

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD**

**MEGAZONE LASER CENTRE, NEW WRITTLE STREET,  
CHELMSFORD, ESSEX**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING**

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| Authors: Kamil Orzechowski MA (Fieldwork & Report) |                       |
| NGR: TL 7075 0633                                  | Report No: 4439       |
| District: Chelmsford                               | Site Code: CF74       |
| Approved: Claire Halpin MfA                        | Project No: 5154      |
| Signed:  | Date: 31 October 2013 |

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#### **SUMMARY**

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## OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

|   |   |                   |                   |
|---|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Project details</b>  |   |                   |                   |
| Project name  | <i>Megazone, Laser Centre, New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, Essex</i>  |                   |                   |
| <p><i>In September and October 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring during groundworks on land at the Megazone Laser Centre, New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, Essex (TL 7075 0633). The monitoring was commissioned by NR Powell Dev Ltd and conducted in compliance with a planning condition of Chelmsford District Council, as advised by Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECC HEA). The condition was attached to planning approval for the proposed demolition of the existing building and the construction of seven houses with ancillary car parking, cycle storage and bin/recycling store (Chelmsford Planning Ref. 12/00884/FUL).</i></p> <p><i>The site was subject to an archaeological trial trench evaluation by AS in August 2013 (Smith et al 2013), and the evaluation identified evidence of well-preserved 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman occupation indicating that modern truncation of the site has not been total.</i></p> <p><i>It was felt, therefore, that this site had potential for archaeological remains. In the event the monitoring recorded a Roman (2<sup>nd</sup> century) ditch (F2006) in the same area of the site as the Roman features recorded during the evaluation. Like the evaluation features the ditch was 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman.</i></p> |   |                   |                   |
| Project dates (fieldwork)   | <i>25/09, 30/09, 7/10, 8/10 and 9/10</i>  |                   |                   |
| Previous work (Y/N/?)   | <i>N</i>  | Future work       | <i>N</i>          |
| P. number   | <i>P5154</i>  | Site code         | <i>CF74</i>       |
| Type of project   | <i>Archaeological monitoring and recording</i>  |                   |                   |
| Site status   | <i>None</i>   |                   |                   |
| Current land use  | <i>Megazone Laser Centre</i>  |                   |                   |
| Planned development   | <i>Residential</i>  |                   |                   |
| Main features (+dates)  | <i>Ditch</i>  |                   |                   |
| Significant finds(+dates)   | <i>Roman pottery and CBM</i>  |                   |                   |
| <b>Project location</b>   |   |                   |                   |
| County/ District/ Parish  | <i>Essex</i>  | <i>Chelmsford</i> | <i>Chelmsford</i> |
| HER/ SMR for area   | <i>Essex HER</i>  |                   |                   |
| Post code (if known)  |   |                   |                   |
| Area of site  |   |                   |                   |
| NGR   | <i>TL 7075 0633</i>   |                   |                   |
| Height AOD (max/ min)   | <i>Approximately 28m AOD</i>  |                   |                   |
| <b>Project creators</b>   |   |                   |                   |
| Brief issued by   | <i>Essex County Council HEM Team (Alison Bennett)</i>   |                   |                   |
| Project Supervisor  | <i>Kamil Orzechowski</i>  |                   |                   |
| Funded by   | <i>NR Powell Dev Ltd</i>  |                   |                   |
| Full title  | <i>Megazone, Laser Centre, New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, Essex. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording</i> |                   |                   |
| Authors   | <i>Orzechowski, K.</i>  |                   |                   |
| Report no.  | <i>4439</i>   |                   |                   |
| Date (of report)  | <i>October 2013</i>   |                   |                   |

**MEGAZONE LASER CENTRE, NEW WRITTLE STREET,  
CHELMSFORD, ESSEX  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**SUMMARY**

*In September and October 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring during groundworks on land at the Megazone Laser Centre, New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, Essex (TL 7075 0633). The monitoring was commissioned by NR Powell Dev Ltd and conducted in compliance with a planning condition of Chelmsford District Council, as advised by Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECC HEA). The condition was attached to planning approval for the proposed demolition of the existing building and the construction of seven houses with ancillary car parking, cycle storage and bin/recycling store (Chelmsford Planning Ref. 12/00884/FUL).*

