

New Visitor Centre, Lakenheath Fen

LKH 244

Application No. F/95/577

TL 718862

Oasis No. suffolkc1-7963

Report No. 2005/63

Summary

An archaeological monitoring of four test pits, at the site for a new visitor centre at Lakenheath Fen, did not locate any archaeological evidence.

Introduction

A single visit was made to the site on 28th April 2005 to monitor the excavation of four test pits in advance of the construction of a new visitor centre. The monitoring was requested by Edward Martin (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team), as a continuation of work which had been carried out to fulfil an earlier planning condition on application F/95/577. The work was funded by the contractor, MLM.

Interest in the site was based upon its general location near the Little Ouse river amidst the fens to the north of Lakenheath village (Fig.1). There is a dense band of known prehistoric and Roman activity along the fen edge to the south, and numerous prehistoric and Roman findspots, generally surface scatters of flint, pottery, coinage and human bone, have been recorded in the surrounding fens. Therefore there was potential for the test pits to disturb multi-period archaeological deposits.

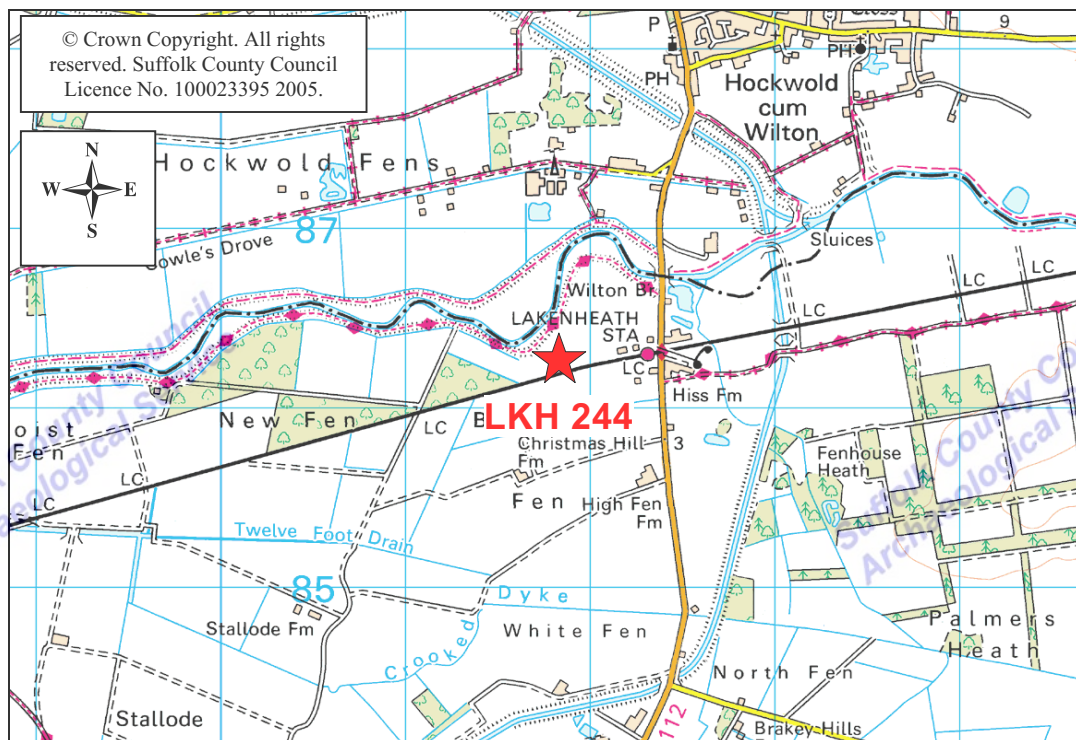


Figure 1. Site location plan

Methodology and Results

The four test pits (Fig. 2) were excavated by a mechanical excavator with a 0.8m wide toothed bucket. They each measured c.3m in length and up to c.2.5m-3m deep.

Test pit 1: 0.3m of topsoil/peat overlying a buried soil horizon of dark grey/black sand/peat. A natural subsoil of pale yellow/grey sands with iron panning lay at a depth of c.0.8m, overlying the natural chalk and water table, both of which were seen at a depth of c.2m. Excavated to a depth of 3m.

Test pits 2 and 3: These two trenches showed a similar soil profile of 0.3m of topsoil/peat overlying a 0.7m-0.8m thick layer of dense peat. A natural subsoil of mid yellow sands was at a depth of 1m-1.1m, with the water table at c.2m. Both were excavated to a depth of c.2m and the underlying chalk was not seen.

Test pit 4: 0.3m of topsoil/peat overlying a buried soil of dark grey sand/peat, 0.5m thick. Beneath this were the natural pale/yellow/grey sands with iron panning. Excavated to a depth of c.2m.

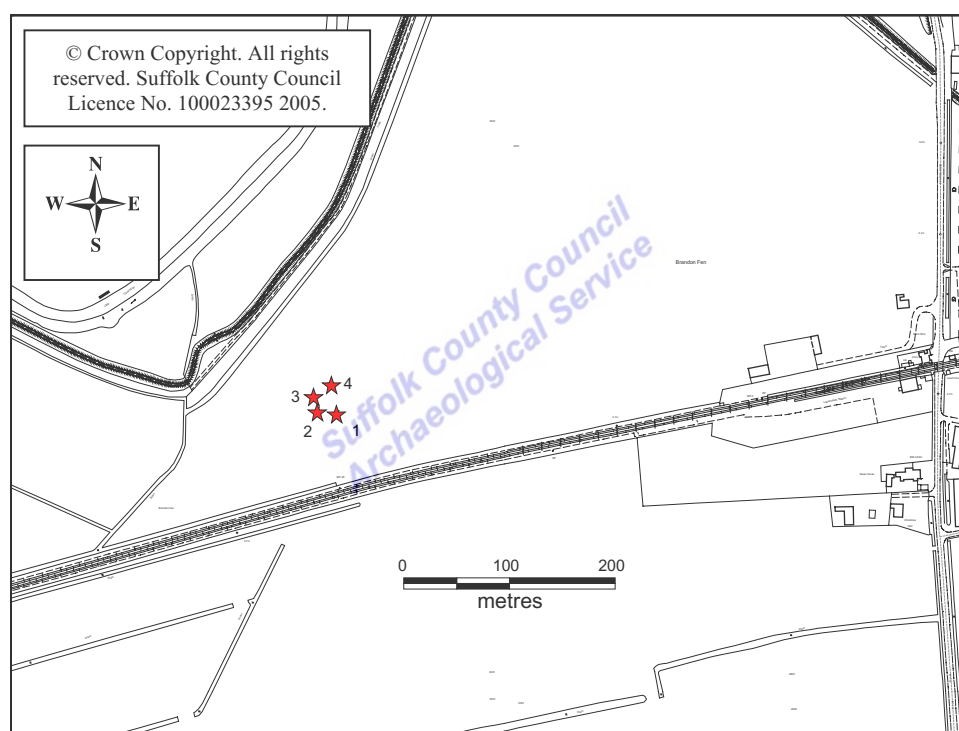


Figure 2. Test pit locations

Discussion

No archaeological evidence, either features or finds, was seen in any of the trenches. Each trench showed the typical topography of the fens, clean and undisturbed sands overlying the chalk, with varying deposits of peat infilling natural hollows in the sand,

The known surrounding sites, often of prehistoric finds scatters, are widely scattered across the fens and, as the size of the trenches was very limited, it is unsurprising that no archaeological evidence was seen on this occasion. The absence of finds in these particular trenches therefore is not a firm indication that there is no potential for archaeological sites within the general area.

John Craven, May 2005