

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
AT
BALLINAHINCH,
ASHFORD,
COUNTY WICKLOW**

ON BEHALF OF: WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

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ABSTRACT

This assessment has been prepared on behalf of Wicklow County Council, to study the impact, if any, on the archaeological and historical resource of the proposed residential development at Ballinahinch, Ashford, County Wicklow (ITM 726495, 697539). The assessment was carried out by Matt Brooks of IAC Archaeology.

The site comprises two areas north and south of the R763 Road northwest of Ashford town. The southern site, the larger of the two, is traversed by the Vartry River and is occupied by woodland, open pasture, and the Ballinahinch Park residential estate. The course of the river has altered over the past two centuries, with the western third of this plot lying within the riverbed at some point. The northern site comprises a small triangular parcel of land to the rear of residential properties at Ballinahinch Wood. There are no archaeological sites located within the development area, however, there are three archaeological sites within 500m. The nearest recorded monument consists of a *fulacht fia* (WI025-082), located c. 462m to the northeast. These remains were exposed during the course of agricultural ploughing in 2012.

Riverside locations were attractive for activities associated with exploitation of the water source in the past. Furthermore, the changing course of the river within the western portion of the site means that archaeological artefacts may survive in the former alluvial soils. As such the area of proposed development, especially the southern portion, is considered to have archaeological potential.

It is clear that much of the site was subject to large-scale disturbance in 2008 and again in 2018 due to the construction activity for residential developments. It is not certain how this disturbance may have impacted the archaeological resource. As such there is some low potential for previously unrecorded archaeological remains to survive beneath the current ground level, particularly along the river banks and wooded area. If present, ground disturbances associated with the proposed development may have an adverse impact on any such remains. This would be caused by ground disturbances such as topsoil stripping and excavation for services/foundations.

It is recommended that groundworks associated with the proposed development, such as topsoil stripping and enabling works, be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist. If any features of archaeological potential are discovered during the course of the works further archaeological mitigation may be required, such as preservation *in situ* or by record. Any further mitigation will require approval from the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL

The following report details an archaeological assessment undertaken in advance of a proposed residential development at Ballinahinch, Ashford, County Wicklow (Figure 1; ITM 726495, 697539). This assessment has been carried out to ascertain the potential impact of the proposed development on the archaeological and historical resource that may exist within the area. The assessment was undertaken by Matt Brooks of IAC Archaeology (IAC), on behalf of Wicklow County Council.

The archaeological assessment involved a detailed study of the archaeological and historical background of the proposed development site and the surrounding area. This included information from the Record of Monuments and Places of County Wicklow, the topographical files within the National Museum and all available cartographic and documentary sources for the area. A field inspection has also been carried out with the aim to identify any previously unrecorded features of archaeological or historical interest.

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed that the site to developed for the construction of 23 housing units within the area as shown on Figure 2.

2 METHODOLOGY

Research for this report was undertaken in two phases. The first phase comprised a paper survey of all available archaeological, historical and cartographic sources. The second phase involved a field inspection of the site.

2.1 PAPER SURVEY

- Record of Monuments and Places for County Wicklow;
- Sites and Monuments Record for County Wicklow;
- National Monuments in State Care Database;
- Preservation Orders List;
- Topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland;
- Cartographic and written sources relating to the study area;
- Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028;
- Ashford Town Plan 2016-2022;
- Aerial photographs;
- Excavations Bulletin (1970–2023).

Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is a list of archaeological sites known to the National Monuments Section, which are afforded legal protection under Section 12 of the 1994 National Monuments Act and are published as a record.

Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) holds documentary evidence and field inspections of all known archaeological sites and monuments. Some information is also held about archaeological sites and monuments whose precise location is not known e.g. only a site type and townland are recorded. These are known to the National Monuments Section as ‘un-located sites’ and cannot be afforded legal protection due to lack of locational information. As a result, these are omitted from the Record of Monuments and Places. SMR sites are also listed on a website maintained by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DoHLGH) – www.archaeology.ie.

National Monuments in State Care Database is a list of all the National Monuments in State guardianship or ownership. Each is assigned a National Monument number whether in guardianship or ownership and has a brief description of the remains of each Monument.

The Minister for the DoHLGH may acquire national monuments by agreement or by compulsory order. The state or local authority may assume guardianship of any national monument (other than dwellings). The owners of national monuments (other than dwellings) may also appoint the Minister or the local authority as guardian of that monument if the state or local authority agrees. Once the site is in ownership or guardianship of the state, it may not be interfered with without the written consent of the Minister.

Preservation Orders List contains information on Preservation Orders and/or Temporary Preservation Orders, which have been assigned to a site or sites. Sites deemed to be in danger of injury or destruction can be allocated Preservation Orders under the 1930 Act. Preservation Orders make any interference with the site illegal. Temporary Preservation Orders can be attached under the 1954 Act. These perform the same function as a Preservation Order but have a time limit of six months, after which the situation must be reviewed. Work may only be undertaken on or in the vicinity of sites under Preservation Orders with the written consent, and at the discretion, of the Minister.

The **topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland** are the national archive of all known finds recorded by the National Museum. This archive relates primarily to artefacts but also includes references to monuments and unique records of previous excavations. The find spots of artefacts are important sources of information on the discovery of sites of archaeological significance.

Cartographic sources are important in tracing land use development within the development area as well as providing important topographical information on areas of archaeological potential and the development of buildings. Cartographic analysis of all relevant maps has been made to identify any topographical anomalies or structures that no longer remain within the landscape.

Documentary sources were consulted to gain background information on the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage landscape of the proposed development area.

Development Plans contain a catalogue of all the Protected Structures and archaeological sites within the county. The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Ashford Town Plan 2016-2022 were consulted to obtain information on cultural heritage sites in and within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development area.

