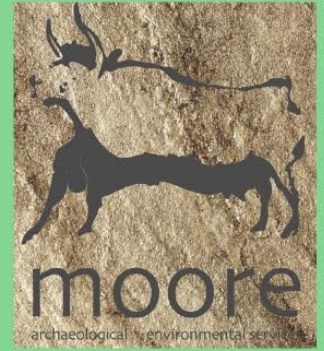


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Prepared for  
**CST Group**

Presented on  
**25<sup>th</sup> March 2026**



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# CULTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Prepared by  
**Declan Moore**

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Our Reference **26037**

Your Reference **NA**

## PROPOSED ATHLONE LINK ROAD – PHASE 2, ATHLONE, CO.

### WESTMEATH

Moore Archaeological & Environmental Services Limited. T/A Moore Group  
Registered in the Republic of Ireland - Registration Number: 341912  
Registered Address: 3 Gort na Rí, Athenry, Co. Galway, Ireland  
Phone: +353 (0)91 765640  
Web: [www.mooregroup.ie](http://www.mooregroup.ie)



**Moore Group Project Manager: Declan Moore**

**Revision History**

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26037 Athlone Link Road CHA	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	Client

Report prepared by: Declan Moore  
Archaeological Consultant

**Purpose**

This report describes the results of a cultural heritage assessment of a proposed new link road in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. The results, conclusions and recommendations contained within this report are based on information available at the time of its preparation. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that all relevant data has been collated, the author and Moore Group accept no responsibility for omissions and/or inconsistencies that may result from information becoming available after the reports completion. Moore Group accepts no responsibility or liability for any use that is made of this document other than by the Client for the purposes for which it was originally commissioned and prepared.

**Filename: 26037 Athlone Link Road CHA**

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## Abbreviations

ACA	Architectural Conservation Areas
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DLHG	Demesne Landscapes and Historic Gardens
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
NMS	National Monuments Service
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record

## Coordinate System

All GPS coordinates given in this report are in Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM).

## 1 Introduction

Moore Group was commissioned to complete a cultural heritage impact assessment of a proposed Active Travel Link Road with segregated cycling facility joining the Crescent Junction (R915) to Coosan Point Road/Southern Station Road Junction in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. The proposed development will include a new two-way carriageway widening from the narrowest width of 6.25m towards the signalised junctions at either end, a 2.75m two-way cycle-track and a 1.8m wide footpath, a two-way segregated cycle facility on Southern Station Road (west side) and a three-meter-wide shared surface from the Crescent Junction linking to the Athlone Train/Bus Station. The proposed development will also include an extension to the existing Athlone town centre bus depot yard, boundary treatments, signage, drainage and all associated ancillary works.

There are no recorded archaeological monuments within or in the immediate vicinity of the subject site. The closest recorded Archaeological site is the Athlone Town Wall Defences (WM029-042020--) which, at its nearest is located to approximately 133m to the south of the site. There are two structures listed in the NIAH located to the north of the site.

### 1.1 Scope of Work

This study aims to assess, as far as reasonably possible from existing records, the archaeological and cultural heritage environment (hereafter referred to as cultural heritage environment or cultural heritage resource), to evaluate the potential or likely impacts that the proposed development will have on this environment and, where appropriate, to suggest mitigation measures to ameliorate potential impacts, in accordance with the policies of:

- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- The National Monuments Acts (1930-2005).
- The Westmeath County Development Plan (2021-2027).
- Best practice guidelines.

Following on from this, the residual impact that the proposed scheme will have on the baseline environment is identified and evaluated.

### 1.2 Terms and Definitions

#### **Cultural Heritage**

The phrase 'cultural heritage' is a generic term used to identify a multitude of cultural, archaeological, and architectural sites and monuments. The term 'cultural heritage', in Environmental Impact Statement compliance with Section 2(1) of the Heritage Act (1995), is used throughout this report in relation to archaeological objects, features, monuments and landscapes as well as all structures and buildings which are considered to have historical, archaeological, artistic, engineering, scientific, social, or technical significance/merit. For the purposes of this report the definition of "cultural heritage" is taken broadly from the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972, which considers the following to be "cultural heritage":

- Tangible cultural heritage.
- movable cultural heritage (artefacts).
- immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, etc).
- underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins, and cities); and
- Intangible cultural heritage (oral traditions, folklore etc).

Cultural heritage comprises archaeology, architectural heritage, folklore, and history. Archaeology is the study of past societies through surviving structures, artefacts, and environmental data, and is concerned with known archaeological sites and monuments, areas of archaeological potential and underwater archaeology. Architectural heritage comprises structures, buildings, traditional and designed, and groups of buildings including streetscapes and urban vistas, which are of historical, archaeological, artistic, engineering, scientific, social, or technical interest, together with their setting, attendant grounds, fixtures, fittings, and contents. Architectural heritage and archaeology together form 'built heritage' or 'tangible heritage'. Folklore and history are aspects of 'intangible heritage', which also includes language, musical traditions, traditional crafts and skills, townland names, poetry and so on. These forms of cultural heritage are "non-moveable, non-material and largely non environmental although by their associations with certain sites and places, add to the character of an area".

### **World Heritage Sites**

Although not formally recognised in Irish legislation, impacts on World Heritage Sites will nonetheless be a material consideration for developments in their wider vicinity. To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area with legal protection by an international convention administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). World Heritage Sites are designated by UNESCO for having cultural, historical, scientific, or other form of significance. The sites are judged to contain "cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity".

### **National Monuments**

On a national level, the highest degree of protection granted to archaeological monuments are those afforded National Monument status, which are protected under the National Monuments Act of 1930 and its various amendments. These are the pre-eminent archaeological sites in Ireland and fall into several categories including:

- Sites that are in the ownership or guardianship of the state.
- Monuments that are the subject of Preservation Orders.
- Monuments in the ownership of a local authority; and
- Walled towns.

Generally National Monuments in state care are numbered amongst the best preserved and most impressive monuments in the country. Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended)

requires that the consent of the Minister is required for archaeological works at or near a national monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or a local authority or to which a preservation order applies (including upstanding or subsurface remains of town defences).

### **Record of Monuments and Places/Archaeological Survey Database**

The legislation that affords protection to the archaeology of Ireland has seen several amendments since the first National Monuments Act of 1930 and there is a legacy of several different registers and associated terminology.

A feature recorded in the 'Record of Monuments and Places' (RMP) refers to a recorded archaeological site that is granted statutory protection under the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. The RMP is the most widely applying provision of the National Monuments Acts. It comprises a list of recorded monuments and places (resulting from the Archaeological Survey of Ireland [ASI]) and accompanying maps on which such monuments and places are shown for each county. The information contained within the RMP is derived from the earlier non-statutory Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). However, some entries were not transferred to the statutory record as they refer to features that on inspection by the Archaeological Survey were found not to merit inclusion in that record or could not be located with sufficient accuracy to be included. Such sites however remain part of the SMR. The record is a dynamic one and is updated to take account of on-going research.

The most up-to-date record of archaeological monuments, the Archaeological Survey Database (ASD), is available for viewing and download on the [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) website. This record is continually revised and indicates several additional sites that do not feature in the RMP. The National Monuments Service also makes available SMR Zones of Notification on the website.

### **Sites and Monuments Record**

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) is an inventory of the known archaeological monuments in the State. There are more than 150,800 records in the database and over 138,800 of these relate to archaeological monuments.

An 'area of archaeological potential' refers to an area of ground that is deemed to constitute one where archaeological sites, features or objects may be present in consequence of location, association with identified/recorded archaeological sites and/or identifiable characteristics.

### **Register of Historic Monuments**

Section 5 of the 1987 National Monuments Act states that the Minister is required to establish and maintain a Register of Historic Monuments. Historic monuments and archaeological areas present on the register are afforded statutory protection under the 1987 Act. Any interference with sites recorded in the Register without the permission of the Minister is illegal, and two months' notice in writing is required prior to any work being undertaken on or in the vicinity of a registered monument. This list was largely replaced by the Record of Monuments and Places following the 1994 Amendment Act.

### **Architectural Conservation Areas**

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides that all Development Plans must now include objectives for preserving the character of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). An ACA is a place, area, group of structures or townscape of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest, or which contribute to the appreciation of protected structures.

In these areas, the protection of the architectural heritage is best achieved by controlling and guiding change on a wider scale than the individual structure, to retain the overall architectural or historic character of an area.

### **Record of Protected Structures/National Inventory of Architectural Heritage**

The importance of our built heritage is enshrined in the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (Part II, Section 10) which places a statutory obligation on local authorities to include in their Development Plans objectives for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special interest. The principal mechanism for the protection of these structures is through their inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). This list provides recognition of the importance of a structure, protection from adverse impacts and potential access to grant aid for conservation works. The record of Protected Structures is an ongoing process and can be reviewed and added to. In considering additions to the Record of Protected Structures local authorities have recourse to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) which provides a source of guidance on the significance of buildings in their respective areas.

### **Designed Landscapes-Demesnes, Historic Gardens & Country Estates**

The Architectural Section of the DHLGH is in the process of a multi-phase study looking at Designed Landscapes and Historic Gardens that appear as shaded areas on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Maps, circa. 1830.

'The objective of this survey is to begin a process of understanding of the extent of Ireland's historic gardens and designed landscape. Sites were identified using the 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps. These were compared with current aerial photography to assess the level of survival and change.'

## **1.3 Methodology**

### **1.3.1 Introduction**

In this assessment, tangible cultural heritage resources are captured under the relevant sections of archaeology and architectural/built heritage., while non-tangible associations with these sites and the wider study area (i.e., history and folklore) are assessed, where known, in the archaeological and historical background section of this report, with further information presented in relevant sections.

