WATERLOO LANE,
CHELMSFORD
ESSEX

EVALUATION

AUGUST 2005

EWLC 05

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

An Archaeological Evaluation at the Waterloo Lane, Chelmsford, Essex

Site Code: EWLC 05
Central National Grid Reference: TL 7105 0695

Written and Researched by Neil Hawkins
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, August 2005

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1 ABSTRACT

1.1 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. at the Waterloo Lane, Chelmsford, Essex. The evaluation was conducted between 11th and 14th July 2005, in advance of the redevelopment of the site. The work was commissioned by Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting on behalf of Higgins.

1.2 The evaluation consisted of seven trial trenches, aimed at comprehensive coverage of the western and central areas of the site, which revealed natural gravel overlain by alluvial clay and peat formations, and 20th century made ground and tarmac.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at Waterloo Lane, Chelmsford, Essex (see location map, Fig. 1). The evaluation was commissioned by Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting on behalf of Higgins in advance of the redevelopment of the site.

2.2 The evaluation covers an area of land centred on National Grid Reference TL 7105 0695. The land was previously used as a car park. The site is bounded to the east by the River Chelmer, to the north by car parks and Waterloo Lane, to the west by office buildings fronting onto Waterloo Lane and to the south by a small wooded area and car park. The archaeological evaluation involved the excavation and recording of seven trial trenches, aimed at comprehensive coverage of the western and central areas of the site (see trench location map, Fig. 2).

2.3 The evaluation was conducted between 11th and 14th of July 2005 and followed a written scheme of investigation prepared by CgMs Consulting. The fieldwork was supervised by the author, Neil Hawkins, under the Project Management of Tim Bradley. The site was monitored by Pat Connell of Essex County Council.

2.4 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records and artefacts will be deposited at Chelmsford Museum.

