

Archaeological evaluation at Purford Green Development Site, Little Brays, Harlow, Essex, CM18 6HP

October 2021



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CAT Report 1721

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Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aim	2
5	Results	2
6	Finds	3
7	Conclusion	4
8	Acknowledgements	5
9	References	5
10	Abbreviations and glossary	5
11	Contents of archive	6
12	Archive deposition	6

Figures after p6

OASIS summary sheet

List of photographs, tables and figures

Cover: Extract from Chapman and André's map of Essex, 1777

Photograph 1	T5 trench shot, looking northeast	3
Photograph 2	T6 trench shot, looking north	3
Table 1	Details on the main types of ceramics and pottery	4
Table 2	Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features and contexts	4
Table 3	Approximate dates for the individual features	4
Fig 1	Site location and trench proposal	
Fig 2	Evaluation results	
Fig 3	Feature and representative sections	

1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (seven trial-trenches) was carried out at Purford Green Development Site, Little Brays, Harlow, Essex, in advance of an application to construct thirty-five new dwellings with associated infrastructure and landscaping. The site lies in an area which previous archaeological investigations have identified as one of both Iron Age and medieval activity. Two medieval or post-medieval ditches which may be associated with the abovementioned medieval activity in the vicinity were uncovered, as well as a modern pit and an undatable pit or ditch. It should be noted, however, that ground reduction in the north of the site during the construction of the school which originally stood here would have destroyed archaeological remains which might have existed here while others could have been obscured by flooding which affected all of the evaluation trenches.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Purford Green Development Site, Little Brays, Harlow, Essex which was carried out during 4th-5th October 2021. The work was commissioned by Daniel Jefferis of Essex Housing in advance of an application to construct thirty-five new dwellings and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), Historic Environment Advisor Maria Medlycott 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 an *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation*, detailing the required archaeological work, written by Maria Medlycott (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 Historic England's *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 evaluation* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background 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>).

The eastern boundary of the site follows the parish boundary between Netteswell and Latton, which was likely delineated during the early medieval period. To the south and west lie historic footpaths and field boundaries. Excavations at other sites in Essex have identified a link between the routes of historic footpaths and medieval settlement sites.

A geophysical survey carried out before the construction of the Harlow Rugby Club, to the north of the proposed development site, revealed numerous features. The subsequent excavation by Archaeological Solutions uncovered Iron Age and medieval features including an Iron Age cremation burial. Worked Neolithic flints also suggest earlier prehistoric occupation within the area (ECC48782).

A few find spots of Middle to Late Iron Age coins have been recorded close to the site.

The Church of St Andrew is located to the northwest of the site. The church was constructed in the 13th century with additions made in the 15th century (ECC3810). Traces of earthworks suggest a deserted medieval village may lie within the vicinity (ECC3811).

Work on the main roads around the site in 1952-3 revealed 17th-century pottery kilns to the north, northeast and southeast of the site (ECC1922, ECC3768 and ECC3769). A further post-medieval kiln is recorded to the south at Pinchions (ECC18121). An evaluation undertaken by CAT at Holly Cross Catholic Primary School revealed no archaeological features but some medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered, and these may be related to the abovementioned kilns (CAT Report 756, ECC48388).

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 2-3)

Seven trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The trenches were 30m long and 1.8m wide.

Trenches T5, T6 and T7, within the southern half of the site, were cut through modern topsoil (L1, c 0.16-0.29m thick, firm, moist/wet medium grey/brown silty-clay) and a further layer of soil (L2, c 0.11-0.23m thick, firm, moist medium grey/brown clay) onto natural (L3, firm, moist medium yellow/brown clay, encountered at a depth of 0.36-0.47m below current ground level [bcgl]). During the construction of the building which previously stood here, the northern half of the site was stripped to a depth of c 0.45-1m bcgl into L3. Trenches T1, T2, T3 and T4, which were located in this part of the site, were therefore cut directly into L3.

Sondages were excavated in trenches T1, T2, T3, T4, T6 and T7 to confirm the identification of L3 as natural.

