

**LAND TO REAR OF
23 HIGH STREET
SOUTH BENFLEET
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL
TRENCHING**



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit
November 2004**

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23 HIGH STREET
SOUTH BENFLEET**

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Prepared By: Andrew Robertson	Signature:
Position: Project Supervisor	Date:
Approved By: Patrick Allen	Signature:
Position: Project Manager	Date:
Approved By: Mark Atkinson	Signature:
Position: Unit Manager	Date:

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

Please contact the Archaeological Fieldwork Manager, at the

Field Archaeology Unit,

Fairfield Court, Fairfield Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 3YQ

fieldarch@essexcc.gov.uk

Tel: 01376 331470

Fax: 01376 331428

**LAND TO REAR OF
23 HIGH STREET
SOUTH BENFLEET**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL
TRENCHING**

Client: Brian Davison Associates

FAU Project No.: 1389

Planning Application No: CPT/0391/04

NGR: TQ 77803 86056 (Centred)

Site Code: CPHS 04

Date of Fieldwork: 3rd and 4th November 2004

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological trial trenching evaluation to the rear of 23 High Street, South Benfleet. Brian Davison Associates submitted a planning application for a residential development on the site. The local planning authority, advised by the Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion team (HAMP) of Essex County Council, placed an archaeological condition, in line with Planning Policy Guideline 16 (DoE 1990), on the development. Subsequently Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) were commissioned to undertake an archaeological desktop survey (Archer 2004). Following this a further archaeological condition was placed upon the development, to evaluate the site with three trial trenches. ECC FAU was further commissioned to undertake this evaluation.

2.0 LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

The site lies on the south side of South Benfleet, High Street, directly opposite St Mary's Church, which dates to the 12th century (Archer 2004). It lies within an area of archaeological potential with a number of excavations and finds spots, dating to the Roman and medieval periods, in the vicinity. The frontage of 23 High Street is dated to the 15th century with additions to the rear being 17th century in date. The boundaries of the property seem to have remained static since at least 1777, where they are noted on one of the earliest maps of the area.

The land slopes down to the west, towards Benfleet Creek. Below approximately 1.3m of modern rubble the undisturbed natural geology was mid brown silty clay.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the trenching was to locate, identify and record any surviving archaeological remains and clarify the nature and extent of modern disturbance to the site.

