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Conservation and Management Plan for  
Enclosure at Maynetown (RMP DU015-055)

For

Portmarnock Real Estate Developments Ltd.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This plan outlines the strategy for conserving and managing the early medieval enclosure DU015-055, situated in Maynetown townland within the Portmarnock South Phase 1F development. The subsurface monument, a very significant archaeological site, is to be preserved in situ as a central element of the proposed residential development and will form part of the Racecourse Park Development Project.

The proposed landscaping of the open space area where the subsurface ditched enclosure (DU015-055) is located offers a unique opportunity to sensitively integrate heritage with amenity.

By integrating the below ground monument into the design—guided by archaeological supervision and informed by prior archaeological survey and testing results—the scheme ensures preservation in situ, while enabling meaningful public engagement with the site.

The design seeks to demonstrate clear avoidance of below-ground anomalies, and reflect the monument's character through subtle topographic expression and the incorporation of natural materials.

As required under Objective HCA014, the development of a 'live' conservation and management plan will guide all phases of the development, including construction method statements and protective measures. Crucially, the no-dig policy must be achieved through engineered landscaping solutions that avoid ground penetration.

After discussion with the statutory authorities, the final design seeks to interpret the enclosing ditch visibly at surface level and allows for artistic and educational signage, and links naturally with the coastal setting. This approach ensures the monument's long-term preservation and presentation, while contributing to a well-designed and culturally significant amenity area within the residential scheme.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This plan outlines the strategy for conserving and managing the early medieval enclosure DU015-055, situated in Maynetown townland within the Portmarnock South Phase 1F development. The subsurface monument, a very significant archaeological site, is to be preserved in situ as a central element of the proposed residential development and will form part of the Racecourse Park Development Project. It will provide the focus of an open space and amenity area of soft landscaping inspired by the underlying archaeology.

The plan follows a previous Conservation Plan which was prepared in 2009 by Margaret Gowen (Gowen 2009). More recent archaeological investigations (Leigh 2022; McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22R0112, 22E0509) have further informed our knowledge of the monument.

This plan will provide an updated strategy for the monument informed by the results of recent investigations, and in keeping with the ongoing development and with the current policies and practices for heritage management within areas of public realm.

The preservation of the site has been secured to date by:

- encircling the site with a 20m buffer zone which effectively prevented any built development taking place within the boundaries of the monument;
- a temporary metal fence which was erected to respect this buffer zone.

## 2. SUMMARY OF SITE SIGNIFICANCE

The enclosure DU015-055 represents an early medieval ditched settlement, radiocarbon dated to AD 687-952 (7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). The site comprises a 70m diameter circular enclosure, with a ditched avenue extending eastward, and internal features including a large pit with reinterred human remains and signs of habitation and industrial activity. As a Recorded Monument (RMP DU015-055), the site is a legally protected heritage asset.

Excavations have revealed:

- Butchered animal bones (including cattle and horse),
- Blacksmithing evidence (slag, hearth cakes),
- Human remains (minimum of 10 individuals) including trauma indicators,
- Internal features including a large pit and probable ritual elements.

## 3. CONTEXT

### 3.1. Study Area

The enclosure is located in the townland of Maynetown, to the west of the Coast Road (R106) and the Baldoyle Estuary, north of the Mayne Road (R123) and to the east of the Dublin-Belfast Railway Line and the existing 'St. Marnock's Bay' residential development.

The area is rich in archaeology, much of which has been identified as a result of the development of this area. It includes burnt mounds, numerous enclosures of early medieval date and a deserted medieval settlement. The enclosure is located on the south-east edge of the Portmarnock Phase 1F lands next to an area which will be developed by Fingal County Council to create 'Racecourse Park'. A mound (RMP DU015-014) is located within the Phase 1B portion of the development to

the north-west, and an 'Inter-Monumental Route' will provide access and views between the mound and the enclosure.

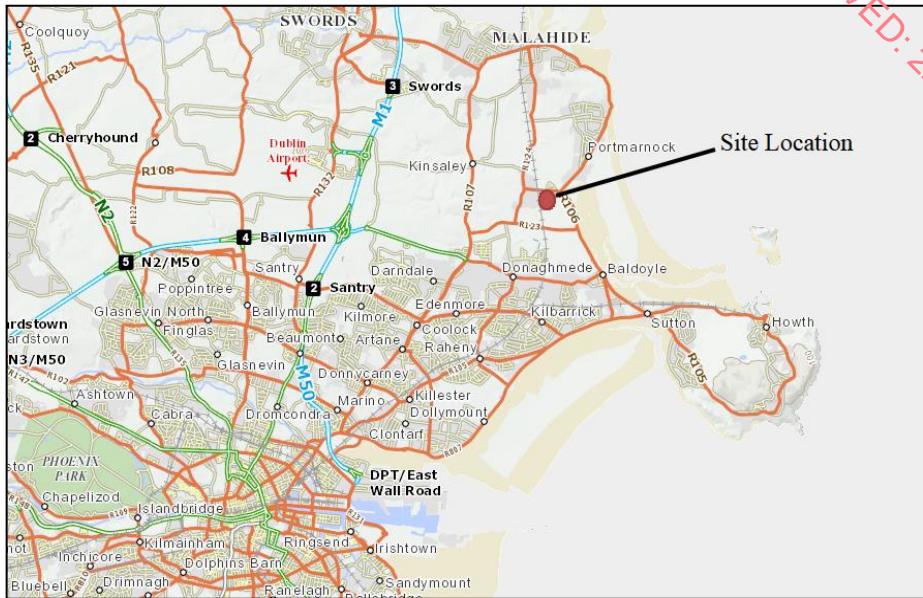


Figure 1 Site location

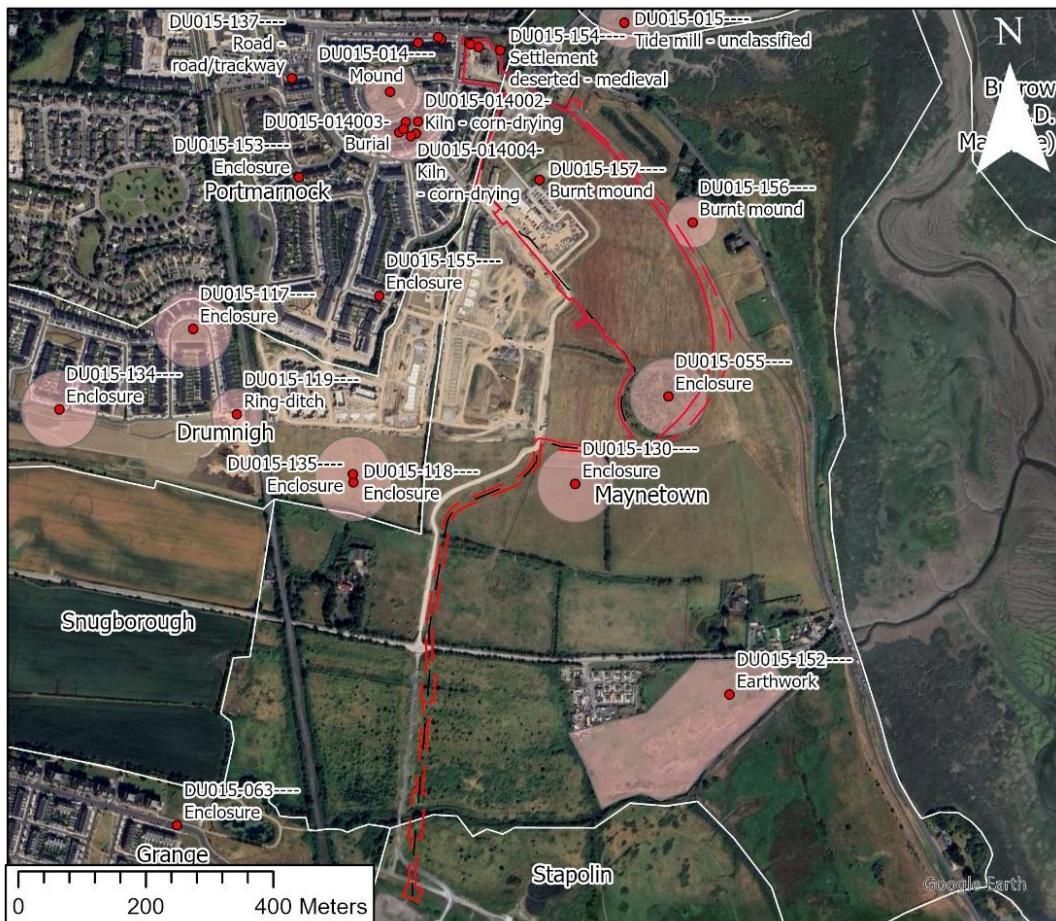


Figure 2 Archaeological monuments in the vicinity of Enclosure DU015-055 and the Portmarnock Phase 1F development (Google Earth, September 2003)

### 3.2. Previous Conservation Plan

The previous conservation plan was prepared for the mound (RMP DU015-014) and the enclosure (RMP DU015-055) which are located in Portmarnock Phase 1B and Phase 1F respectively in compliance with Condition 14 of Planning Ref. F07A/0947. It was agreed upon by the National Monuments Service, Fingal County Council, Brady Shipman Martin (landscape architects), Sherman Oaks (the then developer) and Margaret Gowen & Co. (the then investigating archaeological consultancy).

