

Colchester Archaeological Trust



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issued June 2023

Archaeological monitoring at The Slip, St Osyth
Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8GW: May 2023



CAT project ref.: 2023/04h
ECC code: STOPP23

**Archaeological monitoring at The Slip, St Osyth
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**report prepared by Adam Ronn
with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton**

fieldwork by Adam Ronn

**commissioned by Matthew Bynoe
on behalf of City & Country**

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out on land at The Slip, St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex during groundworks forming part of the construction of new dwellings for residential and holiday accommodation. St Osyth Priory is a medieval priory founded in the 12th century, and the development site is located within the Priory Park. Groundworks at The Slip revealed a ditch, modern pit and tree-throws.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) from 16th-24th May 2023 at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex. The work was commissioned by Matthew Bynoe of City & Country and carried out during groundworks at The Slip for the construction of a 17 new dwellings for residential and holiday accommodation, landscaping, ancillary works and associated groundworks.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the EHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Historic Environment Advisor at Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS). This recommendation was for archaeological monitoring and was based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

A new brief was not issued for this phase but follows on from the Project Brief issued for the evaluation written by ECCPS (*Brief for Archaeological evaluation and historic building recording on land at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyths, Tendring* – ECC 2023). A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for this monitoring work was prepared by CAT and agreed in advance with ECCPS (CAT 2023).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016), 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* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts of the ECC Brief (ECCPS 2022) and Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The town of St Osyth is recorded at *Cicc* in the Domesday Book of 1086 and is said to be the location of a 7th-century nunnery founded by Saint Osyth, from whom the modern town gets its name. The proposed development site is located within the park at St Osyth Priory, to the west of the centre of the historic town. St Osyth is a coastal village located at the southernmost tip of the Tendring peninsula, and the Priory estate is roughly the entire length of the village of St Osyth, located between the village and Brightlingsea creek to the west.

St Osyth Priory is a medieval priory that was founded in the 1120s by Richard de Belmeis, Bishop of London, as a house for Augustinian Canons. It became an abbey dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, and Osyth sometime before 1161. The park associated with the priory was most likely gained around 1268, when a charter was granted to the abbey allowing some hunting rights. The abbey was suppressed and surrendered to the crown in 1539.

In 1553, Thomas Darcy gained possession of the abbey and was responsible for making many structural changes. Many of the medieval buildings were demolished, including the abbey church, and impressive modifications were made to the remaining buildings to create a substantial residence. New buildings were also constructed and the formal walled garden

created. Over the next 400 years, the priory and park had considerable reworking, remodelling and modernisation, as well as additional buildings added. In the late 19th century, gravel extraction began within the park and continued into the 20th century.

The ruins of the priory and garden are scheduled (NHLE No. 1002193, SAM No. 24 and EHER 4) and the park is a Registered Park and Garden (NHLE No. 1000237). St Osyth Priory and park contains 22 structures which are listed.

The area known as The Slip is closest to the scheduled zone and priory remains. To the west of The Slip is a possible barrow (EHER 2828). It is a circular mound with a shallow ditch, while possibly prehistoric in date, it has not been conclusively dated so may represent a post-medieval garden feature.

In February 2023, CAT carried out an archaeological evaluation (eight trial-trenches and three test-pits) within St Osyth Priory Park localised to four areas of pending development (CAT Report 1904). Evaluation trenches T5-T8 in The Slip revealed a ditch, a post-medieval/modern service trench, three three-throws and an animal burrow. Ditch F4 was aligned north-west/south-east and crossed trenches T5 and T8. It measured 2m wide and 0.67m deep and produced a single sherd of handmade flint-tempered prehistoric pottery.

4 Aims

The aims of the archaeological monitoring were to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits and to assess the archaeological potential of the site.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

The foundation trenches for two construction plots were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. All context numbering follows on from a previous archaeological evaluation on the development site (see CAT Report 1904). A context list with dimensions can be found in Appendix 1.

