
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

EARLYBIRDS PRE-SCHOOL,
ST BENEDICT'S ROAD,
BECCLES, SUFFOLK

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING & RECORDING

Authors: Lisa Smith BA (Fieldwork and Report) Charlotte Davies MAAIS (Graphics)	
NGR: TM 42275 90976	Report No. 3538
District: Waveney	Site Code: BCC 073
Approved: Claire Halpin MIFA	Project No. P3836
Signed:	Date: April 2010

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Earlybirds Pre-school, St Benedict's Road, Beccles, Suffolk. Archaeological Monitoring & Recording</i>		
Project description (250 words) <i>In April 2010 Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring at Earlybirds Pre-school, St Benedict's Road, Beccles, Suffolk (NGR TM 42275 90976). The archaeological monitoring was required in compliance with planning consent for the construction of a new pre-school and care building (DC/09/0802/CCC).</i> <i>The monitoring uncovered the outline of a World War II brick air raid shelter which is to be preserved beneath the proposed development. No other archaeological features or finds were present at the shallow levels proposed for the development.</i>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>23rd April 2010</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>P3836</i>	Site code	
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Monitoring & Recording</i>		
Site status	<i>Area of Archaeological Importance</i>		
Current land use	<i>School grounds</i>		
Planned development	<i>New pre-school and care building</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>World War II air raid shelter</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Suffolk</i>	<i>Waveney</i>	<i>Beccles</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>-</i>		
Area of site	<i>-</i>		
NGR	<i>TM 42275 90976</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>c. 10 m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>SCC AS-CT</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Lisa Smith</i>		
Funded by	<i>Earlybirds Preschool Group</i>		
Full title	<i>Earlybirds, Preschool, St Benedict's Road, Beccles, Suffolk. Archaeological Monitoring</i>		
Authors	<i>Smith L.</i>		
Report no.	<i>3538</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>April 2010</i>		

EARLYBIRDS PRE-SCHOOL, ST BENEDICT'S ROAD, BECCLES, SUFFOLK

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

SUMMARY

In April 2010 Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring at Earlybirds Pre-school, St Benedict's Road, Beccles, Suffolk (NGR TM 42275 90976). The archaeological monitoring was required in compliance with planning consent for the construction of a new pre-school and care building (DC/09/0802/CCC).

The monitoring uncovered the outline of a World War II brick air raid shelter which is to be preserved beneath the proposed development. No other archaeological features or finds were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In April 2010 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring at Earlybirds Pre-school, St Benedict's Road, Beccles, Suffolk (NGR TM 42275 90976)(Figs. 1 - 2). The archaeological monitoring was required in compliance with planning consent for the construction of a new pre-school and care building (DC/09/0802/CCC).

1.2 The archaeological monitoring was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team (Keith Wade, dated 09/02/2010), and a specification prepared by AS (dated 5/03/2010). It complied with the Institute of Archaeologists' (IfA) *Code of conduct, Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2008), and the *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE (Fig. 1-2)

2.1 The site lies on the northern side of St Benedict's Road off Ravensmere, Beccles. It lies within the historic medieval core area of Beccles, which lay to the east of Beccles Bridge, and is within the area of Archaeological Importance for Beccles as identified on the Waveney Local Plan. The area is noted on the County Historic Environment Record as an Area of Archaeological Interest. Medieval pits have been recorded at Ravensmere.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site is in an area of earthy sulphuric peat soil but close to a soil change to the south comprising calcareous pelosols. The underlying geology is Upper Cretaceous Chalk and the site is located c.10m AOD.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 There is a general paucity in prehistoric finds, several stone tools or worked flints including an Acheulian handaxe from Lotman's Carr (BCC010) have been found, but these are in the main not well provenanced. A socketed bronze spearhead was found in The Avenue (BCC 011). A possible exception is an oval earth work to the east of Beccles which may represent an Iron Age 'hillfort' (BCC 023). Timber piles from a trackway that are thought to link up with it are also suggested as Iron Age (BCC 043).

