

# An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at the rear of 26 Springfield Road, Great Dunmow, Essex

November 2014



report prepared by  
**Adam Wightman with a finds report by Stephen Benfield**

Commissioned by  
**Mr Ridgley**

CAT project ref.: 14/11e  
Historic Environment code: GD38  
Museum accession code: SAFWM 2014.277  
NGR: TL 62463 21619



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**  
Roman Circus Centre,  
Roman Circus Walk,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436273304  
email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

**CAT Report 802**  
November 2014

## Summary

*An evaluation by trial-trenching undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 26 Springfield Road, Great Dunmow, produced a small quantity of finds of later prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval date from a soil layer which sealed the natural geology. No archaeological features or deposits associated with the Roman small town were identified within the evaluation trench.*

## Introduction (Figs 1 & 2)

This is the archive report on the archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at 26 Springfields, Great Dunmow, Essex (NGR TL 62463 21619). The plot is occupied by a residential property and a detached garage and lies on the southern edge of the settlement at Great Dunmow (TL 62463 21637) (Fig 1).

The proposed development comprises the construction of a single bungalow in the back garden of the existing property which will front onto Woodview Road (Fig 2). The plot of land to be developed slopes from north-east to south-west and contains the garage and areas of hardstanding and grass.

The development lies within the built-up area of the Roman small town at Great Dunmow. The projected line of Stane Street, the Roman road from Colchester (Camulodunum) to St Albans (Verulamium) is to the north. A number of small-scale excavations in the vicinity have identified Roman occupation dating from the first to fourth century AD (17 Highfields (EHER 16232), 31 Highfields (EHER 45637), 60-67 Springfields (EHER 19663) and Land south of Springfields (EHER 48222))

The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief produced by the Historic Environment Advisor Richard Havis (2014) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CAT (2014).

## Results (Figs 2 & 3)

A single trial-trench was excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The trench was 9m long by 1.8m wide and located within the footprint of the proposed new dwelling (Fig 2).

Beneath the turf, a modern topsoil layer (L1) containing brick, tile and tarmac pieces was uncovered (Fig 3). It is probable that this topsoil was deposited here following the construction of the surrounding houses. The modern topsoil overlay a layer of modern make-up (L2) consisting of a medium brown clayey-silt soil containing small, abraded brick/tile fragments. L2 was either deposited in this area during the construction of the surrounding houses to level the back garden of the property or is the original topsoil on the site. Beneath L2, a medium grey silty-clay (L3) was identified. L3 contained post-medieval pottery, a worked flint and abraded brick/tile fragments (see finds section below) and is considered to be the original topsoil/subsoil layer that seals the natural geology. The natural geology (L4) was a light grey sandy-clay mixed with gravel located at a depth of c 800mm below modern ground level. The natural was cleaned by hand but no archaeological deposits or features were identified.



**Plate 1: T1, facing north-west.**



**Plate 2: T1 stratigraphy, facing north.**

## **Finds**

*by Stephen Benfield*

A small quantity of bulk finds consisting of post-medieval and modern pottery, ceramic building material (CBM) and a single prehistoric flint flake was recovered from two soil layers (L2 & L3). The quantities of finds are listed by type in Table 1.

**Table 1 Type and quantities of finds**

<b>Finds type</b>	<b>no.</b>	<b>wt (g)</b>
Pottery	3	67
Ceramic building material (CBM)	11	138
Worked Flints	1	2

The pottery was recorded using the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1985 & *CAR 7*). The pottery fabrics recorded are listed in Table 2 below. All of the finds are listed with a spot date in Table 3.

**Table 2 Pottery fabrics list**

Fabric	Fabric description	Period
40	Post-medieval red earthenwares (general)	p.med
51B	Flower pot	p.med-mod

**Table 3 Types of finds by context and find number**

Ctxt	find no	description of finds	finds spot dating
L2	1	<b>Pottery: Post-medieval/modern</b> Large flower pot base edge -Fabric 51B (1@58g) <b>CBM ?Roman</b> brick/tile pieces (total 2@23g). <b>Post-medieval/modern</b> Peg-tile (3@35g)	19-20C
L3	2	<b>Pottery: Post-medieval</b> Fabric 40 (2@9g) one sherd with internal brownish glaze and one sherd with micaceous red fabric with grey core and an external greenish glaze <b>Worked flint:</b> Small flint flake, some cortex at proximal and distal ends, possible plat form prep and slight lipping behind striking platform (1@2g) <b>CBM ?Roman</b> brick/tile pieces (total 2@49g). <b>Post-medieval/modern</b> Peg-tile (3@26g). <b>Not closely dated</b> CBM fragment (1@5g)	M16-18C

