

Proposed Large Scale Residential  
Development at Rathgowan, Mullingar,  
Co. Westmeath  
**Applicant: Marina Quarter Ltd.**

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**CHAPTER 15 Cultural Heritage & Archaeology**  
Appendix 15.1 Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment

# Volume III

## Appendices





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Appendix 15.1

Cultural Heritage Impact  
Assessment

**Proposed Housing Development, off Ashe Road,  
Mullingar, County Westmeath  
Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment**

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**Excavation Licence: 20E0255 & Detection Device Licence: 20R0091**

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# 1. Introduction

John Cronin & Associates have been commissioned by Glenveagh Homes Limited to prepare a cultural heritage impact assessment of a proposed housing development project in Mullingar townland, County Westmeath. The proposed development site comprises a vacant green field area on the east side of the Mullingar Western Relief Road (R394) and is approximately 0.6km from the town centre (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1:** Site location (OSI Licence SU 0003320)

‘Cultural Heritage’ is defined by UNESCO as encompassing several aspects of tangible assets (immovable: archaeological sites and monuments, architectural heritage structures; movable: artefacts; and underwater: shipwrecks, submerged features) and intangible assets (e.g. folklore, oral tradition and language).

**Section 2** of this report provides details on the methodology used to compile this assessment, which included programmes of desktop research, field surveys and licensed archaeological test trenching.

**Section 3** presents details on relevant legal and planning frameworks and then describes the cultural heritage context of a study area that encompasses the proposed development site and the lands extending for 500m in all directions from its boundary. **Section 4** provides a description of the site based on fieldwork and desktop research.

**Section 5** presents the results of a programme of archaeological test trenching undertaken within the boundary of the proposed development. This site investigation was carried out in July 2020 by Mr Padraig Dunne (John Cronin and Associates) under a licence issued by the National Monuments Service (Licence ref. 20E0255).

**Section 6** presents an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on the known and potential cultural heritage resource.

**Section 7** presents appropriate mitigation measures as recommendations.

## 2. Methodology

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### **Assessment Methodology**

The guidelines relevant to the assessment of the archaeological and cultural heritage resources are the *Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht 2011) and the *Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage* (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands 1999). The assessment of potential impacts were informed by criteria published in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA 2017) *Draft Guidelines for Information to be Contained in EIAR* as well as guidelines for the assessment of impacts on the cultural heritage resource published by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 2011).

The assessment was based on the results of a programme of desktop research followed by a field inspection of the proposed development site which were undertaken to identify any features of cultural heritage significance likely to be impacted by the proposed development. The recorded and potential cultural heritage resource within a study area encompassing both the internal area of the proposed development site and the lands extending for 500m from its boundary, was assessed in order to compile a comprehensive archaeological and cultural heritage baseline and context. The following sections present overviews of the nature of these studies.

### **Desktop Study**

The assessment commenced with a desktop survey which was undertaken to identify all recorded archaeological sites and designated architectural heritage structures within the study area. The principal source reviewed for the assessment of the known archaeological resource were the Sites and Monuments Record (SMRs) and the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) for County Westmeath. The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and structures listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) were reviewed in order to assess the designated architectural heritage resource within the study area.

In addition, the following sources were consulted:

- *Cartographic Sources:* The detail on historic maps can indicate past settlement and land use patterns in recent centuries and can also highlight the impact of modern developments and agricultural practices. This information can aid in the identification of the location and extent of unrecorded, or partially levelled, features of archaeological or architectural heritage interest. The cartographic sources examined for the study area included the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Down Survey, the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (1830s-40s) and the 25-inch OS maps (1887-1913).
- *Development Plan:* The relevant development plan is the *Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020* which outlines the planning policies and objectives for the protection of the archaeological and architectural heritage resource in this area. The LAP also maps the locations of structures listed in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS)



published in the *Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020* and it also identifies the designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and Zone of Archaeological Potential within the town.

- *Database of Irish Excavation Reports*: This online database contains summary accounts of all archaeological excavations carried out in Ireland (North and South) from 1970 to 2020 and was reviewed in May 2020 ([www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie)).
- *Placenames Database of Ireland*: This database provides a comprehensive management system for data, archival records and placenames research conducted by the State. Its primary function is to undertake research in order to establish the correct Irish language forms of the placenames of Ireland and to publish them on a public website ([www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie)).
- *UNESCO designated World Heritage Sites and Tentative List*: A review of the locations of the two World Heritage sites in Ireland and other significant sites included in a Tentative List (2010) nominated by Ireland for inclusion revealed that there are no examples located within the environs of the study area.
- *Irish Heritage Council: Heritage Map Viewer*: This online mapping source ([www.heritagemaps.ie](http://www.heritagemaps.ie)) collates various cultural heritage datasets sourced from, among others, the National Monuments Service, National Museum of Ireland, local authorities, the Royal Academy of Ireland and the Office of Public Works.
- *Literary Sources*: Publications consulted are listed in Section 6 of this report.
- *Aerial images*: A review of available online aerial imagery of the proposed development site was undertaken in order to ascertain if any traces of unrecorded archaeological sites were visible.

### ***Field Survey***

A systematic field-walking survey of the proposed development site was undertaken in dry and bright weather conditions that provided good landscape visibility. All areas within the site boundary were accessible at the time of survey and the internal lands were assessed in terms of landscape setting, existing land use, vegetation cover and whether any potential unrecorded archaeological sites or architectural heritage features were observable. Extracts from the photographic record of the field survey are presented in the **Appendix** of this report.

### ***Archaeological Test Trenching***

A programme of archaeological test trenching within the boundary of the proposed development was carried out in July 2020 by Mr Padraig Dunne (John Cronin and Associates) under a licence issued by the National Monuments Service (Licence ref. 20E0255). Extracts from the photographic record of the test trenching investigations are presented in the **Appendix** of this report.

## 3. Context

### **General Location**

The proposed development site is situated in a semi-rural setting within an area of Mullingar townland on the western outskirts of the modern suburbs of the town and is delimited by the Mullingar Western Relief Road (R394) on the west side and by Ashe Road (R393) to the south. The internal area is characterised by open low-lying agricultural lands primarily used for grazing and the areas to the north, south and east are dominated by residential developments with farmlands extending to the west. The terrain in the area is generally level and the bedrock material is formed by limestone and calcareous shale overlain by fine loamy soils. There are no watercourses located within the proposed development site.

### **Legal and Planning Context**

The management and protection of cultural heritage in Ireland is achieved through a framework of international conventions and national laws and policies established in accordance with the provisions of the 'European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (the Valletta Convention) and 'European Convention on the Protection of Architectural Heritage' (Grenada Convention). Cultural heritage can be divided loosely into (a) the archaeological resource covering sites and monuments from the prehistoric period until the post-medieval period and (b) the architectural heritage resource, encompassing standing structures and sites of cultural importance dating from the post-medieval and modern period. In addition, local place names, folklore and traditions are considered part of our cultural heritage.

