

Archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 1a, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF

July, September and October 2020



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CAT Report 1609

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Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aims	2
5	Results	2
6	Finds	7
7	Environmental assessment	8
8	Conclusion	9
9	Acknowledgements	9
10	References	10
11	Abbreviations and glossary	11
12	Contents of archive	11
13	Archive deposition	11
Appendix 1 Context list		13
Appendix 2 Catalogue of CBM		15
Figures		after p15
CAT wsi		
OASIS summary sheet		

List of photographs, tables and figures

Cover: General site shot

Photograph 1	Road strip, looking north-east	3
Photograph 2	Road strip, looking north-west	3
Photograph 3	Charcoal-rich pit F20, looking east	4
Photograph 4	Charcoal-rich pit F22, looking west	4
Photograph 5	Charcoal-rich pit F29, looking south-west	4
Photograph 6	Post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch F23, looking northwest	5
Photograph 7	Swale and drainage trench strip, looking north-east	6
Photograph 8	Drainage trench strip through the car park, looking north-east	6
Photograph 9	Charcoal-rich pit F16, looking north-east	7
Table 1	Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features	7
Table 2	Sample details	8
Table 3	Charcoal taxa	9
Fig 1	Site location	
Fig 2	Location plan of evaluation trenches, Phase 1 (outlined in blue) and current Phase 1a works (outlined in green)	
Fig 3	Road strip excavation results. Modern disturbance in grey.	
Fig 4	Swale and drainage excavation results. Modern disturbance in grey.	
Fig 5	Feature and representative sections	
Fig 6	Distribution map showing the locations of all the charcoal-rich pits recorded in Northern Colchester since 2001. Each circle represents a single charcoal-rich pit unless otherwise stated. Those that have been dated have been assigned to Phase 1, 2 or 3.	

1 Summary

An archaeological strip, map and record excavation was carried out at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex during groundworks as part of Phase 1a of the development. The development site is located within an area of cropmarks with recent excavations since 2001 revealing a significant concentration of charcoal-rich pits across this area of northern Colchester. Evaluation and Phase 1 excavation in advance of the current project had previously uncovered evidence of charcoal-rich pits, along with post-medieval, modern and undated features.

CNG (South) Phase 1a excavation revealed 29 features including two medieval/post-medieval pits, a post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch, fourteen modern features (ditches/drainage ditches, a pit, posthole and wheel-rut), five undated features (pits, a pit/posthole and a gully terminus) and two natural features. Also excavated were three undated charcoal-rich pits along with two charcoal-rich pits of post-medieval/modern and modern date.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report for an archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex which was carried out during 8th to 24th July, and 28th September to 6th October 2020. The work was commissioned by Mr J Conington of Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd in advance of groundworks for the creation of a new access road and boulevard and associated drainage, including drainage basins, services, and an energy centre, and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the CHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBCAA). This recommendation was for an archaeological excavation and was based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Excavation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Jess Tipper (CBCAA 2019), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2019).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003; Medlycott 2011). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (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 draws on the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER) (accessed via Colchester Heritage Explorer, <https://colchesterheritage.co.uk>).

The CHER shows that the development site lies within an area of archaeological potential. The western half of the development site is located within an area of cropmarks of pits and assorted linear features (CHER MCC8632). Significantly, between 2001 and 2019, 16 archaeological investigations in and around the development site have revealed 269 charcoal-rich pits (see CAT Report 1479 for a summary of these investigations and Fig 5 of this report for a location map). These charcoal-rich pits are all of a similar size, shape and profile, containing high concentrations of oak charcoal, and usually including evidence of *in situ* burning, or at least hot materials being deposited within the pit with sufficient heat to scorch the base. Dating evidence

from the pits was sparse across all of the archaeological investigations, but analysis of the dating (for CAT Report 1479) suggested three main phases of activity: Phase 1 – Early Iron Age to early Roman period (1st century AD); Phase 2 – late Anglo-Saxon to early medieval period (10th-14th centuries); and Phase 3 – post-medieval period (16th century onwards). Based on current evidence the charcoal-rich pits from Phases 1 and 2 most likely represent separate periods of charcoal production in northern Colchester.

In 2016, in advance of the current development works, a gradiometry survey of the c 50 hectare development site was carried out by Stratascan. The survey identified the corner of an undated enclosure along with a number of possible associated linear features and some modern anomalies related to services (Richardson 2016, ECC3649).

In 2018-19, Archaeological Services, Durham University carried out a trial-trenching evaluation across the development site (Watson & Swan 2019; ECC4302) (for location plan see Fig 2). Charcoal-rich pits, post-medieval boundary ditches, and postholes and ditches of unknown date were uncovered. Finds from the 11 charcoal-rich pits included sherds of prehistoric and Late Iron Age pottery, and a fragment of Roman period glass.

In March 2020 and following the evaluation, an excavation was undertaken on the development site as part of Phase 1 of project. A further two/three charcoal-rich pits were excavated along with three undated pits and a modern ditch (CAT Report 1554, ECC4434) (for location plan and results see Fig 2).

4 Aims

The aim of this investigation was to excavate and record all archaeological horizons due to be destroyed during the proposed development.

5 Results (Figs 3-5)

Feature, layer and finds numbers used during the current investigation follow on from numbers assigned during Phase 1 of this investigation (CAT Report 1544).

5.1 Road strip (Figs 3 & 5; Photographs 1-6)

An area measuring 0.26ha was stripped under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist and was located immediately to the west of the Phase 1 excavations carried out in March 2020 (CAT Report 1544). The area was stripped through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.11-0.19m thick) and accumulation (L3, c 0.16-0.2m thick) onto natural (L3, encountered at a depth of c 0.26-0.36m below current ground level (bcgl)).

Post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch F23 was a T-shaped ditch aligned north-north-east to south-south-west and west-north-west to east-south-east. Part of the boundary to the north and south still exists today, and it is visible on the first edition 6-inch OS map of 1875. A section cut through the ditch measured 0.94m wide and 0.35m deep.

Modern remains included drainage ditches F19, F21 and F28, ditches F24 and F26, pits F20 and F25, post-hole F32, and possibly wheel-rut F27. Other modern disturbance was planned but not numbered or excavated (highlighted in grey on Fig 2). Interestingly pits F20 and F25 both had charcoal-rich fills but a fragment of post-medieval/modern glass came from F20 and pit F25 cut modern ditch F24. Pit F20 was c 0.39m diameter by 0.07m deep, pit F25, 0.72m by 0.45m and 0.11m deep, and neither showed evidence of *in situ* burning or scorching.

Undated charcoal-rich pits F22 and F29 were sub-oval in plan with gently sloping sides and a flat base. They both had a single charcoal-rich fill but only pit F22 showed evidence of *in situ* burning/scorching at the base of the feature. Pit F22 was 0.63m by 0.59m and 0.14m deep, and pit F29 was 0.64m by 0.5m and 0.07m thick.

Undated pits F30 and F31 were 0.92m by 0.61m and 0.1m deep and 0.6m by 0.49m and 0.06m deep respectively. Undated feature F33 was probably of natural origin.



Photograph 1 Road strip, looking north-east



Photograph 2 Road strip, looking north-west



Photograph 3 Charcoal-rich pit F20, looking east



Photograph 4 Charcoal-rich pit F22, looking west



Photograph 5 Charcoal-rich pit F29, looking south-west



Photograph 6 Post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch F23, looking northwest

5.2 Swale and drainage area (Figs 4 & 5; Photographs 7-9)

An area measuring 0.25ha was stripped along the eastern edge of the development site for the new swale and drainage trenches to a depth of 0.3-0.65m bcgl. Most of the area was stripped through L1 (c 0.09-0.32m thick) and L3 (c 0.07-0.2m) onto L2 (encountered at a depth of 0.3-0.41m bcgl). However, the far south-western corner of the strip was located in a car park. In this area excavation occurred through a modern gravel surface (L4, c 0.1-0.16m thick), a levelling layer (L5, c 0.13-0.15m thick), a layer of concrete (L6, c 0.04-0.06m thick) and a build-up layer (L7, c 0.18-0.25m thick) onto L2 (0.51-0.56m bcgl).

Fragments of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile came from pits F15 (lost) and F36. Pit F15 was 1.16m by 0.7m and 0.11m deep, and pit F36 c 1.05m diameter and 0.1m deep. Modern drainage ditches F8, F9, F10, F11, F13 and F18, and modern pit F34 were also excavated, and other modern disturbance was planned but not numbered or excavated (highlighted in grey on Fig 3).

Undated charcoal-rich pit, F16, was sub-round in plan (c 0.67m diameter by 0.1m deep) with gently sloping sides and a flat base. It had a single charcoal-rich fill but did not show any evidence of *in situ* burning or scorching. There were four more undated features: pit F12, 1.19m by 0.77m and 0.11m deep; pit/posthole F14, 0.28m diameter by 0.08m deep; gully terminal F35, aligned east-north-east to west-south-west, it was 0.8m wide and 1m deep; and pit F37, c 1.36m diameter and 0.1m deep. Natural feature F17 was also excavated.



