



16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION





16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Prepared on behalf of:

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Site Code	ECC4025	NGR	TM 00801 12508
Project No.	P1197		
Planning Ref.	170168	OASIS	britanni1-290247
Approved By:		Date	August 2017



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Abstract

On 31st July 2017 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trench evaluation at 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex (TM 00801 12508) on behalf of Mr Bill Fox in advance of the construction of a single dwelling within a curtilage of a grade II listed building, with car port and associated external works, at 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex, (TM 00801 12508). The work was undertaken in response to a design brief issued by Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBC/AA) (Tipper, J. dated 23rd May 2017) requiring a programme of linear trial trenching to sample the threatened available area. This constituted 18.00m of excavated area, forming a single 10.00m x 1.80m trench arranged diagonally across the proposed dwelling's footprint on a NW-SE alignment.*

The evaluation revealed 2 phases of activity on the site. The first phase related to sub soil 1001 which is likely a buried agricultural sub soil, indicative of the sites prior use as agricultural land. The presence of the post-medieval CBM and tile fragments suggest possible night soiling. The second phase relates to top soil 1000 which is a modern garden soil covering the agricultural sub soil 1001. Modern iron nail and CBM were recovered from this layer and it likely represents the use of the site as a garden following the previous phase of agricultural use which possibly ended between 1880 and 1900. According to OS maps and aerial photographs the site has been used as a garden since this time until present day.

The evaluation was successful in identifying the post-medieval activity on the site, taking the form of agricultural use and its modern use as a garden since. However, despite the high potential for archaeology associated with the Roman period and medieval priory no features were encountered.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

On 31st July 2017 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trench evaluation at 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex (TM 00801 12508) on behalf of Mr Bill Fox in advance of the construction of a single dwelling within a curtilage of a grade II* listed building, with car port and associated external works, at 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex, (TM 00801 12508).

The work was undertaken in response to a design brief issued by Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBC/AA) (Tipper, J. dated 23rd May 2017) requiring a programme of linear trial trenching to sample the threatened available area. This constituted 18.00m of excavated area, forming a single 10.00m x 1.80m trench arranged diagonally across the proposed dwelling's footprint on a NW-SE alignment.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located within the southern portion of the small town of West Mersea, Essex. The site lies north and west of Coast Road as Coast Road turns northerly. The site is bound on all sides by urban development.

Bedrock geology is described as Thames Group Clay, Silty. This sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 34 to 56 million years ago in the Palaeogene Period when the local environment was previously dominated by deep seas, (BGS, 2017).

Superficial geology is described as River Terrace Deposits, 3 - Sand and Gravel. These superficial deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period when the local environment was previously dominated by rivers, (BGS 2017).

3.0 PLANNING POLICIES

The archaeological investigation is to be carried out on the recommendation of the local planning authority, following guidance laid down by the *National Planning and Policy Framework* (NPPF, DCLD 2012) which replaces *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5, DCLG 2010). The relevant local planning policy is the *Colchester Borough Council Core Strategy (adopted 2008, updated 2014)*.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2 & 3)

The following archaeological background uses the Colchester Historic Environment Record (CHER) and Record Office (500m search centred on the site), Historic England PastScape (www.pastscape.org.uk), and the Archaeological Data Service (www.ads.ahds.ac.uk) (ADS).



The CHER holds 67 monument entries within 500m of the site and 30 events (Figs. 2 & 3).

The most significant records relating to the site is MCC8858 which relates to Roman remains in the vicinity of West Mersea Hall, Yew Tree House and St Peter and St Paul's Church. Mosaics were first noted by Cromwell Mortimer in 1730. They were generally of red tesserae, but the main pavement is more complex consisting of white, yellow and red tesserae forming flowers, knots and guilloches. In 1896 Laver observed a wall some 2ft high and 3ft wide, and in 1953 a circular foundation, possibly an apse, was found. Finds have been reported, but none has survived except fragments of Samian and the rim of a mortarium which was found in 1921 under the pavement in the church. In 1991 two trial holes were excavated in preparation for the proposed West Mersea church extension. Human bone was found but it was disturbed; the bone was residual and did not represent an *in-situ* inhumation. Two coffin fittings (handles) and a nail also seem to be associated with residual deposition of graves. Other finds included peg and flue tile, and two sherds of pot, one sherd possibly being Roman.

