

NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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REPORT REVISION SCHEDULE

DOCUMENT: BEAUMONT HOTEL, HEXHAM, WATCHING BRIEF

PROJECT: CP 743

Rev	Date	Prepared by	Edited by	Checked by
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02				
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CONTENTS

REPORT REVISION SCHEDULE	i
CONTENTS	ii
LIST OF PLATES, TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.....	iii
NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
1. INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION	1
1.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY	1
1.2 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT	1
2. METHODOLOGY	2
2.1 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN	2
2.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF	2
2.3 ARCHIVE	2
3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	4
3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	4
3.2 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	5
4. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS	7
4.1 INTRODUCTION	7
4.2 TRENCH 1	7
4.3 TRENCH 2	8
4.4 EASTERN DEEP SUPPORT PILE.....	9
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	11
5.1 CONCLUSIONS	11
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS	11
BIBLIOGRAPHY	12
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST	13
APPENDIX 2: FIGURES	14

LIST OF PLATES, TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES	Page
<i>Plate 1. Trench 1 looking south east from the Beaumont Hotel fire escape.</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Plate 2. Trench 1 looking north-east showing modern stratigraphy.</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Plate 3. Trench 1 looking east.</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Plate 4. Trench 2 looking north-west showing deeply stratified natural sand.</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Plate 5. Support Pile 'b' excavation, looking west.</i>	<i>9</i>

TABLES	Page
<i>Table 1. List of Contexts.</i>	<i>13</i>

FIGURES	Page
<i>Figure 1. Site Location Map.</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Figure 2. Location of Development Area</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Figure 3. Location of Watching Brief</i>	<i>16</i>

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In October 2008, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was invited by Swarbrick Associates, on behalf of their clients Mr and Mrs Owen, to maintain an archaeological watching brief at The Best Western Beaumont Hotel, Hexham, Northumberland (NY935639).

The work followed a planning application for the construction of a new extension to the Beaumont Hotel, which affected an area considered to have a high archaeological potential. The hotel is located within the historic core of Hexham, at a location which was once within the grounds of Hexham Abbey. The potential therefore existed for sensitive archaeological remains to be revealed by the proposed groundworks at the site.

The watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of the foundation trenches as well as the deep piling. This clearly indicated that in the southern half of the site the modern surface lay on the natural sand substrate (which was excavated to a depth of 2m without change) while the northern extent of the site revealed modern overburden and makeup at least 1.4m in depth with no sign of the natural substrate.

Due to the lack of archaeological presence within the area excavated so far, it is considered that no further archaeological monitoring is required within the current scheme of works, unless excavation to a greater depth than has already been tested is required.



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking south east from the Beaumont Hotel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Owen for commissioning the project.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to Nick Best of Northumberland County Council for his help during this project.

The watching brief was undertaken by Tony Liddell, Project Supervisor. The report was written and illustrations produced by Tony Liddell. The project was managed by Martin Railton, Project Manager. The report was edited by Martin Railton, and Matt Town, Project Managers.

1. INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

1.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 1.1.1 The development area lies to the east of The Best Western Beaumont Hotel, near the southern extent of Beaumont Road, Hexham, Northumberland (NY 935 639: see Figures 1 and 2 for the precise location).
- 1.1.2 The geology of the immediate area consists of stepped alluvial terraces which have been created by the River Tyne and its changing course. The underlying geology consists of Middle and Upper Limestone Groups with several areas of Coal Measure rocks as fault inliners. This geology is overlain by glacial sands, gravel and boulder clay (Countryside Commission 1998).

