

Archaeological evaluation and historic building recording at the garage site adjacent to Bentons Farm, Mollands Lane, South Ockenden, Essex, RM15 6DB

May 2016



by Laura Pooley

with contributions by Stephen Benfield and Chris Lister
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**commissioned by Michael Reeves
on behalf of Sunbury Homes**

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CAT Report 953
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Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Results of evaluation	2
5	Finds from evaluation	4
6	Historic building recording	4
7	Discussion	10
8	Acknowledgements	10
9	References	10
10	Abbreviations and glossary	10
11	Contents of archive	11
12	Archive deposition	11

Figures

after p11

List of photographs, maps and figures

Cover: general site shot

Photograph 1	T1, looking W	3
Photograph 2	T2, looking SE	3
Photograph 3	T3, looking S	3
Photograph 4	T4, looking W	3
Photograph 5	T5, looking W	4
Photograph 6	T6, looking W	4
Photograph 7	T7, looking E	4
Photograph 8	Building A, west and south elevations with the inserted garage doorway to the left of the shot – view north-east.	7
Photograph 9	Infilled cart door opening in south elevation with ivy-covered door posts indicating the original height of the building – view north.	7
Photograph 10	Original doorway in side wall of east midstrey – view west.	8
Photograph 11	Infilled original doorway in the west wall of the west midstrey – view south-west.	8
Photograph 12	Original wrought iron cart door retainer mounted on east wall of the west midstrey – view east.	9
Photograph 13	Probable original flagstones of the threshing floor in front of the west midstrey – view north.	9
Map 1	1866 25 inch Ordnance Survey map showing building A with the projecting midstreys on its north side.	6
Map 2	Chapman and André survey of Essex from 1777 with Bentons farm circled. The precursor to building A is shown with a single midstrey on its north side.	6
Fig 1	Site location	
Fig 2	Results	
Fig 3	Feature sections (F4, F5 and F7) and representative sections (T3 and T5-6)	

1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation took place at the garage site adjacent to Bentons Farm, Mollands Lane, South Ockendon in advance of the construction of sixteen new dwellings. Bentons Farm was a previously listed early 17th century house (with later additions) located within a complex of farm buildings. The evaluation revealed one post-medieval pit that may have been contemporary with Bentons Farm. The remaining features were a modern pit and posthole, and large areas of modern disturbance.

A historic building recording was undertaken on the remains of a brick built building associated with Bentons Farm. The evidence suggests it dates from the mid 19th-century and was probably constructed as a threshing barn. It also appears to represent the brick replacement of an earlier timber-framed barn.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report for an archaeological evaluation and historic building recording at the garage site adjacent to Bentons Farm, Mollands Lane, South Ockendon, Essex which was carried out on 4th May 2016. The work was commissioned by Michael Reeve, on behalf of Sunbury Homes, in advance of the construction of sixteen new dwellings and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Richard Havis advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological trial trenching and excavation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Richard Havis (ECCPS 2015), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2016).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

The EHER shows the proposed development lies adjacent to the previously listed building of Bentons Farm (EHER 35291). The listing description states:

Early C17 house, timber-framed and plastered, with red plain tile hipped roof. Two storeys. Four window range, double hung vertical sliding sashes with glazing bars. C18 flat canopy over door, on carved brackets. C18 panelled door. Remains of crosswing at north end, is probably remnant of earlier house. C17 red brick chimney stacks, rebuilt C19 at tops.

This building, with its associated farm structures to the south and east of the farmhouse formed a complex of structures on the first edition Ordnance survey maps of 1887. The main farm buildings are also visible on the Chapman and Andre maps of 1777. Considering that many of the dispersed farms within this area have their origins in the medieval period there is a high potential that the farmhouse stands on or in the immediate vicinity of an earlier medieval structure.

Archaeological trial trenching (EHER 48714) in the garden of Benton farmhouse, immediately to the west of this development site identified surviving post-medieval features and residual medieval sherds (Knight, 2015).

Immediately to the south of the development area the EHER records the presence of partial enclosures recorded from aerial photographs. No further information is available on these enclosures within the record but similar enclosures in Thurrock have dated to the Late Bronze Age through the Iron Age.

A full archaeological and historic background is given in an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (CgMs Consulting, 2016).

4 Results of evaluation (Figs 1-3)

Seven trial-trenches were located across the development site. Each trench was dug by a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision.

