

**WESTWAY/SHEEPEN PLACE
COLCHESTER
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

OCTOBER 2006

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WESTWAY/SHEEPEN PLACE
COLCHESTER
ESSEX
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Client: Barratt Eastern Counties

NGR: TL 9910 2578

Site Code: COLEM.2005.28

Date of Fieldwork: 1 December 2004 to 25 April 2006

SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit during groundworks for a residential development by Barratt Eastern Counties at Westway/Sheepen Place, Colchester, Essex. This work followed a previous trial-trenching evaluation (Brooks 1997) which identified possible Roman finds at a depth of 1.3m towards the south end of site.

Deposits up to 1.78m in depth were recorded. All observed sequences contained finds of 19th- or 20th-century date. No archaeological features or deposits dating to the Roman period were identified.

The results of the archaeological monitoring mirrored those from previous monitoring of groundworks for Block M at the northern end of the development area (Ennis 2005), where a sequence of deposits 1.7m deep appeared to be entirely of recent origin.

Both sets of archaeological fieldwork confirm the results of the original site evaluation that in most areas there was a 1.5m to 2m build-up of recent (19th/20th-century) deposits above the London Clay. It is unlikely that any significant Roman remains existed on site.

1.0 INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring during groundworks for a residential development at Westway/Sheepen Place, Colchester. The work was undertaken by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Barratt Eastern Counties, in accordance with an archaeological brief prepared by Martin Winter of Colchester Borough Council Museums Service (2004), who monitored the work. The site archive will be deposited in Colchester Museum.

The archaeological recording was undertaken to fulfil an archaeological condition placed on planning consent under the terms of Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990).

The results of archaeological monitoring of Block M at the northern end of the Westway development area, constructed by Swift Developments Ltd, have already been reported on (Ennis 2005).

2.0 BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

2.1 Topography and Geology

The development area lies to the north-west of Colchester town centre (centred on NGR TL 992 258), between Westway to the west and the river Colne to the east, with access off Sheepen Place to the south. It forms a strip of land measuring 300m north-south and up to 60m east-west, covering an area of 1.84ha. The development area is relatively level, at between 6m and 7m OD.

The site had been cleared of buildings and in recent years was used as a car park. The south of the site was formerly a printing works, and the northern area was waste ground.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

The development area is located 260m north-west of the walled Roman and medieval town, to the north-west of a known Roman suburb, previously recorded at the Middleborough excavation (Crummy 1984) and on a number of minor sites in the area.

The development area was evaluated for possible archaeological remains in 1997 (Brooks 1997). Six trial trenches were excavated during the evaluation, four located in the southern end of the site area, and two in the northern two-thirds of the site. All trenches showed a considerable build-up of deposits, between 1.5 and 2.0m thick, above London Clay and river silts. With one exception, this build-up of deposits was recent, dating to the 19th and 20th centuries.

Trench 3 of the evaluation, located c. 70m north of the site's southern limit, showed evidence of a dumped gravel layer containing possible Roman artefacts, at a depth of 1.3m below modern ground level. This was interpreted as possible Roman reclamation of the banks of the Colne.

Monitoring of groundworks for Block M at the northern end of the development area (Ennis 2005) failed to identify any features or deposits of Roman date. An observed 1.7m-deep sequence of deposits appeared to be entirely of recent origin.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The archaeological work was designed and undertaken in order to:

- secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme.
- secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.

The specific aim of the archaeological work was to record any surviving Roman deposits.

4.0 METHOD

The requirement of the design brief was for a programme of intermittent attendance on site by an archaeologist to record any archaeological remains exposed during those stages of the development involving substantial ground disturbance.

The residential buildings were founded on deep piles, with pile caps supporting concrete ground-beams. It was not practicable to monitor deposits disturbed during the piling operation, and monitoring concentrated on the pile caps and ground-beams, and the access roads and services. However, these generally intruded to a depth of no more than 0.7m below modern

ground level, and after initial observations of groundworks at both northern and southern ends of the site it soon became clear that most of the construction works cut into disturbed modern levels only. As a result it was proposed (ECC FAU letter of 9 March 2005), and agreed by the Colchester Borough Council monitoring officer (email of 15 March 2005), that surviving archaeological deposits were unlikely to be exposed in groundworks less than 0.7m deep and that future observations were to be targeted on sewer and drainage trenches that exceeded this depth. Subsequently, Manholes S9 and S10 were identified as being of sufficient depth and were duly observed.

