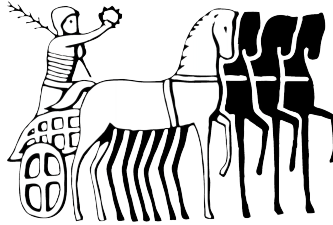


Colchester Archaeological Trust



CAT Report 2255
issued February 2026

**Archaeological excavation at 4 Castle Court,
Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1BJ: January 2026**



CAT project ref.: 2025/11i
ECC code: EEX63018
Scheduled Monument Consent Number: S00248192

**Archaeological excavation at 4 Castle Court,
Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1BJ: January 2026**

NGR: TL 53924 38739 (centre)

**Scheduled Monument: NHLE 1297737
Scheduled monument consent number: S00248192**

**CAT project ref.: 2025/11i
CAT Report 2255**

**ECC code: EEX63018
OASIS id: colchest3-538584**

**report prepared by Sarah Veasey
with contributions from Dr Matthew Loughton and
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fieldwork by Sarah Veasey with Billy Coble and Ziya Eksen

**commissioned by Ed Morton, The Morton Partnership
on behalf of Bakers of Danbury**

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1 Summary

Archaeological excavation was carried out at 4 Castle Court, Saffron Walden, Essex, comprising the hand-excavation of a foundation trench for a replacement boundary wall. The wall is located between 4 Castle Court and Walden Castle, a scheduled (NHLE 1297737) motte and bailey castle. A single feature was identified during the work, a construction cut associated with the removed boundary wall. A modest finds assemblage was recovered from topsoil, consisting of pottery sherds, glass, a metal fork and a floor tile.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of archaeological excavation undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at 4 Castle Court, Saffron Walden, Essex, from 5th-9th January 2026. The work was commissioned by Ed Morton of The Morton Partnership, on behalf of Bakers of Danbury, and comprised the excavation of a foundation trench for a replacement boundary wall.

As the site is located adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) (NHLE 2197737), and the foundation trench straddles the SAM zone, an archaeological condition by the Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments (HEIAM) required that the foundation trench for the replacement wall be hand-excavated by professional archaeologists.

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

In addition to the 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, 2023a&b, 2025)
- 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 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 site is located within the inner bailey of the scheduled monument of Walden Castle (NHLE 1297737), a motte and bailey castle west of Castle Hill and Zone 1 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.

Saffron Walden is sited in the north of Uttlesford district. It lies about 2km to the east of the River Cam, at the point where the important Lea/Stort/Cam River route cuts a gap through the East Anglian Heights (a chalk ridge). The castle is located at the highest point, 68m OD, on the top of the chalk promontory known as Bury Hill. This promontory is flanked on either side by the streams known as The Kings Ditch and the Madgate Slade; these converge to the west of the town to form the Slade (ECC 1999, 3). After the Norman Conquest Saffron Walden was granted to the de Mandevilles, becoming the centre of their Essex and Suffolk estates. They had the castle built in the late 11th century (EHER 411).

The Castle comprises three distinct units; the keep, which consists of a large square tower of at least three storeys with clasping buttresses; the inner bailey, an ovoid area encompassing c 1.25ha enclosing the keep and domestic buildings; and the outer bailey, an elongated oval area which enclosed the inner bailey and the rest of Bury Hill promontory which contained the town. Various excavations have taken place on both the defences and town interior (EHER 408).

During monitoring of groundworks for an extension to 4 Castle Street, a probable pre-castle land-surface was uncovered, buried below c 1.2m of chalk-rich re-deposited material. Archaeological features consisting of a single possible post-hole and a small pit, both of post-medieval date, were identified above the medieval redeposited mound material. A fragment of flint walling, which had been incorporated into the southern wall of the existing dwelling, was found to consist of black glass bottles and a piece of carved masonry, perhaps derived from the castle. The wall probably represents the surviving remains of the rear boundary of the 18th-century properties that once fronted onto Castle Street at this location (FAU Report 1655).

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during groundworks for the construction of a new toilet, septic tank, and drainage system at the Castle Hill Tennis Club in 2011. Although the groundworks were relatively small-scale, they still provided a useful window into the western half of the inner bailey. Potential medieval and post-medieval strata survived intact in places to a depth exceeding 1m. The discovery of the robbed foundation of a building, probably medieval in date, is particularly important as few remains of other contemporary buildings have so far been identified within the castle other than the keep itself (FAU Report 1967).