There were no archaeological features in trenches T1, T2, T3, T4 or T7. It should be noted, however, that the stripping of the northern half of the site, mentioned above, would have destroyed any archaeological deposits within this area. In addition, all trenches were at least partially flooded due to heavy rain and the high water table, which would have obscured any features which might have been present.

Trench 5 (T5): 30m long by 1.8m wide

Medieval/post-medieval ditch F3 lay on a NW-SE alignment and was 1.46m wide and 0.22m deep.



Photograph 1 T5 trench shot – looking northeast

Trench 6 (T6): 30m long by 1.8m wide

Undatable pit F1 extended beyond the limit of excavation (LOE) but its exposed extent was 0.7m wide and 0.1m deep.

?Modern pit or ditch F2 was aligned NE-SW. The feature extended beyond the LOE; its exposed dimensions were 1.67m wide and 0.4m deep.

Medieval/post-medieval ditch F4 was oriented E-W and was 1.08m wide and 0.15m deep.



Photograph 2 T6 trench shot – looking north

6 Finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

The evaluation produced a very small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) with just eight sherds with a weight of 54g (Table 1). This material came from three features: pit/ditch F2, ditch F3, and ditch F4 (Table 2). Three sherds of medieval Colchester-type ware (fabric F21) with a weight of 11g was recovered from ditches F3 and F4. Two sherds of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile with

a weight of 38g came from pit/ditch F2 and ditch F3. Finally, a small fragment of brick (3g), possibly dating to the 19th or 20th century, was recovered from pit/ditch F2.

Ceramic material	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
Pottery	3	11	4
CBM	5	43	9
All	8	54	7

Table 1 Details on the main types of ceramics and pottery

Context	Description	No.	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
F2	Pit/ditch	2	39	20
F3	Ditch	3	9	3
F4	Ditch	3	6	2
Total		8	54	7

Table 2 Quantities of pottery and CBM from specific features and contexts

Conclusion

Table 3 summarizes the dating evidence for the features which contained dateable pottery and ceramics. Pit/ditch F2 is possibly modern while ditches F3 and F4 could date from the 15th to the mid-16th century on the account of sherds of late Colchester late medieval type-ware (CAR 7, 108-9).

Context	Description	Post-Roman	CBM	Date approx.
F2	Pit/ditch	-	PT BR Baked clay	19th-20th century?
F3	Ditch	F21	PT	Late medieval/post-medieval
F4	Ditch	F21	-	Late medieval/post-medieval

Table 3 Approximate dates for the individual features

7 Conclusion

Four features were uncovered during this evaluation: a pit, two ditches and a pit or a ditch.

Of greatest significance were the two ditches, which dated to the 15th to the mid 16th century. It is possible that these deposits are related to the medieval and post-medieval remains uncovered during excavations carried out in 2016 some 470m to the north in advance of the construction of Harlow Rugby Club. Early Ordnance Survey mapping of the area depicts the site as lying within fields, and so the modern pit is likely the product of agricultural activity here prior to the construction of the school which formerly stood at the site.

Despite the sparsity of remains uncovered during this evaluation, it should be borne in mind that the aforementioned ground reduction within the north of the site during the construction of the school might have destroyed archaeological deposits, while the flooding which affected the trenches might have obscured further features. It is

possible, therefore, that this is an area far more rich in archaeological remains than the limited results of this investigation indicate.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Daniel Jefferis and Essex Housing for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, fieldwork was carried out by B Holloway with N Pryke, A Ronn, C Hill and Z Eksen. Figures are by C Lister, B Holloway and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Maria Medlycott.

9 References

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

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 8 (EAA 8)
CAR 7	2000	<i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85,</i> by J Cotter
CAT	2020	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT Report 756	2014	<i>An archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching at Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy, Traceys Road, Harlow, Essex,</i> by A Wightman
ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
ECCPS	2021	<i>Brief for trial trenching and excavation for Purford Green development Site, Purford Green, Harlow,</i> by M Medlycott
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14)
Historic England	2016	<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 24 (EAA 24)
MHCLG	2019	<i>National Planning Policy Framework.</i> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	ceramic building material, ie brick/tile
ClfA	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'
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
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	O nline A ccess to the I ndex of A rchaeological I nvestigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
peg-tile	rectangular thin tile with peg-hole(s) used mainly for roofing, first appeared c AD1200 and continued in use to present day, but commonly post-medieval to modern
post-medieval	from c AD 1500 to c 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s

wsj written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1721)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Original site record (trench sheet, sections)

Site digital photos and log

Inked sections

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1721)

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log

Graphic files

Survey data

Site data

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 Harlow Museum under site code HAPG21.

