

## South Lowestoft Relief Road, Lowestoft

National Grid Reference: TM 5335 9160

Suffolk Sites and Monuments Record Reference: LWT 152

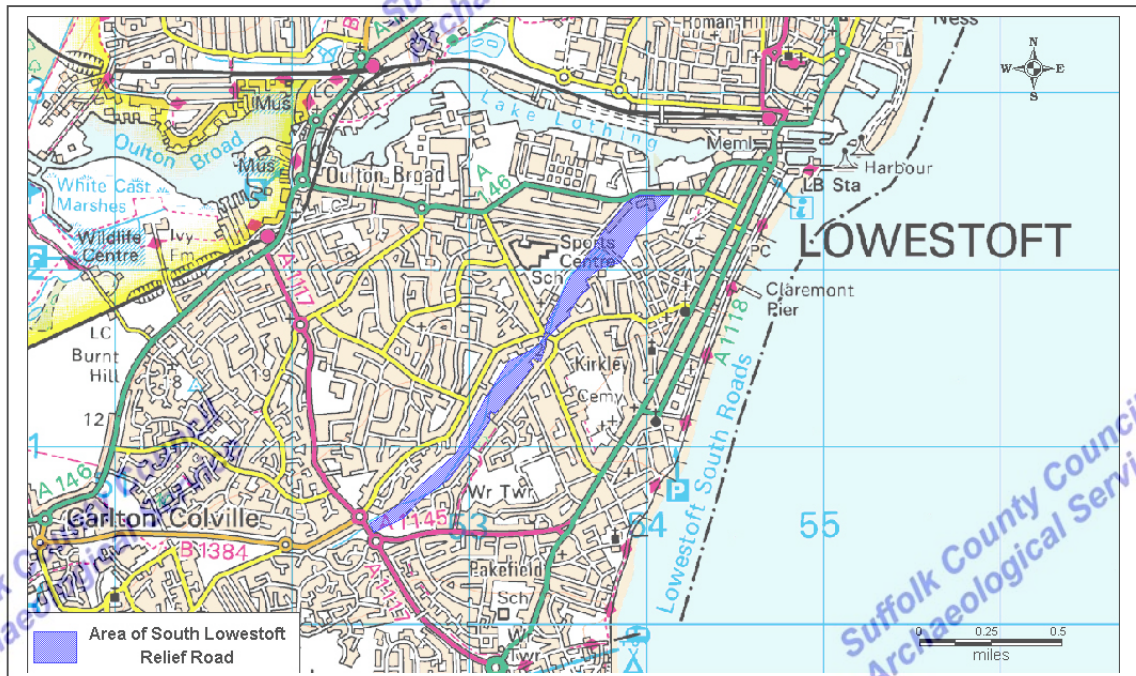
Clare McLannahan, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, February 2005

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### Summary

Planning consent for the construction of a new relief road through South Lowestoft required a programme of archaeological monitoring to be undertaken. The site was evaluated in 1999, which concluded that evidence was unlikely but possible however, monitoring of the groundworks throughout 2005 revealed no archaeological evidence. It was deemed that early activity was unlikely due to the waterlogged conditions of the ground.



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Figure 1: Site location

## Introduction

Planning consent for the construction of a new relief road through South Lowestoft (TM 5335 9160), required a programme of archaeological monitoring to be undertaken. The site was evaluated in 1999; a study which involved a walkover survey, analysis of the county Sites and Monuments Record database for this area and a documentary and aerial photograph survey (Newman, J., SCCAS. 99/18, April 1999). Borehole evidence was also examined. This evaluation concluded that archaeological potential in the area was low since Medieval and later times, but potential for earlier evidence was possible. The low lying nature of the proposed road route would have discouraged past settlement activity and current intensive landuse and recent ground disturbance may have damaged any existing archaeology but it was deemed necessary to monitor the site periodically to determine this. The site currently has a variety of landuses such as allotments, rough open ground, dense tree cover and industrial units to the north so preservation of any archaeology was likely to vary depending on this land use.

A Brief and Specification for the archaeological work (Appendix 1) was produced by Jude Plouviez of the Conservation Team, Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service (SCCAS), who requested a series of monitoring visits during the ground works. This was to observe the ground surface and the upcast soil to determine the presence, if any, of archaeological features or finds in the area. The project was commissioned by Breheny's Contractors on behalf of Suffolk County Council Highways Department.

## Methodology

The site was visited throughout 2005 by Clare McLannahan of SCCAS field team. The development entailed stripping the topsoil from the road area using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, excavating a small stretch at a time. This stripped area was at various stages of excavation during the visits and was inspected for cut features and deposits within it. The spoil was initially retained on site and this was examined for artefacts. The SMR reference number LWT 152 was allocated to the site.

## Results

The entire stretch of the road was visited intermittently throughout the development. Visibility varied depending on differing factors such as the weather, position along the road, the level of the water table and the amount of stripped ground that was revealed at that time but for the greater part, it was somewhat limiting.

The depth of the natural subsoil varied throughout from between c.200mm at the north end of the stretch to almost c.2m in places. Where it was this deep, the build up consisted of a combination of strongly smelling rich humic clay very dark brown silt and pale grey fine silt, implying that this area was waterlogged for much of the time. The natural subsoil in these instances was yellow gravel and sand, usually below the water table.

As the area runs along the path of a large drain, it was this and the subsequent high water table that meant the area was often underwater, or too wet to negotiate adequately. Where it was possible to access it, it seemed apparent that it had always been underwater; preserved tree roots and such like lying in fine silt.

Despite these waterlogged conditions ordinarily offering good preservation for archaeological artefacts, nothing of note was seen throughout the whole area. In fact, only post-medieval pottery and a modern bottle dump (seen by the contractors at TM 5363 9198) were recorded during the archaeological monitoring of this route. Greater areas of potential, such as alongside the bridge at Blackheath Road, were inspected in greater detail but again, nothing of note was seen.

Where the natural subsoil level was more shallow, often modern disturbances such as a former house at TM 5338 9154 or industrial intrusions at TM 5409 9240 affected the visibility and potential preservation of archaeological evidence.

## **Conclusion**

No archaeological features or finds were seen during these monitoring visits. It is likely that most of the stretch has been waterlogged for some considerable time and the differing ground conditions resulting from this suggest that the plot was unlikely to have been settled in the past.

Clare McLannahan

Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2005

## **Bibliography**

Newman, J., Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. Report No. 1999/18, April 1999.