Evaluation of the potential impacts of the proposed development upon the archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage resource is based on a desktop study of written, graphic, photographic, cartographic, and electronic information sources followed by a field survey. Considering, amongst other aspects, the legislative protection afforded to the cultural heritage resource, this report evaluates the

archaeological, architectural, cultural, and historical importance of the subject area and examines the potential impacts of the proposed development and the effects on that resource.

The methodology used in the preparation of this assessment is broadly based on guidance provided in the Guidelines for Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment of TII National Road and Greenway Projects (TII Publication Number PE-ARC-02009. 2024), the EPA's Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA 2023) and other relevant guidelines.

This impact assessment addresses Cultural Heritage under the two headings of archaeology and architectural/built heritage.

### 1.3.2 Desktop Assessment

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Known cultural heritage sites were reviewed on the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) along with aerial photography and Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) mapping and other relevant sources. The following information sources, where relevant, were used for this report:

#### **Archaeological Heritage**

- UNESCO World Heritage Sites including the tentative list of candidate sites.
- National Monuments, be they in the ownership or guardianship of the State, in the ownership of a local authority or monuments under preservation orders.
- Potential National Monuments in the ownership of a local authority.
- Walled Towns.
- Archaeological Monuments that are the subject of both Preservation Orders and Temporary Preservation Orders.
- The Register of Historic Monuments.
- Archaeological Survey Database (ASD) from [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) (Sites and Monuments Record available through the Historic Environment Viewer).
- Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) for County Westmeath.
- National Monuments Service (NMS) Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) Zones of Notification.

Where appropriate, sites considered of exceptional value or sensitivity in the broader area were also reviewed.

The Westmeath County Development Plan (2021-2027) was reviewed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural heritage of the area. The development plans contain lists of cultural heritage sites including national monuments, recorded monuments, architectural conservation areas, protected structures, and protected views as well as baseline assessments of the landscape character of the county.

The plans also outline the county's heritage policies and objectives that aim to protect and promote the archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage of the region. This evaluation was carried out with due regard to these policies and other relevant information contained within the plans.

The Urban Archaeology Survey was established in 1982 to record known information relating to Irish towns and to present it to the public. One of the main objectives was to produce a zone of archaeological

potential, based on the available evidence, which could be used for planning purposes. Historical sources of information were compiled and known archaeology of the towns was evaluated.

To assess the potential impact of the proposed works the following sources were also consulted or reviewed:

- Excavations Bulletin. The Excavation Bulletin is both a published directory and an online database ([www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie)) that provides summary accounts of all the excavations carried out in Ireland and Northern Ireland from 1970 to 2012. The database gives access to over 15,000 reports and can be browsed or searched using multiple fields, including Year, County, Site Name, Site Type, Grid Reference, Licence No., Sites and Monuments Record No. and Author.
- Topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland. The topographical files of the NMI identify all recorded finds held in the NMI archive that have been donated to the state in accordance with national monuments legislation. The files sometimes include reports on excavations undertaken by NMI archaeologists in the early 20th century. Valuable information that can be gleaned might include the exact location, ground type, depth below ground level and condition when found, of each find. However, the amount and the usefulness of the information available on each find can vary considerably. The topographical files are listed by county and townland and/or street name.
- Cartographic Sources. Analysis of historic mapping shows how the landscape has changed over time. The comparison of editions of historic maps can show how some landscape features have been created, altered, or removed over a period. Sometimes features that appear on these early maps are found to be of potential archaeological significance during fieldwork.
- Toponyms. Townland names are a rich source of information for the land use, history, archaeology, and folklore of an area. The placename can have a variety of language origins such as, Irish, Viking, Anglo-Norman and English. The names can provide information on families, topographical features, and historical incidents. In terms of the built environment many names reference churches, fords, castles, raths, graveyards, roads and passes etc. In compiling the following data, several resources were consulted including the Placenames Database of Ireland [www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie) and Irish Names of Places by P.W. Joyce (Joyce, 1913).
- Aerial photographs. The usefulness of aerial photography is that it allows for a different perspective - 'the distant view'. Archaeological sites may show up on the ground surface, depending on their state of preservation, by light and shadow contrasts (shadow marks), tonal differences in the soil (soil marks) or differences in height and colour of the cultivated cereal (crop marks). It is also a useful aid in pinpointing existing features and can assist in ascertaining their extent and degree of preservation.

- Lidar. The Geological Survey Ireland Open Topographic Data Viewer was consulted for available 1m/2m DTM Lidar data of the PDA<sup>1</sup>.
- Athlone Town Walls and Defences Conservation Plan, 2005 (Oxford Archaeology).
- Published archaeological inventories; and
- Documentary Sources: several literary references were consulted.

### Field Inspection

In addition to documentary and archival research and analysis, a detailed surface-based inspection of the area of the PDA was undertaken by the author. This also involved visiting selected accessible monuments to appraise the possible effects that the proposed development would have on the receiving archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage environment as well as to determine sites' current extent and condition. Field inspection is necessary to determine the extent and nature of archaeological, architectural, and historical remains and can also lead to the identification of previously unrecorded or suspected sites and portable finds through topographical observation and local information.

### 1.4 Difficulties Encountered

No difficulties were encountered during the completion of this assessment.

### 1.5 Description of Project

The development will consist of an Active Travel Link Road with segregated cycling facility joining the Crescent Junction (R915) to Coosan Point Road/Southern Station Road Junction. This will include a carriageway widening from the narrowest width of 6.25m towards the signalised junctions at either end, a 2.75m two-way cycle-track and a 1.8m wide footpath. Also included are a new two-way segregated cycle facility on Southern Station Road (West side) and a three-meter-wide shared surface from the Crescent Junction linking to the Athlone Train/Bus Station. The proposed development will also include an extension to the existing Athlone town centre bus depot yard, boundary treatments, signage, drainage and all associated ancillary works to be completed.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer>

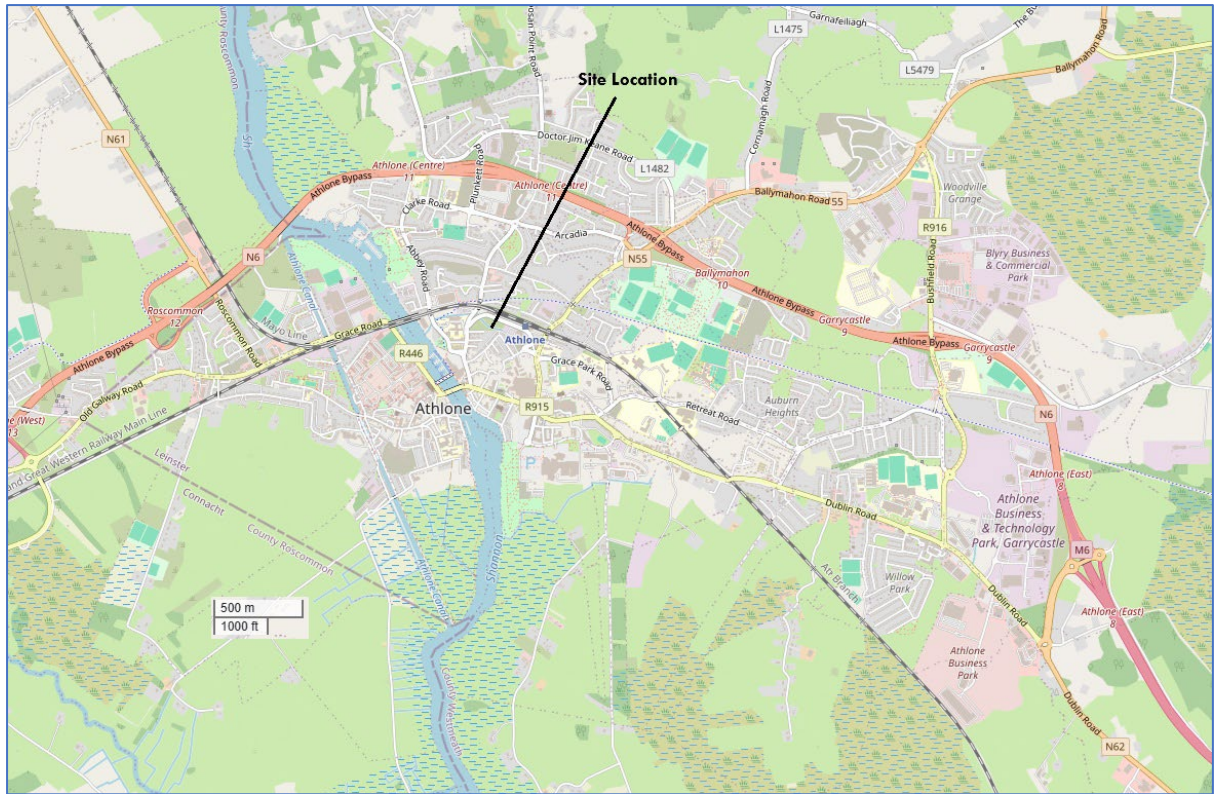


Figure 1 Site location map (© OpenStreetMap Contributors).