All work was carried out in accordance with the Colchester Borough Council's Guidelines on Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork and the IFA (Institute of Field Archaeologists) by laws and guidelines. Standard ECC FAU (Field Archaeology Unit) recording methodologies were employed.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig. 1)

5.1 General Monitoring

General observations were made of groundworks in the southern half of the development area and along the new road corridor during visits to the site in December 2004. Truncated (modern) brick structures were noted in the south-west of the area and brown silt containing 19th/20th-century glass bottles in drainage works along the new road corridor. Modern deposits over 1.7m deep were identified in the trench excavated at the site's north-west boundary to remove Japanese Knotweed, and a similar depth of modern build-up was recorded in the Block M lift shaft (Ennis 2005). No Roman levels were identified in either of these deep groundworks, nor were any residual Roman finds present in the disturbed upper levels. Observation of groundworks for the ground-beam trenches in February 2005 established that these only cut into disturbed modern deposits, and it was at this stage that the monitoring methodology was redefined to cover only sewer and drainage trenches deeper than 0.7m.

5.2 Japanese Knotweed Trench

The deep rectangular trench approximately 10m by 12m excavated at the north-western boundary of the site to remove Japanese Knotweed (Fig. 1) is described in detail as a typical example of the sequence of deposits found across the site. The sides of the trench exposed only modern overburden. At the top of the sequence was 0.5m of hardcore. This overlay 0.4m of grey brown clay silt and 0.2m of orange/grey re-deposited clay. Underlying these was 0.28m

of dark brown ashy clay above 0.4m of black ashy clay. The lowest deposit of ashy clay contained white porcelain, unfrogged brick fragments and non-corroded iron. It sealed bright grey London Clay at a depth of 1.78m below the modern ground surface.

5.3 Manholes S9 and S10

The modern sequence recorded in the Japanese Knotweed trench was confirmed as typical by further detailed observation and recording in April 2006 of two manholes and a connecting trench to the north-east of Building F (Fig. 1). The southern manhole (S9) was 1.3m deep and the northern manhole (S10) 1.4m deep, and the observed works extended for some 11m. The sides of both manholes exposed mixed dark grey-brown ashy silt with occasional lenses of gravel and clay. The base of S10 was particularly ashy and contained frogged bricks, bottle glass and modern pottery. Modern ceramics and glass were evident throughout the observed trench.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Modern deposits were observed to a depth of at least 0.7m across the entire site, but because of the piled foundation design sequences below this level were observed only in a few areas of deeper groundworks. Modern deposits were recorded down to London Clay at a depth of 1.7-1.8m in the north of the site, both in the Japanese Knotweed trench and in the lift shaft of Block M in the Swift Developments area (Ennis 2005). A sequence of modern deposits was also observed to a depth of 1.3-1.4m in Manholes S9 and S10 near Block F in the south-centre of the site, only a short distance above the level of the London Clay.

All observed sequences contained finds of modern (19th- or 20th-century) date, and obviously modern material was found at the base of all the deepest recorded sequences. No archaeological features or deposits dating to the Roman period were identified. The postulated Roman gravel layer recorded in the trial-trenching evaluation was at a depth of 1.3m (Brooks 1997, trench 3), and if extensive Roman deposits had existed at this level they would have been exposed in the deeper groundworks at both the northern and southern ends of the site, as well as in the other evaluation trenches. Roman artefacts were completely absent, even as residual finds in the modern overburden, and even the Roman finds recovered in the evaluation trenching were not confidently identified (Brooks 1997, 8).

The monitoring works confirm the general conclusions of the evaluation trenching, that the site had been highly disturbed to a depth of 1.5m or more in the 19th-20th centuries. Altogether, the evaluation trenching and subsequent monitoring suggest a general absence of evidence for Roman activity across the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

