Colchester Archaeological Trust

CAT Report 1924
issued April 2023

An archaeological evaluation at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL: April 2023

CAT project ref.: 2023/03d
ECC code: ECC4777

An archaeological evaluation at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL: April 2023

NGR: TL 95343 22170

Planning ref.: 221953

CAT project ref.: 2023/03d
CAT Report 1924

ECC code: ECC4777
OASIS id: colchest3-514194

report prepared by Harvey Furniss

figures by Chris Lister, Harvey Furniss and Emma Holloway

fieldwork by Harvey Furniss, Ziya Eksen and Alice Parker

commissioned by Chris Elsey on behalf of Colchester Zoo Ltd

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Issued:	04.05.2023	

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out on land at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. Despite lying within an archaeologically rich landscape, the trenches at The Firs yielded a single natural feature and no other archaeological contexts or finds.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex on the 11th April 2023. The work was commissioned by Chris Elsey of Colchester Zoo Ltd and took place in advance of the demolition of the existing dwelling and out-building as well as the construction of a new replacement three-bedroom detached house with garage and associated groundworks.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the EHER/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 evaluation by trial-trenching 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 an Archaeological Evaluation*, written by Dr Simon Wood and detailing the required archaeological work (CBCAA 2023), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2023).

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* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER numbers) accessed via the Colchester Heritage Explorer (www.colchesterheritage.co.uk).

The Geology of Britain viewer[1] shows the bedrock geology of the site is London clay formation (clay, silt and sand, comprised of bioturbated or poorly laminated, blue-grey or grey-brown, slightly calcareous, silty to very silty clay), with superficial deposits of cover sand (blanket deposits of very fine grained sand).

Cropmarks, previously recorded by aerial photography, to the north, south, east and west of the site had indicated the presence of boundary ditches and enclosures (MCC4829, MCC7568, MCC7638, MCC7725).

Gryme's Dyke, which is Roman in date, runs approximately north-south *c* 368m east of the site (MCC7464). However, the dyke has been infilled in this area and its precise location is unknown. Gryme's Dyke is the outermost earthwork of the dyke system surrounding Colchester. It consists of a ditch and bank extending from the River Colne to the Roman River, an approximate distance of 5.5km. From the Late Iron Age, a series of long dykes extended across the Colchester gravel plateau, linking the River Colne and Roman River and creating a defended perimeter of water, marsh and forest enclosing an area of 28 sq km (MCC7469). Most of the dykes faced west, to provide protection from inland attack. It is thought that as well as

[1] British Geological Survey – https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/?

serving a defensive purpose, the dykes would have formed part of a stock management system (CAT Report 1560). Gryme's Dyke forms the westernmost boundary in the system of dykes belonging to the Late Iron Age/early Roman *oppidum* of Camulodunum which is viewed as being of national, if not international importance, with all surviving elements considered worthy of protection.

The site is located *c* 1.4km west of the scheduled and nationally-important Late Iron Age and Roman site at Gosbecks (NHLE 1002180, CHER MCC7470). The Gosbecks site has been the subject of multiple investigations including aerial photography, geophysical surveys, evaluations and excavations (Hull 1958, 259-71; *CAR* **11**, 95-105; CAT Reports 30, 45 and 127). Archaeological remains at the site include dykes, droveways and field systems; a large enclosure which was possibly the farmstead of Cunobelin, who controlled a substantial portion of south-eastern Britain, including the territories of the Catuvellauni and the Trinovantes (MCC7044); a small Roman fort of probable Claudian date (MCC7472); a Romano- British temple (MCC2849) surrounded by a monumental portico (MCC7043); a Roman theatre (MCC2831); a Roman water-main, possibly leading to a bath-house (MCC2903); and a road leading to the walled Roman town (MCC2529).

The site is also located *c* 415m south-west of the Stanway elite burial site which was excavated between 1987 and 2003 prior to the extraction of sands and gravel aggregates (MCC8095). Five enclosures were recorded including a Middle Iron Age farmstead and four Late Iron Age funerary enclosures of high-status individuals of the Catuvellaunian family. Each enclosure incorporated a single wooden chamber in a central or axial position. Two burials from the site, with finds including pottery, weapons and game boards known as the 'Warrior burial' and the 'Doctor's burial', are nationally recognised for their significance (Crummy *et al* 2007).

Stanway Hall is located some 117m south-west of the site (MCC7543). The hall originally dates to the mid 16th century but was almost entirely rebuilt in the modern period (MCC11730). The medieval fish ponds associated with the hall survive within the zoo grounds (MCC7542) as does the 13th-century parish church of All Saints (MCC4546, MCC7538-MCC7541), which has been derelict since *c* 1700. The church is both scheduled (NHLE 1019879) and a Grade II* listed building.

Previous archaeological work by CAT at Colchester Zoo includes a watching brief in 1996 prior to the expansion of the zoo to the west focusing on the area of the paddocks. Amidst difficult site conditions, no features were uncovered. Thirty-six worked flints were recovered, however, including cores, blades and flakes, which were dated to the Early Neolithic period (CAT Report 1000, project 96/5b). In 2005, an evaluation (Archaeological Solutions Report 1730) followed by excavation (CAT Report 346) uncovered 34 medieval burials and a couple of ditches beside the ruins of All Saints Church in advance of the construction of an orangutan enclosure (CHER MCC9128). Small archaeological investigations in 2018 and 2019 revealed no significant archaeological remains (CAT Reports 1325 and 1431).

In 2020 CAT started a series of phased archaeological work on a plot of land to the east of Colchester Zoo. A desk-based assessment was carried out in June 2020 (CAT Report 1560), which included an Aerial Investigation and Mapping (AIM) investigation carried out by Helen Saunders of ECC Place Services. A geophysical magnetometer survey identified a spread of debris in the SE corner of the field associated with the site of Baymill Cottages, a series of large palaeochannels and patches of buried Quaternary fills (TigerGeo 2020). It also identified 27 weak linear anomalies typical of ditch fills.