The finds are mostly small with very low average weights. Most are abraded, although not heavily so. This suggests they have been heavily broken-up before arriving in the contexts (L2 & L3) from which they were recovered. Therefore, the latest of the more closely-dated finds should probably be considered as a terminus post-quem for the deposition of the two soil layers with which they are associated.

The earliest closely-datable find is a single, small, prehistoric flint flake recovered from L3(2). This is not closely dated within the later prehistoric period (Neolithic-Bronze Age), but evidence of possible preparation of the striking platform could suggest a Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date rather than later.

A few pieces of relatively thick ceramic building material (CBM) from both layers are in a moderately fine, sandy red fabric. This suggests they may be of Roman date rather than later, but are not closely-dated. Pieces of peg-tile were also recovered from both layers. These most probably date to after the late 12th-13th century (Ryan 1993), but otherwise can only be broadly dated as medieval or post-medieval/modern. However, a late medieval or more probably a post-medieval date appears most likely.

The most closely-dated finds are a few small sherds of pottery. A base sherd in a fine red fabric from L2(1) is almost certainly from a modern flowerpot (Fabric 51B). Of two small, abraded sherds from L3(2) one can be confidently identified as a post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric 40), the relatively fine fabric of this sherd indicating a mid 16th-17th century date. The other, in a coarse, micaceous sandy fabric is probably also a post-medieval red earthenware, the coarse, sandy fabric indicating a late 16th-17th century date.

## Discussion

The archaeological investigations identified two soil layers which are likely to be associated with the construction of the surrounding estate and a buried topsoil/subsoil layer containing abraded post-medieval pottery sherds, peg-tile fragments and a later prehistoric worked flint. The only evidence of the Roman activity previously identified in the close vicinity were small, abraded pieces of brick/tile which could be of Roman date.

## Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Mr Ridgley for commissioning the project. The site work was undertaken by A Wightman. The finds were identified by S Benfield and E Holloway illustrated the sections.

The project was monitored by Richard Havis for the Essex County Council Historic Environment team.

## References

**Note: all CAT fieldwork reports are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>**

- |                |      |  |
|----------------|------|--|
| CAR 7          | 2000 | <i>Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-85</i> , Colchester Archaeological Report 7 by J Cotter  |
| CAT            | 2014 | Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological trial-trench and excavation at the rear of 26 Springfields, Great Dunmow, Essex, by S Benfield                             |
| Cunningham, C. | 1985 | <i>A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex</i> in Cunningham, C, & Drury, P, Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, CBA Research Report 54, 1-16 |
| Havis, R.      | 2014 | Brief for an Archaeological Trial Trench and Excavation at the rear of 26 Springfields, Great Dunmow, CM6 1BP  |
| Ryan, P.       | 1993 | 'Roof tile' in: Andrews, A., (ed) <i>Cressing Temple. A Templar and Hospitaller manor in Essex</i> , Essex County Council  |

**Distribution list:**

Mr Ridgley  
Richard Havis, Historic Environment Advisor at Place Services  
Essex Historic Environment Record



**Colchester Archaeological Trust**

Roman Circus Centre,  
Roman Circus Walk,  
Colchester,  
Essex CO2 7GZ  
tel.: 07436273304  
email: [archaeologists@catuk.org](mailto:archaeologists@catuk.org)

*checked by PC (27/11/2014)*

## **Appendix 1: contents of archive**

One A4 document wallet containing:

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Copy of the evaluation brief issued by ECC
- 1.2 Copy of the WSI produced by CAT
- 1.3 Risk assessment
- 1.4 2 x A4 site plans provided by developer

### **2 Site archive**

- 2.1 Site digital photographic record
- 2.2 Attendance register
- 2.3 Context sheets (L1-L4)
- 2.4 Finds register
- 2.5 Site photographic record on CD
- 2.6 1 x A3 permatrace with representative sections

