



**Lands of 42, 43 and 44 Brews Hill,  
Navan,  
Co. Meath**

Abbeylands South townland

Site Area: Approx. 1306 sqm

ITM: 686554, 767687(centre)

**Record of Monuments and Places: None  
(Approx. 45m outside Navan Historic Town ME025-044)**

**Record of Protected Structures: None**

**Architectural Conservation Area: None**

**Desk Based Review and Assessment**

Niall Roycroft

**24<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

## Non-Technical Summary

Meath County Council is proposing to develop the 0.13 hectare land portion titled 'Lands of 42, 43 and 44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath' in Abbeylands South townland 686554, 767687. The lands on the 1837 OS previously formed part of ribbon development along Brews Hill on the southern half of the site and open field on the northern half.

There are three principal buildings (and their associated gardens) on the site:

- 42 Brews Hill is a 6m square 19<sup>th</sup> century building that was originally thatched. It has been remodelled into a single room, but blocked doors, windows and fireplace(s) are visible. Store room and garage extensions and other additions in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. 42 Brews Hill has been subsumed into the property of 43 Brews Hill.
- 43 Brews Hill. This three-bay L-shaped building does not match the building on the 1888-1913 OS. In particular, the current gated access between 42 and 43 Brews Hill is not shown on the older mapping. So the whole of 43 Brews Hill may be entirely rebuilt in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. All windows with concrete sills. Masonry with red brick chimney and windows. No access internally.
- 44 Brews Hill. This building (three bay approx. 10m x 8m) does not seem to have exactly the same outline as a building here on the 1888-1913 OS and flaking plaster shows considerable mass concrete in the upper rear walls and as such it is likely that this building (or significant parts of it) also dates to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. No access internally.

All garden boundaries are either mass concrete that typically dates to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century or modern concrete blockwork to the adjoining housing to the west. Surfaces and paths are all mass concrete.

Several other sheds and lean-tos on recent mapping have been demolished, but one modern shed on the Emmet Terrace Back Lane to the northern end of the property is being used for storage.

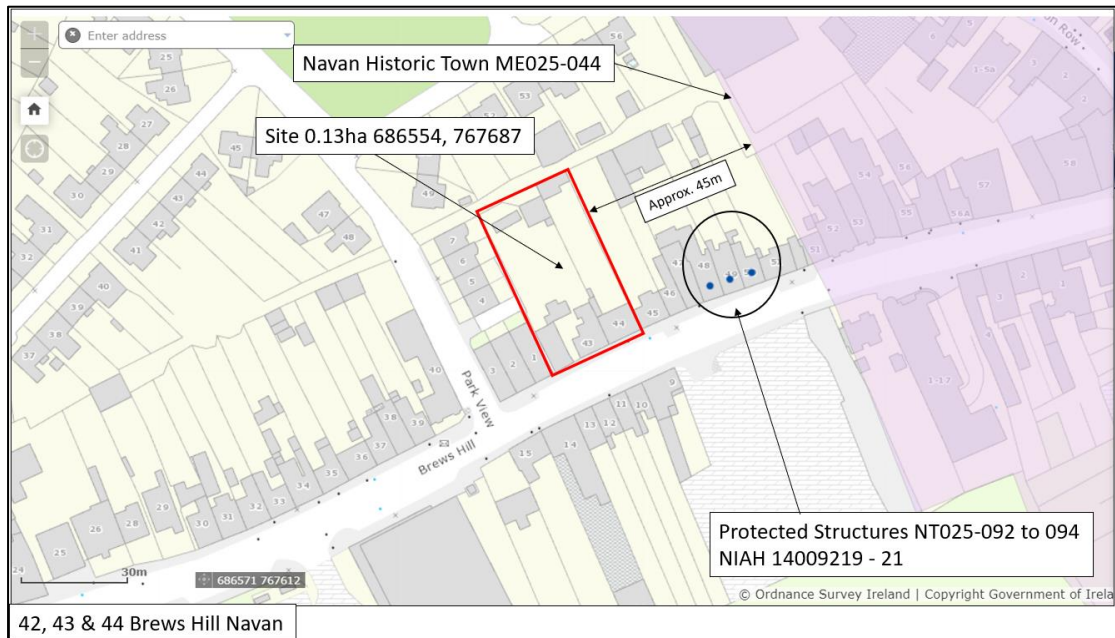
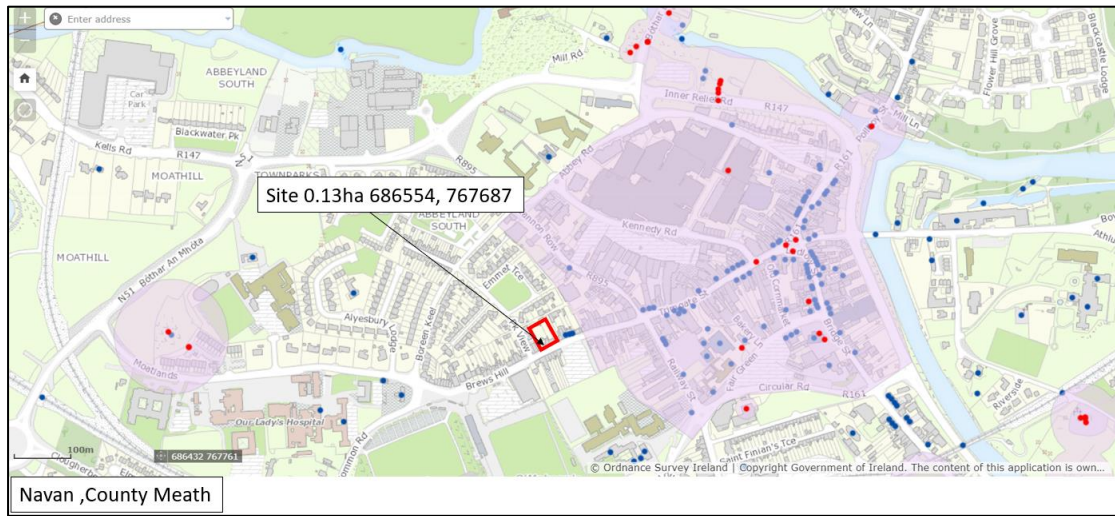
Garden soils are seen throughout. The site has been recently cleared of considerable dumping and a large stand of probable Japanese Knotweed is visible in the garden to the rear of 44 Brews Hill.

The site has a low potential for archaeological remains, but it would be of useful to trial trench it to confirm this. Coordination with the Japanese Knotweed removal will be required.

Further survey of the 42 Brews Hill 19<sup>th</sup> century house will be required to clarify and record some details of the roof trussing and materials. The suspended wooden floor here is currently too unstable to allow safe access.

Although there was no access to 43 and 44 Brews Hill these buildings appear to have little heritage value in terms of further building recording. To be confirmed once access is open.

# 1 Introduction



Meath County Council is proposing to develop the 0.13 hectare land portion titled 'Lands of 42, 43 and 44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath' in Abbeylands South townland 686554, 767687. The lands on the 1837 OS previously formed part of ribbon development along Brews Hill for the southern half of the site and open field to the northern half.

