

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

**Debenham Pre- School, Sir Robert Hitcham
Primary School, Aspall Road, Debenham**

DBN 129

Planning App. No. MS/0023/07

Oasis ID No. suffolkc1-30652

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2007

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SMR information

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Summary

Planning permission to erect a pre-school building and office/store has been granted on the condition that an adequate programme of archaeological monitoring is carried out. The site lies within one hundred metres of known medieval occupation alongside The Gulls watercourse. Find-spots of medieval metalwork and pottery from three recorded locations lie just to the north of the development site. A series of fifteen concrete pads or piers will form the foundations for the new building, each requiring an individual footing to be mechanically excavated. Each footing measured around 1.20m square and 1.00m deep; all were closely inspected, but failed to reveal any archaeological features or finds.

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1.0 Introduction

Planning permission to erect a pre-school building and office/store at the Sir Robert Hitcham Primary School was granted, conditional upon an adequate programme of archaeological monitoring. The site lies within one hundred metres of known medieval occupation alongside The Gulls watercourse. Records from The County Sites and Monuments Record suggest that medieval occupation may have extended further north than the present settlement area (see Figure 2). A scatter of medieval metalwork was found just to the north of the site (DBN 019) and further east, two further locations (DBN 040 and DBN 052) have produced substantial groups of thirteenth to fourteenth century pottery, together with some earlier pottery types. The location of the development lies just outside the line of the former northern boundary of the school grounds. The extent of the original school grounds can be seen on the early Ordnance Survey Map before additional agricultural land was incorporated late in the nineteenth century (see Figures 1. and 3.). The development site would, until quite recently, have formed part of the agricultural land to the north of the school.



Figure 1. Site location

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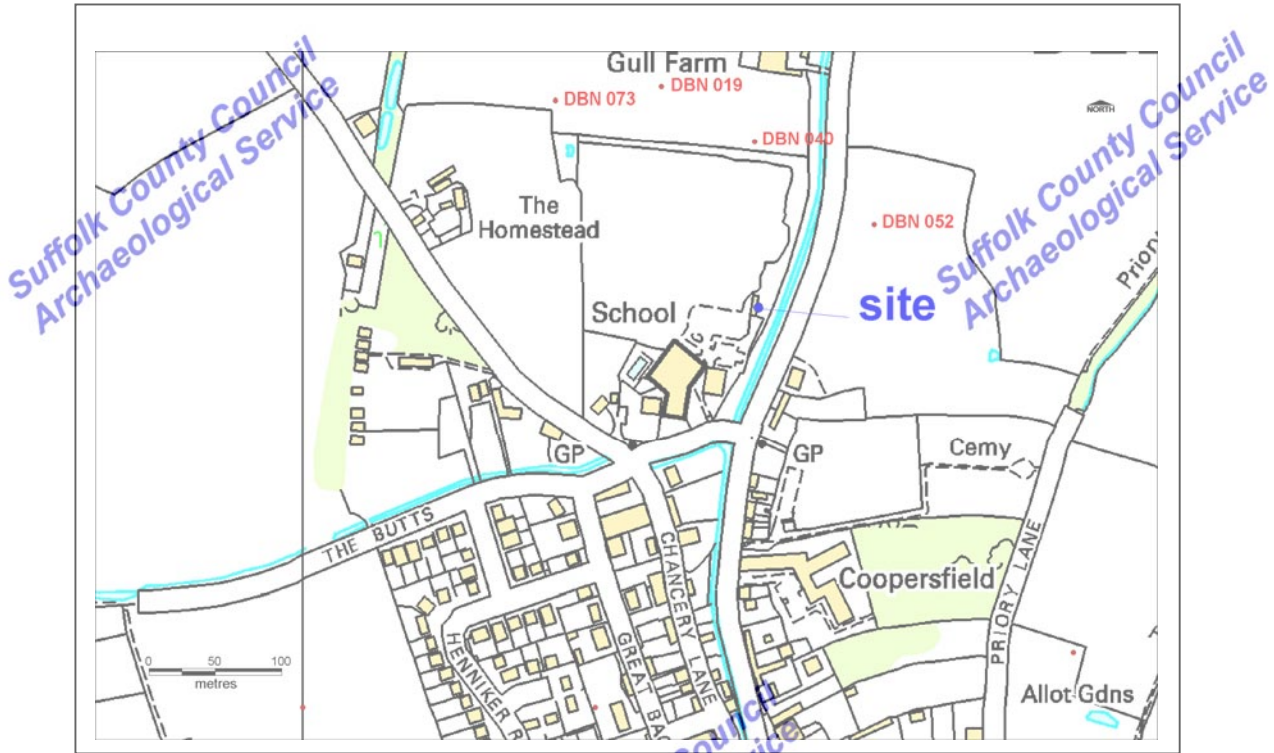


