

Archaeological trial trenching on land south of Wyndhams Croft, Whiteditch Lane, Newport, Essex

November-December 2015



Report prepared by
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on behalf of
Ford Wells Group

CAT project ref: 15/11a
NGR: TL 5180 3452
HEA code: NEWEC15
Saffron Walden Museum accession code: 2015.64



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CAT Report 899
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1. Summary

Eighteen trenches were excavated in advance of a housing development on Whiteditch Lane, Newport. Fourteen features were identified, the majority of which were shallow, leached out and almost certainly natural.

Two ditches were identified, one Roman, the other of an unknown date. Both are most likely to be field boundaries. The Roman ditch (F14) was exposed in four trenches and runs east-west across the centre of the site.

Nothing else of archaeological interest was uncovered.

2. Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report on the trial-trenching carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land south of Wyndhams Croft, Whiteditch Lane, Newport, Essex. (TL 5180 3452), from the 26th November to the 1st December 2015. The work was commissioned by Ford Wells Group following the direction of a brief prepared by Richard Havis, Historic Environment Advisor for Essex County Council (November 2015). The brief was issued in response to a planning application for the proposed development of the site, comprising the construction of fifteen dwellings with associated garages, access and landscaping (Planning Ref: 14/3266/OP). Work proceeded in accordance with a WSI prepared by CAT (2015) in response to the above brief.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with local and national standards as detailed in CAT 2014, ClfA 2008a, ClfA 2008b, MoRPHE, EAA 8, EAA 14, and EAA 24.

3. Archaeological background

The Essex Historic Environment (HER) Record shows that the proposed development lies within a potentially sensitive area of archaeological interest.

The proposed development lies just outside the suggested limits of the medieval town of Newport (EHER 376-377), and there is documentary evidence of a castle being in the vicinity (EHER 234). Initially the castle was thought to be located in the area of the school immediately to the east/southeast of the site. However, excavations here have failed to identify any remains. In addition an evaluation to the west of the proposed site revealed two areas of activity dating to the Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age (EHER 48597), with multiple pits as well as two small ditches. The nature of the features suggests that they were probably related to settlement activity.

4. Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record and establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any remains and deposits likely to be disturbed by the proposed works, in particular with reference to any potential archaeological deposits relatable to the information provided in Section 3 above.

5. Trial-trenching methodology and results (Fig 2-4)

This section provides an archaeological summary of the excavation of eighteen trial trenches, including features, finds encountered and dating information. The trial-trenches ranged from 5m to 30m in length and were located across the proposed development site (Fig 2).

The trial-trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. Three layers (**Photograph I**) and fourteen features were encountered across the site:

Context	Description	Finds	Date
L1	soft moist dark grey/brown clayey silt topsoil. 130mm-190mm thick over entire site.	modern pottery, glass	modern
L2	soft moist medium/dark grey/brown clayey silt subsoil, underlying L1 over entire site, sealing natural L3. 100mm-200mm thick.	peg tile	post-medieval
L3	moist/wet friable yellow/orange natural clay underlying L2 across whole site. mottled in places.	-	post-glacial
F1	small linear aligned WNW-ESE across the centre of T1 . 880mm wide and 440mm deep with a moist light/medium grey clayey silt fill.	animal bone, worked flint	?
F2	very shallow linear aligned NW-SE across T2 . 400mm wide and 80mm deep with a moist medium grey/brown clayey silt fill.	flint flakes, shell	?
F3	linear aligned N-S across T2 . very likely contemporary with F4 – seems to share top fill. 900mm wide and 230mm deep with a moist medium/dark grey/brown clayey silt fill.	flint flake	prehistoric?
F4	linear aligned N-S across T2 . very likely contemporary with F3 – seems to share top fill. 800mm wide and 220mm deep with a moist medium/dark grey/brown clayey silt fill.	-	prehistoric?
F5	possible posthole/small pit in the north end of T6 . 400mm diameter and 170mm deep with a wet medium yellow/brown mottled clayey silt fill. brick flecks in fill.	-	modern?
F6	shallow linear aligned E-W across the southern half of T6 . 1m wide and 90mm deep with a wet dark grey/brown clayey silt fill.	-	?
F7	very shallow linear aligned N-S across the centre of T5 . 300mm wide and 60mm deep with a moist medium grey/brown clayey silt fill. appears to cut through subsoil L2 in section.	-	post-medieval
F8	small pit in centre of T10 . 690mm diameter and 220mm deep with a moist light grey clayey silt fill. some brick flecks observed during excavation.	-	post-medieval/modern
F9	narrow and shallow linear aligned N-S in T10 before terminating near F8. very likely to be a plough scar.	-	modern
F10	very shallow sub oval pit/depression in centre of T12 . 1.4m diameter and 50mm deep with a moist medium grey/brown clayey silt fill.	flint flake	prehistoric?
F11	shallow linear aligned E-W before terminating in the centre of T13 . 310mm wide and 60mm deep with wet dark mottled grey/yellow/brown clayey silt fill.	-	prehistoric/post-glacial?
F12	shallow circular depression/pit in T8 , very close to F13. 900mm-1.1m in diameter and 170mm deep with moist light/medium grey/brown clayey silt.	-	post-glacial?
F13	shallow irregular shaped oval depression/pit in T8 , very close to F12. 1.2mm-1.4m wide and 140mm deep with moist light grey/brown clayey silt.	-	post-glacial?
F14	wide and deep ditch aligned broadly E-W in T8 , T9 , T17 and T18 . 1.6m wide and 500mm deep with a moist medium/dark grey/black clayey silt fill with flecks of charcoal.	Roman pottery	Roman



Photograph I Representative section of T7, showing stratigraphy of site. Shot taken facing north.

