

# **An archaeological evaluation at Elmwood Avenue, Colchester, Essex December 2002**

**commissioned by  
BDG Design Ltd  
on behalf of  
Annington Homes**

**report prepared by  
Kate Orr**

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NGR: TL 98021 22469  
Colchester Museums accession code: 2002.248  
Planning application no: O/COL/02/1303



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**CAT Report 216**  
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## 1 Summary

Two trial-trenches revealed relatively undisturbed ground. Natural features plus one possible drain-trench and a soakaway were observed.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation at Elmwood Avenue, Colchester, Essex, on the corner of Elmwood Avenue and Littlewood Road.
- 2.2 This report follows a brief written by the Archaeological Officer for Colchester Borough Council and a Written Scheme of Investigation written by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT). The evaluation was carried out by CAT in December 2002 in response to a planning application which was submitted in July 2002 for the erection of seventeen housing units (planning application no O/COL/02/1303).
- 2.3 The site is located approximately 3.4km south-west of Colchester town centre, off Layer Road, at NGR 98021 22469. The 0.148 hectare block of land is situated in a residential area on the corner of Elmwood Avenue and Littlewood Road. It is surrounded by fences on the western and southern sides, grass to the east and Elmwood Avenue to the north. The site is on level ground at 37m OD and is composed of a mix of tarmac-surfaced car park and grass.
- 2.4 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 evaluation* (1999).

## 3 Archaeological background

- 3.1 The development area lies within the Late Iron Age *oppidum* of Camulodunum, a pre-Roman high-status settlement surrounded by an extensive series of defensive dykes. The main focus of the settlement is situated 200m west of the development area, at Gosbecks. Here cropmarks and successive seasons of excavations have revealed Late Iron Age enclosures and field systems which were succeeded by Roman settlement and a Romano-British temple and theatre (Crummy 1997; EHCR 11643-11652).
- 3.2 Cropmarks show that this activity continued to the east of the development area, and this has been proved by the evidence from a recent evaluation at the Garrison. The main findings were a Neolithic pit, two possibly Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age occupation sites, elements of a Middle Iron Age agricultural landscape, and fields and trackways related to the Late Iron Age *oppidum* and Roman activity (Brooks 2002a; Brooks 2002b).
- 3.3 Although none of these cropmarks cross the development site itself, there is a small enclosure showing on aerial photographs at the Musket Club, 200m to the east. This was also evaluated recently, but no evidence of the enclosure was observed (Brooks 2002b; EHCR 11829).
- 3.4 The land has been in the ownership of the MoD or its predecessor since before 1920 (Studd 1994, 252).

## 4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological work was to locate, identify and assess the quality and extent of any surviving archaeological remains prior to the determination of the planning application. This information will then enable an informed decision to be taken on the preservation or otherwise of any deposits and the need for further archaeological work and/or mitigation.

## 5 Methodology

- 5.1 The two trenches (T1 and T2) were dug by a contractor under archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. Both trenches were 20m in length and 1.5m in width. They were placed within the footprint of the proposed buildings.
- 5.2 Individual records of layers and features were entered on CAT pro-forma record sheets.
- 5.3 Section drawings of features and layers were made at a scale of 1:10. A plan of Feature or F1 was made at 1:20 and plans of the two trenches were made at 1:50.
- 5.4 Finds were registered on CAT record sheets and assigned find numbers according to context.
- 5.5 Colour photographs of features were taken with a 35mm transparency camera.
- 5.6 Heights OD were taken using a dumpy level.

## 6 Results (Figs 3-4)

### 6.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 (T1) was positioned on the north-western side of the site. It was dug to a depth of between 600mm and 720mm. 300mm of mid brown sandy silt topsoil (Layer or L1) was stripped off to expose a similar thickness of orangey brown clayey silt subsoil (L2). No dating evidence was derived from either of these layers, although they are likely to be post-medieval or modern. Within the natural sand and gravel (L3) were four irregular silty patches. Slots were taken out of three of these by hand to investigate them further. Their fills of light brown clayey silt did not contain any finds and all the features were shallow. They are therefore interpreted as being natural features and of no archaeological significance.

