

**Main PRV Installation opposite
St. James' Church, East Hill and the
junction of Priory Street/The Dell
Colchester, Essex**

Archaeological Watching Brief



for:
Anglian Water

CA Project: SU0438
CA Report: SU0438_1
OASIS ID: cotswold2-507591
HER Ref: ECC4717 and ECC4718

November 2022



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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	4
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	5
4. METHODOLOGY.....	5
5. RESULTS.....	6
6. DISCUSSION.....	7
7. CA PROJECT TEAM.....	8
8. REFERENCES.....	8
APPENDIX A: OASIS REPORT FORM.....	9

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000 @ A4)
- Fig. 2 Location of works in East Hill (1:500 @ A3)
- Fig. 3 Location of works in Priory Street (1:500 @ A3)
- Fig. 4 Pit 1 photographs
- Fig. 5 Pit 2 photograph
- Fig. 6 East Hill photographs
- Fig. 7 Pits 3 and 4 photographs

SUMMARY

Project name:	Anglian Water Main PRV Installation
Location:	East Hill (opposite St. James Church) and the junction of Priory Street/The Dell, Colchester, Essex
NGR:	600149 225257 and 600140 225058
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	2nd – 21st August 2022
OASIS ID:	cotswold2-507591
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service and the Archaeology Data Service.
Site Code:	ECC4717 and ECC4718

During August 2022 Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during the installation of a Pressure Regulating Valve (PRV) on East Hill and associated works at the nearby junction of Priory Street and The Dell, Colchester, Essex.

The East Hill works entailed the excavation of a pit c.7m by 4m in the roadway to access the existing water main. This revealed a natural subsoil of yellow/orange sands and gravel directly below the road and its subbase. A smaller excavation in adjacent pavement revealed only modern services. The Priory Street works comprised the excavation of two adjacent rectangular pits, the largest of which was c.1.9m by 0.9m. Both revealed only late post-medieval made ground deposits and modern services. The base of a red brick wall is probably related to the 19th century terrace housing that once lined the north side of Priory Street. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. During August 2022, four visits were undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology (CA) in order to carry out an archaeological watching brief during works by Anglian Water in East Hill and in nearby Priory Street, Colchester, Essex (centred at NGR: 600149 225257 and 600140 225058; Fig. 1). This watching brief was undertaken for Anglian Water Services Limited (AW).
- 1.2. The proposed works primarily comprised the excavation of a chamber for the installation of a Pressure Regulating Valve (PRV) on the water main running under the carriageway of East Hill, opposite St. James Church, and associated modifications to existing water pipes; one within the adjacent pavement on East Hill and another within the carriageway and pavement in Priory Street, close to its junction with The Dell.
- 1.3. AW had been advised by Colchester Borough Council (CBC) that this scheme would require an archaeological watching brief during groundworks. The scope of work was outlined by Simon Wood, the Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) CBC and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing the methods to be employed during the watching brief was prepared by CA (2022) and approved by the AA.
- 1.4. Two event numbers were issued for these works; ECC4717 (East Hill) and ECC4718 (Priory Street).
- 1.5. The required work, an archaeological watching brief, was carried out in accordance with the approved WSI. The watching brief was also carried out in line with *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2020a) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015).

The site

- 1.6. The excavation sites are all within the carriageway or the adjacent pavements along East Hill and Priory Street.
- 1.7. The East Hill site is opposite St. James' Church and lies close to the top of East Hill, which forms one of the main routes into the town centre, at approximately 23m AOD. East Hill is on an east-facing slope that descends towards the River Colne, which lies

approximately 500m to the east. The hill also slopes down the north and the river curves around so that it lies c.600m to the north.

