

**St. BOTOLPH'S CAR PARK,
COLCHESTER,
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

February 2005

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ESSEX**

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EVALUATION**

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	1
1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 BACKGROUND	3
2.1 Location and Topography.....	3
2.2 Geology.....	4
2.3 History and Archaeology.....	4
3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	4
4 METHOD	4
5 RESULTS	5
5.1 Summary.....	5
5.2 Trench 1.....	7
5.3 Trench 2.....	7
5.4 Trench 3.....	8
5.5 Trench 4.....	8
5.6 Trench 5.....	8
6 CONCLUSIONS	9
7 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS.....	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	10
BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DETAILS	11
APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX.....	11
APPENDIX 2: EHER SUMMARY SHEET.....	12

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location Plan	2
Figure 2: Representative Sections of Excavated Trenches	6

**St. BOTOLPH'S CAR PARK,
COLCHESTER,
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

SUMMARY

Client: Mott MacDonald Ltd

NGR: TL 00026 24832

Planning Application No: O/COL/04/0087

Colchester Museum Accession Number: COLEM.2005.29

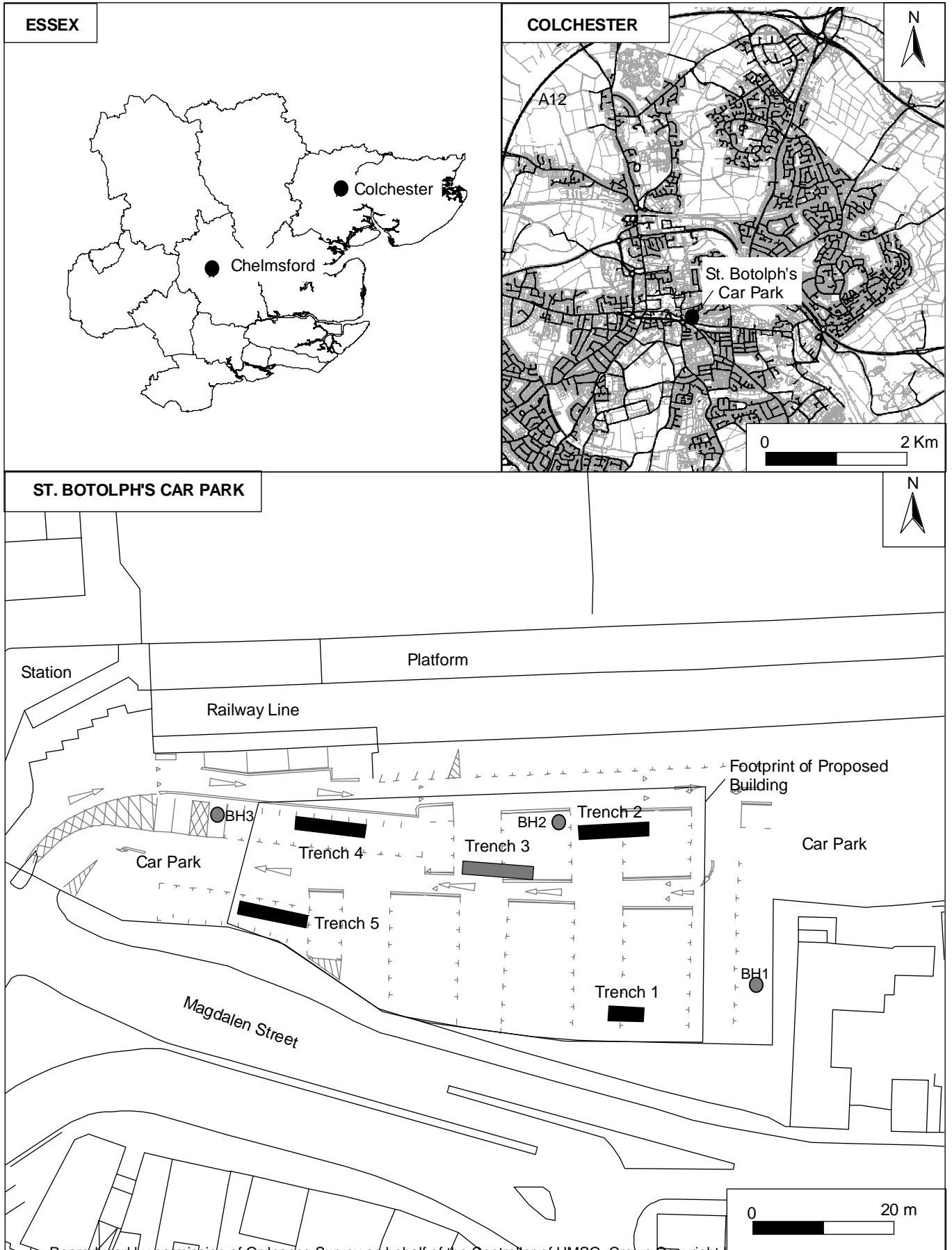
Site Code: C0SB05

Project No: 1436

Date of Fieldwork: 18/01/05 – 08/02/05

The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (FAU) carried out an archaeological evaluation at St. Botolph's Car Park, Colchester. The work was commissioned by Mott MacDonald Ltd on behalf of Essex County Council in advance of the construction of a new Magistrates Court. The site lies 150m outside the Roman town walls, but within the precinct of St Botolph's Priory, 100m to the south of the priory church. It was formerly the railway station goods yard, and is currently in use as a public car park operated by Colchester Borough Council.

Four trial trenches were excavated within the footprint of the new building. The evaluation has shown that there is at least 1m of overburden across the site. The recorded stratigraphy indicated that the area was likely to have been severely truncated during the construction of the railway station. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were recorded during the works other than 20th-century foundations associated with the railway and former goods yard, and it is unlikely that any survive elsewhere in the proposed development area.



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Figure 1: Site Location Plan

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report contains the results of archaeological evaluation prior to a new development at St. Botolph's car park (Fig. 1). The evaluation was designed to determine the presence, nature, date and survival of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed building.
