

# Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 1886**  
**issued December 2022**

**Archaeological evaluation at Hall Meadows,  
Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7JF:  
November 2022**



**CAT project ref.: 2022/11e**  
**ECC code: AMHM22**

**Archaeological evaluation at Hall Meadows,  
Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7JF:  
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**NGR: TL 97831 01494**

**Planning ref.: MAL/22/00595**

**CAT project ref.: 2022/11e  
CAT Report 1886**

**ECC code: AMHM22  
OASIS id: colchest3-510774**

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**fieldwork by Ben Holloway with Elliott Hicks and  
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**commissioned by the landowner**

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<b>Issued:</b>		

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## Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aims	2
5	Results	2
6	Finds	6
7	Conclusion	8
8	Acknowledgements	8
9	References	8
10	Abbreviations and glossary	8
11	Contents of archive	9
12	Archive deposition	9

Appendix 1 Context list

Figures after p

OASIS summary sheet

## List of photographs, tables and figures

Cover: Working shot, looking north

Photograph 1	Trench 1, looking north	3
Photograph 2	Ditch F1, looking north-north-east	3
Photograph 3	Pit/tree-throw F2, looking east	4
Photograph 4	Tree-throw F5, looking south-west	4
Photograph 5	Tree-throw F8, looking west	5
Photograph 6	Tree-throw F14, looking north	5
Photograph 7	Trench 2, looking west	6

Table 1	Summary of the pottery and CBM	6
Table 2	Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features	6
Table 3	Approximate dates for the individual features	7
Table 4	Worked flints	7

Fig 1 Site location and trench layout in relation to proposed development

Fig 2 Results

Fig 3 Feature and representative sections

## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. Located within an area of known cropmarks and surrounded by prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains, the development site is also located close to the 17th-century Asheldham Hall. Excavation revealed two ditches, two post-holes, a pit/tree-throw and 11 tree-throws. One of the ditches produced a piece of peg-tile and could be a field boundary ditch. A piece of Roman imbrex was also recovered from the pit/tree-throw. Small sherds of pottery and two pieces of worked flint from five of the tree-throws provides evidence for prehistoric occupation on or close to the development site.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex on 28th-29th November 2022. The work was commissioned by the landowner, and took place in advance of the construction of a new dwelling with associated groundworks.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), the Historic Environment Advisor stipulated 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 2021).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for a trial trenching and excavation at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham* which detailed the required archaeological work (ECCPS 2021), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT (2002) in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS.

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* (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 includes extracts of the ECC Brief and Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale<sup>1</sup>) shows the area has a bedrock geology of Thames Group (clay, silt and sand) with superficial deposits of sedimentary river terrace deposits (sand and gravel). The site is located on the eastern side of the village of Asheldham, within the Dengie Peninsular. The area is characterised by small isolated farms scattered throughout flat open fields, the result of reclamation of the Dengie and Tillingham marshes in the 19th century.

Approximately 140m SSE of the development site is the Grade II listed 17th-century timber-framed Asheldham Hall (NHLE 1346226), with the Church of St Lawrence (NHLE 1110970) another 85m beyond that. Thought originally to have been an Anglo-Saxon timber structure, the church was rebuilt in the early 14th century, with alterations and additions in the 14th-15th century and restoration work in the 19th century. Excavations in the churchyard have recorded a Roman ditch, which had been re-cut multiple times, and a medieval stone dwelling for the priest alongside burials (EHER 12150-7).

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

Approximately 460m south-west of the development is Asheldham Camp, an Iron Age fort located on a plateau setting. Investigations around the fort have yielded scatters of Neolithic to Bronze Age flint waste flakes and blades. Observations during gravel extraction have revealed evidence of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Saxon remains, especially pottery. Some Roman and a sherd of medieval pottery have also been recorded. During the construction of a water supply for Southminster in 1900, evidence of a possible entrance to the camp was observed. Finds found during construction included a Viking axe-head and knife, and Iron Age and Roman pottery (EHER 12051-12060, NHLE 1014142).

