

Hall Lane Upminster London Borough of Havering



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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(Eastern) Ltd.**

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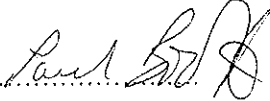
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Hall Lane, Upminster, London Borough of Havering

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

In February 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Hall Lane, Upminster, London Borough of Havering (NGR TQ 562 895) on behalf of Bryant Homes (Eastern) Ltd. The evaluation revealed no features/deposits of archaeological interest. The field evaluation suggested that the study area had never been settled or utilised for arable farming practice.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In February 2003 OA carried out a field evaluation at Hall Lane, Upminster in the London Borough of Havering on behalf of Bryant Homes (Eastern) Ltd. The evaluation was undertaken on the site of a demolished abattoir (Fig. 1) in respect of a planning application for a number of new dwellings and a brief set by and a WSI agreed with Nick Truckle of GLAAS. The development site is situated at NGR TQ 562 895 and is 2.85 hectares in area.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on meadow/pasture land at between c. 55 and 43 m above OD. The site is situated on a north facing slope.
- 1.2.2 The 1:50,000 Geological Survey of Great Britain (BGS 1974) shows the underlying geology to be predominantly of London Clay although some alluvial Drift deposits are shown to be present in the northern part of the site.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk based assessment (OA 2003), the results of which are summarised below.
- 1.3.2 The study area and wider region are thought to have been heavily wooded prior to the later medieval period. Even so, once cleared of woodland and brought under cultivation the lack of development in the area suggested that the potential for the recovery of archaeological data would be low. The presence of possible *in-situ* Lower and Upper Palaeolithic remains in the vicinity of the site (OA 2003) is highly significant and suggested the possibility for the recovery of similar remains on the proposed development site.
- 1.3.3 A single earthwork mound has been identified in the south-east corner of the study area. This mound may represent a burial monument from the prehistoric period, though there is no evidence in the wider area for activity from the

monumental prehistoric period and it may, therefore, be the result of the backfilling of a pond (Rob Whytehead *pers comm*).

- 1.3.4 The lack of evidence for ploughing from the later medieval to present day would suggest that any archaeological remains encountered during fieldwork would be in a good state of preservation.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA would like to extend thanks to Mike Wade of Bryant Homes Ltd. and Nick Truckle of GLAAS.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The evaluation was carried out in order to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the investigation area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the evaluation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of 15 trenches 1.6 m wide and of varying length (see Fig. 2). The original brief was to excavate 26 trenches measuring 1.6 m wide and 30 m in length but the removal and consolidation of the site of the old abattoir resulted in a greatly reduced area available for evaluation. The evaluation was therefore restricted to the meadow land left untouched by construction work around the southern and western part of the site (Fig. 2). The area previously occupied by the old abattoir had been reduced to the natural London Clay and left as a large, battered depression covered by up to 0.6 m of hardcore. Two trenches (Trenches 4 and 7) were cut through the hardcore to test the underlying ground for archaeological potential. The remaining trenches were 30 m in length with the exception of Trenches 9 and 10 which measured 20 m long.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were plotted using an EDM Total Station. The trenches were then excavated by a mechanical 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket

which was used to remove the topsoil/overburden down to the latest horizon of archaeological significance.

3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No deposits exhibiting palaeo-environmental potential were encountered during the fieldwork and as a result no samples were taken for analysis.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 Due to the almost total absence of archaeological features/deposits during the evaluation the results will be presented by area rather than by trench. This system will therefore split the site into high, middle and low ground based on the trench locations and their positions on the hill.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site is located on a north-facing slope of long term meadowland. The soils were generally derived from the underlying natural London Clay. The soils were invariably wet and until the present development no serious effort at land drainage had been attempted. Except in the north-east corner of the site, the soil sequence was composed of topsoil overlying the London Clay, in the north-east corner a thick layer of alluvium was found to be overlying the topsoil.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

The southern trenches (Trenches 19-26)

5.1.1 Trenches 19-26 were located on the highest point of the site, on the brow of the hill (Fig. 2). The soil sequence on this part of the site was very shallow,

consisting of a thin topsoil (typically less than 0.1 m thick) overlying the natural London Clay.

- 5.1.2 The only trench that contained any subsoil features was Trench 22. This trench was orientated north-west to south-east and was bisected by a wire and post fence that defined a possible post-medieval trackway. This feature was aligned north to south and the eastern edge was defined by a low bank and a shallow ditch (2207). The trackway (2204) was further exposed in the side of the cutting for the abattoir and measured 0.8 m wide and 0.5 m deep. Ditch 2207 had concave sides measuring over 1.38 m wide and was filled by a black silty soil (2205) up to 0.36 m deep that contained 20th century finds such as polythene and glass. The bank (2203) ran parallel with the ditch down the western side and was composed of a stiff clay which was derived from the upcast material from the ditch, which in turn buried the topsoil below. The bank was 0.28 m thick and 3.25 m wide (though there was some evidence for slumping within the ditch). Both the ditch and the bank were covered by a thin layer of topsoil (2201) (Fig. 3).
- 5.1.3 Trench 26 was located in the south-east corner of the development area. The trench was L-shaped and orientated north-south and east-west (Fig. 2). Both 'arms' of the trench were 30 m long and 1.6 m wide. This trench was targeted in order to attempt to pick up archaeological evidence relating to an elongated mound immediately beyond the site limit, no features or deposits of archaeological interest were present within the trench.

