

Archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead, Essex, CO9 2AD

August 2016



by Laura Pooley

with contributions by Stephen Benfield
figures by Chris Lister and Emma Holloway

fieldwork by Ben Holloway and Emma Holloway

**commissioned by James Emmerson
on behalf of 100 Acres Ltd**

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Braintree Museum accession code: [requested](#)

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out on land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead, Essex in advance of the construction of four new dwellings. Historic mapping shows that the garden plot was in existence by at least 1838 and the buildings on either side date from the 16th to 18th century. A single medieval pit (13th-14th century) and residual medieval pottery sherds suggest activity on the development site during the earliest origins of the town. Five later pits (three late medieval/post-medieval and two post-medieval/modern) are probably associated with the use of the development site as a yard/garden to the rear of the property fronting onto the High Street.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead, Essex which was carried out on 2nd August 2016. The work was commissioned by James Emmerson on behalf of 100 Acres Ltd in advance of the construction of four new dwellings with gardens, parking and related works. The work was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Teresa O'Connor 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* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological trial trench evaluation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2016), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2016).

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* (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 utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

The proposed development lies within the extent of the historic settlement of Halstead. A Heritage Statement (Hillman-Crouch, 2015) has been submitted with the application which provides a good historic background for the site and the surrounding listed buildings along the High Street. It can trace the garden plot to around 1838, with the distinctive garden wall erected slightly later in date. A garden lodge was built in the NW corner of the plot which no longer survives. The houses either side of 16 High Street date from the 16th to 18th century and the settlement is medieval in origin. The site lies within an area that may preserve evidence for past historical activity related to the settlement of the town.

Halstead is a market town that can trace its origins back to 1251, when it was granted a market. It is possible that the date 1251 represents the expansion of a small early town centred perhaps on Head Street. Halstead benefited from the rise in the East Anglian cloth trade from the late medieval period through to the post-medieval period. The late post-medieval period saw major changes with the introduction of the silk-weaving trade

by the Courtaulds in the 18th century and the building of Courtaulds factory in 1828. At the height of the cloth-manufacturing period the density of housing was much greater in Halstead, with crowded tenements in the yard areas behind the buildings on the frontage.

4 Results (Figs 2-3)

Two trial-trenches were located within the footprint of the new dwellings. The trenches were dug by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. In a change to the WSI, 7m of T1 could not be excavated due to unsafe ground conditions arising from the collapse of a retaining wall.

Trench 1 (T1) – 5m long by 1.8m wide

Four layers were identified. Modern turf and a thick layer of topsoil (L1, c 570mm thick) sealed a layer of modern levelling (L2, c 200mm thick) which sealed a layer of post-medieval accumulation (L3, c 250mm thick). Beneath L3 was natural sandy-clay (L4, identified at a depth of c 920mm below current ground level). Two large pits were excavated. Late medieval/post-medieval pit F1 cut undated pit F2.

Trench 2 (T2) – L-shaped trench 7m and 5m long by 1.8m wide

Four layers were identified. Modern turf and a thick layer of topsoil (L1, c 260mm thick) sealed a layer of modern levelling (L2, c 390mm thick) which sealed a layer of post-medieval accumulation (L3, c 230mm thick). Beneath L3 was natural sandy-clay (L4, identified at a depth of c 830mm below current ground level). Five pits (F3-F7) and a modern drain (F8) were excavated. The pits were small shallow features ranging from 0.5-1.1m across and 200-350mm deep, and dating from the medieval (13th-14th century +) (F6), late medieval/post-medieval (F3, F7), and post-medieval/modern (18th-19th century) (F4-F5) periods.



Photograph 1 T1, looking NW



Photograph 2 T2, looking SE



Photograph 3 T2, looking NE

5 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

Small quantities of finds dating from the medieval, post-medieval and modern period were recovered from seven features most of which are pits, but including one small pit or post-hole and a linear (drain) feature. All of the finds are listed and described by context in Table 2 and an overall spot date for the finds from each context is also provided. The pottery fabrics referred to follow the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1985 & CAR 7) and are listed in Table 1.

