

# **Archaeological Evaluation at 4 High Street Rayleigh Essex**

Grid reference: TQ 8074 9088  
Planning Application: 14/00887/FUL  
Oasis No. 212928

## **Prepared for**

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## **Non-technical summary**

This report is of the findings for an archaeological evaluation by way of trial trenching in advance of the construction of a detached two storey dwelling.

The evaluation located a single ditch terminus, perpendicular to the evaluation trench. The ditch, whilst large at 2.12m width by 0.90m in depth was not thought to be part of the defensive system of Rayleigh castle, but perhaps a further boundary of a more civic nature parallel to the outer bailey of the castle earthworks. Considering the position of the ditch, probably within 30m of the outer bailey and the fact that it formed a terminus adjacent to the early medieval core of the town, it is possible that the feature may have also formed part of a causeway between the castle and the town.

## **1. Introduction**

As part of the planning application (14/00887/FUL) at 4 High Street Rayleigh for the new proposed single dwelling, an archaeological evaluation was requested by Rochford District Council Historic environment Team in October 2014 to ascertain if any below ground historical assets were at risk of damage by the current development. A written scheme of investigation was presented to the Historic Environment Team by Archaeoserv and accepted as part of the archaeological process. The results of the evaluation were inspected by Alison Bennet (Historic Environment Officer ECC) for Thurrock Council who visited the site to inspect the ditch feature. The overall findings of this project are presented here as part of the ECC brief requirement.

## 2. Site Location & Geology

The development site is on land to the rear of 4 High Street Rayleigh (TQ 8074 9088) in south Essex, and to the immediate south-east of the motte and bailey of Rayleigh castle. The site lies within what is considered to be the original historic core of the town. The geology for the site is London Clay (BGS: 258/9).



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**Figure 1. Site Location**

**Figure 2. Site Location plan, development area highlighted in red**

### **3. Planning background**

3.1 The planning application (14/00887/FUL) was submitted to Rochford District Council for the 'construction of a semi-detached building a conversion for a further existing building'. As the site lies within an area highlighted by the Historic Environment Record as having a high potential for archaeological deposits being present a full archaeological condition was recommended. The full condition that was recommended (condition 6) was based on the National Planning Policy Framework and stated:

*"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"*.

3.2 The archaeological investigation was be carried out based upon the recommendation of the local planning authority, following guidance laid down by the National Planning and Policy Framework (NPPF, DCLD 2012) which replaces Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5, DCLG 2010).

3.3 Detailed standards, information and advice to supplement this brief will be sought in standards for '*Field Archaeology in the East of England*,' (East Anglian Occasional papers 14, 2003). In addition, this brief has been compiled respecting the following standards: Regional Research Framework (East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 3, 1997, 'Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties, 1. resource assessment'; Occasional Paper 8, 2000, 'Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy'; and Revised Research Framework for the Eastern Region, 2008, and Medlycott, M (ed.) 2011 *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24

### **4. Archaeological and Historical Background**

#### ***4.1 Archaeological Background***

Medieval and post medieval finds have been made in close proximity to the current site at London Hill. The information relating to this held in the HER is as follows:

*Watching brief, 1986, discovered evidence for a building in a cut feature within a dark organic build up, a possible hearth, a layer of clay and charcoal and perhaps an occupation layer - a series of clay floors. The amount of charcoal may indicate a workshop rather than a house. Pottery finds suggest a C14-C15 occupation date. The discoveries indicate that the street alignment of London Hill existed and was probably built up by the C14 and C15 (HER 13374). The potential and importance archaeologically of the current location cannot be underestimated, the HER states:*

' *The morphology of the medieval built-up area is not entirely clear, however it appears to have been concentrated along the High Street, in the area to the east of the outer bailey.*

*The parish church was sited at the north-eastern end of the town, its location perhaps marking the site of the original Domesday settlement. At this point the east-west route of London Hill meets the north-west route of the High Street. To the south of the church is a triangular built-up area, delimited by London Hill, Bellingham Lane and High Street. It is possible that this area originally formed part of the market-place (see below), however a watching-brief at 3-5 London Hill (ESMR 13374) established that the area was already partly built-up by the 14th and 15th centuries. Traces of several successive clay floors and a hearths were noted on the site. Some of the property boundaries on either side of the High Street may well reflect the original layout of the medieval tenements (HER 13374). The close proximity of these finds will almost certainly extend over into the area under study, which is within the triangular formed development mentioned above, which probably formed the early market place.'* (Essex HER)

