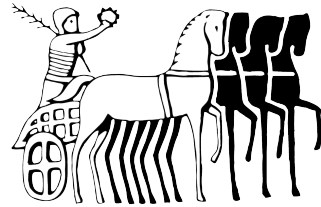


Colchester Archaeological Trust



CAT Report 2226
issued December 2025

**Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Oak House,
Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex:
November 2025**



CAT project ref.: 2025/10c
ECC code: EEX62415

**Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Oak House,
Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex:
November 2025**

NGR: TL 68990 21196 (centre)

**Planning district.: Uttlesford
Planning ref.: UTT/24/2790/OP**

**CAT project ref.: 2025/10c
CAT Report 2226**

**ECC code: EEX62415
ECC monitor: Katie Lee-Smith
OASIS id: colchest3-537949**

report prepared by Xander Smith

fieldwork by Nigel Rayner with Billy Cobble and Matt Perou

**commissioned by Paula Robertson, Front Architecture
on behalf of Property One Building Services Ltd**

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Issued:	02/12/2025	

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Fig 1 Site location.

Fig 2 Results.

Fig 3 Representative sections.

1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (three trial-trenches) was carried out on land adjacent to Oak House, Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex, in advance of the construction of two detached dwellings. Despite being located within the historic village, the evaluation did not uncover any archaeological remains.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Oak House, Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex on 18th November 2025. Work was commissioned by Paula Robertson of Front Architecture on behalf of Property One Building Services Ltd and took place in advance of the construction of two detached dwellings.

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 2024).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Trial Trenching and Excavation at Oak House, Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted* (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 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 EHER shows that the proposed development lies within an area with a high potential for archaeological remains. The site is located within the settlement of Watch House Green, a historic village centred mainly around agriculture. The settlement itself dates to at least the 16th century, with listed buildings including a mid-16th-century timber-framed barn and a 17th-century timber-framed house at Watch House, two houses of 16th to 17th century date named Felmoor Farmhouse and Weavers, and an ornamented 19th-century pump (EHER 37001, 37000, SMR 1146724, 1146732, 1112894, 1112895). A number of other listed buildings exist south-east and south-west of the development, focused mainly in Felsted and Bannister Green.

The former moated site of Little Grand Courts was located in close proximity to the site but has since been destroyed (SMR 9562). To the west of the site are the undated cropmarks of linear features, possible pits and a rectilinear feature (SMR 1358). There are no recorded PAS find spots in the immediate proximity of the site, although some Iron Age and medieval finds have been recorded in the wider area.

To the north-east of the proposed development, a homestead settlement has been identified dating to the 12th and 13th century. Notable finds include Late Saxon pottery and a bone chess piece. Overall, the excavation showed a broadly agricultural land use from the 11th century, with later field enclosure dating to the late 18th to 20th century (ASE 2016).

CAT has completed three investigations in the area around the proposed development. In 2021, an evaluation east of Watch House revealed eleven ditches, one post-hole and a metalled surface (EHER 49596). These were predominantly Roman in date apart from four post-medieval features (CAT Report 1660). The subsequent excavation in 2022 revealed a continuation of this activity with a ditch and associated gullies, metalling and more cut features likely representing evidence of a Roman farmstead or villa dating from the late 2nd into the early to mid-4th century (CAT Report 1849). In 2023 CAT completed an evaluation at Watch House Farm, but only a single modern feature was identified containing dumped agricultural material (CAT Report 1995).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site to be London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand), with superficial deposits of Lowestoft Formation (chalky till, together with outwash sands and gravels, silts and clays).

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

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)

Four trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. All trenches were 14m long and 1.8m wide, and were excavated through a modern layer of grassy topsoil (L1, c 0.14-0.16m thick, soft moist dark grey/brown silt and inclusions of: stone 1%, tile/brick 1%) and an undated subsoil (L2, c 0.22-0.26m thick, firm moist medium brown silty clay and inclusions of: stone 1%), into the natural geology (L3, encountered c 0.34 – 0.4m below current ground level, firm moist medium yellow/brown silty clay and inclusions of: gravel 5%, stone 5%). No archaeological remains were encountered.



Photograph 1 Trench 1, looking west north-west.



Photograph 2 Trench 2, looking south-east.



Photograph 3 Trench 3, looking south-west.



Photograph 4 Trench 2 representative section with sondage, looking south-west.

