

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 2182
issued May 2025**

**Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at
Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green,
Castle Hedingham, Essex, CO9 3DX: May 2025**



**CAT project ref.: 2025/04i
ECC code: EEX61528**

**Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at
Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green,
Castle Hedingham, Essex, CO9 3DX: May 2025**

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**report prepared by Sarah Veasey
with contributions by Dr. Matthew Loughton,
Tabitha Lawrence, Alec Wade, Laura Pooley and
Bronagh Rae-Quinn**

**fieldwork by Harvey Furniss
with Dr. Patrick Spencer**

**commissioned by the landowner
on behalf of Marjoram Leisure Ltd**

Prepared by:	Sarah Veasey PCIfA	Project Officer (Archaeology & Historic Buildings)
Reviewed by:	Laura Pooley MCIfA	Post-Excavation Manager
Reviewed and approved by:	Howard Brooks MCIfA	Senior Associate
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Colchester Archaeological Trust

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

tel.: 01206 501785

email: services@catuk.org

web: www.catuk.org

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out at Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green, Castle Hedingham, Essex, ahead of the construction of a new suite of guest rooms. The site is located on the edge of a former village green and adjacent to the postulated route of a Roman road. Two trenches, arranged in an X-shape, were excavated in the footprint of the proposed new building, uncovering a single ditch with a possible prehistoric date. Finds from the ditch included fragments of animal bone and worked flint while a single sherd of Iron Age pottery was recovered from a colluvium layer.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green, Castle Hedingham, Essex on 16th-20th May 2025. The work was commissioned by the landowner on behalf of Marjoram Leisure Ltd and took place prior to the construction of detached building for ten guest suites.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the EHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECCHEA). This recommendation was based on the guidance given in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT and agreed with the ECCHEA (CAT 2025a).

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 2025b).

3 Archaeological and geological 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 (accessible via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The site proposed for development lies to the west of the village centre of Castle Hedingham. The village is medieval in origin, expanding around the site of Hedingham Castle (NHLE No. 1002218, NHLE No. 1122959, EHER 6787). The site is located on the edge of a former historic green, which is proposed to have a medieval origin. On the 1777 Chapman and André map (Map 1), a small rectangular building is present near the north-western boundary of the site.

The site is located adjacent to the western bank of the River Colne. A watermill is depicted on a map dating from 1592, to the north-east of the development site, where the river splits into two channels.



Map 1 Extract of the 1777 Chapman and André map, the location of the proposed development site highlighted in green.

Roughly 150m north-east is the site of the medieval priory of St Mary, St James and the Holy Cross (EHER 6816). The priory was founded in the late 12th century by Aubrey de Vere, the 1st Earl of Oxford, as a home for Benedictine nuns. All that remains of the priory is a flint and rubble wall.

To the west of the development site is the postulated route of the Via Devana, a Roman road that runs from Colchester to Cambridge. Fieldwalking on land the other side of the Roman road identified a 3-nozzled Roman lamp (EHER 16065) and nine sherds of Roman pottery, including Samian, coarseware, oxidisedware, and Roman tile (EHER 16064). Earlier discoveries in the same area

include an unrecorded number of red tesserae, fragments of Roman tile and Antonine-era pottery (EHER 6888). This area also has a number of cropmarks, interpreted as linear features, known as 'West of Castle Hedingham' (EHER 9830).

Further cropmarks include former field boundaries 250m north (Castle Hedingham Piggeries, EHER 17177), a double ditched linear feature 750m south-east (cropmark south of Sheepecot Farm, EHER 14401), and linear features and a possible ring-ditch 750m north-east (north-east of Four Winds, EHER 14402).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site to be Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation (chalk). Superficial deposits of Kesgrave Catchment Subgroup (sand and gravel) cover most of the site but with superficial deposits of alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel) along the north-eastern boundary.

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 2-3)

Two trenches, measuring 22m and 8m, arranged in a X-shape were machine excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

The trench was excavated through a modern car park surface (L1, c 0.19-0.48 thick), a colluvium layer (L2, c 0.21-0.80 thick, compact, dry, mid greyish, orangey-brown sandy silt with frequent daub and charcoal flecking and frequent stones), a second colluvium layer (L3, 0.13-0.38m thick, firm, dry, light mottled brownish-yellow silty sand with occasional stones and heavy bioturbation) into the natural sands and gravels (L3, encountered c 1.02-1.17, below current ground level, compact, slightly moist, light mottled brown yellowish-orange sand with very rare stone and heavy bioturbation).

