

350/INV

Balloan Fields Healthcare Village

Archaeological Watching Brief

Interim Report

Client: Manda Healthcare Limited

Graham Robins

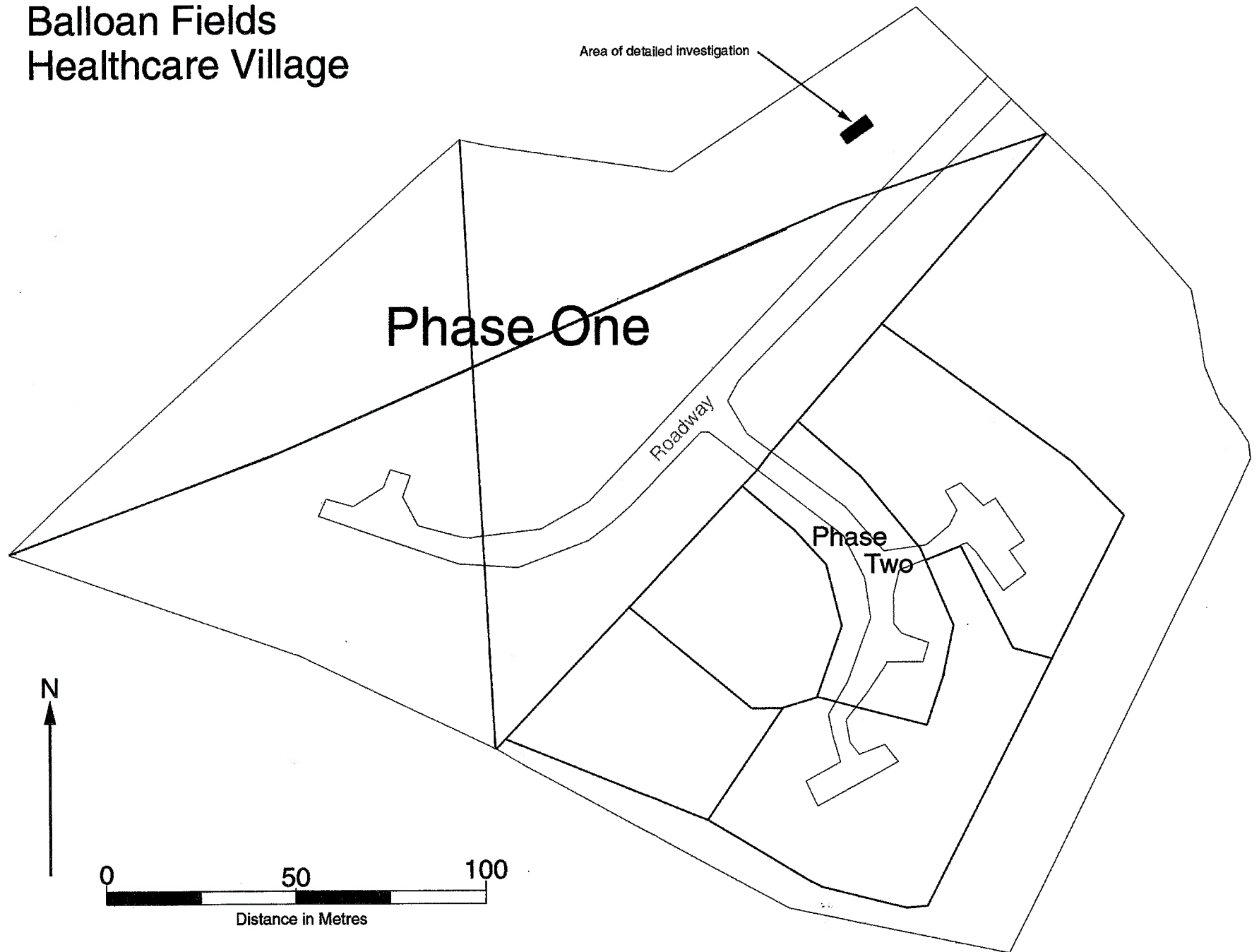
North Highland Archaeology

September, 1999

Figure 1: Location plan
Balloon Fields Healthcare Village



Balloan Fields Healthcare Village



Client: Manda Healthcare Limited, 68 - 70 Fairfield Road, Inverness, IV3 5QP
Archaeologist: North Highland Archaeology, White Lodge, Kildary, Invergordon, IV18 0PD
Site Contractor: GF Job Ltd, Wester Milton, Moyness, Nairn

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was required by the Highland Council's Archaeology Unit on the groundworks associated with the development of a greenfield site at Balloan Fields, Inverness, (NGR NH 669 426); planning application IN/97/876. This is an interim report, requested by the developer, covering work conducted between 26th April, 1999 and 7th May, 1999 (Phase One and Phase Two of the development schedule). One feature of possible archaeological significance was identified and investigated.

