

**Archaeological Evaluation on Land adjacent to 80 Maldon
Road Witham Essex**

Grid reference: TL 82384 14049
Planning Application 13/0090/FUL
Oasis No. 151267

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by trial trenching on land adjacent to 80 Maldon Road Witham Essex (TL 82384 14049). This was in advance of the erection of a new dwelling. The work was carried out in response to an archaeological brief written by Teresa O'Connor of the Essex County Council Archaeological Services Historic Environment Management Team, dated May 2013.

Two trenches were excavated, one of 6m in length by 1.8m (tr1) to cover the footprint of the garage and one 12m trench by 1.8 m (tr2) was sighted over the house footprint, totalling 32.4 sq metres of trenching.

No archaeology was noted in either of the two evaluation trenches except for two small rubbish pits of Victorian date.

The bank along Maldon Road was found to be a natural land surface, queried by Rodwell (1993).

1. Introduction

An application has been made by the client Mr Robert Hayward for the construction of a new dwelling on land adjacent to 80 Maldon Road Witham Essex. Planning Policy S5: Archaeology and Planning, issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990, sets out the requirements for developers to provide sufficient information on the archaeological impact of development to enable a reasonable planning decision to be made. Local Plan Policy B22, while stating that there should be a presumption in favour of the preservation of nationally important archaeological features and sites, outlines the process to be followed in order that the archaeological importance of a site may be determined and mitigation strategies put in place if necessary. This is also the requirement of the Deposit Joint Replacement Structure Plan (Policy 7, June 1998). As a result of the application, and to comply with planning policy, an archaeological evaluation was commissioned from Archaeoserv – DP Archaeological Services. Research was undertaken at the Essex County Council Records Office, Chelmsford and the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record office was consulted. A copy of this report will be deposited with the Essex County Council H.E.R. and an on-line report will be made available with the Archaeological Data Service/project oasis.

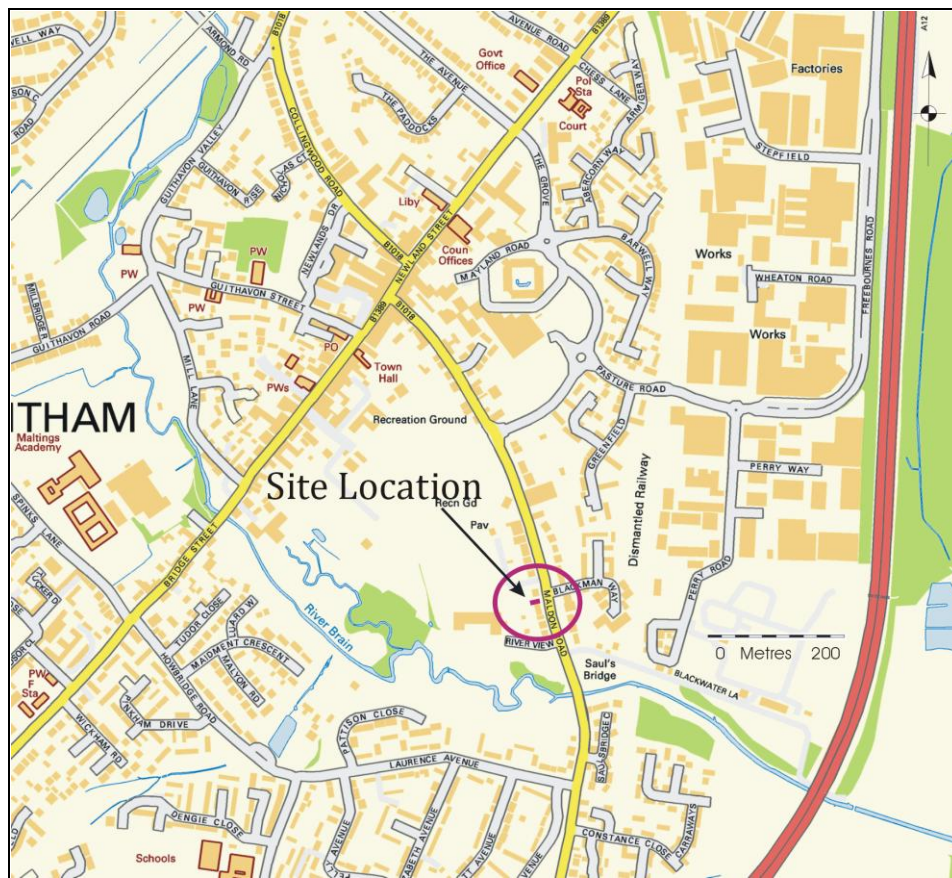


Figure 1. Location of Witham Essex

2. Site Location and Description

The development site at 80 Maldon Road is situated south of and close to the town centre of Witham. The site lies within a ribbon development along the west side of Maldon Road, leading out of the town.

