

Archaeological Evaluation

**Land at Moat House, Dunmow Road
Great Easton, Essex**

NGR: TL 561179 225258

Site Code: GEMH17

ASE Project No: 161138

**ASE Report No: 2017031
OASIS ID: 274557**



January 2017

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Retirement Villages Group Ltd to conduct an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at Moat House, Dunmow Road, Great Easton, Essex, in advance of the construction of nine additional care units.

The potential for Prehistoric, Roman, and Medieval archaeological remains was assessed prior to the works as low to moderate. However, the remains of a Medieval homestead moat are located north of the site, within the Moat House grounds. Historic mapping shows that the site consisted of undeveloped meadow land and subsequently landscaped grounds through the Post-Medieval and Modern periods.

Five trenches were excavated across the development site, within the south of the Moat House grounds. No archaeological features were encountered.

It is judged that there is low potential for archaeological remains to be present elsewhere within the development site boundary. The impact of the proposed development on the below-ground heritage resource of this vicinity is therefore predicted to be low to negligible.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 Finds**
- 6.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

Appendix 1: Summary of excavated trenches
Appendix 2: HER Summary
Appendix 3: OASIS Form
Appendix 4: Trench photographs (Figs. 3-7)

TABLES

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

FIGURES

Front Cover Image: General Site View Facing Northeast

Figure 1: Site location
Figure 2: Trench locations

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of UCL's Institute of Archaeology (IoA), Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Retirement Villages Group Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Moat House, Dunmow Road, Great Easton, Essex, CM6 2HB (NGR: TL 561179 225258; Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The site evaluation was undertaken in order to satisfy the requirements of an archaeological condition placed on planning consent for the development.

1.1.2 The site is bounded by Dunmow Road (B184) to the south, the grounds of the Moat House retirement village to the north and west, and open fields to the east. A small stream is located between the site and the B184. The site comprised of landscaped parkland associated with the retirement village, measuring 0.5ha.

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 2017), the bedrock formation comprises clay, silt, and sand of the London Clay Formation with superficial deposits of clay, silt sand, and gravel head deposits.

1.2.2 Ground level generally sloped from Moat House in the north to the stream in the south. The highest level measured 73.79m OD at the north end of Trench 1 and the lowest level at 70.04m OD at the west end of Trench 5.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Planning permission for the development was sought from and granted by Uttlesford District Council in August 2016 for the construction of nine extra care units (Planning ref. UTT/16/2233/FUL). A phased archaeological condition was recommended by ECC Place Services, acting as archaeological advisor to the local Planning Authority.

1.3.2 The condition duly attached by Uttlesford District Council to planning consent states:

1. No development or preliminary groundworks can commence until a programmed of archaeological trial trenching has been secured and undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the planning authority.

2. A mitigation strategy detailing the excavation/preservation strategy shall be submitted to the local planning authority following the completion of this work.

3. No development or preliminary groundworks can commence on those areas containing archaeological deposits until the satisfactory completion of fieldwork, as detailed in the mitigation strategy, and which has been signed off by the local planning authority through its historic environment advisors.

4. The applicant will submit to the local planning authority a post-excavation assessment (to be submitted within six months of the completion of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Planning Authority). This will result in the completion of post-excavation analysis, preparation of a full site archive and report ready for deposition at the local museum, and submission of a publication report.

1.3.3 A Brief of Works was subsequently issued by Richard Havis of ECC Place Services (ECC 2016) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CgMs Consulting setting out the scope of work, methodology, and research aims for the trial-trench evaluation (CgMs 2016b). The work was undertaken in accordance with this document, with *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney, 2003), and the relevant standards and guidance of ClfA (2014a).

1.4 Scope of Report

1.4.1 This report presents the results of five archaeological evaluation trenches excavated on the site on the 24th of January 2017. It followed the methodology laid out in the WSI (CgMs 2016b) and the Risk Assessment Method Statement (ASE 2017).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The archaeological background of the site is set out in detail in a Desk-Based Assessment, which considers known heritage assets within a 1km radius of the site (CgMs 2016a). The results of the DBA are summarised below with due acknowledgement.

2.1.2 No archaeological remains have been recorded within the site area. However, evaluation has previously been undertaken elsewhere within the wider Moat House grounds.

2.2 Prehistoric

2.2.1 Scattered remains of Prehistoric activity have been recorded from the wider search area, including a Neolithic flint chisel (HEA 376347), a residual piece of either Bronze or Iron Age pottery (MEX4244), and a collection of flint artefacts and a ceramic vessel dating between the Early Bronze Age and Late Iron Age (MEX1040798).

2.2.2 The presence of cropmarks within the wider search area also suggests Prehistoric occupation.

2.3 Roman

2.3.1 Documentary evidence (Margary 1967) suggests that the probable Roman road between Chelmsford and Great Chesterford lies approximately 400m to the east of the site.

2.3.2 A possible Roman rural settlement was recorded west of the site (MEX1040799), remains of which consisted of a large enclosure ditch, a possible trackway, smaller gullies, and refuse pits.

2.3.3 Cremations dated to the Roman period were found in a vault in 1850 at Rose's Pit, west of the site (HEA 376347).

2.3.4 Other scattered Roman remains have been found in the wider search area, including pottery (MEX4247), tile and quern stone fragments (MEX4750), and a findspot recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (MEX1048270).

2.4 Early Medieval

2.4.1 During the excavations at Great Easton Castle, west of the site (MEX4245), a few sherds of unstratified St. Neots ware were recovered (MEX4250), suggesting Early Medieval (Saxo-Norman) settlement may have been located within the vicinity of the castle.

2.4.2 The Domesday Book records a priest at the Church of St. John in 1066, also suggesting an Early Medieval settlement within the wider area. The site likely would have lain within agricultural fields on the periphery of this settlement.

2.5 Medieval

- 2.5.1 Great Easton motte castle, a scheduled Medieval monument (MEX4253), is located c. 200m west of the site. Its presence suggests a centre of local or royal administration that could be used as a garrison during military operations.
- 2.5.2 Excavations in the grounds of Great Easton Hall in 1964-66 recorded remains relating to the development of the manorial site from its origins as a Norman motte castle to a Medieval hall house (Allen and Walker in prep). The motte moat and an outer defensive ditch were deliberately infilled in the mid-12th century, presumably as part of Henry II's suppression of adulterine castles after the Anarchy. The earliest settlement in the outer enclosure to the south and west of the motte dates to the 12th century. Later phases of settlement are represented by successive timber buildings dated to the 13th and 14th centuries, interpreted as a hall and a detached kitchen. The hall and kitchen were replaced by the present Great Easton Hall in the 15th century.
- 2.5.3 A Medieval homestead moat is located to the north of the site, within the northern part of the wider Moat House grounds (MEX4321). Given its nearby presence, it is likely the site was located on agricultural lands associated with this farmstead.

2.6 Post-Medieval and Modern

- 2.6.1 Moat Cottage (HER 1190-1), adjacent to the Medieval moat, is a 17th century timber-framed building with elements dating to the 16th century.
- 2.6.2 Historic Ordnance Survey mapping consistently shows that the site was undeveloped agricultural land that was associated with Moat Farm from the early 19th century. A residence known as the Parsonage and then as Rectory House was built to the north of the site by the time of the 1839 Tithe Map.
- 2.6.4 Probably in the 1960s, Rectory House, is replaced by the Moat House and is significantly altered and extended into the 1990s.

2.7 Previous investigations at Moat House

- 2.7.1 A 2007 trial-trench evaluation at Moat House targeted the area of previous residential home development within the northern part of the Moat House grounds (Heritage Network 2007). This work recorded an undated gully and posthole, an animal burial and a late Post-medieval ditch and bank. However, no definitive evidence of archaeological activity predating the late Post-Medieval period was identified.

2.3 Project Aims and Objectives

2.3.1 The general aims of the archaeological investigation, as stated in the WSI (CgMs 2016b, section 3), were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence, extent, and character of any archaeological evidence on the site and to consider the archaeological interest of these in the wider context.
- To generate an archive that will allow future research of the remains to be undertaken.
- To disseminate the results of the work in a format and manner proportionate to the significance of the findings.
- To explore, and where possible and appropriate, implement measures to encourage public engagement with the findings.

