

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

## COUNTY HALL, IPSWICH

**SMR ref. IPS 382**

**(Ipswich SMR ref. IAS 6701)**

M. Sommers

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Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

Field Projects Team

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**SCCAS REPORT No. 2007/109**

*OASIS ref. suffolkc1-27531*



# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	1
<b>2. Methodology</b>	3
<b>3. Results</b>	4
<b>4. The Finds</b>	9
<b>5. Discussion</b>	11
<b>6. Recommendations for Future Work</b>	11

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Location Plan	1
Figure 2: The County Hall Complex	2
Figure 3: Trench Location Plan	4
Figure 4: Plan of Trench 2	6
Figure 5: Sections	7

## List of Plates

Plate I: Trench 1 – illustrating the nature of the overburden and the truncation of the natural subsoil	4
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## Appendices

Appendix: Context List	12
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## COUNTY HALL, IPSWICH

County SMR Ref. IPS 382 (Ipswich. SMR ref. IAS 6701); OASIS ref. suffolkc1-27531

**SCCAS Report No. 2007/109**

**Summary:** An archaeological evaluation was undertaken during May 2007 to investigate the potential for buried archaeology within an area of land situated to the rear of County Hall, St Helen's Street, Ipswich (NGR ref. TM 1686 4450), in advance of a proposed residential development (application no. IP/05/00641/FUL). Two linear trenches were machine excavated within the proposed building footprint. The first trench, which ran across the site, revealed that this area had been heavily disturbed by previous construction that had severely truncated the natural subsoil, which was encountered at a depth of c.1.5m. The second trench ran close to and parallel with Bond Street on the site's western boundary. Within this trench evidence for Saxon activity in the form of a rammed pebble surface and a ditch, both of which were associated with Middle and Late Saxon pottery, was recorded at a depth of c.0.6m at which level the natural subsoil occurred. It was noted that no significant later disturbance to the archaeological levels had occurred in the area of this trench. It was feared that cellars associated with a terrace of houses may have destroyed evidence closer to the street frontage but a third machine dug trial trench excavated close to Bond Street did not reveal any evidence of deep disturbances.

This evaluation is recorded on the County SMR, reference no. IPS 382 (Ipswich SMR ref. IAS6701). The evaluation was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team who were commissioned and funded by the site's owners, Rainbow Developments Limited.

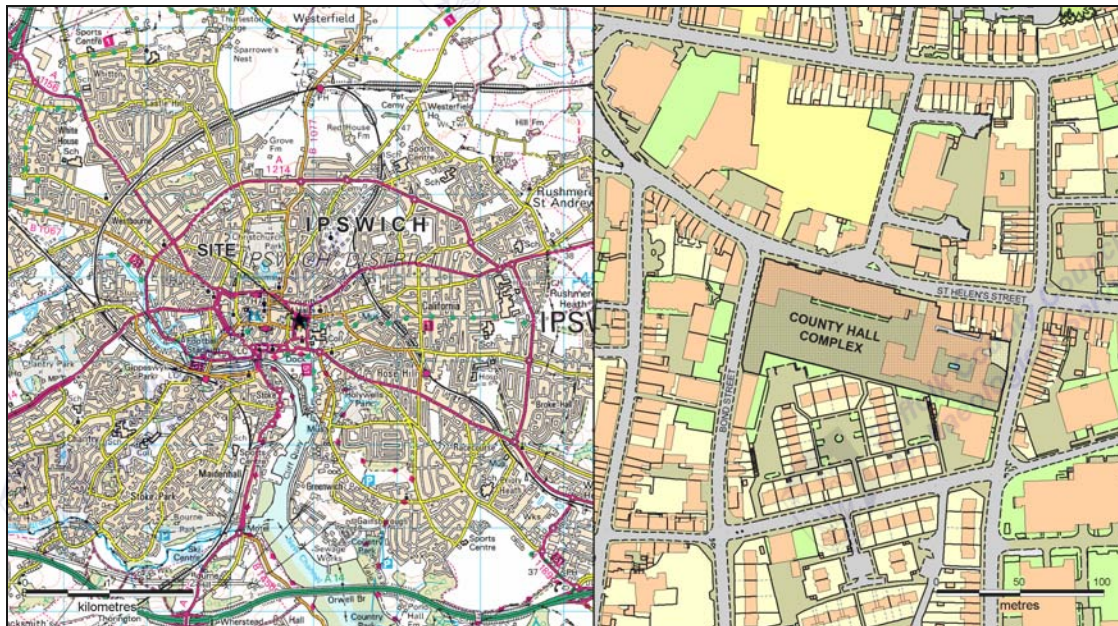


Figure 1: Location Plan

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## 1. Introduction

Construction of a residential development on vacant land which forms part of the County Hall complex in St Helen's Street, Ipswich, has been proposed (application no. IP/05/00641/FUL). The NGR for the approximate centre of the site is TM 1686 4450; for a location plan see figure 1 above. The application was approved but is conditional on the implementation of a programme of archaeological works

being in place before the development commences. The first phase of the programme of work is to be a trenched evaluation of the site to assess the nature and depth of any buried archaeological remains that may present the results of which will then be used to inform the decisions of the SCC Conservation Team as to what further archaeological work may be required. To detail the works required for the evaluation a Brief and Specification was produced by Mr Wade of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (see Appendix I).

