

Archaeological Impact Assessment

Proposed residential development at former convent, New Street, Rathangan, County Kildare

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology.....	2
3. Context	3
4. Description of site.....	10
5. Archaeological impact statement	11
6. References/sources.....	12
Appendix: Summaries of archaeological investigations within the study area	13

1. Introduction

John Cronin & Associates have been commissioned by Sophia Housing c/o Walsh Associates to prepare an Archaeological Impact Assessment of the proposed residential development of a site on New Street, Rathangan. The site is currently occupied by a former convent/school and a series of outbuildings which have not been in use since 2017. The proposed development is as follows:

Construction of social housing development comprising 24 no. 1 and 2-bedroomed apartments and a community room for residents and all associated landscaping and site development works.



Figure 1: General location of subject site outlined in red (Source: Government of Ireland, Historic Environment Viewer)

This report presents summary details on the locations of recorded elements of the archaeological resource within the environs of the proposed development site and aims to identify any previously unknown archaeological constraints. The study area for this assessment comprised the internal area of the subject lands combined with the lands extending for approximately 1km from its boundary. The assessment firstly outlines the methodology used in its compilation (**Section 2**) and then provides an archaeological and historical context for the study area, including a summary of the relevant legal and planning framework for the recorded and potential elements of the archaeological resource within its environs (**Section 3**). The results of a site inspection are described in **Section 4**, an assessment of impacts is provided in **Section 5** and conclusions and recommendations are presented in **Section 6**.

2. Methodology

This assessment is based on a site inspection and a programme of a desktop research in order to identify all known archaeological sites within the study area. The principal sources reviewed for this assessment of the known archaeological resource are the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). Between 1984 and 1992, the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) issued a series of county SMRs which lists known archaeological sites and places and this record formed the basis for the statutory RMP established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Similar in format to the SMRs (comprising a list and set of maps), the RMPs were issued for each county in the State between 1995 and 1998. Archaeological monuments included in the statutory RMP are legally protected and are generally referred to as 'Recorded Monuments'.

The ASI has continued to record and add entries to the SMR and has developed an online database and web viewer known as 'Historic Environment Viewer'. This has been developed to enhance the user's experience by facilitating access to the database of the National Monuments Service's Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) in a seamless one stop point of access for both data resources (Source: www.archaeology.ie). In addition, the following sources were consulted as part of the desktop study:

- *Cartographic Sources* - The detail on cartographic sources can indicate past settlement and land use patterns in recent centuries and can also highlight the impact of modern developments and agricultural practices. This information can aid in the identification of the location and extent of unrecorded, or partially levelled, features of archaeological or architectural heritage interest. The cartographic sources examined for the study area include the First edition of the 6-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (surveyed and published in the 1830s-40s), the 25-inch OS maps (surveyed and published 1887-1913) and the Cassini 6-inch maps (c.1940).
- *Development Plans* - The local authority development plan relevant to the study area was consulted as part of this assessment. These plans outline the local authorities' policies for the conservation of the archaeological and architectural heritage resource and include the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and any designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The relevant development plans for the study area is the *Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029*.
- *Database of Irish Excavation Reports* - The Database of Irish Excavation Reports contains summary accounts of all licensed archaeological excavations carried out in Ireland from 1960s to present.
- *UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Tentative List* - UNESCO seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. There are two world heritage sites in Ireland and a number of other significant sites are included in a Tentative List (2010) that has been put forward by Ireland for inclusion.

