

**Archaeological monitoring at
'The Meadows', University of Essex,
Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex
July-September 2012**



**report prepared by
Adam Wightman
with a finds report
by Stephen Benfield**

**commissioned by
Bouygues**

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CAT Report 678
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Summary

The Colchester Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief during the construction of a row of town-houses at 'The Meadows' site in the new Knowledge Gateway development on the Colchester campus of the University of Essex.

Nineteen archaeological features were identified and recorded during the monitoring. Based on the pottery-dating evidence, it is probable that they date to the period of the mid-late 1st century BC to the AD mid 1st century.

Archaeological features and finds dating to this period were also identified in four trial-trenches excavated to the east of The Meadows site during the ECC FAU evaluation in 2004. Together, these findings suggest that there was probably a rural settlement, perhaps a farmstead, located in this area during the Late Iron Age.

Introduction (Figs 1-2)

This is the archive report on the archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on behalf of Bouygues at The Meadows, the University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex (NGR TM 0242 2424 (c); Fig 1). The Meadows site is approximately 1.05 hectares in area and is situated in the southern corner of the wider 17.5 hectare 'Knowledge Gateway' site, an extension of the University of Essex's Colchester campus.

Five new student accommodation blocks were constructed on the site as well as a pavilion building which will house a retail outlet, a common room and laundry facilities (Fig 2). Three blocks of 'cluster flats' (Blocks 1-3) and a row of town-houses (Townhouse 'Row A') are located on land which was built up during the Knowledge Gateway infrastructure enabling works (Fig 2). The removal of the topsoil from this area was intermittently monitored by a CAT archaeologist in 2011 (CAT Report 638). Once the topsoil had been removed, clay was deposited on the flood-plain to raise the ground-level by approximately 0.75 m to create a 'residential platform' on which the new buildings have been constructed without the need for archaeological monitoring.

The area to the north-east of the line of protected trees (Fig 2) was used to stockpile topsoil during the Knowledge Gateway infrastructure enabling work (CAT Report 638). Therefore, archaeological monitoring was required in this area during the construction of a second row of town-houses (Townhouse 'Row B') and the pavilion (Fig 2).

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a brief written by Martin Winter, the Colchester Borough Council Archaeology Officer (CBC 2011), and a corresponding written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT (CAT 2012).

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with Colchester Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (CIMS 2008a) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester and Ipswich Museums* (CIMS 2008b), and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) was also followed.

Archaeological background (Figs 1-2, 4)

Located to the west of the development area are the remains of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery (Fig 2), which consist of at least five barrows (EHER no 2413). One of these barrows lies to the west of the railway line within the site of the former Moler Works, which is now the car-park of the B&Q store. The other four barrows are located to the east of the railway line on the edge of the Knowledge Gateway development area (Fig 1). Three of these barrows are complete, but the western side of the fourth one was probably removed when Salary Brook was diverted for the construction of the railway.

A trial-trenching evaluation was undertaken within the Knowledge Gateway development area by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) in 2004. This evaluation identified evidence for agricultural activity on the lower valley slope of the River Colne during the Late Iron Age-early Roman period (Fig 4; ECC FAU 2004). Further evidence for activity in the Roman period was encountered on the lower valley slope in Area B of the watching brief undertaken by CAT during the Knowledge Gateway infrastructure enabling works (CAT Report 638). Five pits were identified, one of which contained frequent Roman brick and tile fragments which probably derive from a Roman building which stood nearby, and two others are thought to be associated with burial activity (Fig 4). The Colchester Road (Fig 1) also follows the presumed line of a Roman road (EHER no 2534).

Near the top of the river valley, just to the south of the Colchester Road, a dense concentration of medieval pottery was identified during the infrastructure enabling works (CAT Report 638). This has been attributed to domestic occupation in the area in the 13th-14th centuries, probably associated with a previously unknown medieval farmstead.

It is probable that the original 'Wivenhoe Park' was established in the medieval period. It was initially a deer park (EHER no 16186), the area of which can only be postulated from historic map sources which are of a later date. The earliest such source dates to 1734 (ERO D/DU 27/1) and shows a park area enclosed by a park pale with a house or lodge on the southern boundary of the park (now Boundary Road; ECC FAU 2003). It is probable that the flood-plain would have been used for grazing in this period.

Results (Fig 3; Plates 1-5)

The archaeological monitoring took place over a period of six weeks and consisted of nine visits. The removal of topsoil from the area of Townhouse 'Row B' and from the southern end of the eastern service-trench was carried out under continuous archaeological supervision (Fig 3). The remainder of the eastern service-trench and the large service-trench to the west of Townhouse 'Row B' (Fig 3) were both examined after they had been excavated. The western service-trench was approximately 1.5 m deep. The eastern service-trench was a minimum of 1.0 m deep; it had been partially infilled prior to the arrival of the CAT archaeologist.

