

# Archaeological monitoring on land west of Granta Cottages, Market Road, Great Chesterford, Essex, CB10 1NS

July - November 2017



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**commissioned by Graham Elmer**

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**CAT Report 1292**

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## 1 Summary

*Archaeological monitoring was carried out on land west of Granta Cottages, Market Road, Great Chesterford during a groundworks and drainage associated with the construction of a residential dwelling. The site was located partially within the boundary of a 4th-century Roman town, which is also a scheduled monument.*

*Despite the proximity to known archaeological remains, uncovered during an evaluation immediately to the north of the new dwelling, only a single undated posthole was observed during the monitoring. The lack of evidence of the Roman town wall or its associated ditch in any of the monitored trenches suggests that the proposed alignment of the wall may need to be reconsidered.*

*Two unstratified sherds of mid-to-late 2nd-century samianware were recovered during the monitoring, and presumably originated from the Roman fort pre-dating the 4th-century Roman town.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring on land west of Granta Cottages, Market Road, Great Chesterford which was carried out between July and November 2017. The work was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) and was commissioned by Graham Elmer. The monitoring was carried out during the construction of a residential dwelling, with associated groundworks and drainage.

In response to consultation, Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECCHEA) Richard Havis and Historic England Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments (HEIAM) Sarah Poppy advised that as the site lies within a scheduled monument and in an area highlighted by the EHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, 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 Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT and agreed with the ECCHEA and HEIAM (CAT 2018).

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with Historic England's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015), 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 watching briefs* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

## 3 Archaeological background (Fig 2)

The following archaeological background draws on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex.

The proposed development site lies on the southern edge of the scheduled area of a 4th-century walled Roman town (SM 24871). Within 'The Roman Town of Great Chesterford' (Medlycott 2011) the town wall is shown directly bisecting Granta Cottages. The town wall was over 3m wide and has been investigated in several locations around its circuit. Sometimes it survives as intact foundations, but often only a robber trench indicates its location (Medlycott 2011).

On the southern side of Newmarket Road evidence of Roman coffins are recorded (EHER 4941) as well as masonry foundations, which may be either part of the walled

town or more likely part of the second walled enclosure located around the church (EHER 13922). For further details of the archaeology of Great Chesterford see the Historic Town survey (Medlycott 1999) and the publication on the town (Medlycott 2011a).

An evaluation carried out by CAT on the eastern side of the Roman town (again on Newmarket Road; CAT Report 1207) failed to expose any evidence of the town wall. It did, however, uncover a road surface associated with the Roman town.

In the immediate vicinity of the development site, an archaeological evaluation undertaken at 3 and 4 Granta Cottages by ECC Field Archaeology Unit (ECCFAU) found evidence of masonry walls. The evaluation found evidence at no. 3 of a substantial wall, interpreted as the town wall, and at no. 4 further foundations, interpreted as the remains of a masonry structure inside the walled town area (EHER 48223; Miciak 2013).

An evaluation in 2015 to the east of 6 Granta Cottages by CAT did not identify any trace of the town wall (Fig 2, CAT Report 864).

In 2016 another archaeological evaluation by CAT was carried out on the current site (forming part of the pre-planning application phase of work) (CAT Report 988). Two trial-trenches were excavated. The first, located within the garden of the proposed new dwelling, was excavated across the projected line of the Roman wall and targeted several anomalies identified during a ground penetrating radar survey carried out before trenching (*ibid*, Appendix 1). The evaluation revealed the remains of a large, 2m wide, robber trench aligned SW to NE. Probably the remains of the 4th century Roman town wall, the robber trench appeared to be on the same alignment as part of a wall foundation identified at No 4 Granta Cottages. Three Roman pits, two undated pits and an undated linear, possibly a ditch, were also excavated. Results from the evaluation showed that two of the pits and the possible ditch were anomalies on the gpr survey, but the robber trench itself was not. The second trench, on the site of the proposed new dwelling, revealed a single modern service.

#### **4 Aims**

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken to identify and record any surviving archaeological deposits that may exist on the site, particularly in relation to the walled 4th-century Roman town as detailed above.

## 5 Results (Fig 2)

During the monitoring, a CAT archaeologist observed the excavation of approximately 70m of foundation trenches, connecting a series of rammed piles. The foundation trenches (on average) measured 0.9m in width and 1m in depth.



**Photograph 1** South-west corner of foundation trench during excavation. Photograph taken facing east.

The excavation of two service trenches was also observed (Fig 2). One was for a water pipe and consisted of c 21m of trenching aligned east-west, between Newmarket Road and the temporary builders compound. This trench measured 400mm wide and 750mm deep.



