

**NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES LTD  
CASTLE VILLA, THIRSK**

**Negative watching brief report**

**Site name:** Castle Villa, Thirsk                      **Grid reference:** NGR 442780 482030  
**Parish:** Thirsk civil parish      **District:** Hambleton      **County:** North Yorkshire  
**Administrative Authority:** Hambleton District Council  
**Development:** Excavation of electricity cable trench                      **Date:** 18/05/15  
**Contractor:** Northern Powergrid (Northeast) Ltd, on behalf of Mr Adrian Johnson  
**Scheduled Monument Consent reference:** S001004488  
**Monitoring Archaeologist:** Kevin William Collins      **Project Manager:** Oliver Cooper  
**NAA project number:** 1250    **NAA report number:** 15/83

**Reasons for watching brief**

Archaeological monitoring was required under Scheduled Monument Consent (ref S001004488), as the work was entirely within the Scheduled Monument of Thirsk Castle (SM20454). An Anglo-Saxon burial has also been excavated within the vicinity. There was the potential for encountering previously unrecorded archaeological remains. The following details constitute a précis of the site as described by Historic England's National Heritage List for England (online).

Thirsk Castle was a motte and bailey castle originally constructed by Robert de Stuteville in the late 11th century. The Scheduled remains of the castle comprise a bank approximately 1.5m-2.5m in height and 140m in length, with the ephemeral remains of a former outer ditch approximately 10m in width. Further remains are believed to lie beneath the shallow-founded buildings and metalled areas in properties to the west and south-west of Castle Villa and the 19th-century Masonic Hall to the north-west of the monument.

Following its construction the castle was held by Roger de Mowbray until 1175; Henry II ordered its destruction in 1176, following an uprising against the monarchy over increasing taxation. The de Mowbrays then constructed a manor house (the precise location of which is unknown) and dovecotes at the site of the castle, which were destroyed by the Scots following the Battle of Old Byland in 1322.

No further development is believed to have occurred within the Scheduled Monument, with the development site being used as a garden during the late 14th century and laid to grass by the start of the 15th century. The remains of the castle and manor were gradually encroached upon by post-medieval and 19th-century development.

Castle Villa a detached red-brick residential property with associated grounds, was constructed in the 1890s in the centre of the motte; decorated stonework is reported to have been found during the excavation of the foundations of the villa. Little evidence for the remainder of the motte has been identified, with much of the motte truncated during the construction of residential properties to the west of the market square.

