

Critical Review of a project design for an archaeological field evaluation and excavation at Pocock's Field, Kings Drive, Eastbourne

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This essay seeks to critically assess whether the project design, written by Archaeology South-East (ASE) for an archaeological field evaluation and excavation at Pocock's Field, Kings Drive, Eastbourne, met the standards set out by the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE). Furthermore, this essay will assess whether the project delivered an appropriate research design, based on contextual historic environment information, suggested an appropriate methodology for site investigation, delivered effective project management and communication both within and beyond the project team as well as whether it resulted in a suitable outcome regarding publication and archiving. In order to achieve this the essay will set out the requirements of a MoRPHE compliant project design, discuss how engagement with the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) archaeology team raised issues with the written scheme of investigation (WSI) especially its need for it to meet MoRPHE standards, how the ESCC historic environment record (HER) was updated, publication requirements met, and finally whether aims of community engagement were met during the project.

1.2 The project carried out at Pocock's Field was undertaken as part of the planning process under Eastbourne planning reference EB/2010/0003.¹ Archaeology South-East, the commercial unit for the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London

¹ Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC), 'Application Summary – 090835', <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/planning/application-summary/?RefType=APPPlanCase&KeyText=090835> [Accessed 13/03/2022].

(UCL), were commissioned by the developer Bovis Homes to undertake the required programme of archaeological work.² This work was to comprise of a series of evaluation sampling techniques followed by a comprehensive scheme of excavation which was to include an outreach programme and engagement with the local community.³ This programme built on prior archaeological work that had been carried out in the years preceding the granting of the planning application; a desk based assessment undertaken by CgMs in 2007, a geophysical survey undertaken by ASE in the same year, and a prior evaluation of the site undertaken by Wessex Archaeology in 2008. Further phases of work were also undertaken by a local archaeological society - the Eastbourne Natural History & Archaeology Society (ENHAS).⁴

1.3 The work described in ASE's project design was undertaken in order to meet a condition ascribed to the planning application by Eastbourne Borough Council that:

"No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.

REASON: The development is likely to disturb items of archaeological Interest"⁵

2.0 MoRPHE Project Design requirements

2.1 The Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) was published by Historic England, then English Heritage, in 2006. It has subsequently undergone re-publication in 2015⁶. MoRPHE developed out of earlier work specifically the Management of Archaeological Projects 2nd Edition otherwise known as MAP2. This guidance was developed by English Heritage in 1991.⁷ The aim of the guidance was to answer concerns set out in the Frere report particularly around how best to publish the vast amount of archaeological data that was being created through the planning process.⁸

² Palmer, D et al (2013), *'Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation And Excavation At Pocock's Field, Kings Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex'*, Archaeology South East 5647, 1.1.

³ Palmer et al, *'Pocock's Field'*, 1.1 – 1.3.

⁴ Palmer et al, *'Pocock's Field'*, 1.2.

⁵ *Ibid*, 1.2

⁶ Edmund Lee, *Management Of Research Projects In The Historic Environment*, London: Historic England (2015)

⁷ Gill Andrews, *Management Of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd Edn. (London: Historic Buildings And Monuments Commission For England, 1991).

⁸ Andrews, *Management Of Archaeological Projects*, p. 1.

2.2 Within the MoRPHE procedural model it is at the initiation stage when an effective, viable Project Design (PD) should be established.⁹ This should describe the aims and objectives as well as the business case of the project, it should identify stakeholders as well as proposed project execution stages and what outputs were to be completed in each one.¹⁰

2.3 Other documents contained within the PD should include a risk log that contains; uncertainties, potential problems and opportunities.¹¹ The appropriate team structure should be proposed with those staff being consulted as to their availability. As well as the risk log and proposed team structure, plans should be made for how communication will be managed between both staff and stakeholders, and project review points.¹²

2.4 According to MoRPHE the PD should be a 'comprehensive, free-standing document assuming no prior knowledge of the project or its circumstances on the part of the reader's part.'¹³ This means that the PD needs to be clear and concise, with the project background clearly explained so that whatever the audience the nature of the project will be fully understood.

3.0 Engagement with East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Archaeology Team

3.1 The planning for the evaluation and excavation at Pocock's field began in 2013 with the production of a written scheme of investigation (WSI) that was submitted to the ESCC archaeology team in April of that year.¹⁴ The first draft of the WSI was reviewed by the then county archaeology, Casper Johnson, who made several comments to the archaeological unit Archaeology South East (ASE).

3.2 The first of these comments asked that the unit produce a new WSI utilising more of the MoRPHE structure especially regarding how they defined the project and research objectives, project outcomes, the methodology to achieve these outcomes and how this will be demonstrated as having been achieved at the closure of the project. These comments can be seen in full in Appendix 1.¹⁵

⁹ Lee, *MoRPHE*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Lee, *MoRPHE*, p. 8.

¹¹ Lee, *MoRPHE*, p.8.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 8.

¹³ Lee, *MoRPHE*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Palmer *et al*, '*Pocock's Field*.'

¹⁵ Johnson, C (2013) *Pers Comm (Written)*.

