

A preliminary archaeological desk-based assessment Willow Grange, Cold Norton Road, Purleigh, Essex:



(site centre: TL 918 017)

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November 2014



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CAT Report 801
November 2014

1 Summary

This is a preliminary desk-based assessment of the archaeological remains in and around a site at 'Willow Grange', Cold Norton Road, Purleigh.

There are no archaeological sites or finds within the site itself.

The nearest archaeological or historical sites are a possible Roman road, a listed building (The Red Lion Public House), a demolished WWII road-block, and a defunct Cold War Monitoring post – these are 50m south, 500m east, 375m north and 800m north-east of the site respectively. None will be affected by this proposed development.

However, the site is within a planned landscape which has been laid out in a 'co-axial' (i.e., gridded) pattern. This is demonstrated by the Latchingdon to Burnham Road, which turns through a succession of right-angled bends as it negotiates this older landscape. The age of this co-axial landscape is unknown, but could be Anglo-Saxon or Roman (or even earlier).

So, does the site have any ancient boundaries? Only the western and eastern site boundaries concern us here, since the others are either arbitrary, or up against modern fences. Neither boundary has ancient growth, but the eastern has an old ditch and bank which may be of some antiquity (i.e., older than the growth now upon it). The proposed development should attempt to preserve the eastern boundary.

2 Introduction

This preliminary desk-based assessment has searched the two primary online sources for archaeological remains in Essex:

- The *Essex Historic Environment Record* (EHER). This, the primary source for a survey of this type, is a computerised list of all recorded find-spots of archaeological material in Essex, whether excavated sites or loose finds.
- The *Heritage Gateway*. This national database gives lists of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), Listed Parks and gardens, Registered Battlefields, Listed Buildings, and other resources.

The aim is to catalogue the archaeological remains on and around the proposed development site, and to discuss them in their local context.

For the purposes of this preliminary assessment, a 'search area' has been defined, equating to the area shown on Figure 1.

A walkover survey was conducted to examine the hedges for signs of antiquity.

3 Results

3.1 Designations

There are no listed battlefields, registered parks or gardens, or Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Search Area. There is one listed building (**1** below)

3.2 Archaeological sites and listed buildings close to proposed development site (PDS)

This is a list of all archaeological sites and finds, and other historical sites within the Search Area (i.e., Fig 1). Unusually for Essex, there are no recorded archaeological excavations or surveys, or archaeological cropmark sites in the Search Area.

1 The Red Lion Public House¹

National Grid Reference: TL 88181 00423

Essex Historic Environment Record: 38523

English Heritage *Listed Buildings Online* website reference: 1337443

Distance from site: 500m east

Grade II C18 timber framed public house. Plastered and partly clad with painted brick, roofed with handmade red clay tiles. Double-range plan facing N, with one internal stack in each range, external stack at left end, and C20 external stack to rear. C20 single-storey extension to left, behind stack. C20 flat-roofed single-storey extension to rear. 2 storeys. Roof fully hipped, valley open at right end only.

2 East-west road through Latchingdon - possible Roman Road

NGR: TL 872004

EHER: 7838

Distance from site: 50m south

Possible Roman road. On Ordnance Survey card as part of Miller Christy's Othona-London and Latchingdon-Dengie routes (TL 851003-887000) but cancelled. No Roman roads certainly identified in the area despite the presence of a fort at Bradwell and many other sites. In Dengie hundred, the present roads make many right-angled bends and it has been suggested that they result from centuriation, but in fact they were made by C18 road builders.

Sources: Hull 1963.

With respect, EHER has slightly missed the point here. The date of construction of the road is not the point, it is the age of the rectilinear grid system within which the road is located. This coaxial grid is ancient, and positively not created by 18th century road builders.

3 Road Barrier (destroyed), Deadaway Bridge, Latchingdon

EHER: 10648

NGR: TL 875008

Distance from site: 375m north

Contemporary records state, "Road Barrier. Road No. B.1010, Deadaway Bridge. Map ref. 321193" (Mil.Ed.). There is no sign of this barrier on 1960 AP, although soil infill marks clearly indicate that the stream had been widened as an anti-tank ditch and filled again.

¹ red numbers apply to sites shown on Figure 1.

4 Cold War Nuclear Monitoring Post, Latchingdon

NGR: TL 46685

EHHER: 882009

Distance from site: 800m north-east

Underground monitoring post in the garden of Butterfields Lodge, 400 yards north of Latchingdon Road along track to Butterfields.

Sources: Catford 1998, Catford 1999, Dobinson 2000

4 Historic hedges

Given the site's position within a co-axial and possibly ancient landscape, a site walkover focussed on the boundaries. The intention here is not to catalogue the hedges, but merely to offer a few thoughts based on the walkover. In hedge surveys, one looks for signs of antiquity - high species count, old coppice stools (and signs of coppicing in general), ancient ditches and banks. Of course the growth on a boundary can be younger than the boundary itself (which may have ancient ditches and banks, for instance).

Only parts of the western and eastern PDS boundaries coincide with hedges. The eastern site boundary has an old ditch and bank (external ditch). This may be an old boundary, although the tree and hedge growth upon it is not particularly old.



Plate 1: general site view (west). It is a flat site, rather wet underfoot, with no previously unrecognised earthworks.



Plate 2: view north along eastern site boundary.



Plate 3: view into eastern boundary. There is an old ditch and bank here (external ditch on east side). Although the present tree growth is not ancient, the bank and ditch may be of some antiquity.



