

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

70-74, HIGH STREET, ALDEBURGH (SMR refs. ADB 168)

REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF SITE PREPARATION
ASSOCIATED WITH A MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT
(Application Nos. C/01/1409)

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2007/038
(OASIS Ref. Suffolkc1-23312)

Summary: Archaeological monitoring of groundwork for a mixed use development at 70-74, High Street, Aldeburgh (NGR; TM 4649 5667), was undertaken during December 2006. Visits were made to the site to examine the grubbing out of old footings and the site strip in preparation for piling but no significant archaeological deposits or features were identified. The top 1.2m to 1.4m comprised made ground within which only occasional late post-medieval brick, tile and clay smoking pipes were identified. This monitoring event is recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record under the reference ADB 168. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned by OWL Architects on behalf of their client, MS Oaks, who funded the work.

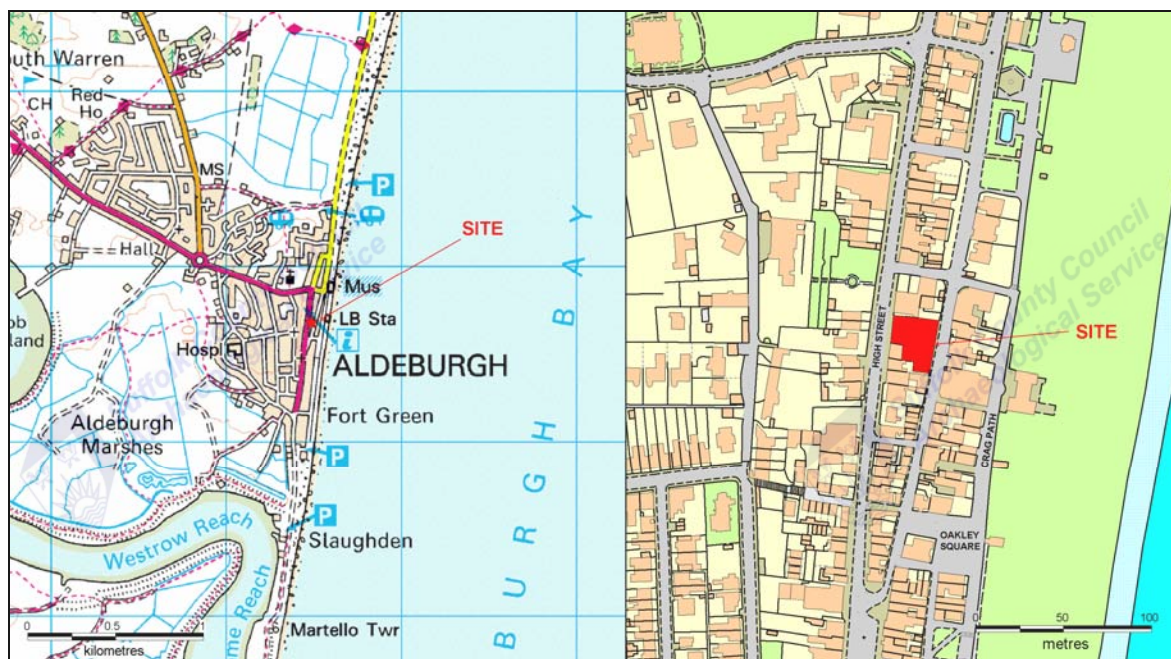


Figure 1: Location Plan

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Introduction

Archaeological monitoring of the site preparation works associated with the construction of a mixed use development at 70-74, High Street, Aldeburgh, was undertaken during December 2006. Interest in the site is due to it being located within the area of the late medieval town of Aldeburgh, defined in the County Sites and Monuments Record as an archaeological site of regional importance.

The site lies on the eastern side of the High Street and is approximately 45m from the shingle beach. The National Grid Reference for the approximate centre of the site is TM 4649 5667 (for a location plan see figure 1) and it lies at a height of approximately 4.2m O.D. The site had been covered in buildings although at the time of the monitoring visits all except the house in the southwest corner of the site had been cleared. This remaining house was to be retained and incorporated into the new development.

An earlier site investigation by SIC (East Anglia) Limited indicates that deposits of marine shingle lie beneath 1.2m to 1.5m of 'made ground'. The made ground is likely to comprise debris that has built up within the area of the town from the medieval period onwards and that evidence for medieval occupation, in the form of cut features, structural remains and surfaces, could occur at any level within this made ground.

The proposed construction is to be built on a piled foundation with connecting groundbeams. The piling operation will cause only limited impact on buried deposits but the excavation of the groundbeams has the potential to reveal and damage archaeological remains. To ensure there was no loss of any significant archaeological evidence a condition was placed upon the planning consent (application no. C/01/1409) to allow for archaeological monitoring of the groundwork in order to provide a record of any archaeological features or deposits that may be revealed. To detail the archaeological work required a Brief and Specification was produced by Mr K. Wade of the Suffolk County Council Conservation Team (see Appendix).

