

Archaeological evaluation on land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex, CO9 1LA

April 2022



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**commissioned by Steve Pease
on behalf of Framar Developments Ltd/St. Giles Developments Ltd**

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out on land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex in advance of the construction of new commercial units. Located close to the river Colne, prehistoric flints and a Roman coin have previously been found in the river valley, with the 19th-century Halstead Gas Works and the former Colne Valley Ironworks adjacent to the south.

Evaluation revealed a small concentration of three/four prehistoric features (pits and a pit/ditch) which produced flints of possible Bronze Age date. The only other features uncovered were a modern field boundary ditch present on early OS mapping, a large modern pit, and an undated ditch, pit and tree-throw.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex on the 28th and 29th April 2022. The work was commissioned by Steve Pease on behalf of Framar Developments Ltd/St Giles Developments Ltd in advance of the construction of seven commercial units with associated groundworks including access, refuse storage and an electrical substation.

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* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*, written by ECCPS and detailing the required work (ECCPS 2021), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS in advance of the work commencing (CAT 2022).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016), 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 includes extracts of the ECC brief and the Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

There is evidence for prehistoric and Roman occupation in and around Halstead, primarily in the form of stray finds including a Roman coin found to the west of the site (EHER 9363). To the north, an assemblage of prehistoric worked flint was recovered from the Colne river valley and evidence for prehistoric ritual activity is associated with the valley location (EHER 46324-5). In the Saxon period there was a settlement in Halstead, and by the time of the Domesday Survey there was a reasonably large population within the area, with an unusually high proportion of smallholders and freemen (ECC 1999, 3). Halstead grew from medieval settlement into a thriving town with planned elements which survive today (EHER 9429).

The houses erected along the High Street were high-status dwellings which reflected the town's prosperity from the East Anglian cloth trade at the end of the medieval and into the post-medieval period. The late post-medieval period saw major changes to the town with the introduction of the silk-weaving trade by the Courtaulds in the 18th century and the building of

Courtaulds factory in 1828. Courtaulds was a major employer in the town and also responsible for the construction of many public buildings, including housing. At the height of the cloth-manufacturing period, the density of housing was much greater in Halstead, with crowded tenements in the yard areas behind the buildings on the frontage.

The site lies within an area of growth in the early 19th century, largely due to its location along the edge of the Colne Valley Railway line (now partly dismantled, EHER 6817). To the south of the site lay the 19th-century Halstead Gas Works (EHER 40406) and the former Colne Valley Ironworks (EHER 15305). The ironworks were founded by Symington and Atterton, between 1866 and 1870. It was subsequently acquired by Charles Portway and split between two founders, 'C Portway and Sons Ltd' and the 'Tortoise Foundry Co. Ltd.'. On the 1st edition OS map, there are no buildings related to the gasworks within the area of the site, whereas buildings and the gasometer are visible within the site on mapping after 1950.

Halstead has seen few archaeological interventions, but for information on the general history and background of Halstead see the Historic Town Assessment Report (ECC 1999).

4 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits and to assess the archaeological potential of the site to allow the ECCHEA to determine if further investigation is required.

Specific project aims were to identify evidence associated with the medieval and post-medieval town and prehistoric evidence associated with its river valley location.

5 Results (Figs 2-4)

Four trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.

Each trench was 30m long by 1.8m wide and was stripped through topsoil (L1, c 0.19-0.25m thick) and subsoil (L2, c 0.36-0.43m thick) into natural (L3, identified at c 0.50-0.72m below current ground level). A sondage was excavated in T3 to confirm the identification of L3 as natural.

A full context list with soil descriptions and measurements can be found in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (T1)

Small pits F1, F2, F3 were sub-round or sub-oval features with a shallow concave base. Pit or ditch terminal F4 was larger and V-shaped in section. Four pieces of prehistoric worked flint were recovered from F1, F3 and F4, and could possibly be dated to the Bronze Age.

Trench 2 (T2)

Undated ditch F5 was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east and was U-shaped in section. Large modern feature F6, probably a pit, was not excavated as finds in the surface of the feature included fragments of concrete and window glass.

Trench 3 (T3)

Small circular pit F7 and tree-throw F8/F9/F10 are both undated features.

Trench 4 (T4)

Ditch F11 is part of an old field-boundary ditch as seen on OS mapping. The V-shaped ditch had three fills and produced 19th-/20th-century finds.