The site is also located within an area of multiple cropmark plots recorded through aerial photography and gravel extraction around the village has meant that some of these cropmarks have been investigated. For example, the excavation of an area of cropmarks north-west of Asheldham Hall revealed pits, post-holes, a possible beam-slot and a metallised surface indicative of a Roman structure such as a villa or farmstead. Clusters of Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age features were also identified along with a ditch which contained a sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery (EHER 12183). The investigation of cropmarks on the south side of the nature reserve included Iron Age pottery and a pit which contained Neolithic pottery (EHER 12185).

Cropmarks on land south of the church (south-west of Asheldham Hall) show a large rectilinear enclosure with a smaller rectilinear enclosure in one corner, as well as a number of linear features and pits (EHER 12184). Road names and early mapping suggest this may also be the area of a possible deserted medieval village (EHER 12088). Monitoring before the construction of a new crop storage building at Dengie Crops Ltd to the SSW revealed part of a known cropmark which crossed the site. The ditch revealed pottery of Early Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon date (EHER 48921).

#### **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.

#### **5 Results** (Figs 2-3)

Two trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Positioned within the footprint of the new dwelling, the trenches were 15m and 16m long by 1.8m wide, and cut through modern ploughsoil (L1, 0.65-0.7m thick) onto natural (L2).

There were 16 features in the two trenches. The vast majority appear to be tree-throws (F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, F9, F12, F13, F14, F15, F16), all fairly irregular in size and shape, and ranging from 1.65m by 1.45m and 0.14m deep, to >0.35m by 0.36m and 0.1m deep. Prehistoric flints were recovered from F5 and F8, with tiny scraps of prehistoric pottery also recovered from F7, F8, F14 and F16. The prehistoric pottery totalled only seven fragments at 13g with a low mean sherd weight, indicating that the pottery was residual and likely to have been present within the ploughsoil for a considerable period before becoming incorporated into the backfill of the tree-throws.

Ditch F1 was aligned north-east to south-west and was V-shaped in profile, 0.63m wide by 0.17m deep. It was cut by pit/tree-throw F2 (>1.8m by 1.4m and 0.33m deep) which produced a piece of Roman imbrex. Ditch F3 was aligned east to west, U-shaped with a wide irregular base. It was c 1m wide by 0.12m deep and a piece of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile was recovered from the fill. Post-holes F10 and F11 were both c 0.38m by c 0.29m, and 0.05-0.7m deep.



**Photograph 1** Trench 1, looking north



**Photograph 2** Ditch F1, looking north-north-east



**Photograph 3** Pit/tree-throw F2, looking east



**Photograph 4** Tree-throw F5, looking south-west



**Photograph 5** Tree-throw F8, looking west



**Photograph 6** Tree-throw F14, looking north



**Photograph 7** Trench 2, looking west

## 6 Finds

### 6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material *by Dr Matthew Loughton*

The evaluation uncovered nine sherds of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) weighing 90g with a mean sherd weight of 10g (Table 1). This material was recovered from six features (Table 2).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	7	13	2	0.00
CBM	2	77	39	-
<b>All</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0.00</b>

**Table 1** Summary of the pottery and CBM

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
F2	Pit/tree-throw	1	58	58
F3	Ditch	1	19	19
F7	Tree-throw	2	2	1
F8	Tree-throw	2	3	2

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
F14	Tree-throw	1	6	6
F16	Tree-throw	2	2	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>10</b>

**Table 2** Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features**Prehistoric pottery**

There was a small quantity (7 pieces at 13g) of handmade pottery tempered with sand (HMS), flint (HMF), and sand and flint (HMSF). This material is in a very fragmentary state with a low mean sherd weight (2g) and the lack of diagnostic material precludes any precise dating except possible to the later prehistoric period in general (Late Bronze Age to Early-Mid Iron Age).

**Ceramic building material (CBM)**

A small fragment (58g) of Roman imbrex was recovered from pit F2, while a sherd of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile (19g) came from ditch F3.

**Conclusion**

Table 3 summarizes the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and CBM. Four of the features are prehistoric, one is possibly Roman, and one is post-Roman (medieval/post-medieval).

