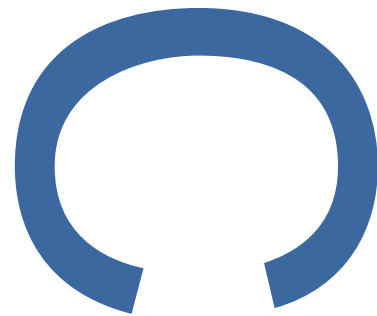
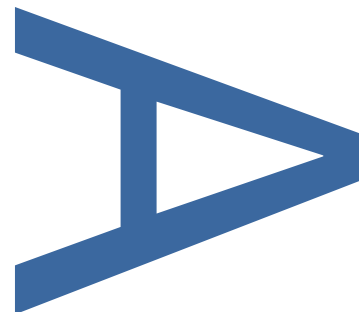


**Former College Buildings, Epping  
Forest College**



**An Archaeological Evaluation**



<b><i>Planning reference</i></b>	<b>EPF/2905/19</b>		
<b><i>Local planning authority</i></b>	<b>Epping District Council</b>		
<b><i>PCA report no.</i></b>	<b>R14628</b>	<b><i>Site Code</i></b>	<b>EECB21</b>
<b><i>PCA project no</i></b>	<b>K7312</b>	<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b>August 2021</b>

**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED**

**[www.pre-construct.com](http://www.pre-construct.com)**

Project Information	
Site name	Former College Buildings, Epping Forest College
Project type	An Archaeological Evaluation
Site address	Former College Buildings, Epping Forest College, Loughton, Essex, IG10 3FE
NGR	TQ 543693 196458
Local planning authority	Epping District Council
Planning reference	EPF/2905/19
Commissioning client	RPS Group
Project dates	12 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Archive site code	EECB21

PCA Information			
PCA project code	K7312	PCA report number	R14628
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Graphics checked by:	MR	
Project Manager approval:	HH	
Reissued report version:		
Reason for reissue:		
Project Manager approval:		