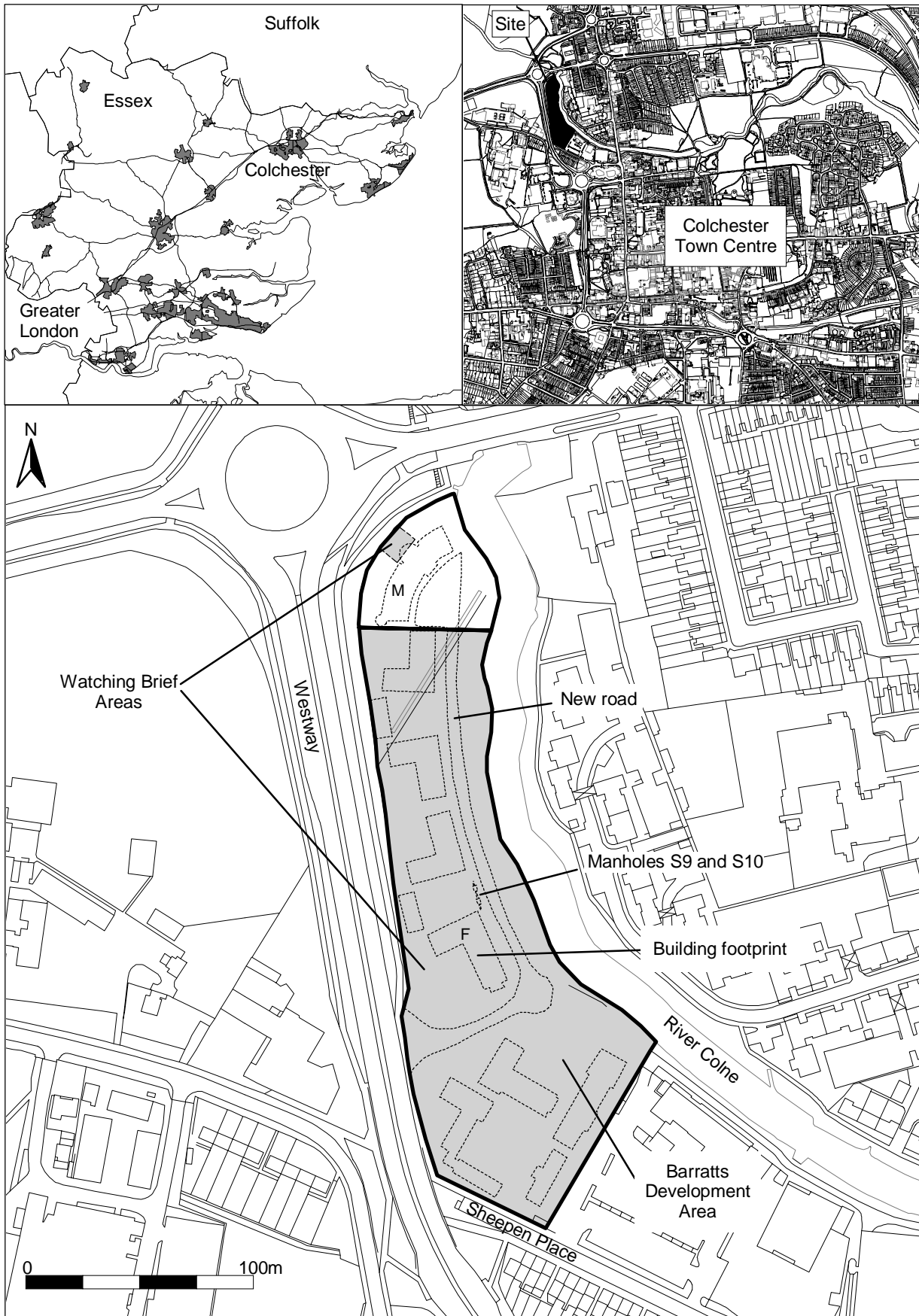
The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit would like to thank Barratt Eastern Counties for commissioning and funding the archaeological work. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by T. Ennis, B. Barker and M. Germany of the ECC FAU, and was managed by P. Allen. The archaeological work was monitored by M. Winter of Colchester Borough Council Museums on behalf of the local planning authority.

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Colchester Borough Council	2004	<i>Brief for archaeological attendance and recording (a watching brief), Westway/Sheepen Place, Colchester, Essex.</i> Colchester BC Museums Service
Crummy, P.	1984	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 3: Excavations At Lion Walk, Balkerne Lane and Middleborough, Colchester, Essex.</i> Colchester Archaeol. Trust
DoE	1990	<i>Planning Policy Guideline 16: Archaeology and Planning.</i> Dept. of Environment
Ennis, T.	2005	<i>Block M, Westway, Colchester, Essex. Archaeological Attendance and Recording (Watching Brief).</i> ECC FAU report 1408

APPENDIX 1: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Westway/Sheepen Place, Colchester, Essex	
Parish:	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99100 25780	Site Code: COLEM.2005.28
Type of Work: Archaeological Monitoring	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 1st December 2004 to 25th April 2006	Size of Area Investigated: 1.84ha
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Colchester	Funding source: Barratt Eastern Counties
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.:
Final Report:	
Periods Represented: Modern	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>Archaeological monitoring was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit during groundworks for residential development at Westway/Sheepen Place, Colchester, Essex.</p> <p>Deposits up to 1.78m in depth were noted. All observed sequences contained finds of modern (19th/20th century) date. No archaeological features or deposits dating to the Roman period were identified.</p> <p>The results of the archaeological monitoring mirrored those from the Watching Brief on Block M (Ennis 2005) at the northern end of the development area where a recorded 1.7m sequence of deposits appeared to be entirely of recent origin.</p> <p>Both sets of archaeological fieldwork confirmed the findings of the original site evaluation (CAT 1997) that in most areas there was a 1.5m to 2m build-up of recent (19th/20th century) deposits above the natural clay.</p>	
<p>Previous Summaries/Reports: - <i>Westway/Sheepen Place, Colchester. Archaeological Evaluation, November 1997. Colchester Archaeological Trust.</i> <i>Block M, Westway, Colchester, Essex. Archaeological Attendance and Recording (Watching Brief). ECC FAU 2005</i></p>	
Author of Summary: T. Ennis	Date of Summary: September 2006



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Fig.1. Site Location