

**An archaeological watching brief
at Garrison Alienated Land Area C1,
Flagstaff Road, Colchester Garrison,
Colchester, Essex**

March 2012

**report prepared by
Ben Holloway**

on behalf of RPS and Taylor Wimpey

CAT project code: 12/3a
Colchester & Ipswich Museums accession code: 2012.24
NGR: TL TL9963 2458 (c)



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CAT Report 641
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Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Aims and objectives	1
4	Archaeological background	1
5	The Watching brief	3
6	The finds	3
7	Discussion	3
8	Acknowledgements	3
9	References	3
10	Glossary and abbreviations	4
11	Archive deposition	4

Figures after page 6
EHER summary sheet

List of figures

- Fig 1 Colchester Garrison Alienated Land (Area C1 shaded)
Fig 2 Site in relation to Roman Circus.

1 Summary

Monitoring work was carried out on the 0.3 ha Garrison Alienated Land Area C1 site (Flagstaff Road, Colchester) during the removal of foundation pads and parking surface of the temporary Taylor Wimpey project offices, marketing suite and associated parking.

Due to the site's position within the area of the scheduled Roman circus (SAM 35614) no excavation was permitted below 300mm. No archaeological features were observed. This is probably due to the site having been substantially disturbed during the demolition of the Civil Service Club in 2004, and subsequent consolidation with imported crush material.

2 Introduction (Figs 1-2)

This is the archive report on an archaeological watching brief carried out at Garrison Alienated Land Area C1 during the removal of foundation pads and car park associated with the temporary Taylor Wimpey project offices.

Centred on NGR TL 9963 2458, the site is on the north side of the crossroads formed by Flagstaff Road, Napier Road Circular Road North and Circular Road East, and is on the northern side of a dry valley which slopes down from north to south to a plateau where the former military hospital was situated.

Drift geology of the area is predominantly sands and gravel. This is occasionally in a clay matrix, and is sometimes capped by cover loam.

The archaeological watching brief was commissioned by RPS on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) under RPS project management between the 5th and 8th of March 2012.

All fieldwork was done in accordance with a research design prepared by RPS (RPS 2004a) and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by RPS in association with CAT, dated February 2012, and agreed by CBCAO and English Heritage (RPS 2012).

This report mirrors the standards and practices contained in Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on the standards and practice for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIM 2008a) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIM 2008b), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

The project was monitored by the CBCAO and RPS.

3 Aim

The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits which may be damaged during the groundworks.

4 Archaeological background

The archaeological and historical setting of the Garrison redevelopment area was comprehensively explored in an archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site (CAT Report 97, by Kate Orr, 2000), and will only be summarised here.

A Neolithic/Early Bronze Age beaker (UAD event/SMR 1249) was known prior to 2000 from the vicinity of Flagstaff Road (bordering the eastern side of C1). This evidence for activity was enhanced by an excavation in Taylor Woodrow Area C1 itself in 2004 which investigated a cluster of c.1m diameter Late Neolithic pits containing decorated Peterborough ware and Mildenhall ware pottery and together these suggest small scale although potentially intermittent or seasonal occupation (CAT Report 361, Jan 2006; CAT Report 412, 18). Late Bronze Age pottery in 300mm deep pits and a late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flint blade was found during excavations at the Abbey (UAD/SMR 3019). In addition a late Bronze Age pit was excavated beneath Flagstaff Road during the installation of the storm-water drain by Anderson Group in January 2006 whilst several late Bronze Age settlement related features were excavated in 2005. A substantial quantity late Bronze Age pottery was recovered from pits and residually within Roman graves during the 2005 archaeological excavations for Taylor Woodrow at the northern extent of Area J1 (excavation area J1 North).

A wide Roman ditched and metalled track or road was found to the west of C1 in Taylor Wimpey land parcel J1 (where it was flanked by hundreds of early to late Roman burials) and would, if continued to the north-west, connect with arterial road system to the west of Colchester. Mersea Road to the east also appears to follow the course of a Roman road leading to the south-east gate of the town and is similarly associated with Roman (and Saxon) burials. The north-east area of St John's Abbey was built over a Roman cemetery area. A total of 34 Roman inhumations were found during excavations from 1971 to 1985, the shallowest being about 1m below ground level. Over 400 burials were excavated further to the west within Taylor Wimpey Area J1 (near Butt Road) in 2004. Other inhumations have been found within this area since the 19th century, including to the north-west of C1 and beneath Circular Road North and Abbey Field to the south-west. Other burials areas have been located to the south-east of C1 within Area C2 to the south of the circus, beneath Napier Road and within the Napier Road car-park at Area B1b. The 2004 evaluation of C1 did not identify burials of any period.