In summary, the relevant legislation, guidelines and advice notes relevant to this assessment include:

- National Monuments Acts (1930 – 2014)
- Heritage Act (1995)
- National Cultural Institutions Act (1997)
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act (1999)
- Planning and Development Act (2000)
- Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht (2011) *Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*
- Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands (1999) *Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage*

### **Relevant Archaeological Legislation and Policies**

The National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2014 and relevant provisions of the National Cultural Institutions Act 1997 are the primary means of ensuring the satisfactory protection of archaeological remains, which are deemed to include all man-made structures, of whatever form or date, except buildings habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes.

A National Monument is described as 'a monument or the remains of a monument, the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical,

architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest attaching thereto' (Section 2, National Monument Act, 1930). Section 8 (1) of the 1930 National Monuments Act also provides that where it appears that a monument which in the Minister's opinion is a national monument in danger of being destroyed, injured or removed the Minister may by Preservation Order undertake the preservation of such monument. It is an offence under the 1930 Act to undertake damage or works to a National Monument or a monument with a Preservation Order without the consent of the Minister. There are no National Monuments or monuments with Preservation Orders located within the study area.

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) comprises county-based lists of all certain or possible archaeological sites and monuments dating to before 1700 AD (with some later examples also included). The SMRs formed the basis for the establishment of the statutory Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) which was established under Section 12 (1) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994. This record comprises lists and maps of known archaeological monuments and relevant places in respect of each county in the State. The 1994 Act states that any proposed works to monuments listed in the RMP requires that two months' advance notice be submitted to the Minister (currently in the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage).

Archaeological sites listed in the SMR/RMP are typically referred to as 'recorded monuments' and there are no examples located within the proposed development site or its close environs while there are two recorded monuments within the surrounding study area. These comprise the former location of a standing stone (WM019-089003), which is likely post-medieval in date, located c.300m to the east of the proposed development site and a ringfort (WM019-046----) located c.500m to the southwest.

The proposed development site is located c.600m outside west end of the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Mullingar town as identified in the Mullingar Local Area Plan (LAP) 2014-2020<sup>1</sup>. The LAP includes the following policies and objectives in relation to the protection of the archaeological resource within the area:

*It is a Policy of the Council:*

*PARC 1 To protect the archaeological heritage of the town in accordance with Departmental Guidelines*

*PARC2 To strictly control development that may be detrimental to any feature or site of archaeological significance or that may seriously detract from the interpretation and setting of these sites.*

*PARC3 To protect and retain surviving medieval plots and street patterns in the town.*

*PARC4 To ensure that all sites of archaeological potential are protected from development that may injure any potentially important archaeological features or sites*

*It is an objective of the Council:*

*OARC1 To endeavour to ensure that all reports, excavation results and other information relating to archaeological heritage be made available for public viewing at libraries and create and maintain a database of same.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/MLAP%20Volume%202%20Book%20of%20Maps.pdf>



OARC2 To provide guidance to developers in relation to proposals for development that may potentially impact upon the archaeological heritage, drawing their attention to additional published government guidance available such as 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (1999)

OARC3 To require, where appropriate, that an Archaeological Assessment be carried out by a suitably qualified person prior to the commencement of any activity that may impact upon the archaeological heritage.

OARC4 To ensure that any development taking place either above or below ground which is within, adjacent to, or might affect sites and features of historical and archaeological interest shall respect the character of the archaeological site and its setting and shall be sited and designed with care for the character of the site and setting.

OARC5 To impose conditions on development that will affect sites of archaeological potential to ensure that appropriate measures are taken for the identification and mitigation of the archaeological impacts, including a licensed excavation and recording of remains prior to commencement of development where appropriate.

#### *Relevant Architectural Heritage Legislation and Policies*

Protection of the architectural/built heritage resource is provided through a range of legal and policy instruments. The Heritage Act, (1995) protects all heritage buildings owned by a local authority from damage and destruction. The Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act, 1999, requires the Minister to establish a survey to identify; record and evaluate the architectural heritage of the country. The function of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is to record built heritage structures within the Republic of Ireland and to make the inventory available to planning authorities for the purpose of the exercise by the authority of its statutory functions (including planning and development) relating to architectural heritage.

The Planning and Development Act, 2000, requires local authority development plans to include a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) which shall include every structure, or parts of structures which form part of the architectural heritage and which are in the opinion of the planning authority of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest within its functional area. Since the introduction of this legislation, planning permission is required for any works to a protected structure that would affect its character. The Act also provides planning authorities the statutory power to define Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA), which are defined as "a place, area, group of structures, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of a development plan to preserve" (from *Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2011, 41).

The Mullingar LAP 2014-2020 does not list any protected structures within the proposed development site while there are a number of examples within the surrounding study area. The proposed development site is not located within, or in the close environs of, any of the Architectural Conservation Areas within the town. The LAP includes the following policies

for the protection of the architectural heritage resource within the town administration area:

*It is a policy of the Council:*

*PBH1 To protect and conserve buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and to resist the demolition of such structures, in accordance with 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2004).*

*PBH2 To prevent forms of development that would be injurious to the town's architectural and archaeological heritage.*

*PBH3 To preserve and protect Mullingar's built environment in terms of streetscapes, individual buildings and features of historical, architectural or artistic interest*

*PBH4 To resist the demolition of vernacular architecture of historical, cultural and aesthetic merit, which make a positive contribution to the character, appearance and quality of the local streetscape*

*PBH7 To protect the character of designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) including the public realm area associated therewith and to resist inappropriate development that would detract from the heritage value of these areas.*

### **Overview of Historical Context**

While there are various historical records relating to the development of Mullingar town in the area to the east of the study area, there is little information in relation to the lands within the close environs of the proposed development site. The following details on the development of the town have been sourced from the *Irish Historic Town Atlas Vol 5: Mullingar* (Simms *et al* 1992). The name Mullingar first appears in a 12<sup>th</sup>-century account of the life of an earlier local saint named Colman of Lynn. The existing town was founded by the Anglo-Normans after the Petit family were granted lands in the area by Hugh de Lacy in 1170 and quickly established a manor there around a motte and bailey which was later replaced by a stone castle. These were located by the banks of the River Brosna within the area now occupied by the town centre. The first record of a burgess dates to 1201 and the town received its first grant to hold fairs in 1207. By the 1230s the settlement contained a parish church, Augustinian and Dominican monasteries, a hospital and a Frankhouse where travellers were housed. Mullingar became the main county town in 1542 after the creation of the County of Westmeath during Henry VIII's reign. The town was struck by plague in 1575 which decimated the population, and in 1597 it was burned by Hugh O'Neill during the Nine Years' War. Later, in 1690, the town was occupied by the Williamite Army who used it to stockpile arms and supplies during their campaign against the Jacobite forces. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century Down Survey records that the wider townland of Mullingar, which contains the proposed development site, comprised common land in 1641 and was in the ownership Sir Arthur Forbes in 1670.

