

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

LAND ADJACENT SHEEPCOTE HALL, STOWMARKET (SMR ref. SKT 046)

A REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF GROUNDWORK ASSOCIATED
WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SINGLE DWELLING & GARAGE
(Application Nos. 2312/05)

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2006/159
(OASIS Ref. Suffolk1-18232)

Summary: Archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with the construction of a single dwelling and garage block on land adjacent Sheepcote Hall, Creeting Road, Stowmarket (NGR; TM 0633 4462), was undertaken during August and September 2006. Sheepcote Hall is a 16th century structure with possibly earlier origins. All footings and test pits were monitored but no archaeological deposits, features or artefacts of any period were identified. The natural subsoil comprised stiff pale brown boulder clay with chalk and was overlain by an orange brown silty clay subsoil and a dark rich garden soil. There was no evidence for previous truncation of the ground surfaces. This monitoring event is recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record under the reference SKT 046. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned and funded by J.A.B. Homes.

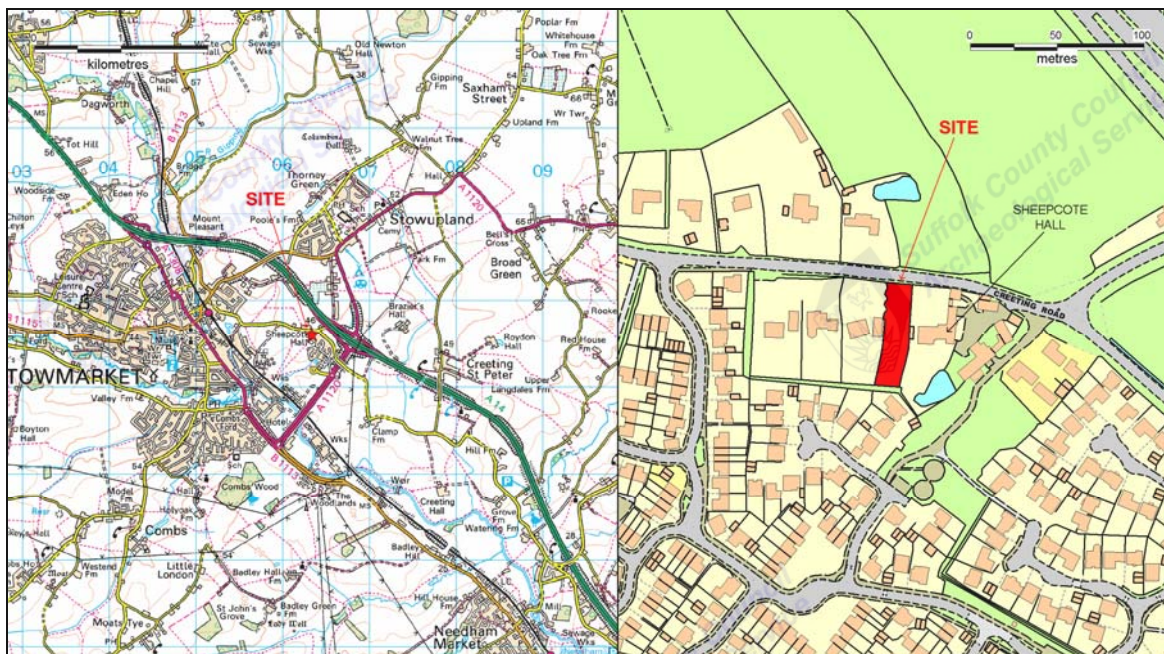


Figure 1: Location Plan

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Introduction

Archaeological monitoring of groundwork associated with construction of a residential development on land immediately to the west of Sheepcote Hall was undertaken during August and September 2006. The development comprised a single 'barn' type dwelling and a 'cart-lodge' style double garage block. Interest in the site is due to its location adjacent Sheepcote Hall, a large structure that has been dated to the 16th century but which may have earlier origins. It is designated as a Grade II structure on the Lists of Buildings of special architectural and historic interest.

