

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

### **LAND SOUTH OF THE STREET, TAKELEY, ESSEX**

**ASE Project No: 200534  
Site code: TSTK20**

**ASE Report No: 2020237**



**November 2020**

# Archaeological Evaluation

## Land South of The Street Takeley, Essex

NGR: TL 53799 21289

ASE Project No: 200534  
Site code: TSTK20

ASE Report No: 2020237  
OASIS ID: 407346

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Rochester Properties Ltd to conduct an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land south of The Street, Takeley, Essex.*

*The evaluation was carried out as a condition of planning consent for a proposed residential development and was the first phase of archaeological fieldwork on the site. Three evaluation trenches were excavated, providing a 5% sample of that area of the site (1782sq m) where construction work was proposed.*

*The trenches revealed a simple sequence of turf and topsoil over the natural stratum of glacial till. No archaeological deposits or features were identified, and no artefacts were recovered.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL), carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land south of The Street, Takeley, Essex.

1.1.2 The archaeological evaluation was carried out as a condition of planning consent for a proposed residential development, and was commissioned by the development, Rochester Properties Ltd. It was the first phase of archaeological fieldwork on the site.

### **1.2 Location, Topography and Geology**

1.2.1 The site is located south of The Street (B1256), on the western edge of the village of Takeley, Essex, at National Grid Reference TL 53799 21289 (Figure 1).

1.2.2 The proposed development site is a roughly rectangular parcel of land, currently rough grassland. It is bounded to the north by The Street (former A120), to the east by another area of rough grassland, to the west by the gardens of an adjacent residential property, and to the south by the Flitch Way – a footpath/cycleway that runs along the former Bishops Stortford to Braintree railway line.

1.2.3 The site is generally level, at approximately 95m OD, and has a total area of 4604sq m, of which 1782sq m will be occupied by proposed housing and associated development, while the remainder of the site will comprise gardens.

1.2.4 The underlying solid geology of the site is recorded by the British Geological Survey (BGS 2020) as London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand). Overlying superficial deposits comprise those of the Lowestoft Formation (glacial till).

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 Planning consent has been granted on appeal by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) for a residential development of eight dwellings with associated access, parking and open space (Ref: UTT/18/2049/FUL). Having considered the application, Essex County Council's Place Services (ECCPS), who advise UDC on archaeological matters, identified the site as lying within an area of archaeological interest and as such recommended that an archaeological condition should be placed upon any planning consent, in line with national and local planning policy.

1.3.2 The following condition was duly attached to planning consent:

*5) No development or preliminary groundworks can commence until a programme of archaeological trial trenching and excavation has been secured and undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

1.3.3 A brief of works specifying the scope of the required archaeological work was issued by ECCPS (2020).

1.3.4 Subsequently, a Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation was prepared (ASE 2020a). This was approved by ECCPS, prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Report**

1.4.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching undertaken on land south of The Street, Takeley, Essex. The fieldwork was carried on 02 November 2020.

1.4.2 The report describes and interprets the results of the fieldwork and assesses the potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the wider development site.

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## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following information is derived from The Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), Essex County Council's Uttlesford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project (2009) and other relevant secondary sources. The locations of the most pertinent sites and findspots are shown on Figure 1.

### 2.2 Historic Environment Character

2.2.1 Lying in the area of Takeley and alongside Takeley Street/Dunmow Road, itself the historic route of Roman Stane Street, the site is situated within an area of archaeological interest. Significant amounts of archaeological investigation have been undertaken in the general area particularly at Stansted Airport (to the north) and the village of Takeley itself (to the east).

2.2.2 The Uttlesford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project was carried out by Essex County Council Historic Environment Management and Records Teams of Essex County Council (now part of Place Services) which identifies character areas. The site lies on the boundary of HECA 4: Stansted Airport and HECA 5: Hatfield Forest. In HECA 4 archaeological evidence indicates the exploitation of the woodland which once covered the area, for hunting, from the Palaeolithic onwards with settlement beginning in the Bronze Age. In HECA 5, the nationally important survival of a medieval hunting forest, also includes evidence of prehistoric occupation.