The eastern end of the trench was dug through tarmac. Tarmac (L4), sub-base (L5) and a grey brown silty band (L6) replaced the topsoil in this area. There were no finds or features of archaeological significance in this trench.

### 6.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 (T2) was dug in the northern part of the site, mainly through tarmac (L4), to between 830mm-850mm in depth. The sand and stone sub-base (L5) overlaid a band of grey brown silty sand (L5) which is presumed to be modern as it only occurs under the tarmac. An orangey brown clayey silt subsoil (L7), similar to L2, sealed natural sand and gravel (L3). Three silty patches were observed within the natural. A section was taken out of one of these to investigate it further, and it was found to be a natural feature. A terminal to a modern ditch or trench was observed, cut into the natural ground at the western end of T2. The feature F1 was 720mm deep and less than 1m wide. The feature was almost straight-sided at the top; however; it was stepped in at the bottom to form a 'V' shape. The feature had two fills: the upper fill (a) was a grey silt and the lower fill (b) was a lighter grey silt which was quite wet at the bottom. A piece of white china and two fragments of tile were the only finds from its fill. This feature is possibly a drain-trench, although no drain was found in it.

The other feature in T2 was a stone-filled soakaway pit (F2) at the eastern end of the trench, with a ceramic pipe leading into it.

The only finds from the evaluation were modern pottery and tile fragments from F1 which have been discarded.

## 7 Discussion

The evaluation did not expose any features of archaeological significance. The topsoil and subsoil layers were largely free of finds. One of the modern features (F1) may be a drain-trench. Apart from this feature, a soakaway and the laying of the tarmac, the site appears to be undisturbed.

## 8 Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Kate Orr and the site work was carried out by Kate Orr and Mike Ripley. The project was monitored by Martin Winter, Archaeology Officer for Colchester Borough Council.

The Trust would like to thank Annington Homes for funding the work and BDG Design Ltd for commissioning the work.

## 9 References

- Brooks, H, 2002a An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas E and F at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, CAT Report 203
- Brooks, H, 2002b An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on Areas DR, G, M, P, Q, R, RO, S and T at Colchester Garrison PFI site, Colchester, Essex, CAT Report 207
- Crummy, P, 1997 *City of Victory*
- Studd, P, 1994 'Colchester: barracks', in *The Victoria History of the County of Essex, IX*, ed by J Cooper

## 10 Glossary

Bronze Age context finds	the period from c 2000 BC to 700 BC specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where are made
EHCR feature	Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
NGR natural	National Grid Reference geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
Neolithic	the late Stone Age, ie c 4000 BC-2000 BC
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 430

## 11 Archive deposition

The paper archive is held at Colchester Archaeological Trust, 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museums, under accession code 2002.248.

## 12 Site context list

Trench	Context	Description	Context date
T1 & T2	L1	Mid brown sandy silt topsoil	post-medieval or modern
T1	L2	Orangey brown clayey silt subsoil	undated
T1 & T2	L3	Natural orange sand and gravel	Glacial
T1 & T2	L4	Tarmac	modern
T1 & T2	L5	Sand and stone sub-base for tarmac	modern
T1 & T2	L6	Grey brown silt underneath L5	modern
T2	L7	Orangey brown clayey silt subsoil, similar to L2	post-medieval or modern
T2	F1	Terminal of a straight-sided trench filled by: a - grey silt b - lighter grey silt below	modern
T2	F2	Soakaway; a square straight-sided pit filled by flint nodules and stones	modern

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### Distribution list:

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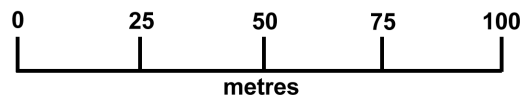
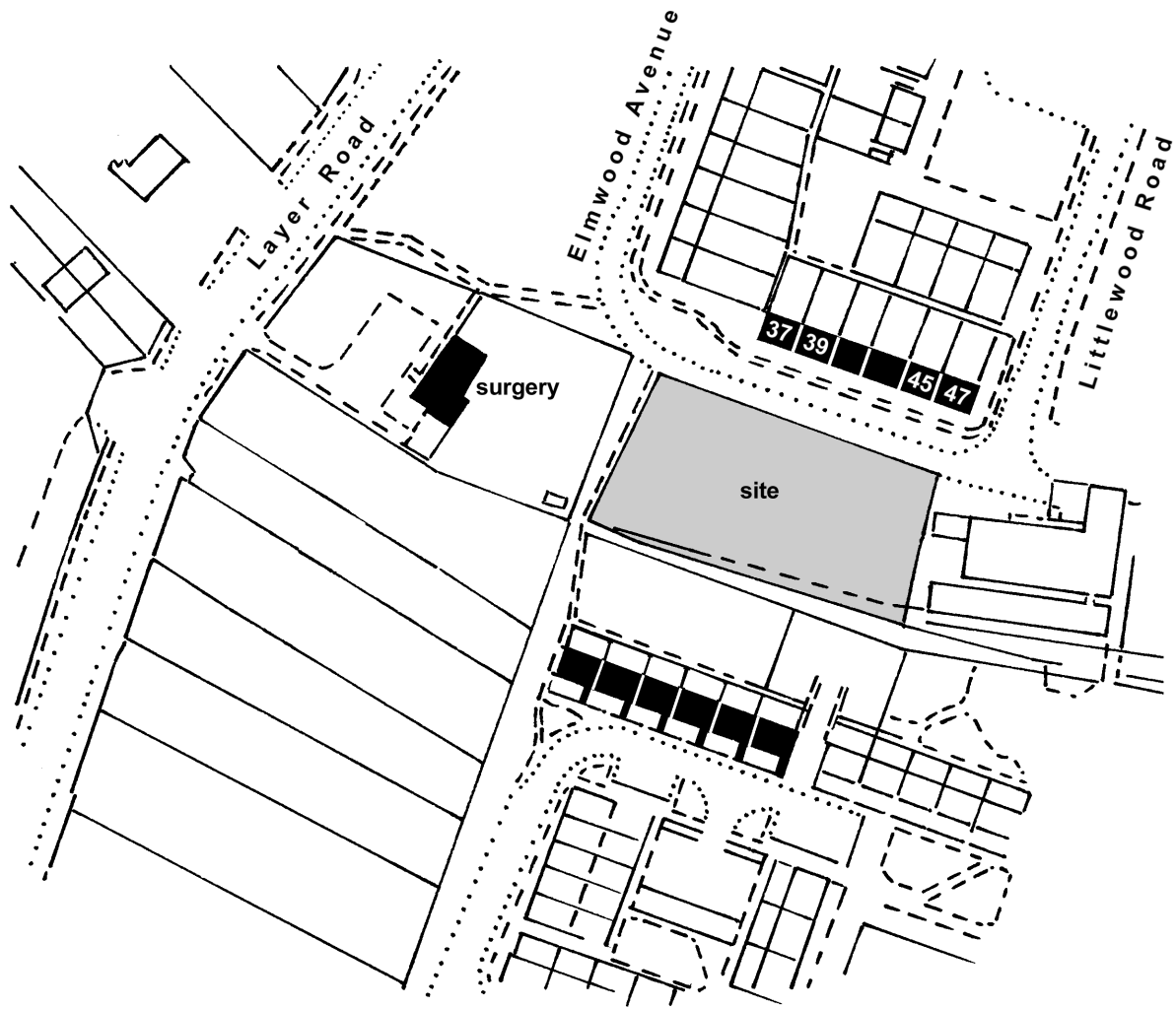


Fig 1 Site location.

