

**LAND TO THE REAR OF HIGHFIELD TOWERS
HILLRISE ROAD, COLLIERS ROW, ROMFORD,
LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION
BY
TRIAL TRENCHING**



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

July 2005

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	1
1 INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 Project History	3
1.2 Abbreviations used in the report.....	3
2 BACKGROUND	4
2.1 Location and Topography	4
2.2 Geology	4
2.3 History and Archaeology.....	4
3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	5
3.1 General Aims	5
3.2 Specific Objectives	5
4 METHOD.....	6
4.1 Machining	6
4.2 Excavation and Recording.....	6
5 RESULTS	7
5.1 Summary	7
5.2 Trench 1.....	7
5.3 Trench 2.....	8
5.4 Trench 3.....	8
5.5 Trench 4.....	8
5.6 Trench 5.....	10
6 CONCLUSIONS	10
7 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS.....	11
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	12
APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA	13
APPENDIX 2: TRENCH DATA	13
APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX.....	14
APPENDIX 4: GLSMR SUMMARY	15

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location Plan	2
Figure 2: Plan of Excavated Features.....	9

**LAND TO THE REAR OF HIGHFIELD TOWERS, HILLRISE ROAD,
COLLIERS ROW, ROMFORD, LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY TRIAL TRENCHING**

SUMMARY

Client: Hill Partnerships Ltd

NGR: TQ 50635 92166

Planning Application No: London Borough of Havering P2302.04

Site Code: HII05

Project No: 1485

Date of Fieldwork: 21/6/05 – 24/6/05

The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on the site of a new housing development to the rear of Highfield Towers, Hillrise Road, Colliers Row, Romford. The aim of the work was to identify evidence of possible medieval or post-medieval activity associated with the site of a nearby 16th-century manor, Celys Place, or any earlier evidence of exploitation of the agriculturally fertile soils.

The five evaluation trenches identified only modern ditches, a gully, a burnt area and service trenches, and no earlier archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were recovered. The site was agricultural land until the area was built up in the mid-20th century. It also appears that the site area had been truncated during the construction of the adjacent tower block and related garages. It is considered that the development will have at most only a negligible impact on archaeological remains in this part of Romford.



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Fig.1. Site Location Plan

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project History

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching prior to a new housing development to the rear of Highfield Towers, Colliers Row, Romford, in the London Borough of Havering. The fieldwork aimed to determine the presence, nature, date and survival of archaeological remains in the proposed development area.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out as part of a condition placed by the London Borough of Havering on a planning application submitted by Hill Partnerships Ltd. The condition required a programme of archaeological work under the terms of Planning Policy Guidance 16 on Archaeology and Planning.
- 1.1.3 The development consists of fifteen houses and three blocks of flats. Groundworks that might disturb any archaeological remains on the site include the construction of piled foundations and the excavation of ground beam slots, access road foundations and service trenches.
- 1.1.4 Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the evaluation on behalf of Hill Partnerships Ltd. The project was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (EH GLAAS 2005), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2005).
- 1.1.5 Following completion of the project, the site archive will be deposited with the Museum of London.

1.2 Abbreviations used in the report

ADS = Archaeological Data Service

ECC FAU = Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

EH GLAAS = English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service

GLSMR = Greater London Sites and Monuments Record

LAARC = London Archaeological Archives Resource Centre

NMR = National Monuments Record

NGR = National Grid Reference

OS = Ordnance Survey

OD = Ordnance Datum

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Fig. 1)

- 2.1.1 The site lies to the north of Highfield Towers (TQ 50635 92166). It extends westward to the rear of 223-241 Hillrise Road, covering an area currently in use as garages, and eastward to encompass a grassed area currently in use as recreation ground. The site totals approximately 0.46 ha in area.
- 2.1.2 The northern row of garages had been demolished prior to the archaeological investigation. The southern row was awaiting demolition pending party-wall negotiations.
- 2.1.3 The garage area was covered by a substantial layer of concrete, which formed the access and base to the demolished garages. The recreation ground area was covered by long grass.
- 2.1.4 The site was situated upon the crest of a ridge overlooking the Thames valley to the south. Within the development area the ground was relatively flat, at a height of c. 74m OD, although there was a gradual fall from east to west.