- 1.2 The trial trenching evaluation was in response to a planning application by Essex County Council for a new Magistrates Court (LPA No: O/COL/04/0087), to be constructed under a Private Finance Initiative.
- 1.3 Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the evaluation for Mott MacDonald Ltd on behalf of Essex County Council. The project was completed in accordance with a brief prepared by Martin Winter of Colchester Borough Council Museum Service (CBC 2004), who also monitored the work.
- 1.4 Following completion of the project, the site archive will be deposited with Colchester Museum, while copies of the report will be supplied to Mott MacDonald Ltd, Colchester Borough Museum Service, and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

2 SITE BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography

- 2.1.1 The proposed development is located on land to the north of Magdalen Street, immediately to the south of St. Botolph's (now Colchester Town) railway station (centred on TL 00026 24832), c. 0.5km to the south-east of Colchester town centre. The site was formerly the railway station goods yard, and is currently in use as a public car park operated by Colchester Borough Council.
- 2.1.2 Although the site is level, it lies near the foot of a hillside sloping steeply down from south to north. The site's southern edge, alongside Magdalen Street, is terraced into the hillside, which is retained by a brick wall up to 3.5m high.

2.2 Geology

- 2.2.1 The underlying surface geology of this area is recorded as glacial sands and gravels over London Clay (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).
- 2.2.2 A preliminary borehole survey (RSA Geotechnics 2004) suggests that ancient ground levels have been reduced over the south of the site, but that there is at least 1.7m of made ground in the north.

2.3 History and Archaeology

- 2.3.1 The site lies 150m outside the Roman town walls, within the precinct of St Botolph's Priory, 100m to the south of the priory church. No archaeological remains have been recorded from the site itself, but a possible Roman cremation urn and a possible Saxon vessel have been found close to St Botolph's station.
- 2.3.2 St Botolph's station was built between 1862 and 1866 by Great Eastern Railways (Wilson 2005). In 1900 a purpose-built goods and coal yard was added and alterations were made to the existing goods yard, to the south of the station. These improvements included the addition of six sidings, two weighbridges, a new goods shed and a 6-ton crane.
- 2.3.3 In the last quarter of the 20th century the goods yard was closed and the site was cleared for use as a public car park.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The archaeological aim was to locate, identify and record any surviving remains within the trial trenches to provide an evaluation of the archaeological potential of the area affected by the proposed development.
- 3.2 This evaluation report will assess the need for any further archaeological work or mitigation measures.