Within the site of Townhouse 'Row B', a medium grey/brown clayey-silt topsoil (L1, approximately 350 mm thick) overlay a lighter grey/brown silty-clay colluvial deposit (L2, approximately 150 mm thick). L1 and L2 were stripped from the development area using a tracked excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, exposing an alluvial orange/brown silty-clay (L3). All the archaeological features identified during the monitoring were cut into L3 (Plates 1-5). Late Iron Age and Roman pottery sherds were collected from the colluvial deposit (L2) during the topsoil-stripping (see finds section below). The

only modern disturbance encountered was the cut for a stormwater drain in the southern end of the eastern service-trench (Fig 3).

Nineteen archaeological features were identified during the archaeological monitoring (F1-F19; Fig 3). Those within the footprint of Townhouse 'Row B' were covered by a piling mat within minutes of being exposed and were, therefore, not excavated. Tentative interpretations based on the size and shape of the features in plan, the character of their upper fills and any finds recovered from these fills, are outlined below.

A group of four ?post-holes (F1, F2, F7, F8) was identified towards the southern end of the site of Townhouse 'Row B' (Fig 3). These appeared to form a square and may be the remains of a four-post structure. All four ?post-holes had dark grey/brown clayey-silt fills which contained flecks of daub and a high charcoal content (Plate 1). A sherd of Late Iron Age-early Roman grog-tempered ware and a burnt flint were recovered from F1 and a fragment of fired clay and a small lump of slag were recovered from F2 (see finds section below). To the north-east, two more ?post-holes (F9, F10) were identified. The fill of F9 contained no charcoal inclusions and was significantly lighter than the fills of the other five ?post-holes. However, its fill was comparable to the ?pits F11, F12 and F19 which were also identified in this area (Fig 3).



Plate 1: ?post-holes F1, F2, F7, F8.

To the north-west of those nine features, a ?post-hole (F6), the terminal end of a curving ?ditch (F3) and two large ?pits (F4, F5) were identified (Fig 3). Both the ?post-hole (F6) and the ?ditch (F3) had medium grey/brown clayey-silt fills with charcoal flecking. A piece of abraded Roman CBM and a worked flint were recovered from the surface of F3 (see finds section below). The large ?pit (F4) had a dark grey/brown fill with a high charcoal content, particularly around the edge of the feature (Plate 2). A large patch of burnt clay was observed in the centre of F4 and there was a slight reddening of the surrounding natural clay, possibly indicating burning *in situ*. Large ?pit F5 also had a dark grey/brown clayey-silt fill with a high charcoal content. Fragments of burnt clay, slag and three Late Iron Age-early Roman pottery sherds were recovered from the surface of F5 (see finds section below). It is possible that F4 and F5 may derive from industrial processes occurring on the site. However, the shape and size of F5 are reminiscent of an inhumation burial (Plate 3), perhaps indicating that F4 and F5 are pyre-related features.



Plate 2: large ?pit/pyre-related feature F4.



Plate 3: large ?pit/pyre-related feature F5.

In the centre of the footprint of Townhouse 'Row B', a further six features were identified (F13-F18; Fig 3). F16-F18 was a group of three ?post-holes which had dark grey/brown clayey-silt fills with a high charcoal content. The large ?pit F13 was roughly oval in shape and had a similar fill to the ?post-holes F16-F18. A small lump of slag and a burnt stone were recovered from the surface of F13 (see finds below). The ?pit was very large (approximately 3m in diameter) and was perhaps an infilled quarry-pit, or maybe an infilled hollow caused by animal trampling. In total, 126 small sherds of Late Iron Age pottery were recovered from the surface of F15 and a large patch of burnt clay was observed at the western end of the feature, probably indicating burning *in situ* (Plate 4). F15 may have been an oven with a flue on its western side or possibly a pyre-related feature.

The most northerly feature identified during the monitoring was a NE-SW aligned linear feature (F14; Fig 3). F14 was approximately 1.5 m wide and had a medium grey/brown clayey-silt fill with charcoal flecking (Plate 5). Nine sherds of Late Iron Age pottery were

recovered from the surface of F14 (see finds section below). F14 was observed in section in the edges of the two service-trenches (Fig 3) and was over 1 m deep. No features were identified to the north of F14, perhaps indicating that it had been a field boundary ditch.



Plate 4: ?oven/pyre-related feature F15.



Plate 5: linear feature F14.

