

Archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 2, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF

April-May 2021



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CAT wsi
OASIS summary sheet

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1 Summary

An archaeological strip, map and record excavation was carried out at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex during groundworks as part of Phase 2 of the development. Archaeological investigations in this area of northern Colchester since 2001 have revealed a significant concentration of charcoal-rich pits dating from the Early Iron Age through to the post-medieval period, with many likely associated with charcoal production. Archaeological evaluation along with excavations as part of Phase 1 and 1a of the current project, have previously uncovered evidence for charcoal-rich pits, along with post-medieval, modern and undated features on the development site

Phase 2 excavations at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) revealed 23 features: ten modern features, including two pits with a charcoal-rich fill, drainage ditches, pits and postholes; eight undated pits/postholes; and five undated pits/tree-throws.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological strip, map and record excavation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex out from 12th April to the 21st May 2021. The work was commissioned by Mr J Conington of Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd and is a continuation of enabling works comprising the creation of a new access road and boulevard with associated drainage, including drainage basins, services, the energy centre and associated groundworks (see planning background for full description).

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the CHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBCAA). This recommendation was for an archaeological excavation and was based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Excavation*, written by Dr Jess Tipper and detailing the required archaeological work (CBCAA 2019), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT (2021) in response to the brief and agreed in advance with CBCAA.

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003; Medlycott 2011). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER) (accessed via Colchester Heritage Explorer, <https://colchesterheritage.co.uk>).

The CHER shows that the development site lies within an area of archaeological potential. The western half of the development site is located within an area of cropmarks of pits and assorted linear features (CHER MCC8632). Significantly, between 2001 and 2020, 17 archaeological investigations in and around the development site have revealed 269 charcoal-rich pits (see CAT Report 1479 for a summary of these investigations and Fig 2 of this report for a location map). These charcoal-rich pits are all of a similar size, shape and profile, containing high concentrations of oak charcoal, and usually including evidence of *in situ* burning, or at least hot materials being deposited within the pit with sufficient heat to scorch the base. Dating evidence from the pits was sparse across all of the archaeological investigations, but analysis of the

dating (for CAT Report 1479) suggested three main phases of activity: Phase 1 – Early Iron Age to early Roman period (1st century AD); Phase 2 – late Anglo-Saxon to early medieval period (10th-14th centuries); and Phase 3 – post-medieval period (16th century onwards). Based on current evidence the charcoal-rich pits from Phases 1 and 2 most likely represent separate periods of charcoal production in northern Colchester.

In 2016, in advance of the current development works, a gradiometry survey of the c 50 hectare development site was carried out by Stratascan. The survey identified the corner of an undated enclosure along with a number of possible associated linear features and some modern anomalies related to services (Richardson 2016, ECC3649).

In 2018-19, Archaeological Services, Durham University carried out a trial-trenching evaluation across the development site (Watson & Swan 2019; ECC4302) (for location plan see Fig 3). Charcoal-rich pits, post-medieval boundary ditches, and postholes and ditches of unknown date were uncovered. Finds from the 11 charcoal-rich pits included sherds of prehistoric and Late Iron Age pottery, and a fragment of Roman period glass.

In March 2020 and following the evaluation, an excavation was undertaken on the development site as part of Phase 1a of project. A further two/three charcoal-rich pits were excavated along with three undated pits and a modern ditch (CAT Report 1554, ECC4434) (for location plan and results see Fig 3).

Finally, in July-October 2020 excavations were undertaken on the development site as part of Phase 1a of this project (CAT Report 1609; ECC4565). Twenty-nine features were excavated which included three undated charcoal-rich pits and two charcoal-rich pits of post-medieval/modern and modern date. The remaining features consisted of two medieval/post-medieval pits, a post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch, fourteen modern features (ditches/drainage ditches, a pit, posthole and wheel-rut), five undated features (pits, a pit/posthole and a gully terminus) and two natural features (for location plan and results see Fig 3).

4 Aims

The aim of this this investigation was to excavate and record all archaeological horizons due to be destroyed during the proposed development.

5 Results (Figs 4-7)

As per the WSI two areas were initially to be investigated under Phase 2 of the project. The first was a large area to the south of the development site located in between two areas previously excavated as part of Phase 1a (CAT Report 1609). This area was fully excavated and the results are presented below. The second was a small area on the northern edge of the development site (see Figs 1-2 for a location), which has now been postponed and no longer forms part of the Phase 2 groundworks.

Feature, layer and finds numbers used during the current investigation follow on from numbers assigned during Phase 1 and 1a of this investigation (CAT Reports 1544 and 1609). A full context list can be found as Appendix 1.

An area measuring 0.32ha was stripped under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Part of the area was stripped through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.25m thick) and accumulation (L3, c 0.15m thick) onto natural (L3, encountered at a depth of c 0.4m below current ground level (bcgl)). However, in the car park and along the footpaths the strip occurred through modern concrete (L8, c 0.11m thick) laid on a silty-gravel base (L9, 0.12m thick) and accumulation (L3, c 0.1m thick) onto natural (L3, encountered at a depth of 0.29-0.33m bcgl).



Photograph 1 Site strip, far western edge, looking southeast



Photograph 2 Site strip, central section, looking southeast



Photograph 3 Site strip, central section, looking northwest



Photograph 4 Site strip, far eastern edge, looking northwest

Modern drainage ditches F38 (a continuation of F28), F44, F49 and F50 crossed the site along with a number of smaller land drains, electricity cable trenches (including F59) and postholes from an old fence (including F46). Gully F40b is also likely to be a relatively modern drainage feature and F51 is a modern pit.

A small number of undated pits and pit/postholes were scattered across the site (F39, F40a, F41, F42, F43, F45, F54 and F58). None produced any finds but most included at least some rare charcoal-flecking in the fill. Pit F39 was the largest of these at 3.6m by 3.3m and 0.25m deep with an ashy-fill, with pit/posthole F45 the smallest at 0.27m by 0.23m and 0.15m deep. Features F52, F53, F55, F56 and F57 could also be pits but are perhaps more likely to be tree-throws.



Photograph 5 Pit F39, looking southeast



Photograph 6 Pit/posthole F45, looking north

The only charcoal-rich rich features were pits F47 and F48. Both were sub-oval, relatively shallow features with a small amount of charcoal in each, though there was no evidence for *in situ* burning. Pit F47 was 0.86m by 0.6m and 0.1m deep, and pit F48, 0.91m by 0.81m and 0.06m deep. However, a fragment of clinker/coke from F47 and a piece of modern glass from F48 suggests that both are relatively modern features.



Photograph 7 Modern charcoal pit F47, looking north-north-west



Photograph 8 Modern charcoal pit F48, looking north-north-west

6 Finds

6.1 Ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation produced four sherds of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile with a weight of 44g. These sherds came from F44 (finds no. 10, 3 pieces at 10g) and F51 (finds no. 16, 1 piece at 34g). These finds have been discarded.

6.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

A fragment of modern glass came from F48, two fragments of modern iron rod from F51, and fragments of clinker/coke from F44 and F47. These finds have been discarded.

Context	Finds no.	Sample no.	Description
F43	9	-	Iron pan: Five fragments of natural iron pan.
F44	10	-	Clinker/coke: Two fragments, 2.6g.
F47	-	14	Clinker/coke: Fragment, 0.4g.
F48	-	15	Glass: Fragment of clear modern glass, 0.3g.
F51	12	-	Iron rod: Two fragments of round-section iron rod, probably modern, 33.4g.

Table 1 Miscellaneous finds listed by context

7 Environmental assessment

by Lisa Gray

Introduction

This report is an assessment of four samples (see Table 2) taken from pits/charcoal-rich pits.

This report follows archaeobotanical assessments and charcoal identifications from the Phase 1 and 1a excavations (Gray 2020, in CAT Reports 1544 and 1609).

Sample	Feature no.	Feature type	Date	Initial volume (L.)
12	F41	Pit	Undated	10
13	F43	Pit	Undated	10
14	F47	Charcoal-rich pit	Modern	30
15	F48	Charcoal-rich pit	Modern	30

Table 2 Sample details

Methodology

Samples were taken and processed by Colchester Archaeological Trust. All samples were processed using a Siraf-type flotation device with flot collected in a 300-micron mesh sieve then dried. Once with the author the flots were scanned under a low powered stereo-microscope with a magnification range of 10 to 45x. The whole flots were examined. The abundance, diversity and state of preservation of eco- and artefacts in each sample were recorded.

Identifications were made using uncharred reference material (author's own and the Northern European Seed Reference Collection at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London) and reference manuals (such as Beijerinck 1947; Cappers et al. 2006; Charles 1984; Jacomet 2006). Nomenclature for plants is taken from Stace (Stace 2010). Latin names are given once and the common names used thereafter.

