

# A preliminary archaeological desk-based assessment Admirals Farm, Great Bentley, Essex:



(site centre: TM 114 222)

**Commissioned by Mr Brian Morgan (ADP) on behalf of Mr George Wright**

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## 1 Summary

*This is a preliminary desk-based assessment of the heritage assets and archaeological remains in and around a 6.6 ha proposed development site (PDS) at Admirals Farm, Great Bentley, Essex (TM 114 222).*

*There are no archaeological sites or finds within the PDS itself.*

*There are seventeen archaeological and historical sites within a 500m Search Area. None will be affected by this development. The most important is the parish church of St Mary (550m south), and most of the others are Listed Buildings clustered around Bentley Green (300-500m south).*

*An evaluation in 2014 revealed ditches which are best interpreted as fragments of a prehistoric landscape (ie, fields and a droveway) at Sturrick Farm, 200m to the west. The nearest significant sites to the PDS are three groups of cropmarks. It is quite likely that some of these are recently-removed field boundaries, but others (like those excavated at Sturricks) are probably the remains of prehistoric fields and tracks (linear marks) and burial sites (circular marks).*

*The Historic Environment Characterisation report points out that Great Bentley area lies within an important area of archaeological cropmarks, the most significant of which are prehistoric, and that (unless disturbed by mineral extraction) archaeological survival is likely to be good.*

*In summary, it can be said that whereas there are no known archaeological sites within the PDS, there is a reasonable possibility that archaeological remains, perhaps of prehistoric date, await discovery here.*

## 2 Aim and content

The aim of this preliminary desk-based assessment is to catalogue the archaeological remains on and around the proposed development site, and to discuss them in their local context. The two primary sources are:

- The *Essex Historic Environment Record* (EHER) is the primary source for a survey of this type, listing 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.

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

After a summary of the parts of the *Historic Environment Characterisation Project* report relevant to Great Bentley ([Section 3](#) below), the archaeological sites and heritage assets are listed ([Section 4](#)), and discussed ([Section 5](#)).

### 3 Historic Environment Characterisation

The historic landscape character of the Great Bentley area has been described in the *Tendring Historic Environment Characterisation Project* (Tendring/ECC 2008). There are a number of distinct ways in which the Historic Environment is now described. Below are the most relevant of those descriptions – the **Historic Landscape Character** description (Tendring/ECC pages 244-5), and the **Archaeological Character Area** description (*ibid*, 287).

#### **Historic Landscape Character Area 7. Tendring plateau**

- A large plateau-like area, drained by the Holland Brook to the south and by smaller streams to the north and west. The geology is largely London Clay in the central and eastern parts, overlain by Head in the western part. There are bands of Kesgrave sands and gravels, marking the former line of the River Thames running diagonally across the area, and small patches of alluvium close to the coast and in the valley of Ramsey Creek.
- The fieldscape comprises a mixture of later enclosure by agreement and pre-18th century irregular fields (these are probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older), with the later enclosure in the majority. It appears that at least some of the enclosure comprised the sub-division into strip fields of early irregular shaped fields. Post-1950s boundary loss can be assessed as moderate, rising to high on a number of farms and severe on one or two farms.
- The area is characterised by long, thin, roadside greens and small triangular greens at road junctions, with one larger area of former heathland at Bradfield Heath. There are areas of enclosed meadow pasture in the stream valleys. The areas of ancient woodland are largely in the southern half of the area, although there is an important grouping overlooking the Stour estuary at Wrabness. There are also areas of orchards, mainly in the northern half of the area.
- The settlement is dispersed in character, comprising church/hall complexes, manors, farms, cottages and small hamlets, the latter often strung out along the roadside greens. Modern development has largely taken the form of infilling of this pattern, resulting in ribbon development along the roads.
- A network of narrow lanes connects the scattered farmsteads and villages. The Manningtree to Harwich railway line runs along the northern edge of the area and the area is dissected by the modern A120 and A123.
- Small areas of ancient woodland survive with a largely neglected coppice with standards structure.
- Areas of former and surviving parkland can be found along the northern edge of the area e.g. Mistley Park and Furze Hill.

