

Site Code: AFD 10
 Client: Mr E Fraser

Achtuie Farm, Drumnadrochit

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Non-Technical Summary

Alba Archaeology (Highland) Ltd was commissioned by Mr E Fraser in July 2010 to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Achtuie, Drumnadrochit, Inverness-shire (NH 52190 31250) as part of a project for a new house and garage with associated access and services. Highland Council Archaeology Unit produced a specification for this work.

The work revealed no archaeological features or deposits and no recommendations for further archaeological work are proposed.

1. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Alba Archaeology (Highland) Ltd on behalf of Mr E Fraser in regard to a condition of planning as required as part of a planning application. The development site is a 'greenfield' site located at Achtuie by Drumnadrochit, Inverness-shire, Highland. The proposed development is close to an archaeological site, of a cup-marked stone and a building (see below).

The work was required as part of planning condition no.4 by Highland Council Planning Department (ref. 08/00691/FULIN), which stated the following:

Prior to the commencement of development, arrangements for an archaeological watching brief to be carried out on site clearance works, in accordance with the attached specification, shall be submitted to and require the approval in writing of the Planning Authority. No site clearance or excavation works shall take place until that approval has been given and all such works shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved arrangements.

Reason: To protect the historic interest of the site.

A specification for the work was supplied to the client by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit (see Appendix 1).

2. BACKGROUND

The site is located north of the existing public road A82, close to Drumnadrochit. Access to the site is gained from a track off the access road to Wester Achtuie Farm to the west of the development site. The development site is a 'greenfield' site within an area of rough arable pasture. An archaeological site of a cup-marked stone lies to the northwest of the development area.

The following archaeological sites are located in the vicinity of the development site:

1 – Wester Achtuie

HC HER – MHG 3313

NMRS – NH53SW 3

Grid Ref – NH 52172 31330

Classification – Cup-marked stone

There is an extensive area of cup-markings on the naturally polished east end of a glaciated ridge of sandstone, on the moor, just beyond the dike between Easter and Wester Achtuie. The ridge runs E.N.E. and is covered with stunted heather. It is impossible to say how many cup-marks there are, as some are covered by turf, but the author has traced 88 varying in size from 1" to 3" in diameter, and in depth from a barely roughened surface to 1 1/8" The cup-marked surfaces lie in a rough line NE- SW and about 40 yards long.

A Grant 1888.

In the area centred at NH 521312, on a piece of outcropping rock, three cup-marks about 2" across by 1/2" deep can be seen. As the greater part of the ridge is now grass and heather covered, no other cup marks were found and there is no local knowledge of any such markings.

Visited by OS 4 December 1964.

Two smooth sheets of bedrock immediately to the NE of the enclosed fields around Wester Achtuie bear thirteen cup-markings between them, each measuring about 70mm across and 10mm in depth. Visited by RCAHMS 1 September 1997.'

2 – Wester Achtuie

HC HER – MHG 47334

NMRS – NH53SW 51

Grid Ref – NH 52150 31329

Classification – Building

A rectangular building lies to the NNE of Wester Achtuie, abutting a ruinous drystone wall. It measures 11.5m from ESE to WNW by 3.5m transversely within a faced rubble wall 1m in thickness and 0.4m in height.

Visited by RCAHMS 1 September 1997.

In the wider area there is recorded a burnt mound and a number of field systems of unknown date. No past archaeological work has been conducted to the area of development or in the immediate vicinity.

A survey of maps held in the National Library of Scotland indicates that the development site is indicated on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 as an area of rough ground. The same is shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905.

3. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological watching brief took place on the site on the 26th of July 2010. Weather during the work was slightly overcast with showers. Work on the house and garage plot was excavated using a 6-tonne tracked back-acting machine with a 1.8m wide straight-edged bucket. Supervision was conducted on areas where any new sub-surface ground works were to be carried out i.e. house plot , garage and access road (services - water supply and electricity to be from existing supply on opposite side of road and were not monitored) Topsoil was removed to an maximum depth of 25cm across the site.

The site lies on a southwest facing slope, of rough arable pasture. There were no upstanding features on the site.

