

**Alderwood PRU Centre, Ipswich
IPS 699**

Archaeological Monitoring Report

SCCAS Report No. 2012/155

Client: SCC (Resource Management)

Author: M. Sommers

October 2012

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HER Information

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Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Team alone. Ultimately the need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting services cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

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Date: 19th October 2012

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Summary

The remains of a group of three underground air raid shelters were discovered during groundwork associated with the replacement of temporary accommodation at Alderwood PRU Centre, Raeburn Road, Ipswich. They consisted of single, elongated chambers formed from pre-cast concrete panels. The roofs of all three had been pushed in and the internal spaces filled with sand and gravel. They are within the former playing fields of a group of three schools that were present in this area during the Second World War. All three of these schools have since been demolished and the playing fields redeveloped with modern housing, the PRU Centre and a new primary school. It is highly likely that the three shelters identified are part of a much larger group or groups of shelters that would have been associated with the former school sites.

1. Introduction

The construction of new accommodation at the Alderwood PRU Centre, Raeburn Road, Ipswich, was commenced during September 2012 (see figure 1 for a location plan). During the initial groundwork a buried concrete structure was discovered and identified as an air raid shelter. Advice regarding the implications of the presence of this structure on the site was sought from Dr Jess Tipper of the County Conservation Team who recommended that works should cease to enable a quick assessment of its significance.

2. Results

The site was visited by the author on the 6th September 2012. Within the area of the new build a large excavation, which had cut across the width of the air raid shelter, had been machine excavated down to a depth of c. 1.8m. The base of the excavation measured approximately 2m by 1.5m. Two of the sides were battered resulting in dimensions of c. 1.5m by 4m at ground level. Within the vertical sides of the excavation sections across the width of the shelter were exposed (plates 1 and 2). It primarily consisted of two parallel walls, situated approximately 1.5m apart. The roof of the shelter was absent, having been pushed in, and the interior space was filled with sand and gravel of a similar nature to the surrounding natural subsoil.

The shelter was formed from pre-cast concrete panels with steel reinforcing that were bolted together side by side (plate 3). Each panel was approximately 31cm wide and would have extended the full height of the shelter. They would have curved over at the top and met to form an arched roof. The bottom edge of the concrete panels sat in a shallow concrete trough (plate 3) at a depth of c. 1.8m below the present ground level. No formalised floor surface was evident within the shelters. The remains of timber sheeting was evident on the exterior face of the shelter walls (plate 4).

The footprint of the new building had been partially stripped revealing two areas of ground disturbance of similar dimensions to that already seen suggesting further shelters were present on the site.

