

Archaeological testing report

Lands at Cartron, Oranmore, County Galway



Excavation Licence No. 24E0554

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Project summary

<i>Excavation Licence Number</i>	24E0554
<i>Report Author (s)</i>	András Hindli
<i>Date of investigation</i>	28 – 29 May 2024
<i>Duration of investigation</i>	Two days
<i>Investigation Type</i>	Test trenching
<i>Grid Reference</i>	536360, 725238 ITM
<i>Townland</i>	Cartron
<i>Additional townland (if relevant)</i>	N/A
<i>Postal address (if relevant)</i>	N/A
<i>OS 6" Sheet</i>	GA095
<i>Planning Authority</i>	N/A
<i>Planning Ref. No.</i>	N/A Pre-planning
<i>Licence Holder</i>	András Hindli
<i>Archaeological Contractor</i>	John Cronin & Associates
<i>Client</i>	Marshall Yards Development Company Ltd.
<i>Relevant SMR Number</i>	N/A
<i>Reason for investigation</i>	Pre-planning archaeological assessment of land parcel for proposed residential development
<i>Summary of findings</i>	<p>A programme of archaeological testing consisting of 11 no. linear trenches with a combined length of 795m was undertaken at the subject site to inform any potential impacts on unrecorded subsurface archaeological features in the event of future development. A number of these trenches were designed to target anomalies identified during a previous geophysical survey (licence 24R0217). No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the testing programme. The subject site showed evidence of disturbance caused by previous ground works, such as geological trial pits and other mechanically excavated areas; clearance and levelling of the lands, drainage systems and works related with the overhead powerline polesets.</p>

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1. Introduction

John Cronin & Associates have been commissioned by **Marshall Yards Development Company Ltd** to undertake a programme of archaeological testing associated with a land parcel (hereafter referred to as the 'subject site') at Cartron, County Galway.

It was noted during desktop assessment and site inspection that the subject site possessed a low to moderate potential to contain previously unrecorded archaeology. The site was then subject to a geophysical survey under licence 24R0217, conducted by Dr. Ger Dowling (Dowling 2024) which revealed a few discrete anomalies of potential archaeological interest.

The programme of archaeological testing was undertaken between 28 and 29 May 2024. Test trenches were designed to target anomalies identified during the geophysical survey, as well as evaluating the overall site. **No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were found during these investigations.**

2. Context

Location and site description

The subject site is located in the townland of Cartron, County Galway, approximately 6km east of Galway city centre and 1.5km northwest of Oranmore (**Figure 1 - 2**). The site is bounded by a trainline on its northern side, by the R338 to the south, a modern dwelling to the west and a farm to the east.



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



Figure 2: Location of subject site (red area) (Source: Ordnance Survey of Ireland)

The subject site is set within a relatively flat pastureland and is composed of a larger field to the west and two smaller fields to the east. The fields were subject to licenced reclamation sometime within the past decades, concluding in site clearance and levelling of the subject site by mechanical means.

Archaeological & historical background

There are **no** recorded archaeological monuments within the subject site. However, there are two archaeological sites recorded by the ASI within the 500m radius study area which surrounds the subject site, a ringfort (GA095-012----) and a megalithic structure (GA095-044----). Details of these archaeological monuments are presented in **Table 1** and **Figure 3**.

Table 1: List of recorded archaeological sites within the 500m study area

SMR No.	Classification	Townland	ITM (E,N)	Description
GA095-012----	Ringfort	Cartron	536518, 725711	On the summit of a rocky hillock in grassland. Poorly preserved circular cashel (diam. 38m) defined by a collapsed drystone wall overlain throughout by a field wall
GA095-044----	Megalithic Structure	Garraun South	537042, 725260	Currently the information for this record has not been uploaded