4. RESULTS

A total area of 323m² was stripped of topsoil on average 25cm in depth across the site for the house plot to an area roughly 18m NE-SW by 19m NW-SE. The topsoil and subsoil consisted of a loose light brown soil, heavy with roots from bracken and some gorse. It lay on top of a loose soft yellow-brown sandy silt natural with patches of angular gravel, though to the West the natural was more of an orange-brown sand with patches of gravel. Overall a large number of outcrops of yellow sandstone and boulders of sandstone and granite were revealed. No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered on the site.

5. DISCUSSION

The archaeological watching brief conducted on this site revealed no archaeological features or deposits. The map and documentary evidence available indicate that the development site has previously been an area of rough pasture. Although a cup-marked rock is to be found in the vicinity of the development site there was no indication of it being an area of archaeological activity.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no further archaeological work recommended for this site as comprehensive monitoring work has taken place and no archaeological deposits or features were identified. The desk based assessment has also been carried out by the author and although there is recorded archaeology in the vicinity of the development site (cup-marked stone and a building); no associated features were identified within the development site.

7. REFERENCES

Highland Council HER entries MHG 3313, 47334

RCAHMS CANMORE database (National Monuments Record of Scotland) entries NH53SW 3 and 51.

Maps Consulted

1st Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:10,560 Inverness-shire sheet 29 surveyed 1870-1 published 1875.

2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:10,560 Inverness-shire sheet 29 published 1905.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alba Archaeology (Highland) Ltd would like to thank the following for their help during the work:

- Mr E Fraser;
- Staff of Gregory's Contractors for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit;
- Staff of Highland Council Archives.

9. ARCHIVE

The following is to be deposited in the National Monuments Record in Edinburgh:

- Notebook of results
- Copy of this report

A set of digital images showing the progress of the work has been deposited with Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record. Digital images used in this report have been deposited with HSMR on disc as well as a copy of this report as a PDF file.

10. DISCOVERY & EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND

A short summary of the results of this project will be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

Figure 1 – Site Location. 1:25000

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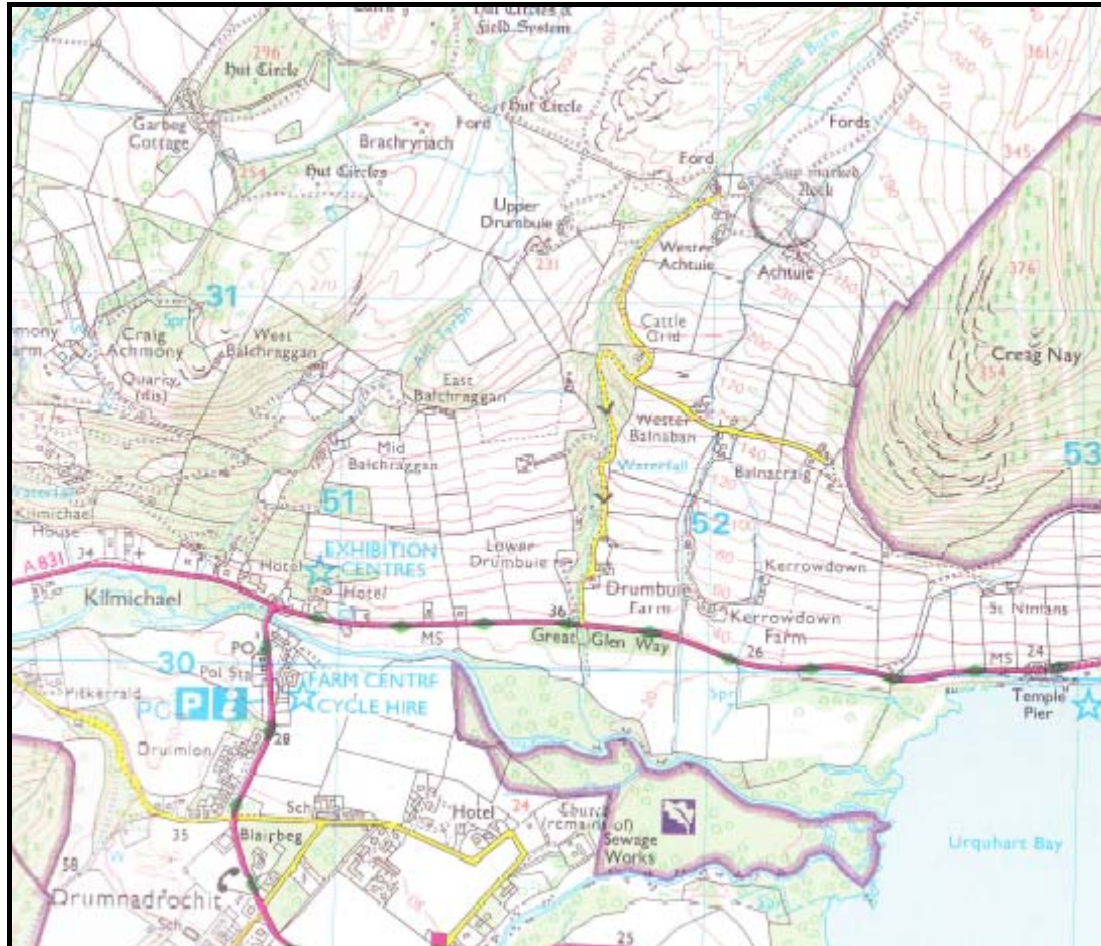