The Palaeolithic is represented by two records the, closest of which (MCC8787) is located 200m East of the site. The record refers to the discovery of a flint hand axe. The majority of the prehistoric records relate to the Iron Age. The two most significant records (MCC5727 and MCC6829) are both located with 300m of the site. MCC5727 refers to the discovery of a single sherd of Iron Age pottery in a test pit while MCC6829 relates to an Iron Age vessel whose discovery was reported to the portable antiquities scheme.

The Roman period is well represented in the records returned by the CHER search. The most significant record relates to the Roman remains in the vicinity of West Mersea Hall (MCC8858), discussed above. 250m north east of the site a wall (MCC8837) some two feet thick, built of stone and tile set in pink mortar, was discovered with burnt daub and oyster shell during a small excavation in 1922. A further excavation in 1927 by MR Hull found additional pottery, a bone pin, and an iron knife. All of the above was dated to the Roman period. Another record only located 20m from MCC8837 in the vicinity of West Mersea Church refers to cement, tesserae, fragments of flue and other tile, and also an antoninianus of Postumus, found between 1919 and 1923. MCC5729 located north of the site on the periphery of the search area relates to further test pits which produced small amounts of Roman and pottery. The wider historic landscape contains much evidence for Roman domestic occupation with mosaics frequently observed during works in the area from the 18th century onwards. Two geotechnical trenches were examined adjacent to the site (ECC2974) and revealed a number of pits. The pit fills contained large quantities of oyster shell and some fragments of animal bone. Additionally tile/brick were recovered from one of the pit fills which was dated to both Roman and post-medieval periods. The Roman material is, however, likely to be residual in the pit fill, with the later post-medieval material giving a more reliable date for the deposit.

The Saxon period is only sparsely represented by the records returned by the CHER search. The closest to the site is the Church of St Peter and St Paul, West Mersea,



(MCC8909). This parish church, with ragstone walls containing Roman, and later, brick. Much of the chancel and nave was rebuilt in the 14th Century, but the tower appears to be largely 11th century in design. Apart from Saxo-Norman west tower, church is of little interest architecturally.

The medieval period is well represented in the records returned by the search however the most significant record relating to the site refers to the location of a suspected small priory (MCC8835) near West Mersea Church, known to have been established as early as 1046. Little is known of the history of the priory. In 1294 a valuation of the priory details the extents of the three manors belonging to it (Mersea, Peet and Fingringhoe). It was stated that two monks dwelt there. The priory also owned the churches of West Mersea and Fingringhoe.

The post medieval period is the best represented in the results returned by the CHER search however this predominantly focused in the west of the search area. One record adjacent to the site (MCC4448) relates to an early 18th century brick house with gate and gatepiers, located on the north side of Coast Road to the west of the church, and in the supposed area of the priory (MCC8835). The building, (Yew Tree House) has two storeys, with five bays, segment-headed windows and parapet, and a Tuscan doorway.

Given the above, the predominant potential for archaeology at this site was likely to relate to the Roman period. The potential for encountering features associated with remains of this period were considered **Significantly High**. The potential for encountering archaeology from the medieval period was considered **Moderate** while archaeology relating to the remaining periods was considered **Low**.

5.0 PROJECT AIMS

The CBC/AA brief (Tipper, J. dated 23rd May 2017) states that the trial trenching exercise is required to:

- Identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological deposit, together with its likely extent, localised depth and quality of preservation.
- Evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/alluvial deposits.
- Establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence.
- Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.

6.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The research objectives for the project are in line with those laid out in *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24 (Medlycott, 2011).



Project objectives will cover the following:

- To recover as much information as possible on the extent, date, phasing, character, function, status and significance of the site. Also that the state of preservation of archaeological features and deposits should be determined.
- Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost.
- An assessment of the environmental potential of the site through examination of suitable deposits (to be arranged with a suitably qualified specialist)

7.0 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

The CBC/AA Brief required an adequate representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains are potentially threatened. This constituted 18.00m of excavated area, forming a single 10.00m x 1.80m trench arranged diagonally across the proposed dwelling footprint on a North-west to South-east alignment.

A 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to machine down to the archaeological horizon, thereafter all excavation work was undertaken by hand.

8.0 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (Fig. 4, 5 & 6)

8.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was orientated north-west to south-east and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.73m in sample section 1. Trench 1 contained no archaeological features.

Topsoil **1000** was present to a depth of 0.32m in sample section 1. This layer overlay sub soil **1001** which was present from a depth of 0.32m to 0.46m. This layer overlay colluvial layer **1002** which was present from a depth of 0.46m to 0.73m. This layer overlay natural **1004**.

9.0 DEPOSIT MODEL (Fig. 5)

The deposit model was consistent across the site.