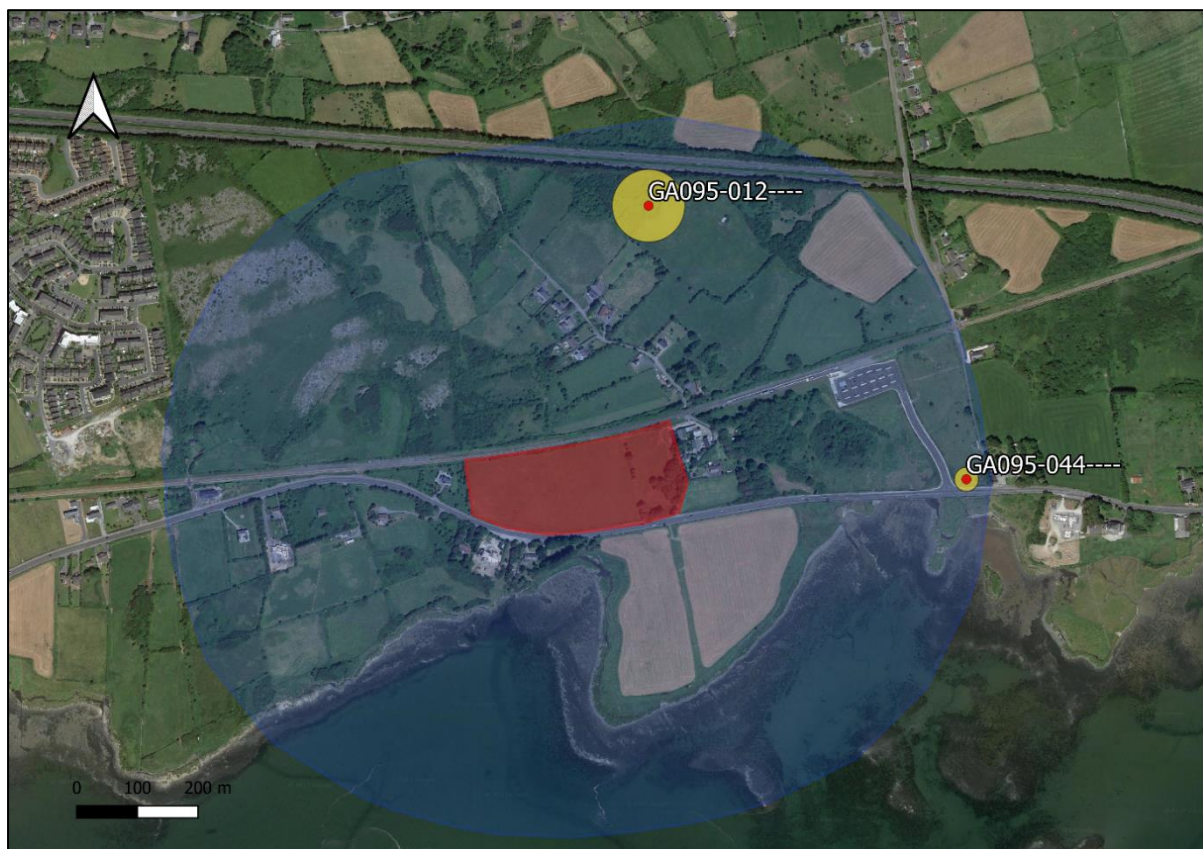


Figure 3: Recorded archaeological sites within 500m of the subject site (Source: Government of Ireland)

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 gives access to over 27,000 reports and can be browsed or searched using multiple fields, including year, county, site type, grid reference, license number, Sites and Monuments Record number and author.

No licenced excavations were undertaken within the subject site. A total of two licenced investigations have taken place within the 500m study area. The table below (**Table 2**) provides summary accounts of these licenced archaeological investigations within the study area have been extracted from *The Excavation Database* (Source: www.excavations.ie).

Table 2: Summary of licenced archaeological investigations within study area (source www.excavations.ie)

Licence No.	Summary
11E0288	Test excavations were carried out on the site of a proposed new train station at Garraun South, Oranmore, in August 2011. The proposed development consists of a platform, telecoms building, car park and access road. The proposed access road passes within 30m of GA095-044 (Megalithic structure, possible). Sixteen test trenches were opened on the footprint of the proposed access road and car park. No archaeological material was uncovered.
95E0099	<p>This project involved the excavation of two monuments in the townland of Doughiska, on the outskirts of Galway City, prior to the construction of Phase 3 of the Galway Eastern Approach Road, which will involve the total destruction of these monuments. The sites comprised an uncertain earthwork (Site No. 1) and a burnt mound (Site No. 2). The work was commissioned by the Road Design Section of Galway County Council and the excavations were carried out between 15 May and 16 June 1995.</p> <p>Excavation of the uncertain earthwork (Site No. 1) produced no archaeological material. Excavation of the burnt mound involved the opening of an area 9m north-east/south-west by 10m north-west/south-east (Trench A). A further trench measuring 5.5m in length and 3m in width was excavated to the west-south-west of the mound (Trench B). Trench A revealed the outline of a horse-shoe-shaped mound measuring 8.8m north-west/south-east by 5.6m north-east/south-west. Concentrated areas of burning were evident in the centre of the mound and the terminal on the south-east side. At the base of the mound a number of post-holes and irregular-shaped cuts were uncovered. These formed a semicircle surrounding the opening of the mound.</p> <p>While no evidence of a trough was discovered, the excavation of Trench B uncovered a natural depression with evidence of burning. Samples for C14 dating were taken from both this trench and the burnt mound.</p>

Placenames

The Irish origins and translations for the townland of Cartron and surrounding townlands (**Table 3**) were sourced from www.logainm.ie.