Finds

by Stephen Benfield

Introduction

A small quantity of bulk finds, most of which can be dated to the Late Iron Age period, were recovered from seven contexts (F1, F2, F3, F5, F13, F14, F15) and from the colluvial deposit L2. The most closely-dated finds consist of pottery of Late Iron Age date and one piece of ceramic building material (CBM) which is probably Roman. One thick flint flake is possibly of later prehistoric (Bronze Age) date. In addition,

there are a few pieces of burnt flint, fired clay and slag. The finds are listed by context and described in Table 2 (below). The Late Iron Age pottery (a total of 146 sherds, weighing 511g) was recorded with reference to the Colchester Roman pottery fabric series (**CAR 10**) and the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber & Dore 1998), supplemented by an additional fabric code for Late Iron Age grog-tempered ware (Fabric GTW) and for Central Gaulish pottery in the 'Standard Fabric' (see Stead & Rigby 1989, 119; Fabric CNG SF). The pottery fabrics recorded are listed and quantified in Table 1 (below).

Table 1: Roman pottery fabrics.

Fabric	Description	quantity	Wt (g)
CNG TN	Central Gaulish (micaceous) <i>terra nigra</i>	1	3
DZ	fine oxidised wares	3	5
GTW	grog-tempered ware (Late Iron Age-early Roman)	141	454
MP	Oxfordshire-type red colour-coated wares	1	49

Table 2: finds by context and find number.

context	context type	finds no	finds	finds spot-date
L2		1	Pottery Late Iron Age/Roman , Fabric GTW, 6@ 25 g (abraded), inc. poss. sherd from a butt-beaker; Fabric MP(?), 1@ 49 g (abraded) base sherd, micaceous, orange-brown, slightly soft, sandy fabric	Roman, ?4th century (residual? Late Iron Age)
F1	?post-hole	3	Pottery Late Iron Age , Fabric GTW, 1@ 7 g. Burnt stone , flint 1@ 39 g.	Late Iron Age
F2	?post-hole	4	Fired clay 1@ 1 g, dark, silty fragment, presumed to be fired clay. Slag 1@ 11 g, dark coloured, moderately heavy slag (type unidentified)	
F3	?ditch	5	CBM ?Roman 1@ 16 g (abraded). Flint 1@ 6 g, squat secondary flake	Roman
F5	large ?pit	6	Pottery Late Iron Age/Roman , Fabric DZ, 1@ 1 g; Fabric GTW 2@ 6 g. Fired clay 2@ 1 g, red, sandy fragments. Slag 1@ 11 g, dark-coloured, light weight slag (type unidentified)	Late Iron Age/early Roman
F13	large ?pit	7	Burnt stone , flint, 1@ 349 g, single broken cobble piece Slag 1@ 13 g, dark-coloured, moderately heavy slag (type unidentified)	
F14	linear feature	8	Pottery Late Iron Age/Roman , Fabric GTW, 8@ 84 g. Fabric CNG TN, 1@ 3 g, (abraded) upright rim sherd from platter form Cam 2	Late Iron Age (late 1st century BC-mid 1st century AD)
F15	?oven or possible pyre-related feature	9	Pottery Late Iron Age , Fabric DZ, 2@ 4 g (abraded), includes rim sherd - these are probably sherds from beakers; Fabric GTW, 124@ 332 g, the fabric is thin and wheel-thrown, suggesting an early-mid 1st-century date, rims from 2-3 different pots, includes a bead-rim jar/bowl	Late Iron Age (early-mid 1st century)

Finds discussion

Prehistoric

A few of the finds are possibly of prehistoric date but are not closely datable. There is a single, squat flint flake from F3 which is probably prehistoric and most likely to date to the later Bronze Age. Single heat-altered stones (burnt flints) from F1 and F13 are also possibly of prehistoric date, as these are commonly associated with prehistoric sites. The struck flint and one of the burnt flint pieces were recovered from features containing other finds which date to the Late Iron Age and Roman period, while the other piece of burnt flint (a broken cobble piece) comes from a feature which also produced a piece of slag (F13). Assuming that the struck flint and burnt flints are of prehistoric date, they all appear to be residual in the contexts from which they were recovered. There is also a small quantity of finds of prehistoric date from the evaluation trenches excavated by ECC FAU to the east of the site (Fig 4; ECC FAU 2004, 10-12, appendix 3). These include worked flints and flint-tempered pottery, dated as probably Late Bronze Age, from FAU T21 and a Neolithic arrowhead from FAU T23 (ECC FAU 2004, 12).

