

Primary School, off Mount Road, Moreton Hall, Rougham. RGH 040

Application No. E/97/2871/P
TL 879 645

Oasis Reference: suffolkc1-3056
Report No. 2005/23

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of footing trenches for the construction of a primary school on the Moreton Hall East estate, Rougham, did not locate any archaeological evidence.

Introduction

A series of visits was made to the site from 5th July to 22nd October 2004 to monitor the groundworks associated with the construction of a primary school. The works consisted of the removal of topsoil for an access road, car parks and building footprint, the excavation of footing trenches for the construction of the building and other general landscaping. The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by R.D. Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team). The work was funded by the developer, Suffolk County Council.

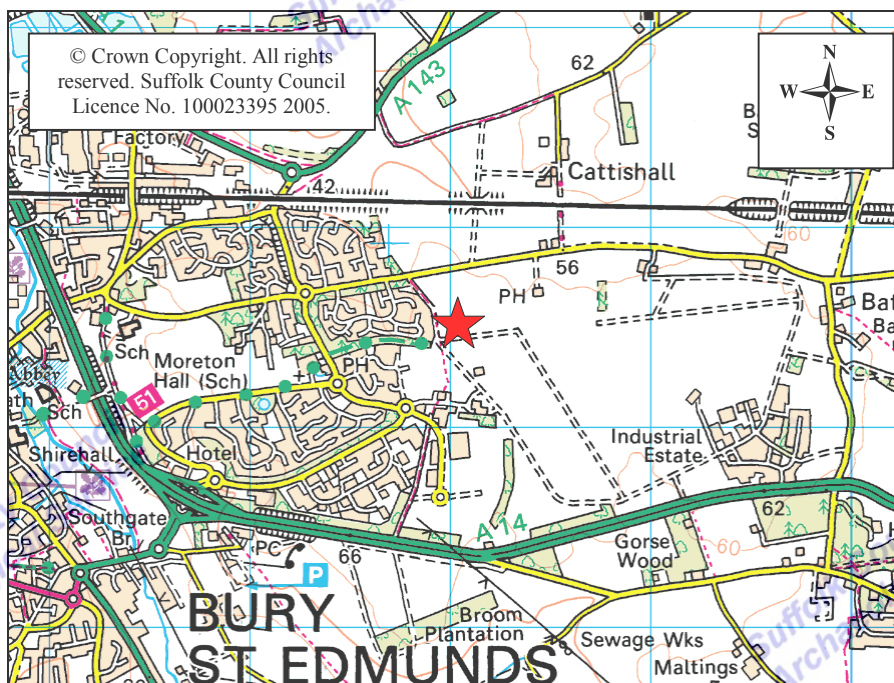


Figure 1. Site location plan

The site was located on arable fields at TL 879 645 (Fig. 1) and is part of the wider housing development of Moreton Hall East, which, due to the archaeological condition on planning application E/97/2871/P, has seen a range of previous fieldwork. The entire development area was evaluated in 1999 (Finch 1999) which

identified several areas for further work. The last phase of these excavations (Craven in prep, Fig. 2) located prehistoric features at RGH 036, a continuation of the site previously located at BSE 199 (Duffy 2004). Together these two sites appear to represent a focus of prehistoric settlement activity, although there was a lack of evidence for structures. RGH 036 defined the eastern edge of this settlement, approximately 200m to the south-west of the school buildings, its northern extent was unclear and the settlement may have extended into the area of the school grounds. Other nearby excavations at RGH 037 and 038 showed traces of Roman field systems, 350m to the south-east and scattered prehistoric features, at RGH 037 and 038 and also RGH 039, 400m to the east.