In 2020, Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out an evaluation prior to the construction of a new hard tennis court at the tennis club. Shallow robber trenches equating to walls were recorded in trenches 1

and 2, while trench 3 contained no archaeological features or finds. There was no explanation for an area of ground disturbance detected by the geophysical survey (Barlow & Higgs 2020).

Further archaeological monitoring was undertaken at Castle Hill Tennis Club during the groundworks for replacement fencing as well as the relocation of the grass court. Despite being located within the inner bailey of the scheduled monument, no archaeological remains were uncovered, although across the whole site finds included post-medieval peg-tile, building slate, animal bone and clay tobacco pipe (CAT Report 1848).

In 2025, a test-pit was excavated at the proposed development site (CAT Report 2212). The test-pit was excavated to establish the depth and nature of the wall's foundations. No archaeological finds were recovered and the only feature recorded was the wall proposed for demolition.

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site is Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation (Chalk).

4 Aims

Archaeological excavation was undertaken to excavate and record any archaeological deposits which would be impacted by the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

A foundation trench, measuring 1.8m wide and 8.3m long, was hand-excavated by CAT archaeologists to a depth of 1.3m. The trench was excavated through a layer of topsoil (L1, 0.22-0.46m thick) into the natural chalk (L3, encountered 0.22-0.56m below current ground level). A number of medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered from the topsoil. In some areas of the trench, a possible layer of subsoil (L2, 0.20-0.35 thick) was identified, but it was unclear if this was areas of topsoil and natural that had been combined by the high volume of root action throughout the trench. A full context list, with context descriptions and dimensions, can be found in appendix 1.

The only feature encountered during the works was construction cut F1 (0.14-0.23m wide and 0.80-0.90m deep.), which was related to the removed flint and mortar boundary wall.

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



Photograph 1 The trench during excavation, looking north-east.



Photograph 2 The fully excavated trench, looking east.



Photograph 3 Drawing the representative section, looking north-west.

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The excavation produced a small assemblage of seventeen sherd of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) with a combined weight of 950g and EVE of 0.72 (Table 1). The mean sherd weight is 55.9g. All of this material was recovered from the topsoil L1.

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	16	683	42.7	0.72
CBM	1	267	267.0	-
All	17	950	55.9	0.72

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM.

Medieval and post-medieval pottery

Medieval and post-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). The pottery assemblage consists of sixteen sherds with a weight of 683g and EVE of 0.72 (Table 3). Pottery of note included a blue transfer printed Spode rectangular shallow tray or dish in Pearlware (Staffordshire-type white earthenwares/fabric F48D) dating to the late 18th to early 19th century, and a handle from a Jackfield teapot (fabric F48J).

Fabric code	Fabric description	Fabric date range guide
F21	Colchester-type ware	c 1200-1550
F40	Post-medieval red earthenwares	c 1500-19th/20th century
F40A	Metropolitan slipware	1600-1800
F45M	Modern English stoneware	1800-2000
F48D	Staffordshire-type white earthenwares	1800-2000
F48J	Jackfield ware	1740-1800
F48L	Lustre ware	1780-1900

Table 2 Medieval and post-medieval pottery fabrics recorded.

Fabric code	Fabric description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
F21	Colchester-type ware	4	131	32.8	0.00
F40	Post-medieval red earthenwares	3	261	87.0	0.22
F40A	Metropolitan slipware	1	16	16.0	0.00
F45M	Modern English stoneware	1	35	35.0	0.00
F48D	Staffordshire-type white earthenwares	5	201	40.2	0.50
F48J	Jackfield ware	1	27	27.0	0.00
F48L	Lustre ware	1	12	12.0	0.00
Total		16	683	42.7	0.72

Table 3 Summary of the medieval and post-medieval pottery.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

The CBM consists of a fragment (267g) of plain floor tile.

Conclusion

The assemblage of pottery and CBM from topsoil L1 dates to the 19th century. This material was not retained.

Context	Description	Medieval and post-medieval pottery	CBM	Date Approx.
L1	Toposil	F21 (squat jug), F40 (smaller storage jar, large storage jar), F40A, F45M (bottle), F48D (plate, tray/dish), F48J (teapot), F48L	Floor tile	19th century

Table 4 Approximate dates for the individual contexts.