The subsequent evaluation revealed 245 features, primarily ditches and pits, but including also geological features and tree-throw pits (CAT Report 1610). The main period of activity at the site was in the Late Iron Age-early Roman period. This activity was centred on a plateau of flat ground at the northern edge of the site. The number of features and the quantity of finds recovered suggests that the site was either occupied during the Late Iron Age-early Roman period, or that an area of occupation of that period is located immediately to the north. The finds dating evidence indicates that the main period of activity on the site began sometime after c 30

BC and continued into the early Roman period (? c 30 BC- AD 60). The site appears to have been abandoned not long after the Roman conquest, when any activity in this area would have likely moved eastwards to within the area defended by Gryme's Dyke. The in-filled ditch of Gryme's Dyke was identified in three of the evaluation trenches situated along the eastern edge of the site. The upper-part of the ditch had been in-filled in the mid-20th century and the bank levelled. However, limited investigations revealed that the lower fills of the ditch are preserved below the modern in-fill. These fills have the potential to contain important archaeological finds, which could contribute significantly to the dating of the construction of the dyke and therefore the development of the Late Iron Age and Roman *oppidum* of Camulodunum.

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 CBCAA to determine if further investigation is required.

5 Results (Appendix 1 and Figs 2-3)

Two trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. A layer of topsoil (L1, 0.3-0.42m thick) was present across site. Sealed below were two layers of buried soil (L2, 0.19-0.27m thick and L3, 0.24-0.34m thick) onto the natural geology (L4, identified at an average depth of 0.82m below current ground level).

Trench 1 (6m long by 1.8m wide)
T1 had originally been placed perpendicular to the existing garage however a green house inhibited its location. The new positioning for the trench was agreed via the CBCAA monitor (see Fig 2). There were no archaeological contexts uncovered and no finds recovered from T1.

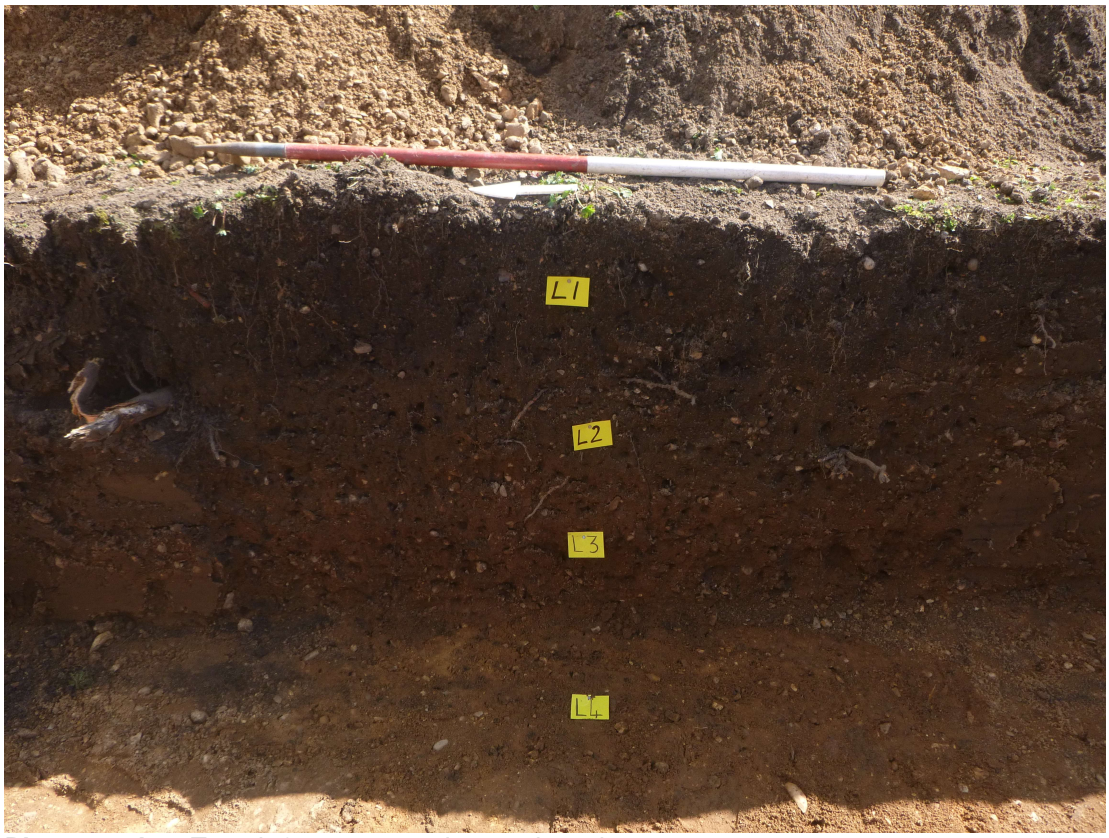
Trench 2 (8m long by 1.8m wide)
T2 had originally been placed directly through the middle of the proposed development however due to an unforeseen boundary edge the trench was moved northwards by *c* 1m. An undated tree-throw (F1) was uncovered at the northern end of the trench. No finds were recovered from T2.

Photograph 1 Site shot, view south-west.

Photograph 2 Trench 1, view west.

Photograph 3 Trench 1, representative section, view north.

Photograph 4 Trench 2, view south.



Photograph 5 Trench 2, representative section, view east.

Photograph 6 F1, view north-west.

6 Finds

There were no archaeological finds.

7 Conclusion

Despite being located in the rich archaeological landscape around the Roman town of Colchester, the trenches at The Firs yielded a natural feature and no other archaeological contexts.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Chris Elsey and Colchester Zoo Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman, and fieldwork was carried out by H Furniss with Z Eksen and A Parker. Figures are by C Lister, H Furniss, and E Holloway. The project was monitored for Colchester Borough Council by Dr Richard Hoggett.

9 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	*Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **8** (EAA **8**)
CAT	2023	*Health & Safety Policy*
CAT	2023	*Written scheme of investigation (WSI) for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL*
CAT Report 30	1998	*Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Colchester: an archaeological evaluation of the north-west area*, by S Benfield
CAT Report 45	1999	*Excavation at Gosbecks Archaeological Park: July-August 1999*, by C Austin
CAT Report 127	2008	*Excavations of Late Iron Age and Roman features and a Roman road north of Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Colchester, Essex 1995-1996*, by S Benfield
CAT Report 346	2005	*A medieval cemetery at All Saints' Church, Great Stanway, Essex (Colchester Zoo)*, by H Brooks
CAT Report 1000	2017	*A miscellany of unpublished Colchester and Essex sites: 1984-2000 (sites not published in any Colchester Archaeological Report, or in the CAT Report Series from 1997)*, by H Brooks
CAT Report 1325	2018	*Archaeological evaluation on land at Colchester Zoo (Tiger Toilet), Maldon Road, Stanway, Essex, CO3 0SL: September 2018*, by L Pooley
CAT Report 1431	2019	*Archaeologic strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Zoo, Maldon Road, Stanway, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL: May 2019*, by E Hicks
CAT Report 1560	2020	*Archaeologic desk-based assessment and heritage statement: Stanway Quarry Expansion, Land south of Maldon Road, Stanway, Essex*, by P Parmenter
CAT Report 1610	2020	*Archaeological evaluation on land east of Colchester Zoo, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex – September-November 2020,* by S Carter and A Wightman
CBCAA	2022	*Brief for Archaeological Evaluation at The Firs, Maldon Road, Stanway, Colchester* by S Wood
CIfA	2014a	*Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation.* Updated June 2020.
CIfA	2014b	*Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives.* Updated June 2020.
CIfA	2014c	*Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.* Updated October 2020.
CIfA	2014d	*Code of Conduct.* Revised Oct 2022.
Gurney, D	2003	*Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA **14**)
Historic England	2016	*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*
Medlycott, M	2011	*Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA **24)**
MHCLG	2021	*National Planning Policy Framework.* Ministry of Housing, Communities