Trench 1 (Photograph II)

Trench 1 (T1) was 30m long and aligned NW-SE. T1's stratigraphy consisted of 250mm of topsoil (L1) and 90mm of subsoil (L2) before encountering natural clay at 340mm (L3).

One feature was excavated in T1; a linear running WNW-ESE (F1 – **Photograph III**). One sheep tooth and a worked flint were recovered from this feature.



Photograph II Shot of T1, taken facing south.

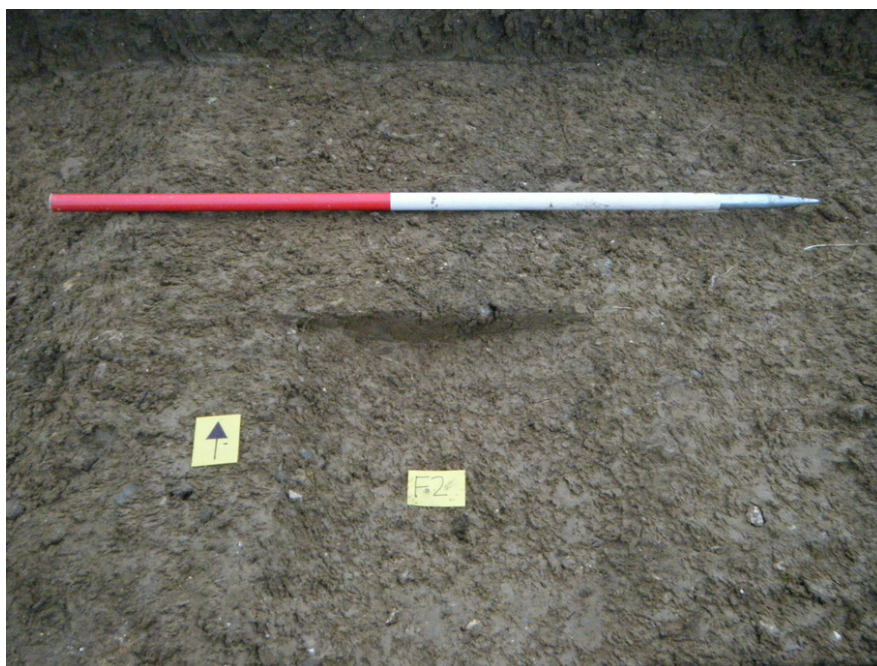


Photograph III F1 section. Shot taken facing east.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (T2) was 30m long and aligned NE-SW. T2's stratigraphy consisted of 130mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 130mm of subsoil (L2) before encountering natural clay at 260mm (L3).

Three features were excavated in T2, one narrow shallow linear aligned NW-SE (F2 – **Photograph IV**), and two N-S contemporary linears (F3 and F4). Flint flakes were recovered from F2 and F3, but no other finds were recovered.



Photograph IV F2 section. Shot taken facing north.

Trench 3 (Photograph V)

Trench 3 (T3) was 15m long and aligned NW-SE. T3's stratigraphy consisted of 130mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 130mm of subsoil (L2) before encountering natural clay at 260mm (L3).

There were no features in T3.



Photograph V Shot of T3, taken facing north.

Trench 4

Trench 4 (T4) was 30m long and aligned NW-SE. T4's stratigraphy consisted of 180mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 150mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 330mm (L3).

There were no features in T4.

Trench 5 (Photograph VI)

Trench 5 (T5) was 30m long and aligned NE-SW. T5's stratigraphy consisted of 220mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 100mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 320mm (L3).

One feature was excavated in T5, a shallow linear running N-S (F7). No finds were recovered from it.



Photograph VI Shot of T5, taken facing north-east.

Trench 6

Trench 6 (T6) was 30m long and aligned NW-SE. T6's stratigraphy consisted of 180mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 170mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 350mm (L3).

Two features were excavated in T6, a small pit/posthole (F5) and a wide shallow linear running E-W (F6). No finds were recovered from either feature.

Trench 7

Trench 7 (T7) was 30m long and aligned NE-SW. T7's stratigraphy (**Photograph I**) consisted of 160mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 190mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 350mm (L3).

There were no features in T7.

Trench 8

Trench 8 (T8) was 30m long and aligned NW-SE. T8's stratigraphy consisted of 160mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 150mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 310mm (L3).

Three features were excavated in T8, two shallow depressions/pits (F12 and F13 – **Photograph VII**) and a substantial ditch aligned E-W (F14 – **Photograph VIII**). No finds were recovered from F12 or F13, but F14 contained several sherds of Roman pottery and residual worked flint.

After the excavation of F14, two more trenches were opened to ascertain its alignment – T17 and T18 (detailed below).



