



RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR
FURTHER INFORMATION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT-
SITE B,
DONACARNEY GREAT,
BETTYSTOWN,
COUNTY MEATH

MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNING REFERENCE NUMBER: LB190816

PREPARED BY
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FOR



4th SEPTEMBER 2019



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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This archaeological impact assessment has been prepared on behalf of [REDACTED] as a response to a request for Further Information from Meath County Council to assess and define any impact which the construction of a housing scheme at Donacarney Great townland, Bettystown, County Meath may have on the archaeological resource.

The combined results of two phases of Licensed test trenching at Site B, carried out in 2008 and 2009, identified a large multi-period site with evidence for burial and settlement, along with craft activity including cereal processing. The earliest evidence is prehistoric in date, most probably Bronze Age, characterised by a series of six circular enclosures and a linear ditch on the western part of the site. An area of settlement was identified in the eastern part of the site which possibly dates to the Iron Age or, more likely, the Early Medieval period. The latest datable phase of activity was uncovered on the northern end of the site, where Medieval (late 12th – 14th century) pottery was recovered from a curvilinear ditch located to the south of a Bronze Age Enclosure.

The Conservation Plan prepared by [REDACTED] (dated 14th October 2009) and approved by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (in a letter dated 20th January 2010) confirmed that a core area of known archaeological significance measuring approximately 120m east/west x 66m north/south would be preserved *in situ*, while the areas of Enclosures B (RMP ME021-026) and C to the south of the core area and Enclosure G to the north would be preserved by record by means of archaeological excavation.

It is confirmed that all recommendations and mitigation measures contained in the Conservation Plan prepared by [REDACTED], on 14th October 2009, which was approved by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on 20th January 2010 and which formed the basis for planning permission being granted by Meath County Council, will be implemented in full in relation to the current planning application for the site.

The excavation of Enclosures B (RMP ME021-026), C and G will be carried out well in advance of groundworks commencing on site, and under Licence to National

Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland and to the satisfaction of Meath County Council.

The developer has agreed to provide all funds to cover excavation and post-excavation costs associated with the excavation of Enclosures B, C and G. A written report/s will be compiled that will set out the results of the archaeological excavation, and dissemination of the results will take the form of a report/reports lodged with the National Monuments Service, the National Museum of Ireland and Meath County Council. Should results warrant it, wider dissemination in the form of full publication may be recommended.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This archaeological impact assessment has been prepared on behalf of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to assess and define any impact which the construction of a housing scheme at Donacarne Great townland, Bettystown, County Meath may have on the archaeological resource (Ordnance Survey Sheet 021, figure 1). The impact assessment has been prepared by Dermot Nelis.

This desk-based study will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature of the archaeological resource within the proposed development area using appropriate methods of study.

The study involved detailed interrogation of the archaeological and historical background of the wider development area. This included information from the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) of County Meath (figure 3), Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland, cartographic sources, documentary records and aerial photographs. A 1km study area has been imposed around the area of proposed land take to assess the archaeological potential of the wider development area.

1.2 The Development

The proposed development will consist of the construction of 63 no. dwellings comprising a mix of house-types, including (i) 22 no. two-storey, three-bedroom, semi-detached units; (ii) 2 no. two-storey, three-bedroom, detached units; (iii) 10 no. two-storey, four-bedroom, semi-detached units; (iv) 6 no. two-storey, detached units and (v) 23 no. two-storey, two-bedroom, terraced units. The proposed development will also include the provision of car parking, private open space, public open space, foul and surface water drainage, ESB substations, street lighting, boundary treatments and all ancillary site development works necessary to facilitate the development (figure 2).

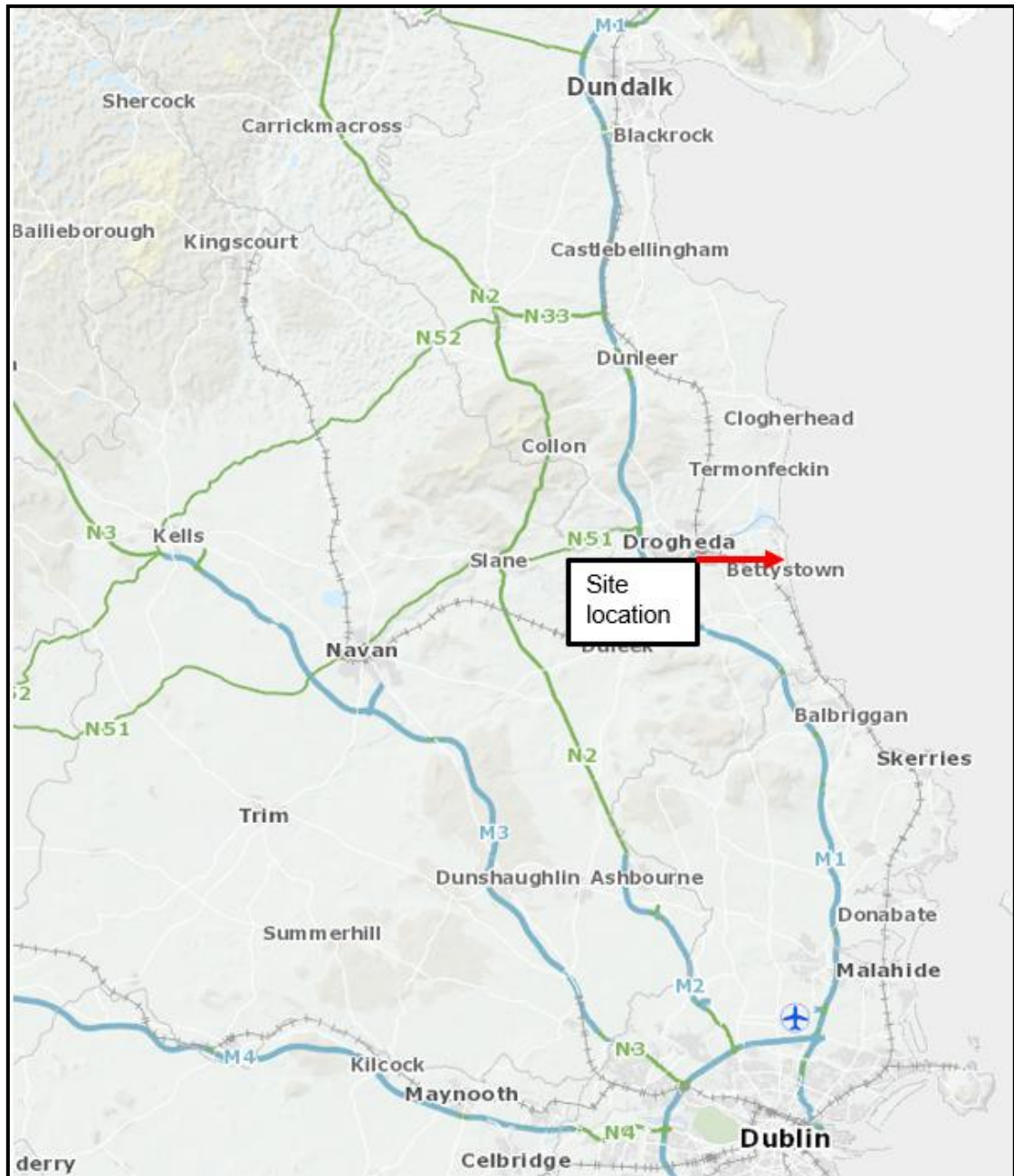


Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Proposed site layout

1.3 Planning Background

A request for Further Information received from Meath County Council (Planning Reference LB/190816, Condition No. 1) asked that the applicant:

“Prepare an Archaeological Impact Assessment, as described below, to address the impacts, and potential impacts, on archaeological remains in the area where present proposed development is to take place. The requested Archaeological Impact Assessment will address the current layout and design of the proposed development and will clearly indicate the proposed mitigation measures in relation to archaeological impacts and the conservation and presentation of the sites that are to be preserved in situ. The report of the assessment will be submitted as Further Information. This will enable the

Planning Authority and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to formulate an informed archaeological recommendation before a planning decision is taken.