The trenches totalled c 352m in length and were c 0.45m wide and 0.7-0.9m deep. Site stratigraphy consisted of topsoil (L1, c 0.21-0.35m thick), subsoil (L2, c 0.24-0.5m thick) and natural (L3, identified at a depth of 0.45-0.9m below current ground level).

Previous archaeological evaluation at The Slip (CAT Report 1904) had revealed a ditch, F4, aligned north-west to south-east across the site. The ditch was identified in section in both plots during this monitoring phase, but the foundation trenches were too unstable to allow for further excavation to take place. The ditch was photographed and planned. Where the trenches were more stable, modern pit F7 and tree-throws F8 and F9 were excavated.



Photograph 1 Foundation trenches, looking north.



Photograph 2 Ditch F4 showing unstable trench edges, looking north-west.



Photograph 3 Modern pit F7, looking north.



Photograph 4 Tree-throw F9, looking south-west.



Photograph 5 Site shot, looking north-east.



Photograph 6 Foundation trenches, looking east-south-east.

6 Pottery

by Dr Matthew Loughton

Pit F7 produced one sherd (9g) of modern (19th-20th century) English stoneware (fabric F45M) and a sherd (22g) from a 19th-20th century flowerpot (fabric F51B). These finds were not retained.

7 Conclusion

Archaeological monitoring at The Slip, St Osyth Priory Park, revealed one modern pit, two tree-throws and part of ditch F4 (previously investigated during the evaluation phase, CAT Report 1904). Unfortunately though, unstable trench edges meant the ditch could not be further excavated, so no other dating evidence was recovered beyond the single sherd of prehistoric pottery from the evaluation.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Matthew Bynoe and City & County for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman and fieldwork was carried out by A Ronn. Figures were produced by A Ronn and E Holloway. The project was monitored for Essex County Council by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS).

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	2023	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2023	<i>Written scheme of investigation for archaeological monitoring at The Slip, St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8GW</i>
CAT Report 1904	2023	<i>Archaeological evaluation on land at St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex: February 2023</i>
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation.</i> Revised Oct 2020
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Updated Oct 2020
Cotter, JP	2000	<i>CAR Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85.</i> Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd.
ECCPS	2022	<i>Brief for Archaeological evaluation and historic building recording on land at St Osyth's Priory Park, St Oysths, Tendring,</i> by T O'Connor
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)
MHCLG	2021	<i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	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
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record

feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: None retained

Digital record

CAT Report 1946

ECCPS brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Digital photographs

Survey data

Site data

12 Archive deposition

The 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 the Archaeology Data Service.

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Distribution list:

Matthew Bynoe, City & Country

Teresa O'Connor, Essex County Council Planning Services

Essex Historic Environment Record

Appendix 1 Context list

Context Number	Trench number	Finds no.	Layer type	Description	Date
L1	All	-	Topsoil	Soft to firm, dry dark brownish-black silt with small stone inclusions.	Modern
L2	All	-	Subsoil	Firm, dry mid to dark yellowish-brown silt with occasional gravel and small stone inclusions.	Undated
L3	All	-	Natural	Soft, dry mid brownish-orange sandy gravel.	Post-glacial
Evaluation					
F1	6	-	Tree-throw	Soft/loose, dry mid greyish-brown silty sand with gravel inclusions. 0.83m diameter x 0.16m deep.	Undated
F2	6	-	Tree-throw	Soft, dry mid brownish-grey silty sand with gravel inclusions. 0.92m x 0.87m x 0.30m deep.	Undated
F3	5	-	Tree-throw	Soft, dry mid brownish-grey silty sand with sand and gravel inclusions. 1.19m x 1.09m x 0.24m deep.	Undated
F4	5, 8, 9	1	Ditch	Firm, dry light to mid greyish-brown sandy silt with rooting and small stone inclusions. >47m long x c 2.25m wide x c 0.82m deep.	Undated
F5	9	-	Animal burrow	Soft/loose dark brownish-grey silty sand with occasional small stone inclusions and sand flecking. 1.02m x >0.28m x 0.16m deep	Undated
F6	8	2	Service trench	Soft, moist very dark brownish-grey sandy silt with heavy rooting. >2.25m x >2.1m x >0.86m deep	Post-medieval/ modern
Monitoring					
F7	-	3	Pit	Mid grey, silt/sand, soft, dry, frequent stones. 1.13m x >0.45m x 0.17m deep.	Modern
F8	-	-	Tree-throw	Mid brown sandy silt, dry, common rooting. 0.94m x >0.45m x 0.15m deep	Undated
F9	-	-	Tree-throw	Dry, soft, light grey, sandy silt, frequent rooting and rare stones. 0.9m x >0.45m x 0.5m deep.	Undated

