

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 1995
issued November 2023**

**Archaeological evaluation at Watch House Farm,
Watch House Green, Felsted, Essex, CM6 3EF:
October 2023**



**CAT project ref.: 2023/08i
ECC code: FLWH23**

**Archaeological evaluation at Watch House Farm,
Watch House Green, Felsted, Essex, CM6 3EF:
October 2023**

NGR: TL 69049 21213 (centre)

Planning ref.: UTT/22/2187/OP

**CAT project ref.: 2023/08i
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report prepared by Megan Beale

**with contributions from Dr Matthew Loughton and
Laura Pooley**

**fieldwork by Ben Holloway with Megan Beale,
Chloé Hill and Charlie Hodges**

**commissioned by Michael Spink, Soundgate Ltd
on behalf of RLA Aria Developments Ltd**

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Prepared by: | Megan Beale | Senior Site Assistant |
| Reviewed by: | Laura Pooley | Post Excavation Manager |
| Reviewed and approved by: | Howard Brooks | Interim Director of Archaeology |
| Issued: | 30/11/2023 | |

Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785

email: services@catuk.org

web: <https://catuk.org>

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation of five trenches took place at Watch House Farm, Felsted ahead of the construction of three new dwellings. Previous archaeological investigations nearby have shown activity from the Roman period, as well as evidence of a possible medieval homestead. A single, modern feature was identified, containing dumped agricultural material.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Watch House Farm, Felsted, Essex between the 30th October to the 1st November. The work was commissioned by Michael Spink of Soundgate Ltd, on behalf of RLA Aria Developments Ltd, and took place during groundworks for three new dwellings with garages and associated groundworks.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), the Essex County Council Historic Environment Officer Katie Lee-Smith advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2023).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with an *Archaeological Brief for Trial Trenching* written by Katie Lee-Smith (ECCPS 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 2015), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2020a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2020b).

3 Geological and archaeological background

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

In 2015, Archaeology South East (ASE) undertook an archaeological evaluation and excavation on land directly north of the development site (EHER 49073). The investigations uncovered features and artefacts dating from the prehistoric through to the medieval periods (ASE Report 2015439). Notable finds included sherds of Saxon pottery, a medieval antler gaming piece and a post-medieval coin. It was suggested that the site is located near a medieval homestead, perhaps a manor house, the precise location of which is undetermined.

Roughly 200m to the south-east of the proposed development, CAT undertook an archaeological evaluation and excavation in 2021/22 (EHER 49596). Both phases of work revealed a series of ditches, gullies and pits along with a metalled surface (CAT Reports 1660 and 1849). The majority of the features and finds assemblage were dated to the Roman period.

Cropmarks have been identified on land to the north-west, south-west and south-east of the site. These complexes include possible trackways and other linear features (EHER 1358), possible field boundaries (EHER 14086) and a possible square enclosure and trackway with linear features and pits (EHER 1356).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site is London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand) with superficial deposits of Lowestoft Formation (diamicton).

¹ British Geological Survey – <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>

4 Aims

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken to excavate and record any archaeological deposits which were exposed by the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Five trenches of varying lengths were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

Three horizons were noted in all five trenches:

- Modern topsoil (L1, 0.06-0.15m thick) covered the entire site.
- Under this was a make-up layer (L2, 0.20-0.25m thick), which sealed
- a stony, clay natural (L3, from 0.3-0.5m below current ground level (bcgl)).

Significant root disturbance was noted throughout all three layers, and in all trenches.

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 5m long, 1.8m wide and was orientated north-east/south-west. It was excavated to a depth of between 0.33-0.39m.



Photograph 1 T1, view south-west.

Natural (L3) was noted from 0.30-0.36m bcgl. No archaeological remains were encountered in this trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was a T-shaped trench measuring 10m and 10m by 1.8 wide. It was orientated north-west/south-east and north-east/south-west, and was excavated to a depth of 0.36-0.42m bcgl.



Photograph 2 T2, view north-east.



Photograph 3 T2, view east.

Natural (L3) was encountered from 0.32-0.4m bcgl. No archaeological remains were encountered in this trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was a roughly L-shaped trench, measuring 12m and 8m by 1.8m wide. It was orientated north-east/south-west and north/south and was excavated to a depth of 0.42-0.53m.



Photograph 4 T3, view north-east.



Photograph 5 T3, view north.