2.5 The site was allocated the site code EWLC 05.

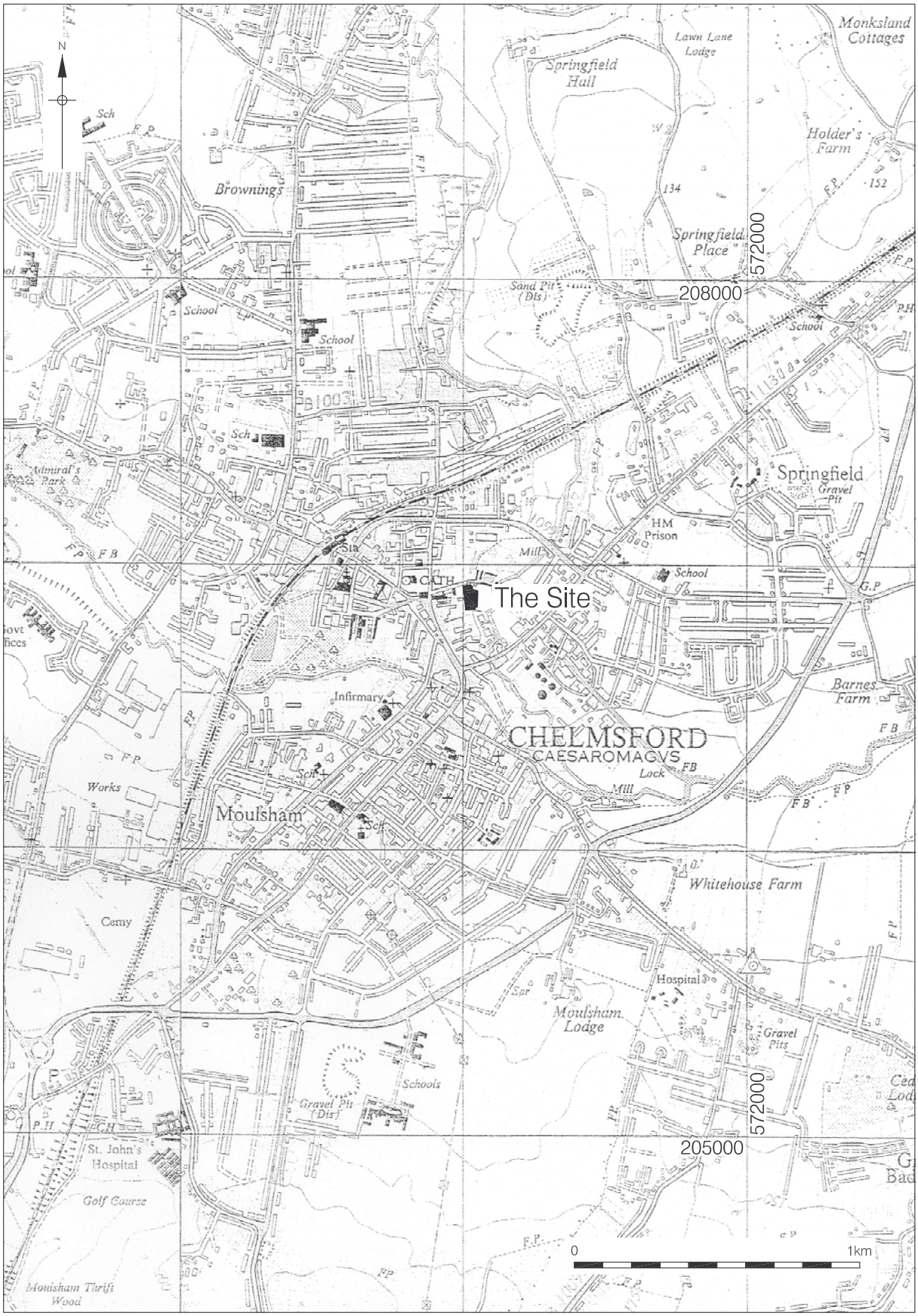

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Figure 1
Site Location
1:20,000

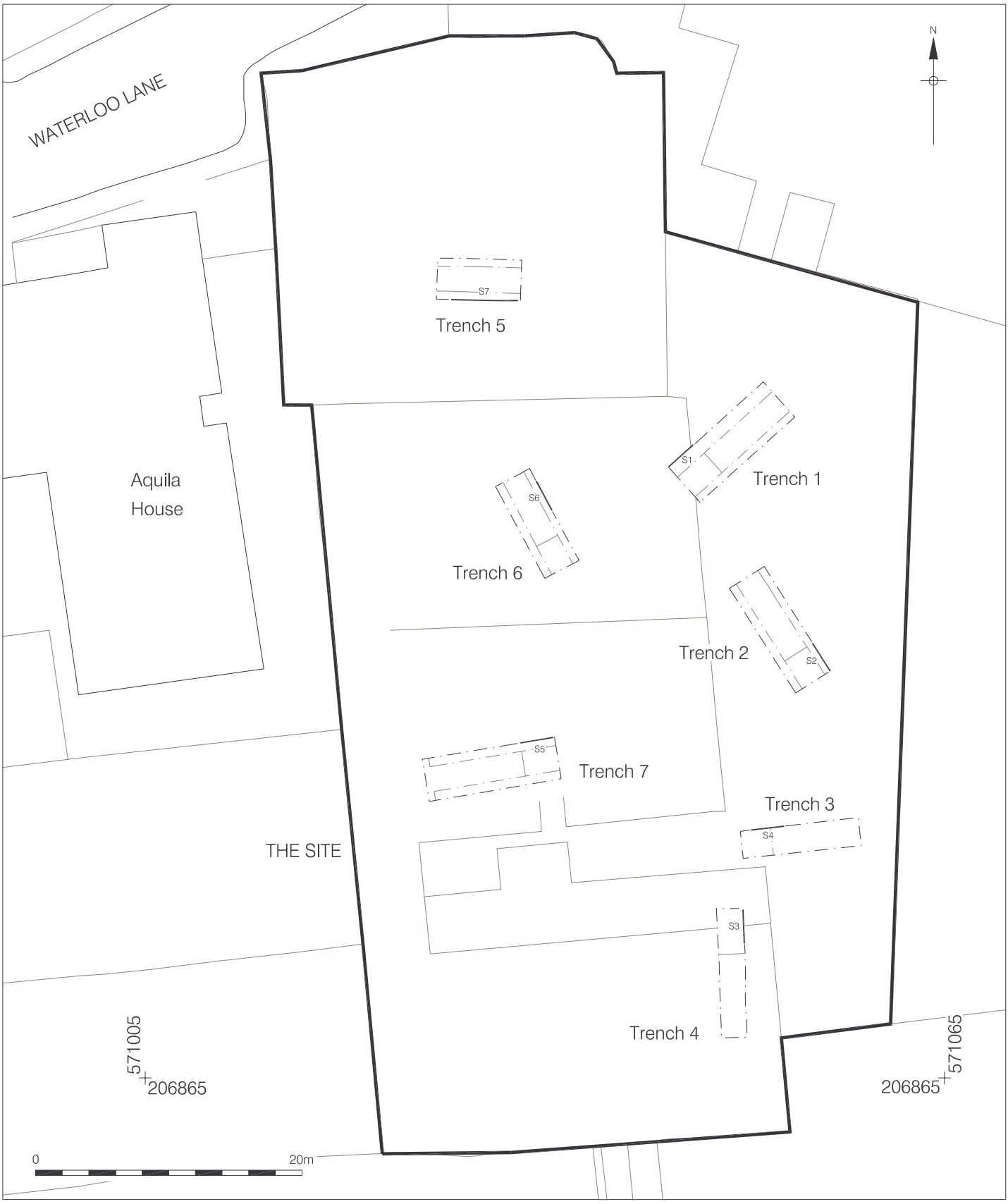

Figure 2
Trench Location
1:400

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 ARCHAEOLOGY IN CHELMSFORD AND THE UDP

3.1.1 In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16) "Archaeology and Planning", providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.

3.1.2 In considering any planning application for development, the local planning authority will be guided by the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG 16, by current Development Plan policy and by other material considerations.