Charcoal fragments larger than 4mm Ø in size were separated from the main flots and where

possible, one hundred fragments were randomly selected for identification using a riffle box. Identification was attempted using epi-luminating microscopy. It is difficult to make identifications of charcoal fragments that are smaller than 4mm Ø in size because the diagnostic features necessary for identification may not be visible in such small fragments (Asouti 2006, 31; Smart & Hoffman 1988, 178-179). Fragments smaller than this size were scanned to find any twigs or smaller roundwood fragments. When fragments have been broken to reveal anatomical features, they have been wrapped in foil to keep those fragments intact so they can be counted. Charcoal identifications were made using modern reference slides (author's own) and anatomical guides (Hather 2000, Schoch *et al.* 2004).

Results

Each flot produced only charcoal, modern rootlet fragments and occasional earthworm cocoons. No table has been created for them due to their unproductivity.

The charcoal in these samples (see table 2 below) came from fragments of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* L.), beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.), cherry/plum/sloe (*Prunus* sp.) and oak (*Quercus* sp.). It was not possible to distinguish between stem or branch oak-wood. Oak cannot be differentiated to species based on microscopic wood anatomy alone (Boyd 1988, 608; Schoch *et al.* 2004) and it is difficult to separate species of cherry/plum/sloe wood (Hather 2002, 11).

Sample	Ash	Beech	Cherry/Plum/Sloe	Cherry/Plum/Sloe (roundwood/twig)	Oak (stem-wood)	Oak (roundwood/twig)
12	7	10	-	-	21	-
13	-	-	-	-	4	-
14	-	8	-	-	27	-
15	-	-	8	1	88	2

Table 3 Charcoal taxa

The cherry/plum/sloe roundwood/twig fragment in sample <15> had a diameter of 5mm and 4 growth rings. One of the oak roundwood/twig fragment in this sample had a diameter of 5mm and had 5 growth rings and the other had a diameter of 5mm and 2 growth rings

Discussion

As with previous charcoal analyses carried out for Colchester Northern Gateway sites (see Gray in CAT Reports 1219, 1479, 1544 and 1609), the most frequently occurring charcoal type in these features are oak and beech wood with some cherry/plum/sloe. Well-seasoned oak burns slowly giving off a '...good lasting heat...' and well-seasoned beech also burns well but not as well as oak (Skellern 2000). Oak wood provides long-lasting fuel (Gale & Cutler 2000, 205) and beech wood is also a fuel wood that burns at a high heat with little smoke (Taylor 1981, 46). Beech wood was the traditional fuel for bread ovens (Warren 2006, 46). It is possible that bundles of wood and woody stems from trees and shrubs such as young oak and cherry/plum/sloe were gathered to produce extreme heat and high flames over a short time (Marguerie & Hunot 2007, 1425).

8 Conclusion

CNG (South) Phase 2 excavation revealed 23 features: ten modern features, including two pits containing a charcoal-rich fill, drainage ditches, pits and postholes; eight undated pits/postholes; and five undated pits/tree-throws. Unlike other charcoal-rich pits uncovered across northern Colchester (see Archaeological Background), the two modern pits are unlikely to be associated with charcoal production as this area was largely farmland by this period, and evidence from other investigations suggests that these later pits could be either military campfires or associated with agricultural activities (CAT Report 1479). Two similar charcoal-rich pits of post-medieval/modern date were also excavated as part of Phase 1a of the project (CAT Report 1609).

9 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Mr J Conington and Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by M Baister, Z Eksen, H Furniss, R Mathieson and A Ronn. Figures are by L Pooley and E Holloway. The project was monitored for Colchester Borough Council by Dr Richard Hoggett and Dr Simon Wood.

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Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

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| CAT Report 1479 | 2020 | <i>Archaeological excavation, evaluation and monitoring at Colchester Northern Gateway Sports Hub, Plots 2-3, east of Colchester Park and Ride, Mile End, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JA: July 2018 – June 2019</i> |
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| CAT Report 1609 | 2020 | <i>Archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 1a, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF: July, September and October 2020</i> |
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11 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 500 – 1066
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CBCAA	Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor
CHER	Colchester Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
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 c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	O nline A ccess to the I ndex of A rchaeological I nvestigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

12 Contents of archive

Finds: None retained

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1609)

Site digital photos and log

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1609)

CBC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Site data

Survey data

13 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 Colchester Museum under project ref. ECC4616.

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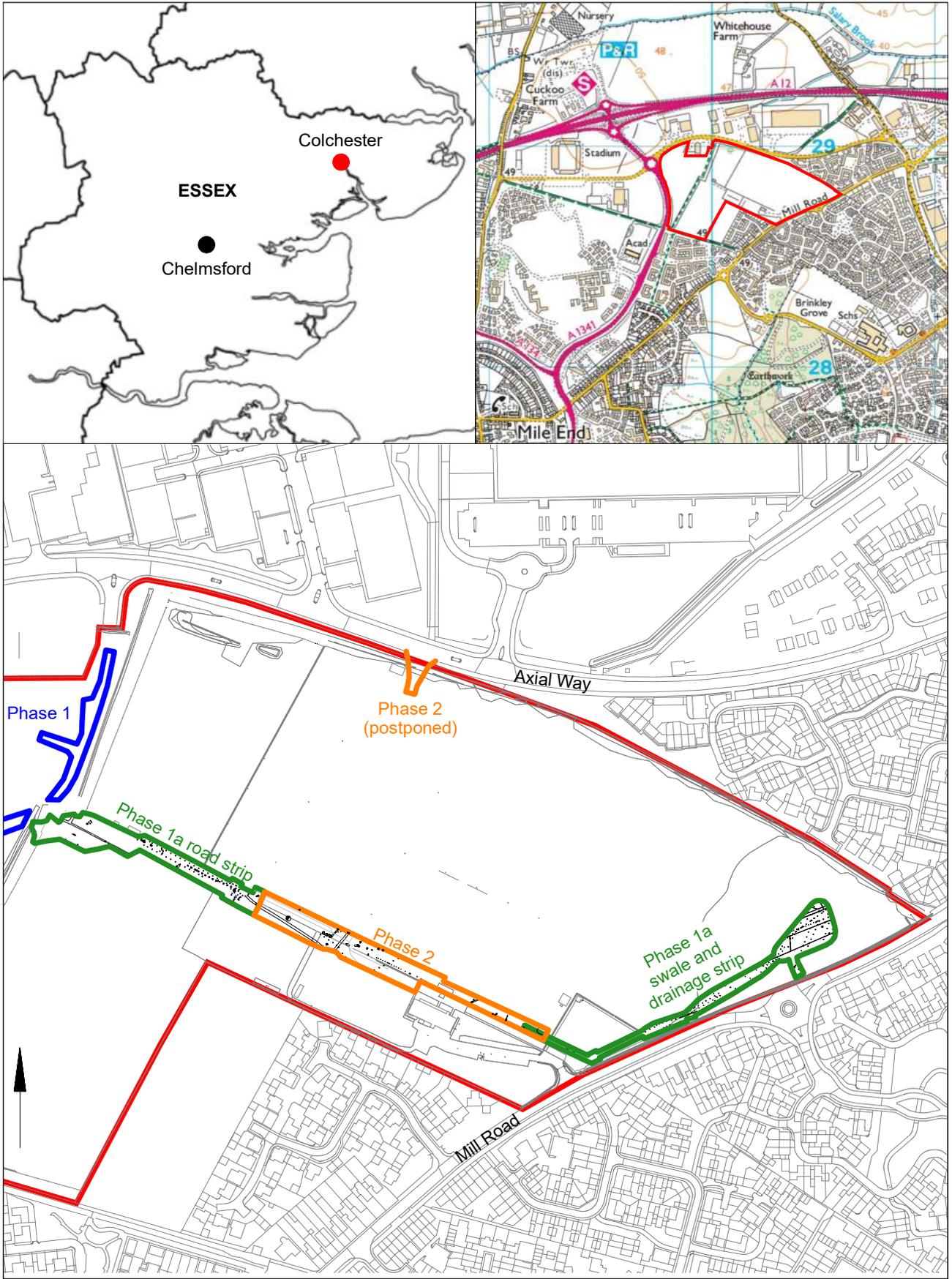
email: lp@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy
Date: 27.7.2021

