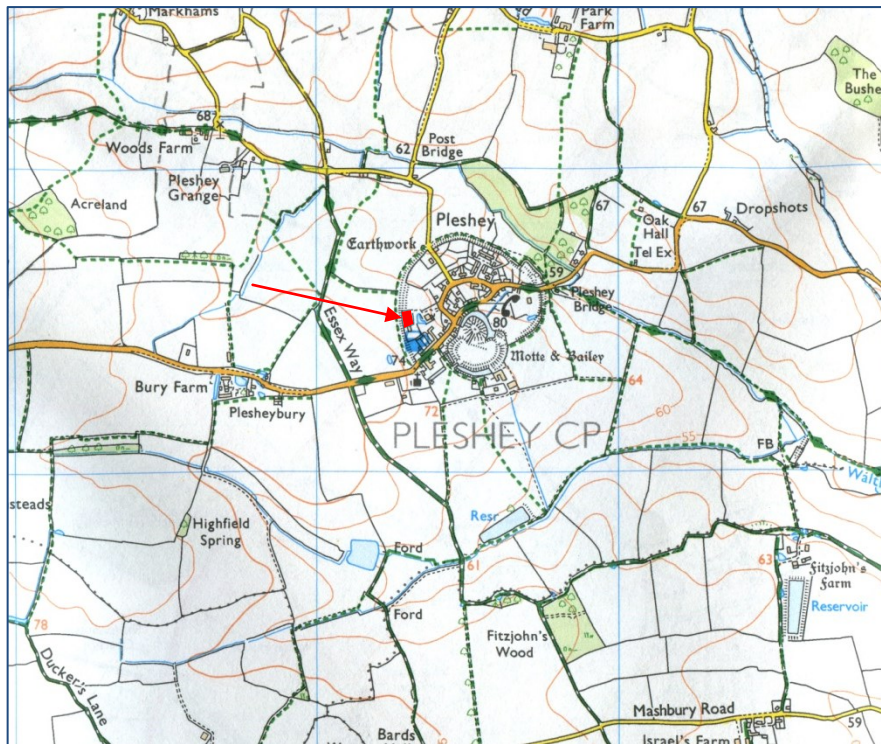


- *A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken at Becketts, Back Lane, Pleshey, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 1HL. This was conducted by Midland Archaeological Services during the construction of a small orangery to the rear of the property.*
- *This programme of archaeological monitoring concluded that re-deposited natural and natural deposits were present. No archaeological deposits or features were recorded.*



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**Fig. 1:** Location Map 1:25 000

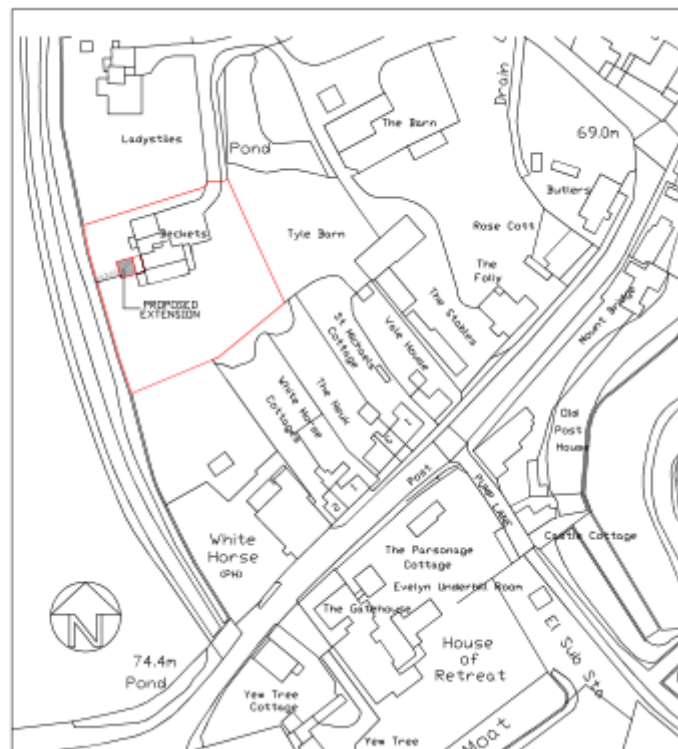
## 1.0 Introduction

Midland Archaeological Services (MAS) were commissioned by Westbury Garden Rooms Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring of land at Becketts, Back Lane, Pleshey, Chelmsford, CM3 1HL, henceforth called the site.

## 2.0 Location and Description

Pleshey is situated in the administrative district of Chelmsford City Council, approximately 10km north-north-west of Chelmsford. The site is located just to the west of Back Lane and fronting The Street, north of the castle ruins and within the earthwork enclosure TL 6631 1447 (figs. 1, 2, 3). The site area comprises of a small square of land approximately 16sqm in extent located to the immediate west of the

current property and lies at 74m OD. The underlying geology comprises of Chalky Boulder Clay overlying glacial sands and gravels on London Clay.<sup>1</sup>



**Fig. 2:** Location Plan 1: 2500

### 3.0 Planning Background

Chelmsford City Council has granted permission for the construction of an orangery at Becketts, Back Lane, Pleshey, Chelmsford, CM3 1HL, planning ref:14/01702/FUL.

permission is subject to conditions and on the recommendation of the Historic Environment Officer that a programme of archaeological monitoring be undertaken throughout the groundwork phase and that any archaeological deposits identified will require excavation and recording prior to any further work or machine activity in the area.

