

**Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment Summary**

**Site:** Moresby Hall, Moresby, Whitehaven, Cumbria

**Applicant:** Mr R. Rimmer

**Local Planning Authority:** Cumberland Council (Copeland)

**Date:** April 2026

## **Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Site Location, Geology and Topography
3. Policy and Guidance (Summary)
4. Methodology
5. Map and Image Regression (1751–1996; 1939–1986 Aerials)
6. Archaeological and Historical Background
7. Gazetteer of Recorded Heritage Assets (Within 300m)
8. Assessment of Significance and Archaeological Potential
9. Impact Assessment
10. Mitigation Strategy and Research Objectives
11. Conclusions

## **Non-Technical Summary**

The previous planning application concerning Moresby Hall (ref. no. 4/18/2242/0F1) was accompanied by an extensive Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA) prepared by Greenlane Archaeology Ltd who collated the archaeological baseline for the land comprising the northern yard of Moresby Hall. This statement has been prepared to provide a summary of the evidence provided within the previous DBA and goes on to describe an appropriate, proportionate mitigation strategy aligned to the current enabling-development proposal.

Given the proximity of the Roman fort and the recorded discoveries within the wider setting, there remains potential for sub-surface archaeological deposits to survive beneath previously developed ground. The recommended mitigation is an archaeological watching brief during intrusive groundworks.

## **Abbreviations and Glossary**

DBA	Desk-Based Assessment
HER	Historic Environment Record
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation
NGR	National Grid Reference
SAM	Scheduled Monument

## **1. Introduction**

**Purpose:** to establish the archaeological baseline; assess the potential for unknown buried remains; consider likely effects of the proposal; and set out proportionate mitigation.

**Scope:** proposals comprise the demolition of dilapidated/non-traditional agricultural structures and the construction of five dwellings with associated services and reinstatement of a historic access; all within previously developed land.

The Scheduled Monument (the Roman fort) lies outside the red line boundary.

## **2. Site Location, Geology and Topography**

**Location:** to the east of the C4001 and c.200m north of the A595 junction; c.30m AOD.

**Topography:** the northern yard sits below road level and is contained by retaining/boundary walls. This has implications for both archaeological survival and the visual context.

**Geology:** Coal Measures with glacial till and local sands/gravels; suitable for preservation of cut features where undisturbed.

## **3. Policy and Guidance (Summary)**

National policy seeks the conservation of designated heritage assets and supports proportionate investigation of archaeological remains. A watching brief secured by condition is widely used where the scale and nature of groundworks are limited and the risk to significant deposits is low to moderate.

Local policy emphasises high-quality design and protection of the historic environment, including the sensitive development of previously developed land.

## **4. Methodology**

**Desk-based sources:** Historic Environment Record data; historic mapping (1751 onwards); aerial photography; documentary sources; and known archaeological interventions in the vicinity.

**Study area:** 300m radius from the centre of Moresby Hall for baseline data; red line boundary for impact and mitigation.

**Limitations:** non-intrusive; potential exists for unknown deposits not previously recorded; this assessment avoids speculation and focuses on verifiable evidence.

## **5. Map and Image Regression (1751–1996; 1939–1986 Aerials)**

- 1751 estate plan indicates an earlier south gateway, courtyard arrangement and structures north of the Hall.
- c.1810 mapping shows formal garden plots to the north/east and suggests disuse/partial ruin of northern elements at that time.
- 1838 tithe: identifies ranges along the west and north and confirms the yard function.
- 1865 OS: early agricultural expansion north of the Hall is evident.
- 1899 OS: substantial development of northern ranges; relocation of the principal vehicular access to the south-west corner.
- 1925 OS: further extension/alteration of northern ranges; glasshouse to east gardens noted earlier.
- 1939–1986 aerial imagery: confirms survival and later decline of northern agricultural buildings; shows earthwork expression of the Roman fort; records the yard's persistent use.

## **6. Archaeological and Historical Background**

Prehistoric: Bronze Age material within the study area (spearhead; cremation/burial cairn) indicates funerary and tool-using activity, albeit sparsely documented.

Roman: The fort immediately west demonstrates a strong military presence; stray finds and features (road alignments, altar/s, bath structure, coins, pottery) are recorded across the study area; a vicus is postulated to the south and west in places.

Early Medieval: Limited direct physical evidence; church dedication and morphology suggest early origins.

Medieval: The Hall's origins lie in this period; the surviving chancel arch (now isolated) is medieval; agricultural organisation likely established by the later medieval period.

