

Archaeological evaluation on land at Chesterford House, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex, CB10 1PL

March 2020



by Dr Elliott Hicks

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commissioned by Kevin Swayne

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CAT Report 1539
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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (three trial-trenches) was carried out on land at Chesterford House, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex, in advance of the construction of two dwellings. The site lies outside of the Roman and medieval settlement of Great Chesterford, a town of nationally-significant archaeological importance. Previous excavations to the immediate northwest revealed remains of Roman extramural settlement and an Anglo-Saxon burial. A single Roman ditch and a medieval or post-medieval pit cut by two postholes were recorded during this evaluation. The former feature formed part of the extramural area of the Roman town, while the latter features are probably the product of agricultural activity in the area prior to the construction of Chesterford House by the 19th century.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land at Chesterford House, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex which was carried out on 23rd March 2020. The work was commissioned by Kevin Swayne in advance of the construction of two dwellings and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Katie Lee-Smith advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with an *Archaeological Brief for Trial Trenching and Excavation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Katie Lee-Smith (ECCPS 2020), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2020).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on published accounts of the archaeological remains at Great Chesterford (Medlycott 2011), the ECC brief and the Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The Historic Environment Record shows that the proposed development lies within an area of highly sensitive archaeological deposits.

Finds of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age date have been found in the vicinity. A possible Bronze Age barrow is located within the later Roman town and both the Roman town and temple appear to have their origins in the Late Iron Age.

A Roman fort was established here following the Boudican revolt of AD 60/61 but had been abandoned by the end of the 1st century. Around the fort grew a settlement which expanded considerably in the 2nd century, declined in the 3rd century, and then expanded again in the 4th century with the construction of the town walls. The town would have been the economic focus for the surrounding area and was located in an

area of strategic importance. The development site is located c 880m east of the 1st-century Roman fort and 4th-century walled town (SM 24871) within an area of extramural settlement and cemeteries, and there is high potential for Roman deposits surviving here.

A large Early Saxon cemetery is located to the northwest of the Roman town, with other burials recorded close to the Great Chesterford churchyard. The location of the associated Anglo-Saxon settlement has yet to be identified.

The site of the medieval town was the same as that of the Roman town, and lies within the Great Chesterford Conservation Area (HER 18489).

Archaeological trial trenching and excavation conducted directly to the north of the site by Oxford Archaeology East in 2014 uncovered a Roman roadside ditch, well and pits containing a large pottery assemblage alongside glass and metal artefacts. An Anglo-Saxon burial was also excavated and radiocarbon dated to AD 661-770, indicating the potential presence of a cemetery in the area. Most of the remains were located along the southern edge of the 2014 site, 100m west of the current development site (Moan 2014; EHER 48751).

4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits, and to assess the archaeological potential of the site to allow the ECCHEA to determine if further investigation is required.

5 Results (Figs 2-4)¹

Three trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Trench T1, a T-shaped trench, was 16m long and 1.8m wide; trench T2, an L-shaped trench, was 13m long and 1.8m wide; and trench T3 was 14m long and 1.8m wide.

The trenches were cut through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.2-0.25m thick, firm, moist dark grey/brown silt) and an accumulation layer (L2, c 0.11-0.15m thick, firm, moist medium grey silt) onto natural (L3, firm/hard, dry medium grey sandy-silt with frequent chalk pieces, encountered at a depth of 0.35-0.36m below current ground level).

Trench 1 (T1): 16m long by 1.8m wide

Roman ditch F7 was aligned NNW-SSE and was 0.69m wide and 0.3m deep.

Undatable pit F8 was 1.18m wide and 0.2m deep. It was possibly natural in origin.

A shallow pit, F3 was also excavated. The feature extended beyond the limit of excavation but its exposed extent was 1.99m wide and 19cm deep. It may have been a treethrow.

Trench 2 (T2): 13m long by 1.8m wide

Medieval or post-medieval pit F4 extended beyond the limit of excavation, but its exposed extent was 1.59m wide and 0.72m deep. Two postholes, F5 and F6 were cut into the base of F4. They were 0.17m wide and 0.16m deep and 0.23m wide and 0.22m deep, respectively.