Table 3: Translation of townland name (source www.logainm.ie)

Townland	Irish Root	Translation
Cartron	<i>An Cartrún</i>	-
Curragrean	<i>Cora Ghrian</i>	<i>Cora</i> ; weir, stone-fence, ford
Garraun South	<i>An Garrán Theas</i>	<i>Garrán</i> ; grove
Ardaun	<i>Na hArdáin</i>	-

Cartographic review

The cartographic sources examined for the study areas include the first edition 1:10,560 or 6-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) map (1837-42) (**Figure 4**) and the 1:2500 or 25-inch OS map (1888-1913). (**Figure 5**). The 6-inch map depicts subject site within a landscape of enclosed agricultural land. The townland boundary of Cartron can be seen along the western perimeter of the subject lands.

The 25-inch map similarly depicts the subject site within agricultural land, though minor changes can be seen in the form of sub-division of fields. Generally, the review of cartographic sources indicates that the fields within the subject site have remained agricultural and largely undisturbed. No potential archaeological features are depicted.

An examination of Ordnance Survey and Google satellite images from 1995 to the present was undertaken on the subject site. The images show that the land has remained largely unchanged and there is no indication of any archaeological features on the site (**Figures 6 & 7**).

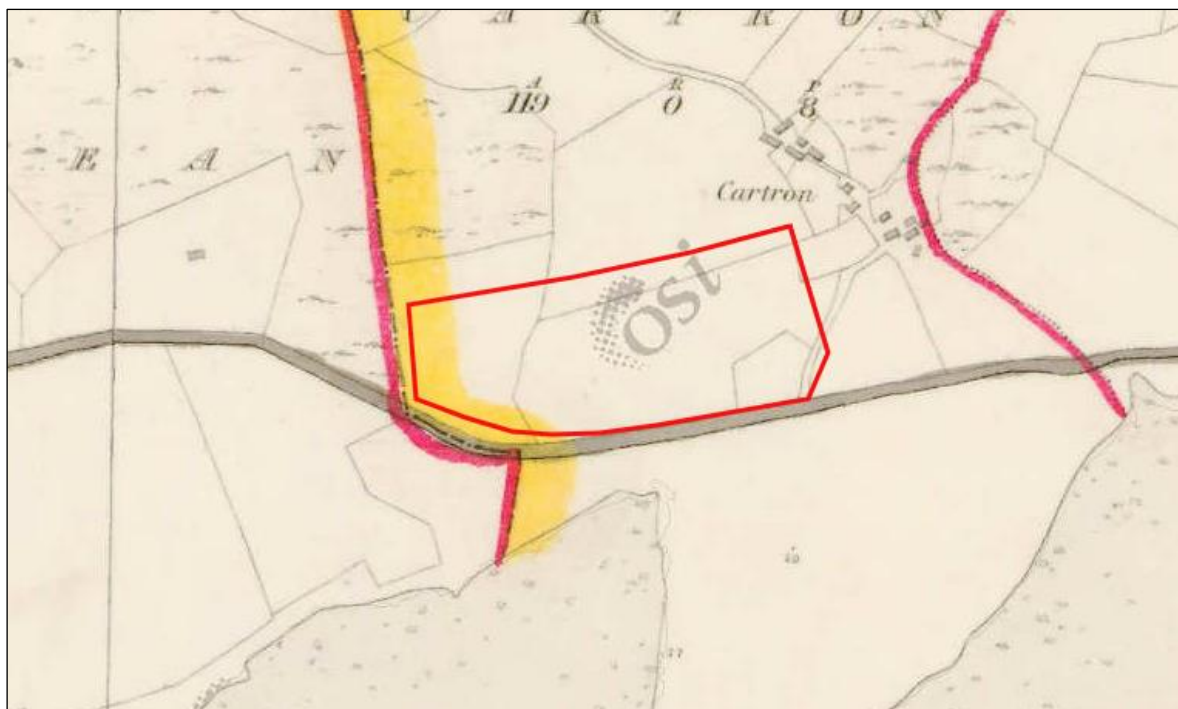


Figure 4: Extract from the first edition 6-inch OS map depicting the subject lands, approximate site boundary defined in red (Source: Government of Ireland & Tailte Éireann)

