

THORPE HALL, STATION ROAD

THORPE-LE-SOKEN

ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



Essex County Council
Planning

Field Archaeology Unit

November 2001

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November 2001

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**THORPE HALL, STATION ROAD
THORPE-LE-SOKEN
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Client: Tangram Leisure Ltd.

Planning Application No.: TEN/1175/01

NGR: TM 1820 2175

Site Code: TSTH 01

Project No: 994

Dates of Fieldwork: 5th-12th November 2001

SUMMARY

Seven evaluation trenches were excavated on the site of a car parking area for a proposed residential health spa development at Thorpe Hall, Thorpe-le-Soken. The area contained several cropmark features across the south of the site that were investigated as the main aim of the evaluation.

Archaeological remains were concentrated in the south-west of the site, in Trench 1, where a stratified sequence of ditches, gullies, pits and layers indicate occupation activity which principally dates to the mid-late Roman and perhaps early/mid Saxon periods. Outlying remains of ditches may represent an associated field system.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (EEC FAU) on behalf of Tangram Leisure Ltd. The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief produced by the Heritage Conservation Branch of Essex County Council (ECC HAMP).

The purpose of the work was to establish through trial trenching the presence and nature of archaeological features or deposits within the proposed car park to be constructed as part of the wider redevelopment of Thorpe Hall as a residential health spa.

The site archive will be deposited with Colchester Museum (Appendix 5) and a copy of the report and site summary (Appendix 6) will be supplied to the Essex Heritage Conservation Record (EHCR) held by Essex County Council in Chelmsford.

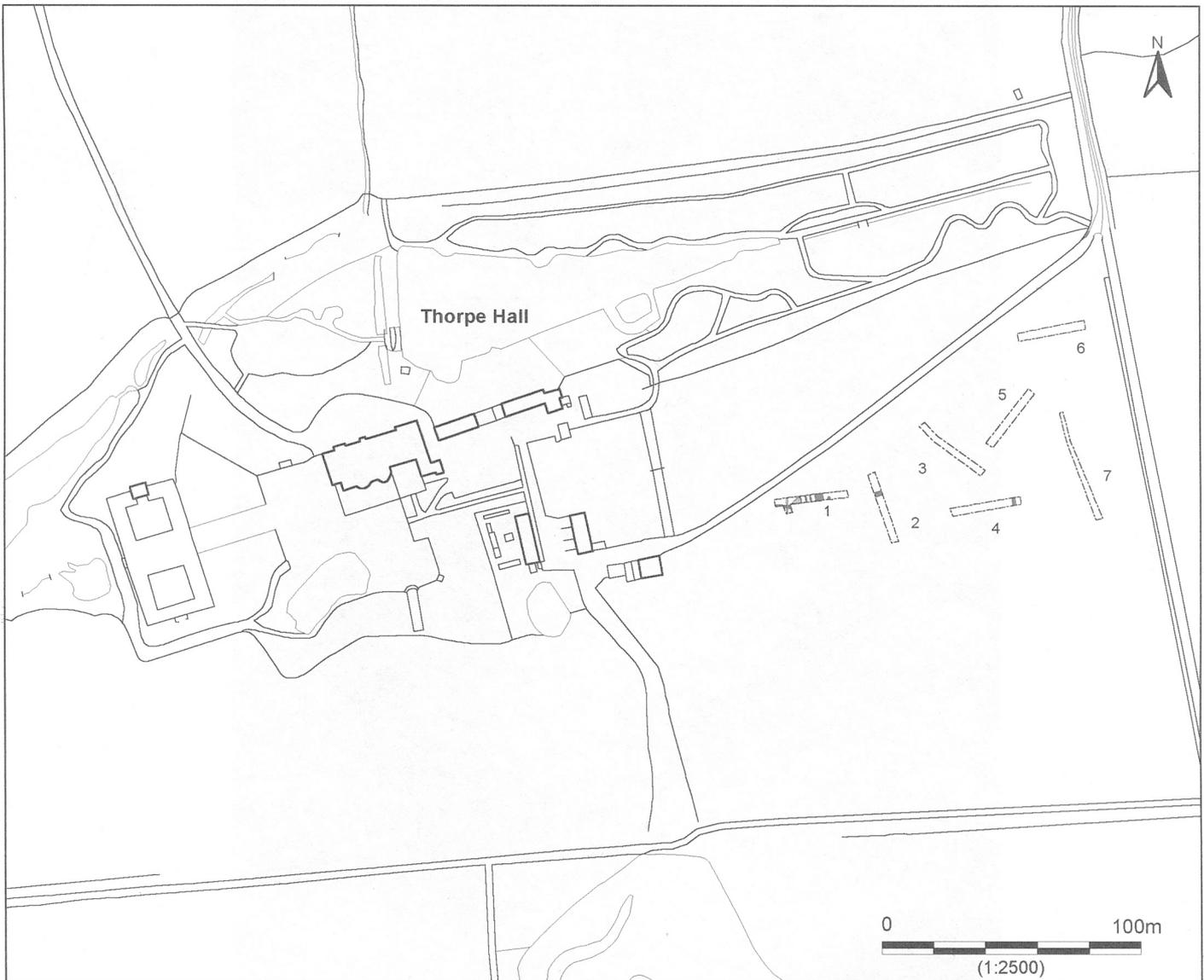
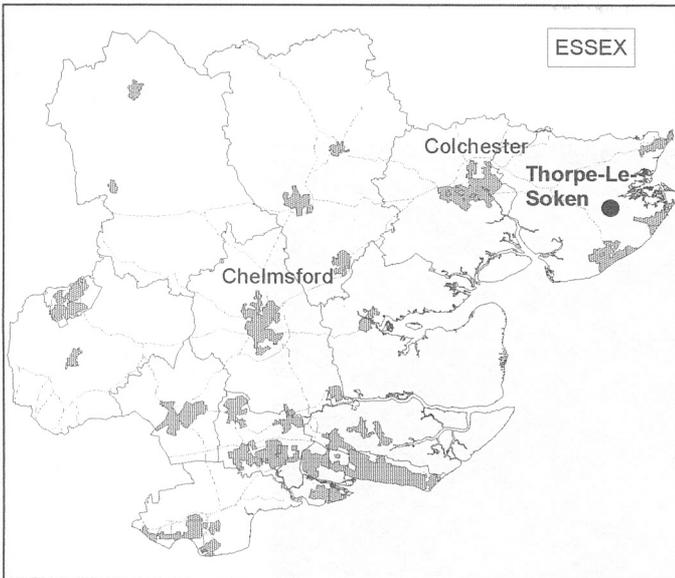
2.0 SITE BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Geology (Fig. 1)

Thorpe Hall is located off Station Road, to the south of Thorpe-le-Soken; a village situated approximately 30km east of Colchester in Tendring District. The site is located within the grounds of the Thorpe Hall estate.