4 METHOD

- 4.1 The brief specified that a 5% sample, measuring 90m², should be evaluated by trial trenching. The location and extent of the trial trenches is shown on Figure 1 (co-ordinates

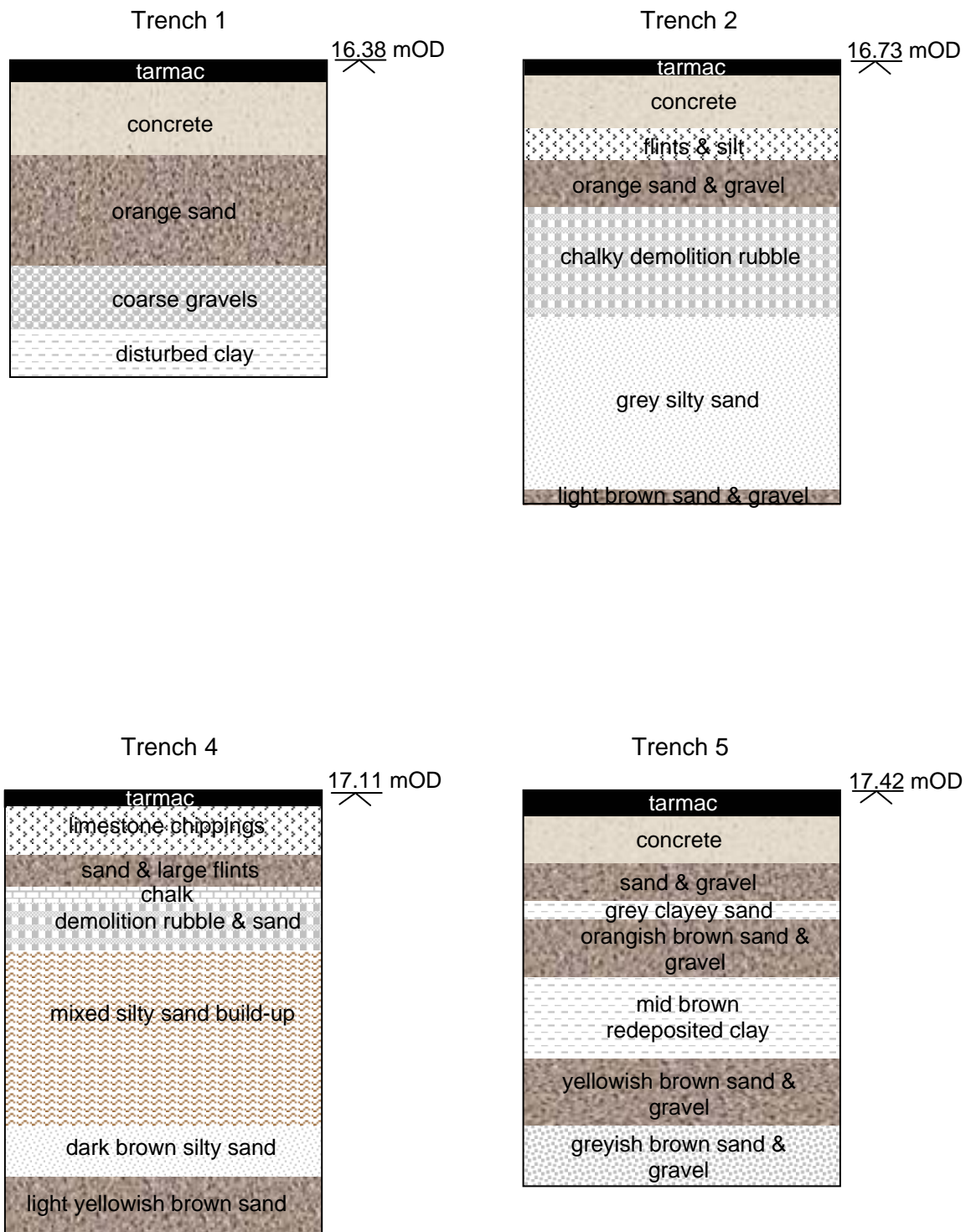
are given in Appendix 1). Four 10m by 2m and one 5m by 2m trenches were to be excavated within the footprint of the proposed development.

