

**Forge Cottage, Gestingthorpe Road,
Belchamp Walter, Essex**

Planning application: BTE/00730/09

HER Ref: BWTFC 10

Report on Archaeological Trial Trenching

(John Newman BA MIFA, 2 Pearsons Place, Henley, Ipswich, IP6 0RA)

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Site details for HER

Name: Forge Cottage, Gestingthorpe Road, Belchamp Walter, CO10 7AU

Client: Chelsworth Ltd

Local planning authority: Braintree DC

Planning application ref: BTE/00730/09

Development: Residential dwelling

Date of fieldwork: 10 February 2010

HER Ref: BWTFC 10

OASIS ref: johnnewm1_72695

Grid ref: TL 8192 4051

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Summary: Belchamp Walter, Forge Cottage (BWTFC 10, TL 8192 4051) trial trenching located the green edge ditch visible on earlier OS maps towards the back of the proposed house footprint. Within the bulk of the new build area the only features were small pits of later 19th/20th date on what would have been part of the medieval green around the nearby crossroads. Finds from the site were all of 18th century or later date with a large amount of 19th/20th debris from the adjacent forge in a general make-up layer. (John Newman Archaeological Services for Chelsworth Ltd).

1. Introduction & background

1.1 Chelsworth Ltd commissioned John Newman Archaeological Services (JNAS) to undertake the archaeological trial trenching works on a proposed new house plot within the former yard and garden of Forge Cottage, Belchamp Walter (see Fig. 1 for site location), as required under a condition for a programme of archaeological works of the planning decision notice for application BTE/00730/09. The trial trenching requirements were set out in a Brief set by Ms T O'Connor of the Historic Environment Team (HEM) of Essex CC to satisfy this condition (Appendix II).

1.2 Belchamp Walter parish lies to the west of Sudbury in an area where the local soils are dominated by the heavier boulder clay or till deposits of central Essex. The site is located some 900m west of the parish church and Belchamp Hall in a small hamlet around a crossroads in a landscape characterised by small concentrations of settlement close to churches and general dispersed settlement along the roads and lanes and around greens and tyes (areas of common grazing and other communal land use). The site is close to the 65m OD contour with the nearest main water course, the Belchamp Brook, being nearly 1km to the south east. At the time of the investigation the site was under a concreted area of hard standing immediately south of Forge Cottage and just to the south of the crossroads within the hamlet.

1.3 To quote from the relevant Brief- 'The position of the development adjacent to the crossroads of the historic settlement at Belchamp Walter within close proximity of find spot evidence for Roman to medieval activity indicates the potential for archaeological deposits to survive on the site.' A small settlement is shown on the Chapman & Andre map of Essex of 1777 supporting this assumption and as the likelihood that the system of roads and lanes in the area is at least medieval in origin there is a strong possibility that this hamlet has seen settlement type activity since at least the high medieval period. The early Ordnance Survey

large scale map of the later 19th century for the Belchamp Walter area (see Fig. 2) gives more detail for the pre-modern layout of the hamlet with what is now Forge Cottage shown as the *Smithy* and *Post Office* on the south eastern corner of the cross roads. From this late 19th century map evidence it is clear that this cottage site almost certainly represents green infill as the roads entering the junction from the east and south in particular open out in a funnel like way some distance from the centre of the cross roads to form what must have been a moderately large open area also containing a pond, which still exists, in its south western quarter. The process of green encroachment had clearly gone some way by the later 19th century with the construction of the *Smithy* and *Post Office* with what appears to be an orchard behind and work currently underway on Forge Cottage itself indicates a Victorian construction date with re-use of timbers from elsewhere (pers. comm. Peter Nichols, main contractor at Forge Cottage).

