

**An archaeological
watching brief at
254 Straight Road,
Lexden,
Colchester, Essex**

February-April 2002

**on behalf of
Colchester Borough Council**

CAT project ref.: 02/2e
Colchester Museum accession code: 2002.44
NGR: TL 9675 2365



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CAT Report 185
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1 Summary

Observations were made during an archaeological watching brief on groundworks for three bungalows at 254 Straight Road, Lexden, Colchester, Essex. No evidence of the Triple Dyke was observed, and no other features of archaeological significance were observed.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between the 21st February and the 2nd April 2002, at the request of Colchester Borough Council. The work was necessitated by the construction of three bungalows and a new access adjacent to and to the rear of 254 Straight Road, Lexden, Colchester, Essex.
- 2.2 The site is located in Lexden, 3km south-west of Colchester town centre. The plot is situated on the eastern side of Straight Road at National Grid Reference TL 9675 2365. It is bordered by the Mormon Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints to the south. The bungalows were erected on the former garden of no 254, and trees and a shed were taken down to develop the site (Figs 1-2).
- 2.3 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1999, updated 2002) and *Guidelines on the preparation and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996, updated 2002), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1999).

3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The Iron Age *oppidum* of Camulodunum was flanked by a number of large linear earthworks (dykes), most of which were built in the late Iron Age to define and protect this important settlement centre which was succeeded by Roman Colchester (Essex Heritage Conservation Record or EHCR 11625). However, some of the dykes can be dated to the early Roman period and this is probably when Triple Dyke was constructed. Triple Dyke is called 'Shrub End Dyke' at this point on Straight Road (CAR 11, 52). The development site is situated within this system of dykes, being located on the line of the Triple Dyke (EHCR 11636). When the Mormon Church was built in 1963, a section of this dyke was observed (CAR 11, 121; EHCR 12635). Heath Farm Dyke lies 15m to the south (EHCR 11626), and a short stretch of it can be seen as an earthwork in the woods to the rear of the Mormon Church.
- 3.2 The watching brief site is also located on the site of a supposed Roman camp which is marked as a cropmark in figure 6.1 of CAR 11.
- 3.3 A watching brief was carried out by CAT in 1997 during the building of an extension to the south of the Mormon Church (Brooks & Benfield 1997). There was no sign of the Shrub End Dyke here; however, the ditch to the 'Roman camp' was recorded in section to the north-east of the church.

4 Aims and objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological features, finds or deposits revealed by the groundworks.

5 Methods

- 5.1 The size of the plot is 65m x 24m. The fieldwork was carried out by professional archaeologists Kate Orr and Laura Pooley of CAT. The first visit was made on the 21st February 2002 during topsoil-stripping for the new access. Subsequent visits were made during excavations for drains and foundations.

- 5.2 The trenches were dug by the contractors with a mechanical excavator. The sides of the trenches were checked for features and soil types were noted. Spoil heaps were checked for artefacts. No artefacts of archaeological significance were recovered.

6 Results

- 6.1 During topsoil-stripping for the new access on the 21st February 2002, the following soil profile was observed:

Layer or L1 – 300mm of mid brown silty loam topsoil with root activity.

L2 – 100mm of light brown silty clay with modern brick flecks and lumps.

- 6.2 On the 28th February and 6th March, a long length of drain was dug in a north to south direction which was between 750mm and 1m deep. Approximately 18m of this drain was observed. This is an area where the line of the dyke might be observed, but there was no sign of it. The following soil profile was observed:

L1 – 300mm of mid brown silty loam topsoil with stones.

L2 – 500mm of light brown/orange silty clay with no modern material.

L3 – 200mm of dark orange sandy clay and gravel natural.

- 6.3 On the 6th March, the footings for Plot 1 at the rear of no 254 were dug out to 1.2-1.5m depth. A similar soil profile was observed to that of the drain trench. A large pit was exposed in the north-western foundation trench at the corner of the plot. This feature (Feature or F1) was 1.2m deep and filled with modern-looking topsoil-type material; the north-facing section of F1 is drawn in Figure 3. It contained no finds and was probably dug fairly recently.

- 6.4 Between the 7th March and the 2nd April, five more visits were made. A small length of the footings of Plot 2 were observed plus the garage footings, but there were no features or finds of archaeological significance.

