

**An archaeological evaluation at  
80 West Street, Rochford,  
Essex  
January 2010**

**report prepared by  
Stephen Benfield**

**on behalf of  
G H T Properties**

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HEM site code: RF18  
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**CAT Report 540**  
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## **Contents**

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aim	2
5	Methods	2
6	Results	2
7	Discussion	4
8	Archive deposition	5
9	Acknowledgements	5
10	Abbreviations	5
11	References	5
12	Glossary	6

Figures after p 6

EHER summary sheet

## **List of figures**

- Fig 1 Location of the evaluation trenches in relation to the site.
- Fig 2 Detail plan of trenches and representative sections of deposits.

## 1 Summary

*The evaluation consisted of two 10 m-long machine-excavated trenches, each located within the footprint of one of two proposed buildings. One trench was situated close to the road frontage on West Street, the other at the rear (north-east corner) of the development site.*

*Overall, a small number of features dating to the post-medieval and modern periods were located. These consisted of small pits, post-holes, a probable drain and a soakaway. The features cut or were sealed by layers of accumulated soil, demolition material or make-up dating to the late medieval/post-medieval and modern periods. These layers sealed natural clay at about 700 mm, which must be close to the water-table as all of the features excavated at below about 800 mm immediately filled with water.*

*Close to the road frontage on West Street, accumulated soil with finds dating to the late medieval or early post-medieval period and an absence of any significant archaeological features suggest that the area was open, possibly cultivated, land during that time.*

*At the rear (north-east corner) of the development site, two features dated as post-medieval which contained waterlogged wood - parts of preserved timber posts or stakes - were located. They were sealed by 19th- to 20th-century demolition material consisting of pantiles from the roof of an earlier building of post-medieval or later date. These features and the probable earlier building here may well be connected with industrial activity dated to the 18th century which was recorded on the adjacent plot to the east (76-78 West Street). On that site a number of timber-lined pits were located which were possibly used in tanning or cloth-working.*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT). The investigations took place at 80 West Street, Rochford, Essex, in the footprints of two proposed buildings.
- 2.2 The development site, approximately 0.12 hectares in extent, is situated just to the west of Rochford town centre, opposite the railway station, and is centred at NGR TQ 87382 90555.
- 2.3 The fieldwork was carried out by CAT on the 20th January 2010.
- 2.4 All fieldwork was done in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) submitted by CAT which followed a brief (Garwood 2009) which was supplied by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM) team. The project was monitored by Adam Garwood of the ECC HEM team.
- 2.5 This report follows standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). Other sources used are *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

## 3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The development site is located within an area of archaeological potential in the western part of the historic town of Rochford, close to the focus of the medieval settlement around the market-place which was granted its charter in 1257.
- 3.2 The historic town assessment report shows the development on the edge of the medieval and subsequent post-medieval expansion of the settlement. The importance of the medieval settlement (a leet court for the honour of Rayleigh was transferred in the 15th century) means that it has the potential to have been

significantly larger than current evidence suggests, and that significant deposits of medieval and post-medieval date might be encountered (ECC 1999).

- 3.3** Recent excavation work at the adjacent 76-78 West Street identified a number of timber-lined pits of 18th-century date which are likely to be industrial in nature. The presence of this post-medieval activity would suggest that similar deposits are likely to be encountered on the 80 West Street site.

## **4 Aim**

The aim of the fieldwork was to establish and record the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by groundworks associated with the construction of the proposed buildings.

