

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2009/174

**Land at Ellough Road, Beccles
BCC 071**

S. Cass

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HER Information

Planning Application No: W/3075/9
Date of Fieldwork: 25th May to 19th June 2009
Grid Reference: TM 4347 8961
Funding Body: Badger Building Ltd.
Curatorial Officer: Jess Tipper
Project Officer: Linzi Everett and Simon Cass
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<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

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Summary

An archaeological monitoring was carried out on land at Ellough Road, Beccles between the 25th May and the 19th June 2009 during the excavation of footings for new residential units in an area of the site previously identified by evaluation as likely to be undisturbed by modern activity. No archaeological activity was noted, although the presence of a significant spread of peat was confirmed across most of the area at a depth of c. 8m AOD (c. 2m below existing ground levels).

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1. Introduction

A planning application was submitted to construct 62 houses with associated gardens and garaging on a former industrial area off Ellough Road, Beccles (Fig. 1). No formal Brief and Specification was produced for this site due to a planning error, and so an archaeological evaluation was commissioned once work was about to commence. For a full report of this previous phase of works, see SCCAS report no. 2008/232. During the evaluation it became obvious that much of the site had been disturbed in more recent years and despite a negative result from the trenching, the evaluation noted the potential for undisturbed stratigraphy in the south eastern corner of the site; recommending that any ground disturbance in this area be subject to archaeological monitoring.



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Figure 1. Site location

The monitored area is centred on TM 4355 8959 (Fig. 2). The site was formerly occupied by a number of warehouses and workshops that had been demolished at the time of the evaluation and the land had been partially landscaped in preparation for the

building works. The new road and drainage systems were in place, but no house construction had started.



