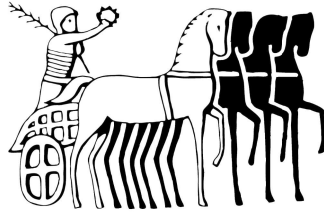


Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 2015
issued January 2024**

**Archaeological evaluation at Manor Nursery,
Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, CB10 2UT:
December 2023**



**CAT project ref.: 2023/11b
ECC code: WIMMN23**

**Archaeological evaluation at Manor Nursery,
Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, CB10 2UT:
December 2023**

NGR: TL 56446 35443 (centre)

Planning ref.: UTT/20/0755/OP & UTT/21/3536/DFO

**CAT project ref.: 2023/11b
CAT Report 2015**

**ECC code: WIMMN23
OASIS id: colchest3-520778**

**report prepared by Harvey Furniss
with contributions by Dr Matthew Loughton,
Bronagh Rae-Quinn, Adam Wightman**

**fieldwork by Harvey Furniss with Charlie Hodges
and Tabitha Lawrence**

commissioned by the landowner

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1 Summary

An archaeological evaluation (five trial-trenches) was carried out at the former Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, in advance of the construction of four new dwellings. The site lies on the road from Saffron Walden to the Debden barracks, south-west of the village of Wimbish. Excavations revealed three pits, two of which yielded prehistoric finds.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for an archaeological evaluation carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) at the former Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex from 11th to 13th December 2023. The work was commissioned by the landowner and took place in advance of the construction of four new detached dwellings along with associated landscaping and parking.

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 2023).

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *Brief for Trial Trenching and Excavation at Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish* written by Richard Havis (ECCPS 2023). A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with ECCPS (CAT 2023a).

In addition to the project Brief and WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was undertaken in accordance with:

- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2015),
- Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2020a-d, 2022),
- East of England standards and frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Gurney 2003, Medlycott 2011) and the recent review updates on <https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>
- Relevant health and safety guidelines and requirements (CAT 2023b).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background primarily includes extracts from the Brief and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessible to the public via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The Historic Environment Record shows that the proposed development lies within an area of known archaeological deposits. Artefact find spots dated from the Mesolithic to Early Bronze Age (EHER 53807-8), recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme, indicate potential prehistoric occupation close to site.

The development site is also located within a bustling medieval landscape. To the north is The Rectory, a moated site visible on 2nd edition OS map (EHER 350). Another moated site, rectangular in plan, was located to the north-east of site on the edge of Crowney Wood (EHER 1950). To the south-east is Abbots moat which consists of the remains of a homestead moat and a single ditch which is rectangular in plan and in poor condition (EHER 231). North-west of site is Thunderley Hall, a timber-framed former moated hall which dates from the 13th century. The moat is, again, rectangular in plan and includes three fish ponds (EHER 1945), while the Hall is now a farmstead which has been heavily restored (EHER 1953). A deserted medieval village, located immediately south of Thunderley Hall, was recorded in the EHER after 12th-14th century pottery sherds and building materials were recovered from a field-walking project in the 1960s (EHER 1946 and 1947). A watching brief at Thunderley Hall in 2015 identified brick and

flint walls, a brick oven, medieval pottery, and other structural remains (EHER 49530, Cullum 2020).

Immediately adjacent to the development site is the former RAF station Debden which opened in 1937. It was used as a fighter airfield during the Battle of Britain, the aircraft playing a part in defending the airspace over London in 1940. In 1942 it became the home to three RAF 'Eagle Squadrons' of volunteer American pilots before the site was transferred to the USAAF until the end of the war. The airfield was handed back over to the RAF on the 5th September 1945, and continued to be used by the RAF until 1975. Debden was thereafter occupied by the British Army, but now known as Carver Barracks, and is still in use (EHER 16539).

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 2-4)

Five trial-trenches were excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist and amounted to 140m of trenching. Trenches T1, T3, and T5 were 30m long and 1.8m wide, while trench T4 and T2 were 25m and 20m long respectively, both also 1.8m wide. Due to the presence of on-site constraints, trench T4 was shortened by a metre at its eastern end, but an area around F1 was expanded in order to expose any other close by features.

All five trenches were cut through a layer of topsoil (L1, 0.13-0.48m thick). There was a buried soil layer (L2, c 0.13-0.35m thick) between the topsoil and natural was encountered in trench T4. An accumulation layer was encountered in trenches T1-4 (L3, 0.12-0.29m thick). All trenches were cut onto natural (L4, encountered at a depth of 0.47-0.59m below current ground level).