3. Context

Location

The proposed development site is located on the eastern side of the town of Rathangan, approximately c. 400m to the east-northeast of its centre (see **Figure 3**). The site encompasses approximately 0.7 ha and is contained within the townland of Rathangan. The subject site is bound to the north by greenfield sites, to the south by New Street (R414), to the west by residential and mixed development and to the east by St. John's Convent (former) (Ref. 11810039/RPS Ref. B17-37) and the Catholic Church of the Assumption of Saint Patrick (Ref. 11810040). For this assessment, a 200m study area was taken extending from the red line boundary surrounding the proposed development site. There are no recorded archaeological sites within the subject site but the site is located on the periphery of the deserted medieval settlement in the centre of the town. According to Bradley *et al* (1986 vol. 4, 413-21), it is likely that at least some of the present street pattern may be of medieval origin and similarly the plots that run off of Main St., Market Square and Chapel Street may reflect a burgrave-plot pattern.



Figure 2: General location of subject site (Source: Historic Environment Viewer)

Legal & Policy Framework

The management and protection of cultural heritage in Ireland is achieved through a framework of national laws and policies which are in accordance with the provisions of the Valetta Treaty (1995) (formally the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*, 1992) ratified by Ireland in 1997; the *European Convention on the Protection of Architectural Heritage* (Granada Convention, 1985), ratified by Ireland in 1997; and the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003, ratified by Ireland in 2015.

The locations of World Heritage Sites (Ireland) and the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites submitted by the Irish State to UNESCO were reviewed and none are located in the area surrounding the subject site. The nearest World Heritage Site is that of Brú na Bóinne which is located c.84km to the north-northeast.

The national legal statutes and guidelines relevant to this assessment include:

- National Monuments Act (1930) (and amendments in 1954, 1987, 1994 and 2004);
- Heritage Act (1995);
- National Cultural Institutions Act (1997);
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (1999);
- Planning and Development Act (2000);
- Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht (2011); and
- Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, 1999.

The administration of national policy in relation to archaeological heritage management is the responsibility of the National Monuments Service (NMS) which is currently based in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The National Monuments Act of 1930, and its Amendments, are the primary means of ensuring the satisfactory protection of the archaeological resource. They include a number of provisions that are applied to secure the protection of archaeological monuments. These include the designations of nationally significant sites as National Monuments, the Register of Historic Monuments (RHM), the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), and the placing of Preservation Orders and Temporary Preservation Orders on endangered sites.

Section 2 of the National Monuments Act, 1930 defines a National Monument as ‘*a monument or the remains of a monument, the preservation of which is a matter of national importance*’. The State may acquire or assume guardianship of examples through agreement with landowners or under compulsory orders. Archaeological sites within the ownership of local authorities are also deemed to be National Monuments. **There are no National Monuments located within the study area.** The nearest National Monument to the subject site is Grange Castle – tower house (KD002-007----) (Nat. Mon. 629) which is c. 22km north of the subject site. This is a late 15th/early 16th century rectangular structure.

The National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 made provision for the establishment of the RMP, which comprises the known archaeological sites within the State. The RMP, which is based on the earlier Register of Historic Monuments (RHM) and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), provides county-based lists of all recorded archaeological sites with accompanying maps. All RMP sites receive statutory protection under the National Monuments Act 1994 and the NMS must be given two months’ notice in advance of any work proposed at their locations. There are **no** recorded archaeological site within the subject site. There are **no** further archaeological sites recorded by the ASI within the 200m radius study area which surrounds the subject site. The nearest archaeological site to the proposed development is a graveyard (KD017-011007-) which is located c.300m to the west of the development site.

The *Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029* includes the following relevant policies and objectives in relation to the protection of the archaeological resource:

***AH 02** Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the archaeological heritage of County Kildare, avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest and secures the preservation in-situ or by record of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest, including underwater cultural heritage. The Council will favour preservation in – situ in accordance with the recommendation of the Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (1999) and the Council will seek and have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.*

***AH 03** In co-operation with the National Monuments Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage require archaeological impact assessment, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring and/or underwater archaeological impact assessments for planning applications in areas of archaeological importance and where a development proposal is likely to impact upon in-situ archaeological monuments, their setting and archaeological deposits, based on recommendations of a suitably qualified archaeologist and the Council will seek and have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.*

