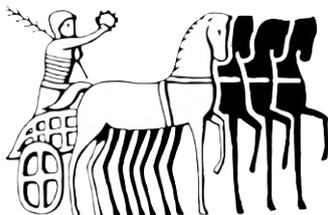


Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 2144
issued March 2025**

**Archaeological monitoring and recording at
Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex,
CM7 1WY: February 2025**



**CAT project ref.: 2024/05f
ECC code: BTNH24**

**Archaeological monitoring and recording at
Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex,
CM7 1WY: February 2025**

NGR: TL 75583 21746 (centre)

**Planning District: Braintree
Planning ref.: 24/00027/FUL**

**CAT project ref.: 2024/05f
CAT Report 2144**

**ECC code: BTNH24
OASIS id: colchest3-525050**

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fieldwork by Ziya Eksen and Xander Smith

commissioned by Steve Barclay, McArdle Sport Tec Ltd

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Issued:	05/03/2025	

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex during groundworks for the creation of a synthetic sports pitch. Despite being located adjacent to crop mark features, there were no archaeological remains.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring and recording carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex, on 14th-20th February 2025. The work was commissioned by Steve Barclay on behalf of McArdle Sport Tec Ltd, in advance of the construction of a 3G synthetic sports pitch.

As the site lies within an area highlighted by the EHER as having a high potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECCHEA). This recommendation was for archaeological monitoring and was based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2023).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Monitoring at Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree*, written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2024), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2024).

In addition to the project WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was undertaken in accordance with:

- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015),
- Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2020a-d, 2022),
- East of England standards and frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on <https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>
- Relevant health and safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2024).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the archaeological brief, the Colchester Archaeological Trust report archive, and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER numbers, which are accessible via the Heritage Gateway website (www.heritagegateway.org.uk)).

Braintree lies on a clay- and brickearth-capped ridge between the Rivers Brain and Blackwater. Braintree (*Branchetreu*) is first mentioned in 1086, but it was also known as Great Rayne (Medlycott 1999). The Domesday Book records Braintree in 1066 and 1086 (Rumble 1983).

The proposed 3G sports pitch lies adjacent to a cropmark feature as recorded through aerial photography prior to the construction of the high school and identified on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER 6500). The cropmarks show a broad ditched, roughly square enclosure with an entrance on the north-western side. The features may represent a former moated enclosure which may be medieval or later in origin. Other linear features that cross the school playing field area may be historical or earlier field boundaries.

Lying to the west is the north-south aligned London Road, a postulated Roman road leading to the small Roman town at Braintree.

Historic mapping reveals the site is crossed by a parish boundary and was in agricultural use in the late 19th century.

For a general background of Braintree, see the Braintree Historic Town Assessment Report (Medlycott 1999).



Map 1 Extract of the 1st edition OS map of England and Wales Sheet 223, with the site in red.

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock of the site is Eocene London Clay, a marginal marine deposit comprised of bioturbated or poorly laminated, blue-grey or grey-brown, slightly calcareous, silty to very silty clay. Within the district, the superficial geology consists of till deposits of Lowestoft Formation. These entail an extensive sheet of chalky till, outwash sands and gravels, silts and clays. The till is characterised by its chalk and flint content.

4 Aims

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to identify and record any archaeological contexts revealed during the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

All groundworks were carried out by a mechanical excavator or bulldozer (where stated) under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Groundworks revealed no archaeological remains and only a couple of land drains.

The area of the sports pitch (c 97m by 61m) was stripped to a depth of 0.2m through topsoil (L1) using a bulldozer. The south-east end of the pitch (an area c 27m by 61m) was then stripped by another 0.3m using a mechanical excavator. Topsoil (L1) in this area was 0.28-0.3m thick and sealed natural beneath (L2).

Subsequently, a drainage trench (0.7m wide by 0.5m deep) was excavated along the north-east edge of the pitch, with six smaller land drain trenches (0.4m wide by 0.2-0.3m deep) dug across the pitch. They were excavated through a remnant of topsoil L1 (if had not already been stripped away) into natural L2.

Finally, six post-holes 1.4m by 1.4m and 1.2m deep were excavated around the pitch for lighting. Each was excavated through L1 (0.25-0.3m thick) into natural L2.

Topsoil L1 was a moist, mid orange-brown sandy silt, with rare small stones. Natural L2 was a moist, firm, mid orange-brown silty clay, containing frequent small stones and chalk fragments.

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



Photograph 1 Strip of the sports pitch with a bulldozer, looking north-west.



Photograph 2 Strip of the sports pitch by mechanical excavator, looking north-west.



Photograph 3 Drainage trench, looking south-west.



Photograph 4 Drainage trench, looking north-east.



Photograph 5 Lighting pit, looking north.

6 Conclusion

Monitoring of groundworks during the creation of a new sports field at Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex revealed no archaeological remains.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Steve Barclay of McArdle Sport Tec Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by A Wightman and C Lister, with fieldwork carried out by Z Esken. Figures were compiled by Z Eksen and C Hill. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

8 References

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

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9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, or 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	Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological Investigation S , http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
Roman	AD 43 to AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

10 Archive deposition

Digital record: This project falls within the ClfA definition of a sterile project (<https://www.archaeologists.net/selection-toolkit/sterile-projects>), and as such the preserved archaeological archive will take the form of a single digital document that incorporates all the relevant elements from the project archive. This document will be uploaded to OASIS and released into the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) library, from where it will be curated by the ADS. The single digital document will include the report, brief, wsi, photographs, and original site data (for example context sheets, section drawings).