## **5 Methods (Fig 1)**

- 5.1** Two trenches, T1 (centred at NGR TQ 87372 90542) and T2 (centred at NGR TQ 87398 90560), each 1.4 m wide, were excavated by machine. The location of each trench had been agreed in advance according to a plan approved with the ECC HEM team. This consisted of a trench being located across the central area of the footprint of each of the proposed buildings. In the event, T2 was dug further south, due to an area of reinforced concrete, placing it just inside the edge of the footprint of the proposed building.
- 5.2** A mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket was used to excavate the evaluation trenches, removing the modern deposits to expose any significant archaeological features. Work was carried out under archaeological supervision, and all exposed archaeological features were photographed and examined in sufficient detail to allow their nature, date and importance to be assessed.
- 5.3** Each trench and any features located within it were planned by hand, and the location of the trenches on the development site was set out and recorded in the same way.
- 5.4** Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features or deposits were entered on CAT pro-forma recording sheets. Section drawings of layers were made at a scale of 1:10 and plans at a scale of 1:20.
- 5.5** Finds were registered on CAT pro-forma record sheets and assigned finds numbers according to context. Finds were washed, marked with the site code number, and bagged according to context. Post-medieval and modern pottery was identified by Howard Brooks of CAT.
- 5.6** Colour photographs of the main features, sections, and the site environs were taken with a digital camera.
- 5.7** Limited metal-detecting of the surface of spoil heaps was conducted during the evaluation.

## **6 Results**

### **6.1 Trench 1: summary (Fig 2 plan & Sx 1)**

The top 300 mm of deposits in T1 consisted of modern demolition rubble mixed with dark soil (L1). Below this was a medium to dark-brown silt about 500 mm thick (L2). This appeared to become slightly lighter in hue toward its base. It contained fragments of brick and peg-tile and a small quantity of pottery dating to the late medieval or early post-medieval period was also recovered from it (Table 1). This deposit sealed natural, slightly dirty, yellow-brown clay at about 700 mm.

At the western extremity of the trench was a linear feature (F1). This extended obliquely north-east to south-west across the end of the trench. The lower part had been cut into the natural clay. The main (upper) fill consisted of the same dark brown silt as L2, but included lumps of yellow-brown clay disturbed from the natural. The pieces of natural clay in the fill showed clearly that it was cut through the lower part of L2, and most probably it had been cut from above that layer. F1 consisted of

a trench with steep sloping sides. At its base was a single layer of whole, unfrosted red bricks of late post-medieval or early modern date (Table 1). These had been laid side-by-side along it, with the longest sides abutting each other. One brick had sooting on it, suggesting the bricks had been re-used from an earlier feature.

The base of this feature penetrated the water table; immediately on excavation, it began to fill with water welling up from below. The purpose of F1 is not clear, but it would appear most likely to represent a drain.

The east end of the trench was occupied by a large modern soakaway (F2), which contained many fragments of broken breezeblocks among its rubble fill.

**Table 1: summary of contexts and significant associated finds for T1.**

(Note: pottery fabrics refer to *CAR 7*.)

feature or layer	type	finds recovered	finds/context dated
L1	modern demolition		modern
L2	accumulation	pottery: 1 rim sherd Border ware (Fabric 42) from a chamber pot or flat-rimmed bowl, 24.4 g, late 16th-17th century; 2 sherds medieval sandy orange ware (Fabric 21), 8.7 g	late medieval or early post-medieval
F1	drain	red unfrosted brick (225 x 65 x 110 mm) sooted, re-used?; 3 pieces animal bone	late 18th/early 19th century+
F2	soakaway	breezeblock fragments	modern

## 6.2 Trench 2: summary (Fig 2 plan & Sx 2)

The upper part of T2 consisted of modern hard-standing about 300 mm thick (L3). This was made up of concrete resting on a sand and gravel (hogging) base with some patchy dark soil below. In the central area of the trench, this overlay a deposit of fairly clean yellow-brown clay about 140 mm thick (L4). The clay directly covered an uneven layer of dark-grey silt about 60 mm thick (L6) which contained numerous fragments of red pantiles, but did not extend beyond it. A sherd of modern pottery and a fragment of post-medieval glass were recovered from this layer sealed beneath the clay deposit (Table 2). The clay (L4) appears to have been deposited as a seal over a dump of demolition material (L6).

At the west end of the trench, toward the base of the trench, L3 sealed a grey silt/clay (L5) which did not produce any finds material and appeared to probably be a natural deposit. L5 lay directly over the more extensive natural deposit of slightly dirty yellow-brown clay. The top of the natural yellow-brown clay, as elsewhere along the base of the trench, was encountered at a depth of about 700 mm.