*The site was subject to an archaeological trial trench evaluation by AS in August 2013 (Smith et al 2013), and the evaluation identified evidence of well-preserved 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman occupation indicating that modern truncation of the site has not been total.*

*It was felt, therefore, that this site had potential for archaeological remains. In the event the monitoring recorded a Roman (2<sup>nd</sup> century) ditch (F2006) in the same area of the site as the Roman features recorded during the evaluation. Like the evaluation features the ditch was 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In September and October 2013 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological monitoring during groundworks on land at the Megazone Laser Centre, New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, Essex (TL 7075 0633; Figs.1 - 2). The monitoring was commissioned by NR Powell Dev Ltd and conducted in compliance with a planning condition of Chelmsford District Council, as advised by Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECC HEA). The condition was attached to planning approval for the proposed demolition of the existing building and the construction of seven houses with ancillary car parking, cycle storage and bin/recycling store (Chelmsford Planning Ref. 12/00884/FUL).

1.2 The site was subject to an archaeological trial trench evaluation by AS in August 2013 (Smith et al 2013), as the initial requirement of the planning condition.

1.3 The monitoring was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor (ECC HEA) (dated 2/9/2013), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by Archaeological Solutions (dated 03/09/2013), and approved by ECC HEA. The project adhered to appropriate sections of Gurney (2003) 'Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England', *East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14*, and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2008).

1.4 The objectives of the project of archaeological monitoring and recording were:

- to ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect buried archaeological remains;
- to secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme;
- to ensure a level of reporting commensurate with the findings of the investigation
- to secure the analysis, long-term conservation and storage of the project archive

1.5 The research aims were to characterise any further evidence of Roman activity, or any evidence of later activity on the site, specifically to identify:

- Any further evidence of the date and character of activity across this area of the Roman town
- Any evidence of structures and their function

#### *Planning policy context*

1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.

1.7 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings and scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances

when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

## **2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

2.1 The site is located on the northern side of New Writtle Street, in the centre of Chelmsford. It comprised the former Megazone Laser Centre building and adjacent open area. The building had been recently demolished prior to the development.

2.2 The site lies in an area of considerable archaeological potential, within the south western part of the Roman settlement of Caesaromagus. The development of the town of Chelmsford is detailed by Medlycott (1999). The settlement likely developed after the establishment of a fort after the Boudican revolt of 60-61 AD. Civilian settlement grew along the contemporary London to Colchester road (which shadows the course of present Moulsham Street adjacent to the Megazone site), and a more minor road leading south east to Heybridge and Wickford. The town contained a mansio, bath-house and temple precinct, the first two rebuilt on a larger scale in the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century, followed by the construction of earthwork defences surrounding the town. The site lies in the south western corner of the extent of the Roman town. Previous investigations on the site have revealed Roman finds indicative of settlement evidence (Historic Environment Record No. 5858), and a possible section of the Roman town defences have been excavated close by to the south (HER 5848). Whilst there will certainly have been truncation from previous development on the site, other sites in the area have revealed surviving Roman horizons buried at depth.

2.3 The site was subject to an archaeological trial trench evaluation by AS in August 2013 (Smith *et al* 2013), as the initial requirement of the planning condition. In summary:

*The evaluation at the Megazone Laser Centre identified evidence of well-preserved 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman occupation indicating that modern truncation of the site has not been total.*

Three pits (F1004, F1008, & F1016) and two ditches (F1010 & F1014) were identified in Trenches 1A-C. All features were well preserved sealed by layers L1002 and L1013 and produced finds dateable to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Roman).

The recently demolished building which once stood on the site had its origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is depicted on early maps as a cinema before becoming the Megazone Laser centre. In light of this a certain impact was expected on below ground deposits and this was evident in the south-eastern corner of the site and in central areas of the trench (Trench 1B) where cellars relating to the building had inflicted severe truncation. The evaluation however did identify areas of preservation with Roman features sealed by a post-medieval layer which is consistent with the site's position within the south-western corner of the Roman town and is location to the west of Moulsham Street which follows the route of the old Roman road.