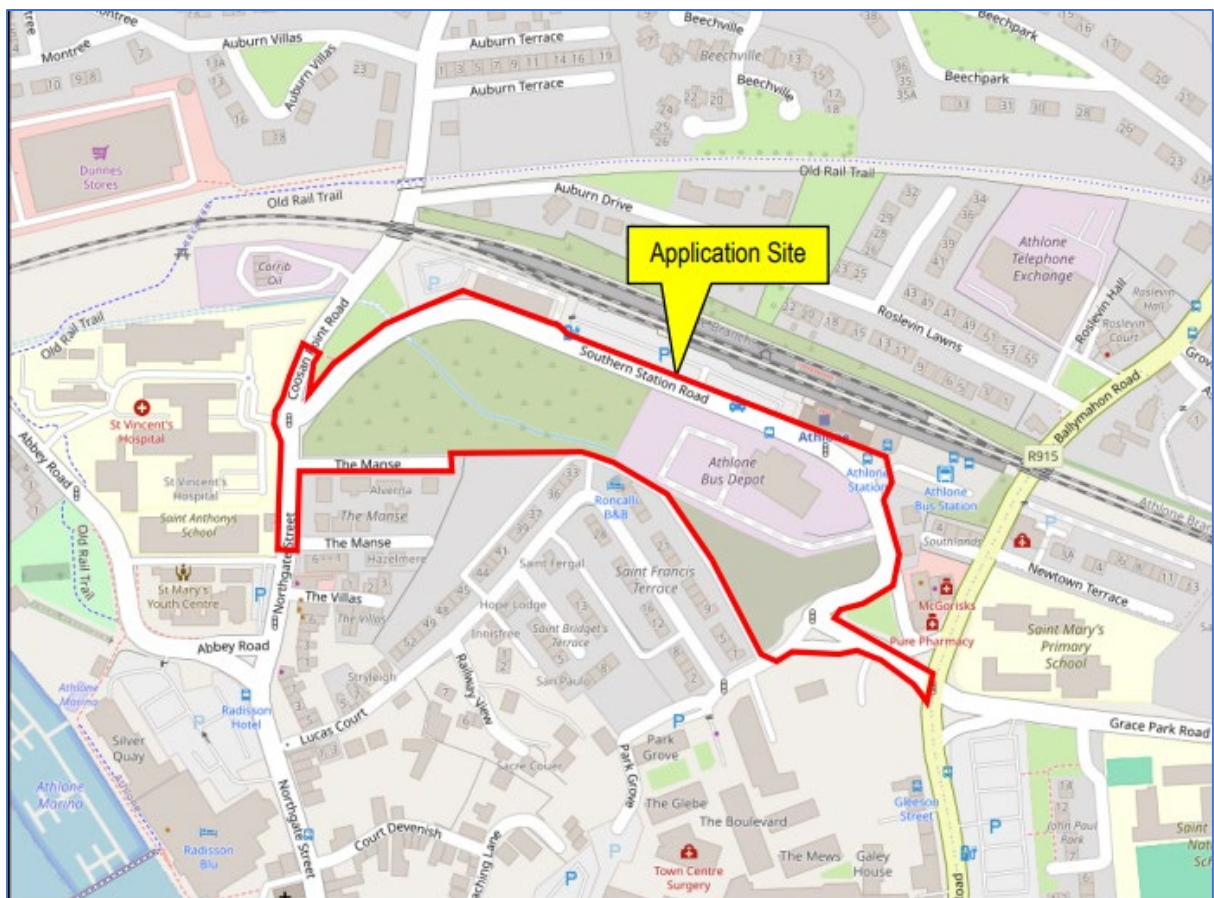
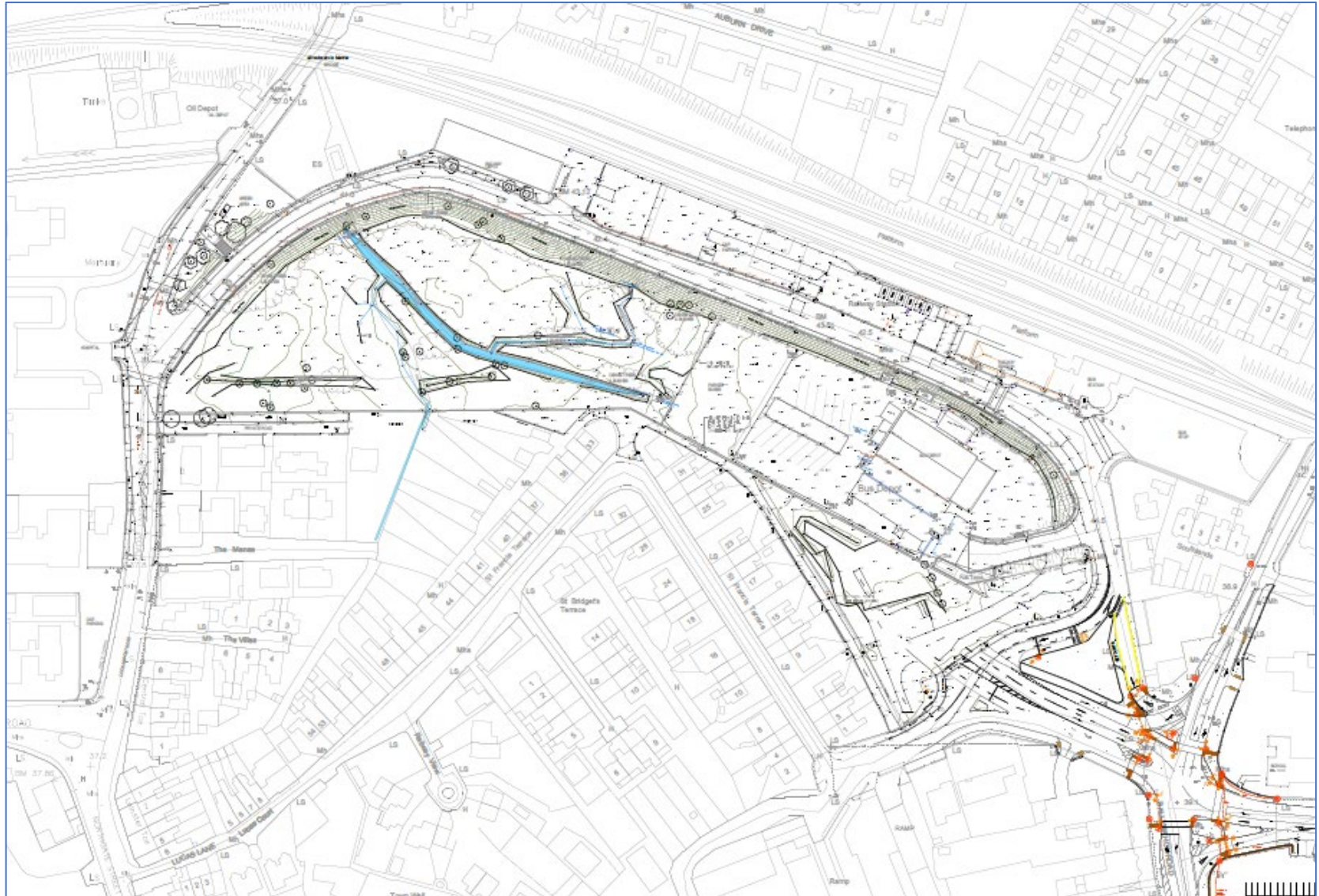


Figure 2 Showing indicative outline of subject site (in red).



**Figure 3 Existing site layout**

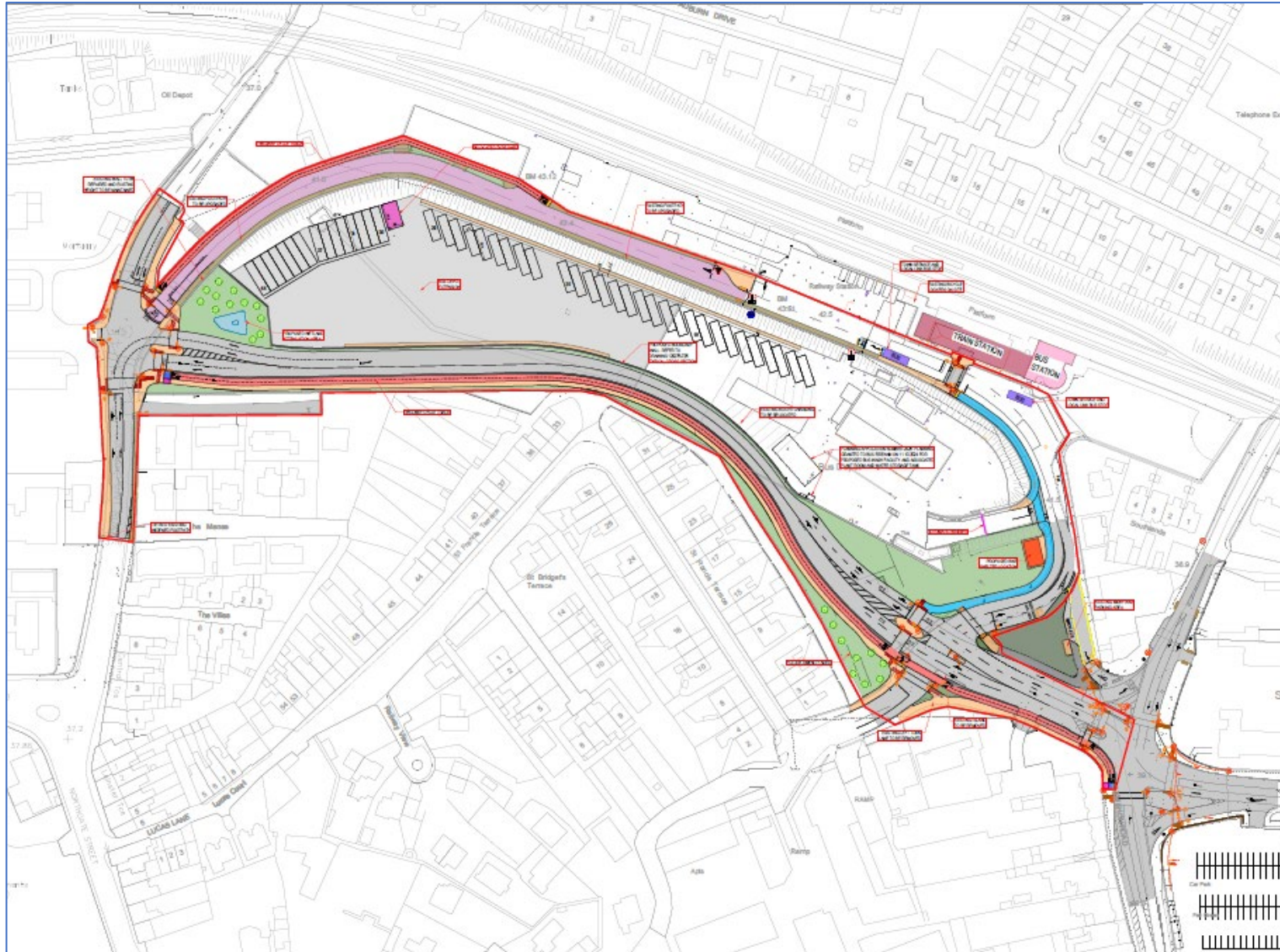


Figure 4 Proposed site layout plan

## 2 Existing Environment

### 2.1 Location Details

The subject site is primarily an area of wasteland with evident treelines, scrub, rough grassland and wet grassland & wetland areas with a substantial drainage ditch bisecting the site in an east-west direction between the Crescent Junction and Coosan Point Road/Southern Station Road, Athlone Town, Co. Westmeath.