At the top of the stratigraphic sequence was topsoil **1000**, a garden soil, which was present to a depth of 0.20m sample section 1. This comprised of a dark grey-brown firm, sandy silt with frequent rounded flint and pebble inclusions. Fragments of animal bone, modern iron nails, fragments of modern brick and CBM were found (not retained).



Beneath topsoil layer 1000 was sub soil **1001** which comprised a firm mid grey-brown sandy silt with very frequent rounded stone inclusions. This layer was present to a depth of 0.55m to a maximum thickness of 0.27m in sample section 2. Fragments of coke, post-medieval CBM fragments and roof tile fragments (not retained) were found indicating the possibility of night soiling activity during the post-medieval period.

Below 1001 was colluvial layer **1002** which was a very firm light orange-brown, sandy silt with frequent rounded flint and stone inclusions. This layer was present to a depth of 0.73m to a maximum thickness of 0.27m in sample section 1. This colluvial layer was present in the southern two thirds of the trench.

At the base of the stratigraphic sequence, present from a depth of 0.73m in sample section 1, was natural geology **1004**, which consisted of a firm mid brown-orange sandy gravel with frequent rounded flint and stone inclusions.

10.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The archaeological background for the site suggested that there was a **significantly high** potential for encountering features associated with the Roman period and **moderate** potential for encountering archaeology from the medieval period

The evaluation revealed 2 phases of activity on the site. The first phase relates to sub soil **1001** which is likely a buried agricultural sub soil indicative of the sites prior use as agricultural land. The presence of the post-medieval CBM and tile fragments suggest possible night soiling. This can be supported by first edition OS map 1874 which indicates that the land was being used for agricultural purposes as field divisions are visible (**fig 6**).

The second phase relates to top soil **1000** which is a modern garden soil covering the agricultural sub soil **1001**. Modern iron nail and CBM were found in this layer and it likely represents the use of the site as a garden following the previous phase of agricultural use which possibly ended between 1880 and 1900. According to OS maps and aerial photographs the site has been used as a garden since this time until present day.

The evaluation was successful in identifying the post-medieval activity on the site, taking the form of agricultural use and its modern use as a garden since. However, despite the high potential for archaeology associated with the Roman period and medieval priory no features were encountered.

11.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

Arrangements will be made for the archive to be deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museum. The digital archive will be stored with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).



12.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Britannia Archaeology would like to thank Mr Bill Fox for commissioning and funding the project.

We would also like to thank of Jess Tipper the Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBC/AA) for his advice and assistance on the project.

The site was excavated by Matt Baker, Dan McConnell and Louisa Cunningham of Britannia Archaeology Ltd.



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Historic England PastScape www.pastscape.org.uk

Archaeological Data Service (ADS) www.ads.ahds.ac.uk

English Heritage National List for England
www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england



16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex
Archaeological Evaluation
P1197

HER Data

Provided and licenced by Colchester Borough Council Historic Environment Record.



APPENDIX 1 – DEPOSIT TABLES

Deposit Tables

TRENCH 1

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
1	NW-SE	12.28	2
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
1	SE end of trench	NE Facing	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.32m	Topsoil: Dark grey-brown, firm sandy silt with frequent rounded flints and pebble inclusions	
1001	0.32-0.46m	Sub Soil: Mid grey-brown, firm sandy silt with frequent rounded stone inclusions.	
1002	0.46-0.73m	Colluvium: Light orange-brown, very firm sandy silt with frequent rounded flint and stone inclusions	
1003	0.73m+	Natural: Mid brown-orange, firm sandy gravel with frequent rounded flint and stone inclusions.	

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
1	NE-SW	12.48	3
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
2	NW end of trench	NW Facing	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.28m	Topsoil: Dark grey-brown, firm sandy silty with frequent rounded flint and pebble inclusions.	
1001	0.28-0.55m	Sub Soil: Mid grey-brown, firm sandy silt with frequent rounded stone inclusions.	
1003	0.55+	Natural: Mid brown-orange, firm sandy gravel with frequent rounded flint and stone inclusions.	