**Photograph 2** Trench for water pipe under excavation. Photograph taken facing north-west.

The second trench was for much more substantial deep drainage, connecting to an existing sewer and surrounding the new building on the north, east and west (Fig 2). This trench was c 37m long, measured 0.6m wide (although was larger in the location of manholes) and varied between 2.7m deep (to the west) and 0.65m deep (to the east).

Most of the trenching (whether for foundations or services) was excavated through three horizons. Modern topsoil (L1, c 330mm thick) sealed a layer of dark sandy-silty subsoil (L2, c 0.20-0.52m thick) which sealed natural sands and gravels (L3).

The water trench, at its eastern end, was initially machined through L4 and L5, rather than L1. These were modern layers associated with either the road to the south or the track alongside Granta Cottages.

The drainage trench at its western end encountered L6, a substantial modern layer probably associated with the existing service in this location (Fig 4).

As observed previously during the evaluation (CAT Report 988), the thickness of L2, and as a result the depth of L3, increases in the south of the site. The sewer trench to the north of the new building encountered natural sands and gravels at 500mm below current ground level, whereas the water main trench south of the building went to a depth of 750mm and never encountered the natural subsoil (Fig 4).

Only one feature was encountered during the monitoring, a small posthole observed in the section of the easternmost foundation trench (F10). No finds were recovered from this feature, but it was sealed by L2 (Photograph 4).



**Photograph 3** Drainage trench, showing shallower east end and original service run to be diverted. Photograph taken facing north-west.



**Photograph 4** Section in eastern foundation trench, showing F10 and L2. Photograph taken facing north-east.

No other features were encountered during the monitoring, but this was largely due to the trenches failing to penetrate through the subsoil (L2) in most areas (Fig 4).

## 6 Finds

Unstratified finds recovered during the monitoring included two sherds of central Gaulish samianware (Dr 18/31) dating from the mid-late 2nd century.

Further unstratified finds included a fragment of animal bone and a worked flint, possibly part of a core.

## 7 Discussion

Although the monitoring failed to expose any significant features or finds, it does provide some insight into the archaeology in this area of Great Chesterford.

The 2nd-century samian recovered during the monitoring probably originated from the Roman fort that pre-dates the 4th-century walled town (Medlycott 2011).

The town wall on the southern and eastern side of the Roman town has proven elusive. The possible route of the town wall in this area is proposed by Medlycott (2011, Fig 3.26). During recent archaeological investigations only once has a foundation been observed on this proposed alignment; during the 2013 evaluation by ECCFAU (Miciak 2013). This foundation was interpreted as the town wall, despite being only 0.68m wide, and the town wall being known to be over 3m in width (Medlycott 2011).

Slightly further along the proposed alignment, the 2015 evaluation by CAT to the east of Granta Cottages failed to uncover any evidence relating to the town wall (CAT Report 864).

CAT's evaluation on the current site in 2016 interpreted a feature to the south of T1 as the robber trench of the town wall. This feature was 2m wide, which, although wider than the foundation observed in the 2013 evaluation, was still narrower than the known width of the wall (CAT Report 988). After the evaluation, CAT proposed an alternate

alignment of the town wall, aligned further north-east to south-west than Medlycott's (Fig 2).

Because no evidence of the town wall or its associated ditch were observed during the 2017 monitoring detailed in this report, both of these proposed alignments now need to be reconsidered (Fig 2). Until further archaeological investigation is carried out to the south of the scheduled Roman town, any suggested route of the town wall in this area must continue to be hypothetical.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Graham Elmer for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by M Baister and A Tuffey. Figures were prepared by M Baister and S Carter. The project was monitored for Essex County Council by Richard Havis, and for Historic England by Sarah Poppy.

## 9 References

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

- |                       |       |  |
|-----------------------|-------|--|
| Brown and Glazenbrook | 2000  | <i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2 – Research Agenda and Strategy</i> . East Anglian Archaeology                          |
| CAT Report 864        | 2015  | <i>An Archaeological Evaluation at Granta Cottages, Newmarket Road, Great Chesterford, Essex: August 2015</i>  |
| CAT Report 988        | 2016  | <i>Archaeological evaluation on land to the west of Granta Cottages, Newmarket Road, Great Chesterford, Essex, CB10 1PE: July 2016</i>                     |
| CAT                   | 2017  | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological monitoring on land west of Granta Cottages, Market Road, Great Chesterford, Essex CB10 1NS</i> |
| CAT                   | 2018  | <i>Health &amp; Safety Policy</i>  |
| CIfA                  | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i>   |
| CIfA                  | 2014b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>                                      |
| DCLG                  | 2012  | <i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>  |
| 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          | 1999  | <i>Great Chesterford Historic Town Assessment Report ECC</i>   |
| Medlycott, M          | 2011a | <i>The Roman Town of Great Chesterford</i> East Anglian Archaeology 137  |
| Medlycott, M          | 2011b | <i>Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)            |
| Miciak, L             | 2013  | <i>Numbers 3 and 4 Granta Cottages, Newmarket Road, Great Chesterford, Essex: Archaeological Evaluation (FAU Report 2644)</i>                              |



## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
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
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	<b>O</b> nline <b>A</b> ccess to the <b>I</b> ndex of <b>A</b> rchaeological <b>I</b> nvestigations, <a href="http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main">http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main</a>
Roman	period from AD 43 – c 410

## 11 Contents of archive

**Finds:** none retained

### **Paper and digital record**

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1292)

Original site record (feature and layer sheets, finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, architectural plans, attendance register, risk assessment

## 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: 2016.19.

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### **Distribution list**

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*Checked by:* Philip Crummy

*Date:* 10.07.2018

## Appendix 1 Context list

Context Number	Finds Number	Context Type	Description	Date
F10	-	posthole	soft, dry, medium orange/brown sandy-silt with common medium subrounded stone inclusions	undated
L1	-	topsoil	friable, dry, dark brown/black sandy-silt with CBM and chalk flecks	modern
L2	-	subsoil	friable, dry, medium/dark brown sandy-silt with common irregular and subrounded stone inclusions	post-Roman
L3	-	natural	loose/soft, dry, light yellow sand with abundant medium/large irregular and subrounded stone inclusions	post-glacial
L4	-	compaction for track	firm/hard, dry, medium yellow mortar layer with large amounts of gravel, stone and CBM	modern
L5	-	build-up for road	very hard, dry, redeposited natural (L3) with large flint and chalk nodules	modern
L6	-	disturbance from services	soft, dry, dark black sandy silt with common brick flecks	modern