Archaeological Impact Assessment should be compiled as follows:

- (a) The applicant is required to engage the services of a suitably qualified archaeologist to carry out an archaeological assessment of the development site. No sub-surface work should be undertaken in the absence of the archaeologist without his/her express consent.*
- (b) The archaeologist should carry out any relevant documentary research and inspect the site. If required further test trenches may be excavated at locations chosen by the archaeologist (licensed under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004), having consulted the site drawings.*
- (c) Having completed the work, the archaeologist should submit a written report to the Planning Authority and to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in advance of the planning decision. Where archaeological material/features are shown to be present, preservation in situ, preservation by record (excavation) or monitoring may be required.” (www.meath.ie).*

1.4 Archaeological Background

A planning application (Meath County Council Planning Reference SA/901809) was previously submitted by [REDACTED] to Meath County Council for a residential development at the site under discussion. Planning permission was granted by Meath County Council, in agreement with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), based on recommendations made in a site-specific Conservation Plan prepared by the developer’s previous archaeological consultant ([REDACTED]).

The Conservation Plan prepared by [REDACTED] (dated 14th October 2009) and approved by DoEHLG (in a letter dated 20th January 2010) confirmed that a core area of known archaeological significance measuring approximately 120m east/west x 66m north/south would be preserved *in situ* (figure 8), while the area of Enclosure B (RMP ME021-026) and Enclosure C to the south of the core area and Enclosure G to the north (figure 9) would be preserved by record by means of

archaeological excavation. The archaeological excavation would be carried out well in advance of groundworks commencing on site, and under Licence to National Monuments Service (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) and the National Museum of Ireland and to the satisfaction of Meath County Council.

A detailed summary of the previous archaeological fieldwork carried out on site is provided in **Section 4**.

1.5 Project Team

Dermot Nelis Licensed Archaeologist. BA ArchOxon ACIfA MIAI

Dermot Nelis graduated from Queen's University Belfast, and after gaining extensive fieldwork experience undertook postgraduate studies at the University of Oxford in archaeological consultancy and project management.

Dermot acted as Senior Archaeologist on several road schemes and Directed large-scale multi-period excavations associated with those developments. He has completed over 170 Licensed fieldwork programmes and over 250 archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage desk-based reports and Environmental Impact Assessments.

2 BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

2.1 Methodology

Research consisted of a paper and digital survey of archaeological, historical and cartographic sources. A study area of 1km has been imposed around the area of land take.

2.2 Paper and Digital Survey

The following sources were examined, and a list of sites and areas of archaeological potential was compiled:

- Record of Monuments and Places of County Meath;
- Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland;
- Previous archaeological fieldwork;
- Cartographic and documentary sources relating to the study area;
- Aerial photography.

Record of Monuments and Places is a list of archaeological sites known to the National Monuments Service. Back-up files of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) provide details of documentary sources and field inspections where these have taken place.

Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland is the archive of all known finds recorded by the National Museum. This archive relates primarily to artefacts, but also includes references to monuments and unique records of previous excavations. The find spots of artefacts are important sources of information in the discovery of sites of archaeological significance.

Details of **Previous Archaeological Fieldwork** is recorded in the *Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (www.excavations.ie).

Cartographic sources are important in tracing land-use development within a development area, as well as providing important topographical information on sites and areas of archaeological potential. Cartographic analysis of relevant maps has been made to identify any topographical anomalies that may no longer remain within the landscape. **Documentary sources** were consulted to gain background information on the historical and archaeological landscape surrounding the development area.

Aerial photographic coverage is an important source of information regarding the precise location of sites and their extent. It also provides initial information on the terrain and its potential to contain previously unidentified archaeological remains.



3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 General Archaeological Background

There are nine RMP sites recorded within the 1km study area (figure 3).

During the Mesolithic period (c. 7,000–4,000 BC) people existed as hunters/gatherers, living on the coastline, along rivers and lakesides. They used flint and other stones to manufacture sharp tools, and locating scatters of discarded stone tools and debris from their manufacture can sometimes identify settlements. Their impact on the landscape was minimal, and the limited amount of evidence includes the remains of timber houses and primitive stone tools. In Meath, the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater were the most important means of travel and Mesolithic period settlements were concentrated on their banks (Meath County Council 2013, Volume 2, Appendix 7, 11).

In 1998 excavation at Moynagh Lough, Brittas, County Meath focused on an area of Late Mesolithic activity sealed beneath an Early Medieval crannog. Artefactual evidence included three polished stone axeheads, six spearheads of slaty sandstone, five elongated pebbles, nine hammerstones and two polishing stones. Approximately 2,000 pieces of chert, flint and other stone were recovered from the site. A single shallow pit exposed in isolation during archaeological testing in 2001, at Kilsharvan, County Meath, had upon analysis a radiocarbon determination c. 5,060–4,800 BC, dating it to the later Mesolithic (www.excavations.ie). Late Mesolithic conical, woven basketry fish-traps were discovered during archaeological excavations at Clowanstown, County Meath (Clancy 2009, 40-41). A Mesolithic fishing platform and Neolithic burnt mounds were revealed near the centre of a former Lough. Five mounds were located at the western edge of a raised bog and a mooring was identified by the position of six substantial stakes around the landward side of the former lough. This possibly provided a structure to fish from as well as a potential mooring for a dugout. Radiocarbon determinations from wood samples returned a date range of between 5,000–4,000 calibrated BC (www.excavations.ie).

The population became more settled during the Neolithic period (c. 4,000-2,400 BC) with a subsistence economy based on crop growing and stock-raising. This period also saw changes in burial practices, and a tradition of burying the dead collectively and carrying out of cremations emerged. Neolithic monuments from County Meath include portal, passage and wedge tombs. Some of the most recognisable Neolithic monuments in Ireland are located at Brú na Bóinne, County Meath. The megalithic

tombs, which date from c. 3,000 BC, belong to the Neolithic period and are classified as passage tombs. They occupy the high ground on ridges in an area densely covered by archaeological remains. This archaeological zone is to a large extent bounded by the River Boyne to the south and to the north by its tributary, the River Mattock.

The Bronze Age (c. 2,400-600 BC) is 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. Though this activity has markedly different characteristics to that of the preceding Neolithic period, including new structural forms and new artefacts, it also reflects a degree of continuity. In addition to changes in material culture, there were changes in burial rite from communal megalithic tombs to single burial in cists. Bronze Age monuments from County Meath include standing stones, stone pairs, cairns, barrows and *fulachta fiadh*, which are one of the most numerous monument types in Ireland with over 4,500 examples recorded (Waddell 2005, 174). The number and importance of prehistoric structures in County Meath is considered to exceed that of any other part of Ireland; high quality remains are most in evidence in the Boyne Valley, Hill of Tara and Loughcrew Hills.

There are two ring-barrows recorded within the development area (www.archaeology.ie). RMP ME021-025 is recorded as a small circular grass-covered feature (external diameter c. 12m) defined by a slight earthen bank which is visible on aerial photography. RMP ME021-026 is located approximately 60m south east of RMP ME021-025, and is also noted as being a small circular grass-covered feature (external diameter c. 15m) defined by a slight earthen bank and again recorded on aerial photography. Further information is provided on these two sites in **Section 4**.