2. Trial trenching methodology

2.1 As outlined in the Brief set by HEM an L shaped trench was opened (see Fig. 3) covering the road frontage area of the new build area and its northern edge following the breaking of a relatively thin concrete yard surface. In all 11m of trench at a width of 1.6m were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision to the top of the underlying natural till surface using a wide, toothless, ditching bucket. The exposed till surface was closely examined for archaeological features and any indistinct areas were hand cleaned and exposed cut features were hand sampled. The upcast spoil from the trench was examined visually and by an experienced metal detector user for any finds. Site visibility for features and finds is considered to have been good throughout the evaluation. All recording within the trench was done at 1:20 in plan and 1:10 in section; the trench was then recorded in relation to existing mapped details. A full photographic record in digital and monochrome film was taken of the trenching works.

3. Results

3.1 Under 250mm of concrete surface and modern make-up the 11m of trench revealed a layer (0001) which was 200mm thick nearest to the road frontage increasing to 600mm at the rear of the site and consisted of a dark brown/black clay loam with much burnt material, cinders and scrap late 19th and 20th century iron objects (see Fig. 4 for trench plan and sections). This layer (0001) which ran across the site is clearly smithy derived debris used to level-up the area and it also contained late 19th/20th century glass, pottery and brick/tile fragments. Below the smithy

debris layer (0001) a mid brown clay subsoil (0002) was identified which varied in depth between 200-250mm across the site and the removal of which exposed the natural till surface. This layer (0002) contained occasional later Post medieval pottery and brick/tile fragments with the most notable find being a sherd of 18th century Staffordshire type combed slipware (wt 15g) plus a few sherds of Staffordshire type white salt glazed stoneware. During the soil stripping a close watch was kept for stray finds within the layers removed and a metal detector search was also made across the upcast spoil and exposed till surface. This search did not recover any finds of pre 19th century date.

Trench depth was recorded as follows at three points (see also Fig. 4):

- 1- 650mm deep (250mm concrete & make-up/200mm layer 0001/ 200mm layer 0002).
- 2- 900mm deep (250mm concrete & make-up/ 400mm layer 0001/ 250mm layer 0002).
- 3- 1100mm deep (250mm concrete & make-up/ 600mm layer 0001/ 250mm layer 0002).

3.2 Examination of the opened trench revealed four features which were allocated observable phenomena (OP) or feature numbers; these are (see also Fig. 4):

0003: a small scoop/base of a shallow pit with a mid grey/brown clay fill (0004), the only finds recovered were 3 small fragments (20g) of 19th/20th century brick/tile (finds discarded on site).

0005: a small pit with a pale brown clay fill (0006) containing occasional small chalk fragments and 4 small fragments (25g) of 19th/20th century brick/tile (finds discarded on site).

0007: a post hole still containing modern fragments of wood.

0008: a large ditch at least 1.5m/2m wide and 1m deep (from the till surface) running on a south west-north east alignment at the furthest limit of the trenching from the road frontage. This ditch (0008) contained an upper fill (0009) of a mid brown clay with charcoal fragments, small iron scraps and smithy cinder debris over a lower fill (0010) made up of pale brown clay with more cinder debris, a few coal fragments and Post medieval brick and tile fragments. While all the peg tile fragments within this layer (0010) were too small to give any meaningful dimensions one brick fragment was larger (red sandy fabric, wt 630g, size- 95mmx40mmx?, or 3.75inx1.5inx?) while another gave a thickness dimension (red sandy fabric, wt 310g, size- ?x58mmx? or ?x2.25inx?).

Where identifiable these brick and tile fragments indicate a later 18th or 19th century date for the lower fill (0010) in this ditch (0008). The eastern edge of the ditch lay outside the trial trench which was constrained at this end by a terrace dropping down into the garden beyond.