- 1.8. The Priory Street site is located 200m to the south of the East Hill site. Priory Street is a residential street, primarily 19th century housing, although much of this has been cleared along the northern side of the street to create a large car park. It lies at a height of approximately 17m AOD on a gently south facing slope.
- 1.9. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as Thames Group - Clay, silt and sand, a sedimentary bedrock formed between 56 and 33.9 million years ago during the Palaeogene period. This is overlain by superficial deposits of the Kesgrave Catchment Subgroup - Sand and gravel, a sedimentary deposit formed between 2.59 million and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period (BGS 2022).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The East Hill site lies within the bounds of the Roman town of Colchester and as such, has been occupied for nearly two thousand years, with possible earlier occupation also in the vicinity. East Hill and High Street would have been a major arterial route into and out of the city at the time and the main eastern gate of the Roman town was a short distance (c.30-40m) to the east. Monitoring works in the 1980's in this area recorded natural deposits at approximately 0.8m - 1.0m below surface level (Simon Wood *pers. comm.*).
- 2.2. St. James' Church is mentioned in documentary sources from the mid-13th Century, though structural elements of the existing building indicate an earlier 12th Century or possibly a pre-conquest date.
- 2.3. Priory Street lies just outside the Roman town and follows the curve of the Roman wall in the south-eastern corner of the town. The Roman walls along Priory Street were heavily damaged during the Civil War siege of the town, and there may be deposits related to the slighting of the defences afterwards in this area. The ruins of the medieval priory of St. Botolph's, founded in the late 11th century, lie to the south of the western end of the street.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. The general objectives of the watching brief were:

- to monitor the development groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record any significant buried archaeological deposits/features thus revealed;
- at the conclusion of the project, to produce a report setting out the watching brief results and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data;
- at the conclusion of the project, to compile a stable, ordered, accessible project archive.

3.2. The specific aims of the work were to:

- record any evidence of past settlement or other land use;
- recover artefactual evidence to date any evidence of past settlement or activity that may be identified;
- sample and analyse environmental remains to create a better understanding of past land use and economy.

3.3. Had any significant archaeological remains been identified they would have been put into their local and regional context with reference to the East Anglian Regional Research Framework (<https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. The watching brief involved the continuous observation by a competent archaeologist of all intrusive groundworks associated with the proposed works.

4.2. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*. In this instance the majority of the recording comprised the creation of a photographic record with suitable scales in place. A Leica GPS system was used to record the precise location of each excavation.

4.3. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. In the event, no deposits were identified that required sampling.

-
- 4.4. CA will make arrangements with the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service for the deposition of the project archive. The archive will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (ClfA 2020b).
- 4.5. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix A, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. The site was visited on four separate occasions, they were as follows:
- 3rd and 4th September 2022 – monitoring of Pit 1, within the carriageway of East Hill;
 - 9th August 2022 – monitoring of Pit 2, within the pavement on East Hill;
 - 21st August 2022 – monitoring of Pits 3 and 4, Priory Street

Pit 1 (Figs. 2 and 4)

- 5.2. This excavation measured 7.1m by 4.1m and was cut to a maximum depth of 1.6m. The work was carried by a combination of machine and hand excavation.
- 5.3. A number of existing services, including the water main to which the PRV was to be fitted, were encountered within the northern half of the excavation. They consisted of two possibly redundant water pipes, electric cable and at least two gas pipes. The southern part of the excavation was to be the location of the chamber for the PRV and was fortunately clear of services.
- 5.4. The excavation entailed the removal of the modern road surface and a concrete subbase. This was found to be lying directly on the surface of a natural subsoil that comprised multiple layers of water sorted yellow and orange sands and gravel. No previous interventions or deposits were identified, and no artefacts were recovered.

Pit 2 (Figs. 2 and 5)

- 5.5. Pit 2 was a solely hand dug excavation in the pavement adjacent Pit 1. It comprised an irregular rectangle that measured c.3m by 0.6m and was cut to a depth of 0.6m. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were identified as the entire excavation was cut through backfilled trenches associated with existing services.