2.2 Geology

- 2.2.1 The natural geology of the site was of patchy gravels within a silty clay matrix. The natural appeared to be more gravelly at the eastern (higher) end of the site. This represents a mixed glacial deposit at the northern edge of the Orsett Heath gravel terrace.

2.3 History and Archaeology

- 2.3.1 The site lies well to the north of Romford's historic core, and lies directly to the south of the boundary of Havering Park, 1km SSW of the village of Havering-atte-Bower. The area was previously agricultural land and remained undeveloped until 1921. By the 1950s the site

had been incorporated into a large residential development that had spread north from Romford.

- 2.3.2 The potential for late medieval or early post-medieval remains was suggested by the presence of the site of a late medieval manor of Celys Place (later to become Havering Grange) 200m to the east of the development area (ADS ref. NMR_NATINV-965417).

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General Aims

- 3.1.1 The main aim of the investigation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains threatened by the proposed development.
- 3.1.2 As well as recording the archaeological remains that may be present, the evaluation was also to assess the degree of existing disturbance and its effect on archaeological survival.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- 3.2.1 More specific objectives included the evaluation of:
- The potential for survival of out-buildings and agricultural features associated with the Celys Place manor house.
 - Any evidence of prehistoric and later exploitation of agriculturally fertile sand and loam deposits.
- 3.2.2 This evaluation report aims to assess the significance of archaeological deposits within the development area in order to inform any decision on further work or mitigation proposals.

4 METHOD

4.1 Machining

4.1.1 The trial trench locations were determined by the EH GLAAS brief (2005). The trenches were positioned across the footprints of the proposed blocks of flats.

4.1.2 A mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed bucket was used under archaeological supervision to excavate two 10m x 2m trenches in the garage area, and three 20m x 2m trenches in the recreation ground area. A total area of 160 sq m was evaluated.

4.2 Excavation and Recording

4.2.1 Standard ECC FAU methodologies were employed with regard to excavation and recording. All stratigraphy was recorded using the ECC FAU's context recording system. Planning and surveying was tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

4.2.2 The site was surveyed by tape measure in relation to surrounding buildings and the site boundaries. Plans were drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10.

4.2.3 All surfaces were sufficiently cleaned to ensure that any features present were visible. Archaeological features and deposits were excavated using hand tools. A sample of natural features was excavated in order to prove that they were not man-made.

4.2.4 Finds from all features were collected, where present, if not obviously modern.

4.2.5 No environmental samples were taken due to the absence of well-stratified, datable deposits with potential for significant ecofact presence or survival.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 The excavation recorded eight archaeological contexts belonging to four features cut onto the natural rift geology. Most of these represented modern drainage feature that had been backfilled within the last 50 years.

5.1.2 The plans of the excavated features in trenches 3, 4 and 5 are shown in Figure 2. No areas of significant archaeological activity were identified in any of the trenches.

5.2 Trench 1

5.2.1 Natural silty gravel was identified at a height of 72.8m OD, below a 0.40m thick layer of disturbed build-up containing modern building rubble, capped by a 0.25m thickness of concrete hard-standing / garage foundations.

5.2.2 A modern concreted drain crossed the southern end of the trench, at a depth of 72.54m OD. This represented the surface-water drain that originally ran along the length of the garage block.

5.2.3 No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

5.3 Trench 2

5.3.1 Natural silty gravel was identified at a height of 73.2m OD, below a 0.35m thick layer of disturbed build-up containing modern building rubble, capped by a 0.25m thickness of concrete hard standing / garage foundation.

5.3.2 A modern concreted drain crossed the centre of the trench, identified at a depth of 73.24m OD. This is likely to have been a continuation of the surface-water drain identified in trench 1. Two further modern concrete features were identified within the trench. These are likely to have been sill beams for structures associated with the garage block.