Photograph VII F12 and F13. Shot taken facing east.



Photograph VIII F14 in T8. Shot taken facing west.

Trench 9

Trench 9 (T9) was 30m long and aligned NE-SW. T9's stratigraphy consisted of 180mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 150mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 330mm (L3).

One feature was exposed in T9, the very edge of the substantial Roman ditch F14.

Trench 10

Trench 10 (T10) was 30m long and aligned NW-SE. T10's stratigraphy consisted of 150mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 200mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 350mm (L3).

There were no features in T10.

Trench 11

Trench 11 (T11) was 30m long and aligned NE-SW. T11's stratigraphy consisted of 160mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 190mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 350mm (L3).

There were no features in T11.

Trench 12

Trench 12 (T12) was 30m long and aligned NW-SE. T12's stratigraphy consisted of 180mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 130mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 310mm (L3).

One feature was excavated in T12, a very shallow sub oval pit/depression (F10). One flint flake was recovered from its fill.

Trench 13

Trench 13 (T13) was 15m long and aligned NE-SW. T13's stratigraphy consisted of 170mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 130mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 300mm (L3).

One feature was excavated in T13, a very shallow linear aligned E-W that terminated in the centre of the trench (F11). No finds were recovered from this feature.

Trench 14

Trench 14 (T14) was 30m long and aligned NE-SW. T14's stratigraphy consisted of 140mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 210mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 350mm (L3).

There were no features in T14.

Trench 15

Trench 15 (T15) was 30m long and aligned NW-SE. T15's stratigraphy consisted of 130mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 150mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 280mm (L3).

There were no features in T15.

Trench 16

Trench 16 (T16) was 30m long and aligned NE-SW. T16's stratigraphy consisted of 120mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 130mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 250mm (L3).

There were no features in T16.

Trench 17

Trench 17 (T17) was 5m long and aligned NW-SE. T17's stratigraphy consisted of 160mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 150mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 310mm (L3).

One feature was exposed in T17, a continuation of F14 aligned E-W, previously observed in T8 and T9.

Trench 18

Trench 18 (T18) was 9m long and aligned NW-SE. T18's stratigraphy consisted of 160mm of topsoil (L1), sealing 150mm of subsoil before encountering natural clay at 310mm (L3).

One feature was exposed in T18, a continuation of F14 aligned E-W, previously observed in T8 and T9.

6. Finds

Stephen Benfield

Introduction

A small quantity of prehistoric worked flint and Roman pottery was recovered, together with a few pieces of animal bone and shell. These come from excavated features located in five of the evaluation trenches (T1, T2, T8, T12 & T17). All of the finds are listed and described by context in **Table 2**. The Roman pottery fabrics refer to those commonly used for recording Roman pottery in Essex (Going 1987) with the addition of the fabric category Black surface wares (Fabric BSW). The fabrics are listed in **Table 1**.

Fabric	Fabric description	No.	Wt/g.
BSW	Black surface wares	13	304
21	Micellaneous oxidised red wares	1	4
45	Romanising coarsewares	2	2
47	Sandy greywares	4	36
	<i>Total</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>346</i>

Table 1 Roman pottery fabrics

Trench	Ctxt	Find no	Form/ description	Spot date
T1	F001	1	<i>Flint:</i> squat flake, cortex on base, moderately large striking platform, part patinated dorsal face with unpatinated irregular flake removal and shatter areas, some use wear/damage on slightly concave edge <i>Animal bone:</i> ruminant tooth (probably sheep), poor condition	Flint dated later prehistoric (LNeo-BA) but animal bone in context is probably later
T2	F002	2	<i>Flint:</i> four moderately thin flakes, cortex on one piece, damaged/broken pieces removing parts of flakes or striking platform areas; one flake notched either side of striking area removing part of striking platform and creating an irregular point with use wear/damage along the non-cortex edge; one broad flake with hinge fracture lightly patinated on dorsal face <i>Oyster shell:</i> single oyster shell	Flint dated later prehistoric (LNeo-BA) but shell suggests a later date for context
T2	F003	3	<i>Flint:</i> moderately thin flake, cortex along one edge, hinge fracture	Flint dated later prehistoric (LNeo-BA)
T12	F010	4	<i>Flint:</i> small flake piece retaining striking platform broken away/snapped on base and side	
	US	5	<i>Flint:</i> probable broken thermal fracture piece with some patination on surfaces except broken edge, but with small area of unpatinated possible modification/use wear at one corner (utilised natural piece)	Flint dated prehistoric but animal bone in context is probably later

