Appendix A.13.1

Archaeological and Historical Background

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Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric Period (c. 8000 BC – AD 500)

While there is possible evidence of a human presence in the southwest of Ireland as early as the Palaeolithic period (Dowd and Carden 2016), the Mesolithic Period (c. 8000–4000 BC) is the earliest time for which there is clear evidence of prehistoric activity in Ireland. During this period people hunted, foraged and gathered food and appear to have had a mobile lifestyle. The most common evidence indicative of Mesolithic activity at a site comprises of scatters of worked flint material; a by-product from the production of flint implements or rubbish middens consisting largely of shells (Stout & Stout 1997). The latter are commonly discovered in coastal regions or at the edge of lakes and some worked flakes have been found near Oughterard (Robinson 1997, 331) to the northwest of the Project. It is likely that nearby coastal and riverine environments were an important element for the Mesolithic populations in this landscape, as a food and travelling resource. Some Mesolithic flints have been discovered during excavations in Terryland c.1.25km southeast of the Project (Moore Group website, 13/02/16). In addition, a large amount of lithics, some of Mesolithic date, were retrieved from the Terryland area (approximately 1km southeast of the Project) from the 1800s onwards and are housed in the collections of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI).

During the Neolithic period (c. 4000–2500 BC) communities based their economy on the rearing of stock and cereal cultivation and as a result they became less nomadic. This transition was accompanied by major social change. Agriculture demanded an altering of the physical landscape, forests were rapidly cleared and field boundaries constructed. There was a greater concern for territory, which saw the construction of large communal ritual monuments called megalithic tombs, which are characteristic of the period. In Ireland four main types of megalithic tomb have been identified: court-tombs, portal-tombs, passage-tombs and wedge-tombs. The first three types are earlier in date (pre-2000 BC) and are largely confined to the northern half of the country, while wedge-tombs are slightly later in date and are most numerous in the west and southwest.

No definite Neolithic sites are recorded within the receiving environment of the Project. In 2006, a possible megalithic structure was identified as part of the EIA for the 2006 Galway City Outer Bypass (GCOB) in Mionlach (CH 49), which is located to the immediate southeast of the Project. In addition, seven polished stone axeheads have been recovered from the townland of Mionlach (NMI files) and Neolithic flints are recorded from the townland of Terryland (NMI files and Moore Group Website, 13/02/16).

The Bronze Age (c. 2500–800 BC) was characterised by the introduction of metalworking technology to Ireland and coincides with many changes in the archaeological record, both in terms of material culture as well as the nature of the sites and monuments themselves. Megalithic tombs were no longer constructed and the burial of the individual became more typical. Cremated or inhumed bodies were often placed in a cist, a small stone box set into the ground, or a stone lined grave. Burials were often made within cemeteries and marked within the landscape with the construction of an earthen barrow or cairn of stones. Only one barrow is recorded within the receiving environment of the Project. AH 11 is located c.190m east-southeast of the Project within the townland of Dangan Lower.

The most common Bronze Age site within the archaeological record is the burnt mound or fulacht fia. Over 7000 *fulachta fia* have been recorded in the country making them the most common prehistoric monument in Ireland (Waddell 2010, 183).

Although burnt mounds of shattered stone occur as a result of various activities that have been practiced from the Mesolithic to the present day, those noted in close proximity to a trough are generally interpreted as Bronze Age cooking/industrial sites. Fulachtaí fia generally consist of a low mound of burnt stone, commonly in a horseshoe shape, centred around an earth-cut trough. They are found in low lying marshy areas or close to streams or rivers. Often these sites have been ploughed out and survive as a spread of heat shattered stones in charcoal rich soil with no surface expression in close proximity to a trough. A number of fulachtaí fia have been excavated within the townland of Doughiska, outside the receiving environment of the Project. In addition, several burnt mound sites (where no trough was noted) were also excavated in Doughiska during 2006 prior to the construction of the existing N6. The former location of these sites lies within the footprint of the Project but all have been fully excavated (AH 36) (Bennett 2006:790).

There is increasing evidence for Iron Age (c. 800 BC – AD 500) settlement and activity in recent years as a result of development-led excavations; however, the Iron Age is often difficult to identify in Irish archaeology as it appears to involve a great deal of continuity from the preceding Bronze Age. Whilst there are no Iron Age sites recorded within the vicinity of the Project, the River Corrib (Newcastle area) produced a La Tène sword of Iron Age origins adjacent to a possible fording point in the Dangan Lower/Newcastle area (NMI Ref.: E269:1).

