

# **The Rectory, Main Road, Somersham, Suffolk**

**Planning application: 0271/11**

**HER Ref: SSH 018**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Report**

(© John Newman BA MIFA, 2 Pearsons Place, Henley, Ipswich, IP6 0RA)

(June 2011)

## **Site details for HER**

Name: Land to rear of The Rectory and east of St Marys Church, Main Road, Somersham, IP8 4RD

Client: Somersham PCC

Local planning authority: Mid Suffolk DC

Planning application ref: 0271/11

Development: Extension to graveyard for St Marys Church

Date of fieldwork: 25 May, 2011

HER Ref: SSH 018

OASIS ref: johnnewm1-102940

Grid ref: TM 0910 4870

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*Summary: Somersham, land to rear of The Rectory, and east of St Marys Church, Main Road (SSH 018, TM 0910 4870) evaluation trenching of the area proposed as an extension to the graveyard for St Marys Church revealed a single pit which did not contain any finds and whose irregular base suggests an origin as a tree root hole. A metal detector search and visual scan of the upcast spoil recovered one small pottery sherd of probable Roman date and metal finds of 19<sup>th</sup> century or later date (John Newman Archaeological Services for Somersham PCC).*

## 1. Introduction & background

1.1 Somersham PCC commissioned John Newman Archaeological Services (JNAS) to undertake the archaeological evaluation works on the area of garden adjacent to the existing graveyard around St Marys Church which was detached from the remainder of the garden of The Rectory, Main Road, Somersham (see Fig. 1) when this property was sold by the Diocese. A planning application, 0271/11, has been submitted to incorporate this area of detached garden into the existing graveyard and the subsequent evaluation requirements to test the area concerned for evidence of previous use for burials, or any other indication of past activity, were set out in a Brief and Specification (see Appendix II) set by Dr A Antrobus of the Suffolk CC Archaeological Service. Prior to the evaluation works a search was made in the County Record Office for historical documentary or cartographic sources that might throw light on the area concerned (*'The Churchyard, Somersham St Mary'* A M Breen, October, 2010) and a walkover survey was also carried out (*'Archaeological Assessment Somersham St Mary'* R D Carr nd). Both the record office search and survey were inconclusive regarding past use of this plot of land though the general consensus was that the eastern boundary of the present graveyard is one of some historic integrity and no clear evidence can be concluded for the existence of burials on its eastern side in what became part of the garden of The Rectory. However without trial trenching this conclusion could not be definitive, in addition evidence for later Saxon or medieval settlement type activity might also be found close to the parish church.

1.2 Somersham parish is some 5km west of modern Ipswich in the valley of a small, west-east flowing, stream which is a tributary of the River Gipping to the east. The main part of the village is located along the main street which runs on an east-west alignment approximately parallel to the small valley formed by the stream with the parish church of St Marys being at the eastern edge of the historic village core, close to the 25m OD contour line and on the southern side of the valley and c80m south of the main village street. Soils in the area are loams over sand and gravels towards the valley base with heavier, Till, deposits higher up towards the watershed.

1.3 As outlined in section 1 above examination of historic documentary and cartographic sources and a walkover survey could not produce a conclusive result regarding the plot of land proposed as an extension to the graveyard (see Fig. 2). Therefore while the possibility for previous use of the area concerned for burials was low it could not be ruled out. Evidence for past settlement type activity of later Saxon or medieval date was also a strong possibility in such close proximity to the parish church and the proposal to incorporate this plot of land into the graveyard will result in major ground disturbance in the years to come with consequent damage to archaeological deposits should any be present.

## 2. Evaluation methodology

2.1 The area of the proposed graveyard extension to the east of St Marys Church was trenched to a previously agreed plan with two north-south aligned trenches giving an extensive sample of the plot of land (see Fig. 2). This plot of land is rectangular and covers an area of c875m<sup>2</sup> measuring c55m along its north/south axis by 15m wide and both trial trenches were excavated on a north-south alignment as any burials, if they were present, would most likely be on an east-west orientation.

