## Leez Priory, Hartford End, Great Leighs, Essex

Planning application: 17/00845/FUL

**HER Ref: GLLP17** 

**Archaeological Monitoring Report** 

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

(January 2020)

(Tel: 01473 832896 Email: johnnewman2@btinternet.com)

#### Site details for HER

Name: Leez Priory, Hartford End, Great Leighs, Essex, CM3 1JP

Client: Country House Weddings

Local planning authority: Chelmsford CC

Planning application ref: 17/00845/FUL

Development: Erection of accommodation blocks

LPA Archaeological advisor: Historic Environment Branch, Essex CC

Date of fieldwork: 15 December, 2017 & 1 October, 2019

HER ref: GLLP17

SM ref: 12607

Listed building ref: 112643 (and others, Grade I)

SMC ref: S00166353

OASIS: johnnewm1-379899

Essex CC HER ref: 5956 & 5957

Scheduled Monument and listed building complex

Grid ref: TL 7012 1848 (former farmyard)

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Summary: Great Leighs, Leez Priory, Hartford End (GLLP17, TL 7012 1848) following a consultation period and evaluation that confirmed that planned new accommodation blocks within the Scheduled Monument area at the priory could be constructed using small piled foundations with little ground disturbance a programme of monitoring was put in place. This monitoring examined 24 small (300mm x 300mm) pile pits in an area of former concreted farmyard with no deposits of any archaeological significance being revealed save a small fragment of a brick foundation of likely Post medieval date. In addition an associated drain run along an existing ditch at the most only disturbed 100mm of topsoil (John Newman Archaeological Services for Country House Weddings).

#### 1. Introduction & background

- 1.1 Country House Weddings commissioned John Newman Archaeological Services (JNAS) to undertake the archaeological monitoring of ground works required under a condition for a programme of archaeological works of the planning decision notice for application 17/00845/FUL. The monitoring requirements were set by Ms A Bennett of Place Services at Essex CC to satisfy this condition and to meet the related Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) requirements from Historic England and in response JNAS produced the relevant Written Scheme of Investigation (see Appendix II) in order that conditional discharge could be gained from the LPA and ground works commence on site following a small scale evaluation by the author that established that small scale piled foundations for the planned accommodation blocks would not disturb archaeological deposits of any significance (Newman, 2016) with only evidence for late/early Post medieval brick built foundations being revealed. This development concerns the erection of two accommodation blocks largely built off the existing concrete former farmyard area to the south of the main building complex at Leez Priory, Hartford End, Great Leighs (see Figs. 1 & 2) with associated drainage using an existing ditch to the east of the development. The monitoring also ensured that ground disturbance in this scheduled area was kept to the low level previously agreed with Historic England, Essex CC and the client.
- 1.2 Leez Priory is located in the parish of Great Leighs to the south west of Braintree and north of Chelmsford in central Essex and on the southern side of a small water course; the River Ter. In this part of central Essex settlement is characterised by small villages in a generally scattered settlement pattern with the landscape crisscrossed by small lanes and roads and farms and cottages located around small greens or adjacent to route ways. Leez Priory is on the parish boundary between Little Leighs and Felsted in a somewhat isolated location. Soils in the area are generally clay loams of the Hanslope association over chalky till and previous monitoring of drainage works at Leez Priory revealed pale brown clay with flints and occasional bands of very silty orange sand.
- 1.3 In summary the Augustinian Priory of Leighs, or Leez, was founded c1200 and was a relatively wealthy house still valued at £114 at its suppression when it was seized by Henry VIII before being granted to Sir Richard Rich, an eminent Tudor lawyer and courtier. Sir Richard, Later Lord Rich, converted the priory into one of the major Tudor mansions in the country unusually keeping much of the priory church whose fabric was incorporated into his great house. The mansion flourished through the later 16th and 17th centuries but by the later 18th century was sold to the Governors of Guys Hospital, London following the decline of the aristocratic owners, and much of the structure was then demolished as its status declined to that of a tenanted farm house. Through the life of the priory, and probably into the ensuing country mansion period, the setting of the site within the valley of the River Ter was

exploited and is evidenced by the various fish ponds upstream to the west of the main site and now surviving as earthworks.

