

Land to the rear of Suffolk House  
High Street, Laxfield, Suffolk  
LXD 074

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

SCCAS Report No. 2014/116

**Client: Hollins Architects & Surveyors**

Author: M. Sommers

October 2014

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High Street, Laxfield, Suffolk  
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Archaeological Evaluation Report

SCCAS Report No. 2014/116

Author: M. Sommers

Contributions By: n/a

Editor: Dr R. Gardner

Report Date: October 2014



## HER Information

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**Report Number:** 2014/116

**Site Name:** Land to the rear of Suffolk House, High Street,  
Laxfield, Suffolk

**Planning Application No:** 0866/13 and 2671/13

**Date of Fieldwork:** 14th October 2014

**Grid Reference:** TM 2951 7242

**Client/Funding Body:** Hollins Architects and Surveyors  
(on behalf of their client)

**Client Reference:** n/a

**Curatorial Officer:** Dr Abby Antrobus

**Project Officer:** M. Sommers

**Oasis Reference:** suffolkc1-192687

**Site Code:** LXD 074

Digital report submitted to Archaeological Data Service:  
<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

### 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.

Prepared By: M. Sommers  
Date: 16th October 2014

Approved By: Dr R. Gardner  
Position: Contracts Manager  
Date:  
Signed:



# Contents

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Summary

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Geology and topography</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Archaeology and historical background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. Methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. Results</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Finds and environmental evidence</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. Discussion</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8. Conclusions and recommendations for further work</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9. Archive deposition</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>10. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>11. Plates</b>	

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Location map	2
Figure 2. Trench location (site topography approximated in red)	6
Figure 3. 3rd Ed. Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale sheet of 1904 (rescaled extract)	9

## **List of Plates**

Plate 1. Trench 1, camera facing north (ref. HXF 87)	1
Plate 2. Trench 1, camera facing east (ref. HXF 88)	1
Plate 3. Trench 2, camera facing west (ref. HXF 89)	2
Plate 4. Trench 2, camera facing north (ref. HXF 90)	2
Plate 5. View southwest across the slope along the northern edge of the western plot (HXF 96)	3
Plate 6. Northern end of Trench 2, camera facing southwest (HXF 91)	3

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1. Brief	
Appendix 2. OASIS data collection form	



## **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out within an area of land to the rear of Suffolk House, High Street, Laxfield, Suffolk, in advance of a small residential development. A series of three trial trenches were excavated but no archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were identified. The site's topography suggested the possible presence of building platforms but this is probably due to quarrying up to the site boundary, in the area to the north, and the location of a slightly sunken trackway (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team for Hollins Architects and Surveyors).



# **1. Introduction**

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Planning permission has been granted for the construction of two dwellings on adjacent plots located to the rear of two existing houses, Suffolk House and St Helens, that front onto High Street, Laxfield (application numbers 0866/13 and 2671/13). For the purposes of this report the two plots will be referred to as a single site (the development area).

A condition was attached to the planning consent calling for an agreed programme of archaeological work to be in place in advance of this development. The first stage of the programme of work, as specified in a Brief produced by Dr. Abby Antrobus of the Suffolk County Council Conservation Team, was the undertaking of a trenched evaluation in order to ascertain what levels of archaeological evidence may be present within the development area and to inform any mitigation strategies that may then be deemed necessary (Appendix 1).

The National Grid Reference for the approximate centre of the site is TM 2951 7242. Figure 1 shows a location plan of the development area.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 14th October 2014 by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service's Field Team who were commissioned by Hollins Architects and Surveyors, on behalf of their client who ultimately funded the work.

# **2. Geology and topography**

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The development area consists of a roughly rectangular shaped piece of land at a height of 50m OD. It comprises two level areas, separated by a slightly sunken trackway that runs down to a low area immediately to the north. Beyond this low area the land rises very slightly before gently sloping down to the upper reaches of the River Blyth, which runs west to east in a channel approximately 110m to the north.

