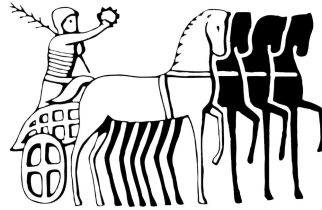
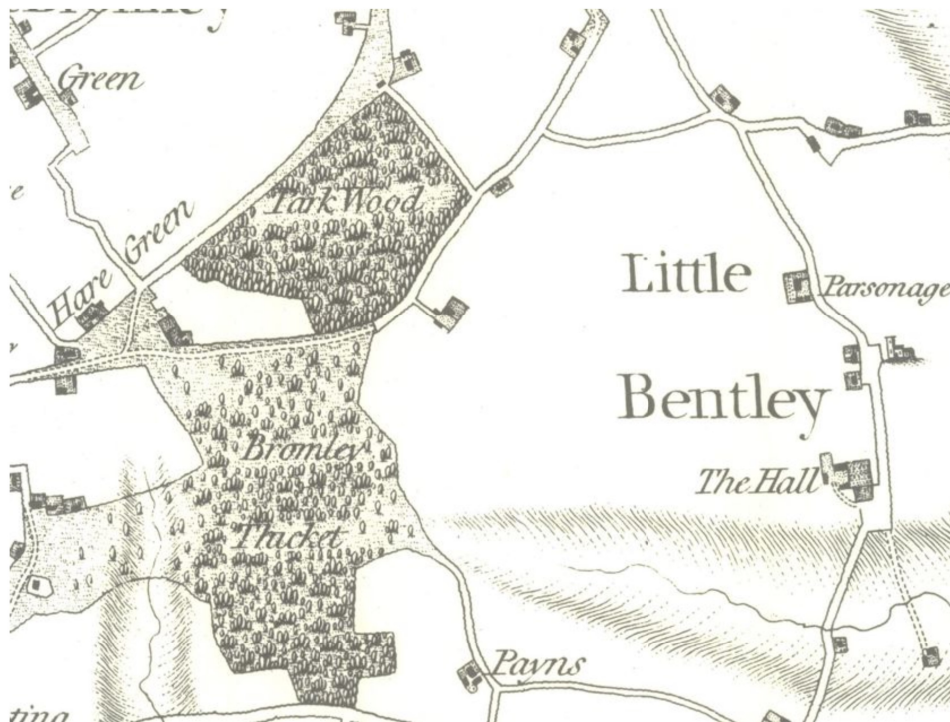


Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 2026
issued March 2024**

**Archaeological evaluation at Alder Park,
land adjacent to Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road,
Little Bentley, Essex, CO7 8SZ: January 2024**



**CAT project ref.: 2024/01a
ECC code: LBEHR24**

**Archaeological evaluation at Alder Park,
land adjacent to Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road,
Little Bentley, Essex, CO7 8SZ: January 2024**

NGR: TM 10560 24991 (centre)

**Planning refs.: 21/01523/FUL &
APP/P1560/W/23/3314642**

**CAT project ref.: 2024/01a
CAT Report 2026**

**ECC code: LBEHR24
OASIS id: colchest3-521832**

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**commissioned by Graeme Roe
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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (12 trial-trenches) was carried out at Alder Park, land adjacent to Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road, Little Bentley, Essex, in advance of the construction of six non-residential buildings. Harwich Road is thought to have its origins in the Roman period, and the site lies in the midst of numerous cropmark complexes. Excavations at the site revealed a prehistoric gully and a pit or tree-throw possibly dating to the Late Iron Age, indicating that a settlement may have stood nearby during this period. A post-medieval pit and a modern pit and ditch were also uncovered.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Alder Park, land adjacent to Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road, Little Bentley, Essex during 22nd-25th January 2024. The work was commissioned by Graeme Roe on behalf of Brandart Ltd and took place in advance of the construction of six buildings for use as offices, financial, professional and medical services.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), the Historic Environment Advisor advised that, 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 a *Brief for programme of archaeological trial-trenching and excavation on land adjacent Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road, Little Bentley* written by Mark Baister (ECCPS 2024). A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2024).

In addition to the project Brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was undertaken in accordance with:

- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015),
- Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2020a-b, 2022, 2023a-b),
- East of England standards and frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Brown & Glazebrook 2000, Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on <https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>
- Relevant health and safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2024).

3 Archaeological background

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

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the site has a bedrock geology of Thames Group (silty clays and clays, some sandy or gravelly, with some silts, sands, gravels and calcareous mudstones) with superficial deposits of cover sand (periglacial aeolian blanket deposits of lowland areas comprising fine- to very fine-grained sand).

Harwich Road (historically known as Monkey Street) is thought to be Roman in origin (EHER 2534). Roman pottery has been recovered to the south-west of the site, close to the road at Hare Green (EHER 2651), and to the east near Little Bentley (EHER 3020). Other artefacts recovered nearby include Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age pottery retrieved from a pit uncovered to the north of the site during the erection of a pylon in 1936 (EHER 3041). Medieval pottery and metal-detected medieval finds have been recovered to the south and west of the site (EHER 3057).

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

This area has seen little development and consequently little archaeological work has been carried out. Several cropmark complexes do lie within the vicinity of the site, however. South-west of the development area are cropmarks indicating the presence of a tripartite sub-rectangular enclosure, the central compound of which contains a series of enclosures, annexes, ditches, and pits (EHER 3115). South-east of the site are further cropmarks of an undated rectangular enclosure with a probable western entrance (EHER 17263).

