

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
the Waste Transfer Station
Cordons Farm
Braintree
Essex
CM77 8DL**

NGR: TL 7800 2160

Planning Ref: 13/0057/ECC

**ASE Project No: E8091
Site Code: CRCF 13**

**ASE Report No: 2013338
OASIS id: 166742**

**Andy Letch
Illustrations by Andrew Lewsey**

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Abstract

Two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site of a municipal waste transfer station prior to refurbishment and improvement works. A third trench could not be excavated due to access restrictions and existing underground power cables. The site lies within an area of undated cropmarks that are recorded within the surrounding fields.

Both trenches were dug through thick layers of modern gravel surfacing and made ground onto natural clay deposits, the upper part of which were discoloured through ground contamination.

No archaeological features or deposits were found or finds collected.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 Finds and Environmental Samples**
- 6.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

Appendix 1: HER Summary Sheet
Appendix 2: OASIS Form

FIGURES

Front Cover Image: Excavation of Trench 3 viewed to north

Figure 1: Location of archaeological evaluation trenches

Figure 2: Trench 1 viewed to north-west

Figure 3: Trench 2 viewed to north-east

TABLES

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

Table 2: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts

Table 3: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) were commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an evaluation of the waste transfer station at Cordons Farm prior to the start of a refurbishment and modernisation program.

1.1.2 The site is jointly used by Essex County Council and Braintree District Council as a deposition and storage point for municipal refuse before being taken away for recycling or landfill.

1.2 Location

1.2.1 The site is located on the south-eastern side of Braintree off the Fowlers Farm roundabout and along the Long Green Road towards the village of Cressing (NGR: TL 7800 2160; Figure 1).

1.3 Topography and Geology

1.3.1 The site lies within a largely rural setting and its topography, and that of the surrounding area, is predominantly flat. The site itself is uneven in places due to the nature of the made ground and extensive vehicle usage. Other users of the site include a haulage company and other businesses. The immediate environs to the east are rural.

1.3.2 Geological works show the site is covered by an extensive layer of made ground between 0.4m bgl and 1.10m bgl overlying a sandy gravelly clay deposit known as the Lowestoft Formation, with London Clay deposits beneath (CgMs 2013).

1.4 Planning Background

1.4.1 Planning permission for the new waste transfer site has been granted by Braintree District Council with a condition for archaeological works (planning ref. 13/0057/ECC). In the recommendation for archaeological works, the Historic Environment Officer from Essex County Council Place Services recommended that the site should be evaluated by trial trenches in advance of redevelopment in order to understand the nature and extent of any archaeological remains on the site, perhaps associated with the undated cropmarks. Through discussions between the Historic Environment Officer and CgMs Consulting, three evaluation trenches were agreed, whose locations were based on areas of least disturbance (CgMs 2013).

1.5 Aims and Objectives

1.5.1 The aim of the archaeological work was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological remains in order to understand the archaeological potential of the site and the implications of the proposed development upon it. Furthermore, should such

evidence be found, the evaluation would inform possible mitigation measures to avoid damaging archaeological deposits through development.

1.6 Scope of Report

- 1.6.1 This report details the results of the evaluation at the Cordons Farm waste transfer site carried out by Andy Letch (Senior Archaeologist) on the 11th December 2013. The fieldwork was managed by Andy Leonard and Jim Stevenson managed the post-excavation process.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There are no designated heritage assets within the development site
- 2.2 Prior to the establishment of the waste station in the late 20th century, the site was used as farmland. Undated cropmarks of former field boundaries are recorded to the south-west side of Fowler's Farm (EHER 14215). Other undated cropmarks also survive within a 1km radius of the site (CgMs 2013).
- 2.3 Ground investigation works undertaken prior to redevelopment show widespread truncation and disturbance to the site from its presence use.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Three 2m x 25m trenches were stipulated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), positioned to avoid the more disturbed parts of the site highlighted by ground investigation works (Figure 1). Trenches 1 and 3 were excavated on the north side of the site on a gravelled access and parking area. Trench 2, located on the tarmac area to the south, in the main part of the site, could not be excavated because it was located between two busy access points (Figure 1). An alternative location to the north could not be dug due to the presence of underground electricity cables, detected by CAT scanner. Trench 1 was extended by 10m to make up for this.
- 3.2 The trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator using a 1.8m wide flat-bladed bucket through a thick layer of modern made ground and onto the level of the natural geology, the top of which was stained from spilled pollutants, believed to be oil or petrol. No archaeological deposits or features were observed.
- 3.3 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Braintree Museum in due course. The contents of the archive are summarised below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	2
Number of trench sheets	3
Plan and sections sheets	None
Bulk Samples	None
Photographs	6
Bulk finds	None

