

**LAND SOUTH OF ALLOTMENT GARDENS
STUMP LANE
CHELMSFORD
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

JULY 2009

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Prepared By: Trevor Ennis	Signature:
Position: Project Officer	Date:
Approved By: Patrick Allen	Signature:
Position: Project Manager	Date:

Document Ref.:	2002 Rep
Report Issue Date:	July 2009
Circulation:	Bellway Homes Ltd
	ECC HEM
	Essex HER

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. Please contact the Archaeological Fieldwork Manager, at the

Field Archaeology Unit,
Fairfield Court, Fairfield Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 3YQ.
fieldarch@essexcc.gov.uk
Tel: 01376 331470
Fax: 01376 331428

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c/o County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1QH

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LAND SOUTH OF ALLOTMENT GARDENS

STUMP LANE

CHELMSFORD

ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Client: Bellway Homes Ltd

NGR: TL 7192 0752

Planning Application no: Pre-planning application

Site Code: CFSL 09

ECC FAU Project no: 2002

OASIS No.: essexcou1- 60989

Dates of Fieldwork: 2nd to 6th April 2009

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out on land south of the allotment gardens, on the corner of Stump Lane and Springfield Road, Chelmsford in advance of a proposed housing development. Nine trenches were excavated across the 1.25 hectare site, representing a 4% sample of its area. The site lies 1km from Chelmsford's Roman, medieval and post-medieval core. Springfield Road follows the line of the Roman London-Colchester road.

The evaluation identified very few archaeological features. A single sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from a subsoil layer, indicating possible cultivation or other activity of that date. No remains positively dating to the Roman, medieval or post-medieval periods were identified, and there was no evidence of the postulated Roman cremation cemetery. One undated ditch containing baked clay and burnt flint ran parallel to Springfield Road and the presumed line of its Roman predecessor and is therefore most likely to be of Roman or medieval date. The latest excavated feature was a small pit dating to the 19th or 20th century.

The archaeological remains recorded on the site are sparse and poorly dated, and are considered to be of low significance.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching carried out on land south of the allotment gardens, Stump Lane, Chelmsford, in advance of a proposed housing development. The evaluation was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Bellway Homes Ltd, prospective purchaser of the land.

An outline planning application for a housing development had previously been submitted to the local planning authority, Chelmsford Borough Council, (planning ref: CHL/00125/08). Since the site was considered to lie within an area of archaeological potential, the Essex CC Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM) recommended that a full archaeological condition be placed on any future planning consent in line with Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (DoE 1990), and issued a Design Brief for archaeological evaluation by trial trenching (ECC HEM 2008). The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with this Design Brief and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2009).

Copies of this report will be supplied to Bellway Homes Ltd (including a copy for the local planning authority), ECC HEM and the Essex Historic Environment Record. A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>). The site archive and copies of the report will be deposited in Chelmsford Museum

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and Geology

The proposed development area is located at the corner of Springfield Road and Stump Lane (TL 7192 0752), c. 1km north-east of Chelmsford town centre (Fig. 1). The site is broadly rectangular and measures c. 125 by 100m (12,500 sq m).

The site was formerly used as allotments but is now overgrown with long grass, weeds, brambles and shrubs. A south-east to north-west aligned track sub-divides the area, giving access from Springfield Road to existing allotments to the north-west of the site.

The surface geology is brickearth overlying terrace gravels of the river Chelmer. The site lies on the north-eastern slope of the river valley at c. 41m OD.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

This archaeological background is based on records held in the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) at County Hall, Chelmsford, and on the historic town assessment for Chelmsford (Medlycott 1998).

The site is located over 1km to the north-east of Chelmsford's Roman, medieval and post-medieval core, but Springfield Road follows the line of the Roman road from London to Colchester, which extends north-eastwards from the Roman settlement, situated to the south of the crossing point of the rivers Can and Chelmer. Roman artefacts have occasionally been found to the north of the river crossing, including a Roman urn recovered from Stump Lane close to the railway line, i.e. a short distance to the north of the site (EHER 5563). It is possible this may have been part of a Roman cremation cemetery alongside the Colchester road, similar to the cemetery recorded alongside the London road to the south-west of the Roman settlement.