Trenches 1-5 and Trench 7 were excavated through modern concrete (L1, 100mm thick) and make-up (L2, c 200mm thick) which sealed natural sands and gravels (L5).

Trench 6 was excavated through modern topsoil (L3, c 300mm thick) and a layer of subsoil (L4, c 550mm thick) which sealed natural sands and gravels (L5).

Natural was encountered across the site at a depth of between 300-800mm below current ground level.

Trench 1 (T1): 5m long by 1.8m wide

A small post-medieval pit (F5) contained an iron nail and occasional brick flecks. A patch of modern disturbance (F2) was not excavated.

Trench 2 (T2): 12m long by 1.8m wide

A patch of modern disturbance (F3) was not excavated.



Photograph 1 T1, looking W



Photograph 2 T2, looking SE

Trench 3 (T3): 25m long by 1.8m wide

Two patches of modern disturbance (F1) were not excavated. A modern land drain was also identified.

Trench 4 (T4): 10m long by 1.8m wide

An undated posthole (F6, probably modern) was recorded along with a patch of modern disturbance (F6) which was not excavated. Two land drains were also identified.



Photograph 3 T3, looking S



Photograph 4 T4, looking W

Trench 5 (T5): 16m long by 1.8m wide

A modern linear feature and a patch of modern disturbance were not excavated.

Trench 6 (T6): 10m long by 1.8m wide

A small pit (F4) contained modern brick and metal waste (not retained).



Photograph 5 T5, looking W



Photograph 6 T6, looking W

Trench 7 (T7): 15m by 1.8m
No features were identified.



Photograph 7 T7, looking E

5 Finds from evaluation

A single iron nail was recovered from post-medieval pit F5 in T1. It is complete measuring 63mm long (12g).

6 Historic building recording *by Chris Lister*

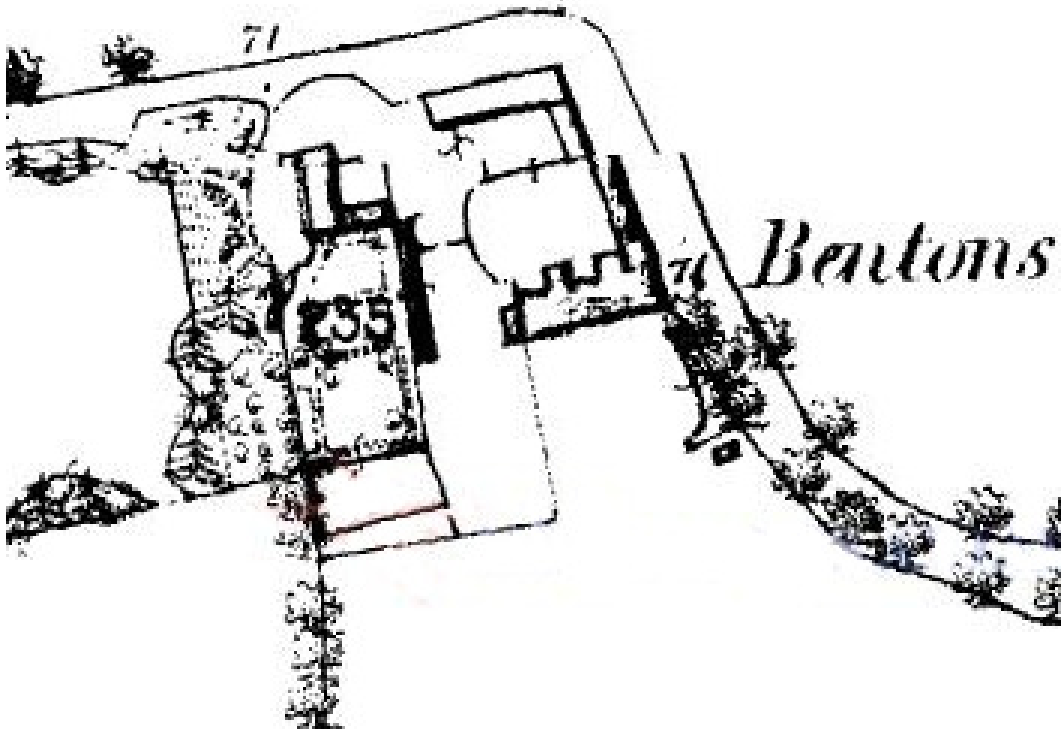
The majority of the structures on the development site are single-storey, purpose-built brick garages dating to the late 1960s or early 1970s. However there is one building that dates to the 19th century (labelled A on Fig 1). This is a single-storey structure aligned roughly east to west, in a very poor state of repair without a roof and heavily overgrown