Aerial photographic coverage is an important source of information regarding the precise location of sites and their extent. It also provides initial information on the terrain and its likely potential for archaeology. A number of sources were consulted including aerial photographs held by the Ordnance Survey and Google Earth.

Excavations Bulletin is a summary publication that has been produced every year since 1970. This summarises every archaeological excavation that has taken place in Ireland during that year up until 2010 and since 1987 has been edited by Isabel Bennett. This information is vital when examining the archaeological content of any area, which may not have been recorded under the SMR and RMP files. This information is also available online (www.excavations.ie) from 1970–2023.

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2.2 FIELD INSPECTION

Field inspection is necessary to determine the extent and nature of archaeological and historical remains, and can also lead to the identification of previously unrecorded or suspected sites and portable finds through topographical observation and local information.

The archaeological field inspection entailed -

- Walking the proposed development and its immediate environs.
- Noting and recording the terrain type and land usage.
- Noting and recording the presence of features of archaeological or historical significance.
- Verifying the extent and condition of any recorded sites.
- Visually investigating any suspect landscape anomalies to determine the possibility of their being anthropogenic in origin.

3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed development area is located within the townland of Ballinahinch, Parish of Killiskey and Barony of Newcastle in County Wicklow. The site comprises two areas north and south of the R763 Road in Ashford. The southern site comprises parts of the Vartry River, greenfield/woodland and the Ballinahinch Park residential estate. The northern site comprises a small triangular parcel of land to the rear of residential properties at Ballinahinch Wood. There are no archaeological sites located within the development area, however, there are three archaeological sites within 500m (Figure 1). The nearest recorded monument consists of a *fulacht Fia* (WI025-082), located c.

462m to the northeast, exposed during ploughing in 2012.

3.1.1 Prehistoric Period

Mesolithic Period (7000–4000 BC)

Recent discoveries may suggest the possibility of a human presence in the southwest of Ireland as early as the Upper Palaeolithic (Dowd and Carden 2016), however; the Mesolithic period is the earliest time for which there is clear evidence for prehistoric human colonisation of the island of Ireland. During this period people hunted, foraged and gathered food and appear to have led a primarily mobile lifestyle. The presence of Mesolithic communities is most commonly evidenced by scatters of worked flint material, a by-product of the production of flint implements.

The current archaeological evidence suggests that the environs of the proposed development area were first inhabited towards the later part of the Mesolithic period. At this time people made crude flint tools known as Larnian (or Bann) Flakes. Small numbers of these flakes have been found at Dalkey Island, Dun Laoghaire, Rathfarnham and Loughlinstown to the north and St. Bride's Head close to Wicklow Town and Brittas Bay to the south. These sites may indicate small-scale transient settlements along the riverbanks and seashores (Stout 1994).

Neolithic Period (4000–2500 BC)

During this period communities became less mobile and their economy became based on the rearing of stock and cereal cultivation. The transition to the Neolithic was marked by major social change. Communities had expanded and moved further inland to more permanent settlements. This afforded the development of agriculture which demanded an altering of the physical landscape. Forests were rapidly cleared and field boundaries were constructed. Pottery was also being produced, possibly for the first time. The advent of the Neolithic period also provided the megalithic tomb. There are four types of tomb in Ireland, namely the Court Cairn, Portal, Passage and Wedge; of which the latter style straddles the Neolithic to Bronze Age transition. The focus of Neolithic tomb building in Wicklow is in the north of the county, close to the Dublin border. There are 20 passage tombs located within this area and most of these

are situated above the 240m contour.

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Whilst there are no Neolithic sites recorded within the immediate landscape, a number of megalithic tombs are recorded along the coast in County Wicklow and within the mountains to the northwest.

Bronze Age (2500–800 BC)

This period is marked by the use of metal for the first time. As with the transition from Mesolithic to Neolithic, the transition into the early Bronze Age was accompanied by changes in society. Megaliths were replaced in favour of the individual, subterranean cist or pit burials that were either in isolation or in small cemeteries. These burials contained inhumed or cremated remains and were often, but not always, accompanied by a pottery vessel.

Over 7,000 burnt mounds or *fulacht fia* sites have been recorded in the country and c. 1,500 examples excavated, making them the most common prehistoric monument in Ireland (Waddell 2022, 164). Although burnt mounds of shattered stone occur as a result of various activities that have been practised from the Mesolithic to the present day, the Bronze Age has long been believed to have seen the peak of this activity. Dating evidence from a growing number of burnt mounds, suggests activities resulting in burnt mounds were carried over a span of 3,500 years in Ireland (Hawkes 2018). They are typically located in areas where there is a readily available water source, often in proximity to a river or stream or in places with a high water table. In the field burnt mounds may be identified as charcoal-rich mounds or spreads of heat shattered stones, however, in many cases, the sites have been disturbed by later agricultural activity and are no longer visible on the field surface. Nevertheless, even disturbed spreads of burnt mound material often preserve the underlying associated features, such as troughs, pits and gullies, intact. A cluster of *fulacht fia* sites (WI025-081-083) is found at Inchanappa South within 500m of the proposed development area, exposed during ploughing.

A ring-ditch (WI025-051), which was found to contain three urn burials (and a further urn burial to the exterior) was excavated in the townland of Mountusher, c. 1.1km to the southeast of the proposed development area, prior to the construction of the M11.

Iron Age (800 BC-AD 500)

There is increasing evidence for Iron Age settlement and activity in recent years as a result of development-led excavations as well as projects such as LIARI (Late Iron Age and Roman Ireland). Yet this period is distinguishable from the rather rich remains of the preceding Bronze Age and subsequent early medieval period, by a relative paucity within the current archaeological record. The Iron Age in Ireland is problematic for archaeologists as few artefacts dating exclusively to this period have

been found and without extensive excavation, it cannot be determined whether several monument types, such as ring barrows or standing stones, date to the late Bronze Age or Iron Age. It is likely that there was significant continuity in the Iron Age, with earlier monuments re-used in many cases.