1.2 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.2.1 In October 2008, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was invited by Swarbrick Associates, on behalf of their clients, to maintain an archaeological watching brief at The Beaumont Hotel.
- 1.2.2 The work followed a planning application for the construction of a new extension to the hotel, which affected an area considered to have a high archaeological potential (Planning Application No: 20070841; NCCCT Ref: T25/32; 7543). The Beaumont Hotel is located within the historic core of Hexham, at a location which was once within the grounds of Hexham Abbey. Parts of these grounds were lost to the construction of Beaumont Street around 1860, when a number of burials formerly within the Abbey precinct were revealed. Two Roman altars were also discovered. The potential therefore existed for further sensitive archaeological remains to be revealed by the proposed groundworks at the site.
- 1.2.3 The main impact of the development was to have occurred within the footprint of the proposed extension at the rear of the hotel, through the excavation for pile caps. Additional impact may also have arisen from the provision of services. As a result of the archaeological potential of the site, and in line with guidance given in Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (Archaeology and Planning), a programme of archaeological work was required in order to mitigate the impact of the development on archaeological remains, undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation submitted to and approved by Northumberland County Council Conservation Team.
- 1.2.4 This report sets out the results of the fieldwork in the form of a short document outlining the findings of the watching brief, followed by a statement of the archaeological potential and recommendations for the area.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 All fieldwork methodology was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001), and generally accepted best practice.
- 2.1.2 All fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the Project Design produced by Martin Railton of North Pennines Archaeology Limited and ratified by Nick Best of Northumberland County Council Conservation Team (NCCCT).

2.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.2.1 The watching brief consisted of the observation and recording of groundworks associated with the pile-caps and the foundation trenching for the new extension. The watching brief took place on 29th-30th October, and November 6th, 2008.
- 2.2.2 The watching brief was undertaken by trained and experienced archaeologists and conformed with all relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001) as well as English Heritage guidelines. The watching brief involved the systematic examination and accurate recording of all archaeological features, horizons and artefacts identified. A full and detailed stratigraphical record was produced according to the conventions set out in the North Pennines Archaeology Limited Excavation Manual (Giecco 2003), using NPA pro-forma record sheets, with all relevant plans and sections produced, and the trenches photographed using Black and White Film, Colour Transparencies and Digital Photography
- 2.2.3 All groundworks were tied into the Ordnance Datum and the National Grid.
- 2.2.4 In summary, the main objectives of the watching brief were:
- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
 - to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
 - to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
 - to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survived in order to understand site and landscape formation processes;
 - to inform the exact location and depth of the service run and new pathway;
 - to establish, where possible, the condition of the remains for future management purposes.

2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 The full archive has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with the current English Heritage guidelines set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and Brown, DH, 2007, *Archaeological Archives A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation*. The archive

will be deposited within an appropriate repository, and a copy of the report given to the County Historic Environment Record, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier **NPA 08 BWB-A**.

