

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2012/89

**New Learning Facility, Minsmere Nature Reserve,
Westleton.
WLN 051**

HER Information

Planning Application No: C/10/3067

Date of Fieldwork: 25th October - 16th March 2012

Grid Reference: TM 468 671

Funding Body: RSPB

Curatorial Officer: Jude Plouviez

Project Officer: Linzi Everett

OASIS ID: suffolkc1-137596

Summary

Monitoring of groundworks associated with the construction of a new learning facility at Minsmere nature reserve, Westleton, was carried out as a condition of the planning consent in order to record any archaeological evidence present. Continuous monitoring of ground level reduction within the main building footprint revealed three undated parallel ditches. No other groundworks revealed any archaeological features however they were more shallow and did not reach levels at which archaeology would have been revealed.

1. Introduction

A planning application was made for a new reception area and leaning centre at Minsmere Nature Reserve, Westleton. The site is centred on TM 468 671.

The site lies within an area of archaeological activity, recorded in the County Historic Environment Record (HER). It was felt that the development would cause significant ground disturbance with the potential to destroy archaeological deposits, were they present. As such, there was an initial requirement for an archaeological evaluation by trial trench, as outlined in a Brief and Specification produced by Jude Plouviez of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) Conservation Team (Appendix I). The SCCAS Field Team was subsequently commissioned to carry out the work which was funded by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

2. Geology and topography

The site lies on a spur of land projecting south into the Minsmere valley at a height of c.10m OD. The underlying geology of the site comprises glaciofluvial drift (deep sand).