Ring-barrows are noted as being circular or oval raised areas (generally up to 1m above the external ground level or level with it) enclosed by fosse(s) and outer bank(s), with or without an entrance. They are part of the Bronze/Iron Age burial tradition (c. 2400 BC – 400 AD).



Figure 3: RMP sites within the 1km study area

During the Iron Age (c. 600 BC-400 AD) new influences came into Ireland which gradually introduced the knowledge and use of iron, although for several centuries bronze continued to be widely used. The Iron Age in Ireland however is problematic for archaeologists as few artefacts dating exclusively to this period have been found, and without extensive excavation it cannot be determined whether several monument types, such as ring-barrows or standing stones, date to the Bronze Age or Iron Age. Most knowledge for this period stems from Irish folklore, the epic poems and legends of warrior kings and queens that are traditionally believed to be Celtic in origin.

A habitation site (RMP ME021-030) is recorded 660m south west of the proposed development area in Donacarney Great townland (www.archaeology.ie).

Archaeological test trenching (Licence Number 06E0413) of an area measuring approximately 15 acres in size identified a number of features consisting mostly of linear trenches or spreads of silty clays with bone inclusions. A group of features in an area measuring approximately 60m x 45m revealed eight refuse pits and two, or possibly three, corn-drying kilns. The sub-rectangular refuse pits contained large quantities of animal bone, some of which had been burnt in roasting. The faunal assemblage was dominated by cattle, followed by sheep and pig, and the bones represented large animals which were probably slaughtered for immediate consumption. Dog and cat were also present, perhaps as scavengers. Two sub-rectangular pits, which from their fills and evidence of oxidisation of the subsoil are likely to have been for cereal drying, were also recorded in this area. Barley, wheat and oats, some of it charred, was recovered, and they are likely to be contemporary with the other pits. Five curvilinear features were also noted, and these may have been related to the kilns. A sample of animal bone produced a calibrated C14 determination of 320-520 AD for this open habitation site which may have served a larger settlement in the vicinity.

A cist (RMP ME021-010001) and burial (RMP ME021-010002) are recorded approximately 920m south east of the proposed development area in Betaghstown townland (www.archaeology.ie). A crouched inhumation with an inverted food vessel was discovered in a cist (RMP ME021-010001) during an archaeological excavation in 1980. Eighteen burials (RMP ME021-010002), the majority placed in slab-lined graves, were also recovered from the same excavation. Some of the burials were crouched in pits, and all appear to be Iron Age in date.

A burial (RMP ME021-014) is recorded approximately 150m north west of RMP ME021-010001 and RMP ME021-010002 in Betaghstown townland, but there is no further information provided on this site on National Monuments Service's online database. A burial (RMP ME021-019) is also recorded approximately 720m south west of the proposed development area in Betaghstown townland, but again there is no further information provided on this site on National Monuments Service's online database.

The Early Medieval period (c. 400-1169 AD) is depicted in the surviving sources as entirely rural, characterised by the basic territorial unit known as *túath*. Walsh (2000, 30) estimates that there were at least 100, and perhaps as many as 150, kings in Ireland at any given time during this period, each ruling over his own *túath*. Many sites

in County Meath are said to have specific associations with St. Patrick. In particular the Hill of Slane was the site of the lighting of the first Paschal Fire by St Patrick in 432 AD, in defiance of King Leoghaire and pagan tradition. A number of St. Patrick's followers established churches and monasteries throughout County Meath, such as that founded by St. Erc at Slane and that at Trim by St. Loman. St. Patrick placed St. Cianan over the first Church in Duleek in the 5th century, and prior to his death in 489 AD he was credited with building the first stone church in Ireland. The first monastery said to have been founded by St. Patrick was that at Donaghmore (Meath County Council 2013, Volume 2, Appendix 7, 13).

The new religious culture brought changes in settlement and agricultural patterns. The ringforts and associated field patterns of the Early Medieval period indicate a life largely based on grazing. During this turbulent period roughly circular defensive enclosures known as ringforts were constructed to protect farmsteads. They were enclosed by an earthen bank and exterior ditch, and ranged from approximately 25m to 50m in diameter. The smaller sized and single banked type (univallate) was more than likely home to the lower ranks of society, while larger examples with more than one bank (bivallate/trivallate) housed the more powerful kings and lords. They are regarded as defended family homesteads and the extant dating evidence suggests they were primarily built between the 7th and 9th centuries AD (Stout 1997, 22-31). The ringfort is considered to be the most common indicator of settlement during the Early Medieval period. The most recent detailed study (*ibid.*, 53) has suggested that there is an approximate total of 45,119 potential ringforts or enclosure sites throughout Ireland.

Enclosure sites belong to a classification of monument whose precise nature is unclear. Often they may represent ringforts, which have either been damaged to a point where they cannot be positively recognised, or are smaller or more irregular in plan than the accepted range for a ringfort. An Early Medieval date is in general likely for this site type, though not a certainty.

Two enclosures (RMP ME021-021001 and RMP ME021-021002), along with a field system (RMP ME021-021003), are recorded approximately 1.2km north west of the proposed development area in Donacarney Great townland. There is no further information provided on these sites on National Monuments Service's on-line database.

The Early Medieval period is also characterised by the foundation of a large number of ecclesiastical sites throughout Ireland in the centuries following the introduction of Christianity in the 5th century. The early churches tended to be constructed of wood or post-and-wattle. Between the late 8th and 10th centuries mortared stone churches gradually replaced the earlier structures. Many of the sites, some of which were monastic foundations, were probably originally defined by an enclosing wall or bank similar to that found at coeval secular sites. This enclosing feature was probably built more to define the sacred character of the area of the church than as a defence against aggression. An inner and outer enclosure can be seen at some of the more important sites; the inner enclosure surrounding the sacred area of church and burial ground and the outer enclosure providing a boundary around living quarters and craft areas. Where remains of an enclosure survive it is often the only evidence that the site was an early Christian foundation.

A burial ground (RMP ME021-029) is recorded approximately 470m west of the proposed development area in Donacarney Great townland (www.archaeology.ie). It was situated on a slight rise in a fairly level landscape. Archaeological test trenching (Licence number 07E0622) covering approximately 23 acres identified an area of intensive activity, where a number of linear features up to 12m long were recorded. These features ran north east/south west or north west/south east, while some quite deep (1m) spreads of grey silty clays with shell, animal bone and charcoal inclusions and drains were also noted. The burial of an east/west oriented adult male, aged c. 25-35 in a supine position was recorded, along with the disarticulated bone of a 17-25 year old female at the eastern edge of the area. The burial produced a calibrated C14 date of 575-670 AD. More possible grave-cuts were noted, and it is suggested that this site may represent an Early Medieval burial ground (www.archaeology.ie). Three skulls were also recovered approximately 60m to the west south west of the male burial.

It is believed that the illustrious religious house at Kells was founded in 804 AD by monks from St. Columcille's foundation at Iona, who were seeking a safe location during the Viking invasions. Reliquaries of the Saint were relocated there in 877 AD and even though the monastery suffered successive sackings, the Book of Kells, now in Trinity College Dublin, was preserved. Apart from the churches and round towers, other important visible remains from this period are the numerous high crosses such as those at Kells, Duleek and Castlekeeran (Meath County Council 2013, Volume 2, Appendix 7, 13).