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Finds no.	Sample no.	Feature Type	Description	Date
L1	-	-	Topsoil	Soft moist dark grey/brown silty-clay	Modern
L2	-	-	Natural	Firm, moist light/medium yellow/orange/brown clay	Post-glacial
L3	-	-	Accumulation	Hard, light grey/brown sandy-silt with occasional stones and CBM pieces	Modern
L4	-	-	Car park surface	Gravel surface	Modern
L5	-	-	Levelling layer	Crush with thin layer of tarmac at base	Modern
L6	-	-	Concrete layer	-	Modern
L7	-	-	Build-up layer	CBM pieces and stones	Modern
L8	-	-	Car park surface	Concrete	Modern
L9	-	-	Sub-base	Soft silty-sand with dense gravel. Sub-base for L8.	Modern
Phase 1a					
F8	1	-	Drainage ditch	Very firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt with very frequent stones and occasional CBM fragments	Modern
F9	-	-	Drainage ditch	Very firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt with very frequent stones	Modern
F10	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silt with frequent stones	Modern
F11	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Modern
F12	-	-	Pit	Firm, dry medium/dark grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Undated
F13	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Modern
F14	-	-	Pit/posthole	Firm, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Undated
F15	2	-	Pit	Friable, medium grey/brown clayey-silt	Medieval / post-medieval
F16	-	<6>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm/hard, dry light/medium grey/brown sandy-silt with charcoal flecks	Undated
F17	-	-	Natural feature	Firm, moist light/medium grey/brown sandy-silt with frequent stones	Post-glacial
F18	-	-	Drainage ditch	Friable/firm, dry light/medium grey/brown clayey-silt	Modern
F19	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Modern
F20	-	<7>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm/hard, dry medium/dark grey/brown sandy-silt with charcoal flecks	Post-medieval/modern
F21	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm/hard, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Modern
F22	-	<8>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm, dry light grey/brown sandy-silt with charcoal flecks	Undated
F23	3	-	Ditch	Soft/friable, light/medium yellow/grey/brown sandy-silt	Post-medieval/modern
F24	-	-	Ditch or elongated pit	Very, firm/hard dry medium grey/brown clayey-silt with CBM and coal flecks	Modern
F25	-	<9>	Charcoal-rich pit	Firm, dry, medium-dark grey/brown silty sand with rare small stones and frequent charcoal	Modern (cuts F24)
F26	4	-	Ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay with frequent stones	Modern
F27	-	-	?Wheel-rut	Firm, moist medium/dark grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Modern
F28	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist medium grey/brown sandy-silt with very frequent stones	Modern
F29	5	<10>	Charcoal-rich pit	Mixed black/brown clayey-silt with frequent charcoal-flecks throughout	Undated

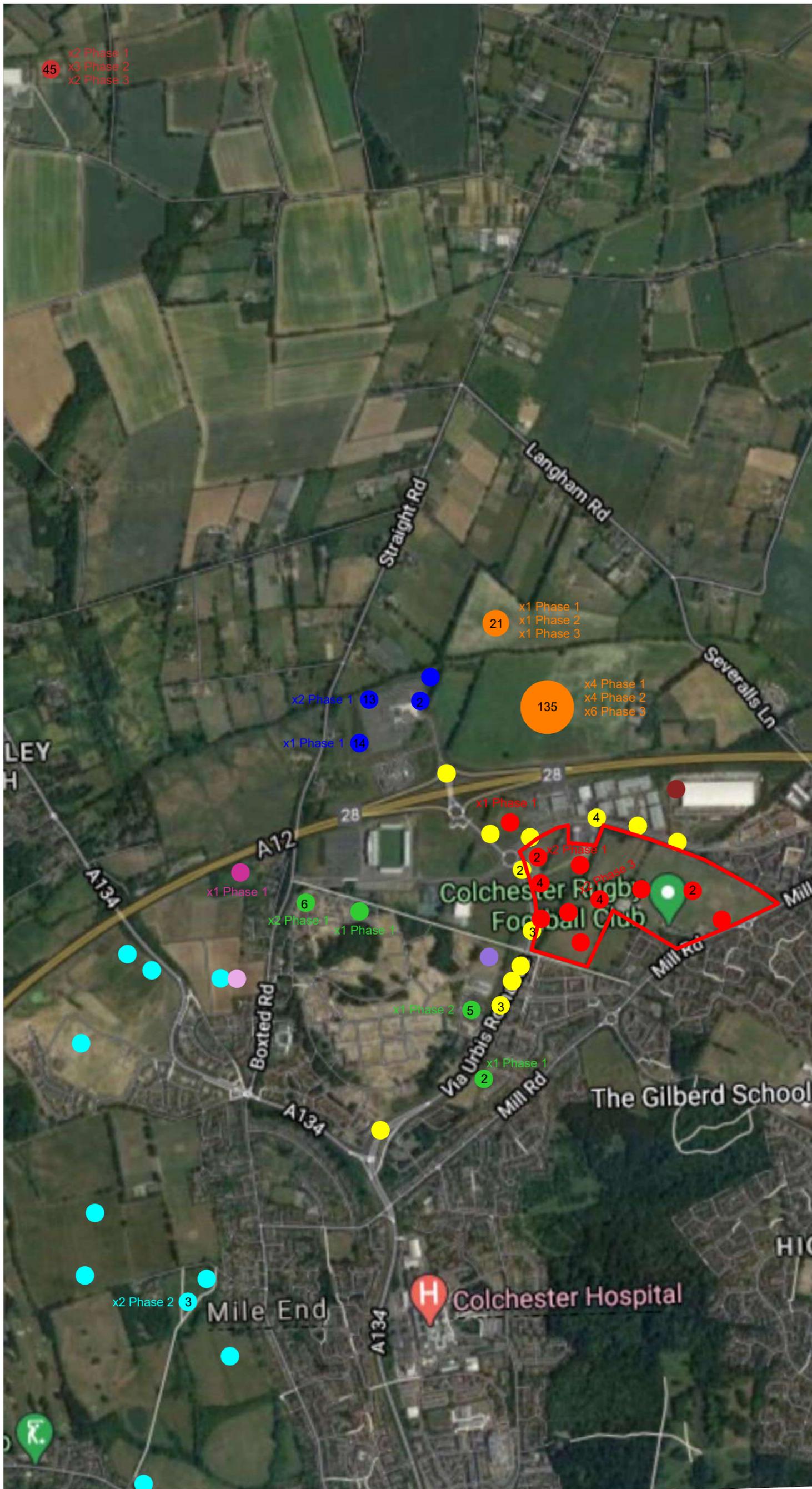
F30	-	-	Pit	Firm, dry medium grey sandy-silt with very frequent stones and rare charcoal flecks	Undated
F31	-	-	Pit	Firm, dry medium grey/brown sandy-silt	Undated
F32	-	-	Posthole	Friable, moist medium/dark brown sandy-silt	Modern
F33	-	-	Natural feature	Firm, moist light grey sandy-silt	Post-glacial
F34	6	-	Pit	Firm/hard, medium/dark green/brown silty-clay with very frequent stones and charcoal flecks	Modern
F35	-	-	Gully	Firm/hard, medium grey/brown silty-clay	Undated
F36	7	-	Pit	Firm/hard, medium grey/brown silty-clay with very frequent stones	Medieval / post-medieval
F37	-	-	Pit	Firm/hard, medium grey/brown silty-clay with frequent stones and charcoal flecks	Undated
Phase 2					
F38	-	-	Drainage ditch (part of F28)	Dry, medium grey/brown sandy-silt with modern brick and metal finds (not retained).	Modern
F39	-	-	Pit	Upper fill: Dark black clayey-silt with charcoal flecks. Lower fill: Medium/light grey clayey silt with occasional stone.	Undated
F40a	-	-	Pit	Dark black/grey clayey-silt with occasional sub-rounded stones and charcoal flecks	Undated
F40b	-	-	Gully	Firm, dry, medium grey/brown sandy-silt, 10% stone	Modern
F41	-	<12>	Pit	Firm, moist, light-medium grey/brown sandy-silt with rare charcoal	Undated
F42	-	-	Pit	Firm, dry, light grey/brown sandy-silt with some clay	Undated
F43	9	<13>	Pit	Firm, moist, medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay, rare charcoal	Undated
F44	10	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist, medium grey/brown sandy-silty-clay	Modern
F45	-	-	Pit/posthole	Firm, moist, light-medium grey/brown sandy-silt with rare charcoal	Undated
F46	11	-	Posthole	Firm, moist, medium grey/brown sandy-silty-loam	Modern
F47	-	<14>	Pit	Loose, soft, moist, very dark grey clayey-silt with dense charcoal inclusions	Modern
F48	-	<15>	Pit	Loose, soft, moist, very dark grey/black clayey-silt with dense charcoal inclusions	Modern
F49	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist, dark brown sandy-silt	Modern
F50	-	-	Drainage ditch	Firm, moist, dark grey/brown sandy-silt	Modern
F51	16	-	Pit	Loose, soft, wet, medium black clayey-silt with charcoal	Modern
F52	-	-	Tree-throw	Soft, wet, medium grey silty-clay with charcoal	Undated
F53	-	-	Tree-throw	Soft, wet, medium grey silty-clay with charcoal	Undated
F54	-	-	Pit	Soft, loose, dry, light grey silty-clay	Undated
F55	-	-	Pit/tree-throw	Firm, moist, medium grey/brown sandy-silty clay with charcoal	Undated
F56	-	-	Pit/tree-throw	Firm, moist, light-medium grey/brown sandy-silty clay with charcoal	Undated
F57	-	-	Pit/tree-throw	Firm, moist, light-medium grey sandy-silty clay with charcoal	Undated
F58	-	-	Posthole	Loose, soft, dark brown silt with charcoal and CBM flecks	Modern
F59	-	-	Services	Moist, dark brown silt	Modern



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Fig 1 Site location





Archaeological investigations where charcoal-rich pits have been identified

- Northern Approach Road 2001 & 2013
- Flakt Woods 2004
- NGAUE 2011
- Cuckoo Farm P&R 2015
- Severalls School 2015
- Severalls Hospital 2016 & 2017
- Cambian Fairview 2017
- Colchester North 2017
- Lodge Farm 2018 & 2018
- Colchester Northern Gateway 2017-2020
- Colchester Northern Gateway South 2019 & 2020 (evaluation, Phases 1 and 1a)

Charcoal-rich pit phasing, based on analysis in CAT Report 1479:

- Phase 1 - Early Iron Age to early Roman (1st century AD)
- Phase 2 - late Anglo-Saxon to early medieval (10th to 14th centuries)
- Phase 3 - post-medieval/modern (17th century onwards)

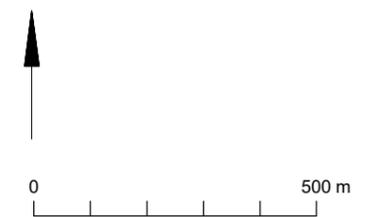


Fig 2 Distribution map showing the locations of all the charcoal-rich pits recorded in Northern Colchester since 2001. Each circle represents a single charcoal-rich pit unless otherwise stated. Those that have been dated have been assigned to Phase 1, 2 or 3.

