

# Archaeological evaluation on land north of 63 Rectory Road, Stisted, Essex, CM77 8AL

February 2021



**by Laura Pooley**

with contributions by Howard Brooks

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fieldwork by Nigel Rayner with Mark Baister, Matt Perou and Nick Pryke

**commissioned by Andrew Stevenson Associates  
on behalf of Task Force Developments Ltd**

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**CAT Report 1636**

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OASIS summary sheet

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## 1 Summary

*An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out on land north of 63 Rectory Road, Stisted, Essex, in advance of the construction of three new dwellings. Located within the historic village of Stisted, which is likely of medieval origin, the evaluation revealed two phases of activity on the development site. The first dates to prehistoric period with two pits containing Bronze Age pottery and a quantity of heat-altered (burnt) stone. The second dates to the later medieval period with three ditches, a gully/plough scar and pit producing pottery sherds of 12th to 14th century date.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land north of 63 Rectory Road, Stisted, Essex which was carried out on 17th and 18th February 2021. The work was commissioned by Andrew Stevenson Associates on behalf of Task Force Developments Ltd in advance of the construction of three new dwellings. The evaluation was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Teresa O'Connor 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* (MHCLG 2019).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for trial trenching evaluation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Teresa O'Connor (ECCPS 2021), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2021).

In addition to the brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015), 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 includes extracts of the ECC brief and the Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>)

Stisted is a historic village of likely medieval origin and the centre of the village, some 400m to the southeast of the development site, contains several listed buildings dating from the 15th century onwards. To the southwest of the development site is Stisted Hall (EHER 30193), a 19th-century Grade II\* listed country house (NHLE no.1171201) with designed landscape (EHER 19953). The current golf course is now situated within this former designed landscape. An earlier manor house (HER 6385) is known to have existed on the site of Stisted Hall but was demolished before the current house was built. The manor house dated to before the 16th century and is likely to have had medieval origins. During the digging of the foundations for the present Stisted Hall, six Roman funerary urns were also uncovered, strongly suggesting the presence of a Roman cemetery. Struck flints and abraded prehistoric pottery have also been recovered from topsoil within the golf course with undated cropmarks to the northwest including linear features and large pits.

#### 4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to record the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits, and to assess the archaeological potential of the site to allow the ECCHEA to determine if further investigation is required.

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

Five trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. They were initially cut through a layer of modern make-up (L4) which was considerably thicker on the north of the site (T1-T3, c 0.6-0.9m) than to the south (T4, c 0.2-0.5m). Sealed beneath L4 was a layer of buried topsoil (L1, c 0.1-0.3m thick) and subsoil (L2, c 0.1m thick). Natural (L3) was encountered at a depth of c 0.8-1.35m below current ground level (bcgl) to the north, and c 0.4-0.8m bcgl to the south.

##### **Trench 1 (T1): L-shaped, 25m long by 1.8m wide**

Ditch F7 was aligned north-south and was recorded further to the south as F6 in Trench 3. It was a shallow U-shaped feature that was 1.1m wide by 0.2m deep. Fragments of pottery from F6 dated to the medieval period, but the only find recovered from F7 was a fragment of metalworking debris.

Pits F8, F9 and F10 were small round features (0.65-0.74m in diameter) with a shallow bowl-like cuts (0.11-0.22m deep). Pottery from F9 was of probable Bronze Age date and included two fragments of fired clay, a quantity of heat-altered (burnt) stone was also recovered from F8 and from F9.

##### **Trench 2 (T2): T-shaped, 20m long by 1.8m wide**

There were no archaeological remains in trench T2.

##### **Trench 3 (T3): 20m long by 1.8m wide**

Ditch F6 was aligned north-south and was recorded further to the north as F7 in Trench 1. It was a shallow U-shaped feature that was c 0.63-0.98m wide by 0.2m deep. The southern end of ditch F6 was cut by ditch F5.

Ditch F5 was aligned northwest to southeast and was a shallow U-shaped feature c 0.75m wide by 0.18m deep. The ditch was not present within Trench 2 to the northwest, suggesting that the ditch either terminates between the two trenches or changes alignment.

Ditch F5 also cut ditch F1. Ditch F1 was aligned northeast to southwest and was a very shallow U-shaped feature c 1m wide by 0.1m deep.