Trench 3 (T3): 14m long by 1.8m wide

F2, an undatable shallow pit-like feature, was 1.97m wide and 18cm deep. It may have been the product of rooting.

¹ The photographic record could not be completed as fieldwork ceased due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Treethrow F1 was also excavated.



Photograph 1 Working shot

6 Finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

Pit F4 (1) produced one fragment of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile with a weight of 50g. Ditch F7 (2) contained a Roman greyware body sherd with a weight of 7g.

7 Conclusion

Despite being located in an area rich in nationally-significant archaeological remains, only a small number of features were uncovered during this evaluation: a Roman ditch, a medieval or post-medieval pit into which two postholes were cut, two pits, a possible pit, and a treethrow.

Previous archaeological investigations in this area have established that Roman extramural settlement extended into this area, some 675m to the east of the walled town. Excavations carried out to the immediate west and northwest of the present site uncovered a roadside ditch, a well and several pits. It is likely that the ditch recorded in the present investigation forms part of a field system or large paddock attached to an extramural house, but the limited area excavated means its relationship to the other Roman remains in the area is unclear. It does lie at a rough right-angle to the roadside ditch, however.

A medieval or post-medieval pit, cut by two postholes, was also uncovered. The nature of this feature is unclear, but it appears that the pit was excavated and then two posts were set into its base. Historic cartographic evidence indicates that prior to the construction of Chesterford House during the 19th century, this section of the present-day High Street was lined by a series of buildings to the rear of which was unoccupied land which was almost certainly utilised for agricultural purposes (see Map 1 below) and these remains are probably related to this activity. It is also possible, however, that they evidence activity at this site during the medieval period.



Map 1 Extract from Chapman and André's map of Essex, 1777. The approximate location of the site is indicated by the blue arrow.

Finally, while an Anglo-Saxon burial was previously excavated to the west of the present site, no features or material of this date was revealed during this investigation.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Kevin Swayne for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway with R Mathieson, M Perou and A Smith. Figures are by C Lister, B Holloway and S Carter. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Katie Lee-Smith.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--|
| Brown, N & Glazebrook, J | 2000 | <i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8) |
| CAT | 2019 | <i>Health & Safety Policy</i> |
| ClfA | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i> |
| ClfA | 2014b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| ECCPS | 2020 | <i>Archaeological brief for trial trenching and excavation on land at Chesterford House, High Street, Great Chesterford,</i> by Katie Lee-Smith |
| Gurney, D | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14) |
| Historic England | 2015 | <i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i> |
| Medlycott, M | 2011 | <i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) |
| Medlycott, M | 2011 | <i>The Roman Town of Great Chesterford.</i> East Anglian Archaeology 137 |
| Moan, P | 2014 | <i>A Romanised section of the Icknield Way at land south of Stanley Road, Great Chesterford, Essex.</i> Oxford Archaeology East Report No. 1638 |
| MHCLG | 2019 | <i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. |

10 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon period from c 500 – 1066

Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
Mesolithic	period from c 10,000 – 4000BC
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Neolithic	period from c 4000 – 2500 BC
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
Palaeolithic	period c 800,000 BC to c 10,000BC
peg-tile	rectangular thin tile with peg-hole(s) used mainly for roofing, first appeared c AD1200 and continued in use to present day, but commonly post-medieval to modern
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
wsi	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1539)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Original site record (trench sheets, sections)

Site digital photos and log

Inked sections

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1539)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Survey data

12 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 Saffron Walden Museum under accession code SAFWM: 2020.36

Distribution list:

Kevin Swayne
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

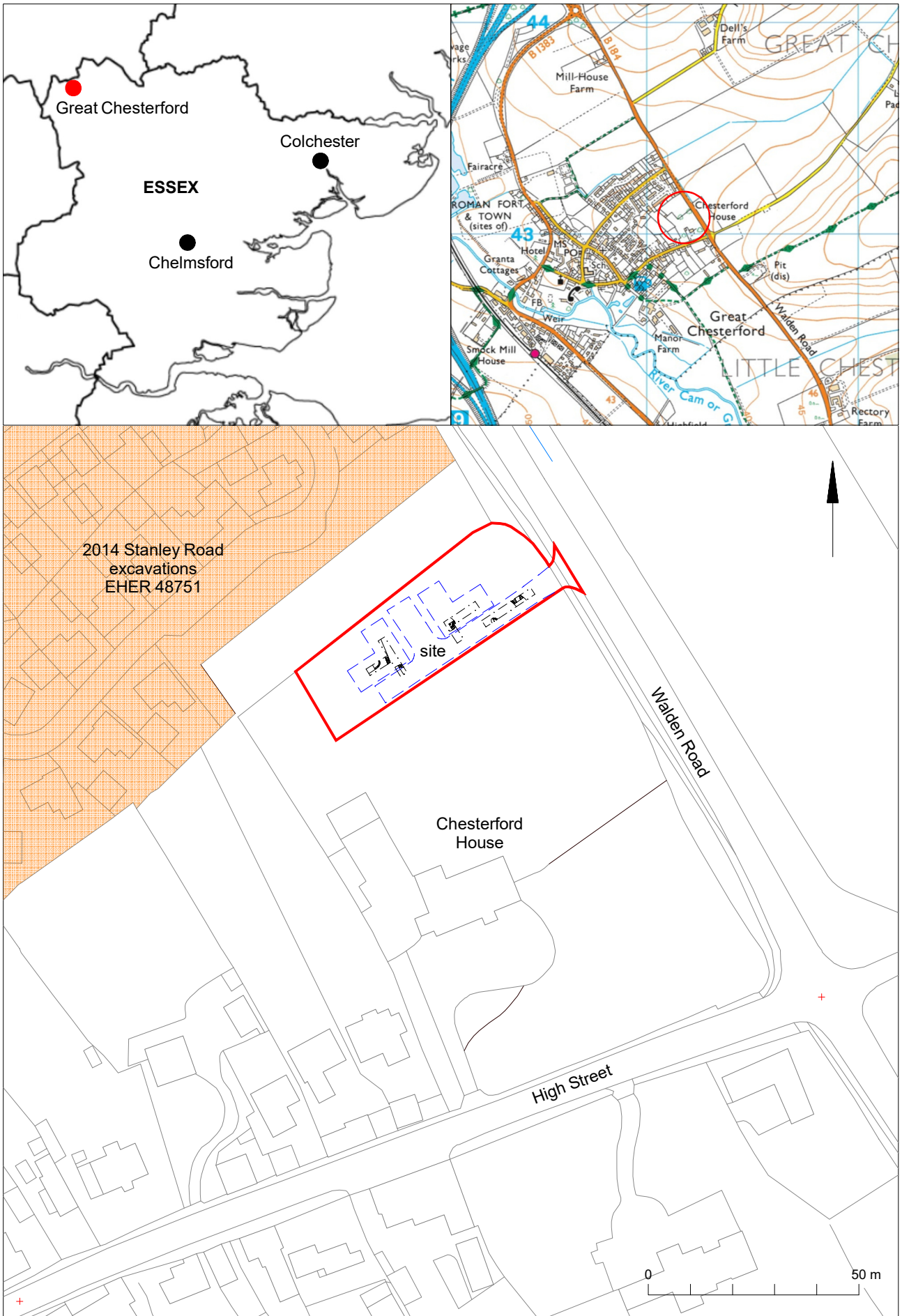


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Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 01.05.2020



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Fig 1 Site location, (proposed development shown blue)