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1

4.1.1 Trench 1 was a 35m-long trench excavated on the south-west side of the gravel area, west of the waste area entrance route. It targeted the area of the proposed weighbridge and the north-west end of the new waste transfer building. An extra 5m was added either end of the trench to partly make up for the loss of Trench 2.

4.1.2 A thick layer of modern overburden was removed across the entire trench, comprising gravel, rubble, plastic and modern debris mixed with a dark brown grey silty material, likely to represent former topsoil (context [01]). Below this lay the natural orange brown clay at c.64.85m OD, the upper part of which was predominantly stained a blue-grey colour from contamination (Figure 2). Maximum trench depth was 1.00m.

Context	Type	Description	Max. length & width	Thickness
01	Layer	Modern overburden	Whole trench	0.60-0.88m
02	Layer	Natural orange brown clay	Whole trench	-

Table 2: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts

4.2 Trench 2

4.2.1 The WSI located Trench 2 in the tarmac area between an office cabin and the refuse/recycling bins at the south-west end of the site (Figure 1). This was targeted on the route of a proposed surface water drain. However, after speaking to staff, this was found to be impractical because the area was in use as a turning space for lorries and parking for refuse vehicles. The only alternative location available was to the north-east, close to the fence line between the tarmac and gravel parts of the site, but when surveyed by a CAT this was found to be covered in underground electricity cables and therefore the trench was abandoned.

4.3 Trench 3

4.3.1 Trench 3 was excavated on the north-west side of the gravel area along the line of the south-eastern boundary fence, within the footprint of the proposed new waste transfer building. The trench was moved 19.5m to the north-east from its original position because the original trench straddled the existing fence between the two areas (CgMs 2013; Figures 1 & 2).

4.3.2 The same deposits were encountered within Trench 3 as Trench 1, though here the modern overburden (context [01]) was shallower, between 0.35m and 0.50m. The stained upper part of the natural clay [02] appeared at c.66.28m OD, slightly higher than in Trench 1, since the ground level is slightly higher, by 1.00m. Approximately 0.25m of contaminated geology was removed, exposing a largely similar natural deposit to that observed in Trench 1, but more gravelly and browner in the central part of the trench (Fig. 3).

Context	Type	Description	Max. length & width	Thickness
01	Layer	Modern overburden	Whole trench	0.35-0.50m
02	Layer	Natural orange brown gravelly clay	Whole trench	-

Table 3: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts

5.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 No archaeological features were encountered. No finds were collected or samples taken.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The two evaluation trenches excavated at Cordons Farm demonstrate widespread modern disturbance in the northern part of the site, with up to c.0.90m of modern made ground lying directly over the geology. There was extensive discolouration of the natural clay through contamination associated with present use. Although trenching could not be undertaken on the southern part of the site, modern made ground of similar and deeper depths are known from the geotechnical survey.
- 6.2 No indications of archaeological features or deposits were found during the evaluation and it is likely that should any be present, their survival will be affected by the high degree of modern disturbance. No evidence was found of the cropmark field boundaries mentioned on the Essex Heritage Environment Record but it is possible they survive outside the excavated areas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CgMs 2013. *Specification for an Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation: Waste Transfer Station, Cordons Farm, Braintree, Essex.*

IfA 1994 (rev. 2008). *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluations*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project and Teresa O'Connor, Historic Environment Officer for Essex County Council Place Services for monitoring the project. Thanks also to Dan Moore and staff at the transfer site.

Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

Site name/Address: Waste Transfer Station, Cordons Farm, Braintree, Essex	
Parish: Braintree	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 7800 2160	Site Code: CRCF 13
Type of Work: Archaeological evaluation	Site Director/Group: A. Letch, ASE
Date of Work: December 2013	Size of Area Investigated: 1.21 hectares
Curating Museum: Braintree Museum	Funding source: client
Further Work Anticipated?: No	Related HER No: 14215
Final Report: EAH roundup	OASIS No: 166742
Periods Represented: Modern	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>Two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site of a municipal waste transfer site prior to refurbishment and improvement works. A third trench could not be excavated due to access restrictions and existing underground power cables. The site lies within an area of undated cropmarks recorded in the surrounding fields.</p> <p>Both trenches were dug through thick layers of modern gravel surfacing and rubbly made ground onto natural clay deposits, the upper part of which were discoloured through ground contamination.</p> <p>The site has been heavily truncated and disturbed. No archaeological features or deposits were found but it is possible the cropmarks survive below the level of disturbance outside the excavated areas.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: A. Letch	Date of Summary: December 2013

Appendix 2: OASIS Form

Project details

Project name	Waste Transfer Site at Cordons Farm
Short description of the project	Two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site of a municipal waste transfer site prior to extensive refurbishment works. . A third trench could not be excavated due to access restrictions and existing underground power cables. The site lies within the area of undated cropmarks within the surrounding fields. Both trenches were dug through thick layers of modern gravel surfacing and rubblely made ground onto natural clay deposits, the upper part of which were discoloured through ground contamination, likely to be dumped engine oil, or similar. No archaeological features or deposits were found or finds collected.
Project dates	Start: 11-12-2013 End: 12-12-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	8091 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	""Targeted Trenches""
Development type	Service infrastructure (e.g. sewage works, reservoir, pumping station, etc.)
Development type	refurbishment of waste site
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX BRAINTREE BRAINTREE Waste Transfer Station at Cordons Farm
Postcode	CM77 8DL
Study area	1.21 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 7800 2160 51 0 51 51 50 N 000 35 07 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 64.85m Max: 66.28m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Essex County Council Place Services
Project design	CgMs Consulting

