

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NEW MUSEUM BUILDING, WEST STOW ANGLO SAXON VILLAGE WSW 076

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, 2007
(Planning app. no. SE/07/0481)

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

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Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

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Summary

Two trenches were excavated as part of an archaeological evaluation of the proposed site of the new museum building at West Stow Country Park. This revealed the remains of an ancient occupation soil, which produced two sherds of Early Saxon stamped pottery. The occupation soil had been truncated by ploughing and occurred only in within hollows. Post holes and possible pits were also found suggesting that the sampled area was within the spread of the Anglo-Saxon settlement site.

SMR information

Planning application no.	SE/07/0481
Date of fieldwork:	8th October 2007
Grid Reference:	TL 7994 7140
Funding body:	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
OASIS REF	Suffolk c1 33059

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on the proposed site of a new museum building for the reconstructed Anglo-Saxon Village at West Stow Country Park. The work was a condition of the consent on planning application SE/07/0481 and was completed in accordance with the Brief and Specification (Appendix 1) set by R.D.Carr of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) Conservation Team dated 4th September 2007. The fieldwork was undertaken by members of SCCAS Field Team on 8th October 2007 and funded by St. Edmundsbury Borough Council.

The site lies at TL 7994 7140 (Fig. 1) on the northern side of the Lark Valley within an area of 'high archaeological importance' as recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). It is immediately east of the nationally important Anglo-Saxon settlement site WSW 002 (West 1985) and archaeological deposits have been identified immediately to the south-west of the proposed building. This includes a dark soil layer WSW 040 identified during excavation of a pipe trench (Fig. 1).

The site is presently part covered by a copse of mixed trees, which current mapping shows as more extensive than it actually is on the ground, and part under grassland. Within the trees there is a low earth bank which runs NE-SW along the north edge of the site. The first edition Ordnance Survey map published in 1884 shows the area as heath land, on the second edition map (1904) the development area is part of an arable field and sewage beds are shown immediately to the south.

The aim of the evaluation was to determine if any archaeological deposits existed on the site and to access its character and extent in order to inform any future archaeological mitigation strategy and estimates of costs.