2.3.2 The specific aims of this project were, where possible, to identify:

- Remains of a Medieval occupation, potentially associated with the moated site to the north.
- Remains of Late Iron Age and Roman occupation associated with the findings on the western side of Dunmow Road.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The trenches were positioned as close as possible to the planned locations specified in the WSI. Due to ground disturbance conducted prior to the archaeological fieldwork, the east end of Trench 2 was shifted c.2m south. Trench 4 was shifted c.1.5m northeast to avoid existing mature trees. The remaining three trenches were excavated as planned (Figure 2).
- 3.1.2 All trenches were excavated using a tracked 360° excavator with a 1.8m toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and subsoil were stripped incrementally under archaeological supervision down to the top of archaeological or else geological deposits and then hand cleaned.
- 3.1.3 The trenches were recorded using standard ASE trench record sheets and were planned using a Digital Global Positioning System (DGPS).
- 3.1.4 A full photographic record comprising colour digital images was made. All trenches were photographed and several representative photographs of the overall site were taken.
- 3.1.5 No archaeological features were exposed or finds recovered from the site and no environmental samples were taken.

3.2 Archive

- 3.2.1 Guidelines contained in the *CifA Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (2014b) will be followed for the preparation of the archive for museum deposition.
- 3.2.2 Subject to agreement with the legal landowner ASE will arrange with the Saffron Walden museum for the deposition of the archive. No artefacts or environmental evidence were retrieved.
- 3.2.3 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Item	Quantity
Context sheets	0
Section sheets	0
Plan sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	23
Context register	0
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	0
Trench Record forms	5

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Trenches 1-5

- 4.1.1 Five trenches were excavated, each measuring 25m in length and 1.8m in width (Figure 2).
- 4.1.2 Topsoil and subsoil were recorded in all trenches. The topsoil comprised dark brownish grey, firm clay silt with occasional small rounded stones. It varied in thickness from 0.17m to 0.29m. This overlaid subsoil consisting of mid greyish brown, firm clay silt with occasional small rounded stones and rare charcoal flecks. Its thickness measured between 0.09m and 0.19m. Detailed context data for the deposit sequence recorded in each trench can be found in Appendix 1.
- 4.1.3 The natural geology varied slightly across the site. Trenches 1-3 contained light orange brown, firm clay with frequent small to medium flints and other stones. Trenches 4 and 5 contained light yellow-greyish brown, firm silty clay with occasional small to medium stones.
- 4.1.4 No archaeological features were encountered in any of the excavated trenches. No finds were retrieved from the topsoil or subsoil deposits.
- 4.1.5 Evidence of a modern drain and landscaping debris were found in Trench 3.
- 4.1.6 Photographs of the excavated trenches are presented in Appendix 4.

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 No artefacts were recovered during the evaluation. Modern landscaping debris and drain tile was observed in the topsoil and subsoil but not retrieved.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

6.1.1 Natural superficial geology was encountered in all trenches, between 69.46m OD at the southwest edge (Trench 5) up to 73.29m OD at the northeast corner of the site (Trench 1). It varied slightly from primarily orange brown clay in the north and west (higher areas) to slightly siltier clay in the east and south (lower areas).

6.1.2 The overlying topsoil and subsoil layers, of 0.45-0.70m combined thickness were generally unchanging across the site and showed evidence of modern disturbance in the form of landscaping.

6.1.3 No archaeological remains were uncovered during the evaluation.

6.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

6.2.1 There was some evidence of modern activity within the site, likely in association with landscaping of the present day retirement village located immediately north of the site. However, there is no evidence that any archaeological remains were affected during this process as the trenches show that the natural surface was still present and relatively undisturbed beneath the overburden.

6.3 Consideration of research aims

6.3.1 In general, the research aims (Section 3) cannot be addressed due to the lack of archaeological remains from the evaluation trenches. The work has determined that there is low to negligible potential for archaeological remains to be present elsewhere within the development area.

