

A Proposed Development at
Miller's Lane, Galway City

Archaeological Screening Report

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Executive Summary

This report has been prepared in advance of the proposed development of a park at Miller's Lane, in Galway City. This study aims to assess the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage environment which currently exists on and around the proposed development site, evaluate the likely impacts that a proposed development will have on this environment, and recommend suitable mitigatory measures. The study area upon which this report is based extends 500m from the site boundary in all directions and incorporates parts of the townlands of Clybaun and Ragoon.

The site of the proposed development, which extends to *circa* 3.51 ha, is centred upon two soccer pitches which lie between Miller's Lane and a modern road which links Ragoon Road to the Western Distributor Road. The soccer pitches, which were developed in the 1990s, are terraced into the natural slope of the hill and so the eastern pitch is at a higher elevation than that to the west of it, and is at a lower elevation than Miller's Lane, to the east.

There is one known archaeological monument recorded on the site, an early modern designed landscape feature, but this was removed during archaeological test trenching and monitoring in 1993. The site of the removed feature continues to be protected under the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended. There are no structures listed on Galway City Council's Record of Protected Structures on the site.

This report concludes that the archaeological potential of the proposed development site is low. Ground levels across the centre of the site were reduced during the creation of the soccer pitches in the 1990s and further significant ground disturbance occurred during the creation of the L5000 link road between the Ragoon Road and the Western Distributor Road. The site visit undertaken for this report uncovered nothing of archaeological significance.

This report recommends that, if *An Bord Pleanála* decide to grant approval for the proposed development, input from the National Monuments Service should be sought when a draft outline of the proposed works is available, so that further mitigatory measures, if any are required, can be agreed. This report further recommends that the design team should strive to retain existing stone walls in the vicinity of Miller's Lane where possible, as these may be related to parkland associated with Ragoon House.

1 Introduction

1.1 General

1.1.1 This report has been prepared for MKO, Tuam Road, Galway, in relation to their work, undertaken on behalf of Galway City Council, on a proposed park development on lands at Miller's Lane on the west side of Galway City.

1.1.2 This report was prepared in April 2025 by Dr Rory Sherlock, Consultant Archaeologist, following a site visit and a short programme of documentary research.

1.2 Site Location

1.2.1 The proposed development site lies in the townland of Ragoon, Co. Galway, at ITM 527060, 725240.



Figure 1: Site Location: The site is situated in the townlands of Clybaun and Ragoon, Galway City (Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50292372 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)

