AREAS E, F AND G

PRIORS GREEN

TAKELEY

ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GEOTECHNICAL SITE INVESTIGATION TEST PITS

Field Archaeology Unit

December 2006

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PRIORS GREEN, TAKELEY, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING
OF
GEOTECHNICAL SITE INVESTIGATION

TEST PITS

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GEOTECHNICAL SITE INVESTIGATION TEST PITS

Client: RPS Planning (on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc)
FAU Project No.: 1706
NGR: TL 57189 21233
Site Code: TAPG 06
OASIS No.: essexcou1-18994
Date of Fieldwork: 27 September 2006

SUMMARY

As part of an ongoing programme of housing development construction works in the Priors Green area of Takeley, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by RPS Planning to monitor and record geotechnical test pits to provide a preliminary assessment of the archaeological potential of a roughly grassed area along the northern side of Dunmow Road.

Seven geotechnical trial pits were excavated across the area. No truncation was revealed across the majority of the site, although some was noted in the southwest corner and along the western edge where a significant amount of soil discolouration, due to leaching, was also identified. No archaeological features or deposits were identified in any of the test pits, nor any artefacts collected.

There is no indication that archaeological remains survive within this area. However, if remains are present then the lack of truncation suggests that their survival should be good.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is an assessment of the results of the archaeological monitoring of seven geotechnical pits, excavated by RSK ENSR Ltd, within Areas E, F and G at Priors Green, Takeley, Essex (Fig. 1). However, Area G at the eastern side of the area was inaccessible and therefore not investigated.

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the monitoring for RPS Planning on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc. The project was carried out in accordance with a general Method Statement produced by RPS Planning.

Both the fieldwork and the reporting have been carried out to professional standards and guidance issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999) and the *ALGAO* standards for fieldwork (Gurney 2003).

The report is structured to describe the background to the project, followed by an assessment of the results of the fieldwork, followed by a discussion of the archaeological potential. Appendices include descriptions of the test pits, details of the archive contents and the EHER summary. All illustrations are placed together towards the back of the report.

The site archive will be deposited at Saffron Walden Museum. A copy of this report will be deposited with the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER). A further copy will also be uploaded to the OASIS database.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Fig 1)

Areas E, F and G are located to the south of the Priors Green Phase II development. They are bounded to the east by woodland, to the west by residential property boundaries and Broadfield Wood, to the south by Dunmow Road (the former A120) and to the north by a drainage ditch. The land falls gently from south to north, away from Dunmow Road.

The site is mainly covered with rough pasture, with trees and shrubs at its east end and an area of tarmac hardstanding along its southern and western sides. It has formerly been used as stabling and grazing for horses.

2.2 Geology

Over the southern and western edges of the site the topsoil has been previously removed and a layer of modern hardcore laid down to create a hardstanding. The depth of the topsoil, where present, averages *c.*0.4m, with between 0.3 and 0.7m of mid brown clay subsoil below this.

The drift geology of the site is generally that of pale brown chalky boulder-clay of the Lowestoft Formation, although this becomes chalkier approximately 2m below ground level. The underlying solid geology of the area is London Clay (BGS map EW222 Great Dunmow v.2).

2.3 History and Archaeology

The site is located within a wider agricultural landscape, that has evolved from the Bronze Age through to the present day. This landscape is becoming increasingly better understood and documented as a result of archaeological fieldwork taking place in advance of extensive construction development in the Takeley area. This is particularly evident in the recent work at Stansted Airport (Havis & Brooks 2004; Framework Archaeology in prep), evaluation and excavation work undertaken in advance of the re-alignment and construction of the A120 (Fitzpatrick 2001), Frogs Hall (Ennis in prep) and also by recent work undertaken in Takeley itself (Robertson 2005 and 2006) and further west of the present site (Roberts 2003).

To the immediate south of the site, Dunmow Road is thought to be on the approximate line of Stane Street, the Roman road from Braughing/Puckridge to Colchester (Drury and Rodwell 1980). To the northeast at Frogs Hall is a presumptive Roman villa (EHER 9140) with associated Roman landscape features. Jacks Green medieval moated site, (EHER 4655), is located *c*.300m to the north of the current investigation area. Warish Hall (EHER 4572), another medieval moated site (a scheduled Ancient Monument), lies further to the north. Jacks Lane, a bridleway that runs east-west to the north of the site, is also thought to have medieval origins.

Recent excavations within the Phase 1 area of this development revealed a range of multi-period remains across a 10ha area, almost immediately to the east of the current site. This included Iron Age boundaries and occupation remains, a medieval farmstead alongside Jacks Lane, and three phases of apparently post-medieval cultivation trench systems (Robertson 2006).

Prior to being occupied by hardstanding and a small paddock, this site was open fields, as shown by historic mapping.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the monitoring works was to establish the potential for archaeological remains in the proposed development area, with a view to developing an archaeological mitigation strategy if necessary.