with vegetation. It is constructed from a variety of bricks, ranging from soft reds to pitted orange/yellow stocks which are either hand-made or more likely wasters from a local brick yard, deemed too low a quality to be sold for house bricks, laid in a rough English bond in lime mortar. In plan form the building is rectangular with two projecting structures on its north side. The layout is identical to that depicted on the 1866 25 inch Ordnance Survey and must be the same building (Map 1). There is a possibility that the structure is even earlier than this suggests, as the Chapman and André survey of Essex from 1777 (Map 2) shows a similar-sized structure in the same location, although it appears to have only a single projection to its north side. It may be that the brick structure shown on the Ordnance Survey mapping was a replacement for an early building on the farm, probably a timber-framed barn.

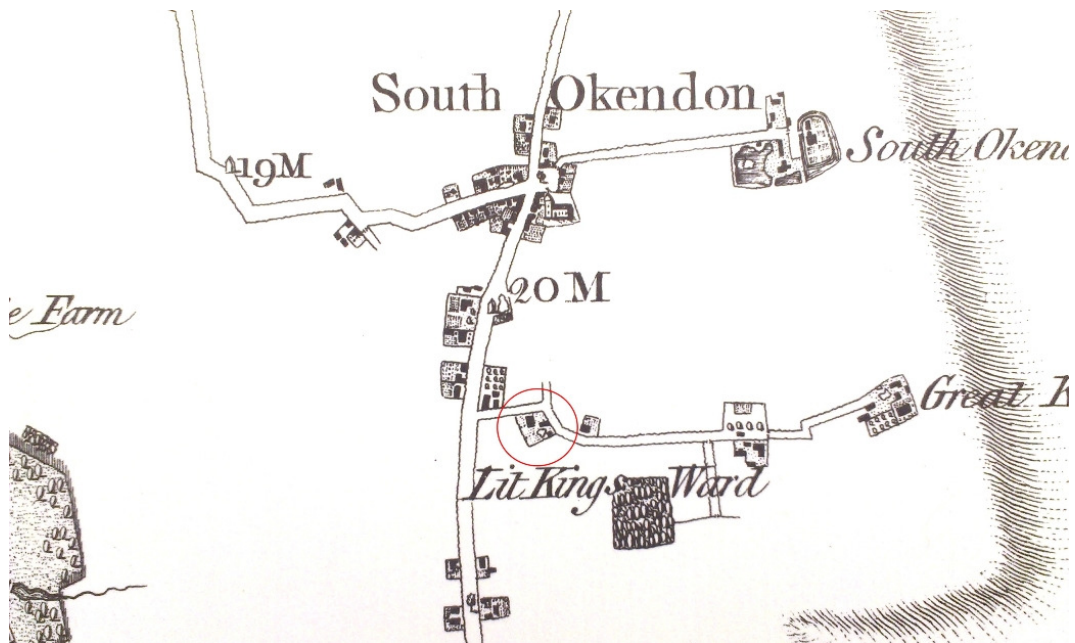
The remains of building A strongly indicate that it was constructed as a threshing barn, with two midstreys on the north side with cart door openings opposite these in the south wall (Photograph 8). Although the brickwork of the walls only stands to single-storey height a pair of surviving door posts in the east cart door opening shows that the structure was originally two storeys in height (Photograph 9). The full height of the building was probably reduced when the other farm yard buildings were demolished in the 1960s by the present owner's father, although it is claimed that the site was cleared completely at this time (Michael Reeves, *pers comm*). Although the upper part of the building has completely gone, enough of the fabric remains to support the theory that it was constructed as a threshing barn. The midstrey cart door openings have each been infilled with later blocking walls but there are original side doors in the outer walls of each midstrey (Photographs 10, 11) although the doorway in the west midstrey has also been infilled. An original large wrought iron cart door retainer survives attached to the wall in the west midstrey (Photograph 12). The interior of the building is floored with concrete, probably a later coating, but there are large square flagstones in line with the west midstrey that are likely to be the remains of the original threshing floor (Photograph 13).