Photograph 7 Swale and drainage trench strip, looking north-east



Photograph 8 Drainage trench strip through the car park, looking north-east



Photograph 9 Charcoal-rich pit F16, looking north-east

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The excavation uncovered eight sherds of medieval/post-medieval and modern ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) with a weight of 1,734kg (Table 1). This material was recovered from four features and as an unstratified find. Sherds of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile were recovered from ditch F23, ditch F26 and pit F36. Brick fragments of 19th- to 20th-century date came from ditch F26 and pit F34.

Context	Description	Qty.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	Date
F23	Ditch	1	18	18	Medieval/post-medieval
F26	Ditch	2	34	17	Modern
F34	Pit	3	721	240	Modern
F36	Pit	1	13	13	Medieval/post-medieval
U/S	?	1	948	948	Modern
Total		8	1,734	217	

Table 1 Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features

6.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

A fragment of green post-medieval/modern glass came from F20 (environmental sample <7>) and from F23 (finds no. 3). The fragments weighed 0.8g and 10.1g respectively.

Twenty fragments of clinker (weighing 22.2g) was recovered from F37 (environmental sample <11>, which produced no environmental remains).

7 Environmental assessment

by Lisa Gray

Introduction

This report is an assessment of five samples (see Table 2) taken from charcoal-rich pits.

Sample	Feature no.	Feature type	Date	Initial volume (L.)
6	F16	Charcoal-rich pit	Undated	20
7	F20	Charcoal-rich pit	Undated	10
8	F22	Charcoal-rich pit	Undated	30
9	F25	Charcoal-rich pit	Undated	40
10	F29	Charcoal-rich pit	Undated	20

Table 2 Sample details

Methodology

Samples were taken and processed by Colchester Archaeological Trust using a Siraf-type flotation device. Flot was collected in a 300-micron mesh sieve then dried.

Once with the author, the flots were scanned under a low powered stereo-microscope with a magnification range of 10 to 40x. The whole flots were examined. The abundance, diversity and state of preservation of eco- and artefacts in each sample were recorded.

Identifications were made using uncharred reference material (author's own and the Northern European Seed Reference Collection at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London) and reference manuals (such as Beijerinck 1947; Cappers *et al* 2006; Charles 1984; Jacomet 2006). Nomenclature for plants is taken from Stace (Stace 2010). Latin names are given once and the common names used thereafter.

Charcoal fragments larger than 4mm Ø in size were separated from the main flots and where possible, one hundred fragments were randomly selected for identification using a riffle box. Identification was attempted using epi-luminating microscopy. It is difficult to make identifications of charcoal fragments that are smaller than 4mm Ø in size because the diagnostic features necessary for identification may not be visible in such small fragments (Asouti 2006, 31; Smart & Hoffman, 1988, 178-179). Fragments smaller than this size were scanned to find any twigs or smaller roundwood fragments. When fragments have been broken to reveal anatomical features, they have been wrapped in foil to keep those fragments intact so they can be counted. Charcoal identifications were made using modern reference slides (author's own) and anatomical guides (Hather 2000; Schoch *et al* 2004).

Results

Each flot produced only charcoal and modern rootlet fragments. No table has been created for them due to their unproductivity. The only exception was sample six that contained one grass (Poaceae) stem fragment.

The charcoal in each sample came from fragments of oak (*Quercus* sp.) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.) (Table 3). It was not possible to distinguish between stem or branch oak-wood. Oak cannot be differentiated to species based on microscopic wood anatomy alone (Boyd 1988, 608; Schoch *et al.* 2004).

Sample	Oak	Beech
<6>	69	-
<7>	66	-
<8>	83	-
<9>	77	4
<10>	70	63

Table 3 Charcoal taxa

Discussion

As with previous charcoal analyses carried out for Colchester Northern Gateway sites (Gray 2018; Gray 2020a; Gray 2020b) the most frequently occurring charcoal type in these features are oak and beech wood. Both wood taxa represented in the charcoal have uses as fuel and craft woods. Well-seasoned oak burns slowly giving off a ‘...good lasting heat...’ and well-seasoned beech also burns well but not as well as oak (Skellern 2000). Oak wood provides long-lasting fuel (Gale & Cutler 2000, 205) and beech wood is also a fuel wood that burns at a high heat with little smoke (Taylor, 1981, 46).

Radiocarbon recommendations

These charcoal fragments come from long-lived tree species and are not normally recommended for radiocarbon dating.

8 Conclusion

CNG (South) Phase 1a excavation revealed 29 features including two medieval/post-medieval pits, a post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch visible on the 1st edition OS map of 1875 and still partially extant, fourteen modern features (ditches/drainage ditches, a pit, posthole and wheel-rut), five undated features (pits, a pit/posthole and a gully terminus) and two natural features. Three undated charcoal-rich pits (F16, F22 and F29) were also excavated. They are of a similar size and shape to those identified across 16 investigations in and around the development site (see Archaeological background and Fig 5 for a location plan). A further two charcoal-rich pits (F20 and F25) were of post-medieval/modern and modern date.

Environmental samples taken from all five features revealed oak and beech charcoal. Although only one of the undated charcoal-rich pits showed evidence of *in situ* burning or scorching it is possible that they are all related to charcoal production. However, the pits of post-medieval/modern and modern date are unlikely to be associated with charcoal production as this area was largely heathland/farmland by these periods, and evidence from other investigations might suggest that these later pits are military campfires (CAT Report 1479) or perhaps associated with agricultural activities.

Eleven charcoal-rich pits were previously excavated on the development site during the trial-trenching evaluation. Nine were undated, but three produced finds dating to the prehistoric, Late Iron Age and Roman periods (Watson & Swan 2019; ECC4302). Another two undated charcoal-rich pits were subsequently excavated as part of Phase 1 of the project (CAT Report 1544). A third pit from Phase 1 was originally identified as a charcoal-rich pit, but in a recent re-evaluation of the evidence, this feature is probably more likely to be a pit with a charcoal fill than a charcoal-rich pit (CAT Report 1479, 34-36). Archaeological investigations at CNG (South) have therefore shown that charcoal-rich pits are present within the development site that, on current evidence, belongs to a period of charcoal production in northern Colchester that ranges from the Early Iron Age to early Roman period (CAT Report 1479) with a separate phase of military and/or agricultural activity in the post-medieval/modern periods.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Mr J Conington and Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by M Baister with Z Eksen. Figures are by C Lister, M Baister and E Holloway. The project was monitored for Colchester Borough Council by Dr Jess Tipper and Dr Richard Hoggett.

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

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11 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 1066
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAA	Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor
CHER	Colchester Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
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
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
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

12 Contents of archive

Finds: Part of one box (charcoal)

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1609)

Site digital photos and log

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1609)

CBC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Site data

Survey data

13 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 Colchester Museum under project ref. ECC4565.

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Distribution list:

