

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

FORMER DEPOT, BEECHES ROAD, WEST ROW, MILDENHALL MNL 538

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2004/05
(Planning app. no. F/2002/429)

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Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

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List of Contributors

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Acknowledgements

This project was funded by Baker Nisbet Ltd and was monitored by Judith Plouviez (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team).

The monitoring was carried out by John Craven from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team. The post-excavation was managed by Richenda Goffin who also produced the specialist finds report.

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of the excavation of footing trenches and associated groundworks at the former depot, Beeches Road, West Row, Mildenhall, identified unstratified medieval material indicating low-level activity in the vicinity during the medieval period and a possible cellar and well associated with post-medieval buildings shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey of 1904.

HER information

Planning application no.	F/2002/429
Date of fieldwork:	December 2004 – March 2005
Grid Reference:	TL 673 762
Funding body:	Baker Nisbet Ltd
Oasis reference	Suffolkc1-5417

1. Introduction

A series of visits was made to the site from December 2004 to March 2005 to monitor the site strip and excavation of footing trenches and associated groundworks. The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by Judith Plouviez (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application F/2002/429. The work was funded by the developer, Baker Nisbet Ltd.

Interest in the site was based upon its general location, at a height of 5-6m OD, on an area of chalk overlooking the fens to the west, within the band of multi-period occupation that occurs along the fen edge. In particular there is known Roman settlement at MNL 064, 400m to the north and at MNL 193, 150m to the south-west (Fig. 1). The site also lies within the areas of potential medieval settlement at Thistley Green and West Row. There was potential therefore for the development to disturb archaeological deposits from a range of periods.

The site's former use however, as a bus depot and engineering workshop, had caused considerable disturbance to the ground-levels, with frequent pipe and cable trenches, underground tanks, drainage soakaways and other disturbances, and had left areas of low-level contamination. As a result an archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks was considered an appropriate mitigation strategy to record any archaeological deposits.