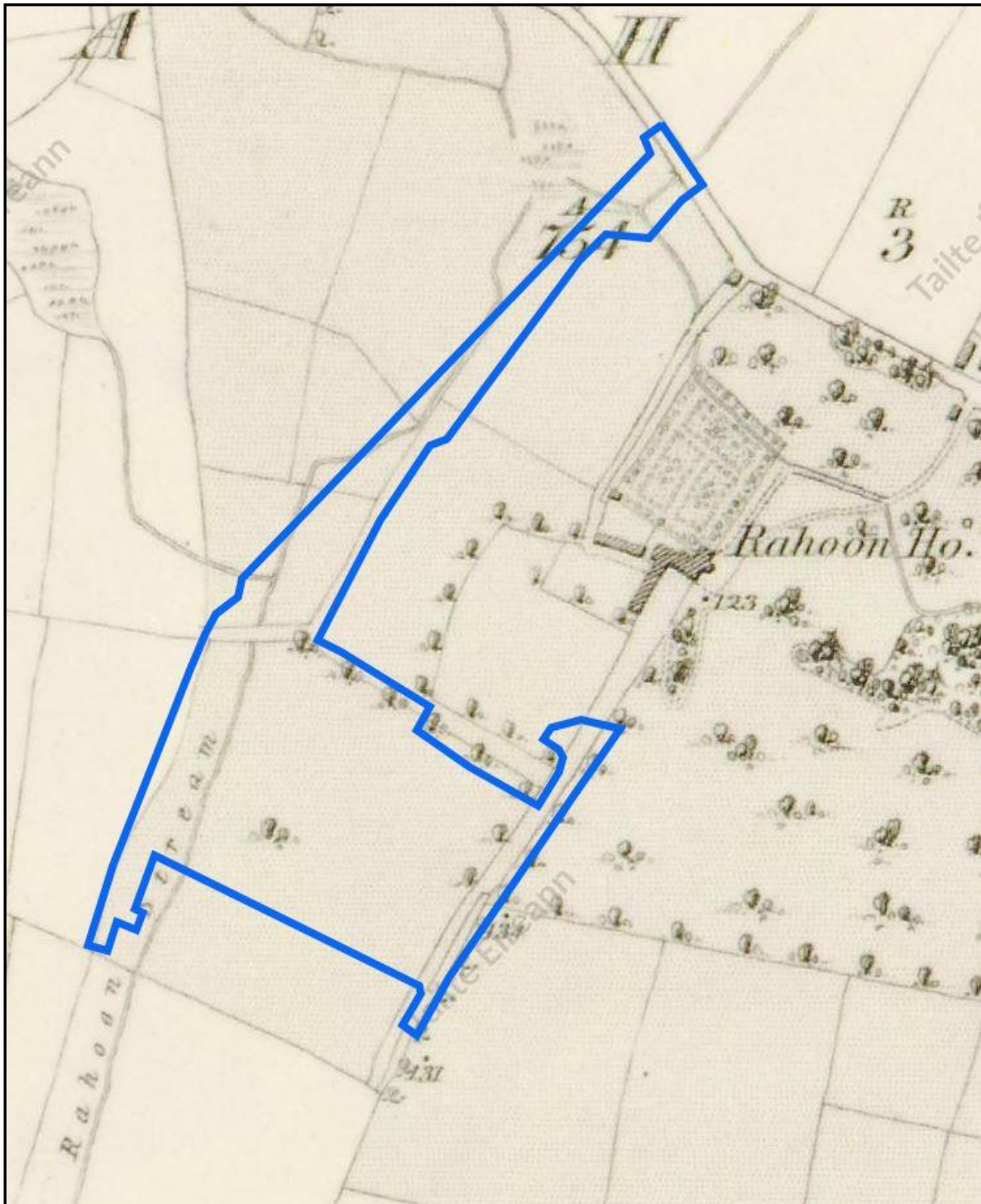


Figure 2: Location Map (extract from OS 6" map - 1st ed. from 1837) with site indicated by blue outline (Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50292372 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)

