

An archaeological evaluation by test-pits in the Sheepen Road car park, Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex

December 2014



**fieldwork supervised by Nigel Rayner
report prepared by Howard Brooks**

on behalf of Barefoot & Gilles

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1 Summary

Three test-pits were excavated in the Sheepen Road car park to test the depth of modern overburden and to identify the highest significant archaeological horizons.

The test-pits showed that there is between 2.0 and 2.5m of recent 'made ground' here (ie, no earlier than 19th century).

This consists of an upper modern band of tarmac, concrete and 'hogging', from modern ground level to 0.4m below modern ground level (bgl). Below that, there are two layers of dumped soil. The upper (1.0m-1.2m thick) contains lumps of concrete and is of 20th century date. The lower (0.6m-0.9m thick) contains 19th century finds.

There were no significant finds or features.

2 Introduction

This is the report on an archaeological evaluation by three test-pits carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in the Sheepen Road Car Parks, Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex, on 29th December 2014. The work was carried out on behalf of and was funded by Barefoot & Gilles, to whom we are grateful.



Plate 1: TP1 under excavation

3 Archaeological background

This section is based on records held by The Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, and the Urban Archaeological Database held at Colchester and Ipswich Museum.

The site lies beyond the NW corner of the walled Roman (and later) town, and east of the Scheduled pre-Roman and Roman settlement and trading depot at Sheepen. Modern structures now occupying the Sheepen include Colchester Institute and St Helena School (where there are two Romano-Celtic temples).

There have been two previous archaeological projects on or near this site. The first was a 1996 evaluation by CAT (CAT 1996). During that evaluation, Test-pit 1 (TP1), on the grassed area between the east edge of the car park and the road, showed modern deposits to a depth of 1.7m below modern ground (ie, 5.7m AOD). TP2, also on the grassed area, showed modern dumped material to 1.4m bgl (5.92m AOD). Below that was undated dirty yellow sand and dark brown sandy loam to the limit of excavation at 2m bgl (5.32m AOD). TP3, in the grassy area south of the car park, showed modern dumped material to a depth of 2m bgl (5.89m AOD). Below that was 0.2m of undated black sandy silt. In summary, the 1996 trenches showed modern material to a depth of at least 1.4 metres (TP2), or even deeper in TP1 (1.7m) and TP3 (2m).

The other project was a 1999 watching brief and excavation by Archaeological Services and Consultancy, 120m south of the car parks site (ASCL 1999). The rescue excavation element of this project recorded Late Iron Age to mid-2nd century Roman activity. The main finding was a rectangular timber structure.

4 Planning background and archaeological response

No planning application has yet been submitted. However, it is proposed to redevelop the site for housing.

CBC Archaeological Officer (CBCAO) had identified that the development site is in an area of significant archaeological potential (Section 3 above). Because of this potential, CBCAO recommended the evaluation by test-pits described here, and set out the requirements for the test-pits in a *Brief* (CBC 2014).

Barefoot and Gilles commissioned CAT to carry out the required archaeological work, which it did in accordance with the *Brief* and a *Written Scheme of Investigation* prepared by CAT (2014) and agreed with CBCAO.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with CAT *Policies and procedures* (2012), 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), CIMS 2008a, CIMS 2008b. The guidance contained in the documents *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) and *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) was also followed.

5 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to test the depth of modern overburden and to identify the highest significant archaeological horizons on the site.

6 Results (Figs1-4)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the test pits (TP1-3), with context and finds dating information. For all three test-pits, the tarmac and concrete top surface was broken out by machine.

Test-pit 1

TP1 was 7m long E-W and 1.6m wide N-S. The archaeological sequence from top to bottom was:

L1 modern concrete and tarmac: 0.4m thick (to 0.4m below car park surface)

L2 modern dumped material with concrete, tarmac, and brick in a matrix of moist dark grey brown clay: 1.1m thick (to 1.5m below car park surface).

L3: post-medieval dumped material, soft moist brown clay silty loam with small branches and twigs, occasional oyster shell fragment. 0.6m thick (to 2.10m below car park surface).

L4: soft moist greenish clay silt with small stones – possibly natural riverine silts. 0.2m deep to limit of excavation (to 2.3m below car park surface)



Plate 2: TP1 fully excavated.

Test-pit 2

TP1 was 7m long E-W and 1.6m wide N-S. The archaeological sequence from top to bottom was:

L1 modern concrete and tarmac: 0.4m thick (to 0.4m below car park surface)

L2 modern dumped material with concrete, tarmac, and brick in a matrix of moist dark grey brown clay: 1.2m thick (to 1.6m below car park surface).

