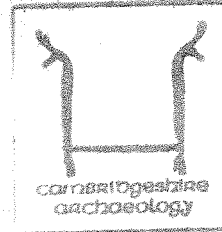
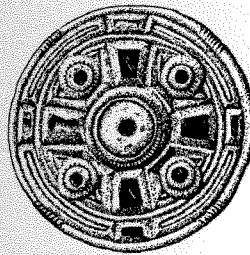


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A142 Fordham Bypass An Archaeological Desktop

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1994

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A40

Commissioned By Department of Transportation, Cambridgeshire County Council

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Proposals for a Fordham bypass between TL 612 717 and TL 634 679 have given rise to the need for an archaeological desktop study as part of an environmental assessment. Study of the proposed route has identified a number of known sites suggesting that an archaeological landscape is bifurcated by the route which will require further evaluation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The applicants, Cambridgeshire County Council Department of Transportation, approached Cambridgeshire Archaeology for a preliminary study of impact of the development proposals on surviving archaeology as part of an environmental statement.

1.2 The proposals are for a rerouting of the A142 past Fordham, on a line to the west of the existing road.

1.3 The new route runs from an existing roundabout at the south of Soham (TL612 717) to a new junction close to Snailwell at TL 634 679, between these points it runs on a line west of the present A142 (*Figure 1*).

1.4 The civil parishes affected are Soham and Fordham.

1.5 This desktop comprises an initial investigation based upon cartographic and documentary searches and a site visit to examine the route for surviving earthworks, to produce recommendations for further works in the area.

2 IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.1 The proposal is for construction of a new road with associated slip roads and access points which can be highly destructive of archaeological remains.

2.2 Construction will involve the removal of large amounts of topsoil and subsoil along the route and affect adjoining areas as a result of the need for embankments, services and construction camps.

2.3 An additional hazard may be the dumping of materials along the route.

3 PLANNING POLICIES AFFECTING ARCHAEOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

3.1 National

Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16)

Para. 6. Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction.

Para. 8. Where nationally important remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.

Para. 13. If physical preservation in situ is not feasible, an archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record' may be an acceptable alternative. From the archaeological point of view this should be seen as a second best option.

Para. 25. requires local planning authorities to request a prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation before deciding upon a planning application on any site where important archaeological remains may exist. This evaluation may lead to requirements for preservation of all, or parts, of the site, or for further archaeological work.

3.2 Cambridgeshire County Council Guidelines

3.2.1 Structure Plan

Policy P14/2 'All County road schemes in rural areas will be planned, designed and executed to minimise undesirable effects on the landscape and will incorporate tree planting, landscaping, and creative conservation measures where appropriate'.

Policy P14/12 'The local planning authorities will exercise their powers of development control to preserve scheduled monuments and other important archaeological sites in the County'.

Policy P14/13 'Where there is no overriding case for the preservation of an archaeological site, opportunities will be sought prior to the granting of planning permission, for excavation and recording of the site'.

3.2.2 Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Section has also produced guidelines for roadschemes specifically:

3.2.2.1 Phase 1 (Route Selection, Pre-Public Consultation/Planning Application)

Desktop assessment of known archaeological sites.

Assessments of aerial photographs.

Site visits to evaluate condition of known sites.

Fieldwalking of the proposed route.

Landscape historical summary.

Liason with the DTP planners and engineers.

Recommendations for route alterations avoiding important sites which require preservation - field evaluation may be necessary.

Requirements for further work, where damage to archaeological remains cannot be avoided, in consultation with County Archaeology Office.

Phase 2 (After Route Selection)

Detailed site evaluation - earthwork survey, fieldwalking, trial trenching, geophysical survey.

Recommendations to engineers on known sites of high potential.

Excavation or preservation of newly identified sites of importance.

Sample excavation of other archaeological sites and features.

Post-excavation analysis, conservation of artefacts and publication of results.

3.2.2.2 Phase 3 (During Construction Work)

Provision for recording brief as necessary during soil stripping operations and construction works.

4 GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 General Character.

4.1.1 The area of the new road is generally flat, lying between the New River and the River Snail; highest points are at either end at 10m (North end) and 20 m (South end).

4.1.2 The land use is arable in most parts of route with pasture close to the A142 at Fordham and some nurseries to the north of the B1102/A142 junction.