Trenches 1 and 2

T1 was a T-shaped trench which encountered two modern services at the easternmost end. T2 also exposed two more modern services. No archaeological remains were uncovered in either trench.



Photograph 1 T2 trench shot – view north-north-east.

Trench 3

Pit F2 was uncovered in the centre of trench T3. The feature was circular in plan with steep sides and a narrow flat base and yielded no finds.



Photograph 2 T3 trench shot – view north-north-east.



Photograph 3 Pit F2 – view south.

Trench 4

Pit F1 was uncovered in the northern half of the trench. Eleven prehistoric pottery sherds were recovered from this feature, including one possibly deriving from an open bowl (Fig 5). In order to check for other features around F1, a small area was opened increasing the area for T4 to 77m² in total.



Photograph 4 T4 oblique shot – view north-west.



Photograph 5 Pit F1 – view west.

Trench 5

Pit F3 was uncovered in the eastern end of trench T5. The feature was circular in plan with moderate and shallow sides and a concave base. A single piece of worked flint was recovered from F3 which could be either a small flake or the distal end of a blade. The find showed evidence of use-wear or edge-damage on the lateral edges.



Photograph 6 T5 trench shot – view east



Photograph 7 Pit F3 – view east

6 Finds

6.1 Pottery and brick

by Dr Matthew Loughton

Pit F1 produced a small assemblage of handmade flint-tempered pottery (fabric HMF) at 54 sherds with a weight of 770g and EVE of 0.17. The mean sherd weight is 14g.

This includes 11 sherds (106g) from an open bowl (or jar) (Fig. 5) with a high shoulder and a short upright rim (EVE:0.17). The fabric of this vessel is tempered with abundant flint alongside some sparse medium flint, with a smooth black exterior surface and slightly rougher interior and black core. This vessel is similar to the round bodied bowl (Type H) from the Late Bronze Age assemblage from Springfield Lyons, Essex (Brown 2013), while similar looking vessels dating to the Early Iron Age are known from North Shoebury, Essex (Brown 1995, fig. 65 no. 87) and Flixton 'Park Quarry', Suffolk (Percival 2022, 93 fig. 3.58.121).

The only other diagnostic element from this assemblage is part of a finger-impressed cordon (Fig. 5) which is in a medium flint-tempered fabric, although there are some sparse coarse flint inclusions with a black surfaces and brown core. Finger-impressed cordons are typical of Middle Bronze Age pottery (Brown 1999) although they can also be found on some later Bronze Age vessels (Brown 1995, 80, 82 fig. 64.63).

The remaining flint-tempered sherds from this pit are found in brown to orange-coloured fabrics which are tempered with common coarse flint (28 sherds at 503g), including one sherd with a combed decoration (Fig. 5). Finally, there was one sherd of orange-brown coloured handmade pottery which was tempered with common coarse burnt flint which has rough surfaces.

This assemblage likely dates to the Early Iron Age, although a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date cannot be ruled out. Finally, two sherds (119g) of post-medieval red earthenware (AD 1500-1800/1900) from a smaller storage jar (EVE:0.15) came from buried soil L2.

6.2 Flint

by Adam Wightman

Either a small flake or the distal end of a blade was recovered from pit F3 (finds no.3). There is a small area of cortex on the right lateral edge and a possible break at the distal end. The piece was detached from its parent core using a hard hammer and there is some evidence that the striking platform was prepared prior to detachment. There is also some evidence of use-wear or edge-damage on the lateral edges. Probably Neolithic or Bronze Age in date.

6.3 Environmental assessment

by Bronagh Rae-Quinn

Introduction

Two samples were taken during the evaluation, one of which was from prehistoric pit F2

Sample	Context No.	Feature Type	% Sampled	Provisional Date	Sample Volume (L.)
1	F1	Pit	25	Undated	20
2	F2	Pit	25	Prehistoric	30

Table 1 Sample information

Sampling and processing methods

All samples were floated by a trained member of CAT staff and analysed by the author. Nomenclature for all plant remains is taken from Stace (2010). All samples were processed using a serif-style flotation device which produced a flot and a larger residue, both of which were analysed by the author. Flots were collected in a 300 micron mesh and scanned using a microscope (magnification x10), while the larger residues were scanned by eye and any charcoal/charred wood removed by hand.

