

Archaeological Monitoring Report

S.C.C.A.S. Report No.2003/47

Former Garage site, Lower Street, Rattlesden

Introduction

Four visits were made to the site to monitor the groundworks and record potential archaeological levels. The monitoring was a condition on the consent (planning application No.1061/00) to build six dwellings on the site and was carried out by members of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service and followed a specification from Archaeological Officer R.D.Carr (SCC Conservation Team). The visits were made between March and October 2002 and funded by the developer Baker Construction.

The site lies at TL9790 5903 at the heart of the Medieval settlement of Rattlesden. It is situated on the 48m contour at the base of a steep sided valley and alongside the river that bisects the village. The river, where it is crossed by the road and at the western end of the site, is now held in a concrete lined cut. The recognised Medieval buildings and streets follow the river course but are further up the valley sides on or above the 50m contour. It was thought that the site had archaeological potential for river crossings, Medieval and Post Medieval rubbish deposits, and possibly buildings, although dwellings in this low-lying spot were thought unlikely.

The engineering test holes showed that there were dumped deposits of 50 cm or more over the top of the majority of the site. The scope for monitoring was quite limited as the construction proposals were that the house footings will be piled with pile caps and beams, either above ground surface or within the disturbed horizon. Monitoring was therefore largely restricted to the examination of a sewer trench c.1.20m deep that ran through the entire length of the development area.

Results

The trench sections suggested that the ground level over the entire site had been raised extensively with the deposition of building demolition debris and imported soil. This was up to 60cms deep and had been deposited sometime in the 20th century. This overlay the original topsoil, a deep horizon of a 'clean' dark peaty loam and the subsoil was a silty orange clay. There was a deeper disturbance close to the site entrance that had been filled with building rubble. No archaeological levels or features were observed and no finds were recovered from the examination of the trenches or up-cast spoil.

Conclusion

The complete absence of archaeological material suggests that this site was never occupied as Medieval Rattlesden developed. Its position below the surrounding Medieval houses suggests that it may have been too wet or vulnerable to changes in the river and was suitable only as pasture or meadow.

D.Gill

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