

**PALLET YARD
PRIORS GREEN
TAKELEY
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
ON
GEOTECHNICAL SITE INVESTIGATION
TEST PITS**



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit
September 2006**

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TAKELEY
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TEST PITS**

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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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**PALLET YARD
PRIORS GREEN, TAKELEY**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON
GEOTECHNICAL SITE INVESTIGATION
TEST PITS**

Client: RPS Planning (on behalf of Countryside Properties)

FAU Project No.: 1701

NGR: TL 5690 2125

Site Code: TAPG 06

OASIS No.:

Date of Fieldwork: 22 August 2006

SUMMARY

As part of an ongoing programme of construction works in the Priors Green area of Takeley, Essex, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) was commissioned by RPS Planning to archaeologically observe and record geotechnical test pits to assess the site potential within a former pallet yard alongside the Dunmow Road.

Eight geotechnical trial pits were excavated across the pallet yard. The majority of the site had been truncated and a significant amount of soil discolouration, due to leaching, was 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 the area of the pallet yard. If remains are present then, due to the discoloration of the subsoil, only the larger features will be identifiable during larger-scale works.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is an assessment of the results of an archaeological monitoring of eight geotechnical pits, excavated by RSK ENSR Ltd, on the former pallet yard Priors Green, Takeley, Essex (Fig. 1).

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the monitoring for RPS Planning on behalf of Countryside Properties. The project was carried out in accordance with a Method Statement produced by RPS Planning. The site archive will be deposited at Saffron Walden Museum. A copy of this report will be deposited with the Essex Heritage and Conservation Record (EHCR), a further copy will also be uploaded to the OASIS database.

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 EHCR summary. All illustrations are placed together towards the back of the report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Fig 1)

The location of the Pallet Yard is to the west and south of the spine road. It is bounded to the east and north by woodland, to the west by open fields, to the south by Dunmow Road (TL 5720 2148). The land falls gently from north to south towards Dunmow Road.

The area was formerly a builders yard, which was split into several bays. The western edge of the investigation area was covered by rough grass and scrubby bushes, while the remainder was covered with modern hardcore. The south west corner of the area contained the remains of concrete footings, for the buildings shown on the current OS map.

2.2 Geology

Over the majority of the site the topsoil had been removed and a layer of modern hardcore laid down. The depth of the topsoil, where present, averaged c.0.6m, with between 0.1 and 0.5m of mid brown clay subsoil below this.

The drift geology of the site was generally that of pale brown chalky boulder-clay of the Lowestoft Formation, although this was became 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, dating 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 some 1.5km to the 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 (ESMR 9140) with associated Roman landscape features whilst Warish Hall (ESMR 4572), a Scheduled medieval moated site (protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979), lies 1km to the north. Another medieval moated site, Jacks Green (ESMR 4655), is located to the northwest of the current investigation area. Jacks Lane, a bridleway that runs east-west to the north of the site, is also thought to have medieval origins. Prior to becoming a builder's yard the area was previously open fields.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the project was to establish the potential for archaeological remains in the proposed development area, with a view to developing an archaeological mitigation strategy if there is potential for significant remains.

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. The sections and location of each pit was recorded and a photographic record comprising monochrome prints and

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)

Eight test pits (TP) were machine excavated by the geotechnical investigation contractor at various locations across the pallet yard. All measured 3 x 0.5m and were between 1.4 and 2.5m deep. Each test pit is briefly described below. Further information can be found in Appendix 1.

The northern end of the development area, towards the moated site, was not test-pitted due to ecological restrictions.

5.1 Test pit 1

Located at the northern end of the pallet yard, this test pit was excavated to a depth of c.1.4m. Three distinct layers were recorded; from the top down these were 0.55m of modern rubble, 0.45m of dark green brown clay subsoil and 1m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features were identified.

5.2 Test pit 2

To the southwest of TP1, TP2 was approximately 1.5m deep. Four layers were identified in the section; 0.25m of modern rubble, 0.3m of dark green brown clay subsoil, 0.35m of mid brown clay and 1.4m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

5.3 Test Pit 3

TP3 was located to the west of TP 1. It was approximately 2.5m deep and cut through three layers; 0.7m of modern rubble and tarmac, 0.6m of dark green brown clay subsoil and 1.2 m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features were identified in this test pit.

