

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Land at Acton Place Industrial Estate, Acton ACT 028

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2004
(Planning app. no. B/03/01707/FUL)

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Field Team

Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

© February 2005

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Contents

List of Figures
List of Tables
List of Contributors
Acknowledgements
Summary
SMR information

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Results
4. The Finds
5. Discussion

References

Appendix 1: Brief and specification

List of Figures

1. Site location plan
2. Site on O.S map of 1926.
3. Site plan after first stage of groundworks
4. Section 0002
5. Section 0007

List of Tables

1. Finds Quantities

List of Contributors

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Acknowledgements

This project was funded by Albert E Webb and Son Ltd. and was monitored by R.D. Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team). The fieldwork was carried out by John Craven 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.

Finds processing and production of site illustrations was carried out by Gemma Adams and the specialist finds report by Richenda Goffin.

Summary

An archaeological monitoring on land at Acton Place Industrial Estate, Acton, located evidence in the form of a post-medieval brick wall and associated floor surface, of an ancillary building situated approximately 50m to the south-east of the east wing of Acton Place. Other, less substantial structures, were also identified which could be related to garden walls or other features within the grounds of the main building.

SMR information

Planning application no. B/03/01707/FUL
Date of fieldwork: 16th March – 11th November 2004
Grid Reference: TL 884 456
Oasis Reference: Suffolkc1-3275
Funding body: Albert E Webb and Son Ltd.

1. Introduction

A series of site visits were made from 16th March to 11th November 2004 to monitor the levelling of ground and excavation of footing pads for the construction of a steel framed workshop (Fig. 1). The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by R.D. Carr (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application B/03/01707/FUL. The work was funded by the developer, Albert E Webb and Son Ltd.

The modern industrial park is situated upon the former site of Acton Place (ACT 020). The origins of this large country house were in the 16th century, with a major rebuild in the 18th century. The main house was demolished in 1825, although the east wing survived until the early 20th century (Fig. 2). The position of the workshop has been placed to avoid the site of the east wing, which lies immediately adjacent to the north-west, under a concrete yard. However a program of archaeological monitoring was required, as there was potential for the works to disturb unknown ancillary structures relating to the formal gardens and enclosures around the main house.

The site, covering an area of 1200 sqm, lay on a gentle, north-east facing, slope. It was an area of waste grassland, generally used for storage of old vehicles, within the vehicle breakage/repair compound of A.E. Webb and Son.

2. Methodology

The initial stage of works was the terracing of the natural slope, which involved the removal of topsoil and subsoil to level the building footprint. This meant the south-western edge was excavated to a depth of 0.9m while the remainder had a gradual reduction in the amount of overburden removed as the site descended the slope. Along the north-west edge this meant that no material was removed. At this stage the entire site was inspected and recorded. Bulk and feature sections were recorded at a scale of 1:20, digital photographs were taken and are included with the digital archive.

The second phase of works was the excavation of footings for stanchion pads. On the south-west edge these were excavated through the already observed subsoil, on the north-west edge they cut through the remaining modern deposits. However only a small part of these footings were seen in the eastern corner.

An OASIS form was completed for the project (suffolkc1-3275).

The site archive is kept in the small and main stores of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds under SMR No. ACT 028.