and Local Government.

10 Abbreviations and glossary

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	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find.
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Late Iron Age	Period from *c* 100 – 50 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
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	**O**nline **A**cces**S** to the **I**ndex of Archaeological Investigation**S**, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
Roman	the period from AD 43 to *c* AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of digital archive

CAT Report 1924
CBC evaluation brief
Digital photographs
Site data
Survey data

12 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.

Distribution list:
Chris Elsey, Colchester Zoo Ltd
Dr Richard Hoggett, Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
Essex Historic Environment Record

Appendix 1 Context list

Context no.	Trench no.	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
L1	All	-	Topsoil	Friable, dry dark brown sandy silt with frequent rooting and rare stone inclusions	Modern
L2	All	-	Buried soil	Firm to compact, dry mid greyish-brown sandy silt with frequent stone inclusions and occasional rooting	Modern
L3	All	-	Buried soil	Compact, dry mid brownish-grey silty sand with frequent stone inclusions and no rooting	Post-glacial
L4	All	-	Natural	Compact, dry mid to dark mottled brownish-orange clayey sand/gravel	Undated
F1	T2	-	Tree-throw	Firm, dry mid to light greyish-brown sandy silt with occasional stone inclusions 0.93m (L) x 0.53m (W) x 0.16m (D)	Undated

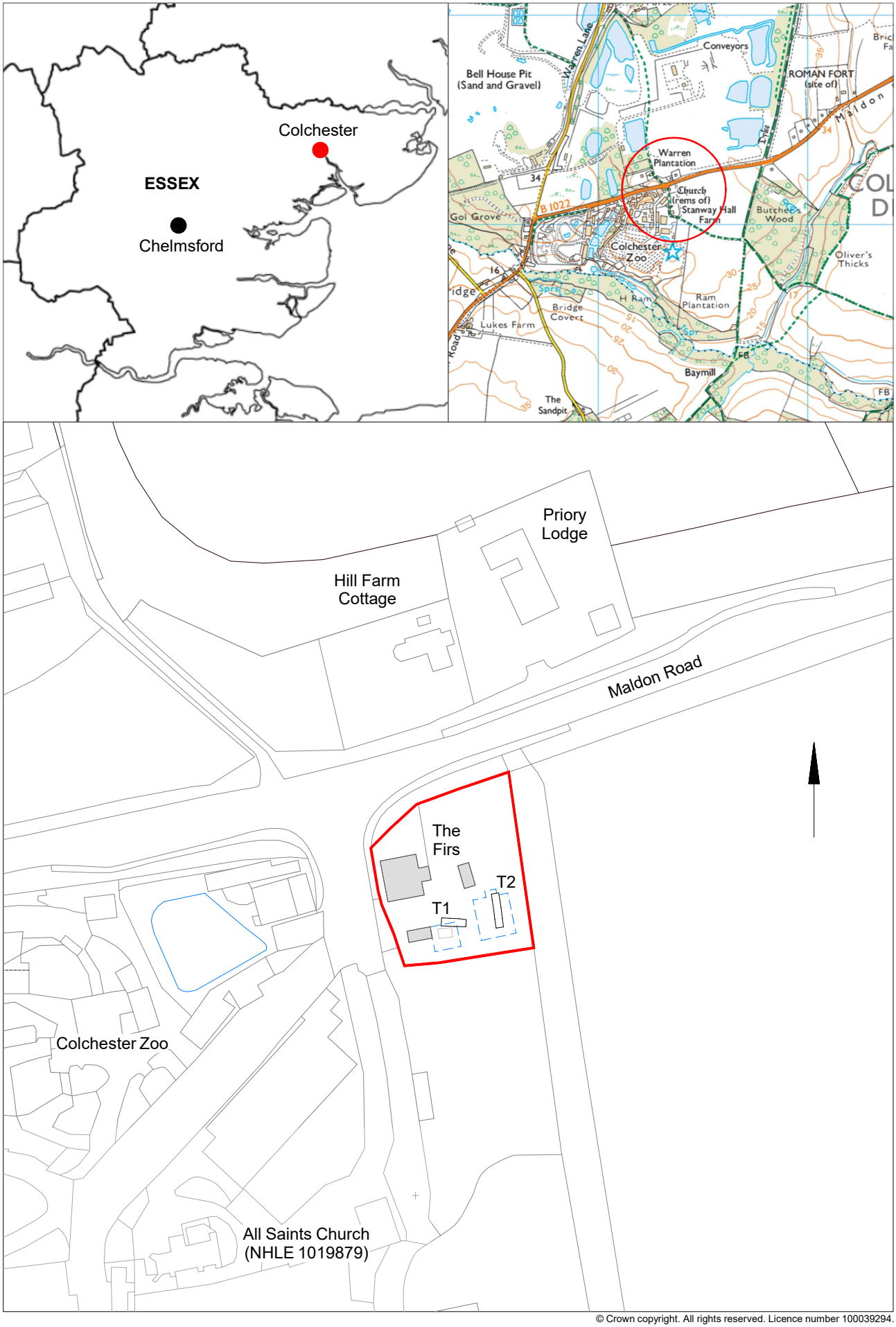


Fig 1 Site location and trench layout in relation to the proposed development (dashed blue lines).