Late Iron Age/Roman

Most of the pottery dated to the Late Iron Age consists of grog-tempered ware (Fabric GTW) which broadly dates to the period of the mid-late 1st century BC-AD mid 1st century. Of interest are two imports from Central Gaul. One, from F8, is an abraded rim sherd from a *terra nigra* platter (Fabric CNG TN), probably of form Cam 2. The other, an unstratified surface find, is a sherd from the footing base of a flagon (Fabric CNG SF). These two can be dated to the late 1st century BC-AD early 1st century (Stead & Rigby 1989, 120). A few sherds of oxidised fine ware (Fabric DZ) probably date to the Late Iron Age or early Roman period of the late 1st century BC-AD late 1st century but, given the predominance of Late Iron Age pottery here, are most probably of Late Iron Age date.

The two imported sherds from Central Gaul (Fabric CNG TN & Fabric GNG SF) are quite abraded. Although one was from L2, the other, from pit F8, was also recovered with relatively unabraded grog-tempered wares. Some abrasion is recorded on the sherds of oxidised fine ware (Fabric DZ) in pit F15 which were also recovered with unabraded Late Iron Age grog-tempered wares, suggesting that they may have a different (longer) depositional history to the grog-tempered wares and are possibly not contemporary with this feature. As the more abraded sherds are all fine wares, it could be that the finer fabrics have been more adversely affected by the depositional environments on the site. However, it could also imply that the fine wares may have longer or more complex depositional histories than the grog-tempered coarse wares and are, to some extent, residual in these contexts. Therefore, the contexts might date to the period of the early-mid 1st century (c AD 25-50) rather than earlier.

The pottery from the FAU evaluation trenches close to the eastern limit of the site (FAU T21 & FAU T23-T25) is also primarily of Late Iron Age date with some Gaulish imports, but includes a small quantity of Roman pottery (ECC FAU 2004, 10-12, appendix 3). The Roman pottery includes reduced wares, oxidised wares (which most probably date to the 1st-2nd/3rd century), and a possible amphora sherd from FAU T25 (ECC FAU 2004, 12). The relatively small quantity of pottery recovered from this area dated to the post-conquest (Roman) period contrasts with findings from the Knowledge Gateway infrastructure enabling works (CAT Report 638) to the south-east of The Meadows site (Fig 4). There, the closely-dated pottery spans the Late Iron Age and Roman period of the AD 1st-4th century and other finds there include a significant quantity of Roman CBM (CAT Report 638, 14-17).

A small quantity of unidentified slag of different types was recovered as individual pieces from three features (F2, F5, F13). The only closely-dated find associated with the slag is Late Iron Age pottery in the pit F5, but the quantity of Late Iron Age finds from the site indicates that the slag most probably also dates to the Late Iron Age period. Slag recovered from the ECC FAU evaluation trenches just east of the site included a substantial piece (1,625 g) from FAU T23 (ditch 12) associated with Late Iron Age and Late Iron Age/Roman pottery. This may represent part of a furnace lining or hearth bottom (ECC FAU 2004, 10), suggesting that this and possibly some of the slag may be related to iron-smithing activity nearby.

Discussion (Fig 4)

Nineteen archaeological features were identified during the archaeological monitoring. The scale of the work undertaken means that it is not possible to say for certain what these features represent; the ?post-holes may have been parts of buildings or fence lines, the ?linear features may have been field boundaries or enclosure ditches, and the ?pits could have been used for the disposal of industrial and/or domestic waste. Furthermore, one feature may have been an oven and two others could have been pyre-related features. Pottery sherds from some of the features may suggest domestic activity in the vicinity, whereas the fired clay and slag indicates that some light industrial activity was occurring on or around the site.

Based on the pottery-dating evidence, the activity at The Meadows site has been dated to the period of the mid-late 1st century BC to the AD mid 1st century, which is broadly contemporary with the major Late Iron Age industrial site of Sheepen on the outskirts of Roman Colchester (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Niblett 1985; *CAR* 11, 70-84). Archaeological features dated to this period were recorded in four trial-trenches excavated to the east of the development area during the ECC FAU evaluation in 2004 (Fig 4; ECC FAU 2004). Moreover, it is probable that one of the ditches identified in FAU T21 (ditch 29; ECC FAU 2004, 5) may join our ditch F14, possibly forming the boundary of an enclosure (Fig 4). Two unexcavated pits recorded during the Knowledge Gateway infrastructure enabling works to the south-east of The Meadows site (Fig 4) were similar to the pits identified during this monitoring and are probably of a similar date (CAT Report 638). No other features were observed in close proximity to The Meadows site during the infrastructure works. However, this is probably due to the difficult conditions under which the monitoring was undertaken in 2011 and not because of the absence of archaeological features in these areas (CAT Report 638, 12).

