

Archaeological Watching Brief

**Green Meadows
High Street
Great Chesterford
Essex**

Planning Application No.: UTT/0732/10

ASE Report No: 2013178

November 2013

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**Green Meadows
High Street
Great Chesterford
Essex**

**NGR: TL 551120 242940
Planning Ref: UTT/0732/10**

**ASE Project No: E8009
Site Code: GCGM13**

**ASE Report No: 2013178
OASIS Ref.: 153732**

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East, the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, University College, London, undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring during groundworks for a rear extension and a new garage at Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex.

Green Meadows is located outside the known historic core of the town, on the north side of the road towards the north-eastern end of the High Street, bounded on both sides by residential properties and a domestic garden to the rear.

The remains of a Late Iron Age settlement and Roman town and fort are situated in the northern part of Great Chesterford and within some of the fields immediately adjacent. The fort was constructed during the 1st century AD, possibly as a consequence of the Boudiccan revolt in AD 60. The civilian settlement developed alongside the fort and continued to expand after the fort went out of use during the tail end of the 1st century. Fourth-century expansion followed 3rd-century decline and culminated in the building of town walls. It is possible the town had civitas status as it is one of only two walled towns in Essex, the other being Colchester.

The medieval town was initially reasonably prosperous, but declined to almost village-like status following on from the collapse of the cloth trade during the early post-medieval period. From c. 1700 onwards, the prosperity of the town recovered slightly due to trade from passing traffic as a consequence of its road links with Newmarket and Cambridge and, later, the rail link between London and Cambridge.

The first edition Ordnance Survey cartographic evidence shows a series of probable farm buildings in and around the site which have the potential to date back to the medieval period

No significant archaeological remains likely to predate the construction of Green Meadows were noted during the monitoring works, including any evidence for the farm buildings shown in the area on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, suggesting that the site was not used for domestic occupation before the construction of the house in the late 19th / early 20th century. This lack of activity is probably due to the location of the site on the edge of the town and its previous use as part of a farm. A further indication of the suggested marginal location of the site in relationship to the historic core of the town is the southerly distribution along the High Street of most of the pre-19th / 20th-century listed buildings.

As no features of interest predating the construction of the house were exposed during the recording works it is suggested that the development has not had an adverse impact upon the archaeological record.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Archaeology South-East, the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, University College, London, undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring during groundworks for a rear extension and a new garage at Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex. The work was undertaken on behalf of TJD Building Contractors Ltd in response to a Design Brief issued by the Historic Environment team at Essex County Council Place Services (2013) and accordance with a responding Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2013).

1.2 Copies of this report will be supplied to the client, Essex County Council Place Services, and the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record. A digital version of the report will form part of the Oasis on-line database of archaeological investigations at www.oasis.ac.uk. The site archive will be deposited at Saffron Walden Museum.

1.3 Site Background

1.3.1 The proposed development site is located within the grounds of Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford (NGR: TL 5112 4295 – Fig. 1). The proposed development comprises a range of extensions and alterations to the existing buildings, namely: the construction of a replacement two storey rear extension, a two storey side extension to replace an existing single storey side extension, the removal of an existing single storey front extension and the construction of a new front canopy, a new rear conservatory, the replacement of a detached garage and the conversion of the loft with the insertion of a front facing roof light.

1.4 Geology and Topography

1.4.1 The site lies in an area of transitional geology. River terrace deposits of sand and gravel are present to the southwest, these being formed by the River Cam or Granta which is situated approx. 400m to the southwest. Chalk deposits are present beyond the gravel terraces to the northwest (British Geological Survey map viewer – <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/>).

1.5 Planning Background

1.5.1 A planning application (UTT/0732/10) for the construction of a range of extensions was submitted to Uttlesford District Council in April 2010. As the site lies on the edge of the historic town of Great Chesterford in an area thought to contain important archaeological deposits, ECC Place Services, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the District Council, recommended that a full condition be attached to any grant of planning consent.

1.5.2 This recommendation is in accordance with guidance contained in the

National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012) and the condition that was recommended states that:

‘No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority.’

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The following background information derives from the ECC Place Services Design Brief (ECC Place Services 2013), the Historic Towns Project Assessment Report for Great Chesterford (Medlycott 1998), and the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record.