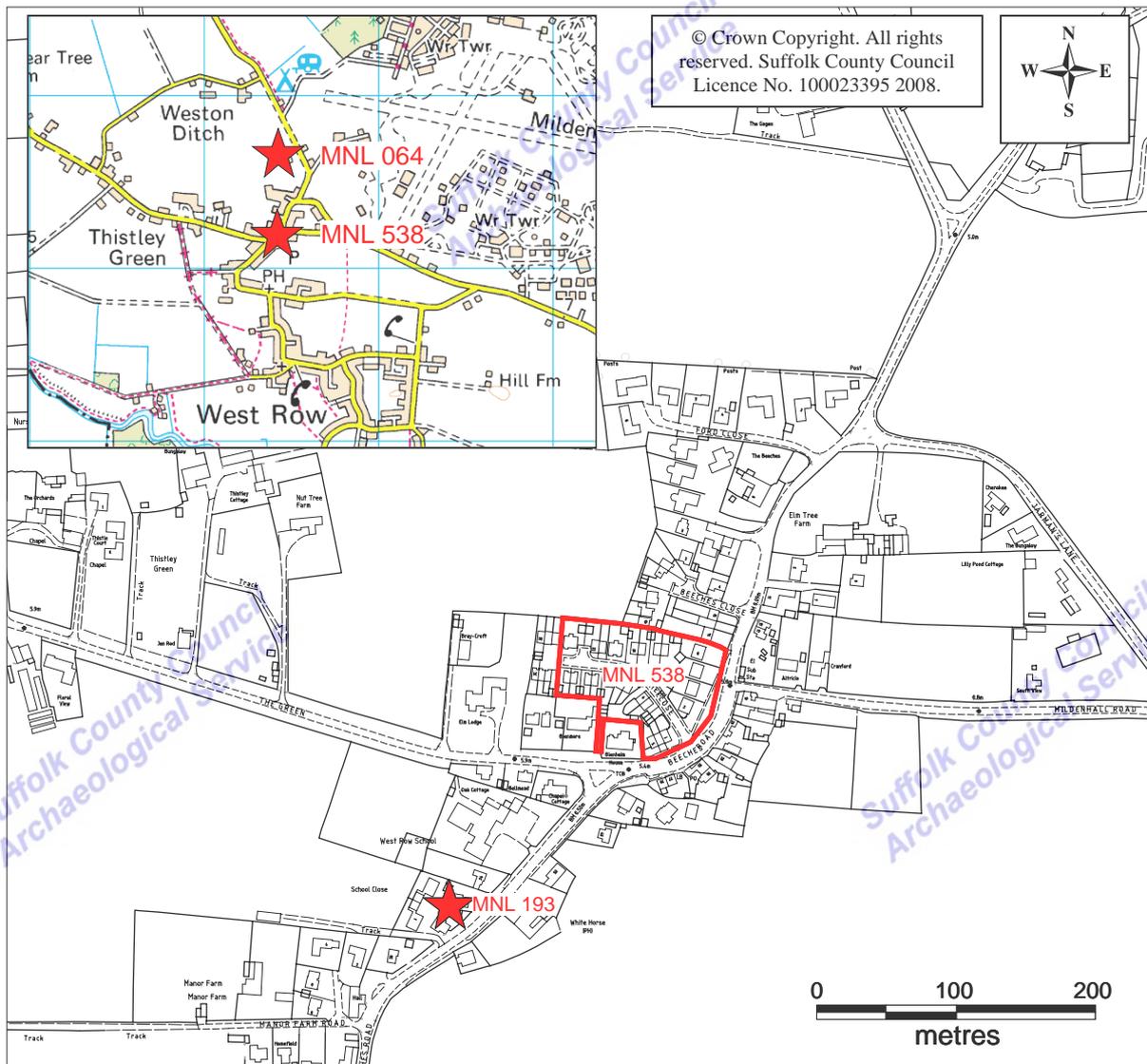


Figure 1. Site location plan

2. Methodology

The first stage of groundworks entailed the removal of contaminated ground. This consisted of a site strip, by a mechanical excavator, of up to 0.4m of generally modern material until buried topsoil or the natural subsoil levels were exposed.

The second stage of the groundworks consisted of the excavation of footing trenches for the individual house plots (Fig. 2). Trenches for five of the house plots (Fig. 3), those along the road frontage, were generally observed whilst fully open and identifiable features were cleaned and recorded. The trenches measured 0.8m wide and ranged from 0.8m-1.5m deep, from the reduced ground level, and were cut directly into the chalk subsoil.

An OASIS form has been completed for the project (reference no. suffolkc1-5417) and a digital copy of the report submitted for inclusion on the Archaeology Data Service database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>).

The site archive is kept in the main store of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds under HER No. MNL 538.