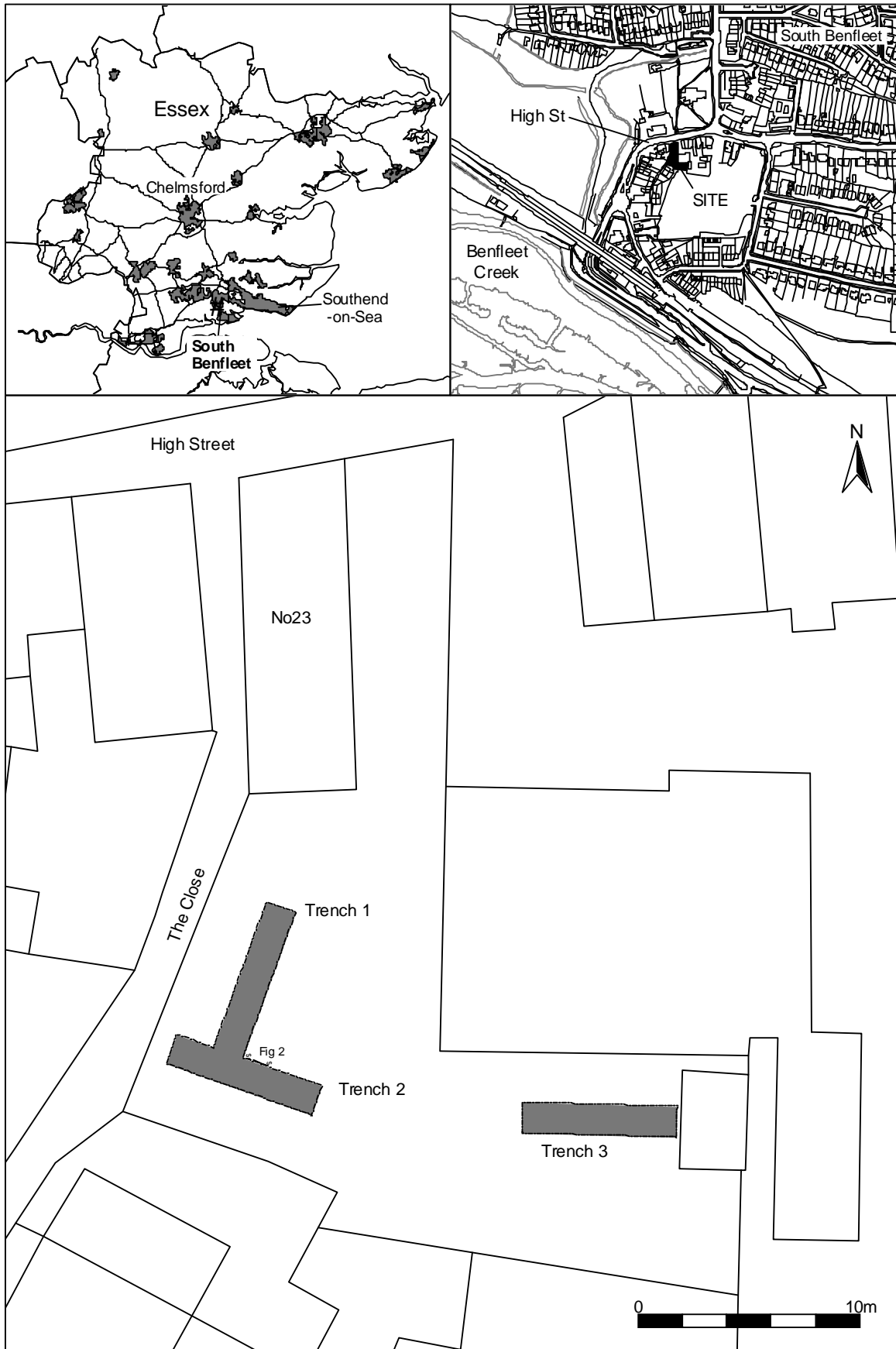


Fig.1. Site Location

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4.0 METHOD

The trial trenches were excavated using a 3-ton mini-digger fitted with a toothless bucket, under archaeological supervision. After the removal of approximately 1.3m of overburden the exposed surface was then examined for any archaeological remains. The trenches were recorded in plan and a representative section drawn. A photographic record of all trenches was maintained. The IFA standards and by-laws and ALGAO's Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003) were adhered to during the fieldwork.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The site had been cleared of vegetation and concrete hard standings prior to the commencement of work. Three trenches measuring 7m by 1.4m were excavated in the approximate location of the proposed houses.

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 1)

Trench 1 ran north-south and was located along the western edge of the site. The trench was excavated onto undisturbed geology at a depth of c.1.2m. The topsoil was approximately 0.4m deep with 0.7m of modern build-up below this. Mixed in with this build up was oyster shell, bone and medieval pottery. Despite this no archaeological features were identified. With the agreement of the HAMP monitoring officer none of the finds were collected and no environmental samples were taken.

5.2 Trench 2 (Figs. 1 and 2)

Trench 2 abutted trench 1 at right angles and ran roughly east – west along the southern edge of the site. It was excavated to a depth of approximately 1.3m. The composition and depths of the topsoil and the modern build-up were the same as trench 1. A representative section of the trench was drawn but no archaeological remains were identified and no finds were retrieved or environmental samples taken.

5.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 1)

Running east-west, trench 3 was located in the south-eastern corner of the site. The undisturbed geology lay approximately 1m below the present ground surface. Above it was modern rubble, but unlike the build-up seen in the previous two trenches this contained no obviously medieval pottery. No archaeological remains were identified and no finds were retrieved or environmental samples taken.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The desktop survey indicates that the area of the High Street, Benfleet was a focus for a medieval settlement, with several medieval buildings still extant. Despite the presence of a known late medieval building on the High Street frontage, no archaeological remains were encountered in the trenches. It is unlikely that any survive in the development area. The presence of medieval finds noted in the general site build up suggests that there were medieval archaeological deposits in the vicinity.

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned and funded by Brian Davison Associates. The monitoring officer was Mr P. Connell of HAMP on behalf of the local planning office. Mr P. Allen managed the project and D Smith assisted the author on site. The illustrations were prepared by A. Lewsey.

