Archaeological evaluation at Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Earls Colne, Essex, CO6 2PG

July 2016

by Laura Pooley
with contributions by Stephen Benfield
figures by Chris Lister

fieldwork by Ben Holloway and Alec Wade

**commissioned by Steven Belchem
on behalf of Mr Richard Pascoe**

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List of photographs, tables and figures

Cover: general site shot

1   Summary
An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out at Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Earls Colne, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling in the existing car park. Oxford House is a Grade II 15th-century listed building on a large plot with curtilage outbuildings. The evaluation trench revealed a medieval ditch aligned northwest to southeast, two modern pits, a row of four undated postholes and an undated pit. The medieval ditch may possibly have been a field boundary on the Earls Colne Priory estate.

2   Introduction (Fig 1)
This is the archive report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Essex which was carried out on 19th July 2016. The work was commissioned by Steven Belchem on behalf of Mr Richard Pascoe in advance of the construction of a detached dwelling within the existing car park of Oxford House. The work was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Teresa O'Connor advised that in order 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* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological evaluation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2016), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2016).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (*MoRPHE*) (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA **14** and **24**). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3   Archaeological background
The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

Oxford House lies within the historic core of Earls Colne (EHER 18469). Formerly known as the 'The Carved Angel', 'The Coachman Inn' and 'The George', Oxford House is a 15th century Grade II listed building on a large plot with curtilage outbuildings (NHLE no. 1337931). It is located close to the Priory, a medieval Benedictine monastery, the remains of which are a scheduled monument and the priory smithy is believed to have been located on the development site before it became 'The George'. The medieval town is thought to have grown up around the Priory and ribbon development is known to have continued along Upper Holt Street.

The building now known as Oxford House sits in a prominent position within a large plot. It has two cross-wings dating from the 15th and 17th century and has been documented as being an inn since the 17th century. Its layout will have been altered over time to adapt to the changing needs of an inn, however there is the potential for the survival of fixtures and fittings relating to the original use and evolution of the building over the centuries that it has served as an inn. An outbuilding within the curtilage of the house survives which is likely to have had a service function to the inn

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and which retains a historic and architectural interest. Historic mapping depicts further outbuildings within the curtilage of the Inn that are no longer extant.

Historic England lists the building as:
> House, now public house. C15, C16 and C17, altered in C18, C19 and C20. Timber framed, plastered, roofed with handmade red plain tiles. Hall range facing NE (along Lower Holt Street) with crosswings to left and right; left crosswing now oversailed by main range. Right crosswing projects to front. C19 lean-to extensions to front, and along right side. C20 extensions at rear. 2:1 window range of C18 sashes with glazing bars. C19 sashes with side-lights in front extension. Interior includes C18 fire surrounds and side-purlin roof, C15 original framing and window openings.

4   Results (Figs 2-3)
A single L-shaped trial-trench was located within the footprint of the new dwelling with the base of the L parallel and closest to the road. The trench was dug by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision and measured 10m and 6m long by 1.8m wide (28.8m²).

Three layers were identified. Modern hardstanding and hoggin/crush (L1, *c* 500mm thick) sealed a layer of subsoil (L2, *c* 230mm thick) which sealed natural sands and gravels (L3, identified *c* 710mm below current ground level).

Medieval ditch F7, aligned northwest to southeast, was excavated at the south end of the trench. It measured approximately 700mm wide by 110mm deep. Post-medieval pit F1 and modern pit F3 were also excavated further to the northwest. A row of four undated postholes (F2, F5, F6 and F8) running southeast to northwest along the trench, probably from an old fence line. Posthole F5 contained a small quantity of fired clay suggesting that these post features may be of a similar date as undated pit F4 which also contained fragments of fired clay.

Photograph 1 Trench shot, looking SE

Photograph 2 Trench shot, looking NE

5   Finds
by Stephen Benfield

A small quantity of finds were recovered from four features (F1, F4, F5 and F7). Ditch
F7 produced a small quantity of pottery of medieval date (*c* 11th- early 13th century).
Pit F1 contained finds of early modern date (*c* 18th-19th century) and a single (residual)
sherd of medieval greyware (dated *c* 13th -14th century). The finds from a pit and
posthole (F4 & F5) consisted only of a few, small pieces of fired clay which are not
closely dated. All of the finds are listed and described by context in Table 2 and an
overall spot date for the finds from each context is also provided. The pottery fabrics
referred to follow the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1985 & *CAR* **7**)
and are listed in Table 1. Dating of the pieces of brick ceramic building materia (CBM)
recovered broadly follows Ryan (1996).