4.2 There is virtually no evidence for Roman occupation in the immediate area.

4.3 Beccles means 'meadow by the stream' and the town was urban by 1086 when it is first recorded, but in general there is a dearth of medieval finds (BCC 08). Beccles Bridge (BCC 022) is the site of three bridges built at the same spot (TM 4207 9108). Medieval timber piles probably belong to a bridge documented in the 13th century, a masonry bridge with three arches replaced this, and in the early 19th century an iron bridge was built. The Hermitage Inn next to the iron bridge is on the site of a hermitage with a chapel dedicated to St Mary (BCC 009). The Gothic church of St Michael's dates back to 1369 (BCC 013), and St Peter's Chapel near Old Market Place dates to the 12th century (BCC 031). At the Old Bus Depot three late medieval extraction pits were found (BSC Misc).

4.4 Post-medieval flood defences have been identified from aerial photography which may have their origins in the medieval period (BCC 66). Other causeways and water management earthworks are also known around Beccles Marsh and Beccles Common, some are possibly of medieval origin (BCC 057, 060 and 060).

4.5 In the very early post-medieval period a number of sites along the Waveney Valley were production centres for a late medieval transitional pottery industry. Medieval and post-medieval pottery has been dredged from the river at Beccles (NHER 51564), whilst circumstantial evidence suggests the town was the centre for a brick industry. A watching brief carried out at 25 Ravensmere recorded footings of a wall thought to be 16th century which overlay an earlier undated ditch (BCC 024). Two windmills are shown on a 1675 map, one near the bridge and the other at 'Bullock's Mill'. 'Boney's Island' on Beccles Common is the name given to a probable artificial island that local legend claims was where Napoleonic prisoners of war were kept (BCC 023). The 1888 first edition OS map shows the railway station with associated buildings (BCC 040).

4.6 Archaeological monitoring carried out at 17 Ravensmere Road recorded no archaeological features or finds.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The monitoring encompassed the ground reduction of an area of rough grass set within brick paviors in south-western corner of the site. The ground was reduced by approximately 400mm. The excavation of foundation trenches for a boundary wall and drainage were also monitored. The new foundations for the building were to comprise a reinforced concrete floor slab built off the existing tarmac playground surface, so excavations were limited.

5.2 Undifferentiated overburden was mechanically excavated, thereafter all further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as necessary.

6 RESULTS

The Boundary Wall Foundation Trench

A trench was excavated along the western boundary for a proposed new boundary wall. The trench measured approximately 15.50m x 0.60m and varied in depth.

Sample Section 1 South-east facing 0.00m = 10.12m AOD			Fig. 3	DP1
0.00 – 0.36m	L1001	Topsoil. Dark greyish brown sandy silt with occasional rounded pebbles and CBM		
0.36m – 0.75m+	L1002	Made Ground. Light greyish brown sandy silt with moderate CBM fragments and occasional small rounded pebbles.		

Sample Section 2 South-east facing 0.00m = 10.18m AOD			Fig. 3	DP 2
0.00 – 0.44m	L1001	Topsoil. As above.		
0.44 – 0.87m+	L1002	Made Ground. As above		

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

Ground Reduction

The ground was reduced in the south-western corner of the site to the current level of the surrounding tarmac surfaces by approximately 0.40m. The removal of topsoil (L1001) revealed the outline of a brick air raid shelter (M1005; Fig. 3)

Air Raid Shelter M1005 (10.27m x 1.90m – 2.75m x 0.22m+ – 1.10m+) was aligned roughly SW/NE. The shelter was rectangular with a narrow offset wing extending to the south-west and an entrance offset at the north-eastern end (DP 4 & 5). The central core of M1005 was constructed of modern frogged bricks (230mm x 110mm x 70mm) laid in English bond and mortar bonded. The walls were 0.22m wide. The narrow south-western range was a single course of brick wide laid in stretcher bond (DP 6). The shelter was backfilled with L1004, a light brownish grey sandy silt with frequent large CBM and concrete fragments and occasional rounded pebbles.

