



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

ON GEOTECHNICAL TEST PITS

AT

LAND AT WHITTINGHAM WAY,

BISHOP'S STORTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE

TL 485 190

On behalf of

CgMs Consulting and

Hertfordshire County Council

OCTOBER 2007

REPORT FOR CgMs Consulting
Morley House
26 Holborn Viaduct
London
EC1A 2AT

PREPARED BY Gwilym Williams

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ENQUIRES TO *John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ
Tel/Fax 01865 358300*

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services during geotechnical test-pitting on behalf of CgMs and Hertfordshire County Council. Roman pottery and some potential archaeological features were revealed, although it was not possible to ascertain their precise nature. Roman and post-medieval pottery as well as post-medieval ceramic building material were observed in and recovered from the ploughsoil.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located off Whittington Way, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire centred on grid reference TL 485 190. The site is some c.53 hectares in extent and is bounded by Whittington Way to the north, by Obrey Way to the north-west, by St James Way to the south and by London Road (A1184) to the east (Figs. 1 and 2). The solid geology is shown by the Institute of Geological Sciences as Chalk (IGS, 1979). The drift geology, as shown on the 1:50,000 Geological Survey (Sheets 240: Epping and Sheet 222: Dunmow) is largely overlain by drift Boulder Clay. On the east side of the site a north-south Gravel Head deposit occurs, which is cut by a dry valley, filled with a similar Gravel Head deposit. Glacial Sands underlying the Boulder Clay are locally exposed to the north of the dry valley.

1.2 Planning Background

The south-western part of the study site falls within a wider area that is designated as an Area of Archaeological Significance, identified in East Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan Second Review, adopted in 2007. The 'Area of Archaeological Significance' was first designated in the 1990 East Hertfordshire Local Plan due to the discovery of Roman building remains during ploughing in the 1950s in a field now south of St James Way.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the study site or in the immediate vicinity, although the Iron Age Hillfort of *Wallbury*, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM EX16) is situated c.500m to the southeast.

The Local Plan Second Review contains the following policies relating to Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological remains:

BH1 ARCHAEOLOGY & NEW DEVELOPMENT

(I) DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE THE COUNCIL CONSIDERS THAT IT WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE, WHETHER SCHEDULED OR UNSCHEDULED, AND THEIR SETTING.

(II) PERMISSION OR CONSENT MAY BE REFUSED WHERE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS DO NOT SATISFACTORILY PROTECT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF MORE LOCAL IMPORTANCE, AND THEIR SETTING.

(III) WHERE APPROPRIATE, UNDER SECTION 106 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (OR AS SUBSEQUENTLY REVISED), THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

WILL SEEK TO SECURE THE ENHANCEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS AND THEIR SETTING.

BH2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

WHERE APPLICATIONS ARE SUBMITTED ON SITES WHICH MAY HAVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST, THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL EXPECT TO BE PROVIDED, BY THE APPLICANT, THE RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND/OR ASSESSMENT PRIOR TO THE DETERMINATION OF AN APPLICATION. THE EVALUATION AND/OR ASSESSMENT SHOULD SEEK TO DEFINE:

A) THE NATURE AND CONDITION OF ANY ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS WITHIN THE APPLICATION SITE; AND

B) THE LIKELY IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON SUCH FEATURES; ON THE BASIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION AND/OR THE ASSESSMENT, THE COUNCIL WILL CONSIDER THE MOST APPROPRIATE MEANS OF MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE PRESERVATION IN SITU OR, WHERE THIS IS NOT MERITED, THE MEASURES NEEDED TO SECURE THE RECORDING OF ANY REMAINS PRIOR TO DEVELOPMENT.

BH3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND AGREEMENTS

WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED ON SITES CONTAINING ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS, ANY PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS AND/OR FORMAL AGREEMENTS REQUIRING APPROPRIATE EXCAVATION AND RECORDING IN ADVANCE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE RESULTS.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

No find spots for archaeological remains earlier than the Late Bronze Age have been found within 500m of the study site. The desk-based assessment, from which this resume was drawn, details the potential for encountering such remains. The aim of this background is to set the site in its immediate context; all references are to be found in the original Desk-Based Assessment.

