

**LAND TO THE REAR OF 21 HIGH STREET
SOUTH BENFLEET
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING
AND EXCAVATION**



Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit

February 2007

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND EXCAVATION

Client: Aspect Developments Ltd

Planning Application No.: CP/133/06 FUL

NGR: TQ 7762 8601

Site Code: CPBH 06

FAU Project No.: 1646

Dates of Fieldwork: 4th-12th October, and 22 November 2006

OASIS Ref No: essexcou1-22467

SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring of ground reduction for the construction of five houses and a basement car park was carried out at 21 High Street, South Benfleet, Essex, as a condition on planning consent. The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential opposite the medieval parish church. The monitoring identified Roman and medieval archaeological features beneath post-medieval and modern levelling layers, and these were excavated in a break in the groundworks.

The archaeological remains were shown to relate to both Roman and medieval activity on the site. The Roman remains primarily consisted of a number of rubble-filled pits. With the exception of Roman building material, used to backfill several of the pits, very few datable finds were recovered from any of these features. The quantity of the features in the development area suggests that the site was utilised as more than agricultural land. However, the lack of material culture associated with the features indicates that the area was not directly settled on. It is likely that this area was marginal land that lay outside of any settlement. The on site evidence seems to suggest that after the 4th century the area of the site was either abandoned or returned to agriculture as a topsoil layer lay over the Roman features.

All the medieval remains date from either the 10th/11th centuries or the 15th/16th centuries and were related to 'back yard' features, such as boundary ditches, disparate post-

holes/small pits and cess pits, one with the putative remains of a small structure over it. Although these remains are what would be expected to the rear of known medieval frontage buildings the early date of the first phase, 10th/ 11th centuries pushes back the dates for the settlement of this area of South Benfleet by approximately 100 years. The 15th/16th century cess pit may well be associated with the extant 15th-century structure at 23 High Street.

It is likely that a number of smaller shallower medieval features were truncated by post-medieval and modern levelling and terracing of the site. Indeed, a significant amount of medieval pottery was recovered from these layers.

The Roman remains add a little more substantive evidence to the supposition of a settlement in the vicinity, although they are not concrete proof. The earlier medieval remains extend the dates of the known medieval occupation back into the 10th century. The depth of the Roman and medieval features below modern ground level suggests that further remains of these periods might survive in other sites along the High Street.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological monitoring with subsequent excavation was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) prior to the construction of a small residential development on land to the rear of 21 High Street, South Benfleet by Aspect Developments. The work was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (ECC HEM), who monitored the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

Copies of the report will be supplied to the client, Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM) and the ECC Historic Environment Record. A further copy will be uploaded to the OASIS database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>) and a summary will appear in the journal *Essex Archaeology and History* (EAH). The archive will be deposited at Southend Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located on disused former industrial land to the rear of 21 High Street, within the medieval core of the village and opposite the 12th-century St. Mary's Church. In general the land slopes down to the south-west towards Benfleet Creek, although there is also a slight fall to the south. The observed natural geology was a silty clay alluvium and the underlying geology is London Clay (BGS Accessed 2007).

2.2 Planning Background

A planning application (CP/133/06 FUL) was submitted to Castle Point District Council to construct a linear block of five housing units along the eastern boundary of the site, with an underground car park to the west, and direct ramp access from the High Street. A desk-based assessment of the site's archaeological potential (Heppell 2006) was submitted in support of the planning application. Due to the perceived archaeological potential of the development area the HEM team of Essex County Council advised that a full archaeological condition should be attached to the planning consent.

2.3 History and Archaeology

The High Street has medieval origins and is a designated Conservation Area, containing several listed buildings. Immediately to the west of the site, the building at the frontage of 23 High Street has been dated to the 15th century. The parish church of St Mary the Virgin (EHER 27490), which lies directly opposite the development area, is 12th-century in date. An archaeological evaluation to the rear of 23 High Street (Robertson 2004) recovered residual medieval pottery in a thick levelling layer. Several pottery findspots along the High Street suggest Roman settlement, possibly along the line of a Roman road that connected Benfleet to Canvey Island to the west (Priestly 1977).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles record that Alfred the Great routed the Danes, who had established a fortified camp at Benfleet, in 894 AD and burnt their fleet (EHER 7090). Charred timbers and skeletons were found when the railway was constructed in 1855 overlooking the Creek just to the south of the High Street, where the camp was likely to have been situated (EHER 7167). However, no Saxon artefacts have been discovered in the High Street area.

The 1841 Tithe Map shows the development area as yards and gardens. The house at 21 High Street may have been demolished by this time to provide access to the rear. In the latter part of the 19th century the yards had become amalgamated and built over. Modern industrial units were added in the 20th century (Heppell 2006)

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the project is preserve by record any archaeological remains that will be destroyed by the development. The overall objectives were in line with those laid out in the regional research framework for archaeology (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

The site-specific objectives were:

- To record any evidence of Saxon, medieval or post-medieval settlement on the site.
- To record any evidence of buildings or other structures in relation to Saxon, medieval or post-medieval development of the site.
- To record any evidence of activities taking place on the site, in relation to domestic consumption, manufacturing and trade, both from site features and from objects and environmental evidence.
- To record any evidence that might relate to the documented Danish camp.

- To record any evidence of settlement or activity earlier than the Saxon period, especially any evidence of the Roman period.

4.0 METHOD

Following demolition of the modern industrial units, the modern overburden was removed by the contractors. Further reduction of the ground level was undertaken in the area of the basement car park by mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket under archaeological supervision. After the discovery of several archaeological features, the area was extended by a further 3m to the east.

Standard ECC FAU methodologies were employed with regard to excavation and recording. The machine-excavated surface was sufficiently cleaned to ensure that any features present were visible. Surveying and planning was tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid using GPS. A photographic record consisting of black and white print and colour digital images was maintained throughout the course of the investigation.

Both the fieldwork and the reporting have been carried out to professional standards and guidance issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999) and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers for the East of England (ALGAO) (Gurney 2003).

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Figs. 1-3)

The fieldwork was undertaken in two distinct phases: the monitoring of the ground reduction and subsequent excavation of the features uncovered. The results from each of these phases of work are described below, with further context information in Appendix 1.

5.1 Monitoring results (Figs. 1 and 3.1)

During the monitoring of the reduction of the ground level a number of layers and two modern pits were recorded. Layer 2 was approximately 0.3 to 0.6m deep and comprised of modern building rubble associated with the demolition of the previous structures. Below this was mid-brown/yellow clay-silt layer 30. This was approximately 0.1m thick and is likely to have been part of the same levelling episode as layer 20.

Below layer 30 two pits were identified (7 and 21). Initial investigation of these uncovered 18th-century pottery. They were cut into a layer of mid-grey/brown silt clay 3/20/47 which was approximately 0.6m deep, the finds recovered from this layer were all post-medieval in

date. Below this layer were a number of Roman and medieval features which were excavated, with the agreement of the client and the monitoring officer, and are described below.