2.2 Late Iron Age and Roman

2.2.1 The remains of the Late Iron Age settlement and Roman and town and fort are situated in the northern part of Great Chesterford and within some of the fields immediately adjacent. The fort was constructed during the 1st century AD, possibly as a consequence of the Boudiccan revolt in AD 60. The civilian settlement developed alongside the fort and continued to expand after the fort went out of use during the tail end of the 1st century. Fourth-century expansion followed 3rd-century decline and culminated in the building of town walls. It is possible the town had *civitas* status as it is one of only two walled towns in Essex, the other being Colchester.

2.3 Saxon

2.3.1 Early Saxon cemeteries have been found in the eastern half of the town and in the areas to the north and south of those. The nearest known Saxon cemetery to Green Meadows is on the junction of High Street, Carmel Street and South Street. Evidence for Saxon settlement has been less forthcoming, as it is conjectured to have been built over by the later settlement.

2.4 Medieval and post-medieval

2.4.1 Great Chesterford developed in accordance with practices more generally associated with the English Midlands, evidenced by Midlands-style building types, the placing of main buildings back from the road, the arranging of tofts, and the use of strip fields until the Enclosure acts of 1804.

2.4.2 The town was initially reasonably prosperous, but declined to almost village-like status following on from the collapse of the cloth trade during the early post-medieval period. From c. 1700 onwards, the prosperity of the town recovered slightly due to trade from passing traffic as a consequence of its road links with Newmarket and Cambridge and, later, the rail link between

London and Cambridge.

2.4.3 Most of the listed buildings in Great Chesterford comprise houses and are of 15th to 18th century date, located along Church Street, South Street, Carmen Street and Carmel Street. The earliest surviving building is the 13th-century church of All Saints on Church Street. The distribution of the listed buildings along High Street is mostly southerly, with none of them predating the 16th century. The Green Meadows house appears to be of late 19th / early 20th century construction.

2.4.4 The first edition Ordnance Survey cartographic evidence shows a series of probable farm buildings in and around the site which have the potential to date back to the medieval period (Fig. 2).

2.5 Recent Archaeological Investigation

2.5.1 No archaeological excavations have taken place within or close to Green Meadows.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHOD

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to excavate and record any archaeological remains present within the area of development, to ensure their preservation by record prior to damage or destruction.

3.1.2 Specific aims were:

- To establish the date and nature of the initial and subsequent settlement of this part of Great Chesterford, paying particular attention to the layout of plots/tenements and whether industrial, domestic or commercial occupation is present.
- Specific attention shall be paid to evidence for the earlier structures known to have existed on the site.

3.1.3 In the event that significant discoveries had been made this report would have sought to identify appropriate research objectives for any future work, 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) and Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011). However, as no archaeological features or finds were uncovered the work has no potential to contribute to any of the research framework objectives

3.2 Fieldwork Method

- 3.2.1 The archaeological work comprised the monitoring of all groundworks, which penetrated deeper than the depth of the (modern disturbed) topsoil and subsoil, namely, a soak-away and the wall footings for the rear extension and garage. Items with groundworks too shallow to be fruitful for monitoring comprised the new front porch and garden paving.
- 3.2.2 The excavation of footings and soak-away was undertaken by the developer using a small tracked excavator equipped with (where appropriate) narrow toothed, and broad toothless buckets. The results of the monitoring were recorded on pro-forma Watching Brief Record Sheets.
- 3.2.3 The footings (foundation trenches) for the rear extension and garage measured 0.8m wide and 1.3m deep, and 0.6m wide and 1.2m deep respectively. The hole for the soak-away was 1.6m long, 1.5m wide and 1.3m deep. The interiors of the rear extension and garage were machine reduced by c. 0.3m, a depth insufficient to reach the underlying chalk.
- 3.2.3 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' standards, Code of Conduct and by-laws and the ALGAO standards for field archaeology in the east of England (IfA 2008 and 2010; Gurney 2003). Archaeology South-East is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists, and uses the MOLAS (1994) site manual for archaeological fieldwork to record all archaeological deposits and features.

