

Archaeological impact assessment

**Former Avid Technology International Site
Carmanhall Road
Sandyford Industrial Estate
Dublin 18**

**Strategic Housing Development
Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016**

By

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04 March 2021

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Executive summary

This document comprises an assessment of the archaeological risk associated with a proposed Strategic Housing Development (SHD) at the site of the former Avid Technology International site in the townland of Carmanhall, Sandyford, Dublin 18. The assessment was undertaken on behalf of Atlas GP Ltd. in advance of a proposed application to An Bord Pleanála.

The site's morphology is determined using historical mapping and information derived from previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity, where a walk-over survey did not reveal any features on the ground which may have a possible archaeological provenance. The development site is not located within the constraint zone of any sites or monuments noted in the statutory Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). Within the wider landscape there is evidence for diffuse yet sustained archaeological settlement and activity: within a 1km radius there are six sites noted on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

Where a field boundary depicted by Rocque in 1760 has possible origins in the land enclosures undertaken in the late seventeenth century, it is recommended that licensed archaeological monitoring be undertaken over the initial ground reduction programme.

1 Introduction

1.1 This document constitutes an archaeological assessment of a 0.73ha brown-field development site on the corner of Carmanhall Road and Blackthorn Road within the Sandyford Industrial Estate, Dublin 18 (Figure 1). It is being submitted to *An Bord Pleanála* as part of a Strategic Housing Development application on behalf of Atlas GP Ltd.

Until recently approximately two thirds of the site was occupied by an industrial unit, with hardstanding occupying the remaining area. The site currently has planning permission for the construction of student accommodation with an overall gross floor area of 25,459m² arranged in a single 7 to 9 storey block providing a total of 817 bed spaces (PL06D.303467).

The immediate surroundings of the site reflect the ongoing changing nature of Sandyford and include a single storey commercial building and the 6-storey Microsoft building on Carmanhall Road to the north, low profile commercial buildings to the west fronting onto Ravensbrook Road, a 6 storey office complex to the south on Blackthorn Road and a 2 to 3-storey office and light industrial buildings on the opposite side of Blackthorn Road. The area is currently undergoing transformation from low rise industrial, employment and office usage, to higher density residential and mixed-use developments.

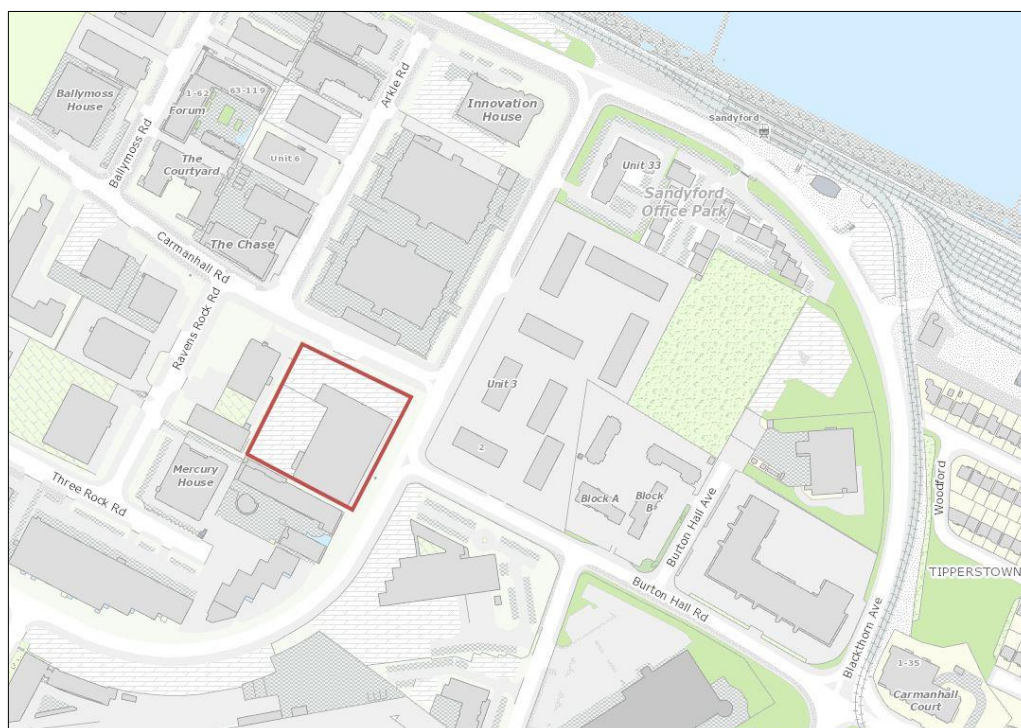


Figure 1 Site location (ASI Historic Environment Viewer)