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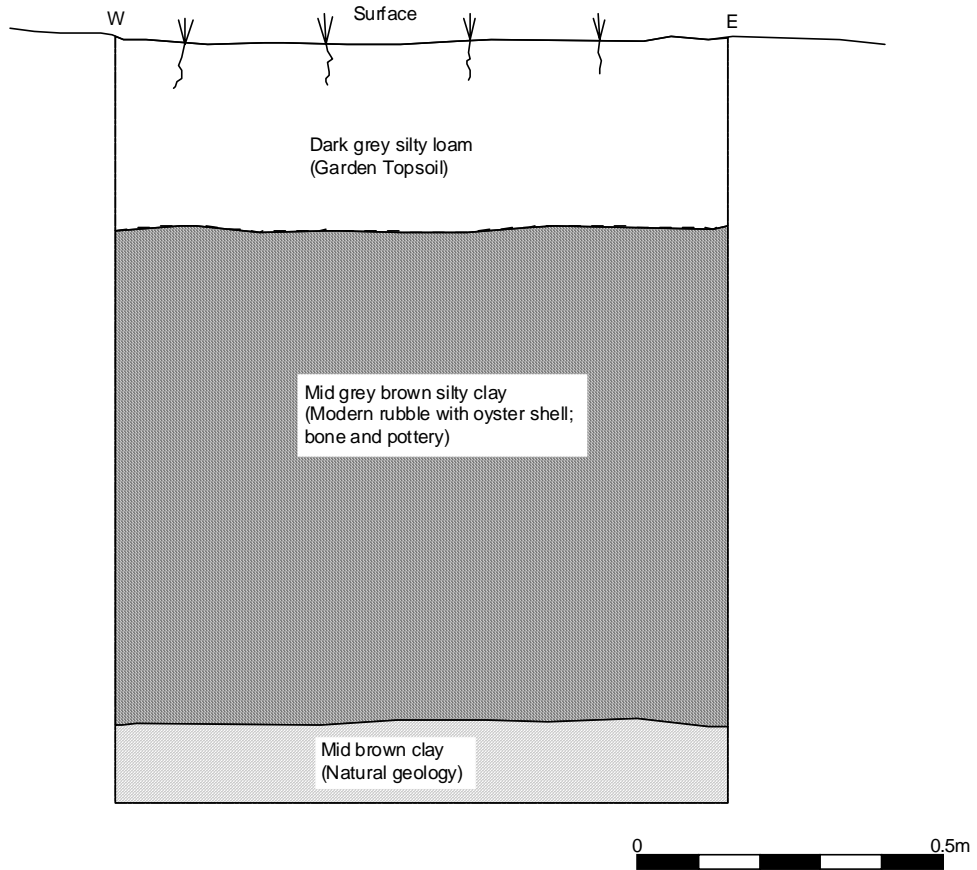


Fig.2. Representational section of Trench 2.

APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE INDEX

SITE NAME: Land to Rear of 23 High Street, South Benfleet (CPHS 04)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation
- 1.2 Written Scheme of Investigation for Evaluation

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 3 x Trench sheets
- 3.2 1 x Section sheet
- 3.3 1 x Plan sheet
- 3.4 2 x Photographic record sheets
- 3.5 4 x Black and White Prints
- 3.6 4 x Colour Slides

APPENDIX 2: EHCR SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: Land to Rear of 23 High Street, South Benfleet	
Parish: South Benfleet	District: Castle Point
NGR: TQ 77803 86056 (Centred)	Site Code: CPHS 04
Type of Work: Evaluation	Site Director/Group: Andrew Robertson ECC FAU
Date of Work: 3rd and 4th November 2004	Size of Area Investigated: Approximately 29.5m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Southend Museum	Funding Source: Brian Davison Associates.
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related EHCR Nos:
Final Report: EAH Summary?	
Periods Represented: None	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Three trenches measuring 7 x 1.4m were excavated in the footprints of the proposed buildings. Two trenches were 1.3m deep and the third was 1m deep. Although none of the trenches revealed any archaeological features a layer of modern rubble, below the topsoil, contained oyster shell; bone and medieval pottery.</p> <p>This suggests that although it is unlikely that archaeology survives on the development area there was medieval activity in the vicinity.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: Archer, J. 2004 <i>Land to the Rear of 23 High Street, Benfleet, Essex Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment</i> ECC FAU Client Report	
Author of Summary: Andrew Robertson	Date of Summary: November 2004