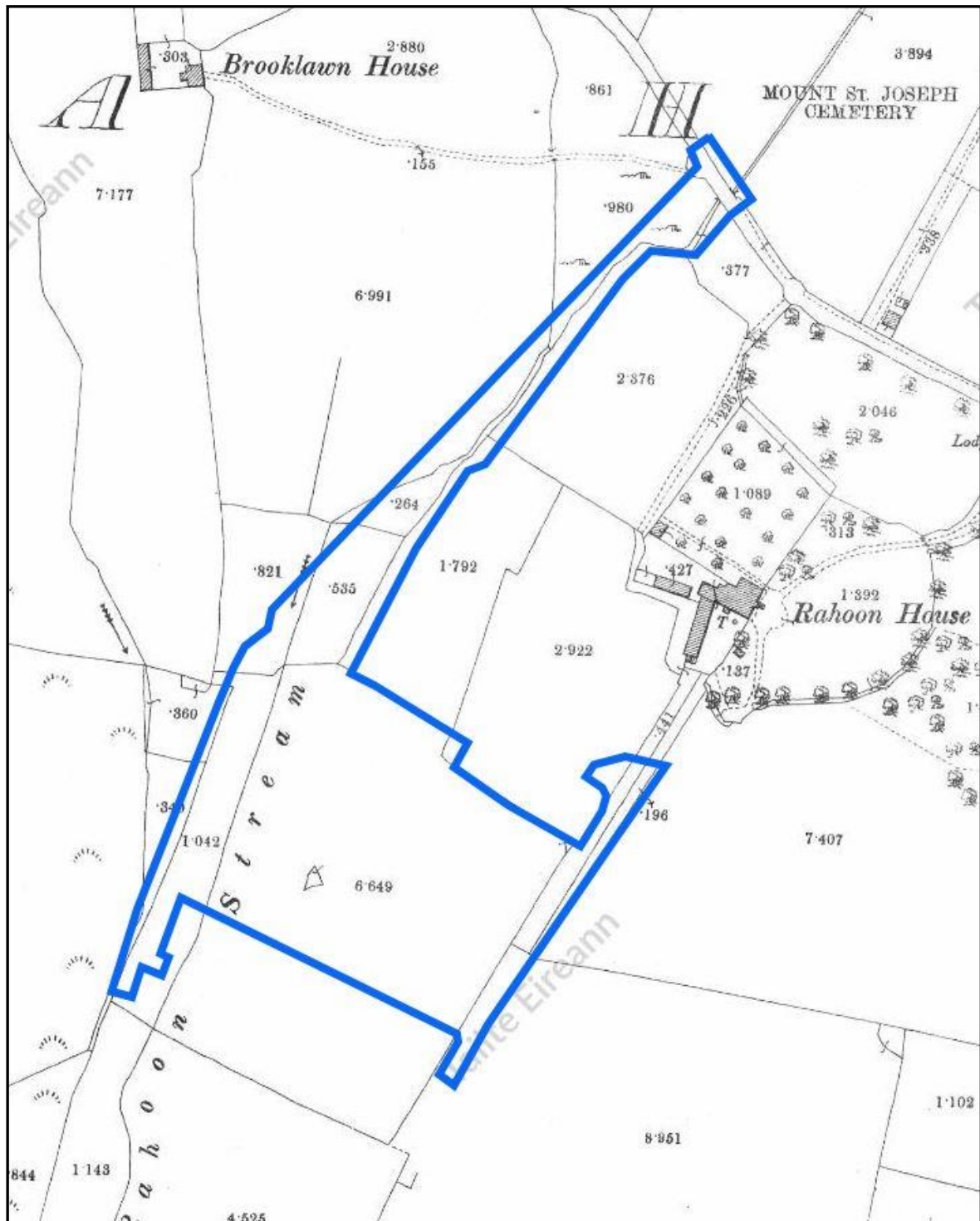


Figure 3: Location Map (extract from OS 25" map from 1895) with development site outlined in blue (Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50292372 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)



Plate 1: Aerial view of the proposed development site (outlined in blue) at Miller's Lane, Galway City (Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50292372 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)



Plate 2: GIS-derived aerial view of the development area (yellow shading), with the 200m (dashed yellow line) and 500m (solid yellow line) buffers, with known archaeological sites indicated with red dots and NIAH structures indicated by blue dots

1.3 Study Area

- 1.3.1 The study area upon which this report is based extends 500m from the site boundary in all directions and incorporates parts of the townlands of Clybaun and Ragoon. The area is today

generally known as Miller's Lane, after laneway which runs along the eastern side of the site, but this name is not used on the Ordnance Survey 6" or 25" maps of the area.

1.4 Objectives and Methodology

1.4.1 Objectives

This study aims to assess the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage environment which currently exists on and around the proposed development site.

1.4.2 Desktop Research Methodology

The desktop research element of this study utilised several documentary and cartographic sources, and the main sources consulted may be summarised as follows:

- National Monuments Service's online Historic Environment Viewer
- Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) & Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)
- Unpublished archive of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
- NIAH Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Record of Protected Structures for Galway City
- Excavations Bulletin
- Aerial Photographs
- Cartographic Sources

1.4.3 Fieldwork Methodology

A site inspection by a professional archaeologist is a key component of any Archaeological Screening Report. During the site inspection the archaeologist records any known monuments and also seeks to identify and record any hitherto unrecorded features of archaeological or cultural heritage significance. The archaeologist walks the site, records the current land use, notes any inaccessible areas, and takes a series of photographs to illustrate the report. The site under consideration in this study was visited by the author on 24/03/2025.

2 The Receiving Environment

The site of the proposed development is occupied two soccer pitches and a range of adjoining walkways, roads, footpaths, parking areas, and scrub-covered areas.

2.1 Legislative Status and Planning Context

- 2.1.1 One known archaeological monument is recorded on the site of the proposed development and this is protected by the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended).
- 2.1.2 No structures on the site of the proposed development are listed by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.
- 2.1.3 No structures on the site of the proposed development are listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Galway City.

