



Rathfarnham Castle Stable Yard,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin 16

Method statement to accompany a reactivation of
Ministerial Consent No. C000785 to carry out archaeological
monitoring during Site Investigations works

Date: 25th September 2024
Applicant: Faith Bailey

1 INTRODUCTION

This method statement accompanies an application to reactivate Ministerial Consent (C000785) in order to carry out archaeological monitoring of Site Investigation works at Rathfarnham Castle, Stable Yard, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16 (Figure 1; ITM 714436, 729008). The site comprises stables and courtyards adjoining Rathfarnham Castle within the demesne landscape. Ministerial Consent is required as the site falls within the zone of notification for Rathfarnham Castle which is a National Monument in State Care (Nat. Mon. 628) and is subject to a preservation order (PO no. 2/1986), in addition to being listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (DU022-014). Moreover, there are five recorded archaeological sites within the study area and these are described below within the archaeological background.

Archaeological monitoring of conservation works have been carried out recently by Aisling Collins Archaeological Services (ACAS, 2018) as part of the Rathfarnham Castle Outbuilding stabilisation works. These works involved the redevelopment of the entire site for the conservation and reuse of the castle and its adjoining structures. Rathfarnham Castle Outbuilding stabilisation works have been split in two phases: **Phase 1**: To evaluate and conserve/stabilise the condition of Rathfarnham castle outbuildings and to protect the buildings' fabric in advance of their redevelopment and reuse (*ibid.*). **Phase 2**: To develop a conservation plan for the restoration of some or all of these buildings/structures to provide appropriate and sustainable use for them with careful integration in these heritage buildings to expand the existing visitor attraction increasing footfall to this site to improve vibrancy and economic activity.

South Dublin County Council have now appointed a design team in order to deliver the proposed redevelopment of the Stable Yard and the proposed Site Investigation works are being carried out in order to inform that design.

Archaeological monitoring during Phase 1 of works did not reveal any feature of archaeological significance.

Earlier archaeological monitoring in the northern portion of the development area revealed modern material across the monitored area (Nelis 2005, Licence No. 05E1169). No archaeological features or objects were revealed as a result of the monitoring.

It is envisaged that monitoring of ground disturbance will commence on the 8th October 2024 with works continuing intermittently over a period of two to three weeks, based on the contractor's current programme



FIGURE 1: Site Location showing nearby recorded monuments

2 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The Site Investigations works will include probes, window sampling and trial pits as shown in Figure 2, and Surface Water Soakaway testing.

Site Investigation works include:

- 4no. trial pits to circa 600mm long x 600mm wide x 600mm, depth to depend on the depth of the existing foundation.
- 3no. Dynamic probes approximately 75mm diameter to refusal or maximum depth of 12m if no refusal
- 3no. window sampling approximately 100mm diameter to a depth of 4m
- Samples for laboratory testing
- An initial waste classification for 3 evenly distributed samples from trial pits required for waste classification purposes
- Report with dynamic and window sample logs, trial pit details, bearing capacity and commentary on viability of proposed single storey new building along with the waste classification report

Surface Water Soakaway test consists of the following procedure:

- Excavate hole in side garden to the following dimensions 1.0m wide, 1.0m long, 1.0m deep. Excavated hole to be located approximately in centre of garden and c. 5.0m from rear wall.
- Confirm dimensions of excavated hole by measurement to the nearest centimetre.
- Install timber stake measuring in bottom of hole that extends for 750mm above bottom of hole to allow water level to be measured against.
- Install another timber stake measuring in bottom of hole that extends for 250mm above bottom of hole to allow water level to be measured against.
- Infill hole with water to cover both stakes.
- Take time measurement (in minutes and seconds) of when water level is at top of higher stake. Take further measurement in minutes and seconds for when water level reaches top of second lower stake.
- Repeat this procedure three times to achieve three readings for the same excavated hole.