**Table 1** Location details

<b>County and town</b>	Westmeath, Athlone
<b>Municipal District</b>	Athlone.
<b>Townlands</b>	Athlone.
<b>Street</b>	NA
<b>Archaeological Monuments</b>	None in the vicinity.
<b>Walled town</b>	Athlone is a member of the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) and has a defined town defence. The medieval walling and associated features are considered as a single national monument.
<b>Nat Mon No. within 200m of scheme</b>	Town Defences (WM029-042020---).
<b>Architectural Area of Conservation</b>	None.
<b>Record of Protected Structures / NIAH</b>	RPS No. 105, NIAH 15004151- railway station and RPS No. 146, NIAH 007134 - Cast-iron postbox, both located immediately north of subject site.
<b>ITM</b>	604087/741890

### 2.2 Archaeological and Architectural Baseline Data

#### 2.2.1 General Archaeological and Historic background

##### 2.2.1.1 The Mesolithic Period (8000BC-4000 BC)

The Mesolithic people were the first known inhabitants of Ireland, arriving about 10,000 years ago, although recent discoveries suggest earlier occupation or activity dating back a further ca. 2500 years to the Upper Palaeolithic Period (Dowd and Carden, 2016). The recent Palaeolithic evidence includes butchery marks identified on a bear patella found in a cave in County Clare in 2016, which was dated to 12,500 BC (Dowd and Carden, 2016). However, in 2021, re-examination of a reindeer bone fragment discovered in Castlepook Cave near Doneraile, County Cork in 1905 revealed human butchery

marks on the bone, which was radiocarbon dated to 31,000 BC, proving human settlement in Ireland at a much earlier stage than previously thought. The Mesolithic (middle stone age) people were a mobile society relying on wild resources for food, which was hunted and gathered using stone tools as well as boats, nets, and traps. Settlement was in temporary and semi-permanent groups of huts constructed of wood slung with hide, which may have operated as seasonal or hunting camps. Mesolithic activity to date shows a marked concentration in the north-east of Ireland this can in part be attributed to both the availability of flint and the large number of antiquarians and collectors in the region and suggests that activity in this period was widespread in the country, with settlers probably utilising the extensive coastline for fish and shellfish.

There is an increasing body of evidence to show that these Mesolithic hunters frequented the Midland lakes. Close to the Shannon in County Offaly where one great lake (Lough Ree/Derg) existed, traces have been found of an early settlement probably a hunting camp, dating from ca. 6,500 B.C. and now covered by the later growth of the raised bogland. A number of sites belonging to the close of the Mesolithic period, some three thousand years later, have been discovered on the shores of Lough Derravaragh and Lough Kinale. The weapons and tools of these Mesolithic hunters were made of chert, a compact, black-coloured stone used as a substitute for flint. One such site at Corralanna, Co. Westmeath during peat extraction works exposed a significant lithic assemblage in 1999. The finds were made exclusively of chert and included two axes, some coarse stone tools and a small range of organic finds including uncarbonised hazelnut shells. Other artefacts recorded from the wider area are a round chert scraper (NMI E181:15) from Clonmacnoise and a polished chert lancehead (NMI 1958:149) from Kellysgrove, Co. Galway. There are no sites from the early prehistoric period within the vicinity.

#### *2.2.1.2 Neolithic Period (4000BC-2500BC)*

The practice of farming spread from the Middle East, through eastern and southern Europe to reach Ireland via Britain around 4000BC. Ireland's Mesolithic hunters were, over a period, displaced or assimilated by the new Neolithic settlers. This transition fundamentally changed the local economy from one based on hunting and foraging to one of cereal cultivation and livestock rearing. The arrival of the first farmers resulted in land clearance by burning or chopping down trees with stone axes. There were no indigenous cereal crops, but the settlers brought with them wheat and barley as well as domesticated sheep, goats and cattle. Tending of crops and animals required a more sedentary lifestyle and larger permanent settlements.

Farming as a practice required new skills and, more importantly, new tools. This demand resulted in the development of specific crafts. Polished stone axes, ards (ploughs), flint tools for harvesting crops, and stone saddle querns for grinding the grain required the exploitation of specific stone sources. Flint remained an important stone for the production of tools and weapons, objects such as javelin heads, mace heads, polished axes and fine leaf and lozenge shaped arrowheads were used for both hunting and warfare. During this period the first long distance trade networks were established. Stone axes from Britain, a flint axe from Scandinavia, pitchstone from Scotland, and jadeite axes from the Alpine area of northern Europe have all been found throughout the country. Pottery also makes its first

appearance in the archaeological record. The pots were handmade, coil built and fired in bonfires or pits. The earliest pots were mainly undecorated round bottomed bowls, although decoration became more common in the later part of the period.

Other significant changes included the development of a ritual landscape dotted by large megalithic (from the Greek mega – large and lith – stone) monuments built as communal tombs or for ceremonial purposes. These monuments indicate status, knowledge of engineering, and the ability to organise resources, including labour. These tombs are divided into four classes: court tombs, portal tombs, passage tombs and wedge tombs.

The best-known megalithic tomb in the vicinity of the subject area is the portal dolman in Mihanboy, Co. Roscommon (RO051-043001--); however, the River Shannon would certainly have been exploited for both food resources and transport purposes. Neolithic finds include seven axeheads from Westmeath (NMI 1989:31; 1988:84; 1945:290; 1947:282; 1943:232).

### 2.2.1.3 *The Bronze Age (2500BC-500BC)*

As stone tools were replaced by the use of copper, later combined with tin to make bronze, the structure of society also changed over centuries. While some communal megalithic monuments, particularly wedge tombs continued to be used, the Bronze Age is characterised by a movement towards single burial and the production of prestige items and weapons, suggesting that society was increasingly stratified and warlike.

Gold jewellery from this period in the form of lunulae, torcs and bracelets are amongst the finest in Europe and hint at the presence of new social elites. In a domestic context, dwellings changed from a general rectangular plan, typical of the Neolithic, to circular arrangements evidenced on excavation by postholes and slot trenches.

The early Bronze Age was characterised by a considerable expansion of settlement in the county. The people of this period preferred well drained lightly forested upland pastures. These lightly forested slopes were easier to clear with the available technology, and the cleared soil was worked until depleted. Pasture and cattle raising was the key to the Bronze Age economy in the county. The improved technology associated with the Bronze Age also assisted the farmers in improving control over their environment, by more extensive farming practices and forestry clearances. Surviving from the Bronze Age settlers are hill forts, fulachtaí fia, weaponry and ornaments.

During the earlier part of this period individual burials were deposited in small stone lined graves (cists) and unlined pits. Burials were often accompanied by distinctive pottery vessels (food vessels) and other grave goods occasionally of copper and bronze. These burial sites are often represented by a single grave without any above ground marker or communal burials in barrows. There are several different classes of barrows but in general they consist of a circular enclosing element of ditches and sometimes banks. The interior, where burials are usually found, may be flat or have a mound of varying height. Bronze Age burials may also be found in flat cemeteries in stone cists or earth-cut pits. These cemeteries

are generally not evident above ground but are occasionally discovered during farming and quarrying activities. A local example of this monument type is found at Garrynafela (WM029-041--).

In a domestic context, dwellings changed from a general rectangular plan, typical of the Neolithic, to circular arrangements evidenced on excavation by postholes and slot trenches. Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age settlements are usually located on well-drained soils suitable for agriculture and near rivers or fording points for ease of transport and communication.

The most common Bronze Age site within the archaeological record is the burnt mound or fulacht fiadh. These enigmatic features are amongst the most common prehistoric archaeological site in Ireland. They are often recognised as horseshoe or oval shaped mounds which on excavation are found to consist of burnt material, ash, and shattered stone. In the centre a wooden trough will sometimes survive possibly lined with clay or leather, and one or more hearths may be present. Fulachtaí fia are almost always found in marshy areas or by a stream and it is thought that their location was chosen to allow the trough to be filled with water. Often these sites survive as a spread of heat-shattered stones in charcoal rich soil with little to no surface expression. Some debate exists regarding the function of these monuments and suggestions include their use as cooking sites (O'Kelly, 1954), bathing sites or textile dyeing sites and potentially brewing/mashing sites (Quinn and Moore, 2009). Extant isolated examples in the wider area are scattered (there are over 30 examples within a 6km radius of the subject site) with examples found during excavation work for the nearby M6 including two at Taduff East (RO051-011001-- & 011002--).