The geology for the site is of Lowestoft Formation chalky till and Head, overlying London Clay (BGS, s. 241; 1990).



Ordnance Survey Licence No.100047655

Figure 2. Site Location

3. Archaeological and Historical background

3.1 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.

The proposed development site lies along the postulated 'Wulvesford Enclosure' (HER 9048), a D-shaped enclosure indicated by an earthwork shown on the 1839 Tithe map on the west side of Maldon Rd and completed by the course of Newland Road and the River Brain. Rodwell (1993) suggests this to be part of an earthwork enclosure and that some elements of medieval town planning utilised a pre existing earthwork that may date to the Saxon period or earlier. The evidence for an enclosure is topographical and cartographic. Maldon Road forms one arm of the proposed enclosure, as at this point it curves down from the London-Colchester road to Saul's Bridge, across the River Brain. Maldon Road has a bank along the south-western side, which is clearly depicted on the tithe map of 1839. Rodwell argues that the road runs along the line of the enclosure ditch, although it is possible that the road is simply a sunken road and the bank is not a bank but the original land-surface. The north-western arm of the enclosure is more problematical. It has been suggested that Lockram Lane marks its line; however this lane dates to the seventeenth century, developing as a short-cut to the Church and Witham Mill.

3.2 Historical Background

A tenant called Ade de la Holleditche (Britnell, 1968) had a house in the vicinity of the later Lockram Lane in about 1320, and Rodwell has suggested that the appellation of Holleditche may be a reference to a landscape feature at that point.

Mapping of the development site would place the proposed dwelling along the bank of the enclosure and it is possible that evidence for the nature and date of this earthwork may be preserved within the area of the proposed new house and would be disturbed or destroyed by the proposed development. The position of the garage would be inside the enclosure where settlement and industrial activity would have been located.

The Witham area has been the subject of extensive archaeological investigation in recent times. A considerable amount of this has already been presented in detail by Rodwell (1993) and by Turner (1999), but the bulk of this relates to land to the north of Maltings Lane.

A number of enclosures of Iron Age to Saxon date are discussed, including the Early to Middle Iron Age 'Witham Lodge Earthwork' and the Roman religious temple site at Ivy Chimneys.

Field-walking, evaluation and excavation 1 km to the south-west of the site, on the other side of the River Brain have uncovered a landscape that revealed near-continuous evidence of settlement activity from the Late Bronze age to the medieval period. Investigations began with field-walking during 1995 and concluded in 2000-2 with a large scale excavation of 6ha in area in the same location.

The open area excavation (Robertson 2004) revealed evidence of Bronze Age roundhouses, Early Iron Age pits, Middle and Late Iron Age enclosure systems, a Roman farmstead with associated field system, a crop processing area and a cemetery. Also found was an early Saxon settlement and a medieval farmstead complex (EHER 18504, 18505, 18506).

Although the excavations of 2000/02 are some distance away to the south-west of the present development, further settlement activity could be present within the new area to be investigated.

A number of interventions have been carried out closer to the present site, but none have been within the postulated enclosure (HER 9048) suggested by Rodwell. In the 19th c. a number of cinerary urns were discovered c. 200m to the rear of the development site (HER 8197), within the possible enclosure or ancient burgh earthworks. This find is the only tangible archaeological evidence close to the development site. Further urns were unearthed of unclear age in 1949, to the south of the site, between Saul Bridge and Olivers Cottage (Powell, W, R., VCH, 1963).

4. Results

4.1 Fieldwork

A plan of the two trenches was drawn to a scale of 1:50; sections were drawn to a scale of 1:10.

A metal detector survey was carried out at all stages of the project.

All artefactual evidence was retained for dating and analysis.

A full photographic archive was produced consisting of colour slide, monochrome print and digital at 10 million pixels resolution, and will form part of the site record to be curated at the Braintree Museum archive..

Site plans and sections were digitized to archive standard, reduced versions of which are included in this report.

All features were described in detail with an overall statement of the potential for further work.

4.2 The Trenched Evaluation

The trenched evaluation produced two Victorian rubbish pits; no other archaeology was located in either of the two evaluation trenches.

