

Archaeological evaluation on land at Admirals Farm, Heckford's Road, Great Bentley, Essex, CO7 8RS

September-October 2016



by Laura Pooley

figures by Ben Holloway and Emma Holloway

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**commissioned by Stephen Williams, Hills Residential
on behalf of Hills Residential**

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CAT Report 1031

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (34 trial-trenches) was carried out on land at Admirals Farm, Great Bentley, Essex in advance of the construction of a new housing development. The development site was located in an area of prehistoric and later cropmarks, and ditches, gullies and pits were excavated. Aside from ten modern features and ten tree-throws there was a medieval/post-medieval ditch and pit, fifteen undated ditches/gullies and three undated pits. The earliest finds were two prehistoric flint flakes, both residual in later contexts, but the remaining finds were all of medieval/post-medieval to modern date.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land at Admirals Farm, Heckford's Road, Great Bentley, Essex which was carried out 20th September – 11th October 2016. The work was carried out on behalf of Hills Residential in advance of the construction of a new housing estate, and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Adrian Gascoyne advised that in order to establish the archaeological implications of this application, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for archaeological evaluation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Adrian Gascoyne (ECCPS 2016), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2016).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

A desk-based assessment (CAT Report 820) was commissioned and submitted with the planning application. It identified that the development site lies within an area of potential archaeological interest with evidence for multi-period below ground archaeological remains nearby, in the form of cropmarks of likely prehistoric and later date. Further details can be found in the DBA report.

Historic mapping also depicts a watercourse curving northwards across the development area towards the later pumping station which was built in 1903. The watercourse predates the pumping station and seems to terminate at field boundaries with a notable 'gap' at the southern extent. Its origin and function are unclear. A remnant of the watercourse survives at the southern boundary of the development site and is depicted on the modern OS map.

4 Results (Figs 2-8)

Thirty-four trial-trenches were machine excavated across the development site under archaeological supervision. Each trench measured 30m long by 1.8m wide (totalling 1836m²).

Unless otherwise stated, three layers were identified within the trenches. Modern topsoil (L1, c 60-350mm thick) sealed a dark grey/brown silty-clay subsoil (L2, c 100-320mm thick), which sealed natural sandy-clay (L3).



Photograph 1 T9, looking N

Trench 1 (T1): Modern ditch F28, aligned NW-SE, measured 2.1m wide by 0.28m deep. Modern service trench F27 continues into T3 as F8. Plough scaring was noted cut into natural.

Trench 2 (T2): Probably modern ditch F13, aligned NE-SW, measured 0.54m wide by 0.32m deep. It was a steep-sided ditch with a flat base.

Trench 3 (T3): Modern service trench F8 was recorded and continues into T1 as F27. Plough scaring was noted cut into natural.

Trench 4 (T4): Modern pit/posthole F17, undated pit F19 and tree-throw F22 were excavated. Evidence of root or burrowing activity on one side of F19 suggests that this may also be a tree-throw.

Trench 5 (T5): Three small, shallow gullies aligned NE-SW (F35-F37) ran parallel to large field boundary ditch F55. This field boundary is modern in date and is shown on 6-inch 1874 OS map and is still present on the 1:25,000 1938 map. Gully F35 in particular contained a very organic fill with semi-decayed wood, suggesting it was also of a modern date. Plough scaring and tree rooting cut into natural was also noted.

Trench 6 (T6): Undated pit F4 and linear F7 were excavated. The linear was aligned NW-SE and was very shallow at approximately 0.60m wide by 0.06m deep. It is either the remains of the base of a ditch/gully or is natural in origin, possibly associated with rooting from the nearby hedge.

Trench 7 (T7): Undated linear F9 was aligned NE-SW and measured 0.5m wide by 0.03m deep. It is either the remains of the base of a ditch or gully, or is natural in origin. Undated pit F6 was also excavated.

Trench 8 (T8): Undated gully terminal F10 was aligned NNW-SSE. It was a V-shaped ditch that measured 0.48m wide by 0.2m deep.

Trench 9 (T9): Modern field boundary ditch F20 is a continuation of F55 in T5. It is of a fairly irregular size and shape, suggesting that it may have been disturbed by a tree throw. Post-medieval/modern gully F14 ran parallel to F20 and is probably part of F35 in T5. Gully F14 measured 0.74m wide by 0.17m deep.

Trench 10 (T10): Tree-throws F29-F30 were excavated.



Photograph 2 T16, looking E

Trench 11 (T11): Undated gully F38 was aligned NW-SE and measured 0.29m wide by 0.13m deep. Modern tree-throw F39 was also excavated.

Trench 12 (T12): Medieval/post-medieval ditch F2 was aligned WNW-ESE and measured 1m wide by 0.18m deep.

Trench 13 (T13): Undated ditch F3 was aligned E-W and measured 0.53m wide by 0.18m deep. Undated ditch F1 was aligned WSW-ENE, measuring approximately 0.7m wide by 0.17m deep it had steep-sides and a flat base and is likely to have been of a modern date.

Trench 14 (T14): Pit F16 was a steep-sided feature with a flat base. Despite containing a prehistoric flint flake the pit is likely to have been of a modern date and the flint residual. Undated small pit/posthole F5 and modern tree-throw F15 were also excavated.

Trench 15 (T15): Irregular undated ditch F11 was aligned NE-SW and measured approximately 0.9m wide by 0.18m deep. To the south was probable modern ditch F12 which was aligned E-W, had steep-sides and a flat base, and measured approximately 0.85m wide by 0.38m deep.



Photograph 3 T24, S

Trench 16 (T16): Modern ditch F18 was a continuation of the large field boundary ditch identified as in T5 as F55 and in T9 as F20. Three undated but parallel gullies were also identified in this trench (F21, F23 and F26) and are probably associated with the

boundary. Infact gully F26 is likely to be a continuation of gully F14 in T9 and F35 in T5. Two tree-throws (F24-F25) were also excavated.

Trench 17 (T17): Undated ditches F33 and F32 were aligned WNW/ESE and W/E. Ditch F32 was U-shaped and measured 1.25m wide by 0.5m deep, whereas ditch F33 was V-shaped and measured 1.6m by 0.65m deep. Tree-throw/root-bole F34 was also identified.

Trench 18 (T18) – Trench 20 (T20): No significant archaeological horizons were exposed.

Trench 21 (T21): Tree-throw F31 was excavated and plough scarring was noted cut into natural.

Trench 22 (T22): No significant archaeological horizons were exposed but plough scarring was noted cut into natural.

