

# Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 1882**  
**issued January 2023**

**Archaeological evaluation on land east of  
Henderson Road, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex,  
CO16 0NF: December 2022**



**CAT project ref.: 2022/07o**  
**ECC code: TSER22**

**Archaeological evaluation on land east of  
Henderson Road, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex,  
CO16 0NF: December 2022**

**NGR: TM 18688 22546 (centre)**

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OASIS summary sheet

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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation (12 trial-trenches) was carried out on land east of Henderson Road, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex in advance of the construction of a new residential development. The site lies adjacent to an area in which previous investigations revealed numerous medieval quarry pits containing artefacts dating from the 11th to the 14th century that indicated occupation in the vicinity during this period, as well as a series of post-medieval ditches and gullies thought to represent the remains of enclosures used for animal husbandry. A Roman ditch, a ditch possibly dating from the 11th to the early 13th century, and a pit, a treethrow and pit/tree-throw dating to the post-medieval or modern periods were uncovered. Sixteen other features were also excavated, but a paucity of artefactual evidence meant they could not be dated.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land east of Henderson Road, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex on 5th-9th December 2022. The work was commissioned by Graham McCormick of M Scott Properties Ltd, and took place in advance of the construction of a new residential development.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), the Historic Environment Advisor stipulated 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* (MHCLG 2021).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Programme of Archaeological evaluation and excavation on Land East of Henderson Road, Thorpe-le-Soken* written by Teresa O'Connor and detailing the required archaeological work (ECCPS 2022), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2022).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

## 3 Archaeological background

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

The site is located at the northern edge of the village of Thorpe-le-Soken. The name of the village is thought to be Danish in origin, implying at least limited settlement in the area towards the end of the Saxon period. Chapman and André's map of Essex, published in 1777, depicts a landscape dominated largely by dispersed farmsteads and halls linked by a network of roads dating at least to the medieval period (Medlycott 2008, 26, 29).

Immediately adjacent to the site, at its western boundary, a series of archaeological investigations were carried out prior to a housing development. The 2017 evaluation uncovered a series of largely parallel ditches and gullies, together with pits and post-holes, in the north-west corner of the site. These remains were interpreted as defining an area of medieval agricultural activity, perhaps stock management (Germany 2017). Based on these results, a second phase of investigation took place (excavation, additional trial-trenches and a watching brief). A sequence of intercut complexes of medieval pits overlain by a largely orthogonal arrangement of ditches and gullies of post-medieval date were revealed. A number of post-

medieval and undated pits were also recorded. The intercut pit complexes were interpreted as the product of quarrying in a rural context that were in-filled with pottery and other artefacts of likely domestic origin, mostly dating to the 11th-14th centuries, but perhaps later. Of particular significance was an anthropomorphic carved terminal from a medieval bone knife handle, which is believed to be one of only three examples of such artefacts found in Britain. The overlying post-medieval ditches and gullies, initially detected during the evaluation and provisionally dated as medieval, clearly contained residual artefacts deriving from the quarry pits. The function of these perpendicular linear features was unclear, but was thought to define small enclosures. A scatter of post-medieval and undated pits uncovered was associated with this phase of land use (Germany 2018).

In 2021-22, CAT undertook a trial-trench evaluation on land south of Frinton Road, approximately 280-300m south and south south-west of the present site, in advance of an application to construct a new residential development. Excavations uncovered numerous post-medieval and modern features which were likely the product of agricultural activity associated with the nearby Thorpe Hall. Residual finds were also recovered, including a sherd of Iron Age pottery, sherds of Roman pottery and CBM, medieval pottery and, notably, a glazed medieval floor tile which possibly originated from Thorpe Hall (CAT Report 1765).

Cropmarks indicate the presence of large areas of former field boundaries to the north and north-east of the site that are visible on 1st edition OS mapping (EHER 46801 and 46798). Cropmarks to the north-west suggest the presence of linear features, pits and two possible ring-ditches which possibly date to the Bronze Age (EHER 3160).

For more information of the background of Thorpe-le-Soken see the Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation Project (Medlycott 2008).

#### **4 Aims**

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits and to assess the archaeological potential of the site to allow the ECCHEA to determine if further investigation is required.

#### **5 Results** (Figs 2-6)

Twelve trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. They were 30m long and 1.8m wide. Trench T5 was excavated in two sections due to the presence of trees.

The trenches were cut through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.15-0.4m) onto natural (L2). Sondages were excavated in trenches T10, T11 and T12 to confirm the identification of L2 as natural.

There were no features in trenches T8, T9, T11 or T12.

##### **Trench 1**

Ditch F8 was extended through the northern half of the trench on an ENE-WSW alignment. It was 1.04m wide and 0.07m deep with a shallow, irregular profile. A single sherd of pottery dating from the 11th to early 13th century was retrieved from the feature.

Undated posthole F1 was uncovered at the northern end of the trench. It had a V-shaped profile and was 0.24m wide, 0.36m long and 0.13m deep.

Tree throws F2 and F3 were also excavated. A small fragment of post-medieval/modern brick was recovered from F3.



**Photograph 1** T1 trench shot – looking north northeast

### **Trench 2**

Undatable ditch F4 passed through the eastern end of the trench on a WNW-ESE alignment. It was 0.71m wide and 0.13m deep and had a shallow, slightly irregular U-shaped profile.

