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*Development Consultants  
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## REPORT SUBMISSION SHEET

<b>Site:</b> Railway Field Link Road	<b>Job No:</b> 05_06
<b>Job Description:</b> Archaeological Monitoring	<b>Development:</b> Road Scheme
<b>Excavation Licence No:</b> 05E0123	<b>Planning Ref. No:</b> N/A

### REPORTS SUBMITTED TO:

<b>Client:</b>	Mr. Alan Kelly, Athlone Urban District Council, Town Hall, Athlone, County Westmeath
<b>Project Engineers:</b>	Mr. Kevin Walsh, Michael Punch & Partners, NIB Building, Stephen Green, Sligo
<b>Department of Environment, &amp; Local Government-Licensing:</b>	Licensing Section, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. Dún Scéine 4/5 Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2
<b>Department of Environment, &amp; Local Government-Planning:</b>	Ms. Laura Claffey, Planning Department, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. Dún Scéine 4/5 Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2
<b>National Museum:</b>	Duty Officer, National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.

#### HEAD OFFICE

Unit 21  
Boyne Business Park  
Greenhills, Drogheda  
Co. Louth  
Tel: 041 9835422  
Tel: 041 9835513  
Fax: 041 9842131  
enquiries@acsltd.ie  
www.acsltd.ie

#### NEWRY OFFICE

61, Dominick Street  
Newry, Co. Down  
BT35 8BW  
Tel: 028 30256008  
Fax: 028 30256009

#### DUBLIN OFFICE

Mespil House  
Sussex Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 6672914

#### DIRECTORS

Donald Murphy  
*M.A., M.I.A.P.A.*  
Deirdre Murphy  
*B.A., H.D.E., M.Litt, M.I.A.P.A.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Tara O Neill

*Tara O Neill*

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005



past | present | future

# ACS



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Railway Field Link Road

Client: Athlone Town Council

Licence No: 05E0123  
Planning Ref: N/A  
NGR 204100, 241850-204350, 241700

Report Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005

TARA O NEILL

Our Ref: 05\_06

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Unit 21  
Boyne Business Park  
Greenhills, Drogheda  
Co. Louth  
Tel: 041 9835422  
Tel: 041 9835513  
Fax: 041 9842131  
enquiries@acs ltd.ie  
www.acs ltd.ie



## PROJECT DETAILS

<b>Project</b>	Archaeological Monitoring
<b>Archaeologist</b>	Tara O Neill
<b>Client</b>	Athlone Town Council Town Hall Co. Westmeath
<b>Site</b>	Railway Field Link Road
<b>Townland</b>	Athlone
<b>Parish</b>	St Marys
<b>County</b>	Westmeath
<b>Nat. Grid Ref.</b>	204100, 241850- 204350, 241700
<b>RMP No.</b>	N/A
<b>Licence No.</b>	05E0123
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	N/A
<b>Our Ref.</b>	05/06
<b>Project Start Date</b>	3rd March 2005
<b>Report Date</b>	23rd May 2005

### **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

Archaeological monitoring of eight trial pits along the route of the proposed Railway Field Link Road in Athlone, County Westmeath, was carried out by Tara O Neill under licence number 05E0123. The monitoring was undertaken prior to an archaeological assessment which was recommended by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and will be carried out prior to construction. No archaeological features were exposed during monitoring.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report details the results of archaeological monitoring at the site of a proposed link road at Railway Field, Athlone, County Westmeath (Ordnance Survey six-inch sheet 29, E192, N319 – E218, N306; National Grid Reference 204100, 241850 – 204350, 241700; Figures 1–2). Archaeological monitoring was carried out on behalf of Michael Punch and Partners, NIB Building, Stephen Street, Sligo. The archaeological monitoring was carried out under licence 05E0123 issued to Tara O Neill by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on 2nd February 2005. The monitoring of trial pits was carried out over two days from the 3rd – 4th March 2005.

## **2. THE DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 The Proposal**

The proposed development will involve the construction of a link road between the Crescent Junction and the Coosan Point Junction through the Railway Field and expansion of the existing roundabouts (Figure 3).