The existing townscape within the town centre developed after a devastating fire which swept through Mullingar in 1747. The strategic location of the town within a rich agricultural hinterland subsequently helped it become an important centre for the wool and cattle trade during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, aided by its location on the road between Dublin and Galway. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the town continue to development as an increasingly important trade and transport centre following the opening of the Royal Canal in 1806 and

the Midland Great Western Railway in 1848, both of which further connected the town with Dublin. The town also became an important army base in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with several regiments stationed at a barracks in the town which the NIAH records were built in 1814 and first occupied in 1819. The original barracks were built to accommodate 1000 soldiers and it was originally named Wellington Barracks, like many of the barrack complexes built in Ireland at the time. The barracks was renamed Columb Barracks in 1922 after Patrick Columb, a member of the National Army who was killed on Mary Street, Mullingar in 1922.

A 19<sup>th</sup> century description of the lands in the environs of the town notes that the system of agriculture was in an unimproved state; with not much waste land, but a considerable quantity of bog; and that stone of good quality for building is quarried (Lewis 1837). A number of landmark buildings were erected in the town during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the Cathedral of Christ the King, the County Council buildings, which were constructed on the site of the old County jail, St. Finian's College and the County Hospital. The post-war period witnessed increasing prosperity in the town which became a strong base for industry and technology while remaining an important market town. The last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a dramatic increase in the town's population following major investments in transport infrastructure with a subsequent expansion of modern housing suburbs many of which are occupied by commuters working in the greater Dublin region.

### **Recorded Archaeological Monuments**

As previously noted, there are no recorded monuments located within the proposed development site while there are two examples within 500m of its boundary. The nearest of these is located c.300m to the east of the proposed development site and comprises the recorded former location of a standing stone (WM019-089003-) of potential 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The ASI has published the following inventory description of this monument on the Historic Environment Viewer:

*Site of possible standing stone located in field to the N of Columb Barracks on the outskirts of Mullingar town (WM019-089----). The constraint circle on the Record of Monument and Places Map for Co. Westmeath marks the site of a standing stone in the wrong field. An archaeological assessment was carried out in this field by Clare Mullins in 1997 prior to a housing development and no archaeological features were identified. A note on the map in the SMR file indicates that the possible standing stone originally was located in the field to the E of the constraint circle. The car park of a large shopping centre now stands in the area where the possible standing stone was originally located. It is possible that this standing stone was not a prehistoric monument but the remains of a 19th century War Department Boundary Stone marking out the boundary of the military property belonging to Columb Barracks. There are numerous boundary stones depicted in this field on the 1910 ed. OS 25-inch map.*

A ringfort (WM019-046----) is located c.500m to the southwest of the proposed development site within the townland of Sarsanstown and the ASI has published the following inventory description of this monument on the Historic Environment Viewer:

*Situated on a very slight rise, in pasture. Depicted on the revised 1913 ed. OS 25-inch map as a curvilinear field boundary. Monument described in 1983 as a semi-circular shaped area (dims. 46m E-*

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/15310007/columb-barracks-ashe-road-mullingar-mullingar-county-westmeath>



W; 44m N-S) enclosed by traces of an inner bank, with possible intervening fosse and a possible outer bank. There are very slight traces of a low inner bank at NW and N. A shallow ditch is present from SW-W-N-E-SE and may represent an intervening fosse. A possible outer bank is present from SW-W-N-E-SE and is incorporated into a field fence supporting a mature thorn hedge. A low, wide scarp defines the monument from SE-SW. The interior is generally level and featureless. Monument is visible on Digital Globe aerial photography as a curvilinear tree-lined field boundary.

### **Excavations Database**

The Excavation Database contains two entries for archaeological investigations within the study area surrounding the proposed development site and these were both undertaken within the site of a proposed housing development in lands on the opposite (west) side of the Western Relief Road from the proposed development site. Pre-development archaeological test trenching revealed a pit feature of archaeological potential and the following description of this investigation is published in the Excavation Database(Licence 06E0953)<sup>3</sup>:

*Pre-development testing was carried out on the site of a proposed housing development at Rathgowan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, in November 2006. The site is located on the north-west edge of the town and is not near any known monument. Testing comprised the excavation of 43 trenches on the footprint of the proposed development. The topsoil averaged 0.3m in thickness and overlay boulder clay and black shale limestone outcrop. A probable Bronze Age pit feature was uncovered during testing. It presented as a black outer and grey inner circle with a total diameter of 0.35m. A quarter section revealed three depositions, the first a grey silt, the second the charcoal-rich lining of the pit and the final grey ash-enriched deposit. This final central deposit contained burnt-bone fragments that could clearly be seen in section. Full excavation of the pit feature and its environs and monitoring of topsoil removal in the vicinity of the pit was recommended.*

A subsequent archaeological excavation within the property was carried out in 2007 and revealed a total of three pits likely associated with Bronze or Iron Age cremated burial activity. All three pits were preserved in record by an archaeological excavation described as follows in the Excavation Database<sup>4</sup>.

