

Colchester Archaeological Trust



CAT Report 2192
issued July 2025

**Archaeological monitoring and recording for the footbridge
at Porters Hall, Porters Hall Road, Stebbing, Essex,
CM6 3TB: July 2025**



CAT project ref.: 2025/05c
ECC code: EEX61814
Schedule Monument Consent Number: S00246384

**Archaeological monitoring and recording of the footbridge
at Porters Hall, Porters Hall Lane, Stebbing, Essex,
CM6 3TB: July 2025**

NGR: TL 67777 23608 (centre)

**Scheduled Monument: SM20691, NHLE 1008701
Scheduled monument consent number: S00246384**

**CAT project ref.: 2025/05c
CAT Report 2192**

**Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments:
Adam Single
ECC code: EEX61814
OASIS id: colchest3-533898**

report prepared by Sarah Veasey

fieldwork by Ziya Eksen

**commissioned by Fran Morgan
on behalf of Porters Hall LLP**

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Porters Hall, Porters Hall Road, Stebbing, Essex, during groundworks for a new footbridge across the scheduled medieval moat (NHLE 1008701) that surrounds the Grade II listed building (NHLE 1322338). The hall is a 16th-century timber-framed manor house with an associated farmstead, which contains a number of other listed structures. No archaeological remains were uncovered during the groundworks.*

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Porters Hall, Porters Hall Road, Stebbing, Essex, on 31st July 2025. The work was commissioned by Fran Morgan (Porters Hall LLP) on behalf of Porters Hall LLP and took place during groundworks for a new footbridge.

As the site is located within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (NHLE 1008701) and the building is Grade II* listed (NHLE 1322338), an archaeological condition was recommended by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECCHEA) and the Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments (HEIAM). This requirement was based on the guidance given in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2025).

An application for scheduled monument consent was made and granted (consent no. S00246384), which outlined the required monitoring. Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) also produced a project brief (ECCPS 2025) outlining the groundworks that required archaeological monitoring.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by CAT (2025a) in response to the archaeological condition, which was agreed with the HEIAM as well as ECCHEA in advance of the groundworks.

In addition to the scheduled monument consent, project brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was carried out by CAT will be 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 (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on <https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>
- Relevant Health & Safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2025b).

3 Archaeological and geoarchaeological background

The following archaeological background primarily includes records from the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>) and the Scheduled Monument listing.

The development site is located within an area of known archaeological deposits and heritage assets at Porters Hall and within its associated grounds (EHER 1236). Porters Hall is part of an important medieval moated complex, with an associated farmstead, which is a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1008701). As stated in the list entry, this includes a rectangular moated area which measures 110m by 65m. The arms are between 12m and 6m in width and are water-filled, except to the south-west where they have dried out. The eastern corner has an irregular extension which measures 30m by 20m. The southern corner has also been extended along the same line as the southwestern arm for a further 32m. Along the southern edge of this arm is a slight bank, 3.5m wide and about 0.4m high, which is considered to have been used as a garden terrace. An outlet channel leads from the southern corner of the moat to the road. Access to the island is across a modern brick-built bridge on the northeastern arm, which replaced a wooden drawbridge. This section of the arm was in-filled during the construction of the brick bridge.

The complex contains four listed buildings, including the Grade II* listed Porters Hall which dates to the 16th century (NHLE 1322338), the Grade II listed Porters Hall Barn which dates to the 17th century (NHLE 1112730), and two Grade II Porters Hall outbuildings dated to the 16th/17th century (NHLE 1306802) and the 15th/16th century (NHLE 1112731). This second outbuilding, the northernmost of the two, has been used as a dovecote but was originally a dwelling and probably a small section of an earlier hall on the site.

Additional buildings no longer extant on the site are shown on Chapman and André Map of 1777 (Map 1). The earthworks and undulations of the island indicate the presence of surviving below ground features, particularly to the north-west where the foundations of the original house may be present.

Porter's Hall moated site is associated with the family of Henry Le Portir in 1284 and is recorded in historical sources from 1398 (EHER 1236).



Map 1 Extract of the Chapman and André map from 1777.

In 2022, CAT undertook a three-trench evaluation on the site (CAT Report 1837). No archaeological remains were identified; however, the trenches were only excavated to the development formation depth, therefore archaeological remains may have existed beneath this level.

