

Stane Street revealed: archaeological monitoring at 46 High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex

April 2012



report prepared by
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on behalf of
Enterprise Heritage

Planning references: UTT/21116/10, UTT/2117/10/LB
CAT project ref.: 12/02e
NGR: TL 6284 2174
ECC project code: GD34
Saffron Walden Museum accession code: SAFWM 2012.03



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CAT Report 651
June 2012

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1 Summary

This site, a former car park on the south edge of High Street, is located in both the historic centre of Great Dunmow and also within the area of the Roman small town.

Ten archaeological features were identified during monitoring of contractor's excavation of footings trenches for six new buildings. The most significant were two areas of compacted gravel (which coincide precisely with the projected course of Roman Stane Street), and a ditch which may be an associated road-side ditch. Associated sherds of Roman pottery date the gravel to the 2nd century AD, possibly later.

There were also five post-medieval pits, two post-medieval/modern wells (features cut into what were then the back plots of post-medieval properties on the New Street frontage), and fragments of modern foundations associated with the recently-demolished council offices.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

- 2.1 This is the archive report on the archaeological monitoring commissioned by Mr Neil Yates of Enterprise Heritage, and carried out at 46 High Street, Gt Dunmow, by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) between 4th and 20th of April 2012. Post-excavation work was carried out in May-June 2012.
- 2.2 The L-shaped (NGR TL 6284 2174) was formerly office car parking associated with Uttlesford District Council Planning Department.
- 2.3 The Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (HEM) team was consulted by Uttlesford District Council in February 2012 on a planning application (UTT/21116/10, UTT/2117/10/LB), which proposed the re-development of the High Street site for 6 new house-plots. In response to consultation, HEM made the following recommendation, in line with *Planning Policy Statement 5*:

"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."
- 2.4 A brief detailing the required archaeological work (archaeological monitoring) was written by HEM (HEM 2012: Richard Havis).
- 2.5 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation produced by CAT in response to the HEM brief, and agreed with HEM (CAT 2012).
- 2.6 In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with CAT *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a), and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE: English Heritage 2006), *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) and *Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England* (EAA 24) was also followed.

3 Archaeological background

This section is based on records held by the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford. For any unreferenced discoveries below, see Medlycott 1999.

The development site is an area of high archaeological potential, in the Roman small town which developed along Stane Street to the west of the Roman road junction and on a prominent ridge above the river crossing. The town covered an estimated 10-12 hectares.

Excavations on the land behind High Street have produced Roman deposits. For example, recent excavations at the southern end of New Street and south of Springfields have identified what may be the boundary ditch of the Roman settlement, as well as evidence of Middle Saxon occupation (EHER 13867).

Archaeological monitoring of recent development along New Street (ie, nos 9, 36, 44, and 58) has produced quantities of Roman pottery (EHER 13883). Monitoring at no 36 has also produced portions of a 7th- to 9th-century Middle Saxon bowl.

Recent excavations in Chequers Lane (west of the current site) revealed the remains of a late Roman inhumation cemetery (CAT Report 535). Immediately to the east of the site, on the opposite side of High Street, a Roman kiln was excavated (EHER 46525).

Three evaluation trenches excavated to the rear of the High Street by CAT (Report 632) showed that Roman archaeological horizons had survived beneath the car park. These were pits, ditches and small post-holes dated 1st-2nd century. There was no Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity, but there were a few post-medieval and modern pits.

4 Aim

The aim of the monitoring is to preserve by record any archaeological remains and deposits disturbed or destroyed by the proposed works. Specific attention was paid to evidence for the development of Roman Great Dunmow.

5 Monitoring Results (Figs 2, 3)

This section gives a summary of the archaeological monitoring for each building plot, with context and finds dating information. The foundation trenches (generally 0.7m wide and 1.2m deep) were excavated under archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator, through two layers (upper - crush and hogging; lower - base of former car park and hardcore from recent demolition). This material sealed a silty accumulation layer which in turn sealed archaeological material and natural ground (a mixture of boulder clay and gravel patches). Plots 1-4 (not included in this project) involved refurbishment of existing buildings on New Street and High Street.