The deposit containing the demolition material (L6) sealed three features located along the north side of the trench (F3, F4, F5) which had been cut into the natural yellow-brown clay.

F3 was a small, ?sub-circular feature extending from beneath the north edge of the trench. It was quite shallow with a depth of only about 100 mm below the base of the trench and did not penetrate the water table. The fill consisted of a grey-brown silt/clay. A piece from a pantile was recovered from the fill (Table 2).

F4 was a part of a ?sub-rectangular feature, possibly a large post-hole or small pit, extending from beneath the north edge of the trench. The feature could be excavated only to about 100m of depth before it filled with water and so the base, which could not be reached, must have penetrated the water table. It was filled with a dark-grey silt and contained preserved wood. This appeared to be part of a post and which extended into the unexcavated lower part of the fill. Several fragments of post-medieval brick were recovered from it (Table 2).

F5 was a small sub-square feature which was either a small post-hole or stake hole. It could not be excavated to much depth before it filled with water and so the base, which was not reached, must have penetrated the water table. There was the

lower part of a preserved wooden stake or small post in it, extending beyond the limit of excavation into the lower fill. Its relationship to F4 is not clear.

At the east end of the trench was part of a ?sub-rectangular pit (F6), which extended from beneath the south section. This feature was cut into the natural, yellow-brown clay. It was sealed by L3 and was filled with a grey silt containing common chalk/lime fragments and some oyster shells. Material identical to this distinctive fill extended across into the north section of the trench so that it was either a larger feature or its fill had been disturbed and spread across this area prior to the hard-standing of L3 being laid down. The base of F6 was located at 170 mm below the base of the trench and this penetrated the water table; on excavation, the feature immediately filled with water. Fragments of pantiles and a sherd of modern pottery (Table 2) were recovered from the fill.

**Table 2: summary of contexts and significant associated finds for T2**

(Note: pottery fabrics quoted refer to *CAR 7*.)

feature or layer	type	finds recovered	finds/context dated
L3	concrete hard-standing and make-up		modern
L4	clay dump		modern
L5	?natural		
L6	demolition	pottery: 1 sherd modern ironstone (Fabric 48d), 1.4 g; glass: 1 sherd, 3.4 g, post-medieval/modern; pantile fragments	modern
F3	small pit/post-hole	pantile fragment; 3 animal bone pieces	post-medieval or modern
F4	post-hole/pit	3 red brick fragments (35-40 mm thick)	post-medieval
F5	post-hole/stake hole		post-medieval
F6	pit	pottery: 1 sherd modern ironstone (Fabric 48d), 3.4 g; pantile fragments; red brick fragments; oyster shells	modern

## 7 Discussion

The absence of any significant archaeological features in T1, close to the road frontage on West Street, together with the depth of soil accumulation there, suggests that the area was open, possibly cultivated, land during the late medieval or post-medieval periods.

At the rear of the development site, the deposits encountered over most of the length of T2 consisted of modern demolition and make-up down to the natural clay. This indicates that the earlier soil accumulation and deposits, which must have existed here, have been entirely removed. At the base of the sequence in T2, 19th-/20th-century demolition material of pantile fragments mixed with soil (L6) clearly derives from the roof of an earlier building. Pantiles can be dated in England to the late 17th century or after and are most commonly used on the roofs of attached secondary buildings, such as lean-tos or outbuildings (East Herts District Council, <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/Index.jsp?articleid=11618>). This demolition layer may be a dump or make-up deposit or, less likely, a surface. The clay (L4) deposited directly over it appears to be a deliberate capping, either as a seal because of the damp ground, or possibly a floor surface, or as make-up for a floor surface above it which has since been removed. However, as no sign of any associated foundations or post settings for walls was encountered, then the interpretation of L4 as a floor inside a building may be less likely.

The four features located in the base of T2 consisted of pits and post-settings and these may be connected with the earlier building of post-medieval date represented

by the demolition material (L6). They are not connected with a potential later building represented by L4 as all but one of them (ie pit F6) are sealed by the demolition material L6. F6 can be dated to the 19th-20th centuries and, while F3 clearly pre-dates L6, a broken pantile fragment from its fill associates it with that layer (L6) so that it probably does not significantly pre-date it.