#### **4.2 Historical Background**

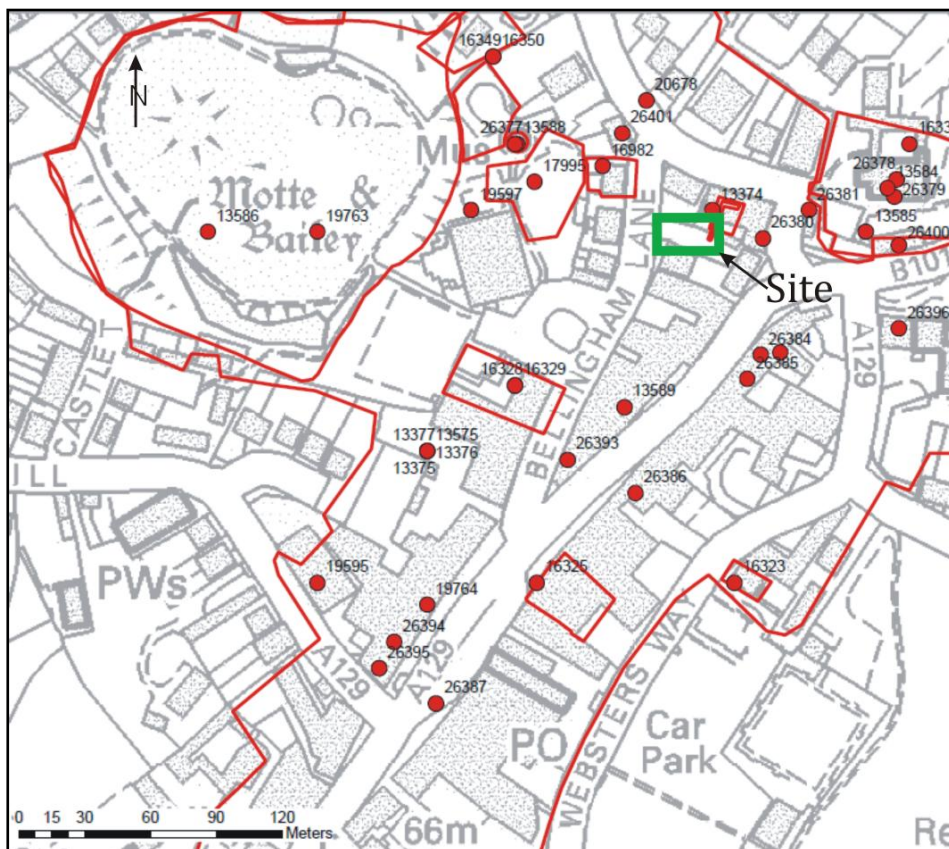
Rayleigh was probably one of the most important centres in south Essex in medieval times. The presence of a well-preserved mount representing the motte of the castle built by Sweyne (of Essex). Rayleigh is one of 48 castles mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and the only one in recorded the county of Essex. The Survey records that Swein (other spellings are Sweyn, Sweyne, and Suen) built the castle in his manor. He was the son of Robert FitzWimarc, a Norman lord and favourite of Edward the Confessor (r. 1042–1066).<sup>[1]</sup> Swein was one of the wealthiest landowners in post-Conquest Essex, and the Survey records that in 1086 his lands were worth £255. By around 1200 the castle was in ruins and the remains, or the rubble that existed on the mount at the time, were used by its new owner Huber De Burgh to build his new castle at Hadleigh. Although Rayleigh's status as a fortified town waned rapidly from this point onwards, Rayleigh continued to grow throughout the medieval period with the church, *The Holy Trinity*, being built to the east of the castle during the 11th century and the tower incorporated in the 15th century. A market was established, probably as early as the 13th century and may have been sited between Bellingham Lane and the High Street. Recent discoveries have shown that medieval London Hill was on the same alignment as today and that the high street probably forms the original north-south road, rendering Rayleigh a little-changed town except for the post medieval build up which is seen today.



## 5. Map Information



*Figure 2. Chapman and Andre map of Raleigh (1777)*



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*Figure 3. Site location in relation to known archaeological evidence (HER)*

## **6. Archaeological Evaluation**

### **6.1 Methodology**

At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> was initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms.

6.2 This project was carried through in a manner broadly consistent with English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 1991 (MAP 2).

All work was undertaken to Institute for Archaeologists (IFA) and Museum of London Archaeology Service (Molas) standards.

6.3 The fieldwork was undertaken by Dennis Payne BA (Hons) ACIfA and Mr Martin of Britannia Archaeology with relevant experience.

6.4 The Post excavation work will be carried out in part by Archaeoserv along with the appropriate specialists that may be appointed for this project.

6.5 A photographic record was compiled, comprising an overview of the site prior to work starting, as well as after completion of the work using black and white photographs, colour transparencies and high resolution digital images of at least six million pixel resolution, and will be included with any excavated features, sections and other relevant details that aid interpretation.