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## ILLUSTRATIONS

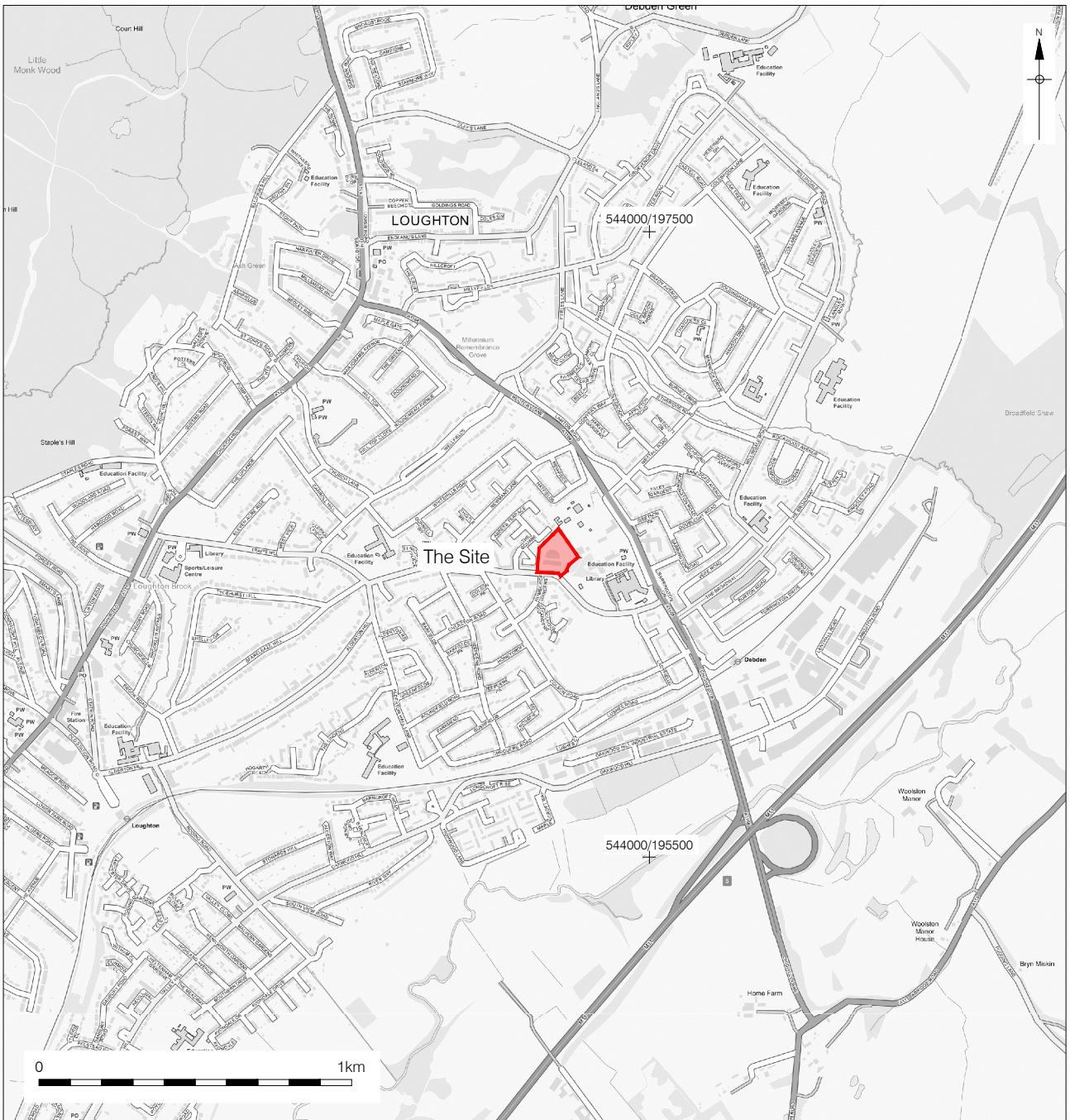
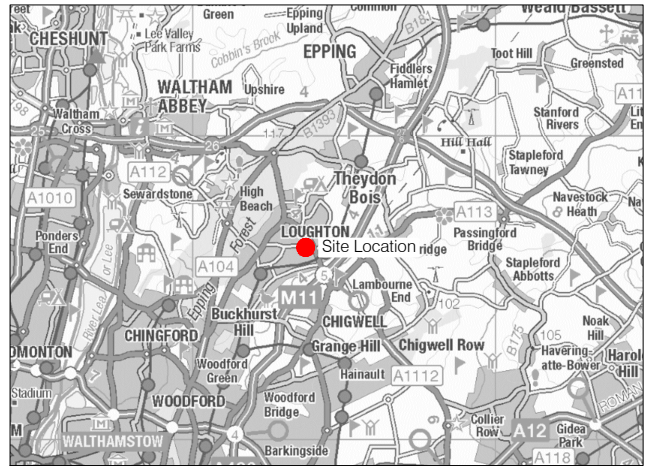
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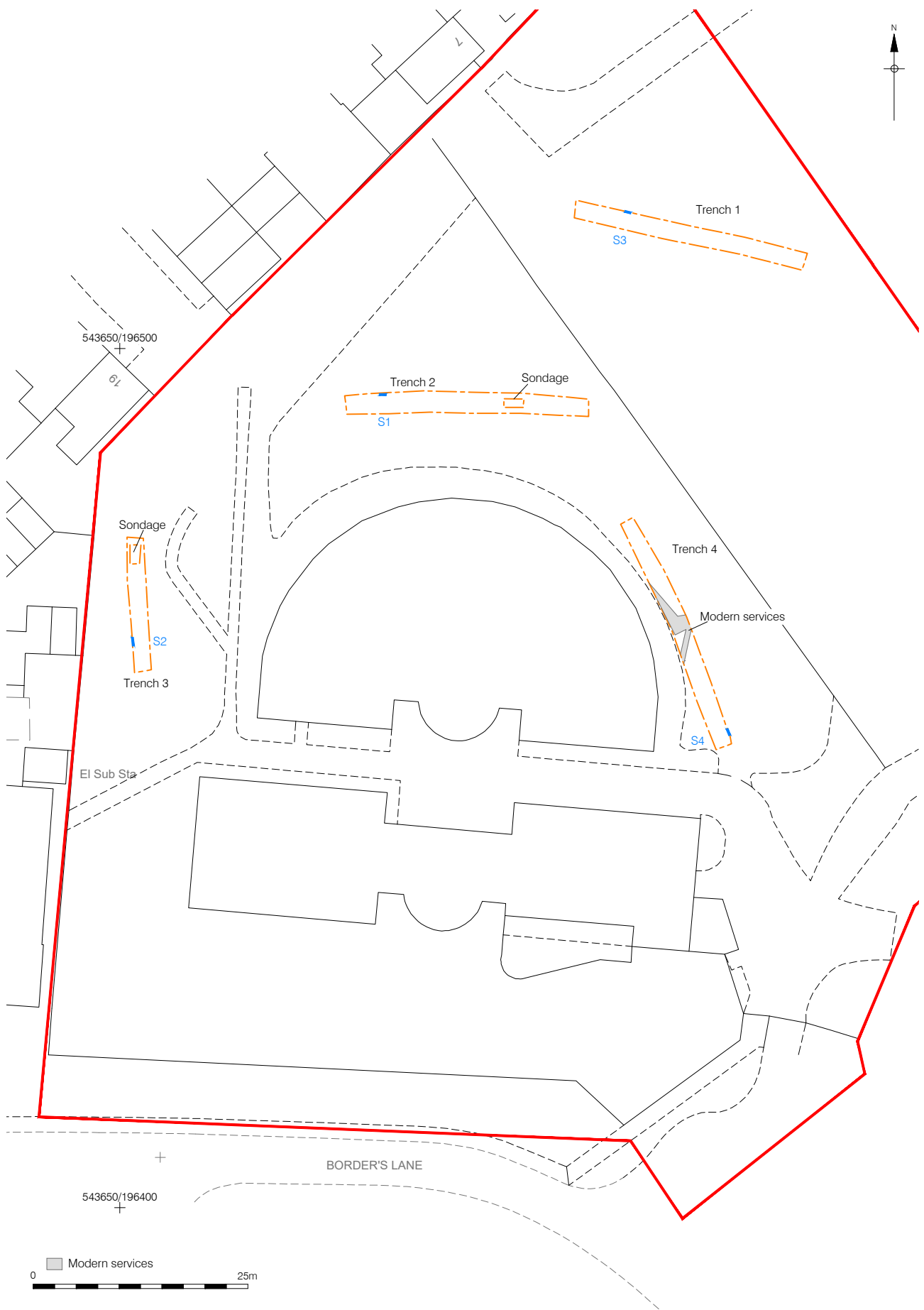
## **1 ABSTRACT**