The development area (TM 1820 2175) occupies the northern part of a large meadow to the south east of the house. A roughly triangular area of approximately 800m², the site slopes slightly downwards to the north and is bounded by a hedge and ditch to the east and by a service road to the north. A further area of pasture lies to the south.

The general height of the site is 25.60m above sea level. Below topsoil the natural subsoil is characterised by a sandy clay with gravel outcrops.



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Fig. 1 Site Location Plan

2.2 Archaeological Background

According to the Essex Heritage and Conservation Record (EHCR), held in County Hall, Chelmsford, the proposed car park development lies within an area of significant archaeological potential as indicated by a series of cropmarks located across the field. These cropmarks include a small group of ring ditches of likely prehistoric origin that lie outside the development area, to the south. A number of undated linear cropmark features, including what appears to be one side of a possible rectangular enclosure (EHCR 3153), lie within the planned car park area. The approximate positions of the cropmarks, derived from an unrectified plot, are shown in Fig. 2.

2.3 Planning Background

As a response to a planning proposal by Tangram Leisure for the provision of a 200 space car park, linked to a planned residential health spa, ECC HAMP recommended that, in view of the sites high archaeological potential, a pre-determination field evaluation should be conducted to assess the survival of below ground archaeological remains.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the evaluation was to locate, identify and record the presence of any surviving archaeological remains within the development area focused on the cropmark areas. Depending on the results, any further work would be arranged between the developer and HAMP, the monitoring body.

A minimum sample of 8% of the development area was specified by the brief issued by HAMP, to be investigated by means of a programme of trial trenching. A contingency of a further 2% sample, to clarify any exposed remains where necessary, was also specified. This contingency was not used. The number and distribution of the evaluation trenches aimed to evenly sample the site as a whole and, where possible, intercept the known cropmarks in its southern part (Figs.1 and 2).

4.0 METHOD

Seven trial trenches were dug using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were dug to a width of 3.2m and aligned for maximum coverage of the site and of the cropmarks (Fig. 2). Each was thirty metres in length, although Trench 7 was extended by a further 10m in an attempt to verify the line of the rectangular enclosure cropmark. Trench location data is presented in Appendix 4.

Where stratified archaeological deposits were not encountered, the trenches were dug onto the top of the underlying natural subsoil.

All exposed features and deposits were sampled by hand excavation. Recording followed standard FAU methodology, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation, and included the creation of written, drawn and photographic records.

On completion of the work, the trenches were inspected by Pat Connell (HAMP) and subsequently backfilled by machine, with his consent.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

Approximately 0.36m of topsoil (1) was removed in each of the trenches. This consisted of a mid brownish grey sandy silt clay with occasional stones but very little cultural debris. Except for Trench 1, the topsoil lay immediately over the natural subsoil (3), suggesting that any intervening subsoil layers had been destroyed by ploughing over the greater part of the site. The natural subsoil was an orange brown sandy clay interspersed by random patches of gravel and a high degree of iron panning. In the south and west of the site the deposit was noticeably more clayey in texture.

Archaeological remains were found in the south and west of the development area, in Trenches 1, 2 and 4, but particularly concentrated in Trench 1. Dating evidence was found in Trenches 1 and 4. The results are described below and a site matrix included as Appendix 1.