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Distribution list:

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Date: 13.10.2020

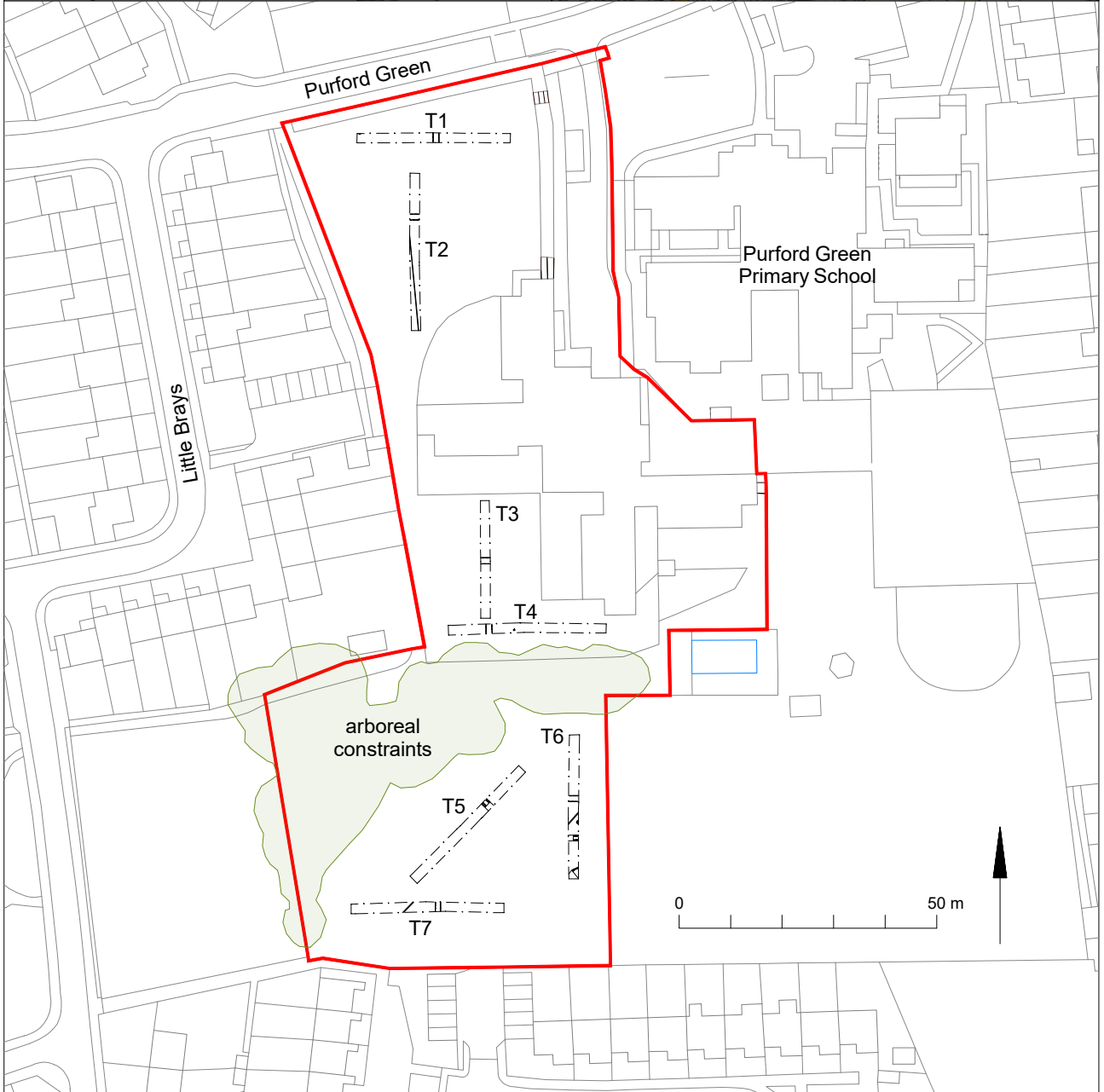
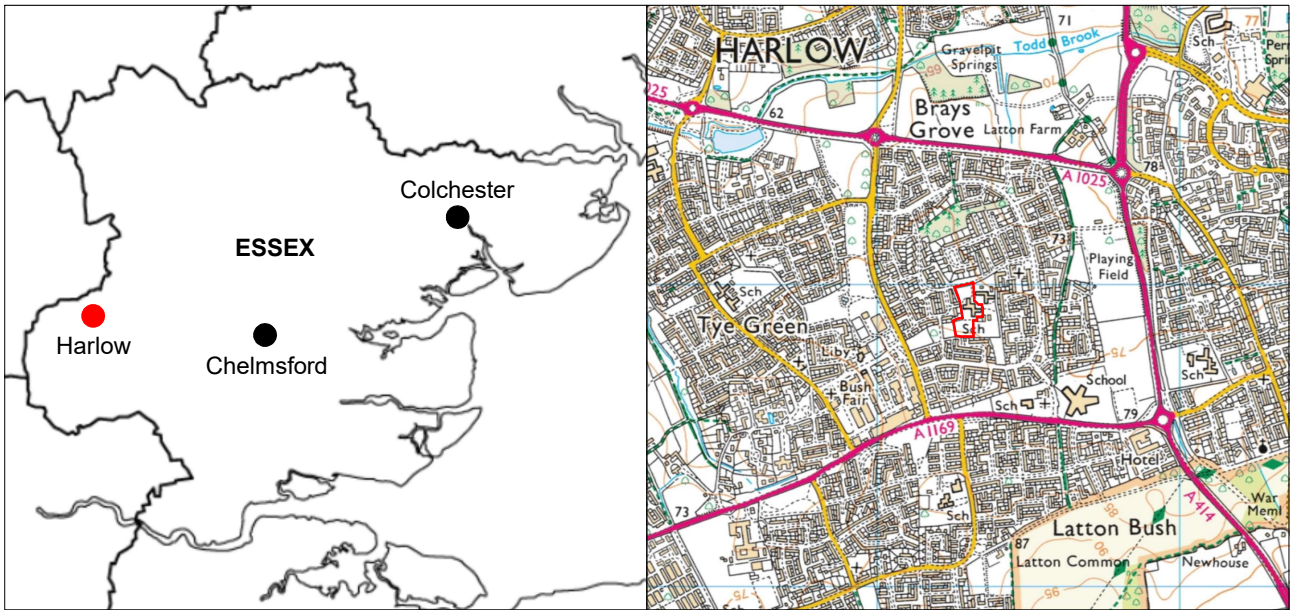