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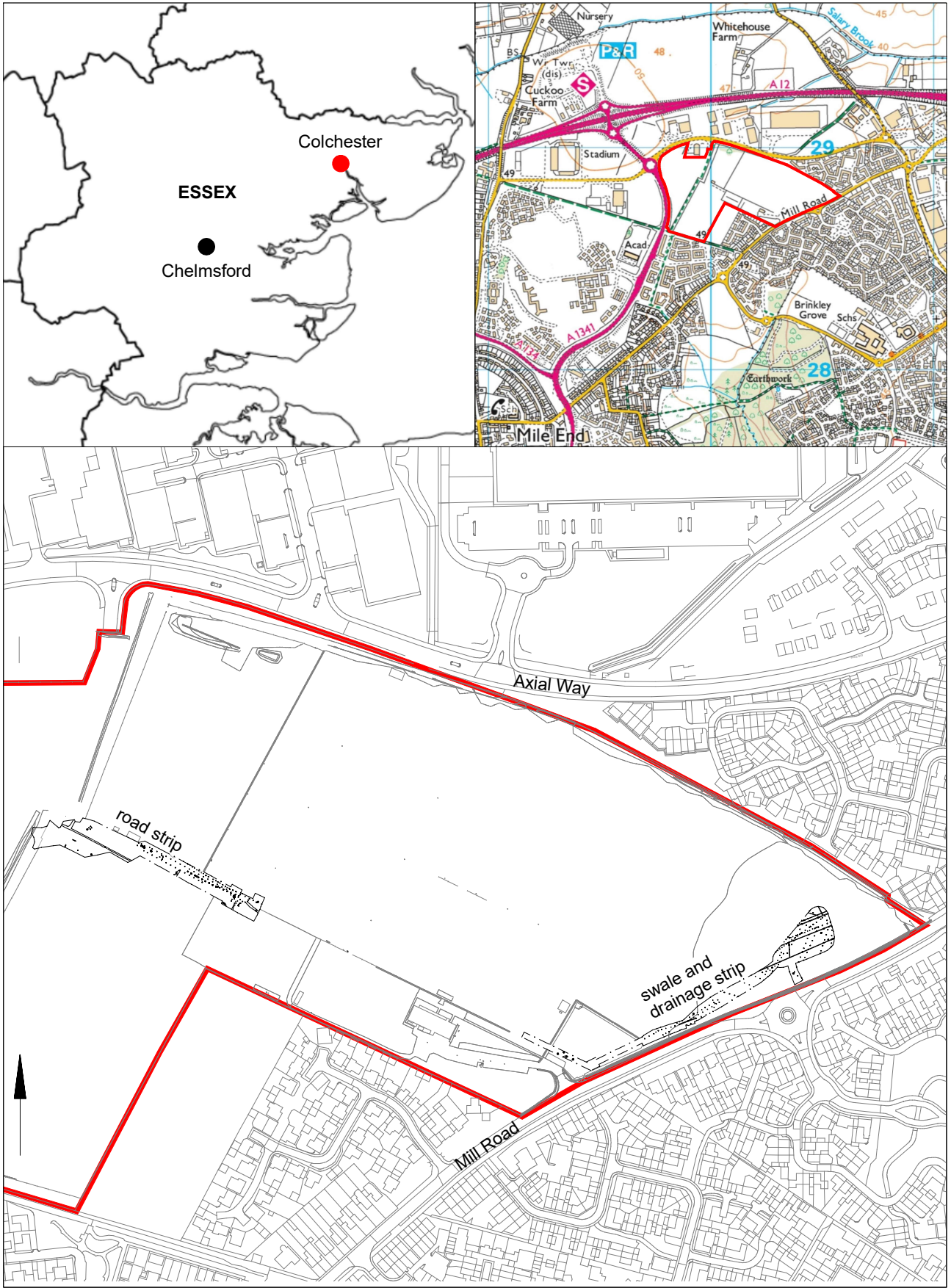
Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Finds no.	Sample no.	Feature Type	Description	Date
L1	-	-	Topsoil	Soft moist dark grey/brown silty-clay	Modern
L2	-	-	Natural	Firm, moist light/medium yellow/orange/brown clay	Post-glacial
L3	-	-	Accumulation	Hard, light grey/brown sandy-silt with occasional stones and CBM pieces	Undatable
L4	-	-	Car park surface	Gravel surface	Modern
L5	-	-	Levelling layer	Crush with thin layer of tarmac at base	Modern
L6	-	-	Concrete layer	-	Modern
L7	-	-	Build-up layer	CBM pieces and stones	Modern
F8	1	-	Drainage ditch	Very firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt with very frequent stones and occasional CBM fragments	Modern
F9	-	-	Drainage ditch	Very firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt with very frequent stones	Modern
F10	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silt with frequent stones	Modern
F11	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Modern
F12	-	-	Pit	Firm, dry medium/dark grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Undated
F13	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Modern
F14	-	-	Pit/posthole	Firm, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Undated
F15	2	-	Pit	Friable, medium grey/brown clayey-silt	Medieval / post-medieval
F16	-	<6>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm/hard, dry light/medium grey/brown sandy-silt with charcoal flecks	Undated
F17	-	-	Natural feature	Firm, moist light/medium grey/brown sandy-silt with frequent stones	Post-glacial
F18	-	-	Drainage ditch	Friable/firm, dry light/medium grey/brown clayey-silt	Modern
F19	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Modern
F20	-	<7>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm/hard, dry medium/dark grey/brown sandy-silt with charcoal flecks	Post-medieval/modern
F21	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Modern
F22	-	<8>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm, dry light grey/brown sandy-silt with charcoal flecks	Undated
F23	3	-	Ditch	Soft/friable, light/medium yellow/grey/brown sandy-silt	Post-medieval/modern
F24	-	-	Ditch or elongated pit	Very, firm/hard dry medium grey/brown clayey-silt with CBM and coal flecks	Modern
F25	-	<9>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm, dry, medium-dark grey/brown silty sand with rare small stones and frequent charcoal	Modern (cuts F24)
F26	4	-	Ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay with frequent stones	Modern
F27	-	-	?Wheel-rut	Firm, moist medium/dark grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Modern
F28	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silt with very frequent stones	Modern
F29	5	<10>	Charcoal-rich pit	Mixed black/brown clayey-silt with frequent charcoal-flecks throughout	Undated
F30	-	-	Pit	Firm, dry medium grey sandy-silt with very frequent stones and rare charcoal flecks	Undated
F31	-	-	Pit	Firm, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Undated

F32	-	-	Posthole	Friable, moist medium/dark brown sandy-silt	Modern
F33	-	-	Natural feature	Firm, moist light grey sandy-silt	Post-glacial
F34	6	-	Pit	Firm/hard, medium/dark green/brown silty-clay with very frequent stones and charcoal flecks	Modern
F35	-	-	Gully	Firm/hard, medium grey/brown silty-clay	Undated
F36	7	-	Pit	Firm/hard, medium grey/brown silty-clay with very frequent stones	Medieval / post-medieval
F37	-	-	Pit	Firm/hard, medium grey/brown silty-clay with frequent stones and charcoal flecks	Undated

Appendix 2 Catalogue of CBM

Context	Feature type	Finds no.	Qty.	Wt. (g)	MSW/g	Discarded?	Typology	Sub-type	Length	Breadth	Thickness	Date
F23	Ditch	3	1	18	18	X	PT					MEDIEVAL-POST MEDIEVAL
F26	Ditch	4	1	15	15	X	PT					MEDIEVAL-POST MEDIEVAL
F26	Ditch	4	1	19	19	X	BR					19TH-20TH CENTURY
F34	Pit	6	3	721	240	X	BR	FROGGED	?	?	68	19TH-20TH CENTURY
F36	Pit	7	1	13	13	X	PT					MEDIEVAL-POST MEDIEVAL
US	?	8	1	948	948	X	BR		?	110	?	19TH-20TH CENTURY