5. Interpretation

Rodwell (1993) argued that the postulated enclosure ‘Wulvesford Enclosure’ (HER 9048), a D-shaped enclosure indicated by an earthwork shown on the 1839 Tithe map, had its eastern boundary along Maldon Road as there is a bank which runs the length of it. This bank he states could either be natural, with Maldon Road being a sunken road, or that the bank is an earthwork, part of the defensive works of the enclosure. Trench 1 of the evaluation revealed a level, natural sub-stratum at 7.50 m from the bank’s edge, an original land surface, proving that the bank, at least at this point, is of a natural composition and therefore cannot be a man-made earthwork. It is quite possible though that the bank would indeed make a good natural defensive feature for this side of the enclosure and was most likely used as such.

6. Discussion

The results of this evaluation have successfully shown that no archaeology will be compromised by this development. It has also proved that the bank along Maldon Road is of natural composition, at this location, and answers a question presented by Rodwell (1993) as to whether the bank was erected as part of defensive system of the postulated enclosure or was simply part of the natural land surface.

No further archaeological work is thought necessary on the site.

7. Archive deposition

The paper and photographic archive will be held at the Essex County Council Historic Environment Records Office (EHER)

A digital record and copies of the report can be viewed at the Essex County Council Historic Environment Records Office (EHER). The digital report may also be viewed at the following site: <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/policy.html>.

The physical finds archive will be deposited at the County Store, Braintree Museum Braintree Essex

8. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr Hayward who commissioned this work.

This report for archaeological evaluation was written by Dennis Payne BA (Hons) (DPAS), who also managed the project and carried out the field-work.

Bibliography

British .Geological. Survey. 1990 (sheet 241)

Powell, W, R., (1963) Victoria County History (Essex)

Rodwell, W., (1993) *The Origins and Early Development of Witham, Essex: A Study in Settlement and Fortification, Prehistoric to Medieval*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Turner, R., (1999) Excavations on an Iron Age Settlement and Roman Religious Complex at Ivy Chimneys, Witham, Essex, 1978-83, 260-7

Online References

PastScapes <http://www.pastscape.org/homepage/index.htm>

APPENDIX I: Digital Images



Plate 1. Pre-excitation, view from the south-west



Plate 2. Pre-excitation, viewed from the north-east



Plate 3. Trench 1, viewed from the south-west



Plate 4. Sample Section of Trench 1

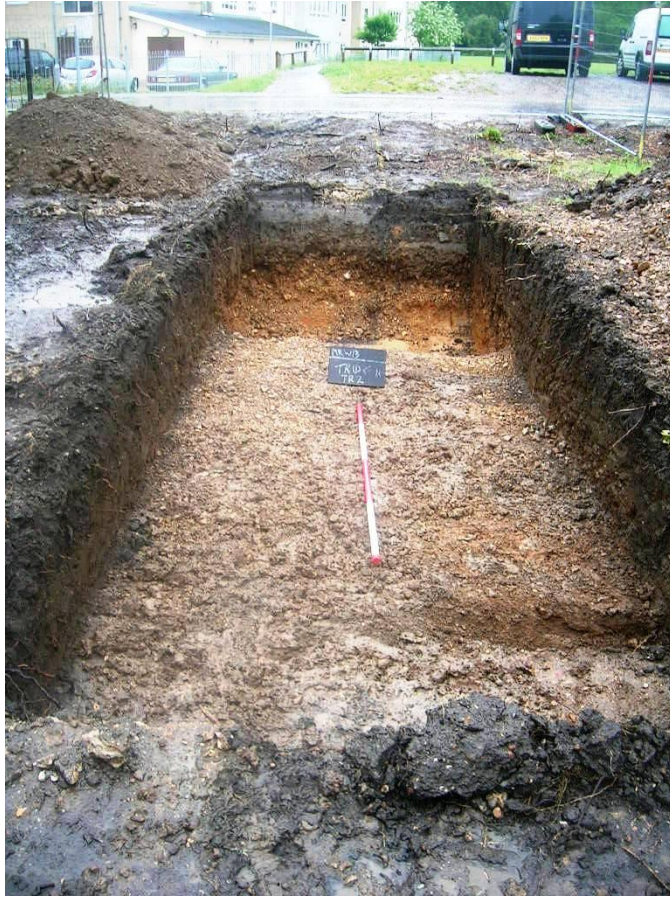


Plate 5. Trench 2, viewed from the north-east

