

Archaeological trial-trenching at 76 High Street, Grays, Essex

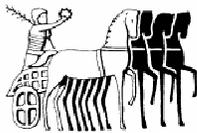
September 2014



Report prepared by Pip Parmenter
and Mark Baister

on behalf of Huggins Bromage Ferguson Ltd.

CAT project ref: 14/06i
NGR: TQ 6137 7770
HET code: THHG14



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CAT Report 788
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1. Summary

The site is located at 76 High Street, Grays, Essex (Fig. 1), and was occupied by a (now demolished) snooker hall. Four trial trenches were excavated totalling 5% of the total development site. A brick floor surface was uncovered, and after consultation with the HEA, further small-scale excavation was undertaken. This exposed the brick foundations of a post-medieval building, probably a vicarage visible on early edition ordnance survey maps.

2. Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report on the trial-trenching and small-scale excavation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at 76 High Street, Grays, Essex (Fig. 1, TQ 6137 7770), on the 3rd July and 14th August 2014. The work was commissioned by Huggins Bromage Ferguson Ltd. following the direction of a brief prepared by Richard Havis, Historic Environment Advisor for Essex County Council (4/4/14). The brief was issued in response to a planning application for the proposed development of the site, comprising the construction of flats, retail outlets and associated infrastructure (Planning Ref: 13/00480/FUL). Work proceeded in accordance with a WSI prepared by CAT (2014) in response to the above brief.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with local and national standards as detailed in IfA 2008a, IfA 2008b, MoRPHE, EAA 8, EAA 14, and EAA 24.

3. Archaeological Background

The Essex Historic Environment Record informs us that the proposed development sits within the historic centre of Grays. The earliest records pertaining to settlement at Grays are in the Domesday Book, where it is described as a small manor with a population of 28. The town saw steady growth during the 19th century, in parallel with the development of the railway line. The proposed development site is located directly to the south of the church of St Peter and St Paul, which dates back to the 13th century, but which was largely rebuilt in 1846. Ordnance survey maps going back to 1866 show that a vicarage once stood on the western half of the site (**Plate I**).

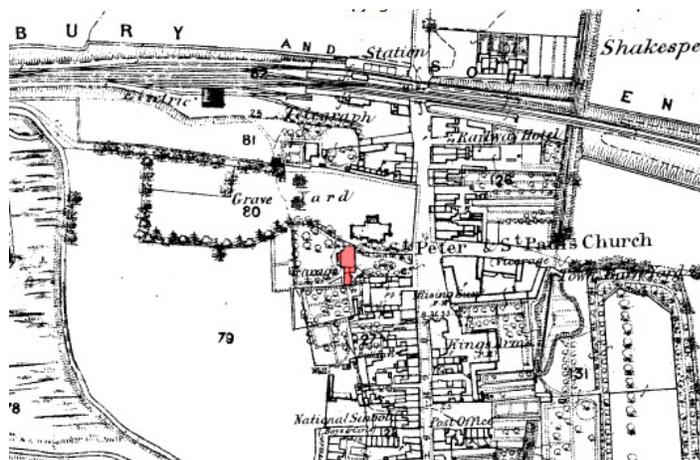


Plate I 1866 ordnance survey map of Grays. Vicarage shown in red.

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

with reference to any potential archaeological deposits relatable to the information provided in Section 3 above.

5. Methodology and Results (Fig 2-3)

This section provides an archaeological summary of the excavation of four trial trenches, including features and finds encountered and dating information.

The four trial-trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. Four layers were encountered across the site –

Layer	Description
1	A layer of loose, silty, modern crush containing the remains of the demolition of the site (including building materials, pottery and glass). Present across the whole site.
2	Modern remnant topsoil present across the evaluation area.
3	A post-medieval firm, silty accumulation horizon which sealed most of the features present at the site. It contained oyster shell and pegtile.
4	Natural, post-glacial silt.

Trench 1

The only feature present in Trench 1 was a single large modern pit (F10) containing modern brick. The trench was split down the middle to avoid a service run.

Trench 2

A modern pit (F9) and a linear containing flecks of mortar (F8) were present in Trench 2. The modern pit contained brick and coal. The linear could potentially have been a heavily robbed out medieval foundation, but was somewhat ephemeral and only a small amount of mortar remained in the fill. It contained pottery, peg tile and clay-pipe and was sealed by the post-medieval accumulation layer (L3) visible across the site.