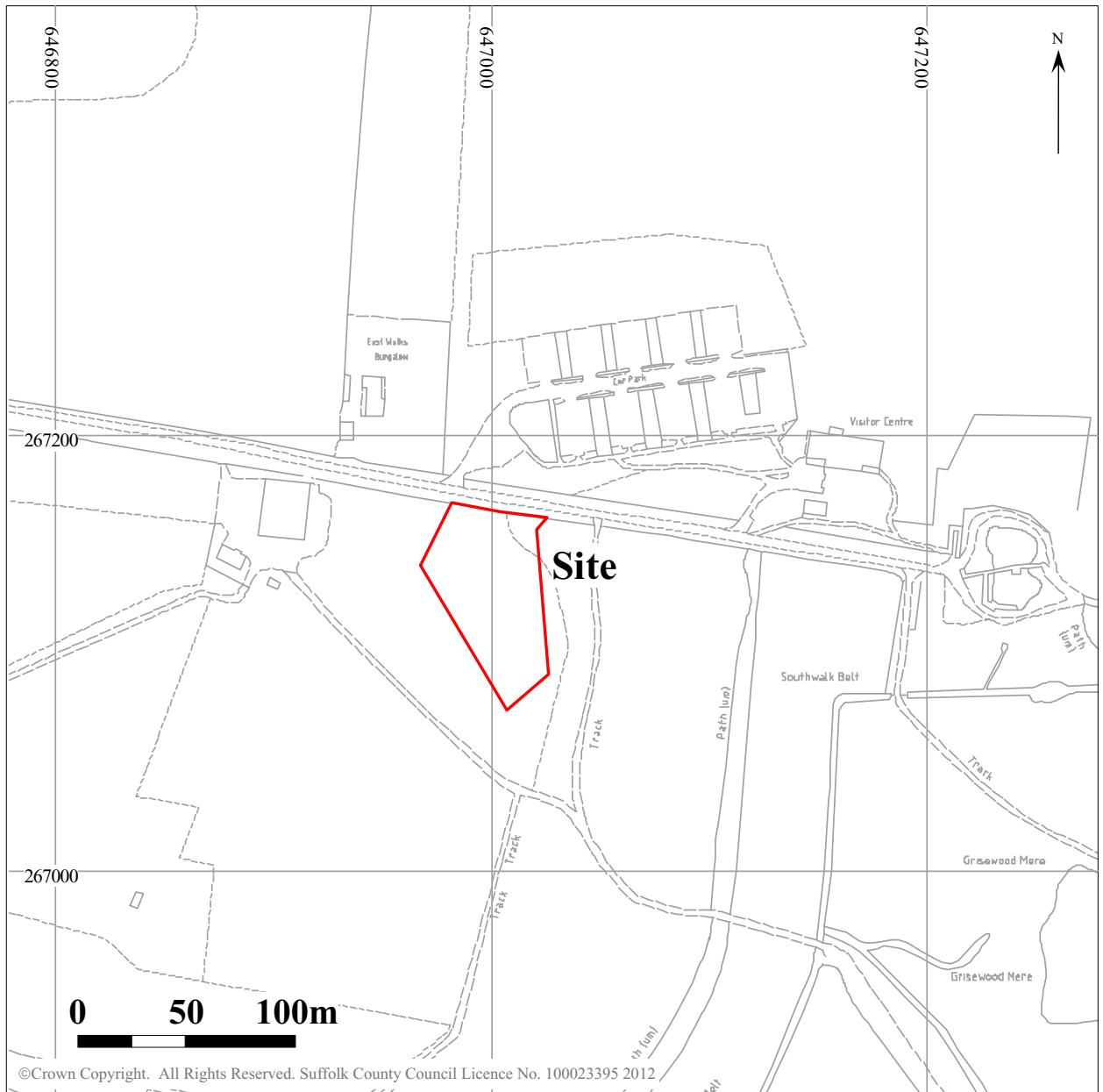