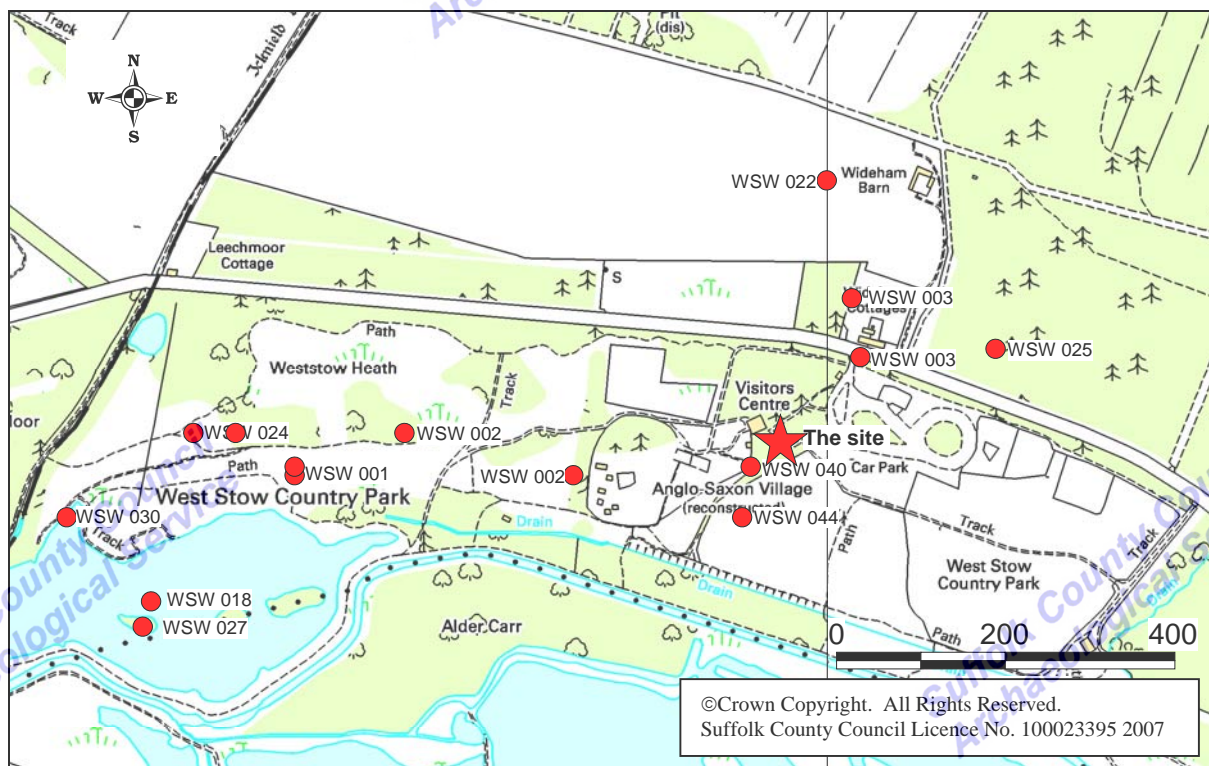


Figure 1. Site location plan and sites recorded on the SMR

Methodology

Two linear trenches were excavated by a back-acting wheeled digger fitted with a 1.6m toothless bucket and under the constant supervision of an archaeologist. 36sq metres were excavated, 5% of the application area and followed a trench plan designed to determine the nature of the bank and the likely extent of the archaeology (Fig. 2). Beyond establishing the date and nature of the archaeological deposit, trenching was kept to a minimum to avoid unnecessary intervention at this stage. The site was monitored by Bob Carr whilst the trenches were open.

The machine removed the topsoil to expose the surface of the subsoil. All possible archaeological features were sampled by hand excavation to at least the minimum requirements of the specification (Appendix 1). Plans and sections were recorded at 1:20 and the positions of the trenches and features were plotted against the national grid using a Total Station Theodolite. Digital and film photographs were routinely taken and levels were related to a temporary datum on the side of the visitors centre.

All pre-modern finds were retained for analysis and the site data has been input onto an MS Access database. The finds and site records have been archived in the small and main stores of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds and with the County Sites and Monuments Record under the parish code WSW 076. A copy of the report has also been lodged with the OASIS on-line database (ref suffolkc1 33059).

