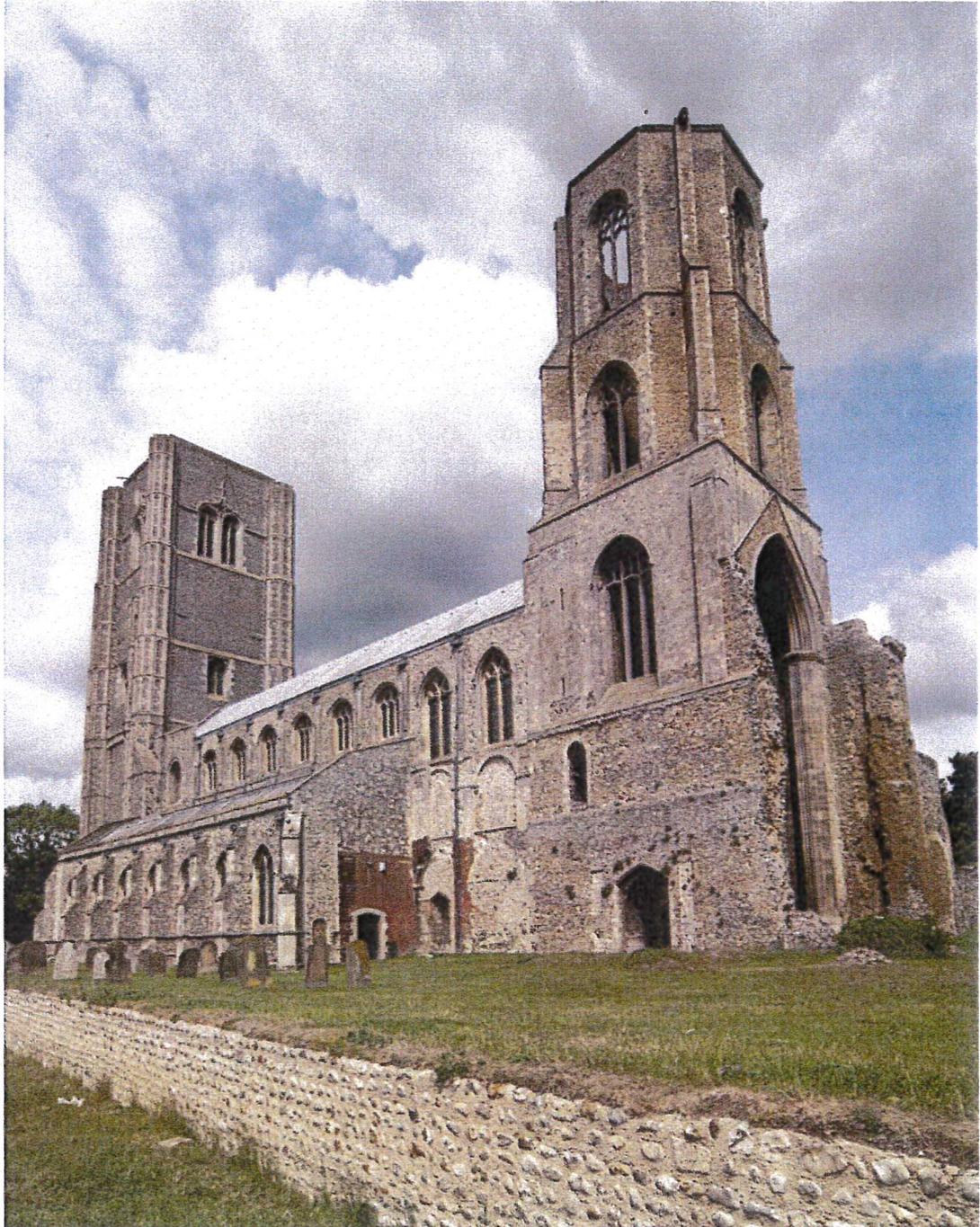


Wymondham Abbey

The Abbey Experience

Archaeological Assessment and Mitigation Strategy



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Cover photo: Wyndham Abbey from the south-east.

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Summary

This Archaeological Assessment and Mitigation Strategy addresses the historic buildings and below-ground archaeological aspects of the proposed development at Wymondham Abbey. In doing so it summarizes the scope of the proposed works (section 1.1); the impact on the standing buildings and below-ground archaeology, and the mitigation strategy in relation to this (section 6); the planning background relevant to the historic buildings and monuments, and to the buried archaeology (section 2); the historic buildings background (section 3); the archaeological background (section 4); and the 2002 archaeological evaluation (section 5). The structural history presented here draws in part on secondary sources, but, given that these parts of the abbey church have seen little study hitherto, it largely represents original research based on analysis of the fabric.

1 Introduction

1.1 Summary of proposed development

The proposed new facilities development is in response to a need, identified by the PCC, to remove the sacristy and vestries from the south aisle, and to build new spaces for them and for lavatories, tea preparation, storage, education and interpretation.

Freeland Rees Roberts Architects were selected through a competition in 1997, and have designed new facilities that meet the PCC's needs by proposing:

- an extension of the south aisle (approximately re-establishing the medieval volume, the south aisle having been shortened after the Dissolution), to form a single-storey block providing a combined sacristy, clergy vestry and archive reading room, a store, lavatories, a kitchen servery, an area for displays and interpretation, and a flexible room for educational use, interpretation, displays and meetings.
- a single-storey extension north of the east tower and east of the north aisle, approximately recreating the volume of the medieval chapel of St Margaret, which occupied this space. The new room will be used for education, interpretation and the choir vestry.
- a link between the two new buildings across the bottom of the eastern, or monastic, tower, formed by a paved path with wrought iron railings.
- re-ordering of the interior of the existing roofed parts of the parish church, following removal of the sacristy and vestries from the south aisle, involving relocation of the shop from the west tower to the west end of the

south aisle; relocation of two chest tombs from the west end of the south aisle to new locations further east; and replacement of the screen under the west tower with one slightly further east, to create an entrance lobby for the west door.

- creation of a herb garden (with a raised bed) south of the south aisle.

1.2 Purpose of this document

The extensive duration of the formulation of the current design proposals, the replacement of individuals associated with (or having an interest in) the development, the complex evolution of the design, and the closely related long history of archaeological research and proposed mitigation, are all features of this project. As a result, this document is designed to review the archaeological aspects of the site and the proposed development, and to summarize the archaeological implications and adaptations of the final design.

2 Planning background

2.1 South Norfolk Local Plan

Two policies in South Norfolk Local Plan (adopted March 2003) will apply to the archaeological considerations of the proposal:

Policy ENV 9 [*nationally and locally important archaeological remains*] requires that:

There will be presumption against proposals which would involve significant alteration or cause damage, or which would have a significant impact on the setting of visible archaeological remains of national importance, whether scheduled or not, ancient monuments are shown on the Proposals Map.

Development affecting sites of archaeological remains of local interest and their settings will only be permitted if the need for the development outweighs the local value of the remains.

Applicants will be required to arrange for archaeological field evaluation of any such remains before applications are determined. Proposals should include provision for the remains and their settings to be protected, enhanced or preserved.

Where it is accepted that physical preservation in situ is not merited, planning permission may be subject to conditions and/or formal agreement requiring the developer to secure investigation and recording of the remains, and publication of the results.

Policy IMP 13 [alterations of listed buildings] requires that:

Consent will not be granted for proposals for extensions or alterations, including partial demolition, of Listed Buildings unless they are formulated so as to ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of buildings is preserved.

However, in relation to listed building policy, see below sections 2.3 and 2.4.

2.2 Scheduled Monument

Wymondham Abbey is partly a Scheduled Monument (English Heritage ref. no. NF131). The scheduled area mostly lies south of the ha-ha (i.e. south of the church), although an area extends into the present churchyard to include the visible remains of the monastic buildings. This includes the areas affected by the proposed development: i.e. the east, or monastic, tower; the remains of the north transept and the adjacent chapel of St Margaret; and the site of the demolished eastern part of the nave south aisle and the north-eastern part of the cloister.

2.3 Listed Buildings

The statutory Grade I listing for the Abbey Church of St Mary and St Thomas of Canterbury (English Heritage Listed Building ref. no. 386100) covers the roofed church and the adjoining upstanding ruins (principally the east, or monastic, tower). The ruins of the chapter house and adjacent conventual buildings to the south-east of the east, or monastic, tower, are listed separately (Grade II: English Heritage Listed Building ref. no. 386102).