4.0 METHOD

The project comprised of monitoring and recording geotechnical test pitting across the development area. The test pits were excavated using a mechanical excavator under the control of the geotechnical contractor, RSK ENSR Ltd. The sections and location of each pit were recorded and a photographic record comprising digital images was maintained throughout the fieldwork. All plans were linked to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Standard FAU methodologies were employed with regard to the recording. All *IFA* standards and by-laws and *ALGAO's* Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003) were adhered to throughout the project.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig 1)

Seven test pits (TP) were machine-excavated by the geotechnical investigation contractor at various locations across Areas E, F and G. All measured 2.0 x 0.5m and were between 2.2 and 2.7m deep. Each test pit is briefly described below. All recorded deposits are described from the top to bottom of each exposed sequence. Further information can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1 Test pit 1

Located in the south west corner of Area E, this test pit was excavated to a depth of c.2.7m. Three distinct layers were recorded; from the top down these were 0.5m of modern rubble, 0.5m of dark green brown clay subsoil and 1.7m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological remains were identified.

5.2 Test pit 2

To the east of TP1, TP2 was approximately 2.5m deep. Four layers were identified in the section; 0.3m of modern rubble, 0.3m of dark green brown clay subsoil, 1.2m of light brown chalky till and 0.7m of light grey clay and chalk. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

5.3 Test Pit 3

TP3 was located in the north west corner of Area E. It was approximately 2.2m deep and cut through four layers; 0.5m of modern rubble and tarmac, 0.5m of dark green brown clay subsoil, 0.7m of light brown chalky till and 0.5m of pale grey clay and chalk. No archaeological features were identified in this test pit.

5.4 Test pit 4

To the east of TP3, TP4 was located in the area of rough grass along the northern edge of Area E. It was approximately 2.3m deep and contained three distinct layers; 0.3m of topsoil, 0.4m of mid brown clay subsoil and 1.6m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features were identified in the section.

5.5 Test pit 5

Situated to the south of TP4, in Area F, TP5 was excavated to a depth of 2.5m. Four distinct soil layers were identified; 0.4m of topsoil, 0.5m of mid brown clay subsoil, 0.9m of light brown chalky till and 0.7 m of light grey chalky clay. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

5.6 Test pit 6

Located in the south east corner edge of Area E, TP6 was excavated to a depth of c.2.7m. Three soil layers were seen in the section; 0.35m of topsoil, 0.7m of mid brown clay subsoil and 1.6m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features were identified.

5.7 Test pit 7

TP 7 was situated to the north of TP 6, in the north east corner of Area E. It was excavated to a depth of 2.6m and three distinct soil layers were identified in the section; 0.4m of topsoil, 0.4m of mid brown clay subsoil and 1.8m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

No finds were recovered from any of the test pits. No deposits with perceived environmental potential were identified and so no soil samples were taken for analysis.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that over the majority of the site there has been little or no truncation of the ground level and little modern ground disturbance noted. Only in the south west corner and along the western edge had the topsoil been previously removed and a layer of hardcore laid down. A dark green clay layer was exposed in the test pits cut through the hardcore (TP 1 – 3). It is likely that this is an *in situ* subsoil that has been discoloured by leaching, through or from the overlying hardstanding.

The lack of significant truncation and the generally undisturbed nature of the deposits exposed in the test pits would suggest that any archaeological remains present should survive reasonably well. However, there is no indication from the test pits that any significant archaeological remains are present within Areas E, F and G.

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by RPS Planning on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc. Thanks go to Simon Blatherwick for his assistance throughout the project. Thanks are also due to RSK ENSR Ltd for their assistance on site. M. Atkinson managed the project and the author carried out the fieldwork, both of ECC FAU. Richard Havis monitored the work on behalf of the local planning authority.