While there are several sherds of medieval pottery, the earliest dating to the period of the 11th-early 13th century (F1) these are scattered between the features as individual sherds. Apart from F8 (T2) (which is clearly a modern context) the only associated dating evidence with them are pieces of flat tile (F1, F6-F7). These tile pieces are undoubtedly from peg-tiles, although a few piece in F7 and F8 are notably thick at between 14mm-17mm. Peg-tiles begin to appear in London from the 12th century (Egan 1998, 28), but are not considered to be common on most buildings in Essex before the 14th century (Ryan 1996, 97) and remain common into the late post-medieval and early modern period. This suggests features where medieval pottery and peg-tile pieces occur together as the only closely datable finds (F1, F6-F7) the features probably date to at least the 14th century or later. A number of features have other finds, notably sherds of bottle glass and pieces of brick, that are of post-medieval and/or modern date (F4, F5 and F8). Pieces of lime plaster from F1 and F8 are also probably likely to be of post-medieval or modern date. The only metal objects recovered come from the modern pit F8. These consist of a handle that is almost certainly from a pair of scissors and a small piece of unidentified corroded iron.

Fabric code	Fabric name
13	Early medieval sandy wares
20	Medieval sandy greywares
21	Medieval sandy orange wares
40	Post-medieval (glazed) red earthenwares
48D	Staffordshire-type white earthenwares

Table 1 Pottery fabrics

Trench (T), Feature (F) & Finds No.	Form/ description	Finds spot date
T1, F1, 1	Medieval pottery: (1) Fabric 12 (11-12/E13C). CBM: Peg-tile (PT) (2) (medieval-post-medieval). Wall plaster: (1) grey-white lime plaster with white (lime wash) surface (medieval(?)-post-medieval)	L med – p-med (residual E med)
T2, F3, 3	CBM: Peg-tile (PT) (1) (medieval-post-medieval).	L med – p-med
T2, F4, 2	CBM: Brick (3) two, small abraded pieces in an orange-red fine sand fabric (these appear to be brick rather than Roman tile); one larger brick piece in a coarse red fabric with lime mortar on surface, square corner edge (post-med – mod, probably 18-19C?)	P-med(?) /mod (prob. 18-19C)
T2, F5, 7	Glass: (1) dark green bottle glass (p-med/mod, prob. Mod). CBM: Peg-tile (PT) (1) (medieval-post-medieval).	P-med(?) /mod (c18-19C)
T2, F6, 6	Medieval pottery: (1) Fabric 20 (L12/13-14C). CBM: Peg-tile (PT) (2) (medieval-post-medieval). Shell: Oyster shell (1) small piece.	Medieval (13/14C+)
T2, F7, 5	Medieval pottery: (1) Fabric 20 (L12/13-14C). CBM: Tile (1) small piece, fine sand orange fabric, abraded, 17 mm thick (probably thick PT – see F8); Peg-tile (PT) (2) (Medieval-post-medieval). Shell: Oyster shell (1) small piece.	L med – p-med
T2, F8, 4	Medieval/Post-medieval pottery: (3) Fabric 21 rim sherd,	Mod (18-

Trench (T), Feature (F) & Finds No.	Form/ description	Finds spot date
	splash glaze on exterior (13-15C); Fabric 40 base, internal glaze (16-18C); Fabric 48D bowl rim, traces of paint on interior and paint skin on rim (M18-19/E20C). Glass: (1) dark green vessel glass, iridescent surfaces from surface decay (p-med-mod). Iron: (3) Handle- corroded, round finger-loop with bar off-set to one side of loop, probably part of a pair of scissors (p-med-mod); Heavily corroded small piece, broad and slightly tapering to one end, second small piece, which might otherwise pass for a nail shaft piece, possibly part of this (not closely dated – probably post-modernist). CBM: (SQ) Peg-tile pieces up to 14-15 mm thick, white lime mortar from use on two pieces (med(?) - p-med). Wall plaster: (1) white lime plaster with white (lime wash) surface (med?)-post-med). Slag: (1) small piece of light, glassy slag. Animal bone: (1) small bone piece, medium-large mammal	19/E20C)

Table 2 Finds by context

6 Discussion

An evaluation on land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead revealed a medieval pit, three late medieval/post-medieval pits, two post-medieval/modern pits and a modern drainage trench. Halstead can be traced back to 1251 when it was granted a market, and the medieval pit and residual pottery is probably associated with the earliest origins of the town. The later pits are all probably associated with the use of the development site as a yard/garden to the rear of the property fronting onto the High Street. The houses either side of 16 High Street date from the 16th to 18th century, and historic maps show that the development site was used as a yard/garden since at least the time of the Tithe Award Map for Halstead of 1838. By 1855 the Local Board of Health Town Map for Halstead shows that the boundaries of the plot concur with those of today (Hillman-Crouch 2015).