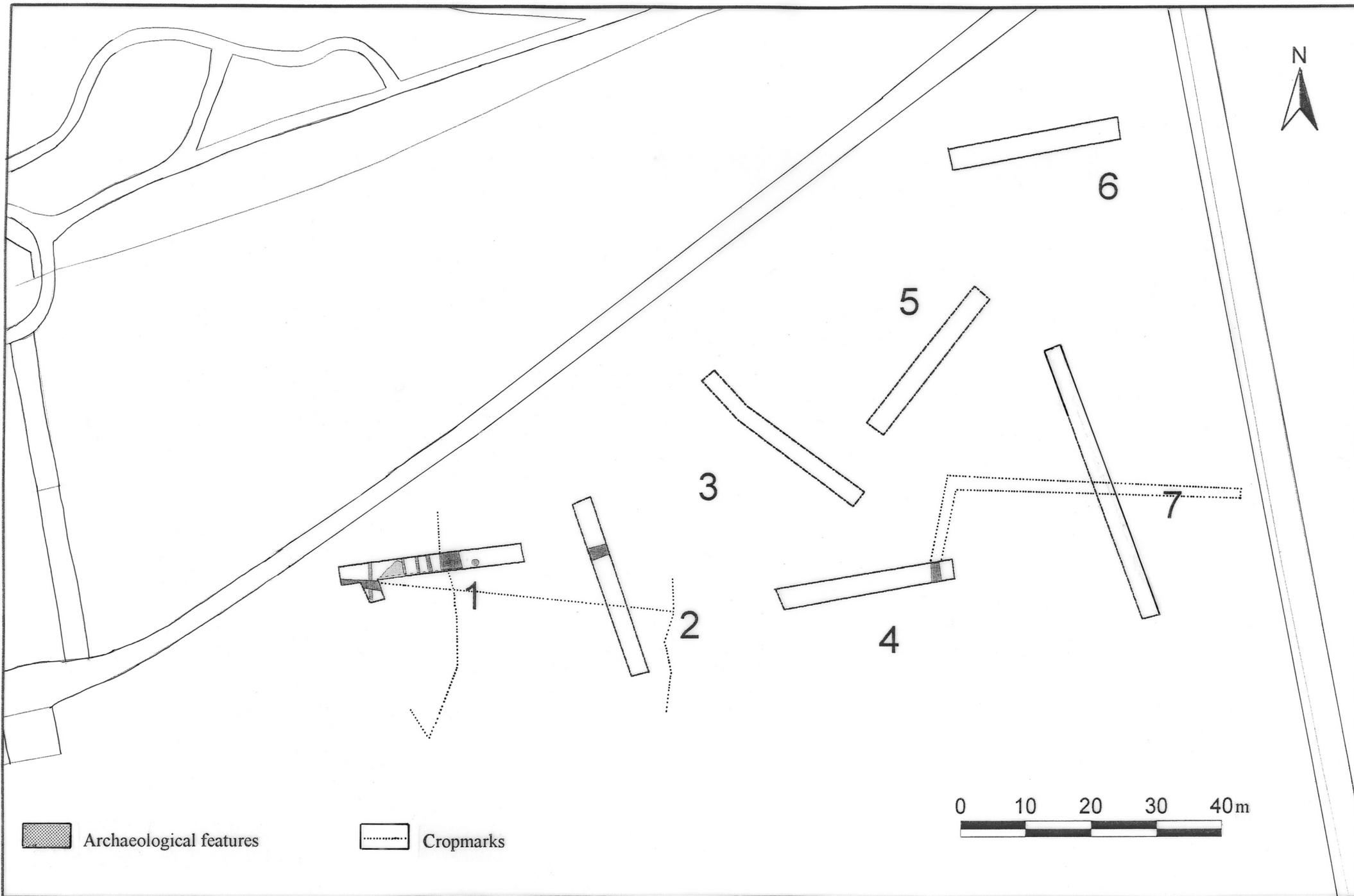


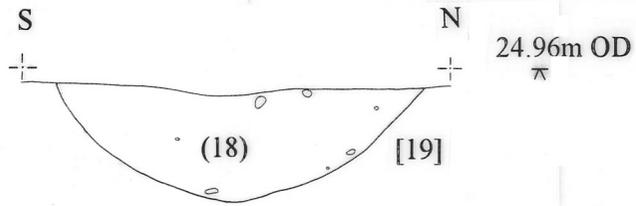
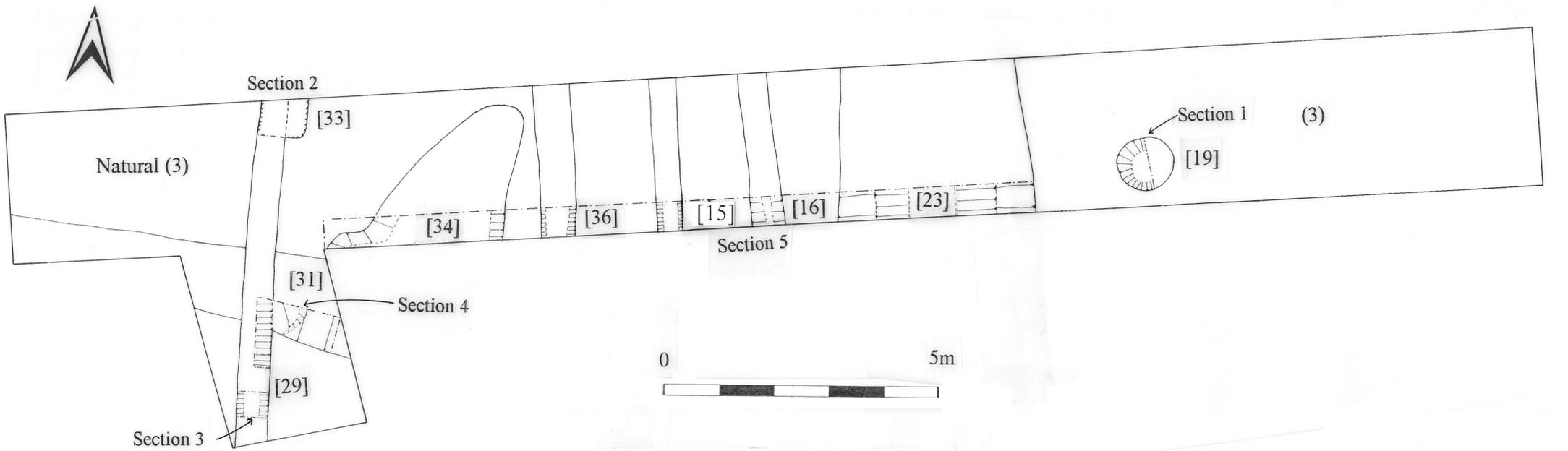
Fig. 2 Location of evaluation trenches and cropmarks

5.1 Trench 1 (Figs. 2, 3 & 4)

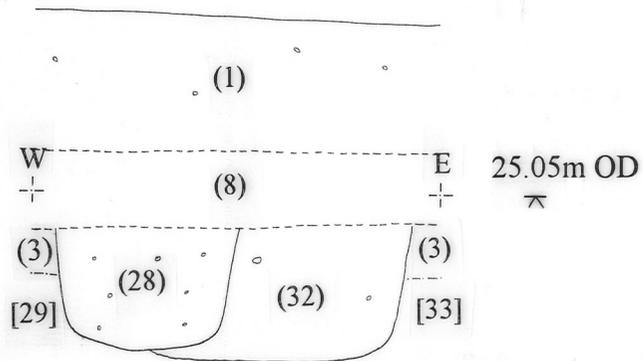
The removal of topsoil in Trench 1 exposed archaeological features and deposits approximately 0.36m below existing ground level. Excavation established that these comprised a stratified sequence of layers, pits, ditches and gullies. The recorded inter-relationships between these various remains are presented on the site matrix (Appendix 1).

The earliest feature in this stratified sequence was the base of a large pit, [34]. Located toward the western end of the trench, it was difficult to define and may have been more than one feature. However, pottery collected from its fill indicates a reliable mid 2nd century date. The pit appears to have been truncated by an expansive, though shallow, hollow [44] that occupied the whole of the western half of the trench. Only the eastern extent of this feature was established. The hollow contained a 0.3m-thick sequence of grey, gravel-free, silts (layers 24, 17 and 13) which seem to represent its gradual silting during the mid 2nd century.

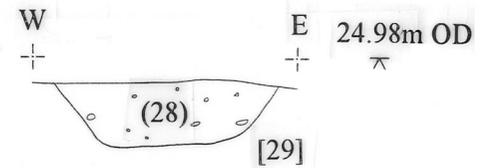
Within this silting sequence, and generally located on or toward the eastern edge of the hollow, were a number of minor ditches or gullies (features 10, 15, 16 and 36), all of which shared a north-south alignment. These may represent successive boundary or drainage features that skirted the hollow edge. The earliest of these was ditch [36] which contained 2nd century pottery. It may have been associated with an apparent gravel 'bank' deposit (38) that lay alongside, immediately to its east. As the hollow continued to silt-up, these boundary features were replaced by ditches [10] and [16]. Whether or not these were strictly contemporary was not established; their differing dimensions and profiles perhaps makes this unlikely. However, it is noteworthy that undated ditch [10] appears to be a replacement of underlying ditch [36]. Ditch [16] contained a sherd of Saxon pottery. Likewise, their relationship with the far more substantial ditch [23], to their east, is not certain, though all could be broadly contemporary. At 3m wide and 1m deep, ditch [23] represents a significant boundary on the very edge of the, by now, largely silted-up hollow and corresponds closely with one of the linear cropmark features (Fig. 2). The silty nature of its fills and the paucity of finds may suggest that it was a field, rather than settlement, boundary. The upper fill (20) may, in fact, be a later accumulation in its slump hollow. This is supported by the presence of a small quantity of medieval pottery in this deposit. On the basis of the stratigraphy the ditch, and its fills proper, could be mid to late Roman, although the undiagnostic pottery collected supplies only a broad 'Roman' date.



