

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT. RATHGOWAN, MULLINGAR, COUNTY WESTMEATH



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The results, conclusions and recommendations contained within this report are based on information available at the time of its preparation. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that all relevant data has been collated, the authors and AMS accept no responsibility for omissions and/or inconsistencies that may result from information becoming available subsequent to the report's completion.

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Executive Summary

Archaeological Management Solutions (AMS) was engaged by DSPL to prepare an Archaeological Assessment for a proposed Strategic Housing Development (SHD) at Rathgowan/Farranshock townland on the outskirts of Mullingar, County Westmeath (Figure 1).

The purpose of the assessment was to assess the current archaeological and cultural heritage significance of the lands in question, including a baseline study of known archaeological monuments, cultural heritage, past investigations and artefacts located within a Study Area extending 1km from the site centroid (ITM 642013, 753322, Figure 2). The work included a site visit in October 2020 that assessed the receiving environment and possible impacts of the proposed development. It aims to appraise the archaeological and other cultural heritage potential of the area and assess the likely impacts of the proposed development on the subject site and any remains present. Finally, recommendations are made for archaeological works which may be needed to provide further information or for measures to mitigate any predicted impacts/adverse effects of the proposed development on archaeology. Such a mitigation strategy might be by design or through preservation by record depending on significance. The study also considers other cultural heritage within the Study Area including architectural heritage structures listed on the Westmeath County Council Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), as well as a study of local placenames and folklore.

Baseline study: The Site adjoins a Recorded Monument¹ in the townland of Saranstown, a ringfort (WM019-046), listed in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The site is partly defined to the west by the Saranstown and Rathgowan townland boundary. The Zone of Notification² (ZoN) for the monument extends into the western extent of the subject site. A second Recorded Monument in the Study Area comprises the site of a standing stone (WM019-089003), which no longer extant. There are no recorded architectural heritage sites (RPS or NIAH) within the subject site. The wider Study Area includes sixteen recorded architectural heritage sites. The remains of an undesignated vernacular building is present within the subject site in the form of a low stone wall. Forty-nine artefacts are recorded within the Study Area on the National Museum of Ireland's database records. The Site contains peat in water-logged low-lying areas, suggesting potential for unrecorded archaeology being preserved within or below the peat, including possible environmental material with information on past landscapes, organic materials, deposited metal objects or possibly burnt mounds.

A previous archaeological investigation (Licence No. 04E0980), was undertaken as part of an earlier planning application over a larger area including the subject site (planning ref. 04/5226), excavated eight test trenches and recorded one previously unrecorded archaeological pit feature. An archaeological investigation to the north of the subject site (Licence No. 06E0953) found three likely prehistoric pits. The subject site has therefore been identified as an area of potential for further previously unrecorded archaeological features surviving in areas that have not been subject to archaeological testing.

A licensed geophysical survey was carried out by J.M Leigh Surveys in November 2020, concurrent

¹ The Archive Unit of the National Monuments Service (NMS) of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) maintains a publicly accessible database known as the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which contains current information on known archaeological sites and monuments, including whether or not they are scheduled for inclusion in the next issue of the statutory RMP.

² The SMR sites dataset includes a 'Zone of Notification' for sites and monuments. These do not define the exact extent of the monuments, but rather are intended to identify areas in which archaeological remains may occur for the purposes of notification under Section 12 (3) of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994*.

with this assessment. A number of anomalies with archaeological potential were identified on the Site.

Test Excavation: Given the potential for unrecorded archaeological remains to be present, and in order to inform an appropriate strategy to mitigate adverse archaeological impacts on any such archaeology, it is recommended that a programme of test excavations and monitoring be undertaken within the Site. Under the National Monuments Act 1930 to 2014, such works must be carried out in consultation with and under licence issued by the National Monuments Service (NMS) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Test excavations are recommended to be undertaken within the Site prior to development, subject to NMS consultation, in order to comply with the Local Plan policies and objectives.

Archaeological Monitoring: It is also recommended that any site preparation groundworks such as topsoil clearance, or other intrusive activity on the Site, should be monitored by a licence-eligible archaeologist under a licence issued by the NMS of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This would ensure that in the event of further archaeological remains being identified during the course of licenced archaeological monitoring, this active licence could be upgraded to allow for appropriate mitigation subject to approval from the NMS in conjunction with NMI.

The above archaeological recommendations are made subject to the results of a fully comprehensive archaeological impact assessment report, inclusive of impact assessment of the final proposed application details, and are also subject to agreement with the NMS.

Table of Contents

Disclaimer	1
Abbreviations and Definitions	6
Introduction.....	7
Project Background	7
Proposed Development	7
Aim and Scope of Assessment	8
Methodology	9
Receiving Environment.....	11
Site Location/Description.....	11
Archaeological and Historical Background	12
<i>Prehistoric period.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Medieval period.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Post-Medieval to Modern period.....</i>	<i>14</i>
Historical Mapping	16
Recorded Archaeological Sites	18
Previous Archaeological Investigations	19
Archaeological Finds.....	20
Archaeological Potential	21
Recorded Architectural Heritage Sites.....	22
Placenames and Folklore	25
Proposed Development	26
Impact Assessment	27
Recommendations.....	28
References	31
Appendices	33
Appendix 1: Recorded Archaeological Sites within the Study Area.....	33
Appendix 2: Previous Archaeological Investigations within the Study Area	34
Appendix 3: List of NMI Finds from the Vicinity of the Proposed Development	36
Appendix 4: Westmeath County Council Policy	38
County Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018–2023	38
Westmeath County Development Plan 2014–2020	38
Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014–2020	41
Figures	43

List of Tables

Table 1: Sources consulted	9
Table 2: Recorded archaeological sites within the study area.....	19
Table 3: Recorded architectural heritage sites within the study area (NIAH)	23

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location.	44
Figure 2: Recorded archaeological and architectural heritage within a 1km radius of the subject site.	45
Figure 3: Aerial view of site.....	46
Figure 4: Site as shown on first-edition OS map (1838).	47
Figure 5: Site as shown on 25-inch OS map (1913).	48
Figure 6: Proposed SHD development design (BKD Architects 2022) with archaeological areas indicated.	49
Figure 7: Layout of the 2004 test trenches.....	50
Figure 8: Geophysical survey interpretation (Leigh 2020).....	51

List of Plates

Plate 1: View of the southeast of the Site, facing west towards Rathgowan Wood.....	52
Plate 2: View of the southwest of the site facing north towards the ringfort.....	52
Plate 3: View of west of site facing northwest towards remains of wall, possibly a vernacular house or avenue wall, with ringfort to rear.	53
Plate 4: View of north of site facing northeast showing an internal road.....	53

Abbreviations and Definitions

Abbreviation	Definition
AMS	Archaeological Management Solutions Ltd
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
DAHGI	Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands
DEHGL	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GSI	Geological Survey Ireland
HEV	Historic Environment Viewer
ITM	Irish Transverse Mercator
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
NMS	National Monuments Service
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
NRA	National Roads Authority
OS	Ordnance Survey
OSI	Ordnance Survey of Ireland
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
SHD	Strategic Housing Development
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
WCC	Westmeath County Council
ZoN	Zone of Notification

Coordinate System

All coordinates given in this report are in Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM).

Introduction

Project Background

Archaeological Management Solutions (AMS) was engaged by DSPL Ltd to prepare an Archaeological Assessment for the site of a proposed 6.15Ha Strategic Housing Development (SHD), in the townland of Rathgowan/Farranshock, Mullingar, County Westmeath (Figure 1 & Figure 2). The subject site is located north and east of existing housing at Ardilaun Heights and Rathgowan Wood, northwest of the R394, which is known as the Mullingar Western Relief Road and south of the R393 Ashe Road.

A previous grant of planning from Westmeath County Council for the subject site (Planning Ref. 04/5226) included the following Planning Condition in relation to archaeology:

- 15 (i) *An agreed archaeological mitigation strategy shall be agreed between the developer, consultant archaeologist and the National Monuments Section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in advance of the commencement of any phased construction work at the development site.*
- 15 (ii) *A minimum of a 20m buffer must be established between the development area and Recorded Monument WM019-046 (Ringfort) in order to ensure that any potential associated sub-surface archaeological remains are preserved in-situ. No groundworks for construction or landscaping shall take place within this 20m buffer. Should planting take place within this buffer zone only plants with shallow root systems should be chosen. In order to safeguard the monument from encroachment by machinery during construction works, this buffer zone should be securely cordoned off using post and railing fencing throughout the duration of the proposed development. This area shall be out of bounds to all machinery and no activity associated with construction works shall be carried out there.*

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation (either in situ or by record) of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.'

Proposed Development

The proposed development will consist of 212 no. dwellings and a creche. The residential dwellings are comprised of 107 no. 2 & 3 storey houses, 86 no. 2 & 3 bed duplex units in 8 no. 3 storey blocks and 19 no. 1 & 2 bed apartments accommodated 1 no. 4 storey building which also accommodates a crèche at ground floor level (430sq.m), with associated outdoor play area (Figure 6). The proposed houses consist of 31 no. 2 bed, 70 no. 3 bed and 6 no. 4 bed detached, semi-detached and terraced houses.

The proposed development provides for all associated site development works, relocation of existing underground surface water attenuation tank, car parking, bin & bicycle storage, public and communal open spaces, hard & soft landscaping and boundary treatments, underground utilities, substation and public lighting. Vehicular access to the development will be off the R394, via Rathgowan Park with pedestrian & cyclist access also proposed onto the R393 Ashe Road to the north.

Aim and Scope of Assessment

The *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* states that *where it is considered that a proposed development may (due to its location, size, or nature) have archaeological implications, then an archaeological assessment should be carried out* (DAHGI 1999, 25).

It defines archaeological assessment thus:

- *gaining a better understanding of a known or suspected archaeological site or monument with particular reference to considering the implications of proposed development for such a site or monument; and,*
- *locating previously unidentified archaeological sites or monuments (or possible ones) prior to the commencement of development works with particular reference to considering the implications of proposed development for such sites or monuments.*

Thus, the purpose of the Archaeological Assessment was to provide a baseline survey and analysis of known archaeological remains within a wider 1km Study Area, as well as an appraisal of its archaeological potential. This was undertaken to identify any further works required to support the planning application, and inform an appropriate archaeological strategy to mitigate any predicted impacts/adverse effects of the development on archaeology.

Other recorded cultural heritage and architectural heritage sites within the Study Area, including structures on the Westmeath RPS and those listed on the NIAH, were also considered along with placenames and folklore.

Other relevant cultural heritage policy is included in Appendix 4.

Methodology

The methodological approach employed is informed by guidance for the assessment of development provided in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *Draft Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA 2017) and *Advice Notes on Current Practice* (EPA 2003). The methodology is also consistent with other guidance including the National Roads Authority (NRA), now Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), *Guidelines for the Assessment of Archaeological Heritage Impacts on National Road Schemes* (NRA 2005a) and *Guidelines for the Assessment of Architectural Heritage Impacts on National Road Schemes* (NRA 2005b). Distances between recorded monuments are measured from the edge of the ZoN for each site, to one decimal point accuracy.

The study was divided into two main components: the collation of baseline data and the analysis of this data to determine any likely impacts. The methodology comprised a high-level desk-based survey to identify all recorded archaeological and architectural heritage sites within a defined Study Area of a 1km radius of the site centroid. It also included a review of information that can provide an indication of the archaeological potential (or likelihood of previously unrecorded and subsurface archaeological remains to be extant) within the Site, including a site inspection and a geophysical survey.

The site inspection was undertaken in October 2020 by AMS and involved a walkover of the development area and its surrounding environment, photography and recording of its layout, land use, and archaeological potential, and to assess its suitability for a possible geophysical survey, if appropriate (Plate 1– Plate 4). The ringfort adjoining the Site was also considered in relation to the current development proposal to help inform the impact assessment. The geophysical survey was undertaken by J.M. Leigh Survey's in November 2020. This focussed on 1.5ha of the Site, adjacent to the ringfort, across two areas, Area A and Area B (Figure 8). The desk-based survey involved consultation of the sources listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sources consulted

Data	Source
Background Information	<i>Westmeath County Development Plan 2014–2020</i> ³ , <i>Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014–2020</i> ⁴

³ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/developmentplans/countydevelopmentplan2014-2020/> [Accessed: November 2021]. Note: A new draft Development Plan (2019–2025) will soon be issued for public consultation. See <http://countydevelopmentplanreview.meath.ie/>.

⁴ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/localareaplans/> [Accessed: November 2021].

