

Colchester Archaeological Trust



CAT Report 1895
issued January 2023

**Archaeological evaluation at 30 Bridge Street,
Writtle, Essex, CM1 3EX: January 2023**



CAT project ref.: 2022/11c
ECC code: WRBS22

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Writtle, Essex, CM1 3EX: January 2023**

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Planning ref.: 22/00732/FUL

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**fieldwork by Ben Holloway with Alexander Smith and
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commissioned by the landowner

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out at 30 Bridge Street, Writtle, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. The site lies to the east of the historic core of Writtle, which traces its origins back to the medieval period, and northwest of a bridge spanning the River Wid at a point which has likely formed a crossing over the river since the medieval period. Despite lying in an archaeologically-sensitive area only two pits – one medieval or post-medieval and one modern – were uncovered.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at 30 Bridge Street, Writtle, Essex on 9th January 2023. The work was commissioned by the landowner, and took place in advance of the construction of a new dwelling.

In response to consultation with Essex County Council Place Services (ECCPS), the Historic Environment Advisor 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 2021).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation and Excavation at 30 Bridge Street, Writtle* written by Mark Baister and detailing the required archaeological work (ECCPS 2022), and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2022).

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 2016), 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* (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 Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the site has a bedrock geology of London clay formation (clay, silt and sand) with superficial deposits of Head (clay, silt, sand and gravel), bordering onto the River Wid where the superficial deposit contains alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel).

The village is located on a raised area of land above a flood plain, at the confluence of the Rivers Can and Wid. When the Domesday survey was issued in 1086, Writtle was the most substantial settlement in the area, a royal manor comprising of some 194 households. Following the collapse of the Roman bridges spanning the Can and Chelmer rivers, the main route linking Colchester and London was redirected through the town, precipitating its development and economic growth (ECC 2006, 10).

The historic medieval core of the village is centred around Writtle Green, which is located approximately 275m to the west of the development site. Bridge Street runs eastwards from the green to a crossing over the River Wid, just southeast of the site. The current bridge was built in 1891 but this has almost certainly formed a crossing point over the river since the medieval period. An undated burial was uncovered during the construction of the current bridge, suggesting that further burials may lie here (EHER 716).

¹ British Geological Survey – <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/?>

Two test-pit excavations were undertaken in the village of Writtle between 2009 and 2014. In that time a total of 631 small archaeological test pits were excavated by 200 local secondary school children as part of the Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) programme run by Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA) at the University of Cambridge (Collins 2017). In the garden of 6 Drake House, post-medieval Delft ware pottery was recovered (EHER 48891). Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery was also found in another test-pit excavated nearby, in the garden to the rear of 15 Lawford Lane (EHER 48813; EHER 48890).

Several cropmark complexes and features recorded by aerial photography lie on the eastern side of the River Wid. Some of these include rectilinear features thought to represent part of a water-meadow (EHER 14057-8), while the area just to the west of Beeches Road includes boundaries and faint ring-ditches (EHER 853).

For more information on the area see the *Chelmsford Borough Characterisation Project* (ECC 2006).

4 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were 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)

Two trial-trenches were machine-excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. Trench T1 was 5m by 5.5m and trench T2 was 16m long and 1.8m wide. Trench T1 was positioned to avoid an ecological exclusion zone.

The trenches were cut through modern topsoil (L1, 0.42-0.45m thick) and a buried soil layer (L2, 0.12-0.23m thick) onto natural (L3, encountered at a depth of 0.55-0.66m below current ground level).

There were no archaeological remains in trench T2.

Trench 1

Pit F1 was located in the northeast corner of the trench. It was 0.35m wide and 0.06m deep. It contained a fragment of medieval or post-medieval peg-tile.

Pit F2 lay immediately to the north of F1. It was 0.65m wide and 0.13m deep. It produced a sherd of modern pottery, a fragment of post-Roman brick, a fragment of peg-tile and a fragment of coke.



Photograph 1 T1 trench shot – looking north northeast

6 Finds

6.1 Ceramic finds

by Dr Matthew Loughton

Four sherds of pottery and ceramic building material (henceforth CBM) with a weight of 60g were recovered during the evaluation (Table 1). The mean sherd weight is 15g. This material came from pits F1 and F2 (Table 2).

Pottery

Pit F2 produced one small sherd (2g) of Staffordshire-type white earthenwares (F48D) dating to the 19th-20th century.