Drainage Trenches

Two drainage trenches were excavated at the northern end of the site where a toilet block originally stood (Fig 3). The trenches measured 0.60m wide and were excavated to connect the proposed new drainage with an existing drain run. A layer of made ground (L1006) relating to the construction of the original drainage was encountered beneath Tarmac Surface L1000). No archaeological features or finds were present.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features and finds during the archaeological investigation.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 Topsoil L1001 was removed from the south-western corner of the site and along the length of a foundation trench for a boundary wall. L1001 comprised a dark greyish brown sandy silt with occasional rounded pebbles and CBM . It varied between 0.36m and 0.44m in depth.

8.2 The removal of topsoil revealed a layer of made ground (L1002) which consisted of a light greyish brown sandy silt with moderate CBM fragments and occasional small rounded pebbles. It was observed to a depth of 0.87m and was likely associated with the construction of the air raid shelter (M1005). Tarmac Surface L1003 was also revealed in plan only, to the east of M1005.

8.3 The uppermost layer in northern areas of the site consisted of a modern tarmac surface, L1000, which was 0.11m thick and overlay made ground (L1006). L1006 was a dark greyish brown sandy silt with frequent fragments of CBM and concrete, metal and large angular stones (0.58m deep).

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 An air raid shelter (M1005) was encountered during the groundworks. The shelter was identified in outline only, and is to be preserved *in situ* beneath the concrete raft of the proposed new development.

9.2 The air raid shelter is brick built and may originally have had a flat concrete slab roof, now removed. The entrance was from the north via a narrow passage offset to the east and divided from the central core of the building by a brick partition. At the south-western end of the building a narrow range also offset to the east extends in a single brick width and may have been used as a w/c or for ventilation. This wing has now become disengaged from the main structure due to pressure from a concrete raft constructed for an electrical substation to the south.

9.3 The northern area of the site was originally occupied by a toilet block, now demolished. The block has had a considerable impact on below ground deposits. The excavations in this area revealed a layer made ground (L1006) associated with the existence of the original drainage systems. The new services are to make use, where possible, of this existing pipe work. No archaeological features or finds were present.

10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

10.1 The requirements for archive storage will be agreed with the Suffolk HER, and the archive deposited there. A unique event number will be obtained from the County Historic Environment Record Officer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AS is grateful to Tom Miller Haysom Ward Miller Architects for their commissioning of the monitoring and recording and the Earlybirds Preschool Group (in particular Mrs Caroline Gooderham) for funding the project.

Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank Willow Builders for their assistance on site (in particular Mr Malcolm Self).

AS is pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Keith Wade of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team

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Institute for Archaeologists (IFA) 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*. IFA.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1
Sample Section 1, looking north-west