5.2 Excavation results (Figs. 2-3)

With the exception of two intercutting pits in the north-eastern corner all the features were identified along the western side of the site. The remainder of the site was seen to have been disturbed, possibly during the construction of the industrial units that formerly stood on the site. All the remains have been dated as either Roman or medieval, although very few of the features are securely dated. The excavated remains are described below under the period headings.

5.2.1 Roman (Fig 2)

Six Roman features were uncovered within the stripped area. None of them are closely dateable other than being late Roman in character, i.e. 2nd to 4th century. Indeed only 190g of Roman pottery (24 sherds) were recovered from all the features (19% by weight of the total amount of pottery recovered). In comparison to this 61kg (328 fragments) of Roman building material was recovered of which 81% was recovered from Roman features (a further 0.3kg of building material was post-medieval in date). A number of the features investigated were classified as Roman in date, based upon the building material, which renders the date somewhat insecure.

Of the five pits investigated, three were situated along the western side of the site with the remaining two located in the northeast corner. Pits 46 and 43 were situated in the northeast corner, with pit 43 cutting pit 46. The full extent of the pits was not exposed as they both extended out of the investigation area; however pit 43 was approximately 0.7m deep and contained a single fill 42. Pit 46 contained two fills, 44 and 45, with 45 being comprised primarily of tile and brick. Although most of the building material from fill 45 was Roman an unusual brick of 16th/17th-century date was also recovered (reported on separately below), which is likely to be intrusive. Nominally both these pits have been dated as Roman, however a note of caution should be given as the dating is based solely upon building material.

Pit 32 was similar in nature to pit 46 in containing two fills, 34 and 33, with the upper fill 33 being comprised almost entirely of Roman brick and tile. This pit was located in the

southwest corner of the site and measured at least 2.6m long, 1m wide and was 0.85m deep. It extended both to south and west of the investigation area. No dating evidence other than the building material was recovered from this feature and as such the dating is only tentative.

Pits 16 and 28 were both located in the northwestern corner of the site and both extended westwards out of the investigation area. Pit 16 was roughly 0.6m in diameter and 0.3m deep. The single fill 15 was packed with Roman brick and tile, and two small pieces of Roman pottery were recovered. Both this pit and pit 28 were cut by medieval ditch 38. Pit 28 measured approximately 1.5m long, 1.4m wide and was 0.35m deep. It contained four fills, 26, 27, 35, and 39. Only the top fill 26 contained datable pottery, while the remaining three fills contained quantities of Roman building material and oyster shell. Given their proximity it is possible that these two pits may be related, however later features have truncated much of them making interpretation difficult.

In the northwest corner of the site was a small spread/layer, 19, of Roman tile and brick. Only a small area of it was identified on the site as it extended northwards, towards the High Street. It was cut by medieval ditch 38 and pit 18. No clear function could be discerned for this layer.

It is clear that there was Roman activity on the site, although from the site evidence it is difficult to discern what form the activity took. The large pits would seem to suggest a sizable time investment in their initial digging suggesting more than agricultural usage. However, it is clear that sometime between the 4th and 10th centuries they were filled with what can only be described as Roman 'hardcore', possibly representing levelling or consolidation of the ground.

5.2.2 Medieval (Fig 2)

Three small pits, 5, 9 and 18, cess pit 11 with associated post-holes 14 and 41 and a single ditch, 38, were positively dated as medieval in origin. It is notable however that the largest percentage (81% by weight) of pottery on the site is of medieval date, although some of it (37% of the total weight for medieval pottery) is residual in later features.

Pit 5 was located along the southern edge of the site. It contained a single fill, 4, and measured 1.3m long by 0.75m wide and 0.43m deep. The pottery recovered from the fill

had a broad date range of between the 10th to 13th centuries, although a single sherd was 10th to 11th century in date. All of the sherds were unabraded suggesting that the pottery was in its original place of deposition. On balance it is likely that this feature dates from the 10th/11th centuries.

Small pit 18 was situated towards the northwest corner of the site, and was partially truncated by machine. It measured 1.1m wide, and was 0.24m deep. The single fill, 17, contained animal bone, shell, tile and a small amount of pottery. The pottery suggests a 10th to 11th century date for the feature, and although a single very small piece pottery dated to the 13th to 14th centuries was recovered, it is likely that this was intrusive.

Ditch 38 was the only ditch identified on the site and was situated in the northwest corner. It was orientated northeast – southwest and had a slight curve. The ditch was 0.5m wide and 0.61m deep. The single fill of the ditch 29/ 37 contained a quantity of Roman building material which is likely to be residual. The pottery recovered is dated to the 10th to 13th century but based upon the spatial relationship between this feature and those dated to the 10th/11th century it is likely that the ditch is of the earlier date in origin.

The only group of features on site that may have been structural was pit 11 (Fig. 3.2) with the associated post-holes 14 and 41. The pit was located in the centre-west of the site and was cut by post-medieval pit 7. Pit 11 measured 2.2m long, 2.0m wide and was 1.35m deep, it contained four fills 10, 24, 25 and 40. Fills 24, 25 and 40 all contained residual Roman pottery, with virtually a complete vessel (albeit broken into 15 sherds) being recovered from fill 25. These three fills seem to be comprised to a greater or lesser extent of cess deposits, although there is a suggestion that the primary fill 40 was deposited through standing water. The upper fill 10 was noticeably different to the lower three fills and contained a significant amount of charcoal and ash, possibly the residue from clearing out of fires or ovens. The two post-holes were located on the southern side of the feature in the approximate corners and were both filled by 24. Post-hole 14 was approximately 0.2m in diameter and was 0.15m deep, while post-hole 41 was approximately 0.3m in diameter and 0.3m deep. It is likely that this group of features represents a cess pit with a covering structure (it is assumed that two further post-holes lay on the unexcavated northern side).

Layer 31 (Fig 3.1) may date to the early medieval period, although no dating material was collected from it. It overlay some of the Roman features and was cut by several of the 10th

or 11th century ones, such as ditch 38 and pit 18. It may represent old topsoil and indeed seems to contain a degree of humic material. It may represent a period, between the 4th and 10th centuries (but presumably after the Roman features had been infilled with the building rubble) when the area of the site was not utilised, although it may have been under agriculture.