Trench 3

Three features were excavated in Trench 3, a frogged brick floor surface (F5), a modern concrete wall foundation (F6), and a possible medieval foundation, similar to trench 2 (F7). F5 and F6 were cut into the post-medieval accumulation layer (L3), making a more modern date likely. Clay pipe and post-medieval pottery were found next to F6. The possible medieval foundation (F7) was sealed by the post-medieval accumulation layer (L3). It contained fragments of stone, flint, chalk and mortar and appears more intact and less robbed out than F8 in Trench 2.

Trench 4

Trench 4 contained four features of a post-medieval date. The features included a compacted chalk surface (F1), which, although it could possibly have been natural, was probably the remnant of a floor surface. It was associated with finds of clay-pipe. A small pit (F2) at the east end of the trench, and possibly associated with the chalk surface, was identified as a small refuse deposit, with charcoal inclusions. It contained pottery, peg tile and clay-pipe. A small square post-hole (F3) was excavated in the middle part of the trench. It contained pottery (including one shard of residual medieval material) and clay pipe. The final feature excavated in trench 4 was a post-medieval pit (F4), which contained pottery, animal bone and clay-pipe. All of these features were sealed by post-medieval accumulation layer (L3).

Foundations of the Vicarage

Following the exposure of some potential building foundations during the trial-trenching, and a discussion with the HEA, a small-scale excavation was undertaken. It's intent was to uncover the extent of these features, and to try and positively identify the remains of the vicarage shown on early ordnance survey maps.

During the excavation a series of brick foundations (F11 – **Plate II**) were exposed, heavily cut by modern services. These foundations were uncovered as much as possible and are almost certainly related to the vicarage (Fig 3).

As well as the vicarage foundations, the line of modern foundation F6 was exposed, and found to cut through several more patches of the floor surface F5. As in trench 3, the floor surface comprised of frogged bricks and is cut into the post-medieval accumulation layer (L3), so is modern in age, albeit clearly pre-dating the concrete foundations.



Plate II The vicarage foundations (F11), shot facing north-east.

6. Finds

Post-medieval pottery, clay-pipe and building materials were recovered from most of the features on the site. One feature (F4) also contained animal bone and was identified as a refuse deposit. Two modern pits present in trenches 1 and 2 contained modern brick. One piece of intrusive medieval pottery was recovered from a post-hole (F3) in trench 4.

7. Discussion

The archaeological remains uncovered at 76 High Street, Grays, are not surprising from a site at the centre of a historic town. A vicarage was always known to have been on this site from early ordnance maps, and the brick foundations comprising it's remains were exposed as far as possible during these investigations. Post-medieval finds including pottery, peg tile and clay-pipe are typical of sites of this type, and this, combined with the post-medieval accumulation layer associated with the construction of the vicarage and its occupation, gives a fairly complete picture of the recent (post-medieval) history of the site.

The only evidence for earlier occupation is a single residual medieval pottery sherd found in F3, and possibly two shallow robbed out foundations (F7 and F8).

8. Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Huggins Bromage Ferguson Ltd. for commissioning the project. The project was managed by B Holloway, and the fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway, M Baister, P Skippins and R Mathieson. Figures are by MB. The project was monitored for Essex County Council by Richard Havis.

9. References

<i>EAA 8</i>	2000	Research and Archaeology: a frame work for the Eastern Counties 2 Research agenda and strategy, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 8, ed. by Brown, N. and Glazenbrook, J.
<i>EAA 14</i>	2003	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Paper 14, ed. by David Gurney
CAT	2014	Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological monitoring and trial-trenching on land west of High Warren Farm, Lee Chapel Lane, Langdon Hills, Basildon, Essex. June 2014 (CAT WSI By Mark Baister)
<i>EAA 24</i>	2011	Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24, ed. by Maria Medlycott
MoRPHE	2006	Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (English Heritage)
Havis, R	2014	Brief for Archaeological Trial Trenching and follow up excavation at 76 High Street, Grays, April 2014.
IfA	2008a	Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation.
IfA	2008b	Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.

10. Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material (brick, tile, tessera).
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
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
HEA	Historic Environment Advisor
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
layer	an accumulation or deposition of archaeological material
post-medieval	the period from AD 1500 to AD 1800
medieval	the period from AD 1066 to AD 1500
modern	the period from AD 1800 to present day
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey

11. Contents of the archive

Finds archive

No finds retained after report completed.

