

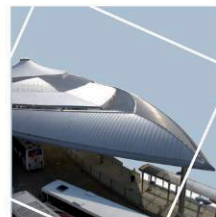
Report 2049



nau archaeology

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
283 Whapload Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk**

HER LWT 165



Prepared for

AD Utting Construction Ltd.



Nigel Page and Helen Stocks

August 2009



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NAU ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT CHECKLIST		
Project overseen by	Nigel Page	
Draft completed	Helen Stocks and Nigel Page	09/08/2009
Graphics completed	Nigel Page	09/08/2009
Edit completed	Richard Hoggett	10/08/2009
Signed off	Richard Hoggett	10/08/2009

NAU Archaeology

Scandic House
85 Mountergate
Norwich
NR1 1PY

T 01603 756150

F 01603 756190

E jayne.bown@nps.co.uk

www.nau.org.uk

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Location: 283 Whapload Road
District: Waveney
Grid Ref: TM 5525 9403
HER No: LWT 165
Dates of Fieldwork: 4 and 6 December 2008, 19 May 2009 and 27 July 2009

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation carried out in 2008 ahead of the construction of eight new houses at 283 Whapload Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, revealed a small number of post holes or shallow pits and a stake hole of possible late medieval post-medieval date and two modern brick-built wells. Therefore, it was considered necessary that an archaeological watching brief be maintained on the construction groundworks to record any further archaeological features that may be exposed.

Part of a small ditch of probable late medieval date, previously identified in the evaluation, was exposed. No artefacts, or any other form of evidence, were recovered from the ditch, so its purpose remains unclear.

No other archaeological features or deposits were exposed.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Planning consent was granted for the construction of eight houses at 283 Whapload Road, Lowestoft (DC/08/0774/ARM), on a site which lies within the boundaries of the medieval town (Figs 1 and 2). The consent contained a condition requiring that a programme of archaeological work be carried out before development begins and a brief for archaeological evaluation was issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (Wade 2008).

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. BAU1969) and reported in October 2008 (Westall 2008). The results of the evaluation were significant enough for the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service to place a further condition on the scheme for a watching brief, which is reported here.

The watching brief was commissioned and funded by A.D. Utting Construction Ltd.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Suffolk Sites and Monuments Record, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology of northeast Suffolk is predominantly estuarine or marine shelly sands, known as Crag. These are overlain in the Lowestoft area by clay (Lowestoft Till) mixed with chalk and by glacial outwash gravels (Wymer, 1999, 17). These are, in turn, overlain by the sandy soils of the Sandlings (Martin 1999, 20).

While much of the East Anglian coastline has been lost to erosion, deposition at Lowestoft has caused the shoreline to move eastwards. The Whapload Road and Denes area is at a lower level than the High Street and would once have been part

of the beach. The natural in this area is a pale beige beach sand, and the fact that it was encountered at a higher level on the eastern side of the site than on the western side suggests that this sand was deposited here in dunes, as indicated by the name 'Denes'.