Historical cartography indicates the primary land-use of the development area has consistently been agricultural (Medlycott 2008). Ordnance Survey maps issued between 1896 and the mid 1950s highlight no changes to the land aside from the construction of a barn which has since been demolished. The neighbouring Cliphedge Farm is also depicted on historic mapping and did not at any point extend beyond its present-day boundary. The closest listed structure to the development area is Red Tiles, a Grade II-listed 16th-century cottage in Raven's Green (EHER 34493; NHLE 1111457).

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 excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Most of the trenches were cut through modern topsoil (L1, 0.19m-0.45m thick) onto natural (L3). The only exception was trench T2. This was cut through topsoil (L1, c 0.11-0.12m thick) and subsoil (L2, c 0.18-0.2m thick) onto natural (L3, encountered at a depth of 0.31m below current ground level). Additionally, within the eastern half of the trench, L1 and L2 were cut by a modern pit filled with crush, which was recorded as L4 (c 0.3-0.32m thick). Sondages were excavated in trenches T3, T7 and T8 to confirm the identification of L3 as natural. There were no archaeological remains in trenches T5, T7, T10, T11 or T12. A full context list with soil descriptions and dimensions can be found in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Gully or natural feature F7 extended through the eastern half of the trench on an east north-east/west south-west alignment. Possible ditch F10 extended into the western half of the trench from the north-east on a north-east/south-west alignment for a short distance before terminating. Posthole F11 was uncovered in the western half of the trench. None of the three features produced any finds.

Trench 2

Pit F1 was uncovered within the western half of the trench. Modern detritus was observed on its surface and so it was not excavated. Pit F2 lay immediately to the east of F1. Some sherds of peg-tile, an iron nail and a clay pipe stem were recovered from this feature.

Trench 3

Gully F12 extended into the centre of the trench from the south on a north north-west/south south-east alignment for a short distance before terminating. It produced no dating evidence. Gully F13 lay immediately north-east of gully F12 and was roughly oriented north-west/south-east. It yielded six sherds of prehistoric pottery and a worked flint. Natural feature F8 was also excavated.



Photograph 1 T3 trench shot – looking west

Trench 4

Pit or natural feature F6 was uncovered in the southern half of the trench. It yielded no dating evidence. Pit or tree-throw F9 lay in the northern half of the trench. It yielded one sherd of pottery which possibly dated to the Late Iron Age.

Trench 6

Ditch F3 passed through the northern half of the trench on a west north-west/east south-east alignment. It produced some sherds of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile and some fragments of a modern field drain.

Trench 8

Pit F5 lay at the northern end of the trench. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Trench 9

Ditch F4 extended into the northern half of the trench from the south on a north north-west/south south-east alignment for a short distance before terminating. It contained no dating evidence.



Photograph 2 T4 trench shot – looking north

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and CBM

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation uncovered a small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) consisting of 16 sherds with a weight of 433g and mean sherd weight of 27g (Table 1). This material was recovered from four features (Table 3).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
Pottery	8	57	7
CBM	8	376	47
All	16	433	27

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM.

Prehistoric pottery

There is a small assemblage of handmade prehistoric pottery consisting of six sherds with a weight of 38g which all came from gully F13. This material is very fragmented, tempered with flint, grog, or shell, and cannot be tightly dated (Table 2). One sherd (fabric HMG) was decorated with a fingernail impression on the exterior.

Fabric Group	Fabric description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
HMF	Handmade flint-tempered	1	3	3
HMG	Handmade grog-tempered	3	29	10
HMSH	Handmade shell-tempered	2	6	3
Total		6	38	6

Table 2 Details on the prehistoric pottery.

Late Iron Age-Roman pottery

Pit/tree-throw F9 produced a small assemblage of Late Iron Age pottery. There was one sherd of possible Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware (6g) and a sherd (13g) from a storage vessel (fabric HZ).

Ceramic building material (CBM)

The CBM consisted of five pieces (37g) of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile from pit F2 and ditch F3, and three fragments (339g) of a modern field drain which came from ditch F3.

Conclusion

Table 3 summarizes the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and ceramics.

Context	Description	Prehistoric	LIA-Roman	CBM	Date Approx.
F2	Pit	-	-	PT	Post-medieval
F3	Ditch	-	-	PT, FIELD DRAIN	Modern
F9	Pit/tree-throw	-	GTW?, HZ	-	?Late Iron Age
F13	Gully	HMG, HMF, HMSH	-	-	Prehistoric

Table 3 Approximate dates for the individual features.

6.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

A single fragment of iron nail (7g) and a fragment of post-medieval clay pipe stem (1g) came from pit F2 (find no.9). They have been discarded.

6.3 Flints

by Tabitha Lawrence

A single flake was recovered from the terminus of gully F13 (sx 2). The flake is a light grey flint with frequent impurities present in the material. Small quantities of soil are concreted onto both faces. It exhibits attributes of hard hammer knapping and extensive use-wear/edge-damage along the edges. The flake is not closely dateable but given that prehistoric pot sherds were also recovered from the feature it is probable that the flake is similar in date (Butler 2005).

6.4 Animal bone

by Alec Wade

The only animal bone recovered from the evaluation was from post-medieval pit F2 in trench T2, which contained the articulated skeletons of two calves (identified as find numbers 4 and 5 respectively) (see Fig 6). They were deposited in the pit on their sides, facing each other with their rear legs entangled and their heads at the north-west end of the feature. The body of the north-easternmost calf (number 4) was more flexed with its head and neck twisted, looking rearward along its back. This calf was represented by 156 fragments of bone and tooth weighing 810g. Number 5, laying to the south-west, by 238 pieces weighing 1.264kg. Another 62 small pieces were recovered (including phalanges, tarsals and amorphous fragments) that could not reliably be assigned as to which calf they belonged (98g).