## **Archaeological Character Area 10: Brightlingsea and Great Bentley** (Tendring/ ECC 2008, p 287)

- Overlying London Clay bedrock are found extensive drift deposits of Brickearth over Kesgrave sands and gravels/Lowestoft formation. Alluvial deposits are widespread over the areas adjacent to the River Colne and Brightlingsea Creek. From a maximum height of around 28metres OD the landscape drops away to the south and the Colne Estuary and Brightlingsea Creek. The area is drained southwards by the Bentley Brook.
- **The area is notable for its widespread and important cropmark landscape encompassing the entire area. Although no doubt representing a wide variety of periods, of particular significance are those that have been shown by excavation to relate prehistoric activity, especially during the Bronze Age.** Further evidence of prehistoric activity may be expected in the coastal and intertidal zones.
- **Neolithic features and a possible enclosure have been identified near Great Bentley.**
- Finds of Roman material at Brightlingsea and the identification of a Roman villa suggest the importance of the area in contemporary agricultural production and its position at the mouth of the Colne Estuary may have been of importance.
- Medieval settlement existed at Great Bentley and Brightlingsea with the latter serving as a port. A medieval monastic establishment existed at Frating. St Osyth was home to an important monastic establishment and a significant local port and town in the medieval period.
- The coast has long been home to industry including salt production, fishing, and oyster production and evidence of these activities is widespread.
- **Where undisturbed (by mineral extraction for instance) archaeological survival is likely to be good** and the coast and intertidal zone have the further potential for a wide range of well preserved archaeological and environmental evidence

## 4 Heritage Assets in the Search Area

There are no Heritage Assets within the 6.6 hectare Proposed Development Site.

This is a list of all archaeological sites and finds, and other historical sites within the Search Area (500m around the site: shown on Fig 1). Unusually for Essex, there are no records of loose finds (pottery, flints, metalwork, etc).

### 4.1 Designations

There are no Listed battlefields, Registered Parks or Gardens, or Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Search Area. There are eleven listed buildings, grouped here into nine sites (Figure 1: sites 1-9 below)

#### 1 Church of St Mary

EHER reference: 1306652  
Distance from PDS: 550m SSW  
NGR: TM1090921644  
Listed Buildings Online reference: 1306652

Grade I Parish Church. Chancel and nave circa 1130-40. West tower C14. North Porch C14/C15 heavily restored C19/C20. C19 and C20 restorations.

Walls of regularly coursed and herringboned puddingstone, small stones, septaria. Quoins and doorways of Barnack stone, puddingstone dressings to original windows. West Tower is of the same materials with bricks, volcanic and igneous stone. Red plain tiled roofs. The church is a complete example of C12 building.

Chancel, east window C19. North wall central C13 lancet and a western early C12 round headed window of puddingstone. South wall, eastern small C15 cinquefoiled light. Central and western C19 restored trefoiled lancets, traces of a C12 window above western window. North wall C15 eastern window, 3 cinquefoil lights with vertical tracery, 2 centred head, label with headstops. C12 north doorway, plain jambs round headed arch. Imposts with projecting volutes to inner faces. South Wall, eastern C15 window of 3 cinquefoil lights, vertical tracery, 4 centred head. Central and western C12 round headed windows. Between these windows is the C12 South doorway. C12 door, simple vertically boarded.

#### 2 Great Bentley Hall

EHER: 34260  
Distance from PDS: 550m SSW  
TM 10954 21773  
LBO: 1337210

Grade II C17 and C18 timber framed brick house. C17 rear range, C18 front with later alterations. Red brick faced, plastered return and rear wing. Red plain tiled roof. Left and right brick chimney stacks. 2 storeys and attics.

### **3 Barn to rear and 60 metres west of Great Bentley Hall**

LBO: 1169206  
Distance from PDS: 550m SSW  
TM10900 21715

Grade II Barn. C18. Large, timber framed and weatherboarded. Modern asbestos roof. 2 gabled midstreys facing east. Probably 8 bays, the southern bays with first floor granary. Through wall bracing, arched braces, hanging knees to tie beams.

