

# Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 1985  
issued October 2023**

**Archaeological evaluation on land opposite  
St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road,  
Woodham Mortimer, Essex, CM9 6SN:  
September 2023**



**CAT project ref.: 2023/03h  
ECC code: WMSM23**

**Archaeological evaluation on land opposite  
St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road,  
Woodham Mortimer, Essex, CM9 6SN:  
September 2023**

**NGR: TL 82164 05030 (centre)**

**Planning ref.: 21/01276/FUL**

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OASIS id: colchest3-514210**

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**fieldwork by Harvey Furniss with Tabitha Gulliver-  
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and Alexander Smith**

**commissioned by David Loudfoot, Elegy Ltd  
on behalf of Maldon Fields Ltd**

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<b>Issued:</b>	18/10/23	

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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation (20 trial-trenches) was carried out on land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer, Essex, in advance of the construction of a new crematorium. Despite lying on the southwestern fringe of the historic town of Maldon, only three features were uncovered, a medieval or post-medieval ditch, an undated post-hole and a pit which produced sherds of possible Late Bronze Age pottery. The latter feature apparently constitutes the first evidence of prehistoric activity in the area, and possibly indicates the presence of a prehistoric settlement.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer, Essex, between 18th to 22nd September 2023. The work was commissioned by David Loudfoot of Elegy Ltd, on behalf of Maldon Field Ltd, in advance of the construction of a crematorium with a ceremony hall and memorial arboretum as well as associated infrastructure and landscaping.

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

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for trial trenching and excavation: Land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer, Maldon* written by Maria Medlycott and detailing the required archaeological work (ECCPS 2023), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2023).

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

## 3 Archaeological and geological 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 bedrock geology of the site to be London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand, comprised of bioturbated or poorly laminated, blue-grey or grey-brown, slightly calcareous, silty to very silty clay) with superficial Glaciofluvial deposits (sand and gravel). London clay is not conducive to cropmark formation and little archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken in this area.

Woodham Mortimer is a small village located to the south-west of Maldon, on the Dengie peninsula. Early written sources list the village as 'Wudeham', around 975, though during the Norman Conquest the parish changed hands to Ralph Peverell and was subsequently known as 'Little Woodham'. The parish was then granted to Robert de Mortimer during the reign of Henry II, and the village acquired its present name.

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

Little is known of the archaeological deposits within the vicinity of the proposed development site. There are two parallel linear cropmarks running north to south in the northeastern corner of the development site (Fig 1). These appear to correlate with the layout of Woodham Mortimer Hall, and may indicate a former approach or avenue to the estate (EHER 7842). To the north-east of the site further cropmarks indicate the possible presence of a ring-ditch and associated linear features (EHER 8975).

The development area has been identified as the possible site of a deserted or shrunken medieval village (EHER7843) likely associated with Woodham Mortimer Hall (NHLE No. 1146860, EHER 7846-7) and St Margaret's Church (NHLE No. 1146833, EHER 7844-5). St Margaret's Church is a Grade II-listed building. The church has been largely rebuilt, with the exception of the southern wall of the nave which dates to the early 12th century. Woodham Mortimer Hall is also Grade II-listed. Its rear block was originally part of a 15th-century hall-house, while the front block was added in the early 17th century and includes four curvilinear 'Dutch' gables. The Woodham Mortimer Hall estate also includes an 18th-century barn and 19th-century granary, both of which are also Grade II-listed (EHER 39071, 39072).

Located within the boundary of the development area is a Grade II-listed obelisk dated to 1825 (NHLE No. 1110995). It was erected in memory of William Alexander Esquire of Woodham Mortimer Hall by the Cooper Company, to whom he gifted the estate for the benefit of the poor.

To the north of the site is the purported route of a reputed Roman road running north-east to south-west between Woodham Mortimer and Maldon (EHER 7940).

#### **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** (Appendix 1; Figs 2-4)

Twenty trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Site stratigraphy was modern ploughsoil (L1, c 0.30m thick) sealing natural (L2). A context list with soil descriptions and feature dimensions is available as Appendix 1.

There were no archaeological remains in trenches T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T14, T15, T16 or T18.