The development entails the conversion of existing buildings (St Andrew's House and County Hall), the clearance of redundant buildings and the construction of two separate areas of new build within the County Hall complex. The new build comprises an apartment block on land to the rear of County Hall and flats/houses on land to the east of the complex in an area fronting Grimwade Street (see figure 2). This report deals only with the results of the field evaluation of the area for the apartment block to the rear of County Hall. The Grimwade Street frontage will be evaluated at a later date.

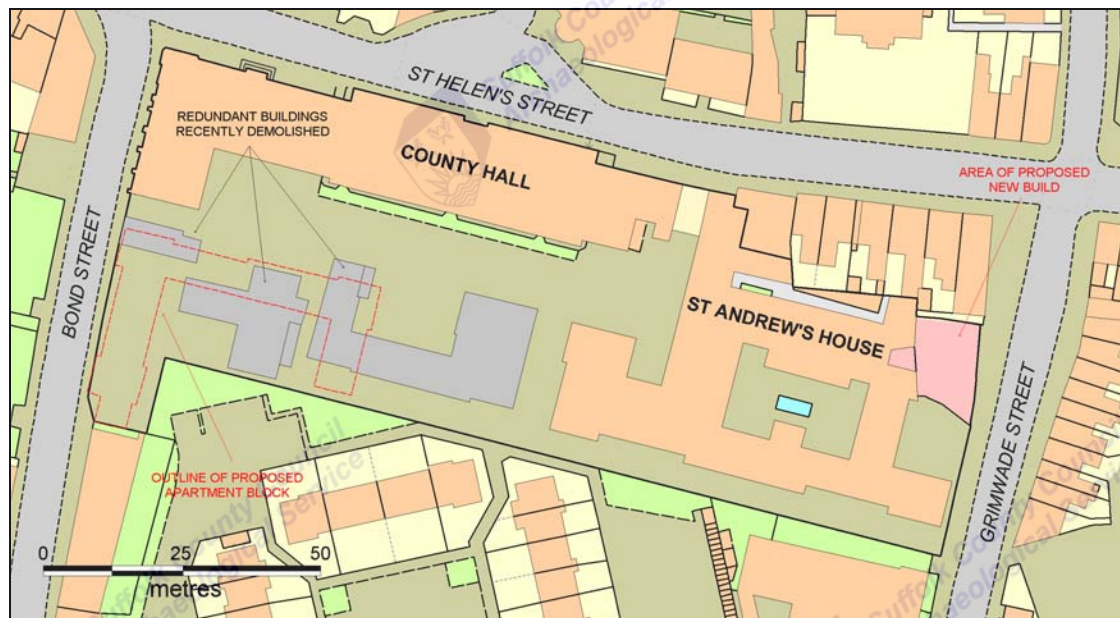


Figure 2: The County Hall Complex

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An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, undertaken in 2003 (SCCAS Report No. 2003/173), identified the potential for Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains to be present within the development area. It was noted that the site is close to an area of Middle and Late Saxon pottery kilns, which is situated to the west but is believed to have extended along St Helen's Street towards the site. St Helen's Street itself is thought to be of at least medieval origin and undoubtedly would have had properties fronting the street during the medieval period. The development area also formed part of the site of the County Gaol, built during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and finally demolished in the 1930s. Unfortunately it is documented that the foundations for the gaol were systematically grubbed out when it was demolished which is likely to have severely damaged or destroyed earlier remains.

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned and funded by the site's owners, Rainbow Developments Limited and was undertaken by the Field Projects Team of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. The archive of the work is lodged with the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at its Bury St. Edmunds office under the Sites and Monuments Record reference, IPS 382 (details are also recorded on the Ipswich SMR under the reference IAS 6701). A summary of this project has been entered onto OASIS, the online archaeological database, under the reference suffolkc1-27531.

## **2. Methodology**

Trial trenches were machine excavated down to the level of the natural subsoil (or the top of any significant archaeological deposits if encountered) using the back acting hoe of a 'JCB' type wheeled excavator. It was necessary to initially use a toothed bucket to cut through the surface and underlying rubble base but once this had been done the remainder of the trench was excavated using a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were positioned to run the long axis of two of the arms of the proposed apartment block in accordance with an approved plan.