Pit 9 was not fully exposed as it extended westwards out of the investigation area. It was partly truncated by machine and was only partially excavated due to the constraints of the site. It measured 3.4m wide, was 0.5m deep and was over 0.6m long. It contained three fills; 8, 12 and 13. Fill 12 was the primary fill of the pit and was likely degraded cess. The dating of this fill is somewhat problematic as it contained pottery dating to the later 15th or 16th century, while fill 8, the top fill, contained unabraded 10 to 13th century pottery. Fill 8 was primarily a dump of oyster shell. Despite the unabraded nature of the pottery in fill 8 the possibility exists that this was a redeposited fill. If the oyster shell was originally part of a midden deposit that was 'tidied' up to cap a cess pit then this may account for the inclusion of earlier pottery. The 15th to 16th century date of the primary fill fits well with the known date of surrounding extant structures and it is possible that this feature was associated with a frontage building of this date, although no building has been identified.

Overall it seems likely that there are two phases of medieval activity represented upon the site. The earliest dates from the 10th or 11th centuries and is represented by pits, a ditch and a cesspit or latrine. The second phase as evidenced from the site dates to the 15th/16th centuries and is contemporary with some of the extant buildings along the High Street.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

Finds were recovered from twenty-four 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.

6.1 Roman Pottery

Roman and post-Roman pottery was recovered from fifteen contexts, amounting to 87 sherds, weighing 994g. The largest component is medieval which is described more fully below. Seven contexts produced small amounts of Roman pottery, twenty-four sherds, weighing 190g. Most of the assemblage comprises base and body sherds in coarse fabrics which are not closely datable within the Roman period. Two contexts contained pottery which provided a closer date, although in both cases the pottery is residual in a medieval feature. The fills of pits 9 and 11 each contained G24 jars (Going 1987, fig.10) a type which spans the 2nd to 4th centuries. The late Roman date is supported by a sherd of Rettendon-type ware in the fill of ditch 38.

6.2 Medieval Pottery

A small amount of pottery, sixty-one sherds, weighing 803g was recovered from eleven contexts. However, only thirty-four sherds (56% of the total) and 472g (59% of the total) were recovered from medieval contexts (six in total) and the remainder of the pottery was residual in later contexts. Most contexts also contain quantities of Roman tile or brick. The earliest pottery appears in the upper fill 10 of pit 11. The most interesting find comprises unabraded fragments from a Late Saxon Shelly Ware wheel-thrown jar with an everted rim and squared bead. It is paralleled by an example found in London (Vince and Jenner 1991, fig. 2.23.1, 3). A simple everted jar rim also occurs in this fabric. The other pottery in this feature comprises Late Saxon Thetford-type Ware jar and storage jar rims, and an Early Medieval Ware simple everted cooking pot rim. All of this pottery is datable to the 10th and 11th centuries.

Thetford-type Ware also occurred in pit 5, along with unfeatured sherds of Early Medieval Ware and early medieval Shell-Tempered Ware (which is hand-made not wheel-thrown). Pit 5 may therefore be contemporary with pit 11. Small quantities of early medieval Shell-Tempered Ware and one sherd of Early Medieval Ware were also recovered from the upper fill 36 of ditch 38 and from fill 17 of pit 18. Pit 18 further contained a sherd of Late Saxon Shelly Ware and a sliver of intrusive Mill Green Ware. Pit 9 also produced early medieval

pottery, but the latest pottery (from primary fill 12) comprises a Tudor Red Earthenware handle from a large jug or cistern, so the earlier material is likely residual. The fact that the Late Saxon/early medieval pottery from features 5, 11, 18 and 38 is un-abraded would indicate the pottery is undisturbed and not residual.

There is very little pottery dating to the High Middle Ages. Single sherds of Mill Green Ware occur in pits 9 and 18 as well as unstratified. A sherd of perhaps contemporary Medieval Coarse Ware occurred in post-medieval layer 47. All other features contained 18th or 19th century pottery.

This excavation produced the earliest pottery found so far at Benfleet and provides a date of 10th to first half of the 11th-century for the earliest settlement of the High Street, pre-dating the 12th-century church. Pottery of this early date is unusual in Essex. The Late Saxon Shelly Ware, although not made in London, was probably traded via the capital along the Thames. Very little of this ware has been identified in historic Essex (although it does occur at Barking Abbey (Redknap 1991, 358)). The Thetford-type ware, which is most likely Ipswich-Thetford ware (i.e. made in Ipswich) may have been re-exported via London and the Thames, but was more likely traded down the coast as it also occurs at the east-coast ports of Maldon and Colchester. It would therefore appear that Benfleet had access to both coastal and riverine trade during the Late Saxon period.

The relative preponderance of early medieval Shell-Tempered Ware is to be expected as it is very common in south Essex at sites close to the Thames, and continued in production well into the 13th century. Finds of Mill Green Ware are also common in south Essex. There is not enough pottery to comment on the function of the site; jars and cooking pots, always the most common vessel type, are the only forms to occur in the Late Saxon and early medieval fabrics. One of the Thetford-type Ware jar rims has a laminated internal surface, which may indicate specialised activity of some kind.

6.3 Brick and tile

6.3.1 Roman

Large quantities of Roman brick and tile were recovered. In all, more than 61kg was collected from twenty-one contexts, although it should be noted that this represents only a sample of the total brick and tile present. Most of the brick and tile comprises large fragments (average fragment weight 187.3g) which are crisp with unabraded edges. The

assemblage was scanned and the tile types were listed by context. The highest proportion appears to be brick, which is present in sixteen contexts; roofing tiles (tegula and imbrex) were noted in eleven. Box-flue tile was recorded in pit 28, and overfired/warped fragments were present in layer 19 and pits 11 and 32. The condition, and the size, of the fragments suggests that most of the Roman brick and tile is in its original place of deposition, although the purpose for its deposition is unclear. It may be worth noting that the most fragmentary brick and tile appears in contexts which also contain post-Roman pottery.

6.3.2 Post-medieval

Six contexts contained brick and tile fragments, total weight 1012g, nearly all of which are small and can only be broadly dated to the post-medieval period. The fill of pit 46 produced approximately half of a narrow brick, dimensions 100 x 37-42mm, weight 760g. This brick fragment was submitted to Pat Ryan for study and comparison with bricks in several standing buildings in South Benfleet. A full report is contained in the archive; the conclusion is presented here:

“Part-brick; red, fine-particled fabric; scar from missing large pebble inclusion; no sand adhering to any surfaces; fairly irregular in shape; irregular rounded arrises; squodge marks; rough base. It is likely that this part-brick was made locally of a rather pure clay by using the slop-moulding method of brick making, rather than the more common Essex practice of sand-moulding, in the 16th or 17th century.”

6.4 Animal bone

Sixteen contexts produced animal bone, amounting to 161 pieces, weighing 2380g. The bone was scanned for condition and completeness, and basic identifications of the taxa and the skeletal elements present were carried out using Schmid (1972). The bone is fragmented, but in good surface condition. Because of the fragmentation, most animal types were identified by the presence of teeth and larger elements, such as the condyles. This has led to a probable bias in identifications. Few large mammals were noted, however, with sheep/goat and pig bones present in equal proportions. Cattle and large mammal bones were recorded mainly in the fills of medieval ditch 38. Fish bones were noted in the fills of pits 9 and 11. No bird bones were recorded. Few butchery marks were visible but the assemblage, as a whole, is likely to represent domestic food waste.