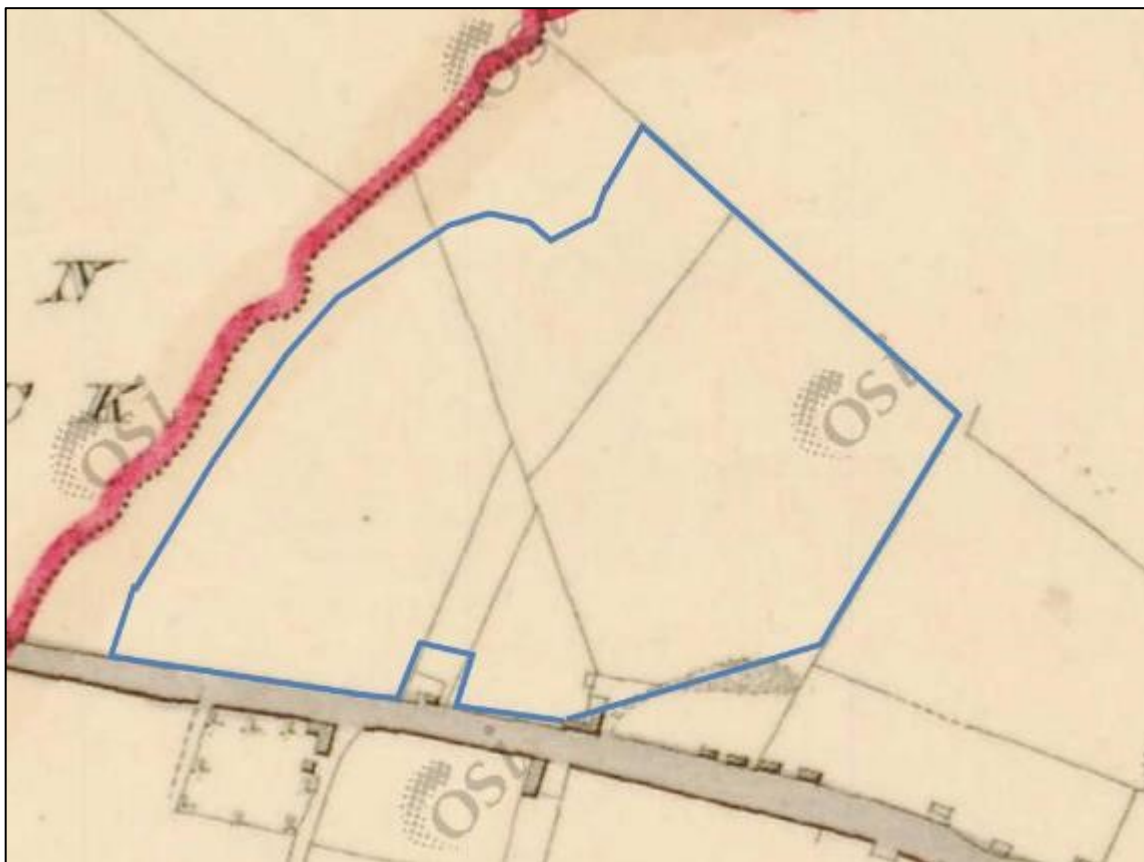
*Excavation of three pit features took place on 16 and 17 January 2007 under an extension to licence 06E0953 (Excavations 2006, No. 2081). A 20m by 20m area of archaeological potential had been identified around a single pit feature found during testing before a residential development. The pit (No. 1) was fully excavated and found to have two deposits of charcoal-enriched silt and clay with burnt bone inclusions. Two additional pits were found within a 3m radius of the original. Pit No. 3 was very similar to the original, with charcoal-enriched clay and silt deposits which included burnt bone. Pit No. 2 was slightly larger than the others and showed signs of in situ burning, with scorched clay at the base of the pit extending out over the rim. It also contained the same charcoal-enriched clay/silt deposits but it had a higher percentage of ash and burnt bone than the other pits. It seems likely from this evidence that Pit No. 2 was used to carry out cremations and the burnt bones were deposited in the other two. No evidence of other features such as enclosing elements or ditches was found. No diagnostic artefacts were found within the pits. It is likely, however, that the burials date from the late Bronze Age or Iron Age. Monitoring of topsoil removal in the remainder of the field was recommended.*

<sup>3</sup> <http://excavations.ie/report/2006/Westmeath/0016835/>

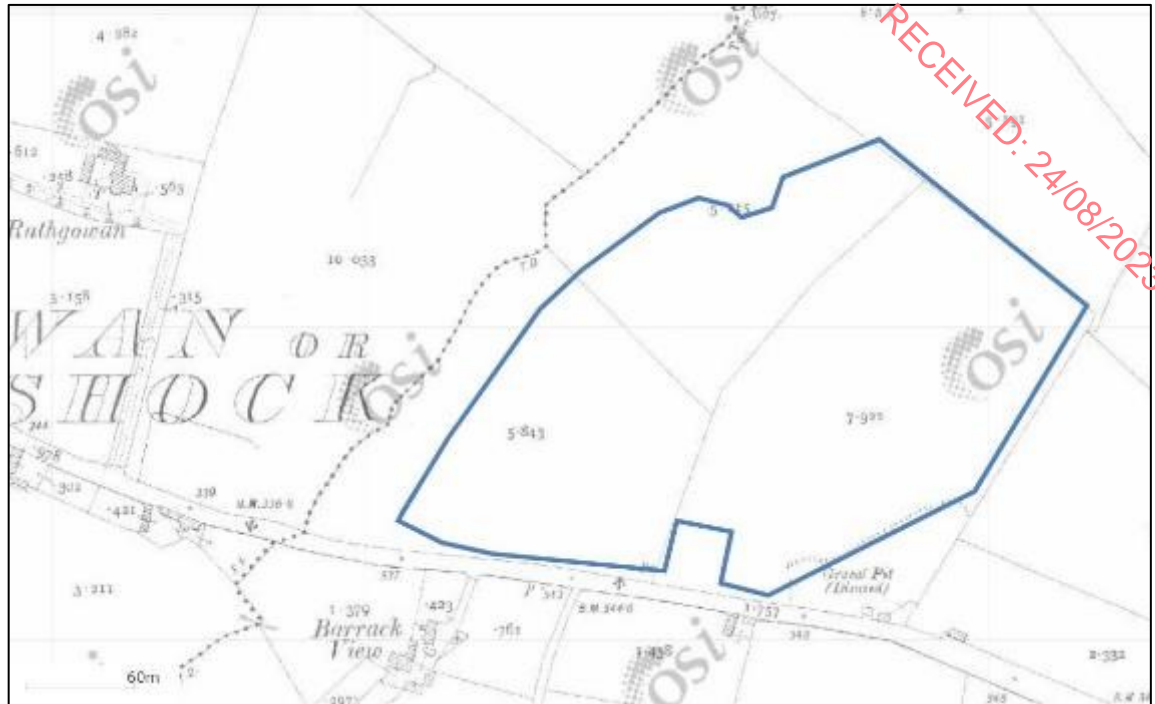
<sup>4</sup> <https://excavations.ie/report/2007/Westmeath/0018909/>

**Review of Cartographic Sources and Aerial Imagery**

The 6-inch OS map (1830s-40s) shows the proposed development site as undeveloped farmland with field boundaries on the line of the existing fragmented examples within the site boundary (Figure 2). Two small roadside houses along Ashe Road are indicated just outside the south end of the development boundary: the location of the western example is now occupied by an ESB substation and a now levelled house is shown just outside the southeast corner of the site boundary with a gravel pit extending from its location to the northeast. The detail on the 25-inch OS map (1887-1913) indicates that a number of field boundaries within the site boundary were removed during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the two houses along Ashe Road had also been levelled in that period (Figure 3). The gravel pit outside the southeast end of the site boundary is labelled as ‘disused’ on this map but is still indicated by hachures indicating that it had not been infilled at that time.



**Figure 2:** 6-inch OS map showing the proposed development site boundary (OSI Licence SU 0003320)



**Figure 3:** 25-inch OS map showing the proposed development site boundary (OSI Licence SU 0003320)

A review of aerial images published online by OSI and Google indicates that the lands within the proposed development boundary have been in use as pastureland since the 1990s and did not reveal any observable traces of unrecorded archaeological features. The aerial images also demonstrate the expansion of modern housing estates into the area in recent decades as well as the construction of the Western Link Road in the 2000s (Figure 4).