Fabric code	Fabric name
13	Early medieval sandy wares (general)
20	Medieval sandy greywares (general)
40	Post-medieval (glazed) red earthenwares (general)

Table 1 Pottery fabrics

Context	Find no	Form/ description	Finds spot date
F1	1	***Medieval pottery:*** Single sherd (12g) Fabric 20, grey sandy fabric (dated 13-14C) (residual) ***Post-medieval pottery:*** (3 sherds, 532g) Fabric 40 Sherds possibly all from same storage jar, arched lug handle and external and internal glaze (see *CAR* **7**, 207) (dated 18-19 C). ***Clay pipe:*** Single bowl and 6 stem pieces (up to 95mm long) bowl corresponds with Crummy Type 7 dated to the late 17C (c 1670-1700) (*CAR* **5**) ***Glass:*** Single sherd of green bottle glass with iridescent (degrading) surfaces (dated post-medieval) ***CBM (Brick):*** Three piece of brick, two (*c* 47mm thick) with relatively smooth surfaces, sharp edges and fine red dense fabric with occasional small stones; another similar (*c* 45mm thick) in hard grey/blue-grey fabric with white, sandy lime mortar on one edge (L17-E18C) ***Stone:*** Thin buff/cream coloured limestone piece (18-22mm thick) with chalk inclusions, relatively flat, pitted, rather coarse surfaces.	**Early modern** (18/18-19C)
F4	4	***Fired clay:*** (6 pieces, 36g) all from same parent piece, 3 joining producing a piece with a slightly uneven, curving surface, fine sand fabric, dark-grey interior, orange-red margins and brown-buff surface (not closely dated)	
F5	2	***Fired clay:*** Small piece (fragment) (1g) of fired clay (not closely dated)	
F7	3	***Medieval pottery:*** (4 sherds, 42g) Fabric 13, common inclusions of quartz sand, includes base and shoulder sherds from cooking pots, one sherd sooted on exterior from use as cooking vessel, exterior of sherds mainly reduced, one sherd partly reduced with red fabric core and buff/grey surface (dated 11-E13C)	**Medieval** (11-E13C)

Table 2 Finds by context

6   Discussion
An evaluation within the car park of Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Earls Colne
revealed a medieval ditch of 11th to early 13th century date. Medieval Earls Colne was
a long, thin straggling town with two foci – the market area in the High Street in Earls
Colne parish and a smaller group of houses in White Colne parish, clustered around the

triangular green (Medlycott 1999, p7). The small Benedictine priory was established between Earls Colne and White Colne in 1101-7 and is adjacent to the development site. Although there is no direct evidence, it is possible that this ditch was originally associated with the priory estate, perhaps forming a field boundary.

The only other features excavated were two modern pits, an undated row of postholes from an old fence line and an undated pit. The undated features are likely to be of a relatively modern date, and they are all probably associated with the use of the site as a rear yard to the public house which has stood on the site since the 15th century.

7   Acknowledgements
CAT thanks Steven Belchem and Richard Pascoe for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway and A Wade. Figures are by C Lister. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

8   References

CAR **7**	2000	*Colchester Archaeological Report* **7**: *Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85,* by J Cotter
CAT	2014	*Health and Safety Policy*
CAT	2015	*Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation and historic building recording at Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Earls Colne, Essex, CO6 2PG*
CIfA	2014a	*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*
CIfA	2014b	*Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*
Cunningham, C	1985	'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex' in Cunningham, C., & Drury, P., *Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford,* CBA Research Report **54**
DCLG	2012	*National Planning Policy Framework*. Dept of Communities and Local Government.
EAA **14**	2003	*Standards for field archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, **14**. Ed. D Gurney
EAA **24**	2011	*Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **24**, by Maria Medlycott
ECCPS	2015	*Brief for archaeological trial trenching and historic building recording at Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Earls Colne*
English Heritage	2006	*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage)
Medlycott, M	1999	*Historic Towns in Essex: Earls Colne.* Historic Town Assessment Report. ECC
Ryan, P	1996	*Brick in Essex, from the Roman conquest to the reformation*