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Fig 1 Site location



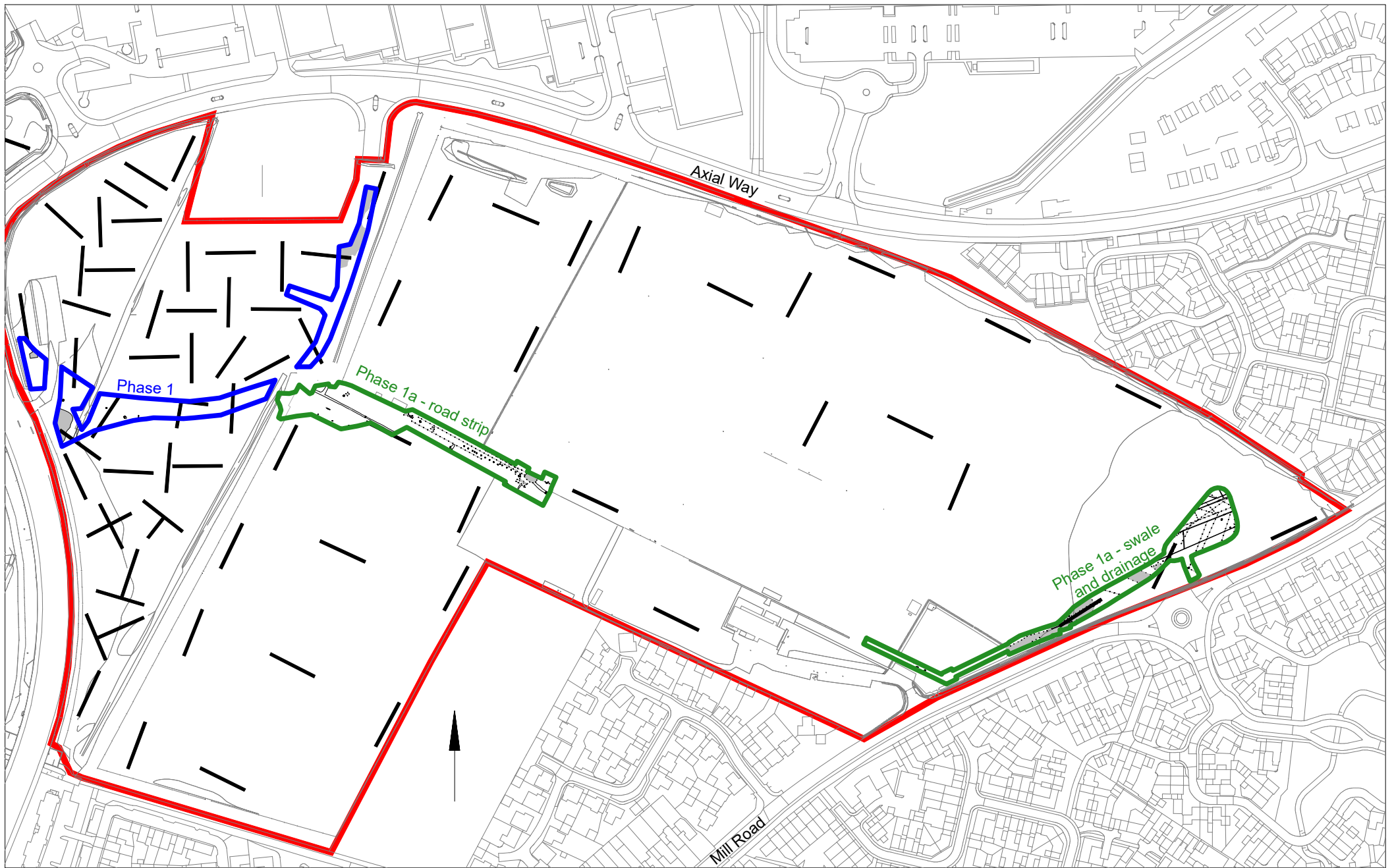

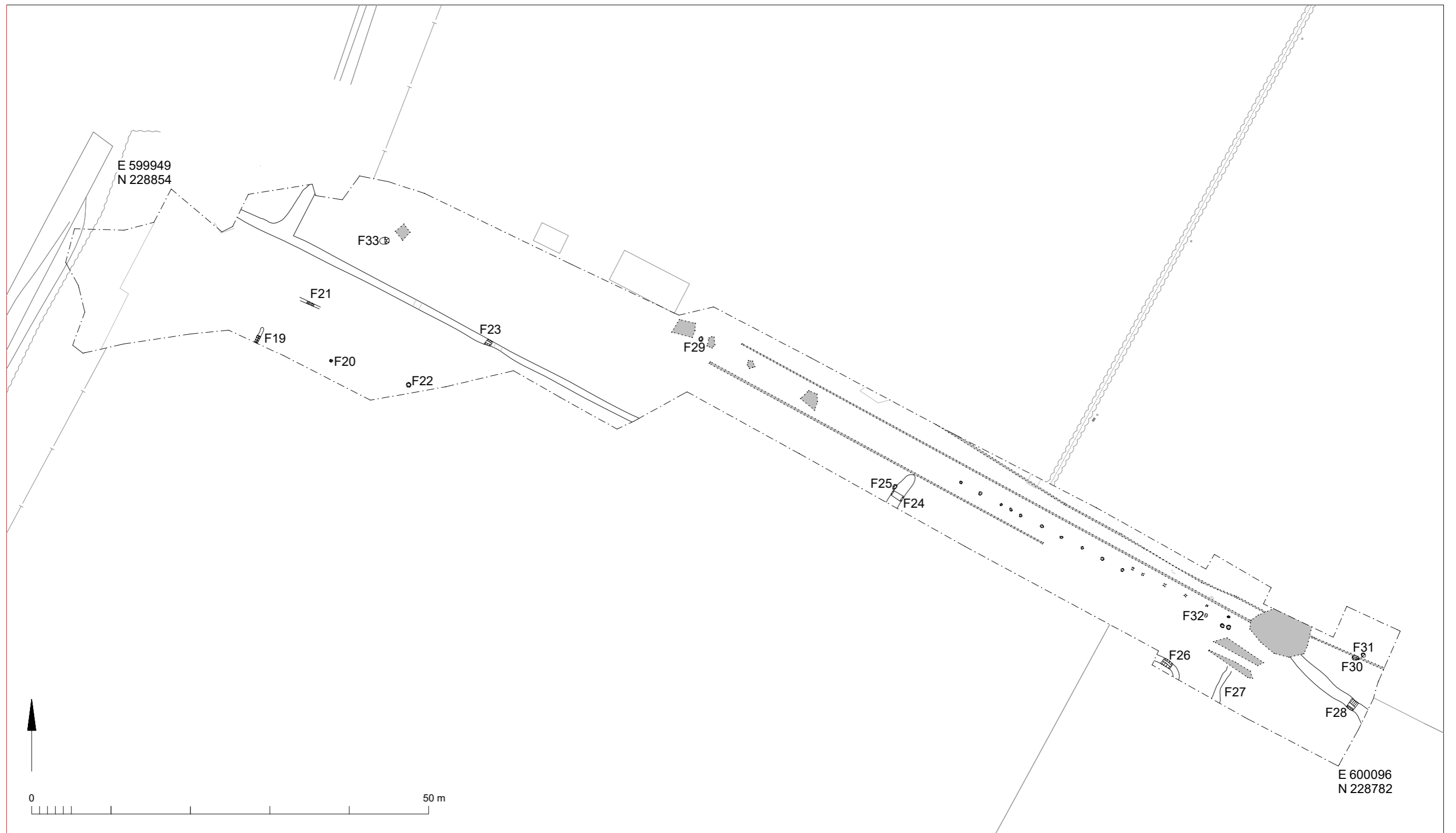


Fig 2 Location plan of evaluation trenches, Phase 1 (outlined in blue) and current Phase 1a works (outlined in green)


 evaluation trenches
 (Watson & Swan 2019)

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0  200 m



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Fig 3 Road strip excavation results. Modern disturbance in grey.

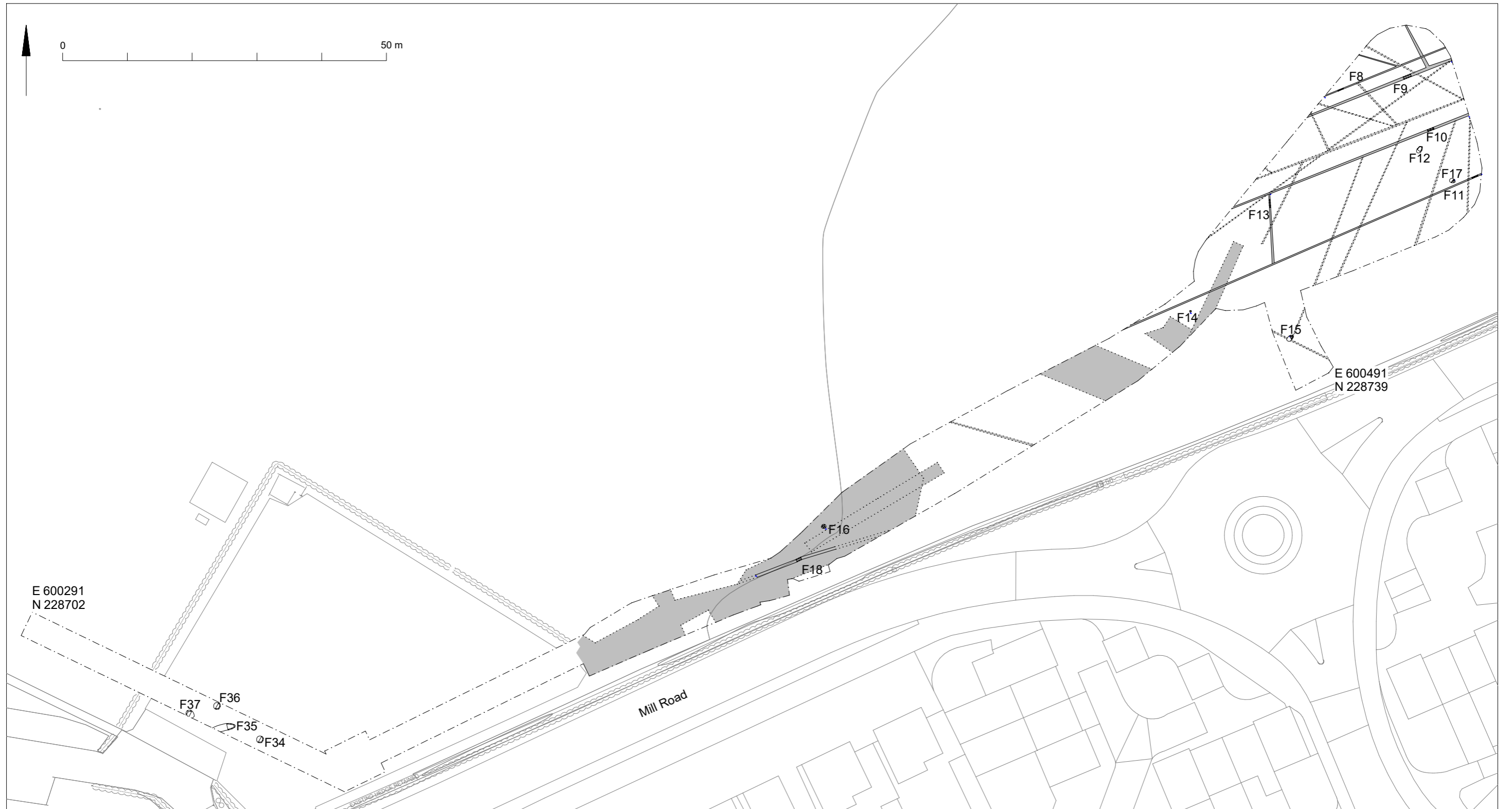


Fig 4 Swale and drainage excavation results. Modern disturbance in grey.