Overall the features contained a good quantity of well-preserved Roman pottery (95 sherds) dating to the second century AD. The assemblage included imported central Gaulish samian ware and east Gaulish fine ware beakers suggesting primary deposition from moderate to high status occupation in the south-western corner of Caesaromagus (Chelmsford) (Pottery Report below).

The environmental samples taken from the features revealed a limited amount of information due mainly to the narrow scope of the evaluation. A small quantity of grain was collected consistent with other Roman activity of this date.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 ECC HEA required continuous archaeological monitoring of the groundworks associated with the proposed development that have the potential to impact on potential archaeological horizons. This was principally being the foundation trenches for the new residential block, and any additional service runs required.

4.2 Undifferentiated overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Thereafter, all further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed. Excavated spoil was checked for finds and the trenches were scanned by metal detector.

## 5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Sample sections of the stratigraphy encountered were recorded:

|                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| Sample Section 1<br>0.00 = 28.25m AOD |
|---------------------------------------|



|              |       |   |
|--------------|-------|---|
| 0.00 – 0.44m | L1000 | Modern demolition layer. Grey brown, loose, mostly sandy silt mixed with brick fragments and concrete rubble                    |
| 0.44 – 0.95m | L1001 | Made Ground. Yellowish, brownish grey, loose, sandy silt with frequent - moderate brick fragments and other demolition material |
| 0.95m+       | L1002 | Natural. Light brownish yellow, loose, sandy silt.  |

|   |       |                                    |
|---|-------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Sample Section 2</i><br><i>0.00 = 28.71m AOD</i> |       |                                    |
| 0.00 – 0.18m  | L1000 | Modern demolition layer. As above. |
| 0.18 – 0.79m  | L1001 | Made Ground. As above.             |
| 0.79m+  | L1002 | Natural. As above.                 |

|   |       |   |
|---|-------|---|
| <i>Sample Section 3</i><br><i>0.00 = 28.46m AOD</i> |       |   |
| 0.00 – 0.07m  | L1010 | Tarmac.                                     |
| 0.07 – 0.70m  | L1009 | Modern brick foundation                     |
| 0.70 – 1.39m  | L1008 | Hard core. Grey brown, loose, sandy gravel. |
| 1.39m+  | L1002 | Natural. As above.                          |

*Description:* During the site visits the excavation of the foundation trenches and services with a JCB, for the seven houses, were monitored. The foundation trenches for the external walls were up to 1.00m wide, and the internal walls were 0.50 - 0.70m wide. The trenches were between 1.60m and 2.00m deep.

Features were recorded in Sample Section 3. F1004 was a pit with shallow moderately sloping sides and a concave base. Its fill, L1005, was a light greyish green, friable, sandy silt. It contained modern (18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century) pottery (106g), residual Roman CBM (165g) and slag (10g).

Adjacent to F1004, F1006 was a linear feature as it was visible on the opposite section of the footing trench. It had near vertical sides and an uneven base. Its fill, L1007, was a dark greyish, greenish brown, friable, silty sand. It contained Roman (2<sup>nd</sup> century) pottery (40g), Roman CBM (179g), animal bone (58g) and an oyster shell fragment (1g).

## 6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 Within the parameters of monitoring during groundworks it is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

## **7 DEPOSIT MODEL**

7.1 In general uppermost was a modern demolition layer, L1000, which comprised a greyish brown, loose, mostly sandy silt with brick fragments, concrete rubble and glass. Below was L1001, a made ground layer, comprising a yellowish, brownish grey, loose sandy silt with frequent - moderate brick fragments and other modern demolition material. L1001 sealed natural, L1002, a light brownish yellow, loose, sandy silt.

## **8 DISCUSSION**

8.1 After the demolition of the Megazone building the evaluation encountered a series of well-preserved Roman pits and ditches dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD which is consistent with the site's position within the south-western corner of the Roman town of Caesaromagus. There was evidence of modern truncation across site and therefore the full extent of preservation was unknown at this time.