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Figure 2. Site detail

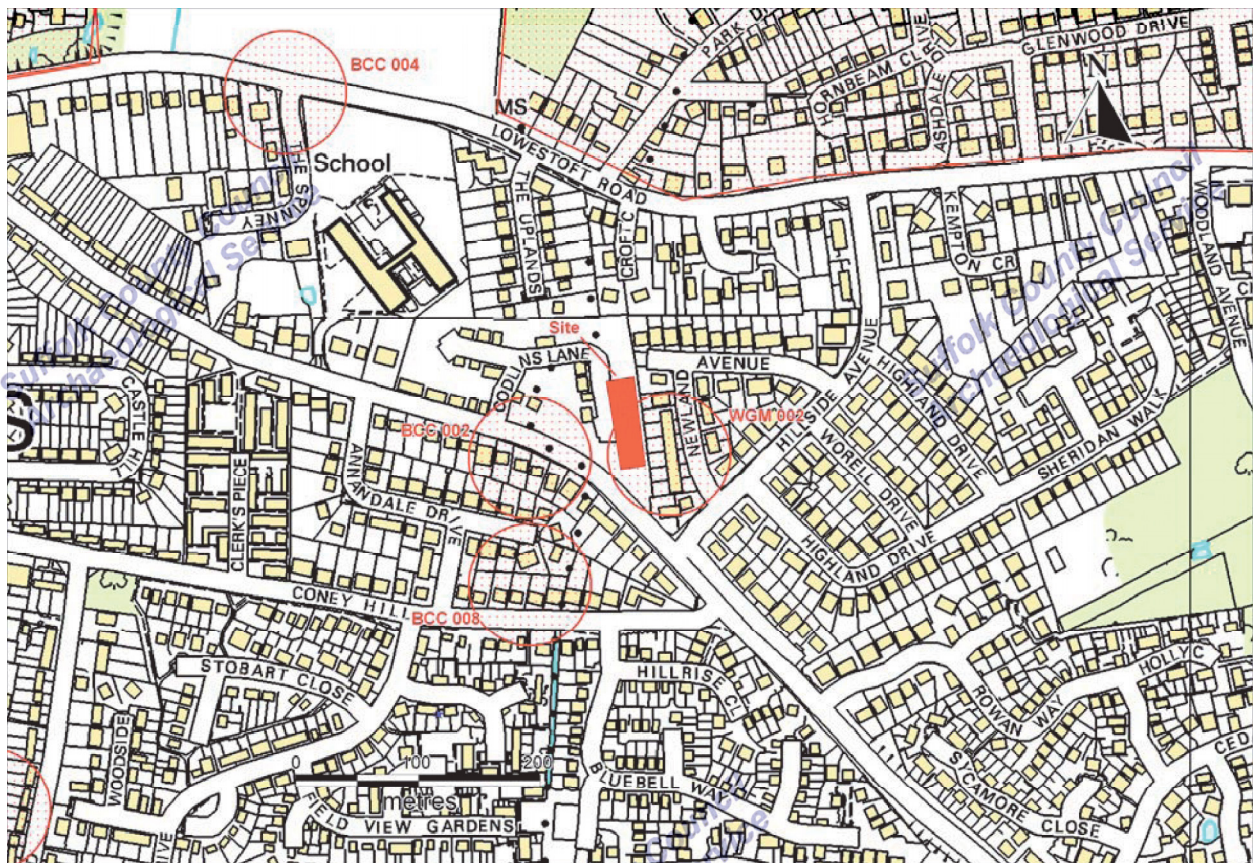
2. Geology and topography

The development covers an area of c. 17 600 m² and lies at approximately 12m OD.

The plot is predominantly flat and has an underlying drift geology of sand and gravel. It is surrounded by houses to the north, east and west, and Ellough Road to the south.

3. Archaeological and historical background

The site lies some 1.2km from the medieval town of Beccles (BCC 018). A number of finds have also been recovered from the vicinity, including a Neolithic flint axe (WGM 002), Roman (BCC 002) and Bronze Age pottery sherds (BCC 008) and a lead medieval papal bull (BCC 004). A post-medieval brick kiln (BCC 020) is also recorded 400m to the north-west of the site on the county Historic Environment Record (HER) (Fig. 3) indicating potential archaeology from any of these periods.



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Figure 3. HER sites

4. Methodology

Footings were observed on a number of days during May and June 2009, at various stages of excavation. They were excavated by a 180-degree mechanical excavator using a medium-sized toothed bucket. Due to the presence of the peat it was necessary for the footings to be enlarged from their originally intended dimensions and depths, down to the base of the peat layer.

5. Results

The stratigraphy observed during this monitoring generally consisted of between 0.3 and 0.4m of topsoil (mostly removed prior to excavation of the footings) above 0.5m of disturbed subsoil (a mixed mid/dark greyish brown and mid orangy brown sandy silt). Below this was a layer of mid orangy brown silty sand with occasional small sub-rounded stones and gravels approximately 0.5m deep sitting above a layer of fine grey/white sand c. 0.4m thick. These two layers appear to be naturally deposited. The

pale sand layer sealed peat deposits up to 1.3m thick, with a further deposit of pale sand below the peat which was the lowest point of the foundations.



Plate 1. Footings, facing north.

No large wooden ecofacts were observed within the peat and sampling was hampered by the depth of the foundations and the instability of the surrounding soils. It was decided in consultation with the Conservation Officer not to sample the peat deposits as little useful information could be collected without core/column sampling which was unavailable.

Further monitoring at the site revealed that this deposit did not extend to the southern limit of the monitored area as the final, most southerly, set of footings did not encounter any peat.

6. Discussion

The presence of substantial peat deposits in this area of the site was surprising, although some peaty deposits were expected on the western part of the site. Looking at

the contours of the area, it appears that there is a depression leading away from the area of the foundations down to the north, leading out to Beccles Marshes, and it is possible that this peat deposit continues in that direction, or has formed here in a natural hollow as water has drained down to the marsh.

The lack of any archaeological deposits or artefacts may be a result of this area being known to be marshy and unsuitable for utilisation in historic or prehistoric periods, though the layers of sterile sand above the peat are of unknown origin, and could represent intentional land reclamation of this area.

7. Conclusions and significance of the fieldwork

Evidence from this site would suggest that in other areas along the shallow depression running north to the marshes there may be little in the way of direct archaeological activity, but that peat deposits are likely to exist at depth. These peat deposits may contain preserved artefacts and ecofacts worth studying, but are likely to need an appropriate sampling strategy to be implemented alongside any on-site monitoring or evaluating schemes.

8. Archive deposition

Paper and photographic archive: SCCAS Ipswich T:\ENV\ARC\PARISH\Beccles

Finds and environmental archive: None

9. List of contributors and acknowledgements

The monitoring was carried out by Linzi Everett and Simon Cass from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

The project was directed by John Newman who also provided advice during the production of the report.

The report was checked by Richenda Goffin.

10. Bibliography

Good, C., 2008 Land at Ellough Road, Beccles, BCC 071, A Report on the Archaeological evaluation and monitoring 2008, SCCAS report no. 2008/232

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Team alone. Ultimately 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 services cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.