Data	Source
	<p><i>Westmeath planning portal</i>⁵ <i>County Heritage Plan for Westmeath 2018–2023</i>⁶; Townlands.ie; and Logainm.ie; Duchas.ie folklore records⁷; Cartography: Historical OS maps via OSI's public viewer;⁸ Aerial photography: Google Earth and Digital Globe via the Historic Environment Viewer (HEV)⁹; Orthophotographs via OSI's public viewer; Previous Archaeological Investigations: Database of Irish Excavation Reports (www.excavations.ie), NMS archive reports¹⁰; NMI topographical files and online finds database made available by the Heritage Council.¹¹ Geology map: Geological Survey Ireland (GSI).¹² Teagasc and EPA's Irish Soil Information System (SIS).¹³</p>
Archaeological Heritage	<p>RMP: Statutory list of protected places and monuments, with accompanying constraints map for County Westmeath (1996); SMR: Database of current information on sites and monuments accessed via the HEV; Lists of National Monuments in State Care: Ownership and Guardianship for County Westmeath (published in 2009)¹⁴; List of Preservation Orders held by the NMS, published in 2019¹⁵.</p>
Architectural Heritage	<p>NIAH accessed via the HEV; Westmeath RPS.¹⁶</p>

⁵ <http://www.eplanning.ie/WestmeathCC/AppFileRefDetails/045226/0> [Accessed: November 2021].

⁶ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/conservationheritage/heritageplan/> [Accessed: November 2021].

⁷ <https://www.duchas.ie/en> [Accessed: November 2021].

⁸ Available at: <http://map.geohive.ie/> [Accessed: November 2021].

⁹ Available at: <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/> [Accessed: November 2021].

¹⁰ NMS archive reports on archaeological investigations 04E0980, 06E0953

¹¹ Available at: <https://heritagemaps.ie/WebApps/HeritageMaps/> [Accessed: November 2021].

¹² <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsecure.dccae.gov.ie%2Far%2Frest%2Fservices%2FBedrock%2FBedrockGeology500k%2FMapServer&source=sd> [Accessed: November 2021].

¹³ Available at: <http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/map.php> [Accessed: November 2021].

¹⁴ <https://www.archaeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/pdf/monuments-in-state-care-westmeath.pdf> [Accessed: November 2021].

¹⁵ <https://www.archaeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/publications/po19v1-all-counties.pdf> [Accessed: November 2021].

¹⁶ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/conservationheritage/protectedstructures/> [Accessed: November 2021].

Receiving Environment

Site Location/Description

Mullingar, the county town of Westmeath, is situated in low-lying ground on the River Brosna between Lough Owel and Lough Ennell and is expanding to meet the eastern and southern edges of the Site which covers parts of Rathgowan/Farranschock (*Fearann Seac nó Ráth Ghabhann*) and Sarsanstown townlands and a small portion of Mullingar town, in Mullingar Civil Parish, Barony of Moyashel and Maheradermon, Co. Westmeath (Figure 1). The R394 Clonmore Link Road adjoins the southeast of the Site and the R393 runs roughly east–west at the northern edge of the Site while the urban boundary runs through the southeastern corner of the Site (Figure 2). The area is traversed by the River Blackwater, orientated on a roughly northwest–southeast axis and the Royal Canal runs 745m to the south and 1km to the east of the site.

The Site is a greenfield plot measuring 6.06 hectares (ha) in area, centred on ITM 642013, 753322. The Study Area is a 1km radius from the site centre point, situated in County Westmeath covering the townlands of Rathgowan or Farranschock and Sarsanstown, and the western edge of the modern urban area of Mullingar. It lies entirely within the Local Area Plan Boundary as shown on the Mullingar Local Area Plan map MLAP 05 and the Site is on land zoned Proposed Residential MLAP 14.¹⁷ Service maps indicate the subject site contains a range services, including drainage, water mains, attenuation tanks, electrical and gas lines below ground, particularly in the area of the Rathgowan Wood housing estate at the southern end of the Site (Wherity 2014; Malachi Cullen 2008).

The wider landscape is composed of limestone and shale bedrock, while the soils generally comprise Elton Fine loamy drift with limestones to the east and west of Mullingar, with small pockets of peat to the north and south of the town.¹⁸ Topographically the area is generally low-lying (50–100m OD), and comprises part of the Carboniferous Lowland Plain. A topographical survey undertaken on the subject site shows the ground as undulating (Murphy Surveys Ltd 2020). The survey recorded levels of 102.1m OD in the north of the Site, 99.0m OD in the east, 97.8m OD in the southeast and 103.3m OD in the west and southwest, giving a slope from higher ground in the north and west to the east and southeast. Geotechnical investigation showed the lowest-lying areas, especially in the east and southeast, have deposits of peat (IGSL Ltd 2005). An AMS site inspection in October 2020 noted that the site is in pasture with spoil heaps of materials from previous groundworks and it was heavily

¹⁷ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/MLAP%20Volume%202%20Book%20of%20Maps.pdf> [Accessed January 2021]

¹⁸ <http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/map.php> [Accessed 17 September 2020]

waterlogged.

An archaeological investigation on the Site in 2004 comprised the excavation of eight test trenches (Guinan 2004). The report recorded topsoil of c.0.2–0.60m in depth, which overlay orange gravel boulder clay and yellow boulder clay on drier ground, changing to peaty soils above grey gravel and white marl in low-lying areas in the east. A 2005 geotechnical investigation on the Site comprised the excavation of twenty trial pits to depths of 1.5–2.5m below ground level (BGL) and dynamic probes at forty locations (IGSL Ltd 2005). This report recorded “variations in sub soil type across the site with upper deposits of topsoil, soft peats and silts underlain predominantly by deposits of firm to stiff gravelly clays / gravelly silts but with some loose to medium dense sandy gravels also encountered in places beneath the upper soils”; topsoil depths were noted in the range of 0.15–0.85m. Peat was identified in six of twenty test pits although the accompanying plan does not give full locations for these. One area of heavy waterlogging was also identified on the Site, located just northeast of the ringfort boundary in the southwest of the site.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric period

The County Heritage Plan for Westmeath 2018–2023¹⁹ indicates that the county has a wealth of prehistoric archaeological monuments including the royal site of Uisneach, prehistoric barrow burials, wooden trackways such as the Bronze Age road at Mayne, and various types of earthworks dotted throughout the landscape. Many prehistoric artefacts have also been found from early stone tools dating from the Mesolithic period to Bronze Age gold ornaments. The National Museum of Ireland (NMI) database records (Appendix 3) list no artefacts from the townlands of Rathgowan or Farranshock, or from Sarsanstown. However, a range of historic artefacts from the vicinity of Mullingar, including prehistoric stone axes, gold ornaments and bronze spearheads are recorded by the NMI.²⁰

A small number of recorded prehistoric sites are recorded in the vicinity of the Site, although none are located within the Study Area. The site of a former Standing Stone (WM019-089003) 1km to the east of the Site is recorded in the east of the Study Area. Standing Stones are usually Bronze Age in date,

¹⁹ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/conservationheritage/heritageplan/> [Accessed: November 2021].

²⁰ It must be noted the provenance of older finds from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may simply give some findspots as ‘Mullingar’ or ‘near Mullingar’ and it is unknown how far away from the Site some of these were discovered or even whether they were in their original locations. Thus, while these artefacts are from the wider area and similar materials could potentially be present on the Site, there is limited accurate information on findspots.

but the SMR records the following for this feature: “It is possible that this standing stone was not a prehistoric monument but the remains of a 19th century War Department Boundary Stone marking out the boundary of the military property belonging to Columb Barracks” (SMR WM019-089003).²¹

The nearest recorded prehistoric monuments to the Site are a complex of monuments including an enclosure (WM018-085002) and a pair of barrows or burial sites (WM018-085001, WM018-085003) on a low rise in Walshestown South, 2.6km to the northwest of the Site, and a large mound barrow (WM019-030) 2.3km to the north of the Site in Irishtown²². The area was clearly in use for burial during the prehistoric period and was likely settled, although no houses of this date have been identified in the area to date.

As above, the Site itself has some water-logged low-lying areas with peat and this is a typical location for *fulacht fiadh* or burnt mound sites. These monuments are comprised of a trough or pits, and/or a spread of burnt stone and charcoal, often without artefacts and they date mainly to the prehistoric period. There is potential for such archaeology on the Site, as well as possible burials or pits as found in archaeological investigations locally (Guinan 2004).

Medieval period

There are records of an early medieval ringfort named *Dun Bri* in the vicinity of Mullingar (Delaney 2006) although Mullingar’s foundation as a town is thought to date to the twelfth century. Conall mac Suibhne, a seventh-century King of Mide, held the land of Mullingar on which there was a fort. A number of artefacts of this date found in Mullingar give support to the suggestion of a secular early medieval residence in the area (as cited in WM019-089 SMR entry).

It is believed that Mullingar was the chief manor of William le Petit, who was granted the manor of Magheradernon by Hugh de Lacy. The parish church (WM019-089016) of All Saints seems to date to the late twelfth century and William le Petit was granted a four-day fair at Mullingar in 1207. These two features indicate that there was a nucleated settlement here from the beginning of the thirteenth century. The foundation, however, of the Augustinian (WM019-089009) and Dominican (WM019-089004) priories c.1227 and c.1237 respectively reflects significant activity in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. No early charters are known but a mention of the provost and bailiffs in 1297 indicates that the town corporation was in existence by this date (WM019-089 SMR entry). The extent of the manorial holding is not known, and it is unclear if it could have incorporated the Site as part of

²¹ <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/>

²² <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/>

the manor outfields.

Mullingar town's urban boundary lies to the east of the Site and its smaller historic core, lying outside the Study Area, is a recorded archaeological monument (WM019-089) and as an Historic Town its defences, including the walls and gates, are also a National Monument. The medieval monuments in the historic town of Mullingar consisted of an Anglo-Norman motte & bailey castle (WM019-089005), a stone castle known as Mullingar Castle (WM019-089001), All Saints' Parish Church (WM019-089016) and graveyard (WM019-089017), St. Mary's Augustinian Priory (WM019-089009), Holy Trinity Dominican Priory (WM019-089004), a Frankhouse (WM019-089027) belonging to the Knights Hospitaller, numerous urban castles (WM019-089001; WM019-089010; WM019-089029; WM019-089030; WM019-089032; WM019-089040-048), a town gaol (WM019-089007), a sessions house (WM019-089039), a bridge (WM019-089015) [Morans Bridge] over the River Brosna, a watermill (WM019-089006) known as the Mote Mill and a tucking mill called Francis's Mill (WM019-089033). The motte and bailey castle was constructed close to the fording point (WM019-089014) over the River Brosna. The location of a medieval road or 'way' passing through the area known as 'Bohyrbuy' [*Boher Bui*, Yellow road] has not been identified (WM019-089 SMR entry).

Post-Medieval to Modern period

The town had a difficult existence during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For instance, in 1484 Mullingar was burned by the Gaelic Uíi Maine and in 1475 the townspeople had to buy off Aodh Rua O Domhnaill in order to prevent him from burning it. The date of the construction of the first bridge (WM019-089015) is unknown but in 1569 'the bridge of Mullingar' is referred to as being 'near the churchyard'. In 1572 Mullingar was plundered and burned by the Clanricard Burkes. A highway called 'Bater Sedgre' in or near Mullingar, mentioned in 1573, cannot be identified today. In 1575, the town was devastated by plague and plundered and burned by Aodh MacUidir and Cormac O'Neill in 1587 (WM019-089 SMR entry).

The seventeenth century, however, was a period of prosperity. A reference to the 'West Gate' in a land grant of 1609 suggests that town defences (WM019-089035) had been constructed around Mullingar during the late sixteenth century. The extent of the defences is difficult to gauge but it is likely that their boundary was formed by the River Brosna on the east, by the line of Bishop's Gate Street and Friar's Mill Road on the north and by the boundary of the parish churchyard on the south. The motte and bailey (WM019-089005) may have been linked to the defences but it is not certain. The western boundary of the town is conjectural but the SMR entry suggests that the Square possibly formed the western limit of the defended town (WM019-089 SMR entry). These defences are therefore not expected to extend into the Study Area.

The 1656 Down Survey map of Co. Westmeath²³ depicts Mullingar as an oval-shaped fortified town standing on the banks of the River Brosna. In 1661, Sir Arthur Forbes was granted the castle, two now dissolved monasteries and the town of Mullingar as a manor.

In 1667, the confirmation of a land grant to Sir Arthur Forbes under the Acts of Settlement and Explanation listed in the town of Mullingar (WM019-089), a mount which was the remains of the Anglo-Norman earth and timber castle (WM019-089005), a number of castles (WM019-089001; WM019-089010; WM019-089029; WM019-089030; WM019-089032; WM019-089040-048), three mills (WM019-089006; WM019-089033; WM019-089038), a Dominican abbey (WM019-089004), an Augustinian abbey of Canons Regular (WM019-089009) and a Session House (WM019-089039) (WM019-089 SMR entry). The historic town of Mullingar was described in 1682 by Sir Henry Piers, who recorded the existence of an over-shaft mill (WM019-089006), two other mills (WM019-089033; WM019-089038), two monasteries (WM019-089009), (WM019-089004); one of these stood in the east end of the town, the other on the west end of the town. Also, some 'castles' (WM019-089001; WM019-089008; WM019-089010; WM019-089029; WM019-089030; WM019-089032) which likely include tower houses or fortified houses in the area, a gaol (WM019-089007) a session house (WM019-089039) and a church (WM019-089016). He noted that the 'whole town and commons' was 'given in fee to the Right Hon. The Lord of Granard and his heirs, the ancient corporation is dissolved, and the whole town and liberties, with other his lordship's lands in this county are by his majesty erected into a manor' (WM019-089 SMR entry).

