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**Archaeological Test Trenching at  
Fairycastle Rd., Jamestown, Commons,  
Ratoath, Co. Meath**

**Client:**

BEO Properties Ltd.

**Excavation Licence No.: 21E0511**

ITM: 701928, 750512

Planning Ref.: N/A

RMP/SMR Nos: N/A

Caroline Cosgrove

16 September 2021

ACSU Ref.: 2015

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## PROJECT DETAILS

<b>Project</b>	Archaeological Assessment at Commons, Jamestown, Ratoath, Co. Meath
<b>Report Type</b>	Test Trenching Report
<b>Licence No.</b>	21E0511
<b>Townland(s)</b>	Commons, Jamestown.
<b>RMP</b>	N/A
<b>ITM</b>	7019828, 750512
<b>Consultant</b>	Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit, 21 Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, County Louth
<b>Excavation Director</b>	Caroline Cosgrove.
<b>Report Author</b>	Caroline Cosgrove.
<b>Report status</b>	Final
<b>Report Date</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
<b>ACSU Ref.</b>	2015

Revision	Date	Description	Status	Author	Reviewed	Approved
0	17.9.2021	Archaeological Assessment Report	Draft	C.C.	D.M	C.C
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final report details the results of archaeological test trenching carried out in the townlands of Commons and Jamestown, Ratoath, Co. Meath (ITM 7019828, 750512).

An area that the site is a part of was subject to a geophysical survey between February and March 2020. This was carried out by Ian Russell and Robert Breen of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit Ltd (ACSU) under licence 20R0026. No anomalies representing definite archaeological features were identified; however, a number of magnetic anomalies scattered across the site suggested a potential for archaeological features such as pits, spreads and kilns. The geophysical report recommended test trenching, targeting anomalies identified in order to establish their nature, depth and significance.

Subsequently, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2021, test trenching was conducted by Caroline Cosgrove of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit Ltd. This was carried out under licence 21E0511, issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. Test trenches were arranged in order to target anomalies identified during the geophysical survey (20R0026) and the site overall. A total of 42 test trenches were excavated, totalling 4,486m of linear trenches. Each trench measured 1.8m in width. In general, the topsoil was a dark brown silty clay that measured between c. 0.3m–0.58m in depth. The natural, varied from an orangish-brown boulder clay (exposed in the south most part of the site) to a mottled orange and grey clay in the remaining part of the site.

Archaeological test trenching identified three areas of archaeological activity: one in Field 1 and two in Field 5. The features exposed comprise ploughed out pits, post-holes and spreads, likely associated with a prehistoric activity. These features were exposed in Trenches 3, 4, Trenches 30, 30a and the east part of Trench 19. Furthermore, a number of linears were exposed; these were found to represent field ditches and drains. Field boundaries exposed in Field 5 account for Anomaly G identified during geophysical survey also visible above the ground and are marked on all Ordnance Survey maps (1835, 1909 and 1958). The anomalies identified during the geophysical survey were found to relate to modern agricultural activity.

Test trenching identified three areas with ploughed out, archaeological features (pits, post-holes and spreads) with no surface expression. The proposed development will directly impact the features. Therefore, it is recommended that the features identified be preserved by record (excavated). The three areas shall be stripped of topsoil, and any archaeological features exposed be preserved by record (excavated). All excavation should be carried out by a licence eligible archaeologist at the pre-construction phase in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on archaeological features and deposits.

## PLANNING INFORMATION



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

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<b>Site Owner:</b>	BEO Properties
<b>Address:</b>	6 Argus House, Greenmount Office Park, Harold’s Cross, Dublin 6.
<b>Planning Authority:</b>	Meath County Council
<b>Planning Reg. No.:</b>	Pre-planning
<b>Excavation Type:</b>	Test Trenching
<b>Contractor/Developer:</b>	As above
<b>Address:</b>	As above

### Description of Proposed Development

The development is a strategic housing development that includes 452 residential units on lands located immediately to the south of the existing built area of Ratoath in County Meath.

### Archaeological Condition

This assessment was carried out at a pre-planning stage to accompany the planning application.

### Impact Statement

Archaeological test trenching identified a number of pits, spreads and post-holes. They were concentrated in two fields, Field 1 and Field 5. The anomalies identified during the geophysical survey targeted during this test trenching were found to represent modern agricultural activity.

### Recommendations

Test trenching at Commons, Jamestown, Ratoath, Co. Meath identified three areas with ploughed out, archaeological features (pits, post-holes and spreads) with no surface expression. The features will be directly impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, it is recommended that the features identified be preserved by record (excavated). The three areas shall be stripped of topsoil, and any archaeological features exposed be preserved by record (excavated). All excavation should be carried out by a licence eligible archaeologist at the pre-construction phase in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on archaeological features and deposits.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report details the results of archaeological test trenching carried out in the townlands of Commons and Jamestown, in Ratoath, Co. Meath (ITM 7019828, 750512; Figures 1, 2). The site contains no Recorded Monuments; the nearest monument is enclosure ME045-066, located c. 356m east of the site and is scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the Record of Monuments and Places.

The site contains no protected Structures listed within the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 or any structures listed in the National Inventory of Architecture Heritage. The nearest such structure listed is The Manor House (RPS MH044310; NIAH Reg. No. 14336002), located c. 1.02km to the north, while house (NIAH Reg No 14336014) is located c. 1.1km to the north of the site.

The archaeological test trenching was carried out by Caroline Cosgrove of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit Ltd (ACSU) under licence 21E0511 issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. The fieldwork took place between the 16<sup>th</sup> of August and the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 2021.

### 1.1 Site location

The site is located in the north-eastern part of the townland of Commons and southwest part of Jamestown, in the Barony and Civil Parish of Ratoath, in County Meath. It is located south of the town of Ratoath, c. 18km northwest of Dublin City Centre (Figures 1-2). The site is bounded by the Fairy house Road R155 to the west, Glascairn Lane to the East, residential properties to the north and green fields to the south.

## 2. NATURAL & CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

### 2.1 Natural landscape

The site is located within an agricultural landscape. The ground is relatively flat and consists of pasture grasslands and arable fields. The site consists of five fields (Figures 8, 9). Fields 1, 2, and 5 were overgrown, and Fields 3 and 21 were recently cut for silage. Fields 1, 3 and 5 have not been used and have become overgrown.

The site has an elevation that ranges between 91 – 95m OD. The site's underlying geology is Carboniferous limestone (Finch, Gardiner, Comey & Radford 1983, 10).

### 2.2 Cultural landscape

The site is situated in the townland of Commons ( An Coimín) in the Barony and Civil Parish of Ratoath. An examination of the Placenames Database of Ireland ([www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie)) reveals that the townland of

Commons (An Coimín) was first mentioned and depicted as the ‘Comons of Ratooth’ on the Down Survey Map of County Meath in the Barony of Ratoath (1654-56). It can be translated as commonage, common land; little hollow or glen.

Ratoath is marked on several historic maps, and the proposed site can be identified on those maps. On William Petty’s Down Survey of the ‘Parish of Rattoth’ (1654-56), the map showed the proposed development site south of the town in the townland of ‘Commons of Ratoth’ (Figure 3). On Taylor and Skinner’s Maps of the Roads of Ireland (1777), the site is located in a greenfield, southwest of a northwest to southeast aligned public road; now known as Fairyhouse Road., with a row of mature trees on its eastern side (Figure 4). On the 1st edition OS map (surveyed 1835, published 1837), the site is located east of a north to south aligned road (the Fairyhouse Rd) and south of an east to west aligned public road (Glascarn Lane). The proposed development site extends across five fields (Figure 5). On the 3rd edition OS map (surveyed 1909 – published 1911), little has changed; the proposed development site now runs across eight fields. One of the fields was divided into two smaller fields with a north to south running boundary, and the most northern field was separated into two by a wet ditch aligned north-south (Figure 6). An examination of the Cassini edition 6-inch map (1958) shows no change within the proposed development site (Figure 7).

In addition to the maps, aerial photographs were reviewed. Photographs, dating between 1995 to 2013, from the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and Google Earth imagery, dating between 2005 and 2020, were examined. Linear cropmarks likely representing removed field boundaries or wet ditches are visible. There were no crop marks noted within the proposed development site.

### **2.2.1 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The site is located to the south of Ratoath. Ratoath is the name of a village, a townland, a parish and a barony in the southeast part of County Meath. The Irish for Ratoath is Ráth Tó translating into Tó’s ringfort. Orpen writes that Ratoath could have come from the Irish ráith tuaith which he translates into the “north rath”, (Orpen 1921, 68-69); however, it is more likely that tuaith is from túatha, meaning territory. In the book of Fermoy, a scribe wrote that when districts were divided into small territories, they became known as túatha (O’Neill 2002, 12). Anglicised forms of Ratoath were Ratouth, Ratour, Rathtowt and Rathouthe. (Orpen 1921, 68 -70). These words were evidently spelt phonetically by people that were unfamiliar with the name. The historic town of Ratoath (ME044-034) contains a number of Recorded Monuments which are outlined below (section 2.2.3).

#### **Prehistoric Period**

The wider environs of the study area are well represented in the archaeological record, dating back to the Prehistoric period. Burnt pits and spreads/fulachtaí fia, located north of the proposed development site, were discovered as a result of archaeological assessments (Licence No.s 03E1300, 03E1632,

03E1781). Fulachtaí fia are one of the most commonly discovered prehistoric site types found in the Irish landscape. They represent the use of pyrolithic technology, involving the boiling of water in troughs with heated stones. These site types were generally interpreted as cooking/industrial sites (Hawkes 2018). These sites generally consist of a low mound of charcoal-enriched soil mixed with an abundance of heat-shattered stones, commonly forming a horseshoe shape in proximity to a trough, and are found in low-lying marshy areas or close to streams. Often these sites have been ploughed out and survive as a spread of heat-shattered stones in charcoal-rich soil with no surface expression.

A multi-phase site was excavated on the Dunshauglin road, Ratoath (04E0218) c 1.3km northwest of the proposed development site. This revealed Bronze age features, which included a large burnt spread, an enclosure with a diameter of c. 37m and an inner circular structure. Finds included bronze age pottery, a spindle whorl, worked flint and chert.

Artefacts recorded by the National Museum of Ireland also demonstrate prehistoric occupation of the area, such as a fragment of a stone axe head (E551:1294) found in Grange townland, which probably represents Neolithic activity, and an unusual funerary vessel (NMI X192), described as a double ‘sepulchral vessel’, found in 1864 in a cist during the excavation of a ditch in Ratoath and most likely dating to the Bronze Age (Waddell 1974; 1990, 129).

### **Early medieval period**

The first half of the name Ratoath suggests a pre-Norman fort or fortification. There is currently no evidence within Ratoath village for such an enclosure. The Normans may have decided to build their motte on the site of an earlier enclosure, completely truncating the earlier fortification. Graham writes that in addition to strategic concerns, other factors that influenced the Normans in settling into an alien environment was their “desire to colonise the best agricultural land and the pre-existing settlement” (Graham 1975, 223). The comparative ease at which the Anglo-Normans colonised and penetrated Ratoath, (fourteen years), suggests that they moved into an area that already had a high degree of settlement and organisation (Murphy 2009, 157). It is possible that the name Ratoath refers to the early Medieval enclosure that was excavated in 2003 (03E1781) and 2004 (04E021), c. 1.3km northwest of the proposed development site. Prior to the construction of a residential housing estate, excavations revealed a multi-period site. This included an Early Christian ‘cemetery settlement’ with an enclosure, with evidence for both settlement and burials which dated to the 6th/7th century AD (Seaver 2016, 6). The landscape surrounding the proposed development site also contains a high distribution of early medieval site types, indicated by the presence of enclosures, ringforts and agricultural features, including field systems and cultivation ridges. In the early medieval period, settlement occurred as dispersed defended homesteads on lakes and across the wider landscape. Souterrains dating from the same period are often associated with settlement sites. These can include open settlements, enclosed settlements, ecclesiastical sites and promontory forts. The term ‘souterrain’ derives from the French

sous terrain, meaning ‘underground’. In archaeological terms, souterrains are artificial underground structures cut into bedrock or, more commonly, built into dug-out trenches with drystone walling and large stone lintels. Souterrains have two basic functions; (i) to provide temporary refuge in times of danger and (ii) to provide a cool storage place for food products (O’ Sullivan and Downey, 2004). Three enclosures are present in the environs of the development area, SMR No. ME045-064 located c. 0.9km to the southeast, RMP No. ME045-011 to the east, RMP No. ME044-025 to the south (Figure 2).

ME044-025 was marked as a ‘Fort’ on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (see Figure 5), while ME045-064 was identified in the form of a cropmark via aerial imagery from 2018. Furthermore, previous disturbance of enclosure ME044-025 produced human remains, suggesting the area is highly archaeologically sensitive and has significant potential for further human remains.

To the east of Ratoath town, in advance of the M2 Finglas-Ashbourne Road scheme, a number of important archaeological discoveries were made. The most significant was a large multi-phased early medieval archaeological complex that was excavated at Raystown (Licence 03E1229), which comprised enclosures, souterrains, a cemetery, kilns, mills and a mill race (Seaver 2005; 2016).

