

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 2004
issued November 2023**

**Archaeological evaluation at The Crown Inn,
Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire,
CB7 5NJ: November 2023**



**CAT project ref.: 2023/09j
CHET event number: ECB7198**

**Archaeological evaluation at The Crown Inn,
Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire,
CB7 5NJ: November 2023**

NGR: TL6328 7081 (centre)

**Planning district: East Cambridgeshire
Planning ref.: 22/00774/FUL**

**CHET event number: ECB7198
CHET monitor: Lewis Busby**

**CAT project ref.: 2023/09j
CAT Report 2000**

OASIS id: colchest3-519413

**report prepared by Ben Holloway
with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton,
Laura Pooley and Alec Wade**

**fieldwork by Ben Holloway with Ziya Eksen,
Matt Perou and Charlie Hodges**

**commissioned by Michael Simpson,
Michaels Property Ltd**

Prepared by:	Ben Holloway	Project Officer
Reviewed and approved by:	Laura Pooley	Post Excavation Manager
Issued:	24/11/2023	

Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House,
Roman Circus Walk,
Colchester,
Essex CO2 7GZ
tel.: 01206 501785
email: services@catuk.org
web: www.catuk.org

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out at The Crown Inn, 14 Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire in advance of the construction of new residential dwellings. The Crown Inn site is located within an archaeologically sensitive area, in the historic core of the settlement of Fordham. Thirteen pits and post-holes were identified during the evaluation, eight of post-medieval/modern date with the rest likely to be contemporary, and all probably associated with activity in and around the Crown Inn which dates from the 16th century. There was no evidence to suggest that Saxon settlement activity identified during excavations at Fordham CofE Primary School to the east of the investigation area continued into the development site.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on 2nd-3rd of November 2023 at The Crown Inn, 14 Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire. The work was commissioned by Michael Simpson of Michaels Property Consultants Ltd, on behalf of Nayland Homes Ltd, in advance of the construction of two new residential dwellings with associated landscaping and amenity space.

In response to consultation with Lewis Busby, Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET), it was advised that as the site lies within an area highlighted by the Cambridgeshire HER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended. The recommended archaeological condition is based on guidance given in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2021).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for an archaeological evaluation* written by Lewis Busby and detailing the required archaeological work (CHET 2023), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with CHET (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 2015), 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 background (Fig 2)

The following archaeological background draws on information from the Cambridge Historic Environment Record (arch.her@cambridgeshire.gov.uk), CCC licence number 23-5338.

Geology

The British Geological Survey geology viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the site bedrock geology for the site is Zig Zag Chalk Formation (chalk), with superficial River Terrace deposits (sand and gravel) in the eastern half of the development site.

Archaeology² (Fig 3)

(All measurements are taken from the centre point of the development site to the centre point of the archaeological site).

The development site is located within an area of archaeological potential, within the historic core of the village of Fordham. The village is mentioned in the Domesday book and is recorded as having a population of 25 households.

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

² This is based on records held by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER)

This background is focused on CHER search results within a 500m radius of the site.

Prehistoric

The earliest activity identified in the search area are several finds spots. These include a Mesolithic tranchet axe (CHER ref. 07551, 375m NW), polished stone axe (CHER ref. 07752, 375m NW), a Neolithic polished flint sickle (CHER ref. 07553, 255m NW), a Neolithic polished flint chisel (CHER ref. 07555, 255m NW) and a Bronze Age socketed and looped axe and decorated pottery sherds (CHER ref. 07441, 300m ESE).

Evidence of inhumations (CHER ref. 07549), along with sherds of Early Iron Age pottery have been recorded 375m north-east of the development site.

Roman

No Roman remains have been identified in the search area.

Anglo-Saxon and medieval

A vast quantity of Saxon activity has been identified in the village of Fordham. An excavation, in 2001, at Fordham Primary School identified a post-built structure, two parallel ditches and a series of post-holes. The finds recovered indicate a possible middle-late Saxon date for the activity. During further excavations in 2016, more late Saxon features were uncovered, including a series of ditches, a sunken feature building, and a number of post-holes. The finds uncovered included pottery of a 10th to mid 12th century date (CHER ref. CB14610, MCB25655, ECB420 & ECB4713, 80m NE).

Archaeological evaluation at Hillside Meadow (CHER ref. CB15031 & ECB876, 200m SW) identified five ditches and one gully which were suggested to be Saxon in date. Excavations elsewhere in Hillside Meadow (CHER ref. CB15561 & ECB715, 230m SSW) revealed evidence for sparse domestic or agricultural Saxon activity.

In 2001, an archaeological evaluation at 69 Mill Lane (CHER ref. CB14608 & ECB418, 360m SW) uncovered two narrow ditches and a course of clunch wall. A single sherd of medieval pottery was the only find recovered.

Post-medieval to modern

Eight evaluation trenches were excavated at 27 Mill Lane (CHER ref. MCB19640, ECB3792 & ECB3833, 240m SW). The features excavated were mostly undated, except for one 19th/20th century rubbish pit. It has been suggested the undated features are possibly Saxon in date and associated with the previously identified Saxon activity in area.

A large post-medieval sand extraction pit was identified during an archaeological evaluation at 37-55 Mildenhall Road (CHER ref. MCB26615 & ECB5389, 330m E).

