vicinity. The location plan must also show the position of features identified during the work.
- A detailed site background, including reference to previous work conducted in the wider area on similar developments and the results of such work.
- The circumstances and objectives of this work.
- An analysis of the project results drawing in comparative data; a statement regarding the potential for, and survival of, buried prehistoric sites in this area; and a statement of the significance of the results as per the Burra Charter.
- Scale plans, sections and photographs of all significant archaeological features noted.
- A full index to any records or other material generated by the project including the archive location.
- A list of finds, as appropriate, set out in the required format for Treasure Trove reporting.
- Details of the sampling and finds retention policies and their justification.
- A copy of this Specification for the required work, presented as an Appendix.
- Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork.
- Proposals for presenting the results of the work to the local community where appropriate.

b) Distribution

The archaeologist appointed is responsible for making sure copies of the report have been received by the recipients listed below. The archaeologist appointed should allow for all costs when estimating for the work. We require archaeologists to submit satisfactory reports within the agreed deadline.

Apart from any copies required by the client, at least four copies of the project report must be produced by the archaeologist. These must be submitted to all of the following within 4 weeks of the completion of the field work.

- One paper copy for the Council's Area Planning and Building Standards Manager, Highland Council, 88 High Street, Nairn, IV12 4AU
- One paper copy to be deposited with the Council's Senior Librarian Information Co-ordinator, Libraries Support Unit, 31a Harbour Road, Inverness IV1 1UA. This will be available for public consultation through the public library service.
- One paper copy to be deposited with the Council's Assistant Curator (Archaeology), Museum & Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness IV2 3EB (*This copy will only be required if there are finds*).
- One digital copy for the Archaeology Unit, Planning and Development Service, Council Offices, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX : The report should be supplied by email or on a computer disc as a *pdf* file. Please ensure that all drawings and photographs are included.

c) Other Products of the Work

Where significant archaeology has been found, the archaeologist must arrange a presentation of the project results, to the local community within a year of the completion of the fieldwork. This is the responsibility of the Archaeological Contractor, and will not be funded by the Highland Council.

A brief summary of the results must be sent to the Council for Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*.

6) Monitoring

The archaeologist appointed is responsible for agreeing arrangements for monitoring with Archaeology Unit staff. We will monitor projects as necessary to ensure that minimum standards are met.

Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates - with contact names, telephone numbers and arrangements for access - must be given to the HC Archaeology Unit by the archaeological contractor.

Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or other unexpected occurrences which might significantly affect the archaeological work and /or the development must be notified by the archaeologist immediately to the applicant and the Senior Archaeologist. The finds or features must be left *in situ* until arrangements have been agreed for safeguarding or recording them. In the meantime work may continue on other areas of the site.

7) Finds

Chance finds can be made during any archaeological fieldwork. Archaeologists should note that advice and facilities for emergency conservation and temporary storage can be offered by Inverness Museum. All finds should be notified for Treasure Trove.

8) Insurance

The archaeologist appointed must take all necessary measures to conform with the Health and Safety at Work Acts and be covered by all necessary insurance. Section 24 of the Highland Council's revised Contracts Standing Orders states:

"All specifications issued by and contracts entered into with the Council in connection with the carrying out of work or the provision of services shall provide that the contractor holds a valid insurance policy, approved by the Council, for:-

1. Employers liability - minimum limit - £10m (statutory limit)
2. Public liability - minimum limit £5m."

9) General

The archaeologist agrees by undertaking this work to the terms of this brief, including the following:

The archaeologist appointed must:

- carry out the work according to the Code of Conduct, standards and guidance of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- agree a timetable for the work with the client and the HIC Archaeology Unit.
- not comment to the press or other media without prior approval from the applicant and HIC Archaeology Unit.

This brief has been produced by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit, to whom any enquiries should be addressed. No one else has authority to vary its terms.

*Highland Council Archaeology Unit
Tuesday, 6 December 2005*