Fig 1 Site location

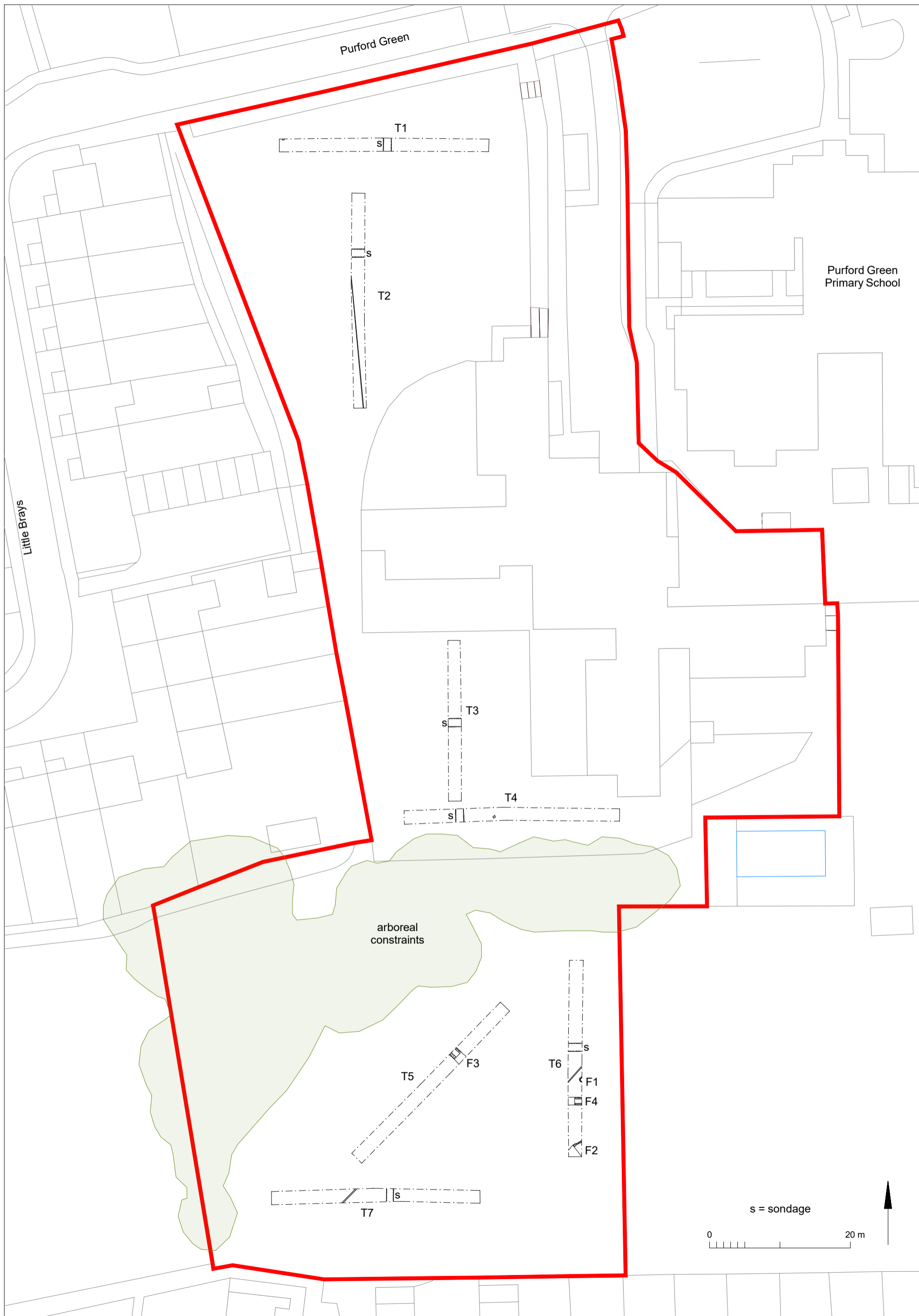


Fig 2 Evaluation results (modern features and drains in grey)