1.4 In more recent years Leez Priory has been in use as a successful venue for Country House Weddings and to enhance this role more single storey overnight accommodation has been seen as being essential to the business and through a programme of consultation with Historic England, Essex CC Archaeological Service, KLH Architects and Chelmsford City council it was agreed that an area of former concreted farmyard to the south of the main building complex would a suitable site. This former farmyard area is screened from the main building complex by a wall of Post medieval date and the author carried out a small evaluation (*ibid.*) with two test pits that revealed evidence for brick built foundations of late/early Post medieval date probably to be associated with post-Dissolution use of the site as the centre of a farm complex. From these results it was agreed that new accommodation blocks could be constructed on small pile foundations with the main part of the new structures being built on these piles and off the existing concrete with an associated programme of archaeological monitoring.

#### 2. Monitoring methodology

2.1 Two visits were made to the site to monitor the relevant ground works with initially the small pile pits being examined followed later by the related drainage works. On each visit a small number of digital images were taken to record the exposed deposits and to confirm that the main build is above the existing concrete yard surface (see Appendix I).

#### 3. Results

- 3.1 In total 24 No. 300mm x 300mm pits were cut carefully though the concrete yard surface for the new accommodation blocks to a depth of 200mm and only one of these (Pit 1) revealed some evidence for a red brick foundation of later/earlier Post medieval date. In addition two of the pile pits (Pits 4 & 5) revealed evidence for a chalk surface below the concrete. The remaining 21 pits only revealed mid to dark brown clay subsoil (see Appendix I for pit 10 into typical clay subsoil).
- 3.2 While the initial plan was to place the drainage pipe for the new build in the upper part of the silt within the existing ditch to the east of the accommodation blocks a review of the drop between the site and the lower area to the east confirmed that the pipe needed to be at present ground level in the ditch so no disturbance was required and in all likelihood the pipe will be left under a shallow depth of redeposited top soil.

#### 4. Conclusion

4.1 In summary it can be confirmed that the needs of the client for additional accommodation at the site plus the care to avoid any excess ground disturbance has been achieved through a thorough programme of consultation, small scale

evaluation and then a monitored and careful build programme. While the results of this investigation adds little to our understanding of Leez Priory it should be seen as a well co-ordinated and designed development that ultimately adds to the future survival of the priory site as a site of significant historic importance through its current use as a wedding venue. While some evidence for late medieval to early Post medieval brick built structures was revealed in the evaluation and subsequent monitoring the amount of disturbance was limited to shallow 300mm x 300mm pile pits and it can be confirmed that the bulk of the archaeological deposits in this former farmyard area have been left in situ.

4.2 Therefore it is concluded that the relevant SMC and planning conditions for this development at Leez Priory have been met and can be discharged.

(Acknowledgements: JNAS is grateful to Laura, Jason and everyone else on site for their close cooperation during the monitoring)

Ref:

Newman, J 2016

Leez Priory, Hartford End Great Leighs, Essex (Scheduled Monument Ref: EX12607/1 Archaeological Report on Test Pit Excavation in former farmyard area)

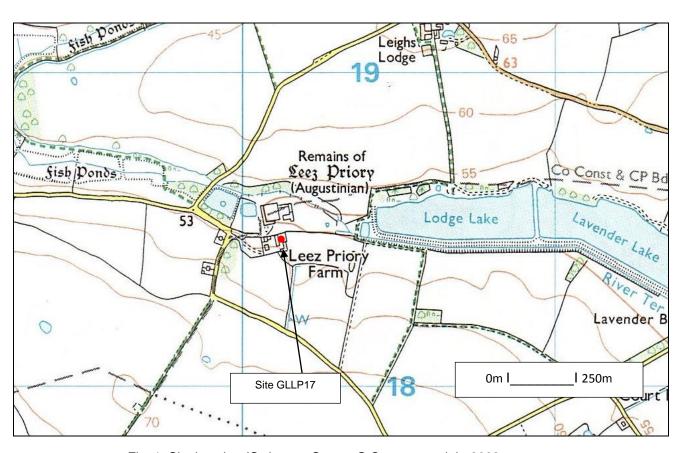


Fig. 1: Site location (Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2008 All rights reserved Licence No 100049722)