##### **Trench 17**

Pit F2 was uncovered at the eastern end of the trench. A hand-dug extension to the trench was excavated in order to ascertain the extent of the feature; it was sub-circular in plan, steep-sided with a concave base and a narrow V-shaped profile. Twenty-four sherds of pottery deriving from a single vessel, possibly an urn, and likely dating to the Late Bronze Age, were recovered.

##### **Trench 19**

Post-hole F3 was located at the southern end of the trench. It was circular in plan with gentle sides, a concave base and a U-shaped profile. It produced no dating evidence.

##### **Trench 20**

Ditch F1 extended through the eastern end of the trench on a north-east to south-west alignment. The ditch had moderately-sloping sides and a U-shaped profile, and produced a fragment of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile.



**Photograph 1** Trench 1 – view west.



**Photograph 2** Trench 6 – view east.



**Photograph 3** Trench 7 – view east.



**Photograph 4** Ditch F1 – view north-east.



**Photograph 5** Trench 20 – view west.



**Photograph 6** Pit F2 showing pottery *in situ* – view south.



**Photograph 7** Pit F2 fully-excavated – view south.



**Photograph 8** Trench 17 – view west.



**Photograph 9** Post-hole F3 – view south.



**Photograph 10** Trench 19 – view south.

## 6 Finds

### 6.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation uncovered a small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) consisting of a total of 25 sherds with a weight of 794g and pottery EVE of 0.07 (Table 1). The mean sherd weight is 32g. This material was recovered from two features.

Context	Feature	Finds type	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
F1	Ditch	Peg-tile	1	217	217	-
F2	Pit	Pottery	22	554	24	0.07
		Baked clay	2	23	12	-
<b>Total</b>			<b>25</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>-</b>

**Table 1** Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features.

#### Prehistoric pottery

Pit F2 produced a small assemblage of prehistoric handmade flint-tempered (fabric HMF) pottery consisting of 22 sherds with a weight of 554g and EVE of 0.07. The mean sherd weight is 25g. The only diagnostic sherd comes a possible urn (EVE:0.07) which is undecorated. This assemblages possibly dates to the Late Bronze Age.

#### Ceramic building material (CBM)

CBM consisted of two sherds (23g) of baked clay from pit F2 and one sherd of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile (217g) which came from ditch F1.

#### Conclusion

Table 2 summarizes the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and ceramics. Pit F2 possibly dates to the Late Bronze Age while ditch F1 is medieval or post-medieval.

Context	Description	Prehistoric	CBM	Date Approx.
F1	Ditch	-	PT	Medieval/post-medieval
F2	Pit	HMF (URN?)		?Late Bronze Age

**Table 2** Approximate dates for the individual features.

### 6.2 Worked flint

by Adam Wightman

A small assemblage of three worked flints was recovered from pit F2 (finds no. 2). None of the flints are typologically diagnostic and the assemblage cannot be dated more closely than Mesolithic-Bronze Age. However, the evidence for platform preparation on one of the flints would indicate that a Mesolithic or Neolithic date is more likely for that piece.

Catalogue:

- Small (22mm x 37mm x 5mm) secondary hard-hammer flake (grey-brown flint), broken at distal end (and maybe left lateral edge) with evidence of preparation of the platform prior to removal of the flake.
- Small (19mm x 22mm x 5mm), tertiary hard-hammer flake (dark grey flint).
- Probable core fragment (27mm x 23mm x 15mm), evidence of at least three previous removals, dark grey flint retaining some cortex (c 40%).

### 6.3 Environmental assessment

by Bronagh Quinn

#### Introduction

One sample was taken during the evaluation (Table 3), floated by a trained member of CAT staff and analysed by the author. It was processed using a serif-style flotation device which produced a flot and a larger residue, both of which were analysed by the author. The flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh and scanned using a microscope (magnification x10), while the larger residue was scanned by eye and any charcoal/charred wood removed by hand. Nomenclature for all plant remains is taken from Stace (2010).

Sample	Context	Feature Type	% Sampled	Provisional	Sample Volume (L.)
1	F2	Pit	100	?Late Bronze Age	70

**Table 3** Sample information.

#### Results

The sample showed evidence of bioturbation in the form of a high density of modern rootlets and small densities of mollusca, insect larvae and uncharred seeds (Table 4). It also contained a mid to high density of charcoal, although only one fragment of it was greater than 10mm in size.

