

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

'HIGHLANDS', HIGH STREET NEEDHAM MARKET (SMR ref. NDM 018)

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GROUNDWORK
ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
ON THE SITE OF 'HIGHLANDS', HIGH STREET, NEEDHAM MARKET
(Application No. 1134/03)

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Report No. 2004/170
(OASIS Ref. Suffolkc1-5428)

Summary: Archaeological monitoring of groundwork associated with the construction of a residential development on the site of 'Highlands', High Street, Needham Market (NGR TM 0857 5535), was undertaken during 2004. Numerous house plot footings and a large area of extensive earthmoving was monitored but no evidence for earlier activity or occupation was identified and no artefacts were recovered. This monitoring event is recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record under the reference NDM 018. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, with funding from the developer, Hopkins Homes Ltd

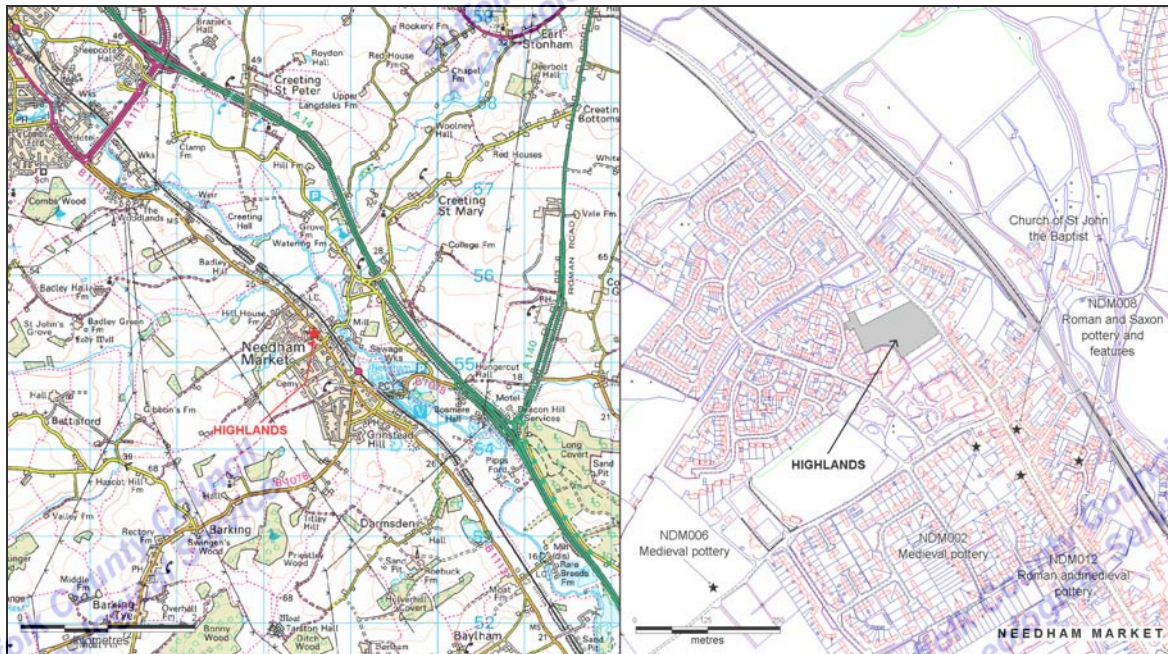


Figure 1: Site Location Plan
(relevant findspots recorded on the County SMR are also marked)
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Introduction

An application for a residential development on a site formerly occupied by 'Highlands', situated towards the northwest end of Needham Market High Street (application no. 1134/03), was approved but with an attached condition calling for a programme of

archaeological works to be put in place prior to the commencement of construction work. The archaeological interest in the site was due to it being situated within the Gipping valley in an area close to a site of known Anglo-Saxon occupation. The site also fronts onto the High Street and is c.220m from the medieval church of St. John the Baptist.

The development was to comprise of thirty-eight dwellings, primarily in terraces or semi-detached houses. The proposed buildings were to be constructed on strip footings and it was the excavation of these that had the greatest potential to reveal and damage any archaeological deposits or features that may be present.

The area had formerly been the site of a Victorian house, named Highlands, and its grounds (see figure 2). The house stood towards the rear of the plot with a formal garden between it and the road. The site slopes down from west to east although it has been partially terraced with a large part of formal garden area being cut into the slope. The National Grid Reference for the approximate centre of the site is TM 0857 5535; for a location plan see figure 1 above. This monitoring event is recorded on the Suffolk County Sites and Monuments Record under the reference NDM 018. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team, with funding from the developer, Hopkins Homes Limited.