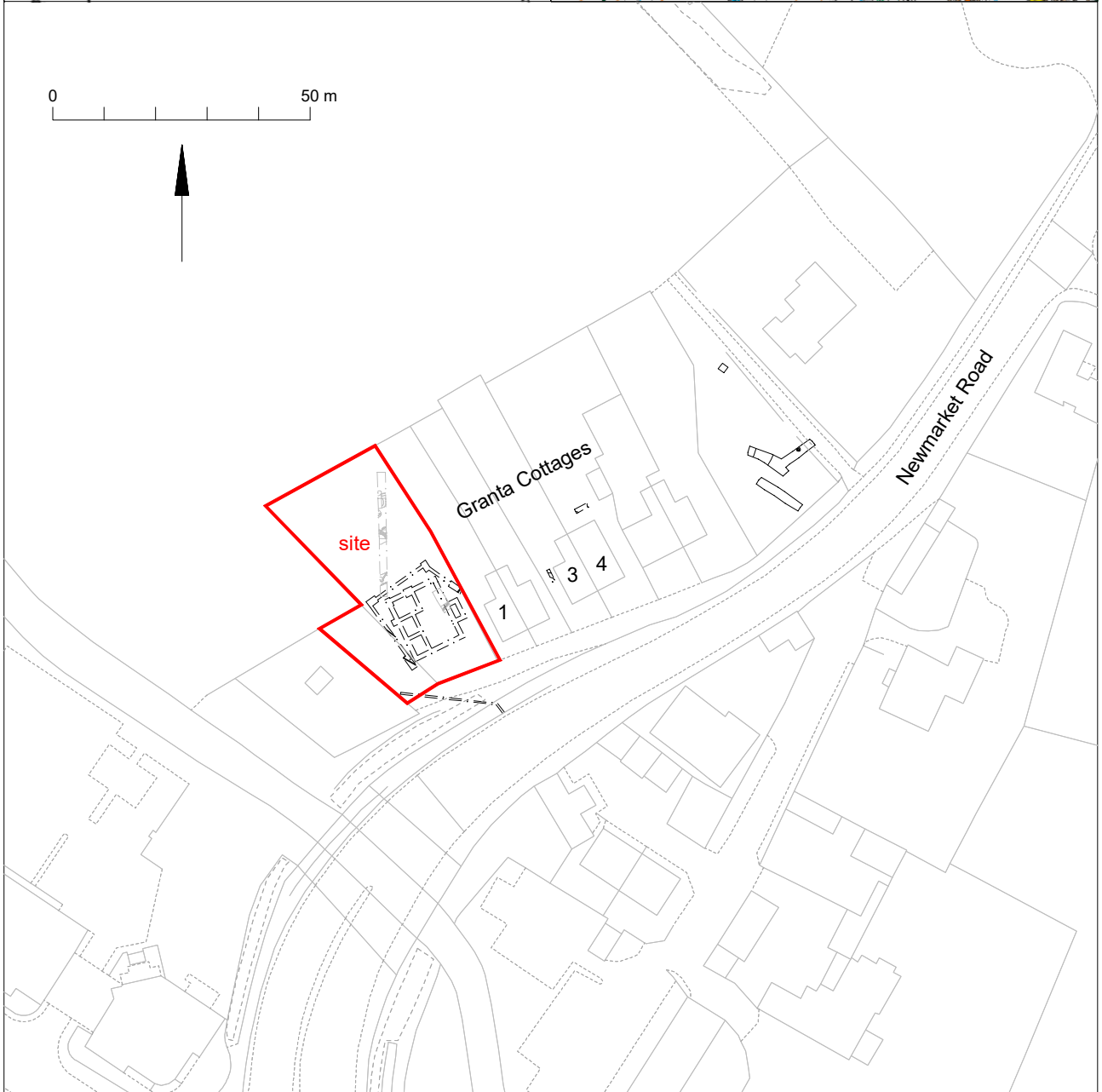
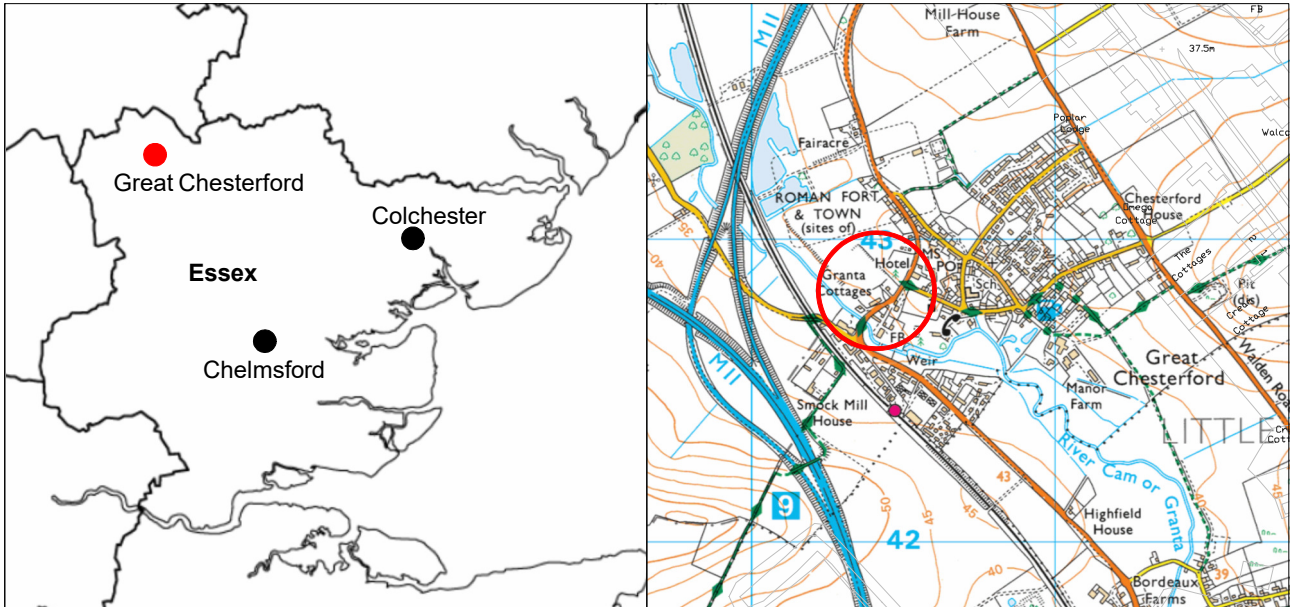