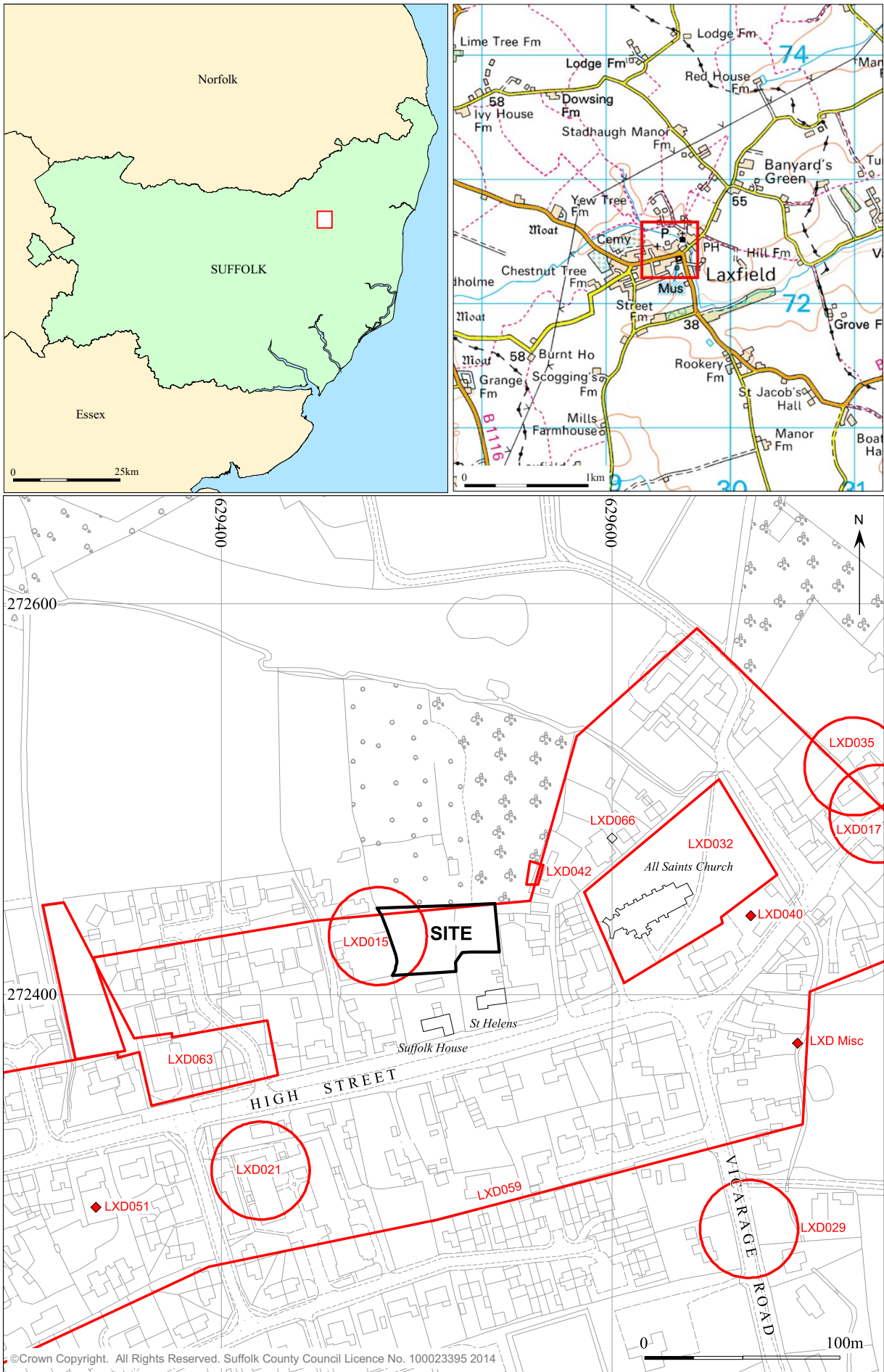


Figure 1. Location map (with HER data in red)

The development area comprises parts of the gardens to the rear of St Helens and Suffolk House and is set approximately 40m back from the High Street, which forms the main route through the small town of Laxfield (part of the B1117).

The underlying superficial geology comprises glacial till of the Lowestoft Formation (British Geological Survey). This has resulted in a landscape that is flat or gently undulating except where it is dissected by river valleys and small tributary streams.