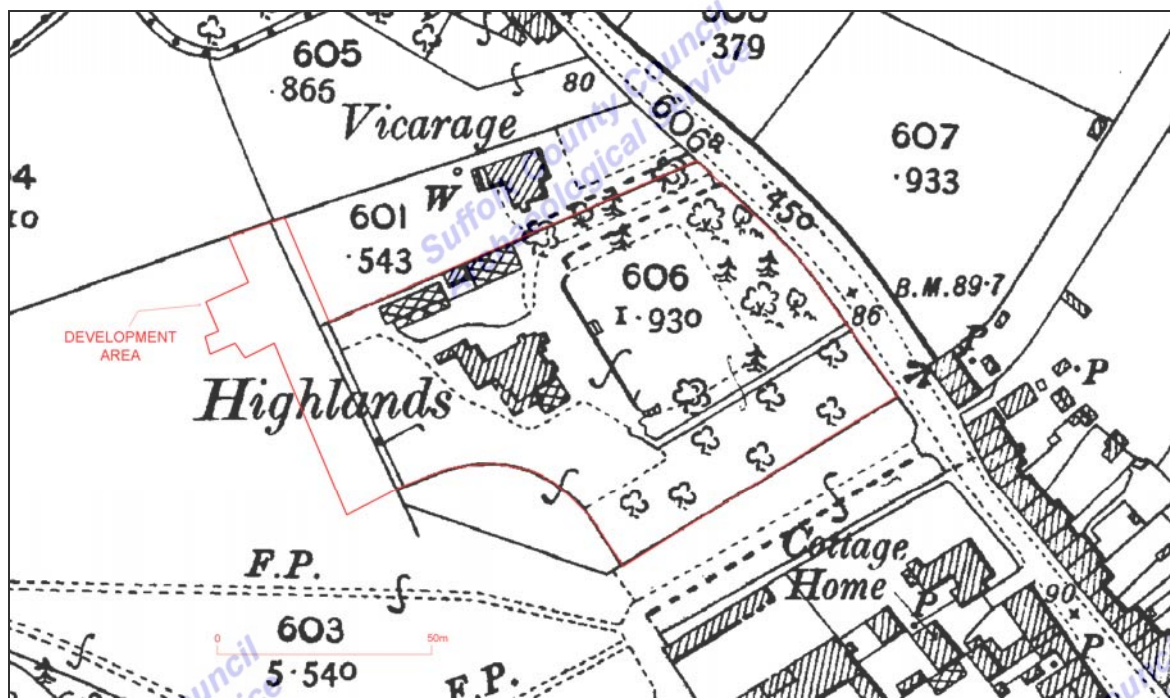


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition (c.1900) 1:2500 scale sheet (extract)

Methodology

Visits were made to the site to inspect the footings for the new buildings, for archaeological features and deposits, after they had been excavated by the building contractors. This was done through a visual examination of the footing trenches and the resultant spoil. The depth of the footing trench was recorded and the make-up of the ground as revealed by the footing trench was noted. The spoil was retained onsite in large heaps and this was examined for artefacts. It is believed that the spoil was to be later removed from site.

Results

A total of eight visits were made to the site. See figure 3 below for details of the locations of the new structures and of details noted during the monitoring visits.



Figure 3: Monitoring Locations

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The first two visits were made in May 2004 to inspect the footings then being excavated for a ?showhouse, later identified as Plot 38. The resultant footing trenches were examined but no significant archaeological features or deposits were identified in the revealed cross sections through the ground's makeup. Only an undisturbed natural subsoil, which consisted of a stiff grey boulder clay, was noted. This was overlain by a thin topsoil, c.0.10m thick, which contained occasional fragments of post-medieval brick and tile. The total depth of the footings was c.2.3m. The resultant spoil was examined but no artefacts were recovered.

A brief walkabout of the site was undertaken during which it was noted that the floors of 'Highlands' and a group of greenhouses, which formerly stood against the northern boundary of the site, were still *in-situ*. A small hole into an underground void under the floor of the house was also visible. Further investigation by the onsite contractors revealed a brick lined passage, c.1.1m wide and 3m in length. This passage was later identified as part of a cellar, the majority of which had been backfilled with rubble. A covered brick lined well in an area to the northwest of the house was also noted.

No further monitoring visits were undertaken until September 2004 when the main phase of construction was underway. A further six visits were made (22nd, 24th & 30th September 7th & 14th October and 9th November) to inspect the works then in progress. During these visits the footing trenches for plots numbered 1 to 5 and plot 8 were examined after their excavation by the building contractors. The immediate area around plots 1 to 5 was lowered by c.0.5m and this work was also inspected. The area of plots 9 to 18 was stripped of topsoil exposing the underlying natural, which was examined, and the old cellar was emptied and partially grubbed out.

A new retaining wall was to be built between the two terraces and this entailed considerable earthmoving operations to cut the rear edge of the lower terrace back c.8m to provide space to excavate the footing for the retaining wall and to provide space for a substantial service run behind the new wall (see Plate I). The area of plots of 25 to 30 was also stripped of topsoil. All these works were inspected. Approximately 4m to the northeast of plots 19 to 22 a c.6m length of service trench was examined. This revealed a 0.4m thick layer of topsoil overlying the natural subsoil, which appeared to have been truncated, but no archaeological features or deposits were identified. During the monitoring visits the surface of all spoil tips present on site were walked over and examined for artefacts.

No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts, other than late 19th century and 20th century items, were identified in any of the areas monitored.

Conclusion

No significant archaeological deposits appear to have been damaged or destroyed by the development of this site. All monitored footing trenches were cleanly excavated and gave a good opportunity to observe for archaeological features and deposits. The areas stripped of topsoil also gave good opportunities to observe for deposits and their absence on this site has to be considered a real phenomenon although it must be said that very little of the street frontage of the site was seen apart from the stripped area in the vicinity of plot 18. The actual street frontage of the site was planted with mature trees in a belt c.6m wide, which was to be retained.

On the upper terrace the interface between the topsoil and the subsoil was blurred and irregular suggesting that the surface of the natural had not been truncated whereas on the lower terrace there was evidence for truncation of the natural subsoil surface as would be expected.

Mark Sommers
Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
Field Projects Team

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Plate I: cutting back of the lower terrace (7th Oct. 2004)