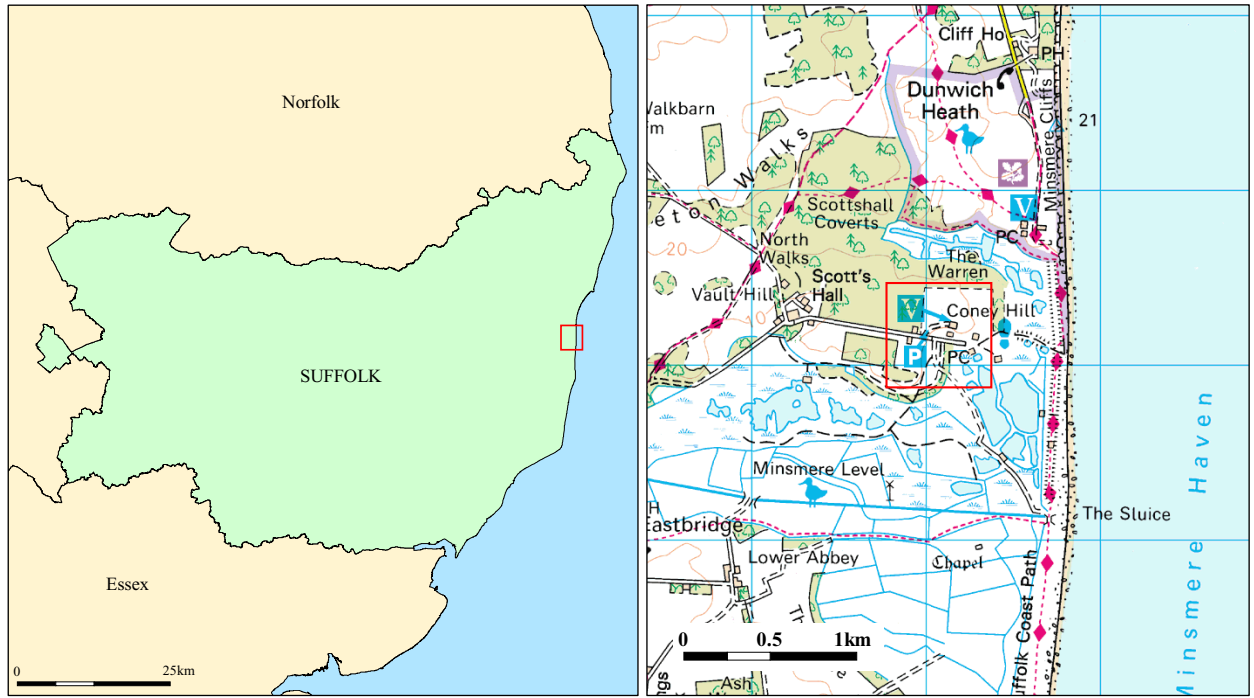