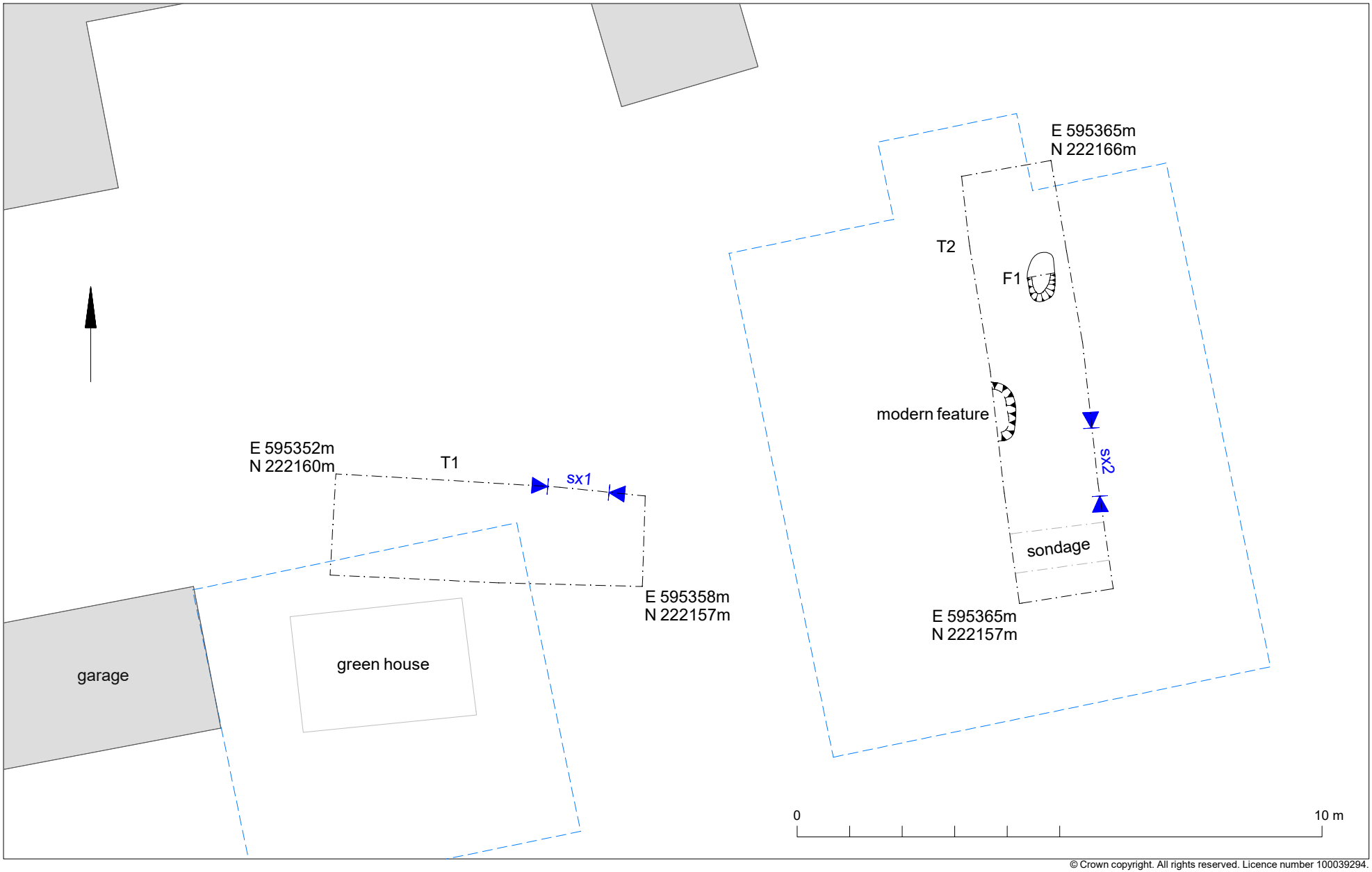


Fig 2 Results with development plan (in blue) as well as green house (in grey).