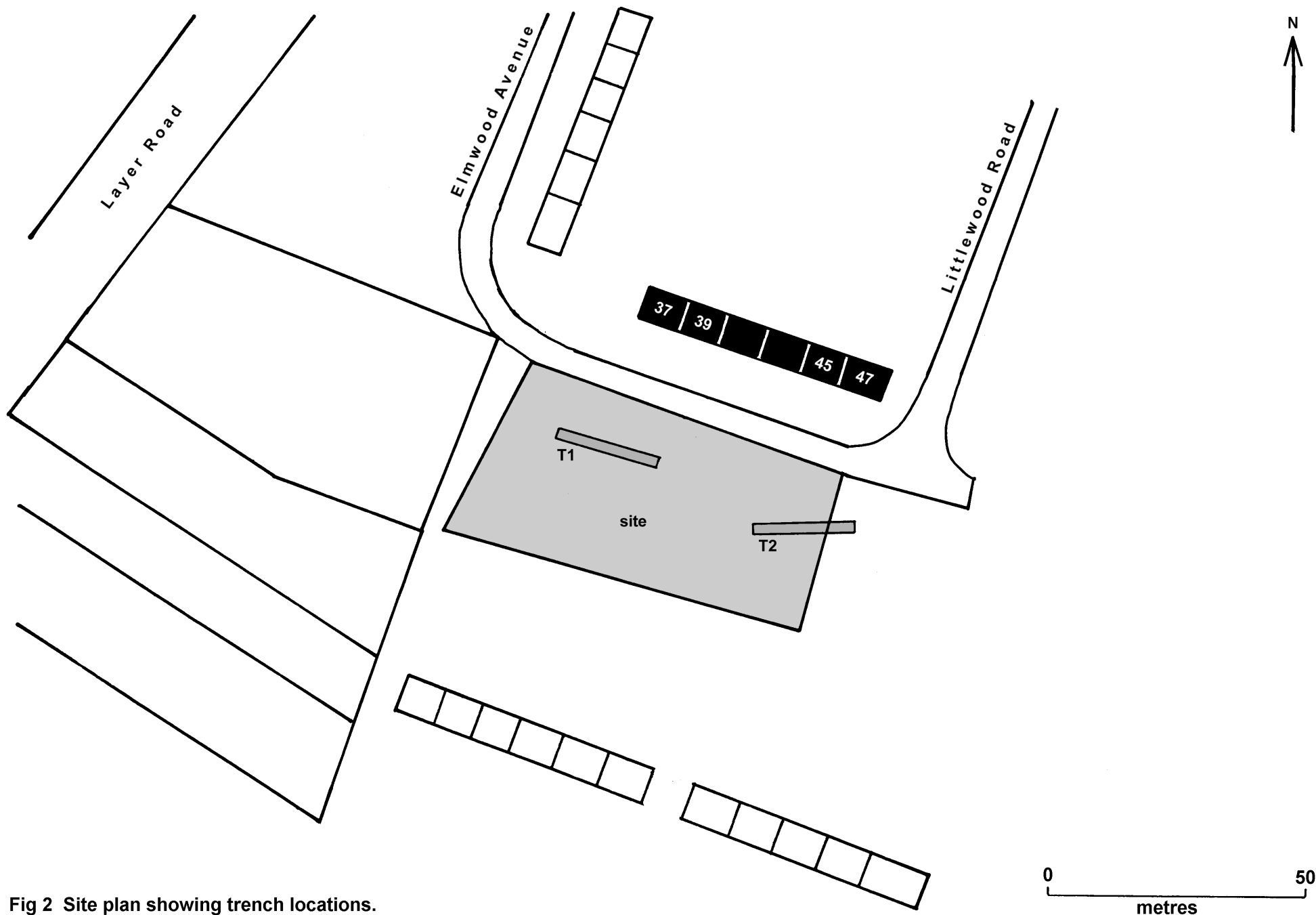


Fig 2 Site plan showing trench locations.