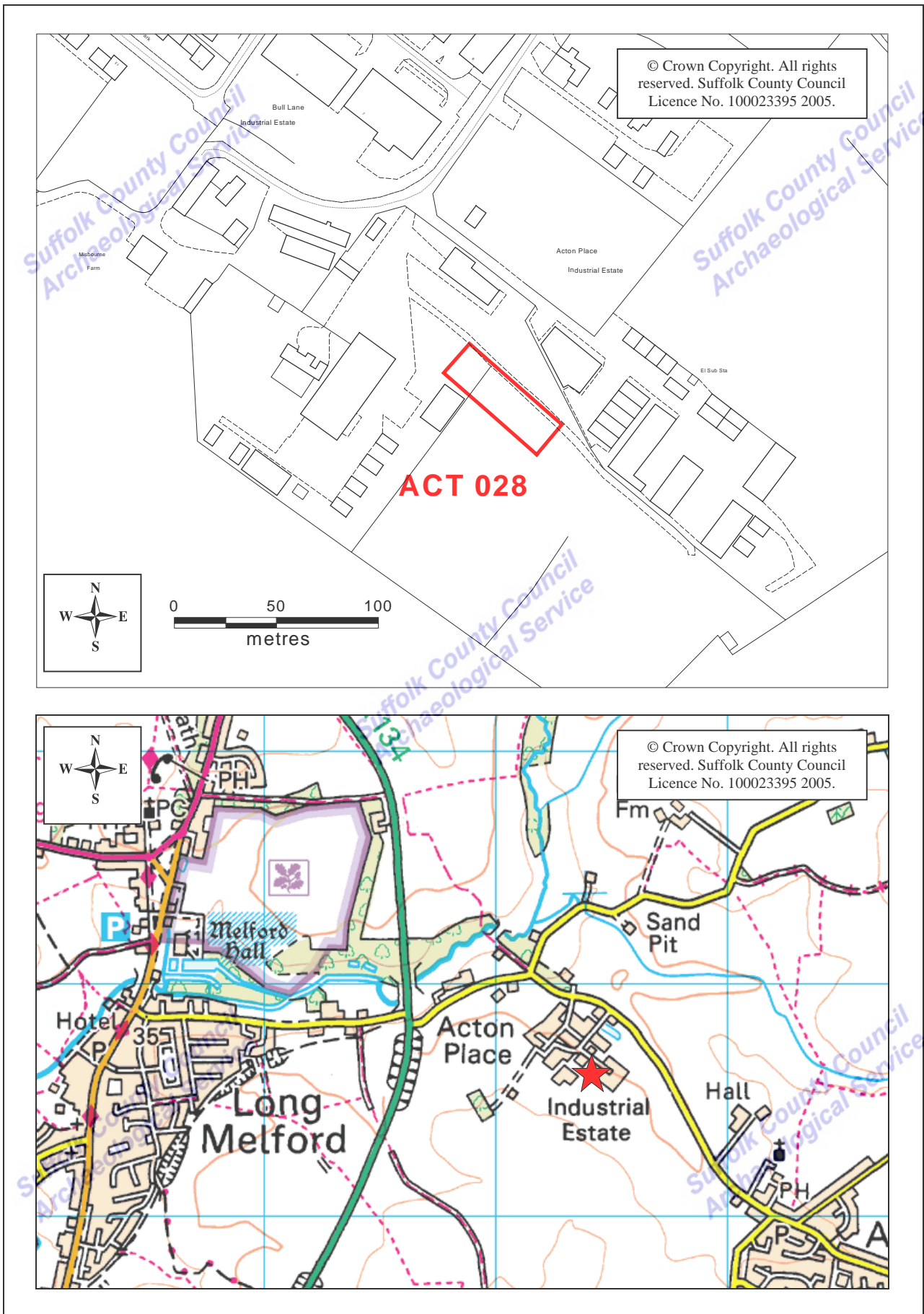


Figure 1. Site location plan

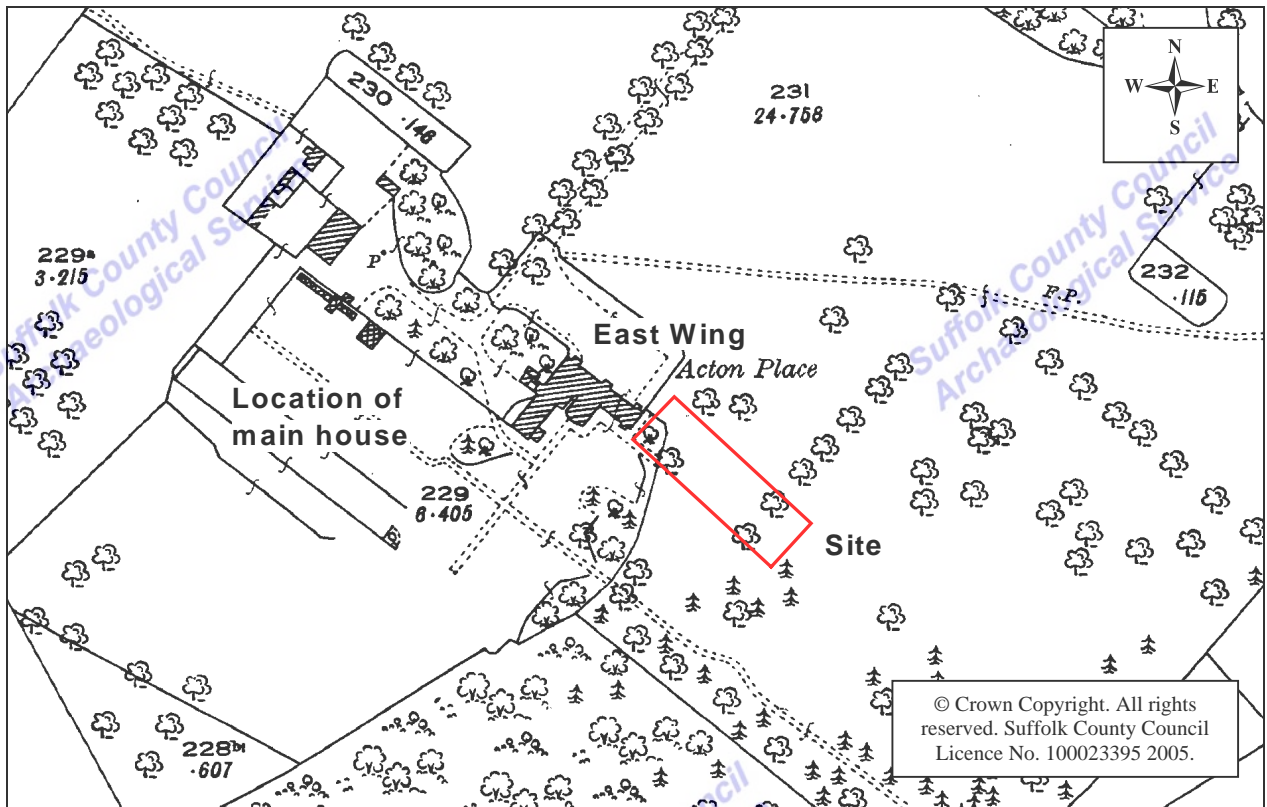


Figure 2. Site on O.S map of 1926.