<b>Sample No.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>F2</b>
Modern intrusive seeds	x
Charcoal 4-10mm	xxx
Charcoal >4mm	xxxx
Mollusc shells 1-4mm	xxx
Mollusc shells >1mm	xx
Modern insect larvae	x
Modern plant debris (rootlets, chaff, leaves)	xxxxx
<b>Sample volume (litres)</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Volume of flot (litres)</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>% flot sorted</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4** Volume of flot.

<b>Sample No.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>F2</b>
Charcoal <10mm	x
Charcoal 4-10mm	xx

**Table 5** Amount of charcoal recovered from residues.

#### Key to Tables 4-5

x	0-10
xx	10-25
xxx	25-50
xxxx	50-100
xxxxx	100+

#### Potential, significance and recommendations

The sample produced a mid to high density of charcoal, although only a small percentage of that would be of a large enough size to be viable for further analysis/testing (>4mm). Identification of the larger pieces of charcoal could determine whether any of this material is suitable for radiocarbon dating to help determine the date of the feature.

Although the environmental potential of the current assemblage is limited, further works on the site could produce additional plant macrofossil evidence. It is recommended that any future

works continue to take soil samples in line with the CAT environmental policies outlined in the WSI.

## 7 Conclusion

Archaeological evaluation on land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer revealed only three features, a pit, a post-hole and a ditch. While the post-hole produced no artefactual evidence, the ditch contained a piece of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile. It is possible that this feature is related to Woodham Mortimer Hall or the deserted medieval village that is thought to lie in the vicinity. Of greater significance was the possible Late Bronze Age pit uncovered in the southwestern part of the site. It contained several sherds of pottery including a piece possibly from an urn, although there was no cremated human bone in the feature. Although apparently isolated, given the amount of pottery recovered from its fill, this pit indicates prehistoric settlement in the area which merits further investigation. If further archaeological work does take place, and if more prehistoric remains are uncovered, an assessment should be carried out at this time to determine whether the charcoal from F2 should be sent for radiocarbon dating.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank David Loudfoot of Elegy Ltd and Maldon Fields Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman and L Pooley, with fieldwork carried out by H Furniss with T Gulliver-Lawrence, C Hodges, C Hill, A Parker and A Smith. Figures were compiled by C Lister, H Furniss 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                      | 2023  | <i>Health &amp; Safety Policy</i>   |
| CAT                      | 2023  | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological evaluation at land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer, Essex, CM9 6SN, by Sarah Veasey</i> |
| CIfA                     | 2020a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation.</i> Published 2014; revised October 2020  |
| CIfA                     | 2020b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Published 2014; revised October 2020                         |
| CIfA                     | 2022  | <i>Code of Conduct.</i> Published 2014; revised 2022.   |
| ECCPS                    | 2023  | <i>Brief for trial trenching and excavation: Land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer, Maldon, CM9 6SN, by M Medlycott</i>                                 |
| 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> )  |
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| 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.   |
| Stace, C                 | 2010  | <i>New Flora of the British Isles.</i> 3rd edition. Cambridge University Press.   |

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

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, or a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Late Bronze Age	period from c 1000 – 700 BC
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
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
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

## 11 Contents of archive

### Finds

Part of one box

### Digital record

CAT Report 1985

ECCPS brief, CAT WSI

Digital photographs

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 Colchester Museum (finds) and the Archaeology Data Service (digital archive).

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### Distribution list:

David Loudfoot, Elegy Ltd

Maldon Fields Ltd

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

**Appendix 1: Context list**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b> Finds</b>	<b>Layer type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
L1	All	-	Ploughsoil	Firm, dark greyish-brown sandy silt with occasional stone and flint inclusions	Modern
L2	All	-	Natural	Compact, mid orangey-brown clays and gravels	Post-glacial
F1	20	1	Ditch	Friable, dry mid to dark greyish-brown silty sand with small rounded stone inclusions. 1.5m wide x 0.33m deep.	Medieval/ post-medieval
F2	17	2, <1>	Pit	Friable, dark greyish-brown sandy silt with frequent small rounded stone inclusions. 0.82m x 0.57m x 0.43m deep.	?Late Bronze Age
F3	19	-	Post-hole	Firm, light grey-brown silty clay 0.47m x 0.43m x 0.09m deep.	Undated