Undatable ditch F5 was uncovered in the western half of the trench. It was oriented NNW-SSE and was 1.77m wide and 0.55m deep with a U-shaped profile. The feature probably continued on to T3, to the south, where it was recorded as F16.

### **Trench 3**

Two undatable pits – F6 and F7 – were excavated, the former in its southern half, the latter in its northern half. Both features extended beyond the limit of excavation (LOE); their exposed extents were 0.46m wide and 0.17m deep and 0.96m wide and 0.21m deep, respectively. F6 had a steep-sided U-shaped profile, while F7 had an irregular profile.

Undatable pit/ditch terminus F16 lay in the southern half of the trench. It too extended beyond the LOE; its exposed dimensions were 0.67m wide and 0.35m deep. The feature was irregular in profile. It possibly represented a continuation of F5 in T2, to the north. The feature produced a single fragment of animal bone.

### **Trench 4**

Ditch F20 extended through the western end of the trench on a NW-SE alignment and was 0.95m wide and 0.12m deep with a shallow U-shaped profile. It produced a small assemblage of Roman pottery deriving from a greyware Cam 268 jar and a storage jar, dating from the early 2nd to the early 4th century, as well as a fragment of baked clay.

Pit F18 was located immediately to the east of F20. The feature extended beyond the LOE; its exposed dimensions were 0.74m wide and 0.18m deep. It had a slightly irregular U-shaped profile. A single fragment of post-medieval/modern brick was recovered from this feature.

Natural feature F17 was also excavated.



**Photograph 2** T4 trench shot – looking east southeast

#### **Trench 5**

Modern tree throw F9 was located in the northern half of the trench. The feature extended beyond limit of excavation, its exposed extent being 0.77m wide and 0.14m deep. The feature was slightly irregular in profile. It was cut by an undatable plough scar F10, which was 0.21m wide and 0.03m deep.

Ditch F19 passed through the southern half of the trench on a WNW-ESE alignment. It was 0.78m wide and 0.21m deep with a U-shaped profile. A modern field drain lay at the base of the feature.

Undatable ?natural feature F12 was also excavated.

#### **Trench 6**

Undatable ?ditch F11 extended through the centre of the trench on a NW-SE alignment. It was 2.16m wide and 0.23m deep with a shallow U-shaped profile.

#### **Trench 7**

Undatable pit F15 was uncovered at the western end of the trench. The feature extended beyond the LOE; its exposed extent was 0.55m wide and 0.12m deep. It had an irregular profile.

Natural feature F14 was also excavated.

#### **Trench 10**

Undatable ditch terminus F13 was uncovered at the western end of the trench. The feature was aligned NNE-SSW and was 0.69m wide and 0.18m deep with a U-shaped profile.



**Photograph 3** T10 trench shot – looking east southeast

## 6 Finds

### 6.1 Pottery and CBM

*by Dr Matthew Loughton*

The evaluation uncovered a small assemblage of pottery (12 sherds at 71g with an EVE of 0.18) and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) (3 sherds weighing 9g) recovered from four features, although most of this material came from ditch F20.

#### **Roman pottery**

Ditch F20 produced a small assemblage of Roman pottery with 10 sherds (35g) of coarse, locally-produced grey ware pottery (fabric GX) from a Cam 268 jar (EVE:0.18) dating to AD 125/150-280/320, and a sherd (34g) from a large storage jar in fabric HZ.

#### **Post-Roman pottery**

One sherd (2g) of early medieval sandy ware (fabric F13), dating to AD 1000-1225, was recovered from ditch F8.

#### **Ceramic building material (CBM)**

The CBM consists of two small sherds (5g) of post-medieval/modern brick from pit/treethrow F3 and from pit F18, and one sherd of baked clay (6g) from ditch F20.

#### **Conclusion**

Table 3 summarizes the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and ceramics. Ditch F20 is Roman, dating from the early/mid-2nd century AD onwards while ditch F8 dates to the medieval period. The two remaining features (F3 and F18) date to the post-medieval or modern periods.



Context	Description	Roman	Post Roman	CBM	Date Approx.
F3	Pit/tree-throw	-	-	BR	Post-medieval/modern
F8	Ditch	-	F13	-	AD 1000-1225
F18	?	-	-	BR	Post-medieval/modern
F20	Ditch	GX (Cam 268), HZ	-	-	AD 125/150-280/320

**Table 1** Approximate dates for the features

## 6.2 Animal bone

*by Alec Wade*

The only animal bone recovered was part of a humerus (weighing a total of 8g) that was broken into three fragments from undated pit/ditch terminus F16. The bone was in very poor condition with a brownish discolouration often resulting from having been in a waterlogged environment. Though a positive identification of its species is not possible, it is very likely to be either sheep or goat.

## 7 Environmental assessment

*by Bronagh Quinn*

A sample (10L, c 5% sample) was taken from the fill of modern treethrow F9. It was floated by a trained member of CAT staff and the flot assessed by the author. The flot (<0.1L in volume) contained a small amount of charcoal amongst modern detritus (including grass, straw and modern grains) and is not of archaeological significance. No further work is recommended.