Trench 23 (T23): Undated gully F42 was aligned ENE-WSW and measured 0.24m wide by 0.07m deep. Plough scarring was also noted cut into natural.

Trench 24 (T24): Undated gullies F40-F41 were aligned ENE/WSW. Gully F40 was V-shaped measuring 0.5m wide by 0.15m deep, whereas gully F41 was a flat U-shape measuring 0.63m wide by 0.1m deep. Modern service trench F43 was recorded to the south.

Trench 25 (T25): Five layers were identified. Layers L1 (c 70mm thick) and L2 (c 350mm thick) sealed a layer of dark grey/brown sandy-loam (L4, c 260mm thick, ? buried ploughsoil) and a fine dark brown sandy-silty accumulation (L5, c 130mm thick), which sealed natural sandy-clay (L3). Three modern service trenches (F50, F52 and unnumbered) and modern pit or linear feature F51 (containing backfilled topsoil and subsoil) were excavated.

Trench 26 (T26): Four layers were identified. Layers L1 (c 130mm thick) and L2 (c 210-270mm thick) sealed a layer of dark grey/brown sandy-loam (L4, c 290mm thick, ? buried ploughsoil), which sealed natural sandy-clay (L3). Tree-throw F49 was excavated.

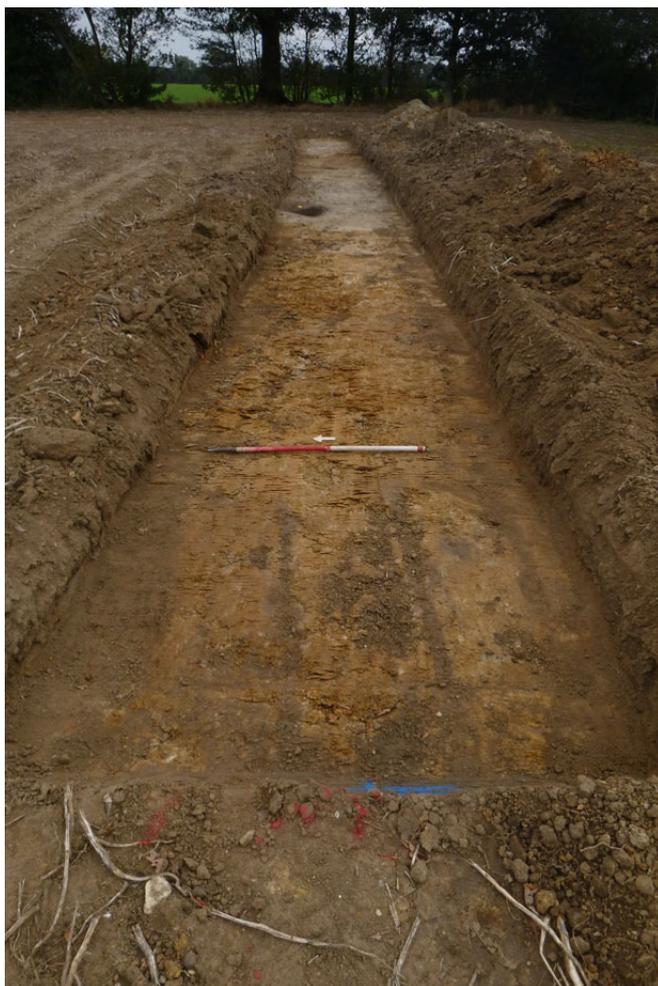
Trench 27 (T27) – Trench 30 (T30): No significant archaeological horizons were exposed.

Trench 31 (T31): Medieval/post-medieval gully F44, was aligned N/S and was U-shaped measuring 0.55m wide by 0.10m deep. To the south was modern service trench F45 and associated shallow depression F46.

Trench 32 (T32): Ditch F47 was aligned N/S and was a flat U-shape measuring 1.07m wide by 0.09m deep.

Trench 33 (T33): No significant archaeological horizons were exposed.

Trench 34 (T34): Medieval/post-medieval pit F48 and modern pit F54 were excavated. Modern service trench F53 was also recorded and may have been associated with pit F54.



Photograph 4 T34, looking E

5 Finds

by Laura Pooley (pottery identified by Stephen Benfield)

A small quantity of finds were recovered from thirteen contexts. The finds consisted of two prehistoric flint flakes with small fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), pottery and iron nails all of which are likely to date to the post-medieval and modern periods. The finds are listed and described by context in Table 1 and an overall spot date for the finds from each context is also provided. The pottery fabrics referred to follow the Essex post-Roman fabric series (*CAR 7*). None of the finds appear to have been deliberately placed in the features in which they were found but represent a sparse background scatter of material which has been spread across an agricultural field.

Trench, Feature & Finds Nos.	Description	Date
T1, F28, 15	CBM: peg-tile (1: 14g), modern fabric, 12mm thick	modern
T2, F13, 5	Modern pottery: (1: 10g) flower-pot body sherd, Fabric 51B	modern
T3, F8, 3	Modern pottery: (1: 16g) Staffordshire-type white earthenware, Fabric 48D	modern, Late 18th – 19th C
T9, F14 sx2, 6	CBM: (1: 36g) post-medieval – modern brick fragment	pmed – modern

T12, F2, 2	CBM: peg-tile (1: 30g), 11mm thick	med – pmed
T13, F1, 1	CBM: (1: <1g) tiny fragment	-
T14, F16, 10	Worked flint: (1: 6g) probable flake with patination on both the ventral and dorsal surface, the flake has then had small flakes removed from around the edges forming notches, the edge modification cuts through the patination and clearly occurred long after the flake was originally detached	prehistoric
T16, F18, 11	CBM: peg-tile (2: 152g), fine sandy fabric, 12mm thick	med – pmed
T31, F44, 16	CBM: peg-tile (1: 10g), 11mm thick	med – pmed
T31, F46, 17	Modern pottery: (1: 2g), Staffordshire-type white earthenware, Fabric 48D	modern, Late 18th – 19th C
T34, F48, 18	CBM: peg-tile (1: 26g), 12mm thick	med – pmed
T34, F54, 19	Post-medieval pottery: (1: 270g) glazed red earthenware base, Fabric 40 CBM: peg-tile (3: 68g), 11-12mm thick Iron nails: (2: 12g), fragments, incomplete, c 14mm diameter	pmed-modern 17th/18th – early 19th century
L1, 20	Worked flint: (1: 4g) secondary flake made from flint derived from local secondary gravel source, two probably areas of retouch but also areas of usewear/edge damage	prehistoric

Table 1 All finds by context

6 Discussion

Archaeological evaluation at Admiral's Farm revealed modern features consisting of service trenches, six ditches/gullies and four pits. In addition were a ditch and a pit of medieval/post-medieval date, fifteen undated ditch/gullies, three undated pits and ten tree-throws. The earliest finds were two prehistoric flint flakes, both residual in later contexts, with the remaining finds of medieval/post-medieval to modern date.

