

# **Report on an archaeological watching brief at Myland hospital 'Parcel B', Mill Road, Colchester, Essex November 2003**

## **CAT Report 251**

report prepared by Kate Orr

commissioned by CGMs Consultants on behalf of Taylor Woodrow

## **1 Summary**

*A watching brief was carried out during housing development on an area of land to the north of the former Myland hospital. No features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded from the small sample of footings and services monitored. The site appears to be largely undisturbed by modern buildings.*

## **2 Introduction**

**2.1** This is a report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at 'Parcel B', at the site of Myland hospital, Mill Road, Colchester, Essex. The site is located 4km to the north-east of Colchester town centre, centred at National Grid Reference TM 003 286. It is bounded by Mill Road to the west and the former Myland hospital site to the south and east, and a housing development to the north-east.

**2.2** The watching brief was carried out in November and December 2003. It was necessitated by a planning application for a residential development which was given planning permission with a condition for an archaeological watching brief (planning application numbers COL/97/0220 and RMCOL/01/1215).

**2.3** This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999, updated 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996, updated 2002), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

## **3 Archaeological background**

**3.1** The land was included in an archaeological desk-based assessment carried out in 2000 (CAT Report 77). Although no discoveries have been recorded on the development area itself, cropmarks of rectilinear features and ring-ditches lie 300m to the north of the development site (Essex Heritage Conservation Record or EHCR 2644). This site has never been investigated so it is not possible to interpret definitely, but it may represent an occupation site surrounded by field boundaries. There are also four small ring-ditches showing up as cropmarks 700m to the south (EHCR 2645).

**3.2** Myland hospital was built to the south of the site in 1884 and demolished in 1989.

**3.3** A watching brief carried out in 2002 and 2003 during the groundworks for the George Wimpey Homes, Barratt Homes and Wilson Connolly Homes housing developments to the south proved to be negative (CAT Report 239).

## **4 Aim**

The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or finds disturbed by the groundworks.

## **5 Methods**

- 5.1 The watching brief consisted of two visits made by a professional archaeologist from CAT. Only a small percentage of groundworks were monitored. It was decided with Martin Winter and CGMs Consultants after the second visit that the site did not justify any further monitoring.
- 5.2 Foundation and service trenches were dug by contractors using a mechanical excavator with a toothed bucket. Sections were examined for features and spoil heaps were checked for finds.
- 5.3 Sketch section drawings were made of layers at a scale of 1:10. No features were recorded.

## **6 Results**

On the first visit, which was made on the 18th November, house plot 61 or 62 in the central western part of the site was monitored. The trenches were 750mm wide and 1.3m deep. Vegetation and a small amount of topsoil had already been stripped off the site. Approximately 250mm of light greyish brown slightly sandy silt topsoil (Layer or L1) sealed natural light grey silty clay mixed with orange sand (L2). At approximately 900mm below ground-level, the natural became more sandy and continued to the base of the trench (L3). Other house foundation trenches had been filled in with concrete but it was possible to observe the uppermost soil profile from the over site, and no features were observed. Several house foundation trenches on the Mill Road frontage had already been filled in and could not, therefore, be monitored.

On the second visit, which took place on the 8th December, house plots 67 and 68 in the western part of the site were monitored. The footings were 450mm wide and between 1.2 and 1.3m deep. A short section of sewer trench to the south of plots 67 and 68 was also open. A similar soil profile to plots 61/62 was observed. Peg-tile was visible within L1 and a few pieces were seen on the spoil heap. Except for this, no finds were recorded. There was no evidence of any modern buildings and this was verified by the groundworkers. No cut features such as pits and ditches were observed in the sections. Although the trenches were too deep to enter and examine closely, the sections were fairly 'clean' and larger features should have been visible, had they been present.

## **7 Acknowledgements**

The site work was carried out by the author. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council, and Paul Chadwick from CGMs Consultants. The Trust would like Taylor Woodrow Developers for funding the work and allowing access to the site.

## **8 References**

- CAT Report 77                      A desk-based assessment of the archaeological remains on land at NHS Estates, Myland hospital, Colchester, Essex, unpublished CAT archive report, by H Brooks and K Orr, 2000
- CAT Report 239                    An archaeological watching brief at the site of Myland hospital, Colchester, Essex, unpublished CAT archive report, by K Orr, 2003

## 9 Archive deposition

The archive, which consists of a paper and digital archive only is held by CAT at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2002.118.