The commencement of Viking raids at the end of the 8th century and their subsequent settlement during the following two centuries marked the first ever foreign invasion of Ireland. Viking settlement evidence is scarce and has been found in Cork, Dublin and Waterford, however excavations there have revealed extensive remains of the Viking towns. Outside these towns understanding of Viking settlement is largely drawn from documentary and place-name evidence. In addition to Cork, Dublin and Waterford, documentary sources provide evidence for the Viking foundation of the coastal towns of Limerick and Wexford (Edwards 2006, 179). Other indirect evidence which suggest Viking settlement, or at least a Norse influence in Ireland, is represented by upwards of 120 Viking-age coin hoards, possible votive offerings of Viking style objects and the assimilation of Scandinavian art styles into Irish design. While the initial Viking raids would have been traumatic, the wealth and urban expansion brought into the country as a result of Viking trading would have eventually benefited the Gaelic Irish and cultural assimilation in some parts would have been significant.

In the 9th century County Meath suffered from invasions by the Danes. Turgesius sailed up the River Boyne in 838 and after a period of devastation, often directed at the church, set up his regime and rule near Tara. The Danes however continued their attacks until 980 when they were defeated at Tara. During their period of power the Viking invaders promoted a more commercial and urbanised lifestyle, and the founding of towns and villages grew apace after the Norman invasion (Meath County Development Plan 2013, Volume 2, Appendix 7, 13).

The arrival of Anglo-Normans in Ireland towards the end of the 12th century caused great changes during the following century. Large numbers of colonists arrived from England and Wales and established towns and villages. They brought with them new methods of agriculture which facilitated an intensification of production. Surplus foods were exported to markets all along Atlantic Europe which created great wealth and economic growth. Results of this wealth can be seen in the landscape in the form of stone castles, churches and monasteries.

The county of Meath was granted to Hugh de Lacy, by Henry II, to hold by the service of 50 knights. Under the Normans the system of landownership was a manorial one, with towns and villages established around castles. The town of Trim was the centre of Norman power in County Meath. Kells was also prominent as a Norman fortification, although most of the remains from that period have not survived.

The political structure of the Anglo-Normans centered itself around the establishment of shires, manors, castles, villages and churches. In the initial decades after the Anglo-Norman invasion a distinctive type of earth and timber fortification was constructed- the motte and bailey. Mottes were raised mounds of earth topped with a wooden or stone tower while the bailey was an enclosure, surrounded by an earthen ditch with a timber palisade, used to house ancillary structures, horses and livestock. There are 22 motte and baileys recorded in County Meath (www.archaeology.ie).

In certain areas of Ireland however Anglo-Norman settlers constructed square or rectangular enclosures, now termed moated sites. Their main defensive feature was a wide, often water-filled, fosse with an internal bank. As in the case of ringforts, these enclosures protected a house and outbuildings usually built of wood. They appear to have been constructed in the latter part of the 13th century, although little precise information is available. There are 32 moated sites recorded in County Meath (www.archaeology.ie).

More substantial stone castles followed the motte and bailey and moated sites in the 13th and 14th centuries. Tower houses are regarded as late types of castle and were erected from the 14th to early 17th centuries. Their primary function was defensive, with narrow windows and a tower often surrounded by a high stone wall (bawn). An Act of Parliament of 1429 gave a subsidy of £10 to “*liege*” men to build castles of a minimum size of 20ft in length, 16ft in breadth and 40ft in height (6m x 5m x 12m). By 1449 so many of these £10 castles had been built that a limit had to be placed on the number of grants being made available. The later tower houses were often smaller, with less bulky walls and no vaulting. There are 50 tower houses recorded in County Meath (www.archaeology.ie).

The proposed development area falls within lands which were granted to Hugh de Lacy by Henry II, and c. 1182 de Lacy established an Augustinian monastery at nearby Colp. During the Medieval period a tower house was built in Donacarney (RMP ME021-009), located 1.6km north west of the proposed development area. The tower house was known as “*Draycott’s Castle*”, and this name is a possible reference to the Draycott family who occupied the lands of Colp in 1559.

The present tower at Trim Castle was completed by William Peppard in 1220 AD. Combined with the massive curtain walls, gates and associated buildings, it is the largest castle in Ireland. More modest than Trim were the baronial castles of



Dardistown, Killeen and Dunsany (Meath County Council 2013, Volume 2, Appendix 7, 15).

The 14th century throughout north west Europe is generally regarded as having been a time of crisis, and Ireland was no exception. Although the Irish economy had been growing in the late 13th century, it was not growing quickly enough to support the rapidly expanding population, especially when Edward I was using the trade of Irish goods to finance his campaigns in Scotland and Wales. When the Great European Famine of 1315-1317 arrived in Ireland, brought about by lengthy periods of severe weather and climate change, its effects were exacerbated by the Bruce Invasion of 1315-1318. Manorial records which date to the early 14th century show that there was a noticeable decline in agricultural production. This economic instability and decline was further worsened with the onset of the Bubonic Plague in 1348.

Before the Tudors came to the throne the kings of England were also the kings of western France and so, during the 14th and 15th centuries, the various lords who ruled in Ireland were largely left to themselves. The Tudor conquest however brought a much greater interest in the affairs of Ireland. They wanted to put a stop to the raids of the Gaelic Irish on areas under English rule, and to do this they ruthlessly put down any rebellions and even quashed inter-tribal feuds. English settlers were then brought in to settle their lands. The first of these plantations occurred in the mid-16th century in what is now Laois and Offaly. After the Desmond rising in Munster in 1585 came another plantation, and parts of south western Tipperary were planted at that time.

From 1593 until 1603 there was a countrywide war between the Gaelic Irish, who were supported by the French, and the Elizabethan English. The Irish were finally defeated and with the "*Flight of the Earls*" from Rathmullan, County Donegal in 1607, Ulster, which had previously been independent of English rule, was planted.

A holy well (RMP ME021-013) is recorded approximately 970m south of the proposed development area in Ministown townland (www.archaeology.ie). There is no further information provided on this site on National Monuments Service's online database. Holy wells are often found associated with early ecclesiastical sites. Although most have no artificial features associated with them, it is clear that the veneration of wells is a very ancient tradition within Ireland and more generally Europe (Lacy 1983, 301).

Expansion in the agricultural sector following a period of economic growth in Ireland from the mid-1730s led to rising prices and increase in trade. This growth in agricultural productivity resulted in an increase in related industrial development throughout the country.

Donacarney

The name Donacarney appears to be a derivative of the Irish *domhnach* which usually denotes a church site. In the case of Donacarney it may be translated as Cearnach's church, or may relate to the nunnery of *Domnach Ceirne* (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1988). Bettystown is a translation of *Baile an Bhiataigh* (www.logainm.ie), and both of these townlands lie in the parish of Colpe, within the barony of Lower Duleek. According to early historical sources, the initial settlement of Colp, which lies c. 2km to the west of the proposed development area, was associated with *Inber Colpdi* or *Inber Colptha*. The latter is associated with a 7th century saint named Athcain, whose feast day is June 16th. In the 7th century *Inber Colptha* is also described as the place where St. Patrick landed in the 5th century when starting his mission in Ireland, and as such was regarded as important enough to be claimed by the Patrician See of Armagh. The history of Donacarney is linked to the growth of the ecclesiastical settlement of Colp. It is noted that a church marked in Donacarney as being "*in ruins*" on the First Edition 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map may have formed an early foundation of St. Patrick (www.archaeology.ie).

Inber Colpdi was regarded by the Early Christian writers as being an ancient landing place, and was used as a port of entry for goods from Iona into Ireland in the 8th century (O'Brien, 2001). The discovery of an 8th century brooch, known as the Tara Brooch, on the beach at Bettystown is an indication of the wealth and importance of the area at that time.

3.2 Toponyms

Townland names are an important source in understanding the archaeology, geology, land-use, ownership and cultural heritage of an area.