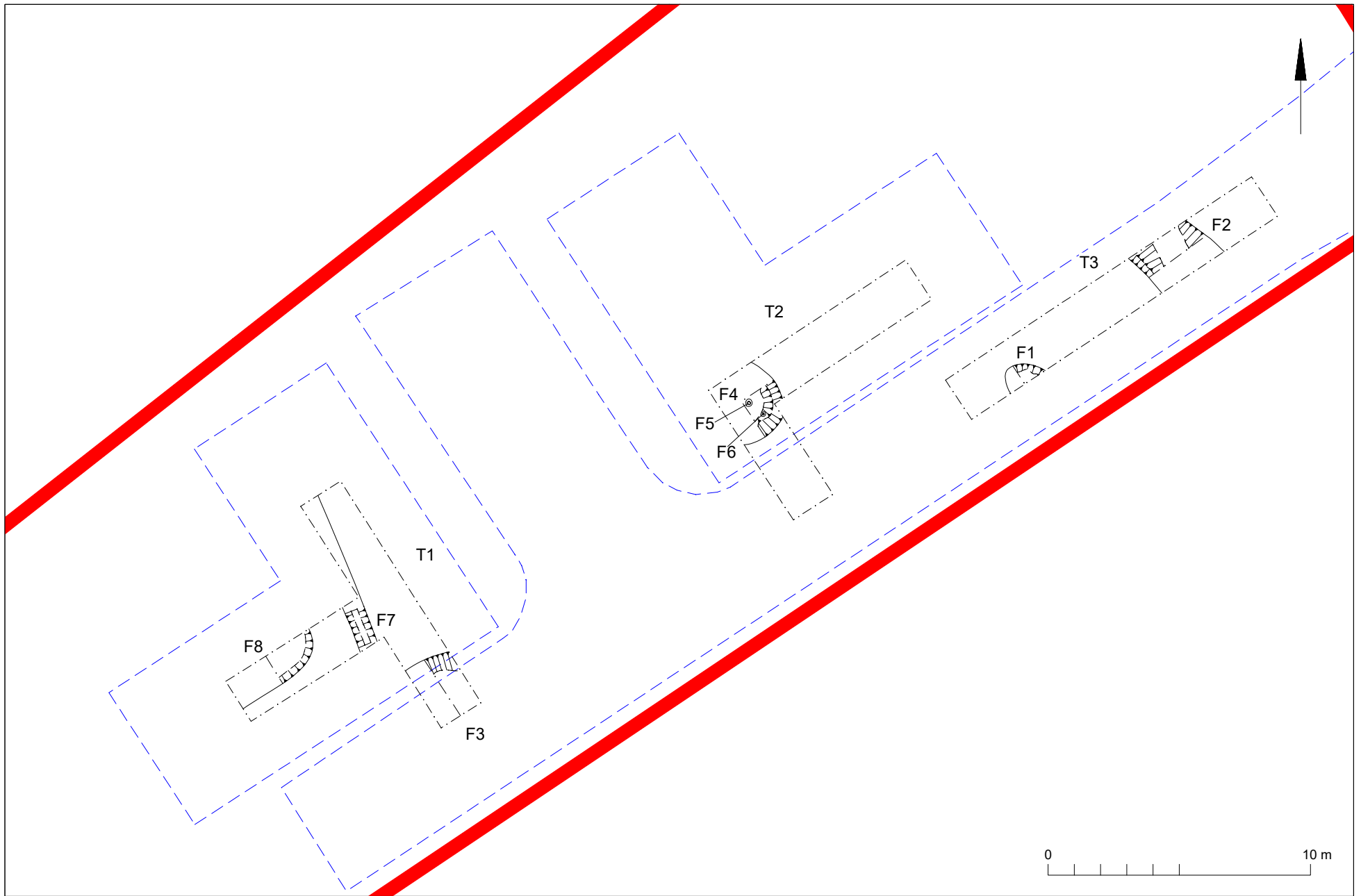


Fig 2 Evaluation results (development dashed blue).