The condition of the bone was poor and much of the less dense bone and some smaller elements at the extremities (such as phalanges) had not survived in the ground conditions. However, enough skeletal parts from both animals were recovered to be confident that the bodies were complete when buried. Most of the left and right mandibles survived from both animals with the main cheek tooth row intact. The tooth rows were virtually identical for both calves with only minor signs of wear being shown on the premolars. In both individuals the first molar was either just visible in the crypt (number 4) or beginning to erupt (number 5). The unerupted state of the M1 in both calves suggests an age at death of less than six months. The state of epiphyseal fusion for both individuals, where it could be determined, was that all joints were unfused. This also indicates an age of less than six to nine months at death based upon the unfused acetabulum pubis for both animals.

As the carcasses were intact and bore no sign of butchery, it must be concluded that the animals were the victims of a disease or infection that left no observable signs of injury or illness on the skeletons.

7 Environmental assessment

by Bronagh Rae-Quinn

Introduction

One sample was taken during the evaluation. The 20L sample was taken from 50% of undated pit F5.

Sampling and processing methods

All samples were floated by a trained member of CAT staff and analysed by the author. Nomenclature for all plant remains is taken from Stace (2010). All samples were processed using a serif-style flotation device which produced a flot and a larger residue, both of which were analysed by the author. Flots were collected in a 300-micron mesh and scanned using a microscope (magnification x10), while the larger residues were scanned by eye and any charcoal/charred wood removed by hand.

Results

The sample produced charcoal in a high density with nothing else except for a single indeterminate charred grain and a modern uncharred root/tuber. There was no *in-situ* burning noted in the feature.

Sample No.	1
Context No.	F5
Indet. Grain	x
Charcoal >10mm	xxx
Charcoal 4-10mm	xxxxx
Charcoal <4mm	xxxxx
Modern plant material (rootlets)	xxxxx
Sample volume (litres)	20
Volume of flot (litres)	0.7
% flot sorted	100%

Table 4 Volume of flot (**Key:** x 0-10; xx 10-25; xxx 25-50; xxxx 50-100; xxxxx 100+)

Potential, significance and recommendations

The samples taken produced an overall low density of environmental remains with minimal significance to the interpretation of the site. There is potential for further assessment of the charcoal, although this is not recommended at this time. Although the environmental potential of the current assemblage is limited, further works on the site could produce additional plant

macrofossil evidence. It is recommended that any future works continue to take soil samples in line with the CAT environmental policies outlined in the WSI.

8 Conclusion

Thirteen features were uncovered during evaluation at this site: four pits, three ditches, two gullies, a pit or tree-throw, a pit or natural feature, a gully or natural feature and a natural feature. Finds were quite sparse and only five of these features could be dated. These remains were distributed across the site but tended to cluster within its western half. The most significant remains were pit or tree-throw F9 in trench T4, which produced a sherd of pottery possibly dating to the Late Iron Age, and gully F13 in trench T3, which contained six sherds of prehistoric pottery and a flint flake. Both features were located in the western part of the site, and it is possible that a settlement stood nearby in this period. A post-medieval pit, a modern pit and a modern ditch were also uncovered. These were likely the product of agricultural activity.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Graeme Roe and Brandart Ltd for commissioning and funding the project. The project was managed by C Lister and A Wightman, with fieldwork carried out by N Rayner with M Perou, Z Eksen, C Hodges and A Parker. Figures were compiled by C Lister, Z Eksen and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor and Mark Baister.

10 References

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

- | | | |
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| CIfA | 2020b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> . CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; published 2014, revised 2020 |
| CIfA | 2022 | <i>Code of Conduct</i> . CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; published 2014, revised 2022 |
| CIfA | 2023a | <i>Standard for archaeological field evaluation</i> . CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists |
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11 Abbreviations and glossary

Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
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
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

12 Contents of archive

Finds: tbc after discussion with Colchester Museum

Digital:

CAT Report 2026

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Digital photographs

Site data

Survey 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 Colchester Museum (finds) and the Archaeology Data Service (digital data).

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Distribution list:

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ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Trench no.	Finds no.	Interpretation	Context information	Period
L1	All	2	Topsoil	Soft, moist medium/dark yellow/grey/brown sandy-silty-loam with charcoal and CBM flecks. 0.11-0.45m thick.	Modern
L2	T2	-	Subsoil	Soft, moist medium brown silty-clay. 0.18-0.2m thick.	Undated
L3	All	-	Natural	Soft, moist light/medium yellow/orange/grey/brown sandy-silty-clay. 0.19-0.45m below current ground level.	Post-glacial
L4	T2	-	Crush	Firm, dry/moist medium grey/brown sandy-silt with abundant CBM and concrete pieces and 3% stones. 0.3-0.32m thick.	Modern
F1	T2	-	Pit	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty-clay with frequent CBM and concrete and 1% stones. Extended beyond the limit of excavation [LOE]; exposed extent 1.58m by 1.96m. Not excavated.	Modern
F2	T2	4, 5, 8, 9	Pit	Friable, moist medium yellow/grey/brown silty-clay with charcoal and CBM flecks. 0.98m by 0.92m and 0.17m deep. U-shaped profile.	Post-medieval
F3	T6	1	Ditch	Soft, moist light brown clay. 0.66m wide and 0.17m deep. Irregular profile.	Modern
F4	T9	-	Ditch	Soft, moist light grey silt with 1% stones. 0.6m wide and 0.1m deep. Shallow U-shaped profile.	Undated
F5	T8	<1>	Pit	Soft, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay with charcoal flecks with 5% stones. 0.45m by 1.12m and 0.14m deep. Slightly irregular V-shaped profile.	Undated
F6	T4	-	Pit/natural feature	Soft, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay with 5% stones. 0.71m by 1.08m and 0.19m deep. U-shaped profile.	Undated
F7	T1	-	Gully/natural feature	Soft, moist light brown sandy-silty-clay. 0.54m wide and 0.08m deep. Shallow, irregular profile.	Undated
F8	T3	-	Natural feature	Soft, moist grey/brown sandy-silty-clay.	Undated
F9	T4	3	Pit/tree-throw	Soft, moist light/medium yellow/grey/brown sandy-silty-clay with 1% stones. Extended beyond the LOE; exposed extent 2.09m by 0.67m and 0.38m deep. Irregular profile.	?Late Iron Age
F10	T1	-	?Ditch	Soft, moist light brown clayey-sand. 0.73m wide and 0.26m deep. Irregular profile.	Undated
F11	T1	-	Pit	Soft, moist medium grey/brown clayey-silt. 0.53m by 0.66m and 0.16m deep. V-shaped profile.	Undated
F12	T3	-	?Gully	Soft, moist medium yellow/grey/brown sandy-silt 1% stones. 0.53m wide and 0.11m deep. Irregular profile.	Undated
F13	T3	6, 7	Gully	Soft, moist light brown clay. 0.34m wide and 0.13m deep. Slightly irregular V-shaped profile.	Prehistoric

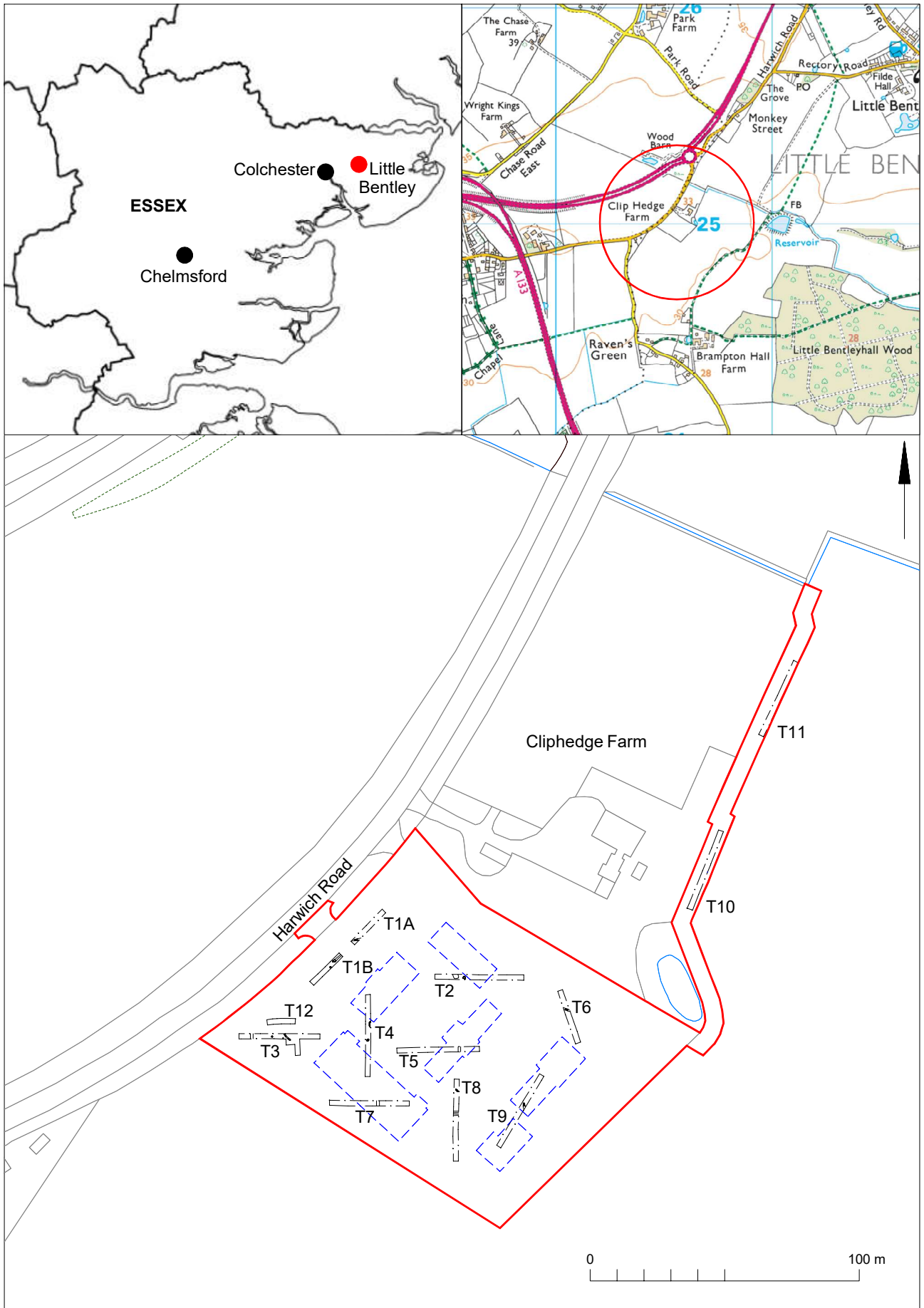


Fig 1 Site location and trench results in relation to proposed development (dashed blue lines)