In 1682, Piers indicates that it was a thriving town in which many of the old buildings were either restored or replaced. In 1690, during the Williamite Wars, earthwork fortifications were constructed around the historic town (WM019-089) of Mullingar. These fortifications may have incorporated the earlier town defences (WM019-089035) dating from the late sixteenth century (Andrews and Davies 1992, 10). In 1691, new fortifications were constructed around the town which may have included the construction of a star-shaped fort around All Saints' parish church (WM019-089016) and graveyard (WM019-089017) as shown on a map of Mullingar dating from 1691 (WM019-089 SMR entry).

The Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014–2020 historical background on the town notes that in 1806, a transport revolution was brought to the town with the completion of the Royal Canal, followed by the railway in 1848. Nineteenth-century Mullingar was an important military centre and many British army regiments were stationed in the town, presumably at the Barracks on the west side of the town which is located within the Study Area. The original barracks were built in 1814 to accommodate 1000

²³ <http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/index.html> [Accessed: November 2021]

soldiers and it is likely that the majority of these were housed in these two barrack buildings. It was originally named Wellington Barracks, like many of the barrack complexes built in Ireland at the time. During the First World War, the town was a major military training depot (MLAP, 2014, 11). The barracks was renamed Columb Barracks in 1922 after it was handed over from the British to the fledgling Irish State on independence.

The Barracks has numerous historically significant connections, being named after Patrick Columb, a member of the National Army who was killed on Mary Street, Mullingar in 1922.²⁴ It was also the location of an infamous speech in 1976 where the then Minister for Defence, Paddy Donegan, declared that the President (and Commander in-Chief of the Armed Forces) Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, was ‘a thundering disgrace’ causing some shock nationally and the later resignation of the President.²⁵

In 1858, Lord Greville purchased Mullingar town and his family remained as landlords of Mullingar until the 1920s. During the First World War, the town was a major military training depot (MLAP 2014, 11).

Historical Mapping

The Down Survey maps of Ireland were drawn in 1656–58 and are some of the earliest nationally surveyed maps available, possibly showing the country close to what it may have looked like during the late medieval period. Urban areas, churches and castles, and some topographical features such as rivers and hills are noted. On the Down Survey map for the Barony of Moyashell and Maherdernon²⁶ Mullingar is depicted as a roughly circular enclosed or defended settlement on a river with the placenames ‘Rathgowe’ and ‘Sarsonstown’ shown to its southwest; the placename ‘Farransollot’ may refer to Farranshock. Two areas immediately surrounding the town are noted as commons land.

The first-edition six-inch OS map for the area²⁷ dates to 1838 and shows Rathgowan townland extending to the north and south of the modern R393 road (Figure 4). Its boundary on the west side, where it adjoins the ringfort (WM019-046), does not appear to have changed since this date. A total of six buildings line the R393 road and two buildings that appear to be a small vernacular house and

²⁴<https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/15310007/columb-barracks-ashe-road-mullingar-mullingar-countywestmeath#:~:text=The%20site%20for%20the%20barracks,in%20these%20two%20barrack%20building> [Accessed: November 2021]

²⁵ Proceedings 1963, 1964. *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 31, no. 1/2 (1964): 104-05. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25535424> [Accessed: November 2021]

²⁶[http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php - bm=Moyashell+and+Maherdernon&c=Westmeath&p=Mollingare](http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php-bm=Moyashell+and+Maherdernon&c=Westmeath&p=Mollingare) <http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php>

²⁷ Sheet WM019, surveyed 1836, published 1838

outbuilding are shown in the western extent of the Site, accessed by an avenue leading southward from the R393 road (Plate 3). The Site is divided into small fields, all of which appear to be pasture and are not indicated on mapping as marshy or wetland, despite the known presence of peat and waterlogged land on the Site today. A narrow road or path leads southeast-wards from the vernacular house avenue, cutting across the fields towards the town boundary, which was once following the line of a road at this point. The remainder of the townland is agricultural land in fields. The urban extent of Mullingar town adjoins the east side of Rathgowan and covers a portion of the southeast of the Site. The barracks on Ashe Road is shown as a rectangular walled compound of buildings at this time, although it is surrounded by fields as the town does not fill its urban extent. The barracks (completed 1814–19) were originally known as Wellington Barracks and later renamed Columb Barracks after being handed over to the Irish Free State in 1922.²⁸ An area of commons is shown to the North of the barracks.

The 25-inch map²⁹ from 1913 shows Rathgowan House was built to the north of the R393, with a laundry building then located to the northwest of the Site which is no longer extant (Figure 5). Otherwise, the same field divisions depicted on the 25-inch map remain on the Site; however, Mullingar has an expanded town footprint with new buildings between the military barracks and the Site. During the twentieth century, a bend on the R393 road just northwest of the site was straightened. The nineteenth-century field boundaries have been removed to create larger fields and new housing and roads have been constructed; the area to the east of the Site has been developed as the town of Mullingar expands. The Barracks was not named on the earlier maps above although it appears on the 1957 6-inch map³⁰ as Columb Barracks.

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columb_Barracks [accessed 12 February 2021]

²⁹ Sheet WM019-09, surveyed 1911, published 1913

³⁰ Sheet WM019, surveyed 1911, published 1957

Recorded Archaeological Sites

Two recorded archaeological monuments occur within the 1km study area Table 2 Figure 2. There are no recorded archaeological monuments on the Site, however there is one recorded archaeological site located adjoining the site. Sarsanstown ringfort (WM019-046) lies on the west side of the site and its Zone of Notification extends c.30m into the western portion of the Site (Figure 2). The only other recorded monument within the 1km Study Area is the site of a standing stone (WM019-089003) located 760m east of the Site, within modern Mullingar town. As discussed above, this standing stone is recorded as likely to have been erected in the nineteenth century as a boundary marker associated with the barracks, and when first recorded was not in its original location. Military archive plans³¹ of the barracks show the original locations of nineteen boundary stones located both around the barracks walls and stretching northwards into fields along the line of a sewage system. The stone is therefore regarded as built heritage; it will not be included on the next revision of the statutory RMP.

The next nearest recorded monuments, lying outside the Study Area, are a number of ringforts including WM019-045 at Grange North, located 1km southwest of the Site, WM019-033 1km northwest of the Site in Irishtown, and in Walshestown South a ringfort (WM018-120) in association with a hut site (WM018-120001) lie 1.8km to the southwest of the Site.

Ringforts, raths and related monuments, such as cashels and raised/platform raths, are all traditionally considered forms of early medieval enclosed settlement (Stout 1997). However, excavation and topographical studies have shown that within these classifications are a wide variety of morphologies and dates (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2008, 51–72). They can be univallate, bivallate or trivallate, can vary greatly in size, can occur singly or in dense concentrations and may or may not contain evidence of settlement. Although the vast majority appear to have been built during the second half of the first millennium AD, in areas of Gaelic rule they were sometimes inhabited into later times. This is particularly true west of the Shannon, especially in the Burren of County Clare where there are examples of continued occupation in cashels as late as the seventeenth century (Fitzpatrick 2009). It is also important to note, when considering what the early medieval inhabited landscape was like, that other forms of settlement existed; these included unenclosed settlements, crannogs, settlement cemeteries, rectangular enclosures and ecclesiastical sites (O'Sullivan & McCormick 2017).

The Sarsanstown monument is recorded as an almost circular earthen-banked ringfort, with its morphology in line with other recorded examples and in an area adjacent to a number of other known medieval ringforts. However, it is in poorly drained land and may perhaps not have been suitable for

³¹ <http://mpdsearch.militaryarchives.ie/> Plan AD119275-009 [Accessed: November 2021]

occupation, suggesting it could perhaps have been an agricultural enclosure of similar form and unknown date.

Table 2: Recorded archaeological sites within the study area

Reference	Designation	Site Type	Townland (County)	ITM (Centre point)	Approximate Distance
WM019-046	RMP	Ringfort	Sarsanstown	641819, 753298	0m
WM019-089003	SMR	Standing Stone	Mullingar	642899, 753342	720m

Further information on the recorded archaeological monuments within the Study Area can be found in Appendix 1.

Previous Archaeological Investigations

A number of archaeological investigations located within and in the immediate environs of the Study Area are recorded in the online Database of Excavation Reports and the TII Digital Heritage Collection. Appendix 2 provides a summary account of the past archaeological investigations carried out within the Study Area.

Two past archaeological investigations were undertaken within the Study Area (Figure 2). The only recorded past investigation on the Site was a programme of test trenching, undertaken prior to an earlier proposed development in 2006–07 (Licence No. 04E0980)³² which was partially located on the current Site. This investigation of eight trenches (I–VIII) covered a total of 585m²; parts of four of those trenches extended into the Site, covering 141m² or 0.23% of the current Site’s total area of 6.06 hectares. All eight trenches, except Trench II, were recorded as archaeologically sterile (Figure 7). Trench II in the south of the Site contained three areas of burning, two of which were not archaeological in nature. The third area of burning was located on the Site, found directly below the topsoil, 2m from the eastern end of Trench II. It was a shallow cut feature (C5), measuring 2.12m north–south by 1.46m wide and 0.34m deep. The pit was filled with charcoal-stained soil mixed with sandstone and limestone pebbles and it contained no finds. This feature was fully excavated and interpreted as archaeological, although its function and date are not known as no artefacts were recovered and no radiocarbon dating was undertaken at the time of reporting.

The other recorded past investigation in the townland of Rathgowan in the online Database of Excavation Reports³³ was a programme of works comprising the excavation of 43 test trenches,

³² <https://excavations.ie/report/2004/Westmeath/0012853/> [Accessed: November 2021].

³³ <https://excavations.ie/report/2006/Westmeath/0016835/> [Accessed: November 2021].

monitoring of topsoil stripping, and the later phase including excavation of a group of three pits in 2006–07 (Licence No. 06E0953). This investigation was located just to the north of the Site in Rathgowan on the north side of the current line of the R393 road. Two of the three pits were similar in type, containing deposits of charcoal-rich soil with fragments of burnt bone. The third pit showed signs of *in-situ* burning on the base and sides; it also contained deposits of charcoal-rich soil with fragments of burnt bone but contained more ash and burnt bone fragments than the unburnt pits. This pit group was interpreted by the excavator as two possible cremation burial pits and a pyre of possibly Bronze Age date; however, the result of any post-excavation analysis was not available for consultation as part of this baseline study. A range of unstratified objects including post-medieval to modern pottery sherds, modern brick, glass, slag and clay pipe artefacts were found within the topsoil and are not directly related to the pits.

A geophysical survey was carried out under licence 20R0256 by J.M. Leigh Surveys within the subject site in November 2020 on behalf of AMS and Davy for the proposed SHD development (J.M. Leigh Surveys Ltd. 2020). A gradiometer survey covered an area totalling c.1.5 hectares across two discrete areas; Area A was located adjacent to the recorded ringfort (WM019-046) within its Zone of Notification and Area B was located in the southern portion of the Site, adjacent to a housing estate (Figure 8). The total area covered by the geophysics survey was 24.75% of the Site's total area of 6.06 hectares. Ground conditions were not conducive to the full Site being surveyed.

Indications of potential previously unrecorded archaeology were identified within the Site through geophysical survey. In Area A, a number of short linear responses were recorded adjacent to the recorded ringfort; however, there was no clear archaeological pattern, and these may represent agricultural activity of unknown date. In Area B, further likely agricultural activity was represented by short linear responses indicative of ploughing and drainage features. A notable trend running through the east of Area B does not appear to be associated with the background agricultural responses and it may represent a former field division or other linear feature. A short linear response located at the western extent of Area B has a magnetic signature indicative of a ditched feature and may be of archaeological interest (Figure 8, Feature 4). The date of these potential archaeological features is unknown and as ringforts were agricultural homesteads with surrounding fields, it is possible some of the features identified could be contemporary with or related to it.

Archaeological Finds

Appendix 3 lists the 49 archaeological artefacts recorded within the Study Area or in the Mullingar

area by the National Museum of Ireland's (NMI) finds database.^{34,35} As the Study Area extends into the urban area of Mullingar, some artefacts with a find spot listed only as 'Mullingar' appear on the list but could have been found in any part of the town. These include prehistoric artefacts such as stone axes, gold ornaments such as torcs, bronze spearheads, later material including coins, a leather shoe preserved in peat in a bog, and some human remains from burials. Their presence indicates the Mullingar area has been an arena of human activity since at least the Neolithic period and possibly since shortly following the occupation of the island of Ireland in the Early Holocene c.12,500 to 11,500 years ago³⁶.