The eastern trenches (Trenches 16, 13 and 9)

- 5.1.4 Trench 16 was located on the slope of the hill approximately half way between the brow to the bottom (Fig. 2). This trench was orientated north-east to south-west and was 30 m in length and 1.6 m wide. The only feature observed within this trench was a land drain aligned east to west that was almost certainly associated with the abattoir.
- 5.1.5 Trench 13 was located parallel with the eastern boundary of the development site (Fig. 2). This trench was moved slightly to avoid trees planted outside of the area.
- 5.1.6 Trench 13 occupied a position within the site that covered both the base of the slope of the hill and the flat land at the bottom. The site as a whole was wet but the land in the northern part of the development area was the lowest and wettest. This degree of water-logging was reflected in the sequence of soils within Trench 13. The top of the sequence varied between the north and south ends of the trench. At the south end (on the slope) the sequence was topped by the typical topsoil (131), that was up to 0.45 m thick. This deposit at the south

end of the trench overlay a thin subsoil (133) that was less than 0.05 m thick and closely resembled the London Clay natural. A layer of pale brown clay deposited as a result of the settling of material in a pond environment (132) was observed above the topsoil 15.4 m from the south end of the trench. This clay was 0.3 m thick and had partially buried the topsoil horizon (131). No finds older than 20th century manuring fragments in the topsoil were recovered from this trench.

- 5.1.7 Trench 9 was orientated north-west to south-east and located across the north-eastern corner of the development area (Fig. 2). The sequence of deposits in this trench was similar to that identified in Trench 13, though they appeared to represent an older sequence. The latest deposit was a thin, dark brown topsoil (91) typically less than 0.1 m thick. This horizon overlay a pale brown pond-derived clay layer (92) with a variable thickness that measured a maximum of 0.7 m and a minimum of 0.2 m. This layer was clean and did not produce any finds. The clay directly overlay a buried topsoil (93) that was similar in composition to the active soil at the top of the sequence but which had a bluish tinge (possibly due to the presence of the mineral Vivianite). This buried soil also had a variable thickness between 0.3 and 0.5 m. The buried topsoil lay directly on the natural London Clay (94). No finds were recovered from this trench.

The western trenches (Trenches 4, 7 and 10)

- 5.1.8 Trenches 4 and 7 were located within the area previously occupied by the old abattoir (Fig. 2). Prior to the commencement of the evaluation the abattoir had been demolished and the area covered with up to 0.6 m of hardcore in readiness for tarmac roads and building foundations. Two trenches were cut through the hardcore (Trenches 4 and 7) in order to test the potential for the survival of underlying archaeology.
- 5.1.9 Trench 4 was orientated north to south and measured 4 m in length. The hardcore surface was 0.65 m thick and lay directly above the natural London Clay, which had been truncated during the demolition. The fact that the level of the natural had been reduced rendered further investigation unnecessary.
- 5.1.10 Trench 7 was located amongst temporary site accommodation and orientated east to west. The trench measured 12 m in length and was 1.6 m wide. The hardcore surface was 0.3 m thick and lay above a mid greyish brown, silty clay subsoil (702). The subsoil was up to 0.28 m thick and did not produce any dateable artefacts. The base of the sequence was composed of natural London Clay. A single feature was observed cut into the clay, cut (704) was nearly oval in plan and only 0.05 m at maximum depth. The feature was filled by a single fill (705), which was similar in composition to the

overlying subsoil. It would appear that this feature was merely a depression in the London Clay. At the eastern end of the trench was a large recently felled tree stump, which had been covered by the hardcore.

- 5.1.11 Trench 10 was situated parallel to the western site boundary (Fig. 2). This trench was 20 m in length and 1.6 m wide. The sequence of deposits here revealed a topsoil layer up to 0.18 m thick (1001). This deposit sealed a mid brown silty clay subsoil up to 0.18 m thick (1002) that contained occasional small pebbles. The natural deposit within Trench 10 was London Clay with bands of clay and gravel.

5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 With the exception of the finds recovered from the subsoil context in Trench 7 (705), all of the finds were recovered from topsoil contexts. Finds recovered from topsoil contexts may represent general field manuring and cannot therefore be considered useful for dating purposes. If this is the case then by implication this would mean that the fields have not been continuous pasture but have been cultivated at some point in the past. All the finds recovered (including those from context 705) were of post-medieval and 20th century origin.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The demolition and landscaping of the central part of the development site prior to the commencement of the fieldwork meant that the original agreed sampling strategy had to be altered. This led to an unavoidable concentration of trenches in the southern part of the site, which was earmarked for landscaping. The remaining trenches were located only after site inspection had indicated that suitable spaces were accessible in the western part of the development area. Despite the restrictions, the trenching programme enabled a good sample of the available space across the sloping topography to be obtained.