Multi-period

Four phases of activity were identified during additional excavations at Hillside Meadow (CHER ref. CB14613, ECB4407 & ECB422, 160m SW). Phase 1 dates to the early/middle Saxon period and is represented by five small enclosures with a series of pits and sunken feature buildings. Two of these enclosures were reused in phase 2, during the middle/late Saxon period. No further structures were identified but four juvenile burials were present. Phase 3 was dated to the late Saxon period and comprised four enclosures and a sunken feature building. The latest phase of activity on the site was post-medieval.

Another evaluation at Hillside Meadow (CHER ref. CB14611 & ECB421, 245m SW) revealed two phases of activity. The earliest phase was suggested to be Saxon and comprised a boundary ditch, post-holes and gullies with some domestic finds. Later activity was represented by a phase of levelling and a post-medieval ditch and pit.

Listed buildings³

A large number of listed buildings are located within the vicinity of the proposed development, fronting on to Church Street and the surrounding roads. The most notable of which are the Grade I listed Church of St Peter, which has origins in the 13th century, (100m SW, NHLE No. 1309769, CHER ref. DCB1267 & 07574) and the 16th-century Crown Inn, located within the site boundary (NHLE No. 1162197, CHER ref. DCB957).

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 CHET to determine if further investigation is required.

5 Methodology

The excavation of the evaluation trenches and features, their subsequent recording (survey, drawing and photography) and metal-detecting strategy were all carried out in accordance with the written scheme of investigation (WSI) agreed with CHET prior to work commencing.

6 Results (Figs 3-5)

Four trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. All trenches were 1.8m wide, three were 10m long (T2-4) and one T-shaped trench totalled 15m in length (T1).

Trenches 1-3 were cut through the modern car park surface which consisted of a mixture of compacted gravel, tarmac patching and associated sub-base (L5, 0.1-0.15m thick). Beneath this a subsoil (L3, 0.1m thick) sealed natural geological deposits (L4, encountered at a depth of 0.4m below current ground level [bcgl]). Trench 4 was excavated through modern topsoil (L1, 0.3m thick) which sealed a deposit of modern dump material (L2, 0.15m thick). This was observed throughout T4 but was concentrated in the east end of the trench. Beneath L2 subsoil (L3, 0.15-0.3m thick) sealed the natural geological horizon (L4, encountered at a depth of 0.45m bcgl). Significant level reduction appears to have taken place in T1-3, presumably at the time the car park was constructed to create a stable base for L5.

Trench 1

The archaeological horizon was encountered at 0.25m [bcgl]. Post-hole F1 was 0.44m in diameter, 0.3m deep and contained a small assemblage of modern pottery. Pit F2 was 1.1m in diameter, 0.1m deep, and produced no datable material.

Trench 2

Archaeological material was encountered at 0.4m [bcgl]. Pit F12 was located in the north end of the trench. It was 0.9m long, 0.88m wide and 0.35m deep, and contained a small amount of peg-tile and mortar fragments.

Pit F13 was located in the south end of end of T2. The feature continued beyond the edge of the trench but was 2.3m by at least 1.8m and 0.4m deep. There was no datable material recovered from the fill.

A small amount of fragmented cement asbestos sheet was observed at the extreme south end of T2.

³ This is based on records held at the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER).



Photograph 1 Trench 1, looking north.



Photograph 2 Trench 2, looking south.

Trench 3

Archaeological material was encountered at 0.4m bcgl. Pit F10 was located in the centre of T3. It was 0.66m in diameter and 0.15m deep. The feature contained a fragment of pantile dating from the mid-late 17th century.

Further north was pit F11 which continued beyond the edge of the trench but measured at least 1.1m by 0.8m and 0.3m deep. It produced a small assemblage of modern pottery and a fragment of brick.



Photograph 3 Trench 3, looking north.

Trench 4

Archaeological material was encountered at 0.6m bcgl. Pit F3 was located at the east end of the trench. The size of the feature could not be determined but it was 0.45m deep. The feature produced a small assemblage of modern material, although only the peg-tile was retained for post-excavation analysis.

Pit F5 in the centre of T4 contained modern slate fragments and the semi articulated remains of a small animal (cat?), and was interpreted as the modern burial of a domestic pet. After discussion with the CHET monitor it was agreed that the feature would be photographed and recorded but not excavated. It measured 1.06m in diameter.

Post-holes F4 (0.35m in diameter and 0.1m deep), F6 (0.33m in diameter and 0.05m deep) and F7 (0.3m in diameter and 0.04m deep) were shallow features excavated in the centre of the trench. No datable material was recovered from any of these features.

Pit F8 measured 2.67m by at least 1.8m and was 0.65m deep, with some evidence of rooting/redeposition of natural material (L4) on the western edge. A small amount of animal bone recovered from the fill suggests a post-medieval/modern date.

Pit F9 contained modern slate and CBM fragments as well as coal and ash clinker. Due to the recent nature of the deposit, and after discussion with the CHET monitor, it was agreed that the feature would be photographed and recorded but not excavated. F5 measured 0.45m in diameter.



Photograph 4 Trench 4, looking east.

7 Finds

7.1 Pottery and ceramic building material

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation uncovered a small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) totalling 18 sherds with a weight of 1,278g (Table 1). The mean sherd weight is high at 71g. This material was recovered from five contexts (Table 2).

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
Pottery	10	517	52	0.70
CBM	8	761	95	-
All	18	1,278	71	0.70

Table 1 Summary of the pottery and CBM.