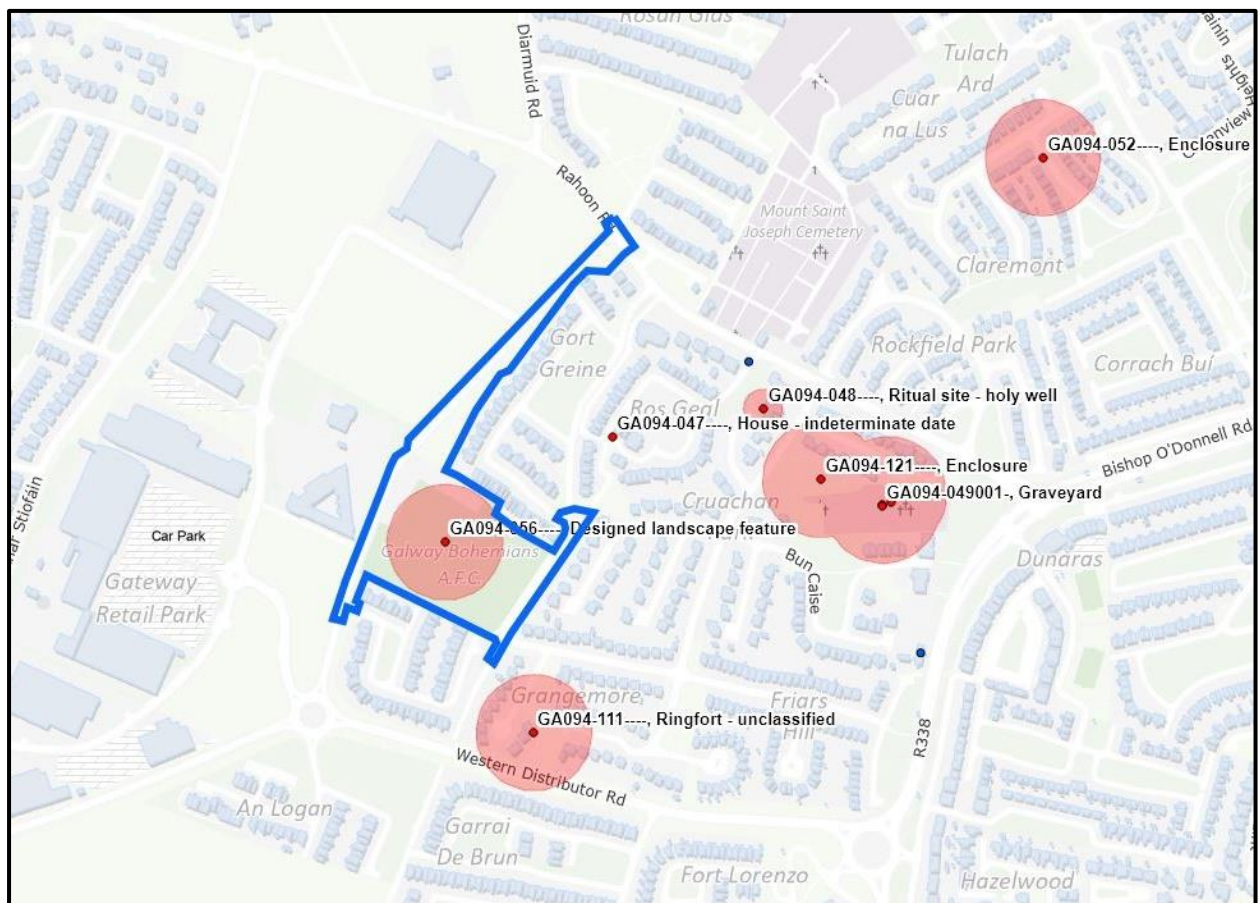


Figure 4: Site Location Map (OSI Street Map from Historic Environment Viewer) – the proposed development site is outlined in blue. Also shown are known archaeological sites (red dots – see Section 2.2) and their Zones of Notification (pink overlay).

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2.2 Known Archaeological Sites in the Area

2.2.1 In summary, just one known archaeological site lies within the boundary of the proposed development site (Plate 2), while a further two sites lie within 200m of the site boundary, and a further six sites lie within 500m of the site boundary. These sites are protected by the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended.

2.2.2 The archaeological sites and monuments located within 500m of the proposed development site are listed in the Sites and Monuments Record (RMP) for County Galway as follows:

- The site of a designed landscape feature (GA094-056----) lies within the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- The site of a levelled ringfort (GA094-111----) lies *circa* 80m southeast of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- A house of indeterminate date, namely Ragoon House (GA094-047----), lies *circa* 80m northeast of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- The site of a holy well dedicated to St James (GA094-048----) lies *circa* 200m northeast of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- The site of an enclosure (GA094-121----) lies *circa* 230m east of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- The site of a church dedicated to St James (GA094-049----), located within an ecclesiastical enclosure (GA094-049002-) containing a graveyard (GA094-049001-) lies *circa* 230m to 370m east of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- The site of a levelled enclosure (GA094-052----) lies *circa* 400m northeast of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- The site of a well (GA094-051----) lies *circa* 470m southeast of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.
- The site of a designed landscape feature (GA094-050----) lies *circa* 480m southeast of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.