## 8 Conclusion

Twenty features were uncovered during the course of this investigation: seven ditches, four pits, a pit or ditch, a posthole, a pit or treethrow, a pit or natural feature, a treethrow, a ploughscar and three natural features. These remains were concentrated in the centre and the northern section of the site. Little artefactual evidence was recovered, and only four of these features could be dated.

The first phase of activity at the site occurred during the Roman period. A single Roman ditch was uncovered at the centre of the site. It produced a small assemblage of twelve pottery sherds deriving from two jars dating from the early 2nd to the early 4th century, suggesting occupation in the vicinity of the site at some point during this period. These remains may be associated with the Roman activity detected during the evaluation carried out by CAT to the south in 2021-22 (CAT Report 1765).

A second phase of activity took place during the 11th to the early 13th century. A single small sherd of pottery dating to this period was recovered from ditch F8, at the northern end of the site. This area lies adjacent to a site where previous investigations identified medieval activity, made evident by numerous quarry pits which contained artefacts dating from the 11th to the 14th century suggesting inhabitation nearby. It is possible that ditch F8 forms part of the complex of medieval remains uncovered in the area, although it does not correspond with any features recorded during earlier excavations, and it is instead more likely that the pottery sherd was residual.

Three features dating to the post-medieval or modern periods, a pit, a treethrow and a pit or tree throw, were also uncovered. Historical cartography compiled in the late 19th century depicts this area lying within a field system, and it is likely that these features relate to agricultural activities.

## 9 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Graham McCormick and M Scott Properties Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, A Wightman and L Pooley, with fieldwork carried out by N Rayner with Z Eksen, K Davies, A Parker and A Smith. Figures were compiled by C Lister, B Holloway and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

## 10 References

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

- |                          |       |   |
|--------------------------|-------|---|
| Brown, N & Glazebrook, J | 2000  | <i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper <b>8</b> (EAA <b>8</b> ) |
| CAR 7                    | 2000  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter   |
| CAR 10                   | 1999  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 10: Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86</i> , by R Symonds & S Wade   |
| CAT                      | 2022  | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land east of Henderson Road, Thorpe Le Soken, Essex, CO16 0NF</i>         |
| CAT Report 1765          | 2022  | <i>Archaeological evaluation on land south of Frinton Road, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, CO16 0JF: December 2021-January 2022</i> , by E Hicks                                 |
| ClfA                     | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation.</i> Revised October 2020  |
| ClfA                     | 2014b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Revised October 2020                               |
| ClfA                     | 2014c | <i>Code of Conduct.</i> Revised October 2021  |
| ECCPS                    | 2022  | <i>Brief for Programme of Archaeological evaluation and excavation on Land East of Henderson Road, Thorpe-Le-Soken</i> , by T O'Connor                                    |
| Germany, M               | 2017  | <i>Archaeological evaluation on Land South of Landermere Road, Thorpe Le Soken, Essex, CO16 0NF.</i> Archaeology South-East Report no. 2017500                            |
| Germany, M               | 2018  | <i>Archaeological excavation and watching brief on Land South of Landermere Road, Thorpe Le Soken, Essex, CO16 0NF.</i> Archaeology South-East Report no. 2018205         |
| Gurney, D                | 2003  | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers <b>14</b> (EAA <b>14</b> )                                      |
| Historic England         | 2015  | <i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>   |
| Medlycott, M             | 2008  | <i>Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation Project.</i> Essex County Council Historic Environment Team  |
| Medlycott, M             | 2011  | <i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers <b>24</b> (EAA <b>24</b> )             |
| MHCLG                    | 2019  | <i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.   |

## 11 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 1066
Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCH EA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EH ER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present

natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, <a href="http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main">http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main</a>
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
wsj	written scheme of investigation

## 12 Contents of archive

**Finds:** part of one box (pottery)

### **Digital record**

The report (CAT Report 1882)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Survey data

Site data

## 13 Archive deposition

The archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with the Archaeological Data Service.

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### **Distribution list:**

Graham McCormick (M Scott Properties)

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

## Appendix 1 Context list

Context Number	Trench number	Finds Number	Feature / layer type	Description	Date
L1	All	-	Topsoil	Firm, moist medium grey/brown loamy-clayey-silt with 1% stones	Modern
L2	All	-	Natural	Firm, moist light yellow/grey/brown silty-clay with 1% stones	Post-glacial
F1	T1	-	Post-hole	Firm, moist dark grey/brown silty-clay	Undatable
F2	T1	-	Tree-throw	Firm, moist medium grey/brown clay	Undatable
F3	T1	1	Pit/treethrow	Firm, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay with charcoal and CBM flecks	Post-medieval / modern
F4	T2	-	Ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Undatable
F5	T2	-	Ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy silty clay	Undatable
F6	T3	-	Pit	Soft, moist dark grey/brown clay	Undatable
F7	T3	-	Pit	Soft, moist dark brown silty-clay with 1% stones	Undatable
F8	T1	2	Ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay	11th to early 13th century
F9	T5	<1>	Treethrow	Firm, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay with charcoal flecks	Modern
F10	T5	-	Plough scar	Soft, moist medium/dark grey/brown/black silty-clay with charcoal flecks and 1% stones	Undatable
F11	T6	-	?Ditch	Firm, moist light/medium grey sandy-silty-clay	Undatable
F12	T5	-	?Natural feature	Firm, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay	Undatable
F13	T10	-	Ditch terminus	Firm, moist light/medium grey/brown silty-clay with charcoal flecks	Undatable
F14	T7	-	Natural feature	Firm, moist light grey silty-clay	Undatable
F15	T7	-	Pit	Soft, moist light grey silty-clay with charcoal flecks	Undatable
F16	T3	3	Pit/ditch terminus	Soft, moist medium orange/grey/brown sandy-silty-clay with 1% stones	Undatable
F17	T4	-	Natural feature	Soft/friable, moist light orange/grey sandy-silty-clay with 1% stones	Undatable
F18	T4	4	Pit	Soft, moist medium/dark orange/grey/brown/black silty-clay with charcoal and daub flecks and 1% stones	Post-medieval / modern
F19	T5	-	Drainage ditch	Soft, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay with ceramic field drain in base	Modern
F20	T4	5	Ditch	Friable/firm, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay with charcoal flecks	Early 2nd to early 4th century