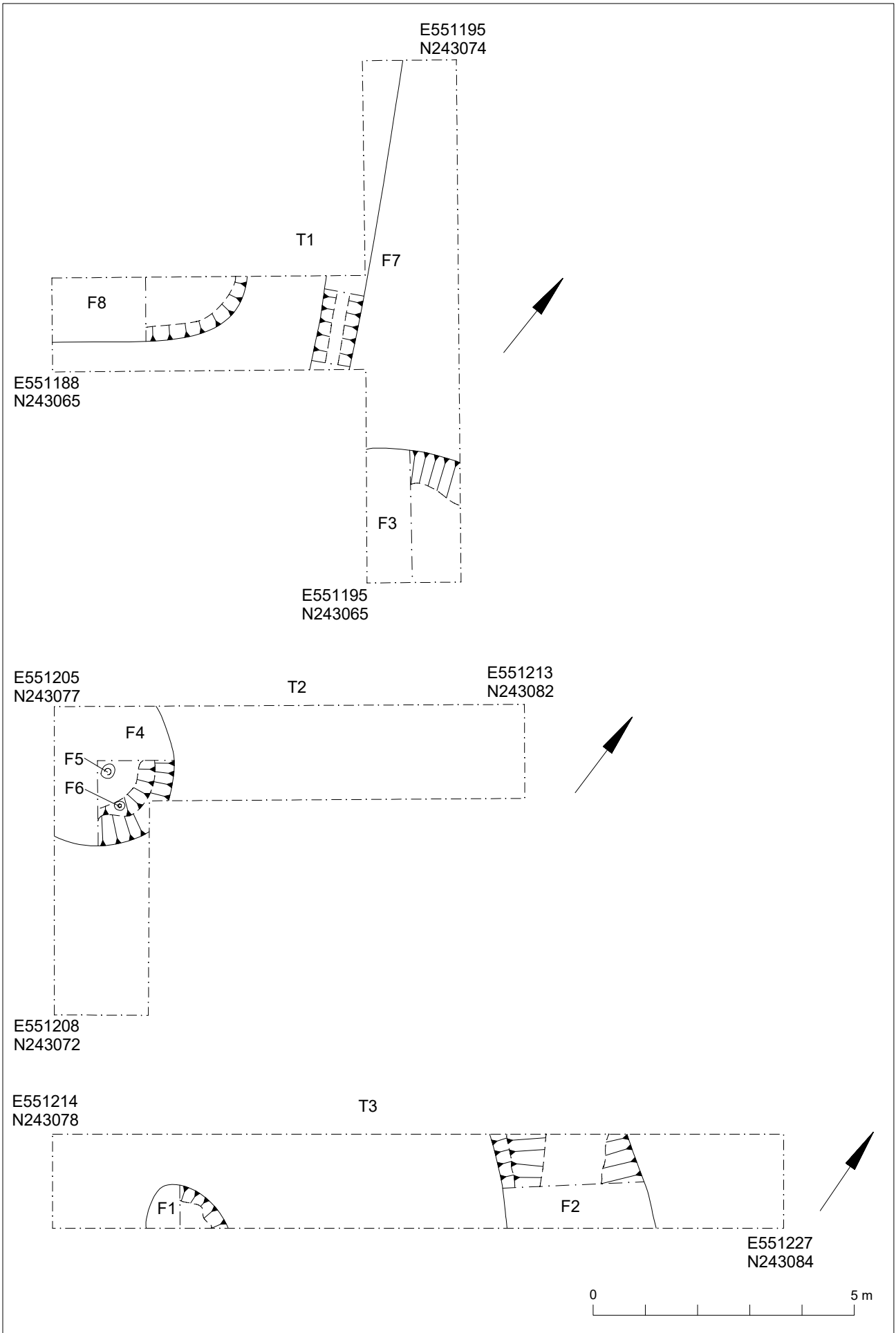


Fig 3 Trench plans.