6.3.2 The site specific research questions can therefore be answered as follows:

- *Is there any evidence for Medieval occupation connected with the moated site to the north?*

No such evidence was found. It is presumed that such activity was limited to the vicinity of the homestead moat and further east toward Great Easton Hall.

- *Is there any evidence for a Late Iron Age/Roman occupation connected with findings to the west of Dunmow Road?*

No such evidence was found. It is presumed that associated remains of this date do not extend this far east.

6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 No archaeological remains relating to past land use have been found within the evaluation trenches.

6.4.2 It is judged that there is low potential for significant archaeological remains to be present elsewhere within the development site. The impact of the

proposed development on the heritage resource of this vicinity is therefore predicted to be low to negligible.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix 1: Summary of excavated trenches

Trench	Context	Type	Interpretation	Depth m	Height m AOD
1	1/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.22-0.29	71.94-73.79
1	1/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.31-0.39	71.59-73.29
2	2/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.21-0.22	72.10-72.17
2	2/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.32-0.36	71.68-71.80
3	3/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.17-0.25	70.71-71.77
3	3/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.27-0.44	69.88-71.36
4	4/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.21-0.25	70.75-71.11
4	4/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.36-0.43	70.11-70.63
5	5/001	Layer	Topsoil	0.18-0.22	70.04-70.35
5	5/002	Layer	Subsoil	0.34-0.38	69.46-69.89

Appendix 2: HER Summary

Site name/Address Land at Moat House, Dunmow Road, Great Easton, Essex	
Parish: Great Easton	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 561179 225258	Site Code: GEMH17
Type of Work: Archaeological Evaluation	Site Director/Group: Samara King, Archaeology South-East
Date of Work: 24/01/2017 to 25/01/2017	Size of Area Investigated 0.5 ha
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden Museum	Funding source: Developer
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos:
Final Report: EAH roundup	OASIS No: 274557
Periods Represented: None/modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out within the south part of the Moat House site, in advance of the construction of nine retirement care units.</p> <p>A total of five trenches were excavated. No archaeological remains were located.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: Samara King	Date of Summary: January 26, 2017

Appendix 3: OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-274557	
Project details	
Project name	Land at Moat House, Great Easton, Essex
Short description of the project	Evaluation by trial trenching was carried out at the Moat House in advance of the construction of nine new care units. Five trenches were excavated across the development area. No archaeological remains were located.
Project dates	Start: 24-01-2017 End: 25-01-2017
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Associated project reference codes	GEMH17 - Sitecode UTT/16/2233/FUL - Planning Application No. 161138 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 4 - Regularly improved
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
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 UTTLESFORD GREAT EASTON Land at Moat House, Dunmow Road
Postcode	CM6 2HB
Site area	0.5 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 561179 225258 51.87894076987 0.268343789586 51 52 44 N 000 16 06 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 69.46m Max: 73.29m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Essex County Council Place Services

Project design originator	CgMs Consulting
Project director/manager	Sarah Ritchie
Project supervisor	Samara King
Type of sponsor/funding body	client
Name of sponsor/funding body	CgMs Consulting
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	n/a
Digital Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Paper Media available	"Map", "Miscellaneous Material", "Report", "Survey "
Project bibliography	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Evaluation. Land at Moat House, Dunmow Road, Great Easton, Essex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	King, S.
Other bibliographic details	ASE report 2017031
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East
Place of issue or publication	Witham
Description	A4 report of approximately 20 pages including figures and maps.
URL	http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/
Entered by	Mark Atkinson (mark.atkinson@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	30 January 2017