The trenches were also slightly off-set to give a more systematic sample of the plot. In all 34m of trench at a width of 1.3m were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision to the top of the underlying naturally occurring chalky and sandy clay with flints Till deposit using a wide, toothless, ditching bucket giving a sample of 44.2m<sup>2</sup>, or just over 5%, of the plot of land. The exposed chalky clay with flints surface in the southern trench and sandy clay with flints surface in the northern trench was closely examined for archaeological features and any indistinct areas were hand cleaned and the single exposed feature was sectioned by hand. The upcast spoil from the trench was examined visually and by an experienced detector user. Site visibility for features and finds is considered to have been good throughout the evaluation on a dry, sunny day. The trench was recorded in relation to existing mapped details. A full photographic record in digital and monochrome formats was taken of the trenching works (see Appendix I).

### 3. Results

3.1 The southern trench (T1 on Fig. 2) was 17m long and 1.3m wide on a north-south alignment. The soil profile proved to have an upper layer of recently deposited top soil containing Post medieval brick/tile fragments which was 400/500mm deep; this material was imported to the site within the last 5 years to fill a hollow area in former garden (Stuart Diaper pers. comm.). Below this the original top soil layer, which was 300mm deep, could be seen and this lay above 300mm of a mid brown clayey subsoil which in turn lay over the naturally occurring chalky clay with flints Till deposit. The only feature revealed was a pit towards the southern end of the trench (see Fig. 3- 0002) which was 2.4m across and 300mm deep with an irregular base and a mid brown sandy clay fill (0003). No finds were recovered from this feature though one very small (2/3gm) sherd of abraded Roman period greyware pottery was found in the upcast spoil (0001) from the trench. All the other finds seen in the trench spoil were of 19<sup>th</sup> century or later date.

3.2 The northern trench (T2 on Fig. 2) was also 17m long and 1.3m wide and on a north-south alignment. In this trench the 300mm of topsoil lay over 200mm of a mid brown clayey subsoil which lay over the naturally occurring sandy clay with flints Till deposit. No features were revealed in this trench and, again, the only finds in the upcast spoil were of 19<sup>th</sup> century or later date.

### 4. Conclusion

4.1 The evaluation results support the conclusions of the record office search and walkover survey that this plot of land has, historically, been outside the graveyard for the parish church. The single feature identified (0002) with its irregular base is probably best interpreted as a tree root hole of uncertain date and the lack of any other features or pre 19<sup>th</sup> century finds points to the parish church having been on the south-eastern edge of the medieval village with only agricultural land on its eastern boundary. While it cannot be discounted that stray burials could exist outside the eastern boundary to the present graveyard this possibility is assessed as being very low and previous systematic use of the plot of land in question for funerary purposes can be discounted. Similarly evidence of later Saxon or medieval domestic use of the area is absent.

4.3 Based on the evaluation results it is recommended that no further archaeological investigations be carried out on the proposed graveyard extension to the east of the parish church.

**Archive-** to be deposited with the Suffolk CC Archaeological Service under the HER ref. SSH 018.

**Disclaimer-** any opinions regarding the need for further archaeological work in relation to this proposed development are those of the author's alone. Formal comment regarding the need for further work must be sought from the official Archaeological Advisors to the relevant Planning Authority.

**(Acknowledgements:** JNAS is grateful to Somersham PCC for their close cooperation, to Stuart Diaper for his expert machine operation, to James Armes for the metal detector search and to Sue Holden for preparing her report figure).

