

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 2223
issued December 2025**

**Archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to
55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex: November 2025**



**CAT project ref.: 2025/09f
ECC code: EEX62278**

**Archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to
55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex: November 2025**

NGR: TM 06345 25068 (centre)

**Planning district: Tendring
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CAT Report 2223**

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**report prepared by Laura Pooley
with contributions from Dr Matthew Loughton**

**fieldwork by Nigel Rayner,
Xander Smith and Alice Parker-Shirley**

commissioned by and on behalf of Vaughan & Blyth

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

telephone: 01206 501785

email: services@catuk.org

website: <https://catuk.org/>

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (seven trial-trenches) was carried out on land adjacent to 55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex, in advance of the construction of six bungalows and associated infrastructure. The site lies in an area of extensive cropmarks, close to a postulated Roman road and medieval moat. The evaluation revealed twelve features (three pits, two post-holes, two gullies and five ditches) which were concentrated in Trenches 3 and 5. Pottery from five of the features has been dated from the late Saxon through to the medieval period (10th to the 13th centuries) and it is highly likely that all the features on the site are of a similar date.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at land adjacent to 55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex on 12th-13th November 2025. Work was commissioned by Adrian Massink and took place in advance of the construction of six self-build bungalows and associated infrastructure.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) as having a high potential for archaeological remains an archaeological condition was recommended. This follows the guidelines given in *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2025).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Trial Trenching at Land adjacent to 55 Church Road Elmstead* (ECCPS 2025) and a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by CAT (2025a) in response to the brief.

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, 2025, 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 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 EHER shows that the development site lies within an area of extensive cropmark features. Cropmarks to the north, north-east and east (c 400-900m from the site) have been interpreted as settlement enclosures most likely of prehistoric date, a Bronze Age barrow cemetery, isolated ring-ditches, multi-period trackways and a rectilinear field-system and possible Roman farmsteads (EHER 2580, 2596, 2620). The site also lies c 520m to the north-west of a postulated Roman road (HER 80669) leading from Alresford to Elmstead.

Archaeological investigations by CAT c 1.2-1.8km to the south-west of the site have revealed a multi-period landscape (CAT Reports 1209, 1319, 1527, 1575, 1880, 2036, 2115). Notable features include prehistoric ring-ditches and cremations, Late Iron Age to Roman enclosures, Roman kiln evidence and medieval pits.

Archaeological investigations c 900m to the north-west at Elmstead Hall revealed small scale prehistoric activity and an extensive Roman field system (Heard 2019). Recent work by CAT to the immediate south of this site (c 700m north-west of the development site) revealed similar evidence for prehistoric pitting and a continuation of the Roman field system (CAT report forthcoming).

To the west, opposite the proposed site, evaluation has revealed some evidence for activity dating from the prehistoric to medieval period (EHER 80768 and 81956). Similarly, c 600m to the east, limited investigations at Lodge Farm suggest activity nearby in the prehistoric period (EHER 46845, 81949). There is also a rectangular moat near Parsonage Farm c 500m north-north-west of the site (EHER 2396).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site is the Thames Group of clay, silt and sand with a superficial deposit of cover sand.

4 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to record the location, extent, character and significance 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.

¹ <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>

Specific project aims were to record:

- Evidence relating to the Roman road.
- Evidence relating to the cropmarks identified in the vicinity.
- Evidence relating to any other settlement activity.

5 Results (Figs 2-4)

Seven trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The trenches were all 1.8m wide and 20m long apart from T4 which was 15m long. Trench 3 was also extended to further examine identified archaeological features.

All trenches were excavated through a modern layer of grassy topsoil (L1, c 0.22-0.36m thick) into the natural geology (L2). There were no archaeological remains in trenches T1-T2, T4 and T6-T7.



Photograph 1 Trench 1, looking north.



Photograph 2 Trench 4, looking south-east.



Photograph 3 Trench 7, looking north.

Trench 3

To the north of the trench were three pits. Pit F1 (1.25m by 0.99m and 0.21m deep) produced six sherds of medieval pottery (mid/late 13th century) and two fragments of peg-tile along with small, abraded fragments of lava quernstone. Pits F2 and F4 were both undated. Pit F2 (0.62m by 0.45m and 0.13m deep) produced fragments of baked clay and pit F4 (0.43m by 0.29m and 0.19m deep) a small fragment of metal-working debris.

Gully F3 was aligned north-east to south-west and contained five late Saxon pottery sherds (11th century?) along with a fragment of medieval/post-medieval brick. It was a shallow, U-shaped feature (0.48m wide by 0.12m deep).