2.4 Ecclesiastical Exemption

Wymondham Abbey, by virtue of being a Church of England parish church, has Ecclesiastical Exemption from Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent. This

covers the building in use as a parish church and, under section 5(1)c-d of *The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 1994* 'any object or structure fixed to the exterior of a church building' and 'any object or structure within the curtilage of a church building which, although not fixed to that building, forms part of the land'. Under section 5(3) of the 1994 Order such attached structures as found at the east end of Wymondham Abbey are excluded from Ecclesiastical Exemption 'where that object or structure is itself a listed building (apart from any status as a listed building which it may have solely by being treated as part of the church building by virtue of section 1(5)(a) or (b) of the Act)', but this clearly does not apply here as Listed Building ref. no. 386100 covers the parish church and the attached remains (as distinct from the separately listed chapter house and associated ruins to the south). Therefore, it is clear that Ecclesiastical Exemption applies to all the above-ground elements of the proposed development, although Ecclesiastical Exemption does not extend to below-ground archaeology, nor does it remove the requirement for Scheduled Monument consent (which, here, applies to the upstanding remains of the east tower, north transept, and St Margaret's chapel).

3 Historic buildings background

3.1 Introduction

The proposed development is located at the east end of the existing church, on the site of parts of the eastern end of the church, largely demolished – as they had been in monastic use – at the Dissolution. The new buildings will abut, or connect with, the 16th-century south aisle, the late 14th-century east tower, the c.1300 north aisle, and the ruins of the 12th-century north transept and the c.1300 chapel of St Margaret. This section reviews the nature of these parts of the building, their significance, and their key features.

3.2 Summary structural history of Wymondham Abbey

3.2.1 Before the priory

It is likely that the site of Wymondham Abbey was first occupied by an Anglo-Saxon minster (a mother church serving an extensive *parochia*, comprising several later parishes), the most probable foundation date being in the 7th or 8th centuries.¹ This minster status would imply an extensive precinct,² and, in common with other East Anglian minsters, a monastic community that is likely to have survived Viking period disruption and to have provided continuity with the priory founded in 1107.³ That the priory founded by William d'Aubigny in 1107 was on the site of the earlier church is evident from the early charters, which record the foundation gift of the 'whole church of Wymondham',⁴ and the continuity explains why the priory church maintained parochial functions.⁵ There is no upstanding evidence of the pre-1107 church(es) or ancillary buildings, although some remains have been discovered through excavation (see section 5).

3.2.2 Romanesque Benedictine priory

Notwithstanding the earlier minster status – and the implied monastic continuity – the new foundation as a Benedictine daughter house of St Albans saw establishment of a substantial monastery. By 1125 there were 12 monks in addition to the prior.⁶ The church as built following foundation in 1107 was of cruciform plan. The eastern arm comprised a three-bay presbytery and high altar sanctuary, with an

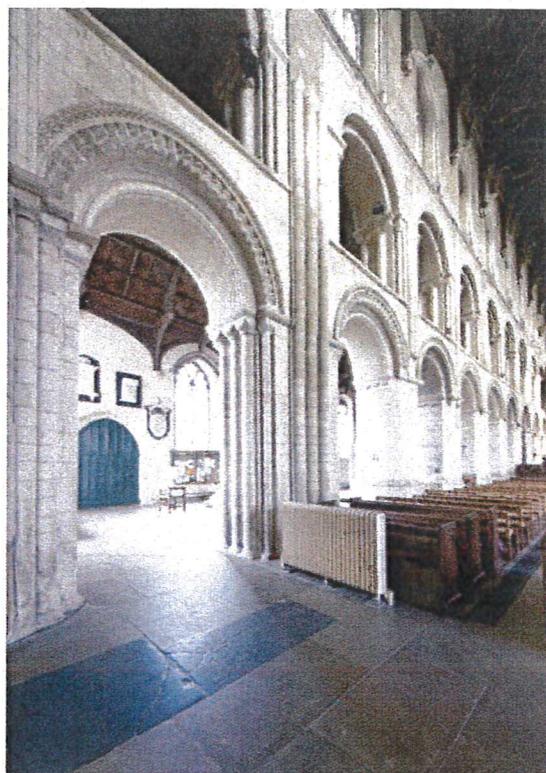


Fig. 1. Romanesque fabric (north elevation of nave).

apsidal east end, flanked by aisles terminating in apsidal chapels (i.e. an apse-echelon plan). To the west was the crossing, with a tower and unaisled north and south transepts: apsidal chapels projected from the east walls of the transepts. To the west of this there was a nave of 12 bays, with aisles and a pair of western towers. The 12th-century form of the conventual buildings is largely unknown, although excavation has shown that a slype and an apsidal chapter house were located, as expected, south of the south transept.

3.2.3 Gothic modifications to the priory/abbey

With the post-Dissolution destruction of the eastern arm and the conventual buildings, much of the Gothic work at Wymondham has been lost. The major Gothic works for which there is surviving upstanding fabric comprise: the rebuilding of the north aisle c.1300, or just after, with a wider plan than the Romanesque original and creating a chapel of St Margaret between the east end of this and the north transept; the building of the east tower from c.1385, located over the eastern bays of the nave, to replace the failing 12th-century crossing tower; the addition of the new porch c.1420-30; and the replace-

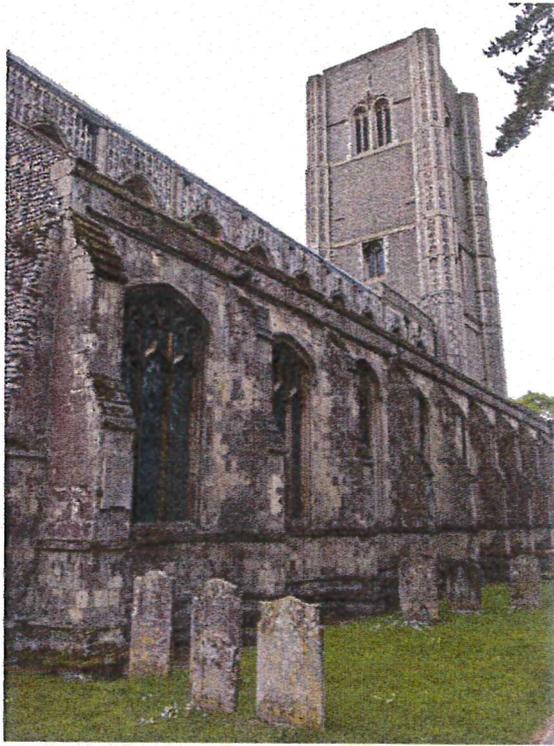


Fig. 2. North aisle (c.1300 with windows of c.1500-20) and west tower (completed c.1480).

ment of the nave clerestory and roof c.1440. Beginning around the same time as the priory became an abbey (1447), the west tower was completed by c.1480. All except two of the north aisle windows were replaced c.1500-20.

3.2.4 16th-century demolitions and modifications following Dissolution

The abbey was dissolved in 1538, thereafter the building has functioned solely as a parish church. The redundant conventual buildings and much of the monastic part of the church were demolished, essentially leaving what survives today. Two major modifications to the church soon after the Dissolution comprised the replacement of the south aisle, on a wider and shorter plan in 1544-60; and remodelling of the piers of the arcades (the three bays of the parish church chancel in 1573, and the nave bays in 1584-5).

3.3 South aisle

The present nave south aisle of Wymondham Abbey dates from 1544-60. It differs from the previous, 12th-century, south aisle in that it is both wider (internally by 2.53m) and shorter (by five bays: i.e. internally by 18.75m). With the

post-Dissolution demolition of much of the monastic part of the abbey, there was no longer a need for the south aisle to extend as far eastwards, but, previously, the south aisle had extended to the 12th-century south transept, and its south wall had formed the north wall of the monastic cloister.