Trench	Ctxt	Find no	Form/ description	Spot date
			Animal bone: medium size mammal metapodial (possibly sheep), poor condition	
T8	F014	6	<p><i>Flint:</i> three pieces; elongated flake with cortex on one edge and some patination on surfaces, later small unpatinated flake removal on dorsal face, small, shallow notch-like are on one edge with use wear/damage; flake with cortex on dorsal face, area of striking platform heavily battered; small natural elongated flake, patinated, small area of edge close to base has spaced small spaced notches which again are almost certainly natural</p> <p><i>Roman pottery:</i> - group of sherds from the base of a bowl with chamfered edge, fine sand, noticeably micaceous fabric with rare small stone/flint inclusions (Fabric BSW) 6 sherds, weight 61 g - shoulder from a jar with rilled bands, coarse sandy fabric with rare small stone/white quartz inclusions, abraded (Fabric BSW) weight 25 g - single body sherd from a jar/bowl (Fabric BSW) weight 7 g - base of a jar in sandy fabric with rare small stone/white quartz inclusions, contained dark charcoal soil deposit (Fabric BSW) weight 160 g - rim from a moderately large jar in sandy fabric (Fabric BSW) weight 35 g - small sherds from the base of a jar/bowl, some small dark inclusions (Fabric 45) 2 sherds, weight 2 g - body sherds in sandy greware from jar(s)/bowl(s), abraded (Fabric 47) 4 sherds, weight 36 g - body sherds in a slightly coarse sand oxidised (orange) fabric, patches of flaking pale grey residue on surfaces and edges (Fabric 21) weight 4 g</p>	Roman, 2C+ with L1-2/3C (residual preh flints)
T17	F014 (surface finds)	7	<p><i>Roman pottery:</i> body sherds from a jar/bowl, abraded (Fabric BSW) 3 sherds, weight 16 g</p>	Rom

Table 2 Finds by context

Prehistoric

Individual pieces and small numbers of worked flint of prehistoric date were recovered from four features - F1(T1), F2(T2), F3(T2), F10(T12) and F14(T8). There are no closely-diagnostic pieces, but the nature of the flint-working with irregular flakes, the presence of several hinge fractures, and several notches made on flake edges suggest a later prehistoric, Late Neolithic-Bronze Age, date with the Later Bronze Age being the most likely. Some of the pieces have cortex and there is some patination on surfaces, but this is mostly confined to the dorsal face. One flake from F14 has a small flake removed from its dorsal face which is later than the patinated surface. Another unstratified piece appears to be a natural thermal fracture that has possibly been utilised as there is a shallow, dished area on one edge that is possibly modification or use wear. The impression is of expedient use of local flint, some of which had broken patinated edges. The flints recovered with Roman pottery in ditch F14 are clearly residual. Worked flints recovered from other contexts where they are associated with animal bone and oyster shell are also likely to be residual. The moderately-poor condition of the bone might indicate acidic soil conditions.

Roman

All of the Roman pottery was recovered from one ditch F14 which was located in four of the trenches (T8, T9, T17 & T18). Most of the pottery comes from the excavated section in T8. Close dating within the Roman period is difficult. The assemblage is quite small and all of the pottery is coarseware with only one rim sherd. Also, some sherds are abraded and might be old in relation to the context, although this might also reflect acidic soil conditions. The sherds recovered are mostly from jar or jar/bowl forms with one bowl/dish. There are sherds from two pots that suggest a date in or after the 2nd century. One is part of the base from a bowl or dish that has a chamfered edge. The other is a shoulder sherd with rilling indicating that it may come from a 'Braughing' jar (Going 1987, form G21). That the rilling is confined to the shoulder suggests a date in the 2nd century or later. The small assemblage itself is dominated by Black Surface wares. There is one sherd in a 'Romanising' fabric that is likely to date to the late 1st or early 2nd century. None of the pottery needs date to the late Roman period. Overall, a date in the 2nd-3rd century seems likely for the pottery.

7. Discussion

Most features were not of archaeological interest. Three were ascertained to be modern in origin (F5, F8 and F9). Of the rest, three contained worked flint fragments (F2, F3 and F10), but the remainder contained no finds. Universally these undated features had leached fills and shallow profiles. They maybe prehistoric in origin but, realistically, they could just as easily be natural depressions or gullies. If they are natural features, the worked-flint recovered from them probably represents a background spread of Late Neolithic/Bronze Age prehistoric activity in the landscape surrounding the site (possibly associated with the prehistoric remains found to the west of the site – see Archaeological background above).

The only two features that are of archaeological interest are the undated ditch F1 and the Roman ditch F14. The lack of any pits or other features associated with either ditch suggests that they are isolated field boundaries. A possible Roman ditch was uncovered during the evaluation of the school to the east (Bazley 2004), and this ditch likely fits into the same agricultural landscape.

The lack of settlement activity on the site is somewhat surprising, given the sites elevated location and commanding view of the surrounding area. The most logical reason for this lack of historical settlement is the high water-table. Even though the site is on a hill, there is a large amount of surface water. During this investigation trenches and sections would often become full of water within 24 hours, even if shallow. Such a high water-table would have made the site unappealing and unsuitable for any settlement in the past.

8. Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Ford Wells Group for commissioning the project. The project was managed by M Baister, and the fieldwork was carried out by M Baister, R Mathieson, F Whymark and A Wade. Figures are by M Baister and E Holloway. The project was monitored for Essex County Council by Richard Havis.