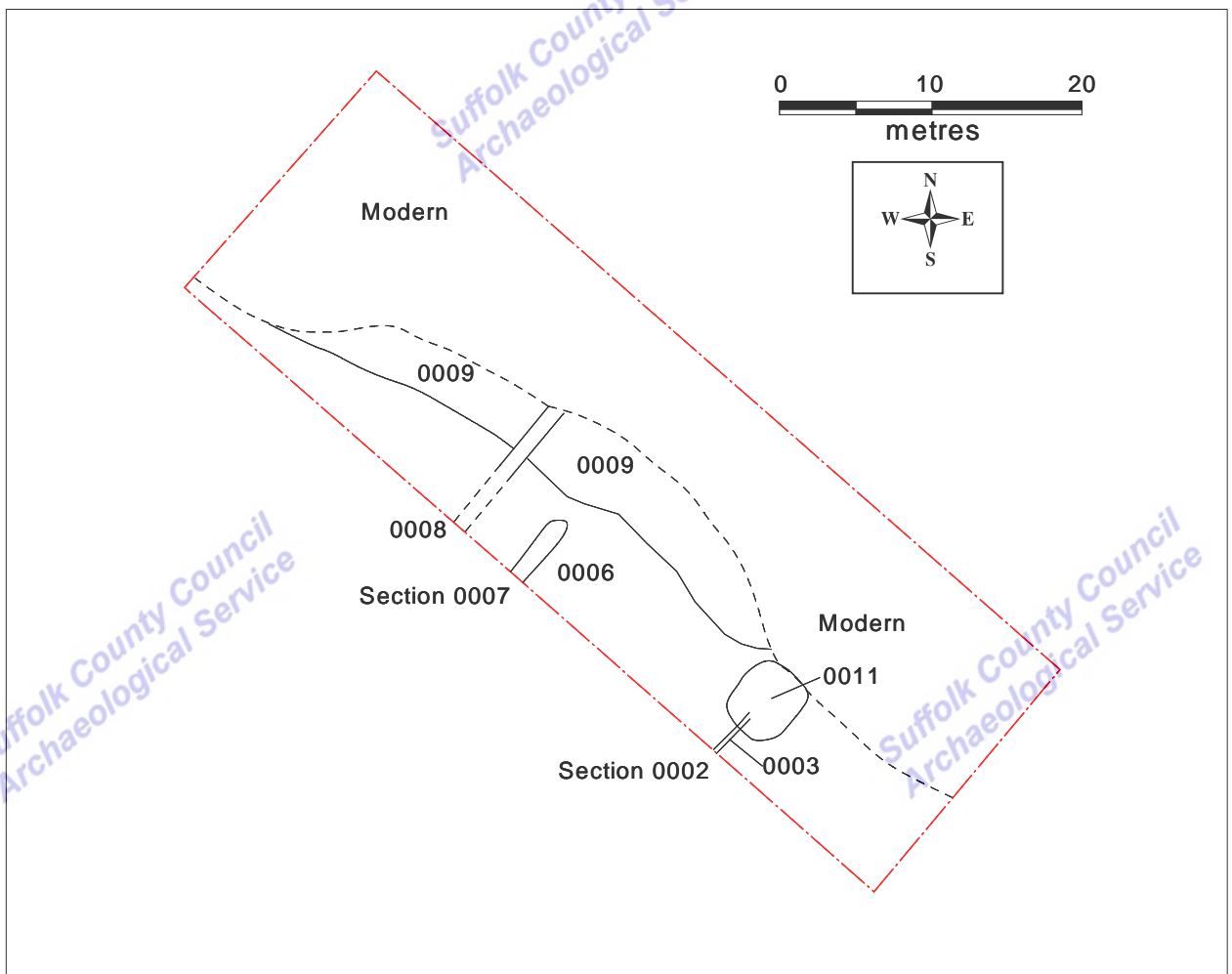


Figure 3. Site plan after first stage of groundworks

3. Results

(Fig. 3)

The first stage of works, the levelling of the building footprint, exposed the natural subsoil over approximately one third of the site. Along the south-west edge of the site this showed that the topsoil was 0.3-0.4m thick and lay above a 0.4-0.5m thick layer of a mid brown clay/loam, 0010, which appeared to be a natural buried soil horizon. This layer was above the natural subsoil, a heavy yellow clay with chalk, of which 0.2-0.3m was removed along the south-west site edge.

0003 was the remnants of a linear brick wall, aligned north-east – south-west emerging from the southern corner of the site. The bulk of the surviving structure was removed during machining but it was clearly visible in section 0002 (Fig. 4). The section showed it to be heavily damaged with the courses of bricks being disturbed, although overall it had retained its shape. At its base it cut into the natural subsoil.