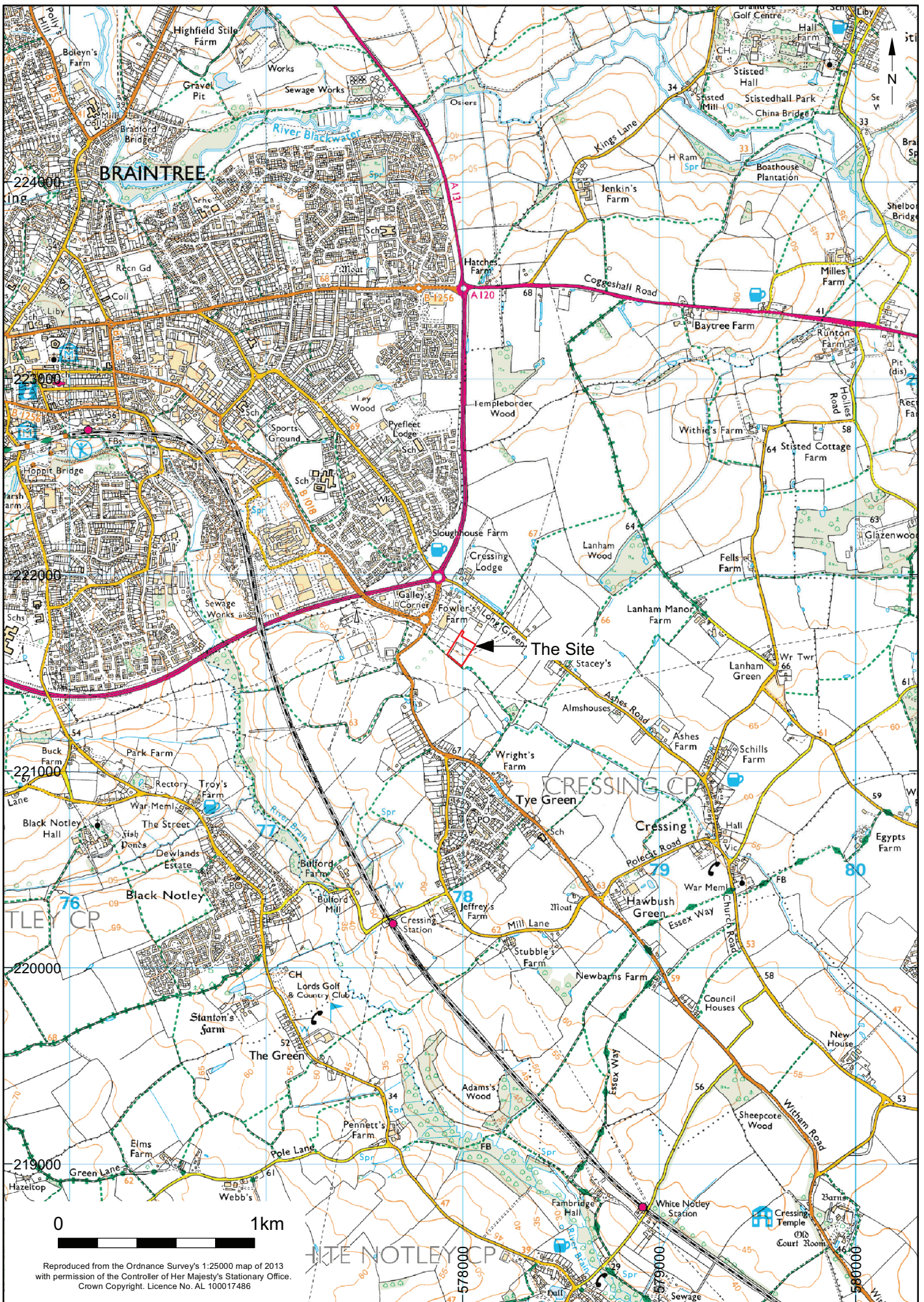
originator
 Project director/manager Jim Stevenson
 Project director/manager Andrew Leonard
 Project supervisor Andy Letch
 Type of sponsor/funding body CgMs Consulting

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Physical Contents "other"
 Digital Archive recipient Braintree Museum
 Digital Contents "none"
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
 Paper Archive recipient Braintree Museum
 Paper Contents "none"
 Paper Media available "Notebook - Excavation', ' Research', ' General Notes', "Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
 Title An Archaeological Evaluation at the Waste Transfer Station, Cordons Farm, Braintree, Essex
 Author(s)/Editor(s) Letch, A.
 Other bibliographic details Report no. to be issued
 Date 2013
 Issuer or publisher Archaeology South-East
 Place of issue or publication Portslade
 Description Short evaluation report with location figure and photo plates
 Entered by Andy Letch (a.letch@ucl.ac.uk)
 Entered on 16th December 2013



© Archaeology South-East		Cordons Fram Waste Transfer Station		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 8091	Dec 2013	Site location		
Report Ref:	Drawn by: JLR			



© Archaeology South-East		Cordons Farm Waste Transfer Station		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 8091	Dec 2013	Trench location		
Report Ref:	Drawn by: AL/JR			



Trench 1



Trench 3

© Archaeology South-East		Cordons Fram Waste Transfer Station	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 8091	Dec 2013	Photographs	
Report Ref:	Drawn by: JLR		

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