3.1.3 The relevant Development Plan framework is provided by the Essex and Southend on Sea Replacement Structure Plan on 9th April 2001. The Plan contains the following policy which provides a framework for the consideration of development proposals affecting archaeological and heritage features.

"POLICY NR5 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE FEATURES"
DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHICH WOULD HAVE A MATERIALLY ADVERSE IMPACT UPON THE HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE, EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER, AND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OF ANCIENT LANDSCAPES, ANCIENT WOODLANDS, REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS, REGISTERED BATTLEFIELDS AND PROTECTED LANES. CONSERVATION, ENHANCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES WILL BE ENCOURAGED AND IMPLEMENTED WITHIN THESE DEFINED AREAS SO AS TO RETAIN AND PROMOTE THEIR HISTORIC AND LANDSCAPE INTEREST. ANY PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD GIVE RISE TO A MATERIAL INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF TRAFFIC USING PROTECTED LANES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

3.1.4 The Chelmsford Borough Local Plan was adopted in April 1997 and the Borough's current policies relating to archaeology state:

"POLICY ENV12
WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL, WHERE APPROPRIATE, REQUIRE THE RETENTION OF IMPORTANT FEATURES AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT.

POLICY ENV13

IF THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS MAY EXIST, WHOSE EXTENT AND IMPORTANCE ARE UNKNOWN, THE BOROUGH COUNCIL MAY REQUIRE DEVELOPERS TO ARRANGE FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD ASSESSMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BEFORE THE PLANNING APPLICATION IS DETERMINED THUS ENABLING AN INFORMED AND REASONABLE PLANNING DECISION TO BE MADE.

POLICY ENV14

WITHIN THE HISTORIC CORE OF CHELMSFORD AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL NOT ALLOW DEVELOPMENT TO TAKE PLACE UNTIL SATISFACTORY PROVISION HAS BEEN MADE FOR A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT."

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 The site is located at the interface of the first terrace gravels with the more recent (Holocene) alluvial deposits associated with the River Chelmer[1].

4.2 The site formerly lay outside the urban area of Chelmsford in an area of 'water meadows' associated with the River Chelmer. It is likely that the eastern part of the site was subject to flooding prior to the canalisation of the River Chelmer between 1960 and 1962[2].

4.3 The study site is broadly level, comprising surface parking, at around 24m OD.

[1] British Geological Survey, 1994,

[2] Hawkins, 2005

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 PREHISTORIC

5.1.1 Prehistoric flints and potsherds, mostly Bronze Age, were recorded during an archaeological intervention at 63-66 High Street; these appear to have been residual. Further prehistoric material was recovered during the works associated with the canalisation of the River Chelmer.

5.1.2 Iron Age activity is recorded from the site of Chelmsford's Dominican Priory and from 217-218 Moulsham Street. Early Iron Age occupation is evidenced south of the River Can in the area of the later Roman Town[3].

5.2 ROMAN

5.2.1 Chelmsford was the location of a small Roman town (Caesaro-Magnus) that lay south of the River Can at Moulsham. The Roman town developed on the site of a mid first century farmstead, and a short-lived post Boudiccan revolt fort.

5.2.2 The town developed along the London to Colchester road, a Government Posting Station, mansio, was added c.120-150 AD. The town grew to its maximum extent in the mid 2nd century, and earthwork defences were constructed c.160-175 AD but were abandoned by the mid 3rd century. Occupation of the town probably continued into the early fifth century though there is clear evidence for the abandonment of building plots in the 3rd and 4th centuries implying a gradual decline.

5.2.3 The London to Colchester road does not seem to have crossed the Can and Chelmer by the obvious direct route but rather dog legged up High Street before swinging east, utilising areas of relatively higher ground.

5.2.4 The area of the study site appears to have been very marginal to the Roman settlement, probably lying in an area of water meadows[4].

5.3 ANGLO SAXON AND EARLY MEDIEVAL

5.3.1 There is limited evidence for early Saxon occupation on the site of the Roman town south of the Can, and none in the immediate vicinity of the study site[5].

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[3] Hawkins, (2005)

5.4 LATE MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL

5.4.1 The medieval town of Chelmsford was founded at the end of the twelfth century by the Bishop of London within his manorial lands north of the River Can. The town was centred around a central Market Place, now represented by Tindal Square, Tindal Street and High Street.

5.4.2 New bridges had been built over the Can and Chelmer in the early twelfth century restoring the line of the old Roman road and the parish church of St. Mary (now Chelmsford Cathedral) was established at the head of the market by at least the early thirteenth century.

5.4.3 The street frontages of High Street, Tindal Street and Tindal Square were probably all built up by 1200, remaining continuous occupation thereafter. The area of the study site probably remained wholly undeveloped throughout the late medieval period.

5.4.4 A small number of cottages lay on the study site in the late 19th century, illustrated on the Chelmsford Tithe Map of 1842/3. These cottages remained onsite until their demolition sometime after 1955 and the area was converted into a car park, as it remains until the present day[6].