As well as being reduced in height the building has been subdivided by the insertion of a blockwork wall at the west end. This area has been roofed over and a garage door-shaped opening with a concrete lintel has been inserted into the south wall (Photograph 8). A smaller doorway has been inserted into the east wall of the west midstrey, providing access into a modern lean-to on the north side of the structure between the midstreys.

Despite being in a ruinous state building A is a significant building in local historical terms. The cartographic evidence and the English bonding of the brickwork suggests a mid 19th-century date. This was a period that saw an increase in the availability of cheap, mass produced bricks, due in part to the repeal of the Brick Tax in 1850 but mainly as a result of the rapid development of the rail network. It also coincided with population growth and an agricultural boom that was accompanied by high yields and the availability of cash loans for the improvement of farm infrastructure. Although the Victorian housing market preferred to build in Flemish bond, farm and industrial buildings were more usually constructed in English bond. It is entirely plausible that an existing timber-framed barn at Bentons Farm was replaced with a modern brick version, sourced more cheaply from local brick yards than a timber-framed replacement, which would have been constructed from beams imported from the Baltic at this time. Brick barns are not unknown in Essex, although they are far from common, but they tend to fall into two distinct categories: examples of the early use of brick in agricultural buildings, as at Red Brick Barn, Sutton Hall, Rochford, which is a 17th-century brick barn; or late examples as at New Marsh Farm, Foulness, which was constructed in the late 19th century. Building A would obviously fit into the latter of these two categories and should be considered important as it illustrates the transition of one building material to another, whilst at the same time its plan form retains elements (the midstreys and the hand threshing floors) of agricultural practices that remained the same for centuries.



Map 1 1866 25 inch Ordnance Survey map showing building A with the projecting midstreys on its north side.



Map 2 Chapman and André survey of Essex from 1777 with Bentons farm circled. The precursor to building A is shown with a single midstreys on its north side.



Photograph 8 Building A, west and south elevations with the inserted garage doorway to the left of the shot – view north-east.



Photograph 9 Infilled cart door opening in south elevation with ivy-covered door posts indicating the original height of the building – view north.



Photograph 10 Original doorway in side wall of east midstrey – view west.



Photograph 11 Infilled original doorway in the west wall of the west midstrey – view south-west.



Photograph 12 Original wrought iron cart door retainer mounted on east wall of the west midstrey – view east.



Photograph 13 Probable original flagstones of the threshing floor in front of the west midstrey – view north.

7 Discussion

The archaeological evaluation only revealed one post-medieval pit that may be contemporary with Bentons Farm. All of the remaining features were modern, indicating a substantial amount of modern disturbance across the site.

The standing remains of a brick built building probably represent a mid 19th-century threshing barn associated with Bentons Farm that replaced an earlier timber-framed structure. Despite being in a ruinous state this is a significant building in local historical terms.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Michael Reeves and Sunbury Homes for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway, R Mathieson, N Rayner and A Wade. Figures are by C Lister and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Richard Havis.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

Brown, D	2007	<i>Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>
CAT	2014	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2016	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological trial-trenching and excavation at the Garage Site Adjacent Bentons Farm, Mollands Lane, South Ockendon, Essex, RM15 6DB</i>
CgMs Consulting	2016	<i>Land at Bentons Garages, Mollands Lane, South Ockendon, Essex, RM15 6DH</i>
ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).</i>
ECCPS	2015	<i>Brief for archaeological trial-trenching and excavation at Benton Farm, Molland Lane, South Ockendon, by Richard Havis</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Knight, H	2015	<i>Benton's Farm evaluation, Mollands Lane, South Ockendon</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)</i>

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD 1800
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 953)

ECC Evaluation Brief, CAT Written Scheme of Investigation

Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, Architectural plans, Attendance register

12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Thurrock Museum under accession code THKLH: [tbc](#)