#### 2.2.1.4 *The Iron Age (c. 500BC to 500AD)*

The end of the Irish Bronze Age merges into the Early Iron Age almost imperceptibly. It would seem from the evidence so far uncovered that iron use was gradually introduced into Ireland; however bronze implements were still very much in use for everyday objects and for ornamentation. The Iron Age in Ireland has often been referred to as a 'Dark Age' due to a lack of finds, features or sites in comparison to the Bronze Age or the succeeding Early Medieval Period. However, development-led excavation associated with linear developments and other large scale infrastructural projects in recent decades along with research projects such as the Late Iron Age and Roman Project have added significantly to our knowledge of the Irish Iron Age.

Iron objects are found rarely and when discovered are often in poor condition. As in Europe, there are two phases of the Iron Age in Ireland: the Hallstatt and the La Tène. The Hallstatt period dates from 700BC onwards and spread rapidly from Austria, across Europe, and then into Ireland. The later Iron Age or La Tène culture also originated in Europe during the middle of the 5th Century BC. Life in Iron Age Ireland seems to have been much as it was in the early historic period – mixed farmers living in or around small, defended settlements known as ringforts or stone cashels. This period is also associated with the arrival of the Celts. It is believed these people lived in family groups helping each other work the land for sources of food. They would have had farms consisting of cattle, pigs, sheep, grain, and vegetables so land would have held some importance to them. They would have used horses, probably

to help with farming, as Y-shaped pendants, harnesses to help lead horses, had been found in more recent times. Their diet probably consisted of wild berries, fruits, nuts, and herbs that were gathered from the surrounding landscape. They would have also hunted animals for food and fished the rivers and the vast Irish shores. Hillforts, crannogs, ringforts, souterrains, cist burials, monoliths and ogham stones are all associated with this period.

#### 2.2.1.5 *Early Medieval (500AD-1000AD)*

In general, it is accepted that the Celts, arriving here in early Iron Age times and made use of earlier sacred burial places such as Uisneach and Cruachan. There is, however, a school of thought who would see the Bronze Age people who erected the barrows and other burial mounds as the first Celts. Future excavations may help to solve the problem.

Hillforts, a field monument closely associated with the Celts on the Continent and in Britain, are also found in Ireland, though only about fifty examples are recorded, and none are known from the Midland region. Another form of Iron Age monument, the linear earthworks called the Black Pig's Race, or Duncla – can be seen extending from Lough Kinale to Lough Gowna in County Longford blocking this ancient and important routeway. This earthwork can be traced running in a southwesterly direction as far as Slanemore. Another impressive linear earthwork known as the Dun of Drumsna, can be seen near Carrick-on-Shannon in County Roscommon.

In the Early Historic period large numbers of enclosed domestic habitations 'ringforts or raths' were built and occupied and these represent the commonest and most recognizable of the field monuments in the Irish countryside. The majority are simple enclosed homesteads but the larger forts, defended by massive banks and deep ditches or fosses, probably had some form of defensive function. It could be said that almost every townland be it in drumlin, upland or undulating grassland, contains or did contain a ringfort, and certainly any townland with the prefix Rath or Lios (and there are many) received its name from the ringfort or forts within its boundary. Probably accounting in part for their numerical strength is the fact that they range in date from at least the early Iron Age to Medieval times. A significant complex of ringforts is found to the southwest of Athlone in the townlands of Kilmocolmock, Crannagh and Keelty.

Souterrains are subterranean passages and are usually associated with ringforts and cashels but sometimes in association with ecclesiastical sites. Generally dating to the early Christian period most souterrains are of drystone construction, though in some parts of the country where stone was less plentiful they were tunnelled through earth or rock (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, 100-151).

The fording point at Athlone has been regarded as important from prehistoric times, indicated by the large numbers of finds from the riverbed. The first indications of a settlement in historic times are in the form of five grave slabs found on the east riverbank, dating from the mid-eighth century, which may have indicated the presence of a church. Ornaments, found in the Shannon at Athlone, have been related to a major Viking gold hoard, found at Hare Island in 1802, dating to the ninth and tenth centuries AD.

The impact of Christianity along the Shannon is indicated by a number of important early church foundations, few more significant than the monastic settlement of Clonmacnoise (OF005-027001--)

founded by St. Ciarán in the mid-6th century on the eastern bank of the River Shannon. The site includes the ruins of a cathedral, seven churches (10th -13th century), two round towers, three high crosses and the largest collection of Early Christian graveslabs in Western Europe. Clonmacnoise's period of greatest growth came between the 8th and 12th centuries. It was attacked frequently during these four centuries, mostly by the Irish (at least 27 times), the Vikings (at least 7 times) and Normans (at least 6 times). The early wooden buildings began to be replaced by more durable stone structures in the 9th century, and the original population of fewer than ten men grew to perhaps 1,500 to 2,000 by the 11th century. Artisans associated with the site created some of the most beautiful and enduring artworks in metal and stone ever seen in Ireland, with the Clonmacnoise Crozier (on display in the National Museum of Ireland) and the Cross of the Scriptures representing the apex of their efforts. Viking age finds from this period include a hoard found in 1802 on Hare Island, Lough Ree. Weighing 10Kg. Charles Vallancey, writing in 1804, records the hoard contained "ten gold bracelets, and a number of silver anklets, with some ingots of silver". The Marquis of Lansdowne purchased the gold antiquities in Dublin but in 1812, after his death, they were offered for sale again this time by Messrs Rundel and Bridge, Silversmiths of Ludgate Street, London and melted down.

#### 2.2.1.6 Late Medieval 1100AD-1550AD

The Late medieval period is generally defined by the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169. Originally invited by Diarmuid Mac Murchada as mercenaries to assist in the recovery of his Leinster Kingdom, the Anglo-Normans quickly set about making territorial claims for themselves. By 1171 King Henry II mounted a second invasion resulting in his Lordship of Ireland. Moated sites are generally square or sub-rectangular and are defined by a bank with an external ditch and raised interior. These monuments would have been defensive homesteads. The interior was often raised and would have contained buildings. This monument type dates to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and would have been constructed by the Anglo Normans to protect their manor houses. Athlone's strategic location was recognised long before the arrival of the Normans. The annals record that a causeway was built by the kings of Connacht and Mide as early as 1001. This was followed by the first bridge and castle built by Toirdealbach, King of Connacht, in 1120 and 1129. During the Norman conquest King John realising the town's importance in expanding and securing his territorial ambitions authorised the building of a stone castle and bridge by his Irish Justiciar, Bishop John de Gray of Norwich. The castle did not always protect the town which was burnt and breached on a number of occasions. In 1381 Edmund Mortimer earl of March had to retake the castle and the castle was taken again by Lord Dillon in 1490. In 1547 the castle was repaired by William Brabazon, the King's Treasurer in Ireland.

Irish stone churches of pre-1100 date are small and have little structural sophistication. It is possible that the majority of early medieval churches in Ireland of this date were constructed in wood, not stone, and were principally simple post-built structures. When the Romanesque tradition infiltrated Ireland in the early decades of the 1100s it did not effect a widespread or significant change in the size or structure of Irish churches; rather, the Romanesque features were simply integrated into the long established, indigenous architectural format (O'Keeffe, 2000). An attempt to bring the practices of the Irish Church

into line with the Church elsewhere in Europe began in the twelfth century when a series of synods and councils were set up. It is thought that the Cluniac priory of Saints Peter and Paul was founded in West Athlone, during the mid-twelfth century. This religious foundation was added to by the arrival of the Franciscans who according to Father Donatus Mooney wrote that the friary church was consecrated in 1241 and that Athlone was one of the first convents of the Rule of the Friars Minor in Ireland (Jennings 1934, 102). It's unclear who the founder of the abbey was but the Dillon family claimed patronage of the abbey, based on the presence of an effigial tomb belonging to the Dillon family which was located in the choir of the church (*ibid.*).

During the Tudor period the town continued to flourish. In 1557 the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney, ordered a new stone bridge to be built across the Shannon. In 1641 Irish rebels began the Confederate Wars that eventually resulted in the Cromwellian conquest of the country. Athlone with its obvious strategic importance was held by Irish troops until late in 1650 when it eventually fell to General Charles Coote, who attacked the town from the west, having crossed into Connacht at Sligo.

Forty years later during the Wars of the Two Kings Athlone again took centre stage. Following the defeat at the Boyne the Jacobites retreated to a newly reinforced town and prepared for the advancing Williamites. The resulting siege of 1690-1 resulted in the town defences and the castle sustaining heavy damage. The bombardment of the western side of the town was intense, with over 60,000 shot fired into the town over a ten-day period. One survivor described the scene, "with the balls and bombs flying so thick, that the spot was hell on earth". A rebuilding programme was undertaken by the British Army between 1800-1827 at about the same time as the Artillery Fort at Shannonbridge was built. The machicolations of the central keep are all nineteenth century. In the interior is an early nineteenth century two-storey barrack building. The modern ramp up to the castle has a line of pistol loops. The castle was taken over by the Irish Army in 1922 and continued as a military installation until it was transferred to the Office of Public Works in 1970.

Between 1803 and 1817 during the Napoleonic Wars fear of a French invasion resulted in an extensive defensive system of batteries being constructed to the west of the town. These gun emplacements placed on earthen ramps were linked by sunken pathways. Most of the eight batteries were demolished in the later 19th and early 20th century, earthworks however survive at Battery no. 1, to the east of the canal at the present-day location of Battery heights (WM029-011--).

## 2.2.2 Archaeological Heritage

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### 2.2.2.1 World Heritage Sites

There are no World Heritage Site or potential World Heritage Site contained in the Tentative List of Candidate Sites within 5km of the study area.