On its southern side, on top of the subsoil, was a layer or surface, 0005, composed of a creamy white mortar with brick and tile fragments approximately 0.1-0.15m thick. Above layer 0005, and above the natural on the north side of the wall was a deposit, 0004, 0.4-0.5m thick of dark grey/brown clay/loam containing frequent charcoal flecks. 0004 was approximately 3m wide and filled a vertical cut into layer 0010. Both 0005 and 0010 were immediately below the topsoil.

Approximately 3m onto the site the wall 0003 faded away into a confused deposit of brick rubble and chalk (0011), probably the damaged remnants of itself and the floor surface 0005.

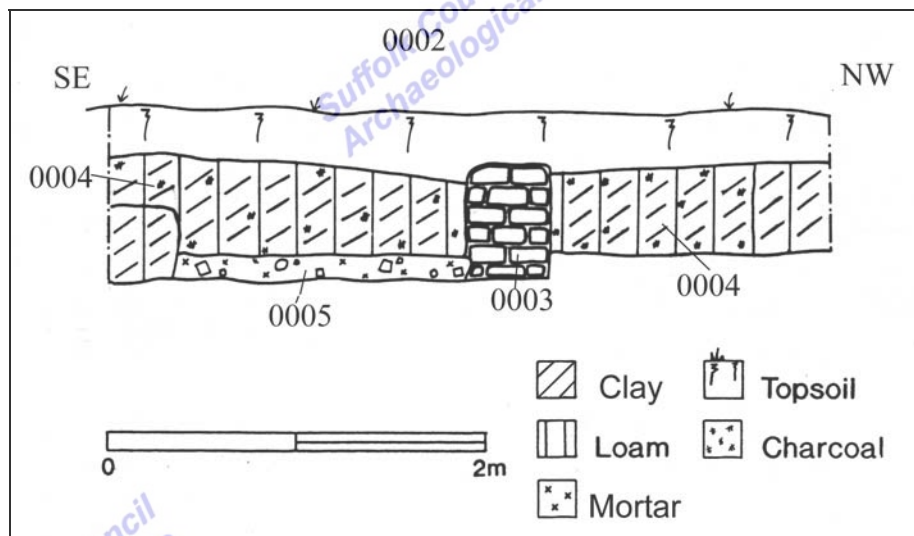


Figure 4. Section 0002

0006 was a linear, shallow spread of clay mixed with mortar aligned north-east – south-west. The majority of the feature was removed during machining but baulk section 0007 (Fig. 5) showed it to be 1.5m wide and 0.2m thick, cutting the natural subsoil and directly under the topsoil. Several pieces of animal bone were recovered.