4.1.3 Drainage runs into the New River and River Snail which ultimately flow northwards into the fens

4.1.4 There is a slight slope from west to east and an area of factory units and lorry park occupies the northern space between the railway bridge and the present A142.

4.2 Geology (Worssam & Taylor 1969).

The area is underlain by Cretaceous deposits, including both Lower and Middle Chalk.

4.3 Soils (Mackney et al. 1983).

4.3.1 The soils of the area fall into three main groups:

At the northern part of the route soils are dominated by Swaffham Prior Soil Association forms which are generally well-drained and loamy. Further south these are replaced by Reach Soil Association and Wantage 2 Soil Association types. Both are relatively well-drained calcareous soils. At the southernmost end of the proposed route are soils from the Moulton Soil Association which are well-drained calcareous loamy soils.

4.3.2 A finger of fenland is mapped by Hall (Hall et al. 1987 & unpublished maps) crossing the route at its lowest point (see Fig , 1). This fenland is most developed in medieval times but is not mapped geological or soil maps. Peat from it may have been lost to wastage.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 General Archaeological Background.

5.1.1 The development area runs principally along and beside a chalk promontory projecting into the southern fen edge.

5.1.2 The area provides access to both upland and lowland resources and as such is an eco-tone.

5.1.3 Eco-tones were favoured locations for settlement in prehistory.

5.1.4 The Soham, Snailwell, Isleham and Fordham area is rich in Bronze Age settlement remains, similar environments at Mildenhall, Suffolk, are also notable for their frequency of Bronze Age occurrences (Fox 1923; Hall et al. 1987; Leaf 1935; Martin 1988, Martin & Murphy 1988).

5.1.5 Chance finds of Neolithic axes and other flint tools are also common but settlement remains are rare (Taylor 1985).

5.1.6 Iron Age materials are relatively under-represented in the area, but Romano-British settlement is well attested (Taylor 1985).

5.1.7 Changes to the water regime of the fens affected the balance of resource availability in the eco-tone and from late Roman times higher water tables made the upland area more important (See 4.3.2).

5.2 Research background.

5.2.1 The basic background evidence derives from the County SMR and references held in it.

5.2.2 The area is located within the zone of interest of the Soham Metal Detectorists' Club and so isolated find spots are relatively over-represented in the SMR when compared to other areas.

5.2.3 Block Farm and Lark Hall Farm were subject to investigation as part of the Cambridgeshire County Council County Farms Survey (Malim 1990).

5.2.4 The development corridor lies close to the southern fen edge (marked on Fig. 1) and so evidence from English Heritage's Fenland Survey, undertaken by David Hall,

provides useful background to the corridor itself (Hall et al. 1987 and unpublished maps).

5.2.5 Excavation has been undertaken at the Saxon cemetery site south of Soham by Lethbridge (1932).

5.2.6 The route of the existing Soham bypass was fieldwalked and sample excavation undertaken by Mike Young (1980), of the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge.

5.2.7 A lack of SMR entries exists for the lowland zone in the middle of the route, this probably reflects the greater depth of deposits rather than any real gap in activity, although damp low ground may have been avoided.

5.3 Chronological background.

5.3.1 There are no *in situ* Palaeolithic campsites along the development corridor.

5.3.2 Mesolithic occupation is present in the form of Mesolithic blades (SMR No.07444A).

5.3.3 Neolithic evidence is dominated by the presence of a number of spot finds of polished stone axes, these may well represent forest clearance activities. Settlement evidence is currently lacking but is a factor that needs consideration.

5.3.4 Bronze Age evidence comes from spot finds of worked flint and a metal spearhead. Two ring-ditches are known from cropmarks which are probably the ploughed out remains of Bronze Age burial mounds (SMR No.07433 / 09025), one of these yielded worked flint (Taylor 1980).

5.3.5 Iron Age remains are, as yet, unknown within the development corridor, but could be present. An early Iron Age burial is known from Snailwell (Lethbridge 1954) and it is difficult to differentiate between late Iron Age and Romano-British materials and cropmarks.

5.3.6 The Roman period is particularly well-represented in the development area. There are a number of chance finds of metal work derived from the activities of metal detectorists, surface finds of Roman pottery and building materials, and cropmark evidence of enclosures. Villa buildings are known on either side of the development corridor, on the western side at Block Farm (Malim 1990) and to the east lies Biggin Farm, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No 80). The latter cannot be subject to any development work without Scheduled Monument Consent from English Heritage.