A single ditch, F1, was located in the trench. It was on a north-west/south-east alignment, with a wide U-shaped profile which was 1.12m wide and 0.33m deep. The fill of the ditch was a firm, slightly moist, mid to dark brownish-orange sandy silt with rare stones. The finds recovered were worked flint and animal bone, possibly suggesting a prehistoric date for the ditch.

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



Photograph 1 The trench, view north-east.



Photograph 2 The trench, view north-west.



Photograph 3 Ditch F1, view south-east.

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation produced one sherd (8g) of handmade sand-tempered pottery (fabric HMS) from colluvium layer L3. This sherd is possibly of Early, or more likely, Middle Iron Age date.

6.2 Lithics

by Tabitha Lawrence

The attributes of the worked pieces of flint have been tabulated and described below. The analysis of this assemblage has been completed in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2020). The principal works cited include *Prehistoric Flintwork* (Butler 2005) and the *Classification of Lithic Artefacts from the British Late Glacial and Holocene Periods* (Ballin 2021). All the worked pieces have been collected

during hand-excavation or retained from environmental samples. The measurement of flakes during analysis follows the methodology as devised by Saville (1980) and outlined by Butler (2005).

The evaluation led to the recovery of a small assemblage of lithics. Overall, the flints vary in colour from mid grey-brown to a lighter mottled brown. A long flake was recovered as an unstratified find (finds number 3). It has platform preparation and indications of soft hammer percussion. The piece does have a break at the distal end and a degree of patination on both faces.

Additionally, six flakes were recovered from colluvium layer L3. One of these six flakes has retouch to right lateral edge in the proximal segment. This retouch may have been completed in efforts to form a notch. The other flakes are unmodified. It is of note that two of the flakes are very thin and have platform preparation, suggesting careful use of soft hammer percussion. Four of the six flakes have edge-damage and breaks, with patination also present on two of them.

A bladelet and a shatter piece were recovered from ditch F1. The bladelet is produced on mid grey-brown good quality flint. The bladelet has a break to its right lateral edge and proximal end but apart from that it is in good condition. The shatter piece is relatively crude with minimal edge-damage.

In conclusion, the lithics do indicate activity of an early date in the local area (Mesolithic to Neolithic). This is due to the dominance of precise soft-hammer percussion within the assemblage and the presence of blade technology. It is also of note that two flakes have undergone some degree of patination, which, although not directly attributable to age, does suggest a prolonged exposure to taphonomic factors.

Context	Find / sample no.	Type	Cortex %	Hard/ soft hammer	Platform preparation	modification
u/s	3	flake	10	soft	yes	break at distal end
L3	<2>	flake	15	?hard	no	edge-damage and mis-hits present
		flake (broken)	0	soft	-	break at proximal end
L3	2	flake	0	soft	?yes	plunge
		flake	100	hard	no	
		retouched flake	50	soft	yes	patinated on part of surface, semi-abrupt retouch on right lateral edge.
L3	<3>	flake	0	soft	yes	patinated
F1	1	bladelet	0	soft	?no	break on right lateral edge and proximal end.
		shatter piece	0	-	no	

Table 1 Summary of the lithics (<> are sample numbers)

6.3 Animal bone

by Alec Wade

The evaluation produced a small assemblage of five pieces of animal bone (weighing 41g) from ditch F1. The material was collected both by hand and from the wet sieving of an environmental sample of the features fill. Although the surface condition of the bone was fair it was discoloured by a uniform mid-grey speckling. Only two pieces were identifiable, both were of horse and represented elements of the foot and ankle. No cut marks or signs of gnawing were noted.

Find or <sample> number	Species	No. of pieces	Weight (g)	Comments
1	Equus (horse)	1	26	Incomplete 1st phalange. Broken into two fragments due to excavation damage. Bd 41.6mm, BFd 39.9mm.
	Cow or horse sized	1	1	Small fragment of either a carpal or a tarsal?
<1>	Equus (horse)	1	12	Tarsal. Complete left navicular. GB 48.3mm.
	Unidentified	2	2	Scapula fragments. Possibly cow or horse sized?