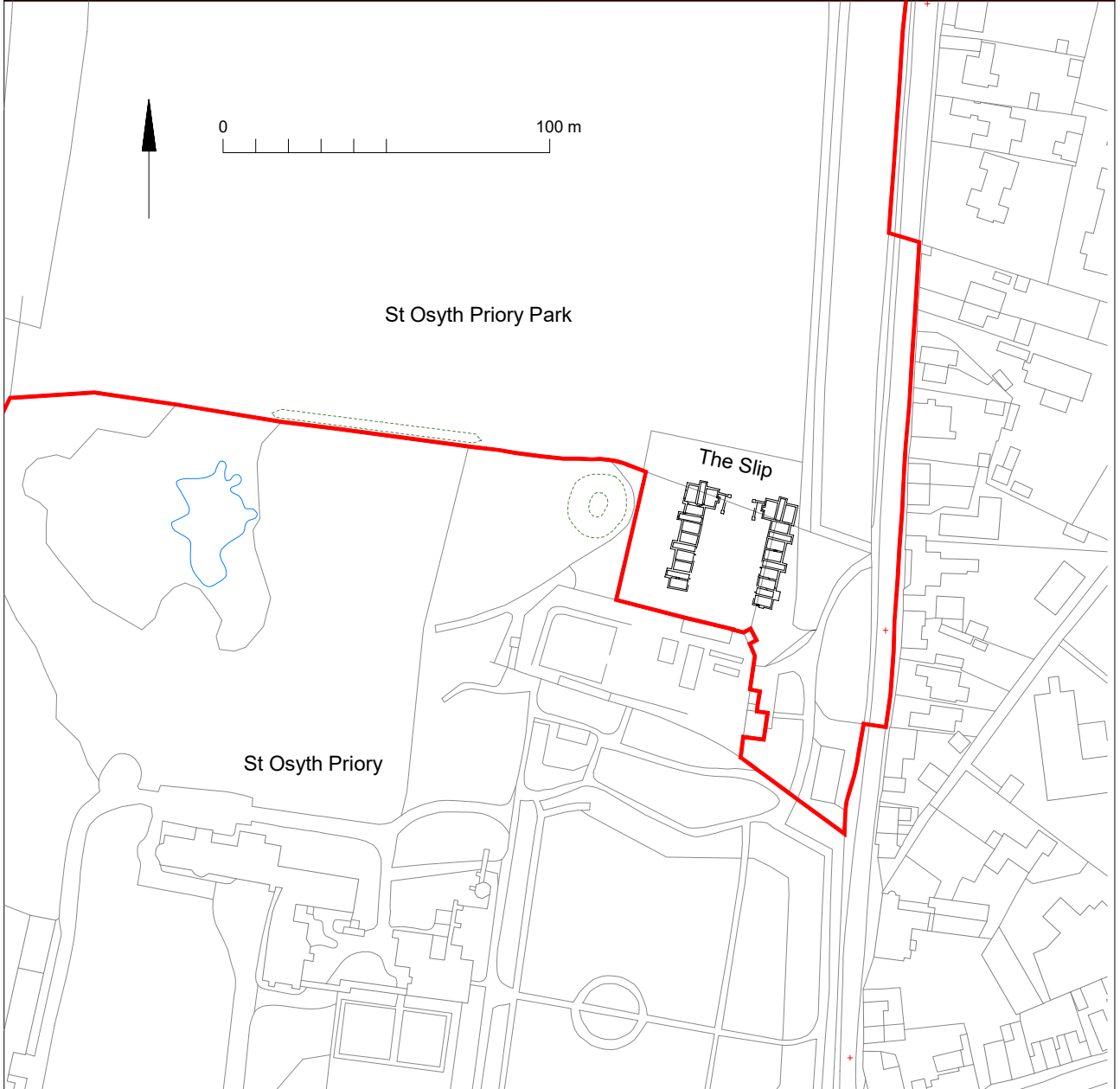