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) at Former College Buildings, Epping Forest College, Loughton, Essex. The work was undertaken in July 2021 and was commissioned by the RPS Group in order to complete trial trenching in advance of development as advised by Essex County Council Place Services. The site was centred at National Grid Reference TQ 543693 196458.
- 1.2 A total of four trenches were excavated during the evaluation in order to determine if any archaeological deposits or features survived on the site, and if so, to determine their extent and nature.
- 1.3 The evaluation recorded the topography of the natural London Clay and Lowestoft Formation, which illustrated a gradual slope towards the southeast of the site. Two layers, most likely to be associated with the late 20<sup>th</sup> century development of the site, were identified during the evaluation. No other evidence of human occupation was observed during works.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at the former college buildings of Epping Forest College, IG10 3FE, in the County of Essex, between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021. The work was commissioned by RPS Group, acting on behalf of their client.
- 2.2 The proposed development sought to demolish existing derelict college buildings for residential redevelopment. The development proposals were submitted to the local planning authority (LPA), Epping Forest District Council, and are currently under consideration (EPF/2905/19). The application was accompanied by an archaeological desk-based assessment (CgMs 2019). Consultation with Essex County Council (ECC) Place Services, who act as archaeological advisors to the LPA, required a programme of archaeological trial trenching should take place in advance of development.
- 2.3 The site was bounded by Boarders Lane to the south. Rectory Lane, which linked Loughton and Debden, was situated to the east. The area was built-up with occasional areas of green space. The site was approximately 3750 square metres in size and was centred at National Grid Reference TQ 543693 196458. The site was occupied by derelict buildings and rough ground.
- 2.4 A total of four trenches were excavated as part of the archaeological evaluation. The trenches were located to provide good spatial coverage of the site and avoid known services and other site constraints.
- 2.5 The work was conducted by PCA under the supervision of Kathy Davidson and the project was managed by Helen Hawkins.
- 2.6 ECC Place Services identified the site as being located within Historic Environment Character Zone 9.1, an area which historically had dispersed sparse settlement prior to mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development. Loughton Hall and the nearby Church of St Nicholas formed the medieval manorial centre, with the remaining settlement scattered along Epping Road. Both the Hall and Church are Victorian replacements of older buildings.
- 2.7 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will be deposited with the Epping Forest Museum identified by the unique site code EECB21.





