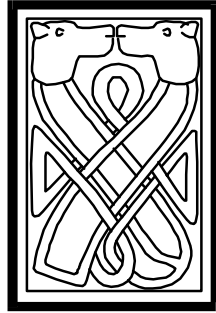


# **BAMBURGH RESEARCH PROJECT**



## **INSTALLATION OF AN ELECTRICITY CABLE AT HOTSPUR STREET AND BONDGATE WITHOUT, ALNWICK, NORTHUMBERLAND**

### **REPORT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING**

Compiled for Power On Connections by The Bamburgh Research Project: Commercial Projects Section

BRP 10/02b

March 2010

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*Figure 1 Site location*

*Figure 2 Location of the electricity line*

*Plate 1: Installation trench at the corner of Hotspur Street with Bondgate Without, facing north east*

*Plate 2: Modern culvert on Hotspur Street, facing west*

## **SUMMARY**

*This report describes the archaeological monitoring programme carried out by the Bamburgh Research Project during the excavation of trenches along Bondgate Without and Hotspur Street in Alnwick, Northumberland. The work occurred between 17 February and 23 February, 2010, and was commissioned by Power On Connections. Only a small stretch of the excavation along Bondgate Without was monitored, as delays resulted in confusion over the dates the excavation was taking place and the Bamburgh Research Project was not notified. No features nor deposits of archaeological interest were encountered in the trenches that were investigated, this possibly being due to their relatively shallow depth (not exceeding 0.85 metres).*

*The principal concern of the planning authorities was that the trenches would impinge on deposits and features associated with the town wall, which ran along Hotspur Street to the Bondgate Tower in this part of Alnwick. This tower and the walls that fortified the town were constructed after AD 1433 when a royal charter was granted for this work by Henry VI, but it was not considered in a satisfactory state for defence until roughly AD 1484. In time, the wall's defensive significance began to wane and it suffered from neglect, presumably being robbed of its stone for the construction of other buildings in the district. The only remaining feature of the town's defence that is visible to us now is the Bondgate Tower, the other features having been dismantled or buried. The textual and cartographic evidence for the presence of the wall and its attendant structures are summarised in this report and the potential for their archaeological investigation in developments of this part of Alnwick considered.*

**INSTALLATION OF AN ELECTRICITY CABLE  
AT HOTSPUR STREET AND BONDGATE WITHOUT,  
ALNWICK,  
NORTHUMBERLAND**

**REPORT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
MONITORING AND RECORDING**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.0.1 This report has been compiled by The Bamburgh Research Project, Commercial Section for Power On Connection. The document sets out the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks along Hotspur Street and Bondgate Without associated with the installation of an electrical supply to a new property on Bondgate Without, Alnwick, Northumberland.
- 1.0.2 This work was undertaken by the *Bamburgh Research Project* between 17<sup>th</sup> February and 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2010. Because of an unfortunate misunderstanding arising from a significant delay occasioned by the presence of a culvert on Bondgate Without, the excavation re-commenced without the archaeologists being notified. No monitoring of the excavation therefore occurred along Hotspur Street. This report is consequently concerned only with the description of the stratigraphic succession observed in the Bondgate Without trench, although the potential of archaeologically significant remains being present along Hotspur Street will be discussed in the section regarding the historical background of the study.
- 1.0.3 The work was undertaken in compliance with a Written Schedule of Investigation compiled by the Bamburgh Research Project in February 2010 in response to a brief issued by the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team. The Northumberland County Council Conservation Team number is: A4/12; 10655 and the OASIS record number is: bamburgh1-75110.

## **2.0 THE SITE**

### **2.1 Location**

- 2.1.1 The electricity cable will be installed in a trench along Hotspur Street to a new development on Bondgate Without. Hotspur Street lies in the centre of the town of Alnwick, Northumberland immediately to the south of Bondgate Without the main street through Alnwick, which becomes the A1068 to the east of the town and the B6346 to the west (NGR NU 18871321) (Figures 1 and 2).

### **2.2 Geological Formations**

- 2.2.1 The remote geological history and formations of the Alnwick district are of little relevance to understanding the medieval development of the town, as these are buried far too deeply below the layers of urban waste to have had much impact on the

settlement. Most of Alnwick is underlain by thick deposits of Carboniferous rock, mostly of Fell Sandstone that rises to the north and the south and defines the westernmost periphery of the Northumberland Coastal Plain. Along the low lying portions of the town at the River Aln, there are copious deposits of Holocene alluvial material and small patches of sand and gravel from the Holocene also occur to the south of the town where small streams and rivulets ran.

