

DESK BASED ASSESSMENT ADVICE NOTE

Durham County Council Archaeology Section (DCCAS)

When Should I do a Desk Based Assessment (DBA)?

You should only produce a DBA for a planning application if specifically asked for by DCCAS or the relevant case officer. Due to the development of online resources and other desktop data management technologies, we usually have access to sufficient information to assess an application without further research.

Unless a DBA is adding information to the decision making process, the work is unnecessary as part of the planning process.

Your client may still want a DBA for their own purposes, but if one is submitted with an application without having been requested or discussed with DCCAS, we reserve the right to charge for the time taken to read and assess the information in the DBA. Details of this are in our charging policy (available via <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2012/Historic-Environment-Record>)

If in doubt, please contact DCCAS who will be able to advise you on specific planning applications.

Information available to DCCAS staff

DCCAS have access to various data sets which allow us to make informed decisions on the archaeological requirements of most schemes. A list of these sources is provided below. Where known, the online location for this data is listed, but not all the information is online, and some has been obtained by us through other routes.

Historic Environment Record - Event and Heritage Feature Records

Historic Landscape Characterisation

National Record Historic Environment (NRHE) – accessible via Pastscape

<http://www.pastscape.org/default.aspx> or the Heritage Gateway at

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

Excavation Index - accessible via Heritage Gateway

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

Local title Maps - available from the Durham University Library Special Collections

<http://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/view?docId=ead/ddr/ddradmin.xml#DDR-EA-TTH-1-t>

Portable Antiquities Scheme - data available from <http://finds.org.uk/database>

LIDAR - One metre resolution data available from <http://www.geostore.com/environment-agency/survey.html#/survey>

Designated sites - data available to download from

<https://services.historicengland.org.uk/NMRDataDownload/default.aspx> or

accessible via the NHLE <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

National Mapping Program - data comprising the North East Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment, the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty miner Farmer Project,

and the Archaeological assessment of the aggregate producing areas of County Durham Project

Ordnance Survey Historic Mapping – from First Edition to 2000s as raster files, including 1:500 Town Plans

Vertical Aerial Photographs – 1940s verticals and more modern coverage

National Trust - Monument data via Web Mapping

Various DCCAS acquired layers – such as the North East Vernacular Architecture Group recording projects data, Milestone Society data, etc

Additional Collections to check if doing a DBA

Once you have checked if a DBA is needed for the planning process (i.e. asked for by DCCAS, DCC, or DMBC) then check all of the above sources (for context) PLUS relevant ones from the list below:

Durham

County Record Offices

County Durham Local History Reference Library (Clayport Library, Durham City)

Durham University Special Collections and Archives (Palace Green, Durham City)

Durham University Aerial Photograph collection available via Archaeological Services

Durham Cathedral Records and Archives

Historic England Archive <http://archive.historicengland.org.uk/>

Englands Places <http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/archive-collections/englands-places/>

Beamish archives

Archaeological records held by the Universities of Durham and Newcastle (if applicable)

Local/national historical and archaeological journals and publications referred to on the HER

Borehole logs (from client if available; or British Geological Survey)

Shared Visions: North East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment – 2006 Petts, D and Gerrard, C. Durham, Durham County Council

Websites which may be useful include www.durham.gov.uk/durhamrecord and Google Earth

Darlington

Durham County Record Office is the archive

Crown Street Local Studies Library

Specialist

North-east Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineering

Weardale Museum

Dukesfield Documents – A research archive centred on the Blakett and Beaumont lead business records www.dukesfield.org.uk/research/dukesfield-documents

National Railway Museum Archive - <http://www.nrm.org.uk/ResearchAndArchive>

It is worth noting that some estate or company records may have gone to archives outside Co. Durham such as in Northumberland or Tyne & Wear.

General Advice

When a DBA is requested, it should include a Statement of Significance and Impact Assessment.

Having determined the significance of the site or building, including the relative significance of constituent features, the impact assessment should consider the impact of the proposed work in detail, highlighting where work affects areas of high or low significance and where this is may represent unacceptable levels of harm or where that harm may be acceptable, if mitigated through archaeological works. A statement saying the site has significance and work will have an impact is not enough.

There should be a critical analysis of sources used and their relevance to the particular site. Listing all of the sources and their information is not necessarily useful if they do not provide new information. It is worth making a note of sources that have been checked but provided no additional information.

Where available and relevant, any geotechnical information should be checked and the information incorporated into the DBA.

See also: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014) *Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment* for more general information about writing a desk based assessment.

Desk-Based Research for Geophysical Surveys

In some advice given to developers, DCCAS will say that a geophysical survey of a site is required and a stand-alone desk-based assessment is not however adequate research should be carried out to set the results in context. The aim of desk-based research is to offer interpretations of the results of the survey and will require a full HER search and may incorporate similar research to a stand-alone DBA.

A full map regression is not necessary however should historic maps help to identify geophysical anomalies then their inclusion would be useful, for example when identifying historic field boundaries or previous uses of a site. If there is any doubt, please contact DCCAS.