### 2.3 Prehistoric

2.3.1 As noted above, archaeological investigation has identified prehistoric remains in the vicinity of Takeley and Hatfield Forest. Examples to the east of the site include Priors Green, Takeley where Early Neolithic pits and evidence for flint knapping and food production were identified (Germany *et al* 2015), land at Bonnington's Farm where archaeological investigations found two small pits that are undated but may be Neolithic or Bronze Age and a ditch containing Middle/Late Iron Age pottery (EHER 45630) and the Barkers Tank site where archaeological features included those of Bronze date (EHER 45253).

2.3.2 To the west of the site, located in Beggershall Coppice within Hatfield Forest, the scheduled later prehistoric earthworks of Portingbury Hills survive (List No. 1002168). Possibly forming a farmstead, the monument comprises three main elements: a mound and ditch (EHER 4583), and a near-rectangular enclosure with surrounding ditch and probable external bank, connected by a causeway formed of a pair of near-parallel ditches (EHER 4584). Excavation of the roughly square mound, c.30m wide, and associated V-shaped ditch in the 1960s revealed the remains to be of Iron Age date, whilst no dating evidence was evident for the enclosure or causeway.

2.3.3 Evaluation and excavation at Brewer's End, located further east along Dunmow Road towards Takeley village, recorded possible pre-conquest Iron Age settlement remains (ASE 2015a). These comprised roundhouses and pits

occupying a complex of irregular ditched enclosures located close to Roman Stane Street but not seemingly aligned upon it and so judged to predate its formalisation as a Roman thoroughfare.

- 2.3.4 Nearer the site at Land adjacent to Coppice Close a Middle Iron Age ditch and an elongated pit were found (TACC18; ASE 2018).
- 2.3.5 The Iron Age agrarian and settlement remains found alongside the Dunmow Road (former A120) at various locations give some weight to the theory that Stane Street was a pre-Roman track, in existence in the Iron Age (EHER 1226).

## **2.4 Romano-British**

- 2.4.1 The Roman period saw the construction (or re-routing and re-surfacing) of the road (EHER 4697), now Dunmow Road/Stane Street, which ran between the Roman centres at Colchester and Braughing. Small farmsteads began to appear along the road line and the landscape continued to be re-aligned alongside the road. Land use activity within the landscape continued from the Late Iron Age into the Roman period, as evidenced by archaeological remains of Roman date encountered at several sites within the vicinity of the Roman road, for example pits and ditches identified during archaeological works in the vicinity of the junction of the Dunmow Road and the road to Little Barrington Hall (EHER 46483 and 54949).
- 2.4.2 During evaluation at Land West of The Chalet (TAWC15), to the east of the site along Dunmow Road, an east/west Late Iron Age/Roman ditch was found that was speculated to be a roadside boundary along the north side of Roman Stane Street (ASE 2015b).
- 2.4.3 Further toward Takeley village, excavation at the Brewer's End site (ASE 2015a) identified that the original Iron Age settlement became incorporated into an extensive and regular rectilinear enclosure/field system in the mid/late 1st century. This presumably sat alongside the formalised route of Roman Stane Street.

## **2.5 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval**

- 2.5.1 Reaney (1935, 535) gives the etymology of the name Takeley as *Tæccá's leah*; 'leah' meaning a clearing. This would probably be translated as 'the clearing in the forest owned by Taecca'. The site actually lies at the northern limit of the parish of Hatfield Broad Oak. The name Hatfield comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Hoep-Field*, 'Hoep' meaning heathland and 'Field' meaning open space in sight of woodland (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hatfield-forest/history/>). 'Broad Oak' refers to a particularly large oak tree within the woodland. Despite the obvious Anglo-Saxon origins of the names, little is known of the post-Roman development of the site area and archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation is sparse. The names suggest that the area was partially covered by woodland and certainly Hatfield Forest is known to be a remnant of an ancient woodland.