Late Bronze Age

Late Bronze Age occupation is evidenced locally. An archaeological evaluation undertaken in 1994 on the alignment of St James Way revealed a large enclosure ditch c. 2.4m wide, a cobbled surface, and features containing animal bone and Late Bronze Age pottery (HER 9277: TL 4758 1910) c.150m west of the study site. A second trench, Trench J, revealed further prehistoric features suggesting that evidence of settlement/activity may extend towards the western boundary of the study site (HER 9277).

Six LBA rubbish pits were also recorded during archaeological investigations for the Thornbera Road Extension indicating a second LBA settlement site nearby (north of the study site) (HER 1090: TL 486 197). In addition, the HER records 3 finds of Late Bronze Age date including a looped and socketed axe (HER 2124: TL 476 187), a bronze socketed gouge on possible site of a 'ploughed out' round barrow (HER 2125: TL 4766 1846) and a bronze axe found in 1961 (HER 2126: TL 476 190).

Iron Age

The Iron Age is characterised in the region by settlement stability and the large-scale organisation of the landscape, developments that began in the Late Bronze Age. Settlement evidence is plentiful and diverse, ranging from individual farmsteads occupied by a single household, to hillforts holding much larger communities. 'Wallbury' hillfort, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM EX16), some 500m south-east of the study site may have played a part in the local settlement hierarchy.

Excavations along St James Way identified Iron Age settlement evidence, revealing two ring-gullies, the remains of round houses, within a complex of enclosure ditches. Early and Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from the features (HER 9278: TL 4836 1876). In 1912, a quantity of Early Iron Age pottery (HER 2785: TL 490 196) was recovered during gravel extraction on Thorley Hill, north of the study site, suggesting a second occupation site. To the west of the development area a silver quarter stater of Cunoblin was found by a metal detectorist (HER 6540: TL 481 193).

Roman

In 1954, deep ploughing in a field beyond St James Way to the south of the study site revealed the remains of rectangular timber buildings with mortar floors. Artefacts associated with the features included pottery, coins, roof tile as well as worked and waste flint (HER 1526: TL 488 180). A sketch of the site places the site roughly 60m south of the proposed development site.

More recent archaeological investigations on the site of a proposed agricultural roadway, within the study site (No HER: TL 480 194) identified evidence of a Roman rural settlement surrounded by a complex of enclosures and field boundaries (Essex CC Field Archaeology Unit 2003).

Evidence of Roman occupation was also identified during a rescue excavation at Thorley Park (HER 4582: TL 4779 1962) and a Roman cremation was recorded during archaeological investigations for the Thornbera Road Extension (HER 1090: TL 486 197) c.500m north-east of the site. Within 500m of the study site a number of metal objects have been found by metal detectorists including a bronze fibula broach (HER 6537: TL 481 193) as well as a quantity of bronze and silver coins (HER 6539: TL 481 195).

Saxon

No Saxon remains are recorded in the vicinity of the development area. The proposed site lies over 2.5km south of the Saxon settlement at Bishop's Stortford and a short distance north-east of the Saxon manorial centre at Thorley.

Early Medieval-Medieval

Prior to the Conquest, William, Bishop of London, had bought the Manor of *Torlei* (Thorley) from the Saxon, Godith, to add to his lands at Stortford and Hadham. Then, between his death in 1075 and the Domesday Survey of 1086, both the Manor of Sawbridgeworth and Thorley were granted by the King to Geoffrey de Mandeville as a reward for his services at Hastings. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records *Torlei* manor having 4 hides (480 acres) with eight ploughed lands for arable farming, approximately 27 tenants, a knight, a priest and a mill.

Historical sources suggest that during tenancy of Geoffrey de Mandeville the first manor house was built on the site of present day Thorley Hall. The existing Thorley Hall (a Grade II Listed Building) is located 250m south-west of the study site, has late 13th and early 14th century origins (HER 4237: TL 4770 1884; LB II *).