8.2 It was felt, therefore, that this site had potential for archaeological remains. In the event the monitoring recorded a Roman (2<sup>nd</sup> century) ditch (F2006) in the same area of the site as the Roman features recorded during the evaluation. Like the evaluation features the ditch was 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman.

## **9 DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE**

9.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at Chelmsford Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

## **10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank NR Powell Dev Ltd for commissioning the monitoring and for their assistance.

AS is pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Ms Alison Bennett of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management Team.

## **11 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

British Geological Survey 1991 *East Anglia Sheet 52°N-00° 1:250,000 Series Quaternary Geology*. Ordnance Survey, Southampton

Gurney, D. 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper no. 14

Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 (revised 2008) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*

Smith, L., 2013. *Megazone Laser Centre, New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, Essex. An Archaeological Evaluation*. AS Report No. 4394.

## **12 WEB SITES**

Heritage Gateway  
Unlocking Essex's Past

**CF74, Megazone, Chelmsford, WB**

Concordance of finds by feature

| <b>Feature</b> | <b>Context</b> | <b>Segment</b> | <b>Description</b> | <b>Spot Date</b> | <b>Pottery</b> | <b>CBM (g)</b> | <b>A. Bone (g)</b> | <b>Other</b>   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 2001           |                |                | Subsoil            | 19th-20th C      | (3) 34g        |                |                    |                |
| 2004           | 2005           |                | Fill of Pit        | 18th-19th C      | (7) 106g       | 165            |                    | Slag (1) - 10g |
| 2006           | 2007           |                | Fill of Ditch      | Roman            | (5) 40g        | 179            | 58                 | O. Shell - 1g  |

## The Roman Pottery

*Andrew Peachey*

The monitoring recovered eight sherds (81g), limited to non-diagnostic body sherds of locally-produced coarse wares. Pit F2004 (L2005) contained three sherds (36g) and Ditch F2005 (L2007) five sherds (45g), with both contexts including body sherds of black-surfaced/Romanizing grey ware and sandy grey ware (Going 1987: 9: fabrics 45 & 47). The former fabric declines rapidly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD at Chelmsford therefore the pottery is unlikely to post-date this period, but this is based on very limited evidence.

### *Bibliography*

Going, C. 1987 *The Mansio and other sites in the south-eastern sector of Caesaromagus: the Roman Pottery*, CBA Res. Rep. 62.

## The Post Roman Pottery

*by Peter Thompson*

The monitoring recovered seven moderately abraded sherds, weighing 105g, from two contexts. All of the pottery would match an early modern to modern date, although one body sherd of post-medieval red earthen ware could be a little earlier.

| Type    | Feature | Context | Quantity      | Date   | Comment   |
|---------|---------|---------|---------------|--|---|
| Subsoil | 2001    |         | 3x33g         | 19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup><br>factory<br>made<br>refined<br>white<br>earthenware | Includes 'Willow Pattern'<br>Transfer Printed plate   |
| Pit     | 2004    | 2005    | 4x72g<br>PMRE | 18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup><br>post-<br>medieval<br>red<br>earthenware            | 4 separate vessels<br>x1 unglazed everted rim<br>c.28 cm diam<br>1x unglazed body sherd<br>x1 splash glazed body<br>sherd<br>x1 bowl or jug body sherd<br>with glossy internal and<br>external brown glaze and<br>scar from broken rod handle |

## **The Ceramic Building Materials**

*Andrew Peachey*

The monitoring recovered seven fragments (359g) of CBM, including abraded roof tile fragments of Roman and post-medieval date.

The Roman CBM occurred in a single fabric, almost certainly produced locally, which was oxidised orange with inclusions of common quartz (0.1-0.5mm), sparse red iron rich grains and flint (both 0.5-5mm). Pit F2004 (L2005) contained four fragments (81g) of Roman CBM and Ditch F2006 (L2007) a single fragment (185g), probably entirely derived from tegula roof tile although no flanged fragments were present. Pit F2004 (L2005) also contained two fragments of post-medieval peg tile.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1