***AH 04** Ensure that development in the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest is not detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting by reason of its location, scale, bulk or detailing and to ensure that such proposed developments are subject to an archaeological assessment prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist. Such an assessment will seek to ensure that the development can be sited and designed in such a way as to avoid impacting on archaeological heritage that is of significant interest including previously unknown sites, features, objects and areas of underwater archaeological heritage.*

***AH 05** Require the preservation of the context, amenity, visual integrity and connection of the setting of archaeological monuments. As a general principle, views to and from archaeological monuments shall not be obscured by inappropriate development. Where appropriate, archaeological visual impact assessments will be required to demonstrate the continued preservation of an archaeological monument's siting and context.*

***AH 06** Secure the preservation in-situ or by record of:*

- the archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994*
- any sites and features of historical and archaeological interest including underwater cultural heritage and protected wrecks.*
- any subsurface archaeological features including those underwater, that may be discovered during the course of infrastructural/development works in the operational area of the Plan. Preservation relates to archaeological sites or objects and their settings.*

***AH 09** Promote and support in partnership with the National Monuments Section of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), the concept of Archaeological Landscapes where areas contain several Recorded Monuments.*

Archaeological & historical background

For this assessment, a 200m study area extending from the proposed fence development was observed. There are **no recorded archaeological sites** within this study area. It is likely that at least some of the present street pattern may be of medieval origin and similarly the plots that run

off of Main St., Market Square and Chapel Street may reflect a burgage-plot pattern (Bradley et al 1986 vol. 4, 413-21).

The following section presents summary details of the main periods within the Irish archaeological record. The dating framework used for each period is based on *Guidelines for Authors of Reports on Archaeological Excavations* as published by the National Monuments Service.

Early prehistoric

Traditionally, the earliest recorded evidence for human settlement in Ireland dates to the Mesolithic period (c.7000–4000 BC) when groups of hunter-gatherers arrived on the island, however recent evidence in the form of a butchered bear patella found in Alice and Gwendoline Cave near Ennis in Co. Clare now suggests that humans were present in Ireland during the Palaeolithic period between 12,800 to 12,600 cal BC (Dowd and Carden, 2016, 161). However, in 2021, re-examination of a reindeer bone fragment discovered in Castlepook Cave near Doneraile, County Cork in 1905 revealed human butchery marks on the bone which was radiocarbon dated to 31,000 BC, proving human settlement in Ireland at a much earlier stage than previously thought. While the Mesolithic settlers did not construct any settlements or monuments that leave any above ground traces, their presence in an area can often be identified by scatters of worked flints in ploughed fields or shell middens adjacent to the coastline. There are no recorded sites dating to the Mesolithic period within the study area.

The Neolithic period (c.4000-2400 BC) began with the arrival and establishment of agriculture as the principal form of economic subsistence, which resulted in more permanent settlement patterns. As a consequence of the more settled nature of agrarian life, new site-types, such as more substantial rectangular timber houses and various types of megalithic tombs, begin to appear in the archaeological record during this period. There are no recorded sites dating to the Neolithic period within the study area.

Late prehistoric periods

Metalworking arrived in Ireland with the advent of the Bronze Age period (c.2400–500 BC). This period was also associated with the construction of new monument types such as standing stones, stone rows, stone circles and *fulachta fia*. *Fulachta fia* translates as cooking places of the wild (or of deer), they are often interpreted as the remains of cooking sites and are the most numerous archaeological site type in Ireland, radiocarbon dating of excavated examples has generally produced dates in the Bronze Age (c.2400-500BC). The development of new burial practices saw the construction of funerary monuments such as cairns, barrows, boulder burials and cists. The later first millennium BC and the early centuries AD comprise the Irish Iron Age, which is the most obscure period in the Irish archaeological record. While there is general agreement that the introduction of an iron technology was a significant factor in the eventual demise of bronze working on a large scale, but how, why and when this came about in Ireland is far from clear. There are no recorded sites from the late prehistoric period within the study area.

