

# Archaeological trial-trenching evaluation at Sandon House, Panfield Lane, Braintree, Essex

March 2015



fieldwork directed by Adam Wightman  
report prepared by Howard Brooks

on behalf of Northover Contracts

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NGR: TL 75323 24371  
Braintree Museum accession code: tbc



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EHER summary sheet

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## 1 Summary

*Four trenches in the footprints of proposed new housing on the western side of Panfield Lane revealed a modern post-hole and an undated pit in Trench 1 (T1) and T3 respectively. Trenches 2 and 4 both intercepted ditches running roughly parallel with Panfield Lane. These may be parts of a field boundary predating Sandon House, and infilled in the post-medieval period.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report on the March 2015 archaeological trial-trenching evaluation carried out by CAT on behalf of Northover Contracts. The site is on Panfield Lane, north-west of Braintree town centre, and is centred at TL 75323 24371

## 3 Archaeological Background

The following archaeological background draws on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER). EHER shows that the proposed development lies in an area of archaeological potential. Maps show that Sandon House (formerly Kynance) has stood on this site since at least c.1870. The Chapman and André map of 1777 depicts small groups of houses along Panfield Lane where portions of the roadside greens have been taken as *purpresture* which was a common practise of land enclosure in the late medieval/early post-medieval period. Recent fieldwork immediately west of the site has uncovered evidence of Roman and medieval occupation and industrial activity. Earlier speculation that a north-south Roman road crossed 00m west of the site has now been disproved, since two sets of fieldwork have disproved the road line. There must be a Roman road somewhere in this area, but its exact route is unknown.

## 4 Planning Background

A planning application was submitted to Braintree District Council in July 2014 for the demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of eight dwellings with associated works and infrastructure (14/00919/FUL). As the site lies within an area highlighted by the EHER to have a potential for archaeological deposits, an archaeological condition was recommended by ECC Historic Environment Advisor (ECCHEA). The recommended archaeological condition is based on the guidance given in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and states:

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

A brief detailing the required archaeological work (an evaluation by trial-trenching) was written by ECCHEA (Teresa O'Connor). All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a *WSI* (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by CAT in response to the ECCHEA (ECC 2015) and agreed with ECCHEA (CAT 2015).

The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr Duncan Wilson for Northover Contracts, and was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on 11th and 12th March 2015. Post-excavation work was carried out in March and April 2015.

In addition to the *WSI*, all fieldwork was carried out in accordance with CAT *Policies & Procedures* (CAT 2012), and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2006), *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England (EAA 14)*, *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24) was also followed.

**5 Aim**

The aim of the evaluation was to record and establish the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any remains likely to be disturbed by the proposed works.

**6 Results** (Figs 2-3)

This section gives an archaeological summary of the evaluation trenches (T1-4), with context and finds dating information.

Four evaluations trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The two northernmost trenches (T1, T2) were located in an area of scrubland. The two southernmost trenches (T3, T4) were excavated within the property boundary of Sandon House (Fig 2).

**T1 and T2: discussion**

In the western half of T1 and T2, a mid-grey/brown clayey-silt topsoil (or possibly ploughsoil) overlay an older mid-brown silty-clay soil, which, in turn, overlay the natural clay (a medium orange/brown clay with patches of flint gravel). No finds were recovered from L1 or L2.

**T1: contexts and dating**

Context no	type	dated finds	finds date	period
F1	post-hole	clinker and slate (not kept)	post-medieval or modern	post-medieval or modern

**T2: contexts and dating**

Context no	type	dated finds	finds date	period
F2	ditch	post-medieval pottery and glass	post-medieval or modern	post-medieval or modern



Plate 1: trench 1, view east to Panfield Lane. F1 in foreground



Plate 2: trench 2, view east

A post-hole cut into L2 and L3 in the western end of T1 contained small clinker and slate fragments, and is probably modern in date (Fig 2). In the southern end of T2, the western edge of a pit or linear feature **F2** cut natural clay L3. Its fill was a dark grey/brown clayey-silt which contained modern pottery and glass fragments.