The proposed development consists of demolishing all the existing structures on the site and the construction of a series (approx. six units) of Council Houses.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Topography

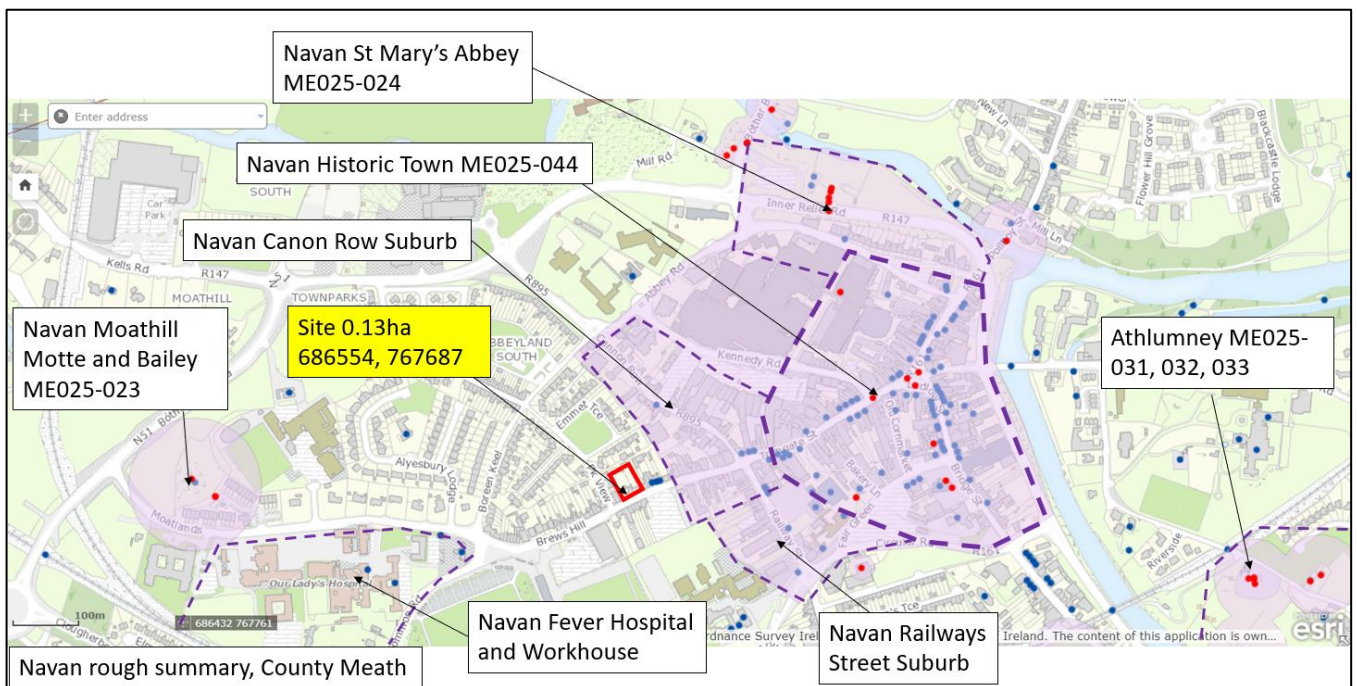
Brews Hill Ex-Lyric Theatre works showed this part of Navan continues to be a sandy hill. The site is gently sloping and there are no unusual elements.

Brews Hill is the old road south-west from Navan to Trim via Robinstown and there was a fork heading west via Ardraccan. Canon Row c.140m to the east was an extra-mural suburb of Navan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the road to Kells.

The 1837 OS shows ribbon development along Brews Hill on both sides including the area of proposed development. At this time the road lead out of Navan to the Fever Hospital (later the Navan Workhouse and now Navan Hospital).

### 2.2 Record of Monuments and Places

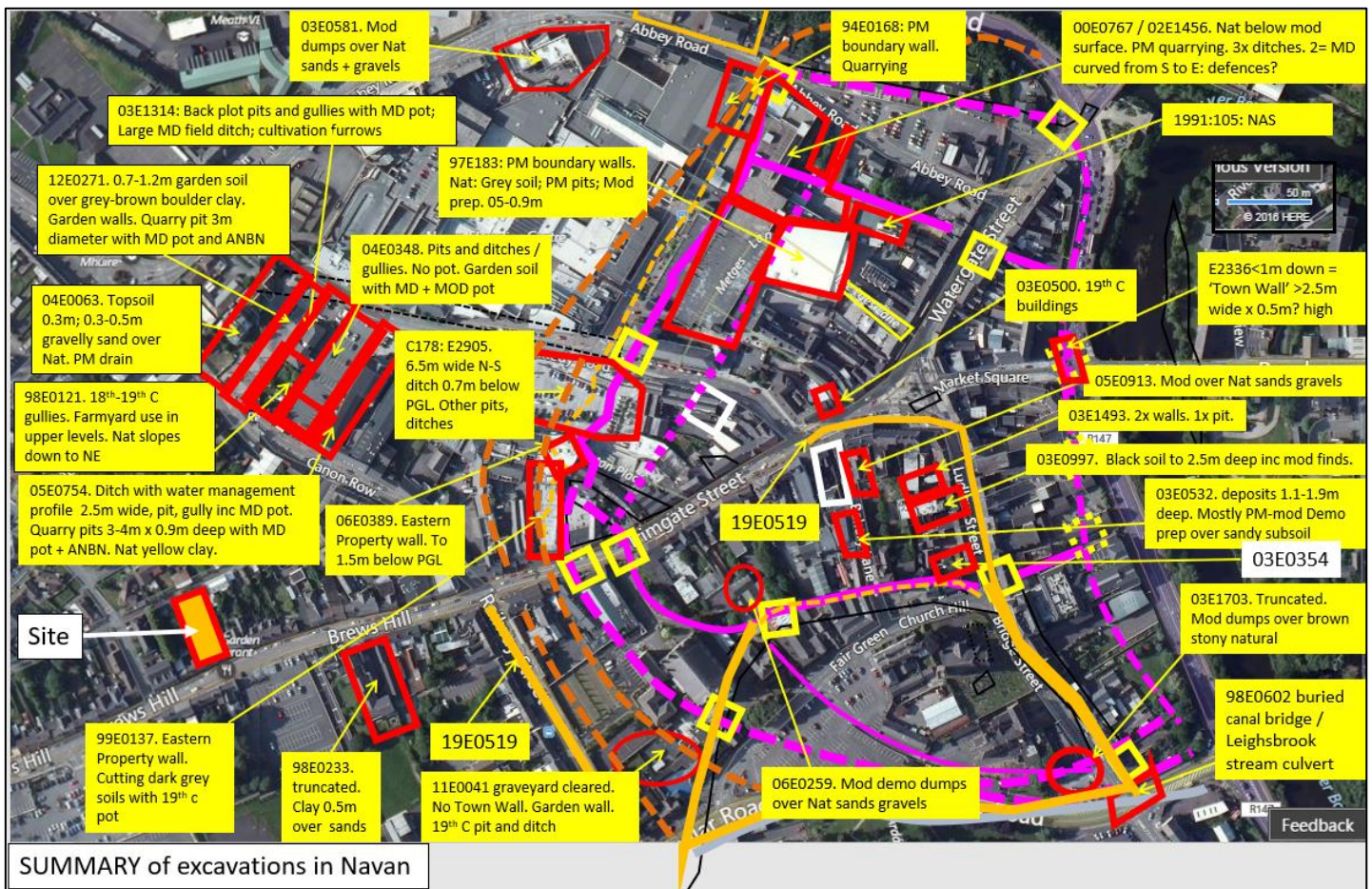
The Sites and Monuments Record has been recently updated by the National Monuments Service.