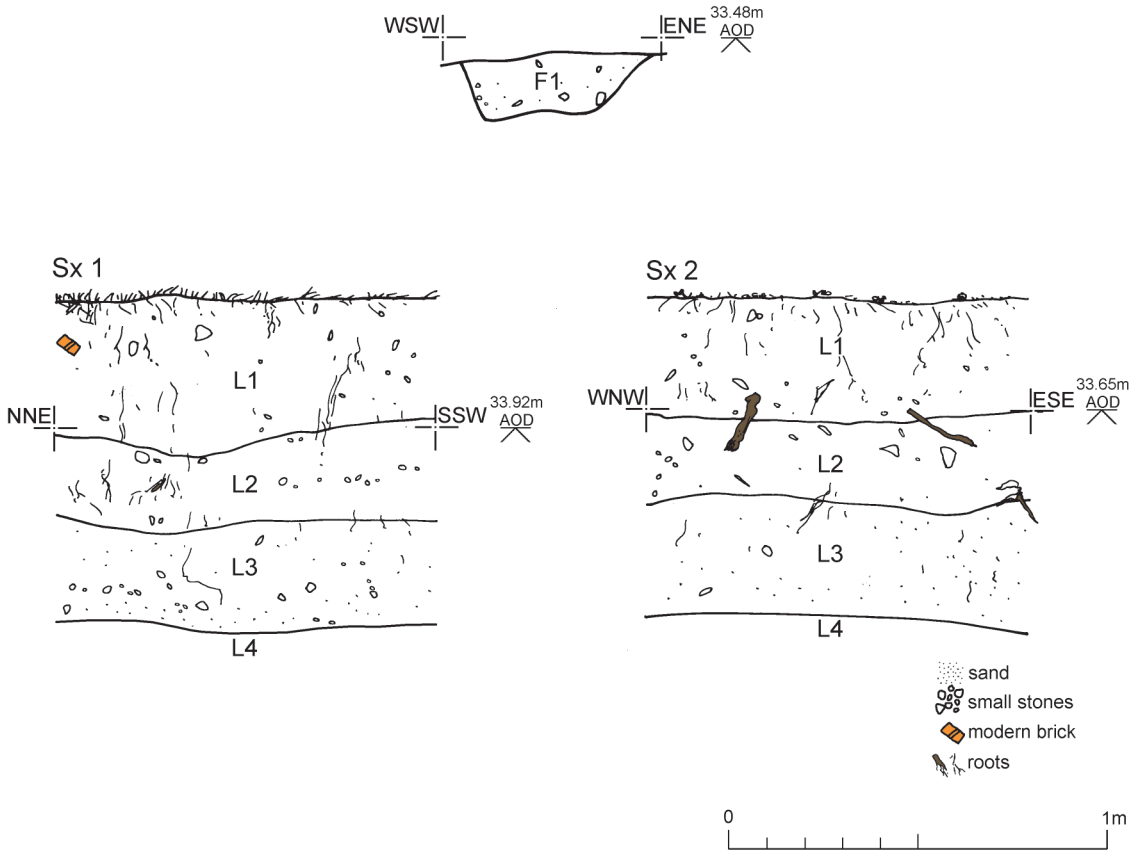


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: **The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL**	
Parish: Colchester	***District:*** Colchester
NGR: TL 95343 22170 (centre)	***Site code:*** CAT project ref.: 2023/03d CHER ref.: ECC4777 OASIS ref.: colchest3-514194
Type of work: Evaluation	***Site director/group:*** Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 11th April 2023	***Size of area investigated:*** 1300 sq metres
Location of curating museum: Archaeological Data Service	**Funding source:** Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	***Related CHER/SMR number:***
Final report: CAT Report 1924	
Periods represented:	
Summary of fieldwork results: *An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out on land at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. Despite lying within an archaeologically rich landscape the trenches at The Firs yielded a single natural feature and no other archaeological contexts or finds.*	
Previous summaries/reports: -	
CBC monitor: Simon Wood and Richard Hoggett	
Keywords: -	***Significance:***
Author of summary: Harvey Furniss	***Date of summary:*** April 2023

Colchester Archaeological Trust

Written scheme of investigation
for an evaluation by trial-trenching at The Firs,
Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL

March 2023

CAT project ref.: 2022/03d
CHER code: ECC4777

Written scheme of investigation for an evaluation by trial-trenching at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL.

March 2023

NGR: TL 95343 22170

Planning district.: Colchester
Planning ref.: 221953

CAT project ref.: 2022/03d

CHER code: ECC4777
CCC monitor: Dr Rik Hoggett
OASIS id: colchest3-514194

WSI prepared by: Emma Holloway
Figure by: Chris Lister

Commissioned by: Chris Elsey (Colchester Zoo)
Client: Colchester Zoo Ltd

Prepared by:	Emma Holloway	Junior Project Officer
Reviewed and approved by:	Chris Lister	Contracts Manager
Issued:	24/03/2023	
Revised by:	Emma Holloway	Junior Project Officer
Re-issued:	03/04/2023	

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Site location and description

The site is located approximately 5.2km south-west of the core of historic Colchester City Centre at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex (Fig 1). The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 95343 22170. The site is an approximately 0.13 hectare parcel of land, roughly rectangular in shape.

Proposed work

The proposed development comprises the demolition of the existing dwelling and out building to be replaced with a new three-bedroom detached house and garage and associated groundworks.

Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER/ECC numbers, which are accessible via Colchester Heritage Explorer (https://colchesterheritage.co.uk/map).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale[1]) shows the bedrock geology of the site is London clay formation (clay, silt and sand, comprised of bioturbated or poorly laminated, blue-grey or grey-brown, slightly calcareous, silty to very silty clay), with superficial deposits of cover sand (blanket deposits of very fine grained sand).

Cropmarks, recorded by aerial photography, lie to the north, south, east and west of the site and indicate the presence of boundary ditches and enclosures (MCC4829, MCC7568, MCC7638, MCC7725).

The line of Gryme's Dyke, which is thought to be Roman in date, runs approximately north-south *c* 368m east of the site (MCC7464). However, the dyke has been infilled in this area and its precise location is unknown. Gryme's Dyke is the outermost earthwork of the dyke system surrounding Colchester. It consists of a ditch and bank aligned north to south extending from the River Colne to the Roman River, an approximate distance of 5.5km. From the Late Iron Age, a series of ten long dykes extended across the Colchester gravel plateau, linking the River Colne and Roman River and creating a defended perimeter of water, marsh and forest enclosing an area of 28 sq km (MCC7469). Most of the dykes faced west, to provide protection from inland attack. It is thought that as well as serving a defensive purpose, the dykes would have formed part of a stock management system (CAT Report 1560). Gryme's Dyke forms the westernmost boundary in the system of dykes belonging to the Late Iron Age/early Roman *oppidum* of Camulodunum which is viewed as being of national, if not international importance, with all surviving elements considered worthy of protection.

The site is located *c* 1.4km west of the main centre of the nationally-important Late Iron Age and Roman site at Gosbecks (MCC7470) The Late Iron Age and Roman complex at Gosbecks (Scheduled Monument NHLE no. 1002180; MCC7470), has been the subject of multiple investigations including aerial photography, geophysical surveys, evaluations and excavations (Hull 1958, 259-71; *CAR* **11**, 95-105; CAT Reports 30, 45 and 127). Archaeological remains at the site include dykes, droveways and field systems; a large enclosure which was possibly the farmstead of Cunobelin, who controlled a substantial portion of south-eastern Britain, including the territories of the Catuvellauni and the Trinovantes (MCC7044); a small Roman fort of probable Claudian date (MCC7472); a Romano- British temple (MCC2849) surrounded by a monumental portico (CHER MCC7043); a Roman theatre (CHER MCC2831); a Roman water-main, possibly leading to a bath-house (CHER MCC2903); and a road leading to the walled Roman town (CHER MCC2529).

The site is also located *c* 415m south-west of the Stanway elite burial site which was excavated between 1987 and 2003 prior to the extraction of sands and gravel aggregates (CHER MCC8095). Five enclosures were recorded including a Middle Iron Age farmstead

[1] British Geological Survey – https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/?

and four Late Iron Age funerary enclosures of high-status individuals of the Catuvellaunian family. Each enclosure incorporated a single wooden chamber in a central or axial position. Two burials from the site with finds including pottery, weapons and game boards known as the 'Warriors burial' and the 'Doctor's burial' are nationally recognised for their significance (Crummy *et al* 2007).

Stanway Hall is located some 117m south-west of the site (CHER MCC7543). The hall originally dates to the mid 16th century but was almost entirely rebuilt in the modern period (CHER MCC11730). The medieval fish ponds associated with the Hall survive within the zoo grounds (MCC7542) as does the 13th-century parish church of All Saints (MCC4546, MCC7538-MCC7541), which has been derelict since *c* 1700. The church is a Scheduled Monument (NHLE no. 1019879) and is also a Historic England Grade II* Listed Building.