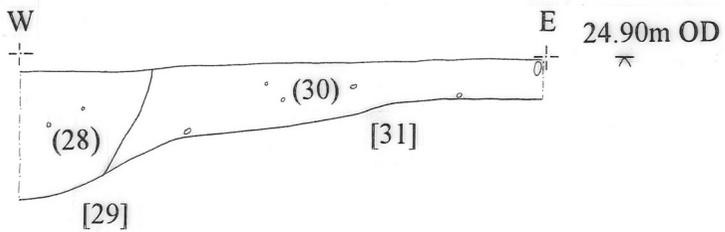
Section 1 West-facing section



Section 2 South-facing section



Section 3 North-facing section



Section 4 South-facing section



Fig. 3 Plan of Trench 1 and sections through features

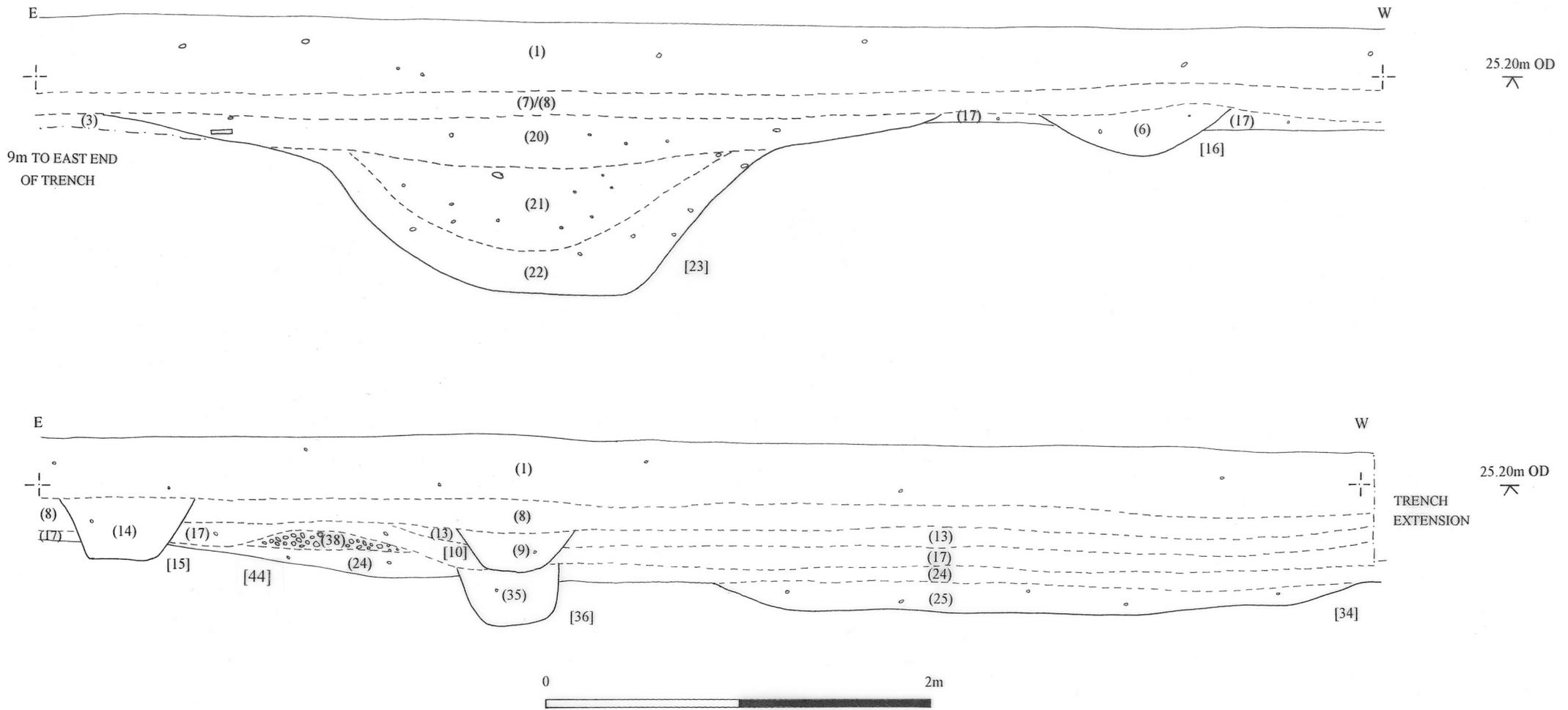


Fig. 4 North-facing section through deposits and features in trench 1

An undated pit, [19], lay to the east of ditch [23] while a number of further features were present in the west end of the trench. Their relationships with the hollow and its overlying features could not be established as the various silt layers did not seem to extend this far. The relationship between pit [34] and east-west ditch [31] was not established nor was any dating evidence retrieved from the fills of the latter. This ditch was cut by a minor north-south ditch [29] which yielded medieval pottery and post-Roman brick and tile fragments. This in turn cut a small square pit, [33] of earlier, though unspecified, date.

All of the cut features described above were sealed by a layer of homogenous mid brownish-grey silty clay (contexts 7 and 8) that extended across the whole area of the trench. Two conjoining sherds of Saxon pottery were recovered from this deposit, although this cannot be used to reliably date it. Only one feature, gully/ditch [15], was observed to cut this layer; crossing the trench on a north-south alignment. It was filled with a mottled grey and orange clay, interspersed by pockets of loamy soil similar to topsoil layer (1) directly above. This feature may possibly be medieval, or later, in date.

5.2 Trench 2 (Figs. 2 & 5)

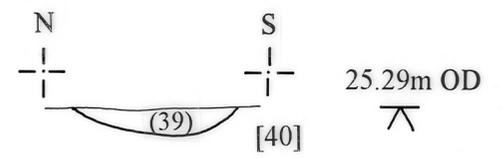
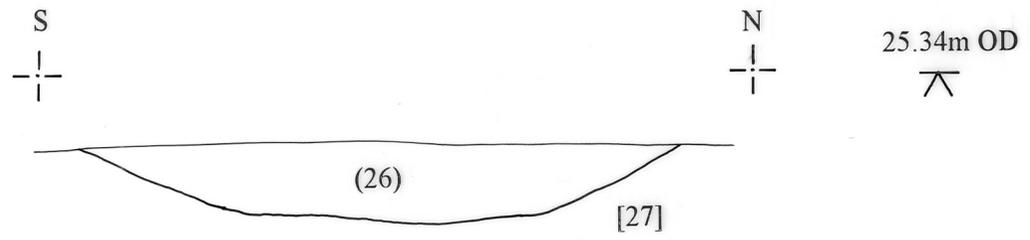
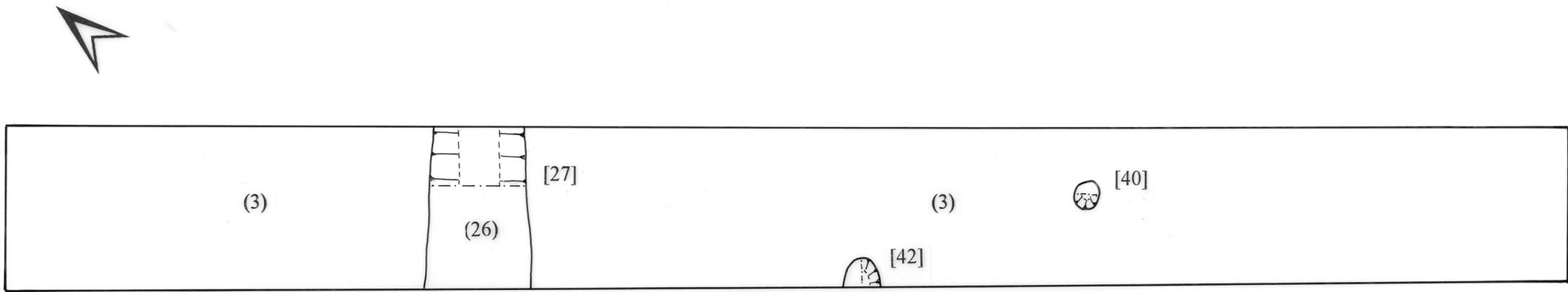
A layer of topsoil (1) was cleared directly onto mixed clay and gravel natural 0.36m below. Cut into this, toward the north end of the trench, was shallow ditch [27] which ran on a roughly east-west alignment. No dating evidence was recovered from its fill. Two postholes, [40] and [42], were identified in the middle of the trench (Fig. 5). Only the latter yielded dating evidence in the form of a sherd of Roman pottery.