The SMR for Navan is being updated but the Navan and District Historical Society website contains a great deal of information on the town

<http://www.navanhistory.ie/index.php?page=history>

## 2.3 Details of the Excavations, ie entries



There have been many archaeological works in Navan. The nearest to the proposed site is 98E0233

## 1998:516 - THE LYRIC CINEMA, BREW, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** THE LYRIC CINEMA, BREW

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 98E0233

**Author:** Rosanne Meenan, Roestown, Drumree, Co. Meath.

**Site type:** Urban

**ITM:** E 686980m, N 767834m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.653039, -6.684234

When the Lyric Cinema was built in the 1940s a basement down to a depth of 2.5-3m below the street level was excavated. The evidence of the excavation remained in the form of concrete foundations down to the depth described. The foundations had cut through a clay layer c. 500mm deep; this overlay a 2m-deep natural deposit of grey sand. The top of another clay layer was exposed at this level.

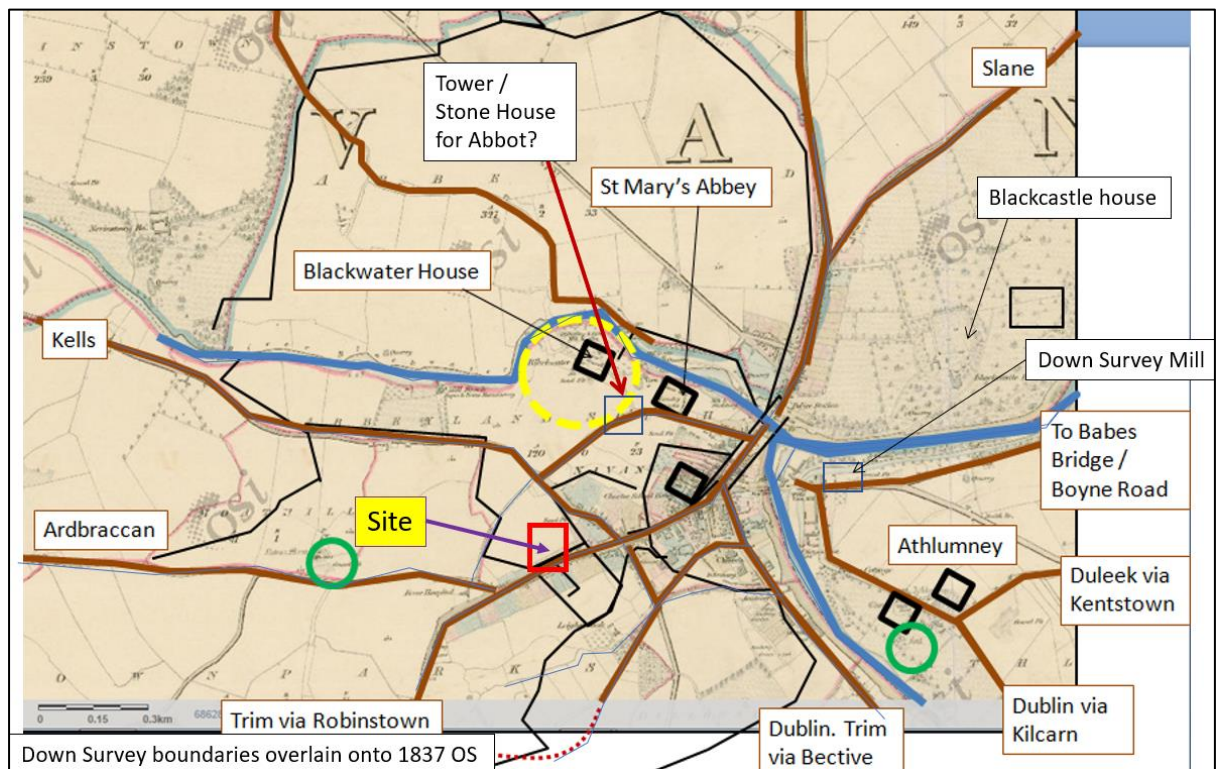
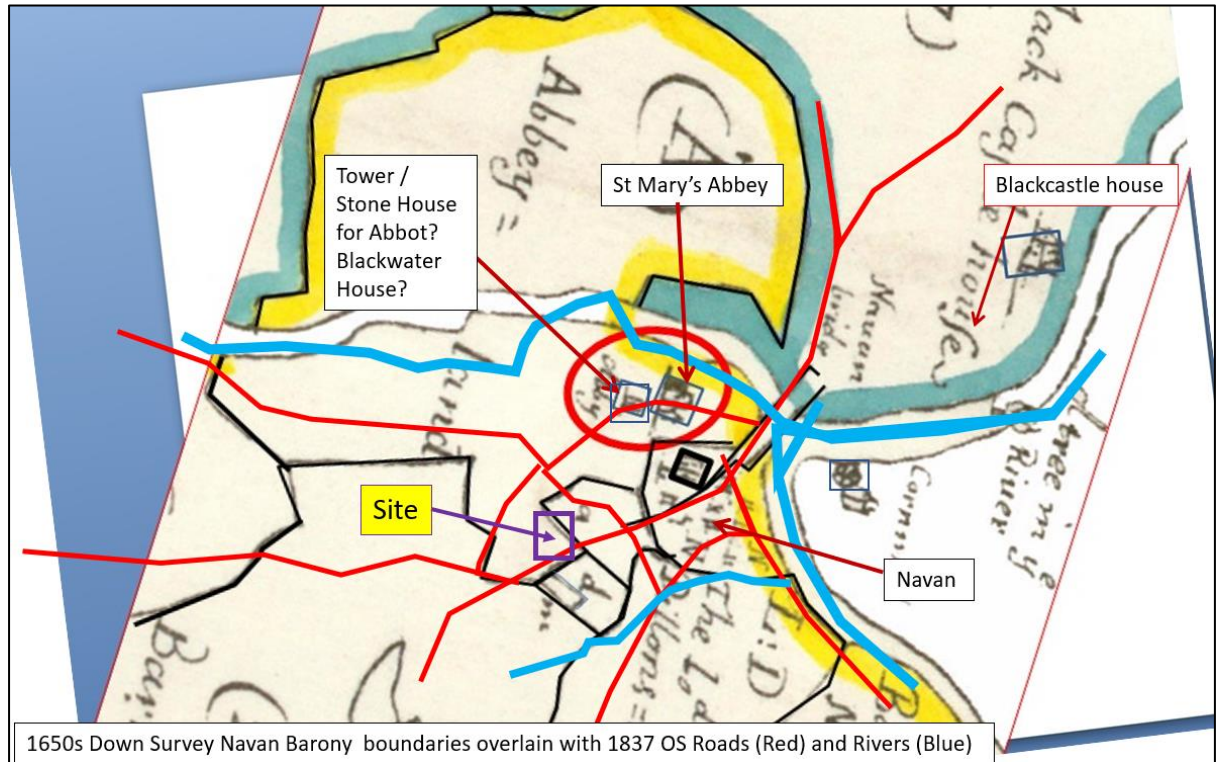
As such a large proportion of the site had already been removed during the construction of the cinema, there was little left to test. A mechanical digger with a 3ft bucket was used

to pull a trench along the access ramp along the east side of the site.

The stratigraphy was shown to be very disturbed, even in this area. An earthenware sewage pipe ran along the east side of the ramp; this lay at 1.5m below the present street level, and there was redeposited clay underlying the pipe and overlying the natural sand layer. A concrete wall associated with the cinema was exposed along the west side of the ramp. It was as deep as the other cinema walls. It is clear therefore that there was major disturbance in this area to a depth of c. 2.5m.