### **4 The Old Rectory**

EHER: 34262  
LBO: 1111406  
Distance from PDS: 400m SSW  
TM 109 7221683

Grade II C18 or earlier timber framed house (formerly The Vicarage). Red brick faced, plastered returns and rear.

### **5 Palfryman's Cottage and Pond House**

#### Palfryman's Cottage

LBO: 1169216  
Distance from PDS: 550m SSW  
TM 11003 21654

Grade II Cottage. C17 or earlier with C18 and later alterations and additions. Timber framed. C18 red brick faced, plastered returns. Off centre left red brick chimney stack. One storey and attics. 3 gabled dormers. Included for group value.

#### Pond House

LBO: 1337211  
TM 11018 21648  
Distance from PDS: 550m SSW

Grade II House, now 3 dwellings. C17 or earlier with later alterations and additions. Timber framed, painted brick faced, parapet verges. Red plain tiled roof. 4 red brick chimney stacks. 2 storeys. A long building standing back from a small pond.

### **6 Jasmine Cottage and Jasmin Place**

#### Jasmin Cottage

LBO: 1306629  
TM 11165 21637  
Distance from PDS: 550m SSW

Grade II small cottage. Probably C18 with later alterations. Timber framed and plastered. Red plain tiled roof. End red brick chimney stack. One storey and attics. The cottage with gable to road is set forward left of Jasmine Place.

#### Jasmine Place

TM 11144 21632

LBO: 1111407  
Distance from PDS: 550 SSW

Grade II Cottage. C17/C18 or earlier with later alterations and additions. Timber framed and plastered. Red tiled roofs. 4 ranges, right crosswing, 1 storey and attics. Chimney stack, each range. C20 glazed porch, vertically boarded door to left range.

#### **7 Goodwyns and Monsey**

LBO: 1111408  
Distance from PDS: 450 SW  
TM 11250 21678

Grade II House and attached cottage. C16 or earlier with later additions and alterations. Timber framed, part plastered, part weatherboarded, painted brick to left. Red plain tiled roofs. Left and right external red brick chimney stacks. "Monsey" is the right crosswing, C20 extension with entrance door and garage door to right.

#### **8 Peacehaven and Pond Cottages**

EHER: 34268  
Distance from PDS: 325m SSW  
TM 11083 21873  
LBO: 1306636

Two Grade II C18 timber framed-cottages, with later alterations. Thatched roof of 2 levels. Left and right external red brick chimney stacks. One storey and attics.

#### **9 Sturrick Farmhouse**

LBO: 1169253  
Distance from PDS: 350m W  
TM 10751 22253

Grade II house, C17 or earlier rear range, c.1700 front range with later alterations. Timber framed, C18 red brick returns and rear, scratch date 1708. C19 red brick facade. Red plain tiled roof. Right, left and rear chimney stacks. 2 storeys and attics.

### **4.2 Archaeological excavation sites in search area**

#### **10 Sturrick Farm, Sturricks Lane, Gt Bentley**

EHER: not yet assigned.  
Distance from PDS: 200m W  
TM 10856 22213 (c)

Prior to redevelopment of this 2 ha site, an evaluation in 2014 on behalf of Mersea Homes revealed two parallel field ditches which may be part of a droveway. A number of other ditches at right angles may be interpreted as fragments of adjacent field boundaries. Together, these may be part of a field system.

Finds were very scarce. There were only two sherds (plus a few sherd flakes) in the field ditches, both Bronze Age. There were four burnt flints in the ditches, generally supportive of the prehistoric date proposed for this field system. There



was one stratified Neolithic/Bronze Age flint (possibly residual), and three unstratified Bronze Age flints. There were no later finds.

The droveway is a new addition to the cropmark complex more strongly represented to the north and west of Sturrick Farm. Excavation has shown that not all these cropmarks are prehistoric, but there are sufficient prehistoric burial sites and a potential living site (approximately 700m NW of Sturrick Farm) to give a prehistoric context to the Sturrick Farm features.

**Ref:** CAT Report 794

### 4.3 Archaeological cropmark sites in search area <sup>1</sup>

Cropmarks are the major group of archaeological sites which have a direct bearing on the potential for the presence and/or survival of archaeological sites within the PDS.