<1> = sample number

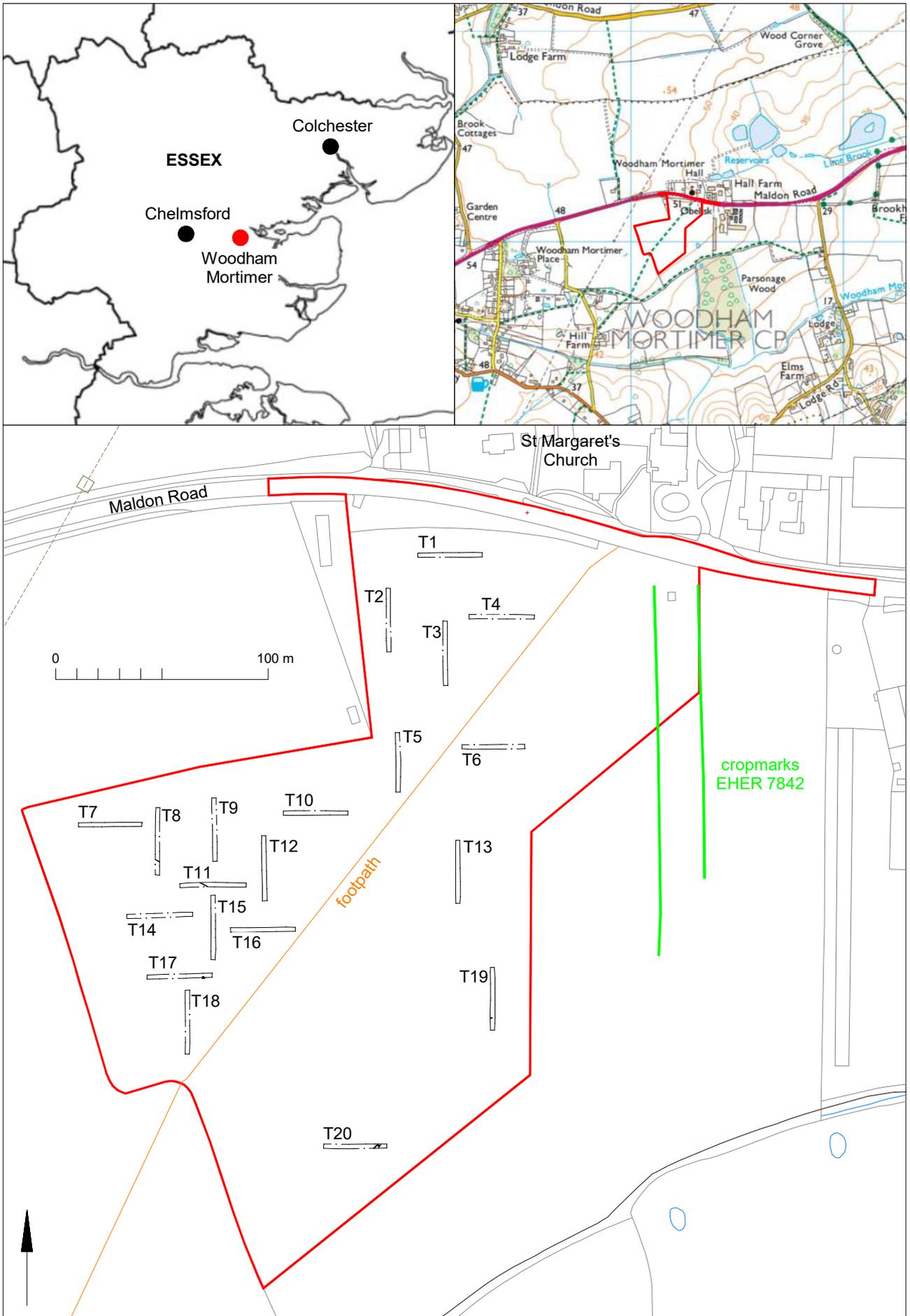


Fig 1 Site location.