The other two features (F4, F5) probably date earlier than the other features, although both are probably post-medieval. They are set apart from the other features as neither produced any pantile fragments and both contained preserved waterlogged wood. The small post-hole or stake hole F5 could not be directly dated. However, F4, which is either part of a pit or a large post setting, contained fragments of red bricks which can be dated as post-medieval. The location of F5 at the edge of F4 suggests that they may be related features.

The features F4 and F5, and possibly the building represented by the roof demolition material in L6, may well be connected with the industrial activity dated to the 18th century which was recorded on the adjacent site to the east, ie 76-78 West Street. There a number of timber-lined pits, possibly use in tanning or cloth-working, have been recorded (Garwood 2009).

## 8 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive are currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Southend Museum under accession code SOUMS A 2010.1.

## 9 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank G H T Properties for commissioning and funding the work. The fieldwork was carried out by S Benfield.

## 10 Abbreviations

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
EAA	East Anglian Archaeology
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
HEM	Historic Environment Management
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
NGR	National Grid Reference

## 11 References

- |            |      |  |
|------------|------|--|
| CAR 7      | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter  |
| EAA 3      | 1997 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>3</b> , ed by J Glazebrook                    |
| EAA 8      | 2000 | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14     | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b> , ed by D Gurney  |
| ECC        | 1999 | <i>Historic town project assessment report: Rochford</i>   |
| Garwood, A | 2009 | <i>Archaeological evaluation at 80 West Street, Rochford</i> , Essex County Council brief  |

IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
MoRPHE	1991	<i>Management of research projects in the historic environment</i> , 2nd edition (English Heritage)

### Internet references

East Herts District Council, 'Guidance notes on the preservation and repair of historic materials and buildings, Tiles and slates'  
<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/In dex.jsp?articleid=11618>

## 12 Glossary

context	either a feature, layer or a complex of layers/features
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
pentile	S-shaped roof tile introduced from the Netherlands to Britain in the late 17th century
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century