Figure 1. Site location

3. Archaeological and historical background

The high archaeological potential of the site was based predominantly on its location within an area of cropmarks which suggest possible prehistoric or Roman activity. The findspot of an Anglo-Saxon jewellery fragment lies to the west of the development area, and may be significant in the context of strong trade links between the coastal estuaries of east Suffolk and the Continent at this time. Various 20th century military features are known in the vicinity. During the evaluation of the learning facility site a ditch of unknown date sealed by a significant depth of subsoil was recorded (Everett, 2011).

4. Methodology

Several visits were made to the site to inspect the various groundworks. The major part of the monitoring exercise centred around the main learning facility building, the entire footprint of which was stripped to the required formation level under the supervision of, and where necessary, the direction of, an archaeologist using a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Hand cleaning of the exposed surfaces was carried out where necessary in order to clarify the nature of the deposits and identify cut features.

Identified contexts were allocated numbers within a unique continuous numbering system under the HER code WLN 051, continuing the sequence started during the evaluation. Context information was recorded on SCCAS 'pro-forma' recording sheets.

A photographic record comprising digital shots, was made throughout. The monitoring archive will be deposited in the County HER at Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

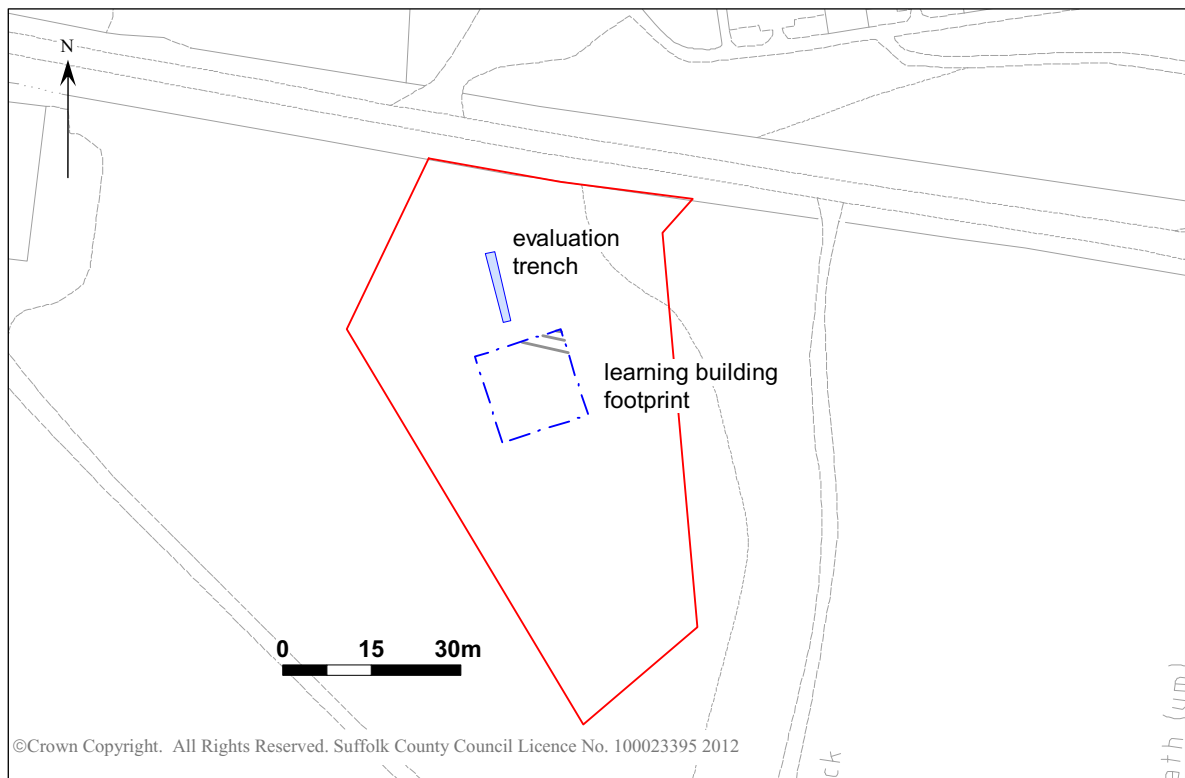


Figure 2. Location of building footprint in relation to the evaluation trench. Ditches shown in grey

5. Results

Two ditches were identified in the north east corner of the site, with a third possible ditch also recorded (Fig. 3). These closely spaced features ran approximately parallel with each other in a NW-SE direction and were sealed by c.0.6m of subsoil. They were very similar to the ditch recorded during the earlier evaluation in term of dimensions, form and alignment and occurred below a similar depth of subsoil. No finds were recovered from the pale grey brown sandy fills, nor were any finds observed within the stripped topsoil or subsoil.

Several other visits were made to monitor groundworks for various other elements of the learning facility, including the access road, but none reached depths where archaeological deposits might be expected to be visible.