Together with the findings of the ECC FAU trial-trenching evaluation, the results of this monitoring suggest that there was probably a rural settlement, perhaps a farmstead, located in this area during the Late Iron Age. The pottery-dating evidence suggests that the site was much less intensively used in the Roman period, possibly becoming part of an agricultural landscape with the focus of occupation/activity shifting to the south-east, where previous investigations have shown that activity continued into the late Roman period (CAT Report 638).

Acknowledgements

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The project was monitored by Mr Martin Winter (CBCAO) for Colchester Borough Council.

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Note: all CAT fieldwork reports are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

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Distribution list:

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Appendix 1: contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by the CBCAO
- 1.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment
- 1.4 1 x A3 site plans provided by developer
- 1.5 1 x A4 site plans provided by developer

2 Site archive

- 2.1 Site digital photographic record
- 2.2 Attendance register
- 2.3 Context sheets (F1-F19)
- 2.4 2 x A4 site plans
- 2.5 Finds register
- 2.6 Site photographic record on CD

3 Research archive

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report
- 3.2 Finds report

Not in wallet

The finds (1 small bag)

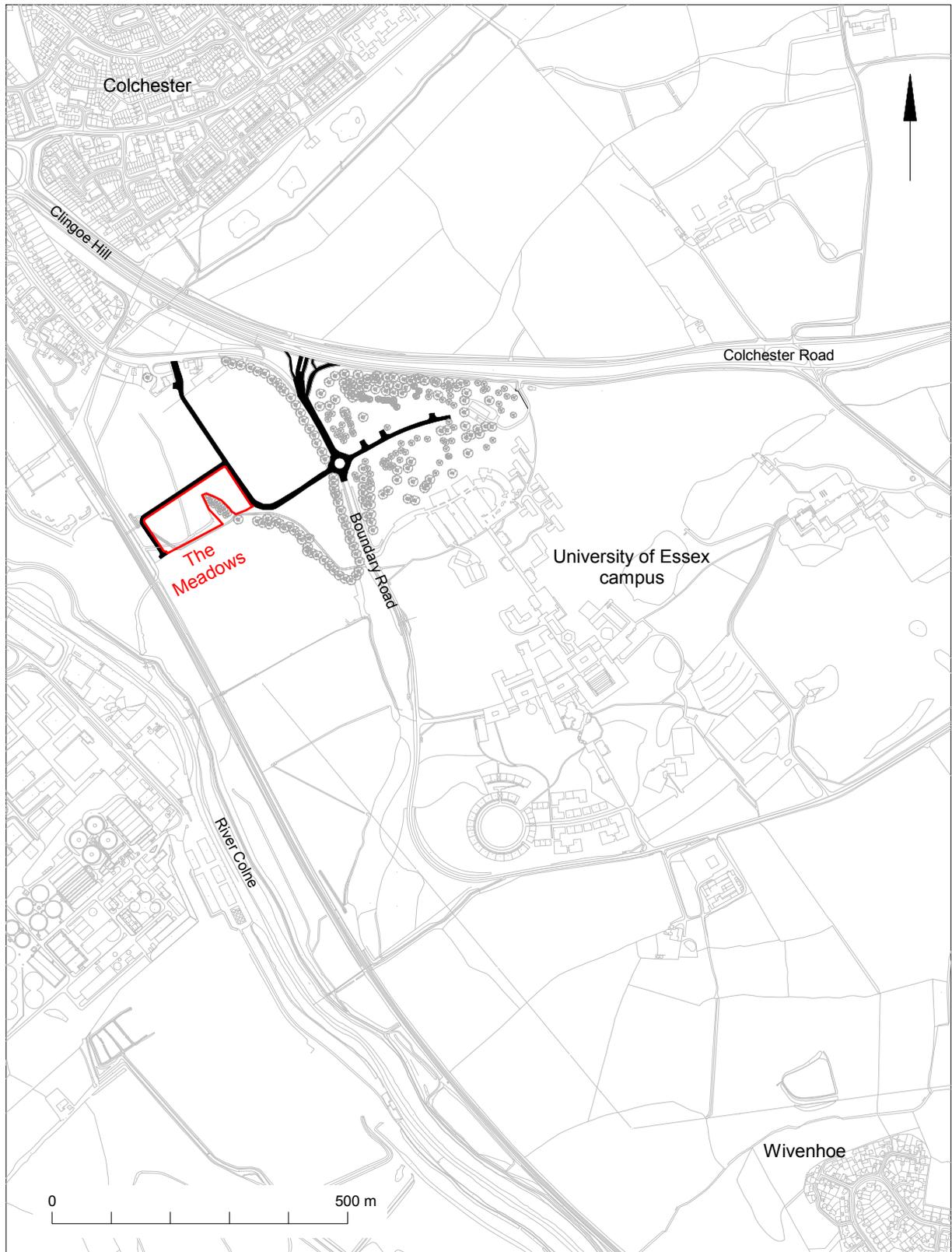


Fig 1 Site location.