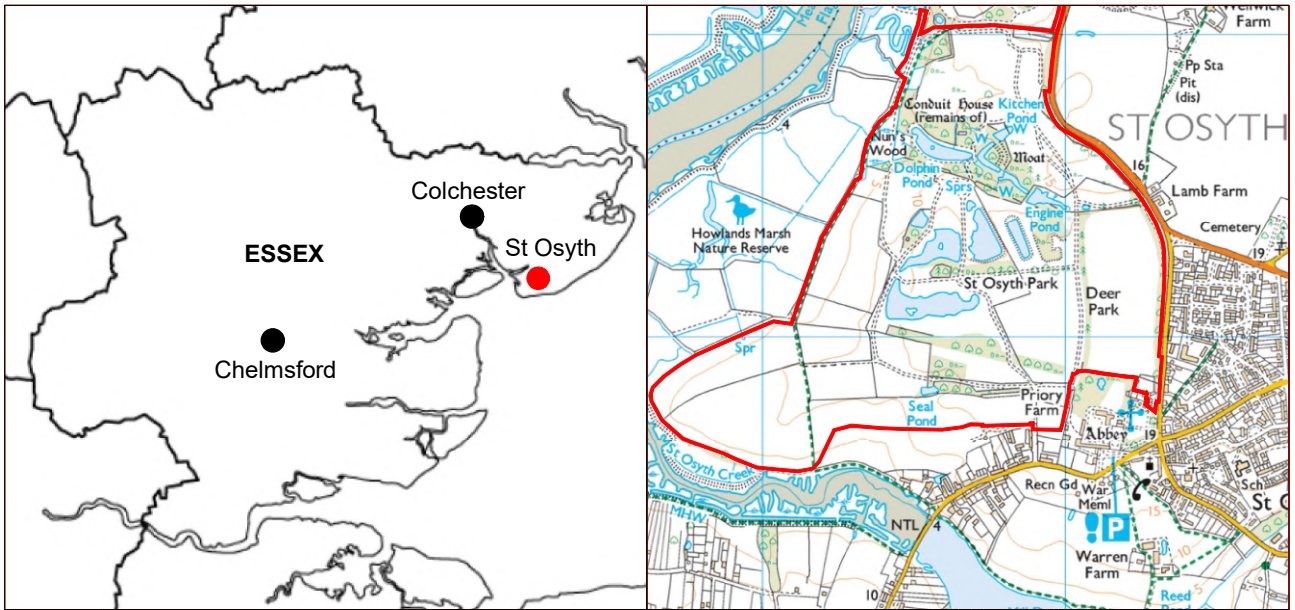


