## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This interim report provides a preliminary account of the results of an ongoing watching brief being undertaken at Nosterfield Quarry, North Yorkshire, on behalf of Mike Griffiths and Associates for Tarmac (Northern) Ltd. The archaeological investigation in advance of mineral extraction at Nosterfield Quarry will not be completed for several years, and as such this report is based on the preliminary assessment and review of field records, and selected specialist assessments and analyses, which have been prioritised in order to inform the strategy for the ongoing watching brief. This interim report has been prepared at the request of Tarmac (Northern) Ltd. in support of a planning application to extend Nosterfield Quarry. In accordance with the archaeological planning condition for the current quarry, a full and final report including all necessary assessments and analyses, will be produced on completion of the watching brief and the results published.

The watching brief at Nosterfield Quarry commenced in 1995, and has been carried out since 1998 by Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) Ltd on behalf of Mike Griffiths and Associates for Tarmac Northern Ltd. The area covered by the fieldwork lies to the north of Nosterfield village, North Yorkshire.

### 1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

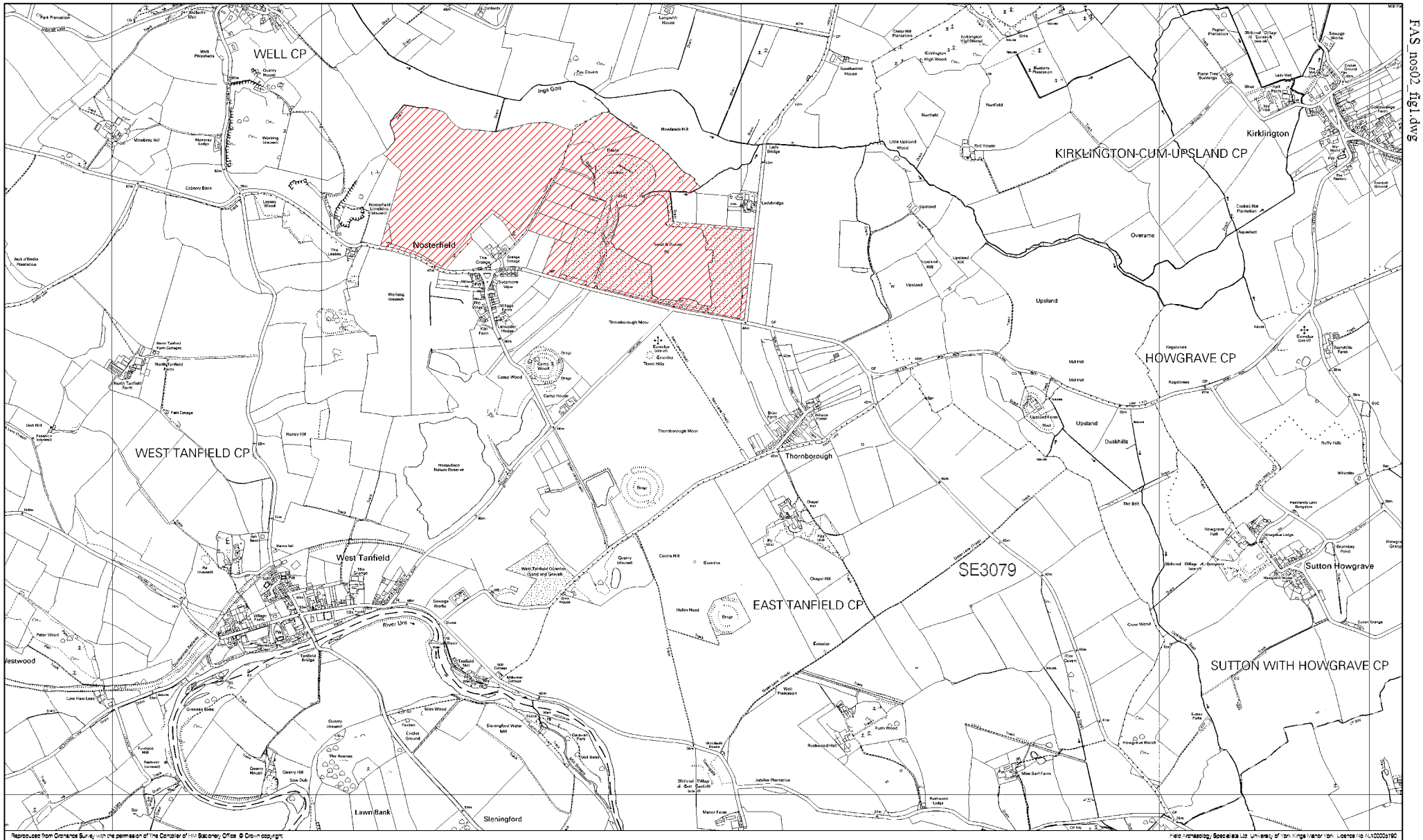
Nosterfield Quarry (SE 280 808) is situated to the west of Nosterfield village, North Yorkshire, on fluvio-glacial gravels that lie to the north of the River Ure. The quarry occupies land on the northern side of the B6267, as it leads away from the A1 (Figure 1), bounded to the east by a road, and extending westwards for 1800m. The quarry extends north-south for 660m, covering a total of 106 hectares. At the onset of this project, existing quarry workings dominated the eastern part of this area, lying between the road to the south, and extending north and west for a total of 13.4 hectares.