There are no known monuments in the vicinity of the proposed development area that would suggest an active presence of Iron Age communities in this area.

3.1.2 Early Medieval Period (AD 500–1100)

The early medieval period is depicted in the surviving sources as an almost entirely rural based society. Territorial divisions were based on the *túath*, or petty kingdom, with Byrne (1973) estimating probably at least 150 kings in Ireland at any given time. This period, with a new religious culture and evolving technologies, saw significant woodland clearance and the expansion of grassland. A new type of plough and the horizontal mill were two innovations that improved agriculture and allowed for the population to increase. Consequently, from c. AD 500 onwards, the landscape became well settled, as evidenced by the profuse distribution of ringforts, a dispersed distribution of enclosed settlements, normally associated with various grades of well-to-do farming and aristocratic classes in early medieval Ireland (Stout and Stout 1997, 20).

During this period the area south of Greystones was located within the territories of the *Uí Dúinchada*, the ruling branch of which was the *Mac Gilla Mo Cholmóc* (Simpson 1994). The historic route south of Dublin is fossilised by the current R761 road, which passes north-south c. 2.2km east of the proposed development area. Given the accessibility provided by this route and the fertile nature of the coastal plains, this area would have been well-populated at this time.

The ringfort or *rath* is the most common indicator of settlement during the early medieval period. One of the most recent studies of early medieval settlement enclosures has suggested that there is potential for at least 60,000 such sites to have existed on the island (O'Sullivan et al. 2014, 49). One of the most common indicators of settlement during this period is the ringfort (Stout 1997). Ringforts were often constructed to protect rural farmsteads and are usually defined as a broadly circular enclosure delineated by a bank and ditch. Ringforts can be divided into three broad categories – univallate sites, with one bank or ditch; multivallate sites with as many as four levels of enclosing features and platform or raised ringforts, where the interior of the ringfort has been built up. These enclosed sites were intimately connected to the division of land and the status of the occupant. A ringfort (WI025-084) is recorded in Inchanappa South townland c. 956m to the northeast of the proposed development area.

This period was also characterised by the advent of Christianity in Ireland. The impact of the religion is particularly visible within County Wicklow with the presence of important early church foundations, including the great monastic complex at Glendalough, which was established by St Kevin in the 6th century. The recorded church (WI025-026) and graveyard (WI025-026001) that are located on the summit of a drumlin may date to this period. Archaeological testing (Bennett 2005:1704, Licence No. 05E1193) adjacent to the monument in 2005 identified the remains of a curving ditch that may have once surrounded the monument and is characteristic of early church foundations (WI025-026004). The graveyard itself is oval in plan, which

is a further indication of an early medieval foundation.

The ecclesiastical enclosure at Ballymaghroe (WI025-001001-005) is situated within a possibly earlier enclosure defined by an earth and stone bank. Test trenching (Bennett 1999:892, Licence No. 99E0302) was undertaken to the south of the ecclesiastical enclosure that revealed an ironworking site (WI025-001004).

Many holy wells are often found in association with early ecclesiastical sites. Well veneration was not confined to Ireland or even to Europe and at least some holy wells in Ireland were important venues of pre-Christian ritual activity. A number of wells are formed by springs or consist of hollowed stones that collect water. There is a holy well associated with St Bridget or *Tubber Brighde* (WI025-020) located c. 465m to the southwest of the proposed development area in Ballymacahara.

3.1.3 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 Anglo-Norman presence was strongest in the southeast of the country, and it is mainly in this region that land was carved up and granted to the Anglo-Norman lords who participated. The main success of the Anglo-Norman occupation was the welding of scattered territories into a cohesive unit through the introduction of the English form of shire government. The rural landscape became a network of manorial centres; these units would generally contain a castle, a manorial house and a number of dwellings, with extensive surrounding acreage. During the 14th to 16th centuries, tower houses were the typical residence of the Irish gentry and are a common feature in the Irish landscape.

In 1169 the first of the Irish Anglo-Norman landings and invasions took place in County Wexford, at the invitation of the former king of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough Kavanagh. The Anglo-Normans, joined by 500 *Uí Chennselaig* men, took the Viking town of Wexford. Through a policy of military force and integration, the Anglo-Normans colonised much of the country. Marriages between Norman leaders and the women of Ireland's great families aided this integration. The Norman feudal culture, techniques, language, and legal systems were to have a profound effect on the county after 230 years of Norse influence.

The Anglo-Normans were an important influence in the creation of an urban network in medieval Ireland. In County Wicklow, they expanded and developed the settlements at Arklow and Wicklow and were responsible for the foundation of a number of new urban centres and boroughs (settlements which had the legal privileges of towns but seem to have functioned as large villages). These were located at Bray, Killickabawn, Mulsoes Court (Powerscourt) and Newcastle. With the possible exception of Bray, all of these settlements were to be abandoned or at least partly deserted in the 14th and 15th centuries.

There is a large moated site (WI025-003) recorded c. 1km east of the proposed development area, which is likely to date to the medieval period. These sites were often the home of farmers, and like the ringfort, were designed with defence in mind, as a large ditch and bank would form an enclosed area.

Archaeological testing in 2005 (Bennett 2005:1704, Licence No. 05E1193) also produced evidence for possible medieval settlement c. 933m southeast of the proposed development area (WI025-096/097). Some of this activity was initially identified as being potentially prehistoric in date. However, analysis of pottery sherds recovered from some of the features during the course of testing was found to be medieval in date. Evidence in the form of scattered pits and linear features, along with the identification of slag, may indicate an area of industry or settlement. Medieval pottery was also recovered from a feature in the western portion of the site (WI025-092).