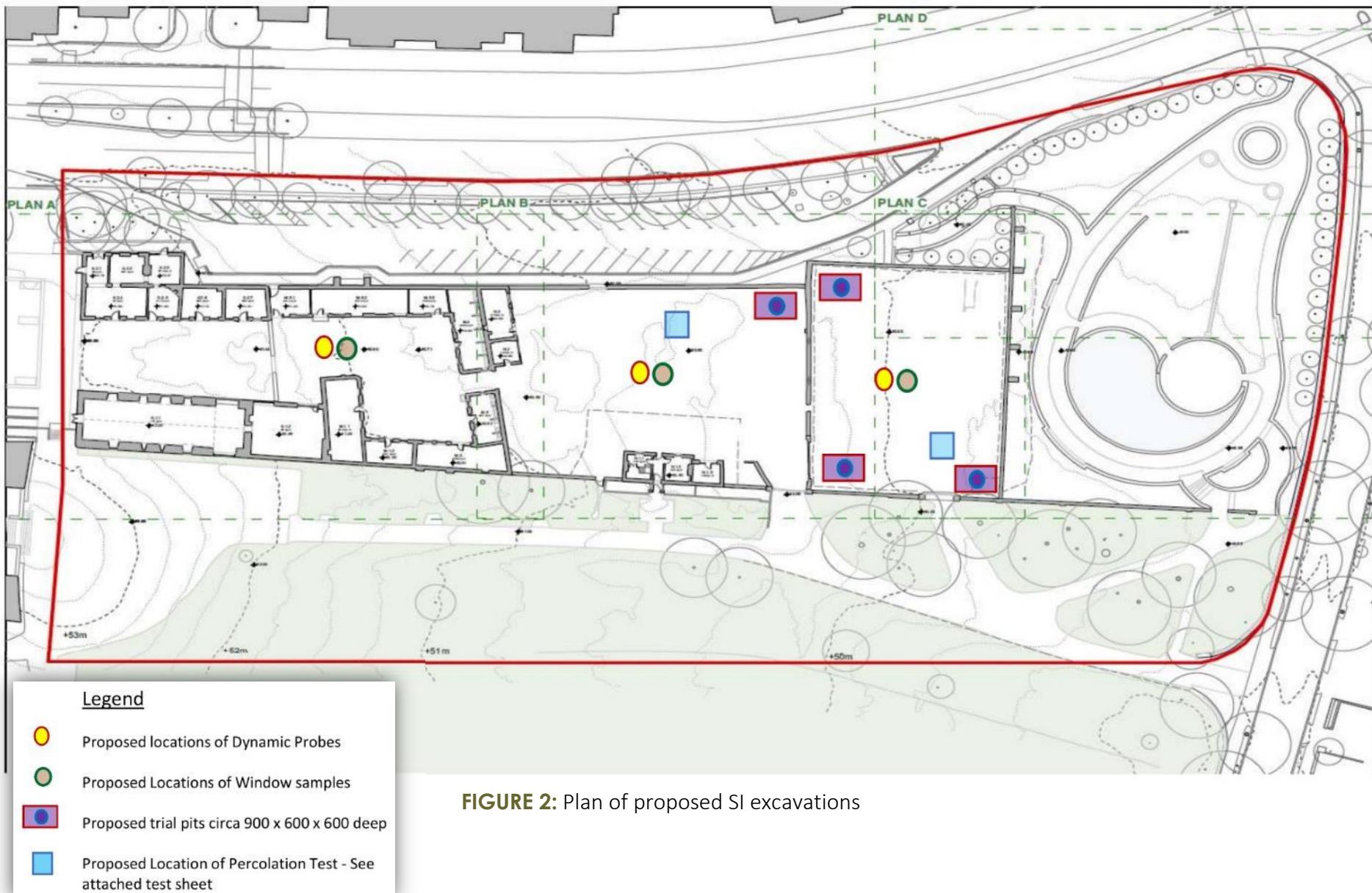


FIGURE 2: Plan of proposed SI excavations

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed development area is located within the townland of Rathfarnham, parish of Rathfarnham and barony of Rathdown, in County Dublin. The site comprises stables and courtyards adjoining Rathfarnham Castle within the demesne landscape of the Castle, and it is bound to the west by Rathfarnham Road and to the north by Castleside Drive. The site falls within the zone of notification for the Rathfarnham Castle (DU022-014), located c. 19m to the south, which is a National Monument in State Care (Nat. Mon. 628) and is subject to a preservation order (PO no. 2/1986). Additionally, there are five recorded archaeological sites within the wider study area (200m). A watermill site (DU022-099) is located c. 131m southwest; a redundant record comprising ecclesiastical remains (DU022-0130) is located c. 134m to the northwest; finally, a church with graveyard and a recorded grave slab (DU022-013001, DU022-013002, DU022-013003) are located c. 134m northwest.