Photograph 1 Trench 1, looking south-east



Photograph 2 Trench 2, looking south-west, with F6 visible as the dark patch in the centre of the trench



Photograph 3 Trench 3, looking north-west

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

Ditch F11 produced a small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM). A sherd (81g) of yellow ware (fabric F48E) dating to the 19th-20th century was recovered along with six fragments of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile (408g) and three fragments of brick, one of which was possibly frogged. The ditch dates to the 19th-20th century. None of the finds were retained.

6.2 Metal object

by Laura Pooley

From F11 (finds no. 5) was a copper-alloy disc, very slightly domed on one side with a raised lip around a central circular perforation, 47mm diameter, 5.9mm thick with a central perforation of 9.3mm diameter. An unidentified fixture or fitting, probably dating to the 19th or 20th century.

6.3 Worked flint

by Howard Brooks

This is a small group of four struck flints (two blades and two flakes), weighing a total of 11g. Only one (flake) has any cortex. The blades are well knapped on medium grey, and grey brown flint. One blade is in cloudy grey flint which looks like patination.

The removal of flakes from the core prior to the striking of these flints is evidence of careful core preparation. Two are surprisingly fresh (F1), showing little use or movement before they were

deposited in their final contexts. The flake from F4 looks better travelled, and (being of a differently-coloured flint) may not be local.

This is a prehistoric group, but a lack of specific details makes closer dating difficult. A date centred on the Bronze Age may be appropriate.

Context	Finds no.	Size (mm)	Description
F1	1	35x19	Blade. 3g. Good quality, grey brown flint. No cortex. Three flakes had been detached from the core before this one. Whether deliberate or not, a slight hook at the end. Slight nibbling on both long edges, probably accidental. <i>Suspiciously fresh.</i>
F1	1	25x11	Small flake (or blade?). 1g. Flint as above. Two blades had been struck from the core before this one. Nibbling all around. <i>Suspiciously fresh.</i>
F3	2	35x14	Blade. 2g. Slightly dullish brown flint, otherwise good quality. Three flakes had been detached from core before this one. Some damage at proximal end. Slight nibbling at one end.
F4	3	33x19	Flake. 5g. Cloudy grey flint. Looks patinated, but probably not. Cortex at distal end and along one edge. Well defined striking platform. One or two flakes removed prior to this one.

Table 1 The worked flint

7 Conclusion

Evaluation on land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead revealed a small concentration of three, possibly four, prehistoric features (pits and a pit/ditch) in Trench 1 which produced four prehistoric flints possibly of Bronze Age date. The site lies close to the river Colne and further north an assemblage of prehistoric (Mesolithic and Neolithic) worked flint was recovered from the river valley (EHER 46324-5). Together with evidence from this evaluation, this would suggest small-scale temporary use of the river valley throughout the prehistoric period.

The only other features uncovered were a modern field boundary ditch present on early OS mapping of the site, a large unexcavated modern pit, and an undated ditch, pit and tree-throw.



Map 1 1879 OS map, modern field boundary ditch F11 shown by the blue arrow

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Steve Pease and Framar Developments Ltd/St. Giles Development Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and A Wightman, with fieldwork carried out by S Veasey with M Seehra and B Quinn. Figures were compiled by C Lister, S Veasey and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

9 References

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

Brown, N & Glazebrook, J	2000	<i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8)
CAT	2022	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2022	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological evaluation on land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex, CO9 1LA,</i> by E Holloway
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation.</i> Revised October 2020
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Revised October 2020
CIfA	2014c	<i>Code of Conduct.</i> Revised October 2021
Cotter, J P	2000	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85</i>
ECC	1999	<i>Historic Towns In Essex: Halstead, Historic Town Assessment Report.</i> Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch
ECCPS	2021	<i>Brief for Archaeological Evaluation and excavation on Land West of Rosemary Lane, Halstead,</i> by T O'Connor
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
Historic England	2015	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
MHCLG	2019	<i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

10 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c AD 500 – 1066
Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
evaluation	a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork, which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area. This may take the form of an intrusive investigation of a percentage of the site, geophysical or topographical survey. The results of this investigation will establish the requirements for any further work.
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
Mesolithic	period from c 10,000 – 4000BC
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Neolithic	period from c 4000 – 2500 BC
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, 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
wsi	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: Small bag of flint, all other finds discarded

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1822)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs and log

Scans of original site data (section drawings)

Graphic files

Site data

Survey data

12 Archive deposition

The 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 reference no. HSRL22 and with the Archaeological Data Service.