5.3.3 No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

5.4 Trench 3

- 5.4.1 Natural gravelly silty clay was identified at a height of 74.7 m OD, below 0.30m of topsoil. The natural subsoil was not homogeneous, and in places was more gravel than clay. This is typical of sediments deposited in a post-glacial environment.
- 5.4.2 A ditch (7) and a narrower gully (5) crossed the eastern end of the trench. Both ran east to west and were very shallow (less than 0.3m deep). They were filled with a gravelly topsoil mixed with modern refuse, including plastic, metal springs and glass. The similarities between these two features suggest that they were associated. They are likely to have been drainage features that were backfilled before the creation of the recreation ground, after the construction of Highfield Towers.
- 5.4.3 A large lump of concrete was present in the eastern end of the trench. This further suggests that the area was heavily disturbed during the construction of the adjacent accommodation and that the area may well have been landscaped.

5.5 Trench 4

- 5.5.1 Natural gravelly silty clay was identified at a height of 75.4 m OD, below 0.30m of topsoil. More expansive outcrops of gravel were present. In places these were quite grey in colour, which suggested a higher silt content. Excavation of these, however, showed that the staining was likely to have been caused by the percolation of topsoil through the free-draining gravels, and that the features were of natural origin.
- 5.5.2 Two patches of burnt flint were identified towards the middle of the trench. On cleaning, one was found to be very ephemeral. Excavation of the second (1) revealed that it was less than 0.1m deep and contained no finds. It is likely that these features represent scorched natural gravels below the bases of fire-pits that have been heavily truncated.
- 5.5.3 A sand-filled trench crossed the eastern end. This ran north-south and housed the cables for the closed circuit TV cameras on the adjacent buildings.

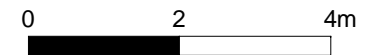
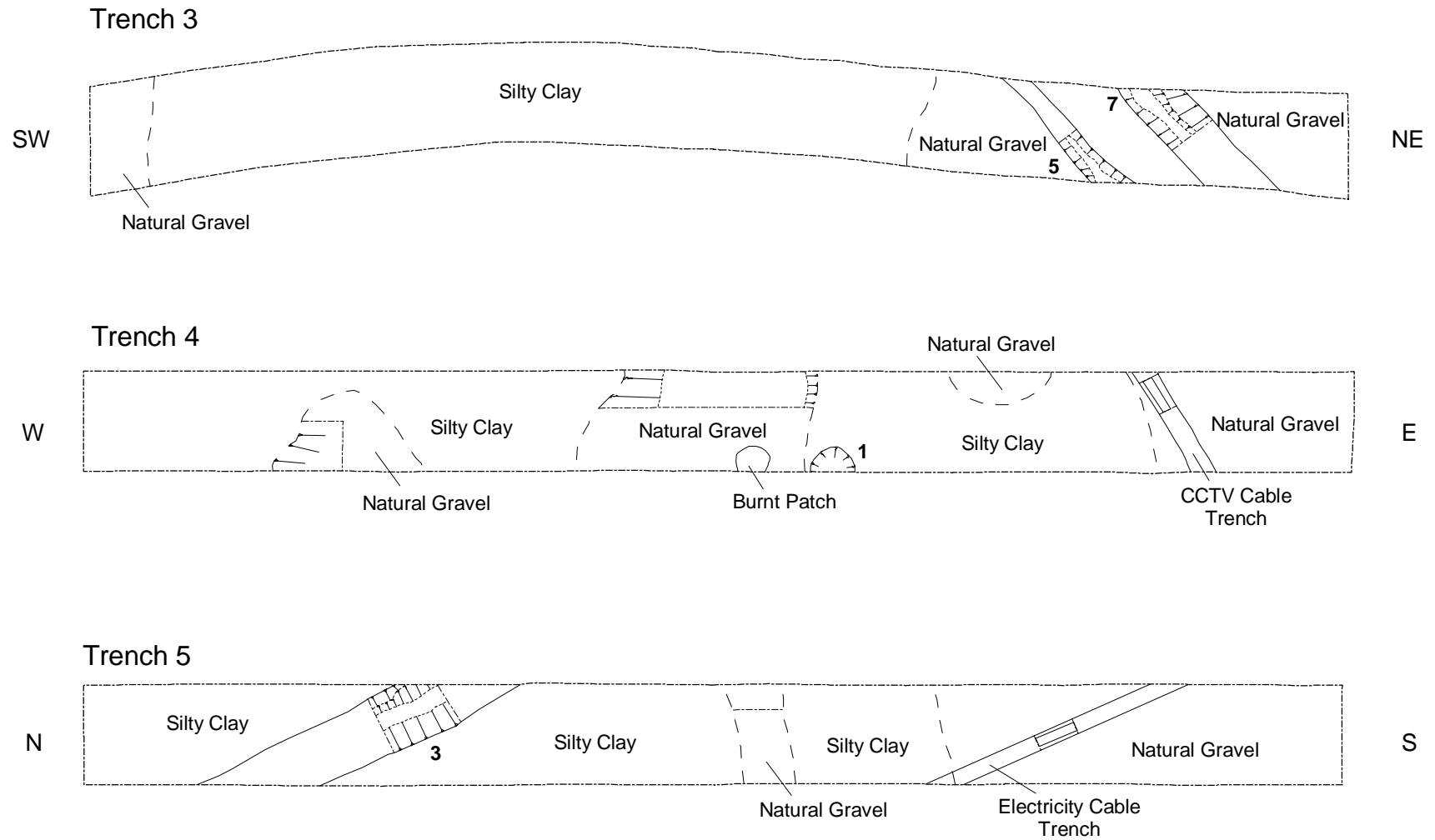