6.2 Glass and iron

by Laura Pooley

Finds recovered from L1, finds no.2 were:

- A fragment of clear window glass, 8.2g.
- A fragment from the base of a pale green glass bottle, 14.6g.
- A fragment from the handle of a blue glass vessel decorated with striped panels, 4.4g
- A complete paste jar of clear glass, ribbed underneath the rim, embossed **10G** on base, 72.0g, 43mm high, 58mm diameter.
- Incomplete scale-tang iron fork with most of prongs missing and both scales missing (although the three evenly spaced iron rivets to hold the tangs are still in place), 24.4g

All are of 19th to 20th century date and have been discarded.

7 Conclusion

Despite the close position of the trench to Walden Castle, the only archaeological feature identified during the excavation was a construction cut associated with the boundary wall that is to be replaced. A number of finds were collected from the topsoil. The assemblage was largely post-medieval in date but did contain some residual medieval pottery sherds, suggesting that the area around the castle has been subject to landscaping during in the 19th and 20th centuries.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Ed Morton, The Morton Partnership and Bakers of Danbury for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister and carried out by S Veasey with B Coble and Z Eksen. Figures were prepared by S Veasey. The project was monitored for Historic England by Adam Single.

9 References

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

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10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
EHHER	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
wsi written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: Not retained.

Digital record:

CAT Report 2255

CAT WSI

Digital photographs

Site data (including scans of original sections)

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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Distribution list

The Morton Partnership

Bakers of Danbury

Adam Single, Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments

Essex Historic Environment Record

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
L1	1	Topsoil	Soft, moist/wet, medium grey/brown silty loam and inclusions of: stone 3% 0.22-0.46m thick	19th/20th century
L2	-	?Subsoil	Soft, moist, grey/brown silty loam with redeposited chalk throughout 0.20-0.35 thick.	Undated
L3	-	Natural	Firm, moist, light grey/white chalk Encountered 0.22-0.56m below current ground level	Post-glacial
F1	-	Construction cut	Soft moist/wet, medium, grey/brown sandy silty loam and inclusions of: stone 5% 0.14-0.23m wide and 0.80-0.90m deep.	Post-medieval

