Colchester Archaeological Trust

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issued October 2025

Archaeological monitoring and recording at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, CM3 4AU: January-March 2025



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ECC code: EEX60885

Archaeological monitoring and recording at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, CM3 4AU: January-March 2025

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commissioned by the Homeowner

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, ahead of the construction of a side extension and alterations to the front of the property. Old Riffhams is a Grade II listed (NHLE 1122037), three-storey, timber-framed house. Its main features date to the mid-16th century but its core may be earlier. Land at Riffhams has previously yielded medieval finds, however the only remains uncovered by the groundworks were a 19th-century brick path at the front of the property and a modern soakaway, drainage trench and pit/tree throw to the side.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring and recording carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, from 14th January to 14th March 2025. Work was commissioned by the homeowner in advance of a replacement single-storey orangery side extension and alterations to the front of the property.

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 for archaeological monitoring and was based on the guidance given in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2023).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological monitoring and recording at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow* (ECCPS 2024), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCHEA (CAT 2024).

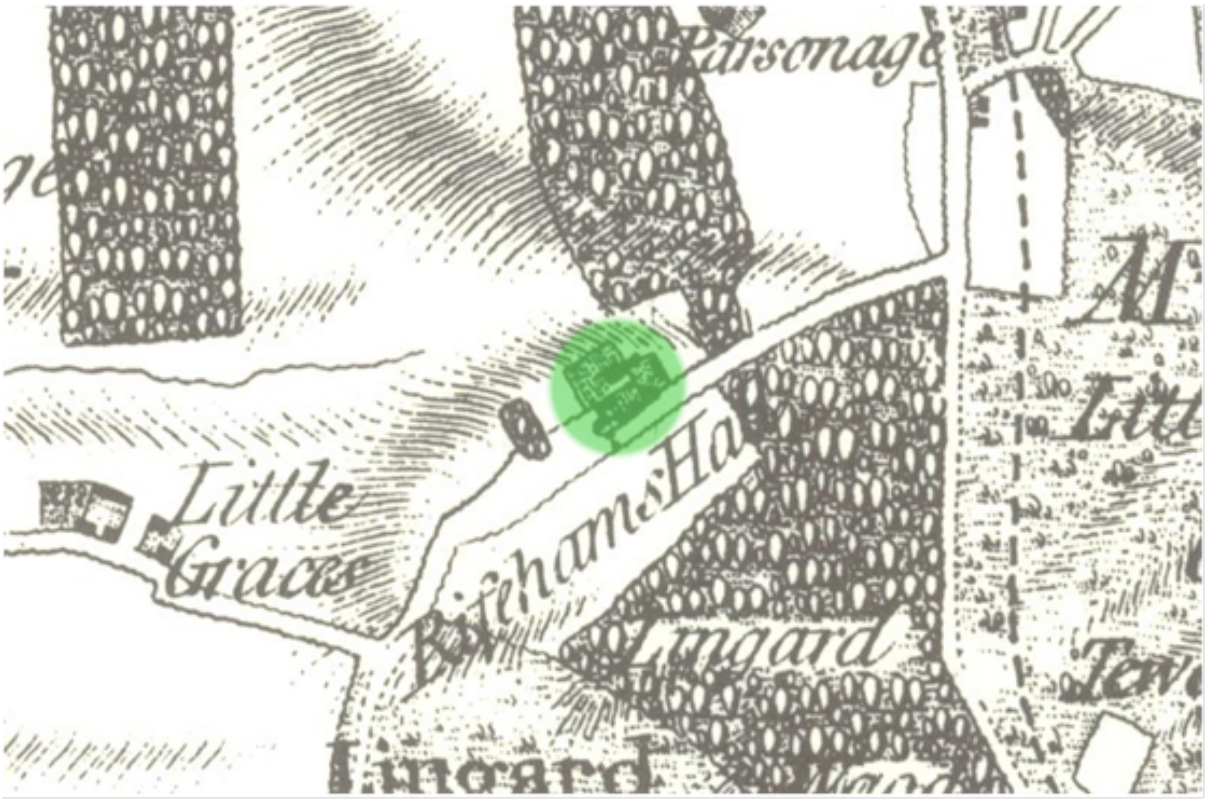
In addition to the project brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was undertaken in accordance with:

- *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 (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/
- Relevant health and safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2025).