- 2.3.2 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd support the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an online index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature created as a result of developer-funded archaeological fieldwork. As a result, details of the results of this assessment will be made available by North Pennines Archaeology, as a part of this national project. The report can be accessed under the unique project identifier *northpen3-51462*.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to Hexham.
- 3.1.2 *Prehistory (up to AD 70):* there is no evidence for Palaeolithic, Mesolithic or Neolithic activity Hexham, though the extent of long-distance trade in stone axes during the Neolithic is attested by unprovenanced finds of axes along the Tyne valley, some originating from Great Langdale, Cumbria. Nearby sites of Bronze Age date include a Bronze Age Cist excavated in 1921 at the Hexham Golf Course (NY 9164). No known Iron Age sites exist within the boundaries of Hexham, with the closest being Hexham Grid Supply Point, Newbrough, 9 km north-west of the town, where a hillfort was identified by Northern Archaeological Associates in 1997 (NAA 1997).
- 3.1.3 *Roman (AD 70-450):* Dere Street lies c.5km west of Hexham, and crosses the River Tyne at Corbridge. A potential Roman Road (period not yet confirmed) also extends from Hexham to Diptonmill, c.4km to the south. Hadrian's Wall, built in c.AD122 lies 4km to the north and extends across the Tyne-Solway gap.
- 3.1.4 *Early-Medieval (AD 450-1066):* Hexham is a historic town, which has been settled since the early medieval period at least, and possibly earlier. The earliest documentary reference to the settlement is dated to AD 674, when land was granted by Queen Ethelrid, (or Ethelreda), of Northumberland, to Wilfrid, to endow a new bishopric. The Church of St Andrew was founded at this time, later becoming a Cathedral in AD 681. Two further churches were founded during the 7th-8th century, around the Market Place at Hexham, the Church of St Peter, and the Church of St Mary, although the exact location of these has yet to be confirmed.
- 3.1.5 The Bishop moved to Lindisfarne in AD 821, at which time the Church of St Andrew's became the centre of a monastery. The monastic buildings were destroyed by a Viking incursion of AD 875, and little now survives of the early church.
- 3.1.6 *Medieval (c.1066-1485):* the Church of St. Andrews was re-founded by Augustinian Monks in 1113, and a gatehouse was added in the mid 12th century. The priory was provided with a precinct wall, some of which survives in later property boundaries (Armstrong 2002, 9). Much of the area between the Gatehouse and the Priory has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Abbey became a parish church in 1536 following the Dissolution of the Monasteries.
- 3.1.7 The centre of Hexham contains surviving buildings of medieval date. The medieval administrative district is thought to be marked by the location of the mid-14th century Old Gaol and the early 15th century Moot Hall. During the medieval period, Hexham grew into a successful market town, serving a commercial function for the surrounding agricultural areas. The layout of the medieval market town is thought to be reflected in the early 19th century town plan, focusing on the Abbey and Market Place, with properties following the street frontages and burgage plots to the rear. This can be seen on Wood's plan of Hexham, surveyed in 1827.
- 3.1.8 *Post-medieval (to c.1485-1900):* the farm associated with the Priory of St. Andrews covered a large area to the west of the precinct, much of which was incorporated into a

park in the 18th century, known as the Sele. This is now designated as a registered Historic Park and Garden.

- 3.1.9 The leather industry was of particular importance in Hexham during the post-medieval period, with livestock being produced in the surrounding countryside especially for skins and hides to be processed and sold in Hexham. A number of tannery sites were located in the Burn Lane area of the town. The success of this industry enabled Hexham to expand its population significantly, and to flourish during the 17th and 18th centuries. William Hutchinson, upon his visit in 1776, stated that, “This place is not very populous, the inhabitants being computed at 2000 souls: the streets are narrow and ill-built” (quoted in Armstrong 2002, 25). The effect of the Industrial Revolution and developments on Tyneside led to the decline of cottage industries and more rural livelihoods, ending the growth of Hexham.

3.2 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of some of the archaeological works within Hexham.
- 3.2.2 In 1998, a series of Resistive Tomography surveys were undertaken on the bowling green north west of Hexham Abbey at the request of Dr Grace Simpson to investigate the possibility of Roman material remaining in the vicinity of the Abbey (Szymanski 1998). The survey produced subsurface variations consistent with a rubble-filled north-south ditch with related construction dykes. It was also noted that the variations could also represent subsurface voids or tunnels.
- 3.2.3 In 2000, Tyne and Wear Museums undertook a watching brief and archaeological evaluation south east of Hexham House which located five sections of stone structures interpreted as being the remains of features representing early Abbey buildings (TWM 2000).
- 3.2.4 In August 2006, NPA undertook an archaeological watching brief on land disturbed by the erection of new interpretation panels at Hexham Abbey (Crompton and Peters 2006). This report is available via the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project, reference *northpen3-23902*. The archaeological material encountered, which consisted of animal bones and an oyster shell, was consistent with that of food waste material from past habitation in the vicinity. Fragmentary human bones were also discovered, and this is unsurprising given the location of the site so close to the Abbey.
- 3.2.5 In April 2007, NPA undertook a desk-based assessment of land at Battle Hill, Hexham (Peters 2007). This report is available OASIS project, reference *northpen3-25978*. The results of the research showed that the development site remained as a backplot for the properties fronting Battle Hill and St Mary’s Chare until a series of small workshops and outbuildings were constructed. These buildings date to between 1844 and 1860. At some time between 1860 and 1897, these buildings were replaced by an L-shaped building, and this survived at least until 1920. Much of the eastern part of the development site remained clear of buildings throughout this period. The probability therefore is that areas of undisturbed medieval or post medieval archaeology may survive in this area.

