

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Land to the rear of 132 High Street, Lakenheath LKH 236

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GROUNDWORKS ASSOCIATED WITH HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON LAND TO THE REAR OF 132 HIGH STREET, LAKENHEATH.

Planning Application No. F/2004/0407/OUT
NGR: TL 7157 8238
OASIS Ref. Suffolkc1-11559

Funded by: Jaxmead Properties

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2005/169

Summary

Archaeological monitoring of footing trenches for housing development on land to the rear of 132 High Street, Lakenheath further established the course of one ditch, seen in the evaluation, to a slight extent but otherwise did not identify any further archaeological evidence of medieval occupation in the area (Craven 2004).

Introduction

A series of visits was made to the site from 30th September to 7th October 2005 to monitor the excavation of footing trenches for a housing development. The work was commissioned by Peter Webster for Jaxmead Properties was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by R. D. Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application F/2004/0407/OUT. The work was funded by the developer, Jaxmead Properties

The village of Lakenheath lies on the south-eastern edge of the fens, bounded to the north and west by the 'Cut-Off Channel', a drainage channel constructed in the 1960's, which marks the current fen-edge and roughly follows the line of the natural fen-edge. The site lies on the western edge of Lakenheath, to the rear of properties fronting on to the High Street and immediately east of the Cut-Off channel, at TL 7157 8238 and at between c.4m OD and 6m OD (Fig. 1).

The site, which measured c.0.36ha in size and was situated on a very slight west-facing slope, had been evaluated in October 2004 (Craven 2004). This had two principal aims, firstly to establish whether a large building, marked on the 18th century Hodskinsons map and recorded in the Suffolk SMR as LKH 161, was present within the development area, and secondly too see whether there was any preservation of fen-edge prehistoric activity or natural waterlogged and peat deposits.

The evaluation showed a high level of preservation of the natural subsoil beneath a deep, 0.8m thick, garden topsoil. The trenches showed no evidence of the Great House on the site but did

identify a series of ditches, containing pottery dating to the 12-13th century, which are important evidence of occupation in this period, outside of the known medieval core of the village.