To the south of the trench and aligned north-west to south-east were ditches F11 (0.56m wide by 0.14m deep) and F12 (0.72m wide by 0.21m deep). Both were U-shaped features which converged together in Trench 5 to the south-east where they are recorded as ditches F5, F6 and F7. Although ditches F11 and F12 produced no dating evidence, the ditches in Trench 5 produced late Saxon and medieval pottery sherds.

Undated post-holes F9 (0.25m by 0.18m and 0.16m deep) and F10 (0.18m diameter and 0.14m deep) are possibly aligned parallel to ditch F11.

Trench 5

Ditches F5, F6 and F7 are aligned north-west to south-east and are a continuation of ditches F11 and F12 in Trench 3. All are U-shaped features of a similar width and depth: F5 (0.7m wide and 0.14m deep), F6 (0.77m wide and 0.12m deep) and F7 (0.63m wide and 0.21m deep). Ditch F5 is part of a terminus, with ditches F6 and F7 continuing to the south-east. It was not possible to determine the relationship between ditches F5, F6 and F7. It is likely that F7 and F11 are a part of the same medieval ditch, as are F5, F6 and F12, but this would need to be confirmed with further investigation. Three medieval pottery sherds (13th century) were recovered from ditch F5 with two late Saxon sherds (11th century?) from F7. Small and abraded fragments of lava quern and a large piece of metalworking debris came from F6.

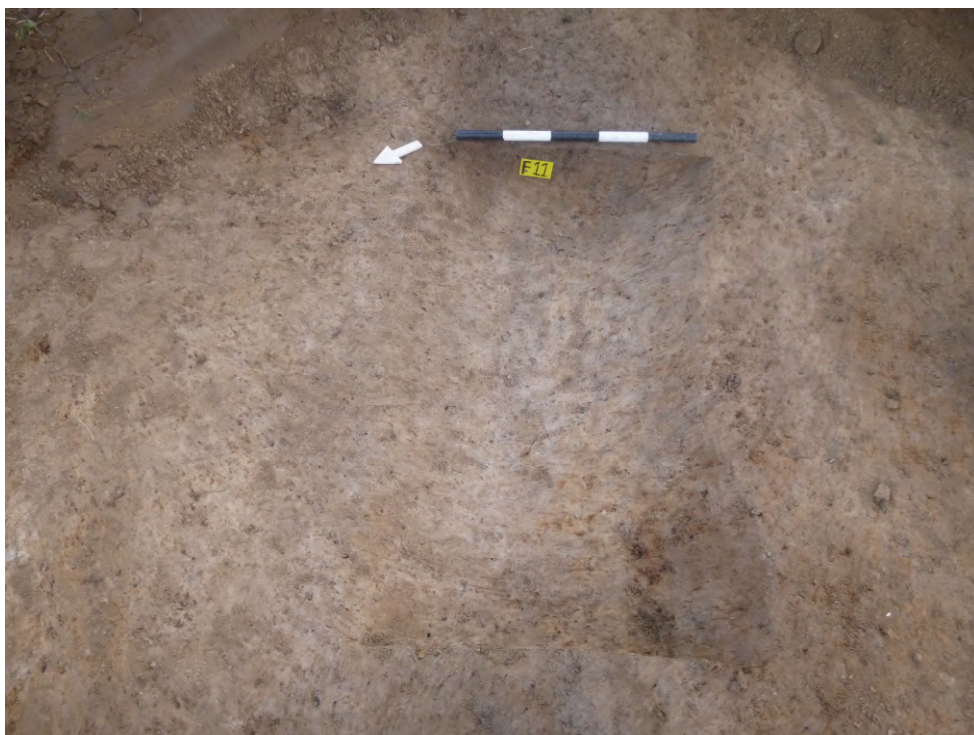
Gully F8 (0.45m wide and 0.12m deep) was on a similar north-west/south-east alignment to ditches F5, F6 and F7 but c 4m further to the east. A small U-shaped feature it produced seven sherds of late Saxon pottery (10th century).



Photograph 4 Trench 3, looking north-north-east.



Photograph 5 Pit F1, looking north-west.



Photograph 6 Ditch F11, looking south-east.



Photograph 7 Ditch F12, looking north-west.



Photograph 8 Post-holes F9 and F10, looking south.



Photograph 9 Trench 5, looking east.



Photograph 10 Ditches F5, F6 and F7, looking north-west.



Photograph 11 Gully F8, looking south-east.

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation uncovered a small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) at thirty-three sherds with a weight of 258g and a mean sherd weight of 7.8g (Table 1).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	23	174	7.6	0.00
CBM	10	84	8.4	-
All	33	258	7.8	0.00

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM.