As would be expected, the east wall of the south aisle (i.e. that abutted by the proposed development) does not retain any 12th-century fabric (other than the springings and a few of the lower voussoirs of the Romanesque transverse arch, visible in the west face), but the 16th-century work (which includes the south-east buttress and the adjacent small blocked four-centred doorway) does include (on the eastern, or external, face of the wall) a straight joint with ashlar quoins to the north of the small doorway. The joint corresponds with the location of the south face of the 12th-century south wall of the aisle. This suggests that when the 16th-century aisle was constructed, the eastern part of the 12th-century aisle was still standing: the excavation of a north-south cross-wall flanked by tiled flooring (of 17th-century or later date) within this area confirms that the eastern part of the 12th-century south aisle survived the Dissolution and the 16th-century



Fig. 3. East end of south aisle, showing doorway of 1903.

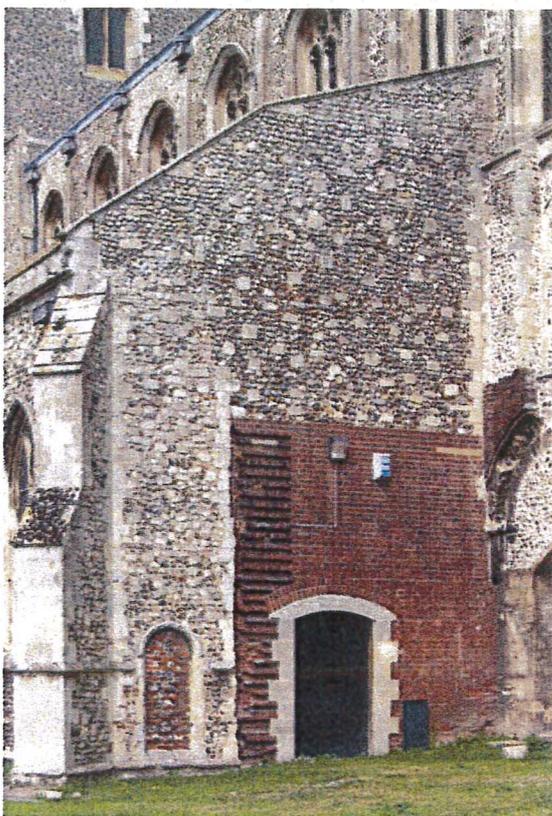


Fig. 4. East end of south aisle, showing brickwork of 1903.

rebuilding of the south aisle (see sections 4.1 and 5.3).

To the north of this straight joint the east wall of the south aisle thins (on its western, or internal, face), and the lower half of the eastern face of the wall is faced in brick. Within and integrated with this brickwork there is a stone-quoined doorway. Externally the doorway is plain and has a segmental head, while internally it has moulded jambs and a moulded three-centred head. Both the doorway and the brickwork are the result of an aborted scheme to build a vestry in 1903, by William Searle Hicks and Henry Clement Charlewood:⁷ clearly the plan was to build a vestry with its south wall directly along the line of the 12th-century aisle south wall. The masonry on the eastern face above the brickwork, which comprises flint rubble with scattered pieces of ashlar, is different to the 16th-century work in the southern part of the east wall, and probably dates from the Hicks and Charlewood restoration of 1902-5: certainly, their work included rebuilding the south aisle roof.⁸

It is unclear whether the eastern face of the east wall represents re-facing in 1902-5 or a

complete rebuilding. A 13th-century pillar piscina now in the parvise above the north porch (currently the Muniment Room) was apparently discovered during works on the wall in 1903.⁹ It is probable that this refers to the works preparatory to the aborted vestry (see above), but it is uncertain whether the piscina was *in situ* (albeit blocked) or had been reused as building stone. Whatever the case, it is almost certain that it was relocated to the wall during the 16th-century works. Indeed, reuse of earlier material (apparently from the chapter house) is a feature of the south aisle.¹⁰

3.4 Nave south elevation

Between the east end of the 16th-century south aisle and the 14th-century east, or monastic, tower, there are two bays of the south elevation of the nave. The lower level comprises the former arcade of the 12th-century nave, now blocked. The two Romanesque arches are largely visible, although only fragments of the piers can be seen, due in part to recent (probably 1902-5) brick patching. The fact that there is no equivalent blocking of the eastern bays of the north arcade (if this did not result from unblocking in the late 16th century, when the arcade piers were remodelled) could suggest that the blocking on the south side was not undertaken in the late 14th century to buttress the new tower. An alternative date for the ground-level arcade blocking would be the early 15th century, when all the arches of the gallery on the south side of the church were blocked, and a new room (possibly a library and scriptorium¹¹) was formed within the nave south gallery (i.e. over the 12th-century south aisle). That said, the blocking of the eastern two bays at gallery level follows that of the arcade below in that it fills the entire thickness of the 12th-century wall, whereas the gallery-level blocking to the west is much thinner, leaving most of the gallery arches visible as a deeply recessed blind arcade. Moreover, within the western blocked arch of the main arcade there is a two-centred doorway that appears more consistent with late 14th-century than early 15th-century origins. This has ashlar jambs, with the ashlar facing continued on to the adjacent face of the blocking. The doorway itself was blocked by 1827.¹² There are two areas of brick repair at this level of the nave south elevation. The Flemish bond and brick type differentiates them

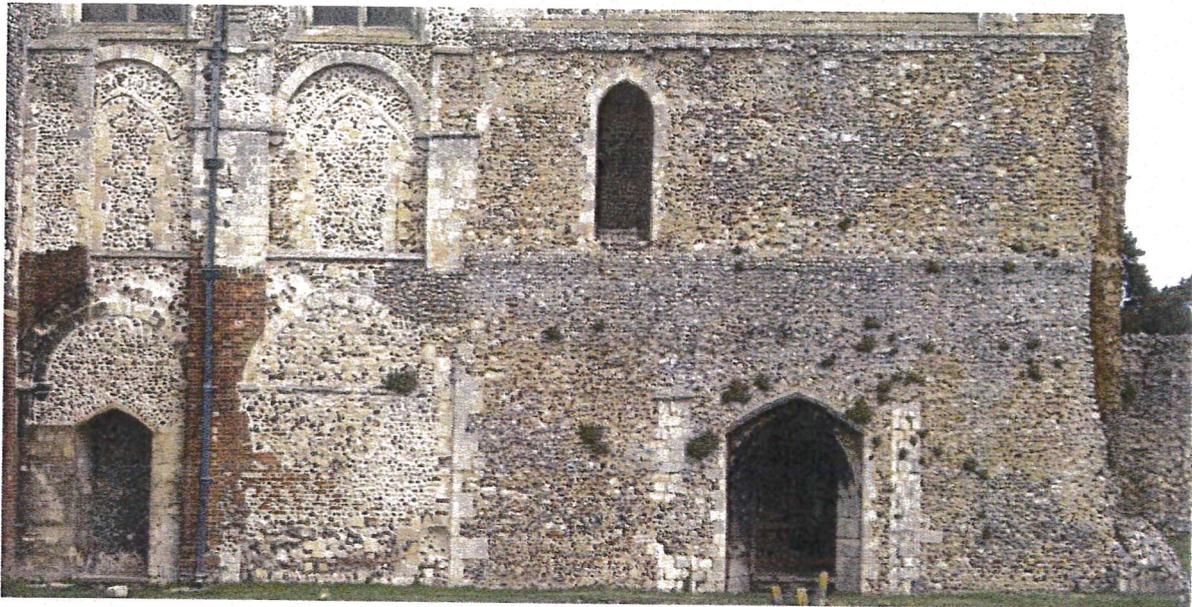


Fig. 5. South elevation of nave and lower part of east (monastic) tower.

from the English bond work of 1903 at the east end of the south aisle, and they doubtless represent 19th-century repairs (possibly those to the east tower carried out in 1898¹³).

Further evidence for a late 14th-century date for the blocking of the arcade comes from the gallery level. Here the two eastern bays of the former gallery arches were given smaller Gothic openings, of which the two-centred external arches and jambs survive, which were blocked in turn. If these arches penetrated the full thickness of the wall (they could have been recesses), the *terminus ante quem* for this blocking is the date of the stringcourse and lower splay of the clerestory windows above, which crosses the former gallery arcade on the interior around the level of the 12th-century abacus and stringcourse. The internal stringcourse and splays date from the late 14th century or, just possibly, the early 15th century (see below), so that the Gothic gallery arches, if penetrating the wall, must have had a very short life, and, of course, the 12th-century arches must have been blocked at or by this time. It has been suggested that the new room over the nave south aisle did not extend to these two bays, and that the gallery in these bays was re-established at a later point, although there is no evidence that the creation of the new room involved demolition of the 12th-century gallery in this area.¹⁴ Indeed, it must be suspected that this argument is based on the assumption that the blocked Gothic arches in these two bays were

external windows, whereas this is implausible: for them to have been external windows, the levels of their sills would have required demolition of this part of the 12th-century gallery and, still less likely, creation of a flat roof over two bays of the nave aisle. It is most likely, therefore, that the blocked Gothic arches represent a change in design during the late 14th-century works or, more plausibly, recesses blocked at a later date: the possibility of recesses here being for cupboards is consistent with the suggested use of the south nave gallery as a library or scriptorium.