5.4 Test pit 4

To the west of TP3, TP4 was located in the area of rough grass. It was approximately 1.5m deep and contained three distinct layers; 0.5m of rubbly topsoil, 0.7m of mid brown clay subsoil and 0.3m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features were identified in either section.

5.5 Test pit 5

Situated to the south of TP2, TP5 was excavated to a depth of 2.5m. Three distinct soil layers were identified, 0.25m of rubbly topsoil; 0.55m of mid brown clay subsoil and 1.7 m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

5.6 Test pit 6

Located in along the southern edge of the pallet yard, TP6 was excavated to a depth of c.1.5m. Four soil layers were seen in the section, 0.4m of modern rubble, 0.3m of dark green brown clay 0.4m of mid brown clay subsoil and 0.4m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features were identified.

5.7 Test pit 7

TP 7 was situated to the south of TP 3, in the area of scrubby grass. It was excavated to a depth of 1.5m and three distinct soil layers were identified in the section; 0.8m of rubbly topsoil, 0.7m of mid brown clay subsoil and 0.1m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

5.8 Test pit 8

Located to the south of TP7, TP8 was excavated to a depth of 2.5m. Three separate layers were recorded, 0.5m of rubbly topsoil, 0.5m of mid brown clay subsoil and 1.5m of light brown chalky till. No archaeological features were identified in this test pit.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

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

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that over the majority of the site the topsoil had been previously removed and a layer of hardcore laid down. Several of the test pits also revealed a dark green clay layer immediately under the hardcore and it is likely that this is in-situ subsoil that has been discoloured by leaching. Only along the eastern edge of the site was any significant amount of topsoil identified, and even this was full of modern debris.

The level of truncation, and subsequent raising, across the site seems to be limited to roughly the topsoil depth, c.0.6m, as the surface of the pallet yard is not significantly different in height to the surrounding areas. However, the depth to which the soil is discoloured by material leaching out of the hardcore is approximately 0.4m. This discolouration makes the identification of any archaeological features surviving in this subsoil virtually impossible. The sum effect of both the truncation and the discolorations is that the meaningful archaeological interface is approximately 1m below the current ground level.

Overall, it is likely that only substantial archaeological features will survive in the pallet yard. However, there is no indication from the test pits that any archaeological remains are present and the potential for survival is demonstrated to be low.

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by RPS Planning on behalf of Countryside Properties. Thanks go to Simon Blatherwick and Josh Williams for their 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.

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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	3 x 0.5	1.4	Yes	No	TL 56926 21307
2	3 x 0.5	1.5	Yes	No	TL 56890 21272
3	3 x 0.5	2.5	Yes	No	TL 56940 21294
4	3 x 0.5	1.5	No	No	TL 56953 21289
5	3 x 0.5	2.5	Yes	No	TL 56877 21239
6	3 x 0.5	1.5	Yes	No	TL 56914 21211
7	3 x 0.5	1.5	No	No	TL 56960 21231
8	3 x 0.5	2.5	No	No	TL 56956 21200

APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

SITE NAME : Pallet Yard, Priors Green, Takeley (TAPG 06)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Research Archive