Figure 2. Site in the context of The County Sites and Monuments Record
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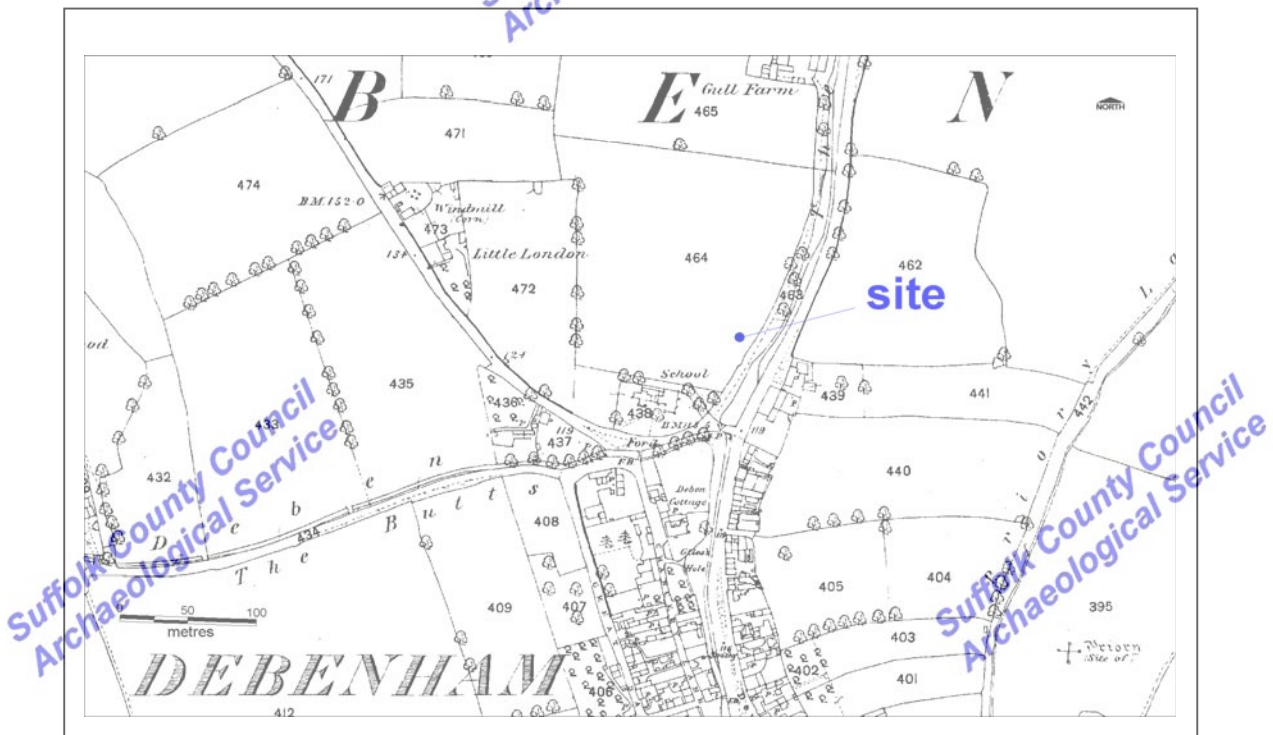