Pit 3 (Figs. 3 and 7, photo A)

- 5.6. A rectangular pit hand dug within the pavement on the north side of Priory Street. It measured 1.6m by 0.45m and was cut to a depth of 0.65m. Below the concrete pavement surface the pit revealed made ground deposits containing fragments of soft red bricks and tile of probable 19th century date; two modern services were also exposed. A single course of a brick wall was seen at the northern end of the pit. It appeared to be formed of soft red bricks in a lime mortar. No significant archaeological deposits or artefacts were recorded.

Pit 4 (Figs. 3 and 7, photo B)

- 5.7. A rectangular pit cut into the carriageway of Priory Street, immediately to the south of Pit 3. It measured 1.95m by 0.85m and cut to a depth of 0.6m. Below the tarmac road surface, a dirty brown sand and gravel deposit containing fragments of late post-medieval/19th century brick and tile was encountered and continued to the base of the excavation. A cut for the trench containing the modern water pipe was clearly evident. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. The excavation of Pit 1 revealed a large expanse of natural subsoil lying directly below the modern road surface and subbase with no earlier deposits or artefacts present. This complete absence of early material is probably the result of Georgian improvements undertaken in this area. The Victoria County History volume for Essex (Cooper and Elrington 1994) notes that in 1811 the Colchester improvement commission was set up to improve the town's roads. In 1817 the commission reduced the gradient of East Hill and Frere Street (as the eastern end of the High Street was then known) and demolished the last remnants of East Gate in 1819 (most of which had already collapsed in the 17th century). The brick underpinning of the Roman town wall near East Gate, which currently forms the eastern edge of the St. James' churchyard (Fig. 6, photo A) and the brick underpinning of the wall to the west of St. James' Church (Fig. 6, photo B) are a result of the reduction of the roadway gradient. The extent of the underpinning would suggest the removal of possibly up to 2m of material. This work would have undoubtedly destroyed any earlier evidence that may have been present.

-
- 6.2. The remaining excavations revealed only made ground deposits of late post-medieval or 19th century and modern services and the trenches cut for their installation. The fragment of brick wall noted in Pit 3 is likely to be the base of the front wall of one of the houses that formerly fronted to the north side of Priory Street.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1. The fieldwork was undertaken by Mark Sommers and Linzi Everett. This report was written by Mark Sommers with the illustrations prepared by Ryan Wilson, CA illustrator. The project archive has been compiled by and prepared for deposition by Zoe Emery. The project was managed for CA by Stuart Boulter and assisted by Martin Cuthbert. The report was edited by Stuart Boulter.

