

Archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at Piggots Mill, Watling Lane, Thaxted, Essex

February 2014



report prepared by **Ben Holloway**

commissioned by **Mr Brian Christian**
on behalf of clients

Planning reference: UTT/13/0592/FUL

ECC HET code: TX24

CAT project ref 14/2g

NGR: TL 6088 3101

Saffron Walden Museum accession code: pending (requested Feb 2014)



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CAT Report 758
February 2014

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1 Summary

Thaxted is particularly noted for its post-medieval cutlery industry, remains of which have come to light on several sites in the town.

A proposed development site on the eastern edge of the town's medieval core was evaluated by means of an L-shaped evaluation trench (total length, 27m).

There were no significant archaeological remains, the only discoveries being a modern pit, a modern yard surface and several modern service-runs.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on the archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at Piggots Mill, Watling Lane, Thaxted, Essex, in February 2014.

The site is rectangular and has a narrow access to Watling Lane on the east. It includes part of an open garden and of the rough surface of Piggots Mill stack-yard.

Proposed works involve the demolition of two agricultural buildings and the construction of a single new dwelling, garage and associated infrastructure. Site centre is NGR TL 6088 3101.

Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS) was consulted by Uttlesford District Council in August 2011, and again in 2013 following another planning application (UTT/13/0592/FUL). In response to consultation, ECCPS made the following recommendation in line with *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012):

" L2 Implementation of Archaeological Fieldwork Programme

No development including any site clearance or groundworks...shall take place within the site until the applicant or their agents, the owner of the site or successor in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work from an accredited archaeological contractor in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in a manner that accommodates the approved programme of archaeological work."

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (an evaluation by trial-trenching) was written by ECCPS officer Richard Havis (ECC 2013). Mr Brian Christian (on behalf of clients) commissioned Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) to carry out the archaeological work specified in the ECCPS brief, which it did on 25th February 2014 in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by CAT (2014) in response to the ECCPS brief and agreed with the ECCPS officer. Post-excavation work was carried out in February and March 2014.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with recognised national and local standards as given in IfA 2008a, IfA 2008b, English Heritage 2006, *EAA 14* and *EAA 24*.

3 Archaeological background

This section draws on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held by Essex County Council at County Hall, Chelmsford.

The site lies on the edge of the medieval town of Thaxted, which was granted a market in 1205. Although the town was not in a prominent location, within a hundred years it had become a major centre of the cutlery industry. Documentary evidence shows the town's rapid expansion in the fourteenth century. In a list of trades carried on by tenants of the Manor of Thaxted, seventy-nine people (over a third of the adult male population) were cutlers (Medlycott 1999). The site is shown in Medlycott (1999) as lying on the edge of the medieval and post-medieval expansion area of Thaxted. It is also possible that the medieval settlement of Thaxted was significantly larger than the present evidence suggests, and it was possible that deposits of this date would be found on the development site.

4 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to record and establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any remains and deposits likely to be disturbed by the proposed works, in particular reference to any potential archaeological deposits detailed in Section 3 above.

5 Results of the evaluation (Figs 2-5)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trench (T1), with context and finds dating information.

T1 was excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator, through L1 - a modern imported topsoil 100mm thick, which sealed natural geology (boulder clay: L2).



Trench 1: summary

This is a summary of T1, with a tabulation of context and finds dating information.

There were no significant archaeological features in T1. The only discoveries were a modern pit (F1), modern service runs and a manhole (unnumbered), and (in the centre of the trench) modern hard-standing (L3) directly sealing the natural geological boulder clay (L2).

context no	context type	dated finds	period
F1	pit	brick, peg-tile (not retained)	modern
L1	topsoil	-	modern
L2	natural	-	-
L3	yard surface	brick (not retained)	modern

6 Finds

Fragments of post-medieval and modern brick and peg-tile in pit F1 and in hard-standing L3 were not retained.

7 Discussion

The site is located away from the main street frontage, on the edge of Thaxted's historic core, and is shown on OS maps as the stack-yard associated with Piggots Mill.

