

Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching

Beeches Road, Chelmsford, Essex

ASE Project No: 8131

Site Code: CF79

ASE Report No: 2014066



February 2014

**Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching
Beeches Road, Chelmsford
Essex**

NGR: TL 6949 0678

Planning Ref: 12/01448/OUT

**ASE Project No: 8131
Site Code: CF79**

**ASE Report No: 2014066
OASIS id: 171806**

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With
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February 2014

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Abstract

The site of former local government offices on Beeches Road, Chelmsford was archaeologically evaluated on behalf of CgMs Consulting. The trial trenching was recommended by Essex County Council Place Services and was undertaken in advance of probable residential development.

The site of the trial trenching lay immediately east of a small Roman cremation cemetery, which was discovered more than fifty years ago during building work. The local government offices were constructed as an emergency hospital in 1940, but were never used for that purpose.

The trenching revealed modern deposits of mostly concrete, tarmac and hardcore, but no archaeological deposits, features or finds.

It is concluded from the results of the archaeological work that the site of the local government offices has been previously stripped, truncated and landscaped, and that much of this work was carried out in 1940. It is also concluded that the Roman cremation cemetery to the immediate west does not extend into the site of the former local government offices.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Beeches Road, Chelmsford, which was requested by Essex County Council Place Services and was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting by Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL). The archaeological work took place in advance of residential development.

1.2 Location, Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The site is situated near the western edge of Chelmsford and is bounded by Beeches Road to the north-east and by houses to the north-west, south-west and south-east (Fig. 1). Westlands Community Primary School and playing fields lie immediately west.

1.2.2 The local government offices occupy roughly two thirds of the site and consist of eight north-east south-west aligned office blocks, interlinked by a central north-west south-east aligned corridor. A tarmac and concrete-covered car park and a small number of stand-alone ancillary buildings lie south and south-east of these and are accessed by a tarmac-covered driveway along the site's south-eastern edge. The car park contains numerous drain covers, several lamp-posts and an automatic car-parking barrier. It also contains a central c.0.3m high step, where one part of the car park is slightly higher than the other. Running along the north-western and western edges of the site are grass-covered strips with south-east and east-facing slopes.

1.2.3 The site sits c.28.5m above mean sea-level, on superficial Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel above London Clay (BGS 2013). The river Can flows southwards, c.300m east of the site, and is a tributary of the river Chelmer.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Chelmsford Borough Council subsequently granted planning consent for the redevelopment of the site, involving the demolition of existing structures and the construction of up to forty-six residential units with associated access, parking and amenity space (Planning Reference: 12/01448/OUT).

1.3.2 The planning consent has the following condition (9):

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

REASON: To ensure that adequate archaeological records can be made in respect of the site in accordance with Policy DC21 of the adopted core strategy and development control policies development plan document.

1.3.3 The Historic Environment team of Essex County Council Place Services used the results of a desk based assessment produced by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2014) to recommend that an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching should precede any residential development at the site of the local government offices at Beeches Road, Chelmsford because it potentially contained prehistoric and/or Roman remains.

1.4.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation, which stipulated how the trial trenching evaluation should be undertaken, was produced by ASE and CgMs Consulting and approved by the Historic Environment team before the archaeological work began (ASE 2014).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The aims of the archaeological investigation were:

- To determine, as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains.
- To enable the Historic Environment Management Team of Essex County Council to make an informed decision as to whether a second stage of archaeological work would be required in order to satisfy the archaeological condition.
- To obtain more information about why the region apparently contains comparatively few examples of Roman burials within formal cemeteries (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Beeches Road, Chelmsford, which was undertaken following on from the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment (CgMs 2014). The trenching took place during 10th-13th February 2014 and was carried out in advance of residential development within a 1.65ha plot of previously occupied land. The trenching was managed by Andy Leonard and was undertaken by Mark Germany and Andrew Lewsey.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The following information is derived from the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) and an archaeological desk-based assessment for the site, produced by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2014).

2.2 Neolithic artefacts from within the wider vicinity include a flint spearhead or knife and six flint axes (HER 5537 and 702). Bronze Age finds and remains comprise a flint arrowhead, a bucket-urn, a flint dagger and a possible burial mound (HER 701, 714, 816 and 852).

- 2.3 The development site sits c.2.5km north-west of the site of the Roman town of Caesaromagus, much of which was focussed on Moulsham Street in the centre of present-day Chelmsford. Building work within school playing fields immediately west of the site more than fifty years ago revealed a small Romano-British cremation cemetery (HER 721).
- 2.4 Historic maps dating to 1777, 1799, 1842, 1874, 1896, 1921 and 1939 record the development site as farmland.
- 2.5 The site was used to construct a wartime emergency hospital in 1940, which was subsequently used not as a hospital but as local government offices. The 'hospital building' and ancillary structures are currently still standing, but are no longer in use.
- 2.6 No previous archaeological works have taken place within the site and no remains are known from it.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHOD

- 3.1 The archaeological fieldwork consisted of machine stripping and archaeological investigation of seven trenches (Fig. 1). Trenches 1 and 7 measured 10m long, Trench 3 20m long, Trench 6 28m long and Trenches 4 and 5 30m long. Trench 2 was 24m long, but split into two parts by a 6m long gap. Trench 7 was not originally envisaged, but was compensatory for trenches 2 and 6, both of which were slightly shorter than originally intended (24m and 28m respectively). All seven trenches were 1.8m wide. The positions of the trenches were partly dictated by necessary avoidance of existing buildings, lamp posts and signs, and access points for vehicles. Trenches 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were dug within the tarmac and concrete-covered 'hospital' car park, to the south-west of the existing body of standing buildings, and Trenches 2 and 7 within a thin strip of grass along the western edge of the development area. The trenches sampled 1.7% of the 1.65ha site and were located by using a Leica GPS. The archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with the stipulations of a Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2014).
- 3.2 The trenches were stripped of topsoil, subsoil, hardcore and concrete by using a tracked excavator equipped with a concrete breaker and a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. The stripping of the trenches was carried out under archaeological supervision, and was taken no deeper than the surface of the in situ glacial Head deposits (hereafter referred to as 'natural'). The exposed surface of the natural was examined for the presence of archaeological remains, and spoil heaps were visually inspected for residual and displaced archaeological artefacts. No metal detecting was undertaken as most of the site deposits contained numerous modern metal artefacts.
- 3.3 Standard ASE excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout, with all work carried out in accordance with the IfA (Institute for Archaeologists) Code of Conduct, by-laws and guidelines (IfA 2009) and in compliance with *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of*

England (Gurney 2003).

- 3.4 All stratigraphy was recorded using the ASE context recording system, with all exposed archaeological features and deposits being individually numbered, recorded and excavated. Modern features such as underground services and wall footings were planned, but not investigated, described or numbered. A photographic record of each trench and its deposit sequences was maintained.
- 3.5 The evaluation took no soil samples and retained no artefacts because no non-glacial, pre 20th-century deposits or finds were encountered.
- 3.5 The site archive is currently held at the ASE site office at Braintree and will be deposited with Chelmsford Museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	28
No. of files/paper record	36
Plan and sections sheets	1
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	24
Bulk finds	0
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 measured 10m long by 1.8m wide by 0.46m deep (Fig. 2). It revealed four deposits [1/001] to [1/004], all of which ran the length and breadth of the trench. Other remains comprised a modern drain/sewer pipe, which was left in situ, and a cross-shaped arrangement of poured concrete which was possibly footings for the walls of a building. No archaeological features or artefacts were present. The area immediately surrounding the drain/sewer pipe at the southern end of the trench was not bottomed.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
1/001	Deposit	Tarmac	10m	1.8m	0.09m – 0.12m
1/002	Deposit	Hardcore	10m	1.8m	0.18m – 0.29m
1/003	Deposit	Layer	7.75m	1.8m	0m – 0.16m
1/004	Deposit	Natural	7.75m	1.8m	Not excavated

Table 2: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts

- 4.1.2 Natural deposit [1/004] comprised pale brownish orange silt clay, and was present beneath layers of brownish grey plastic silt clay [1/003], modern hardcore [1/002] and tarmac [1/001] respectively. Numerous very irregular thin patches of greenish-grey silt covered its surface. Deposit [1/003] was less than 0.17m thick and present between the natural and hardcore.

Hardcore layer [1/002] consisted of gritty orange sand and abundant fragments of London Brick. Both it and deposit [1/003] were densely compacted.

4.2 Trench 2

4.2.1 Trench 2 investigated the flat top of a grassed strip of earth above an east-facing step/slope (Fig. 3). It was 30m long, 1.8m wide and 0.78m deep. It revealed three deposits [2/002] to [2/003], but no archaeological features or finds. A 6m-long section within in its northern half was unable to be stripped because there was no room for its spoil.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
2/001	Deposit	Topsoil	30m	1.8m	0.21m – 0.25m
2/002	Deposit	Subsoil	30m	1.8m	0.24m – 0.31m
2/003	Deposit	Natural	30m	1.8m	0.32m

Table 3: Trench 2 list of recorded contexts

4.2.2 Deposits [2/001] to [2/003] comprised greyish brown friable silt clay topsoil [2/001], slightly paler, greyish brown silt clay subsoil [2/002], and pale brownish orange plastic silt clay natural [2/003]. The natural had a gradual east-facing slope. The subsoil increased in thickness as it went eastwards and the topsoil lay horizontal.

4.3 Trench 3

4.3.1 Trench 3 ran for a distance of 20m. It was 1.8m wide and 0.35m deep (Fig. 4). It revealed four deposits [3/001 to 3/004], but no archaeological features or finds.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
3/001	Deposit	Tarmac	20m	1.8m	0.09m – 0.14m
3/002	Deposit	Hardcore	20m	1.8m	0.10m – 0.15m
3/003	Deposit	Layer	20m	1.8m	0.02m – 0.10m
3/004	Deposit	Natural	20m	1.8m	Not excavated

Table 4: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts

4.3.2 Natural deposit [3/004] supported brownish orange plastic silt clay [3/003], compacted modern hardcore [3/002], and tarmac [3001] respectively. Layer [3/003] was similar to natural deposit [3/004] and was possibly redeposited natural. Hardcore layer [3/002] comprised compacted orange gritty sand and pieces of modern ceramic building material, mostly bricks.

4.4 Trench 4

4.4.1 Trench 4 was 30m long, 1.8m wide and 0.42m deep (Cover and Fig. 5). It revealed four deposits [4/001 to 4/004], a large ceramic drain pipe, two narrow, linear cuts, probably for small drains, and part of a robbed-out concrete wall foundation. There were no archaeological features or artefacts.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
4/001	Deposit	Tarmac	30m	1.8m	0.09m – 0.18m
4/002	Deposit	Hardcore	30m	1.8m	0.18m – 0.24m
4/003	Deposit	Layer	30m	1.8m	0m – 0.09m
4/004	Deposit	Natural	30m	1.8m	Not excavated

Table 5: Trench 4 list of recorded contexts

4.4.2 Natural [4/004] consisted of pale brownish orange plastic silt clay with no inclusions. Numerous very irregular thin patches of brownish grey silt covered its surface and appeared to be semi-humic (Fig. 10). Deposit [4/003] consisted of compacted brownish grey plastic silt clay. Hardcore [4/002] covered it and was also compacted. It comprised gritty orange sand and abundant large pieces of modern bricks.

4.5 Trench 5

4.5.1 Trench 5 had a maximum depth of 0.44m (Fig. 6). It was 30m long and 1.8m wide. It uncovered four deposits [5/001 to 5/004], a large modern drain pipe, and a ceramic warning cover for an underlying electricity cable, which was left in situ and the cable not exposed.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
5/001	Deposit	Tarmac	30m	1.8m	0.09m – 0.11m
5/002	Deposit	Concrete	30m	1.8m	0.10m – 0.12m
5/003	Deposit	Layer	30m	1.8m	0.15m – 0.30m
5/004	Deposit	Natural	30m	1.8m	Not excavated

Table 6: Trench 5 list of recorded contexts

4.5.2 All four deposits within Trench 5 continued beyond the edges of the trench. Deposit [5/003] and natural deposit [5/004] consisted of yellowish brown and pale brownish orange, stone-free plastic silt clay respectively. Concrete layer [5/002] overlaid [5/003] and contained reinforcing rods and numerous pieces of gravel.

