

**An archaeological evaluation and
watching brief on the site for a
Visual Arts Facility,
East Hill House and
Colchester Bus Station, Colchester, Essex**

October 2004

1: interim results

**commissioned by
Colchester Borough Council**

report prepared by
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the preliminary report on archaeological fieldwork which took place between 18th and 27th October 2004 on the proposed site for Colchester's Visual Arts Facility. The purpose of this report is the rapid dissemination of the data recorded in the field. A future more comprehensive report will be available on completion of the post-excavation analysis.
- 1.2 The fieldwork fell into two categories:
1. Nine archaeological evaluation trenches were manually excavated in the grounds of East Hill House.
 2. A watching brief was maintained on geotechnical engineers' window sample holes in the grounds of East Hill House and the forecourt of the adjacent Bus Station.

2 Aim

The aim of the fieldwork was to establish the depth of archaeologically sensitive levels as an aid to the design of foundations for the proposed development.

3 Methods

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out in briefs prepared by Colchester Borough Council Museums Service and Oxford Archaeological Associates in August 2004 and revised in October 2004.

4 Results

4.1 The Evaluation Trenches (location plan: fig 1)

The recorded archaeological contexts from the nine evaluation trenches are briefly described in the following tables.

Trench T1

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00088 25126

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 22.35mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 50cm below present ground level (21.85mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 65cm (21.70mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|---|----------------------------|
| L1 | turf and topsoil | modern |
| L2 | topsoil spread/ levelling (tennis court?) | post-medieval / modern |
| L3 | accumulation | post-Roman - post-medieval |
| L4 | dump (unexcavated) | Roman |
| L5 | scatter of destruction debris (unexcavated) | Roman / post-Roman |
| L6 | dump (augered) | Roman |
| F1 | pit | Roman, possibly later |

Auger Results: an auger probe through L6 found fine pale yellow sand at an overall depth of approximately 65cm.

Trench T2

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00102 25119

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 22.33mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 60cm below present ground level (21.73mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 80cm (21.53mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| L7 | turf and topsoil | post-medieval - modern |
| L10 | accumulation | post-Roman |
| L11 | disturbed natural subsoil (augered) | - |

| | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| L13 | stoney layer, part of F6 (unexcavated) | Roman |
| F6 | stoney area, possible feature (unexcavated) | Roman |

Auger results: a probe through L11 extended to 1.3m overall depth. The disturbed levels of L11 extend to approximately 80cm, below which was a clean silty sand subsoil.

Trench T3

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00118 25116

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 22.48mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: none earlier than post-medieval

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 1.0m (21.48mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| L8 | turf and topsoil | modern |
| L12 | possible upper fill of pit F7 | post-medieval |
| L20 | lower fill of pit F7 (augered) | post-medieval |
| L21 | natural sand | - |
| F7 | large pit, cuts natural | post-medieval |

Auger results: an auger probe through the unexcavated fill of the pit F7 indicated that the pit was cut to an overall depth of 1.9m. Beneath this was clean sand similar in nature to L21.

Trench T4

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00117 25145

Size: 3m x 1m

Present ground level: 22.88mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 15cm below present ground level (22.73mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 30cm (22.58mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|--|--|
| L14 | turf and topsoil | modern |
| L15 | disturbed natural subsoil (augered) | - |
| L22 | redeposited subsoil? | Roman |
| F3 | robber trench, north-south wall foundation (unexcavated) | post-Roman removal of Roman foundation |
| F4 | stoney spread – metalling? (unexcavated) | Roman |

Auger results: a small slot through L15 found a pale yellowish brown silty sand at an overall depth of 30cm. This material was probed for a further 35cm (65cm overall) without change.

Trench T5

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00132 25122

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 22.62mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 40cm below present ground level (22.22mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: not investigated

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| L9 | turf and topsoil | post-medieval - modern |
| F2 | gravel surface (unexcavated) | Roman? |

Trench T6

Location: East Hill House day nursery car park

NGR: TM 00120 25173

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 24.37mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 42cm below present ground level (23.95mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 78cm (23.59mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| L16 | turf and topsoil | modern |
| L17 | car park surfacing overspill | modern |
| L18 | accumulation | post-Roman |
| L19 | destruction debris/dump (augered) | Roman / post-Roman |
| F5 | soakaway | modern |

Auger results: an auger probe through L19 indicated that L19 may extend down for a further 30cm, changing to a yellowish brown silty sand, possibly natural subsoil, at 78cm overall depth.