7 Discussion

No features or finds of archaeological significance were revealed during the watching brief. This is surprising as the Triple Dyke (Shrub End Dyke) appears to run right through the current development area and was recorded in 1963 on the site of the Mormon Church adjacent to the site. Either the current groundworks were not deep enough to expose the cut or the top of the dyke has been destroyed here.

8 Archive deposition

A copy of this report will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2002.44.

9 Acknowledgements

The Colchester Archaeological Trust is grateful to the following for their help and co-operation:

Alec Oakley Ltd

Martin Winter, Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council

10 References

Brooks, H, & Benfield, S, 1997 Watching brief report, Church of the Latter Day Saints, Straight Road, Lexden

CAR 11 Colchester Archaeological Report 11, *Camulodunum 2*, by CFC Hawkes & P Crummy, 1995

Kate Orr, April 2002

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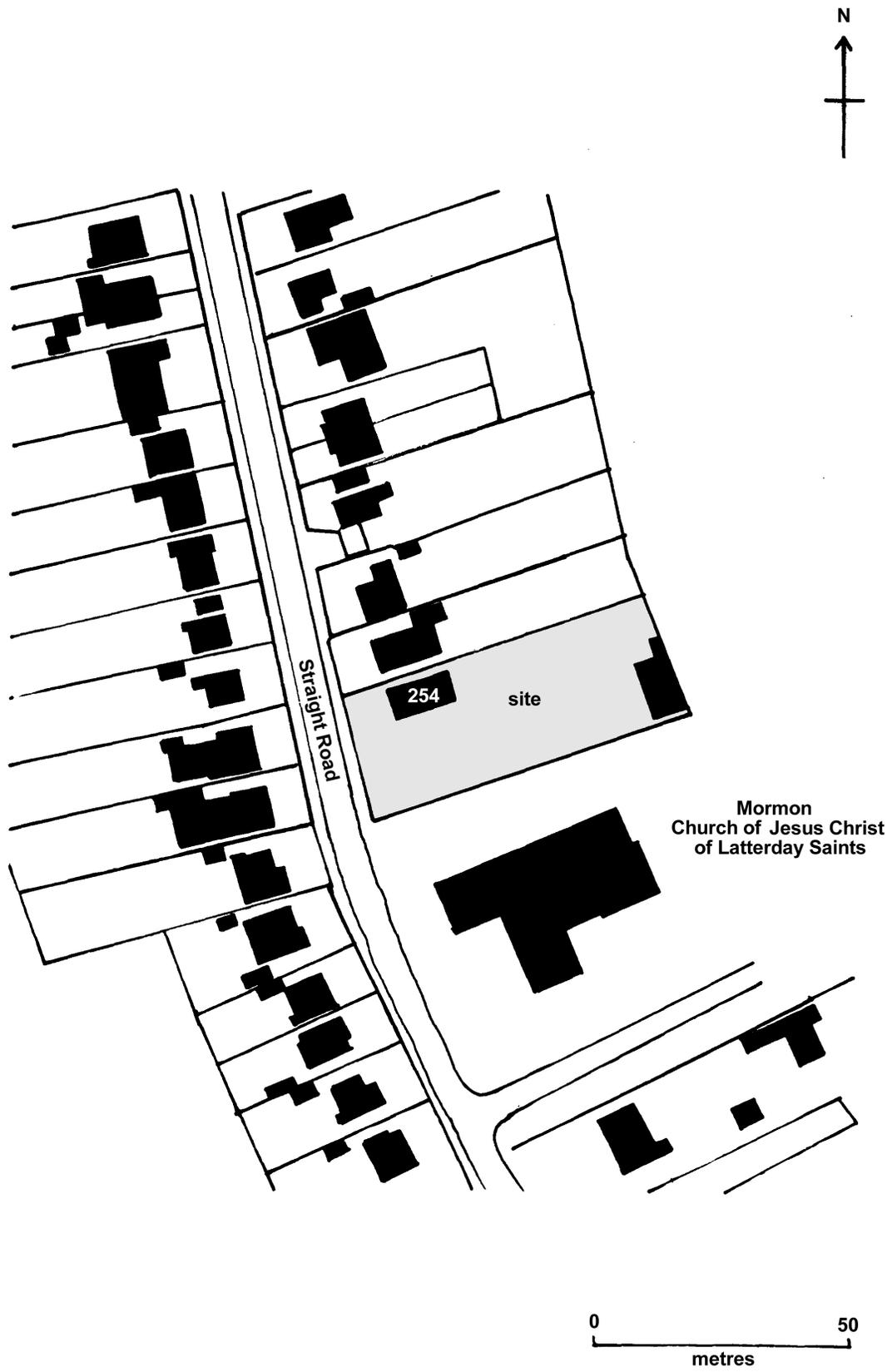


Fig 1 Location plan.