Plot 5-8: summary

Plots 5-8 formed a terrace of new build properties on the western side of the site. The only significant feature was a Roman pit (F5) in the eastern edge of plot 8. Other remains included two modern foundations (the demolished part of the Uttlesford District Planning Office: F6-7), three post-medieval pits (F1, F3-4), and a capped well head (F2).

Plots 5-8 – contexts and dating

Feature no	Type	dated finds	period
F1	pit	pottery, peg-tile, animal bone	post-medieval
F2	capped well head	brick (not retained)	post-med/modern
F3	pit	pottery, glass	post-medieval
F4	pit	peg-tile (not retained)	post-medieval
F5	pit	pottery	Roman
F6	foundation	--	modern
F7	foundation	--	modern

Plot 9: summary

The T-shaped Plot 9 was on the southern edge of the site. There were two modern pits (F8, F10) and a modern brick drainage duct associated with the former car park (F11). There was one significant deposit - a compacted gravel layer F9 in the south-eastern corner of the plot. Although undated here, its alignment matches F12 in plot 10, and it is undoubtedly the same feature (there dated as Roman).

Plot 9 – contexts and dating

feature no	type	dated finds	period
F8	pit	glass	modern
F9	compacted gravel	--	Roman
F10	pit	brick, peg-tile (not retained)	post-medieval
F11	foundation	--	modern

Plot 10: summary

The L-shaped Plot 10 was on the southern edge of the site. There was a modern capped well head (F14) in its northern part. Significant contexts were a compacted gravel surface (F12) and a ditch (F13) on the southern plot edge. The gravel contained five Roman sherds and a piece of Roman brick. The pottery spans mid-1st century to maybe as late as the 3rd or 4th century, but all sherds have a common date of 2nd century AD which may reasonably be taken as the most likely date for this gravel surface. Given that the gravel in Plot 10 (and Plot 9 to the west) coincided precisely with the projected course of Stane Street as given in Medlycott (1999), there is little doubt that F9 and F12 are part of Stane Street. As far as can be judged from this small sample, ditch F13 appears NW/SE aligned, and so it may be the roadside ditch on the northern side of Stane Street (although the scale of the excavation makes this difficult to confirm). There was some modern disturbance to both the gravel and the ditch.

Plot 10 – contexts and dating

feature no	type	dated finds	period
F12	compacted gravel	pottery	Roman
F13	ditch	pottery, tile	Roman
F14	well head?	brick, peg-tile (not retained)	post-medieval/modern

6 Finds

by Stephen Benfield

Introduction

A small quantity of bulk finds of Roman, post-medieval and modern date came from layers and features revealed by the excavation of footings trenches and from dumped spoil excavated from the trenches. Finds consisted of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), glass and slate (listed and described in Table 2). There are no individually numbered small finds. The context of the finds is listed in Table 2.

The finds were recorded by type, count, and weight for each finds number, and then spot-dated. Roman pottery fabrics and forms refer to the Essex Roman fabric series (Going 1987). Medieval and post-medieval pottery fabric types refer to the Essex post-Roman fabric series (Cunningham 1985; *CAR 7*). The pottery fabrics are listed in Table 1.

Fabric code	Fabric name	date
<i>Roman:</i>		
1	Colchester colour-coated ware	M2-E/M3C
36	Hadham grey wares	Roman
41	Black-burnished ware 2	E/M2-4C
44	Storage jar fabrics	Roman
45	Romanising grey wares/Black surface wares	Roman, principally M1-2C

Fabric code	Fabric name	date
47	Sandy grey wares	Roman
<i>Post-Roman:</i>		
40	Post-medieval red earthenwares (general)	16/17-18C
45F	Westerwald stoneware	17-18C