## **7. Results: Evaluation by Trenching**

7.1 A single evaluation trench was opened diagonally across the proposed building footprint, measuring 10m in length by 1.8m in width; the maximum depth was 0.70m.

7.2 The deposit model consisted of a top soil or garden soil (1000) of 0.30m above a made-up layer of mixed soil and crushed building material (1001) to a depth 0.40m.

7.3 One archaeological feature was located at the extreme west end of the trench, being a linear ditch [1003], terminating immediately beyond the trench section. The terminus was only discovered after environmental sampling took place from the lower fill (1004), whereupon the natural geology could be seen rising quite noticeably.

7.4 Ditch [1003] had a total depth of 0.90m and a width of 2.12m, the fills consisted of a primary, fairly compacted deposit (1004), of dark blackish-grey silty, organic clay with abundant oyster shell to a depth of 0.12m by a width of 1.20m. The secondary deposit (1005), a light brownish-grey, silty clay with no inclusions, measuring 1.70m width by 0.22m depth, above this a tertiary deposit (1006) consisting of light orangey-brown silty clay, compact with no inclusions, this deposit was 2.25m in width by 0.22m in depth. The final fill of the ditch (1001), a made-up or demolition layer, was a mixed soil and clay, dark greyish-brown in colour with a high consistency of crushed building material, to a total depth of 0.40m by 2.08 m in width. This last deposit was spread across the whole site as it was seen throughout the trench.

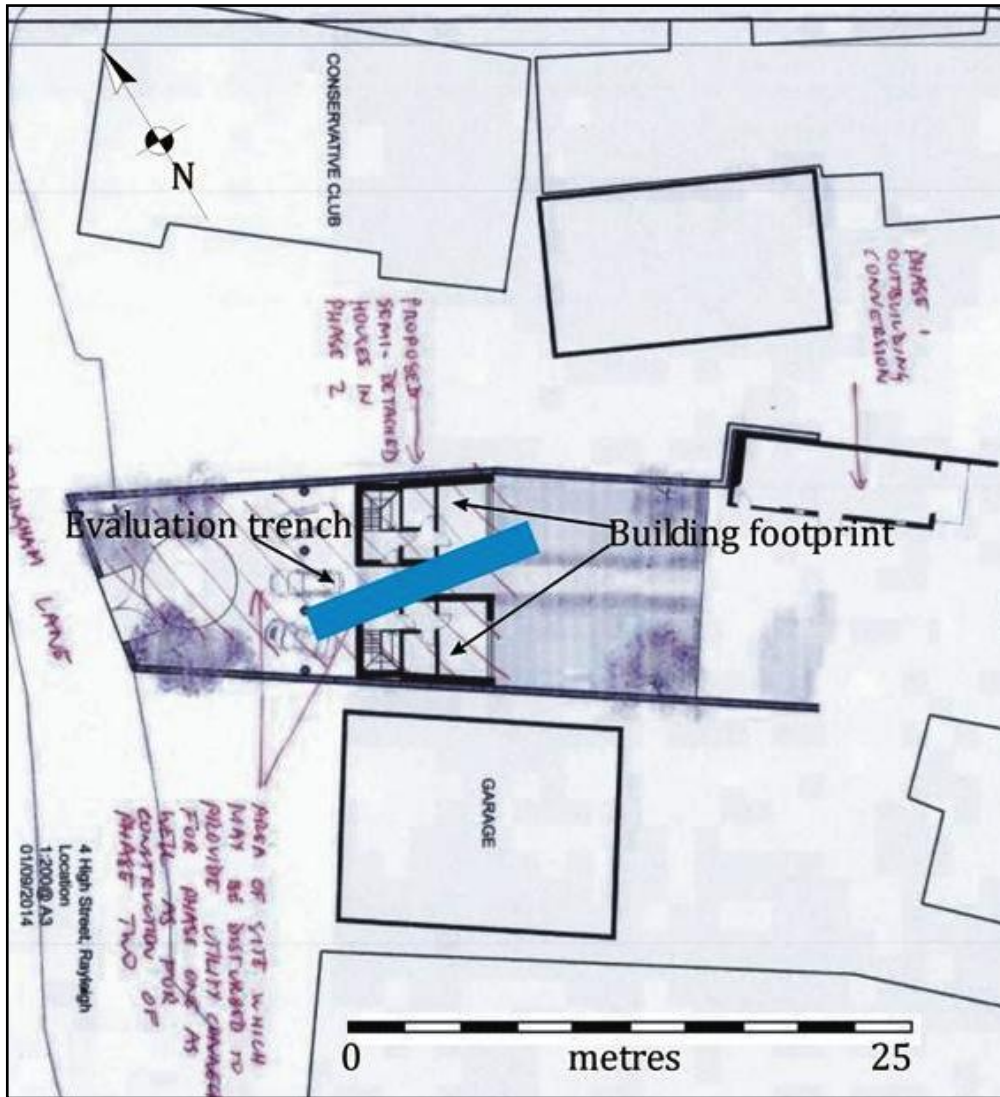
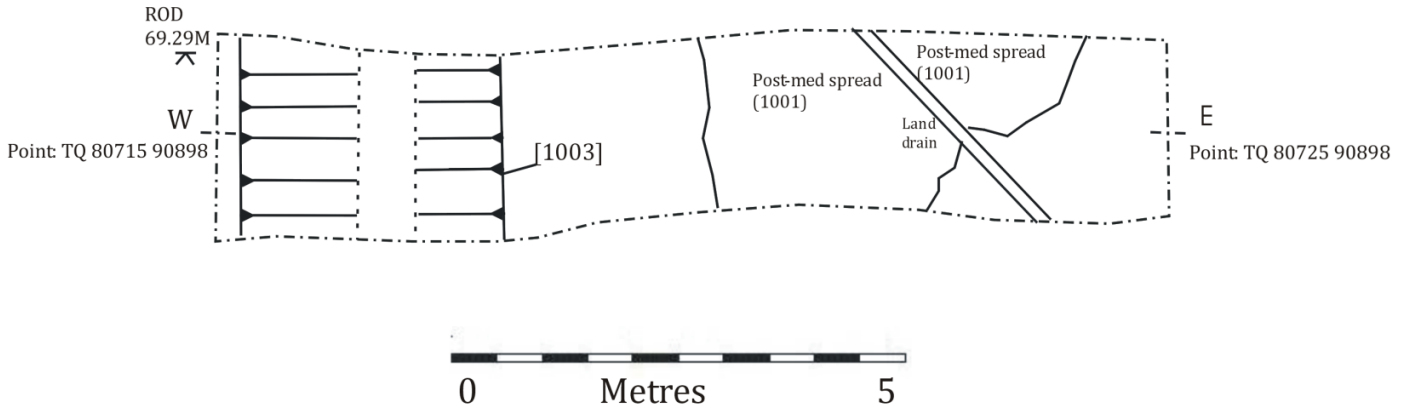
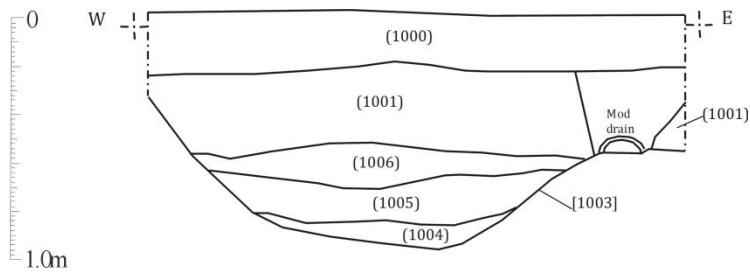