Table 2 Animal bone from F1.

Period	Species	MNI
Prehistoric	Equus (horse)	1

Table 3 Minimum number of individuals (MNI).

6.4 Heat altered (burnt) stones

by Tabitha Lawrence

Four heat-altered stones (26.5g) were recovered from colluvium layer L3. They were small sized irregular broken pieces, cracked and crazed from the heat and discoloured white (calcified), light pink and grey. This material has been discarded.

6.5 Shell

by Laura Pooley

Fragments of land snail shell were recovered from environmental samples <1> and <2> from F1 and L2 respectively. There were 30 fragments weighing 1.9g from F1, and seven fragments weighing 0.4g from L2. They have been discarded.

7 Environmental assessment

by Bronagh Rae-Quinn

Introduction

Three soil samples were taken during the evaluation, producing minimal environmental material.

Sampling and processing methods

All samples were floated by a trained member of CAT staff and analysed by the author. All samples were processed using a serif-style flotation device which produced a flot and a larger residue. 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

As all three of the samples were taken for recovery of worked flint, it should be unsurprising that they contained little to no environmental material. Samples 1 and 3 each contained a single possible grain, which is likely to have been wind-blown detritus. A relatively high density of mollusc shells were present in Sample 1. Sample 2 contained no environmental evidence and was discarded.

Sample No.		1	3
Context No.		F1	L3
Cereals			
Indet. Grains		x	x
Dryland herbs			
<i>Bromus sp.</i>	Brome	xcf	
Other remains			
Charcoal 4-10mm		x	
Charcoal <4mm		xxx	x
Mollusc		xxxx	x
Sample volume (litres)		20	10
Volume of flot (litres)		<0.01	<0.01
% flot sorted		100%	100%

Key

x 0-10
xx 10-25
xxx 25-50
xxxx 50-100
xxxxx 100+
cf uncertain identification

Table 4 Environmental results.

Potential, significance and recommendations

The samples taken from the evaluation produced minimal environmental remains. Whilst the mollusc shells are noteworthy, without further contextual information they provide minimal interpretative value to the site. Although the environmental potential of the current assemblage is limited, further works on the site could produce additional plant macrofossil evidence.

8 Conclusion

Archaeological evaluation at Memories of Chinatown, Castle Hedingham, revealed a single ditch of possible prehistoric date. A small finds assemblage was recovered from the ditch as well as from a colluvium layer. The assemblage was dominated by worked flints which had general characteristics of a Mesolithic to Neolithic date. The only other find of note was a single sherd of pottery which was likely Middle Iron Age in date. These finds attest to some low-level activity in the area during the prehistoric period.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank the landowner and Marjoram Leisure Ltd for commissioning and funding the project. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister, with fieldwork carried out by H Furniss with Dr. P Spencer. Figures were compiled by S Veasey and M Beale. 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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11 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCH EA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EH ER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Iron Age	period from 800 BC to AD 43
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to 1540

Mesolithic	period from 10,000 BC to 4000 BC
modern	period from AD 1901 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Neolithic	period from 4000 BC to 2200 BC
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from AD 1540 to 1901
Roman	the period from AD 43 to 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

12 Contents of archive

Finds: Less than one box

Digital:

CAT Report 2182

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 but will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum (finds) and the Archaeology Data Service (digital archive).