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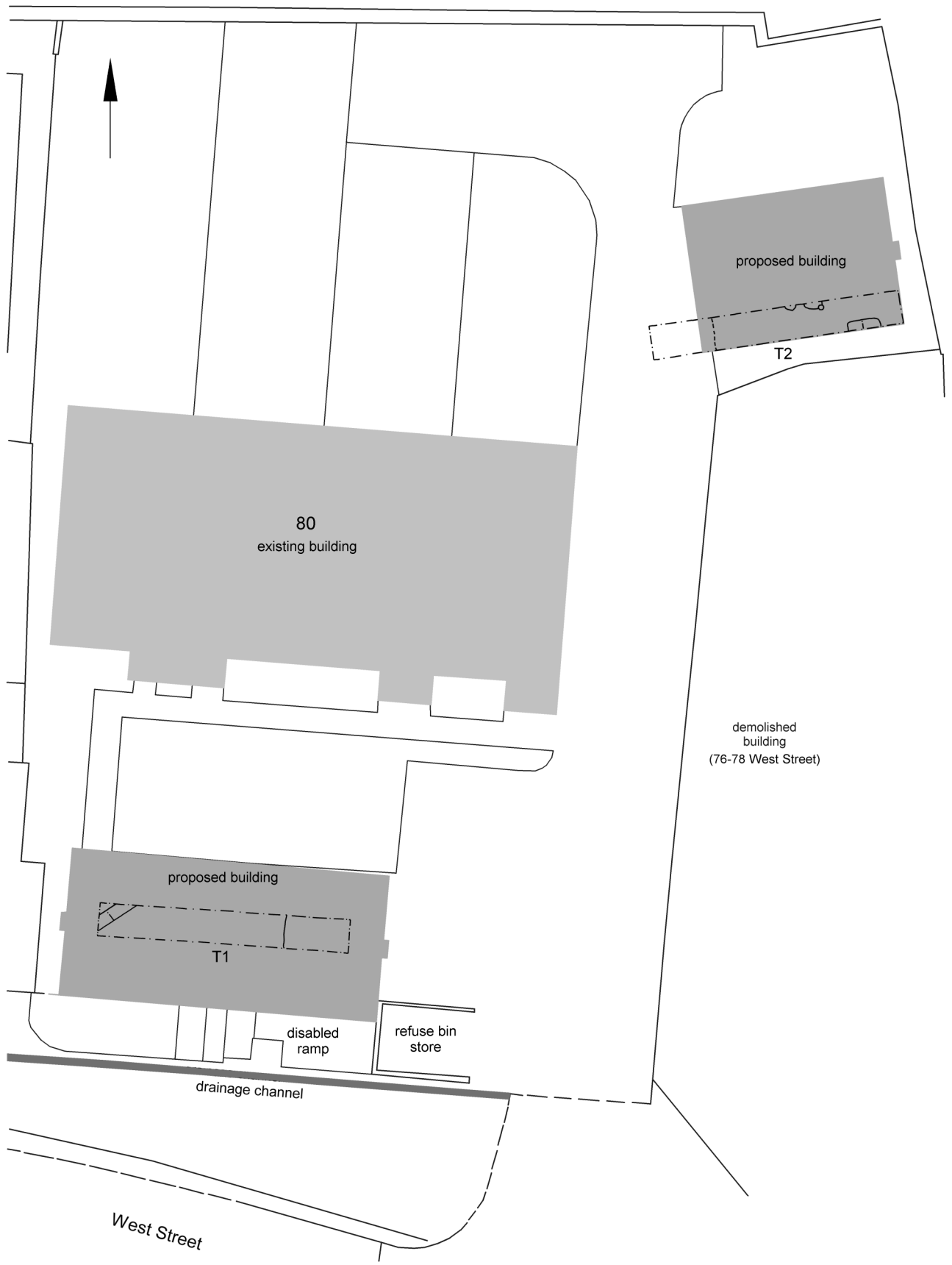
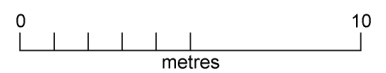


Fig 1 Location of the evaluation trenches in relation to the site.