General site shot before excavation of footings



2

Footings being excavated



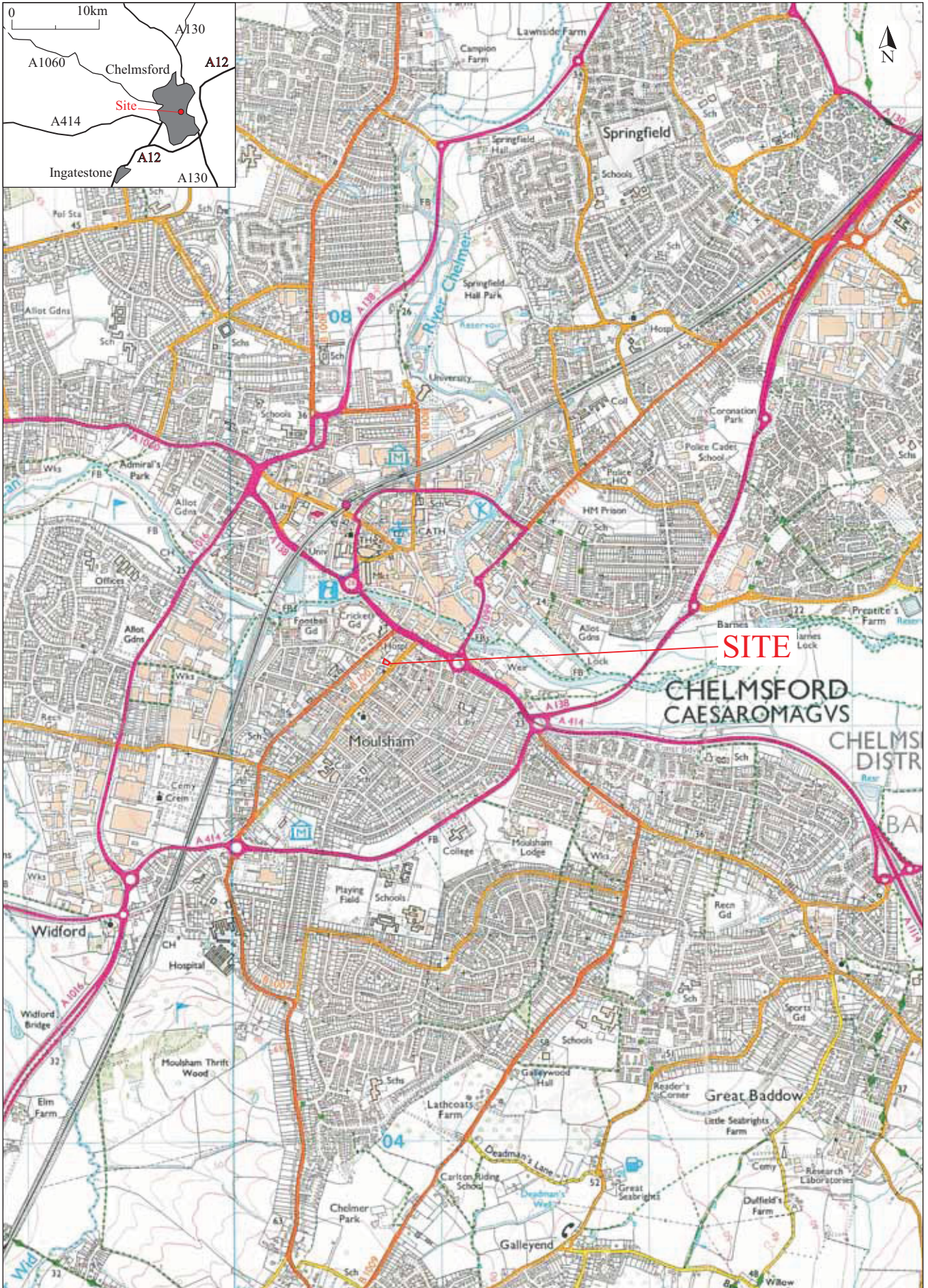
3