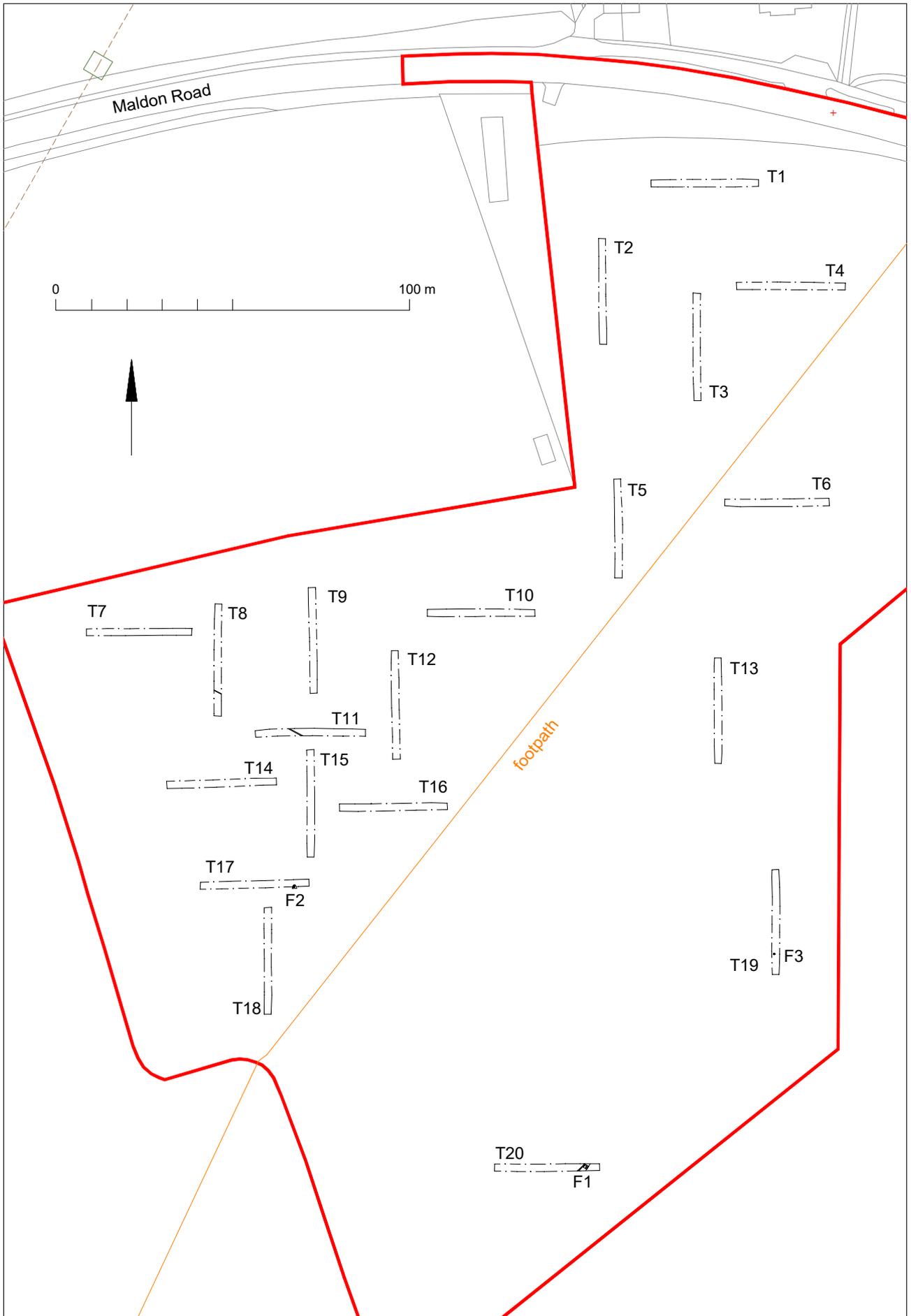


Fig 2 Results, modern land drains in grey.