Walker's map of 1591 shows the site as lying in open fields outside the town limits, and Springfield Road did not become built up until the 18th and 19th centuries, with a ribbon development of suburban villas set within their own grounds. In the late 19th century the 1st edition Ordnance Survey showed the site as being occupied by allotments, suggesting it may never have been built on.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Aims

The general aim of the archaeological evaluation was to establish the location, extent, date and character of any surviving archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

3.2 Objectives

If significant remains had been identified, research objectives for the project would have been in line with those laid out in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to investigate:

- Any surviving evidence of a cemetery or other activity alongside the Roman road;
- Any surviving evidence of medieval or post-medieval activity or settlement.

4.0 METHOD

Nine evaluation trenches were excavated under supervision of an archaeologist using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. All trenches were 30m long by 1.5m wide, most were straight apart from trenches 7 and 9 which were L-shaped. The trenches represent a 4% sample of the overall development area.

The trenches were cleaned and potential features were hand-excavated. Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout. ECC FAU is a registered Archaeological Organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and all work was carried out in accordance with IFA by-laws and guidelines (IFA 1997; 2001) and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003).

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Figs 1 - 5)

Archaeological features were identified in trenches 4 and 5 and finds recovered from subsoil deposits in trenches 8 and 9. No archaeological features were identified in trenches 1, 2 or 3. Trench location data is recorded in Appendix 1, and detailed context information is presented in Appendix 2.

Although trench depths ranged from 0.40m to 0.66m, most were 0.50-0.55m deep. The overburden was fairly consistent across the site and consisted of very dark grey loam topsoil (1) above mid greyish brown silty clay subsoil (2). It is possible that slight variations in the depth of the topsoil correlated with the positions of former individual allotment plots. Various decayed timber boards and posts clearly associated with the former allotments were noted during machining.

The underlying natural strata comprised orange, brown and yellow silty clay interspersed with occasional patches of gravel. The north-west part of the site was noticeably wetter than the rest of the development area and the surface of Trench 1 became covered in groundwater soon after excavation.

5.1 Trench 4

A single pit (4) was excavated towards the western end of Trench 4 (Fig. 2). The pit was 0.7m wide by 0.2m deep and was cut from directly below root-disturbed topsoil. It was filled with mid brownish grey silty clay (3) that produced a variety of recent finds dating to the 19th or 20th century.

5.2 Trench 5

A north-east/south-west aligned ditch (19) was excavated at the southern end of Trench 5 (Fig. 3). The ditch was 1.6m wide by 0.25m deep with a slightly concave profile. In section (Fig. 4) it was also cut from directly below the topsoil and through subsoil. The ditch was filled with pale brown silty clay (11) that contained baked clay, burnt flint and flecks of charcoal. However, no dating evidence was recovered.

5.3 Trench 6

Slightly deeper subsoil, not fully removed by machine, was noted along the edge of the trench at its southern end (Fig. 2). No archaeological features were observed.

5.4 Trench 7

A patch of mottled light grey and brown clay-silt containing rare nodules of iron pan was investigated at the south east end of Trench 7 (Fig. 2). The deposit was 0.14m deep, root disturbed and appeared to be of natural origin.

5.5 Trench 8

At the south end of Trench 8 there was a slight slope down to the south in the top of the natural clay which was infilled with subsoil. In section (Fig. 5) there was a corresponding additional layer (9) sandwiched between the topsoil (1) and the subsoil (2). Layer 9 comprised mid greyish brown clay silt and produced one fragment of post-medieval roof tile.