Ceramic building material (CBM)

Sherds of medieval/post-medieval peg-tile were recovered from posthole F1 (15g) and pit F2 (9g) while a fragment of post-Roman brick (34g) came from pit F2.

6.2 Miscellaneous finds

by Laura Pooley

Three small and abraded fragments of lava quern (53.8g) were recovered from L2 (finds no.1), and a small fragment of coal/coke (2.1g) came from F2 (finds no.2). All have been discarded.

7 Conclusion

Excavations at this site revealed two pits. One dated to the medieval or post-medieval periods, while the other dated to the modern period. Their proximity, however, and the presence of peg-tile in both, suggests that they might be contemporaneous. Some fragments of quernstone were also recovered from accumulation layer L2.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank the landowner for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, A Wightman and L Pooley, with fieldwork carried out by B Holloway with A

Smith and M Perou. Figures were compiled by C Lister, B Holloway and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Mark Baister.

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)
CAT	2022	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT	2022	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for an evaluation by trial-trenching at 30 Bridge Street, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3EX</i>
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluation.</i> Revised October 2020
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.</i> Revised October 2020
CIfA	2014c	<i>Code of Conduct.</i> Revised October 2022
Collins, C	2017	<i>Archaeological Test Pit Excavations in Writtle, Essex: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014.</i> Access Cambridge Archaeology
ECC	2006	<i>Chelmsford Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Project.</i> Essex County Council Historic Environment
ECCPS	2022	<i>Brief for Archaeological evaluation and excavation at 30 Bridge Street, Writtle,</i> by M Baister
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14)
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 24 (EAA 24)
MHCLG	2021	<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
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	a single unit of excavation, which is often referred to numerically, and can be any feature, layer or find
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	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
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
ws	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: none retained

Digital record

The report (CAT Report 1895)
ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation
Site digital photographs, thumbnails and log
Graphic files
Survey data
Site data

12 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 Chelmsford Museum under project ref. WRBS22 and with the Archaeological Data Service.