2
Sample Section 2, looking north-west



3
Boundary wall foundation trench, looking south-east



4
Air raid shelter M1005, looking east



5
Air raid shelter M1005, looking north-east

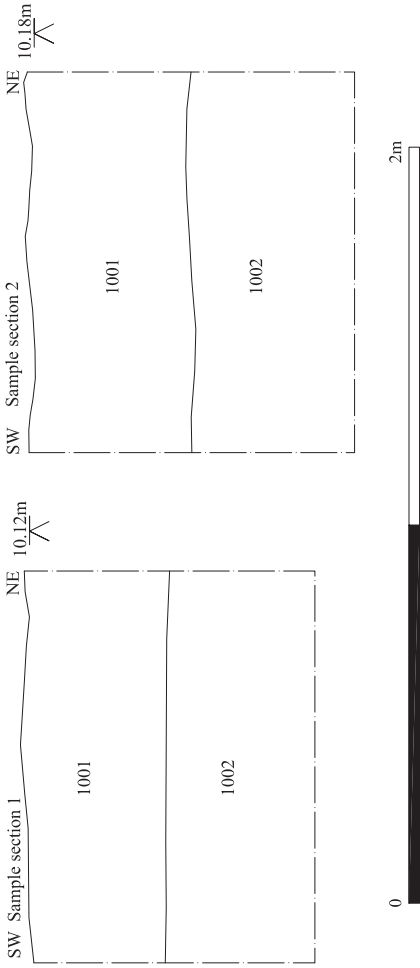
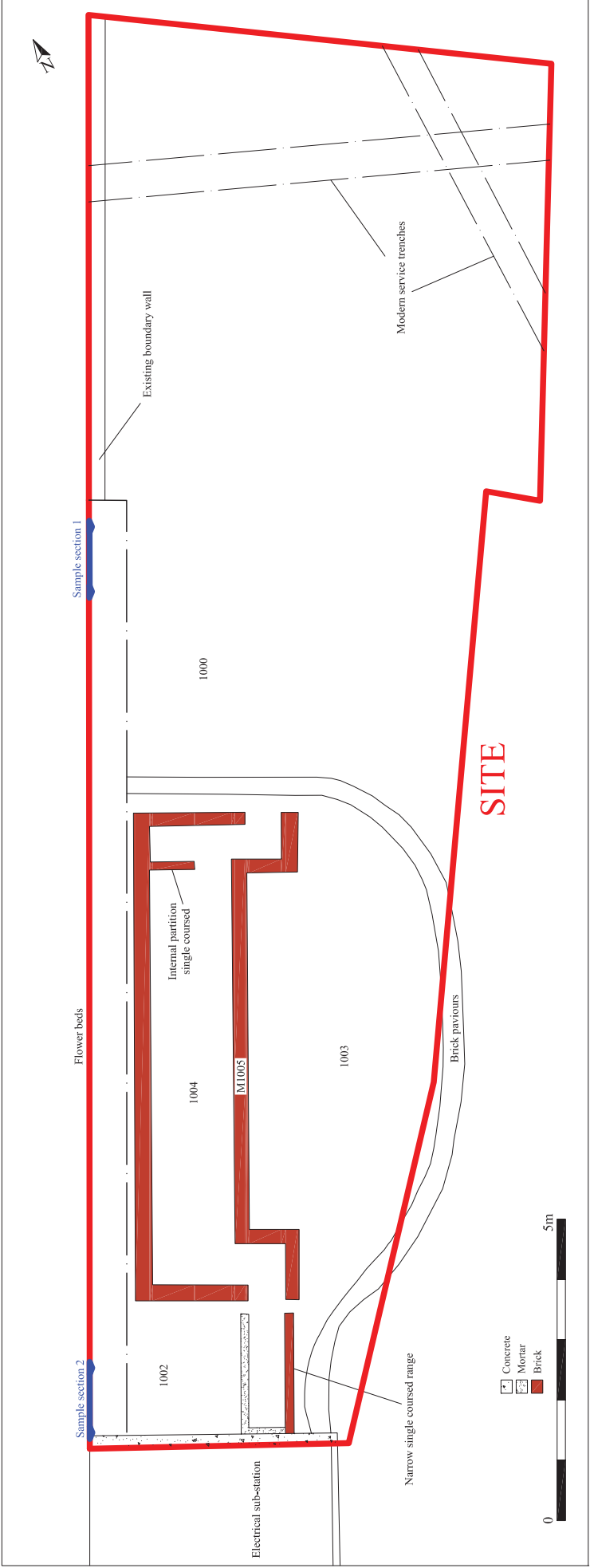


6
South-western range, looking south-east



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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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Fig. 3 Area of watching brief & sections

Scale plan at 1:100 & sections at 1:20 at A4