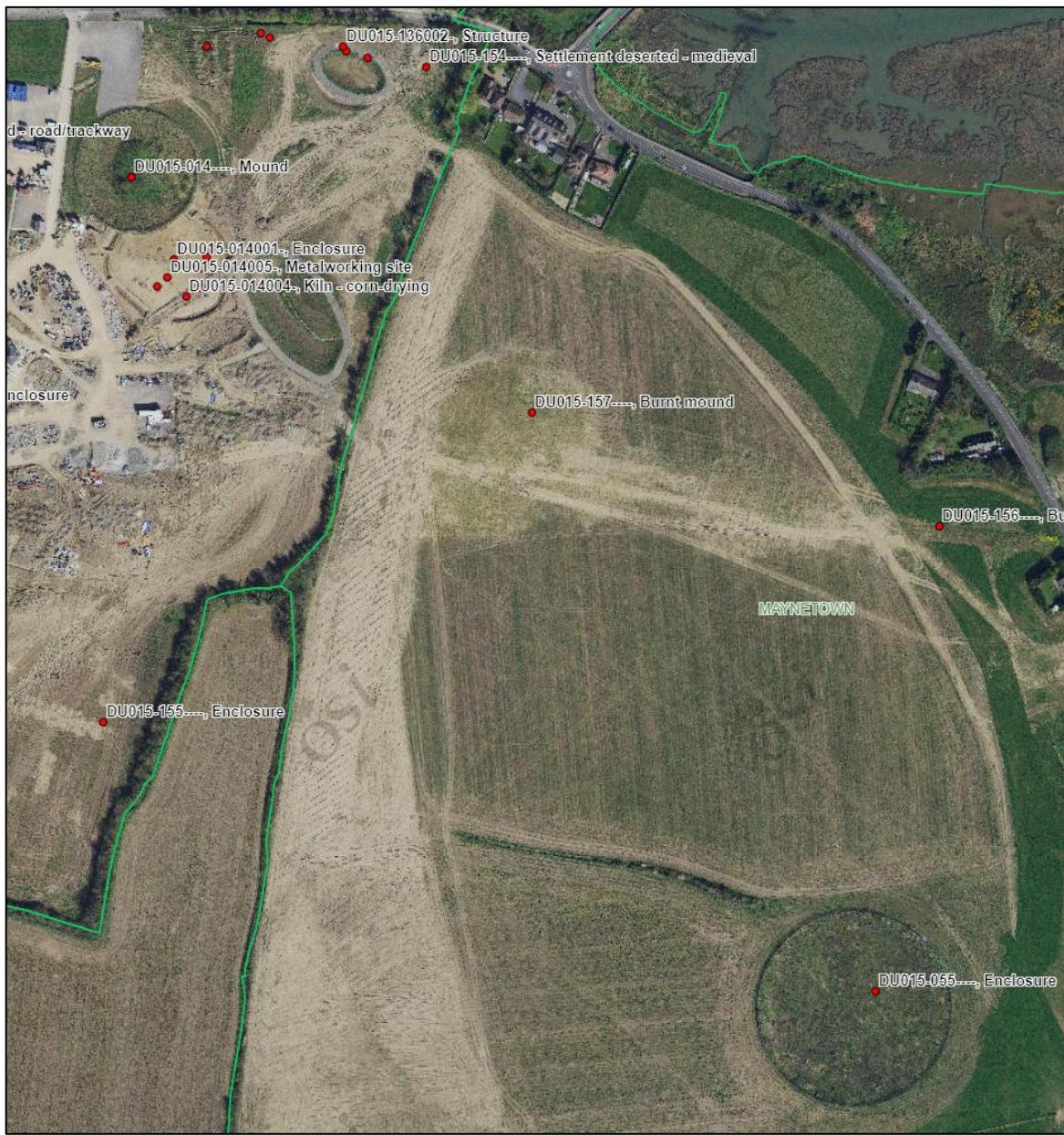


Figure 3 Aerial Imagery (MapGenie 2016) showing the fenced off monuments that form part of the conservation plan, DU015-014 – Mound and DU015-055 Enclosure

It was agreed that the enclosure (RMP DU015-055) would be retained with a 20m buffer zone within Class 2 open space. Fencing would prohibit any construction activities. Operations to prepare and complete the open space would comprise of the following activities:

- Spray off existing vegetation within circular work area with a translocated herbicide;
- Cut and remove all herbaceous when it has died off;
- Fence off and secure buffer area to protect it from adjacent construction activities;
- Spread additional topsoil over area within buffer zone if required;
- Following consultation with archaeologist, rotovate the area to 150mm deep and reseed;
- Form paths to the perimeter of the archaeological area as per plans;
- Provide for interpretative panels.

Subsequent archaeological investigations have revealed that there are human remains 0.4m below the surface, and the area has become overgrown with willow, briars and palm trees which have seeded from nearby gardens. This will create challenges for the removal of vegetation and reseeding, and the updated conservation plan will address these issues while guided by the principals set out in the original conservation plan. All measures will be carried out in consultation with Fingal County Council, the National Monuments Service, the landscape architects and the developer.



Figure 4 A drawing showing the inter-monumental route connecting the mound at the north to the enclosure at the south

### 3.3. Methodology

#### 3.3.1. Desk Study

A review of the following information took place in order to inform the Conservation and Management Plan:

- Record of Monuments and Places and Sites and Monuments Record: The primary source of information for the desk study is the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), as revised in light of fieldwork, formed the basis for the establishment of the statutory RMP pursuant to Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994. The RMP records known upstanding archaeological monuments, their original location (in cases of destroyed monuments) and the position of possible sites identified as cropmarks on vertical aerial photographs. It is based on a comprehensive range of published and publicly available documentary and cartographic sources. The information held in the RMP files is read in conjunction with published constraint maps. Archaeological sites identified since 1994 have been added to the non-statutory SMR database of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (National Monuments Service, DHLGH), which is available online at [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) and includes both RMP and SMR sites. Those sites designated as SMR sites have not yet been added to the statutory record, but are scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP;
- Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029): The current Fingal Development Plan was consulted for policies and objectives which relate to the protection, conservation and management of archaeological monuments;
- Portmarnock South Local Area Plan (LAP) 2013: This document recognises the importance and the protection of recorded archaeological and newly identified sites and monuments. It identifies the following points in relation to creating a strong vision within the context of the proposed development lands at Portmarnock South: -
  1. The protection of archaeological sites within a changing environment and the development of the LAP lands so they have a meaningful expression and reason to be within the present landscape, making these remains into an accessible historic landscape that individuals can relate to;
  2. Provision of signage that can be adopted throughout Fingal so it becomes a recognisable brand.

The Development Plan identifies the Portmarnock LAP as being 'operational' at the time of the publication of the Development Plan. The Portmarnock South LAP has subsequently lapsed on 6 July 2023. The Development Plan clarifies the position that "the provisions of the operational LAPs will continue to apply up to the expiration of the LAP, thereafter the provisions of the Development Plan will pertain." Arising from this, the Portmarnock South LAP no longer applies to development at the subject lands.

- Fingal Heritage Plan 2024-2030: This Plan was consulted for Heritage Actions which Fingal County Council have committed to which are of relevance to the protection, conservation and management of archaeological monuments;
- Previous excavations data: Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy Ltd and Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd have undertaken a number of excavations previously within the larger development lands (see reference section). In addition to this, the 'Excavations' bulletin published by Wordwell and on the website [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie), was consulted for any previous relevant archaeological surveys and excavations that have taken place on or in the vicinity of the proposed development. The 'County Dublin Archaeology Data viewer' also provides excavation information for County Dublin in the form of a webGIS in which

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archaeological excavations are mapped with excavation reports provided. It is available at [www.heritagemaps.ie](http://www.heritagemaps.ie). Excavating archaeologists working within the surrounding environment were also asked for comments on newly revealed features.

- Conservation Plan: The previous Conservation Plan (Gowen 2009) which was approved by the National Monuments Service and the planning authorities was consulted prior to providing an updated plan. The previous report provided a Conservation Plan for both the enclosure (RMP DU015-055) and the mound (RMP DU015-014) which now forms the focus of an amenity area within the Phase 1B lands.

### 3.3.2. Site Inspection and Investigations

Numerous archaeological investigations comprising geophysical survey, archaeological test excavation, archaeological excavation and archaeological monitoring have been undertaken across the Portmarnock lands generally over the past 25 years, including three excavations (Wallace 2000; Moriarty 2009; McLoughlin 2023; Licence 00E0732, 07E0574, 22E0509) and two phases of geophysical survey (Shiel et al. 2000; Leigh 2022; 00R0037, 22R0112) at the site of the enclosure. Additionally archaeological testing associated with a rising main for Uisce Éireann included trenches along ‘avenue’ feature on the east side of the enclosure (Kavanagh & Whitaker 2019; Licence 19E0449).

A site inspection was undertaken on 22 January 2025 by Dr Yolande O’Brien and Dr Karen O’Toole to assess the current condition of the enclosure.

## 4. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

### 4.1. Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029)

The Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) states that;

*The Council’s vision is to conserve, manage, protect and enhance the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage of the County, which are valuable and finite resources, through good management, sensitive interventions and sympathetic development and to acknowledge, support and reinforce the integral role heritage, culture and the arts play in sustaining and creating attractive, vibrant and engaging places to live, work and enjoy.* (Chapter 10.3)

It has specific objectives in relation to the preservation and management of archaeological monuments as follows;

**Objective HCAO1 – Preservation-in-situ:** Favour the preservation in situ or at a minimum preservation by record, of archaeological sites, monuments, features or objects in their settings. In securing such preservation the Council will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

**Objective HCAO2 – Protection of RMPs/SMRs:** Protect all archaeological sites and monuments, underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects, which are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, Wreck Inventory of Ireland and all sites and features of archaeological and historic interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places, and to seek their preservation in situ (or at a minimum, preservation by record) through the planning process.

**Objective HCAO3 – Management of Archaeological Resource:** Encourage and promote the appropriate management and maintenance of the County's archaeological heritage, including historical burial grounds and underwater cultural heritage in accordance with conservation principles and best practice guidelines.

**Objective HCAO7 – Archaeology and Development Design:** Ensure archaeological remains are identified and fully considered at the very earliest stages of the development process, that schemes are designed to avoid impacting on the archaeological heritage.

**Objective HCAO10 – Context of Archaeological Monuments:** Ensure that development within the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Notification does not seriously detract from the setting of the feature and is sited and designed appropriately.

**Objective HCAO11 – Impacts of large-scale development:** Ensure that proposals for large scale developments and infrastructure projects consider the impacts on the archaeological heritage and seek to avoid them.

**Objective HCAO13 – Findings of Archaeological Activity:** Encourage reference to or incorporation of significant archaeological finds into development schemes, where appropriate and sensitively designed, through layout, in situ and virtual presentation of archaeological finds and by using historic place names and the Irish language where appropriate.

**Objective HCAO14 – Archaeology in Open Space:** Retain and manage appropriately archaeological monuments within open space areas in or beside developments, ensuring that such monuments are subject to an appropriate conservation management plan, are presented appropriately and are not left vulnerable, whether in the immediate or longer term, to dangers to their physical integrity or possibility of loss of amenity.

**Objective HCAO16 – Conservation Plans:** Manage the archaeological sites and monuments that Fingal County Council owns or is responsible for according to best practice and according to Conservation Plans where they exist.

**Objective HCAO18 – Public Awareness:** Raise public awareness of the cultural heritage and improve legibility by providing appropriate interpretation in areas, sites, villages, and buildings of archaeological and historic significance.