APPENDIX 2 – OASIS SHEET

OASIS FORM - Print view

<http://oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm>

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

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OASIS ID: britanni1-290247

Project details

Project name	16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex
Short description of the project	On 31st July 2017 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trench evaluation at 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex (TM 00801 12508) on behalf of Bill Fox in advance of the construction of a single dwelling within a curtilage of a grade II* listed building, with car port and associated external works, at 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex, (TM 00801 12508). The work was undertaken in response to a design brief issued by Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Advisor (CBC/AA) (Tipper, J. dated 23rd May 2017) which required a programme of linear trial trenching to sample the threatened available area. This constituted 18m of excavated area, forming a single 10.00m x 1.80m trench arranged diagonally across the proposed dwelling's footprint on a NW-SE alignment. The evaluation revealed 2 phases of activity on the site. The first phase relates to sub soil 1001 which is likely a buried agricultural sub soil indicative of the sites prior use as agricultural land. The presence of the post-medieval CBM and tile fragments suggest possible night soiling. The second phase relates to top soil 1000 which is a modern garden soil covering the agricultural sub soil 1001. Modern iron nail and CBM were found in this layer and it likely represents the use of the site as a garden following the previous phase of agricultural use which possibly ended between 1880 and 1900. According to OS maps and aerial photographs the site has been used as a garden since this time until present day.
Project dates	Start: 31-07-2017 End: 31-07-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECC4025 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Small-scale (e.g. single house, 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 COLCHESTER WEST MERSEA 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex
Postcode CO5 8LH
Study area 0 Hectares
Site coordinates TM 00801 12508 51.774626173718 0.910960213974 51 46 28 N 000 54 39 E Point
Height OD / Depth Min: 12.26m Max: 12.54m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Britannia Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator Dan McConnell
Project director/manager Martin Brook
Project supervisor Louisa Cunningham
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body Bill Fox

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
Digital Archive recipient Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID ECC4025
Digital Contents "none"
Digital Media available "GIS", "Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient Colchester Museum
Paper Archive ID ECC4025
Paper Contents "none"
Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Drawing", "Map", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title 16 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex
Author(s)/Editor(s) Louisa Cunningham



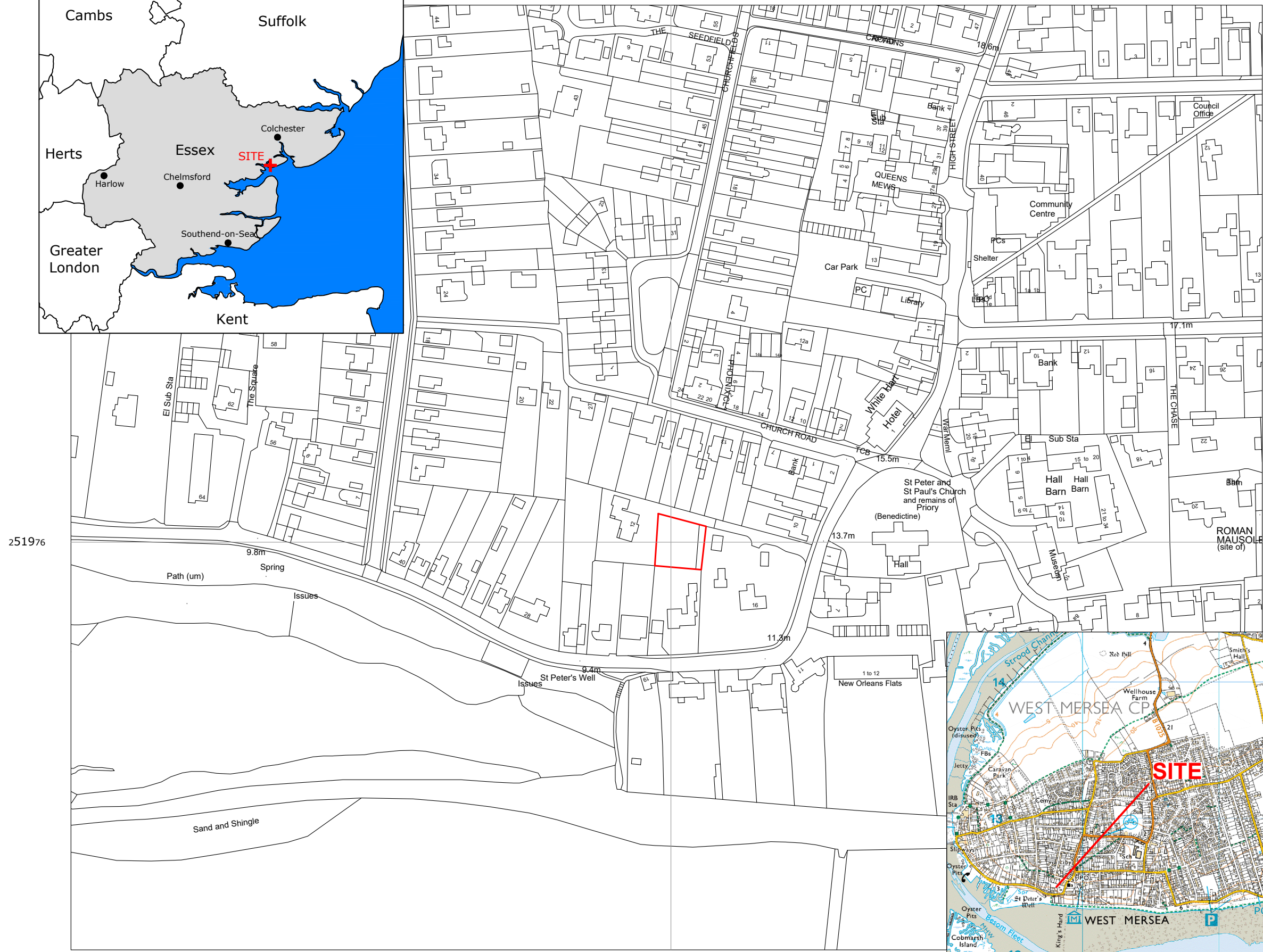
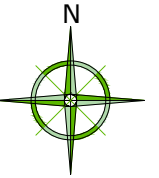
OASIS FORM - Print view