Early medieval

This period began with the introduction of Christianity in Ireland and continued up to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans during the 12th-century (c.400–1169 AD). The establishment of the Irish church was to have profound implications for political, social and economic life and is attested to in the archaeological record by the presence of church sites, associated places for burial and holy

wells. The early medieval church sites were morphologically similar to ringforts but are often differentiated by the presence of features such as church buildings, graves, stone crosses and shrines. This period saw the emergence of the first phases of urbanisation around the large monasteries and the Hiberno-Norse ports. However, the dominant settlement pattern of the period continued to be rural based in sites such as ringforts, which comprise roughly circular enclosures delimited by roughly circular earthen banks formed of material thrown up from a concentric external ditch. Ringforts are one of the most numerous monuments in the Irish landscape, with some 45,000 recorded examples (Stout 1997, 53). The early medieval terms for these sites – *ráth*/*lios*/*dún* these still form some of the most common place-name elements in the country. Archaeological excavations indicate that many ringforts were early medieval farmsteads with internal timber buildings and were surrounded by associated field systems.

Later and post-medieval

The arrival and conquest of large parts of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans in the late 12th-century broadly marks the advent of the Irish late medieval period, which continued up until the beginning of the post-medieval period in c.1550. The arrival and conquest of large parts of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans in AD 1169 marks the advent of the late medieval period which continued until approx. AD 1550. This period saw the continuing expansion of Irish urbanisation as many of the port cities developed into international trading centres and numerous villages and towns developed as local or regional market centres. There are no recorded sites which date to this period in the study area.

Placenames

The Placenames Database of Ireland (available at www.logainm.ie) which provides translations of the Irish origins of townland names was consulted. Townlands are the smallest unit of land division in the Irish landscape and many may preserve early Gaelic territorial boundaries that pre-date the Anglo-Norman conquest. The boundaries and nomenclature of the Irish townlands were recorded and standardised by the Ordnance Survey in the 19th-century. The Irish roots of townland names often refer to natural topographical features, but some name elements may also give an indication of the presence of past human activity within the townland, e.g., *dun*, *lios* or *rath* indicate the presence of a ringfort while *temple*, *saggart*, *termon* or *kill* record an association with a church site. The subject site is located within the townland of Rathangan. This comes from the Irish 'Ráth Iomgháin' and indicates the presence of the ringfort- (*rath*) in Rathangan (KD017-011001-) which is first referenced in the Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland in 802 AD.

The Excavations Database

The Excavation Database contains summary accounts of all licensed archaeological investigations carried out in Ireland (North and South) from the 1960s to present. The database can be browsed or searched using multiple fields, including year, county, site type, grid reference, license number, Sites and Monuments Record number and author. The proposed solar farm development site is located within the townland of Rathangan. A review of the Database was undertaken for Rathangan townland and there were 10 programmes of archaeological works within the townland. The nearest of these was carried out c.340m to the north of the subject site. In 2019, a series of pre-development archaeological testing was carried out. A total of 14 trenches were excavated and revealed the presence of a single ditched sub-circular enclosure which suggested

a ringfort-type feature (19E0534). See **Appendix** for full entries of this and other programmes of licensed archaeological works.

Cartographic review

The detail on historic cartographic sources demonstrates the nature of past settlements and land use patterns in recent centuries and can also highlight the impacts of modern developments and agricultural practices. This information can aid in the identification of the location and extent of unrecorded or partially levelled features of archaeological or architectural heritage interest. The cartographic sources examined for the study areas include the 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map (1837-42), (**Figure 3**) the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (1888-1913) (**Figure 4**), and the 1:10,560 Cassini Ordnance Survey map (surveyed and published 1940s) (**Figure 5**).