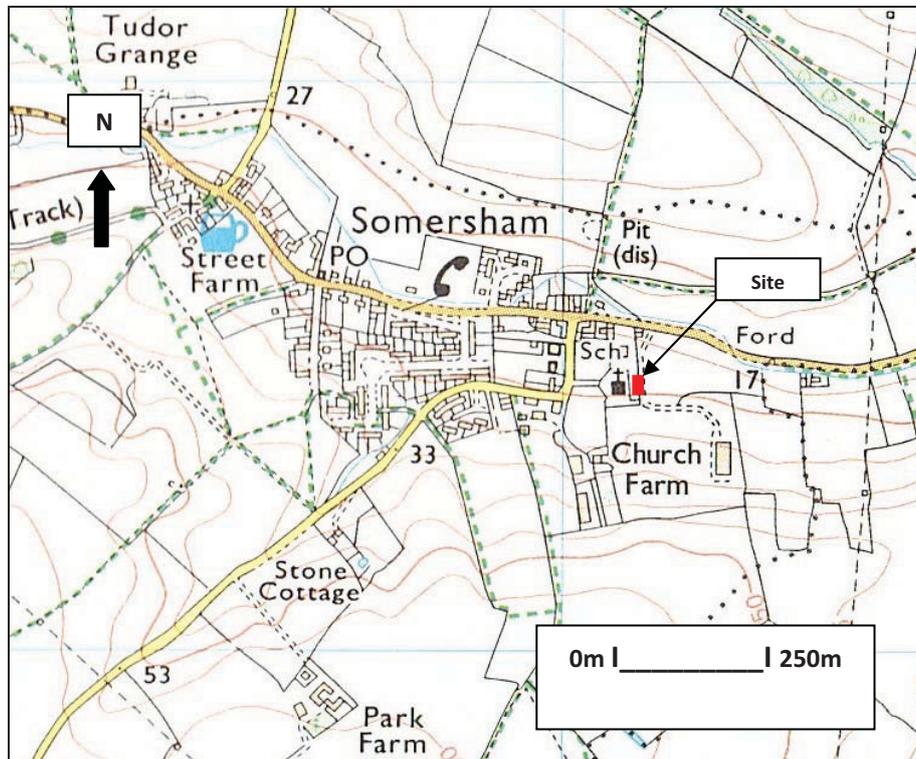


Fig. 1: Site location (Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2006  
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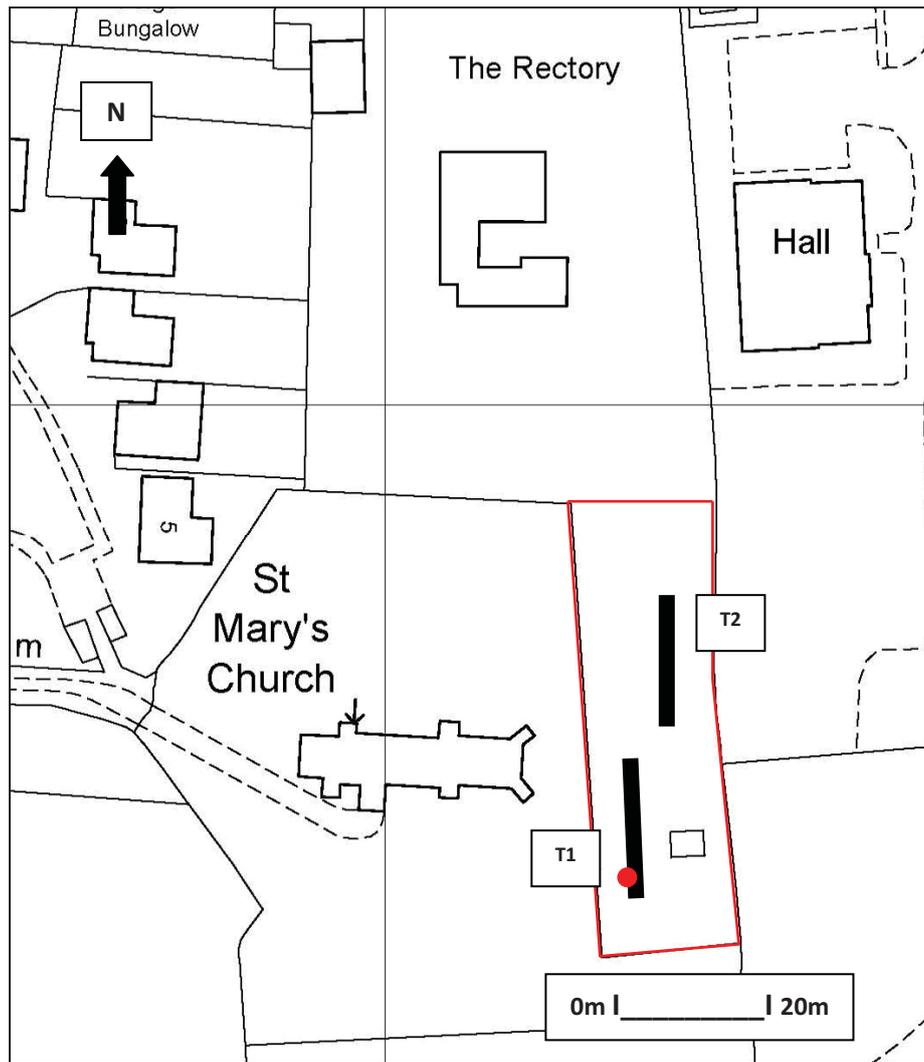