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OASIS:

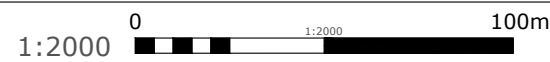
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Site Boundary

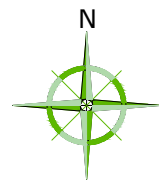
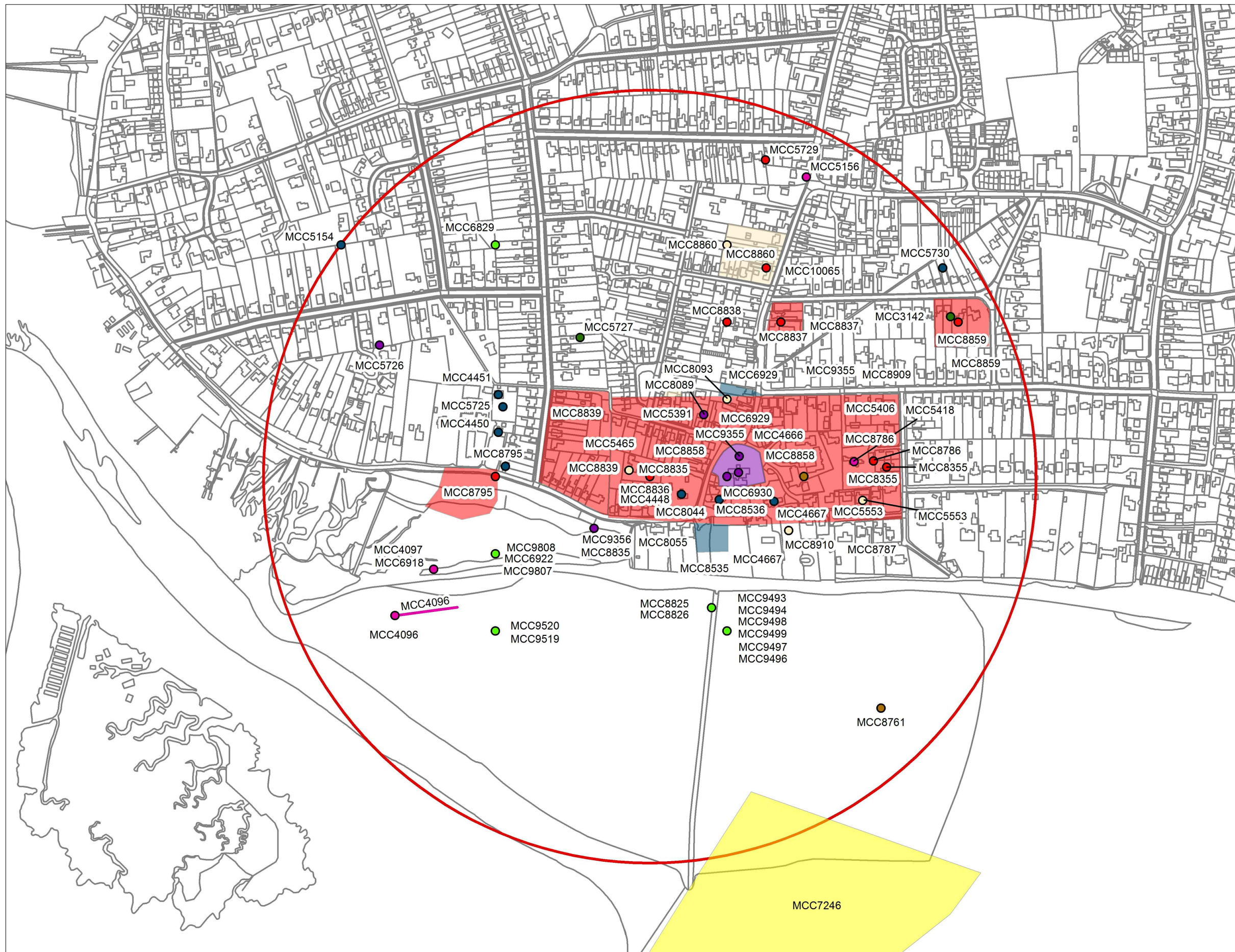
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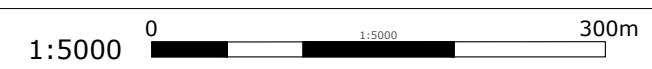