F1004 & F1006 – Sample section 3



4

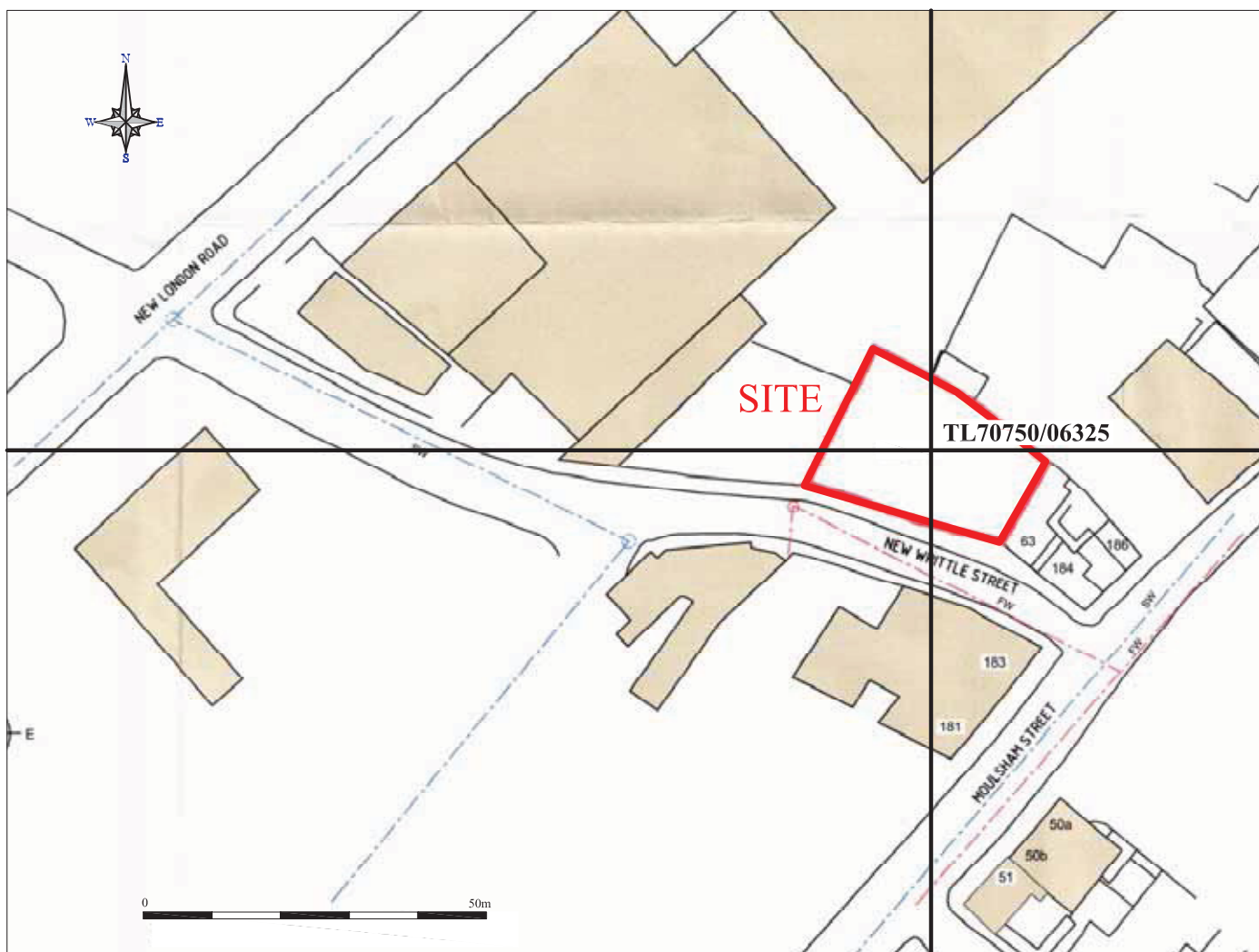
General site shot after excavation of footings