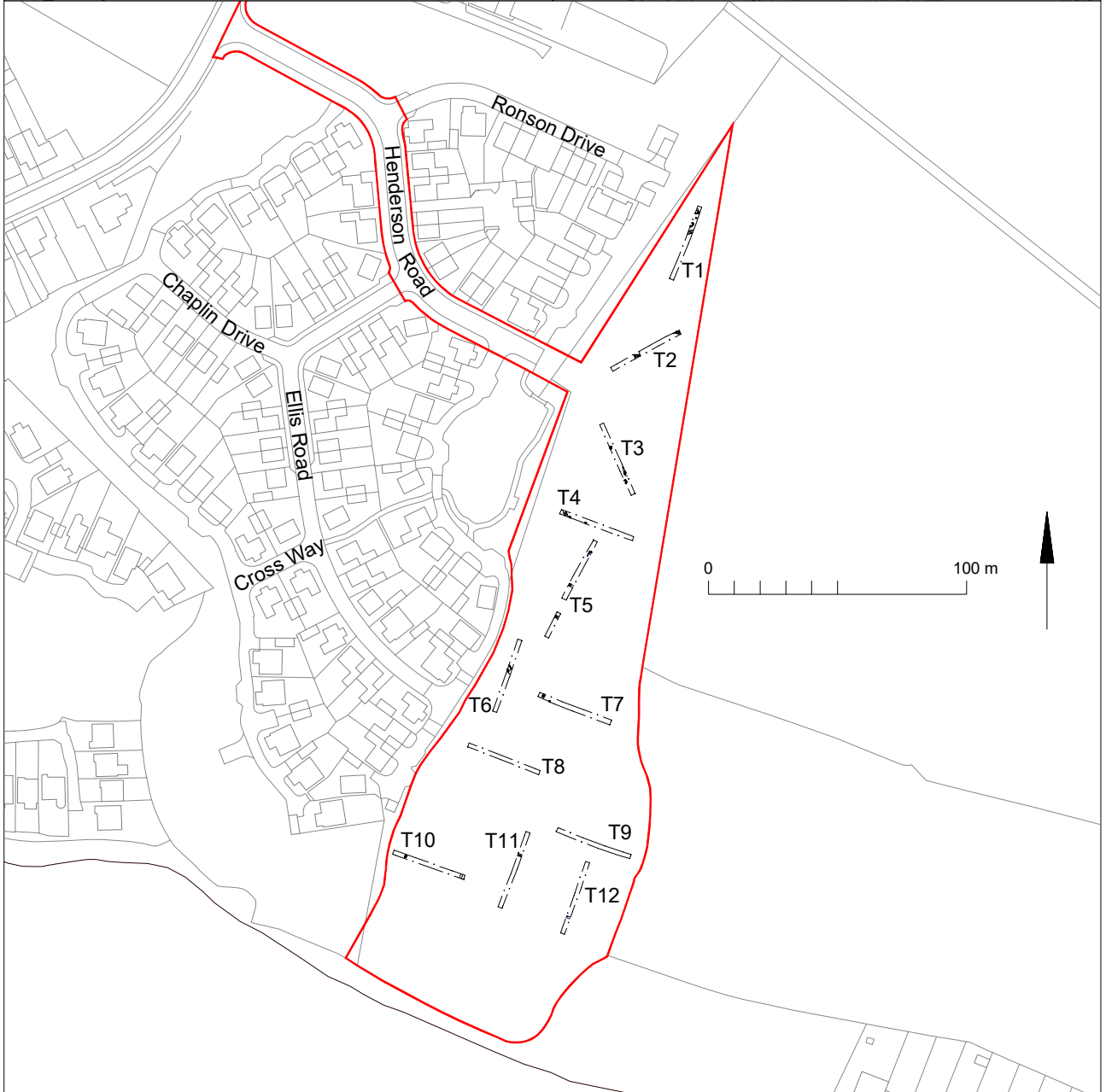
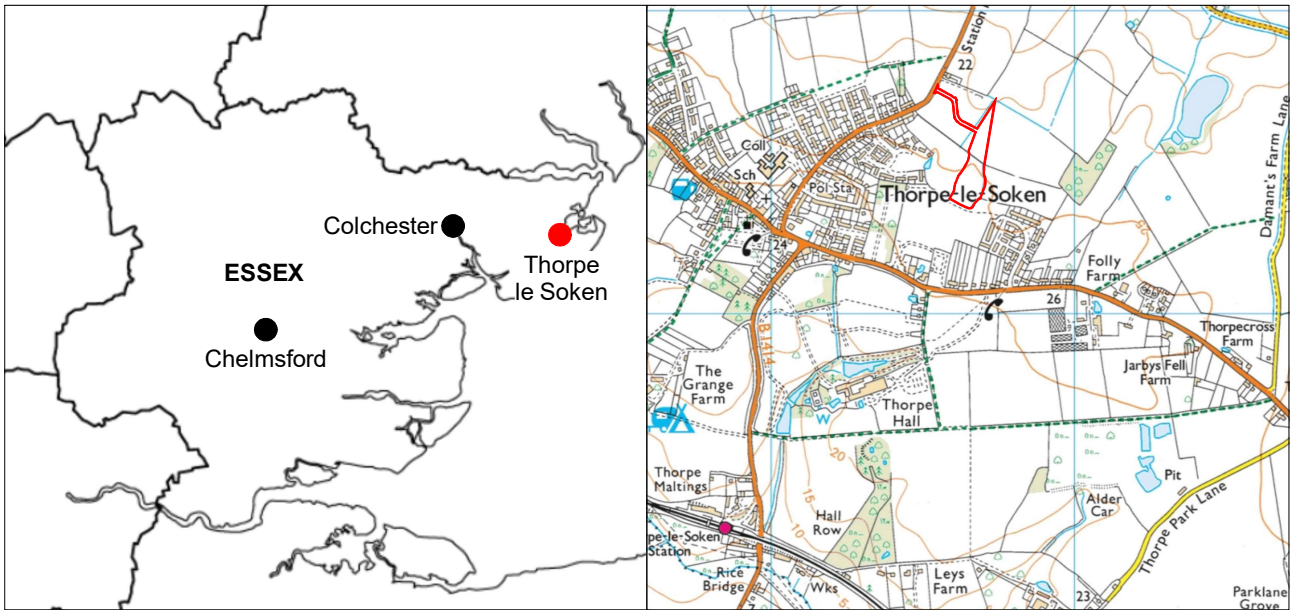