Fragments of pottery from all three ditches (F1, F5 and F6) dated from the 12th to the 14th centuries, suggesting they they are all broadly contemporary and part of the same field system. A fragment of metal-working debris was also recovered from F5.

##### **Trench 4 (T4): L-shaped, 20m long by 1.8m wide**

Small gully, or perhaps a plough scar, F4 was aligned west-north-west to south-south-east. It was a thin and shallow feature c 0.11-0.22m wide by c 0.08m deep. Fragments of tile and peg-tile from F4 could date to the late medieval or post-medieval period, but given the 12th to 14th century date of the pottery from the site a late medieval date is probably more likely.

Pit F2 to the north of F4 was c 1.8m long by at least 1.1m wide and c 0.2m deep. Fragments of pottery from the pit also dated from the 12th to the 14th centuries.

Modern service trench F3 cut both F2 and F4.



**Photograph 1** Trench 3 with ditches F1, F5 and F6 in background, looking south



**Photograph 2** Pit F8 before excavation, looking west

## 6 Finds

### 6.1 Pottery

by Howard Brooks

This is a group of prehistoric (27 sherds, 236g) and medieval (12 sherds, 143g) material from eight contexts (seven features and one surface layer). The prehistoric sherds are mostly small, undecorated and undiagnostic, so identification is based on fabric types rather than form or decoration from Nigel Brown's 1988 classification. Medieval pottery classification is based on John Cotter's 2000 work in *Colchester Archaeological Report 7*.

Context & trench	Finds no.	Sherd count	Sherd weight	Description	Provisional date
F1, T3	4	5	41	Four body sherds and one base from a fabric 20 (medieval sandy grey ware) cooking pot	12th-14th century
F2, T4	3	1	38	Base sherd from a fabric 20 cooking pot	12th-14th century
F5, T3	5	2	8	One rim and one body sherd. The rim is peculiar in that it is heavily flint tempered. Body thickness and rim are okay for medieval, but the fabric looks prehistoric. Uncertain as to whether this is residual prehistoric, or medieval. Given that both periods are represented on this site, this is probably not critical.	12th-14th century
F6, T3	6	4	34	Three body sherds and one base from a fabric 20 cooking pot	12th-14th century
F9, T1	10	1	9	Heavily flint-tempered sherd, 12mm thick, one surface light orangey brown in contrast to very dark grey core. Probably Brown (1988) fabric D	Prehistoric, probably Bronze Age
F9, T1	8	22	218	Comparatively large group of sherds. Probably two vessels: (1) 9mm thick, orange surface over pale brown layer over grey core, inner pale brown surface, sand and flint temper, Brown fabric E. 6 sherds 135g. Includes an out-turned flat topped rim. (2) Orange surface over darker grey core, inner pale brown surface, but much sandier than the first vessel, with occasional large flint. 14 sherds 83g. Brown Fabric F? <i>This is an odd group. If I had seen one or two of the sandier sherds in isolation, I might have been tempted to describe them as medieval sandy ware, perhaps slightly more sandy than usual.</i>	Prehistoric, probably Bronze to Iron Age
L2	11	4	9	Four thin (6mm) flint-tempered body sherds, probably Brown (1988) Fabric B.	Prehistoric
L2, T4	2	4	22	One body sherd and three fragments of flat-topped rim in fabric 20	13th-16th century

**Table 1** The pottery listed by context

The pottery indicates two separate periods of activity here – prehistoric and medieval. The medieval material, from the ditches and pits of T3 and T4 on the eastern and southern parts of the site, is probably too large a group to be explained as 'manure scatter', so it probably indicates domestic activity of some kind in the vicinity. The prehistoric material, by contrast, all came from pit F9 in T1. It can be noted that F9 also contained burnt flints, as did F8 (which had no pottery). So, the area intercepted by T1 at the northern end of the site appears to contain a small group of prehistoric pits.