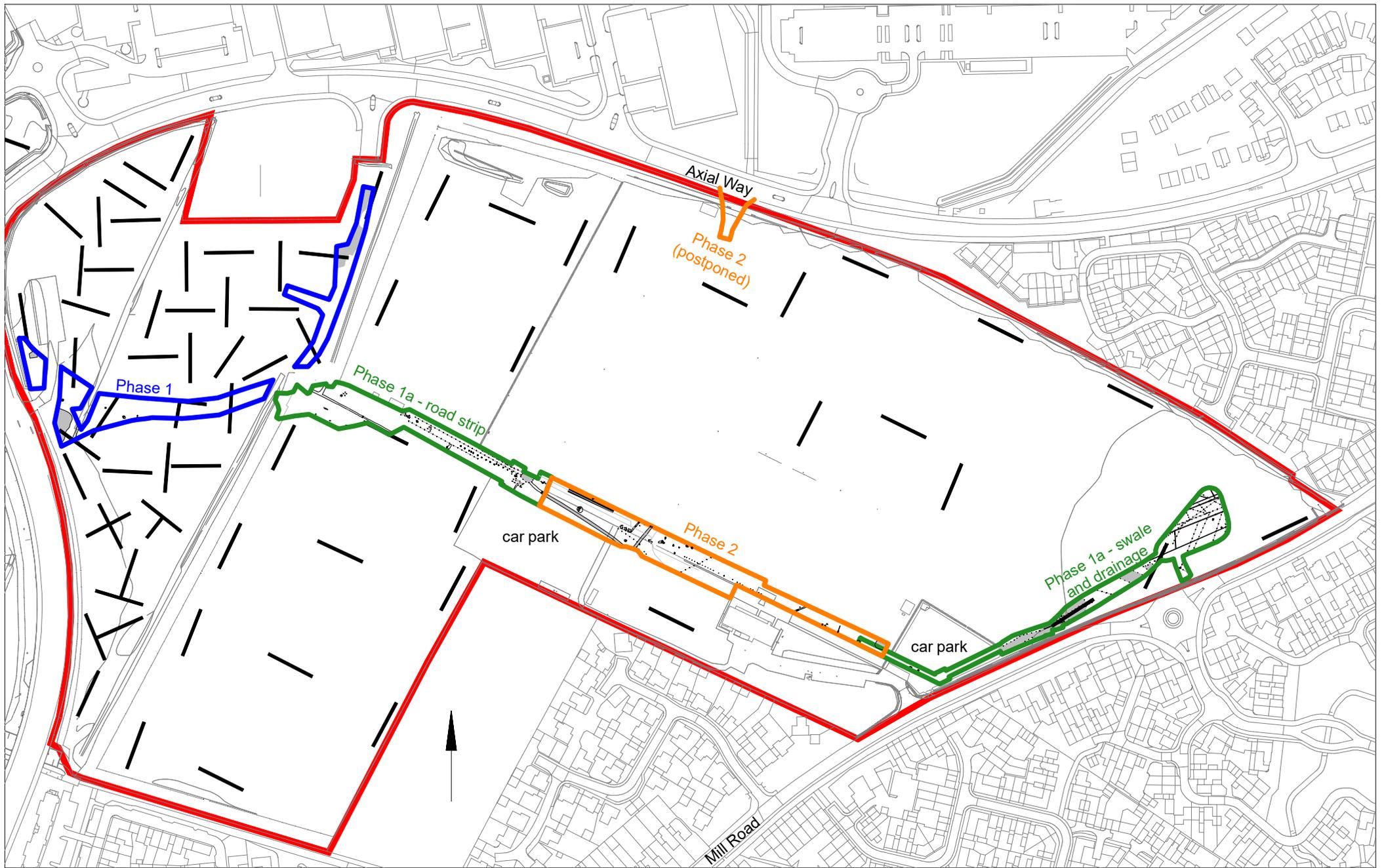


Fig 3 Location plan of evaluation trenches, Phase 1 (outlined in blue)
Phase 1a (outlined in green) and current Phase 2 (outlined in orange)

— evaluation trenches
(Watson & Swan 2019)

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0 200 m

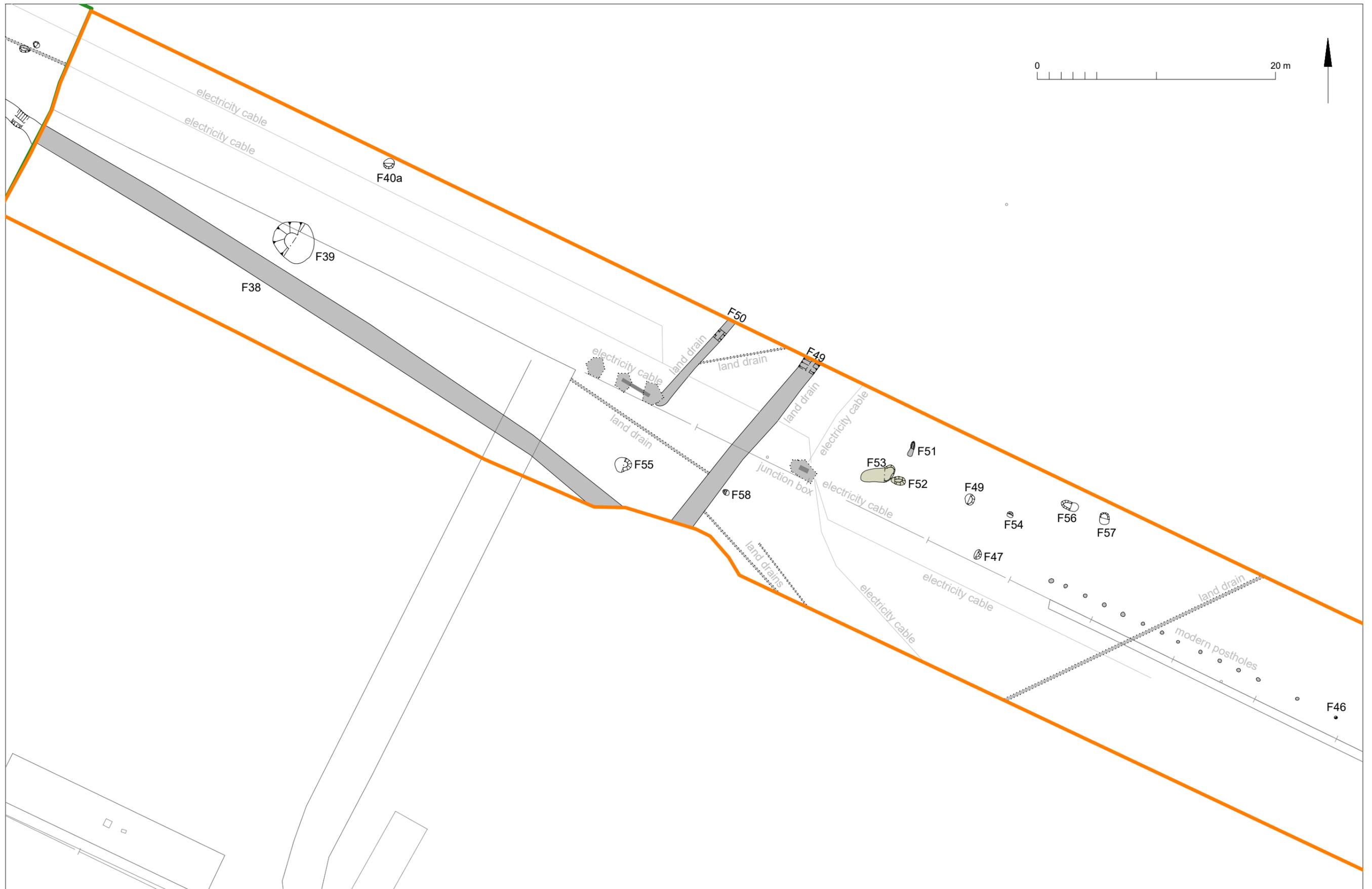


Fig 4 Results, northwestern half of excavation area (modern features in grey)