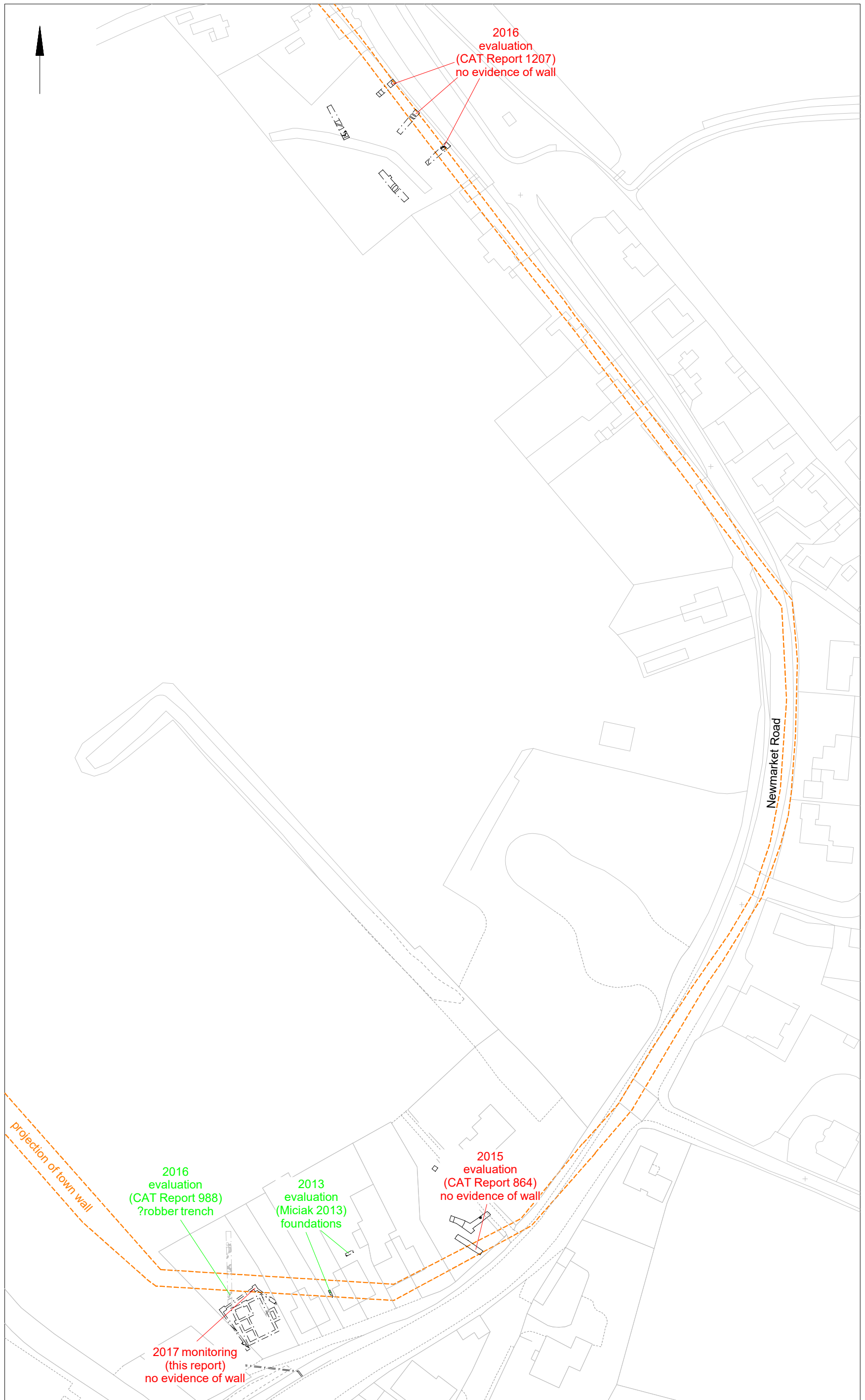


Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Plan showing projected line of wall to south of Roman town (after Medlycott 2011). Recent archaeological investigations shown, along with location of any foundations/robber trenches uncovered.



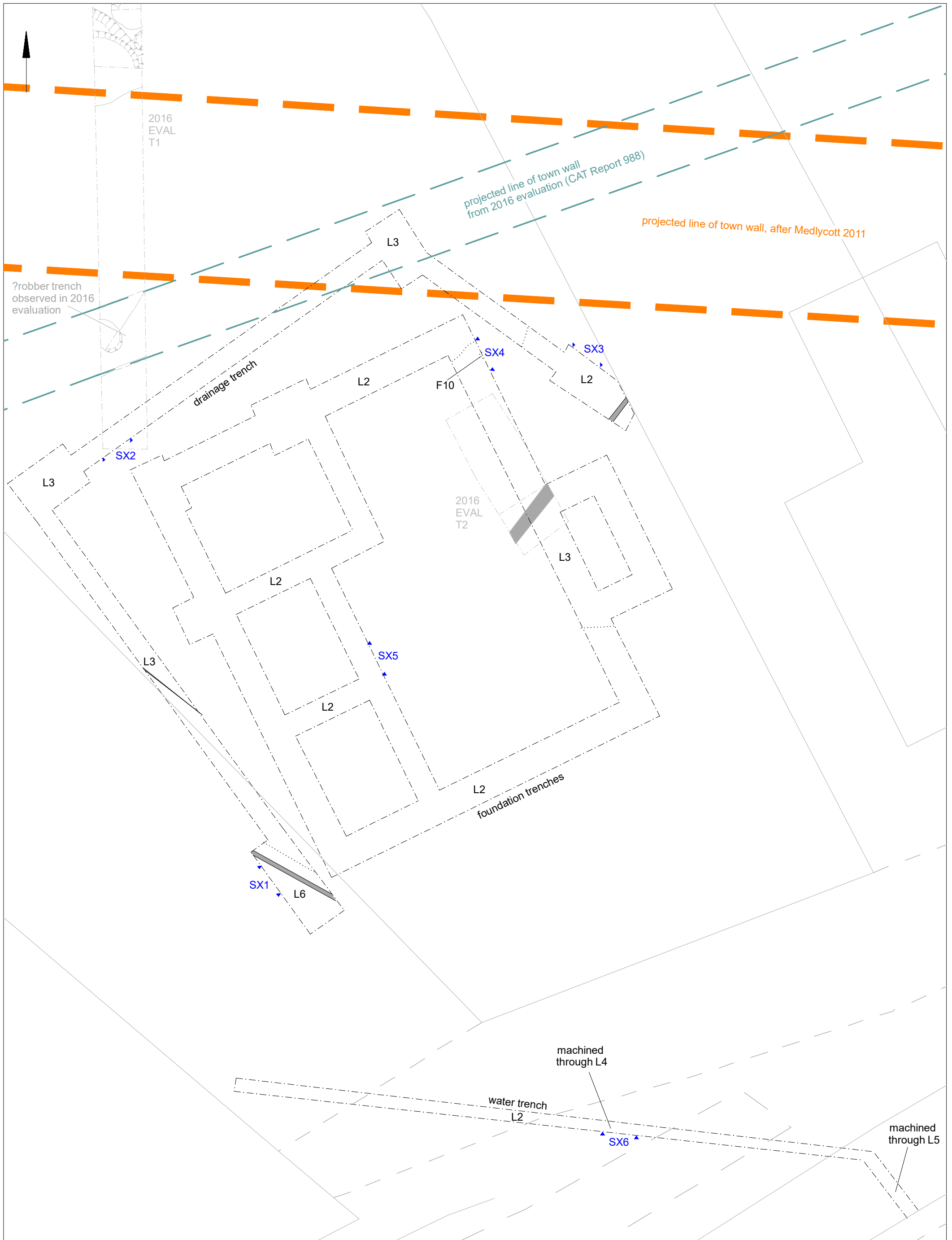
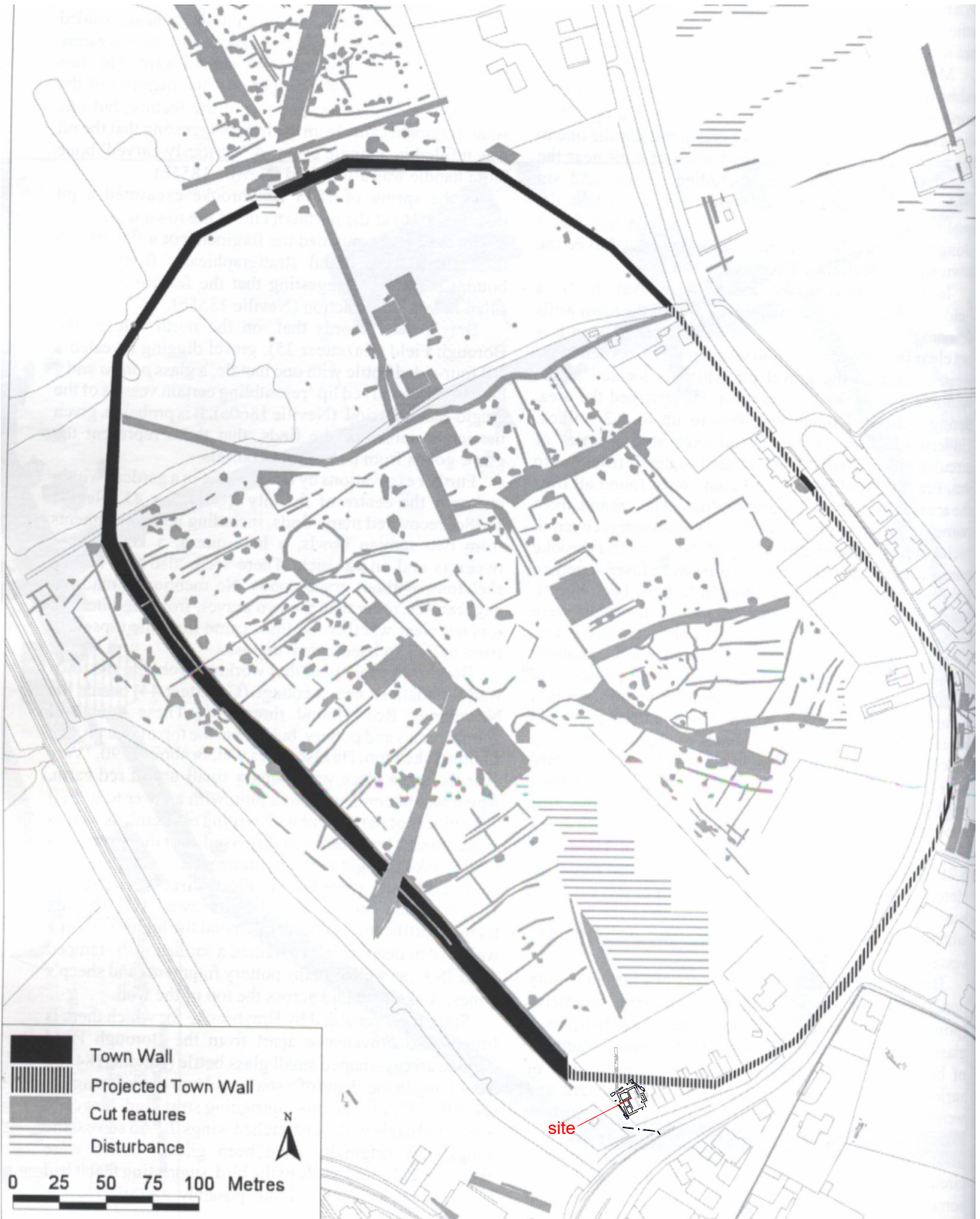