- 2.5.2 The accepted wisdom is that in northwest Essex the highly developed agricultural landscape of the Roman period saw depopulation and abandonment in the early Anglo-Saxon period, with the new settlers preferring the lighter soils of the valleys to the clay plateaux (Timby *et al* 2007, 149-152). The largescale fieldwalking surveys and excavations carried out in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s in advance of the construction and expansion of Stansted Airport and the re-routeing of the A120, have not changed this picture of early and middle Anglo-Saxon settlement significantly. Along the entire route of the new A120 Stansted to Braintree road corridor, only one Anglo-Saxon site was identified.
- 2.5.3 The parish of Takeley is listed in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and the church of Holy Trinity is at least 12th century in date. Roman Stane Street continued in use and was one of the principal medieval roads of Essex, described in 1204 as 'the causeway leading from Stortford to Colchester' (Reaney, 1969, 3), a phrase which emphasizes the importance of its western end. At this time Takeley was formed of numerous dispersed settlements such as Brewers End, Bonnington's or Bennington's Green, some moated sites such as Warish Hall and scattered farms. Overall the evidence suggests the area was highly populated in the 12th to 13th centuries (ECC 2009, 178-181).
- 2.5.4 The settlement sites are situated within an agricultural landscape. Archaeological investigations at Brewers End, situated between the current site and Takeley village, encountered remains of an open field containing cultivation trenches, that was later enclosed and subsequently replaced by a more substantial post-medieval field system (EHER 48342). Areas of cobbling of this period have been identified to the north of the site (EHER 45948).
- 2.5.5 Pits and scatters of medieval pottery have been found on various sites alongside Stane Street (e.g. Land West of the Chalet, ASE 2015b). The Roman Road evidently remained in active use, though land use to either side was mostly agricultural.
- 2.5.6 Thremall Priory is located west of the site, along Dunmow Road / Stane Street. This Augustinian house was established by the mid 12th century and functioned until the Dissolution.
- 2.5.7 To the south of the site lies the nationally important Hatfield Forest; a rare surviving example of a medieval royal hunting forest, with over 1000 acres of coppices and wood pasture (EHER 7333,17334). Hatfield Forest is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 but did not become a royal forest for hunting deer until around AD 1100. Royal hunting rights remained until 1446. The forest still contains many medieval elements with ditches and earthworks defining different areas of coppices, woodland and grassland. Scheduled Monuments within the forest have medieval elements; Portingbury Hills (List No. 1002168) may have been adapted and enlarged in the medieval period to form a moat. The Warren includes a medieval rabbit warren (List No. 1015433).

## 2.6 Post-medieval

- 2.6.1 The post-medieval development of the site and its vicinity can be traced on historic mapping. The Chapman and Andre map of 1777 shows that Stane

Street ran along the northern boundary of the Hatfield Forest, although not in an area of woodland, and that development was limited to the northern side of the road at this time. This layout is also shown on a parish map of 1766 and the Hatfield Broad Oak tithe map of 1838.

2.6.2 The Bishops Stortford to Braintree Railway was opened by the Great Eastern Railway in 1869 in response to the need to move more agricultural produce out of Essex. This line was run along the edge of the wooded area of the Hatfield Forest and south of Stane Street, leaving a strip of land between the two in which the site is located. Piecemeal development of plots in this strip of land has been ongoing since the inter-war years.

2.6.3 Post-medieval built heritage assets, in the form of existing and no longer extant buildings are found to the north of Stane Street. These include a post-medieval windmill (EHER 18170).

## **2.6 Aims of the project**

2.6.1 The general aims of the evaluation, as specified in the WSI (ASE 2020a), were as follows:

- to identify any archaeological features or deposits that will be impacted by the proposed development, and to enable a mitigation strategy for any identified remains to be implemented before development takes place
- to establish the location, extent, date, character, significance and quality of preservation of surviving archaeological remains within the development area.

2.6.2 Within these parameters, the following site-specific objectives were formulated:

- Is there any evidence relating to the Romano-British period, in particular to Stane Street and features associated with it?
- Is there any evidence of medieval structures/features associated with Hatfield Forest?

