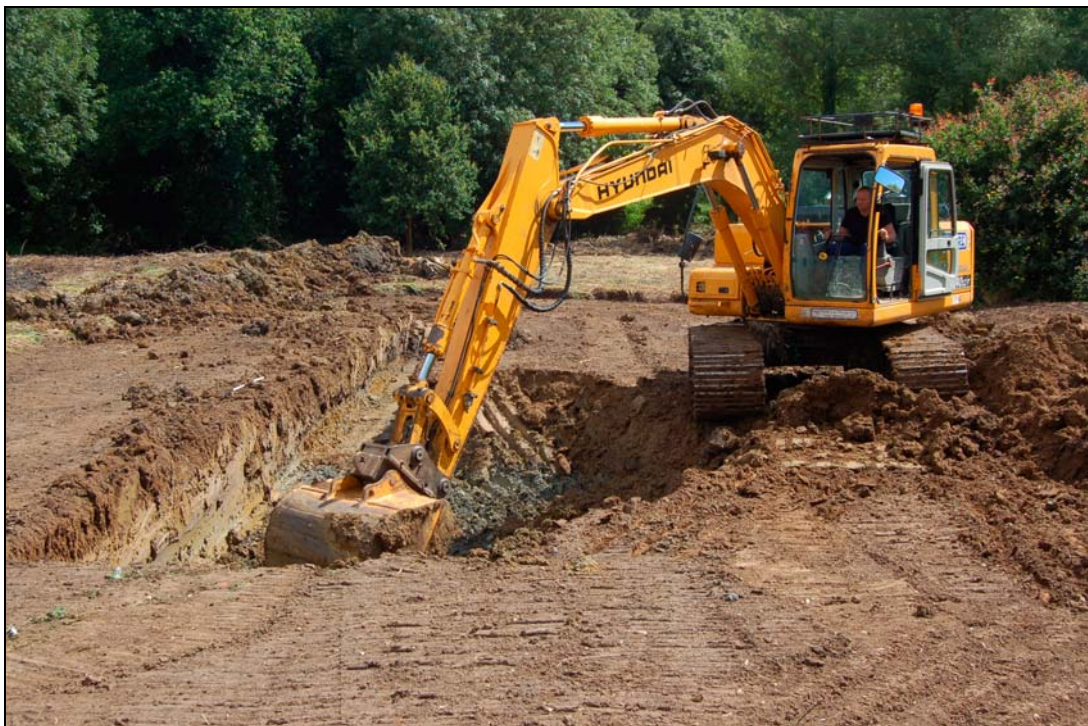


**RIVER BRAIN BACKWATER CHANNEL RESTORATION
LAND ADJACENT TO RIVERS VIEW ROAD
WITHAM
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