Figure 2 – Site Location (2) 1:2500

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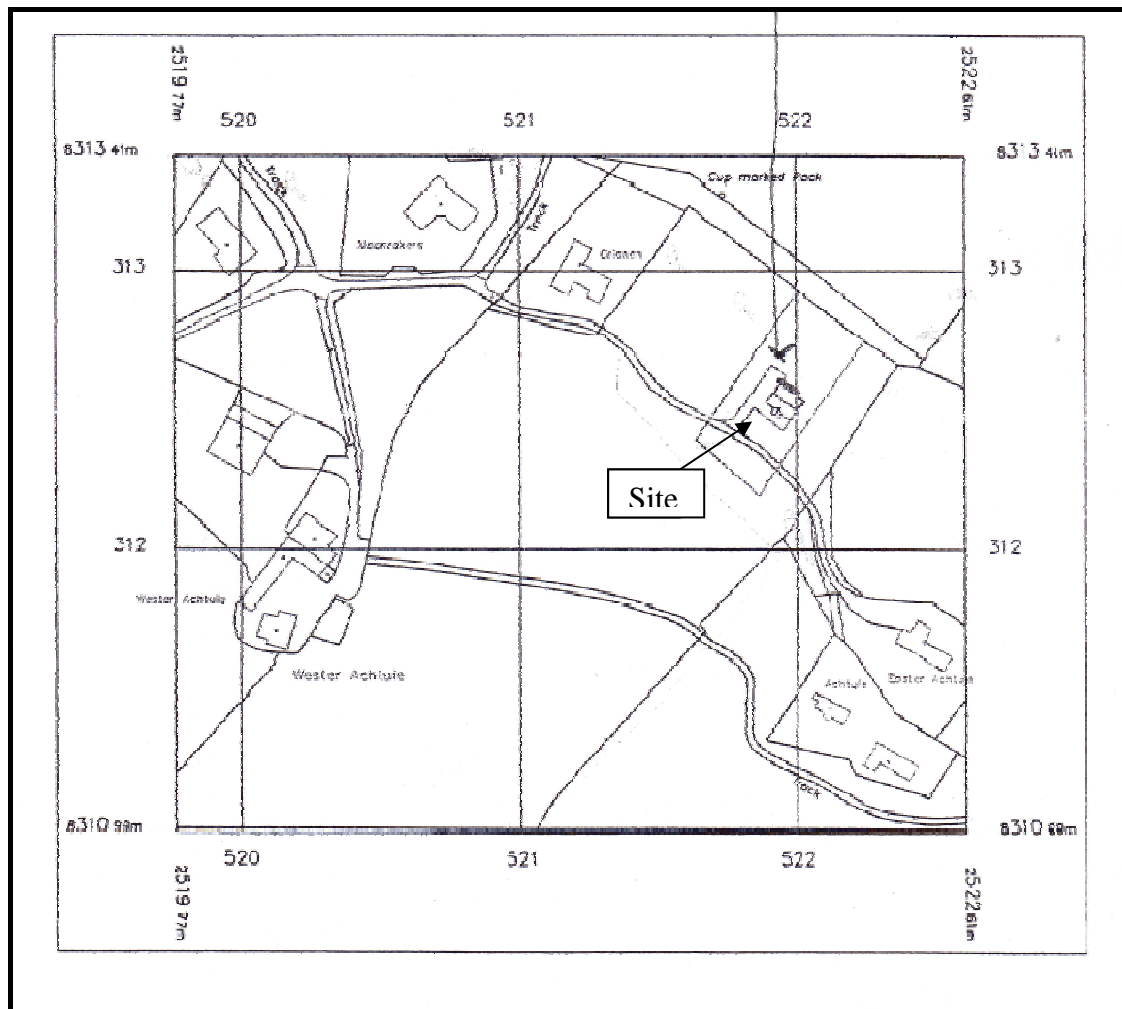