Table 1: Pottery fabrics showing period/common date range

plot no.	finds no	ctxt (F/L) no.	ctxt type	finds	date
5	6	F1	pitting in NE corner of plot	Pottery post-Roman 1@20 g, rim Fabric 45F	17-18C
6	7	F3	pit fill central part of plot	Pottery post-Roman 1@8 g, Fabric 40 CBM post-Roman peg-tile 2@44 g Glass post-medieval/modern 1@6 g	17-18C
8	8	F5	pit in NE corner of plot	Pottery Roman 5@109 g, Fabric 36(?) abraded; Fabric 44; Fabric 45/47, rim, very abraded, rounded bowl rim, possibly 2-3C(?); Fabric 47 CBM 1@9 g, thin flake from a tile surface, not closely dated, possibly peg-tile (dated med/post-med - mod) Animal bone 3@33 g from medium sized mammal(s) inc. phalanx	Rom (residual?) with p-Rom CBM(?)
9	5	F10	pit	Glass modern complete Kilner jar (not retained)	20C
10	1	U/S	spoil (site surface)	Pottery Roman 6@137 g, Fabric 47, includes body sherd with vertical rows of comb-stab decoration (M1-E2C), Fabric 36(?) rim sherd from a jar	Roman
10	2	F12	dark gravel in south footing trench	Pottery Roman 5@94 g, Fabric 1, beaker base (M2-M3C); Fabric 45 (M1-2C(?)), Fabric 41, B1.2 (M2-3/4C); Fabric 47 CBM Roman 1@55 g RBT piece	M2-3C/4C
10	3		features/disturbance along N side of south footing trench	Pottery Roman 1@4 g, Fabric 45/47, silty possibly M1-2C CBM Roman 1@104 g, RB(?)30 mm thick, red sandy fabric swirled through with white/cream firing clay probably Roman Slate 1@48 g, thin piece from a roof slate, probably post-medieval or modern	post-med or modern
10	4	F2	spoil from fill of deep pit/well	CBM post-Roman peg-tile 2@110 g (10-14 mm thick) one piece with complete circular peg-hole, other with parts of two closely adjacent peg-holes	med/post-med

Table 2: Dated finds list, by plot number, context, and finds number

Finds discussion

Most of this small group of finds (where they can be associated with features) are from pits, and (where closely-dated) are of post-medieval or modern date. The most closely datable, apart from a modern Kilner jar (F10, *finds number* 5), are two sherds, one of German Westerwald stoneware (Fabric 45F) dated 17th-18th century (F1, *finds number* 6), and the other of post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric 40) dated 16th/17th-18th

century from F3 (*finds number 7*). The remainder of these finds consists mostly of pieces of peg-tiles, broadly dated medieval to post-medieval or modern.

A small quantity of Roman pottery (5 sherds) came from pit F5 in the north-eastern corner of Plot 8 (*finds number 8*), but some of this is abraded and a tile flake from the same context may be from a peg-tile, suggesting that the Roman pottery might be residual. The only context which produced stratified finds of which all are undoubtedly Roman is a layer of dark gravel (F12) in the southern footing trench of Plot 10. The pottery (5 sherds) from F12 (*finds number 2*) can be dated to the mid 2nd-3rd/4th century. A piece of Roman brick or tile (55 g) was also recovered from this context. A small quantity of Roman pottery (6 sherds) was recovered as unstratified finds (US) from spoil on the surface at the south end of Plot 10 (*finds number 1*), and this is probably associated with L3. The pottery includes a greyware sherd with rows of comb-stab decoration dated mid 1st-early 2nd century.

Most of the Roman pottery consists of sherds of coarse grey wares (Fabric 47), probably either of local production or from the Colchester or Hadham potteries. While it is likely that at least some are products of the Hadham kilns (Fabric 36), none were able to be positively identified to a particular source. There is one fine ware, a colour-coated beaker base from the Colchester potteries (Fabric 1) which is dated mid 2nd-early/mid 3rd century (Going 1987, 3). This came from the dark gravel layer L3 (*finds number 2*) at the southern end of Plot 10.

7 Discussion

The results of this monitoring are similar to those of the earlier evaluation (December 2011), insofar as they show that Roman archaeological horizons have survived here, although truncated by post-medieval and modern features.

With the exception of the Roman pit (F5) in Plot 8, Roman features were only found on the southern edge of the site (Plots 9 and 10), and consisted of fragments of compacted gravel surfacing (F9, F12), and a ditch (F13).

The route of Stane Street (the major Roman road from Colchester to Braughing) is projected by Medlycott (1999) along a line which would coincide with the southern edge of the current site. It is therefore possible that the gravel surface and the ditch are the surface of Stane Street and an associated roadside ditch.