Late Saxon and medieval pottery

Late Saxon and medieval pottery was recorded according to the fabric groups from *CAR 7* (Cotter 2000) (Table 2) while the number of vessels was determined by rim EVE (estimated vessel equivalent). A small assemblage of late Saxon (10th to mid-12th century) to medieval pottery was recovered at twenty-three sherds with a weight of 174g (Table 3) which was recovered from five features (Table 4). This material dates from the 10th century in the case of the Thetford type wares (fabric F9) to the 13th century for the Colchester-type ware (fabric F21). The only identifiable diagnostic sherd was a base from a Medieval greyware cooking pot which came from pit F1.

Fabric code	Fabric description	Fabric date range guide
F9	Thetford type wares	c 850/900-1150
F13	Early Medieval sandy wares	1000-1225
F20	Medieval sandy greyware	c 1150-1375/1400
F21	Colchester-type ware	1200-1550

Table 2 Late Saxon and medieval pottery fabrics recorded.

Fabric code	Fabric description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
F9	Thetford type wares	10	48	4.8	0.00
F13	Early Medieval sandy wares	6	62	10.3	0.00
F20	Medieval sandy greyware	4	55	13.8	0.00
F21	Colchester-type ware	3	9	3.0	0.00
Total		23	174	7.6	0.00

Table 3 Summary of the late Saxon and medieval pottery.

Context	Feature type	No.	Weight(g)	MSW (g)
F1	PIT	6	60	10.0
F3	GULLY	5	59	11.8
F5	DITCH	3	9	3.0

Context	Feature type	No.	Weight(g)	MSW (g)
F7	DITCH	2	5	2.5
F8	GULLY	7	41	5.9
Total		23	174	7.6

Table 4 Quantities of late Saxon and medieval pottery from specific features.**Ceramic building material (CBM)**

There was an small assemblage of CBM at ten fragments with a weight of 84g and mean sherd weight of 8.4g (Table 5). This material was recovered from three features (Table 6). Small fragments of medieval/post medieval peg-tile came from pit F1 and a possible small fragment of ?brick from gully F3.

CBM code	CBM type	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
PT	Peg-tile	2	18	9.0
BR?	Brick?	1	15	15.0
Baked clay		4	13	3.3
Daub		3	38	12.7
Total		10	84	8.4

Table 5 Ceramic building material by type.

Context	Description	No	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
F1	PIT	2	18	9.0
F2	PIT	4	13	3.3
F3	GULLY	4	53	13.3
Total		10	84	8.4

Table 6 Quantities of CBM from specific features.**Conclusion**

Table 7 summarises the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and CBM. These date from the late Saxon (10th century) to the early medieval period (13th century). The small fragments of peg-tile and brick from the pit F1 and the gully F3 could be intrusive or indicate a slightly later medieval date for these features.

Context	Description	Late Saxon and medieval pottery	CBM	Date Approx.
F1	PIT	F9, F20 (COOKING POT)	PT (INTRUSIVE?)	Mid/late 13th century
F3	GULLY	F13	BR? (INTRUSIVE?)	11th century?
F5	DITCH	F21	-	13th century
F7	DITCH	F9 F13	-	11th century?
F8	GULLY	F9?	-	10th century

Table 7 Approximate dates for the individual features.

6.2 Quernstone, metalwork, metalworking debris and clinker/coke

by Laura Pooley

Twenty-five small, abraded and featureless fragments of lava quernstone were recovered from F1 and F6, with a mean sherd weight of only 4.6g. The quernstone could be of Roman or medieval date.

A large fragment (991g) of metalworking debris came from F6 with a smaller fragment (9.7g) from F4. If further metalworking debris is recovered during future archaeological investigation on the site, they should all be sent for specialist analysis.

Five items were metal detected from topsoil L1 in trenches T1, T2, T3, T4 and T6. The only piece of note was a Royal Artillery button dated c 1790-1802. The others were all unidentifiable and undatable fragments. A fragment of clinker/coke was also recovered from L1 in T5.