4. Conclusion

4.1 As outlined in section 1 above, the hamlet at Belchamp Walter has a high possibility to contain evidence for medieval activity as it was clearly a well established settlement around the crossroads by the mid/late 18th century. In addition examination of the first edition OS map of the later 19th century points to the former presence of a road side green at the crossroads which would be a landscape feature consistent with a rural medieval settlement in north east Essex. With the information gained from the first edition OS map the trenching results can be more confidently interpreted with the ditch (0008) at the eastern most point examined, towards the rear of the proposed new house footprint, clearly being the green edge ditch visible on the early OS cover (see Figs. 2 & 3). That this ditch was mapped in the later 19th century indicates that it was open at this point and the brick and tile fragments from its lower fill (0010) are of a date consistent with these conclusions. From this initial conclusion the remainder of the trial trench must be on what was formerly the green and therefore the lack of any pre-18th century evidence is not surprising as medieval communities jealously guarded their communal rights on such areas. Encroachment onto the green at the cross roads is very likely to have been of later Post medieval date and the presence of only 18th century or later finds in the subsoil (0002) and the strong possibility that Forge Cottage is of 19th century origin both support this conclusion.

4.2 In conclusion it has been of value to establish more about the settlement at these cross roads at Belchamp Walter from a combination of map study and trial trenching results. However it is unlikely that further on-site archaeological investigation for this development would add much of further interest.

(Acknowledgements: The author is grateful to Teresa O'Connor of HEM, Essex CC, for her advice with regard to this project and for generously providing a copy of the relevant historic OS map extract. Thanks are also due to James Armes for carrying out the metal detector search, William Pewter for his skilled plant operation and Peter Nicholls for information regarding Forge Cottage.)

Selected images



Ditch (0008) from north showing edge on right (west) & feature running out of the trench to left (east)



East-west arm of trench from west- ditch (0008) at the end of the trench

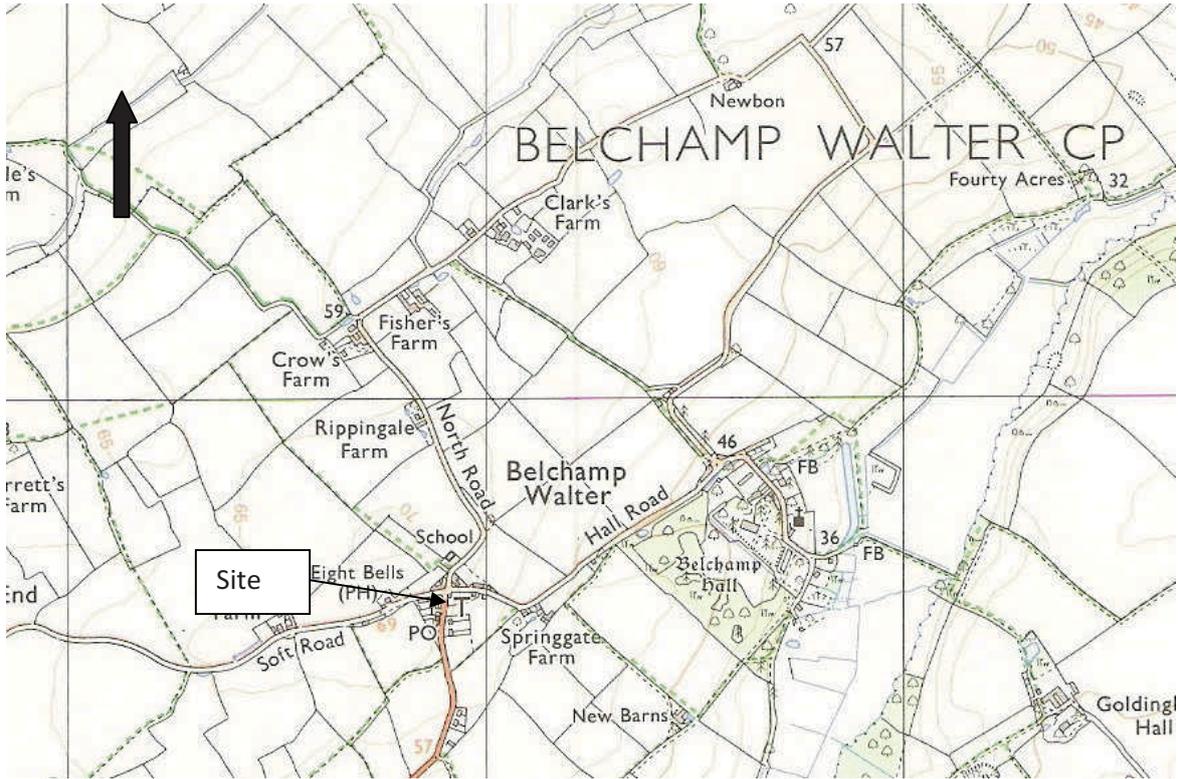


Fig. 1: Site location (Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 1979. All rights reserved, WL1005096) Scale: 0m | _____ | 500m

