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Archaeological Impact Assessment

At Coolaghknock Glebe, Kildare

Licence 23E0795

February 2024

Client: NDFA

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1 Introduction

A pre planning archaeological impact assessment including testing was undertaken by John Purcell Archaeological Consultancy to assess the cultural heritage impact of a development at Coolaghknock Glebe, Kildare Town, Co. Kildare. This report is being undertaken on behalf of the National Development Finance Agency.

The report is based on documentary and cartographic research from all available sources including but not limited to the Record of Monuments and Places, the Sites and Monument Records, the topographical files of the National Museum, the Development Plan, local sources, and other literary and documentary references. Previous excavation in the immediate vicinity of the site was also reviewed. Archaeological testing was undertaken in February 2024.



Figure 1: Location of development

2 Receiving Environment

The proposed development is located to the northeast of Kildare Town. The site is located within a greenfield site currently in use as pasture. The site is bounded at the west by modern housing. Modern housing and the R413 form the northern boundary. Agricultural lands are to the south and east. A modern access lane is visible at the west of the site leading to a paved area within the site.

3 Methodology

This report has been prepared having regard to the following guidelines;

- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government, 2018)
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (European Commission, 2017)
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports – Draft (EPA, 2017)
- National Monuments Acts, 1930-2014
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Bill, 2006
- Heritage Act 1995
- Frameworks and Principles for the protection of Archaeological Heritage 1999
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments and the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000

3.1 Study Methodology

This assessment consists of a paper survey identifying all recorded sites within the vicinity of the proposed development, a site inspection and the results of archaeological test trenching.

The desktop survey undertaken consisted of a document and cartographic search utilising a number of sources including the following:

- Record of Monuments and Places (RMP); The RMP records known upstanding archaeological monuments, the original location of destroyed monuments and the location of possible sites identified through,

documentary, cartographic, photographic research and field inspections.

- The RMP consists of a list, organised by county and subdivided by 6" map sheets showing the location of each site. The RMP data is compiled from the files of the Archaeological Survey.
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage; The inventory of architectural heritage lists all post 1700 structures and buildings in the country. This includes structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social, scientific or technical importance.
- County Development Plans; The county development P
- plans were consulted to ascertain if any structures listed in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and/or any Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) were to be impact by the proposed development.
- Cartographic Sources; the following maps were examined: Down Survey (1656-1658), 1st edition Ordnance Survey Maps (1836-1846) and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey Maps (1908).
- Literary Sources; various published sources, including local and national journals, were consulted to establish a historical background for the proposed development site. Literary sources are a valuable means of completing the written record of an area and gaining insight into the history of the environs of the proposed development. Principal archaeological sources include: Local Journals; Published archaeological and architectural inventories; Peter Harbison's Guide to the National Monuments of Ireland; and O'Donovan's Ordnance Survey Letters.
- Previous archaeological assessments and excavations for the area were also reviewed.
- Topographical files are located at the National Museum of Ireland and detail stray finds across the country.

Figure 2: Site boundary with archaeological monuments marked



4 General Archaeological and Historical Summary

4.1 Brief Archaeological Background

Prehistory

Mesolithic to Bronze Age

Hunter-gatherer communities or Mesolithic people reached Ireland around 8000 BC. Early Mesolithic sites in Ireland are frequently found in coastal areas or further inland along river valleys. These settlers have left little trace on the landscape. The recovery of artefacts and identification of sites is usually where farmland is ploughed or in areas where developments include a topsoil strip. Most of the known Mesolithic material has been found on archaeological excavations. The Mesolithic period is divided into two periods – early (c. 8000–6500 BC) and late (6500–4000 BC) based on the type of tools.

The arrival of agriculture in the Neolithic Period led to a more sedentary way of life. The most visible remains associated with this period are megalithic tombs. These are located across the country. Over 90 Neolithic houses have been recorded across the country. These are usually only recorded during archaeological testing and excavation.

The commonest prehistoric monument are barrows. These are associated with the Bronze/Iron Age burial tradition (c. 2400 BC - AD 400) and are defined by an artificial mound of earth or earth and stone, normally constructed to contain or conceal burials.