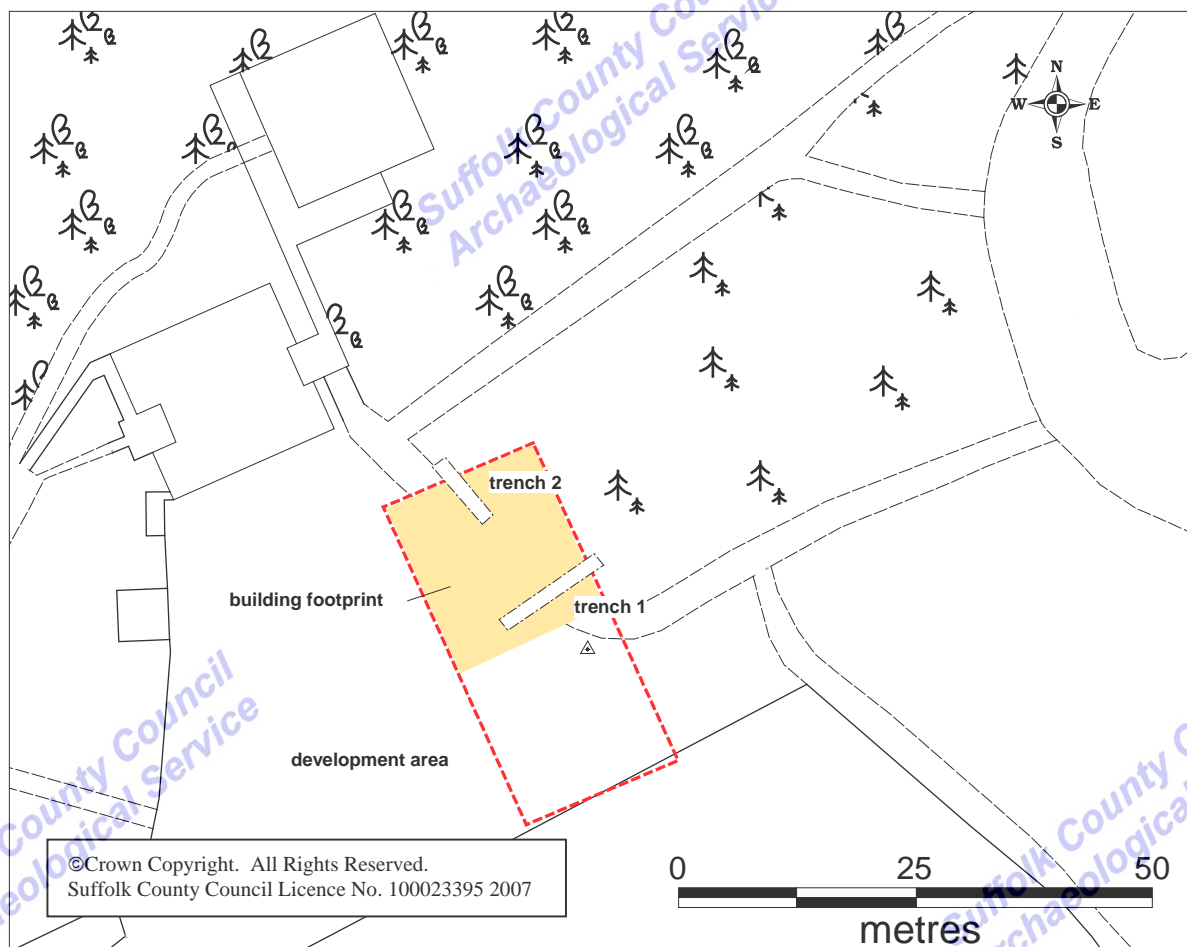


Figure 2. The site and trench plan

Results

The position of the trenches are shown on Figure 2 and they are described below.

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 and 3)

Trench 1 was 13m long and was excavated into the area of grassland at the mid point of the development area. The machine removed a layer of layer of rubble and hogging (0002), part of a recent consolidated track, and a dark sandy topsoil (0003) down the yellow sand of the surface geology. The topsoil was 0.3m deep and throughout this depth fragments of china, post medieval brick, and coal were observed. The topsoil had been cultivated and light plough scarring was seen on the surface of the subsoil. Two shallow linear features (0004 and 0009) and two postholes (0005 and 0007) were recorded cutting the subsoil. None of the features were visible until the topsoil layer 0003 had been removed.