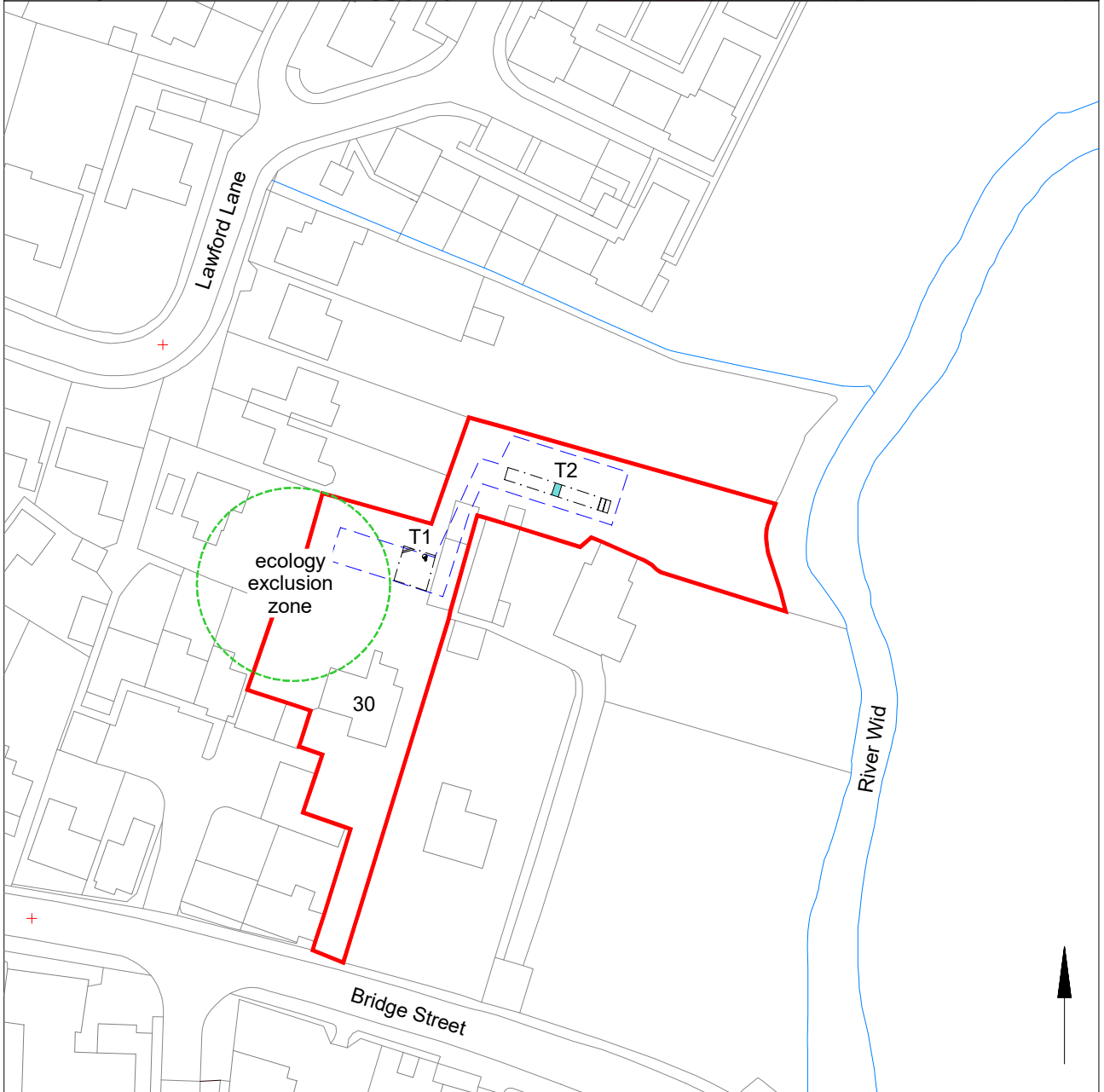
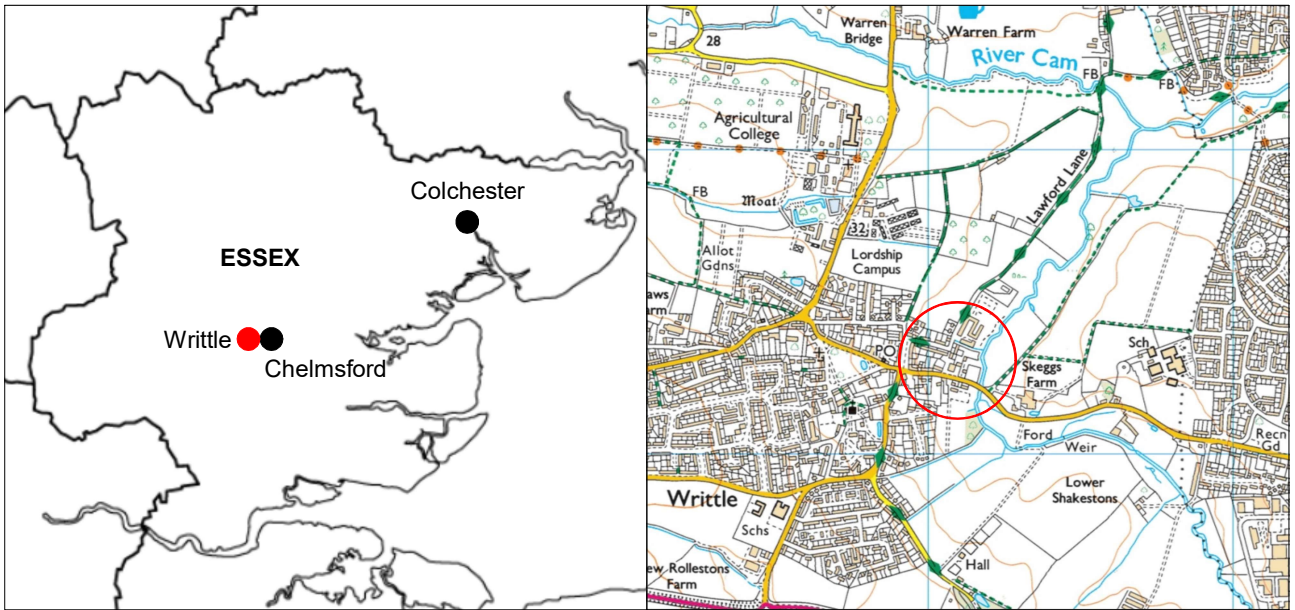
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Distribution list:

The landowner
ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor
Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Context list

Context Number	Trench number	Finds Number	Feature / layer type	Description	Date
L1	All	-	Topsoil	Friable, moist dark grey/brown silty-clay with CBM flecks	Modern
L2	All	1	Buried soil	Friable, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay	Undatable
L3	All	-	Natural	Friable, moist light yellow/brown clay	Post-glacial
F1	1	3	Posthole	Friable, moist medium grey/brown silty-clay	Medieval/ post-medieval
F2	1	2	Pit	Friable, moist medium/dark grey/brown silty-clay	Modern



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Fig 1 Site location, proposed development dashed blue.