- 2.2.2 The Fell Sandstone afforded an excellent local source of building material, supplemented by the hard dolerite from the Whin Sill lying to the east of the town and outcropping at places such as Howick, Craster and Embleton. Good exposures of the Fell Sandstone can be seen immediately to the west of Alnwick on the road that runs towards Rothbury, where sections have been cut for the construction of the disused railway line. Small local quarries probably operated in the region, but they were exploited only ephemerally and did not result in large pits that were mined for many centuries as occurred elsewhere. One can characterise Alnwick as being relatively well drained, surrounded by not only good agricultural land but also upland moor, both of which contributed significantly to the wealth of the town.

### **2.3 Archaeological background**

- 2.3.1 The earliest history of Alnwick remains shrouded in obscurity and the archaeological remains have hitherto not shed any light on the nature of the settlement before the construction of the castle by the Normans. Instead, inferences concerning its origins have been drawn from sporadic historical sources, toponymic studies, and analyses of the road structures (Conzen 1960, 15 - 18). The name 'Alnwick' derives from the Anglian language and means 'homestead (*wic*) on the Aln' (Mawer 1920, 5) and it has been suggested that the main settlement was near Bailiffgate (Conzen 1960, 16). This is plausible insofar that the name implies settlement by the river, and thus down the slope from the kernel of the Medieval town. Our understanding of Alnwick improves with the advent of the Norman settlement, but this was accompanied by considerable urban expansion and possibly a fundamental re-orientation of the road system (Conzen 1960, 15). We cannot therefore be certain that the Norman construction respected the structure of the earlier town settlement.

- 2.3.2 The town of Alnwick is replete with archaeological finds and listed buildings. Most salient in the orbit of the excavations in the Bondgate Tower (HER 4830), the only visible remnant of the defensive structure surrounding Alnwick in the fifteenth century. This was constructed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Northumberland after AD 1434, when the royal licence to construct the town wall was issued by Henry VI, and probably erected *ca.* AD 1450. Little is known regarding the town wall and its subsidiary defensive features, apart from incidental mention in the historical documents. Much of this was ably summarised by George Tate in his study of the history of the town (1866, 236 - 246): he mentions the existence of four towers, one of which was Bondgate, the other three having been demolished. One of these was the Clayport Tower (HER 4831), whose situation was indicated on the maps of Alnwick produced by Norton (1624), Armstrong (1769) and Wood (1827), which was reputed to have been larger than Bondgate Tower (Tate 1866, 242). Another was the Pottergate Tower (HER 4523), whose situation is uncertain; there are suggestions that the present tower lies atop the ruins of the original tower, which has been disputed by some authorities

(Williams 2008, 17). The final tower, completing the defensive ring, was at Narrowgate (HER 4832); this was indicated on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the Ordnance Survey map, but its location is largely conjectural and based on deeds (Tate 1866, 244).

- 2.3.3 All of these towers were connected by a wall, which reached 6.15 metres in height, and 1.8 metres in thickness. Nothing of this wall remains above the surface, and archaeological evidence for its course and its characteristics is therefore of paramount importance in understanding the Medieval settlement of the town as it defined the extent of urban settlement at this period. The only archaeological evidence that has been encountered was at Greenwell Road where dressed sandstone slabs conjoined by lime mortar was encountered during the course of development at a depth of 1.1 metres (Reed 2002, 9 – 10). Its course is postulated to have run along Hotspur Street, which delimited the Medieval town, but once it had become superfluous with the advent of James VI to the throne in England and the threat of further Anglo-Scottish conflict receded, it seems to have fallen into disrepair and the stone probably used for the construction of buildings as Alnwick expanded.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Monitoring during excavation**

- 3.1.1 A suitably experienced archaeologist, familiar with the archaeological background to the site, was present to record any items of interest that were revealed. All work was carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2000) and followed the IFA Standards for Watching Briefs (IFA 2008). The work undertaken conformed to the methodology listed below.