L3: post-medieval dumped material, soft moist brown clay silty loam with small branches and twigs, occasional oyster shell fragment. Finds are listed below (no earlier than 19th century). 0.9m thick (to 2.5m below car park surface).

L4: not reached – limit of excavation at 2.5m below car park surface.

Test-pit 3

TP1 was 4m long N-S and 1.6m wide E-W. The archaeological sequence from top to bottom was:

L1 modern concrete and tarmac: 0.4m thick (to 0.4m below car park surface)

L2 modern dumped material with concrete, tarmac, and brick in a matrix of moist dark grey brown clay: 1.0m thick (to 1.4m below car park surface).

L3: post-medieval dumped material, soft moist brown clay silty loam with small branches and twigs, occasional oyster shell fragment. Finds are listed below (no earlier than 19th century). 0.6m thick (to 2.0m below car park surface).

L4: soft moist greenish clay silt with small stones – possibly natural riverine silts. 0.3m deep to limit of excavation (to 2.3m below car park surface)

7 Finds

by Howard Brooks

Trench 2, layer 3

3 sherds (263 grammes) from plates or dishes in modern ironstone, Cotter (2000)

Fabric 48d. 19th/20th century.

1 complete 'Ginger beer bottle', 544g. Stamped

JAS COVENEY
MAGDALEN STREET
COLCHESTER

1 square section green glass bottle with sides recessed, 230g. No marks. Victorian.

1 complete green glass bottle, 297g, raised lettering:

LEA & PERRINS
WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE

1 pale green glass bottle stopper, 13g (doesn't fit bottles above!).

Trench 3, layer 3

1 complete stoneware ginger beer bottle, 495g. Stamped:

MALLINSON & CO
COLCHESTER
&
HALESWORTH

1 grey roof slate fragment, 69g.

4 sherds Fabric 48d modern ironstone, 108g, 19th/20th century.

8 Discussion

The presence of 19th-century finds at a depth of between 2.0m (TP3), 2.1m (TP1), and 2.3m below the car park surface (TP2) demonstrates that the car park occupies land which was essentially created by the dumping of soil in the 19th and 20th centuries (the top 0.4m being recent concrete and tarmac, plus its foundation).

No significant archaeological remains were exposed in the test pits. Although Roman suburban buildings were excavated at Middleborough in the 1970s only 200m to the east (the site is now occupied by the Octagon), there appears to be nothing of significance on this site. It was probably marginal land, perhaps made damp by the presence of the Colne, which is only 300m to the north-east.

The soil here may have been dumped because this was a convenient out-of-town site where waste could be disposed of. Whether or not it was intentional, the dumping has raised ground level by 2 metres, to the extent that it is now dry ground.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Barefoot & Gilles for commissioning and funding the work. Site work was by Nigel Rayner and Felix Whymark, and was monitored by CBCAO Chris Lister. Report text Figures are by Howard Brooks.

10 References

ASCL	1999	<i>An archaeological watching brief on the former sports field, Colchester Institute, Sheepen Lane, Colchester, Essex. Ref ASAC/B/CIC99.1</i>
CAT	2014	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation, Sheepen Road Car Park, Colchester, Essex.</i>
CAT	1996	<i>Archaeological evaluation at the Colchester Institute playing field and tennis courts, and at the Colchester Borough Council Car Parks, Sheepen Road, Colchester. By Stephen Benfield</i>
CAT	2012	<i>Policies & Procedures</i>
CBC	2014	<i>Brief for an archaeological evaluation: Car Park, Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex.</i>
CIMS	2008a	<i>Guidelines on standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester (CBC)</i>
CIMS	2008b	<i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums (CBC)</i>
Cotter, John	2000	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i>
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England East Anglian Archaeological, Occasional Papers, 14, ed by D Gurney</i>
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers, 24, ed by M Medlycott</i>
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation. Institute for Archaeologists.</i>
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials. Institute for Archaeologists.</i>

11 Abbreviations and glossary

CBC	Colchester Borough Council
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LIA	Late Iron Age (150BC – AD43)
modern	19th-21st centuries
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
post-medieval	period from 1530 to 1900
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430

12 Content of archive

paper archive

One A4 wallet containing: this report: original site record: photo catalog: photos on disc: sundry papers and plans.

finds: none retained

13 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 Colchester & Ipswich Museum (accession code 2015.8).