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Distribution list:

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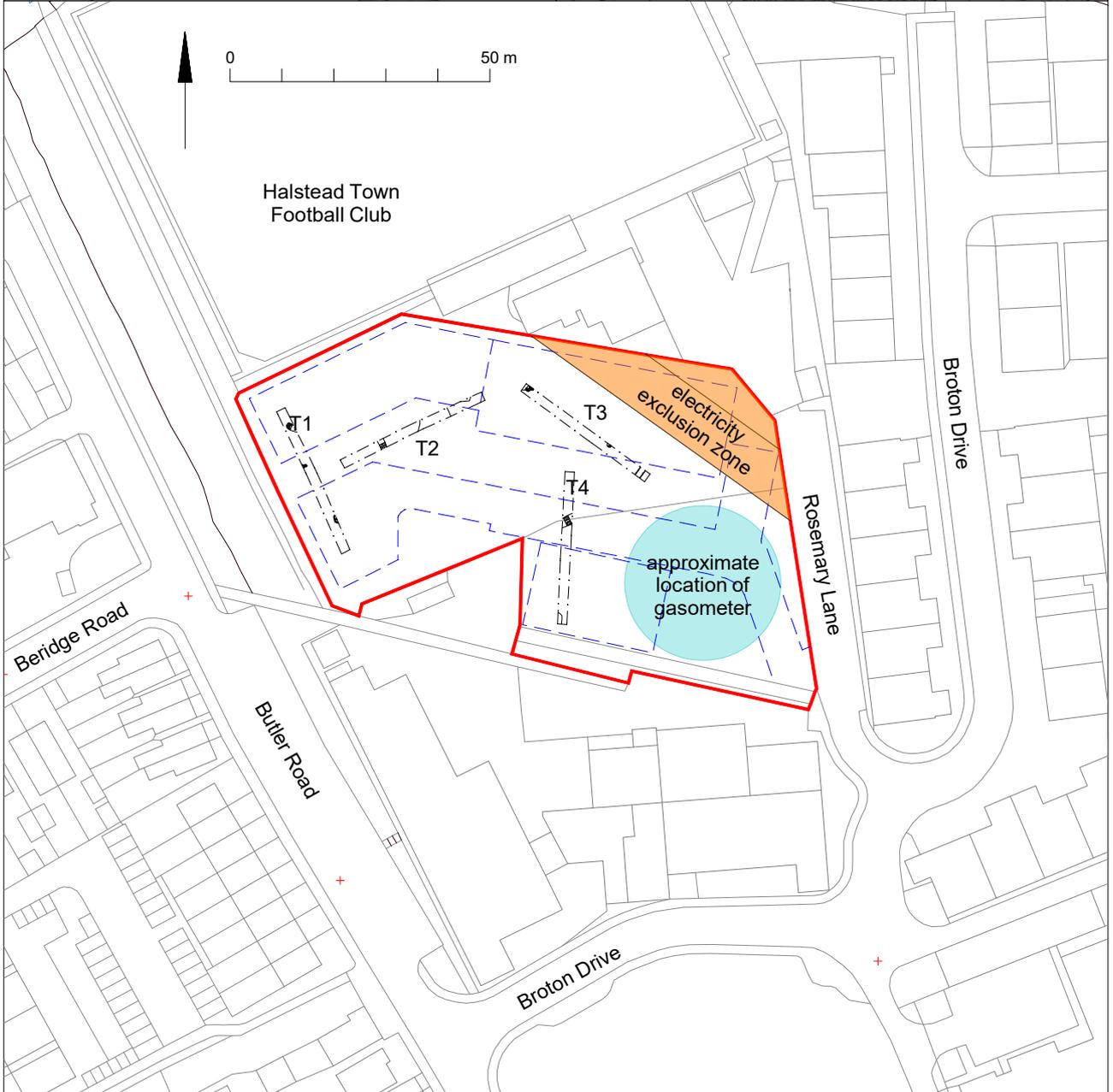
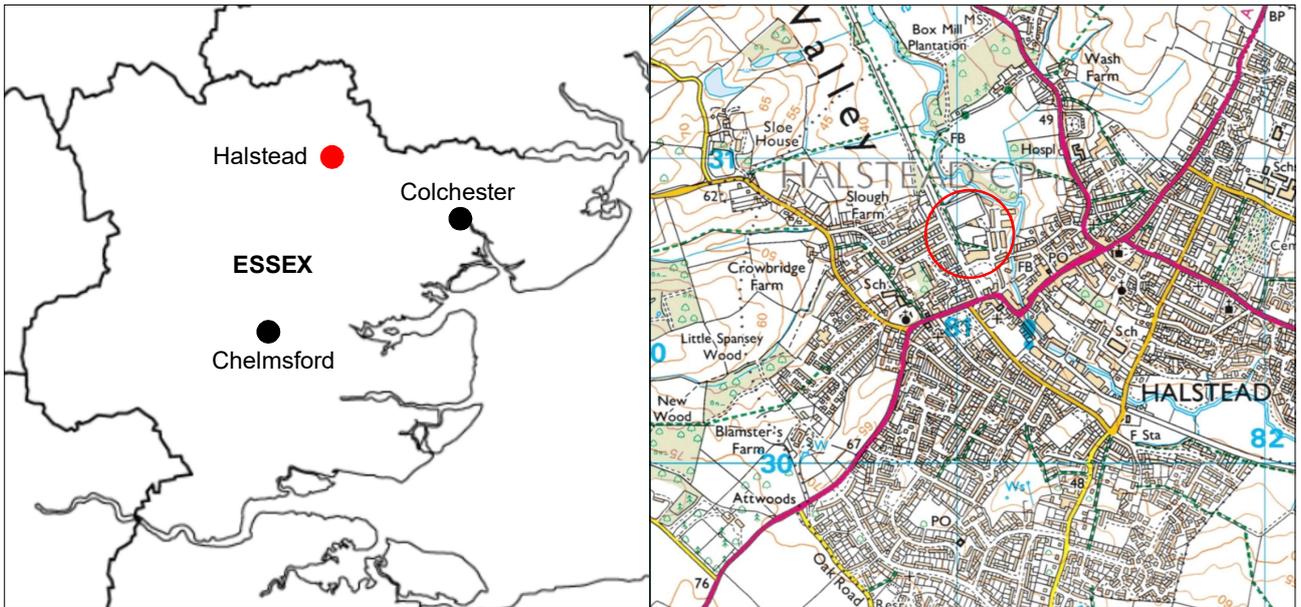
email: sv@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 05/07/2022