### 3. Archaeology and historical background

The development area is located within the small Suffolk town of Laxfield, close to the medieval parish church of All Saints. The town is of at least a medieval origin as indicated by the presence of the church and a number of archaeological sites or findspots that are recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) in the local area. A summary of these entries is presented in Table 1; the recorded locations of which are marked in Figure 1.

HER ref.	Summary
LXD 015	Rose Cottage: Pottery sherds, late medieval; mainly 16th century and Victorian. Just to the south of the cottage is a possible circular moat or ditch.
LXD 017	Waterloo House: Scatter of 16th century green glazed pottery and 17th century brown glazed wares, found in 'Miss Taylor's garden'.
LXD 021	Hartismere House: 17th century brown glazed ware, some 16th century sherds. Also, coin hoard found in 1973 during construction work by three builders who divided the group up evenly. Only [less than] one-third of group reported to Lowestoft Coroner (inquest in 1994) - these consisted of 16 coins from 1566 to 1643-9 (latest dated example is 1644). There are seven sixpences of Elizabeth I, two sixpences of James I and four shillings and three sixpences of Charles I, with a total value of ten shillings. The finders also noted the remains of a partly intact leather purse in association with the coins. The original group originally comprised about 100 coins, probably buried during the civil war period.
LXD 029	Findspot of a 17th century pipkin handle.
LXD 032	All Saints Church (vicarage). Fine flint panelled tower, stone faced with pinnacles, nave, chancel, vestry and south porch; diocese of St Edmundbury and Ipswich, deanery Hoxne. Listed in Domesday as church plus 43 acres & half plough. Chancel & vestry date to the 19th century, nave decorated, rest perpendicular. Cautley states 'The close resemblance between the flintwork and panelling of the tower here and that at Eye, and the fact that Eye Priory had the appropriation of Laxfield, make it probable that the same master-mason built both, circa 1480'. Note: Laxfield Church Tithes record payments of half-silver (an Anglo-Saxon tax)

	<p>on Shrove Tuesdays, to the Minster Church up until 1840. This may suggest Laxfield was a Minster Church (needs research). Also note: Laxfield presumably seat of Edric of Laxfield (one of the richest in East Anglia) in 1066.</p> <p>In 2012 two small evaluation test-pits were excavated within the body of the tower of All Saints Church, Laxfield on the line of proposed new service trenches. Immediately below the existing concrete floor in Trench 1 the remains of an earlier brick floor was uncovered. The bricks were heavily sooted on their upper surface and were interpreted as representing a 19th or early 20th century structure that would have formed the stable base for a stove. Two other similar bases survive in the nave. Below the brick floor in Trench 1 and immediately below the concrete in Trench 2 a layer of disaggregated lime mortar and flints were recorded. No medieval floor levels were encountered. Judging by the base level of the extant limestone mouldings, particularly in the area of Trench 1, medieval floor levels would have been similar to those of today and, on that basis, are likely to have been replaced rather than built over.</p> <p>Also Anglo-Saxon ring with 'cruciform pattern of concentric circles' found in 1819 in the churchyard 'near some coins of East Anglian kings'.</p>
LXD 035	Scatter of 'Medieval pottery' delineated on map within the garden of 'Miss Felgate's Cottage'
LXD 040	Land to the rear of the Royal Oak Public House.: Moat, inhabited, parts of two square compounds, occupied.
LXD 042	Church Terrace Cottage: One large ditch of unknown date but with post-medieval finds in the fill, observed during a monitoring visit.
LXD 051	The Brambles: Archaeological monitoring revealed medieval finds.
LXD 059	Medieval town of Laxfield, defined from historic maps (primarily Hodkinson's 1783) and locations of listed buildings. 1427, grant of a weekly market and 2 fairs to Sir John Wingfield.
LXD 063	Baptist Chapel (Particular), with associated burial grounds (one to north-west and former one to east, north of road, now built over (Jubilee Close). Not known if burials were removed or not).
LXD 066	1 Church Walk: archaeological monitoring revealed an undated layer of flint cobbles.
LXD Misc	Sunnyside, Vicarage Road: layer of hard packed compacted gravel surface (reported by owner).