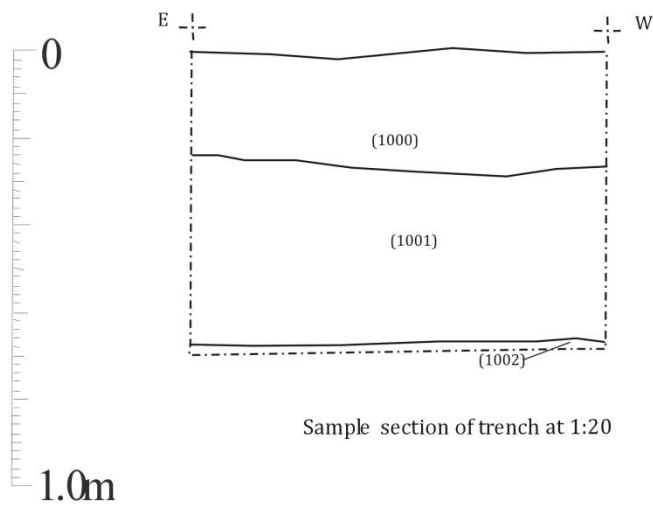
Figure 4. Trench location plan



**Figure 5. Plan of evaluation trench**



Ditch section [1003] at 1:10



Sample section of trench at 1:20

**Figure 6. Sections**

## 8. Finds evidence

Compiled and edited by Richenda Goffin

### *8.1 The Pottery:*

#### *Introduction and recording method*

A total of eight fragments of pottery was recovered from the evaluation, weighing 210g. The ceramics were quantified using the recording methods recommended in the MPRG Occasional Paper No 2, Minimum standards for the processing, recording, analysis and publication of Post-Roman ceramics (Slowikowski et al 2001). The number of sherds present in each context by fabric, the estimated number of vessels represented and the weight of each fabric was noted. Other characteristics such as form, decoration and condition were recorded, and an overall date range for the pottery in each context was established. The pottery was catalogued using letter codes based on fabric and form and has been inputted on the database (Appendix I).