Early Medieval Period (AD 500-1169)

During the early medieval period Ireland was not a united country but rather a patchwork of minor monarchies all scrambling for dominance, with their borders ever changing as alliances were formed and battles fought. Kingdoms were a conglomerate of clannish principalities with the basic territorial unit known as a *túath*. Byrne (1973) estimates that there were probably at least 150 kings in Ireland at any given time during this period, each ruling over his own *túath*. These kings were distributed strategically throughout the region and ruled over many tribal units.

The most common indicator of settlement during the early medieval period is the ringfort. Ringforts, (also known as *rath*, *lios*, *caiseal*, cathair and *dún*) are a type of defended homestead comprising of a central site enclosed by a number of circular banks and ditches. The number of ditches can vary from one (univallate) to two or three (bivallate or tri-vallate) and is thought to reflect the status and affluence of the inhabitants. Another morphological variation consists of the platform or raised ringfort – the former resulting from the construction of the ringfort on a naturally raised area. Ringforts are most commonly located at sites with commanding views of the surrounding environs which provided an element of security. While ringforts, for the most part, avoid the extreme low and uplands, they also show a preference for the most productive soils (Stout 1997, 107). One of the most recent studies of the ringfort (Stout 1997) suggested that there are a total of 45,119 potential ringforts or enclosure sites throughout the island of Ireland. This figure has since been revised upwards to 'over 47,000 ringforts', while O'Sullivan et al suggest that there are 'at least 60,000 early medieval settlement enclosures on the island' (O'Sullivan et al., 2014). While the names *rath* and *lios* refer to earthen ringforts, *caiseal* (cashel) and *cathair* refer to their stone-walled equivalents. Cashels are more frequent in the west of the country, where bed rock would have been relatively easy to source as a building material.

There are two ringforts recorded within the receiving environment of the Project (AH 19, 35) along with a cashel (AH 29). A cashel was also excavated during works associated with the N6 Galway to Ballinasloe Road Scheme to the east of the termination point of the Project (Bennett 2006:779). A further three enclosures are recorded within the receiving environment of the Project, which have the potential to represent ringfort sites (AH 6, AH 18, AH 45).

Another feature commonly found in conjunction with ringforts is the souterrain. These are underground passageways and it has been suggested that they were food stores or used as hiding places during times of strife.

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The majority of souterrains comprise of earth cut passageways and chambers that are lined with either stone or wood, although stone cut examples are also known. County Galway has a particularly high recorded density of souterrains (Clinton 2001, 33), however only one is recorded within the receiving environment and this is associated with a cashel and children's burial ground in Ballybrit (AH 29).

Crannóga or lake dwellings are normally associated with the early medieval period, although artefacts found during field walking and excavations have revealed occupation as early as the Bronze Age and as late as the post-medieval period. *Crannóga* are not as numerous as ringforts, but nonetheless represent an important settlement type for this period. It is estimated that based on current records of known or potential sites that there is c.1200 *crannóga* in Ireland (O'Sullivan et al 2014, 58), confined largely to parts of the country with a large number of lakes and other stretches of shallow water. Although sometimes located on natural islands, *crannóga* are generally constructed on entirely artificial foundations, with the *crannóg* material kept in place by a ring of close-set vertical piles forming a palisade (Edwards 1996, 34-5). The site locations are naturally defensive and accessed by boat, causeway or wooden bridge. Some of the *crannóga* on open water survive as small, often wooded islands, while others have been submerged by rising water levels or when the *crannóg* material has compacted and sunk. Drainage operations have often revealed sunken sites, recognisable in older reclaimed land as grassy or tree-grown hummocks. By their very nature, *crannóga* are waterlogged, thus allowing for the preservation of normally perishable organic material, such as wood, leather and environmental evidence. There are two *crannóga* located on the shores of Ballindooley Lough c. 360m to the north of the Project.

This period was also characterised by the introduction of Christianity to Ireland. The new religion was a catalyst for many changes, one of the most important being literacy. Irish was written down for the first time using the ogham script. The ogham alphabet is thought to be based on the Latin alphabet of the later Roman Empire and today the majority of the inscriptions that survive are located on pillar stones or boulders.

A bullaun stone is a Recorded Monument in the townland of Rahoon within the footprint of the Project (AH 2). Bullaun stones are a rather enigmatic monument form, which have attracted a variety of interpretations. They have often been found in association with early medieval religious contexts, but this may be associated with metal working at religious sites and as such may indicate an industrial reason for the association. This may also explain the occurrence of bullauns in isolated locations (Dolan 2009, 17). In addition, they have been interpreted as being used for grinding grains. The bullaun at AH 2 is recorded but was not identified during the field inspection for this assessment due to overgrowth. It is possible that it has been incorporated into a field wall at this location.