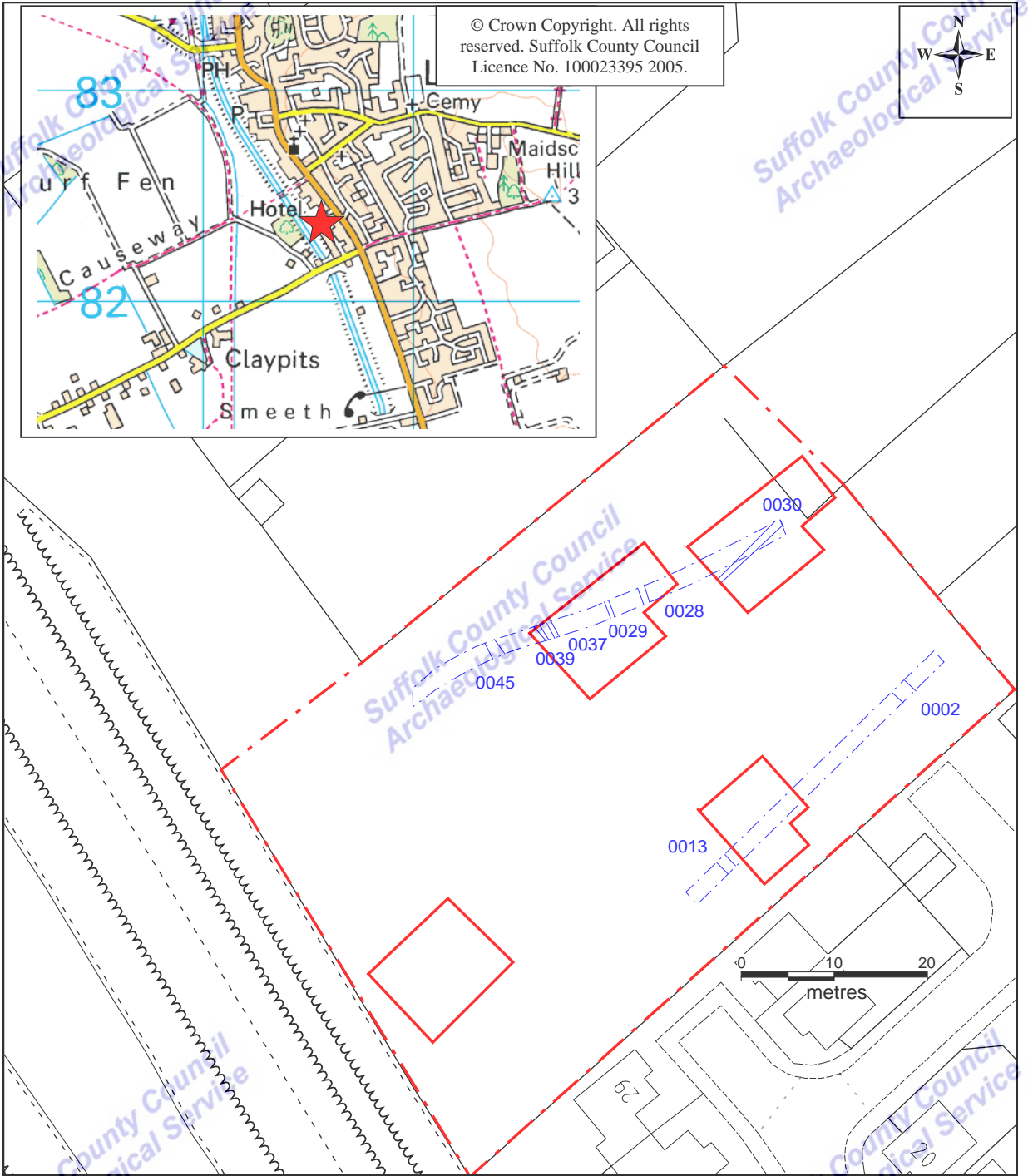


Figure 1. Site plan and location

The results of the evaluation indicated that the footing trenches of any development would disturb archaeological deposits, particularly in the northern part of the site. The Conservation Officer therefore requested that a program of archaeological monitoring should take place during excavation of the footings, with the aim of establishing the courses of the ditches and, if possible, to obtain a broader, stratified sample of pottery. Together this could provide information on the occupation of the area and of medieval pottery use and distribution in west Suffolk.

Methodology and Results

Site visits were made during the excavation of trenches for four of the building plots and each trench was seen whilst fully excavated. The trenches measured 0.8m wide and were c.0.9m-1.2m deep, the depth varying according to the level of the underlying subsoil of yellow and orange, iron pan mottled sands.

The trenches showed a similar soil profile to that seen in the evaluation, a deep garden topsoil, up to 0.8m deep, overlying varying layers of mixed sands which lay above the subsoil. These lower soils were very dry and friable which meant that the trench sections were in poor condition. Combined with the deep and narrow nature of the trenches this made archaeological observation very difficult, the position of the evaluation trenches themselves proving difficult to identify. Ditch 0030 was identified, and its course traced for a few more metres to the south-west, but the remaining ditches, 0028, 0029, 0037 and 0039, which ought to have been visible within the trenched areas were not identified. No material finds were seen or collected from any of the trenches.

Discussion

Monitoring of the development has been inconclusive, with the limitations of the trenches and the nature of the soils proving a major factor in affecting the level of observation possible.

Although one ditch was seen as extending further, confirming its south-west to north-east alignment which is similar to various nearby modern property boundaries, there was no additional evidence seen, or material recovered from the other medieval ditches. As a result no further conclusions concerning the nature of these deposits, other than those stated in the evaluation report, can be drawn.

References

Craven, J., 2004, *Land to the rear of 132 High Street, Lakenheath, LKH 236*. SCCAS Report No. 2004/124.

J. A. Craven, November 2005