Nothing of archaeological interest was exposed in the test-trench.

## 2.4 Map regression





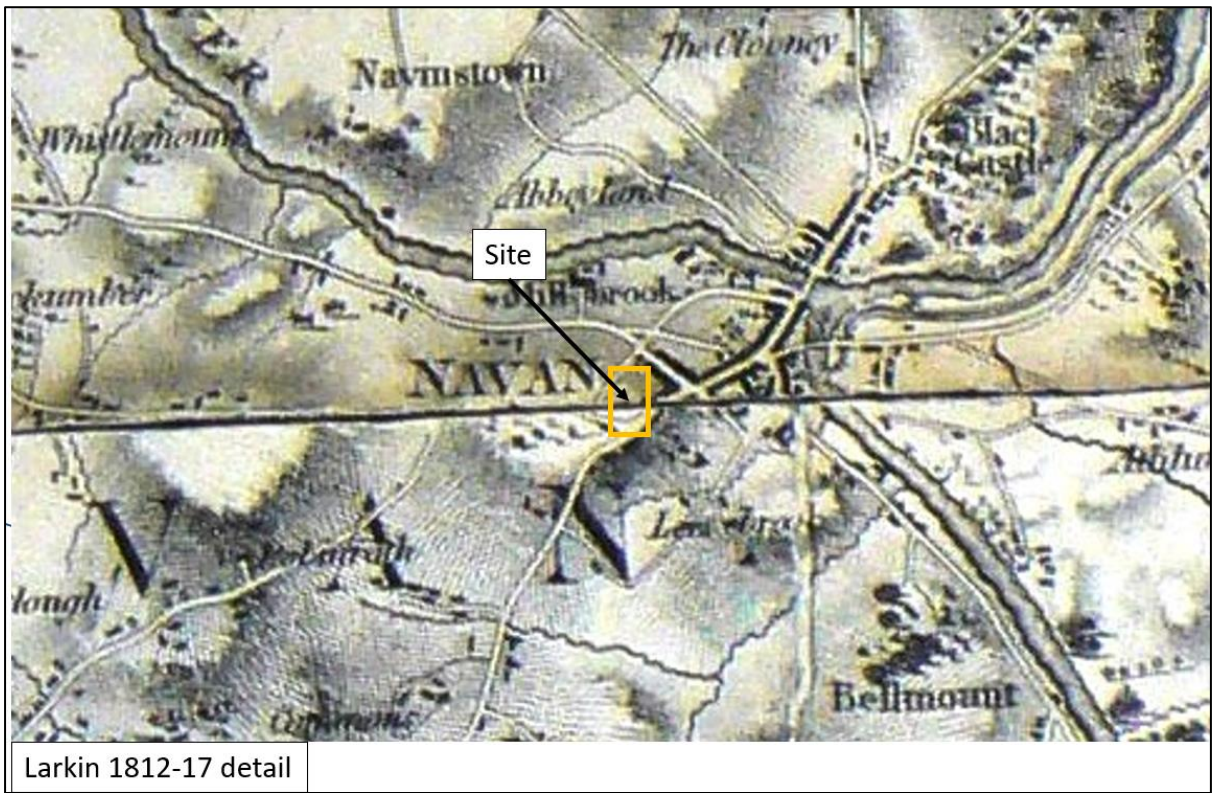
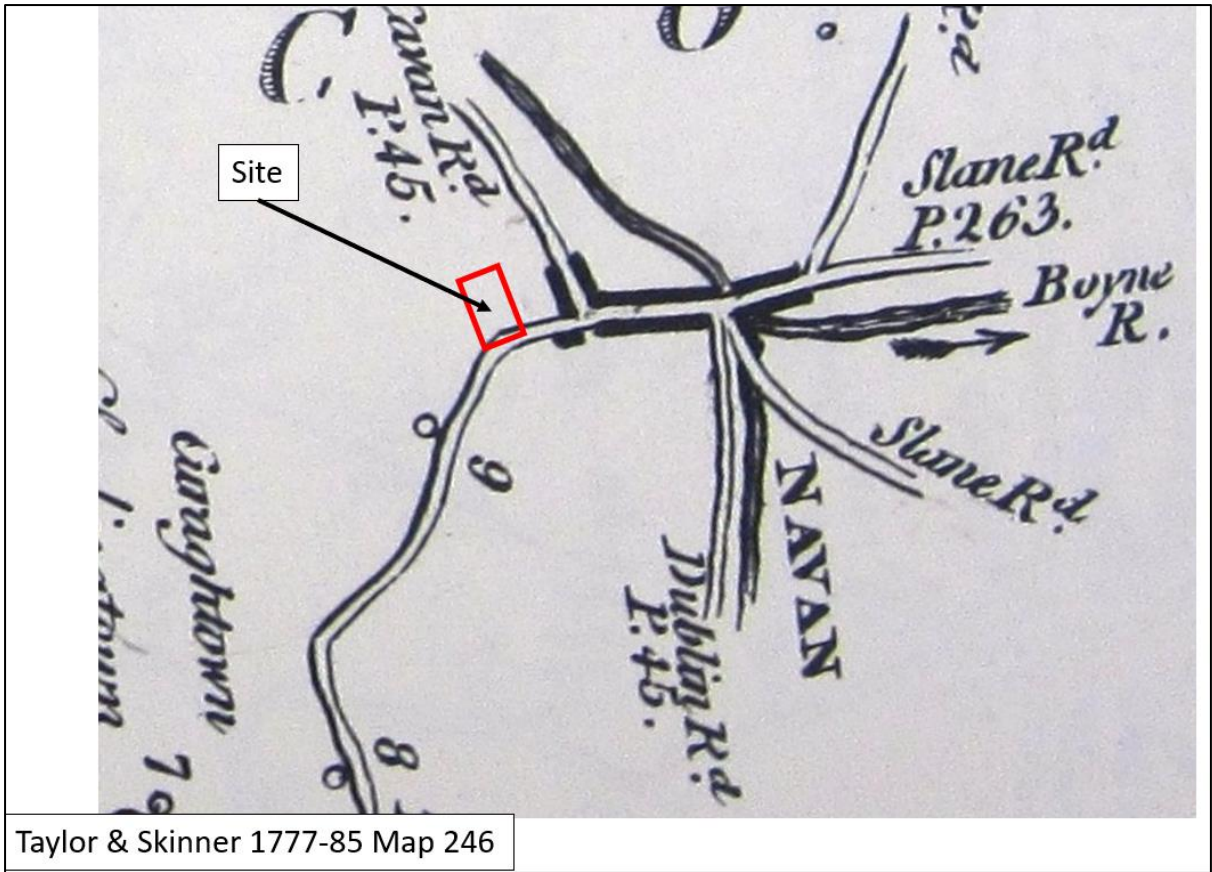
Thomas Williams 1756 Map



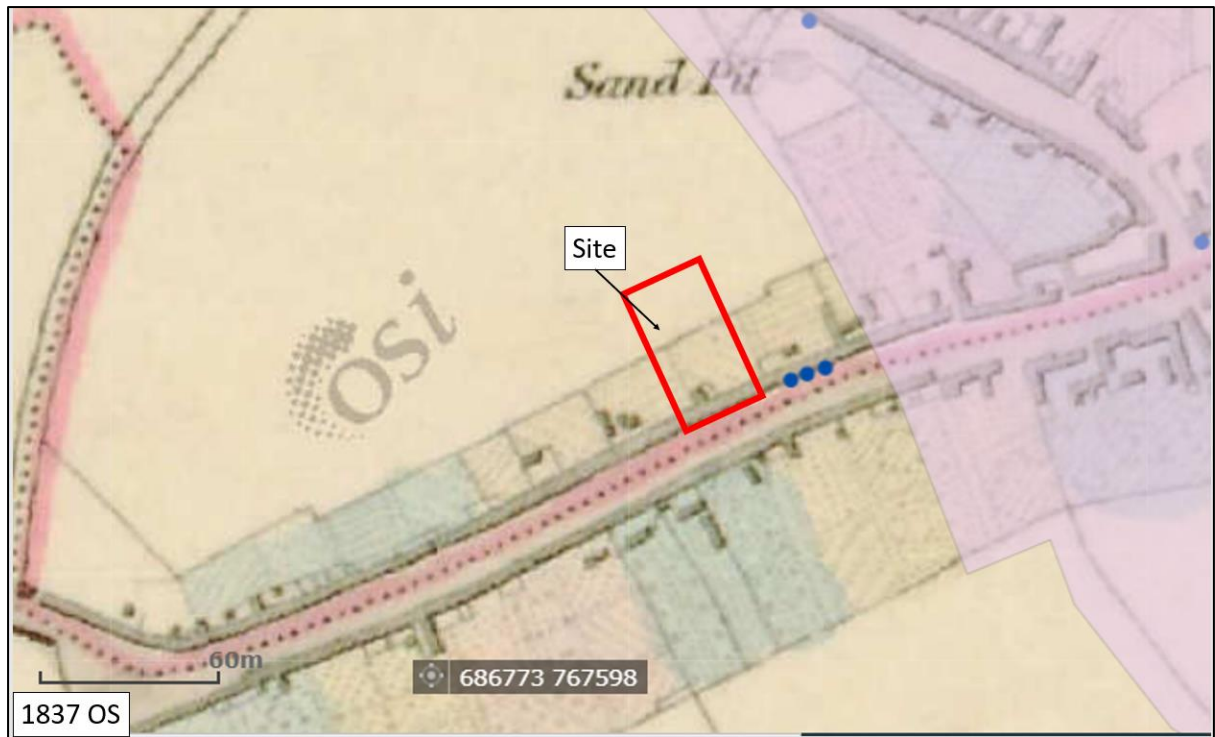
Thomas Williams 1756 Map aerial sketch

The site appears to be in green fields outside Navan town in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

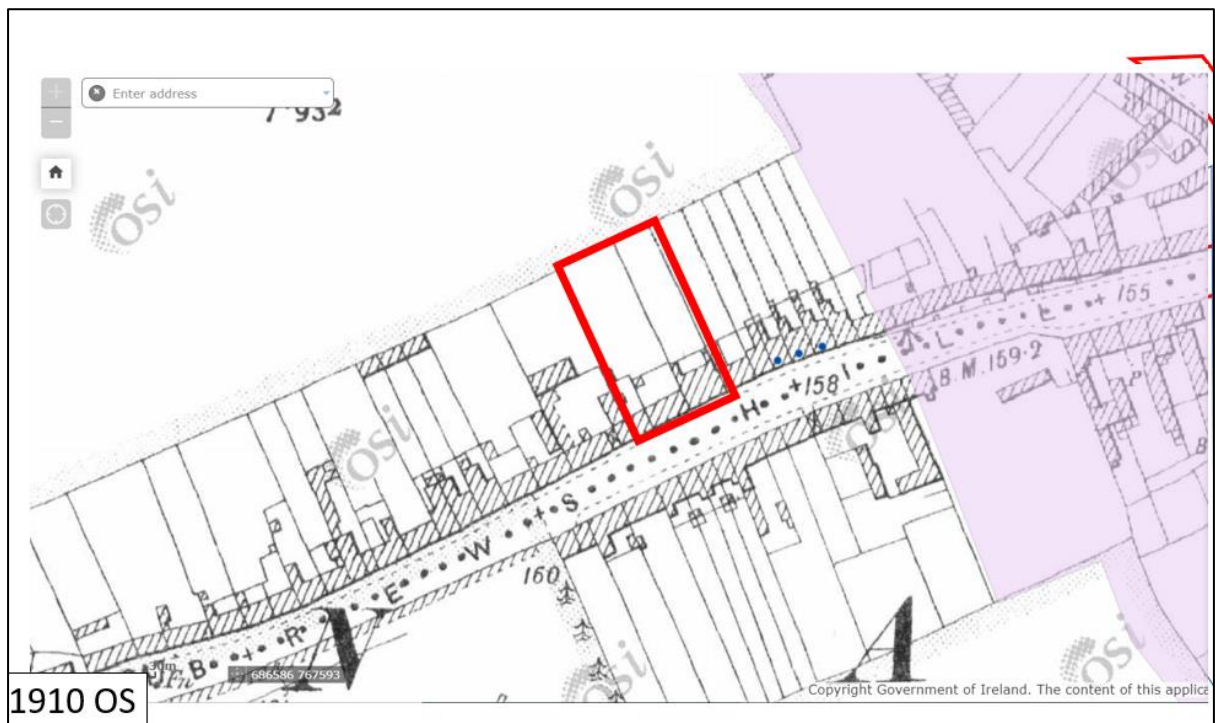




The mapping from 1650s to 1817 shows the site is located outside of Navan Town on the Trim Road. Ribbon development along Brews Hill towards the site is starting around the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The 1837 OS shows Brew's Hill lined with 'cabin suburb' developments on the road with garden plots to the rear. After the Navan Workhouse (now Navan Hospital) was built nearby in the 1840s there are records of alms being distributed to those living on Brew's Hill.



The 1888-1913 (or 1910 OS) shows the housing on Brew's Hill has been rebuilt by this time and the property rear boundaries have been extended further to the north. No 43 Brews Hill (the centre house in the Site outline) shows no gap between Nos

42 and 43. Also the shape of No 43 is not the same as it is today. Therefore, it is proposed that No 43 Brews Hill has been completely rebuilt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

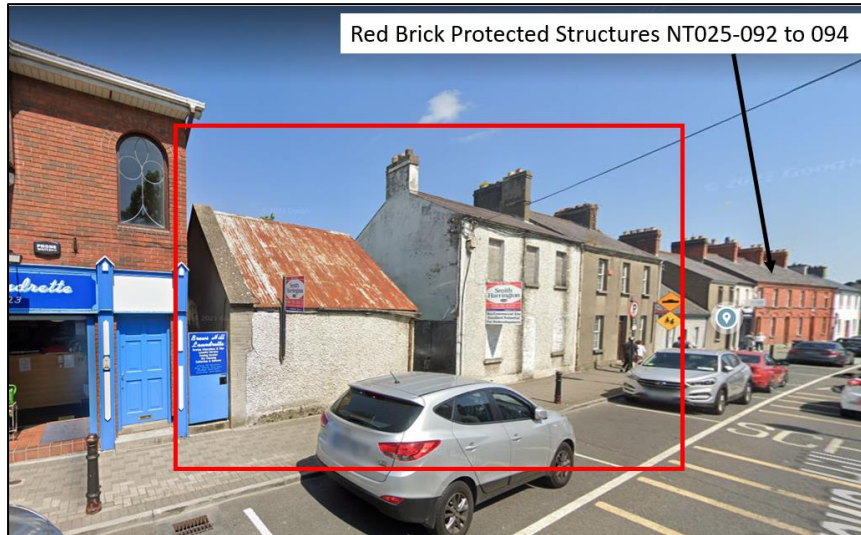


The 1939 Cassini map shows the area fully developed with new streets and housing, as Navan expanded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nos 42 and 43 Brews Hill have been amalgamated, perhaps showing the existing 43 Brews Hill has been built by this time. The use of low grade mass concrete in the garden boundary walls would agree with this general rebuilding at this time.



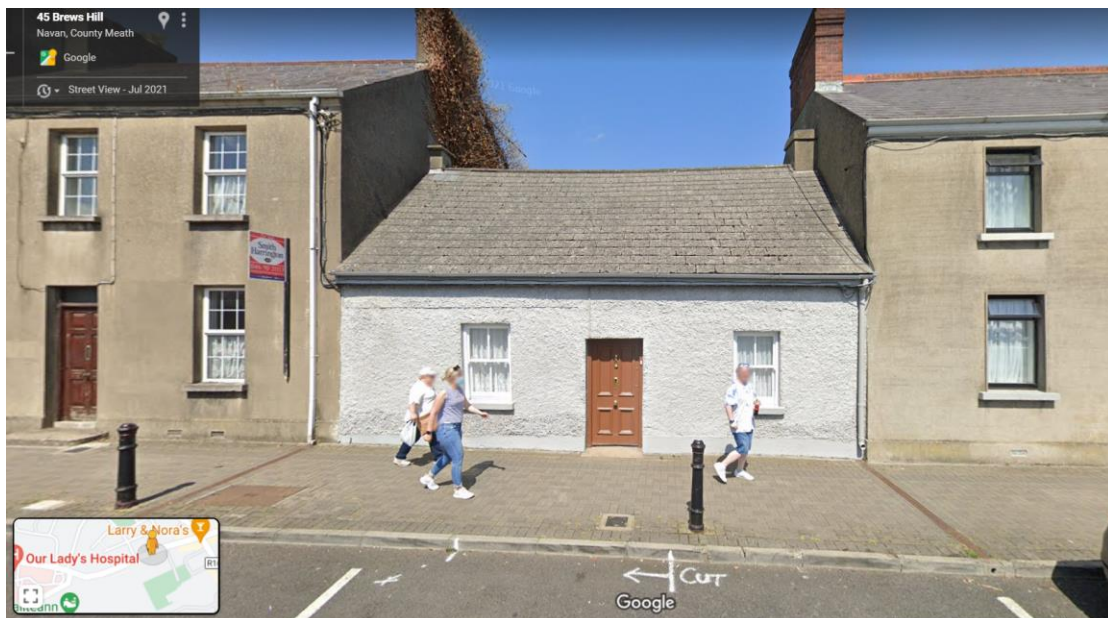
### 3 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

#### 3.1 Record of Protected Structures



The site is located 20m or so from red brick protected structures NT025-092 to 094. The buildings on the proposed development site are early 20<sup>th</sup> century types and have not been inspected for any intrinsically significant features.

Maintenance of the general streetscape layout is recommended.

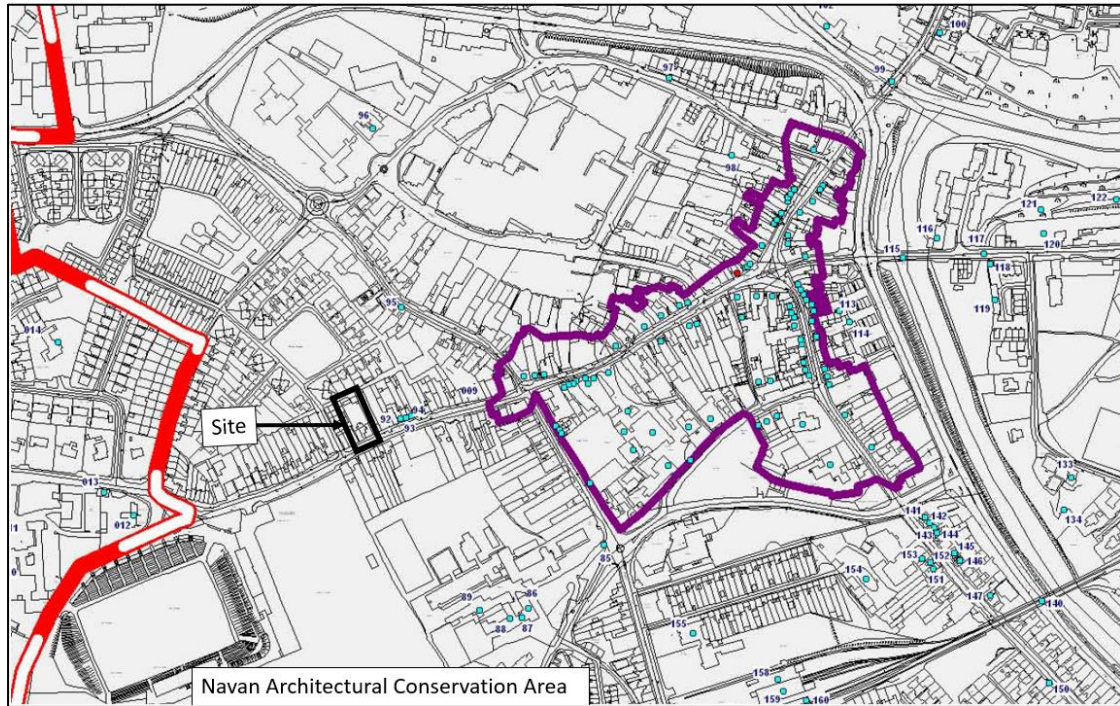


The cabin-suburb type bungalow at 45 Brews Hill appears to be a rare survival of the previously small scale development along this street. This building has numerous similarities to 42 Brews Hill