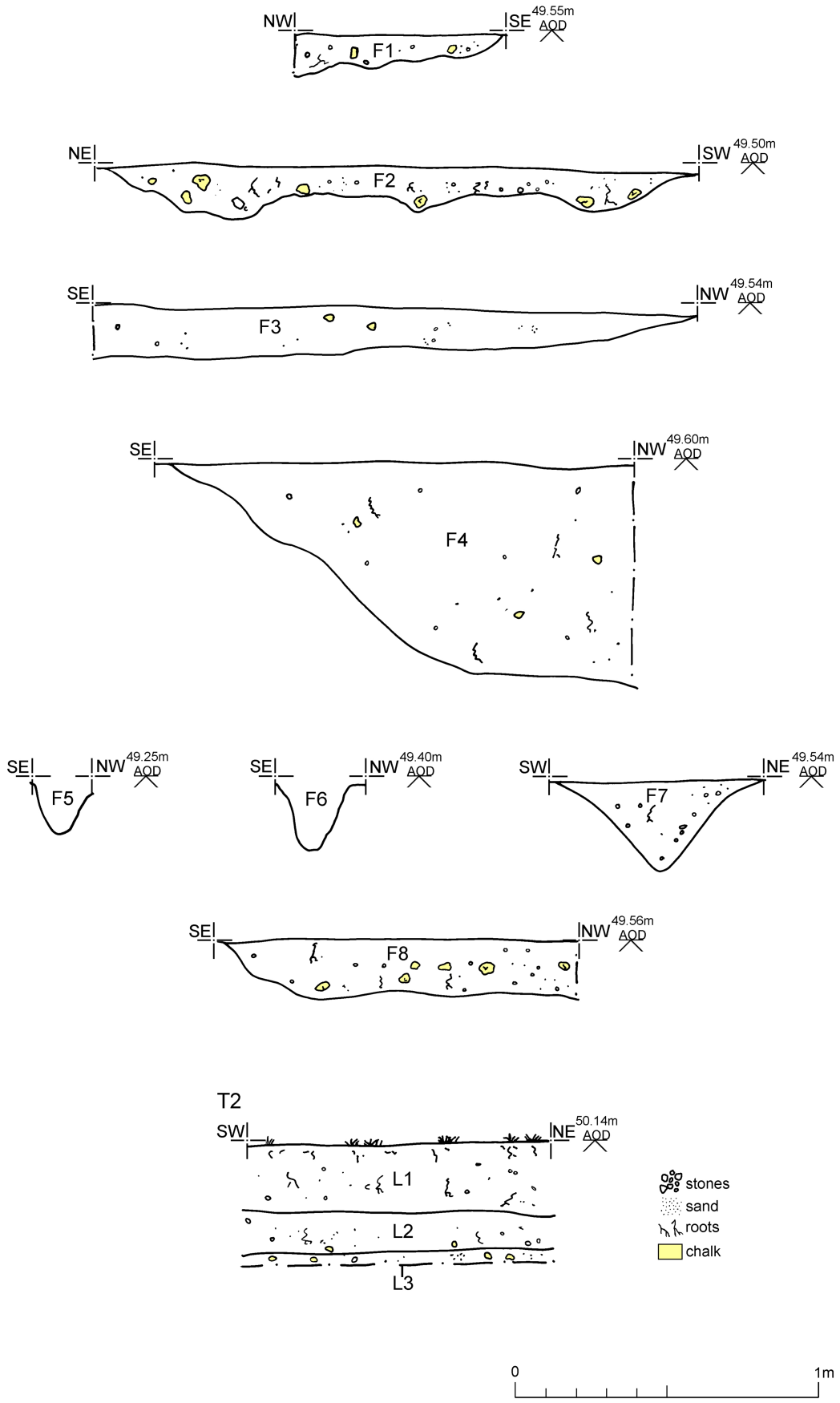


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-386844

Project details

Project name	Archaeological evaluation on land at Chesterford House, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex, CB10 1PL
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation (three trial-trenches) was carried out on land at Chesterford House, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex, in advance of the construction of two dwellings. The site lies outside of the Roman and medieval settlement of Great Chesterford, a town of nationally-significant archaeological importance. Previous excavations to the immediate northwest revealed remains of Roman extramural settlement and an Anglo-Saxon burial. A single Roman ditch and a medieval or post-medieval pit cut by two postholes were recorded during this evaluation. The former feature formed part of the extramural area of the Roman town, while the latter features are probably the product of agricultural activity in the area prior to the construction of Chesterford House by the 19th century.
Project dates	Start: 23-03-2020 End: 23-03-2020
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	2020/02m - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	UTT/18/2969/FUL - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	CHGC20 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	DITCH Roman
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Monument type	PIT Medieval
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Monument type	POSTHOLE Uncertain
Monument type	TREETHROW Uncertain
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Significant Finds	PEG-TILE Medieval
Significant Finds	PEG-TILE Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX UTTLESFORD GREAT CHESTERFORD land at Chesterford House, High Street
Postcode	CB10 1PL
Study area	0.14 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 51164 43105 52.065216166328 0.205487107453 52 03 54 N 000 12 19 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 49.22m Max: 49.78m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust

Project brief originator HEM Team Officer, ECC

Project design originator Laura Pooley

Project director/manager Chris Lister

Project supervisor Mark Baister

Type of sponsor/funding body Landowner

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum

Digital Archive ID CHGC20

Digital Media available "Images vector","Survey","Text"

Paper Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum

Paper Archive ID CHGC20

Paper Media available "Context sheet","Photograph","Report","Section"

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