

LAND OFF PRENTICE ROAD, STOWMARKET

SKT 039

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Planning Application No: 1380/03

Grid reference: TM 0512 5874

Date of Fieldwork: 18th to 21st July 2005

Funding Body: Wharf Developments

Introduction

A Planning Application (1380/03) was made for a mixed development (ten business units and four flats) on land at Prentice Road, Stowmarket. The site encompasses *c.* 950m² and is centred approximately on NGR TM 0512 5874. It lies on generally level ground at *c.* 27.5m AOD. The site is bounded to the north by the existing buildings of The Maltings; to the east by Prentice Road; to the south by open waste ground; and to the west by the River Gipping.

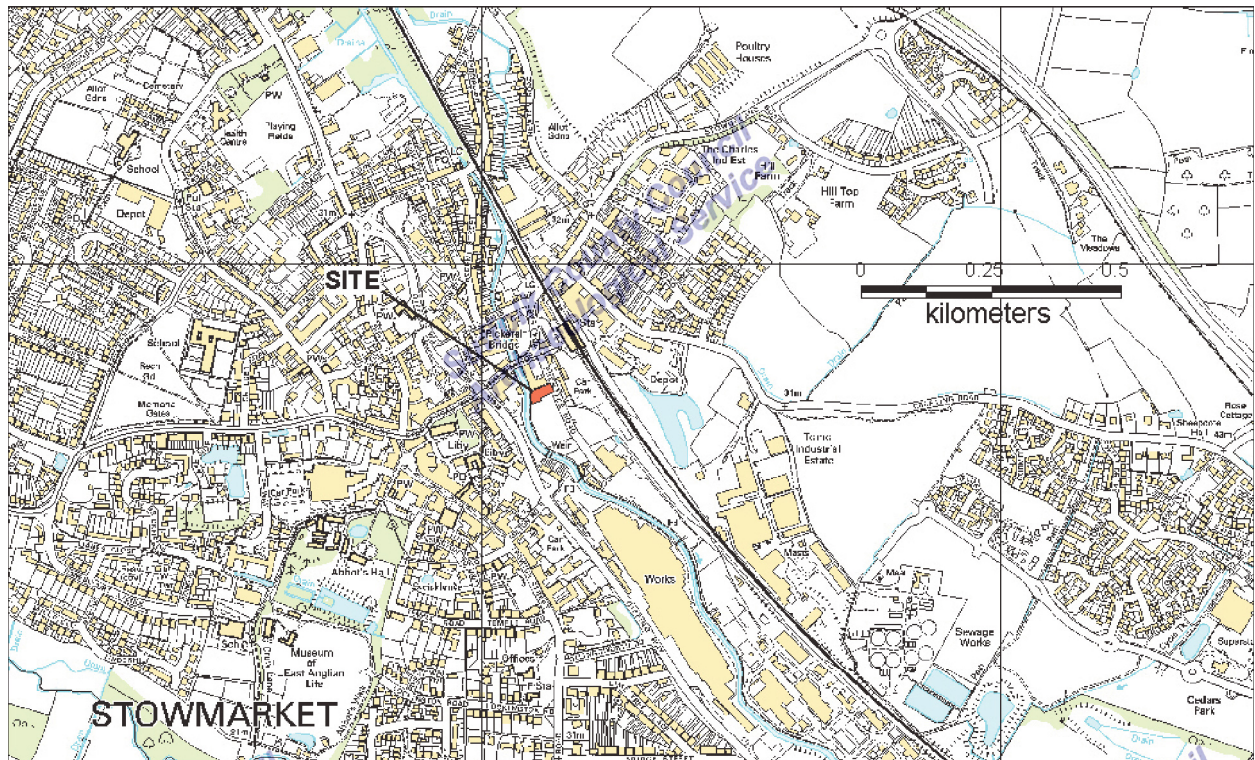


Figure 1. Site location

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The site lies on the eastern bank of the River Gipping immediately opposite the area of the medieval town. The bridge (SKT 023) that carried the present day B1115 lies just 50m to the north and is thought to have existed from at least the middle of the 16th century, as indicated on early cartographic sources. In addition, the site of the medieval Thorney Hall (SKT 012) lies just 80m to the north-east.

Given its proximity to the river the site was thought to have the potential for the preservation of waterlogged deposits (with the resultant possibility of the preservation of organic remains). Although the proposed development was to be piled this, and the fact that the site lies within the area of archaeological interest for Stowmarket, led to a condition requiring Archaeological Monitoring being recommended by Keith Wade of the Suffolk County Council Archaeology

Service Conservation Team. The SCCAS Field Team was subsequently commissioned by the architects Poole and Pattle on behalf of their client, Wharf Developments, who also funded the work.

Methodology

A series of visits were made between the 18th and 21st of July 2005 to observe the open excavations for the pile caps.

The pile caps were excavated using a small 360⁰ tracked mechanical excavator (minidigger) fitted with a 0.5m wide toothed bucket. This necessitated brief hand cleaning of the base of the trench and the faces of the upstanding sections in some areas in order to clarify the nature of the deposits. They were excavated in small groups with concrete poured on the same day, so not all could be examined in detail.

The site was allocated the SMR number SKT 039 and observed archaeological features and deposits were allocated OP (observable phenomena) numbers and recorded on *pro forma* context sheets.



Figure 2. Position of pile caps (solid red indicates those monitored)

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Results

The location of the observed pile caps is shown in Figure 2 above, with those directly monitored highlighted in solid red.

The following common stratigraphy was observed throughout the site:

Context	Depth	Description
0002	0-0.6m (max)	'Scrubland soil' . Soft mid greyish brown slightly sandy silty clay with rare CBM pieces and occasional small to medium sub-angular flint pebbles. Substantial root disturbance in places.
0003	c. 0.2m thick	River gravels . Loose mid yellowish brown medium sand with moderate poorly sorted small rounded to sub-rounded flint pebbles.
0004	c. 0.8m+	Natural drift . Firm slightly brownish grey (bluish - gleyed - in places) with rare poorly sorted large flint cobbles.

No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Perhaps surprisingly, no river or reclamation deposits were encountered. The level of the deposits encountered was very uniform, with no indication of any slope toward the river's edge, as might have been anticipated.

Conclusions

Despite its proximity to the river the site yielded no evidence of waterlogged deposits. This demonstrates that the course of the river had not been affected by any reclamation or infilling along its eastern bank. There was also no indication of any slope down toward the river, suggesting that the site had been levelled at some point in the past (presumably for the construction of the earlier Maltings shown occupying the site on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey Maps).

Report No. **2005/132**

Rhodri Gardner, for SCCAS, August 2005

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