The machining of the trenches was closely observed throughout in order to identify archaeological features and deposits and to recover any artefacts that may be revealed. Excavation continued until the undisturbed natural subsoil or the top of any significant archaeological deposits were encountered. The newly exposed surface was examined for cut features or deposits. Any features/deposits noted were sampled through the hand excavation of a section through the fill in order to determine depth and shape in order to aid their interpretation and recover datable artefacts.

Context numbers were issued to each feature/deposit noted starting from 0002, 0001 being reserved for unstratified finds from the site, and their locations recorded on a 1:50 scale plan of the trench. The revealed cross-sections were then recorded at a scale of no less than 1:20 and photographed using a 4 megapixel digital camera.

A series of levels on the base of the trench 2 and the adjacent existing ground surface were recorded and related to an Ordnance Survey Bench Mark on the front of the County Hall, recorded on current OS mapping as having a height of 11.43m.

Following archaeological investigation the trench locations were plotted and their depths were noted. Upon completion of the fieldwork the trenches were backfilled.

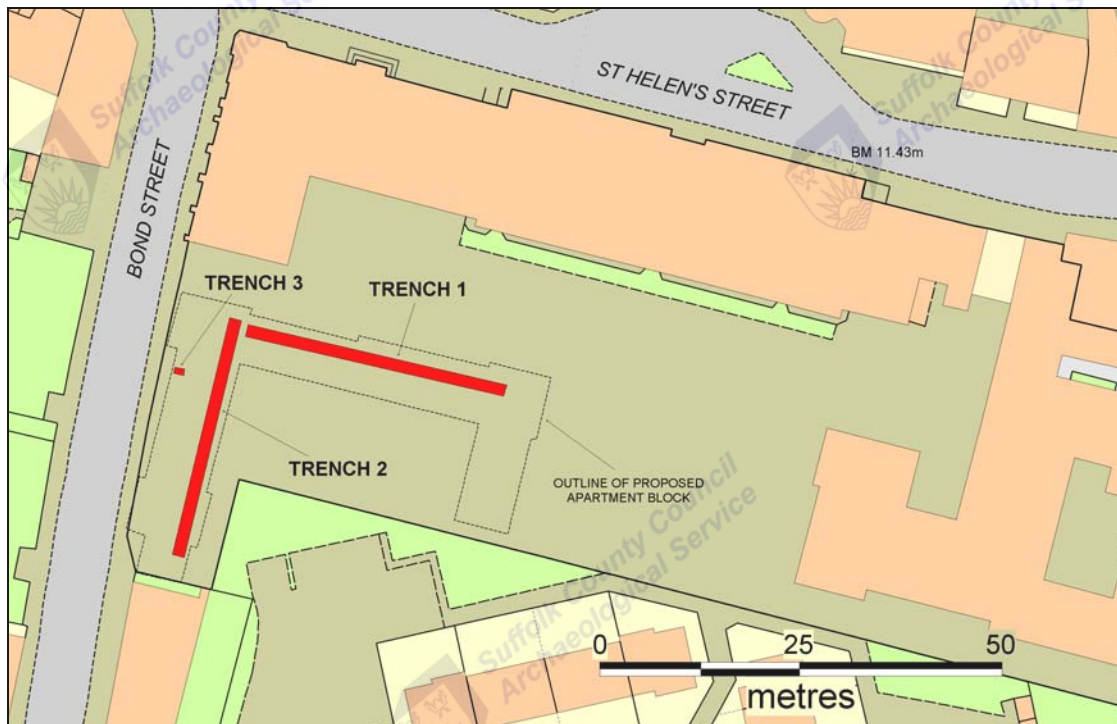


Figure 3: Trench Location Plan

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### 3. Results

Two trenches totalling 63m in length were excavated within the footprint of the proposed apartment block; see figure 3 above for a plan of their location. See Appendix II for the list of context numbers used and their descriptions.

Trench 1 was approximately 33m in length and aligned approximately east-west. It lay across an area where redundant buildings had been recently (December 2006) been demolished and the footings removed.

The trench was excavated to a depth of *c.* 1.4m at which depth the undisturbed natural subsoil was encountered. The natural subsoil comprised bright yellow/orange silty sand with gravel and was buried beneath a deposit of made ground which comprised brick and concrete rubble mixed with dark sandy loam. The interface between the overburden and the natural subsoil was very abrupt



Plate I: Trench 1: illustrating the nature of the overburden and the truncation of natural subsoil



suggesting the natural subsoil had been truncated. Towards the western end of this trench the remains of a brick walls associated with a concrete floor were noted. Attempts to remove these were made but this was beyond the safe capability of the machine suggesting they were of some depth and on substantial foundations.