- 1.2 The proposed development site is not located within the constraint zone of any site or monument noted in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), however within the wider landscape there is evidence for diffuse yet sustained archaeological settlement and activity. Inside of a radius of c.1km from the proposed development there are six sites afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts (as amended) and the *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022*.

Most of the archaeological investigations undertaken in the vicinity of the development site took place in 2001-2002 and were occasioned by the construction of the South Eastern Motorway (the M50). The construction of the Luas extension in 2007, some 400m to the south east, resulted in a small archaeological excavation, where the construction of the Leopardstown Hotel in 1999 also monitored under archaeological licence; there was nothing of significance recorded at either location. The only archaeological investigation undertaken in the Sandyford Industrial Estate, the development of the Beacon complex in 2000, did not result in the recording of archaeological deposits or features. A group of pit burials excavated in 2001 to the south of the site in the same townland can however be dated to the period 2000—1850BC.

- 1.3 Although there have been no archaeological test trenches opened, the historical mapping strongly suggests that the development site has been in agricultural use since at least the eighteenth century. There are unlikely to be surviving archaeological deposits impacted by the proposed development, where the existing remnant development has more than likely truncated any significant archaeological material, which in this area has been relatively ephemeral and recorded relatively close to the surface.

2 Proposed Strategic Housing Development

2.1 The proposed development will see the construction of an apartment block over a single basement level, arranged around a central courtyard. The development description is as follows:

(i) construction of a Build-To-Rent residential development within a new part six, part eight, part nine, part eleven storey rising to a landmark seventeen storey over basement level apartment building (40,814sq.m) comprising 428 no. apartments (41 no. studio, 285 no. one-bedroom, 94 no. two-bedroom & 8 no. three-bedroom units) of which 413 no. apartments have access to private amenity space, in the form of a balcony or lawn/terrace, and 15 no. apartments have access to a shared private roof terrace (142sq.m) at ninth floor level;

(ii) all apartments have access to 2,600sq.m of communal amenity space, spread over a courtyard at first floor level and roof terraces at sixth, eight and ninth floor levels, a 142sq.m resident's childcare facility at ground floor level, 392sq.m of resident's amenities, including concierge/meeting rooms, office/co-working space at ground floor level and a meeting/games room at first floor level, and 696sq.m of resident's amenities/community infrastructure inclusive of cinema, gym, yoga studio, laundry and café/lounge at ground floor level. The café/lounge will primarily serve the residents of the development and will be open for community use on a weekly/sessional basis;

(iii) provision of 145 no. vehicular parking spaces (including 8 no. mobility parking spaces, 2 no. club-car spaces and 44 no. electric charging spaces), 5 no. motorcycle parking spaces, bin stores, plant rooms, switch room and 2 no. ESB sub-stations all at ground floor level; provision of bicycle parking (752 no. spaces), plant and storage at basement level; permission is also sought for the removal of the existing vehicular entrance and construction of a replacement vehicular entrance in the north-western corner of the site off Carmanhall Road;

(iv) provision of improvements to street frontages to adjoining public realm of Carmanhall Road & Blackthorn Road comprising an upgraded pedestrian footpath, new cycling infrastructure, an increased quantum of landscaping and street-planting, new street furniture inclusive of bins, benches and cycle parking facilities and the upgrading of the existing Carmanhall Road & Blackthorn Road junction through provision of a new uncontrolled pedestrian crossing; and,

(v) All ancillary works including provision of play equipment, boundary treatments, drainage works - including SuDS drainage, landscaping, lighting, rooftop telecommunications structure and all other associated site services, site infrastructure and site development works. The former Avid Technology International buildings were demolished on foot of Reg. Ref. D16A/0158 which also permitted a part-five rising to eight storey apartment building. The development approved under Reg. Ref. D16A/0158, and a subsequent part-seven rising to nine storey student accommodation development permitted under Reg. Ref. PL06D.303467, will be superseded by the proposed development.