There is no prehistoric settlement activity recorded within the study area of the proposed development. Two possible Neolithic flint scrapers and a flint core have been recovered from the wider environs of the proposed development area (NMI Ref.: 1988:142, IA/129/1996), indicating a Neolithic presence in the wider landscape.

The name Rathfarnham comes from the Irish *Ráth Fearnán* which means 'The Rath' or 'Fort of Fearnán'. Some sources explain *Ráth Fearnán* as the 'fort of the alders', a species that can be found growing along the Dodder.

The establishment of the settlement of Dublin by the Vikings in the 9th century was a transformative event for the area. While Viking settlement focused on the Liffey near modern Woodquay, Islandbridge and at Clondalkin, rural Viking settlement in the south of the county has been inferred from the presence of 'Rathdown Slabs'. The graveslab (DU022-030003) at Whitechurch, c. 2.4km south of the proposed development area, is recognised as a 'Rathdown Slab' (Corlett 1999). The Scandinavian controlled hinterland around Dublin in this period reached the foothills of the Dublin Mountains. Rathdown slabs are believed to be the grave markers of Viking Christians and are influenced by Viking art forms.

During the Medieval period (AD 1100–1600). The piecemeal conquest by the Anglo-Normans of Ireland, which commenced in AD 1169, had a fundamental impact on the Irish landscape. The written history of Rathfarnham began at the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion in 1199 when the lands around Rathfarnham were granted to Milo le Bret. The road to Rathfarnham, c. 38m to the northwest of the development area, according to some sources, follows the same route as the *Slighe chualann*, the ancient highway, which in the time of St. Patrick was used by travellers from Dublin to Wicklow and Wexford (southdublinhistory.ie).

Rathfarnham church (DU022-013001) and graveyard (DU022-013002) are located c. 134m to the northwest of the proposed development area. The RMP formally listed the site as 'ecclesiastical remains' (redundant record; DU022-013). The earliest reference to this church is in 1225 when it was the subject of a dispute between the Prior and Canons of Holy Trinity and the Archdeacon of Dublin (Breen 1981). It went out of use by 1795 with only the nave and the chancel arch surviving. A graveslab (DU022-013003) within the graveyard was dated between the 9th and 12th centuries.

Rathfarnham Castle (DU022-014; PO no. 2/1986) was built in the late 16th century by Adam Loftus and re-modelled in the 18th century when in the hands of Speaker Connolly, the Hoadley's and the Earls of Ely (Ball 1903). Adam Loftus came to Ireland in 1560 and quickly rose to a number of prestigious positions, including the archbishop of Dublin and Lord Chancellor of Ireland. As archbishop, Loftus deemed the existing palace in Tallaght remote and unsuitable. Following a successful petition to the Crown, he acquired a new estate in Rathfarnham, which had been confiscated from Viscount Baltinglass. The original 16th century castle was a large semi-fortified house of enlarged tower house type. It has a rectangular plan with a very thick central spine and four flanker towers.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw a dramatic rise in the establishment of large residential houses around the country. The large country house was only a small part of the overall estate of a large landowner and provided a base to manage often large areas of land that could be located nationwide. Lands associated with the large houses were generally turned over to formal gardens, which were much the style of continental Europe. Gradually this style of formal avenues and geometric garden designs was replaced during the mid-18th century by the adoption of parkland landscapes – to be able to view a large house within a natural setting. Although the creation of a parkland landscape involved working with nature, rather than against it, considerable constructional effort went into their creation. Earth was moved, field boundaries disappeared, streams were diverted to form lakes and quite often roads were completely diverted to avoid travelling anywhere near the main house or across the estate. A large, designed landscape was established as a demesne associated with Rathfarnham Castle. The principal structure was surrounded by extensive gardens and parkland, which included a walled garden, water features, and ancillary buildings. Today the northern half and central area of parkland are covered by residential development. The remainder of the parkland is covered by a golf course.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the River Dodder became a focus for local industry, feeding numerous mill races. These mill races were used to power many different industries along the length of the river including Old Mill (DU022-070) located c. 272m to the west and a mill at Big Bridge (DU022-044001) c. 570m north of the proposed development area. A further mill site (DU022-099) was located somewhere close to Butterfield Road, c. 131m to the southwest in proximity to the Owendoher River. These mills formerly occupied the site of one of the many medieval mills fed by the medieval city watercourse. Several weirs are located along the River Dodder often associated with mills and industry; however, they also provided fishing points and regulated the flow of the river.

