## Archaeological test-pit evaluation at Lewis Gardens, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1JH July 2017

(Report revised September 2017)



by Laura Pooley

with contributions by Stephen Benfield figures by Sarah Carter and Laura Pooley

fieldwork by Nigel Rayner and Alec Wade

# commissioned by Robert Ratcliffe (The Morton Partnership) on behalf of OMC Investments Ltd

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Colchester Museum accession code COLEM: 2017.117

CHER ref: ECC4049

OASIS reference: colchest3-291035



**Colchester Archaeological Trust** 

Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785 email: lp@catuk.org

CAT Report 1151 September 2017

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#### 1 Summary

An archaeological test-pit evaluation was carried out at Lewis Gardens, Colchester to inform the build-depths of a proposed new boundary wall. The development site is located within the southeast angle of the Roman walled town, specifically within the largely residential area of Insula 31/32. Test-pits TP1 and TP3 revealed modern and post-medieval made-ground sealing probable Roman accumulation/demolition layers (L4 and L6) identified at a depth of 0.38-0.45m below current ground level (bcgl). Test-pit TP2 revealed modern and post-medieval contexts, including a cobbled surface, to a depth of 0.55m bcgl.

#### 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This archive report presents the results of archaeological test-pit evaluation at Lewis Gardens, Colchester, Essex which was carried out 27th-28th July 2017. The work was commissioned by Robert Ratcliffe (The Morton Partnership) on behalf of OMC Investments Ltd, to help inform build-depths for a proposed new boundary wall. Work was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Colchester Borough Council Planning Services (CBCPS), Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor Jess Tipper 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 paragraphs 128, 129 and 132 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

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 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 draws on the major published sources for Colchester archaeology, and also the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER) and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

The proposed development site is located within the southeast part of the walled Roman town of *Colonia Victricensis* and specifically within Insulas 31/32, with a Roman east/west street to the north of the site following the course of the High Street (*CAR* **6**, p15).

A number of significant archaeological investigations have taken place within this southeast angle of the Roman town, within Insulas 31/32, 38b, 39 and 40. These have revealed that the whole area was largely residential. See summary below, or full details see Hull 1958, Richardson 1961, Dunnett 1971 and work by CAT (Crossan 1990; *CAR* 6; CAT Reports 234, 295, 305, 372, 385, 477, 520).

A mosaic pavement was uncovered in Lewis's Gardens in 1923 (UAD 321). Further excavations on the site in 1955 and 1958 (UAD 3069 and 3070; Richardson 1961) revealed three Roman buildings with at least two structural phases. Two of the houses had hypocausts and from within the demolition and robbing material, painted wall plaster and red, white and grey tesserae were recovered. Later in 1959, a sewer trench dug between the 1955 and 1958 sites (UAD 3365; Richardson 1961) showed stretches of wall foundation and a tessellated floor, both on an east-west alignment.

Excavations in 1966 at the rear of 5 Queen Street (UAD 3065; Dunnett 1971) identified a 2nd century Roman building with rubble foundations that had at least three structural phases. The latter of these phases incorporated a hypocaust overlaid with a coloured mosaic floor. Observations made during groundworks for the Queen Street multi-storey car park (in 1970, UAD 3484), at the Mulberry Tree Family Centre (in 1983-84; *CAR* **6**, 375-8; UAD 3033) and the former bus station (in 2003; CAT Report 234; UAD 3069-3070) revealed further Roman structural remains. Works at the Mulberry Tree Family Centre also revealed two Roman inhumation burials and a third displaced skull (*CAR* **6**, 375-6), with evaluation trenches dug by CAT in 1990 (UAD 3577; Crossan 1990) revealing a Roman infant burial in a tile-covered grave accompanied by a small beaker.

The presence of at least one principal east-west street is known, extending beneath the former Keddies department store fronting onto Queen Street to the north (UAD 307) and crossing the northern wing of the Mulberry Tree Family Centre (UAD 3033). Its projected line should cross the southern half of the D-shaped garden of East Hill House. No north-south streets have yet been located by excavation within the grounds of East Hill House or on the site of the former bus station, although Hull suggested that the line of one may lie on or close to the boundary separating the two (Hull 1958, 51).