Appendix 1 Context list

Trench no.	Context	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
All	L1	-	Topsoil	Firm dry medium grey/brown loamy and inclusions of: gravel 2%	Modern
All	L2	-	Subsoil	Soft moist medium orange/grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 4%	Undated
All	L3	-	Natural	Firm moist medium yellow/orange silty sand and inclusions of: gravel 30% 35.8-36.5m AOD.	Post-glacial
<hr/>					
T1	F1	1	Pit	Soft dry light yellow/brown sandy-silt. 1.69m by 0.56m and 0.22m deep	Prehistoric
T1	F2	-	Pit	Soft moist medium grey/brown loamy-silt. 0.51m by 0.47m and 0.18m deep	?Prehistoric
T1	F3	2	Pit	Soft moist medium grey/brown loamy-silt. 0.40m by 0.71m and 0.31m deep	Prehistoric
T1	F4	3	?Ditch/pit	Soft dry light yellow/grey sandy-silt. 1.11m by 1.95m and 0.45m deep	Prehistoric
T2	F5	-	Ditch	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty-sand with charcoal flecks. 1.05m wide and 0.22m deep	Undated
T2	F6	-	Pit	Very dark brown/black sandy silt with modern inclusions of concrete, peg-tile, window glass. 6.18m wide, not excavated.	Modern
T3	F7	-	Pit	Soft moist light/medium yellow/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 5%. 0.86m by 0.48m and 0.26m deep.	Undated
T3	F8/F9/F10	-	Tree- throw	Soft moist medium grey loamy silt. 1.38m by 1.10m and 0.98m deep.	Undated
T4	F11	4, 5	Ditch	Soft moist medium dark grey/brown loamy silt 1.62m wide and 0.59m deep	Post-medieval



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Fig 1 Site location in relation to the proposed development (dashed blue) with site constraints highlighted.