It is valid to ask the question – is this surface substantial enough to be Stane Street? Or is it a smaller street, leading into the Roman town? One of the writers (HB) while working at Stansted Airport had conversations with local archaeologists, both amateur (Takeley Local History Society) and professional (ie Dr Chris Going), to the effect that many years of searching and observation of contractors' trenches had failed to locate the gravel surface of Stane Street, although its *route* has not been questioned. It seems that Stane Street was less a continuously gravelled highway and more a group of adjacent and roughly parallel tracks running along an old route. So, the modest thickness of the gravel surface found on the 2012 site is not a bar to its being interpreted as Stane Street.

This is not to rule out entirely the case that the gravel surface may be that of a side street, but the coincidence of the position of the gravel being exactly in line with Stane Street's projected course and the general elusiveness of its gravel surface mean that the gravel may, with a reasonable degree of confidence, be interpreted as Stane Street. If this is correct, then the pottery from the gravel (ie 2nd century in date, possibly later) shows that Stane Street was not surfaced until the 2nd century (possibly later) in the small town of Dunmow.

Evidence of Roman street-side activity is not strong here, with only a single Roman pit and a few sherds from later contexts. The small-scale structural and domestic activity identified by the 2011 evaluation was largely absent from this (monitoring) phase of the project.

The lack of any medieval finds indicates that the site was probably open ground at the time, presumably linked to houses fronting onto both New Street and High Street.

Most of the excavated features were of post-medieval and modern date. These were domestic pits to the rear of properties on the post-medieval street frontages. The well

was located close to the remaining frontage of New Street. It may have been an internal well, but, as no structural evidence survives, it is more likely to be associated with the rear of a building on the High Street frontage.

8 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mr Neil Yates of Enterprise Heritage for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by B Holloway. Fieldwork was carried out by BH and S Benfield. The project was monitored for ECC HEM by Richard Havis.

9 References

- | | | |
|------------------|-------|---|
| CAR 7 | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester 1971-1985</i> , by J Cotter |
| CAT | 2012 | Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological monitoring at 46 High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex, February 2012. |
| CAT | 2008 | <i>Policies and procedures</i> |
| CAT Report 535 | 2011 | <i>A Roman cemetery at Great Dunmow: evaluation, excavation and watching brief at the Salerooms site, Chequers Lane. Aug/Sept 2009 and March 2010.</i> CAT report, prepared by Adam Wightman and Howard Brooks, July 2011 |
| CAT Report 632 | 2012 | <i>An archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of 46 High Street Great Dunmow, Essex. December 2011.</i> CAT report, prepared by Adam Wightman, January 2012 |
| Cunningham, C M | 1985 | 'A typology for post-Roman pottery in Essex', in <i>Post-medieval sites and their pottery: Moulsham Street, Chelmsford</i> , by C M Cunningham and P J Drury, Chelmsford Archaeological Trust Report 5 and Council for British Archaeology Research Report 54, 1-16 |
| EAA 14 | 2003 | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14, 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 24, by Maria Medlycott |
| English Heritage | 2006 | <i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i> |
| Going, C | 1987 | <i>The Mansio and other sites in the south-eastern sector of Caesaromagus: the Roman pottery.</i> CBA Research Report 62. |
| HEM | 2012 | <i>Archaeological Monitoring at 46 High Street, Great Dunmow.</i> Essex County Council Brief |
| IfA | 2008b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> |
| IfA | 2008a | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief</i> |
| Medlycott, M | 1999 | <i>Great Dunmow Historic Town Assessment.</i> Essex County Council |

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
fill	the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch
HEM	Historic Environment Management (of ECC)
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
medieval	from AD 1066 to c 1530
modern	from 1800 to present day

natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
post-medieval	circa 1530 to 1800
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 430

11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Saffron Walden Museum under accession code 2012.3.

12 Contents of archive

Finds

1 museum box containing all finds.

Paper record

One A4 wallet containing:

- Brief and WSI
- Copy of Report 651
- Original site record sheets
- Photo log
- Attendance record
- Disc with digital photographs