West of these disturbances, in the final 1.5m western stretch of this trench, the natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.8m and lay beneath a deposit of dark silty loam. The interface between the subsoil and this layer was irregular suggesting the natural subsoil in this area had not been truncated. At the very end of this trench the natural subsoil sloped away at an angle of *c.* 45°. Although no change in the overlying material could be detected it is likely that this slope was related to an archaeological feature, either a pit or possibly a ditch. No finds were recovered from the fill.

Trench 2 was approximately 30m in length and was aligned parallel with Bond Street, but set back from the road edge by *c.* 8m. It was known that a terrace of houses formerly fronted Bond Street and in order to avoid any possible cellars the trench was excavated *c.* 8m back from the road in what would have been the rear gardens for the terrace. The area was tarmacked and had formerly been an area of car parking

After removal of the tarmac surface and its sub-base of sand and brick rubble a deposit of dark silty loam was immediately encountered (context number 0025). This was generally *c.* 0.6m thick and overlay the natural subsoil, which at its highest point lay at 10.78m OD. Within this trench various archaeological features and deposits were recorded which are described below. Figure 4 is a reduced scale plan of this trench. Figure 5 comprises the recorded sections of the features noted in Trench 2. The spot heights noted on the plan in figure 4 are as follows:

location	Spot height no.	Height in metres above OD
existing ground surface	1	11.39
	2	11.39
	3	11.30
base of trench	4	10.72
	5	10.78
	6	10.38
	7	10.35

Table 1: Recorded heights within Trench 2

**0002** – A large pit feature located on the eastern edge of the trench. Believed to roughly oval in shape with sheer sides. Excavated to a depth of 1.8m but base not reached. Excavation halted due to safety concerns. Dark silty loam fill (0003) similar to layer 0025. Not easy to discern but appeared to have been cut from high up in layer 0025. Finds suggest a late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date. A differing fill (0008) was noted in a small test excavation at the southern end of this feature which comprised light grey and orange silty sand but no finds were recovered from this layer.