Table 1. Summary of HER entries

Given the development area's location and the proximity of known archaeological sites it was considered that there was a high potential for significant archaeological deposits or features to be present.

## **4. Methodology**

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The trial trenches were machine excavated down to the level of the natural subsoil using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The location of the trenches was broadly in accordance with a trench plan approved by the County Conservation Team although the presence of a summer house resulted in a shortening the longer north-south trench (T2). In order to achieve the stipulated sample area an additional trench was excavated (T3).

The machining of the trenches was closely observed throughout in order to identify any archaeological features and deposits and to recover any artefacts that might be revealed. Excavation continued until undisturbed natural deposits were encountered, the exposed surface of which was then examined for cut features. Had any features or significant deposits been identified they would have been sampled through hand excavation in order to determine their depth and shape and to recover datable artefacts.

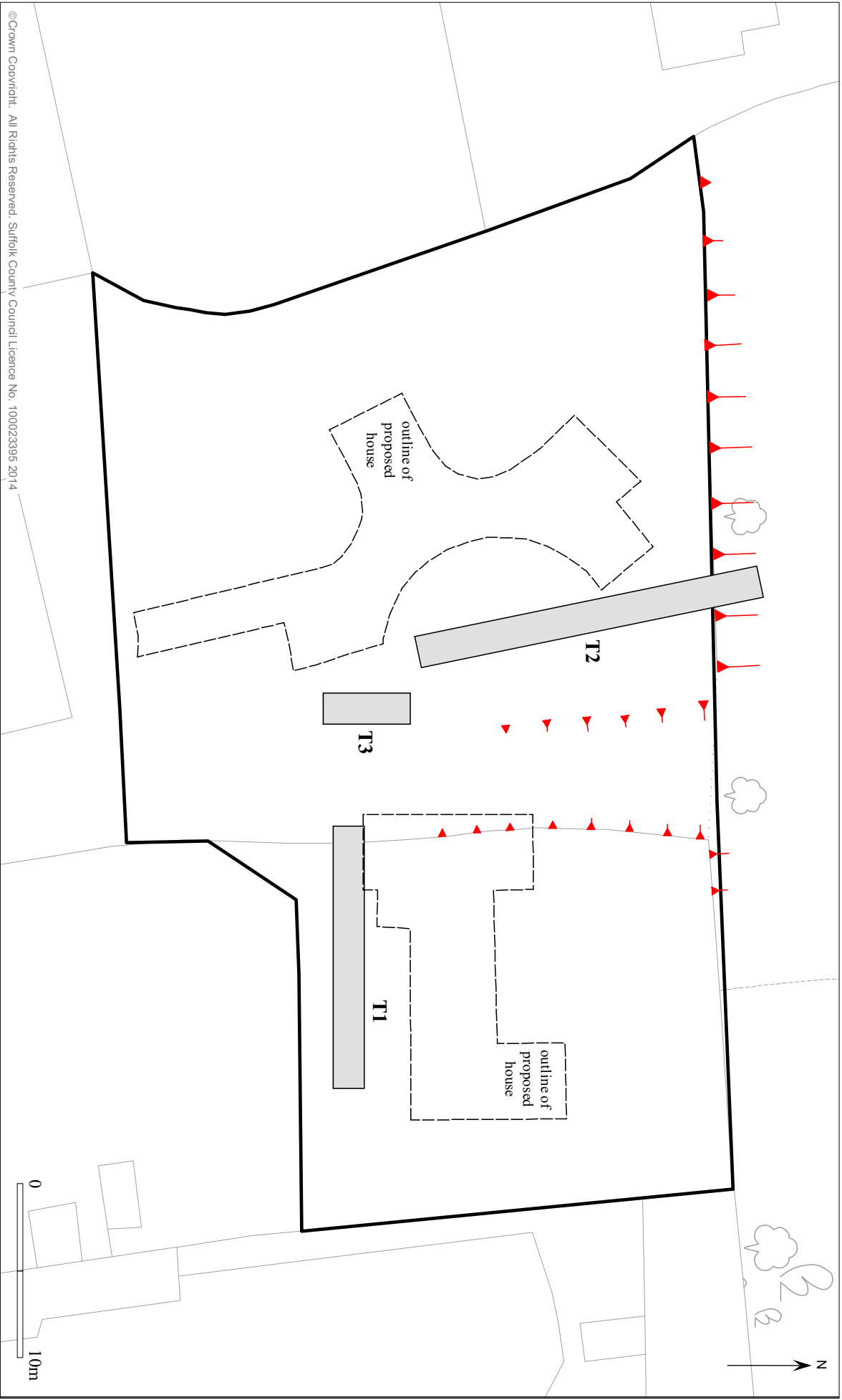
Following excavation of the trenches, the nature of the overburden was recorded and their locations plotted.