6.5 Shell

Shell, mainly oyster, was recorded in seventeen contexts. The total amounts to more than 350 pieces, weighing almost 3kg, with three-quarters by weight recovered from a single deposit (fill 8 of pit 9). A bulk (18kg) soil sample was taken from the deposit because of the quantities of shell. The sample was processed by wet-sieving with flotation using a 0.5mm mesh and collecting the flotation fraction (flot) on a 0.5mm sieve. The residue was then dried and separated into coarse and fine fractions using 4mm and 2mm sieves. The material in the coarse fraction (>4mm) was sorted by eye, and artefacts and environmental material extracted and bagged separately. The fine fraction was saved but not sorted. The flot was also dried and bagged. Retrieved artefacts were recorded by count and weight and these details added to the quantification table in Appendix 2.

At least 140 separate oyster valves were recorded from the sample, representing a minimum of seventy individuals. There are large and small examples, some are distorted and others are attached to other shells, perhaps demonstrating cramped conditions in the oyster beds. Two have ?knife marks and several have 10-15mm diameter holes, probably representing attempts to extract the contents. At least thirty-six individual whelks were also present, along with mussel, cockle and winkle shells. A good number of the shells bear a greenish deposit, indicating that pit 9 was probably a midden deposit or a cesspit.

Almost all of the remaining contexts with shell produced oyster only, the main exception being fill 39 of pit 28, where cockle and mussel predominated. In total, more than 180 oyster valves were recorded, representing a minimum of 90 individuals. Shell found in this quantity indicates a degree of middening, as shellfish formed a large part of the diet during the Roman and the medieval periods.

6.6 Miscellaneous finds

Iron nails and objects, some of which are likely to be fairly recent, were recovered from three contexts. Some of the pieces are coated with a blue mineral deposit (vivianite) which occurs during burial in a damp, organic environment. The iron object in the fill of pit 43 is too corroded for identification. Very small amounts of baked clay were found in two features. One of the pieces in medieval ditch 38 has wattle impressions, and all of the baked clay probably represents the remains of daub. A post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem came from modern layer 3. Finally, pieces of wood, probably root fragments, were recovered from the fill of pit 21 and the primary fill of pit 11. Both occurrences are likely to represent relatively recent disturbances.

6.7 Assemblage discussion

Of interest are the quantities of Roman brick and tile, although other finds of this date are sparse. It is interesting, too, that at least eight contexts with Roman tile also include finds of a later date (medieval and post-medieval). This indicates a degree of later disturbance, at least, and begs the question that contexts ostensibly dated to the Roman period by the presence of brick and tile alone could have been deposited during the medieval period. Unfortunately, datable finds of any period, except for the Roman brick and tile, are present in low amounts, so establishing a dating sequence is difficult. It should also perhaps be noted that pottery of both Roman and early medieval date appears more often in contexts of a later date. The quantities of undatable material, particularly the shell, indicate midden deposits, and this may account for the apparent disturbance during the medieval period.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The discussion of the remains on the site has been split into the three different periods, which are outlined below.

Roman

The Roman remains on the site are somewhat enigmatic, the size of the pits suggests that the area of the site was utilised to a relatively high degree. However, with the exception of the building material very little in the way of material culture was recovered. The building material was likely deposited late on in the life of the Roman site and may have been used to level of the site immediately prior to returning the land to more pastoral uses, or indeed abandonment, as evidenced by topsoil layer 31, and as such can almost be ignored in regard to a discussion of the use of the site during the Roman period.

Given the size of the pits in both the southwest and northeast corners it can be assumed that a reasonable amount of time and effort investment was put into their initial excavation, which suggests that they were not situated far from areas of settlement. However, the original function of these pits is unclear as the non-rubble fills were virtually sterile.

The lack of material culture associated with the pits suggests that this area was not directly settled as a greater quantity of detritus would be expected. However, the density of the features is more than would be expected from wholly agricultural land and it seems likely that this area was marginal land just outside a settlement. The location of this assumed settlement is unclear but if the postulated Roman road does indeed run to the west of

Benfleet then it would be reasonable to assume that any settlement would be focused along its line, and may further be clustered around the crossing point between the mainland and Canvey Island, to the southwest of the site.

Medieval

The medieval features on the site fall into two distinct phases, the first phase dating from the 10th to 11th centuries with the second dating to the 15th/16th centuries. Both phases seem to represent 'back yard' remains with no structural remains identified on the site from either phase.

The 10th/11th-century remains represent the earliest medieval features uncovered in South Benfleet. The presence of suspected redeposited midden material seems to indicate some proximity to settlement. Although the actual features on the site do not really bear up to much interpretation, ditch 38 may speculatively be a property division. The proximity to actual occupation is further suggested by the pottery, shell and animal bone that was recovered. The vast majority of the pottery seems to be domestic in nature with jugs and cooking pots being identified. It is perhaps unsurprising that presumptive occupation remains of this date have been uncovered given a church is mentioned in the Domesday book, and is possibly a forerunner of the existing 12th-century church, and was likely a focal point for any settlement.

The one possibly structural feature uncovered was the presumptive covered pit 11. The post-hole were clearly associated with the pit, being dug into the sides and may have supported a small roof. Why a cess filled pit is covered over is unclear, although the obvious suggestion of a latrine should not be discounted. The projected size of the structure would have been approximately 1m square, assuming a further two post-holes in the northern half. Whatever the function of this feature it is clearly associated with domestic occupation in the close vicinity.

The second phase of activity dating to the 15th/16th century date was likely associated with the buildings that front onto the present High Street, parts of which date to the 15th century. Although this phase is only represented by a single cess pit and some residual finds from post-medieval layers. The lack of features in this later phase may be due in part to truncation of shallower features by the post-medieval levelling.

In general the medieval remains identified on the site relate to domestic occupation. Although no direct evidence of this occupation, in the form of structural remains was uncovered it seems likely that the settlement was focused around the church and may have followed a similar line to the extant buildings. The apparent gap in the archaeological record, between the 11th and 15th centuries could be as a result of a number of factors from settlement contraction to later truncation, although no clear indication as to what the factors may have been was identified upon the site.

Post-medieval and modern

The post-medieval and modern remains on the site all relate to levelling and terracing of the area. It is likely that during these episodes of levelling/ terracing some of the shallower medieval features were removed, particularly in the eastern half of the site. This is seemingly evidenced by the medieval and indeed Roman finds recovered from these layers.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The survival of features on the western half of the site is relatively high, especially when considering the amount of truncation in the eastern half of the site. The condition of the surviving remains is reasonably good with little disturbance, apart from truncation by later features. The Roman remains add a little more substantive evidence to the supposition of a settlement in the vicinity, although they are not concrete proof. While the earlier medieval remains extend the dates of the known medieval occupation back into the 10th century.