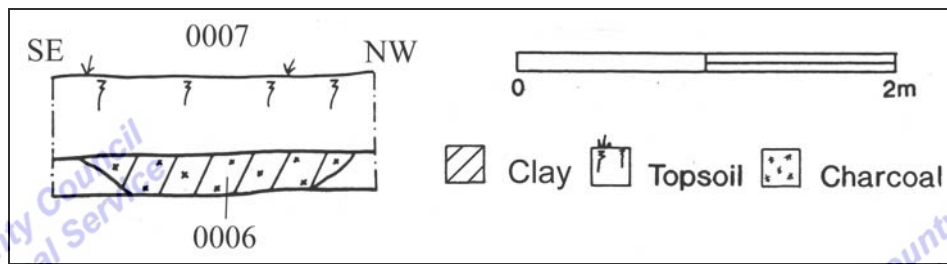


Figure 5. Section 0007

0008 was a linear feature, aligned north-east – south-west, approximately 0.5m wide. Its southern extent was almost totally removed and was not apparent in the baulk section. In the centre of the site it was visible as a linear spread of loose, broken bricks and mortar, cutting into layer 0009.

0009 was a layer of dark grey clay/loam underlying the modern material in the north-eastern part of the site and may be the same deposit as 0010, underlying the topsoil.

The second stage of groundworks, the excavation of footing trenches for stanchion pads, was not observed apart from at the eastern end of the site and no further features were observed.

4. The Finds

Richenda Goffin, February 2005

Introduction

Finds and faunal remains were collected from 2 contexts during the monitoring, as shown in the table below.

Context	Ceramic Building Material		Animal bone		Shell		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	
0003	2	2063					15th-18th C
0006					1	9	
0006			6	214			
Total	2	2063	6	214	1	9	

Table 1: Finds quantities

Ceramic building material

Two fragments of post-medieval brick were recovered from the wall 0003. One brick has a width of 106mm and a depth of 600mm, and the second fragment is 104mm wide and 603mm in depth. Both fragments show evidence of mortar on their surfaces. The bricks are made from a soft, sandy fabric containing some ferrous inclusions and sparse flint. They are both uniformly fired to an orange-red colour. The bricks have no indications of shallow surface depressions or frogs. They date to the post-medieval period but are not industrially produced, and a 15th-17th century or slightly later date is likely.

Animal bone

Six fragments of animal bone were collected from spread 0006. These include 2 fragments of a sheep mandible, and a femur, also probably of a sheep. In addition a single cattle vertebra was present. Indications of butchery were noted on one of the fragments.

Shell

A single fragment of oyster shell was present in spread 0006.

Discussion

The dating evidence for this small group of finds and faunal remains is limited to the fragments of post-medieval brick present in the wall 0003.

5. Discussion

Archaeological monitoring was limited to approximately 40% of the development area and identified three features of particular interest, 0003, 0006 and 0008. These linear features all followed the same alignment, running directly down the slope, in parallel to the structure of the east wing of Acton Place.

0003, is a brick wall of 15th-18th century date and is clearly associated with floor surface 0005, indicating that this is a building of some kind. Wall and floor cut through layer 0010, implying that the floor level was sunk below the contemporary ground-level. When this possible building was abandoned the floor and surviving base of the wall were covered in a thick single deposit of clay/loam, 0004, infilling the hole created by the sunken floor..

0006, although parallel to 0003, did not appear to be a wall, consisting of a shallow spread of clay mixed with mortar traces. However its alignment indicates it probably had a structural function and is possibly surviving evidence of a footing trench or foundation for another wall.

0008, although in very poor condition, was clearly the remains of a wall parallel to 0003. As it cut through layer 0009 it is probably of a similar date to 0003.