5.6 Trench 9

The overburden in Trench 9 was generally around 0.40m deep, but at the southern end it deepened to 0.76m deep due an increased thickness (0.56m) of topsoil. Yellowish brown subsoil (6) infilling a low spot in the base of the trench (Fig. 2) was hand-excavated and produced one small sherd of probable Middle Iron Age pottery. At the very end of the trench a thin gravel deposit (8) was noted at the interface between the topsoil and subsoil. No finds were recovered from this layer.

6.0 FINDS by Joyce Compton

Small groups of finds were recovered from four contexts in four of the excavated trenches. All of the finds have been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context; full quantification details can be found in Appendix 3. The finds are described by trench below.

6.1 Trench 4

A range of relatively recent items was recovered from the fill of pit 4. These comprise a small piece of coal, small and abraded brick and tile fragments, a sherd of weathered green glass and a large sherd from a cylindrical stoneware bottle. The latter has a grey body and a mottled brown glaze. Stoneware bottles were popular containers for bulk liquids in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The glass body sherd probably derives from a post-medieval wine bottle, unfortunately not more closely datable.

6.2 Trench 5

Ditch 10 produced four burnt flints and a quantity of baked clay. The clay fragments are reddish-buff in colour, hard-fired and sandy, with burnt flint inclusions. The pieces are formless with no distinguishing features and may represent the remains of a hearth. There is no associated dating evidence.

6.3 Trench 8

Layer 9 produced a single, small, post-medieval roof tile fragment.

6.4 Trench 9

A small sherd of pottery was recovered from the subsoil. This is a body sherd in buff-brown sandy fabric, with inclusions of quartz and flint. The sherd is likely to date to the Middle Iron Age, perhaps slightly earlier.

6.5 Comments on the assemblage

Very few finds were recorded and most of these are relatively recent. The prehistoric pottery from the subsoil in Trench 9 is of interest, however, and hints at earlier origins for the Roman road along which Springfield Road is aligned. It is unfortunate that the baked clay is undated, since this could easily be contemporary with the prehistoric pottery.

No further work is required on any of the material. The glass and coal have been discarded following recording, and the other recent finds could be discarded at the archiving stage. The baked clay, burnt flints and the prehistoric sherd should all be retained.

7.0 DISCUSSION

Very few archaeological features were identified. The single sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery recovered from the subsoil in Trench 9 does little more than indicate possible activity of that date in the vicinity of the site. Deeper subsoil survived patchily along the Springfield Road frontage, and it is difficult to tell whether it represents an earlier cultivated soil or merely a disturbed soil horizon resulting from cultivation of allotments in modern times.

No evidence of a possible Roman cremation cemetery was found, nor any evidence that could be related specifically to the Roman road whose line is followed by the modern Springfield Road. A thin gravel layer was exposed at the very southern end of Trench 9 but did not contain any finds nor was it sufficiently compacted to have been a road metalling.

The finds recovered from the undated ditch in Trench 5 would not be out of place in a feature of prehistoric date. However, as the ditch ran parallel with Springfield Road and the

presumed line of its Roman predecessor, it is perhaps more likely to date to the Roman or medieval periods.

The latest excavated feature was a small 19th-20th century pit in Trench 4 that would have been dug when the site was already in use as an allotment.

8.0 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

No positively dated Roman remains were found nor any associated with subsequent medieval or post-medieval roadside development. The site is located some distance from the historic Roman and medieval towns and would appear to have remained undeveloped until the modern day.

No evidence for the presumed Roman cremation cemetery was found. The Roman urn (EHER 5563) recovered during 19th-century work on the railway in Stump Lane was found over 100m north of the current site and may be associated with a more localised cemetery or other activity situated away from the line of the London to Colchester Roman road. There is no firm evidence that the Roman pottery vessel should have been a cremation vessel at all.