1.1 Client Report

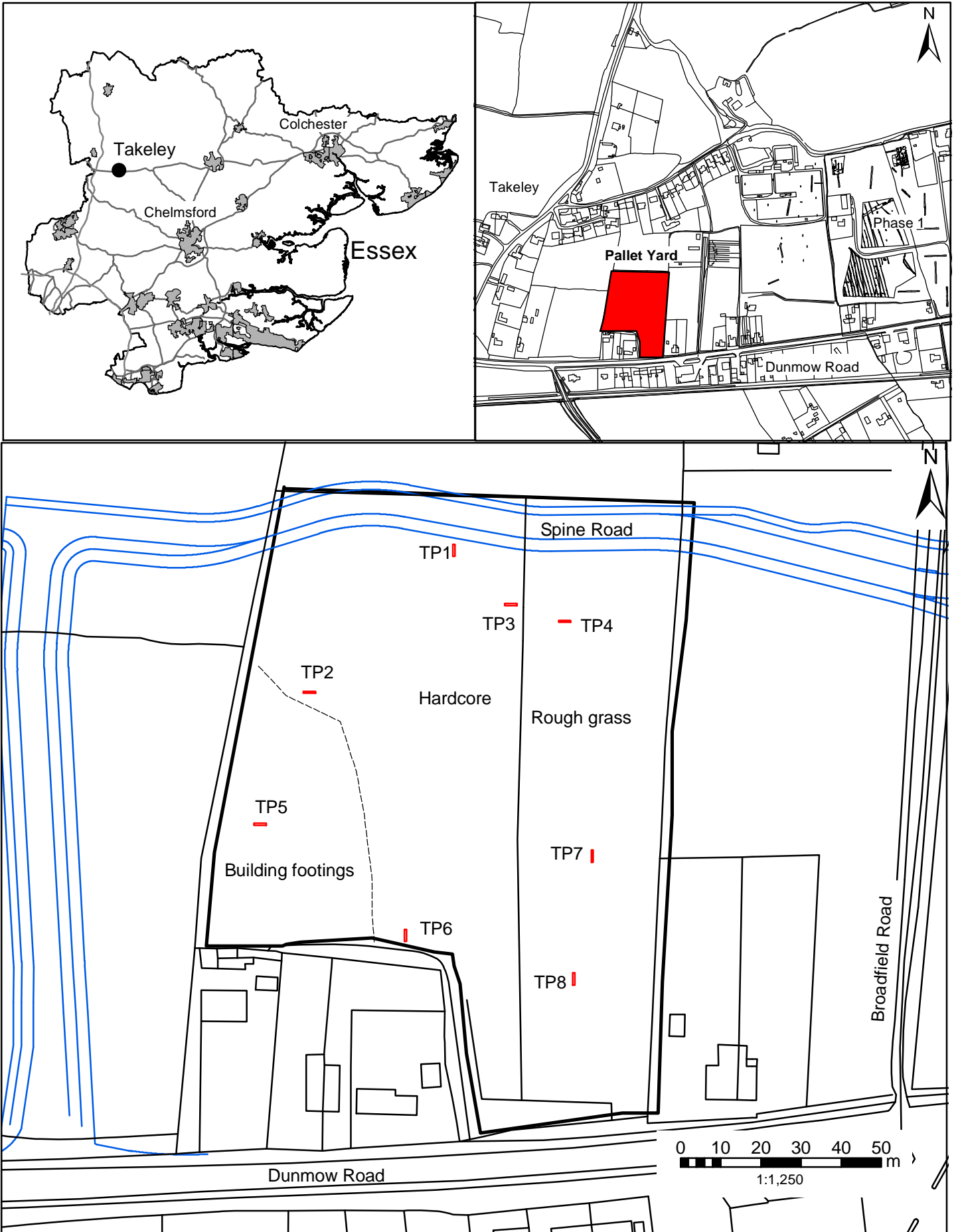
2. Site Archive

2.1 8 x Test pit section drawings and notes

No finds

APPENDIX 3: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: Pallet Yard, Priors Green, Takeley	
Parish: Takeley	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 5690 2125	Site Code: TAPG 06
Type of Work: Watching brief on Geotechnical test pits	Site Director/Group: A. Robertson ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 22nd August 2006	Size of Area Investigated: Development area c.1ha
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden Museum	Funding Source: RPS Planning (on behalf of Countryside Properties)
Further Work Anticipated? Yes	Related EHER Nos: 4572; 4655; 9140
Final Report: N/A	
Periods Represented: None	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>As part of an ongoing programme of construction works in the Priors Green area of Takeley, Essex, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) was commissioned by RPS Planning to archaeologically record geotechnical test pits to assess the site potential.</p> <p>Eight geotechnical trial pits were excavated across the pallet yard. The majority of the site had been truncated and a significant amount of soil discolouration, due to leaching, was identified. No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were identified in any of the test pits.</p> <p>There is no indication that archaeological remains survive within the area of the pallet yard. If remains are present then due to the discoloration of the subsoil only the larger features will be identifiable.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: N.A.	
Author of Summary: A. Robertson (ECC FAU)	Date of Summary: September 2006



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Figure1 - location of Geotechnical pits