Context	Finds no.	Description
Lava quernstone (discarded)		
F1	1	Twenty-one fragments, small, abraded and featureless, 108.1g.
F6	8	Four fragments, small, abraded and featureless, 6.7g.
Metalworking debris		
F6	6	Large fragment, 991g.
F4	4	Small fragment, 9.7g
Metalwork (all discarded aside from the button)		
L1, T1	11	Crumped fragment of copper-alloy sheet, 13.6g.
L1, T2	11	Fragment of copper-alloy, broken on all edges, flat, 1.3g.
L1, T3	11	Fragment of lead strip, 5.0g.
L1, T4	11	Royal artillery button, c 1790-1802. Copper-alloy, round and flat with simple looped attachment. On the front is the Shield of the Board of Ordnance – three left pointed cannons stacked vertically on a horizontally striated shield with three cannon balls above. 1.4g. https://www.britishbadgeforum.com/royal-artillery-uniform-buttons-regular-and-volunteer/
L1, T6	11	Fragment of copper-alloy, broken on all edges, flat, 1.3g.
Clinker/coke (discarded)		
L1, T5	9	Fragment, 9.0g.

Table 8 Quernstone, metalworking debris, metalwork and clinker/coke, listed by context.

7 Conclusion

Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex revealed twelve features (three pits, two post-holes, two gullies and five ditches) concentrated in Trenches 3 and 5, with no remains found in the other five trenches. Pottery from five features has been dated from the late Saxon through to the medieval period (10th to the 13th centuries) and it is highly likely that all the features on the site are of a similar date.

Based on the current evidence there are at least two phases of ditch aligned north-west to south-east. The earliest represented by F7 and F11 produced pottery sherds dating to the 11th century. The later, represented by F5, F6 and F12, produced sherds dating to the 13th century. Gullies F3 and F8 appear to belong to the late Saxon phase (10th-11th centuries) and pit F1 to medieval phase (13th century).

The discovery of ditches, gullies, pits, post-holes and pottery sherds suggests settlement of the site from the 10th to 13th centuries, but further investigation would be needed to determine the exact nature of this settlement. It could possibly be related to the medieval moat near Parsonage Farm (EHER 2396) located c 500m to the north-north-west of the site.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Adrian Massink for commissioning and funding the project. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister, with fieldwork carried out by N Rayner with X Smith and A Parker-Shirley. Figures were compiled by X Smith, L Pooley and C Hill. 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 www.catuk.org

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10 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
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'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to 1540
modern	period from AD 1901 to present day
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	period from AD 1540 to 1901
Roman	period from AD 43 to AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: Part of one box

Digital:

CAT Report 2223

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Digital photographs

Site data

Survey data

12 Archive deposition

The digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust but will be permanently deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.

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Distribution list:

Adrian Massink

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Trench no.	Finds no.	Interpretation	Description	Date
L1	All	9, 11	Topsoil	Soft, moist, dark brown sandy silt	Modern
L2	All	-	Natural	Hard, light yellow/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 5%	Post-glacial
F1	3	1	Pit	1.25m by 0.99m and 0.21m deep Firm dry light grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 1%	Medieval
F2	3	2	Pit	0.62m by 0.45m and 0.13m deep Soft dry light grey sandy silt with charcoal flecks	Undated
F3	3	3	Gully	0.48m wide and 0.12m deep Firm dry light grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks	Late Saxon
F4	3	4	Pit	0.43m by 0.29m and 0.19m deep. Firm dry light grey sandy silty clay with charcoal flecks	Undated
F5	5	5	Ditch	0.7m wide and 0.14m deep Firm dry light/medium yellow/grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks, daub flecks and inclusions of: stone 1%	Medieval
F6	5	6, 8	Ditch	0.77m wide and 0.12m deep Firm dry light/medium yellow/grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks, daub flecks and inclusions of: stone 1%	?Late Saxon/ medieval
F7	5	7	Ditch	0.63m wide and 0.21m deep Firm dry light/medium yellow/grey/brown sandy-silt, rare small stones, occasional charcoal	Late Saxon
F8	5	10	Gully	0.45m wide, and 0.12m deep Firm dry light grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks	Late Saxon
F9	3	-	Post-hole	0.25 by 0.18m and 0.16m deep Soft dry light grey sandy silty clay with charcoal flecks	Undated
F10	3	-	Post-hole	0.18m diameter and 0.14m deep Soft dry light grey sandy silty clay with charcoal flecks	Undated
F11	3	-	Ditch	0.56m wide and 0.14m deep Firm dry light grey/brown sandy silt	Undated
F12	3	-	Ditch	0.72m wide and 0.21m deep Firm dry light grey/brown sandy silt	Undated