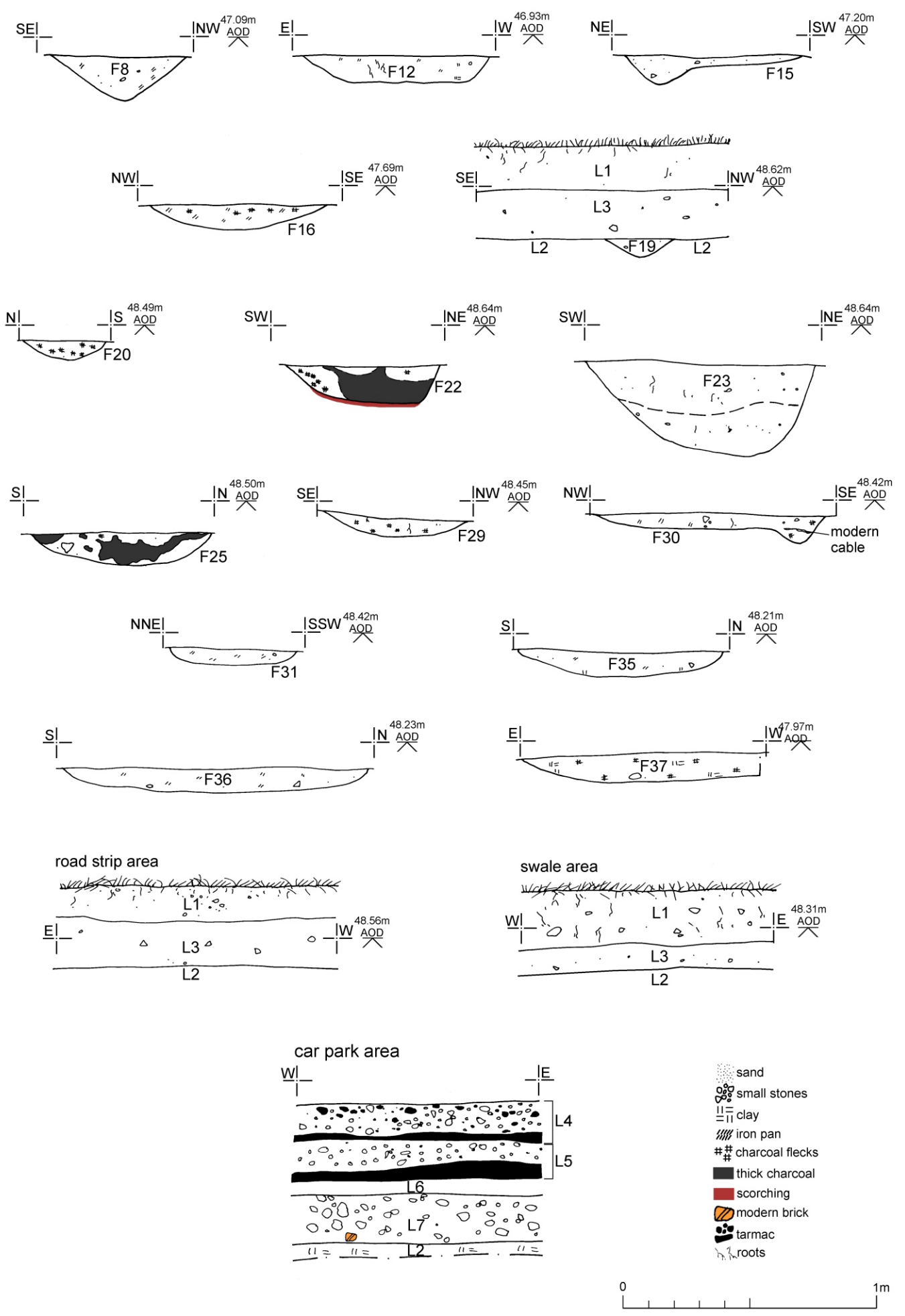
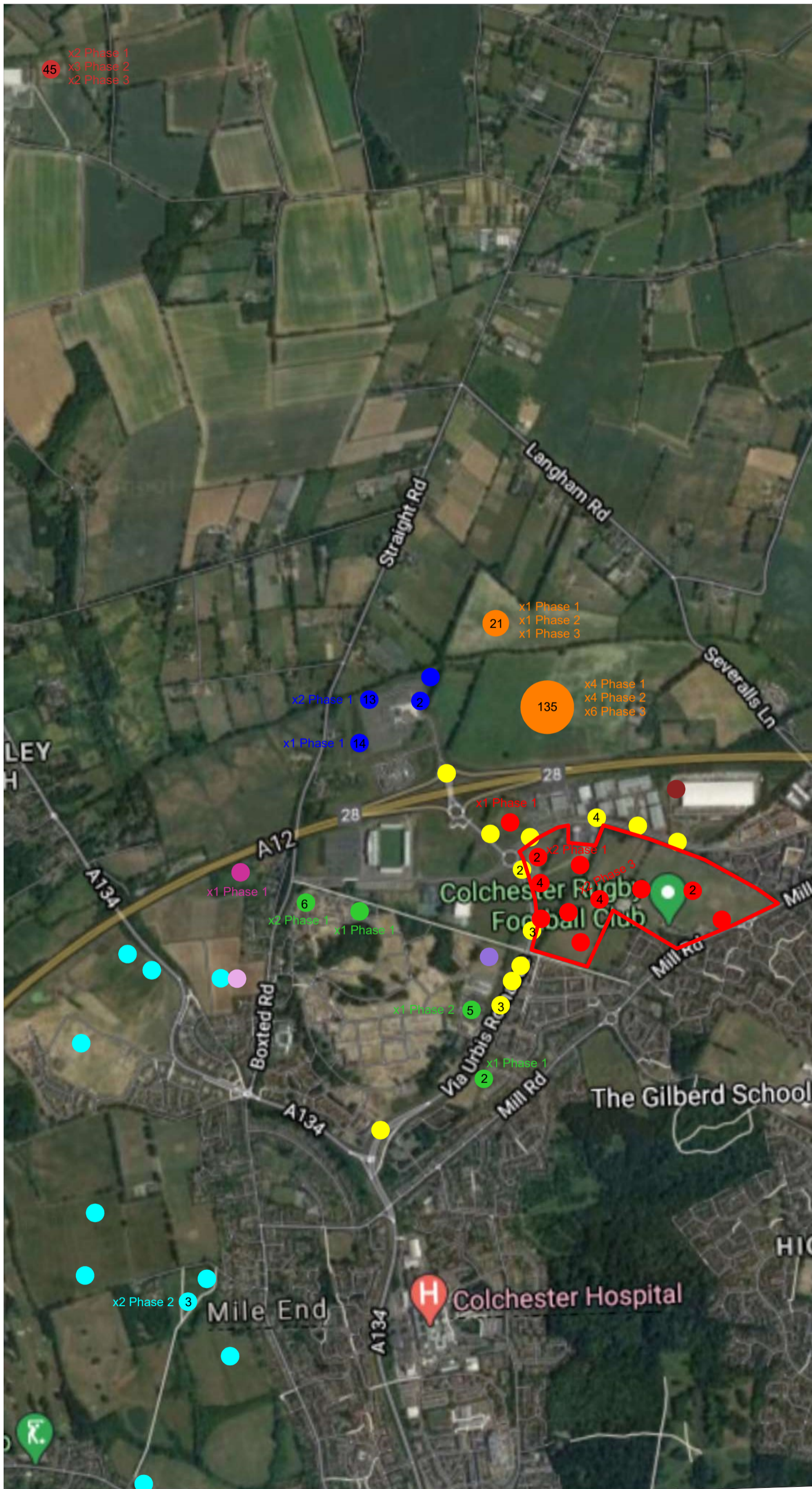


Fig 5 Feature and representative sections.



Archaeological investigations where charcoal-rich pits have been identified

- Northern Approach Road 2001 & 2013
- Flakt Woods 2004
- NGAUE 2011
- Cuckoo Farm P&R 2015
- Severalls School 2015
- Severalls Hospital 2016 & 2017
- Cambian Fairview 2017
- Colchester North 2017
- Lodge Farm 2018 & 2018
- Colchester Northern Gateway 2017-2020
- Colchester Northern Gateway South 2019 & 2020, including Phase 1a (boundary outlined in red)

Charcoal-rich pit phasing, based on analysis in CAT Report 1479:

- Phase 1 - Early Iron Age to early Roman (1st century AD)
- Phase 2 - late Anglo-Saxon to early medieval (10th to 14th centuries)
- Phase 3 - post-medieval/modern (17th century onwards)

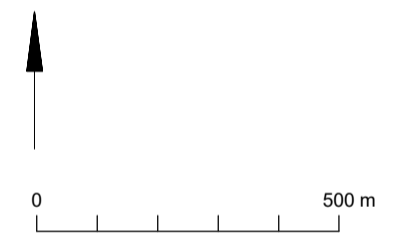


Fig 6 Distribution map showing the locations of all the charcoal-rich pits recorded in Northern Colchester since 2001. Each circle represents a single charcoal-rich pit unless otherwise stated. Those that have been dated have been assigned to Phase 1, 2 or 3.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 0024 2877 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 20/06o CHER ref: ECC4565 OASIS ref: colchest3-397906
Type of work: Strip, map and record excavation and monitoring	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 8th-24th July 2020 & 28th September-6th October 2020	Size of area investigated: 21.25 ha
Location of curating museum: Colchester museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related CHER/SMR number: CHER ECC3649, ECC4302, ECC4112, ECC4434
Final report: CAT Report 1609	
Periods represented: Post-medieval, modern and undated	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological strip, map and record excavation was carried out at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex during groundworks as part of Phase 1a of the development. The development site is located within an area of cropmarks with recent excavations since 2001 revealing a significant concentration of charcoal-rich pits across this area of northern Colchester. Evaluation and Phase 1 excavation in advance of the current project had previously uncovered evidence of charcoal-rich pits, along with post-medieval, modern and undated features.</p> <p>CNG (South) Phase 1a excavation revealed 29 features including two medieval/post-medieval pits, a post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch, fourteen modern features (ditches/drainage ditches, a pit, posthole and wheel-rut), five undated features (pits, a pit/posthole and a gully terminus) and two natural features. Also excavated were three undated charcoal-rich pits along with two charcoal-rich pits of post-medieval/modern and modern date.</p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 1544	
CBC monitor: Dr Jess Tipper & Dr Richard Hoggett	
Keywords: charcoal-rich pit	Significance: *
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: December 2020

Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 1a, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, CO4 5JF.