CAT has conducted several recent archaeological investigations at Firstsite, in the former bus station and in the grounds of the adjacent East Hill House. Investigations in 2003 (CAT Report 234) and 2004 (CAT Reports 295 and 305) in the garden of The Minories and in the bus station confirmed the nature, distribution and depth of the post-Roman layers. In 2006 a watching brief in the bus station (CAT Report 385) revealed late Roman robbing material or demolition debris. Investigations in the area between 2006 and 2008 (CAT Report 477) revealed a metalled street and parts of a Roman building presumed to be a town-house on the southern side of Insulas 31 and 32. In 2009, an evaluation in the gardens of East Hill House found the remains of two Roman town-houses, one with a hypocaust and one with at least one area of tessellated floor (CAT Report 520). Monitoring in 2009/2010 at Firstsite also revealed Roman remains at between 0.45m and 1.10m below modern ground-level (CAT Report 599) including a metalled surface and tessellated floor.

#### 4 Results (Figs 2-4)

Three test-pits were laid out along the proposed line of the new boundary wall. Following a revision made to the planning application in September 2017 the proposed line of the new wall was moved a short distance to the west of its original location.

Under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist, the test-pits were initially excavated by machine through modern and post-medieval layers. They were then excavated, cleaned and recorded by hand. Depths were determined by either the height of *in situ* Roman deposits (TP1 and TP3, see below) or when the depth met the requirements for the proposed wall foundation (as in the case of TP2).

## Test-pit 1 (TP1): 1.1m by 1.1m, stepped down to 1m by 0.95m, 0.65m deep (Figs 3-4)

Test-pit 1 was excavated through a modern concrete road surface on a thin bedding layer of sand (L1, c 0.23m thick). This overlaid a base layer of modern crushed redbrick hardcore (L3, 0.15-0.20m thick) and a post-medieval levelling deposit (L4, 0.03-0.05m thick).

Sealed beneath L3 was a layer of slightly-sandy silty-clay (L4) which contained Roman demolition debris in the form of ceramic building material, *opus signinum* and mortar. This layer was excavated for a depth of approximately 0.19m until it was determined that it was likely to be a Roman layer and excavation ceased at 0.65m below current ground level (bcgl).

An unidentified post-medieval cut feature (F1) had been cut through L4. This was not excavated.



Photograph 1 Test-pit TP1, looking N

Context no.	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
F1	-	Cut feature	Soft, moist, medium-dark grey/brown sandy-silt, 1% stone, 3% CBM, very occasional charcoal. Finds of post-medieval CBM including peg-tile not retained. Identified at a depth of 0.47m bcgl. At least 0.19m deep.	Post-medieval
L1	-	Concrete road surface	Concrete road surface on a bedding layer of sand. c 0.23m thick.	Modern
L2	-	Hardcore	Crushed red brick hardcore. Identified at a depth of 0.23m bcgl c 0.15-0.2m thick.	Modern
L3	1	Levelling	Firm, moist, dark grey slightly silty-clay with smaller fragments of post-medieval CBM. Identified at a depth of 0.37-0.42m bcgl c 0.03-0.05m thick.	Post-medieval
L4	2	Accumulation/ demolition	Firm, moist, dark grey slightly-sandy silty-clay containing frequent fragments of Roman CBM, opus signinum and mortar, 1% stone. Identified at a depth of 0.4-0.45m bcgl. At least 0.19m thick.	?Roman

Table 1 Test-pit 1 context list

# Test-pit 2 (TP2): 1.1m by 1.1m, stepped down to 0.85m by 0.80m, 0.55m deep (Figs 3-4)

Test-pit 2 was excavated through a modern concrete road surface on a thin bedding layer of sand (L1, c 0.28-0.29m thick). This overlaid a base layer of modern crushed red-brick hardcore (L2, 0.15m thick) sealing a layer of of post-medieval levelling (L5, 0.12-0.15m thick). Beneath L5 was a cobbled stone surface (F3) which was not excavated but is assumed to be of a post-medieval date. A post-medieval feature (F2) was identified as cutting through surface F3 but was not investigated further. Excavation ceased at the height of the cobbled stone surface (0.55m bcgl) as the contractor stated that groundworks for the proposed wall would not go deeper than this depth.