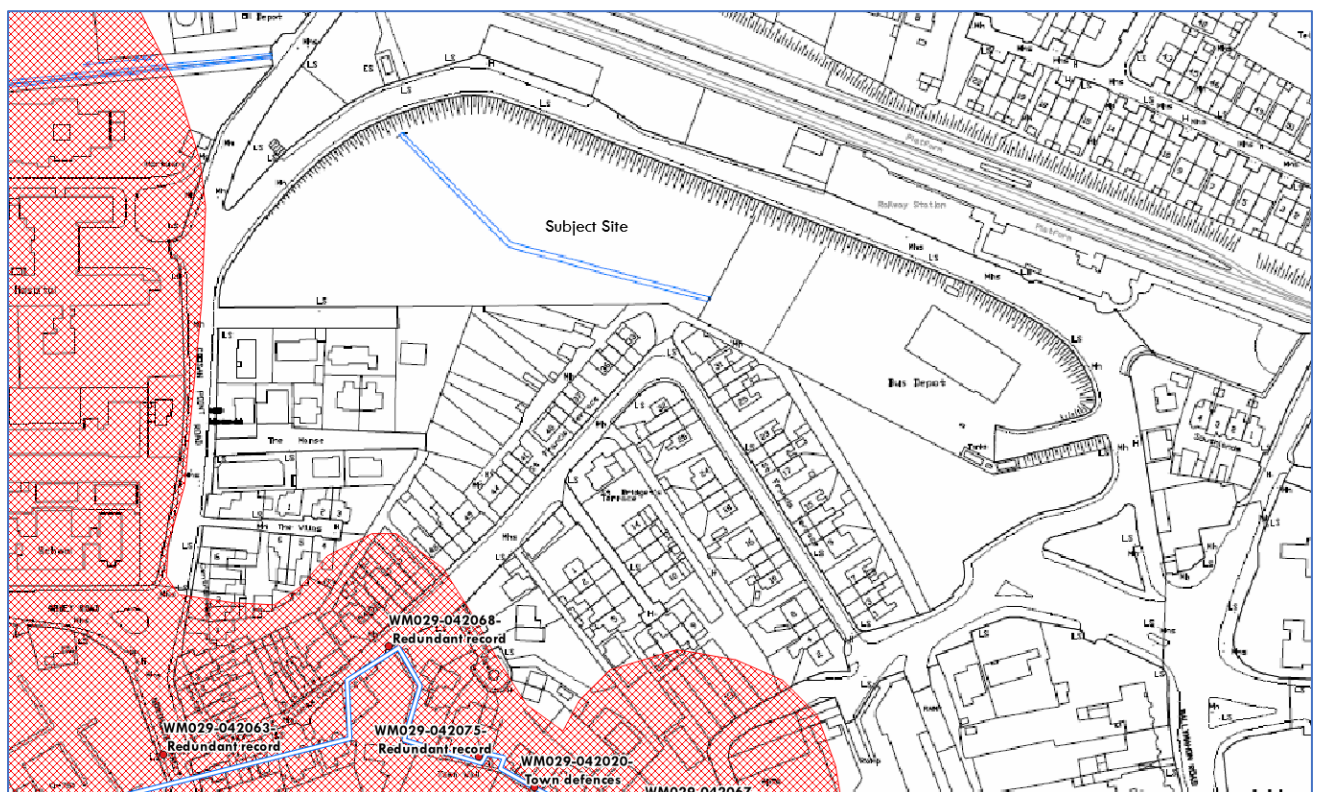
### 2.2.2.2 National Monuments in State Care, Guardianship or under Protection Order

There are no National Monuments in State Care (Ownership or Guardianship) or Monuments that are subject to a preservation order within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development. The Town

Defences of Athlone (WM029-042020---) are accorded National Monument status. Only small sections remain, together with indicators of the positions of the walls. The closest section (no longer extant) is 133m to the south.

### 2.2.2.3 Record of Monuments and Places/Archaeological Survey Database/Register of Historic Monuments

Archaeological monuments are general registered by the National Monuments Service using a Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) number. The closest Recorded Monument is the Town Defences of Athlone (WM029-042020---) located 133m to the south of the subject site. The subject site is located (at its closest) 30m north of the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Athlone as identified within the Urban Archaeological Survey for Westmeath. This area corresponds with the Zone of Notification as shown on the National Monuments Service map-viewer. This area represents the historic core of the town and is the area within which it would be expected that sub-surface archaeological deposits may survive.



**Figure 5** Excerpt from Archaeological Survey Database Map ([www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)) showing subject site and nearby known monuments. Conjectural town wall depicted in blue at bottom of figure.

### 2.2.2.4 Map Regression

For this study the following historic maps were consulted:

- Down Survey 1654 -1656.
- Kilkenny, 1758, by John Roque (Trinity College Dublin).

- First edition Ordnance Survey 6" Maps circa 1837, and
- Third edition Ordnance Survey 25" Maps circa 1900.

A review of the available cartographic sources for the subject area, begins with the Petty's Down Survey, so called because a chain was laid down and a scale made. The survey was undertaken from 1656-8 under the direction of William Petty. Using the earlier Civil Survey as a guide, teams of surveyors, mainly former soldiers, were sent out to measure every townland to be forfeited to soldiers and adventurers post the Cromwellian Wars. The resulting maps, made at a scale of 40 perches to one inch (the modern equivalent of 1:50,000) were the first systematic mapping of a large area on such a scale attempted anywhere. The primary purpose of these was to record the boundaries of each townland and to calculate their areas with great precision. The maps are also rich in other detail showing churches, roads, rivers, castles, houses and fortifications.

The town of Athlone is depicted in this map as a large walled town with a bridge crossing the Shannon. The walls are depicted as taking on a star or angular shape surrounding the town both sides of the river. The subject site is located to the north of the walled town with little additional detail depicted.

Phillips Map of 1685 is a little more detailed. It depicts Athlone town as a walled town lying either side of the river with a connecting bridge. The wall encircles both sides of the town. It is an angular wall with protruding watch towers. The subject area is located to the north of the town, outside of the walls. A roadway which passes through the north gate and continues northward curves around the subject area and takes the same route as the modern Coosan Point Road.

The canal which runs N/S through west Athlone is recorded on Taylor and Skinners Map of 1777. The approximate location of the development area is depicted as an open space to the north of the town.. This map depicts North gate and Coosan Point Road following the same route as today.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey 6" Maps depicts the subject area in pre-famine times (created 1837-1842). The subject area itself is depicted as a green field site with 2 field boundaries running roughly North – South through it. A third boundary runs west to east through the eastern part of the subject site. A building is depicted to the north (outside of the subject area) lining the Coosan Point Road. No features are depicted at the subject site.

Much has changed with significant development by the time of the later 2<sup>nd</sup> and later 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 25" maps with the introduction of the railway line and station (and associated structures) to the north and significant housing developments both north and south of the site. The site itself remains in greenfield with the central watercourse/drain clearly depicted.

#### *2.2.2.5 Aerial Photography*

A review of available aerial photographs was undertaken to identify any previously unrecorded anomalies of historical potential. Inspection of the aerial photographic coverage of the area held by the Ordnance Survey (1995-2013), Google Earth (2002-2020) and Bing Maps was completed. The subject

area is an urbanised environment with a highly developed core. No additional sites or features were noted.

#### 2.2.2.6 *LiDAR Review*

A review of the Geological Survey Ireland Open Topographic Data Viewer was carried out<sup>2</sup>. There is no available data for the subject site.

#### 2.2.2.7 *Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland*

A review of the online resource [www.heritagemaps.ie](http://www.heritagemaps.ie) was completed. No finds are recorded in the vicinity of the subject site.

#### 2.2.2.8 *Previous Archaeological Fieldwork in the vicinity*

The following section lists excavations which have been previously carried out at and in the vicinity of the subject site. There were two licenced archaeological investigations within the subject site. These are summarised below.

##### **2005:1517 - ATHLONE: Railway Field Link Road, Westmeath**

County: Westmeath

Site name: ATHLONE: Railway Field Link Road

Sites and Monuments Record No.: N/A

Licence number: 05E0123

Author: Tara O'Neill, Archaeological Consultancy Services

Site type: No archaeology found

Period/Dating: N/A

ITM: E 604050m, N 741875m

Monitoring of six trial pits was carried out on 3–4 March 2005, along the route of the proposed Railway Field link road in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. No archaeological features were exposed during monitoring.

##### **2007:1873 - ATHLONE: Railway Field, Westmeath**

County: Westmeath

Site name: ATHLONE: Railway Field

Sites and Monuments Record No.: N/A

Licence number: 05E0123 Ext.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://dcentr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer> viewed 12th February 2025

Author: Stuart D. Elder, Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.