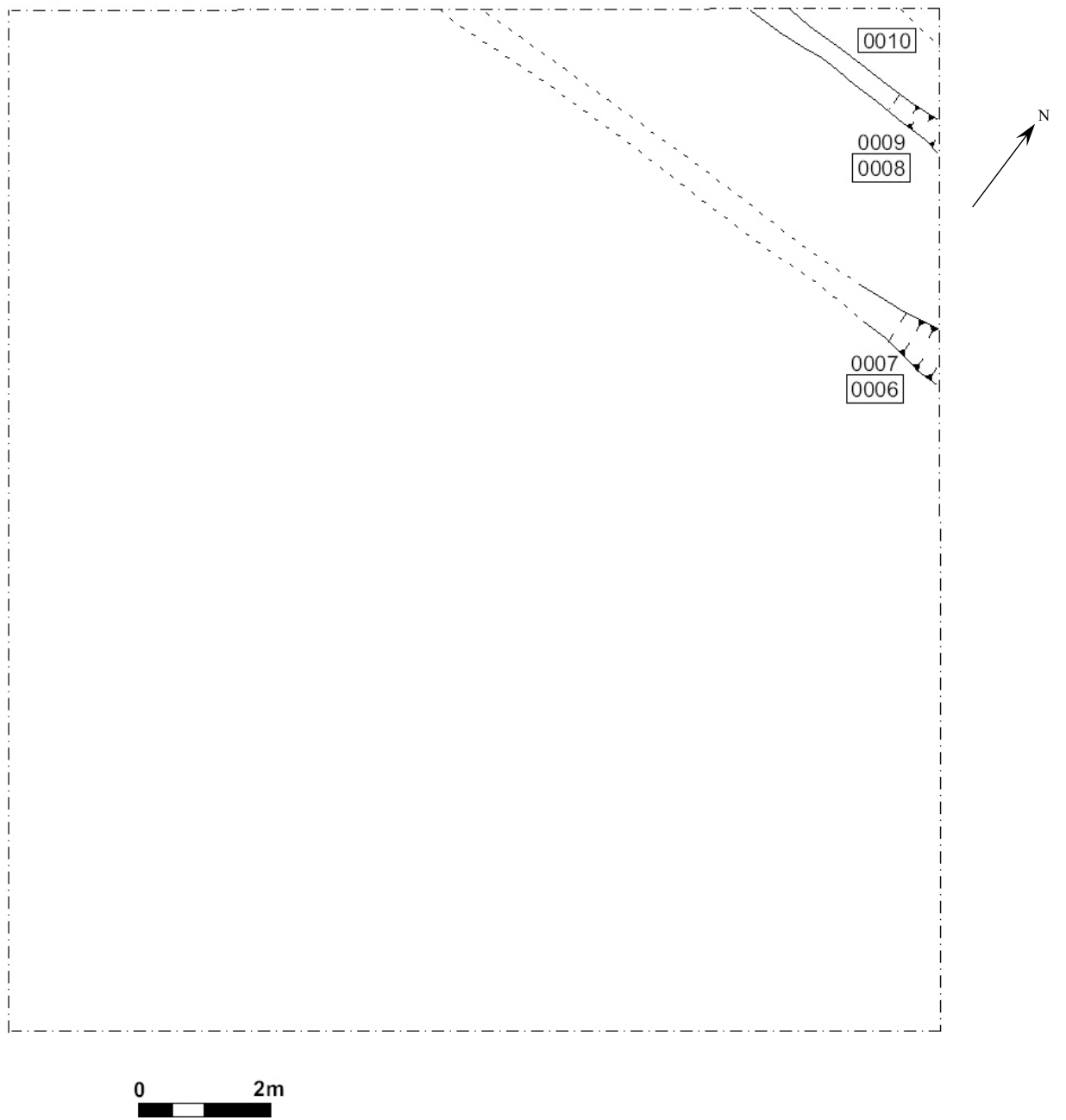


Figure 3. Plan of monitored learning building footprint



Plate 1. Ditch profiles exposed in the NW-SE section of the building footprint



Plate 2. Full profile of ditch 0006, looking NE



Plate 3. Excavated section of ditch 0008, looking SW

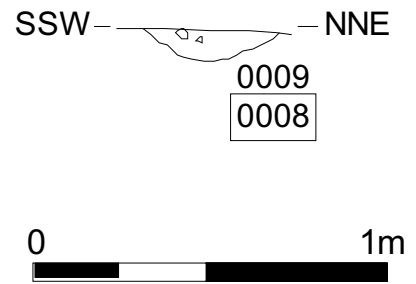


Figure 4. Drawn section of ditch 0008



Plate 4. General view of the stripped access road

6. Discussion

Where the groundworks were excavated to a level below the topsoil and subsoils, archaeological features similar to those identified during the evaluation were recorded. However, these depths were only reached during the monitored strip of the learning facility building, and even then, definition of the individual ditches was impossible until the natural subsoil was reached, as their fill was invisible in plan, almost identical to the subsoil layer above. No datable evidence was recovered from any of the ditches. If significant occupation had been nearby, even a small quantity of pottery or other signs of activity might have been expected from the ditch fills or subsoil and this lack of finds suggests these features may be related to a field system rather than being property boundaries. Although further evidence which may have been able to assist the interpretation of these ditches could survive within the development area, no other monitored groundworks extended into potential archaeological levels.

Bibliography

Everett, L., 2011, WLN 051 Minsmere Nature Reserve, Westleton, SCCAS
Evaluation Report no. 2011/93

The Archaeological Service

Economy, Skills and Environment
9–10 The Churchyard, Shire Hall
Bury St Edmunds
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Brief for Continuous Archaeological Recording
at
Minsmere Nature Reserve, Westleton

PLANNING AUTHORITY: Suffolk Coastal District Council

PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBER: C/10/3067

SHER NO. FOR THIS PROJECT: WLN 051

GRID REFERENCE: TM 468671

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL: New learning centre etc

AREA: Small

CURRENT LAND USE: grassland

ISSUED BY: Jude Plouviez
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Date: 11 October 2011

1.1 Planning permission has been granted with an archaeological condition. The development area has been evaluated by trial trenching and an undated ditch located (see report SCCAS 2011/93). Archaeological monitoring of development work in this area has been recommended.

1.2 The archaeological contractor must submit a copy of their Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) or Method Statement, based upon this brief of minimum requirements, to Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Curatorial Team (SCCAS/CT) for scrutiny; SCCAS/CT is the advisory body to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on archaeological issues.