No finds are listed as deriving from Rathgowan or Farranshock, or Sarsanstown townlands. One bronze spearhead, likely of prehistoric date, is noted to have been found 'near the barracks', which is assumed to be Columb Barracks located within the Study Area to the east of the Site on the edge of Mullingar town. The presence of highly significant artefacts in the area, such as the Bronze Age gold and bronze items, suggest there may have been some votive deposition of artefacts either singly or in hoards as these are known to have been placed in wet contexts such as peat bogs and lakes.³⁷ The waterlogged areas and peat present in low-lying parts of the Site could potentially contain such material.

Archaeological Potential

Given the distribution and proximity of recorded archaeological sites in the area, including ringforts and barrows, and the range of artefacts listed by the NMI, it is clear the area has seen activity since the prehistoric period and been well-settled since. While it initially appears that there are no recorded archaeological sites located within the Site, its boundary adjoins a recorded ringfort monument on its west side where the townland boundaries of Rathgowan and Sarsanstown meet. The Zone of Notification of this monument extends into the west side of the Site, indicating the possibility of unrecorded archaeology surviving below ground within this area.

A previous archaeological investigation on the Site (Guinan 2004) also found a possible archaeological feature of uncertain function and date, comprising a pit containing stone with evidence for burning.

³⁴ Available at: <https://heritagemaps.ie/WebApps/HeritageMaps/>

³⁵ Note: the online database is a partial record only. Due to coronavirus restrictions a review of the internal digital database (Topographical Files) held in the NMI has been undertaken by an NMI Duty Officer; research of the full catalogues of all recorded stray finds in their paper archives has not been undertaken.

³⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277379116300610>,
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3318/priac.2020.120.01?seq=1>

³⁷ <http://www.mbarchaology.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Ritual-deposits-in-Ireland.pdf> [Accessed 06 January 2021]

Morphologically, this feature resembles pits identified in archaeological investigations located outside the Site immediately to the north on the northern side of the R393 road (Delaney, 2006). This second archaeological investigation in the Study Area recorded three possible Bronze Age pits with some burnt bone, which may indicate a cremation burial was present although the results of post-excavation findings are not known.

The Site inspection by AMS Ltd showed that the area of the ringfort is quite waterlogged, suggesting it may not have been the most suitable for occupation, although the water table may have been quite different when it was in use. There is potential for archaeological remains surviving below ground across the Site, particularly in the vicinity of the ringfort.

The geophysical survey on the Site (J.M. Leigh Surveys 2020) identified a number of potential archaeological features and some likely agricultural features in the west of the Site.

Based on existing records and investigations there is therefore a high potential for surviving unrecorded subsurface remains to be present within the Site, particularly in the west in the vicinity of the ringfort, with some low potential for a burnt mound or *fulacht fiadh*, and there is some potential for the discovery of isolated artefacts.

Recorded Architectural Heritage Sites

There are no previously recorded architectural heritage sites located within the Site. Forty-three architectural heritage sites fall within the 1km Study Area (Table 3; Figure 2). All are recorded by the National Inventory Architectural Heritage (NIAH), with many of the buildings in Columb Barracks also being included on the statutory Register of Protected Structures (RPS) for County Westmeath. The nearest are Rathgowan House (NIAH Reg. No. 15310001) and Barrack View (RPS No. 019-020; NIAH Reg. No. 15310002). Rathgowan House in Brackagh townland, lies c.140m northwest of the site. The name might suggest it is an estate house and its owners once controlled the lands of Rathgowan, however the records show this is a small house built in suburban style c.1920 and it appears to have no relation to the site, other than forming part of its local setting. Barrack View is a house c.250m to the east of the Site dated to 1870–1900. It is not currently shown on the HEV or NIAH Building Survey³⁸ but it was listed in previous NIAH GIS layers (June 2017; see Figure 2).

The remaining recorded architectural heritage sites are not related to the Site and are concentrated in and around Columb Barracks on the western outskirts of Mullingar town, located c.460m to the east of the Site (Figure 2). These include the barracks gateway, boundary walls, internal buildings such

³⁸ <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/15310002/> [Accessed: November 2021]

as barracks buildings, a chapel, gym, house and a well. Just outside the barracks walls lie a milepost and a post-box recorded by the NIAH (Table 3). This was a British military barracks before being handed over to the Irish State on independence. There appear to be local beliefs that land adjacent to the barracks holds buried ordnance and that some munitions were buried on a nearby landed estate after independence in the early twentieth century, although there are no reliable sources quoted for these suspicions³⁹. Military archives for the barracks include an undated Ordnance Survey plan (AD119276-02) of an extension to Mullingar rifle range, which was located on open ground in Marlinstown Bog, Clongawney and the Downs c. 1.8km east of Mullingar town.⁴⁰ In the same collection a 1917 ground plan of the barracks (AD119275-009) notes a 'Drill Field' as an 'Area of War Department Property' on the south side of the barracks walls. There are no records of associated ordnance grounds surrounding the barracks although the surrounding lands of similar military installations, such as at Athlone, would have been used for such activity. It is unknown whether such lands adjacent to the barracks were also used for firearms training or could hold unrecorded unexploded ordnance (UXO) but it may be an issue to consider for the Site, and contact should be made with the barracks, who may have an archivist and who could advise if necessary.

Unrecorded potential architectural heritage may be present on the site as partial remains of a stone wall are present in the location where two small vernacular buildings and an avenue leading from the R393 road to the north are visible on OS mapping (Figure 4, Plate 3). Historic mapping shows two vernacular buildings located in the west of the Site during the nineteenth century (Figure 4), likely a house and outbuilding which may survive as foundations, floors and hearths at or below ground level with possible remains of stone or mud walls, roof materials, iron work or similar examples of traditional building materials. It is currently unclear if the wall remains relate to these buildings or if the avenue was walled and partially survives.

Table 3: Recorded architectural heritage sites within the study area (NIAH)

NIAH Reg. No.	RPS No.	Name (if known)	Importance Rating	Original Use
15310001	N/A	Rathgowan House	Regional	house
15310002	019-020	Barrack View	Local	house
15310003	019-021	Columb Barracks	Regional	barracks
15310004	N/A	Butler's Public House	Local	public house
15310005	019-022	N/A	Regional	post box

³⁹ <https://erinascentandwordpress.wordpress.com/2016/07/01/bloodshed-in-mullingar-civil-war-begins-in-co-westmeath-april-1922/> [Accessed: November 2021]

⁴⁰ <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/home/> [Accessed: November 2021]

NIAH Reg. No.	RPS No.	Name (if known)	Importance Rating	Original Use
15310006	019-023	N/A	Local	monument
15310007	019-024	Columb Barracks	Regional	barracks
15310008	019-025	St. Colman's chapel	Regional	church/chapel
15310009	019-026	Columb Barracks	Regional	building misc; rectory/glebe/vicarage/ curate's house
15310010	019-027	Columb Barracks	Regional	gates/railings/walls
15310011	019-028	Columb Barracks	Regional	guard house
15310012	019-029	Columb Barracks	Regional	barracks; building misc
15310013	019-030	Columb Barracks	Regional	officers' mess
15310014	019-031	Columb Barracks	Regional	tank/silo
15310015	019-032	Columb Barracks	Regional	prison/jail
15310016	019-033	Columb Barracks	Regional	well
15310017	019-034	Columb Barracks	Regional	barracks
15310018	019-035	Columb Barracks	Regional	barracks
15310019	019-036	Columb Barracks	Regional	sports hall/centre/gymnasium
15310024	019-039	N/A	Regional	house
15310025	019-040	N/A	Regional	house
15310026	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310026	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310027	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310027	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310028	N/A	N/A	Local	house
15310029	019-041	N/A	Local	vent pipe
15310030	N/A	Valley Cottages	Local	house
15310030	N/A	Valley Cottages	Local	house
15310030	N/A	Valley Cottages	Local	house

NIAH Reg. No.	RPS No.	Name (if known)	Importance Rating	Original Use
15310030	N/A	Valley Cottages	Local	house
15310224	N/A	McKeown Terrace	Regional	house
15310225	N/A	McKeown Terrace	Regional	house
15310231	019-211	N/A	Regional	milestone/milepost
15310232	019-212	23 Patrick Street	Regional	house

Placenames and Folklore

Placename sources for the townlands within the Study Area note the Irish name for Rathgowan or Farranshock is *Fearann Seac nó Ráth Ghabhann*.⁴¹ For Rathgowan townland, *rath* is a term for a ringfort and *gabhan* means a smith or skilled metalworker. In Farranshock, *fearann* means land, *seac* is not given on loganim.ie but can be translated as ‘jack’⁴²; alternatively, it may relate to *sceach*, meaning a thorn bush as the land is rough grazing. The placename ‘Rathgowne’ is first recorded in 1609 and ‘Farimshock’ in 1741.⁴³ Both names are also listed on loganim.ie in association with Sarsanstown from 1746. It is possible land divisions were not clear-cut at that time and these names were used interchangeably for the area of the Site, leading to the townland having two names even today.

According to the Urban Survey of Westmeath (Bradley et. al. 1985, 113–14), the placename Mullingar is derived from *Muileann Cearr*, the wry or left-hand mill, and according to the twelfth-century Life of St Colmán mac Luacháin it commemorates a miracle of the saint who caused the mill on the River Brosna to turn left-handwise. In many medieval documents, the name is prefixed by Ad- or Ath-, indicating that the town stood on an important ford (WM019-089 SMR entry).

The repository for folklore records, Duchas.ie, holds no records of folklore relating to the townland names of Rathgowan, Farranshock, or Sarsanstown in County Westmeath.⁴⁴

⁴¹<https://www.townlands.ie/westmeath/moyashel-and-maheradermon/mullingar/mullingar-rural/rathgowan-or-farranshock/> [Accessed: November 2021]

⁴²<https://www.translate-irish.com/en/dictionary-irish-english/seac> [Accessed: November 2021]

⁴³<https://www.logainm.ie/en/51903> [Accessed: November 2021]

⁴⁴<https://www.duchas.ie/en> [Accessed: November 2021]

Proposed Development

While final designs are not yet available, the draft proposed development comprises the construction of 214 dwelling units in a housing estate, as well as all associated services, roads and landscaping (Figure 6). Buildings and roads are proposed to be laid out with a buffer zone of open space provided for from the edge of the monument (WM019-046), currently defined by the bank and hedgerow running along the shared townland boundary, covering its Zone of Notification (Figure 3). No buildings are proposed to be located in the buffer zone area although it is assumed landscaping will be required (Figure 6).

Draft proposed formation levels for conventional strip building foundations for the houses spread across the majority of the Site are *c.*1.0m below current ground level (m BGL), with a similar level expected for roads and services (*pers. comm.*, Isabel Ottewill, Davy, 8 December 2020). The two proposed blocks of apartments in the southeast of the site, Block 1 and Block 2 (Figure 6), will have piled foundations with a ground beam of currently unspecified depth and each is proposed to have a lift with the lift pit measuring approximately 2 x 2m in plan and up to 1.2m below floor level. There is a possibility that site levels will be raised by the introduction of made ground in certain areas for drainage purposes, although full details are not yet available (*pers. comm.* Paul Casey, Punch, 15 December 2020).

The geotechnical report (IGSL Ltd 2005) found that ground conditions in many areas could support strip foundations of up to 1.0m BGL, although certain areas were of softer ground and provision should be made for the possible dewatering of foundation excavations and for trench support systems to be used in areas of deeper excavations.

Impact Assessment

To summarise the above, the subject site had some limited groundworks carried out for a previous planning application (04/5226), including a geotechnical investigation. It is determined to be an area of archaeological potential by virtue of:

- the extant ringfort at the western side of the Site, the field boundary is part of the monument;
- vernacular buildings on the Site dating to at least the 19th century, possibly foundations and low wall of a house and shed remaining, an access lane or avenue from the northeast survives;
- past archaeological investigation on the site which identified an archaeological pit of unknown date and function;
- the presence of previously unrecorded significant archaeological features identified on an adjacent development to the north of the Site;
- the topographic suitability of the site for burnt mounds or *fulachtí fia* to occur in low-lying, wetter portions of the site;
- the quantity of high-status gold and bronze objects recorded from the general locality, and
- the geophysical survey (Leigh 2020) demonstrated the potential for surviving subsurface archaeological features. The nature and significance of the identified geophysical anomalies should be established by targeted test excavation.

The presence and significance of possible unrecorded archaeology should be established by further test-excavation.

A recent topographical survey recorded the ground level as ranging from 97.8–103.3m OD (Murphy Surveys 2020).