Above this level (and above that of the abutment of the proposed development) is the clerestory. The late 14th-century windows of the two eastern bays are different from those to the west, and match those of the middle stage of the east tower. It has been suggested that the sills of these two windows were lowered in the 15th century,¹⁵ but there appear to be no good grounds internally or externally for this (the difference in stone types on the external elevation probably represents repair as it extends too far up the windows to result from lengthening of the windows). The external sills of the clerestory windows in these two bays are just above the 12th-century gallery arches, and would have required reduction of the pitch of the lean-to gallery roof. Where the gallery roof abutted the south face of the new east tower, it was also set at this level. Although the remainder of the clerestory was rebuilt c.1440,

along with the nave roof, it did not utilize this low sill level.

3.5 East, or monastic, tower

Currently an unroofed and unglazed tower, with a substantial open arch on its eastern face, this was built from c.1385. The new tower was built west of the crossing of the priory church, over two and a half bays at the eastern end of the nave, leaving a small gap of half a bay between it and the earlier crossing tower. Although suffering from structural problems (which were the reason for the new tower), the 12th-century crossing tower appears to have remained in place during construction of the new tower, but was then removed.

The east tower has three stages on the south and north faces that have always been external, but only two on the east and west, due to the abutment of the nave roof and the, then extended, eastern arm roof. The lowest of the originally external stages of the north and south walls rises above the level of the south nave aisle roof and, on the north, the St Margaret's chapel roof (although both have been removed), and corresponds with the clerestory level of the church. This stage has Perpendicular windows with three main lights (now unglazed). Above this level, the square plan of the tower becomes octagonal, with two diminishing storeys. The windows are restricted to the cardinal faces, with the ordinal faces comprising plain rubble walls (in contrast with the ashlar below) with central stepped buttresses. The middle storey has two-light windows that match those of the eastern two bays of the nave clerestory (dated to c.1395). Above this the bell stage windows, or belfry openings, also have two main lights, but with ogee forms.

The present lower external faces of the tower were once enclosed by the abutting roofs, and are now exposed on the north, east and south sides, due to the post-Dissolution demolition of the monastic parts of the church. The eastern face comprises a tall arch – akin to a crossing arch – that opened into the revised eastern arm of the church, and which spanned the monastic choir below. Above the arch the abutment of the late 14th-century roof is clearly visible. The north and south faces of the tower are of flint rubble, each with an offset corresponding to the level of the floor of the Romanesque gallery. In the south wall there is a two-centred arched

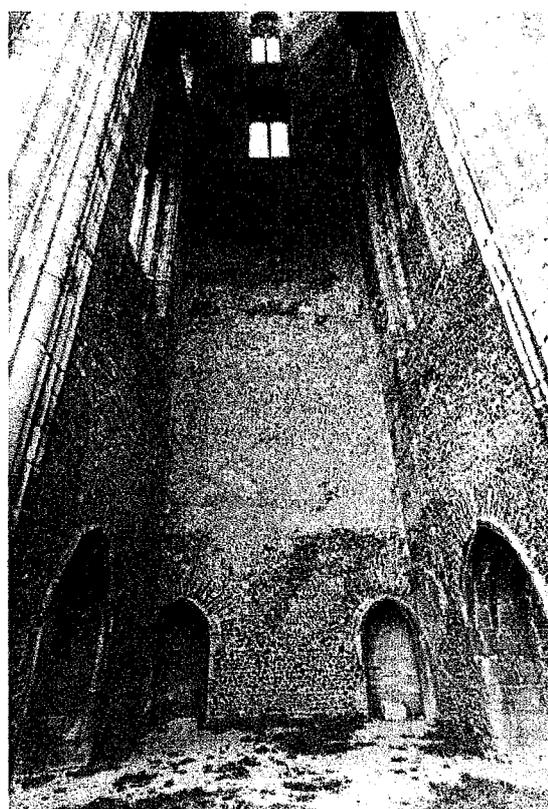


Fig. 6. East (monastic) tower interior, from the east.

doorway of c.1400 at the upper level, which provides access to a spiral stair in the south-west corner of the tower. At ground level, a pair of matching doorways central to each wall provided access between the base of the tower (i.e. the choir) and the south aisle and St Margaret's chapel. Both doorways are late 14th century: both were blocked in 1833-4,¹⁶ with the south doorway subsequently unblocked, and the blocking to the north doorway replaced in 1902-5 in brick and flint (to incorporate a boiler flue). The inner faces of the lower stages of the north and south walls are largely of plain flint rubble of the late 14th century, representing the thickening of the walls necessary to carry the new tower, and creating a narrower space than the nave to the west. The internal face of the south wall has a blocked 14th-century opening immediately west of the lower window, corresponding to the external doorway (see above). Both the north and south internal faces have fragmentary remains of c.700mm-wide semicircular or segmental arches below this level (i.e. with apexes at 42.62m OD). There are no discernible jambs below either arch, and they fall within the area encompassed by the projected gallery-level arcade so presumably



Fig. 7. East (monastic tower) and remains of the north transept.

date from the late 14th century or later. The south face of the south wall reveals remains of the blocked 12th-century nave arcade, with two piers partly visible either side of the 14th-century doorway. This suggests that the Romanesque arches may survive within the core of the wall. On the north face of the north wall, the western arch of the two and a half bays of nave arcade below the tower survives largely intact, albeit blocked: it lies within the eastern end of the nave north aisle as rebuilt c. 1300. To the east of this, the now external part of the north face of the north wall has no trace of 12th-century work, although where this walling continues eastwards (i.e. forming the half-bay between the late 14th-century tower and the east wall of the north transept), the eastern part of an arch of the 12th-century gallery survives. Immediately below this, but on the south face of the wall, an attached shaft and a scalloped capital are visible survivals from the respond at the east end of the nave north arcade: above the capital there are two early 12th-century voussoirs with hollow and roll mouldings, but these remnants of the nave arcade stop short of the respond of the late 14th-century east tower

arch. In short, it is unclear whether any 12th-century work is encapsulated in the 14th-century north wall of the tower to the east of the nave north aisle. The northern face of this wall is abutted by a redundant brick boiler flue of 1903 (see section 3.6 for the boiler room).

The internal part of the west wall of the late 14th-century tower was built across the 12th-century nave. Although doubtless replacing a choir screen, or *pulpitum*, the new wall was much more substantial, rising the full height of the nave, and has no architectural detail other than two small late 14th-century doorways at the north and south ends of the wall (at ground level). The eastern face of the wall is flint rubble, with occasional fragments of reused ashlar.

3.6 St Margaret's chapel/nave north aisle/boiler room

Francis Blomefield identified this space as the chapel of St Margaret, which was recorded at the Dissolution.¹⁷ It was created c. 1300 (see below), replacing the eastern two bays of the narrower 12th-century nave north aisle. Today it comprises an unroofed space, flanked on its west by the east wall of the north aisle, on its east by the remains of the north transept, and on its south by the north wall of the east tower and the half-bay of walling between this and the transept.

The south wall – i.e. the northern face of the monastic tower and the adjacent half-bay – is discussed above (section 3.5).