During the 14th and 15th centuries the manor changed hands frequently and during this period Richard Whytyndone (1358–1423), better known as Dick Whittington, four times Mayor of London held the Manor. Whittington Way, immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of the site, reflects this association.

In 1420 the manor was sold to the Leventhorpes of Shingle Hall, Sawbridgeworth and in 1447 Henry VI granted John Leventhorpe permission to create a hunting park, for which he acquired a further 520 acres in the parishes of Sawbridgeworth and Thorley to accommodate it.

Cartographic research suggests that during the Medieval period land within the proposed development area was in agricultural use and held by Thorley Hall, the seat of Thorley Manor. However, documentary evidence suggests the possibility that during the 15th century at least part of the study site fell within a hunting park.

4.10 Post-Medieval-Modern

Within the proposed development area, a single find of a post-medieval boot buckle was made by a metal detectorist (HER 6544: TL 481 195).

The earliest map showing the site at a useful scale is a map of 1672-3 showing the 'Lands of the Manor of Thorley Hall', showing a building to the south of Church Lane, which forms the western boundary of the study site. The site of a Tudor house was identified after ploughing revealed quantities of broken tiles, pottery and oyster shells in this area (HER 2778: TL 4800 1911). The remainder of the site is shown comprising 10 fields variously in arable and pasture use. The building may also be that seen on Bryants' map of 1820.

The 1825 Plan of Thorley Estate, Thorley Hall and Thorley Wash shows the majority of the site in arable and pastoral land use. By this date the earlier building off Church Lane had been demolished. The Tithe Map of 1840 shows a similar pattern of buildings off Church Lane to that on the 1820 Bryant's Map. The field pattern evident in the 1840's progressively had sections of hedgerow removed over the period to 1980.

Cartographic evidence suggests that the Tudor house off Church Lane revealed during ploughing in the late 1980s (HER 2788: TL 4800 1911) had been demolished between 1951 and 1983.

In addition to the Medieval Thorley Hall, a Grade II* Listed building, there are four other Listed buildings and structures of Post-Medieval date associated with the Thorley Hall Estate. These include a nine bay timber framed barn (HER 11993: TL 4766 1891; LB II*) and a five bay timber framed barn (HER 11994: TL 4765 1883; LB II), 17th/18th century garden walls and garden shed (HER 12206: TL 4770 1887; LB II) and an 18th/19th century cast iron pump (HER 12207: TL 4770 1884; LB II).