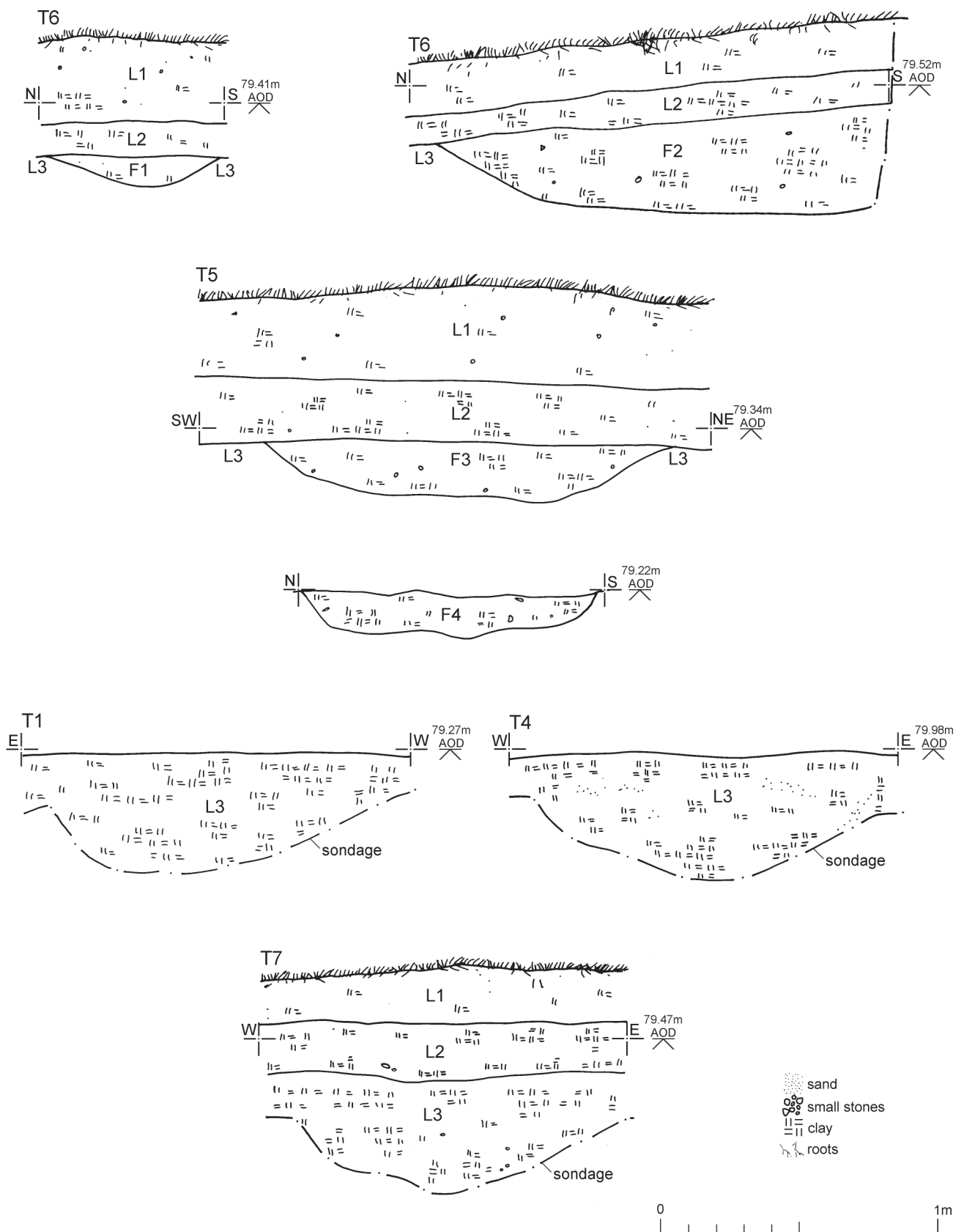


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

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OASIS ID: colchest3-427823

Project details

Project name	archaeological evaluation at Purford Green Development Site, Little Brays, Harlow, Essex, CM18 6HP
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation (seven trial-trenches) was carried out at Purford Green Development Site, Little Brays, Harlow, Essex, in advance of an application to construct thirty-five new dwellings with associated infrastructure and landscaping. The site lies in an area which previous archaeological investigations have identified as one of both Iron Age and medieval activity. Two medieval or post-medieval ditches which may be associated with the abovementioned medieval activity in the vicinity were uncovered, as well as a modern pit and an undatable pit or ditch. It should be noted, however, that ground reduction in the north of the site would have destroyed archaeological remains which might have existed here while others could have been obscured by flooding which affected all of the evaluation trenches.
Project dates	Start: 04-10-2021 End: 05-10-2021
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HW/FUL/20/00569 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	2021/07p - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	HAPG21 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	DITCH Medieval
Monument type	DITCH Post Medieval
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Monument type	DITCH Modern
Monument type	PIT Modern
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Modern
Significant Finds	CBM Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Modern
Methods & techniques	""Sample Trenches""
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
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 HARLOW HARLOW Purford Green Development Site, Little Brays, Harlow, Essex
Postcode	CM18 6HP
Study area	1.05 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 46300 08902 51.759189731857 0.120045990217 51 45 33 N 000 07 12 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 79.22m Max: 79.32m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	HEM Team Officer, ECC
Project design originator	Emma Holloway
Project director/manager	Adam Wightman
Project director/manager	Chris Lister

Project supervisor Ben Holloway
 Type of sponsor/funding body Developer
 Name of sponsor/funding body Essex Housing

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient Harlow Museum
 Digital Archive ID HAPG21
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
 Paper Archive recipient Harlow Museum
 Paper Archive ID HAPG21
 Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Photograph", "Report", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

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