2.2.3 The monument within the site boundary, namely the 'designed landscape feature' in Ragoon townland (GA094-056----), is not described by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) on the online Historic Environment Viewer. The unpublished files of the ASI, accessed through the NMS Archive Service, describe the site as a 'non-antiquity' and as a 'modern man-made feature'. It was described by an ASI surveyor in January 1992 as a 'D-shaped enclosure of large

boulders' measuring 9.5m by 8m, though no entrance was noted and the surveyor suggested that the site was probably an landscape feature associated with Ragoon House. The threat to the feature posed by the imminent construction of the soccer pitch was noted and several communications on mitigation proposals (letters and notes on phone calls) are contained within the ASI file on the site. A synopsis of the archaeological mitigation undertaken on the site is included in Section 2.3 below.

2.3 Recent Archaeological Excavations

- 2.3.1 A search through the online national database of archaeological excavations (www.excavations.ie), using the names of each of the townlands within the 500m study area, uncovered one relevant record of archaeological investigation. Several accounts of large scale linear developments (drainage works etc.) did mention also one or more of the townlands under study, but no finds of interest were reported from the study area within these reports.
- 2.3.2 The report relating to the proposed development site is an account of test trenching and monitoring which was undertaken by Martin Fitzpatrick in Ragoon in May 1993 under Excavation Licence 93E0078. The summary of this investigation on www.excavations.ie states:

The trial trenching and watching brief at Ragoon took place on 27th May 1993.

On the east shoulder of a ridge running north-west/south-east, the monument consisted of a poorly preserved triangular-shaped enclosure, delimited by boulders averaging 0.9m in height. A total of two trenches were dug mechanically, dissecting the enclosure. The first running north-west/south-east through the middle of the site, the second running perpendicular to the first in a north-east/south-west direction. Apart from the excavation of the two trenches, the digger also removed the boulders delimiting the site, which proved to be of a single course.

The two trenches revealed no archaeological features or deposits, nor was there any indication of on-site activity. The site is of no archaeological importance and may have been, as local history suggests, the work of a local landlord. ([Fitzpatrick 1993](#))

This report refers to the designed landscape feature (GA094-056) which is recorded within the proposed development site, since it describes a triangular enclosure, and such an enclosure is visible on the 25" map of the area (Figure 3). The area has since been developed into two soccer pitches and so the designed landscape feature no longer exists.

2.3.3 The original report on the test trenching and monitoring undertaken by Martin Fitzpatrick was accessed through the NMS Archive Service. The works took place on a single day in May 1993 and consisted of the excavation of two test trenches through the feature using a mechanical excavator, followed by the removal of the enclosing element. The feature is described by Fitzpatrick as a poorly preserved triangular enclosure which measured 10.75m by 9.3m and he includes a scaled plan of the feature in his report. The feature was formed with a single course of limestone boulders and Fitzpatrick records that local information suggests it was created by a local landlord to enclose a tree. Fitzpatrick's extensive trenches across the feature, each being 10m long, 2.5m deep, and 1.5m wide, were perpendicular to each other and uncovered nothing of archaeological interest. The boulders were set in topsoil (C.1) and overlay the layer below it (C.2).

2.3.4 In summary, the ASI surveyors who visited the site (see Section 2.2.3), and the archaeologist who undertook test trenching and monitoring on the site (see Section 2.3.3), both considered the feature to be modern in date and essentially considered it to have little or no archaeological value. Though the feature is now listed by the ASI as a designed landscape feature, and though the site is now surrounded by a Zone of Notification covering an area of 1.13 ha (Figure 4), it is clear that:

- i. the feature was fully removed under archaeological supervision in 1993,
- ii. the archaeologist found nothing else of interest on the site during the mitigation works, and
- iii. the ground levels in the area were subsequently reduced significantly in order to create two soccer pitches.

In light of this, one could suggest that the establishment of a protective Zone of Notification around the site of the removed landscape feature is inappropriate and should be reconsidered.