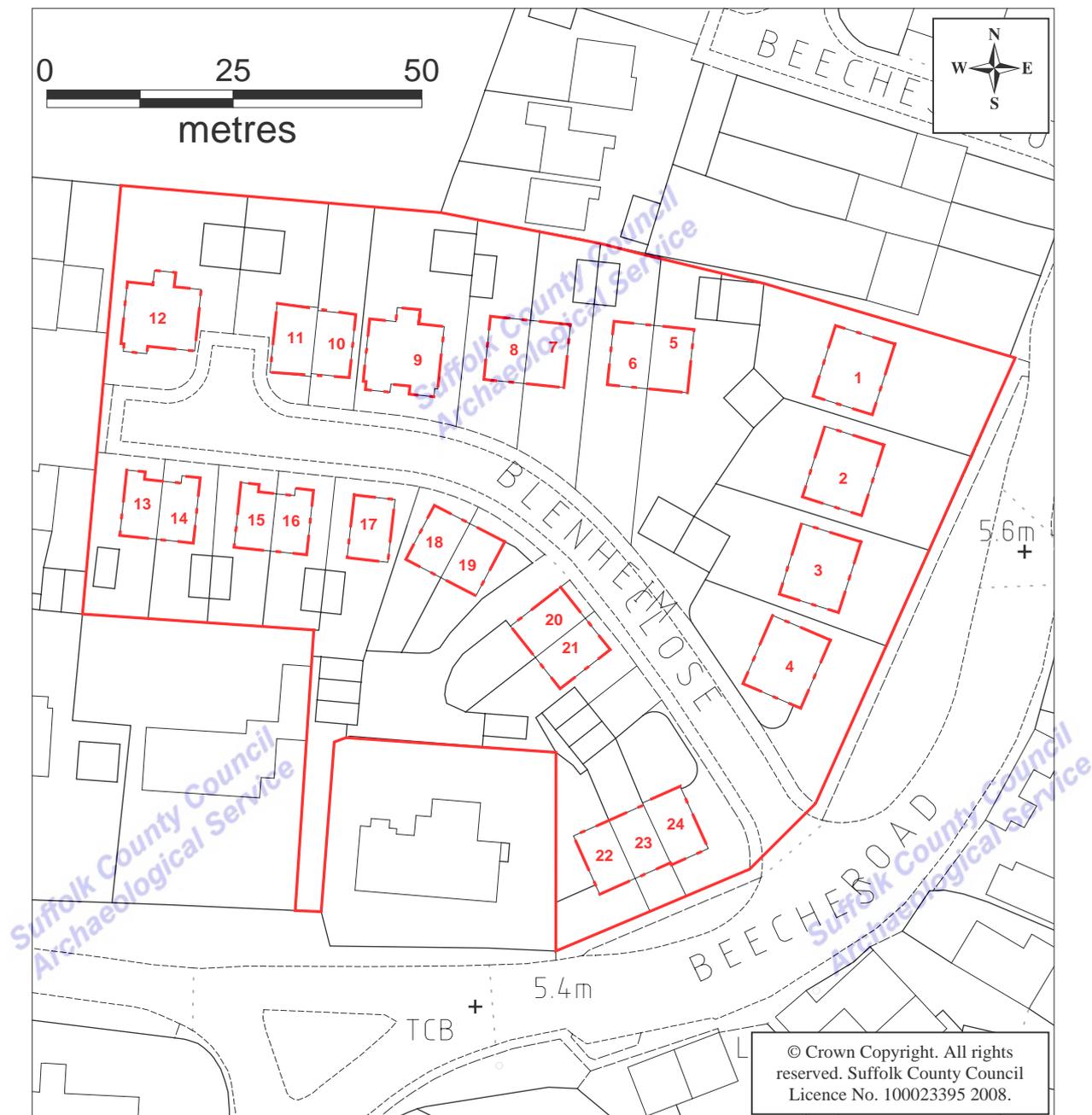


Figure 2. Overall site plan

3. Results

The contaminated soil removal allowed a rapid survey of large parts of the site. This proved to be inconclusive though as the site was only roughly cleared to the natural subsoil, a broken chalk mixed with patches of silt/sand with frequent areas of topsoil and modern disturbances remaining in place. The general poor ground and weather conditions meant that it was not possible to identify, or confirm the absence of, archaeological features at this stage although three sherds of 12th-13th century pottery and a fragment of 13th-15th century roof tile, 0002, were recovered from the north-east corner of the site.

The monitoring of footing trenches identified several archaeological features, amidst frequent areas of heavy modern disturbance and are listed below, plot by plot.

3.1. Plot 01

This plot was not seen before concrete was poured, however approximately 0.3m of the trench depth was visible which showed a surviving layer of dark brown loam overlying the natural chalk. The spoil heap was rapidly checked and animal bone, 0003, recovered.

3.2. Plot 02

These trenches were seen whilst fully open and in the eastern half they cut through the natural chalk, which was visible at the reduced ground-level. To the west the chalk then descended under a layer, 0.3m-0.8m thick of dark grey/brown clay/loam. This layer was very clean with little debris although one sherd of 16th-17th century pottery was recovered, 0004. The western edge was occupied by heavy modern disturbance.

3.3. Plots 22-24

These trenches were seen whilst fully open and, in the eastern half, they cut through natural chalk from the surface. One large shaft, 0005, filled with modern rubbish and measuring approximately 2.5m in diameter and deep, was seen along the eastern edge. The western part of the plot still partially had a mid brown loam overlying the natural chalk but a large part of this was cut through by two parallel east to west aligned chalk lump walls, 0006 and 0007. These walls were c.4m apart and each measured 0.6m wide and extended to a depth c.1m below the reduced ground level. The space between them was filled with modern deposits to a depth of c.1.3m so they appeared to be forming two sides of a cellar, although there was no sign of any connecting, north to south aligned walls. The southernmost wall was also observed further to the west in a separate service trench.