Results

Only sample 2 produced any environmental remains, with sample 1 only containing a high density of modern rootlets. The flot from sample 1 was discarded.

Sample 2 (F2) was taken from a prehistoric pit and produced a very low density of small charcoal and a single cereal grain. The grain itself is in such poor condition as to make identification impossible.

Sample No.	2
Context No.	F2
Cereal (grain) indet.	x
Charcoal >10mm	-
Charcoal 4-10mm	x
Charcoal <4mm	xx
Modern plant material (rootlets)	xxx
Sample volume (litres)	30
Volume of flot (litres)	<0.1
% flot sorted	100%

Table 2 Flot information

Key to Table 2	
x	0-10
xx	10-25
xxx	25-50
xxxx	50-100
xxxxx	100+

Potential, significance and recommendations

The samples taken from the evaluation produced a low density of environmental remains with minimal significance to the overall interpretation of the site. Although the environmental potential of the current assemblage is limited, further works on the site could produce additional plant macrofossil evidence. It is recommended that any future works continue to take soil samples in line with the CAT environmental policies outlined in the WSI.

7 Conclusion

Excavations at Manor Nursery revealed three pits as well as a series of modern services. Pit F1 yielded a small assemblage of pottery (770g) while only a single worked flint was recovered from F3. The pottery from F1 provided a broad date spanning from the Middle Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age. Though the feature is more likely dated to the EIA, a late Bronze Age date cannot be ruled out. The worked flint from pit F3 could have been either a small flake or the distal end of a blade.

Despite the paucity of features on site, material evidence for a prehistoric occupation of the area was in abundance. The quantity of the pottery, as well as the style of the pots, indicate that there was a level of domesticity on or close by to the development area.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank the landowner for commissioning and funding the project. The project was managed by C Lister and H Furniss, with the fieldwork carried out by H Furniss with C Hodges and T Lawrence. Figures were compiled by H Furniss and E Holloway. The project was monitored for ECCPS by Richard Havis.

9 References

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--|
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| 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 | 2023a | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex CB10 2UT</i> |
| CAT | 2023b | <i>Health & Safety Policy</i> . Colchester Archaeological Trust. |
| CIfA | 2020a | <i>Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives</i> . CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; published 2014, revised 2020. |
| CIfA | 2020b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and</i> |

		<i>research of archaeological materials</i> . ClfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; published 2014, revised 2020.
ClfA	2022	<i>Code of Conduct</i> . ClfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; published 2014, revised 2022.
ClfA	2023a	<i>Standard for archaeological field evaluation</i> . ClfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.
ClfA	2023b	<i>Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> . ClfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.
Cullum, R	2020	<i>Archaeological Watching Brief. Thunderley Hall, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex. Archaeology South East report 2020203</i>
ECCPS	2023	<i>Brief for Trial Trenching and Excavation at Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish</i> by Richard Havis
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>
Jacomet, S et al.	2006	<i>Identification of cereal remains from archaeological sites</i> . 2nd ed.
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	2023	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Percival, S	2022	'Prehistoric pottery' in Boulter, S (ed.), <i>Living with Monuments: Excavations at Flixton Volume II</i> . Cirencester: Cotswold Archaeology/East Anglian Archaeology 177 , 66-94.
Stace, C	2010	<i>New Flora of the British Isles</i> . 3rd edition.

10 Abbreviations and glossary

Bronze Age	period from c 2500 – 700 BC
CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ClfA	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'
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	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
prehistoric	pre-Roman
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
WSI	written scheme of investigation

11 Contents of archive

Finds: One small bag of pottery and flint.

Digital:

CAT Report 2015

ECC evaluation brief, CAT written scheme of investigation

Site digital photographs

Graphic files

Site data

Survey 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 Saffron Walden Museum (finds) and the Archaeology Data Service (digital archive).