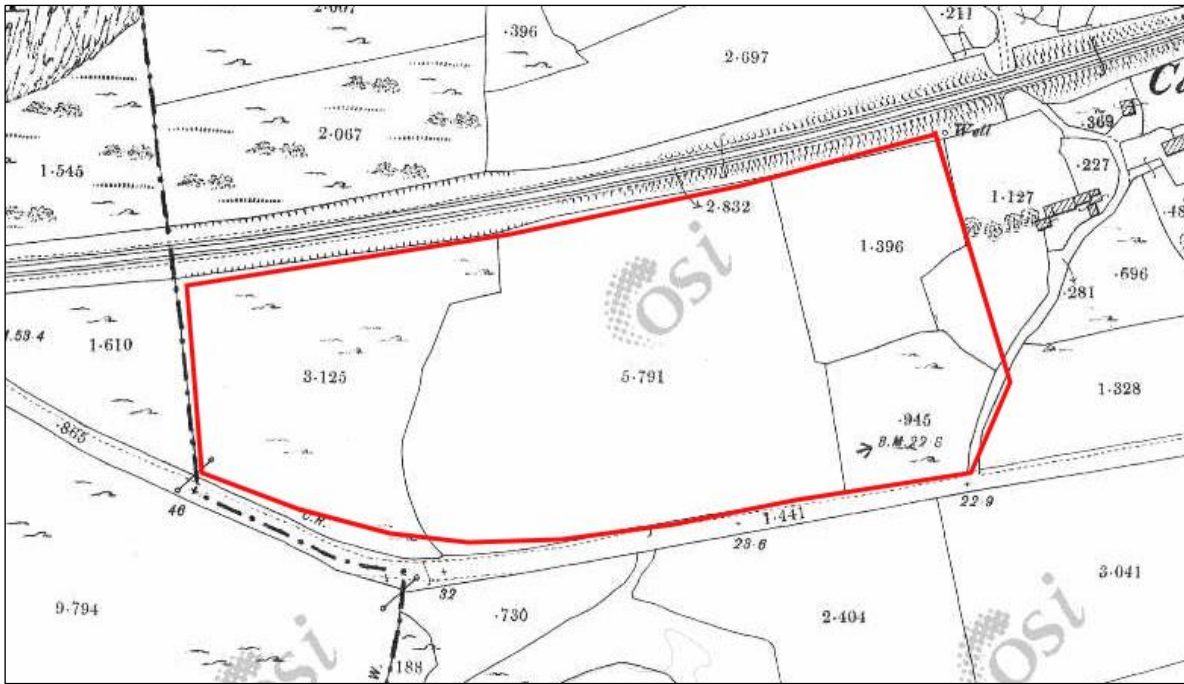


Figure 5: Extract from the 25-inch OS map depicting the subject lands, approximate site boundary defined in red (Source: Government of Ireland & Tailte Éireann)