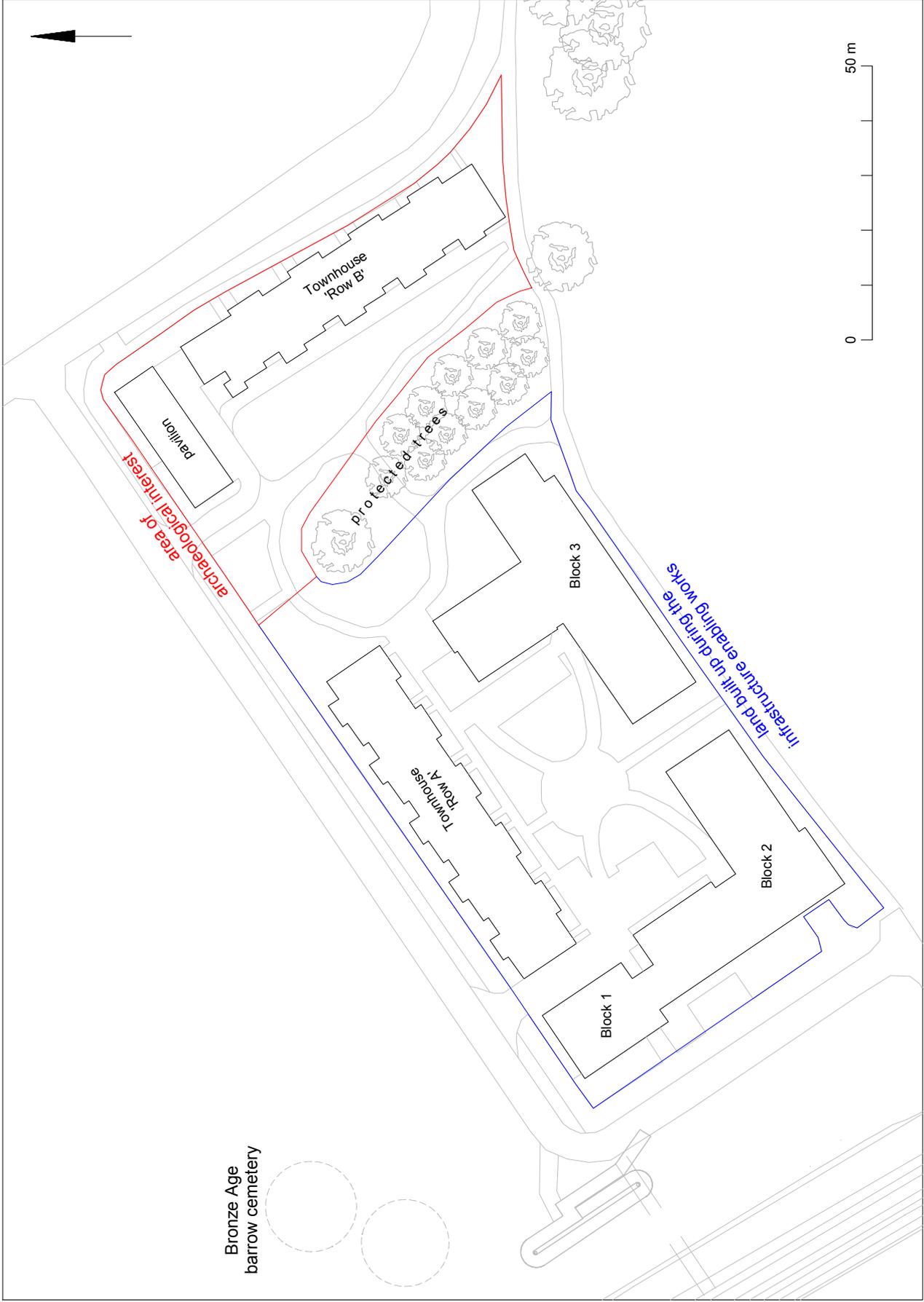
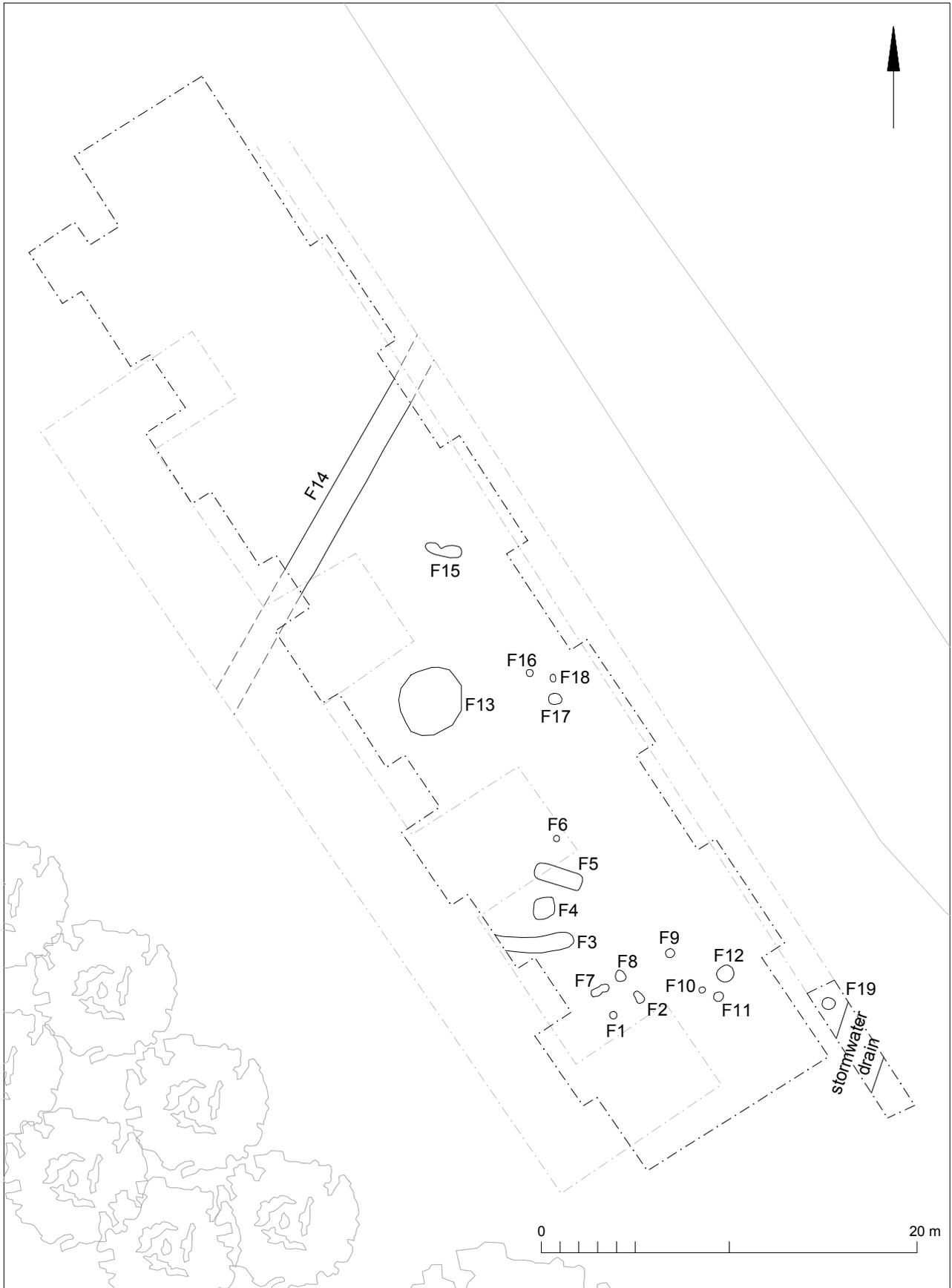