A photographic record of the work undertaken was compiled using a 14 megapixel digital camera.

## **5. Results**

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Three evaluation trenches, with a total length of 40m, were excavated (Fig. 2). All revealed a natural subsoil of grey clay with chalk flecks (T1 and T3) or a pale brown silty gravel (T2) lying at a depth of approximately 0.3m below a dark rich garden topsoil (plates 1 to 4). There was no indication in the trenches of any previous intervention into, or truncation of, the natural subsoil except at the northern end of Trench 2 where the natural subsoil appeared to have been cut away to form a c. 45 degree slope down to the north. Other than occasional fragments of soft red brick and infrequent sherds of 19th/20th century glazed ceramics from the topsoil, no artefacts were recovered.



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Figure 2. Trench location (site topography approximated in red)



The topography of the development area was of interest as the approximate areas of the two proposed house plots appeared as level platforms separated by a sunken trackway (see Figure 2 for a graphic representation of the site topography).

The northern edge of the development area was marked by a slope down to the north. This was particularly noticeable along the northern edge of the western plot (plate 5) where a height difference of nearly 1.5m was evident. Trench 2, which was extended to the north, indicated that the slope was probably caused by a reduction in land levels in the area north of the development area (plate 6). No evidence for the deposition of imported material to create the level platforms was identified.

## **6. Finds and environmental evidence**

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No artefacts of any period were recovered during the evaluation.

## **7. Discussion**

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The appearance of the development area, two level areas separated by a trackway, suggested the possible presence of platforms for previous structures. As the general topography sloped down gently to the north the initial interpretation was that these areas had been deliberately built-up in antiquity in order to create level platforms for construction. However, no imported materials were identified in any trench and the excavation of Trench 2 indicated that the area to the north had been reduced in height, probably as a result of small scale quarrying, leading to the creation of the marked height difference along the northern edge of the development area. This edge, and the edges of the sunken trackway, correspond with boundaries marked on the 1st and 2nd editions of the 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey maps of 1884 and 1904 respectively (see Fig. 3 for an extract of the 2nd edition map). The existence of boundaries along the northern edge of the development area presumably imposed a southern limit to the area being quarried resulting in the relatively steep and clearly artificial slope at this location. These boundaries also mark the limits of the domestic gardens within which a small degree of levelling may have occurred through years of gardening activity and this has contributed to the development area's level appearance.

The complete absence of features and artefacts indicates that the development area has not been the site of any earlier structures or any identifiable backyard activities associated with the medieval occupation that was presumably present closer to the street frontage.

## **8. Conclusions and recommendations for further work**

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The evaluation did not identify any archaeological deposits or features that could be under threat from the proposed development. Based on these results, no further work is recommended, although the final decision is at the discretion of the County Conservation Team.

## **9. Archive deposition**

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Historic Environment Record reference under which the archive is held: LXD 074.

Digital archive can be found on the SCC servers at the following location:

*R:\Environmental Protection\Conservation\Archaeology\Archive\Laxfield\LXD 074 evaluation (Suffolk Hs)*

Digital photographs are held under the references HXF 87 to HXF 96

A summary has been entered into OASIS, the online database, ref. suffolkc1-192687

## **10. Acknowledgements**

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The evaluation was carried out by Mark Sommers, from the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team, with grateful assistance from the site owners.