#### **3.2 General standards**

- 3.2.1 All archaeological features identified during the monitoring, would be sample excavated according to their type and form:

50% of all discrete features.  
50% of waterlogged deposits.  
25% of stratified deposits.  
25% of the area of linear/curvilinear features with a non-uniform fill  
10% of the area of linear/curvilinear features with a uniform fill

- 3.2.2 A 40 litre bulk palaeoenvironmental sample would be taken from all features recognised as suitable for the preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains.
- 3.2.3 Secure contexts would be sampled for dating where appropriate, whether on site or as sub samples of bulk samples.
- 3.2.4 Pottery and Animal Bone would be collected as bulk samples whilst significant artefacts would be three-dimensionally recorded prior to processing. All finds would be recorded and processed according to the BRP system and submitted for post-excavation assessment. Finds recovery and storage strategies were in accordance with

published guidelines (English Heritage 1995 and IFA Guidelines for Finds Work). Had artefacts of gold or silver been recovered they would be treated in accordance with the 1996 Treasure Act and appropriate procedures would be followed.

- 3.2.5 In the event of Human burials being revealed they would be left *in situ* and treated in an appropriate manner. Consultation with the County Archaeological Officer would be sought to determine further action.
- 3.2.6 Any archaeological features encountered would be hand-cleaned, excavated and recorded:
1. A photographic record of the site was taken using black and white print, colour slide film at 35mm format. In addition a digital photographic record was compiled.
  2. A written description of features was compiled using the BRP *pro forma* context recording system.
- 3.2.8 Arrangements will be made with the appropriate museum for the deposition of the site archive within 6 month of the completion of the post-excavation report.

## **4.0 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Monitoring during excavation**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken intermittently between 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010. The excavation trench varied in width between 0.4m and 0.7m and did not exceed 0.85m in depth. Only the initial work at the junction of Bondgate Without and Hotspur Street was monitored because of a misunderstanding arising from a series of delays caused by the presence of a culvert. No indications of any archaeological remains were uncovered during the course of this work, but it is worth bearing in mind that the trenches were of only modest depth and therefore were unlikely to have reached below the post-medieval accumulation of material. This inference is corroborated by the undifferentiated sequence of sediment commingled with débris consisting of drainage tile, glass, and brick in the sections that were subject to investigation. Numerous service lines cut across the trench, indicating that there is substantial disturbance in this part of the town from modern development.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.0.1 The sections that underwent investigation revealed nothing of the town walls, nor any features such as ditches that might be associated with such a construction. At the junction of Bondgate Without and Hotspur Street, there might have been expected to have been some features associated with the wall, but nothing was evident in the trenches. This is most probably attributable to the relatively shallowness of the trenches, although it is also possible that the expansion of Alnwick in the post-Medieval period resulted in the widespread destruction of such deposits. A more promising locale for encountering evidence associated with the Medieval wall is along Hotspur Street, which runs parallel to the course of this structure, but there was unfortunately no monitoring of the excavations that took place here.
- 5.0.2 It is possible that even shallow trenches might have exposed the uppermost levels of the ditches that were presumably situated immediately outside the wall, especially in the uppermost parts of the excavation area towards the junction with Hotspur Place, where the land rises appreciably and perhaps the overburden would be less. This must remain conjecture, though, until excavations are carried out in this immediate vicinity that can either confirm or dismiss the possibility of any of the features associated with the town wall surviving here.

## **6.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 6.0.1 We wish to thank Garry Turner of *Power On Connections* for commissioning us to undertake this work and providing us with all the necessary information to write the



Written Scheme of Investigation and the report. The workmen on the site also deserve thanks for their good humour and forbearance as archaeologists interrupted their routine to take photographs and measurements. As ever, thanks is especially due to Nick Best of the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team for his advice and for approving the Written Scheme of Investigation on short notice.

Text: Kristian Pedersen and Graeme Young  
Illustrations: Graeme Young

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## APPENDIX I

### INSTALLATION OF AN ELECTRICITY CABLE AT HOTSPUR STREET, ALNWICK, NORTHUMBERLAND

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF WRITTEN SCHEDULE OF INVESTIGATION

## INTRODUCTION

This Written Schedule of Investigation has been compiled by The Bamburgh Research Project, Commercial Section for Power On Connection. The document sets out the project design for an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during groundworks along Hotspur Street associated with the installation of an electrical supply to a new property on Bondgate Without, Alnwick, Northumberland. The Northumberland County Council Conservation Team number is: A4/12; 10655.

The Written Schedule of Investigation details the proposed scheme of works for the watching brief. The document has been prepared in order to fulfil a requirement for the planning application, as laid out in the brief issued by The Northumberland County Council Conservation Team.

