



## **NEGATIVE WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

### **Road Sign Replacement Works at the Military Road (B6318) and C257 Crossroads, Rudchester, Northumberland**

**NGR: NZ 10320 67535**

**Contractor:** Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (Durham Office)

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**Client:** Northumberland County Council

**PCA Report Number:** 13990

**PCA Site Code:** RCN 19

**SMC Reference:** S00230195

**Oasis ID:** preconst1-381220

#### **LOCATION**

**Planning Authority:** Northumberland County Council

**District:** N/A

**County:** Northumberland

**Site address:** Military Road (B6318) and C257 Crossroads, Rudchester, Northumberland.

#### **DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:**

An appropriately specified programme of archaeological work was required in association with the provision of new road signs at the Military Road (B6318) and C257 Crossroads, Rudchester, Northumberland (NZ 10320 67535). The site under observation lies 2.2km WNW of Heddon-on-the-Wall with all groundworks undertaken within the verge of the Military Road (B6318) and an unnamed road (C257) junction (Figure 1). The work was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) and involved the monitoring of three locations for the installation of support poles for two new traffic signs (Trial Pits 101, 301 & 302) (Figure 2; Plates 1-3).

#### **REASON FOR WATCHING BRIEF:**

The work was of archaeological interest because it lies within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site core area (Ref. 1000098) and Scheduled Monument of Hadrian's Wall (Historic England Ref. 1017533: Rudchester Roman fort, associated civil settlement and a section of Hadrian's Wall and vallum from the A69 to the March Burn in wall mile 13).

Because the site has scheduled monument status, and thus has statutory protection under *The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*, any intrusive groundworks for the installation require SMC from DCMS prior to their undertaking. In accordance with the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport consulted with Historic England before deciding whether or not to grant SMC after an application for the work was submitted by Mr Kevin Brown (Northumberland County Council) on the 24th October 2019. Historic England considered *'...the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be works that are due to a pressing road safety need, are unavoidable and warranted, and will not significantly compromise the integrity of the monument, nor prejudice substantially its longer term preservation.'*

Accordingly, SMC was granted for the proposed signage replacement works by the Secretary of State, advised by Historic England, subject to a series of conditions set out in a letter dated 8th November 2019 to Mr Kevin Brown (Northumberland County Council). Condition b) of SMC states *'No works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological monitoring during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by Historic England.'*

As part of a scheduled monument, any archaeological remains affected by this scheme fall within the category of 'designated heritage assets' as defined within current guidance on the historic environment set out within Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2018).

As the groundworks were undertaken within a Scheduled Monument, the three support pole locations for the provision support pole of new roadside signage were archaeologically monitored, as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC ref. S00230195), on the advice of Historic England to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).

In their assessment of the importance of the Scheduled Monument concerned, as set out in its monument record, Historic England records that the wall fort at Rudchester, its associated civil settlement and Hadrian's Wall and Vallum from the A69 to the March Burn, survives well as upstanding turf-covered features. Rudchester is one of the best surviving examples of a Roman fort and has produced significant archaeological finds including a life-size statue of Hercules and five alters dedicated to Mithras.

The investigations were carried out with reference to Shared Visions: the North East Regional Framework for the Historic Environment (NERRF) (Petts and Gerrad 2006). The relevant key research priorities for the Roman period as set out in the NERRF research agenda is:

- Riii Roman Military Presence,
- Riv Native and Civilian Life,
- Rv Material Culture,
- Rx Roman to Early Medieval Transition.

Frontiers of Knowledge: A Research Framework for Hadrian's Wall (Symonds & Mason Eds.) has identified a series of specific queries in relation to the monument which are relevant to the work at Heddon-on-the-Wall, specifically **A3 The Wall**.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the work was prepared by PCA and approved by Historic England prior to the commencement of any work.

#### **DATES WORK UNDERTAKEN:**

Archaeological work was undertaken at the site on the following dates:

- Thursday 15/01/2019

#### **RESULTS:**

*During the watching-brief, separate stratigraphic entities were assigned unique and individual 'context' numbers, which are indicated in the following text as, for example [123].*

Three trial pits were undertaken within the verge of the Military Road (B6318) and unnamed road (C257) crossroads (Figure 2). The dimensions of each trial pit are summarised in the table below:

Trial Pit	Length	Width	Depth
101	0.60m	0.60m	0.61m
301	0.60m	0.53m	0.67m
302	0.58m	0.57m	0.70m

*Summary of Trial Pit dimensions*

A total of seven contexts were identified during the excavation of three Trial Pits (Trial Pits 101, 301 & 302).

#### **Trial Pit 101 (Plate 1)**

The earliest deposit recorded in Trial Pit 101 comprised concrete (106) that was encountered c. 0.60m below present ground level at a height of 137.52m AOD. This in turn was overlain by 0.41m thick soft dark grey clayey sandy silt (105) that contained occasional small to medium sized sandstone rubble along with modern refuse material. Topsoil comprised c. 0.20m thick soft dark grey sandy silt (104) that occurred at a maximum height of 137.52m AOD.