The archaeological remains recorded in the evaluation are not consistent with previous suggestions of a Roman roadside cemetery or other activity, and are sparse and poorly dated. They are considered to be of only low significance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Essex CC Field Archaeology Unit would like to thank Bellway Homes Ltd for commissioning and funding the archaeological investigation, especially Mike Davey for his help in securing land access and in providing safety fencing. The fieldwork was undertaken by Trevor Ennis, Mark Germany and Andrew Lewsey. The illustrations were prepared by Andrew Lewsey. Finds were processed by Phil McMichael and analysed by Joyce Compton. The project was managed by Patrick Allen, and monitored on behalf of the local planning authority by Teresa O'Connor of the Essex CC Historic Environment Management team.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------|--|
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| DoE | 1990 | <i>Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning</i> . HMSO |
| ECC FAU | 2009 | <i>Written scheme of investigation for archaeological trial trenching evaluation on Land South of Allotment Gardens, Stump Lane, Chelmsford</i> . ECC FAU internal publication |
| ECC HEM | 2008 | Archaeological trial trenching on Land South of Allotment Gardens, Stump Lane, Chelmsford, Essex. ECC HEM Design brief |
| Gurney D. | 2003 | <i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Paper 14 |
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| IFA | 2001 | <i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological evaluation (revised)</i> . Institute of Field Archaeologists |
| Medlycott, M. | 1998 | <i>Chelmsford. Historic Towns Project Assessment Report</i> . Essex CC, held in the Essex Historic Environment Record |

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DATA

All dimensions given in metres

Trench	Measurements	Co-ordinates
1	30m x 1.5m x 0.66m deep, orientated NW/SE	NW: 571873.24, 207568.09 SE: 571891.62, 207543.38
2	30m x 1.5m x 0.50m, orientated NW/SE	NW: 571913.87, 207600.74 SE: 571932.84, 207576.70
3	30m x 1.5m x 0.50m, orientated, NE/SW	SW: 571883.03, 207523.17 NE: 571906.98, 207541.86
4	30m x 1.5m x 0.60m, orientated, NE/SW	SW: 571931.12, 207536.49 NE: 571954.61, 207555.16
5	30m x 1.5m x 0.55m, orientated NW/SE	NW: 571894.99, 207515.94 SE: 571913.79, 207492.12
6	30m x 1.5m x 0.50m, orientated NW/SE	NW: 571955.28, 207542.35 SE: 571973.67, 207518.11
7	10m + 20m x 1.5m x 0.55m, orientated NW/SE & NE/SW	SE: 571922.97, 207462.50 NE: 571932.76, 207482.83
8	30m x 1.5m x 0.55m, orientated NW/SE	NW: 571925.93, 207507.10 SE: 571944.74, 207483.88
9	10m + 20m x 1.50m x 0.40m, orientated NW/SE & NE/SW	SE: 571958.41, 207494.94 NE: 571966.72, 207516.83

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions given in metres

Context	Trench	Type	Description	Period
01	1 - 8	Layer	Topsoil – dark grey to dark brownish grey loam	Modern
02	1 - 8	Layer	Subsoil - mid greyish brown silty clay	-
03	4	Fill of 4	Mid brownish grey silty clay	Modern
04	4	Pit	0.7m x 0.55m+ x 0.20m deep	Modern
05	9	Layer	Topsoil – dark brownish grey loam	Modern
06	9	Layer	Subsoil – yellowish brown silty clay	-
07	9	Layer	Natural - brownish yellow silty clay	-
08	9	Layer	Brown gravel, 0.08m thick	-
09	8	Layer	Mid greyish brown clay silt, 0.24m thick	Post-med
10	5	Ditch	1.5m+ x 1.30m x 0.25m deep	-
11	5	Fill of 10	Pale brown silty clay	-

APPENDIX 3: FINDS DATA

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
3	4	1	2	Coal fragment (Discarded)	-
		1	6	Glass; green bottle body sherd, all-over weathering (Discarded)	Post med.
		4	48	Brick and tile fragments	Post med.
		1	34	Pottery; body sherd, modern stoneware bottle	Modern
6	Subsoil	1	8	Pottery; body sherd	Prehistoric
9	Layer	1	44	Roof tile fragment with peg hole	Post med.
11	10	4	62	Burnt flints	-
		25	478	Baked clay	-