[4] Hawkins, (2005)

[5] ibid

[6] Hawkins, (2005)

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 The excavation of seven trenches was outlined in the Method Statement prepared by CgMs Consulting Limited[7]. The fieldwork was designed to assess the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains, which may require further investigation.

6.2 All trenches were machine excavated with a 360-degree mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist. The maximum dimensions of the trenches are shown in Table 1. Once archaeologically sensitive deposits or features were encountered, machining was stopped to allow archaeologists to clean with hand tools as necessary and record the remains.

Trench Number	Max Dimensions (m)	Max height (m OD)
1	10.00 x 2.00	23.41
2	10.00 x 2.00	23.54
3	10.00 x 2.00	23.56
4	9.60 x 2.00	23.62
5	9.50 x 2.00	24.26
6	8.00 x 2.00	24.50
7	10.00 x 2.00	23.86

Table 1: Trench Dimensions

6.3 Recording was undertaken using the single context planning method. All features and deposits observed were planned and recorded onto *pro forma* context record sheets. Contexts were numbered sequentially and are shown in this report within square brackets. Plans and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate. A general photographic survey of the site and working conditions was taken.

6.4 Two temporary benchmarks, 24.16m OD and 23.68m OD, were traversed onto the site from the Ordnance Survey Benchmark of 29.46m OD, located on the eastern corner of the front face of Shire Hall.

[7] Hawkins, (2005)

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Phase 1 – Natural Terrace Gravels

7.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered throughout Trenches 1-7, [3], [7], [10], [14], [37], [28] and [18] respectively, was the natural terrace gravels. This context existed as a loose deposit of fine sand and gravel, light blueish grey in colour. In Trench 1 this was encountered at a highest level of 20.78m OD; in Trench 2, 20.91m OD; in Trench 3, 20.87m OD; in Trench 4, 21.05m OD; in Trench 6, 21.69m OD; and in Trench 7, 21.05m OD. In Trench 5, however, the terrace gravel sloped distinctly upwards from east to west, and had a highest level of 22.48m OD and a lowest level of 21.88m OD. This slope probably represents the edge of the gravel terrace where it meets the alluvial deposits from the River Chelmer.

7.2 Phase 2 – Alluvial Deposits and Possible Channels

7.2.1 Sealing the natural terrace gravel [3] in Trench 1 was a layer of silty-clay alluvium, [2]. This layer was encountered at a height of 22.63m OD and had a maximum thickness of 1.85m. This layer represents alluvial flooding from the River Chelmer to the east.

7.2.2 Sealing the natural terrace gravel, [7], in Trench 2 was a sequence of silty-clay alluvium, layers [6] and [5]. They had an overall thickness of 1.85m, the highest level of which was 22.76m OD. These layers represent alluvial flooding episodes from the River Chelmer to the east.

7.2.3 Sealing the natural terrace gravel, [10], in Trench 3 was a sequence of silty-clay alluvium, layers [9] and [8]. They had an overall thickness of 2.15m, the highest level of which was 23.02m OD. These layers represent alluvial flooding episodes from the River Chelmer to the east.

7.2.4 Sealing the natural terrace gravel, [14], in Trench 4 was a sequence of silty-clay alluvium, layers [13], [12] and [11]. They had an overall thickness of 2.12m, the highest level of which was 23.26m OD. These layers also represent alluvial flooding episodes from the River Chelmer to the east.

7.2.5 Sealing the natural terrace gravel, [37], in Trench 5 was a sequence of silty-clay alluvium, layers [36] and [35]. They had an overall thickness of 0.57m. This sequence sloped upwards from east to west, with the highest level at the eastern end of 22.45m

OD and the western end 22.58m OD. These layers represent alluvial flooding episodes from the River Chelmer to the east.

7.2.6 Sealing the natural terrace gravel, [28], in Trench 6 are a series of layers of alluvium, [27] and [26], and a palaeochannel, [25], sealed by a further alluvial layer, [23]. Alluvial layers [27] and [26] were not fully exposed in plan or section. Cutting these layers was a palaeochannel [25]. This channel ran northeast-southwest through the trench and was encountered at a height of 22.55m OD and was not fully excavated due to health and safety constraints. The channel was filled with a firm clayey silt [24], which was light greyish green in colour. The channel was sealed by another layer of alluvium, [23], which was encountered at a height of 22.15m OD and had a maximum thickness of 0.40m. These deposits represent alluvial flooding episodes, and a channel associated with the River Chelmer to the east.

7.2.7 Sealing the natural terrace gravel, [18], in Trench 7 was a sequence of silty-clay alluvium, layers [17] and [16]. They had an overall thickness of 1.50m, the highest level of which was 22.55m OD. These layers represent alluvial flooding episodes from the River Chelmer to the east.

