

**RIVENHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL
CHURCH ROAD
RIVENHALL
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY TRIAL TRENCHING**



Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit

AUGUST 2006

**RIVENHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL
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**RIVENHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL
CHURCH ROAD, RIVENHALL, ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL TRENCHING

SUMMARY

Client: Rivenhall Primary School

NGR: TL 829 178

Site Code: RHRS06

Project No: 1677

Date of Fieldwork: 31st of July 2006

Oasis Accession Number: essexcou1-16940

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Rivenhall Church of England Primary School in order to establish the archaeological implications of constructing a new hard surface play area to the east of the school buildings. The site lies immediately to the west and south of a Scheduled Ancient Monument that contains previously investigated prehistoric, Roman villa, Saxon and Medieval remains of national importance.

The investigation has demonstrated the possibility for the survival of archaeological remains on the site that could relate to the multi-period activity known in the vicinity. A single post-hole was revealed that cut through a sealed, but previously truncated, land surface. Unfortunately, no finds were recovered from either. Further archaeological remains comprised a known modern field boundary that had been backfilled and subsequently overlain by modern deposits.

The proposed development is unlikely to disturb significant archaeological remains, as the site has previously been built up by with over 0.5m of modern debris associated with the construction of Rivenhall Primary School. Consequently, if groundworks do not penetrate below this, any archaeological remains present will continue to be preserved in situ. However, much of the general area has been disturbed by modern services and possible tree roots, some of which penetrate down to archaeological levels of interest. Where undisturbed, archaeological remains could survive but the necessarily limited scope of the trenching meant the extent and nature of these potential remains were not fully characterised.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the evaluation on behalf of RPS (Rivenhall Church of England Primary School) under the terms of an archaeological condition placed on planning consent in accordance with Planning Policy Guideline note 16 (PPG16).

The condition was placed on preliminary planning application OTH/0084/06 by Braintree District Council Planning Department following specialist advice from the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM) given the proximity to a highly sensitive area of archaeological deposits. The application is for the construction of a new hard surface play area to the rear of the school buildings.

The archaeological work followed a brief produced by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM 2006) and the written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by ECC FAU (2006).

1.2 Report and Archive

Copies of this report will be supplied to RPS, ECC HEM and the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record (ECC HER). A version will be uploaded to the Online Access Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>). The project archive, including two copies of the report, will be deposited at Braintree museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, Geology and Topography

The site is currently a grassed play area of approximately 345 square metres and lies in the grounds of Rivenhall Primary School on Church Road, Rivenhall (TL829178). The school sits on the apex of a low hill, at c.38mOD, with the ground surface generally sloping down from west to east towards the Cressing Brook. Adjacent to the northern edge of the proposed development is the graveyard of St Mary and All Saints Church. Currently, sheep graze on land to the east and residential properties line Church Road to the south.

2.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

Archaeological investigations in the area of the proposed development have demonstrated the presence of remains in the vicinity dating from the Mesolithic period onwards. The

following summary utilises information from previous archaeological reports (Rodwell and Rodwell 1986; Clarke 2006) and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

Evidence of an extensive Roman villa was first discovered in the playing field to the east of the primary school in 1846 during drainage works. Further work was undertaken on the villa and surrounding area by the Roman Essex Society in 1892 and 1946-52. Between 1971-3, the Essex Archaeological Society undertook excavations in the vicinity of the parish church of St Mary and All Saints to the north of the School (Fig.2). During these investigations, further evidence for the development of the villa complex was revealed. In addition, archaeological remains survived relating to an early Saxon hall, the first church and associated cemetery and various phases of a priest's house spanning the 12th to 15th centuries.

Archaeological investigation has previously been undertaken to the west of RPS, prior to the construction of additional buildings to the rear of the school (EHER 19100). Unfortunately, earlier construction works had disturbed the area and no significant archaeological remains were identified. As a result of these previous investigations the main villa building and much of the area to the east of the proposed hard surface play area has been given scheduled ancient monument status (SAM 24867, Fig.2)

Prehistoric

A few diagnostically Mesolithic and later Neolithic flints represent the evidence of earliest occupation in the immediate vicinity of the primary school. These likely relate to seasonal activity along Crossing Brook that runs south to the River Blackwater. To date, several pits have been uncovered during groundworks within the churchyard that have produced Late Bronze Age pottery, much of which was apparently wasters (EHER 8080). This certainly implies a focus of occupation in the area at that time but may further allude to nearby contemporary pottery production and associated activity. During previous excavations, Iron Age remains were also identified that comprised post-holes, abraded pottery sherds and several ditches likely to be peripheral to any settlement nucleus.

Roman (EHER 19117)

The Scheduled Ancient Monument of Rivenhall Roman Villa has been intensively reported upon (Rodwell and Rodwell 1986; Clarke 2004). Only a summary is presented here.

The main villa building is aligned north-south and its southern rooms are located below the eastern end of the parish church. Partial excavation revealed that it was c.60m long by c.25m including two short wings to the east and west at either end. Further associated

buildings likely form a courtyard arrangement and include a domestic range and bath house. Other fragments of a road, yard surfaces and pavement, an enclosure wall and a 'corn-drier' have also been found. Surrounding cropmarks indicate the presence of field systems that may have an Iron Age or Roman origin (Fig.2).

Saxon and medieval (EHER 8086)

The villa is considered to have provided a focus for Saxon occupation of the area with no discernable hiatus in activity from the Roman period. The buildings are likely to have been kept in use up until the 6th century (Rodwell 1986) with several possible extensions and additions being made. A timber-framed hall was found to butt the eastern wall of the northern, east-west wing, to the main villa building. There were two distinct concentrations of Anglo-Saxon pottery within the building, possibly indicating a kitchen area and a midden. Other Anglo-Saxon finds included a lead loomweight, a bronze brooch, a fragment of a glass bowl and two bone pins.

Subsequently, archaeological evidence indicates that a timber church was built on the site sometime during the 10th century. This was replaced later in the 10th or 11th century by the existing two-celled masonry church with square chancel, a Grade 1 listed building (EHER 28915, listed building number 113506). In its construction, building materials were reused from the derelict Roman villa and it may have been built over a room that previously had religious significance. Further archaeological investigation ahead of burials to the east of the churchyard in 1999 located late Saxon/Early and Medieval inhumations and dumps of domestic debris associated with the Priests House (Clarke 2006).

Rivenhall Church of England Primary School

The following utilises information provided by English Heritage, Listed Building Online Archives (<http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk>). The school and School House are grade II listed buildings (LBN. 113505).

Originally, the primary school was built in the 19th century and comprised two flint and stone buildings (EHER 28914). The school is a single storey high, the school house is two storeys, and both display *Gothic* revival design features, specifically arched windows and doorways.

In part, the more recent development of the site can be traced from historic maps. Generally, there has been little change with regard to the land parcelled with the church and the private housing to the south. In contrast, the primary school seems to have acquired additional land

leading to the expansion of its property boundaries and in-filling of several field boundaries that once were present.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Generally, the aim of the work was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains exposed during groundworks (ECC HEM 2006).

3.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives for the project were in line with those laid out in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

3.1.1 The specific research objectives of the investigation were to identify:

- Evidence of occupation in the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods
- Surviving structural remains
- The range of artefactual remains (to inform site use, status, wealth, etc.)
- The ecofactual and environmental potential of remains

The investigation sought to inform any future mitigation strategy to be employed before or during development.

4.0 METHODS

The evaluation comprised excavation of a single 9.4m by 1.6m trench that was located within the footprint of the proposed hard surface play area (Fig.1). The archaeological investigation was carried out in reference to maps provided by Jilly Wilkinson (School Manager) in June 2006 and local Ordnance Survey data.

All mechanical excavation was carried out under archaeological supervision using a JCB fitted with a toothless bucket.

All surfaces were sufficiently cleaned to ensure that any features present were visible and spoil heaps were examined for archaeological material. Archaeological features and deposits were excavated using hand tools and finds were collected and bagged by context. A full photographic record was maintained throughout the investigation. Plans and sections were drawn at an appropriate scale to document the remains.

Standard ECC FAU recording and excavation methods were used. All fieldwork methods and recording conformed to the codes of practice and guidance issued by the IFA (1999) and adhered to regional guidelines (Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered organisation with the IFA.

5.0 RESULTS

The trench comprised an area of c.15 square metres (Fig.1). Excavations lead to the exposure of the natural orange/brown clays at 35.42mOD. Overlying the natural was a 0.14m thick layer of subsoil (9) that consisted of disturbed natural clays with a grey hue. It contained no inclusions of note or any indications of nearby occupation and no datable finds were recovered from it. It is possible that it represented a truncated former ground surface.

Approximately 1.32m from the southern edge of the ditch was a steep sided circular post-hole (5), 0.32m in depth, with a flat base that truncated subsoil (9). It was filled by light grey silty clay (6) with charcoal flecks throughout and contained no datable finds. This may represent limited evidence for structural activity beyond the limits of the current known occupation.

Further archaeological remains comprised a modern east-west ditch (7) that was visible as a cropmark continuing further east beyond the proposed development area (Fig.2). The ditch profile was not fully characterised due to the proximity of the development boundaries but appeared to have been in excess of 2m wide and was certainly over 0.60m in depth. Pottery and glass were recovered from the upper fills (see section 6).

The ditch and post-hole lay below a 0.14m-thick gravel rich build-up layer (3) that in turn sat below (2) a 0.18 to 0.44m-thick layer of made ground, and both truncated the subsoil and natural clays.

On average, a depth of c.0.35m of topsoil overlay the recent build-up deposits that were 0.4m-thick and from which an array of modern finds was recovered. The topsoil comprised dark grey clay silt mixed with small rounded gravels charcoal flecks and modern building debris.

A metal water pipe, waste water and sewerage pipe aligned east-west ran through the trench at its southern end and so limited excavation here to removal of topsoil only. Further

excavation in the proposed development area to the east and south was not possible due to the presence of several trees and drainage provisions for nearby properties. Adjacent to the rear of the school building was several tarmac pathways.

6.0 FINDS (by Joyce Compton)

Small groups of finds were recovered from two contexts. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full details can be found in Appendix 2. The finds are described by category below.

All of the finds are modern, comprising small and unremarkable brick and tile fragments, glass, and pottery. Both contexts produced similar, if not identical, finds types.

6.1 Glass

A complete blue-green bottle, height 180mm, base diameter 55mm, was found in layer (2). The bottle is unmarked and not used for mineral water, but it may have contained a sauce product, or similar. A large green stopper, maximum diameter 68mm, came from fill (8) of ditch (7). The upper surface is bisected by a moulded groove, to aid either fastening or removal of the stopper from the jar. Other glass fragments include the base of a clear medicine bottle, dark brown sherds from a large container, and ornamental dish sherds.

6.2 Pottery

A complete small stoneware bottle, height 120mm, base diameter 60mm, was recovered from the fill of ditch (7). The bottle is impressed near the base with a cartouche that contains the maker's details - 'George Skey Wilnecote Tamworth'. This firm operated from the 1860s until 1935, when taken over by Doulton's of Lambeth, and made ceramic pipes and sanitary ware as well as containers for chemical and industrial products. Other stoneware sherds, recorded in both contexts, are from ribbed jars, used for preserves and other household necessities. Both contexts also produced a range of white earthenware vessel types, some with blue transfer-printing, and one with green. White earthenware has been current from the end of the 18th century up to the present day, but the use of green transfer-printing indicates a date from the mid 19th century onwards.

Further work is not required on any of the material. The complete bottles have been added to the FAU teaching collection. None of the remaining material has been retained.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Generally, the archaeological features and deposits uncovered seemed well preserved.

Below the modern topsoil survived a sequence of built-up deposits in excess of 0.5m deep that were collectively associated with the more recent construction of additional school buildings and associated modern services. These sealed or disturbed a layer of subsoil that could have represented a truncated ancient land surface. Into this appears to have been dug an undated circular post-hole and a modern east-west ditch.

The modern ditch was an in-filled field boundary that can be seen on early edition Ordnance Survey maps. A comparable north-south linear intersects it c.50m to the east of the proposed development. Previous archaeological observations and investigations have mapped both these ditches (Rodwell 1986).

The investigation has established that groundworks to be undertaken during construction of the hard surface play area are unlikely to disturb archaeological levels of interest but has demonstrated the potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains where disturbance has not been caused by modern services, tree roots and previous ground reduction. Unfortunately, because of the necessarily limited scope of the investigation the full extent, date, and nature of these remains have not been fully characterised. In the scheduled area of the playing field, to the east, the ground looks to have remained undisturbed (Fig.1 and 2).

The presence of few features and deposits within the trench means little can be discerned about occupation or domestic activity in the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, there is insufficient information to enable greater understanding of the wider landscape associated with the multi-period activity seen beneath the church and churchyard to the north and under the playing field to the east.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ECC Field Archaeology Unit thanks Rivenhall Primary School for commissioning and funding the project. Special thanks are extended to Mrs Jilly Wilkinson, Mrs Pat French, and Mrs Pierce for their help in facilitating the fieldwork. Mark Atkinson managed the project, Matthew Pocock carried out the fieldwork. Andrew Lewsey produced the digital illustrations and the finds report was written by Joyce Compton. Vanessa Clarke of the ECC HEM monitored the investigation on behalf of the local planning authority.

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

Context No.	Type	Description	Depth/ Thickness (m)	Date
1	Layer	Topsoil – a dark grey compact clay	0.28 - 0.34	Modern
2	Layer	Build-up – a light grey brown clay silt	0.18 - 0.44	Modern
3	Layer	Build-up (High gravel content), mid grey/ brown clay silt	0.14	Modern
4	Layer	Natural – orange brown clay	Unknown	Undated
5	Post-hole	Circular, steep sided, flat based	0.32	Undated
6	Fill	Fill of 5 – mid grey clay silt	0.32	Undated
7	Ditch	E/W Field boundary, survives as cropmarks	0.58	Post-med
8	Fill	Fill of 7 – light brown silty clay	0.46	Modern
9	Layer	Subsoil (clean; disturbed natural), grey brown clay (silt)	0.14	Undated
10	Fill	Fill of 7 – mottled orange silty clay	0.12	Modern

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Description	Date
2	Layer	3	358	Glass; complete bottle, blue-green, two-piece mould; base of a clear medicine bottle, marked with 'tablespoons' measuring lines; moulded base sherd from a purple dish	Modern
		7	218	Brick and tile fragments	Modern
		4	50	Pottery; rim sherd, stoneware jar; body sherds, white earthenware, two with blue transfer-printing, one is from a cup with the handle springing	Modern
8	7	4	8	Glass; window pane sherds	Modern
		4	190	Glass; large green stopper from a utilitarian storage vessel; rim sherd from a semi-opaque pink dish, external imitation 'cut-glass' decoration; dark brown bottle body sherds, large vessel, one is embossed 'B R A...'	Modern
		5	158	Brick and tile fragments	Modern
		13	520	Pottery; complete stoneware ink/blacking bottle, marked 'George Skey Tamworth'; rim and body sherds, ribbed stoneware jar; plain white earthenware saucer and plate rim sherds and body sherds, two with fluted decoration; cup body sherd with handle springing; plate rim sherd with green transfer-printing	Modern

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME; Rivenhall Primary School, Church Road, Rivenhall

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for the archaeological investigation
- 1.2 Written scheme of investigation

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report
- 2.2 Analytical Reports
 - 2.2.1 Finds Report
- 2.3 Catalogues
 - 2.3.1 Context Finds Record
 - 2.3.2 Finds Catalogue

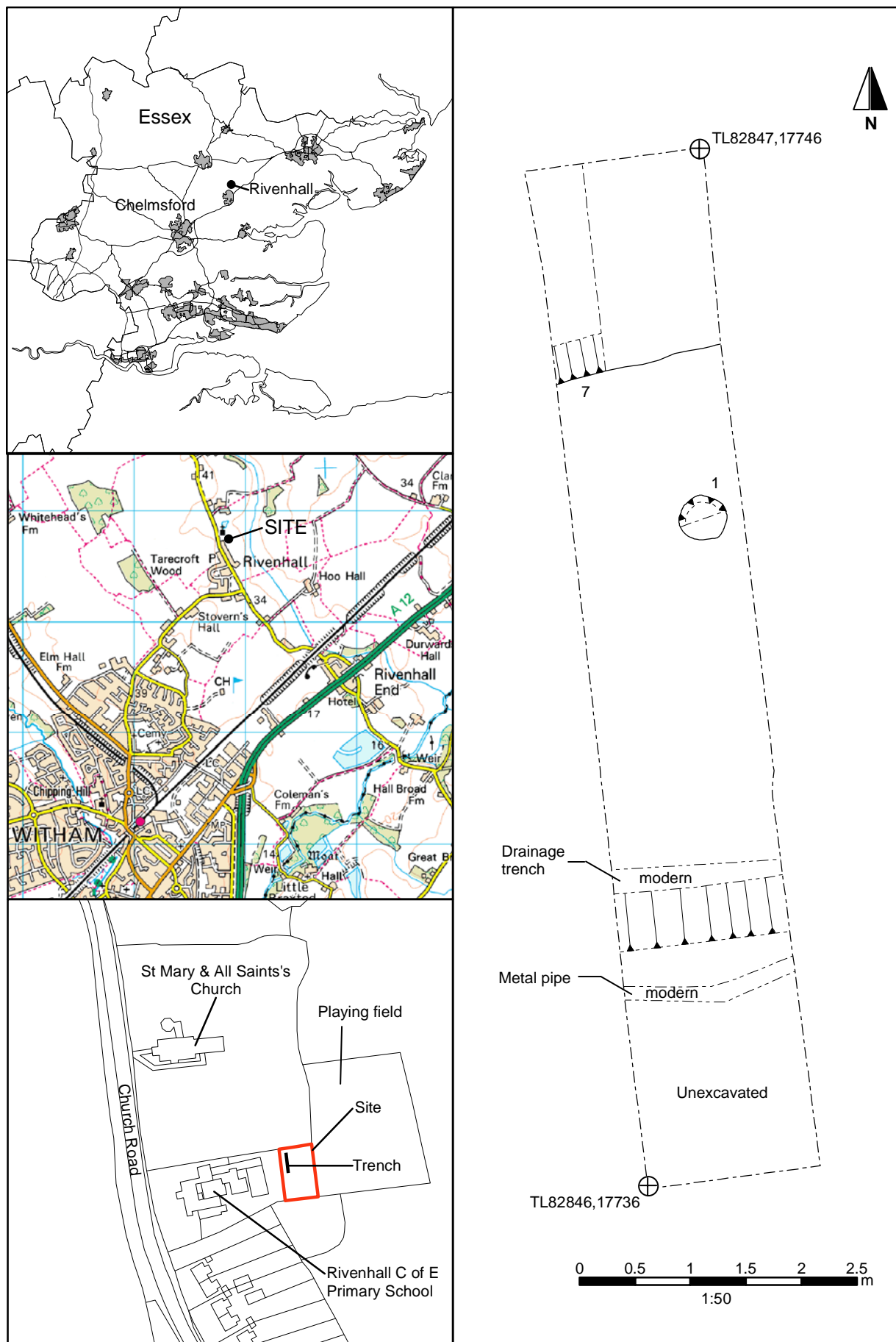
3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Index
- 3.2 Context Record Sheets
- 3.3 Photographic Register
- 3.4 CD (Digital photos and archive data)
- 3.5 Black and white prints/ negatives
- 3.6 Miscellaneous maps, plans and sketch sections

The finds were not retained

APPENDIX 4: EHER SUMMARY

SITE NAME/ADDRESS:	Rivenhall Primary School, Church Road, Rivenhall , CM8 3PQ		
CONTRACTING UNIT PROJECT NUMBER	1677		
OASIS ACCESSION NUMBER	essexcou1-16940		
PARISH: Rivenhall	DISTRICT: Braintree		
NGR: TL 829 178	SITE CODE: RHRS06		
TYPE OF WORK: Evaluation by Trial Trenching	SITE DIRECTOR/GROUP: M.Pocock of ECC FAU		
DATE OF WORK: 31st July 2006	SIZE OF AREA INVESTIGATED: 15 square metres		
FINDS/CURATING MUSEUM: Braintree	FUNDING SOURCE: Developer		
FURTHER WORK ANTICIPATED. Unknown	RELATED HER No. 19100, 19117, 8086, 28914		
FINAL REPORT: EAH Summary			
PERIODS REPRESENTED: Modern and un-dated			
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:			
<p>Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Rivenhall Church of England Primary School in order to establish the archaeological implications of constructing a new hard surface play area to the east of the school buildings. The site lies immediately to the west and south of a Scheduled Ancient Monument that contains previously investigated prehistoric, Roman villa, Saxon and Medieval remains of national importance.</p> <p>The investigation has demonstrated the possibility for the survival of archaeological remains on the site that could relate to the multi-period activity known in the vicinity. A single trench was located to the east of the school comprising a post-hole that cut through a sealed, but previously truncated, land surface. Unfortunately, no finds were recovered from either. Further archaeological remains comprised a known modern field boundary that had been backfilled and subsequently overlain by modern deposits.</p> <p>The proposed development is unlikely to disturb significant archaeological remains, as the site has previously been built up by with over 0.5m of modern debris associated with the construction of Rivenhall Primary School. Consequently, if groundworks do not penetrate below 36mOD, any archaeological remains present will continue to be preserved in situ. However, modern services and possible tree roots, some of which penetrate down to archaeological levels of interest, have disturbed much of the general area. Where undisturbed, archaeological remains could survive but the necessarily limited scope of the trenching meant the extent and nature of these potential remains were not fully characterised.</p>			
PREVIOUS SUMMARIES/REPORTS: None			
AUTHOR OF SUMMARY: Matthew Pocock (ECCFAU)	DATE OF SUMMARY: August 2006		