5.3 Trench 4 (Figs. 2 & 6)

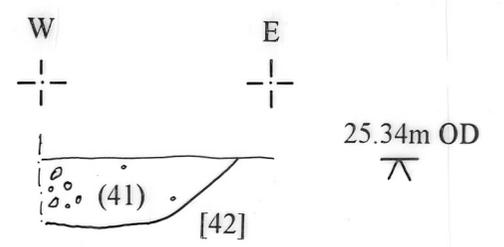
Natural mixed subsoil lay beneath 0.36m of topsoil in Trench 4. Ditch [37] was observed at its eastern end crossing the trench on a broadly north-south alignment. A fragment of likely post-Roman tile was recovered from its fill. The line of the ditch closely correlates with that of the plotted 'enclosure cropmark' in the south east corner of the site (Fig.2).

5.4 Trenches 3, 5, 6 and 7 (Fig.2)

No archaeological features or deposits were discerned within any of the four remaining trenches located in the central, northern and eastern parts of the site. However, Trench 7 was specifically positioned to investigate a further part of the 'enclosure cropmark' that was



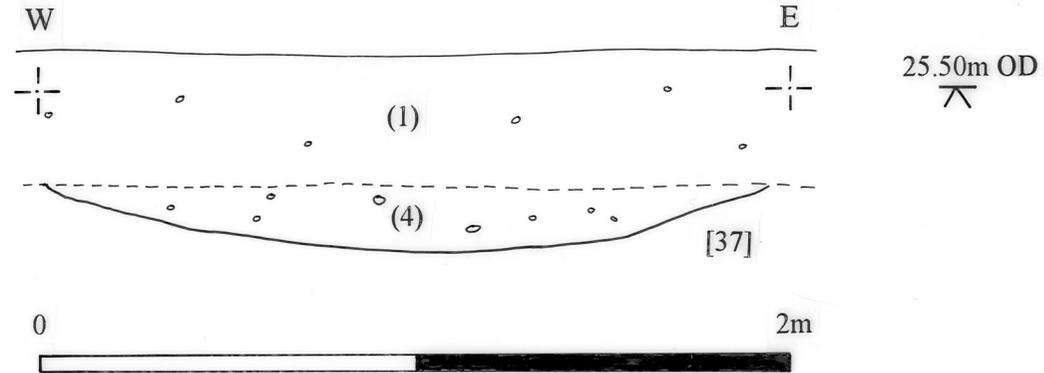
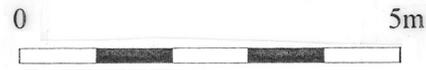
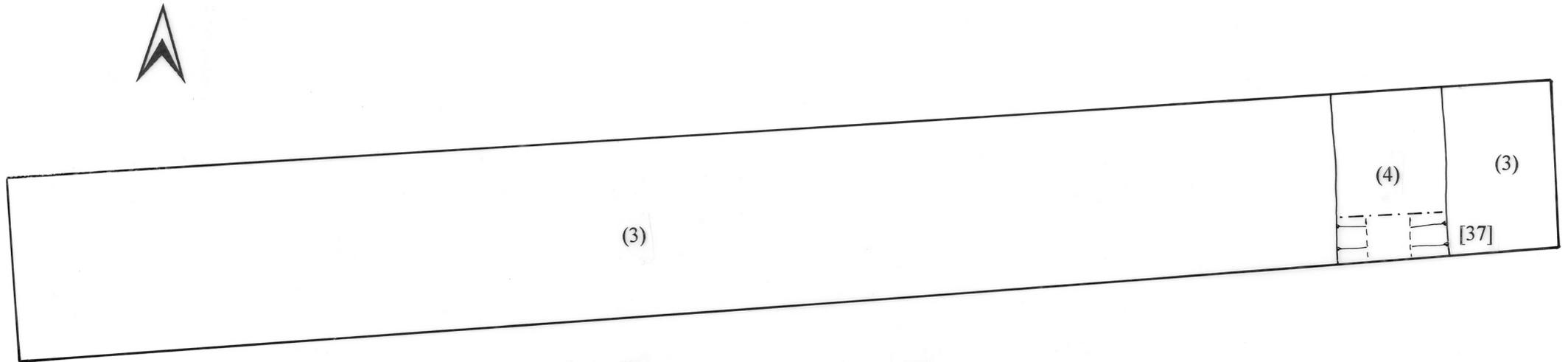
Section 2 West-facing section through posthole [40]



Section 3 South-facing through posthole [42]



Fig. 5 Plan of Trench 2 and sections through features



Section 1 North-facing section through ditch [37]

Fig. 6 Plan of Trench 4 and section through ditch [37]

successfully located within Trench 4. Although it may reasonably be predicted to cross the middle of Trench 7, no sign of this feature was identified. It is possible that the ditch was particularly shallow in this vicinity and was simply lost within the modern ploughsoil.

6.0 FINDS

Almost all of the finds recovered, came from the features and deposits investigated within Trench 1. The majority comprise Roman pottery, brick and tile with small quantities of fragmentary baked clay artefacts and single pieces of animal bone and metalwork. However, of potential significance is a small quantity of early/middle Saxon pottery.

6.1 Roman pottery by T.S. Martin

A total of 144 sherds weighing 1.5kg were recovered from fifteen contexts. All but one sherd came from Trench 1. The pottery has been classified using the Chelmsford typology published by Going (1987, 2-54) as is standard for FAU sites. The evaluation of the Roman-period ceramics is primarily concerned with identifying the variety of fabrics and forms, and with providing dating evidence for site features (Appendix 2). Quantification has been undertaken by sherd count and weight by fabric.

By far the bulk of the pottery came from groups comprising below 30 sherds and no feature or deposit contained more than 0.5kg of pottery. Most of the sherds recovered from the site were in poor condition, often exhibiting high levels of abrasion. However, several contexts contained enough diagnostic material to allow reasonably close dating. The layers and pit [34] in Trench 1 have provided the most diagnostic sherds and are, therefore, the most reliably dated.