Fig 1 Site location

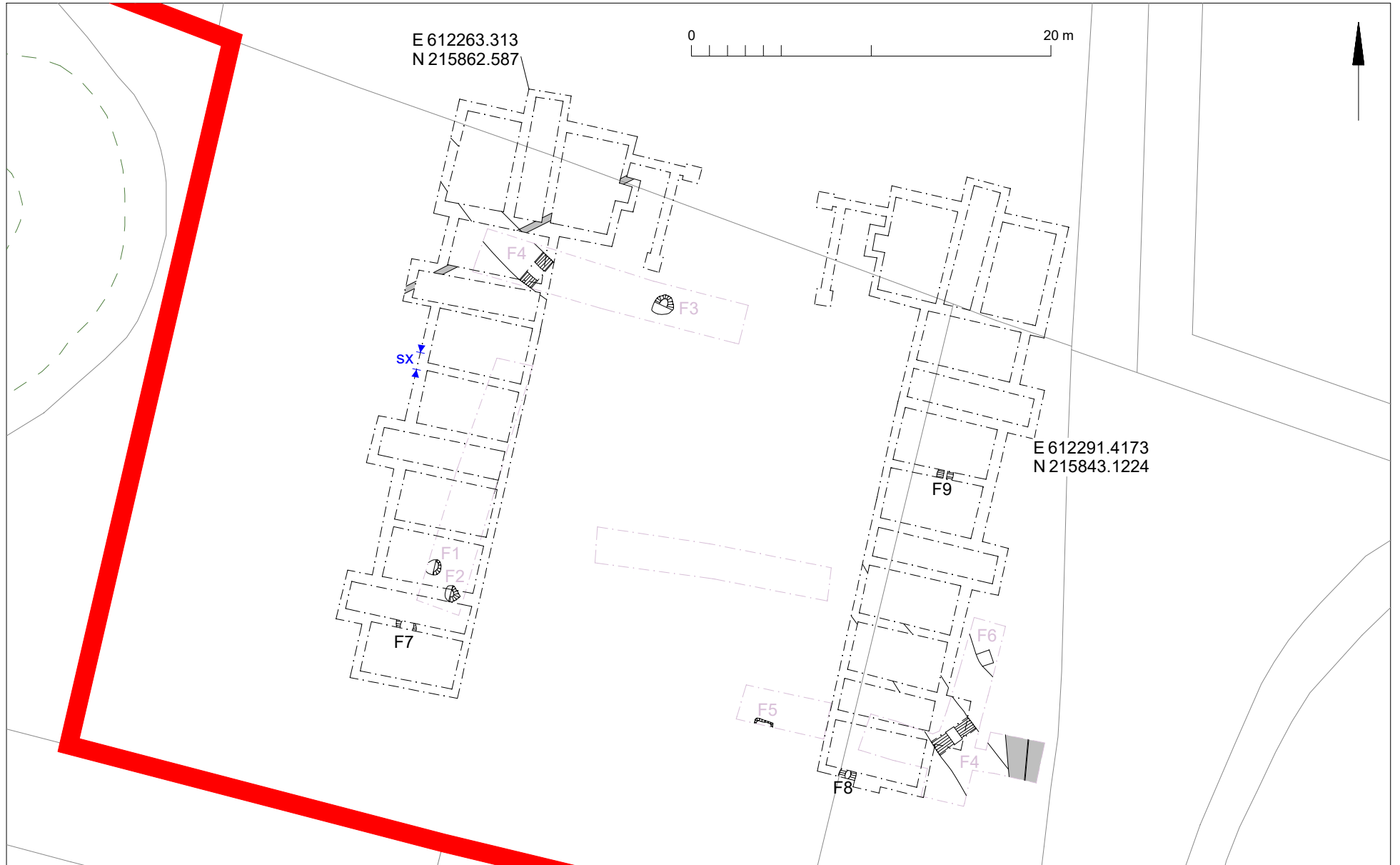


Fig 2 Results, shown in relation to the 2023 evaluation (trenches outlined in pink with numbers also in pink).
Modern services in grey.