6 Conclusion

Despite being located in an area that had a high potential for archaeological remains, the evaluation on land adjacent to Oak House, Watch House Green, uncovered no archaeological remains.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Paula Robertson of Front Architecture and Property One Building Services Ltd for commissioning and funding the project. The project was managed by C Lister and A Wightman, with fieldwork carried out by N Rayner with B Cobble and M Perou. Figures were compiled by X Smith and C Hill. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Katie Lee-Smith.

8 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at www.catuk.org

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9 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 1066
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'
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 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 c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

10 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, wsi, photographs, and original site data (for example context sheets, section drawings).

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Distribution list:

Paula Robertson, Front Architecture

Property One Building Services Ltd

Historic Environment Advisor, Essex County Council Place Services

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

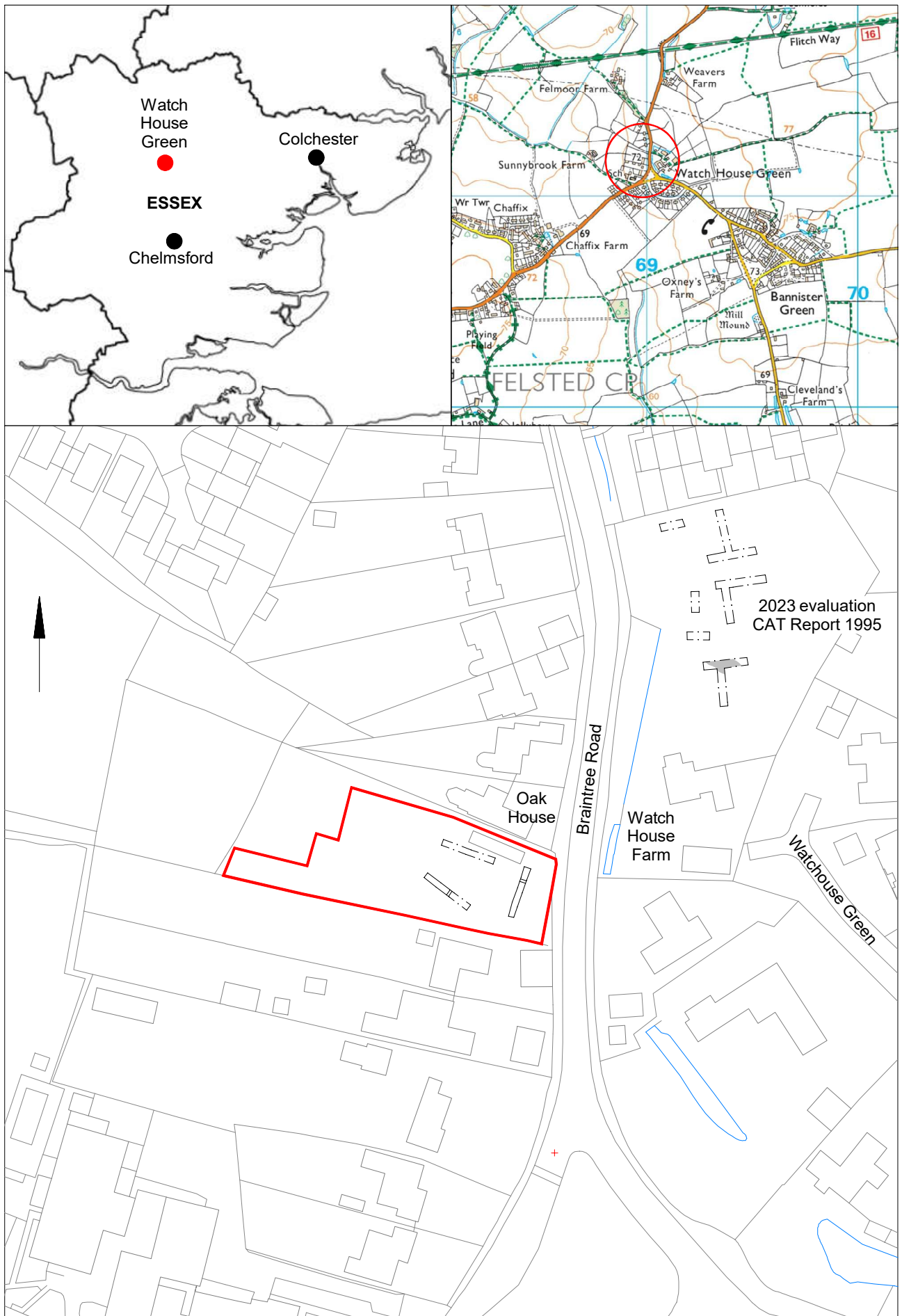


Fig 1 Site location.