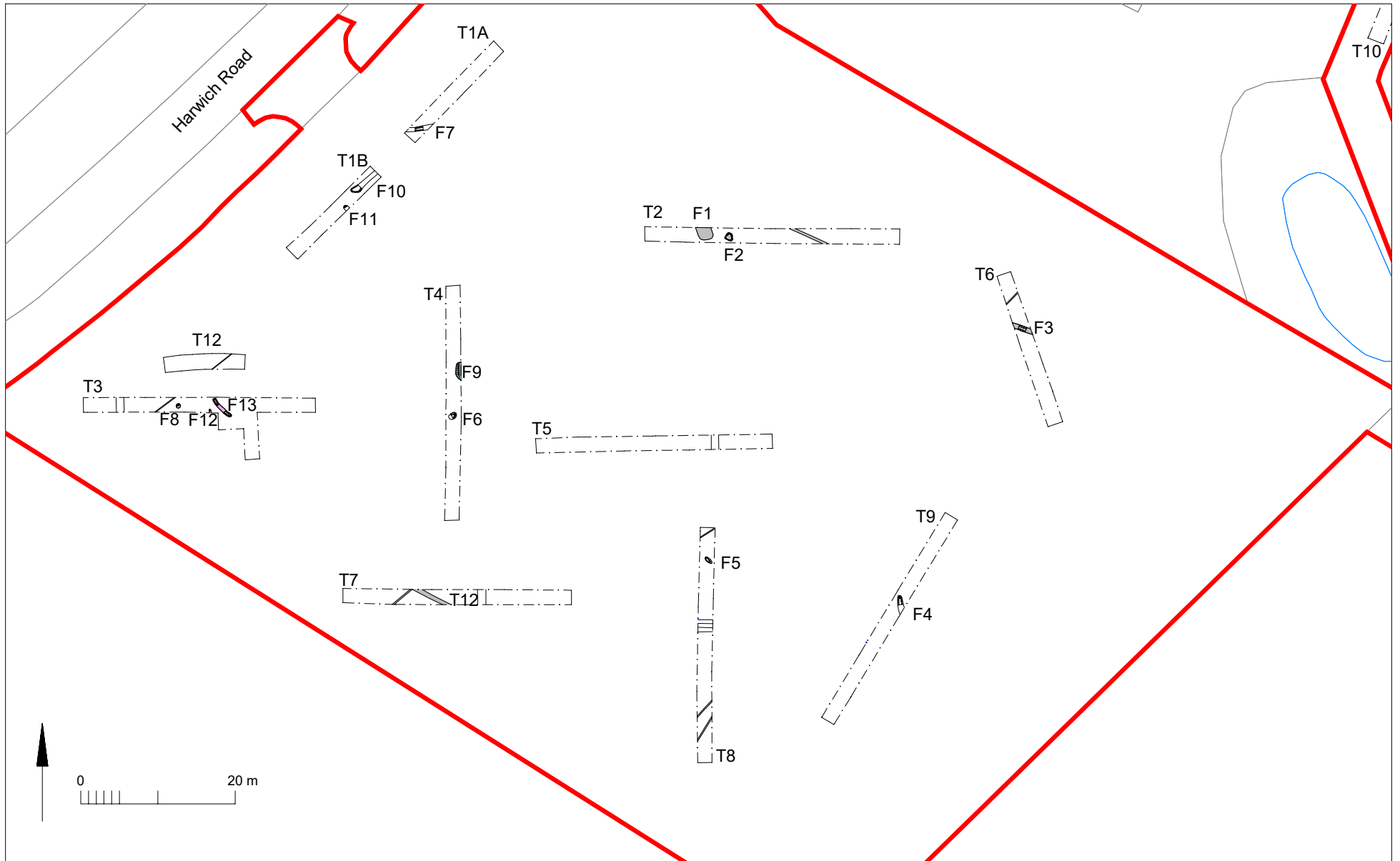


Fig 2 Results (see Fig 4 for phasing)