Plate 4: planting around Willow Grange is not ancient.

5 Discussion of heritage issues

This is a curious site. Although it is not a great surprise that there are no known archaeological remains in the site itself, the general lack of 'heritage assets' is unusual for Essex.

The only 'heritage assets' are the Roman road (the B1018 Cold Norton / Latchingdon Road) 50m to the south, a listed building (the Red Lion) 500m east, a demolished WWII road block 375m north-east, and a Cold War monitoring post 800m north-east. None of these will be affected by the proposed development.

It can be argued that the most interesting heritage aspect is that the site is within an ancient landscape whose origins may lie in the Anglo-Saxon or Roman periods, or even earlier. Paul Drury and Warwick Rodwell prefer a Roman date for this landscape, as shown in Plate 5 below, which is an extract from their 1980 article. The Roman roads follow the orientation of this planned landscape, as does the B1010. East of the site, the modern roads zig-zag their way through a series of right-angled bends in Mayland and Althorne as they negotiate this ancient landscape.



Plate 5: Willow Grange site (red) shown in the context of the coaxial fields, as plotted by Drury and Rodwell (1980). Drury & Rodwell show this landscape as Roman.

In summary, there are no recorded archaeological remains on this site. All that can be said is that its eastern boundary may be ancient.

6 References

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- Hull, MR 1963 *Victoria County History (VCH)*, volume 3 Roman Essex

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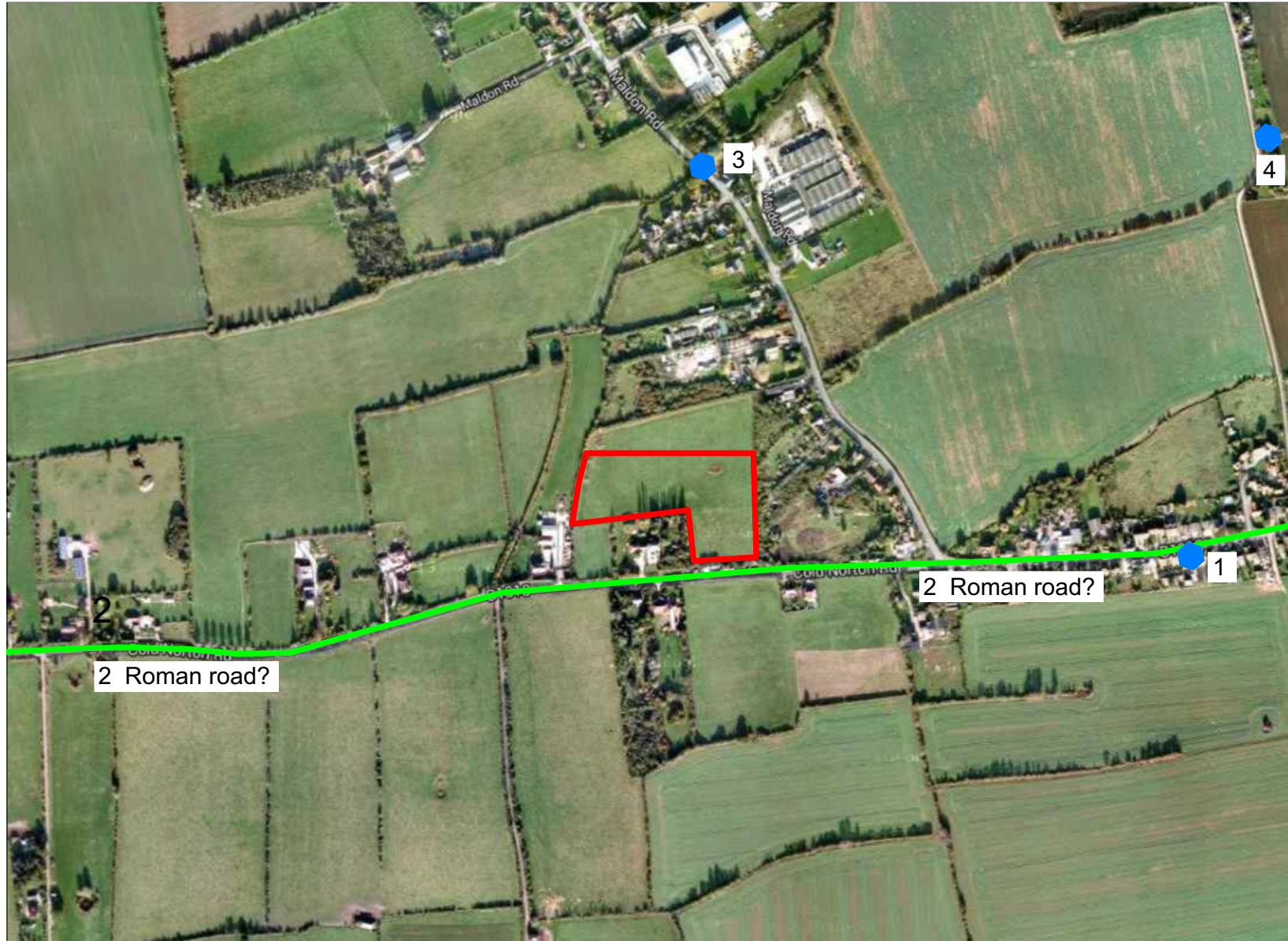
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Fig 1 Archaeological and heritage assets around Willow Grange site (red outline)
1 - Red Lion Pub, 2 - Roman road?, 3 - WWII road block, 4 - Cold War Monitoring post