**Figure 4:** Aerial Images of proposed development site (OSI Licence SU 0003320)

***Designated Architectural Heritage Resource***

There are no designated architectural heritage structures located within the proposed development site while the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) listed in the *Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020* includes a total of 19 structures within the surrounding

study area and an additional two structures in the area not included in the RPS are listed in the NIAH. The majority of these listed structures are located within the Columb Barracks complex which is located in an urban area c.190m to the southeast of the proposed development site (Figure 5). The lands between the proposed development site and the barracks are occupied by modern housing developments. There is one Protected Structure located within 100m of the site boundary and this comprises a two-storey house known as 'Barrack View' (RPS ref. 019-020), which is located on the opposite (south) side of Ashe Road. This late 19th-century house is entirely contained within its existing property line on the south side of the road and no associated curtilage features extend into the proposed development site. The building is also included in the NIAH ref. (15310002) which notes that it comprises a typical late 19<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse and assigns it a local rating<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 1:** Designated architectural heritage structures within study area

Name/location	Description	NIAH Ref.	RPS Ref.	Rating
St Finian's College	Handball Alley	15309015	WM019-015	Regional
Rathgowan House	House	15310001	-	Regional
Barrack View	House	15310002	WM019-020	Local
Columb Barracks	House	15310003	WM019-021	Regional
Butler's Public House, Ashe Rd.	House	15310004	-	Local
Ashe Road	Post box	15310005	WM019-022	Regional
Columb Barracks	Monument	15310006	WM019-023	Local
Columb Barracks	Barracks	15310007	WM019-024	Regional
St. Colman's chapel	Chapel	15310008	WM019-025	Regional
Columb Barracks	Chaplain's house	15310009	WM019-026	Regional
Columb Barracks	Gates/ entrance	15310010	WM019-027	Regional
Columb Barracks	Guard House	15310011	WM019-028	Regional
Columb Barracks	Mess	15310012	WM019-029	Regional
Columb Barracks	Mess	15310013	WM019-030	Regional
Columb Barracks	Tank	15310014	WM019-031	Regional
Columb Barracks	Prison	15310015	WM019-032	Regional
Columb Barracks	Well	15310016	WM019-033	Regional
Columb Barracks	Barracks	15310017	WM019-034	Regional
Columb Barracks	Barracks	15310018	WM019-035	Regional
Columb Barracks	Bath house	15310019	WM019-036	Regional
Ashe Road	Milestone	15310231	WM019-211	Regional

### Undesignated Cultural Heritage Assets

While encompassing the archaeological and designated architectural heritage resources, cultural heritage also includes various undesignated assets such as settlements, demesne landscapes, vernacular structures, townland boundaries, folklore, placenames and historical events. There are no extant vernacular structures located within the proposed development site and it is not located within a known former settlement area or demesne lands. It is entirely located within the townland of Mullingar and the only townland boundary within its environs is the boundary with Rathgowan or Farranstock townland to the west which is

<sup>5</sup><https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/15310002/barrack-view-ashe-road-mullingar-mullingar-county-westmeath>

now occupied by the Western Relief Road. Townlands are the smallest unit of land division in the Irish landscape and many preserve early Gaelic territorial boundaries that pre-date the Anglo-Norman conquest. Their layout and nomenclature were recorded and standardised the Ordnance Survey in the 19th century. The Irish translations of the townlands names often refer to natural topographical features but name elements may also give an indication of the presence of past human activity within the townland, e.g. *dun*, *lios* or *rath* indicate the presence of a ringfort while *temple*, *saggart*, *termon* or *kill* record an association with a church site. The anglicised name of Mullingar is derived from the Irish *An Muileann gCearr* meaning “the left-handed mill” and relates to a tradition that the 7th century Saint Colman caused a local mill to grind backwards and forwards at the same time after a miller in the locale refused to grind barley for him. There are no watercourses located within the proposed development site and its immediate environs that may have been associated with the milling activity referred to in this tradition.

## 4. The site

The field survey of the proposed development site was undertaken in July 2019 in dry and bright weather conditions which provided excellent landscape visibility. The survey was assisted by the use of a drone in order to assess if any traces of potential archaeological sites not observable at ground level were visible from above. The following description of the two fields within the site boundary should be read in conjunction with the photographic record presented in the **Appendix** of this report.

The sub-rectangular field in the southwest corner of the proposed development site measures c.150m east-west by c.130m north-south at its midpoint. It is shown as a portion of a larger field on the historic OS maps which has since been truncated by the construction of the Western Relief Road in the west end. Ashe Road extends along the southern end of the field and a 20<sup>th</sup>-century ESB substation is located in the southeast corner. The field comprises an area of improved pasture which was in use for cattle grazing at the time of inspection and the ground terrain is generally level with a slight rise up towards the northwest corner. The majority of the field is well drained, except for an area in the southwest corner where an area of reed-covered hollows and disturbed ground are evident. These appear to be related to activity associated with the construction of the adjacent relief road and a review of aerial images indicates that this area of the field was used as a storage area during the road construction in the 2000s. The central and northeast sections of the field contain small irregular surface undulations of natural appearance. A low denuded earthen bank, topped with trees, forms the east and north boundaries while a modern road fence delimits the western side and a section of the south end along Ashe Road. A number of pole-sets and a pylon are located within the field and these carry over-head power lines extending to the ESB substation in the southeast corner. No surface traces of any potential unrecorded archaeological sites were noted during the inspection of this field.

The remainder of the proposed development site comprises a large pasture field created by the removal of a number of the field boundaries shown on the historic OS maps and it measures c.210m north-south by c.240m east-west. This area also comprises an improved pasture field which was under cattle grazing at the time of inspection. The ground surface rises gently to the northeast corner and contains irregular undulations of natural appearance. The west side is delimited by the modern timber fence along the relief road while the remaining boundaries are formed by low earthen banks topped with trees and bushes. The east end of the ESB substation property is located in the southwest corner and there are modern residential housing estates to the north and east. There was no surface trace noted of the disused gravel pit or small levelled structure indicated on the 6-inch OS map within the area outside the line of mature trees that form the southern end of the west site boundary. No surface traces of any potential unrecorded archaeological sites were noted during the inspection of this field.

### ***Summary of Desktop Study and Field Survey***

The proposed development site appears to have comprised undeveloped farmland located within the agricultural hinterland around Mullingar town in recent centuries. There are no



recorded archaeological monuments located within the site boundary and the nearest extant example is a ringfort (WM019-046---) located c.500m to the southwest. In addition, it is located c.600m outside the west end of the Zone of Archaeological Potential around the historic core of the town. No potential unrecorded archaeological sites were noted within the proposed development site during the desktop study or field inspection.

There are no extant structures of any date located within the site boundary and it is not located within, or in close environs to, an Architectural Conservation Area. The nearest Protected Structure is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse named Barrack View (RPS ref. 019-020), which is located on the opposite (south) side of Ashe Road. This building is also listed in the NIAH which assigns it a rating of local significance (NIAH ref. 15310002). A review of historic OS maps indicates that the house was confined within its existing property line in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and no associated curtilage features are depicted within the proposed development site. No potential unrecorded features of architectural or cultural heritage significance were noted within the proposed development site during the desktop study or field inspection.

The locations of the recorded archaeological sites and designated architectural heritage structures within the study area are indicated on Figure 5 below.