This monitoring event is recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record under the reference ADB 168. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, who were commissioned by the OWL Architects on behalf of their client, MS Oaks, who funded the work.

Methodology

Site visits were to be made to inspect the groundbeam trenches once they had been excavated by the building contractor in order to identify cut features and archaeological deposits which, if located, were to be sampled through hand excavation in order to assess their shape and depth and to recover datable artefacts. Any revealed soil profiles were to be recorded, with the depths and thickness of any layers identified noted. A photographic record was also to be compiled.

Although it was initially proposed to examine the ground beam trenches once they had been excavated discussions with the on-site contractors revealed that they intended to strip c. 500-600mm off the entire site prior to the laying of a piling mat. Upon completion of the piling operation the area would then be built up to just above the original levels. As the base of the groundbeams would be coincidental with the level of the piling mat it was apparent that the best opportunity to identify archaeological remains would be during the initial ground reduction prior to the laying of the mat and consequently visits were made during that phase of the groundwork.

The surfaces of any spoil tips present on site during the monitoring visits were also quickly examined for archaeological artefacts.

Results

The site was first visited on the 15th December 2006 after the foundations of the cleared buildings had been grubbed out. Unfortunately the resultant holes had all been filled by the time the site was visited. The site appeared as an area of ground sloping very slightly down from west to east and covered in fragments of crushed brickwork and concrete. No significant archaeological deposits or features were noted.

The site was visited again on the 22nd December 2007 at which time the ground reduction for the piling mat was underway. Across the western edge of the site c. 550mm of material was being removed by machine although this was expected to reduce slightly towards the eastern edge of the site. The material comprised a dark brown sandy topsoil over dark brown to black sand and shingle with chalk flecks. Within this material numerous fragments of red brick and tile were noted (see Plate I). No obvious layering was apparent. The spoil was being placed immediately alongside the stripped area and this was examined during and after excavation but other than very occasional small fragments of post-medieval clay smoking pipes no further finds were present.

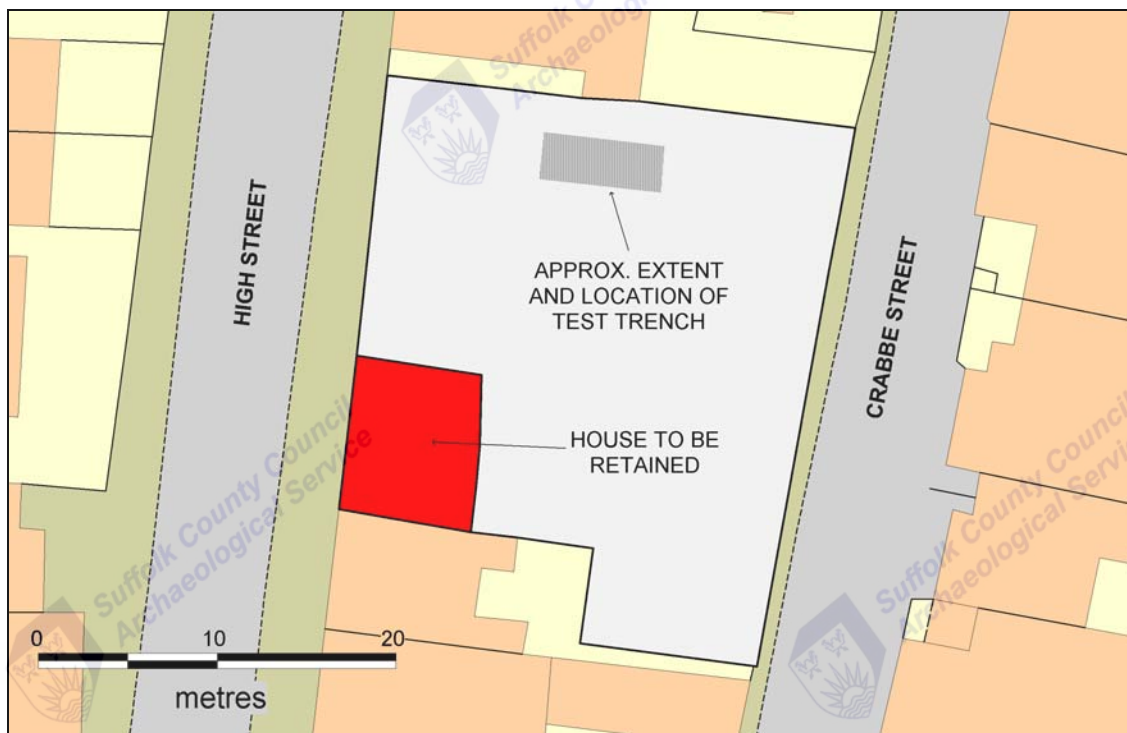


Figure 2: Monitoring Details

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During the ground reduction a short test trench was excavated to the base of the made ground at the location indicated in figure 2. This trench was 1.3m deep at which point a deposit of bright yellow sand and shingle, which was interpreted as the natural subsoil, was encountered. No cutting features were noted. The interface between the two was relatively sharp suggesting there may have been some truncation prior to build-up of the made ground. There was no obvious layering within the made ground deposit although it was noted that all the finds appeared to be in only the top 0.5m with no artefacts identified as having come from any deeper levels.