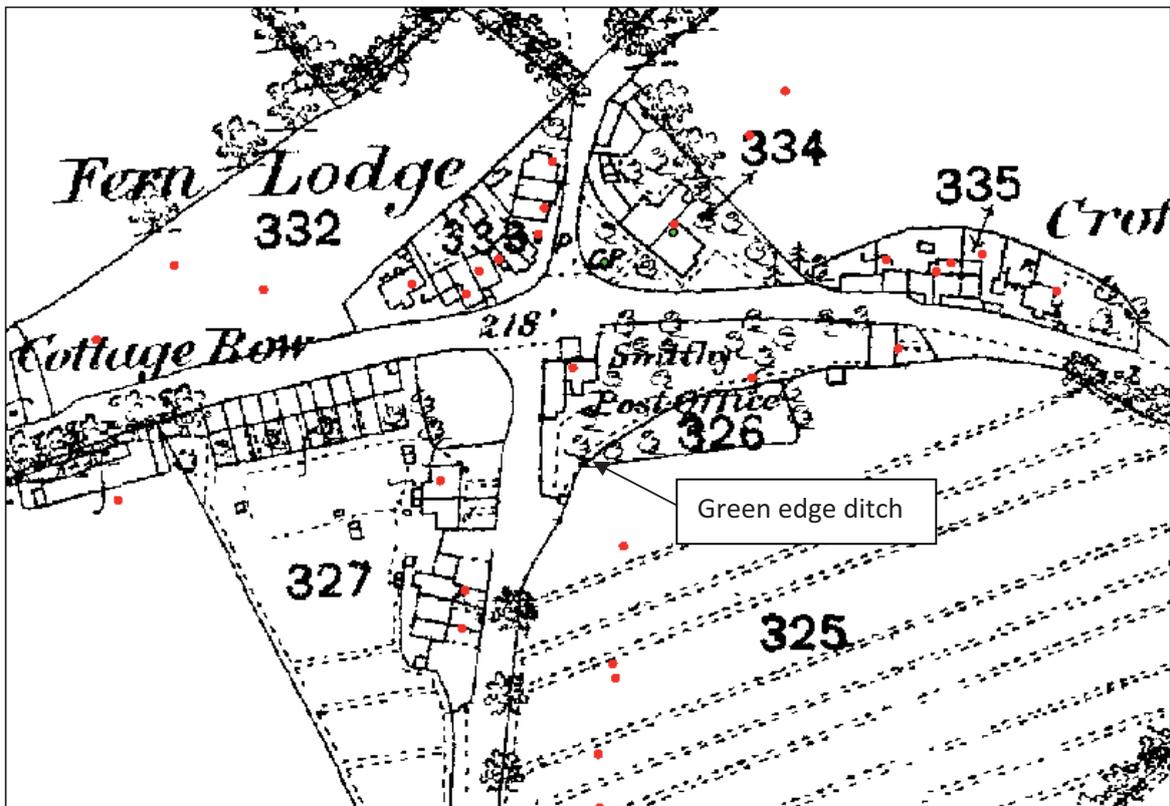


Fig. 2: First edition Ordnance Survey- map extract

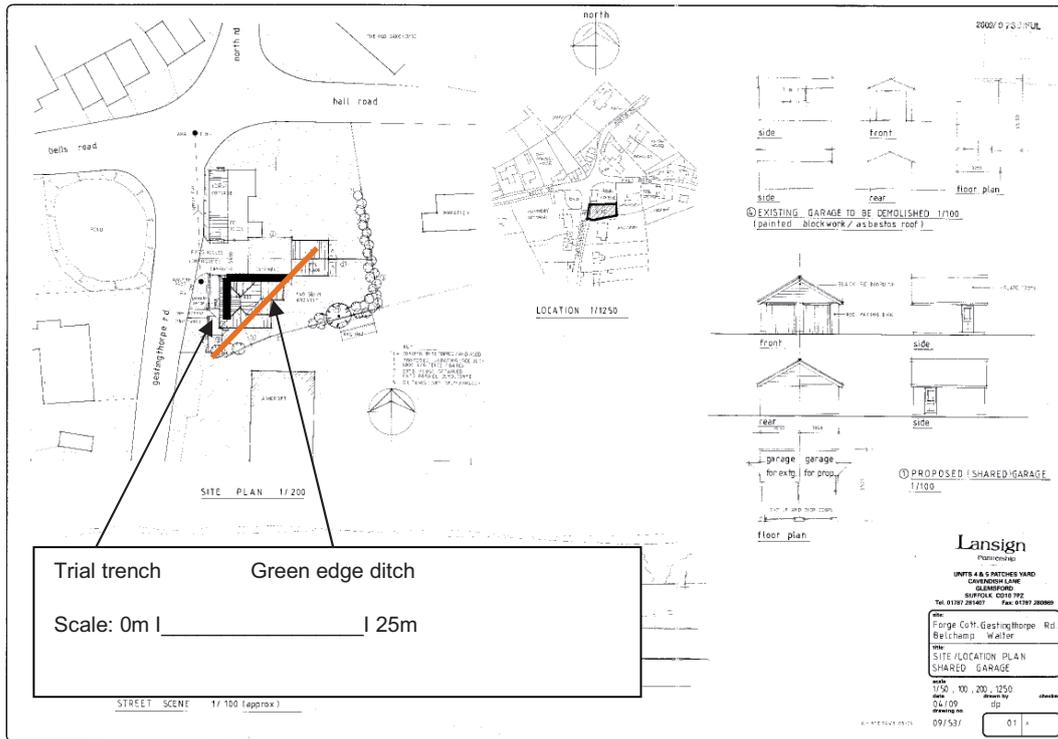


Fig. 3: Trench location

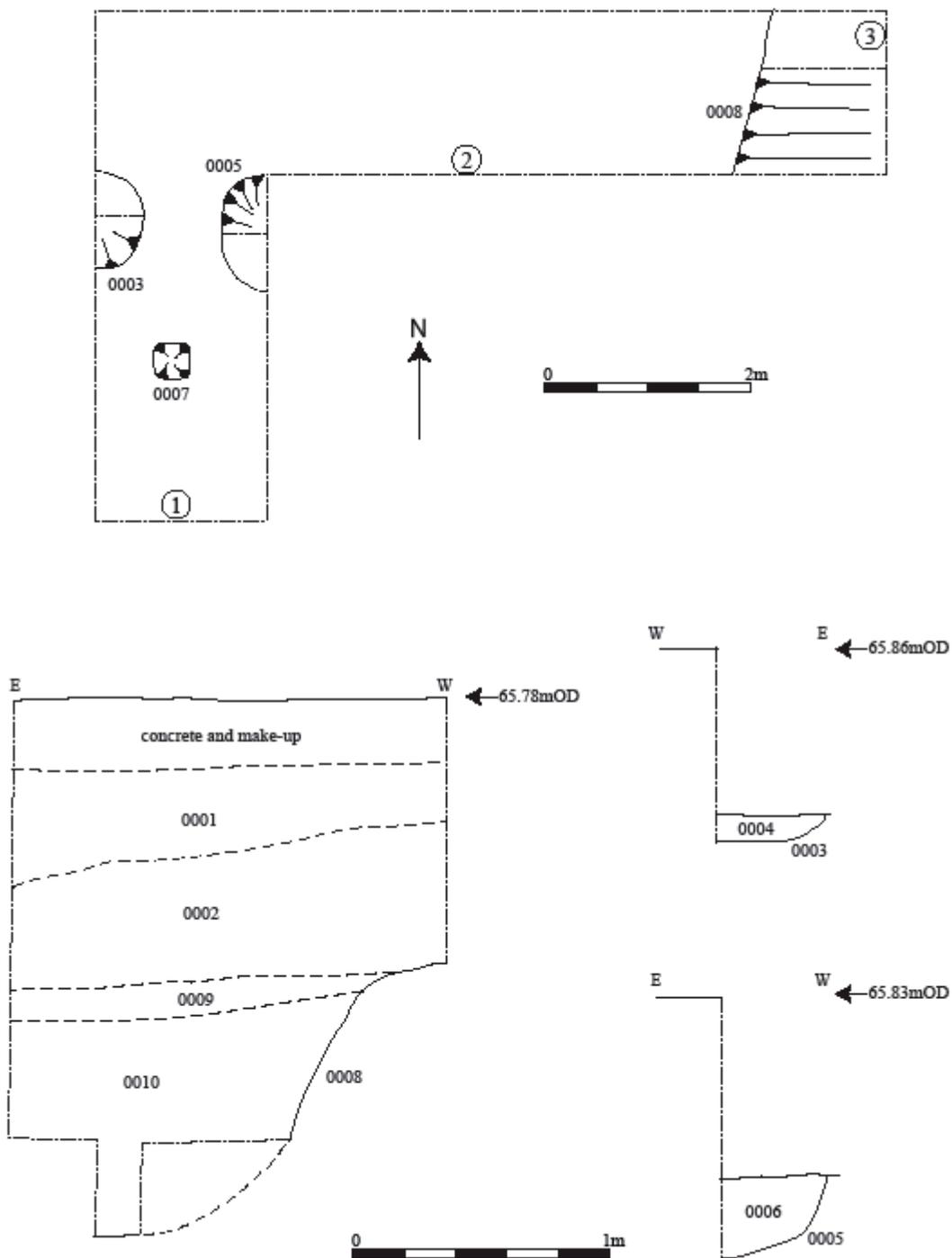


Fig 4: Archaeological features- trench plan & sections

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING AT
FORGE COTTAGE
GESTINGTHORPE ROAD
BELCHAMP WATER,
BRAINTREE**

August 2009



Essex County Council

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT BRANCH

Site: Forge Cottage, Gestingthorpe Road, Belchamp Water, Braintree

Planning app. no.: BTE/00730/09

Historic Environment Management (HEM) Team Officer: Teresa O'Connor (01245) 437638

Museum: Robert Rose, Museum Collections & Heritage Manager, Braintree District Museum

E-mail: robert.rose@braintree.gov.uk Tel. (01376) 325266 or (01376) 551414 Ext. 6180

This archaeological brief is only valid for six months. After this period the HEM Team of the Historic Environment Branch of Essex County Council should be contacted to assess whether any changes are required. Any written scheme of investigation resulting from this brief shall only be considered for the same period.

*The contractor is advised to visit the site before completing their **written scheme of investigation** as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.*

1. Introduction

The HEM Team of the Historic Environment Branch of Essex County Council has prepared this brief for an archaeological investigation at the above site. The proposed development comprises the demolition of an existing single garage (covered under separate application), severance of part side garden and erection of new two storey dwelling and associated outbuilding with improvements to existing access. The position of the development adjacent to the crossroads of the historic settlement at Belchamp Water within close proximity of findspot evidence for Roman to Medieval activity indicates the potential for archaeological deposits to survive on the site.

2. Site Location and Description

The proposed development lies on land between Forge Cottage and Ashcroft, located along Gestingthorpe Road south of the crossroads in the centre of the historic settlement at Belchamp Water (Grid ref TL 8192 4051). The site is currently undeveloped and used as a garden with an outbuilding (to be demolished).