### **Medieval Period**

In April 1172, King Henry II gave Hugh de Lacy a major baron of land in “... Meath with all its appurtenances to hold for the service of 50 knights”. De Lacy divided up the land, which measured almost 325,000 hectares, between himself, his baron and chief followers. This process of division was known as sub-infeudation. De Lacy retained Clonard, Duleek, Ratoath and Trim as his own demesne manors. (Murphy 2009, 156-157). Ratoath was one of seven unwalled settlements that were seen as important centres of the sub-infeudation of County Meath (Graham 1975, 226). Hugh de Lacy (Senior) gave the tithes of Ratoath to the Abbey of St Thomas in Dublin. The grant was confirmed by the Bishop of Clonard in 1183. The manor then was granted to his son Walter de Lacy, who by 1198 had given all of the land of “Rathtowtht” to his brother Hugh (Earl of Ulster). Ratoath, along with Hugh de Lacy’s, (junior), other lands were confiscated by King John in 1210 and granted to Philip of Worcester. Later, King John returned “the castles of Nober and Ratoath” to Walter de Lacy. In 1224, Hugh de Lacy, with the support of some barons of Meath tried to forcibly take back his lands in Ratoath. King John intervened and once again took the castle and lands of Ratoath. Walter was fined 3,000 marks in 1225 and was handed back control of the lands, King John kept control of the castle. A year later King John gave Walter the castle and lands for a 3-year period. Walter did not hold the castle for the three years as Hugh finally took custody of the castle and lands off his brother on the 20th of April, 1227 (Orpen 1921, 69 – 70).

The next record we have of Ratoath is in February 1283, where Roger de Clifford and the Countess, his wife, sold the manor of “Rathouthe” in Ireland for £500 to queen Eleanor (wife of Edward I). On the

4th of July, 1283, Queen Eleanor granted Ratoath to Richard de Burgh, Earl of Ulster and his wife, Margaret (ibid, 70 – 72). In 1317, Richard de Burgh's successor, as the earl of Ulster, William Donn de Burgh, defeated Edward Bruce's forces in an ambush in Ratoath (Otway-Ruthven 1968, 230). A grave slab of a knight (ME044-034005-), set into the church tower has been described by Hunt as a knight with his head upon a tasselled cushion, wearing chain mail over a surcoat that is belted at the waist. One hand lies upon the sword grip and the other on the sword below. On the back of the grave slab is an inscription in Lombardic characters. The cross slab has been dated to the 13th / 14th century. (Hunt 1974, 213). The knight represented on this cross slab, may well have fallen in the ambush of Edward Bruce's forces in 1317.

The archaeological remains at Ratoath would suggest that the area was settled sometime during the medieval period. The most predominant feature at the centre of the village, is the motte and bailey (RMP ME044-034001) which is of Anglo-Norman construction. We don't know when the motte and bailey were constructed, however, an entry in the 'Annals of Loch Cé' recorded that when Hugh de Lacy ,(senior), died in 1186, the Lordship of Meath "from the Shannon to the sea was full of castles and of foreigners". It is believed that by this date, the motte castle at Ratoath had been built. (Murphy 2009, 157). The motte consists of a flat-topped earthen mound with a diameter of 20m. The base, which is much wider, measures 52m in diameter and the mound itself has a height of 11m. Remains of a fosse are visible and a rectangular bailey (c. 30m E-W by c. N-S) is visible to the south-east. The construction of the motte, bailey and castle would have been vital for garrisoning the Anglo-Norman forces and in turn, offering security to the new settlers. The Castle, however, would have quickly developed to being an important centre for non-military activities i.e., economic exploitation (Murphy 2009, 157).

A short distance north-east of the base of the motte is the site of an early church. The church was granted by Hugh de Lacy to the Abbey of St Thomas, who had control of it until the reformation (White 1943, 35). Reference to the early church is made in Dopping's Visitation Book, 1682-5, Bishop Dopping noted that the church was in good repair despite the chancel not having a roof (Ellison. 1971, 37-8). A recorded visitation by Bishop Ellis between 1723-33, reported that the medieval church in Ratoath church was still in use. (O'Neill 2002, 50). The Church of Ireland in Meath took on a great rebuilding scheme between 1799 and 1820, coinciding with the period of the First Fruits Commissioners between 1780 and the 1830s. Over one million pounds was given to the government for the rebuilding of Church of Ireland churches, however, the board stipulated that a church should be unroofed for a minimum of 16 years prior to the allocation of a grant. (ibid, 51). The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage records that the church that stands next to the motte commenced c. 1820 and in 1837. Samuel Lewis noted that the church was "... a neat edifice in good repair" and reported that it benefited from a loan of £800 from the Board of First Fruits (Lewis 1837, 2, 509). In addition to the 13th/14th century grave slab, a 17th century cross can also be found in the present graveyard attached to the 19th century church. The Abbey of St. Mary Magdalen was in existence in Ratoath in the 14th Century, the location of which is unknown. Written documentary evidence from 1388 records that the abbey owned forty acres of land,

worth 6 shillings and 8 pence. The historian, Rev. Cogan believes that the abbey was probably absorbed in the possessions of the abbey of St. Thomas. In the late 1700s. Rev. Mervyn Archdall visited St. Magdalen abbey and recorded seeing “some old walls and the west windows”. Cogan sadly responds that a century later “every vestige has been swept away” (Cogan 1862, 259).

### **Post-Medieval**

In 1795, a turnpike road was built between Curraghera and Ratoath (Andrews 1964). A suitable infrastructure was needed, and the introduction of toll roads was the result of economic prosperity under the Protestant Anglo-Irish. These toll roads were easily recognisable as they ran in straight lines. Lewis mentioned that small scale manufacture occurred in Ratoath, through the manufacture of sacking and the weaving of linen and remarked that the land was profitable, allowing for cultivation and the quarrying of good quality stone (Lewis, 1837,2). Corballis Esq had his principal seat at the Manor House in town, which is an example of a Protected Structure (Ref. MH044310), as listed in the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (see below).

Fairyhouse Racecourse, located to the south of the study area, is noted for the first time on the third edition OS 25-inch map, where a Grand Stand, Pavilion and Flagstaff are all depicted. The first race at Fairyhouse Racecourse was held in 1848, with the Irish Grand National steeplechase held since 1870.

#### ***2.2.2 Previous archaeological investigations***

The site is a part of an area that was subject to a geophysical survey. This was carried out by Ian Russell of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit Ltd (ACSU) under Licence no. 20R0026. No definitive signs of an archaeological site were identified; however, some of the field boundaries visible on the OS mapping have been detected, as well as an anomaly that may represent an old trackway or ‘boreen’, or possibly the remnants of ridge and furrow ploughing. Additional possible anomalies that may represent areas of archaeological activity, perhaps in the form of burning or pits, were also identified.

In addition, there have also been a number of archaeological investigations carried out within Ratoath town and some in the surrounding townlands.

Listed below (Table 1) are the investigations located in the environs of the proposed development site that further demonstrate the overall archaeological potential of the site and its surrounding townlands. The details are derived from the Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland ([www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie)).



Table 1: Previous Archaeological Investigations

Site	Licence No.	RMP/ SMR No.	Site Type	Investigation type
Tankardstown	99E0581	ME045-011	No archaeological significance	Archaeological monitoring
Fairyhouse Road, Ratoath	01E0721	N/A	No archaeological significance	Archaeological testing
Jamestown	11E062	N/A	No archaeological significance	Archaeological testing and monitoring
Irish Street/Fairyhouse Road, Ratoath	15E0228	SMR-ME044:034	No archaeological significance	Archaeological testing
Ratoath Outer Relief Road, Jamestown	18E0136	N/A	No archaeological significance	Archaeological monitoring
Well Road, Ratoath	20E0438	ME044-034-	Medieval activity	Archaeological testing and excavation

While there were a number of archaeological assessments carried out within the environs of the proposed development site, no archaeological remains were identified. Investigations within and surrounding Ratoath town, however, have uncovered numerous archaeological sites, including Medieval ditches, two 19th-century buildings on Main Street (Licence no. 01E0248) and Medieval burgrave plots on Well Road (Licence no. 20E0438). On the Kentstown Road, a late Medieval open drain and associated laneway surface, a later area of rough cobbling, a cistern-type structure, a substantial ditch possibly representing the town boundary, a small V-shaped ditch, an 18th/19th-century wall foundation and a further ditch of unknown date were recorded (Licence no. 01E1173). On the western fringe of the town, an 18-ha residential development led to the discovery of a large multi-phase site (03E1781) and (040218). It included Bronze Age features such as a large burnt spread, an enclosure with a c. 37m diameter and inner circular structure; other features included two ring ditches with associated pits and kilns and an early medieval enclosure with 56 burials. Burial 38, an extended supine inhumation, was buried wearing a neck ring with a ring-and-dot motif and simple interlocking clasp. A date from burial 38 fell within the range of AD 580-580 (Wallace & Dehanene in Bennett, 2003, 2004). Excavations along the M2 Finglas to Ashbourne Road, c. 2.8km east of the site, uncovered a number of archaeological sites, including *fulachta fiadh* (03E1237 and 03E1310). A multi-period site (03E1526; ME045-034) with features ranging from the Late Neolithic to the Post-Medieval period included a series of prehistoric pits, a Bronze Age enclosure, cremations and crouched inhumations and a burnt mound. The most significant was a large multi-phased early medieval archaeological complex that was excavated at Raystown (Licence 03E1229), which comprised enclosures, souterrains, a cemetery, kilns, mills and a mill race complex (Seaver 2005; 2016).



### 2.2.3 Recorded Monuments

The site contains no monuments listed within the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The nearest such monument is enclosure ME045-066---- located c. 356m east of the site.

The surrounding landscape is also rich in recorded monuments, ranging in date from the prehistoric period to post-medieval times. The following is a list of the recorded monuments within the environs of the proposed development site. These descriptions are derived from the published Archaeological Inventory of County Meath (Moore 1987). In certain instances, the entries have been revised and updated in the light of recent research and are available in the National Monuments Service Archaeological Survey Database (<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>).

Table 2: Recorded Monuments

RMP No	Class/Site Type	Townland	Description
ME045-066--- -	Enclosure	Jamestown	Located on a slight N-facing slope. The faint cropmark of a circular enclosure (diam. c. 30m E-W) defined by a slight fosse W-N-E
ME045-064--- -	Enclosure	Glascarn	Located on a fairly level landscape. The cropmark of a sub-rectangular enclosure (dims c. 55m NE-SW: c. 50-55m NW-SE) defined by fosse or drain
ME044-043--- -	Ring-ditch	Mullinam	Situated on a slight NW-facing slope in a fairly level landscape. The cropmark of a small circular feature (diam. c. 8m) defined by a single continuous ditch
ME044-025--- -	Enclosure	Ennistown (Ratoath By.)	Oval area defined by field fence on E and S. Bank on N and W destroyed exposing human bones (dims. c. 73m NW-SE, c. 30m NE-SW).
ME044-041--- -	Ring-ditch	Warrenstown (Ratoath By.)	Situated on a fairly level landscape. The cropmark of a small circular enclosure (int. diam. c. 7m) defined by a single continuous fosse feature
ME045-013--- -	Ring-ditch	Glascarn	Cropmark ring (diam. c. 20m)
ME044-024--- -	Field system	Warrenstown (Ratoath By.)	Rectangular fields, defined by scarps (dims. up to 30m by 20m) covering c. 8 acres.
ME045-011--- -	Enclosure	Tankardstown (Ratoath By.)	Circular area defined by fosse (diam. c. 60m).

RMP No	Class/Site Type	Townland	Description
ME044-034--- -	Historic town	Ratoath	Incorporates 18 recorded monuments, including a motte and bailey (ME044-034001-); a font (ME044-034002-); a church (ME044-034003-); architectural fragments (ME044-034004- & 007-), an effigial tomb (ME044-034005-); a churchyard cross (ME044-034006-); a market cross (ME044-034008-), a cistern (ME044-034011-); cultivation ridges (ME044-034015-); a graveyard (ME044-034017-); and miscellaneous sites uncovered as a result of excavations (ME044-034009-, 010-, 012-, 013-, 014-, 016 & 018-).

#### 2.2.4 Stray Finds

The topographical files were consulted, no stray finds are recorded for the townland of Commons, Ratoath. Listed below are stray finds found within the environs of the site.

Table 3: Stray finds

NMI Reg. No.	Location	Find	Circumstances
NMI X192	Ratoath	Bones and one or two unusual funerary vessels, one described as a double 'sepulchral vessel without internal communication' (Waddell 1974; 1990, 129)	Found in a stone cist during excavation of a ditch in 1884
E551:1294	Grange	A 3.9cm long fragment of a sandstone axe	Discovered during field walking.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 Site description

The site is located in the northeastern part of the townland of Commons, and south west part of Jamestown, to the south of Ratoath in County Meath. The site is bounded by the Fairy house Road R155 to the west, Glascairn Lane to the east, residential properties to the north and green fields to the south. The ground is relatively flat and consists of pasture grasslands and arable fields. Fields 1, 3 and 5 have not been used for several years and have become overgrown. The site is bounded by mature hedgerows and trees.