2.4 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

2.4.1 Two structures listed by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage lie within the 500m study area for the proposed development. These structures may be summarised as follows:

- The gateway and railings of Ragoon House (NIAH Ref. No. 30311001), which date to circa 1860 and which stand *circa* 170m east of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.

- Summerdale House (NIAH Ref. No. 30311003), a 19th-century six-bay two-storey house which lies *circa* 365m east of the proposed development site in Rahoon townland.

2.5 NIAH Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

- 2.5.1 The gardens of Rahoon House are listed by the NIAH's Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes (NIAH Ref.: GA5374). The NIAH describes the various elements as follows, based largely on the Ordnance Survey 6" and 25" maps:

Description: *A medium-sized pre-1840 demesne west of Galway city. It is now covered by a housing estate extending beyond its historic boundary. A pre-1840 house remains and is unused. Gates, c.1860, stand at the historic entrance location, the pre-1840 lodge is gone. The pre-1840 main approach can be traced in the recent housing estate road and footpath, the pre-1840 service route is gone. One wall remains of the pre-1840 productive garden, the gardener's house from that date is gone. No woodland or parkland remain. A medieval graveyard and church ruin survives to the east side of the demesne.*

Principal Building: *Detached three-bay two-storey house, pre-1840. Facing southeast with canted central breakfront. Pitched replacement roof, chimney stacks to gables, rendered random-squared stone walls. Now disused, boarded-up and fenced off.*

Outbuilding: *Two pre-1840 ranges to south-west side of house at right angles to one another, now gone.*

Productive Garden: *Walled garden, pre-1840, to north-west side of house, now gone apart from east wall.*

Productive Garden Building: *Structure, probably bothy or gardener's house, pre-1840, in south-west corner of walled garden, now gone*

Parkland: *Parkland to southeast of house, pre-1840, reduced to ovaloid form at house c.1870, now gone.*

Water: *Rahoon Stream once ran through the west of the site, now culverted.*

Avenue, Drive or Walk: *Main approach, pre-1840, from gate in northwest to house front following curved route. Now replaced by two-lane metalled road, south section remaining as footpath in grass area. Service access to west of house following straight route to road in north along rear of productive garden, now gone.*

Gate Lodge or Gateway: *Gates, c.1860, possibly from Renmore, or another local house. Entrance comprises of four gate piers in form of cut limestone Roman Doric-style columns flanking vehicular and pedestrian entrances, with tooled limestone plinths and carved limestone caps, decorative cast-iron double-leaf and single gates. Opening now serving the entrance to the Ros Gael housing estate, piers set to road width wider than original spacing. Lodge, pre-1840, to west of gate, now gone.*

Boundary or Boundary Wall: *Pre-1840 road along north-east section of demesne realigned c.1870 on straight line to include an area north of the church ruin site. No historic boundary walls remain.*

Historical/Cultural Association: *In 1786 Wilson refers to Ragoon as the seat of Mr. French. In the early 19th century it was a Bodkin house, occupied by Roderick O'Connor at the time of the first Ordnance survey. It was held in fee by Thomas C. Dickson at the time of Griffith's Valuation and valued at £27. This house was bought by Kennedy O'Brien in the early 1870s and remained in his family's possession until the 1930s.*

- 2.5.2 Ragoon House still stands *circa* 80m northeast of the proposed development site and has recently been renovated for use as apartments. No significant surviving element of the Ragoon House demesne will be affected directly by works on the proposed development site, but some of the stone walls in the vicinity of Miller's Lane may represent (much repaired) walls of fields and lanes within the demesne.



Plate 3: Ragoon House which lies *circa* 80m from the proposed development site. It is listed on the Sites and Monuments Record (GA094-047), but is not listed by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

2.6 Record of Protected Structures

- 2.6.1 Ragoon House (Plate 3), which lies *circa* 80m northeast of the proposed development site, is listed on Galway City Council's Record of Protected Structures (RPS No. 8301), and is therefore protected under the Planning and Development Act 2000. This listing includes the associated gateway and railings which are listed by the NIAH.

- 2.6.2 Galway City Council's Record of Protected Structures also lists Summerdale House (RPS Ref. No. 1001), a 19th-century six-bay two-storey house which lies *circa* 365m east of the proposed development site in Ragoon townland.