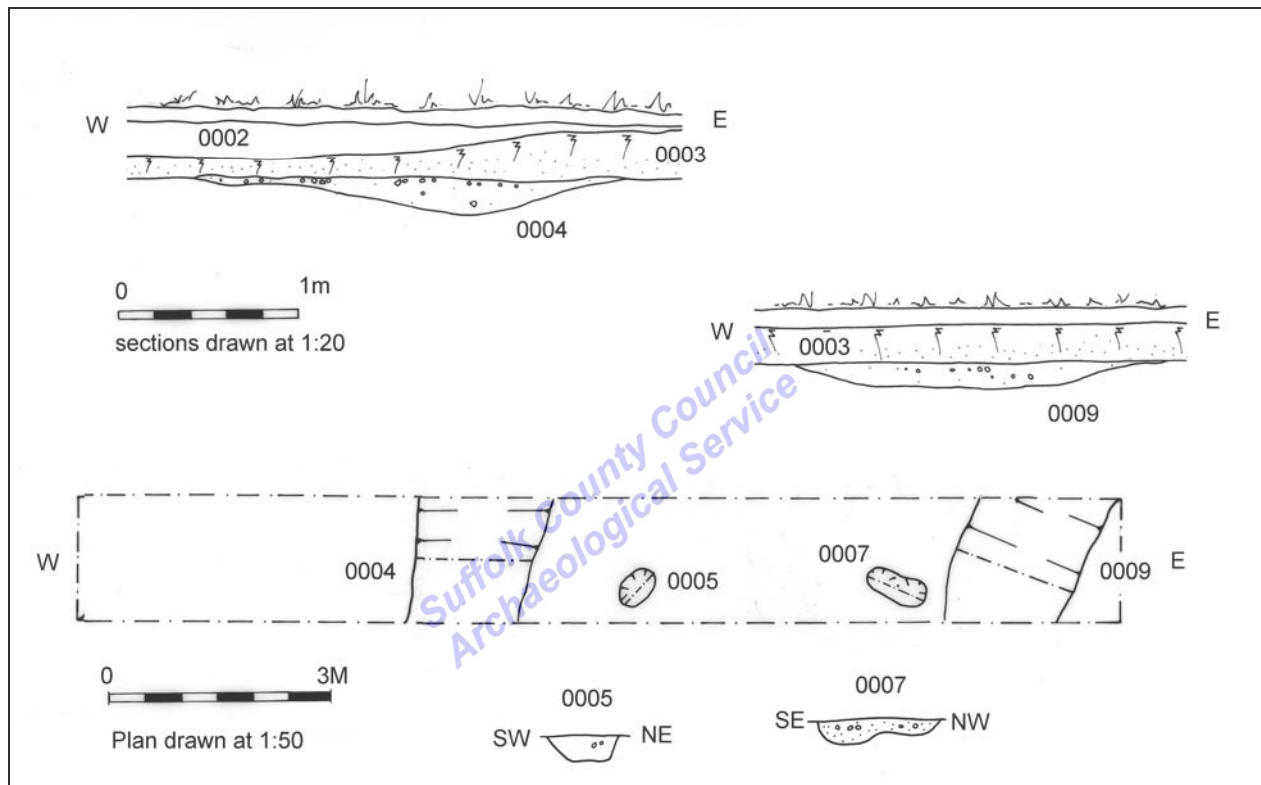


Figure 3. Trench 1, plan and sections

The linear features were similar in size and character and almost parallel, running N-S 5.5m apart. Each feature was 1.9m-2.0m wide and 0.2m deep, and filled with a single deposit of pale brown sand. A single struck flint was recovered from 0009 whilst 0004 produced no finds.

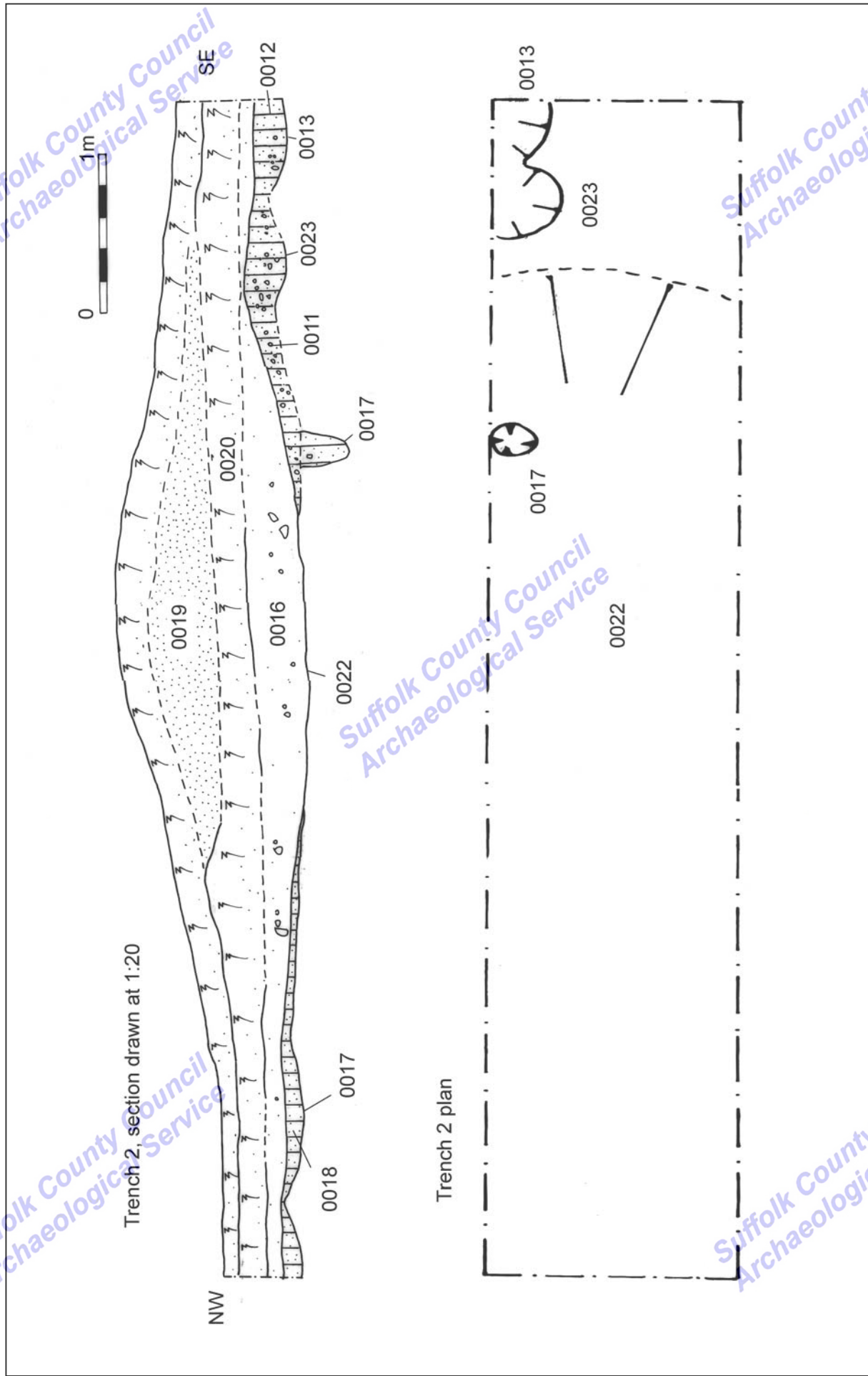
Postholes 0005 and 0007 were filled with a single layer of grey sand, darker and distinct from the linear features. The postholes were both 0.16m deep and their similarity suggest that they may have been associated and part of a single structure, 0007 had a double cut suggesting that the post had been replaced. A single very small sherd of Early Saxon handmade pottery was collected from 0007.