9. References

Bazely, M.	2004	An Archaeological Watching Brief At Newport Free Grammer School, Newport, Essex
CAT	1999	Policies and procedures (updated 2014)
CAT	2015	Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation on land south of Wyndhams Croft, Whiteditch Lane, Newport, Essex, CB11 3UD. November 2015
CIfA	2008a	Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation.
CIfA	2008b	Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.
EAA 8	2000	Research and Archaeology: a frame work for the Eastern Counties 2 Research agenda and strategy, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 8, ed. by Brown, N. and Glazenbrook, J.
EAA 14	2003	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Paper 14, ed. by David Gurney
EAA 24	2011	Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24, ed. by Maria Medlycott
ECC	2015	Brief for Archaeological Trial Trenching and Excavation at the land south of Wyndhams Croft, Whiteditch Lane, Newport, Essex. November 2015
Going, C.	1987	<i>The Mansio and other sites in the south-eastern sector of Caesarmagus: the Roman pottery</i> , CBA Research Report 62
MoRPHE	2006	Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (English Heritage)

10. Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material (brick, tile, tessera).
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
ERO	Essex Records Office
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
HEA	Historic Environment Advisor
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
layer	an accumulation or deposition of archaeological material
post-medieval	the period from AD 1500 to AD 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to AD c410
medieval	the period from AD 1066 to AD 1500
modern	the period from AD 1800 to present day
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey

11. Contents of the archive

Finds archive

1 Museum box containing all finds.

Paper archive

1 A4 wallet containing:
this report
original site record (context and finds sheets)
section drawings
digital photo log
attendance record
sundry papers
digital photos on disc

12. Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive are currently held by CAT at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, C02 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Saffron Walden Museum (accession code: 2015.64)

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Distribution list:

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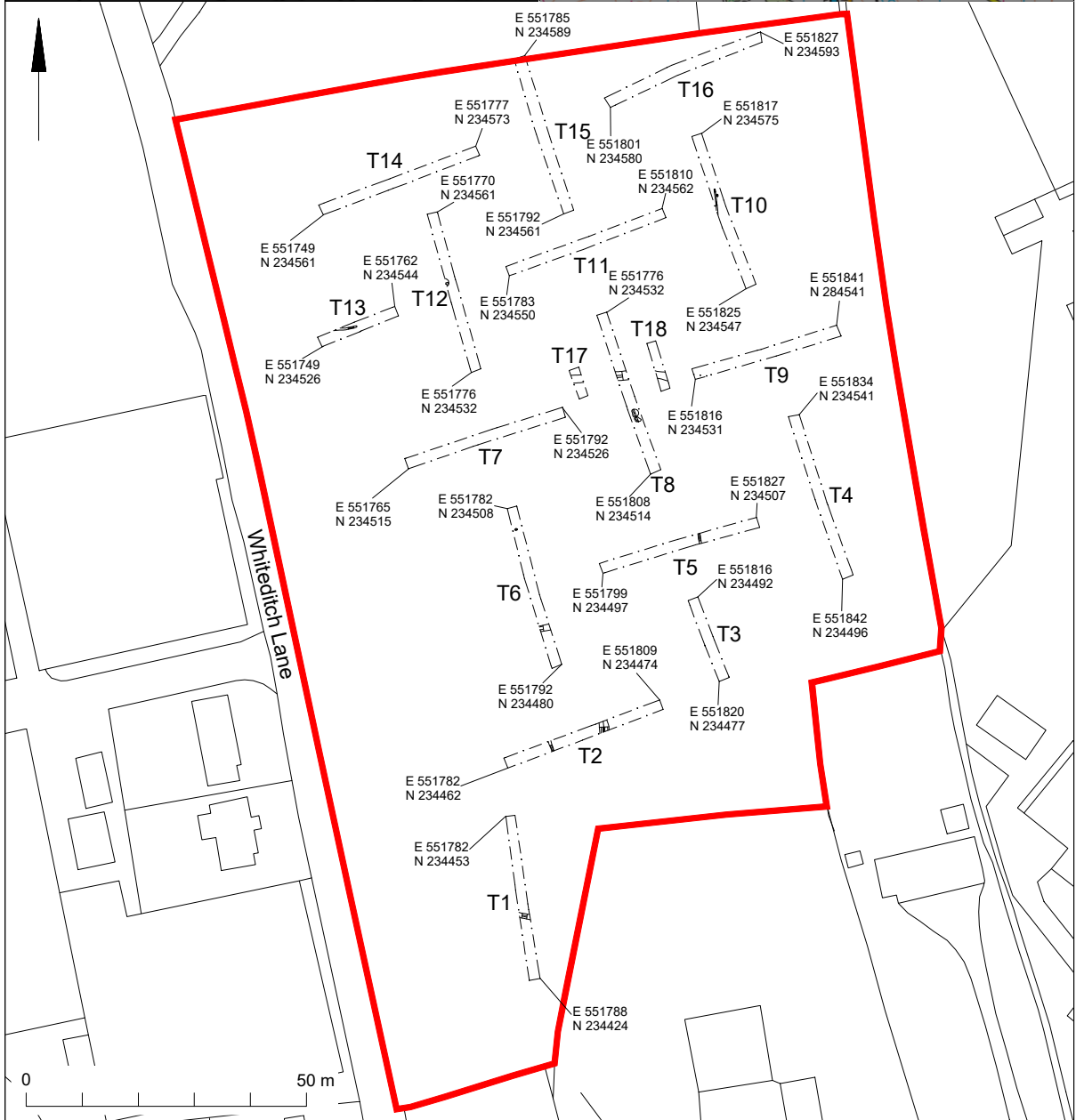
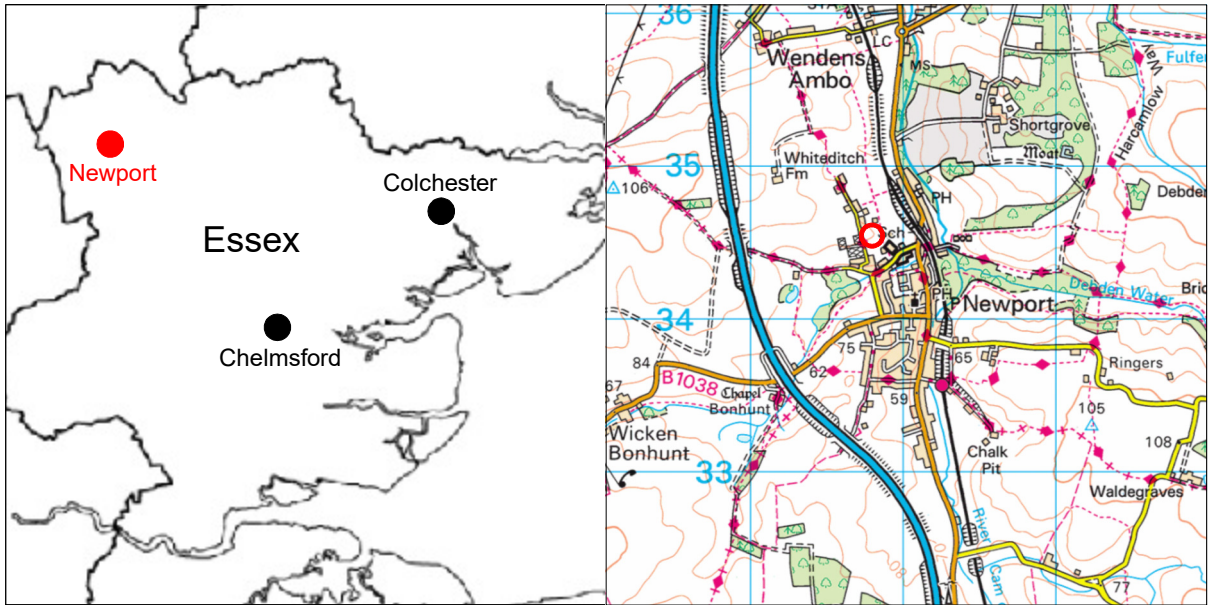