Table 1: Translation or explanation of names from the proposed development area

Townland	Derivation/Meaning
Donacarney Great	<i>Domhnach Cairnigh Mór</i> . May translate as <i>Cearnach's church</i> , or it may relate to the nunnery of <i>Domnach Ceirne</i>

Bettystown	<i>Baile an Bhiataigh</i> . Betagh's town, with Betagh possibly being a family name
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3.3 Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland

Information on artefact finds and excavations from County Meath is recorded by the National Museum of Ireland (NMI). Location information relating to such finds is important in establishing prehistoric and historic activity in the study area.

There are no entries recorded in the Topographical Files for Donacarney Great townland.

The nearest findspot recorded in the Topographical Files is listed as "*mollusc shells*" (NMI Reference 1977:2329-2334), and is located 1km south east of the proposed development area in Bettystown.

3.4 Summary of Previous Fieldwork in the General Area

The results of previous archaeological investigations in the surrounding area have uncovered a wealth of archaeological material. Evidence for occupation dating from the Bronze Age to the Medieval period was uncovered during test trenching and subsequent excavation at Triton Lodge to the south west of Bettystown, where the recorded features included a series of pits, a *fulacht fiadh*, a circular ditched enclosure and a souterrain (www.excavations.ie). Evidence for burial and ceremonial activity has also been uncovered. A Bronze Age cist containing an inhumation burial accompanied by a ceramic "*Food vessel*" and an Early Medieval inhumation cemetery were found in Bettystown (www.excavations.ie). Adjacent to this site, and immediately west of Bettystown village, was a large multi-phase site with evidence for a Neolithic timber circle, an Early Bronze Age flat cemetery and an Iron Age cemetery (www.excavations.ie). Further burial evidence was recorded nearby at Narroways, Bettystown where there were two disturbed burials which were thought to be prehistoric or Early Medieval in date (www.excavations.ie). Archaeological testing was carried out on a proposed development site located c. 400m to the north west of the proposed development area, where evidence for prehistoric settlement and burial were uncovered (www.excavations.ie). Testing identified a ring-ditch or barrow and a possible *fulacht fiadh*, while structural remains were indicated by a scattering of postholes and a series of pits, at least one of which appeared to contain a cremation burial (www.excavations.ie).

Not all of the archaeological investigations carried out in the vicinity of the proposed development area uncovered archaeological remains however. Testing at a site in the vicinity of Bettystown, on the western side of the Bettystown/Laytown Road and to the west of the above-mentioned burial site, did not identify anything of archaeological significance (www.excavations.ie). Monitoring of the excavation of a pipeline trench through the townlands of Mornington, Donacarney, Bettystown, Betaghstown, Laytown and Julianstown did not lead to the discovery of any archaeological material (www.excavations.ie). Similarly, testing on the site of a cropmark (RMP ME021-021) at Donacarney Little and an assessment in the vicinity of a tower house (RMP ME021-009) in Donacarney, which lies to the north west of the proposed development area, did not uncover anything of archaeological significance (www.excavations.ie).

3.5 Cartographic Analysis

Ordnance Survey Map First Edition 1:10,560 (1837); Ordnance Survey Map Third Edition 1:10,560 (1907-1911); Ordnance Survey Map First Edition 1:2,500 (1908-1911) (figures 4 - 6)

The eastern, western and southern extent of the proposed development area are recorded as townland boundaries on all editions of the historic maps. Research suggests that:

“hoards and single finds of Bronze Age weapons, shields, horns, cauldrons and gold personal objects can all be shown to occur on boundaries” (Kelly 2006, 28).

All the editions of the Ordnance Survey maps record the same field boundaries as exist today. The majority of the development area is recorded as a garden associated with Eastham House on the First Edition 1:10,560 map. RMP ME021-025 and RMP ME021-026 are both recorded but not labelled on the Third Edition 1:10,560 map and the First Edition 1:2,500 map.

There are no additional archaeological features recorded on historic cartographic sources within the proposed development area.

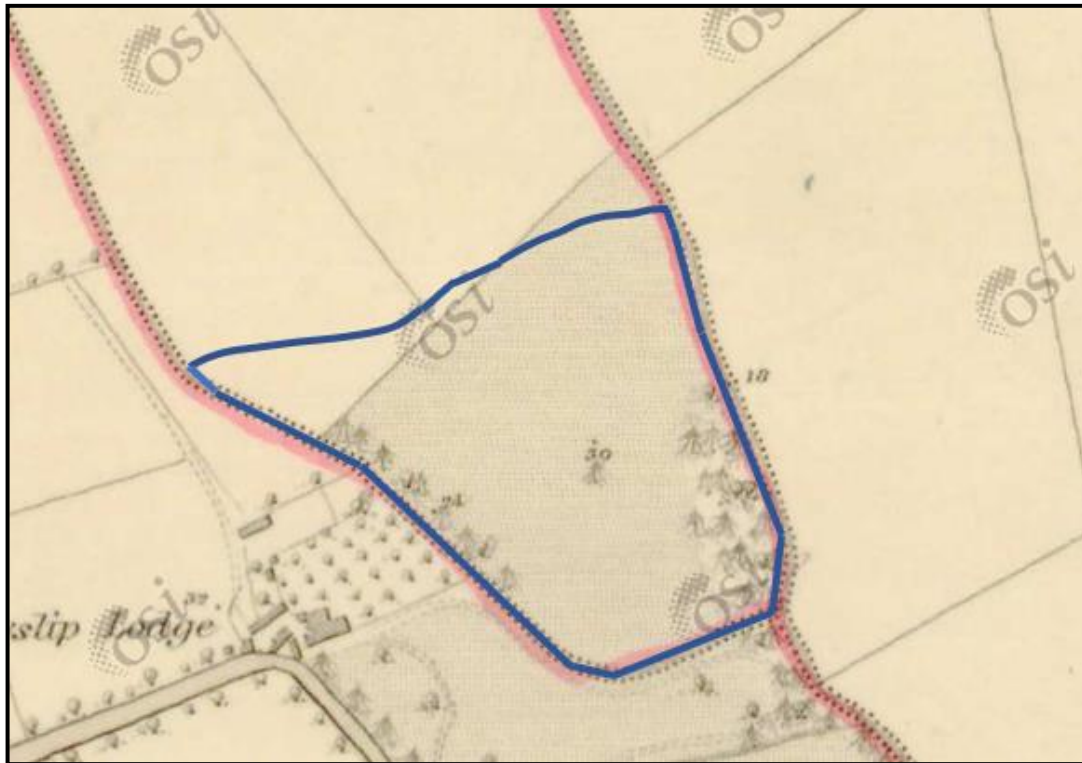


Figure 4: Extract from First Edition 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map showing the proposed development area