The project was directed by Mark Sommers and managed by Dr Rhodri Gardner, who also provided advice during the production of the report.





## 11. Plates

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Plate 1. Trench 1, camera facing north (ref. HXF 87)



Plate 2. Trench 1, camera facing east (ref. HXF 88)





Plate 3. Trench 2, camera facing west (ref. HXF 89)



Plate 4. Trench 2, camera facing north (ref. HXF 90)





Plate 5. View southwest across the slope along the northern edge of the western plot (HXF 96)



Plate 6. Northern end of Trench 2, camera facing southwest (HXF 91)





**Appendix 1. Brief**

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Economy, Skills and Environment  
9–10 The Churchyard, Shire Hall  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP33 1RX

## Brief for a Trenched Archaeological Evaluation

AT

### LAND TO THE REAR OF SUFFOLK HOUSE, HIGH STREET, LAXFIELD, SUFFOLK

<b>PLANNING AUTHORITY:</b>	Mid Suffolk District Council
<b>PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBER:</b>	0866/13 AND 2671/13 (adjacent plots)
<b>HER NO. FOR THIS PROJECT:</b>	To be arranged
<b>GRID REFERENCE:</b>	TM 295 724
<b>DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL:</b>	Erection of two dwellings and associated landscaping
<b>AREA:</b>	0.19ha
<b>CURRENT LAND USE:</b>	Garden/Green field
<b>THIS BRIEF ISSUED BY:</b>	Abby Antrobus Archaeological Officer Conservation Team Tel. : 01284 741231 E-mail: abby.antrobus@suffolk.gov.uk
<b>Date:</b>	2 October 2014

#### Summary

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted on two applications relating to adjacent sites. They have the following condition relating to archaeological investigation:

‘No development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work has been secured, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.’

- 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 (and in conjunction with our standard Requirements for Trenched Archaeological Evaluation 2011 Ver 1.1), to the Conservation Team of Suffolk County Council’s Archaeological Service (SCCAS/CT) for scrutiny; SCCAS/CT is the advisory body to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on archaeological issues.

- 1.3 The WSI should be approved before costs are agreed with the commissioning client, in line with Institute for Archaeologists' guidance. Failure to do so could result in additional and unanticipated costs.
- 1.4 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 (including the need for any further work following this evaluation), will enable SCCAS/CT to advise the LPA that the condition has been adequately fulfilled and can be discharged.
- 1.5 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. If the approved WSI is not carried through in its entirety (particularly in the instance of trenching being incomplete) the evaluation report may be rejected.

### **Archaeological Background**

- 2.1 This site lies within the historic core of the medieval small town of Laxfield, defined in the County Historic Environment Record (LXD 059). Finds of medieval and post-medieval pottery are recorded in the immediate vicinity (LXD 015). There is potential for archaeological remains relating to the origins, development and early life of the village to exist on the development site.

### **Planning Background**

- 3.1 There is high potential for archaeological deposits to be disturbed by this development. The proposed works would cause significant ground disturbance that has potential to damage any archaeological deposit that exists.
- 3.2 The Planning Authority was advised that any consent should be conditional upon an agreed programme of work taking place before development begins in accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets (that might be present at this location) before they are damaged or destroyed.

### **Fieldwork Requirements for Archaeological Investigation**

- 4.1 A linear trenched evaluation is required of the development area to enable the archaeological resource, both in quality and extent, to be accurately quantified.
- 4.2 Trial Trenching is required to:
  - Identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological deposit, together with its likely extent, localised depth and quality of preservation.
  - Evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/alluvial deposits.
  - Establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence.
  - Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.