2.7 Cartographic Evidence

- 2.7.1 The Ordnance Survey 6" map from the 1837 (Figure 2) shows no features of archaeological significance on the site of the proposed development. It does show several areas of parkland associated with Ragoon House – these are located to the east and north of the modern soccer pitches.
- 2.7.2 The Ordnance Survey 25" map from 1895 (Figure 3) shows no features of archaeological significance on the site of the proposed development, but it does show the triangular enclosure which was investigated, and removed, by Martin Fitzpatrick in 1993 (see Section 2.3.3 above). Both maps also show, and name, Ragoon Stream, which runs along the line of the modern road which defines the western edge of the proposed development site. The stream appears to have been culverted prior to, or during, the construction of this road.

3 Site Description

The site of the proposed development, which extends to *circa* 3.51 ha, is centred upon two soccer pitches which lie between Miller's Lane and a modern road, the L5000, which links Ragoon Road to the Western Distributor Road (Plate 1). The soccer pitches, which appear to have been developed in the 1990s, are terraced into the natural slope of the hill and so the eastern pitch is at a higher elevation than that to the west of it, and is at a lower elevation than Miller's Lane, to the east. The proposed development site extends outwards from the four corners of the soccer facility along Miller's Lane at the east and along the L5000 at the west.

3.1 The Soccer Pitches

The two soccer pitches within the proposed development site lie side-by-side, their long axes being orientated NNE-SSW. The eastern pitch is at a higher elevation and it has clearly been terraced into the hillside, as a rising bank of scrub separates it from Miller's Lane. To the west and northwest, the soccer pitches are adjoined by a parking area, whereupon stands a temporary structure used as changing facilities. No features of archaeological interest were noted in the area of the soccer pitches.



Plate 4: The soccer pitches from the southwest, with the L5000 to the left

3.2 The L5000 Road

The proposed development extends *circa* 500m along both sides of the L5000, the modern road which defines the western edge of the proposed development site. This area is generally characterised by the modern road and the associated footpaths and fencing, but there is also an area overgrown with scrub to the north of the pitches and to the east of the L5000 (Plate 5). No features of archaeological interest were noted in this area.



Plate 5: View of along the L5000 looking northeast, with scrub-covered area and the Gort Greine housing estate to the right



Plate 6: View of along the L5000 looking southwest from the Rahoan Road intersection, with scrub-covered area and the Gort Greine housing estate to the left

3.3 Miller's Lane

The proposed development extends *circa* 185m along Miller's Lane, a public walkway which defines the eastern edge of the proposed development site (Plate 1). The area is generally characterised by modern pavements and landscaping (Plate 7), though some of the stone walls in the area may represent boundary walls associated with the parkland of Ragoon House (Plate 8). No features of archaeological significance were noted in this area.



Plate 7: View looking southwest along Miller's Lane, with the soccer pitches at a lower elevation (right)



Plate 8: View public road at northeast corner of proposed development site (with Miller's Lane on the other side of the stone wall at right)