Trench 2 (Figs 2 and 4)

Trench 2 was 9.5m long and positioned to section the bank that ran across the north end of development area. Access was restricted and the length of the trench limited by the position of trees. The machine cut through the bank to the surface of a pale sand (0016) where a single feature 0023 was identified. The bank was made up of a deposit of dark sand (0019) which had buried an earlier topsoil layer (0020). The construction of the bank had occurred long enough ago for the bank soil and the topsoil to have become almost homogenous, but the line of the old ground surface was still just discernible (Fig. 5). The bank supported trees older than the

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Figure 4. Trench 2 plan and section 3

construction date of the visitor centre indicating that the bank was not the result of soil movement related to its build.

Below the topsoil was a pale sand (0016), which was initially interpreted as the geological surface. Excavation of the one visible feature at this level however revealed this to be a redeposited sand and the fill of a broad shallow cut (0022) which extended over full width of the trench. The cut truncated a buried ancient occupation soil layer 0011, which was recorded at up to 15cms deep, across the full length of the trench and infilled underlying hollows or shallow pits 0013, 0017 and 0023, and posthole 0017. The occupation soil produced two sherds of handmade, stamped pottery dated to 6th century (see finds section in this report). Posthole 0017 was circular in plan with tapering sides suggesting that this was the setting for a pointed stake and situated on the sloping side of hollow 0013. The posthole was cut by 0022 and sealed by fill layer 0016 demonstrating that it was a feature from antiquity. The shallow profile of features 0013, 0017 and 0023 meant that it was difficult to determine if these were cut features or undulations in the subsoil surface but they were all infilled with an archaeological soil.

The trees over the north half of the development area are immature and would be easy to remove, they are however closely spaced and the depth of roots extend into the archaeological level.



Figure 5. Section through the bank

The Finds by Richenda Goffin

Introduction

Finds were collected from four contexts, as shown in the table below.

OP	Pottery		Flint		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	
0008	1	4			Early Saxon
0010			1	20	
0011	2	18			6th century
0012	1	22			6th century
Total	4	44	1	20	

Pottery

A total of four fragments of Early Saxon pottery was recovered (0.044kg). A single undecorated rim sherd made from a hand-made sandy fabric with organic inclusions (ES02) was present in post-hole fill 0008. It is relatively unabraded. Two further sherds from the occupation soil deposit 0011 include a very abraded fragment of hand-made pottery, which has lost its outer surfaces. It is very hard-fired, almost vitreous and mainly sandy, but presumed to be Saxon. A second body sherd is in better condition, although slightly abraded around the edges. It is made in a medium sandy fabric with occasional granitic inclusions. It is decorated with two circular stamps applied within a band delineated with two horizontal grooves. Although the finer detail of the stamps are now difficult to see, they fit into the West Stow published typology, of a cross in circle (West 1985, 132). These stamps form the second largest group at West Stow, stratified examples of which are found mainly in SFBs dating from the late sixth century (West 132). A thick-walled large body sherd recovered from the occupation soil deposit 0012 is also decorated. It is made from a sandy fabric which is granite-tempered (ESCF), and is decorated with at least four circular cross-hatched stamps applied in between horizontal grooved bands. Such stamps are the most common form of stamp on the hand-made wares of the sixth century found at West Stow (West 133).

Flint

A single struck flint flake with retouch on one edge was recovered from the hollow 0010.

Discussion of the finds evidence

The small quantity of pottery recovered from the evaluation confirms the presence of buried soil deposits dating to the Early Saxon period, with the stamps indicating a 6th century date.