### **3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

3.1 The following backgrounds are taken from the desk-based assessment (CgMs 2019)

#### **3.2 Geology.**

3.2.1 The British Geological Survey (2021) shows that the bedrock geology of the site is London Clay, a sedimentary bedrock form approximately 48 to 56 million years ago in the Paleogene Period. The local environment was previously dominated by deep seas.

3.2.2 The drift geology of the site comprises the Lowestoft Formation, an extensive sheet of chalky till, together with outwash sands and gravels, silts and clays. The Boyn Hill Gravel formation and the Woodford Gravel Formation are both also located close to the site.

#### **3.3 Topography**

3.3.1 The site lay approximately 750m to the north of the River Roding. The topography of the study area displayed a gentle slope from north to south.

3.3.2 The study area comprised the former College Buildings within Epping Forest College. The southern area of the site was occupied by trees while the central area was occupied by the derelict college buildings, which were surrounded by a paved surface. The areas to the north and east of the site were formerly developed college land. The site was bounded by residential properties to the north and west.



## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Unless referenced otherwise, the following archaeological background is taken from the desk-based assessment for this site (CgMs 2019).

### 4.2 Prehistoric

4.2.1 There is some archaeological evidence, in the form of findspots, for early prehistoric (Palaeolithic) activity in the general area, particularly within the wooded parts of the parish. Palaeolithic remains have also been identified along the valley of the River Roding, which is located to the south of the site. In that area geological deposits of the Lower Thames Terraces and brickearth silts which outcrop on the valley sides have proved to contain cold-climate faunal remains.

4.2.2 In closer proximity to the site prehistoric worked flint (of Paleolithic to Bronze Age date) was recovered from works between Loughton Hall and Hatfield in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This location is to the east of the site, between the site and Rectory Lane.

4.2.3 There is scattered evidence of Mesolithic activity across the district, typically comprising surface artefacts or artefacts that are residual in later features. In proximity to the site a Mesolithic tranchet axe was found to the south in the vicinity of the Loughton Brook/River Roding, as well as flakes and a blade 1km to the south east and 1km to the west.

4.2.4 Archaeological evidence for Neolithic activity is similarly scattered and there are no known remains of this date within the study area.

4.2.5 The Bronze Age is better attested in the archaeological record of the district. This period saw a population increase and greater agricultural activity which included the clearance of woodland on higher ground and perhaps farms along the Roding valley. Known remains which may be of this period within the study area comprise cropmarks and enclosures.

4.2.6 In the Iron Age the district was situated in what was the boundary between the territory of two tribes, The Trinovantes and Catuvellauni. A chain of hillforts was established along the Lea, Stort and Cam valleys including Loughton Camp, c. 2km northeast of the site. There are also a variety of enclosed and unenclosed settlements across the district. No known archaeological remains of Iron Age date are recorded within the study area.