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Distribution list:

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Chris Lister Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer (CBCAO)

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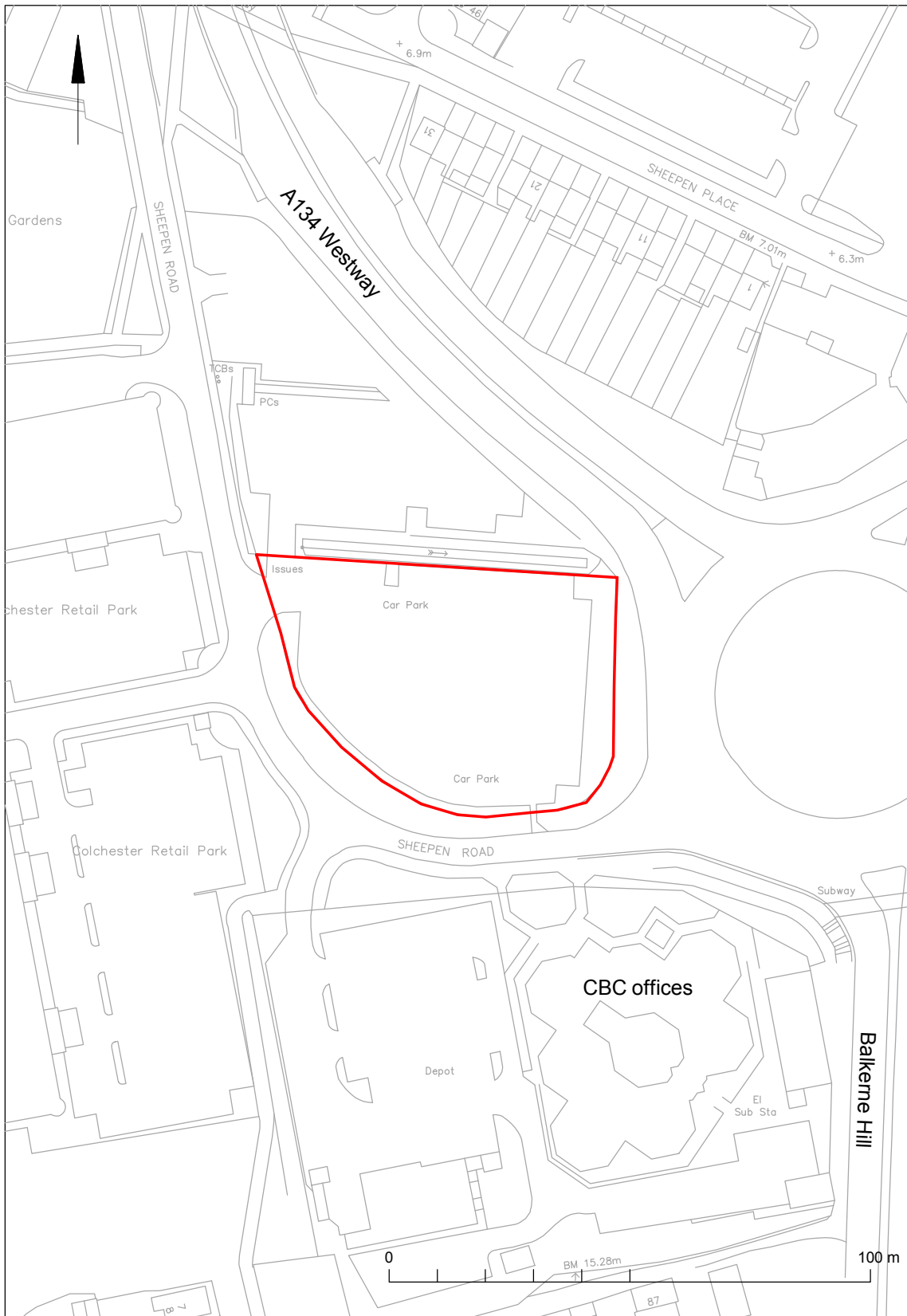
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email: archaeologists@catuk.org