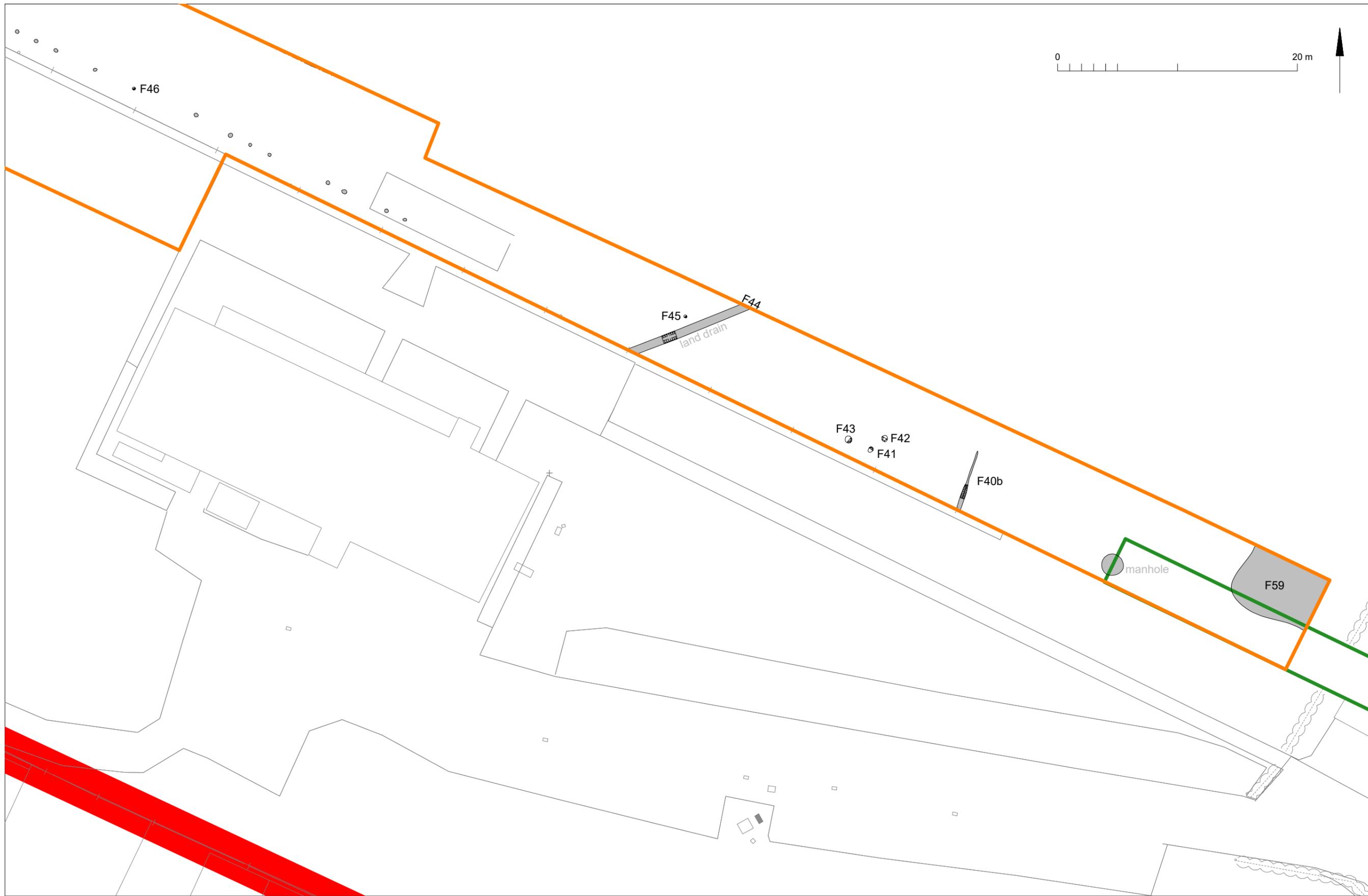


Fig 5 Results, southeastern half of excavation area (modern features in grey)

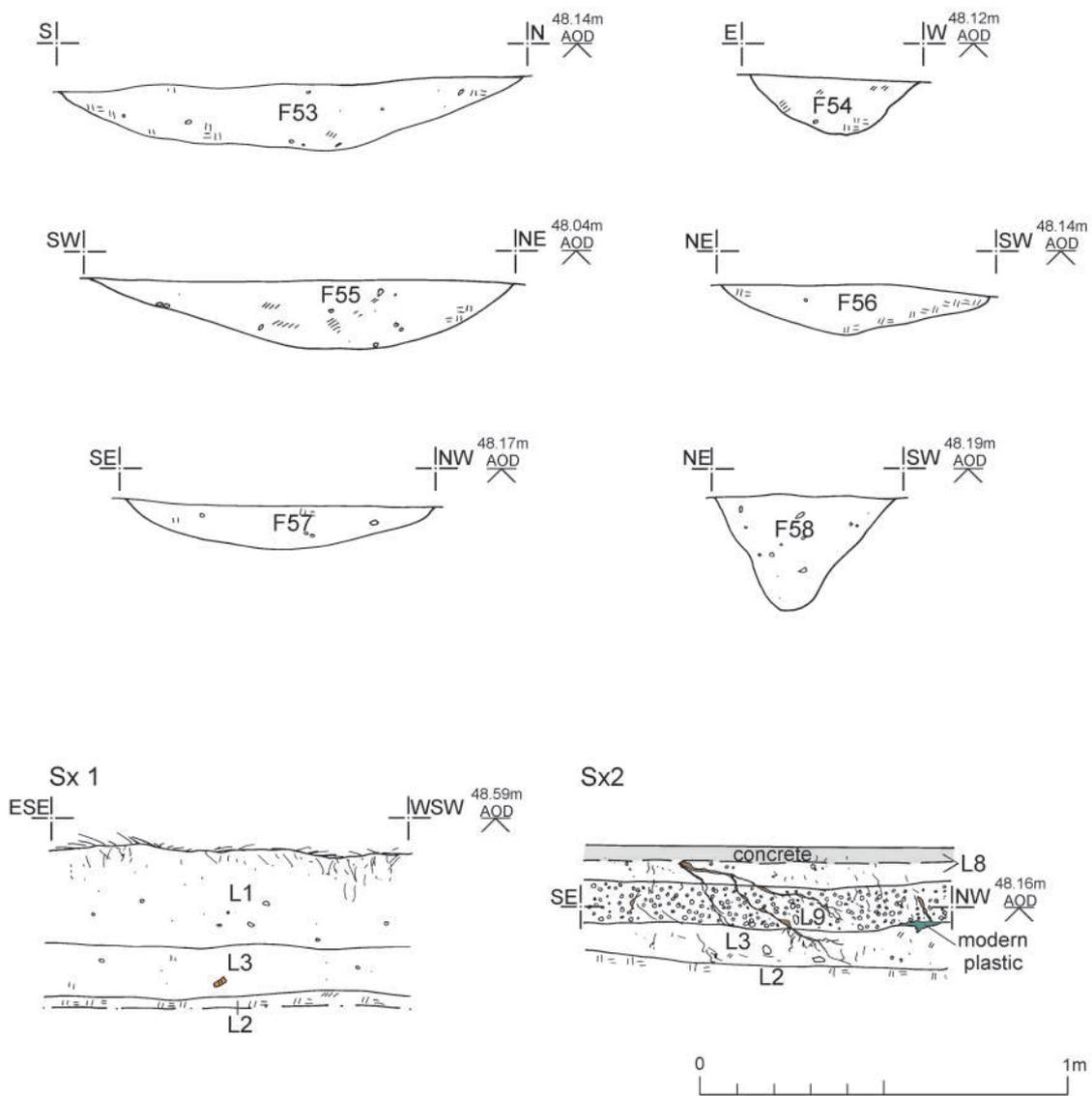


Fig 7 Feature and representative sections.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 0024 2877 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 2021/03v CHER ref: ECC4616 OASIS ref: colchest3-418275
Type of work: Strip, map and record excavation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 12th April – 21st May 2021	Size of area investigated: 21.25 ha
Location of curating museum: Colchester museum	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related CHER/SMR number: CHER ECC3649, ECC4302, ECC4112, ECC4434, ECC4565
Final report: CAT Report 1689	
Periods represented: Modern and undated	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological strip, map and record excavation was carried out at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex during groundworks as part of Phase 2 of the development. Archaeological investigations in this area of northern Colchester since 2001 have revealed a significant concentration of charcoal-rich pits dating from the Early Iron Age through to the post-medieval period, with many likely associated with charcoal production. Archaeological evaluation along with excavations as part of Phase 1 and 1a of the current project, have previously uncovered evidence for charcoal-rich pits, along with post-medieval, modern and undated features on the development site</p> <p>Phase 2 excavations at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) revealed 23 features: ten modern features, including two pits with a charcoal-rich fill, drainage ditches, pits and postholes; eight undated pits/postholes; and five undated pits/tree-throws.</p>	
Previous summaries/reports: CAT Report 1544 and 1609	
CBC monitor: Dr Richard Hoggett & Dr Simon Wood	
Keywords: -	Significance: -
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: July 2021

Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 2, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, CO4 5JF.