#### 4.2. Fingal Heritage Plan 2024-2030

The Fingal Heritage Plan (2024-2030) reiterates the Council's vision with regard to heritage, stating further that, '*We will protect our heritage and nurture a sense of place through collaboration and community engagement.*' It also provides Actions which are of relevance to the conservation and management of archaeological monuments as follows:

**Action 1.6:** Continue to resource and review the implementation of existing Conservation Management Plans and encourage the use of the conservation management plan process for heritage assets in both the private and community sectors.

#### 4.3. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives in relation to the enclosure within the development lands of Phase 1F and all associated works comprise the following;

- Preservation in situ of the full extent of the enclosure and associated avenue ditches within the development.
- Integration into public open space with minimal landscape intrusion.
- Ongoing protection against degradation from development, vandalism, and natural overgrowth.
- Promotion of public awareness and appreciation of the site's heritage value.

## 5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 5.1. Prehistoric Period

Recent excavations to the south of Station Road in Portmarnock (McLoughlin 2019a, 2019b, 2020b; Licence 16E0101, 16E0613, 18E0016) have added to the evidence of prehistoric activity in coastal north county Dublin. Artefacts of prehistoric date within the Portmarnock lands have included a number of flint flakes and projectiles dating from as early as the Mesolithic period to the Neolithic period and Bronze Age. A significant late Bronze Age find from the Phase 1C excavation is a copper alloy Dowris phase knife blade (19E0303:4).

A number of features have been identified, including evidence of burnt mounds dating to the Early Bronze Age, one of which is a recorded monument ((RMP DU015-014). Evidence of the elusive Iron Age has also been identified, with a curving ditch within an early medieval enclosure being found to be of Iron Age date. Another ditched enclosure (SMR DU015-014001) returned Late Iron Age and early medieval dates, and a pit within that enclosure was dated to the early Mesolithic (6329-6052 BC).

Given the indications of prehistoric activity in the area, it is possible that the upstanding mound at Portmarnock (RMP DU015-014) could be prehistoric. Testing of the mound in 2007 (Moriarty 2009) suggested a medieval date, however the mound was quite disturbed. Based on the newly revealed evidence for prehistoric activity in the surrounding area, it now seems more likely that the mound had its origins in prehistory. Morris (1939) in an examination of the Díndsheanchas (Old Irish metrical lore of place names, edited by Gwynn in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) has associated this site with the burying place of 'Maine', 'son of Medb and Ailell'. Maine (also known as Maine or Cichmaine), the son of Medb and Ailell of Connacht, is said to have been killed by fishermen at Inbher Cichmaine, the inlet or bay of Cichmaine and his burial ground is described as being at the northern end of Inbher Cichmaine. Morris makes the argument that Inbher Cichmaine appears to correspond with what is now known as Portmarnock Bay and the mound situated at the northern end of the bay, corresponds with the reputed burial location. It is possible that if the mound did originate in prehistory, it could have been used as the burial place of Maine.

### 5.2. Early Medieval Period

There are many sub-surface enclosure sites which have been identified in Portmarnock and the surrounding townlands as a result of aerial photographic analysis, particularly in recent years. Based on the results of excavations carried out in 2016-2017 and 2019 to the south of Station Road, it is likely that many of these enclosures could represent early medieval settlement activity. Three excavated enclosures at Portmarnock have been dated to the early medieval period, with elements of Iron Age activity (McLoughlin 2019a; 2019b; 2022a; Licence 16E0101, 16E0613 and 19E0303). The enclosure which is the subject of this Plan has similarly been dated to this period. Investigations by Moriarty (2009; Licence 07E0574) returned a radiocarbon date of AD 687-887 from a charcoal sample from the base of the ditch, as confirmed by more recent excavations by McLoughlin (2023; Licence 22E0509) which dated a human femur from the site to 674-876 BC.

### 5.3. Aerial Imagery

The enclosure site (RMP DU015-055) was clearly visible in aerial imagery from 2003 when dry weather conditions were experienced. A circular enclosure of 70m diameter is visible, with two linear features to the east creating a funnel of 'avenue' feature towards the monument (Figure 5). Another enclosure to the south-east (SMR DU015-130) is also identifiable in this image.



Figure 5 Enclosures DU015-055 and DU015-130 visible on aerial photography (Google Earth, September 2003)

### 5.4. Previous Archaeological Investigations

Four archaeological test excavations and two phases of geophysical survey have been undertaken of the enclosure and the 'avenue' feature since 2000 comprising;

- October 2000: Archaeological test-excavation (Wallace 2000; Licence 00E0732)
- November 2000: Geophysical survey (Shiel et al. 2000; Licence 00R0037)
- June 2008: Archaeological test excavation (Moriarty 2009; 07E0574)
- October 2019: Archaeological Testing of Uisce Éireann Rising Main (Kavanagh & Whitaker 2019; Licence 19E0449)
- July 2022: Geophysical Survey of Enclosure DU015-055 (Leigh 2022; Licence 22R0112)
- July 2022: Archaeological Testing of Enclosure (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509)

The results are included in Appendix 1 of this plan. In summary the investigations have revealed a 70m circular enclosure with a ditch measuring up to 7.1m wide and 2m deep and an entrance to the east (Plate 1). A charcoal sample from the base of the ditch was radiocarbon dated cal. AD 687-887, while a sample of animal bone from a secondary fill dated to cal AD 774-952, placing the monument in the early medieval period.

Topsoil of 0.30-0.40m overlay the archaeological features, of which numerous were identified within and outside of the enclosure. This included two splayed ditches of up to 5.5m wide and 1.4m deep, running for a distance of up to 120m from the entrance in a south-east direction. They have been interpreted as an 'avenue' feature. A disarticulated human arm bone was recovered from the southern ditch of this avenue.

A large oval pit within the northern interior of the enclosure measured 8.3m long and contained a deposit of human remains representing a minimum of ten individuals including at least five adults and five juveniles (Plate 2). They were as little as 0.40m below the surface and had been wrapped prior to deposition. A human bone sample was radiocarbon dated to cal AD 674-876, which is consistent with the date obtained for the enclosure ditch.

Two linear ditches and two smaller linear features likely to be associated with the enclosure were identified to the north-east of and outside of the enclosure (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509; T2, T3). These features will require excavation.

Finds have included a small segmented cylindrical bead, a ferrous nail shank, a possible fragment of kiln fabric, a possible iron blade fragment, smithing hearth cakes and a large annular iron ring. Cattle dominated the animal bone assemblage which appeared to have been brought to the site on the hoof and killed, butchered and eaten on site. A relatively high incidence of horse was also noted.



Plate 1 Enclosing ditch (Moriarty 2009; Licence 07E0574)



Plate 2 Deposit of human skeletal remains, section of pit in the background (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509)

### 5.5. Current Condition

The enclosure was surrounded with protective fencing in 2012 which respects a 20m buffer zone around the monument. However, there are now several breaches in the fencing where panels have fallen away (Plate 3). The interior of the fenced area is extremely overgrown with willow, briars and palm trees which have evidently seeded from nearby gardens (Plate 4).



Plate 3 Protective fencing around enclosure with displaced panels



Plate 4 Overgrown enclosure site inside fence

## 6. MANAGEMENT MEASURES

### 6.1. Notification

Notification of works work at the enclosure are required in compliance with the National Monuments Acts (1930-2014). Section 12 (3) of the Act states that any person proposed to carry out work at or in relation to a Recorded Monument is required to give notice in writing to the

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage of the proposed works at least two months in advance and shall not, except in the case of urgent necessity and with the consent of the Minister, commence the work until two months after the giving of notice.

The Historic and Archaeological and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 has been enacted and it is now law. However, until the Act is fully commenced, the National Monuments Acts have not yet been repealed and therefore remain in force. When commenced, relevant works (being works at, on, in, under, to, or within the immediate surroundings of, a monument) will require a licence from the Minister under Section 27.

## 6.2. Physical Protection (Construction Phase)

- Ensure there is a clear demarcation of the site during the construction phase of the development, this can be achieved by either by keeping the existing temporary metal fence in place or upgrading the fence with similar. During the landscaping process, this fence will be removed.
- Within the open space area, the extent of the below ground enclosure should be surveyed in and clearly demarcated so it is obvious to all contractors and site workers the exact position of the below ground enclosure.
- Given that sensitive archaeological remains have been revealed 0.30cm-0.40cm below the current ground level, it must be ensured that no excavation takes place as part of the site preparation and construction works and a 'no dig' policy is followed.
- Control vegetation: Remove invasive species (e.g., willow, briars) and self-seeded ornamental plants (e.g., palm trees) as set out in landscaping plans.
- Drainage management: Implement soft landscaping to ensure good drainage and avoid waterlogging within the enclosure.
- Ensure landscaping works are carried out with suitable and low weight machinery and hand tools that form part of a method statement that will be submitted to the authorities for their approval.
- All work to take place under an approved method statement to be agreed by Fingal County Council and the National Monuments Service.
- Ongoing consultation with the community archaeologist in Fingal County Council as the conservation measures are put in place.