The remains of the stone built monumental Roman circus that extend into the southern area of Area C1 are, currently unique to Britain and has been confirmed by a number of investigations (Fig 2, and CAT Report 361, CAT Report 412). The western end of the *spina* was found beneath Circular Road North in 2007 whilst the starting gates themselves were partially exposed by CAT excavations in 2007 (ibid). The east-west orientated circus is approximately 450m in length and 70m wide with a central '*spina*' barrier and was used for chariot racing. Elements identified to date include the seating *cavea* with internal and external (buttressed) walls, two entrance ways through the southern *cavea*, a lowered racetrack dirt surface (the removed topsoil was presumably used to construct *cavea* banks on which seating was constructed), a segment of the semi-circular end of the circus, a fragment of the starting gates structures (demonstrating bays for eight chariots rather than twelve), a monument base on the line of the *spina* (for an obelisk?), and further elements of the *spina* including its western end and a fragment of a turning post pillar (*meta*).

A c.75m length is represented within C1 (although to varying degrees of preservation). The circus foundations (where identified) in C1 have largely been robbed out (during the medieval period).

The Roman circus foundations at C1 were robbed out during the medieval period and this appears to tally well with the construction of St John's Abbey to the north-east (with the western precinct wall of the abbey flanking the east side of Flagstaff Road). The abbey church was recently investigated following a fire at the former officer's Club.

5 The Watching brief

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken over a period of 4 days, with visits being made during the removal of hard standing and foundations associated with the Taylor Wimpey project offices. Since the site is scheduled, level reduction was restricted to 300mm below modern ground level.

The removal of two groups of foundation pads was observed, one on the southern edge and another in the centre of the site. These were removed by machine, then the surface layer of tarmac hard-standing. Once foundations and hardtop had been broken up and removed, the underlying sub-base was levelled off and 'tracked in' by machine. No archaeological material was observed.

6 The finds

There were no finds. Substantial amounts of modern CBM were observed. This was imported after the demolition of the Civil Service Club in 2004 to create a stable base for the Taylor Wimpey project offices and marketing suite.

7 Discussion

No archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed. This is due to the limited nature of the site clearance (no excavation was permitted below 300mm), and to the fact that the western part of the site had been infilled with modern material in 2004 to consolidate the ground after demolition and removal of the former Civil Service Club. There was no part of the monitored area where impacted horizons other than made ground were affected.

8 Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by RPS group on behalf of Taylor Wimpey. The project was monitored by CBCAO. The fieldwork was managed by Ben Holloway.

9 References

CAT Report 97		<i>An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site</i> , by Kate Orr, unpublished CAT archive report, 2000
CAT Report 361		<i>Assessment report on the archaeological investigations carried out on Areas C1, C2, E, J1, O, Q, and S1 of the Alienated Land, Colchester Garrison, including the Time Team trenches and the Alienated Land watching brief, 2004-5</i> , unpublished CAT archive report by L Pooley, B Holloway, P Crummy and R Masefield, 2006 http://cat.essex.ac.uk/reports/CAT-report-0361.pdf
CAT Report 412		<i>Archaeological investigations on the 'Alienated Land', Colchester Garrison, Colchester, Essex: May 2004-October 2007</i> . Unpublished CAT client report, by L Pooley, P Crummy, D Shimmin, H Brooks, B Holloway, and R Masefield, February 2011 http://cat.essex.ac.uk/reports/CAT-report-0412.pdf
CIMS	2008a	<i>Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester</i>

CIMS	2008b	<i>Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums</i>
Institute for Archaeologists (IfA)	2008	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>
RPS	2002	<i>Colchester Garrison PFI Health and Safety plan</i>
RPS	2004a	<i>Research design for archaeological investigations for the alienated land, Colchester Garrison</i>
RPS	2012	<i>WSI for archaeological watching brief on Taylor Wimpey compound removal, Area C1, Colchester Garrison, February 2012 (by R Masefield)</i>

10 Glossary and abbreviations

AOD	above Ordnance Datum
BA	Bronze Age (c 2000 BC-700 BC)
CAR	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report</i>
CBCAO	Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer
CBM	ceramic building material
CIMS	Colchester and Ipswich Museums
context	specific location of finds on an excavation
ditch	a linear cut, usually to define the edge of a field
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
IA	Iron Age (7th century BC to Roman invasion of AD 43)
LIA	Late Iron Age (c 200 BC-AD 43)
medieval	from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	19th and 20th centuries
NGR	National Grid Reference
pit	a hole dug principally for the disposal of rubbish
post-medieval	after Henry VIII and to the end of the 19th century
prehistoric	pre-Roman, or generally the years BC
residual	something out of its original context (ie, a Roman coin in a Victorian pit)
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
RPS	RPS Group
Saxon	the period from c AD 410 to AD 1066
septaria	local stone used as building material by Romans
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database, held by Colchester Museums