### 4.3 Roman

4.3.1 Occupation of the district continued in the district into the Romano-British period with various rural villas/farmsteads scattered through it; these include a villa at Long Shaw c. 1.5km northeast of the site. Within the study area known remains of Roman-British date area are largely limited to finds.

### 4.4 Saxon and Medieval

4.4.1 The first known reference to Loughton dates to 1062 when Edward the Confessor granted lands, including *Lukintone*, to the re-founded Waltham Abbey. It is named in the Domesday Book (1086) as *Lochetuna*. The placename probably translates as 'Luh(h)a's farm'.

- 4.4.2 Following the Norman Conquest estates in Loughton, Alderton and Debden were held by Waltham Abbey, Peter of Valognes, a reeve of King William, and Robert Gernon. The largest area of land was held by Waltham Abbey, through to the dissolution of monasteries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Assets recorded in the Domesday Book include a number of (water) mills – presumably on the Roding, meadow lands and woodland for 770 pigs; the latter indicative of a well-wooded landscape.
- 4.4.3 The medieval population was, on the basis of placename evidence, almost entirely concentrated along High Road (now High Street), which lies to the west of the site. Rectory Lane links a crossing of the river Roding, Loughton Hall and the High Road. The extensive woodland of Epping Forest lay beyond this.
- 4.4.4 Medieval manorial centres could be found at Debden Hall, Alderton Hall and Loughton Hall. The site of the latter is situated c. 75m east of the site. The existing hall dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century but supersedes a number of earlier buildings. The original hall was presumably medieval in date but was rebuilt in 1616 and again in 1878 following a fire in 1836. There may also have been a medieval church or chapel in proximity to the hall, on the site of the later church, possibly constructed in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and perhaps replaced in turn in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The parsonage/rectory was situated further north along Rectory Road.
- 4.4.5 The church and hall were the manorial centre of Robert Gernon's estate, it too eventually became part of Waltham Abbey's estates; probably the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Beyond the manorial centre the area was probably agricultural in character.

#### 4.5 **Post-Medieval and Modern**

- 4.5.1 After the Dissolution the Waltham Abbey estates reverted to the crown and were briefly granted to Thomas Darcy in 1551 before being granted to Mary Tudor (later Queen Mary) in 1553. In 1558 Loughton was annexed to the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1613 the Duchy sold the estate to Sir Robert Wroth, whose family had leased the manor since at least 1522. After 1825 the manor was left to John Maitland whose family owned it until it was sold to London County Council in 1945 for the building of the Debden housing estate (EHER 45912/45913/45914).
- 4.5.2 The extant Loughton Hall is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Grade II Listed Building (List. No. 118638). It replaced the early building which dated to 1616. As noted previously the church of St Nicholas is located in close proximity to the hall, it too is a 19<sup>th</sup> century building on the site of an earlier church. The church it replaced may have been constructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century but at the time of the 1836 fire (which saw the hall destroyed) it was decided to demolish the church as well, with the funds from the sale of materials going towards the construction of St John's church which lay closer to the population centres. The chancel was retained as a mortuary chapel but razed in 1877, being replaced by the extant chapel. This was, until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a private chapel for the hall but it now attached to St John's.
- 4.5.3 Reference to historic mapping shows the primarily rural nature of the Loughton area through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rural settlement pattern comprised church/hall complexes such as that above and generally dispersed settlement at hamlets and greens. Industry in the study area was

limited to a brickworks situated east of the site which had been operational since the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