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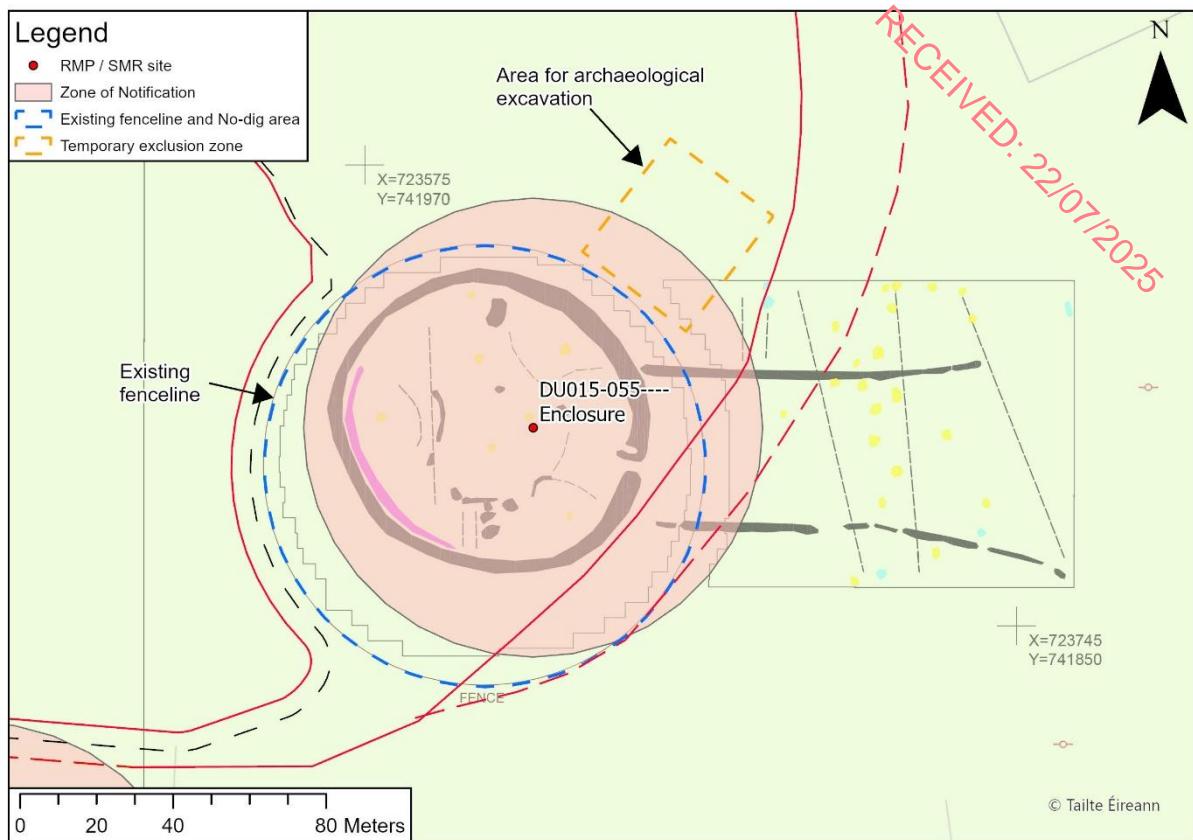


Figure 6 Exclusion zones for construction

### 6.3. Landscaping Plans

Brady Shipman Martin have produced detailed landscape plans which provide for the conservation and protection of the monument while allowing for its display/representation which is reflective of the underlying archaeology, and ensuring that the area around it can function as a useful area of open space. A method statement of the landscaping plans is included in Appendix 2 of this plan. The strategy will involve:

- Spraying off existing grass, bramble and regenerating willow scrub within the circular work area with a translocated herbicide.
- Allow 2 to 3 weeks for herbicide to take full effect.
- Cut to ground, and remove, all vegetation, bramble and scrub.
- Low weight bearing grass cutting machine will be used for removal of the vegetation on flat areas surrounding the enclosure. Vegetation on the enclosure will be cut to ground by hand.
- It is not proposed to remove roots or to excavate existing ground.
- A thin layer of soil (c.100mm) will be spread over the area surrounding the enclosure to infill existing ruts, hollows, etc. to provide a relatively flat surface.

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- (g) Thereafter the full extent of the enclosure and surrounding area will be covered by a geotextile layer to protect the ground and the existing topography of the enclosure.
- (h) A layer of 300 to 800mm deep topsoil will be spread over the conservation area, respecting the natural topography. This topsoil layer will also tie-in to surrounding development, roads, etc.
- (i) The topsoil will provide a suitable protective layer over the conservation area for the landscape works and planting. The topsoil will also act as a protective layer over the ditch, which could otherwise be subject to disturbance or damage by open space users/children
- (j) Likewise the base for the interpretation/seating area will be constructed over the geotextile layer using a 100mm / 150mm deep Cellweb/Geocell reinforcing material.
- (k) A number of low mounds and structures / features are to be provided as part of the archaeology experience/natural play opportunities within the open space. All structures will be founded in the protective topsoil layer and will not penetrate the geotextile layer.
- (l) The top c.150mm of the topsoil layer will be cultivated and seeded and planted as per the landscape plans. Plants used will ensure minimal ground disturbance.
- (m) Provide for seating/interpretative panels to aid the user in understanding the position, context and significance of the location and monument. These features will be founded/integrated into the base for the seating area and will not penetrate the geotextile layer.
- (n) Linkages and signage will also be developed between this open space and a second open space (already constructed as part of Phase 1B (some 600m to the northwest).
- (o) The area will be handed over to Fingal County Council as public open space.

The design concept as outlined in Appendix 2 was devised after consultation with the National Monuments Service and the community archaeologist from Fingal County Council. At these discussions, it was suggested that the results of the archaeological testing and survey should inform the landscaping design and that the surface display should assist with the interpretation of the site. The design output was to be simple in form to allow for easy maintenance of the area while creative to capture the dynamic nature of the broader coastal landscape.

The extent of the monument will be defined by a low earthen mound, the slopes of which will be easy to maintain and mowable (c.1:4). This sense of enclosure provides for a reflective, central area where informal paths, planting, seating and information panels will be provided. This will complement the more active amenity hub proposed at the south and southeast of the open space area. The use of natural materials and planting can create an appropriate setting and assist with the presentation and preservation of the monument while also being an attractive setting for amenity and form a focal point within the proposed development.

The avenue extending eastward from the enclosure will be subtly reflected through carefully designed planting measures.

The area where human remains were uncovered will be respectfully grassed over; while it may be demarcated through the use of long grasses or natural stone features, it will not be explicitly identified in order to preserve the dignity and sensitivity of the site.

Overall, by sensitively landscaping the area containing the subsurface archaeological ditched enclosure - under the supervision of archaeologists – the ongoing preservation, management and meaningful integration of the feature into the overall residential development is ensured, while also providing an amenity area at Portmarnock.

Underpinning the design ethos is a ‘no dig’ policy where no excavation works will be permitted and landscaping will be achieved through building up the area (Appendix 2).

All detailed landscaping elements are provided within the BSM portfolio of drawings and accompany Phase 1F Portmarnock South planning application.

#### 6.4. Archaeological Excavation, Monitoring and Research

- **Conduct excavation** of associated features to the northeast of monument identified in Trench T2 and T3 (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509, Appendix 1). The excavation of these features will be carried out under licence to the National Monuments Service and as part of this undertaking, a full report including post excavation and specialists reporting will be carried out to the National Museum of Ireland’s standards.
- **Monitoring of adjacent development:** All works within 50m of the monument and throughout the proposed development of Phase 1F Portmarnock will be subject to archaeological monitoring by a licensed archaeologist.
- **Geo-referencing and GIS integration:** The plan layout of the site has been digitally mapped and identified by geophysical survey (Leigh 2022; Licence 22R0112, Appendix 1). This information should be incorporated into Fingal County Council’s GIS planning layers.

#### 6.5. Public Access and Interpretation

- **Establish greenways** and throughway as shown on the landscaping plans, to avoid heavy footfall directly on the monument.
- **Interpretive signage:** Install bilingual signage explaining the site's importance, dating, and features. Include QR code links to extended online resources or virtual reconstructions. The type of signage is to be agreed with Fingal County Council and will respect Fingal County Council Brand Guidelines.
- **Viewing platform:** A low-impact viewing platform and/or seating area has been provided as part of the landscaping plans to the east of the monument. This is proposed to take advantage of the seaward views. The signage displays can be used for educational purposes. The design reflects the viewing area of the mound (DU015-014) at the northwest end of the inter-monumental route.
- Encourage the residents and locals to engage with the space by making it attractive and interesting through landscaping and signage.



Plate 5 Viewing platform and signage at the mound (DU015-014) at the northwest of the inter-monumental route



Plate 6 Drone view of testing at enclosure DU015-055, with view of Portmarnock Estuary, Howth and Ireland's Eye

## 6.6. Planning and Policy Integration

- Incorporate the site into Racecourse Park development as a centrepiece for heritage interpretation.
- Apply National Policy Frameworks: Comply with the National Monuments Acts and Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, and integrate with Fingal Development Plan's policies (Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) on archaeological heritage.
- Engage with National Monuments Service and Fingal County Council on all conservation works.

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## 7. RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

- **Fingal County Council:** Lead role in ongoing site maintenance, access, and integration with open space planning.
- **National Monuments Service (DHLGH):** Regulatory oversight and guidance.
- **Local Community Groups:** Involvement in stewardship, interpretation, and community heritage projects.
- **Evara:** For the delivery, interpretation and landscaping of the open space that includes the subsurface enclosure site.

An annual inspection of the monument's condition and vegetation along with signage should take place by the statutory authority, all findings to be reported to the National Monuments Service and Fingal County Council.

## 8. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Task	Responsible Party	Timeline
Site protection measure during construction, fence upgrade and vegetation removal.	Developer & Licensed Archaeologist	Q1 2026
Controlled vegetation removal with archaeological monitoring.	BSM, Licensed Archaeologist & Developer	Q1 2026
Archaeological excavation of gullies and ditches possibly associated with the monument.	Licensed Archaeologist & Developer	Q1 2026
Landscaping – initial build up of the site and introduction of planting, paths, viewing area, seating, play/amenity areas and hard and soft landscaping proposals to enhance the below ground monumental feature and open space. Archaeological monitoring of all works.	BSM & Licensed Archaeologist & Developer	Q2 2026- Q3 2029
Interpretive signage and public info materials to be agreed between parties.	Fingal Co. Co. & Developer	TBA
Annual condition inspections at Fingal County Council's discretion.	Fingal Co. Co.	

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**APPENDIX 1**
**Archaeological Investigations of Enclosure DU015-055**

There have been four archaeological test excavations and two programmes of geophysical survey of the subsurface enclosure site and the 'avenue' feature since 2000 (Image 1). The results are summarised below.