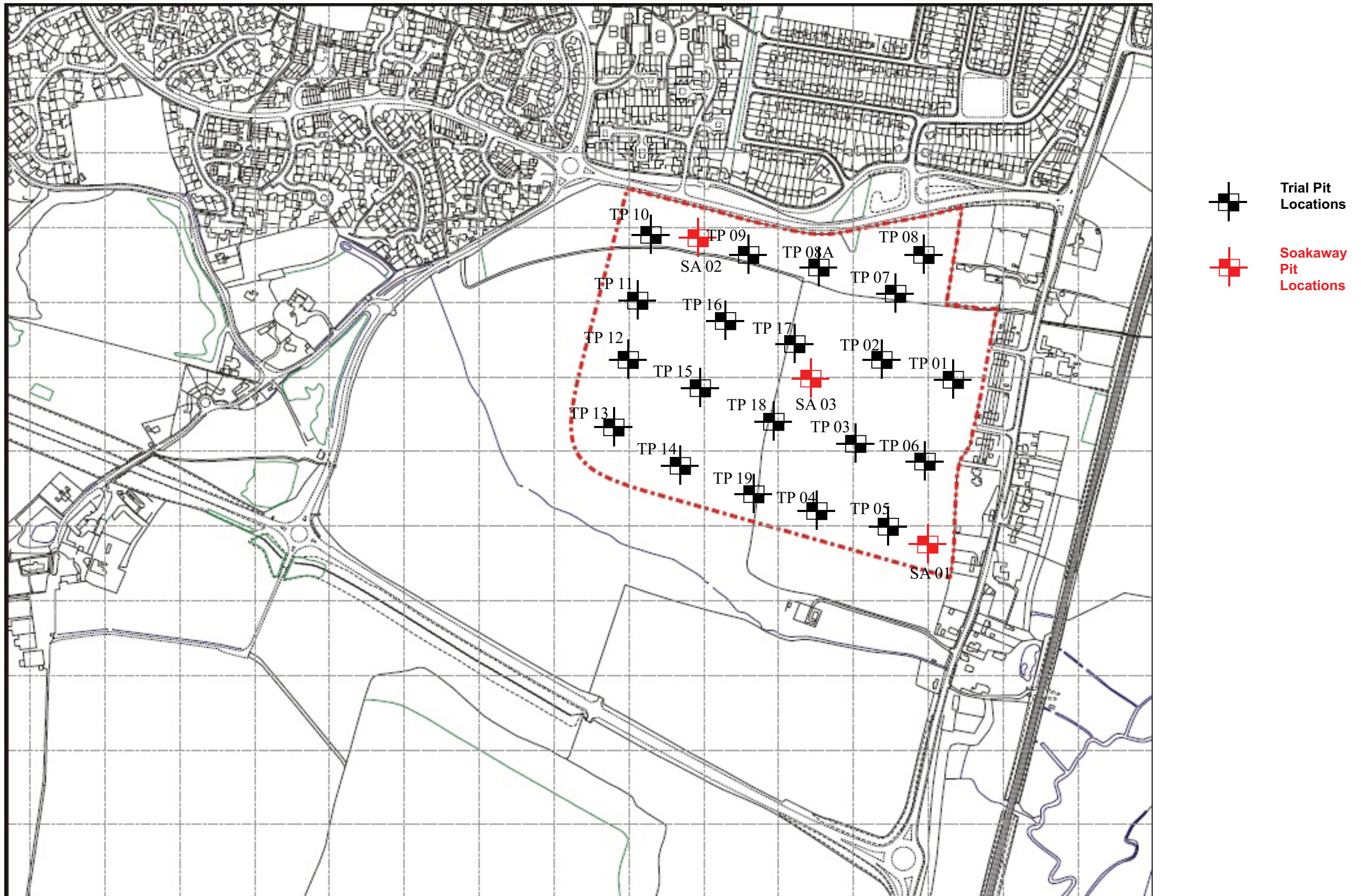


Figure 1. Location of site and approximate location of geotechnical test-pits

This group of Listed buildings is separated from the study site by St James Way and a related overbridge and landscaping.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aim of the work was to identify and record any archaeological remains exposed during the trial-pitting in order to date the known archaeology identified during the geophysical survey.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Rob Bourne of CgMs engaged John Moore Heritage Services to monitor the trial-pitting.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site to monitor all digging that had the potential to disturb or destroy archaeological remains. This comprised the excavation of the trial-pits and their recording during the geotechnical works.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

Twenty trial-pits and three soakaways (SA) were excavated. The soakaways were located from the northwest to southeast corners across the site, and were excavated to measure the speed at which water was absorbed by the surrounding land. They measured 0.28m wide by between 0.8m and 2.1m long by 2m deep. No archaeological features were observed in any of the three soakaways, and finds were limited to a piece of clay tobacco pipe-stem, a fragment of iron, probably a piece of modern broken plough-share, and a single post-medieval or modern potsherd.

The natural geological deposits (SA02/3 and SA03/2) was boulder clay, although clean white sand (SA01/3) was observed in the southeast corner of the site. The interface between the subsoil and the natural was not always clear in the small geotechnical trial pits, and the depths of SA01/2 (1.1m) and SA03/2 (1.7m) reflect this. The subsoil (SA02/2) was observed to be 0.25m. Topsoil was 0.3m thick in all three soakaways.

The trial-pits excavated measured 0.5m wide by between 2m and 3.2m long and between 3m and 3.4m deep. The top of the natural was encountered between 0.35m and 0.75m below current ground-surface. A subsoil was present in the majority of the trenches, although this was occasionally indistinguishable from the natural within the constraints of the geotechnical trial-pits. The subsoil averaged c. 0.27m thick, varying between 0.1m and 0.4m in depth. Trial-pit 08 was comprised entirely of made ground – 08/2 and 08/3. The subsoil was cut by two features [02/2 and 15/4], and two archaeological layers were observed 15/2 and 18/2.