3.3 Fieldwork Constraints

- 3.3.1 The monitoring was restricted to groundworks deeper than the base of the subsoil, namely the soak-away and the wall footings for the rear extension and new garage.

3.4 The Site Archive

- 3.4.1 The site archive is currently stored at the Braintree office of Archaeology South-East, awaiting an agreement of deposition with Saffron Walden Museum. The site archive comprises single copies of the client report, archaeological brief and Written Scheme of Investigation, four watching brief record sheets, one photo register, twenty-two photographs, and one computer disk. The monitoring produced no artefacts or palaeo-environmental remains.

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1 Monitoring revealed a c. 0.33m thick layer of dark brownish grey friable sandy clay topsoil, above a c. 0.3m thick layer of dark yellowish brown friable sandy clay silt subsoil, overlying the chalk bedrock (Figs 3 to 7).

- 4.2 A 19th or early 20th century cistern was uncovered on the south side of the garage and consisted of a large cylindrical shaft, measuring 1.5m wide and 1.7m deep. It cut subsoil and chalk, and was brick lined except for its base. The roof was domed and bonded with mortar, in contrast to the lining which was largely un-mortared. A 0.1m diameter ceramic pipe fed into the top of it from the south-east. A dump of un-compacted topsoil, containing no finds, sat inside the cistern and had been tipped into it by using a small, roughly cut hole in its roof.
- 4.3 The monitoring produced no artefacts apart from pieces of plastic and very infrequent small fragments of modern porcelain in the topsoil. None of these were retained for analysis.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 No significant archaeological remains likely to predate the construction of Green Meadows were noted during the monitoring works, including any evidence for the farm buildings shown in the area on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, suggesting that the site was not used for domestic occupation before the construction of the house in the late 19th / early 20th century. This lack of activity is probably due to the location of the site on the edge of the town and its previous use as part of a farm. A further indication of the suggested marginal location of the site in relationship to the historic core of the town is the southerly distribution along the High Street of most of the pre-19th / 20th-century listed buildings.
- 5.2 As no features of interest predating the construction of the house were exposed during the recording works it is suggested that the development has not had an adverse impact upon the archaeological record.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology South-East would like to thank Anna Dimock and TJD Building Contractors Ltd for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project, and Richard Havis of the Historic Environment team at Essex County Council for his guidance and monitoring. The archaeological work was managed by Adrian Scruby and was undertaken by Mark Germany. Figures 1 and 2 were drawn by Andrew Lewsey.

Essex Historic Environment Record Summary

Site name/Address: Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford	
Parish: Great Chesterford	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 5112 4295	Site Code: GCGM13
Type of Work: Archaeological monitoring	Site Director/Group: Mark Germany, Archaeology South-East
Date of Work: 12/6/13 to 18/6/13	Size of Area Investigated: 70m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden Museum	Client: TJD Building Contractors Ltd
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.:
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History (summary)	
Periods represented: Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Archaeology South-East, the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, University College, London, undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring during groundworks for a rear extension and a new garage at Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex.</p> <p>Green Meadows is located outside the known historic core of the town, on the north side of the road towards the north-eastern end of the High Street, bounded on both sides by residential properties and a domestic garden to the rear.</p> <p>The remains of a Late Iron Age settlement and Roman and town and fort are situated in the northern part of Great Chesterford and within some of the fields immediately adjacent. The fort was constructed during the 1st century AD, possibly as a consequence of the Boudiccan revolt in AD 60. The civilian settlement developed alongside the fort and continued to expand after the fort went out of use during the tail end of the 1st century. Fourth-century expansion followed 3rd-century decline and culminated in the building of town walls. It is possible the town had civitas status as it is one of only two walled towns in Essex, the other being Colchester.</p> <p>The medieval town was initially reasonably prosperous, but declined to almost village-like status following on from the collapse of the cloth trade during the early post-medieval period. From c. 1700 onwards, the prosperity of the town recovered slightly due to trade from passing traffic as a consequence of its road links with Newmarket and Cambridge and, later, the rail link between London and Cambridge.</p>	

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Previous Summaries/Reports:-