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)	EVE
F1	Post-hole	1	3	3	0.00
F3	Pit	1	112	112	0.00
F10	Pit	1	501	501	0.00
F11	Pit	11	649	59	0.70
F12	Pit	4	13	3	0.00
Total		18	1,278	71	0.70

Table 2 Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features.

Post-medieval and modern pottery

The pottery assemblage was recorded according to the fabric groups from CAR 7 (Cotter 2000) while the number of vessels was determined by rim EVE (estimated vessel equivalent) (Table 3). Post-hole F1 produced one sherd (3g) of modern Staffordshire-type white earthenwares (fabric F48D). Six sherds (400g) from a yellow ware (fabric 48E) mixing basin (EVE:0.24) with a mould decorated frieze dating from the late 18th century onwards came from pit F11. This feature also contained one sherd (8g) of modern English stoneware (fabric F45) and two sherds (106g) from a shallow bowl (EVE: 0.46) in Staffordshire-type white earthenwares (fabric F48D) dating to the 19th-20th century.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

There was a small quantity of CBM totalling eight pieces with a weight of 761g and MSW of 95g. Two fragments of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile with a weight of 118g were recovered from pits F3 and F12. One piece (501g) of pan-tile, dating from the 17th century AD onwards, came from pit F10. Pit F11 produced a fragment of brick (122g). Finally, four fragments of mortar with a weight of 20g were recovered from pits F11 and F12.

Conclusion

Table 3 summarizes the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and CBM.

Context	Description	Post-medieval/modern pottery	CBM	Date Approx.
F1	Post-hole	F48D	-	Modern
F3	Pit	-	PT	Medieval/post-medieval
F10	Pit	-	PANT	17th century onwards
F11	Pit	F48D (bowl), F48E (mixing bowl), F45M	BR	Modern
F12	Pit	-	PT	Medieval/post-medieval

Table 3 Approximate dates for the individual features.

7.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

Seven fragments of iron (56.1g) from a cylindrical container/tin came from F12 (finds no. 6) and dates to the 19th/20th century.

7.3 Animal bone

by Alec Wade

The only feature to produce animal or bird bone was undated pit F8 in Trench 4. Seven pieces of bone were recovered (228g), representing five species including deer, dog, horse, mallard and sheep or goat. The condition of the bone was generally poor with moderate loss of surface detail and some localised dark discolouration on the deer tibia fragment. All the material recovered was fragmentary apart from a near complete dog metapodial. Three of the pieces had been dog gnawed. This indicates some residuality in the finds within the pit as prior to their collection and final deposition the pieces must have been in a location accessible to scavenging dogs. No cut or chop marks associated with butchery were noted but the deer tibia fragment may show signs of having been worked before being discarded. The anterior surface of this piece displayed an 86mm long vertical cut groove. One side of the cut was straight and sharply defined whilst the other was slightly curving and bevelled. Consistent saw mark like grooves and a variation in the depth of the incision, becoming shallower towards the termination of the cut, may suggest a rotary tool was potentially employed but this is not certain. If so, this would suggest a post-medieval or more recent date for the activity. The size of the deer tibia suggests that it is possibly from a fallow deer, which would most likely indicate a medieval⁴ or post-medieval date for the deposit. Although the species may be found in earlier periods they may not be part of an established population.

⁴ The species is generally considered a Norman introduction.

Species	No. of pieces	Weight (g)	Comments
Deer (Cervid, Fallow or Red deer?)	1	60	(1) Right distal tibia fragment, fused epiphysis and slightly dog gnawed. Has a vertical cut or gouged irregular groove 86mm long, 4mm wide and 2.7mm deep along its anterior surface.
Dog (canis familiaris)	1	1	(1) Almost complete metacarpal III.
Horse (Equus)	1	156	(1) Femur diaphysis fragment, dog gnawed.
Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos)	1	1	(1) Proximal tibio-tarsus fragment.
Sheep or goat (ovis/capra)	1	6	(1) Mandible fragment, slightly dog gnawed?
Sheep or goat sized mammal	1	2	(1) Mandible fragment.
Unidentified	1	2	(1) Rib fragment.
TOTAL	7	228	

Table 4 Animal bone from pit F8 (finds no. 3).

8 Conclusion

Excavations at The Crown Inn revealed 13 pits and post-holes, eight of which are post-medieval/modern date with the rest likely to be contemporary, and all probably associated with activity in and around the Crown Inn which dates from the 16th century. The stratigraphy in trenches 1-3 indicates that ground reduction and levelling had taken place in the past, presumably as part of construction of the car park, with topsoil and part of the subsoil horizons removed. Additional modern features included a soakaway in T1 associated with the car park, and L2 in T4 which was likely deposited as part of landscaping associated with the garden and play area at the rear of the pub. During the evaluation work there was no evidence to suggest that the Saxon domestic and settlement activity identified during excavation work at Fordham CofE Primary School to the east continued into the development area.

9 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Michael Simpson of Michaels Property Consultants Ltd for commissioning and funding the work on behalf of Nayland Homes. The project was managed by C Lister, A Wightman and L Pooley, with fieldwork carried out by B Holloway with Z Esken, M Perou and C Hodges. Figures were compiled by B Holloway and S Vasey. The project was monitored for CHET by Lewis Busby.