Photograph 2 Test-pit TP2, looking NW

Context no.	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
F2	-	Cut feature	Soft, friable, moist, dark grey sandy-silt, 2% stone, 5% CBM. Finds of post-medieval CBM not retained. Identified at a depth of 0.55-0.57m bcgl.	Post-medieval
F3	-	Cobbled stone surface	Large, rounded cobbles, densely packed set into a matrix of dark grey sandy-silt. Identified at a depth of 0.55-0.57m bcgl.	?Post-medieval
L1	_	Concrete road surface	Concrete road surface on a bedding layer of sand. c 0.28-0.29m thick.	Modern
L2	-	Hardcore	Crushed red brick hardcore. Identified at a depth of 0.28-0.29m bcgl. c 0.15m thick.	Modern

L5	3	_	Firm, moist, orange/grey sandy-silt, 25% gravel, 5% stone, 3% CBM (post-medieval). Identified at a depth of 0.42-0.45m bcgl.	Post-medieval
			c 0.12-0.15m thick.	

Table 2 Test-pit 2 context list

## Test-pit 3 (TP2): 1.1m by 1.1m, stepped down to 0.95m by 0.90m, 0.52m deep (Fig 4)

Test-pit 3 was excavated through a modern concrete road surface on a thin bedding layer of sand (L1, c 0.28-0.29m thick). This overlaid a base layer of modern crushed red-brick hardcore (L3, 0.10-0.13m thick) and a post-medieval levelling deposit (L4, 0.03-0.05m thick). Sealed beneath L3 was a layer of slightly-sandy silty-clay (L6) which contained Roman demolition debris in the form of ceramic building material, opus signinum and mortar. This layer appears to be equivalent to L4 in TP1. It was excavated for a depth of approximately 0.14m until it was determined that it was likely to be a Roman layer and excavation ceased at a depth of 0.52m bcgl.



Photograph 3 Test-pit TP3, looking W

Context no.	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
L1	-	Concrete road surface	Concrete road surface on a bedding layer of sand. c 0.28-0.29m thick	Modern
L2	-	Hardcore	Crushed red brick hardcore. Identified at a depth of 0.28-0.29m bcgl. c 0.10-0.13m thick.	Modern
L3	-	Levelling	Firm, moist, dark grey slightly silty-clay with smaller fragments of post-medieval CBM. Identified at a depth of 0.34-0.36m bcgl <i>c</i> 0.03-0.05m thick.	Post- medieval

L6 4 Accudement	and the property and th	?Roman
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Table 3 Test-pit 3 context list

#### 5 Finds

by Stephen Benfield and Laura Pooley

A small quantity of Roman, medieval and post-medieval finds were recorded from post-medieval and Roman contexts and are listed below in Table 4. The Roman pottery fabrics refer to the Colchester Roman fabric series (*CAR* **10**) and Roman pottery vessel forms refer to the *Camulodunum* (Cam) Roman pottery type series (Hawkes & Hull 1947, Hull 1958). The post-Roman pottery fabrics referred to follow the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1985 & *CAR* **7**).

