

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 1966
issued August 2023**

**Archaeological evaluation on land at Great Bentley
Primary School, Great Bentley, CO7 8LD: July 2023**



**CAT project ref.: 2023/06e
ECC code: GBPS23**

**Archaeological evaluation on land at Great Bentley
Primary School, Great Bentley, CO7 8LD: July 2023**

NGR: TM 1107 2145 (centre)

**Planning district: Tendring
Planning ref.: 23/00340/CMTR**

**CAT project ref.: 2023/06e
CAT Report 1966**

**ECC code: GBPS23
OASIS id: colchest3-517841**

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**fieldwork by Sarah Veasey with Alice Parker &
George Williams**

**commissioned by Strutt and Parker
on behalf of Phelan Construction**

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out on land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, Essex in advance of a new extension. The site is located within the proximity of several previous archaeological investigations, including excavations that uncovered evidence of prehistoric agricultural landscape north-west of the area. However, the evaluation revealed only two modern tree-throws and the remains of a hedgerow.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, Essex on the 24th-26th July 2023. The work was commissioned by Strutt and Parker on behalf of Phelan Construction, and took place in advance of the construction of a new school extension.

As the site lies in an area of potential archaeological sensitivity, the Historic Environment Advisor (HEA) at Essex County Council Place Services recommended 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 written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by GHC Archaeology and Heritage (2023a).

In addition to 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 2020a)* and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (ClfA 2020b)*.

3 Archaeological background

The proposed development has recently been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment (GHC Archaeology and Heritage 2023b) and heritage statement (GHC Archaeology and Heritage 2023c), with the archaeological background of the site summarised in the WSI (GHC Archaeology and Heritage 2023a). The following archaeological background includes information from these three documents and also the CAT report library.

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site to be Thames Group (clay, silt and sand) with superficial deposits of gravels of the Kesgrave Catchment Area.

Great Bentley is a large village centred around the (reputably) largest village green in England (Medlycott 2008, 68). The development site lies south of this open area at NGR TM 1107 2145 (centre), in the immediate vicinity of the railway station and village hall.

Prehistoric activity at Great Bentley is mostly located to the north of the development site and includes some undated cropmarks. Bronze Age and Iron Age agricultural activity has been recorded c 800m north-west of the site at Sturrick Farm (CAT Report 794), c 800m north on land west of Heckfords Road (Cotswold Archaeology 2017), and c 900 north-east on land east of Heckfords Road (CAT Report 1031). Find spots reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme include Neolithic flint artefacts (MEX1045487) and prehistoric burial urns recovered south of the site (MEX10711, MEX10715).

Late Iron Age and Roman activity too was mostly located to the north of the development site. Evaluation and excavation on land east of Heckfords Road (CAT Report 1740) revealed

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

irregular field boundaries, possibly delineating seven fields, with pottery, loomweights and metal-working debris indicating a thriving settlement in the vicinity. The closest evidence for Roman activity to the development site was the discovery of six Roman coins found during the excavation of a sewer in 1946 at Station Road, c 50m to the east (MEX11148). Another Roman coin was found c 400m to the south of the site (MEX10767). An evaluation 600m north of the school on land north of Michael Wright Way revealed a small concentration of seven features (one pit, four tree throws and two ditches). Most of these features were undated, although one produced two late prehistoric worked flints and another a sherd of Roman grey ware pottery (CAT Report 1829).

The village is first mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon will dating to 1045, and is listed in Domesday as having a population of 20 households with a farming-based economy including sheep and cattle, and a salhouse. It was also heavily wooded at the time with wood clearance beginning in 1135. In the medieval period, Great Bentley was an agricultural village centred around the green and church, probably with a moated manor house. The establishment of a moated site (MEX11639) c 250m to the north-west of the study site, alongside an associated fish pond (MEX10974), reflect the village's growth. An evaluation at Admirals Farm, c 700m north-east, revealed medieval ditches and pits associated with this local agriculture (CAT Report 1031). A small amount of medieval activity was also noted during archaeological work on land to the east of Heckfords Road (CAT Report 1740). During the medieval period, the development site was probably part of an agricultural field.

The present-day school was constructed in the late 19th century, with the western half of the site remaining as a field until the late 20th century. The railway station opened in 1866, with a mill and millpond built on the green in 1886. This led to an increased population and more housing within the village.

4 Aim

The primary aim of the archaeological evaluation was to identify and assess the significance of any archaeological remains within the site to allow informed recommendations on the scope of any further archaeological mitigation (GHC Archaeology and Heritage 2023a).