NGR:	600801 212508	REF:	P1197
PROJECT:	16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, COLCHESTER, ESSEX		
DESCRIPTION:	GENERAL LOCATION PLAN		
CLIENT:	BILL FOX		
BRITANNIA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD			
			
UNIT 2 THE OLD WOOL WAREHOUSE ST ANDREWS STREET SOUTH BURY ST EDMUNDS SUFFOLK IP33 3PH			
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DATE:	JULY 2017	PLOT:	A3
VERSION:	1	AUTHOR:	DPM
APPROVED:	MB	FIGURE:	1

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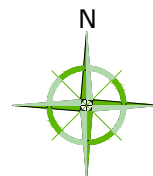


- HER Search Area
- Undated Record
- Multiperiod Record
- Modern Record
- Post-medieval Record
- Medieval Record
- Anglo Saxon Record
- Roman Record
- Iron Age Record
- Bronze Age Record
- Neolithic Record
- Mesolithic Record
- Palaeolithic Record
- Site Boundary



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NGR: 600801 212508	REF: P1197	
PROJECT: 16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, COLCHESTER, ESSEX		
DESCRIPTION: CBCHER DATA: MONUMENTS		
CLIENT: BILL FOX		
BRITANNIA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD		
UNIT 2 THE OLD WOOL WAREHOUSE ST ANDREWS STREET SOUTH BURY ST EDMUNDS SUFFOLK IP33 3PH T: 01449 763034 E: info@britannia-archaeology.com W: www.britannia-archaeology.com © Copyright Britannia Archaeology Ltd 2017		
DATE: JULY 2017	PLOT: A3	VERSION: 1
AUTHOR: DPM	FIGURE: 2	
APPROVED: MB		



- HER Search Area
- Archaeological Event
- Site Boundary

1:5000 0 300m

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NGR: 600801 212508 REF: P1197

PROJECT: 16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, COLCHESTER, ESSEX