Context & finds number	Description	Date	
L3, 1	<b>Medieval pottery:</b> one sherd (16g) of Colchester-type ware, Fabric 21A, glazed, <i>c</i> 14th-15th century. <b>Post-medieval pottery:</b> two sherds (58g) of post-medieval glazed red earthenware, Fabric 40, late 16th/17th – 19th century.	Post- medieval	
L4, 2	Roman pottery: three sherds of greyware, Fabric GX, including rim sherd from a Cam 299 bowl, late 2nd-4th century; one sherd (8g) of Nene Valley colour-coated ware, Fabric EA, mid 3rd-4th century.  Roman CBM: two fragments (92g); tile fragment, 20mm thick; corner piece with other two sides squared off to formed a rough square 42x40mm, 16mm thick.		
L5, 3	<b>Quernstone:</b> fragment of a millstone grit quernstone (312g) with very pronounced ridges ( <i>c</i> 3mm high) on the dressed surface, appears to have been re-used with mortar apparent on one edge, 140mm long, 55mm long, 30mm thick.	?Roman	
L6, 4	Roman pottery: one sherd (2g) of greyware, Fabric GX, a rouletted body sherd.  Roman CBM: one fragment of brick (80g), 38mm thick; one fragment of tegula with flange (214g), base 20mm thick, beginnings of a cut-away visible but broken at this point and further identification not possible, finger-tip impressions on base; two fragments of combed box-flue tile (76g), 13-15mm thick; one tessera cube (20g), 18mm thick, mortar around bottom two thirds.  Roman ceramic gaming counter: two joining sherds forming part of an incomplete (less than half) ceramic gaming counter, made from the wall of a large storage jar (Fabric HZ), very nicely ground/shaped, probably <i>c</i> 75mm diameter, 15mm thick, 50g.	Roman	

**Table 4** All finds by context

#### 7 Discussion

Three archaeological test-pits were excavated at Lewis Gardens to inform dig-depths for a proposed new boundary wall. Test-pits TP1 and TP3 revealed probable Roman

accumulation/demolition layers (L4 and L6) at depths of 0.38-0.45m bcgl, sealed by modern and post-medieval made-ground. Dig depths below this depth would potentially impact on significant archaeological remains. No Roman remains were identified within test-pit TP2 as modern and post-medieval contexts were recorded to a depth of 0.55m bcgl.

It is unlikely that excavations along the revised alignment of the proposed boundary wall would encounter deposits which differ significantly from those identified in the three test-pits.

#### 8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Robert Ratcliffe (The Morton Partnership) and OMC Investments Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by N Rayner and A Wade. Figures were prepared by S Carter and L Pooley. The project was monitored for the CBCPS by Jess Tipper.

#### 9 References

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

Brown, D	2007	Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation
CAR 6	1992	Colchester Archaeological Report <b>6</b> : Excavations at Culver Street, the Gilberd School, and other sites in Colchester 1971-85, by P Crummy
CAR 7	2000	Colchester Archaeological Report <b>7</b> : Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85, by J Cotter
CAR <b>10</b>	1999	Colchester Archaeological Report <b>10</b> : Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-86, by R Symonds and S Wade
CAT	2014	Health & Safety Policy
CAT Report 234	2003	An archaeological evaluation at the First Eastern National bus station, Queen Street, Colchester, Essex, May-June 2003
CAT Report 295	2004	An archaeological evaluation and watching brief on the site of a new visual arts facility, East Hill House and Colchester bus station, Colchester, Essex: October 2004 – 1) interim results
CAT Report 305	2005	An archaeological evaluation and watching brief in the grounds of East Hill House and the Colchester bus station, Colchester, Essex:  October 2004 – 2) main report
CAT Report 372	2006	An archaeological evaluation at the Central Clinic, High Street, Colchester, Essex: May 2006
CAT Report 385	2006	Archaeological monitoring at firstsite:newsite and in Queen Street, Colchester, Essex: April 2006
CAT Report 477	2011	Roman houses and streets in Insulas 31/32 of Roman Colchester: excavations in advance of the construction of the Visual Arts Facility, East Hill, Colchester, Essex November 2006- December 2007 and June 2008
CAT Report 520	2010	An archaeological evaluation at East Hill House, Colchester, Essex: April-June 2009
CAT Report 599	2012	A watching brief at firstsite, Lewis Gardens, High Street, Colchester, Essex: December 2010-March 2011.
ClfA	2014a	Standard and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation
CIfA	2014b	Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives
CIfA	2014c	Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials
Crossan, C	1990	The archaeological aspects of redevelopment of the Queen Street bus station and car park, unnumbered CAT archive report
Crummy, P	1971	'Insula 30', <i>Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society 3, 3rd series, part 1,</i> 107-111
Crummy, P	1992	City of Victory: the story of Colchester – Britain's first Roman town
DCLG	2012	National Planning Policy Framework
Dunnett, B R K	1971	'Excavations in Colchester, 1964-8', in TEAS, 3rd series, 3, 1-106
English Heritage	2006	Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment

		(MoRPHE)
Gurney, D	2003	Standards for field archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).
Hawkes, C & Hull, M	1947	Camulodunum, first report on the excavations at Colchester 1930-39, RRCSAL, 14
Hull, M R	1958	Roman Colchester, RRCSAL, 20
Medlycott, M	2011	Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
Richardson, K M	1961	'Excavations in Lewis's garden, Colchester, 1955 and 1958', <i>TEAS</i> , 3rd series, <b>I</b> , 7-36

#### 10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT Colchester Archaeological Trust

CBCAA Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor CBCPS Colchester Borough Council Planning Services CHER Colchester Historic Environment Record CBM ceramic building material, ie brick/tile ClfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

context specific location of finds on an archaeological site

feature (F) an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'

layer (L) distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material

medieval period from AD 1066 to c 1500 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 c AD 1500 to c 1800

residual something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit

Roman the period from AD 43 to c AD 410

section (abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s

wsi written scheme of investigation

#### 11 Contents of archive

Finds: Small bag (quern and ceramic counter only)

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1151)

CBCPS 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

#### 12 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 Colchester Museum under accession code COLEM: 2017.117.

#### **Distribution list**

Robert Ratcliffe (The Morton Partnership)
OMC Investments Ltd
Jess Tipper, Colchester Borough Council Planning Services
Essex Historic Environment Record



#### **Colchester Archaeological Trust**

Roman Circus House Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 01206 501785 email: lp@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy Date: 18.8.2017