None

Author of Summary: Mark Germany**Date of Summary:** November
2013

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-153732

Project details

Project name	Green Meadows, Great Chesterford, Essex
Short description of the project	Machine excavation of footings for a rear extension and garage at Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex revealed no archaeological remains apart from a late 19th / early 20th-century cistern.
Project dates	Start: 12-06-2013 End: 18-06-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	GCGM13 – Site code
Any associated project reference codes	E8009 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX UTTLESFORD GREAT CHESTERFORD Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford
Study area	100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 551120 242940 51 0 51 53 42 N 000 15 16 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Essex County Council Place Services
Project design	Archaeology South-East

originator

Project director/manager Adrian Scruby

Project supervisor Mark Germany

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum

Digital Contents "Stratigraphic"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography","Text"

Paper Archive recipient Saffron Walden Museum

Paper Contents "Stratigraphic"

Paper Media available "Photograph","Plan","Report"

Project bibliography

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Archaeological Watching Brief. Green Meadows, High Street, Great Chesterford, Essex

Author(s)/Editor(s) Germany, M.

Other bibliographic details E8009

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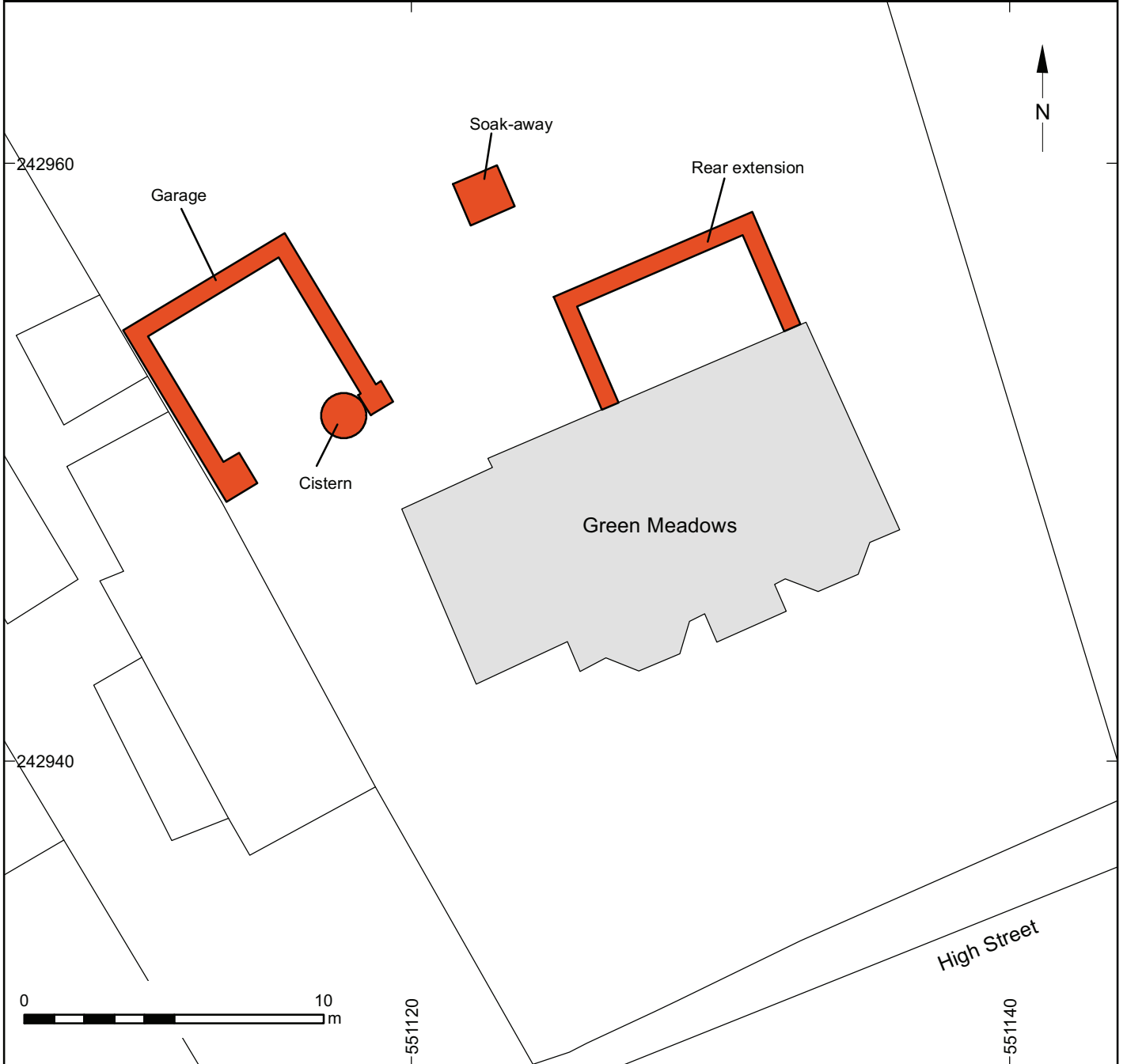
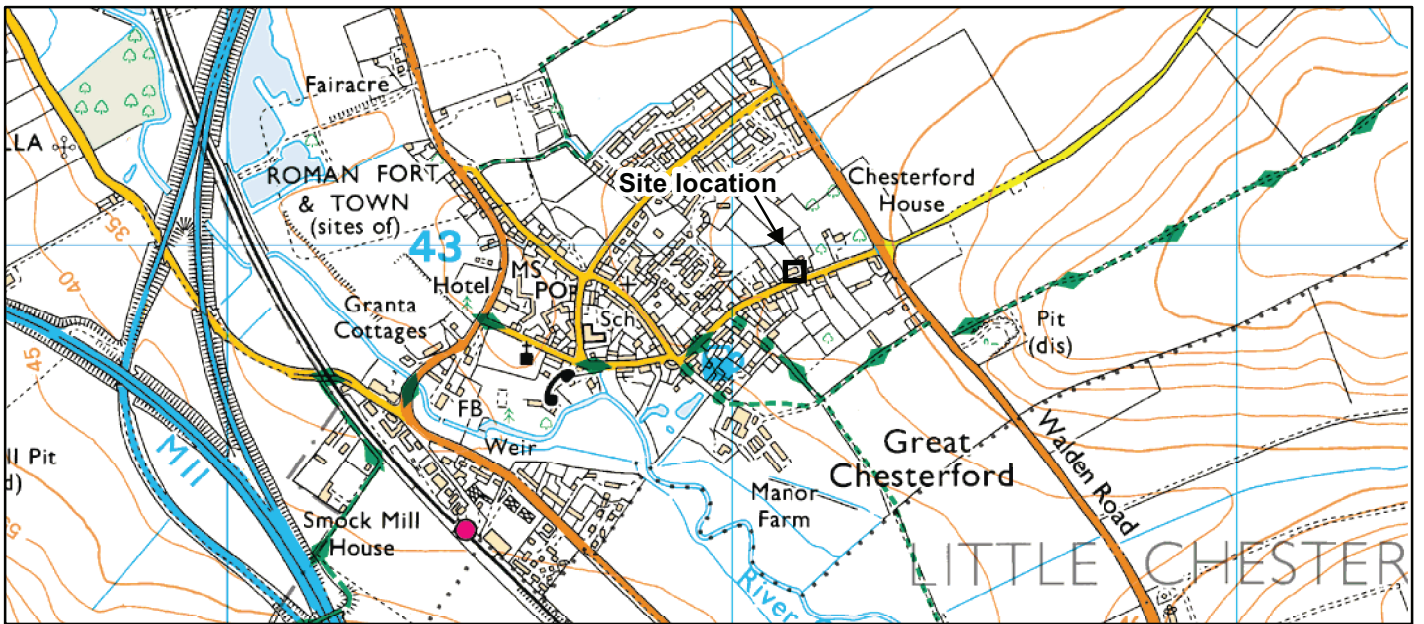
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© Archaeology South-East		Green Meadows, Great Chesterford	Fig. 1
Project Ref: E8009	July 2013	Site location and areas of archaeological monitoring.	
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© Archaeology South-East		Green Meadows, Great Chesterford	Fig. 2
Project Ref: E8009	July 2013	Fourth edition Ordnance Survey (1936-47)	
Report Ref: 2013178	Drawn by: APL		



Fig. 3. Rear extension, looking east



Fig. 4. Rear extension, looking south-east



Fig. 5. Garage, looking north-west



Fig. 6. Garage, looking south



Fig. 7. Cistern, looking south-east