Figure 3: Extract from 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map (1837-42) (Source: Government of Ireland, Historic Environment Viewer)

The 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map shows the lands within the subject site as developed within the central portion. The lands to its immediate east comprise an irregularly shaped agricultural field bordered by a deciduous treeline. The western portion of New Street has a series of mixed-use developments fronting the street. A corn mill is depicted to the south of Slate River. A 'Quaker's Meet Ho.' is labelled to the west of the subject site, beyond the townland boundary for Rathangan, in Newtown. The 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map shows alterations to the building within the subject site. St. John's Convent has been erected to its immediate east. The formerly labelled 'corn mill' is now labelled as 'Sally Mill'. The Quaker's Meet House has been renamed as 'Friends' Meeting House' with a burial ground depicted to its north. By the 6-inch Cassini Ordnance Survey edition, there are few changes to the subject site. The buildings are now labelled as 'schools'.

The cartographic review did not reveal any previously un-noted archaeological features.



Figure 4: Extract from the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (1888-1913.) (Source: Government of Ireland, Historic Environment Viewer)

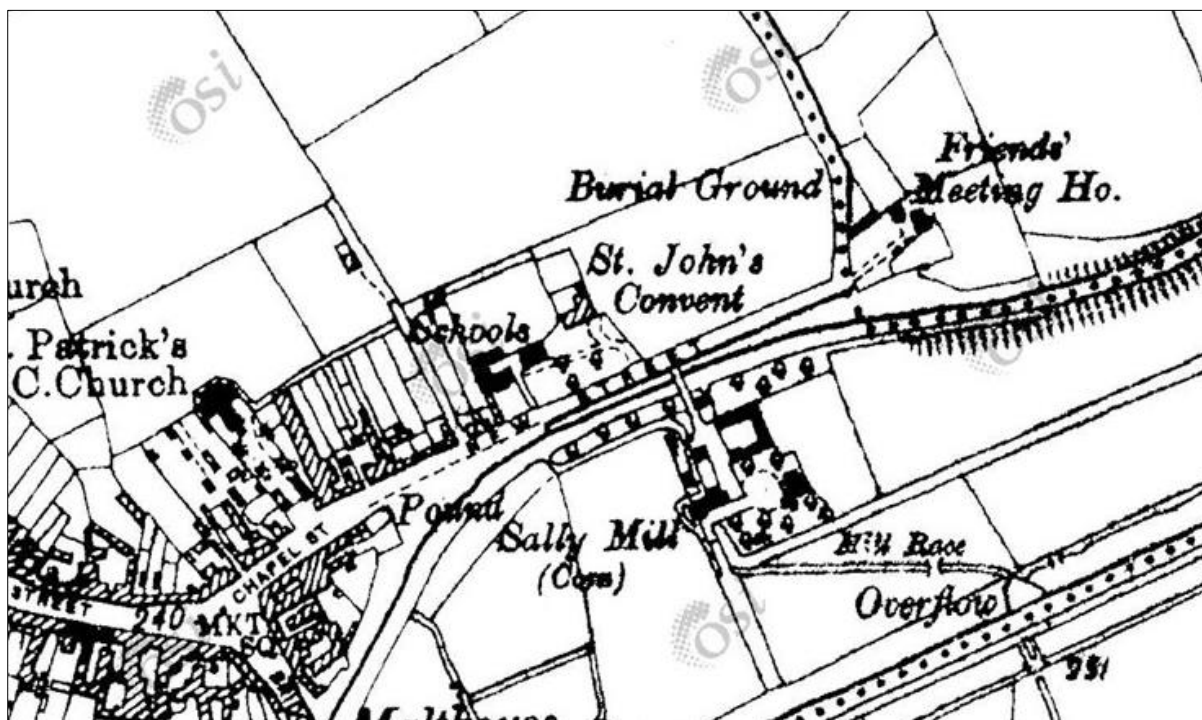


Figure 5: Extract from the 1:10,560 Cassini map c. 1950s (Source: Government of Ireland, Historic Environment Viewer)

