

CGE02

**A Proposed Housing Development
at 144-166 Cowgate, Edinburgh:**

Project Design for an Archaeological Evaluation

Client: Castle Rock Housing Association

7th October 2002

INTRODUCTION

Castle Rock Housing Association has applied for planning permission to build sheltered housing at the former Cowgate Nursery School. The site lies on the Cowgate frontage, at the foot of Old Fishmarket Close and measures 660 m² in area. The area proposed for development currently comprises the nursery school itself with associated play ground, an access road and off-street car parking.

The City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS), who are advising the Council as Local Planning Authority, has requested that an archaeological evaluation is undertaken on the site to establish whether there are any archaeological issues.

This project design is for a programme of work that will provide information that will allow a suitable mitigation strategy to be implemented and is based on discussions between Richard Murphy Architects, Headland Archaeology and CECAS.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within the historic core of medieval Edinburgh, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Cowgate, which lies at the bottom of the ridge on which the High Street stands appears to have been formally laid out in the 14th century, sometime after the High Street which was in existence by at least the 12th century. Initially, the boundary of the town ran mid-way down the slope but by the 16th century, settlement had expanded and a number of important people were residing in the Cowgate including the earls of Morton, the Abbots of Melrose, Archbishop James Beaton and Cardinal Beaton.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the evaluation is:

- to determine the location, extent, nature, condition and significance of any buried or upstanding archaeological features that lie within the proposed development area.

The results of the evaluation will be used to establish the impact of the proposed development on any surviving archaeological features (if present) and to devise an appropriate mitigation strategy.

METHODS

A survey of cartographic sources at the National Libraries of Scotland will be undertaken prior to the evaluation. A review of previous archaeological work in the area (Scandic Crown Hotel, Old Fishmarket Close, for example) will also be undertaken.

The area proposed for development will be evaluated in two phases and by means of a series of machine excavated trenches that will sample 7.5% of the total area (c 660m²). Phase 1 will be undertaken pre-demolition and will target the former play ground area and some covered areas if practical; Phase 2 will focus on the footprint of the nursery building after demolition and the access road and car parking which will be subject to a road closure.

A mini-excavator equipped with a flat blade toothless ditching bucket will be used to remove topsoil or modern overburden under direct archaeological control: a toothed bucket and/or breaker will be used to remove hard surfaces. The resulting surfaces will be hand cleaned if necessary and investigated for archaeological features or deposits. An appropriate sample of pits and post-holes will be 50% excavated by volume. Ditches will be sectioned as appropriate. Features not suited to excavation in narrow trenches will only be investigated in plan.

Bore-holes indicate that the natural sub-soil lies c 1.2m below the present ground surface at the west end of the site. At the east end of the site, natural sub-soil is thought to be up to 3.5m below the present ground surface. In line with health and safety requirements, hand excavation will terminate at a depth of 1.2m. Excavation will continue beyond 1.2m by means of machine-cut sondages to identify deeply buried archaeological levels. These deep deposits will be checked for finds and retained for further analysis, particularly anaerobic soil conditions.

Recording

All recording will be by Headland Archaeology Ltd standard method. All contexts, small finds and environmental samples will be given unique numbers. Bulk finds will be collected by context. Colour transparency and print photographs will be taken. An overall site plan will be recorded at 1:500 relative to the National Grid with 1:20 plans of the individual features. The sections/elevations will be drawn at 1:10. Small finds will be 3D plotted where appropriate. All recording will be undertaken on *pro forma* record cards. Survey recording of all trench locations will be related to the Ordnance Survey grid

Samples and artefacts

Any artefacts retrieved during the trial trenching will be catalogued and will be subject to standard Treasure Trove procedures. Archaeological deposits will be sampled systematically in accordance with Headland Archaeology Ltd standard environmental sampling practice. Bulk samples, a minimum of 10 litres but up to 30 litres if possible, will be taken for wet sieving and flotation. These will be processed and analysed as part of the contract. Bulk samples will be taken from any waterlogged deposits present for assessment of organic remains. Any organic artefacts that are retrieved during the excavation will be stored in appropriate conditions and assessed by a qualified archaeological conservator as a part of this contract.

Reporting and archive

The results of the evaluation will be presented in a report which will take the form of a Data Structure Report (as defined by Historic Scotland). Should archaeological remains be discovered during the evaluation, an assessment of the post-excavation analysis and reporting considered necessary to complete the work to the satisfaction of the Council as Local Planning Authority will be included in the report. In such an event, funds will be secured from the client to complete the necessary work.

A summary report will be prepared for submission to *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*. The records of the archaeological works will be archived at the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

SCHEDULE

The Phase 1 fieldwork will be undertaken the week commencing Thursday 10th October 2002 and will take c 2 days to complete excluding backfilling. An immediate verbal report will be made to the client. The Phase 2 fieldwork will provisionally undertaken in November 2002. All products will be delivered to the client within 2 weeks of the completion of fieldwork.

LIAISON

Headland will maintain close contact with the client and all significant findings will be reported immediately. CECAS will also be kept informed of progress and will be offered the opportunity to visit the site during the evaluation.

HEALTH & SAFETY

A risk assessment will be prepared in advance of the start of fieldwork and will be available to the client for inspection.

PERSONNEL

The evaluation will be managed for Headland Archaeology by Russel Coleman. The fieldwork will be undertaken by Graeme Brown or Danny Dutton assisted by one experienced field archaeologist.