NGR: TM 0024 2877 (centre)

Parish: Colchester

Planning reference: 190665

Commissioned by: Jack Conington (Amphora Trading)

On behalf of: Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd

Curating Museum: Colchester

CHER event number: ECC4616

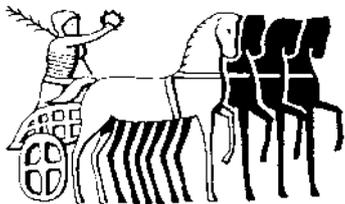
CAT project code: 2020/03v

OASIS project id: colchest3-418275

Site Manager: Chris Lister

CBC Monitor: Dr Richard Hoggett

This WSI written: 29/03/2021



COLCHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST,
Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel: 01206 501785

email: cl@catuk.org

Site location and description

The proposed development site lies approximately 3.6km north-northeast of Colchester town centre at Colchester Gateway (South), between Via Urbis Romanae and Mill Road, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF (Fig 1). The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TM 0024 2877. The site is currently land used as the Mill Road Sports Ground.

Proposed work

This phase of the development (Phase 2) is a continuation of enabling works comprising the creation of a new access road and boulevard and associated drainage, including drainage basins, services, the energy centre and associated groundworks (see planning background for full description).

Archaeological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts from the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive and the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER: accessed via Colchester Heritage Explorer (<https://colchesterheritage.co.uk>)).

A gradiometry survey was carried out by Stratascan in 2016 of the c 50 hectare development area. Their survey identified the corner of an undated enclosure along with a number of possible associated linear responses and a number of modern anomalies related to services (Richardson 2016, ECC3649).

In 2018/19 a trial-trenched evaluation was carried out across part of the proposed development site by Archaeological Services, Durham University. Results included fire pits, post-medieval boundary ditches, and postholes and ditches of unknown date (AS Report 4977, ECC4302).

CAT have carried out several investigations as part of the Colchester Northern Gateway project. During an evaluation of Sports Hub plots 2-3 significant archaeological remains consisted of 24 charcoal-rich pits probably relating to charcoal production. These were sub-round or sub-oval charcoal-rich features with occasional evidence of in situ burning. Dating evidence was mostly lacking but two of the pits contained finds dated to the Roman and post-Roman periods. With radiocarbon dates from charcoal in another two of the pits dating to the Middle Iron Age and late Anglo-Saxon/early Medieval period. Together with another 77 charcoal-rich pits known from previous archaeological investigations, they suggest that charcoal production was occurring in this part of northern Colchester from the Early Iron Age through to the medieval period. Other archaeological remains included residual prehistoric work flints, a single tree throw containing a prehistoric worked flint which may or may not be residual, a small number of undated pits and tree throws, and a number of modern field boundary ditches, many of which are visible on old OS maps dating from the late 19th-century to the late 1990s, with associated agricultural features (CAT Report 1219, ECC4112).

Excavations undertaken in advance of Phase 1 of this project in March 2020 identified three further charcoal-rich pits, one of which produced a Late Neolithic flint arrowhead, along with three undated pits and a modern ditch (CAT Report 1554, ECC4434).

A programme of Strip, Map and Excavate in advance of a new roadway (Phase 1a) was undertaken in July to October 2020. This work comprising part of the roadway, a swale and a drainage trench revealed 29 features including two medieval/post-medieval pits, a post-medieval/modern field boundary ditch, fourteen modern features (ditches/drainage ditches, a pit, and a posthole), five undated features (pits, a pit/posthole and a gully terminus) and two natural features. Also excavated were three undated charcoal-rich pits along with two charcoal-rich pits of post-medieval/modern and modern date (CAT Report 1609, ECC4465).

Planning background

A planning application (190665) was made to Colchester Borough Council in March 2019 proposing a *hybrid planning application- outline application for healthcare campus (5ha) of up to 300 older people's homes (C3), 4,300sqm private acute surgical hospital (C2), (1,200sqm) medical centre (D1), 3,600sqm, 75- bed care home (C2), up to 55742sqm offices (B1a); up to 350 homes (C3), with ancillary retail & food & drink (A3), digital network of ultra fast broadband; 2 points of vehicular access from public highway, pedestrian boulevard & community green (4.5ha). All matters apart from access to be reserved in relation to outline elements of proposals. Detailed consent for a 1st phase of infrastructure to energy centre & heat distribution network.*

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the CHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBCAA). This recommendation was for an archaeological excavation and was based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

Requirement for work

The required archaeological work covers the second stage of archaeological excavation of the area of the new boulevard, access roads and associated drainage, including drainage basins and swales and services, as well as the energy centre and any other associated infrastructure in the first phase of development. Details are given in a Project Brief written by CBCAA (2019).

Specifically, the archaeological work associated with Phase 2 will comprise of a strip, map and record excavation of the area highlighted orange on Fig 1.

If unusual, significant or unexpected remains are encountered the CBCAA will be informed immediately. Amendments to the brief, and this WSI, may be required to ensure adequate provision for archaeological recording.

General methodology

All work carried out by CAT will be in accordance with:

- Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a-c)
- Standards and Frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011)
- Relevant Health & Safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2020)
- The Project Brief issued by CBCAA (2019)

Professional CAT field archaeologists will undertake all specified archaeological work, for which they will be suitably experienced and qualified.

Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name and the start date for the project will be provided to CBCAA one week before start of work.

Unless it is the responsibility of other site contractors, CAT will study mains service locations and avoid damage to these.

At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms. At the end of the project all parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER). This will include an uploaded .PDF version of the entire report.

A unique HER event number will be obtained from the CBCAA prior to the commencement of

fieldwork. The curating museum will be notified of the details of the project and the event code, which will be used to identify the project archive when depositing at the end of the project.

Staffing

The number of field staff for this project is estimated as follows: one supervisor and one archaeologist for eight days.

In charge of day-to-day site work: Mark Baister/Robin Mathieson

Strip, map and excavate methodology

Where appropriate, modern overburden and any topsoil stripping/levelling will be performed using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist. If no archaeologically significant deposits are exposed, machine excavation will continue until natural subsoil is reached.

Where necessary, areas will be cleaned by hand to ensure the visibility of archaeological deposits.

If archaeological features or deposits are uncovered, time will be allowed for these to be excavated, planned and recorded.

There will be sufficient excavation to give clear evidence for the period, depth and nature of any archaeological deposit. For linear features 1m wide sections will be excavated across their width to a total of 10% of the overall length. Discrete features, such as pits, will have 50% of their fills excavated, although certain features may be fully excavated.

Complex archaeological structures such as walls, kilns, ovens or burials will be carefully cleaned, planned and fully recorded, but where possible left *in situ*. Only if it can be demonstrated that the complex structure/feature is likely to be destroyed by groundworks, and only then after discussion with the CBCAA, will it be removed.

Fast hand-excavation techniques involving (for instance) picks, forks and mattocks will not be used on complex stratigraphy.

Trained CAT staff will use a metal detector to scan all areas of the strip and map both before and during excavation. All features and spoil heaps will be scanned and finds recovered.

Individual records of excavated contexts, layers, features or deposits will be entered on proforma record sheets. Registers will be compiled of finds, small finds and soil samples.

All features and layers or other significant deposits will be planned, and their profiles or sections recorded. A representative section will be drawn to include ground level and the depth of machining. The normal scale will be site plans at 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be appropriate.

The photographic record will consist of general site shots, and shots of all archaeological features and deposits. A photographic scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. Standard "record" shots of contexts will be taken on a digital camera. A photographic register will accompany the photographic record. This will detail as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot.

Site surveying

The excavation area and any features will be surveyed by Total Station or GPS, unless the particulars of the features indicate that manual planning techniques should be employed.

Normal scale for archaeological site plans and sections is 1:20 and 1:10 respectively, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.

The site grid will be tied into the National Grid. Corners of excavation areas will be located by NGR coordinates.

Environmental sampling policy

The number and range of samples collected will be adequate to determine the potential of the site, with particular focus on palaeoenvironmental remains including both biological remains (e.g. plants, small vertebrates) and small sized artefacts (e.g. smithing debris), and to provide information for sampling strategies on any future excavation. Samples will be collected for potential micromorphological and other pedological sedimentological analysis. Environmental bulk samples will be 40 litres in size (assuming context is large enough).

CAT has an arrangement with Val Fryer/Lisa Gray whereby any potentially rich environmental layers or features will be appropriately sampled as a matter of course. CAT staff will process samples (unless of a complex nature) and the flots will be sent to VF/LG for reporting.

Sampling strategies will address questions of:

- the range of preservation types (charred, mineral-replaced, waterlogged) and their quality
- concentrations of macro-remains
- and differences in remains from undated and dated features
- variation between different feature types and areas of site

Provision will be included (where necessary) for column or core samples to be taken, for the assessment and/or full analysis of those samples, and for absolute dating of the sequence.