## 6.2 Fired clay and tile

by Howard Brooks

Context & trench	Finds no.	Description
F4, T4	1	1) One piece of peg-tile, 83g. No peg hole visible. Orangey fabric with large sand and shell grits in one surface. Has a hand-made feel. Late medieval or post-medieval?  2) Orange and not obviously tempered fine fabric, with a distinct mica glint, as in Hedingham Ware. But it looks like a spall from a tile, rather than a sherd. Medieval or later.
F9, T1	10	One small (9g) lump of marbled, fired clay with no surfaces. From an unidentifiable object
F9, T1	8	Fired clay lump, no surfaces, slightly marbled pale brown/ and orange fabric, occasional large flints, some vesicules. Burnt?

**Table 2** The fired clay and tile listed by context

The peg-tile in F4 does not look factory-produced, and it is possibly later medieval rather than post-medieval. This might bring the date of F4 closer to medieval date of the other featured in T4.

The two pieces of fired clay in F9 are too small and undiagnostic to be identifiable, though the possible burnt appearance of one of them may be connected with the burnt flints in that context.

## 6.3 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

A large quantity of burnt (heat-altered) stone came from pits F8 and F9. Most of the material comprised of sandstone pebbles (complete, cracked and fragmented) but did include a few quartzite pieces and some flint.

The burnt flints were small- to medium-sized irregular broken pieces, most of which had been cracked and crazed from the heat and discoloured various shades of white (calcified), grey, pink and red. The sandstone/quartzite was less broken-up, having better thermal properties, with many representing parts of rounded stones or small pebbles. Some were discoloured various shades of red, pink and white, but most showed only slight traces of being heat-affected.

Burnt stones are commonly associated with prehistoric occupation, often occurring as groups in pits. Created when in close proximity to heat, notably ovens, hearths and cremations, deliberately heated stones could also have been used as an indirect method for heating water and are often referred to as 'pot boilers' (although their precise use is debated). The types of stones utilised here, flint and sandstone/quartzite, occur in the underlying gravel deposits and would have been available to be collected from the surrounding area.

All of the burnt (heat-altered) stone has been recorded in Table 3 and discarded.

Two fragments of metalworking debris also came from medieval ditches F5 and F7.

Context & trench	Finds no.	Description
F5, T3	5	<b>Metalworking debris:</b> Fragment, 86.3g
F7, T1	7	<b>Metalworking debris:</b> Fragment, 187.0g
F8, T1	12	<b>Burnt pebbles:</b> 40 pieces at 3.98kg, cracked and fragmented, some burnt red/white, most only show slight traces of being heat-affected. <b>Burnt flint:</b> 19 pieces at 740g, cracked and crazed, burnt shades of red, pink, white and grey.

F9, T1	9	<b>Burnt pebbles:</b> 49 pieces at 8.58kg, some complete, others cracked and fragmented, some burnt red and pink, most only show slight traces of being heat-affected. <b>Burnt quartzite pebbles:</b> 5 pieces at 724g, cracked, burnt white/off-white.
F9, T1	10	<b>Burnt flint:</b> one piece, 20.9g, cracked, crazed and burnt white

**Table 3** Miscellaneous finds listed by context.

## 7 Environmental assessment

A single sample (10L) was taken from undated pit F10. The sample was processed by CAT using a Siraf-type flotation device with flot collected in a 300-micron mesh sieve then dried. Processing the sample revealed that there were no environmental remains present.

## 8 Conclusion

Archaeological evaluation on land north of 63 Rectory Road revealed two distinct phases of activity. The first, probably dating to the Bronze Age, is focussed on trench T1 to the north of the site and consists of two prehistoric pits which, between them, contained a quantity of heat-altered (burnt) stone along with some pottery and fired clay. Undated pit F10 may also be associated with this phase of activity.

The second phase belongs to the later medieval period with three ditches, a gully/plough scar and pit containing dating evidence from the 12th to the 14th centuries. Stisted is a historic village of likely medieval origin, and the evidence from this evaluation would indicate medieval activity on the development site. It is likely that the ditches are field boundaries and this activity is probably of agricultural origin.