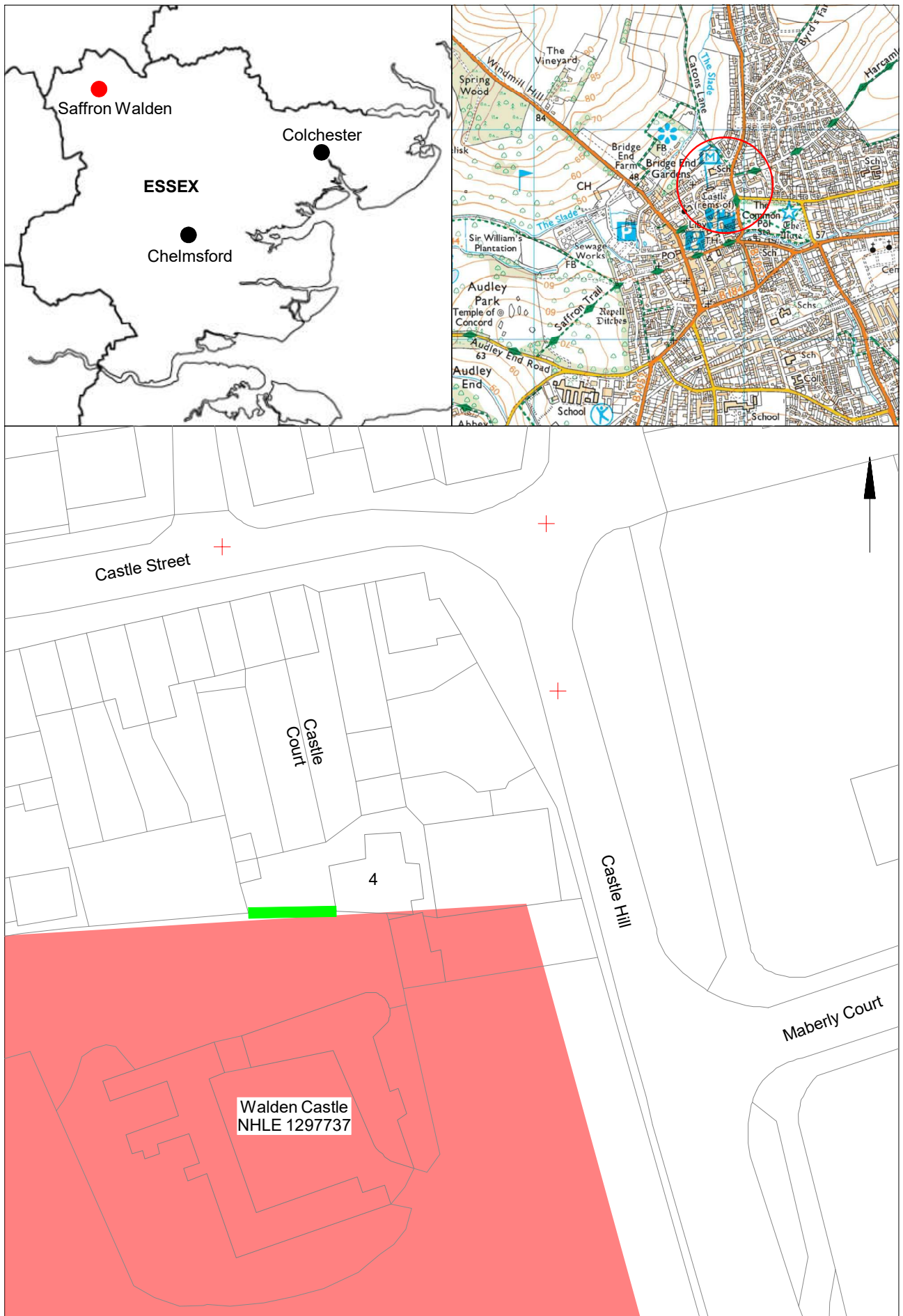
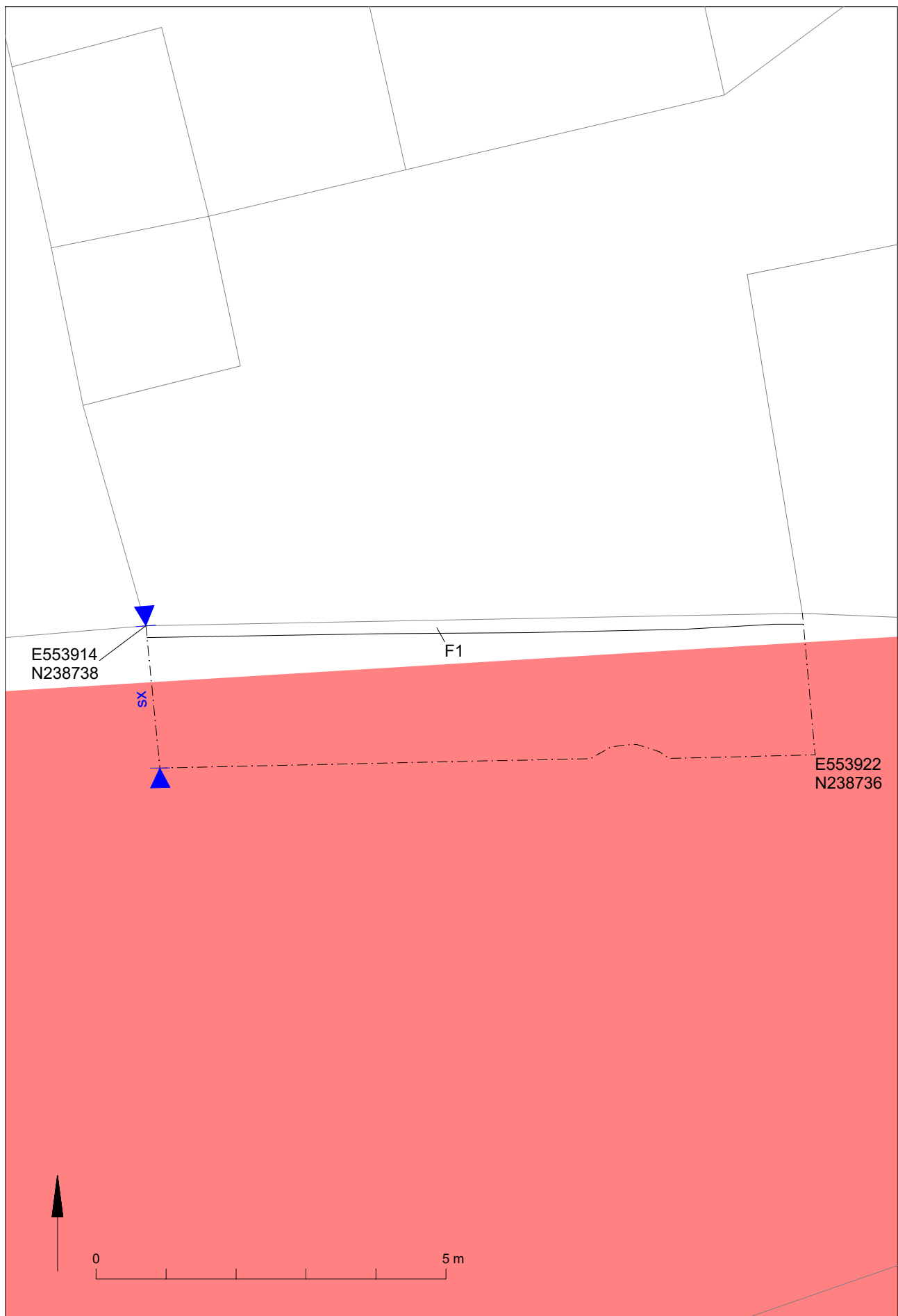