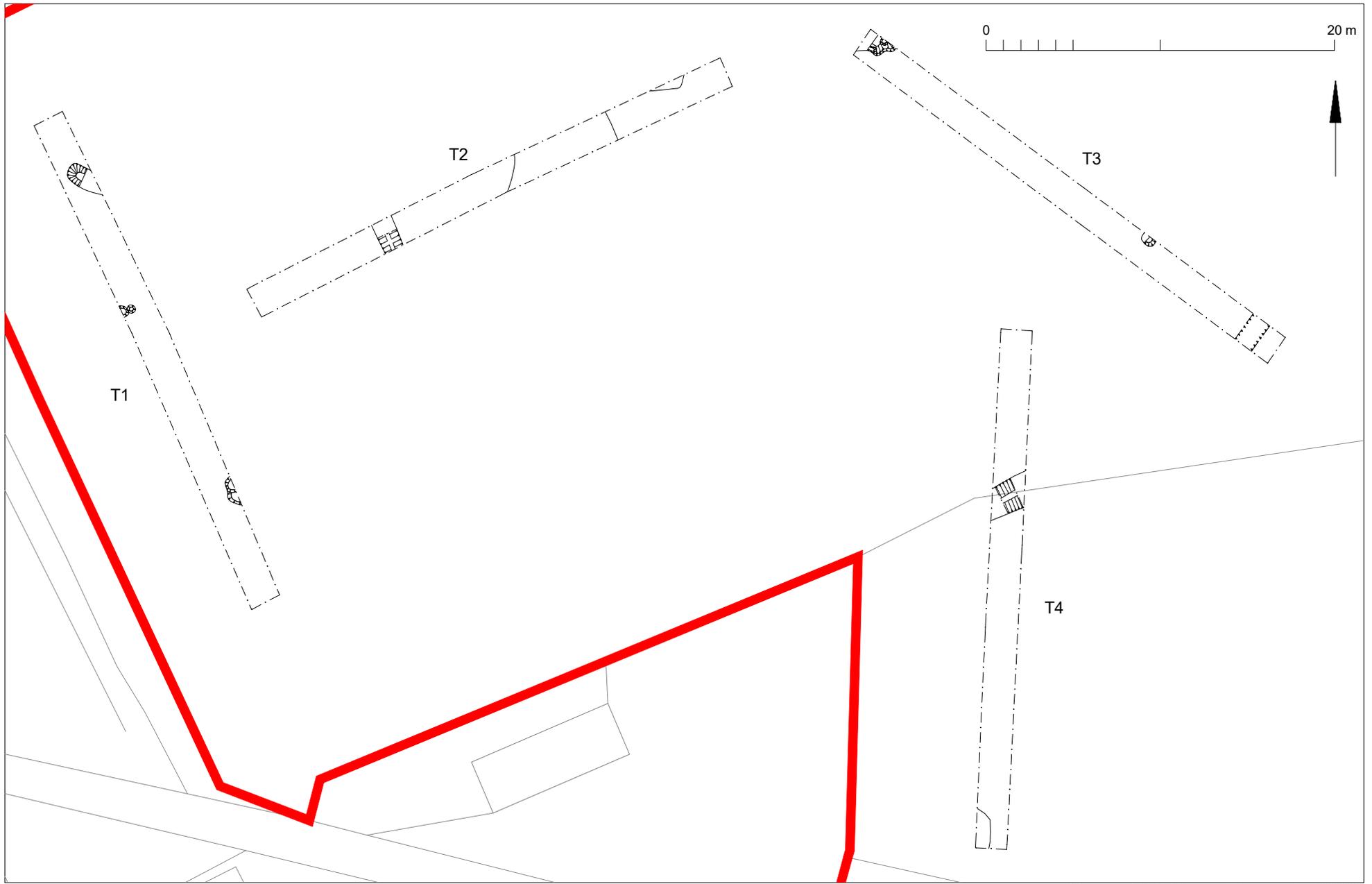


Fig 2 Evaluation results.