9   Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHER	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 of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from *c* AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to *c* AD 1800
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit

| Section | (abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s |
| WSI | Written Scheme of Investigation |

10   Contents of archive
Finds: one bag (medieval pottery), others not retained
Paper and digital record
One A4 document wallet containing:
The report (CAT Report 985)
ECC Evaluation Brief, CAT Written Scheme of Investigation
Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, plans)
Site digital photos and log, Architectural plans, Attendance register, Risk assessment

11   Archive deposition
The paper and 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 Braintree Museum under accession code: requested

Distribution list:
Steven Belchelm (steve@adpltd.co.uk)
Richard Pascoe
Teresa O'Connor, Essex County Council Place Services
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council
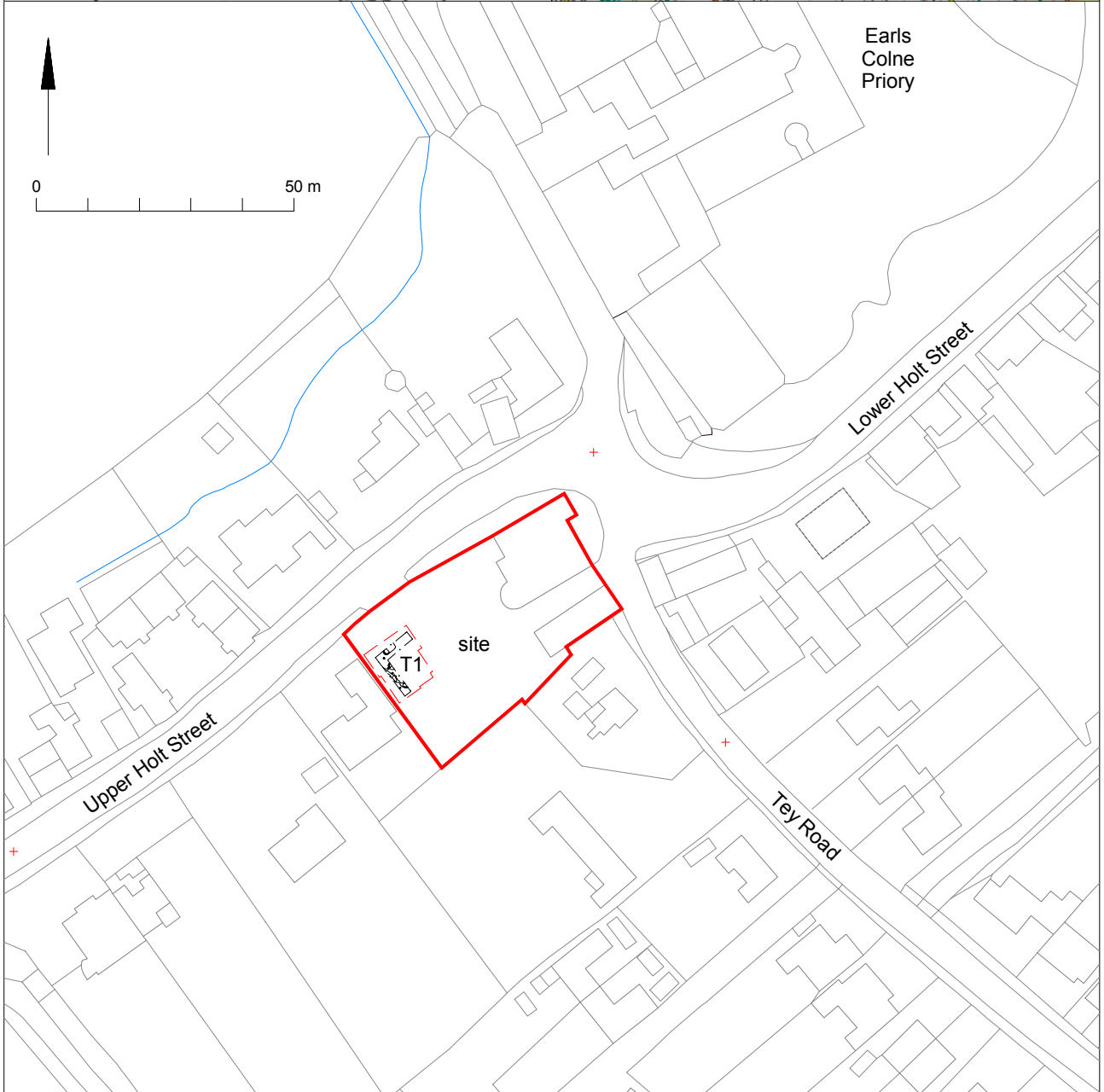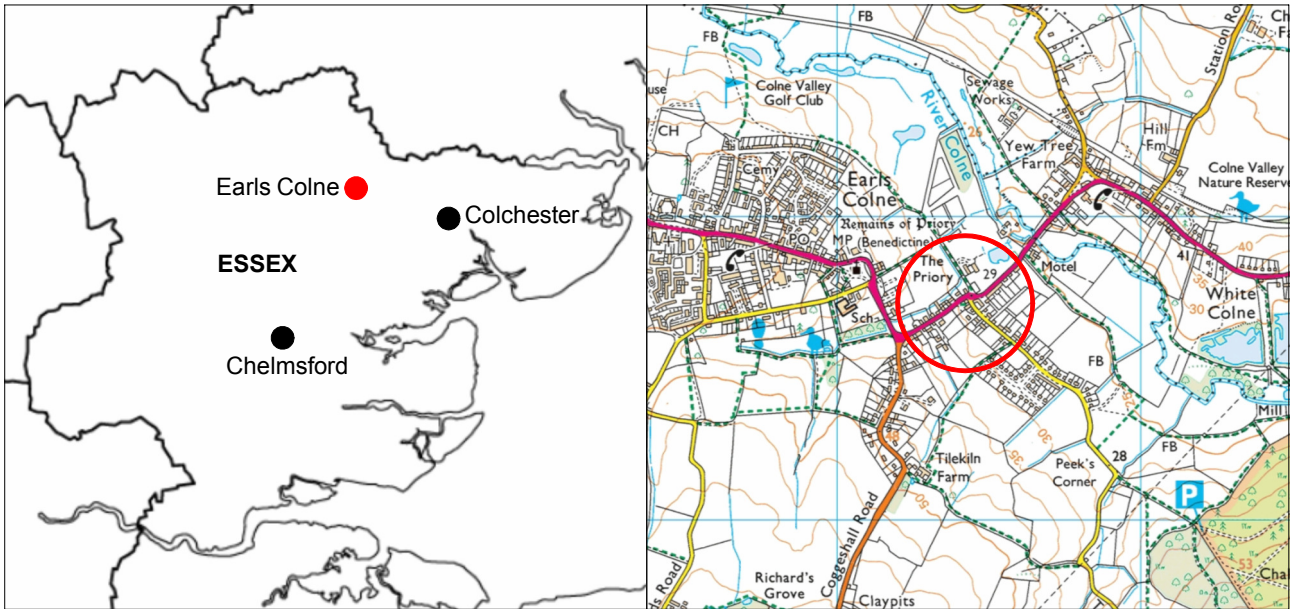
Fig 1 Site location and trench plan.
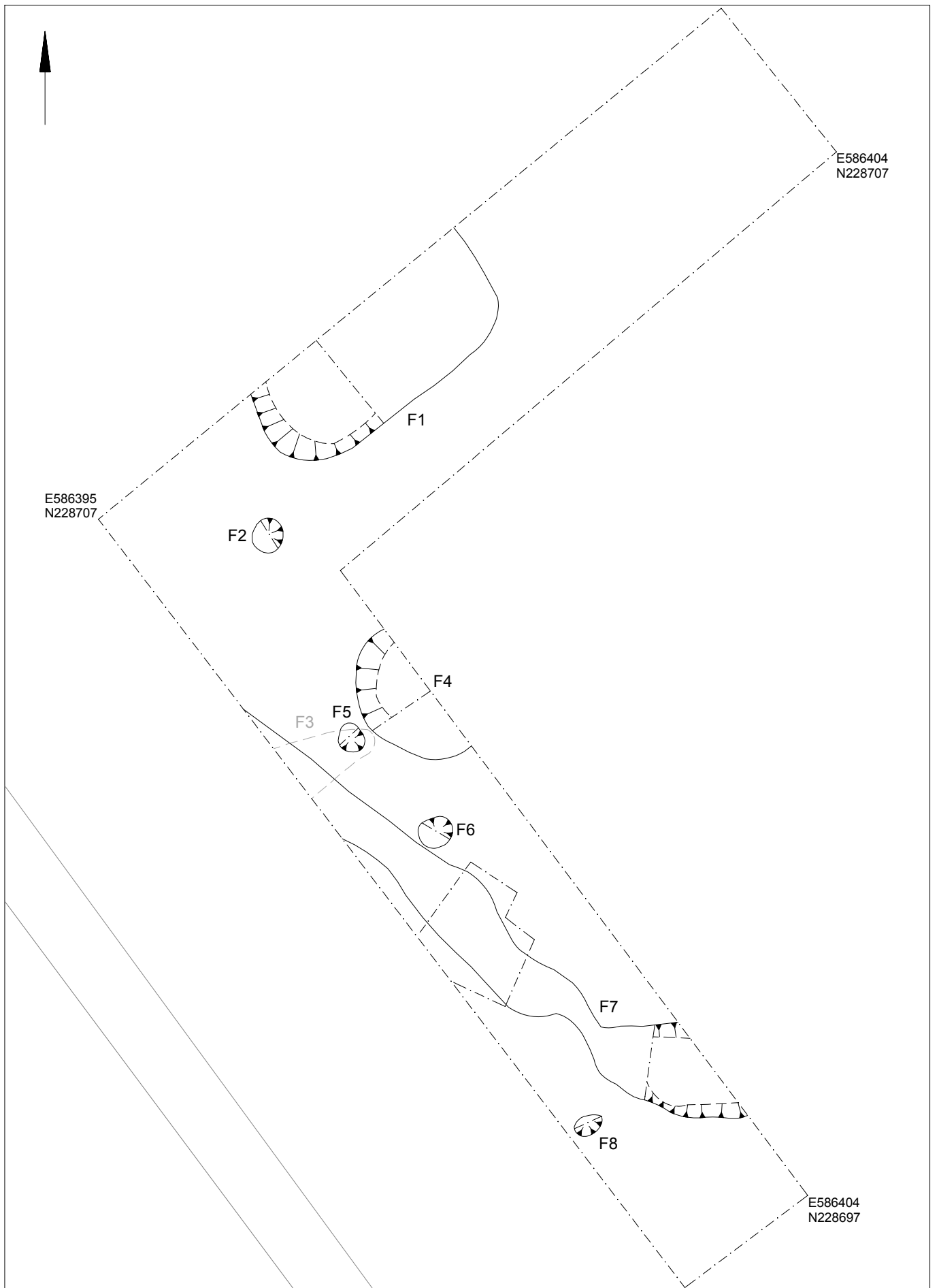
E586404
N228707