Figure 2: Plan of Excavated Features

5.6 Trench 5

- 5.6.1 The natural subsoil in trench 5 varied from silty clay at the northeastern end of the trench, at 75.1m OD, to sandy gravel at the southwestern end, at 76.2m OD. The topsoil was approximately 0.30m deep, but much more gravelly than in the other trenches.
- 5.6.2 The trench cut across a noticeable linear depression in the surface of the grassed area. After excavation, this was seen to correspond with a ditch that ran northwest to southeast across the northern end of the trench. This feature was filled with a very humic, topsoil-like material and was 0.70m deep. No finds other than modern glass, metal and plastics were recovered from this feature and it is likely to have been backfilled in the last 50 years. The lack of truncation to this feature may suggest that it marked the boundary of the impact of the building works.
- 5.6.3 The southern end of the trench contained an electricity cable trench that also ran northwest to southeast. This was excavated to a depth of 0.45m, at which point the ceramic warning tiles became visible.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No significant archaeological deposits were present within the area of any of the trenches.
- 6.2 The shallow depth of many of the modern features indicates that the site is likely to have been truncated during construction of the adjacent tower block and the garages. It is also probable that the grassed area would have been cleared during the construction of the adjacent housing estate. The absence of any archaeological finds in topsoil suggests that there are unlikely to have been any significant archaeological deposits in the area.
- 6.3 It is likely that the area was used for agricultural cultivation up until the construction of the adjacent housing estate in the 1950s, as indicated by the OS mapping.

7 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

- 7.1 The results of the evaluation suggest that the site area is extremely unlikely to contain any significant archaeological features or deposits. The ground works for the new buildings are considered to have at most a negligible impact on any archaeological remains in the area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Essex CC FAU would like to thank Hill Partnerships Ltd, who commissioned and funded the archaeological work, especially Wayne Murfit and John Alexander for their co-operation and assistance. The fieldwork was carried out by Ben Barker and Chris Down of ECC FAU. Digital illustrations were by Ben Barker and Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Patrick Allen of ECC FAU. David Divers of EH GLAAS monitored the archaeological work on behalf of the London Borough of Havering.