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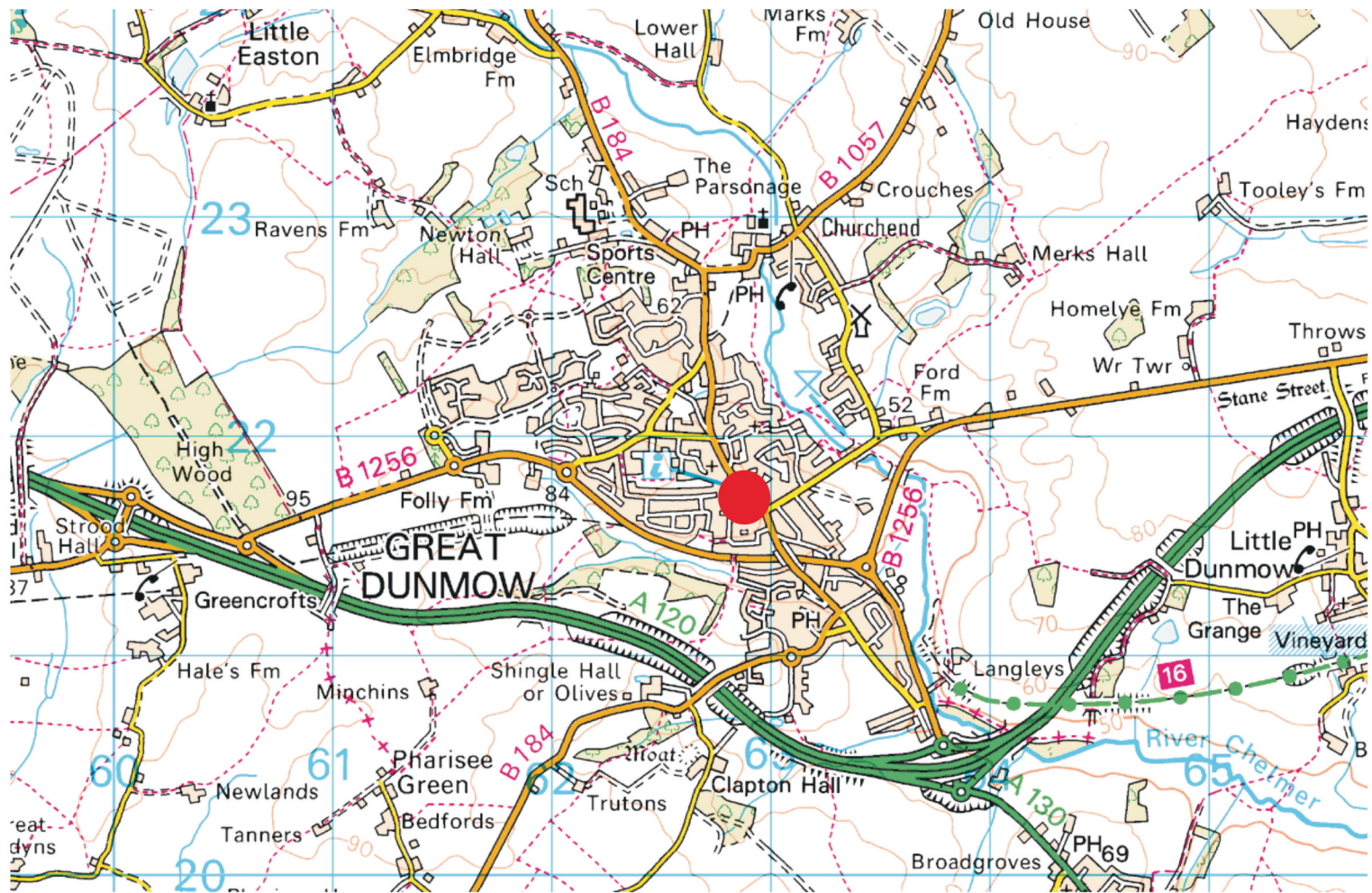


Fig 1 Site location, marked by a red dot.