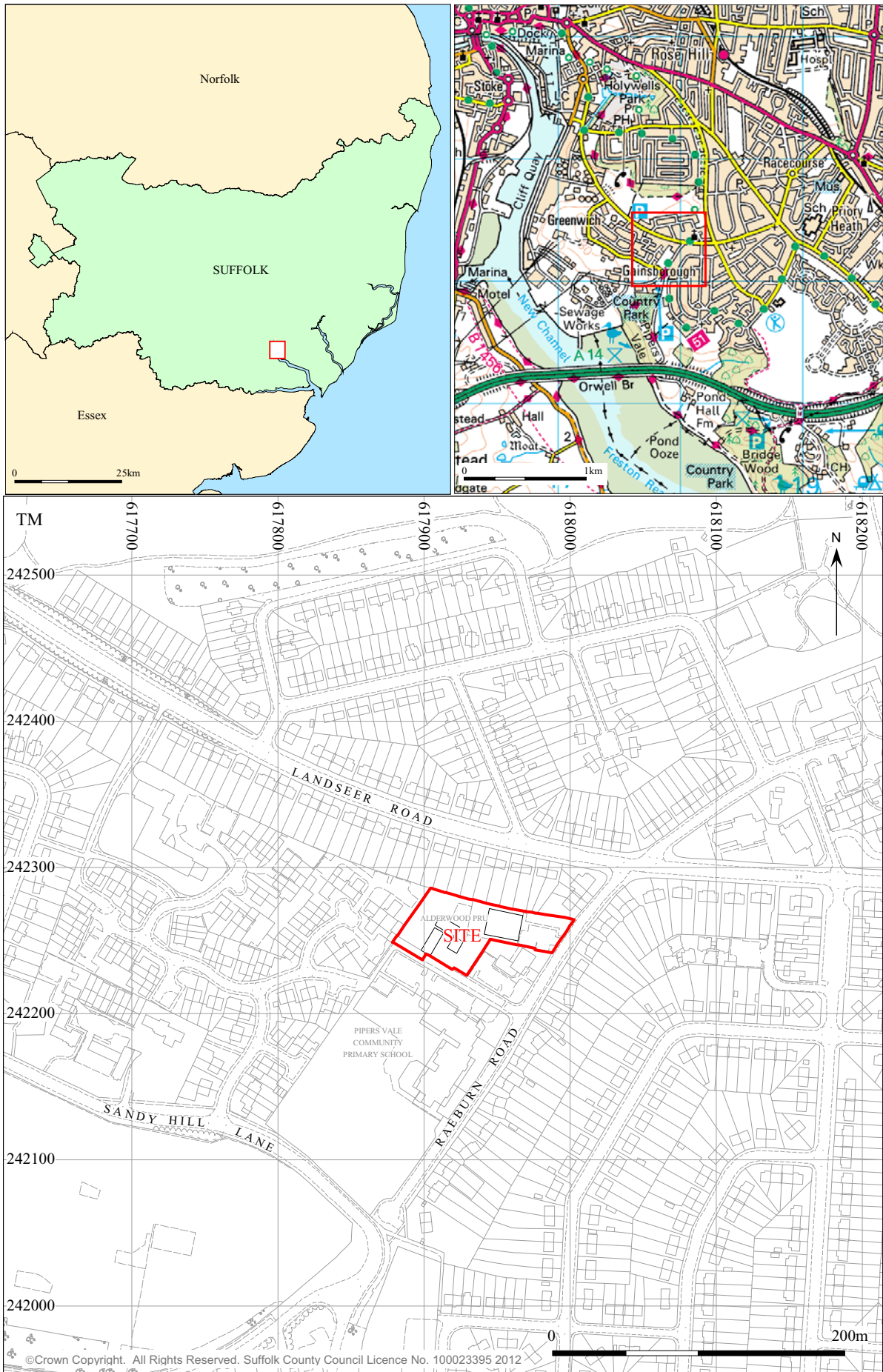


Figure 1. Location map

Following the site visit it was agreed with the County Conservation Team that the photographs and measurements made during the site visit, combined with a location plan of any shelters identified on the site, would comprise an adequate record and that consequently groundwork on site could recommence.