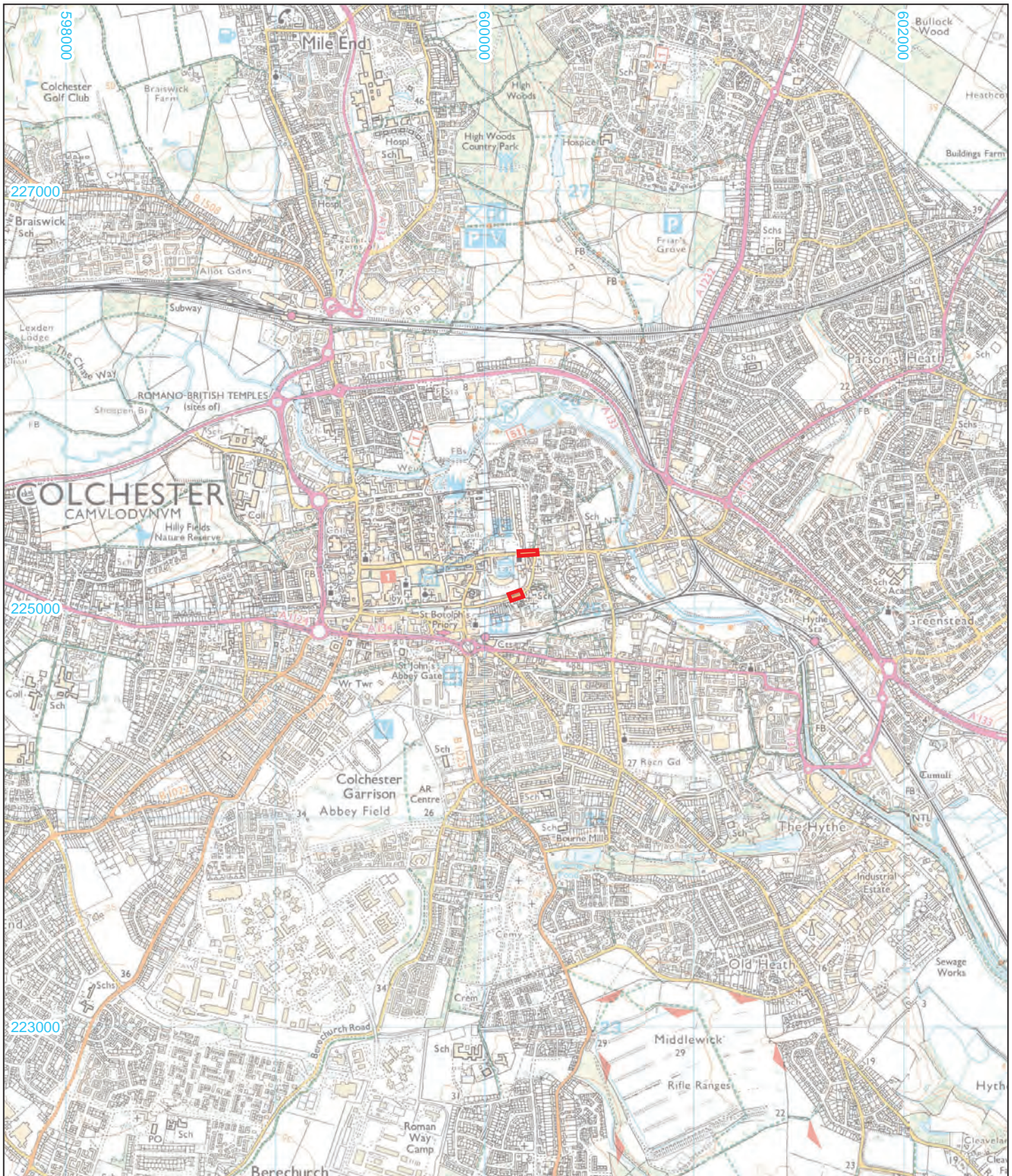
8. REFERENCES

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- ClfA, 2020a, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Reading)
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- Cotswold Archaeology, 2022, *Main PRV Installation opposite St. James' Church, East Hill, Colchester, Essex. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- East Anglian Regional Research Framework, 2022 (<https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>).
- Historic England, 2015, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide*
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2021 *National Planning Policy Framework*

APPENDIX A: OASIS REPORT FORM

Summary for cotswold2-507591

OASIS ID (UID)	cotswold2-507591
Project Name	AW PRV Installation at East Hill, Colchester Essex.
Sitename	East Hill, Colchester, East of England, England
Activity type	Watching Brief
Project Identifier(s)	SU0438 Colchester PRV Installation
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Statutory requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	Cotswold Archaeology
Project Dates	01-Aug-2022 - 31-Aug-2022
Location	East Hill, Colchester, East of England, England NGR : TM 00139 25061 LL : 51.888163, 0.90689 12 Fig : 600139,225061 NGR : TM 00139 25261 LL : 51.88996, 0.90701 12 Fig : 600139,225261
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Colchester Parish : Colchester, unparished area
Project Methodology	Watching brief during excavation of three pits within street/road areas adjacent to and nearby to St James' Church, East Hill, and Priory Street, Colchester
Project Results	The East Hill works revealed a natural subsoil of yellow/orange sands and gravel directly below the road and its subbase. A smaller excavation in adjacent pavement revealed only modern services. The Priory Street works comprised the excavation of two adjacent rectangular pits. Both revealed only late post-medieval made ground deposits and modern services. The base of red brick wall is probably the related to the 19th century terrace housing that once lined the north side of Priory Street. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered in any of the monitored excavations.
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	Colchester Borough Council - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - ECC4718, HER Event No - ECC4717
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Colchester & Ipswich Museum Sevice (Colchester Collection);