### **3 Research archive**

- 3.1 Monitoring (client) report
- 3.2 Finds report

### **Not in wallet**

The finds (1 small sized bag)

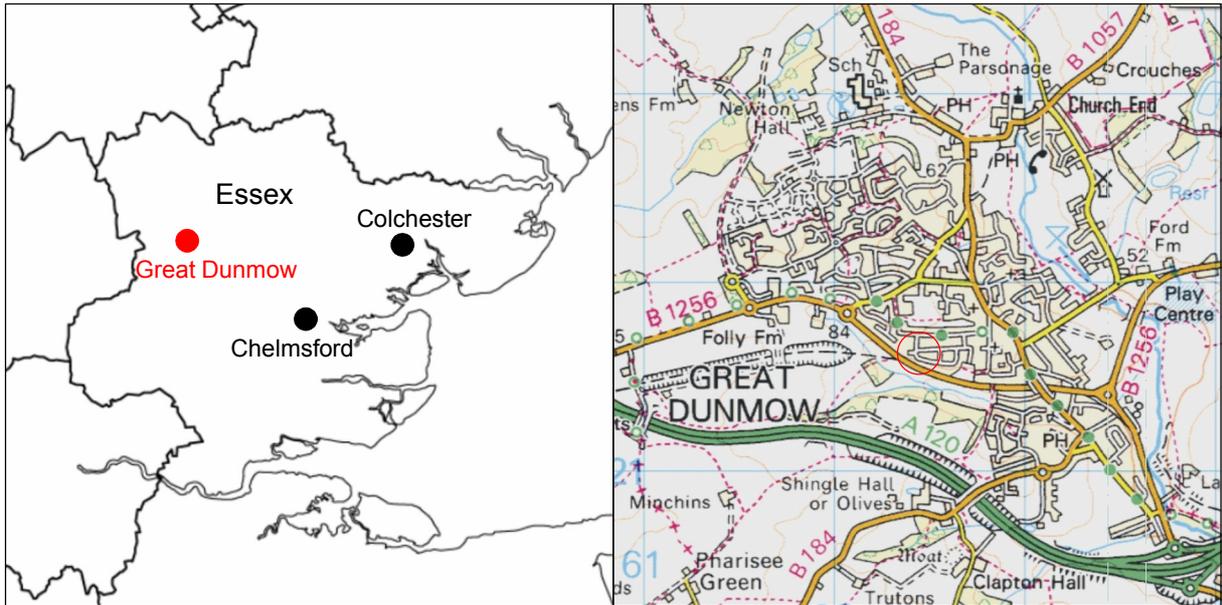
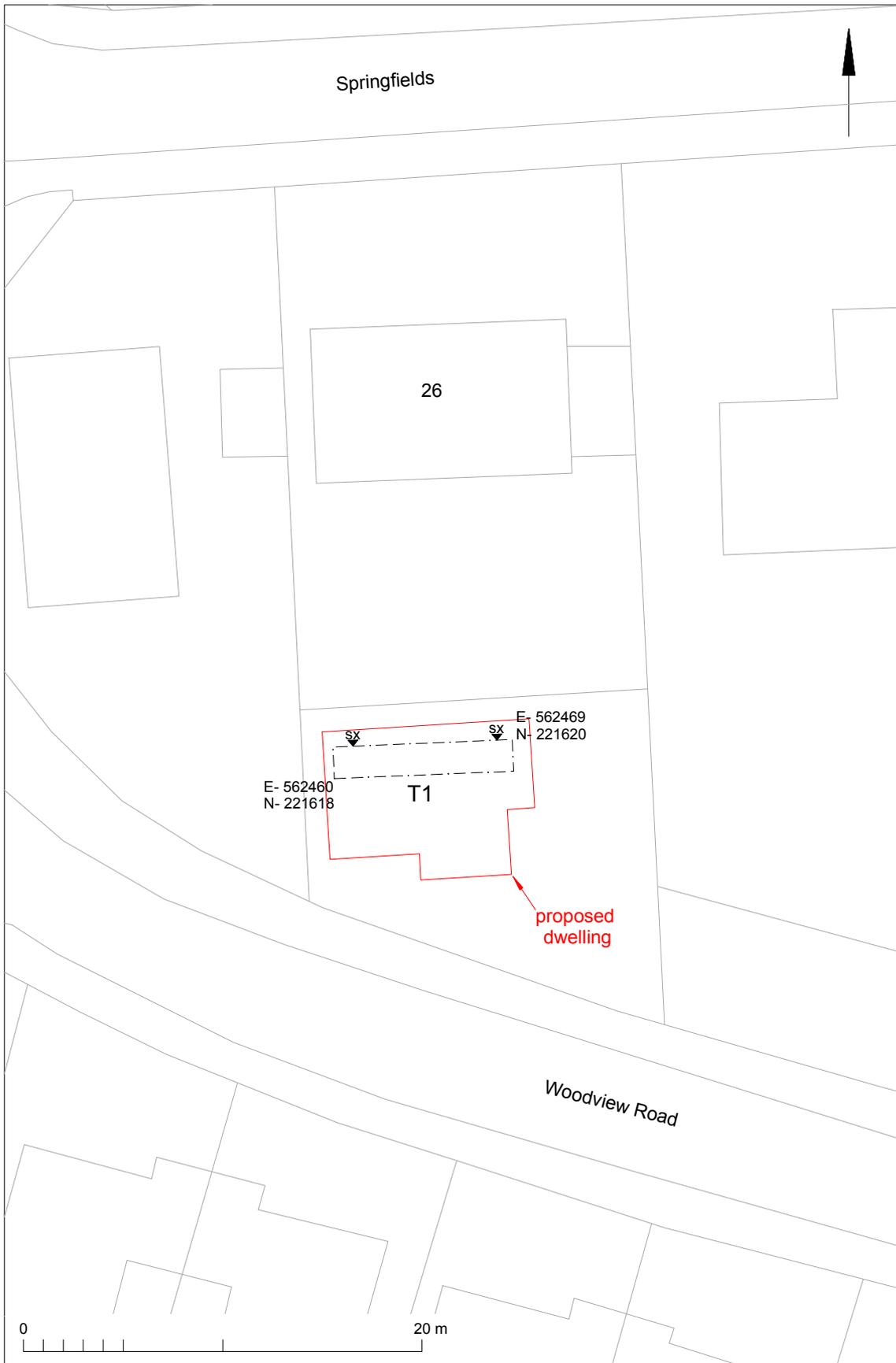