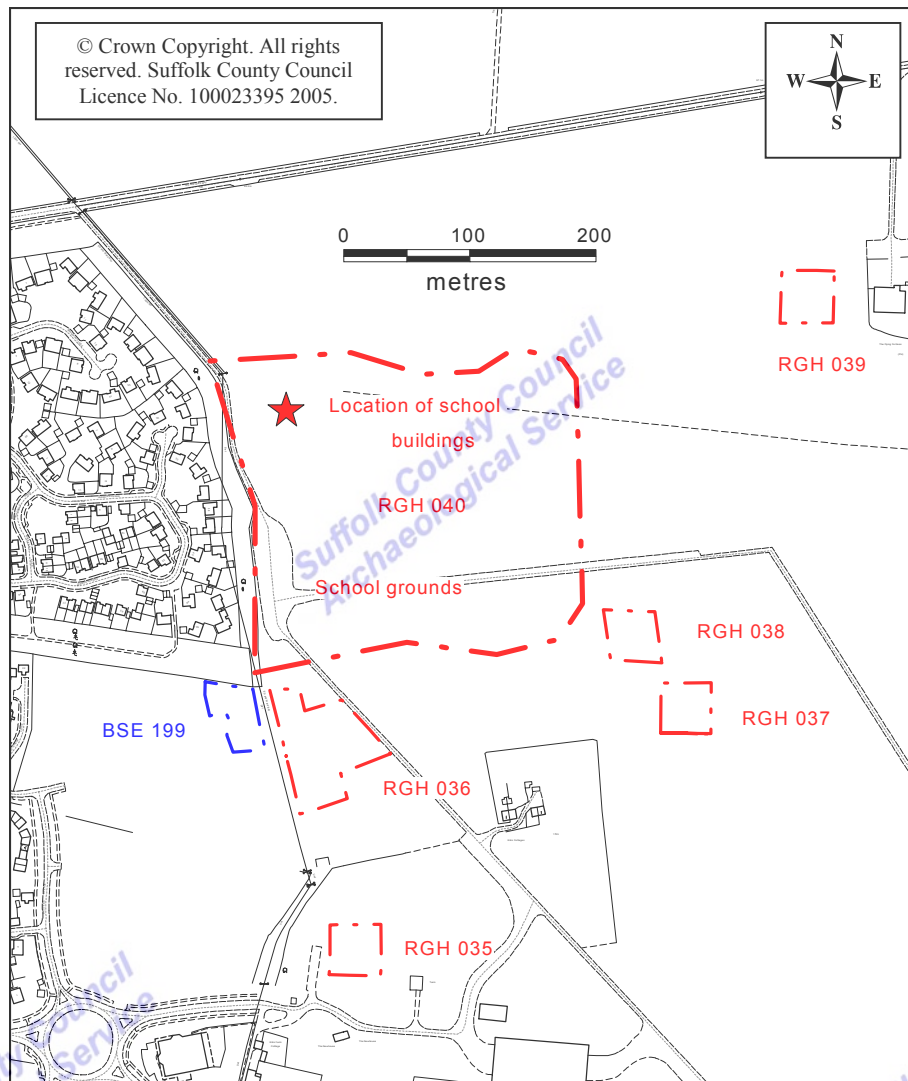


Figure 2. Site plan and previous excavations

The site also lies next to the parish boundary with Bury St Edmunds to the west and Great Barton to the north, and medieval activity has been found 400m to the north on the other side of Mount road at BRG 027 (Craven in prep). On the OS map of c.1886 (Fig. 3) the area is shown as open farmland with a gravel pit occupying part of the site and heathland to the west. During the Second World War the site was part of Rougham airfield, the location of the western end of the runway partially survives as the modern track in the south part of the site while the perimeter track ran through the

north-west corner of the site. The airfield closed soon after the war and the site reverted back to arable farmland.

Therefore there was potential for further prehistoric settlement evidence to be disturbed during development on the site, and for Roman or medieval evidence, possibly of enclosure systems peripheral to probable settlement areas.