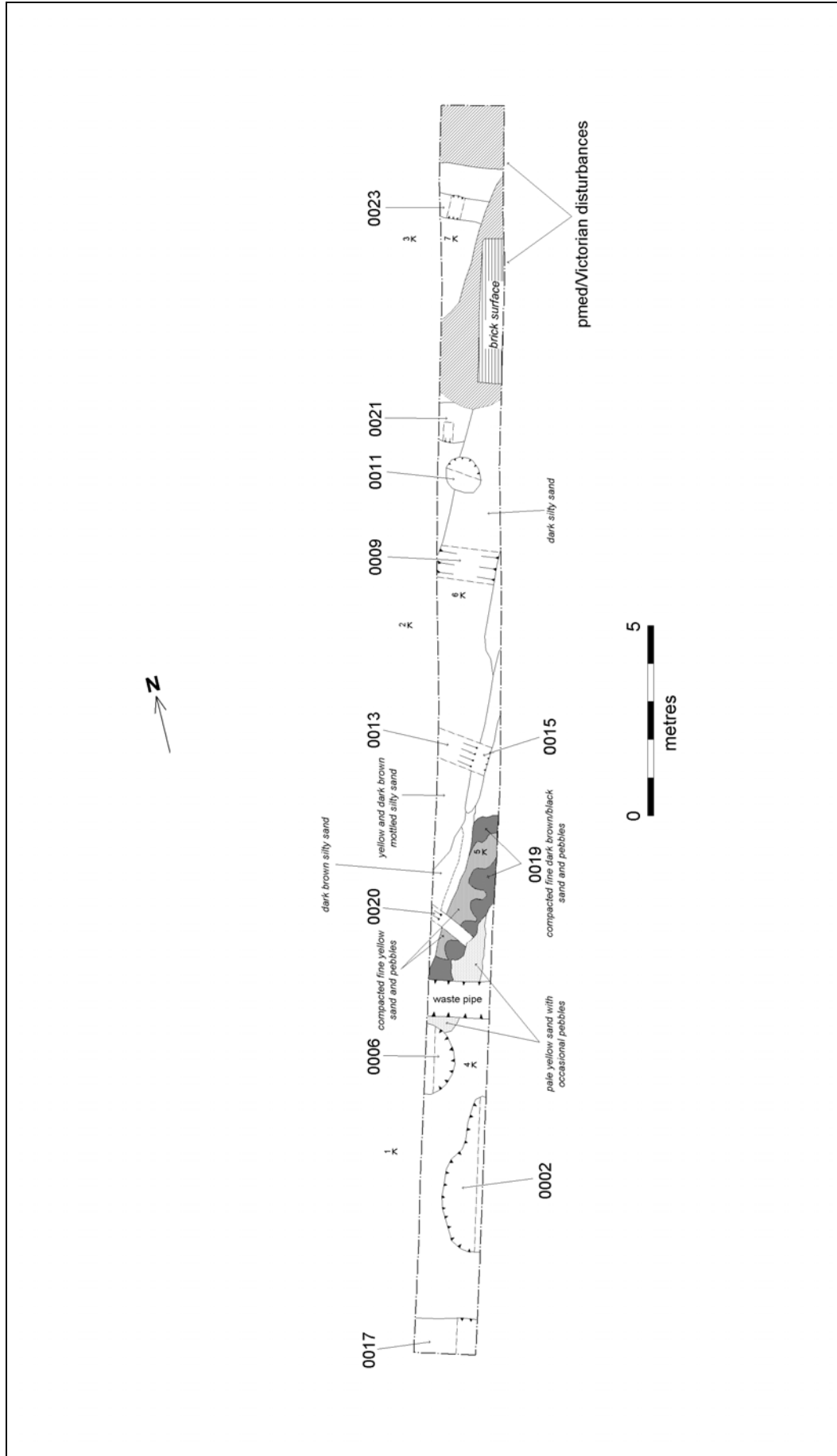


Figure 4: Plan of Trench 2

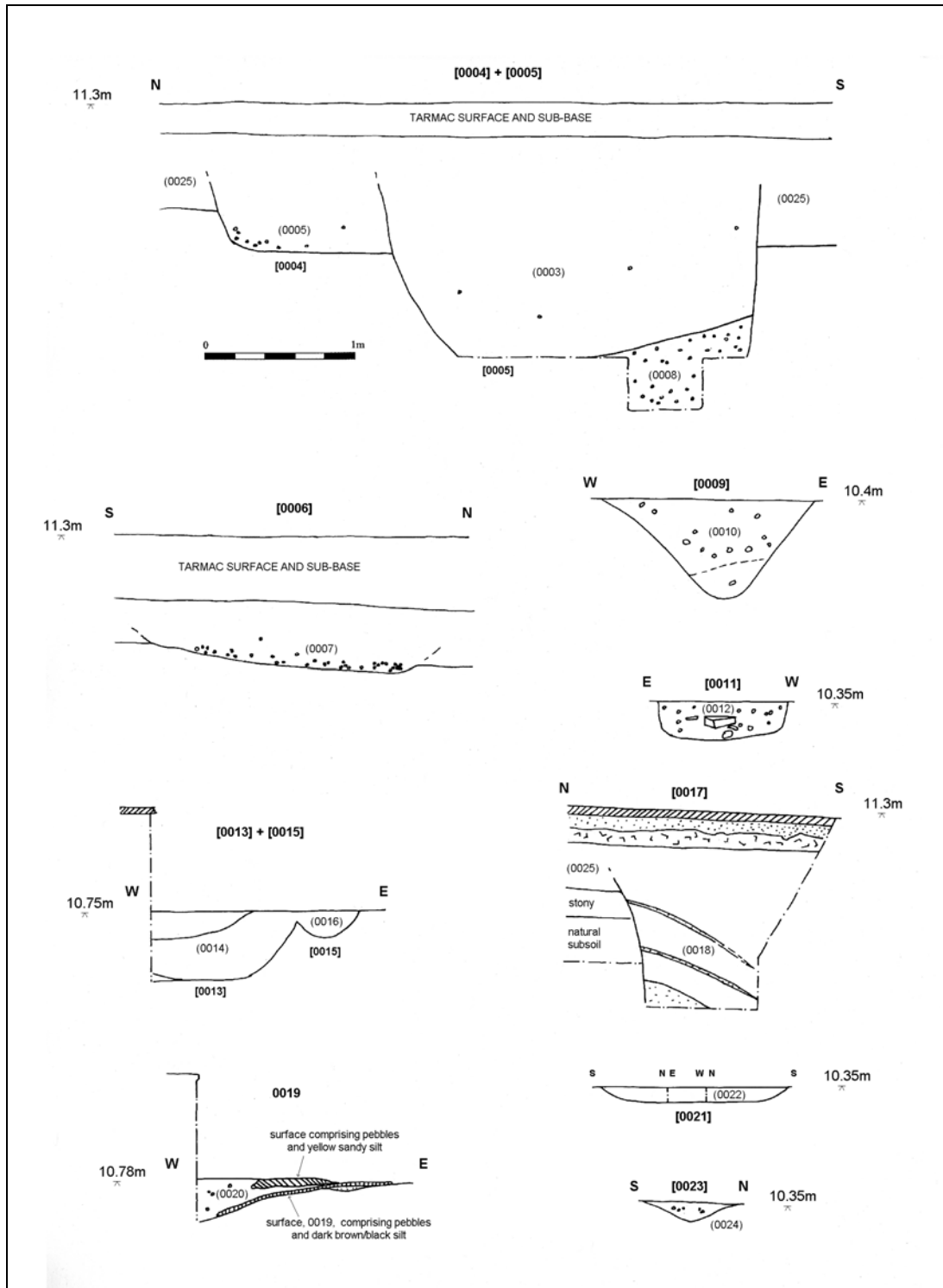


Figure 5: Sections

**0004** – A smaller pit adjacent to and probably cut by 0002. Fill (0005) similar to that of 0002. Not identified as a separate feature until excavated therefore finds have become mixed with those from 0002 but this feature also appeared to have been cut from high in layer 0025 suggesting a similar late 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

**0006** – A shallow feature cut interpreted as a pit. Not possible to determine which level this cut had been excavated from as the fill (0007) and layer 0025 were very similar in appearance although the possibly stonier nature of the fill suggest that it may have been sealed by layer 0025. Finds indicate a Middle Saxon date for the fill.

**0009/0013** – Linear feature cut interpreted as a ditch and running at an oblique angle across the trench. At least 1.5m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.7m. Two sections excavated across the width of this feature revealing a fill (0010 and 0014) that comprised dark brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecks, oyster shell and fired clay fragments. Occasional small thin lenses of mottled yellow sand were also evident. Numerous sherds of pottery suggesting a Late Saxon date were recovered from both of the excavated sections.

**0011** – Small circular pit cut containing a fill (0012) comprising dark grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks. Cuts the fill of ditch 0009/0013. Finds recovered indicate a Late 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date for this feature.

**0015** – Narrow linear cut interpreted as a gully. Measures 0.45m in width and cut the natural subsoil to a depth of 0.18m. Fill comprises dark brown silty sand. Runs parallel to ditch 0009/0013. Not possible to positively determine the relationship between this gully and the ditch. No finds were recovered but only a small portion was excavated during the evaluation.

**0017** – Deep feature noted at the southern end of the trench running perpendicular to Bond Street. Only one side of this cut was visible within trench. It was straight and almost vertical. The fill comprised dark silty loam with occasional lenses of clean yellow sand (0018). Finds from the fill included Saxon pottery but fragments of post-medieval tile were also recovered indicating a 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date.