#### 3.2 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage: Buildings and Gardens

None

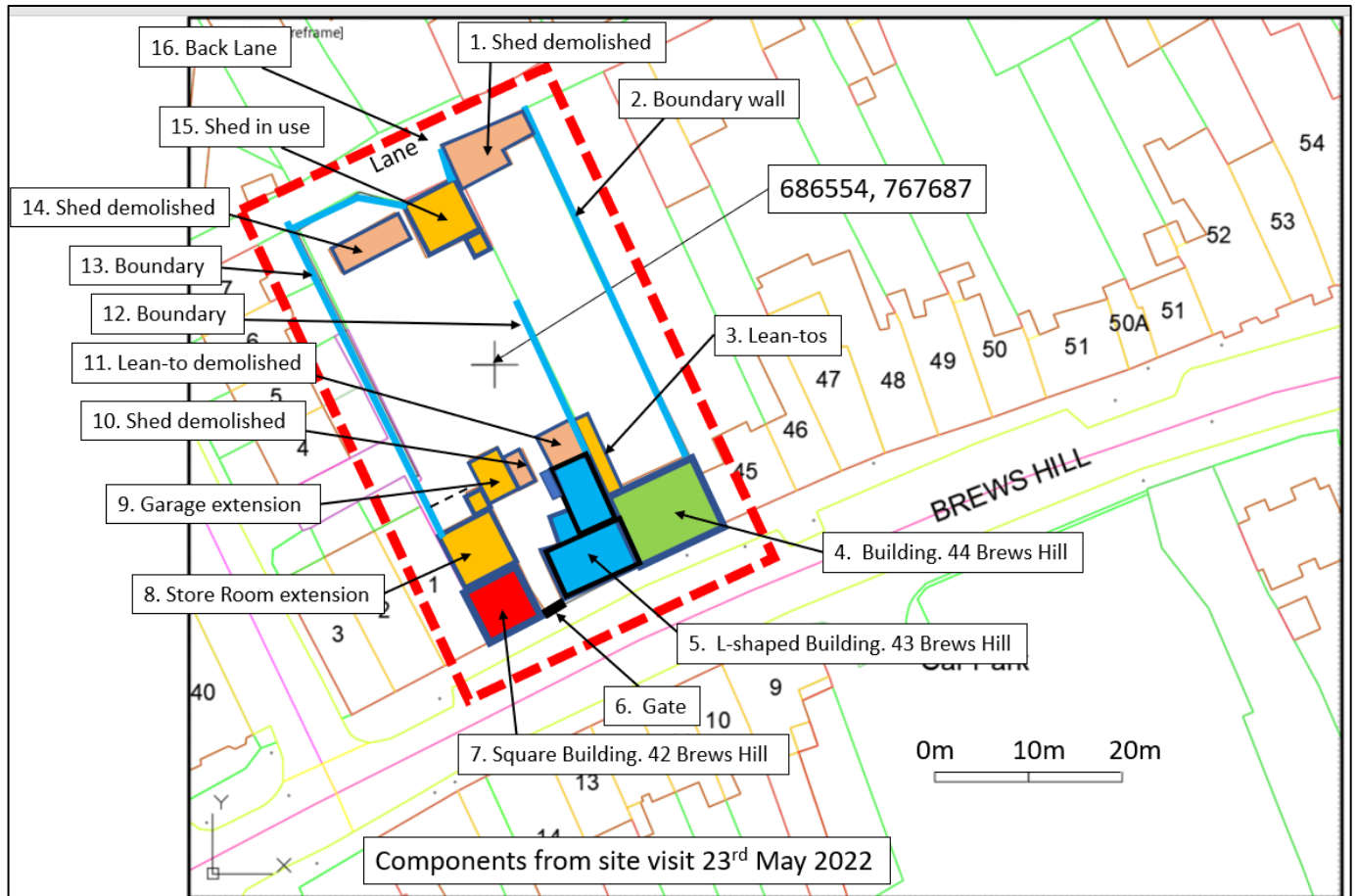
### 3.3 Architectural Conservation Area



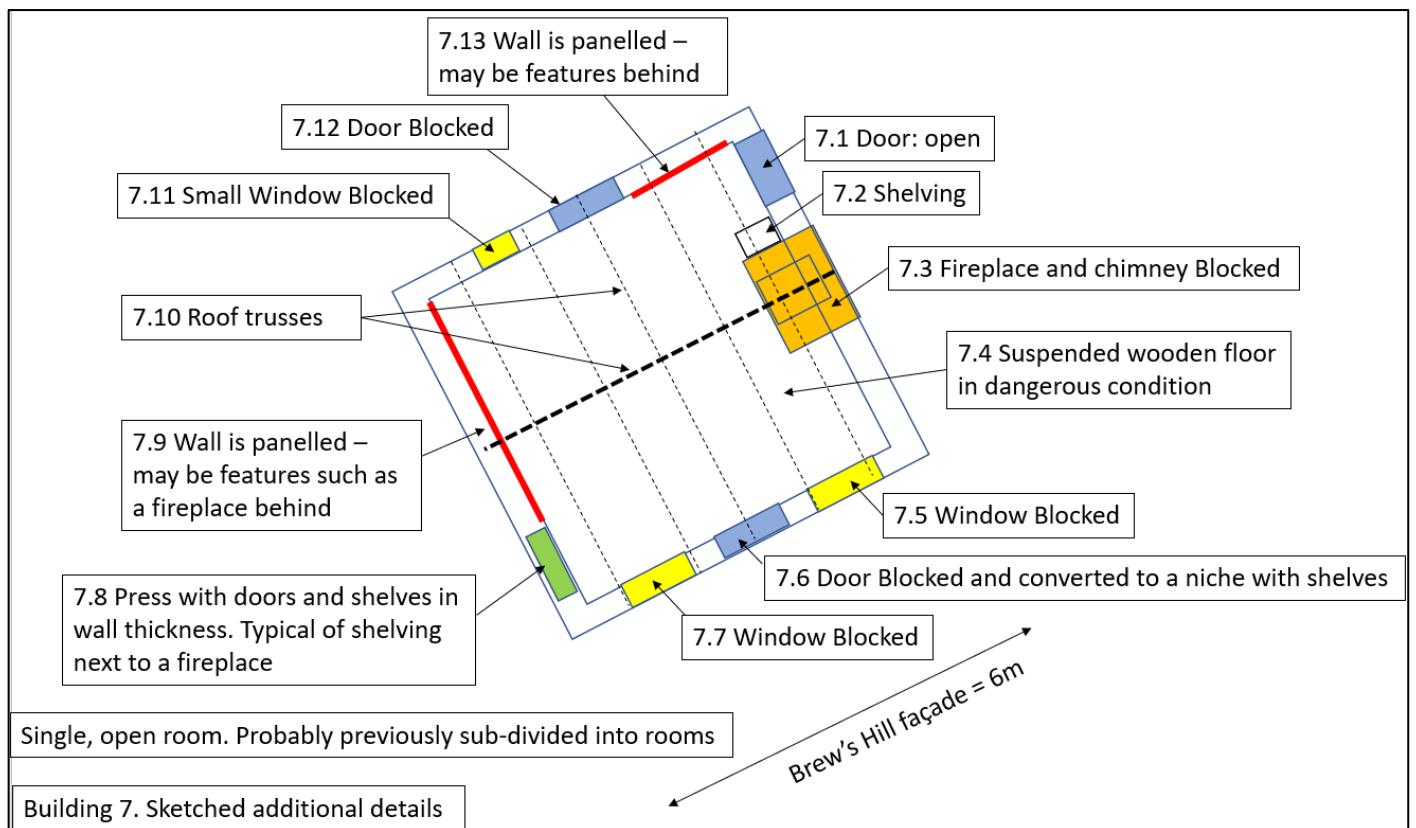
None

## 4 SITE VISIT

The site was visited on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022. The site contains numerous components, so for clarity these have been numbered in the discussion and image captions below.



1. Shed demolished
2. Boundary wall. Mass concrete.
3. Lean-tos. Wood and corrugated sheeting also adjacent oil tank.
4. Building. 44 Brews Hill. Concrete window sills. Rendered masonry. Mass concrete visible in upper floor wall. Modern windows and gutters. Slate roof. No internal access.
5. L-shaped Building. 43 Brews Hill. Rendered masonry. Concrete window sills. Modern windows and gutters. Slate roof. One room visible from exterior which shows red brick chimney and window surrounds and a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century tiled fireplace.
6. Gate. Modern vehicle gate hung on iron posts.
7. Square Building. 42 Brews Hill. Much altered 19<sup>th</sup> century building that was originally a thatched, domestic dwelling. Remains of original roof below corrugated sheeting. Converted into a single room store with a suspended wooden floor in dangerous condition. Further details below:



7.1 Door: open. The door is modern and the only remaining open door. Door access probably created in the 1930s when the site was remodeled. Previous mapping c.1910 shows 43 Brews Hill abutting here.

7.2 Shelving. Small amount of wall shelving inside door. Modern.

7.3 Fireplace and chimney. Blocked. Fireplace removed and sealed over. Any chimney has been removed externally

7.4 Suspended wooden floor in dangerous condition. Joists visible running E-W but flooring is thin and rotten sheeting (rather than planks). Probably not the original floor.