Fig 1 Site location.

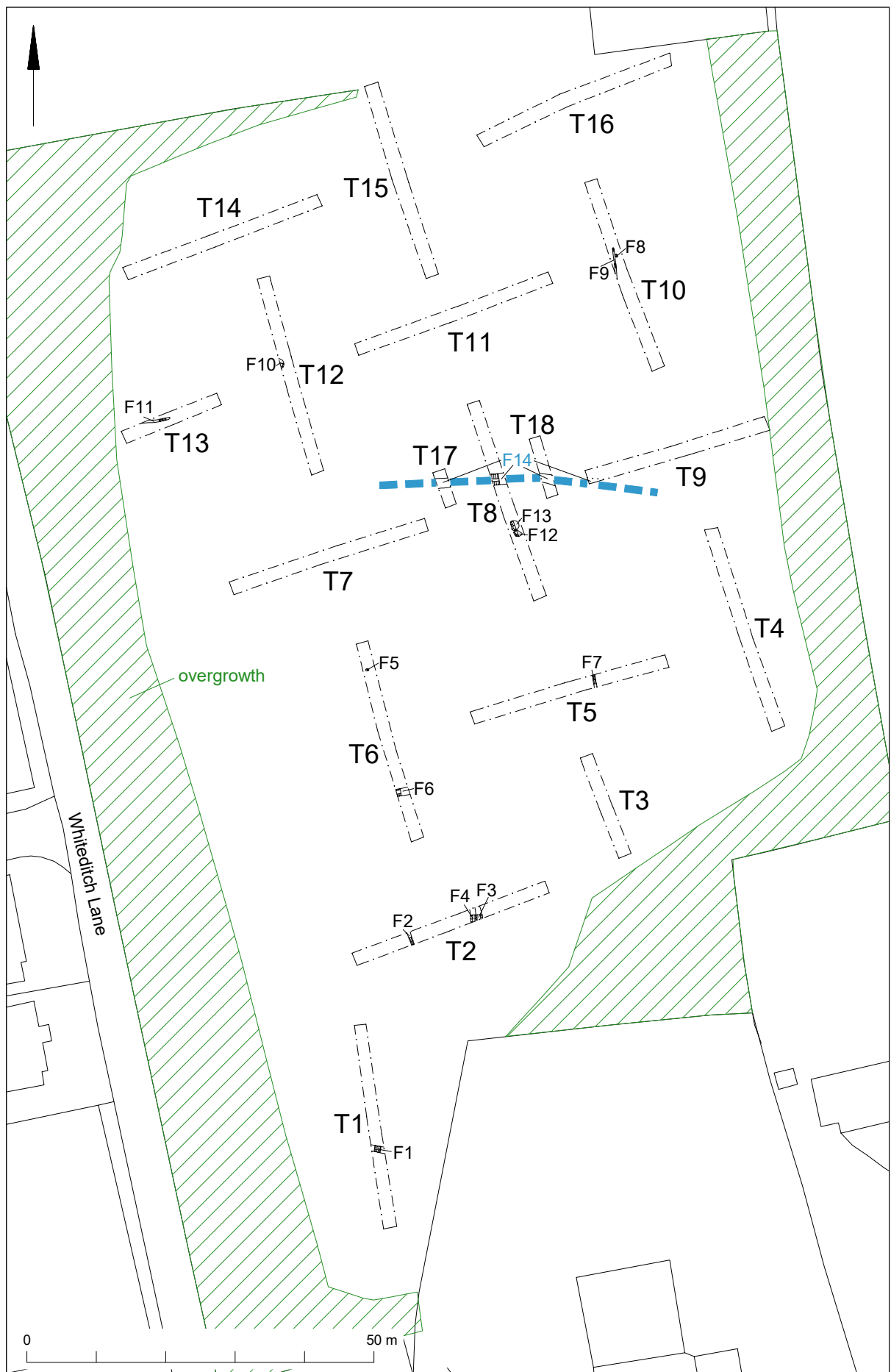


Fig 2 Evaluation results,
projection of ditch F14 shown.

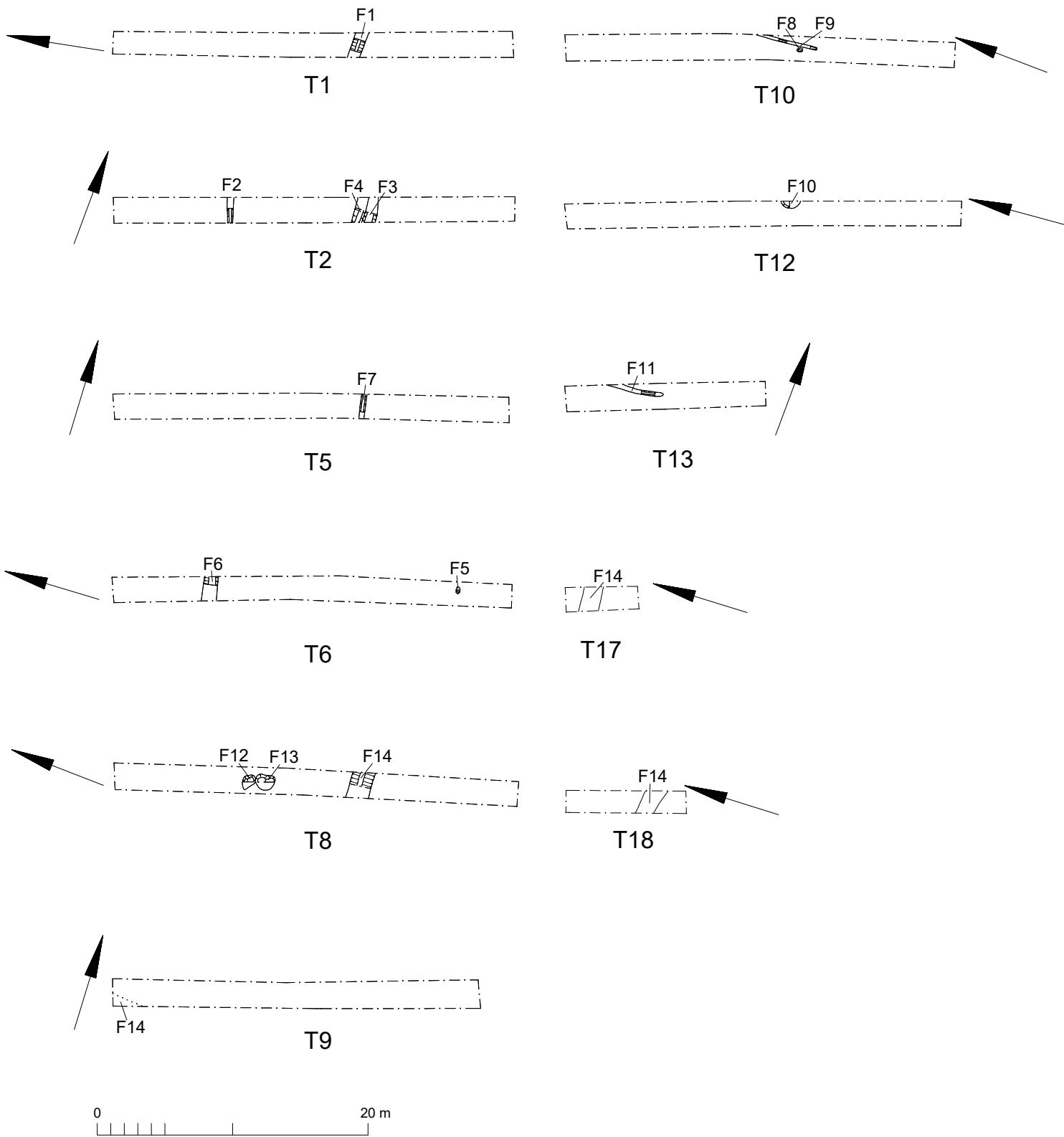


Fig 3 Detailed trench plans.