Natural (L3) was encountered from 0.39-0.5m bcgl. No archaeological remains were encountered in this trench.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was 5m long, 1.8m wide and orientated north-east/south-west. It was excavated to a depth of 0.31-0.34m.



Photograph 6 T4, view south-west.

Natural (L3) was encountered from 0.24-0.31m bcgl. No archaeological remains were encountered in this trench.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was 5m long, 1.8m wide and orientated north/south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.32-0.35m.

Natural (L3) was encountered from 0.27-0.29m bcgl. No archaeological remains were encountered in this trench.



Photograph 7 T5, view south.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was a T-shaped trench, measuring 10m and 10m by 1.8m wide. It was orientated north-east/south-west and north-west/south-east, and was excavated to a depth of between 0.54-0.6m.



Photograph 8 T6, view north-east.



Photograph 9 T6, view north-west.

Natural (L3) was encountered from 0.45-0.51m bcgl. No archaeological remains were encountered in this trench. However, a modern conglomeration (F1) was noted in the centre of the trench. It measured 6.8m wide and at least 3.4m long. Significant fragments of coke, CBM and ironwork were noted on the surface with a band of concrete running across the feature (see photograph 7) as well. As this feature was clearly modern, it was not excavated. Finds were collected from the surface to confirm dating.



Photograph 10 Oblique shot of F1, view north-west.

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation uncovered a small assemblage pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) with a total of 15 sherds with a weight of 1,216g and EVE of 0.20 (Table 1). The mean sherd weight is high at 81g. This material was recovered from two contexts (Table 2).

| Ceramic material | No. | Weight (g) | MSW (g) | EVE |
|------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Pottery | 1 | 133 | 133 | 0.20 |
| CBM | 14 | 1,083 | 77 | - |
| All | 15 | 1,216 | 81 | 0.20 |

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM.

| Context | Description | No. | Weight (g) | MSW (g) | EVE |
|---------|------------------------|-----------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| F1 | Modern Congglomeration | 12 | 932 | 78 | 0.20 |
| L2 | Make-up | 3 | 284 | 95 | - |
| | Total | 15 | 1,216 | 1 | 0.20 |

Table 2 Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific contexts.

Modern pottery

The pottery was recorded according to the fabric groups from *CAR 7* (Cotter 2000) while the number of vessels was determined by rim EVE (estimated vessel equivalent) (Table 3). A tray or dish (EVE:0.20) in Staffordshire-type white earthenware (fabric F48D), dating to the 19th-20th century, was recovered from modern conglomeration F1.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

There was a small quantity of CBM totalling 14 fragments weighing 1,083g, with a MSW of 77g. Make-up L2 contained pieces of three plain post medieval floor-tiles (284g). Modern conglomeration F1 produced eight fragments (114g) of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile, two brick fragments (681g), and one piece (4g) of baked clay.

Conclusion

Table 3 summarises the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and ceramics. None of these finds were retained.

| Context | Description | Modern pottery | CBM | Date Approx. |
|---------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| F1 | Modern conglomeration | F48D (TRAY/DISH) | BRICK, PEG-TILE | MODERN |
| L2 | Make-up | - | FLOOR TILE | POST-MEDIEVAL? |

Table 3 Approximate dates for the individual contexts.

6.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

Pieces of post-medieval/modern agricultural ironwork were recovered from the surface of modern pit F1 (finds no. 2), along with two pieces (12.1g) of clinker/coke.

The ironwork consisted of:

- Piece of flat sheet, roughly diamond-shaped (255.5g).
- Rectangular looped fitting (6.0g).
- Oval-shaped fitting with rectangular loop on the reverse (8.4g), possibly from a horse-harness. The fitting is in two pieces and appears to be riveted joining the front and rear pieces together. If a horse-harness, the fitting was probably attached to leather.
- Four fragments of iron springs from farm machinery (37.3g).
- Three iron nails, round-sectioned with small round heads (14.3g).

All of the finds have been discarded.

7 Conclusion

Despite being in an area with a high potential for archaeological remains, none were encountered. Feature F1 is likely to be a dump of agricultural material related to activities at Watch House Farm.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Michael Spink of Soundgate Ltd and RLA Aria Developments Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and A Wightman and carried out by B Holloway, M Beale, C Hill and C Hodges. Figures were prepared by B Holloway, S Veasey and M Beale. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Mark Baister.