Summary of previous excavations

A review of the Excavations Bulletin (1970–2024) has revealed that archaeological investigations have been carried out within the proposed development area.

In 2018 archaeological monitoring and a building survey was carried out in the area of the outbuildings of Rathfarnham Castle as part of the Rathfarnham Castle Outbuilding stabilisation works (Ministerial Consent C000785). No archaeological features or objects were revealed as a result of the monitoring.

A programme of archaeological work was carried out from 2018-2019 as part of a project to refurbish four rooms at the basement level at Rathfarnham Castle, to the south of the proposed

development area (Bennett 2019:724, Licence No. E004468). Excavations outside the castle found no medieval artefacts and no evidence of a moat. The 16th century foundations and surface level coping were exposed around the castle and excavation revealed a 16th century doorway. Monitoring confirmed that much of the area around the castle has been raised in the 18th or 19th century by just over 1m and that little archaeological stratigraphy survives outside the castle due to extensive later disturbance.

In 2005 a programme of archaeological monitoring was carried out within the northern extent of the proposed development area (Nelis 2005, Licence No. 05E1169). This revealed modern material across the monitored area. As there was no evidence of a relict ploughsoil or topsoil under the imported topsoil was identified, it was considered that the site was fully stripped when the modern material was introduced stripping likely truncated the natural subsoil, which would have removed any subtle archaeological features. No archaeological features or objects were revealed as a result of the monitoring.

Excavation was carried out at Rathfarnham Castle in 1986 after a programme of geophysical survey and included three areas within or partially within the proposed development area (Bennett 1986:24; Licence E000341). Excavation revealed a network of drains containing a considerable amount of late 18th/early 19th century pottery. Over 1,800 finds were recovered, mainly from the topsoil. These consisted mainly of pottery sherds, bottle and window glass, iron fragments and pipe stems of 17th/19th century date. Only three small pottery sherds belonged to the 16th century or earlier. Further monitoring took place in 1993 revealing no archaeological features or layers, apart from a few pieces of post-medieval pottery (Bennett 1993:100, Licence No. E000341). This was followed by trial excavation in 1994, which discovered the remains of a passageway as well as a probable entranceway (Bennett 1994:098, Licence No. 94E0161).

Archaeological trial trenching took place on the tract of land directly across the dual carriageway from Rathfarnham Castle in 1995, c. 58m northwest of the proposed development area (Bennett 1995:107, Licence No. 95E0200). No features or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed. Archaeological testing (Bennett 1995:086, Licence No. 95E0173) was carried out on a site at Rathfarnham Road c. 99m to the northwest and also failed to reveal features or deposits of archaeological significance.

Cartographic Analysis

William Petty, Down Survey: Barony of Newcastle in County Dublin, c. 1655 (Figure 3)

Petty's Down survey represents the first systematic mapping of Ireland on a scale of 40 perches to one inch (the modern equivalent of 1:50,000). It used the previous Civil Survey as a guide and shows many details, such as fortifications, rivers, roads, and structures. The proposed development area lies in between the depicted Rathfarnham Castle (DU022-014) and a 'Chapell' (DU022-013001). To the west along the 'branch of the river Dagher' (Owendoher River) are two mills (DU022-070 and DU022-099).

John Rocque's Map of the City and County of Dublin, 1760 (Figure 3)

By the time of this map, it appears that the proposed development area is located to the immediate north of Rathfarnham Castle, within the settlement of Rathfarnham and three rectangular garden

plots containing structures. To the east lies Boyles Park with the church and Rathfarnham Bridge found to the north. To the immediate west is Rathfarnham Road, which continues north towards Dublin City.