APPENDIX 4: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

SITE NAME: Land south of allotment gardens, Stump Lane, Chelmsford

SITE CODE: CFSL 09

Index to Archive:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 ECC HEM Brief
- 1.2 ECC FAU WSI

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report
- 2.2 Finds Reports

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Context Record Register
- 3.2 Context Records (1 to 11)
- 3.3 Plan Register
- 3.4 Section Register
- 3.5 2 x A4 plan/section sheets
- 3.6 Trench location plan
- 3.7 Photographic Registers
- 3.8 Site Photographic Record (1 set of Black & White prints, 1 Set of digital images on disk)
- 3.9 Miscellaneous notes/plans

Not in File

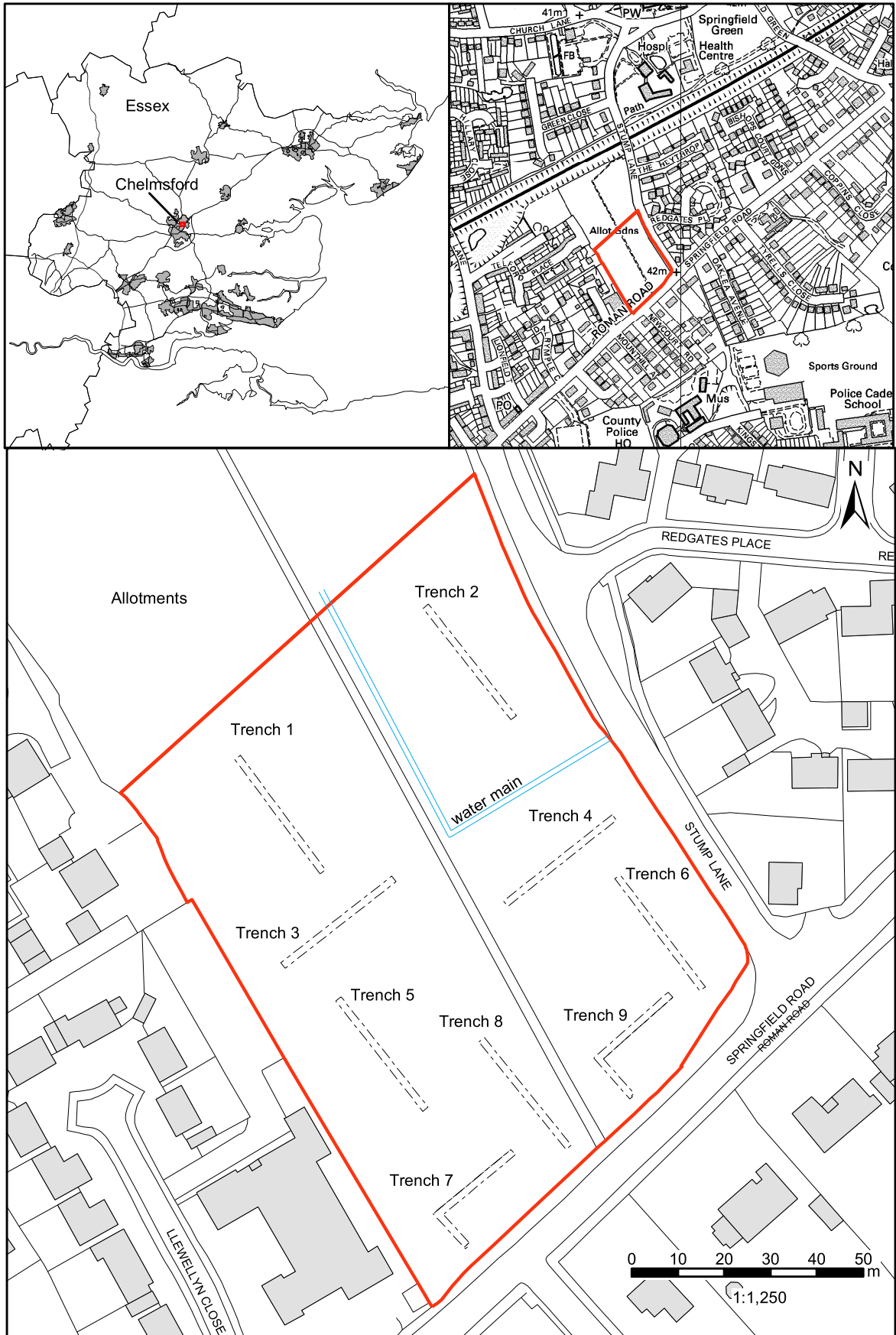
1 large plan/section sheet

Finds

The finds occupy less than one box.

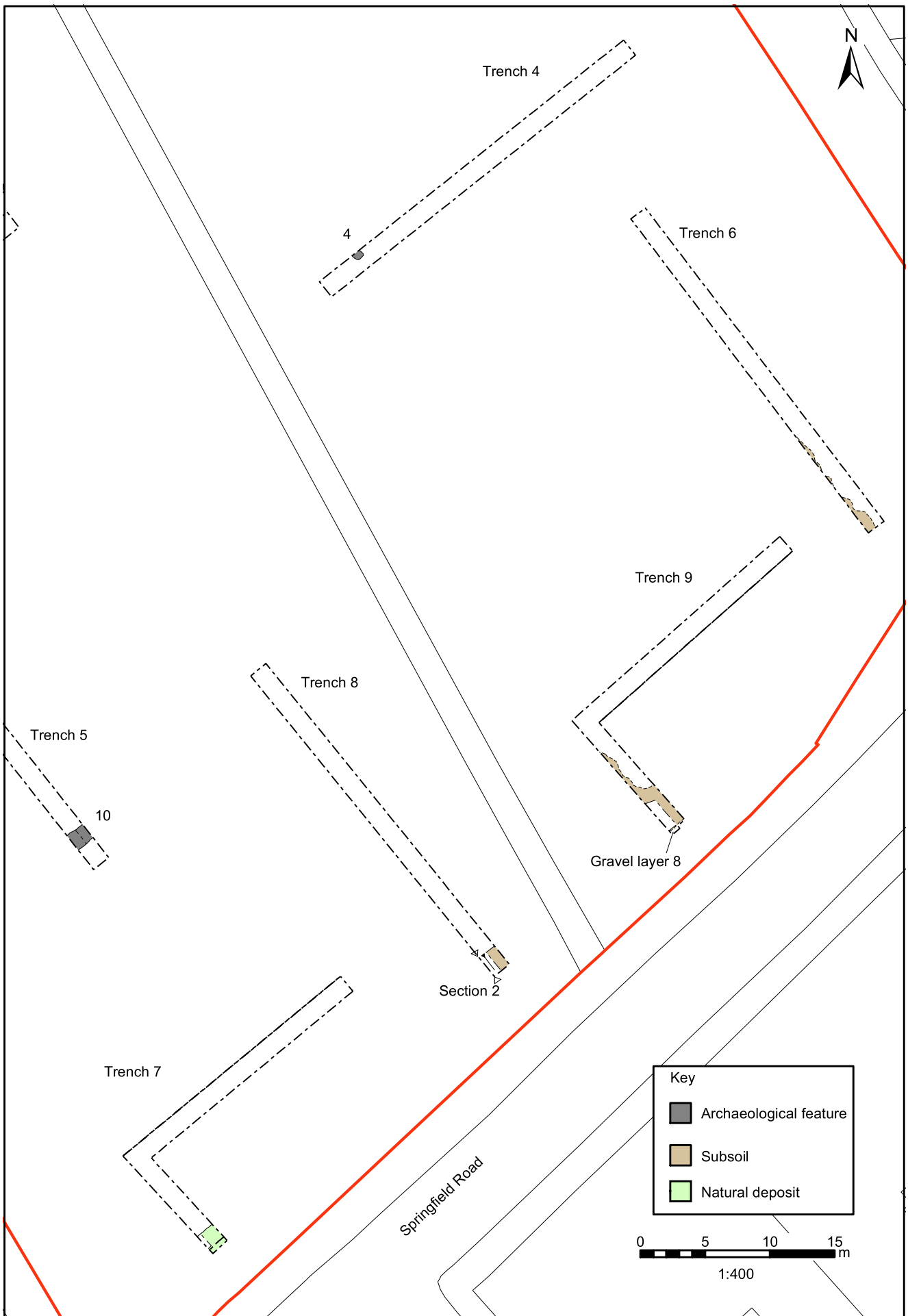