The trial-pit 02 evidenced a large pit or ditch (02/2) at the south end, measuring more than 0.5m east/west, more than 1.6m north/south – it extended beyond the south edge of the pit – and c. 0.5m deep. The dark brown loamy clay silt fill contained charcoal as well as pottery, which was identified as broadly late prehistoric (Paul Booth; pers. comm.). A fragment of possible tegula was recovered from the surface c. 5m southeast of TP02.

Trial-pit 15 revealed another cut feature, as well as a subsoil with reasonable quantities of archaeological finds through it. The subsoil (15/2) was dark yellow clay silt with heavy chalk flecking, and measured c. 0.4m thick. Pottery dating from the 2nd century AD (Paul Booth; pers. comm.) was recovered from the layer as well as iron objects, and oyster shell was observed to be present in the deposit. This layer was cut by a pit or ditch 15/4. This feature was located at the south end of the trial pit and measured more than 0.5m east/west, more 1.3m north/south and was c. 0.65m deep. The fill was dark brown loamy silty clay containing charcoal as well as pottery dating from the late 2nd or 3rd centuries AD (Paul Booth; pers. comm.).

The layer 18/2 was present as a band c. 0.1m thick across the trial pit, located between the topsoil and subsoil. It was black silty clay containing a high proportion of soot and some pottery, as well as a small fragment of daub. The deposit appeared to become more stony toward the south end of the trial-pit. The pottery dated from the 2nd century AD (Paul Booth; pers. comm.). The pottery from the topsoil was only identifiable as Roman (Paul Booth; pers. comm.); i.e. AD 42-410.

The subsoil 08A/2, a mid orangey brown clay silt, evidenced pottery, burnt stone, charcoal and bone. The bone was in moderate to good condition. The date range for the pottery extends from the 1st century BC to 2nd century AD. It is possible that this may be an occupation layer, measuring 0.2m thick; the underlying layer 08A/3 was similar, though more stiff, and contained chalky gravel but no archaeological material.

Prehistoric and Roman pottery was recovered from the topsoil of trial-pits 02 and 18, respectively. Sherds of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil of 04, 07, 09, 12 and SA02; medieval or post-medieval roof tile was recovered from 02/us, 02/1, 05/1, 05/2, 07/1, 08/2, 08/3, 08A/1, 10/1, 14/1, 15/1, 17/us, 18/us, 18/1 and SA02/1.

An undated and narrow possible linear feature was observed at the north end of trial-pit 01. The gully, 01/4, cut the natural, 01/3, and was sealed by 01/2, the subsoil; although, the location of the trial-pit in the bottom of the dry valley may well mean that the layer 01/2 is colluvial in origin. The gully 01/4 measured more than 0.5m long, 0.55m wide and 0.15m deep. No finds were recovered.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief on geotechnical trial-pits carried out at Whittington Way, Bishop's Stortford revealed three archaeological features and three archaeological horizons.

Two features (02/2 and 15/4) were pits or ditches – the limited size of the trial-pits means that it is not possible to assert which they might have been, the third an undated gully (01/4). The layers observed comprise two possible reworked subsoils (08A/2 and 15/2) and a thick layer of burnt material (18/2).

Pottery was recovered from the topsoil predominantly in the centre of the site (trial pits 02, 04, 07, 08A, 09, 15 and 18).

The pottery corresponds broadly with the surrounding archaeological data of activity from the Late Bronze Age through the Iron Age into the Roman period, with post-medieval activity resuming following an extended hiatus during the post-Roman and medieval periods. The limited quantities of dating material from only a few sealed contexts means that the results can only be very broadly indicative of the buried archaeology. Nonetheless, a sequence extending from late prehistory through to the middle of the Roman period, at least, can be expected during an evaluation of the archaeology.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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