NGR: TM 0024 2877 (centre)

Parish: Colchester

Planning reference: 190665

Commissioned by: Jack Conington (Amphora Trading)

On behalf of: Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd

Curating Museum: Colchester

CHER event number: tbc

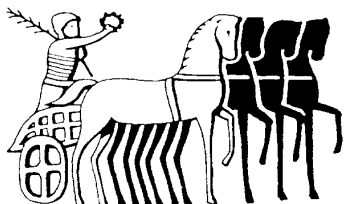
CAT project code: 2020/06o

OASIS project id: colchest3-397906

Site Manager: Chris Lister

CBC Monitor: Jess Tipper

This WSI written: 30/06/2020



COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST,
Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel: 01206 501785

email: cl@catuk.org

Site location and description

The proposed development site lies approximately 3.6km north-northeast of Colchester town centre at Colchester Gateway (South), between Via Urbis Romanae and Mill Road, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF (Fig 1). The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TM 0024 2877. The site is currently land used as the Mill Road Sports Ground.

Proposed work

This phase of the development (Phase 1a) is a continuation of enabling works comprising the creation of a new access road and boulevard and associated drainage, including drainage basins, services, the energy centre and associated groundworks (see planning background for full description).

Archaeological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts from the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER: accessed via Colchester Heritage Explorer (<https://colchesterheritage.co.uk>)).

A gradiometry survey was carried out by Stratascan in 2016 of the c 50 hectare development area. Their survey identified the corner of an undated enclosure along with a number of possible associated linear responses and a number of modern anomalies related to services (Richardson 2016, ECC3649).

In 2018/19 a trial-trenched evaluation was carried out across part of the proposed development site by Archaeological Services, Durham University. Results included fire pits, post-medieval boundary ditches, and postholes and ditches of unknown date (AS Report 4977, ECC4302).

CAT have carried out several investigations as part of the Colchester Northern Gateway project. During an evaluation of Sports Hub plots 2-3 significant archaeological remains consisted of 24 charcoal-rich pits probably relating to charcoal production. These were sub-round or sub-oval charcoal-rich features with occasional evidence of in situ burning. Dating evidence was mostly lacking but two of the pits contained finds dated to the Roman and post-Roman periods. With radiocarbon dates from charcoal in another two of the pits dating to the Middle Iron Age and late Anglo-Saxon/early Medieval period. Together with another 77 charcoal-rich pits known from previous archaeological investigations, they suggest that charcoal production was occurring in this part of northern Colchester from the Early Iron Age through to the medieval period. Other archaeological remains included residual prehistoric work flints, a single tree throw containing a prehistoric worked flint which may or may not be residual, a small number of undated pits and tree throws, and a number of modern field boundary ditches, many of which are visible on old OS maps dating from the late 19th-century to the late 1990s, with associated agricultural features (CAT Report 1219, ECC4112).

Excavations undertaken in advance of Phase 1 of this project in March 2020 identified three further charcoal-rich pits, one of which produced a Late Neolithic flint arrowhead, along with three undated pits and a modern ditch (CAT Report 1554, ECC4434).

Planning background

A planning application (190665) was made to Colchester Borough Council in March 2019 proposing a *hybrid planning application- outline application for healthcare campus (5ha) of up to 300 older people's homes (C3), 4,300sqm private acute surgical hospital (C2), (1,200sqm) medical centre (D1), 3,600sqm, 75- bed care home (C2), up to 55742sqm offices (B1a); up to 350 homes (C3), with ancillary retail & food & drink (A3), digital network of ultra fast broadband; 2 points of vehicular access from public highway, pedestrian boulevard & community green (4.5ha). All matters apart from access to be reserved in relation to outline*

elements of proposals. Detailed consent for a 1st phase of infrastructure to energy centre & heat distribution network.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the CHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBCAA). This recommendation was for an archaeological excavation and was based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

Requirement for work

The required archaeological work covers the first stage of archaeological excavation of the area of the new boulevard, access roads and associated drainage, including drainage basins and swales and services, as well as the energy centre and any other associated infrastructure in the first phase of development. Details are given in a Project Brief written by CBCAA (2019).

Specifically, the archaeological work associated with Phase 1a will comprise of a strip, map and record excavation of the area highlighted orange on Fig 1.

If unusual, significant or unexpected remains are encountered the CBCAA will be informed immediately. Amendments to the brief, and this WSI, may be required to ensure adequate provision for archaeological recording.

General methodology

All work carried out by CAT will be in accordance with:

- Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a-c)
- Standards and Frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011)
- Relevant Health & Safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2019)
- The Project Brief issued by CBCAA (2019)

Professional CAT field archaeologists will undertake all specified archaeological work, for which they will be suitably experienced and qualified.

Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name and the start date for the project will be provided to CBCAA one week before start of work.

Unless it is the responsibility of other site contractors, CAT will study mains service locations and avoid damage to these.

At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms. At the end of the project all parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER). This will include an uploaded .PDF version of the entire report.

A unique HER event number will be obtained from the CBCAA prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The curating museum will be notified of the details of the project and the event code, which will be used to identify the project archive when depositing at the end of the project.

Staffing

The number of field staff for this project is estimated as follows: one supervisor and one archaeologist for ten days.

In charge of day-to-day site work: Ben Holloway/Nigel Rayner

Strip, map and excavate methodology

Where appropriate, modern overburden and any topsoil stripping/levelling will be performed using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist. If no archaeologically significant deposits are exposed, machine excavation will continue until natural subsoil is reached.

Where necessary, areas will be cleaned by hand to ensure the visibility of archaeological deposits.

If archaeological features or deposits are uncovered, time will be allowed for these to be excavated, planned and recorded.

There will be sufficient excavation to give clear evidence for the period, depth and nature of any archaeological deposit. For linear features 1m wide sections will be excavated across their width to a total of 10% of the overall length. Discrete features, such as pits, will have 50% of their fills excavated, although certain features may be fully excavated.

Complex archaeological structures such as walls, kilns, ovens or burials will be carefully cleaned, planned and fully recorded, but where possible left *in situ*. Only if it can be demonstrated that the complex structure/feature is likely to be destroyed by groundworks, and only then after discussion with the CBCAA, will it be removed.

Fast hand-excavation techniques involving (for instance) picks, forks and mattocks will not be used on complex stratigraphy.

Trained CAT staff will use a metal detector to scan all areas of the strip and map both before and during excavation. All features and spoil heaps will be scanned and finds recovered.

Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features or deposits will be entered on proforma record sheets. Registers will be compiled of finds, small finds and soil samples.

All features and layers or other significant deposits will be planned, and their profiles or sections recorded. A representative section will be drawn to include ground level and the depth of machining. The normal scale will be site plans at 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be appropriate.

The photographic record will consist of general site shots, and shots of all archaeological features and deposits. A photographic scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. Standard "record" shots of contexts will be taken on a digital camera. A photographic register will accompany the photographic record. This will detail as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot.

Site surveying

The excavation area and any features will be surveyed by Total Station or GPS, unless the particulars of the features indicate that manual planning techniques should be employed. Normal scale for archaeological site plans and sections is 1:20 and 1:10 respectively, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.

The site grid will be tied into the National Grid. Corners of excavation areas will be located by NGR coordinates.

Environmental sampling policy

The number and range of samples collected will be adequate to determine the potential of the site, with particular focus on palaeoenvironmental remains including both biological remains (e.g. plants, small vertebrates) and small sized artefacts (e.g. smithing debris), and to provide information for sampling strategies on any future excavation. Samples will be collected for

potential micromorphical and other pedological sedimentological analysis. Environmental bulk samples will be 40 litres in size (assuming context is large enough).

CAT has an arrangement with Val Fryer/Lisa Gray whereby any potentially rich environmental layers or features will be appropriately sampled as a matter of course. CAT staff will process samples (unless of a complex nature) and the flots will be sent to VF/LG for reporting.

Sampling strategies will address questions of:

- the range of preservation types (charred, mineral-replaced, waterlogged) and their quality
- concentrations of macro-remains
- and differences in remains from undated and dated features
- variation between different feature types and areas of site

Provision will be included (where necessary) for column or core samples to be taken, for the assessment and/or full analysis of those samples, and for absolute dating of the sequence.