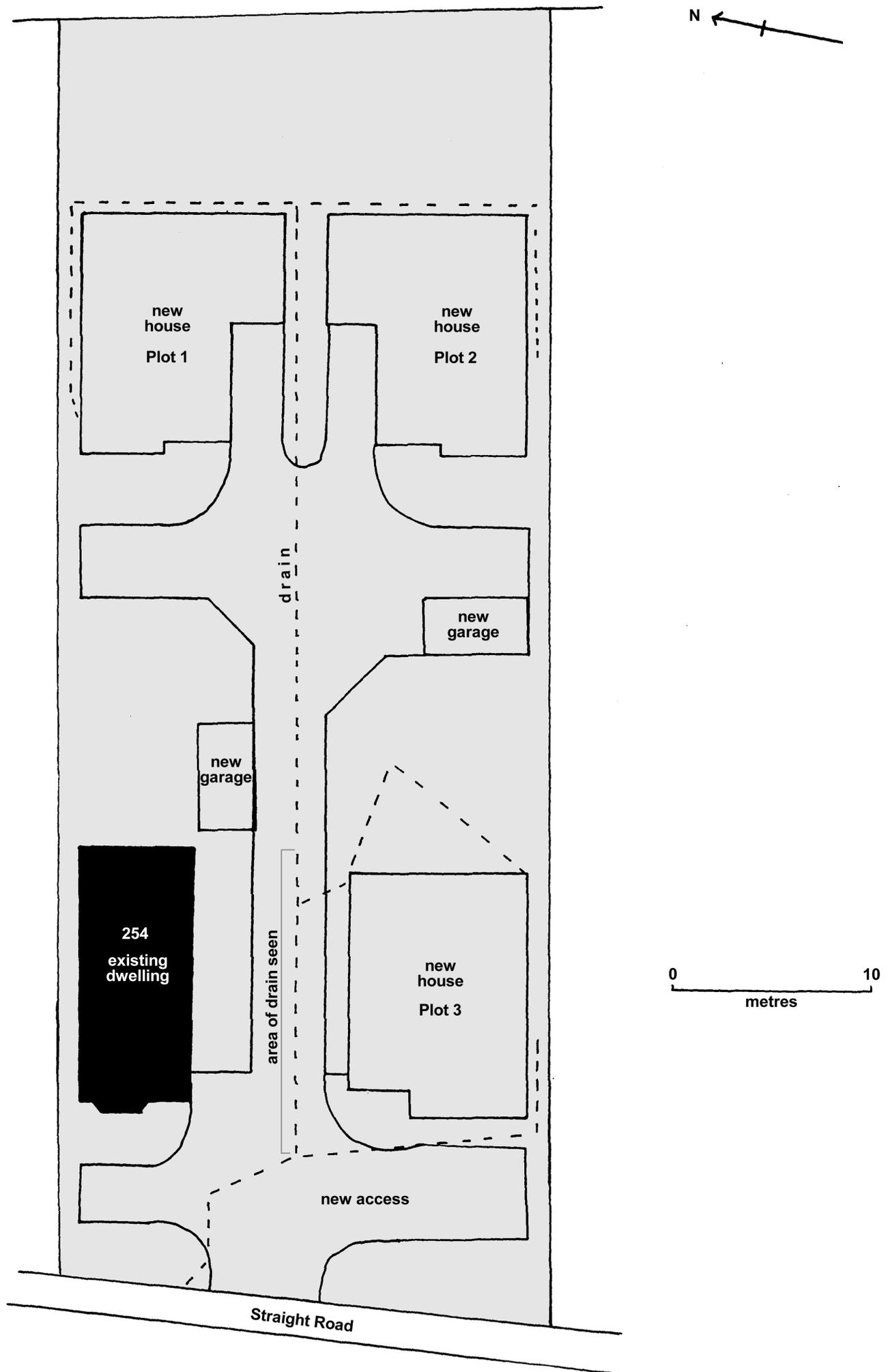


Fig 2 Site plan.