### **2.2 Archaeological Requirements**

Archaeological recommendations from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government include the following;

- 1. The applicant is required to engage the services of a suitably qualified archaeologist to carry out an archaeological assessment of the development site. No sub-surface work should be undertaken in the absence of the archaeologist without his/her express consent. In addition to being located in the vicinity of the Zone of Archaeological Potential, the proposed development is located in close proximity to the Franciscan Friary remains, which almost certainly lie on the site of a pre-Norman church, probably surrounded by an enclosure which is suggested by a lane south of the graveyard, Abbey road and Lucas lane. The proposed works at Coosan Point Road may uncover archaeological remains in the area where the development is proposed to take place.*
- 2. The archaeologist should carry out any relevant documentary research and inspect the site. Test trenches may be excavated at locations chosen by the archaeologist (licensed under the National Monuments Acts 1930-1994), having consulted the site drawings.*

3. *Having completed the work the archaeologist shall complete a written report to the Planning Authority and to the Heritage and Planning Division of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government detailing an appropriate mitigation strategy to be implemented. The archaeologist shall assess any engineering investigations proposed. The monitoring of these investigations may inform the appropriate mitigation strategy to be implemented. Where archaeological material/features are shown to be present, preservation in situ, preservation by record (excavation) or monitoring may be required. Areas which do not require mitigation shall also be agreed with the Planning and Heritage Division.*

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**

#### **3.1 Archaeological and Historical Background (Figure 2)**

The prehistoric period in Athlone is represented by a number of artefacts that have been retrieved from the bed of the River Shannon. Such finds include seventeen stone axes from the Neolithic period, fifty Bronze Age weapons and ornaments and six Iron Age finds (Murtagh, 1994). Other prehistoric activity in the town is scarce and the majority of archaeological activity dates to post 800AD. The earliest extant evidence for settlement within the town takes the form of five graveslabs dating to between the mid-eight century and the tenth century (Murtagh, 1994). The presence of graveslabs suggests that those buried here could have been settled in the locality and these graveslabs also be indicative of a church site.

The town of Athlone (RMP WM 029:042) developed at the bridging point on the routeway connecting the east to the west. The kings of Mide and Connacht constructed a causeway across the Shannon in 1000 and following the surrender of the Munster fleet in 1087, Turloch Mor O Conor erected the first bridge in Athlone in 1120 (Murtagh, 1994). This bridge was used for incursions by O Conor into Mide. In 1129, a fort was built by Turloch Mor O Conor, the King of Connacht and High King of Ireland, to protect the bridging point that he had constructed across the Shannon. Over the following three decades however rivals repeatedly destroyed the fort along with the bridge. By 1199 the Anglo-Normans had established themselves and their castle at this bridging point (Killanin, & Duignan, 1989). In this same year the castle was plundered by Cathal Croiderg O Conor. The existing stone castle was then subsequently built in 1210 by Bishop John De Gray and the curtain walls and drum-shaped towers were constructed in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century (Killanin, & Duignan, 1989). A new bridge was constructed in 1566 and the castle became the headquarters of the English Presidency of Connacht. The castle changed hands a number of times during the eleven years war eventually ending up occupied by Sir Charles Coote II in 1650. Williamites bombarded the town in 1690 and eventually conquered the Jacobites and seized the

castle. The Williamite general was made Earl of Athlone and occupied the castle, which the English army continued to use until 1800 (Killanin, & Duignan, 1989). The castle was remodelled and fortified around this time due to fears of Napoleonic invasion.

### **3.2 Archaeological Monitoring Results**

Archaeological monitoring of trial pits was carried out over two days from the 3rd – 4th of March 2005. The pits were excavated by a JCB and numbered eight in total. Two test pits (Numbers 1 and 2; Figure 3) were not excavated due to their location within the grounds of school which was occupied at the time.

The topsoil (F1) on this site varied depending on its location. Much of the land was submerged under shallow water and topsoil in this instance consisted of shallow dark brown peat. Where the ground was dry the topsoil was mid-brown in colour with occasional stones. It ranged in depth from 0.25m–0.40m depending on location. One trial pit was excavated through tarmacadam within a carpark. In each instance the topsoil or tarmacadam surface were located directly above natural (F2). This consisted of yellow–orange sandy clay in dry locations and grey clay where the ground surface had been submerged. The trial pits measured approximately 5m in length, 0.80m in width and they reached a depth of approximately 3m. No archaeological features or finds were encountered during the excavation of the trial pits (Plates 1-3).

### **3.3 List of Contexts**

- |    |         |
|----|---------|
| F1 | Topsoil |
| F2 | Natural |

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Monitoring of the trial pits on this site revealed no archaeological features. No finds of an archaeological nature were retrieved. Natural was encountered immediately below topsoil/surface.

The trial pits did not impact on any archaeological remains or deposits. However a full archaeological assessment by means of test-trenching along the route of the proposed road has yet to be carried out in accordance with recommendations from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

#### *Notes:*

- *All conclusions and recommendations expressed in this report are subject to the approval of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the relevant local authorities who may issue alternative or additional recommendations.*

## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

### References

Killanin, Lord and Duignan, M.V. (1989) *The Shell Guide to Ireland*. Dublin.