Fig. 2: Trench location with location of pit 0002 at the southern end of T1  
(Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2011 All rights reserved Licence No 100049722)

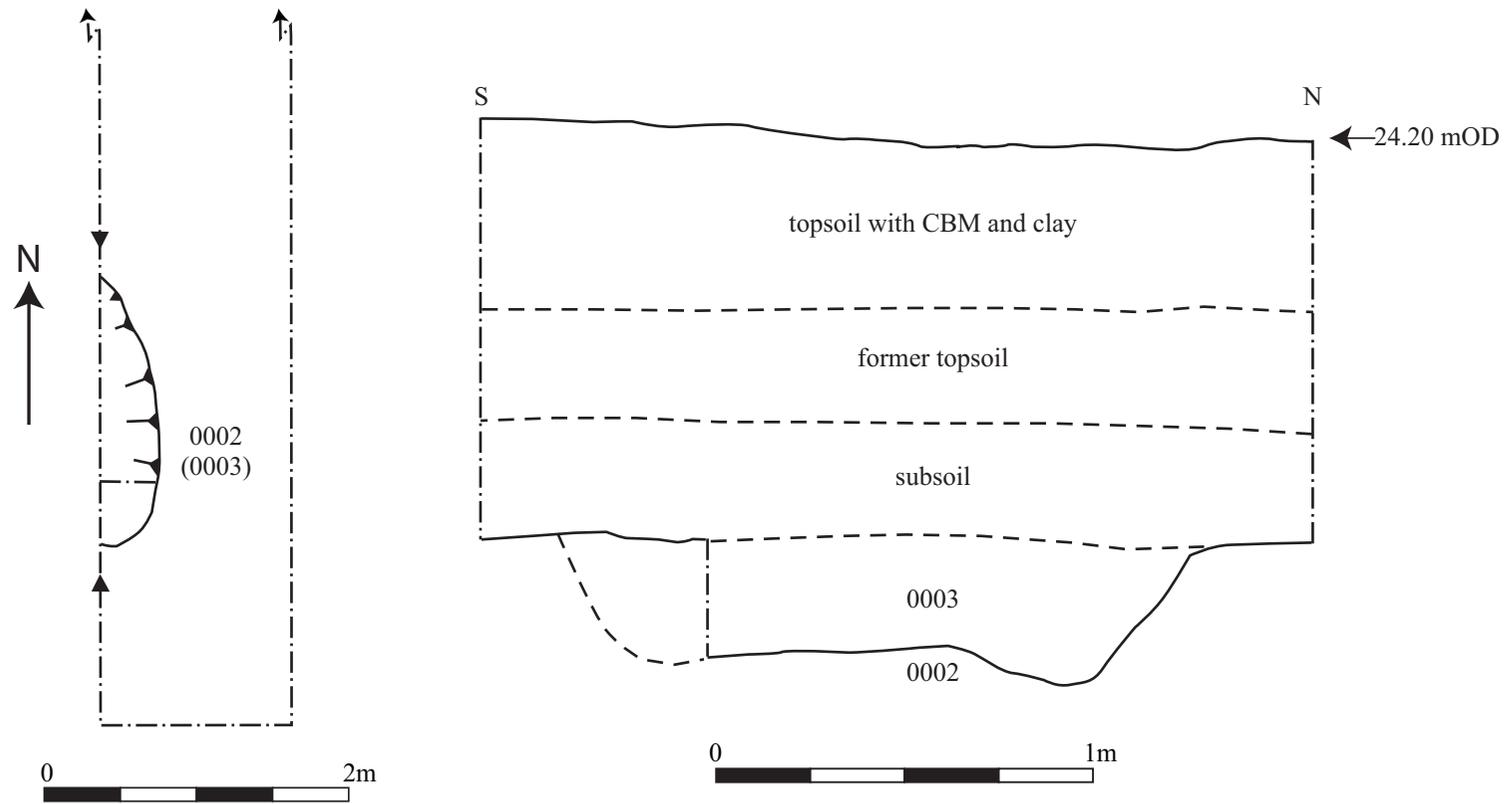


Fig. 3. Plan and section (southern end of Trench 1).

## Appendix I- Images



General view- T1 in foreground



Trench 1 from south



Pit 0002 in Trench 1 from east



Trench 2 from south

9-10 The Churchyard, Shire Hall  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP33 2AR

## **Brief and Specification for Archaeological Evaluation**

### **THE RECTORY, MAIN ROAD, SOMERSHAM (ref: 0271/11)**

*The commissioning body should be aware that it may have Health & Safety responsibilities.*

- 1. The nature of the development and archaeological requirements**
- 1.1 Planning permission is to be sought from Mid Suffolk District Council for the change of use of land from being part of the rectory garden to an extension of the existing graveyard at Somersham Church (TL 091 484). **Please contact the applicant for an accurate plan of the site.**
- 1.2 An archaeological evaluation of the site is required, in accordance with policies HE6.1, HE6.2 and HE7.1 of PPS 5. This will enable the impacts of the development to be fully assessed so that the Local Planning Authority can take into account the particular nature and significance of the heritage assets at this location
- 1.3 The site is located on the western side of the St Mary's church, at c.25m OD. The soil is mainly loam over gravel. The application area is immediately adjacent to the church, which is a prime location for early occupation, and the shape of the property boundaries raises the possibility that this piece of land could have been part of the historic graveyard. A Heritage Statement by Tony Breen and Bob Carr offers a comprehensive review of the historical evidence. It concludes that the churchyard boundary has remained the same since 1677 but that there is no record of the scope of the churchyard before that date. The opinion presented is that the potential for medieval burials on the site is not ruled out, but is arguably low. The possibility that the proposal will disturb earlier graves which could therefore represent a medieval population does, however, still remain. The digging of modern graves would be destructive of any archaeological remains.
- 1.4 This brief and specification is for a linear trenched evaluation of the development area which will inform the planning decision and any potential archaeological mitigation strategy.
- 1.5 The results of this evaluation will enable the archaeological resource, both in quality and extent, to be accurately quantified. Decisions on the need for and scope of any mitigation measures, should there be any archaeological finds of significance, will be based upon the results of the evaluation and, if necessary, will be the subject of an additional specification.
- 1.6 All arrangements for the field evaluation of the site, the timing of the work, access to the site, the definition of the precise area of landholding and area for proposed development are to be defined and negotiated with the commissioning body.
- 1.8 Detailed standards, information and advice to supplement this brief are to be found in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14, 2003.
- 1.9 In accordance with the standards and guidance produced by the Institute for Archaeologists this brief should not be considered sufficient to enable the total execution of the project. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) based upon this brief and the accompanying outline specification of minimum requirements, is an essential requirement. This must be submitted

by the developers, or their agent, to the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (9-10 The Churchyard, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR; telephone/fax: 01284 352443) for approval. The work must not commence until this office has approved both the archaeological contractor as suitable to undertake the work, and the WSI as satisfactory. The WSI will provide the basis for measurable standards and will be used to satisfy the requirements of the planning condition.