Of the seven features that produced pottery dating-evidence, two of these (gully [16] and ditch [29]) included post-Roman sherds. The top fill of ditch [23] also yielded Saxon pottery, although this context may be a later layer slumping into the feature. Not all of the features that contained purely Roman pottery can be closely dated. Post-holes [12] and [42] both produced a small number of sherds that are either undiagnostic or simply not closely datable due to the longevity of the type. There is also a similar problem with the sherds that came from the secondary fill of ditch [23] and no pottery was recovered from the primary fill. Pit

[34] is the most securely dated feature; it contained a medium-sized group of sherds and a number of datable forms. A date in the mid-2nd century seems probable. A general 2nd century date is also likely for gully [36].

The layers in Trench 1 are better dated. Layers (8), (13), (17) and (24) form a stratigraphic sequence that seals pit [34]. It is probable, with the exception of layer (8) which contained Saxon pottery, that layers (13-24) and pit [34] are broadly contemporary; that is of mid-2nd century date. It is also possible that layer (13) has also been disturbed as this context also contained a possible sherd of Oxfordshire red colour-coat. The sherd in question is very badly abraded making identification uncertain. Layer (17) is the most securely dated context. It contained a number of vessel forms that were introduced in the mid-2nd century. Several sherds of BB2 were also present.

Where datable, the bulk of the pottery fits into a narrow, mid-2nd century date band. There is some Hadham ware, which would extend the chronology of the site into the 3rd century and beyond. Two possible Oxfordshire red colour-coat sherds were also identified. However, these are in very poor condition and are not reliably identified. Furthermore, being late 4th century, they are also much later than anything else on the site. It is also notable that no late Iron Age grog-tempered pottery was recovered from the site. The bulk of the pottery comprised sandy grey wares of indeterminate origin, although presumably local, with lesser amounts coming from Colchester, North Kent and samian ware from Gaul.

As well as constituting dating evidence for the features and deposits investigated, the Roman pottery from this site provides a small though useful assemblage from an area of the county that has seen little previous work. However, the quantities of pottery are small and identifiable vessel forms are not present. None of the groups recovered from the site to date warrant detailed analysis and publication. Further fieldwork might produce a larger and more useful assemblage which would allow a better understanding of the site's chronology, especially in the late Roman period. Further collection from partially excavated pit [34] has the potential to provide an important, perhaps quantifiable group in a region where no large groups are currently known

6.2 Saxon pottery by Sue Tyler

Three sherds of Saxon pottery were recovered from ditch fill (6) (one sherd) and layer (8) (two joining sherds), the latter from a large cooking pot.

Sandy fabrics with a little organic temper suggest sixth century rather than later. However, with no diagnostic features present in this very small assemblage, only a general date range of AD 500-800 is realistic.

6.3 Medieval Pottery by Helen Walker

A very small amount of medieval pottery was excavated, four sherds, weighing 28g (Appendix 2). This has been classified using Cunningham's typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex (Cunningham 1985). Single sherds of early medieval ware were recovered from ditches 23 and 27 (fills 20 and 26), as they are borderline medieval coarse ware they are likely to date from the 12th to early 13th centuries. Slightly later pottery was recovered from ditch 29 (fill 28) comprising an abraded medieval coarse ware cooking pot rim, possibly a product of the Mill Green kilns. It is of Cunningham's sub-form H1, a type current through out the 13th century. A very abraded sherd of medieval sandy orange ware was recovered from the top soil (1). Small quantities of small abraded sherds indicates the pottery is likely to be residual, however, it does show there may have been activity in this area during the medieval period.

6.4 Brick & Tile by Hilary Major

A total of fourteen pieces of brick and tile (1487g), mostly Roman, including Roman roof tile and flat brick were collected. The group as a whole was in good condition. The Roman tile from post-Roman contexts was not noticeably more abraded than that from Roman contexts (Appendix 3).

6.5 Other Finds by Joyce Compton

Baked clay

Fragments of baked clay were recovered, most probably deriving from a single loomweight. Six fragments, weighing 138g, were recovered from layer (17) and underlying layer (24) yielded a further four, weighing 54g. The fabric is distinctive, hard and well-fired, and one fragment from context (24) retains a groove and finished corner, suggesting that it came from a saddle-topped loomweight. The remaining fragments have no diagnostic features. Also from layer (17) is a further fragment of baked clay in a finer and softer fabric, but with

no remaining surfaces. It is possible that this could be the remains of a Roman brick, but there is nothing diagnostic in either fabric or form to aid further identification.

Bone

A single cattle tooth, weighing 16g, was collected from layer (17). No other bone fragments were either observed or collected during the fieldwork and probably indicates that the soil conditions on the site are not conducive to the survival of bone.

Flint

A single burnt flint, weighing 12g, was collected from the topsoil (1). A worked flint flake, probably from a blade, came from ditch fill (26).

Iron

A single iron nail, 20g, from layer (13), constitutes the metalwork assemblage. The head of the nail is intact, but the tip is broken off. A fragment of unrelated iron corrosion product accompanies the nail.

Loomweights are normally found in late Iron Age contexts, but their use continues into the late 1st century AD. The remaining finds are not datable, apart from the flint flake, which is prehistoric but does not necessarily date ditch [27] as such. Due to the fragmentary nature of the loomweight, and disparate nature of the remaining finds, no further work on this small assemblage of miscellaneous artefacts is required.

6.6 Environmental Remains

No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation. As noted above, the preservation and survival of animal bone is apparently very poor due to acidic soils. It is possible that this will also have a bearing on the survival of other organic remains.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has established that the cropmarks discerned within the development area are indeed the product of archaeological features present below the topsoil. It is clear that the concentration of remains is in the western part of the site and that, on the basis of the excavated evidence from Trench 1, this includes well-stratified features and deposits that span the mid Roman to early/mid Saxon periods. However, the collection of a worked flint blade (Prehistoric) and fragments of loomweight (principally 1st century BC/AD) may hint at the presence of earlier remains elsewhere within the development area. It has also been established that any groundworks associated with the proposed development of the site that exceed a depth of 0.35m below the present ground surface will disturb archaeological remains.

On the basis of the excavated evidence, it may be speculated that the remains in Trench 1 represent activity on the periphery of a rural settlement, perhaps a farmstead. The focus of this occupation activity probably lies further to the west. The relatively low incidence, range and quality of material culture, together with evidence of 'natural' silting of almost all cut features, would seem to substantiate this view. Ditch [23], in particular, may have functioned as a major landscape boundary, separating the occupation area from its associated agricultural land. The various minor ditches, particularly to its east, may represent the remains of boundaries to a possible field system.