Trench T7

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00095 25123

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 22.34mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 45cm below present ground level (21.89mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 55cm (21.79mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|--|---|
| L23 | turf and topsoil accumulation | post-Roman - modern |
| L24 | disturbed natural subsoil | - |
| L25 | natural subsoil (augered) | - |
| F8 | pit | modern |
| F9 | pit | modern |
| F10 | corner of mortar and stone spread, possible robber trench? (unexcavated) | post-Roman removal of Roman foundation? |

Auger results: a small slot cut through L24 found clean silty sand subsoil (L25) at a depth of 55cm. L25 was probed by auger to an overall depth of 75cm without change.

Trench T8

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00143 25153

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 23.23mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 20cm below present ground level (23.03mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 45cm (22.78mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|---|--------------------|
| L26 | turf and topsoil | modern |
| L27 | scatter of destruction debris (unexcavated) | Roman / post-Roman |
| L28 | dump? (augered) | Roman |
| F11 | shallow pit | possibly Roman |
| F12 | pit | possibly Roman |

Auger results: an auger probe through L28 found a pale yellowish brown silty sand, probably natural, at an overall depth of approximately 45cm.

Trench T9

Location: East Hill House playing field

NGR: TM 00117 25131

Size: 2m x 1m

Present ground level: 22.71mOD

Depth of uppermost Roman level: 55-60cm below present ground level

(22.11 - 22.16mOD)

Depth of uppermost material presumed to be natural subsoil: 1.6m (21.11mOD)

| context | summary description | provisional date |
|---------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| L29 | turf and topsoil accumulation | post-Roman - modern |
| L30 | dump? (augered) | Roman |

Auger results: auger probes at the northern and southern ends of the trench indicate that L30 extends to an overall depth of approximately 1.6m, beneath which is clean, probably natural, sand.

4.2 The Geotechnical Window Samples

The sample locations are shown in figure 1.

| Location | Ground level | Depth | Description |
|------------------------|--------------|----------------|---|
| bh1 Bus station | 22.9mOD | 0 - 20cm | Concrete |
| | | 20 - 48/50cm | Modern make-up/hardcore |
| | | 48/50cm - 1.6m | Dark brown silt (Clay silt becoming sandy silt) Contains oyster shell (62cm) and post-medieval brick (90cm) |
| | | 1.6m | Natural yellow sand |
| bh2 Bus station | 23.0mOD | 0 - 5cm | Tarmac |
| | | 5cm - 10cm | Concrete |
| | | 10cm - 40cm | Ballast and hardcore |
| | | 40cm - 3.3m | Very dark brown silt Contains modern pot and slate (1.75 – 1.9m) and post-medieval brick (3.25m) |
| | | 3.3m | Natural sand |
| bh3 Bus station | 21.6mOD | 0 - 23cm | Concrete |
| | | 23 - 50cm | Ballast |
| | | 50 - 73cm | Hardcore |
| | | 73 - 1.8m | Dark brown silt Contains post-medieval brick (1.7 – 1.8m) |
| | | 1.8m - 2.35m | Mid - dark brown silt with shell |
| | | 2.35m | Natural sand |
| bh4 East Hill House | 22.0mOD | 0 - 15cm | Grass and topsoil |
| | | 15 - 20cm | Sand |
| | | 20 - 32cm | Dark brown sandy silt |
| | | 32 - 42cm | Grey sand |
| | | 42cm - 1.83m | Dark brown silt Contains post-medieval brick (1.55 – 1.65m) |
| | | 1.83m | Natural sand |
| bh5 East Hill House | 22.5mOD | 0 - 15cm | Grass and topsoil |
| | | 15cm - 1.4m | Dark brown silt with brick flecks, shell and septaria |
| | | 1.4m | Natural sand |
| bh6 East Hill House | 23.2mOD | 0 - 20cm | Grass and topsoil |
| | | 20 - 70cm | Mixed brown silt and yellow sand (occasional very small flecks of brick and tile) |
| | | 70cm | Natural sand |
| bh7 East Hill House | 24.3mOD | 0 - 35cm | Topsoil (Dark brown silty loam) |
| | | 35cm - 50cm | Tree root |
| | | 50cm - 1.05m | Mid brown silt (occasional flecks of tile, mortar, coal) |
| | | 1.05m | Natural sand |
| bh8 East Hill House | 22.9mOD | 0 - 40cm | Dark brown silt/silty loam Contains post-medieval brick |
| | | 40 - 72cm | Mid brown silt Contains oyster shell concentration (66-70cm) |
| | | 72cm - 1.05m | Silty grey/brown sand with tree roots |
| | | 1.05m | Natural sand |

| Location | Ground level | Depth | Description |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------|--|
| bh9 Bus station | 22.8mOD | 0 -18cm | Concrete |
| | | 18 - 39cm | Ballast |
| | | 39 - 59cm | Hardcore |
| | | 59 – 1.75m | Dark brown silt High content of mortar in bottom half together with post-medieval brick (1.5 m) |
| | | 1.75m | Natural sand |

5 Finds

The site finds are currently undergoing processing and will be detailed in a future more comprehensive report.