4. Description of site

The proposed development site is located on New Street in the townland of Rathangan and approximately c.400m to the east-northeast of the town centre of Rathangan town, County Kildare (see **Figure 6**). The subject site is bound to the north by greenfield sites, to the south by New Street (R414), to the west by residential and mixed development and to the east by St. John's Convent (former) (Ref. 11810039/RPS Ref. B17-37) and the Catholic Church of the Assumption of Saint Patrick (Ref. 11810040). For this assessment, a 200m study area was taken extending from the red line boundary surrounding the proposed development site which comprised of thirteen NIAH sites, of which nine are recorded protected structures by Kildare County Council. There are no recorded archaeological sites within the subject site but the site is located on the periphery of the deserted medieval settlement in the centre of the town. According to Bradley *et al* (1986 vol. 4, 413-21), it is likely that at least some of the present street pattern may be of medieval origin and similarly the plots that run off of Main St., Market Square and Chapel Street may reflect a burgage-plot pattern.



Figure 6: The proposed development site outlined in red (Source: Government of Ireland: Historic Environment Viewer)

5. Archaeological impact statement

Potential impacts on archaeology

There are no extant archaeological sites recorded by the ASI within the 200m radius study area which surrounds this subject site. However, the development area lies on the periphery of the Zone of Archaeological Protection for Rathangan deserted medieval settlement (RMP KD017-011---). While no extant structures or features of archaeological significance were identified as having the potential to be impacted, directly or indirectly, by the proposed development works, the proposed development area can therefore be considered to be an area of archaeological potential.

Proposed mitigation strategy

In light of the above, it is recommended that all groundworks (ground reductions, site investigations, site development works and service trenching) associated with the proposed works should be monitored by an archaeologist under licence to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

6. References/sources

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Appendix: Summaries of archaeological investigations within the study area

The following are summaries of archaeological investigations recorded on the Database of Irish Archaeological Excavations (www.excavations.ie)

Name	License/author	Description
Rathangan, Kildare	19E0534 James Hession	<p>A programme of archaeological test trenching was undertaken at a proposed housing development site in Rathangan townland, Rathangan, Co. Kildare. A total of 14 test trenches were excavated across the proposed lands.</p> <p>The test trenches identified the presence of a single ditched sub-circular enclosure, 40m north-west/south-east by 38m, with the ditch measuring 2.7m wide and 1.3m deep.</p> <p>The general appearance of this feature is suggestive of a ringfort-type enclosure. No internal features were recorded, and no artefacts were retrieved during the investigation. To the north-west of this enclosure a corn-drying kiln and three pits were identified. These features are most likely associated with the sub-circular enclosure or the nearby RMP sites KD017-068 and KD017-01101 and as such are also likely to be early medieval in date.</p> <p>Two linear features of uncertain date were identified to the north and north-east of the corn drying kiln and a shallow curvilinear ditch was identified along the northern perimeter of the site adjacent to KD017-068. No other features of significance were identified during the investigation.</p>
Bracknagh Road, Rathangan, Kildare	16E0496	<p>A planning application for the development of the subject lands resulted in a Request for Further Information (FI) from the Planning Authority, Kildare County Council (Plan Ref: 16/377). The FI Request included a number of items, of which one, No. 10, dealt with Archaeological Heritage and required that the applicant should commission an Archaeological Impact Assessment to include Geophysical Survey and a programme of Archaeological Testing. The development lands are located outside the Zone of Archaeological Potential established for Rathangan, however, the landholding does include the postulated location of the former Rathangan Castle (KD017-11002). This site is not included in the RMP but is included for protection in the Kildare County Development Plan.</p> <p>The exact location of the castle is unknown. Rocque's map of 1760, the O.S. 1837 map and the SMR (archaeology.ie) indicate its possible position on the sloping ground in the southern half of the lands, while the Urban Archaeological Survey indicate its location to the immediate east of a Sewerage Farm in the lower-lying flood plain area of the site. A limited programme of testing was undertaken in this area of the site in 2006 (Licence No: 16E0265; Excavations: 2006:279) and a layer of cobbling, together with associated medieval pottery, was uncovered. A Geophysical Survey of the area was undertaken by Earthsound Archaeological Geophysics under Licence No.: 16R0126. This comprised Magnetic Gradiometer and Electrical Resistance techniques, as requested by the Planning Authority. This revealed a</p>