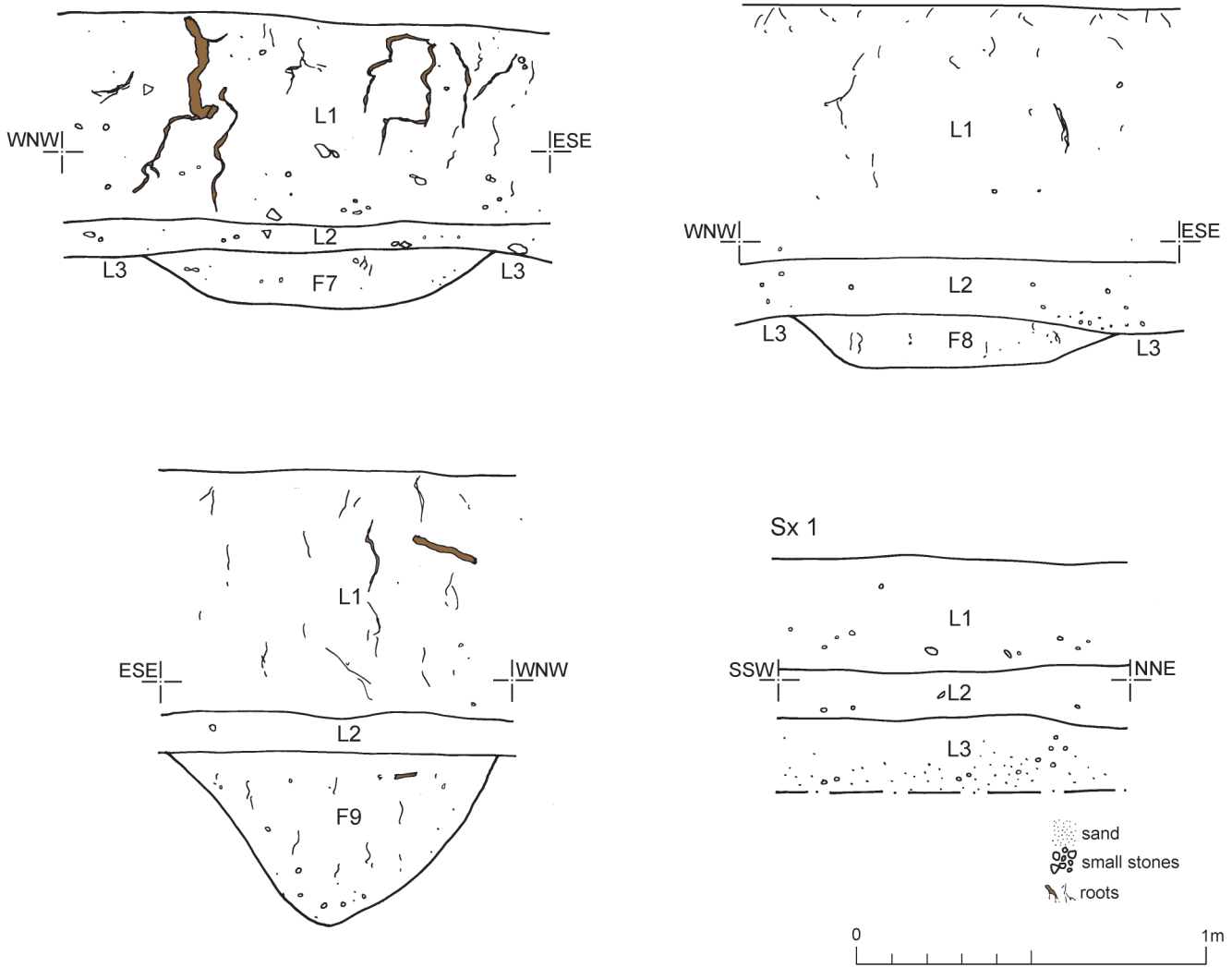


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

Summary for colchest3-515287

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-515287
Project Name	Archaeological monitoring at The Slip, St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8GW
Sitename	St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8GW
Activity type	Watching Brief
Project Identifier(s)	2023/04h
Planning Id	16/00671/FUL, 17/00634/FUL, 19/00032/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	16-May-2023 - 24-May-2023
Location	St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8GW NGR : TM 12270 15840 LL : 51.80089566681741, 1.077251526028145 12 Fig : 612270,215840
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Tendring Parish : St. Osyth
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring of all groundworks carried out as specified in the project WSI.
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring was carried out on land at The Slip, St Osyth Priory Park, St Osyth, Essex during groundworks forming part of the construction of new dwellings for residential and holiday accommodation. St Osyth Priory is a medieval priory founded in the 12th-century, and the development site is located within the Priory Park. Groundworks at The Slip revealed a ditch, modern pit and tree-throws.
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Adam, Ronn
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - STOPP23
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;