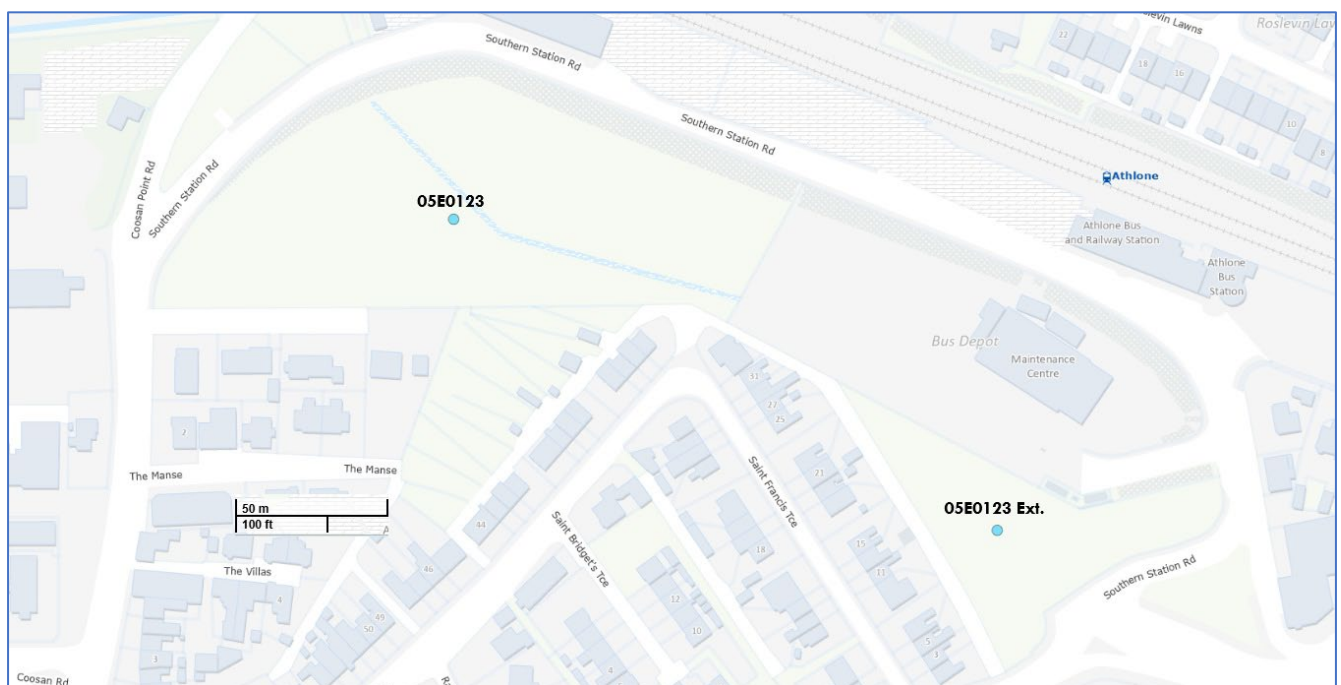
Site type: No archaeology found

Period/Dating: N/A

ITM: E 604227m, N 741774m

The new town centre development in Athlone requires the installation of a new link road through CIE lands immediately to the south of Athlone railway station, between the Crescent Junction and the Coosan Point Junction through the Railway Field, and expansion of the existing roundabouts.

Numerous delays have meant that, two years on, the project has still not advanced to testing stage. Monitoring of test-pits was undertaken by Tara O'Neill in 2005, and no further work was carried out until 2007. At this time only a small area was topsoil-stripped to provide for a contractor's compound. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted.



**Figure 6** Previous archaeological investigations at the subject site.

## 2.2.3 Architectural Heritage

### 2.2.3.1 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

There are no ACAs in the vicinity.

### 2.2.3.2 Record of Protected Structures (RPS)/National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)/Industrial/Vernacular Heritage

There are no protected structures or NIAH sites located within the subject site. Two protected structures, which are also listed on the NIAH are located just north of the subject site. These are described below (excerpted from NIAH).

**Athlone Railway Station, Southern Station Road, ATHLONE, Athlone, WESTMEATH**

RPS Reg. No.: 145

NIAH Reg. No.: 15007135

Rating: Regional

Original Use: Railway station

In Use As: Railway station

Date: 1855 - 1860

Description: Detached five-bay two-storey Italianate style Railway Station, built c.1858 with single-bay single-storey pavilions to either end. Renovated and extended 1985. Hipped slate roof with overhanging bracketed eaves, rendered chimneystacks and cast-iron rainwater goods. Constructed of snecked limestone with ashlar detailing over ashlar plinth. Ashlar quoins to corners. Square-headed window openings with ashlar architraves with entablatures over to ground floor, replacement windows to all openings. Segmental-headed doorcase with architrave set in recessed three-bay loggia with round-headed openings with limestone Doric pillars and limestone surrounds. Two limestone roundels above loggia with cast-iron lanterns. Original interior replaced.

Appraisal: A highly attractive mid nineteenth-century train station, built in a compact and elegant Italianate style. High quality craftsmanship is apparent in the dressings and detailing of the masonry employed. It was built to designs by George Wilkinson (1814-90) for the Great Southern and Western Railway Company's Portarlinton to Athlone Midland line in 1858.

**Athlone Railway Station, Southern Station Road, ATHLONE, Athlone, WESTMEATH**

RPS No.: 146

NIAH Reg No.: 15007134

Rating: Regional

Original Use: Post box

In Use As: Post box

Date: 1880 - 1900

Description: Cast-iron post box, erected c.1890, with 'Post Office' insignia. Original 'VR' monogram now partially removed. Built into loggia to front of Athlone East Train Station (15007135).

Appraisal: An attractive piece of late nineteenth-century mass produced cast-iron work. The various raised elements serve to enhance the artistic design quality of the composition.

### *2.2.3.3 Designed Landscapes - Demesnes, Historic Gardens & Country Estates*

There are no Designed Landscapes-Demesnes, Historic Gardens or Country Estates in the immediate vicinity. The closest demesne depicted (shaded) in the 1st edition OS Map is Springpark House and

demesne which was located roughly 75m to the north of the subject site. There are no extant remains of either the house or the demesne. Nineteenth century terraced housing and other modern development has removed all element of the demesne.

## 2.2.4 Folklore, Other Cultural Heritage Features and Areas of Potential

### 2.2.4.1 Rivers, Streams, and Wetlands

Rivers and streams are important cultural as well as physical features of the landscape, and archaeological sites and features are often related with waterways including features such as fulachtaí fia, fords, bridges, and mills. Riverbanks have been favoured for human occupation since prehistoric times for their proximity to food sources and fresh water and they served as routeways, boundaries, defences and as a focus for ritual. A drainage ditch/watercourse traverses the subject site from east to west. This watercourse is not depicted on early historic mapping and only appears on the final edition OS Map, so is likely of relatively recent provenance.

### 2.2.4.2 Townland Boundaries

No townland boundaries will be affected.

### 2.2.4.3 Folklore Commission

A review of the National Folklore Collection was completed on [www.Dúchas.ie](http://www.Dúchas.ie). There are numerous references to Athlone, but none were noted of relevance to the subject site.

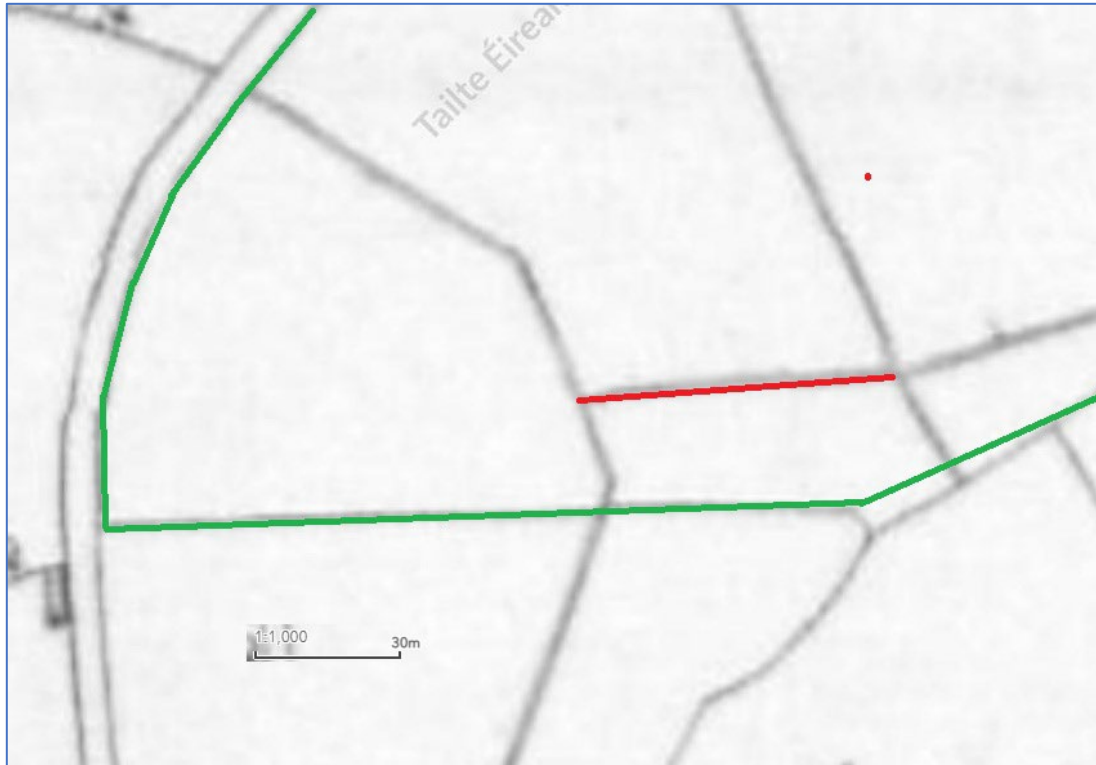
## 2.3 Fieldwork

A field inspection was carried out by the author on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2026 which entailed walking the PDA noting, and recording the terrain type and land usage, the presence of features of archaeological or historical significance and visually investigating any suspect anomalies observed to determine their nature and provenance where possible.

The site could be fully accessed and was inspected throughout. The subject site was accessed via the existing Bus Depot site to the east and via a field gate at the western leading from the Coosan Point Road. The weather conditions were dry and crisp with sunny spells. The site is an irregularly shaped area of greenfield located to the north of Athlone town centre. The subject site is located within the urban area of Athlone Town centre, within a built-up environment. The subject site includes the Athlone Bus Depot to the east and is bounded by housing estates of the Manse to the southwest and St Francis Terrace to the southeast. There are several residential and commercial properties in the wider vicinity of the site. The proposed link road will transverse the site from the Crescent Junction (R915) to Coosan Point Road/Southern Station Road Junction.