3 Archaeological and geological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts of the ECC Brief (ECCPS 2024) and Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk).

Old Riffhams is a Grade II listed three-storey timber-framed house (NHLE 1122037, EHER 30644) built on a half H-plan. While the building is recorded to have origins in the mid-16th century, the listing entry proposes it may have an earlier core. It has 17th- and 18th-century additions, including being almost completely refaced in red brick with a parapet added. Although there have been considerable later alterations, many of the 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century features have been preserved.



Map 1 Extract of the Chapman and André map of Essex (1777). Old Riffhams highlighted in green and labelled as 'Rifehams Hall'.

The EHER records that medieval pottery, tiles and a horseshoe were found on land at Old Riffhams in 1927 with more medieval pottery recovered in 1949 (EHER 5597). In 2023 CAT conducted monitoring at Old Riffhams for the installation of a new boiler. The only features uncovered were modern brick and concrete foundations associated with a former oil tank on the site (CAT Report 1970).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale[1]) shows the bedrock geology of the site to comprise London Clay mudrock, with superficial glaciofluvial deposits (sand and gravel).

4 Aims

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to identify and record any archaeological contexts revealed during the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-4)

All groundworks were carried out by a mechanical excavator under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. A full context list with soil descriptions and measurements can be found in Appendix 1.

Groundworks to the side of the property (Photographs 1-9)

The first phase of the groundworks involved demolishing the existing garden room and digging out the old footings (Photographs 1-2). After this the garden wall had to be stabilised, necessary due to lowering of the ground level. This involved the excavation of three pads, 1.0-1.70m by *c* 1m and *c* 1m deep, dug at *c* 1.5m intervals along the wall (Photographs 3-4) that were filled with concrete. The gaps between the concrete pads were then excavated and filled with concrete. In total an area measuring 8m long by 1.1m wide and *c* 1m deep was excavated in front of the garden wall (Photograph 5 shows the concrete base in place). In this location, topsoil from the raised flower bed (L1, 0.2-0.23m thick) sealed the concrete footings of the bed (L2, 0.1-0.2m thick). Beneath this was a thick layer of made-ground (L3, 0.65-0.85m thick) over natural (L4, identified at a depth of 0.95-1.05m below current ground level (bcgl). There were no archaeological features or finds.

As seen in Photograph 5, the old foundation trenches were backfilled before the new were excavated. The trenches were 0.6m wide and 1.6m deep (Photograph 6). Topsoil (or a remnant thereof, L1, 0.04-0.2m thick) sealed made-ground (L3, 0.50-0.70m) above natural (L4, identified at a depth of *c* 0.8m bcgl) (Photograph 7).

Three modern features were identified in section, cut into L3. Pit or three-throw F1 had an irregular profile and contained modern detritus including brick fragments, it was *c* 1.2m wide by *c* 0.8m deep (Photograph 8). Soakaway F3 was 1m wide and 0.8m deep and filled with gravel and CBM fragments (Photograph 9), drainage trench F2 led to the soakaway.

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



Photograph 1 Photograph taken after the demolition of the garden room and removal of the old footings, the flower bed against the garden wall is still in place, looking north-east.



Photograph 2 Photograph taken after the demolition of the garden room and removal of the old footings, the flower bed against the garden wall has been removed, looking south.



Photograph 3 The pits against the garden wall, looking north-east.



Photograph 4 One of the pits against the garden wall, looking south-east.



Photograph 5 Concrete support against the garden wall in place and levelling of site before foundation trenches excavated, looking north-east.



Photograph 6 The foundation trenches, looking north-east.