The large modern field boundary ditch (F18, F20, F55) and parallel gully (F14, F26, F35) are shown on the 1874 6-inch OS map and still apparent on OS mapping until at least the early 1930s (see Map 1 and Fig 2). Nearby tree-throws (F24 and F25) are probably part of a line of trees that had grown up along the ditch (plotted on the OS maps and currently still visible on Google Earth, although they have been removed on the ground). The OS maps show that the ditch flowed to the north and was probably used to drain excess water away from agricultural land into a small wooded area to the northeast. Parallel gullies F21, F23, F36 and F37 might also be associated with this large ditch.

None of the remaining ditches/gullies are apparent on the OS maps. Feature F9 does appear to follow the line of a footpath on the 1913 25-inch map, but this might just be coincidence. If any of the prehistoric or later cropmarks around the site (see CAT Report 820) (Fig 9) continue into this area, no direct evidence of these horizons was exposed during the evaluation. Any of the undated ditches might conceivably be of an earlier date but an absence of associated material finds perhaps makes this unlikely and more work would need to be completed to obtain firm dating evidence. Some of the more irregular gullies (ie F7 and F9) may even have had a natural origin or been the remains of more pronounced plough scars visible in a number of trenches.

Indications are that the development site has seen minimal human activity prior to the medieval/post-medieval period, by which time it was being used as an agricultural field(s).



Map 1 Six-inch 1874 OS map (Essex XXXVIII) showing the field boundary ditch leading to a small area of woodland.



Imagery © 2016 Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Map data © Google

Photograph 5 Aerial photograph of Admirals Farm showing location of large field boundary ditch (backfilled) and associated tree line.

7 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Stephen Williams and Hills Residential for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by Mark Baister with Sarah Carter, John Dodd, Ben Holloway, Robin Mathieson, Nigel Rayner, Jane Roberts. Figures are by BH and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor.

8 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

CAR 7	2000	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by John Cotter
CAT	2015	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation on land at Admirals Farm, Heckfords Road, Great Bentley, Essex, CO7 8RS</i>
CAT Report 764	2014	<i>A desk-based assessment of the archaeological remains around Sturrick Farm, Great Bentley, Essex</i>
CAT Report 820	2015, revised 2016	<i>A preliminary archaeological desk-based assessment: Admirals Farm, Great Bentley, Essex</i>

CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Dept of Communities and Local Government.
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14. Ed. D Gurney
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24, by Maria Medlycott
ECCPS	2016	<i>Brief for Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Admirals Farm, Heckfords Road, Great Bentley, Essex</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (English Heritage)

9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
cropmark	ancient features which show as lines and other marks in crops due to differential root depth of roots over damp soil in archaeological features
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD 1800
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

10 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1016)

ECC Evaluation Brief, CAT Written Scheme of Investigation

Original site record (feature and layer sheets, finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, Architectural plans, Attendance register, Risk assessment

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Saffron Walden Museum under accession code SAFWM: 2016.21

Distribution list:

Stephen Williams, Hills Residential
Historic Environmental Advisor, Essex County Council Place Services
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



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Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 7.11.2016