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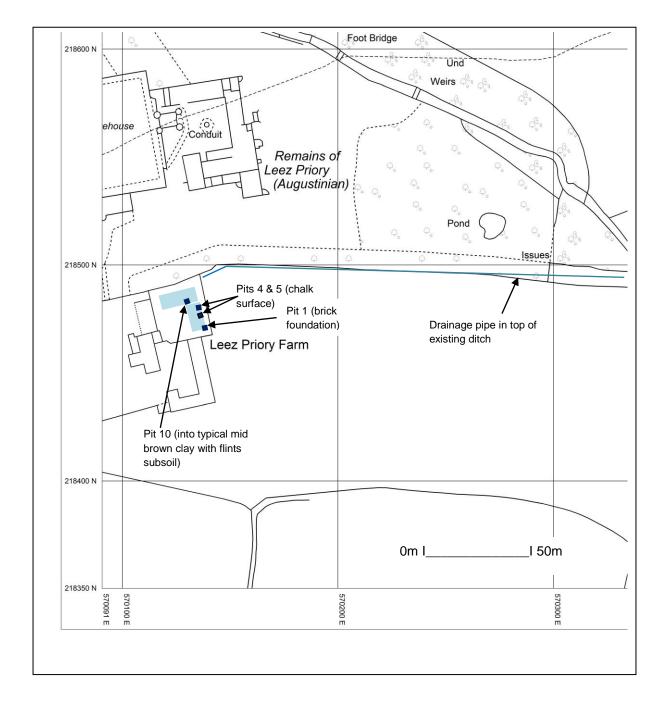


Fig. 2: Location of monitored areas (light blue- new accommodation blocks with drainage run to east, for pile pits shown see Appendix I – Images; in total 24 300mm x 300mm x 200mm deep pits were opened around the perimeter of the block footprints with evidence for a red brick foundation in pit 1 and a chalk surface in pits 4 and 5, otherwise only mid brown clay subsoil as shown for pit 10 in the remaining 21 small and shallow pits)

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## **Appendix I- Images**



New accommodation blocks on concrete yard



Brick foundation in pit 1



Chalk surface in pit 4



Pit 10



Drainage pipe in ditch

## Leez Priory, Hartford End, Great Leighs, Essex

Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring for piling and drainage works for new accommodation blocks

#### March 2017

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

(Tel: 01473 832896 Email: johnnewman2@btinternet.com)

## Site details

Name: Leez Priory, Hartford End, Great Leighs, Essex, CM3 1JP

Client: Country House Weddings

Local planning authority: Chelmsford City Council

Planning application ref: tbc

Proposed works: Monitoring of piling and drainage works for two proposed

accommodation blocks in former concrete farm yard area

Proposed date for ground works: tbc

Grid ref: TL 7012 1848 (former farmyard)

Essex CC HER code: EHER 5956 &5957

Essex CC HER event no: tbc

Scheduled Monument No: Essex: 12607

Listed Buildings: Grade 1 (112643 & other numbers)

#### **Contents**

1. Introduction

- 2. Location, Topography & Geology
- 3. Archaeological & Historical Background
- 4. Aims of the Site Monitoring
- 5. Methodology
- 6. Risk Assessment
- 7. Specialists