Post-medieval to modern: Major 17th-century remodelling of the Hall; 18th–20th-century agricultural ranges; later industrial development including railway infrastructure.

## 7. Gazetteer of Recorded Heritage Assets (Within 300m)

The following rewritten entries summarise the key data for each asset and provide an initial sensitivity appraisal for the current scheme. Grid references are given as NGR eastings/northings; designations are noted where applicable.

No.	NGR	Period	Asset / Description (Summary)	Designation	Sensitivity	Relevance to Proposals
1	300700 524100	Post-medieval	Dismantled east–west railway branch; sandstone bridge remains; reused locally as path.	None	Low	Peripheral to site; negligible effect anticipated.
2	298300 521100	Roman	Probable Roman road forming part of coastal fort network; alignment thought to pass south of Hall.	None	High	Outside development area; no impact from proposals.
3	298050 521050	Roman	Findspot of altar and sculptured stone dedicated to Jupiter; discovered during historic cutting works.	None	High	Indicative of ritual/military activity; not affected by yard works.
4	298260 521050	Bronze Age	Bronze spearhead and flints recovered north of church; findspot uncertain.	None	Medium	Sporadic prehistoric evidence; low likelihood within northern yard.
5	298180 521000	Roman	Roman fort (Gabrosentum) with ramparts, ditches and internal features.	Scheduled Monument	Very High	Outside red-line boundary; no direct or indirect impacts.
6	298275 520992	Medieval	Surviving medieval chancel arch; remainder of church rebuilt in 1822.	Listed Grade II	High	Outside works area; setting preserved.
7	298340 520980	Medieval– Post-medieval	Moresby Hall; multi-phase high-status house with late 17th-century frontage and courtyard plan.	Listed Grade I	Very High	No works to listed fabric; development remains subservient.
8	298350 520955	Undated	Historic discovery of slate/stone-lined burials beneath Hall floors; undated.	None	High	Beneath Hall footprint only; not affected by yard works.
9	298100 520900	Roman	Evidence for heated structure/bath building south-west of fort.	None	Medium	Outside development area.
10	298300 520900	Prehistoric	Urned cremation and possible cairn recorded historically; extent uncertain.	None	Medium	Location uncertain; low potential within yard.
11	298520 520910	Roman	Roman coins recovered during 19th-century road works; wide date range.	None	Medium	Findspot diffuse; not predictive for site.
12	298070 520890	Medieval	Well or water feature recorded within wider fort influence zone.	None	Medium	Outside yard area.
13	298100 520800	Roman	Three Roman silver coins recovered near Parton; precise location unknown.	None	Low	Very limited relevance to proposals.
14	298300 520800	Roman	Trial trenches revealed ditches/gullies with Roman and later pottery; no structures.	None	Medium	South of fort; no interaction with proposals.

## **8. Assessment of Significance & Potential**

Overall significance: the study area forms part of a nationally important Roman military landscape and a high-value medieval/post-medieval historic estate focus.

Potential by period (qualitative): Roman – High; Medieval – High; Post-medieval – High; Bronze Age – Medium; Early Medieval – Low to Medium; Earlier Prehistoric – Low.

Previous disturbance within the yard has likely truncated shallow deposits in places; deeper features could survive locally, especially along former yard edges and undisturbed margins.

## **9. Impact Assessment (Detailed)**

Direct effects: limited to excavation for foundations, services and drainage within previously developed ground. Localised impacts on any surviving features cannot be excluded.

Indirect effects: no works within the Scheduled Monument boundary.

Cumulative effects: prior agricultural use is the principal historic source of disturbance; the proposed works are not anticipated to materially alter the wider archaeological resource.

## **10. Mitigation Strategy & Research Objectives**

Mitigation: an archaeological watching brief during intrusive groundworks, with scope to undertake targeted recording if remains are encountered.

Research objectives (indicative): refine understanding of Roman activity beyond the fort; characterise any medieval/post-medieval yard surfaces or drains; recover dating evidence from stratified contexts where present.

Post-excavation: proportionate reporting, archive deposition and HER submission.

## **11. Conclusions**

As per the conclusions of the DBA prepared by Greenlane Archaeology Ltd, there is a well-documented archaeological context. While the development area has experienced prior disturbance, the potential for surviving sub-surface deposits remains. In such circumstances it is considered that a watching brief secured by condition, as was the case with the permission granted under 4/18/2242/0F1, represents a proportionate response for the current proposals.