Previous archaeological work by CAT at Colchester Zoo includes a watching brief in 1996 prior to the expansion of the zoo to the west focusing on the area of the paddocks. Amidst difficult site conditions, no features were uncovered. Thirty-six worked flints were recovered, however, including cores, blades and flakes, which were dated to the Early Neolithic period (CAT Report 1000, project 96/5b). In 2005, an evaluation was conducted by Archaeological Solutions (Archaeological Solutions Report 1730) followed by an excavation phase completed by CAT. Thirty-four medieval burials and a couple of ditches were recorded beside the ruins of All Saints church in advance of the construction of an orangutan enclosure (CHER MCC9128, CAT Report 346). In 2018, CAT excavated a single evaluation trench in the area of a new toilet block to the south of the zoo by the tiger enclosure. A single pit or ditch and a ditch or natural channel were uncovered (CAT Report 1325). In 2019, a CAT archaeologist supervised the stripping of a small area to accommodate a new admissions building but the only feature observed was a modern soakaway (CAT Report 1431).

In 2020 CAT started a series of phased archaeological work on a plot of land to the east of Colchester Zoo. A Desk-Based Assessment was carried out in June 2020 (CAT Report 1560), which included an Aerial Investigation and Mapping (AIM) investigation carried out by Helen Saunders of ECC Place Services. A geophysical magnetometer survey identified a spread of debris in the SE corner of the field associated with the site of Baymill Cottages, a series of large palaeochannels and patches of buried Quaternary fills (TigerGeo 2020). It also identified 27 weak linear anomalies typical of ditch fills.

The Evaluation revealed 245 features, primarily ditches and pits, but including also geological features and tree-throw pits. The main period of activity at the site was in the Late Iron Age-early Roman period. This activity was centred on a plateau of flat ground at the northern edge of the site. The number of features and the quantity of finds recovered suggests that the site was either occupied during the Late Iron Age-early Roman period, or that an area of occupation is located immediately to the north. The finds dating evidence indicates that the main period of activity on the site began sometime after c 30 BC and continued into the early Roman period (? c 30 BC- AD 60). The site appears to have been abandoned not long after the Roman conquest, when any activity in this area would have likely moved eastwards to within the area defended by Gryme's Dyke. The in-filled ditch of Gryme's Dyke was identified in three of the evaluation trenches situated along the eastern edge of the site. The upper-part of the ditch had been in-filled in the mid-20th century and the bank levelled. However, limited investigations revealed that the lower fills of the ditch are preserved below the modern in-fill. These fills have the potential to contain important archaeological finds, which could contribute significantly to the dating of the construction of the dyke and therefore the development of the Late Iron Age and Roman *oppidum* of Camulodunum.

Planning background

A planning application (221953) was made to Colchester City Council in August 2022 for a proposed *replacement dwelling following demolition of existing structures on site.*

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the CHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits the Colchester City Council Archaeological Advisor (CCCAA) was approached for advice about the potential development at pre-application stage. An

archaeological evaluation was recommended. The recommended archaeological condition is based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2021).

Requirement for work (Fig 1)

The archaeological work will consist of an evaluation by trial-trenching. Details are given in a Project Brief written by CCCAA (*Brief for Archaeological Evaluation at 'The Firs', Maldon Road, Colchester* – CCC 2023).

Specifically CAT will evaluate two linear trenches, located to target the footprints of the new buildings. T1 to measure 6m long, T2 8m long, both 1.8m wide. The 14m of trenching covers an area of 125.2m^2.

The initial work will comprise of the trial-trenching which will be followed by a site meeting with the CCCAA. Further archaeological work may be required. This will be decided by the CCCAA on completion of the trial-trenching and report.

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)
- East of England Standards and Frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/
- Relevant Health & Safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2022)
- the Project Brief issued by the Colchester City Council Archaeological Advisor (CCC 2023)

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 the CCCAA 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 the project (when the WSI is written) an OASIS online record http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/ will be initiated and key fields completed (Activity type, Location and Reviewers/Admin areas). At the end of the project all parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the EHER. This will include an uploaded .PDF version of the entire report.

A unique HER event number will be obtained from the CCCAA 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 CAT project officer and two archaeologists for one day.

In charge of day-to-day site work: Ben Holloway/Harvey Furniss

Evaluation 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 geology 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. All features or deposits will be excavated by hand. This includes a 50% sample of discrete features (pits, etc), at least 10% of linear features (ditches, etc) in 1m wide sections, and 100% of complex structures/features. Complex archaeological structures such as walls, kilns or ovens 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 CCCAA, will it be removed.

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

The depth and nature of colluvial or other masking deposits will be established. Therefore, a sondage will be excavated in each trench to test the stratigraphy of the site. This will occur in every trench unless it can be demonstrated that a feature excavated within a particular trench has clearly penetrated into the natural geology.

A representative section will be drawn of each trench, to include ground level, the depth of machining within the trench and the depth of any sondages.

Trained CAT staff will use a metal detector to scan all trenches both before and during excavation. All spoil heaps will also be scanned and finds recovered.

Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features or deposits will be entered on pro forma 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. 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. A photographic register will accompany the photographic record. This will detail as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot.

The trenches will not be backfilled until they have been signed off by the CCCAA.

Site surveying

The evaluation trenches 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 micromorphological and other pedological sedimentological analysis. Environmental bulk samples will be 40 litres in size (assuming context is large enough).

Sampling strategies will address questions of:

- The range of preservation types (charred, mineral-replaced, waterlogged), and their quality.
- Concentrations of macro-remains.
- Differences in remains from undated and dated features.
- Variation between different feature types and areas of site.

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. Trained CAT staff will process the samples and the flots will be sent to Val Fryer or Lisa Gray for analysis and reporting.

Should any complex, or otherwise outstanding deposits be encountered, VF or LG will be asked onto site to advise. Waterlogged 'organic' features will always be sampled. In all cases, the advice of VF/LG 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

The CCCAA will be notified immediately if any human remains are encountered during the evaluation. Burials, if encountered, will be left *in situ* at this evaluation stage.

Following Historic England guidance (2018), if the human remains are not to be lifted the project osteologist will be available to record the human remains in the ground.

If circumstances indicated it were prudent or necessary to remove remains from the site, 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. 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 CCCAA will be informed, and any advice and/or instruction from the coroner will be followed.

Human remains removed from site for analysis may be sent for radiocarbon dating.