Context	Description	Prehistoric	CBM	Date Approx.
F2	Pit/tree-throw	-	RI	Roman?
F3	Ditch	-	PT	Medieval-Post Medieval
F7	Tree-throw	HMS	-	Prehistoric
F8	Tree-throw	HMF, HMS	-	Prehistoric
F14	Tree-throw	HMSF	-	Prehistoric?
F16	Tree-throw	HMF	-	Prehistoric

**Table 3** Approximate dates for the individual features**6.2 Worked flint**

by Adam Wightman

Worked flints were recovered from pits F5 and F8. A secondary flake was recovered from pit F8 and the proximal end of a snapped blade was recovered from pit F5. The blade was detached from the core using a soft hammer after first preparing the striking platform. The resulting piece may have been intentionally snapped so that the distal end could be used as the blank for a tool. The flake from F8 most likely dates to the later prehistoric period (Neolithic-Bronze Age). It is possible that the blade from F5 dates to the Mesolithic period, although an Early Neolithic date is more likely.

Context	Find no.	Artefact type	cortex %	soft/hard hammer	Notes
F5	4	blade	0	soft	proximal end of a snapped blade
F8	2	flake	40	hard	thick, rough flake with use-wear/edge-damage

**Table 4** Worked flints**6.3 Miscellaneous finds**

by Laura Pooley

A piece of burnt flint (31.2g) came from F2 (finds no.6). It was cracked and crazed and burnt various shades of white, grey and red. This has been discarded.

## 7 Conclusion

Archaeological evaluation at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham revealed two ditches, two post-holes, a pit/tree-throw and 11 tree-throws. Interestingly, five of the tree-throws produced material of prehistoric date – a flint blade dated to the Mesolithic/Early Neolithic period, a flint flake dating to the later prehistoric period (Neolithic-Bronze Age) and seven small sherds of pottery of probable Late Bronze Age to Early-Mid Iron Age date. The small quantity and size of the pottery sherds would suggest that all of this material is residual and had been present within the ploughsoil for a while before becoming incorporated into the backfill of the tree-throws, and the same could be true for the flint. Therefore, although the presence of the pottery and flint would certainly evidence some prehistoric occupation on or close to the development site, it is likely that the tree-throws themselves are of a later date. Neolithic to Bronze Age flint scatters have previously been identified to the south-west of the development site at Asheldham Camp, with features dating to the Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age also present to the north. Pit/tree-throw F2 could also be associated with the 11 tree-throws. Producing a single piece of Roman imbrex, the feature could date to this period, or similarly be a later feature with residual material from the ploughsoil found within it. Peg-tile from F3 indicates that the ditch dates from the medieval/post-medieval onwards and is possibly a field boundary ditch. Historic maps of the area show the development site as open fields, so the tree-throws likely pre-date the 19th century, and may perhaps be associated with the grounds around the 17th-century Asheldham Hall, but they could be older than this.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank the landowner for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, A Wightman and L Pooley, with fieldwork carried out by B Holloway with E Hicks and A Ronn. Figures were compiled by C Lister, B Holloway and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Maria Medlycott.

## 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 <b>8</b> (EAA <b>8</b> ) |
| CAT                      | 2022  | <i>Written scheme of investigation for an evaluation by trial-trenching at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7JF</i>   |
| 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 2022  |
| ECCPS                    | 2021  | <i>Brief for trial trenching &amp; excavation at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham,</i> by M Medlycott   |
| Gurney, D                | 2003  | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers <b>14</b> (EAA <b>14</b> )                                      |
| 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 <b>24</b> (EAA <b>24</b> )             |
| MHCLG                    | 2021  | <i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  |

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

Anglo-Saxon	period from c 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
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
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	<b>O</b> nline <b>A</b> ccess to the <b>I</b> ndex of <b>A</b> rchaeological <b>I</b> nvestigations, <a href="http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main">http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main</a>
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

## 11 Contents of archive

**Finds:** small bag (pottery and flint)

### **Digital record**

CAT Report 1886

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Scan of original site section drawings

Site digital photographs

Survey data

Site 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 Colchester Museum under project ref. AMHM22 and the Archaeological Data Service.