Fig 1 Site location.

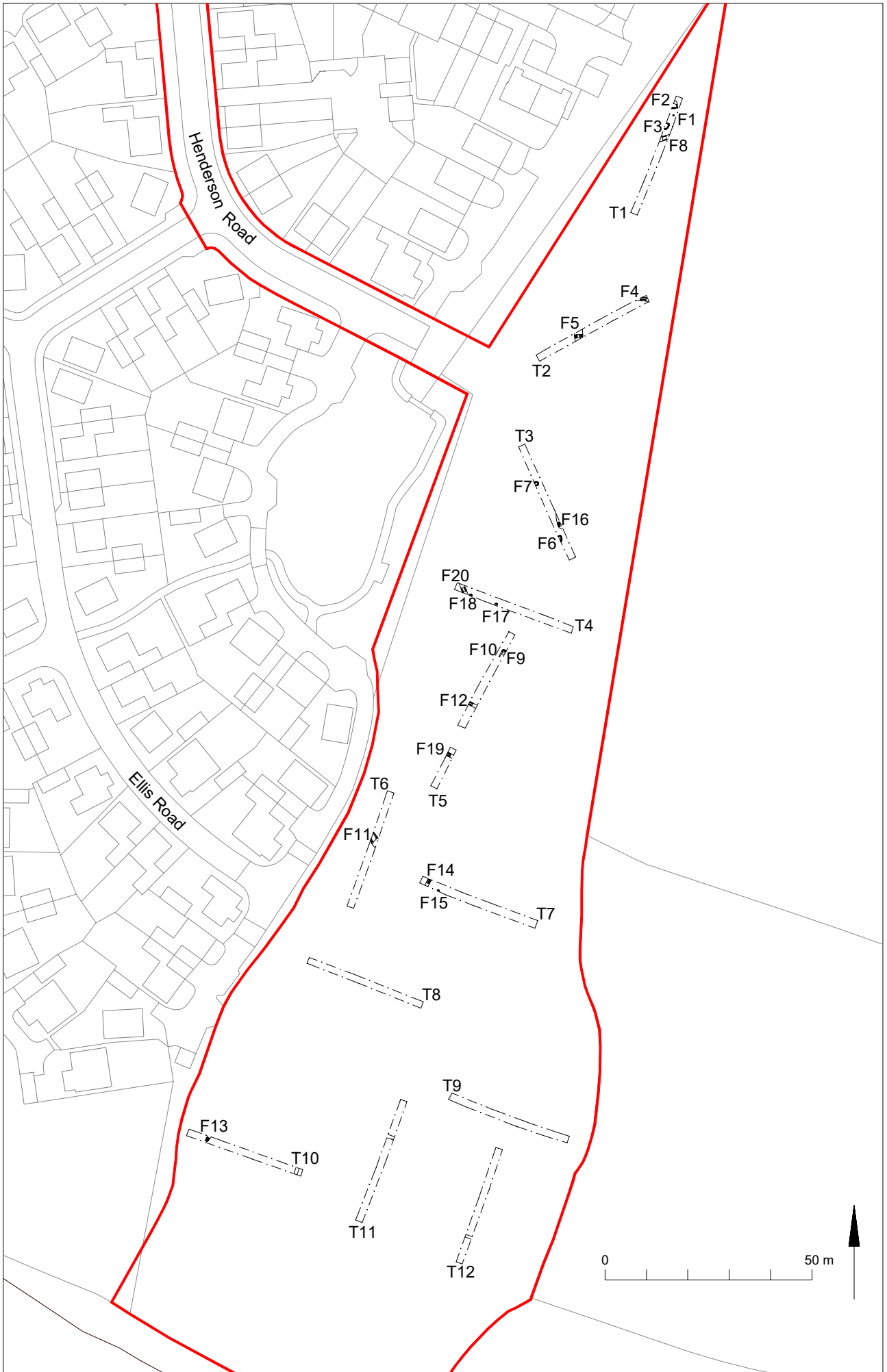


Fig 2 Results.