Following the evaluation, CAT undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during renovation works at the hall (CAT Report 2113). The works monitored comprised a number of tree pits, flower beds and a short run of drainage trench. No archaeological finds or features were identified.

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 (extensive sheet of chalky till, together with outwash sands and gravels, silts and clays).

4 Aims

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

Specific aims research aims were to:

- Identify any medieval or post-medieval deposits related to the settlement within the moated site.
- Record the stratigraphic sequence of deposits affected by the development.

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

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Two foundation pads, one of each bank of the medieval moat, were machine excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Pad I was 2.04m by 1.68m while Pad II was 2.88m by 2.30. Both were excavated to a depth of 0.90m, cutting through a layer of topsoil (L1, 0.14-0.18m thick, soft, dry, dark brown sandy/silty clay) and a layer of subsoil (L2, 0.22-0.25m thick, firm, dry light-medium greyish brown silty clay with chalk flecks and rare stones) into the natural clay (L3, hard, dry medium brownish yellow clay with chalk flecks).

No archaeological remains were exposed in the foundation pads.



Photograph 1 Pad I, view north.



Photograph 2 Pad II, view south-east.

6 Finds

There were no finds.

7 Conclusion

Despite being located within a medieval moated site, archaeological monitoring and recording of the footbridge at Porters Hall, Stebbing uncovered no archaeological remains.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Fran Morgan and Porters Hall LLP for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister and carried out by Z Eksen. Figures were prepared by Z Eksen and S Veasey. The project was monitored for Historic England by Adam Single and for ECC by Katie Lee-Smith.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://catuk.org>

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10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHF	Essex Historic Environment Record

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.
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
HEIAM	Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
modern	period from AD 1901 to the present
medieval	period from AD 1066 to 1540
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
post-medieval	from AD 1540 to 1901
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