## 9 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Andrew Stevenson Associates and Task Force Developments Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by N Rayner with M Baister, M Perou and N Pryke. Figures are by R Mathieson, L Pooley and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Teresa O'Connor

## 10 References

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

- |                          |       |  |
|--------------------------|-------|--|
| Brown, N                 | 1988  | 'A Late Bronze Age enclosure at Lofts Farm, Essex', <i>Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society</i> , Volume <b>54</b> , 249-302   |
| Brown, N & Glazebrook, J | 2000  | <i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper <b>8</b> (EAA <b>8</b> ) |
| CAR 7                    | 2000  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by J Cotter. Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd                   |
| CAT                      | 2021  | <i>Health &amp; Safety Policy</i>  |
| CIfA                     | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i>   |
| CIfA                     | 2014b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>  |
| Cotter, J                | 2000  | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> . Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd                                |
| ECCPS                    | 2020  | <i>Brief for trial trenching evaluation on land off Rectory Road, Stisted, Braintree</i> , by T O'Connor   |
| Gurney, D                | 2003  | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers <b>14</b> (EAA <b>14</b> )                                      |
| Historic England         | 2015  | <i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>  |
| Medlycott, M             | 2011  | <i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers <b>24</b> (EAA <b>24</b> )             |
| MHCLG                    | 2019  | <i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  |



## 11 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
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 (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, <a href="http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main">http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main</a>
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

## 12 Contents of archive

**Finds:** Part of one box

### **Paper record**

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1636)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Original site record (trench sheets, sections)

Site digital photos and log

Inked sections

### **Digital record**

The report (CAT Report 1636)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Site data

Survey data

## 13 Archive deposition

The 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 Braintree Museum under reference SSRR21.

**Distribution list:**

Andrew Stevenson Associates  
Task Force Developments Ltd  
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor  
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



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Checked by: Philip Crummy  
Date: 30.3.2021

**Appendix 1 Context list**

Trench no.	Context	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
All	L1	-	Topsoil	Soft moist dark grey/brown/black silt	Modern
All	L2	2, 11	Subsoil	Soft moist medium grey/brown silt	Modern
All	L3	-	Natural	Natural clay	Post-glacial
All	L4	-	Make-up/ accumulation	Soft moist light/medium/dark yellow/orange/grey/brown sandy clayey loam	Modern
T3	F1	4	Ditch	Mid yellow/brown clay	Medieval
T4	F2	3	Pit	Firm moist medium orange/brown clay	Medieval
T4	F3	-	Service trench	-	Modern
T4	F4	1	Shallow gully/ plough scar	Friable moist dark grey/brown silty clay with charcoal flecks	Medieval/ post-medieval
T3	F5	5	Linear	Dark medium silty clay with rare stones and charcoal flecking	Medieval
T3	F6	6	Ditch	Firm mid grey/brown silty-clay with rare to occasional charcoal flecks and small stones	Medieval
T1	F7	7	Linear	Firm moist medium grey/brown silty clay	Medieval
T1	F8	12	Pit	Soft firm moist dark grey/brown silty clay with charcoal flecks and inclusions of: stone 80%	Bronze Age
T1	F9	8, 9	Pit	Soft moist medium grey/brown silty clay with charcoal flecks, daub flecks and inclusions of: stone 80%	Prehistoric, probably Bronze Age
T1	F10	10	Pit	Soft moist medium/dark grey/brown silty clay with charcoal flecks, daub flecks and inclusions of: stone 1%	Undated