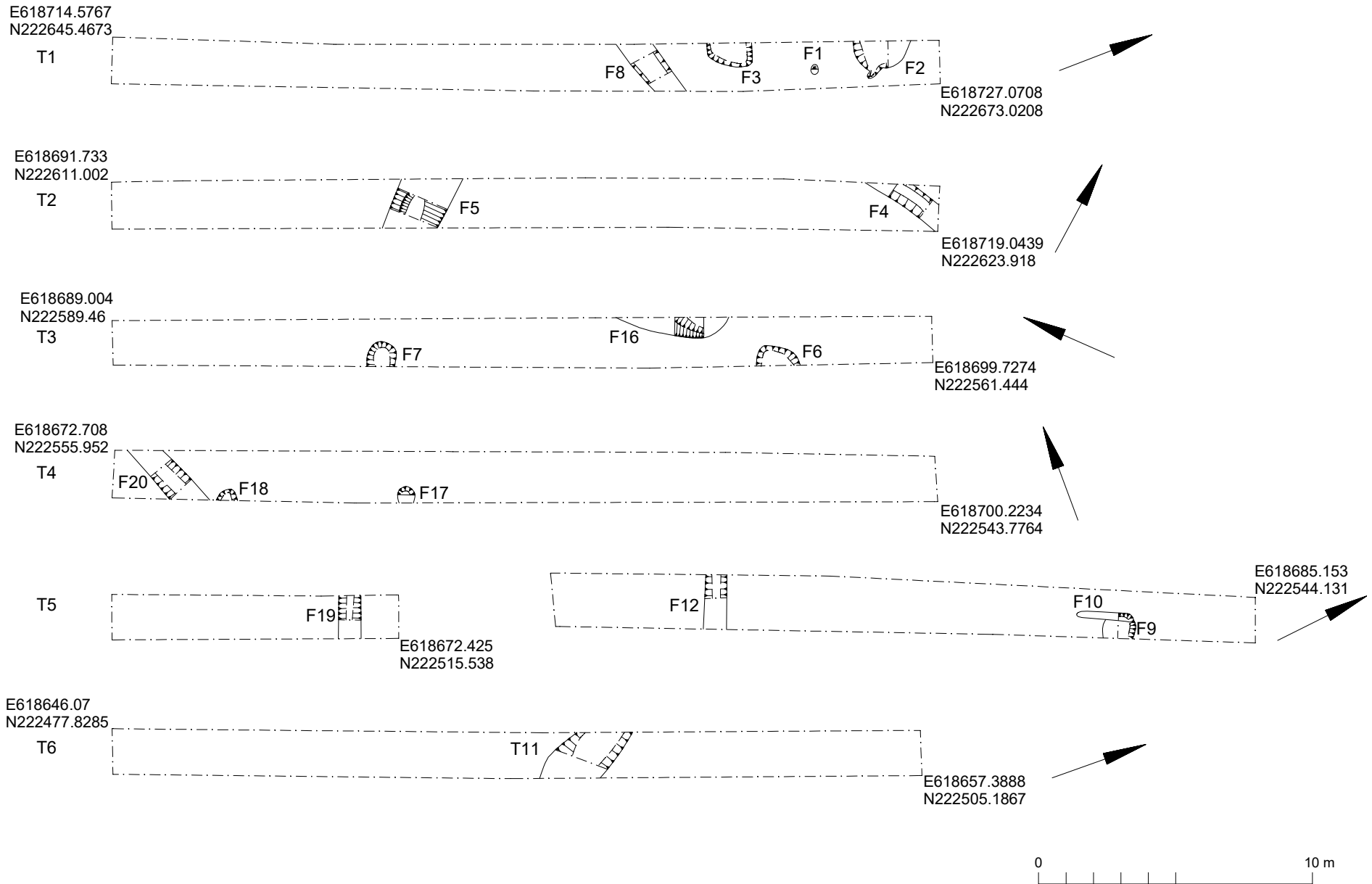


Fig 3 Detailed trench plans.

