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Archaeological Impact Assessment  
At Oldtown Mill, Celbridge, Co. Kildare

June 2023

**Client:** NDFA on behalf of Kildare County Council

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## **Executive Summary**

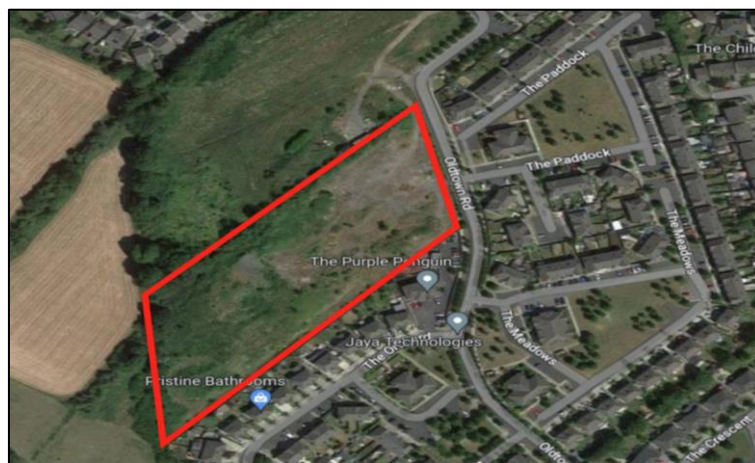
This pre planning report details a review of the archaeological evidence for the area and has assessed the archaeological potential of the study area. The study area is located in the townland of Oldtown to the west of Celbridge, Co. Kildare. No archaeological remains are located within the site or its immediate environs. The site has been partially disturbed as a result of excavation works in the past. These works included deep excavation and removal of topsoil. Original fabric is only visible at the west of the site. No significant impact on the archaeological landscape is predicted. As a result no further archaeological input is required.

## 1 Introduction

A pre planning archaeological impact assessment was undertaken by John Purcell Archaeological Consultancy to assess the cultural heritage impact of a development at Oldtown Mill, Celbridge, Co. Kildare. This report is being undertaken on behalf of the National Development Finance Agency. The report has been compiled to assess the impact of the site on the archaeological and historical landscape.

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 vicinity was also reviewed.

This report was compiled by John Purcell of John Purcell Archaeological Consultancy.



**Figure 1: Location of development**

## 2 Receiving Environment

The proposed development is located in a brownfield site in the townland of Oldtown to the northwest Celbridge. The site is bounded on the south and east by modern housing. It is bounded by agricultural land at the north and west. The site has been disturbed and partially excavated as seen in the aerial photographs for 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 Murrough, 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.



## **Celbridge**

Celbridge (RMP KD011-012001 ) translates as Cill Droiched ('the church of the bridge'), traditional associations with St Mochua. The area has traces of a possible early ecclesiastical enclosure. The village was known as Kildroght until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Celbridge was granted by Strongbow to Adam De Hereford before 1176. Adam granted Celbridge to his brother John, who was in turn succeeded by his son Thomas, on whose death, before 1224, Celbridge passed to his son-in-law Milo de Rochford. The Rochfords held Celbridge until the mid-14th century. The earliest evidence for the existence of a borough is in 1401. There was a significant settlement there by 1314 when Henry le Waleys was charged with breaking the 'doors of houses in the town of Kildroght' and taking geese, hens, bread, and beer (Wood et al. 1956, 318). The settlement was forfeited after the rebellion of Silken Thomas, and in 1536, it was granted to John Alen, Master of the Rolls. By 1554, it had been restored to the Kildares when the earl requested the Lord Deputy to confirm the manor of Castletown (i.e. the town of the castle of Celbridge) to Gerald Sutton, who was later to forfeit it because of his part in the Baltinglass rebellion of 1580. In 1587, the manor of Castletown-Kildroght was granted to John Dongan, and the Dongan's held it for most of the 17th c. In 1654, the Civil Survey recorded 'one stone house .. intended for a malt house, a bridge over the Liffey and three mills in Celbridge, while the 1659 census gave the population of Kildroght as 63 and Celbridge as 34. In 1674, Celbridge was granted a weekly market and two yearly fairs. A burgage plot pattern is evident on 19th century maps, but subsequent building has eroded it. There are references to two castles, a bridge and several mills and evidence of a possible early ecclesiastical enclosure and a medieval church and graveyard (details taken from archaeology.ie).

### **4.2 Archaeological Monuments**

There are no archaeological monuments close to the proposed site at Oldtown. The medieval settlement at Celbridge is over 1km from the site and contains the closest archaeological monuments to the site.

### **4.3 Previous Archaeological Works**

An examination of the bulletin of Irish archaeological excavations was undertaken. This database lists licenced archaeological excavations by townland and county. An examination of the database showed three entries for Oldtown, Celbridge, Co. Kildare. These assessments did not uncover any archaeological remains.

#### **4.4 Cartographic Evidence**

The first edition OS map and the 25" map shows the site as an open area. In the first edition OS map the site is laid out in two fields. By the 25" map the field has been enlarged. No features indicative of archaeological remains were identified.

An examination of the aerial photographs for the site shows largescale excavation has occurred (info taken from geohive.ie). A 1999 photograph shows the site as a green field site. By 2004 the eastern half of the site contained a compound for an adjoining development, the centre of the site appeared to contain a sand and gravel quarry (Figure 5).