#### 11 Cropmarks North of Great Bentley

EHER reference number: 3176

Distance from PDS: 130m N

NGR: TM 114 224

Cropmark of a ring ditch S of Parsonage Farm. Also linear features, some possibly geological.

#### 12 Cropmarks South of Admiral's Farm

EHER reference number: 46882

Distance from PDS: 250m north-east

NGR: TM 118 223

Cropmarks of various linear features including a possible trackway and old field boundaries some shown on the 1st edition OS.

#### 13 Cropmarks North East of Great Bentley

EHER: 3661

Distance from PDS: 150m east

NGR: TM 118 220

Cropmarks: ditches and one small ring ditch, among drainage ditches and recently removed field boundaries. No ring-ditch was mapped by the NMP.

### 4.4 Other Heritage Assets

#### 14 Windmill site

EHER: 47449

Distance from PDS: 200m south

NGR: TM 112 219

<sup>1</sup> where no separate reference is given, the source is EHER air photos originally used to plot cropmarks in the 1980s, and recently replotted by NMP (Ingle, Strachan, *et al*).



Demolished post mill, north of The Old Mill House on Bentley Green.

Ref: Farries 1981-1988

## 15 Great Bentley Pumping Station

EHER: 15580

Distance from PDS: 100m N

NGR: TM 114 222

Developed by Clacton-on-Sea Company in 1903 to meet the increasingly popular resort. Acquired by Tendring Hundred Waterworks Co in 1962. In two ranges, each four bays long. Red brick building with a blue brick plinth. Date stone on the north façade inscribed S.F. 1903. Internally: diesel engine behind west door - plaque on the wall "The Meagre Engine". Also a large cast iron tank at ground level.

Ref: Crosby 1999

## 5 Discussion of heritage issues (Figure 1)

There are no archaeological sites or other heritage assets within the 6.6 ha proposed development site.

There are a number of designated sites within a 500m Search Area, but none of these will be affected by the proposed development. The most important is the Grade 1, 12th-century parish church of St Mary (Map site 1), 550m WSW. Other listed buildings (Grade 2, and clustered around Bentley Green) are Great Bentley Hall (2) with a barn to its rear (3), The Old Rectory (4), groups of listed structures opposite the pond (5), off Station Road (6, 7), and north of Weeley Road (8). Away from the Green are Sturrick Farm (9) 350m W, and the Pumping Station (14), 50m N.

There are perhaps two factors of importance when assessing the archaeological potential of the PDS. The first is that the Tendring Plateau is rich in archaeological cropmarks. There is a major group of cropmarks north and west of Sturrick Farm, and the three cropmarks in this Search Area (11-13) form part of the same landscape of prehistoric fields, tracks and burial sites. The HEC report has this text (ECC/Tendring 2008):

*'The area is notable for its widespread and important cropmark landscape. Although ...representing a wide variety of periods, of particular significance are [cropmarks] shown by excavation to relate prehistoric activity, especially during the Bronze Age.*

*'Neolithic features and a possible enclosure have been identified near Great Bentley.*

*'Where undisturbed (by mineral extraction for instance) archaeological survival is likely to be good'.*

The second is that the Sturrick Farm evaluation (10), 200m west of the PDS uncovered fragments of this prehistoric landscape, *even though no cropmarks were known on that site.*

In summary, the PDS will not affect any of the listed buildings in Great Bentley, but there is the potential for previously unknown archaeological remains to await discovery in the PDS.

## 6 References

CAT Report 794	October 2014	<i>Archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at Sturrick Farm, Sturrick Lane, Great Bentley, Essex. March 2015</i>
ClfA	2014	<i>Standard and Guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment. October 1994, revision of 2014</i>
Crosby, Tony	1999	<i>The Public Water Supply Industry in Essex 1850-1939</i>
ECC/Tendring	2008	<i>Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation Project</i>
Farries, K	1981-1988	<i>Essex Windmills, Millers and Millwrights, Volumes 1 to 5</i>
Ingle, CJ, Strachan, D, Tyler, S and Saunders, H	1993-2012	NMP Cropmark Plot – 1:10,000