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Distribution list:

Landowner

ECC Place Services Historic Environment Advisor

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council

Appendix 1 Context list

Context	Trench	Finds no.	Context type	Description	Date
L1	All	-	Topsoil	Friable, dark greyish-brown silt with frequent rooting	Modern
L2	T4	2	Buried soil	Firm, mid yellow brown silt.	Post-medieval
L3	T1-4	-	Accumulation layer	Firm, mid brownish-yellow clayey silt.	Post-glacial
L4	All	-	Natural	Firm, light yellowish-brown clay with frequent medium to large chalk inclusions and abundant small irregular stones. and Friable mid orange sandy gravel with frequent medium to large stones and occasional chalk flecking.	Post-glacial
F1	4	1	Pit	Firm, dark greyish-brown silty clay with frequent stone, flint and manganese inclusions. 0.94m (L) x 0.85m (W) x 0.36m (D)	Early Iron Age (possibly Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age)
F2	3	-	Pit	Compact, mid grey silty clay deposit with frequent charcoal and occasional angular flint inclusions. 0.85m (L) x 0.84m (W) x 0.34m (D)	Undated
F3	2	3	Pit	Firm, mid grey silty clay with infrequent angular flint stones. >0.71m (L) x 0.79m (W) x 0.12m (D) Feature extending beyond the limit of excavation.	Neolithic to Bronze Age

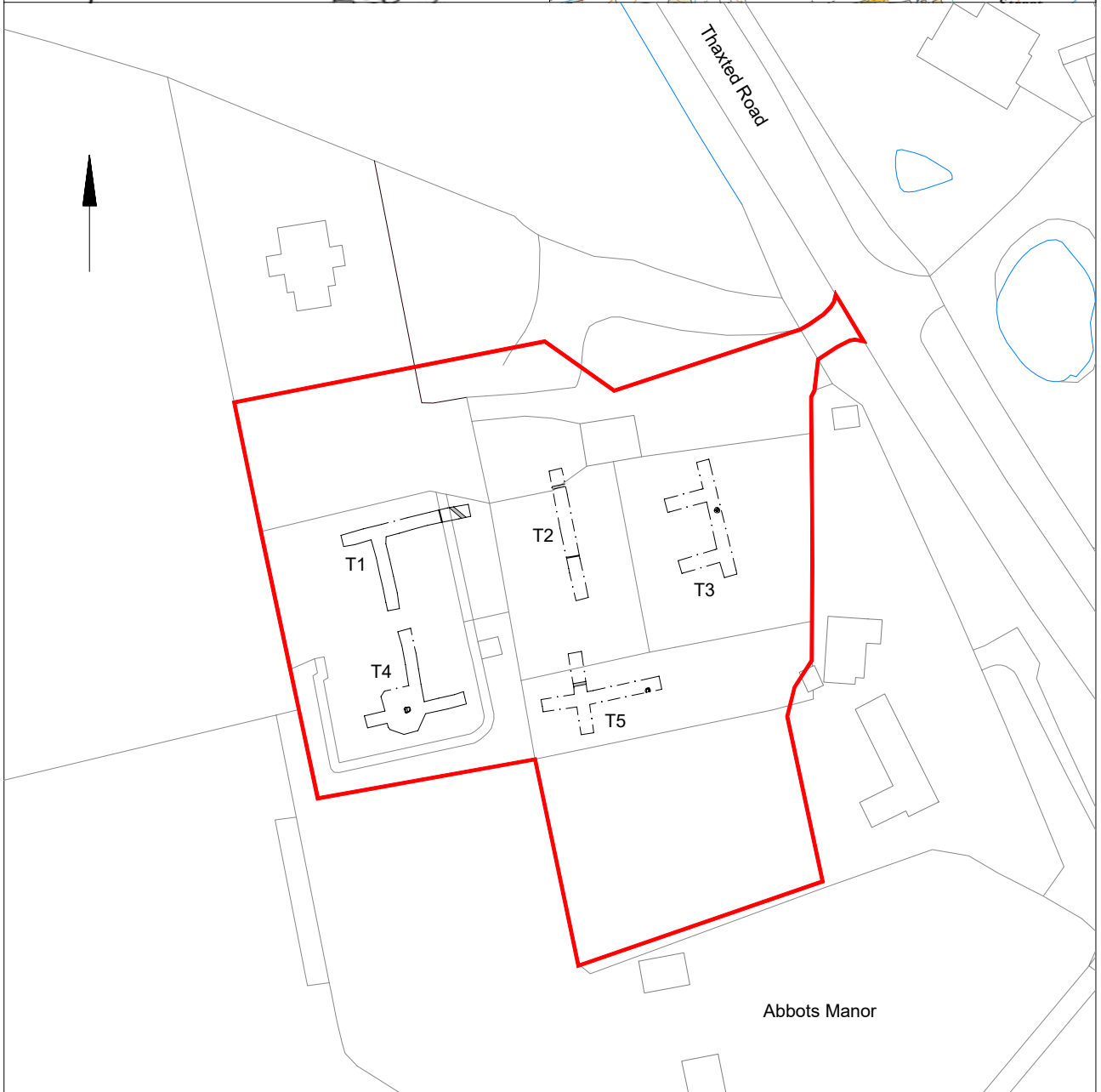
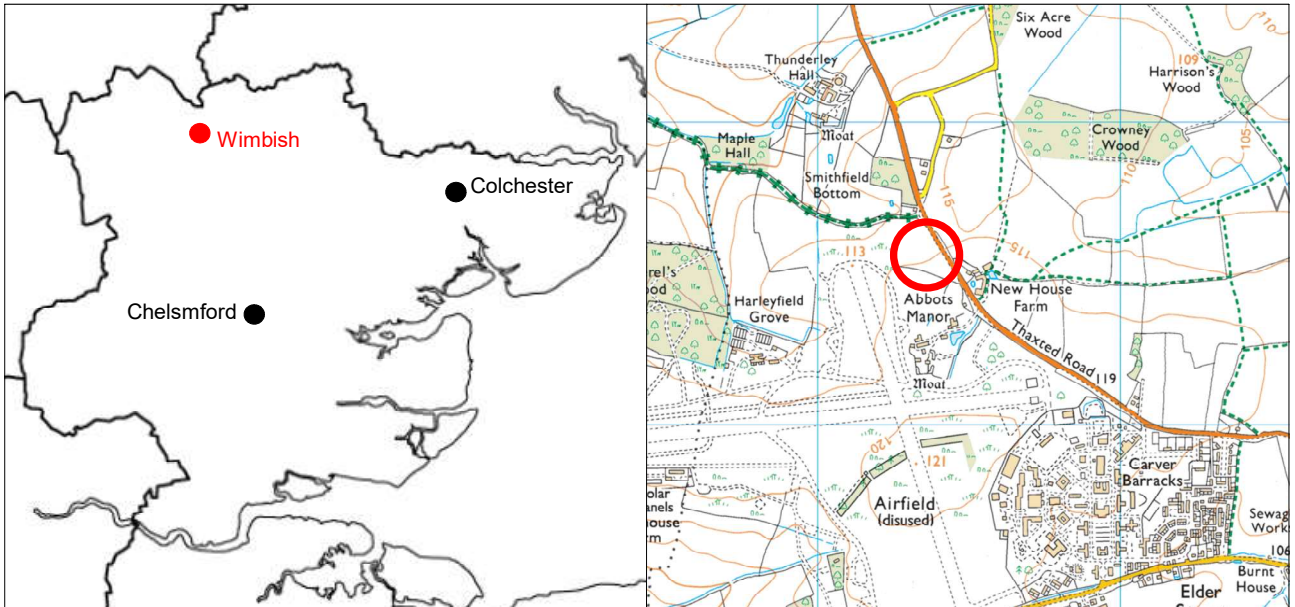