DESCRIPTION: CBCHER DATA: EVENTS

CLIENT: BILL FOX

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UNIT 2
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BURY ST EDMUNDS
SUFFOLK
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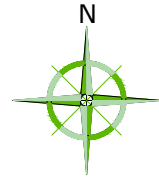
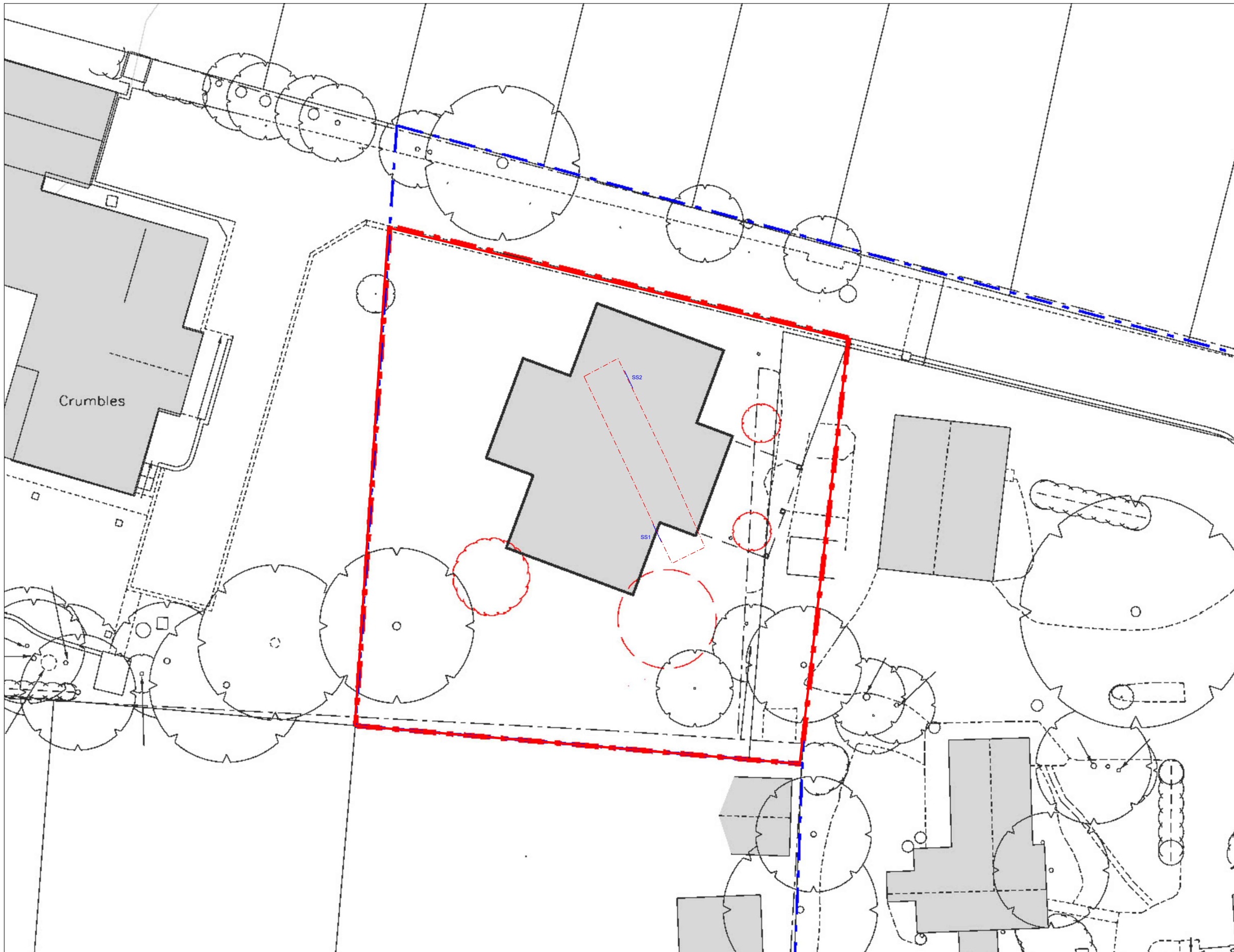
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DATE: JULY 2017 PLOT: A3 VERSION: 1

AUTHOR: DPM
APPROVED: MB

FIGURE: 3



-  Sample Section
-  Trench
-  Site Boundary

NGR: 600801 212508 REF: P1197

PROJECT: 16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, COLCHESTER, ESSEX

DESCRIPTION: TRENCH PLAN OVER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CLIENT: BILL FOX

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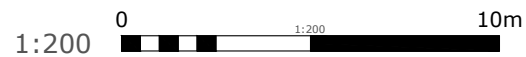
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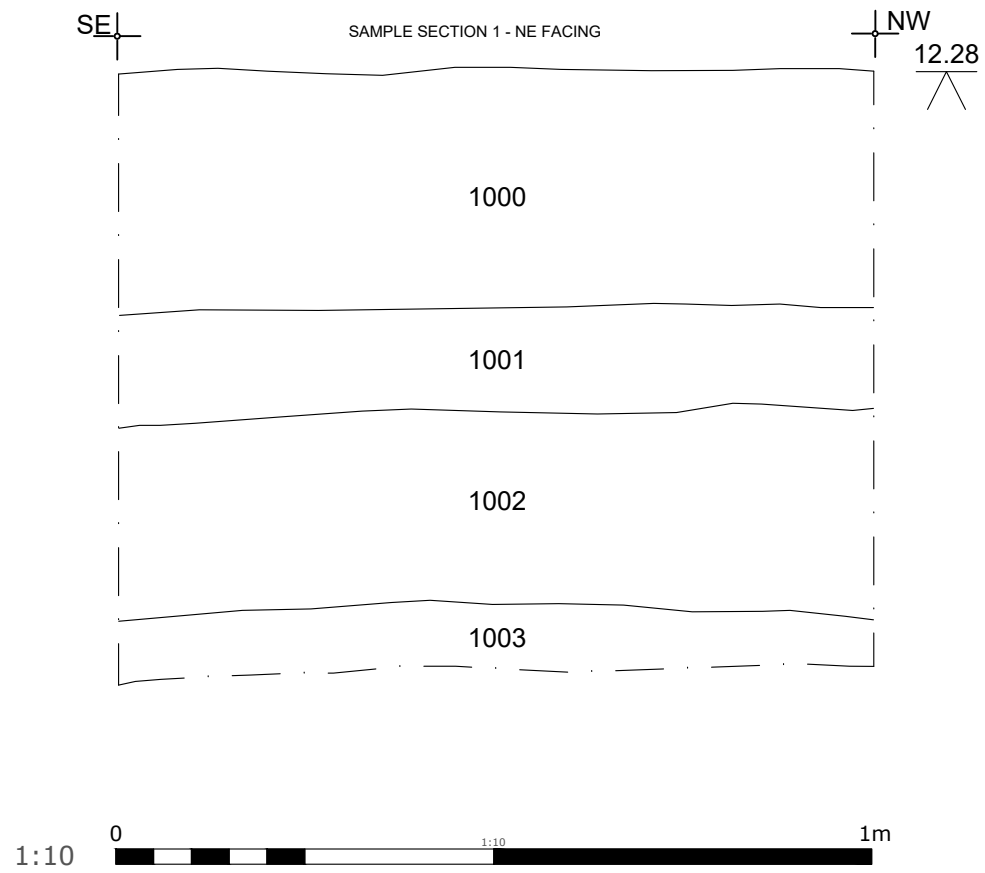
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AUTHOR: DPM
APPROVED: MB