**0019** – In an area on the eastern side of ditch 0009/0013 a surface formed from small rounded pebbles in a matrix of fine dark sand and silt was present. The surface of this was relatively level and extremely hard. A trial excavation revealed that this surface was associated with the ditch as it could be clearly seen to continue down the ditch's edge for at least 0.4m. The surface appeared to have been patched and possibly partially extended over the ditch fill with a further layer of rounded pebbles but set in a matrix of fine yellow sand.

**0021** – Small, roughly circular shaped feature. Cut by ditch 0009/0013 and filled with a fine grey ash (0022). A sample excavation was undertaken which revealed it cut the natural subsoil to a depth of c. 0.1m but no finds were recovered.

**0023** – Narrow linear feature interpreted as a ditch. Runs perpendicular to ditch 0009/0013 but the it was not possible to determine any relationship between the two due to a later disturbance. Measured approximately 0.65m in width and cut the natural subsoil to a depth of 0.12m. The fill (0024) comprised dark brown silty sand with occasional small angular stones. No finds were recovered. Although not entirely clear it appeared that this feature was cut from below the dark silty loam layer (0025).

## 4. The Finds

Richenda Goffin, June 2007.

### Introduction

Finds were collected from 7 contexts in Trench 2, as shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		CBM		Animal bone		Clay pipe		Miscellaneous	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
0001	55	1108							2 frags HSR @ 300g	Unstrat
0003	12	401	9	535	9	196	5	20	4 glass frags @ 145g	L18th-19th C
0007	47	500			16	449				Middle Saxon
0010	34	635			15	136			5 lava quern @ 74g, 1 fired clay @ 13g, 2 burnt flint @ 50g, 1 flint @ 18g, 3 shell @ 17g	10th-11th C
0012	11	389	3	49	1	16	1	3	1 shell @ 25g, 2 iron @ 7g	L18th-19th C
0014	59	940			6	100			1 slag @ 123g, 2 shell @ 17g	10th-11th C
0018	18	213	5	109						16th-18th C
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>4186</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>		

### Pottery

A total of 236 fragments of pottery was recovered from the evaluation, weighing 4.186kg. The majority of the assemblage dates to the Middle Saxon period, (187 sherds @ 3.166kg), making up 75% by weight of the total quantity. In addition, smaller quantities of Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval wares were also identified. The pottery was fully catalogued and the details added to the site database.