3 Archaeological and historical contexts

- 3.1 There is little evidence in the immediate area of the proposed development site for pre-historic activity despite there being a plethora of such sites slightly further afield. Some 800m to the south of the site, to the north of a stream marking the boundary between Carmanhall and Murphystown townlands, a group of Bronze Age pit burials was excavated under licence 01E1229 prior to the construction of the M50. Burial 1 contained a single vessel, and Burial 2 two vessels. Burial 3 was not within a vessel and the cremated remains were placed in a stone-lined circular pit. The pits were found within 7m of each other and close to an area of weathered granite bedrock that may have been exposed at the time of interment. The vessels were identified as vase urns with one dating to between 2000BC and 1850BC.¹ The Topographical Files of the National Museum record the finding of a bronze flat axe at a separate location some 600m to the south of the site,² which with the number of *fulachta fiadh* recorded along the M50, emphasise the potential for recovering Bronze Age activity in the general area.

The most proximate archaeological investigation to the development site was undertaken as part of the monitoring works for the Luas extension under licence 07E0095 and is referred to here not for its archaeological significance, rather to illustrate the random nature of the deposits and structures which may underlie any site in the area. Here, some 430m to the southeast of the development site at Carmanhall Site 1 the foundations of an undated drystone wall foundation were recorded, a structure which had not been recorded on historic mapping.³

Perhaps more typical of what can be expected on the site under discussion can be gleaned from a report generated under licence 99E0493 where material introduced for a recent development was recorded directly above the natural subsoil some 600m to the southeast.⁴ Similarly, the construction of the Beacon Hospital under licence 00E0835 involved the demolition of a number of modern buildings and the reduction of the ground level across the site. Monitoring of the removal of ground slabs and demolition revealed only modern deposits over bedrock, located at 300–600mm below the modern surface. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted.⁵

- 3.2 The earliest evidence for historical settlement can be extrapolated backwards from the Down Survey undertaken in the mid-seventeenth century (Figure 2), which locates the development site in the lands of Leopardstown, a protrusion north-westwards of the

¹ O'Reilly, F. 2004. Site 54 Carmanhall. In I. Bennett (ed.), *Excavations 2002: summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland*, 129-30. Bray.

² NMI Topographical Files, IA/67/83.

³ Johnston, A. 2007. Unpublished preliminary note issued to the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

⁴ Delany, D. 2003. '461 - Leopardstown Road, Rocklands, Dublin'. In I. Bennett (ed.), *Excavations 2001: summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland*, 137. Bray.

⁵ Ó Néill, J. 2003. '468 - Oriflame, Blackthorn Road, Sandyford, Dublin'. In I. Bennett (ed.), *Excavations 2001: summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland*, 139. Bray.

medieval parish of Tully. The name Leopardstown traditionally relates to a leper colony associated with the Hospital of St. Stephen and where the primary reference has not been located, Ball refers to a surrender of the lands from Geoffrey Tyrrell and his wife Sarah in 1230.⁶ It is likely however that the lands were granted to St. Stephen's and the hospital continued to collect tithes from the farm in 1378, without necessarily having a physical presence either in the form of a grange (farm) or indeed a leper hospital.

Leopardstown was on the edge of the Pale and susceptible to occasional raids from the hills to the west. There were two castles or towerhouses in the vicinity which would have afforded some protection. The closest, some 500m to the north is marked on the Down Survey (1655-6) as 'Moltainstowne' (DU023-045), where the approximate site in the townland of Mulchanstown is now occupied by the Stillorgan reservoirs. One kilometre to the south a fragment of Murphystown castle survives inside the entrance gate of the United Kingdom's ambassador's residence *Glencairn* (DU023-025). The ruin comprises portions of two walls of granite masonry 1100m in thickness, with traces of a vault visible over the original ground floor.