## THE SITE

### Location

The electricity cable will be installed in a trench along Hotspur Street to a new development on Bondgate Without. Hotspur Street lies in the centre of the town of Alnwick, Northumberland immediately to the south of Bondgate Without the main street through Alnwick, which becomes the A1068 to the east of the town and the B6346 to the west (NGR NU 18871321) (Figures 1 and 2).

### Archaeological Background

The name 'Alnwick' suggests that its origins lie in the early medieval period, as the suffix '-wick' denotes an estate centre or settlement, often with a specialist function, in Old English; thus, the name meant 'settlement by the River Alne' (Mawer 1937, 5). No archaeological evidence from this period have hitherto been encountered in the town, but it is likely that the settlement was near that river rather than in the modern centre where most of the development work has occurred. Indeed, there are intimations that Alnwick was of only modest importance from its foundation until the Norman occupation of Northumberland, inasmuch that the main political and administrative centre before the construction of the castle was Lesbury.

The licence to 'wall and embattle the town' dates back to 1433, but progress was slow and it took 50 years to complete the work. The wall is recorded as a substantial structure 6 ft thick and up to 20 ft 6 inches high, with four entrances guarded by towers, the nearest of which to the present development lies at the Hotspur Gateway or Bondgate Tower, a Scheduled Monument, constructed after 1432 by the second Earl of Northumberland. The line of the town wall is believed to follow the line of Hotspur Street and Green Batt to the site of the Clayport Gate, along Dispensary Street to Pottergate. Pottergate being an 18th century rebuilding of the medieval gate. The wall continued down Northumberland Street across to Narrow Gate, where there was a small tower, before merging with the castle defences.

A trial trench at Beal's Yard excavated in 2002 located possible evidence of a rampart to the rear of the town wall. Here a metalled street was covered by substantial ground make-up that had been deposited against a feature outside the excavation. This made up ground may have formed a rampart to the rear of the town wall and positions the town wall under the present retaining wall and the western side of Hotspur Street. Later activity revealed in the trench is believed to be associated with the robbing of the town wall and comprised a large cut through the 'rampart'. Further evidence was identified by a watching brief in 2001, which located the remains of

the town wall beneath Greenwell Road. The structure was encountered at a depth of 1.11m below ground level, aligned north-east to south-west and running obliquely across the trench. The wall measured 1.55m wide, somewhat narrower than indicated by the written records of its construction, and built from rough ashlar blocks bonded with lime mortar.

### **Impact of the development**

The electrical conduit is to be laid within a machine excavated trench 600mm wide, which extends for 26m north to south along Hotspur Street before turning westwards for a further 56m. It will be excavated by a JCB to a depth below the present ground level dependant on the prevailing ground conditions, but which is not expected to exceed 1m (Figure 2).

The proposed scheme of works would indicate potential to impact on undisturbed stratigraphy, should it be present, during the excavation of the installation trench for the electrical cable.

The location of the development immediately beyond the medieval core of the historic centre of Alnwick and close to the extrapolated line of the medieval town wall, indicates considerable potential for the works undertaken to impact on medieval stratigraphy, possibly even the town wall itself.

### **OBJECTIVES**

In the light of the potential for the construction works to impact upon preserved archaeological remains it is proposed that a continuous watching brief be conducted during the ground work along Hotspur Street and around the turn onto Bondgate Without, but not along Bondgate Without itself. Provision will be made for the archaeological consultant to suspend works to allow for the rapid investigation and recording of objects or features encountered. Should archaeological material be encountered the consultant will keep the Assistant County Archaeologist informed.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Watching brief during excavation**

During all excavation activity a suitably experienced archaeologist, familiar with the archaeological background to the site, will be present to record any items of interest that area revealed by these excavations. All work will be carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and should follow the IFA Standards for Watching Briefs. This watching brief will conform to the following methodology.

A contingency of up to 20 person days of investigation can be invoked following consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist, the client and the monitoring archaeologist. In the event of hearths, kilns or ovens being encountered then provision will be made for an archaeo-magnetic sample to be taken and processed for dating purposes from each individual fired entity, or per identified building. This process will follow consultation with the Northumberland County Council Conservation Team.

#### **General standards**

All archaeological features identified during the monitoring will be recorded and sample excavated according to their type and form.

A 40 litre bulk palaeoenvironmental sample will be taken from all features recognised as suitable for the preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains.