Figure 3 –Area of Watching Brief 1:500.

© D Fraser Drawing Services.

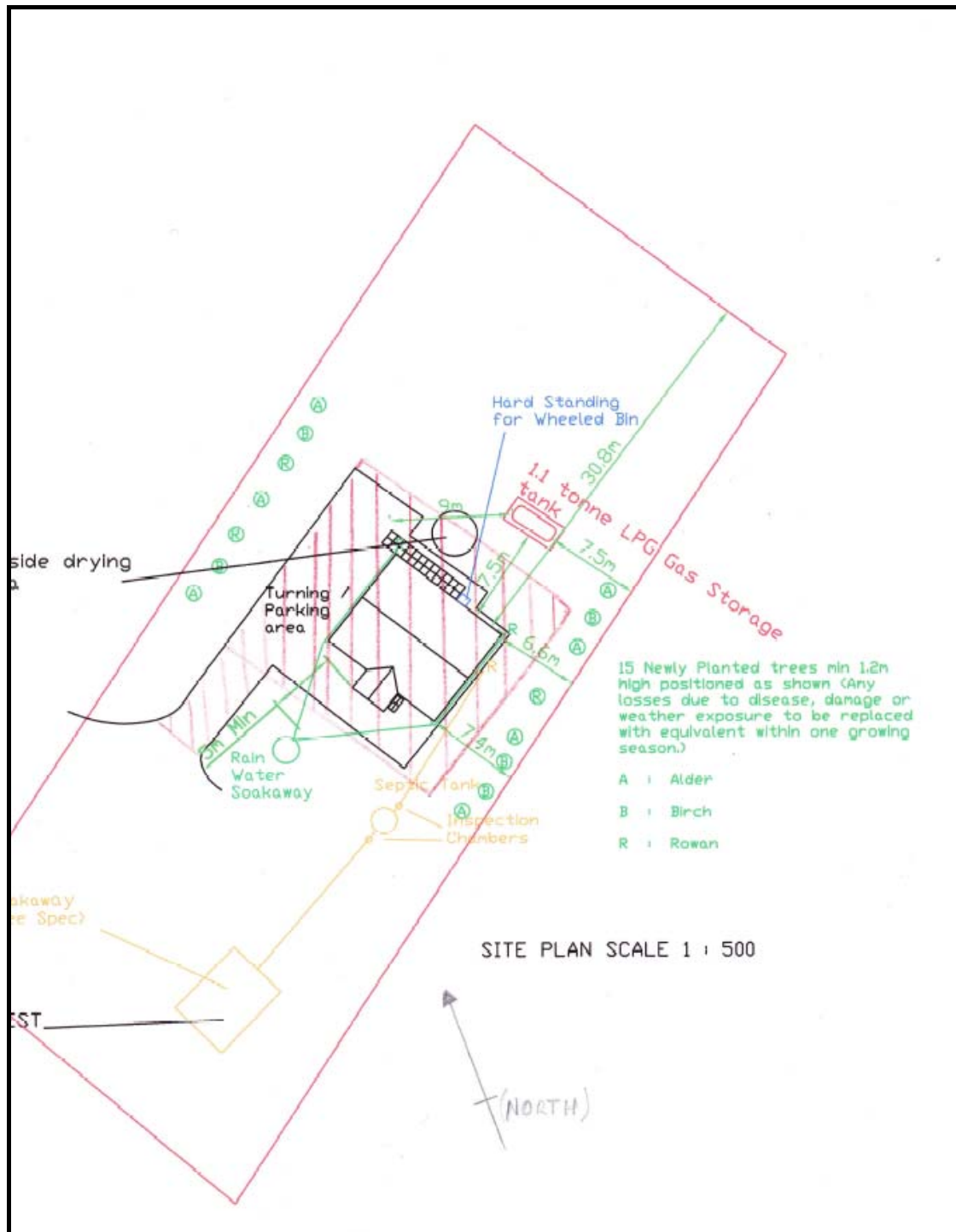


Figure 4 – 1st edition OS of 1875