Appendix 2 Pottery list

Context	Feature type	Find no.	Quantity	Weight (g)	Mean sherd weight (g)	Rim	Handle	Base	Sooting (ext)	Charing (int)	Organic Residue	Fabric Group	Typology	Function	Comments	Start Date	End Date
F1	PIT	1	2	5	2.5							F9				850/900	1150
F1	PIT	1	3	34	11.3	0	0	1	X			F20	COOKING POT	COOKING POT		1150	1375/1400
F1	PIT	1	1	21	21.0							F20				1150	1375/1400
F3	GULLY	3	1	41	41.0	0	0	1		X	X	F13				1000	1225
F3	GULLY	3	4	18	4.5	0	0	1				F13				1000	1225
F5	DITCH	5	3	9	3.0							F21				1200	1550
F7	DITCH	7	1	2	2.0							F9				850/900	1150
F7	DITCH	7	1	3	3.0							F13				1000	1225
F8	GULLY	10	7	41	5.9							F9			?	850/900	1150

Appendix 3 CBM list

Context	Feature type	Find no.	Quantity	Weight (g)	Mean sherd weight(g)	Discard	Typology	Burnt	Comments	Start Date	End Date
F1	PIT	1	2	18	9.0	X	PT			1200/1250	1600
F2	PIT	2	2	3	1.5	X	BAKED CLAY		SAND & COARSER INCS (FL/PEBBLES)	?	?
F2	PIT	2	2	10	5.0		BAKED CLAY	X		?	?
F3	GULLY	3	2	19	9.5		DAUB	X	PY/BR SANDY	?	?
F3	GULLY	3	1	19	19		DAUB		RED SANDY	?	?
F3	GULLY	3	1	15	15		BR		?, PY/OR SANDY SOME FL	1200	1800