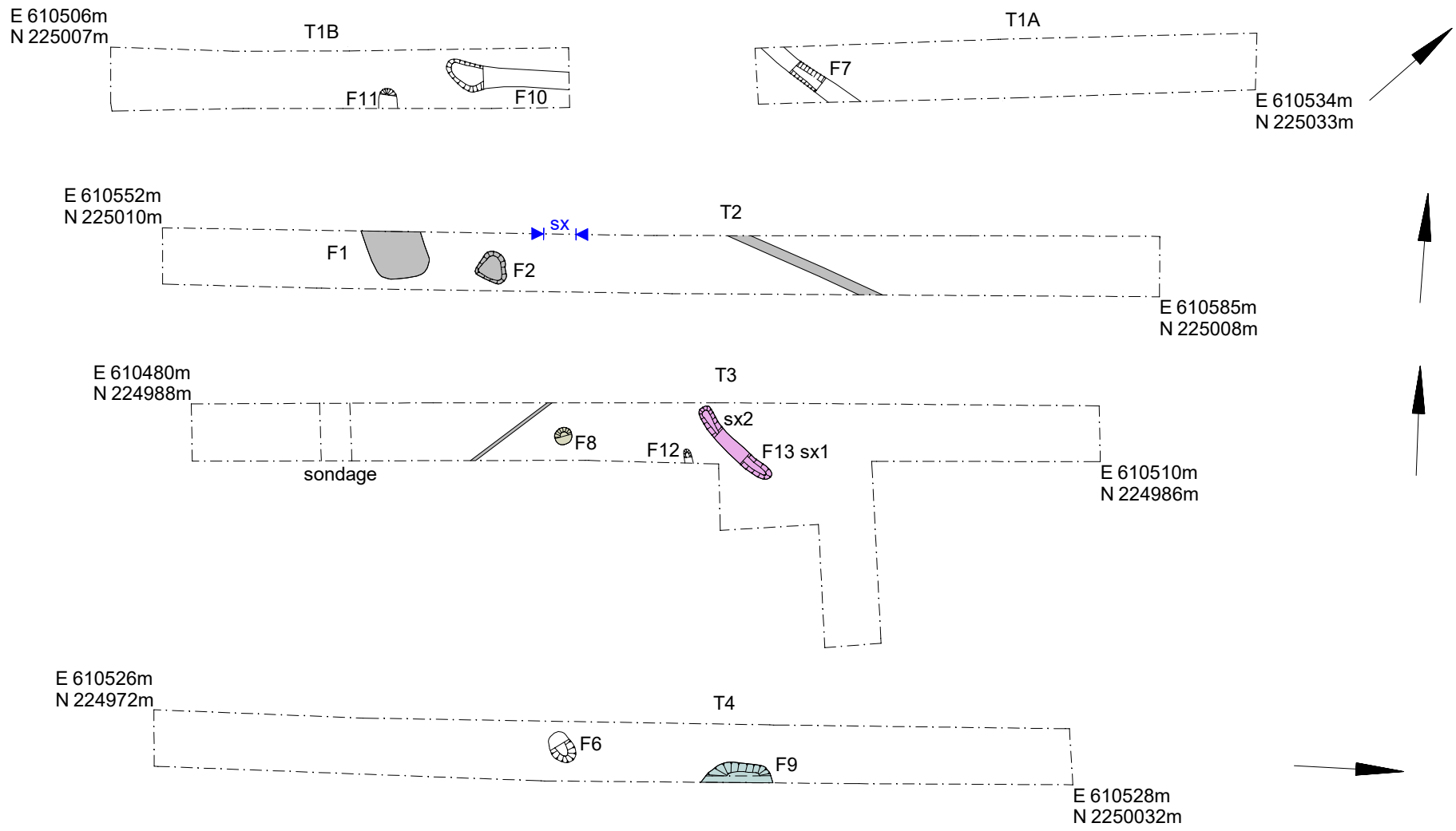


Fig 3 Trench results (see Fig 4 for phasing).



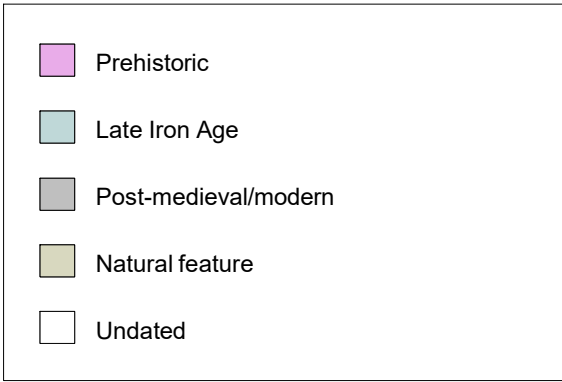
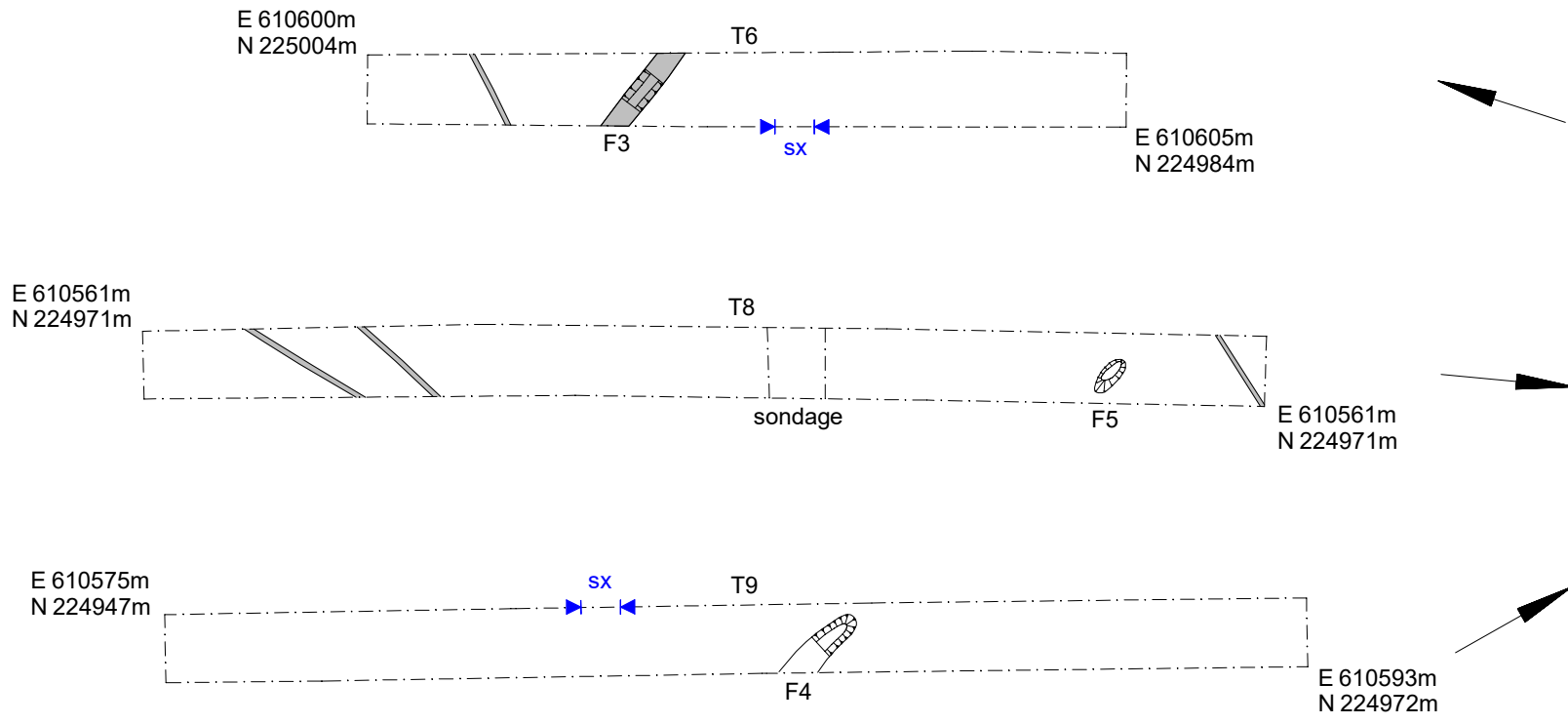