Provision will also be made (where necessary) for the identification and absolute dating of suitable deposits of charred remains. Should VF/LG make a recommendation that suitable samples not datable by other means (ie associated finds) be submitted for absolute dating, then these samples will be sent to the SUERC Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory at Glasgow University for analysis.

Should any complex, or otherwise outstanding deposits be encountered, VF/LG will be asked onto site to advise. Waterlogged 'organic' features will always be sampled. In all cases, the advice of VF and/or the Historic England Regional Advisor in Archaeological Science (East of England) on sampling strategies for complex or waterlogged deposits will be followed, including the taking of monolith samples.

Human remains

CAT follows the policy of leaving human remains *in situ* unless there is a clear indication that the remains are in danger of being compromised as a result of their exposure or unless advised to do so by the project osteologist or CBCAA.

CBCAA will be notified immediately if any human remains are encountered during the excavation.

If circumstances indicated it were prudent or necessary to remove remains from the site during the excavation, the following criteria would be applied; if it is clear from their position, context, depth, or other factors that the remains are ancient, then normal procedure is to apply to the Department of Justice for a licence to remove them and seek advice from the project osteologist. Human remains removed from site for analysis this may involve radiocarbon dating (see finds section).

If it cannot be demonstrated that future ground works are able to avoid impacting them, burials will be fully excavated. However, following HE guidance (HE 2018) if the human

remains are not to be lifted, the project osteologist should be available to record the human remain *in situ* (i.e. a site visit). Conditions laid down by the DoJ license will be followed. If it seems that the remains are not ancient, then the coroner, the client, and the CBCAA will be informed, and any advice and/or instruction from the coroner will be followed.

Photographic record

Will include both general and feature-specific photographs, the latter with scale and north arrow. A photo register giving context number, details, and direction of shot will be prepared on site, and included in site archive. Digital site photographs will be supplied as both a jpeg and in raw uncompressed format (TIFF), with metadata will be embedded into the raw file as per HE guidelines (HE 2015a).

Finds

All significant finds will be retained.

All finds, where appropriate, will be washed and marked with site code and context number. CAT may use local volunteers to assist the CAT Finds Officer with this task.

Most of our finds reports are written internally by CAT Staff under the supervision and direction of Philip Crummy (Director) and Howard Brooks (Deputy Director). This includes specialist subjects such as:

ceramic finds (pottery and ceramic building material): Matthew Loughton

animal bones: Alec Wade (or Adam Wightman, small groups only)

small finds, metalwork, coins, etc: Laura Pooley

non-ceramic bulk finds: Laura Pooley

flints: Adam Wightman

environmental processing: Bronagh Quinn

project osteologist (human remains): Meghan Seehra

or to outside specialists:

animal bones (large groups): Julie Curl (*Sylvanus*)

human bone (large groups): Julie Curl (*Sylvanus*)

environmental assessment and analysis: Val Fryer / Lisa Gray

radiocarbon dating: SUERC Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, Glasgow

conservation/x-ray: Laura Ratcliffe (LR Conservation) / Norfolk Museums Service,
Conservation and Design Services

Other specialists whose opinion can be sought on large or complex groups include:

flint: Hazel Martingell

prehistoric pottery: Stephen Benfield / Nigel Brown / Paul Sealey

Roman pottery: Stephen Benfield / Paul Sealey / Jo Mills / Val Rigby /
Gwladys Monteil

Roman brick/tile: Ian Betts (MOLA)

Roman glass: Hilary Cool

small finds: Nina Crummy

other: EH Regional Adviser in Archaeological Science (East of England).

All finds of potential treasure will be removed to a safe place, and the coroner informed immediately, in accordance with the rules of the Treasure Act 1996. The definition of treasure is given in pages 3-5 of the Code of Practice of the above act. This refers primarily to gold or silver objects.

Requirements for conservation and storage of finds will be agreed with the appropriate museum prior to the start of work, and confirmed to CBCAA.

A contingency will be made in the budget for scientific assessment/analysis. This can include soil micromorphological assessment, absolute dating in the event that archaeomagnetic and/or (more probably) radiocarbon dating is required, if burning is encountered or human

remains (in which case it might be necessary to lift a small sample for absolute dating). The Historic England Regional Science Advisor will be consulted for advice on this.

Post-excavation assessment

Once fieldwork has finished the need for a post-excavation assessment will be discussed and agreed with CBCAA. This may include discussion as to whether there is a need for and extent of radiocarbon dating of appropriate contexts and/or further detailed scientific analysis of other aspects of the project.

If a post-excavation assessment is required by CBCAA, it will be normally be submitted within 2 months of the end of fieldwork, or as quickly as is reasonably practicable and at a time agreed with CBCAA. It will be a clear and concise assessment of the archaeological value and significance of the results, and will identify the research potential in the context of the Regional Research Framework. It will include an Updated Project Design, with a timetable, for analysis, dissemination and archive deposition.

Where archaeological results do not warrant a post-excavation assessment, preparation of the normal site report will begin.

Results

Notification will be given to CBCAA when the fieldwork has been completed.

An appropriate archive will be prepared to minimum acceptable standards outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (HE 2015b).

The report will be submitted within 6 months of the end of fieldwork, with a copy supplied to CBCAA as a PDF.

The report will contain:

- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the archaeological project.
- Location plan of the excavation area in relation to the proposed development. At least two corners of the area will be given 10 figure grid references.
- A section drawing showing depth of deposits from present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale (if this can be safely done)
- Archaeological methodology and detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion and results referring to Regional Research Frameworks (Medlycott 2011).
- All specialist reports or assessments
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results.

An EHER summary sheet will also be completed within four weeks and supplied to CBCAA.

Results will be published, to at least a summary level (i.e. round-up in *Essex Archaeology & History*) in the year following the archaeological field work. An allowance will be made in the project costs for the report to be published in an adequately peer reviewed journal or monograph series

Archive deposition

It is a policy of Colchester Borough Council that the integrity of the site archive be maintained (i.e. all finds and records should be properly curated by a single organisation), with the archive available for public consultation. To achieve this desired aim it is assumed that the full archive will be deposited in Colchester Museums *unless otherwise agreed in advance*. (A full copy of the archive shall in any case be deposited).

By accepting this WSI, the client agrees to deposit the archive, including all artefacts, at Colchester & Ipswich Museum.

The requirements for archive storage will be agreed with the curating museum.

If the finds are to remain with the landowner, a full copy of the archive will be housed with the curating museum.

The archive will be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum within 3 months of the completion of the final publication report, with a summary of the contents of the archive supplied to CBCAA.

A digital / vector drawing of the site be given to the CBCAA for integration into the HER.

Monitoring

CBCAA will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project, and will be kept regularly informed during fieldwork, post-excavation and publication stages.

Notification of the start of work will be given to CBCAA one week in advance of its commencement.

Any variations in this WSI will be agreed with CBCAA prior to them being carried out.

CBCAA will be notified when the fieldwork is complete.

The involvement of CBCAA shall be acknowledged in any report or publication generated by this project.

References

Note: CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

AS Report 497	2019	<i>Archaeological evaluation: Colchester Northern Gateway (South), Colchester, Essex.</i> Archaeological Services, Durham University
Brown, D	2011 (2nd Ed.	<i>Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i>
CAT Report 1219	2018	<i>Archaeological evaluation at Colchester Northern Gateway Sports Hub Plots 2-3, Colchester, Essex – November-December 2017.</i> By L Pooley
CAT Report 1544	2020	<i>Archaeological strip, map and recording at Colchester Northern gateway (South), between Via Urbis Romanae and Mill Road, on land to the south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex – March 2020.</i> By Dr E Hicks & L Pooley
CAT Report 1609	2020	<i>Archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 1a, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex CO4 5JF – July, September, and October 2020.</i> By L Pooley
CBCAA	2019	<i>Brief for Archaeological Excavation at Phase 1, Colchester Northern Gateway (south) Between Via Urbis Romanae & Mill Road Land South of, Axial Way, Colchester.</i> By J Tipper
CifA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>
CifA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives</i>
CifA	2014c	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
Historic England (HE)	2015a	<i>Digital Image capture and File Storage: Guidelines for best practice.</i> By. S Cole & P Backhouse
Historic England (HE)	2015b	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Historic England (HE)	2018	<i>The Role of the Human Osteologist in an Archaeological Fieldwork Project.</i> By S Mays, M Brickley and J Sidell
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24