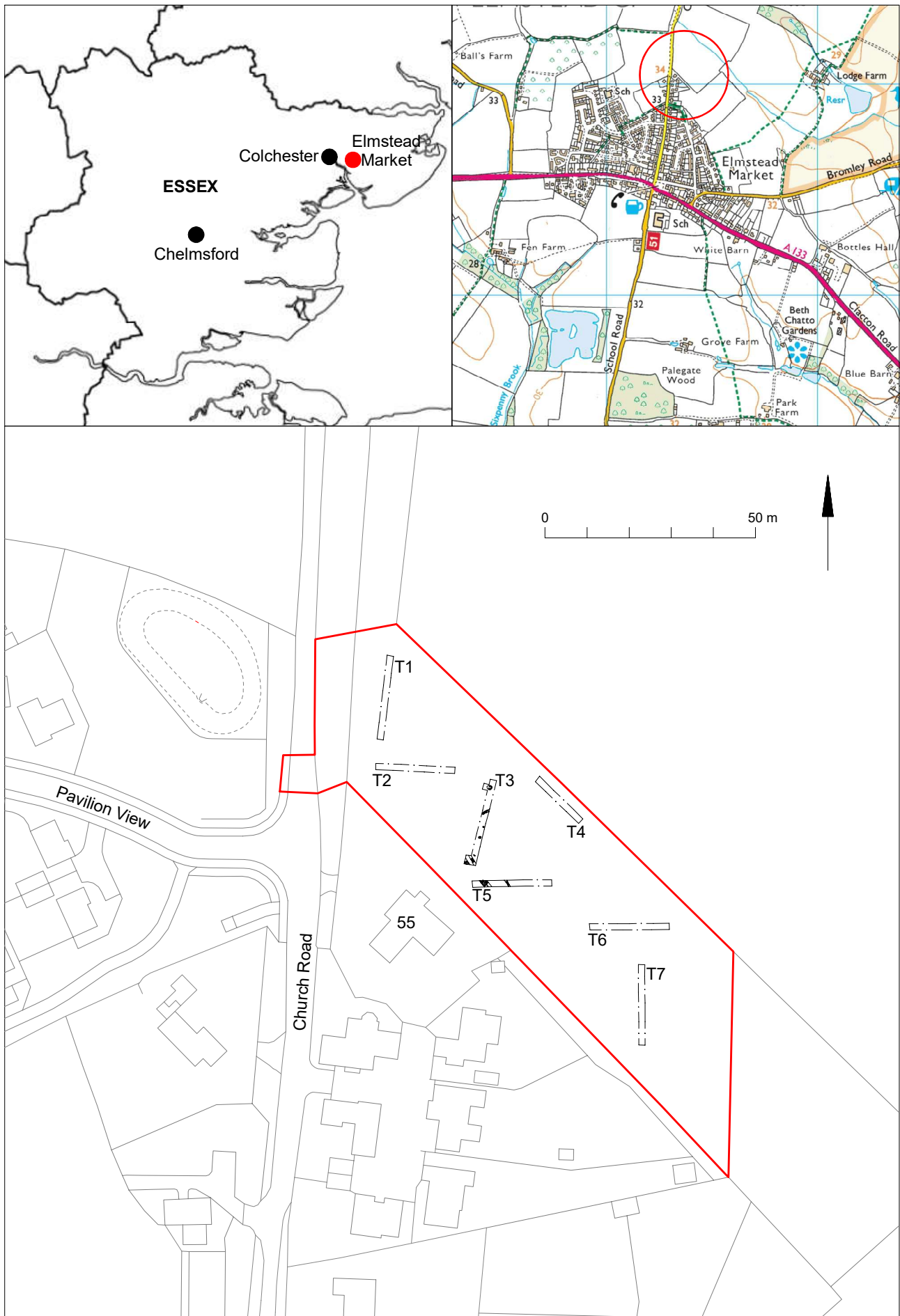
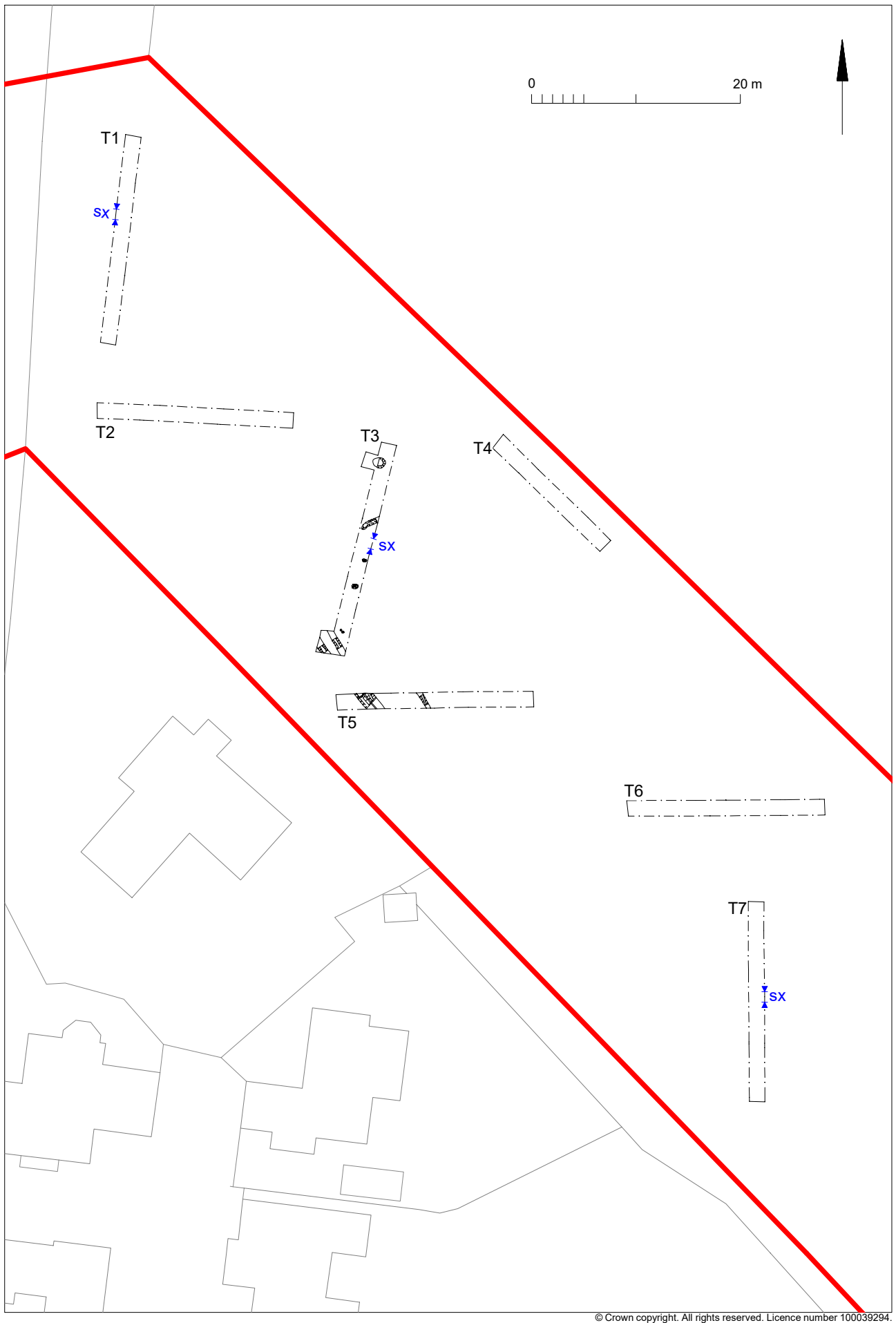


Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Results.