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The known archaeology in this area consists of a crop-mark site, which lies immediately to the north-east of the development. This site is a scheduled ancient monument and has been investigated archaeologically on a previous occasion. The area was fenced according to the requirements of the planning consent notice, paragraph 16 (dated 16th November, 1998). Full details of this site will be included in the final report, to be compiled on completion of this watching brief. The purpose of this report is to detail work carried out to date, which due to the long duration of this project would not be available for some time.

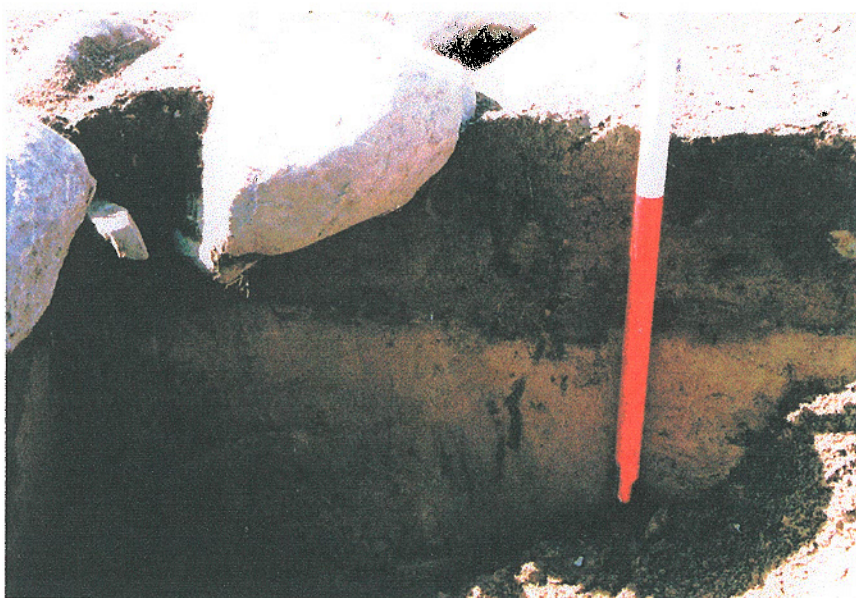
Fieldwork

Fieldwork was begun on 26th April 1999 and continued through until 7th May, 1999. Groundworks for phases one and two of the development schedule were completed during this time (see Fig 2). Weather conditions were dry and well suited to clean soil-stripping. Soil-stripping operations were conducted by a tracked excavator using a 1.5 metre wide, flat-lipped bucket. The excavated top-soil was removed by a wheeled dumper and used to construct a bank.



The average depth of top-soil across the site was 0.5 metres. The boundary between the top-soil and the underlying sub-soil was usually clear, the latter consisting of a mixed sand and gravel of fluvio-glacial origin. In places the sub-soil was more clayey and the boundary with the top-soil was less distinct.

One feature of possible archaeological significance was investigated. It appeared as an rough line of 15 to 20 large, irregularly shaped stones, c.0.4 metres diameter, covering an area measuring approximately 5 metres by 2 metres. The stones were lying in the horizon between the active plough soil and the underlying sub-soil, which here was clayey and indistinct. An area measuring 8 metres by 4 metres was cleaned by hand and the pattern of stones exposed. A quarter section was removed in the north-west corner to examine the nature and extent of this possible feature. The section revealed that these were randomly located stones, lying in a slight hollow. This has most likely occurred as the result of repeated ploughing moving these stones until they collect in this softer, hollow area, where they remain at the interface between the active plough horizon and the underlying sub-soil. There was nothing to indicate that this was a man-made structure of archaeological significance.



North-facing section, showing large stones lying in clay above compacted sand

No other features of archaeological significance were noted.

This report will be included within a final report, which will be produced on the completion of phases 3, 4, 5 and 6. The final report will include all the necessary information to comply with the minimum standard of reporting required by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit.