NEW CHANGING PAVILION, CAR PARK AND ALL-WEATHER PITCH (PHASE 2) SPINKS LANE WITHAM ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING



OCTOBER 2006

NEW CHANGING PAVILION, CAR PARK AND ALL-WEATHER PITCH (PHASE 2) WITHAM ESSEX

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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NEW CHANGING PAVILION, CAR PARK AND

ALL-WEATHER PITCH

(PHASE 2),

SPINKS LANE, WITHAM, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Client: Bryant Harvey Partnership for Braintree District Council

NGR: TL 814 142

Planning Ref: CC/BTE/73/05

Site Code: WH22

Oasis No.: essexcou.18076

Dates of Fieldwork: 30 June to 7 September 2006

SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during groundworks in the area adjacent to the North Essex Adult Community College (NEACC) complex at Spinks Lane, Witham. This second phase of development (Phase 2) included the construction of a new sports

pavilion, all-weather pitch, car park and a temporary contractor's compound.

No definite archaeological remains were identified within the footprint of the new sports pavilion, car park or the contractor's compound. This confirmed the results of the previous observations beneath the NEACC building and car park in the first phase of construction (Phase 1), which established that most of the ground in this area was

truncated, apart from a strip along the Spinks Lane frontage.

Monitoring of groundworks for laying the new all-weather pitch proved unnecessary due to a change in design that avoided significant ground reduction. Monitoring of the floodlight foundation pits identified one Middle Iron Age pit and two undated features along the south-western edge of the all-weather sports pitch. It is possible that all three were contemporary with the remains of Middle Iron Age occupation identified close to Spinks Lane in Phase 1 of the development, and which are believed to be located within the Witham Lodge Earthwork enclosure.

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Although some truncation appears to have occurred beneath the new all-weather sports pitch when the grass playing fields were originally laid out, this does not seem to have disturbed the underlying archaeological remains, which were buried beneath up to 1m of levelling deposits. It is highly probable that further archaeological remains survive beneath the new all-weather sports pitch, and also beneath the grass playing fields to the south-west of the all-weather pitch. The monitoring results confirm that this should be regarded as an area of high archaeological potential, both because of the likely survival of archaeological features there and the proximity of known Iron Age, Roman and Saxon remains of high significance previously recorded during the major excavations at Ivy Chimneys and Maltings Lane.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring of the second phase of development (Phase 2) at Spinks Lane, Witham, in an area adjacent to the new North Essex Adult Community College (NEACC) complex. The monitoring covered groundworks for the construction of a new changing pavilion, car-park, all-weather pitch, and a temporary contractor's compound. The fieldwork was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Braintree District Council, under the terms of an archaeological condition placed on planning consent (CC/BTE/73/05) in accordance with Planning Policy Guideline note 16 (PPG16). The archaeological work followed a brief produced by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM) (2005) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2005). The first phase of work, the construction of the NEACC building itself, part of the car park, and drainage facilities, was monitored and a small area excavated in autumn 2005 (Pocock 2005).

The site archive will be deposited in Braintree Museum. A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis).

2.0 BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

2.1 Topography and Geology

Witham is located on the Roman London to Colchester road on a river crossing at the confluence of the Rivers Brain and Blackwater. The 1.8ha development area is located to the south-west of Spinks Lane and to the south-west of Witham town centre, on the opposite side of the River Brain (TL 814 142; Fig 1). It is bounded to the north and south-east by residential housing, on Stevens Road and Epping Way respectively.

The overall site is a large grassed sports ground accessed from Stevens Road, alongside which there are a pavilion and changing facilities. The site is comprised of two levelled terraces. The lower terrace, adjacent to Spinks Lane, was occupied by a 0.6ha 'redgra' all-weather sports pitch that was removed during Phase 1 of the works. The higher terrace, to the west, was occupied by several grass sports pitches. The natural geology comprises glacial clays and gravels.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.2.1 General Background

The archaeological background for this and other parts of Witham has been discussed in detail by Rodwell (1993) and summarised and reviewed by Medlycott (1998). In view of this, only a summary of the most pertinent information is presented here.

Both large and small-scale archaeological investigations in Witham show that occupation began between the Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age, although residual artefacts date as far back as the Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age).

Archaeological evidence is focussed within two main areas of the town, either side of the River Brain. To the north-east of the development is Chipping Hill, a hill fort with evidence of activity in the Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age (Fig 1). There is some evidence of Roman and early Saxon occupation of the hill-fort before it became the focus of a Late Saxon burh. Settlement subsequently moved to Witham's current centre along Newland Street when a market was established there shortly before 1212. To the south-west of the development intense Iron Age and Roman activity was centred on the excavated multi-period sites at Ivy Chimneys/Witham Lodge and Maltings Lane (Fig. 3).

2.2.2 Iron Age

Investigations at Ivy Chimneys/Witham Lodge during the 1970s identified an Early or Middle Iron Age enclosure known as the Witham Lodge Earthwork. Within this enclosure were approximately six roundhouses and a number of four-post structures (Turner 1999; EHER 14040 and 14043). The postulated north-eastern boundary of the earthwork may run along the edge of Spinks Lane, placing the development area within the enclosure. Evidence of Iron Age settlement and farming to the immediate south of the enclosure was recovered from the recent excavation at Maltings Lane (Robertson 2004).

Phase 1 of the development identified several Middle Iron Age ditches and a pit immediately to the west of Spinks Lane (Pocock 2005). These were located within the postulated north-eastern boundary of the Witham Lodge Earthwork and suggest the likely presence of further archaeological remains within parts of the development area that had escaped truncation during previous landscaping of the sports field.

2.2.3 Roman

From the 1st century onwards, the area of Ivy Chimneys/ Witham Lodge became the primary focus of Roman activity as a direct result of the natural springs at Ivy Chimneys. Landscape use changed from the settlement activity seen in the Iron Age to a temple complex including timber structures, pottery kiln and a man-made pond containing votive offerings. This was supplemented during the 4th and 5th centuries by the construction of a stone building and a hexagonal tile-lined pool. Both Ivy Chimneys and Maltings Lane lie alongside the London to Colchester road on the south-west bank of the River Brain. Coupled with the freshwater spring that the temple complex was built around, the area was ideally sited to become one of the lesser posting stations on one of the principle routes through Roman Britain (Rodwell 1993). To serve this complex, settlement spread to the south in the area of Maltings Lane, where occupation peaked during to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, before falling away in the 4th century.

2.2.4 Saxon

During the early Saxon period activity continued to be focused in and around Maltings Lane. Saxon features, including eight sunken-floored buildings, dating from the 5th to the 7th centuries were excavated. Towards the end of the 6th century the main focus of Saxon activity shifted to the north-west side of the River Brain where the present-day town of Witham began to develop. Agricultural use of the landscape on this south-west side of the river is suggested by the re-establishment of settlement at Maltings Lane in the medieval period on a small scale, with a farmstead fronting the old Roman road (Robertson 2004). There is no known evidence for Saxon, medieval, or post-medieval remains in the vicinity of Spinks Lane but features may be present relating to the farming of the area.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains threatened by the development. The research objectives of the archaeological work were framed with reference to those outlined in the regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). The specific objectives of the work were:

- To record evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation and field systems.
- To identify evidence for the Iron Age Witham Lodge Earthwork enclosure and/or any activity within it.

4.0 METHOD

Reduction of the contractor's compound and the sports pavilion was undertaken by a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. Reduction for the new all-weather pitch was initially undertaken by mechanical excavator with part of the underlying clay/gravel make-up removed by box scraper. All ground reduction works were monitored for the presence or absence of archaeological remains.

All work was carried out in accordance with IFA (Institute of Field Archaeologists) by-laws and guidelines. Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed where practicable.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The results of the fieldwork are described below, with further context information presented in Appendix 1.

5.1 Contractor's Compound (Fig. 1)

A 0.3m thickness of mixed compacted clay was removed during ground reduction for the contractor's compound. One solitary pear-shaped pit or post-hole (49) was revealed, cutting through the underlying natural clay. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature and it may have been of recent origin. The area appeared to have been previously truncated and was crossed by one of the new service trenches monitored in phase 1 of the project (Pocock 2005).

5.2 Sports Pavilion (Fig. 1)

The footprint of the new sports pavilion was stripped of overburden to a depth of 0.5m. The overburden consisted of two modern deposits of hardcore and make-up, overlying natural deposits of brownish orange clay and sand. No archaeological features or finds were identified. No topsoil was present and the area appeared to have been previously truncated. Observations of groundworks for the car park for the sports pavilion confirmed that this area had also been truncated, in similar fashion to the contractor's compound and the phase 1 car park area.

5.3 All-Weather Pitch and Floodlight Pits (Figs 1 and 2)

The existing turf and topsoil, up to 0.1m deep, was removed from the area of the new all-weather pitch. Underlying was a compacted gravely clay silt levelling layer containing 20th-century finds (not retained). This deposit was reduced in depth by 0.2m. No natural clay or archaeological features were exposed.

The all-weather pitch was subsequently covered by landscape fabric and up to 0.3m of grey crushed-stone hardcore. Eight 1.2m-square floodlight foundation pits were excavated through this deposit to a depth of 1.2m. Four floodlight foundations were spaced along the north-east side of the all-weather pitch and four along the south-west side (Fig. 1). Seven of the eight pits were inspected and recorded (the eighth, in the south-east corner, was in an area of modern truncation).

No natural clay was observed in the three inspected foundation pits on the north-east side of the pitch. Each recorded section broadly comprised of deposits of dark grey-brown clay-silt overlying brown gravelly clay and light to mid-brown chalky clay. All appeared to be modern make-up and levelling deposits associated with the construction of the former grass sports pitch. A grey silt with brick flecks observed in the base of foundation pit 1 might represent the top of the original topsoil.

Similar make-up and levelling deposits were recorded in the four floodlight foundation pits on the south-west side of the new all-weather pitch. These, including 0.10m of crushed stone hardcore, extended to a depth of 0.65-0.70m below the present ground surface. The lower 0.5m of the foundation pits comprised bright brown clay and natural gravel which had in places been cut by archaeological features. At the base of the makeup deposits, in foundation pits 5 and 6, were two greyish brown clay layers (44 and 45) that might be remnants of original subsoil. One sherd of residual post-medieval pottery was recovered from layer 44. No buried topsoil was present, suggesting that the original ground surface in this area had been truncated during the construction of the grass pitch. The north-east and southeast faces of foundation pit 7 were disturbed by the presence of a modern field drain.

Archaeological features were recorded in floodlight foundation pits 5, 7 and 8. A probable rubbish pit (41), at least 1m wide by 0.66m deep, was recorded in the north-west side of foundation pit 5 (Fig. 2). This pit contained three fills (38, 39 and 40) and produced six sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery. A ditch or large pit (47) was exposed in the northern half of foundation pit 7. This continued beneath the base of the foundation pit and its fill (46)

contained a few fragments of decayed animal bone (not retained). A third archaeological feature (43), possibly part of a pit (Fig 2), was visible in the north-west face of foundation pit 8. No dating evidence was recovered but two pieces of a heavily corroded iron nail suggest the pit was of some antiquity.

6.0 FINDS by Joyce Compton

A small amount of material was recovered from three contexts during phase 2 of the archaeological monitoring. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context; full details can be found in the table below.

Pottery (7 sherds, total weight 90g) was recovered from two contexts. The small sherd from subsoil layer 44 is from a Staffordshire slipware dish of 18th century date, but all of the remainder (88g, from the fill of pit 41) is prehistoric. This has been examined by Nick Lavender who has assigned a Middle Iron Age date to the assemblage, as for most of the pottery from the phase 1 work. A single slightly everted rim sherd probably comes from a Drury (1978) Form 17b bowl. The remainder of the assemblage comprises largely unabraded body sherds.

Two fragments from a heavily corroded nail were recovered from the fill of pit 43. These are undatable.

The finds are in too small a quantity for further work to be necessary. The pottery from both stages of work has been fully recorded by Nick Lavender for archive purposes. All of the finds should be retained, except for the nail fragments.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

No conclusive archaeological remains were identified in phase 2 of the development within the footprint of the contractor's compound or the new sports pavilion and car park. This confirms the results of observations beneath the NEACC building in phase 1, which established that most of the area alongside Spinks Lane had been truncated by previous groundworks during the laying out of the sports field and the construction of the former 'redgra' all-weather sports

pitch. The only exception is a strip along the actual frontage, where Middle Iron Age ditches and a pit were recorded during the phase 1 work (Pocock 2005).

A change in design to the new all-weather sports pitch avoided substantial reduction in ground levels, and monitoring concentrated on floodlight foundation pits excavated around its edges. Recording of the floodlight pits along the south-western edge of the all-weather pitch suggests that truncation was limited, as archaeological features survived intact beneath subsoil and topsoil layers. This truncation was part of the laying-out of the original grass sports fields which also included the artificial raising of the ground surface by over 1m along their eastern boundary.

One Middle Iron Age pit and two undated features were identified along the western edge of the all-weather pitch. It is possible that all three are contemporary with the remains of Middle Iron Age features identified at the Spinks Lane frontage in phase 1, and are located within the postulated extent of Rodwell's Witham Lodge Earthwork enclosure (Fig. 3). The monitoring was unable, however, to verify the existence of the earthwork enclosure itself.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

Although the site has been subjected to wide-scale truncation it is likely that archaeological remains have been preserved beneath the artificially raised ground upon which the new all-weather pitch has been constructed. The presence of archaeological features, including a Middle Iron Age pit, in three out of four floodlight foundation pits along its south-western side suggests a possible high density of features that may continue beneath the grass playing fields to the west of the development area. Any possible archaeological remains in the area of the new sports pavilion, between the all-weather pitch and Spinks Lane, appear to have been truncated during the original laying out of the sports field. The only survival of archaeological features in the east of the site was at the Spinks Lane frontage, where Middle Iron Age features were recorded in phase 1 of the development.

Taken together, the archaeological monitoring of both phases 1 and 2 of the development suggests that potentially significant Middle Iron Age remains, and possibly also remains of other periods, survive over the main part of the playing fields, although extensive truncation had already taken place over the area nearest Spinks Lane. The main part of the playing fields has a high potential for survival of significant archaeological remains related to the

remains known from the Ivy Chimneys and Maltings Lane excavations to the south-west and south of the site (Fig. 3).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit would like to thank the Bryant Harvey Partnership for commissioning the archaeological investigation on behalf of the Braintree District Council, especially Richard Bryant for his assistance. Thanks are also due to ISG Jackson Special Projects Ltd, in particular their project manager Matthew Bynoe for his help and co-operation during the site works. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Trevor Ennis and Mark Germany of the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit. The project was managed by Patrick Allen of ECC FAU, and monitored by Vanessa Clarke of the Essex CC Historic Environment Management team.

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Rodwell, W.	1993	The origins and early development of Witham, Essex. Oxbow mon. 26
Pocock, M.	2005	NEACC Complex, Spinks Lane, Witham, Essex. Phase 1. Archaeological Monitoring and excavation. ECC FAU report 1529
Turner, R.	1999	Excavation of an Iron Age and Roman Religious Complex at Ivy Chimneys, Witham, Essex. E. Anglian Archaeol. 88

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres. Contexts 1-31 recorded in Phase 1.

Context	Location	Туре	Description	Period
32	Pavilion	Layer	Yellowish brown silt sand and gravel, 0.10m thick	Modern
33	Pavilion	Layer	Grey silt sand, 0.3m thick	Modern
34	Pavilion	Layer	Brownish orange clay sand	Natural
35	Pavilion	Layer	Brownish orange silt clay	Natural
36	AWP	Layer	Yellowish brown clay silt	Modern
37	AWP	Layer	Yellowish brown silt clay, 0.2m+ thick	Modern
38	FP5	Fill of 41	Dark grey brown silt, 0.07m thick	Prehistoric
39	FP5	Fill of 41	Dark grey clay silt with flecks of charcoal, 0.14m thick	Prehistoric
40	FP5	Fill of 41	Brown to orange brown gravely clay, 0.55m thick	Prehistoric
41	FP5	Pit	1m+ wide x 0.66m deep	Prehistoric
42	FP8	Fill of 43	Mottled grey brown silty clay	-
43	FP8	Pit	0.9m+ wide x 0.52m deep	-
44	FP6	Layer	Greyish brown clay, 0.19m thick	Post-med?
45	FP5	Layer	Greyish brown clay, 0.11m thick	Post-med?
46	FP7	Fill of 47	Dark brownish grey clay silt	-
47	FP7	Ditch	1m+ long x 0.8m+ wide x 0.45m+ deep	-
48	Compound	Fill of 49	Dark greyish brown silty clay	-
49	Compound	Pit	Pear-shaped pit, 0.64m x 0.47m x 0.17m deep	-

AWP – All-Weather Pitch FP – Floodlight Pit

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
39	41	6	88	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Prehistoric
42	43	2	6	Iron nail fragments, corroded	-
44	Layer	1	2	Pottery; dish body sherd, Staffordshire slipware	18th C

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME: NEACC COMPLEX, SPINKS LANE, WITHAM

SITE CODE: WH22

The archive includes material from both phases of work (Areas 1 and 2)

Index to Archive:

1. Introduction

1.1 Publication Report

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report Area 1
- 2.2 Client Report Area 2
- 2.3 Finds Reports

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Record Register
- 3.2 Context Records (1 to 49)
- 3.3 Section Register
- 3.4 3 x A4 plan sheets
- 3.5 6 x A4 section sheets
- 3.6 Trench location plans
- 3.7 Photographic Registers
- 3.8 Site Photographic Record (1 set of Colour and Black & White Prints, 1 Set of Colour Slides)
- 3.9 Miscellaneous notes/plans

Not in File

-

Finds

The total finds assemblage occupies less than one box.

APPENDIX 4: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: New Changing Pavilion, All-Weather Pitch and Car Park (Area 2), Spinks Lane, Witham, Essex					
Parishes: Witham	District: Braintree				
NGR : TL 813 143	Site Code: WH22				
Type of Work: Archaeological Monitoring	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis ECC Field Archaeology Unit				
Date of Work: 30th June to 7th September 2006	Size of Area Investigated: c. sq m				
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Braintree	Funding source: Braintree District Council				
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 14040, 14043				

Final Report: EAH round-up

Periods Represented: Iron Age

SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during groundworks for the second phase of development (Area 2) at the North Essex Adult Community College (NEACC) complex at Spinks Lane, Witham. Phase 2 monitoring encompassed the construction of a new sports pavilion, car park, temporary contractor's compound and all-weather pitch.

No conclusive archaeological remains were identified within the footprint of the contractor's compound or the new sports pavilion. This confirmed observations beneath the NEACC building in phase 1 which established that most of the ground in this area, other than a strip along the Spinks Lane frontage, was likely to be truncated.

One Middle Iron Age pit was identified and two undated features were identified in floodlight foundation pits along the south-western edge of the new all-weather sports pitch. It is possible that all three are contemporary with the remains of Middle Iron Age occupation activity identified close to Spinks Lane in Phase 1 of the development and which are believed to be located within the Witham Lodge Earthwork enclosure.

Although some truncation appears to have occurred beneath the new all-weather sports pitch when the grass playing fields were constructed this does not seem to have disturbed the underlying archaeological remains which were subsequently buried beneath up to 1m of levelling deposits. It is highly probable that further archaeological remains survive beneath the new all-weather sports pitch and beneath the grass playing fields to the west of the development area.

Previous Summaries/Reports: NEACC Complex, Spinks Lane, Witham (Phase 1):			
Archaeological Monitoring and Excavation, ECC FAU 2005			
Author of Summary: T. Ennis Date of Summary: October 2006			

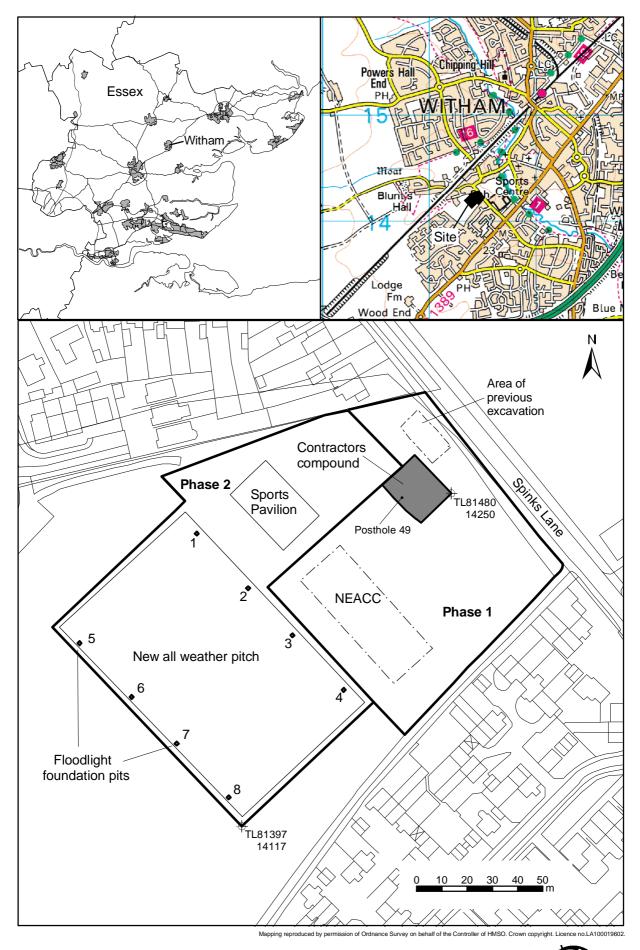


Fig.1. Location plan



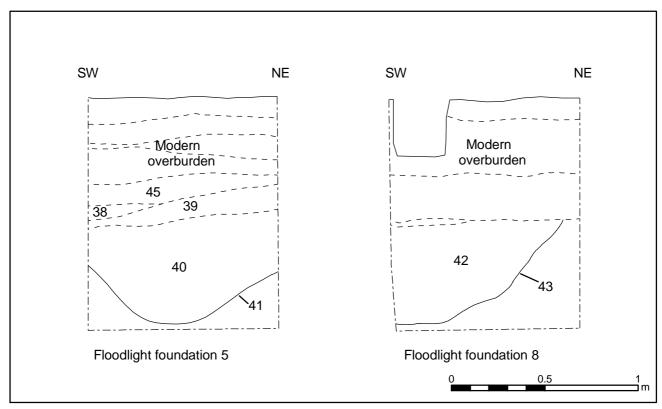


Fig.2. Floodlight foundation pit sections (south-east facing)

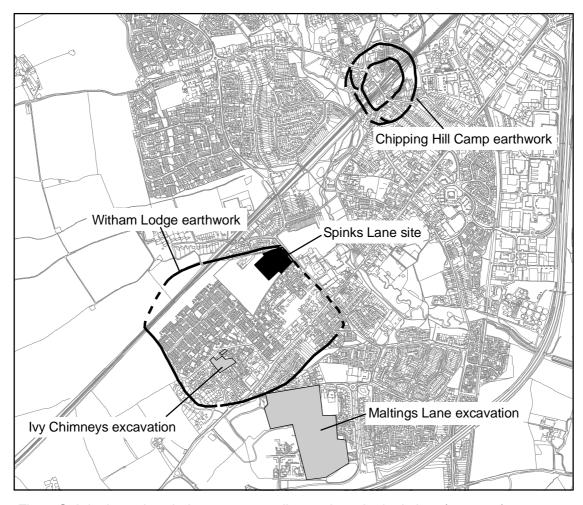


Fig.3. Spinks Lane in relation to surrounding archaeological sites (1:20000)