3. Planning Background

A planning application (BTE/00730/09) was submitted to Braintree District Council in June 2009 for the demolition of an existing single garage (covered under separate application), severance of part side garden and erection of new two storey dwelling and associated outbuilding with improvements to

Forge Cottage, Gestingthorpe Road, Belchamp Water

existing access. As the development lies in an area of significant archaeological potential, the Historic Environment Branch of Essex County Council made the following recommendation to the LPA in line with advice given in *Planning Policy Guidance Note16: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990)*:

RECOMMENDATION: Full condition

"No development, or preliminary groundworks, of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the planning authority."

The application was granted consent in July 2009 with the above condition attached. All archaeological work should be undertaken by a professional recognised archaeological contractor and there will be a financial implication for the applicant.

4. Archaeological Background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford. Prospective contractors are advised to visit the EHER prior to the completion of any written scheme of investigation (To make an appointment contact Ms A. Bennett, 01245 437637).

The Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the proposed development site lies at the core of the historic settlement at Belchamp Water. Cartographic evidence dating to 1777 reveals a small settlement centred around the crossroads with a pond and village green. The map indicates buildings within close proximity of the proposed development which are no longer extant. It is likely that this settlement may be medieval in origin, and that evidence associated with the earlier settlement may survive in the area proposed for development. The medieval Church/Hall complex of Belchamp Manor is represented by the survival of the medieval Church, however the manorial hall was rebuilt in 1720 and lies to the east of the historic settlement at Belchamp Water. In the fields to the south of the development area finds dating from the Iron Age to Postmedieval period have been recovered including pottery, brooches and coins indicative of settlement or occupation throughout these periods.

5. Requirement for Work

The specific aim of the investigation is to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits within the development area and to preserve, by record, any archaeological deposits that will be destroyed by the construction of the new house and access and other significant groundworks.

The proposed development area is within an area of archaeological potential that will be assessed by trial trenching in the first instance. A single 'L' shaped trench shall be placed to run along the length of the front of the house, following the road frontage with the longer arm to run east west along the northern end of the house to include, if possible, the extent of the new single story addition. Should the trench have to be dug in sections to avoid major footings this would be acceptable.

Specific attention shall be paid to:

- Evidence for occupation or activity associated with the historic settlement at Belchamp Water.

Should significant archaeological remains be present the trenches may need to be expanded or an area may need to be opened to include the footprint of the house and any features identified will be excavated. This will be outlined in a separate brief.

6. Methodology

- 6.1 The archaeological work shall be undertaken by a professional team of field archaeologists. The number of staff involved and the structure of the team shall be stated in the written scheme of investigation.
- 6.2 The archaeological contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and the document Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney, 2003).
- 6.3 All of the latest Health and Safety guidelines must be followed on site.
- 6.4 The contractor shall ensure detailed study of all mains' service locations and avoid damage to these.
- 6.5 Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name for the project shall be provided to the Historic Environment Management Team one week in advance of commencement of work.
- 6.6 A site code shall be obtained from the HEM Team Officer of Essex County Council.
- 6.7 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.

- 6.8 The contractor shall provide details of the site surveying, excavation and finds recovery policy in the written scheme of investigation. The site grid shall be tied into the National Grid.
- 6.9 Machine stripping shall be undertaken to an agreed standard, using a toothless ditching bucket, and under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist. The exposed sub-soil or archaeological horizon will be cleaned by hand immediately after machine stripping and any archaeological deposits or negative features planned.
- 6.10 Masonry walls shall be carefully cleaned and planned. Where possible these will be left in situ. If these have to be removed then detailed drawings both in plan and section will be required.
- 6.11 The contractor shall provide details of the sampling strategies for retrieving artefacts, biological remains (for palaeoenvironmental and palaeoeconomic investigations), and samples of sediments and/or soils (for micromorphological and other pedological/sedimentological analyses). Advice on the appropriateness of the proposed strategies will be sought from the English Heritage Regional Adviser in Archaeological Science (East of England). A guide to sampling archaeological deposits (Murphy and Wiltshire 1994) is available from the HEM.
- 6.12 Should human remains be discovered the coroner will be informed and a licence from the Home Office sought immediately; both the client and the monitoring officer will also be informed. Burials will require 100% excavation
- 6.13 The site and spoil heaps shall be checked by metal detector, with any finds recovered.
- 6.14 Details of the site planning policy shall be given in the project written scheme of investigation. The normal preferred policy for the scale of archaeological site plans is 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.
- 6.14 Section drawings shall be completed on all trenches identifying the depth of the archaeological deposits and the depth of the natural sub-soil.
- 6.15 The photographic record policy shall be given in the written scheme of investigation. A photographic register detailing as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot shall accompany the photographic record.
- 6.16 The IFA's Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations and the document Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney, 2003) should be used for additional guidance in the production of the archaeological written scheme of investigation, the content of the report, and the general execution of the project.