- 3.2.6 Between May 2005 and October 2006, NPA undertook an archaeological watching brief (Peters 2007) on a total of 376 test pits excavated during the Hexham water mains refurbishment, by Northumbrian Water PLC. Despite the high archaeological potential of the area, and the high number of test pits excavated under archaeological supervision, few archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief. This can be largely explained by the location of the test pits upon pre-existing water main services, meaning that the areas excavated had been previously disturbed. The most important of the few archaeological features encountered were the surviving remains of a wall footing and nearby large sandstone wall on Eastgate, and human remains encountered by the Market Place on Beaumont Street. The wall may be evidence for a much-disputed town wall, which may have once defended the town. The human remains are probably related to the period before Beaumont Street was constructed, when the area remained an integral part of the Abbey grounds. This report is available via the OASIS project, reference *northpen3-21389*.

4. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1. The watching brief was divided into three stages: The first stage, breaking the concrete and setting the initial piles, was not watched by NPA. The second stage was the excavation of the northern foundation trench, and the third stage was the excavation of the south-eastern foundation trench. The watching brief took place on 29th-30th October and November 6th 2008.

4.1.2 The location of the watching brief can be seen on *Figures 2 and 3*.

4.2 TRENCH 1



Plate 2. Trench 1 looking north-east showing modern stratigraphy.

4.2.1 Trench 1 consisted of 11.64m² of foundation trench and four pile areas covering an area of 5.32m². This trench formed the foundations for the northern extent of the building extension.

4.2.2 The stratigraphical profile of the trench comprised modern build-up and backfill, with service cuts and old pipes and cables visible. The trench was cut to c.1.4m below the modern surface and the natural substrate comprising a yellow-brown sand (101), was

not visible. The deepest strata was a compact dark grey-brown sandy clay (**106**), with brick and sandstone inclusions: the base extent of this layer was not found within the confines of the excavation. Above this was a c.0.35m thick compact layer of ash (**105**), and above that a c.0.16m thick deposit of a dark brown compact clay with inclusions of brick (**104**). Above this clay strata was a c.0.21m thick band of a fairly compact pale brown sand and brick/sandstone rubble deposit used as sub-base (**103**). Above this was the 0.06m thick remains of an earlier concrete and tarmac face (**102**). The modern surface was a c.0.07m thick layer of concrete (**100**).

- 4.2.3 Plates 2 and 3 show the modern stratigraphy uncovered in Trench 1. Trench 1 is located on Figure 2.



Plate 3. Trench 1 looking east.

- 4.2.4 No deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were discovered within the limits of Trench 1.

4.3 TRENCH 2

- 4.3.1 Trench 1 consisted of 3.25m² of foundation trench and three pile areas covering an area of 4.475m². This trench formed the foundations for the southern extent of the building extension.
- 4.3.2 The stratigraphical profile of the trench comprised the modern surface and related strata with the natural substrate, yellow-brown sand (**101**), visible directly below. Trench 2 was excavated to c.2m in depth through natural sand. The only man-made layers were rubble sub-base (**103**) at 0.20m in depth, on top of which was the 0.08m thick modern concrete surface (**100**).
- 4.3.3 Plate 4 shows the undisturbed natural substrate in Trench 2. Trench 2 is located on Figure 2.



Plate 4. Trench 2 looking north-west showing deeply stratified natural sand.