The local geology comprises natural boulder clays, gravels, peat and marl overlain directly by topsoil. Topsoil on the Site was recorded as 0.15–0.85m in depth by archaeological and geotechnical investigations in 2004 and 2005, although this may have changed since due to the above-mentioned groundworks.

The proposed development comprises the construction of 214 dwelling units, as well as all associated services, roads and landscaping (Figure 6). The proposed formation levels of the strip building foundations for all houses on the Site are c.1.0m BGL. The proposed foundation levels for the blocks of apartments are not known but piled foundations, with a ground slab of unknown depth, are proposed as well as two lift pits extending to an assumed c.1.2m below ground floor levels.

Given the above draft proposals, based on current ground levels and an impact level of 1.0m BGL, the minimum impact level for the houses, roads and services is expected to range from 96.8m to 102.3m OD within the footprint of strip foundations, services and roads. This would remove any shallow archaeological remains within their footprint. However, it is assumed the topsoil across the site would be cleared prior to construction and impacts would extend below that level. Any archaeological

features exposed directly below the topsoil would be subject to damage or complete removal without archaeological monitoring, testing or excavation. Archaeological survival of any potential unrecorded archaeological remains is possible between the footprints of foundations and services but would be at risk of harm from site clearance works and traffic, unless identified in advance and protected or subject to preservation by record.

The impact for the blocks of apartments will depend on the levels of their foundation slabs; the lift pits will have an impact of c.1.2m below the ground floor level. Although there will be no archaeological survival within the footprint of any piles, survival between piles is possible if not densely grouped. However, shallow discrete features are vulnerable to site traffic and may need to be excavated and recorded prior to site works progressing.

The proposed development will not directly impact any known cultural heritage assets or previously designated recorded architectural heritage sites however, some possible standing remains of a vernacular building or wall seen on historic mapping will be directly impacted. As noted above, where archaeological remains are present, they would potentially be directly impacted by any proposed ground disturbance extending below the topsoil including temporary works, site clearance, topsoil removal, water testing, construction works, services installation and landscaping. The introduction of made ground for drainage purposes could also have an impact on any unrecorded archaeology present through compaction or disturbance during works, while also introducing an effective buffer between the natural subsoil and the construction level.

The setting of Recorded Monument (WM019-046) would be negatively affected by the development, although the creation of a buffer from the field boundary defining the site's above ground extent would help mitigate the impact. The Site boundary forms part of the monument and no works should be undertaken here without advance consultation, agreement and appropriate licences. Works in this area would be subject to consultation with the NMS and may have a planning condition attached; conditions of planning associated with previous development applications on this site (04/5226) are likely to be re-issued and applicable as a minimum requirement for any newly proposed development.

Recommendations

All archaeological recommendations set out below are subject to the agreement of the NMS of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Architectural survey: Partial remains of a stone wall may require a preliminary survey to be carried out to identify its nature, extent, date and significance. If determined to be of heritage significance, further recording may be appropriate before site works take place.

Test Excavation: Given the archaeological potential of the Site, a programme of geophysical survey was carried out under licence in 2020; this survey identified a small number of anomalies which represent areas of archaeological potential. Based on the finding of this survey, it is recommended that archaeological test excavations be undertaken in the identified areas of archaeological potential where ground disturbance works will be carried out as part of the development in order to establish the presence, nature and extent of any potential archaeological features and the possible vernacular building noted above. The geophysical survey results allow test trenches to be targeted to areas identified as of archaeological potential, covering approximately 12% of the Site area. The proposed methodology for any such Test investigations will require consultation with and approval from the NMS, and should only be undertaken by a licence-eligible archaeologist. A period of at least three weeks should be allowed for the processing of an archaeological excavation licence by the Statutory Authorities to undertake this work. A report on the findings of the archaeological work should be submitted to the relevant authorities and to the Client within the timeframe specified as part of the grant of the archaeological licence.

Archaeological Monitoring: Following test excavations, the remaining areas of the Site could potentially hold unrecorded archaeological remains. All ground disturbance works within the Site, such as site clearance, topsoil stripping or groundworks should therefore be monitored by a licence-eligible archaeologist subject to consultation with the NMS. It is normally recommended that a site inspection is undertaken prior to any groundworks being undertaken. A site visit already carried out for this assessment included an inspection and further inspection may be required to inform the archaeological strategy, method statements and risk assessments etc. Archaeological monitoring should be carried out under a licence issued by the NMS of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage so that if any archaeological features/remains are identified an excavation licence is already in place. A period of three weeks should be allowed for the upgrade of any existing archaeological licence issued for test excavations by the Statutory Authorities.

Isolated or small features may possibly be partially or fully excavated and recorded during test excavation to establish their nature and extent. Depending on the nature and extent of potential identified archaeology, and subject to consultation with the NMS, any extensive remains identified may require further open-area archaeological excavation prior to construction. Highly significant remains may need to be preserved *in situ*, although there are currently no indications of any such remains being present on the Site.

Although the risk is considered to be almost negligible, the potential for unexploded ordnance or munitions to occur on this Site should be advised by the client and assessed as part of the health and safety risk assessment carried out prior to undertaking any intrusive archaeological or ground works.

That risk assessment should include control measures which explicitly set out the procedure to be undertaken in the event of the discovery of UXO, in accordance with best practice and advice from suitably qualified persons.

Buffer Zone and Landscaping around the Recorded Monument: As the condition of planning associated with the previous development application for this site included the creation of a 20m buffer / development exclusion zone around the ringfort on this site, it is likely that similar conditions would be re-issued in relation to any development application in the future. Therefore, it is recommended that any proposal for landscaping within the Zone of Notification surrounding the extant monument adjoining the Site should be in collaboration with the scheme archaeologist and with prior approval of the NMS. In the event of landscaping works occurring within the area of potential for the recorded monument, there is likely to be a requirement for archaeological monitoring of same. As the hedgerow townland boundary forms part of the recorded monument, and is a historic feature in itself, no works should be undertaken on this boundary without prior approval.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Recorded Archaeological Sites within the Study Area⁴⁵

SMR No.: WM019-046

Class: Ringfort - rath

Townland: Sarsanstown

Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP: Yes

Distance from proposed development: 0m (adjoining)

Description:

‘Situated on a very slight rise, in pasture. Depicted on the revised 1913 ed. OS 25-inch map as a curvilinear field boundary. Monument described in 1983 as a semi-circular shaped area (dims. 46m E-W; 44m N-S) enclosed by traces of an inner bank, with possible intervening fosse and a possible outer bank. There are very slight traces of a low inner bank at NW and N. A shallow ditch is present from SW-W-N-E-SE and may represent an intervening fosse. A possible outer bank is present from SW-W-N-E-SE and is incorporated into a field fence supporting a mature thorn hedge. A low, wide scarp defines the monument from SE-SW. The interior is generally level and featureless. Monument is visible on Digital Globe aerial photography as a curvilinear tree-lined field boundary. ‘

SMR No.: WM019-089003

Class: Standing Stone

Townland: Mullingar

Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP: No

Distance from proposed: c700m

Description:

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

⁴⁵ Includes recorded archaeological sites located within the study area. The information is extracted from the online SMR database available through the HEV (<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>)

Appendix 2: Previous Archaeological Investigations within the Study Area

Licence No.	Site Name	Excavation Bulletin Ref.	Author	Summary of Findings (www.excavations.ie)
04E0980	Farranshock/ Sarranstown (sic)	2004:12853	Bernard Guinan	<p>Testing was required in advance of the construction of a housing development at Sarranstown and Farranshock townlands, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. The development consists of the phased construction of a housing scheme over a four-year period. This testing focused on the part of the lands due to be developed during Phase I of construction (c. 3ha in size). In addition, testing was undertaken at strategic points in Phase III of the development, although works here are not planned until 2008.</p> <p>In Phase I, four trenches were excavated using two mechanical diggers equipped with toothless buckets. Trenches I-IV were 1.5m wide and laid out east-west from boundary to boundary at regular intervals. The trenches were stripped from sod through topsoil to a natural boulder clay horizon. The western part of the test area was higher than the eastern part, which ran downhill into an area of marsh. The drier portion of the trenches consisted of peaty topsoil overlying a well-drained light-grey gravel. Occasional cultivation furrows were noted cut into this gravel. As testing progressed downslope, the topsoil changed to a well-defined mid-brown peat horizon overlying a wet, dark-grey, stony boulder clay. At the deepest, wettest part of the trenches this boulder clay changed to white marl before the land began to rise again and the natural reverted to the well-drained boulder clay overlain by the dryer peaty topsoil.</p> <p>Trenches I, III and IV were archaeologically sterile. A small area of burning was noted at the edge of Trench II. The trench was expanded at this point to determine the nature and extent of this feature. Three areas of burning were identified, two of which were not archaeological in nature. The third area was a shallow cut feature filled with charcoal-stained soil mixed with sandstone and limestone pebbles. This would appear to be an isolated feature.</p> <p>Test-trenches V-VIII were excavated to determine the nature and extent of a number of anomalies identified in aerial photography at the north-eastern portion of the larger development site closest to Ashe Road. Each of these four trenches was 1.5m wide and 10m long. All of these trenches were archaeologically sterile.</p> <p>Site type: Testing ITM: E 641912m, N 753408m</p>

Licence No.	Site Name	Excavation Bulletin Ref.	Author	Summary of Findings (www.excavations.ie)
				Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees): 53.528952, -7.367858
06E0953	Rathgowan, Westmeath	2006:2081	Dominic Delaney	<p>Pre-development testing was carried out on the site of a proposed housing development at Rathgowan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, in November 2006. The site is located on the north-west edge of the town and is not near any known monument. Testing comprised the excavation of 43 trenches on the footprint of the proposed development. The topsoil averaged 0.3m in thickness and overlay boulder clay and black shale limestone outcrop. A probable Bronze Age pit feature was uncovered during testing. It presented as a black outer and grey inner circle with a total diameter of 0.35m. A quarter section revealed three depositions, the first a grey silt, the second the charcoal-rich lining of the pit and the final grey ash-enriched deposit. This final central deposit contained burnt-bone fragments that could clearly be seen in section. Full excavation of the pit feature and its environs and monitoring of topsoil removal in the vicinity of the pit was recommended.</p> <p>Site type: Pit</p> <p>ITM: E 641912m, N 753408m</p> <p>Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees): 53.528952, -7.367858</p>
06E0953 ext.	Ashe Road, Mullingar, Westmeath	2007:1919	Dominic Delaney	<p>Excavation of three pit features took place on 16 and 17 January 2007 under an extension to licence 06E0953 (Excavations 2006, No. 2081). A 20m by 20m area of archaeological potential had been identified around a single pit feature found during testing before a residential development. The pit (No. 1) was fully excavated and found to have two deposits of charcoal-enriched silt and clay with burnt bone inclusions. Two additional pits were found within a 3m radius of the original. Pit No. 3 was very similar to the original, with charcoal-enriched clay and silt deposits which included burnt bone. Pit No. 2 was slightly larger than the others and showed signs of in situ burning, with scorched clay at the base of the pit extending out over the rim. It also contained the same charcoal-enriched clay/silt deposits but it had a higher percentage of ash and burnt bone than the other pits. It seems likely from this evidence that Pit No. 2 was used to carry out cremations and the burnt bones were deposited in the other two. No evidence of other features such as enclosing elements or ditches was found. No diagnostic artefacts were found within the pits. It is likely, however, that the burials date from the late Bronze Age or Iron Age. Monitoring of topsoil removal in the remainder of the field was recommended.</p> <p>Site type: Burial pits</p> <p>ITM: E 642930m, N 753206m</p> <p>Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees): 53.527061, -7.35253</p>

Appendix 3: List of NMI Finds from the Vicinity of the Proposed Development

The following information is based on the Topographical Files for the townlands within the Study Area and Mullingar town, as provided by the National Museum of Ireland Duty Officer in October 2020.