Fig 4 Trench results.



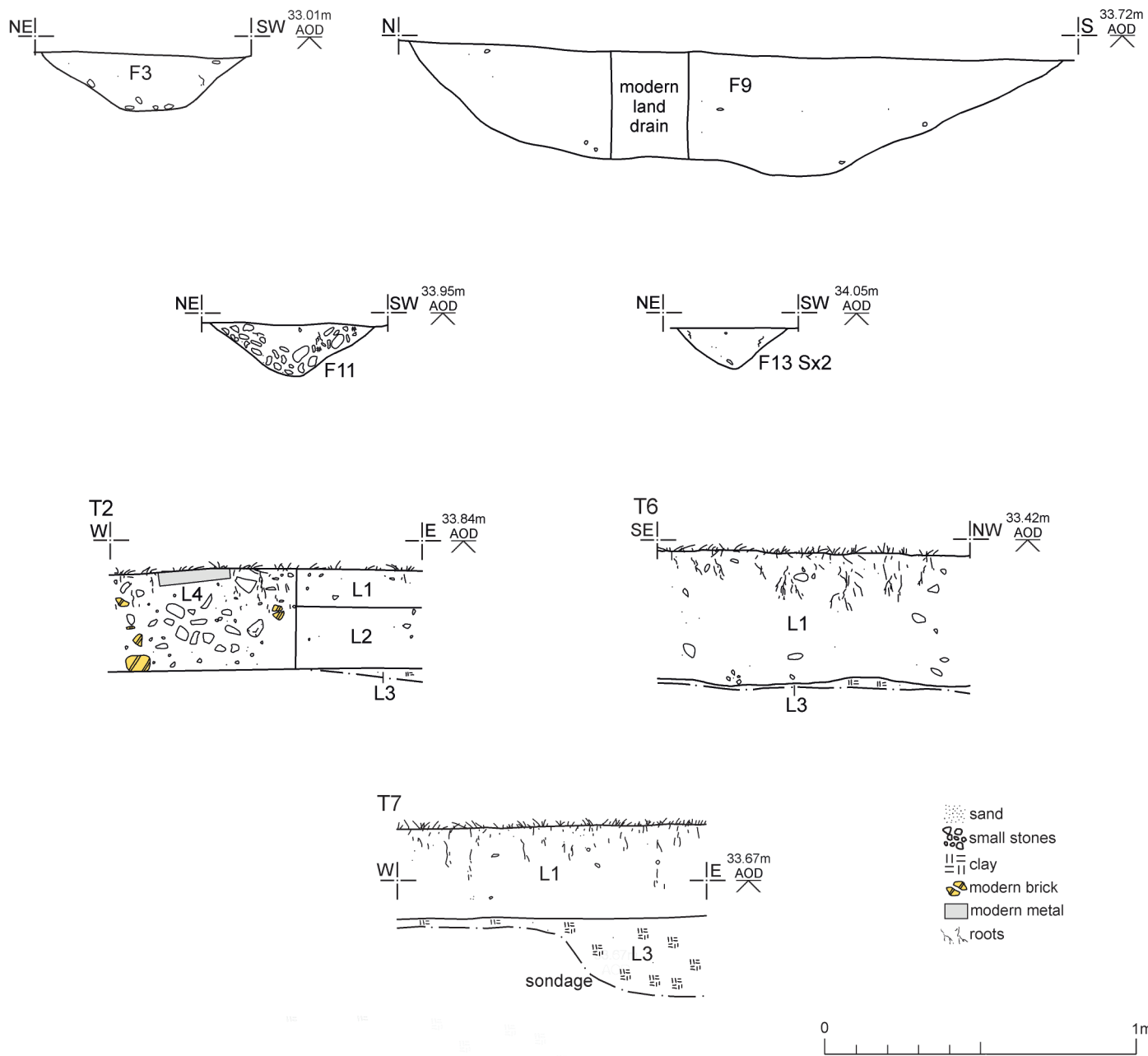


Fig 5 Feature and representative sections.