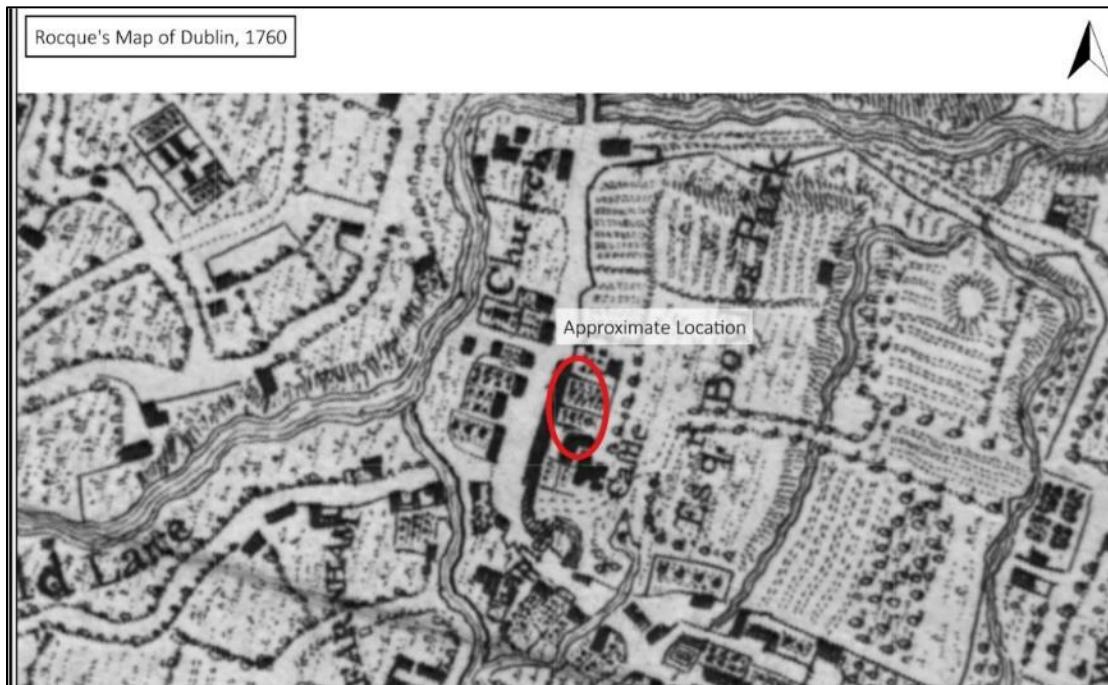


FIGURE 3: Extracts from Down Survey map (c. 1655) and Rocque's map (1760) showing the proposed development area

John Taylor's Map of the Environs of Dublin 1816

By the time of this map in 1816, the proposed development area is still situated within garden plots to the north of the castle and south of the church within 'Ely Demesne'. A grouping of mills (DU022-044001) is found in proximity to Rathfarnham Bridge.

William Duncan's Map of the County of Dublin, 1821

This map depicts how demesne landscapes dominated the wider region around this time. The only notable change from the previous mapping is the inclusion of at least four structures within the proposed development area.

First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1843, scale 1:10,560 (Figure 4)

This is the first accurate historic mapping coverage of the area containing the proposed development area. Within the site's footprint, a large structure is evident making up most of the southern portion, likely the stables and courtyard of Rathfarnham Castle. The site is also shown to be within the Rathfarnham Demesne, made up of lawn fields, gardens and pathways. In the wider area, the church (DU022-013001) and graveyard (DU022-013002) are depicted to the northwest. A further church (Rathfarnham Church of Ireland) and a school are found to the west along with the Old Mill (DU022-070) and Shaw Place. To the north, the Castle Lodge and a Pigeon House are shown.

Ordnance Survey Map, 1871, scale 1:10,560

There are no significant changes to the proposed development or the surrounding environs by the time of this map.

Ordnance Survey Map, 1910, scale 1:2,500 (Figure 4)

By the time of the mapping in 1910, the structures within the proposed development area have expanded and made up most of the southern portion of the site. There has been little change to Rathfarnham Demesne from the previous first edition ordnance survey map. A notable change within Rathfarnham town, to the west, is the formation of a tramway that followed the trajectory of Rathfarnham Road located c. 38m to the northwest.