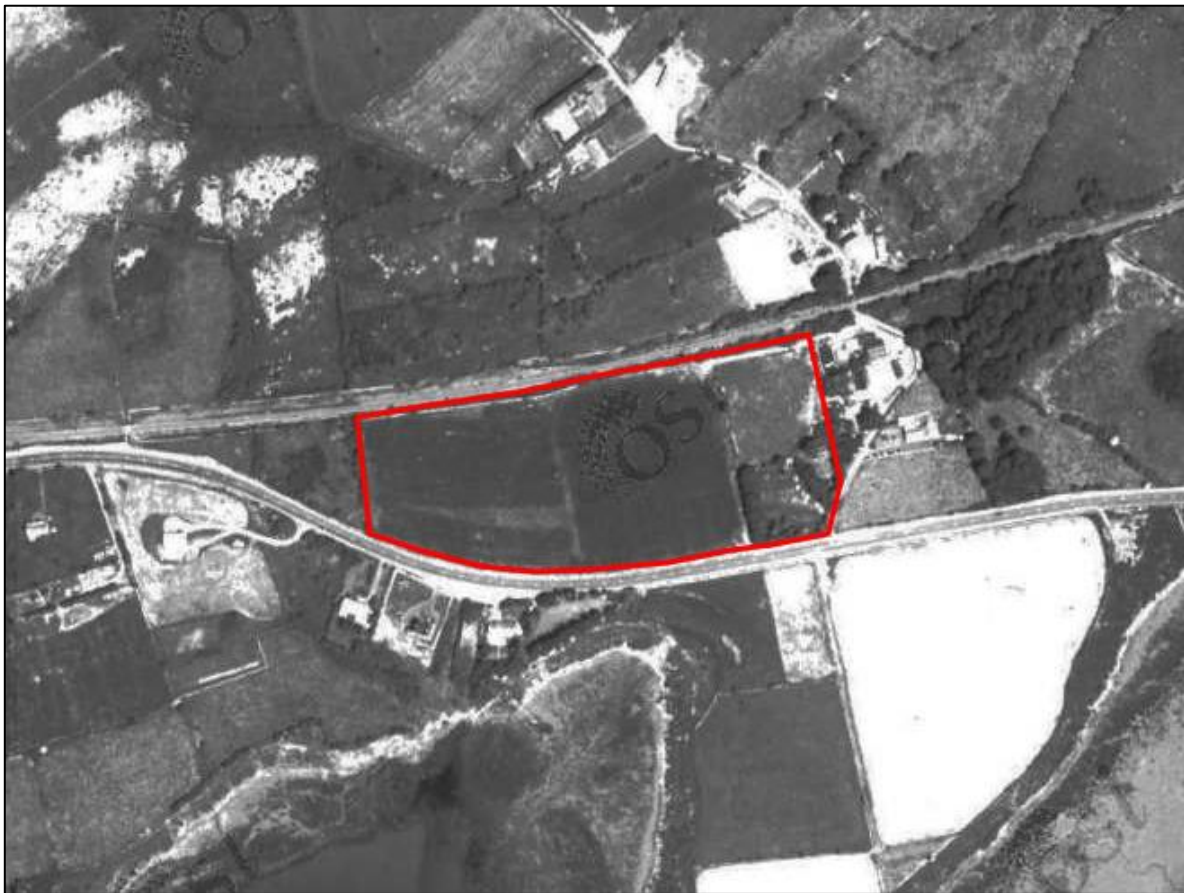


Figure 6: Segment of 1995 OS aerial survey image of subject site (Source: Government of Ireland & Tailte Éireann)



Figure 7: Segment of most recent aerial survey image of subject site (Source: Google Maps)

Geophysical survey

A geophysical survey was recently conducted on the subject site (Dowling, 2024) under licence 24R0217 and revealed a few discrete possibly archaeological anomalies, as well as other features indicative of former agriculture and land division (also depicted on the historical OS maps). The geophysical report describes the results as:

Two 'pit-type' responses [1 & 3] mapped by the investigation in the western field may reflect pits/spreads that contain burnt/fired material in their fills and represent hearth- or oven-type archaeological features. What may be the line of a narrow, curving ditch/trench [2] was also recorded, though an archaeological interpretation for this putative feature is speculative; this could, instead, relate to agricultural activity or be of natural origin. Evidence for past cultivation and former land division is also discernible. A relict field boundary [4] marked on the early historical maps was recorded in the western field, alongside a possible example [5] in the eastern field. A potential field drain [6] was also recorded.