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### **Distribution list:**

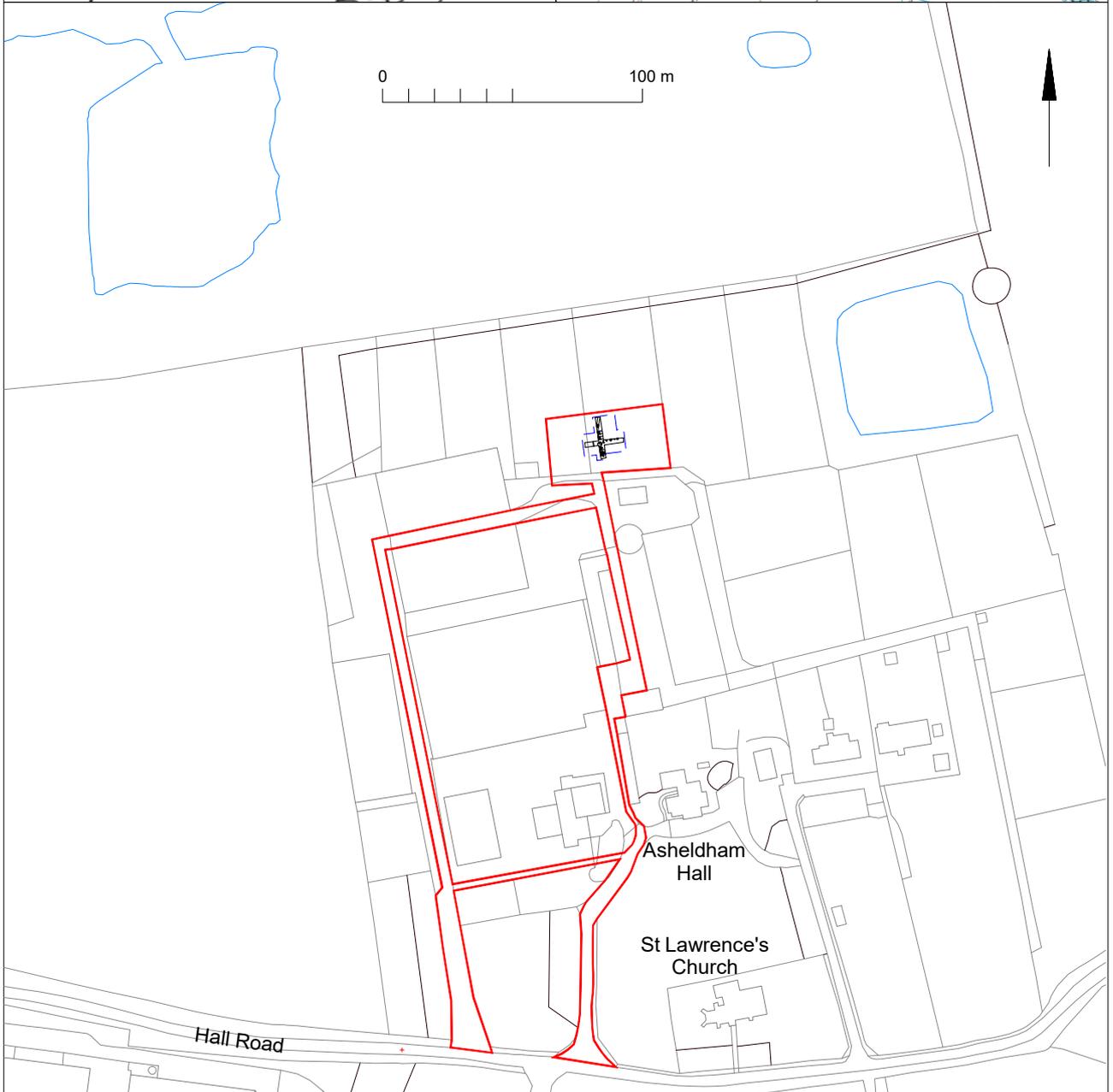
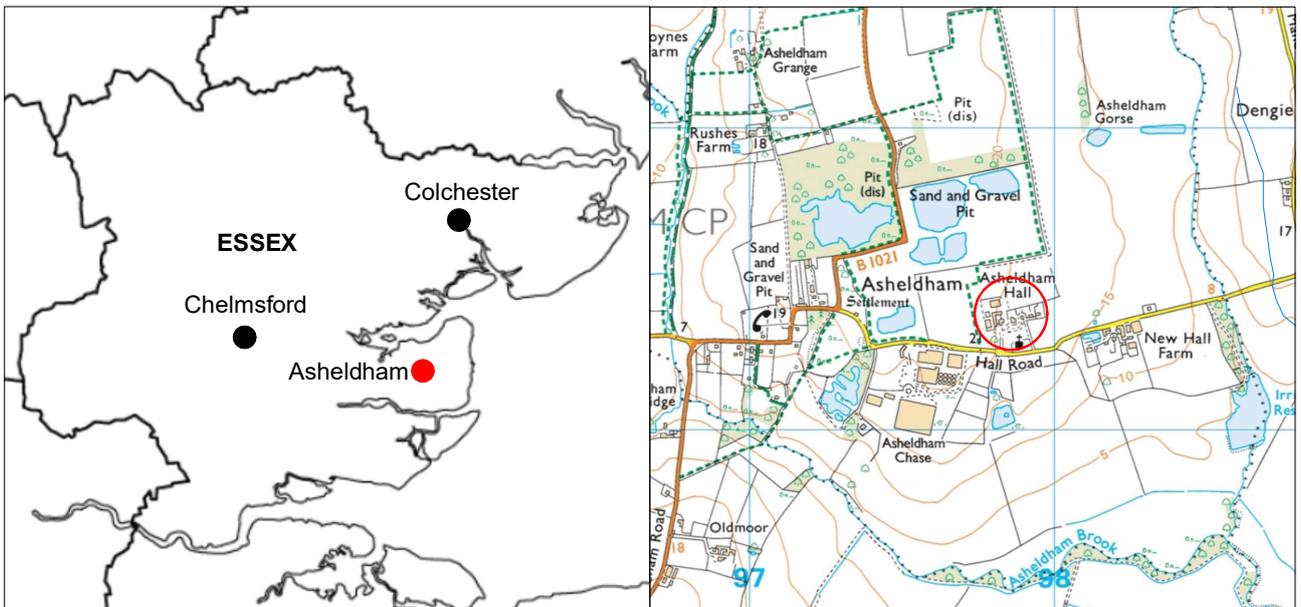
Landowner