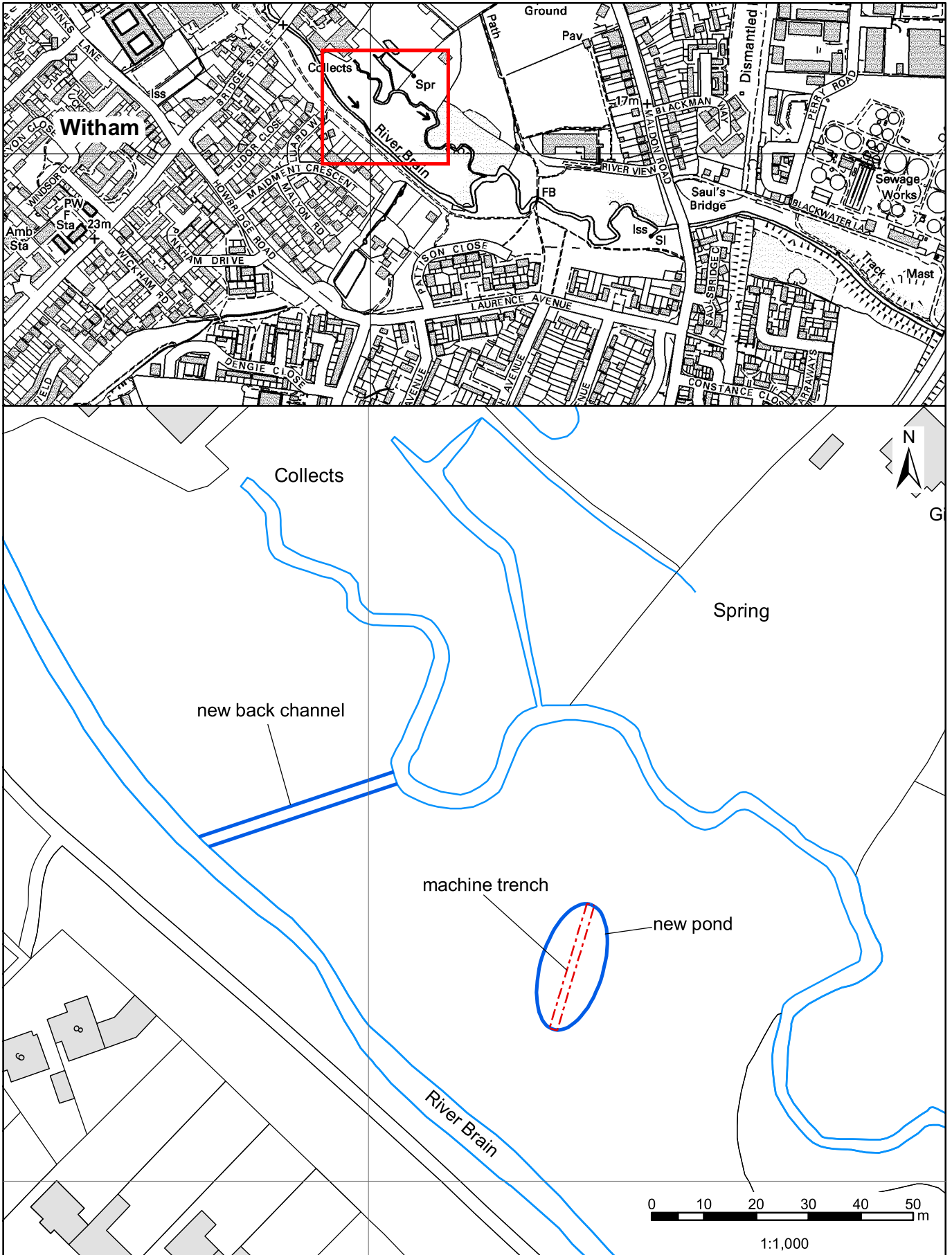


**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

November 2012

Essex HER Summary Sheet

Site Name/Address: River Brain Backwater Channel, land adj. River View Road, Witham, Essex	
Parish: Witham	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 82010 14050	Site Code: none
Type of Work: Archaeological monitoring	Site Director/Team: Andy Letch ECC FAU
Dates of Work: July 30th 2012	Size of Area Investigated: approx 177sq m
Curating Museum: Braintree	Funding Source: Essex Wildlife Trust
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related HER Nos. 14046 (medieval mill)
Final Report: N/A	Oasis No: 136979
Periods Represented: Post-medieval (u/s finds only)	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>Archaeological monitoring was carried out during excavation works for the restoration of a former backwater and the excavation of a new wildlife pond in an area of former flood meadow on the north side of the River Brain, opposite the Maidment Crescent housing estate (fig. 1). The site lies in the historic core of Witham and is close to the site of a medieval water mill recorded in the Domesday Book as belonging to Howbridge Manor, the hall of which stands 130m to the west. The vicinity is a designated Local Wildlife Site for its willow, swamp/fen habitat and the river floodplain and is occupied by a mix of secondary woodland, scrub and wet open areas alongside the river.</p> <p>The existing backwater was cleaned out by mechanical excavator and a replacement channel cut to meet the River Brain away from the existing channel (fig. 1). The new 4.2m-wide channel was 26m long and 1.4m deep. Groundworks exposed an undisturbed 0.4m-thick layer of silty topsoil overlying a 0.50m-thick layer of brown river silts on top of mottled orange/grey sandy clay natural, the top of which was encountered at a depth of 0.90m from the present ground surface (plate 1).</p> <p>The c.86 sq m area of the new pond was cleared of its grey silty topsoil, then an 18m x 1.5m machine trench was cut across the middle of the area to evaluate the archaeological potential of this location. The trench was cut to a depth of 1.2m, revealing similar undisturbed river silt and mottled clay deposits, but no features of archaeological interest (plate 2). Clay deposits at the base of the slot were gravelly and wet. The excavation of the remainder of the 12 x 25m pond area was not monitored.</p> <p>No archaeological features were present and the only finds retrieved were post-medieval in origin, comprising small sherds of orange salt-glazed ware (probably 18th century in date), peg-tile and a small daub fragment found at the top of the silty flood plain deposits immediately beneath the topsoil in the new wet area. The finds were discarded following identification. No remains associated with the mill, or relating to earlier activity on the floodplain were identified.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: Andy Letch	Date of Summary: 07 November 2012



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Fig.1. Approximate location of archaeological monitoring



Plate 1. New back channel, viewed to west



Plate 2. Machine trench through new pond area, viewed to north-east