- 4.5.4 The Chapman and Andre map of 1777 shows this essentially rural landscape, with the site being in an open area to the west of the church/hall complex.
- 4.5.5 Reference to more detailed late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping, for example the 1799 Ordnance Survey drawing, an 1820 parish plan and 1850 tithe map, show that by this period the site lay in a single field. It was beyond the house and gardens of the hall and church. The tithe apportionment shows it was under arable cultivation. Few changes are shown in the environs of the site on subsequent mapping dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site continued to lie within a single field.
- 4.5.6 World War II saw a number of defensive sites established in the area including anti-aircraft guns and batteries, air-raid shelters, anti-tank ditches, anti-tank blocks and pillboxes. There was also a Prisoner of War camp to the southeast of the site.
- 4.5.7 The post-war period saw large scale development in the district. This can be clearly seen on historic mapping and aerial photographs, with much of the study area being built over by the 1960s. This was the Debden Estate, built mostly between 1945-55 by London County Council. The Lucton County Secondary Modern School (Mixed) opened in 1950 and the site lay within its playing fields. By the 1960s the OS shows the school as being for boys and Loughton Hall was a community centre. The Lucton School became Epping Forest High School, once again amalgamating boys and girls education and closed in the 1980s-1990s.
- 4.5.8 The school became the Epping Forest College, a tertiary education facility, in the mid 1990s. By the late 1990s the extant college buildings had been constructed on the site. There is no known record of any archaeological works being undertaken on the site at this time. The buildings themselves were set within grassed grounds and extensive areas of hardstanding.
- 4.5.9 More recent years have seen the college move to a new site to the southwest of the development site. The former school buildings which lay to the west of the site were demolished in 2010 and the area redeveloped for housing. The remainder of the old school/college site has been derelict since then.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (RPS 2021) which proposed the excavation of four evaluation trenches, three to measure 1.8m by 30m and one 1.8m by 15m.

5.2 The completed trenches were as follows:

Trench Number	Size	Depth
1	2m x 28m	1.1m
2	2m x 30m	0.8m
3	2m x 15m	0.85m
4	2m x 30m	1.2m

5.3 All trenches were located using a Digital Global Position System (DGPS) Geomax. Prior to excavation the area surrounding each trench was CAT scanned. Machine stripping was undertaken by mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. All ground reduction was carried out in spits no greater than 100mm under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated in this manner to the top of the London Clay whereafter the sections and base of each trench were cleaned and photographed. Sondages were completed in all trenches to confirm the natural deposits.

5.4 All trenches and section locations were recorded using a Geomax GPS system. This system was also used to establish OD heights of each archaeological deposit. A representative section of each trench was drawn at a scale of 1:10.

## **6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

### **6.1 Phase 1: Natural**

6.1.1 The earliest deposit that was encountered during the archaeological evaluation was natural compact mid yellowish brown clay recorded as layers [4], [2] and [3] in Trenches 1, 2 and 3 respectively (Plates 1, 2, and 3). In Trench 4 the natural ground [6] was similar to the London Clay but more gravelly and orange (Plate 4) and was therefore presumed to be the Lowestoft Formation. The natural deposits were observed in all trenches at heights between 56.60m OD in Trench 2 and 54.86m OD in Trench 4. The natural was fairly level across Trenches 1, 2 and 3, but displayed a gradual slope towards the southeast of the site in Trench 4.

### **6.2 Phase 2: Undated**

6.2.1 Within Trench 2, a 0.2m thick layer of blueish yellow grey clay [1] was present at 58.00m OD. This layer contained occasional CBM flecks and moderate gravel. This layer was sterile of finds and directly overlay the natural clay [2].

6.2.2 Within Trench 4, a 0.66m thick layer of mid greyish brown silty sand [5] was present at 55.55m OD. This layer contained moderate CBM flecks and concrete fragments. This layer was sterile of finds and overlay the natural clay [6].

### **6.3 Phase 3: Modern**

6.3.1 Sealing layers [1] and [5] and natural [3] and [4] were modern layers of topsoil or concrete [+] associated with the redevelopment of the site in the 1990s.