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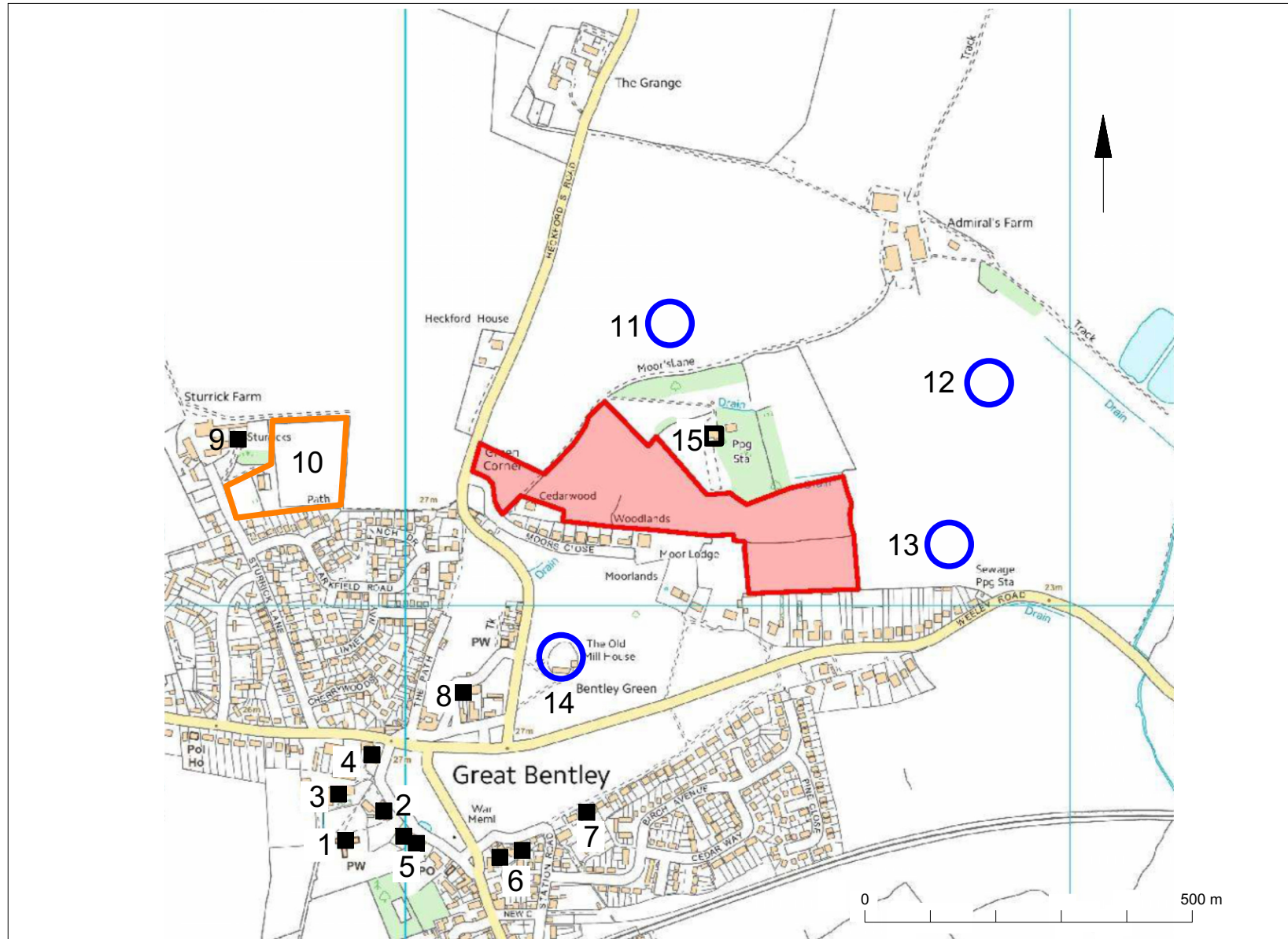
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Figure 1 Heritage Assets around Admirals Farm. 1-9 = listed buildings: 10 - Sturrick Farm 2014 evaluation site: 11-13 archaeological cropmarks: 14 site of windmill (now demolished): 15 - pumping station