Photographic record

Will include both general and feature-specific photographs, the latter with scale and north arrow. A photographic register giving context number, details, and direction of shot will be prepared on site, and included in the site archive.

Finds

All significant finds will be retained.

All finds, where appropriate, will be washed and marked with site code and context number.

Most of our finds reports are written internally by CAT staff under the supervision and direction of Philip Crummy (Director) and Laura Pooley (Post-excavation Manager). This includes specialist subjects such as:

ceramic finds (pottery and ceramic building material): Matthew Loughton
animal bones: Alec Wade (or Adam Wightman/Pip Parmenter - small groups only)
small finds, metalwork, coins, etc: Laura Pooley
non-ceramic bulk finds: Laura Pooley
flint: Adam Wightman
environmental processing: Bronagh Quinn
osteology: (human remains): Megan Seehra

or to outside specialists:
animal and human bone: Julie Curl (Sylvanus)
environmental assessment and analysis: Val Fryer / Lisa Gray
archaeometallurgy: David Dungworth
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: Tom Lawrence
prehistoric pottery: Stephen Benfield / Nigel Brown / Paul Sealey
Roman pottery: Stephen Benfield / Paul Sealey / Jo Mills / Gwladys Monteil
Roman brick/tile: Han Le (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 the CCCAA.

A contingency will be made in the budget for scientific assessment/analysis if suitable deposits are identified. This can include soil micromorphological and geochemical analysis of floors and dark earth deposits and/or absolute dating (such as archaeomagnetic and radiocarbon). The Historic England Regional Science Advisor will be consulted for advice.

Post-excavation assessment

An updated post-excavation assessment will be submitted within 2 months or at an alternatively agreed time with the CCCAA.

Where archaeological results do not warrant a post-excavation assessment then agreement will be sought from the CCCAA to proceed straight to grey literature / publication.

Results

Notification will be given to the CCCAA 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 (Historic England 2015).

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

The report will contain:

- Location plan of trenches in relation to the proposed development. At least two corners of each excavated area will be given a 10 figure grid reference.
- Section/s drawings showing depth of deposits from present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale.
- Archaeological methodology and detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion.
- Appropriate discussion and results section assessing the site in relation to the Regional Research Frameworks (Brown and Glazebrook 2000, Medlycott 2011. https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/).
- All specialist reports or assessments
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results.

An OASIS summary sheet will be completed at the end of the project and supplied to the CCCAA. This will be completed in digital form with a paper copy included with the archive. A copy (with trench plan) will also be emailed to the Hon. Editor of the Essex Archaeology and History Journal for inclusion in the annual round-up of projects (paul.gilman@me.com).

Publication of the results at least a summary level (i.e. round-up in Essex Archaeology & History) shall be undertaken in the year following the archaeological fieldwork. An allowance will be made in the project costs for the report to be published in an adequately peer reviewed journal or monograph series.

A PDF copy of the full report will be uploaded by CAT to the OASIS website and the Colchester Archaeological Trust's Online Report Library (http://cat.essex.ac.uk/), both of which are publicly accessible.

Archive deposition

The requirements for archive storage shall be agreed with the Curating museum.

If finds are retained from the site the full archive will be deposited with Colchester Museum unless otherwise agreed in advance. (A full copy of the archive shall in any case be deposited). If there are no finds a full digital archive will be deposited with ADS Archaeology.

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 and provision must be made for additional recording (e.g. photography, illustration and analysis) as appropriate.

The digital archive resulting from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk) to safeguard the long-term curation of the digital records. The CCCAA will be notified when the digital archive has been deposited. Prior to deposition CAT's data management plan (based on the official guidelines from the Digital Curation Centre [DCC 2013]) will ensure the integrity of the digital archive. A summary of the contents of the archives shall be supplied to the CCCAA at the time of their deposition.

The CCCAA will be notified when the digital archive has been deposited.

Monitoring

CCCAA 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 the CCCAA one week in advance of its commencement.

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

The CCCAA will be notified when the fieldwork is complete.

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

Public outreach

As part of CAT's public outreach programme, CAT is committed to engaging our local community with their archaeological resource. Among other activities, CAT regularly invites volunteers to engage in finds processing tasks at our office, such as washing, marking, sorting and packing bulk archaeological finds from commercial archaeological projects. Our volunteer programme is not designed to replace the work of paid archaeologists but to complement it, and to provide greater public benefit by means of community engagement and participation.

CAT volunteers are fully trained in all tasks they are engaged in and are fully supervised by a CAT employee at all times. Finds processing volunteers are managed and supervised by a Senior Post-Excavation Assistant, whose role is to ensure that all volunteer processing is carried out to the highest possible standard and within professional guidelines. This is overseen by the Post-Excavation Manager and Director.

CAT will never use volunteers in place of employees when funding is agreed for the latter, or if doing so would disadvantageously affect the timetable of works agreed between CAT and our clients.

CAT's liability insurance policies cover the activities of volunteers and liability towards them. All activities are carried out according to CAT's 'Volunteer and work experience policy' and 'Outreach, public relations and publicity policy'.

Events, activities and social media

In addition, the CAT website (www.thecolchesterarchaeologist.co.uk) and social media sites are updated regularly with information on our events and activities, with copies of our archaeological reports freely available at http://cat.essex.ac.uk/. Staff regularly give talks/lectures to groups, societies and schools, information on which (including any fees) is available by contacting the office on 01206 501785. CAT also works in partnership with both the Colchester Archaeological Group and Young Archaeologists Club providing venues for their meetings, advice and assistance.