4.6 Trench 6

4.6.1 The dimensions of Trench 6 were 30m long, 1.8m wide and 0.52m deep (Fig. 7). The trench uncovered six deposits and a ceramic drain pipe. No archaeological features or finds were encountered.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
6/001	Deposit	Tarmac	30m	1.8m	0.08m – 0.10m
6/002	Deposit	Hardcore	20m	1.8m	0.20m
6/003	Deposit	Layer	20m	1.8m	0.12m – 0.16m
6/004	Deposit	Concrete	10m	1.8m	0.29m
6/005	Deposit	Hardcore	10m	1.8m	0.15m
6/006	Deposit	Natural	30m	1.8m	Not excavated

Table 7: Trench 6 list of recorded contexts

4.6.2 The eastern third and the western two-thirds of the trench contained slightly different deposit sequences. In the former, the sequence consisted of tarmac [6/001] above concrete [6/004] above modern hardcore, while in the latter it consisted of tarmac [6/001] and modern hardcore [6/002] above brownish orange friable silt sand with no inclusions [6/003]. Very irregular small thin patches of streaky brownish grey silt occasionally covered the surface of the underlying natural [6/006].

4.7 Trench 7

4.7.1 Trench 7 was dug as compensation for the slightly reduced lengths of Trenches 2 and 6 (Fig. 8). It exposed topsoil above subsoil and was abandoned after uncovering an in situ ceramic drain pipe and plastic yellow warning tape for an electricity cable. No electricity cable was exposed and no archaeological finds or features were encountered.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
7/001	Deposit	Topsoil	10m	1.8m	0.20m
5/002	Deposit	Subsoil	10m	1.8m	0.20m
5/004	Deposit	Natural	10m	1.8m	Not excavated

Table 8: Trench 7 list of recorded contexts

4.7.2 Topsoil [7/001] and subsoil [7/002] both comprised brownish grey friable silt clay. The two looked similar, although the subsoil was slightly paler in colour. Neither contained natural inclusions.

5.0 FINDS

5.1 The trial-trenching found no pre-modern artefacts. Pieces of modern building material were plentiful, but were not retained.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

6.1 No environmental soil samples were taken as no datable, pre-modern archaeological deposits with potential for plant macrofossil recovery were found.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The results of the trenching make it unlikely that the site contains extensive archaeological remains, possibly because it was never occupied before 1940 or more likely because it was truncated and landscaped by the construction of the hospital. A usual rural deposit sequence of topsoil above subsoil above natural is no longer present, with the possible exceptions of trenches 2 and 7, and has been largely replaced by tarmac, concrete and hardcore.

7.2 Not all of the deposits in Trench 2 run parallel with each other, perhaps indicating that the grassy area along the western edge of the site, which was

investigated by Trenches 2 and 7, has been previously landscaped. The area around Trench 7 is also likely to have been previously disturbed as it has been found to contain a ceramic pipe and plastic warning tape for an electricity cable.

- 7.2 Single layers of brownish grey [1/003 and 4/003], brownish orange [3/003] and yellowish brown [5/003] silt clay lie on top of the natural within Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5 and are probably either truncated/redeposited topsoil [1/003 and 4/003] and redeposited natural [3/003, 5/003 and 6/003]. The presence of these deposits is further evidence for the site having been truncated, landscaped and levelled.
- 7.3 The numerous very irregular thin patches of brownish-grey and greenish grey silt which cover the surface of natural deposits [1/004, 4/004 and 6/006] in Trenches 1, 4 and 6 are possibly natural Head deposits or remnants of compressed topsoil from machine stripping.
- 7.4 The trenching has found no Roman remains, perhaps implying that the Roman cremation cemetery which was discovered more than fifty years ago during groundworks to the west of the site, is confined to that area. An alternative explanation is that Roman cremation burials were present, but have been destroyed by the construction of the local government offices in 1940.
- 7.5 Only one third of the local government site has been able to be archaeologically sampled because of the presence of standing buildings, possibly meaning that the results of the investigation are not representative of the site as a whole. Informative archaeological remains perhaps survive in those two un-sampled areas, although this seems unlikely. One reason for this is that it is probable that all three areas were stripped and truncated at the same time as a means of clearing the site for construction. The other is that the uninvestigated two thirds were probably additionally disturbed by groundworks for basements, walls and underground services.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE thanks CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work and for its assistance throughout the project, and Alison Bennett of Essex County Council Place Services for her guidance and monitoring. The trial-trenching was managed by Andy Leonard and was supervised by Mark Germany. The trenches were surveyed and illustrated by Andrew Lewsey. The post-excavation work was managed by Mark Atkinson.

Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

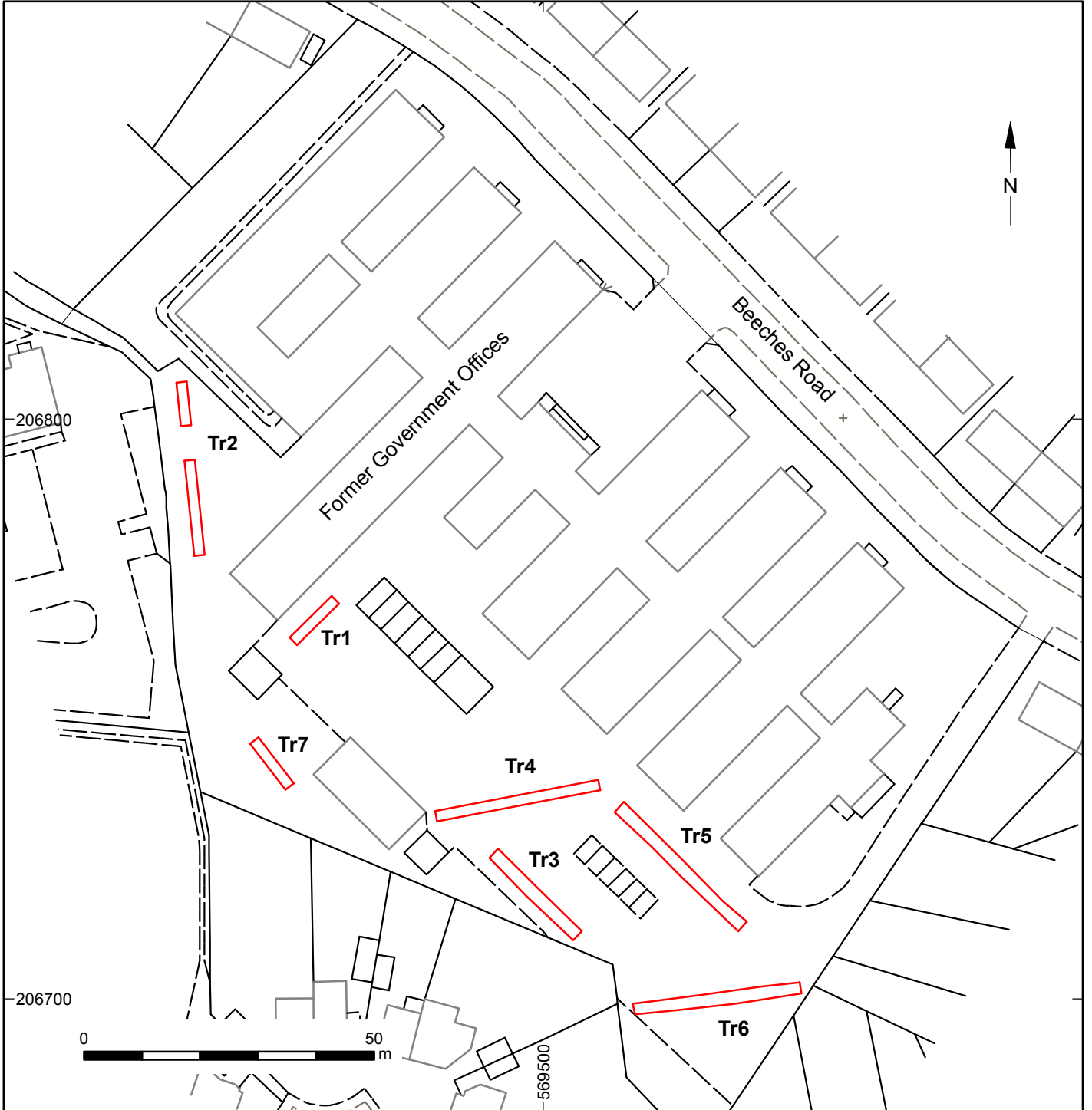
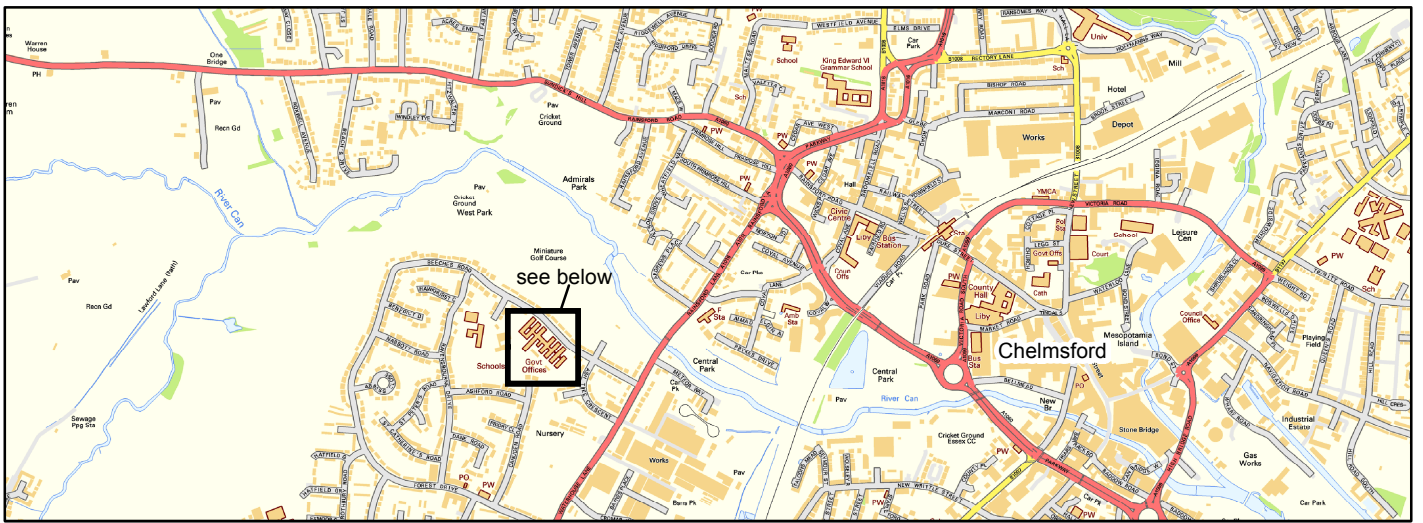
Site name/Address: Beeches Road, Chelmsford	
Parish: Chelmsford	District: Chelmsford
NGR: TL 6949 0678	Site Code: CF79
Type of Work: Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching	Site Director/Group: Mark Germany, Archaeology South-East
Date of Work: 10/2/14 to 13/2/14	Size of Area Investigated: Seven trenches (277m ²)
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Chelmsford Museum	Client: CgMs on behalf of Linden Homes Eastern
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos: 721
Final Report: EAH roundup	OASIS Ref: 171806
Periods represented: Modern	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p><i>The south-western part of former local government offices on Beeches Road, Chelmsford was archaeologically evaluated by trial-trenched in advance of probable residential development.</i></p> <p><i>The site lay immediately east of a small Romano-British cremation cemetery, which was discovered more than fifty years ago during building work. The local government offices were constructed as an emergency hospital in 1940, but were never used for that purpose.</i></p> <p><i>The archaeological work revealed modern deposits of mostly concrete, tarmac and hardcore, but no archaeological deposits, features or finds. The results of the work indicated that the site had been previously stripped, truncated and landscaped, most of which is likely to have taken place in 1940. They also suggested that the Romano-British cremation cemetery didn't extend into the development area.</i></p>	
<p>Previous Summaries/Reports:- Germany, M. 2014 <i>Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. Beeches Road, Chelmsford, Essex.</i> Archaeology South-East report 2014066</p>	
Author of Summary: Mark Germany	Date of Summary: February 2014