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Fig.1. Location and trench plan

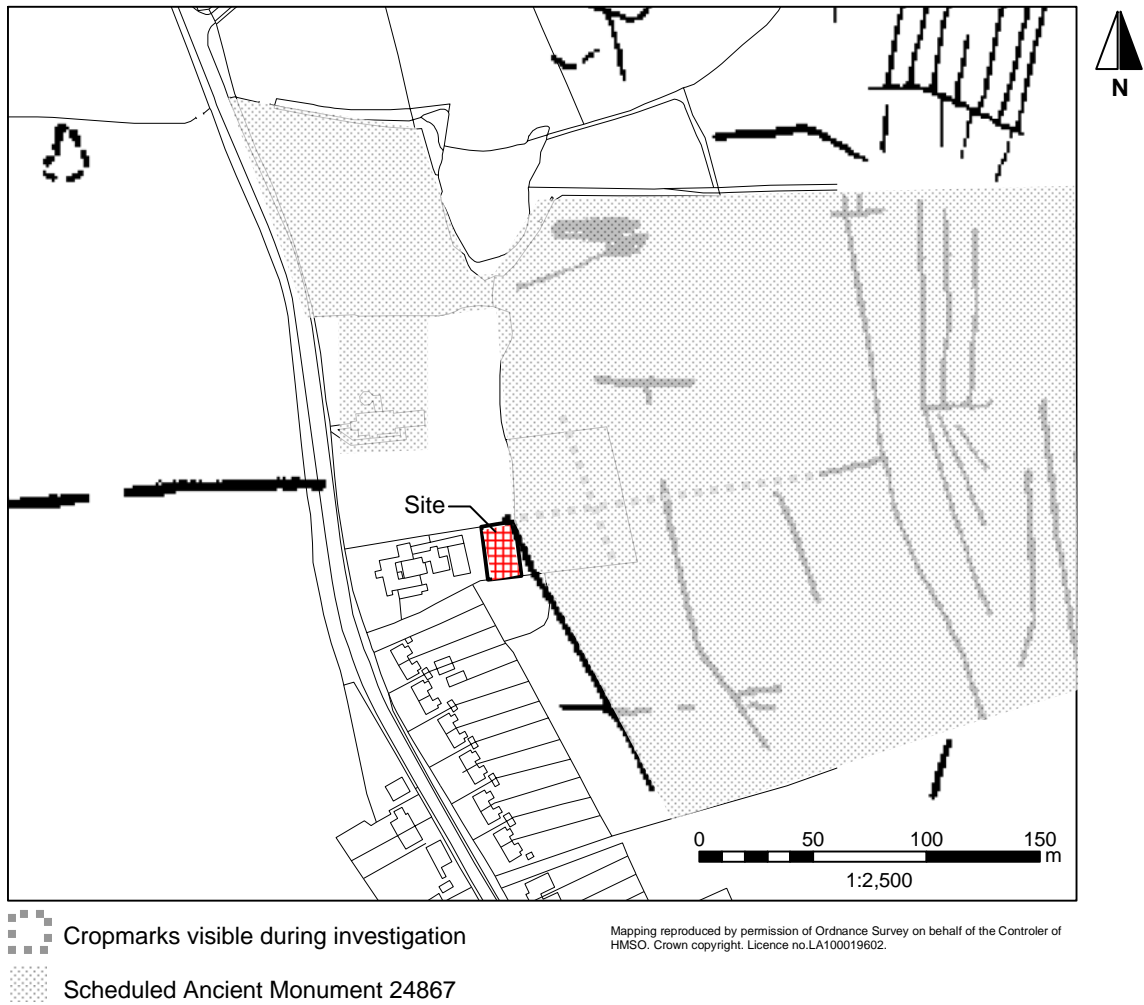


Fig.2 Cropmarks and limits of scheduled ancient monument