
**Monitoring of Works under Archaeological
Supervision and Control**

**11 Belstead Avenue
Caister-on-Sea**

**on behalf of
Mr P Barwick**

**Heather Wallis
March 2012**

HW Report No. 111

Project name **11 Belstead Avenue**
Client **Mr P Barwick**
NHER Event No **ENF 127325**
Grid reference **TG 5179 1211**
Date of fieldwork **27th August 2011 and 5th March 2012**

Introduction

Planning permission was sought for an extension to the rear of a property and for the construction of a new garage at 11 Belstead Avenue, Caister-on-Sea. Due to the site's location (Fig. 1), close to the Roman fort of Caister and probably within the *vicus* to the south of the fort, a Brief for Monitoring the works under Archaeological Supervision and Control was issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

The archaeological works were commissioned by the property owner. The watching brief on the works for the extension to the property was undertaken on 27th August 2011 and for the construction of the garage on 5th March 2012. For the first visit weather and recording conditions were good, while for the second visit conditions were very poor, work being undertaken in heavy rain.

Archaeological Background

Belstead Avenue is situated to the south of Caister Roman fort within an area of known Roman civilian settlement. The fort was established during the early part of the 3rd century, and was one of several located on the east and south coasts of Britain (including Brancaster and Burgh Castle) which are known as Saxon Shore forts. Details of excavation at the fort, undertaken in the 1950s, were published in 1993 (Darling with Gurney 1993). Associated with the fort was a civilian settlement (*vicus*). Evidence for this has come from the study of aerial photographs as well as excavations and watching briefs. Streets, enclosures, buildings, pits, ditches have all been revealed. Finds include pottery and metal artefacts and coins. Both the fort and *vicus* fell out of use in the late 4th century when the area was largely abandoned until the 7th century.

During the Middle and Late Saxon periods this area again became a focus of activity. Artefact evidence suggests this may have been a high status

settlement. An extensive cemetery of this date has been identified and partially excavated to the south of the fort, but to the north of the development site.

Caister-on-Sea features in the Domesday Book of 1086 when the settlement was known as 'Castra'. The earliest architectural evidence within the present Parish Church of the Holy Trinity dates to the 13th century with alterations taking place in later centuries (Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 242). Settlement at Caister has been continuous from the 11th century to the present, although the current site was not developed until the 1930s.

Prior to work commencing the Norfolk HER was searched in order to identify sites which lay close to the development site. Although the site of the Roman fort and *vicus*, along with the location of later Saxon activity have been known for a long time more recent archaeological works have added detail to this. Since 2000 works to the east of the present site have revealed a Bronze Age pits, Roman buildings, pits and ditches and post-medieval activity (NHER 35843, 37421, 40651, 51057)

The Watching Brief

The excavation of the footings for the extension to the property was undertaken in one day and the archaeological recording was completed within this time. A second visit was made to monitor the excavation of the footings for the garage. All of the footings trenches (Fig. 2), which were 0.6m wide, were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision. The depths of the trenches varied slightly, but were all between 0.9m and 1.1m deep. In the northern part of the site the orange/yellow natural sand/silt/clay was revealed at the base of the trenches.

Topsoil (01) was observed to be c.0.25m deep (Fig. 3), although in some areas this was deeper as planting holes for garden plants were noted. Below this up to 0.3m of a mid orange brown silt/sand/clay (02) was noted which in turn lay above mid orange brown sand/silt/clay (03). All of these layers appeared very sterile although root disturbance was extensive. Below this lay a deposit of sand/silt/clay with occasional charcoal and fired clay fleck (10). These deposits were consistent across the whole site.

Features were identified cutting the natural subsoil (11) in the west footing trench of the extension (Figs 2 and 3). Their fills were very similar to deposit 10 so it was not possible to establish if they were sealed by this deposit or cut it. Two ditches and one pit were excavated and recorded.

Both the ditches (07 and 09) lay on a north-east to south-west alignment with regular sloping sides and flat bases. Ditch 09 was 0.85m wide and almost 0.3m deep. Ditch 07 was smaller being only 0.45m wide and 0.15m deep.

Both contained identical fills of mid orange brown sand/silt/clay with occasional charcoal fleck. Adjacent to the smaller of these ditches was a pit (**05**). This was c.0.85m wide and over 0.9m long (extending beyond the edge of excavation). It contained a single fill which was slightly greyer and siltier than the adjacent ditch. Flecks of both charcoal and fired clay were observed in the fill.

Dating evidence was scarce although 3 tiny fragments of heavily abraded Roman pottery and one iron nail was recovered with from the fills of pit **05** and ditch **07**. Ditch **09** produced one small sherd of Roman pottery and one fragment of ceramic building material.

No other features were observed within the footing trenches. No other artefacts were recovered despite observation and metal-detecting of all the excavated soils.