References

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

Archaeological Solutions	2005	*Proposed orang-utan enclosure, Colchester Zoo, Stanway, Colchester, Essex: an archaeological evaluation*, AS Report 1730
Brown, N & Glazebrook, J	2000	*Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **8** (EAA **8**)
CAR **11**	1995	*Colchester Archaeological Report **11**: Camunlodunum 2* by C F C Hawkes and P Crummy
CAT	2022	*Health & Safety Policy*
CAT Report 30	1998	*Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Colchester: an archaeological evaluation of the north-west area*, by S Benfield
CAT Report 45	1999	*Excavation at Gosbecks Archaeological Park: July-August 1999*, by C Austin
CAT Report 127	2008	*Excavations of Late Iron Age and Roman features and a Roman road north of Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Colchester, Essex 1995-1996*, by S Benfield
CAT Report 346	2005	*A medieval cemetery at All Saints' Church, Great Stanway, Essex*

(Colchester Zoo), by H Brooks

CAT Report 1000 2017 *A miscellany of unpublished Colchester and Essex sites: 1984-2000 (sites not published in any Colchester Archaeological Report, or in the CAT Report Series from 1997)*, by H Brooks

CAT Report 1325 2018 *Archaeological evaluation on land at Colchester Zoo (Tiger Toilet), Maldon Road, Stanway, Essex, CO3 0SL: September 2018*, by L Pooley

CAT Report 1431 2019 *Archaeologic strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Zoo, Maldon Road, Stanway, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL: May 2019*, by E Hicks

CAT Report 1560 2020 *Archaeologic desk-based assessment and heritage statement: Stanway Quarry Expansion, Land south of Maldon Road, Stanway, Essex*, by P Parmenter

CAT Report 1610 2020 *Archaeological evaluation on land east of Colchester Zoo, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex – September-November 2020,* by S Carter and A Wightman

CCC 2023 *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation at 'The Firs', Maldon Road, Colchester*, by S Wood

CIfA 2014a *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation.* Revised October 2020

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Crummy, P, Benfield, S, Crummy, N, Rigby, V & Shimmin, D 2007 *Stanway: an elite burial site at Camulodunum*. Britannia Monograph Series **24**

Digital Curation Centre (DCC) 2013 *Checklist for Data Management Plan v. 4.0.*

Gurney, D 2003 *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **14** (EAA **14**)

Historic England 2015 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*

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Hull, R 1958 *Roman Colchester.* Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London no. **XX**. Oxford: The Society of Antiquaries, London.

Medlycott, M 2011 *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **24** (EAA **24**)

MHCLG 2021 *National Planning Policy Framework.* Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

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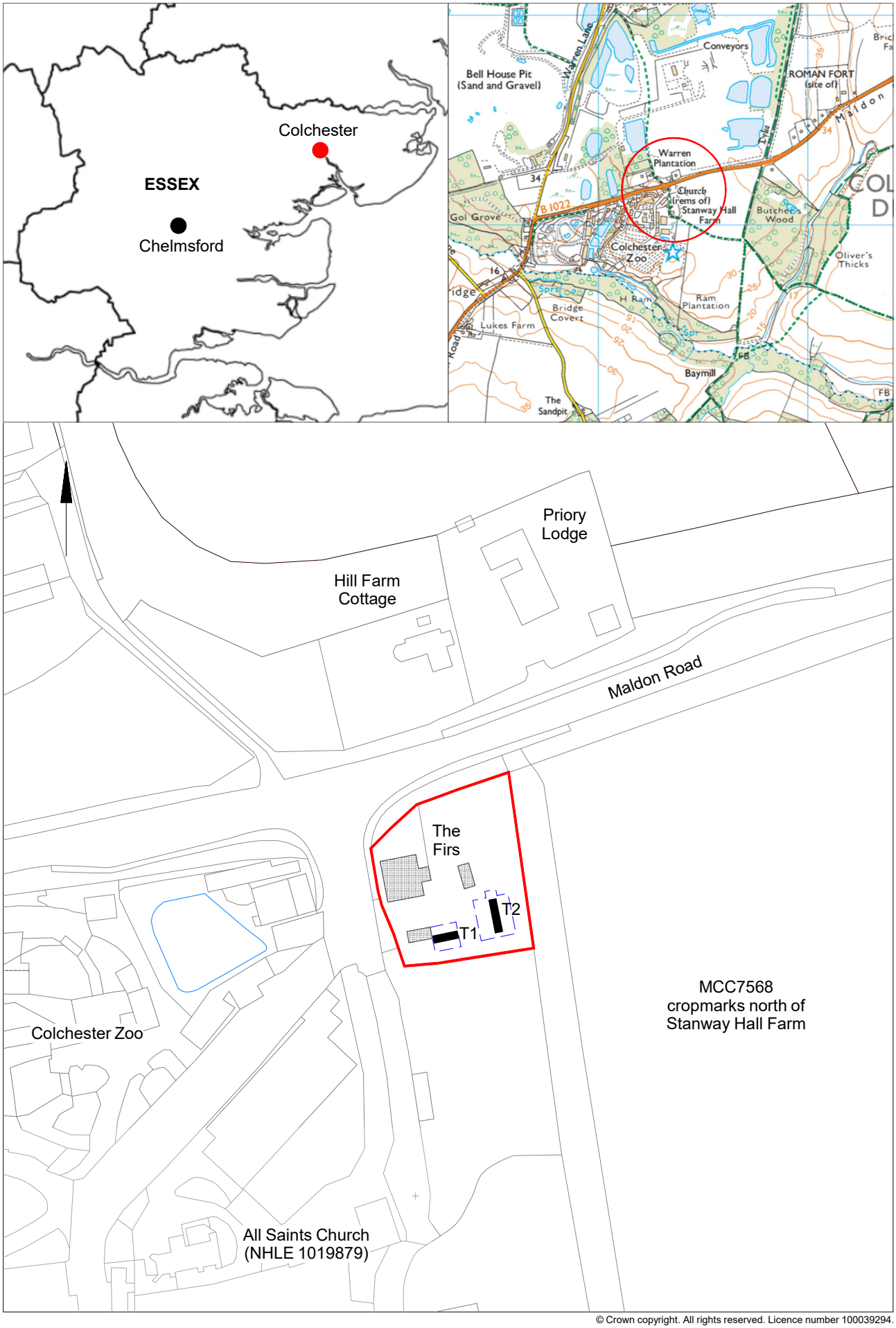

Fig 1 Site location and trench layout in relation to the proposed development (dashed blue lines) and the structures to be demolishe (shaded grey).

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Summary for colchest3-514194

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-514194
Project Name	Evaluation at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL
Sitename	The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL
Activity type	Evaluation
Project Identifier(s)	2022/03d
Planning Id	221953
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	11-Apr-2023 - 11-Apr-2023
Location	The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0SL NGR : TL 95343 22170 LL : 51.8639033540709, 0.835659212208136 12 Fig : 595343,222170
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Colchester Parish : Stanway
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation (two trenches) carried out as specified in the project brief and WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out on land at The Firs, Maldon Road, Colchester, Essex in advance of the demolition of the existing dwelling and out building and the construction of a new three-bedroom detached house and garage and associated groundworks. Despite lying within an archaeologically rich landscape the trenches at The Firs yielded no archaeological contexts or finds.
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	Colchester Borough Council - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	
HER Identifiers	
Archives	