REFERENCES

- | | | |
|----------|------|--|
| ECC FAU | 2005 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (Rev. 1). Archaeological Evaluation to the Rear of Highfield Towers, Hillrise Road, Romford, London Borough of Havering. Essex CC FAU</i> |
| EH GLAAS | 2005 | <i>Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation to the rear of 223-241 Hillrise Road, Garages Adjacent to Highfield Towers, Colliers Row, Romford. EH GLAAS</i> |

APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

Context	Fill of	Category	Details	Period
1	-	Cut	Sub-circular pit, 0.10m deep, 0.6m in diameter.	-
2	1	Fill	Burnt flints in a dark greyish brown clayey silt matrix.	-
3	-	Cut	Ditch, 0.9m wide by 0.45m deep, aligned N-S. Steep sided with a flat base.	Modern
4	3	Fill	Greyish black silty clay with high organic content. Frequent modern finds including polystyrene and plastic.	Modern
5	-	Cut	Gully, 0.4m wide by 0.1m deep, aligned NW-SE. Concave profile with shallow sides. Probably truncated.	Modern
6	5	Fill	Mid Greyish Brown silty clay with frequent gravel inclusions. Occasional modern finds including glass and concrete.	Modern
7	-	Cut	Ditch, 0.8m wide by 0.2m deep, aligned NW-SE. Steep sided with a concave base. Probably truncated.	Modern
8	7	Fill	Mid greyish brown silty clay with high organic content. Frequent modern finds including Fe Springs and modern glass.	Modern

APPENDIX 2: TRENCH DATA

Trench No	N Co-Ordinate	S Co-Ordinate	Length	Width	Area
1	TQ 50581,92140	TQ 50589,92135	10 m	2 m	20 m ²
2	TQ 50605,92160	TQ 50609,92151	10 m	2 m	20 m ²
3	TQ 50645,92183	TQ 50636,92166	20 m	2 m	40 m ²
4	TQ 50676,92189	TQ 50656,92188	20 m	2 m	40 m ²
5	TQ 50697,92217	TQ 50702,92197	20 m	2 m	40 m ²
					160 m ²

APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation
- 1.2 Specification for Evaluation

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Evaluation Report

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Trench Sheets 1 to 5
- 3.2 Context Record Register
- 3.3 Original Context Records 1 to 8.
- 3.4 Trench Sheets 1 to 5
- 3.5 Drawing Registers
 - 3.5.1 Plans Register
 - 3.5.2 Sections Register
- 3.6 Levels Register
- 3.7 Photographic Register
- 3.8 1 sets of 35mm colour slides and B&W Prints
- 3.9 Miscellaneous maps and plans

Not in Files:

Site Drawings (2 sheets)

APPENDIX 4: GLSMR SUMMARY

GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1. TYPE OF RECORDING

Evaluation by trial trench

2. LOCATION

Borough Havering NGR TQ 50635 92166

Site Address Highfield Towers, Hillrise Road, Colliers Row, Romford, London Borough of Havering.

Site Name Land to the Rear of Hillrise Road

Site Code HII05

3. ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/ company/ society: Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

Address Fairfield Court
Fairfield Road
Braintree
Essex
CM7 3YQ

Site Director Ben Barker

Funded by Hill Partnerships Ltd

4. DURATION

Site Started 21/06/05 Finished 24/06/05

Work previously notified Yes

Will Continue No

5. PERIODS REPRESENTED

Modern

6. PERIOD SUMMARIES

Not applicable. No archaeological deposits identified other than modern.

7. NATURAL

Type Silty Gravel

Height above O.D. 74m

8. LOCATION OF ARCHIVE

Please indicate those categories still in your possession:

Notes Plans Manuscripts

All of the records will be deposited in the following museum: Museum of London

Year of transfer 2005

Location of copies

Security copy made

9. LOCATION OF FINDS

In your possession Nil

All of the finds will be deposited in the following museum: Museum of London:

Year of transfer Not Applicable

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barker, B. (2005) *Land to the rear of Highfield Towers, Hillrise Road, Havering. Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching*. ECC FAU Report No. 1485