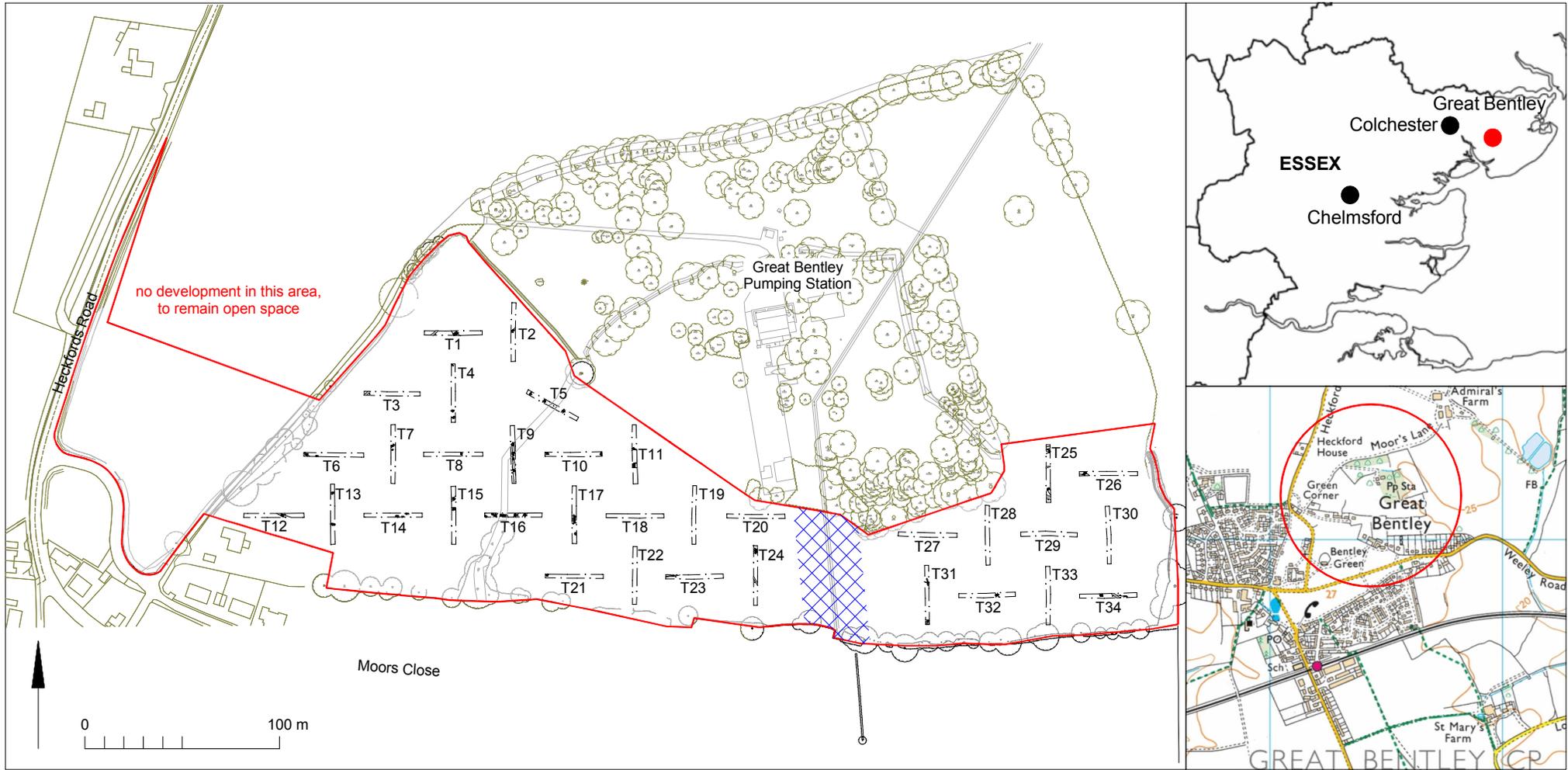


Fig 1 Site location

 electricity exclusion zone

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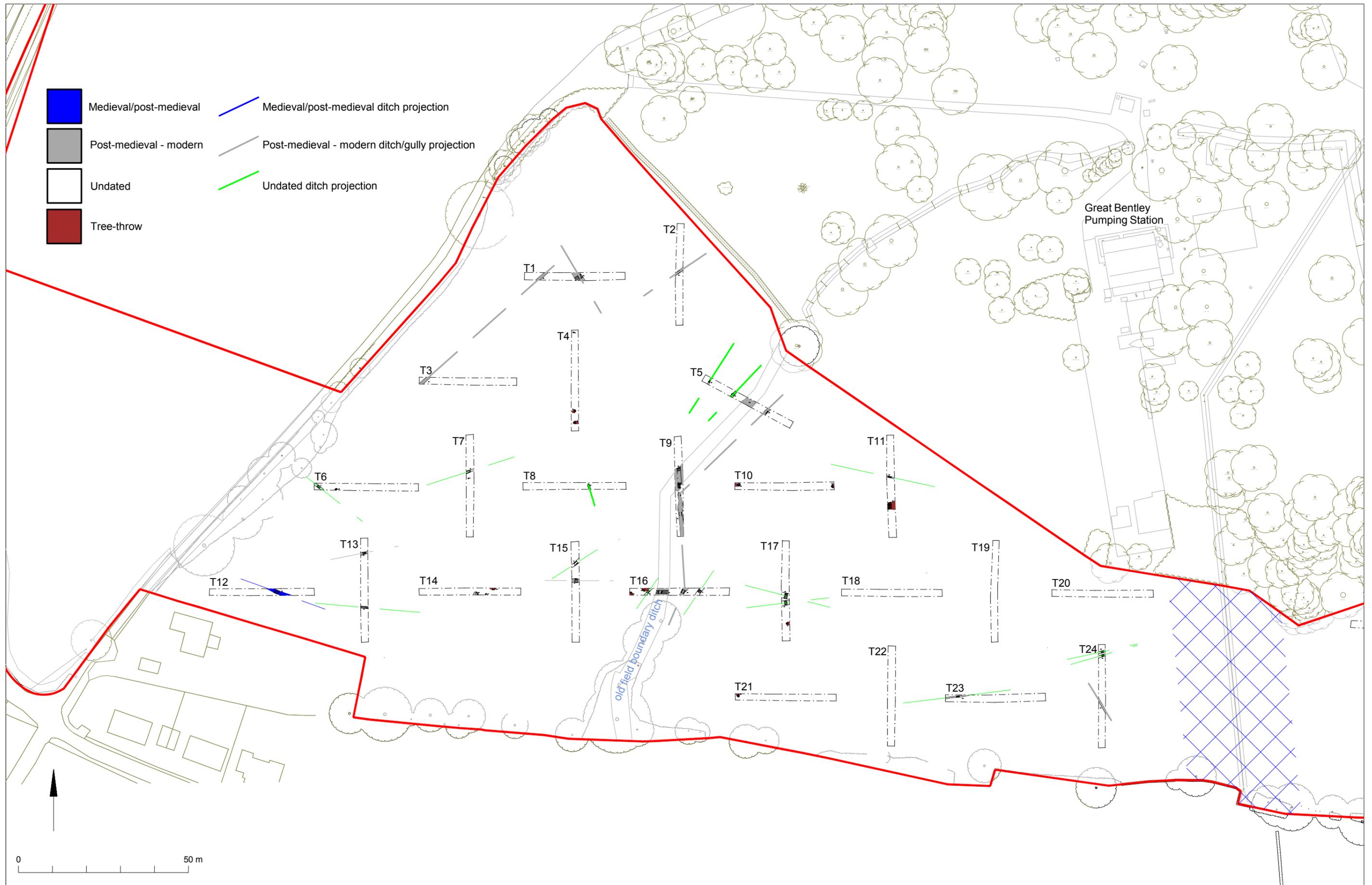