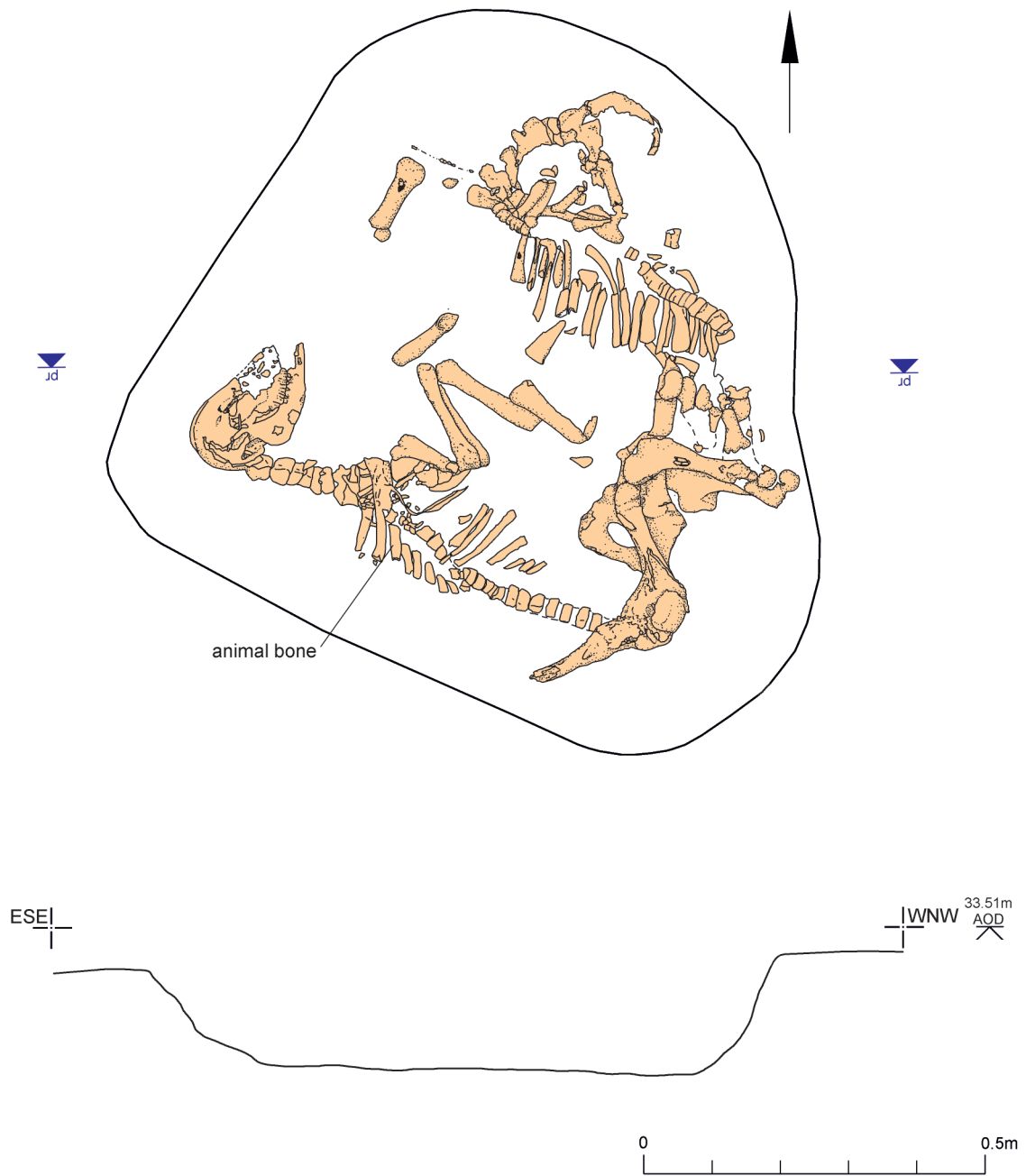


Fig 6 Detailed plan and profile of F2.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-521832

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-521832
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation at Alder Park, land adjacent to Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road, Little Bentley, Essex, CO7 8SZ: January 2024
Sitename	Alder Park, land adjacent Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road, Little Bentley, Essex, CO7 8SZ.
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	2024/01a
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	21/01523/FUL, APP/P1560/W/23/3314642
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	22-Jan-2024 - 25-Jan-2024
Location	Alder Park, land adjacent Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road, Little Bentley, Essex, CO7 8SZ. NGR : TM 10560 24991 LL : 51.883700617624065, 1.058055057165814 12 Fig : 610560,224991
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Tendring Parish : Little Bentley
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation was carried out as per the brief and WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (12 trial-trenches) was carried out at Alder Park, land adjacent to Cliphedge Farm, Harwich Road, Little Bentley, Essex, in advance of the construction of six non-residential buildings. Harwich Road is thought to have its origins in the Roman period, and the site lies in the midst of numerous cropmark complexes. Excavations at the site revealed a prehistoric gully and a pit or tree-throw possibly dating to the Late Iron Age, indicating that a settlement may have stood nearby during this period. A post-medieval pit and a modern pit and ditch were also uncovered.

Keywords	Pit - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Natural Feature - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Gully - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - LATE IRON AGE - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Tree Throw - LATE IRON AGE - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Gully - LATER PREHISTORIC - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Sherd - LATER PREHISTORIC - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Sherd - LATE IRON AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Peg Tile - MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Peg Tile - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Drain Pipe - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Nail - UNCERTAIN - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Clay Pipe (Smoking) - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Lithic Implement - LATER PREHISTORIC - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Animal Remains - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	Private or public corporation Brandart Ltd
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	A Wightman
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - LBEHR24
Archives	Physical Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service (Colchester Collection);