General Discussion

The evaluation has demonstrated that the archaeological level is intact and the potential exists for further cut features and archaeological deposits. Any truncation of the ground surface caused by either the rubbish pit or the sewerage works, which is known to exist nearby does not extend into this area. The development area has been cultivated in the past, but an early Saxon occupation soil horizon containing artefacts does survive. This layer does not exist universally across the area and occurs only in within hollows and low lying parts of the site, it is however extensive and is probably a continuation of the dark earth found during the excavation of a pipe trench in 1992 (WSW 040). The presence of cut features including postholes and pits is indicative of structures surviving on the site and occupation activity during the 6th century and suggests that the area is within the spread of the Anglo-Saxon settlement itself. Similar pale sand filled features were recorded in both trenches and could be the result of the same (?) agricultural process. Other than a single stuck flint none of these features produced finds and they are of an unknown date, but those sampled in Trench 2 post-date the Saxon soil horizon. The density of Saxon features appears to be low and the absence of archaeological deposits in the area of the visitors centre and cafeteria would suggest that this is an outlying area to the main settlement site.

The bank is thought not to be archaeological and follows the line of an earlier forest track that is now part followed by the path to the visitor centre. The bank is probably associated with the planting of the tree belts in the early part of the 20th century and similar banks have been recorded on the edges of rides and tree compartments elsewhere during the forest earthwork surveys (Craven 2003).

Recommendations

The evaluation has shown that an archaeological horizon does survive. Given the national importance of the Saxon settlement site, it is recommended that an open area excavation of the building footprint and associated paved areas be undertaken to fully record the archaeological deposit, prior to any development. The roots of the trees on the north half of the site impact on the top archaeological horizon and the removal of the stumps will cause damage, it is therefore recommended that this process is undertaken under archaeological supervision and completed as part of the archaeological excavation process.

The bank although relatively recent is a detail that relates to the land use as a managed forest and therefore forms part of the historic landscape. It is therefore recommended that the extent of the bank is recorded and is plotted against the Ordnance Survey.

David Gill
October 2007

References

Craven, J., 2003, *Rapid Earthwork Identification Survey* SCCAS Report No. 2003/149

West, S., 1985, 'The pottery' in West, S., *West Stow the Anglo-Saxon Village* Volume 1: Text EAA 24.

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Division alone. The need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its archaeological advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting service cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

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Brief and Specification for a Archaeological Trenched Evaluation

WEST STOW COUNTRY PARK, WEST STOW, BURY ST EDMUNDS IP28 6HE

The commissioning body should be aware that it may have Health & Safety responsibilities.

1. The nature of the development and archaeological requirements

- 1.1 Planning consent (application SE/07/0481) has been granted by St Edmundsbury Borough Council for the construction of a museum building (measuring 16.60 x 16.10m in area) with associated access at West Stow Country Park, West Stow, Bury St Edmunds (TL 7792 7138), with a PPG 16, paragraph 30 condition requiring an acceptable programme of archaeological work being carried out. **(Please contact St Edmundsbury Borough Council for an accurate map of the final application area).**
- 1.3 The Planning Authority has been advised that any consent should be conditional upon securing the implementation of a programme of archaeological works before development begins (PPG 16, paragraph 30 condition). An archaeological evaluation of the application area is required as the first part of a programme of archaeological mitigation; decisions on the need for, and scope of, any further work should there be any archaeological finds of significance will be based upon the results of the evaluation and will be the subject of an additional brief.
- 1.4 This application lies in an area of high archaeological importance recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record. It is located immediately to the east of the site of the multi-period site (WSW 002), which included an early Anglo-Saxon settlement of national importance (West 1985). Archaeological deposits have been defined immediately to the south-west of the proposed building. There is high potential for encountering both occupation deposits of all periods at this location. The proposed works would cause significant ground disturbance that has potential to damage any archaeological deposit that exists.
- 1.5 The site is located on the northern side of the Lark Valley. The underlying geology of the site geology comprises unconsolidated sand.
- 1.6 There is high potential for further important archaeological features to be located in this area. Aspects of the proposed works will cause significant ground disturbance with the potential to damage any archaeological deposit that exists.
- 1.7 A trenched evaluation is required as the first part of the archaeological mitigation strategy for this development.
- 1.8 All arrangements for the field evaluation of the site, the timing of the work, access to the site, the definition of the precise area of landholding and area for proposed development are to be defined and negotiated with the commissioning body.
- 1.9 Detailed standards, information and advice to supplement this brief are to be found in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14, 2003.
- 1.10 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 Written Scheme of Investigation (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 WSI

as satisfactory. The WSI will *provide the basis for measurable standards* and will be used to satisfy the requirements of the planning condition.