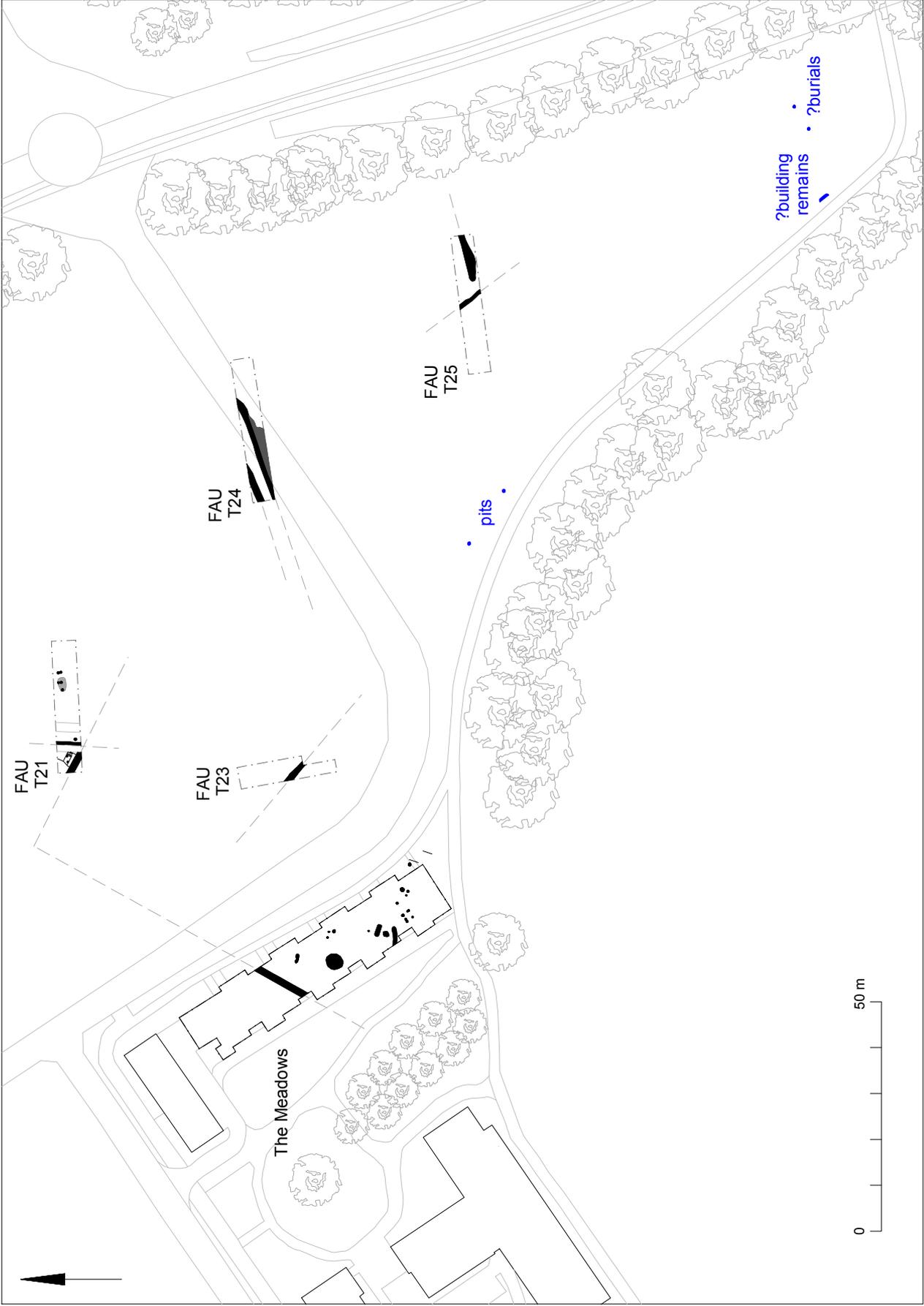