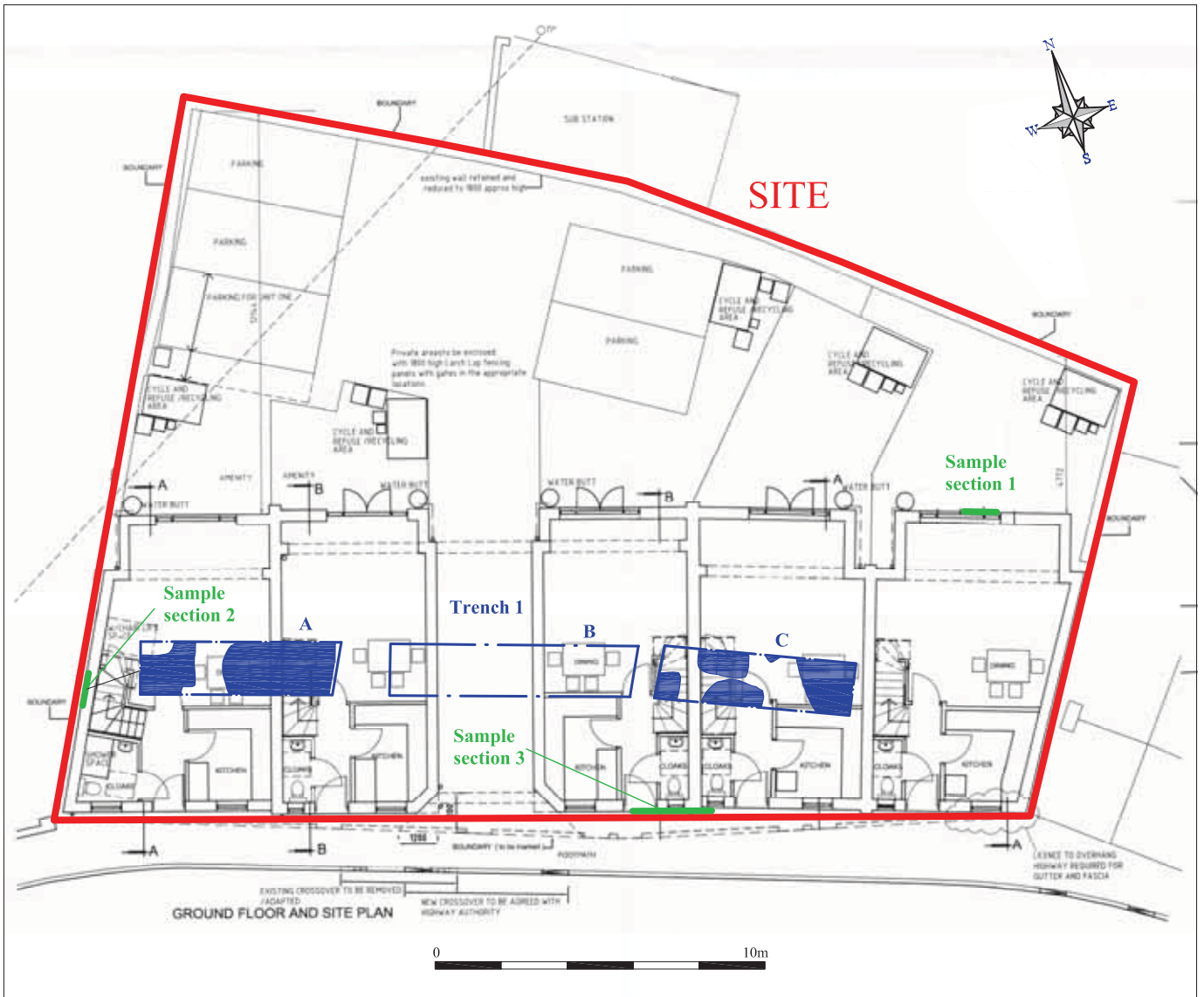
Reproduced from the 1999 Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright Archaeological Solutions Ltd Licence number 100036680

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**Fig. 1 Site location plan**  
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4