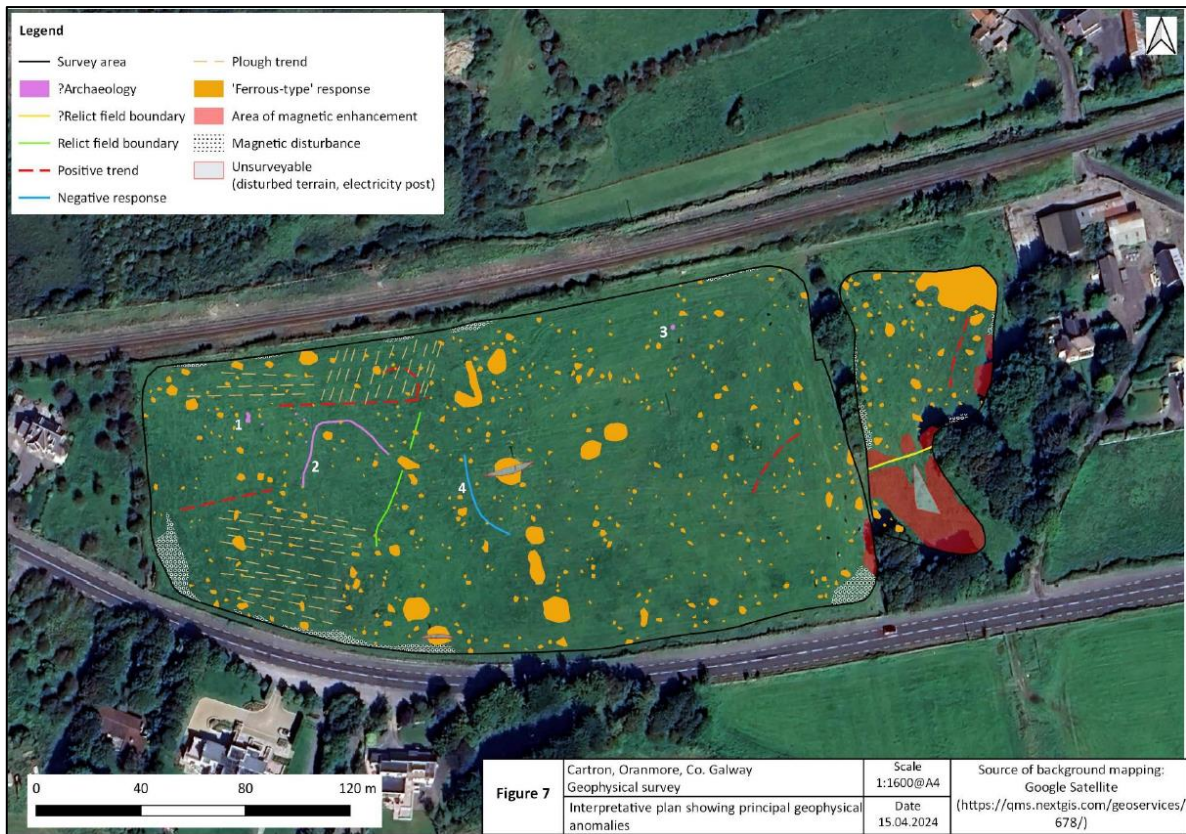


Figure 8: Interpretative plan showing principal geophysical anomalies (Source: Dowling, 2024)

3. Description of testing and results

The aim of the archaeological testing programme was to identify the existence, location, significance and extent of any features, finds, deposits, structures or buildings of archaeological consequence as part of a preliminary / pre-planning archaeological assessment of the subject site.

The proposed archaeological testing originally consisted of **11 no. of machine excavated test trenches with a combined length of 795m (Figure 9, Table 4)**. The trenches were excavated by a 360° tracked excavator operating with a 1.8m wide toothless grading bucket and under constant archaeological supervision by the licensee. The topsoil, and any intermediary horizons were removed to reveal the underlying natural subsoil. The excavated trenches layout were partially conditioned by the presence of two overhead power lines, depicted in **Figure 9** as purple dashed line. In addition, trenches number **T2, T3, T4** and **T6** were designed to target geophysical anomalies of possible archaeological nature.

The subject site showed evidence of disturbance at numerous locations caused by previous ground works, such as geological trial pits and other mechanically excavated areas; clearance and landscaping, drainage systems and works related with the overhead powerline polesets. The testing programme showed that the anomalies from the geophysical survey are associated with these disturbances or variation in the geology of the site. Occasional traces of modern agricultural activity (furrows) were observed mainly within the eastern half of the site. **No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the testing programme.** Detailed descriptions of the excavated trenches are provided in **Appendix 2** of this report.

Table 4: Proposed trench details. See **Figure 9** for trench locations

Trench ID	Length	Orientation
T1	40m	N-S
T2	58m	NW-SE
T3	95m	NE-SW
T4	100m	NE-SW
T5	100m	NE-SW
T6	62m	E-W
T7	91m	ENE-WSW
T8	100m	ENE-WSW
T9	100m	ENE-WSW
T10	25m	NE-SW
T11	24m	ENE-WSW
TOTAL	795m	

