

Requirements for Archaeological Excavation (updated March 2023)

An outline specification, which defines certain minimum criteria, is set out below. These requirements accompany and should be used in conjunction with the project brief. If in doubt, clarification should be sought from SCCAS.

Fieldwork Requirements

- 1.1. If excavation is mechanised a toothless 'ditching bucket' 1.80m wide minimum must be used.
- 1.2. The topsoil may be mechanically removed (unless otherwise agreed) using an appropriate machine with a backacting arm and fitted with a toothless bucket, down to the interface layer between topsoil and subsoil or other visible archaeological surface. All machine excavation is to be under the direct control and supervision of an archaeologist. The topsoil should be examined for archaeological material.
- 1.3. Topsoil, subsoil and archaeological deposits should be kept separate during removal to allow sequential backfilling of excavations, unless otherwise agreed with the developer.
- 1.4. If the machine stripping is to be undertaken by the main contractor, all machinery must be kept off the stripped areas until they have been fully excavated and recorded, in accordance with this specification.
- 1.5. There is a presumption that excavation of all archaeological deposits will be undertaken by hand (including stratified layers; see below) unless it can be shown there will not be a loss of evidence by using a machine. The decision as to the proper method of excavation will be made by the senior project archaeologist with regard to the nature of the deposit.
- 1.6. Provision should be made for hand excavation of any stratified layers (e.g. dark earth) in 2.50m or 1.00m systematic and gridded squares, to be agreed on the basis of the complexity/extent of such layers with SCCAS. This should be accompanied by an appropriate finds recovery strategy which must include metal detector survey and on-site sieving to recover smaller artefacts/ecofacts.
- 1.7. All features which are, or could be interpreted as, structural must be fully excavated. Post-holes and pits must be examined in section and then fully excavated. Fabricated surfaces within the excavation area (e.g. yards and floors) must be fully exposed and

cleaned. Any variation from this process can only be made by agreement with SCCAS, and must be confirmed in writing.

- 1.8. All other features must be sufficiently examined to establish, where possible, their date and function. For guidance:
 - 1.8.a. A minimum of 50% of the fills of the general features is to be excavated. In some instances 100% may be requested, depending on the nature of the feature/deposit.
 - 1.8.b. 10% of the fills of substantial linear features (ditches, etc) are to be excavated (min.). The samples must be representative of the available length of the feature and must take into account any variations in the shape or fill of the feature and any concentrations of artefacts. For linear features, 1.00m wide slots (min.) should be excavated across their width.
 - 1.8.c. Slots should be placed to best allow understanding of the relationships between features and deposits (including appropriate relationship sections).
 - 1.8.d. For discrete features, such as pits, 50% of their fills should be sampled (in some instances 100% may be requested).
 - 1.8.e. Large or deep features may be excavated in quadrants in the first instance, or in other such grid or systematic excavation as may be appropriate to research questions.
 - 1.8.f. All features should be investigated and recorded unless agreed with SCCAS, features which may be geological should also be sampled until confidence can be established.

Any variation from this process can only be made by agreement [if necessary on site] with a member of SCCAS, and must be confirmed in writing.

- 1.9. Any natural subsoil surface revealed should be hand cleaned and examined for archaeological deposits and artefacts. Sample excavation of any archaeological features revealed may be necessary in order to gauge their date and character.
- 1.10. Provision should be made to fully investigate the depth of sequences and depth of features. This may involve the use of stepping, or shoring. Appropriate provision should also be made for extracting water from sites and features. The use of a hand held auger (or a power auger where appropriate) is recommended to gain information from very deep deposits/features and should be available in the staff tool kit. Machine assistance may be used for very large/deep features, in discussion with SCCAS.