6.2 Overall interpretation

Summary of results

- 6.2.1 The field evaluation did not encounter any features of archaeological significance or any complex sequences of deposits. The lack of features and the lack of any signs of ploughing (such as plough scars or remnant ridge and furrow) appear to conform to the documentary and cartographic evidence for the development area. The site and its immediate surrounds are not known to have produced evidence for settlement though Palaeolithic findspots have been noted in the past. The archaeological evidence indicates that the development area has always been under pasture.

Significance

- 6.2.2 The sequence of clay layers and buried and partially buried topsoil exhibited in Trenches 9 and 13 are suggestive of long periods of inundation across this low lying part of the site. Indeed discussion with the site manager of Bryant Homes Ltd revealed that prior to the insertion of drains for the present development, this part of the site was under large areas of standing water. The evidence of deposition of clean alluvium with no signs of seasonal breaks or lamination within the trenches indicates the presence of large puddles or ponds, which must have been standing throughout most of the year. The presence of an active topsoil overlying the alluvium would suggest that some drainage must have been carried out in the relatively recent past.
- 6.2.3 The results of the archaeological field evaluation have shown the development area to be absent of any settlement activity in the past. The evaluation has also shown no evidence of ancient agricultural practice worthy of further investigation. As a result of the fieldwork it is unlikely that any archaeological remains of significance will be affected by the proposed developments and any associated landscaping.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Context No.	Type	Thickness	Width	Comment
4	41	Dep	0.6		Hardcore
7	701	Dep	0.3		Hardcore
7	702	Dep	0.28		Subsoil
7	703	Dep			Natural
7	704	Cut		0.4	Depression
7	705	Dep	0.05	0.4	Fill
7	706	Cut	0.79		Tree stump
7	707	Dep	0.79		Tree stump
9	91	Dep	0.12		Topsoil
9	92	Dep	0.7		Pond Deposit
9	93	Dep	0.6		Buried Topsoil
9	94	Dep			Natural
10	1001	Dep	0.18		Topsoil
10	1002	Dep	0.18		Subsoil
10	1003	Dep			Natural
10	1004	Dep			Natural
13	131	Dep	0.45		Topsoil
13	132	Dep	0.3		Pond Deposit
13	133	Dep	0.06		Subsoil
13	134	Dep			Natural
16	161	Dep	0.41		Topsoil
16	162	Dep			Natural
16	163	Drain		0.25	Drain
19	1901	Dep	0.3		Topsoil
19	1902	Dep			Natural
20	2001	Dep	0.34		Topsoil
20	2002	Dep			Natural
21	211	Dep	0.32		Topsoil
21	212	Dep			Natural
22	2201	Dep	0.26		Topsoil
22	2202	Dep			Natural
22	2203	Dep	0.28	3.26	Bank
22	2204	Dep	0.24		Buried Topsoil
22	2205	Dep	0.36		Fill
22	2206	Dep	0.18		Fill
22	2207	Cut	0.4	1.38	Ditch
23	2301	Dep	0.3		Topsoil
23	2302	Dep			Natural
24	2401	Dep	0.28		Topsoil
24	2402	Dep			Natural
24	2403	Dep			Natural
24	2404	Dep			Natural
25	2501	Dep	0.3		Topsoil
25	2502	Dep			Natural
26	2601	Dep	0.22		Topsoil
26	2602	Dep			Natural

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- BGS 1974 Geological Survey of Great Britain. Sheet 257 *Solid and Drift Edition*
- OA 2003 *Upminster Hall Lane Proposed Residential Development. Desk Top Assessment*

APPENDIX 3 GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Evaluation, Excavation, Watching Brief, Building Recording, Survey,
Geoarchaeological Evaluation, Fieldwalking, Other

2) LOCATION

Borough: **Havering**

Site address: **Hall Lane, Upminster**

Site Name: **Hall Lane** Site Code: **HLU 03**

Nat. grid Ref: **TQ 5628 8954** centre of site: **TQ 5628 8954**

Limits of site: N **TQ 5628 8994** S **TQ 5628 8904**

E **TQ 5678 8954** W **TQ 5578 8954**

3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: **Oxford Archaeology**

Address: **Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES**

Site director/supervisor: **D. Dodds** Project manager: **A. Holmes**

Funded by: **Bryant Homes (eastern) Ltd**

4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started: **24/02/2003** Date finished: **27/02/2003**

Fieldwork previously notified? **YES/NO**

Fieldwork will continue? **YES/NO/NOT KNOWN**

5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon (pre-AD
1066), Medieval (AD 1066-1485), **Post-medieval**, Unknown,

6) PERIOD SUMMARIES

7) NATURAL

Type: **London Clay**Height above Ordnance datum: *c.* **50 m OD**

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

- a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:

NOtes	PLans 15	PHotos x4films
NGtives		
SLides x2Films	COrrispondence	MScripts (unpub reports, etc)
BULK finds x1 Box	SMall finds	SOil samples
OTHer		

- b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and will be deposited in the following location:
- c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: **YES/NO**

10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

See Appendix 2 Bibliography and reference

SIGNED: *[Signature]*DATE: *21/3/03*NAME *A. HAMES*