In the eastern halves of T1 and T2, soil layers L1 and L2 had been removed and the natural clay (L3) had been reduced (prior to the installation of a series of modern drainage trenches: Fig 2). Most of the trenches simply contained large ceramic pipes surrounded by gravel, though one had a smaller plastic pipe and another had concrete slabs down one side of the trench. A layer of mid-grey clayey silt (L5) 450mm thick with fragments of modern building materials covered the area of the drainage trenches. This part of the development site sloped gently to the east, and it is likely that the drainage trenches had been installed as the eastern side of the site was prone to flooding.

### Trench 3

T3, in the car park north of Sandon House (Fig 2), was placed to avoid known service locations and to allow continued use of the car park.

#### T3: contexts and dating

Context no	type	dated finds	finds date	period
F3	pit	none	none	post-medieval or modern?

#### T3 discussion

A layer of stone chippings covered a dark soil containing stones and fragments of tarmac and frogged bricks (L4). In the south-eastern corner of the trench, the bricks were laid flat and formed an earlier path or driveway. Beneath L4, a layer mid-grey clayey silt similar to that seen in T1 and T2 (L5) overlaid the natural clay (L3). A small pit (F3) was cut into the natural clay in T3 (Fig 2). F3 had a dark grey/brown fill which contained no finds or inclusions.

### Trench 4

T4 was located in the garden to the south of Sandon House.

#### T4: contexts and dating

Context no	type	dated finds	finds date	period
F4	ditch	post-medieval pottery, clay-pipe, CBM	post-medieval or modern	post-medieval or modern

#### T4 discussion

A modern topsoil (L6) overlaid an earlier topsoil or ploughsoil (L7), which, in turn, overlaid the natural clay (L3). L6 contained modern inclusions such as clinker and sherds of factory made pottery. L7 contained small CBM inclusions. In the western end of T4 the eastern edge of a ?ditch (F4) containing 17th-18th century finds was identified. F4 appeared to be on the same alignment as Panfield Lane and is probably an infilled boundary ditch.



Plate 3: trench 3, view east



Plate 4: trench 4, view east

## 7 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

The small quantity of post-medieval and modern pottery, glass, clay pipe, animal bone and an iron nail from two contexts (F2 & F4) is listed and described in Table 1. The pottery fabrics refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric type series, following CAR 7. The more closely-datable finds from F4 are 17th-18th century, and those from feature F2 to 19th-20th century. Of some individual note is a deer phalanx bone from F4.

Ctxt	Find no	find type	Fabric	no	wt/g	Form/ description	Period	spot date
F2	1	pottery	48W	3	41	Rim and body sherds from a lid-seated vessel with cream fabric and mottled brown glaze, possibly Whieldon-type ware	p-med/mod	M18-19/20C
F2	1	glass		2	86	Complete small paste jar in clear glass (M19-20C) and green glass sherd from a cylindrical bottle (L18/19-20C)	mod	M19-20C
F4	2	pottery	40	4	135	Base, body and a small rim sherd from jars, red, green & brown glaze, most glazed both sides and internally up to rim on the single rim sherd (abraded)	p-med	17/L17-18C
F4	2	pottery	40	3	32	Black glaze sherds,	p-med	L16/17-E18C

Ctxt	Find no	find type	Fabric	no	wt/g	Form/ description	Period	spot date
						red fabric, handle scar on a large body sherd (not glazed internally) and small rim sherd; the two small sherds are probably from drinking vessels		
F4	2	clay pipe		1	5	Stem piece (bore approx 2.5 mm)	p-med	17-18C
F4	2	CBM		1	5	Fragment of brick or tile		Late med - p-med
F4	2	iron nail		1	11	Corroded, complete, flat round head (length 55 mm)		
F4	2	animal bone		2	11	Metapodial condyle from a cow or possibly deer and a proximal end of a deer second phalanx, the cut end of this bone suggests butchery or possibly skinning		