Plate 1. Overview of Trench 1, facing east, 1m scale



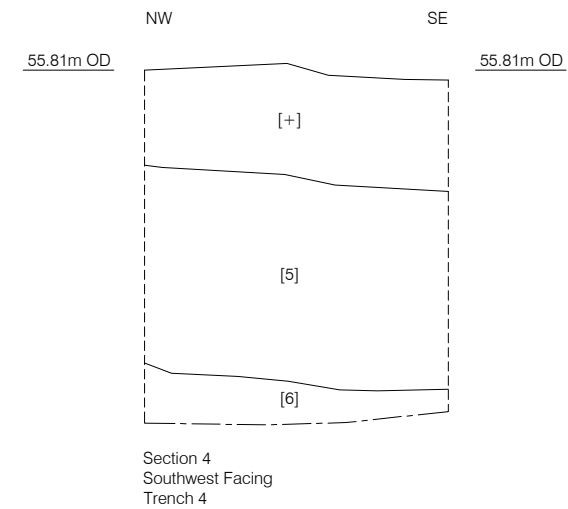
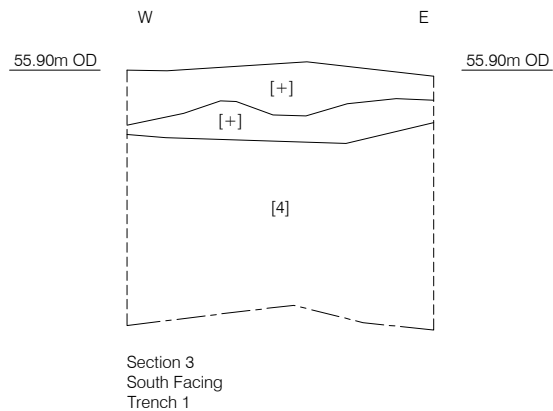
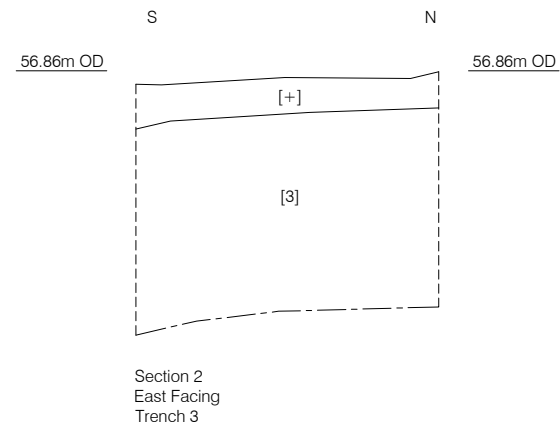
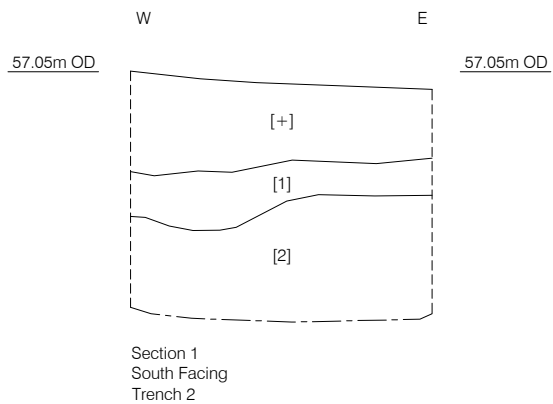
Plate 2. Overview of Trench 2, facing east, 1m scale



Plate 3. Overview of Trench 3, facing north, 1m scale



Plate 4. Overview of Trench 4, facing south, 1m scale



## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Discussion

- 7.1.1 Underlying most of the site was a deposit of natural London Clay, with the Lowestoft Formation in Trench 4 in the south-east of the site. The heights recorded were between 56.60m OD and 54.86m OD, suggesting a gradual slope towards the southeast of the site.
- 7.1.2 The evaluation revealed two undated layers containing CBM and concrete fragments within Trenches 2 and 4. It is possible that these layers are associated with the late 20<sup>th</sup> century redevelopment of the site as both trenches lay within the boundary of the 1990s school road.
- 7.1.3 A modern topsoil or concrete layer covered the site.