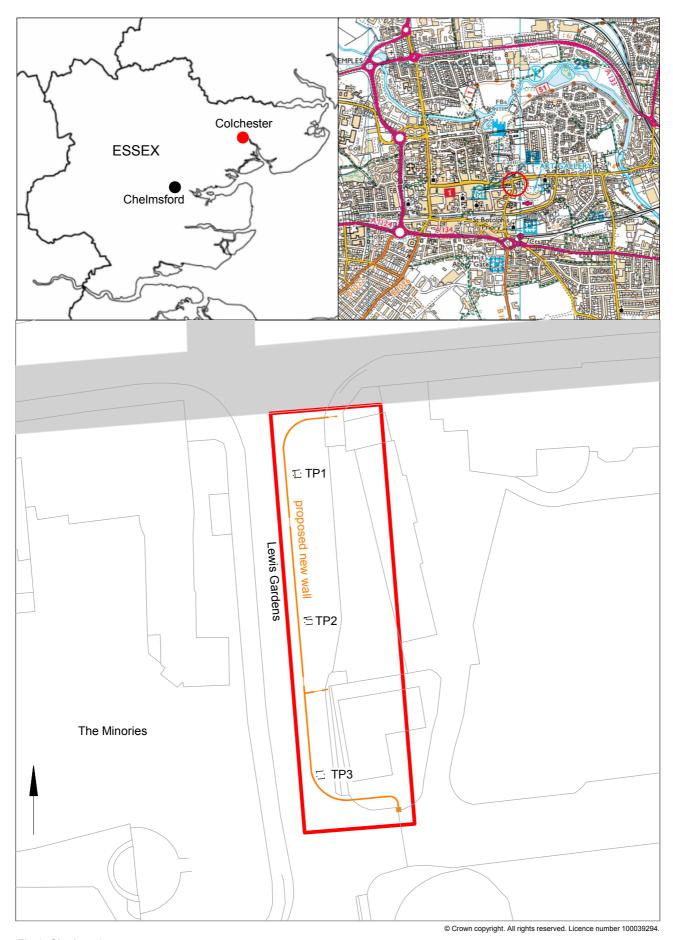


Fig 1 Site location

0 20 m

Roman street layout

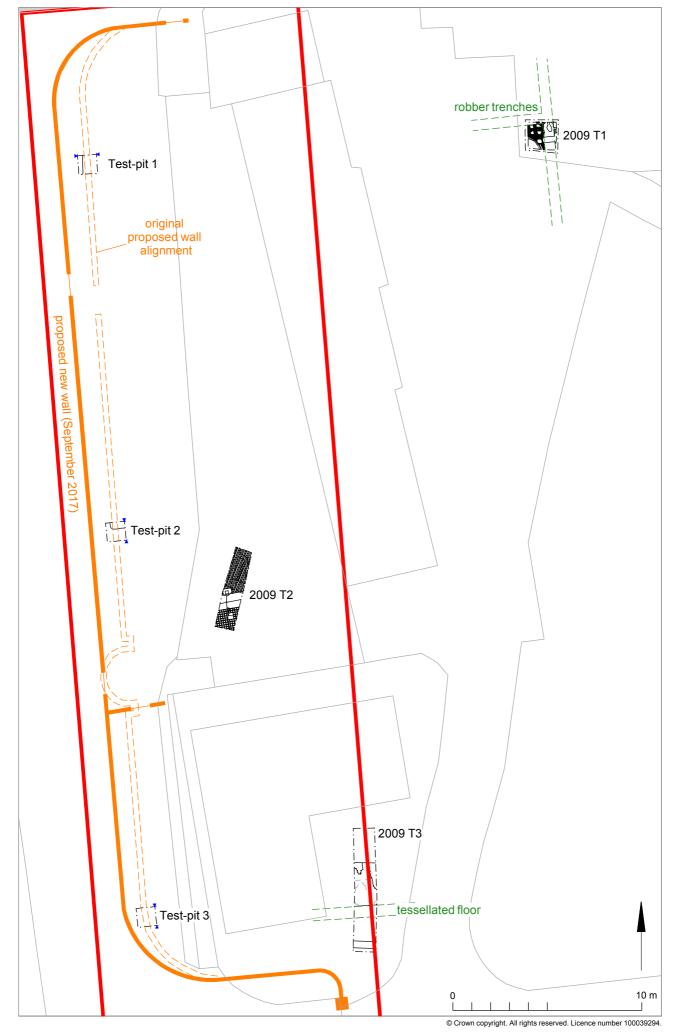
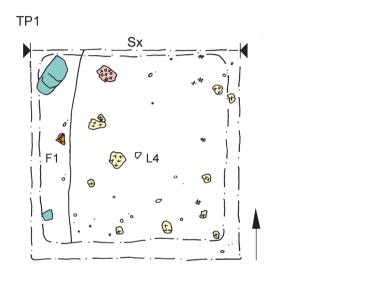


Fig 2 Test-pits in relation to 2009 evaluation trenches T1-T3 with Roman remains highlighted in green



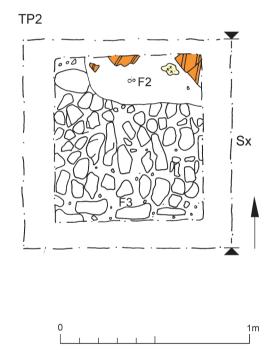
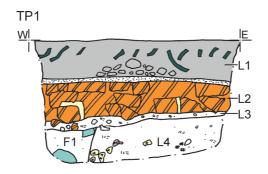
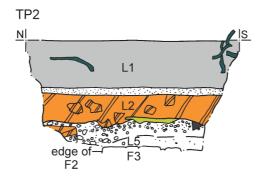
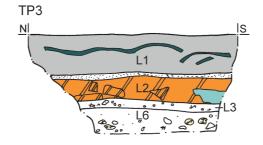