Table 1 Finds by context (CBM=ceramic building material)

## 8 Discussion

Maps show that a house has stood on this site since at least 1870, and perhaps earlier (though not so early as 1777, since it is not shown by Chapman and André). This evaluation has not shown any evidence for structures predating Sandon House. However, one important landscape feature may have been revealed (see plate 5, below). Two trenches 40m apart revealed post-medieval ditches running parallel with Panfield Lane. While it could be argued that they are not necessarily the same ditch, scrutiny of the OS maps shows that there was a field boundary shown between 1875 and 1961 which has now been removed as the rear property boundary of Sandon House has been pushed west. There seems little doubt that the ditches intercepted in this evaluation are the previous field boundary, now infilled.

Recent fieldwork by Oxford Archaeology immediately west of the site has uncovered evidence of Roman and medieval occupation and industrial activity. This evaluation has not produced any material of those dates.

Paul Drury speculated (1976) that the Roman road from Braintree to Radwinter crossed the fields 140m north-west of this site. Fieldwork at Gypsy Corner, in advance of the construction of the new school (700m SW of Sandon House) failed to find any trace of the road (Havis 1993). Likewise, in September 2014, Oxford Archaeology observed the easement for the laying of a new water pipe whose line cut across the projected line of the road. I was on site to see this, and can confirm that there is no Roman road on Drury's projected route. Obviously the lack of Roman road means that it is no longer reasonable to infer Roman roadside settlement here.

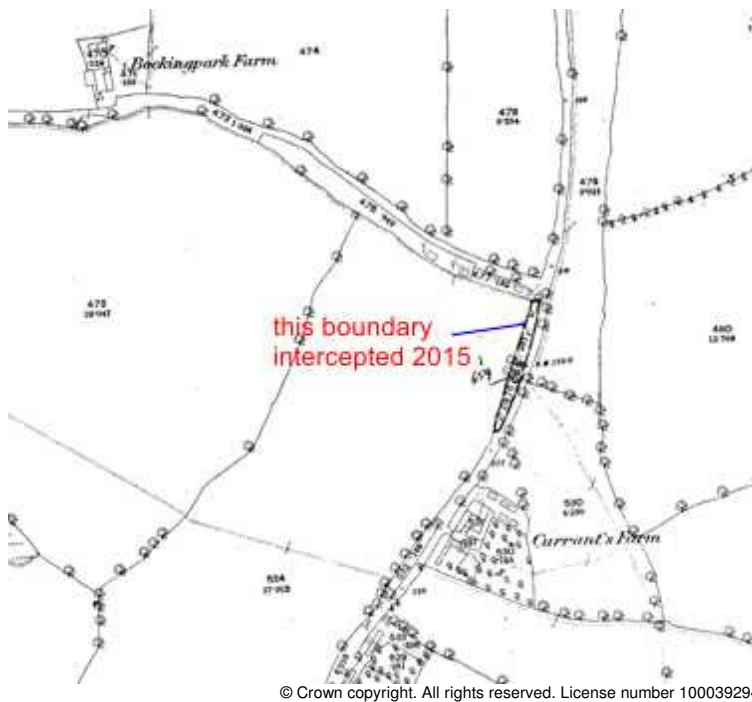


Plate 5: OS 1st edition of 1875, showing field boundary now covered by grounds of Sandon House. Ditches which probably equate to this infilled boundary were intercepted by trenches 2 and 4.

## 9 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Northover Contracts (Mr Duncan Wilson) for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by Adam Wightman, and fieldwork was carried out by AW and Felix Whymark-Reeves. Site plans are by AW, and sections by Emma Holloway. The project was monitored for ECC Place Services by Teresa O'Connor.