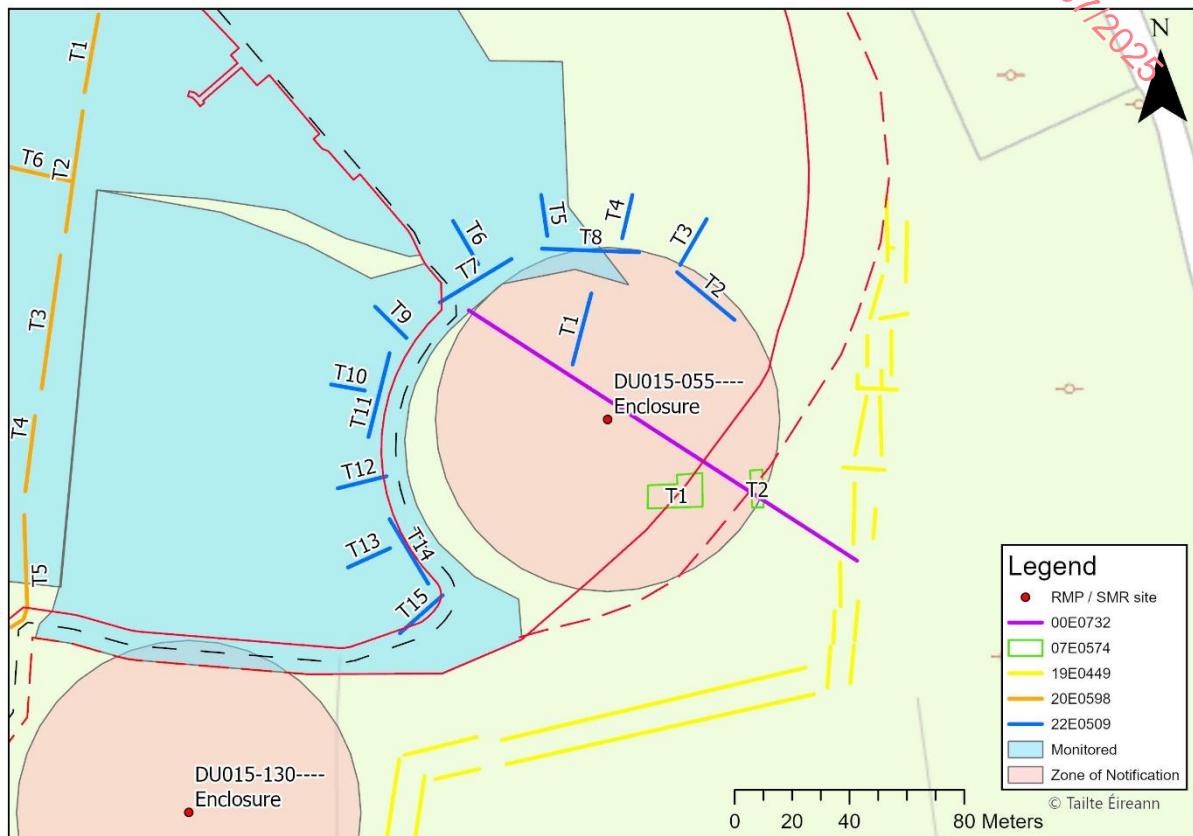


Image 1 Archaeological investigations at enclosure

**October 2000: Archaeological test-excavation (Wallace 2000; Licence 00E0732)**

In October 2000 a small-scale testing programme was carried out at the enclosure site DU015-055 that had been identified through aerial photography. One test trench, measuring 160m in length and 3.5m in width, was mechanically excavated across the site (Image 1, Image 2). The test trench confirmed the presence of a large circular enclosure approximately 70m in diameter and identified a possible entrance feature on the southeast side of the monument. The excavation was not deep enough to expose the base of the ditch. Several features were identified within and outside of the enclosure, comprising deep plough marks, a deposit of charcoal and shell, and slot trenches. A small bead was recovered from the ditch – it was a segmented cylinder, 1.65cm long and 0.70cm wide.

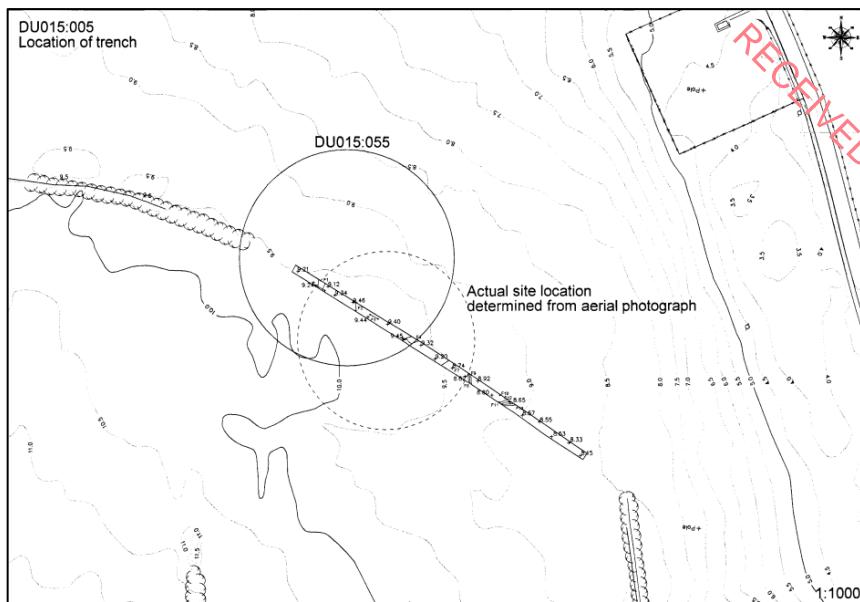


Image 2 Location of test trench excavated by Wallace on enclosure DU015-055 (Wallace 2000; Licence 00E0732)

#### November 2000: Geophysical survey (Shiel et al. 2000; Licence 00R0037)

The aim of this survey, which was undertaken by GSB Prospection for Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd., was to locate and identify the nature and extent of the archaeological remains, and in turn to identify an adequate buffer zone around each site to protect the archaeology in these areas. This survey confirmed, in particular, the archaeological potential of the lands around enclosure site DU015-055 (Shiel et al. 2000). Geophysics corroborated the existence of an entrance feature on the south-east side of the enclosure ditch which had been visible on aerial imagery and suggested through archaeological testing. Two splayed linear responses running for a distance of up to 120m from the entrance in a south-east direction also give the impression of a formal approach to the enclosure (*ibid.*), a portion of which was picked up as a slot trench during the test excavation by Wallace (2000) (Image 3).

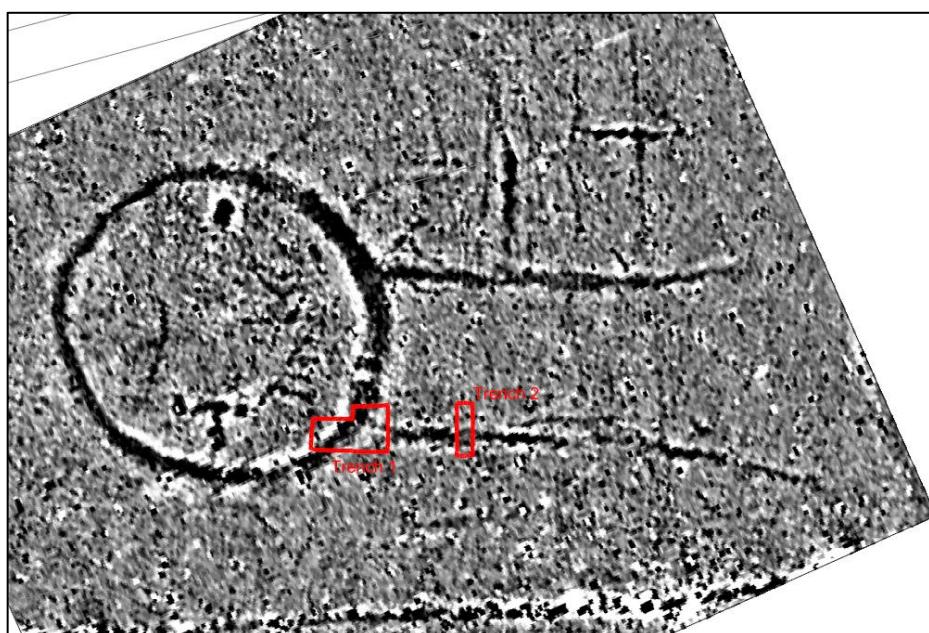


Image 3 Geophysical survey image 00R0037 with test trenches 070574

**June 2008: Archaeological test excavation (Moriarty 2009; 07E0574)**

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In June and July 2008, a small-scale test-excavation was carried out on the enclosure site (Moriarty 2009; Licence 07E0574). The excavation was designed to garner more information about the subsurface enclosure prior to its preservation in situ. Two trenches were opened at the enclosure site (RMP DU015-055) (Image 1, Image 3).

Topsoil of 0.30-0.40m overlay the archaeological features, the earliest of which was a large sub-circular pit. The enclosure was found to be defined by a very large and substantial ditch which measures approximately 7m in width by a maximum of 2m in depth (Image 4). Finds recovered from the ditch comprised butchered animal bone, including horse, and a ferrous nail shank. A charcoal sample recovered from the base of the ditch delivered a radiocarbon date of cal. AD 687-887, dating the site to the early medieval period. The southern avenue ditch which extended from the east side of the enclosure measured up to 5.50m wide by 1.40m deep. One of the fills contained a disarticulated human arm bone. A fragment of vitrified clay possibly represented kiln fabric. A small area of metalled surface was identified along the northern edge of the avenue ditch which was possibly related to the entrance leading into the circular enclosure.



Image 4 Enclosing ditch (DU015-055) as identified in Trench 1

**October 2019: Archaeological Testing of Uisce Éireann Rising Main (Kavanagh & Whitaker 2019; Licence 19E0449)**

Archaeological testing was undertaken by Liza Kavanagh in advance of a proposed rising main associated with a pumping station for Irish Water (Kavanagh & Whitaker 2019; Licence 19E0449). This is a separate scheme and mostly outside of the planning boundary for the Phase 1F lands. The scheme is located 50m to the east of enclosure DU015-055, and the pipeline will cross the associated ditched entrance avenue that approaches the enclosure from the east (Image 1, Image 5).

The archaeological activity was concentrated within the area of test trenches 13-27 to the east of monument DU015-055 and is likely to represent early medieval features contemporary with the enclosure, including the double ditched avenue to the entrance of the enclosure. These features

included two pits, a large ditch with possible associated spread, seven linear ditches, two possible ditches, one historic field boundary and a possible trough.

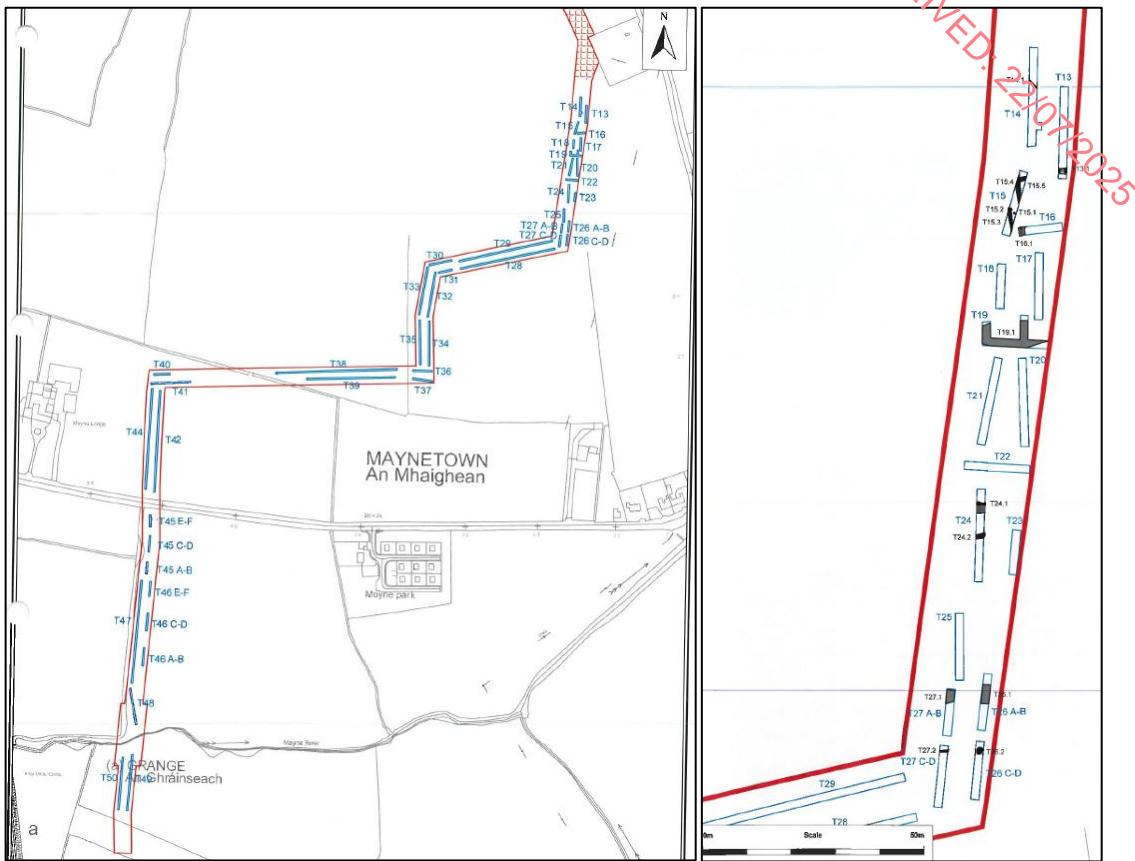


Image 5 Locations of test trenches of features identified east and south of enclosure (Kavanagh & Whitaker 2019)

#### July 2022: Geophysical Survey of Enclosure DU015-055 (Leigh 2022; Licence 22R0112)

A final phase of geophysical survey was undertaken of the enclosure in 2022 in order to confirm the exact location of the enclosing elements of the enclosure due to a discrepancy between the geophysical information, the location recorded in the SMR and the temporary fencing that had been erected around the monument. The survey successfully identified the accurate location of the recorded enclosure, which presents as a circular ditched enclosure (75m diameter) with an entranceway in the east. Numerous responses within the enclosure are indicative of pits and ditches and possible burnt features. The location and direction of the ditched causeway was also accurately recorded (Image 6, Image 7).

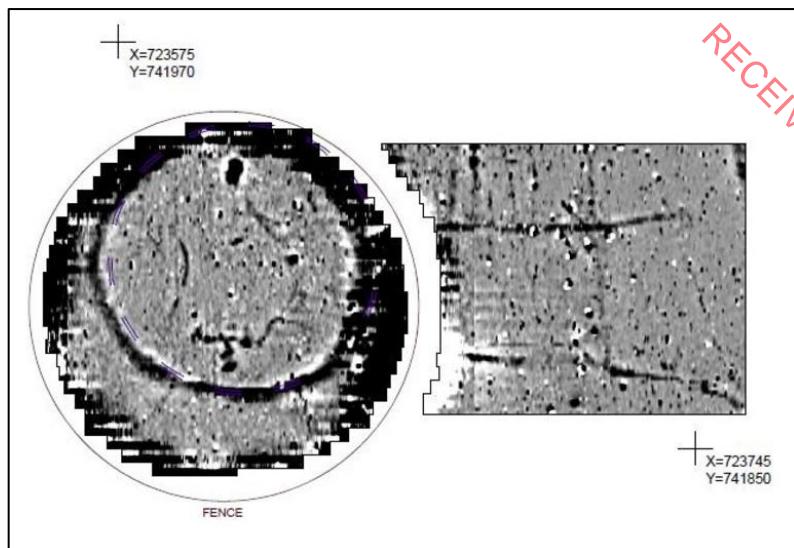


Image 6 Geophysical survey greyscale of enclosure (Leigh 2022)

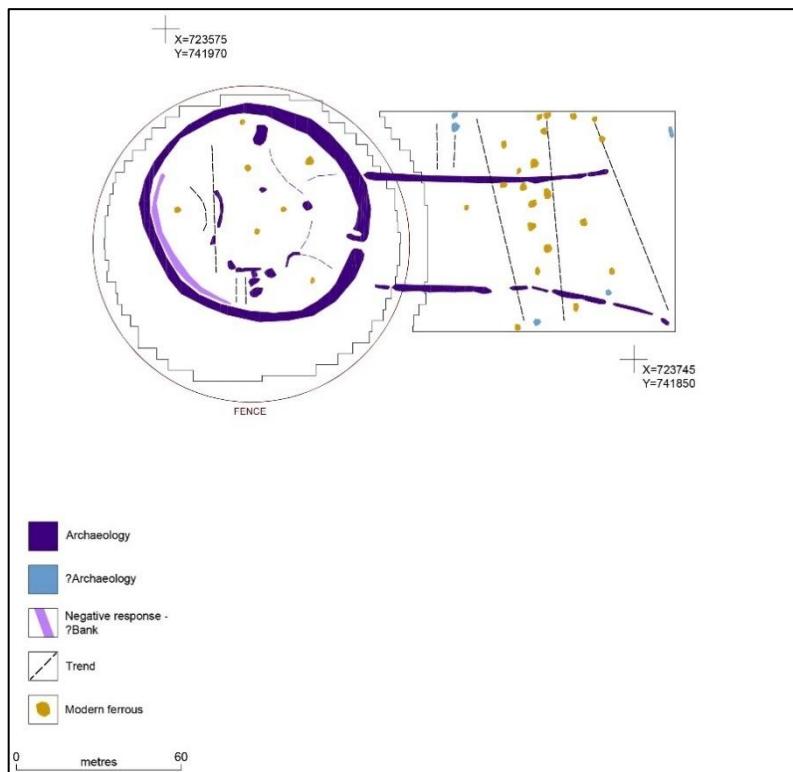


Image 7 Summary interpretation of geophysical survey of enclosure (Leigh 2022)

#### July 2022: Archaeological Testing of Enclosure (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509)

Archaeological testing was undertaken by Gill McLoughlin in July 2022 on the enclosure as part of pre-planning investigations related to Portmarnock Phase 1E and 1F (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509; Image 1, Image 8). The purpose of the testing was to investigate the area surrounding the enclosure in advance of planning for Phases 1E and 1F to see if there were any associated archaeological features, and to investigate both the enclosure ditch and a pit within the interior of the enclosure with the aim of gathering information which would assist in the interpretation and future presentation of the site. The archaeological testing followed discussions with the National Monuments Service and Fingal County Council in relation to the preservation of the site.

Fourteen test trenches were excavated to assess the area of Phase 1E and Phase 1F housing and roadways closest to the enclosure to the west and north (T2-T15), while one trench was placed to target the enclosure ditch and a substantial internal feature indicated on geophysical survey (T1).

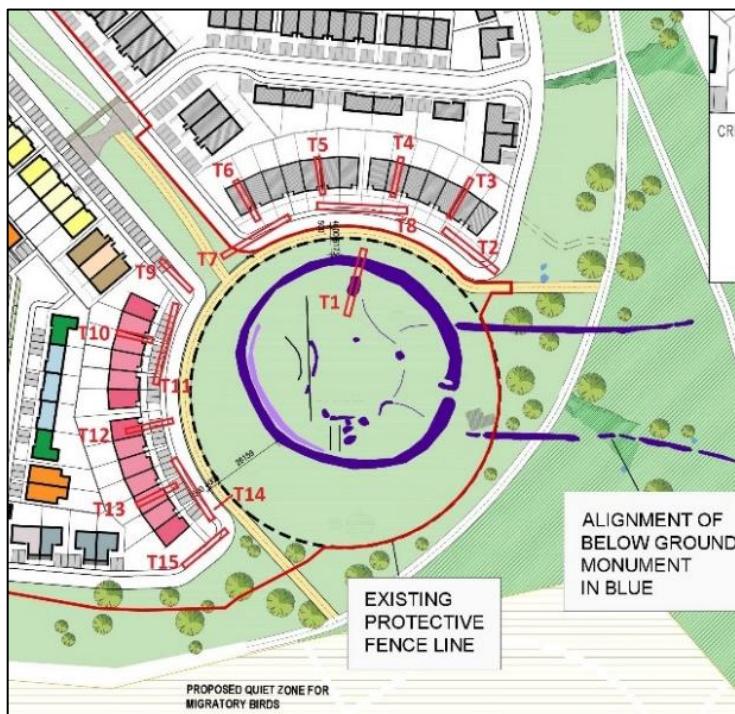


Image 8 Testing layout at enclosure (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509)

The enclosure ditch and a large internal pit, as indicated in the geophysical survey, were identified in trench T1. The oval-shaped pit measured 8.3m long and was excavated to a depth of 1.25m, but the base could not be reached because of ingress of water. A deposit of human remains was dumped in the fill of the internal pit after having been disinterred from elsewhere. The deposit of bones represents a minimum of ten individuals including at least five adults and a minimum of five non-adults ranging from 1.5-16 years. Cranial trauma was noted in two individuals. The bones were present at 0.4m below current ground level and appeared to have been wrapped or contained somehow, resulting in a linear pattern of deposition (NE-SW) which did not relate to a cut (Image 9). An iron find, possibly a fragment of a knife blade, was also recovered from this deposit. Slag, identified as smithing hearth cakes, is evidence of blacksmithing contemporary with the enclosure. A large annular iron ring was recovered from one of the upper fills of pit and may have been used as a pull handle or a suspension loop. A sample from a human femur was radiocarbon dated to 674-876 cal AD.