Fig 2 Results

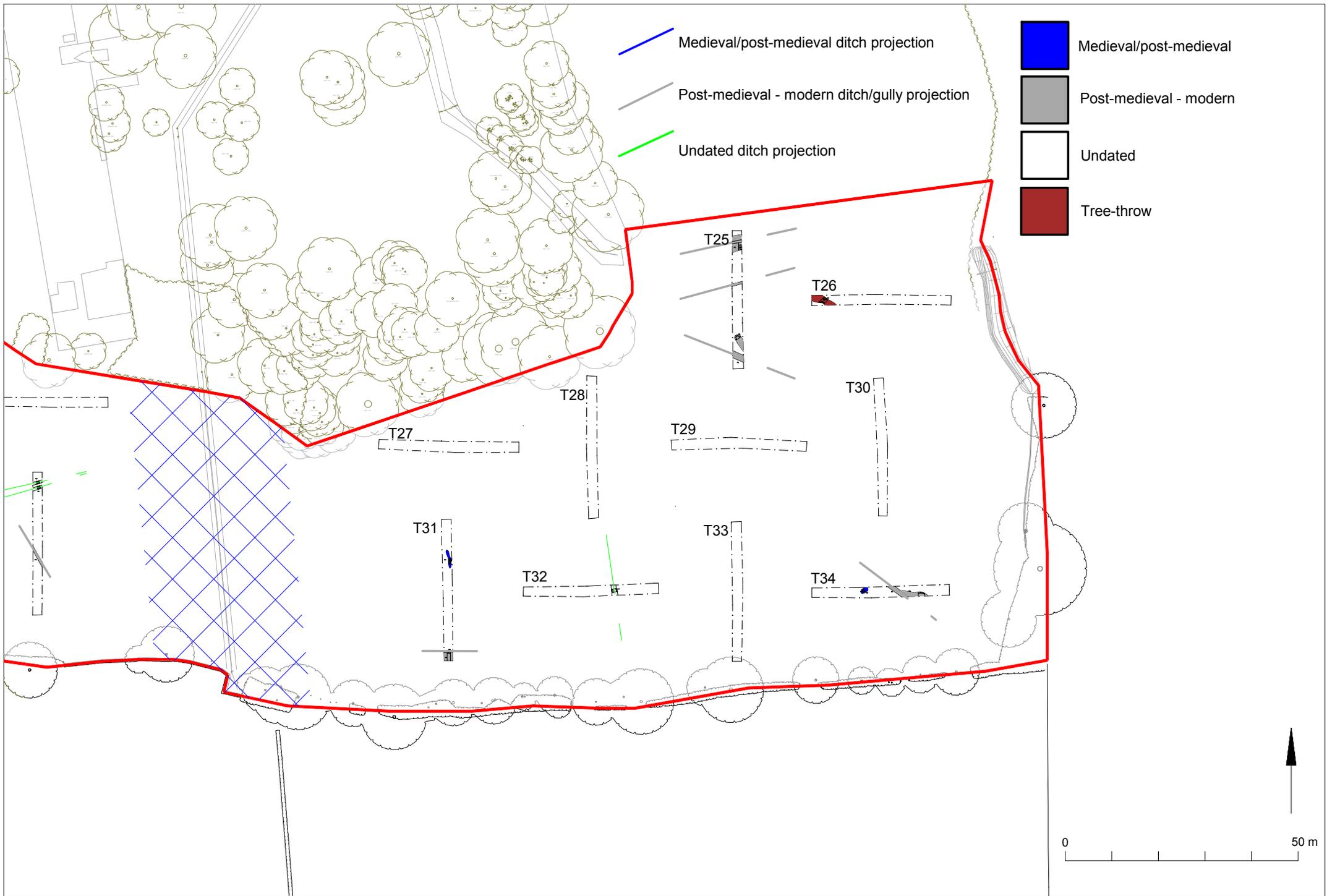


Fig 3 Results

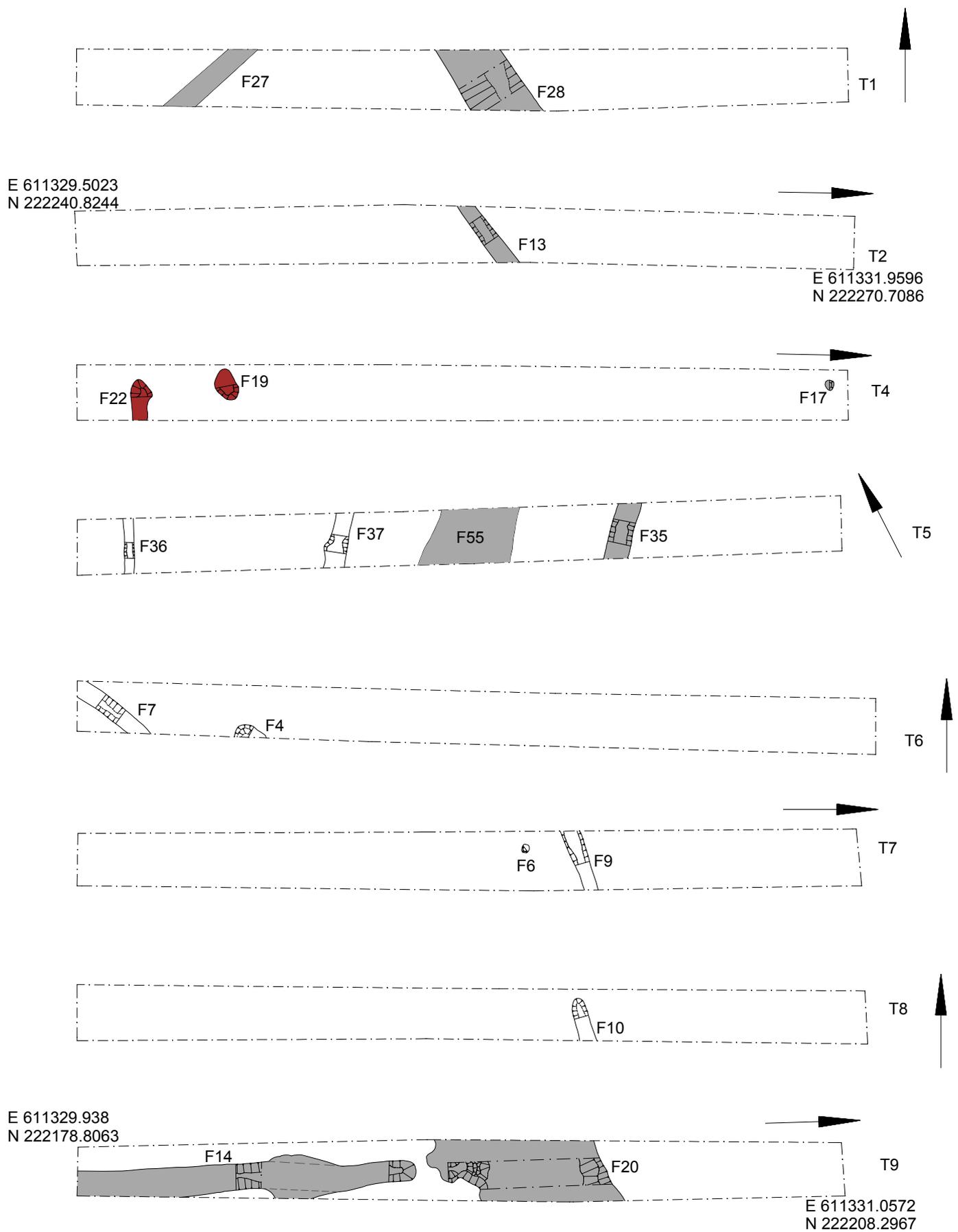


Fig 4 Detailed trench plans (key on Fig 6)