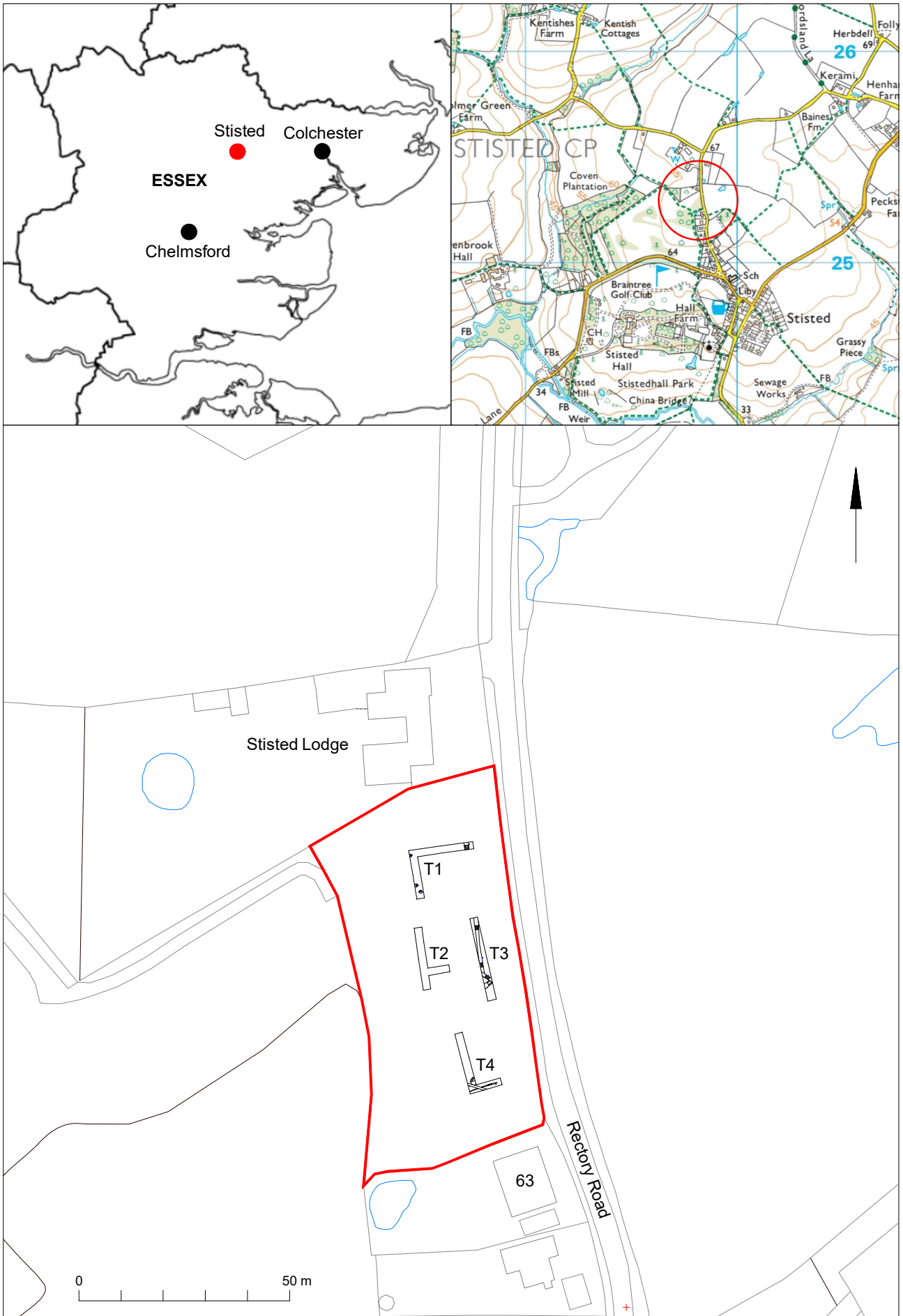


Fig 1 Site location.