The ditch was 7.1m wide and 1.76m deep. Dating of a sample of animal bone from the secondary fill of the enclosure ditch yielded a date range of cal AD 774-952 and a fragment of human bone yielded a date range of cal AD 674-876. These dates align well with a date retrieved from a previous phase of testing in 2008 (Moriarty 2009) and with the dating of three other enclosures excavated nearby in Portmarnock townland (McLoughlin 2019a; 2019b; 2022).



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Image 9 Trench 1, deposit of human skeletal remains, section of pit in the background (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509)

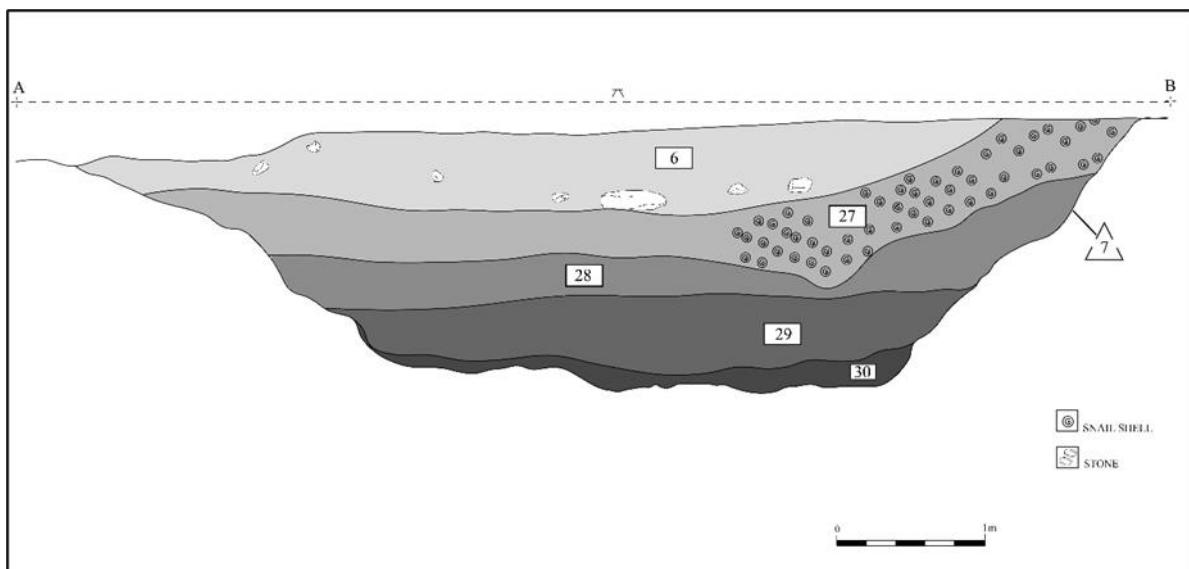


Image 10 West-facing section of enclosure ditch (McLoughlin 2023; Licence 22E0509)

Cattle dominated the animal bone assemblage, and they were likely brought to the site on the hoof and killed, butchered and eaten on site. A perforated cattle scapula appears to indicate a shoulder of beef suspended on a hook, possibly for smoking and may indicate a preserved joint of beef. A relatively high incidence of horse was also noted, and while the assemblage was too small to be statistically viable, a high incidence of horse was also noted at adjacent excavated sites in Portmarnock, so it may be significant.

Two linear ditches and two smaller linear features likely to be associated with sub-surface enclosure DU015-055 were identified in trenches T2 and T3 to the northeast of the enclosure. Ditch C19 was identified in T3 and was oriented WSW-ENE. It measured 3.3m wide by 1.05m deep and contained three fills, all of which contained seashell and animal bone. Ditch C15 was oriented E-W, measured 2.6m wide and in excess of 0.7m deep. The full depth of this ditch was not reached due to rapid water ingress from below. Three distinct fills were noted, which contained animal bone, seashell and charred environmental remains. The nature of the fills in both ditches suggests that these features were associated with the ditched enclosure.

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Nothing of archaeological interest was identified in the other test trenches to the north and west of the buffer zone associated with the enclosure (T4-T15).

It was recommended in the archaeological testing report that the linear ditches and associated features to the northeast of the enclosure in the vicinity of T2 and T3 be fully excavated under licence, in advance of development. It was also recommended that a plan for landscaping the area be agreed in advance with the archaeologist to ensure that the methodology proposed will allow suitable protection to the below ground archaeological remains.

## APPENDIX 2

## Landscaping Plan (Thomas Burns, Brady Shipman Martin)

Proposed landscape works on sub-surface ditched enclosure [RMP DU015-055] within the Portmarnock Phase 1F development area, Station Road, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin (Pre-Planning reference: LRD0058/S1).

Date: 20th June 2025

### Introduction

Post the Stage 2 LRD meeting for the development, BSM have been requested to produce a method statement for the open spaces works pertaining to works works on and around the sub-surface ditched enclosure [RMP DU015-055] within the Portmarnock 1F development site. The works primarily relate to the incorporation of the feature into public open space and the provision of elements of natural play and archaeological representation and interpretation.

Works will be subject to archaeological monitoring by a suitably qualified archaeologist under licence to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

This note represents further development and refinement of the methodology for proposed landscape works as set out in the licence application.

### Description of proposed landscaping works

The ditched enclosure and buffer area (circa 10,500m<sup>2</sup> conservation area with a diameter of 115lin/m) is protected by fencing from adjacent construction activities.

The proposed landscaping works of the conservation area are informed by the archaeological investigations and survey that have preceded the development in order to provide a better understanding of the significance of the ditched enclosure in this otherwise flat, low-lying field.

The landscaping works seek to ensure the protection of the archaeological features within the new residential area; to allow for its display/representation in the landform; and to ensure that the area around it can function as a useful area of open space.

It is proposed to develop the open space with a feature entrance paved area, that mirrors the upstanding mound (**DU015-014**) situated to the northwest of the open space and connected to each other via the 'Inter-Monumental Route'. The ditch itself that encompasses the archaeological features, is proposed to be mounded to enclose and protect the main area of interest. An informal path loops around the inside of the enclosure and meanders walkers to the various archaeological finds. Information lecterns, for children and adults will be dotted throughout to showcase the archaeological finds and demonstrate the rich history of the area. Areas of seating will be proposed with a small quantum of native tree stands in strategic locations. The pathway will then connect to another feature paved area, which offers a seating/viewing point over the bay. From the viewing platform, another informal path loops around the outside of the mounded enclosure, links a series of sensory/natural/semi formal play areas with some kickabout space and teenager hangout spots.

While respecting the topographical integrity of the site and to ensure that a safe and maintainable grass surface is provided it is proposed to provide an additional layer of topsoil over the open

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space area, separated by a geotextile layer, which will form the main protection of the sub-surface features. The depth of this topsoil will vary and range between 300-800mm.

The enclosure will be reserved for passive amenity activities and will provide views to the coast, Howth Head and Lambay Island. Non-invasive planting, primarily grass will be used within the central area of the enclosure to ensure minimal disturbance while creating a recreational zone.

At the outer buffer zone, a more varied planting regime of shrubs, herbaceous plants and ornamental grasses will be favoured along with an information and seating area to provide a more active amenity zone. Paths etc will be constructed above the existing grade. A border of semi-mature trees and shrubs will be established to the edge of the open space within the buffer zone in order to contain the space and create an edge to the area.

The area will be situated within a well-used and focal open space central to the residential development area that will be populated by residents and visitors. It will be overlooked and will become a landmark feature of the new development.

All detailed landscaping elements are provided within the BSM portfolio of drawings. The treatment of the mound from BSM imagery is shown below (Figures 1-4).

The landscape works involve:

- (a) Spraying off existing grass, bramble and regenerating willow scrub within the circular work area with a translocated herbicide.
- (b) Allow 2 to 3 weeks for herbicide to take full effect.
- (c) Cut to ground, and remove, all vegetation, bramble and scrub.
- (d) Low weight bearing grass cutting machine will be used for removal of the vegetation on flat areas surrounding the enclosure. Vegetation on the enclosure will be cut to ground by hand.
- (e) It is not proposed to remove roots or to excavate existing ground.
- (f) A thin layer of soil (c.100mm) will be spread over the area surrounding the enclosure to infill existing ruts, hollows, etc. to provide a relatively flat surface.
- (g) Thereafter the full extent of the enclosure and surrounding area will be covered by a geotextile layer to protect the ground and the existing topography of the enclosure.
- (h) A layer of 300 to 800mm deep topsoil will be spread over the conservation area, respecting the natural topography. This topsoil layer will also tie-in to surrounding development, roads, etc.
- (i) The topsoil will provide a suitable protective layer over the conservation area for the landscape works and planting. The topsoil will also act as a protective layer over the ditch, which could otherwise be subject to disturbance or damage by open space users/children
- (j) Likewise the base for the interpretation/seating area will be constructed over the geotextile layer using a 100mm / 150mm deep Cellweb/Geocell reinforcing material.