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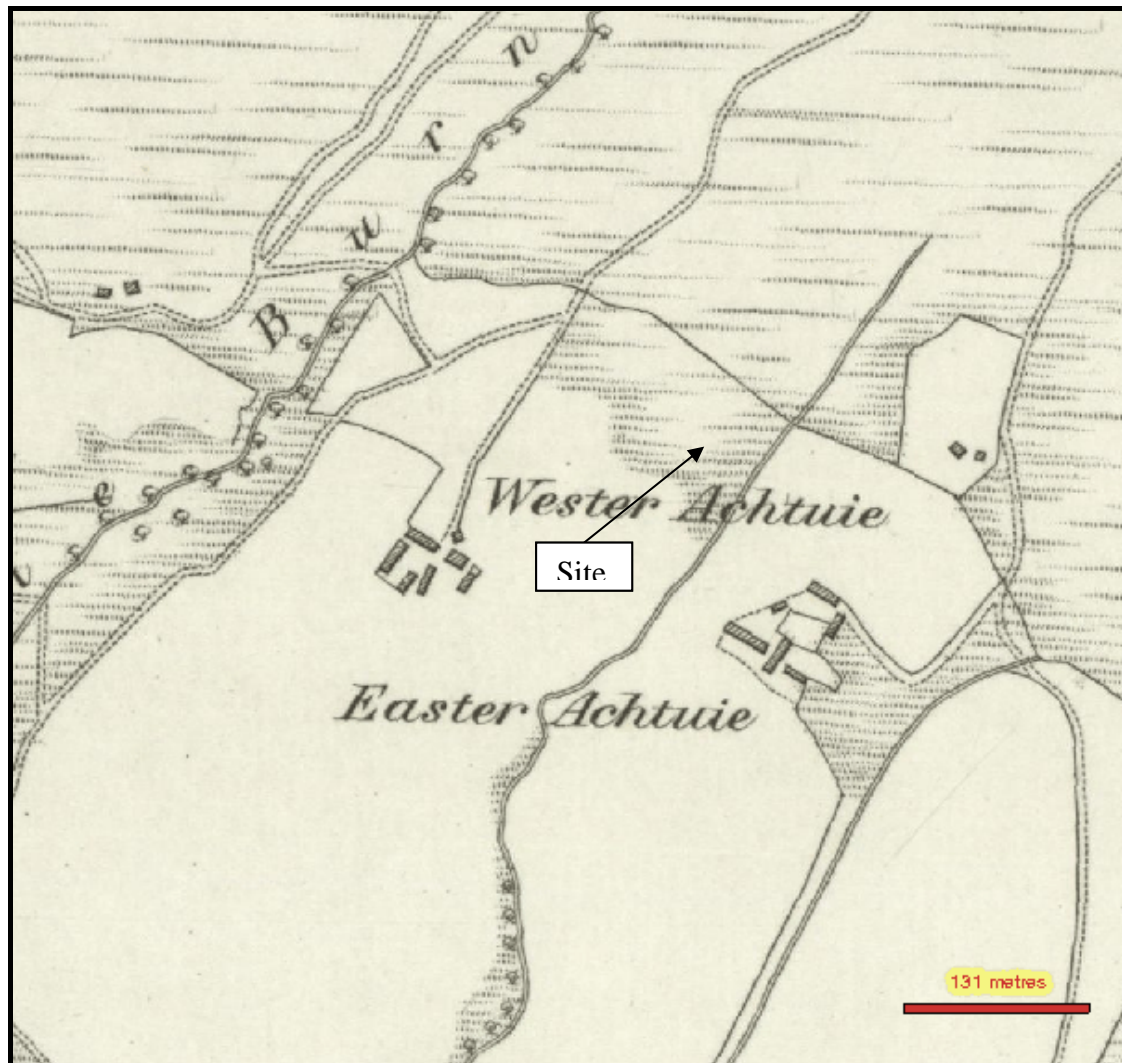


Plate 1 – View of house plot before excavation facing N.