The codes used are based mainly on broad fabric and form types identified in *Eighteen centuries of pottery from Norwich* (Jennings 1981), and additional fabric types established by the Suffolk Unit (S Anderson, unpublished fabric list).

### *8.2 The assemblage*

A large and abraded fragment of a broad strap handle made in a Hedingham fineware fabric was present in fill 1006 of ditch 1003 (56g). It is likely to be from an early rounded jug, and has parallel indentations along the handle similar to those previously noted on other jugs of this type which have been described as 'cat's claw' decoration (Cotter 79). The sherd which is worn and abraded, belongs to the twelfth century.

A second sherd of pottery of later date (16th-18th century) was recovered from the same context. It is from the base of a post-medieval red earthenware vessel with internal glaze (119g). It is from an open vessel such as a bowl, small jar or chamberpot and is made in a fine orange fabric.

Small quantities of pottery were collected from Sample 1 (1004). The largest sherd is a fragment of early medieval sandy ware (Colchester fabric 13) (weight 6g). It is made in a sandy handmade fabric decorated externally with an incised wavy decoration. It dates to the 11th-12th century, with production of this fabric likely to have finished completely by c. 1225 (Cotter 41). Two tiny fragments of shell-tempered ware (weight 1g) were also present in the sample residue, as described below.

Three fragments of pottery were hand collected from fill (1004) of ditch [1003] (28g). The sherds are probably from the same vessel, and are hand-made in a shell-tempered fabric, similar to if not the same as Colchester type 12 A (Early medieval shelly ware without sand). The pottery has dark grey external margins with a dark brown core, and medium to large platelets of shell in a fine matrix. Although the dating of this fabric is not well established, an 11th-12th century date for the main *floruit* of this fabric is likely (Cotter 35).

### ***8.3 Fired clay and ceramic building material***

A single fragment of abraded fired clay was found in fill (1006) of ditch [1003] weighing 7g. It is made in a medium sandy fabric with occasional amorphous shaped voids and dates to the late medieval – post-medieval period.

Three small medium sandy fragments recovered from fill (1004) may be intrusive from the layer above (9g).

### ***8.4 Faunal remains***

Part of a bovine molar was present in fill (1006) (weight 18g). The distal end of a tibia of a cow was identified amongst the fragmentary bone in fill 1004, together with the slender shaft of a heavily stained femur which is probably from a sheep or a goat.

### ***8.5 Oyster shell***

Large fragments of oyster shell were collected from both fills of the ditch. Nine shells weighing 145g were recovered from fill 1004 and a further 38 fragments weighing 170g from Sample 1 (1004).

## **9. Plant macrofossils and other remains**

By Anna West

### ***9.1 Introduction and methods***

A single 10 litre sample was taken from fill (1004) of ditch [1003]. The sample was processed in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

The sample was processed using manual water flotation/washover and the flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned using a binocular microscope at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or artefacts are noted on Table 1. Identification of plant remains is with reference to *New Flora of the British Isles* (Stace 1997).

The non-floating residue was collected in a 1mm mesh and sorted when dry. All artefacts/ecofacts were retained for inclusion in the finds total.

### ***9.2 Quantification***

For the purpose of this initial assessment, items such as seeds, cereal grains and small animal bones have been scanned and recorded quantitatively according to the following categories : # = 1-10, ## = 11-50, ### = 51+ specimens

Items that cannot be easily quantified such as charcoal, magnetic residues and fragmented bone have been scored for abundance as: + = *rare*, ++ = *moderate*, +++ = *abundant*

### 9.3 Results

Table 1 shows the plant macrofossil remains and other ecofacts recovered from the fill of ditch [1003].

SS no	Context no	Feature/cut no	Feature type	Approx date of deposit	Flot contents
1	(1004)	[1003]	Ditch	Early medieval	charred cereal grains ###, charred seeds #, charcoal +++, oyster shell fragments +, un-charred seeds #, fibrous rootlets +++

Table 1. Plant macrofossils and other remains

### 89.4 Discussion

The sample produced 100ml of flot material, which is moderate to small. All of the flot was rapid scanned for the purposes of this report.

The bulk of the material was made up of fibrous rootlets which have been disregarded as modern and intrusive within the archaeological deposit. Wood charcoal was also present but was highly fragmented making it unsuitable for species identification or radiocarbon dating. The preservation of all other plant macrofossils was through charring and was generally fair to good.