Paper archive

1 A4 wallet containing:
this report
original site record (context and finds sheets)
section drawings
digital photo log
attendance record
sundry papers
digital photos on disc

12. Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive are currently held by CAT at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, C02 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Thurrock Museum (Accession code requested)

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Distribution list:

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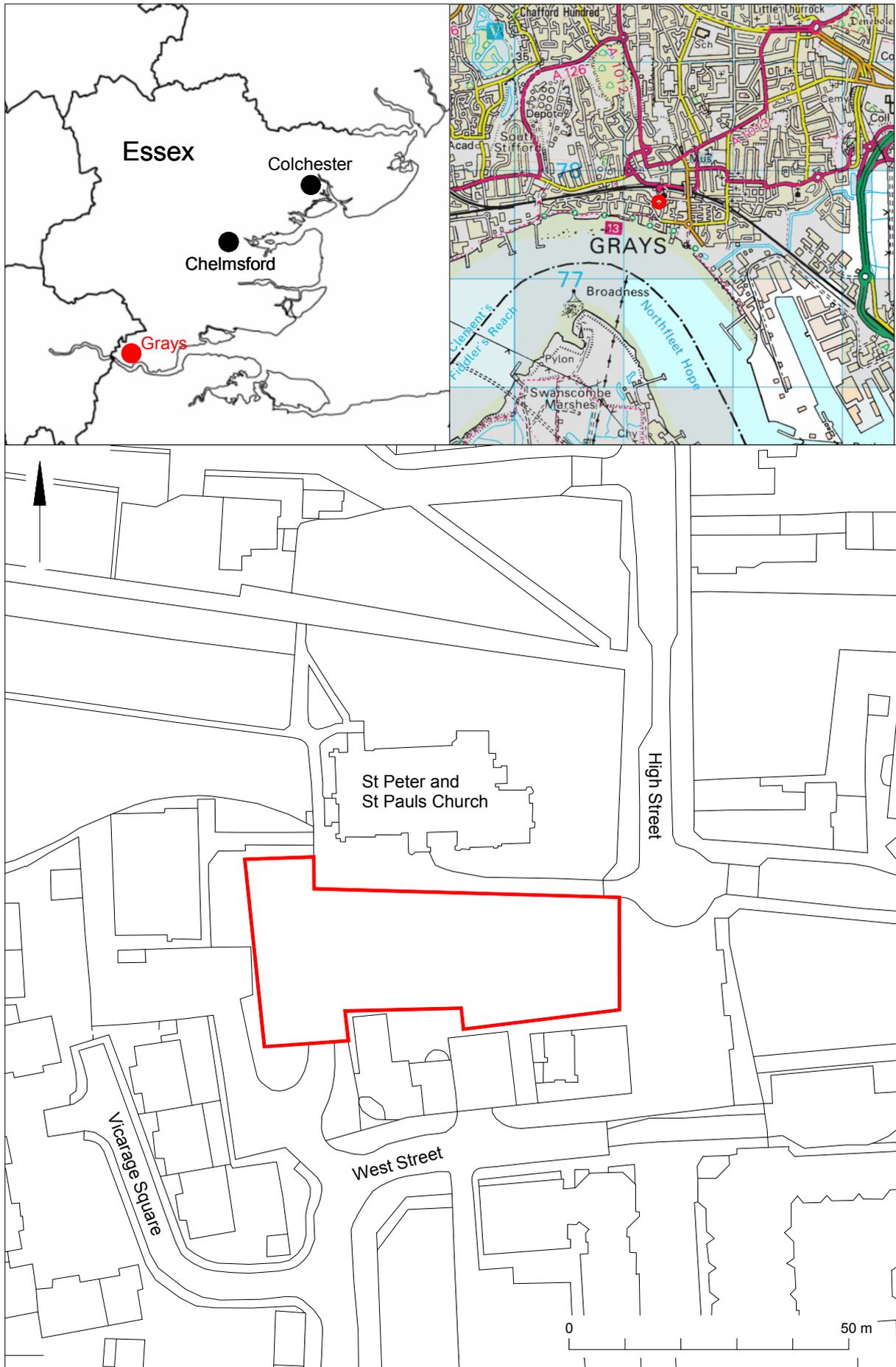
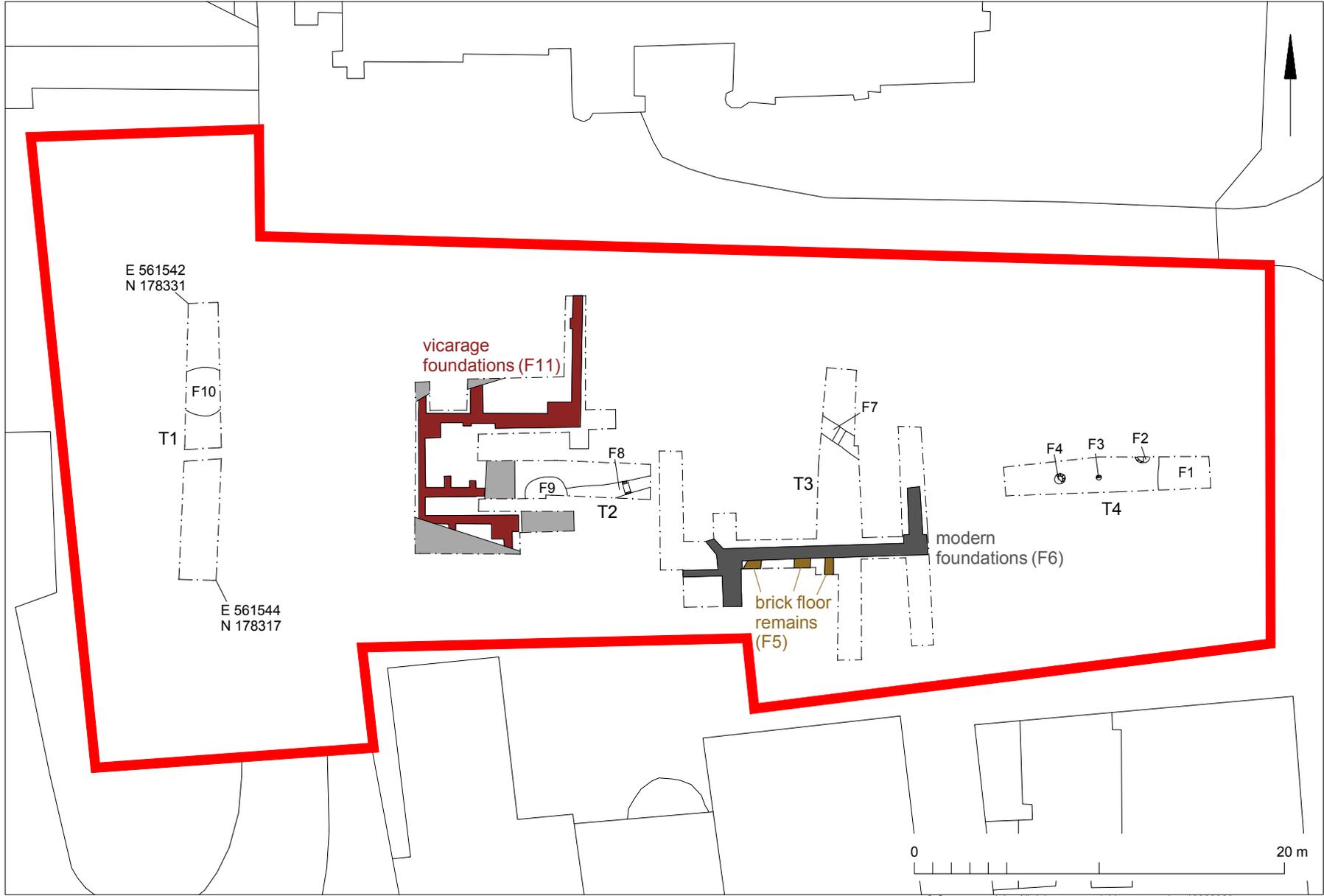
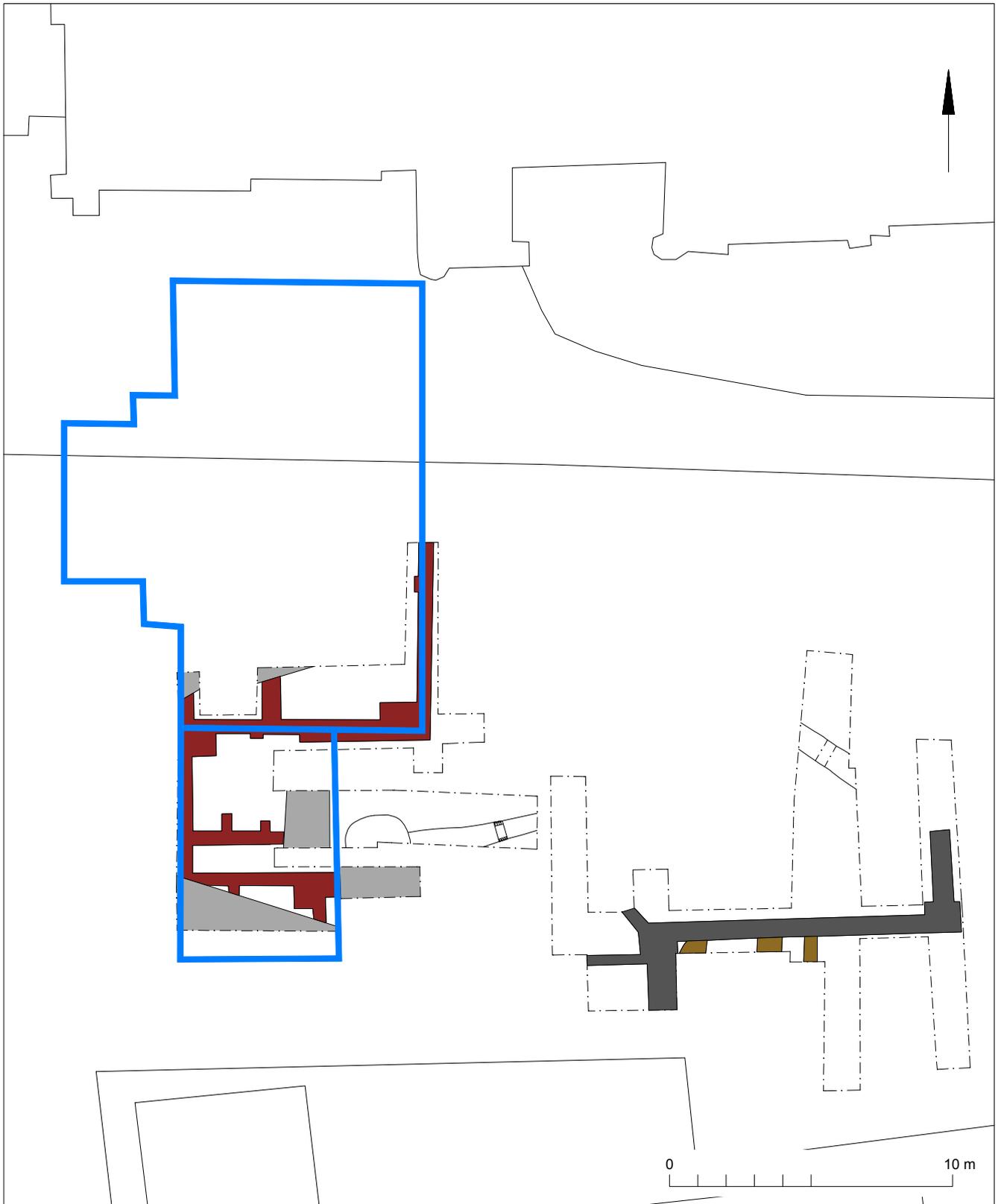


Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Evaluation and excavation results. Modern disturbance shown in light gray.



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Fig 3 Results with overlay of vicarage (in blue), showing layout.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: 76 High Street, Grays, Essex	
Parish: Grays	District: Thurrock
NGR: TQ 6137 7770	Site code: CAT project code – 14/06i HET Code – THHG14
Type of work: Evaluation and small-scale excavation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 3rd of July and 14th August 2014	Size of area investigated: 44m of trenching plus small-scale excavation
Location of curating museum: Thurrock Museum: accession code requested	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: -
Final report: CAT Report 788	
Periods represented: modern, post-medieval, medieval	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>In advance of the construction of flats, retail outlets and associated infrastructure, 44m of trenching was excavated.</i></p> <p><i>A brick floor surface was uncovered, and after consultation with the HEA, further small-scale excavation was undertaken. This exposed the brick foundations of a post-medieval building, most likely a vicarage visible on early edition ordnance survey maps.</i></p> <p><i>Also exposed were two shallow robbed out foundations, possibly of medieval date.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
ECC Monitor: Richard Havis	
Keywords: vicarage, foundation	Significance: *
Author of summary: Mark Baister	Date of summary: September 2014