4.3.4 No deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were discovered within the limits of Trench 2.

4.4 EASTERN DEEP SUPPORT PILE



Plate 5. Support Pile 'b' excavation, looking west.

- 4.4.1 The eastern deep support pile (see Figure 3 and Plate 5) was situated on the alignment for the eastern wall of the extension. The excavation around this support pile entailed the only excavation in this part of the development. The dimensions of the cut made for the pile was 1.85m in length by 1.7m in width.
- 4.4.2 The trench was excavated to c.1.65m below the current surface, and natural sand (**101**) was found 0.35m below the tarmac, with a sheet of *terram* over the natural substrate, a deposit of rubble (**103**) lying over this c.0.25m deep, with a 0.10m thick layer of modern tarmac (**100**) over this.
- 4.4.3 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were found during the excavation of this pile.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of the foundation trenches as well as the deep piling. This clearly indicated that in the southern half of the site the modern surface lay on the natural sand substrate (which was excavated to a depth of 2m without change) while the northern extent of the site revealed modern overburden and makeup at least 1.4m in depth with no sign of the natural substrate.
- 5.1.2 The potential for archaeological remains of all periods remains high within the northern segment of the site below the modern build-up, whilst the potential remains very low within the southern segment of the site below the modern tarmac. The potential for archaeological remains of all periods remains very high within the vicinity of the development site.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.2.1 Due to the lack of archaeological presence within the area excavated it is recommended that no further archaeological monitoring is required within the current scheme of works unless excavation to a greater depth is required.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

Context	Type	Description
100	Deposit	Modern concrete surface
101	Natural	Yellow/pale brown sand
102	Deposit	Old concrete/tarmac surface
103	Deposit	Rubble sub-base
104	Deposit	Dark brown clay
105	Deposit	Ash layer
106	Deposit	Clay soil with stone and brick inclusions
107	Cut	Cut for modern concrete wall base (109)
108	Fill	Modern sand fill of cut [107]
109	Deposit	Modern concrete wall base

Table 1. List of Contexts.

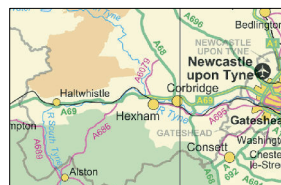
APPENDIX 2: FIGURES




North Pennines Archaeology Ltd
2008

PROJECT: Beaumont Hotel, Hexham
SCALE: 1:10000
REPORT NO: CP 743/08
CLIENT: Mr. and Mrs. Owen
DRAWN BY: TL
DATE: November 2008

LOCATION:

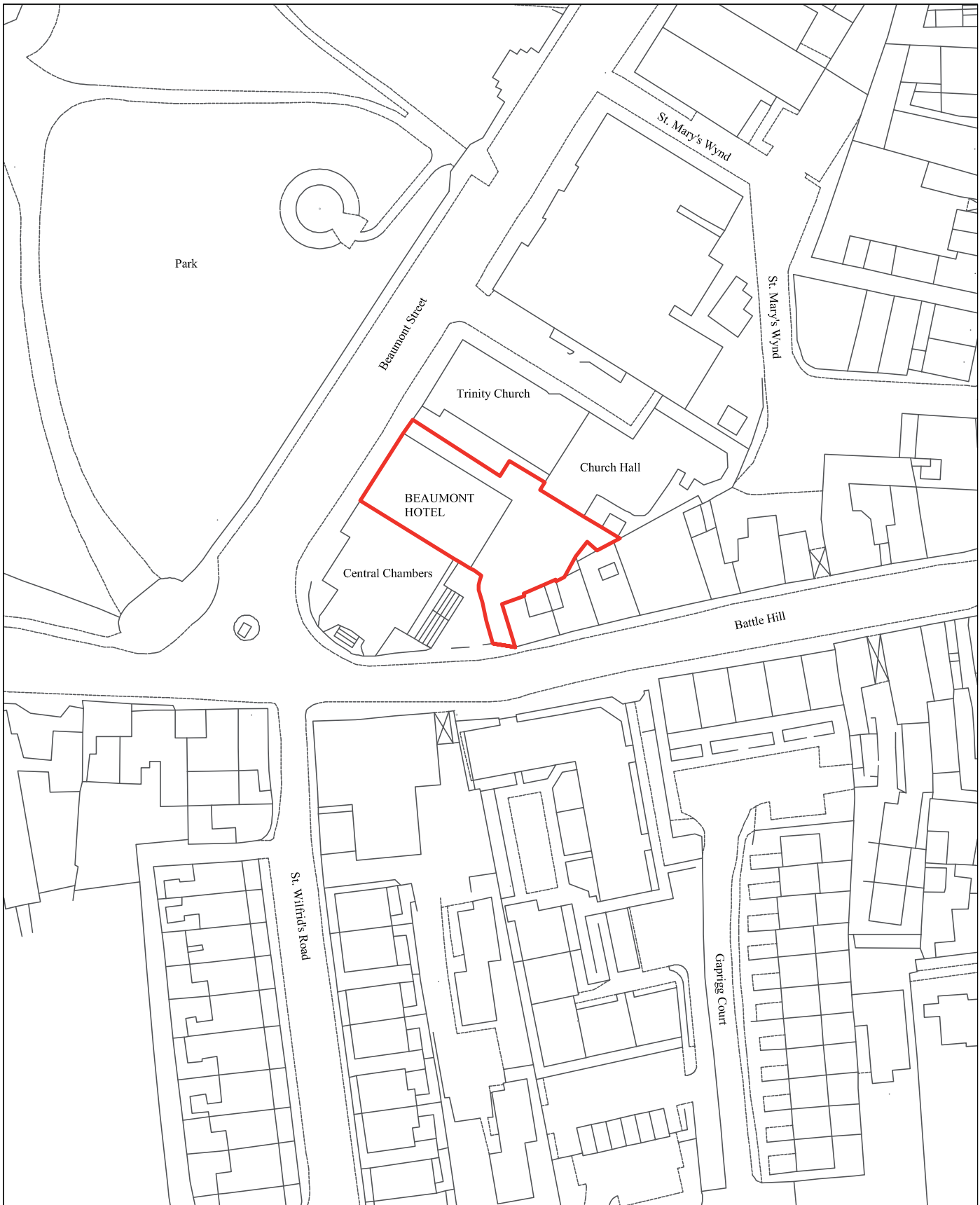


KEY

 Site Location

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Figure 1: Site Location






 <p>North Pennines Archaeology Ltd 2008</p>	<p>PROJECT: Beaumont Hotel, Hexham</p> <p>SCALE: 1:1000 (at A4)</p> <p>REPORT No: CP 743/08</p> <p>CLIENT Mr. and Mrs. Owen</p> <p>DRAWN BY: TL</p> <p>DATE: November 2008</p>	<p>ORIENTATION:</p> 	<p>KEY:</p>  <p>Development Area</p> <p><small>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100014732</small></p>
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Figure 2. Location of Development Area