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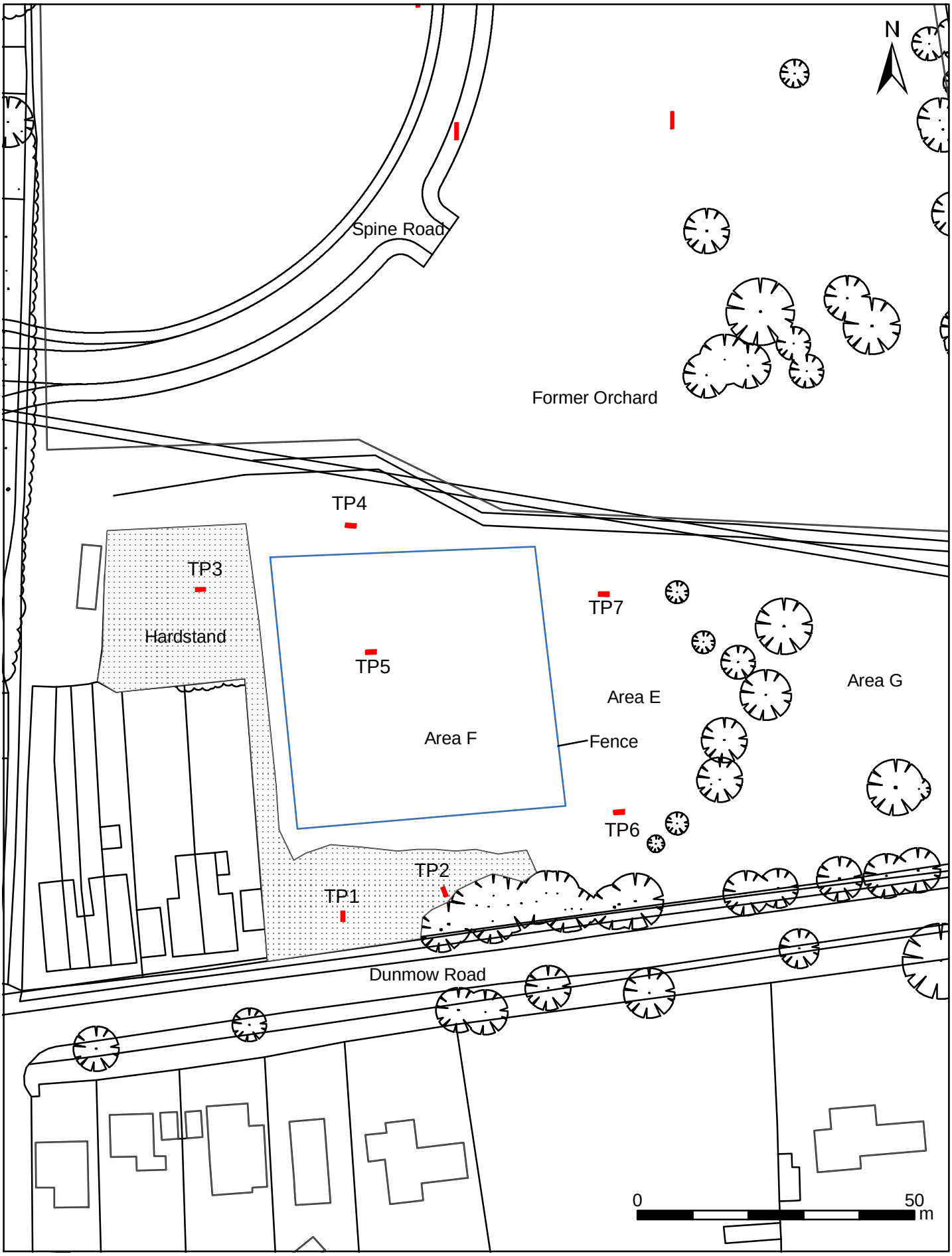

Figure 1 - Location of Geotechnical test pits

APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Test Pit	Dimensions (L x W)	Depth	Truncation of ground level?	Archaeological Features	Central Co-ordinates
1	2 x 0.5	2.7	Yes	No	TL 57170 21195
2	2 x 0.5	2.5	Yes	No	TL 57189 21200
3	2 x 0.5	2.2	Yes	No	TL 57145 21254
4	2 x 0.5	2.3	No	No	TL 57172 21266
5	2 x 0.5	2.5	No	No	TL 57176 21243
6	2 x 0.5	2.7	No	No	TL 57220 21214
7	2 x 0.5	2.6	No	No	TL 57218 21253

APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

SITE NAME : Areas E, F and G, Priors Green, Takeley (TAPG 06)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Research Archive

1.1 Client Report

2. Site Archive

2.1 7 x Test pit section drawings and notes

2.2 7 x Digital photographs of test pit sections

No finds

APPENDIX 3: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: Land adjacent Dunmow Road, Priors Green, Takeley	
Parish: Takeley	***District:*** Uttlesford
NGR: TL 57189 21233	***Site Code:*** TAPG 06
Type of Work: Monitoring of Geotechnical test pits	***Site Director/Group:*** A. Robertson ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 27th September 2006	***Size of Area Investigated:*** Development area *c.*0.75ha
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden Museum	***Funding Source:*** RPS Planning (on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc)
Further Work Anticipated? Yes	***Related EHER Nos:*** 4572; 4655; 9140
Final Report: N/A	
Periods Represented: Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: As part of an ongoing programme of housing development construction works in the Priors Green area of Takeley, geotechnical test pits were monitored and recorded to provide a preliminary assessment the archaeological potential of a roughly grassed area along the northern side of Dunmow Road. Seven geotechnical trial pits were excavated across the area to a depth of 2.2 – 2.7m. The majority of the site showed no truncation, although some was noted in the southwest corner and along the western edge where a significant amount of soil discolouration, due to leaching, was also identified. No archaeological features or deposits were identified in any of the test pits, nor any artefacts collected. There is no indication that archaeological remains survive within this area. However, if remains are present then the lack of truncation suggests that the survival should be good.	
Previous Summaries/Reports: N.A.	
Author of Summary: A. Robertson (ECC FAU)	***Date of Summary:*** November 2006