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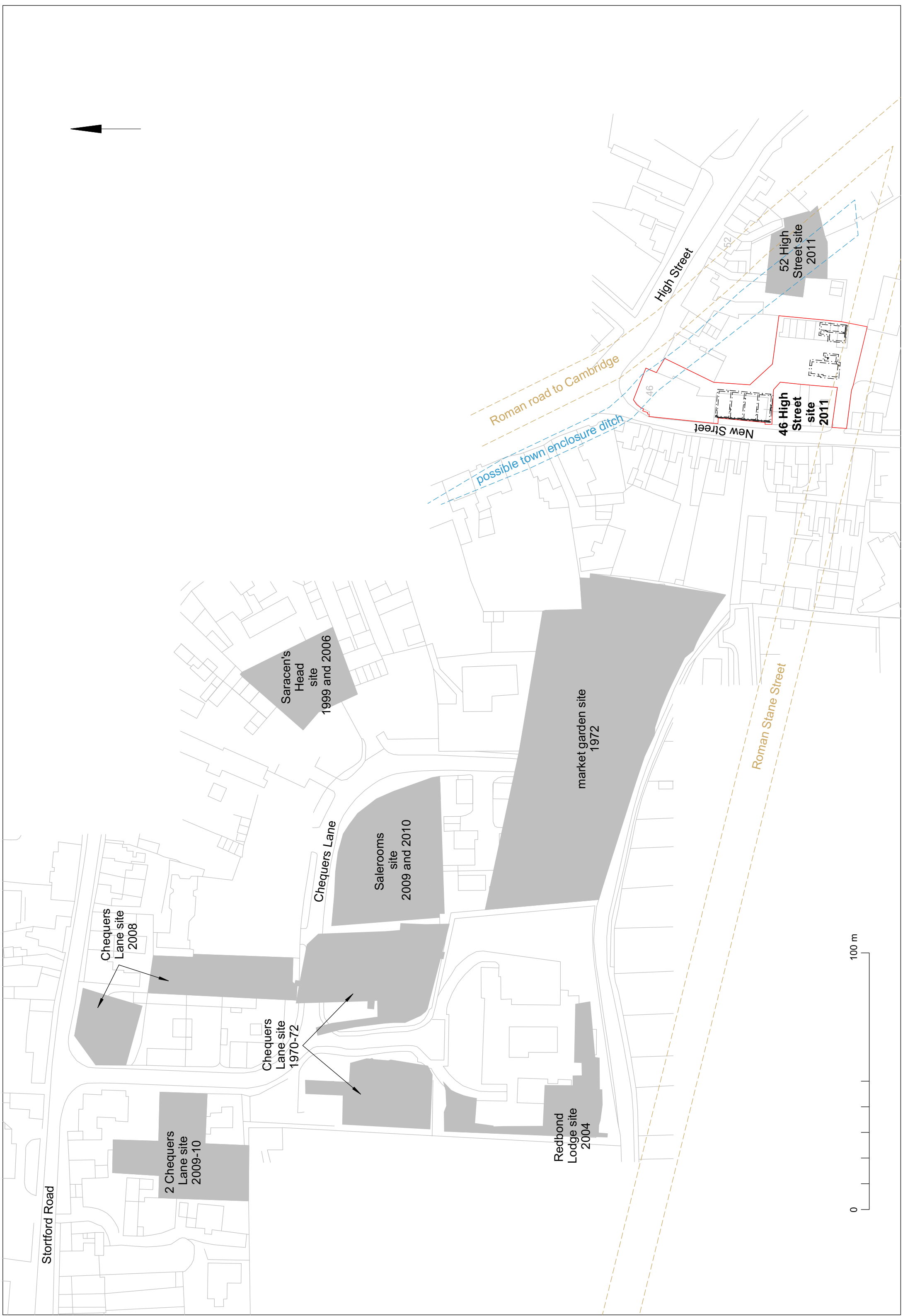
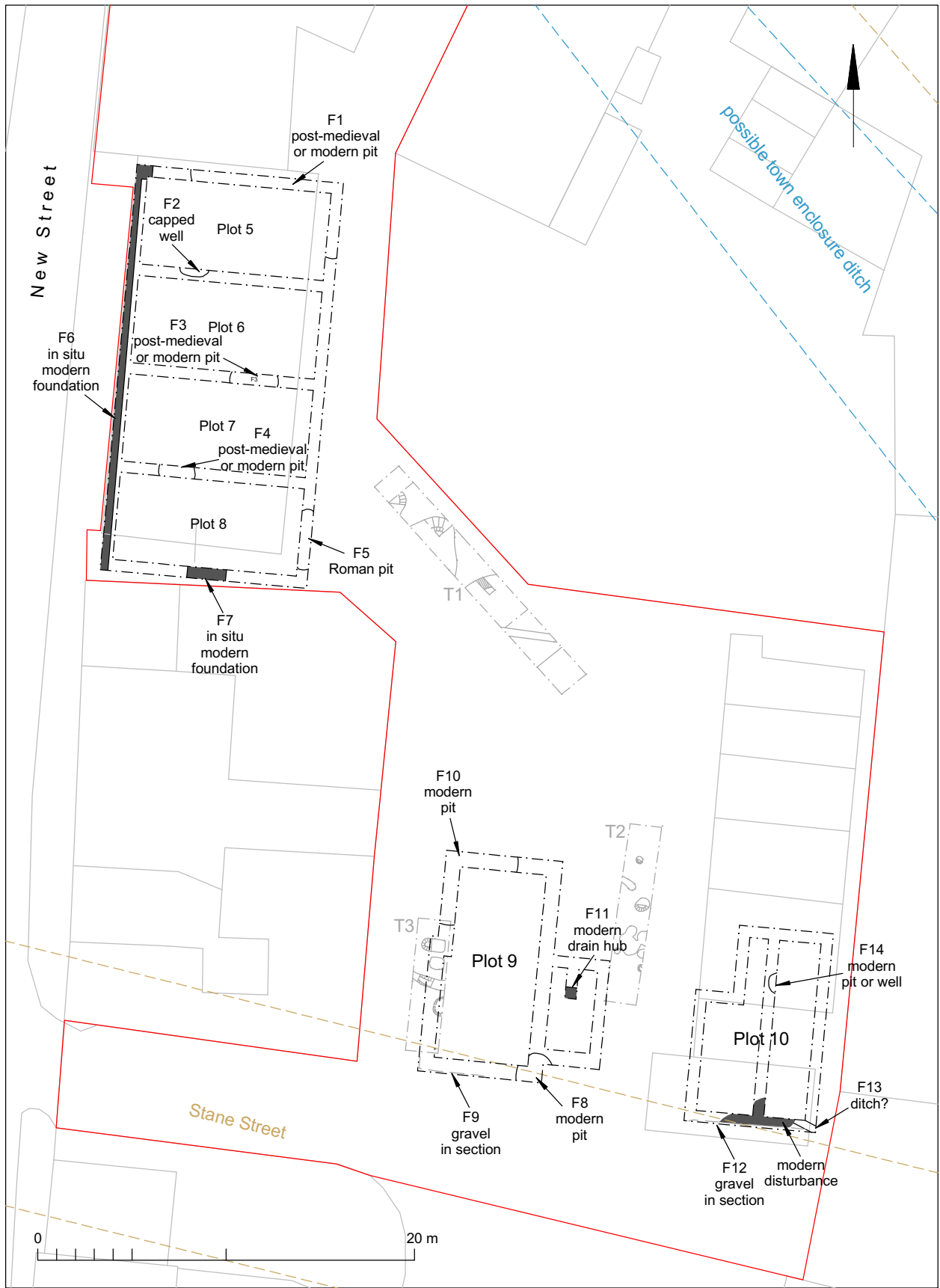