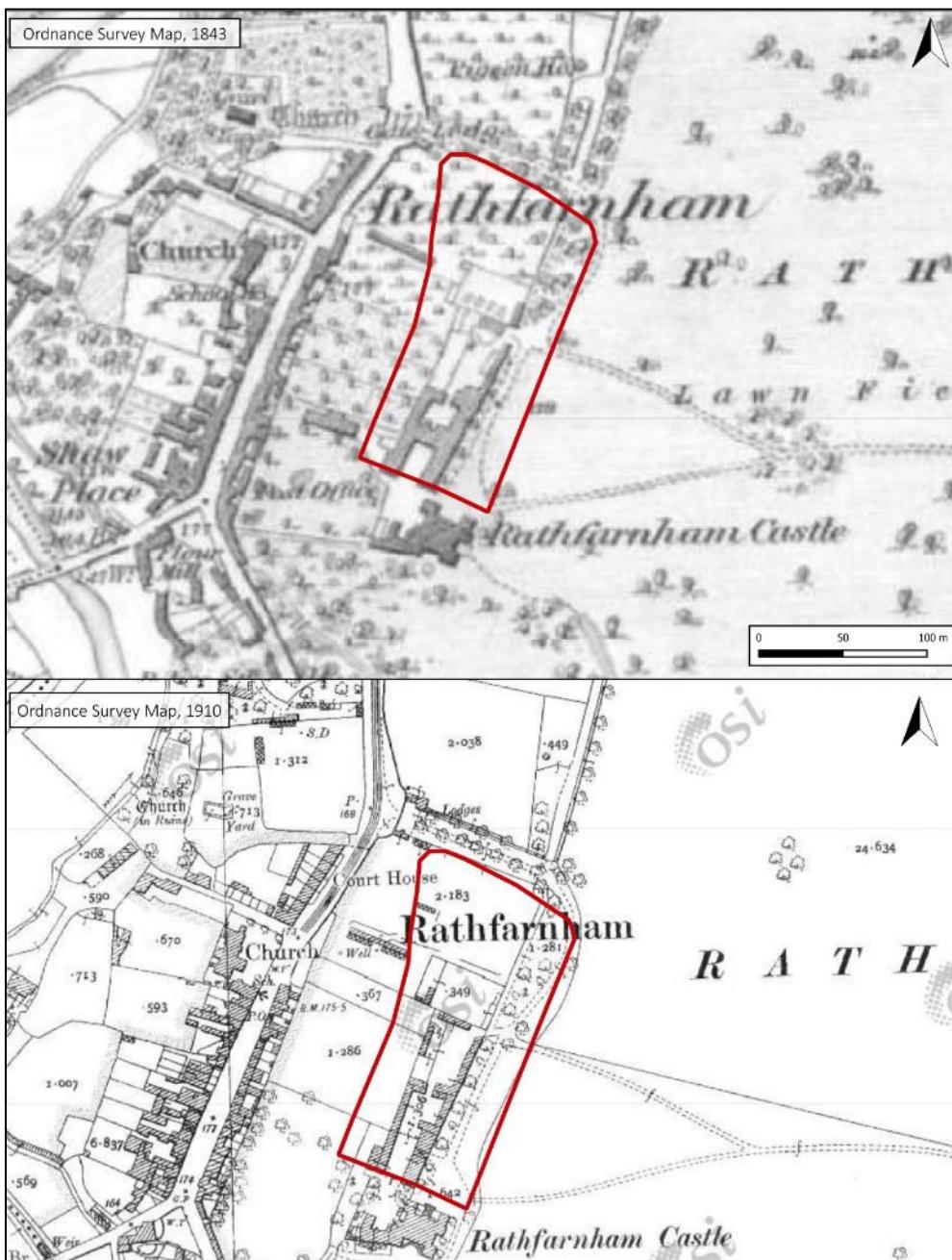


FIGURE 4: Extracts from Ordnance Survey (OS) map (1843 and 1910) showing the proposed development area

Aerial Photographic Analysis

Inspection of the aerial photographic coverage of the proposed development area held by the Ordnance Survey (1995–2013), Google Earth (2005–2024), and Bing Maps revealed that the stables and courtyards of Rathfarnham Castle have been extant since before 1995. The north-western corner of the site experienced development in the form of a water feature in 2008 (Google Earth, April 2008) and the castle's car park expanded into the proposed development area in 2013 (Google Earth, May 2013). No previously unrecorded sites of archaeological potential were noted within the proposed development area

Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland

Information on artefact finds from the study area in County Dublin has been recorded by the National Museum of Ireland since the late 18th century. Location information relating to these finds is important in establishing prehistoric and historic activity in the area. Although, no stray finds were noted in the close environs of study area two flint scrapers and a flint core have been recovered from the wider environs of the proposed development area (NMI Ref.: 1988:142, IA/129/1996), indicating a Neolithic presence in the wider landscape.