### **Location**

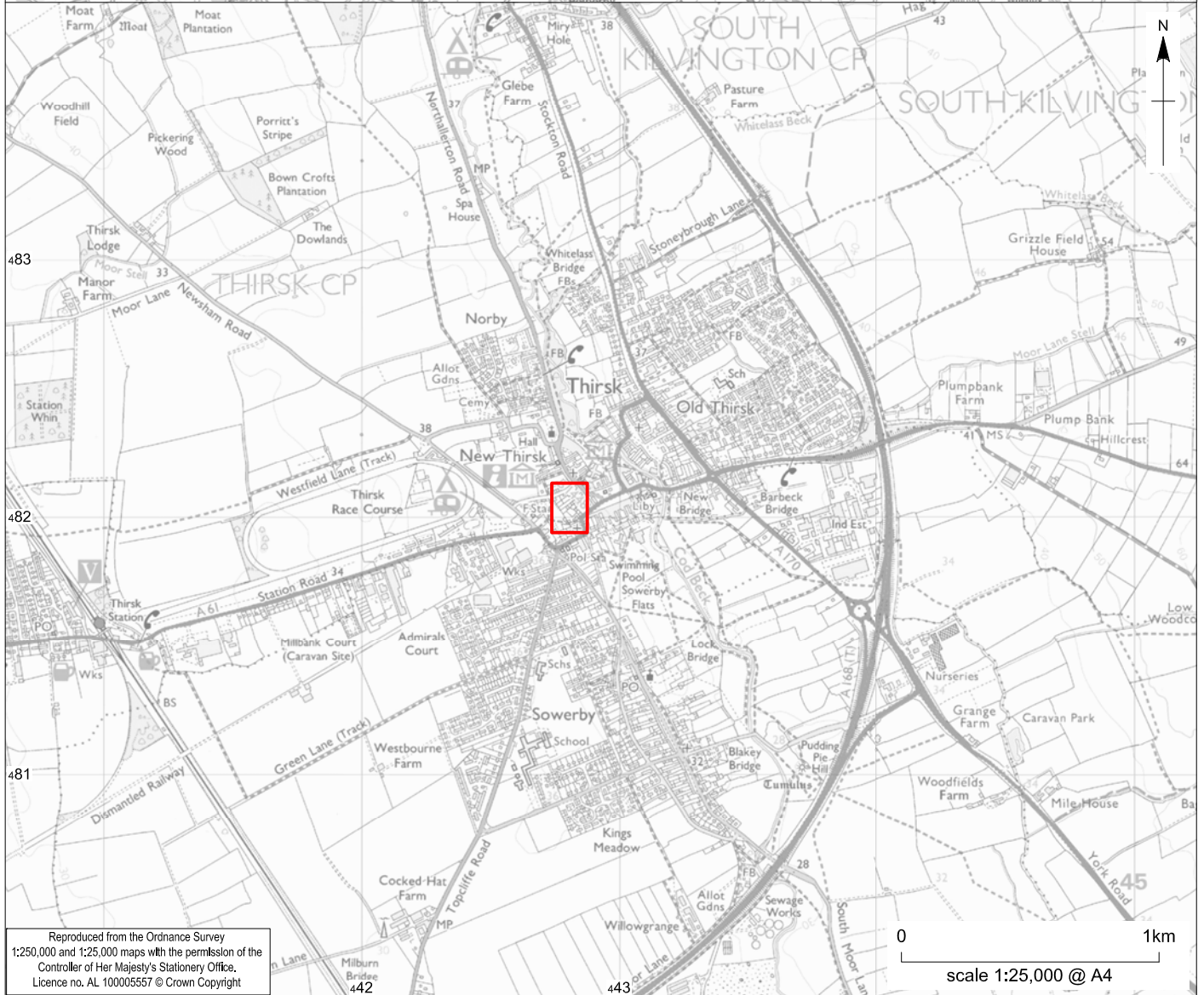
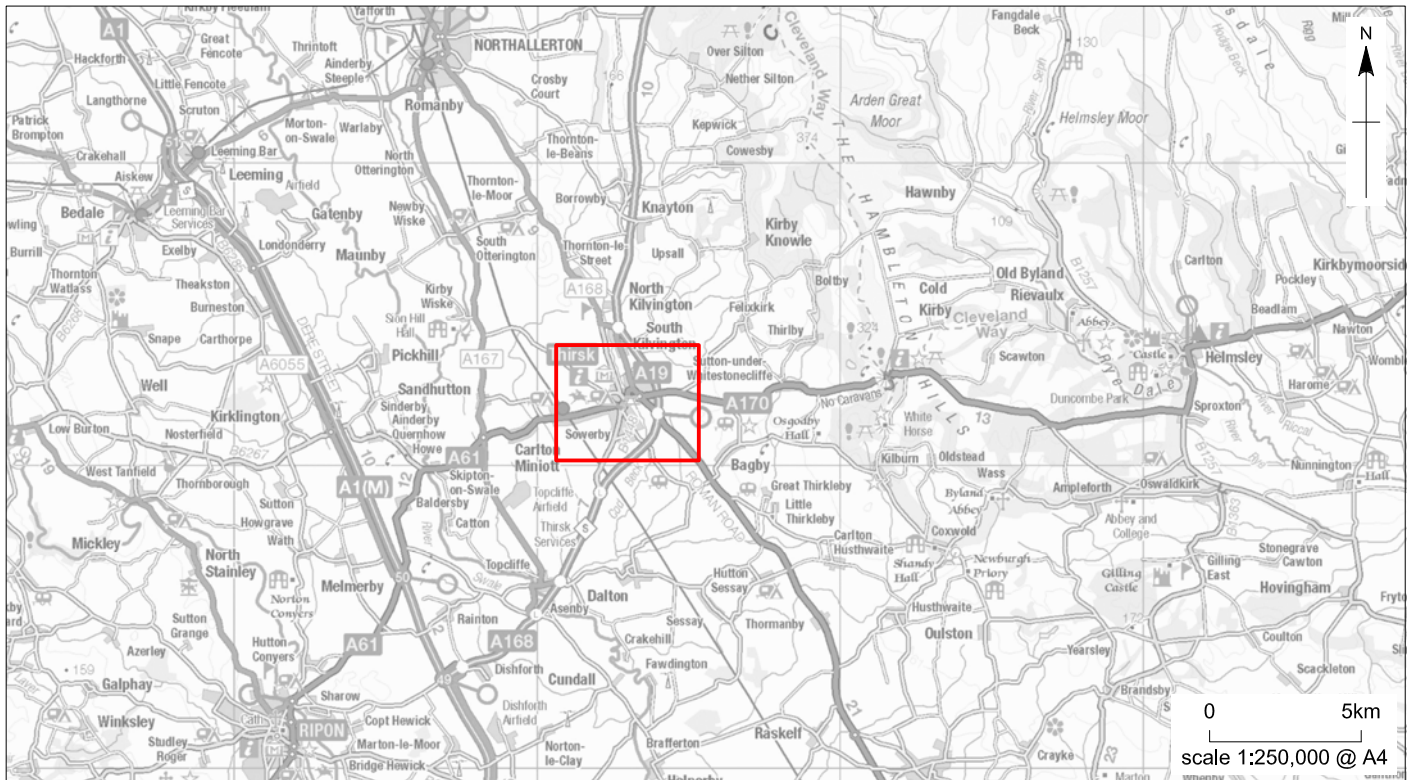
Castle Villa is located within the western part of the historic core of Thirsk (Figure 1). The site occupies a relatively level terrace at approximately 39m aOD, with the western extent of the trench situated within the undeveloped area of the Scheduled Monument (Figure 2; Plate 1) and the remainder of the excavation within the grounds of Castle Villa (plate 2).