3.1.4 Post-Medieval Period (AD 1600–1800)

With the ending of the Williamite Wars, County Wicklow, like the rest of Ireland, entered an era of comparative political calm. Interest in Ireland was revived and it was during this period that Wicklow Town became an important port and garrison. Consequently, the county's landowners, now secure in their positions, commenced the building of new mansions. They were now in a position to experiment with the latest styles of architecture without the need to refer to defensive matters. At the outset, many landowners were constrained by a lack of resources and therefore the first generation mansions were of relatively modest scale and relatively plain in appearance. However, as the sense of security of the Irish aristocracy grew over the following decades their greater access to wealth helped foster a shift towards more ostentatious buildings.

With the onset of the 18th century, the political climate settled and this saw a dramatic rise in the establishment of large residential houses around the country. This was largely due to the fact that after the turbulence of the preceding centuries, the success of the Protestant cause and the effective removal of any political opposition, the country was at peace. 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 dispersed nationally. During the latter part of the 18th century, the establishment of a parkland context (or demesnes) for large houses was the fashion. Although the creation of a parkland landscape involved working with nature, rather than against it, considerable construction effort went into their creation. Major topographical features like rivers and mountains were desirable features for inclusion into, and as a setting, for the large house and parkland.

The Ashford area was characterised by the establishment of multiple large scale demesnes during this period. The proposed development area is located c. 381m west of the demesne associated with Inchanappa House. The house (and associated walled gardens) dates to the 1820s. The demesne originally possessed a number of

tree belts and tree lined boundaries, along with a 'Fox Cover' to the north of the house.

3.2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

A review of the Excavations Bulletin (1970–2022) has revealed that no archaeological investigations have been carried out within the proposed development area. Several investigations have taken place within the vicinity of the proposed development area and are summarised below.

Archaeological excavations (Bennett 2017:669, Licence No. 17E0554) were undertaken c. 176m north of the proposed development area under the site name Ballinahinch 1. Excavations followed on from geophysical survey (Licence No. 17R0073) and testing (Bennett 2017:640, Licence No. 17E0195). A cluster of four pits and an isolated post-hole were discovered containing Beaker pottery and numerous pieces of struck flint. The features suggested some form of settlement activity. Ballinahinch 2 (Bennett 2017:670, Licence No. 17E0555), located c. 185m to the northwest revealed a hearth surrounded by five post-holes with two pits containing early Bronze Age pottery and seven flint pieces. Ballinahinch 3 (Bennett 2017:671, Licence No. 17E0557), located c. 111m to the northwest revealed a possible house structure delineated by a series of slot trenches. A total of 14 lithic pieces and middle to late Bronze Age domestic pottery were retrieved from a variety of features. A scattering of cremated human bone fragments was also retrieved from several features.

Test trenching (Bennett 2005:1704, Licence No. 05E1193) constructed at Inchanappa c. 500m to the southeast revealed eight areas of archaeological potential. Sites 1 and 2 represent prehistoric activity, with prehistoric pottery and flint debitage recovered. Site 3 recovered flint debitage while Site 4 revealed an enclosing ditch and fragment of rotary quernstone. Sites 5 and 6 appeared to be the remains of burning events, possibly cooking pits. Sites 7 and 8 represented a large area of mixed activity and produced evidence of burning activity, including burnt bone and slag material. Some sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered from across the sites.

3.3 CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Down Survey Map of the Barony of Newcastle, c. 1655

The proposed development area is depicted within 'unforfeited lands' and as such no detail is shown.

Jacob Nevill's An Actual Survey of the County of Wicklow, 1760 (Figure 3) This map shows the wider landscape and the approximate position of the proposed development area, which is placed within mostly open land to the west of 'Ash-ford'. The position of the Vartry River is also depicted and partially traverses through the proposed development area. The townland of Ballinahinch is found to the north beyond the main road labelled as 'B.na hinch'. Ballycurry House surrounded by a woodland landscape is found to the north.

First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1840, scale 1:10,560 (Figure 4)

The proposed development area is shown within the townland of Ballinahinch and within four fields. The townland boundary that is bound to the south of the site is also defined as the parish boundary between Killiskey and Rathnew. The western extent of the site is occupied by a part of the Vartry River that has been re-routed. The main road that continues east towards Ashford is bound to the site's north. Fronting this road lies a number of structures to the immediate east of the site. Inchanappa House and demesne landscape is located c. 601m to the southeast of the proposed development area.

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

This detailed map edition places the development area within at least seven fields, five of which are wooded. The route of the Vartry River has again changed and now conforms to the present day alignment. To the east the structures, as previously noted that front the main road, have increased in size, and are now labelled as 'Ashford Post Office'.

3.4 DEVELOPMENT PLANS**3.4.1 Record of Monuments and Places**

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Ashford Town Plan 2016-2022 recognises the statutory protection afforded to all Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) sites under the National Monuments Legislation (1930–2014). The development plan lists a number of aims and objectives in relation to archaeological heritage (Appendix 2).

There are no archaeological sites located within the development area, however, there are three archaeological sites within 500m (Table 1; Figure 1; Appendix 1). All three sites are scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP. The nearest recorded monument consists of a *fulacht fia* (WI025-082), located c. 462m to the northeast, exposed during ploughing in 2012.