The interpretation and dating of many of the features and layers investigated, where possible at all, is tentative – particularly those of possible Saxon and medieval date. Further work would help clarify this. Roman and Saxon period occupation sites have rarely been investigated in this area of the county and the investigation of the relationship between the Roman and Saxon activity (i.e. continuity or otherwise) is of particular interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was funded by and carried out on behalf of Tangram Leisure Ltd. The assistance of both Martin Wooton and The Manser Practice is acknowledged. Work on site was undertaken by the author and Mark Peachey of the FAU. The trenches were surveyed and regenerated by Rachel Clarke. The information was collated and illustrations provided by the author. The processing of the finds was supervised by Phil McMichael. The pottery was identified by Scott Martin, Sue Tyler and Helen Walker, and brick and tile by Hilary Major. Other finds were identified by Joyce Compton. The site was monitored by Pat Connell for Essex County Council Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 2: Summary of Roman pottery dating evidence

Feature	Context	Pottery
5 (layer)	-	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Fabric: HAX.
7 (layer)	-	<i>Samian</i> : Curle 15. <i>Misc. pottery</i> : Forms: B2 (GRS), G44 (STOR).
8 (layer)	-	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Fabric: GRS.(+ Saxon)
12 (p/h)	11 (fill)	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Fabric: GRS.
13 (layer)	-	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Fabrics: BSW, BUF, COLC, GRF, GRS, HAR, ?OXRC & STOR.
16 (gully)	6 (fill)	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Fabric: HAX. (+ Saxon).
17 (layer)	-	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Forms: B1 (GRS), B2.2 (GRS), B2/B4 (BB2 & GRS), G23 (GRS), G [necked] (BSW), G (GRS), K1.2 (GRS), K4.1 (BSW). Fabric: NKG.
23 (ditch)	20 (top fill)	<i>Samian</i> [b/s]. <i>Misc. pottery</i> : Forms: G23 (GRS), G [necked] (BSW), ?G (GRS). Fabric: ?OXRC. (+ Medieval)
	21 (secondary fill)	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Forms: G [necked] (GRS), K (GRS). Fabric: STOR.
24 (layer)	-	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Form: C1 (GRS). Fabrics: GRF, RED & STOR.
29 (Ditch)	28 (fill)	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Fabric: GRS. (+ Medieval).
34 (pit)	25 (fill)	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Forms: B2 (GRS), G25.1 (GRS), G29 (BSW & GRS), H4 (NKG). Fabric: COLC
36 (gully)	35 (fill)	<i>Samian</i> : f33. <i>Misc. pottery</i> : Fabrics: GRS, RED & STOR.
42 (p/h)	41 (fill)	<i>Misc. pottery</i> : Form: ?K (GRS).

Appendix 2: Assessment of medieval pottery

Feature/ type	Fill	The Pottery	Wt (g)	Date range
Topsoil	1	One sherd very abraded medieval sandy orange ware	10	13 th – 14 th C
Ditch 23	20	1 abraded sherd early medieval ware, borderline medieval coarse ware	3	12 th -early
Ditch 27	26	1 abraded sherd early medieval ware, borderline medieval coarse ware	1	13 th C
Pit 29	28	1 abraded medieval coarse ware cooking pot rim, of Cunningham's sub-form H1, possibly a Mill Green product	14	13 th C
			28	

Appendix 3: Quantification of brick & tile

Context	No. of pieces	Wt. (g)	Notes
1	5	172	Fragment of Roman 'brick'; four pieces of post-medieval tile, one with part of a peg-hole.
4	1	13	Spall. Sandy fabric, probably post-Roman.
8	3	720	Fragment of Roman 'brick'; two pieces spall, Roman.
28	2	128	Fragment of post-Roman brick; spall, probably post-medieval.
30	1	166	<i>Tegula</i> . Roman.
32	1	156	<i>Tegula</i> . Roman.
43	1	132	<i>Tegula</i> flange. Roman.
Total	14	1487	

Roman 'brick' includes flat tiles of various forms, used for a variety of purposes besides use as building material. A *tegula* is a flat Roman roof-tile with a flange along each edge. Spall is a fragment with no full thickness.

Appendix 4: Trench location data

Trench 1:

TM 18415.320 21745.894
TM 18415.901 21743.093
TM 18393.319 21740.289
TM 18394.505 21737.367
TM 18392.242 21736.738
TM 18390.804 21739.826
TM 18387.813 21739.435
TM 18387.464 21742.215

Trench 2:

TM 18423.381 21751.870
TM 18432.582 21725.328
TM 18435.251 21726.054
TM 18426.151 21753.112

Trench 3:

TM 18443.496 21771.037
TM 18449.396 21764.644
TM 18466.740 21751.512
TM 18468.526 21753.809
TM 18450.411 21766.928
TM 18445.448 21772.574

Trench 4:

TM 18481.991 21743.414
TM 18482.407 21740.509
TM 18456.027 21735.000
TM 18455.388 21738.112

Trench 5:

TM 18471.483 21762.770
TM 18469.058 21764.391
TM 18485.302 21785.562
TM 18487.606 21783.508

Trench 6:

TM 18482.159 21803.816
TM 18481.538 21806.963
TM 18506.981 21811.872
TM 18507.425 21808.564

Trench 7:

TM 18498.641 21776.650

TM 18513.801 21734.837

TM 18511.150 21734.304

TM 18499.887 21765.426

TM 18501.279 21765.993

TM 18497.261 21776.076

Appendix 5: Contents of Archive

Copy of evaluation report

Report on disk (word 95)

Project specification and Brief

Context and trench sheets

Plans and plan register

Section drawings and section register

Site Matrix

Photographic register and set of colour prints

1 box of finds

Appendix 6: EHCR Summary

Site Name & Address: Thorpe Hall, Station Road, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex	
Parish: Thorpe-le-Soken	District: Tendring
NGR: TM 1820 2175	Site Code: TSTH 01
Type of Work: Evaluation	Site Director/Group: A. Letch, ECC FAU
Dates of Work: November 2001	Size of Area Investigated: Approx. 800m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Colchester	Funding Source: Tangram Leisure Ltd.
Further Work Anticipated?: Yes	Related EHCR Nos.: EHCR 3153
Final Report: Summary in EAH	
Periods Represented: Roman, Saxon, medieval	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: Seven evaluation trenches were excavated on the site of a planned car parking area for a future residential health spa. The area contained several cropmark features to the south of the site that were investigated as the main aim of the evaluation.</p> <p>Archaeological activity was concentrated in the south-west of the site where a stratified sequence of ditches, gullies, pits and layers indicated occupation from the mid Roman to the early/mid Saxon and medieval periods. Some correlation between cropmarks and excavated features was established.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: A. Letch.	Date of Summary: November 2001

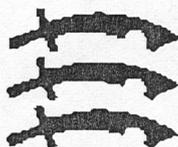
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

THORPE HALL

STATION ROAD

THORPE-LE-SOKEN

October 2001



Essex County Council
Planning
Heritage Conservation Branch

Planning app. no.: TEN/1175/01

Company: Tangram Leisure Ltd

HAMP Officer: Pat Connell

Museum: Colchester

This archaeological brief is only valid for six months. After this period the Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Group should be contacted. Any Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) resulting from this brief shall only be considered for the same period.

The contractor is strongly advised to visit the site before completing their WSI as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.