#### **Trial Pit 301 (Plate 2)**

The earliest deposit recorded in Trial Pit 301 comprised soft dark grey sandy silt (103) that was at least 0.49m thick and contained frequent quantities of small to medium sized sandstone rubble and a fragment of brick. Topsoil comprised 0.18m thick soft dark grey sandy silt (102) that occurred at a maximum height of 137.17m AOD.

#### **Trial Pit 302 (Plate 3)**

The earliest deposit recorded in Trial Pit 302 comprised soft dark grey sandy silt (101) that was at least 0.49m thick and contained frequent quantities of small to medium sized sandstone rubble and fragments of CBM. Topsoil comprised 0.21m thick soft dark grey sandy silt (100) that occurred at a maximum height of 137.27m AOD.

Ground level at the location of all three trial pits was observed to be substantially higher than that of the natural topography. This area of raised ground is likely to be the result of post-medieval or modern levelling activity associated with the construction of the Military Road and the unnamed road (C257).

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered during the investigation.

**ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION:**

Figure 1- Site Location

Figure 2- Detailed Site Location

**ARCHIVE DEPOSITION:**

All documentation resulting from this project will be archived internally by PCA.

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Checked: Aaron Goode

Authorised: Aaron Goode

Date: 20/01/2020

**PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES**

*Plate 1: Trial Pit 101: view west, 0.5m scale*

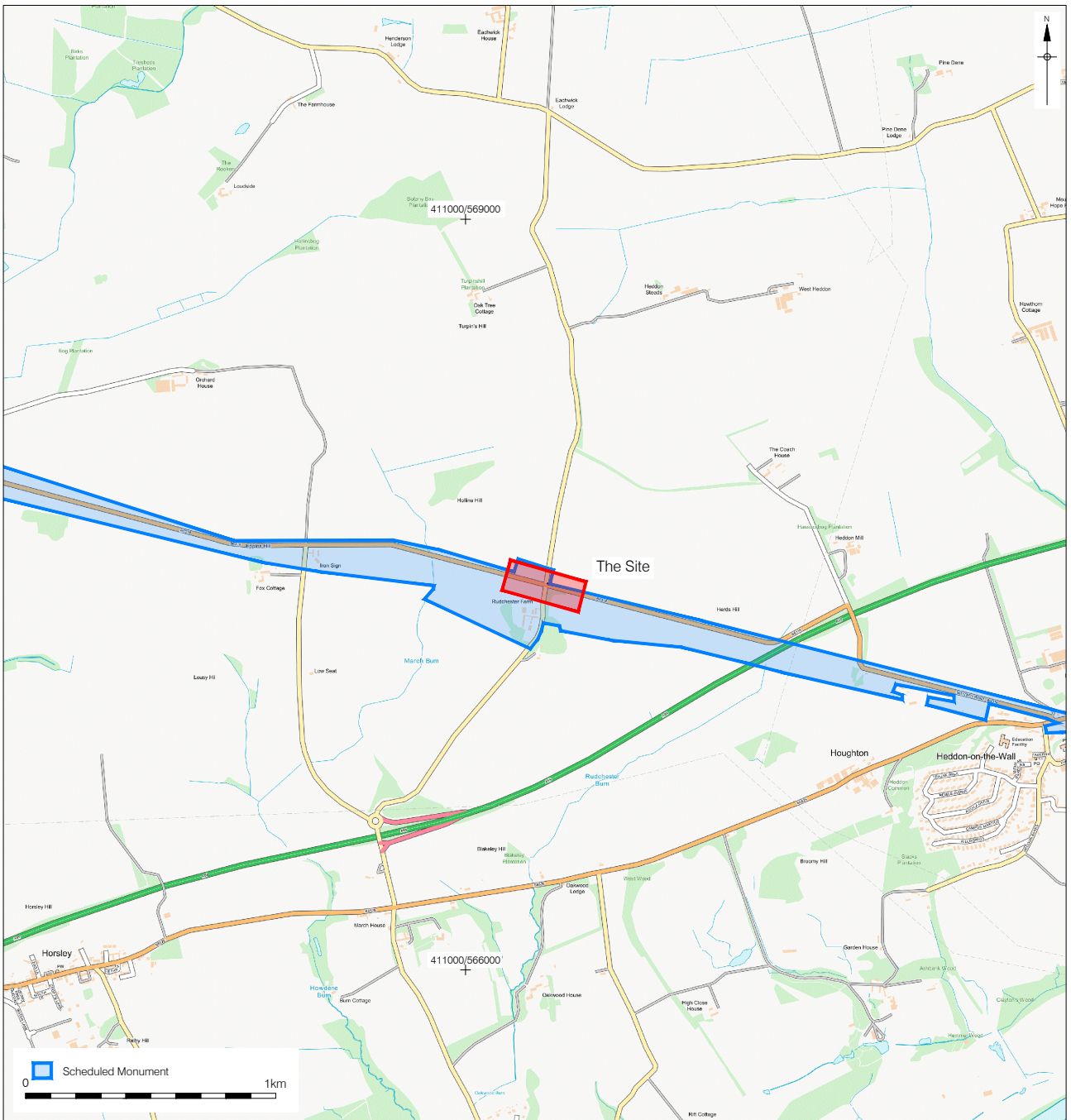
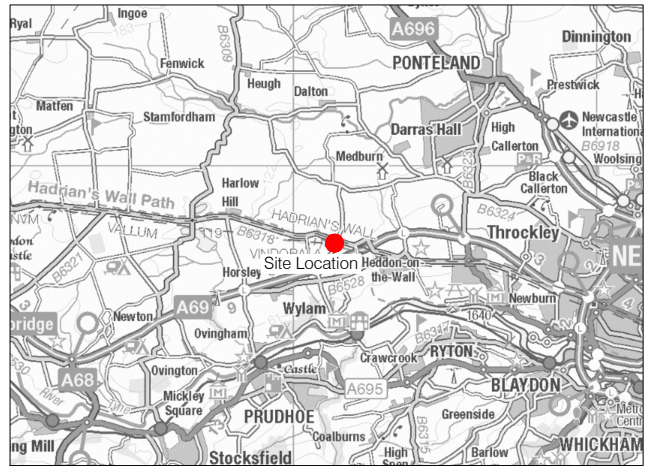