- 4.2 The evaluation trial trenches were concentrated around the northern fringe of the building footprint, where the ground level has been shown to be made up rather than reduced. A single trench was located in the south of the site where it was suspected that wholesale truncation had already taken place.
- 4.3 The trenches were excavated within individually fenced-off areas. At the request of the client, only one trench was excavated at a time, in order to minimise the disruption to the operation of the car park.
- 4.4 A mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed bucket was used to excavate for trenches under archaeological supervision. A decision was made not to excavate Trench 3 due to local ground conditions (see results below). A total area of c. 70 square metres (c. 4%) was therefore stripped and evaluated as part of the investigation.
- 4.5 Standard ECC FAU methodologies were employed with regard to excavation and recording. All stratigraphy was recorded using the FAU's context recording system. Planning and surveying was tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.
- 4.6 All surfaces were sufficiently cleaned to ensure that any features present were visible. Archaeological features and deposits were excavated using hand tools. Excavation by hand was not permitted deeper than 1.2m for health and safety reasons.

5 RESULTS (Figs 1, 2)

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 No archaeologically significant features were recorded in any of the trenches.
- 5.1.2 At least 1m of modern build-up was identified in each trench and it is likely that the original ground surface has been heavily truncated.



Scale 1:50

Figure 2: Representative Sections of Excavated Trenches

5.2 Trench 1

- 5.2.1 Trench 1 was excavated to c. 1m in depth. Undisturbed London Clay was recorded at the base of the trench, at a height of 15.32m OD.
- 5.2.2 A 0.15m layer of disturbed clay, which contained fragments of modern brick, was present above the natural geology. This probably represents the level to which the car park had been reduced to during its construction. A 0.20m-thick layer of large rounded stones and gravel was recorded above this, presumably laid to build the level up, below a further 0.35m layer of orange sand. The tarmac had been laid over a 0.25m thick layer of concrete, which was not detected in the borehole surveys.

5.3 Trench 2

- 5.3.1 Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of c. 1.2m, where a mixed sandy and gravel deposit was encountered. The nearby geotechnical borehole (BH2) recorded that this deposit contained fragments of brick and was made ground. The borehole log indicates that this deposit continues down for another 0.5m (RSA Geotechnics 2004). A 1.8m deep machine-dug sondage was excavated at the western end of the trench. No change in the stratigraphy was observed (supporting the borehole record), and it is likely that this deposit represents modern build-up.
- 5.3.2 A further series of modern build-up layers was recorded above the sand and gravel. These were: 0.55m of grey silty sand; 0.35m of bricks, mortar, chalk and assorted demolition rubble; 0.15m of compacted orange sand and gravel; 0.10m of flints and silt overburden; 0.17m of concrete; and 0.03m of tarmac.
- 5.3.3 A modern drainage pipe ran north-south across the eastern end of the trench. This was left in situ, although it was believed to be defunct.
- 5.3.4 A modern brick foundation was recorded at the extreme eastern end of Trench 2. This was constructed from yellow, machine-made frogged bricks and is likely to be the remains of part of the 20th-century railway goods yard infrastructure.

5.4 Trench 3

5.4.1 A decision was made not excavate Trench 3 due to the negative results obtained from Trenches 2 and 4, to the east and west, and the presence of underground services. The evidence from borehole 2 (BH2) suggested that there was likely to be little change in the stratigraphy between Trenches 2 and 4. This decision was made in consultation, and with the agreement of, the Colchester Museums Service monitoring officer.

5.5 Trench 4

5.5.1 Trench 4 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4m and revealed mixed sand deposits 0.5m below the present car park surface to the base of the trench. Borehole 3 (BH3) suggested that these continued to a depth of c. 2.7m. Again, these are likely to represent build-up layers associated with the construction of the railway sidings/goods yard.

5.5.2 No archaeological features or deposits were present in Trench 4. The stratigraphic sequence was broadly similar to that in Trench 2, although the tarmac was laid on 0.15m of limestone chippings, rather than concrete, and there was a 0.55m band of mixed silty sand below the demolition rubble.

5.6 Trench 5

5.6.1 Trench 5 was machined down to a depth of c. 1.2m onto sand and gravel make-up deposits that contained modern brick fragments. One of the bricks recovered appeared identical to those in the modern retaining wall. This suggests that the disturbance to the ground is likely to be less than 30 years old.