- 1.11 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 the Conservation Team of the Archaeological Service of SCC (SCCAS/CT) before execution.
- 1.12 The responsibility for identifying any constraints on field-work (e.g. Scheduled Monument status, Listed Building status, public utilities or other services, tree preservation orders, SSSIs, wildlife sites &c., ecological considerations rests with the commissioning body and its archaeological contractor. The existence and content of the archaeological brief does not over-ride such constraints or imply that the target area is freely available.
- 1.13 Any changes to the specifications that the project archaeologist may wish to make after approval by this office should be communicated directly to SCCAS/CT and the client for approval.

2. Brief for the Archaeological Evaluation

- 2.1 Establish whether any archaeological deposit exists in the area, with particular regard to any which are of sufficient importance to merit preservation *in situ* [at the discretion of the developer].
- 2.2 Identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological deposit within the application area, together with its likely extent, localised depth and quality of preservation.
- 2.3 Evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/alluvial deposits.
- 2.4 Establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence.
- 2.5 Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.
- 2.6 This project will be carried through in a manner broadly consistent with English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects, 1991 (MAP2)*, all stages will follow a process of assessment and justification before proceeding to the next phase of the project. Field evaluation is to be followed by the preparation of a full archive, and an assessment of potential. Any further excavation required as mitigation is to be followed by the preparation of a full archive, and an assessment of potential, analysis and final report preparation may follow. Each stage will be the subject of a further brief and updated project design; this document covers only the evaluation stage.
- 2.7 The developer or his archaeologist will give SCCAS/CT (address as above) 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.
- 2.8 If the approved evaluation design is not carried through in its entirety (particularly in the instance of trenching being incomplete) the evaluation report may be rejected. Alternatively the presence of an archaeological deposit may be presumed, and untested areas included on this basis when defining the final mitigation strategy.
- 2.9 An outline specification, which defines certain minimum criteria, is set out below.

3. Specification: Field Evaluation

- 3.1 Trial trenches are to be excavated to cover a 5% by area, which is 36m² of the total area of disturbance (c. 720 m² including parking area). These shall be positioned to sample all parts of the site. Linear trenches are thought to be the most appropriate sampling method. Trenches are to be a minimum of 1.8m wide unless special circumstances can be demonstrated; this will result in a minimum of c. 20m of trenching at 1.8m in width. If excavation is mechanised a toothless 'ditching bucket' at least 1.2m wide must be used. A scale plan showing the proposed locations of the trial trenches should be included in the Written Scheme of Investigation and the detailed trench design must be approved by SCCAS/CT before field work begins.
- 3.3 The topsoil may be mechanically removed using an appropriate machine with a back-acting arm and fitted with a toothless bucket, down to the interface layer between topsoil and subsoil or other visible archaeological surface. All machine excavation is to be under the direct control and supervision of an archaeologist. The topsoil should be examined for archaeological material.
- 3.4 The top of the first archaeological deposit may be cleared by machine, but must then be cleaned off by hand. There is a presumption that excavation of all archaeological deposits will be done by hand unless it can be shown there will not be a loss of evidence by using a machine. The decision as to the proper method of excavation will be made by the senior project archaeologist with regard to the nature of the deposit.
- 3.5 In all evaluation excavation there is a presumption of the need to cause the minimum disturbance to the site consistent with adequate evaluation; that significant archaeological features, e.g. solid or bonded structural remains, building slots or post-holes, should be preserved intact even if fills are sampled.
- 3.6 There must be sufficient excavation to give clear evidence for the period, depth and nature of any archaeological deposit. The depth and nature of colluvial or other masking deposits must be established across the site.
- 3.7 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. The contractor shall show what provision has been made for environmental assessment of the site and must provide details of the sampling strategies for retrieving artefacts, biological remains (for palaeoenvironmental and palaeoeconomic investigations), and samples of sediments and/or soils (for micromorphological and other pedological/sedimentological analyses. 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.
- 3.8 Any natural subsoil surface revealed should be hand cleaned and examined for archaeological deposits and artefacts. Sample excavation of any archaeological features revealed may be necessary in order to gauge their date and character.
- 3.9 Metal detector searches must take place at all stages of the excavation by an experienced metal detector user.
- 3.10 All finds will be collected and processed (unless variations in this principle are agreed SCCAS/CT during the course of the evaluation).
- 3.11 Human remains must be left *in situ* except in those cases where damage or desecration are to be expected, or in the event that analysis of the remains is shown to be a requirement of satisfactory evaluation of the site. However, the excavator should be aware of, and comply with, the provisions of Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857.
- 3.12 Plans of any archaeological features on the site are to be drawn at 1:20 or 1:50, depending on the complexity of the data to be recorded. Sections should be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 again depending on the complexity to be recorded. All levels should relate to Ordnance Datum. Any variations from this must be agreed with the Conservation Team.