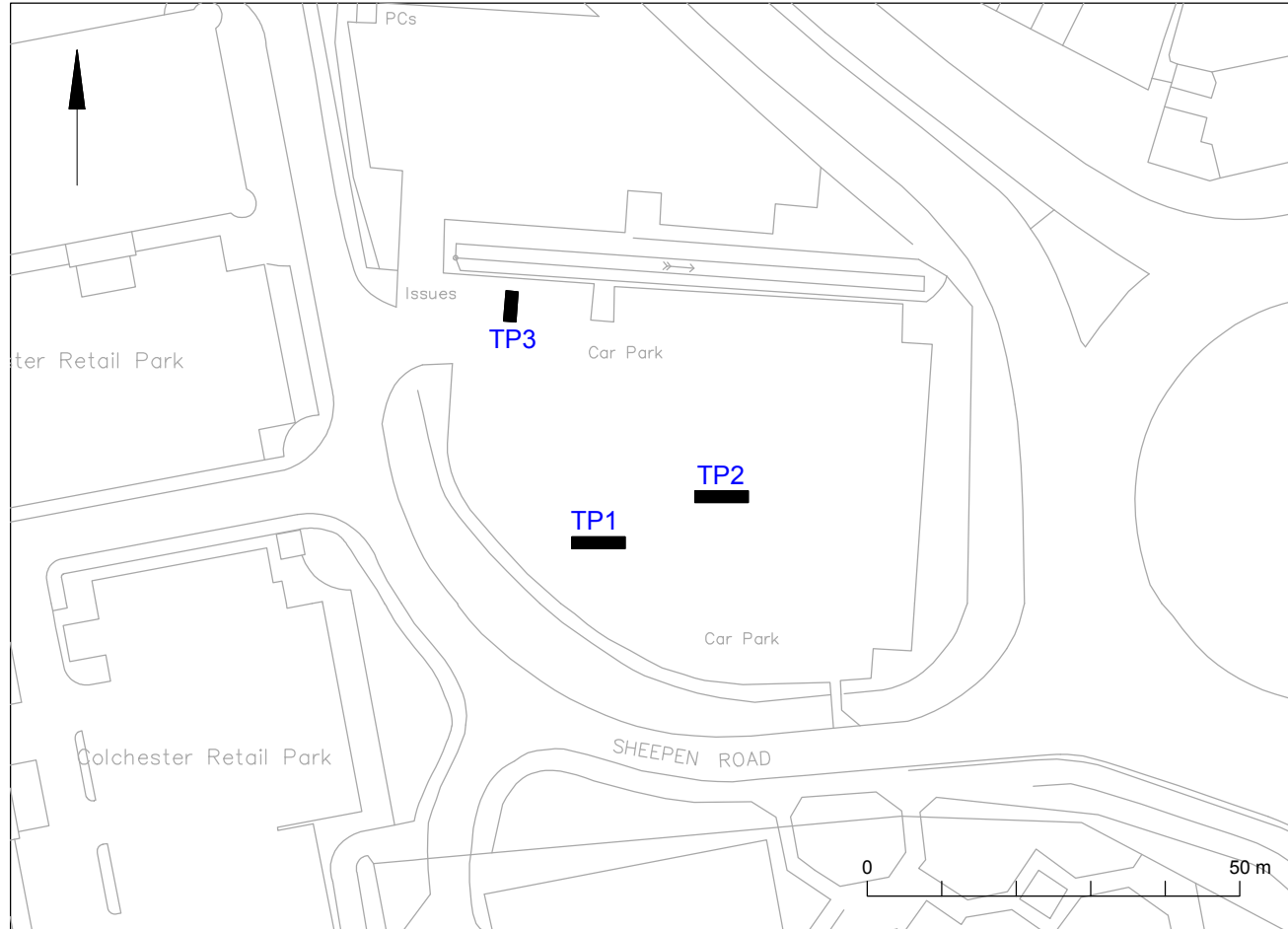
Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 23.01.15



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Fig 1 Site location

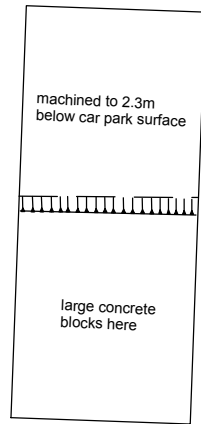


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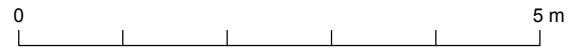
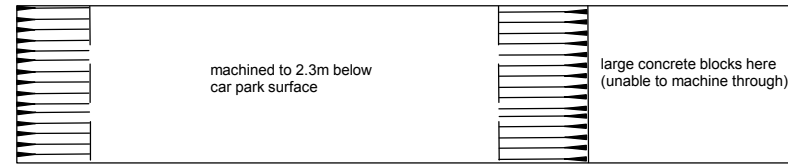
Fig 2 Location of test-pits 1-3 (TP1-3)



