



**An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta**
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

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Site Owner: DSPL Ltd
Address: Davy House
49 Hudson Street
Dublin 2 D02PY05

Planning Authority: Westmeath

Planning Reg. No.: Pre-planning

Excavation Type: Testing

[as per licence application]

Contractor/Developer: DSPL Ltd
Address: Davy House
49 Hudson Street
Dublin 2 D02PY05

Background to Excavation:

Archaeological Management Solutions (AMS) was engaged to carry out archaeological testing and a preliminary architectural heritage survey at a proposed residential development at Rathgowan or Farranshock and Sarsanstown townlands, on the western outskirts of Mullingar town in Co. Westmeath. The development site adjoins a recorded archaeological monument, listed on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as a ringfort, in Sarsanstown (WM019-046), which is partly defined by the hedgerow in the west of the Site. This monument's Zone of Notification (ZoN) extends into the western extent of the site. The archaeological testing consisted of 76 test trenches totalling 1,718 linear meters. This is the equivalent of 5.1% of the available testing area of the proposed development Site which measures 6.06 hectares.

The testing was carried out by Zbigniew Malek between 26–29 October 2021. A site visit by Jon Stirland of the National Monuments Service was undertaken on 28 October 2021. The archaeological information, including recommendations for future works, are presented in Part 1 of this report.

Revised Description of the Proposed Development (June 2022):

DSPL Limited intends to apply to *An Bord Pleanála* for permission for a strategic housing development on a site area of c.6Ha located at Rathgowan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. The site is located north and east of existing housing at Ardilaun Heights and Rathgowan Wood, north-west of the R394, which

is known as the Mullingar Western Relief Road and south of the R393 Ashe Road, all in the townland of Rathgowan or Farranshock.

The proposed development will consist of 212 no. dwellings and a crèche. The residential dwellings are comprised of 107 two- and three-storey houses, 86 two- and three-bed duplex units in 8 three-storey blocks and 19 one-, two-bed apartments accommodated 1 four-storey building which also accommodates a crèche at ground floor level (c.430sq.m), with associated outdoor play area. The proposed houses consist of 31 two-bed, 70 three-bed and 6 four-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.

Buildings and roads are proposed to be laid out with a buffer zone of open space provided from the edge of the ringfort (WM019-046), currently defined by the bank and hedgerow running along the shared townland boundary, covering its ZoN. The client has confirmed that no buildings, drainage features or landscaping works are proposed to be located in the buffer zone which will be defined by a line of trees.

Further Information:

A previous planning application on the Site (04/5226) contained an archaeological condition as follows:

15. Archaeology;

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.

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.

Archaeological Assessment:

An Archaeological Assessment prepared for the proposed development by AMS (Marshall & Rice 2021) recommended the following:

- **Architectural Heritage 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 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.

- **Archaeological Monitoring:** It is 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 National Monuments Service (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 licensed archaeological monitoring, this active licence could be upgraded to allow for appropriate mitigation subject to approval from the NMS in conjunction with National Museum of Ireland.
- **Buffer zone and landscaping around the recorded monument:** It is recommended that any proposal for landscaping within the Zone of Notification associated with the ringfort (WM019-046) adjoining the site should be in collaboration with the scheme archaeologist and with prior approval of the NMS.

Signed:		Date:	29/06/22
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