The new dwelling and the garage block were to be built on strip foundations which would involve significant ground disturbance with the potential to destroy any archaeological deposits or features that may be present. Consequently an archaeological condition was placed upon the planning consent to allow for archaeological monitoring of the groundworks in order to provide a record of any archaeological features or deposits revealed by the groundworks associated with this development. To detail the archaeological work required a Brief and Specification was produced by Dr Jess Tipper of the Suffolk County Council Conservation Team (see Appendix).

The National Grid Reference for the approximate centre of the site is TM 0633 5862; for a location plan see figure 1 above. This monitoring event is recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record under the reference SKT 046. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned and funded by J.A.B. Homes.

Methodology

Site visits were made to inspect the various aspects of the development. A series of test pits, excavated to assess for contaminated ground, and the footings for each structure were visually examined for archaeological deposits or cut features. The excavation of the test pits was observed but the footings were only seen after they had been excavated by the building contractors. The revealed soil profiles were recorded, with the depths and thickness of any layers identified being noted. A small number of digital photographs were also taken. The surfaces of any spoil tips present on site during a monitoring visit were quickly examined for archaeological artefacts. The structure and test pit locations are illustrated in Figure 2.

Results

The site was visited on three occasions to inspect the groundworks then underway.

Visit 1 (30th August 2006): A series of five test pits were mechanically excavated within the site in areas outside the footprints of the proposed structures (marked as TP1 to TP5 in figure 2). These were all excavated to the top of the undisturbed natural subsoil, which comprised stiff grey clay with occasional chalk lumps and was encountered at a depth of 0.6m. This was overlain by a layer of loose orange silty clay which was in turn overlain by 0.3m of dark rich garden soil. The interfaces between the layers identified were irregular and blurred and there was no evidence for any previous truncation of the ground surfaces.

In Test Pit No. 2 the remains of a shallow foundation comprising a mix of concrete and modern machine made bricks laid over a c. 0.1m thick layer of crushed chalk. The total

depth of this footing being c. 0.4m from the present ground surface. No other archaeological features or deposits were noted. The spoil from the test pits was examined but no artefacts were recovered.