Conclusions

Considering the location of the site to the south of the Roman fort, archaeological evidence was surprisingly sparse. This suggests that occupation and activity within this area was not intensive. Other archaeological recording projects undertaken nearby also show occupation in this area to be sparse and possibly of an agricultural nature (eg. Site 8675, 29 Belstead Avenue, in 2000). In contrast to this, excavation further to the east (Site 35843, Albone 2006), produced evidence of more concentrated activity which was renewed over a period of time. Again this evidence was for agricultural and light industrial activity rather than domestic properties.

The results from the present watching brief contribute to the developing picture of occupation to the south of the fort. At present this appears to be of dispersed occupation largely of an agricultural nature.

Bibliography

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| Albone, J., | 2006 | Archaeological Excavation on land off Norwich Road, Caister-On-Sea, Norfolk. <i>Archaeological Project Services Report No. 108/03</i> |
| Darling, M.J. with Gurney, D., | 1993 | <i>Caister-on –Sea Excavations by Charles Green 1951-1955</i> . East Anglian Archaeology 60 |
| Pevsner, N. and Wilson, B., | 1997 | <i>The Buildings of England. Norfolk 1: Norwich and North-East</i> |

Acknowledgements

Thanks are expressed to both Paul Barwick who commissioned this work.
Alice Lyons identified the pottery.

Appendix 1 Context List

Context No.	Category	Description	Finds	Date
01	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy clayey loam		Modern
02	Layer	Mid orange brown clayey silt/sand		post-Roman
03	Layer	Mid orange brown clayey silty sand		post-Roman
04	Pit fill	Mid grey brown clayey sandy silt	Y	Romano-British
05	Pit			Romano-British
06	Ditch fill	Mid orange brown clayey sandy silt	Y	Romano-British
07	Ditch			Romano-British
08	Ditch fill	Mid orange brown clayey sandy silt	Y	Romano-British
09	Ditch			Romano-British
10	Layer	Mid orange brown clayey sandy silt		Romano-British
11	Natural	Yellow/orange clay/sand		

Appendix 2 Finds List

Context No.	Category		No	Wt (g)	Date (Century)
04/06	Pottery	Sandy Grey Ware	2	9	Late 1st-4th
	Pottery	Sandy Coarse Ware	1	7	2nd -4th
	Fe	Nail	1		
08	Pottery	Sandy Grey Ware	1	1	post-Roman
	CBM	Fragment of tegula	1	13	1st-4th