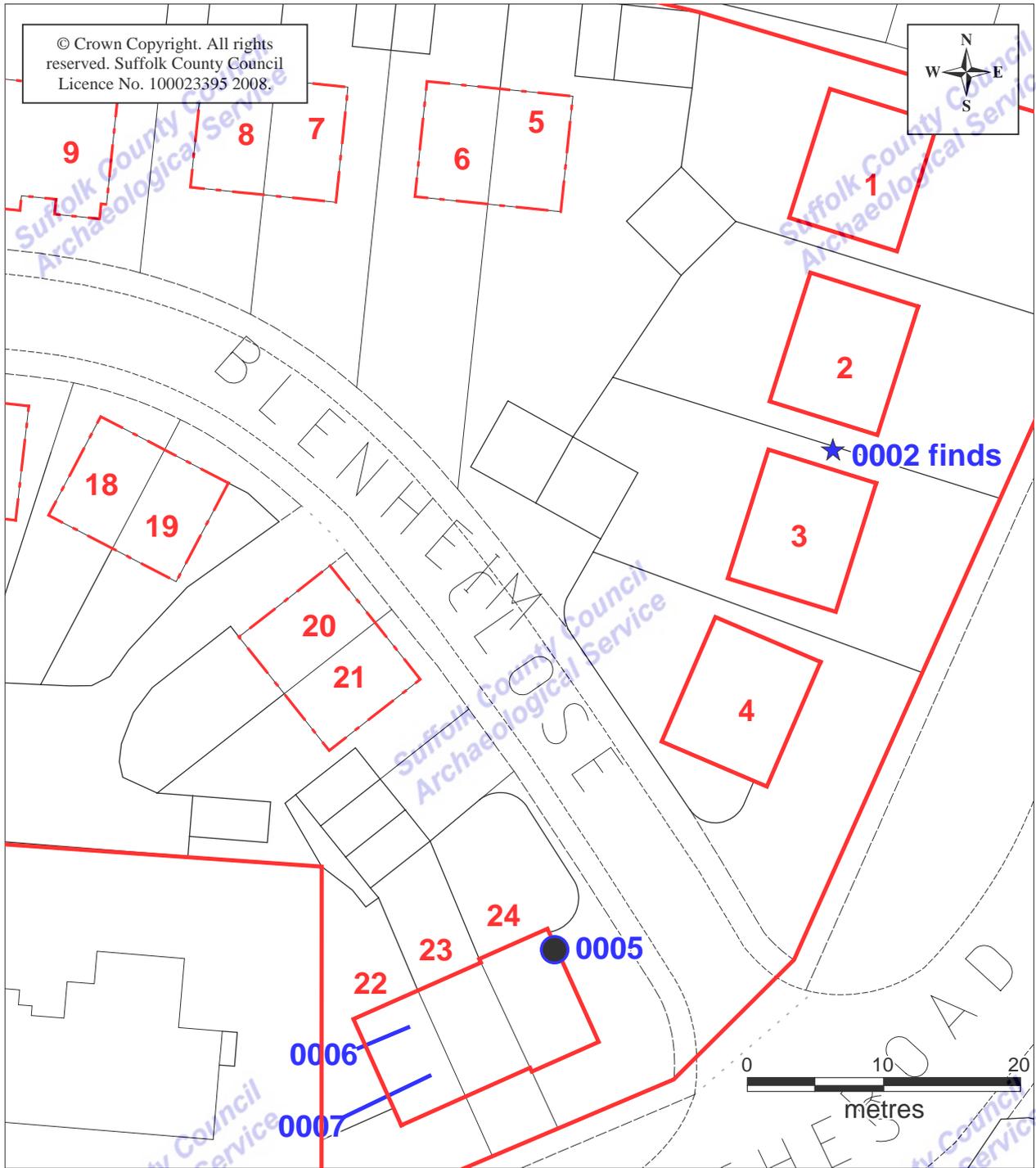


Figure 3. Monitored plots plan

4. The Finds

Richenda Goffin

4.1. Introduction

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

OP	Pottery		CBM		Animal bone		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	
0002	3	12	1	22			13th C
0003					2	194	Undated
0004	1	31					16th-17th C
Total	4	43	1	22	2	194	

Table 1. Finds quantities

4.2. Pottery

A total of four fragments of pottery was recovered (0.043kg). Three glazed medieval wares were collected from 0002, a number allocated to the finds found in the north-eastern part of the site. These include a sherd of Colchester-type slipped ware and two sherds of Hedingham Fineware, (M12th-M13th C) made in the coarser variant of this fabric (Cotter 2000). A fourth fragment was found in a deposit 0004 in Plot 02. This was an abraded Glazed red earthenware sherd with a copper speckle glaze on the interior surface, which dates to the 16th-17th century.