Fig 1 Site location, with the boundary wall highlighted in green in relation to the scheduled extents of Walden Castle (shown red).

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Fig 2 Results. The extent of the scheduled zone surrounding Walden Castle shown in red.

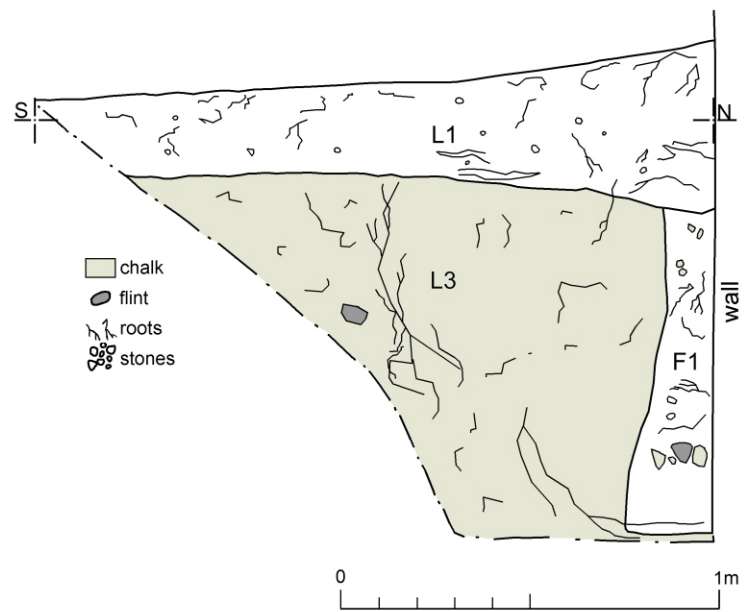


Fig 3 Representative section.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-538584

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-538584
Project Name	Excavation at 4 Castle Court, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1BJ
Sitename	4 Castle Court, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1BJ
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	2025/11i
Activity type	Excavation
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Scheduled monument consent
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	05-Jan-2026 - 09-Jan-2026
Location	4 Castle Court, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1BJ NGR : TL 53924 38739 LL : 52.0257134163273, 0.242084680150517 12 Fig : 553924,238739
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Uttlesford Parish : Saffron Walden
Project Methodology	A foundation trench, measuring 1.8m wide and 8.3m long, was hand-excavated by CAT archaeologists to a depth of 1.3m.
Project Results	Archaeological excavation was carried out at 4 Castle Court, Saffron Walden, Essex, comprising the hand-excavation of a foundation trench for a replacement boundary wall. The wall is located between 4 Castle Court and Walden Castle, a scheduled (NHLE 1297737) motte and bailey castle. A single feature was identified during the work, a construction cut associated with the removed boundary wall. A modest finds assemblage was recovered from topsoil, consisting of pottery sherds, glass, a metal fork and a floor tile.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation Bakers of Danbury
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	A Wightman, C Lister, L Pooley
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - EEX63018
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;