The monitoring archive from this project will be deposited at the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service offices in Bury St Edmunds under the reference ADB 168. The event is also recorded on the OASIS, online database under the reference; suffolkc1-23312.

Conclusion

No significant archaeological deposits or features appear to have been destroyed or damaged by this development as no significant features or deposits were noted in any of the monitored excavations.

The precise date and nature of the made ground deposit could not be readily determined. Only late post-mediaeval artefacts were noted and these came from within the upper 0.5m of the deposit.

All observed excavations were cleanly cut and had any archaeological features or deposits been present it is highly likely they would have been identified.

It should be noted that monitoring of the construction of an extension to Hope Cottage, Crag Path, situated c. 60m to the southeast of the site, also revealed only made ground deposits. At Hope Cottage these comprised of relatively clean shingle and yellow sand but appeared to contain fragments of post-medieval building material of a similar date to those noted on the High Street site. This could be indicative of a deliberate attempt to raise ground levels in this area of the town during the later post medieval period, presumably in response to the real threat of inundation by the sea.

Mark Sommers
Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team

19th February 2007



Plate I: general view of site, camera facing east (22nd December 2006)

APPENDIX

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring 70-74 HIGH STREET, ALDEBURGH

1. Background

- 1.1 Planning permission to redevelop this site has been granted conditional upon an acceptable programme of archaeological work being carried out (C/01/1409). Assessment of the available archaeological evidence and the proposed foundation methods indicates that the area affected by new building can be adequately recorded by archaeological monitoring.
- 1.2 The proposal lies within the area of the late medieval town of Aldeburgh, defined in the County Sites and Monuments Record as an archaeological site of regional importance.
- 1.3 A Site Investigation Report by SIC (East Anglia) Limited shows made ground varying from 1.2 to 1.5 metres in thickness overlying marine gravel.
- 1.4 Late medieval occupation could occur at any level within this made ground.
- 1.5 Formation levels for the ground beams of the pile and beam foundations should not exceed 75cm in depth from the present ground surface causing limited damage to any archaeological deposits, which can be recorded by a trained archaeologist during excavation of the trenches by the building contractor.

2. Brief for Archaeological Monitoring

- 2.1 To provide a record of archaeological deposits which would be 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 the late medieval occupation of the site.
- 2.3 The significant archaeologically damaging activity in this proposal is the excavation of ground beam footing trenches. These, and the upcast soil, are to be observed during and after they have been excavated by the building contractor.

3. Arrangements for Monitoring

- 3.1 The developer or his archaeologist will give the County Archaeologist (Keith Wade, Archaeological Service, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR. Telephone: 01284 352440; Fax: 01284 352443) 48 hours notice of the commencement of site works.
- 3.2 To carry out the monitoring work the developer will appoint an archaeologist (the observing archaeologist) who must be approved by the Planning Authority's archaeological adviser (the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service).
- 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 timetable.
- 3.4 If unexpected remains are encountered, the County Archaeologist should be immediately informed so that any amendments deemed necessary to this specification to ensure adequate provision for recording, can be made without delay. This could include the need for archaeological excavation of parts of the site which would otherwise be damaged or destroyed.

4. Specification

- 4.1 The developer shall afford access at all reasonable times to both the County Archaeologist and the 'observing archaeologist' to allow archaeological observation of building and engineering operations which disturb the ground.
- 4.2 Opportunity should 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 footing trenches unimpeded access at the rate of one and half 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.
- 4.4 All archaeological features exposed should be planned at a minimum scale of 1:50 on a plan showing the proposed layout of the development.
- 4.5 All contexts should be numbered and finds recorded by context as far as possible.
- 4.6 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. 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*, should be prepared and included in the project report.
- 5.5 County Sites and Monuments Record sheets should be completed, as per the county SMR manual, for all sites where archaeological finds and/or features are located.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 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: Keith Wade
 Suffolk County Council, Archaeological Service Conservation Team
 Environment and Transport Department
 Shire Hall
 Bury St Edmunds
 Suffolk IP33 2AR
 Date: 28 February 2005

Reference: /Aldeburgh-HighSt02

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.