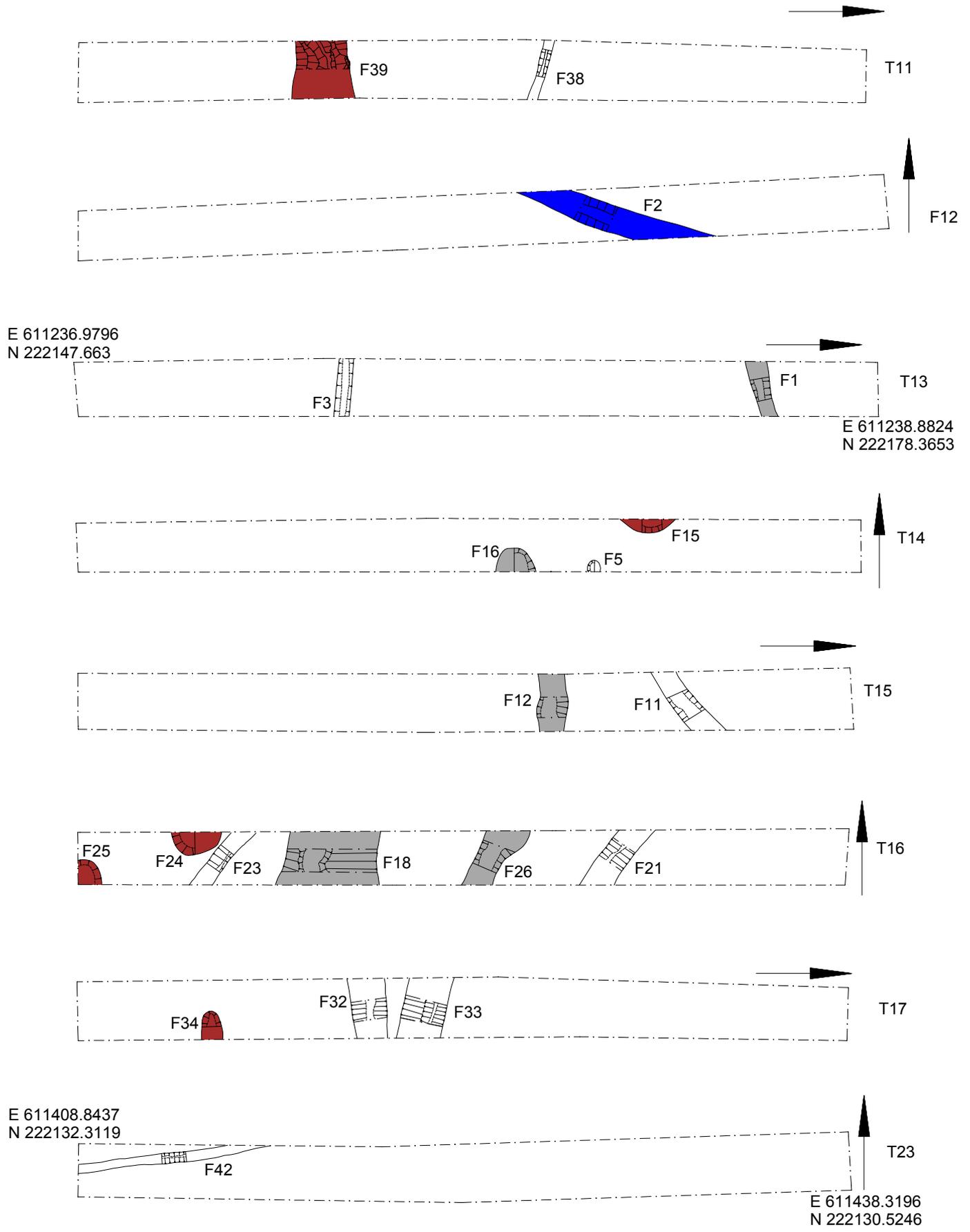


Fig 5 Detailed trench plans (key on Fig 6)