5.6.2 The trench section was composed of alternating bands of sand and gravel, although a thick band of London Clay (0.25m thick) was recorded at 16.82m OD. This material had been redeposited and suggests that the underlying natural geology of the site has been disturbed, as it is unlikely to have been imported.

5.6.3 The eastern end of the trench contained a robbed-out brick foundation trench, which was aligned east to west. This foundation is likely to have been part of a structure within the railway goods yard that was demolished when the car park was created.

- 5.6.4 A drainage pipe ran across the centre of the trench. This was dry and displayed no evidence that it was still functional. It appeared to be contemporary with the build-up layers. To the west of this, a pit-like feature was recorded, but it too contained modern brick and glass. Its excessive depth and modern date meant that it was not excavated.
- 5.6.5 The western end of the trench was only machined to a depth of 0.60m due to the presence of an electricity cable. This was not detected by the 'CAT scan' and was not live at the time of excavation.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 None of the archaeological trial trenches contained significant archaeological deposits, features or finds.
- 6.2 The evidence from this investigation and from the geotechnical survey suggest that the area of the proposed developed has been heavily disturbed.
- 6.3 The whole site is likely to have been truncated during the construction of St Botolph's Railway station and associated goods yard during the 19th and early 20th Century. Further disturbance appears to have occurred during the demolition of the goods yard and the creation of the car park in the late 20th century.
- 6.4 It is unlikely that any archaeological features survive within the area of the proposed development within 1.2m of the present ground surface. The borehole evidence, and obvious truncation of the site, suggest that the existence of archaeological deposits below this depth is extremely unlikely.

7 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

- 7.1 The results of this evaluation indicate that any groundworks within the footprint of the proposed building will have little or no impact on the archaeological resource of Colchester. Any archaeological deposits present at a greater depth than the limits of this investigation will have been heavily truncated. Furthermore, if the proposed development incorporates piled foundations and suspended floors (an option proposed by the RSA geotechnical report) the majority of the disturbance will be confined to the upper levels evaluated in this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was commissioned by Mott MacDonald Ltd on behalf of Essex County Council. Thanks are due to Nikos Pantechis of Mott MacDonald and the Staff of Colchester Borough Council Car Parks for their co-operation and assistance. The project was managed by Patrick Allen of ECC FAU. Martin Winter and Philip Wise of the Colchester Museum Service monitored the evaluation.

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| RSA Geotechnics Ltd | 2004 | <i>Site Investigation at St Botolph's Station Car Park, Colchester, Essex.</i> Report Number 9212. |
| Wilson, B. L. | 2005 | <i>Behind the scenes at Colchester (St. Botolphs).</i> Railway Bylines Volume10, Issue 3. |

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DETAILS

Trench No	NE Co-Ordinate	NW Co-Ordinate	Length	Width	Area
1	TL 000059,24824	TL 000054,24824	5 m	2 m	10 m ²
2	TL 000060,24850	TL 000050,24850	10 m	2 m	20 m ²
3	TL 000033,24845	TL 000044,24844	Not Excavated	Not Excavated	-
4	TL 000020,24850	TL 000010,24851	10 m	2 m	20 m ²
5	TL 000011,24837	TL 000002,24839	10 m	2 m	20 m ²
					70 m²

APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation
- 1.2 Specification for Evaluation

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Evaluation Report

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Trench Recording Sheets x 4
- 3.2 Levels Register
- 3.3 Photographic Register
- 3.4 1 set of 35mm colour slides and B&W Prints
- 3.5 Miscellaneous maps and plans

No artefacts were collected or retained.

APPENDIX 2: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: St Botolph's Car Park, Colchester, Essex.	
Parish: Colchester	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 00026 24832	Site Code: COSB05
Type of Work: Archaeological Evaluation	Site Director/Group: B. Barker ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 18th January to 8th February 2005	Size of Area Investigated: 70m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Colchester	Funding source: Mott MacDonald Ltd.
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related EHER Nos:
Final Report: EAH Summary	
Periods Represented: Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Four trenches were excavated in St Botolph's car park in Colchester, in advance of the construction of a new magistrates' court. This archaeological evaluation showed that there was at least 1m of overburden across the site. It is likely that the original ground surface was severely truncated during the construction of the railway station and goods yard. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were recorded during the works other than foundations associated with the railway and former goods yard.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports:	
Author of Summary: B. Barker	Date of Summary: 23rd February 2005