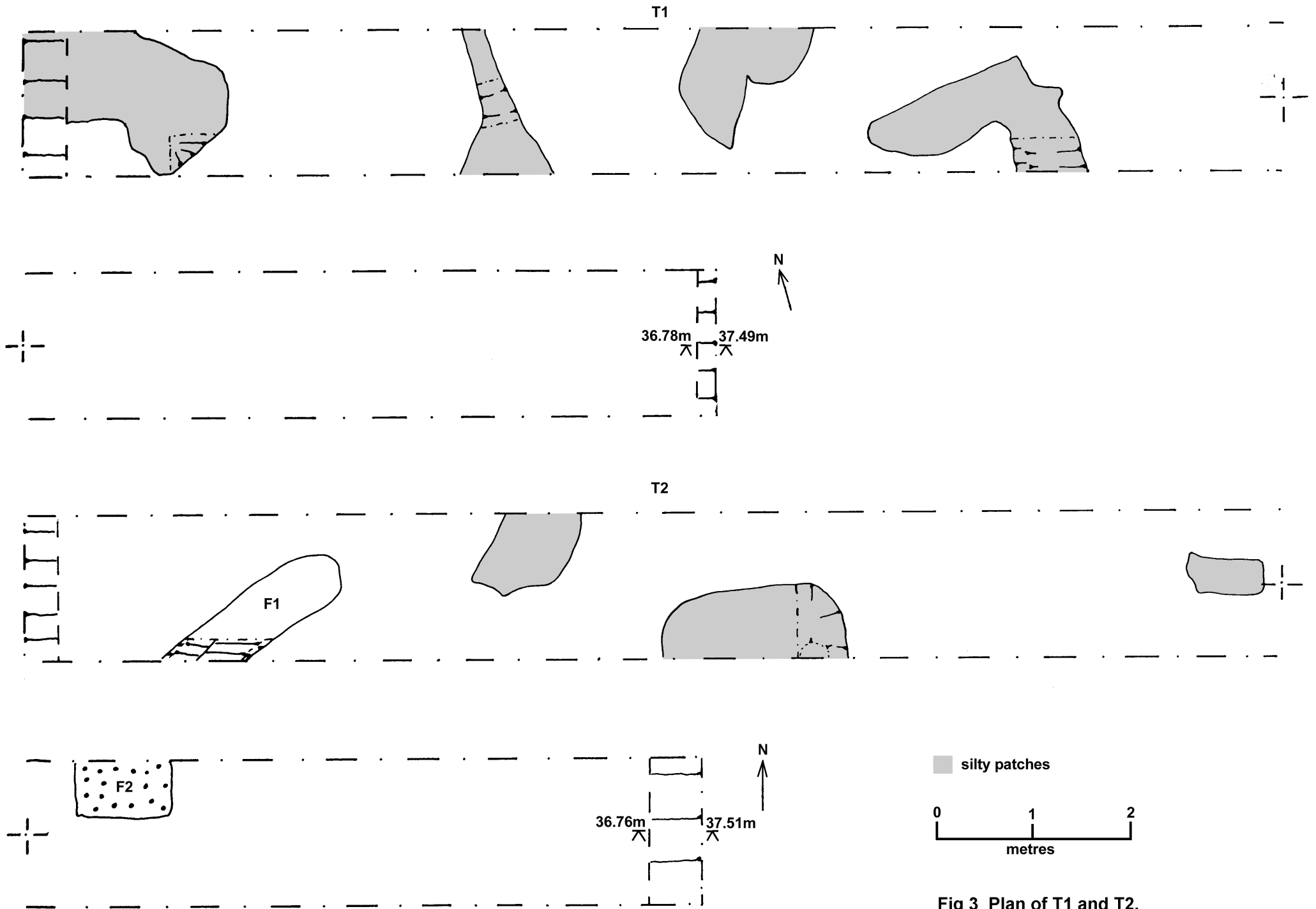


Fig 3 Plan of T1 and T2.