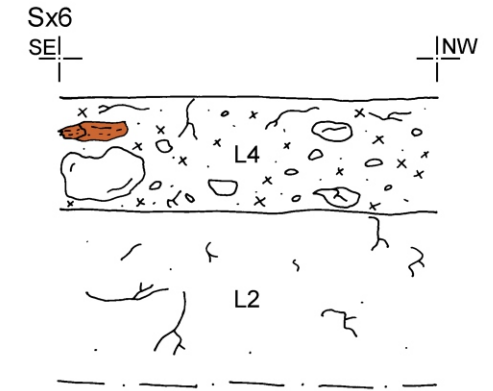
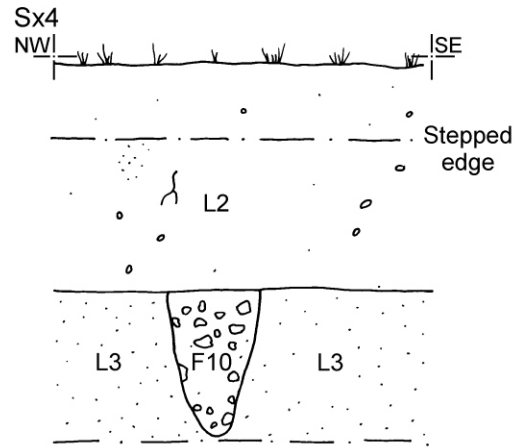
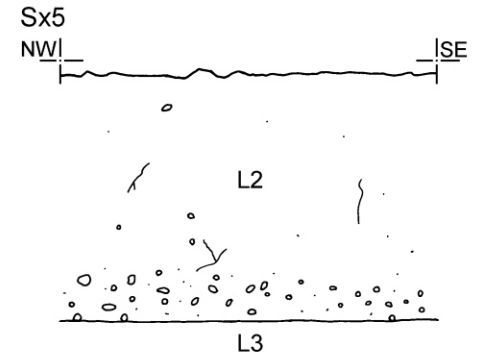
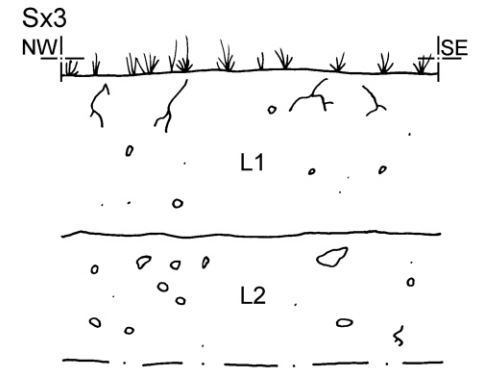
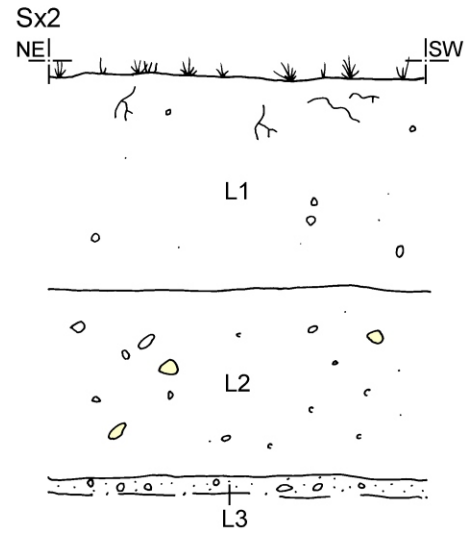
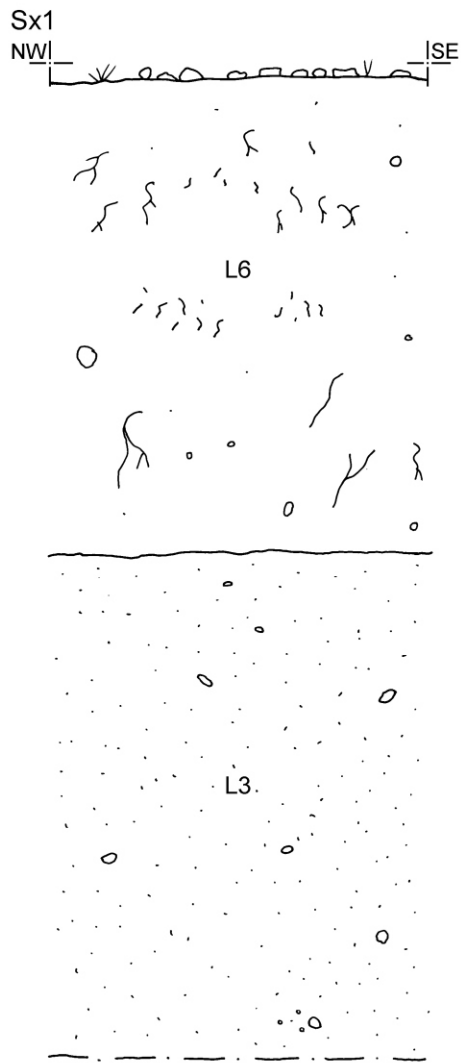
Fig 3 Monitoring overlay on 2016 evaluation results. Modern services in grey. Projected lines of town wall and section locations shown.