- 3.3 Further comments from the county archaeologist, in his role as curator, focused on ensuring that the project design is clear, concise and details the full methodology of the project in line with MoRPHE. For example, under 'Evaluation – General Requirements' the county archaeologist lays out the preferred methodology for the proposed evaluation fieldwork including requirements for a detailed topographical survey, which should be carried out before the test pits, how the test pits should be excavated including asking for further detail under paragraph 5.2 of the WSI.¹⁶
- 3.4 The updated project design, produced by ASE in May 2013 took the comments of the county archaeologist into account adding in further detail to their WSI and ensuring that the document met the requirements set out in MoRPHE. By updating the project design using the curatorial comments provided by the county archaeologist in his role as advisor to the local planning authority (LPA), ASE, has considered the views of one of the key stakeholders within the project and used these views to further develop the methodology. This ensures that the work is planned in line with MoRPHE requirements, which means that archaeologists on site conducting the work will have an up to date and accurate framework to which they can refer if problems arise on site.
- 3.5 As well as comments from the county council curator, ASE also received comments via the county archaeologist, from English Heritage's (now Historic England) scientific advisor Jane Corcoran (see appendix 1). In her comments Jane raised, in paragraph 2.10.8, that despite a large amount of previous work there was little information included regarding the geotechnical aspects of the site.¹⁷ The input from an expert advisor is important to the design of a project. Impartial advice can help direct a project towards achieving its aims without being tied to the financial or political aspects of the company.

4.0 Aims of public engagement

- 4.1 As part of the proposed work, it was agreed between CgMS Consulting (The consultant) and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) that the work would feature an outreach and community engagement programme.¹⁸
- 4.2 Section 11 of the PD/WSI lays out details of how the community engagement element would be undertaken including engagement between ASE, Eastbourne Borough Council Heritage Services (EBCHS),

¹⁶ Johnson, C (2013) *Pers Comm (Written)*.

¹⁷ Corcoran, J (2013) *Pers Comm (Written)*.

¹⁸ Palmer *et al*, 'Pocock's Field.', 1.3.

Eastbourne Natural History and Archaeology Society (ENHAS), and the general public.¹⁹

4.3 The public outreach section of the project design clearly lays out the varied opportunities which were planned to allow the public to engage with the archaeological process such as Volunteer Engagement with Fieldwork (11.2), Visitor Centre and project website (11.3), Open Days (11.4), Schools Programme (11.5), and Other Outreach (11.6).²⁰

4.4 One key outcome of MoRPHE is that the plan for result dissemination should include, wherever possible, opportunities for the outreach and engagement by the local community.²¹ As part of the dissemination plan the results should:

Demonstrate the importance of the project's results. They should present information in a balanced, logical, accessible and structured way. Where possible, attention should be drawn to the potential for future study within the parameters of the project.²²

4.5 The project at Pocock's field proved to be incredibly successful not only in the recording of a complex archaeological site spanning numerous periods, but also in regard to the collaboration between the archaeologists and the public. The public outreach element was such a success that ASE used the project as a case study in assessing key aspects of Public Archaeology.²³ This demonstrates how a clear and effective project design allows and supports the successful implementation of an outreach element to the work.

4.6 Furthermore, as well as the dissemination of results by the contracting unit other stakeholders including ENHAS were able to spread the results of the work amongst their members and the general public, as well as being kept informed of the post-excavation work as it progressed. For example, ENHAS received two talks from lead archaeologist Giles Dawkes, one halfway through the excavation in 2014 and a second talk given during the post excavation process in 2016.²⁴ By giving two talks to one of the key stakeholders with an interest in the excavation, given that ENHAS had

¹⁹ Palmer *et al*, 'Pocock's Field.' 11.1.

²⁰ Palmer *et al*, 'Pocock's Field.' 11.1.

²¹ Lee, *MoRPHE*, p. 22.

²² Lee, *MoRPHE*, p. 22.

²³ Key Concepts In Public Archaeology, ed. Gabriel Moshenska (2022)

<https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/Book/Article/22/47/1854/> [accessed 21 April 2022].

²⁴ John Warren, *Pococks Field Excavation 2014 – some early thoughts on this exciting archaeological site* (2014) https://www.eastbournearchaeology.org.uk/?page_id=236 [accessed 21 April 2022] & John Warren, *Pococks Field Revisited – Report for June Meeting 2016 Pococks Field – A marsh-side settlement – Giles Dawkes* (2016) https://www.eastbournearchaeology.org.uk/?page_id=360 [accessed 21 April 2022].

carried out previous investigative work on site, ASE adhered to the outreach elements of the project design they had produced as well as enhancing the understanding of the sites' archaeology amongst the local community.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The aim of this essay was to review the project design produced ahead of a programme of archaeological work at Pocock's Field, Eastbourne as part of the planning process. The project design was produced by the contractor, Archaeology South East, in line with the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) a guide produced by Historic England, designed to assist in the planning of an effective project.²⁵

5.2 This essay has demonstrated that through communication between the archaeological contractor and the county council archaeology team acting as advisors to the local planning authority, ASE have produced an effective, MoRPHE compliant project design. The project design, building on the guidance set out in MoRPHE allowed the archaeological unit to carry out a comprehensive programme of archaeological excavation at Pocock's Field resulting in numerous grey literature reports and a forthcoming publication.

5.3 Finally, one of the most successful elements of the Pocock's project was its community outreach element, which engaged multiple stakeholders across the entire lifecycle of the project. The aims and methodology of this programme of engagement was clearly and effectively laid out in the project design and follow through during the fieldwork and beyond. By successfully engaging with the public and interested local societies, the project effectively met a number of objectives, of both MoRPHE and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA); to create knowledge and seek involvement and creating public benefit, one of CifA's key objectives in relation to the creation of new understanding and engagement with local communities for their benefit.²⁶

²⁵ Lee, *MoRPHE* – Summary.

²⁶ Lee, *MoRPHE*, p.5; Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA), *What Public Benefit Does Archaeology Deliver?* (n.d.)

<https://www.archaeologists.net/profession/publicbenefit/deliver#:~:text=Knowledge%20gain%20%2D%20research%20which%20advances,and%20identity%20can%20be%20enhanced> [accessed 21 April 2022].

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