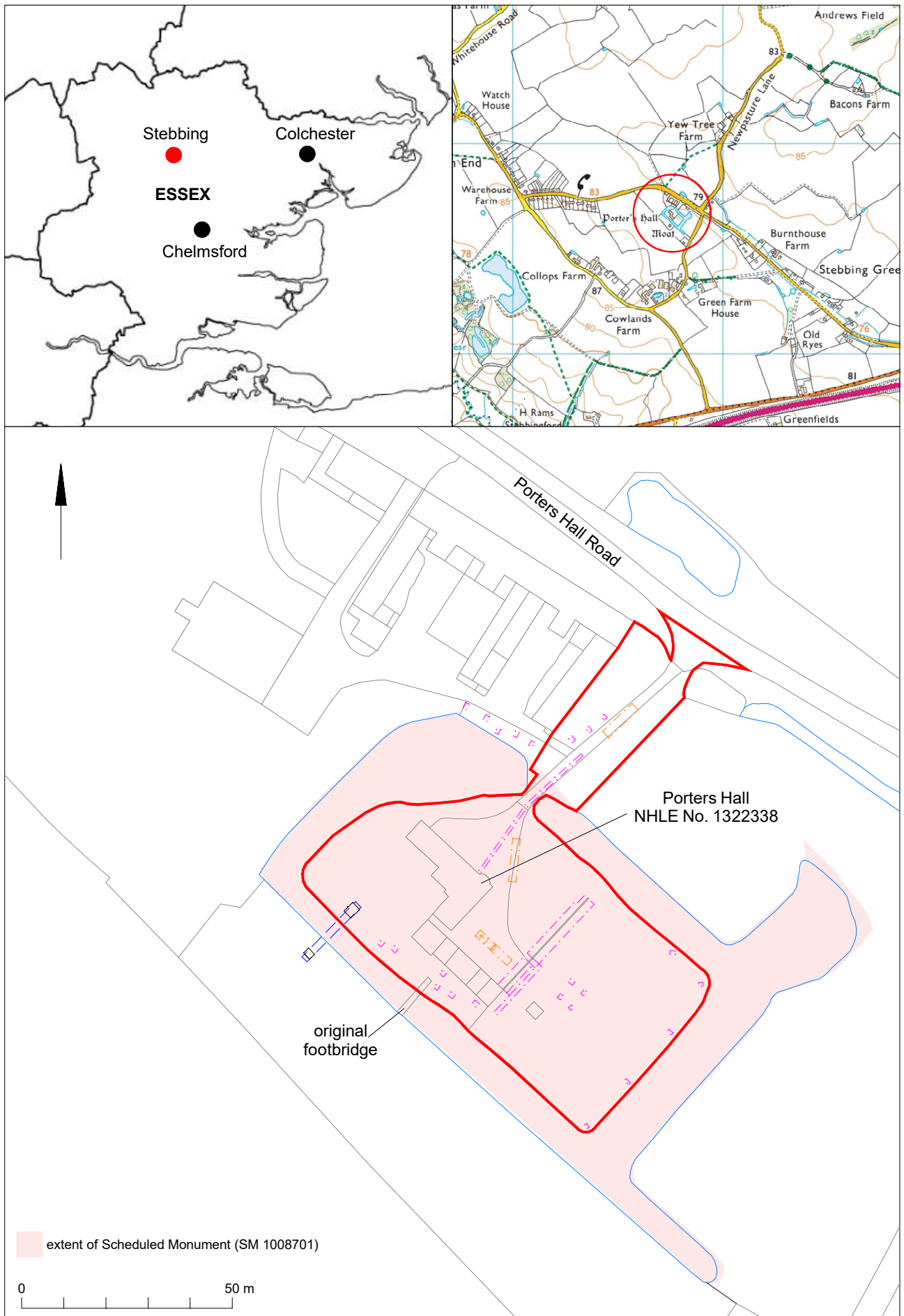
11 Archive deposition

Digital record: This project falls within the ClfA definition of a sterile project (<https://www.archaeologists.net/selection-toolkit/sterile-projects>), and as such the preserved archaeological archive will take the form of a single digital document that incorporates all the relevant elements from the project archive. This document will be uploaded to OASIS and released into the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) library, from where it will be curated by the ADS. The single digital document will include the report, brief, ws, photographs, and original site data (for example context sheets, section drawings).

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Distribution list

Porters Hall LLP
Katie Lee-Smith, Essex County Council Place Services
Adam Single, Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments
Essex Historic Environment Record



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Fig 1 Site location in relation to the proposed footbridge location (dashed blue).
2022 evaluation in orange and 2024/5 monitoring in pink.