9 References

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

| | | |
|--------------------|-------|---|
| ASE Report 2015439 | 2016 | Archaeological trial trenching and excavation land at Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex: Post-excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design by M Germany |
| CAT | 2023 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation and excavation at Watch House Farm, Watch House Green, Felsted, Essex, CM6 3EF</i> by S Veasey |
| CAT Report 1660 | 2021 | <i>Archaeological evaluation on land at Watch House Green, Felsted, Essex, CM6 3EF: April 2021</i> by S Veasey |
| CAT Report 1849 | 2022 | <i>Archaeological excavation on land at Watch House Green, Felsted, Essex, CM6 3EF: July-August 2022</i> by E Hicks |
| CIfA | 2020a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i> . Written 2014, updated 2020 |
| CIfA | 2020b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> . Written 2014, updated 2020 |
| Cotter, J P | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> . Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd. |
| ECCPS | 2023 | <i>Brief for Archaeological Trial Trenching and Excavation at Watch House Farm, Bannister Green, Felsted</i> by K Lee-Smith |
| Gurney, D | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14) |
| Historic England | 2015 | <i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (MoRPHE) |
| 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 | 2023 | <i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government |

10 Abbreviations and glossary

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Anglo-Saxon | period from c 500 – 1066 |
| CAT | Colchester Archaeological Trust |
| CBM | ceramic building material, ie brick/tile |
| CHER | Colchester Historic Environment Record |
| CIfA | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists |
| context | specific location of finds on an archaeological site |
| ECC | Essex County Council |
| EHER | 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, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main |
| post-medieval | from c AD 1500 to c 1800 |
| 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 archive

Finds: not retained

Digital record

CAT Report 1995
ECCPS Brief, CAT WSI
Digital photographs
Graphics files
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 Archaeology Data Service.