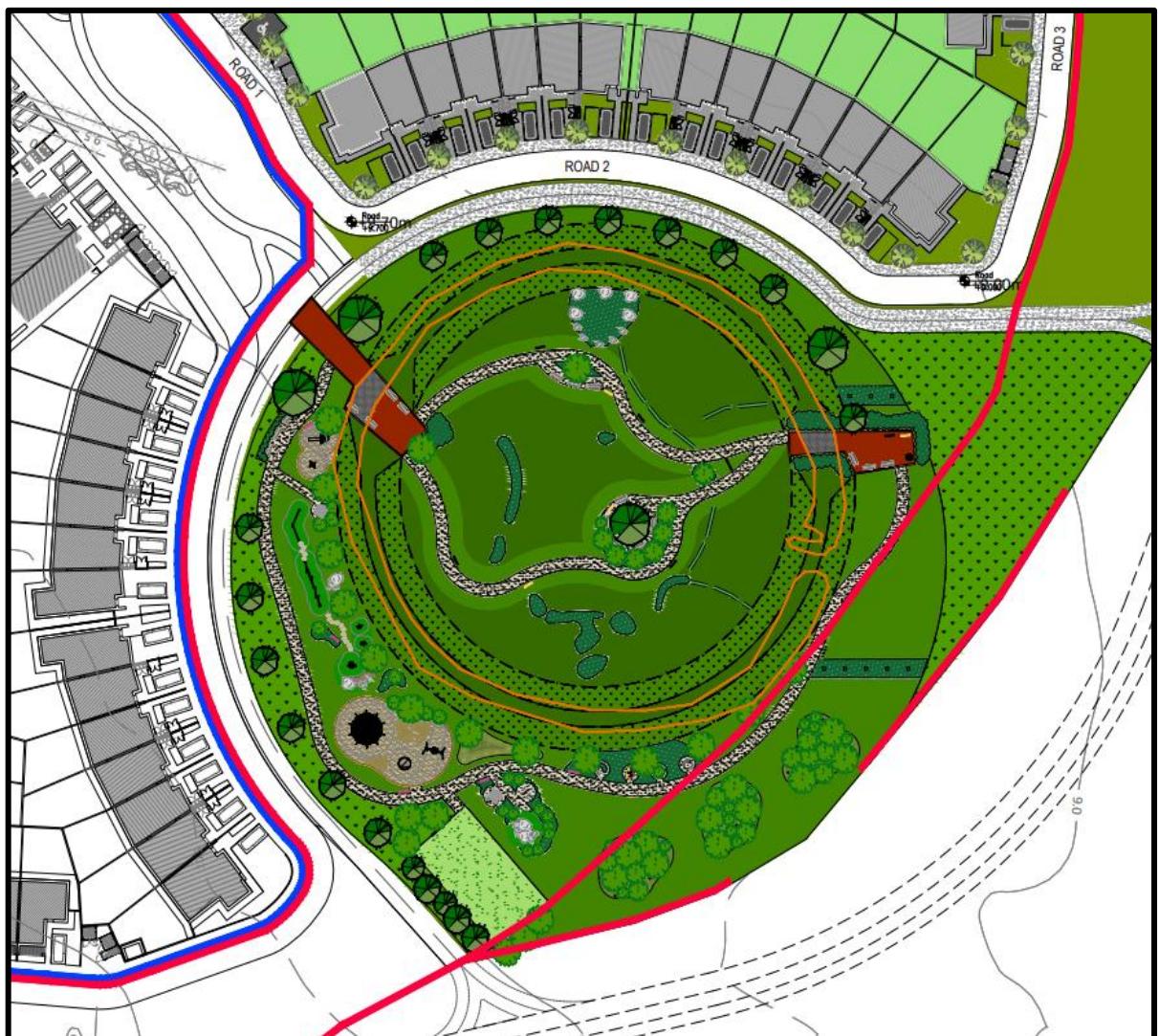
(k) A number of low mounds and structures / features are to be provided as part of the archaeology experience/natural play opportunities within the open space. All structures will be founded in the protective topsoil layer and will not penetrate the geotextile layer.

(l) The top c.150mm of the topsoil layer will be cultivated and seeded and planted as per the landscape plans. Plants used will ensure minimal ground disturbance.

(m) Provide for seating/interpretative panels to aid the user in understanding the position, context and significance of the location and monument. These features will be founded/integrated into the base for the seating area and will not penetrate the geotextile layer.

(n) Linkages and signage will also be developed between this open space and a second open space (already constructed as part of Phase 1B (some 600m to the north west)).

(o) The area will be handed over to Fingal County Council as public open space.



*Figure 1      Overall landscaping proposal*

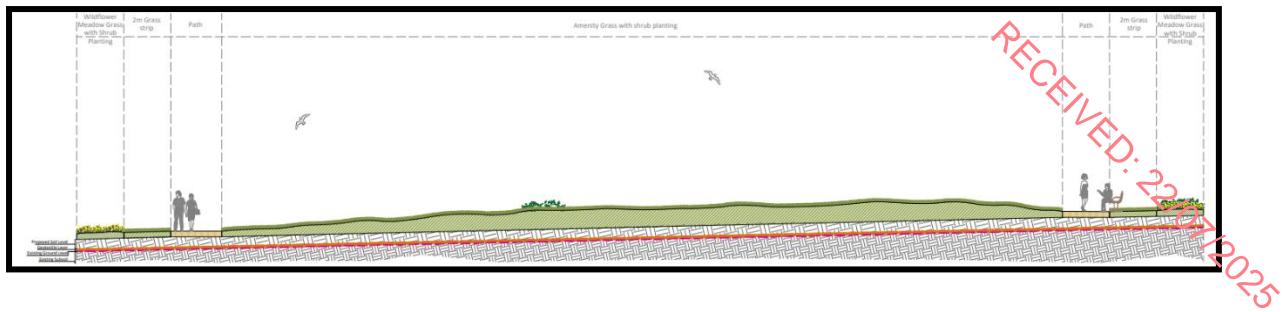


Figure 2 Detail showing archaeological protective layer (from north to south within the enclosure)

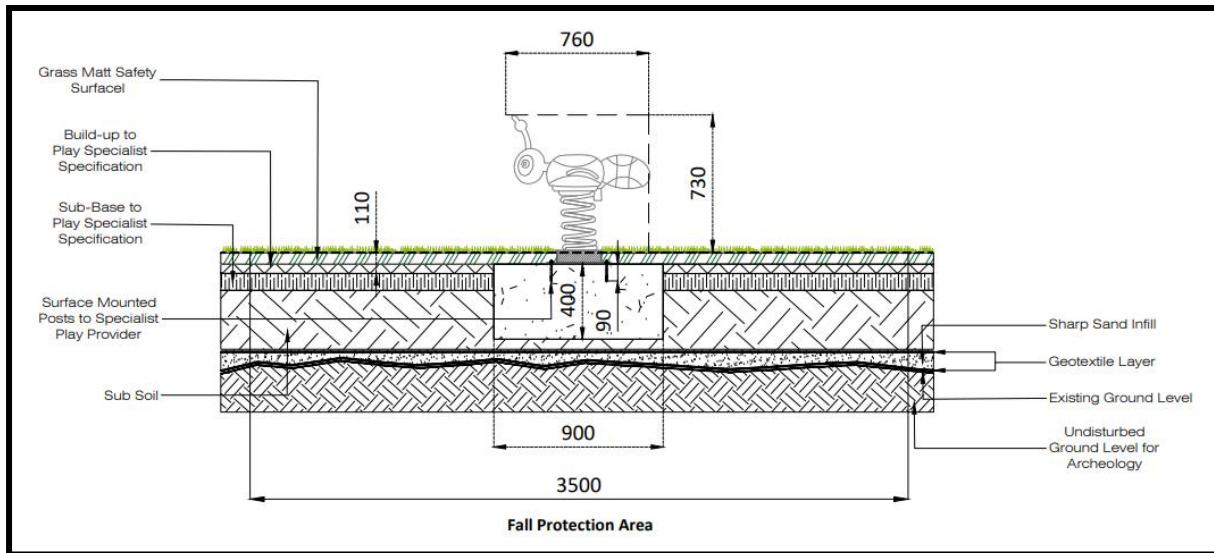


Figure 3 Detail showing toddler play elements built above the existing ground line

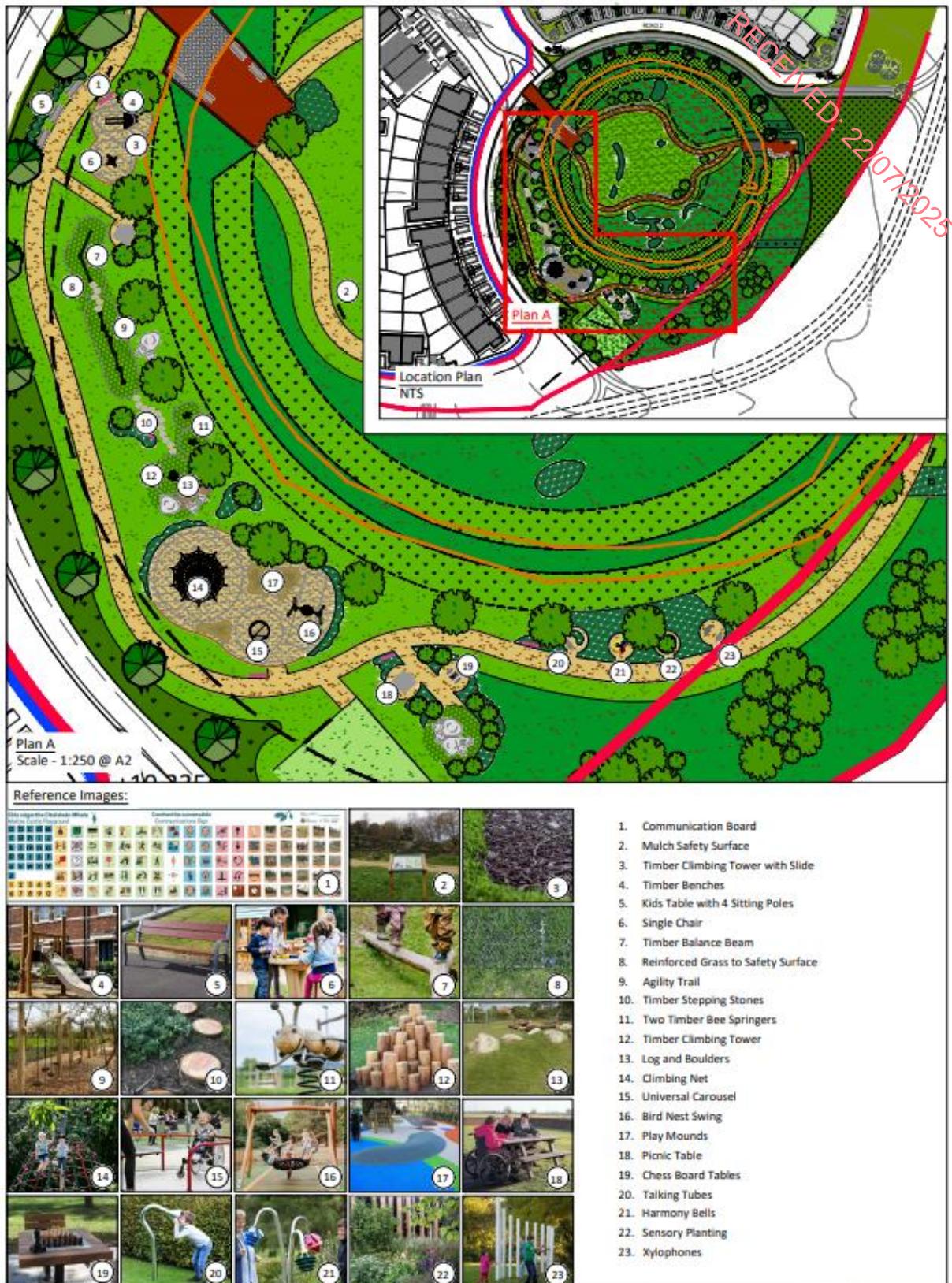


Figure 4 Natural/Sensory/Inclusive Playscape

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