4.3. Ceramic building material

A single fragment of a ceramic rooftile with a circular peghole was also recovered from the north-eastern part of the site. This was made from a fine hard fabric containing occasional large shell inclusions (up to 8mm in diameter), with a reduced core, dating to the 13th-15th century.

4.4. Animal bone

The small quantity of animal bone fragments collected from the spoilheap 0003 in Plot 01 includes the distal end of a bovine tibia.

4.5. Discussion

The small amount of finds recovered from the monitoring are mostly medieval, and although they are not well stratified, they do confirm the proximity of medieval deposits in the vicinity, associated with the settlement nearby. The presence of the medieval rooftile containing shell inclusions is worthy of note, as this may be a fabric produced locally in the fenland area.

5. Discussion

Archaeological monitoring of the development was limited, with the footings of only five of the twenty-four plots being observed due to a lack of communication with the developer. Furthermore, as the initial site strip showed, the site had been frequently disturbed by modern activity, probably relating to the site's 20th century use as a depot or by the range of 19th century buildings, shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey, that formerly occupied the site (Fig. 4).

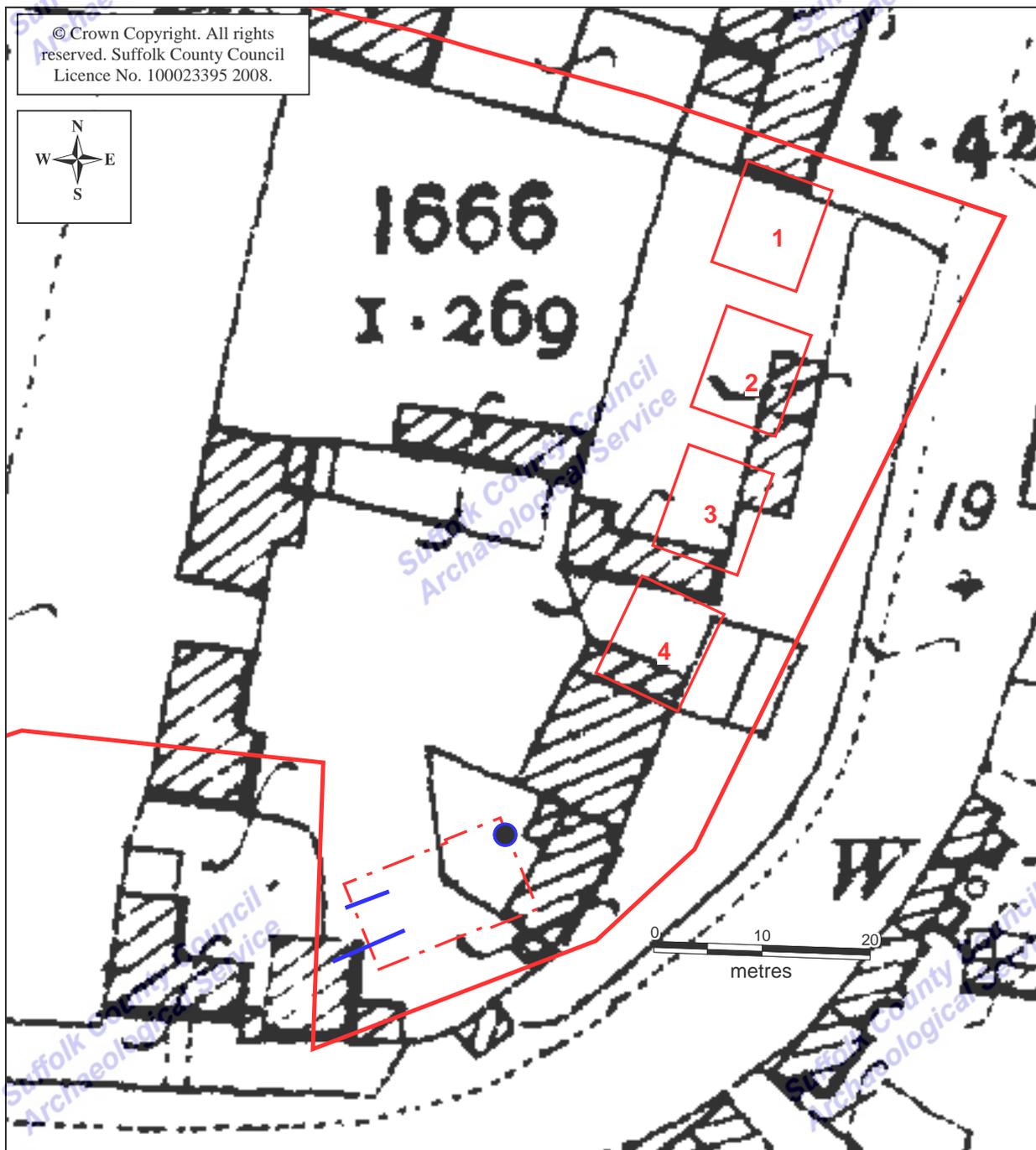


Figure 4. Site as shown on the Second Edition Ordnance survey, 1904.

The finds assemblage was mostly medieval in date but was generally recovered from unstratified contexts and simply indicates the presence of medieval activity in the general vicinity. The descending level of the chalk subsoil in Plot 02 indicates some preservation of the natural

topography, possibly being part of a natural hollow which appears to have been infilled in the late medieval/post-medieval period.

The defined archaeological features are likely to be post-medieval in date, with the two chalk lump walls, 0006 and 0007, possibly marking two sides of an infilled cellar, perhaps relating to the building shown on the Second Edition OS map of 1904 in the south-east corner of the site. The shaft, 0005, may have originally been a well to the rear of the 19th century buildings which fronted onto Beeches Road on the eastern edge of the site.

J.A.Craven

Field Team, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

April 2008

References

Cotter, J., 2000, Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85, Colchester Archaeological Report 7.

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Appendix 1

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE - CONSERVATION TEAM



Brief and Specification for Archaeological Monitoring of Development

FORMER DEPOT, BEECHES ROAD, WEST ROW, MILDENHALL

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 & 4.4. The commissioning body should also be aware that it may have Health & Safety responsibilities, see paragraph 1.5.

1. Background