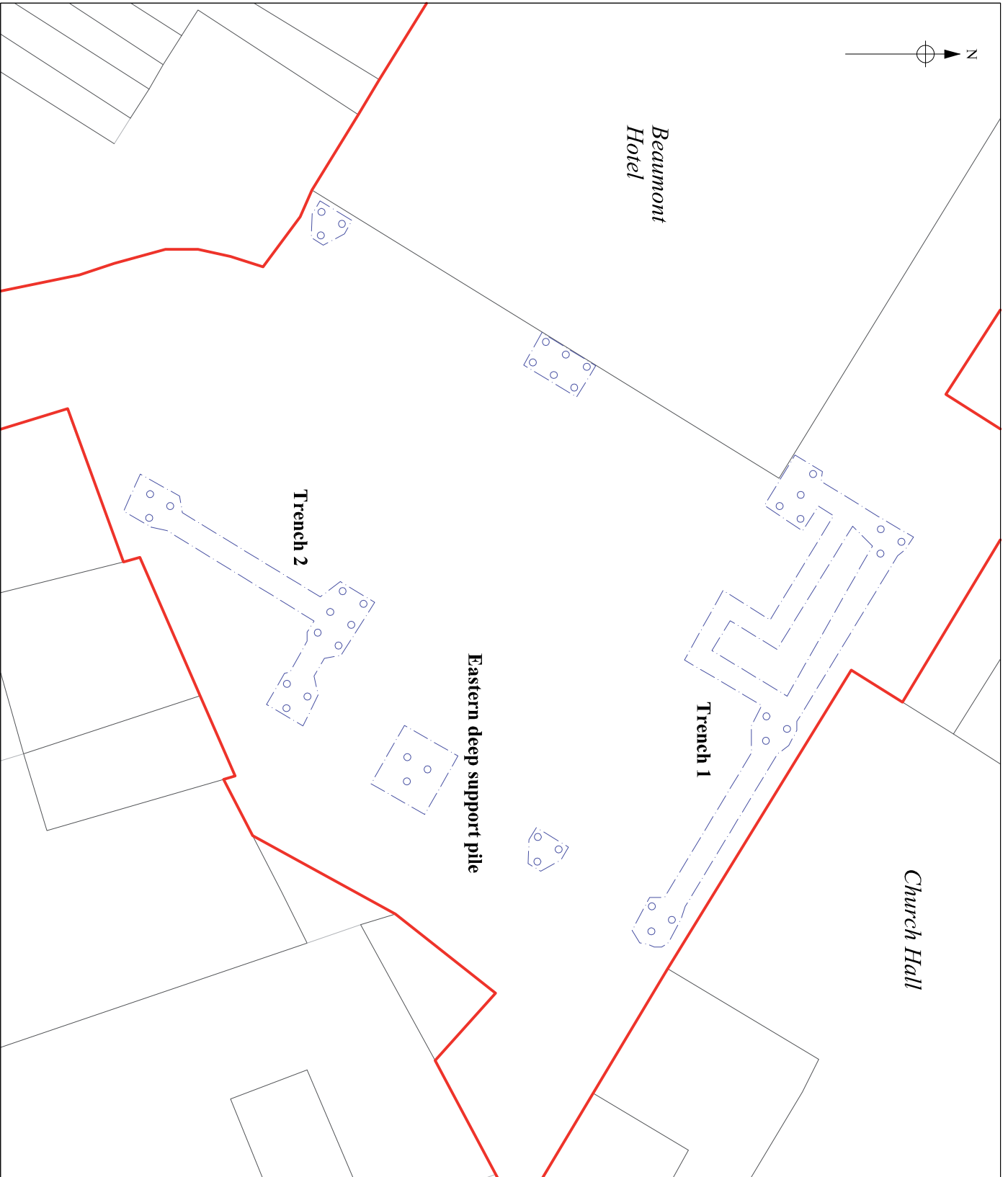


Figure 3. Location of Watching Brief



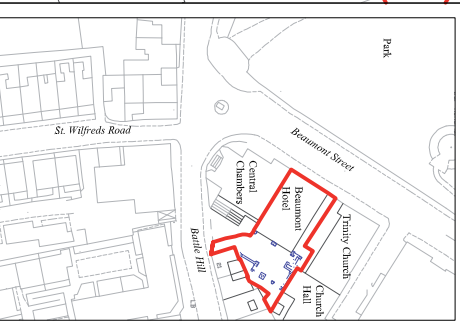
North Pennines Archaeology Ltd
2008
Beaumont Hotel
Watching Brief

Scale 1:150 (at A4)

DRAWN BY: TL

DATE: November 2008

LOCATION:



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Mr and Mrs Owen