## 3.2 Methodology

Test excavation was carried out in accordance with the *IAI Code of Conduct for Archaeological Assessment Excavation* (IAI 2006). The test trenches were excavated to natural subsoil or the top of archaeological deposits.

Archaeological features were uncovered during testing, a small sample of selected features was excavated in order to determine their depth and extent. The features were cleaned and recorded (by plan, photographs, levels, feature sheets, etc.). No finds were retrieved, and no samples were taken.

All excavated trenches were recorded using digital photography. Digital photography images were taken using a high-resolution digital camera with a minimum resolution of 10 Megapixels.

### 3.2.1 Finds retrieval

No finds were retrieved during test excavations

### 3.2.2 Sampling strategy

No samples were taken during test excavations.

## 3.3 Results

Archaeological test trenching was carried out using a 14-tonne tracked excavator. A total of 42 test trenches (Plates 1-50, Figures 9-10) were excavated across the relevant areas, with each trench measuring 1.8m in width. In total, 4,486m of linear trenches were excavated, targeting anomalies identified during the geophysical survey (20R0026; Figure 8). In general, the trenches revealed dark brown silty clay topsoil, C1, measuring c. 0.3–0.58m in depth, overlying a natural, C2, that ranged from an orangish-brown boulder clay to a mottled grey and orange compact clay.

Archaeological test trenching identified three areas of archaeological activity. One area in the southern end of Field 5, centred around Trench 30 (Plates 38-39, Figure 12), another north-east of that, in Trench 19 (Plate 59, Figure 12) and the third in Field 1, centred around Trench 3 and 4 (Plates 3-10, Figure 11). The three areas comprise pits, spreads and post-holes and appear to represent prehistoric activity. Field boundary ditches positively identified by the geophysical survey were also uncovered, C3 (Plate 28, Figure 12) and C11 (Figure 12) as well as several other field ditches and drains. The clay subsoil was very compact and impermeable, requiring a large number of drains and ditches for drainage.

Table 4: Trench descriptions

Trench No.	Field No.	Length (m)	Trench depth	Description
1	1	88	0.55m - 0.72m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.55m to 0.74m in depth and lay above a mottled orange and grey clay natural (C2). A field drain with a 0.7m width ran north to south at the western end of the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 1, Figure 9)).
2	1	88	0.48m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.48m in depth and lay above a mottled orange and grey clay natural (C2). A field drain was identified running southwest to northeast across the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Figure 9).
3	1	85.	0.45m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.45m in depth and lay above a mottled orange and grey clay natural (C2). Burnt pits were exposed in this trench; therefore it was extended. An area of c. 6m N-S by c. 4m E-W was opened up. In total 9 features were identified. 5 post holes (C85, C87, C89, C91 & C93) 4 pits (C79, C81, C83 & C95) and a linear (C77). To the east of the series of pits, a number of liners were identified, one northwest to southeast field drain, three southwest to northeast field drains and an anomaly that turned out to be natural geology. Field drain C97 was sectioned; it measured 0.82m in width and 0.2m depth. It was filled with C98, a mid-grey silty clay with occasional shell and stone. (Plates 2-6, Figure 9 - 11)
4	1	93	0.43m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.43m in depth and lay above a mottled orange and grey clay natural (C2). In total, 3 pits (C71, C73, C99) were exposed in the trench. C71 was a circular pit with a diameter of 0.4m (Plate 8). C73 measured 0.4m E-W by a min. 0.3m N-S and was filled with charcoal and burnt stones. (Plate 9). Pit C99 was oval-shaped and measured 0.67m length by 0.5m width, and was filled with a grey/brown silty clay with burnt bone and charcoal (Plate 10). A field ditch ran N-S, east of pit C75. (Plates 7-10, Figure 9-11).
5	2	146	0.35 – 0.4m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.35m to 0.4m in depth and lay above the orange boulder clay natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 11, Figure 9).
6	2	150	0.4 - 0.48m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.4m – 0.48m in depth and lay above the

Trench No.	Field No.	Length (m)	Trench depth	Description
				orange boulder clay natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 12, Figure 9).
7	2	141	0.3m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.3m in depth and lay above the natural orange clay (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Figure 9).
8	3	71	0.56m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.56m in depth and lay above the mottled orangish-brown and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 8, Figure 9).
9	3	68	0.6m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.65m in depth and lay above the natural orange clay (C2). Stone drains were exposed and ran NW-SE. A tree-bole was identified at the east end of the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 14, Figure 9).
10	3	-	-	Due to overhead powerlines running directly above trench 10, it was not excavated for safety reasons. (Plate 15).
11	3	125	0.5m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled orangish-brown and grey natural (C2). Three field drains ran N-S across the trench where the geophysical survey identified possible archaeology. They had an average width of 0.5m. No archaeological features were exposed or identified in trench 10. (Plate 16, Figure 9).
12	3	124	0.5m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled orangish-brown and grey natural (C2). Three field drains ran across the trench, aligned N-S. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Figure 9).
13	3	84	0.46m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.46m in depth and lay above the mottled orangish-brown and grey clay natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 17, Figure 9).
14	1 & 5	259	0.43m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.43m in depth and lay above the mottled orangish-brown and grey clay natural with frequent mudstone and sandstone (C2). One stone drain aligned SW-NE was at the western end of the trench, and another field drain with a 0.65m width in the centre of the trench. No

Trench No.	Field No.	Length (m)	Trench depth	Description
				archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 18, Figure 9).
15	5	163	0.4 – 0.55m	This trench was orientated WSW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.4 to 0.55m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A number of N-S aligned field drains were identified. No archaeological features were exposed or identified (Figure 9).
16	5	144	0.4m	This trench was orientated WSW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.4m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). There were several field drains identified in the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 19, Figure 9).
17	5	116	0.58m	This trench was orientated WSW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.58m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey clay natural (C2). A field ditch, 1.3m in width, filled with grey/brown clay, was exposed east of the trench and a drain filled with a grey clay at the west end of the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 20, Figure 9).
18	5	269	0.48m	This trench was orientated WSW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.48m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). At the east end of the trench, an oval-shaped pit C64 was identified. It measured 1.54m length by 0.75m width and 0.17m depth. It was filled with C65, a sterile grey clay. It is believed to be non-archaeological. A field drain aligned N-S was identified to the west of C65. Another possible feature, C62, was investigated at the western end of the trench (Plate 22). The terminal of the feature was identified. It measured 0.84m in width. It was filled with C63, a compact grey clay with charcoal flecks. A section in C62 showed that the charcoal resulted from charred roots, and it is believed the feature is not archaeological. Field ditches C49, C4, C7 and C54, were identified at the western end of the trench, and a number of N-S aligned field drains were also exposed. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plates 21 – 22, Figures 9 & 12).
19	5	209	0.5m	This trench was orientated WSW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A potential feature C51 was investigated east of ditch C3 and interpreted as non-archaeological (Plate 23). Burnt pit C59 was identified in the centre of the trench (Plate 24). It has an oval shape, aligned E-W and measures 1.72m length by 0.7m width. Field boundary ditches C3 and C11 were identified in the trench. Other ditches exposed in the trench were C4, C7,

Trench No.	Field No.	Length (m)	Trench depth	Description
				C43, C49, C53, C55 and C61 (Plates 23 – 25, Figures 9 & 12).
20	5	30	0.5m	This trench was orientated NNE-SSW. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey clay natural (C2). Pit C64, an elongated oval pit situated at the east end of the trench, was investigated and interpreted as non-archaeological. Another feature, C55, west of ditch C4, was sectioned. It was considered to be non-archaeological. Field ditches and drains identified in trench 20 were C3, C5, C7, C11, C43, C54 and C62. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 26, Figures 9 & 12)
21	5	180	0.31m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.31m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey clay natural (C2), which became more yellow as it ran west. Field boundary ditches C3 and C11 and field ditches C4, C7, C9 and C19 were exposed in the trench as well as an SW-NE aligned stone drain. No archaeological features were exposed or identified (Plates 27 – 29, Figure 9 & 12).
22	5	185	0.4 – 0.5m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.4m to 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). E-W aligned stone drain identified at the centre of the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 30, Figure 9).
23	5	153	0.4m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.4m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 31, Figure 9).
24	5	115	0.4m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.4m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 32, Figure 9).
25	21	92	0.45m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.45m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 33, Figure 9).
26	21	36	0.49m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.49m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 34, Figure 9).
26 (A)	21	75	0.5	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled



Trench No.	Field No.	Length (m)	Trench depth	Description
				orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified.
27	21	61	0.45m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.45m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 35, Figure 9).
27 (A)	21	33	0.6m-0.7m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.49m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A field ditch with a stone drain at the base ran NW-SE at the western end of the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 36, Figure 9).
28	21	64	0.45m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.45m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 37, Figure 9).
29	5	136	0.45m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.49m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A number of field drains were identified in the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Figure 9)
30	5	187	0.4m	<p>This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.4m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2) that changed to a clayey sand around the identified archaeology. Burnt pits were exposed in the centre of the trench, and an area measuring c. 5m by 5m was opened up. 7 pits were exposed (C21, C23, C25, C27, C29, C66 and C68) – (Plate 38). C21 is 1.2m width by 1.3m length by 0.08m depth. It is filled with C22, a charcoal rich fill with burnt stones (Figure 13). C23 is a circular pit with a diameter of 0.6m. It is filled with C24, a charcoal rich fill with burnt stones. C25 is a sub-circular pit, measuring 0.7m by 0.5m. It is filled with C26, a charcoal rich fill with burnt stones. C27 is an oval-shaped pit measuring 0.8m by 0.55m. It is filled with C28, a charcoal rich fill with burnt stones. C29 is a circular pit, measuring 0.46m in diameter; it is filled with C30, a brown silty clay. C66 is a circular pit, measuring 0.36m by 0.4m. It is filled with C67, a brown silty clay. C68 is a sub-circular pit measuring 0.57m by 0.7m. It is filled with C69, a brown silty clay.</p> <p>A possible circular pit C35 and elongated pit C37 (Plate 39) were situated west of the cluster of pits in the trench. They are filled with a light grey, sterile-looking clay and could be natural. At the western end of the trench WNW-ESE aligned drain C40 was identified. It measured 0.76m in</p>



Trench No.	Field No.	Length (m)	Trench depth	Description
				width. A number of field ditches were also recorded in trench 30; C3, C7, C9, C11, C13, C15, C17. To the east of ditch C7 and west of ditch C17, a possible feature was investigated and interpreted as natural (Plates 38 – 41, Figures 9 & 12).
30 (A)	5	25	0.48m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.48m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A northeast to southwest linear, C31, was identified at the south end of the trench, north of the cluster of burnt pits in trench 30. C31 measured 0.35m in width and was filled with C32, a brown clay. An irregular shape feature with compact grey clay, south of C31 was investigated and interpreted as natural geology. At the southern end of the trench, a subcircular pit C33 is situated. Its located to the east of the terminal of a field drain. It measured 0.38m in diameter and is filled with C34, a brown silty clay. (Plate 42, Figures 9 & 12).
30 (B)	5	66	0.5m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). Two linears with grey fill were identified in the centre of the trench, C41 and C43. C41 was aligned SW to NE and was filled with C42, a mottled light grey and yellow clay. It measured 0.84m in width. C43 was aligned N-S and measured 0.8m width, min. 141m length and 0.16m depth (Plate 44). It was filled with C44, a mottled grey and yellow clay. To the west of C43, the rounded terminal of a drain, C45, was recorded. It measured 0.9m width and a min. of 1.9m length. It was filled with C46, a grey clay. East of that field, boundary ditch C3 was identified and towards the north-western end of the trench, field drain C47, aligned SW-NE ran across the trench. At the southeast end of the trench, ditch C4 ran north to south across the trench. (Plates 43 -44, Figures 9 & 12).
31	5	26	0.45m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.45m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A field drain was identified in the trench running east to west. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 45, Figures 9 & 12).
32	3	61	0.5m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Figure 9).
33	2	137	0.42m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.42m in depth and lay above the mottled

Trench No.	Field No.	Length (m)	Trench depth	Description
				orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 46, Figure 9).
34	21	39	0.48m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.48m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 47, Figure 9).
35	21	27	0.5m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.5m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 48, Figure 9).
36	3	101	0.52m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.52m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A number of field drains were identified in the trench. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Figure 9).
37	3	21	0.58m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.58m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 49, Figure 9).
38	2	25	0.39 – 0.52m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.39m to 0.52m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Plate 50, Figure 9).
39	1	88	0.57 – 0.7m	This trench was orientated WNW-ESE. The sod and topsoil (C1) measured 0.57m to 0.7m in depth and lay above the mottled orange and grey natural (C2). A field drain aligned north to south ran across the western end of the ditch. No archaeological features were exposed or identified. (Figure 9).

### Context Descriptions:

Table 5: Context descriptions

Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C1			0.3m-0.7m	Sod and dark brown silty clay topsoil.
C2				Natural. It consisted of an orange boulder clay and compact mottled orange and grey clay.

Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C3	Min. 156m	3.5m		Field boundary ditch in field 5, aligned north to south. Filled with C5, a dark brownish-grey clay. Exposed in trenches 18, 19, 21, 30 and 30(B). (Plate 28, Figure 12).
C4	Min. 156m	1.3m	0.2m	Field ditch orientated north to south and filled with C6, a mottled grey/brown silty clay. Exposed in Trenches 18, 19, 21, 30 and 30 (B). (Plate 40 – 41, Figures 12 & 13).
C5	Min. 156m	3.5m		Fill of field boundary ditch C3, a dark brownish grey clay. (Plate 28, Figures 12 & 13).
C6	Min. 156m	1.3m	0.2m	Fill of field ditch C4, a mottled greyish brown silty clay. (Plate 40 – 41, Figure 12).
C7	Min. 156m	2.4m		Field ditch, aligned north to south in field 5. Filled with C8, a firm light brown clay. It was exposed in trenches 18, 19, 21, and 30. (Plate 25, Figure 12)
C8	Min. 156m	2.4m		Fill of field ditch C7, a firm light brown clay. (Plate 25, Figure 12).
C9	Min. 31m	0.8m		Field drain, aligned north to south in field 5. Exposed in trenches 21 and 30. Filled with C10, a firm mottled greyish brown clay. (Plate 29, Figure 12).
C10	Min. 31m	0.8m		Fill of field drain C9, a firm mottled greyish brown clay. (Plate 29, Figure 12).
C11	Min. 156m	3.4m		Field boundary ditch aligned north to south in field 5. Marked on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map and seen above ground. It was filled with C12, a compact dark brownish grey clay with red brick. Exposed in trenches 18, 19, 21 and 30. (Figure 12).
C12	Min. 156m	3.4m		Fill of field boundary ditch C11, a compact dark brownish grey clay with red brick. (Figure 12).
C13	Min. 1.6m	1.2m		Terminal of field ditch orientated northwest to southeast. (Likely the same as C54). Filled with C14, a light grey clay. exposed in trench 30 (Figure 12).
C14	Min. 1.6m	1.2m		Fill of field ditch C13, a light grey clay.
C15	Min. 1.97m	0.9m		Terminal of field ditch, aligned NW-SE. It was filled with C16, a mid-grey clay. Exposed in trench 30. (Figure 12).
C16	Min. 1.97m	0.9m		Fill of field ditch C15, a compact mid grey clay.
C17	Min. 2.5m	1.6m		Field ditch aligned NW-SE, filled with C18, a mottled light grey and orange clay. Exposed in trench 30. (Figure 12).
C18	Min. 2.5m	1.6m		Fill of field ditch C17, a mottled light grey and orange clay.
C19	Min. 47m	1.6m		Field ditch aligned north to south, filled with C20, a light grey clay. Exposed in trenches 21 and 30. Figure 12).
C20	Min. 47m	1.6m		Fill of field ditch C19, a light grey clay.

Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C21	1.3m	1.2m	0.08m	Burnt pit, sub-oval in shape. It has a gradual break of slope, gently sloping sides a gradual break of slope at the bottom that leads to a slightly rounded base. It was filled with C22, a charcoal rich deposit with frequent heated reddened stones. Exposed in trench 30. (Plate 38, Figures 12 & 13).
C22	1.3m	1.2m	0.08m	Fill of burnt pit C21. Black charcoal rich fill with frequent red heated stones (Plate 38, Figures 12 & 13).
C23	0.6m	0.6m	0.06m	Burnt pit, circular in shape. It had a gradual break of slope at the top, gently sloping sides, a gradual break of slope at the bottom that leads to a slightly rounded base. It is filled with C24, a charcoal rich fill with burnt stones. Exposed in trench 30. (Plate 38, Figures 12 & 13).
C24	0.6m	0.6m	0.06m	Fill of burnt pit C22, a black charcoal rich silty clay with frequent heat reddened stones. (Plate 38, Figures 12 & 13).
C25	0.7m	0.5m		Burnt pit, sub-circular in shape. It was filled with C26, a charcoal rich fill with frequent heat reddened stones. Exposed in trench 30. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C26	0.7m	0.5m		Fill of pit C25, a charcoal rich silty clay with frequent heat reddened stones. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C27	0.8m	0.55m		Sub-oval shaped burnt pit, aligned SW-NE. It was filled with C28 a charcoal rich silty clay with frequent heat reddened stones. Exposed in trench 30. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C28	0.8m	0.55m		Fill of pit C27, a black charcoal rich silty clay with frequent heat reddened stones. (Plate 38, figure 12).
C29	0.46m	0.46m		Circular shaped pit, filled with C30, a brown silty clay. Exposed in trench 30. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C30	0.46m	0.46m		Fill of circular pit C29, a brown silty clay. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C31	Min. 1.8m	0.35m		Field drain, aligned WSW-ENE, filled with C32, a brown clay. Exposed in trench 30 (A). (Figure 12).
C32	Min. 1.8m	0.35m		Fill of field drain C31, a brown clay.
C33	0.38m	0.38m		Circular pit filled with C34 a brown silty clay. Exposed in trench 30 (A). (Plate 38, Figure 12)).
C34	0.38m	0.38m		Fill of circular pit C33, a brown silty clay. (Plate 38).
C35	0.52m	0.5m		Cut of possible circular shaped pit, filled with C36, a compact grey clay. Exposed in trench 30. (Plate 39, Figure 12).
C36	0.52m	0.5m		Fill of possible pit C35, a compact grey clay. (Plate 39, Figure 12).
C37	Min. 0.4m	0.6m		Terminal of possible feature identified 0.2m north of possible pit C35. It is filled with C38 a compact greyish brown clay. Exposed in trench 30. (Plate 39, Figure 12).

Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C38	Min. 0.4m	0.6m		Fill of feature C37, compact greyish brown clay. (Plate 39, Figure 12).
C39	13.5m	0.5m		Fill of field drain C40, a yellowish grey clay.
C40	13.5m	0.5m		Field drain, aligned WSW-ESE filled with C39, a yellowish grey clay. Exposed at the western end of trench 30. (Figure 12).
C41	Min. 3.3m	0.84m		Field ditch, aligned NW-SE, filled with C42, a mottled light grey and yellow clay. Exposed in trench 30(B) (Figure 12).
C42	Min. 3.3m	0.84m		Fill of linear C41, a compact mottled light grey and yellow clay.
C43	141m	0.8m	0.16m	Linear, aligned N-S, filled with C43, a firm mottled light grey and yellow clay. Exposed in trench 18, 19, 30 and 30(B). (Plate 44, Figures 12 & 13).
C44	Min. 1.8m	0.8m	0.16m	Fill of linear C43, a firm mottled light grey and yellow clay. (Plate 44, Figures 12 & 13).
C45	Min. 1.2m	0.9m		Rounded terminal of field ditch in trench 30 (B). It is filled with C46, a grey clay. (Figure 12).
C46	Min. 1.2m	0.9m		Fill of field ditch C45, a compact grey clay.
C47	Min. 1.8m	0.38m		Field drain aligned SW-NE, filled with C48, a mid-grey clay. Exposed at the western end of trench 30 (B). (Figure 12).
C48	Min. 1.8m	0.38m		Fill of field drain C47, a mid-grey clay.
C49	Min. 1.8m	1.5m		Field ditch aligned north to south field ditch C50, a compact orangish brown silty clay. Exposed at the western end of trench 19. (Figure 12).
C50	Min. 1.8m	1.5m		Fill of field ditch C49, a compact orangish brown silty clay.
C51	Min. 1.8m	0.6m		Possible feature, investigated in trench 19 it is non-archaeological (Plate 23, Figure 12).
C52	Min. 1.8m	0.6m	0.08m	Possible feature exposed in trench 20. It is non-archaeological. (Plate 23).
C53	Min. 1.8m	0.63m		Field ditch aligned north-south, (Possibly the same as C13), filled with C54, a dark grey clay with purplish hue. Exposed in trench 19 and 20. (Figure 12).
C54	Min. 1.8m	0.63m		Fill of field ditch C53, a dark grey clay with purplish hue.
C55	Min. 0.9m	0.8m		Terminal of field ditch, filled with C56 a brownish grey clay. Exposed in trench 19. (Figure 12),
C56	Min. 0.9m	0.8m		Fill of field ditch C55, a brownish grey clay.

Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C57	0.88m	0.56m		Cut of possible pit, filled with C58 a purplish grey clay. Exposed in trench 19, west of pit C19. (Figure 12)
C58	0.88m	0.56m		Fill of possible pit C57, a purplish grey clay. (Figure 12)
C59	1.72m	0.7m		Elongated oval burnt pit, aligned SW to NE. It is filled with C60 a dark grey charcoal rich silty clay with occasional oxidised stone. Exposed in trench 19 and 30(A). (Plate 24, Figure 12).
C60	1.72	0.7m		Fill of pit C59, a dark grey charcoal rich silty clay with occasional oxidised stone. (Plate 24, (Figure 12).
C61	Min. 70m	0.84m		Field drain aligned SE to NW. It was filled with C70, a greyish brown clay fill. Exposed in trenches 18 and 19. (Figure 12)
C62	1.6m	Min. 0.85m	0.22m	Cut of possible feature in trench 18. It is filled with C63, a grey clay with occasional charcoal. It was sectioned and the charcoal was the result of charred roots and the feature was interpreted as non-archaeological. (Plate 22, Figure 12).
C63				Non-archaeological
C64	1.54	0.75	0.17m	Cut of possible feature in trench 18. It is filled with C65, a grey clay. It was investigated and interpreted as non-archaeological. (Figure 12)
C65				Non-archaeological
C66	0.4m	0.36m		Cut of pit filled with C67, a brown silty clay. Exposed in trench 30, SW of pit C23. (Plate 38).
C67	0.4m	0.36m		Fill of pit C66, a brown silty clay. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C68	0.7m	0.57m		Cut of pit filled with C68 a brown silty clay. Exposed in trench 30, east of burnt pit C21. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C69	0.7m	0.57m		Fill of pit C68, a firm brown silty clay. (Plate 38, Figure 12).
C70	Min. 70m	0.84m		Fill of field drain C61, greyish brown clay.
C71	0.46m	0.4m		Sub-circular shaped pit filled with C72, a firm greyish brown silty clay with charcoal and burnt bone. Exposed in trench 4. (Plate 8, Figure 11).
C72	0.46m	0/4m		Fill of pit C71, a firm greyish brown silty clay with charcoal and burnt bone. (Plate 8, Figure 11).
C73	0.35m	Min. 0.23m		Sub-circular shaped pit filled with C74, a firm blackish brown silty clay with frequent stone, including oxidised yellow and orange stone and frequent charcoal. Exposed in trench 4. (Plate 9, Figure 11).
C74	0.35m	Min. 0.23m		Fill of pit C73, a firm blackish brown silty clay with frequent stone including oxidised yellow and orange stone. (Plate 9, Figure 11).



Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C75	Min. 1.8m	0.60m		Field ditch aligned north to south. It is filled with C75, a light brown clay. Exposed in trench 4. (Figure 11)
C76	Min. 1.8m	0.6m		Fill of field ditch C75, a light brown clay. (Figure 11).
C77	Min. 0.77m	0.36m		Feature (possible gully) situated north of series of pits in trench 3. Terminal exposed. It is filled with C78, a grey and yellow mottled clay. (Figure 11)
C78	Min. 0.77m	0.36m		Fill of C77, a mottled grey and yellow clay.
C79	1.05m	0.97m		Sub-triangular shaped pit, with rounded corners. It is filled with C80, a blackish grey charcoal rich silty clay. Exposed in trench 3. (Plate 5, Figure 11).
C80	1.05m	0.97m		Fill of pit C79, a blackish grey silty clay with frequent charcoal. (Plate 5, Figure 11).
C81	0.4m	0.4m		Circular pit, filled with C82 a black brown silty clay with oxidised stone and charcoal. Exposed in trench 3. (Plate 6, Figure 11).
C82	0.4m	0.4m		Fill of pit C81, a blackish brown silty clay with oxidised stone and charcoal. (Plate 6, Figure 11).
C83	0.64m	0.5m		L-shaped pit, situated south of pit C81 in trench 3. It is filled with C84, a blackish brown silty clay with flecks of oxidised clay. C83 could turn out to be two pits. (Plate 6, Figure 11).
C84	0.64m	0.5m		Fill of pit C83, a blackish brown silty clay with charcoal and flecks of oxidised clay. (Plate 6, Figure 11).
C85	0.22m	0.17m		Posthole, east of burnt pits in trench 3. It is filled with C86, a black silty clay. C85 is 1 of 4 post-holes (C85, C87, C89 and C91) aligned N-S in a slight curve, east of burnt pits in trench 3. (Plate 4, Figure 11).
C86	0.22m	0.17m		Fill of posthole C85, a black charcoal rich silty clay. (Plate 4, Figure 11).
C87	0.2m	0.19m		Posthole, east of burnt pits in trench 3. It is filled with C88, a black silty clay. C87 is 1 of 4 post-holes (C85, C87, C89 and C91) aligned N-S in a slight curve, east of burnt pits in trench 3. (Plate 4, Figure 11).
C88	0.2m	0.19m		Fill of posthole C87, a black charcoal rich silty clay. (Plate 4, Figure 11).
C89	0.2m	0.2m		Posthole, east of burnt pits in trench 3. It is filled with C90, a black silty clay. C89 is 1 of 4 post-holes (C85, C87, C89 and C91) aligned N-S in a slight curve, east of burnt pits in trench 3. (Plate 4, Figure 11).
C90	0.2m	0.2m		Fill of posthole C89, a black charcoal rich silty clay. (Plate 4, Figure 11).
C91	0.2m	0.18m		Posthole, east of burnt pits in trench 3. It is filled with C92, a black silty clay. C91 is 1 of 4 post-holes (C85, C87, C89

Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
				and C91) aligned N-S in a slight curve, east of burnt pits in trench 3. (Figure 11).
C92	0.3m	0.18m		Fill of posthole C91, a black silty clay. (Plate 4, Figure 11).
C93	0.2m	0.18m		Posthole east of C81, in trench 3. Filled with C94, a light brown silty clay (Figure 11).
C94	0.2m	0.18m		Fill of posthole C93, a light brown silty clay.
C95	Min. 0.33m	0.33m		Pit situated SW of pit C83 in trench 3. It is filled with C96 a dark brown silty clay (Figure 11). .
C96	Min. 0.33m	0.33m		Fill of pit C95, a dark brown silty clay.
C97	Min. 2.3m	0.9m	0.21m	Field ditch aligned SW to NE. It is filled with C98, a greyish brown silty clay with occasional snail shell. Exposed in trench 3. (Plate 3, Figures 11 & 13). .
C98	Min. 2.3m	0.9m	0.21m	Fill of field ditch C97, a greyish brown silty clay with occasional shell. (Plate 3, Figures 11 & 13).
C99	0.75m	0.57m		Sub-oval shaped pit, aligned N-S. It is filled with C100. A brownish grey silty clay with charcoal and burnt bone. Exposed in trench 3. (Plate 10, Figure 11).
C100	0.75m	0.57m		Fill of pit C98, a friable brownish grey silty clay with charcoal and burnt bone. (Plate 10, Figure 11).

#### 4. MATERIAL CULTURE

No artefacts were recovered during the programme of test trenching on site. No samples were taken. Burnt bone seen in pits C71 and C99 were not lifted and remained *in situ*.

#### 5. DATING

No dating material was recovered during post-excavation analysis.

#### 6. DISCUSSION

This report details the results of an archaeological assessment (test trenching) that was carried out at Commons, Jamestown, Ratoath, Co. Meath. An Archaeological Impact Assessment report was carried out in June 2020 by ACSU. It recommended that the site be archaeologically assessed by means of a geophysical survey followed by test trenching. Subsequently, the geophysical survey was carried out between February and March 2020, under licence number 20R0026 (Russell, Breen 2020). This recommended test trenching targeting anomalies identified.



The test trenching was undertaken under licence number 21E0511 by the author between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2021. The test trenches were set out to investigate potential archaeological features identified in the geophysical survey, as well as the site overall. Forty-two test trenches were excavated across five fields (Plates 1-50, Figure 9).

Three areas of archaeology were identified. In the south part of Field 5, in Trench 30 and 30a, a number of burnt pits were exposed in close proximity to each other (Plates 38 – 41, Figure 12). To the northeast of this, an additional pit, C59 (Plate 24), and potential pit C57 were identified in Trench 19 (Figure 12). In Field 1, in Trenches 3 and 4, several pits and post-holes were identified (Plates 4-10, Figure 11).

A large number of field ditches and drains were exposed across the site. Some large field boundaries were exposed in Field 5, also identified during geophysical survey as Anomaly G. Two of these are visible above the ground, and are marked on all the Ordnance Survey maps (1835, 1909 and 1958). The north to south aligned field boundary ditch (C11) contained red brick on the surface. A large amount of linears was identified as field drains and not of archaeological significance. A possible burnt feature in Field 3, Trench 9, turned out to be a tree-bole upon investigation (Plate 14), and another tree-bole was uncovered in Trench 27, field 21 (Plate 35). The anomalies identified during the geophysical survey were found to be related to modern agricultural activity.

The identified archaeology is summarised as follows;

#### Archaeological features in Field 5

In Trenches 30, 30a a number of burnt pits (C21, C23, C28 and C26) pits (C29, C33, C67 and C69) and possible features (C35, C37 and C41) were uncovered. To the northeast in Trench 19, burnt pit C59 and possible pit C57 to the east were identified (Figure 12).

#### Archaeological features in Field 1

In Trench 4, three pits, C71, C73 and C99 were identified. To the north, in Trench 3, pits C79, C81, C83 and C95, possible gully C77 and post-holes C85, C87, C89 C91 and C93 were uncovered. (Figure 11).

## **7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The site at Commons and Jamestown, Ratoath, Co. Meath was assessed in the form of geophysical survey (20R0026) and test trenching (21E0511).

The test trenching identified three areas with a concentration of ploughed out, archaeological features (pits, spreads and post-holes) with no surface expression. These features will be directly impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, it is recommended that the features identified be preserved by

record (excavated). The three areas shall be stripped of topsoil, and any archaeological features exposed be preserved by record (excavated).

All excavation should be carried out by a licence eligible archaeologist at the pre-construction phase in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on archaeological features and deposits.

## **8. EXCAVATION BULLETIN**

**Fairyhouse Rd, Commons, Jamestown, Ratoath Co. Meath.**

**21E0511**

**ITM. 7019828, 750512**

**RMP No. N/A**

**Testing**

**Poss. prehistoric activity (pits, post-holes, spreads)**

**The 27th of August 2021**

An archaeological assessment in the form of geophysical survey and test trenching was carried out at Fairyhouse Road, Commons, Jamestown, in Ratoath, Co. Meath.

An Archaeological Impact Assessment report was carried out in June 2020 by ACSU and recommended the site should be archaeologically accessed by means of a geophysical survey followed by test trenching.

A program of geophysical survey was carried out in February and March 2020, under licence 20R0026. No anomalies representing definite archaeological features were identified; however, a number of magnetic anomalies scattered across the site suggested that there is a potential for archaeological features such as pits, spreads and kilns. The geophysical report recommended test trenching, targeting anomalies identified in order to establish their nature, depth and significance. Subsequently, test trenching was undertaken in August 2021. In total, 42 test trenches with a width of 1.8m each and measuring a total of 4,886m metres were excavated.

Three main areas of archaeology were identified and consisted of ploughed out archaeological features (pits, post-holes and spreads) with no surface expression. In the south extent of Field 5, a number of burnt pits were exposed in close proximity to each other in Trench 30 and 30a (four burnt pits C21, C23, C28 and C26; four pits C29, C33, C67 and C69 and three possible features C35, C37 and C41). To the northeast, an additional pit, C59, and potential pit C57 were identified in Trench 19. In Field 1, several pits and post-holes were identified in Trenches 3 and 4 (in Trench 3, four pits C79, C81, C83 and C95, a possible gully C77 and five post-holes C85, C87, C89 C91 and C93; in Trench 4, three pits C71, C73 and C99). In addition, a large number of linears were interpreted as field ditches and drains were exposed across the site. There were a small number of large field boundaries in Field 5. Two of these are visible

above the ground and are marked on all the Ordnance Survey maps (1835, 1909 and 1958). The north to south aligned field boundary ditch (C11) contained red brick.

*Caroline Cosgrove, Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit, Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co Louth.*

## 9. PUBLICATION PLAN

An account of this archaeological assessment and its results will be published online as an excavation bulletin on [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie) (see Section 8).

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### **Cartographic and Photography Sources**

Down Survey Map of County Meath, Barony of Ratoath (1654-56)

Taylor and Skinner's Road Maps of Ireland – Map 44 Dublin to Ballyshannon, Donegal and Killybegs (1777)

First edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (surveyed 1835 – published 1837)

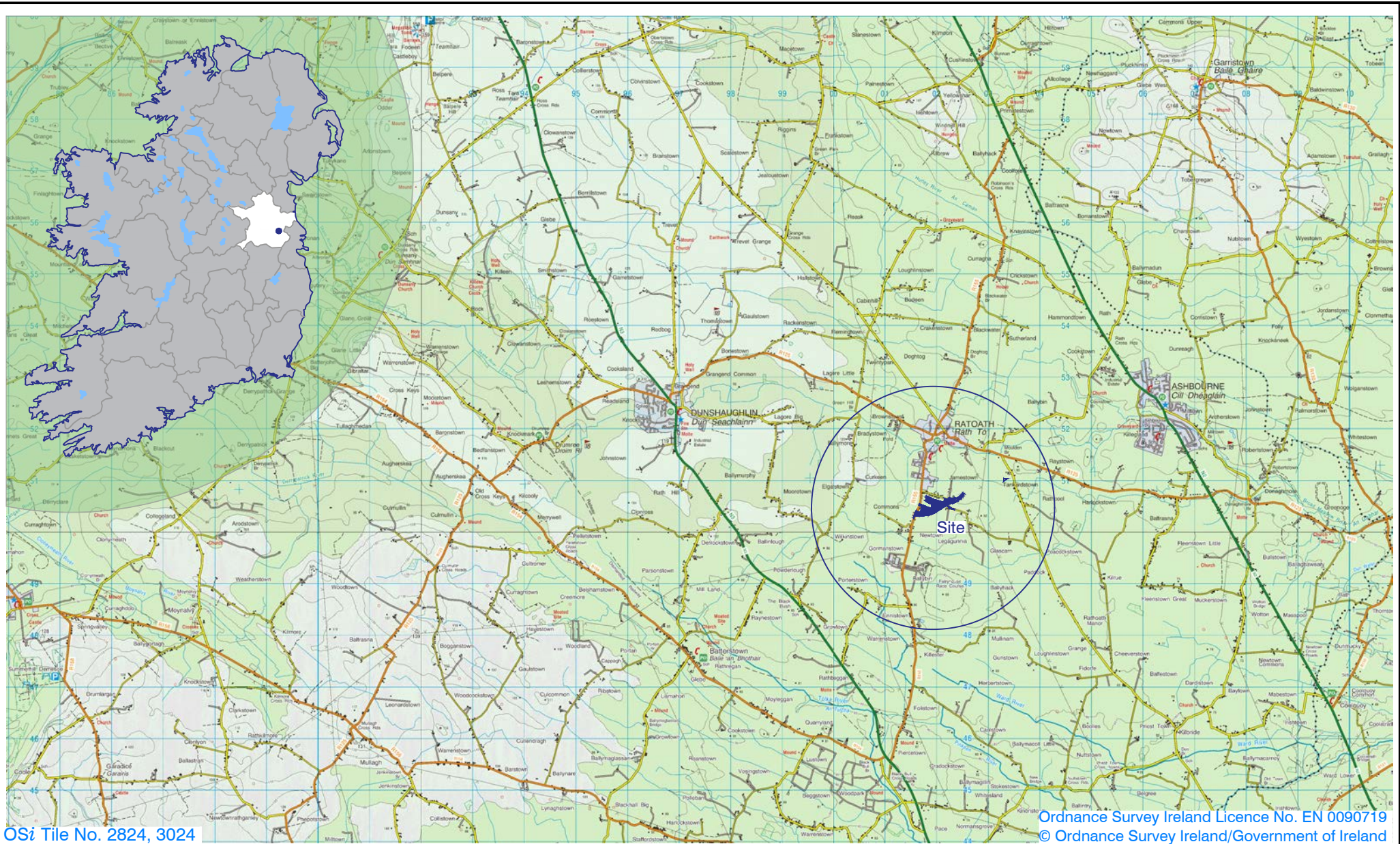
Third edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 25-inch map (surveyed 1909 – published 1911)

Ordnance Survey Ortho (aerial photography) series, 1995-2013

Google Earth Pro (aerial photography) 2005-2020







5 km



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Site: Fairyhouse Road Housing, Ratoath, Co. Meath