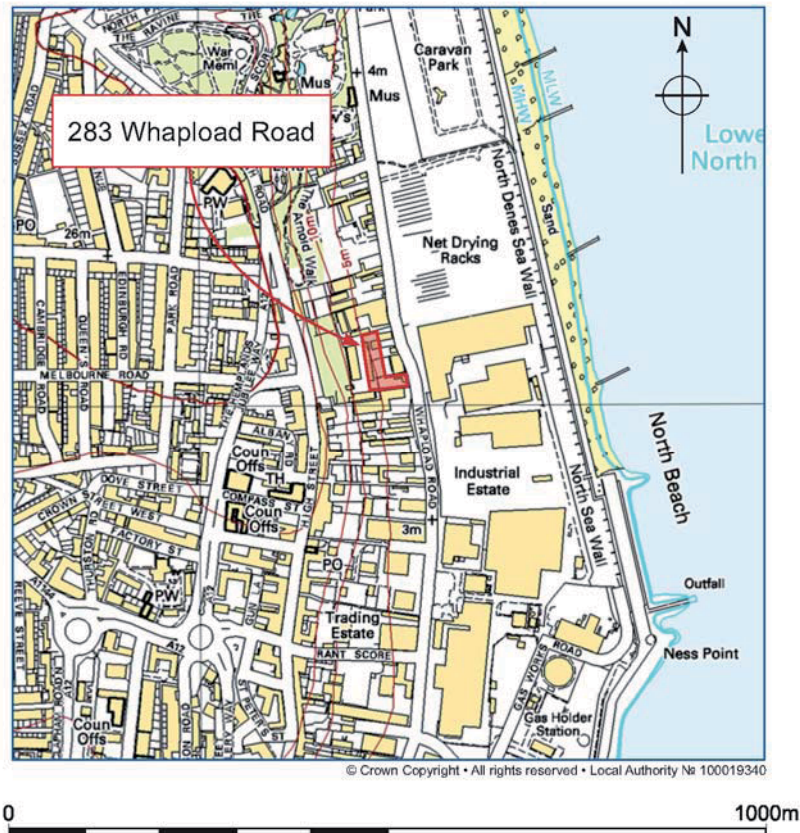


Figure 1 Site location

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical background to the site was given in the evaluation report (Westall 2008) and will not be reproduced here. However, a summary of the results of the evaluation is necessary at this point.

Only a small number of features were identified in the evaluation, consisting of a small shallow ditch, two small pits or postholes, a stake hole and a posthole all of possible medieval date. Other features included two brick-built wells and a brick-built tank, all of which were modern.

Documentary evidence suggest that the Whapload Road area was used for industrial purposes during the medieval and post-medieval periods by High Street merchants and/or workers in the fish trade. The results of the evaluation, whilst indicating that some form of medieval activity took place on the site, were inconclusive in terms of the type of activity that occurred or its extent.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during the various phases of groundworks for the construction of the new buildings and their associated infrastructure.

The excavation for foundations, services and a new soakaway were monitored during the course of several visits.

5.0 RESULTS

Monitoring took place on the foundation trenches for the block of buildings along the street front, the line of new drainage along the southern boundary and a large soakaway towards the centre of the site (Fig 2). The excavations were all carried out by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothed bucket.

5.1 The foundation trenches

The excavation of wall footings for the building of 3 houses facing onto the street frontage was monitored because this was in the area where medieval features were recorded in the evaluation. All the trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.2m. The area was overlain by topsoil to a depth of 0.95m throughout. This deposit was heavily disturbed by modern buildings both from the current building work and by the demolition of the last building. Underlying this deposit was a subsoil deposit to a depth of 0.15m which was leached greyish orange sand. Between 10cm to 15cm of the underlying natural sand was excavated within this trench.

The foundations were excavated through two evaluation trenches (Trench 3 and Trench 4) completed by NAU Archaeology in November 2008. A ditch [25] visible in section was a continuation of a ditch ([17]) recorded in Trench 3 of the evaluation. It continued the alignment seen in the evaluation, but heavy rain before and during the visit made the trench edges unstable and they were collapsing at regular intervals, so no access was possible into the foundation trench. Therefore this feature was not examined in detail and it was only noted in section.

No other archaeological features or deposits were exposed.

5.2 The new drains

A new service trench was excavated to a depth of between 1m to 1.1m along the southern boundary of the site. The line of this trench crossed Trench 5 from the earlier evaluation. Throughout the course of this trench it was cut entirely within modern make up deposits, which had been previously disturbed by the placing of a mobile home and all its connecting services and cables and their subsequent removal.

No subsoil or natural sand were exposed during the excavation of this trench so no archaeological features or deposits were exposed (Plate 1).