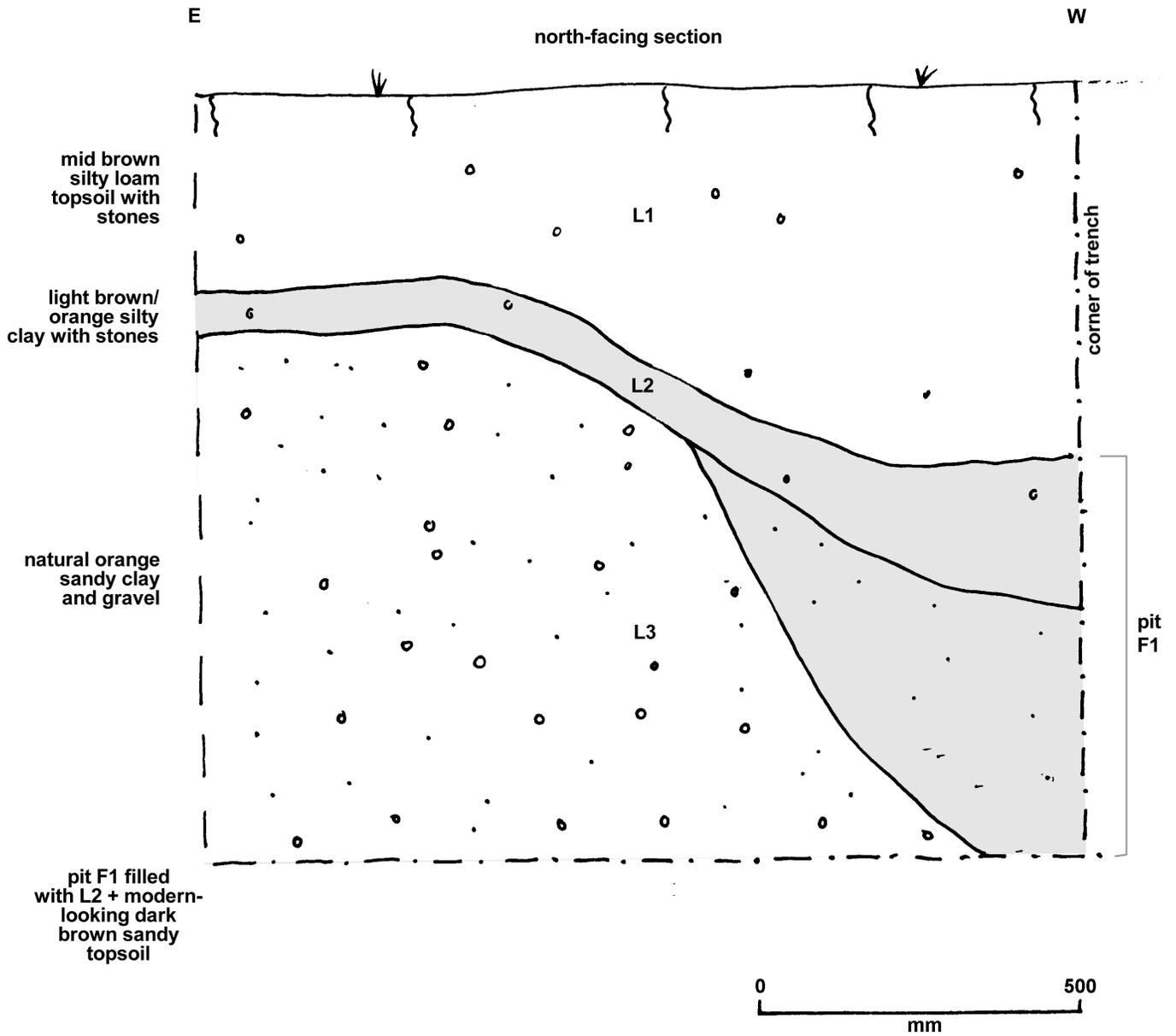


Fig 3 Section drawing of F1.

**Essex Sites and Monuments Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Site name/address: 254 Straight Road, Lexden, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester Borough
NGR: TL 9675 2365	Site code: 2002.44
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: February-April 2002	Size of area investigated:
Location of finds/curating museum: Colchester Museum	Funding source: Colchester Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related SMR nos:
Final report: CAT Report 185 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: None	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Observations were made during an archaeological watching brief on groundworks for three bungalows at 254 Straight Road, Lexden, Colchester, Essex. No evidence of the Triple Dyke was observed, and no other features of archaeological significance were observed.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: April 2002