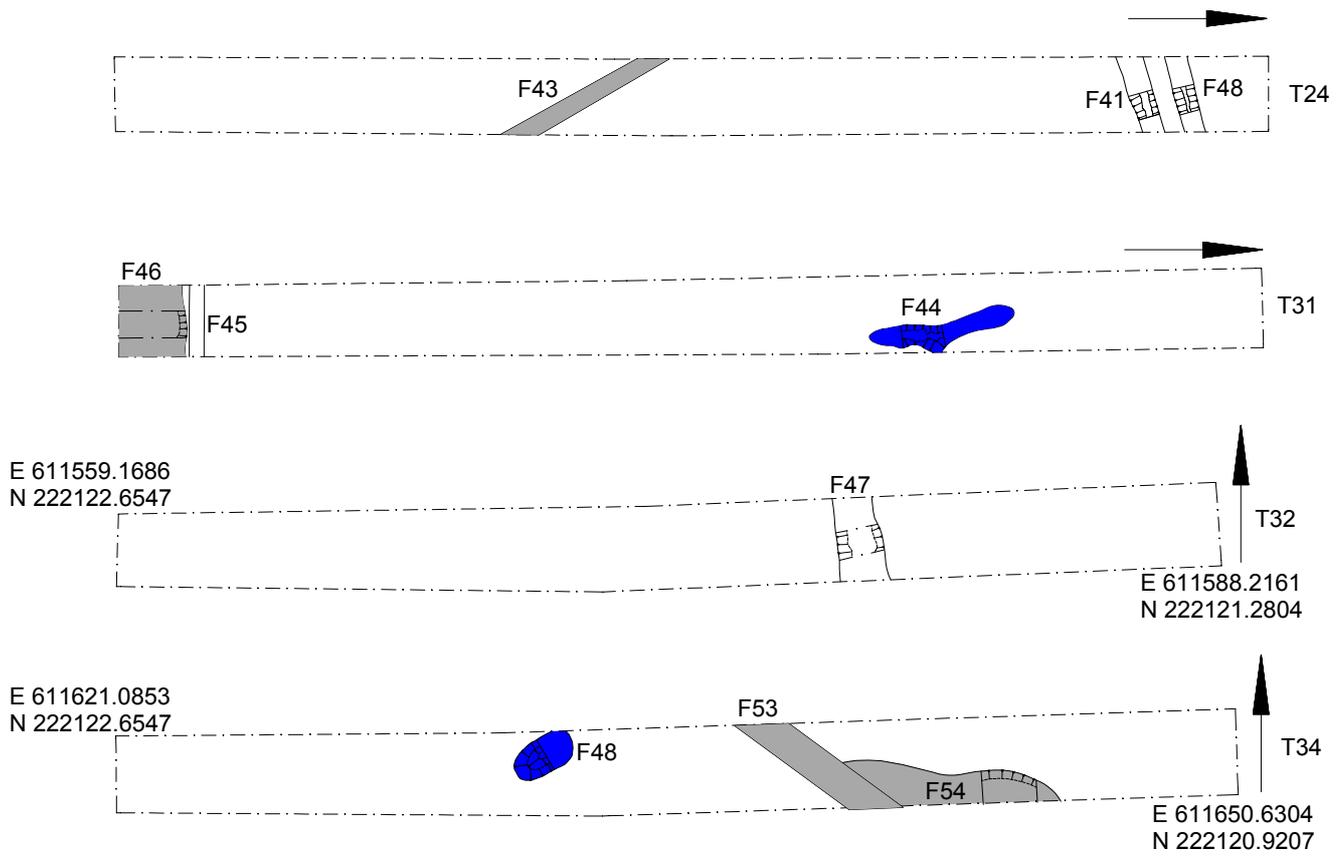


Fig 6 Detailed trench plans

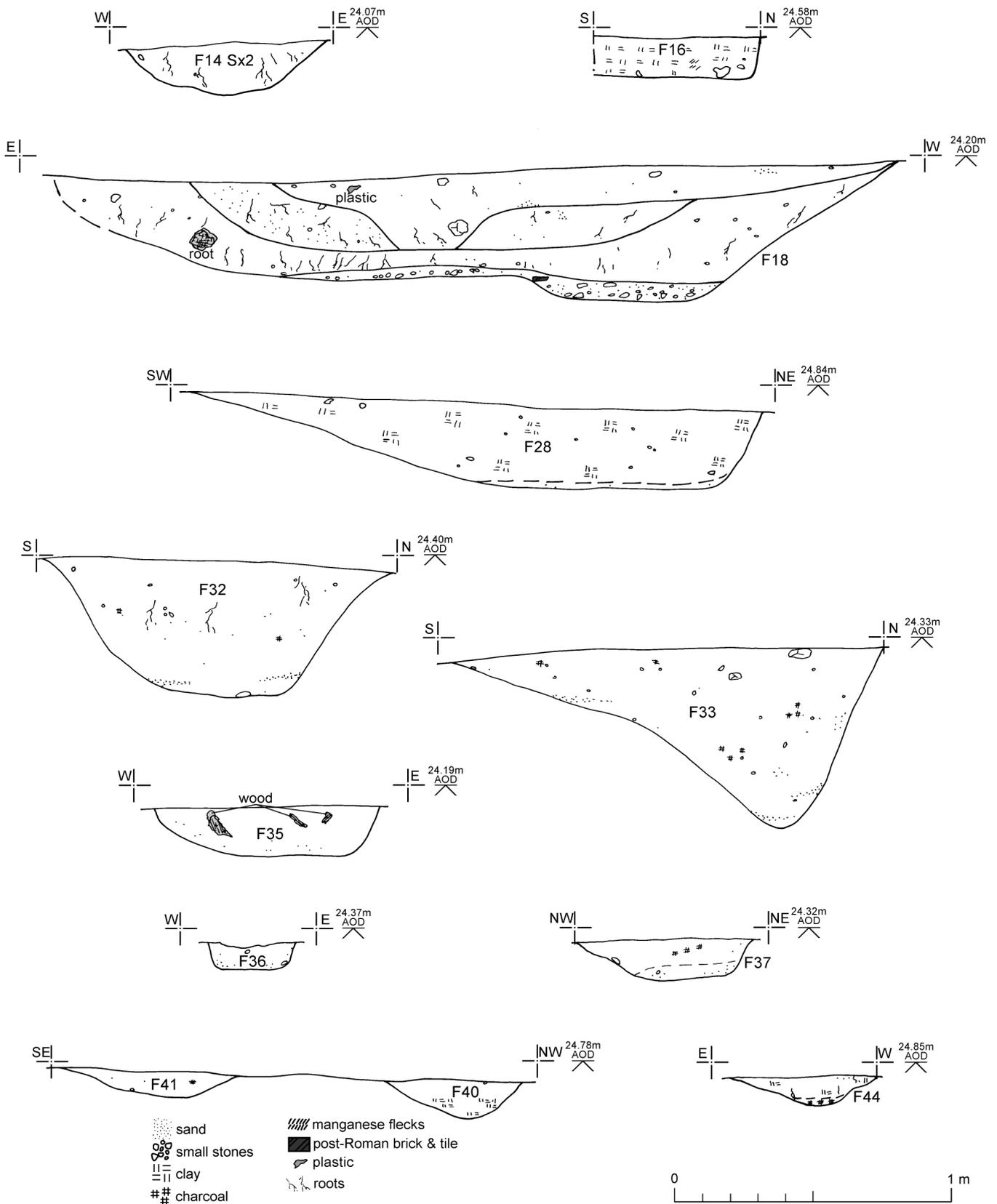


Fig 7 Feature sections.