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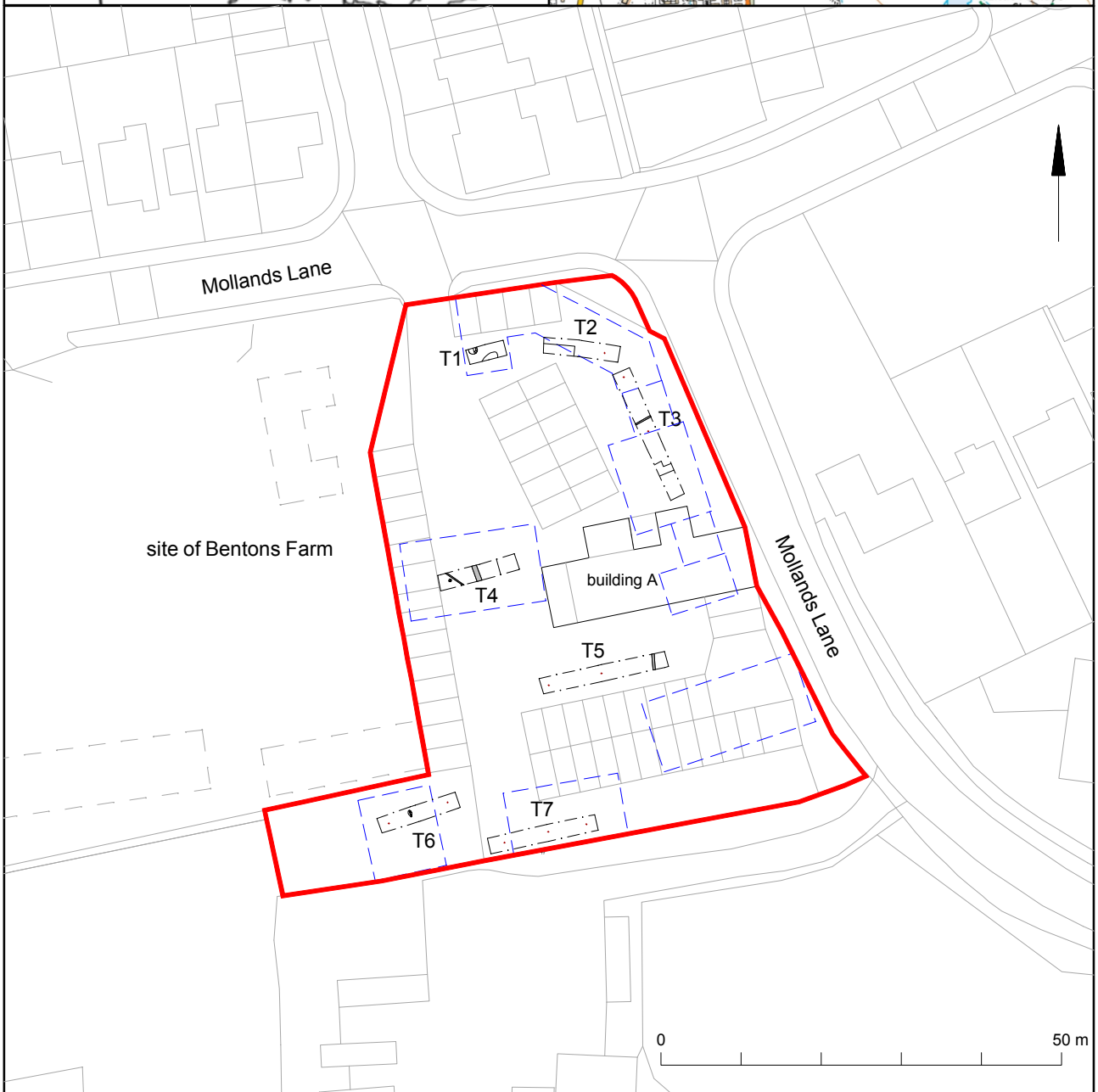
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Checked by: Howard Brooks

Date: 18.05.2016



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Fig 1 Site location. Proposed buildings are shown as dashed blue lines. Building A, the 19th-century barn, is shown as a black line.