Figs: Construction details

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Country House Weddings have commissioned John Newman Archaeological Services (JNAS) to undertake the archaeological monitoring of piling and drainage works for two proposed accommodation blocks in an area currently covered by a concrete former farmyard and as will be required under Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) and planning conditions for these works at Leez Priory. This written scheme of investigation (WSI) details the background to the project and how JNAS will implement the relevant requirements to satisfy the SMC and any related archaeological planning condition for 24 (No) pile locations in the former farmyard area and the laying of a drainage pipe in the silt in the base of an existing ditch to the east. The WSI will also set out how potential risks will be mitigated.
- 1.2 The monitoring will be carried out to the standards set regionally in the *Standards* for *Field Archaeology in the East of England (EAA Occ. Papers 14, 2003)* and nationally in *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (Institute for Archaeologists 1994, revised 2001)*.

## 2. Location, Topography & Geology

2.1 Leez Priory is located in the parish of Great Leighs to the south west of Braintree and north of Chelmsford in central Essex and on the southern side of a small water course, the River Ter. In this part of central Essex settlement is characterised by small villages in a generally scattered settlement pattern with the landscape criss-crossed by small lanes and roads and farms and cottages located around small greens or adjacent to route ways. Leez Priory is on the parish boundary between Little Leighs and Felsted in a somewhat isolated location. Soils in the area are generally clay loams of the Hanslope association over chalky till and previous monitoring of drainage works at Leez Priory revealed pale brown clay with flints and occasional bands of very silty orange sand.

## 3. Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 In summary the Augustinian Priory of Leighs, or Leez, was founded c1200 and was a relatively wealthy house still valued at £114 at its suppression when it was seized by Henry VIII before being granted to Sir Richard Rich, an eminent Tudor lawyer and courtier. Sir Richard, Later Lord Rich, converted the priory into one of the major Tudor mansions in the country unusually keeping much of the priory church whose fabric was incorporated into his great house. The mansion flourished through the later 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries but by the later 18<sup>th</sup> century was sold to the Governors of Guys Hospital, London following the decline of the aristocratic owners and much of the structure was then demolished as its status declined to that of a tenanted farm house. Through the life of the priory, and probably into the ensuing country mansion period, the setting of the site within the valley of the River Ter was exploited and is evidenced by the various fish ponds upstream to the west of the main site and now surviving as earthworks.

3.2 In August 2016 two small test pits were opened in the former farmyard area to examine deposits in the area of the proposed development and to create areas where test boreholes could be carried out. In addition two small test slots were hand excavated in the base of the ditch to the east. The former farmyard is some 40m south of the central part of the medieval Leez Priory and later Tudor house and one of the test pits revealed a wall foundation and brick floor surface of late medieval or early Post medieval date at a depth of 50mm to 100mm below 140mm of concrete (Newman, 2016) while the second test pit revealed a pit of probable Post medieval date. The test slots in the ditch to the east revealed 400mm of humic silt containing occasional debris fragments of recent date.

### 4. Aims of the Site Monitoring

- 4.1 Following the test pitting and borehole examination of underlying deposits a construction method has been designed which will ensure that disturbance to the concrete farmyard surface will be restricted to 24 (No) construction piles around the perimeter of the proposed accommodation blocks. To sink the 150mm x 150mm piles a small area of 400mm x 400mm will be opened through the concrete yard surface at each pile location with the remainder of the yard surface being left in situ, this level of disturbance representing less than 1% of the total yard area. Drainage within the yard area will be within compressible material below the raft for the accommodation blocks and above the yard surface.
- 4.2 The aim of the monitoring is therefore to examine and record any archaeological deposits revealed in each 400mm x 400mm pile location area and advise on possibly moving pile locations within the area opened to avoid sensitive archaeological features as there will be some lee-way for such minor re-location. In this location a better understanding of this part of the priory and country house site will be the main academic objective though ground disturbance will be very limited.
- 4.3 To the east of the yard area the related drainage pipe is to be located within the silt of the existing ditch and the hand excavation of this trench will be monitored to record any archaeological features or finds.