Fig 1 Site location and trenches

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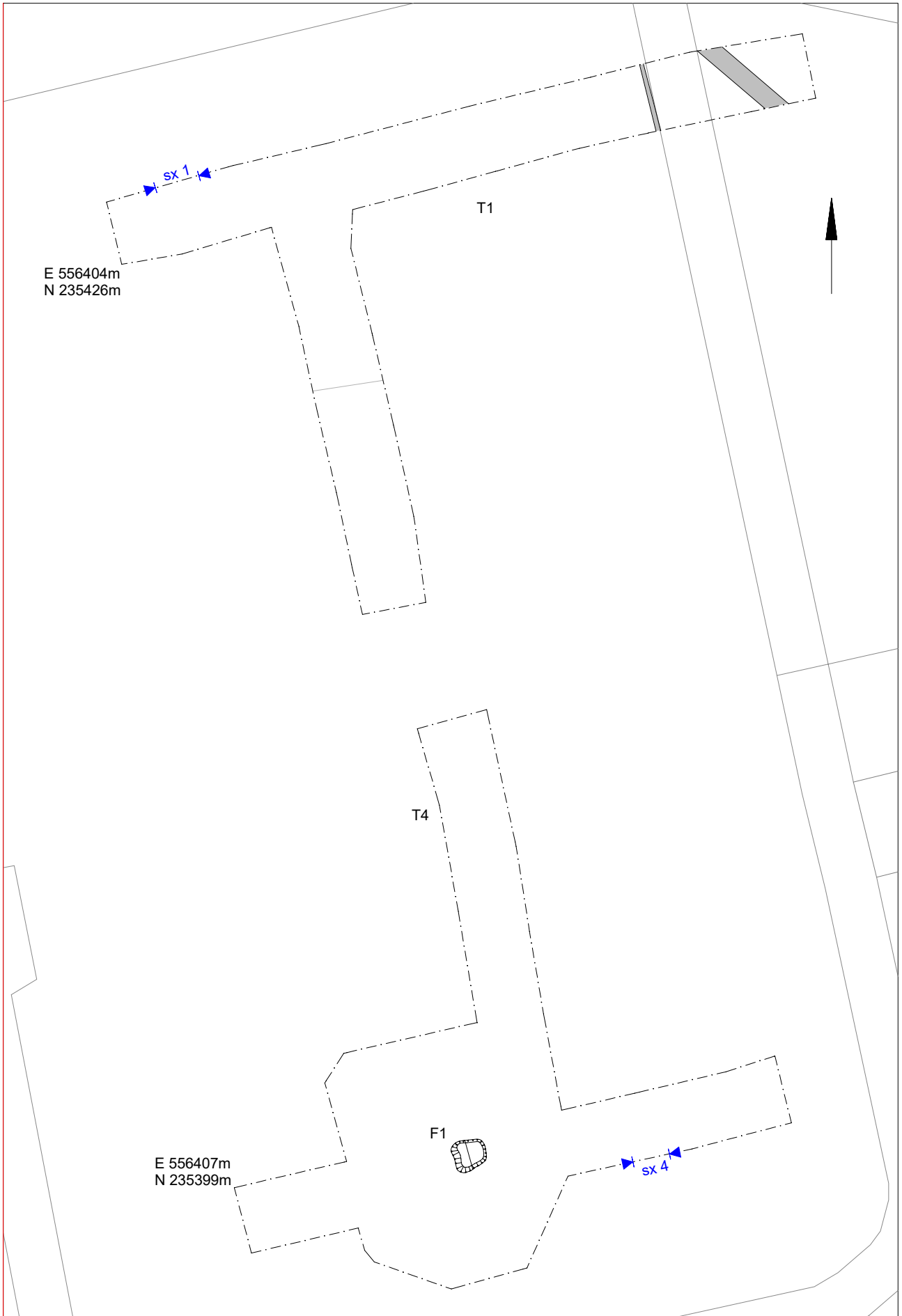


Fig 2 Results (modern services in grey)