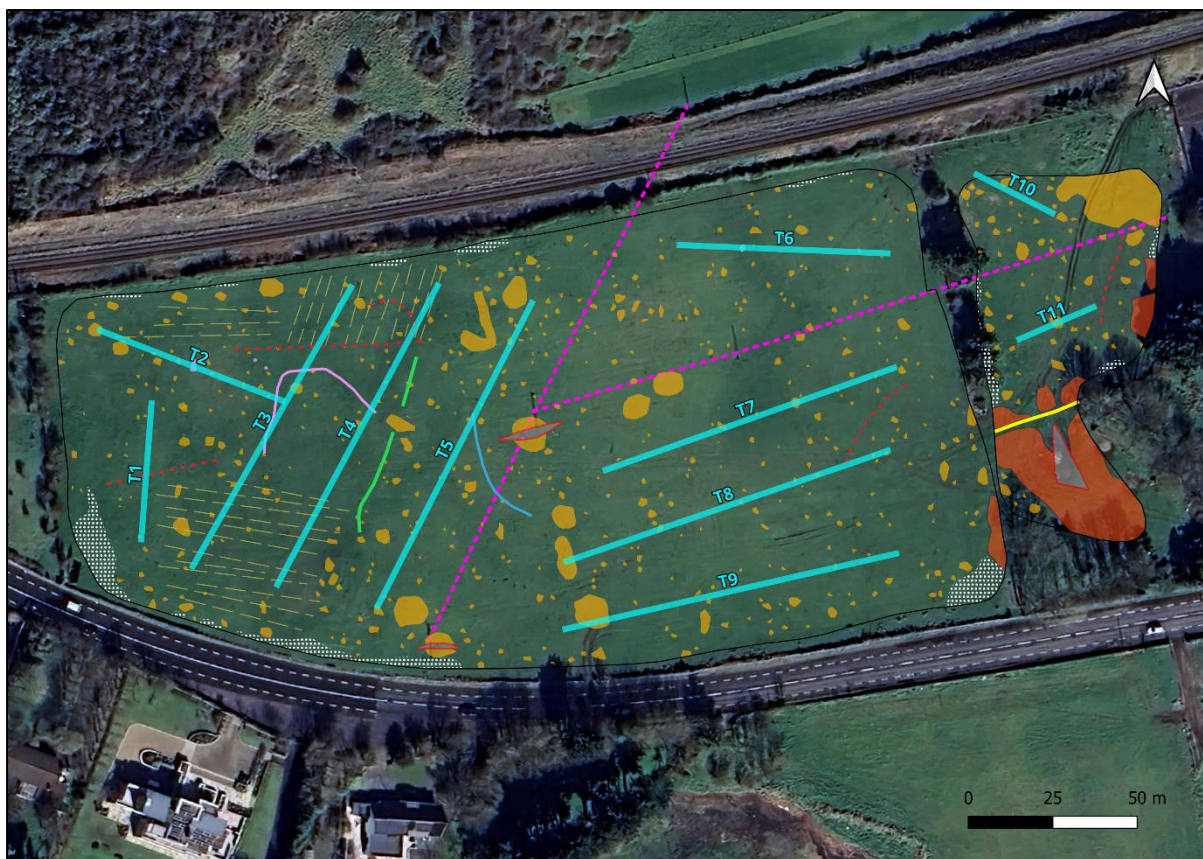


Figure 9: Location of proposed test trenches

4. Conclusions and recommendations

A programme of pre-planning archaeological testing was conducted between the 28th and 29th May 2024 at the location of the subject site. The testing programme noted that many areas of the subject site contain disturbances in the form of mechanically excavated trial pits, landscaping and works associated with the existent overhead powerline polesets. It is believed that these fields were previously subject to licenced reclamation works, involving mechanical clearance and landscaping.

The anomalies recorded during the archaeological geophysical survey were targeted by several of the excavated trenches. All potential anomalies were proven to be modern disturbance or variations in the geology of the site. No features, or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within the trenches during this programme. **On this basis, the proposed development will not give rise to archaeological impacts.**

Given the results produced by the archaeological trenches and the geophysical survey of the subject site, it is recommended that **no further archaeological mitigation works are deemed necessary at this development site.**

5. References/sources

Database of Irish Archaeological Excavations. Available at: <http://www.excavations.ie/>
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Appendix 1: Photographic record



Plate 1: View of subject site facing east from western boundary



Plate 2: Aerial view of excavated trenches within the subject site, facing west



Plate 3: View of trench T1, facing south



Plate 4: View of trench T1, facing north



Plate 5: View of trench T2, facing northwest



Plate 6: View of trench T2, facing southeast



Plate 7: View of modern feature corresponding to targeted geophysical anomaly in trench T2



Plate 8: View of trench T3, facing southwest



Plate 9: View of trench T3, facing northeast



Plate 10: View of trench T4, facing southwest



Plate 11: View of trench T4, facing northeast



Plate 12: View of trench T5, facing southwest



Plate 13: View of trench T5, facing northeast



Plate 14: View of trench T6, facing west



Plate 15: View of trench T6, facing east



Plate 16: View of disturbance at the location of geophysical anomaly in trench T6



Plate 17: View of geological contexts in section within trench T6



Plate 18: View of trench T7, facing northeast



Plate 19: View of trench T7, facing southwest



Plate 20: View of progress of excavation of trench T8



Plate 21: View of trench T8, facing northeast



Plate 22: View of trench T8, facing southwest



Plate 23: View of trench T9, facing northeast



Plate 24: View of trench T9, facing southwest



Plate 25: View of trench T10, facing southeast



Plate 26: View of trench T10, facing northwest



Plate 27: View of trench T11, facing southwest



Plate 28: View of trench T11, facing northeast

Appendix 2: Test trench record

Trench	T1	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.15 - 0.45m
Trench T1 measured 40m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.15m – 0.45m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. The underlying natural subsoil was mottled light-brown and grey sandy clay on the southern half and light grey on the northern side, containing frequent medium to large sub-angular stone inclusions. Rock outcrop and bedrock was predominant throughout the trench. No features, or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.					

Trench	T2	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.1 – 0.64m
Trench T2 measured 58m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.1 – 0.64m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light brown and grey sandy clay with frequent medium to large sub-angular stone inclusions and bedrock. Variation within the natural was visible in the form of pockets of sand and patches of orangish brown clay. The anomaly highlighted on the geophysical survey report relates to modern disturbance consisting of a square-shaped cut with straight sides, and traces of sod within its fill. No features, or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.					