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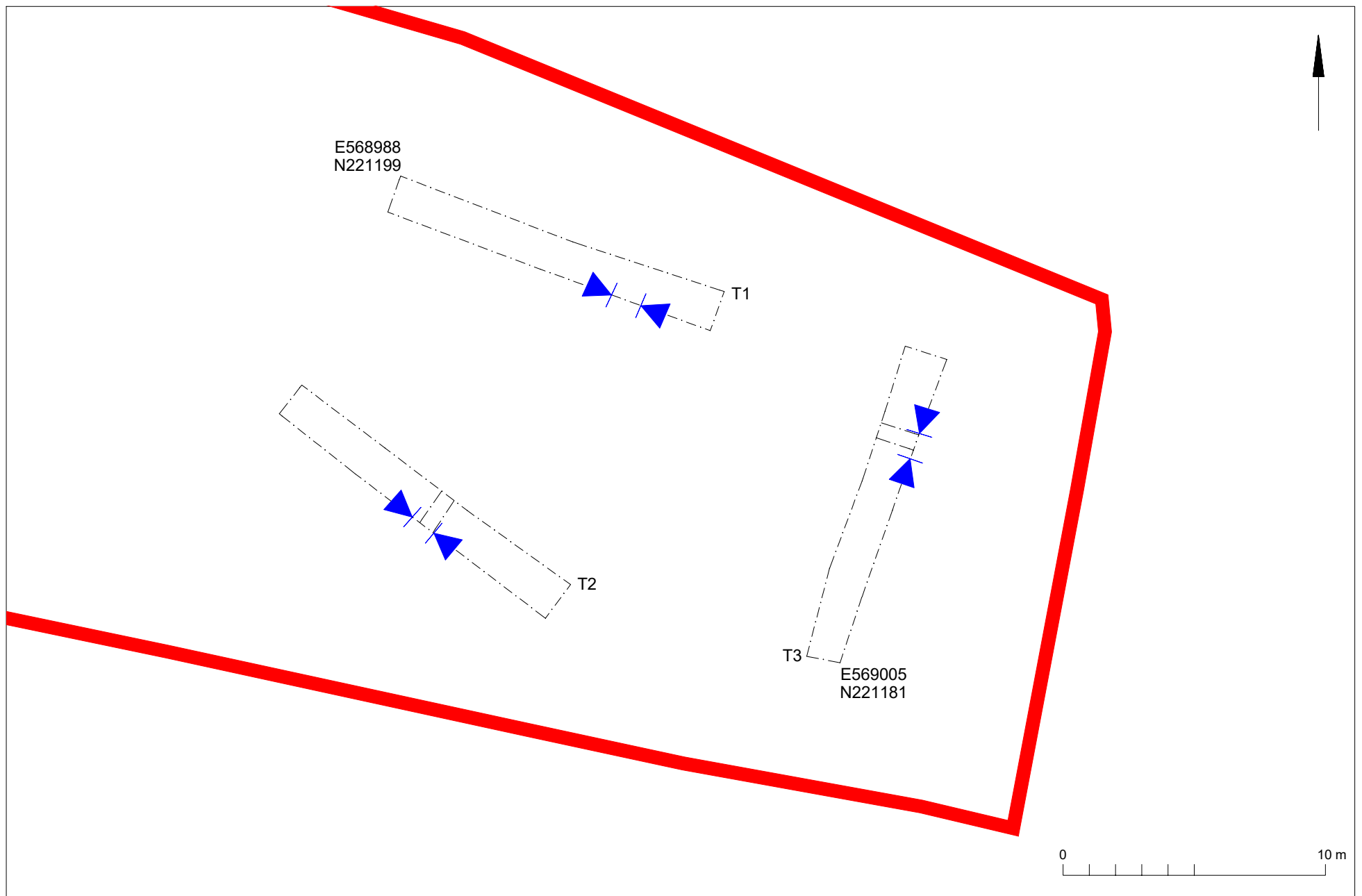


Fig 2 Results.