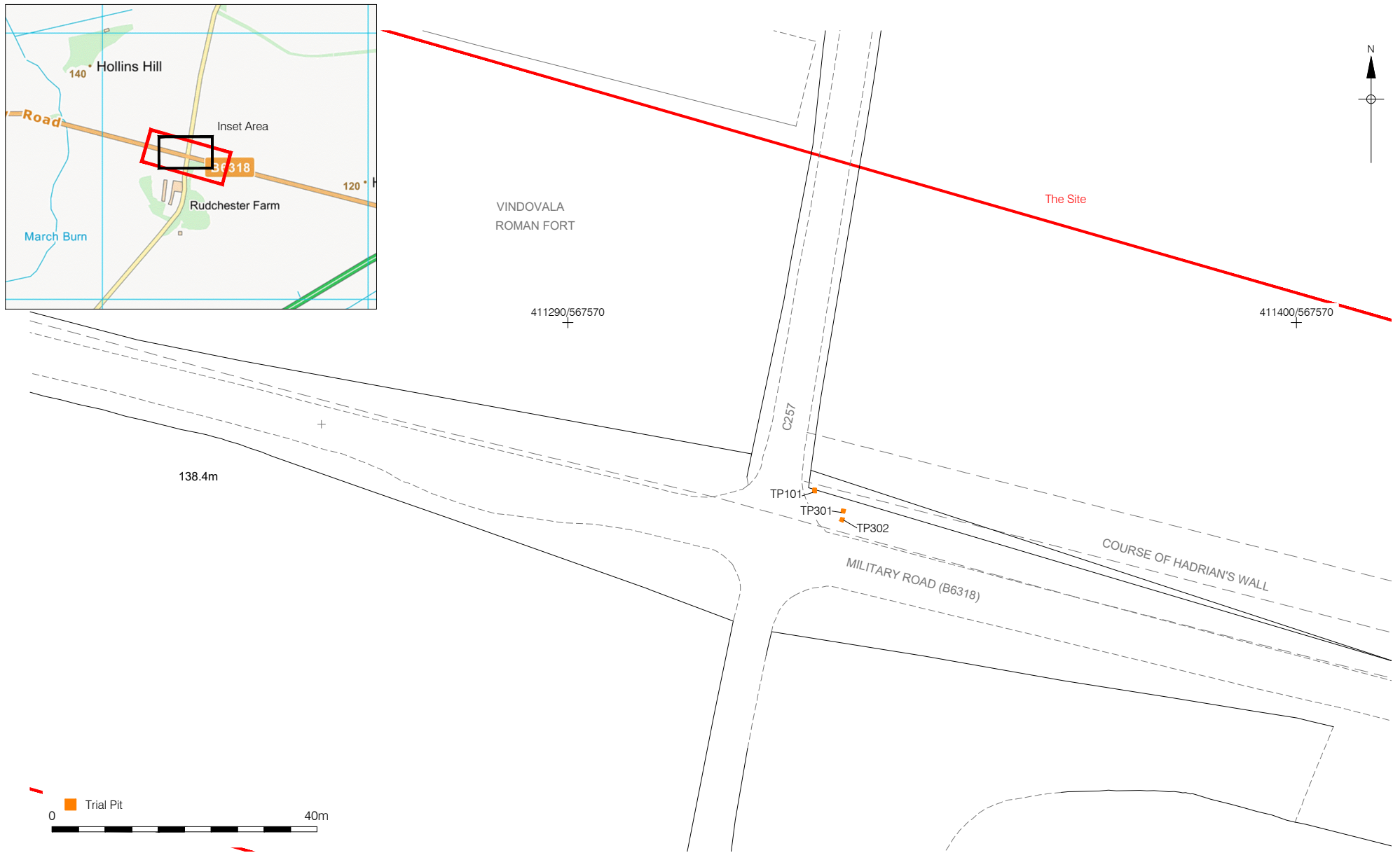
*Plate 2: Trial Pit 301: view west, 0.5m scale*



*Plate 3: Trial Pit 302: view west, 0.5m scale*









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