7 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks James Emmerson and 100 Acres Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway and Emma Holloway. Figures are by CL and EH. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Richard Havis and Teresa O'Connor.

8 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at

<http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

CAR 7	2000	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter
CAT	2014	<i>Health and Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2016	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead, Essex, CO9 2AD</i>
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Cunningham, C	1985	'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex' in Cunningham, C., & Drury, P., <i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , CBA Research Report 54
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Dept of Communities and Local Government.

EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14. Ed. D Gurney
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24, by Maria Medlycott
ECCPS	2016	<i>Brief for archaeological trial trench evaluation on land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead</i>
Egan, G	1998	<i>The medieval household, daily living c 1150-1450</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (English Heritage)
Hillman-Crouch, B, J	2015	<i>16 High Street, Halstead, Essex. Land behind the High Street Building. Heritage Statement.</i> Barry Hillman-Crouch Design and Recording Services.
Ryan, P	1996	<i>Brick in Essex, from the Roman conquest to the reformation</i>

9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
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 of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD 1800
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

10 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 991)

ECC Evaluation Brief, CAT Written Scheme of Investigation

Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, Architectural plans, Attendance register, Risk assessment

11 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 Braintree Museum under accession code: [requested](#)

Distribution list:

James Emmerson, 100 Acres Ltd
Teresa O'Connor, Essex County Council Place Services
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