Field inspection

The field inspection sought to assess the site, its previous and current land use, the topography and any additional information relevant to the report. During the course of the field investigation the proposed development site and its surrounding environs were inspected (Figure 1).

The western extent of the proposed development area is formed by a car park, bordered on the eastern side by the stables wall of Rathfarnham Castle (Plate 1). The stables block is comprised of four distinct areas. The northernmost is formed by a concrete surfaced yard which is used as a store by South Dublin County Council (Plate 2). To the south is an open area, surfaced in tarmac, which is bordered to the east by a historic wall, reinforced with steel supports (Plate 3). There is an overgrown deposit of rubble in the southwestern corner of this area (Plate 4). At the southern extent of this area a cobbled surface is notable, which appears to continue under the gravel surface within the courtyard of the stable block (Plate 5).

The stable block is comprised by derelict structures surrounding a central open space (Plates 6 and 7). To the south, an archway leads to a second enclosed area, also surfaced in gravel (Plate 8). This area is heavily overgrown, and fenced off from the public grounds of Rathfarnham Castle.

The northern section of the proposed development area is formed by a landscaped park, featuring water features. The eastern extent of the proposed development area is located within the lawns of Rathfarnham Castle.

No previously unrecorded features of archaeological significance were identified within the proposed development area during the field inspection.



PLATE 1: Car park, facing south



PLATE 2: SDCC yard, facing northwest

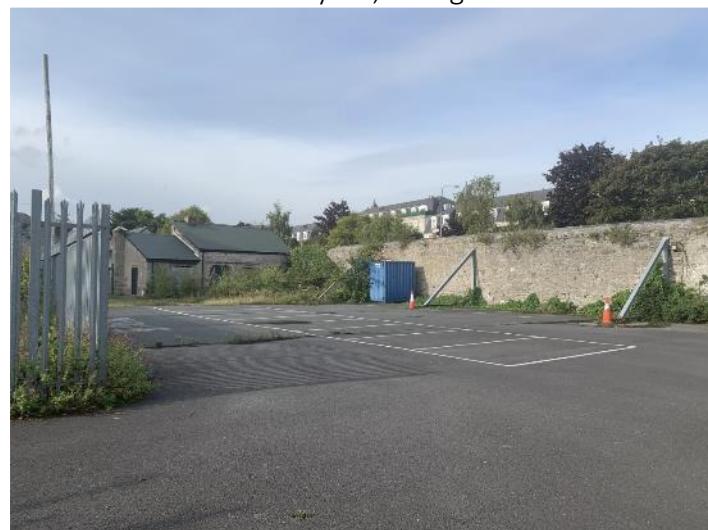


PLATE 3: Area to the north of the stables, facing southwest



Plate 4: Rubble deposit, facing southwest



Plate 5: Original cobbles, facing south



Plate 6: Structure within the stable block, facing northeast



Plate 7: Structure within the stable block, facing northwest



Plate 8: Structures south of the stable block, facing south

4 MONITORING STRATEGY

Archaeological monitoring 'involves an archaeologist being present in the course of the carrying out of developments' and has been defined as being carried out 'so as to identify and protect archaeological deposits, features or objects which may be uncovered or otherwise affected by the works' (Department of Arts, Heritage, the Gaeltacht and Islands 1999b).

The programme of monitoring will aim to establish whether archaeological features and/or deposits exist within the footprint of the proposed development. It is envisaged that monitoring of Site Investigation works (as shown in Figure 2) will commence on the 8th of October 2024 and with works continuing intermittently over a period of two to three weeks based on the contractor's current programme.

Monitoring will be carried out by the licence holder assisted by a suitable qualified archaeologist of a minimum supervisor grade.

Monitoring of the proposed development aims to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development so that mitigation strategies designed to reduce or offset the impact of the proposed development scheme can be formulated.

Should any features of archaeological significance be uncovered during monitoring, limited hand investigation (cleaning only) will be carried out under the direction of the applicant, in order to confirm their archaeological significance. The remains will be recorded and preserved in-situ, covered and the test pit backfilled. No further excavation will take place following the identification of any remains.