0009 and 0010 are most likely to be an old buried topsoil/ground surface, through which these features are cut. Above this the ground levels are relatively recent, built up by the modern yards.

These three linear features are clearly connected to the former great house. 0003 and 0005 may be evidence of an ancillary building situated approximately 50m to the south-east of the east wing of Acton Place while 0006 and 0008 are evidence of less substantial structures, possibly features such as garden walls within the grounds of the main building.

References

Ryder, M., 1968, *Animal bones in Archaeology*, Blackwell Scientific Publications

Appendix 1

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM



Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring of Development

ACTON PLACE

Although this document is fundamental to the work of the specialist archaeological contractor the developer should be aware that certain of its requirements are likely to impinge upon the working practices of a general building contractor and may have financial implications, for example see paragraphs 2.3 & 4.3.

1. Background

- 1.1 A planning application (B/03/01707/FUL) has been made to build a steel framed workshop within the industrial park. The local planning authority have been advised that the site has high archaeological potential and that any consent should be conditional on a PPG 16, paragraph 30 condition. Assessment of the available archaeological evidence indicates that the area affected by new building can be adequately recorded by archaeological monitoring.
- 1.2 The industrial park is within the immediate area of Acton Place, a large country house now demolished. The history of the house suggests a 16th century origin with at least one rebuilding in the early 18th century. This latest building was demolished in 1825 apart from the east wing which remained until the early 20th century and is shown on the 1926 OS map; this too is now demolished. The proposed workshop building has been positioned to avoid the area of the house (the east wing). There is thought to be some potential for unknown ancillary structures associated with the formal garden and enclosures close to the house (see Figure 1).

The workshop is reported to be a steel formed building with pads for the main beams and concrete slab as the base. Ground disturbance is thought to be limited, but the detailed foundation design should be acquired from the developer in order to assess the number of visits which may be necessary.

- 1.3 In accordance with the standards and guidance produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists this brief should not be considered sufficient to enable the total execution of the project. A Project Design or Written Scheme of Investigation (PD/WSI) based upon this brief and the accompanying outline specification of minimum requirements, is an essential requirement. This must be submitted by the developers, or their agent, to the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR; telephone/fax: 01284 352443) for approval. The work must not commence until this office has approved both the archaeological contractor as suitable to undertake the work, and the PD/WSI as satisfactory. The PD/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.

2. **Brief for Archaeological Monitoring**

- 2.1 To provide a record of archaeological deposits which are 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 history of the Great House and gardens.
- 2.3 The significant archaeologically damaging activity in this proposal is the excavation of pad bases and ground reduction for the formation level of the floor slab. These, and the upcast soil, are to be observed after they have been excavated by the building contractor. Adequate time is to be allowed for archaeological recording of archaeological deposits during excavation, and of soil sections following excavation (see 4.3).

3. **Arrangements for Monitoring**

- 3.1 To carry out the monitoring work the developer will appoint an archaeologist (the archaeological contractor) who must be approved by the Conservation Team of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (SCCAS) - see 1.3 above.
- 3.2 The developer or his archaeologist will give the Conservation Team of SCCAS five working days notice of the commencement of ground works on the site, in order that the work of the archaeological contractor may be monitored. The method and form of development will also be monitored to ensure that it conforms to previously agreed locations and techniques upon which this brief is based.
- 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 time-table.
- 3.4 If unexpected remains are encountered the Conservation Team of SCCAS must be informed immediately. Amendments to this specification may be made to ensure adequate provision for archaeological recording.

4. **Specification**

- 4.1 The developer shall afford access at all reasonable times to both the County Council Conservation Team archaeologist and the contracted 'observing archaeologist' to allow archaeological observation of building and engineering operations which disturb the ground.

- 4.2 Opportunity must 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 all ground disturbance unimpeded access at the rate of one hour per 100 square metres 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 must be planned at a minimum scale of 1:50 on a plan showing the proposed layout of the development.
- 4.5 All contexts must be numbered and finds recorded by context.
- 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*, must be prepared and included in the project report.

5.5 County Sites and Monuments Record sheets must be completed, as per the county SMR manual, for all sites where archaeological finds and/or features are located.

Specification by: Robert Carr

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service Conservation Team
Environment and Transport Department
Shire Hall
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP33 2AR

Date: 22 September 2003

Reference: /ActonPlace09

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.