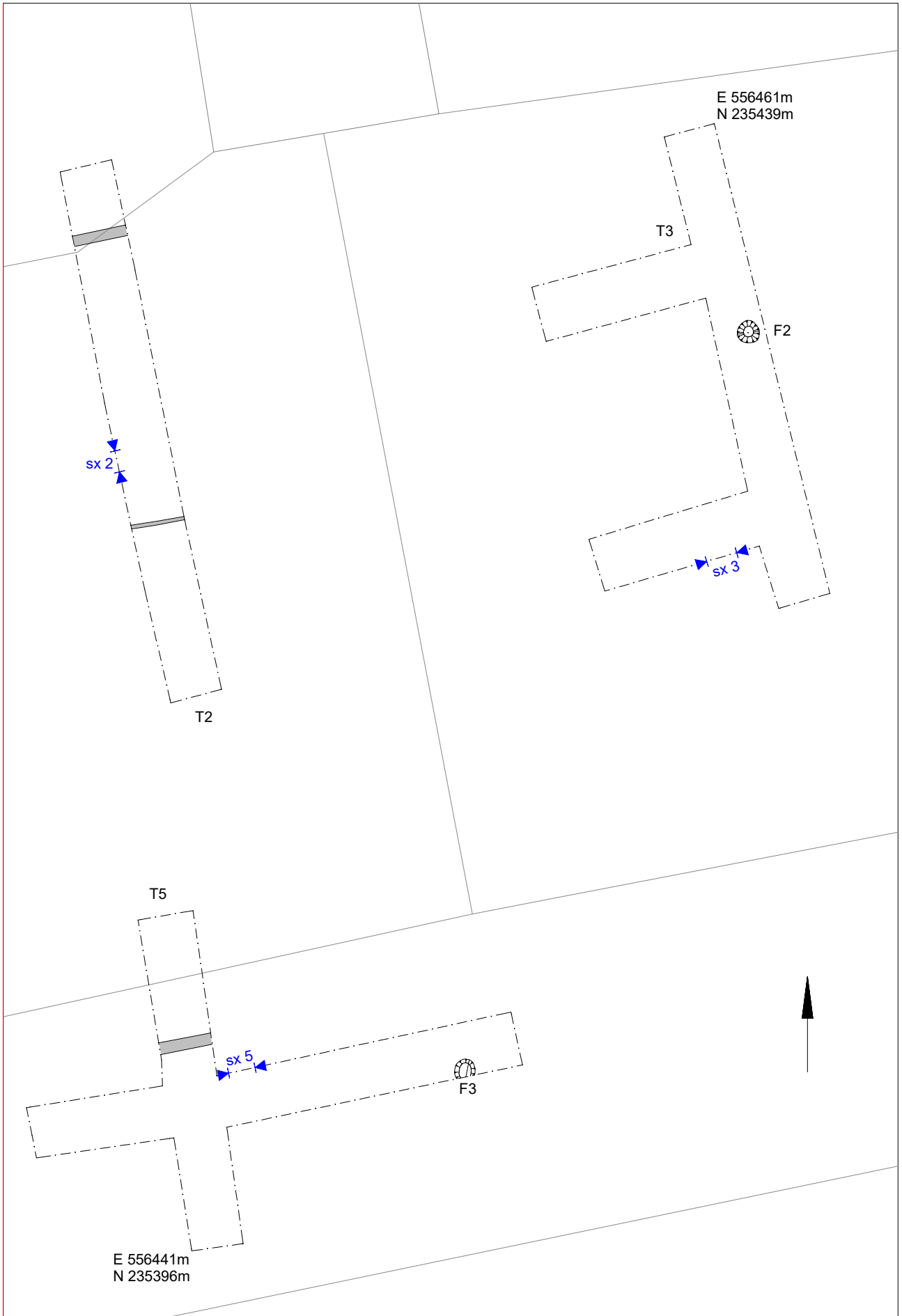


Fig 3 Results continued (modern services in grey)