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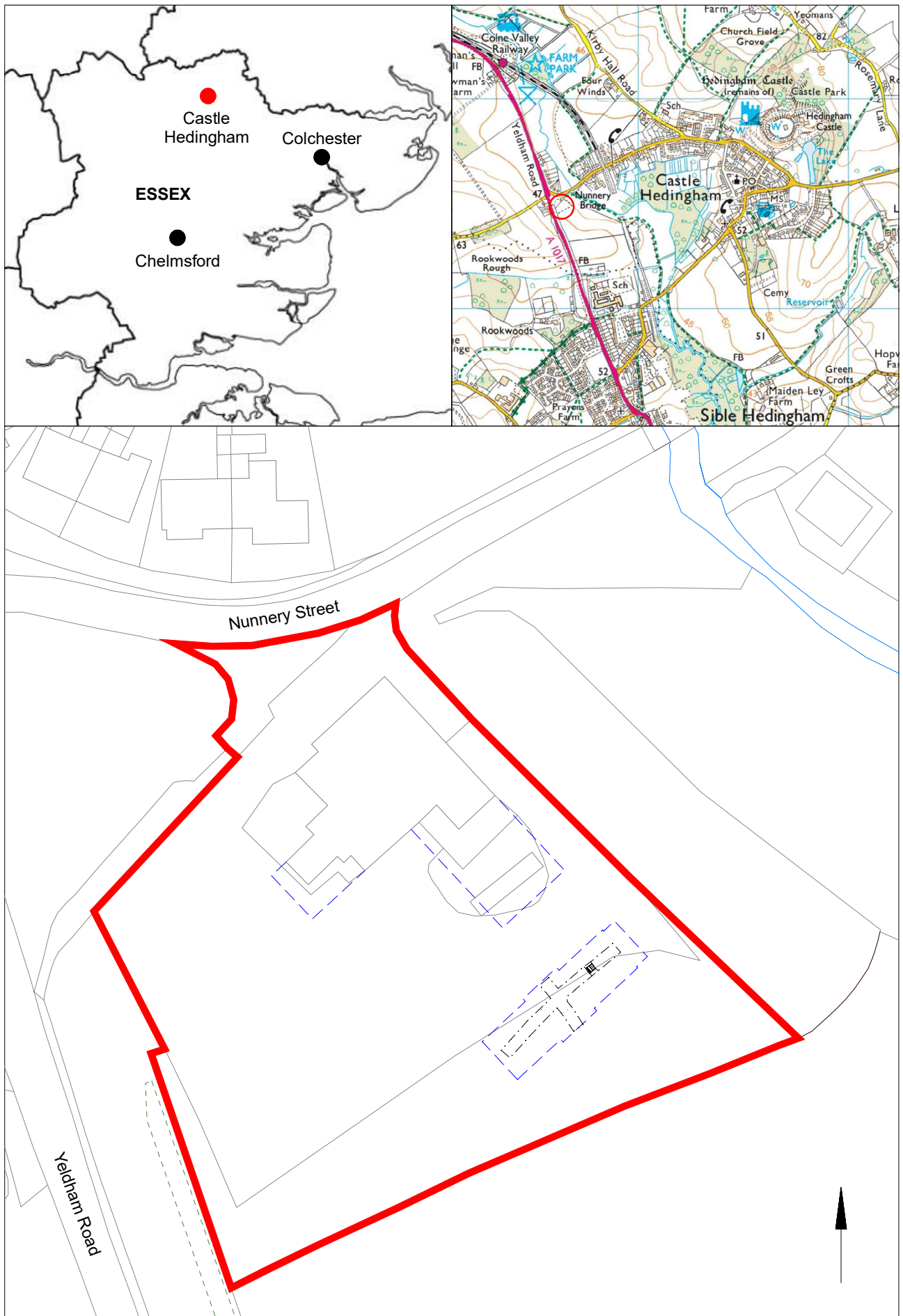
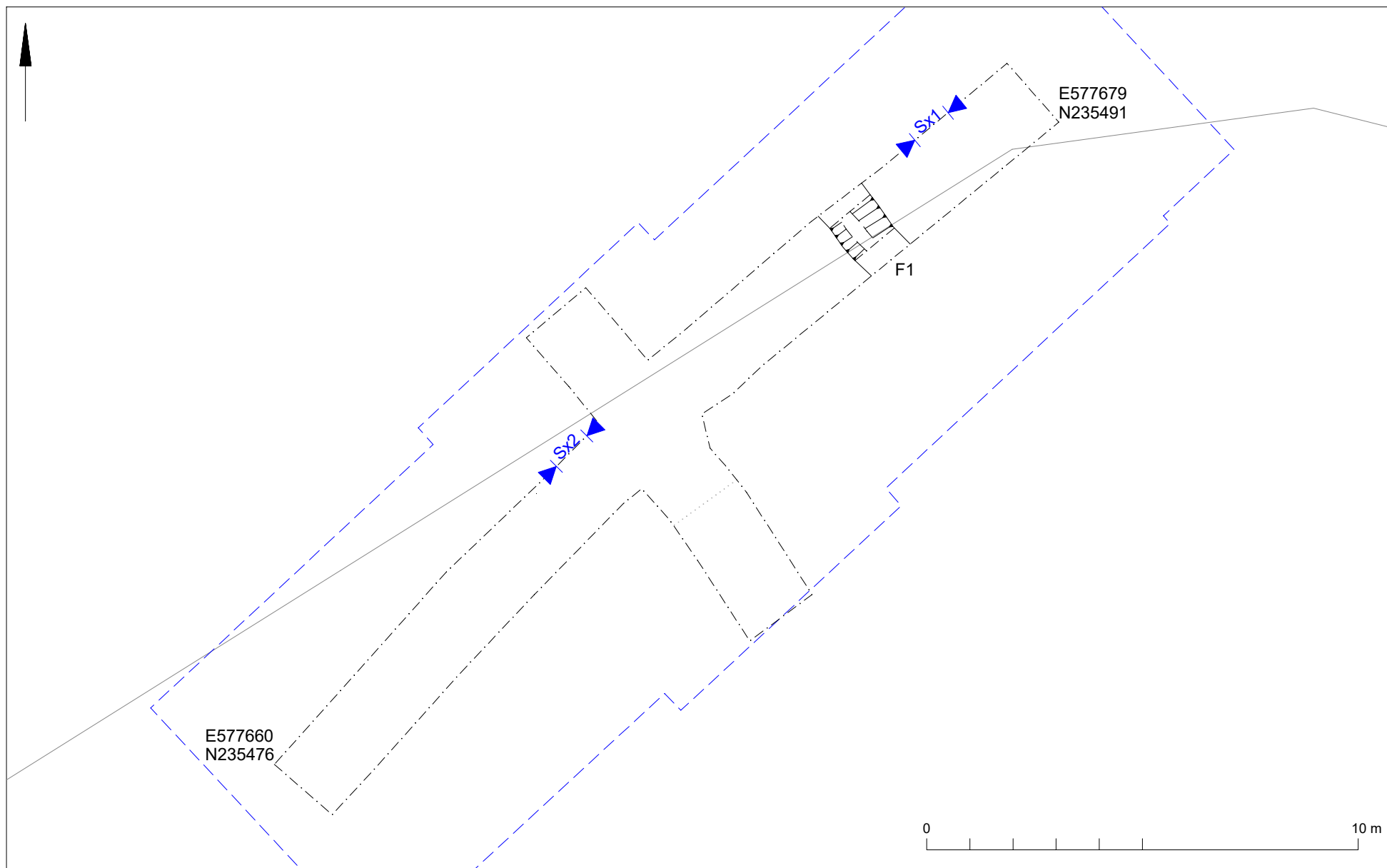