Fig 2 The development area.



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Fig 3 Results. The area of the monitored topsoil-stripping is shown with a black outline and the service-trenches which were examined after they had been excavated are shown with a grey outline.



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Fig 4 Site plan, showing the Late Iron Age and Roman features identified during The Meadows watching brief, the ECC FAU trial-trenching investigation (ECC FAU 2004), and the Knowledge Gateway infrastructure watching brief (shown in blue; CAT Report 638).

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: The Meadows, Boundary Road, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Wivenhoe	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 0242 2424 (c)	Site codes: CAT project – 12/04c Museum accession – COLEM 2012.43
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: July-September 2012	Size of area investigated: approximately 1,150m ²
Location of curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museums	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? Yes	Related EHER numbers: 2413, 2534, 16186, 2419
Final report: CAT Report 678	
Periods represented: Late Iron Age, Roman	
<p>Summary: <i>The Colchester Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief during the construction of a row of town-houses at 'The Meadows' site in the new Knowledge Gateway development on the Colchester campus of the University of Essex.</i> <i>Nineteen archaeological features were identified and recorded during the monitoring. Based on the pottery-dating evidence, it is probable that they date to the period of the mid-late 1st century BC to the AD mid 1st century.</i> <i>Archaeological features and finds dating to this period were also identified in four trial-trenches excavated to the east of The Meadows site during the ECC FAU evaluation in 2004. Together, these findings suggest that there was probably a rural settlement, perhaps a farmstead, located in this area during the Late Iron Age.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: ECC FAU Reports 1214 & 1328, CAT Report 638	
Keywords: Late Iron Age, features, pottery, ?farmstead	Significance: **
Author of summary: Adam Wightman	Date of summary: March 2013