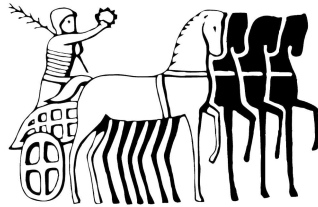


Colchester Archaeological Trust



CAT Report 2033
issued April 2024

**Archaeological evaluation on land south-west of
Hill Farm House, Bromley Road, Parsons Heath,
Essex, CO7 7SE: March 2024**



CAT project ref.: 2024/01k
ECC code: ARBR24

**Archaeological evaluation at land south-west of
Hill Farm House, Bromley Road, Parsons Heath,
Essex, CO7 7SE: March 2024**

NGR: TM 03215 26208 (centre)

Planning ref.: 21/01785/OUT

**CAT project ref.: 2024/01k
CAT Report 2033**

**ECC code: ARBR24
OASIS id: colchest3-522643**

**report prepared by Harvey Furniss & Dr Elliott Hicks
with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton &
Laura Pooley**

**fieldwork by Harvey Furniss
with Charlie Hodges & Matthew Perou**

commissioned by the Landowner

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Issued:	23/04/2024	

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (three trial-trenches) was carried out on land south-west of Hill Farm House, Parsons Heath, Essex, in advance of the construction of a new residential development. The route of a Roman road thought to have linked Mistley with Colchester is projected to run through the southern part of the site, which also lies north-west of an area of ancient woodland, and south-east of the site of a former fulling mill dating back to at least the 16th century. No trace of the Roman road was found along its projected route. Two parallel ditches were uncovered in the northern half of the site, however, and it is possible that these represent the roadside ditches of this thoroughfare, although a lack of finds means this cannot be confirmed without further investigation.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at land south-west of Hill Farm House, Parsons Heath, Essex during 25th-27th March 2024. The work was commissioned by the landowner and took place in advance of the construction of a new residential development.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), the Historic Environment Advisor 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 letter of specialist archaeological advice written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2021). A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by CAT in response to the letter and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2024a).

In addition to the 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 2024b).

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 proposed development site is located to the south-west of the village of Ardleigh. The archaeology of the area is dominated by cropmarks, including a scheduled cropmark complex which lies to the south of the village (NHLE No. 1002146, EHER3502). This nationally important Bronze Age cemetery also contains significant Iron Age and Roman remains known from excavations carried out between 1950 and 1980. Away from the village, historic settlements were generally dispersed (ECC 2008).

Crossing the south of the site is the projected route of a Roman road (EHER 2573), which is thought to have linked Mistley with Colchester. The route of this road is extrapolated from a LiDAR survey, although the thoroughfare cannot be seen at the present site in this survey.

To the south-east of the proposed development site is an area of ancient woodland, known as Churn Wood (EHER 49626), which is purported to have its origins in the medieval period. To the

north-west is a former fulling mill (EHER 2638), which was first recorded in 1588. The mill was one of three built along the Salary Brook.

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the site has a bedrock geology of Thames Group (clay, silt and sand) with superficial deposits of Kesgrave Catchment Group (sand and gravel) in the east of the site.

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 2-5)

Three trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Trench T1 was 25m long and 1.8m wide and trenches T2 and T3 were 17m long and 1.8m wide.

The trenches were cut through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.11-0.39m thick) and subsoil (L2, c 0.1-0.46m thick) onto natural (L3, encountered at a depth of 0.25-0.62m below current ground level). A sondage was excavated in trench T3 to confirm the identification of L3 as natural.

There were no archaeological remains in trenches T2 or T3.

A full context list with soil descriptions and dimensions can be found in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Within Trench 1, a pair of parallel ditches, F2 and F3, passed through the north-western half of the trench. The former feature was 1.29m wide and 0.21m deep and the latter was 1.3m wide and 0.39m deep. Both ditches were aligned west north-west/east south-east and they stood only 0.32m apart. Neither feature contained any dating evidence.

Shrub-bole F1 was also excavated.