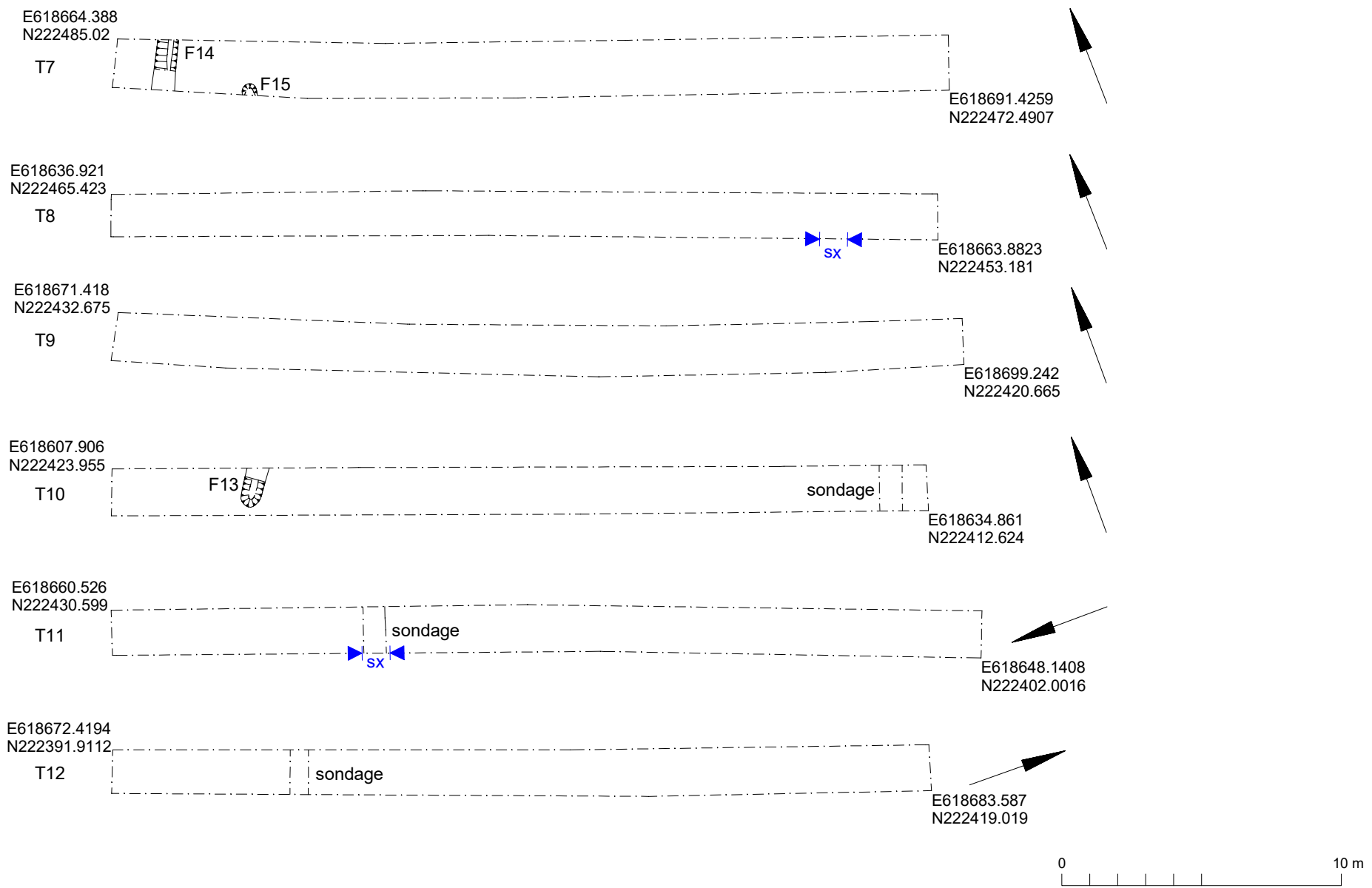


Fig 4 Detailed trench plans.