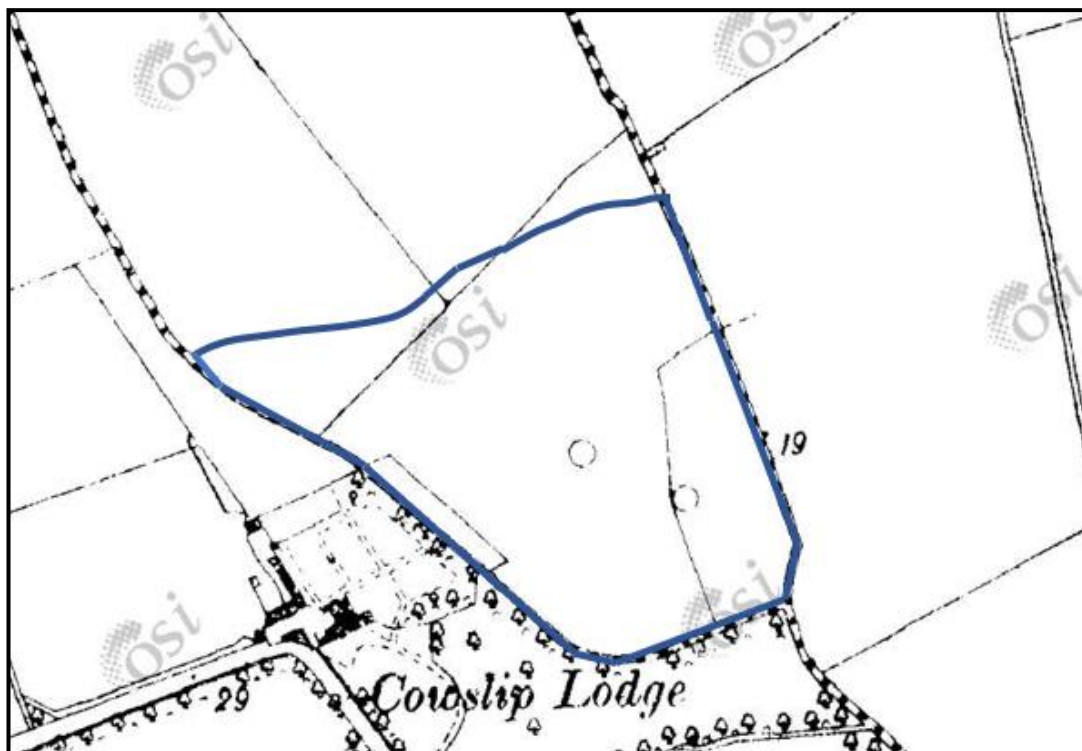


Figure 5: Extract from Third Edition 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map showing the proposed development area

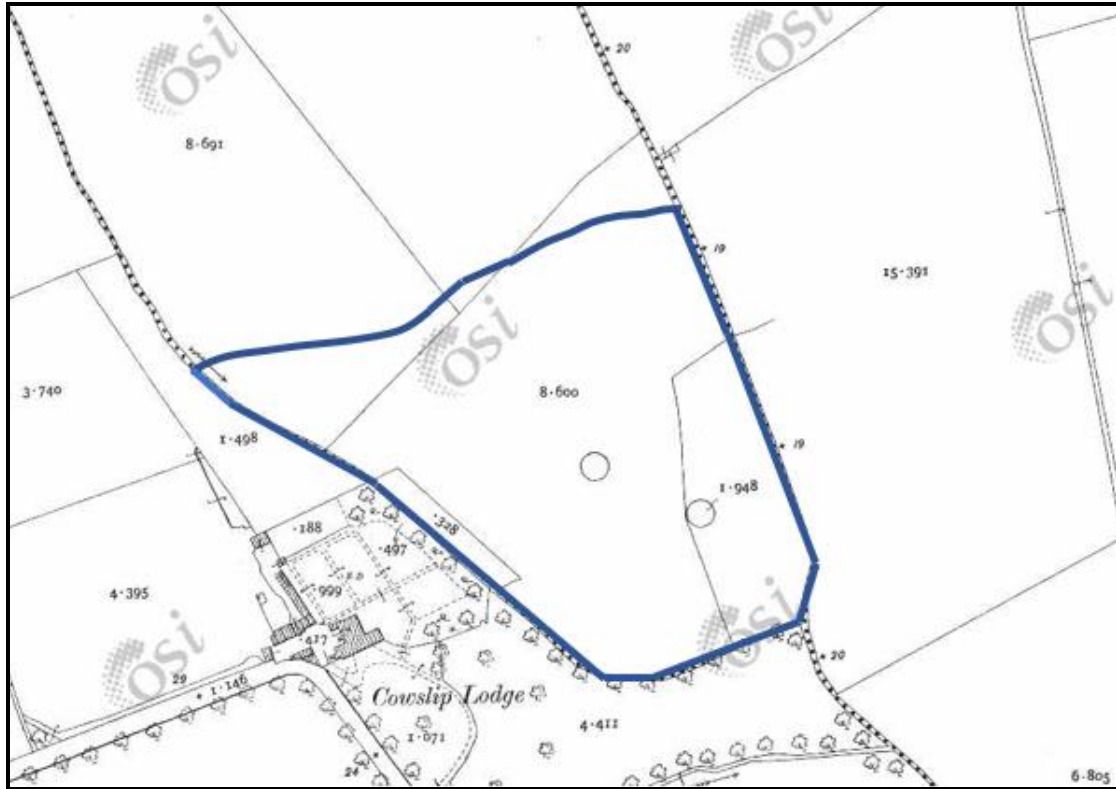


Figure 6: Extract from First Edition 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey map showing the proposed development area

3.6 Aerial Photographs

Aerial photographs held by Ordnance Survey Ireland (www.map.geohive.ie) and more recent aerial photography (www.bing.com/maps) were consulted to look for the presence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

The faint outline of RMP sites ME021-025 and ME021-026 can be seen on aerial photography. No additional archaeological features are visible on aerial photography within the proposed development area.

4 SITE-SPECIFIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The first phase of archaeological assessment carried out within the proposed development area involved a geophysical survey of the site (License Number 08R0300). A test trenching programme (Licence Number 08E0912) was then carried out in response to a request for Further Information for a proposed residential development at Sites A-D at Donacarney Great (Meath County Council Planning Ref. SA/802128). Planning permission (Condition no.2) issued by Meath County Council dated 23rd January 2009 stated that unit numbers 78-170 of Site B should be omitted from the proposed development. The planner's report, dated 21st January 2009, which addressed documentation received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, advised that any further planning applications within the lands should be accompanied by an additional Archaeological Impact Assessment. Accordingly, a second phase of test trenching (Licence Number 08E0912 extension) was carried out (between 27th April and 1st May 2009) in advance of a revised planning application being submitted for Site B (*i.e.* the proposed development area).

The combined results of the two phases of test trenching on Site B have identified a large multi-period site with evidence for burial and settlement, along with craft activity including cereal processing. The earliest evidence is prehistoric in date, most probably Bronze Age, and is characterised by a series of six circular enclosures (Enclosures A, C, D, E, F and G) and a linear ditch on the western part of the site. Dating evidence is based on finds of flint and pottery recovered from the enclosure ditches and internal features.

The evidence indicates that settlement occurred within Enclosures A (RMP ME021-025), C and D, with internal structural remains identified from both Enclosures C and D. Several of the internal features within Enclosure D contained fragments of burnt bone, indicating that cremation burials may also have been interred there.

A Bronze Age urn containing a cremation burial uncovered within a flattened mound or barrow (Enclosure F) identified it as a burial monument. Further burial evidence came from a possible cremation pit just outside the ditch of Enclosure G and from fragments of highly burnt bone within the ditch of Enclosure E. No dating evidence was uncovered for Enclosure B (RMP ME021-026) during testing, but given its morphological similarity and proximity to the other circular enclosures (Enclosures A,

C, D, E, F, G), it is highly likely that it also dates to the Bronze Age. The absence of any associated features or finds from this site could possibly suggest that it was an animal pen.