Photograph 7 Representative section through the foundation trench, view north.

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Photograph 8 Pit or tree-throw F1, looking north-west.



Photograph 9 Soakaway F3 with drainage pipe, looking south-east.



Photograph 10 Ground reduction to the front of the property, looking south-west.



Photograph 11 Brick path F4, looking south-west.



Photograph 12 Brick path F4, looking south-south-east.

Groundworks to the front of the property (Photographs 10-12)
Paving slabs (*c* 0.2-0.3m thick) covering an area of *c* 108 square meters at the front of the property were removed exposing L5 (a layer of modern silty clay) and brick path F4. The remnants of the brick path were recorded for a length of 8m and it was 0.9m wide and set parallel to the building. It had a boarder of bricks set on edge with flat bricks laid in a fairly irregular arrangement. Both unfrogged and frogged bricks were recovered from the path, dating to the early 19th-century and *c* 1875 onwards respectively. The frogged bricks may represent later repairs.

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr. Matthew Loughton

Monitoring uncovered a very small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) at six pieces with a weight of 10.493kg (Table 1). Identifications are based on *CAR* **7** (2000) and Ryan (1996).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	2	30	15.0	0.10
CBM	4	10,463	2,615.8	-6
All	***6***	***10,493***	***1,748.8***	***0.10***

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM.

This material was recovered from two contexts and consists of:

- L5: one sherd (4g) of modern Staffordshire-type white earthenware (fabric F48D) with a 'coral border'.
- L5: one sherd (26g) from a Westerwald stoneware (fabric F45F) tankard (EVE:0.10), dating to *c* 1600-1800.
- F4: a frogged brick (2,245g) with dimensions of 225mm x 108mm x 65mm and an illegible stamp suggesting a date of *c* 1875 onwards.
- F4: three fragments from two unfrogged bricks (8,218g) with dimensions of 230mm x 110mm x 65mm and 225mm x 105mm x 65/68mm. These probably date to the early 19th century.

6.2 Glass

by Laura Pooley

A fragment (148.7g) of glass from L5 came from the base of a pale green, straight-sided, cylindrical bottle of 19th to 20th century date. The lower body is embossed [CHE]LMSFORD.

7 Conclusion

Archaeological monitoring at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex revealed a 19th-century brick path along with a modern pit/tree-throw, soakaway and drainage trench.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank the homeowner for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister, with fieldwork carried out by Z Esken. Figures were compiled by Z Eksen and C Hill. 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

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10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, or a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to 1540
modern	period from AD 1901 to the present
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	period from AD 1540 to 1900
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Digital:

CAT Report 2145

ECC brief, CAT WSI

Digital photographs

Site data

Survey data

12 Archive deposition

The digital 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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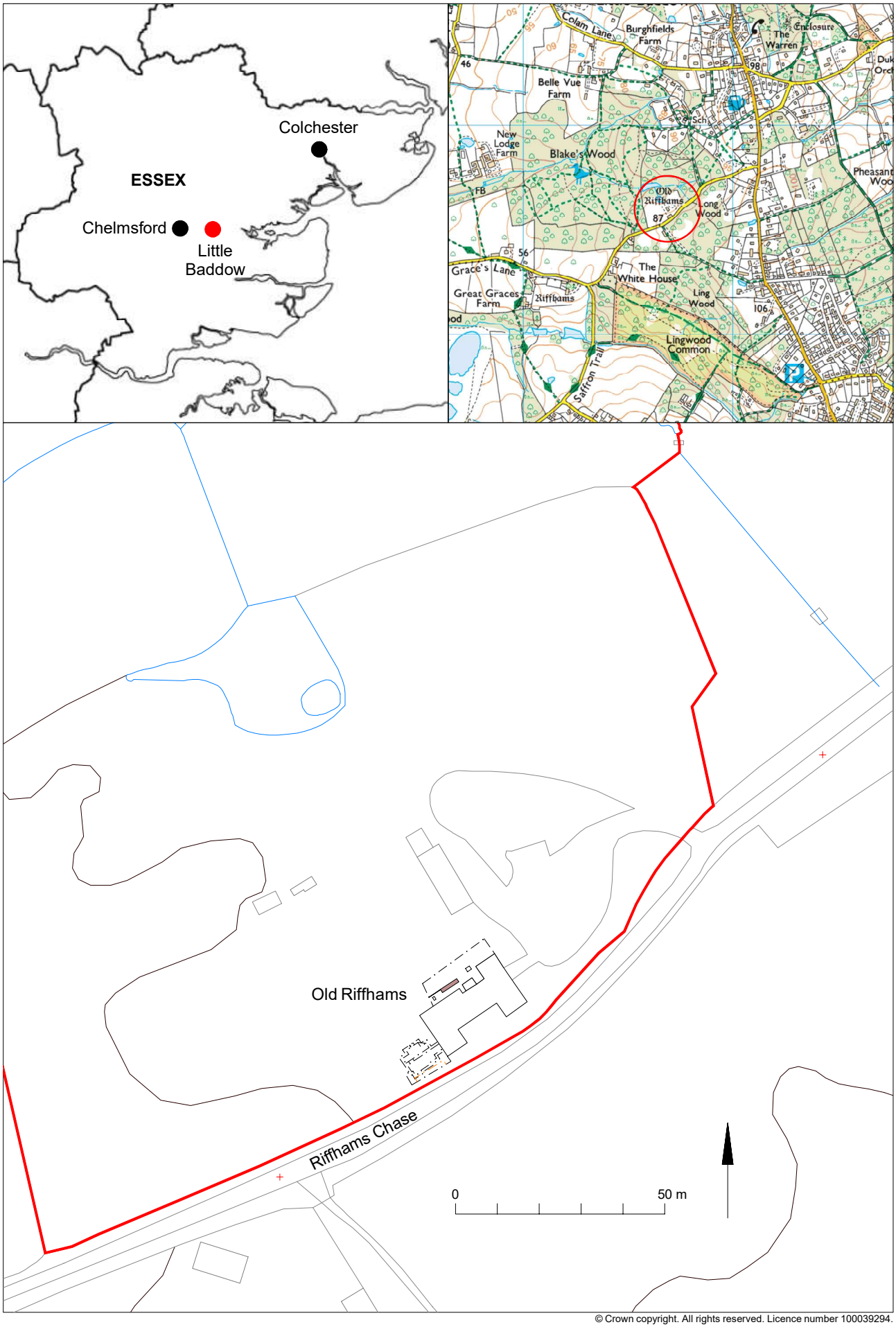
The Homeowner