The west wall – i.e. the east wall of the north aisle – dates from the rebuilding of the aisle, with a wider plan, c. 1300, or just after: the dating is based on the surviving two western windows of the north aisle, which have cusped Y tracery, which in its form here is perhaps more suggestive of an early 14th-century date. The east wall of the aisle is of flint rubble with occasional ashlar. A doorway in the centre provided access to the east end of the north aisle from c. 1300 until blocked during the works of 1902-5: in the 18th century this was a much used entrance to the church, presumably relating to the location (until 1837) of the vestry at the east end of the aisle.¹⁸

The east wall – i.e. the remains of the west wall of the north transept – survives to c. 13.6m (clerestory height) at its south end (where it



Fig. 8. Site of the chapel of St Margaret: view looking southwards, showing boiler flues, and blocked doorways to the east tower (right) and to the former north transept (left).

abuts the half-bay of the former nave wall between the late 14th-century east tower and the 12th-century crossing), but falls away quickly so that at the north-east corner of St Margaret's chapel the wall stands only c.2.8m high. The wall is of flint rubble, and is mostly of 12th-century date. At gallery level adjacent to the crossing, two roundheaded arches survive (now blocked) together with the south respond, showing that the gallery openings in the transept were of double-arched form. Below these there is a wide but low pointed arched recess of flint rubble and brick. This equates with a taller blocked roundheaded arch with ashlar voussoirs on the eastern face of this wall, which was the opening from the 12th-century north transept into the nave north aisle. The pointed arched recess in St Margaret's chapel is evidently a late – probably post-medieval – feature (presumably a doorway in turn blocked) created within the blocking of the Romanesque arch, the western ghost of which can just be detected in the rubble above.

The north wall of St Margaret's chapel has been almost totally destroyed. At the west end a tall stub extends, buttress-like, from the east wall of

the north aisle. The northern (i.e. originally external) face is ashlar dressed and has a stringcourse and offset marking the sill level of the north window, or windows, of the chapel. The ashlar and stringcourse profile are similar to those of the adjacent north aisle (c.1300, with the eastern seven windows replaced in the early 15th century), although the ashlar does not course between the chapel and the aisle, and the stringcourse is at a higher level. This suggests that the chapel was built c.1300, with the lack of continuity reflecting a different building campaign (inevitable, given that the chapel was a monastic creation and the new north aisle was a parish initiative). To the east of this stub of wall there is a wide gap (blocked by iron railings), to the east of which is a low wall of flint rubble and brick, with brick quoins and coping, which abuts the remains of the west wall of the north transept. The wall is of 18th or early 19th-century date.

A subterranean boiler room (measuring c.2.89m x 5.24m) was created during the restoration of 1902-5,¹⁹ and occupies most of the western half of the site of the chapel of St Margaret, with its floor at c.33.71m OD (i.e. c.3.25m below the

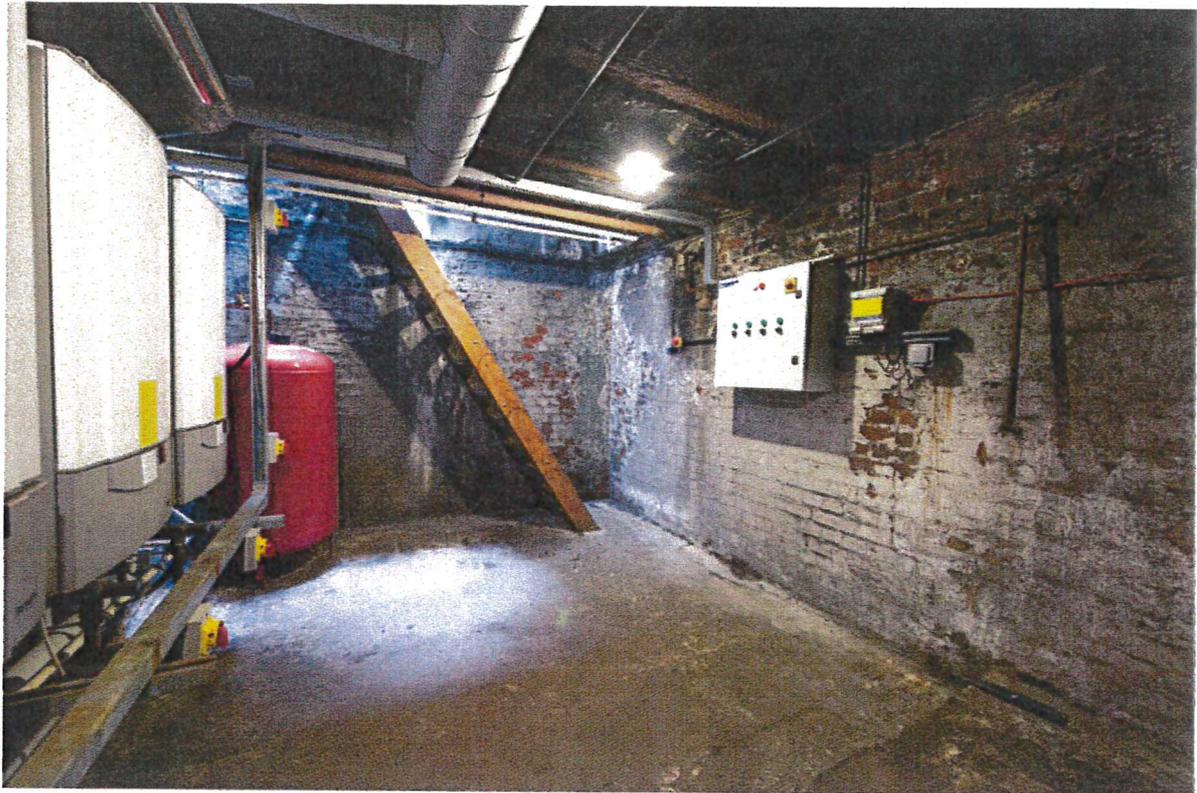


Fig. 9. Boiler room: view looking north-east.

ground level). The boiler room has English bond brick walls, a concrete floor, and a flat roof slab comprising six steel beams with concrete between. Access is via a timber stair and hatch in the north-west corner. Given the limited extent of the boiler room, and contrary to the suggestion of the 1999 Archaeological Assessment,²⁰ there is no reason to suppose that the archaeology of the eastern part and the very northern part of St Margaret's chapel was entirely – or, indeed, significantly – destroyed in 1902-5: the archaeology is likely to include remains of the foundations of the north wall of the medieval chapel and part of the north wall of the 12th-century north aisle. An oil tank, surrounded by a low Flemish-bond brick wall (of 20th-century date, later than the 1902-5 works), occupies the north-eastern part of the ground-level space, and there are modern boiler vents.

4 Archaeological background

4.1 Excavations 1833-4

Excavations undertaken by Samuel Woodward in 1833-4 uncovered remains of walls of the demolished monastic parts of the church, together with remains of the eastern part of the

cloister and the conventual buildings, and numerous burials. Of most relevance to the proposed development, Woodward exposed remains of the south wall of the 12th-century nave south aisle, tracing its plan from the east end of the 16th-century south aisle as far as the south transept. At the east end he discovered a doorway leading from the south aisle into the north-east corner of the cloister. Within the excavated area of the south aisle Woodward located two north-south walls. The western wall (one bay east of the present south aisle) continued south of the aisle wall into the north cloister walk. The eastern wall lay just west of the western jamb of the doorway into the east tower and was confined to the south aisle. Woodward identified both walls as secondary features, with the continuation of the western wall into the cloister suggesting that it was a post-Dissolution feature: re-excavation in 2002 located both these cross-walls more precisely and confirmed their post-Dissolution dating (see section 5.3). Evidently the eastern part of the south aisle remained standing after the building of the new, wider south aisle in the 16th century. Woodward identified the three spaces in the eastern part of the south aisle as, west to east,



Fig. 10. Exposed remains of walls of demolished monastic parts of the abbey, east of the surviving church.

the old vestry (i.e. of the parish church), St Andrew's chapel, and the vestry.²¹ The 2002 evaluation confirmed that Woodward's method (which he does not record) was typical of the period in that it involved digging of narrow trenches rather than open area excavation (see below).