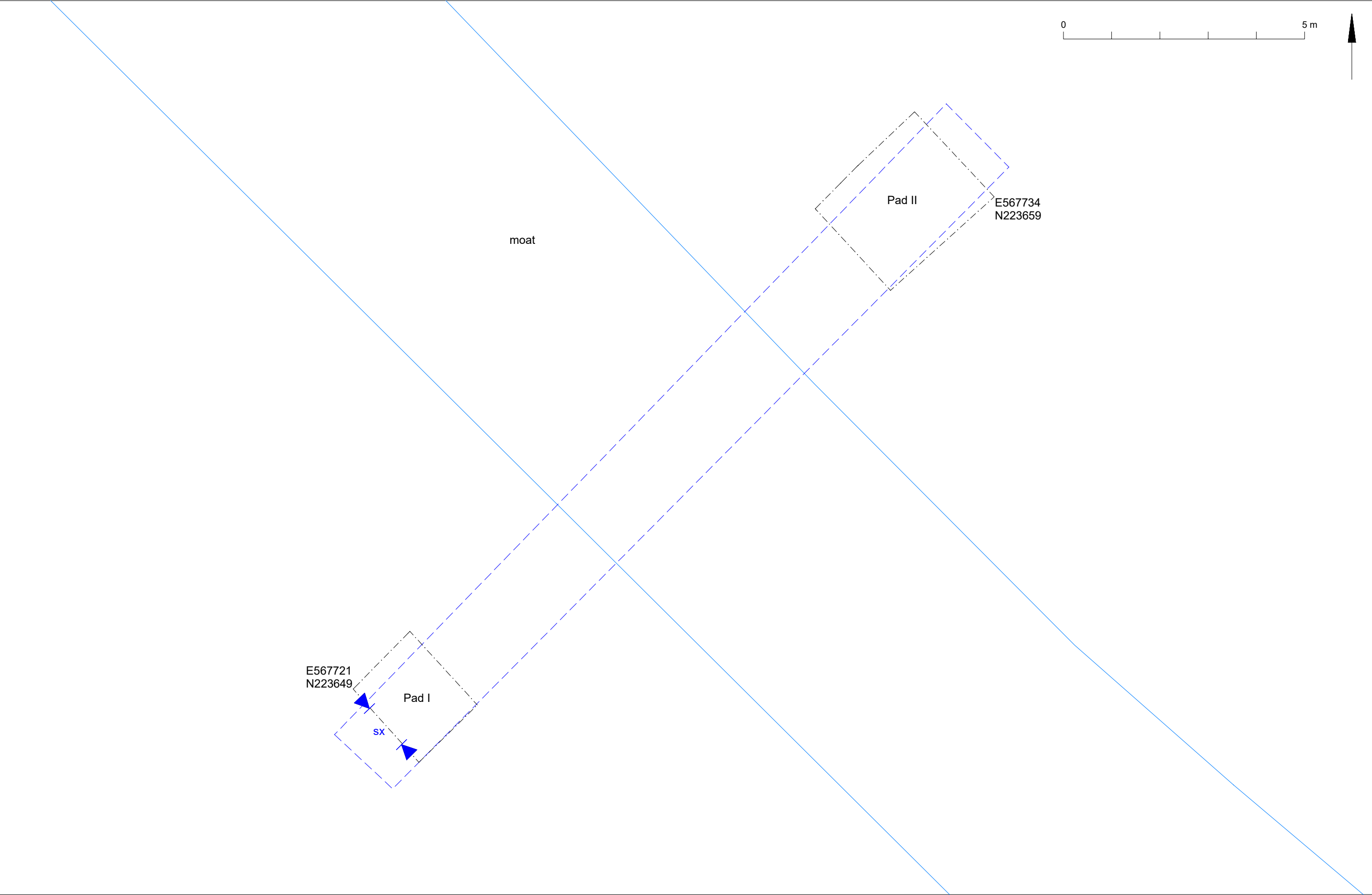


Fig 2 Results in relation to the proposed footbridge (dashed blue).

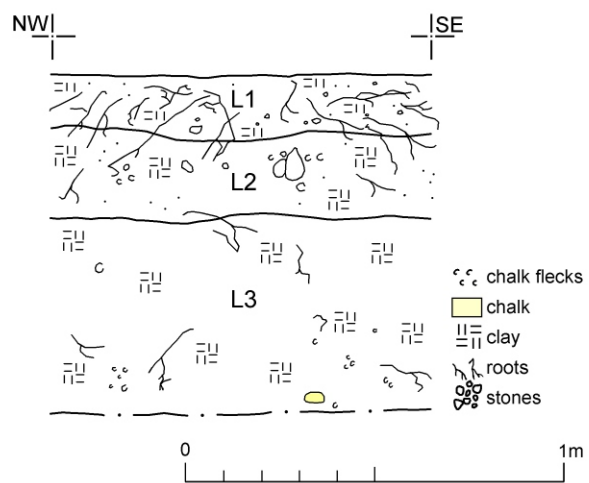


Fig 3 Representative section.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-533898

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-533898
Project Name	Watching Brief at Porters Hall, Porters Hall Road, Stebbing, Essex, CM6 3TB
Sitename	Porters Hall, Porters Hall Road, Stebbing, Essex, CM6 3TB
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	2025/05c
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Scheduled monument consent
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	31-Jul-2025 - 31-Jul-2025
Location	Porters Hall, Porters Hall Road, Stebbing, Essex, CM6 3TB NGR : TL 67777 23608 LL : 51.885784549023676, 0.436425387364014 12 Fig : 567777,223608
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Uttlesford Parish : Stebbing
Project Methodology	Two foundation pads, one of each bank of the medieval moat, were machine excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Pad I was 2.04m by 1.68m while Pad II was 2.88m by 2.30. Both were excavated to a depth of 0.90m, cutting through a layer of topsoil (L1, 0.14-0.18m thick, soft, dry, dark brown sandy/silty clay) and a layer of subsoil (L2, 0.22-0.25m thick, firm, dry light-medium greyish brown silty clay with chalk flecks and rare stones) into the natural clay (L3, hard, dry medium brownish yellow clay with chalk flecks).
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Porters Hall, Porters Hall Road, Stebbing, Essex, during groundworks for a new footbridge across the scheduled medieval moat (NHLE 1008701) that surrounds the Grade II* listed building (NHLE 1322338). The hall is a 16th-century timber-framed manor house with an associated farmstead, which contains a number of other listed structures. No archaeological remains were uncovered during the groundworks.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation Porters Hall LLP
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD Historic England review - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	C Lister, A Wightman, L Pooley
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX61814
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;