NMI Register No.	Find Name	Component / material	Townland	Findspot
1000:1886	Battle axe	Stone	Mullingar	N/A
1874:89	Dress-fastener	Gold	Na	Near Mullingar
1884:10	Bracelet	Gold	N/A	near Mullingar
1884:11	Finger ring	Gold	N/A	near Mullingar
1884:6	Torc	Gold	N/A	Near Mullingar
1884:7	Lunula	Gold	N/A	near Mullingar
1884:8	Ear-spool	Gold	N/A	Near Mullingar
1884:9	Ear-spool	Gold	N/A	Near Mullingar
1929:277	Torc	Gold	Mullingar	N/A
1931:Wk213	Bell	Iron	Mullingar (Nr.)	'Tybroghan'
1932:6569	Axehead	Stone	Mullingar	N/A
1932:Wk214	Bell	Iron	Mullingar (Nr.)	'Tybroghan'
1934:135	Ardshare	Stone	Mullingar	N/A
1938:9638	Spoon	Pewter	N/A	Near Mullingar
1941:504	Stone	Stone	Mullingar	N/A
1948:65	Bead	Glass	Mullingar	N/A
1968:267	Spearhead	Bronze	Mullingar	Near the barracks
1968:308	Axehead	Bronze	N/A	Near Mullingar
1968:314	Axehead	Bronze	N/A	Near Mullingar
1968:330	Axehead	Bronze	N/A	Near Mullingar
1968:338	Axehead	Bronze	N/A	Near Mullingar
1968:346	Axehead	Bronze	N/A	Near Mullingar
1968:351	Axehead	Bronze	N/A	Near Mullingar
1968:366	Axehead	Stone	Mullingar	N/A
1968:374	Tool	Stone	Mullingar	N/A
1968:376	Whetstone	Stone	Mullingar	N/A
1982:30	Tool	Stone	N/A	Patrick St., Mullingar
1984:106	Stone	Stone	Windtown	Near Mullingar
1995:70	Human Remains	Bone	Mullingar	Medieval Cemetery
2004C1:927	Coin			Mullingar

NMI Register No.	Find Name	Component / material	Townland	Findspot
2005C4:23	Pipe	Ceramic	Mullingar	N/A
2005C4:24	Pipe	Ceramic	Mullingar	N/A
2005C4:25	Pipe	Ceramic	Mullingar	N/A
2005C4:26	Object	Plant Remains	Mullingar	N/A
2011:281	Human Remains	Human Remains	Mullingar	Austin Friars Street
2011:282	Object	Stone	Mullingar	Austin Friars Street
3487:W33	Shoe	Leather	N/A	Bog of The Great Down, 4 miles east of Mullingar
5477:W330	Ringed Pin	Bronze	N/A	Oldcastle, Near Mullingar
7605:W86	Ornament	Silver	Mullingar	Mullingar
E499:492	Button	Copper Alloy		Lough, Tuitestown Mullingar
E499:513	Button	Copper Alloy		Tuitestown Lough, Mullingar
R2351	Sword	Iron	N/A	In Neighbourhood of Mullingar
R2352	Sword	Iron	N/A	In Neighbourhood of Mullingar
R2353	Sword	Iron	N/A	In Neighbourhood of Mullingar
R2354	Sword	Iron	N/A	In Neighbourhood of Mullingar
R2355	Sword	Iron	N/A	In Neighbourhood of Mullingar
R2471	Spearhead	Flint	N/A	Bog of Curraghmore, Near Mullingar
R2912	Ornament	Silver	Mullingar	N/A
R341	Shoe	Leather	N/A	Bog of The Great Down, 4 Miles East of Mullingar
RIA1898:40	Spearhead	Bronze	N/A	Baltrasna Bog, three Miles from Mullingar
SA1913:117	Razor	Bronze	N/A	Near Mullingar
SA1913:119.1	Seal Matrix	Copper Alloy	Mullingar	N/A
X2100	Axehead	Stone	Mullingar	Bog
X2101	Palstave	Bronze	Mullingar	N/A
X2102	Palstave	Bronze	Mullingar	N/A
X2103	Rubber	Stone	Mullingar	Bog

Appendix 4: Westmeath County Council Policy

County Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018–2023 ⁴⁶

The Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018–2023 notes the following on relevant National and local plans and policies:

National Heritage Plan

Under the National Heritage Plan (2002), the preparation of a local heritage plan and establishment of a local heritage forum became part of Government policy. At the time of writing, the National Heritage Plan is under review and it is expected that a new National Heritage Plan - Heritage Ireland 2030 will be published soon.

National Planning Framework - Project Ireland 2040

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a strategic plan for economic, social and environmental development in Ireland up to 2040. One of the objectives of the NPF is to preserve and enhance our heritage. Guided by the NPF, the National Development Plan 2018-2023 sets out a strategy for capital investment. Heritage is identified as one of the strategic investment priorities.

Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 (CDP)

Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 sets out the statutory framework for land-use planning and sustainable development in Westmeath. The County Development Plan is currently being reviewed. The Heritage Plan does not repeat the policy commitments of the County Development Plan as it relates to the County's heritage resource, land-use planning and sustainable development. Instead, it aims to support and strengthen the County Development Plan and other Plans by providing data and proposing policy that establishes a clear direction and framework for heritage in Westmeath and its protection, conservation, management and promotion.

The County Westmeath Heritage Plan lists the following strategic objectives which are pertinent to the proposed development:

1. Raise awareness of the heritage of Westmeath and increase understanding of its value
2. Record the heritage of Westmeath and disseminate data
3. Promote best practice in conservation and management of the heritage of Westmeath
4. Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage
5. Promote community participation in heritage plans and projects.

Westmeath County Development Plan 2014–2020⁴⁷

Section 5.21 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014–2020 covers Built Heritage, including Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, historic gardens and demesnes, industrial heritage and vernacular structures, Section 5.31 covers Archaeological Heritage and Section 5.35 is on Cultural Heritage. The Plan lists the following relevant objectives and policies in relation to heritage.

Section 5.24. Built Heritage Policies & Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council:

⁴⁶ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/HeritagePlan201823.pdf> [Accessed 06 January 2021]

⁴⁷ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/developmentplans/countydevelopmentplan2014-2020/> [Accessed 06 January 2021]

P-BH1: To have regard to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government publication 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2004, in the implementation of development objectives and the assessment of planning applications relating to Protected Structures, proposed Protected Structures or buildings within Architectural Conservation Areas.

P-BH2: To protect and conserve buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and to resist the demolition of such structures, in accordance with 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2004.

P-BH3: To ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a Protected Structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, and materials so that the integrity of the structure and its curtilage is preserved.

P-BH4: To encourage the sympathetic and appropriate reuse and retention of Protected Structures. In certain cases, the relaxation of site zoning restrictions may be considered in order to secure the preservation and conservation of the Protected Structure, where the use proposed is compatible with the existing structure. This will only be permitted where the development is consistent with conservation policies and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

P-BH5: To have regard to any future advice from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government regarding energy ratings for Protected Structures and requirements to protect architectural integrity.

P-BH6: To designate those areas that have particular environmental qualities that derive from their overall layout, design and unity of character as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and to ensure that the character of such areas is preserved.

P-BH7: To ensure that any new development or alteration of a building within or adjoining an Architectural Conservation Area positively enhances the character of the area and is appropriate in terms of the plot size, proposed design, including: scale, mass, height, proportions, density, layout, materials, plot ratio, and building lines.

P-BH8: To protect the character of designated Architectural Conservation Areas including the public realm area associated therewith and to resist inappropriate development that would detract from the heritage value of these areas.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council:

O-BH1: To continue to administer a prioritised scheme of conservation grants for owners and occupiers of protected structures.

O-BH2: To continue to review the Record of Protected Structures on an ongoing basis.

Section 5.26. Vernacular Buildings & Structures Policies & Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council:

P-VB1: To encourage the rehabilitation, renovation and reuse of existing vernacular buildings, where appropriate.

P-VB2: To retain where feasible, older buildings in towns which make a positive contribution to the character of the area or townscape.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council:

O-VB1: To carry out an audit of disused vernacular structures in Westmeath during the lifetime of the

Development Plan, and promote their adaptation and re-use.

O-VB2: To ensure that proposed infrastructural and public utility works within the county do not remove historic street furniture such as limestone or granite kerbs, cobblestones, cast-iron post boxes, street lamps etc.

5.33. Archaeological Heritage Policies & Objectives

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council:

P-AH1: To generally preserve in situ all archaeological remains and sites of importance, such as National Monuments, Recorded Monuments, their setting and context and zones of archaeological potential. Within zones of archaeological potential and in the vicinity of Recorded Monuments, development shall only be permitted where the Council considers the importance of the proposed development or other material considerations outweigh the value of the remains in question, in consultation with the National Monument Service.

P-AH2: To protect and retain surviving medieval plots and street patterns in towns and villages of the county.

P-AH3: To ensure that all sites of archaeological potential are protected from development that may injure any potentially important archaeological features or sites, in consultation with the National Monument Service.

P-AH4: To protect historic burial grounds within the county and encourage their maintenance and public access provision. P-AH5 To designate walking routes to important archaeological sites, as public rights of way where possible, in consultation with the National Monuments Service.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council:

O-AH1: To strictly control development that may be detrimental to any feature or site of archaeological significance or that may seriously detract from the interpretation and setting of these sites.

O-AH2: To endeavour to ensure that all reports, excavation results and other information relating to archaeological heritage be made available for public viewing in libraries and to create and maintain a database of same.

O-AH3: To promote pre-planning consultations in relation to proposed developments that may potentially impact upon Archaeological Heritage.

O-AH4: To provide guidance to developers and landowners in relation to proposals for development that may potentially impact upon Archaeological Heritage, drawing their attention to additional published government guidance available such as 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1999'.

O-AH7: To require where appropriate, that an Archaeological Assessment be carried out by a suitably qualified person, prior to authorisation or commencement, as appropriate, of any activity that may impact upon Archaeological Heritage.

O-AH8: To ensure that any development taking place either above or below ground which is within, adjacent to, or might affect sites and features of historical and archaeological interest, shall respect the character of the archaeological site and its setting, and shall be sited and designed so as not to undermine the character of the site and its setting.

O-AH9: To impose conditions on development that may impact upon sites of archaeological potential and to ensure that appropriate measures are taken for the identification and mitigation of the archaeological impacts, including a licensed excavation and recording of remains, prior to

commencement of development, where appropriate.

5.35. Cultural Heritage Policy & Objective

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council:

P-CH1: To protect and conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage features that contribute to the distinctive character and heritage value of County Westmeath.

It is an objective of Westmeath County Council:

O-CH1: To increase public awareness of the Cultural Heritage of the county.

Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014–2020⁴⁸

The Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 covers the town of Mullingar and some of its environs. The accompanying Heritage map MLAP 14 key suggests that all recorded archaeological sites in its area are National Monuments however this is inaccurate. Chapter 7 covers Natural Heritage, Built Heritage & Archaeology and relevant heritage policies and objectives are extracted below.

Section 7.11. Built Heritage Policies and Objectives

It is a policy of the Council:

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

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

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

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

PBH5: To secure the protection of the architectural heritage value and historic built fabric of Columb Barracks and St. Loman's Hospital, in accordance with the provisions of Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 as amended.

PBH6: To promote and facilitate the regeneration and redevelopment of Columb Barracks and St. Loman's Hospital, in a manner consistent with an agreed framework for these strategic sites.

It is an objective of the Council:

OBH1: To cooperate in the preparation of a Regeneration Plan to secure appropriate viable alternative uses for Columb Barracks and St. Loman's Hospital, in consultation with landowners, stakeholders and relevant Government Departments, in consultation with the Architectural Heritage Advisory Service.

Section 7.13. Archaeology Policies and Objectives

It is a policy of the Council:

⁴⁸ <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/MLAP%20Volume%201%20Written%20Statement.pdf> [Accessed 06 January 2021]

PARC1: To protect the archaeological heritage of the town in accordance with Departmental Guidelines.

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

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

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

It is an objective of the Council:

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

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

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

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

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

Figures



Figure 1: Site location.