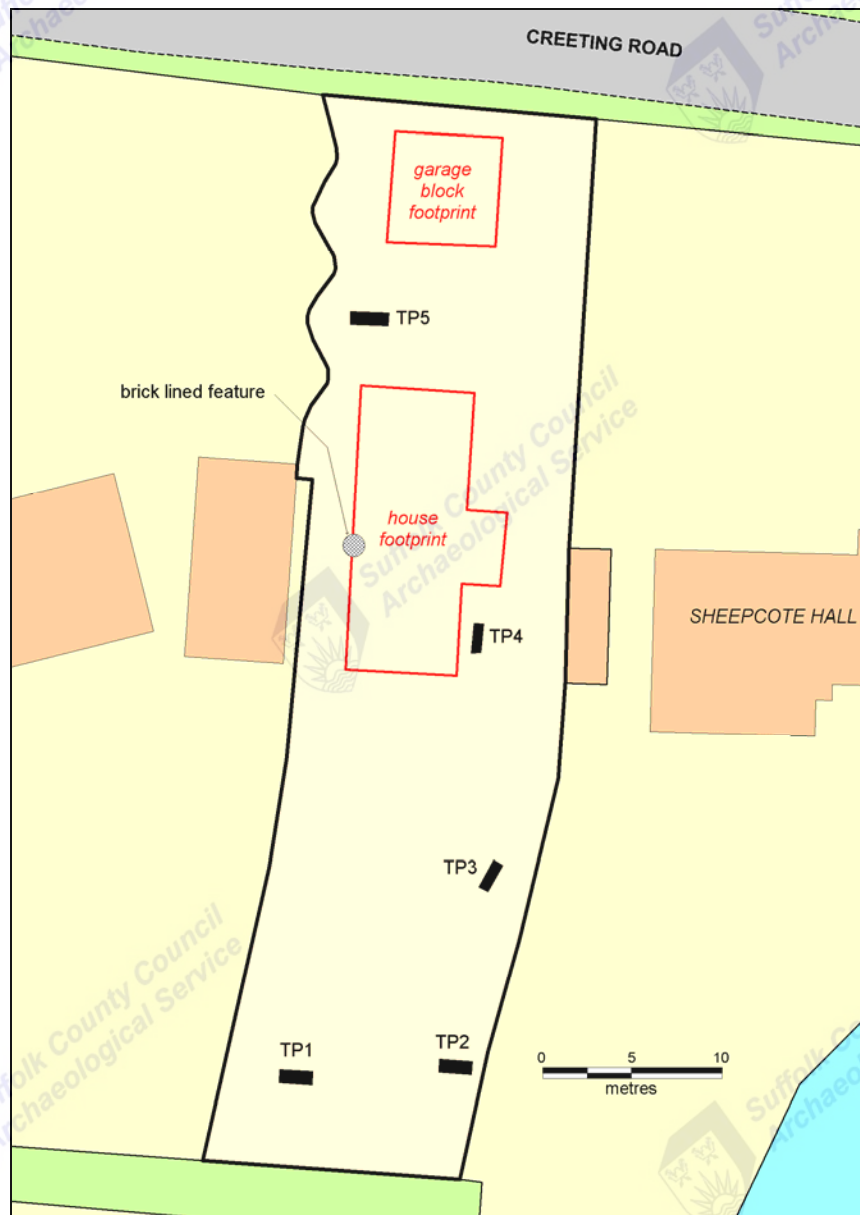


Figure 2: Monitoring Results

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Visit 2 (7th September 2006): The footings for the garage block had been excavated and these were examined. They had been cut to depth of c. 1.1m revealing the same soil profile as seen in the test pits. No archaeological features or deposits were noted and no finds were recovered from the spoil, which at the time of the visit was piled within the building footprint.

Visit 3 (8th September 2006): The majority of the footings for the house structure had been excavated and these were examined during this visit. They too had been cut to depth of c. 1.1m revealing the same soil profile as seen in the test pits and the garage block footings. A single brick lined feature was noted within the western wall footing of the

house. It measured c. 1.2m in diameter and was lined with modern machine made bricks laid with no bonding material. A single modern ceramic pipe running east-west, with a fall to the west, fed into the eastern side of this feature. This feature had been filled/capped with concrete prior to the site visit and its depth had not been recorded. No other archaeological features or deposits were noted and no finds were recovered from the spoil.

No further visits were made.

The monitoring archive from this project will be deposited at the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service offices in Bury St Edmunds under the reference SKT 046. The event is also recorded on the OASIS, online database, reference: suffolkc1-18232.