Tree lines form part of the site boundary which is also occupied by either hedgerows or mixed woodland in the case of the Southern Station Road. The boundary along the footpath is of mixed woodland trees on a fairly steep bank which leads down to the grassland area. The centre of the site is dominated by

thick scrub and bramble. The south of the site was wet underfoot at the time of the site inspection. At the southern end of the greenfield a section of relict field boundary was noted. This presented as an overgrown linear bank roughly 70m in length. This feature aligns with the east-west aligned boundary noted on the first edition OS Map. No features of cultural heritage significance were noted.



**Figure 7** Excerpt from 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. OS Map showing location of relict field boundary.



**Plate 1** Looking northwest at western end of subject site.



**Plate 2 Looking west at western end of site showing watercourse.**



**Plate 3 Looking south at centre of greenfield area showing relict 19<sup>th</sup> century boundary.**



**Plate 4 Looking south at centre of greenfield area showing relict 19<sup>th</sup> century boundary.**



**Plate 5 Looking north along Southern Station Road.**



**Plate 6 Looking east along Southern Station Road showing Railway Station (RPS 145).**



**Plate 7 Looking south towards existing bus depot from Southern Station Road.**



**Plate 8 Looking southwest at subject site from Southern Station Road.**

## 2.4 Potential Effects

### 2.4.1 Potential Direct Effects

Direct negative impacts may occur where sites of archaeological and cultural heritage significance are located within the footprint of the proposed development, which would potentially be impacted upon by ground disturbances.

In relation to the proposed development, direct, physical impacts on the archaeological and cultural heritage can manifest themselves in the following ways:

- Where an archaeological or cultural heritage site, structure, monument, or feature is located within an area where works takes place and the works either intentionally or unintentionally entail the alteration or removal of all or part of the site, structure, monument or feature a direct, physical impact will occur.
- Direct, physical impacts can also occur in gaining access to the site. Where archaeological, architectural, or cultural heritage sites, structures, monuments, or features are intentionally or unintentionally removed or altered when transporting and/or facilitating access for machinery, equipment and/or materials to or from site a direct physical impact will occur; and
- There is the potential for direct, physical impacts on previously unrecorded archaeological and architectural sites, structures, monuments, or features.

If these effects cannot be remediated, for example if archaeological deposits are destroyed during excavations, then the impacts will be permanent.

#### 2.4.1.1 Potential Direct Effects on Recorded Archaeological Monuments

The proposed development will not have a direct impact on any recorded archaeological monuments.

#### 2.4.1.2 *Potential Direct Effects on Unrecorded Archaeological Monuments or Features*

There is a low-moderate potential to directly impact unrecorded archaeological features.

#### 2.4.1.1 *Potential direct Impacts Architectural Sites*

The proposed development will have no direct physical effect on the surrounding built heritage.

### 2.4.2 'Do Nothing Scenario'

If the proposed works were not to proceed, there would be no effect upon the archaeological, architectural, or cultural heritage resource.

#### 2.4.3 *Potential Effects on Setting/Operational Effects*

Impacts on Setting can be reduced with sensitive site development and screening. The impact of the development is usually proportional to the extent to which that development is visible to and from the extant recorded monuments and features.

#### 2.4.3.1 *Archaeological Sites*

The proposed development will not impact the visual amenity of any known monuments.

#### 2.4.3.2 *Architectural Sites*

The proposed development will not impact the visual amenity of the built or industrial heritage resource.

## 3 Mitigation Measures and Residual Effects

### 3.1 Mitigation Measures

A programme of targeted archaeological assessment by way of test excavation will be completed. 'Test excavation is that form of archaeological excavation where the purpose is to establish the nature and extent of archaeological deposits and features present in a location which it is proposed to develop (though not normally to fully investigate those deposits or features) and allow an assessment to be made of the archaeological impact of the proposed development. It may also be referred to as archaeological testing' (DAHGI 1999a, 27).

A suitably qualified archaeologist will be appointed to advise the design team on archaeological matters, liaise with the relevant authorities, prepare an archaeological licence application and method statement, and complete the archaeological testing work. Testing should be carried out under licence to the National Monuments Service at the DHLGH. The application for such a licence requires a detailed method statement, outlining the procedures to be adopted to monitor, record, and recover material of archaeological interest during such work.

Should archaeological material be uncovered at any location, the feature will be summarily investigated to determine the form, age, nature, depth, and extent of the feature. The feature will be planned, photographed, and recorded to best professional standards.

Adequate funds to cover excavation, post-excavation analysis, and any testing or conservation work required should be made available if required. Upon completion of the works dissemination of the results will take the form of a stratigraphic report and full report to publishable standard lodged with the licensing section (NMS) and the Planning Section (NMS) and the National Museum of Ireland. A summary of the report will also be submitted to the Excavations Bulletin within six weeks of the end of fieldwork. Should results warrant it, wider dissemination in the form of a full publication may be recommended.

Where archaeological material is identified, the developer will submit an archaeological mitigation strategy and a detailed method statement for written agreement with the relevant authorities detailing proposed mitigation including, preservation in situ by way of avoidance or redesign, and/or archaeological excavation under a Section 26 licence in advance of development.

The agreed archaeological mitigation (preservation in situ/full excavation) shall take place under licence prior to the commencement of development. The developer shall make provision for excavation, post excavation, interpretation, and publication of the results. A preliminary report detailing the findings of the agreed resolution shall be submitted to the planning authority within four weeks of the licence expiry and a full and final report shall be submitted to the planning authority within 1 year of the licence expiry date.

Work personnel should be instructed to remain vigilant for the discovery of archaeological remains/objects and/or architectural heritage features. Should a suspected archaeological or architectural heritage feature, deposit or artefact, or suspected human remains, be identified or revealed during the work, it is recommended that it is brought to the immediate attention of the archaeologist in the first instance and where applicable the find(s) should be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities (i.e., NMS, NMI, Kilkenny County Council Heritage Office and/or An Garda Síochána).

**The above recommendations are subject to approval by the National Monuments Service at the DHLGH and other relevant authorities.**

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## **Appendix 2 Conventions, Directives and Legislation**

### **Conventions**

Ireland has ratified several European and international conventions in relation to the protection of its cultural heritage. This section summarises Ireland's obligations as a signatory to several International and European conventions relating to the protection and conservation of cultural heritage sites. Also included is a synopsis of existing national legislation governing the care and protection of our cultural heritage resources.

#### **ICOMOS Xi'an Declaration, 2005**

Ireland is a signatory to an international declaration sponsored by International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the Xi'an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas, 2005, that endeavours to ensure the safeguard and conservation of the World's cultural heritage as part of its sustainable and human development.

#### **EIA Directive 85/337/EEC as amended.**

To assist planning and other consent authorities in deciding if significant effects on the environment are likely to arise in the case of development below the national mandatory EIS thresholds, the DHLGH published a Guidance document in August 2003.

### **The European Landscape Convention 2000**

In 2002 Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention - also known as the Florence Convention, which promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. It is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all dimensions of European landscape.

### **Valletta Convention, 1997**

In 1997 the Republic of Ireland ratified the Council of Europe, European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (the 'Valletta Convention'). Obligations under the Convention include provision for statutory protection measures, including the maintenance of an inventory of the archaeological heritage and the designation of protected monuments and areas.

### **Granada Convention, 1997**

Under the European Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage (Granada Convention), 1997, the Republic of Ireland is obliged to maintain inventories of architectural heritage, to protect the architectural heritage and adopt conservation policies as integrated planning objectives.

### **UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972**

This Convention provides for the identification, conservation, and preservation of cultural and natural sites of outstanding universal value for inclusion in a world heritage list. The World Heritage status is a non-statutory designation, and no additional statutory controls result from this designation. However, the impact of proposed development upon a World Heritage Site will be a key material consideration in determining planning applications.

## **Legislation**

### **The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006**

The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 ensures the protection of the archaeological heritage resource by requiring that all applications under this Act are accompanied by an EIAR including information on material assets, including the architectural and archaeological heritage, and the cultural heritage.

### **The National Monuments Act 1930 to 2004**

Irish legislation for the protection of archaeological heritage is based on the National Monuments Acts 1930 and amendments of 1954, 1987, 1994 and 2004. These acts are the principal statutes governing the care of monuments in Ireland. They provide for the protection of national monuments using preservation orders. The overall state archaeological service is provided by the DHLGH and delivered

through the Planning and Heritage Section of the DHLGH and the National Museum of Ireland (Irish Antiquities Division) on behalf of the Minister.

Monuments are protected under the National Monuments Acts in several ways:

- National Monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or a local authority.
- National Monuments, which are subject to a preservation order.
- Historic monuments or archaeological areas recorded in the Register of Historic Monuments; and
- Monuments recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

Section 12(3) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 provides for the protection of monuments and places in the record, stating that “When the owner or occupier (not being the Minister) of a monument or place which has been recorded under subsection (1) of this section or any person proposes to carry out, or to cause or permit the carrying out of, any work at or in relation to such monument or place, he shall give notice in writing of his proposal to carry out the work to the Minister and shall not, except in the case of urgent necessity and with the consent of the Minister, commence work for a period of two months after having given the notice”.

### **The Planning and Development Act 2000**

Under arrangements which came into operation on 1 January 2000 (The Planning and Development Act 2000), the system of listing buildings was replaced with strengthened procedures for the preservation of protected structures and structures in architectural conservation areas (ACA).

### **The Architectural Heritage and Historic Properties Act, 1999**

This Act provides for the establishment of a national inventory of architectural heritage which forms the basis for recommendation from the Minister to local authorities of sites for inclusion in the local authorities Record of Protected Structures