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Distribution list:

Steve Barclay, McArdle Sport Tec Ltd
Notley High School
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

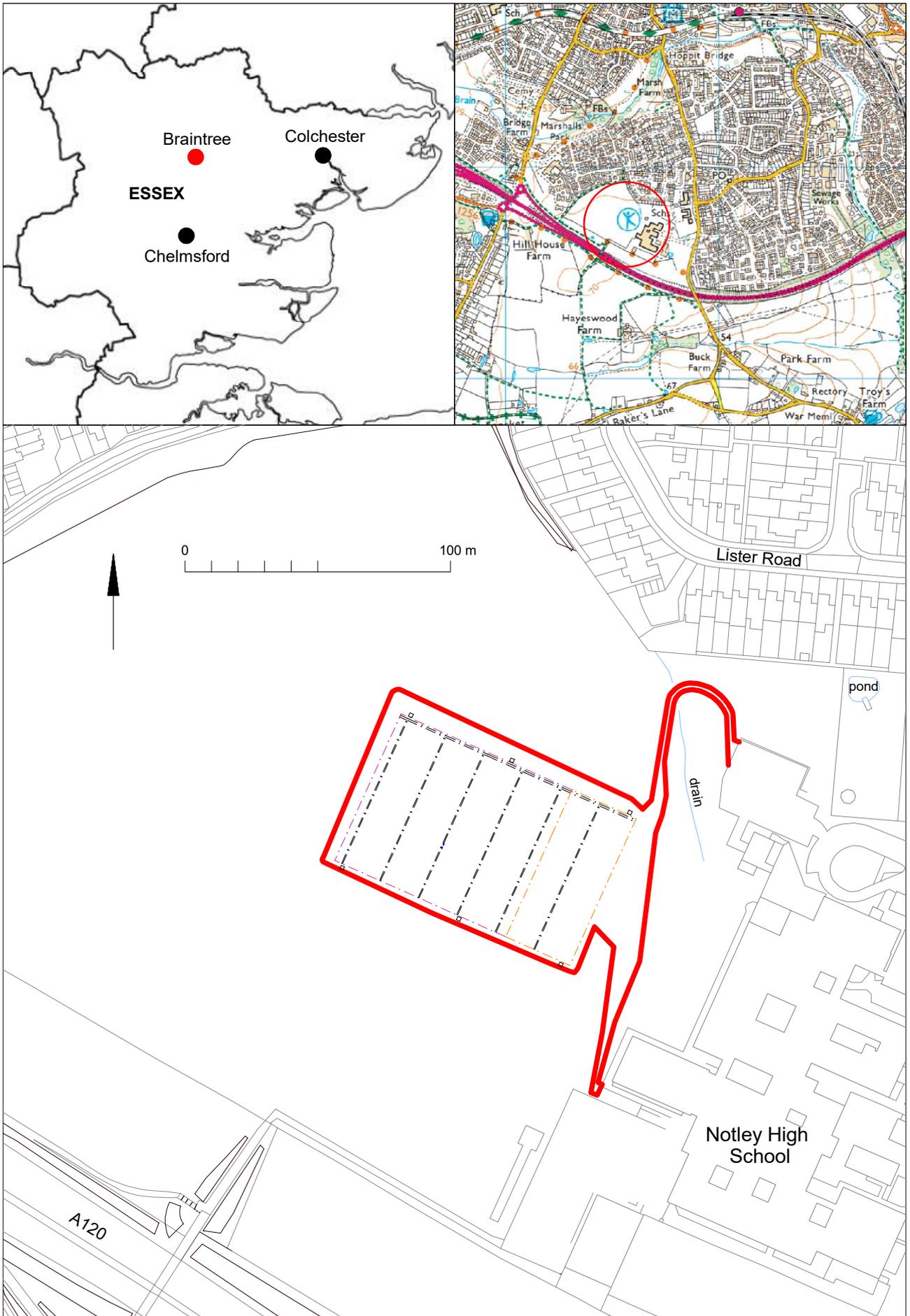


Fig 1 Site location.



Fig 2 Results.

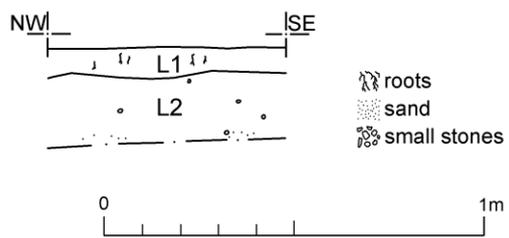


Fig 3 Representative section.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-525050

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-525050
Project Name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex, CM7 1WY: February 2025
Sitename	Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex, CM7 1WY
Sitecode	BTNH24
Project Identifier(s)	2024/05f
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	24/00027/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	14-Feb-2025 - 20-Feb-2025
Location	Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex, CM7 1WY NGR : TL 75583 21746 LL : 51.866658476583126, 0.548783237276122 12 Fig : 575583,221746
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Braintree Parish : Braintree, unparished area
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks carried out as specified in the project brief and wsi.
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out at Notley High School, Notley Road, Braintree, Essex during groundworks for the creation of a synthetic sports pitch. Despite being located adjacent to crop mark features, there were no archaeological remains.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation developer
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Adam Wightman, Chris Lister
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - BTNH24
Archives	