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

Two trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Three layers were present with topsoil (L1, between 0.15m to 0.2m thick) over subsoil (L2, between 0.2m to 0.4m thick) sealing a sandy natural (L3, encountered at an average of 0.5m below current ground level in both trenches). A full context list can be found in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (T1)

T1 was 25m long and 1.8m wide. The only features identified were two tree-throws and a grubbed-out hedgerow. Tree-throws F1 and F3 were small irregular features, with F3 cutting the traces of the former hedgerow. A fragment of modern glass was recovered from tree-throw F1. Grubbed-out hedgerow F2 was on a north-west to south-east orientation, and was recorded for a total distance of c 34m continuing into Trench 2. It was c 0.79m wide and 0.14m deep. There were no significant archaeological remains.

Trench 2 (T2)

T2 was 10m long and 1.8m wide. Hedgerow F2 continued into T2 where it was recorded as F4. A sondage was dug in the centre of the trench to ensure that there were no masking deposits above natural (see representative section in Fig 3). There were no significant archaeological remains.



Photograph 1 Trench 1, looking east.



Photograph 2 Trench 2, looking north-west.



Photograph 4 Hedgerow F2 sx2, looking west.



Photograph 5 Tree-throw F3, looking north-east.

6 Finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton & Laura Pooley

The evaluation produced:

- one fragment (10g) of 19th-/20th-century clear bottle glass from F1 (finds no.1), and
- one unstratified sherd (4g) of stamped ([t]ley[]) modern English stoneware (fabric 45M; Cotter 2000) (finds no. 2).

Both finds have been discarded.

7 Conclusion

The primary aim of the archaeological evaluation on land at Great Bentley Primary School was to identify and assess the significance of any archaeological remains within the site. The evaluation revealed an undated hedgerow and two modern tree-throws but no significant archaeological remains. The scarcity of remains would seem to confirm that this site was largely used as agricultural land.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Strutt and Parker for commissioning the work on behalf of Phelan Construction who funded the project. Archaeological consultancy was provided by Ben Barker of GHC Archaeology and Heritage. The project was managed by C Lister, A Wightman and L Pooley, with fieldwork carried out by S Veasey with G Williams and A Parker. Figures were compiled by S Veasey. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Richard Havis.

9 References

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

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|------------------------------|-------|--|
| 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 | 2023 | <i>Health & Safety Policy</i> |
| CAT Report 794 | 2014 | <i>Archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at Sturrick Farm, Sturrick Lane, Great Bentley, Essex.</i> |
| CAT Report 1031 | 2016 | <i>Archaeological evaluation on land at Admirals Farm, Heckfords Road, Great Bentley, Essex, CO7 8RS: September-October 2016</i> , by L Pooley |
| CAT Report 1740 | 2021 | <i>Archaeological evaluation and excavation on land east of Heckfords, Heckfords Road, Great Bentley, Essex, CO7 8RS: February-May 2021</i> , by S Veasey |
| CAT Report 1829 | 2022 | <i>Archaeological evaluation on land north of Michael Wright Way, Admirals Green, Great Bentley, Essex: July 2022</i> , by Z Eksen & L Pooley |
| CAT Report 1896 | 2023 | <i>Archaeological evaluation on land Moorlands Farm, Michael Wright Way, Great Bentley, Essex, CO7 8RS: December 2022</i> , by S Veasey |
| CIfA | 2020a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation.</i> Originally published in 2014 and last revised October 2020. |
| CIfA | 2020b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Originally published in 2014 and last revised October 2020. |
| CIfA | 2022 | <i>Code of Conduct.</i> Originally published in 2014 and last revised October 2022. |
| Cotswolds Archaeology | 2017 | <i>Land west of Heckford's Road, Great Bentley, Essex: Archaeological Evaluation.</i> Report No. 17132. |
| Cotter, J P | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85.</i> Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd. |
| GHC Archaeology and Heritage | 2023a | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation: Land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, Essex.</i> by Ben Barker. GCH Report No. 1162/03. |
| GHC Archaeology and Heritage | 2023b | <i>Archaeological desk-based assessment: land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, Essex</i> , by Louise Ford & Paul Gajos. GCH Report No. 1162/01. |

GHC Archaeology and Heritage	2023c	<i>Heritage statement: land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, Essex.</i> GCH Report No. 1162/02.
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
Historic England	2016	Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)
MHCLG	2021	<i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
Medlycott, M	2008	<i>Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation Project.</i> Essex County Council
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)

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find.
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'
Late Iron Age	period from c 100 – 50 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	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 digital archive

CAT Report 1966
Written scheme of investigation
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 the Archaeological Data Service.