Charred cereal caryopses were present in moderate numbers, the majority of which appeared to be a naked wheat (*Triticum* sp.). A few possible Barley (*Hordeum* sp.) grains were also observed. Many of the cereal grains were too puffed and fragmented to identify at this stage, possibly indicating that they had been exposed to high temperatures. During the later stages of cereal processing, cereals are heated, or parched, and then pounded in order to release them from their spikelet and although no chaff elements were observed it is possible that this activity may have been taking place on site or nearby.

Small fragments of oyster shell were common within the flot material. A single un-charred weed seed was identified as Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum* L.) which inhabits woods and hedgerows throughout the British Isles; being uncharred and unabraded though this is most likely intrusive within the archaeological deposit.

### 9.5 Conclusions and recommendations for further work

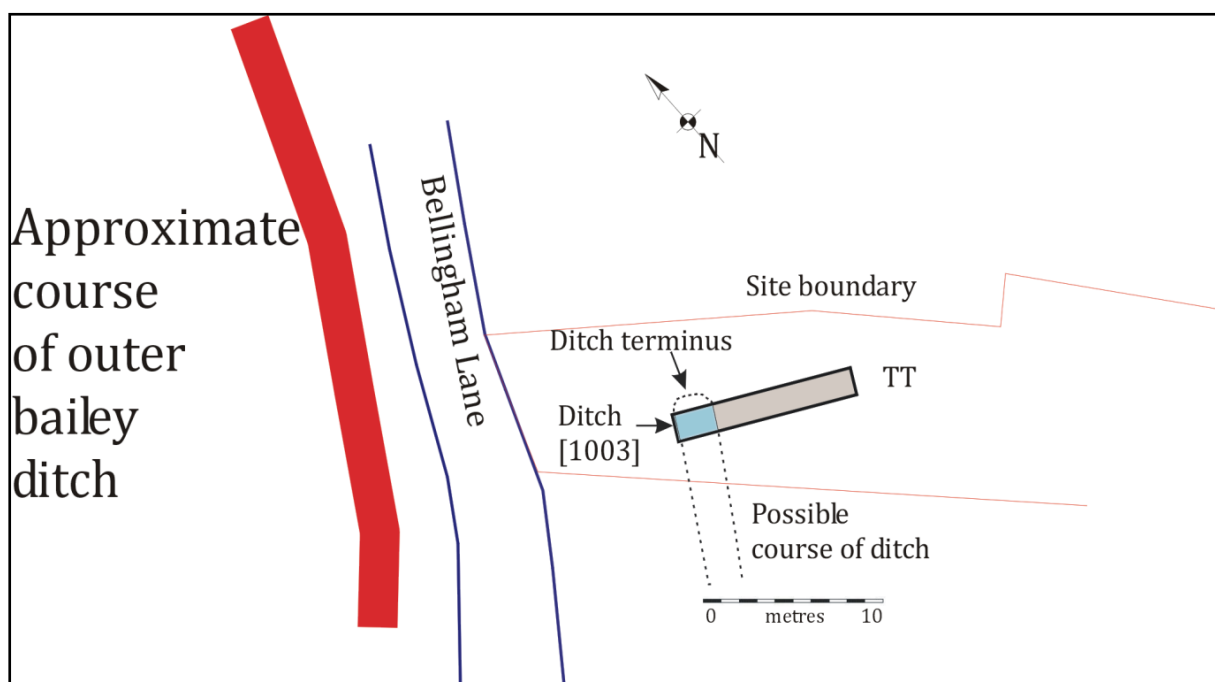
On the whole the sample was fair in terms of identifiable material. It is likely that the domestic activities indicated by the material recovered from Sample 1, took place within the local vicinity and the waste material was deliberately deposited within the archaeological feature. The plant macrofossils recovered were all reasonably well preserved and identifiable to an archaeobotanist.

It is not recommended that any further work is carried out on the flots material at this stage, however if further intervention is planned on this site, it is recommended that further sampling should be carried out with a view to investigating the nature of the cereal waste and provide an insight into the utilisation of local plant resources, agricultural activity and economic evidence on this site. It is recommended that any further samples taken are combined with the flots from the sample taken during this evaluation and submitted to an archaeobotanist for species identification and interpretation.

## 10. Interpretation and Conclusion

10.1 The single trench was located within the development area to sample any archaeology that may exist. Specifically the brief was to locate any further evidence of the historic core of the town, and specifically it is thought be part of the market place where the development site is located.

10.2 The ditch located in the evaluation trench was a terminus, suggesting possibly an entrance way from the castle enclosures to the town; further evidence for a counterpart to the entrance ( an opposing terminus) should be an agenda for future work in this area, if and when the opportunity arise. An entrance way at this location makes sense, with it being immediately within or on the edge of the triangular assumed market area of the town. A further outer ditch then is proffered here, following the circuit of the line of the roads indicated on the Chapman and Andre map and the modern map (figs. 7, 8 ).