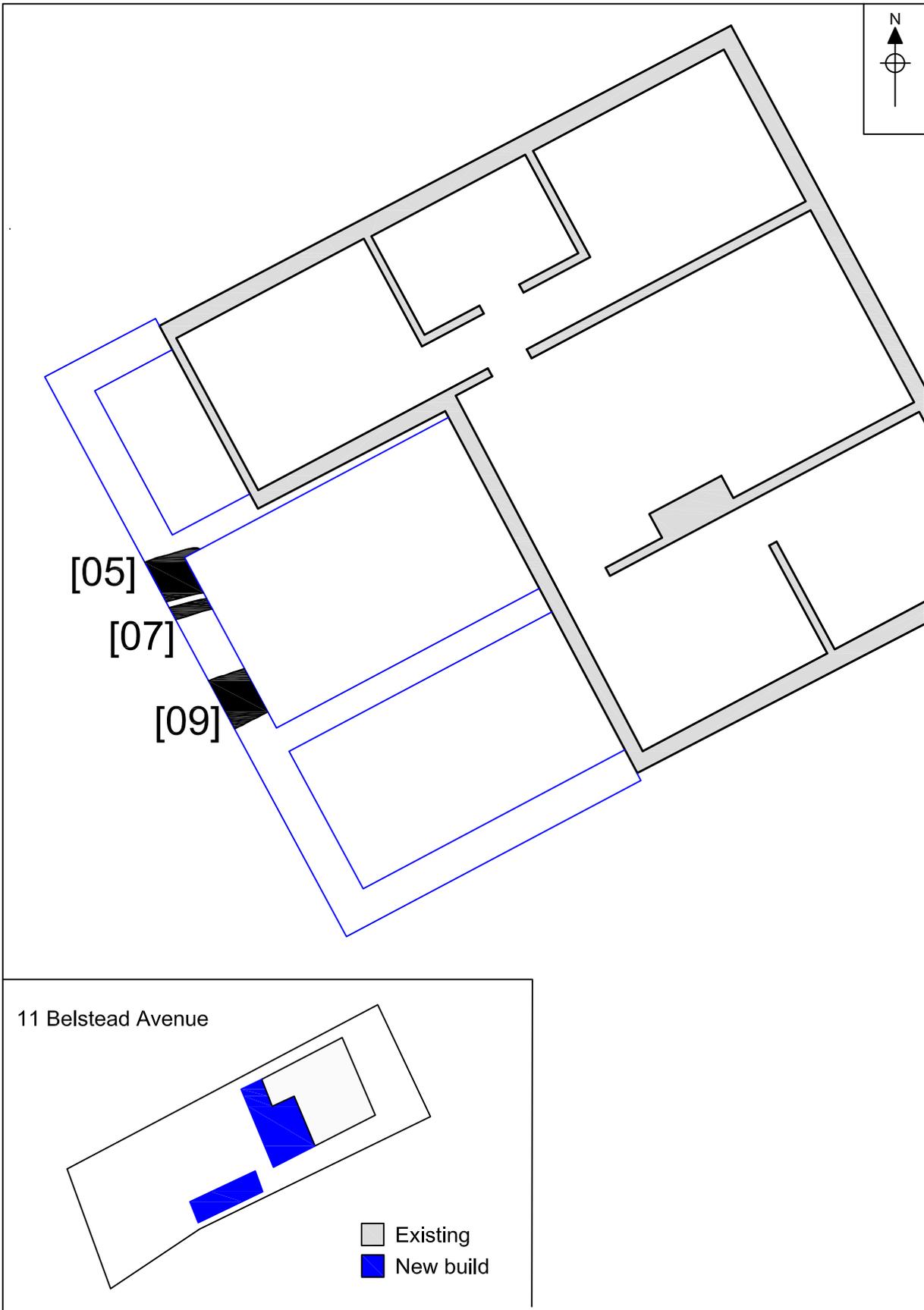


Figure 2. Location of features. Scale 1:100.

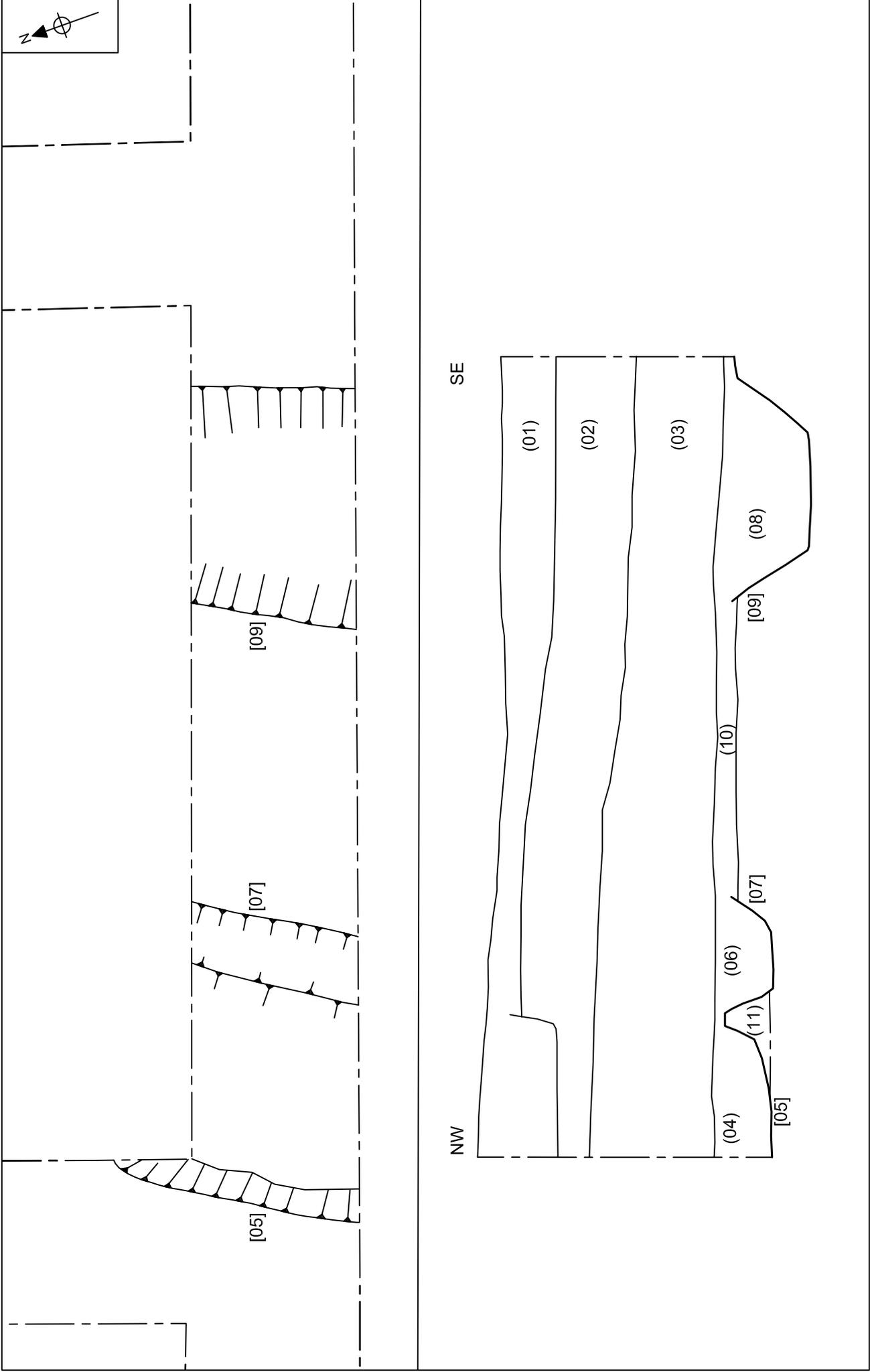


Figure 3. Plan and south-west facing section of features. Scale 1:20 .