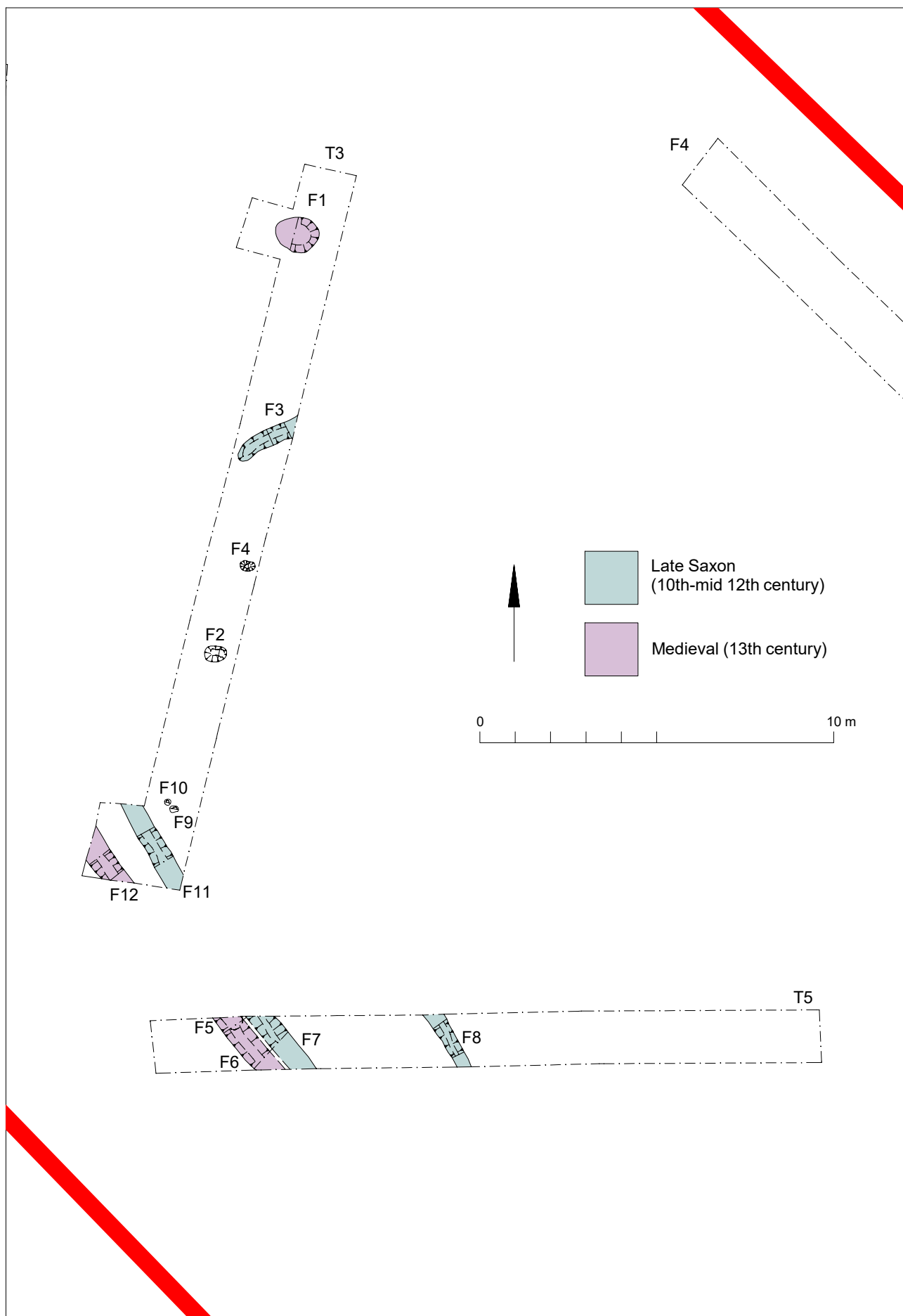


Fig 3 Results: Trenches 3 and 5.