- 1.11. Metal detector searches must take place at all stages of the excavation, including the scanning of excavation areas before they are stripped, by an experienced metal detector user.
- 1.12. All finds will be collected and processed, unless variations in this principle are agreed SCCAS during the course of the excavation. The finds recovery policy should be addressed in the WSI. Sieving of occupation levels and building fills will be expected. All ceramic finds should be processed concurrently with the excavation to allow immediate assessment and input into decision making.
- 1.13. The WSI must provide details of a comprehensive sampling strategy for flotation, assessment and analysis of biological remains by an appropriate environmental specialist (for palaeoenvironmental and palaeoeconomic investigations and also for absolute dating), and samples of sediments and/or soils (for micromorphological and other pedological/sedimentological analyses. All samples should be retained until their potential has been assessed and until a retention strategy has been agreed. Where necessary, advice on the appropriateness of the proposed strategies should be sought from the Historic England Regional Advisor for Archaeological Science (East of England). Samples (including of burnt flint) retained for lipid analysis should be bagged but not washed.
- 1.14. Human remains are to be treated at all stages with care and respect and are to be dealt with in accordance with the law. They must be recorded in situ and subsequently lifted, packed and marked to standards compatible with those described in current guidance from CIFA and Historic England, Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England, and the British Association of Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology. Proposals for the final disposition of remains following study and analysis will be required in the WSI.
- 1.15. Sites where furnished burials are known to be present, or are anticipated, should refer to and comply with 'Excavating Furnished Inhumations- A Guidance Note on Recovering Mineral Preserved Organic Remains 2023.' Where these remains are revealed during the course of mitigation work, SCCAS should be consulted with regards to the most appropriate mitigation approach and amendments to the existing WSI may be necessary.
- 1.16. Excavation record keeping is to be consistent with the requirements the Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER) and compatible with its archive. Methods must be specified in the WSI and agreed with SCCAS.

- 1.17. Plans of any archaeological features on the site are to be drawn at 1:20 or 1:50, depending on the complexity of the data to be recorded. Sections should be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 again depending on the complexity to be recorded. All levels should relate to Ordnance Datum. Any variations from this must be agreed with SCCAS.
- 1.18. A photographic record of the work is to be made, consisting of high-resolution digital images (the image format and resolution should be specified in the WSI), and documented in a photographic archive.

General Management Requirements

- 2.1. The project manager must consult the Suffolk HER Officer to obtain a parish code for the work before commencement. These numbers will be unique for each project or site and must be clearly marked on all documentation relating to the work.
- 2.2. A timetable for fieldwork and assessment stages of the project must be presented in the WSI and agreed with SCCAS before the fieldwork commences.
- 2.3. A detailed risk assessment and management strategy must be presented for this project in the WSI.
- 2.4. The WSI must state the security measures to protect the site from vandalism and theft, and to secure deep any holes.
- 2.5. The composition of the project staff must be detailed and agreed (this is to include any subcontractors). For the site director and other staff likely to have a major responsibility for the fieldwork and post-excavation processing of this excavation there must also be a statement of their responsibilities or a CV for post-excavation work on other archaeological sites and publication record. Ceramic specialists, in particular, must have relevant experience from this region, including knowledge of local ceramic sequences.
- 2.6. Provision should be included in the WSI for public benefit in the form of outreach activities, for example (and where appropriate), open days/guided tours for the general public, local schools, local councillors, local archaeological and historical societies and for local public lectures and/or activities within local schools. Provision should be included for local press releases (newspapers/radio/TV). Where appropriate, information boards should be also provided during the fieldwork stage of investigation. The archaeological contractor should ascertain whether their client will seek to impose restrictions on public access to the site and for what reasons and these should be detailed in the WSI.
- 2.7. Every effort must be made to get the agreement of the landowner to the deposition of the full site archive, and transfer of title, with SCCAS or designated Suffolk museum. The

intended depository should be stated in the WSI, for approval. If this is not achievable for all or parts of the finds archive then provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, illustration, scientific analysis) as appropriate.

- 2.8. Monitoring of the archaeological work will be undertaken by SCCAS. A decision on the level of monitoring required for the fieldwork will be made by SCCAS, in consultation with the project manager and once the fieldwork has commenced. Any unexpected discoveries, or on-site complications, should be communicated to, and discussed with, SCCAS.
- 2.9. The WSI should be approved before costs are agreed with the commissioning client, in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' guidance. Failure to do so could result in additional and unanticipated costs. It is the archaeological contractor's responsibility to ensure that adequate resources are available to fulfil the Brief.
- 2.10. Suitable arrangements should be made with the client, and stated in the WSI, to ensure the site is appropriately closed after the completion of the excavation (and provision for infilling of dangerous holes during fieldwork) to comply with health and safety regulations. The site, and any deep and dangerous holes, should be only backfilled with the prior approval of SCCAS.
- 2.11. Following satisfactory completion of the fieldwork, SCCAS will advise the LPA that the fieldwork has been completed and that no further on-site work is required. Full construction work must not begin until archaeological excavation has been completed and formally confirmed in writing by the LPA.