### 4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The village name is believed to have originated from the Old French Plaisseis, meaning 'an enclosure made with interlaced fencing'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> British Geological Survey 1982

Pleshey and its surrounding environs has a diverse archaeological record spanning from the prehistoric to the post-medieval periods and later. Much of this has been recorded over the years by chance discoveries, research projects, stray finds and during or ahead of development. Most notably the 11<sup>th</sup> century town enclosure and castle (SM 22, EHER 1126) dominate the village.<sup>3</sup> There are also numerous Grade II listed buildings dating from the 15th-19th centuries located throughout the village, with Tyle Barn a Grade II listed barn being located not far to the south-east of the site.

Over the preceding years a variety of artefacts and archaeological features have been recorded close to the site, along Back Lane and The Street areas.

At Lavender Cottage situated along Back Lane a pit dating to the medieval period, along with associated pottery was recorded here during a watching brief in 2001 (EHER 46487). Another watching brief conducted after storm damage to a tree in 1988 along The Street recorded a Roman quern fragment (EHER 16162). In 1988 excavations undertaken along Back Lane revealed a number of medieval pits and ditches, one ditch of substantial size and possibly representing the northern bailey ditch of the castle, early medieval pottery was also recovered (EHER 16218). Archaeological monitoring undertaken close to the site at Tyle Barn revealed medieval floor layers, a post hole feature, gully and possible pit feature, while subsequent archaeological monitoring undertaken in 2014 produced no archaeological evidence,<sup>4</sup> while archaeological monitoring (EHER 19053) on the site during the construction of an extension in the late 1980's recorded only natural deposits.

## **5.0 Aims and Objectives**

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to accurately record and interpret any archaeological deposits, features, artefacts and ecofacts during any ground disturbance associated with the development, thus preserving them by record.

## **6.0 Methodology**

This programme of archaeological monitoring consisted of the continuous observation of excavations associated with the footings for the orangery and was followed by the investigation of any archaeological features and or deposits which may have been revealed.

All spoil was visually observed and metal detected for archaeological artefacts. Deposits identified were subjected to cleaning by hand in order to assess their nature, dimensions and to attempt to recover datable material. These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions complemented by colour slide, B/W photographs and scale drawings in both plan and section.

The fieldwork was undertaken by the author on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> Mills 1998

<sup>3</sup> Medlycott, M. 1999

<sup>4</sup> MAS 2014

## **Archive Creation**

On completion of the fieldwork all photographic films were processed by a specialist laboratory and scanned at a resolution of 600dpi for selective inclusion within this report.

All field notes and drawings were checked for completeness and ordered into a documentary archive and based on the requirements of the receiving museum. The basic archive includes:

1. 2 photographic registers
2. 1 context register
3. 1 drawing register
4. 2 context sheets
5. 1 A3 drawing sheet

## **7.0 Results**

A total of three contexts were recorded throughout the site, (fig.3, Appendix 1, 2). (001) topsoil, (002) represented a light brown clay with frequent chalk inclusions and representing a possible re-deposited natural soil, whilst (003) was a mid brown silty clay natural soil.

## **8.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

Deposit (002) was representative of a natural clay, although it appeared surprisingly high stratigraphically, almost at current ground level in the development area, with sub soil being absent and only a few centimetres of garden topsoil present (001). This could suggest that it has been re-deposited by some action, possibly the digging of the town enclosure ditch located not far to the west.

## **9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology**

The methodology required the monitoring of foundation trenches, the excavation of these was undertaken with a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a bladed bucket attached to a back operating arm. Sufficient time was given by the contractor to insure the complete recording was possible, thus enabling all deposits encountered to be preserved by record.

## **10.0 Acknowledgements**

Midland Archaeological Services would like to thank Westbury Garden Rooms Ltd for this commission. Thanks also go to Alison Bennett, Historic Environment Officer at Essex County Council.

## 11.0 Site Archive

The project archive will be prepared according to the recommendations in Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for long term storage (UKC 1990)<sup>5</sup>, (Museums and Galleries Commission 1992),<sup>6</sup> (MoRPHE 2008),<sup>7</sup> and the Chelmsford Museum Guidelines.<sup>8</sup>

The date for archive deposition with Chelmsford Museum is not currently known but it is hoped to be deposited during August 2015.

Any digital files relating to the site will be saved in a compatible format for inclusion in the County Historic Environment Record.

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<sup>5</sup> Preparation of Excavation Archives for long term storage UKIC 1990

<sup>6</sup> Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections Museums and Galleries Commission 1992

<sup>7</sup> Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, MoRPHE, English Heritage 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Chelmsford Museum Guidelines

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