4.2 Excavations 1927-8

Woodward's plan did not recover the 12th-century form of the eastern termination of the abbey, and it was with this in mind that F. H. Fairweather undertook further excavations in 1927-8. His investigations were of considerable importance in establishing the apse-echelon plan of the eastern arm (i.e. a central apse flanked by apses at the eastern end of the presbytery aisles), the presence of apsidal chapels projecting from the east walls of the north and south transepts, and the apse at the east end of the 12th-century chapter house. Fairweather added nothing of significance to Woodward's earlier work for the area of the proposed development, other than suggesting a later medieval internal thickening of the eastern three bays of the south aisle wall.²²

4.3 Watching briefs 1980-2009

Minor archaeological investigations were undertaken near the abbey during this period in response to works. These included:

- 1980: digging of a new sewer trench across Abbey Meadows, extending from the weir on the river to the angle of Church Street. Finds included numerous animal bones and pottery (which included one sherd of Thetford-type ware, but was dominated by wares of 13-15th-century date).²³
- 1992-3: excavation for a new sewer pipeline running north-west to south-east (passing south-west of the church), and an earthwork survey. Considerable evidence was found for the monastic period (including a wall, a possible robber trench, and floors), but little of direct relevance to the proposed development at the east end of the church. Perhaps most significant was the discovery of likely pre-monastic cut features (i.e. ditches and pits) sealed by monastic deposits. These support the suggestion that the priory occupied the same site as the earlier minster church.²⁴
- 2009: digging of a new gas main trench (750-900mm deep), running eastwards from the

boiler house, mostly along the northern edge of the path from the church to the eastern gate of the churchyard. Finds included disarticulated human bone, a possible buried soil (north of the church), and post-medieval dumping of domestic refuse (by the eastern churchyard wall).²⁵

5 Archaeological evaluation 2002

5.1 Background to evaluation

The late Paul Cattermole (Honorary Archivist at Wyndham Abbey) wrote an Archaeological Assessment in 1999 to inform the early stages of the design of the proposed new facilities.²⁶

This was followed by a geophysical survey in 2001, designed to investigate subsurface anomalies south, east and north of the east, or monastic, tower. Both the resistivity and the ground penetrating radar surveys were undertaken by Stratascan. The results confirmed the expected survival of the foundations of the 12th-century south aisle wall, as well as substantial remains of walls of the eastern arm of the priory church and the conventual buildings to the south.²⁷

The archaeological assessment and the geophysical survey were commissioned by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (now styled NAU Archaeology) prior to undertaking a trenched evaluation in 2002.

5.2 Summary of the evaluation methodology

Four trial trenches were dug by NAU Archaeology in June to August 2002 (see Plan I), comprising:

Trench 1 – located immediately north of St Margaret's chapel

Trench 2 – located in the north-west corner of the east tower

Trench 3 – located immediately south of the east tower, adjacent to the west jamb of the door

Trench 4 – located just east of the east wall of the 16th-century south aisle

5.3 Main findings of the evaluation

The results of the evaluation have been the subject of an unpublished report.²⁸ The main findings discussed in the report are:

- Below the line of the blocked nave south arcade (since the 14th century also the line of the south wall of the east tower) remains were observed of foundations pre-dating the priory. Probably representing important evidence of a previous (11th-century) church on the same alignment, in Trench 4 this earlier wall had a foundation offset of c.670mm (i.e. extending southwards into the area of the former south aisle), reaching a height of 35.44m OD. This part of the foundations comprised flint in compacted silty sand, not mortar. Above the lowest foundation offset there were two stepped flint and mortar foundation offsets (called plinths by the excavator), the lower projecting c.250mm, and the upper reaching a height of c.35.77m OD. It is probable that Trench 4 was outside the building represented by the 11th-century wall, and the top of the upper foundation offset (i.e. c.35.77m OD) may well approximate to the 11th-century ground level south of this wall.
- A series of early mortar floor surfaces were revealed in Trench 2, which appear to relate to the interior of the 11th-century church. The lowest, and earliest, of these was at c.35.35m OD.
- A mortar floor was discovered at c.35.60m in Trench 3, and was identified as part of the 11th-century works. It was c.250mm lower than the earliest floor of this period found in Trench 2 (see above: i.e. within the church). As Trench 3 lies south of what was identified as the south wall of an aisleless nave, the excavator suggests that it may represent the presence of an 11th-century south transept.
- A bell-founding pit was discovered in Trench 2, which was dug during the short life of the 11th-century church. This suggests that the 11th-century church had a tower in this location (i.e. corresponding to the position of the late 14th-century tower): if so, this would be consistent with the excavator's suggestion that the 11th-century church had transepts (see above).
- The remains of the foundations of the south wall of the 12th-century nave south aisle survive to a height (where observed in Trenches 3 and

4) of c.35.68-36.15m OD. They are founded on natural at a mean observed height of 34.46m OD, and the mean height of the upstanding foundations is 1.48m.

- The foundations of the nave south arcade were revealed. In Trench 4 it was clear that, although assimilating the remains of the 11th-century foundations, the 12th-century foundations comprised discrete pads for each pier.
- The evidence of what were identified as Norman make-up layers (but not the floor itself, which was not identified) in Trench 3 showed that the 12th-century south aisle floor level was above c.36.00m OD. More precise evidence for the 12th-century floor level was found in the form of two bases of the 12th-century arcade piers: these revealed the floor to be at 36.15m OD, or very slightly above. In Trench 3 and Trench 4 Norman levels survived up to around 36.10m OD.
- The 12th-century cloister floor level was c.35.11m OD. This was c.1040mm below the level of the south aisle floor, and was achieved by removing (to 34.93m OD) earlier deposits and burials.
- Late Saxon or Early Norman (i.e. pre-c.1107) burials, of which those found south of the 12th-century aisle wall probably represent the deepest burials, the shallower ones being removed during the reduction of the ground level necessary to create the 12th-century cloister with its floor level at c.35.11m OD. One burial (SK1243) was directly below the foundations of the Late Saxon or Early Norman church (to a height of 35.13m OD).
- Monastic period burials (i.e. c.1107-1538). A single, heavily truncated, grave was found in Trench 2 below c.35.80m OD. In Trench 3 two inter-cutting burials were found in the cloister walk (of which the floor level was at c.35.11m OD)
- Post-medieval burials were found in Trench 1. These were shallow (the trench was only excavated to a depth of 1.20m (i.e. c.35.63m OD), and probably dated to the 18th century.
- A post-medieval north-south wall was located in Trench 3, flanked by tiled floors of 17th to 19th-century date, suggesting post-medieval survival of the eastern part of the 12th-century south aisle. A second cross-wall, probably also

medieval, was found in Trench 4 within the north cloister walk.

5.4 Archaeological significance of the findings

The four evaluation trenches confirmed the good survival of the foundations of the south wall of the 12th-century south aisle.

Contrary to recent suggestion, the evaluation confirmed that the late 14th-century east tower was not built on 'freshly dug, deeper, foundations',²⁹ but in fact incorporates both the continuous foundations of the 11th-century church (itself a remarkable discovery) and the individual pier foundations of the 12th-century nave arcade.

The evidence from the Romanesque pier bases revealed in the evaluation was significant as it showed that the east end of the 12th-century south aisle floor was at 36.15m OD, or very slightly above (perhaps as much as 50mm), whereas the floor at the west end of the church, where 12th-century bases survive, is at c.35.80m OD. The discrepancy of c.350-400mm has not been noted previously, and suggests that the south aisle either had steps or, more probably, sloped up eastwards.

In short, through a combination of different survival of deposits and upstanding fabric, the proposed development site is of considerable importance for its potential to provide us with evidence of the architectural development of the monastic church and cloister, and its pre-1107 predecessor. The site also has considerable scope for burial archaeology for the Late Saxon period to the 18th century.

NB: No trenched evaluation was undertaken within St Margaret's chapel. This was in line with the suggestion in the 1999 Archaeological Assessment that all deposits here 'must have been destroyed',³⁰ although it is clear that the subterranean boiler room only occupies most of the western part of this space and that, in fact, there is every reason to suppose significant archaeology in the eastern part of the chapel site and at the north end: this is likely to include remains of the foundations of the north walls of the medieval chapel and of the 12th-century north aisle (see above, section 3.6).

6 Mitigation strategy

6.1 Introduction

It is inevitable that a development of the scale proposed that abuts a standing, but partly ruinous, medieval great church will have a significant impact on the above and below-ground archaeology. Additionally, in the case of the new facilities proposed at Wyndham Abbey, interconnections with the existing buildings (including good access for the disabled) form an essential part of the proposed function of the new buildings. Through early development of a mitigation strategy with Freeland Rees Roberts Architects, however, the potential impact has been reduced. For example, disturbance of the foundations of the demolished 12th-century south aisle has been minimized through adoption of a thin foundation slab; impact on the blocked nave south arcade and south wall of the east tower has been limited to re-establishing the lean-to roof, and the abutment of a new glazed east wall and an internal partition; there is to be no expansion of the present, retained, subterranean boiler room; existing doorways (several of which are blocked) have been re-used, so that only one new opening is planned; the herb garden will have a raised bed (avoiding below-ground impact); and the foul water drainage connection will adopt a pumped system (requiring a much shallower trench than a conventional connection).