TABLE 1: Recorded Archaeological Sites

RMP NO.	LOCATION	CLASSIFICATION	DISTANCE TO SITE
WI025-082	Inchanappa South	<i>Fulacht fia</i>	c. 462m northeast
WI025-020	Ballymacahara	Ritual site - holy well	c. 465m southwest
WI025-092	Inchanappa South	Excavation - miscellaneous	c. 500m southeast

3.5 TOPOGRAPHICAL FILES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

Information on artefact finds from the study area in County Wicklow 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 study area. A review of the topographical files revealed that no stray

finds have been recovered from within the study area of the proposed development.

3.6 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Inspection of the aerial photographic coverage of the proposed development area held by the Ordnance Survey (1995–2013), Google Earth (2008–2022), and Bing Maps revealed that the proposed development area has experienced a number of changes since 1995. Coverage from 2008 (Google Earth, June 2008) shows the majority of the site north of the river has undergone topsoil stripping and development in the form of residential houses (Ballinahinch Park residential estate). Further development (Ballinahinch Wood estate) took place in 2018 within the northern portion of the development area (Google Earth, October 2018). No previously unknown archaeological sites were identified during the aerial photographic analysis.

3.7 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 main portion of the proposed development area is occupied by terraced housing and greenspace forming the Ballinahinch Park housing estate in the east (Plate 1), a pastoral field in the west (Plate 2) and a wooded area along the Vartry River in the south (Plate 3). Manhole covers and a culvert outlet into the river indicate the line of a drain following the course of a former field boundary visible on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, running north-south across the green space. Portions of a rough stone-built wall are visible at the southern edge of the greenspace, along the bank of the river (Plate 4). The wall corresponds to a field boundary visible on the 1910 OS map. No other features of archaeological potential were identified.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This archaeological assessment was commissioned by Wicklow County Council to assess the potential for the survival of archaeological features in advance of a proposed residential development at Ballinahinch, Ashford, County Wicklow. The site comprises two areas north and south of the R763 Road in Ashford. The southern site comprises parts of the Vartry River, greenfield/woodland and the Ballinahinch Park residential estate. The northern site comprises a small triangular parcel of land to the rear of residential properties at Ballinahinch Wood. There are no archaeological sites located within the development area, however, there are three archaeological sites within 500m. The nearest recorded monument consists of a *fulacht fia* (WI025-082), located c. 462m to the northeast, exposed during ploughing in 2012.

A review of the Excavations Bulletin revealed that no archaeological investigations have been carried out within the proposed development area. Archaeological excavations at Ballinahinch in 2017 revealed evidence for Bronze Age settlement activity. Finds included Bronze Age pottery and struck flints. Cremated human bone fragments were also retrieved from several features. Test trenching constructed at Inchanappa revealed eight areas of archaeological potential representative of prehistoric activity including an enclosing ditch and cooking pits. Finds from these features included a fragment of rotary quernstone, burnt bone, slag material and sherds of prehistoric pottery.

Analysis of cartographic sources has revealed that the proposed development area itself has experienced minimal changes from the post-medieval to modern periods. Historically the site is placed within several fields to the west of Ashford town. The Vartry River partially traverses through the proposed development area and has been re-routed a number of times. The townland boundary that is bound to the south of the site is also defined as the parish boundary between Killiskey and Rathnew.

Analysis of aerial photographic record available for the area did not identify any previously unknown archaeological features in the area. Coverage from 2008 shows the majority of the site north of the river has undergone topsoil stripping and development in the form of residential houses (Ballinahinch Park residential estate). Further development (Ballinahinch Wood estate) took place in 2018 within the northern portion of the development area.

Field inspection identified portions of a rough stone-built wall, located along the bank of the river, corresponding to a field boundary visible on the 1910 OS map. No other features of archaeological potential were identified at this time.

Riverside locations were attractive for activities associated with exploitation of the water source in the past. Furthermore, the changing course of the river within the western portion of the site means that archaeological artefacts may survive in the former alluvial soils. As such the area of proposed development, especially the

southern portion, is considered to have archaeological potential.

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGY

Impacts can be identified from detailed information about a project, the nature of the area affected and the range of archaeological resources potentially affected. Archaeological sites can be affected adversely in a number of ways: disturbance by excavation, topsoil stripping; disturbance by vehicles working in unsuitable conditions; and burial of sites, limiting access for future archaeological investigation. Upstanding archaeology can be affected adversely by direct damage or destruction arising from development, from inadvertent damage arising from vibration, undermining etc. and also by indirect impacts to a building's visual setting, view or curtilage.

5.1 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- It is clear that much of the site was subject to large-scale disturbance in 2008 and again in 2018 due to the construction activity for residential developments. It is not certain how this disturbance may have impacted the archaeological resource. As such there is some low potential for previously unrecorded archaeological remains to survive beneath the current ground level, particularly along the river banks and wooded area. If present, ground disturbances associated with the proposed development may have an adverse impact on any such remains. This would be caused by ground disturbances such as topsoil stripping and excavation for services/foundations.

5.2 MITIGATION

- It is recommended that groundworks associated with the proposed development, such as topsoil stripping and enabling works, be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist. If any features of archaeological potential are discovered during the course of the works further archaeological mitigation may be required, such as preservation *in situ* or by record. Any further mitigation will require approval from the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

It is the developer's responsibility to ensure full provision is made available for the resolution of any archaeological remains, both on site and during the post excavation process, should that be deemed the appropriate manner in which to proceed.