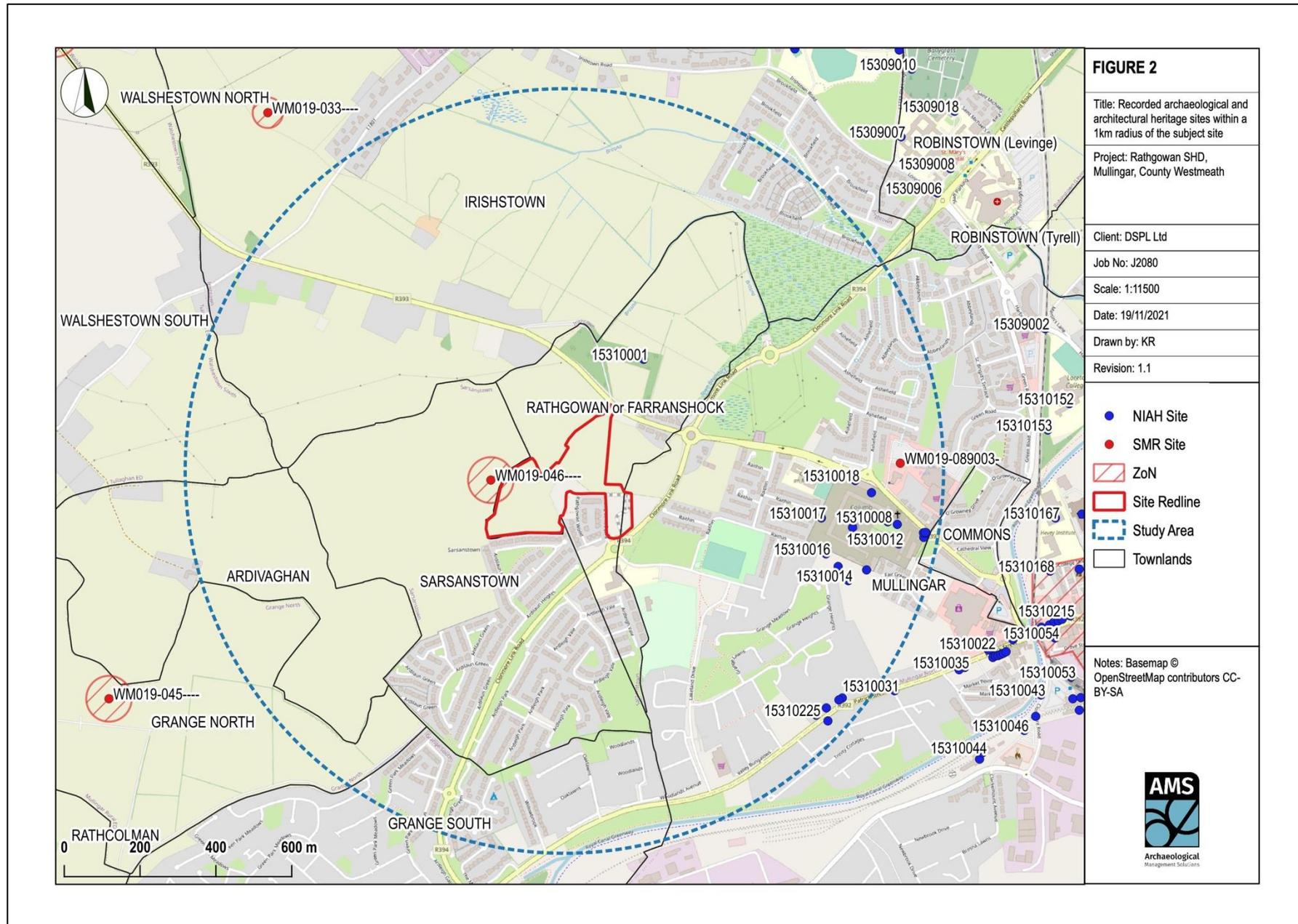


Figure 2: Recorded archaeological and architectural heritage within a 1km radius of the subject site.

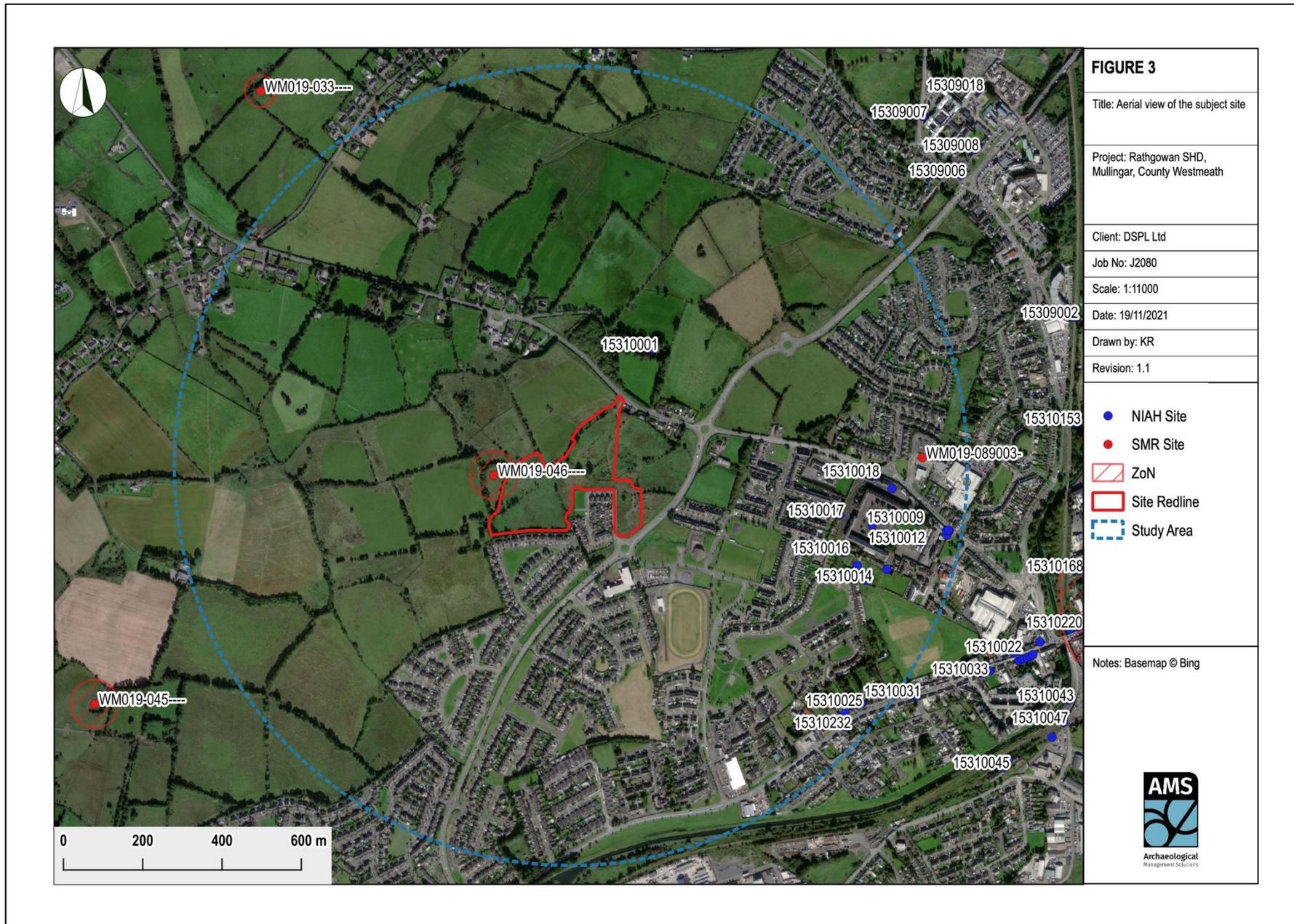


Figure 3: Aerial view of site.

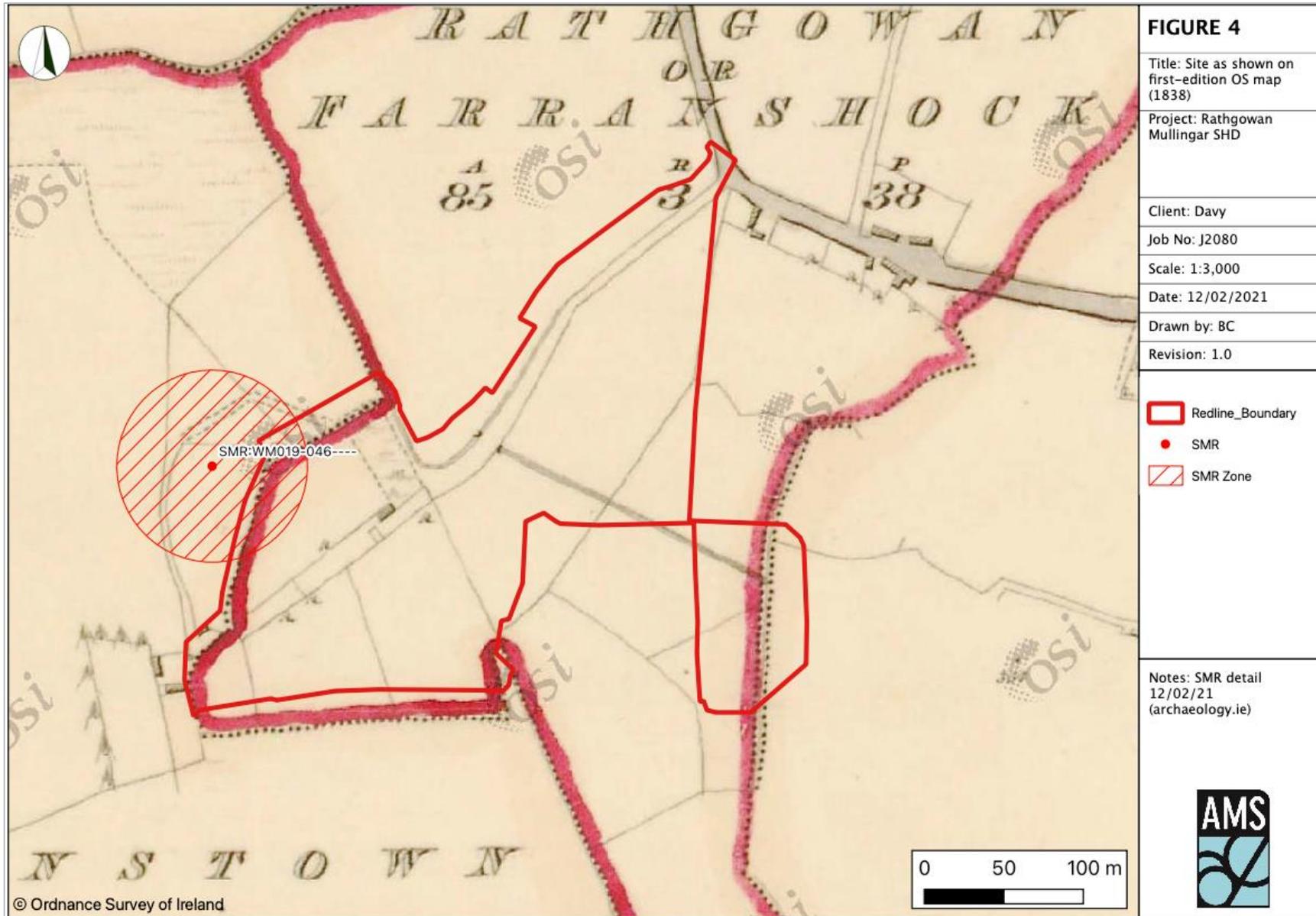


Figure 4: Site as shown on first-edition OS map (1838).

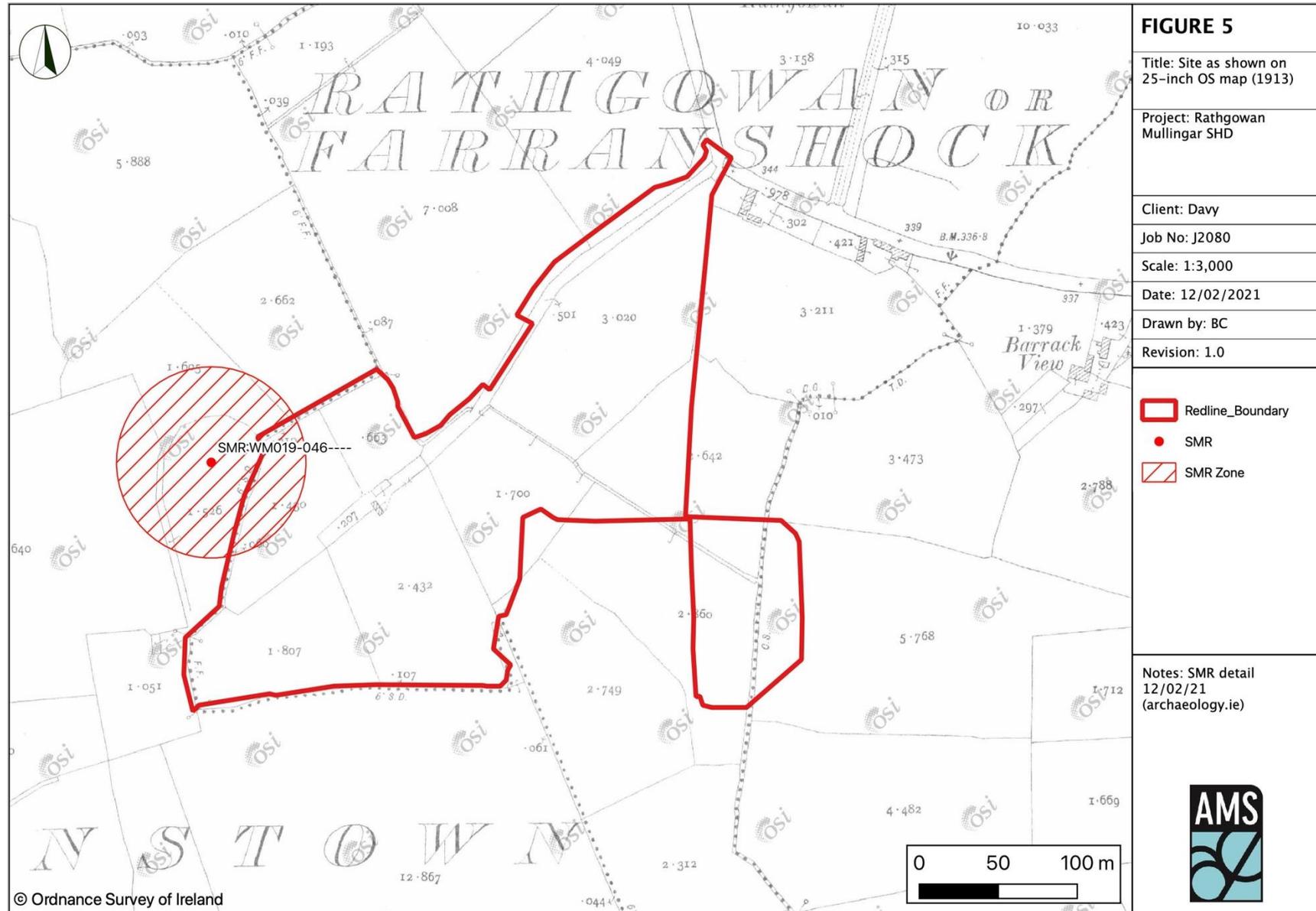


Figure 5: Site as shown on 25-inch OS map (1913).