- 4.3 Further evaluation could be required if unusual deposits or other archaeological finds of significance are recovered; if so, this would be the subject of an additional brief.
- 4.4 Trial trenches are to be excavated to cover 5% by area. These shall be positioned to sample all parts of the site, including areas of landscaping. Linear trenches are thought to be the most appropriate sampling method, in a systematic grid array. Trenches are to be a minimum of 1.80m wide unless special circumstances can be demonstrated; this will result in c.40.00m of trenching at 1.80m in width.
- 4.5 A scale plan showing the proposed location of the trial trenches should be included in the WSI and the detailed trench design must be approved by SCCAS/CT before fieldwork begins.
- 4.6 **It is anticipated that the two development sites will be evaluated together. In the event that they are not, separate WSIs may be produced for each site.**

#### **Arrangements for Archaeological Investigation**

- 5.1 The composition of the archaeological contractor's staff must be detailed and agreed by SCCAS/CT, including any subcontractors/specialists. Ceramic specialists, in particular, must have relevant experience from this region, including knowledge of local ceramic sequences.
- 5.2 All arrangements for the evaluation 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.
- 5.3 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 and other ecological considerations rests with the commissioning body and its archaeological contractor.

#### **Reporting and Archival Requirements**

- 6.1 The project manager must consult the Suffolk 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 all documentation relating to the work.
- 6.2 An archive of all records and finds is to be prepared and must be adequate to perform the function of a final archive for deposition in the Archaeological Service's Store or in a suitable museum in Suffolk.
- 6.3 It is expected that the landowner will deposit the full site archive, and transfer title to, the Archaeological Service or the designated Suffolk museum, and this should be agreed before the fieldwork commences. The intended depository should be stated in the WSI, for approval.
- 6.4 The project manager should consult the intended archive depository before the archive is prepared regarding the specific requirements for the archive

deposition and curation (including the digital archive), and regarding any specific cost implications of deposition.

- 6.5 A report on the fieldwork and archive must be provided. Its conclusions must include a clear statement of the archaeological value of the results, and their significance. The results should be related to the relevant known archaeological information held in the Suffolk HER.
- 6.6 An opinion as to the necessity for further evaluation and its scope may be given, although the final decision lies with SCCAS/CT. No further site work should be embarked upon until the evaluation results are assessed and the need for further work is established.
- 6.7 Following approval of the report by SCCAS/CT, a single copy of the report should be presented to the Suffolk HER as well as a digital copy of the approved report.
- 6.8 All parts of the OASIS online form <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> must be completed and a copy must be included in the final report and also with the site archive. A digital copy of the report should be uploaded to the OASIS website.
- 6.9 Where positive results are drawn from a project, a summary report must be prepared for the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*.
- 6.10 This brief remains valid for 12 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.

### **Standards and Guidance**

Further detailed requirements are to be found in our Requirements for Trenched Archaeological Evaluation 2011 Ver 1.1.

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.

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

### **Notes**

The Institute for Archaeologists maintains a list of registered archaeological contractors ([www.archaeologists.net](http://www.archaeologists.net) or 0118 378 6446). There are a number of archaeological contractors that regularly undertake work in the County and SCCAS will provide advice on request. SCCAS/CT does not give advice on the costs of archaeological projects.

## Appendix 2. OASIS data collection form

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OASIS ID: [suffolkc1-192687](#)

### Project details

Project name	LXD 074 - Land to the rear of Suffolk House, High Street, Laxfield
Short description of the project	Trenched evaluation in advance of the construction of two houses revealed no archaeological features or artefacts.
Project dates	Start: 15-10-2014 End: 16-10-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	0866/13 and 2671/13 - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework – NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	SUFFOLK MID SUFFOLK LAXFIELD LXD 074 - Land to the rear of Suffolk House, High Street
Study area	1680.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TM 2951 7242 52.3013145588 1.36663460045 52 18 04 N 001 21 59 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
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Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team
Project director/manager	Rhodri Gardner
Project supervisor	M. Sommers
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Suffolk County SMR
Digital Archive ID	LXD074
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Suffolk County SMR
Paper Archive ID	LXD074
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Correspondence","Plan","Report"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Evaluation Report: Land to the rear of Suffolk House, High Street, Laxfield
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Sommers, M.
Other bibliographic details	SCCAS Report No. 2014/116
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	SCCAS
Place of issue or publication	Ipswich
Description	printed sheets of A4 paper with card covers and a plastic comb binding

Entered by	MS (mark.sommers@suffolk.gov.uk)
Entered on	16 October 2014





# Archaeological Services Field Projects Team

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