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.1.1 The evaluation was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2020a) and Method Statement (ASE 2020b).
- 3.1.2 Three evaluation trenches (Figure 2) were excavated under direct archaeological supervision using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.2m-wide ditching bucket. The trenches ranged from 18.5m to 21.5m in length and were approximately 2m wide.
- 3.1.3 The trenches were distributed to achieve a random sample of that area of the site (principally the road frontage) within which construction activity was proposed.
- 3.1.4 Mechanical excavation of the turf and topsoil was undertaken to the surface of the geological stratum.
- 3.1.5 All deposits (including the natural stratum) were recorded using a unique sequence of context numbers for each trench and are shown in this report thus: [1/001], whereby the first number is the trench reference and the second number is the context.
- 3.1.6 Written records (trench and context descriptions) were made on *pro forma* trench recording sheets and context sheets.
- 3.1.7 A photographic record was made, consisting of high-resolution digital (JPEG) images taken with a compact camera.
- 3.1.8 The site code TSTK20, allocated by ECCPS, was included on all site records.

#### 3.2 Archive

- 3.2.1 The fieldwork archive is currently held at the Witham office of ASE and, subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, will be deposited with Saffron Walden Museum in due course. The nature and contents of the archive are described in Tables 1 and 2.
- 3.2.2 The archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines contained in the ClfA *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (ClfA 2014b).

Description	Quantity	Type
Trench record sheets	3	A4 paper
Context sheets	6	A4 paper
Context register	0	
Drawing sheets	0	
Drawing register	0	
Digital images	5	High-resolution JPGs

Table 1: Quantification of the fieldwork paper archive

<b>Type</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
Bulk finds	0
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefacts and environmental samples

## 4.0 TRIAL-TRENCHING RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The locations of the three evaluation trenches are shown on Figure 2.
- 4.1.2 No archaeological deposits or features were encountered, and no artefacts were recovered. Each trench displayed a simple sequence of turf and topsoil over the natural stratum. The results are tabulated by trench in sections 4.3 to 4.5.
- 4.1.3 No truncation or disturbance of the site was identified within the trenches, other than tree-root disturbance in the north end of Trench 1.

### 4.2 General soil descriptions

- 4.2.1 The geological stratum was consistent across all three trenches. It was firm, light yellowish or greyish brown clay/silt, containing occasional to moderate pebbles and sub angular flint fragments, and occasional flecks and small fragments of chalk. This was glacial till of the Lowestoft Formation, as plotted at this location by the British Geological Survey (BGS 2020).
- 4.2.2 The overlying topsoil of soft, dark greyish brown silty loam had a well-defined interface with the natural stratum. The topsoil was shallow (0.20m-0.25m thick) and there was no evidence (such as plough scars or subsoiler marks on the surface of the natural) to suggest that the site had been ploughed in modern times.

### 4.3 Trench 1

*Dimensions: 18.50m x 2.00m x up to 0.30m deep*

*Figure: 3*

Context	Type	Description	Average depth BGL	Location
1/001	Layer	Turf and topsoil	0.00m	Trench-wide
1/002	Deposit	Natural stratum	0.20m	Trench-wide

Table 3: Summary of deposits in Trench 1

### 4.4 Trench 2

*Dimensions: 21.50m x 2.00m x up to 0.35m deep*

*Figure: 3*

Context	Type	Description	Average depth BGL	Location
2/001	Layer	Turf and topsoil	0.00m	Trench-wide
2/002	Deposit	Natural stratum	0.25m	Trench-wide

Table 4: Summary of deposits in Trench 2

#### 4.5 Trench 3

*Dimensions: 19.50m x 2.00m x 0.35m deep*

*Figure: 3*

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Average depth BGL</b>	<b>Location</b>
3/001	Layer	Turf and topsoil	0.00m	Trench-wide
3/002	Deposit	Natural stratum	0.25m	Trench-wide

Table 5: Summary of deposits in Trench 3

#### 4.6 Finds and Environmental Remains

4.6.1 No artefacts were recovered and no environmental samples were collected.

## **5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Overview of the stratigraphic evidence and deposit sequence**

- 5.1.1 The natural stratum of glacial till was covered by a thin topsoil and turf layer, forming the current ground surface.
- 5.1.2 No archaeological deposits or features were encountered in the three evaluation trenches, nor unstratified/residual artefacts collected from the overburden deposits.