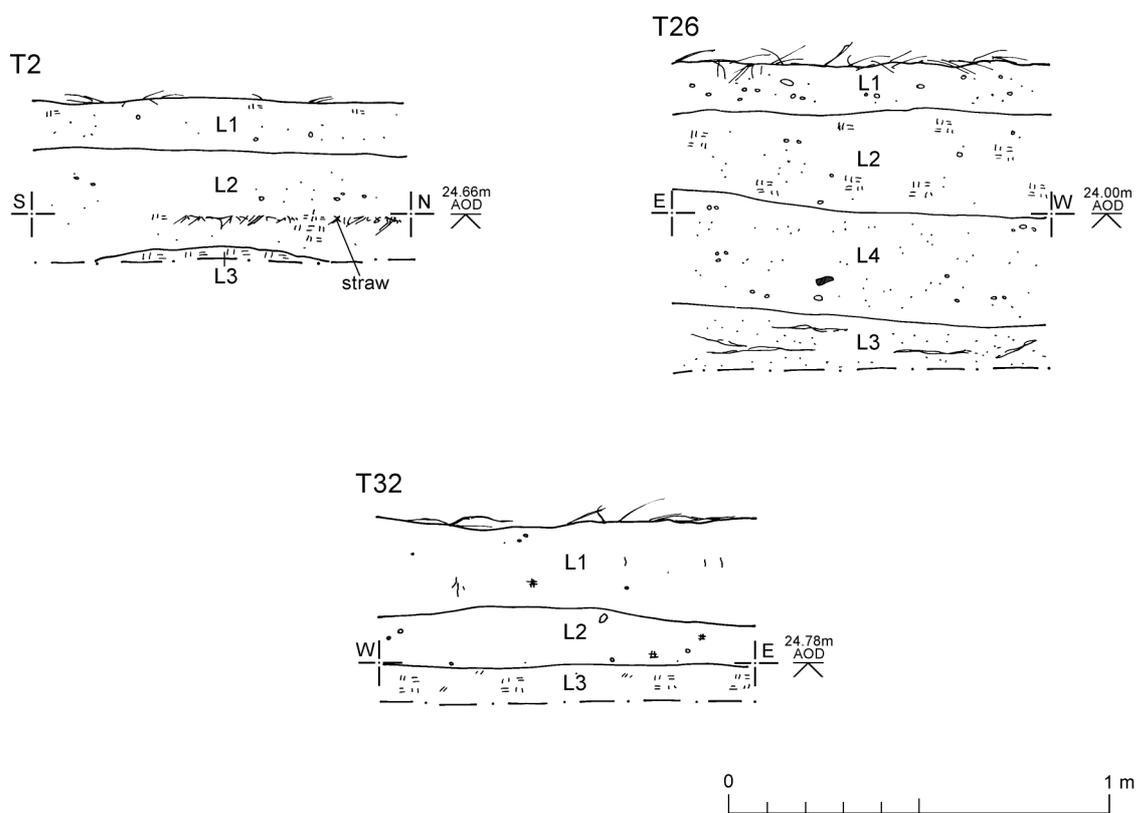


Fig 8 Representative trench sections.

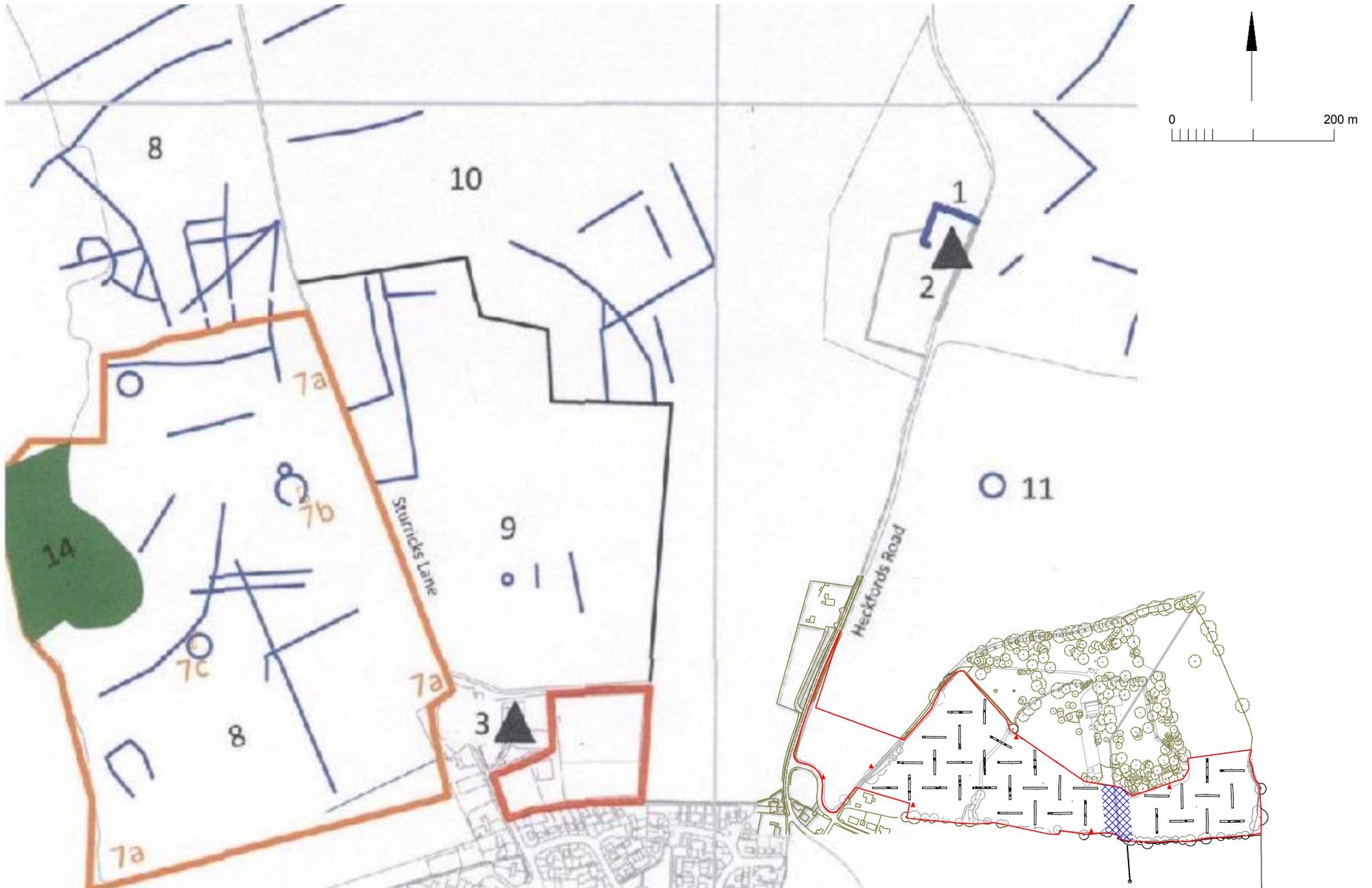


Fig 9 Surrounding cropmarks shown as blue lines (taken from CAT Report 764: 8 & 10 prehistoric field boundaries/enclosures; 7c, 9 and 11 prehistoric burial sites?; 7b medieval windmill; 1 medieval moat)

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Land at Admirals Farm, Heckford's Road, Great Bentley, Essex, CO7 8RS	
Parish: Great Bentley	District: Tendring
NGR: TM 11364 22161 (centre)	Site code: CAT project code: 16/09f ECC project code: GBEAF16 OASIS project ID: colchest3-262677
Type of work: Evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 20th September – 11th October 2016	Size of area investigated: 34 trial-trenches each 30m long by 1.8m wide (totalling 1836m ²)
Location of curating museum: Colchester Museum accession code COLEM: 2016.99	Funding source: developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER number:
Final report: CAT Report 1031	
Periods represented: Post-medieval, modern	
Summary of fieldwork results: An archaeological evaluation (34 trial-trenches) was carried out on land at Admirals Farm, Great Bentley, Essex in advance of the construction of a new housing development. The development site was located in an area of prehistoric and later cropmarks, and ditches, gullies and pits were excavated. Aside from ten modern features and ten tree-throws there was a medieval/post-medieval ditch and pit, fifteen undated ditches/gullies and three undated pits. The earliest finds were two prehistoric flint flakes, both residual in later contexts, but the remaining finds were all of medieval/post-medieval to modern date.	
Previous summaries/reports: –	
Keywords: –	Significance: –
Author of summary: Laura Pooley	Date of summary: November 2016