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**Figure 5:** Location of recorded monuments and designated architectural heritage structures (blue dots) within study area

## 5. Results of archaeological testing

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### **Introduction**

The programme of archaeological test trenching was carried out on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020 under a licence issued by the National Monuments Service (Licence 20E0255). The test trenches were excavated by a 13-tonne 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless grading bucket, which operated under constant archaeological supervision. Twelve linear test trenches totalling 1055m in length were excavated across the footprint proposed development site at 15-25m intervals (Figure 6 and Table 3). The upcast soil from each trench was visually inspected and systematically scanned with a metal-detector (Licence 20R0091) as the excavation progressed. The subject site is sub-divided into two fields and a number of unexcavated gaps were left in Trenches 5-12 due to the presence of an overhead ESB power line.

### **Test Trenching Results**

Test trenching revealed a mid to dark brown silty clay topsoil layer throughout the subject site. This layer was generally 0.3- 0.5m deep and contained occasional inclusions of modern pottery, plastics, glass and metal debris. The topsoil overlay a mottled orange-brown clay subsoil layer with occasional natural inclusions of grey clays, manganese and gravel bands. Frequent evenly spaced cultivation furrows truncated the surface of the natural subsoil in all the trenches. They ranged between 0.3m-1.2m in width and 0.05m-0.2m in depth and were orientated on a northeast-southwest axis. Manual investigation revealed them to comprise a mixture of machine-cut furrows as well as examples with sharp sides and slightly rounded bases that were suggestive of hand-dug 'lazy beds'. All examples were infilled with topsoil material that contained inclusions of animal bone, brick and charcoal fragments with occasional inclusion of clay pipe stems as well as modern blue and creamware pottery sherds. This range of cultural inclusions indicated cultivation activity was occurring within the subject site during the post-medieval and early modern periods.

One potential archaeological feature was uncovered during the test trenching investigations and this comprised a pit feature revealed towards the northeast end of Trench 10, near to the east boundary of the proposed development site (see Table 3:Trench 10, Figures 6 & 7 and Plates 26 & 27).

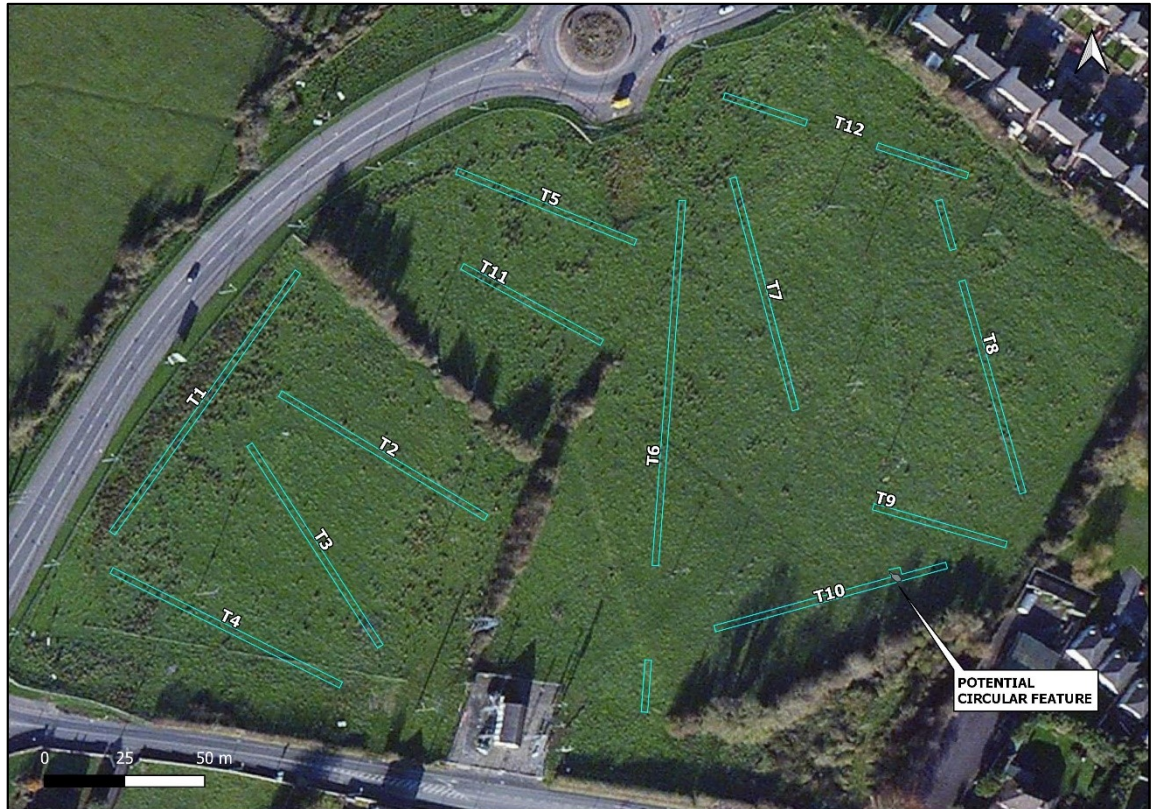
**Table 2:** Test trench dimensions and orientations

Trench	Dimensions	Orientation	Excavated Area
1	100m x 1.8m	NE-SW	180m <sup>2</sup>
2	75m x 1.8m	WNW-ESE	135m <sup>2</sup>
3	75m x 1.8m	NW-SE	135m <sup>2</sup>
4	80m x 1.8m	WNW-ESE	144m <sup>2</sup>
5	60m x 1.8m	WNW-ESE	108m <sup>2</sup>
6	160m x 1.8m	N- S	288m <sup>2</sup>
7	75m x 1.8m	NW-SE	135m <sup>2</sup>



Trench	Dimensions	Orientation	Excavated Area
8	95m x 1.8m	NW- SE	171m <sup>2</sup>
9	80m x 1.8m	WNW-ESE	144m <sup>2</sup>
10	75m x 1.8m	WNW-ESE	135m <sup>2</sup>
11	80 x 1.8m	WNW-ESE	144m <sup>2</sup>
12	80 x 1.8m	WNW-ESE	144m <sup>2</sup>