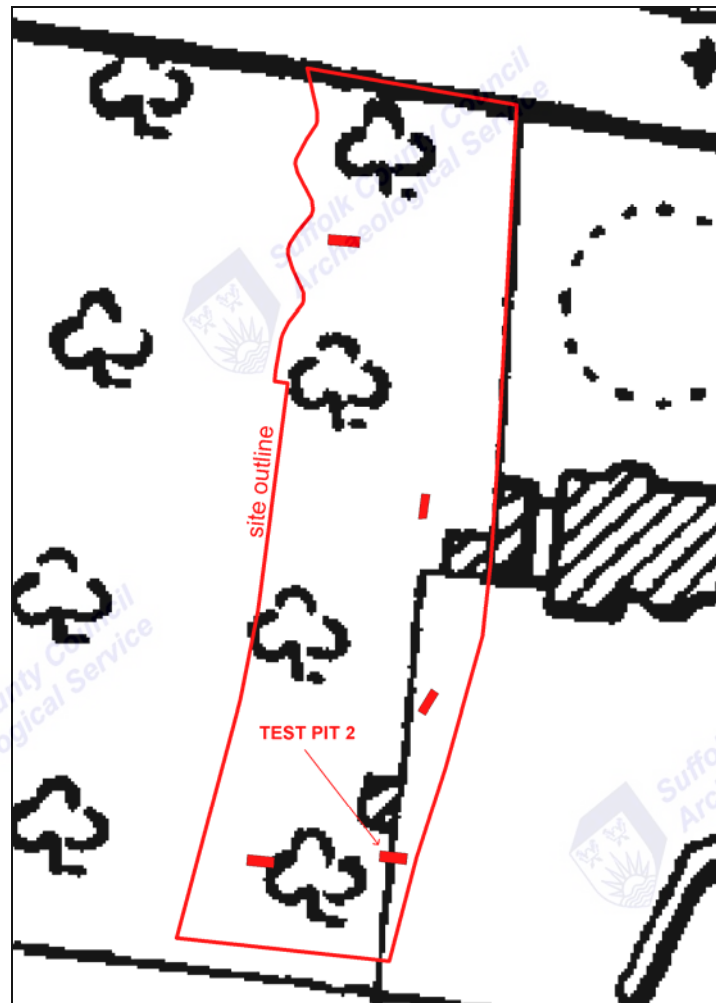


Figure 3: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map (c.1900)

Conclusion

No significant archaeological deposits or features appear to have been destroyed by this development as no significant features or deposits were noted in any of the monitored excavations. All observed excavations were cleanly cut and had any archaeological features or deposits been present it is highly likely they would have been identified. There was no evidence of the natural subsoil having been truncated and the complete absence of

any finds from the site suggests that it is unlikely to have been the site of any earlier occupation.

The First and Second Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (surveyed c. 1880 and 1900 respectively) indicate this area to be an orchard.

The redundant wall footing with the crushed chalk layer noted in Test Pit 2 aligns with a wall line as marked on the 2nd Edition OS maps (see figure 3). There is no evidence for the wall's initial construction although it is also marked on the 1st edition survey indicating it at least predates the 1880s. The crushed chalk layer at the base of the footing may have been used to prevent damp rising. The presence of modern brick and concrete suggests that at least a section of this wall was rebuilt much later in its life.

The brick-lined feature noted in the house footings had the appearance of a well but the use of modern brick and the ceramic pipe indicate this feature is more likely to be a soak-away for rain water drainage, possibly from the guttering of Sheepcote Hall. No well is indicated on any of the early OS maps.

Mark Sommers
Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
Field Projects Team

14th September 2006



Plate I: Footing for the western wall of house.
The brick lined structure is visible in the centre of the picture

APPENDIX

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM

Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring of Development

SITE ADJACENT TO AND WEST OF SHEEPCOTE HALL, CREETING ROAD, STOWMARKET

*Although this document is fundamental to the work of the specialist archaeological contractor the developer should be aware that certain of its requirements are likely to impinge upon the working practices of a **general building contractor** and may have financial implications, for example see paragraphs 2.3 & 4.3.*

1. Background

- 1.3 1.1 Planning permission to erect a detached house and garage on land adjacent to and to the west of Sheepcote Hall, Creeting Road, Stowmarket (TM 063 586) has been granted by Mid Suffolk District Council conditional upon an acceptable programme of archaeological work being carried out (application 2312/05). Assessment of the available archaeological evidence indicates that the area affected by development can be adequately recorded by archaeological monitoring.
- 1.4 This application lies within an area of archaeological interest. The site has potential for medieval (and earlier) occupation, lying adjacent to Sheepcote Hall. The proposed works will cause significant ground disturbance that has potential to damage any archaeological deposit that exists.
- 1.5 In accordance with the standards and guidance produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists this brief should not be considered sufficient to enable the total execution of the project. A Project Design or Written Scheme of Investigation (PD/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 (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 PD/WSI as satisfactory. The PD/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.
- 1.6 Before commencing work the project manager must carry out a risk assessment and liaise with the site owner, client and the Conservation Team of SCCAS in ensuring that all potential risks are minimised.