The area of investigation generally lies between 40m and 43m AOD, rising gently from north to south, and much of the surrounding area is given over to arable land and pasture. The northern part of the site is occupied by a relict lake, in which peat deposits have formed and which retains a marshy character, now known as the Flasks.

To the east of the quarry, the land rises towards Upsland Hill, and in the west, slopes towards the more distant Whitwell Hill. Generally, the landscape surrounding the quarry site is dominated by arable cultivation, although areas such as the Flasks have always been poorly drained. The disused marl pits, areas of peat, limestone and sandstone quarries located within the surrounding areas provide evidence for extraction over several centuries.

### 1.2 PLANNING BACKGROUND

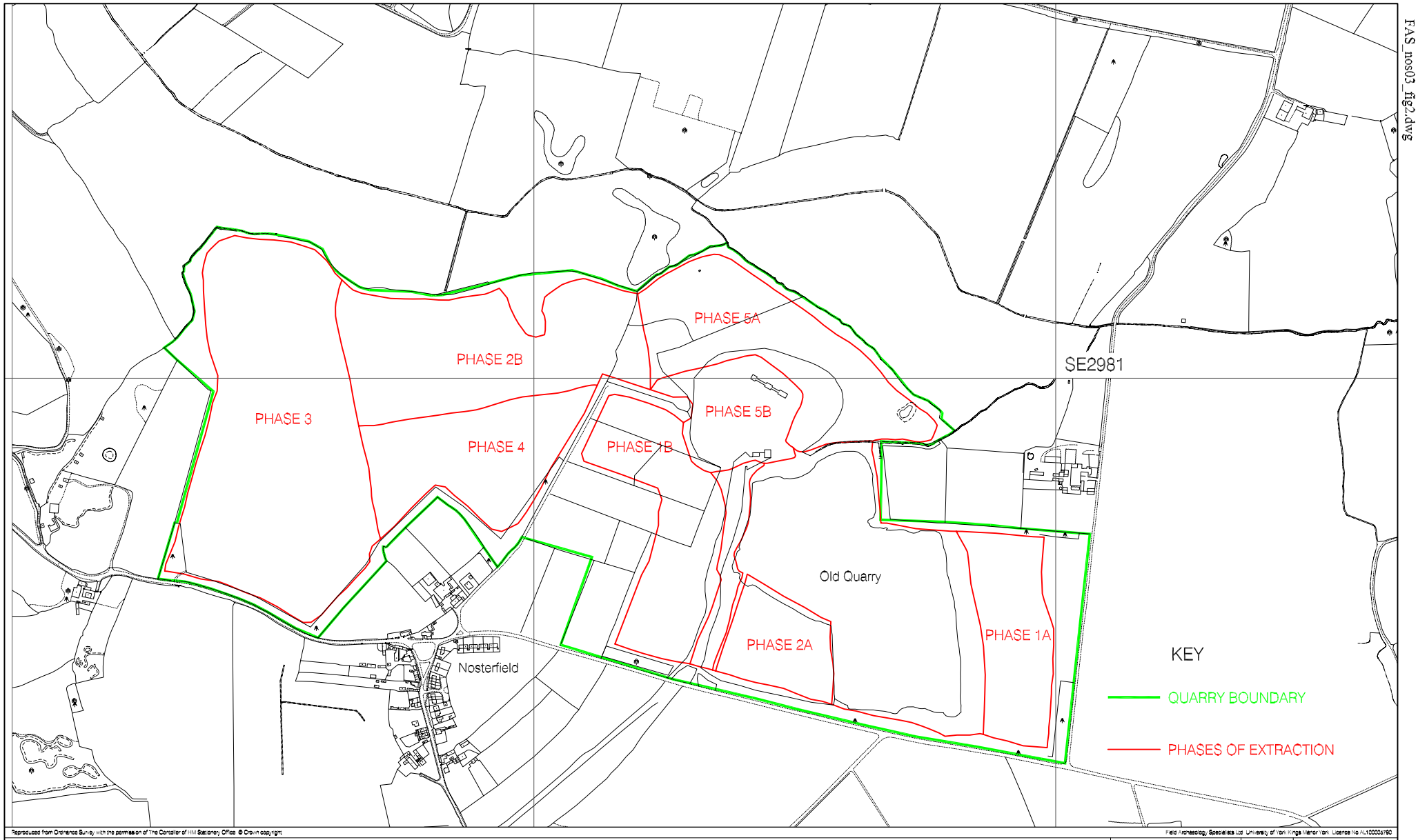
Planning permission for the current quarrying operation at Nosterfield Quarry was granted by North Yorkshire County Council in January 1995. This planning permission included an archaeological condition requiring a watching brief to be maintained during topsoil stripping at the quarry, and the submission of a full report within 6 months of the completion of the final phase of fieldwork. Since 1995 a watching brief has been maintained on successive phases of mineral extraction undertaken in line with the phases of operation submitted with the planning application (Figure 2).




Location map

Scale 1:25000

Figure 1






Phases of mineral extraction

Scale 1:10000

Figure 2

## 1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the watching brief was to identify, investigate and record any archaeological remains within the quarry area prior to mineral extraction, and where possible to determine their date, character and function. A further objective of the archaeological investigation was to develop the most effective methodological approach, given the nature of the archaeological remains encountered, the anticipated variation in the natural strata, and the necessary health and safety constraints of working on an active quarry. In many instances, a variety of investigative techniques were tested in order to enhance data recovery. Geophysical survey, topographic survey, fieldwalking (before and after topsoil stripping), test pitting, and auger survey were employed to provide a fuller record than would have been produced by the watching brief alone.