Fig 3 Test pit manual plans











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

#### **Summary sheet**

Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TM 00044 25226 (centre)	Site code: CAT project ref.: 17/07j CHER ref: ECC4049 OASIS ref: colchest3-291035
Type of work: Test-pit evaluation	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 27th-28th July 2017	Size of area investigated: 0.08ha
Location of curating museum: Colchester museum accession code COLEM: 2017.117	Funding source: Colchester Borough Council
Further seasons anticipated? Not known	Related CHER/SMR number:
Final report: CAT Report 1151	
Periods represented: modern, post	-medieval, Roman

An archaeological test-pit evaluation was carried out at Lewis Gardens, Colchester to inform the build-depths of a proposed new boundary wall. The development site is located within the southeast angle of the Roman walled town, specifically within the largely residential area of Insula 31/32. Test-pits TP1 and TP3 revealed modern and post-medieval made ground sealing probable Roman accumulation/demolition layers (L4 and L6) identified at a depth of 0.38-0.45m below current ground level (bcgl). Test-pit TP2 revealed modern and post-medieval contexts, including a cobbled surface, to a depth of 0.55m bcgl.

# Previous summaries/reports: CBC monitor: Jess Tipper Keywords: - Significance: Author of summary: Date of summary: Laura Pooley August 2017

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#### OASIS ID: colchest3-291035

Project details

Project name Archaeological test pitting at Lewis Gardens, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1JH

Short description of the project

An archaeological test-pit evaluation was carried out at Lewis Gardens, Colchester to inform the build-depths of a proposed new boundary wall. The development site is located within the southeast angle of the Roman walled town, specifically within the largely residential area of Insula 31/32. Test-pits TP1 and TP3 revealed modern and post-medieval made ground sealing probable Roman accumulation/demolition layers (L4 and L6) identified at a depth of 0.38-0.45m below current ground level (bogl). Test-pit TP2 revealed modern and post-medieval contexts,

including a cobbled surface, to a depth of 0.55m bcgl.

Previous/future

Yes / Not known

Project dates work

Any associated project reference 17/07j - Contracting Unit No.

Start: 27-07-2017 End: 28-07-2017

codes Any associated

ECC4049 - HER event no.

project reference codes

COLEM: 2017.117 - Museum accession ID

project reference codes

Field evaluation Type of project

Site status None

Current Land use Other 11 - Thoroughfare

Monument type COBBLED SURFACE Post Medieval

ACCUMULATION/DEMOLITION LAYER Roman Monument type

Significant Finds POTTERY Roman

Significant Finds CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL Roman 

Significant Finds QUERNSTONE Uncertain Significant Finds POTTERY Medieval Significant Finds POTTERY Post Medieval

Methods & techniques ""Test Pits""

Development type Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.) National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF Prompt

Position in the planning process Not known / Not recorded

**Project location** 

Country England

Site location ESSEX COLCHESTER COLCHESTER Lewis Gardens

Postcode CO1 1JH Study area 0.08 Hectares

TM 00044 25226 51.889110728588 0.907352791578 51 53 20 N 000 54 26 E Point Site coordinates

**Project creators** 

Name of Organisation Colchester Archaeological Trust

Project brief originator

none

Project design originator

director/manager

Project supervisor Alec Wade

Type of sponsor/funding Developer

**Project archives** 

Physical Archive Colchester Museum

body

Physical Archive COLEM: 2017.117 ID

Physical Contents "Ceramics", "Worked stone/lithics"

Digital Archive Colchester Museum

recipient

Digital Archive ID COLEM: 2017.117 Digital Contents "Stratigraphic"

Digital Media

"Images raster / digital photography"

available

Paper Archive Colchester Museum

recipient

Paper Archive ID COLEM: 2017.117 Paper Contents "Stratigraphic","Survey"

Paper Media available

"Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section"

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