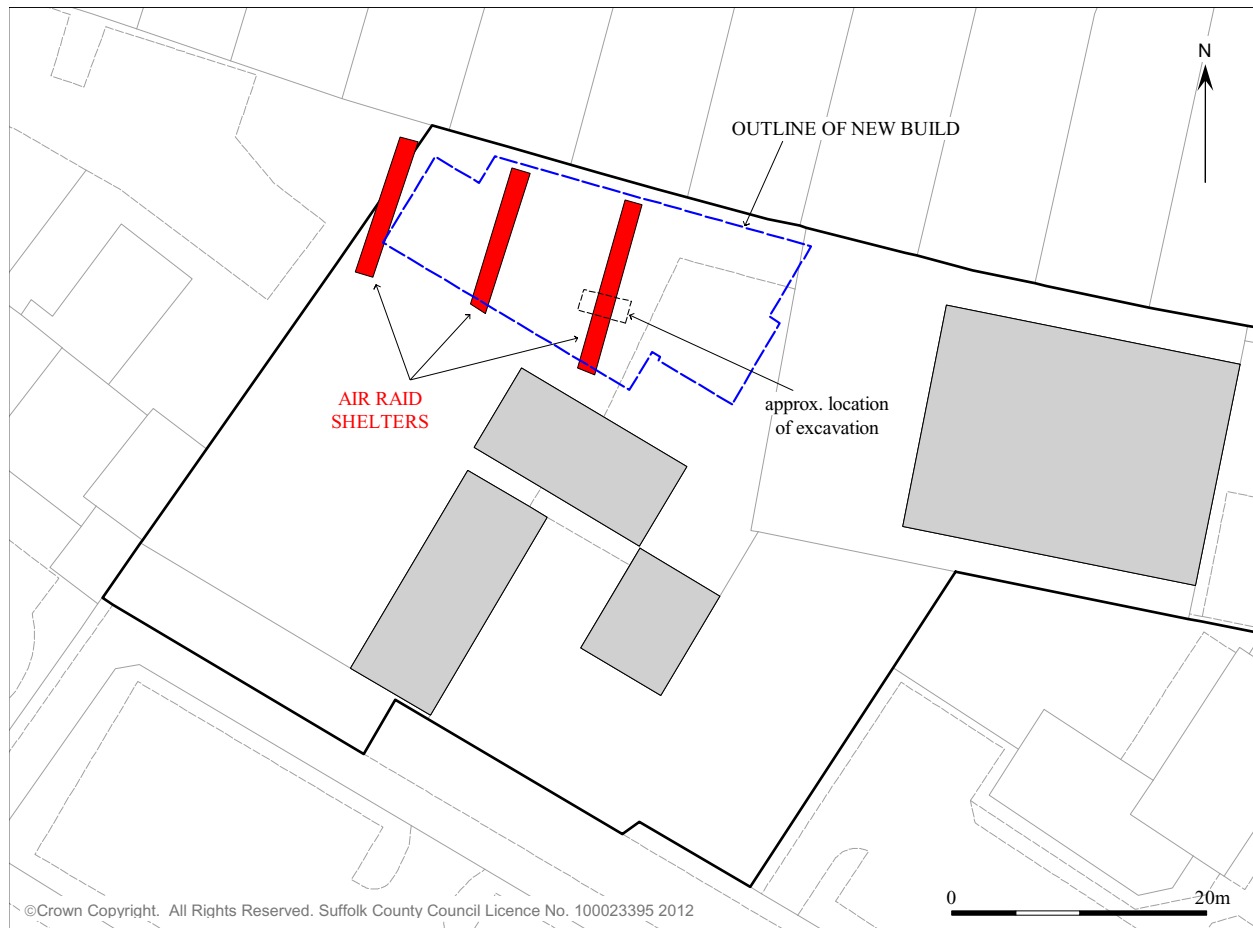


Figure 2. Plan of the shelters

The continuing groundwork did indeed reveal a further two shelters in the areas of disturbed, which, along with the initially noted shelter, were plotted on a scale plan; a copy of which was supplied by Laura Morris of SCC Resource Management. Data from this plan has been used to create figure 2 above. The three shelters were identical in form and had lengths in excess of 13.5m although the full extents, including any possible entrances, were not exposed during the groundwork. The shelters were regularly spaced at a distance of 7.8m apart

To facilitate construction of the new accommodation building the structure of the shelters was reduced in height and bridged using beams and block flooring leaving the bulk of the shelters' structure *in situ*.

3. Discussion

The Alderwood PRU Centre, the adjacent Piper's Vale Primary School and the area of housing off Sandy Hill Lane are all relatively recent developments which have been built on the site of three earlier schools and a large playing field, as depicted on the Ordnance Survey, 1:10560 scale map of 1938 (figure 3).



Figure 3. Ordnance Survey 1:10560 scale sheet of 1938 (rescaled extract)

The red star indicates the approximate location of the site

The concrete structures noted are undoubtedly air-raid shelters dating from the Second World War which would have been installed to provide shelter for the teachers and pupils who attended the three schools that formerly stood on this site. They were constructed from mass produced, pre-cast concrete segments within deep cuts by bolting the panels together to create single chambered linear shelters. The tops of each shelter would probably have protruded above the ground level and been covered in spoil. The timber sheeting noted was probably torevet the trench sides during construction.

The total lengths of each shelter could not be determined but it is unlikely they were not significantly longer due to the logistics of getting people in and out of such structures.

These shelters are undoubtedly a standard design with the concrete panels being issued by central government agencies along with instructions for their use. Entrances would have been situated at one end with an escape tunnel or manhole at the other end. These were probably constructed in concrete poured *in-situ* against timber shuttering.

A recent archaeological evaluation undertaken at the site of the former Thomas Wolsey School revealed a number of identical shelters (SCCAS Report No. 2012/035) suggesting a local authority based program to provide shelters for its schools.

The size of the playing field and the presence of three schools would suggest that there were originally more than just the three shelters within the Alderwood PRU Centre site and that further shelters would have existed to the north-west as well as in other areas of the former playing field.

Being within a playing field, the shelters were presumably broken in and filled as a safety precaution shortly after the end of the war.

4. Conclusions

The three structures located during groundwork at the Alderwood PRU Centre are air raid shelters built for the former Raeburn Road Primary School that existed on this site during the Second World War. They are a standard design built from mass produced pre-cast concrete panels. It is highly likely that further shelters exist in the area.

5. Archive deposition

Historic Environment Record reference under which the archive is held: IPS 669.

The digital archive will be stored on the SCC secure servers at the location:

R:\Environmental Protection\Conservation\Archaeology\Archive\Ipswich\IPS 999 Monitoring (Alderwood PRU)

Digital photographs are held under the references: HQK 78 to HQK 89

A summary of this project has been entered into OASIS, the online database, under the reference: suffolkc1-135675

6. Plates



Plate 1. Section across the shelter, camera facing south-west (ref. HQK 79)



Plate 2. Section across the shelter, camera facing north-east (ref. HQK 85)



Plate 3. Shallow trough at base of panel. One of the tie bolts is also visible.
South-east wall, camera facing south-west (ref. HQK 88)



Plate 4. Remains of timber sheeting on the outer face of the shelter walls
North-west wall, camera facing south-west (ref. HQK 82)

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