These sites vary in shape and scale and can be variously described as bowl-barrow, ditch barrow, embanked barrow, mound barrow, pond barrow, ring-barrow and stepped barrow. The incidence and frequency of these sites in the area attests to the extent of prehistoric settlement in this area from earliest times.

Iron Age to Early Medieval Period

In late Bronze Age Ireland, the use of the metal reached a high point with the production of high-quality decorated weapons, ornament and instruments, often discovered from hoards or ritual deposits. The Iron Age however is known as a 'dark age' in Irish prehistory. Iron objects are found rarely, but there is no evidence for the warrior culture of the rest of Europe, although the distinctive La Tené style of art with animal motifs and spirals was adopted. Political life in the Iron Age seems to have been defined by continually warring petty kingdoms vying for power. These kingdoms, run on an extended clan system, had their economy rooted in mixed farming and, in particular cattle. Settlement was typically centred on a focal hillfort. Another more domestic site common to the Bronze Age is the *fulachta fiadh*. These are located along the edges of streams or in damp areas. They consist of a mound of charcoal enriched soil with fragmented burnt rocks. They usually are accompanied by a wooden or stone lined trough. These were used seasonally possibly for cooking or may have been used for recreational purposes.

Settlement in the Early Medieval Period is defined by the ringfort. The country was a patchwork of competing kingdoms during this period numbering up to 150. Ringforts were a farmstead surrounded by one or more earthen banks. These are the commonest monument across Co. Wexford and have been frequently recorded in the area. These are generally located in areas with commanding views over the countryside to provide security.

The introduction of Christianity to Ireland in the fifth century had a profound impact on Gaelic society, not in the least in terms of land ownership and the development of churches and the development of a large number of religious houses. The earliest churches were constructed of wood and mortar and wattle walls. By the ninth and tenth centuries these were being replaced by stone structures. These settlements became very important around the country and became small towns. Many of these sites were surrounded large earthen enclosures.

Historic Period

When the Anglo-Normans arrived in 1169, as mercenaries under Dermot Mac Murrugh, the landscape changed dramatically, the influx of new settlers signified by the construction of several new types of homesteads, defensive and ecclesiastical sites.

Post Medieval Ireland

Seventeenth century Ireland saw massive upheaval a result of the Confederate wars, the Cromwellian response and the Wars of the two kings. It is estimated that up to a third of the population was wiped out because of famine, disease and war. Soldiers were given land as payment resulting in further upheaval of the local population and the establishment of large estates. These came to dominate the landscape from this period onwards. Religious intolerance in other parts of Europe resulted in the expulsion of the Huguenot from France which were welcomed by the English Crown into Ireland.

4.2 Archaeological Monuments

A number of archaeological monuments are located in the environs of the proposed development. The site is also located 200m east of the archaeological complex at the Curragh RMP KE022-071. The details of these sites have been taken from archaeology.ie and are outlined below.

KD022-037----

Class: Burial

Townland: COLLAGHKNOCK GLEBE

According to Lucas (1969, 103), an adult female burial was found near the surface (D 0.55m) in a natural sand hill or esker. Apparently unprotected, the skeleton was orientated SW-NE, with the skull at the SW. No grave goods were noted.

KD022-049----

Class: Barrow - ring-barrow

Townland: CURRAGH (Kildare ED)

A raised circular area (diam. c. 20m) containing a small central mound (diam. 3.2m), defined by an inner bank, a fosse, and traces of slight outer bank (overall diam. 32m). Partial excavation by O'Riordáin (1950, 259-269: Site 6) revealed a two-period

monument. Phase 1: comprised a low central mound of earth and stone covering the extended inhumation of an adult (head to NW), enclosed by two concentric fosses (c. 6m and c. 8m from the centre) and two smaller fosses close to the central mound - a possible multiple ring-barrow. O'Riordáin suggested that the larger fosses had external banks and that the smaller fosses provided material for the central mound. Phase 2: a cemetery of twelve extended inhumations (head to W), including two children, three adults, two adult females and four adult males was enclosed by the large fosse and bank visible today, and the central mound was also enlarged during this phase. Finds (none directly associated with burials) included six pieces of flint (two worked), one polychrome glass bead (white, yellow and blue), several sherds of medieval pottery and three other sherds with horizontal-line decoration.