### **5.2 Deposit survival and recent or existing impacts**

- 5.2.1 There was nothing to suggest that the site had been ploughed in modern times, and no evidence for ground disturbance that might have been associated with the construction of the nearby railway line.
- 5.2.2 The northeast end of Trench 1 was disturbed heavily by tree roots, and the presence of several stumps in the same area of the site suggest that until recently there was a small stand of trees at that location.

### **5.3 Consideration of Project Aims**

- 5.3.1 No archaeological deposits or features were identified, suggesting that the proposed development will have little or no impact on heritage assets on this site.
- 5.3.2 Site-specific research objectives have been addressed. There was no evidence for Roman activity, despite the proximity of the site to the Roman road, Stane Street. Also, there was no evidence for medieval structures or features associated with Hatfield Forest.

### **5.4 Conclusions**

- 5.4.1 The trial-trench evaluation has provided no evidence for archaeological deposits or features in the northern half of the site. Consequently, it is unlikely that the proposed development will have any impact on below-ground heritage assets.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Kieron Heard conducted the fieldwork. Site surveying was carried out by Craig Carvey. Gemma Stevenson project managed the fieldwork and Mark Atkinson managed the post-excavation process.



## Appendix 1: EHER summary

<b>Site name/Address:</b> Land South of The Street, Takeley, Essex CM22 6NE	
<b>Parish:</b> Takeley	<b>District:</b> Uttlesford
<b>NGR:</b> TL 53799 21289	<b>Site Code:</b> TSTK20
<b>Type of Work:</b> Trial-trench evaluation	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> K. Heard / Archaeology South-East
<b>Date of Work:</b> 02 November 2020	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> 1782m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Saffron Walden Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further Seasons Anticipated:</b> No	<b>Related HER No's:</b> n/a
<b>Final Report:</b> ADS grey lit & EAH sum	<b>OASIS No:</b> 407346
<b>Description</b>	
<p><i>The evaluation was carried out as a condition of planning consent for a proposed residential development and was the first phase of archaeological fieldwork on the site. Three evaluation trenches were excavated, providing a 5% sample of that area of the site (1782sq m) where construction work was proposed.</i></p> <p><i>The trenches revealed a simple sequence of turf and topsoil over the natural stratum of glacial till. No archaeological deposits or features were identified, and no artefacts were recovered.</i></p>	
<b>Periods Represented:</b> None	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b> N/A	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> K. Heard	<b>Date of Summary:</b> 05/11/2020

## Appendix 2: OASIS form

### OASIS ID: archaeol6-407346

#### Project details

Project name	Land South of The Street, Takeley
Short description of the project	Three evaluation trenches were excavated within this site adjacent to Roman Stane Street. No archaeological deposits or features were identified, and no artefacts were recovered.
Project dates	Start: 02-11-2020 End: 02-11-2020
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	TSTK20 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	200534 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	""Sample Trenches""
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX UTTLESFORD TAKELEY Land South of The Street
Postcode	CM22 6NE
Study area	1784 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 53799 21289 51.86847434687 0.234127702894 51 52 06 N 000 14 02 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	Gemma Stevenson
Project supervisor	Kieron Heard
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