#### *Middle Saxon*

Three different types of Ipswich ware were present in the assemblage, Gritty and Sandy Ipswich wares, and a few fragments of a vessel made in a fine fabric with a pink/orange core, which is likely to be a Sandy variant.

Gritty Ipswich ware was the prevalent fabric type, with 113 fragments weighing 1.587kg recovered from the site. Seventy-four fragments of Sandy Ipswich wares were identified, weighing 1.579kg. Rim forms were all from cooking vessels or jars, with one pierced lug also present. Only a single fragment was decorated with a circular stamp. The rim types were not classified in detail, but initial inspection suggests that they are mostly Group I types, with simple upright or everted forms, although one Group III type (with external beading) was present in 0014 (West, 1963). No obvious waster sherds were identified, with no misshapen or spalled fragments, or vessels that had stuck together during the firing. Some fragments appear to be slightly overfired but not significantly so. There was no evidence of usage through sooting observed on the pottery.

#### *Late Saxon*

Twenty-seven fragments of Thetford-type ware were identified from 4 contexts (0.255kg). The rims of four cooking vessels or jars were present, mostly from smaller vessels, and one flat base. The fabrics are relatively fine for Thetford-type ware and the sherds are likely to have come from the Ipswich Thetford-type ware kilnsite nearby, although they are not obviously wasters. A single fragment of St Neots-type ware was present in 0014, which is also likely to be Late Saxon.

#### *Medieval and Post-medieval*

Twenty-one fragments of pottery (0.758kg) dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods were

recovered. A single fragment of Yarmouth-type ware dating to the 11th-12th century was present as a residual element in ditchfill 0018. The post-medieval wares include Glazed red earthenwares (16th-18th C), but mainly later ceramics dating to the 18th-19th century. A fragment of a Black basalt stoneware teapot (1770-1900) was present in pitfill 0012, and more 18th century wares were identified in another pitfill 0003.

### **Ceramic building material**

A small quantity of ceramic building material was collected (17 fragments @ 0.693kg).

Two brick fragments and 7 rooftile pieces in pitfill 0003 are all post-medieval. Two further fragments of red-fired, post-medieval tile were present in pitfill 0012, with a small fragment which is earlier in date (late medieval to early post-medieval). The remains of a burnt rooftile was present in ditchfill 0018, with a small quantity of additional building material dating to the post-medieval period. Three small fragments of tile from this context are embedded in layer of plaster c 12mm in thickness, perhaps originally from part of a floor surface.

### **Metalwork**

Two fragments of iron, probably nail fragments were found in pitfill 0012.

### **Miscellaneous**

Five small and abraded fragments of Rhenish lavastone were identified in the ditchfill 0010. Only one fragment showed any indication of an original worked surface. A small fragment of fired clay was also found in the same fill.

Small quantities of clay pipe stem were recovered from pitfills 0003 and 0012. The remains of the upper part of a glass winebottle dating to the early 19th century was found in pitfill 0003, together with fragments of a finer bottle-shaped vessel.

A struck flint flake (perhaps naturally struck) and two fragments of burnt flint were present in ditchfill 0010.

A single fragment of slag was recovered from ditchfill 0014.

### **Animal bone**

Forty-seven fragments of animal bone were recovered from the evaluation (0.897kg). Most of the material was extremely fragmentary. Evidence of butchery and cutmarks were noted on fragments in pitfill 0007 and ditchfill 0010.

### **Human bone**

The shafts of two probable human tibia were collected as unstratified finds (0001). They may have originally been deposited into the ditch 0013.

### **Shell**

Six fragments of oyster shell found in ditchfills 0010, 0014 and pitfill 0012 were recorded and discarded.

### **Discussion**

Late Saxon pottery in the form of Thetford-type ware and St Neots-type ware was deposited into ditchfill 0014, together with larger quantities of Middle Saxon wares. A similar pattern of pottery deposition was found in ditchfill 0010, which may actually be part of the same feature.

Although most of the Ipswich ware was deposited during the Late Saxon period, an additional quantity was also redeposited into the ditchfill 0018 at the southern end of Trench 2 during the post-medieval period. The only feature which contains exclusively Middle Saxon pottery is pit 0006, but it is also possible that this material has also been redeposited, so that this feature also dates to the Late Saxon period.

The two pits 0002 and 0011 contain pottery of a similar date range spanning the second half of the eighteenth and into the first half of the nineteenth century.

The relatively large quantity of Ipswich ware recovered from the evaluation does not appear to

represent kiln material, either from the Cox Lane area of production or from elsewhere. The Middle Saxon wares are standard sherds which could have been used in the settlement, although the site is beyond the limit of the Middle Saxon town (Ted, is this right?). The Thetford-type wares may have come from the kiln nearby to the north-west, although these sherds also are not wasters.