2. Brief for Archaeological Monitoring

- 2.1 To provide a record of archaeological deposits which are damaged or removed by any development [including services and landscaping] permitted by the current planning consent.
- 2.2 The main academic objective will centre upon the potential of this development to produce evidence for medieval occupation of the site.
- 2.3 The significant archaeologically damaging activity in this proposal is the excavation of building footing trenches and the provision of services for the dwellings, and also any

topsoil stripping and levelling associated with the construction of vehicle access. These, and the upcast soil, are to be observed during and after they have been excavated by the building contractor. Adequate time is to be allowed for archaeological recording of archaeological deposits during excavation, and of soil sections following excavation (see 4.3).

3. Arrangements for Monitoring

- 3.1 To carry out the monitoring work the developer will appoint an archaeologist (the archaeological contractor) who must be approved by the Conservation Team of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (SCCAS) - see 1.3 above.
- 3.2 The developer or his archaeologist will give the Conservation Team of SCCAS 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. The method and form of development will also be monitored to ensure that it conforms to previously agreed locations and techniques upon which this brief is based.
- 3.3 Allowance must be made to cover archaeological costs incurred in monitoring the development works by the contract archaeologist. The size of the contingency should be estimated by the approved archaeological contractor, based upon the outline works in paragraph 2.3 of the Brief and Specification and the building contractor's programme of works and time-table.
- 3.4 If unexpected remains are encountered the Conservation Team of SCCAS must be informed immediately. Amendments to this specification may be made to ensure adequate provision for archaeological recording.

4. Specification

- 4.1 The developer shall afford access at all reasonable times to both the County Council Conservation Team archaeologist and the contracted 'observing archaeologist' to allow archaeological observation of building and engineering operations which disturb the ground.
- 4.2 Opportunity must be given to the 'observing archaeologist' to hand excavate any discrete archaeological features which appear during earth moving operations, retrieve finds and make measured records as necessary.
- 4.3 In the case of any footing and main service trenches unimpeded access at the rate of **two hours per 10 metres** of trench must be allowed for archaeological recording before concreting or building begin. Where it is necessary to see archaeological detail one of the soil faces is to be trowelled clean. In the case of topsoil stripping for the foundation slab unimpeded access at the rate of **two hours per 10 sq metres** of trench must be allowed for archaeological recording before concreting or building begin.
- 4.4 All archaeological features exposed must be planned at a minimum scale of 1:50 on a plan showing the proposed layout of the development.
- 4.5 All contexts must be numbered and finds recorded by context. All levels should relate to Ordnance Datum.
- 4.6 Archaeological contexts should, where possible, be sampled for palaeoenvironmental remains. Best practice should allow for sampling of interpretable and datable archaeological deposits and provision should be made for this. Advice on the appropriateness of the proposed strategies will be sought from J. Sidell, 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.

4.7 The data recording methods and conventions used must be consistent with, and approved by, the County Sites and Monuments Record.

5. Report Requirements

5.1 An archive of all records and finds is to be prepared consistent with the principles of *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)*, particularly Appendix 3. This must be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record within 3 months of the completion of work. It will then become publicly accessible.

5.2 Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with *UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines*. The finds, as an indissoluble part of the site archive, should be deposited with the County SMR if the landowner can be persuaded to agree to this. If this is not possible for all or any part of the finds archive, then provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, illustration, analysis) as appropriate.

5.3 A report on the fieldwork and archive, consistent with the principles of *MAP2*, particularly Appendix 4, must be provided. The report must summarise the methodology employed, the stratigraphic sequence, and give a period by period description of the contexts recorded, and an inventory of finds. The objective account of the archaeological evidence must be clearly distinguished from its interpretation. The Report must include a discussion and an assessment of the archaeological evidence, including palaeoenvironmental remains recovered from palaeosols and cut features. 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).

5.4 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.

5.5 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.

5.6 All parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the SMR. This should include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy should also be included with the archive).

Specification by: Dr Jess Tipper
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Tel. : 01284 352197

Date: 5 July 2006

Reference: /AdjacenttoSheepcoteHallStowmarket2006

This brief and specification remains valid for 12 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.