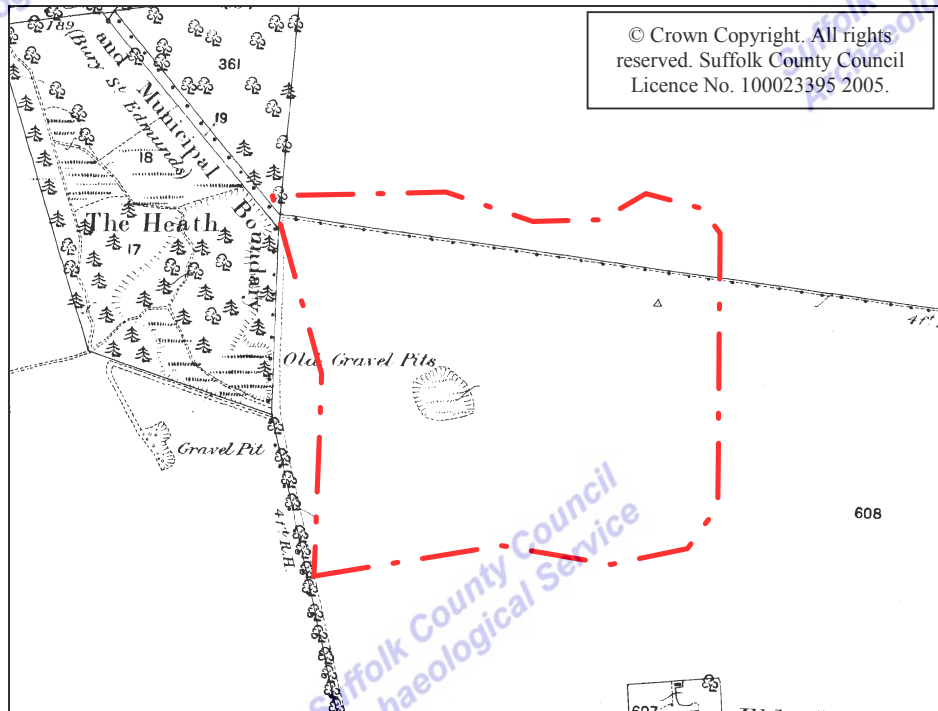


Figure 3. Site on OS map of 1886.

Methodology and Results

The footprint of the school, its car parks and access roads were initially stripped to a depth of 0.3m. This consisted of the removal of the majority of the ploughsoil, leaving a thin layer over the top of the subsoil, which meant that the archaeological levels could not be seen. Footing trenches for the school were then excavated by machine with a toothed bucket, measuring 1m wide and up to 1.2m deep with occasional wider footing pads. The trenches showed a uniform subsoil of silt/clay overlying the undulating natural chalk. Disturbance was limited, with some modern material presumably related to the airfield and the occasional field drain. Observation of service trenches showed similar results.

Other groundworks such as the creation of playing fields within the wider area of the site did not cause any ground disturbance below the ploughsoil.

Discussion

Disturbance to the subsoil from the sites use as part of the airfield was limited and preservation of the natural subsoil was good. At the surrounding sites archaeological evidence was generally preserved at this level, immediately below the topsoil and so the absence of archaeological evidence of any type or period identified during the

monitoring indicates that the main prehistoric occupation at BSE 199 and RGH 036 does not extend in this direction.

However as the site is located in a broader area of low level activity in the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods it seems unlikely that it is totally devoid of archaeological evidence. This absence may largely be due to the methodology of monitoring trenches, in comparison to the large scale open excavations of nearby sites, which may mean that isolated features have been missed or not identified.

Bibliography

- Craven, J., *Moreton Hall East, Great Barton, Bury St Edmunds, BRG 027*. In preparation.
Craven, J., *Moreton Hall East, Rougham, Bury St Edmunds, RGH 035-039*. In preparation.
Duffy, J., 2004, *Drovers Went, Moreton Hall, Bury St. Edmunds, BSE 199*. SCCAS Report No.2004/15.
Finch, E., 1999, *Moreton Hall East, Great Barton, Bury St Edmunds, BRG 024*. SCCAS Report No. 99/64.

John Craven, January 2005