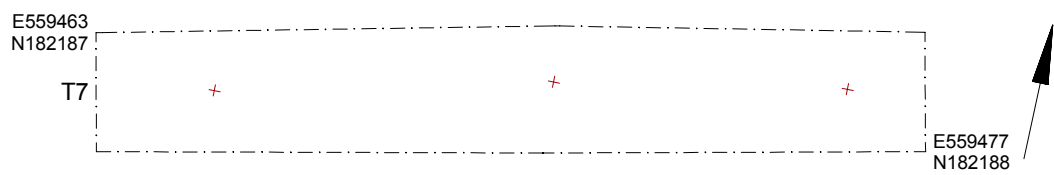
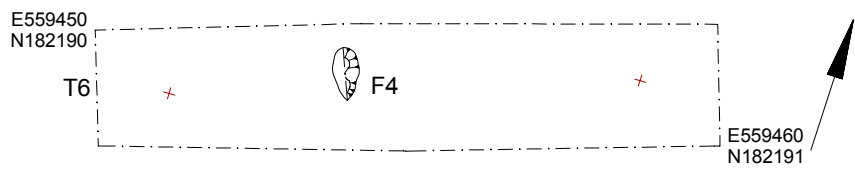
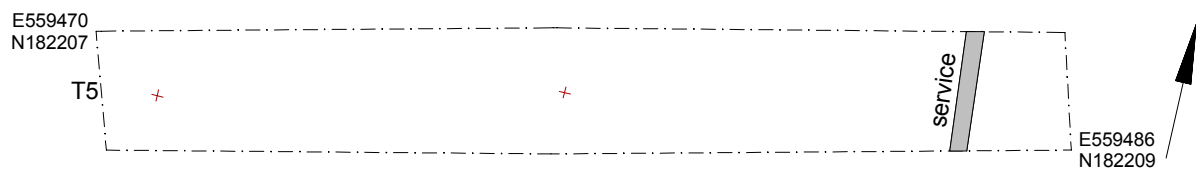
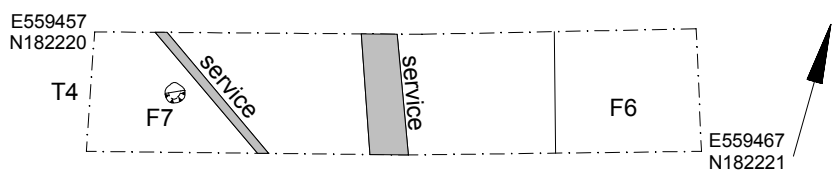
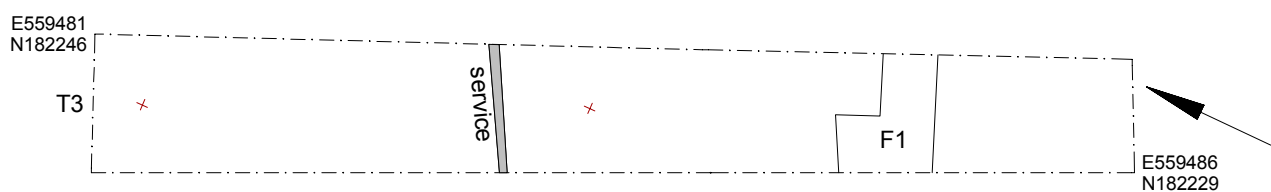
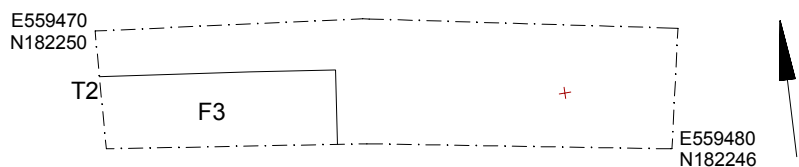
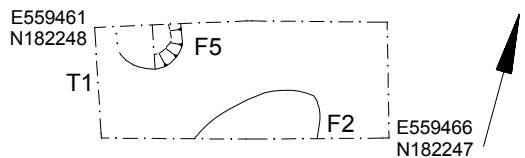


Fig 2 Results.