Photo 1 F2 and F3 – looking west south-west

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



Photograph 2 T2 trench shot – looking west south-west



Photograph 3 T3 trench shot – looking south south-east

6 Finds

There were no finds.

7 Conclusion

The primary aim of this investigation was to confirm the presence of a Roman road thought to have linked Colchester with Mistley. Trench 3 was positioned to target the projected route of this road, but no traces of it were found here. Within trench T1, however, in the northern half of the site, two ditches were uncovered. Both ditches were of very similar dimensions, lay parallel to one another on an east north-east/west south-west alignment, and were only 0.32m apart, and it is possible that they may represent a Roman roadside ditch and a later re-cut. If these features are Roman roadside ditches, their orientation enables us to extrapolate a new projected course of the Colchester-Mistley Roman road. It has also been speculated by Geoff Lunn of the Roman Roads Association that the road turns shifts direction here, turning to the west south-west towards a crossing across the Salary Brook (pers. comm.), and this provides an alternative interpretation of the results of the evaluation. However, no dating evidence was recovered from

either of these features, and so this can only remain a matter of speculation without further investigation. It is worth noting that a previous investigation to uncover the Colchester-Mistley Roman road, carried out some 2.2km to the south-east in 1993, similarly failed to detect any trace of it (CAT Report 1000, 93/8b).

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank the landowner for commissioning and funding the project. The project was managed by C Lister and A Wightman, with fieldwork carried out by H Furniss with C Hodges and M Perou. Figures were compiled by C Lister, Z Eksen and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

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	<i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8)
CAT	2024	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT Report 1000	2017	<i>A miscellany of unpublished Colchester and Essex sites: 1984-2000</i> , by H Brooks
CIfA	2020a	<i>Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives.</i> CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; published 2014, revised 2020
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
CIfA	2023b	<i>Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation.</i> CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
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 (NPPF).</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

10 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 Investigation S , http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
Roman section	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
WSI	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of digital archive

CAT Report 2033
CAT written scheme of investigation
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 Archaeology Data Service (digital).

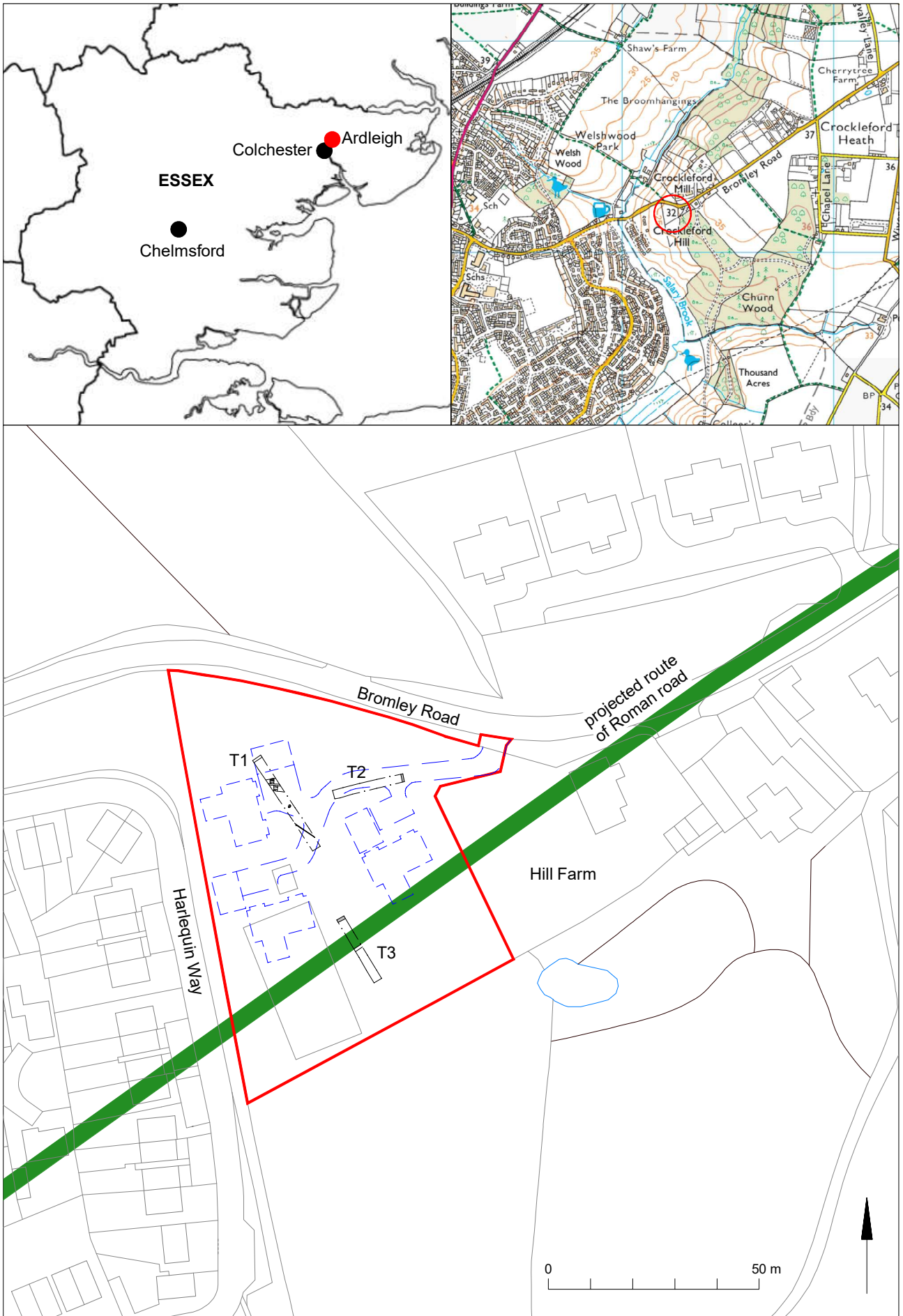
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Distribution list:

The landowner
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Trench no.	Finds no.	Interpretation	Soil description	Period
L1	All	-	Topsoil	Soft, moist dark grey/brown/black silty-loam with 1% stones. c 0.11-0.39m thick.	Modern
L2	All	-	Subsoil	Soft, moist light/medium grey sandy-silt with 1% stones. c 0.1-0.46m thick.	Undated
L3	All	-	Natural	Soft, dry/moist medium yellow/orange sand with abundant gravel. Encountered at c 0.25-0.62m below current ground level.	Post-glacial
F1	T1	-	Shrub-bole	Soft, moist medium brown sand with 3% stones. 0.73m wide and 0.1m deep. Shallow, slightly irregular U-shaped profile.	Undated
F2	T1	-	Ditch	Friable, moist medium brown sand with 2% stones. 1.29m wide and 0.21m deep. Shallow irregular profile.	Undated
F3	T1	-	Ditch	Friable, moist medium brown sand with 2% stones. 1.3m wide and 0.39m deep. Irregular profile.	Undated



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Fig 1 Site location and results in relation to proposed development (dashed blue) as well as the projected Roman road (green).

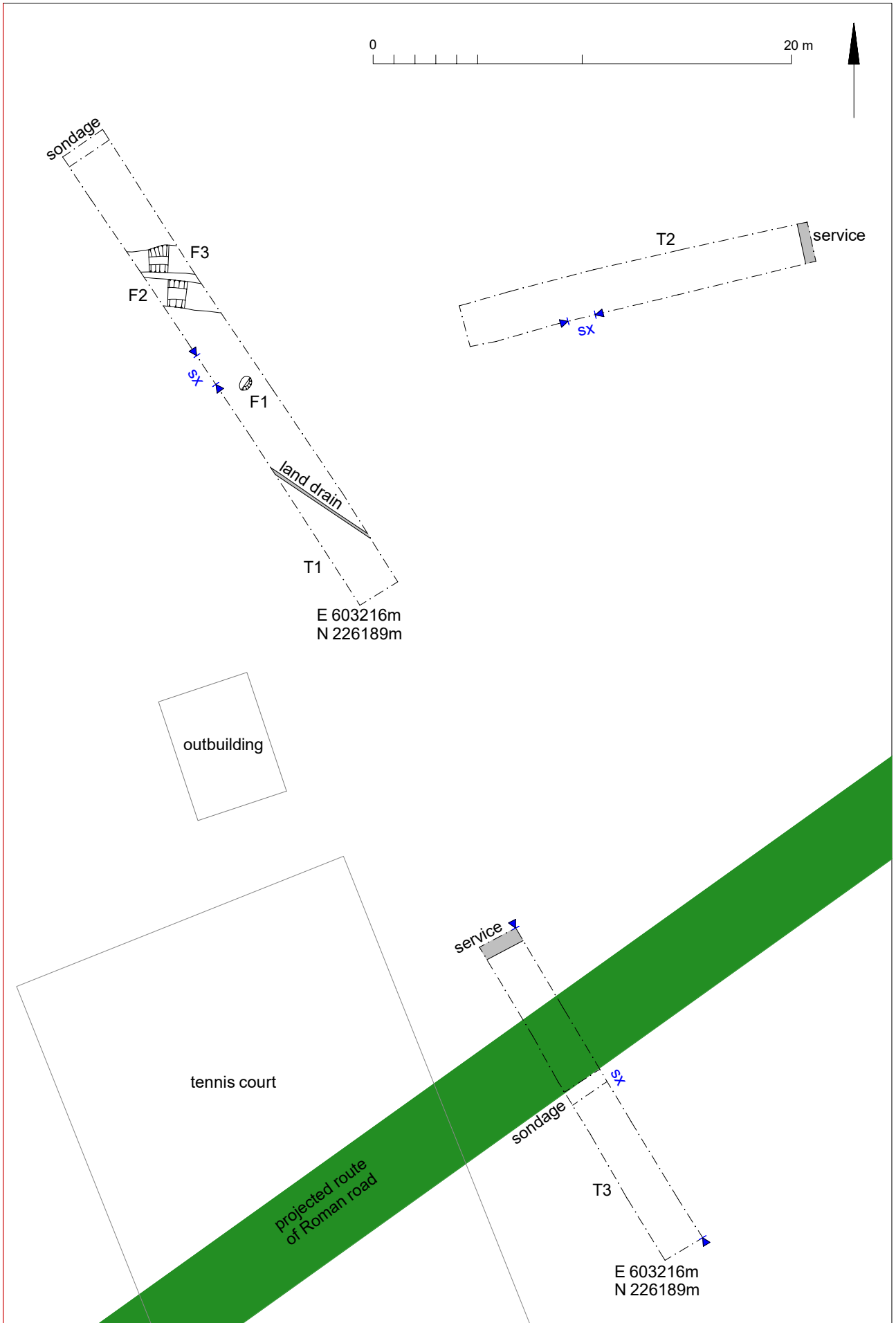


Fig 2 Results

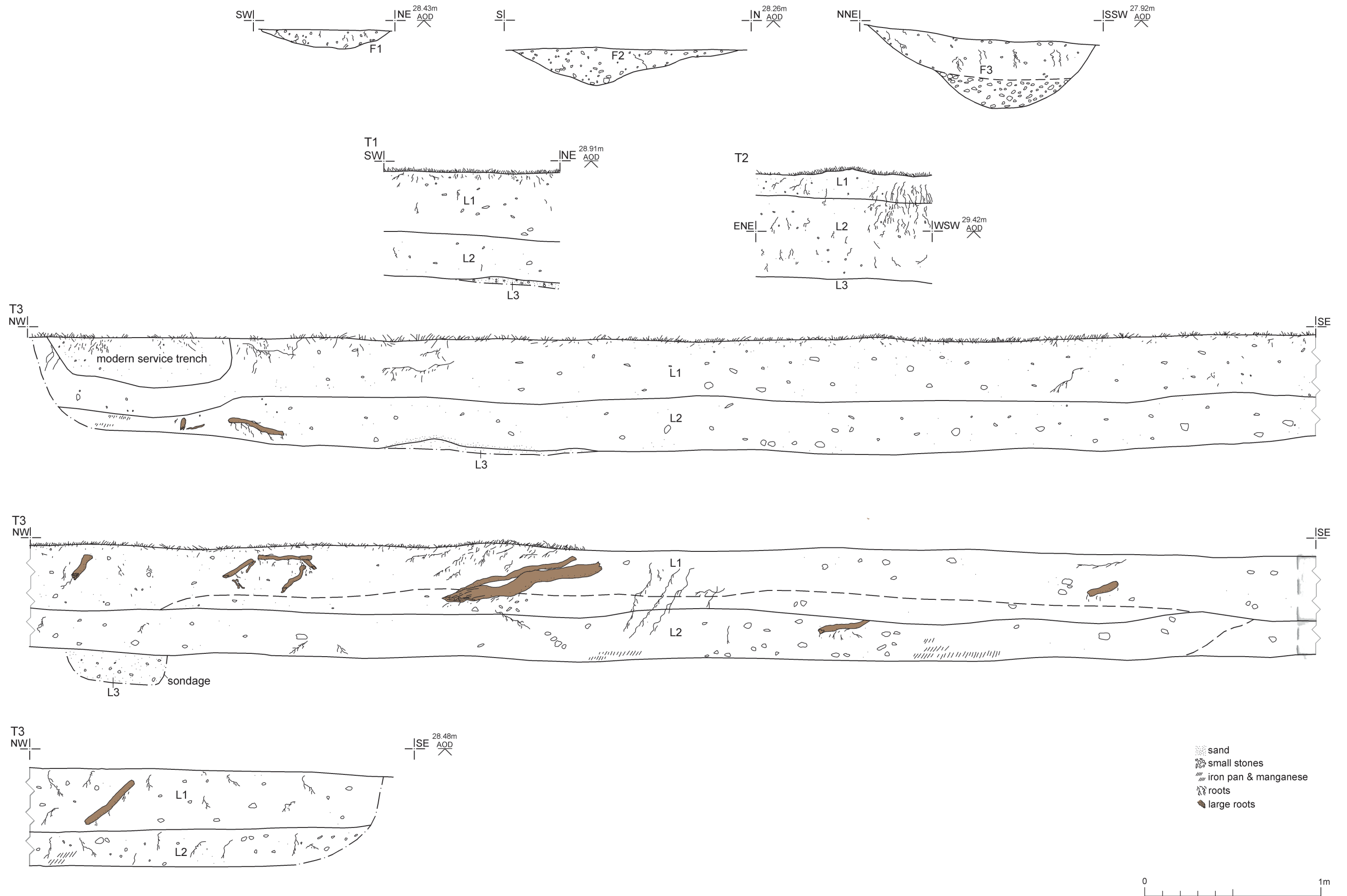
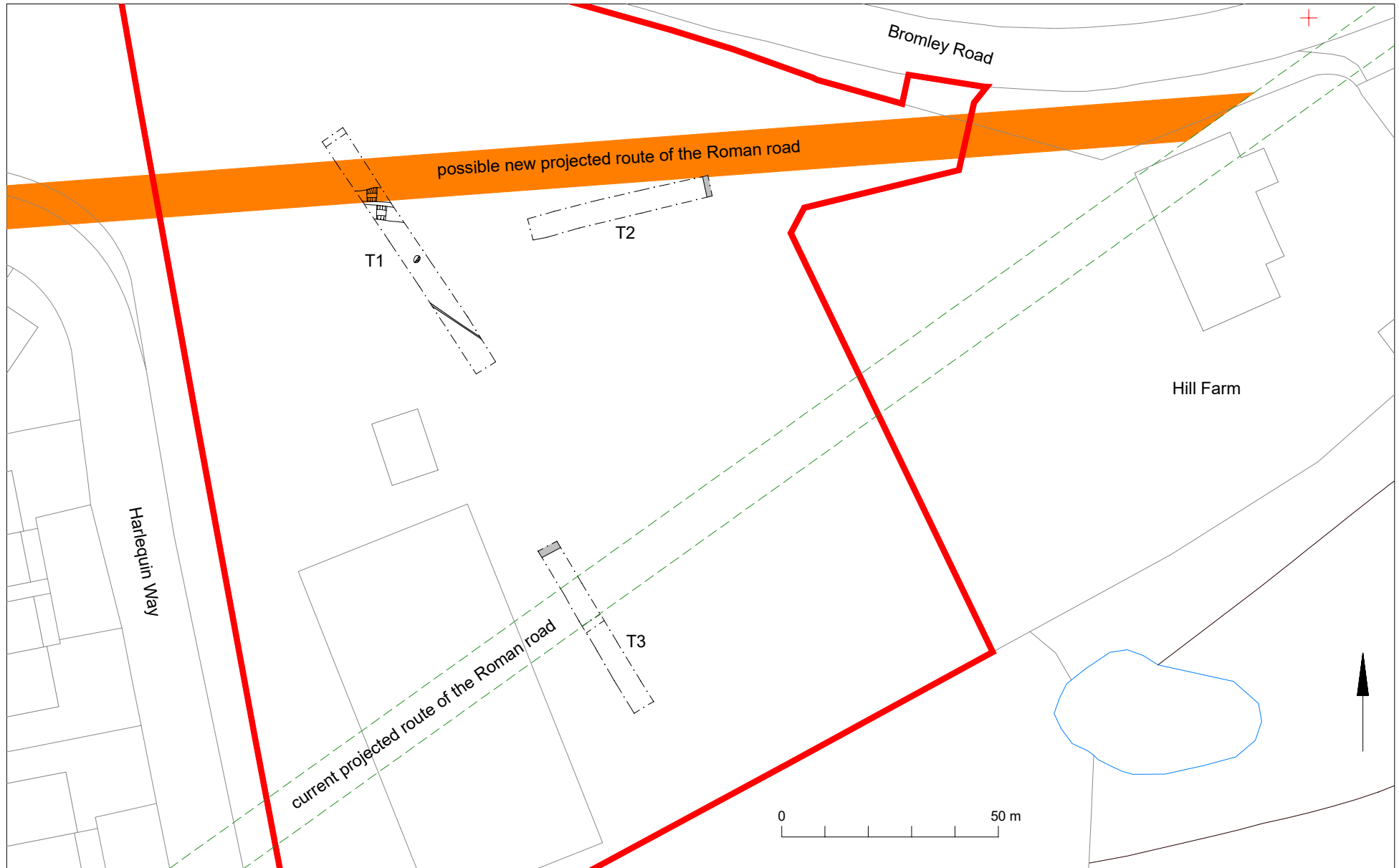