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

**Appendix 1 Context list**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Finds no.</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Soil description</b>	<b>Period</b>
L1	-	Plough soil	Friable/firm moist medium brown silty loam and inclusions of: stone 1%	Modern
L2	-	Natural	Firm dry light/medium orange/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 1%	Post-glacial
F1	-	Ditch	Firm moist dark grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks	Undated
F2	6	Pit/tree-throw	Firm moist medium grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks	?Roman
F3	5	Ditch	Firm moist medium grey/brown sandy silt	Medieval/ post-medieval
F4	-	Tree-throw	Firm moist medium grey/brown sandy silt	Undated
F5	4	Tree-throw	Firm moist medium grey/brown sandy silt	Undated
F6	-	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium brown sand silt and inclusions of: stone 1%	Undated
F7	1	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium brown sand silt and inclusions of: stone 1%	Undated
F8	2	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium brown sand silt and inclusions of: stone 1%	Undated
F9	-	Tree-throw	Loose/soft dry medium grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: gravel 30%	Undated
F10	-	Post-hole	Loose/soft dry medium grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 30%	Undated
F11	-	Post-hole	Loose/soft dry medium grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: stone 5%	Undated
F12	-	Tree-throw	Loose/soft dry light grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 20%	Undated
F13	-	Tree-throw	Loose/soft dry light grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 20%	Undated
F14	3	Tree-throw	Loose dry medium grey/brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 50%	Undated
F15	-	Tree-throw	Loose/soft dry medium brown sandy silt and inclusions of: gravel 10%	Undated
F16	7	Tree-throw	Soft moist medium brown sand silt and inclusions of: stone 1%	Undated



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Fig 1 Site location (proposed development dashed blue)