5.3.7 Anglo-Saxon evidence for use of the landscape is present in a cemetery, excavated in 1931 (Lethbridge, 1932; Meaney 1964). Additional evidence has been recovered by metal detectorists in the form of isolated finds of brooches and coins.

5.3.8 Place name evidence records a reference to Fordham in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (AD 972) and it is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 (Hart 1966; Reaney 1943). The name means a settlement by a ford. Soham was an important religious centre in Saxon times with a Minster church present following on from a monastery founded by St Felix in AD 650. No fewer than three Saxon cemeteries are known from the parish. Place name evidence refers to Saegham in a will dated c.1000 and Saham in Domesday (1086), the name could refer to location by a slow-moving stream.

5.3.9 In AD 1066, both Soham and Fordham comprised 10 hides and both were in Staploe Hundred (Hart 1974). Land in both parishes was owned by the King and Fordham also had to provide eels to the monastery at Ely under a charter of King Edgar.

5.3.9 Medieval activity is known in the area from extensions of the settlements at Soham and Fordham, and also from the shrunken medieval settlement at Landwade, where a moat survives as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No 249). This latter settlement lies just beyond the development corridor but its presence should be noted as the setting of Scheduled Monuments is a consideration in planning decisions.

5.3.10 Medieval agricultural activities are still visible as earthworks in part of the development corridor where furlong boundaries remain.

5.3.11 Fordham Abbey was founded in the thirteenth century but no building survives from that period ; some infilled fishponds are, however, still visible (Haigh 1988).

5.3.12 Post-medieval and more recent activity is clear in the present settlements, farms, nurseries and transport routes of the development corridor. Notable on the SMR are two windmills (SMR No .07495 / 07521) and the Great Eastern Railway track (opened in 1884) which ran between Cambridge and Mildenhall.

6 METHODOLOGY

This report is the result of three stages of investigation, following the Archaeology Section guidelines noted above. The stages are designed to develop an information base by working from the known archaeological resource to the unknown.

The first stage is investigation of the records held in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The SMR is a computer and map based database providing information, in varying degrees of accuracy, on known sites and findspots in the County. The data used here (*Figure 1* & Section 7) is based upon that presently available and should not be seen as a definitive list, as further remains may be discovered by further fieldwork. In this particular case the evidence has been skewed by the activities of metal detectorists which biases records towards later periods and metal objects. It should also be noted that there is always an element of doubt in the mapping of such finds.

The second stage of investigation is a documentary and cartographic search drawing together historical data and checking references on the SMR.

The third stage of investigation is preliminary walk over of the fields to identify surface scatters and plan sampling of these by further fieldwalking. The subsequent fieldwalking is then targeted to answer specific questions such as the time range of material present, key in surface data with subsurface evidence, and provide landscape monitoring.

7 GAZETTEER

The following SMR entries lie within a c. 0.5Km band along the proposed route, presented here in numerical order.

SMR No.	NGR	Description
01228	TL614/710	Neolithic stone tools
07432	TL624/689	Bonze Age Spearhead
07433	TL629/689	Bronze Age ring-ditch and flints
07433A	TL629/689	Mesolithic blades

07442	TL629/691	Prehistoric flint scatter
07449	TL631/693	Fordham Abbey (C13th origin)
07483	TL635/684	Roman villa (SAM 80)
07495	TL608/717	Post-medieval tower mill
07506	TL6148/7159	Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
07506A	TL6148/7159	Roman Coin (Trajan)
07521	TL611/717	Medieval/post-medieval windmill
07530	TL616/711	Neolithic polished ax
07581	TL613/713	Roman finds scatter
07581A	TL613/713	Medieval metal work
07586	TL608/714	Roman coin scatter
07586A	TL608/714	Anglo-Saxon brooch and coin
07586B	TL608/714	Medieval lead object
07586C	TL608/714	Post-medieval metal objects
07633	TL616/699 TL709/740	Disused railway track
07737	TL6240/6890	Neolithic polished ax
08165	TL615/710	Prehistoric flint scatter
09025	TL6298/6893	Ring-ditch (cropmark)
09026	TL630/687	Enclosures (cropmark)
09065	TL632/677	Recent field boundary (cropmark)
09233	TL614/716	Roman bronze brooch
10142	TL611/713	Roman metal objects
10309	TL627/694	Medieval earthwork (furlong boundaries)
10314	TL628/684	Rectangular enclosures (cropmarks)

8 RESULTS

8.1 Field visit.

8.1.1 A visit to the development corridor was made on 22nd July 1994.

8.1.2 Fields were not walked as standing crops would have been damaged, but notes were made of crops present and when possible, notes were made about exposed field surfaces.