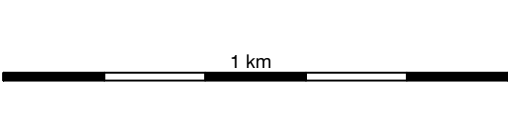
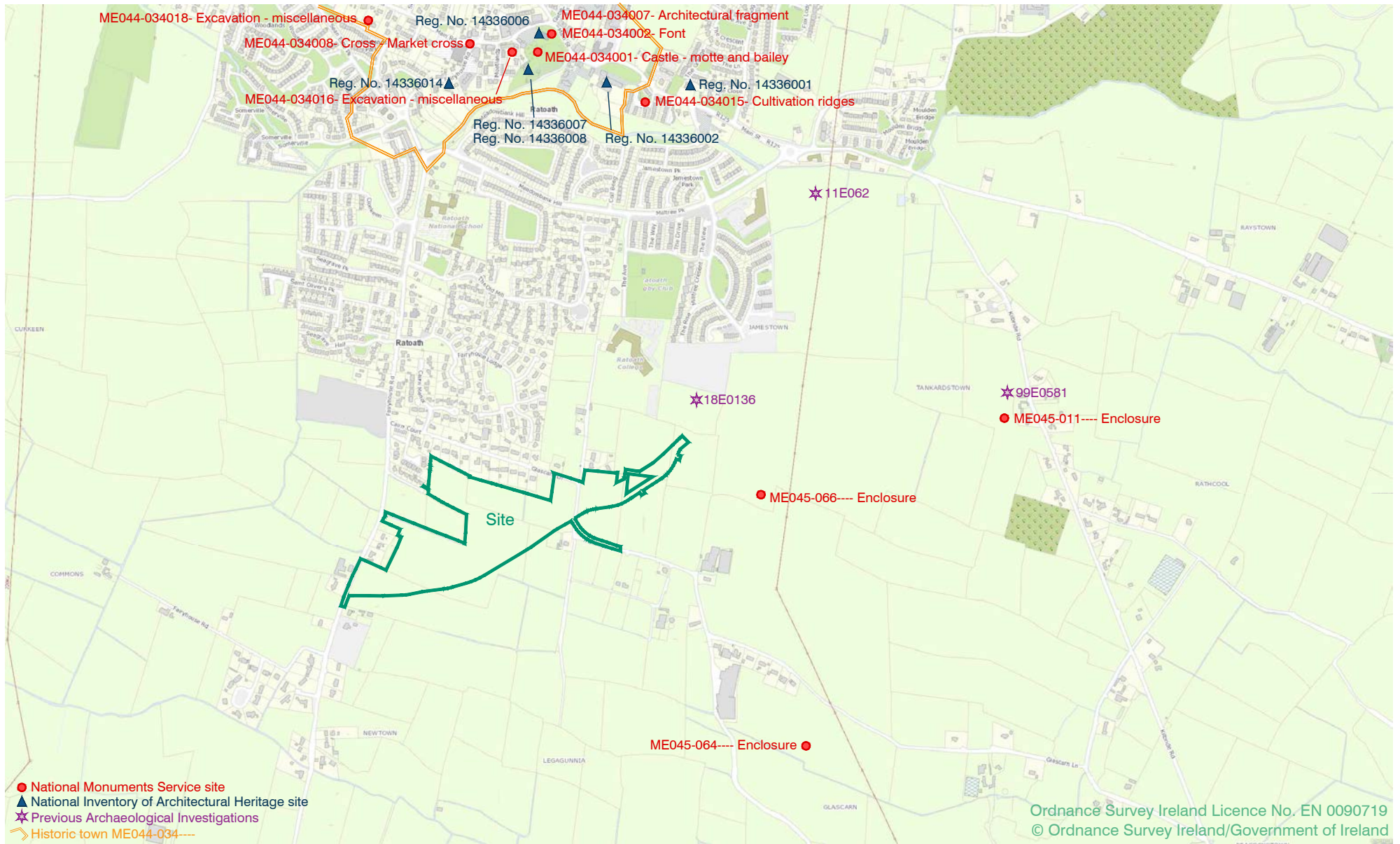
Issued for: Archaeological Test Trenching Report

Drawing number: 2015\_C1001

Date: September 2021 | Scale: 1:100,000 @A4

Figure 1: Location of site





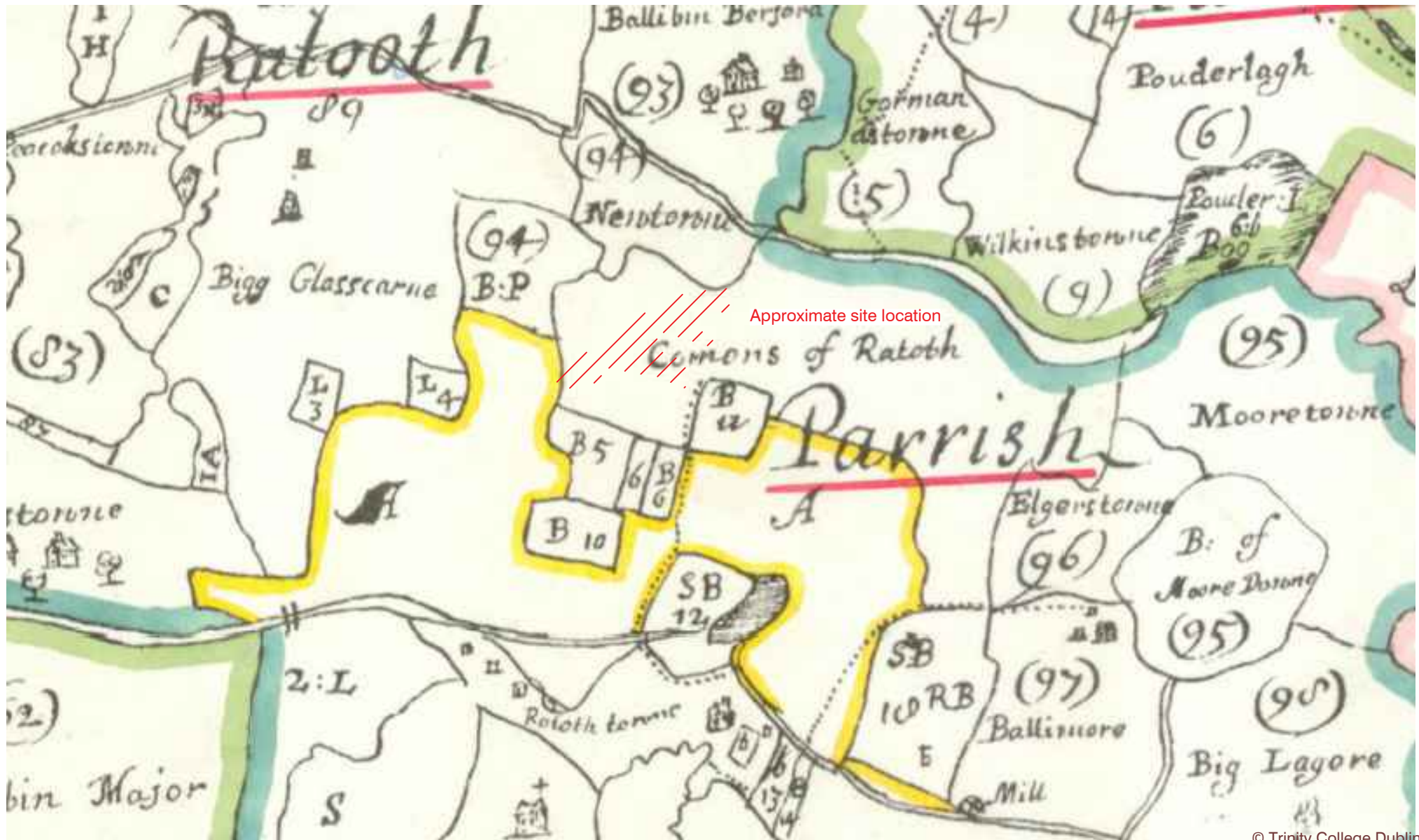
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Site: Fairyhouse Road Housing, Ratoath, Co. Meath  
 Issued for: Archaeological Test Trenching Report  
 Drawing number: 2015\_C1002  
 Date: September 2021 | Scale: 15,000 @A4

Figure 2: Location of site, previous archaeological investigations and nearby Sites and Monuments Record sites





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Site: Fairyhouse Road Housing, Ratoath, Co. Meath	
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Drawing number: 2015_C1003	
Date: September 2021	Scale: Not to scale

Figure 3: Extract from Down Survey map of County Meath, Barony of Ratoath (1654-56), showing approximate location of site



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Site: Fairyhouse Road Housing, Ratoath, Co. Meath

Issued for: Archaeological Test Trenching Report

Drawing number: 2015\_C1004

Date: September 2021 | Scale: Not to scale

Figure 4: Extract from Taylor and Skinner's 'Maps of the roads of Ireland' - Map 44 Dublin to Killybegs (1777), showing approximate location of site

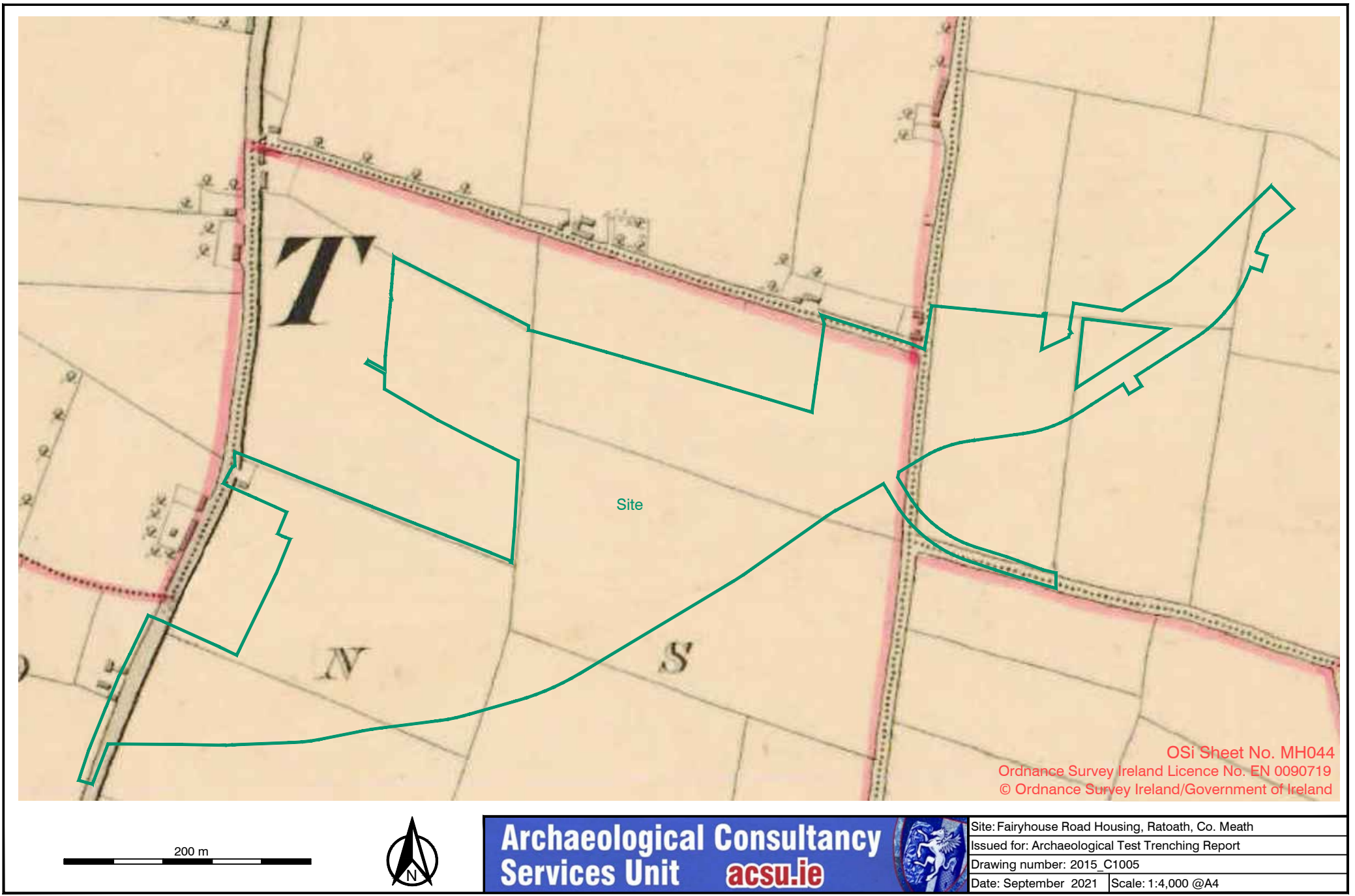


Figure 5: Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (surveyed 1835 - published 1837), showing location of site