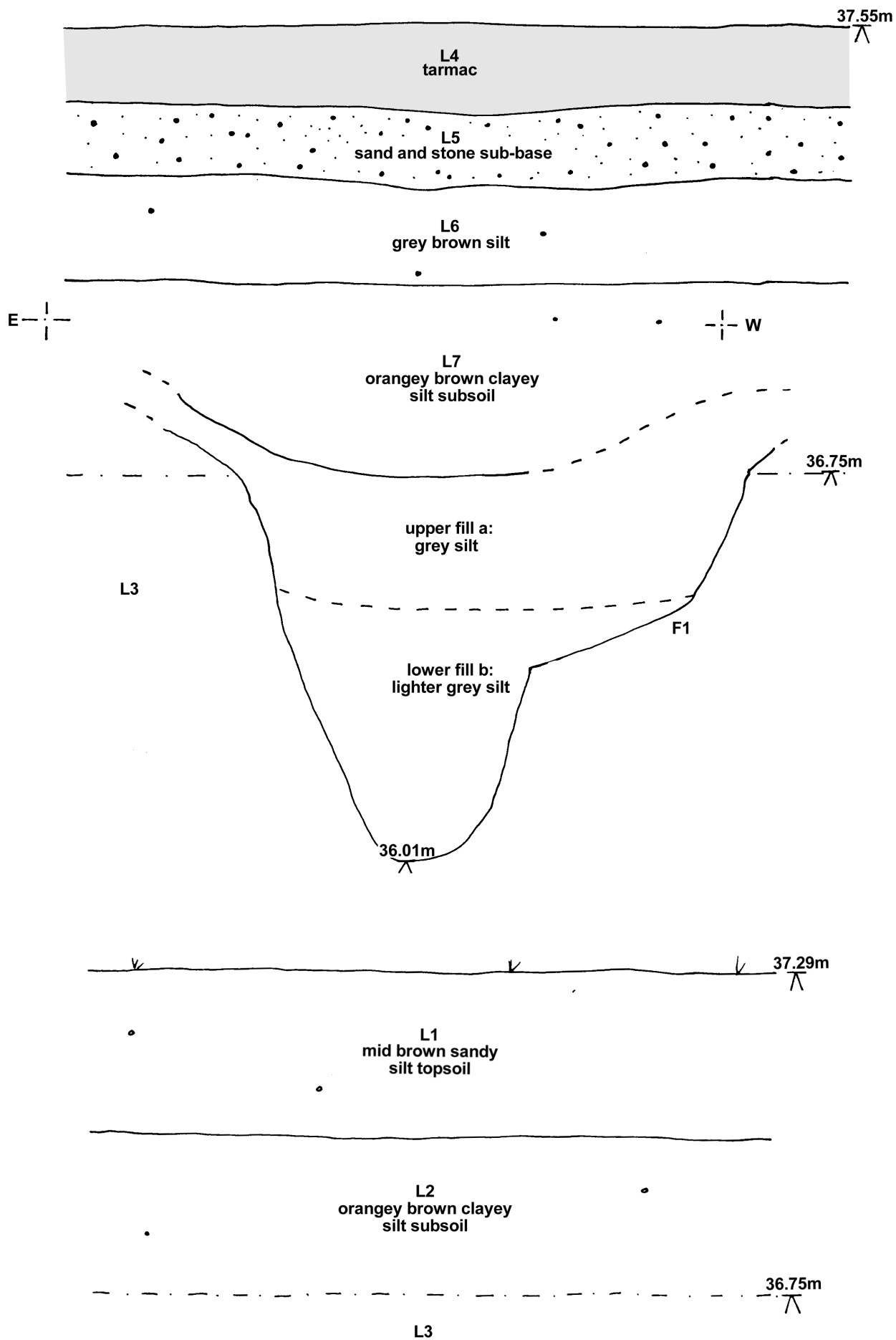
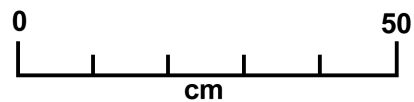


Fig 4 T2: F1, north-facing section (above), and T1: representative north-facing section (below).



**Essex Heritage Conservation Record/  
Essex Archaeology and History**

**Summary sheet**

<b>Site address:</b> Elmwood Avenue, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 98021 22469	<b>Site code:</b> Museum accession code 2002.248
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> December 2002	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 0.148 ha
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Colchester Museums	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> ??	<b>Related EHCR nos:</b> 11643-11652 and 11829
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 216 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
<b>Periods represented:</b> Modern	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> Two trial-trenches revealed relatively undisturbed ground. Natural features plus one possible drain-trench and a soakaway were observed.	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Kate Orr	<b>Date of summary:</b> December 2002