7.3 Phase 3 – Peat Deposits

7.3.1 Sealing the alluvium in Trench 5 was a layer of organic peat [38]. This context existed as a soft/moist deposit of silty peat, mid reddish brown in colour, with frequent organic roots and grasses. It was encountered at a height of 22.58m OD at the eastern end of the Trench and sloped upwards to the western to a height of 22.93m OD. It had a maximum thickness of 0.21m.

7.3.2 Sealing the alluvium in Trench 6 was a layer of organic peat [22]. This context existed as a soft/fibrous deposit of silty peat, dark brown in colour, with frequent grasses and roots. It was encountered at a height of 22.30m OD and had a maximum thickness of 0.20m. Sealing the peat was a layer of alluvium, [21]. This was encountered at a height of 22.48m OD and had a maximum thickness of 0.20m. This layer represents post-peat formation flooding of the area, possibly from a localised channel.

7.4 Phase 4 – Later Post-Medieval Activity

7.4.1 Sealing the alluvium in Trench 1 was a layer of later post-medieval ploughsoil, [1]. This layer was encountered at a height of 23.13m OD and had a maximum thickness of 0.50m.

7.4.2 Sealing the alluvium in Trench 2 was a layer of later post-medieval ploughsoil, [4]. This layer was encountered at a height of 23.21m OD and had a maximum thickness of 0.45m. This layer may represent a marshy floodplain on the edge of the River Chelmer prior to its canalisation.

7.4.3 Sealing the peat layer in Trench 5 were a series of 18th/19th century dumping and levelling layers, [34] and [33], a 19th century pit, [32], and later 19th/20th century made ground, [39], [30] and [29]. The 18th/19th century dump layer [34] was encountered at a height of 23.06m OD and a maximum thickness of 0.24m. This was sealed by a levelling layer [33], which was encountered at a height of 23.11m OD and had a maximum thickness of 0.32m OD. Cutting layer [33] was a circular 19th century pit, [32] which measured 0.90m north-south and 0.80m east-west. It was encountered at 22.93m OD and was 0.67m deep. Sealing this was a sequence of layers of made ground [30] and [29]. The uppermost layer [29] was encountered at 23.78m OD and the layers had a combined thickness of 1.00m. The sequence was sealed by modern crushed concrete and tarmac.

7.4.4 Sealing the layer of alluvium in Trench 6 was a 19th century dump layer, [20], and a 19th century levelling layer, [19]. The uppermost level of these layers was at a height of 23.38m OD and they had a combined thickness of 1.00m. This was sealed by modern hardcore and tarmac.

7.4.5 Sealing the alluvium in Trench 7 was a layer of 19th century made ground [15]. This layer was encountered at a height of 23.15m OD and had a maximum thickness of 0.60m. This was sealed by modern hardcore and tarmac.