Fig 1 Site location.

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100039294.

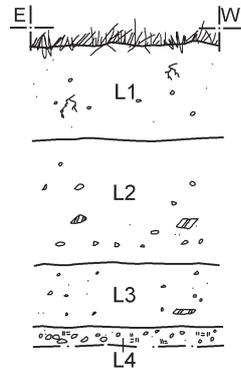
0 50 m



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100039294.

Fig 2 Trench location.

Eastern section



Western section

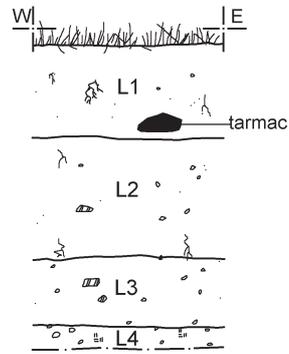


Fig 3 Representative trench sections.

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> 26 Springfield Road, Great Dunmow, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Great Dunmow	<b>District:</b> Uttlesford
<b>NGR:</b> TL 62463 21619	<b>Site codes:</b> CAT project – 14/11e ECC – GD38 Museum accession – SAFWM 2014.277
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation by trial-trenching	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 10th November 2014	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 0.025 ha
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Saffron Walden Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer (Mr J Ridgley)
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER numbers:</b> 16232, 45637, 19663, 48222
<b>Final report:</b>	CAT Report 802
<b>Periods represented:</b>	-
<b>Summary:</b>  <i>An evaluation by trial-trenching undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 26 Springfield Road, Great Dunmow, produced a small quantity of finds of later prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval date from a soil layer which sealed the natural geology. No archaeological features or deposits associated with the Roman small town were identified within the evaluation trench.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> none	
<b>Keywords:</b>	<b>Significance:</b> neg
<b>Author of summary:</b> Adam Wightman	<b>Date of summary:</b> November 2014