Secure contexts will be sampled for dating where appropriate, whether on site or as sub samples of bulk samples. Any concentrations of charcoal or other carbonised material recovered on site will usually be retained.

Pottery and Animal Bone will be collected as bulk samples whilst significant artefacts will be three-dimensionally recorded prior to processing. All finds will be recorded and processed according to the BRP

system and submitted for post-excavation assessment. Finds recovery and storage strategies will be in accordance with published guidelines (English Heritage 1995 and IFA Guidelines for Finds Work). Should artefacts of gold or silver covered by the 1996 Treasure Act be recovered, appropriate procedures will be followed.

In the event of Human burials being revealed they will be left *in situ* and treated in an appropriate manner. After consultation with the County Archaeological Officer, if excavation is required, work will comply with the relevant home Office regulations.

Any archaeological features encountered will be hand-cleaned, excavated and recorded:

A photographic record will be taken using black and white print, colour slide film at 35mm format. In addition a digital photographic record will be compiled.

A written description of features will be recorded using the BRP *pro forma* context recording system.

All features will be drawn at an appropriate scale using pre-printed permatrace. Plans will normally be drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections at a scale of 1:10.

All archaeological features and horizons will be accurately tied into the Ordnance Survey grid. All levels will be tied in to Ordnance Datum.

Arrangements will be made with the appropriate museum for the deposition of the site archive within 6 month of the completion of the post-excavation report.

## **MONITORING**

Access will be made available at all reasonable times to the archaeological representatives of the Northumberland County council Conservation Team to inspect the excavation site.

Access to the site will be on the basis of prior notification and subject to any relevant health and safety considerations.

## **POST-EXCAVATION WORK, ARCHIVE AND REPORT COMPILATION**

On completion of the excavation an assessment of the site records and finds will be undertaken in accordance with English Heritage (1991) guidelines. This will include:

- collation of all site records
- compilation of a report
- production of context, photographic, finds and illustration databases
- analysis of the finds assemblage by relevant specialists
- environmental assessment of selected bulk samples

The assessment report, with each page and paragraph numbered and with cross referenced illustrations, will include:

### **Summary of the project background**

- site location
- methodology
- results of the watching brief
- site location plans and illustrations of results at appropriate scales
- interpretation of the results in an appropriate context
- post-excavation assessment of the site archive
- catalogue and assessment of the artefactual archive
- catalogue and assessment of the faunal remains

catalogue and assessment of the palaeoenvironmental samples recovered  
appendix containing a list and summary of each recorded context

A copy of the report should be submitted by the archaeologist to the commissioning client, and the County SMR, together with a PDF copy, within 2 months of completion of the work. A summary will be prepared for 'Archaeology in Northumberland' and an article will be submitted to a local or national journal if appropriate.

The site archive will be prepared to the standard specified in the Management of Archaeological Projects, appendix 3 (HBMC 1991) and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage (UKIC 1990). A summary account of the context record will be included. The archive will be deposited at the specified museum within 6 months of completion of the work on site.

An online OASIS form will be completed for the project as part of the post-excavation assessment process.

## **PERSONNEL**

The designated project manager Graeme Young, is one of the five directors of the Bamburgh Research Project. A graduate of Newcastle University, with 21 years of experience in field archaeology including directing a number of excavations of urban medieval sites in Newcastle and Durham. He is an Associate Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

Additional field staff, with appropriate archaeological experience, will be engaged as required.

## **SUB-CONTRACTED SPECIALISTS**

Although it is not possible to predict the range of artefacts that may be recovered provision has been made for the analysis of the most common artefacts.

<b>Material</b>	<b>Specialist</b>
Medieval pottery	Jenny Vaughan
Post-medieval pottery	Jenny Vaughan
Prehistoric pottery	Blaise Vyner
Roman Pottery	Blaise Vyner
Animal bone	Durham University Archaeological Services
Palaeoenvironmental	Durham University Archaeological Services
Conservation	Karen Barker

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Bamburgh Research Project complies with the 1974 Health and Safety Act and its subsequent amendments in all its operations. The SCAUM manual and the Bamburgh Research Project Health and Safety Policy Document is followed for all site works. A designated and appropriately trained first aider is present at all times during working hours. A First Aid kit, Accident Book and telephone are provided for each project. Safety footwear is mandatory on all excavation sites. Where required safety helmets and reflective jackets are provided. It is policy for a vehicle to be present at an excavation and staff must be appropriately equipped for bad weather.