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

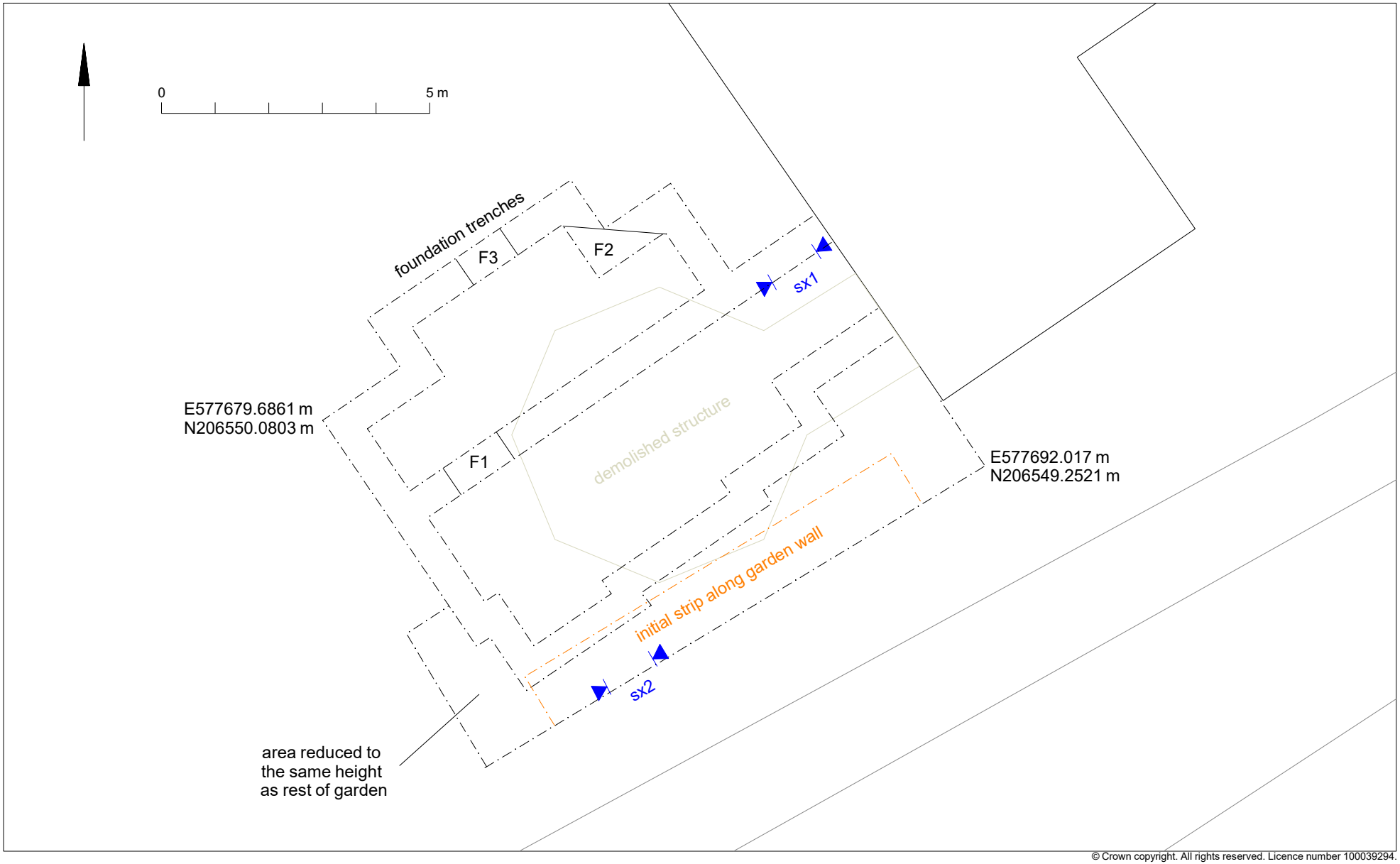
Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
L1	-	Topsoil	Soft, moist, dark brown silty clay, with occasional small stones. Some root traces. 0-0.3m thick.	Modern
L2	-	Concrete	Concrete footing of brick flower bed. 0.08-0.2m thick.	Modern
L3	-	Make-up layer	Mid grey-brown silty clay, with frequent small stones, containing modern building materials. 0.5-0.85m thick.	Modern
L4	-	Natural	Natural clay.	Post-glacial
L5	1	Made-ground	Moist, dark brown silty clay, frequent CBM fragments, small rounded stones, occasional rooting	19th-20th century
F1	-	Pit or tree-throw	Friable, dark grey sand, mortar and tile fragments.	Modern
F2	-	Drainage trench	Drainage pipe trench leading to soakaway F3	Modern
F3	-	Soakaway	Pit containing loose gravel and tile fragments.	Modern
F4	2	Brick path	Brick path, at least 8m long, 0.9m wide, has a border of bricks laid on edge, flat internal bricks laid haphazardly.	19th century



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Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Results: side of property.



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Fig 3 Results: front of property.