**Figure 3: First edition OS map for the site**

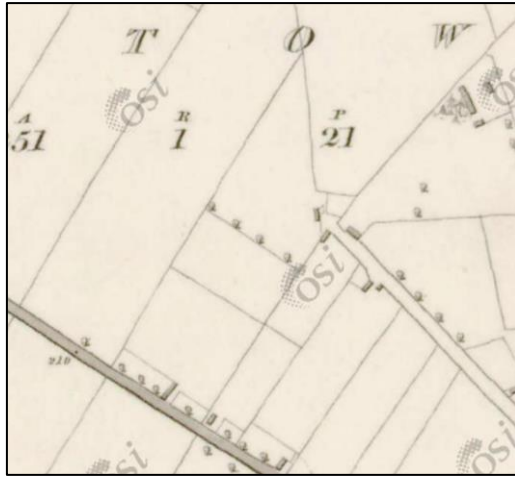


Figure 4: 25" map for the area

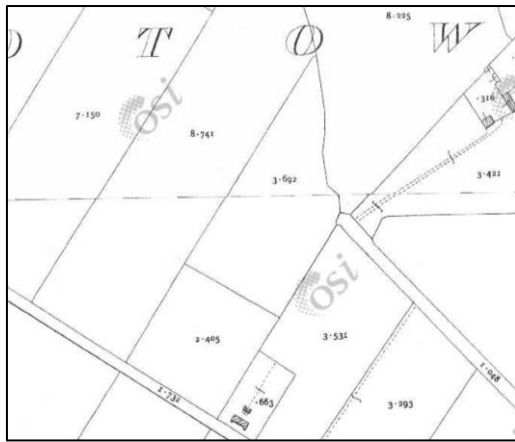
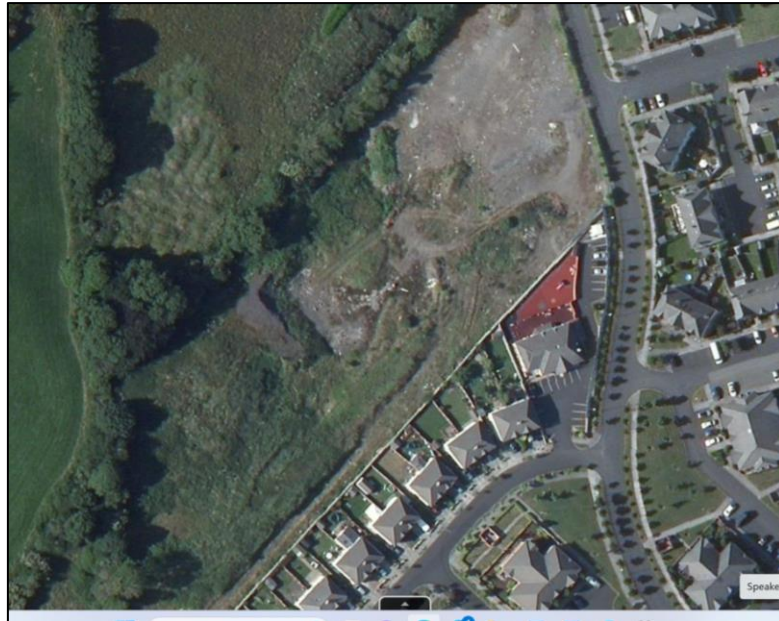


Figure 5: Aerial Photograph for the site (taken from geohive.ie)



#### **4.5 Protected Structures**

The study area does not include any structures listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Kildare of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. No listed structures are located within the wider environs.

#### **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 a large number of finds for Oldtown, Co. Kildare.

Table 1: List of entries for Oldtown from the Topographical files

NMIRegisterNo	SimpleName	Component	Townland	FindPlace	County
1955:82	Pottery	Ceramic	OLDTOWN	Burial I	KILDARE
1955:83	Human remains	Bone	OLDTOWN		KILDARE
1955:84	Human remains	Bone	OLDTOWN		KILDARE
1955:85	Pottery	Ceramic	OLDTOWN	Burial II	KILDARE
1955:86	Pottery	Ceramic	OLDTOWN	Burial II	KILDARE
1955:86.1	Sample	Charcoal	OLDTOWN	Possibly Burial II	KILDARE
1955:87	Bowl	Ceramic	OLDTOWN	Burial III	KILDARE
1955:88	Human remains	Bone	OLDTOWN		KILDARE
1955:89	Human remains	Bone	OLDTOWN		KILDARE

## **5 Impact on the Cultural Landscape**

### **5.1 Recorded Monuments**

The proposed development site is located in the townland of Oldtown to the west of Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The site does not include any recorded archaeological monuments and none are located in the wider environs of the site. An examination of cartographic evidence for the site did not identify any potential archaeological features. Aerial photographs for the site has shown that most of the site has been disturbed in the past.

No significant impact on the archaeological landscape is predicted. As a result no further archaeological input is required.

### **5.2 Protected Structures**

The proposed development site is located to the west of Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The site does not include any protected structures and none are located in the wider environs of the site. An examination of the aerial photographs and cartographic evidence for the site did not identify any additional structures.

## **6 Conclusions**

The study area is located in the townland of Oldtown to the west of Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The site has been partially disturbed as a result of excavation works in the past. These works included deep excavation and removal of topsoil. Original fabric is only visible at the west of the site. No significant impact on the archaeological landscape is predicted. As a result no further archaeological input is required.

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

## References

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