10 References

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

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|---|
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| CIfA | 2020a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i> . Published 2014, revised 2020. |

CIfA	2020b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> . Revised October 2020.
CIfA	2022	<i>Code of Conduct</i> . Published 2014, revised 2022.
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
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MHCLG	2021	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
Schmid, E	1972	<i>Atlas of animal bones</i> . Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Company.

11 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CCC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CHER	Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record
CHET	Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECDC	East Cambridgeshire District Council
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	O nline A cces S to the Index of Archaeological Investigation S , http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
residual	something out of its original context, e.g a Roman coin in a modern pit
saxon	from c AD 410 to c 1066
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

12 Contents of archive

Finds: retention or disposal of finds to be confirmed after consultation with CHET.

Digital record

CAT Report 2004
CHET Brief, CAT written scheme of investigation
Site digital photographs
Graphic files
Survey data
Site data

13 Archive deposition

The archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but on obtaining transfer of title documentation will be permanently deposited with the CHET (if retained) and the Archaeology Data Service.

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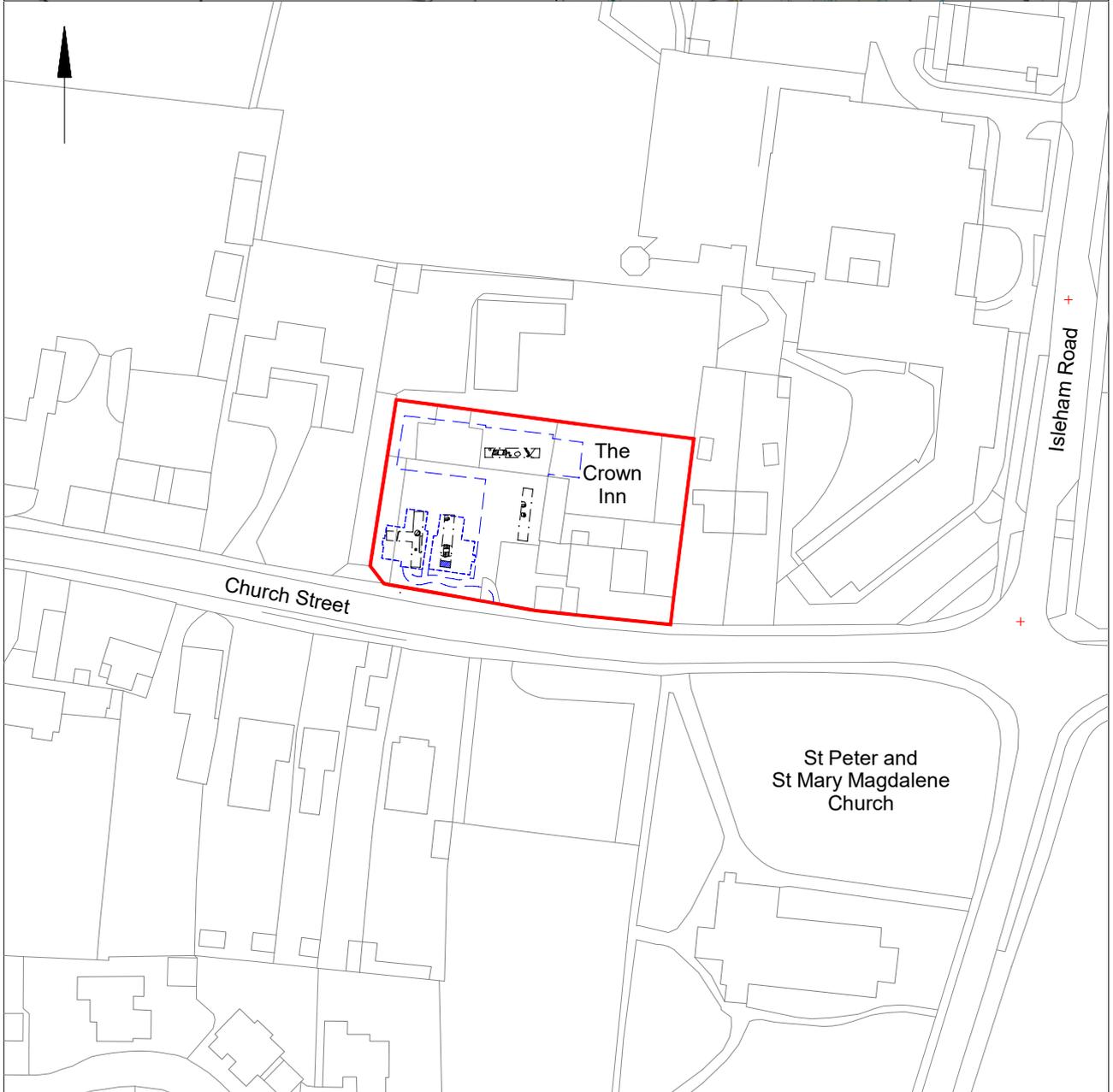
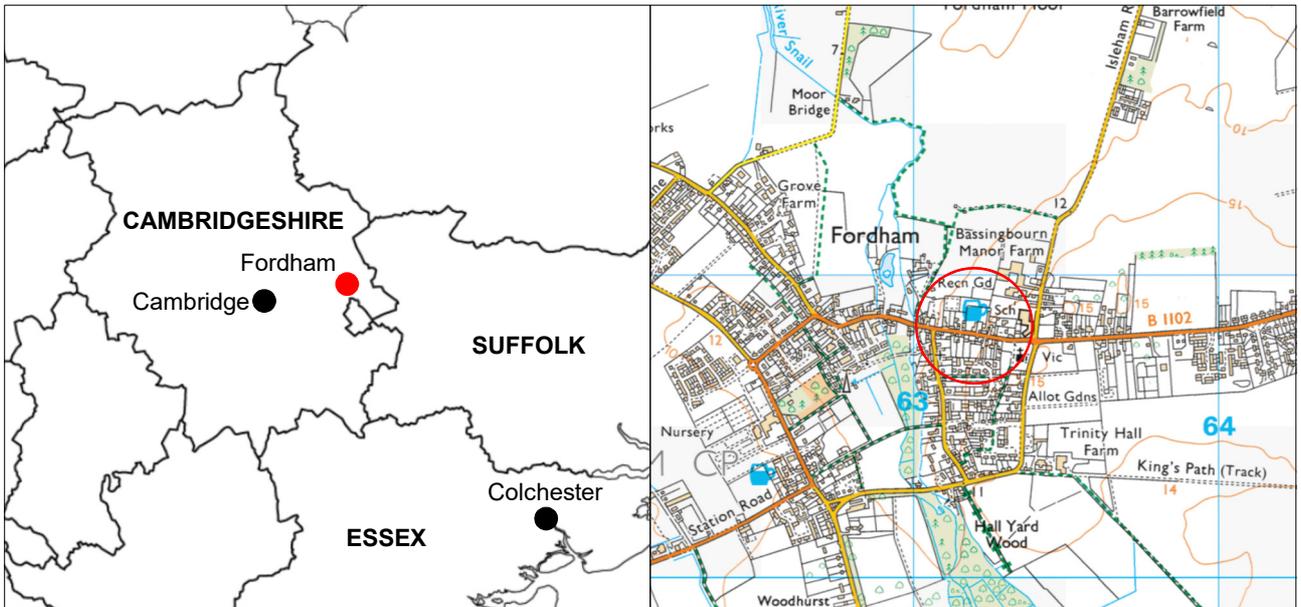
Distribution list:

Michael Simpson, Michaels Property Consultants Ltd
Lewis Busby, Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team
Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Trench	Finds no.	Layer type	Description	Date
L1	T4	-	Topsoil	Soft to firm, dry dark brownish-black silt with small stone inclusions.	Modern
L2	T4	-	Dump deposit	Firm, dry mid to dark yellowish-brown silt with occasional gravel and small stone inclusions.	Modern
L3	T1-T4	-	Subsoil	Soft, dry mid brownish-orange sandy gravel.	Undated
L4	T1-T4	-	Natural	Firm, moist grey white chalk containing lenses of mid yellow sand with gravel patches.	Post-glacial
L5	T1-T3	-	Car park surface associated sub-base	Compacted gravel tarmac patches	Modern

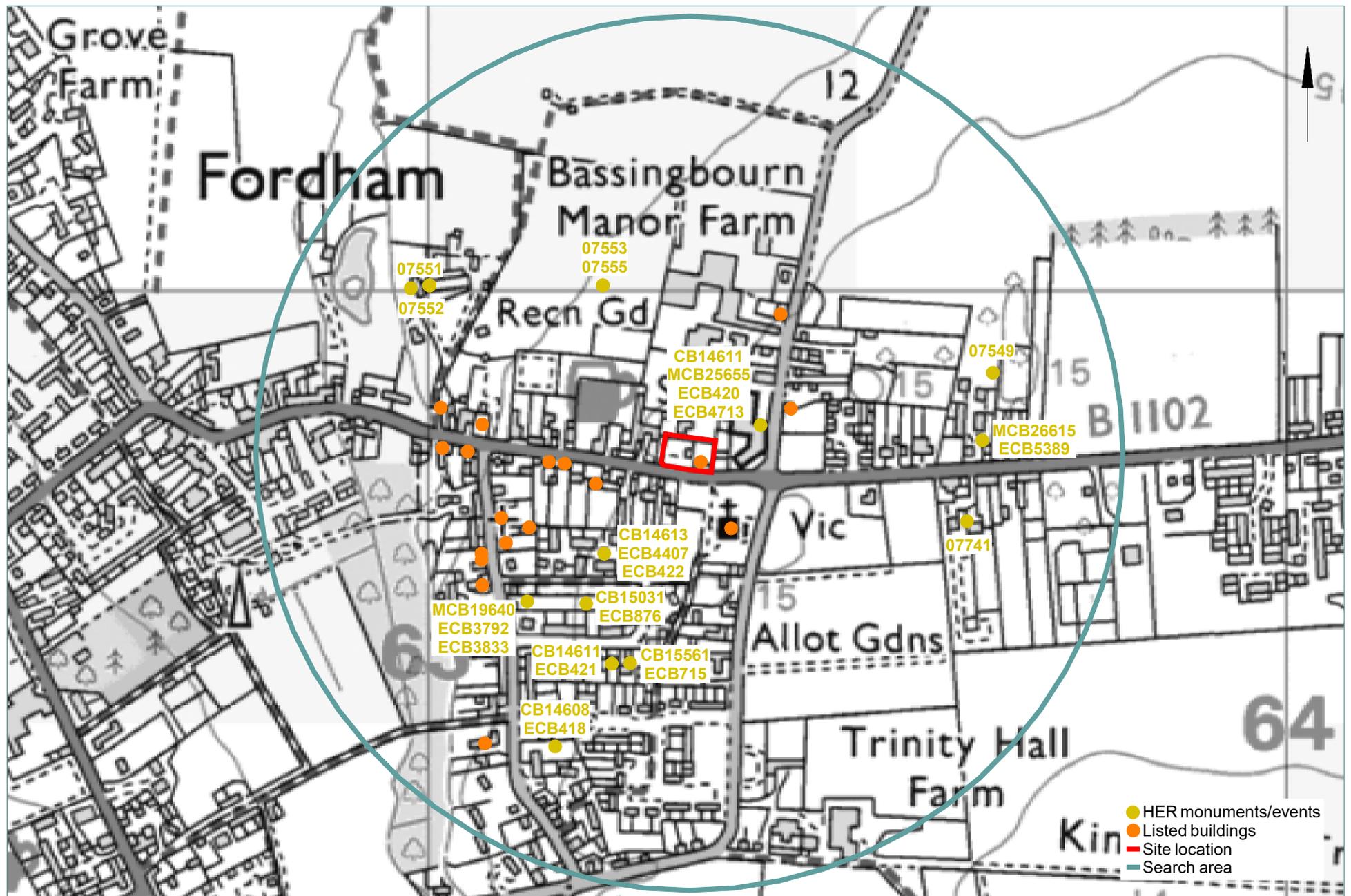
Context	Trench	Finds no.	Feature type	Description	Date
F1	T1	1	Post-hole	Firm, moist mid greyish-brown silt sand with gravel inclusions.	Modern
F2	T1	-	Pit	Firm, moist mid brownish-grey silt.	Undated
F3	T4	2	Pit	Firm, moist dark grey/brown sandy silt.	Modern
F4	T4	-	Post-hole	Firm, moist dark brown silt.	Undated
F5	T4	-	Pit	Feature contained semi articulated small animal skeleton (modern pet burial) agreement with CHET feature was not excavated.	Modern
F6	T4	-	Post-hole	Firm, moist dark brown silt.	Undated
F7	T4	-	Post-hole	Firm, moist dark brown silt.	Undated
F8	T4	3	Pit	Firm, moist dark grey/brown sandy silt occasional lenses of re-deposited natural.	Probably post-medieval/modern
F9	T4	-	Pit	Feature contained large amount of coal fragments in addition of clinker ash extremely modern deposition agreement with CHET feature was not excavated.	Modern
F10	T3	4	Pit	Firm, moist dark grey/brown sandy silt.	Post-medieval
F11	T3	5	Pit	Firm, moist dark grey/brown sandy silt.	Modern
F12	T2	6	Pit	Firm, moist dark brown silt.	Modern
F13	T2	-	Pit	Firm, moist mid greyish-brown silt sand with gravel inclusions.	Undated



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Fig 1 Site location.

0 50 m



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Fig 2 Development site in relation to archaeological data recorded on the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment records.