Provision will also be made (where necessary) for the identification and absolute dating of suitable deposits of charred remains. Should VF/LG make a recommendation that suitable samples not datable by other means (ie associated finds) be submitted for absolute dating, then these samples will be sent to the SUERC Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory at Glasgow University for analysis.

Should any complex, or otherwise outstanding deposits be encountered, VF/LG will be asked onto site to advise. Waterlogged 'organic' features will always be sampled. In all cases, the advice of VF and/or the Historic England Regional Advisor in Archaeological Science (East of England) on sampling strategies for complex or waterlogged deposits will be followed, including the taking of monolith samples.

Human remains

CAT follows the policy of leaving human remains *in situ* unless there is a clear indication that the remains are in danger of being compromised as a result of their exposure or unless advised to do so by the project osteologist or CBCAA.

CBCAA will be notified immediately if any human remains are encountered during the excavation.

If circumstances indicated it were prudent or necessary to remove remains from the site during the excavation, the following criteria would be applied; if it is clear from their position, context, depth, or other factors that the remains are ancient, then normal procedure is to apply to the Department of Justice for a licence to remove them and seek advice from the project osteologist. Human remains removed from site for analysis this may involve radiocarbon dating (see finds section).

If it cannot be demonstrated that future ground works are able to avoid impacting them, burials will be fully excavated. However, following HE guidance (HE 2018) if the human remains are not to be lifted, the project osteologist should be available to record the human remain *in situ* (i.e. a site visit). Conditions laid down by the DoJ license will be followed. If it seems that the remains are not ancient, then the coroner, the client, and the CBCAA will be informed, and any advice and/or instruction from the coroner will be followed.

Photographic record

Will include both general and feature-specific photographs, the latter with scale and north arrow. A photo register giving context number, details, and direction of shot will be prepared on site, and included in site archive. Digital site photographs will be supplied as both a jpeg and in raw uncompressed format (TIFF), with metadata will be embedded into the raw file as per HE guidelines (HE 2015a).

Finds

All significant finds will be retained.

All finds, where appropriate, will be washed and marked with site code and context number. CAT may use local volunteers to assist the CAT Finds Officer with this task.

Most of our finds reports are written internally by CAT Staff under the supervision and direction of Philip Crummy (Director) and Howard Brooks (Deputy Director). This includes specialist subjects such as:

ceramic finds (pottery and ceramic building material): Matthew Loughton

animal bones: Alec Wade (or Adam Wightman, small groups only)

small finds, metalwork, coins, etc: Laura Pooley

non-ceramic bulk finds: Laura Pooley

flints: Adam Wightman

environmental processing: Bronagh Quinn

project osteologist (human remains): Meghan Seehra

or to outside specialists:

animal bones (large groups): Julie Curl (*Sylvanus*)

human bone (large groups): Julie Curl (*Sylvanus*)

environmental assessment and analysis: Val Fryer / Lisa Gray

radiocarbon dating: SUERC Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, Glasgow

conservation/x-ray: Laura Ratcliffe (LR Conservation) / Norfolk Museums Service,
Conservation and Design Services

Other specialists whose opinion can be sought on large or complex groups include:

flint: Hazel Martingell

prehistoric pottery: Stephen Benfield / Nigel Brown / Paul Sealey

Roman pottery: Stephen Benfield / Paul Sealey / Jo Mills / Val Rigby /
Gwladys Monteil

Roman brick/tile: Ernest Black / Ian Betts (MOLA)

Roman glass: Hilary Cool

small finds: Nina Crummy

other: EH Regional Adviser in Archaeological Science (East of England).

All finds of potential treasure will be removed to a safe place, and the coroner informed immediately, in accordance with the rules of the Treasure Act 1996. The definition of treasure is given in pages 3-5 of the Code of Practice of the above act. This refers primarily to gold or silver objects.

Requirements for conservation and storage of finds will be agreed with the appropriate museum prior to the start of work, and confirmed to CBCAA.

A contingency will be made in the budget for scientific assessment/analysis. This can include soil micromorphological assessment, absolute dating in the event that archaeomagnetic and/or (more probably) radiocarbon dating is required, if burning is encountered or human remains (in which case it might be necessary to lift a small sample for absolute dating). The Historic England Regional Science Advisor will be consulted for advice on this.

Post-excavation assessment

Once fieldwork has finished the need for a post-excavation assessment will be discussed and agreed with CBCAA. This may include discussion as to whether there is a need for and extent of radiocarbon dating of appropriate contexts and/or further detailed scientific analysis of other aspects of the project.

If a post-excavation assessment is required by CBCAA, it will be normally be submitted within 2 months of the end of fieldwork, or as quickly as is reasonably practicable and at a time agreed with CBCAA. It will be a clear and concise assessment of the archaeological value and significance of the results, and will identify the research potential in the context of the Regional Research Framework. It will include an Updated Project Design, with a timetable, for analysis, dissemination and archive deposition.

Where archaeological results do not warrant a post-excavation assessment, preparation of the normal site report will begin.

Results

Notification will be given to CBCAA when the fieldwork has been completed.

An appropriate archive will be prepared to minimum acceptable standards outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (HE 2015b).

The report will be submitted within 6 months of the end of fieldwork, with a copy supplied to CBCAA as a PDF.

The report will contain:

- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the archaeological project.
- Location plan of the excavation area in relation to the proposed development. At least two corners of the area will be given 10 figure grid references.
- A section drawing showing depth of deposits from present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale (if this can be safely done)
- Archaeological methodology and detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion and results referring to Regional Research Frameworks (Medlycott 2011).
- All specialist reports or assessments
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results.

An EHER summary sheet will also be completed within four weeks and supplied to CBCAA.

Results will be published, to at least a summary level (i.e. round-up in *Essex Archaeology & History*) in the year following the archaeological field work. An allowance will be made in the project costs for the report to be published in an adequately peer reviewed journal or monograph series

Archive deposition

It is a policy of Colchester Borough Council that the integrity of the site archive be maintained (i.e. all finds and records should be properly curated by a single organisation), with the archive available for public consultation. To achieve this desired aim it is assumed that the full archive will be deposited in Colchester Museums *unless otherwise agreed in advance*. (A full copy of the archive shall in any case be deposited).

By accepting this WSI, the client agrees to deposit the archive, including all artefacts, at Colchester & Ipswich Museum.

The requirements for archive storage will be agreed with the curating museum.

If the finds are to remain with the landowner, a full copy of the archive will be housed with the curating museum.

The archive will be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum within 3 months of the completion of the final publication report, with a summary of the contents of the archive supplied to CBCAA.

A digital / vector drawing of the site be given to the CBCAA for integration into the HER.

Monitoring

CBCAA will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project, and will be kept regularly informed during fieldwork, post-excavation and publication stages.

Notification of the start of work will be given to CBCAA one week in advance of its commencement.

Any variations in this WSI will be agreed with CBCAA prior to them being carried out.

CBCAA will be notified when the fieldwork is complete.

The involvement of CBCAA shall be acknowledged in any report or publication generated by this project.