- 1.10 Neither this specification nor the WSI, however, would be a sufficient basis for the discharge of the planning condition relating to archaeological investigation. Only the full implementation of the scheme, both completion of fieldwork and reporting based on the approved WSI, will enable SCCAS/CT to advise Mid Suffolk District Council that the condition has been adequately fulfilled and can be discharged (assuming planning permission is forthcoming).
- 1.11 Before any archaeological site work can commence it is the responsibility of the developer to provide the archaeological contractor with either the contaminated land report for the site or a written statement that there is no contamination. The developer should be aware that investigative sampling to test for contamination is likely to have an impact on any archaeological deposit which exists; proposals for sampling should be discussed with the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of SCC (SCCAS/CT) before execution.
- 1.12 The responsibility for identifying any constraints on field-work, e.g. Scheduled Monument status, Listed Building status, public utilities or other services, tree preservation orders, SSSIs, wildlife sites &c., ecological considerations rests with the commissioning body and its archaeological contractor. The existence and content of the archaeological brief does not over-ride such constraints or imply that the target area is freely available.
- 1.13 Any changes to the specifications that the project archaeologist may wish to make after approval by this office should be communicated directly to SCCAS/CT and the client for approval.

## **2. Brief for the Archaeological Evaluation**

- 2.1 Establish whether any archaeological deposit exists in the area, with particular regard to any which are of sufficient importance to merit preservation *in situ*.
- 2.2 Identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological deposit within the application area, together with its likely extent, localised depth and quality of preservation.
- 2.3 Evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/alluvial deposits.
- 2.4 Establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence.
- 2.5 Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.
- 2.6 This project will be carried through in a manner broadly consistent with English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 1991 (MAP2), all stages will follow a process of assessment and justification before proceeding to the next phase of the project. Field evaluation is to be followed by the preparation of a full archive, and an assessment of potential. Any further excavation required as mitigation is to be followed by the preparation of a full archive, and an assessment of potential, analysis and final report preparation may follow. Each stage will be the subject of a further brief and updated project design; this document covers only the evaluation stage.

- 2.7 The developer or his archaeologist will give SCCAS/CT (address as above) five working days notice of the commencement of ground works on the site, in order that the work of the archaeological contractor may be monitored.
- 2.8 If the approved evaluation design is not carried through in its entirety (particularly in the instance of trenching being incomplete) the evaluation report may be rejected. Alternatively the presence of an archaeological deposit may be presumed, and untested areas included on this basis when defining the final mitigation strategy.
- 2.9 An outline specification, which defines certain minimum criteria, is set out below.

### **3. Specification: Trenched Evaluation**

- 3.1 Linear evaluation trenches are thought to be the most appropriate method to sample the area. The trench layout should bear in mind the possibility that EW graves may be encountered. The area is c875 sqm, and a 5% sample therefore gives 24m in total of trenching, where trenches are 1.8m wide.
- 3.2 If excavation is mechanised a toothless 'ditching bucket' 1.50m wide must be used. A scale plan showing the proposed locations of the trial trenches should be included in the WSI and the detailed trench design must be approved by SCCAS/CT before field work begins.
- 3.3 The topsoil may be mechanically removed using an appropriate machine with a back-acting arm and fitted with a toothless bucket, down to the interface layer between topsoil and subsoil or other visible archaeological surface. All machine excavation is to be under the direct control and supervision of an archaeologist. The topsoil should be examined for archaeological material.
- 3.4 The top of the first archaeological deposit may be cleared by machine, but must then be cleaned off by hand. There is a presumption that excavation of all archaeological deposits will be done by hand unless it can be shown there will not be a loss of evidence by using a machine. The decision as to the proper method of excavation will be made by the senior project archaeologist with regard to the nature of the deposit.
- 3.5 In all evaluation excavation there is a presumption of the need to cause the minimum disturbance to the site consistent with adequate evaluation; that significant archaeological features, e.g. solid or bonded structural remains, floors, building slots or post-holes, should be preserved intact even if fills are sampled. For guidance:
- For linear features, 1.00m wide slots (min.) should be excavated across their width;
- For discrete features, such as pits, 50% of their fills should be sampled (in some instances 100% may be requested).
- 3.6 There must be sufficient excavation to give clear evidence for the period, depth and nature of any archaeological deposit. The depth and nature of colluvial or other masking deposits must be established across the site.
- 3.7 Buried soils and layers should be sampled according to an appropriate strategy (for example, hand dug test pits).
- 3.8 Archaeological contexts should be sampled for palaeoenvironmental remains. Best practice should allow for sampling of interpretable and datable archaeological deposits and provision should be made for this. The contractor shall show what provision has been made for environmental assessment of the site and must provide details of the sampling strategies for retrieving artefacts, biological remains (for palaeoenvironmental and palaeoeconomic investigations), and samples of sediments and/or soils (for micromorphological and other