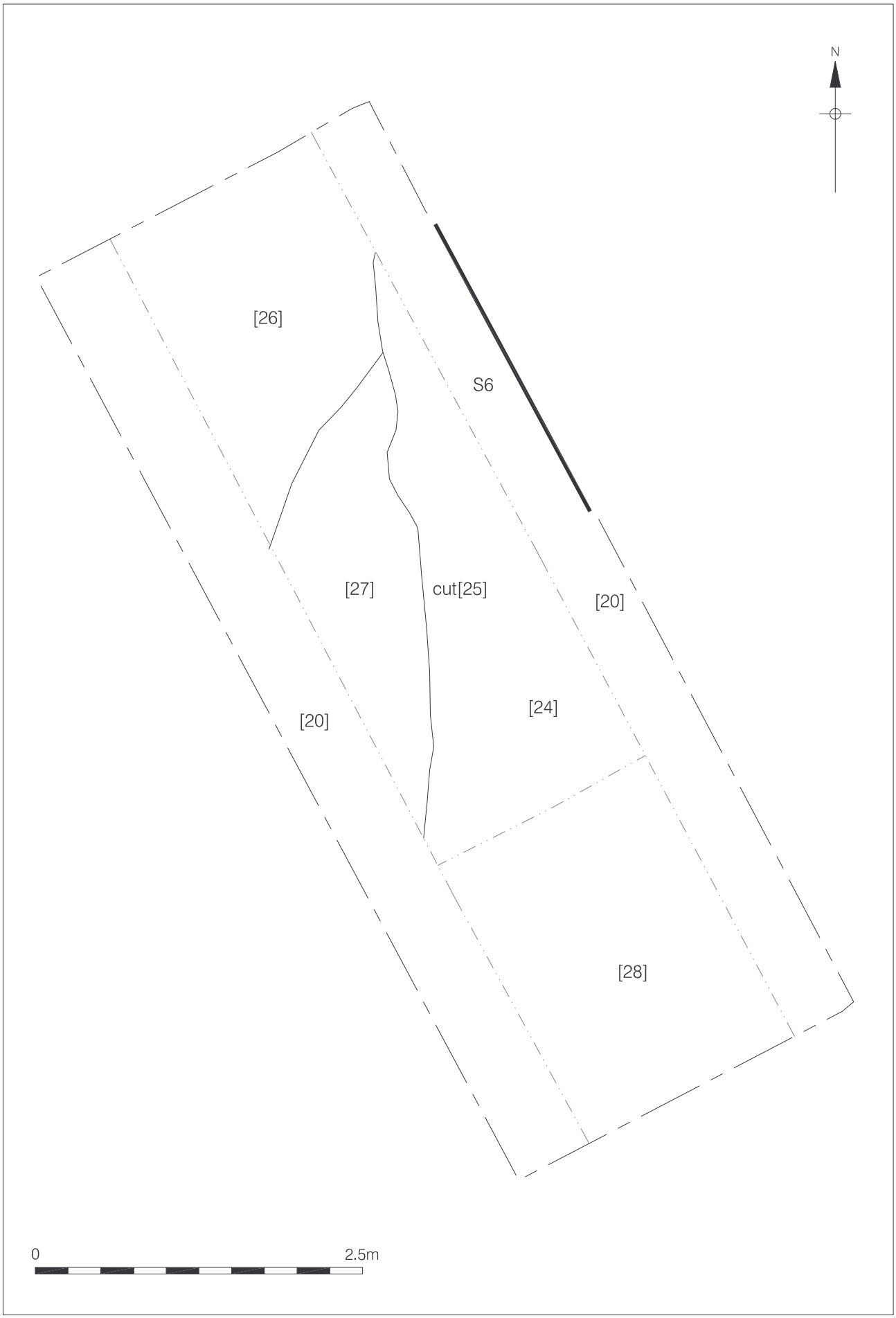
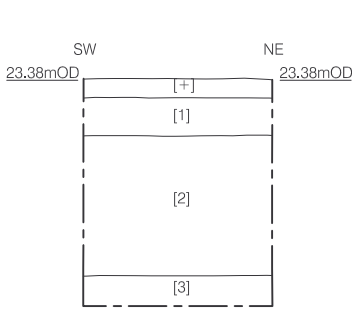
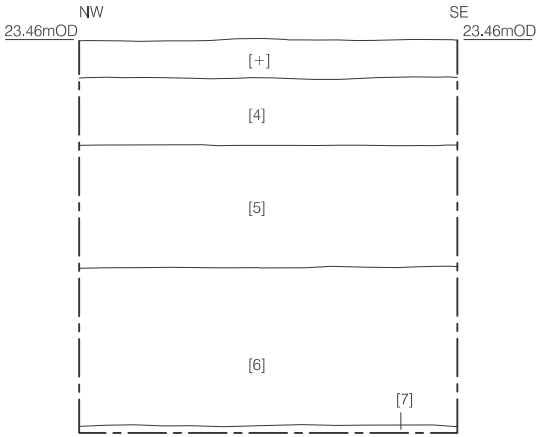


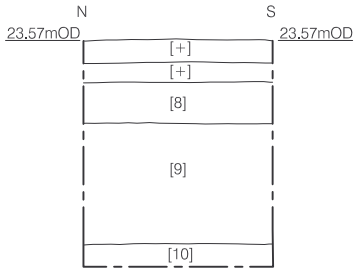
Figure 3
Palaeochannel,cut[25], Trench 6
1:40



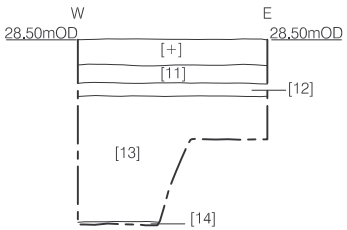
Section 1, Trench 1
South east facing



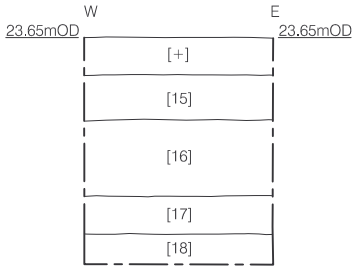
Section 2, Trench 2
South west facing



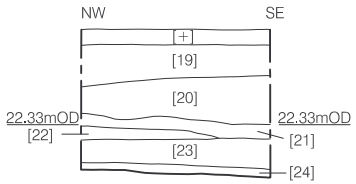
Section 3, Trench 4
West facing



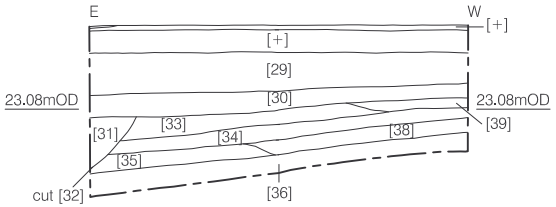
Section 4, Trench 3
South facing



Section 5, Trench 7
South facing



Section 6, Trench 6
South west facing



Section 7, Trench 5
North facing

Figure 4
Sections
1:100

8 TRENCH SUMMARY

8.1 TRENCH 1

8.1.1 Trench 1 revealed natural terrace gravel sealed by alluvium, overlain by later post-medieval ploughsoil sealed by modern made ground.

8.2 TRENCH 2

8.2.1 Trench 2 revealed natural terrace gravel sealed by alluvium, overlain by later post-medieval ploughsoil sealed by modern made ground.