0 50 m

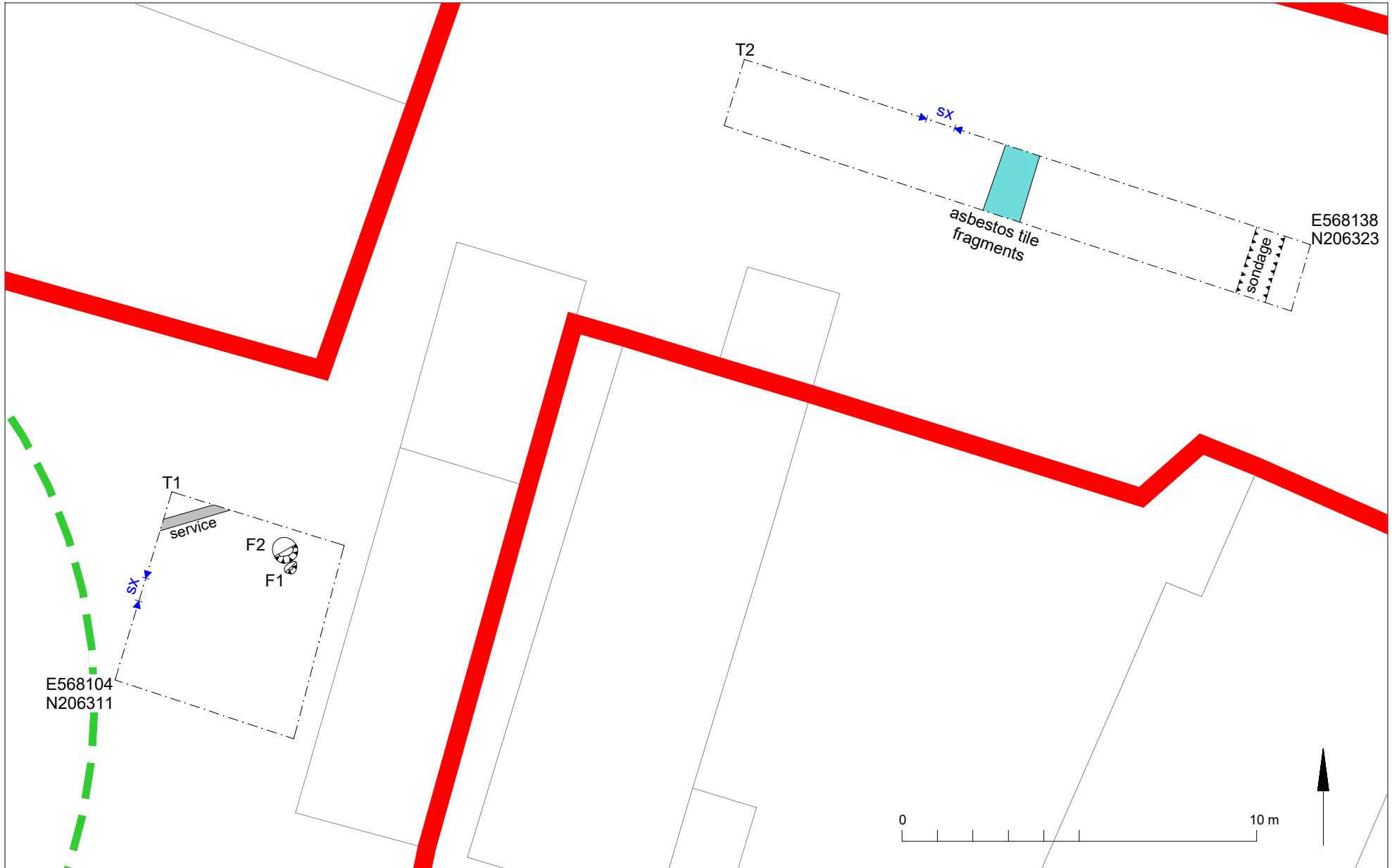


Fig 2 Results

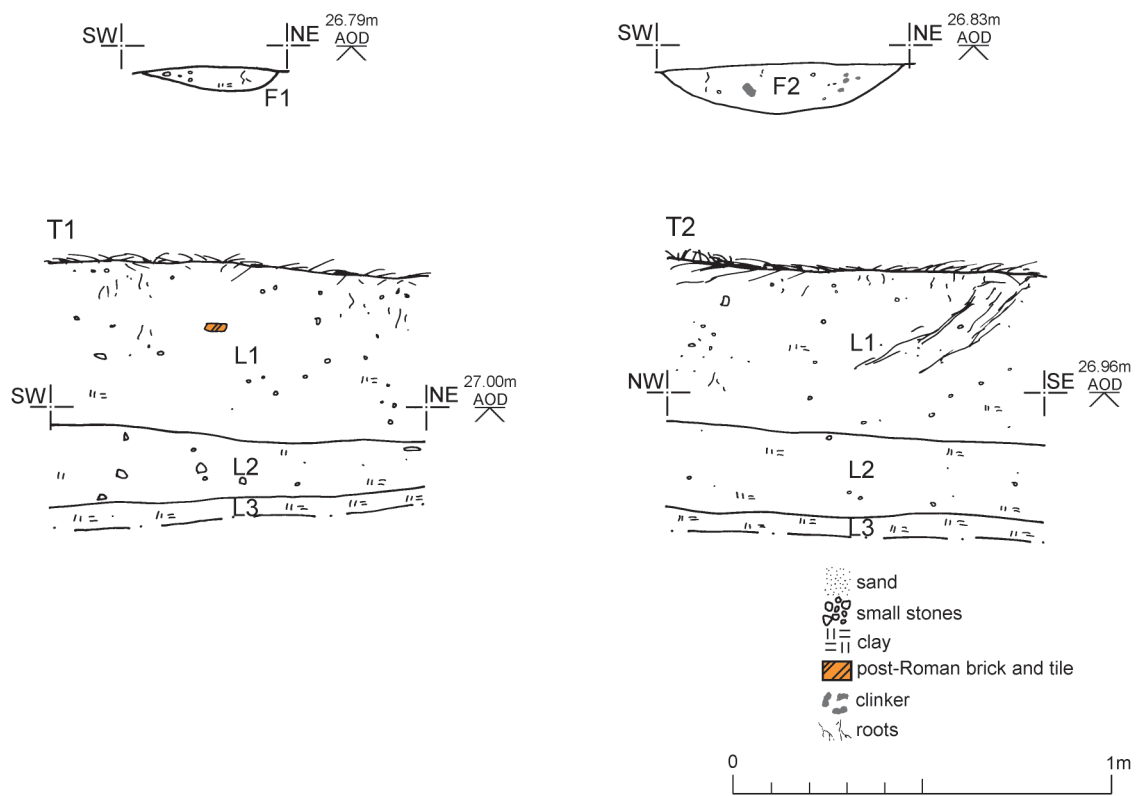


Fig 3 Feature and representative sections.

Summary for colchest3-510688

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-510688
Project Name	Archaeological evaluation at 30 Bridge Street, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3EX: January 2023
Sitename	30 Bridge Street, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3EX
Activity type	Trial Trench
Project Identifier(s)	2022/11c
Planning Id	22/00732/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	09-Jan-2023 - 09-Jan-2023
Location	30 Bridge Street, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3EX NGR : TL 68115 06320 LL : 51.7303873180881, 0.432952478012283 12 Fig : 568115,206320
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Chelmsford Parish : Writtle
Project Methodology	Evaluation carried out as per the brief and WSI.
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (two trial-trenches) was carried out at 30 Bridge Street, Writtle, Essex in advance of the construction of a new dwelling. The site lies to the east of the historic core of Writtle, which traces its origins back to the medieval period, and northwest of a bridge spanning the River Wid at a point which has likely formed a crossing over the river since the medieval period. Despite lying in an archaeologically-sensitive area only two pits – one medieval or post-medieval and one modern – were uncovered.
Keywords	Pit - MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Pit - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Sherd - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Sherd - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Peg Tile - MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Peg Tile - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Brick - MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Brick - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Quern - ROMAN - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Quern - EARLY MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Quern - MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Clinker - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Clinker - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	

HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	E, Hicks
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - WRBS22
Archives	