### 5. Methodology

5.1 Initially the concrete yard surface will be carefully broken out for each of the 24 (No) pile locations. Once the concrete fragments have been removed each pile location pit will be hand cleaned to the depth of 50mm to 100mm below the concrete as this was the level at which archaeological deposits were recorded in the test pits. Each pile location will then be archaeologically recorded and, if necessary, a decision will be made on the best location for each 150mm x 150mm pile. As noted there is some lee-way to make minor variations to the pile location to avoid sensitive features. Any exceptional features or finds will be reported straightaway to HE and Essex CC as will notice of the start date for the works.

- 5.2 The excavation of the trench for the pipe within the ditch will be monitored as it is undertaken and any archaeological features or finds will be recorded.
- 5.3 Site records will be made under a continuous and unique numbering system of contexts under an overall site HER code supplied by Essex CC. All contexts will be numbered and finds recorded by context. Conventions compatible with the county HER will be used throughout the monitoring. Site plans will be drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate and sections at 1:10 (all on plastic drawing film) and related to OS map cover. Sections will be levelled to a datum OD. A photographic record of high resolution digital images will be made of the pile pits and ditch trench and any exposed features.
- 5.4 As necessary and to define archaeological deposits exposed sections and surfaces will be trowelled clean before recording. If archaeological deposits are investigated palaeoenvironmental samples (40 litre) will be taken for processing and assessment by a specialist conversant with regional archaeological standards and research agendas though disturbance of any archaeological features will only be undertaken if it cannot be avoided by leaving such deposits in situ. If human burial evidence is revealed it will be left in situ and HE will be informed straightaway. In this case the likelihood of revealing such evidence is rated as low to medium given the location in relation to what is known about the priory.
- 5.4 All pre-modern finds will be collected and processed unless any variation is agreed with HE. Finds will be assessed by recognised period specialists and their interpretation will form an integral part of the overall report. Finds will be stored according to ICON guidelines with specialist advice/treatment sought for fragile ones. Every effort will be made to gain the deposit of the site finds to the Chelmsford Museum under their relevant HER code and site numbering for future reference. If this is not possible then the HE will be consulted over any requirements for additional recording. Any discard policy will be discussed and agreed with HE.
- 5.5 An archive of all records and finds will be prepared consistent with the principles in *MoRPHE* and this will be deposited with Chelmsford Museum within 4 months of the report being submitted under the relevant HER number and in line with the SMC.
- 5.6 The monitoring report will be consistent with the principles of *MoRPHE* and this report will summarise the methodology. The report will also give an objective account of the deposits and stratigraphy recorded and finds recovered with an inventory of the latter. Any interpretation of the monitoring results will be clearly separated from the objective account of the monitoring and its results. The report will give a clear statement regarding the results of the site monitoring in relation to both the more detailed aims in section 4 above and their significance in the context of the Regional Research Framework (EAA Occ. Papers 3 & 8, 1997 & 2000). A draft copy of the report will be presented to HE within 3 months of the completion of the site works. Once accepted a pdf version and a bound hard copy will be provided if requested

plus a .pdf copy for the County HER. The site monitoring will be registered on the OASIS online archaeological record before site work commences followed by submission of the final draft in .pdf format. An HER summary sheet will be completed and a summary prepared of any positive results for inclusion in the annual county round-up.

#### 6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Protective clothing will be worn on site (hard hat, high visibility vest/coat, steel-toe cap boots, ear muffs if required). Suitable clothing will be available to mitigate against extremes of weather.
- 6.2 Vehicles will be safely parked away from work areas and lines of access.
- 6.3 Before work on site starts any special requirements regarding potential site contamination will be discussed with the client. Gloves and hand wash/wipes be available and any information on possible ground contamination will be passed to finds and environmental specialists. The potential for services in the area will be discussed with the client.
- 6.4 A fully charged mobile phone will be carried and a first aid kit will be taken to site.
- 6.5 The maximum depth for the pile pits should be 250/300mm.
- 6.6 JNAS holds full insurance cover for archaeological site works from the specialist provider Towergate Risk Solutions, details can be supplied on request.