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Fig 4 Monitoring results in relation to the plan of the Roman town (after Medlycott, 2011).

0 50 m



- sand
- ⊙ small stones
- large stones
- √ roots
- ▭ large roots
- x x mortar flecks
- chalk



Fig 5 Feature and representative sections.

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**OASIS ID: colchest3-290048**

### Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring on land west of Granta Cottages, Market Road, Great Chesterford, Essex
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was carried out on land west of Granta Cottages, Market Road, Great Chesterford during a groundworks and drainage associated with the construction of a residential dwelling. The site was located partially within the boundary of a 4th-century Roman town, which is also a scheduled monument. Despite the proximity to known archaeological remains, uncovered during an evaluation immediately to the north of the new dwelling, only a single undated posthole was observed during the monitoring. The lack of evidence of the Roman town wall or its associated ditch in any of the monitored trenches suggests that the proposed alignment of the wall may need to be reconsidered. Two unstratified sherds of mid-to-late 2nd-century samianware were recovered during the monitoring, and presumably originated from the Roman fort pre-dating the 4th-century Roman town.
Project dates	Start: 28-07-2017 End: 10-07-2018
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	17/07a - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	UTT/16/3137/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Vacant Land 2 - Vacant land not previously developed
Monument type	POST HOLE Uncertain
Significant Finds	SHERD Roman
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX UTTLESFORD GREAT CHESTERFORD land west of Granta Cottages, Newmarket Road



Postcode CB10 1NS  
 Study area 0 Square metres  
 Site coordinates TL 71132 06093 51.72689619186 0.47817022334 51 43 36 N 000 28 41 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust  
 Project brief originator none  
 Project design originator Laura Pooley  
 Project director/manager Chris Lister  
 Project supervisor Mark Baister  
 Type of sponsor/funding body Owner

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No  
 Digital Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum  
 Digital Archive ID 2016.19  
 Digital Contents "Survey"  
 Digital Media available "Text","Survey"  
 Paper Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum  
 Paper Archive ID 2016.19  
 Paper Contents "Textiles","other"  
 Paper Media available "Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Survey "

### Project bibliography 1

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