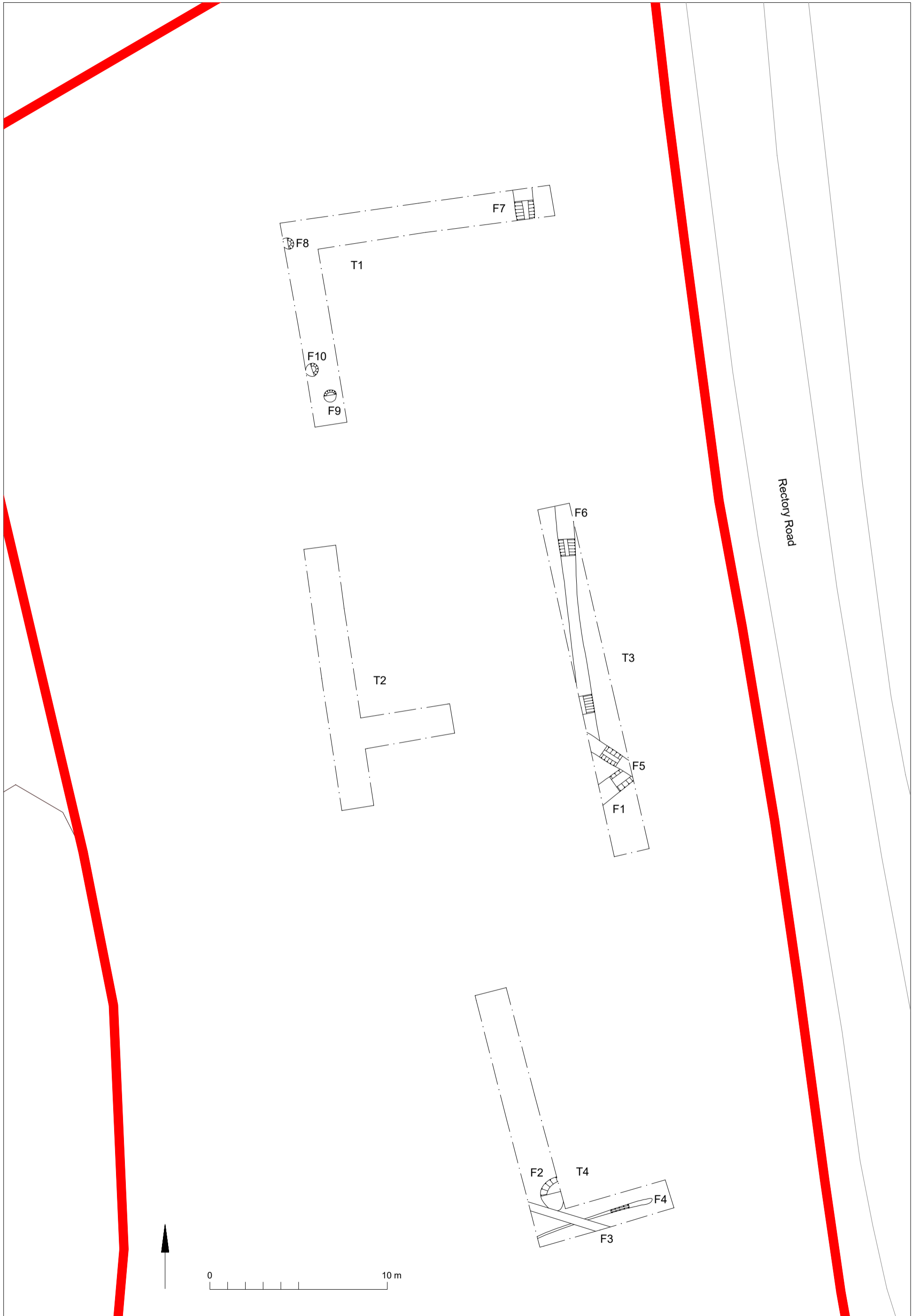


Fig 2 Results

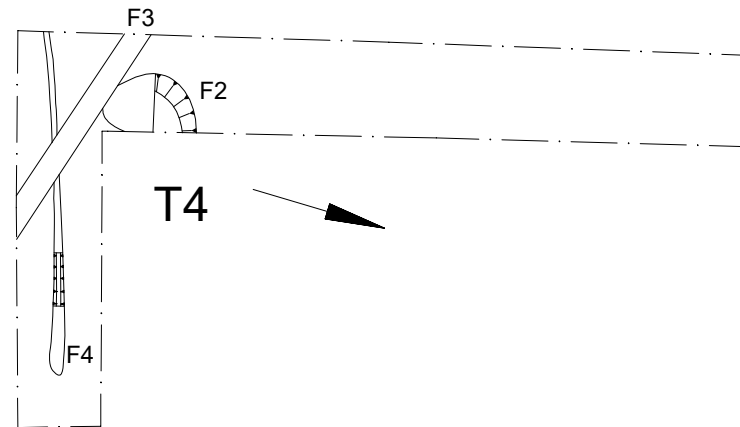