### **Results**

Excavations were carried out using a small mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket. The excavation commenced at the junction with the existing main electrical cable, some 10m west from the boundary wall of Castle Villa. The pit excavated at the junction measured 1m x 1.5m and had a depth of 1m (Plate 3). The new cable trench proceeded in an easterly direction at a depth of 0.45m and width of 0.15m for a length of 9m; entering Castle Villa grounds by tunnelling beneath the boundary wall then continuing for a further distance of 28m to the house. No archaeological features were revealed by the excavation; the construction of the house and subsequent landscaping appeared to have destroyed any features that may have remained. Topsoil was a dark yellowish-brown, silty sand up to 0.30m in depth. An assemblage of 19th to 20th-century pottery, glass, cbm, was observed in the excavated topsoil but not retained.

**Documentation:** Digital photographs; internal archive only

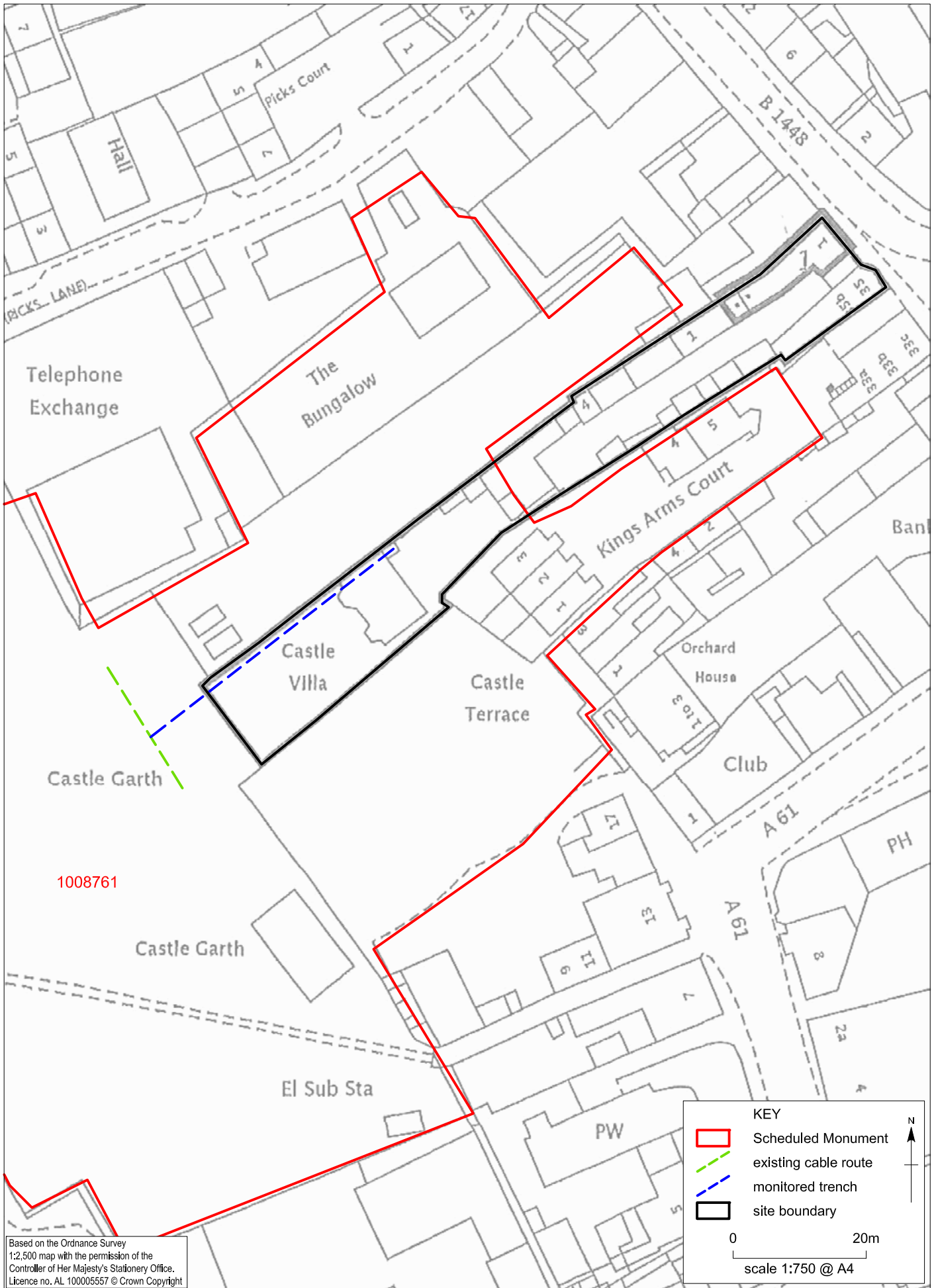
**Report Date:** 23 June2015



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Castle Villa, Thirsk: site location

Figure 1



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 1:2,500 map with the permission of the  
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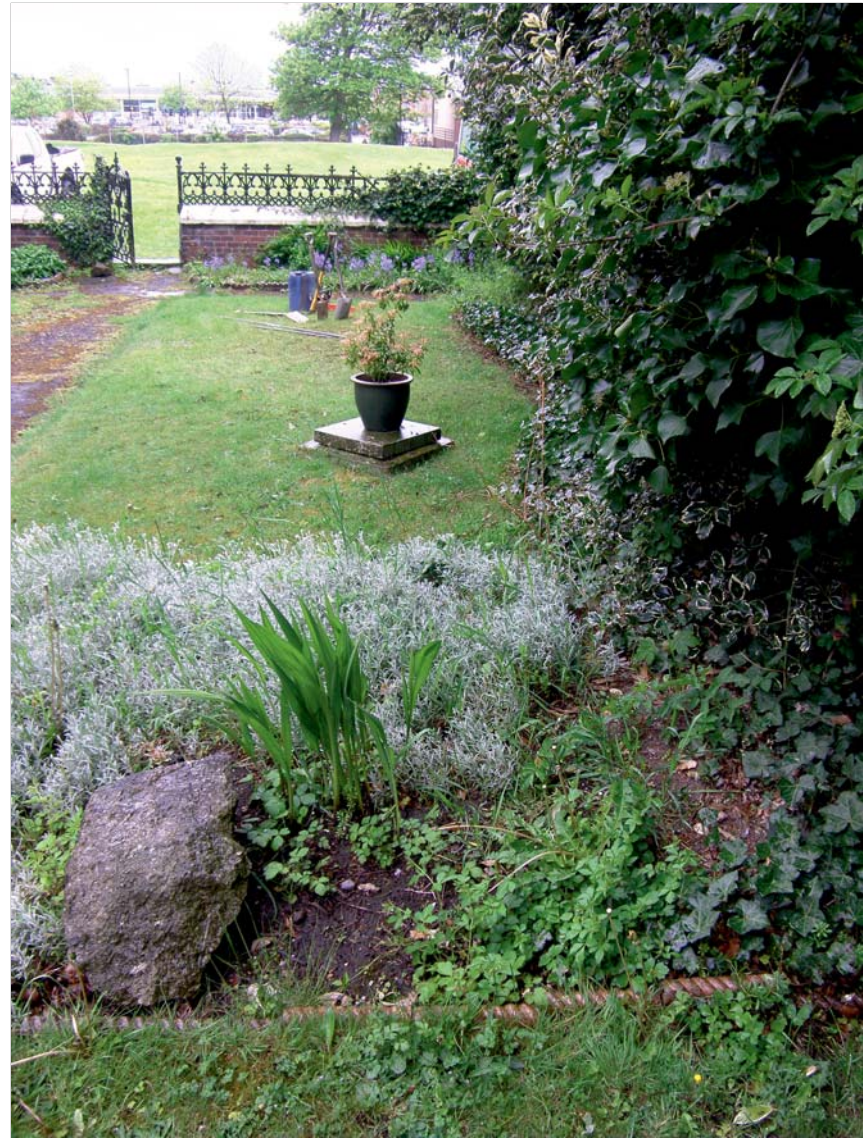
Castle Villa, Thirsk: monitored trench

Figure 2



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*Castle Villa, Thirsk: general view of Castle Villa Plate 1*



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*Castle Villa, Thirsk: view of Scheduled Monument from Castle Villa Plate 2*



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*Castle Villa, Thirsk: view of cable trench Plate 3*