F1

E586395
N228707

F2

F4

F3   F5

F6

F7

E586404
N228697

F8

Fig 2 Results.

0   2 m

SE _|_   _|_ NW   29.33m
                              AOD

F6

SSW _|_   _|_ NNE   29.40m
                                        AOD

F7

SW _|_   _|_ NE   29.40m
                             AOD

F8

SE _|_   _|_ NW   30.08m
                                        AOD

L1

L2

L3

small stones

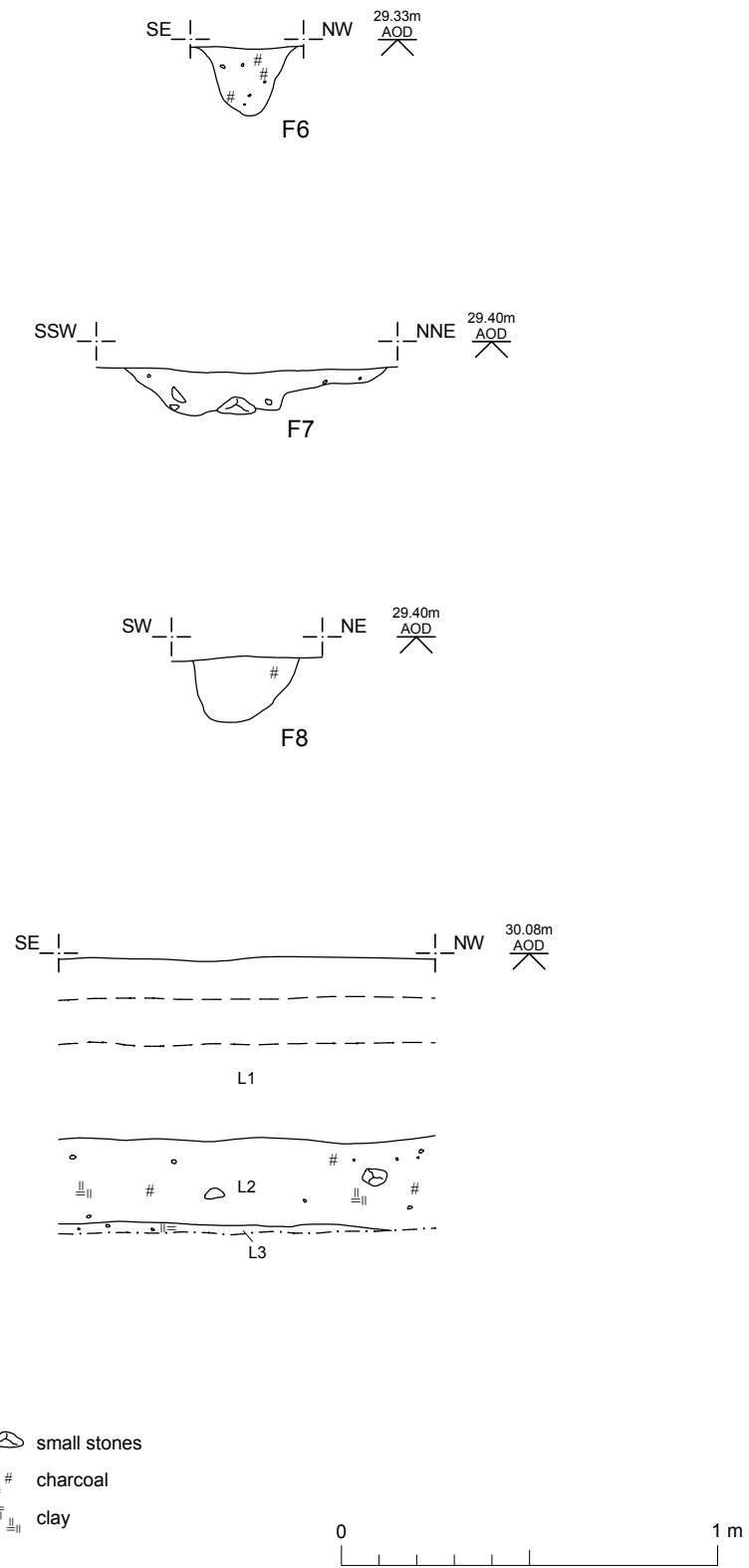charcoal

clay

0   1 m

Fig 3 Sections: F6, F7, F8 and representative section.

Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Earls Colne, Essex, CO6 2PG	
Parish: Earls Colne	***District:*** Braintree
NGR: TL 86427 28723 (centre)	***Site code:*** CAT project code: 16/06k ECC project code: ECOH16 OASIS project ID: colchest3-256038
Type of work: Evaluation	***Site director/group:*** Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 19th July 2016	***Size of area investigated:*** One L-shaped trench – 10m and 6m long by 1.8m wide (28.8m²)
Location of curating museum: Braintree Museum accession code: requested	***Funding source:*** developer
Further seasons anticipated? Not known	***Related EHER number:*** EHER 18469
Final report: CAT Report 985	
Periods represented: medieval, modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching was carried out at Oxford House, Upper Holt Street, Earls Colne, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling in the existing car park. Oxford House is a Grade II 15th-century listed building on a large plot with curtilage outbuildings. The evaluation trench revealed a medieval ditch aligned northwest to southeast, two modern pits, a row of four undated postholes and an undated pit. The medieval ditch may possibly have been a field boundary on the Earls Colne Priory estate.	
Previous summaries/reports: –	
Keywords: –	***Significance:*** *
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	***Date of summary:*** August 2016