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.



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Fig 4 Results showing current project route of the Roman road (dashed green) with the possible new projected route of the Roman road (orange) if ditches F2 and F3 are roadside ditches.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-522643

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-522643
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation on land south-west of Hill Farm House, Bromley Road, Parsons Heath, Essex, CO7 7SE: March 2024
Sitename	Land south-west of Hill Farm, Bromley Road, Ardleigh, Essex, CO7 7SE
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	2024/01k
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	21/01785/OUT
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	25-Mar-2024 - 27-Mar-2024
Location	Land south-west of Hill Farm, Bromley Road, Ardleigh, Essex, CO7 7SE NGR : TM 03215 26208 LL : 51.8973512465413, 0.952203492480067 12 Fig : 603215,226208
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Tendring Parish : Ardleigh
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation was carried out as per the brief and WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (three trial-trenches) was carried out on land south-west of Hill Farm House, Parsons Heath, Essex, in advance of the construction of a new residential development. The route of a Roman road thought to have linked Mistley with Colchester is projected to run through the southern part of the site, which also lies north-west of an area of ancient woodland, and south-east of the site of a former fulling mill dating back to at least the 16th century. No trace of the Roman road was found along its projected route. Two parallel ditches were uncovered in the northern half of the site, however, and it is possible that these represent the roadside ditches of this thoroughfare, although a lack of finds means this cannot be confirmed without further investigation.
Keywords	Ditch - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Tree Throw - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	Private individual
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	A Wightman
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - ARBR24
Archives	