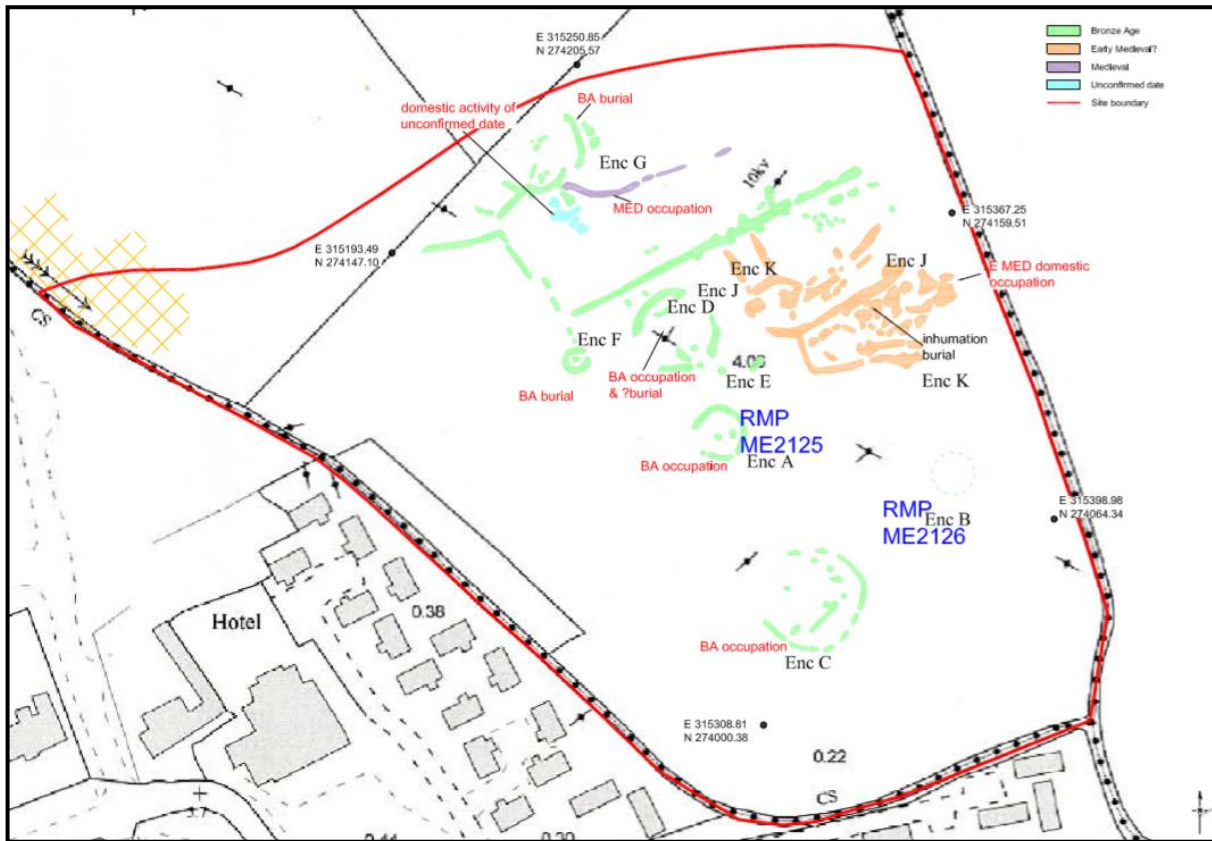


Figure 7: Archaeological features revealed during previous fieldwork

An area of settlement was identified within the sub-rectangular enclosures (Enclosures J and K) on the eastern part of the site, where the stratigraphic sequence indicated that at least three phases of occupation had occurred. A single inhumation burial was also uncovered in this part of the site, and although several other trenches were excavated in proximity to it no further graves were uncovered. While the possibility remains that further burials could exist on site, it is unlikely that there is a large burial ground present. The only find recovered from this general area was a flint scraper, indicating that the earliest phase of activity dates from the prehistoric period. The absence of ceramics coupled with the inhumation burial suggest that the later phases of activity in this part of the site may possibly be Iron Age, or more likely, Early Medieval in date.



The latest datable phase of activity was uncovered at the northern end of the site, where Medieval (late 12th – 14th century) pottery was recovered from a curvilinear ditch located to the south of the Bronze Age Enclosure G.

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT and MITIGATION STRATEGY

A planning application (Meath County Council Planning Reference SA/901809) was previously submitted by ██████████. to Meath County Council for a residential development within the proposed development area. Planning permission was granted by Meath County Council, in agreement with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, based on recommendations made in a site-specific Conservation Plan prepared by the developer's previous archaeological consultant ██████████

The Conservation Plan prepared by ██████████. (dated 14th October 2009) and approved by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (in a letter dated 20th January 2010) confirmed that a core area of known archaeological significance measuring approximately 120m east/west x 66m north/south would be preserved *in situ* (figure 8), while the areas of Enclosures B (RMP ME021-026) and C to the south of the core area and Enclosure G to the north would be preserved by record by means of archaeological excavation (figure 9). The archaeological excavation would be carried out well in advance of groundworks commencing on site, and under Licence to National Monuments Service (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) and the National Museum of Ireland and to the satisfaction of Meath County Council.

As part of the works carried out to date by Dermot Nelis Archaeology, we have reviewed all previous archaeological fieldwork reports and conservation plans as prepared by ██████████ ██████████ ██████████ ██████████ ██████████. In addition, we have reviewed correspondence issued by DoEHLG Development Applications Unit (now Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht).

It is confirmed that all recommendations and mitigation measures contained in the Conservation Plan prepared by ██████████ on 14th October 2009, which was approved by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government on 20th January 2010 and which formed the basis for planning permission being granted by Meath County Council, will be implemented in full in relation to the current planning application for the site.