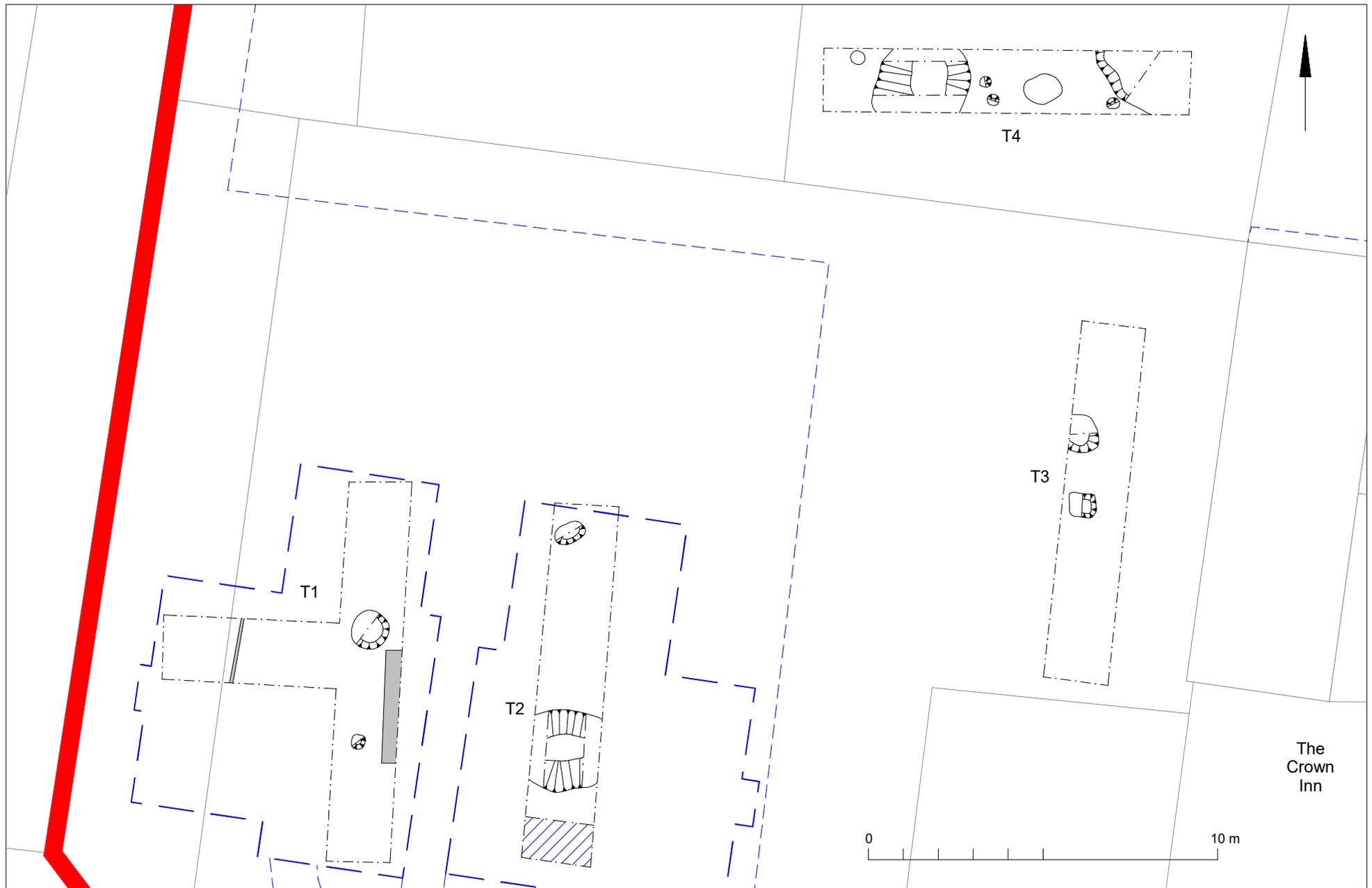


Fig 3 Evaluation results.