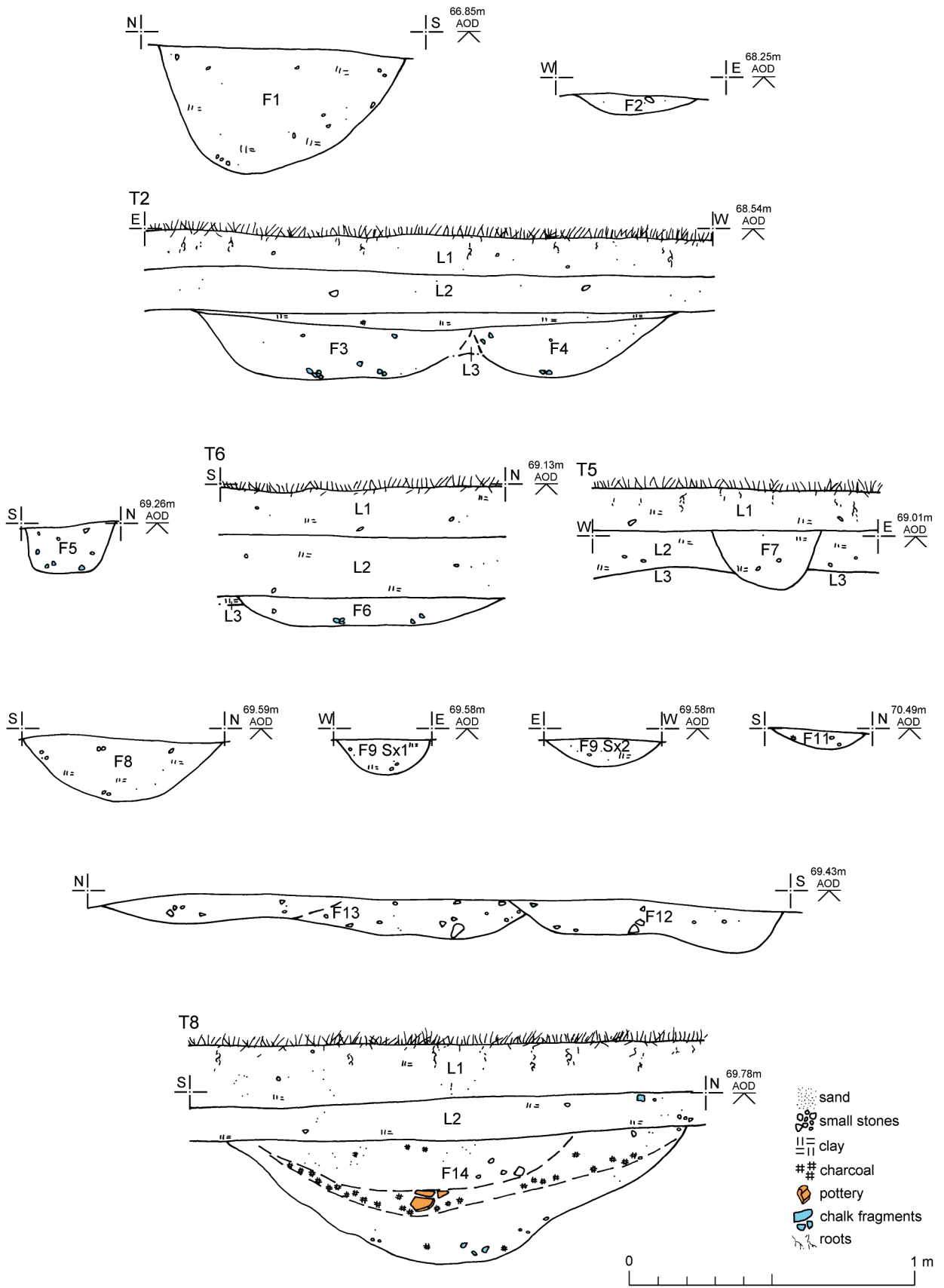


Fig 4 Sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: land south of Wyndhams Croft, Whiteditch Lane, Newport, Essex, CB11 3UD	
Parish: Newport	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 5180 3452	Site code: CAT project code – 15/11a HEA Code – NEWEC15
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 26th November - 1st December 2015	Size of area investigated: 464m of trenching
Location of curating museum: Saffron Walden Museum: 2015.64	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: EHER 234, EHER 376-377, EHER 48597
Final report: CAT Report 899	
Periods represented: modern, Roman, prehistoric	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>Eighteen trenches were excavated in advance of a housing development on Whiteditch Lane, Newport. Fourteen features were identified, the majority of which were shallow, leached out and almost certainly natural.</i></p> <p><i>Two ditches were identified, one Roman, the other of an unknown date. Both are most likely to be field boundaries. The Roman ditch (F14) was exposed in four trenches and runs east-west across the centre of the site.</i></p> <p><i>Nothing else of archaeological interest was uncovered.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
ECC Monitor: Richard Havis	
Keywords: field boundaries	Significance: *
Author of summary: Mark Baister	Date of summary: December 2015