While the origin of the human bone is uncertain there must be a possibility of early burials in the vicinity.

#### **References**

West, S.E., 1963, 'Excavations at Cox Lane (1958) and at the Town Defences, Shire Hall Yard, Ipswich (1959), Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.29, 233-303

## **5. Discussion**

While this area is outside the core of the middle and late Saxon town it is close to the extensive pottery manufactories around Cox Lane and St Helen's Street so associated settlement is a possibility. In addition St Helen's Street must have been a routeway from the earlier medieval period at least towards the suburb of the same name.

While a trial trench only gives a small sample of the archaeological deposits on any site the presence of a ditch of middle to late Saxon date is of interest as it indicates some formal division of the landscape at an early period close to the Saxon town. The quantity of finds from the site is also significant and indicative of intense activity nearby while the human bone indicates burials nearby.

## **6. Recommendations for Future Work**

While much of the footprint of the proposed building is damaged by later foundations the western wing adjacent to Bond Street exhibits good preservation at a depth close to the planned formation level. It is therefore recommended that the footprint area of this western wing should be investigated further prior to ground works commencing.

M. Sommers  
Field Team  
Archaeological Service  
Suffolk CC June 2007

## APPENDIX

## IPS 382 (IAS 6701) CONTEXT LIST

Context	Feature Number	Identifier	Description	Cuts	Cut by	Over	Under
0001		U/S Finds	Unstratified finds recovered from spoil heap of Trench 2				
0002	0002	Pit Cut	Large, probably oval shaped feature cut. Sheer sides, in excess of 1.8m deep (from top of garden soil layer 0025).	0004			
0003	0002	Pit Fill	Uper fill of cut 0002 comprising dark grey to black organic rich sand and silt			0008	
0004	0004	Pit Cut	Small feature cut interpreted as a pit. Cut from relatively high in the garden soil layer (0025)		0002		
0005	0004	Pit Fill	Fill of cut 0004 comprising dark grey to black organic rich sand and silt				
0006	0006	Pit Cut	Shallow feature cut interpreted as a pit				
0007	0006	Pit Fill	Fill of cut 0006 comprising dark grey silty clay with numerous small pebbles				
0008	0002	Pit Fill	Fill within cut 0002 comprising mottled light grey and orange silty sand				0003
0009	0009	Ditch Cut	Linear feature cut. Sloping sides, V shaped profile. Aligned approximately northeast-southwest	0021	0011		
0010	0009	Ditch Fill	Fill of cut 0009 comprising dark brown grey silty sand with frequent medium to large stones, charcoal flecks, oyster shell and fired clay frags.				
0011	0011	Pit Cut	Circular shaped feature cut, sheer sides, flat base	0009			
0012	0011	Pit Fill	Fill of cut 0011 comprising dark grey silty clay with frequent small to medium stones, charcoal and CBM frags				
0013	0013	Ditch cut	Linear feature cut. Sloping sides to rounded V shaped base. Aligned approximately northeast - southwest. Probably same as ditch cut 0009				
0014	0013	Ditch Fill	Fill of cut 0013 comprising dark loamy sand and silt with occasional lenses of mottled yellow sand				
0015	0015	Gully Cut	Possible linear feature running immediately adjacent to and parallel with cut 0013. Relationship not clear - may in fact be fills within a larger ditch feature -not clear in narrow trench				
0016	0015	Gully Fill	Fill of cut 0015 comprising dark loamy sand and silt				
0017	0017	Ditch Cut	Very straight and near vertical sided cut at southern end of Trench 2. Not bottomed. Cut from high up suggesting late date - probable service trench or large pit. Aligned east west.				
0018	0017	Ditch Fill	Fill of cut 0017 comprising dark silty loam with occasional yellow sand lenses.				
0019	0019	Surface	surface formed of compacted small rounded pebbles in a fine black silt - very hard and compact. Occasional areas of later resurfacing with pebbles in a fine yellow sand/silt. Associated with ditch 0014 - surface partially continues down the sloping edge of the ditch				
0020	0014	Ditch Fill	fill of cut 0014? Over area of 0019 within ditch cut				
0021	0021	Pit Cut	?Circular shaped feature cut. Sloping sides to a flat base		0009		
0022	0021	Pit Fill	Fill of cut 0021 comprising grey ?ash				
0023	0023	Ditch Cut	Narrow linear feature cut. Aligned approximately east-west. Relationship with ditch 0009 indeterminable due to pmed disturbance.				
0024	0023	Ditch Fill	Fill of cut 0023 comprising dark brown silty sand with occasional small stones.				
0025	0025	Layer	layer of dark organic rich silty loam. Lies immediately beneath the sub-base for the tarmac surface. Between 0.35 and 0.5m thick.				