7.5 Window Blocked. Flaring ope with wooden sill

7.6 Door Blocked and converted to a niche with shelves. Original street-door.

7.7 Window Blocked. Flaring ope with wooden sill

7.8 Press with doors and shelves in wall thickness. Typical of shelving next to a fireplace. Louvered doors.

7.9 Wall is paneled – may be features such as a fireplace behind

7.10 Roof trusses. Where the ceiling wooden sheeting has collapsed the joists and battens are visible as well as the bundled straw under-thatch.

7.11 Small Window Blocked

7.12 Door Blocked. Original rear door to yard.

7.13 Wall is paneled – there may be features behind.

8. Store Room extension. Modern concrete blockwork and corrugated sheeting roof.
9. Garage extension. Modern concrete blockwork and corrugated sheeting roof. Small ?toilet attached.
10. Shed demolished.
11. Lean-to demolished.
12. Boundary. Garden wall of mass concrete.
13. Boundary. Garden wall of modern concrete blockwork.
14. Shed demolished.
15. Shed in use. Modern concrete blockwork and corrugated sheeting roof.
16. Back Lane. The 1910 OS shows the rear of the Brews Hill properties has been shifted significantly to the north from where it was on the 1837 OS. This presumably shows a wholesale reorganization of Brews Hill housing in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Typically such developments are all linked to a common stone-built sewer that runs parallel to the properties through the back garden. By 1939 Cassini map the whole area has been further developed and the present Back Lane has been constructed.



IMG\_2914. General from 43 Brews Hill. Facing S



IMG\_2915 General from 43 Brews Hill. Facing E



IMG\_2916 General from 43 Brews Hill. Facing N



IMG\_2917 General from 43 Brews Hill. Facing W





IMG\_2918. Building 7.  
Chimney 7.3 and Window  
7.5



IMG\_2919. Building 7. Door 7.6, Window  
7.7, Press 7.8 and panelling 7.9



IMG\_2920. Roof joists  
7.10 with battens and  
under-thatch



IMG\_2921. Roof 7.10.  
Window 7.11. Door  
7.12. Panelling 7.13



IMG\_2922. Building 7 with pitched roof  
and modern door 7.1. Adjacent Shed 8



IMG\_2923.  
Modern Gate  
6



IMG\_2924. Interior of Shed 8



IMG\_2925. Interior of Shed 8



IMG\_2926. Interior of Shed 8



IMG\_2927. Interior to 43 Brews Hill



IMG\_2928 . Interior to 43 Brews Hill. Use of brick.



IMG\_2929. Interior to 43 Brews Hill



IMG\_2930. 3 Brews Hill with Lean-to 11. Facing S



IMG\_2931. Garden to 43 Brews Hill. Facing N



IMG\_2932. Garage 9



IMG\_2933. Building 7. Shed 8 with concrete yard.



IMG\_2934. Left = Shed 8. Right Boundary wall 13



IMG\_2935. Rear of Garage 9. with Shed 8 and 43 Brews Hill in rear.



IMG\_2936. Boundary 13. Facing N



IMG\_2937. Garden of 42-43 Brews Hill. Facing N



IMG\_2938. Mass concrete Boundary 12 between 43 and 44 Brews Hill. Facing SE



IMG\_2939 Garden of 42-43 Brews Hill. Facing S



IMG\_2940. Shed 15. Facing N



IMG\_2941. Shed 15 and site access gate in 44 Brews Hill (right). Facing NW



IMG\_2942. Rear of 44 Brews Hill. Facing S



IMG\_2943. Concrete boundary wall, concrete apron, Japanese Knotweed and rear of 44 Brews Hill



IMG\_2944. Rear of 44 Brews Hill. Facing N



IMG\_2945. Lean-to 3. Facing W



IMG\_2946. Lean-to 3. Facing W



IMG\_2947. Mass concrete in rear of 44 Brews Hill



IMG\_2948. Mass concrete in rear of 44 Brews Hill



IMG\_2949 Rear of 44 Brews Hill Concrete wall and path. Facing N



IMG\_2950. Back Lane and rear boundary to 43-44 Brews Hill. Facing SE



IMG\_2951 Back Lane and rear boundary to 43-44 Brews Hill. Facing SE



IMG\_2952 Back Lane and rear boundary to 43-44 Brews Hill. Facing E

## **5 Proposed Works**

The proposal is to demolish all buildings on site and develop with approx. six housing units.

## 6 DISCUSSION

### 6.1 General discussion

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The site has a low potential for archaeological remains, but it would be of use to trial trench it to confirm this. Coordination with the Japanese Knotweed removal will be required.

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Although there was no access to 43 and 44 Brews Hill these buildings appear to have little heritage value in terms of further building recording. To be confirmed once access is open.

## **6.2 Site investigation Data**

Not available. A good depth of garden soil is predicted. Japanese Knotweed needs to be confirmed and treated.

## **6.3 Archaeological strategy**

### **6.3.1 Building [7]**

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage brought out a guide to thatching in 2015

<https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/app/uploads/2019/10/Thatch-A-Guide-to-the-Repair-of-Thatched-Roofs-2015.pdf>

This document provides some guidance on recording old thatched roofs. At present, the following recommendations are made concerning Building [7]:

- 1 Assess structure for safety issues. The suspended wooden floor requires strengthening at a minimum.
- 2 Record and remove wood sheeting ceiling.
- 3 Remove wooden wall panelling.
- 4 Record roof trusses and battens – including measured sketch of roof structure.
- 5 Potentially record whole interior using a 3D hand-held lidar scanner.
- 6 Investigate and record straw bundled base course / under-thatch and method of tying them to the battens.
- 7 Analyse straw under-thatch and any tying ropes (usually of twisted straw) for plant type.

This will take around one day of fieldwork by a suitably qualified person, plus off-site analysis and reporting.

### **6.3.2 Buildings [4] and [5]: 43 and 44 Brews Hill**

These buildings need to be entered and reviewed to confirm the impression that they are modern and without significant architectural value.

### **6.3.3 Rear gardens of 42-44 Brews Hill**

It is recommended that three trial trenches 2m wide x 30m long are dug N-S in the back garden areas to confirm the impression that there is a low potential for archaeological remains. Such advance work – which may lead to the rescue excavation of a few pits or other features - would typically ensure that archaeological monitoring of construction will not be required. This will need to be coordinated with the presumed Japanese Knotweed area. This work will take 1-2 days on site and require an excavation Licence from the National Monuments Service.



## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Philip Connell, Executive Engineer, Meath County Council

Claire Hughes, Senior Executive Engineer, Meath County Council

## 8 REFERENCES

### Electronic Sources

[www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie) – Summary of archaeological excavation from 1970 onwards.

[www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) – National Monuments Service website listing all SMR sites with aerial photographs.

[www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie) – Ordnance Survey aerial photographs (1995, 2000 & 2005) and historic OS mapping (first edition 6” and 25”). <http://map.geohive.ie/mapviewer.html>

<http://www.logainm.ie/> - Placename index

<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/> -National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

<http://countydevelopmentplan.meath.ie/adoptedplan/> - Meath County Council 2013, Meath County Council County Development Plan 2013-2019

Environment Protection Agency website

<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php> Down Survey mapping

[http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS\\_ID=LCN14679989\\_001](http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS_ID=LCN14679989_001)

Taylor & Skinner 1777-85 Maps of the Roads of Ireland

Google Maps

Bing Maps