1.3 Following acceptance, SCCAS/CT will advise the LPA that an appropriate scheme of work is in place. The WSI, however, is not 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, will enable SCCAS/CT to advise the LPA that the condition has been adequately fulfilled and can be discharged.

1.4 The WSI will *provide the basis for measurable standards* and will be used to establish whether the requirements of the planning condition will be adequately met.

2. Archaeological Background

2.1 As described in the previous brief and SCCAS 2011/93, Evaluation Report.

3 Requirement for Archaeological Investigation

3.1 There is high potential for archaeological deposits to be disturbed by this development. The proposed works involve removal of over 700mm of soil over the footprint of the new Learning Centre and its access road; an archaeological feature was identified at just under 700mm in evaluation.

3.2 Soil stripping over this area should be done under archaeological supervision, using a back acting machine with flat-edged bucket, down to the top of visible archaeological features. Adequate time is then to be allowed for archaeological recording of archaeological deposits before lowering the area to formation level.

3.3 A record should be made of all archaeological features exposed; including a plan of the previously identified ditch and excavated sections of all other features. Excavation procedures and sampling and recording methods should conform to SCC standards (as described in previous evaluation brief, copy in SCCAS report 2011/93))

3.4 Elsewhere in the development areas there is also some potential for archaeological deposits (eg the unevaluated area of extension to the Work Centre); each new area/phase of groundworks should be visited in order to record any deposits exposed in plan and/or section.

3.5 The method and form of development should be also monitored to ensure that it conforms to previously agreed locations and techniques upon which this brief is based.

3.6 If unexpected remains are encountered SCCAS/CT must be informed immediately. Amendments to this brief may be required to ensure adequate provision for archaeological recording.

4 Arrangements for Archaeological Investigation

4.1 All arrangements for the excavation of the site, the timing of the work and access to the site, are to be defined and negotiated by the archaeological contractor with the commissioning body.

4.2 The project manager must also carry out a risk assessment and ensure that all potential risks are minimised, before commencing the fieldwork. The responsibility for identifying any constraints on fieldwork (e.g. designated status, public utilities or other services, tree preservation orders, SSSIs, wildlife sites &c., ecological considerations rests with the commissioning body and its archaeological contractor.

5 Reporting and Archival Requirements

5.1 The project manager must consult the County HER Officer to obtain an event 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.

5.2 An archive of all records and finds is to be prepared consistent with the principles of *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)*. It must be adequate to perform the function of a final archive for deposition in the County Store or other museum in Suffolk.

5.3 Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with *UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines*.

5.4 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.

5.5 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. 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.

5.6 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.

5.7 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 proper deposition (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/policy.html>).

5.8 A report on the fieldwork and archive, consistent with the principles of *MAP2*, must be provided. Its conclusions must include a clear statement of the archaeological value of the results, and their significance in the context of the Regional Research Framework (*East Anglian Archaeology*, Occasional Papers 3 & 8, 1997 and 2000).

5.9 An unbound hardcopy of the report or a digital copy, clearly marked DRAFT, must be presented to SCCAS/CT for approval within six months of the completion of fieldwork unless other arrangements are negotiated. Following acceptance, a single copy of the report should be presented to the County HER as well as a digital copy of the approved report.

5.10 A digital vector trench plan should be included with the report, which must be compatible with MapInfo GIS software, for integration in the County Historic Environment Record.

5.11 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. When the project is completed, all parts of the

OASIS online form must be completed and a copy must be included in the final report and also with the site archive. A .pdf version of the entire report should be uploaded where positive results have been obtained.

5.12 A summary report, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, must be prepared and included in the project report.

5.13 This brief remains valid for twelve months. If work is not carried out in full within that time this document will lapse; the brief may need to be revised and re-issued to take account of new discoveries, changes in policy and techniques.

6 Standards and Guidance

6.1 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.

6.2 The Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (revised 2001) should be used for additional guidance in the execution of the project and in drawing up the report.