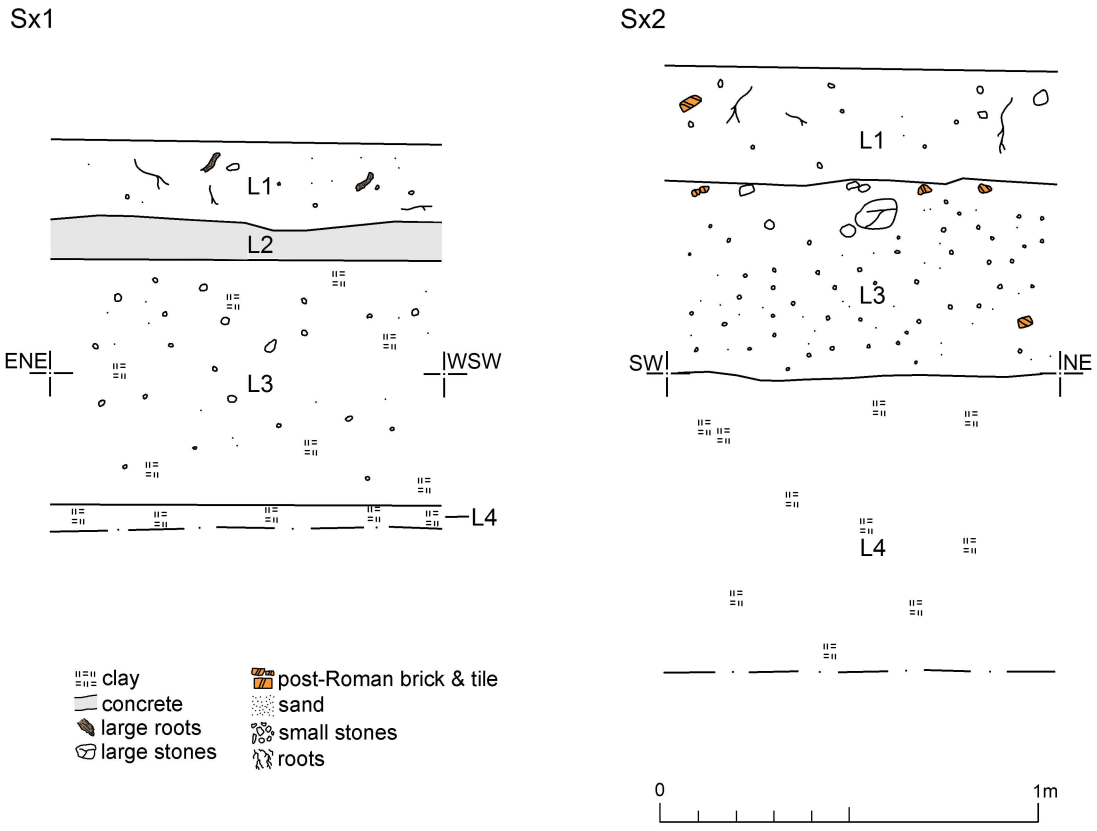


Fig 4 Representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-530417

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-530417
Project Name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, CM3 4AU: January-March 2025
Sitename	Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, CM3 4AU
Sitecode	EEX60885
Project Identifier(s)	2024/12c
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	24/01403/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	14-Jan-2025 - 14-Mar-2025
Location	Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, CM3 4AU NGR : TL 77701 06578 LL : 51.72975077139737, 0.571745457938082 12 Fig : 577701,206578
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Chelmsford Parish : Little Baddow
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks as specified in the project brief and wsi.
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Old Riffhams, Riffhams Chase, Little Baddow, Essex, ahead of the construction of a side extension and alterations to the front of the property. Old Riffhams is a Grade II listed (NHLE 1122037), three-storey, timber-framed house. Its main features date to the mid-16th century but its core may be earlier. Land at Riffhams has previously yielded medieval finds, however the only remains uncovered by the groundworks were a 19th-century brick path at the front of the property and a modern soakaway, drainage trench and pit/tree throw to the side.
Keywords	Garden Path - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	Private individual
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Adam Wightman, Chris Lister
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX60885
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;

Report generated on: 30 Oct 2025, 09:26