pedological/sedimentological analyses. Advice on the appropriateness of the proposed strategies will be sought from Helen Chappell, English Heritage Regional Adviser for Archaeological Science (East of England). A guide to sampling archaeological deposits (Murphy, P.L. and Wiltshire, P.E.J., 1994, *A guide to sampling archaeological deposits for environmental analysis*) is available for viewing from SCCAS.

- 3.9 Any natural subsoil surface revealed should be hand cleaned and examined for archaeological deposits and artefacts. Sample excavation of any archaeological features revealed may be necessary in order to gauge their date and character.
- 3.10 Metal detector searches must take place at all stages of the excavation by an experienced metal detector user.
- 3.11 All finds will be collected and processed (unless variations in this principle are agreed SCCAS/CT during the course of the evaluation).
- 3.12 Human remains must be left *in situ* except in those cases where damage or desecration are to be expected, or in the event that analysis of the remains is shown to be a requirement of satisfactory evaluation of the site. However, the **excavator should be aware of, and comply with, the provisions of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857.**
- 3.13 Plans of any archaeological features on the site are to be drawn at 1:20 or 1:50, depending on the complexity of the data to be recorded. Sections should be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 again depending on the complexity to be recorded. All levels should relate to Ordnance Datum. Any variations from this must be agreed with SCCAS/CT.
- 3.14 A photographic record of the work is to be made, consisting of both monochrome photographs and colour transparencies and/or high resolution digital images.
- 3.15 Topsoil, subsoil and archaeological deposit to be kept separate during excavation to allow sequential backfilling of excavations.
- 3.16 Trenches should not be backfilled without the approval of SCCAS/CT. Suitable arrangements should be made with the client to ensure trenches are appropriately backfilled, compacted and consolidated in order to prevent subsequent subsidence.

#### **4. General Management**

- 4.1 A timetable for all stages of the project must be agreed before the first stage of work commences, including monitoring by SCCAS/CT. The archaeological contractor will give not less than five days written notice of the commencement of the work so that arrangements for monitoring the project can be made.
- 4.2 The composition of the archaeology contractor staff must be detailed and agreed by this office, including any subcontractors/specialists. For the site director and other staff likely to have a major responsibility for the post-excavation processing of this evaluation there must also be a statement of their responsibilities or a CV for post-excavation work on other archaeological sites and publication record. Ceramic specialists, in particular, must have relevant experience from this region, including knowledge of local ceramic sequences.
- 4.3 It is the archaeological contractor's responsibility to ensure that adequate resources are available to fulfil the Brief.
- 4.4 A detailed risk assessment must be provided for this particular site.
- 4.5 No initial survey to detect public utility or other services has taken place. The responsibility for this rests with the archaeological contractor.

- 4.6 The Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised 2001) should be used for additional guidance in the execution of the project and in drawing up the report.