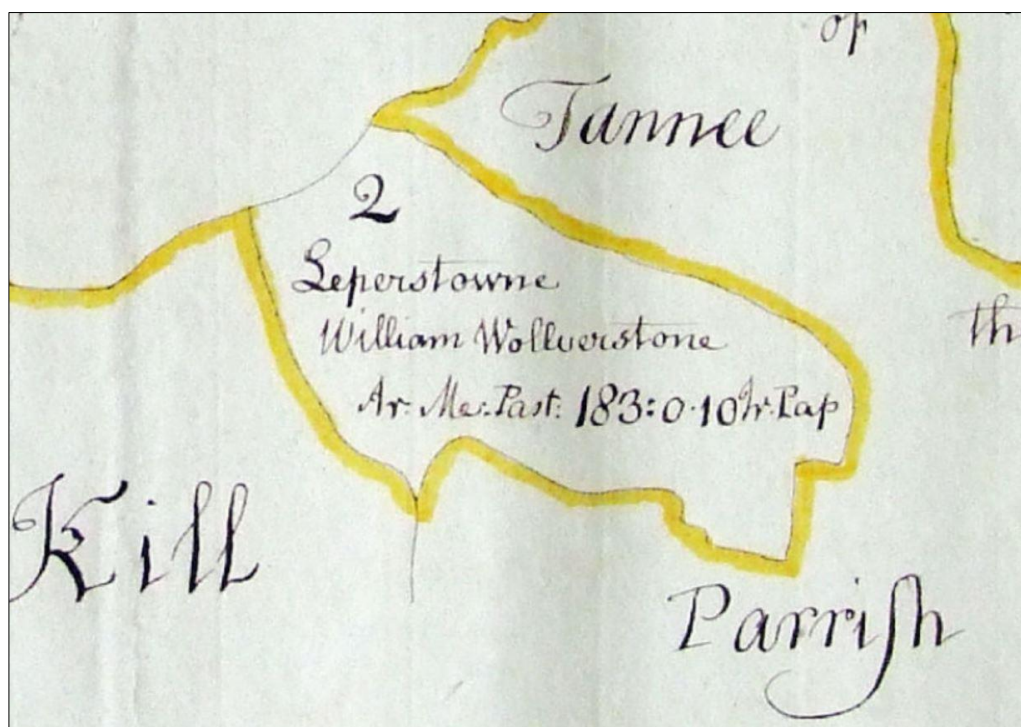


Figure 2 William Farrand, 'The Parish of Killeny, Tully and part of the parish of White Church in the half Barony of Rathdowne', c. 1655. (Extract, north to bottom)

- 3.3 There is no specific documentary evidence for settlement in the townland of Carmanhall itself. It is not referred to on the Down Survey *terrier* by name, where the lands of Leopardstown are described as arable pasture and meadow. It was presumably prime agricultural land as prior to the disturbances of the 1640s it was in ostensibly protestant hands as part of the estate of Theobald Welsh of Carrickmines. By 1670 the townland,

⁶ Ball, F.E. 1902. *A History of County Dublin*, I, 109, Dublin.

and indeed all of Welsh's lands in the area, had been confiscated and divided between Sir Roger Jones and the Earl of Meath. The 1659 census does not return any inhabitants, however it is possible that the 31 English and 29 Irish returned for the adjacent townland of Blackthorn were all resident within the earlier denomination of Leopardstown.

The relative political stability brought about by the Restoration encouraged agricultural improvement and it is likely that by the turn of the eighteenth century the area had been subject to enclosure and the field systems which survived until the end of the twentieth century date to this period. Landholding systems were still defined by townlands, the boundaries of which remained stable. Two such boundaries were in close proximity to the site, the townland boundary just to the northwest of the site separating Carmanhall and Blackthorn, with the boundary to the northeast to Mulchanstown also being the boundary separating the parishes of Tully and Kill.