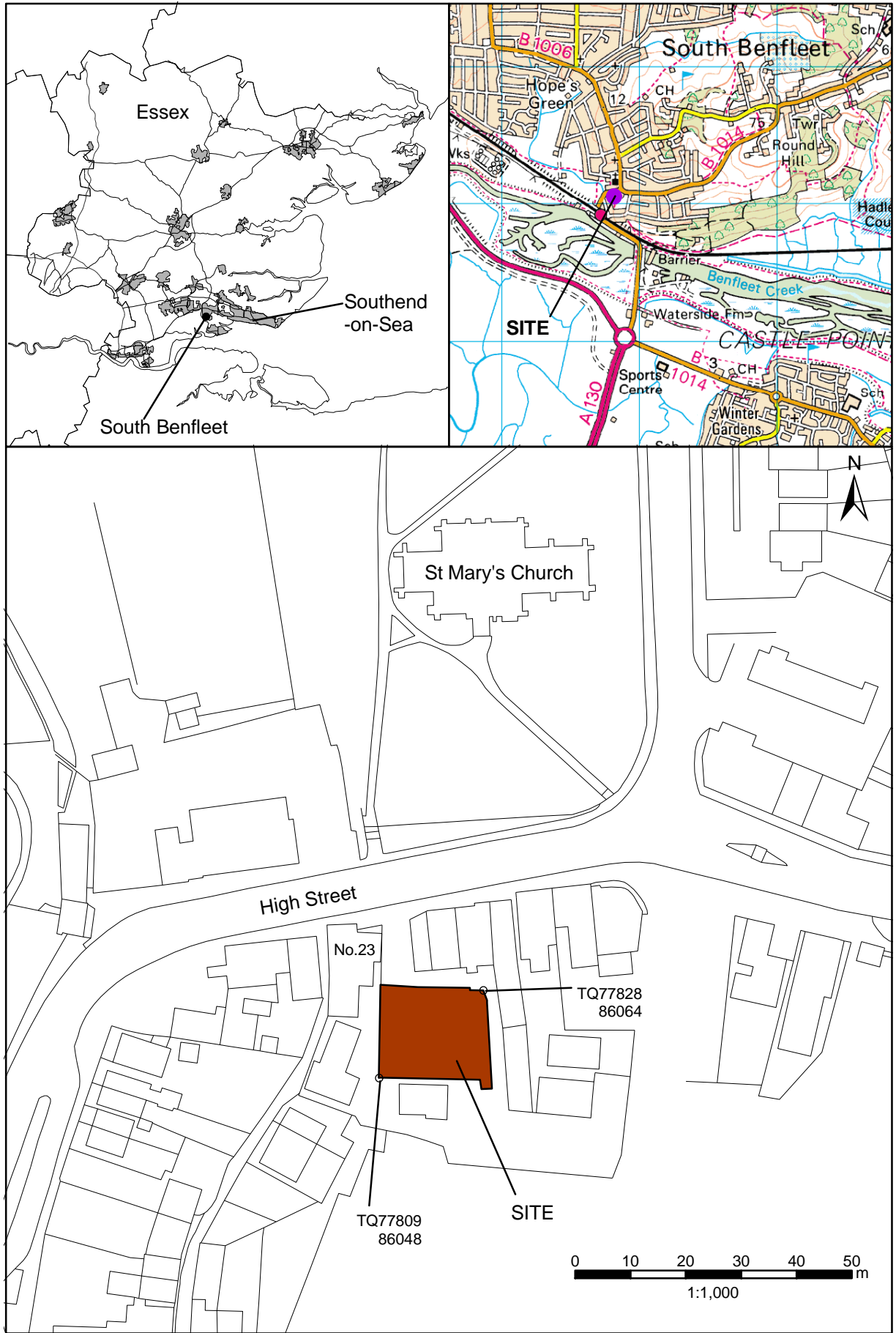
In conclusion despite the relative small scale of the archaeological evidence uncovered a reasonable amount can be deduced regarding settlement patterns from the Roman period through to the 15th/16th centuries. It may be significant that more archaeological remains seem to survive the further east the development progresses, up the slope of the High Street, with the evaluation at 23 High Street producing only unstratified medieval finds