### 7.2 Research Objectives

- 7.2.1 The project specific research questions that were set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (RPS 2021) are addressed as follows, based on the results of the evaluation:

***To establish if there is evidence for prehistoric activity in the area which is perhaps hinted at by the presence of antiquarian finds in the general vicinity.***

- 7.2.2 No evidence for prehistoric activity was identified during the archaeological evaluation.

***To establish if the medieval church/hall complex at Loughton Hall extended into the site.***

- 7.2.3 No evidence for the medieval church or hall complex at Loughton Hall was observed during this evaluation

***To establish if the church/hall complex was set within a larger settlement which has since been lost.***

- 7.2.4 No evidence for a larger settlement in which the church and hall complex was set was seen during the evaluation.

***To contribute to the wider understanding of land-use in the area through the medieval and post-medieval periods.***

- 7.2.5 No evidence for use of the site prior to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century development was identified during the evaluation.

### 7.3 Conclusions

- 7.3.1 The evaluation recorded the topography of the natural London Clay and Lowestoft Formation, which has illustrated a gradual slope towards the southeast of the site.
- 7.3.2 Two layers, most likely to be associated with the late 20<sup>th</sup> century development of this site, were identified during the evaluation.

### 7.4 Archiving

- 7.4.1 Upon approval of this report by ECC and with confirmation that the work is complete, the paper archive will be deposited with the Epping Forest Museum under the unique site code EECB21



and the finds archive will be discarded.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank RPS Group for commissioning the work.
- 8.2 The author would like to thank Helen Hawkins for her project management, Tamsin Cornelius for her work on-site, Diana Valk for the illustrations and John Joyce for logistics.

## 9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## 10 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Type	Phase	Period	Trench	Description	Length	Width	Depth/Thickness	Levels
1	Layer	2	Undated	2	Bluey clay layer	11m	2m	0.2m	58.00m OD
2	Layer	1	Natural	2	Natural clay	30m	2m		56.60m OD
3	Layer	1	Natural	3	Natural clay	15m	2m		56.59m OD
4	Layer	1	Natural	1	Natural clay	30m	2m		55.93m OD
5	Layer	2	Undated	4	Subsoil	30m	2m	0.66m	55.55m OD
6	Layer	1	Natural	4	Natural clay	30m	2m		54.86m OD

## 11 APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX

	Trench 3	Trench 2	Trench 4	Trench 1
Phase 3: Modern	+	+	+	+
Phase 2: Undated		1	5	
		58.00m OD	55.55m OD	
Phase 1: Natural	3	2	6	4
	56.58m OD	56.60m OD	54.86m OD	55.93m OD

## 12 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-427889

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### Project details

Project name	Former College Buildings, Epping Forest College
Short description of the project	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at the former college buildings of Epping Forest College. A total of four trenches were excavated during the evaluation in order to determine if any archaeological deposits or features survived on the site, and if so, to determine their extent and nature. The evaluation has recorded the topography of the natural London Clay, which has illustrated a gradual slope towards the southeast of the site. Two layers, most likely associated with the late 20th century development of this site, were identified during the evaluation. No other evidence of human occupation was observed during the works.
Project dates	Start: 12-07-2021 End: 14-07-2021
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	EECB21 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Between deposition of an application and determination

---

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX EPPING FOREST LOUGHTON Former College Buildings, Epping Forest College
Postcode	IG10 3FE
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 543693 196458 50.954964954577 0.1981424225 50 57 17 N 000 11 53 E Point

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### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	RPS Consulting
Project design originator	RPS
Project director/manager	Helen Hawkins
Project supervisor	Kathy Davidson

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#### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Epping Forest District Museum
Digital Archive ID	EECB21
Digital Contents	"Survey"
Digital Media available	"Database", "GIS", "Spreadsheets", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Epping Forest District Museum
Paper Archive ID	EECB21
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Diary", "Drawing", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Report"

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#### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Former College Buildings, Epping Forest College: An Archaeological Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Davidson, K.
Date	2021
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 client document with PCA covers

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Entered by	Kathy Davidson (KDavidson@pre-construct.com)
Entered on	9 August 2021