Rocque's 1760 county map (Figure 3), demonstrates a degree of continuity from the Down Survey *terrier* of the preceding century, with the northern half of the site ploughed under tillage and the southern half a smaller enclosed field. The enclosures are depicted as mature hedgerows which suggests they are of some antiquity.



Figure 3 John Rocque, 'An actual survey of the county of Dublin', 1760. Approximate site location circled, with *Burton Hall* to the south

- 3.4 Carmanhall would appear to be an earlier name for *Burton Hall*, a house still in existence which can be discerned on Rocque's 1760 mapping, and from which the location of the development site can be identified by back-referencing field boundaries to the Ordnance Survey. *Burton Hall* was built in 1730 by Samuel Burton and during the nineteenth century was owned by Henry Guinness, founder of the Guinness Mahon Bank.

Where the demesne associated with the house is clearly annotated on the first edition Ordnance Survey mapping (Figure 4), the development site itself was clearly demarcated as farmland, with a field boundary traversing the area. The *Tenement Valuation* indicates that in 1856 both fields were held by Bernard Hanley Esq. from John F. Davis Esq. with the combined annual rateable value of the 36-acre holding assessed at the not inconsiderable sum of £114.⁷

By the turn of the twentieth century an element of modernity had encroached into the polite agricultural landscape which had possibly remained unchanged for over 300 years (Figure 5). The Dublin and South Eastern Railway, which connected emerging suburban development in Dundrum, Foxrock and Leopardstown with the terminus at Harcourt Street began operations in 1854. The Stillorgan Reservoirs alongside the railway were developed by Dublin Corporation and built in two stages between 1862 and 1885. The development site however remained unaffected and indeed the field boundary depicted by Rocque in 1760 was still extant in 1943 (Figure 6).

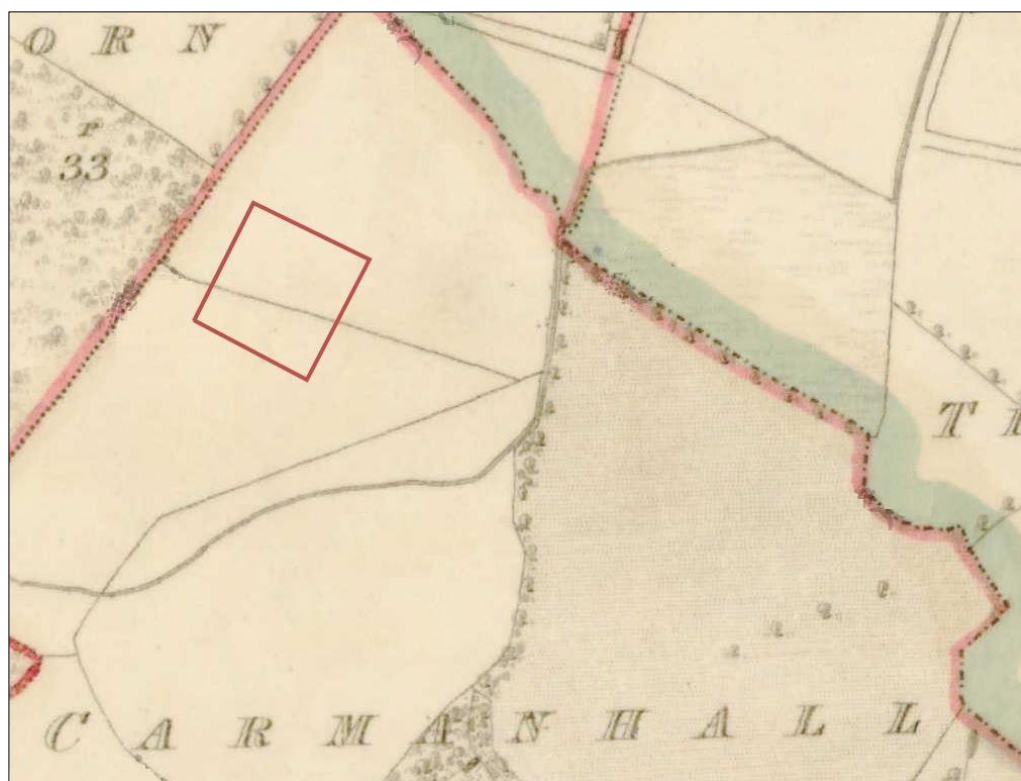


Figure 4 Ordnance Survey, Dublin, sheet 23, 6-inch mapping, c. 1838

⁷ *Primary Valuation of Tenements*, Barony of Rathdown, Parish of Tully, Carmanhall, Plot 1.