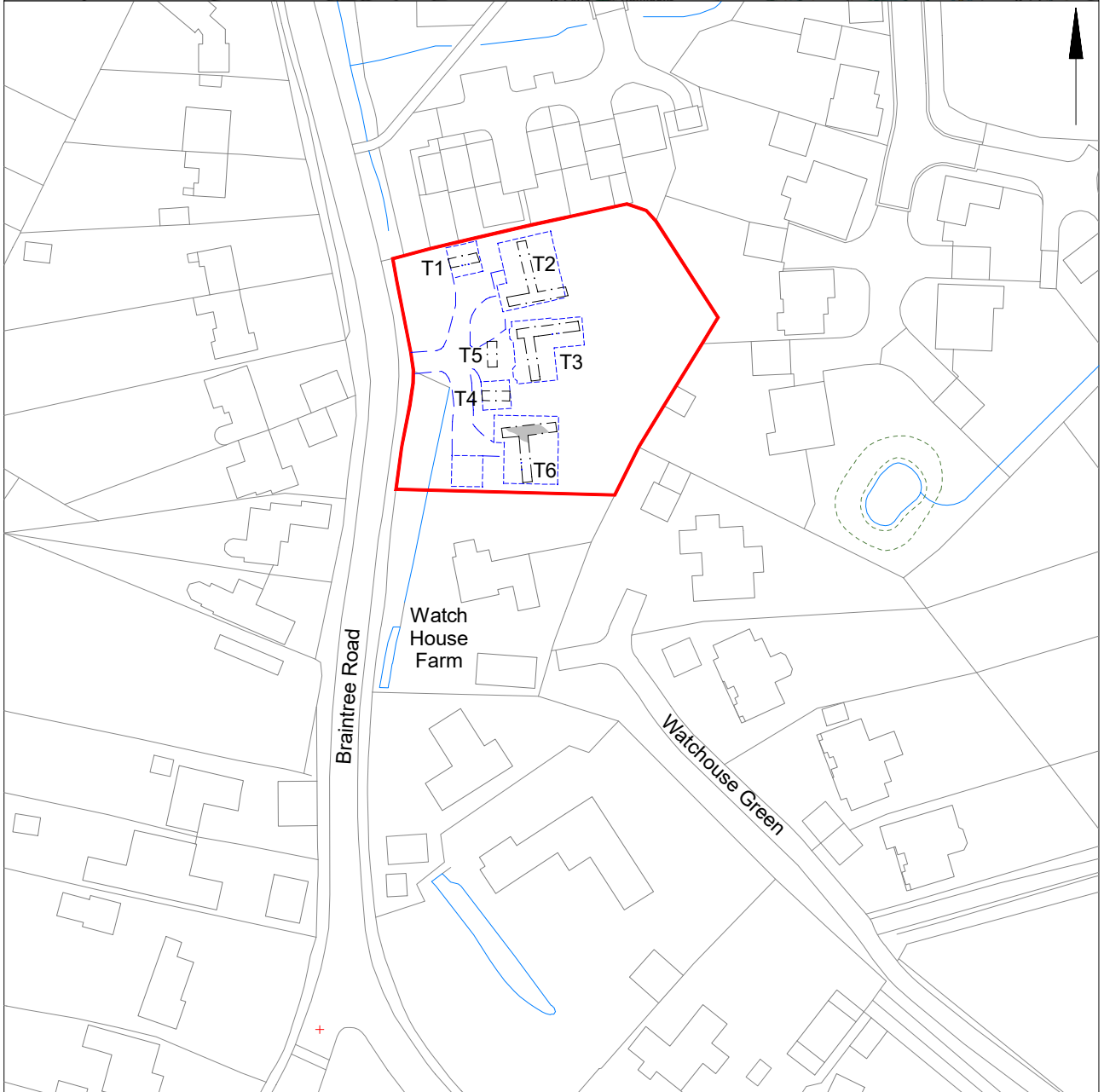
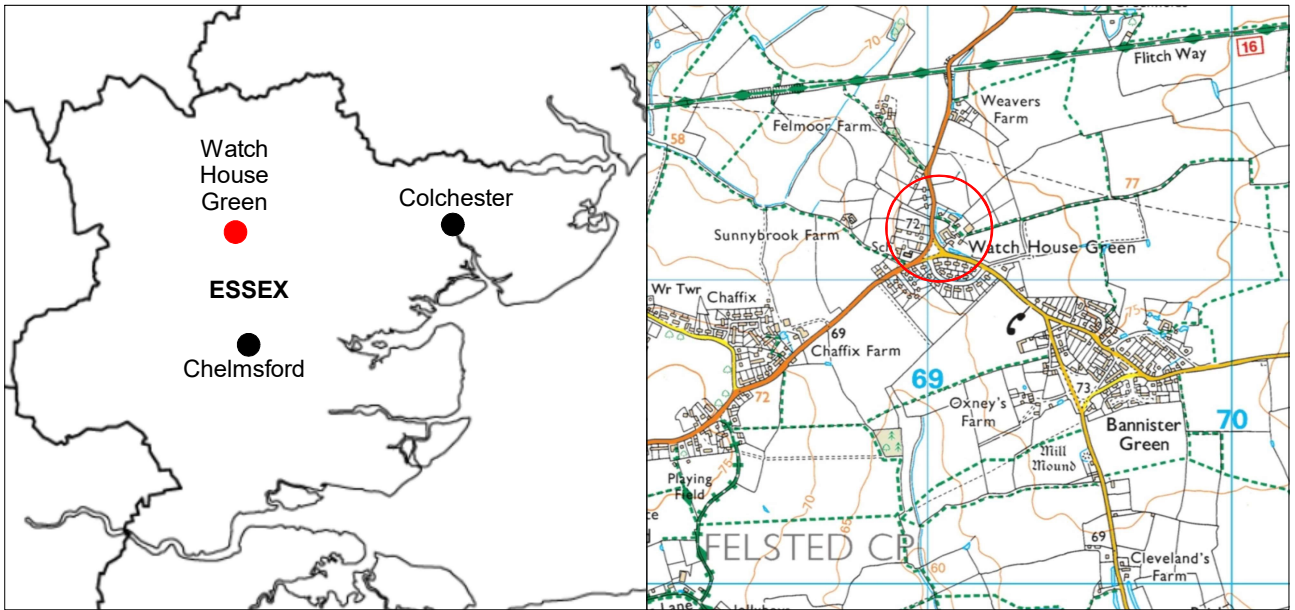
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Distribution list

Michael Spink, Soundgate Ltd
RLA Aria Developments Ltd
Mark Baister, Essex County Council Place Services
Essex Historic Environment Record