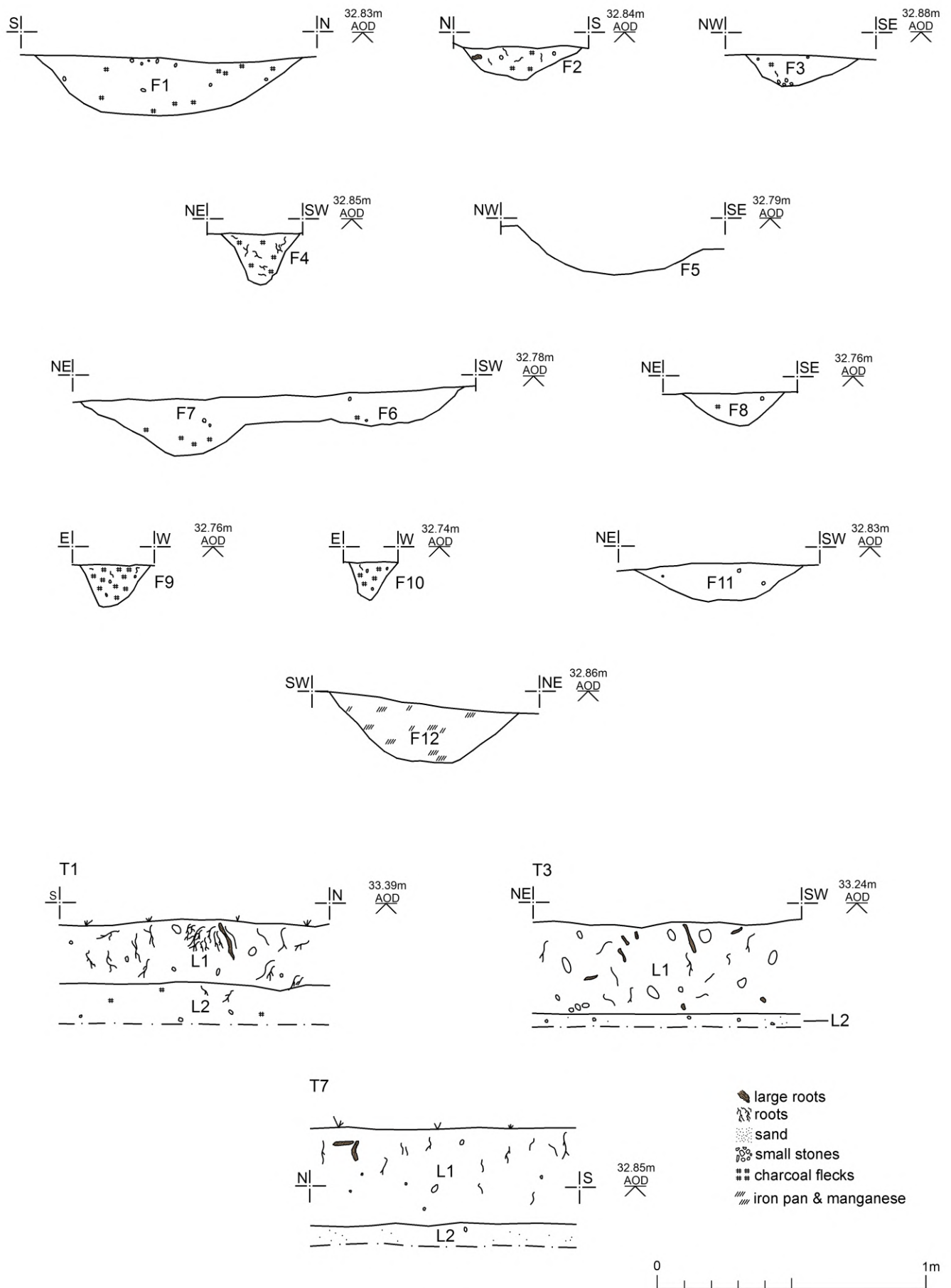


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-537745

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-537745
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to 55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex: November 2025
Sitename	land adjacent to 55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex
Sitecode	EEX62278
Project Identifier(s)	
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	24/01507/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	12-Nov-2025 - 13-Nov-2025
Location	land adjacent to 55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex NGR : TM 06345 25068 LL : 51.885966537111656, 0.996948004536339 12 Fig : 606345,225068
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Tendring Parish : Elmstead
Project Methodology	Achaaeological evaluation (seven trial-trenches) carried out as specified in the project brief and wsi.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (seven trial-trenches) was carried out on land adjacent to 55 Church Road, Elmstead, Essex, in advance of the construction of six bungalows and associated infrastructure. The site lies in an area of extensive cropmarks, close to a postulated Roman road and medieval moat. The evaluation revealed twelve features (three pits, two post-holes, two gullies and five ditches) which were concentrated in Trenches 3 and 5. Pottery from five of the features has been dated from the late Saxon through to the medieval period (10th to the 13th centuries) and it is highly likely that all the features on the site are of a similar date.
Keywords	Ditch - EARLY MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Gully - EARLY MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Rubbish Pit - MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Rubbish Pit - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Vessel - EARLY MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Vessel - MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	Private individual
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Adam Wightman, Chris Lister
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX62278

Archives	Physical Archive - to be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service (Colchester Collection); Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;
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Report generated on: 09 Dec 2025, 12:21