Fig 1 Site location and trench layout in relation to the proposed development (dashed blue).



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Fig 2 Evaluation results in relation to the proposed development (dashed blue).

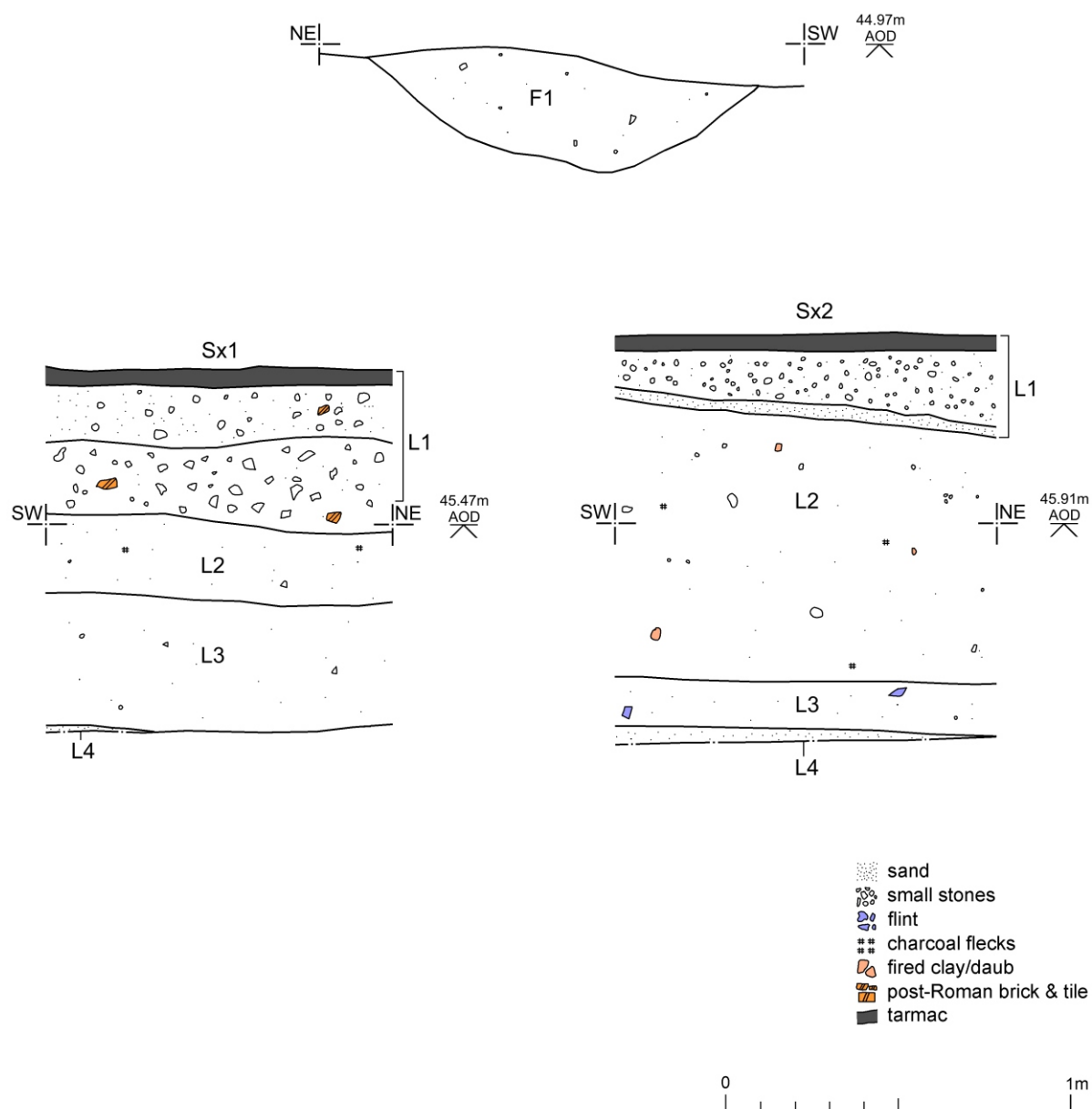


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-533511

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-533511
Project Name	Evaluation at Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green, Castle Hedingham, Essex, CO9 3DX
Sitename	Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green, Castle Hedingham, Essex, CO9 3DX
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	2025/04i
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	21/02637/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	16-May-2025 - 20-May-2025
Location	Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green, Castle Hedingham, Essex, CO9 3DX NGR : TL 77676 35497 LL : 51.98950327018364, 0.586242331375618 12 Fig : 577676,235497
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Braintree Parish : Castle Hedingham
Project Methodology	Two trenches, measuring 22m and 8m, arranged in a X-shape were machine excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (one trial-trench) was carried out at Memories of Chinatown, 1 Crouch Green, Castle Hedingham, Essex, ahead of the construction of a new suite of guest rooms. The site is located on the edge of a former village green and adjacent to the postulated route of a Roman road. An X-shaped trench was excavated in the footprint of the proposed new building, uncovering a single ditch with a possible prehistoric date. Finds from the ditch included fragments of animal bone and worked flint while a single sherd of Iron Age pottery was recovered from a colluvium layer.
Keywords	Ditch - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	Private or public corporation Marjoram Leisure Ltd
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	C Lister, A Wightman, L Pooley
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX61528
Archives	Physical Archive - to be deposited with Braintree District Museum; Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;