## 5. Report Requirements

- 5.1 An archive of all records and finds must be prepared consistent with the principles of English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 1991 (particularly Appendix 3.1 and Appendix 4.1).
- 5.2 The report should reflect the aims of the WSI.
- 5.3 The objective account of the archaeological evidence must be clearly distinguished from its archaeological interpretation.
- 5.4 An opinion as to the necessity for further evaluation and its scope may be given. No further site work should be embarked upon until the primary fieldwork results are assessed and the need for further work is established.
- 5.5 Reports on specific areas of specialist study must include sufficient detail to permit assessment of potential for analysis, including tabulation of data by context, and must include non-technical summaries.
- 5.6 The Report must include a discussion and an assessment of the archaeological evidence, including an assessment of palaeoenvironmental remains recovered from palaeosols and cut features. Its conclusions must include a clear statement of the archaeological potential of the site, and the significance of that potential in the context of the Regional Research Framework (*East Anglian Archaeology*, Occasional Papers 3 & 8, 1997 and 2000).
- 5.7 The results of the surveys should be related to the relevant known archaeological information held in the County Historic Environment Record (HER).
- 5.8 A copy of the Specification should be included as an appendix to the report.
- 5.9 The project manager must consult the County HER Officer (Dr Colin Pendleton) to obtain a HER number for the work. This number will be unique for each project or site and must be clearly marked on any documentation relating to the work.
- 5.10 Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with *UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines*.
- 5.11 Every effort must be made to get the agreement of the landowner/developer to the deposition of the full site archive, and transfer of title, with the intended archive depository before the fieldwork commences. If this is not achievable for all or parts of the finds archive then provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, illustration, scientific analysis) as appropriate.
- 5.12 If the County Store is not the intended depository, the project manager should ensure that a duplicate copy of the written archive is deposited with the County HER.
- 5.13 The project manager should consult the intended archive depository before the archive is prepared regarding the specific requirements for the archive deposition and curation, and regarding any specific cost implications of deposition. The intended depository should be stated in the WSI, for approval. The intended depository must be prepared to accept the entire archive resulting from the project (both finds and written archive) in order to create a complete record of the project.

- 5.14 If the County Store is the intended location of the archive, the project manager should consult the SCCAS Archive Guidelines 2010 and also the County Historic Environment Record Officer regarding the requirements for the deposition of the archive (conservation, ordering, organisation, labelling, marking and storage) of excavated material and the archive. A clear statement of the form, intended content, and standards of the archive is to be submitted for approval as an essential requirement of the WSI.
- 5.15 The WSI should state proposals for the deposition of the digital archive relating to this project with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), and allowance should be made for costs incurred to ensure the proper deposition (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/policy.html>) with ADS or another appropriate archive depository.
- 5.16 Where positive conclusions are drawn from a project (whether it be evaluation or excavation) a summary report, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology*, must be prepared. It should be included in the project report, or submitted to SCCAS/CT, by the end of the calendar year in which the evaluation work takes place, whichever is the sooner.
- 5.17 An unbound hardcopy of the evaluation report, clearly marked DRAFT, must be presented to SCCAS/CT for approval within six months of the completion of fieldwork unless other arrangements are negotiated with the project sponsor and SCCAS/CT.
- Following acceptance, two hard copies of the report should be submitted to SCCAS/CT together with a digital .pdf version.
- 5.18 Where appropriate, a digital vector trench plan should be included with the report, which must be compatible with MapInfo GIS software, for integration in the County HER. AutoCAD files should be also exported and saved into a format that can be imported into MapInfo (for example, as a Drawing Interchange File or .dxf) or already transferred to .TAB files.
- 5.19 At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> must be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms.
- 5.20 All parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the County HER, and a copy should be included with the draft report for approval. This should include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy should also be included with the archive).

Specification by: Dr Abby Antrobus

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9–10 The Churchyard, Shire Hall  
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Email: abby.antrobus@suffolk.gov.uk

Date: 08 April 2011

Reference: Somersham/2011\_0271

**This brief and specification remains valid for six months from the above date. If work is not carried out in full within that time this document will lapse; the authority should be notified and a revised brief and specification may be issued.**

**If the work defined by this brief forms a part of a programme of archaeological work required by a Planning Condition, the results must be considered by the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council, who have the responsibility for advising the appropriate Planning Authority**