6.2 Impact on standing buildings

6.2.1 Summary of mitigation strategy in relation to standing buildings

The design of the new building is such that it minimizes contact with the existing buildings and ruins. The south and north buildings have lean-to roofs that necessarily load on to the walls of the nave/east tower and the east wall of the south aisle, but, otherwise, the new buildings are largely structurally independent. The roof of the south building has been designed so that it allows the full height of the blocked nave main and gallery arcades to be viewed from ground level.

6.2.2 Interventions to standing buildings

The interventions comprise:

- main fixings and chasings for the roof of the south building where it abuts the south wall of the nave and the east tower (re-establishing the roof abutment of the late 14th century);
- main fixings (three beams 270mm x 90mm) and chasings for the western abutment of the roof of the south building against the east wall of the south aisle;
- main fixings for the roof of the north (St Margaret's chapel) building against the north wall of the east tower;
- chasings for the western abutment of the roof of the north (St Margaret's chapel) building against the east wall of the north aisle;
- chasings for upper part of the eastern abutment of the roof of the north (St Margaret's chapel) building against the west wall of the ruins of the north transept;
- fixings (but no teething) for the western abutment of the southern wall of the south building against the east wall/buttress of the south aisle;
- fixings (but no teething) for the western and eastern abutments of the northern wall of the north (St Margaret's chapel) building against the surviving stub of the north wall of the former chapel and the north-west corner of the remains of the north transept;
- chasings for the northern abutment of the glazed eastern wall of the south building against the south wall of the former nave/east tower;
- top fixing for the northern abutment of the c.2.5m-high glazed internal screen in the south building against the south wall of the former nave/east tower;
- chasings for the abutment of the glazed upper part of the eastern wall of the north (St Margaret's chapel) where it is supported by remains of the north transept;
- fixings for the western abutment of the internal wall of the kitchen/servery against the east wall of the south aisle (the fabric here dates from 1903);
- pockets (c.300mm deep) for five 600mm x 450mm ground beams in the south face of the

foundations of the south wall of the nave and east tower;

- unblocking the arch between the former north transept and the former north aisle (reinstating its 12th-century form, as surviving on the eastern face), with fixings added for glazing;
- cutting a new doorway opening between St Margaret's chapel and the north aisle;
- widening and relocating slightly northwards the doorway in the east wall of the south aisle, reusing the existing jambs and arch (the doorway was created in 1903);
- unblocking of the doorway in the south wall of the choir, with fixings added for door (the doorway dates from the late 14th century and was blocked by 1827);
- unblocking of the doorway in the north wall of the east tower, and fixings added for doors (the doorway dates from the late 14th century and the blocking dates from 1902-5);
- fixings for doors to be added to the doorway in the south wall of the east tower (the doorway dates from the late 14th century);
- relocation of two chest tombs from the west end of the south aisle to new locations further east;
- insertion of new screen (and associated storage cupboards) under the west tower;
- demolition of the garden wall at the north-east corner of St Margaret's chapel; and
- replacement of the present boiler room steel and concrete roof with a 150mm pre-cast concrete slab.

6.3 Impact on subsurface archaeology

6.3.1 Summary of the development of the subsurface mitigation strategy

The trenched evaluation showed that the 12th-century floor level of the cloister was at c.35.11m OD; and the south aisle and, almost certainly, the nave (i.e. within the later east tower) at c.36.15m OD, or very slightly above (perhaps as much as 50mm). Significant archaeology was largely confined to these levels and below, with the important exception of the wall foundations, with the south wall of the south aisle observed in 2002 at 35.68-36.15m

OD. With the proposed south and north buildings adopting finished floor levels (35.99m OD and 36.09m OD respectively) slightly below the medieval floor level in this part of the church (c.36.15m OD), it is inevitable that the proposed development will have an impact on subsurface archaeological deposits and features.

The impact on subsurface archaeology by the proposed works has been minimized by adopting a foundation design comprising shallow reinforced concrete ground beams supported by pads. Likewise the main floor slabs will be very thin (150mm) to reduce impact on the remains of the medieval walls of the south aisle. This will also reduce disturbance to the archaeology within the 12th-century south aisle: impact to this will be further minimized through avoidance of crossing this area with a load-bearing wall (this part of the east wall of the new south building is a glazed wall, supported by the main floor slab). The archaeological impact of services has been reduced by use of shallow trenches: most significantly, the c.80m-long foul water drainage connection will be pumped, allowing use of a shallow trench.

6.3.2 Subsurface interventions

The proposed development requires the following subsurface interventions:

- Foundations and floor slab (south building). New foundations will be necessary for the south wall, the southern part of the east wall, and for four steel posts that will provide midway support for the roof structure. The upper component of these foundations will comprise reinforced concrete ground beams, 600mm wide and 450mm deep: the floor slab between these beams will be 150mm deep only, with floor build-up above the floor slab and ground beams (consisting of insulation, screed incorporating under-floor heating pipes, and stone flags) comprising an additional 200mm. The ground beams will be supported by eight concrete pads, 1m deep (four at 1.8m x 1.8m, and four at 1.2m x 1.2m), all located south of the 12th-century south aisle: these will bear on the gravels revealed in the 2002 trial trenches, so that piles will not be required. The northern ends of the five north-south ground beams will be set into pockets in the foundations of the east tower/nave wall (see section 6.2.2). Below the floor slab there will be 150mm of Type 1 granular fill, and below the pads and ground

beams there will be 50mm of concrete blinding: this gives a general level formation level for the south building of 35.49m OD (compared to present ground level rising from c.35.9m OD at the south to c.36.4m OD at the north), with locally deeper excavation to 35.29m OD for the ground beams and c.34.29m for the pads.

- **Foundations and floor slab (north building).**

New foundations will be necessary for the north wall and for two adjacent posts that will support the lower end of the roof structure. The north wall will be supported by a 600mm wide and 450mm deep reinforced concrete beam (which will be reduced if remains of the medieval north wall are found to survive, to preserve the historic fabric). The western post will be supported by a 450mm wide and 450mm deep beam spanning between the new north wall foundation and the north wall of the existing boiler room. The eastern post will be supported by a concrete pad, 1m x 1m and 750mm deep. The new reinforced concrete floor slab outside of area of the retained boiler room will be 150mm deep only, with floor build-up above the floor slab (consisting of insulation, screed incorporating under-floor heating pipes, and stone flags) comprising an additional 200mm. Below the floor slab there will be 150mm of Type I granular fill, and below the pad and beams there will be 50mm of concrete blinding: this gives a general level of reduction for the footprint of the north building (i.e. outside the retained boiler room) of 35.59m OD (compared to present ground level of c.36.9m OD), with locally deeper excavation to 35.39m OD for the ground beams and c.35.29m for the pad.

- **Paving and services trench (east tower).** The paved walkway (with a finished level of 36.27m OD) linking the north and south extensions (via the existing doorways) will be integrated with a c.600mm deep concrete services trench, formed with 150mm thick sides and bottom. With concrete blinding of 50mm below, this will require excavation to c.35.62m OD (from the present ground level of c.36.4m OD).

- **Service trenches.** The water main, electricity and gas supplies will require modification of the existing trenches, but these have yet to be designed.

- **Foul water drainage.** This comprises a narrow and shallow trench (380mm wide and 680mm deep) c.80m in length, together with a manhole

by the churchyard wall (750mm x 600mm and 750mm deep) and a pumping station immediately adjacent to the south-east corner of the south transept (1.5m diameter and 2.0m deep).

6.4 Archaeological investigation and record – buildings

6.4.1 Main architectural metric survey

Initial recording of the visible historic fabric has been undertaken to allow development of the design, by Philip Thomas (2002). This has included digitally-rectified photography of the elevations abutted by the proposed development, and a plan survey of the entire church at ground level, and of the area affected by the proposed development at gallery level.