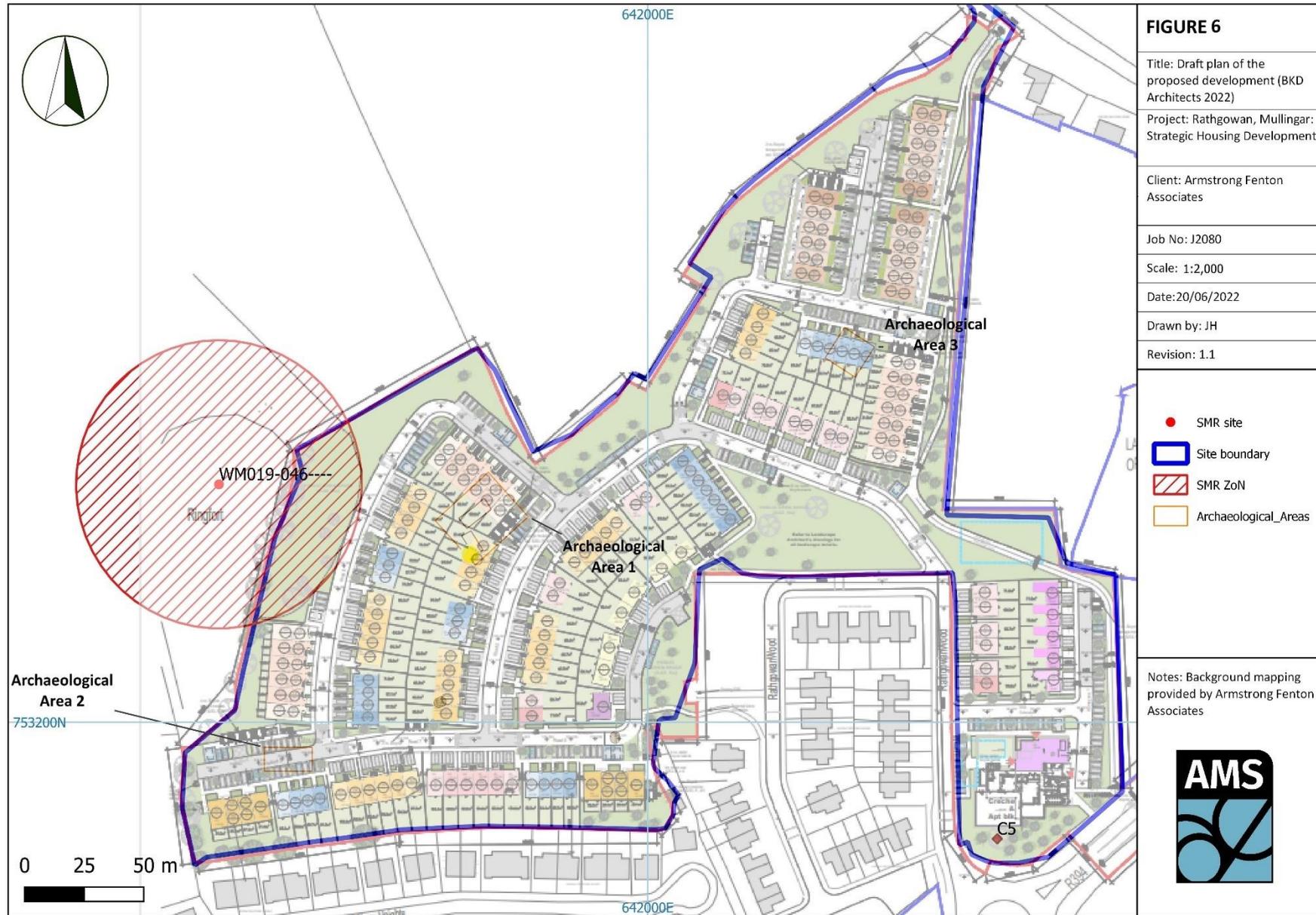


Figure 6: Proposed SHD development design (BKD Architects 2022) with archaeological areas indicated.

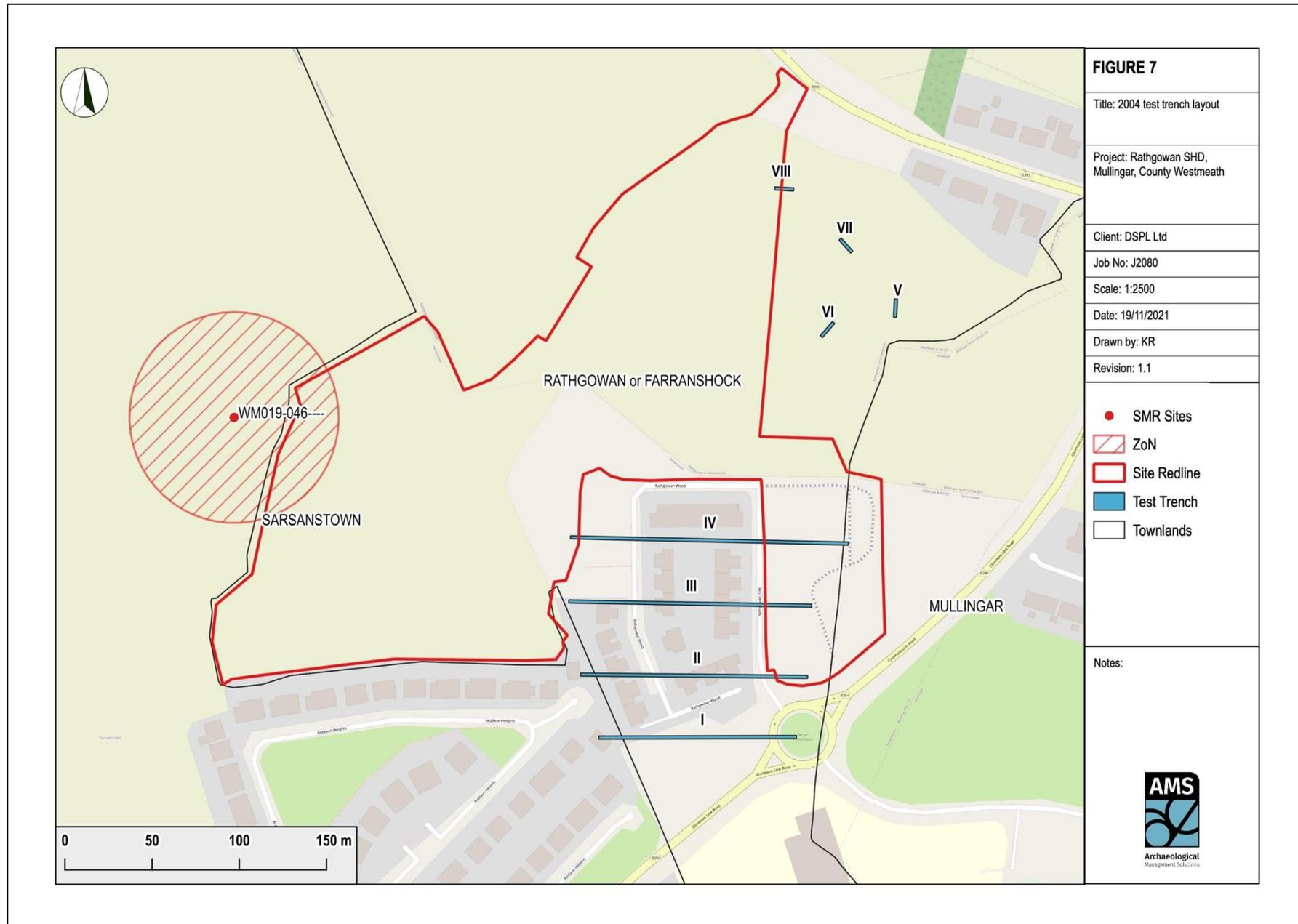


Figure 7: Layout of the 2004 test trenches.

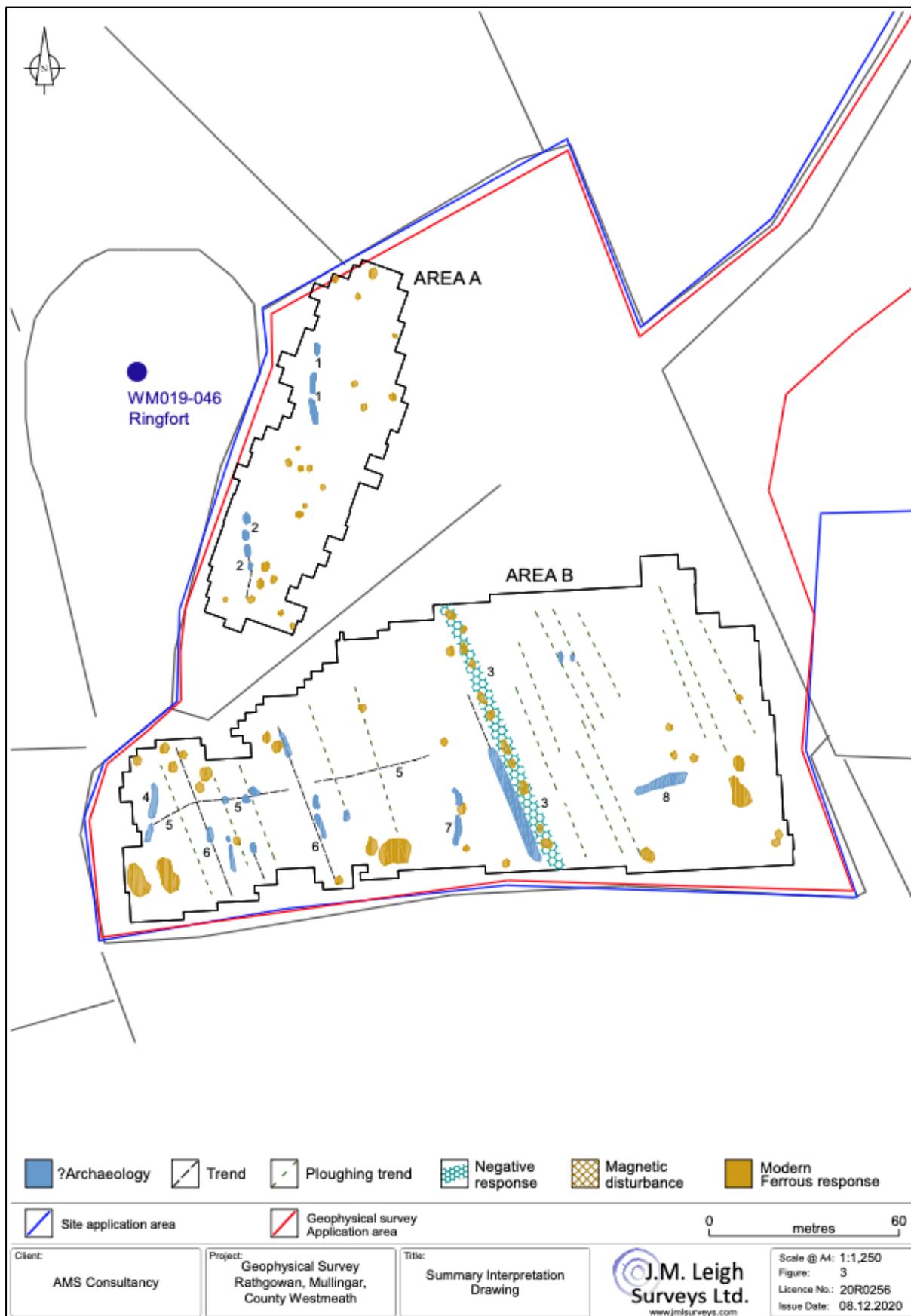


Figure 8: Geophysical survey interpretation (Leigh 2020).



Plate 1: View of the southeast of the Site, facing west towards Rathgowan Wood.



Plate 2: View of the southwest of the site facing north towards the ringfort.



Plate 3: View of west of site facing northwest towards remains of wall, possibly a vernacular house or avenue wall, with ringfort to rear.



Plate 4: View of north of site facing northeast showing an internal road.