Appendix 4: Trench photographs



Figure 3: Trench 1, view south



Figure 4: Trench 2, view east-southeast



Figure 5: Trench 3, view southwest



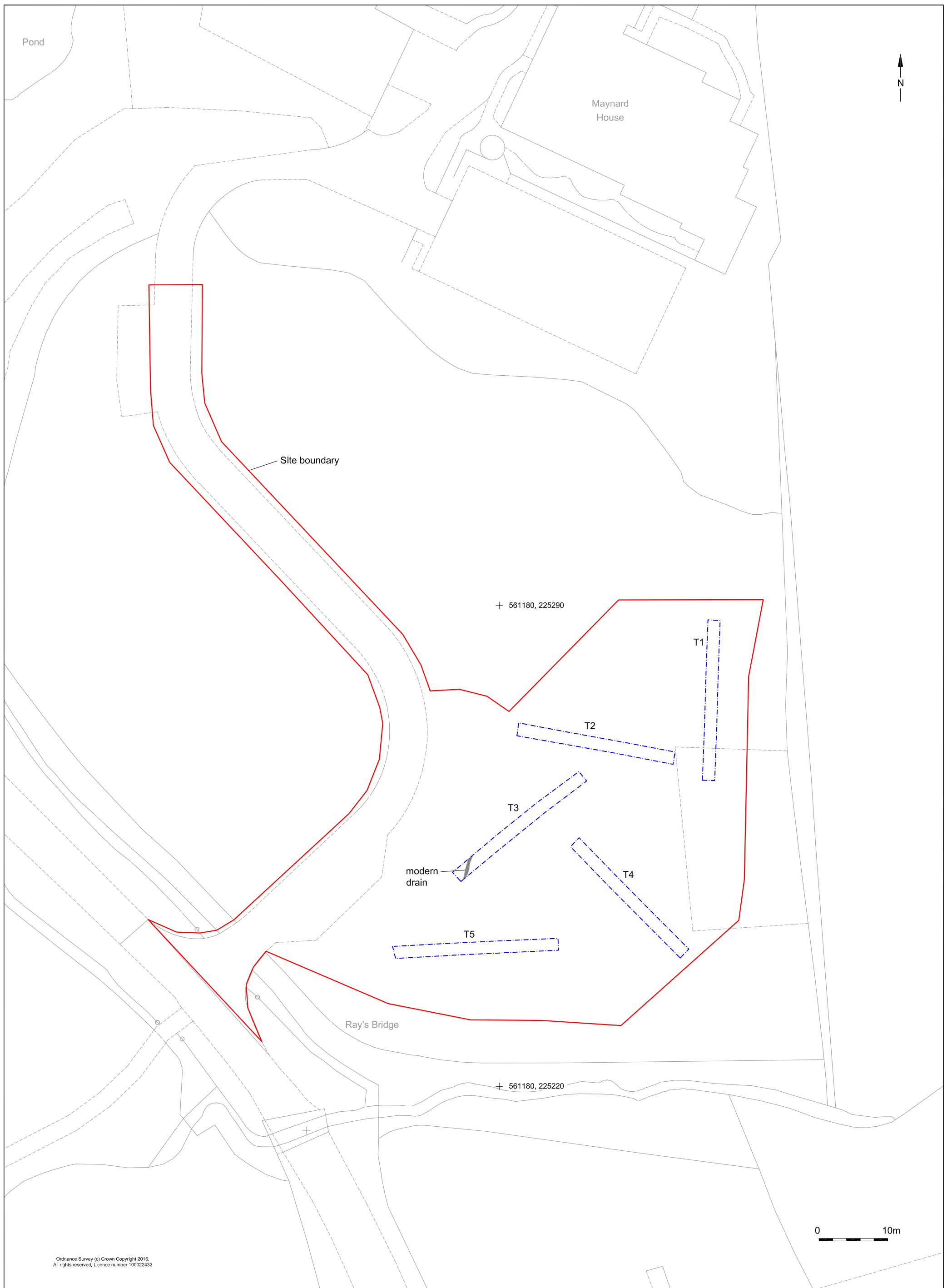
Figure 6: Trench 4, view southeast



Figure 7: Trench 5, view west



© Archaeology South-East		Land at Moat House, Dunmow Road, Great Easton, Essex	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 161138	Jan 2017	Site location and selected HER references	
Report No: 2017031	Drawn by: APL		



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© Archaeology South-East		Land at Moat House, Dunmow Road, Great Easton, Essex	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 161138	Jan 2017	Trench locations	
Report Ref: 2017031	Drawn by: APL		

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