## 10 References

CAR 7	2000	<i>Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , Colchester Archaeological Report 7, by John Cotter
CAT	2012	<i>Policies and Procedures</i>
CAT	2015	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at Sandon House, Panfield Lane, Braintree, Essex</i> . February 2015
CAT Report 713	2013	<i>A desk-based assessment of the archaeological remains in and around land at Panfield Lane, Braintree, Essex</i> . prepared by Howard Brooks on behalf of Mersea Homes
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> . Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> . Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> , Department for Communities and Local Government
Drury, PJ	1976	"Braintree: Excavations and Research 1971-76", <i>Essex Archaeol Hist</i> <b>8</b> , 1-143.
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers</i> , <b>14</b> , ed by D Gurney
EAA 24	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeological Occasional Papers, <b>24</b> , ed by M Medlycott
ECC	2015	<i>Brief for archaeological trial trench evaluation at Sandon House, Panfield Lane, Braintree</i> . by Teresa O'Connor
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Havis, R	1993	"Roman Braintree: excavations 1984-90", <i>Essex Archaeol Hist</i> <b>24</b> , 22-68.

## 11 Abbreviations and glossary

context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Late Iron Age	circa 150 BC – AD 43
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to around AD 430
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

## 12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by CAT at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Braintree Museum under an accession code yet to be assigned.

### 13 Contents of Archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

This report  
Original site records and notes  
ECC Brief and CAT WSI  
Sundry papers  
Photos index, and photos on CD

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#### **Distribution list:**

Duncan Wilson, Northover Contracts  
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#### **Colchester Archaeological Trust Roman Circus House**

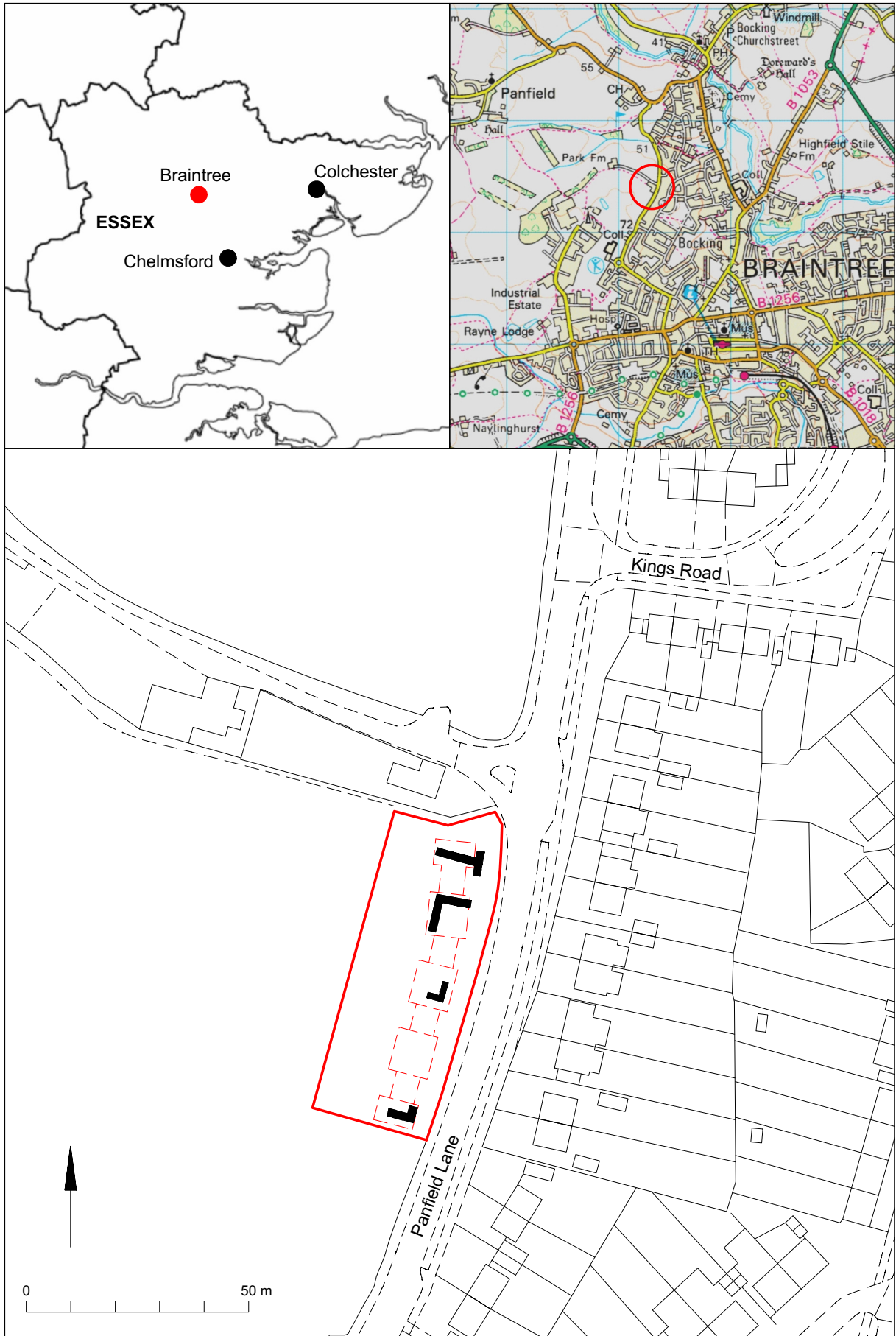
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Fig 1 Site location showing the evaluation trenches in relation to the proposed development.