 Site boundary



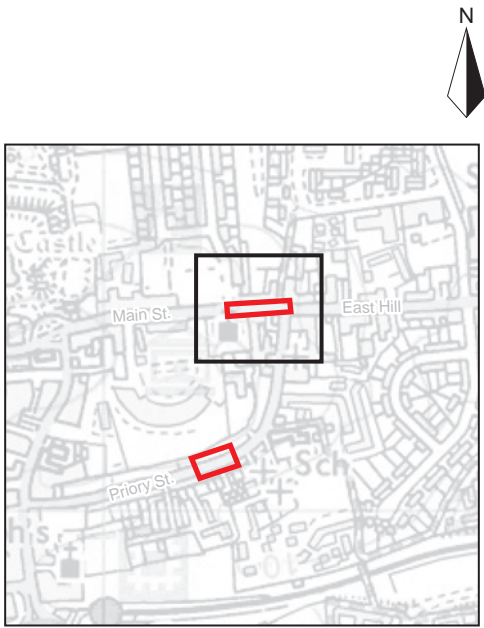
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PROJECT TITLE
 Main PRV Installation opposite St James' Church, East Hill and the junction of Priory Street/The Dell Colchester, Essex

FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	17/11/2022		
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- Site boundary
- Excavated pit
- ← 1 Photograph location and direction