4.1 Finds Retrieval Strategy

The treatment of all archaeological objects will comply with the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland's Code of Conduct for the Treatment of Archaeological Objects and the current Advice Notes for Excavators (NMI 2010) and the Standards for the Care and Treatment of Archaeological Objects from Excavations (NMI 2022). The location of the recovered finds and the context from which they were obtained will also be recorded. Any items recovered during this investigation which require urgent conservation will be treated immediately by a professional conservator (Susannah Kelly), should the requirement arise. All archaeological objects recovered from the site will be cleaned/washed, labelled and stored in accordance with the NMI Standards (2022). Stabilisation of artefacts (where necessary) will be carried out in consultation with a conservation specialist.

Finds will be housed temporarily on-site and thereafter stored at an appropriate location with facilities to ensure their proper storage. Details of archaeological objects will be entered in the NMI finds database registry to facilitate accession to the NMI. All finds will be stored in secure storage at Unit G1, Network Enterprise Park, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow during post-excavation works. Ultimately, all finds will be transferred to the National Museum of Ireland following post-excavation and final reporting. Directions for the disposal or curation of such finds will be sought from the NMI.

4.2 Sampling Strategy

Should any archaeological features be discovered during the course of monitoring they will be preserved in-situ, so a sampling strategy is not applicable.

4.3 Human Remains Strategy

Should any human remains be discovered during the monitoring, *An Garda Síochána* will be notified along with the National Monuments Service of the DoHLGH, the Irish Antiquities Division of the National Museum of Ireland. An Osteoarchaeologist (Maeve Tobin or Jenny Coughlan) will be made available for consultation should this be deemed appropriate. The treatment of human remains will follow best practice guidelines published by several authors (NMI 2019; Buckley, Murphy and O'Donnabháin 2004; Brickley and McKinley 2004). A suitable strategy will be implemented once all parties have been consulted.

5 CONSTRAINTS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODS

No major constraints are envisaged on these works apart from normal Health and Safety matters in relation to on-site ground works and working in proximity to plant/machinery.

6 SPECIALISTS

A team of specialists will be employed where required and may include the following.

- Radiocarbon Dating – 14CHRONO Centre
- Faunal Remains – Margaret McCarthy
- Palaeoenvironmental analysis/reconstruction – Ellen O’Carroll
- Lithics identification – Shane Delaney
- Small Finds and medieval pottery – Siobhan Scully
- Prehistoric pottery – Eoin Grogan
- Human Remains – Maeve Tobin or Jennie Coughlan

7 STORAGE

The developer is aware of their responsibility to provide adequate funds to cover all post-excavation and specialist costs that may be associated with the monitoring exercise.

Should any archaeological remains be identified (and subject to further mitigation to be agreed with the National Monuments Service) the site archive, and any finds, samples etc. would be kept in safe storage during the post-excavation stage. All finds will ultimately be housed in the National Museum.

8 REPORTING

A written report will be compiled that will set out the results of the archaeological monitoring. If archaeological features are uncovered, dissemination of the results would take the form of a full report to publishable standard lodged with the Archaeological Licensing and Planning Unit of the NMS of the DoHLGH and the NMI. This report will also contain an impact and mitigation section that makes recommendations with regards to any archaeological features that may be discovered. A summary of the report would also be submitted to the Excavation Bulletin within six weeks of the end of fieldwork. Should results warrant it, wider dissemination in the form of full publication may be recommended.

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CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

William Petty, Down Survey: Barony of Newcastle in County Dublin, 1654–56

John Rocque's Map of the County of Dublin, 1760

John Taylor's Map of the Environs of Dublin, 1816

William Duncan's Map of the County of Dublin, 1821

Griffiths Valuation Map, 1871

Ordnance Survey Maps of County Dublin 1843 - 1910

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

www.excavations.ie – Summary of archaeological excavation from 1970–2024.

www.archaeology.ie – DoHLGH website listing all SMR/RMP sites.

www.heritagemaps.ie – The Heritage Council web-based spatial data viewer which focuses on the built, cultural and natural heritage.

www.geohive.ie – Ordnance Survey Ireland National Townland and Historical Map Viewer (including Aerial imagery 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2013)

www.googleearth.com – Satellite imagery (2005–2024).