### 7. Specialists

Conservation: Conservation Services

Faunal remains: J Curl (Sylvanus Archaeology)

Human remains: S Anderson (Freelance)

Palaeoenvironmental samples: V Fryer (Freelance)

Pre-historic flint: S Bates (Freelance)

Pre-historic pottery: S Percival (Freelance)

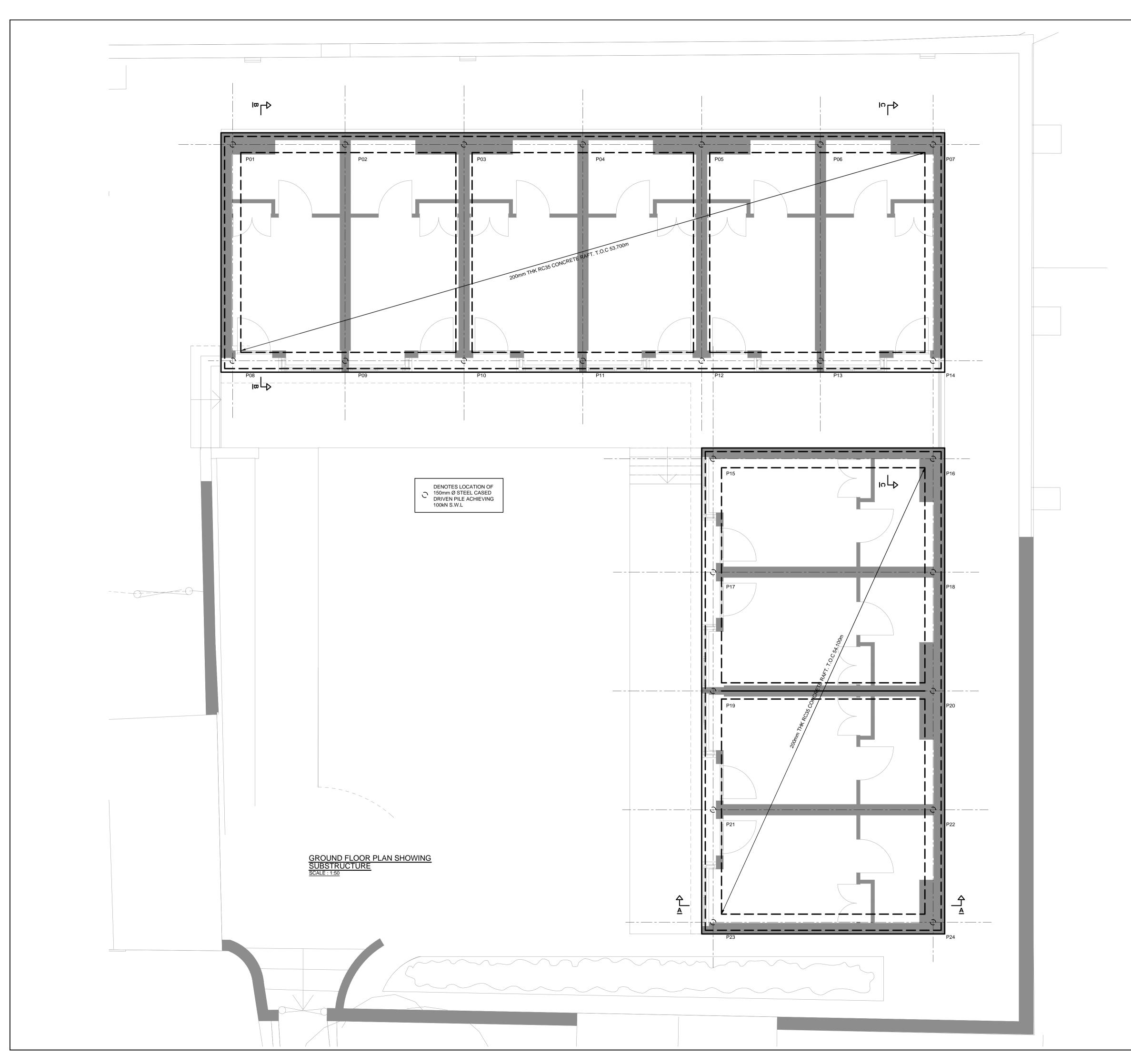
Post Roman ceramics & CBM: S Anderson (Freelance)