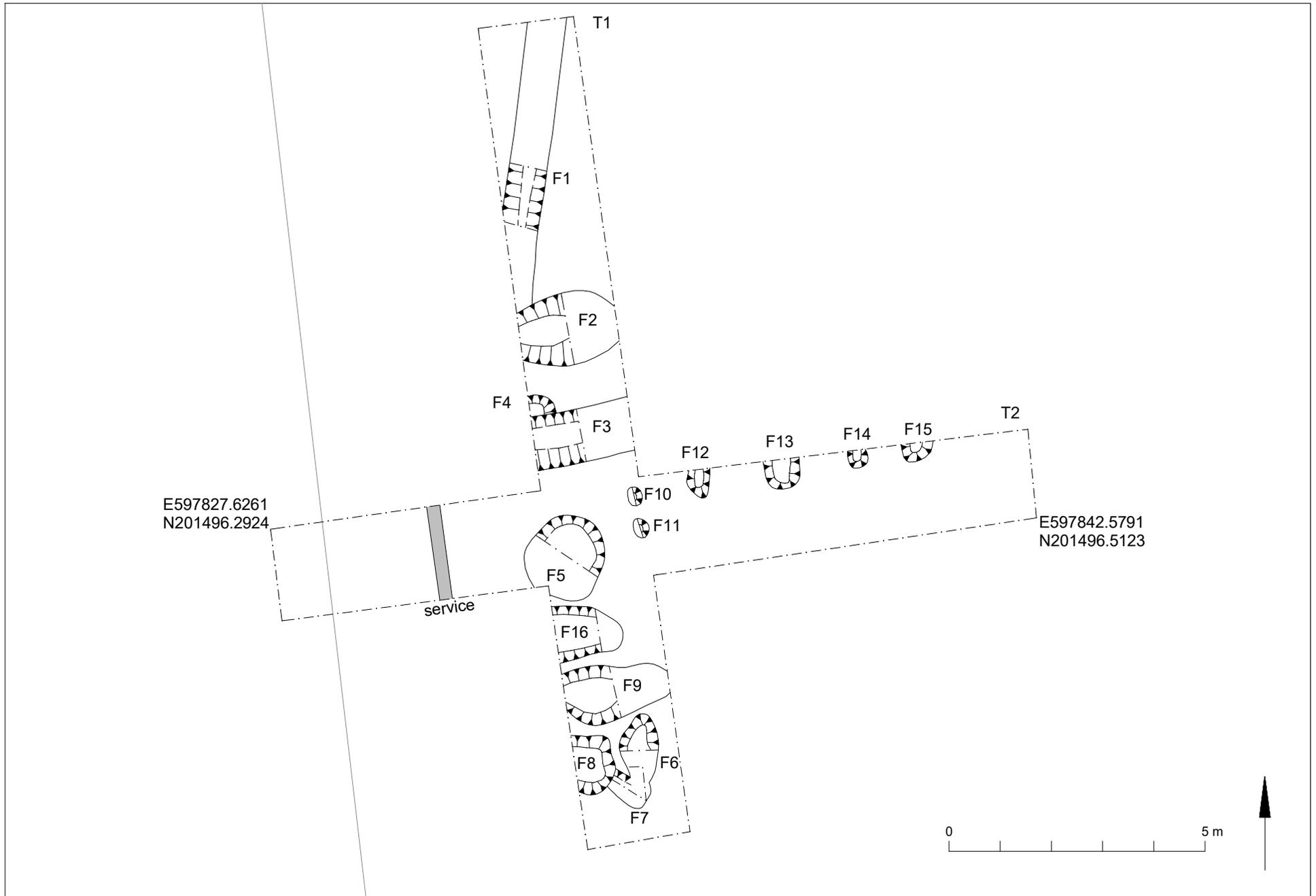


Fig 2 Results

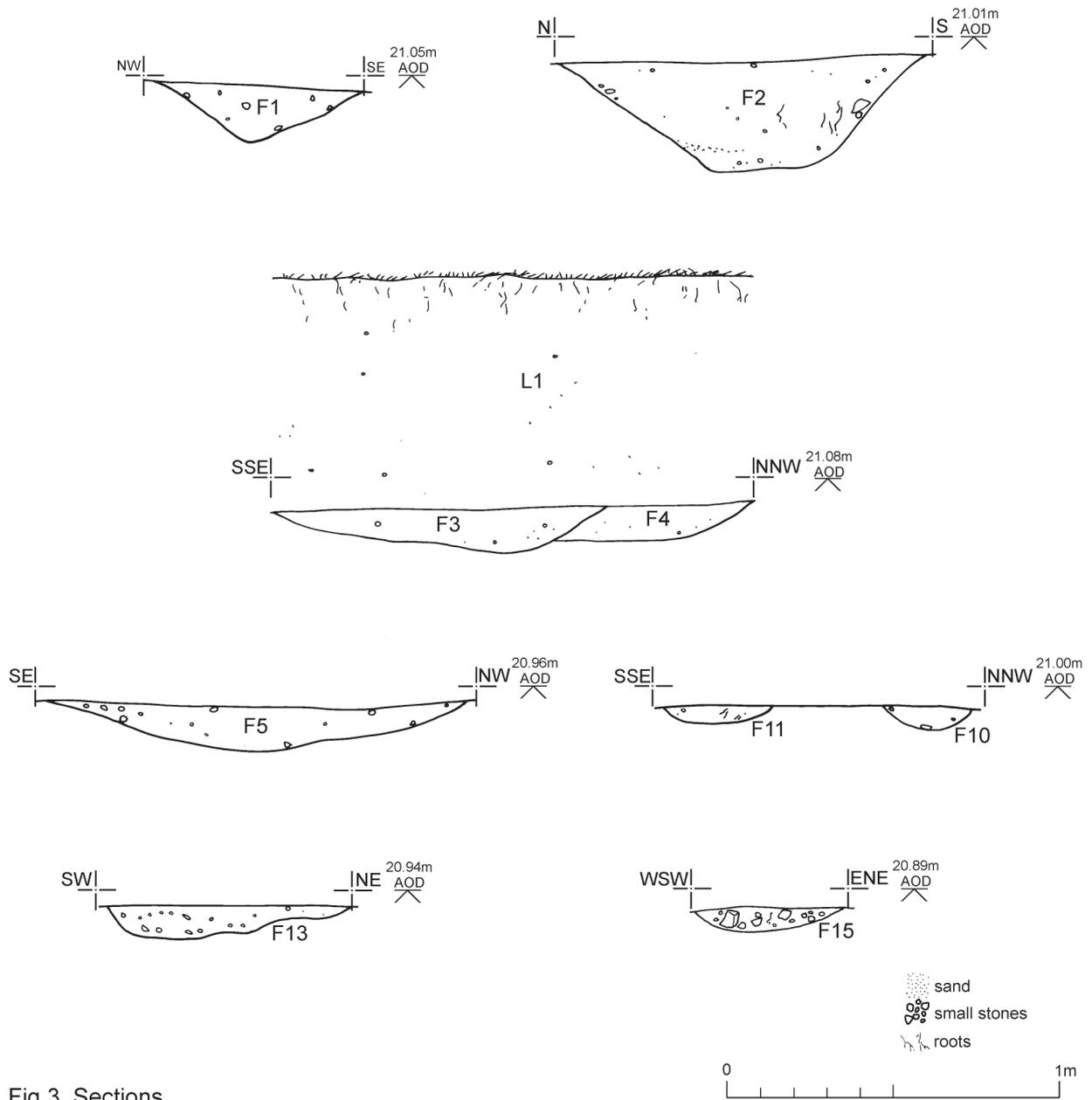


Fig 3 Sections.

# Summary for colchest3-510774

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-510774
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7JF
Sitename	Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7JF
Activity type	Evaluation
Project Identifier(s)	2022/11e
Planning Id	MAL/22/00595
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	28-Nov-2022 - 29-Nov-2022
Location	Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex, CM0 7JF NGR : TL 97831 01494 LL : 51.6773612905795, 0.859977894028494 12 Fig : 597831,201494
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Maldon Parish : Asheldham
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) carried out as per the conditions laid out in the Brief and WSI
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out at Hall Meadows, Hall Road, Asheldham, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. Located within an area of known cropmarks and surrounded by prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains, the development site is also located close to the 17th-century Asheldham Hall. Excavation revealed two ditches, two post-holes, a pit/tree-throw and 11 tree-throws. One of the ditches produced a piece of peg-tile and could be a field boundary ditch. A piece of Roman imbrex was also recovered from the pit/tree-throw. Small sherds of pottery and two pieces of worked flint from five of the tree-throws provides evidence for prehistoric occupation on or close to the development site.
Keywords	Sherd - LATER PREHISTORIC - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Lithic Implement - LATER PREHISTORIC - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	L, Pooley
HER Identifiers	HER Monument No - AMHM22
Archives	Physical Archive - to be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service (Colchester Collection); Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;