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Fig.1. Location plan

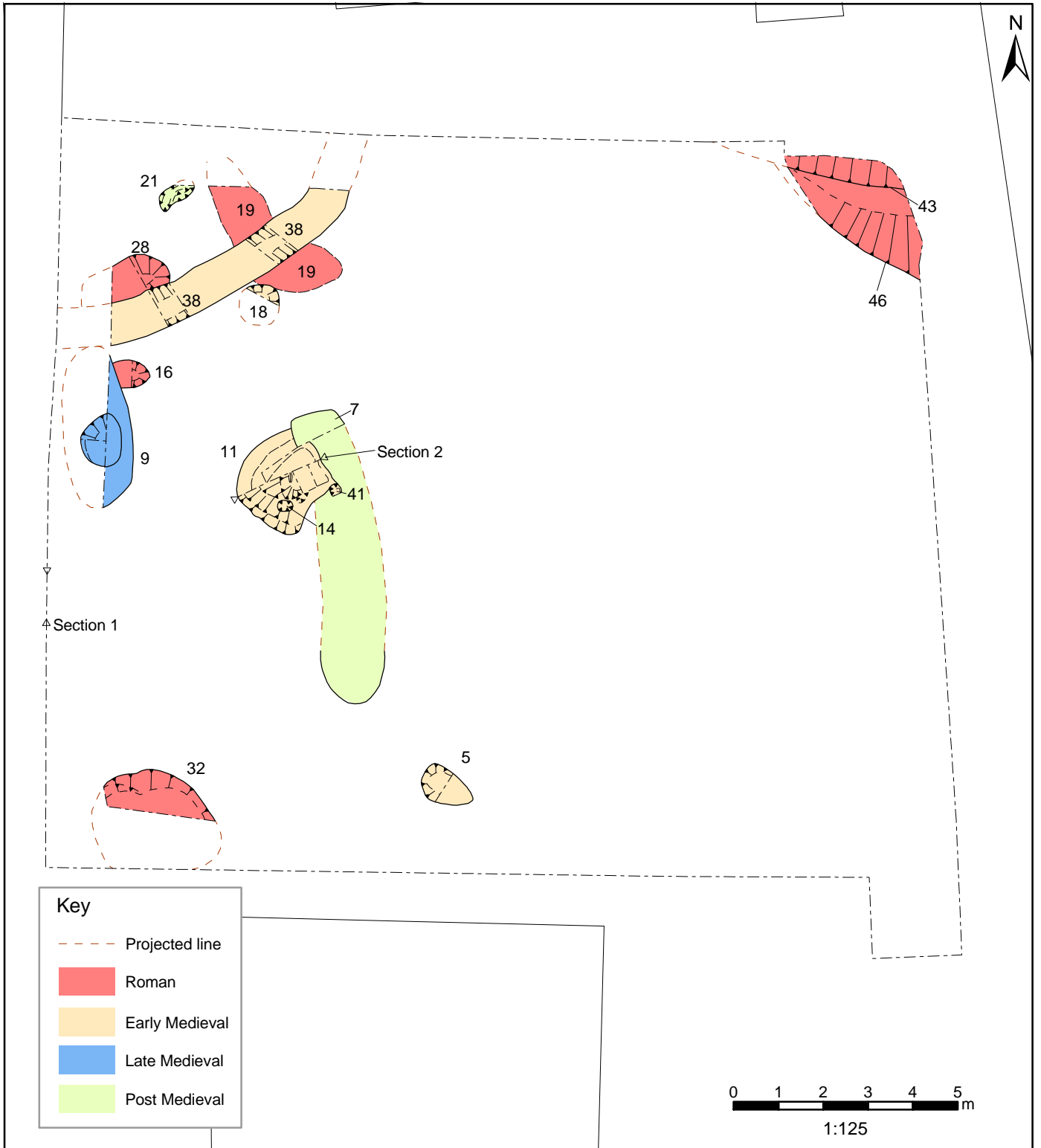
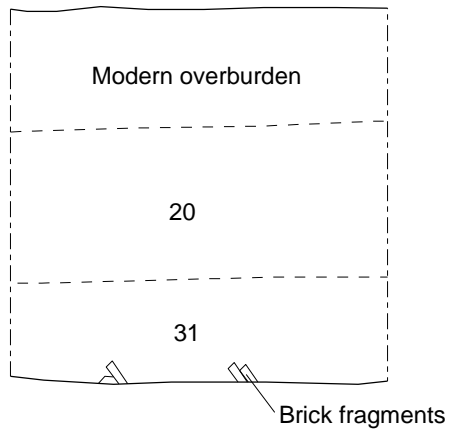
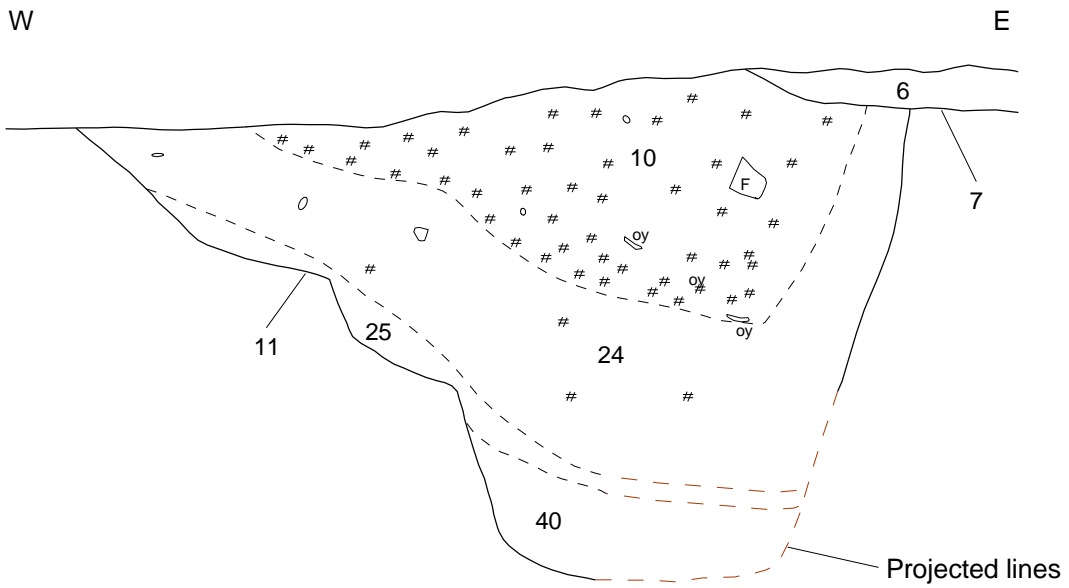


Fig.2. Post-excitation plan

S N



Section 1 - representative east facing baulk section



Section 2 - Pit 11 south facing

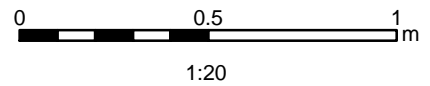


Fig.3. Sections

Appendix 1: Context Data

Context	Feature	Description	Feature Date
1	-	Unstratified finds	various
2	layer	Modern overburden across site	20th
3	layer	Thick dumped layer on east side, equiv. to layers 20 and 47	18th
4	fill	Pit fill of 5	
5	cut	Pit cut, south end of site	10th-11th
6	fill	Contaminated (?) dark backfill	
7	cut	Modern pit in centre of site	20th
8	fill	Oyster shell-rich top fill of pit 9	
9	cut	Large pit containing 8, 13 & 12 on western edge	15th-16th
10	fill	Upper fill of cess pit 11	
11	cut	Cess pit cut by 7	10th-11th
12	fill	Primary fill of 9	
13	fill	Secondary fill of 9	
14	cut	Posthole filled by 24, assoc. with pit 11	Rom
15	fill	Only fill of pit 16	
16	cut	Pit on west baulk	Rom
17	fill	Only fill of pit 18	10th-11th
18	cut	Shallow pit cut by machine	10th-11th
19	layer	Clay/tile layer in NW corner	Rom
20	layer	Modern dumping on west side, equiv. to layers 3 and 47	18th
21	cut	Modern pit in NW corner	20th
22	fill	Primary fill of 21	
23	fill	Secondary fill of 21	
24	fill	Fill of pit 11	
25	fill	Secondary fill of pit 11	
26	fill	Top fill of pit 28	
27	fill	Fill of pit 28	
28	cut	Pit containing large amount of Roman tile in NW corner	Rom
29	fill	Primary ditch fill of 38 (=37)	
30	layer	Levelling layer	20th
31	layer	Former topsoil	4th-10th
32	cut	Tile-filled pit in SW corner	Rom
33	fill	Secondary fill of 32	
34	fill	Primary fill of 32	
35	fill	Primary fill of pit 28	
36	fill	Upper fill of ditch 38	
37	fill	Primary fill of ditch 38. Residual Rm(=29).	
38	cut	Ditch cutting through Rm tile-filled features in NW corner	10th-11th
39	fill	Fill of pit 28	
40	fill	Primary fill of cess pit 11	
41	cut	Posthole assoc. with pit 11	Rom
42	fill	Only fill of pit 43	
43	cut	Pit cut, in NE corner of site	Rom
44	fill	Upper fill of pit 46	
45	fill	Primary fill of pit 46	
46	cut	Pit in NE corner of site	Rom
47	layer	Layer over pit 43, equiv. to layers 20 and 3	18th