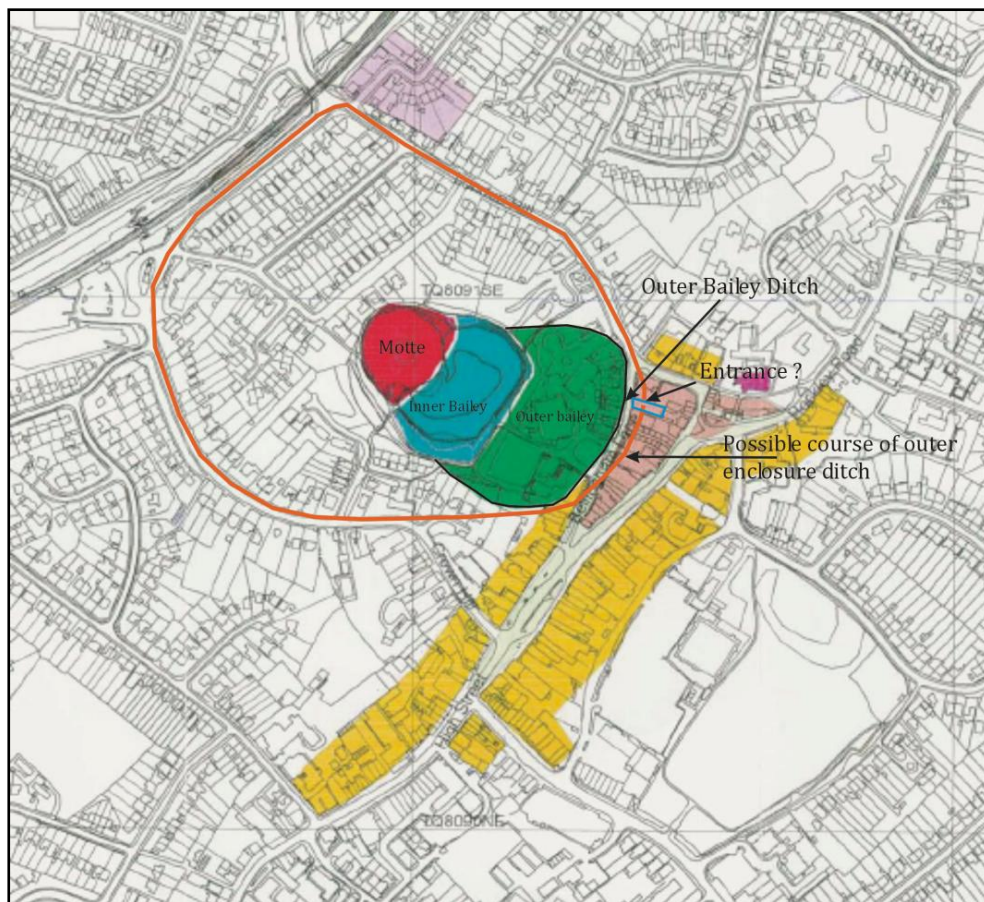


**Figure 7. Post-excavation plan of trench with ditch and possible ditch projection**



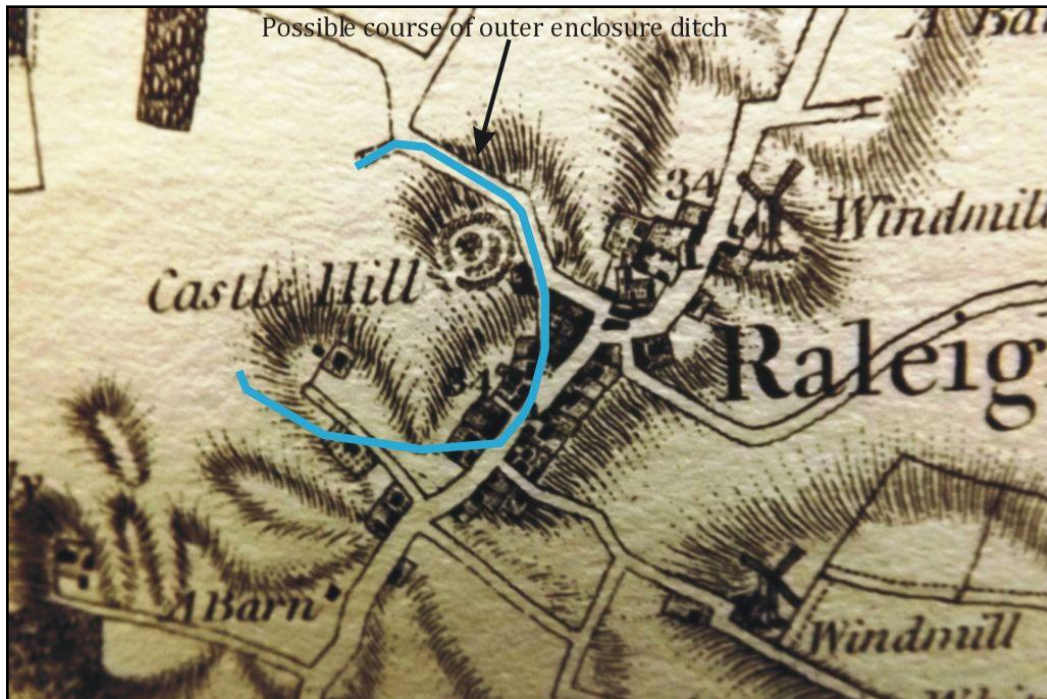
10.3 The hill surrounding Rayleigh Castle would in itself be a good topographic, defensive feature, so any ditch defining that area would make for a further defence feature; the proposed, and one must not forget, conjectural, orange marked course of the ditch on figure 8. follows the possible circuit of the hill bottom and continues towards the eastern side to pick up the High street, Bellingham Lane and around to the north along London Hill.