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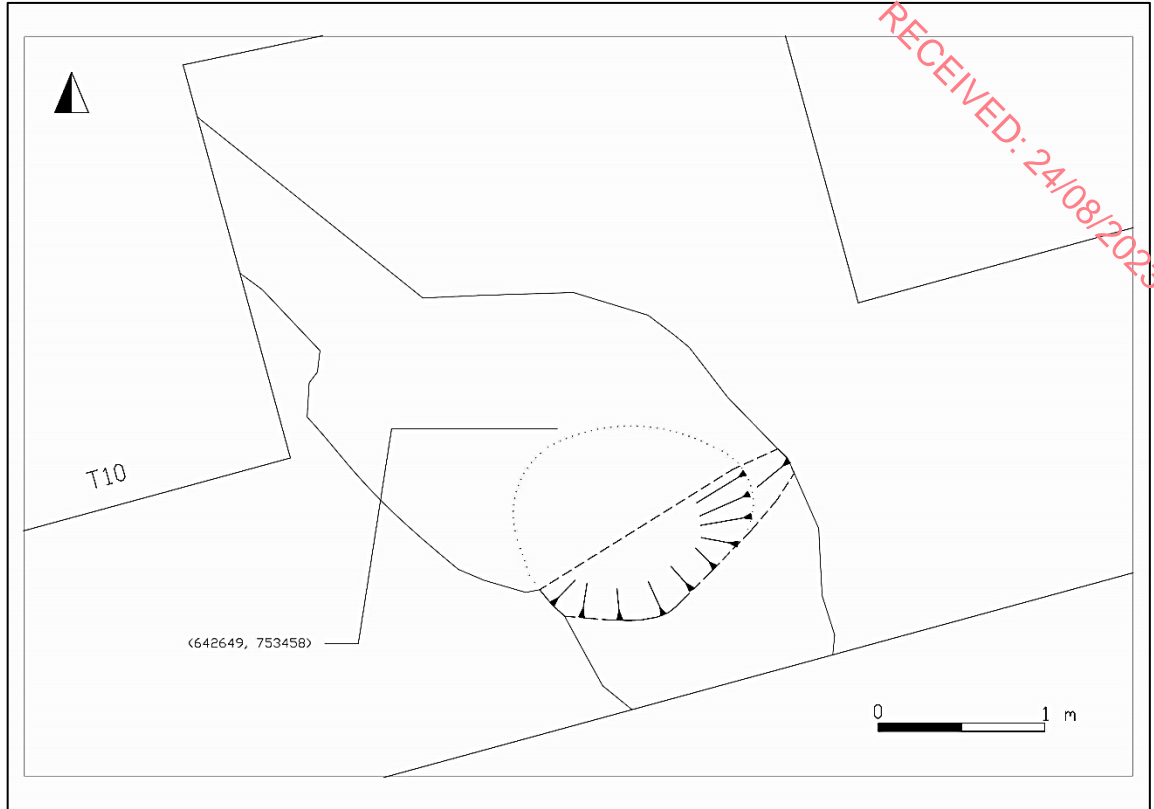
**Figure 6:** Location of test trenches excavated within the subject site.



**Table 3: Results of Archaeological Test Trenching**

<b>Trench</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Test Trench 1 was orientated NE-SW, measured 100m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m below modern ground level. The topsoil consisted of a mid-brown silty clay with moderate small sub-angular stone and pebble inclusions. Occasional modern inclusions were present to the base of the topsoil including, ceramic and glass sherds, plastics and ferrous metal fragments. The underlying natural subsoil consisted of a mottled grey and white silty clay with decayed stone and boulder pockets and occasional sub-rounded medium and large angular stones. Cultivation furrows orientated both NE-SW truncated the subsoil throughout the trench. They were evenly spaced, measured between 0.3-1.2m and 0.15m in depth and were infilled with topsoil. Occasional clay pipe stems were noted with the fill of the furrows.
2	Test Trench 2 was orientated WNW-ESE, measured 75m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.35m below modern ground level. The stratigraphy noted was similar to that encountered in Trench 1, although the subsoil was less leached and mottled orange brown in color. Root activity was noted towards the centre of the trench and cultivation furrows truncated the subsoil surface throughout.
3	Test Trench 3 was orientated NW-SE measured 75m long by 1.8m wide and averaged between 0.2-0.4m deep. The stratigraphy noted was similar to that encountered in Trench 2 to the north and the topsoil was deepest (0.4m) at the southwestern end of the trench were a line of pea gravel indicated the presence of underlying services. Frequent cultivation furrows truncated the subsoil surface.
4	Test Trench 4 was orientated WNW-ESE measured 80m long by 1.8m wide and averaged between 0.2-0.3m deep. The stratigraphy noted was similar to that encountered in Trench 3 to the north like trenches 1-3 the subsoil was truncated by cultivation furrows.
5	Test Trench 5 was orientated WNW-ESE measured 60m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.35m below modern ground level. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown clayey silt with frequent large sub-rounded pebbles and occasional larger stone inclusions. Modern ceramics and plastics were present within its upper levels. The subsoil consisted of a mottled light-mid brown silty clay to the east and a compact gravelly clay to the west. The nature of the subsoil at the western end of the trench suggested that this area had previously been stripped most likely as part of the adjoining road scheme. The presence of overhead power lines constrained the excavation of 10m buffer zone to the WNW end of the trench.
6	Test Trench 6 was orientated NW-SE, measured 160m long by 1.8m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m below modern ground level. Traces of ground scarping associated with the adjacent ESB substation were noted at the southeastern end of the trench and a levelled field boundary extended across the northwestern end. The field boundary was followed the alignment of a boundary depicted in this area on the 25-inch OSI map and a glass bottle was recovered from the base of the feature. The presence of overhead power lines constrained the excavation of 15m buffer zone to the SW end of the trench.
7	Test Trench 7 was orientated NW-SE, measured 75m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.35m below modern ground level. The stratigraphy noted was similar to that encountered in Trench 6 to the west and the topsoil was thickest (0.35m) towards the southeastern eastern end of the trench. Cultivation furrows orientated E-W truncated the subsoil throughout. Two small gravel deposits in the northwest end of the trench were manually investigated and shown to be localised variations within the natural subsoil.

Trench	Description
8	Test Trench 8 was orientated NW- SE, measured 95m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.25m below modern ground level. The stratigraphy noted was similar to that encountered in Trench 7 located to the west although, there was a higher variation from silt to gravel at the northwest end of the trench. Cultivation furrows orientated E-W extended through the trench. The presence of overhead power lines constrained the excavation of a 15m buffer zone in the northwest end of the trench.
9	Test Trench 9 was orientated E-W, measured 80m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m below modern ground level. Cultivation furrows orientated E-W extended throughout the trench. The presence of parallel rows of overhead power lines constrained the excavation of a 50m section of the trench.
10	Test Trench 10 was orientated E-W, measured 75m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.3m below modern ground level. A pit feature of archaeological potential was revealed towards the northeast end of the trench which was locally extended over an area measuring 2m x 2m on the north side to reveal the full extent of the feature (see <b>Figures 6 and 7</b> ). This was initially revealed as a deposit contrastable from the surrounding subsoil, which manual investigation revealed to be the fill of a shallow concave pit feature. It was roughly circular in plan measuring 1.5m in diameter and the limited manual investigation indicates that it is 0.3m in depth. A furrow truncated the upper portion of feature and this had a max depth of 0.15m. The pit feature was initially thought to be a possible kiln but manual cleaning and limited investigation did not reveal any burnt inclusions or traces of fire scorching along its edges. While the date and function of this feature remain to be determined, an archaeological origin cannot be discounted. A small fragment of a possible copper alloy object was uncovered during metal-detecting of the upcast topsoil close to its location. The fragment is bevelled shaped with a polished exterior and curved interior and it measures 300mm by 300mm and 20mm thick. While it appears to be a fragment of a modern machine-polished object, given its proximity to the potential pit feature it has been retained for future analysis.
11	Test Trench 11 was orientated WNW-ENE, measured 80m long by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.3m below modern ground level. The presence of overhead power lines constrained the excavation of a 25m buffer zone to the WNW end of the trench. The stratigraphy was similar to that encountered elsewhere in the field with occasional cultivation furrows noted. A large boundary ditch extended through the centre of the trench and following the same alignment as a levelled field boundary depicted on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition 6-inch OS map.
12	Test Trench 12 was orientated WNW-ESE measured 80m long by 1.8m wide and averaged between 0.2-0.4m deep. The presence of overhead power lines constrained the excavation of a 10m buffer zone to the WNW end of the trench. The stratigraphy noted was similar to that encountered elsewhere in the field, although the ground within the WNW end appeared to be disturbed, likely due to ground works undertaken in this area during the construction of the adjacent road project to the west.