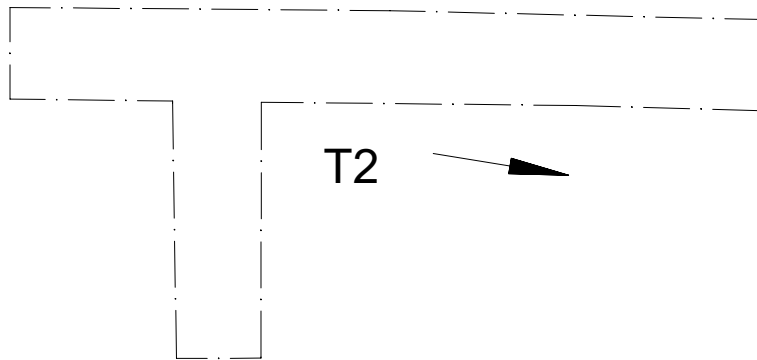
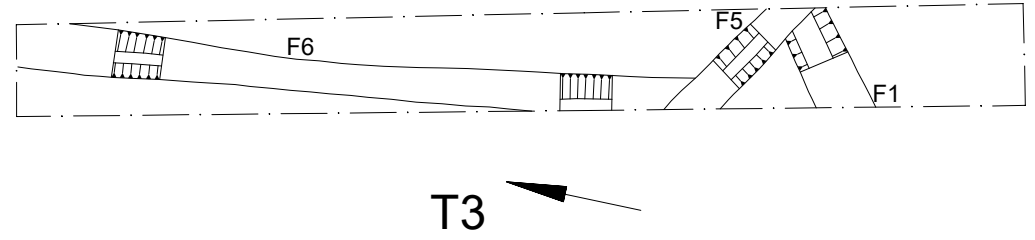
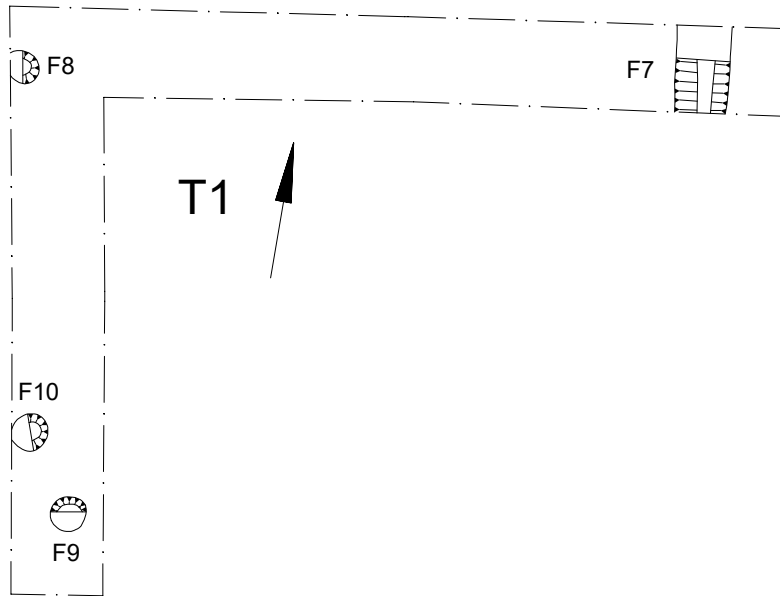