Fig 2 Site location (red outline), showing previous excavations in the vicinity of the site (grey tone), and the projected courses of two Roman roads, and the possible town enclosure ditch (Medlycott 1998):



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Fig 3 Watching brief results (evaluation trenches shown in grey).

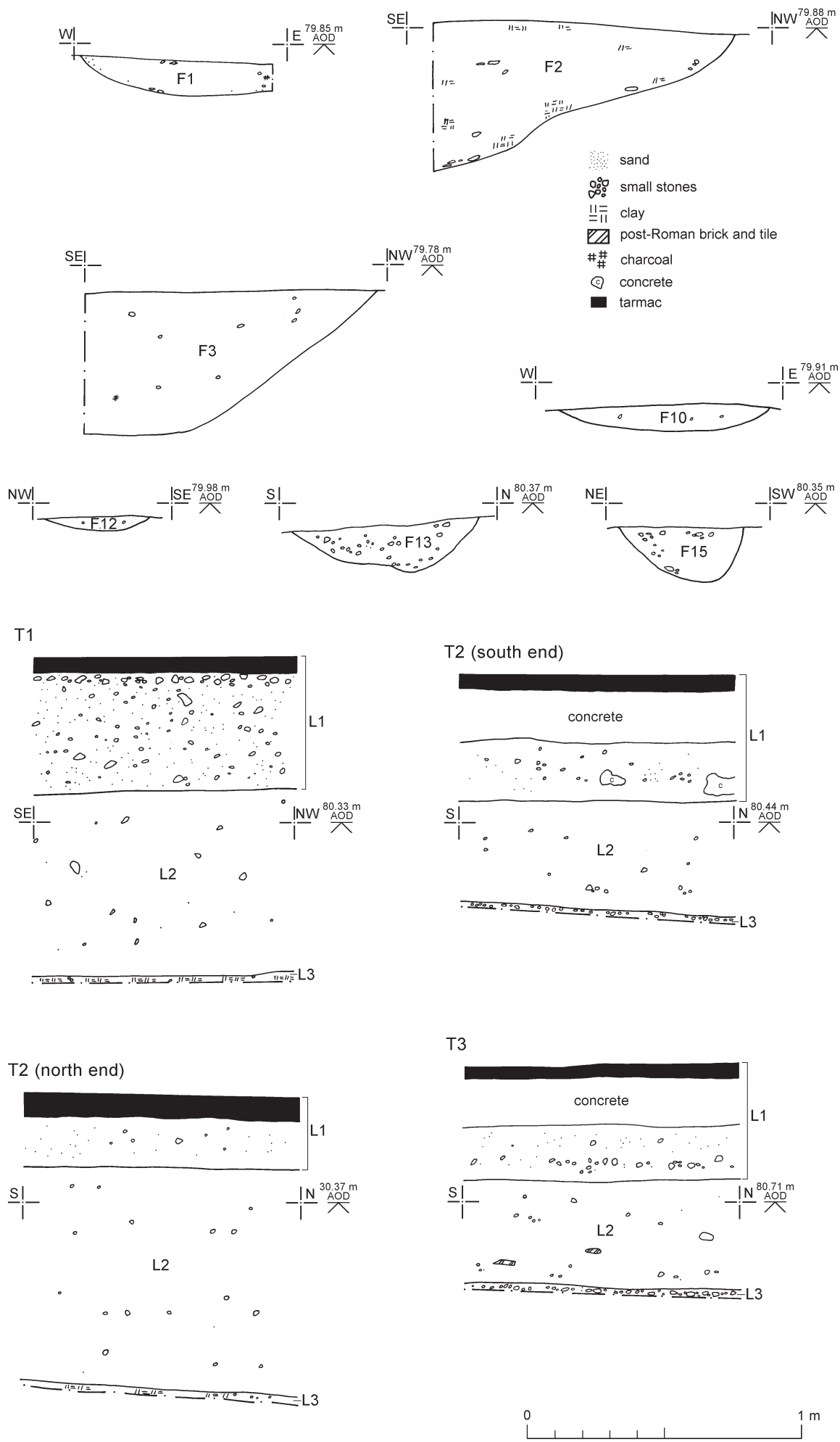


Fig 4 F1-F3, F10, F12-F13, F15: sections; T1-T3: representative sections (all heights relate to site datum of 81.00 m).

**Essex Historic Environment Record/
Essex Archaeology and History**

**Archaeological monitoring (watching brief) at
46 High Street, Great Dunmow**

Summary sheet

Address: 46 High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex	
Parish: Great Dunmow	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 6284 2174 (centre)	Site code: CAT project code – 12/02e
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 4th – 20th April 2012	Size of area investigated: 4x3m footprint
Location of curating museum: Saffron Walden Museum accession code – 2012.3	Funding source: Developer
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: EHER 0443, 1935, 46210
Final report: CAT Report 651	
Periods represented: Roman, post-medieval/modern	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p><i>This site, a former car park on the south edge of High Street, is located in both the historic centre of Great Dunmow and also within the area of the Roman small town.</i></p> <p><i>Ten archaeological features were identified during monitoring of contractor's excavation of footings trenches for six new buildings. The most significant were two areas of compacted gravel (which coincide precisely with the projected course of Roman Stane Street), and a ditch which may be an associated road-side ditch. Associated sherds of Roman pottery date the gravel to the 2nd century AD, possibly later.</i></p> <p><i>There were also five post-medieval pits, two post-medieval/modern wells (features cut into what were then the back plots of post-medieval properties on the New Street frontage), and fragments of modern foundations associated with the recently-demolished council offices.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: none	
Keywords: Roman gravel street	Significance: **
Author of summary: Ben Holloway and Howard Brooks	Date of summary: June 2012
ECC HEM Monitor: Richard Havis	