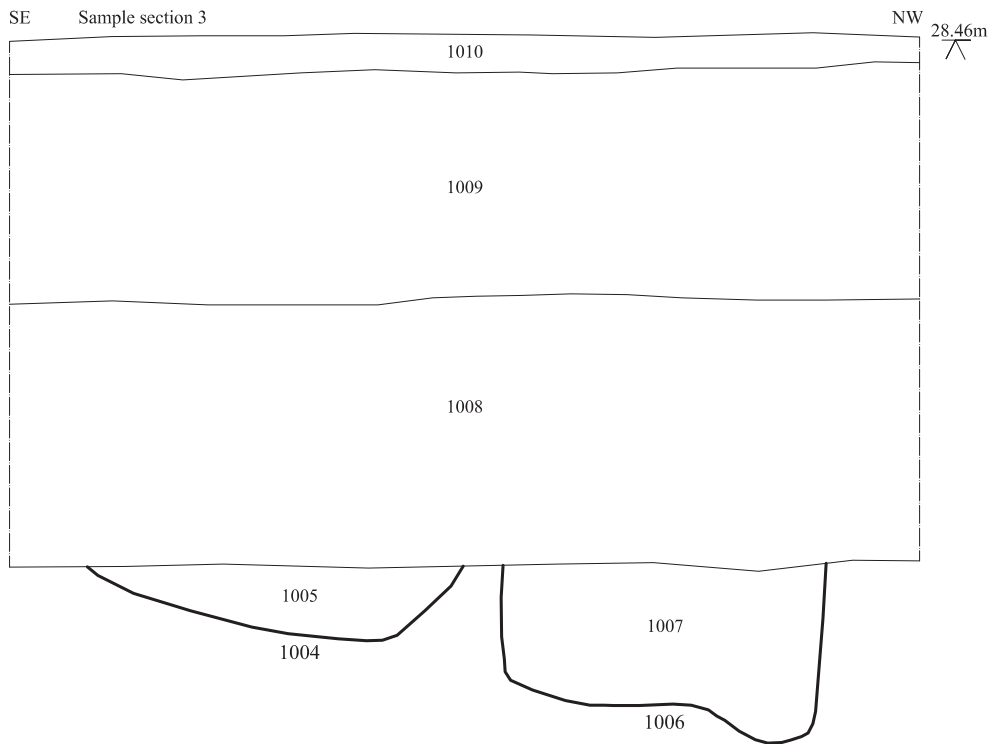
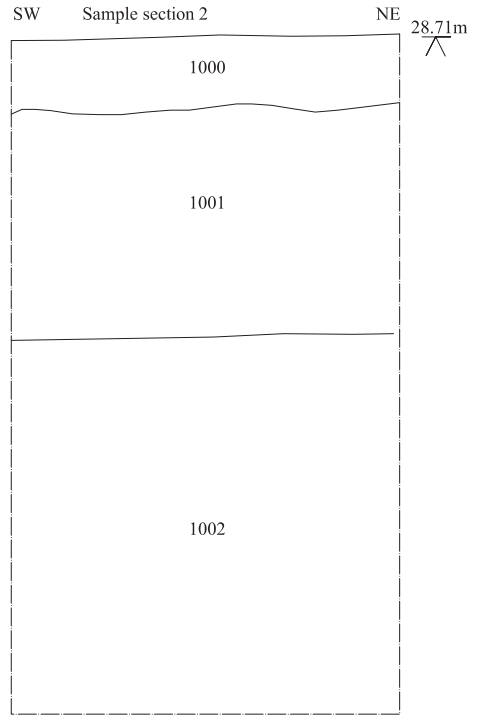
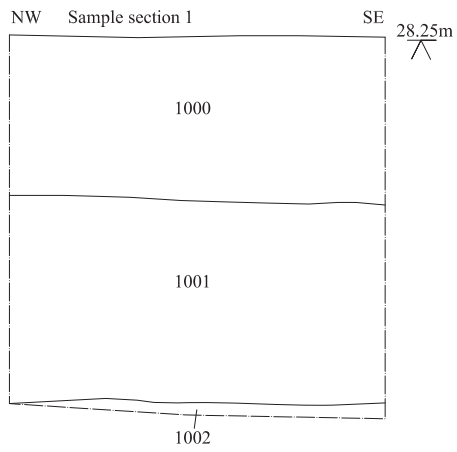




*Archaeological Solutions Ltd*  
**Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan**  
Scale 1:1000 at A4



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**Fig. 3 Footings monitored**  
 Scale 1:200 at A4



|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Archaeological Solutions Ltd</i> |
| <b>Fig. 4 Sample sections</b>       |
| Scale 1:20 at A4                    |