Medieval Period (AD 1169-1600)

The beginning of the medieval period was characterised by political unrest that originated from the death of Brian Borumha in 1014. Diarmait MacMurchadha, deposed King of Leinster, sought the support of mercenaries from England, Wales and Flanders to assist him in his challenge for kingship. Norman involvement in Ireland began in 1169, when Richard de Clare and his followers landed in Wexford to support MacMurchadha. Two years later de Clare (Strongbow) inherited the Kingdom of Leinster and by the end of the 12th century the Normans had succeeded in conquering much of the country (Stout & Stout 1997, 53). The first series of castles in Ireland consisted of earth and timber features and began appearing near the start of the Norman invasion of Ireland and lasted steadily until 1225. These castles were built hastily to establish territorial claims and were later replaced by stone castles.

In 1230, the existing settlement of Galway was attacked by Richard de Burgo as part of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Connacht. The first written reference to Galway is the recording in the annals of the building of the castle of *Bun Gaillmhe*, 'the mouth of the [river] Gaillimh' in 1124. This fortification was part of the deliberate encastellation of lands which Toirdhealbhach Ó Conchobhair, King of Connacht, pursued in the second quarter of the 12th century. It shows that Galway's strategic position was already recognised. De Burgo's attack did not prove successful and he withdrew, returning two years later in 1232 when he met with greater success and erected a castle. This castle did not last long as it was destroyed in 1233. Its replacement suffered a similar fate in 1247, when the annals record the burning of both the town and the castle. The 1247 record is the first mention of the town proper, and it probably consisted of little more than a cluster of cabins nestled in the shadow of the castle (Walsh 2004, 273). However, it must have been of sufficient size to warrant it being called a town (Walsh 1996, 52). The town is recorded as being burnt again in 1266-7.

It was not until the later part of the medieval period that evidence of developing prosperity begins to emerge from the historical record, as the Galway merchants capitalised on their trading links with ports on Europe's Atlantic seaboard and established the town as a substantial part of the mercantile life in the west of Ireland. The town cultivated a Spanish wine trade, with the wool trade and the growing importance of the fish trade also contributing to the growth of the town. During this period and into the 17th century Galway was ruled by an oligarchy. This is defined as a group of families known as the 'tribes' who between them managed every important position of church and state. Galway remained mostly loyal to the English crown during the Gaelic resurgence as a matter of survival, yet by 1642 the city allied itself with the Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny. During the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland English forces captured the city after a nine-month siege. At the end of the 17th century the city supported James II (against William of Orange) and was captured by the Williamites after a very short siege following the Battle of Aughrim in 1691.

There are a number of medieval sites located within the receiving environment of the Project. Menlo Castle (AH 16/BH 10) is c.140m northwest of the proposed N6 GCRR where it crosses the River Corrib. The castle was in existence in 1574 when it was in the possession of 'Thomas Colman' (Nolan 1901, 115), although there is some debate as to the exact location of the original structure, it does appear to have been incorporated into the later 17th century house.

In the eastern part of the Project, within the townland of Ballybrit, a tower house stands at the centre of Galway Racecourse along with a deserted medieval settlement (AH 33/ BH 16 and AH 32). In 1574 the tower house was recorded as being in the ownership of 'Redmud Mc Thomus' (Nolan 1901, 115). The medieval settlement was located to the west of the castle and is shown on Grand Jury mapping dating to 1819. Today the site is characterised by a series of hollows and platforms that represent the site of house platforms.

A tower house is also recorded within the small settlement of *An Caisleán Gearr* (AH 25/ BH 13) to the south of the Project. This building was also in existence in 1574, when it was in the possession of 'Rolland Skeret' (Nolan 1901, 115). The building is slightly more substantial than the relatively small tower house recorded at Ballybrit, and survives in reasonable conditions, although most of southeast and southwest walls are no longer extant.

Post Medieval Period (1600-1900 AD)

At the beginning of this period, between July 1651 and April 1652, Galway City was put under siege during the conquest of Ireland, which was carried out by Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarian forces under the command of Charles Coote. Initially Irish forces positioned themselves on the west bank of the River Corrib, numbering 2500 horses and 7000 foot soldiers (Duffy 1984, 115).

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Coote had no desire to engage with the Irish in battle and as a result conserved his military strength and whilst awaiting the outcome of the siege in Limerick at the time, he fortified his positions on the eastern side of Galway, extending from Loch an tSáile over St Bridget's Hill and Bóthar Mór down to the Terryland River (ibid. 116). The Irish forces gradually pulled back to the confines of the city and Coote's troops took ground to the east of the River Corrib, including Menlo Castle. Coote effected the blockade of the city at this time and when Parliamentary ships arrived in Galway Bay, the city was entirely cut off. The siege of the city continued for nine months, before the city surrendered due, for the most part, to a lack of food and outbreaks of plague.