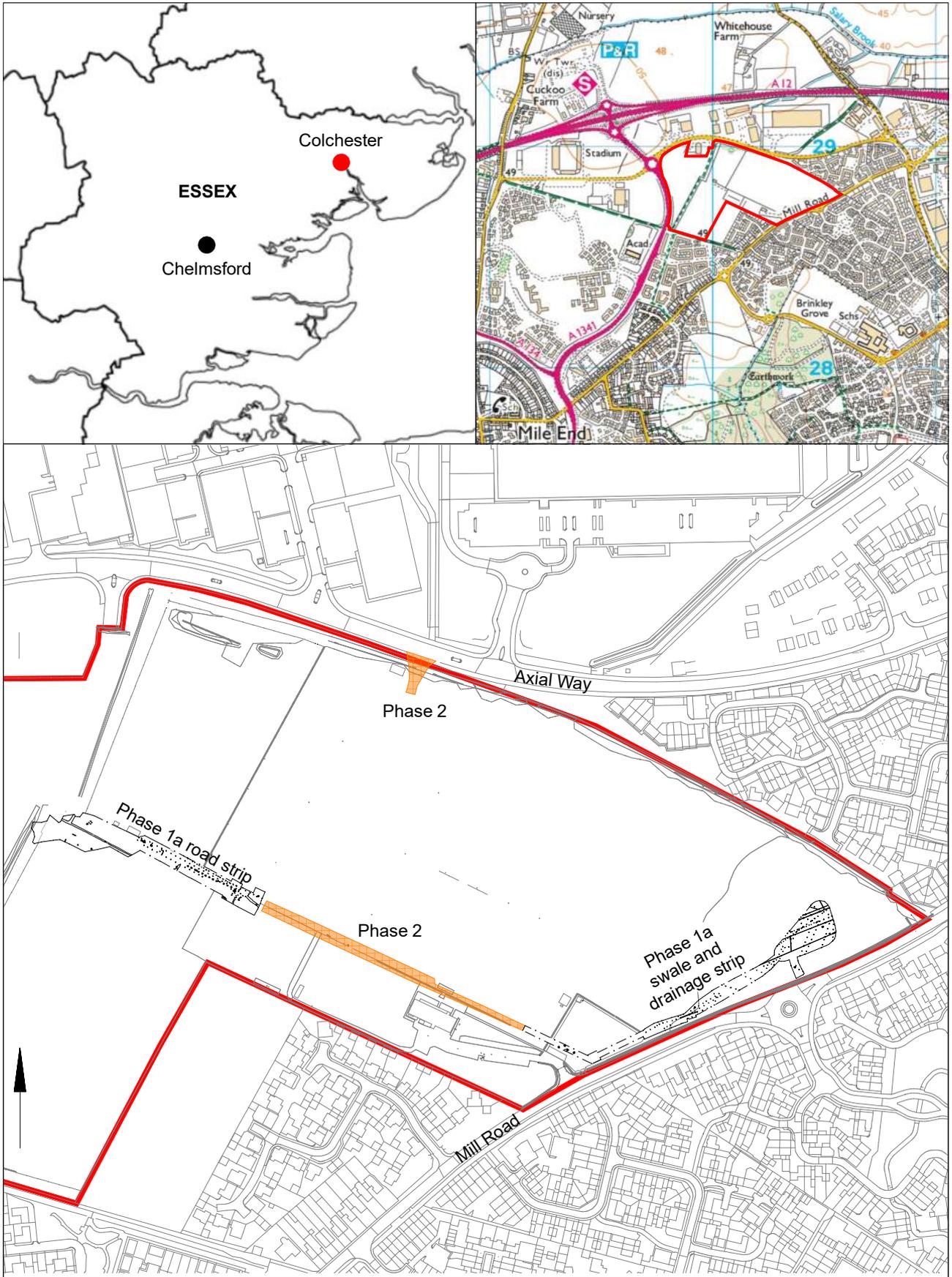
MHCLG	2019	(EAA 24) <i>National Planning Policy Framework. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.</i>
Richardson, T	2016	<i>Stratascan Geophysical Report: Colchester Northern Gateway, Colchester, Essex.</i>

C Lister



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Fig 1 Site location



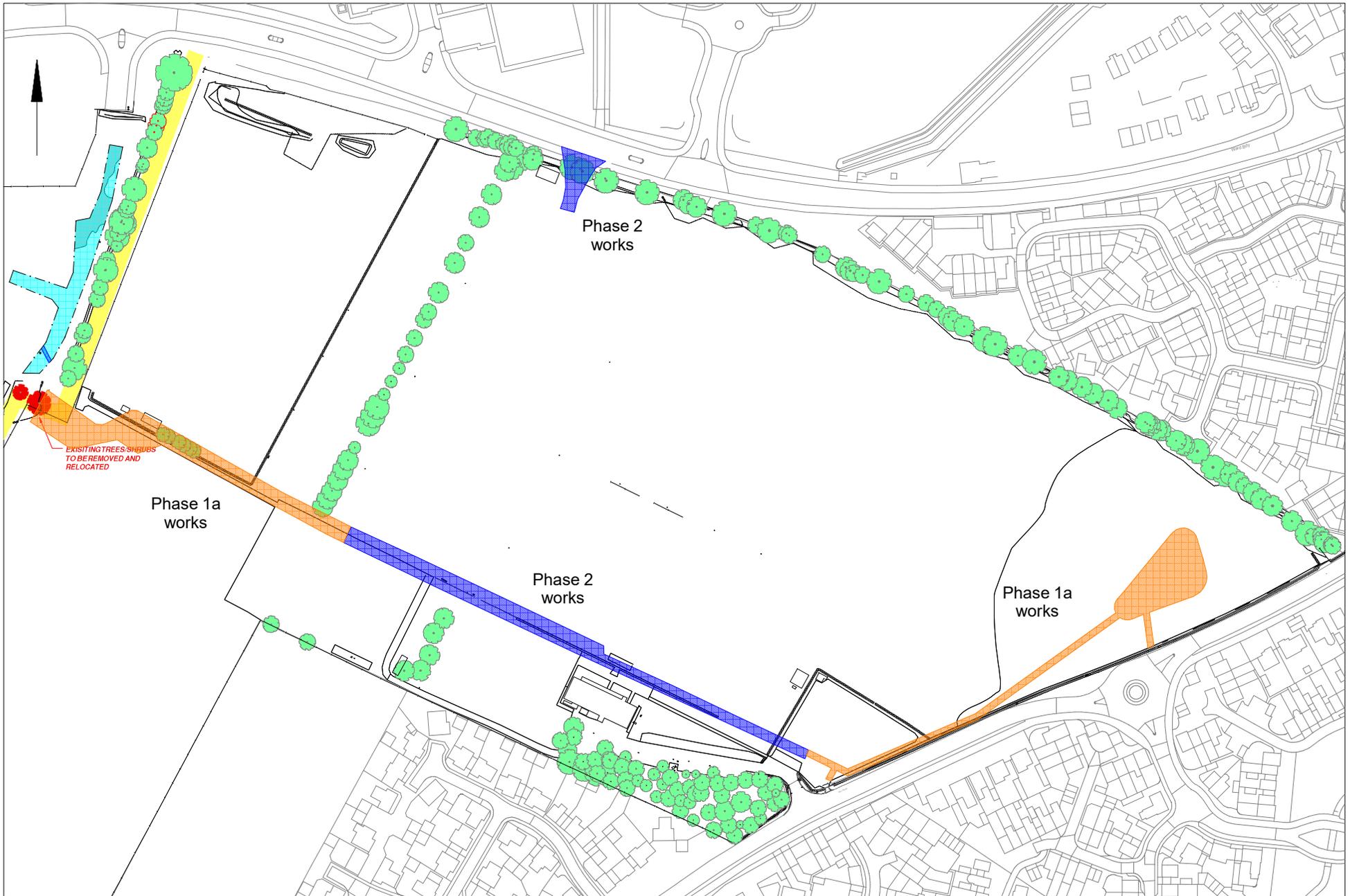


Fig 2 Phase 1a works.



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OASIS ID: colchest3-418275

Project details

Project name	Archaeological excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 2, Axial Way, Colchester, Essex
Short description of the project	An archaeological strip, map and record excavation was carried out at Colchester Northern Gateway (South), land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex during groundworks as part of Phase 2 of the development. Archaeological investigations in this area of northern Colchester since 2001 have revealed a significant concentration of charcoal-rich pits dating from the Early Iron Age through to the post-medieval period, with many likely associated with charcoal production. Archaeological evaluation along with excavations as part of Phase 1 and 1a of the current project have previously uncovered evidence for charcoal-rich pits, along with post-medieval, modern and undated features on the development site Phase 2 excavations at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) revealed 23 features: ten modern features, including two pits with a charcoal-rich fill, drainage ditches, pits and postholes; eight undated pits/postholes; and five undated pits/tree-throws.
Project dates	Start: 12-04-2021 End: 21-05-2021
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	2021/03v - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	190665 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	ECC4616 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	PITS Modern
Monument type	DITCHES Modern
Monument type	POSTHOLES Modern
Monument type	PITS Uncertain
Monument type	POSTHOLES Uncertain
Monument type	TREE-THROWS Uncertain
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	""Open-area excavation""
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 2
Postcode	CO4 5JF
Study area	21.25 Hectares
Site coordinates	TM 0024 2877 51.920865801756 0.912256664707 51 55 15 N 000 54 44 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 47.9m Max: 48.3m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	CBC Archaeological Officer
Project design originator	Chris Lister
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Robin Mathieson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Archaeological Data Service
Digital Archive ID	ECC4616
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID	ECC4616
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological strip, map and record excavation at Colchester Northern Gateway (South) Phase 2, on land south of Axial Way, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JF: April-May 2021
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Pooley, L.
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