#### Project archives

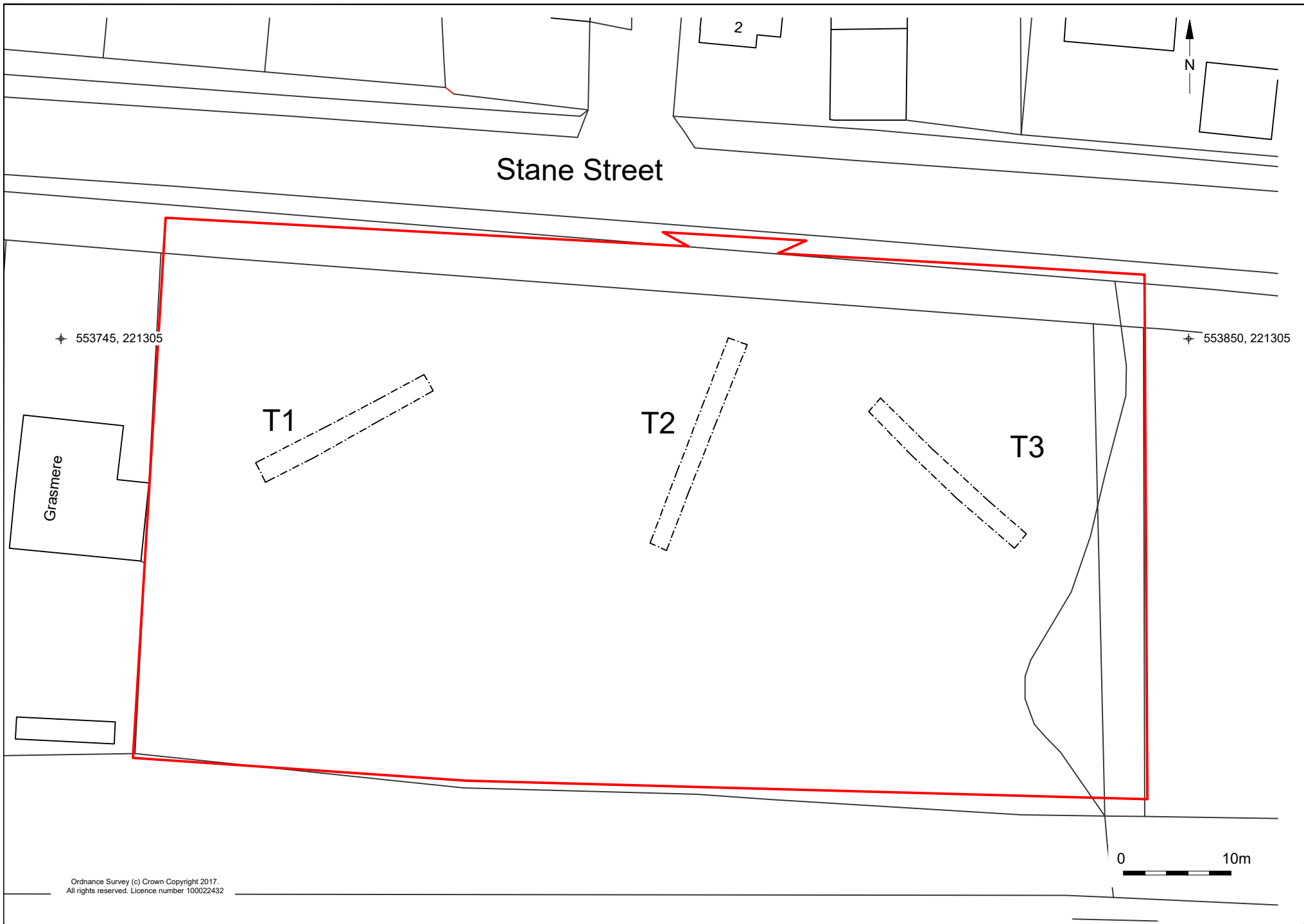
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Digital Archive ID	TSTK20
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Saffron Walden Museum
Paper Archive ID	TSTK20
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Plan", "Report"

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**Project bibliography**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Description	A4, approx 20 pages, inc. figures





© Archaeology South-East		Land south of Dunmow Road, Takeley	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 200534	Nov 2020	Location of evaluation trenches	
Report Ref: 2020237	Drawn by: APL		





Trench 1



Trench 2



Trench 3

© Archaeology South-East		Land south of Dunmow Road, Takeley	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 200534	Nov 2020	Trench photographs	
Report Ref: 2020237	Drawn by: APL		

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