8.3 TRENCH 3

8.3.1 Trench 3 revealed natural terrace gravel sealed by alluvium, overlain by modern made ground.

8.4 TRENCH 4

8.4.1 Trench 3 revealed natural terrace gravel sealed by alluvium, overlain by modern made ground.

8.5 TRENCH 5

8.5.1 Trench 5 revealed natural terrace gravel overlain by alluvium and organic peat, sealed by 18/19th century dumping and levelling layers, which were cut by a 19th century pit. This was overlain by made ground and modern tarmac.

8.6 TRENCH 6

8.6.1 Trench 6 revealed natural terrace gravel overlain by alluvial deposits, which were cut by a palaeochannel, which was then sealed by more alluvium. This was overlain by organic peat, which was sealed by more alluvium and then overlain by 19th century dumping and levelling. This was sealed by modern made ground and tarmac.

8.7 TRENCH 7

8.7.1 Trench 7 revealed natural terrace gravel overlain by alluvium, which was sealed by 18/19th century made ground. This was sealed by modern made ground and tarmac.

9 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 DISCUSSION

9.1.1 The evaluation revealed natural deposits in all trenches consistent with the underlying terrace gravel and alluvium. Other than the later post-medieval period, no evidence for occupation was encountered within the evaluation trenches.

9.1.2 The depth of the alluvium encountered, coupled with the proximity of the River Chelmer to the east, account for the lack of archaeological evidence encountered. The area of the site lies on the margins of the River Chelmer, and only Trench 5, situated to the north of the site, encountered the natural gravel terrace at a higher level. This implies that the edge of the gravel terrace where it meets the floodplain, the area of highest potential for archaeological remains and human activity, is not located in this area of the site. This area is probably further west or north-west towards present day Waterloo Lane.

9.1.3 The presence of organic peat within two trenches indicates a sequence of wet, then drier conditions, followed by more flooding. Human activity, notably from the Bronze Age, has been encountered within such peat formations in various locations including the Thames floodplain. However, the particularly thin peat deposits encountered may imply that the area may not have been marshland consistently, or for long enough for human activity to develop. More likely the area remained mostly too wet for human occupation, with only a small period of time when drier conditions conducive for marshy and peat deposits prevailed.

9.2 CONCLUSIONS

9.2.1 The evaluation has shown that the western and central areas of the site have had little or no truncation. However, these areas lie on the margins of the River Chelmer and are therefore not conducive to human activity or occupation. Any human activity is likely to have been situated further to the west on the edge of the gravel terrace where it meets the alluvial sequence of the Chelmer. The proposed trenches situated in the wooded area towards the east of the site are likely to be situated in the sterile deposits of alluvium associated with the Chelmer, and are therefore unlikely to reveal evidence of utilisation/occupation prior to the modern period.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting Limited for commissioning the project on behalf of Higgins, who kindly funding the work.

10.2 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would also like to thank Pat Connell of Essex County Council for monitoring the work.

10.3 The author would also like to thank the field staff Ashley Pooley, Victoria Osbourne for the illustrations, Natalie Barrett for the surveying and Tim Bradley for his project management and editing.