1.1 Planning permission to construct 24 houses on this site has been granted conditional upon an acceptable programme of archaeological work being carried out (application F/2002/429). Assessment of the available archaeological evidence indicates that the area affected by development can be adequately recorded by archaeological monitoring.

1.2 The development area lies at TL 673 762 on the chalky area south-east of the 5m contour which approximately marks the fen margin. There is a major Roman settlement complex 400m to the north and another 150m to the south-west. It is within an area of potential medieval settlement around Thistley Green and post-medieval gunflint debris has been found on the surface.

There has been extensive 20th century disturbance with a large engineering workshop across the centre of the plot and fuel pumps on the east side; the western third may, however, be relatively undisturbed.

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.

1.4 Detailed standards, information and advice to supplement this brief are to be found in “Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England” Occasional Papers 14, East Anglian Archaeology, 2003.

1.5 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.

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 earlier occupation of the site, particularly in the Roman period onwards.

2.3 The significant archaeologically damaging activities in this proposal are likely to be the site preparation works involving topsoil stripping (e.g. the construction of access roads, hard standing construction, and landscaping) and the excavation of building footing or ground-beam trenches.

2.4 Site preparation will include topsoil stripping in contaminated areas as well as for construction; the stripping process and the upcast soil are to be observed whilst they are excavated by the building contractor.

In the case of footing trenches the excavation and the upcast soil, are to be observed after they have been excavated by the building contractor. Adequate time is to be allowed for the recording of archaeological deposits during excavation, and of soil sections following excavation (see 4.3 & 4.4).

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 topsoil stripping for site preparation, including removal of contaminated soil, access roads, hard standings and landscaping unimpeded access to the stripped area at the rate of one hour per 100 square metres must be allowed for archaeological recording at the interface between topsoil and clean sub-soil surface before the area is further deepened, traversed by machinery or sub-base deposited.

4.4 In the case of footing trenches unimpeded access at the rate of one and a 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.

4.5 All archaeological features exposed must be planned at a minimum scale of 1:50 on a plan showing the proposed layout of the development.

4.6 All contexts must be numbered and finds recorded by context.

4.7 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.
- 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: Judith Plouviez

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

Date: 19 November 2004

Reference: /WestRow-BeechesRd11

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.