Murtagh, H. (1994) *Athlone Irish Historic Towns Atlas*. Dublin.

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### Other Sources

Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 7 Ely Place Upper, Dublin 2.

Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.

Signed:



Tara O'Neill

Archaeologist

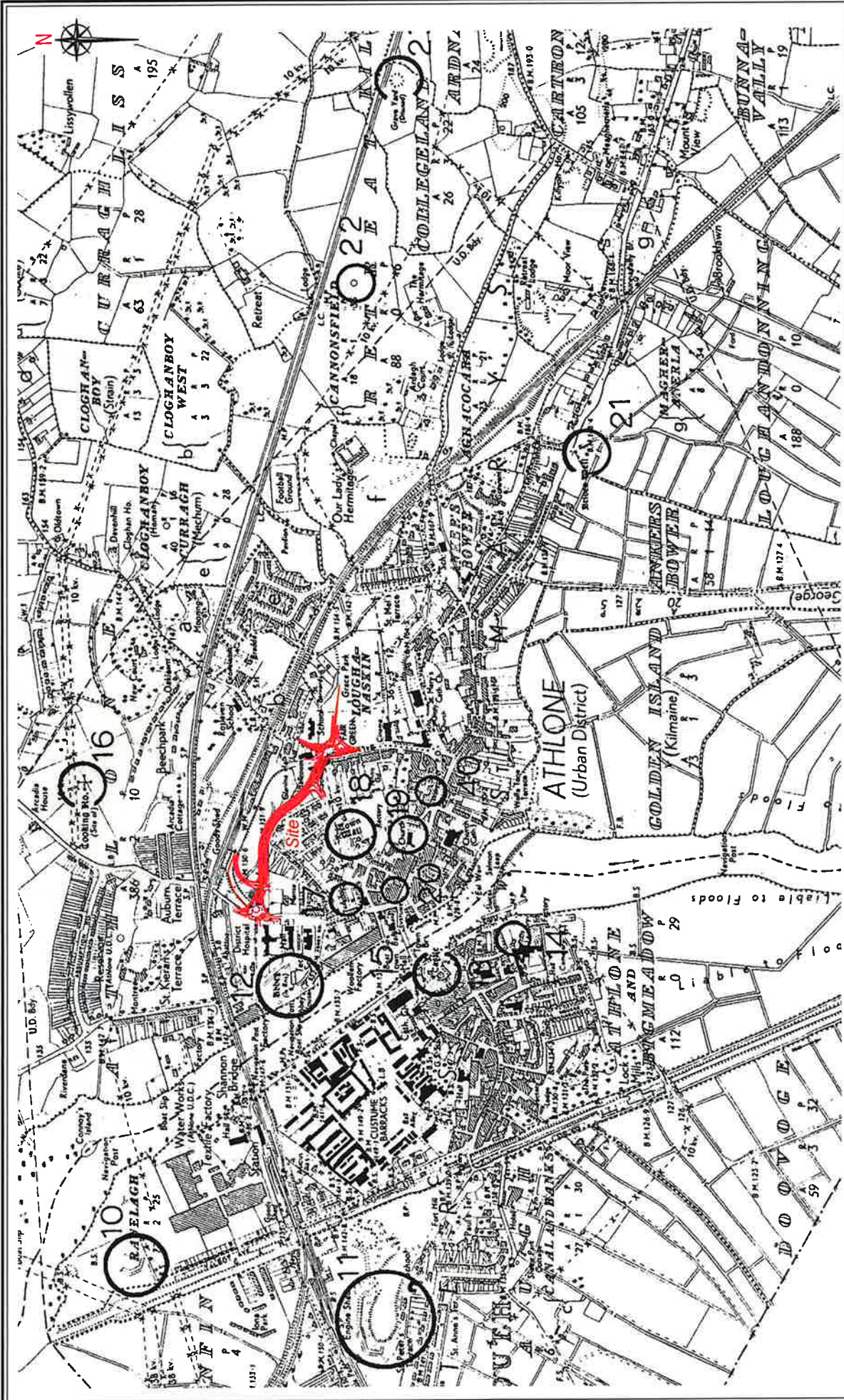
23rd May 2005



<b>Archaeological Consultancy</b> <b>Services Ltd.</b> Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth		Site: Railway Field Link Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath	Scale: 1:50,000 A4
		Issued for: Archaeological monitoring report	Date: 23 May '05
		Client: Athlone Town Council	Origin: Discovery Series No.47
			Drawing no.: 05_06_C03