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Distribution list:

Ben Barker, GHC Archaeology and Heritage Ltd
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Context List

Trench no.	Context	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
All	L1	-	Topsoil	Firm moist dark brown silt.	Modern
All	L2	-	Subsoil	Firm light brown silt.	Undated
All	L3	-	Natural	Firm medium yellow/orange sand.	Post-glacial
T1	F1	1	Tree-throw	Soft moist dark brown clay silt.	Modern
All	F2/F4	-	Hedgerow	Soft dry/moist light grey/brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks.	Undated
T1	F3	-	Tree-throw	Soft dark brown silt.	Modern

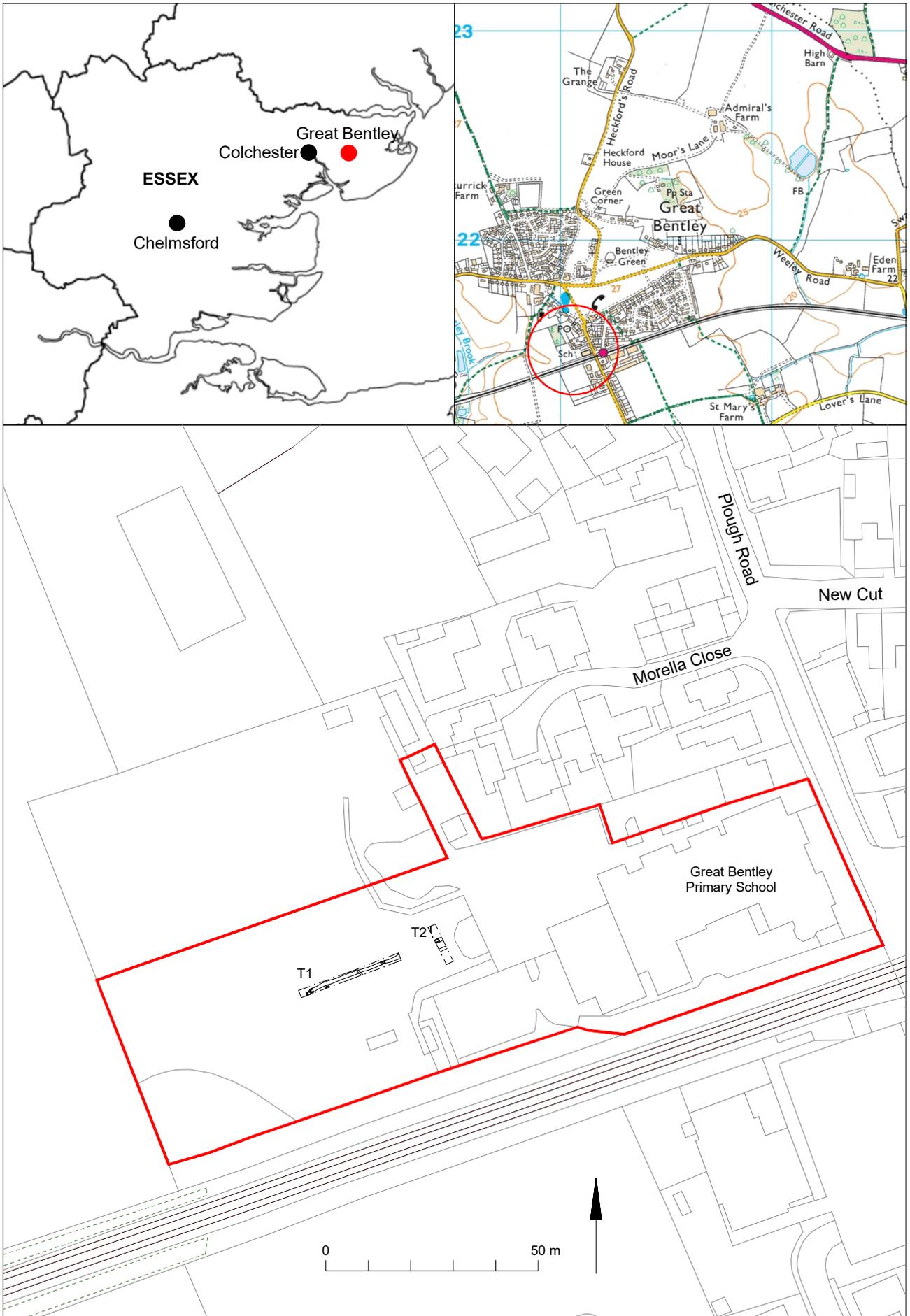
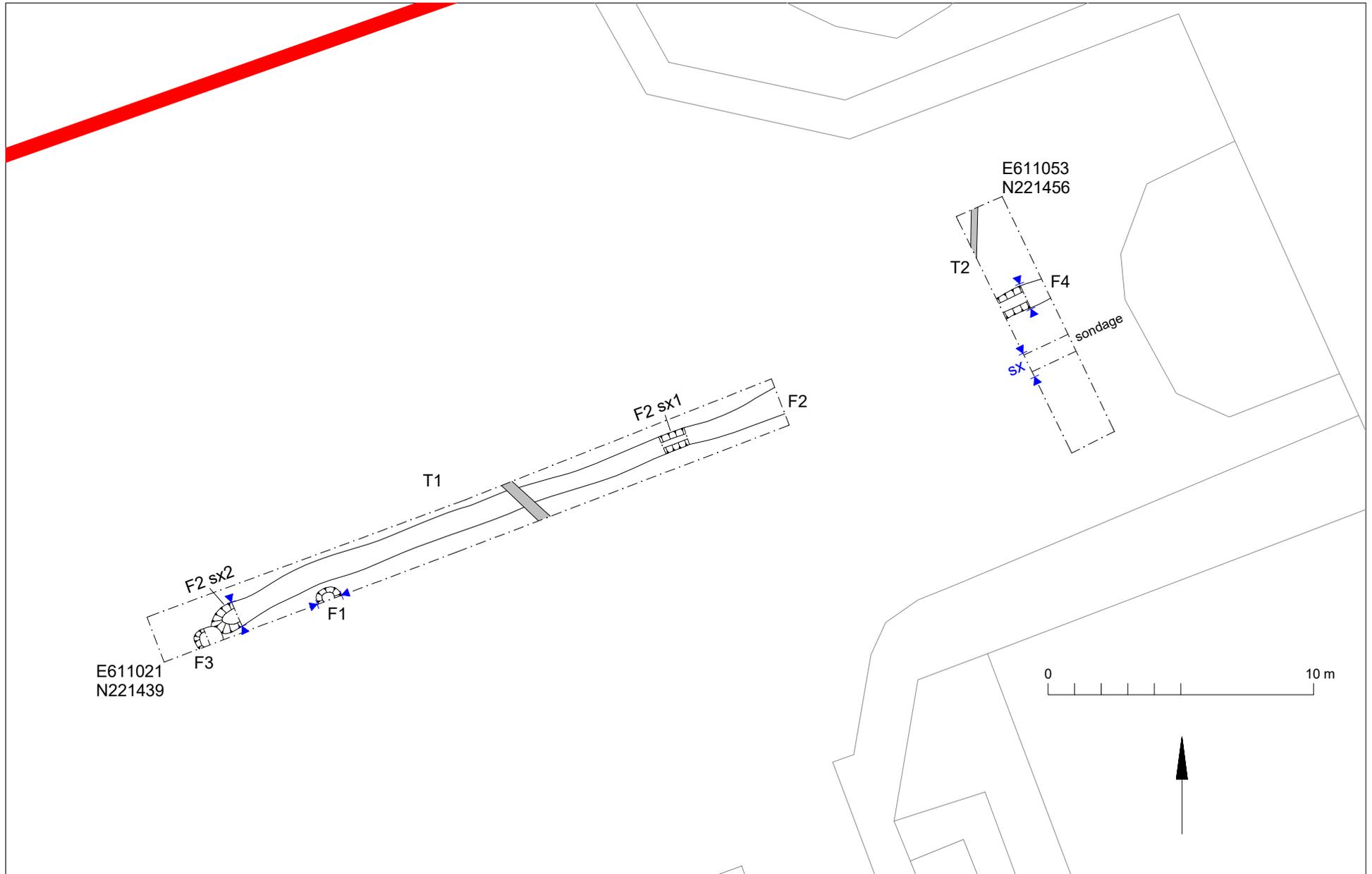


Fig 1 Site location.



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Fig 2 Results (modern services in grey).