6.4.2 Recording of fabric exposed by demolition, lowering of the ground level etc.

The reduction of ground levels, removal of modern features (e.g. the brick boiler flue) will expose additional detail. Experience confirms that it will not be cost effective nor archaeologically consistent (given the time lapse) to add these areas to the 2002 survey: rather it is proposed that additional exposed elevational detail will be recorded, along with the currently visible elevations to be abutted by the proposed development, reusing the existing control targets (re-measured, and supplemented where necessary due to ground-level losses since 2002), using digitally-rectified photography. This will be undertaken by the consultant archaeologist to the specification and standard of the existing metric survey data, but, in this instance, will produce seamless mosaiced images for each elevation, and will take advantage of developments in digital cameras and rectification software since 2002.

6.4.3 Watching brief and recording of interventions in existing buildings

The creation of a new opening in the east wall of the north aisle, modification of the doorway in the east wall of the south aisle, re-opening of other doorways and arches (i.e. those between the former north transept and St Margaret's chapel, the sanctuary and the proposed south building, and the east tower and St Margaret's chapel), demolition of the garden wall at the

north-east corner of St Margaret's chapel, and more minor interventions for fixings, conservation work etc. (see section 6.2.2) will require a watching brief. This will include archaeological supervision of works, recording of any *in situ* features, recovery of any worked stone (or other significant finds), and recording of exposed fabric prior to making good. Records will comprise metric survey (where appropriate) and record photography. Worked stone will be recorded, and labelled, and added to (and thereafter processed and stored with) that produced from the excavation. (see below).

The watching brief and recording will include the preparation of a written report (further developing the architectural and documentary analysis undertaken for this assessment), and will be undertaken by the consultant archaeologist.

Any building recording will be carried out in accordance with a method statement produced in consultation with Dr Ken Hamilton (Senior Historic Environment Officer (Planning), Norfolk County Council), and submitted to English Heritage (in relation to any relevant conditions for Scheduled Monument consent) and to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (in relation to any relevant conditions for the listed building).

6.5 Archaeological investigation and record – below ground

6.5.1 General approach

The foundation and services strategy adopted for the proposed new buildings means that ground beams, concrete pads, ground slabs, and service/drain trenches will penetrate the level of significant archaeology as indicated by the 2002 evaluation trenches. These will be the subject of an archaeological excavation and a watching brief, to be undertaken by a competent archaeological contractor, working to a brief issued by the consultant archaeologist and Dr Ken Hamilton (Senior Historic Environment Officer (Planning), Norfolk County Council), in consultation with Dr Will Fletcher (Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Norfolk), English Heritage), and to the contractor's written scheme of investigation/project design (to be approved by Dr Ken Hamilton).

6.5.2 Summary of excavation method

The archaeological excavation will take place with a clear site (i.e. after enabling works such as the demolition of the above-ground flues and tank for the boilers) and comprises the following elements:

i) reduction across the site of the two new buildings to a general formation level of 35.49m OD, and for the linking pathway (and integrated services duct) to c.35.62m OD. This will commence using machine (using a toothless bucket) working in 100mm spits, with metal detecting of all spoil. Once a horizon of archaeological features is identified (for which the 2002 evaluation will provide useful information), then all subsequent excavation will proceed by hand.

ii) excavation by hand of trenches for the foundation ground beams, pads and service trenches within the new-build footprint. All deposits and features will be removed to at least a distance of 200mm from the designed footprint of ground beams and pads.

iii) a watching brief will be carried out on any works with subsurface archaeological implications not covered by the pre-construction excavation of the site. This will include all service and drainage works outside the footprint of the new buildings.

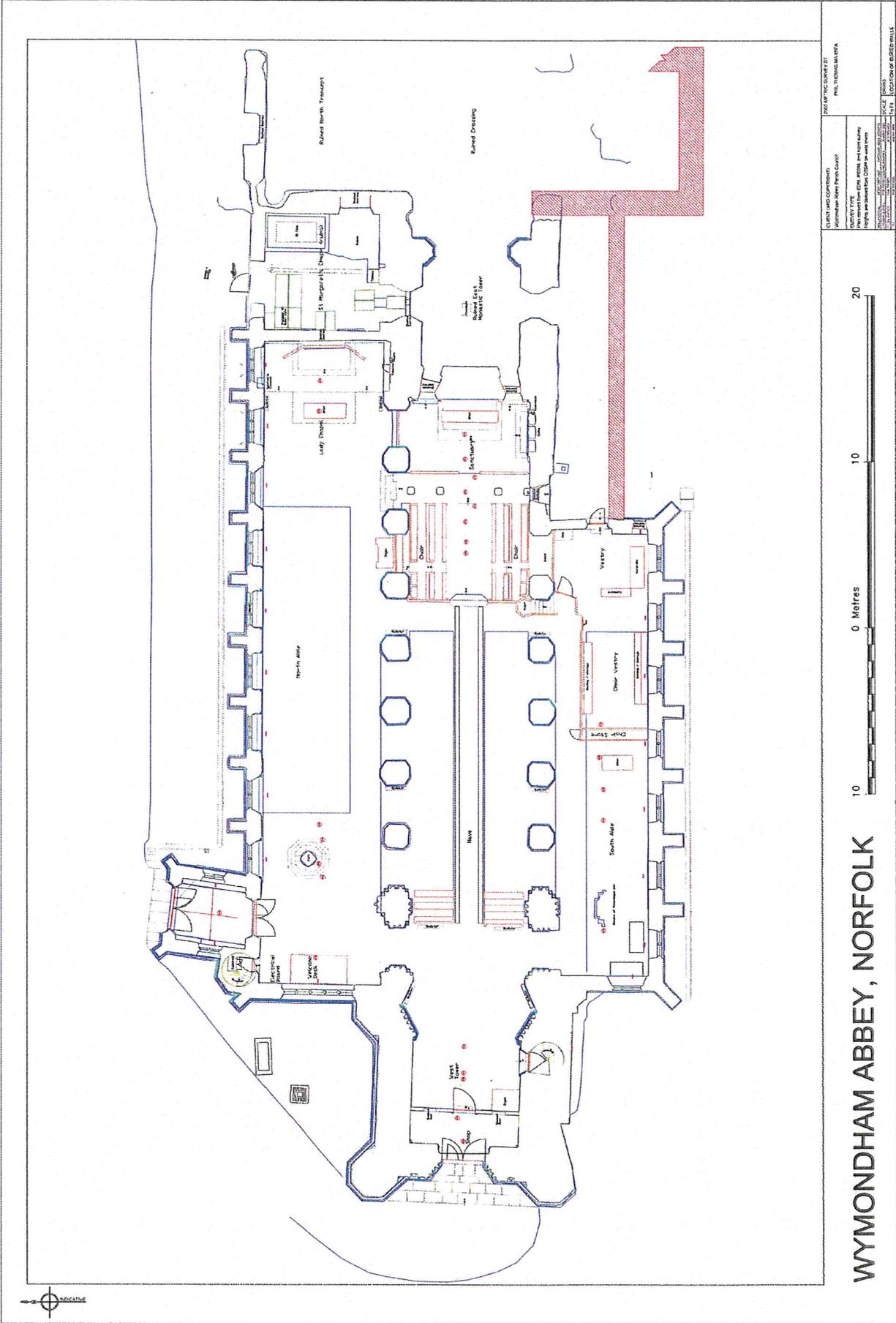
iv) the excavation and watching brief will be monitored by the consultant archaeologist and Dr Ken Hamilton (Senior Historic Environment Officer (Planning), Norfolk County Council), and there will be a requirement for the contractors to cease work (on the relevant part of the site) if archaeological remains of unanticipated significance are encountered, to allow consultation with the consultant archaeologist and, if necessary, Dr Ken Hamilton and English Heritage.

6.5.3 Preliminary research framework

Archaeological excavation will assess:

- the form of the pre-1107 church(es);
- the form of the Romanesque church and its structural history in relation to the cloister and other conventual buildings;
- evidence for later medieval remodelling;

- evidence for post-Dissolution remodelling and demolition;
- evidence for the architectural detail of the demolished parts of the church and conventual buildings (e.g. moulded and painted stone, plaster and window glass);
- the post-Dissolution use of the area;
- the evidence for burial archaeology (including burial practice, chronology, and pathology); and
- evidence for the nature of the palaeo-environment (ancient environment), and the prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon human activity in the area.



Plan 2. Plan of existing church (2003 metric survey) showing location of buried 12th-century south aisle and south transept walls in the vicinity of the proposed development.