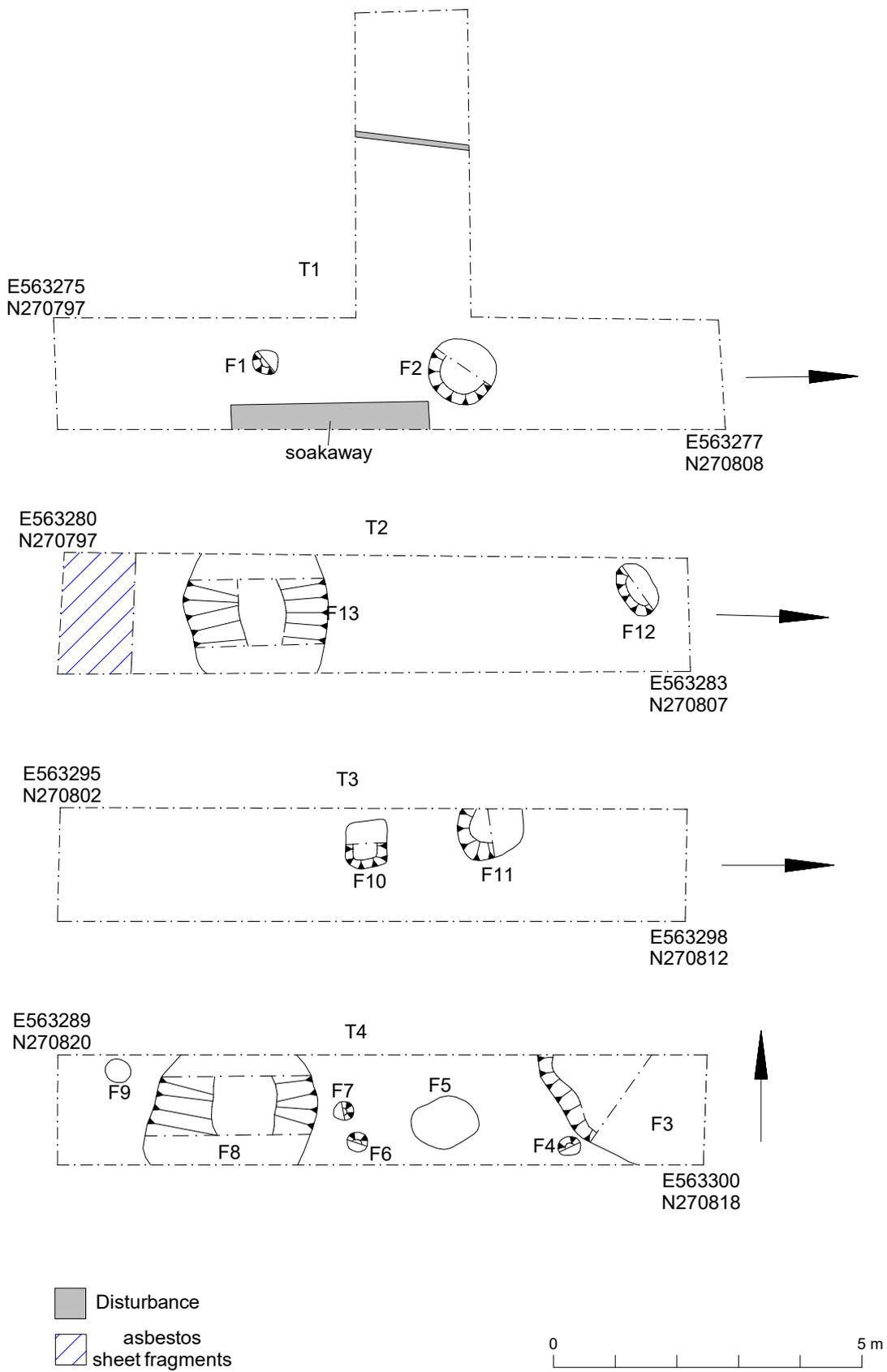


Fig 4 Trench results.