APPENDIX 5: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Land South of Allotment Gardens, Stump Lane, Chelmsford	
Parishes: Springfield	District: Chelmsford
NGR: TL 7192 0752	Site Code: CFSL 09
Type of Work: Archaeological Evaluation	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Dates of Work: 2nd to 6th April 2009	Size of Area Investigated: 1.25 hectare
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Chelmsford	Funding source: Bellway Homes Ltd
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 5563
Final Report: EAH Summary	Oasis No.: essexcou1- 60989
Periods Represented: Iron Age, Post-medieval	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out on land south of the allotment gardens, on the corner of Stump Lane and Springfield Road, Chelmsford in advance of a proposed housing development. Nine trenches were excavated across the 1.25 hectare site, representing a 4% sample of its area. The site lies 1km from Chelmsford's Roman, medieval and post-medieval core. Springfield Road follows the line of the Roman London-Colchester road.</p>	
<p>The evaluation identified very few archaeological features. A single sherd of Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered from a subsoil layer, indicating possible cultivation or other activity of that date. No remains positively dating to the Roman, medieval or post-medieval periods were identified, and there was no evidence of the postulated Roman cremation cemetery. One undated ditch containing baked clay and burnt flint ran parallel to Springfield Road and the presumed line of its Roman predecessor and is therefore most likely to be of Roman or medieval date. The latest excavated feature was a small pit dating to the 19th or 20th century.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports:	
Author of Summary: T. Ennis	Date of Summary: July 2009