Trench	T3	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.13 – 0.55m
Trench T3 measured 95m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.13 – 0.55m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light brown and grey sandy clay with frequent medium to large sub-angular stone inclusions and bedrock. The anomalies highlighted on the geophysical survey report relates to variation in the natural and pockets where the bedrock was slightly covered by a thin layer of sand. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.					

Trench	T4	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.05 – 0.55m
Trench T4 measured 100m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.05 – 0.55m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern ceramics. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light brown and grey sandy clay with frequent medium to large sub-angular stone inclusions and bedrock. The anomalies highlighted on the geophysical survey report relates to variation in the natural and pockets where the bedrock was slightly covered by a thin layer of sand. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.					

Trench	T5	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.1 – 0.5m
Trench T5 measured 100m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.1 – 0.5m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. A layer of mid-brown sandy silt was noted between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, containing occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones and seashells. This was interpreted as a potential introduced layer locally sourced to level the current topography of the field, possibly associated with land reclamation. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light brown and grey					

sandy clay with frequent medium to large sub-angular stone inclusions and bedrock. The anomalies highlighted on the geophysical survey report relates to variation in the natural and pockets where the bedrock was slightly covered by a thin layer of sand. **No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.**

Trench	T6	Date	29/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.7 – 0.8m
Trench T6 measured 62m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.7 – 0.8m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. A layer of mid-brown sandy silt was noted between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, containing occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones and seashells. This was interpreted as a potential introduced layer locally sourced to level the current topography of the field, possibly associated with land reclamation. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light grey sandy clay with frequent medium to large sub-angular stone inclusions and traces of bedrock. A number of modern agricultural furrows were noted running east – west. The geophysical anomaly targeted by this trench corresponded to mechanically excavated disturbance and is likely associated to previous geological trial pits. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.					

Trench	T7	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.15 – 1.2m
Trench T7 measured 91m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.15 – 1.2m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. A layer of mid-brown sandy silt was noted between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, containing occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones and seashells. This was interpreted as a potential introduced layer locally sourced to level the current topography of the field, possibly associated with land reclamation. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light grey sandy clay with moderate small and medium sub-angular stone inclusions, and occasional patches of orangish brown clay. Modern agricultural furrows were noted within the trench running in an east-west direction. Traces of mechanically excavated disturbances were noted and were likely associated with a programme of geological trial pits survey undertaken sometime before the programme of testing. One of these disturbances was investigated showing straight steep cuts reaching a depth of 1.2m. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.					

Trench	T8	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.15 – 0.55m
Trench T8 measured 100m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.15 – 0.55m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. A layer of mid-brown sandy silt was noted between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, containing occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones and seashells. This was interpreted as a potential introduced layer locally sourced to level the current topography of the field, possibly associated with land reclamation. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light grey sandy clay with moderate small and medium sub-angular stone inclusions. Modern agricultural furrows were noted within the trench running in an east-west direction. Mechanically excavated disturbance, likely related to a previous programme of geological trial holes was noted towards the western half of the trench. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.					

Trench	T9	Date	28/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.15 – 0.66m
<p>Trench T9 measured 100m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.15 – 0.66m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. A layer of mid-brown sandy silt was noted between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, containing occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones and seashells. This was interpreted as a potential introduced layer locally sourced to level the current topography of the field, possibly associated with land reclamation. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light grey sandy clay with moderate small and medium sub-angular stone inclusions. Modern agricultural furrows were noted within the trench running in an east-west direction. Two mechanically excavated disturbances were noted towards both ends of the trench and was likely related to a previous programme of geological trial pits survey. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.</p>					

Trench	T10	Date	29/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.65m
<p>Trench T10 measured 25m in length, 1.8m in width and an average of 0.65m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. A layer of mid-brown sandy silt was noted between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, containing occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones and seashells. This was interpreted as a potential introduced layer locally sourced to level the current topography of the field, possibly associated with land reclamation. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light grey sandy clay with moderate small to large sub-angular stone inclusions. Modern plastic water pipe and different types of refuse were noted within this trench. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.</p>					

Trench	T11	Date	29/05/2024	Depth to Natural	0.35 – 0.65m
<p>Trench T11 measured 24m in length, 1.8m in width and between 0.35 – 0.65m in depth. The topsoil consisted of a dark brown silty loam with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions and modern refuse. A layer of mid-brown sandy silt was noted between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, containing occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones and seashells. This was interpreted as a potential introduced layer locally sourced to level the current topography of the field, possibly associated with land reclamation. The underlying natural subsoil was mostly light grey sandy clay with moderate small to large sub-angular stone inclusions. No features or deposits of archaeological consequence were observed within this trench.</p>					