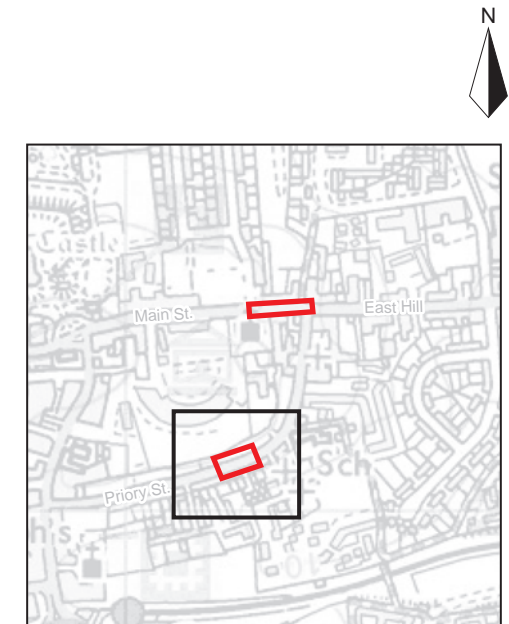
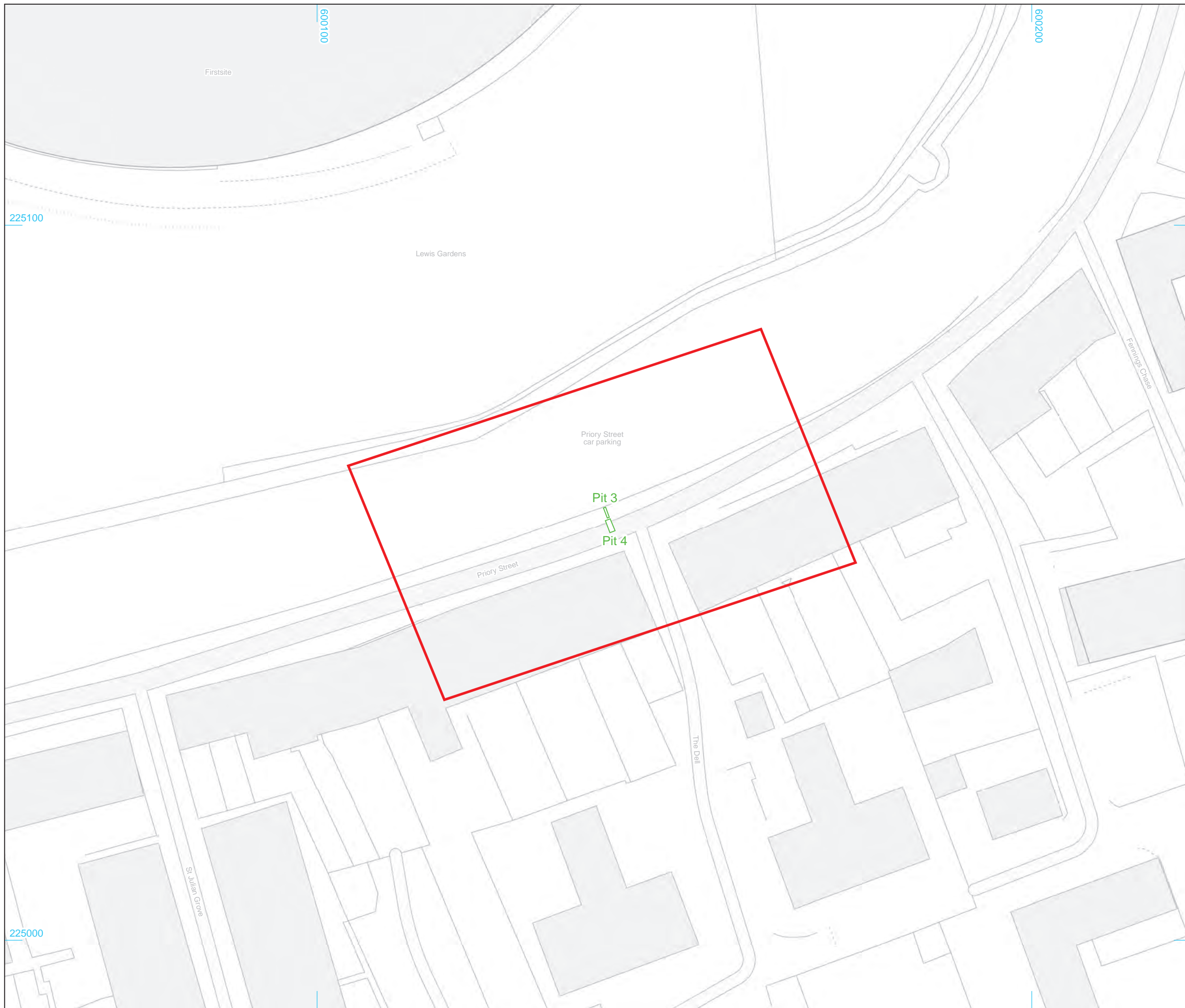
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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
 Location of works in East Hill

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- Site boundary
- Excavated pit



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FIGURE TITLE
Location of works in Prory Street

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A

Pit 1, East Hill, looking west (2m scale)



B

Pit 1, East Hill, soil profile as seen in southern edge of excavation, looking south (2m scale)



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FIGURE TITLE

Pit 1 photographs

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Pit 2, East Hill, looking west (1m scales)



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FIGURE TITLE

Pit 2 photograph

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FIGURE NO.

5



A

Underpinning of wall opposite East Hill excavations, looking south-west (2m scale)



B

Underpinning of wall opposite East Hill excavations, looking south-west (2m scale)



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FIGURE TITLE

East Hill photographs

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FIGURE NO.

6



A

Pit 3, Priory Street, looking north-east (1m scale)



B

Pit 4, Priory Street, looking south-west (1m scale)



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PROJECT TITLE

Main PRV Installation opposite St James' Church, East Hill and the junction of Priory Street/The Dell Colchester, Essex

FIGURE TITLE

Pits 3 and 4 photographs

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FIGURE NO.

7

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