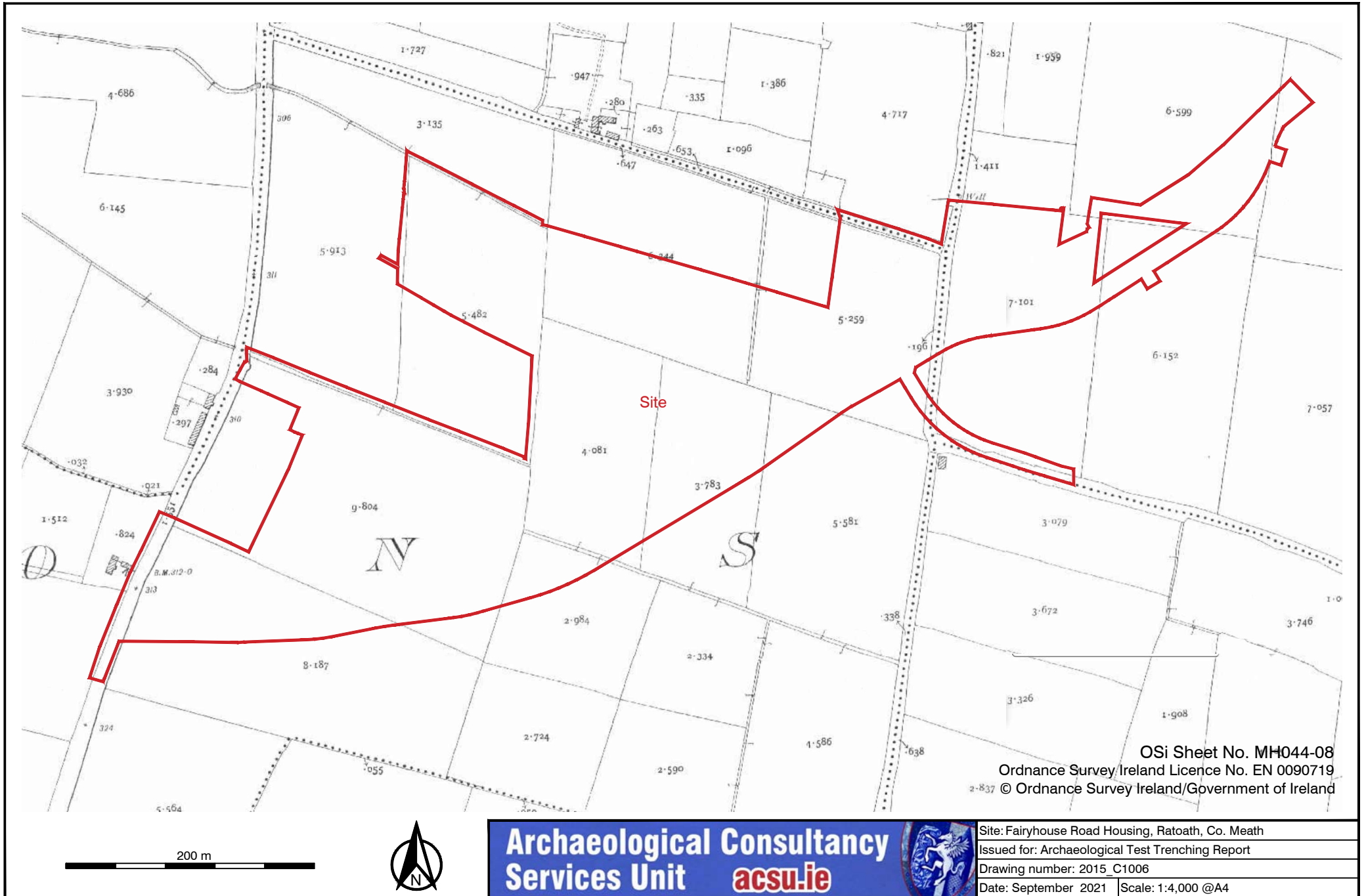


Figure 6: Extract from 3rd edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 25-inch map (surveyed 1909 - published 1911), showing location of site

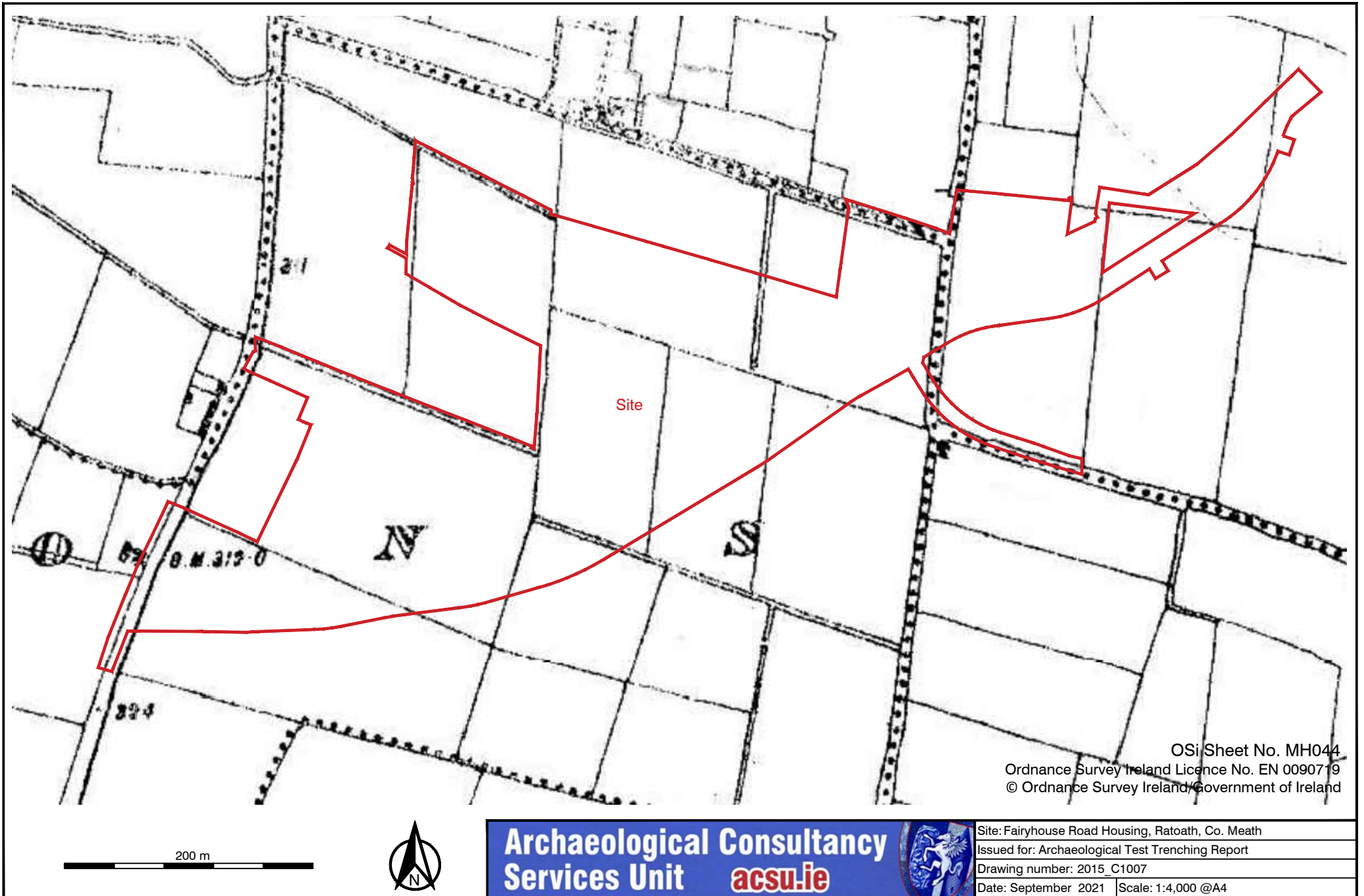


Figure 7: Extract from Cassini edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (1958), showing location of site





Geophysical survey areas

200 m



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Site: Ratoath Outer Relief Road, Ratoath, Co. Meath

Issued for: Archaeological Test Trenching Report

Drawing number: 2015\_C1008

Date: September 2021 | Scale: 1:3,500 @A4

Figure 8: Geophysical survey results (grey scale images), showing fields 1 to 6 and field 21 and extent of site



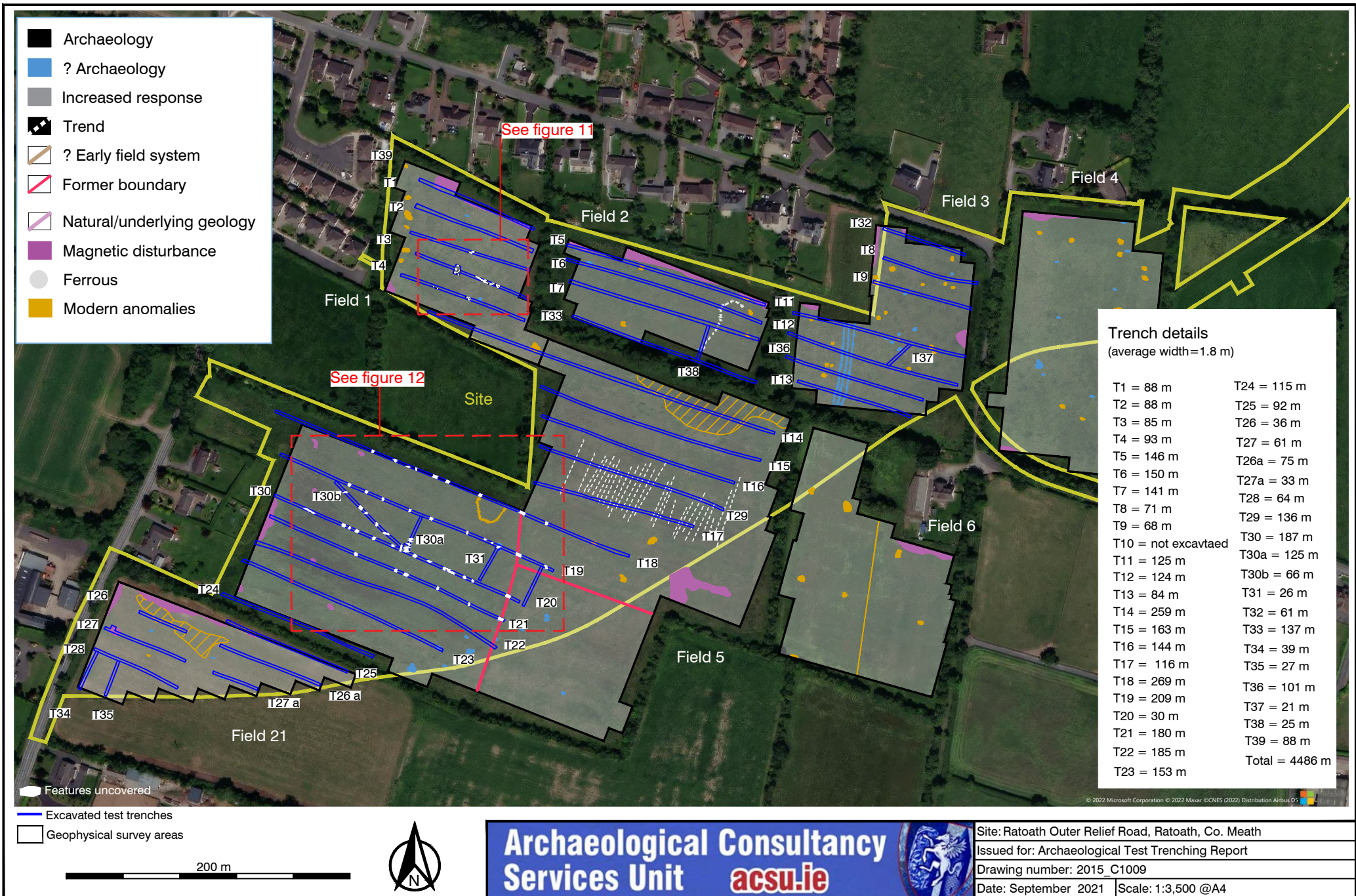
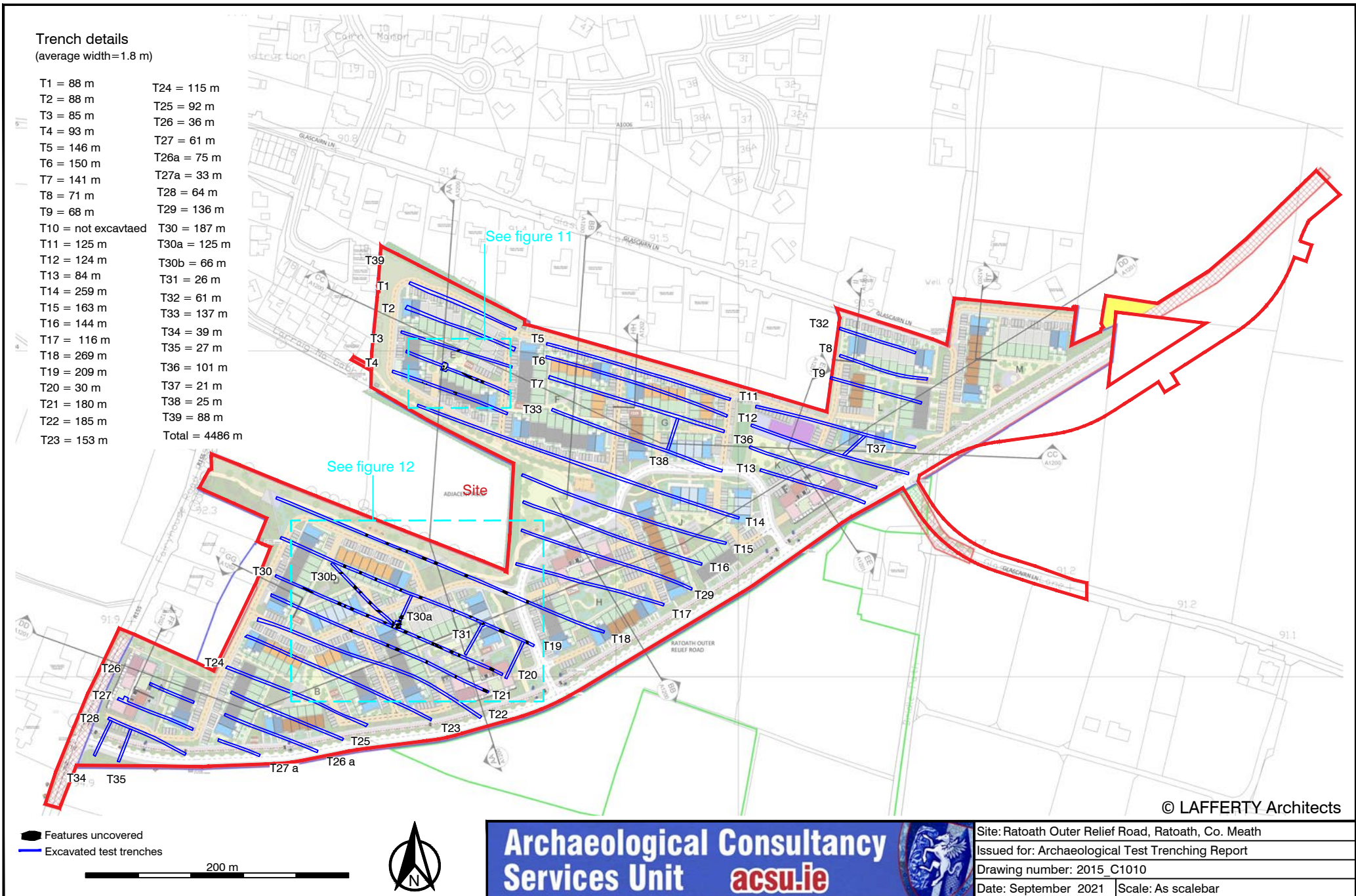