1. Introduction

This brief for a pre-determination archaeological evaluation has been prepared by the Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion (HAMP) Group of Essex County Council. A residential health spa and associated courtyards and parking for 200 vehicles is proposed at Thorpe Hall, Station Road, Thorpe-le-Soken. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the presence/absence and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits/features and where present to record these features and to determine the need for any further archaeological work or mitigation measures.

2. Site Location and Description

The proposed development lies at Thorpe Hall in Tendring District on land at NGR TM 1820 2175, in an area of significant archaeological potential. The area outlined for this evaluation is that of the projected car park site which occupies a polygonal plot of approximately 50x 40 metres maximum dimensions and is currently disused agricultural land.

2. Planning Background

A planning application was received by the HAMP Group from Tendring District Council in July 2001. As the development area was deemed to be of significant archaeological potential, the recommendation of the HAMP Group was that a pre-determination Field Evaluation be conducted. Based on the advice given in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990) this recommendation reads as follows:

Field Evaluation:

“The applicant should be required to conduct a field evaluation to establish the nature and complexity of the surviving archaeological deposits. This is normally undertaken prior to a planning decision being

made. This evaluation would enable due consideration to be given to the archaeological implications and would lead to proposals for mitigation of disturbance”

This brief outlines the requirements for the archaeological work to be undertaken and forms the basis for any WSI submitted by an archaeological contractor for approval by the planning authority. Subject to the results of the evaluation, further archaeological work may be necessary.

3. Archaeological Background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Heritage Conservation Record (EHCR) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford. Prospective contractors may consult the EHCR prior to the completion of any archaeological WSI (to make an appointment contact Ms A. Bennett, 01245 437637).

The development site lies in an area of archaeological potential with a number of cropmarks lying immediately to the south. The cropmarks consist of linear features of unknown date, and a small group of ring-ditches of probable prehistoric date. One side of an apparent rectangular enclosure appears as a cropmark within the car park area (EHCR 3153).

4. Requirement for Work

The purpose of the archaeological evaluation is to locate, identify and record any surviving remains within the proposed development area. A minimum 8% sample of the development area will be investigated by a programme of trial trenching with a further 2% held in reserve in order to clarify any exposed archaeological features/deposits. The trench layout should be designed to provide adequate coverage across the site ensuring that any surviving deposits/features across the development area are sampled; a trench plan must be appended to the WSI. Following an assessment of the results of the trial trenching, further archaeological work may be necessary.

5. General Methodology

- 5.1 All stages of the investigation will be supported by a WSI which sets out the site specific objectives and undertaken by a professional team of archaeologists.
- 5.2 The archaeological contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 5.3 Details including the name, qualifications and experience, of the site director and all other project personnel (including specialist staff) shall be supplied to the HAMP Group as part of the WSI.

- 5.4 The contractor shall ensure detailed study of all mains' service locations and avoid damage to these.
- 5.5 All of the latest Health and Safety guidelines must be followed on site.
- 5.6 A site code will be obtained from the HAMP Group officer of Essex County Council prior to fieldwork commencing.
- 5.7 Notification of the start of fieldwork shall be given to the Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Group at least one week in advance (where possible) of commencement of work.
- 5.8 A museum acquisition number will be obtained from Colchester Museum (01206 282932)
- 5.9 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. Human remains must be left *in situ* except in those cases where damage or desecration are anticipated, or where analysis of the remains is considered to be a necessary requirement for satisfactory evaluation of the site. The preservation state of human bone should be recorded, so as to inform development of the Project Design/Specification for any future excavation. Excavators should be aware of, and comply with, provisions of Section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857 and pay due attention to requirements of Health and Safety.

6. Evaluation Methodology

- 6.1 Machine stripping for the trenches 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.
- 6.2 Details of how all archaeological contexts and artefacts will be excavated, surveyed, recovered and recorded shall be provided. The site grid will be tied to the national grid.
- 6.3 Where possible at least a 50% sample of all contained discrete features shall be excavated. A stated percentage sample to be excavated of linear features shall be provided in the WSI.
- 6.4 All trenches and site spoil heaps shall be checked by metal detector, with any finds recovered.

- 6.5 Details of the site planning policy shall be given in the project WSI. 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.
- 6.6 The photographic record shall consist of photographs in both black and white prints and colour transparencies together with negatives. This shall include both general and feature specific photographs, a photographic scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. The photographic record shall be accompanied by a photographic register detailing as a minimum, feature number, location, and direction of shot.
- 6.7 The contractor must also arrange, through a suitably qualified specialist, the assessment of any environmental, palaeoenvironmental and micromorphological potential of the site through examination of suitable deposits. Please note this does not mean full analysis. The archaeological contractor must consult on environmental sampling policy and make their results known to P. Murphy at the University of East Anglia who co-ordinates environmental archaeology in the region on behalf of English Heritage.
- 6.8 The IFA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*, should be used for additional guidance in the production of the WSI, 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 shall be marked with the site code and context number.
- 7.3 The WSI shall include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might 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 agreed with the appropriate museum prior to the start of work and confirmed in writing to the HAMP Group.
- 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 including a full site matrix and specialist assessments of artefact assemblages and environmental samples shall be submitted within a length of time (but not exceeding 4 weeks) from the end of the fieldwork, to be agreed between the developer and archaeological contractor, with three copies supplied to the Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Group for general distribution.

This report must contain:

- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the evaluation.
- A location plan of trenches in relation to the proposed development. At least two corners of each of the trenches 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.
- Evaluation methodology and detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion
- All specialist reports and assessments.
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results.
- The brief shall be included as an appendix.

8.2 A full archive is to be prepared for all work undertaken.

8.3 An EHCR summary sheet shall also be completed within four weeks (copy attached with brief) and supplied to the HAMP Group officer.

8.4 An allowance shall be made within the costs for full publication in an appropriate journal, probably *Essex Archaeology and History*).

9. Archive Deposition

9.1 The requirements for archive storage shall be agreed with the appropriate museum, and confirmed in writing to the HAMP Group.

9.2 If the finds are to remain with the landowner a full copy of the archive shall be housed with the appropriate museum.

9.3 The full archive shall be deposited with the appropriate museum within 6 months of the completion of the report and confirmed in writing to the HAMP Group unless further work is expected.

9.4 A summary of the contents of the archive shall be supplied to the HAMP Group at the time of deposition to the museum.

10. Monitoring

10.1 The Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Group 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 work shall be given to the Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion Group one week in advance of its commencement.

10.3 All excavated trenches must be inspected by the HAMP Group Officer prior to their backfilling. Any variations of the WSI shall be agreed with the HAMP Group prior to them being carried out.

11. Contractors WSI

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 This is undertaken on behalf of the Local Planning Authority **before** the commencement of any archaeological work

11.3 The involvement of the HAMP Group shall be acknowledged in any report or publication generated by this project.

References

Department of the Environment (1990)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning
(DoE) English Heritage 1995

For further information regarding the content of this brief, please contact the author at the address below. 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.

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