10.4 The finds evidence (11th-12th c. pottery) from the ditch corroborates the theory offered for a further boundary or possible defensive ditch contemporary with the castle (albeit rather small for a defensive purpose); an interpretation of the sequence of its fills, its silting-up or disuse can be illustrated further with the combination of the finds evidence as well.



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**Figure 8 . Showing castle ditch system and possible outer ditch in orange from: Rayleigh Historic Town Project Assessment report 1999**



**Figure 9. Chapman and Andre (1777) map of Raleigh showing incorrectly positioned castle motte; blue line projected course of possible outer ditch following part of the High Street, Bellingham Lane, and London Hill**

10.5 In conclusion, finding a further ditch that is most likely related to the castle, whether in a defensive use or not, is remarkable. The ditch adds to the overall morphology of the castle and its juxtaposition with the early town of Raleigh. The terminus also, found while excavating for samples, was a surprise and also adds to the possibility that an entrance may be at this location between the castle and the town, especially the market area considered to be within the triangular area (the site location) between Bellingham Lane and the High Street of Raleigh. If this theory is correct, then an ancient thoroughfare was here during the early part of the castle's history, however, until a further continuation of this ditch or the opposing terminus, if one exists, is found it cannot be proven unequivocally until further proof is gained. From the information gained thus far from the evaluation we can say however that there is strong evidence for the newly found outer boundary ditch and a possible causeway related to the castle and the town of Raleigh.

## **11. Health, Safety and Environment**

A risk assessment strategy covering all activities was carried out during the lifetime of the project.

All work was carried out in accordance with current health and safety legislation.

Every care was taken to minimise the environmental impact.

## **12. Ownership of Finds, Storage and Curation of Archive**

All artefactual material recovered will be held in long term storage by the Thurrock Museum archive, and ownership of all such archaeological finds will be given over to the museum to facilitate future study and ensure proper preservation of all such artefacts. In the unlikely event that artefacts of significant monetary value are discovered, and if they are not subject to the Treasure Act (1996), separate ownership arrangements may be negotiated.

## **13. Archive preparation and deposition**

The archive will be presented to the Southend Museum, to the standards as laid out in their specification/brief.

## **14. Resources**

The evaluation was undertaken by Dennis Payne BA (Hons) ACIfA; Mr Martin of Britannia Archaeology and additional staff as necessary using standard archaeological field techniques.

## **15. Copyright**

Copyright will remain that of the author. License will be given to the client to present any reports, copyright of the author, to the planning authority in good faith of satisfactory settlement of account.

## **16. Acknowledgements**

Mr Roger Jones who funded this project and I-Arch Consulting Ltd who appointed Archaeoserv to this project.

Alison Bennet (Essex CC Historic Environment Advisor to the project)

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## Appendix I: Pottery identification table

ID	Feature	Context	Ceramic period	Fabric	Form	Decoration
73	1003	1004	LS/MED	EMWS	BODY	
74	1003	1004	MED	EMW SAN	BODY	INCD
75	1003	1004	LS/MED	EMWS	BODY	
76	1003	1006	MED	HFW	JUG	INCD
77	1003	1006	PMED	PMRW	BASE	

## Appendix II: Digital Images



*Plate 1. Pre-excavation view*



*Plate 2. Section of ditch [1003]*



*Plate 3. Section of ditch [1003]*



*Plate 4. Sample section of trench*



*Plate 5. Post-excavation view of trench, looking towards ditch at far end*