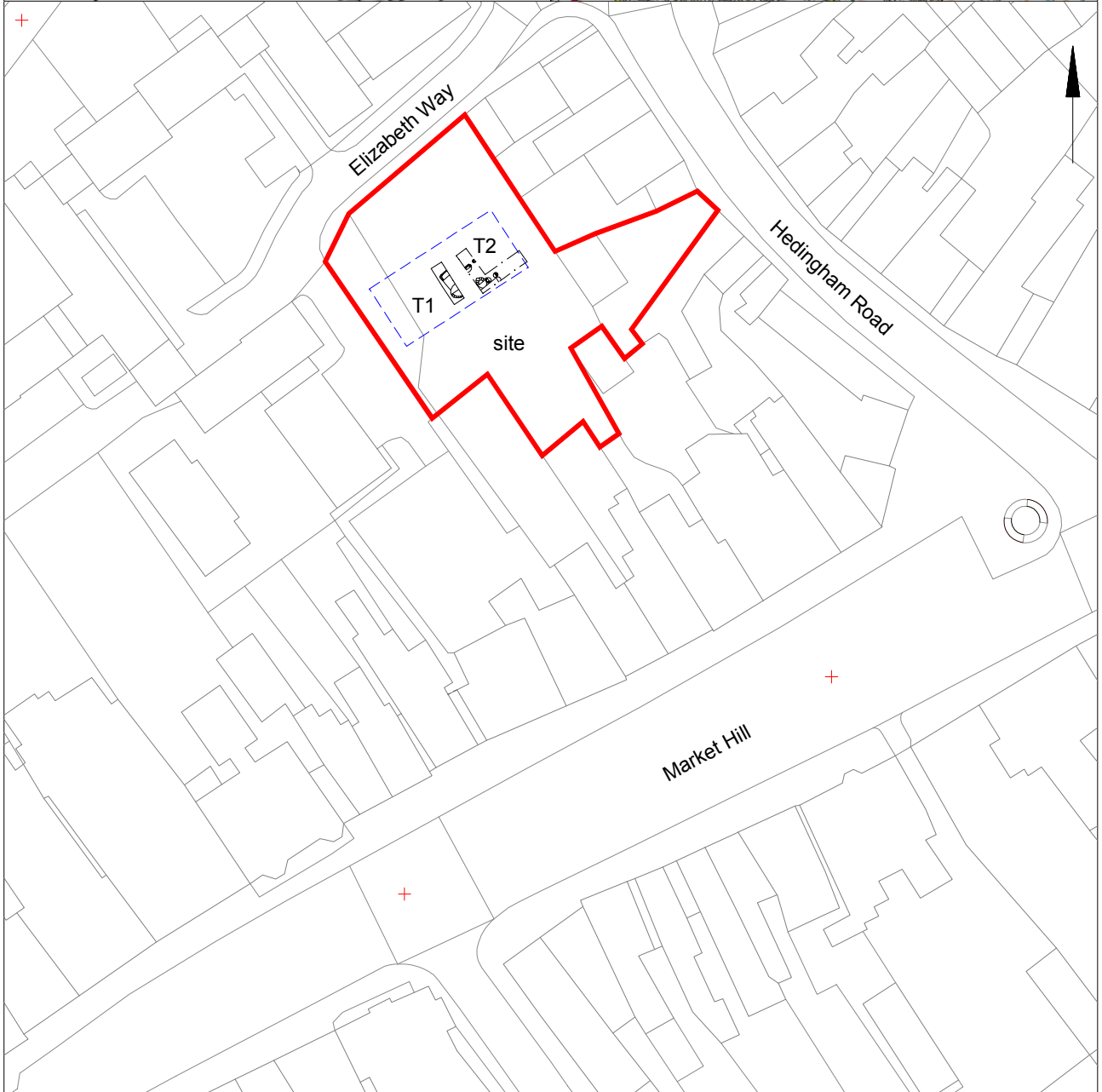
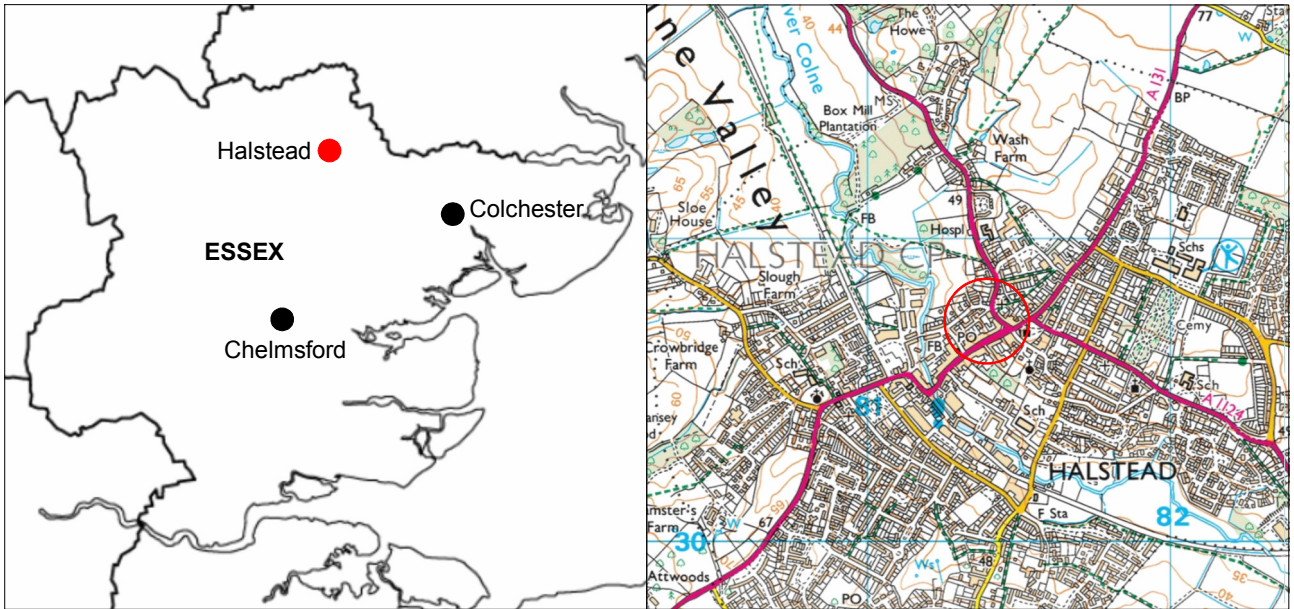
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Date: 18.08.2016



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Fig 1 Site location and trench plan in relation to proposed development (dashed blue line).