Another widespread feature of the post-medieval rural landscape is the Children's Burial Ground (CBG), of which two are recorded within the receiving environment of the Project (AH 8, AH 29). The Archaeological Inventory for West Galway identifies 61 CBGs ranging from those with no visible surface to those with physical/cartographic and or written references (Gosling 1993, 146). The practice of burying children and infants in a separately designated place appears to have proliferated in Ireland from the 17th century onwards and continued in some cases into the last century (Donnelly & Murphy 2008, 28). In part, this reflects the refusal by church authorities to allow the burial of unbaptised children on consecrated ground, but also perhaps the view that unnamed children had not attained full status within the communities they lived in. Occasionally adults who were viewed as outcasts in one way or another were also buried in such places. Often these places are known as '*cillín*', or '*ceallúnach*'. In many instances burials are marked by low un-inscribed upright slabs and the deaths were not mourned or waked in the traditional ways.

The 18th century saw a dramatic rise in the establishment of large residential houses around the country. This was largely due to the fact that after the turbulence of the preceding centuries, the success of the Protestant cause and effective removal of any political opposition, the country was at peace. The large country house was only a small part of the overall estate of a large landowner and provided a base to manage often large areas of land that could be dispersed nationally. During the latter part of the 18th century, the establishment of a parkland context (or demesnes) for large houses was the fashion. Although the creation of a parkland landscape involved working with nature, rather than against it, considerable constructional effort went into their creation. Earth was moved, field boundaries disappeared, streams were diverted to form lakes and quite often roads were completely diverted to avoid travelling anywhere near the main house or across the estate. Major topographical features like rivers and mountains were desirable features for inclusion into, and as a setting, for the large house and parkland. This was achieved at all scales, from a modest Rectory Glebe to demesne landscapes that covered thousands of acres.

From the mid to late 19th century, the landowning classes began to slowly lose their grip on the thousands of acres of Irish landscape that formed a large part of their estates. The house and demesne were often only a small part of the visible wealth possessed by such families and their demise was brought about by a number of factors including The Famine; the loss of a younger generation to the First World War and the fight for independence by the Republicans. The lower classes resented the amount of land that was owned by the Anglo-Irish gentry and in 1922 the Land Commission was established. The purpose of the Commission was to purchase these estates (often for a greatly reduced price) so they could be re-distributed amongst the lower classes. As a result of this, many families became little more than upper class farmers and as a result many left Ireland to return to England. The large houses and demesnes were often left to decay with the houses often demolished for building materials and the demesnes subsumed back into the landscape.

Whilst there were many large houses and demesnes located within the landscape surrounding the Project, today few examples survive intact. Many of the large houses and their demesnes have been completely lost, such as Ballybrit House and demesne (DL 9).

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In other cases, the demesne has been lost but the principal structure has been incorporated into suburban developments, such as Rahoon House (DL 2).

One of the largest demesne landscapes within the receiving environment of Project is the landscape associated with Menlo Castle (DL 8). Although it has lost some of its landscape characteristics, it remains as green field for the most part. The main house (AH 16/ BH 10), whilst in ruins after a fire in 1910, remains as a landmark structure dominating its stretch of the River Corrib. The original 17th century house possessed two storeys over a basement. The house was then extended and altered during the 18th and 19th centuries. Spelissy (1999) notes that corbels from the bartizans of the original Menlo Castle were re- incorporated into the fabric of the summer house in Dangan Lower located on the opposite bank of the river (AH 15/ BH 9). Whilst the summer house may have been connected with Menlo Castle, it did stand within a demesne landscape associated with Dangan House (CH 67/ DL 7).

Vernacular Architecture is defined in James Steven Curl's Encyclopaedia of Architectural Terms (1993) as 'a term used to describe the local regional traditional building forms and types using indigenous materials, and without grand architectural pretensions', i.e. the homes and workplaces of the ordinary people built by local people using local materials. This is in contrast to formal architecture, such as the grand estate houses of the gentry, churches and public buildings, which were often designed by architects or engineers. The majority of vernacular buildings are domestic dwellings. Examples of other structures that may fall into this category include shops, outbuildings, mills, limekilns, farmsteads, forges, gates and gate piers. A number of thatched houses that would be considered to represent the real vernacular of Ireland are listed as protected structures within the study area. These buildings generally date from the late 18th to early 19th centuries and are rare survivals when consideration is given to the amount of vernacular architecture that has been lost in the past 175 years.

There are a number of examples within the receiving environment of the Encyclopaedia, one of which is located within its footprint (BH 12). BH 1 and 2 are thatched cottages located to the northwest and southeast of the Encyclopaedia. Multiple vernacular sites have also been identified within the receiving environment of the Project. These included intact and ruined cottages and small vernacular farmsteads along with clusters of vernacular buildings.