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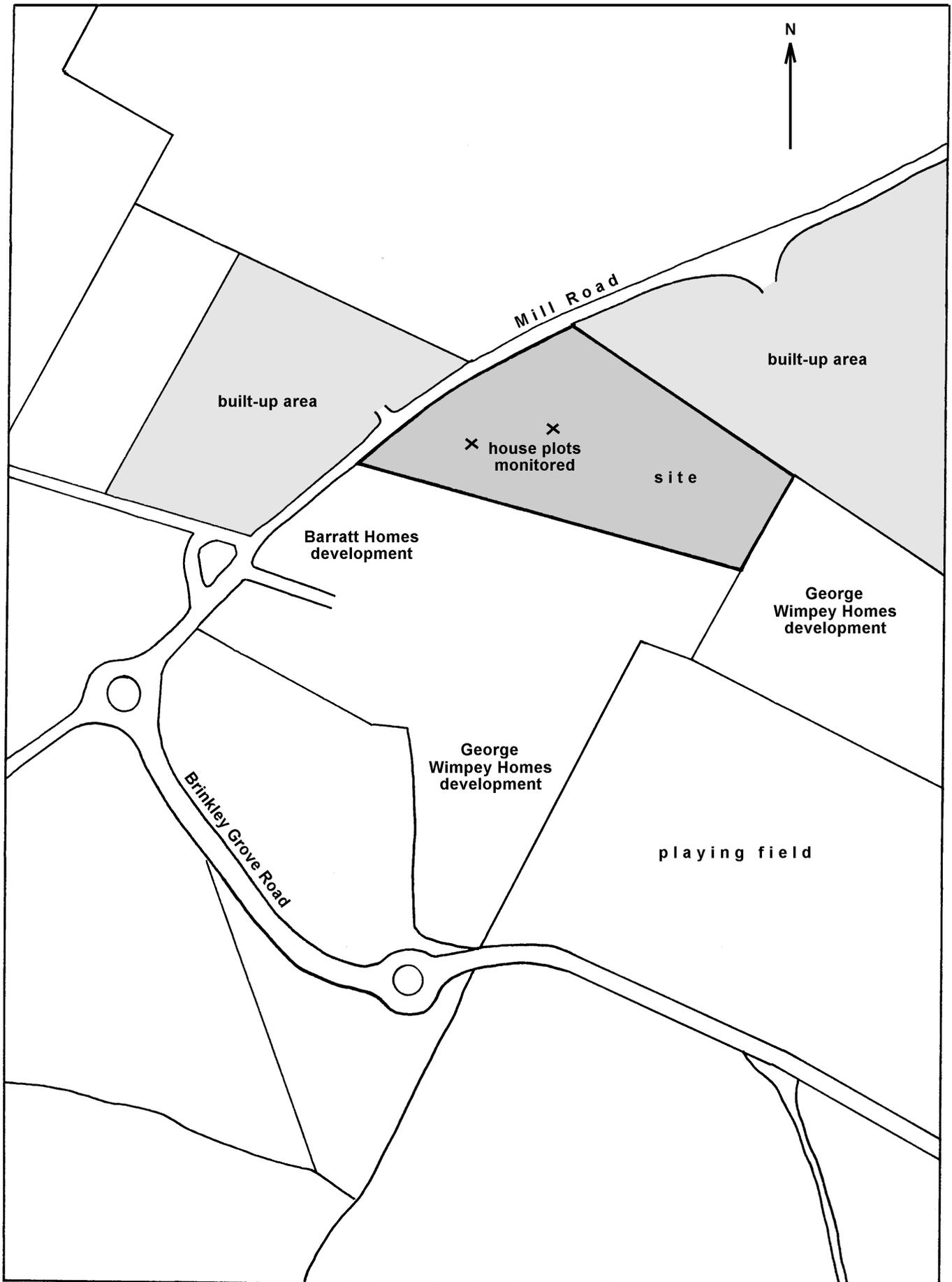
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Plan of the site.