Figure 9: Geophysical survey interpretation, showing fields 1 to 6 and field 21, extent of site and excavated test trenches



**Trench details**  
(average width=1.8 m)

T1 = 88 m	T24 = 115 m
T2 = 88 m	T25 = 92 m
T3 = 85 m	T26 = 36 m
T4 = 93 m	T27 = 61 m
T5 = 146 m	T26a = 75 m
T6 = 150 m	T27a = 33 m
T7 = 141 m	T28 = 64 m
T8 = 71 m	T29 = 136 m
T9 = 68 m	T30 = 187 m
T10 = not excavated	T30a = 125 m
T11 = 125 m	T30b = 66 m
T12 = 124 m	T31 = 26 m
T13 = 84 m	T32 = 61 m
T14 = 259 m	T33 = 137 m
T15 = 163 m	T34 = 39 m
T16 = 144 m	T35 = 27 m
T17 = 116 m	T36 = 101 m
T18 = 269 m	T37 = 21 m
T19 = 209 m	T38 = 25 m
T20 = 30 m	T39 = 88 m
T21 = 180 m	Total = 4486 m
T22 = 185 m	
T23 = 153 m	



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Site: Ratoath Outer Relief Road, Ratoath, Co. Meath	
Issued for: Archaeological Test Trenching Report	
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Date: September 2021	Scale: As scalebar

Figure 10: Details of site development, showing location of excavated test trenches

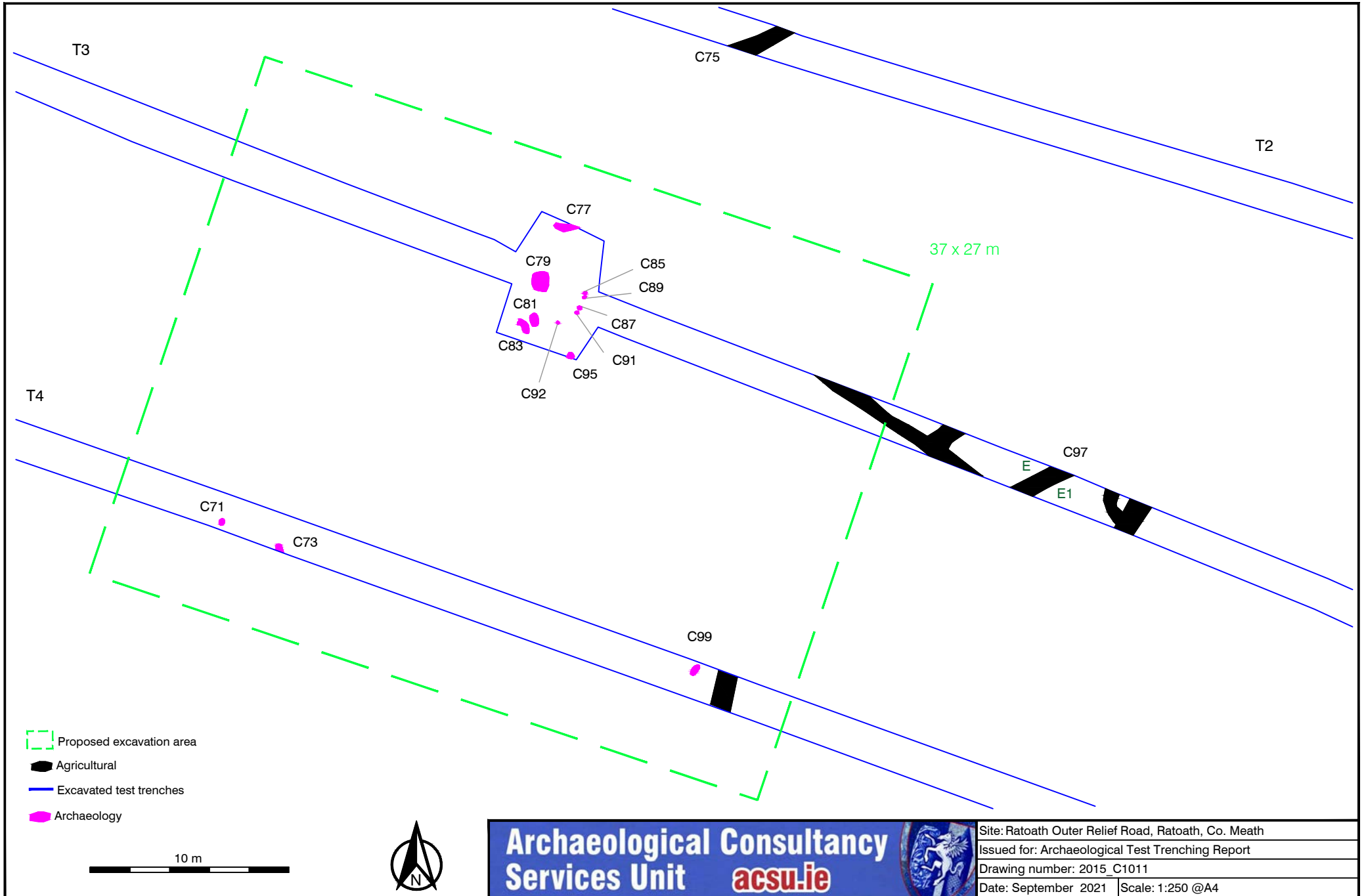


Figure 11: Details of archaeological features uncovered in Trenches 2, 3 and 4

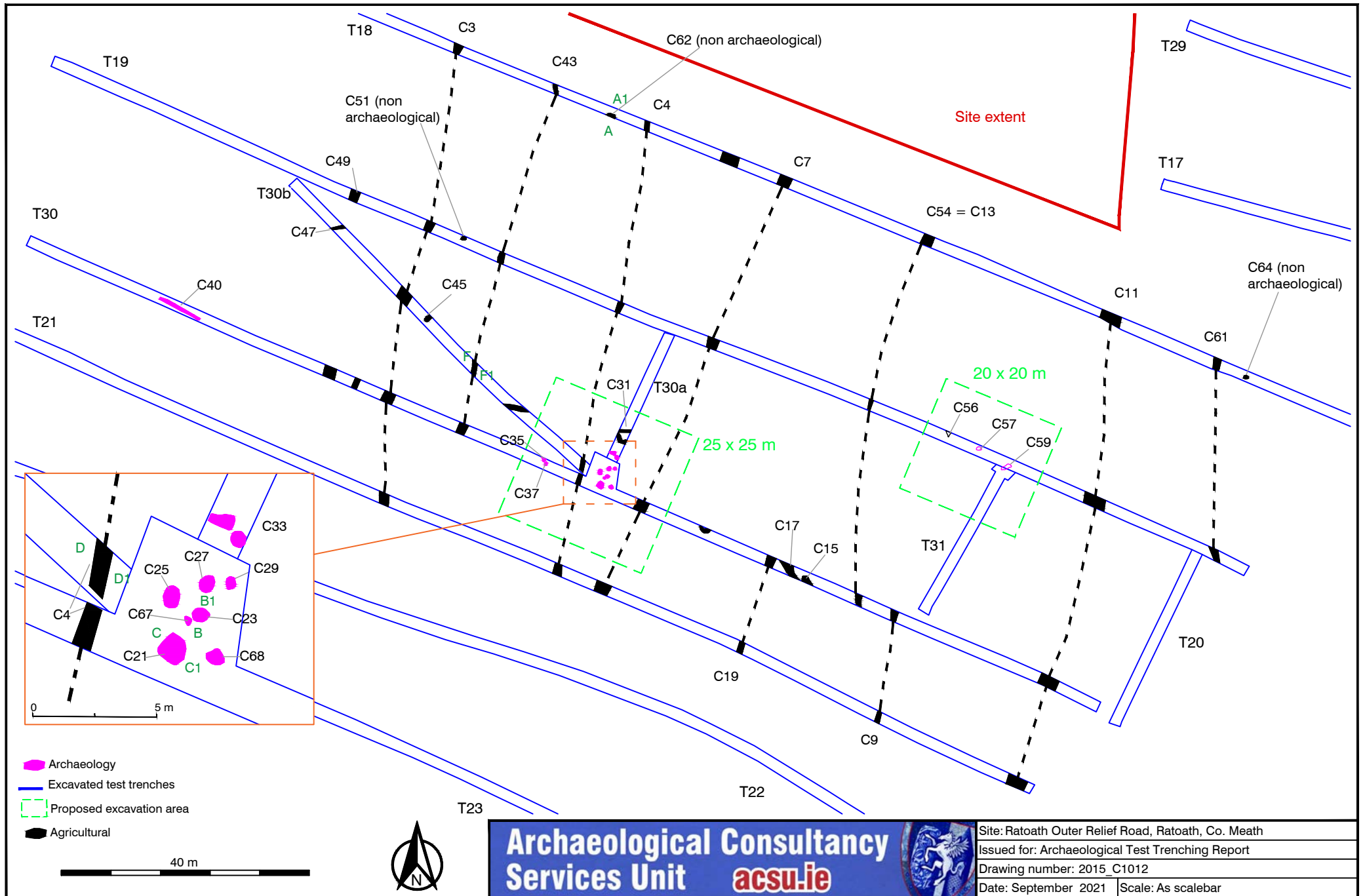


Figure 12: Details of archaeological features uncovered in Trenches 18-21 and Trenches 30-31





Plate 1: Trench 1, looking west.



Plate 2: Trench 3, with field ditch in foreground, looking west.



Plate 3: SW facing section of field ditch C97, Trench 3.



Plate 4: Postholes C85, C89, C87, C91 looking west in Trench 3.





Plate 5: Pit C79, looking north, Trench 3



Plate 6: Pits 81 and C83, looking north, Trench 3.



Plate 7: Trench 4, looking west



Plate 8: Pit C71, looking east, Trench 4





Plate 9: Pit C73, looking southwest, Trench 4



Plate 10: Pit C99, looking east, Trench 4.



Plate 11: Trench 5, looking west



Plate 12: Trench 6, looking west





Plate 13: Trench 8, looking west



Plate 14: Tree bole in Trench 9



Plate 15: Overhead powerlines, directly over planned trench 10.



Plate 16: Trench 11, looking west





Plate 17: Trench 13, looking east



Plate 18: Trench 14, looking west



Plate 19: Trench 16, looking east



Plate 20: Trench 17, looking east





Plate 21: Trench 18 looking east



Plate 22: East facing section of possible feature C62, Trench 18



Plate 23: Section through possible feature C51, Trench 19.



Plate 24: Pit C59, looking north, Trench 19.





Plate 25: Ditch C7, looking east, Trench 19



Plate 26: Trench 20, looking NNE



Plate 27: Trench 21, looking east .



Plate 28: Field boundary ditch C3, looking east in Trench 21





Plate 29 : Ditch C9, looking east, Trench 21.



Plate 30: Trench 22, looking west



Plate 31: Trench 23, looking west.



Plate 32: Trench 24, looking west





Plate 33: Trench 25 , looking west



Plate 34: Trench 26, looking west



Plate 35: Trench 27, with tree bole in foreground looking east. .



Plate 36: Trench 27 (A), looking east





Plate 37: Trench 28, looking west



Plate 38 : Pits C21, C23, C25, C27, C29, C33, C66,C68 looking N, Trench 30



Plate 39: Possible pit C37 & feature C37, looking west, Trench 30



Plate 40: Field ditch C4, looking west, Trench 30





Plate 41: SW facing section of ditch C4, Trench 30



Plate 42: Trench 30 (A), looking NNE



Plate 43: Trench 30 (B) looking NW



Plate 44: Field ditch C43, looking NNW, Trench 30 (B)





Plate 45: Trench 31, looking NNE



Plate 46: Trench 33, looking west



Plate 47: Trench 34, looking NNE



Plate 48: Trench 35, looking NNE





Plate 49: Trench 37, looking NE



Plate 50 : Trench 38, looking NE