Name	License/ author	Description
		<p>number of potential archaeological features. Both techniques were impacted upon by the historic use of the site. The presence of disturbed ground, debris and former landscape and golf course features caused a palimpsest of geophysical signatures, from which potential archaeological features as against more modern features, were difficult to distinguish. A series of linear boundary features were identified along with trackways associated with Rathangan Lodge estate. Potential archaeological activity was detected on the southern extent of the site, where a zone of magnetic enhancement and possible structural remains was identified. These appeared as highly magnetic trends within the magnetometer data, while the resistance survey indicated the presence of only limited possible structural remains within the soil. It was postulated that the possible structure suffered considerable fire damage, causing the high magnetic signature which will have remained within the soil even after the structural remains were removed to form Rathangan Lodge. Evidence of possible industrial activity or burnt pits were found in the magnetometer data, while isolated zones of magnetic enhancement were likely to be associated with the removal of trees and vegetation from the site, by cutting, burning or dynamite (the latter apparently undertaken as a training exercise by the Irish Army in the 1950s).</p> <p>A total of 20 test trenches were subsequently excavated within the confines of the site. The trenches were positioned to gain information with respect to the detected geophysical anomalies, taking the sloping topographical nature of the site into consideration. The testing indicated that the detected geophysical anomalies were associated with geological variations in the subsoil or associated with modern disturbances and features. Such testing did not uncover any features of archaeological interest or potential, although a total of 25 sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered. These were subsequently processed and submitted to Ms. Clare McCutcheon, Ceramic Researcher for examination and reporting. Most of the pottery sherds were determined to date from the late 12th – mid-14th centuries, with four sherds dating to the late 17th – 19th centuries. These are similar in date to the pottery sherds recovered in 2006. The medieval pottery range of dates – late 12th – mid 14th century – would tie in with the dates of when the castle was possibly built and, indeed, rebuilt, although, interestingly, no later medieval pottery, associated with its continued use into the 16th century, was recovered.</p>
Bridge Street, Rathangan, Kildare	06E0714 Martin E. Byrne	<p>The grant of planning for the construction of a mixed-use development at Bridge Street, Rathangan, required that the site be subjected to testing. The site is located on the northern bank of the Slate River and within the zone of archaeological potential established for Rathangan. There are no previously identified monuments located within, or in the general environs of, the site and the adjacent street is believed to have been laid out in the later medieval period.</p> <p>Four trenches were excavated by machine fitted with a toothless ditching/grading bucket. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered during the course of testing.</p>
Rathangan, Kildare	06E0265 Martin E. Byrne	Testing was undertaken in the immediate environs of the site of Rathangan Castle as part of the preparation of an archaeological impact assessment of a proposed residential development. The work was undertaken in early April 2006.