6 Archive deposition

The site records and finds are currently held at Colchester Archaeological Trust, 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF. These will ultimately be deposited permanently at Colchester Museum under cover of museum accession code 2004.358.

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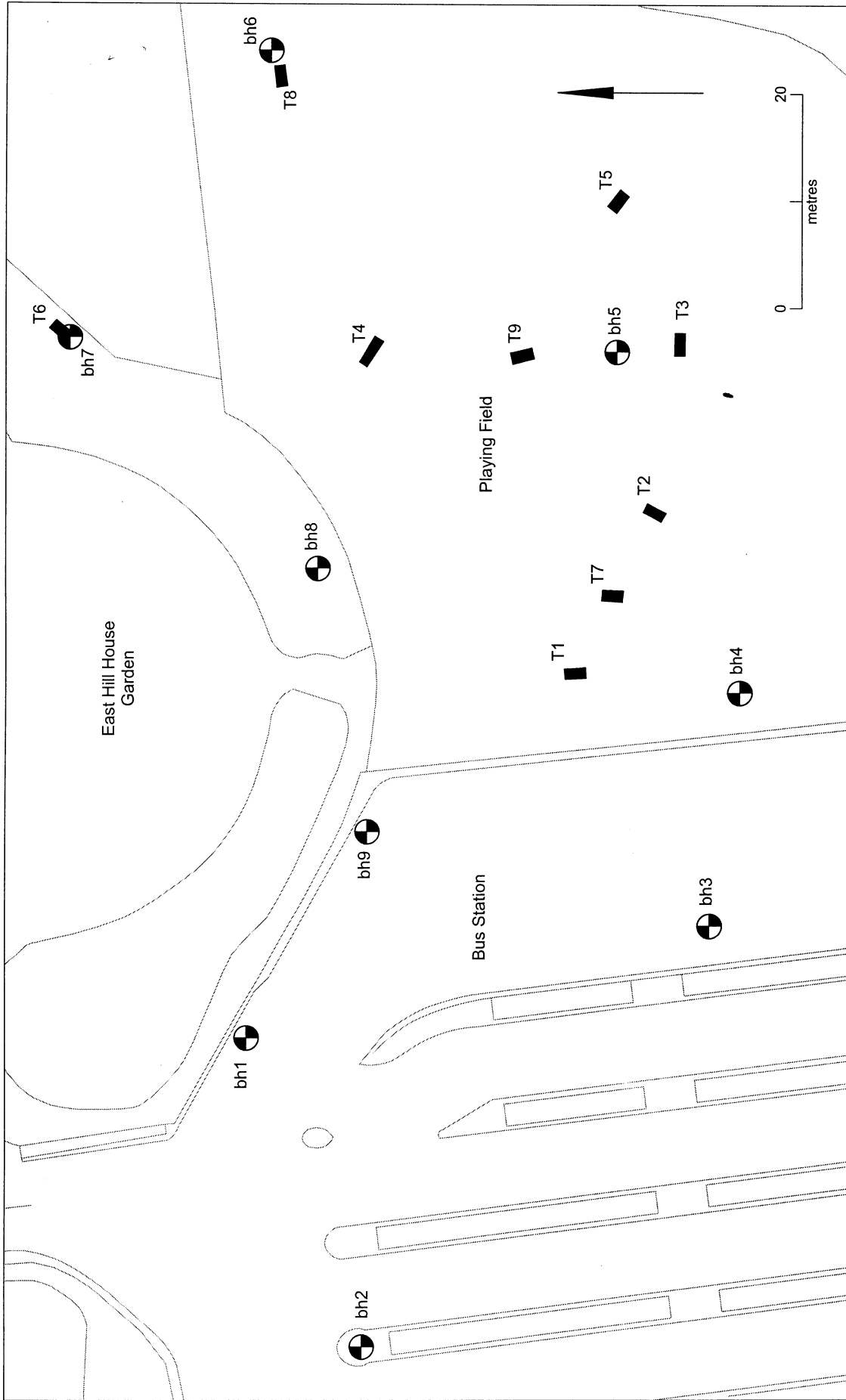


Fig 1 Trench and window sample location plan.