Later IA/Roman period S Benfield (CAT)

Post Roman small finds: JNAS

Ref:

Newman, J 2016 Leez Priory, Great Harford, Great Leighs, Essex- Archaeological Test Pit Report



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REVISION NOTES

P2 - 22.02.17 REVISED TO SUIT ARCHITECTS COMMENTS

# <u>super</u>/structures

structural engineering and design Clydesdale House 1-5 Queen Street Ipswich IP1 1SW

Tel: 01473 217959 Email: info@super-structures.co.uk www.super-structures.co.uk

MR H BRAMER

LEEZ PRIORY ESSEX

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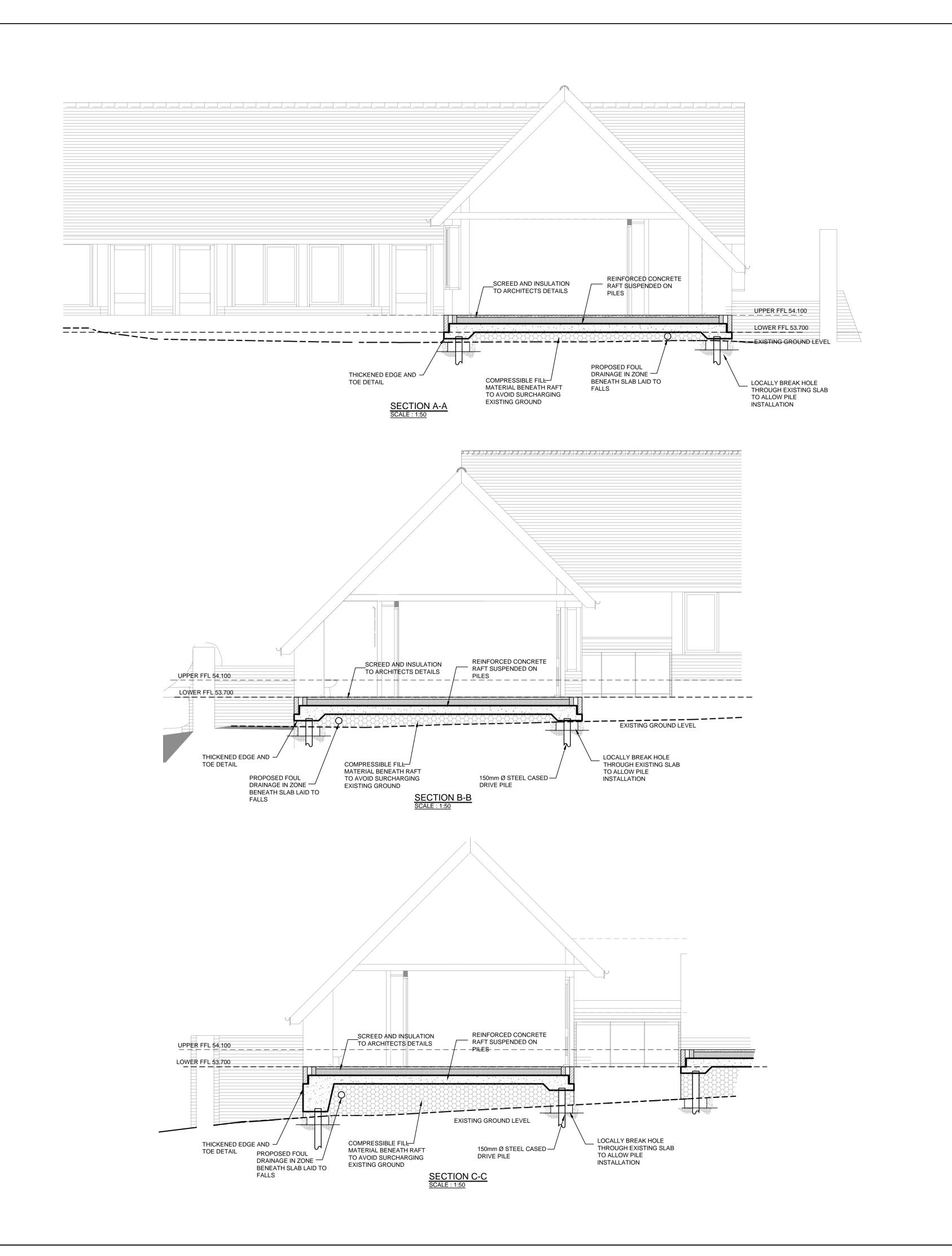
PROPOSED FOUNDATION GENERAL ARRANGEMENT