Appendix 1 Context list

| Context | Finds no. | Context type | Description | Date |
|---------|-----------|-----------------------|--|----------------------|
| L1 | - | Topsoil | friable moist medium/dark grey/brown loamy silt and inclusions of: stone 2% | modern |
| L2 | 1 | Make-up | friable moist medium orange/grey/brown silty clay with brick flecks, tile flecks and inclusions of: stone 2% | post-medieval-modern |
| L3 | - | Natural | firm dry/moist medium yellow/orange clay and inclusions of: stone 20% | post-glacial |
| F1 | 2 | Modern conglomeration | firm dry dark grey/brown loamy silt with brick flecks, tile flecks and inclusions of: stone 5% CBM 5% | modern |



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



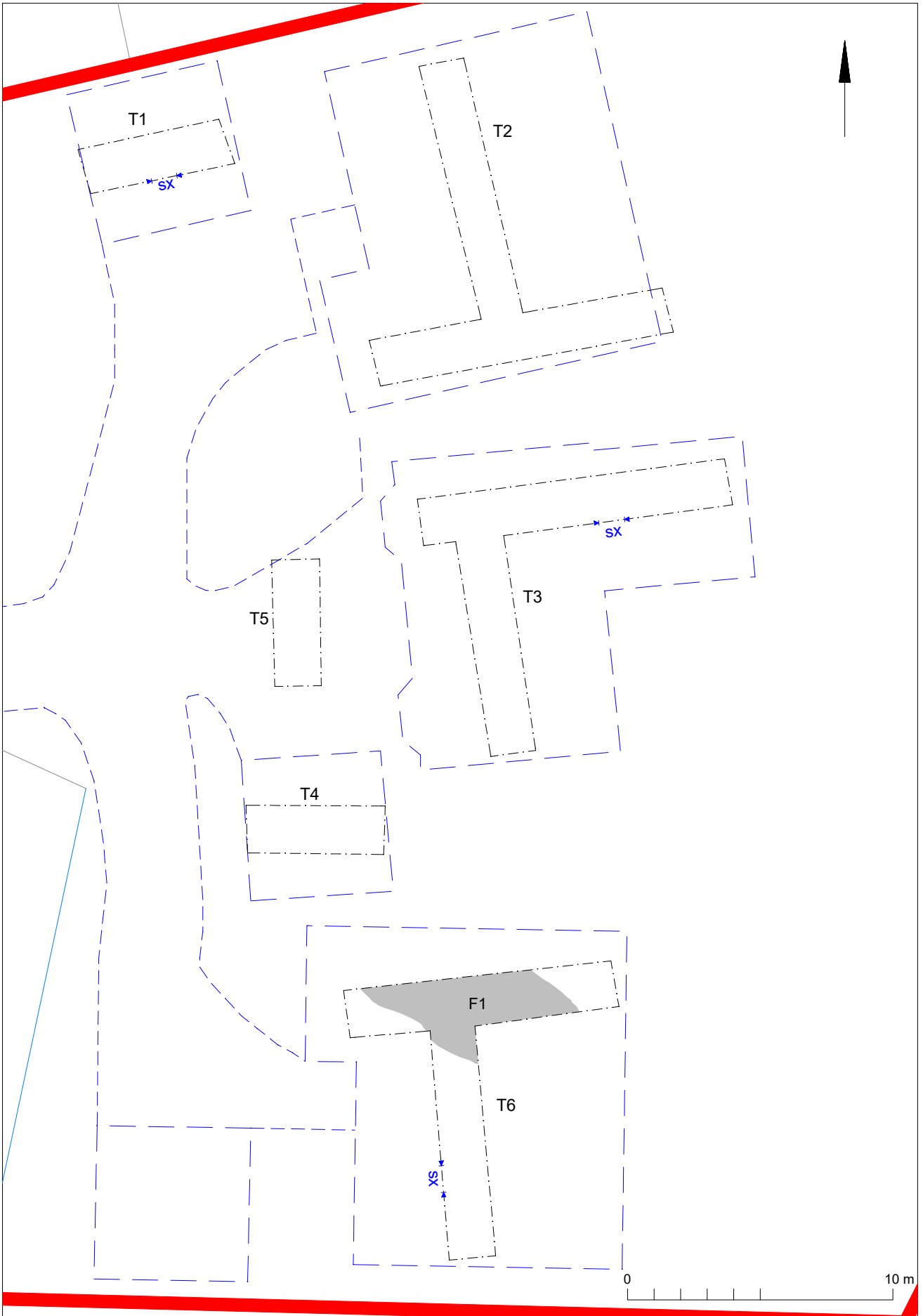


Fig 2 Evaluation results. Dashed blue lines show footprints of new dwellings and garages.