## 1.4 CHRONOLOGY OF INVESTIGATION

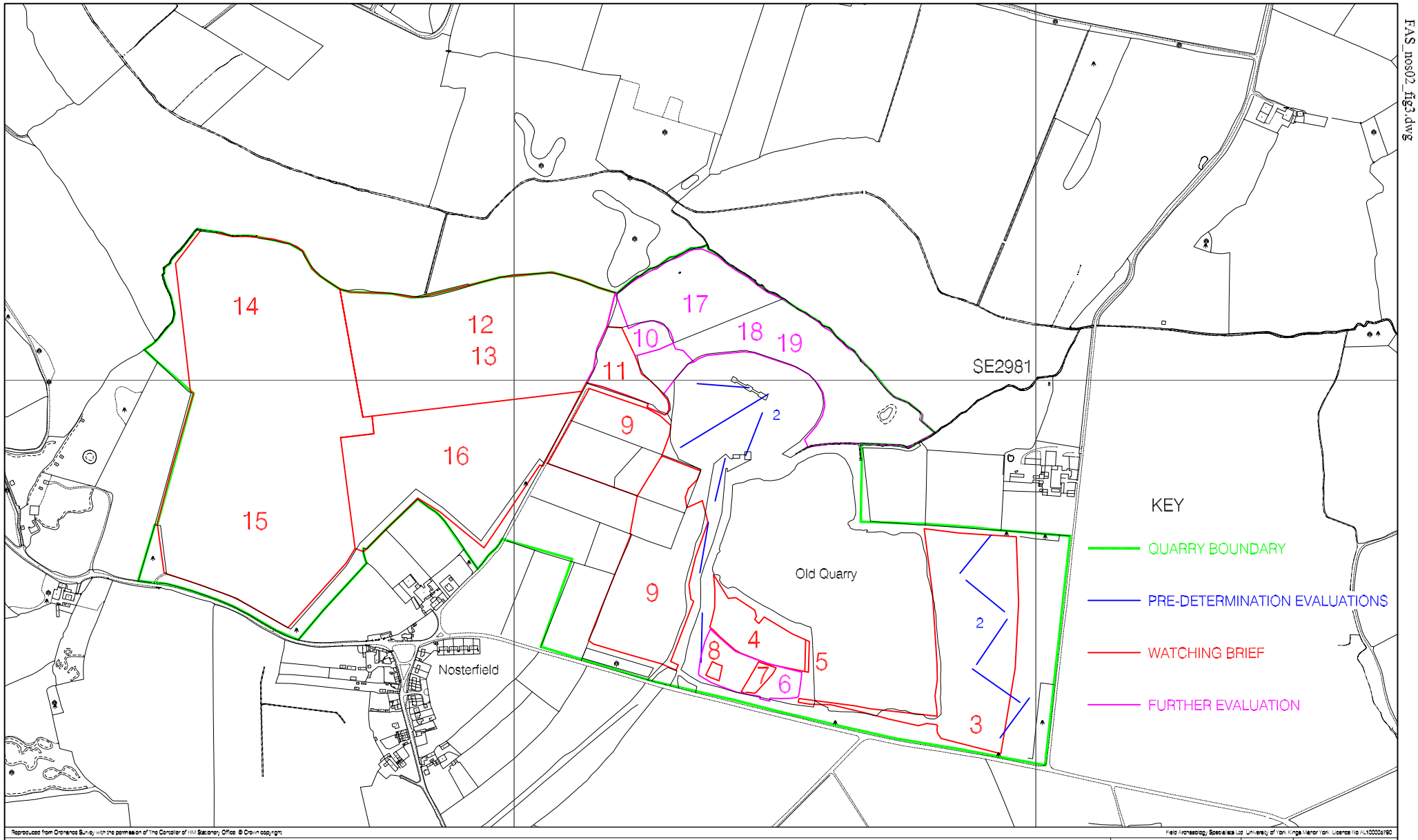
Pre-determination assessment and evaluation of the Nosterfield Quarry site was undertaken in a number of stages from 1991 to 1995, with the watching brief commencing in 1995 (Table 1; Figure 3). Fieldwork was initially undertaken or commissioned by Mike Griffiths and Associates (MGA); phases of fieldwork were carried out by West Yorkshire Archaeological Services (WYAS) and AOC (Scotland). Full reports on all of these stages are available online at:

www.archaeologicalplanningconsultancy.co.uk/mga/projects/noster/index.html.

From 1998 onwards, FAS continued a programme of further evaluation, watching briefs and surveys at successive areas of the Nosterfield Quarry site. The methodology and results for each investigation are presented individually: relevant feature and structure indices are appended (Appendix A and B), along with specialist reports.