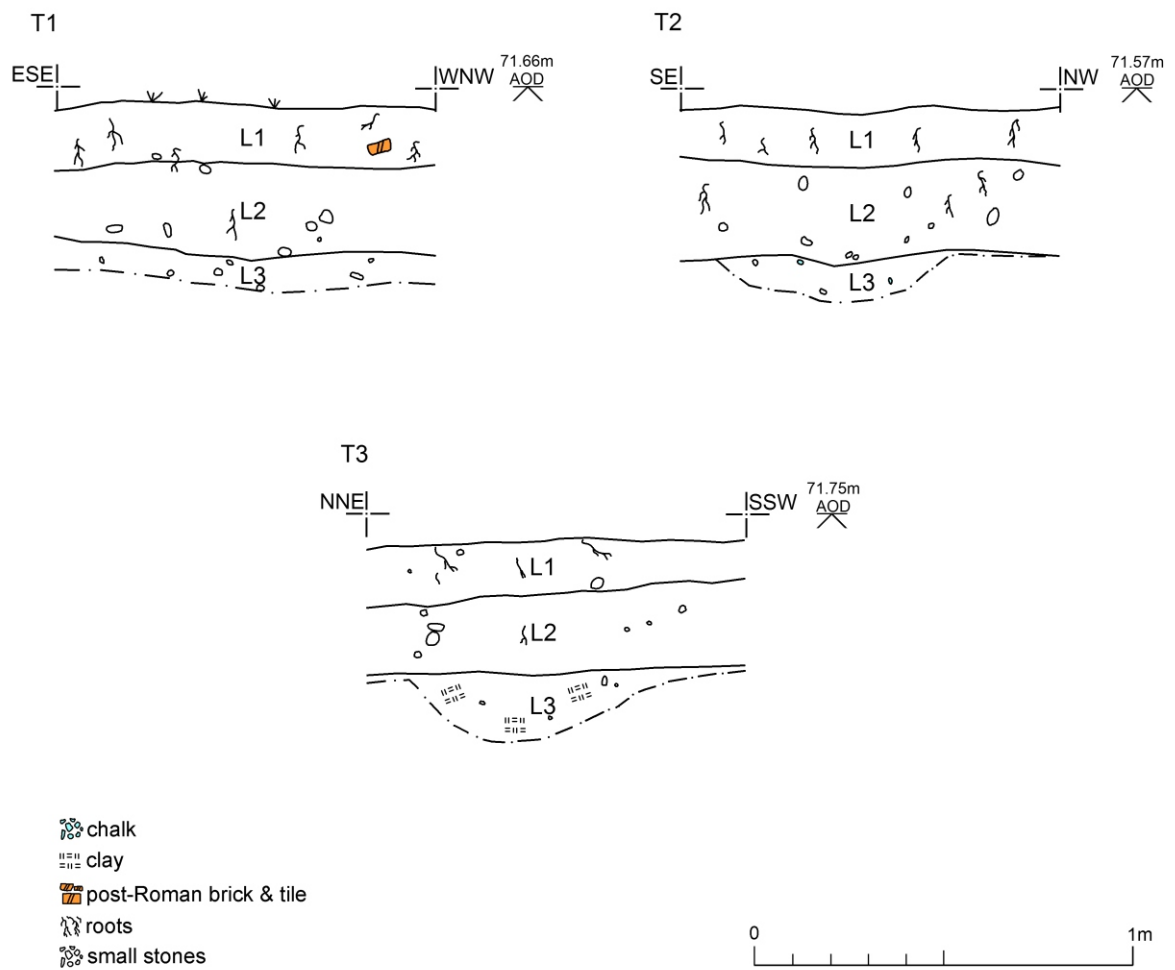


Fig 3 Representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-537949

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-537949
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Oak House, Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex: November 2025
Sitename	land adjacent to Oak House, Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex
Sitecode	EEX62415
Project Identifier(s)	2025/10c
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	UTT/24/2790/OP
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	18-Nov-2025 - 18-Nov-2025
Location	land adjacent to Oak House, Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex NGR : TL 68990 21196 LL : 51.86375238350963, 0.452853423868914 12 Fig : 568990,221196
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Uttlesford Parish : Felsted
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation (three trial-trenches) carried out as specified in the project brief and WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (three trial-trenches) was carried out on land adjacent to Oak House, Watch House Green, Braintree Road, Felsted, Essex, in advance of the construction of two detached dwellings. Despite being located within the historic village, the evaluation did not uncover any archaeological remains.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation developer
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Adam Wightman, Chris Lister
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX62415
Archives	