Fig 3 Trench plans



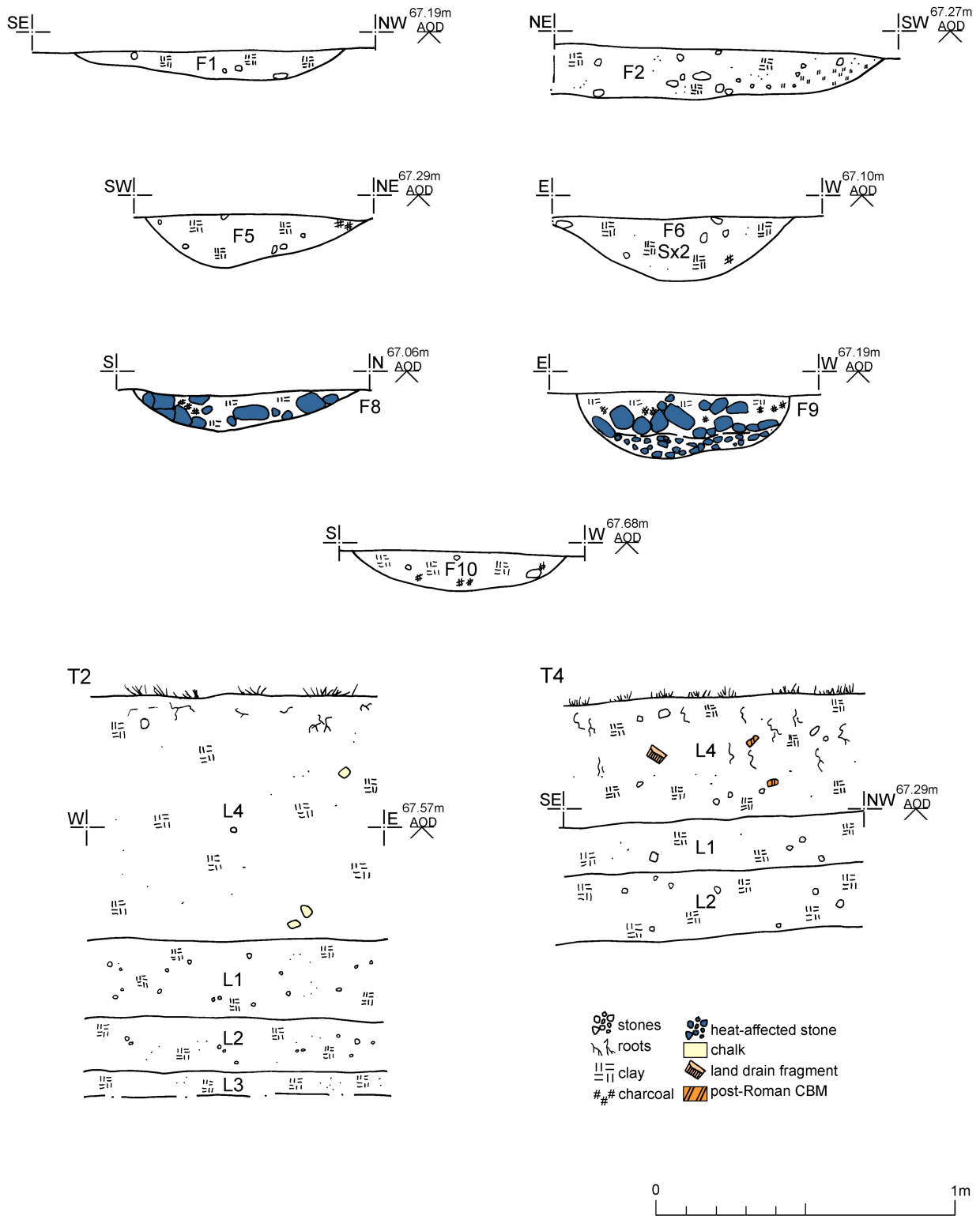


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections.

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**OASIS ID: colchest3-414036**

## Project details

Project name	Archaeological evaluation on land north of 63 Rectory Road, Stisted, Essex, CM77 8AL
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation (four trial-trenches) was carried out on land north of 63 Rectory Road, Stisted, Essex, in advance of the construction of three new dwellings. Located within the historic village of Stisted, which is likely of medieval origin, the evaluation revealed two phases of activity on the development site. The first dates to prehistoric period with two pits containing Bronze Age pottery and a quantity of heat-altered (burnt) stone. The second dates to the later medieval period with three ditches, a gully/plough scar and pit producing pottery sherds of 12th to 14th century date.
Project dates	Start: 17-02-2021 End: 18-02-2021
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	2020/01h - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	SSRR21 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	18/01665/OUT - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	PITS Bronze Age
Monument type	DITCHES Medieval
Monument type	PIT Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Bronze Age
Significant Finds	BURNT STONE Bronze Age
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	TILE Medieval
Methods & techniques	""Sample Trenches""
Development type	Housing estate
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

## Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX BRAINTREE STISTED land north of 63 Rectory Road
Postcode	CM77 8AL
Study area	0.35 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 79816 25278 51.896500598151 0.613743480152 51 53 47 N 000 36 49 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 67m Max: 67.2m

## Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	HEM Team Officer, ECC
Project design originator	Mark Baister
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Nigel Rayner
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

## Project archives



Physical Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Physical Archive ID	SSRR21
Physical Contents	"Ceramics","Industrial"
Digital Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Digital Archive ID	SSRR21
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Paper Archive ID	SSRR21
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Miscellaneous Material","Plan","Report","Section"

### Project bibliography 1

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