Table 1 Index of Investigations

| Investigation No | Intervention No | Quarry Phase | Activity | Contractor | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PRE-DETERMINATION ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION | | | | | |
| 1 | - | - | Desk based assessment, walkover and test pitting | MGA | July 1991 - January 1992 |
| 2 | - | - | Evaluation | AOC | January 1995 |
| POST-DETERMINATION SURVEY, FURTHER EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF | | | | | |
| 3 | Area 1, 2, 3, Trench 4 | 1a, 5b | Watching brief | MGA | Spring 1995 |
| 4 | Trench 5 | 0.083 | Watching brief | MGA | 1996 |
| 5 | - | 0.083 | Watching brief | WYAS | January 1997 |
| 6 | - | 0.083 | Geophysical survey | WYAS | March 1997 |
| 7 | Trench 7 | 0.083 | Evaluation | MGA | March 1997 |
| 8 | Trench 6 | 0.083 | Watching brief | MGA | Spring 1997 |
| 9 | Intervention 1, 2 | 1b | Watching brief | FAS | April-Sept 1998, April 1999 |






Map of archaeological investigations

Scale 1:10000

Figure 3

| Investigation No | Intervention No | Quarry Phase | Activity | Contractor | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | Intervention 3 | 2b, 5a | Walkover and contour survey | FAS | Summer 1999 |
| 11 | Intervention 4 | 2b, 5a | Watching brief | FAS | September 1999 |
| 12 | Intervention 6 | 2b | Walkover survey | FAS | December 1999 |
| 13 | Intervention 5NE | 2b | Watching brief | FAS | January - February 2000, May 2000 |
| 14 | Intervention 5NW | 3 | Watching brief | FAS | October - November 2001 |
| 15 | Intervention 5SW | 3 | Watching brief | FAS | April and June 2002, September 2002 |
| 16 | Intervention 5SE | 4 | Watching brief and test pits | FAS | November - December 2003, June 2004 |
| 17 | Intervention 9 | 0.2083 | Topographic survey (Flasks) | FAS | August 2003 |
| 18 | Intervention 7 | 0.2083 | Augur survey (Flasks) | FAS | August 2003 |
| 19 | Intervention 8 | 0.2083 | Evaluation (Flasks) | FAS | September 2003 |

## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

There is now a considerable corpus of information available for the development of the Thornborough landscape, and a strong interest from both academic and public quarters. However, very little in the way of modern archaeological information was available for the area at the outset of this project in 1995. The principal prehistoric features - the henges, cursus and round barrows - had long been recognised, and had formed the focus of antiquarian attention since the 1860s. Continued interest in the 1950s added to the knowledge of these monuments, but again this activity focussed on small-scale investigations of specific monuments. Until recent work by the Vale of Mowbray Neolithic Landscape Project (Harding 1994-1997; Harding and Johnson 2003; 2004a-d), and the work at Nosterfield Quarry, little research had been undertaken to understand the wider context of these monuments. The current state of knowledge has been summarised in recent reports and large-scale assessments (Harding and Johnson 2003; FAS 2003a). Fieldwalking programmes (Harding and Johnson 1994; 2004b), environmental investigations (Howard *et al* 2000; Long and Tipping 1998; Tipping 2000), survey and excavation (Harding and Johnson 2004a-d) allow the landscape of the Thornborough monument complex to be explored further. Even so, fieldwork in the area is still seen to lag behind the more intensively studied prehistoric landscapes of southern England, and calls have been made for more comprehensive, detailed investigations of upstanding and below-ground archaeology (Harding and Johnson 2003, 9). In this context, the current work at Nosterfield quarry will provide a valuable and significant contribution to this area of research.

### 2.1 HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE NOSTERFIELD AREA

The relative lack of knowledge at the outset of this project in 1995 can be emphasised by considering the history of investigation to that date, through antiquarian activity, early archaeological excavations and modern research. These results contrast dramatically with information that has been acquired since that date. The main focus was naturally on the prehistory of the area, but until the work of the 1990s, very little work was undertaken on a