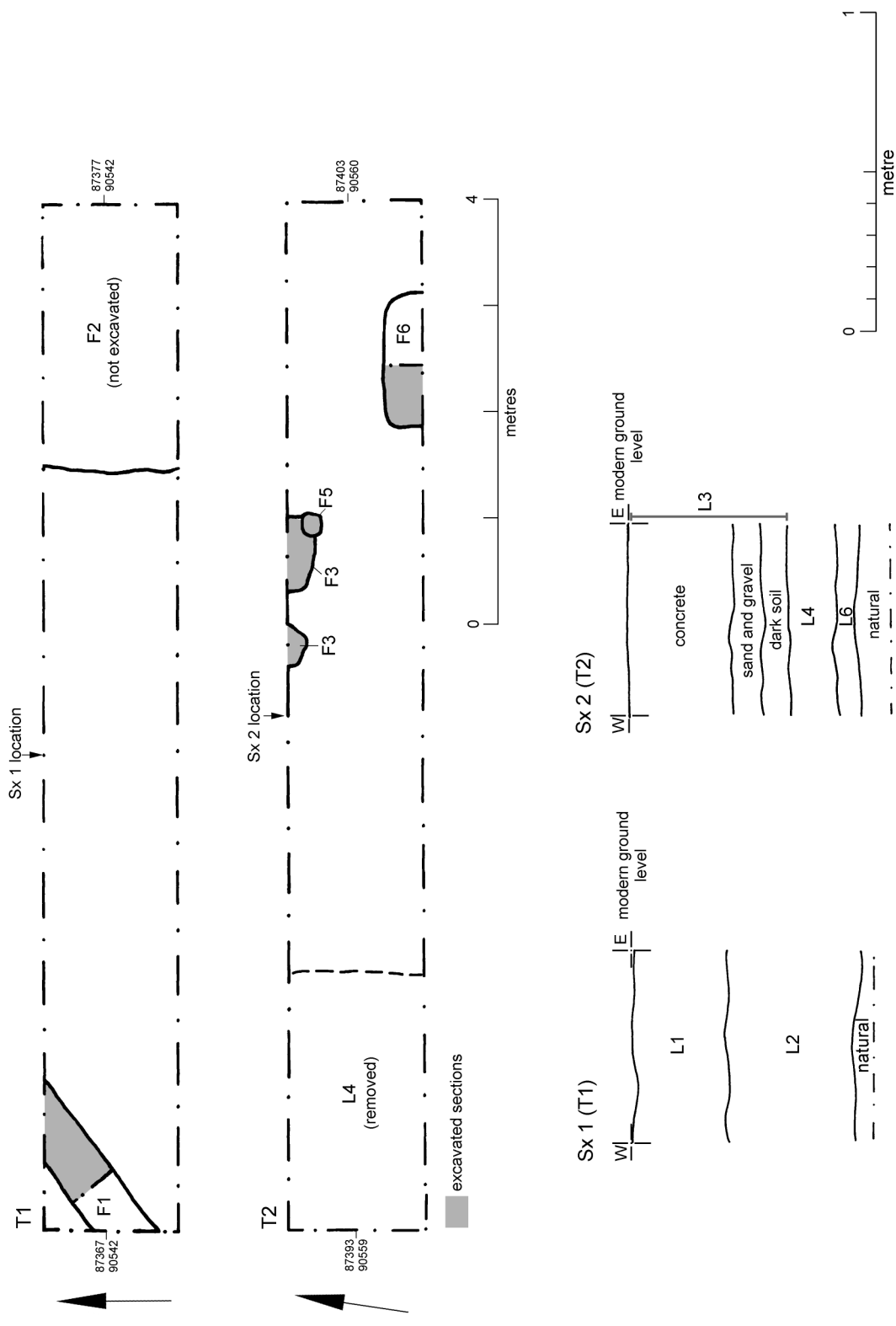


Fig 2 Detail plan of trenches and representative sections of deposits.

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> 80 West Street, Rochford, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Rochford	<b>District:</b> Southend
<b>NGR:</b> TQ 87382 90555 (c)	<b>Site codes:</b> CAT - 10/1b HEM - RF18
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 20th January 2010	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 0.12 hectares
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Southend Museum (accession code SOUMS A 2010.1)	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER nos:</b> 1707-1861, 13516
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 540 and summary in EAH	
<b>Periods represented:</b> ?late medieval, post-medieval, modern	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b></p> <p><i>The evaluation consisted of two 10 m-long machine-excavated trenches, each trench located within the footprint of one of two proposed buildings. One trench was situated close to the road frontage on West Street, the other at the rear (north-east corner) of the development site.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, a small number of features dating to the post-medieval and modern periods were located. These consisted of small pits, post-holes, a probable drain and a soakaway. The features cut or were sealed by layers of accumulated soil, demolition material or make-up dating to the late medieval/post-medieval and modern periods. These layers sealed natural clay at about 700 mm, which must be close to the water-table as all of the features excavated at below about 800 mm immediately filled with water.</i></p> <p><i>Close to the road frontage on West Street, accumulated soil with finds dating to the late medieval or early post-medieval period and an absence of any significant archaeological features suggest that the area was open, possibly cultivated, land during that time.</i></p> <p><i>At the rear (north-east corner) of the development site, two features dated as post-medieval which contained waterlogged wood - parts of preserved timber posts or stakes - were located. They were sealed by 19th- to 20th-century demolition material consisting of pantiles from the roof of an earlier building of post-medieval or later date. These features and the probable earlier building here may well be connected with industrial activity dated to the 18th century which was recorded on the adjacent plot to the east (76-78 West Street). On that site a number of timber-lined pits were located which were possibly used in tanning or cloth-working.</i></p>	

<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Keywords:</b> -	<b>Significance:</b> neg
<b>Author of summary:</b> Stephen Benfield	<b>Date of summary:</b> March 2010