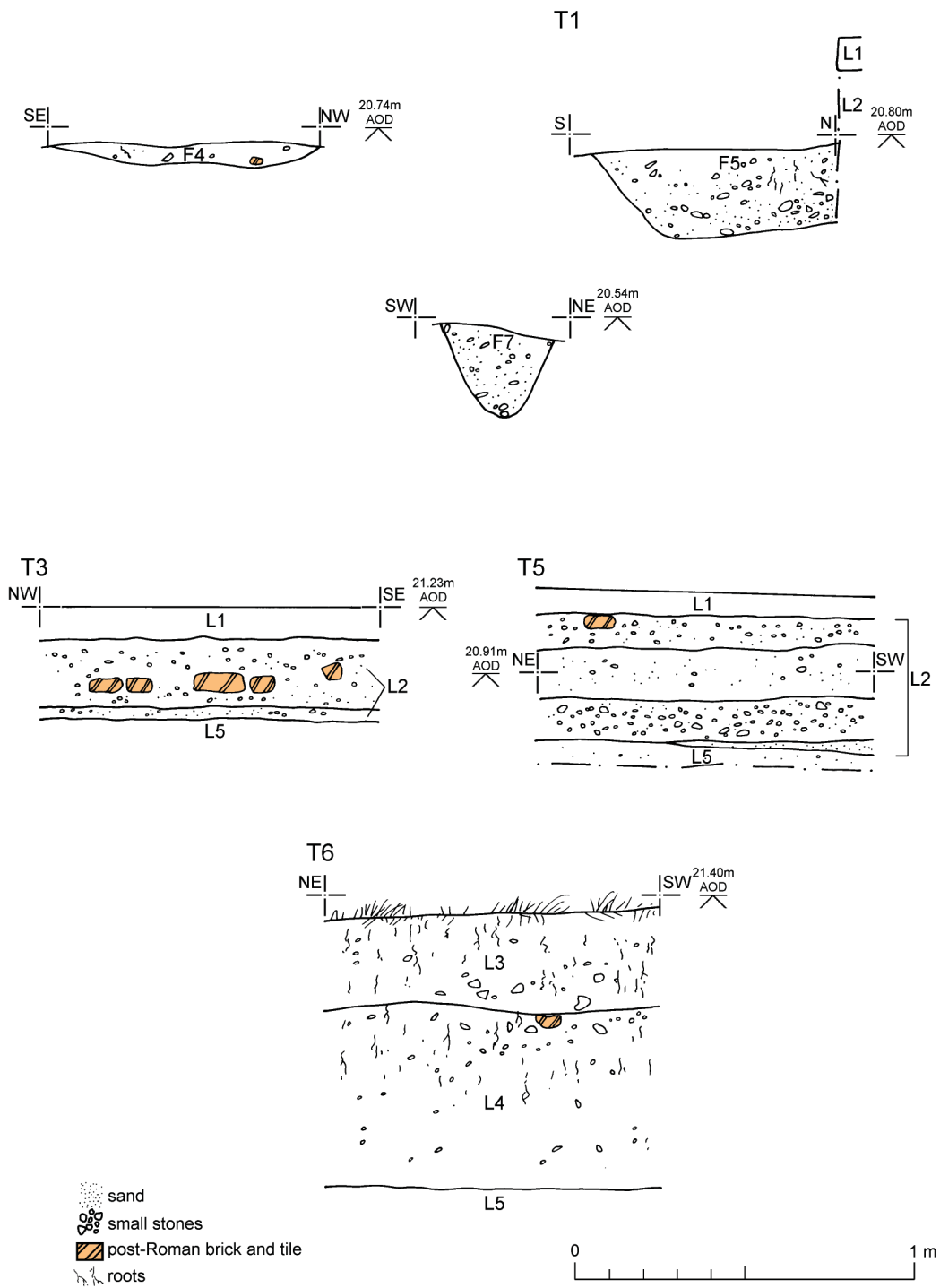


Fig 3 Feature sections (F4, F5 and F7) and representative trench sections (T3 and T5-6)

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Garage site adjacent to Bentons Farm, Mollands Lane, South Ockendon, Essex, RM15 6DB	
Parish: South Ockendon	District: Thurrock
NGR: TQ 59474 82226 (centre)	Site code: CAT project code: 16/03h ECC project code: THML16 OASIS project ID: colchest3-248329
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 4th May 2016	Size of area investigated: Seven trenches totalling 93m linear by 1.8m wide (167.4m ²)
Location of curating museum: Thurrock Museum accession code THKLH: tbc	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER number: EHER 35291, 48714
Final report: CAT Report 953	
Periods represented: post-medieval, modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>An archaeological evaluation took place at the garage site adjacent to Bentons Farm, Mollands Lane, South Ockendon in advance of the construction of sixteen new dwellings. Bentons Farm was a previously listed early 17th century house (with later additions) located within a complex of farm buildings. The evaluation revealed one post-medieval pit that may have been contemporary with Bentons Farm. The remaining features were a modern pit and posthole, and large areas of modern disturbance.</p> <p>A historic building recording was undertaken on the remains of a brick built building associated with Bentons Farm. The evidence suggests it dates from the mid 19th-century and was probably constructed as a threshing barn. It also appears to represent the brick replacement of an earlier timber-framed barn.</p>	
Previous summaries/reports: -	
Keywords: -	Significance: *
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: May 2016