11 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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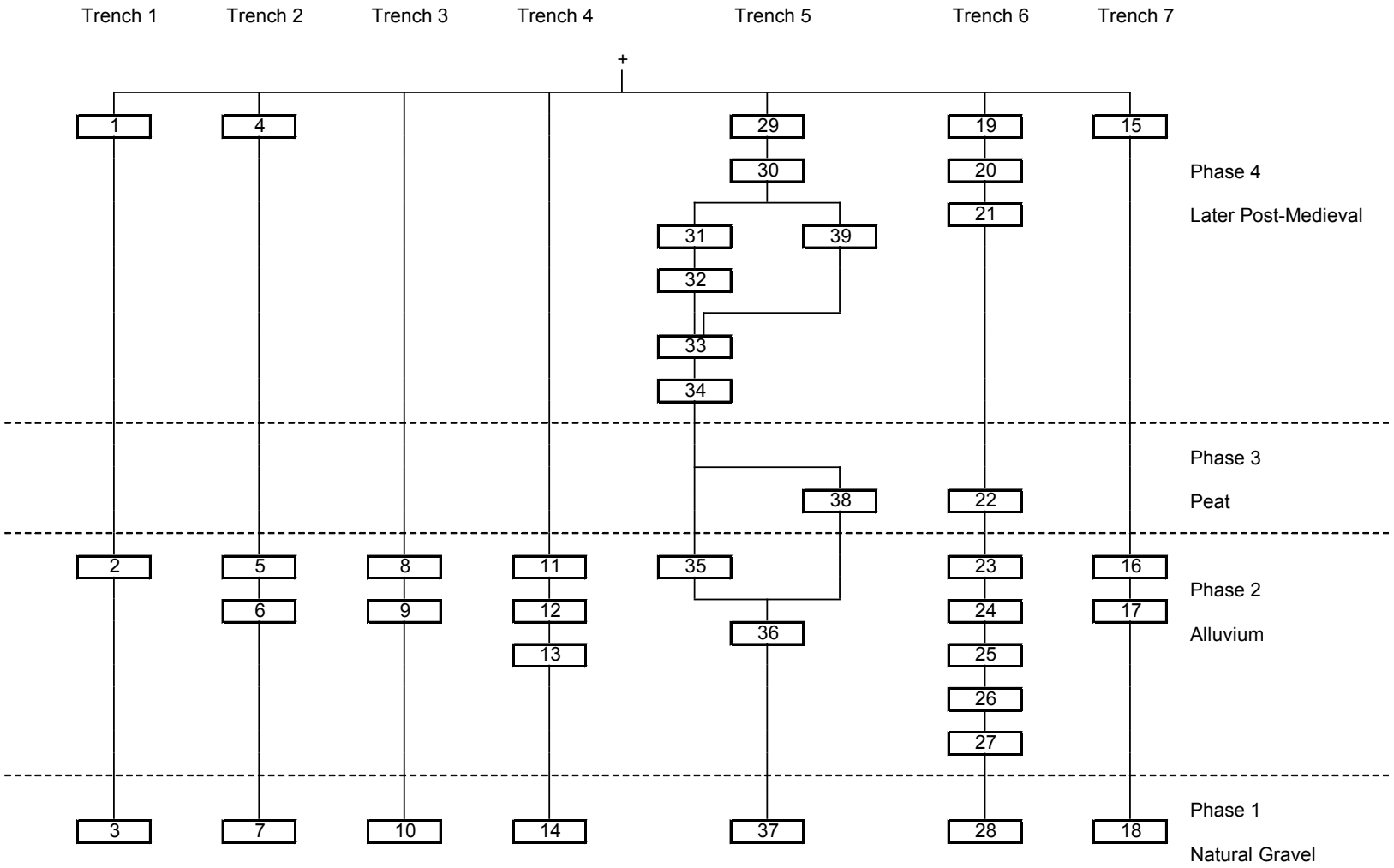
APPENDIX 1: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Type	Trench	Phase	Description
1	Layer	1	4	Ploughsoil
2	Layer	1	2	Alluvium
3	Natural	1	1	Natural Terrace Gravel
4	Layer	2	4	Ploughsoil
5	Layer	2	2	Alluvium
6	Layer	2	2	Alluvium
7	Natural	2	1	Natural Terrace Gravel
8	Layer	4	2	Alluvium
9	Layer	4	2	Alluvium
10	Natural	4	1	Natural Terrace Gravel
11	Layer	3	2	Alluvium
12	Layer	3	2	Alluvium
13	Layer	3	2	Alluvium
14	Natural	3	1	Natural Terrace Gravel
15	Layer	7	4	Made Ground
16	Layer	7	2	Alluvium
17	Layer	7	2	Alluvium
18	Natural	7	1	Natural Terrace Gravel
19	Layer	6	4	Made Ground
20	Layer	6	4	Made Ground
21	Layer	6	3	Alluvium
22	Layer	6	3	Peat
23	Layer	6	2	Alluvium
24	Fill	6	2	Fill of [25]
25	Cut	6	2	Cut for Palaeochannel
26	Layer	6	2	Alluvium
27	Layer	6	2	Alluvium
28	Natural	6	1	Natural Terrace Gravel
29	Layer	5	4	Made Ground
30	Layer	5	4	Made Ground
31	Fill	5	4	Fill of [32]
32	Cut	5	4	Cut for 19th Century Pit
33	Layer	5	4	Levelling Layer
34	Layer	5	4	Dump Layer

35	Layer	5	2	Alluvium
36	Layer	5	2	Alluvium
37	Natural	5	1	Natural Terrace Gravel
38	Layer	5	3	Peat
39	Layer	5	4	Made Ground

APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX



APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-9467

Project details

Project name	Waterloo Lane, Chelmsford
Short description of the project	Archaeological Evaluation at Waterloo Lane, Chelmsford. Seven trenches revealed natural terrace gravels overlain by floodplain alluvium, palaeochannels, organic peat, sealed by 19th century dumping and made ground.
Project dates	Start: 11-07-2005 End: 14-07-2005
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	EWLC05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 2 - Other transport infrastructure
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches','Targeted Trenches','Visual Inspection'
Development type	Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the	Not known / Not recorded

planning process

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX CHELMSFORD CHELMSFORD Waterloo Lane
Postcode	CM1
Study area	4000.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TL 7105 0695 Point
Height OD	Min: 20.78m Max: 22.48m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	CgMs Consultants Ltd
Project design originator	Duncan Hawkins
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley
Project supervisor	Neil Hawkins
Sponsor or funding body	Higgins

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Chelmsford Museum
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Chelmsford Museum
Digital Media available	'Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Diary','Drawing','Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Evaluation at Waterloo Lane, Chelmsford
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Hawkins, N.
Date	2005
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

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