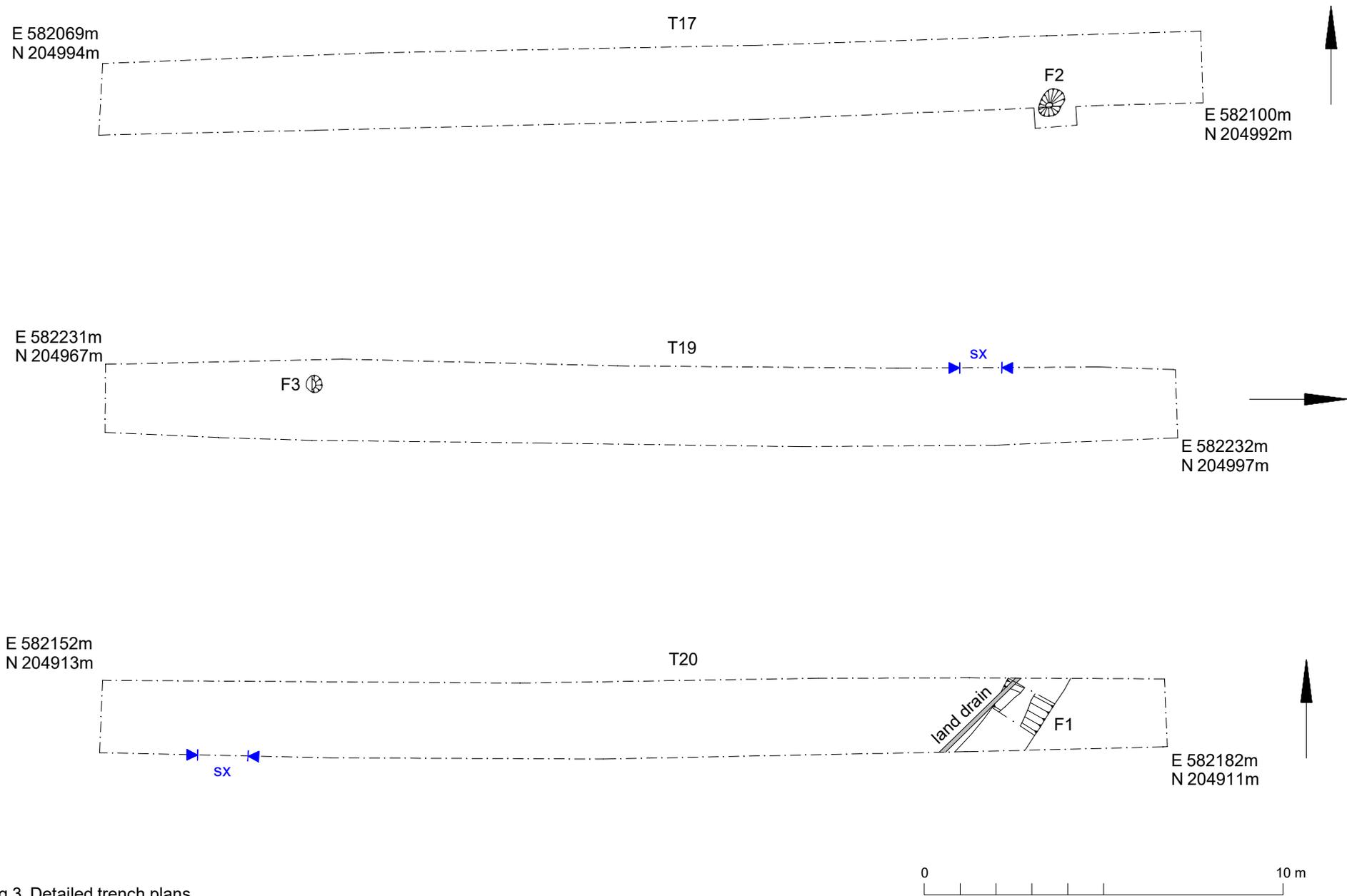


Fig 3 Detailed trench plans.