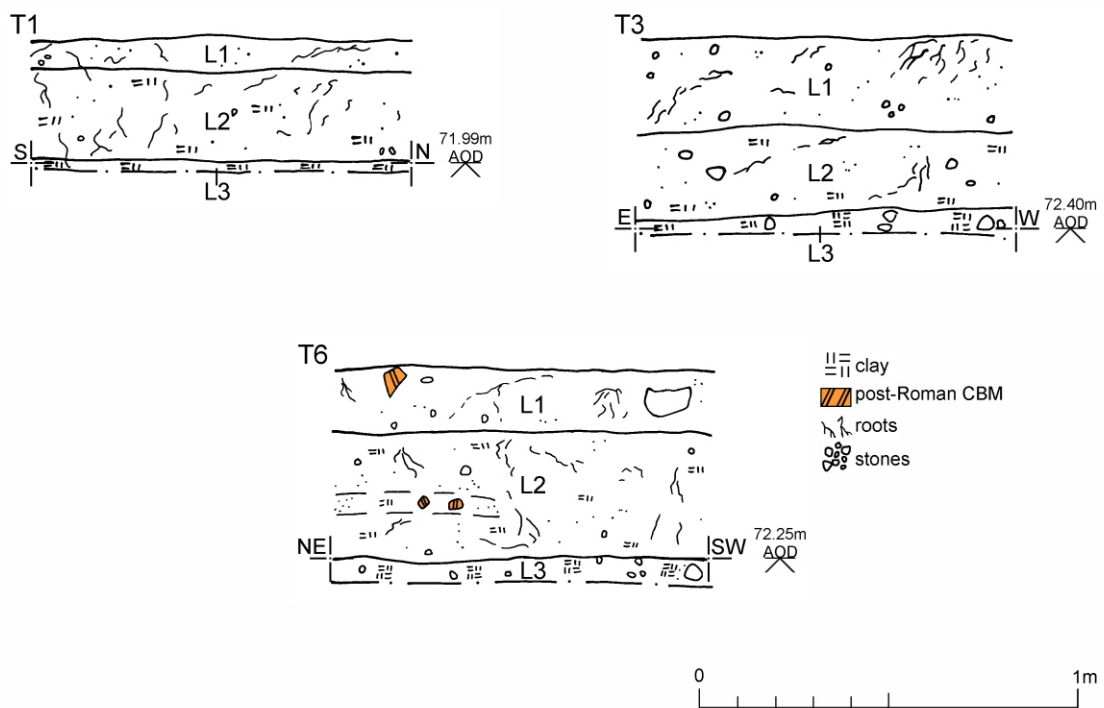


Fig 3 Representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-518457

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| OASIS ID (UID) | colchest3-518457 |
| Project Name | Archaeological evaluation at Watch House Farm, Watch House Green, Felsted, Essex, CM6 3EF |
| Sitename | Watch House Farm, Watch House Green, Felsted, CM6 3EF |
| Sitecode | |
| Project Identifier(s) | 2023/08i |
| Activity type | Evaluation |
| Planning Id | UTT/22/2187/OP |
| Reason For Investigation | Planning: Post determination |
| Organisation Responsible for work | Colchester Archaeological Trust |
| Project Dates | 30-Oct-2023 - 01-Nov-2023 |
| Location | Watch House Farm, Watch House Green, Felsted, CM6 3EF NGR : TL 69049 21213 LL : 51.86388723108959, 0.453717751118575 12 Fig : 569049,221213 |
| Administrative Areas | Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Uttlesford Parish : Felsted |
| Project Methodology | A five trench evaluation took place at Watch House Green, Felsted ahead of the development of three new dwellings with garages. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Brief and WSI. |
| Project Results | An archaeological evaluation of five trenches took place at Watch House Farm, Felsted ahead of the construction of three new dwellings. Previous archaeological investigations nearby have shown activity from the Roman period, as well as evidence of a possible medieval homestead. A single, modern feature was identified, containing dumped agricultural material. |
| Keywords | |
| Funder | Private or public corporation RLA Aria Developments Ltd |
| HER | Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD |
| Person Responsible for work | Chris Lister, Adam Wightman |
| HER Identifiers | HER Event No - FLWH23 |
| Archives | Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive; |