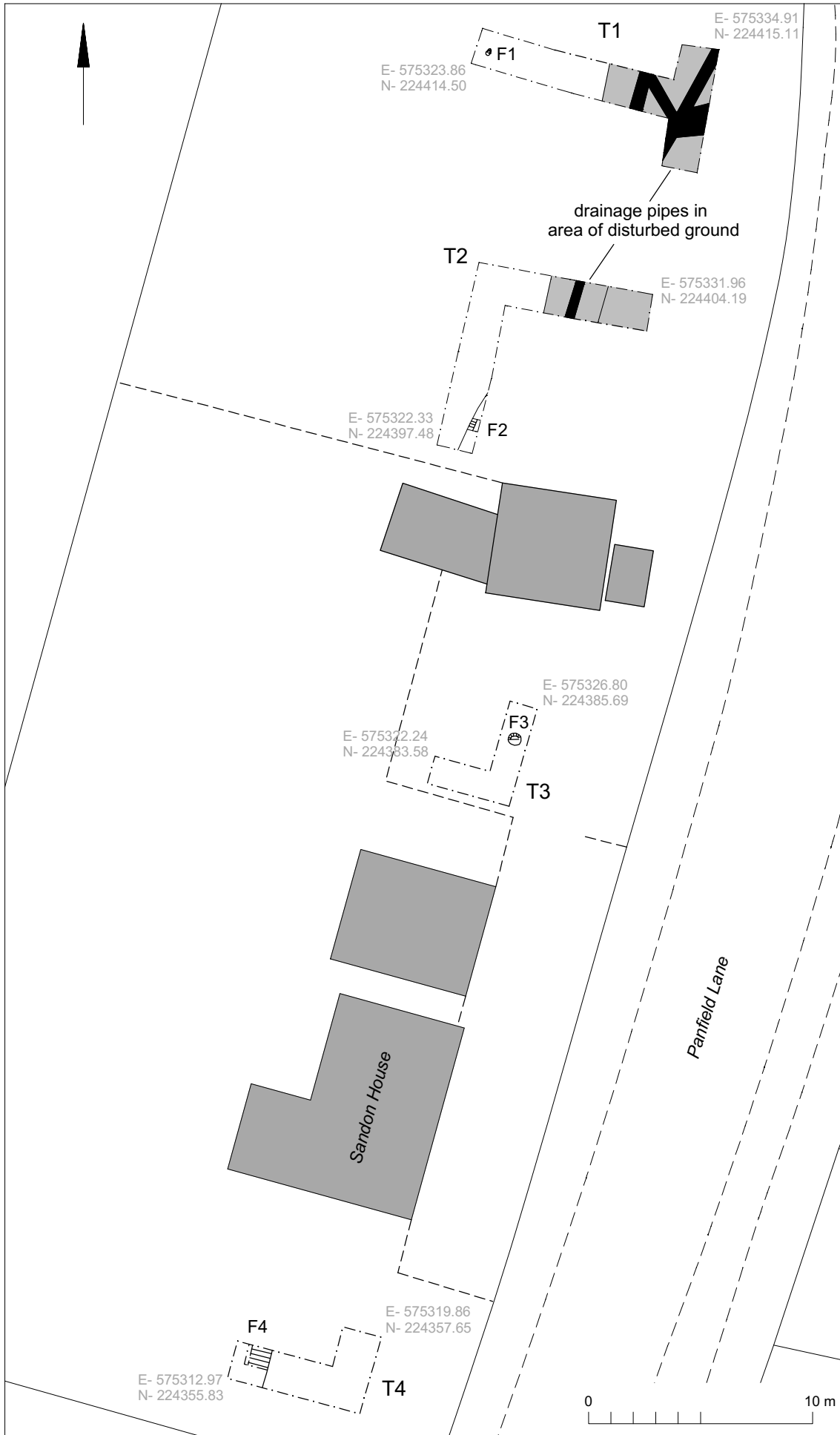


Fig 2 Evaluation results.

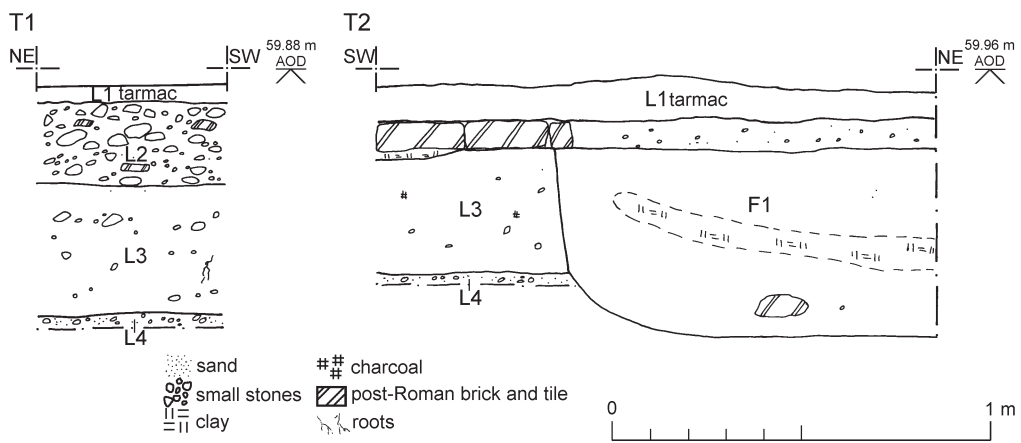


Fig 3 T1-2: sections.

## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> Sandon House, Panfield Lane, Braintree, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Braintree	<b>District:</b> Braintree
<b>NGR:</b> NGR: TL 73523 24371	<b>Site code:</b> CAT project code – 15/02g ECCPS code – BTSHS 15
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 11th-12th March 2015	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 4 trenches, c 48m total length
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Braintree Museum accession code: tbc	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER number:</b> --
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 829	
<b>Periods represented:</b> post-medieval	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>Four trenches in the footprints of proposed new housing on the western side of Panfield Lane revealed a modern post-hole and an undated pit in Trench 1 (T1) and T3 respectively. Trenches 2 and 4 both intercepted ditches running roughly parallel with Panfield Lane. These may be parts of a field boundary predating Sandon House, and infilled in the post-medieval period.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> --	
<b>ECC monitor:</b> Teresa O'Connor	
<b>Keywords:</b> post-medieval, field boundary	<b>Significance:</b> *
<b>Author of summary:</b> Howard Brooks	<b>Date of summary:</b> April 2015