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Fig.1. Site location



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Fig.2. All features

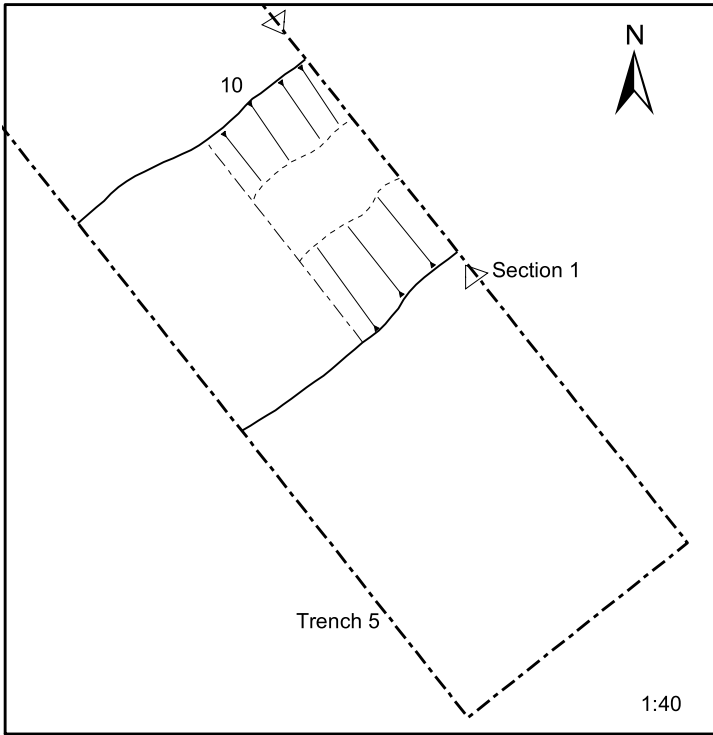


Fig.3. Ditch 10, Trench 5

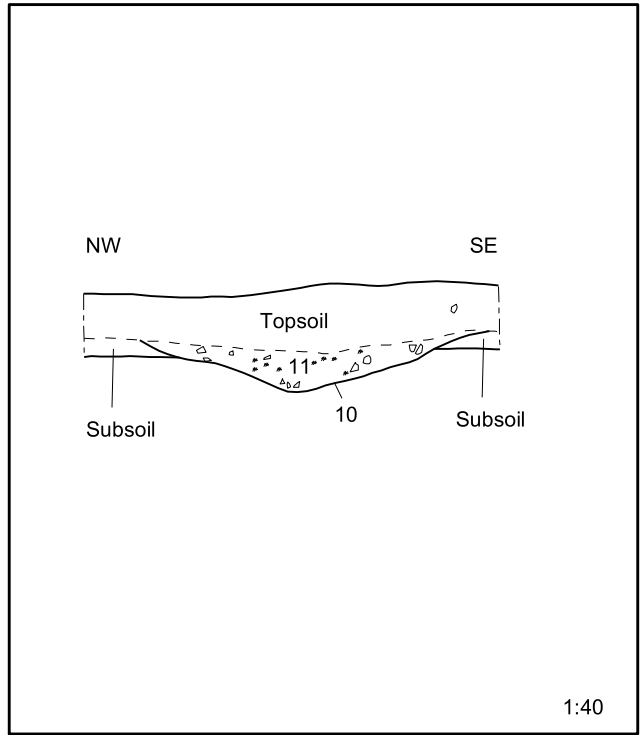


Fig.4. Section 1, Trench 5

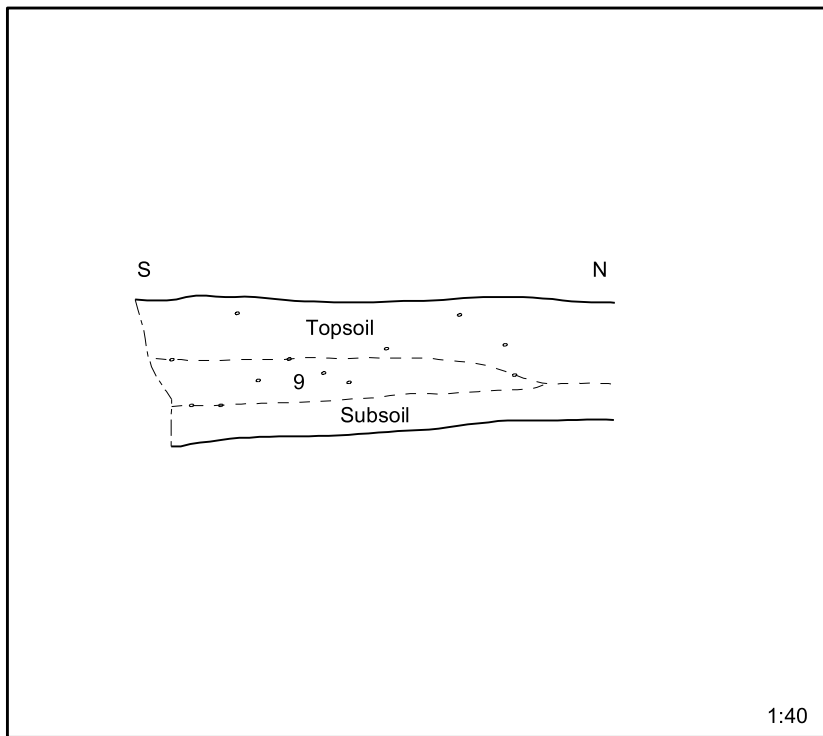


Fig.5. Section 2, Trench 8