Name	License/ author	Description
		<p>There are now no traces of the castle that is marked on Noble and Keenan's map of 1742, which shows it in the field south-west of Rathangan Lodge and in a low-lying marshy area on the banks of the River Slate. In the late 1980s, the owner of Rathangan Lodge recalled wall foundations to the south-west of the house, near the river where a number of irregular earthworks were noted. However, such earthworks have largely disappeared, as the field was subsequently landscaped as a small golf-course. A hatched rectangular area indicates the location of the castle on the first-edition 6-inch OS map (1837), but there are no such indications on the subsequent edition of 1908. The site is not listed in the present RMP or marked on the associated maps. However, its location is included in the Urban Archaeological Survey (Bradley et al. 1997) and the site is listed for protection in the Rathangan Local Area Plan 2002.</p> <p>The development layout proposed that a public green space area be established in the environs of the castle site. Consequently, it was agreed with the National Monuments Service that the castle site did not require testing but that the area to the immediate north and east should be investigated.</p> <p>Three trenches were excavated, all of which uncovered a moderately soft waterlogged peaty material that was 0.3–0.4m in depth. In general, this lay directly upon mid-brown marl/clay, the nature of which indicated that it represented 'natural' subsoil. However, below the peat in the central area of Trench 1, the eastern area of Trench 2 and the southern area of Trench 3, a c. 0.2m layer of relatively compact grey/brown silty clay was uncovered. This material incorporated a high percentage of pebbles, cobbles and small/medium stones dispersed randomly throughout. In addition, a total of 24 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the surface of this layer. It is suggested that the feature may be associated with the castle and may have been introduced as an attempt to raise the original ground surface above the flood-plain. The concentration of medieval pottery, along with the physical matrix of the material and the fact that the northern edge of the layer coincided with relatively drier ground, is the basis for this conclusion.</p>
Bridge Street, Rathangan, Kildare	05E0309 John Kavanagh	A test excavation was carried out at Bridge Street, Rathangan, in March 2005. The site is situated within the zone of archaeological potential of the historic town of Rathangan (SMR 17:11). The excavation uncovered the remains of two cobbled surfaces and the base of a property boundary wall. The foundations of the wall ran east-west extending across the central area of the site. The wall follows the same alignment as the standing walls in the adjacent properties to the east and west, which suggests that the exposed section was part of this original wall. No datable evidence was available from the base of the wall, but it probably forms part of an old property division from the 19th or 20th centuries.
Rathangan/ Monasterevin/ Dysarth/ Hybla, Kildare	03E0208 Claire Cotter	<p>The Kildare Wellfield Development spans the townlands of Rathangan, Dysart, Hybla, Rehills, Monasterevin, Oldgrange and Carbury Hill and will ultimately consist of the following components.</p> <p>At Rathangan: a pipeline will run between Redhills and Oldgrange for approximately 11km. This will involve the excavation by machine of a</p>

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		<p>trench along the route. Water treatment works at Rathangan (Tullylost) will involve ground disturbance over a considerable area. A proposed reservoir at Redhills will also involve ground disturbance over a considerable area.</p> <p>At Carbury Hill-Dysart: a pipeline will run between the water wells and the proposed treatment works and, connecting with the reservoir at Carbury Hill, will involve the excavation by machine of a trench along the route. A proposed reservoir at Carbury will also involve ground disturbance over a considerable area. Water treatment works at Dysart will involve ground disturbance over a considerable area.</p> <p>At Monasterevin: an abstraction scheme will involve the development of well sites – three wells for production at Hybla Wood (Monasterevin/Rathangan Road) and a single well for production at Hybla South, off the N7. Both sites are owned by Coillte. Also involved will be the emplacement of pipelines from the wells to a central location.</p> <p>Advance investigative works relating to the scheme included geophysical prospecting and a paper survey of archaeological, historical and cartographic sources. This was followed up by monitoring at Dysart/Hybla and testing at Carbury Hill. Carbury Hill was dealt with under a separate licence (see No. 891 above, 03E0454). This report deals with the remaining components.</p> <p>The current phase of investigation was concerned with the monitoring of engineers' trial holes excavated along the route of the proposed pipelines and at the water treatment plant and reservoir sites. A total of 163 trial holes were mechanically excavated using a 0.5m-wide toothed bucket. The trial holes measured 2m in length by 0.5m in width by 3m in depth. No features of archaeological significance were noted in any of them. Most produced no finds, while seven produced post-medieval material.</p>