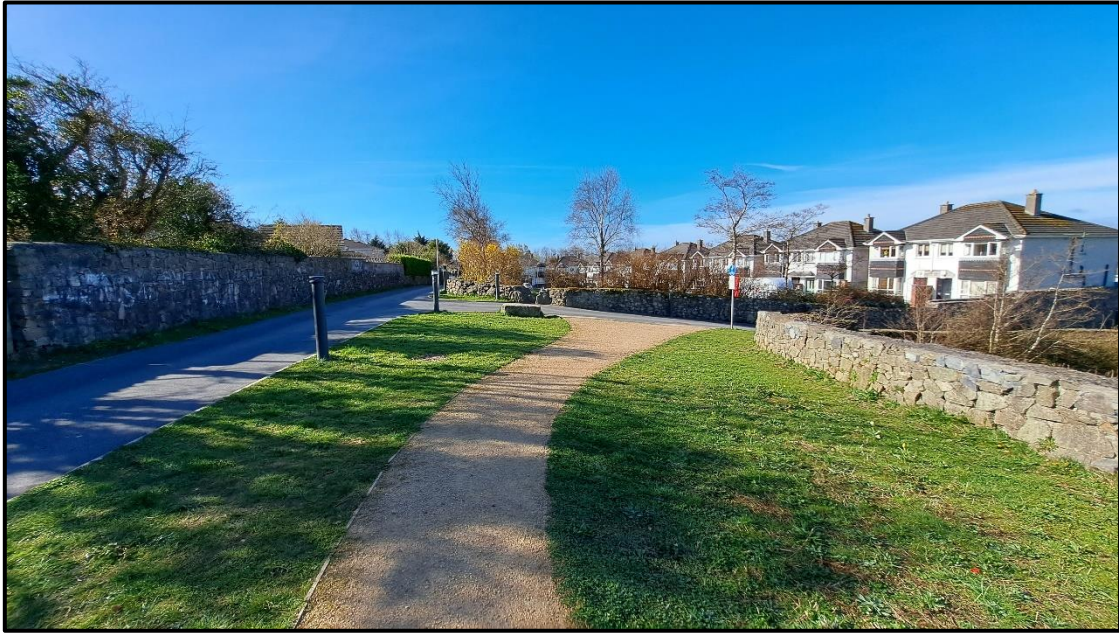


Plate 9: View looking southwest along Miller's Lane, with the pathway along the southern side of the soccer pitches turning to the right between the stone wall (right) and the houses of the Gort na Bró estate (rear right)



Plate 10: The walkway along the southern side of the soccer pitches, which links Miller's Lane to the L5000 road

4 The Proposed Development

- 4.1 The development proposal for the site involves the creation of a civic amenity or park, but the precise nature of the development has not yet been finalised. In general terms, developments of this scale (3.51 ha) require the developer to commission an Archaeological Impact Assessment report (AIAR) before or during the planning process, so that the local authority and the National Monuments Service can understand the archaeological context of the site and can consider the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological heritage.
- 4.2 The proposed development of a park on the site may, or may not, involve widespread ground disturbance and this will be key to the decision making process in terms of further archaeological mitigation. The need for an AIAR for this proposed development cannot be determined until the nature of the proposed development emerges through the ongoing design process, but the scale of the site, being significantly greater than the 0.5 ha threshold commonly used as a marker of large-scale developments in the context of archaeological mitigation, may mean that more extensive archaeological mitigation will be sought by the National Monuments Service in due course.
- 4.3 It is important to note, however, that much of the site has little or no archaeological potential. The area occupied by the soccer pitches at the centre of the proposed development site, which covers *circa* 1.9 ha, appears to have undergone archaeological test trenching in 1993, after which the ground levels across much of the area were significantly reduced. The L5000 road and associated footpaths occupy a further *circa* 0.53 ha of the site and this area, having undergone significant groundworks in the construction of the modern road, also has very limited archaeological potential. The rest of the site consists of a series of narrow strips on Miller's Lane, on the walkway to the south of the pitches, and in the scrub-covered strip beside the L5000, but none of these areas appears to retain significant archaeological potential.
- 4.4 While further archaeological mitigation, which could include geophysical survey or test excavation, may be required in due course, it is clear that the archaeological potential of the proposed development site is very low. The only known archaeological monument on the site was removed in 1993, and there are no Protected Structures on the site. It is clear, therefore, that the proposed development site should be considered very suitable, in archaeological terms, for development.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

- 5.1.1 This report has described the archaeological context of a proposed development site at Ragoon, Galway City. There is one known archaeological monument recorded on the site, a post-medieval designed landscape feature, but this was removed during archaeological test trenching and monitoring in 1993. The site of the removed feature continues to be protected under the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended. There are no structures listed on Galway City Council's Record of Protected Structures on the site.
- 5.1.2 This report concludes that the archaeological potential of the proposed development site is low. Ground levels across the centre of the site were reduced during the creation of the soccer pitches in the 1990s and further significant ground disturbance occurred during the creation of the L5000 link road between the Ragoon Road and the Western Distributor Road. The site visit undertaken for this report uncovered nothing of archaeological significance, but several stone walls were noted in the vicinity of Miller's Lane and these could be related to parkland associated with Ragoon House, though, if so, they are likely to be considerably altered and may, indeed, be modern in date.
- 5.1.3 This report concludes that the proposed development site should be considered very suitable, in archaeological terms, for development, though further mitigatory works may be required due to the size of the site.

5.2 Recommendations

- 5.2.1 If *An Bord Pleanála* decide to grant approval for the proposed development, it is recommended that input from the National Monuments Service should be sought when a draft outline of the proposed works is available.
- 5.2.2 If *An Bord Pleanála* decide to grant approval for the proposed development, it is recommended that the design team should strive to retain stone walls in the vicinity of Miller's Lane where possible.