4.3 Previous Archaeological Works

The archaeological excavation database (excavations.ie) was searched for archaeological excavations and reports in the environs of the proposed development. Three reports are listed for the townland of Collaghknock Glebe. These are all related to the location of the burial excavated in 1966 (KD022-037). This included the original excavation in 1966. The site of the RMP was developed in 2006. Prior to this a geophysical survey and archaeological testing was undertaken in 2004. Archaeological monitoring was undertaken at the site in 2006. No further archaeological features were identified in the vicinity of the RMP.

4.4 Cartographic Evidence

The first edition OS map and the 25" map shows the site laid out in agricultural fields with a similar layout still visible at the site. No features indicative of archaeological remains were identified.

Figure 3: First edition OS map for the site



Figure 4: 25" map for the site

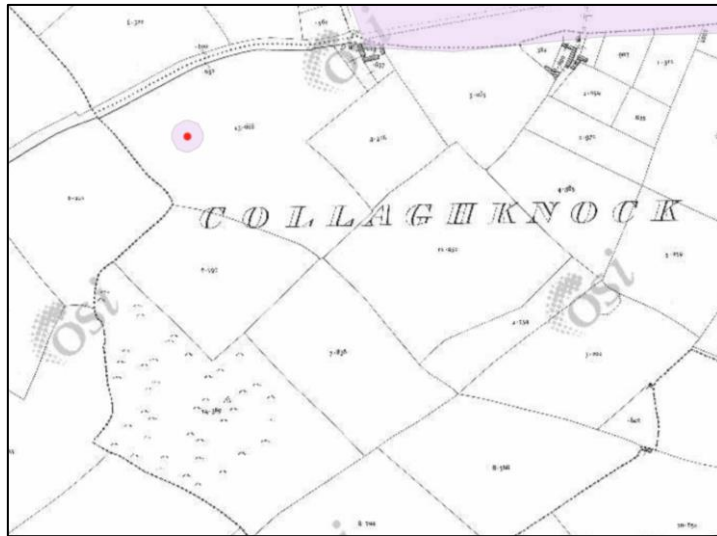


Figure 5: Test trench layout



4.5 Protected Structures

The site at Collaghknock Glebe does not include any structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures for Co. Kildare or the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The closest protected structures are located within Kildare Town over 1km to the west.

4.6 Topographical Files

The topographical files are a record of stray finds and artefacts reported to the National Museum of Ireland. A database is available for research and the artefacts are listed by townland. An examination of the topographical files revealed one find for Collegeknock Glebe. This is bone related to the burial RMP KD022-037.

5 Archaeological Testing

As part of the assessment licenced archaeological testing was undertaken in February 2024. This was undertaken on an dry sunny day. The test trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator fitted with a grading bucket.

Test trench 1-2

These were located at the south of the site. The trenches were orientated east to west. The trenches were excavated to a length of 80m in length and were 1.8m in width. The topsoil was shallow measuring between 0.2-0.3m in depth. Below this the natural was recorded, this consisted of an orange boulder clay, with areas of sand and gravel exposed also.



Plate 1: Test trench 1, looking east



Plate 2: Test trench 2, looking east

Test Trench 4

This was located at the southwest of the site. The trench was orientated east to west. The trench was excavated to a length of 20m and was 1.8m in width. The topsoil was shallow measuring between 0.3m in depth. Below this the natural was recorded, this consisted of an orange boulder clay, with areas of sand and gravel exposed also.



Plate 3: Test trench 4, looking east

Test trench 5-7

These were located at the centre of the site. The trenches were orientated north to south. The trenches were excavated to a length of 120m in length and were 1.8m in width. The topsoil was shallow measuring between 0.3m in depth. Below this the natural was recorded, this consisted of an orange boulder clay. A number of drainage channels were located in these trenches.