Post-Excavation Assessment and Archival Requirements

- 3.1. Within four weeks of the end of fieldwork a written timetable for post-excavation assessment, updated project design and/or reporting must be produced, which must be approved by SCCAS. Following this, a written statement of progress on post-excavation work – whether assessment, analysis, report writing and publication or archiving – will be required at six monthly intervals.
- 3.2. A post-excavation assessment report (PXA) on the fieldwork should be prepared in accordance with the principles of Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (Historic England 2015). The PXA will act as a critically assessed audit of the archaeological evidence from the site; see ALGAO Advice Note for Post-Excavation Assessment (2015).
- 3.3. The Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group/Study Group for Roman Pottery/Medieval Pottery Research Group 'A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology' (2016) should

be adhered to, and ceramics should be assessed with regard to the Suffolk fabric series for post-Roman pottery

- 3.4. In certain instances, a full PXA might be unnecessary. The need for a full PXA or otherwise should be discussed and formally agreed with SCCAS within four weeks of the end of fieldwork.
- 3.5. The PXA must present a clear and concise assessment of the archaeological value and significance of the results, and identifies the research potential, in the context of the Regional Research Framework which is available online at <https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/> (see also East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers 3, 8 and 24, 1997, 2000 and 2011). It must present an Updated Project Design, with a timetable, for analysis, dissemination, and archive deposition. The PXA will provide the basis for measurable standards for SCCAS to monitor this work.
- 3.6. An archive of all records and finds is to be prepared, consistent with the principles of MoRPHE. It must be adequate to perform the function of a final archive for deposition in the Archaeological Store of SCCAS or in a suitable museum in Suffolk (see Archaeological Archives Forum: a guide to best practice 2007).
- 3.7. Finds must be appropriately conserved and stored in accordance with guidelines from The Institute of Conservation (ICON).
- 3.8. The project manager should consult the intended archive depository before the archive is prepared regarding the specific requirements for the archive deposition and curation, and regarding any specific cost implications of deposition. The intended depository must be prepared to accept the entire archive resulting from the project (both finds and written archive) in order to create a complete record of the project. A clear statement of the form, intended content, and standards of the archive is to be submitted for approval as an essential requirement of the WSI.
- 3.9. The PXA should offer a statement of significance for retention, based on specialist advice, and - where it is justified – the UPD should propose a discard strategy. This should be agreed with the intended archive depository.
- 3.10. For deposition in the SCCAS's Archaeological Store, the archive should comply with SCCAS Archive Guidelines. If this is not the intended depository, the project manager should ensure that a duplicate copy of the written archive is deposited with the Suffolk HER.
- 3.11. Archive deposition charges will be charged at the Post Excavation Assessment (PXA) stage of work, prior to the planning conditions for the site being signed off. If a site does

not require a PXA, then SCCAS expects the charge to be paid at the final excavation reporting stage.

- 3.12. The UPD (or excavation report if a UPD is not required) should state proposals for the deposition of the digital archive relating to this project with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), or similar digital archive repository, and allowance should be made for costs incurred to ensure proper deposition (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/policy.html>).
- 3.13. An unbound hardcopy of the PXA and UPD, clearly marked DRAFT, must be presented to SCCAS for approval within six months of the completion of fieldwork unless other arrangements are negotiated. The report should clearly state the author(s) and archaeological contracting unit who produced the document. Following acceptance, a digital copy of the approved final report should be submitted to the Suffolk HER. Provision should also be made for a hard copy report to be submitted, however, the need for this should be discussed and agreed with SCCAS who will advise on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.14. Digital vector plans of mitigation areas, recorded archaeological features and excavated sections, should be provided as georeferenced (EPSG: 27700) ESRI shape or QGIS GPK files. These files should have the relevant attributes attached to them including; HER Parish Code, Primary Reference Number eg (Section Number; Context Number; Sample Number; Small Find number; etc); Group or Feature Number; Archaeological Periods and Phases. These GIS files should be provided to the Suffolk HER following approval of the final report.
- 3.15. On approval of an adequate PXA and UPD, SCCAS will advise the LPA that the scheme of investigation for post-excavation analysis, dissemination and archive deposition has been agreed, and that can be discharged.
- 3.16. Where appropriate, a copy of the approved PXA should be sent to the local archaeological museum, whether or not it is the intended archive depository. A list of local museums can be obtained from SCCAS.
- 3.17. SCCAS supports the OASIS project, to provide an online index to archaeological reports. At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> must be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms. When the project is completed, all parts of the OASIS online form must be completed and a copy must be included in the final report and also with the site archive. A .pdf version of the entire report should be uploaded to the OASIS website.

3.18. Where positive results are drawn from a project, a summary report must be prepared, in the established format, suitable for inclusion in the annual 'Archaeology in Suffolk' section of the Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History. It should be included in the project report, or submitted to SCCAS, by the end of the calendar year in which the work takes place, whichever is the sooner.