7. Finds

- 7.1 All finds, where appropriate, shall be washed.
- 7.2 All pottery and other finds where appropriate, shall be marked with the site code and context number.
- 7.3 The written scheme of investigation shall include an agreed list of specialist consultants, who will be required to conserve and/or report on finds, and advise or report on other aspects of the investigation.
- 7.4 The requirements for conservation and storage shall be stated within the written scheme of investigation.
- 7.5 Finds work should be to accepted professional standards and adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologists Guidelines for Finds Work.

8. Results

- 8.1 The full report shall be submitted to the HEM Team within a length of time (but not exceeding 4 months) from the end of the fieldwork, with a copy supplied to the EHER. A full digital copy shall be supplied to the HEM team.
- 8.2 This report must contain:
 - The aims and methods adopted in the course of the archaeological programme.
 - Location plan of excavated areas in relation to the proposed development. At least two corners of each trench shall be given 10 figure grid references.
 - A section/s drawing showing depth of deposits including present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale.
 - All specialist reports
 - Methodology and detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion. Where appropriate the discussion should be completed in consultation with the Eastern Counties Research Agenda and Strategy (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).
- 8.3 An EHER summary sheet shall also be completed within four weeks. This will be completed in digital form (copy can be emailed). This shall include a plan showing the position of the trenches.

- 8.4 All parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the EHER. This should include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy should also be included with the archive).
- 8.4 Publication of the results at least to a summary level (i.e. round up of archaeology in Essex in *Essex Archaeology and History*) shall be undertaken in the year following the archaeological field work. An allowance shall be made within the costs for full publication in an appropriate journal.

9. Archive Deposition

- 9.1 The requirements for archive storage shall be agreed with the appropriate museum (Braintree), and confirmed in writing to the HEM Officer.
- 9.2 If the finds are to remain with the landowner a full copy of the paper archive shall be housed with the appropriate museum.
- 9.3 The full archive shall be deposited with the appropriate museum within 2 months of the completion of the report and confirmed in writing to the HEM Team.
- 9.4 A summary of the contents of the archive shall be supplied to the HEM Team at the time of deposition to the museum.

10. Monitoring

- 10.1 The HEM Team of Essex County Council will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project. This will include the fieldwork, post-excavation and publication stages.
- 10.2 Notification of the start of the archaeological work shall be given to the HEM Team one week in advance of its commencement.
- 10.3 Any variations of the written scheme of investigation shall be agreed with the HEM Team prior to them being carried out.
- 10.4 All excavated trenches must be inspected by the HEM Team Officer prior to their backfilling.

11. Contractors Written Scheme of Investigation

- 11.1 In accordance with Standards and Guidance produced by the IFA this design brief should not be considered sufficient to enable the total execution of the project. A WSI is required therefore in order to provide the basis for a measurable standard and for submission by the developer to the Local Planning Authority for approval.
- 11.2 Archaeological contractors shall forward a WSI to the HEM Team of Essex County Council for validation prior to fieldwork commencing.
- 11.3 The involvement of the HEM Team shall be acknowledged in any report or publication generated by this project.

References

- Brown, N. and Glazebrook, J. 2000 Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy. East Anglian. Archaeol. Occ. Pap. 8
- Gurney, D. 2003 Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian. Archaeol. Occ. Pap. 14

For further information regarding the content of this brief and as part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content and presentation of this archaeological brief. Please address them to the author at the address below.

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