Appendix 2: Finds Data

All weights given in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
1	u/s	2	10	Iron nails coated with vivianite	-
		1	32	Animal bone; rib fragment, large mammal, with hook-shaped protuberance on thicker edge	-
		2	28	Shell; oyster, two valves	-
		2	745	Tegula fragment; ?imbrex fragment	Roman
		4	158	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Med/post med.
3	Layer	2	60	Animal bone; sheep/goat horn core; fragment	-
		1	8	Shell; oyster fragment	-
		1	4	Clay pipe stem	Post med.
		2	228	Brick fragments, one Roman, one probably post med.	Roman/Post med.
		3	18	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Post med.
		1	8	Pottery; body sherd, sandy grey ware	Roman
4	5	20	266	Animal bone; mandible fragment, pig, with two molars; mandible fragments, sheep/goat, both with three molars; pig ulna, proximal end; rib fragments, large and medium-sized mammals; fragments, including long bone shafts	-
		14	44	Shell; oyster, four valves and fragments	-
		11	1175	Tile fragments, inc tegula flange	Roman
		5	52	Pottery; body sherds	Medieval
6	7	2	114	Iron sheet fragments, both with circular piercings and patches of vivianite	-
		1	4	Animal bone; pig tusk	-
		1	24	Shell; oyster, one valve	-
		10	428	Roof tile fragments and spalls	Post med.
		10	92	Pottery; rim, body and base sherds	Modern
8	9	66	80	Animal bone; cattle astragalus; sheep/goat molar; fragments; fish bones, including denticles, all from sample 1	-
		>200	2175	Shell; oyster (140 valves and uncounted fragments); whelk x 36; mussel x 11; cockle x 1; winkle x 1, all from sample 1 (202g very small fragments discarded)	-
		39	755	Tile fragments and crumbs from sample 1	Roman
		14	24	Pottery; body sherds and crumbs from sample 1	Medieval
10	11	30	182	Animal bone; pig humerus, distal end, and tusk; ribs, scapula blade, long bone shafts and humerus, distal end, medium-sized mammal; fish bones	-
		6	62	Shell; oyster, five valves; garden snail	-
		12	895	Brick and tile fragments, some overfired	Roman
		15	248	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Medieval
12	9	2	50	Animal bone; long bone shaft fragment; thoracic vertebra spine, large mammal	-
		1	16	Shell; oyster, one valve	-
		14	685	Tile fragments	Roman
		5	106	Pottery; rim and body sherds, one glazed, one with handle springing	Medieval
		2	12	Pottery; G24 jar rim sherd, black-surfaced ware; body sherd, fine grey ware	Roman
15	16	4	6	Shell; oyster, one valve and fragments	-
		33	12325	Tile fragments; tegula x 26; brick x 6, one with partial dog-print; imbrex x 1	Roman
		2	30	Pottery; body sherds, black-surfaced ware	Roman

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
17	18	5	52	Animal bone; thoracic vertebra and sawn long bone shaft, medium-sized mammal; fragments	-
		2	6	Shell; oyster and mussel fragments	-
		2	8	Baked clay	-
		3	94	Roof tile fragments	Post med.
		2	26	Tile fragments	Roman
		2	26	Pottery; rim sherd, shell-tempered; body sherd, glazed	Medieval
19	Layer	10	3145	Brick and tile fragments, two overfired/vitrified	Roman
22	21	1	12	Shell; oyster, one valve	-
		2	180	Natural wood/branch pieces, lengths 170mm and 110mm (Discarded)	-
		8	1290	Brick and tile fragments	Roman
24	11	1	68	Roof tile fragment	Post med.
		1	40	Imbrex fragment	Roman
		1	44	Pottery; body sherd, shell-tempered	Medieval
25	11	1	16	Animal bone; tibia, distal end, sheep/goat	-
		1	34	Shell; oyster, one valve	-
		2	252	Brick fragments	Post med.
		17	2060	Brick and tile fragments, including large piece of imbrex	Roman
		15	100	Pottery; G24 jar rim and body sherds, fine grey ware, all same vessel	Roman
26	28	2	46	Animal bone; fragments, poor condition	-
		6	6	Shell; oyster fragments	-
		32	6450	Brick and tile fragments, including tegula and imbrex	Roman
		2	24	Pottery; base and body sherds, fine grey ware	Roman
27	28	45	12160	Brick and tile fragments, including tegula, imbrex and box-flue tile	Roman
29 = 37	38	9	184	Animal bone; horse hoof; sheep/goat mandible plus molars; lumbar vertebra fragment, large mammal; fragments	-
		11	188	Shell; oyster, eight valves and fragments	-
		1	240	Slag, encrusted with green deposit	-
		11	1585	Tile fragments, including imbrex	Roman
33	32	37	8460	Brick and tile fragments, including imbrex and overfired/vitrified fragments and a dog-print	Roman
36	38	1	4	Animal bone; pig tusk	-
		1	2	Shell; oyster fragment	-
		3	24	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Medieval
37	38	18	1380	Animal bone; cattle radius, proximal end unfused; cattle tibia, proximal end, and scapula, glenoid cavity; sheep/goat scapula, glenoid cavity, and mandible with two molars; pelvis fragments, humerus fragment, distal end, rib and long bone shafts, large mammal; tibia, distal end, pig; radius, proximal end, and rib, medium-sized mammal; fragments	-
		20	266	Shell; oyster, sixteen valves and fragments	-
		1	24	Baked clay fragment, with wattle impression	-
		1	8	Burnt flint	-
		38	5270	Brick and tile fragments, including tegula and imbrex, and two pieces in buff clay	Roman
		1	8	Pottery; body sherd, Rettendon type ware	Roman

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
39	28	95	56	Shell; oyster, one small valve; cockle, nine valves and fragments; common otter, two valves and fragments; mussel fragments	-
		1	1	Tile spall	Roman
40	11	1	12	Animal bone; fragment, poor condition	-
		1	12	Natural wood/root piece, length 165mm (Discarded)	-
		8	540	Brick and tile fragments	Roman
42	43	1	24	Iron object, heavily corroded	-
		1	2	Animal bone; rib fragment	-
		3	1090	Brick and imbrex fragments	Roman
45	46	1	760	Brick fragment, width 100mm, depth 35-40mm	16th/17th C
		3	2210	Brick fragments and spall	Roman
47	Layer	1	10	Animal bone; mandible fragment, ?sheep/goat	-
		2	14	Shell; oyster, one valve and fragment	-
		3	80	Roof tile fragments, one with peg hole	Post med.
		1	12	Pottery; body sherd	Medieval
		1	8	Pottery; body sherd, sandy grey ware, abraded	Roman