8.1.3 An extensive area of arable land exists at either end of the development route, both are planted with cereal and could be fieldwalked when crops are removed, probably in August/September.

8.1.4 An area of set aside near Soham could be walked but would probably be uninformative.

8.1.5 Areas of nursery and pasture around Fordham are not suitable for fieldwalking.

8.1.6 Soil depths are variable but generally shallow, archaeological features are only likely to survive as cuts into the base chalk, with the possible exception of land around the present B1102.

8.1.7 No extensive tracts of peat exist along the route and no peaty patches were observed along the route.

8.2 Research.

8.2.1 Study of existing records indicates the presence of a series of cropmarks along the chalk ridge, these are a palimpsest of Bronze Age and Romano-British features, dateable by reference to surface scatters.

8.2.2 The presence of a Saxon cemetery in the north of the development corridor is significant. The location of settlement dating to this period is remarkably difficult to predict, this particular cemetery is unlikely to arise from the religious settlement known at Soham and as there are two nearer cemeteries it may be associated with a settlement focus around the proposed route.

8.2.3 Key research issues likely to be informed upon by work along the road corridor are as follows:

8.2.3.1 Identification of settlement features, and their pattern, of Mesolithic and Neolithic date.

8.2.3.2 The nature of the Bronze Age settlement and economy of this area, with particular reference to the presence of the ecotone.

8.2.3.3 The nature of occupation and exploitation of the area, if any, in the Iron Age.

8.2.3.4 The economy and use of the landscape during the Roman period and the nature of transition both from Iron Age to Roman and from Roman to Saxon.

8.2.3.5 The identification of settlement and economy associated with the known cemetery and settlement evidence of Soham parish in Saxon times.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 General Discussion.

9.1.1 This desktop study shows the known surviving archaeology of the road corridor, materials have been found in all sections of the route.

9.1.2 Three key research areas can be identified from the existing record, namely, the nature of the Bronze Age landscape, the history and use of the area in Roman times and the Saxon settlement and economy of the area.

9.1.3 In addition to the key points above, any information on Mesolithic and Neolithic periods would be a substantial addition to the archaeological record of the area.

9.1.4 The lowland part of the route will need more intensive evaluation as deeper deposits may be masking archaeology, buried palaeosols, and waterlogged deposits.

9.1.5 Especial notice should be made of the presence of two Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Although neither is to be directly affected by the development in terms of its

route, movement of vehicles and dumping will also need to be controlled away from these areas. This is also the case should services (such as electricity cables, water pipelines and gas pipes) affected by the development require moving.

10 RECOMMENDATION

10.1 It is recommended that the guidelines for road schemes of the County Council Archaeology Section outlined above (3.2.2) are followed as far as possible.

10.2 Fieldwalking should be undertaken where possible, but only if conditions are appropriate. Fieldwalking under inappropriate conditions is merely misleading. It should also be noted that the area generally has shallow soil and a long history of ploughing, surface scatter information may, therefore, not be useful.

10.3 Once fieldwalking has been undertaken, aerial photographic evidence within the corridor should be plotted at 1:2500 and subject to re-assessment.

10.4 Strategic areas (such as cropmark sites) may then be subject to geophysical survey and plotting of features.

10.5 Evaluation trenching should then be used to investigate the known, and mapped archaeology, whilst either a general test pitting programme, or random sampling by trenching is undertaken in areas where no archaeology has been documented.

10.6 Part of the planned route runs either in, or adjacent to, an existing railway route. The amount of archaeology affected in this part of the development will depend upon how far new areas are to be topsoil stripped and built upon. The requirements for further archaeological assessment should be based on a more detailed plan of the development. In the southern area the railway runs in a cutting, the section of this cutting should be sampled with 5m stretches cleaned and recorded. Naturally, health and safety considerations will be paramount as the occasional train still runs through this route.

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