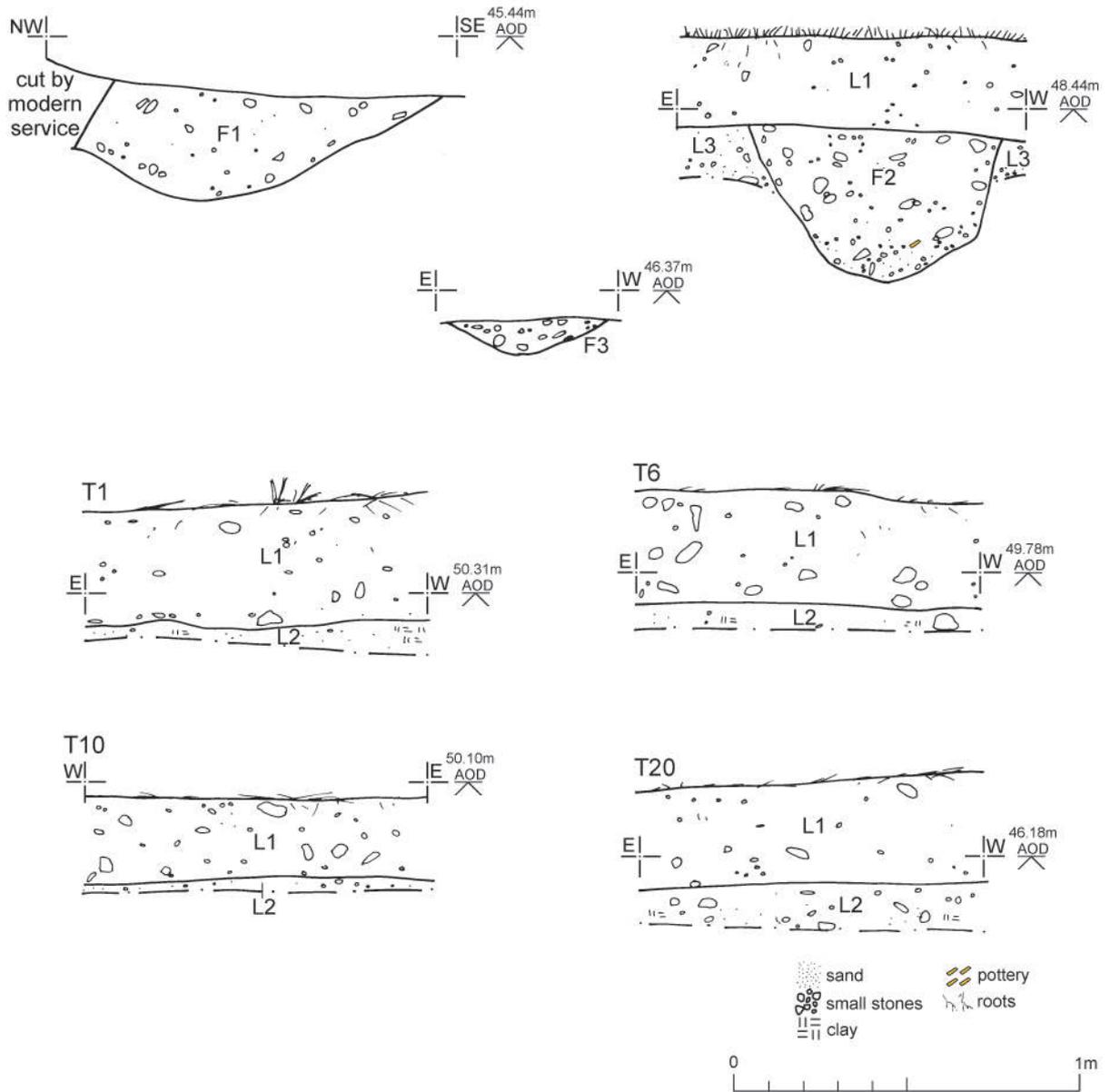


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections.

# OASIS Summary for colchest3-514210

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-514210
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation at land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road Woodham Mortimer, CM9 6SN: September 2023
Sitename	Land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road Woodham Mortimer, CM9 6SN
Sitecode	WMSM23
Project Identifier(s)	2023/03h
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	21/01276/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	18-Sep-2023 - 22-Sep-2023
Location	Land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road Woodham Mortimer, CM9 6SN NGR : TL 82164 05030 LL : 51.7144161086816, 0.635488781801994 12 Fig : 582164,205030
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Maldon Parish : Woodham Mortimer
Project Methodology	An archaeological evaluation (20 trial-trenches) was carried out as per the conditions specified in the project brief and wsi.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (20 trial-trenches) was carried out on land opposite St Margaret's Church, Maldon Road, Woodham Mortimer, Essex, in advance of the construction of a new crematorium. Despite lying on the southwestern fringe of the historic town of Maldon, only three features were uncovered, a medieval or post-medieval ditch, an undated post-hole and a pit which produced sherds of possible Late Bronze Age pottery. The latter feature apparently constitutes the first evidence of prehistoric activity in the area, and possibly indicates the presence of a prehistoric settlement.
Keywords	Pit - LATE BRONZE AGE - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Vessel - LATE BRONZE AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Lithic Implement - LATER PREHISTORIC - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	Private or public corporation developer
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Chris Lister, Adam Wightman, Laura Pooley
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - WMSM23
Archives	Physical Archive - to be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service (Colchester Collection); Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;