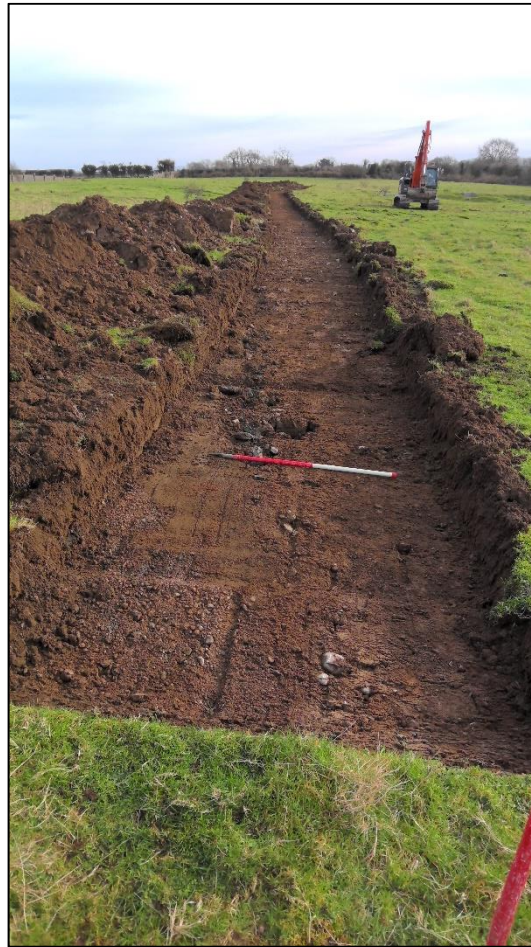


Plate 4: Test trench 5, looking south



Plate 5: Test trench 6, looking south



Plate 6: Test trench 7, looking south

Test Trench 8

This was located at the west of the site. The trench was orientated north to south. The trench was excavated to a length of 70m and was 1.8m in width. The topsoil was shallow measuring between 0.3m in depth. Below this the natural boulder clay was recorded areas of modern disturbance was noted across the trench. Modern drainage channels were also noted across the site.

Test trench 9-15

These were located at the north of the site. The trenches were orientated north to south. The trench was excavated to a length of 60m in length and were 1.8m in width. Redeposited topsoil was visible across the area, measuring 0.3m in depth. Below this the natural was recorded, this consisted of an orange boulder clay. A series of drainage channels were excavated into this boulder clay. Much of this field has been previously excavated with buried modern spoil visible across the site.

Test trench 11 could not be excavated due to the location of two pipelines connecting to the water works at the south of the site.



Plate 7: Test trench 9, looking north



Plate 8: Test trench 10, looking north



Plate 9: Test trench 12, looking north



Plate 10: Test trench 13, looking north



Plate 11: Test trench 13, buried spoil



Plate 12: Test trench 14, looking north



Plate 13: Test trench 15, looking north

Test Trenches 16-20

These test trenches were outside of the proposed development site and were excluded from the archaeological testing.

6 Cultural Heritage Assessment

The proposed development does not include any recorded archaeological monuments. However a burial was excavated in 1966 in what was then the same field as the north of the development. Subsequent archaeological investigation at the development to the west of the site that includes this monument did not uncover further remains. This random find shows the potential for further burials or archaeological deposits in the area. As a result of this archaeological testing was undertaken across the site. A series of trenches were excavated across the site. this has shown that the north field is very disturbed and has previously been stripped. The remainder of the site at the south was in use as pasture, this area has been relatively undisturbed with pipelines running to the waterworks. No archaeological finds or features were identified during the testing.

6 Mitigation And Conclusion

Archaeological testing was undertaken to assess the site for any sub surface remains. None were identified. Although no archaeological remains were identified by the testing there is still potential for remains at the site. The site is on the edge of the Curragh which contains significant archaeological remains, furthermore the random finding of burials in an adjoining site shows there is still archaeological potential in the study area. As a result licenced archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping is recommended. This will allow for deposits to be identified and a strategy for their resolution to take place. These works will be under licence to the NMS.

All recommendations are subject to agreement with the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government.

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