5.3 The soakaway

The soakaway measured c.8m x 2m x 1.75m deep and it was positioned towards the northern half of the centre of the site just to the south of the location of Trench

1 in the evaluation. Approximately 1.5m of modern made ground was removed to expose the undisturbed sand below. The sides of the excavation were fairly unstable and access was not sought, so monitoring was carried out from the side.

No archaeological features or deposits were exposed (Plate 2).

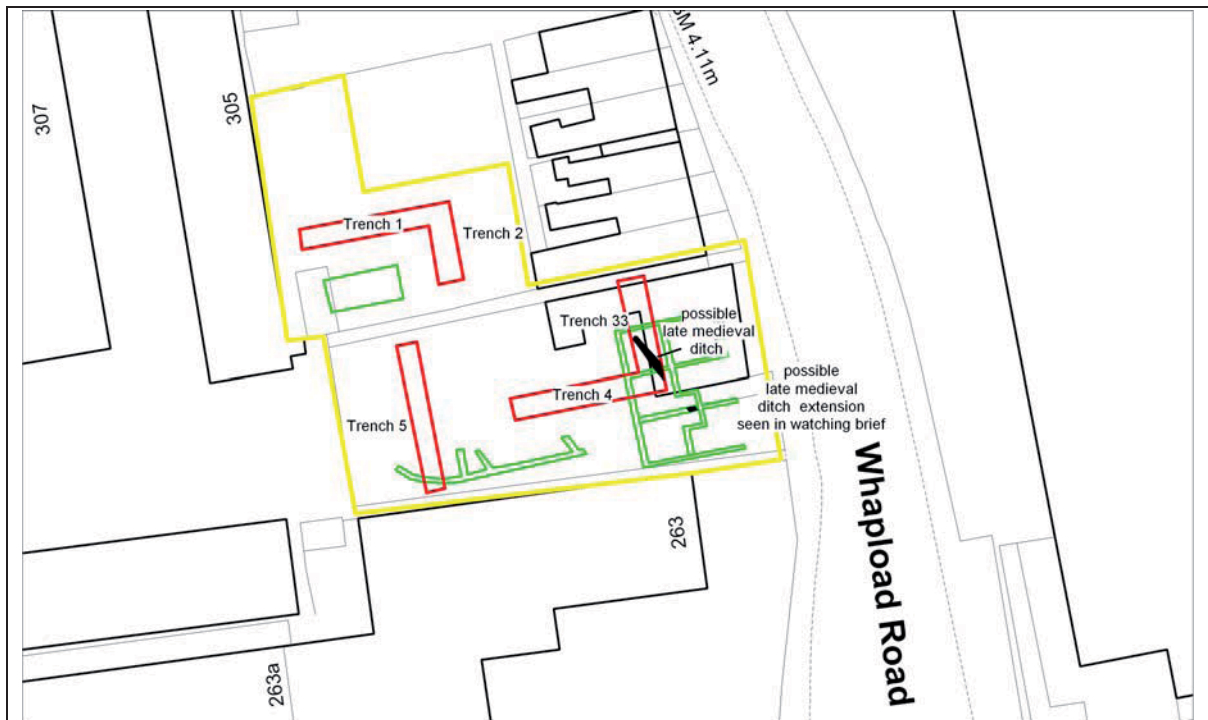


Figure 2: Plan showing the evaluation trenches (red), the watching brief areas (green) and the line of the late medieval ditch recorded in the evaluation and the watching brief (black).

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6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The previous evaluation of this site (Westall 2008) revealed some sparse evidence for medieval activity, although the nature of that activity was unclear. This watching brief recorded part of a shallow ditch previously recorded in the evaluation and no new evidence that could elucidate the nature of that activity.

The lack of any definite structural remains suggests that whatever was taking place on this site in the medieval period it required little in the way of permanent structures and was possibly associated with the fishing industry.



Plate 1: View west along new drainage trench



Plate 2: The new soakaway during construction.

Acknowledgements

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