This evaluation revealed no significant archaeological material relating to the medieval town or to the post-medieval cutlery industry. However, some of the site sequence appears to be mill-related. Hard-standing L3 is apparently the many-times-renewed surface of the mill stack-yard. Linking in with the stack-yard is the fact that T1 revealed a comparatively thin topsoil directly sealing natural boulder clay. The thinness of the topsoil indicates that the site has, at some point, been cleared and levelled, most probably during its lifetime as the stack-yard of Piggots Mill.

Some of the topsoil in the northern part of T1 appeared to have been imported recently (because it sealed a modern man-hole).

The clearing and site levelling associated with the mill stack-yard must have removed material from this site, including (potentially) archaeological horizons and finds.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Brian Christian for commissioning the project on behalf of clients who funded it. The project was managed by B Holloway, and the fieldwork was carried out by BH and M Baister. Figures 1-3 are by MB, and Fig 4 is by E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECC Place Services by Richard Havis.

9 References

EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Paper 14.</i> By David Gurney (ed)
CAT	2014	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological trial trenching at Piggots Mill, Watling Street, Thaxted. February 2014 (CAT WSI By Ben Holloway).</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24.</i> By Maria Medlycott
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
ECC	2013	<i>Brief for archaeological trial trenching at Piggots Farm, Watling Street, Thaxted: 22/10/13.</i> (ECCPS brief, by Richard Havis).
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
IfA	2008b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Medlycott, M	1999	<i>Essex Historic Towns Report: Thaxted (ECC Planning Department)</i>

10 Abbreviations and glossary

AOD	above Ordnance Datum
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC(PS)	Essex County Council (Place Services)
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
medieval	period from Ad 1066 to approximately 1500/1530
modern	19th-21st centuries
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

11 Contents of Archive

Finds: none

Paper and digital record: One A4 wallet containing:

This report (CAT Report 758)
ECC Brief and CAT WSI
Original site record (Feature and layer sheets)
Photo log and photos on CD
Sundry papers

12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by CAT at Roman Circus House, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Saffron Walden Museum (accession code awaited).

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Distribution list:

Mr Brian Christian and clients
Richard Havis, Essex County Council Place Services
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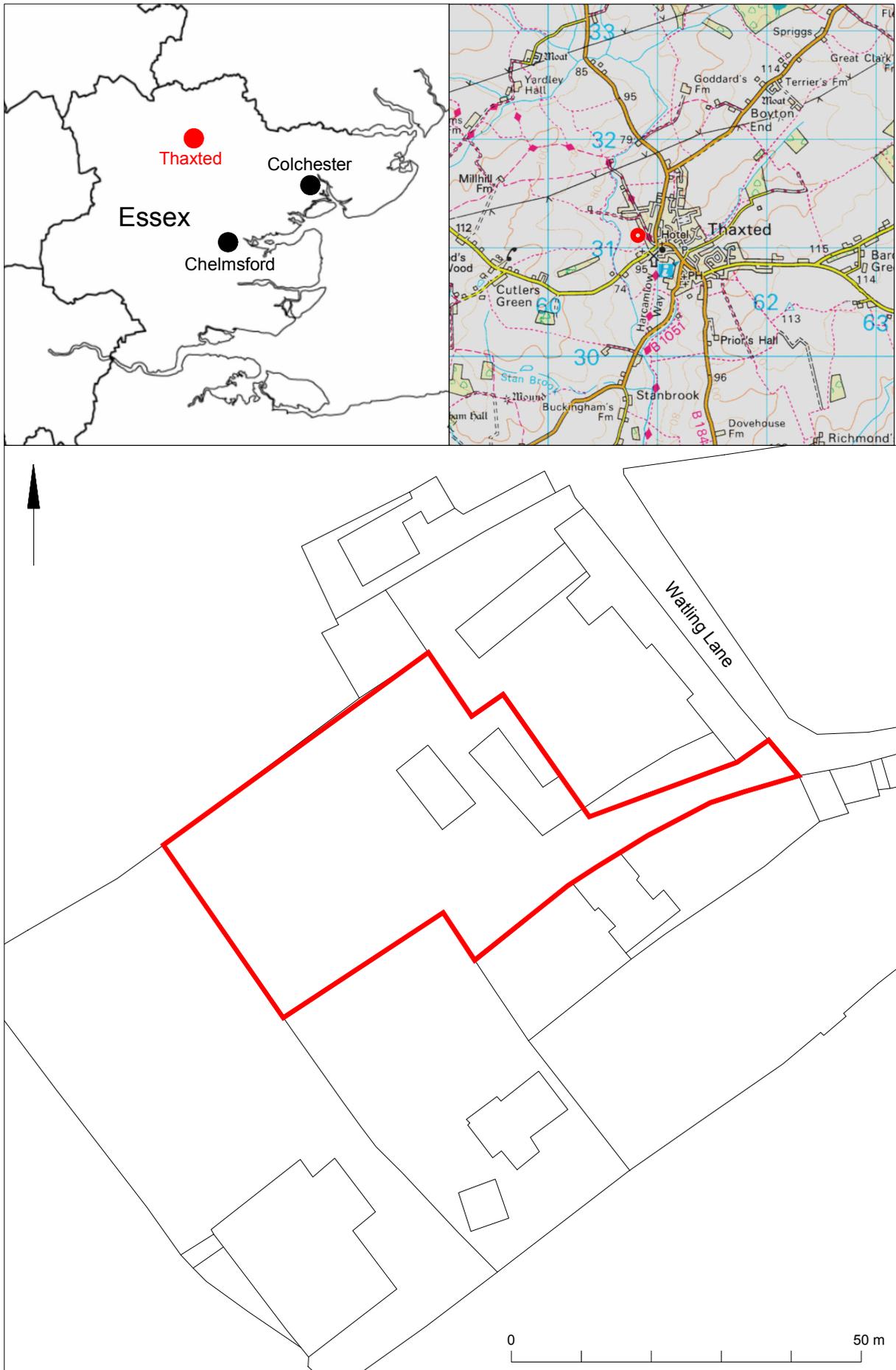
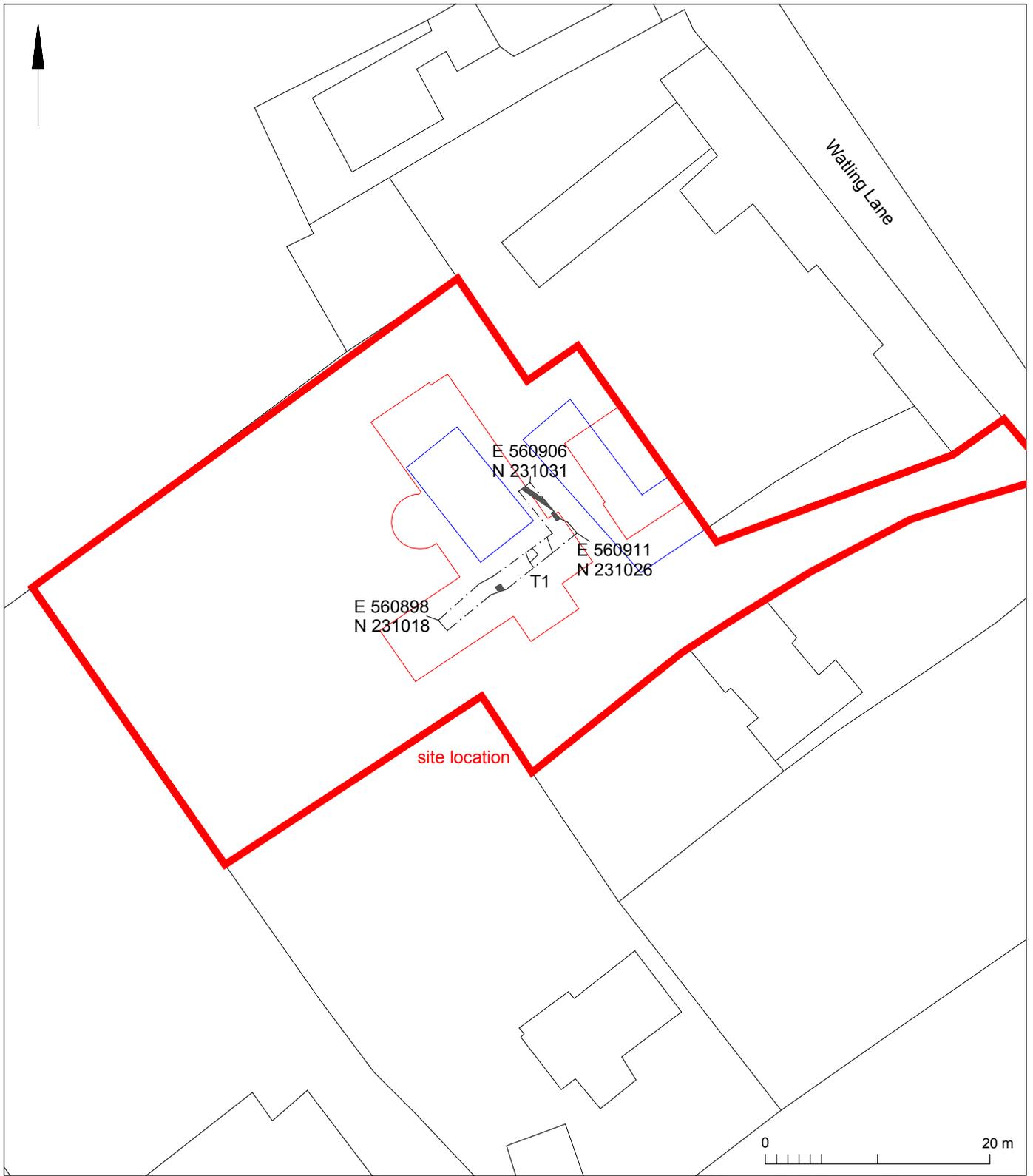
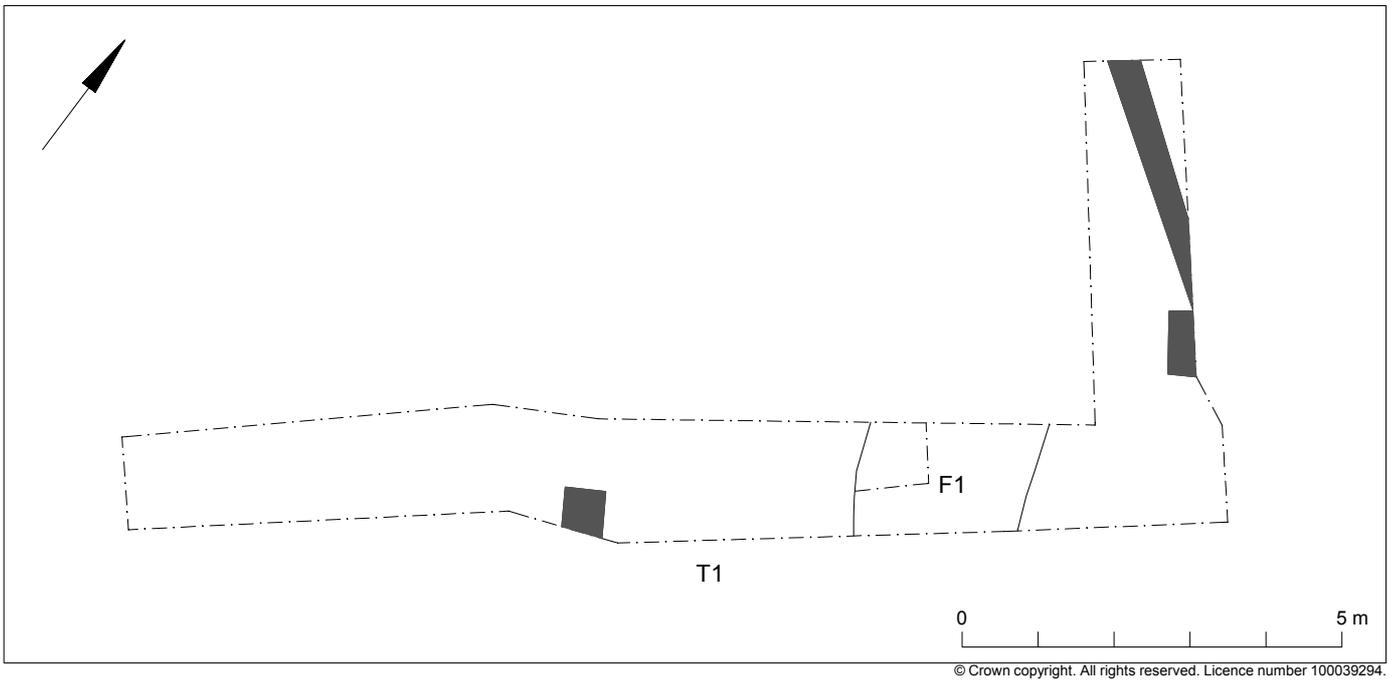


Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Evaluation results. Proposed buildings shown in red, buildings to be demolished shown in blue.



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Fig 3 Detailed trench plan. Modern services shown in grey.

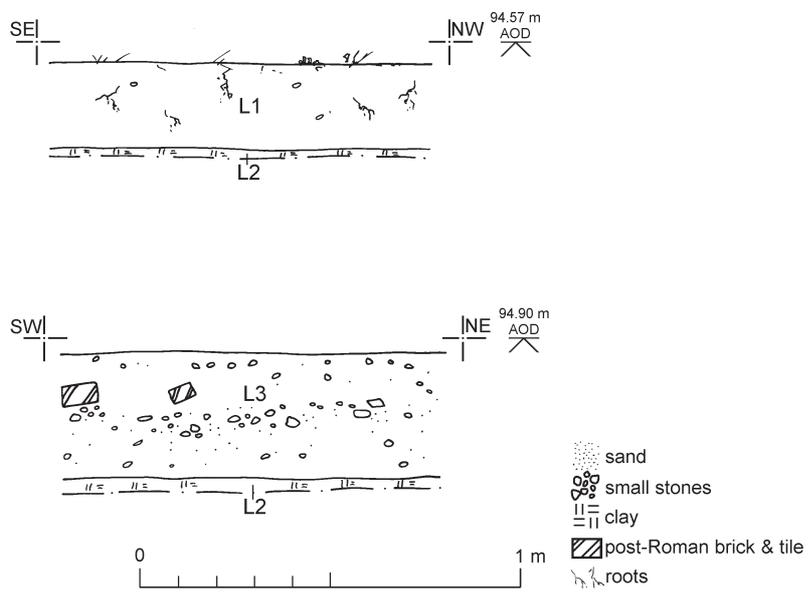


Fig 4 T1: Representative trench sections.

**Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

Summary sheet

Address: Piggots Mill, Watling Lane, Thaxted, Essex	
Parish: Thaxted	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 6088 3101	Site code: CAT project code – 14/2g HET Code – TX24
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 25th February 2014	Size of area investigated: 27m (linear)
Location of curating museum: Saffron Walden Museum accession code : Pending (requested Feb 2014)	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER number: --
Final report: CAT Report 758	
Periods represented: modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>Thaxted is particularly noted for its post-medieval cutlery industry, remains of which have come to light on several sites in the town. A proposed development site on the eastern edge of the town's medieval core was evaluated by means of an L-shaped evaluation trench (total length, 27m). There were no significant archaeological remains, the only discoveries being a modern pit, a modern yard surface and several modern service-runs.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: --	
ECC monitor: Richard Havis	
Keywords: --	Significance: neg
Author of summary: Ben Holloway	Date of summary: February 2014