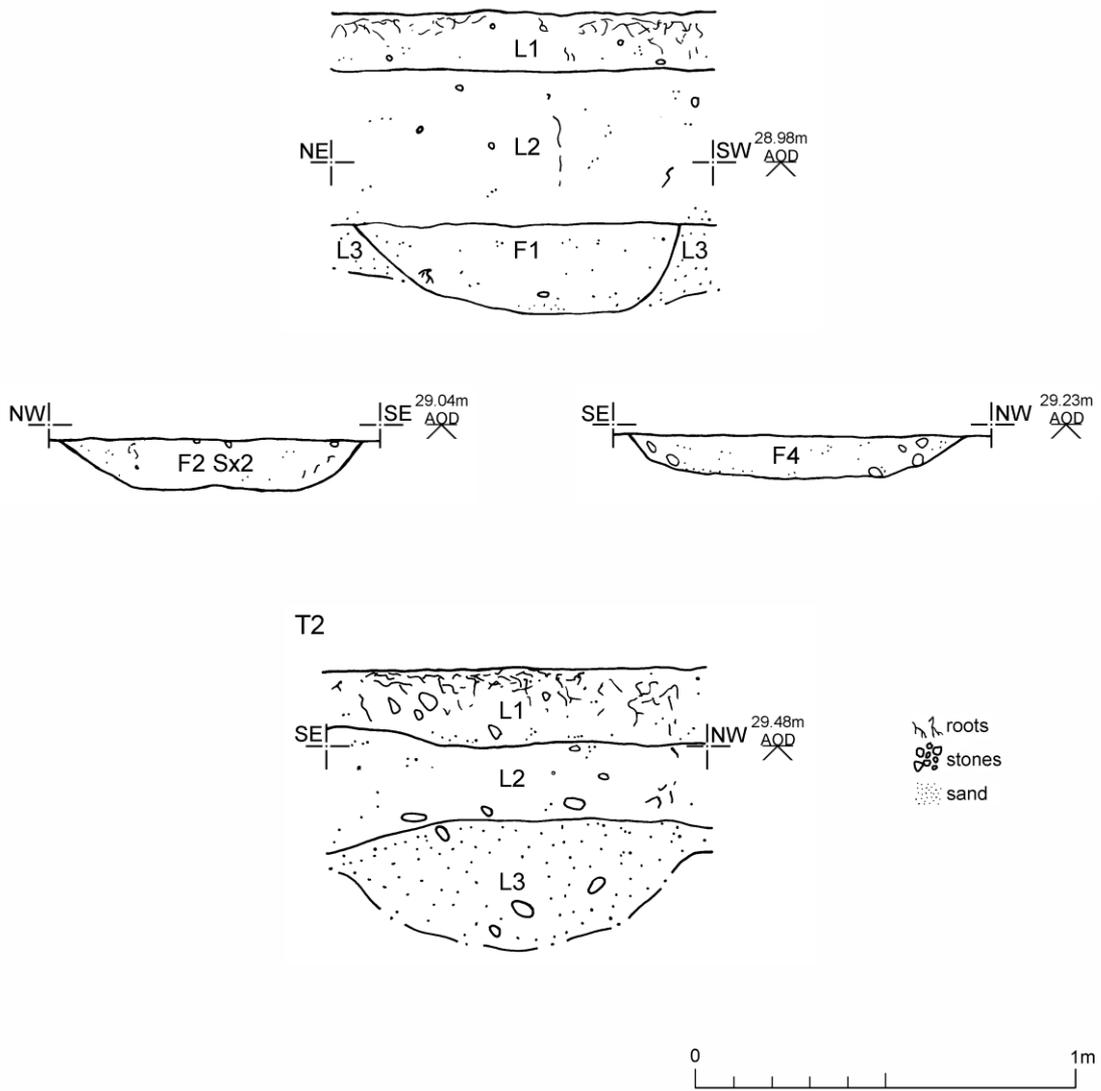


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-517841

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-517841
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation on land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, Essex, CO7 8LD
Sitename	Land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, CO7 8LD
Sitecode	GBPS23
Project Identifier(s)	2023/06e
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	23/00340/CMTR
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Between application and determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	24-Jul-2023 - 26-Jul-2023
Location	Land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, CO7 8LD NGR : TM 11070 21450 LL : 51.851716742685554, 1.063291712643096 12 Fig : 611070,221450
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Tendring Parish : Great Bentley
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) carried out as specified in the project wsi.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out on land at Great Bentley Primary School, Great Bentley, Essex in advance of a new extension. The site is located within the proximity of several previous archaeological investigations, including excavations that uncovered evidence of prehistoric agricultural landscape north-west of the area. However, the evaluation revealed only two modern tree-throws and the remains of a hedgerow.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation developer
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Chris Lister, Adam Wightman
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - GBPS23
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;