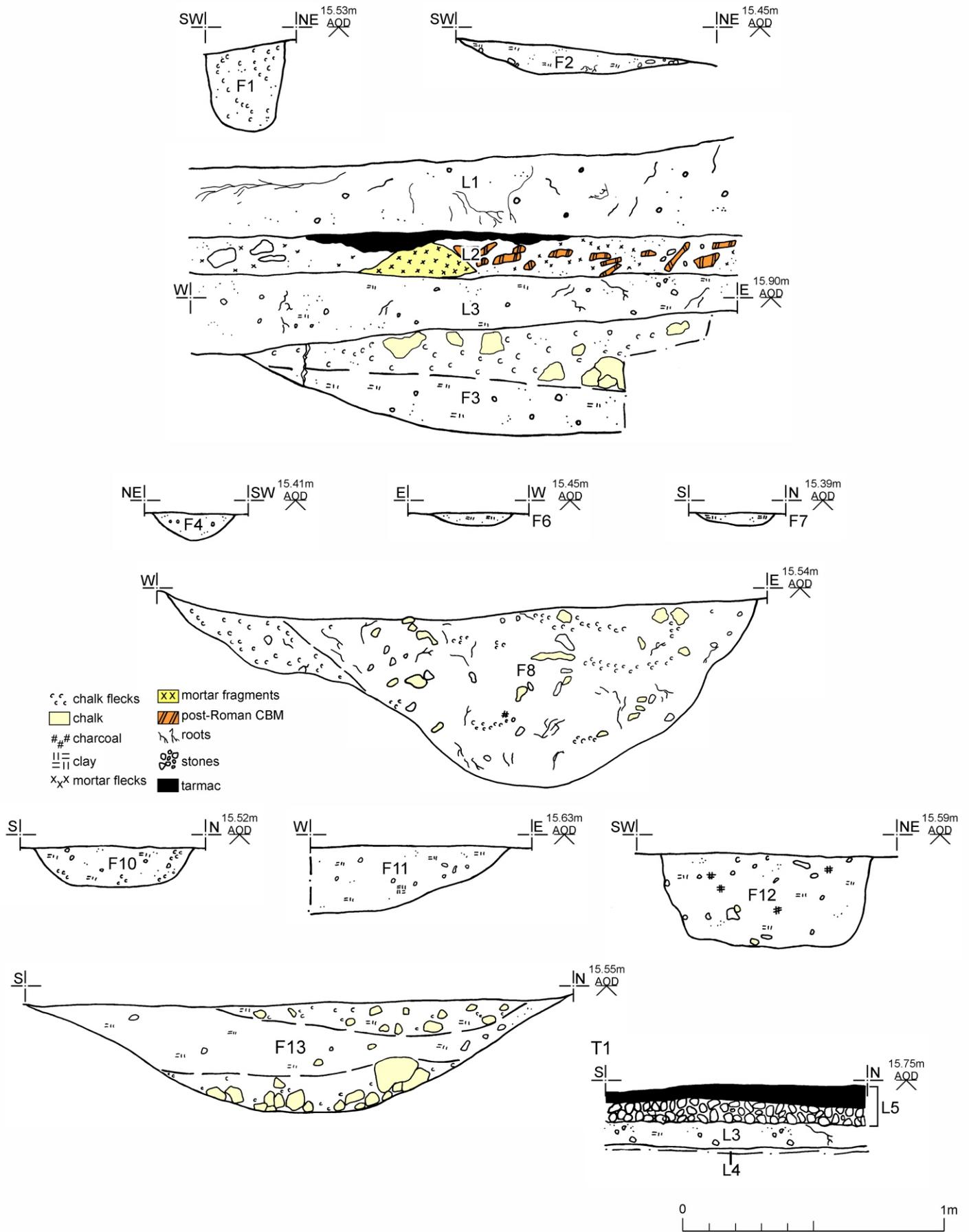


Fig 5 Feature and representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-519413

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-519413
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation at The Crown Inn, 14 Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5NJ: November 2023
Sitename	The Crown Inn, 14 Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire
Sitecode	ECB7198
Project Identifier(s)	2023/09j
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	22/00774/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	02-Nov-2023 - 03-Nov-2023
Location	The Crown Inn, 14 Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire NGR : TL 63280 70810 LL : 52.31112305990357, 0.393744395928202 12 Fig : 563280,270810
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Cambridgeshire Local Authority District : East Cambridgeshire Parish : Fordham
Project Methodology	Archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) carried out as per the conditions of the project Brief and WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out at The Crown Inn, 14 Church Street, Fordham, Ely, Cambridgeshire in advance of the construction of new residential dwellings. The Crown Inn site is located within an archaeologically sensitive area, in the historic core of the settlement of Fordham. Thirteen pits and post-holes were identified during the evaluation, eight of post-medieval/modern date with the rest likely to be contemporary, and all probably associated with activity in and around the Crown Inn which dates from the 16th century. There was no evidence to suggest that Saxon settlement activity identified during excavations at Fordham CofE Primary School to the east of the investigation area continued into the development site.
Keywords	Rubbish Pit - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Rubbish Pit - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Post Hole - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Post Hole - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	Private or public corporation Developer
HER	Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Adam Wightman, Chris Lister, Laura Pooley
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - ECB7198
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;