FIGURE: 4



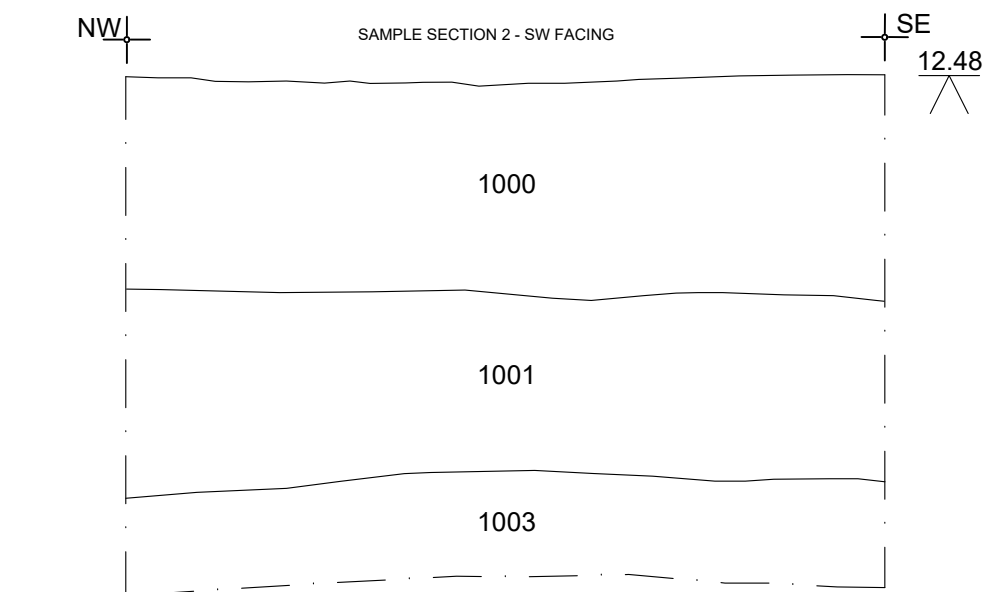
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DP2: Sample Section 1



DP3: Sample Section 2

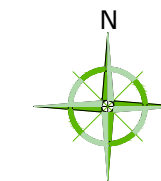



DP1: Trial Trench

NGR:	600801 212508	REF:	P1197
PROJECT:	16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, COLCHESTER, ESSEX		
DESCRIPTION:	SAMPLE SECTIONS & PHOTOGRAPHS		
CLIENT:	BILL FOX		
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DATE:	JULY 2017	PLOT:	A3
AUTHOR:	MJB	VERSION:	1
APPROVED:	DPM	FIGURE:	5



1st edition OS 1874



 Site Boundary

NGR: 600801 212508 REF: P1197

PROJECT: 16 COAST ROAD, WEST MERSEA, COLCHESTER, ESSEX

DESCRIPTION: OS MAP REGRESSION

CLIENT: BILL FOX

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DATE: JULY 2017 PLOT: A3 VERSION: 1

AUTHOR: MJB FIGURE: 6

APPROVED: DPM