References

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

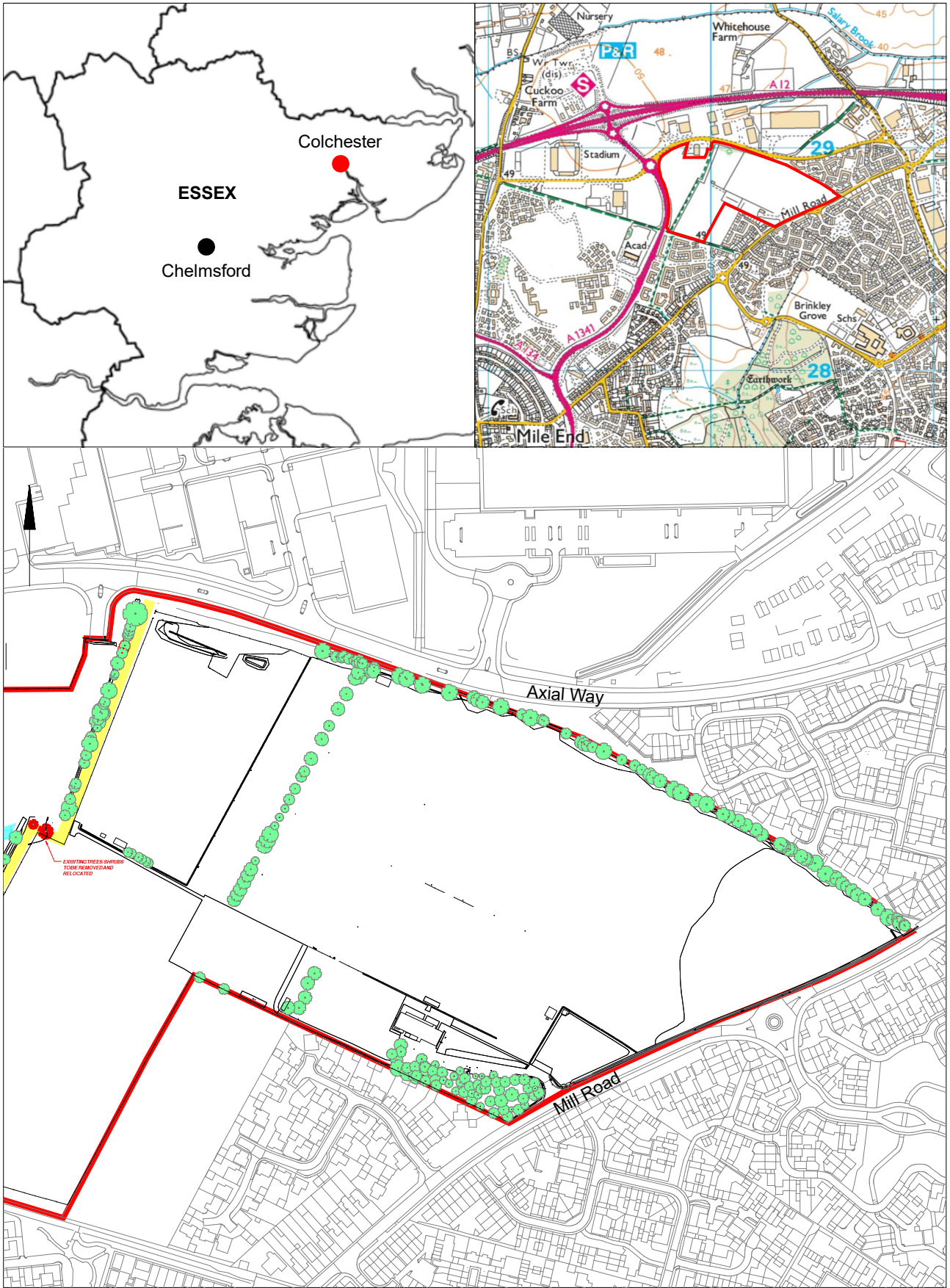
AS Report 497	2019	<i>Archaeological evaluation: Colchester Northern Gateway (South), Colchester, Essex.</i> Archaeological Services, Durham University
Brown, D	2011	<i>Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>
CAT Report 1219	2018	<i>Archaeological evaluation at Colchester Northern Gateway Sports Hub Plots 2-3, Colchester, Essex – November-December 2017.</i> By L Pooley
CAT Report 1544	2020	<i>Archaeological strip, map and recording at Colchester Northern gateway (South), between Via Urbis Romanae and Mill Road, on land to the south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex – March 2020.</i> By Dr E Hicks & L Pooley
CBCAA	2019	<i>Brief for Archaeological Excavation at Phase 1, Colchester Northern Gateway (south) Between Via Urbis Romanae & Mill Road Land South of, Axial Way, Colchester.</i> By J Tipper
CifA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>
CifA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives</i>
CifA	2014c	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</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 (HE)	2015a	<i>Digital Image capture and File Storage: Guidelines for best practice.</i> By. S Cole & P Backhouse
Historic England (HE)	2015b	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Historic England (HE)	2018	<i>The Role of the Human Osteologist in an Archaeological Fieldwork Project.</i> By S Mays, M Brickley and J Sidell
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	2019	<i>National Planning Policy Framework. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.</i>
Richardson, T	2016	<i>Stratascan Geophysical Report: Colchester Northern Gateway, Colchester, Essex.</i>

C Lister



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Fig 1 Site location.



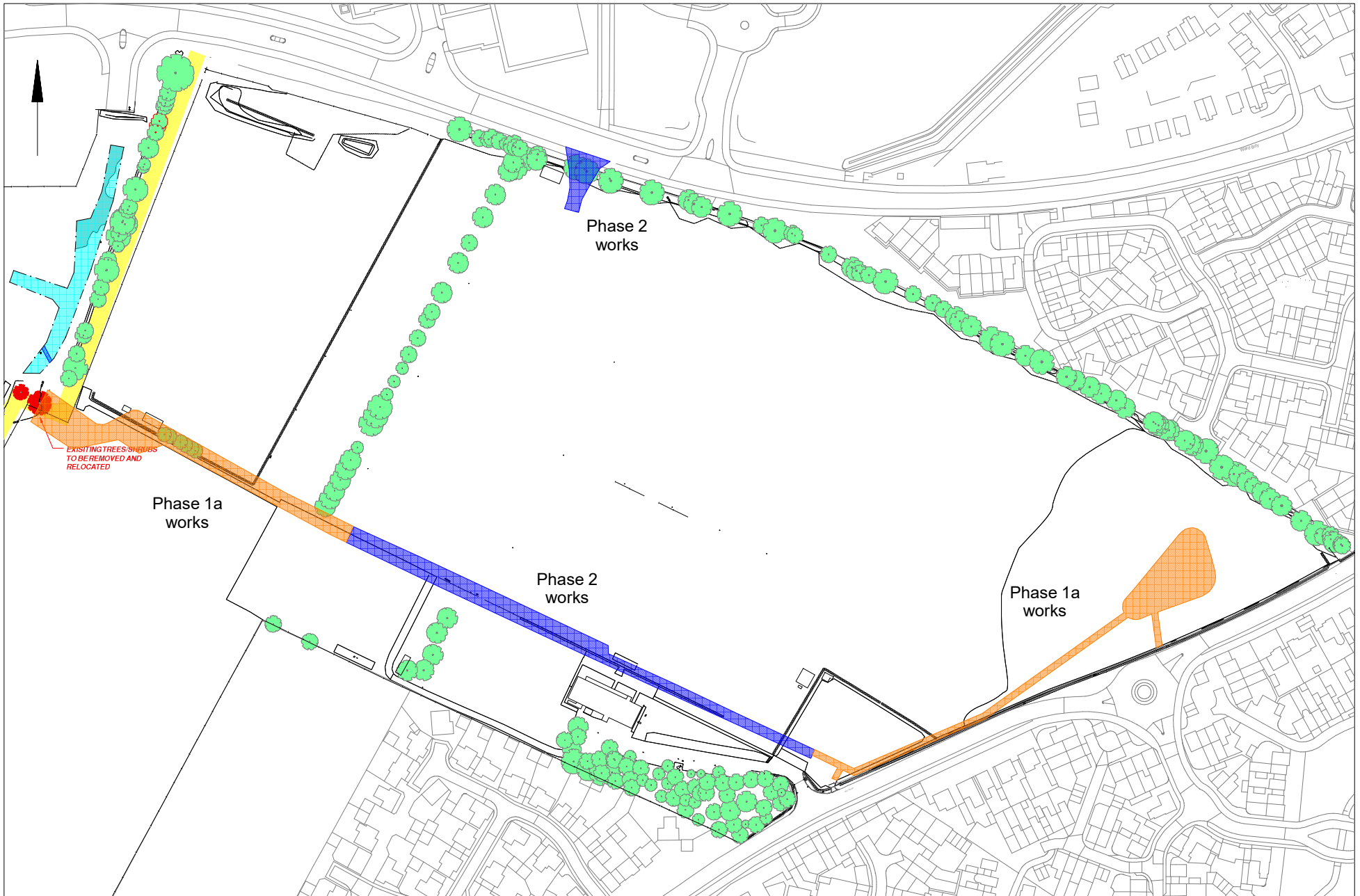


Fig 2 Phase 1a works.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-397906

Project details

Project name	Archaeological excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 1a, off Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF
Short description of the project	An archaeological strip, map and record excavation was carried out at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex during groundworks as part of Phase 1a of the development. The development site is located within an area of cropmarks with recent excavations since 2001 revealing a significant concentration of charcoal-rich pits across this area of northern Colchester. Evaluation and Phase 1 excavation in advance of the current project had previously uncovered evidence of charcoal-rich pits, along with post-medieval, modern and undated features. CNG (South) Phase 1a excavation revealed 29 features including two medieval/post-medieval pits, a post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch, fourteen modern features (ditches/drainage ditches, a pit, posthole and wheel-rut), five undated features (pits, a pit/posthole and a gully terminus) and two natural features. Also excavated were three undated charcoal-rich pits along with two charcoal-rich pits of post-medieval/modern and modern date.
Project dates	Start: 08-07-2020 End: 06-10-2020
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	20/06o - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	ECC4565 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	190665 - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	CHARCOAL-RICH PITS Uncertain
Monument type	CHARCOAL-RICH PITS Post Medieval
Monument type	CHARCOAL-RICH PITS Modern
Monument type	PITS Post Medieval
Monument type	PITS Modern
Monument type	DITCHES Post Medieval
Monument type	DITCHES Modern
Significant Finds	CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL Modern
Significant Finds	GLASS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	GLASS Modern
Investigation type	""Open-area excavation""
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER MYLAND Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 1a, South of Axial Way
Postcode	CO4 5JF
Study area	21.25 Hectares
Site coordinates	TM 0024 2877 51.920865801756 0.912256664707 51 55 15 N 000 54 44 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 46.8m Max: 48.56m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	CBC Archaeological Officer
Project design originator	Chris Lister
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Mark Baister
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Physical Archive ID	ECC4565
Physical Contents	"Environmental"
Physical Archive notes	all other finds discarded
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	ECC4565
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	ECC4565
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 1a, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF: July, September and October 2020
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