- 3.13 A photographic record of the work is to be made, consisting of both monochrome photographs and colour transparencies and/or high resolution digital images.
- 3.14 Topsoil, subsoil and archaeological deposit to be kept separate during excavation to allow sequential backfilling of excavations.
- 3.15 Trenches should not be backfilled without the approval of SCCAS/CT.

4. General Management

- 4.1 A timetable for all stages of the project must be agreed before the first stage of work commences, including monitoring by SCCAS/CT. The archaeological contractor will give not less than five days written notice of the commencement of the work so that arrangements for monitoring the project can be made.
- 4.2 The composition of the archaeology contractor staff must be detailed and agreed by this office, including any subcontractors/specialists. For the site director and other staff likely to have a major responsibility for the post-excavation processing of this evaluation there must also be a statement of their responsibilities or a CV for post-excavation work on other archaeological sites and publication record.
- 4.3 It is the archaeological contractor's responsibility to ensure that adequate resources are available to fulfill the Brief.
- 4.4 A detailed risk assessment must be provided for this particular site.
- 4.5 No initial survey to detect public utility or other services has taken place. The responsibility for this rests with the archaeological contractor.
- 4.6 The Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessments* and for *Field Evaluations* should be used for additional guidance in the execution of the project and in drawing up the report.

5. Report Requirements

- 5.1 An archive of all records and finds must be prepared consistent with the principles of English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 1991 (particularly Appendix 3.1 and Appendix 4.1).
- 5.2 The report should reflect the aims of the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 5.3 The objective account of the archaeological evidence must be clearly distinguished from its archaeological interpretation.
- 5.4 An opinion as to the necessity for further evaluation and its scope may be given. No further site work should be embarked upon until the primary fieldwork results are assessed and the need for further work is established.
- 5.5 Reports on specific areas of specialist study must include sufficient detail to permit assessment of potential for analysis, including tabulation of data by context, and must include non-technical summaries.
- 5.6 The Report must include a discussion and an assessment of the archaeological evidence, including an assessment of palaeoenvironmental remains recovered from palaeosols and cut features. Its conclusions must include a clear statement of the archaeological potential of the site, and the significance of that potential in the context of the Regional Research Framework (*East Anglian Archaeology*, Occasional Papers 3 & 8, 1997 and 2000).
- 5.7 The results of the surveys should be related to the relevant known archaeological information held in the county SMR.

- 5.8 The project manager must consult the SMR Officer to obtain an event number for the work. This number will be unique for each project or site and must be clearly marked on any documentation relating to the work.
- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 The project manager should consult the County SMR officer regarding the requirements for the deposition of the archive (conservation, ordering, organisation, labelling, marking and storage) of excavated material and the archive.
- 5.11 The site archive is to be deposited with the County SMR within three months of the completion of fieldwork. It will then become publicly accessible.
- 5.12 Where positive conclusions are drawn from a project (whether it be evaluation or excavation) a summary report, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology*, must be prepared. It should be included in the project report, or submitted to the Conservation Team, by the end of the calendar year in which the evaluation work takes place, whichever is the sooner.
- 5.13 County SMR sheets must be completed, as per the county SMR manual, for all sites where archaeological finds and/or features are located.
- 5.14 Where appropriate, a digital vector trench plan should be included with the report, which must be compatible with MapInfo GIS software, for integration in the County Sites and Monuments Record. AutoCAD files should be also exported and saved into a format that can be imported into MapInfo (for example, as a Drawing Interchange File or .dxf) or already transferred to .TAB files.
- 5.15 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.
- 5.16 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: Robert Carr

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 Archaeological Service Conservation Team
 Environment and Transport Department
 Shire Hall
 Bury St Edmunds
 Suffolk IP33 2AR
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Tel: 01284 352441

Date: 4 September 2007

Reference: / WestStowCountryPark2007

This brief and specification remains valid for six 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.

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