All staff undergo a safety induction prior to commencing work on site. A written risk assessment is undertaken specific for each site. The safety assessment is reviewed on a daily basis and changes to the working conditions monitored continually during adverse weather conditions.

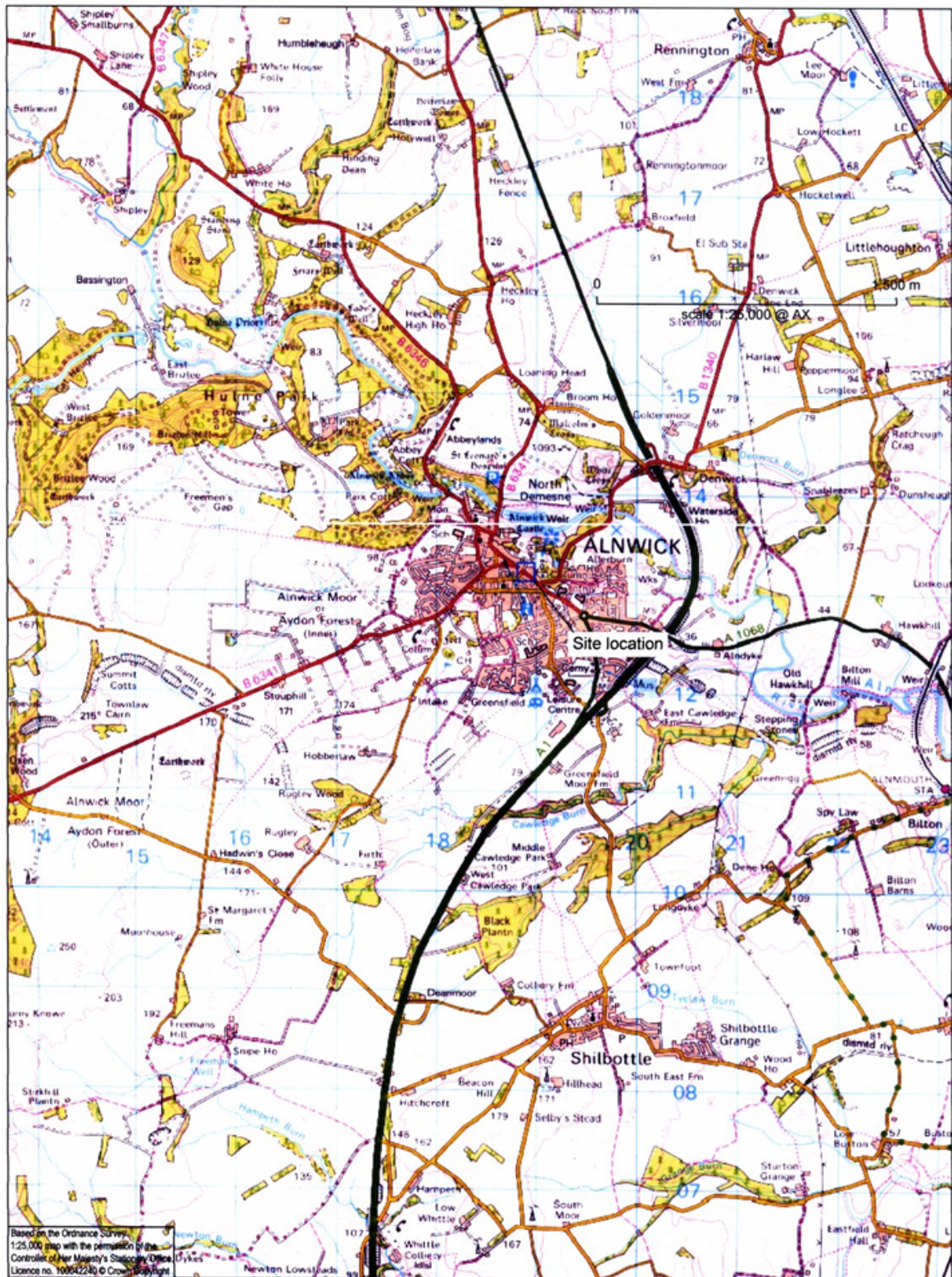


Figure 1 Site location





Figure 2 Location of electrical conduit trench



*Plate 1: Installation trench at the corner of Hotspur Street with Bondgate Without, facing north east*

*Plate*



*2:*

*Modern culvert on Bondgate Without, facing west*