T3



T1



T2

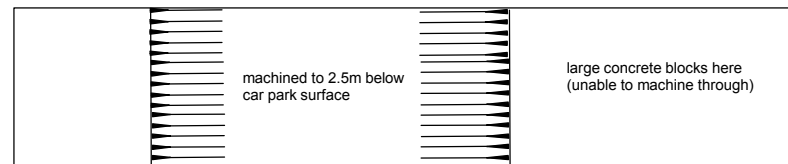


Fig 3 Detail of test-pits 1-3 (TP1-3)

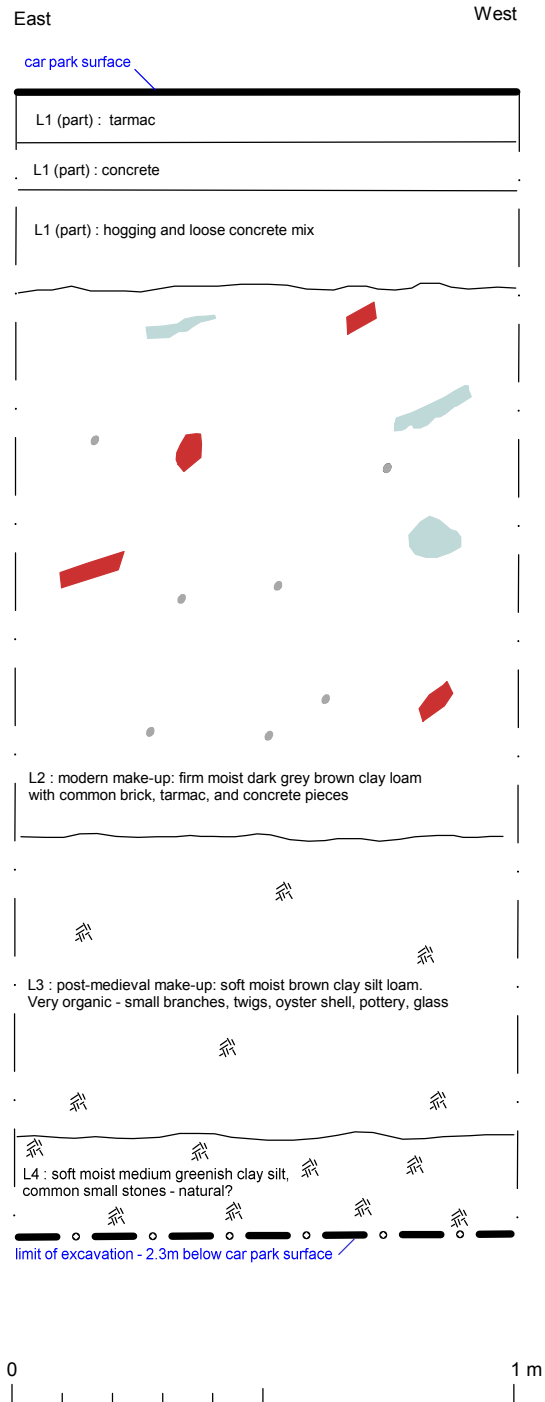


Fig 4 Representative section (T1)

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Sheepen Road car park, Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 99119 25515	Site code: CAT project code – 14/12c
Type of work: evaluation by test-pits	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 29th December 2014	Size of area investigated: test pits: 1.6m x 4m; 1.6m x 7m, 1.6m x 7m
Location of curating museum: Colchester & Ipswich Museum accession code : 2015.8	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? no	Related UAD number: --
Final report: CAT Report 808	
Periods represented: post-medieval and modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>Three test-pits were excavated in the Sheepen Road car park to test the depth of modern overburden and to identify the highest significant archaeological horizons.</i></p> <p><i>The test-pits showed that there is between 2.0 and 2.5m of recent 'made ground' here (ie, no earlier than 19th century).</i></p> <p><i>This consists of an upper modern band of tarmac, concrete and 'hogging', from modern ground level to 0.4m below modern ground level (bgl). Below that, there are two layers of dumped soil. The upper (1.0m-1.2m thick) contains lumps of concrete and is of 20th century date. The lower (0.6m-0.9m thick) contains 19th century finds.</i></p> <p><i>There were no significant finds or features.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
CBC monitor: Chris Lister	
Keywords: made ground	Significance: neg
Author of summary: Howard Brooks	Date of summary: January 2015