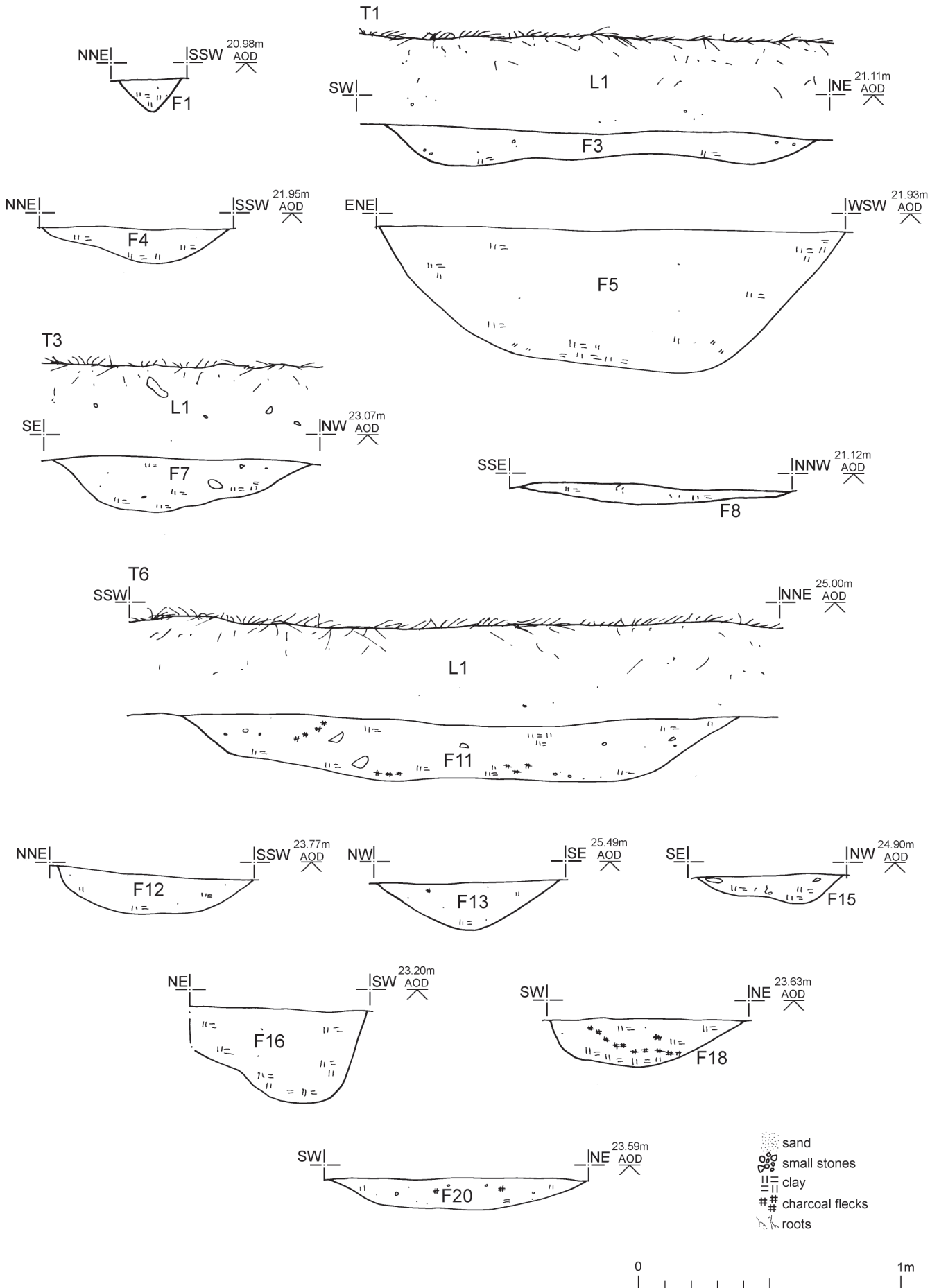


Fig 5 Feature and representative sections.

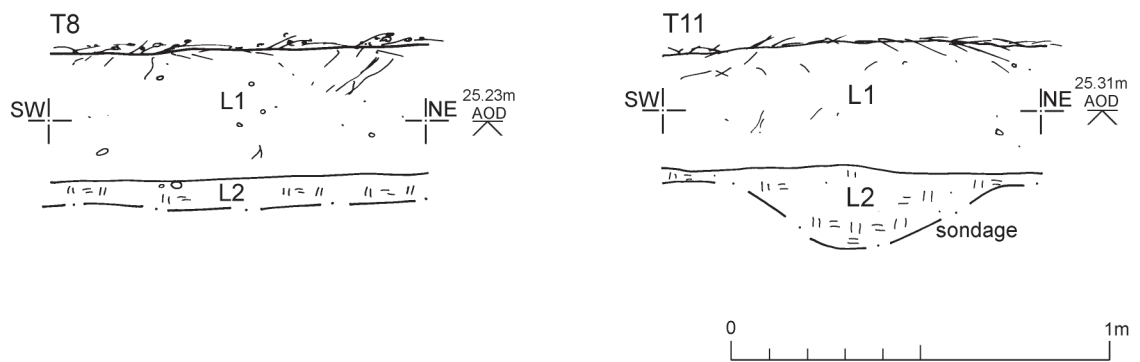


Fig 6 Representative sections.

## Summary for colchest3-508742

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-508742
Project Name	Evaluation at Land east of Henderson Road, Thorpe Le Soken, Essex, CO16 0NF
Sitename	Land east of Henderson Road, Thorpe Le Soken, Essex, CO16 0NF
Activity type	Evaluation
Project Identifier(s)	2022/07o
Planning Id	21/01397/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	05-Dec-2022 - 09-Dec-2022
Location	Land east of Henderson Road, Thorpe Le Soken, Essex, CO16 0NF NGR : TM 18688 22546 LL : 51.8586257263183, 1.17441649558214 12 Fig : 618688,222546
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Tendring Parish : Thorpe-le-Soken
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation was carried out as per the brief and WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (12 trial-trenches) was carried out on land east of Henderson Road, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex in advance of the construction of a new residential development. The site lies adjacent to an area in which previous investigations revealed numerous medieval quarry pits containing artefacts dating from the 11th to the 14th century that indicated occupation in the vicinity during this period, as well as a series of post-medieval ditches and gullies thought to represent the remains of enclosures used for animal husbandry. A Roman ditch, a ditch possibly dating from the 11th to the early 13th century, and a pit, a treethrow and pit/treethrow dating to the post-medieval or modern periods were uncovered. Sixteen other features were also excavated, but a paucity of artefactual evidence meant they could not be dated.

Keywords	Post Hole - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Tree Throw - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Tree Throw - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Tree Throw - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Plough Marks - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Natural Feature - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - ROMAN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Sherd - ROMAN - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Sherd - MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Brick - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Brick - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
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HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	E, Hicks
HER Identifiers	
Archives	