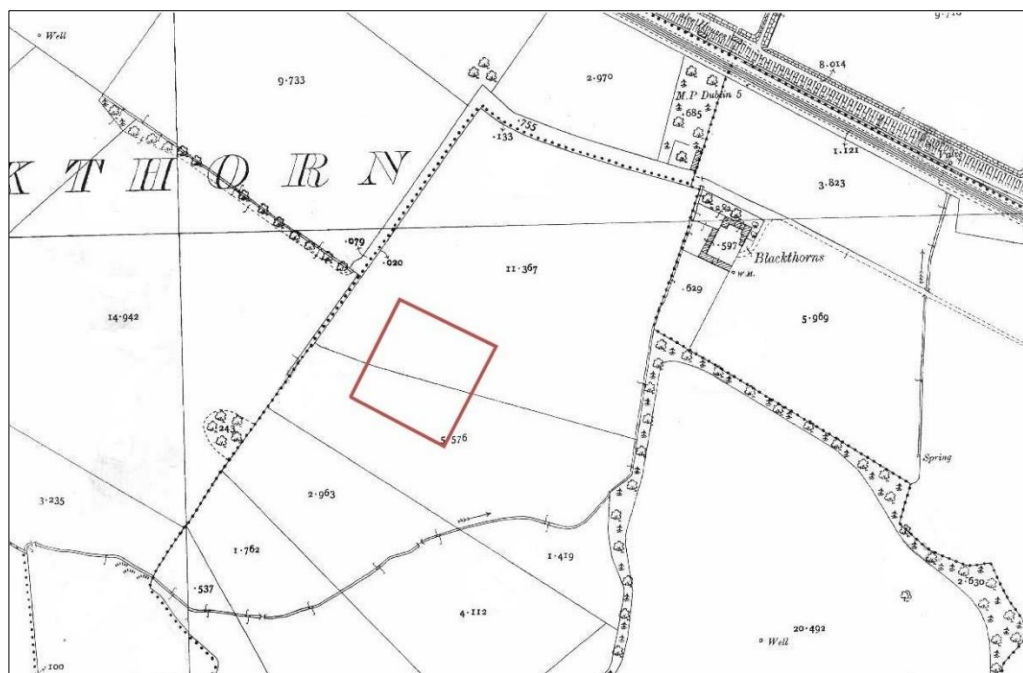


Figure 5 Ordnance Survey, Dublin, 25-inch mapping, c. 1910

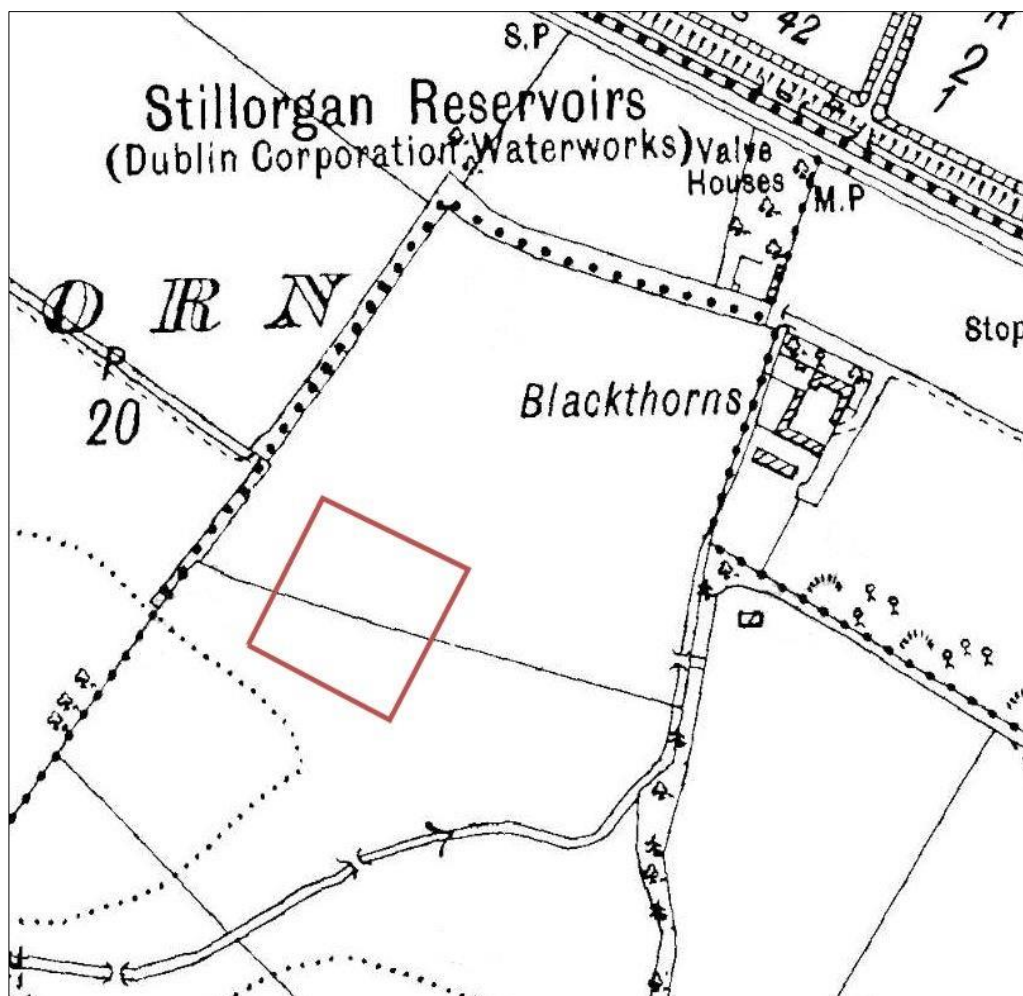


Figure 6 Ordnance Survey, Dublin, 6-inch mapping, c. 1943

4 Projected impact of the proposed development

- 4.1 The proposed development comprises a six to fifteen-storey apartment building over a single basement level (Figure 7). The proposed basement extends along the eastern and southern sides of the development, with no basement to the west and north. The slab will sit at 80.300mOD where under the central courtyard an attenuation area will impact to 81.500mOD. In both cases there can be an additional 1500mm added for slab depth, screed etc. The existing surface levels are between 84.400m to the north, rising to 86.500mOD to the southeast.

Where natural subsoil occurs at depths of between 600-1200mm sub-surface in the immediate area, the construction of the basement level will truncate through into the boulder clay and remove any surviving evidence for the field boundary across the site.

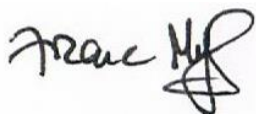


Figure 7 Extent of proposed single-level basement

- 4.2 The information compiled above strongly suggests that there is little of archaeological significance on the site, with the possible exception of an historic field boundary. Any surviving trace of this which may have remained undisturbed by previous development on the site will be removed.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

- 5.1 This report has demonstrated the agricultural nature of the site until its development in recent years, one associated with the larger Sandyford Industrial Estate, the development of which began as early as 1967 on an initial site of 120 acres. Where historical mapping depicts a field boundary across the development, which dates at least to the 1750s, there are no further indications of substantial historical settlement on the site.
- 5.2 Although the construction of the recently demolished *Avid Technology International* structure would not have occasioned significant disturbance to substrates, it is likely that there was some ground reduction undertaken across the site to create a level surface for construction. This in all likelihood truncated any evidence for historical agricultural development, where it is nonetheless possible that the historic field boundary presents as a cut feature across the site.
- 5.3 It is thus recommended that the initial stripping of the site is monitored under archaeological licence and that a section of the field boundary, should it survive, is excavated by hand to establish its nature and antiquity, should there be material suitable for scientific dating recovered.



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