11 Archive deposition

The finds, paper and digital archive are held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums under accession code 2012.24

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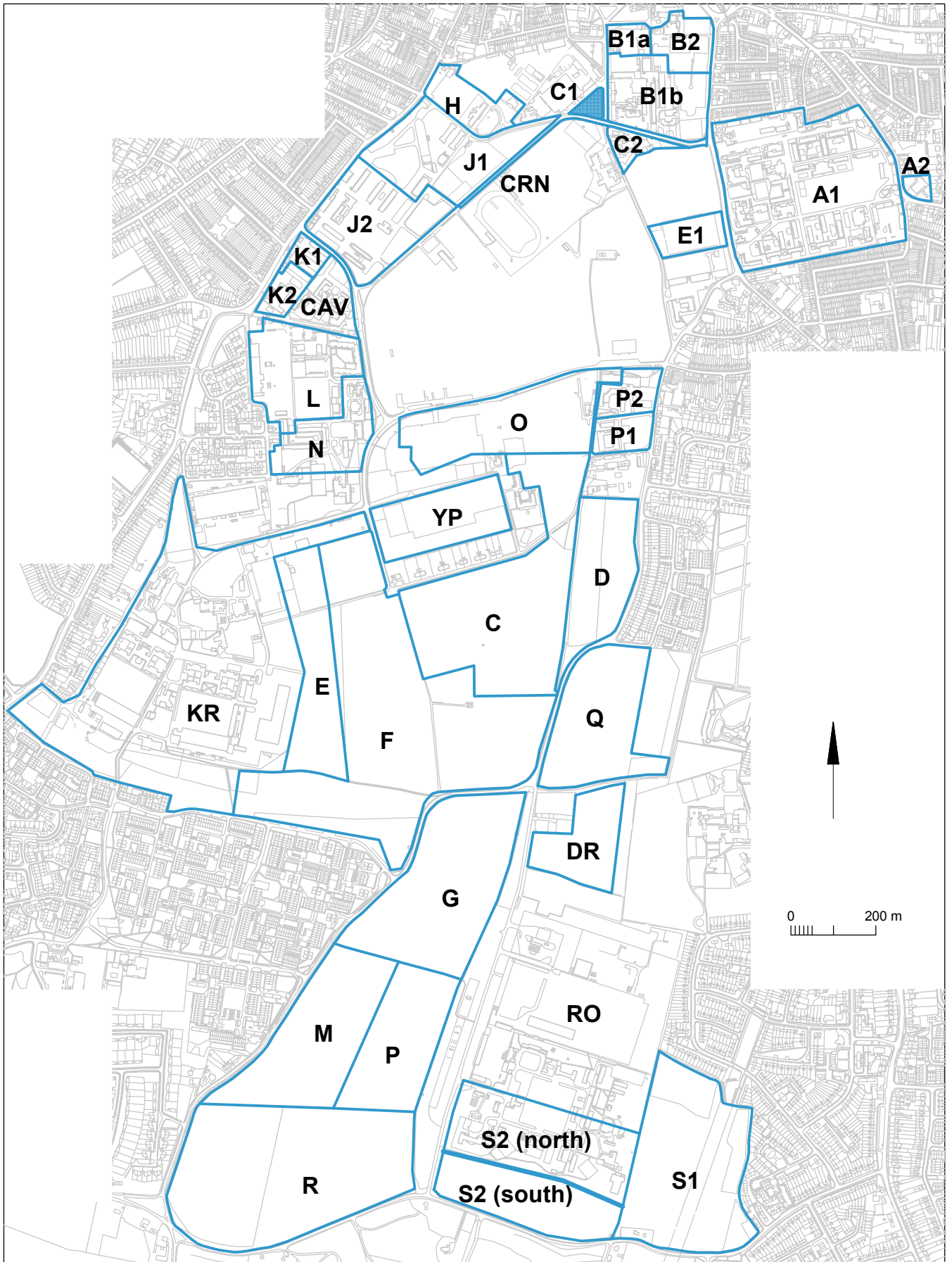
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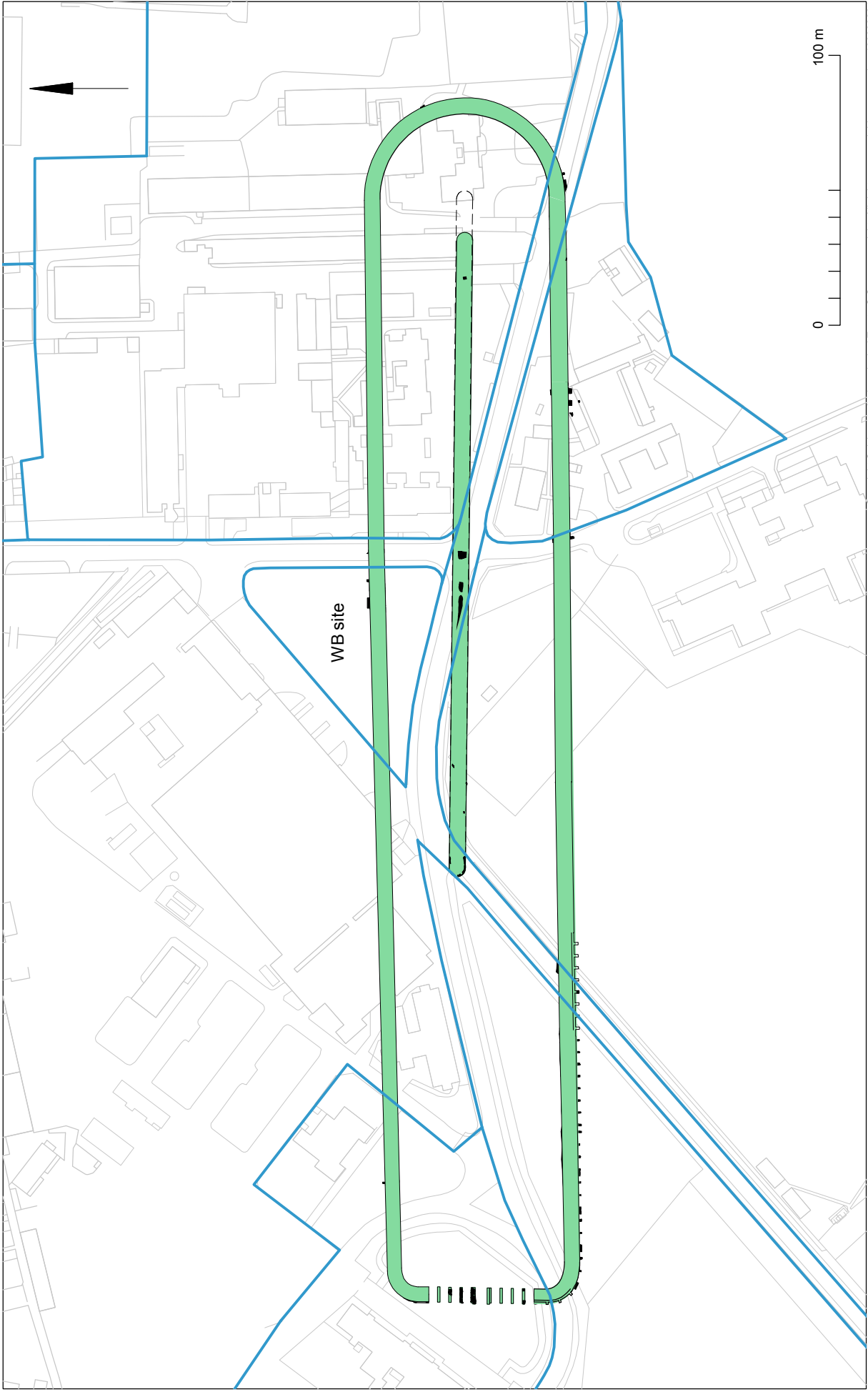
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Fig 1 Colchester Garrison Alienated Land, Area C1 (shaded).



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Fig 2 Site in relation to Colchester circus.

**Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Address: Garrison Alienated Land Area C1, Flagstaff Road, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9963 2458	Site code: CAT project code – 12/3a
Type of work: Watching Brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 5 th -8 th March 2012	Size of area investigated: 0.3ha
Location of curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museum accession code – 2012.24	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: -
Final report: CAT Report 641	
Periods represented: Modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Monitoring work was carried out on the 0.3 ha Garrison Alienated Land Area C1 site (Flagstaff Road, Colchester) during the removal of foundation pads and parking surface of the temporary Taylor Wimpey project offices, marketing suite and associated parking.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Due to the site's position within the area of the scheduled Roman circus (SAM 35614) no excavation was permitted below 300mm. No archaeological features were observed. This is probably due to the site having been substantially disturbed during the demolition of the Civil Service Club in 2004, and subsequent consolidation with imported crush material.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Keywords: -	Significance: neg
Author of summary: Ben Holloway	Date of summary: April 2012