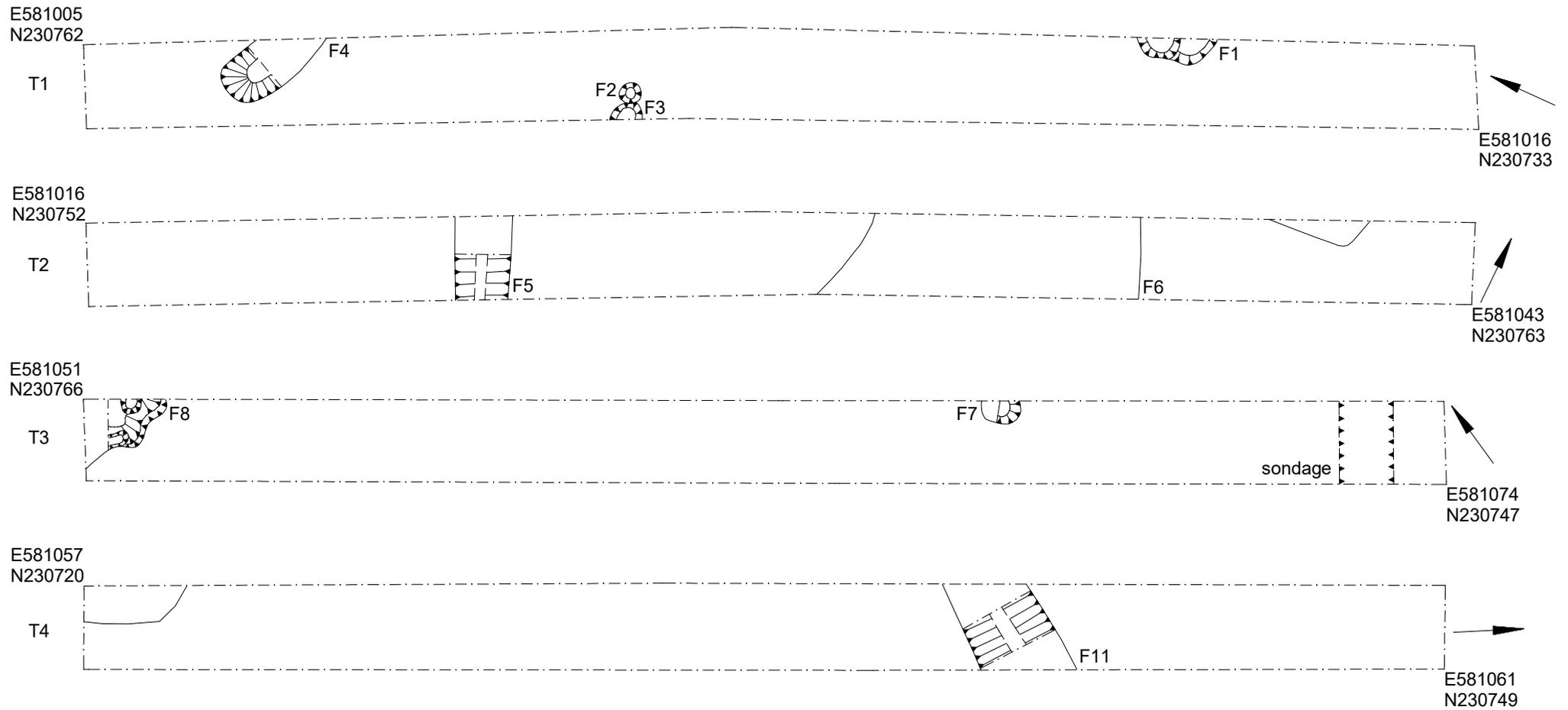


Fig 3 Detailed trench plans.