Please note that all recommendations are subject to approval by the National Monuments Service of the Heritage and Planning Division, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

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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)

www.googleearth.com – Satellite imagery (2005–2022).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SMR/RMP SITES WITHIN THE SURROUNDING AREA

SMR NO.	WI025-082
RMP STATUS	Scheduled for inclusion
TOWNLAND	Inchanappa South
PARISH	Killiskey
BARONY	Newcastle
I.T.M.	727029 697886
CLASSIFICATION	Fulacht fia
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 462m northeast
DESCRIPTION	One of three possible fulacht fiadh (WI025-081----;WI025-082----;WI025083----) exposed in the ploughsoil of this field. Situated on low rising ground on a SE facing slope in a field that has been recently ploughed. Located higher up the slope from possible ploughed out fulacht fiadh (WI025-081----). Only the N half has been exposed by ploughing, the S half was not ploughed over. Not clear how far S the site extends. The exposed spread (dims. 4m x 5m) consists of charcoal and heat shattered stones.
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	WI025-020
RMP STATUS	Scheduled for inclusion
TOWNLAND	Ballymacahara
PARISH	Rathnew
BARONY	Newcastle
I.T.M.	726024 697201
CLASSIFICATION	Ritual site - holy well
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 465m southwest

DESCRIPTION	Recorded in the Ordnance Survey letters of 1838-40 as 'in the townland of Ballymacahara they shew a holy well called Tubber Brighde (or Bridget's Well). It is a strong spring gushing from the foot of a little bank, having two old ash trees growing over it. It is still resorted to for the cure of pains in the limbs, bowels, etc., and the briars and thorns over it exhibit in tolerable abundance the raggy offerings of its votaries' (O'Flanagan 1928, 248). Today a few upright boulders and a clump of trees marks the site of the filled in holy well.
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	WI025-092
RMP STATUS	Scheduled for inclusion
TOWNLAND	Inchanappa South
PARISH	Killiskey
BARONY	Newcastle
I.T.M.	727146 697454
CLASSIFICATION	Excavation - miscellaneous
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 500m southeast
DESCRIPTION	A number of pits and prehistoric pottery were noted here during archaeological test trenching in 2005 (Excavation Licence 05E1193, Site 2) (Delaney 2005, 12).
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

APPENDIX 2 LEGISLATION PROTECTING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The cultural heritage in Ireland is safeguarded through national and international policy designed to secure the protection of the cultural heritage resource to the fullest possible extent (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands 1999, 35). This is undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (Valletta Convention), ratified by Ireland in 1997.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

The *National Monuments Act 1930 to 2014* and relevant provisions of the *National Cultural Institutions Act 1997* are the primary means of ensuring the satisfactory protection of archaeological remains, which includes all man-made structures of whatever form or date except buildings habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes. A National Monument is described as ‘a monument or the remains of a monument the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest attaching thereto’ (National Monuments Act 1930 Section 2). A number of mechanisms under the National Monuments Act are applied to secure the protection of archaeological monuments. These include the Register of Historic Monuments, the Record of Monuments and Places, and the placing of Preservation Orders and Temporary Preservation Orders on endangered sites.

OWNERSHIP AND GUARDIANSHIP OF NATIONAL MONUMENTS

The Minister may acquire national monuments by agreement or by compulsory order. The state or local authority may assume guardianship of any national monument (other than dwellings). The owners of national monuments (other than dwellings) may also appoint the Minister or the local authority as guardian of that monument if the state or local authority agrees. Once the site is in ownership or guardianship of the state, it may not be interfered with without the written consent of the Minister.

REGISTER OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS

Section 5 of the 1987 Act requires the Minister to establish and maintain a Register of Historic Monuments. Historic monuments and archaeological areas present on the register are afforded statutory protection under the 1987 Act. Any interference with sites recorded on the register is illegal without the permission of the Minister. Two months’ notice in writing is required prior to any work being undertaken on or in the vicinity of a registered monument. The register also includes sites under Preservation Orders and Temporary Preservation Orders. All registered monuments are included in the Record of Monuments and Places.

PRESERVATION ORDERS AND TEMPORARY PRESERVATION ORDERS

Sites deemed to be in danger of injury or destruction can be allocated Preservation Orders under the 1930 Act. Preservation Orders make any interference with the site illegal. Temporary Preservation Orders can be attached under the 1954 Act. These perform the same function as a Preservation Order but have a time limit of six months, after which the situation must be reviewed. Work may only be undertaken on or in the vicinity of sites under Preservation Orders with the written consent, and at the discretion, of the Minister.

RECORD OF MONUMENTS AND PLACES

Section 12(1) of the 1994 Act requires the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands (now the Minister for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) to establish and maintain a record of monuments and places where the Minister believes that such monuments exist. The record comprises a list of monuments and relevant places and a map/s showing each monument and relevant place in respect of each county in the state. All sites recorded on the Record of Monuments and Places receive statutory protection under the National Monuments Act 1994. All recorded monuments on the proposed development site are represented on the accompanying maps.

Section 12(3) of the 1994 Act provides that 'where the owner or occupier (other than the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands) of a monument or place included in the Record, or any other person, proposes to carry out, or to cause or permit the carrying out of, any work at or in relation to such a monument or place, he or she shall give notice in writing to the Minister of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands to carry out work and shall not, except in case of urgent necessity and with the consent of the Minister, commence the work until two months after giving of notice'.

Under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004, anyone who demolishes or in any way interferes with a recorded site is liable to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or imprisonment for up to 6 months. On summary conviction and on conviction of indictment, a fine not exceeding €10,000 or imprisonment for up to 5 years is the penalty. In addition, they are liable for costs for the repair of the damage caused.

In addition to this, under the *European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1989*, Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) are required for various classes and sizes of development project to assess the impact the proposed development will have on the existing environment, which includes the cultural, archaeological and built heritage resources. These document's recommendations are typically incorporated into the conditions under which the proposed development must proceed, and thus offer an additional layer of protection for monuments which have not been listed on the RMP.

THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000

Under planning legislation, each local authority is obliged to draw up a Development Plan setting out their aims and policies with regard to the growth of the area over a five-year period. They cover a range of issues including archaeology and built heritage, setting out their policies and objectives with regard to the protection and enhancement of both. These policies can vary from county to county. The Planning and Development Act 2000 recognises that proper planning and sustainable development includes the protection of the archaeological heritage. Conditions relating to archaeology may be attached to individual planning permissions.

Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

Archaeology Objectives:

CPO 8.1

To secure the preservation of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally. In the development management process, there will be a presumption of favour of preservation in-situ or, as a minimum, preservation by record. In securing such preservation, the Planning Authority will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

CPO 8.2

No development in the vicinity of a feature included in the Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) or any other site of archaeological interest will be permitted which seriously detracts from the setting of the feature or which is seriously injurious to its cultural or educational value.

CPO 8.3

Any development that may, due to its size, location or nature, have implications for archaeological heritage (including both sites and areas of archaeological potential / significance as identified in Schedules 08.01 & 08.02 and Maps 8.01 & 8.02 of this plan) shall be subject to an archaeological assessment.

CPO 8.4

To require archaeological assessment for all developments with the potential to impact on the archaeological heritage of riverine, intertidal or sub tidal environments.

CPO 8.5

To facilitate new or improved public access to and erection of appropriate interpretive signage at National Monuments, archaeological sites, castles, sites of historic interest and archaeological landscapes in State or private ownership, as

identified in Schedule 08.02 and Map 8.02 of this plan, in co-operation with landowners.

CPO 8.6

To protect the integrity of Baltinglass Hills archaeological landscape including identified monuments and their wider setting by resisting development that may adversely impact upon the significance and understanding of this important landscape.

CPO 8.7

To support the inscription of Glendalough to Ireland's tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site list and promote a conservation led approach to facilitating visitor access and enjoyment of this internationally significant landscape.

CPO 8.8

To protect and promote the characteristics of historic towns in County Wicklow identified as zones of archaeological potential in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), ensuring that cognisance is given in relevant development proposals to retaining existing street layout, historic building lines and traditional plot widths where these derive from medieval or earlier origins.

CPO 8.9

To protect and promote the conservation of historic burial grounds (those that are generally no longer in use but which may contain sites and features on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and/or RPS) and support greater public access to these where possible.

APPENDIX 3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCE

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL REMAINS

Impacts are defined as ‘the degree of change in an environment resulting from a development’ (Environmental Protection Agency 2022). They are described as profound, significant or slight impacts on archaeological remains. They may be negative, positive or neutral, direct, indirect or cumulative, temporary or permanent.

Impacts can be identified from detailed information about a project, the nature of the area affected and the range of archaeological and historical resources potentially affected. Development can affect the archaeological and historical resource of a given landscape in a number of ways.

- Permanent and temporary land-take, associated structures, landscape mounding, and their construction may result in damage to or loss of archaeological remains and deposits, or physical loss to the setting of historic monuments and to the physical coherence of the landscape.
- Archaeological sites can be affected adversely in a number of ways: disturbance by excavation, topsoil stripping and the passage of heavy machinery; disturbance by vehicles working in unsuitable conditions; or burial of sites, limiting accessibility for future archaeological investigation.
- Hydrological changes in groundwater or surface water levels can result from construction activities such as de-watering and spoil disposal, or longer-term changes in drainage patterns. These may desiccate archaeological remains and associated deposits.
- Visual impacts on the historic landscape sometimes arise from construction traffic and facilities, built earthworks and structures, landscape mounding and planting, noise, fences and associated works. These features can impinge directly on historic monuments and historic landscape elements as well as their visual amenity value.
- Landscape measures such as tree planting can damage sub-surface archaeological features, due to topsoil stripping and through the root action of trees and shrubs as they grow.
- Ground consolidation by construction activities or the weight of permanent embankments can cause damage to buried archaeological remains, especially in colluviums or peat deposits.

- Disruption due to construction also offers in general the potential for adversely affecting archaeological remains. This can include machinery, site offices, and service trenches.

Although not widely appreciated, positive impacts can accrue from developments. These can include positive resource management policies, improved maintenance and access to archaeological monuments, and the increased level of knowledge of a site or historic landscape as a result of archaeological assessment and fieldwork.

PREDICTED IMPACTS

The severity of a given level of land-take or visual intrusion varies with the type of monument, site or landscape features and its existing environment. Severity of impact can be judged taking the following into account:

- The proportion of the feature affected and how far physical characteristics fundamental to the understanding of the feature would be lost;
- Consideration of the type, date, survival/condition, fragility/vulnerability, rarity, potential and amenity value of the feature affected;
- Assessment of the levels of noise, visual and hydrological impacts, either in general or site-specific terms, as may be provided by other specialists.

APPENDIX 4 MITIGATION MEASURES AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCE

POTENTIAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE REMAINS

Mitigation is defined as features of the design or other measures of the proposed development that can be adopted to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset negative effects.

The best opportunities for avoiding damage to archaeological remains or intrusion on their setting and amenity arise when the site options for the development are being considered. Damage to the archaeological resource immediately adjacent to developments may be prevented by the selection of appropriate construction methods. Reducing adverse effects can be achieved by good design, for example by screening historic buildings or upstanding archaeological monuments or by burying archaeological sites undisturbed rather than destroying them. Offsetting adverse effects is probably best illustrated by the full investigation and recording of archaeological sites that cannot be preserved *in situ*.

DEFINITION OF MITIGATION STRATEGIES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

The ideal mitigation for all archaeological sites is preservation *in situ*. This is not always a practical solution, however. Therefore, a series of recommendations are offered to provide ameliorative measures where avoidance and preservation *in situ* are not possible.