Figure 3. The site on the c.1880 OS
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Figure 4. Plan of the excavated areas

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2.0 Methodology

Keith Wade (SCCAS Conservation Team) produced the Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring (see Appendix 1.). All ground disturbance including site clearance, levelling and the excavated pits for constructing the piers were closely examined. Details of the ground disturbance and soil profiles were recorded onto a detailed site plan in addition to *pro forma* Observable Phenomena context sheets. Digital 6.0mp photographs were taken of exposed ground surfaces and all general aspects of the site. Areas of the stripped, levelled and disturbed surfaces were searched, together with the upcast spoil, with the aim of retrieving datable archaeological finds. Site conditions were generally good in terms of visibility and moisture levels.

3.0 Results

The area covered by the development measures 6.0m east-west by 15.0m north-south (see Figure 4.). Within this area, fifteen pits were excavated by a wheeled back-acting mechanical digger fitted with a 0.5m toothed bucket. Each pit covered an area measuring 1.20m square and was excavated to a depth of 1.0m. The dispersed layout of the pits resulted in a generally representative sample of the ground deposits. The entire site area contained a single deep hill-wash deposit, which had accumulated at the base of the

west-east slope. The deposit consisted of virtually stone free silt with a high clay content. It is likely that the formation of this deposit was accelerated by long term arable agricultural use. The southernmost pits contained a high percentage of modern ceramic building material and also re-deposited aggregates. Occasional unstratified fragments of animal bone also occurred over most of the site area. No undisturbed natural deposits were reached within any of the pits and no archaeological features or finds were observed.

4.0 Conclusions

The deep homogeneous deposit that covered the entire area of the site, probably consisted of a combination of plough-soil and hill-wash, which had steadily accumulated towards the base of the west-east slope. If archaeological features exist within the site, it is likely that they lie sealed beneath this general layer. However, this does entirely depend on the rate of soil accumulation, the potential depth of the features and also the depth of former agricultural cultivation. Although no archaeological evidence was located, it is not possible to fully discount the potential of the site.

5.0 Acknowledgements and List of Contributors

This project was funded by Suffolk County Council (Education) and was monitored by Keith Wade (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team).

The fieldwork was carried out by Robert Atfield from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

The project was managed by John Newman, who also provided advice during the production of the report.

6.0 Appendices Appendix 1. Brief and Specification

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM

Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring

DEBENHAM PRE-SCHOOL, SIR ROBERT HITCHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL ASPALL ROAD, DEBENHAM

1. Background

- 1.1 Planning permission to erect a pre-school building and office/store at the Sir Robert Hitcham Primary School, Aspall Road, Debenham, has been granted conditional upon an acceptable programme of archaeological work being carried out (MS/0023/07). 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 100 metres of known medieval occupation alongside the Gulls watercourse and will involve significant ground disturbance.
- 1.3 As pad foundations are proposed there will only be limited damage to any archaeological deposits, which can be recorded by a trained archaeologist during excavation of the trenches by the building contractor.
- 1.4 Before any archaeological site work can commence it is the responsibility of the developer to provide the archaeological contractor with either the contaminated land report for the site or a written statement that there is no contamination. The developer should be aware that investigative sampling to test for contamination is likely to have an impact on any archaeological deposit which exists; proposals for sampling should be discussed with this office before execution.

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 medieval occupation of the site.
- 2.3 The significant archaeologically damaging activity in this proposal is the excavation of building 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.
- 4.7 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 Heathcote, 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.
- 4.8 Developers should be aware of the possibility of human burials being found. If this eventuality occurs they must comply with the provisions of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857; and the archaeologist should be informed by '*Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England*' (English Heritage & the Church of England 2005) which includes sensible baseline standards which are likely to apply whatever the location, age or denomination of a burial.

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

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Date: 18 July 2007

Reference: /Debenham Pre-School, Sir Robt Hitcham

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.