**Figure 7:** Scaled plan of potential pit feature identified in Trench 10 (furrow shown extending NW-SE)

## 6. Impact assessment

### *Archaeology*

There are no recorded archaeological sites located within the proposed development site and there are no extant examples within 500m of its boundary. In addition, it is located c.600m outside the Zone of Archaeological Potential around the historic core of Mullingar as identified in the *Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020*. It is, therefore, concluded that the proposed development will not result in any predicted impacts on the known archaeological resource.

No potential unrecorded archaeological features were noted within the site boundary during the desktop study and field survey carried out as part of this assessment. The subsequent programme of archaeological test trenching did identify the sub-surface remains of one pit feature, measuring 1.5m in diameter by 0.3m in depth, located close to the east site boundary. A limited manual investigation of this feature revealed no cultural inclusions. While the origin and function of this pit feature remain to be determined, it is concluded that an archaeological origin cannot be discounted. The ground works required for the construction of the housing development will likely result in a direct negative impact of indeterminate significance on this undated feature. There were no other potential archaeological features identified within the proposed development site during the test trench investigations.

### *Architectural and Cultural Heritage*

There are no designated architectural heritage structures located within the proposed development site, which contains no extant structures of any date, and it is not located within, or in the close environs of, an Architectural Conservation Area.

There is one Protected Structure within 100m of the site boundary and this comprises a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse, known as Barrack View (RPS ref. 019-020), located on the opposite (south) side of Ashe Road. This building is also listed in the NIAH which rates it as being of local significance (NIAH ref. 15310002) and it is located within the environs of a number of existing modern housing estates. The proposed development will not result in any direct impacts on this structure or on any of its associated curtilage features. While the proposed development will result in an indirect, negative impact on the current setting of the house, given the structure is assigned a 'local' rating by the NIAH combined with the presence of existing modern developments within its environs this indirect impact is determined to be slight in significance. The proposed development will have no other predicted impacts on the architectural heritage resource of the area.

There are no undesignated cultural heritage assets, such as townland boundaries or vernacular structures, located within the proposed development site. The proposed development will, therefore, have no predicted impacts on the undesignated cultural heritage resource.



## 7. Recommended mitigation measures

There are no recorded archaeological sites within the proposed development site, or its close environs, and it is located c.600m outside west end of the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Mullingar town as identified in the *Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020*. It is, therefore, concluded that no mitigation measures for the known archaeological resource are required during the construction or operational phases of the proposed development.

It is recommended that the potential archaeological pit identified within Trench 10 be fully excavated in advance of the commencement of the construction phase by a suitably qualified archaeologist licensed by the National Monuments Service. There were no other potential archaeological features identified within the remainder of the proposed development site during the test trench investigations and it is recommended that construction works within other areas of the site should proceed with no further archaeological intervention. It should be noted that these recommendations may be subject to the approval of the National Monuments Service.

There are no designated or undesignated assets of architectural or cultural heritage significance located within the proposed development site and it is, therefore, concluded that no mitigation measures for these elements of the cultural heritage resource are required during the construction or operational phases of the proposed development.

## 8. References

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- Lewis, S. (1837) *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. London
- Simms, A., Clarke, H. B., & Gillespie, R. (1992) (eds.) *Irish Historic Town Atlas Vol 5: Mullingar*. Royal Irish Academy Dublin.

### Online resources

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<http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/developmentplans/countydevelopmentplan2014-2020/>

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Westmeath County Council's Record of Protected Structures, accessed 10/07/2019

<http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/Volume%205%20Record%20of%20Protected%20Structures%2020140220.pdf>

Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020:

[www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie)

# Appendix: Photographic record

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*Plate 1: Drone view of proposed development site looking southeast*



*Plate 2: Southwest field, looking northwest*



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*Plate 1: Ground disturbance associated with construction of relief road in southwest corner*



*Plate 4: View of north end of proposed development site*



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*Plate 5: View of field boundary within proposed development site*



*Plate 6: View of Ashe Road substation from west*



*Plate 7: View of Barrick View House from north*



*Plate 8: Trench 1, post excavation, facing northeast*





*Plate 9: Cultivation furrow extending east-west through Trench 1*



*Plate 10: Section through a machine dug cultivation furrow in Trench 1*





*Plate 11: Trench 2, post excavation, looking east-south-east*



*Plate 12: Section through a spade dug cultivation furrow in Trench 2*





*Plate 13: Trench 3, post excavation, facing southeast*



*Plate 14: Pea gravel indicating buried underground services towards the northeast end of Trench 3*





*Plate 15 : Trench 4, post excavation, looking west-north-west*



*Plate 16: Trenches 1-4, post excavation, aerial view, looking southeast*





*Plate 17: Trench 5, post excavation, facing east-south-east*



*Plate 18: Trench 6, post excavation, looking southeast*





*Plate 19: Sondage excavated through levelled field boundary towards the northern end of Trench 6*



*Plate 20: Glass bottle in-situ within the fill of the field boundary towards the northeast end of Trench 6*





*Plate 21: Trench 7, post excavation, looking south*



*Plate 22: Trench 8, post excavation, looking southeast*





*Plate 23: Surveying the established buffer zones necessitated by the presence overhead powerlines*



*Plate 24: Trench 9, post excavation, looking east-north-east*





*Plate 25 Trench 10, post excavation, looking northeast*



*Plate 26: Potential circular pit feature at the northeast end of Trench 10, looking south*



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*Plate 27: Section through circular pit feature*



*Plate 28: Trench 11, post excavation, looking west-north-west*



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*Plate 29: Trench 11, post excavation, looking west-north-west*



*Plate 30: Trench 12, post excavation, looking east-south-east*



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*Plate 31: Metal-detecting survey, in progress, looking south*



*Plate 32: Collection of modern finds recovered from trenches*

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*Plate 33: Aerial view of excavated test trenches looking southeast*