Figure 1: Location of site

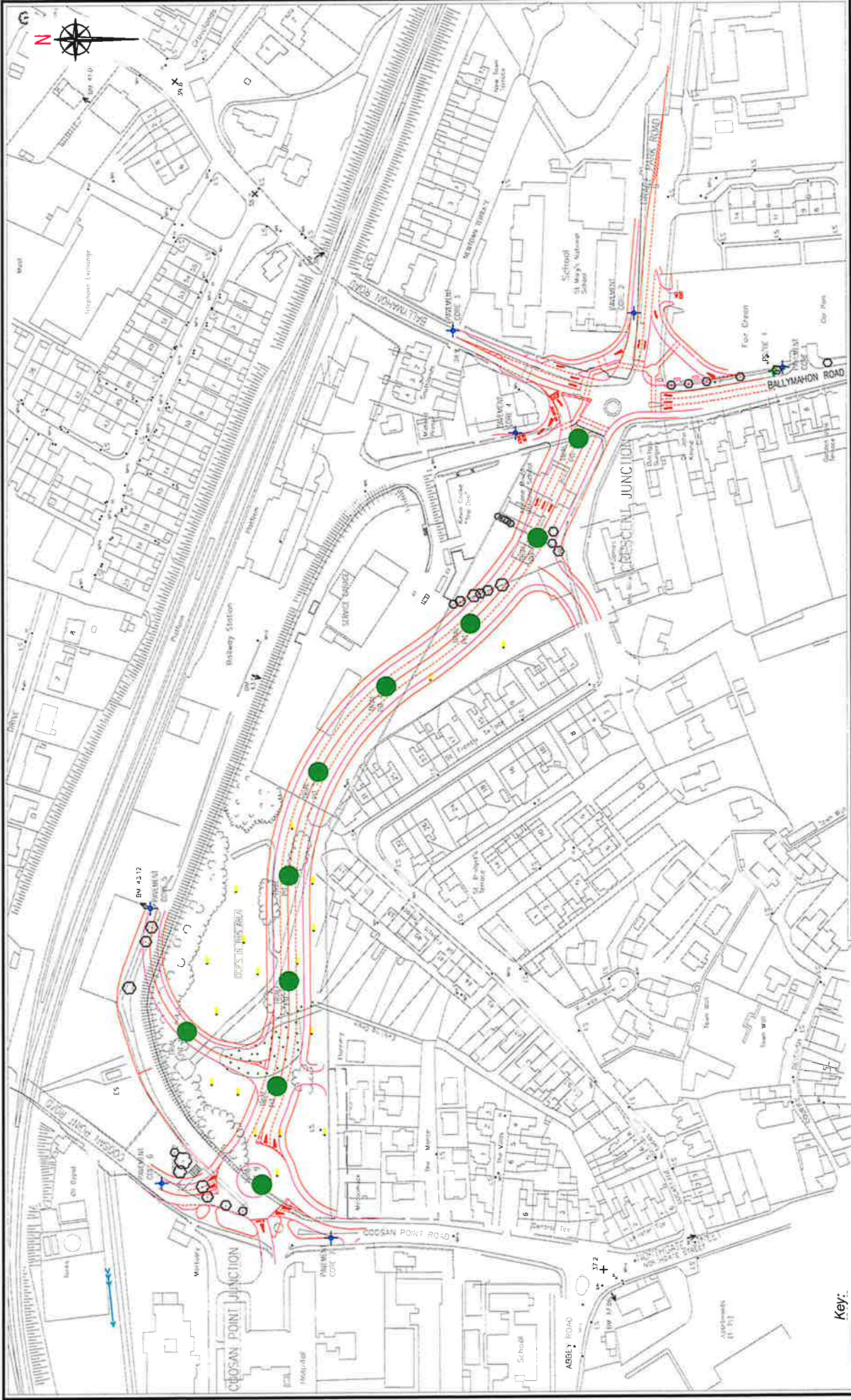




<p><b>Archaeological Consultancy</b>  <b>Services Ltd.</b> Unit 21, Boyne Business Park,  Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth</p>		<p>Site: Railway Field Link Road,  Athlone, Co. Westmeath</p>	<p>Scale: 1:12,500 A4  Date: 23 May '05  Origin: Discovery Series No.47  Drawing no.: 05 06 C04</p>
<p>Issued for: Archaeological monitoring report</p>			
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Figure 2: Detail of local SMRs





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Scale: 1:2,500 A4  
Date: 23 May 05  
Origin: Discovery Series No.47  
Drawing no.: 05\_06\_C05

Figure 3: Detail of proposed link road with trial pits 1-10





Plate 1: Trial pit 3 from northeast (05\_06\_CPI\_22)



Plate 2: Trial pit 5 from west (05\_06\_CPI\_21)



Plate 3: Trial pit 8 from northeast (05\_06\_CPI\_23)