Appendix 2: OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-171806	
Project details	
Project name	Beeches Road, Chelmsford
Short description of the project	Trial-trenching to the immediate west of a former local government building on Beeches Road, Chelmsford revealed widespread evidence for site truncation and landscaping, but no archaeological remains.
Project dates	Start: 10-02-2014 End: 13-02-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	8131 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	CF79 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, 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 CHELMSFORD CHELMSFORD Beeches Road, Chelmsford
Postcode	CM1 2FJ
Study area	15.00 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 6949 0678 51.7335686177 0.454750469751 51 44 00 N 000

	27 17 E Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Essex County Council Place Services
Project design originator	ASE
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Mark Germany
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	Chelmsford Museum
Digital Archive recipient	Chelmsford Museum
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Chelmsford Museum
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. Beeches Road, Chelmsford, Essex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Germany, M.

Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East
Place of issue or publication	Archaeology South-East, The Old Magistrates Court, 79 South Street, Braintree, Essex
Description	A4, 13 pages of text, 10 illustrations
Entered by	Mark Germany (m.germany@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	18 February 2014



© Archaeology South-East		Beeches Road, Chelmsford	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 8131	Feb 2014	Location of archaeological evaluation trenches	
Report Ref: 2014066	Drawn by: APL		



Fig. 2. Trench 1, looking south-west. 1m scale bars



Fig. 3. Trench 2, looking south-east. 1m scale bars



Fig. 4. Trench 3, looking north-west. 1m scale bars



Fig. 5. Trench 4, looking south-west. 1m scale bars



Fig. 6. Trench 5, looking south-east. 1m scale bars



Fig. 7. Trench 6, looking north-east. 1m scale bars



Fig. 8. Trench 7, looking south-east. 1m scale bars

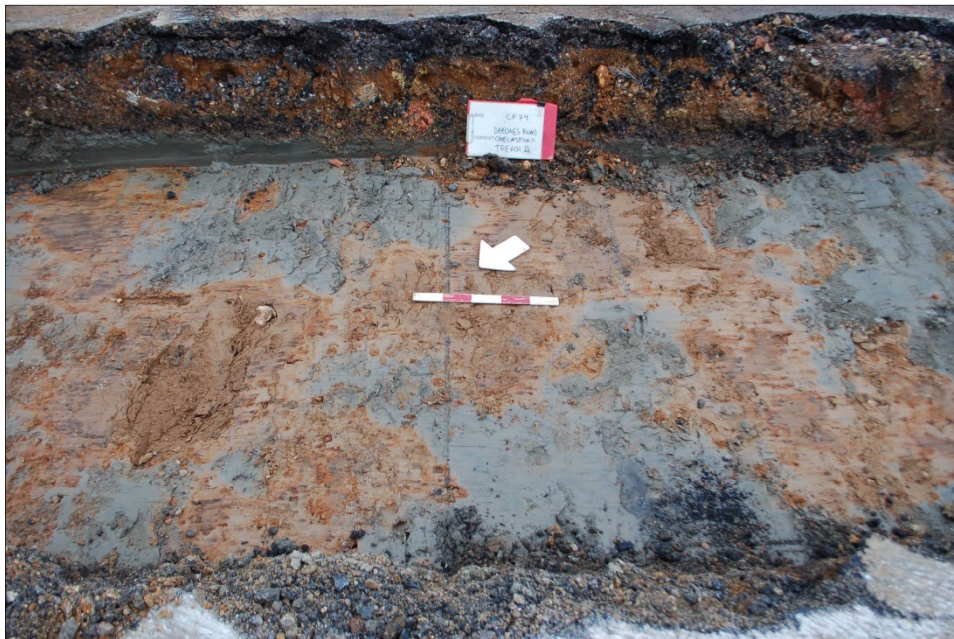


Fig. 9. Trench 4, natural deposit [4/004], looking south-east. 0.5m scale bar