Plate 2 – View of house plot before excavation facing W.



Plate 3 – View of house plot upon excavation facing N.



Plate 4 – View of house plot upon excavation facing W.



Appendix 1 – HCAU Specification



HIGHLAND COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICE SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

New House & Garage at Achtuie, Drumnadrochit
(IN-08-691) NGR 252150 831350

1) Summary

This project may impact on valuable features of historic and archaeological importance. In view of the archaeological potential/sensitivity of the site, HCAU advised that archaeological mitigation is required. The implementation of this brief will meet the concerns raised.

This brief is for a Watching Brief which will enable any discoveries to be recorded quickly and efficiently as they appear with minimum delay or disruption to the development. If significant deposits are encountered, recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development must be made.

This brief has been produced for Mr Ewen Fraser who will be responsible for the work and costs, including any tendering and contractual arrangements. This brief must be read with reference to the HCAU Development Guidance that sets out in detail who is responsible for what, as well as the terms of reference, objectives, method, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The Development Guidance is available on our webpage at www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/conservation/archaeology or a printed copy is available from this office on request.

2) Archaeological Background

The application site lies in a wider area where significant prehistoric remains have been identified. Specifically extensive prehistoric settlements and field systems lie to the north, north-west and north-east of the application site; a scheduled burnt mound lies to the west; and a cup-marked stone lies to the north. There is potential that unrecorded buried remains survive within the application site and will be impacted by the proposed development.

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) Methodology

All fieldwork must be informed by a desk-based assessment undertaken in advance of the start of works.

Fieldwork

Archaeological monitoring (a Watching Brief) is required during all site groundworks for this application. Topsoil stripping of the house and garage footprints, the access road and all services must be monitored by an

archaeologist so that any buried archaeological features can be identified, recorded and/or appropriate mitigation put in place to ensure their preservation.

All recovered artefacts and ecofacts must be subject to a programme of post-excavation analysis and the results incorporated into a final report.

The Archaeological Contractor must refer to the minimum standard requirements as laid out in HCAU Development Guidance. This brief itself is not comprehensive or definitive - tendering Archaeological Contractors will need to determine for themselves the methodology that will deliver the required product. This should be laid down in a Project Design (or Written Scheme of Investigation) and agreed with HCAU in advance of the start of site works. The start of archaeological work will be subject to the submission and approval of this document.

5) Schedule & Monitoring

The Archaeological Contractor is responsible for agreeing arrangements for monitoring with HCAU 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 HCAU by the Archaeological Contractor.

The Archaeological Contractor must make a short progress report (by telephone) to HCAU for every week of fieldwork undertaken. 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 Archaeological Contractor immediately to the applicant and HCAU. 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.

6) Products

Following completion of the fieldwork, an archive and report will be produced and disseminated according to the standards set out in the HCAU Development Guidance. The report should describe the nature of the field work undertaken; the conditions and limitations within which the work was carried-out; the results that were obtained and recommendations for mitigation and/or further work, as appropriate.

All work will be undertaken according to the Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

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. Where work is not carried out in full within that time, a revised specification may be issued.

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.

Appendix 2 – Photograph Register

- 1 – View of house plot prior to excavation facing N.
- 2 – View of house plot prior to excavation facing NE.
- 3 – View of house plot prior to excavation facing N.
- 4 – View of house plot prior to excavation facing W.
- 5 – View of house plot prior to excavation facing E.
- 6 – View of excavation in progress.
- 7 – View of excavation in progress.
- 8 – View of excavation in progress.
- 9 – View of excavation in progress.
- 10 - View of house plot upon excavation facing N.
- 11 – View of house plot upon excavation facing N.
- 12 – View of house plot upon excavation facing W.
- 13 – View of house plot upon excavation facing W.
- 14 – View of house plot upon excavation facing NW.
- 15 – View of house plot upon excavation facing W.
- 16 – View of house plot upon excavation facing N.
- 17 – View of access road upon excavation facing E.