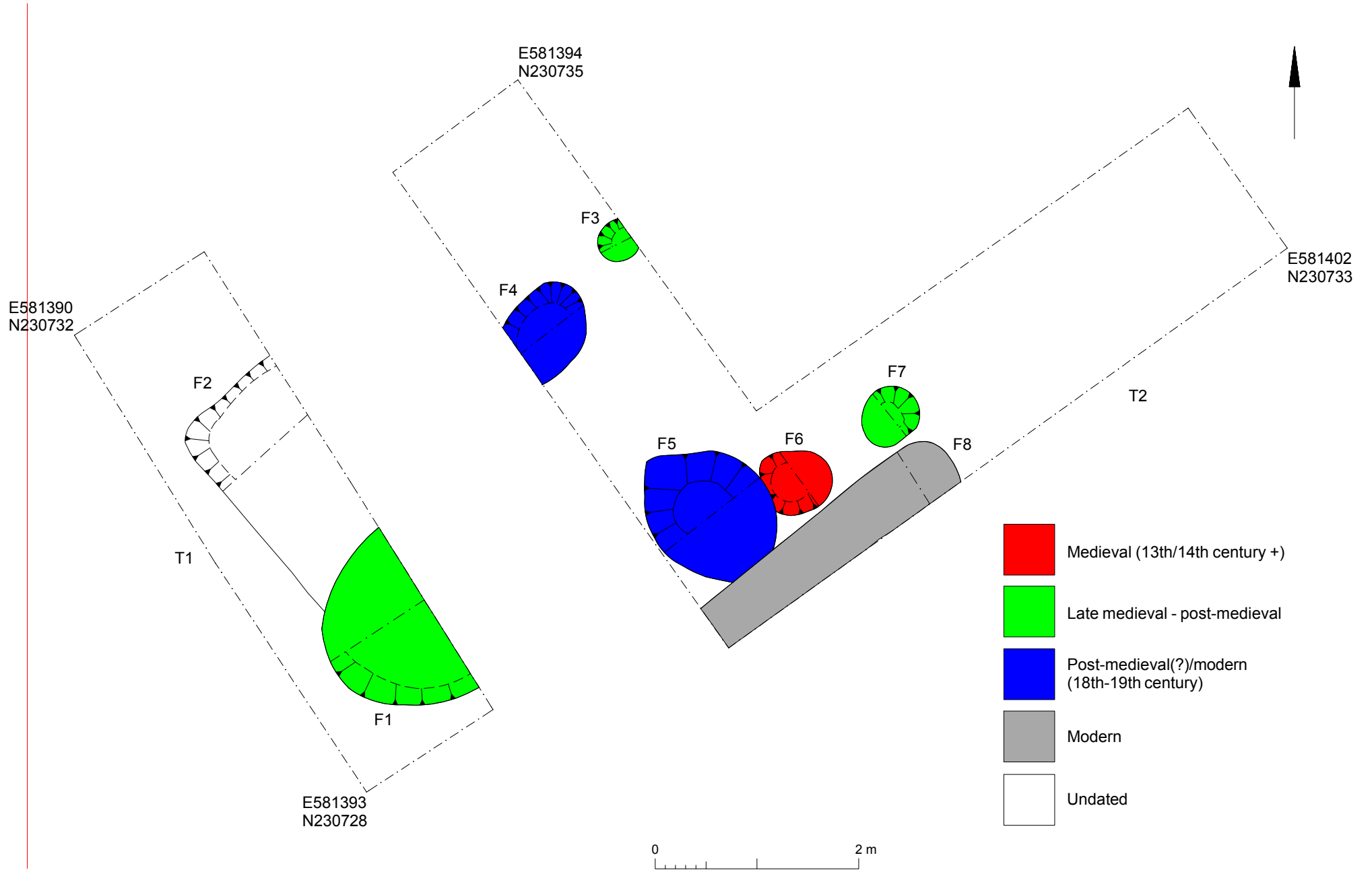


Fig 2 Results with phasing

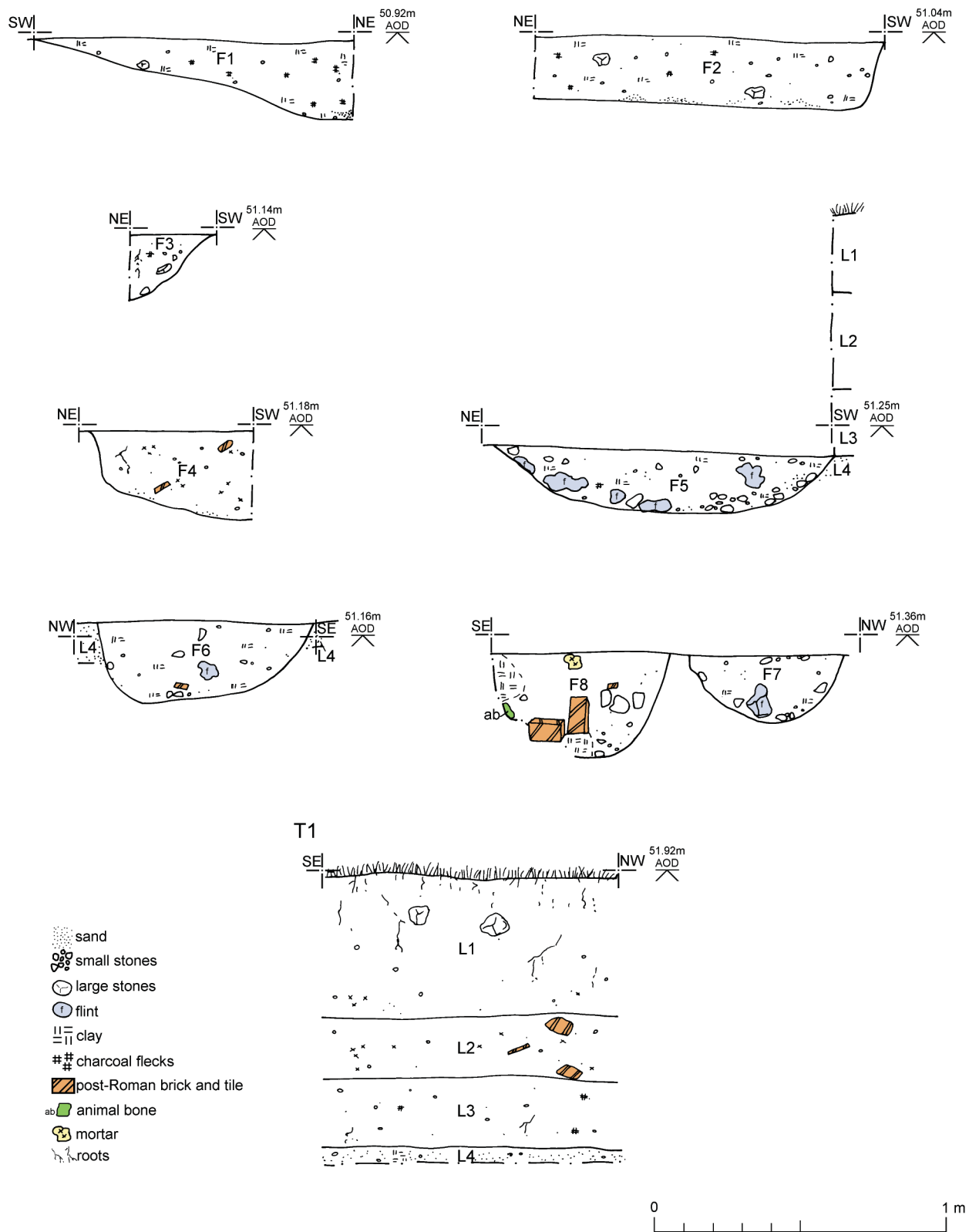


Fig 3 Feature sections (F1-8) and representative trench section (T1).

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead, Essex, CO9 2AD	
Parish: Halstead	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 81394 30733 (centre)	Site code: CAT project code: 16/07n ECC project code: HS8 OASIS project ID: colchest3-258233
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 2nd August 2016	Size of area investigated: Two trenches totalling 17m long by 1.8m wide (30.6m ²)
Location of curating museum: Braintree Museum accession code: requested	Funding source: developer
Further seasons anticipated? Not known	Related EHER number:
Final report: CAT Report 991	
Periods represented: medieval, post-medieval, modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out on land to the rear of 16 High Street, Halstead, Essex in advance of the construction of four new dwellings. Historic mapping shows that the garden plot was in existence by at least 1838 and the buildings on either side date from the 16th to 18th century. A single medieval pit (13th-14th century) and residual medieval pottery sherds suggest activity on the development site during the earliest origins of the town. Five later pits (three late medieval/post-medieval and two post-medieval/modern) are probably associated with the use of the development site as a yard/garden to the rear of the property fronting onto the High Street.	
Previous summaries/reports: –	
Keywords: –	Significance: *
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: August 2016