Medieval Pottery

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
1	u/s	1	6	Sandy orange ware, iron-stained on breaks	13th -16th C
		1	3	Mill Green ware, slip-coated and green-glazed	mid 13th to mid 14th C
		1	25	Creamware, rolled rim from chamber pot	from mid 18th C
		1	124	late kitchen earthenware flanged rim bowl with internal slip-coating and mottled manganese decoration	early 19th C
3	Layer	1	7	post-medieval red earthenware, unglazed	16th to 19th C
		1	8	English stoneware, rim of tavern mug	18th C
		1	3	Staffordshire-type slipware rim of necked cup with brown slip circles around neck	earlier 18th C
4	5	1	7	Thetford-type ware body sherd with girth grooves, unabraded	10th to 11th C
		2	7	Early medieval ware, unabraded	10th to 13th C
		2	38	Shell-tempered ware including thick-walled sherd perhaps from base, unabraded	10th to 13th C
6	7	5	61	Post-medieval red earthenware including rim of small bowl or porringer and misc glazed sherds including a thickened or pad base	17th C or later
		3	19	Creamware: fragments of plate rims including octagonal moulded rim, (Jennings 1981, fig. 103.1642)	1770-75
		1	7	Creamware: footring saucer, industrial marbled slipware, (Barker 1993, p29 top)	?early 19th C
		1	5	Ironstone plate rim with transfer-printed willow pattern	from early 19th C
8	9	1	6	Shell-and-sand-tempered ware, 1 unabraded sherd plus crumbs from soil sample <1>	10th to 13th C
		3	4	Early medieval ware, sherd plus crumbs from soil sample <1>	10th to 13th C
		4	10	Shell-tempered ware from soil sample <1>, 2 sherds and 2 crumbs, largest sherd is unabraded	10th to 13th C
		1	1	Medieval coarse ware from soil sample <1>	12th to 14th C
		1	1	Sandy orange ware, plain glaze from soil sample <1>	?13th C
		2	1	Unidentifiable crumbs from soil sample <1>	-
10	11	3	36	Thetford-type ware comprising everted jar rim and larger rim ?from storage jar, internal surface	10th/11th C

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
				laminated	
		5	64	Early medieval ware includes simple everted cooking pot rim	10th to 11th C
		7	148	Late Saxon shelly ware comprising wheel-thrown jar with everted rim and squared bead, cf. Vince & Jenner (1991, fig. 2.23.1,3), small simple everted jar rim and body sherds including very thick-walled sherd and definitely wheel-thrown sherd, unabraded	earlier 10th to earlier 11th C up to 1040
12	9	3	15	Shell-tempered ware misc sherds	10th to 13th C
		1	23	Mill Green ware, slip-coated and green-glazed sherd from neck of jug	mid 13th to 14th C
		1	68	Tudor red earthenware lower handle attachment from large jug or cistern	later 15th and 16th C
17	18	1	25	Shell-tempered ware, small fragment of thick-walled everted, bevelled rim, could be Late Saxon	10th to 11th C
		1	1	Mill Green ware	mid 13th to 14th C
24	11	1	44	Late Saxon shelly ware: thick-walled body sherd, wheel-thrown, unabraded	earlier 10th to earlier 11th C
36	38	2	22	Shell-tempered ware, unabraded	10th to 13th C
		1	2	Early medieval ware, tiny rim fragment	10th to 13th C
47	layer	1	12	Medieval coarse ware	12th to 14th C

Appendix 3: Contents of Archive

Index to the Archive for 21 High Street, South Benfleet, Essex (CPBH 06)

File containing:

1. Introduction

1.1 Brief & WSI

2. Research Archive

2.1 Copy of Report

2.2 Copy of Finds reports

3. Site Archive

3.1 1 x Watching Brief record Sheet

3.2 1 x Watching Brief notes

3.3 2 x Context Registers

3.4 47 x Original Context Sheets

3.5 1 x Plans register

3.6 1 x Section Register

3.7 2 x Photographic Register (1 B+W; 1 Colour Digital)

3.8 Site photographic record (35mm monochrome prints & digital images(inc. hard copies)

3.9 Site plans & drawings

3.10 Miscellaneous Maps and notes

6 Box of finds

Appendix 4: EHER Summary Sheet

Site Name/Address: 21 High Street, South Benfleet, Essex	
Parish: Castle Point	District: Castle Point
NGR: TQ 7762 8601	Site Code: CPBH 06
Type of Work: Monitoring and Excavation	Site Director/Group: Andrew Letch ECC FAU
Dates of Work: 4-12th October 2006	Size of Area Investigated: 400m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Southend Museum	Funding Source: Aspect Developments Ltd
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related EHER Nos.: HER 7090, 7167, 27490
Final Report: Summary in EAH	
Periods Represented: Roman/ Medieval/ Post-medieval/ Modern	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: Archaeological monitoring of ground reduction for the construction of five houses and a basement car park was carried out at 21 High Street, South Benfleet, Essex, as a condition on planning consent. The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential opposite the medieval parish church. The monitoring identified Roman and medieval archaeological features beneath post-medieval and modern levelling layers, and these were excavated in a break in the groundworks.</p> <p>Roman The archaeological remains were shown to relate to both Roman and medieval activity on the site. The Roman remains primarily consisted of a number of rubble-filled pits. With the exception of Roman building material, used to backfill several of the pits, very few datable finds were recovered from any of these features. The quantity of the features in the development area suggests that the site was utilised as more than agricultural land. However, the lack of material culture associated with the features indicates that the area was not directly settled on. It is likely that this area was marginal land that lay outside of any settlement. The on site evidence seems to suggest that after the 4th century the area of the site was either abandoned or returned to agriculture as a topsoil layer lay over the Roman features.</p> <p>Medieval All the medieval remains date from either the 10th/11th centuries or the 15th/16th centuries and were related to 'back yard' features, such as boundary ditches, disparate post-holes/small pits and cess pits, one with the putative remains of a small structure over it. Although these remains are what would be expected to the rear of known medieval frontage buildings the early date of the first phase, 10th/11th centuries pushes back the dates for the settlement of this area of South Benfleet by approximately 100 years. The 15th/16th-century cess pit may well be associated with the extant 15th century structure at 23 High Street.</p>	

Post-medieval/ modern

It is likely that a number of smaller shallower medieval features were truncated by post-medieval and modern levelling and terracing of the site. Indeed, a significant amount of medieval pottery was recovered from these layers.

The Roman remains add a little more substantive evidence to the supposition of a settlement in the vicinity, although they are not concrete proof. The earlier medieval remains extend the dates of the known medieval occupation back into the 10th century. The depth of the Roman and medieval features below modern ground level suggests that further remains of these periods might survive in other sites along the High Street.

Previous Summaries/Reports: Heppell, E. 2006 *Land at 21 High Street, Benfleet, Essex. Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment.* ECC FAU assessment report 1608

Author of Summary: A. Robertson

Date of Summary: February 2007