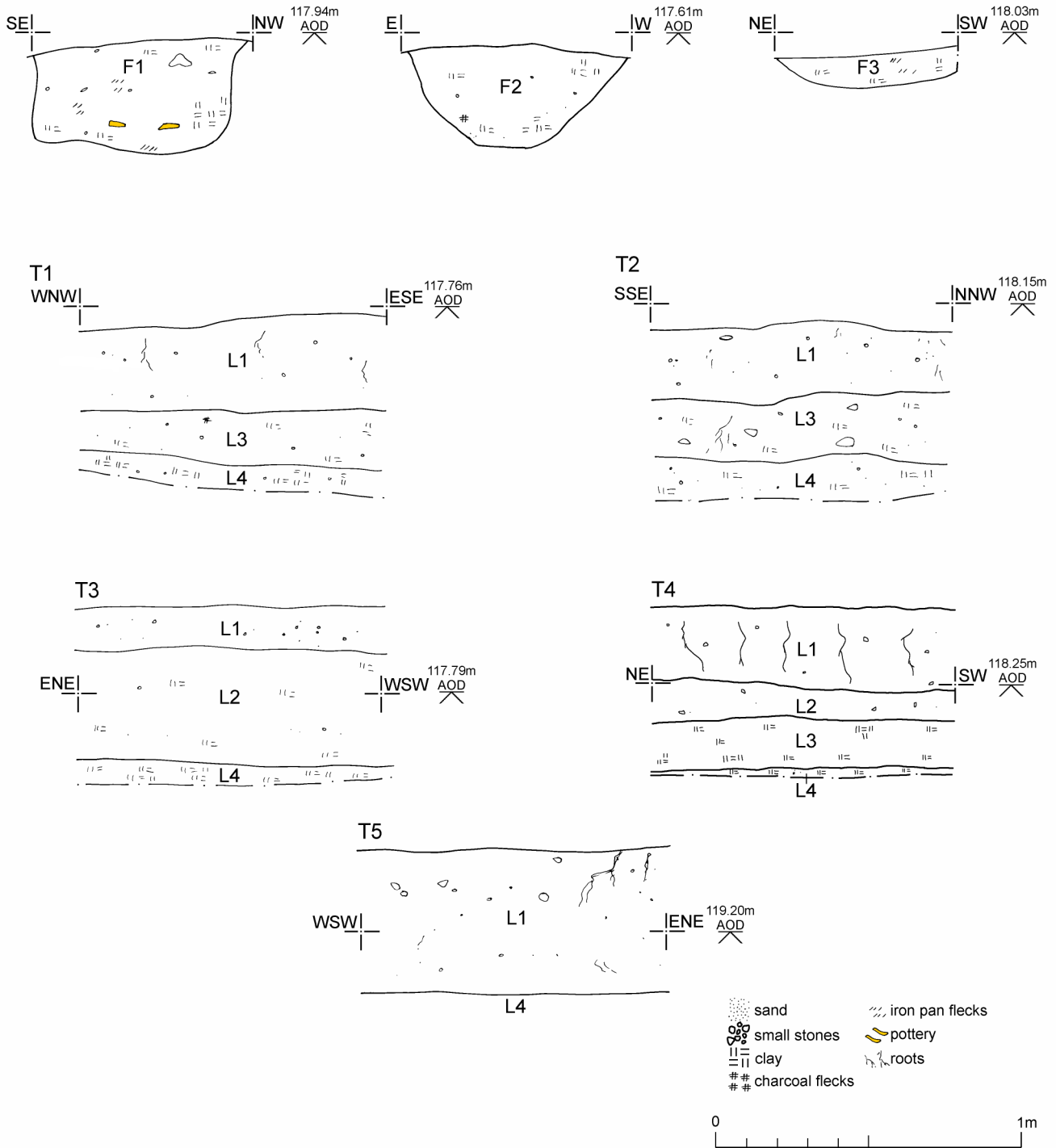


Fig 4 Feature and representative sections.

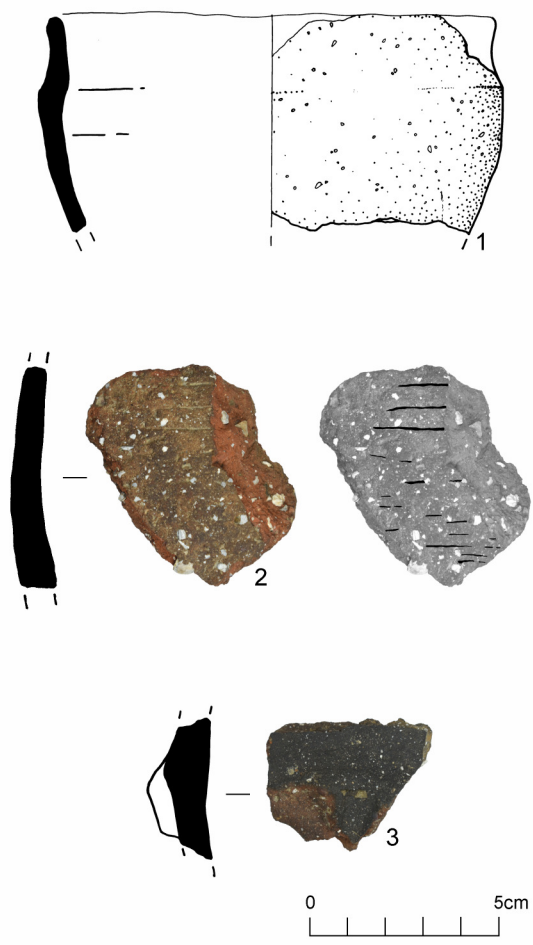


Fig 5 Prehistoric pottery from F1.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-520778

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-520778
Project Name	Evaluation at Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex CB10 2UT
Sitename	Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex CB10 2UT
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	2023/11b
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	UTT/21/3536/DFO, UTT/20/0755/OP
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	11-Dec-2023 - 13-Dec-2023
Location	Manor Nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex CB10 2UT NGR : TL 56446 35443 LL : 51.99539868424117, 0.277308359715394 12 Fig : 556446,235443
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Essex Local Authority District : Uttlesford Parish : Wimbish
Project Methodology	Evaluation was carried out as per the brief and WSI
Project Results	An archaeological evaluation (five trial-trenches) was carried out at the former Manor nursery, Thaxted Road, Wimbish, Essex, in advance of the construction of four new dwellings. The site lies on the road from Saffron Walden to the Debden barracks, south-west of the village of Wimbish. Excavations revealed three pits, two of which yielded prehistoric finds.
Keywords	
Funder	Private individual
HER	Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Harvey Furniss, Chris Lister
HER Identifiers	
Archives	