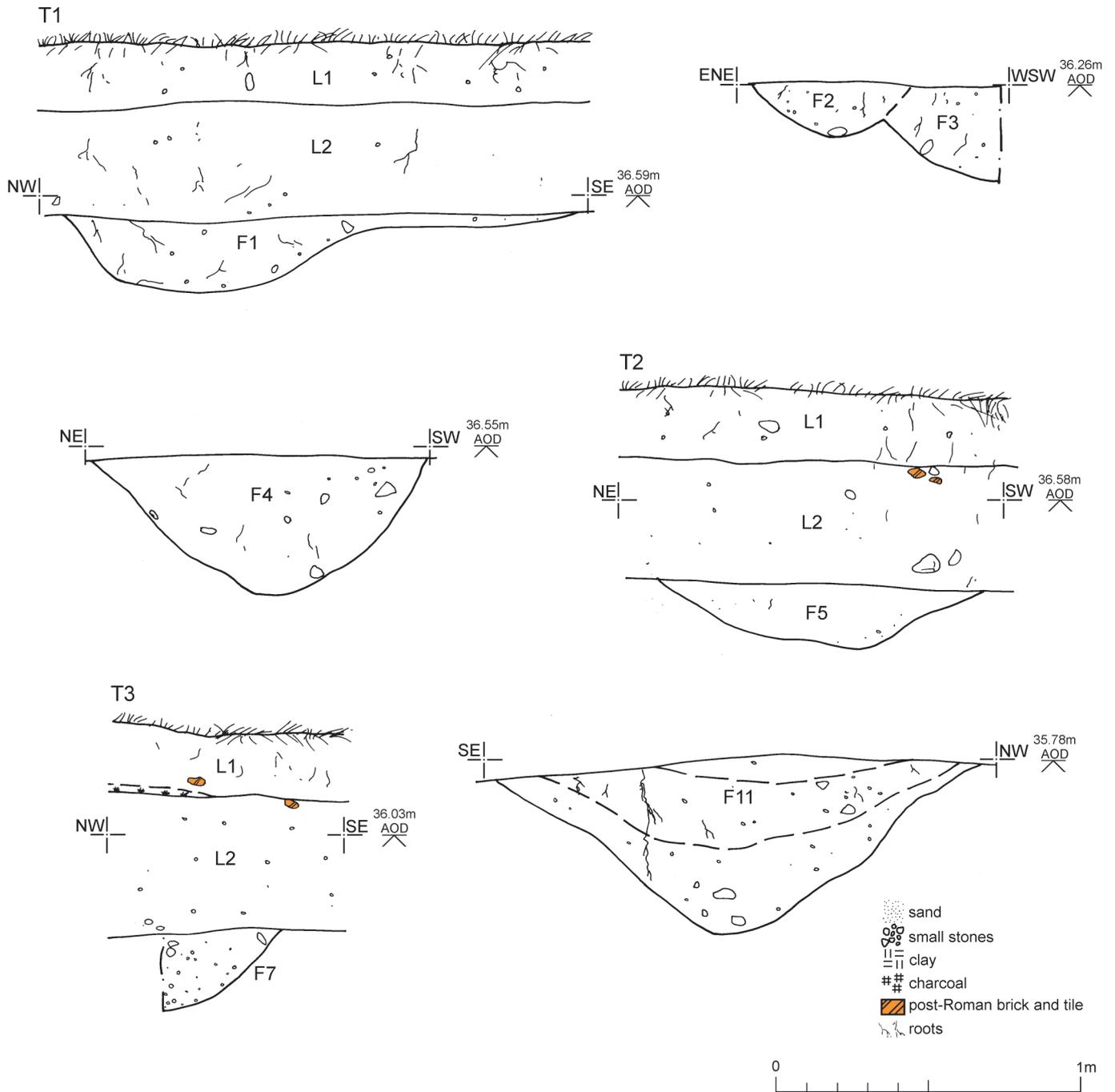


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections.

Summary for colchest3-505221

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-505221
Project Name	Evaluation at Land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex, CO9 1LA
Sitename	Land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex, CO9 1LA
Activity type	Evaluation
Project Identifier(s)	2022/03b
Planning Id	21/01479/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	28-Apr-2022 - 29-Apr-2022
Location	Land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex, CO9 1LA NGR : TL 81054 30753 LL : 51.9458064162446, 0.632884034868199 12 Fig : 581054,230753
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Braintree Parish : Halstead
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation of four trial-trenches
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out on land west of Rosemary Lane, Halstead, Essex in advance of the construction of new commercial units. Located close to the river Colne, prehistoric flints and a Roman coin have previously been found in the river valley, with the 19th-century Halstead Gas Works and the former Colne Valley Ironworks adjacent to the south. Evaluation revealed a small concentration of three/four prehistoric features (pits and a pit/ditch) which produced flints of possible Bronze Age date. The only other features uncovered were a modern field boundary ditch present on early OS mapping, a large modern pit, and an undated ditch, pit and tree-throw.
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	S, Veasey, L, Pooley
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Physical Archive - to be deposited with Braintree District Museum; Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;