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# <u>super</u>/structures

structural engineering and design Clydesdale House 1-5 Queen Street Ipswich IP1 1SW Tel: 01473 217959 Email: info@super-structures.co.uk

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MR H BRAMER

LEEZ PRIORY

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09.02.2017 Junio 14.02.2017

PRELIMINARY

## OASIS ID: johnnewm1-379899

Project details

Project name Leez Priory, Hartford End, Great Leighs, Essex-

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Great Leighs, Leez Priory, Hartford End (GLLP17, TL 7012 1848) following an evaluation that confirmed that planned new accommodation blocks within the Scheduled Monument area at the priory could be constructed using small piled

Short description of

the project

foundations with little ground disturbance subsequent monitoring recorded 24 small (300mm x 300mm) pile pits in

an area of former concreted farmyard with no deposits of any archaeological significance being revealed. In addition an associated drain run along an existing ditch at the most only

disturbed 100mm of topsoil.

Project dates Start: 15-12-2017 End: 01-10-2019

Previous/future work Yes / No

Any associated

project reference

GLLP17 - HER event no.

codes

Any associated

project reference

EX12607 - SM No.

codes

Any associated

project reference

codes

17/00845/FUL - Planning Application No.

Type of project Recording project
Site status Listed Building

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Other 15 - Other

Monument type FOUNDATION Post Medieval

Significant Finds BRICK Post Medieval

Investigation type ""Watching Brief""

Prompt Planning condition

Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

**Project location** 

Country England

Site location ESSEX CHELMSFORD GREAT AND LITTLE LEIGHS

LEEZ PRIORY, HARTFORD END

Postcode CM3 1JP

Study area 400 Square metres

TL 7012 1848 51.838486223408 0.469602283156 51 50 18 N

000 28 10 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 53m Max: 54m

Project creators

Name of Organisation

John Newman Archaeological Services

Project brief Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning

originator Authority/advisory body

Project design originator

John Newman

Project

director/manager

John Newman

Project supervisor John Newman

Type of

sponsor/funding

body

Landowner

Project archives

Physical Archive

recipient

Left in situ

Physical Contents "Ceramics"

Digital Archive

recipient

Chelmsford Borough Musem

Digital Contents "Ceramics"

Digital Media

available

"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive

recipient

Chelmsford Borough Museum

Paper Contents "Ceramics"

Paper Media

available

"Report"

Project bibliography

1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Leez Priory, Hartford End, Great Leighs, Essex-

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Author(s)/Editor(s) Newman, J

Date 2020

Issuer or publisher John NewmanArchaeological Services

Place of issue or Henley, Suffolk

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Description Report in pdf format

Entered by John Newman (johnnewman2@btinternet.com)

Entered on 9 January 2020