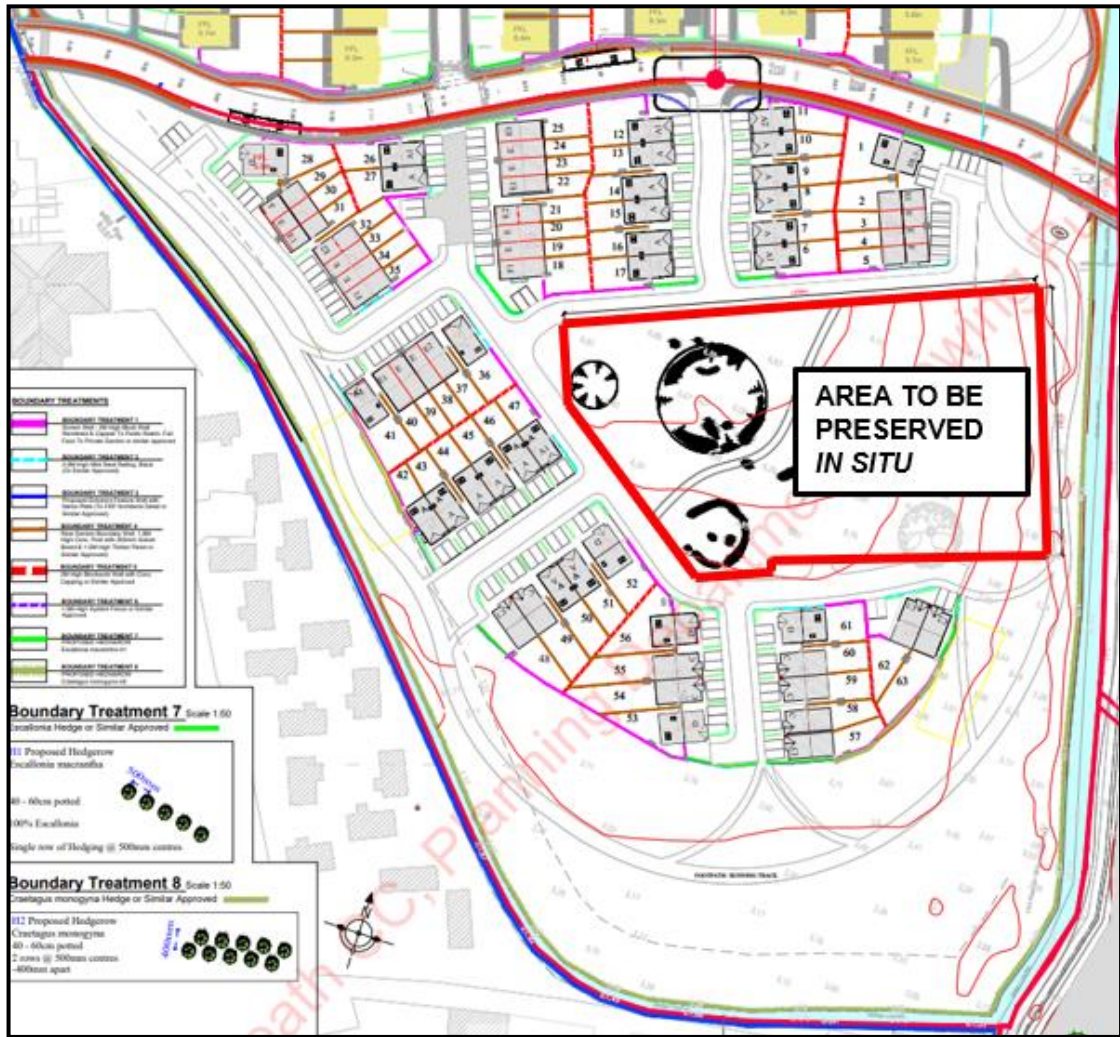


Figure 8: Site plan showing location of area to be preserved *in situ*

In summary, the core area measuring approximately 120m east/west x 66m north/south will be retained as green space to serve as an amenity area within the residential development (figure 8). It is proposed to raise the ground level slightly on the western part of the green area by importing a depth of c. 100mm - 200mm of topsoil. It is intended to create a small circular mound (c. 6m in diameter and between 300mm and 400mm in height) over the location of a Bronze Age barrow (Enclosure F), and to create another low mound over Enclosure D. It is proposed to provide a pedestrian path across the green area. In order to ensure minimal compaction of the below-ground cremation burial uncovered in Enclosure F, the imported topsoil will be laid under constant archaeological supervision. Construction of the path will entail removing the sod and laying a geotextile layer, over which a gravel/hardcore surface will be laid. Park benches may be located around the perimeter of the amenity area, and a series of information plaques will be erected.

Minimal tree planting may be carried out on the western edge of the conservation area, and in other areas where no archaeological features were identified during test trenching. A continual archaeological presence will be maintained by a suitably qualified archaeologist, under Licence to National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland and to the satisfaction of Meath County Council, during all landscaping works within the core area.

The core archaeological area will be fenced with appropriate permanent signage for the duration of construction works in order to protect the below-ground archaeological remains from compaction or damage that might be caused by heavy plant crossing the area.

Should archaeological material be identified during monitoring associated with preparation of the core area to be retained as green space, an alternative location for the seating, pathways or information plaques will be sought. This will ensure there will be no impact on any below-ground archaeological remains. Following completion of the proposed development, the core archaeological area will be maintained as open green space and will not be built upon in the future.

It is proposed to provide a plaque or plaques for the display of public information on the site, to facilitate both the dissemination of public information and management of the archaeological resource preserved *in situ* within the green space area. Such plaque/s will provide a brief description of the enclosure sites within the core archaeological area, and could include plans, photographs and possibly a reconstruction drawing. Maintenance of the green space area will entail mowing the grass and ensuring that the information plaques remain intact.

The excavation of Enclosures B (RMP ME021-026), C and G (figure 9) will be carried out well in advance of groundworks commencing on site, and under Licence to National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland and to the satisfaction of Meath County Council.

The developer has agreed to provide all funds to cover excavation and post-excavation costs associated with the excavation of Enclosures B, C and G. A written report/s will be compiled that will set out the results of the archaeological excavation, and dissemination of the results will take the form of a report/reports lodged with the National Monuments Service, the National Museum of Ireland and Meath County

Council. Should results warrant it, wider dissemination in the form of full publication may be recommended.

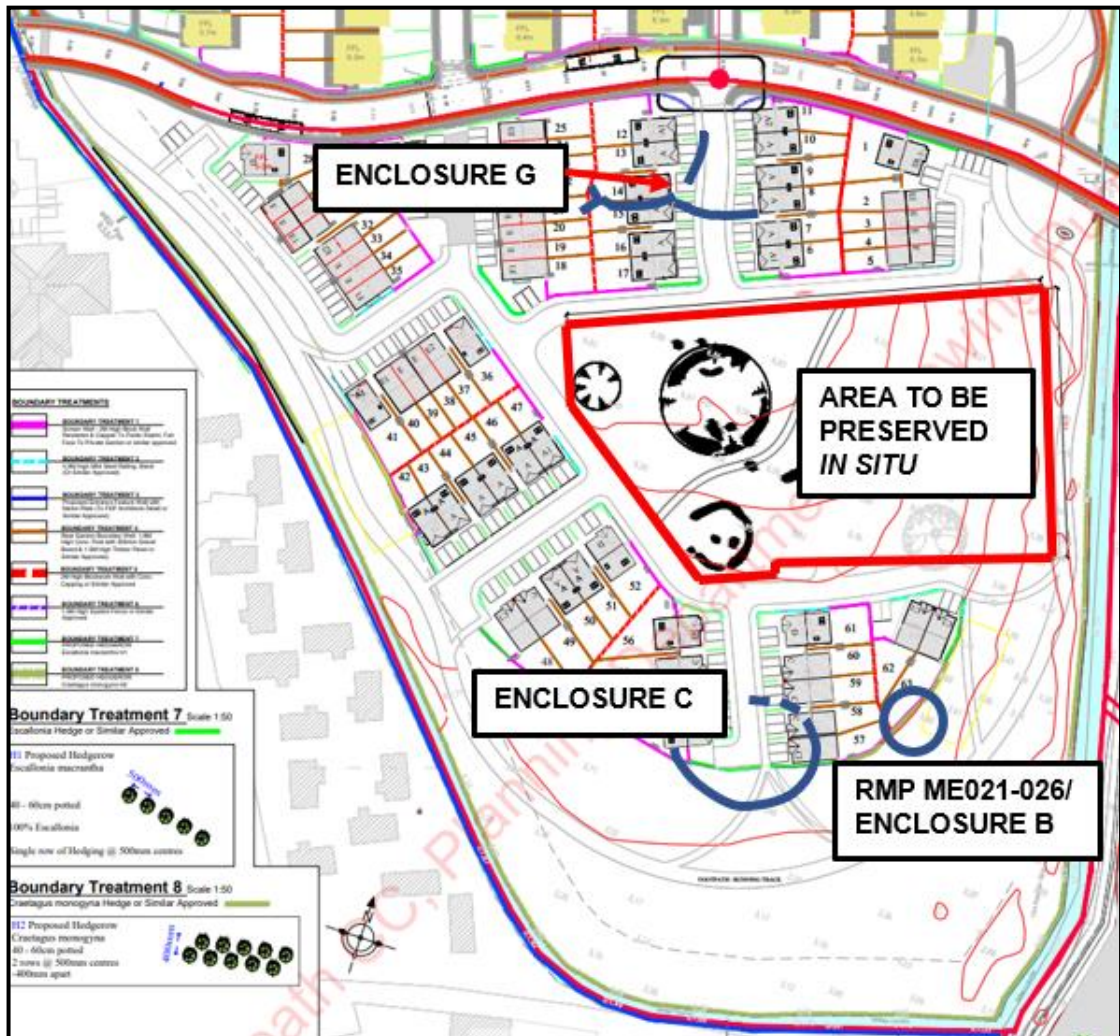


Figure 9: Site plan showing location of Enclosures B, C and G

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