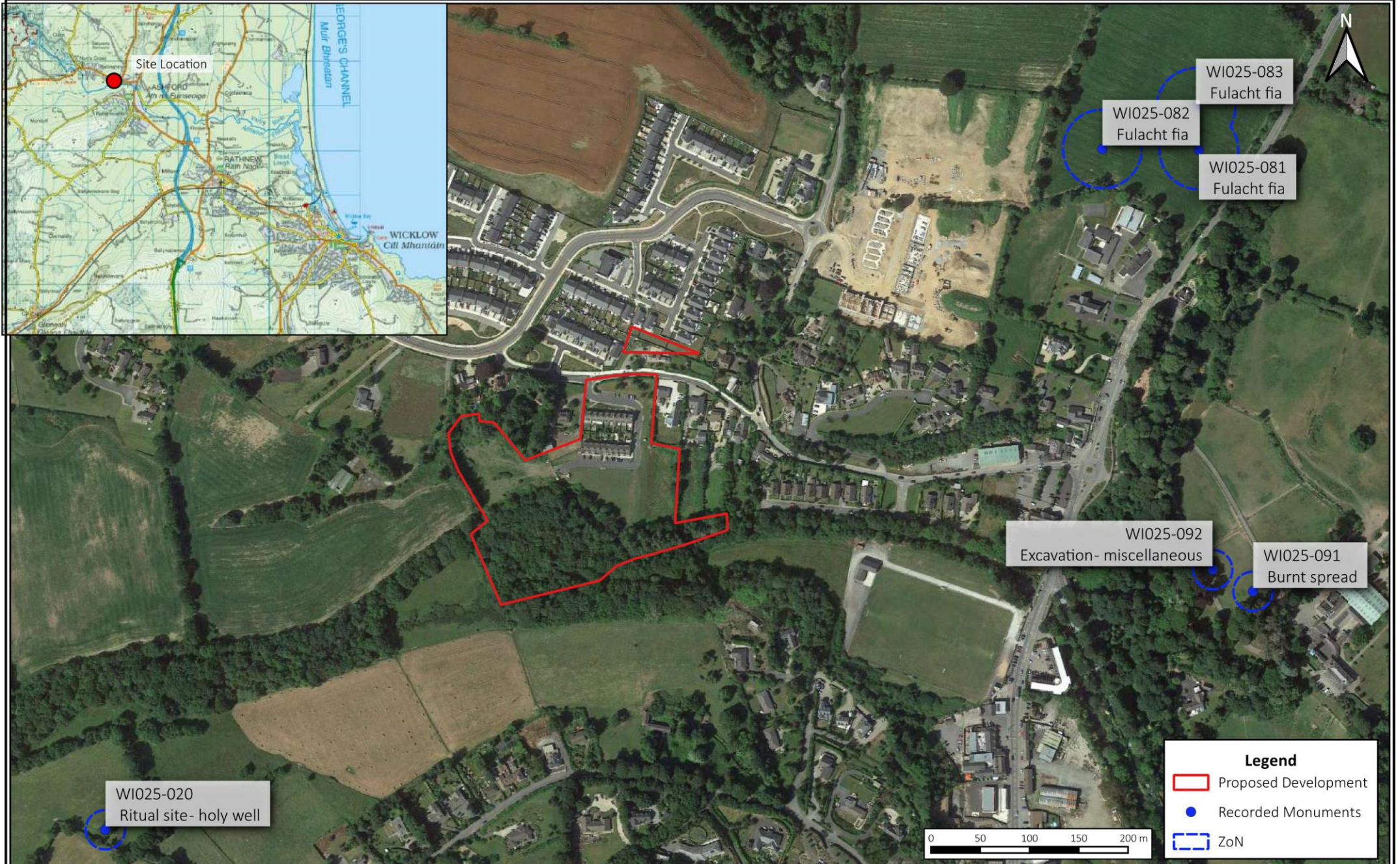
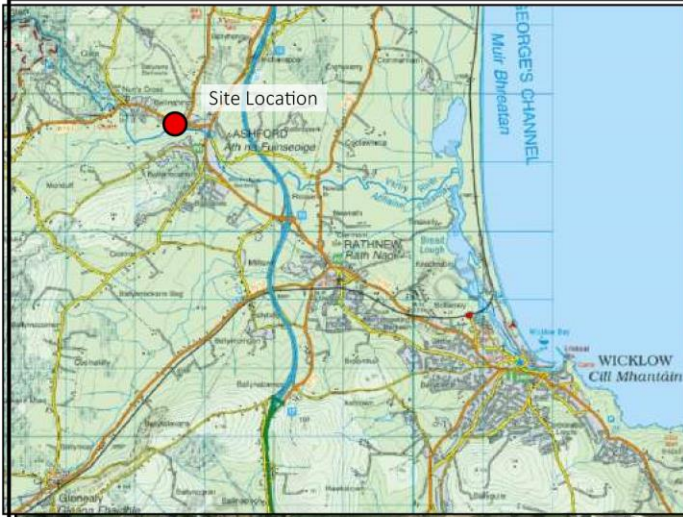
Archaeological Test Trenching can be defined as ‘a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, intertidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate’ (CIfA 2020a).

Full Archaeological Excavation can be defined as ‘a programme of controlled, intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features and structures and, as appropriate, retrieves artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within a specified area or site on land, intertidal zone or underwater. The records made and objects gathered during fieldwork are studied and the results of that study published in detail appropriate to the project design’ (CIfA 2020b).

Archaeological Monitoring can be defined as ‘a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or

underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive (ClfA 2020c).

Underwater Archaeological Assessment consists of a programme of works carried out by a specialist underwater archaeologist, which can involve wade surveys, metal detection surveys and the excavation of test pits within the sea or riverbed. These assessments are able to access and assess the potential of an underwater environment to a much higher degree than terrestrial based assessments.



Legend

- Proposed Development
- Recorded Monuments
- ZoN

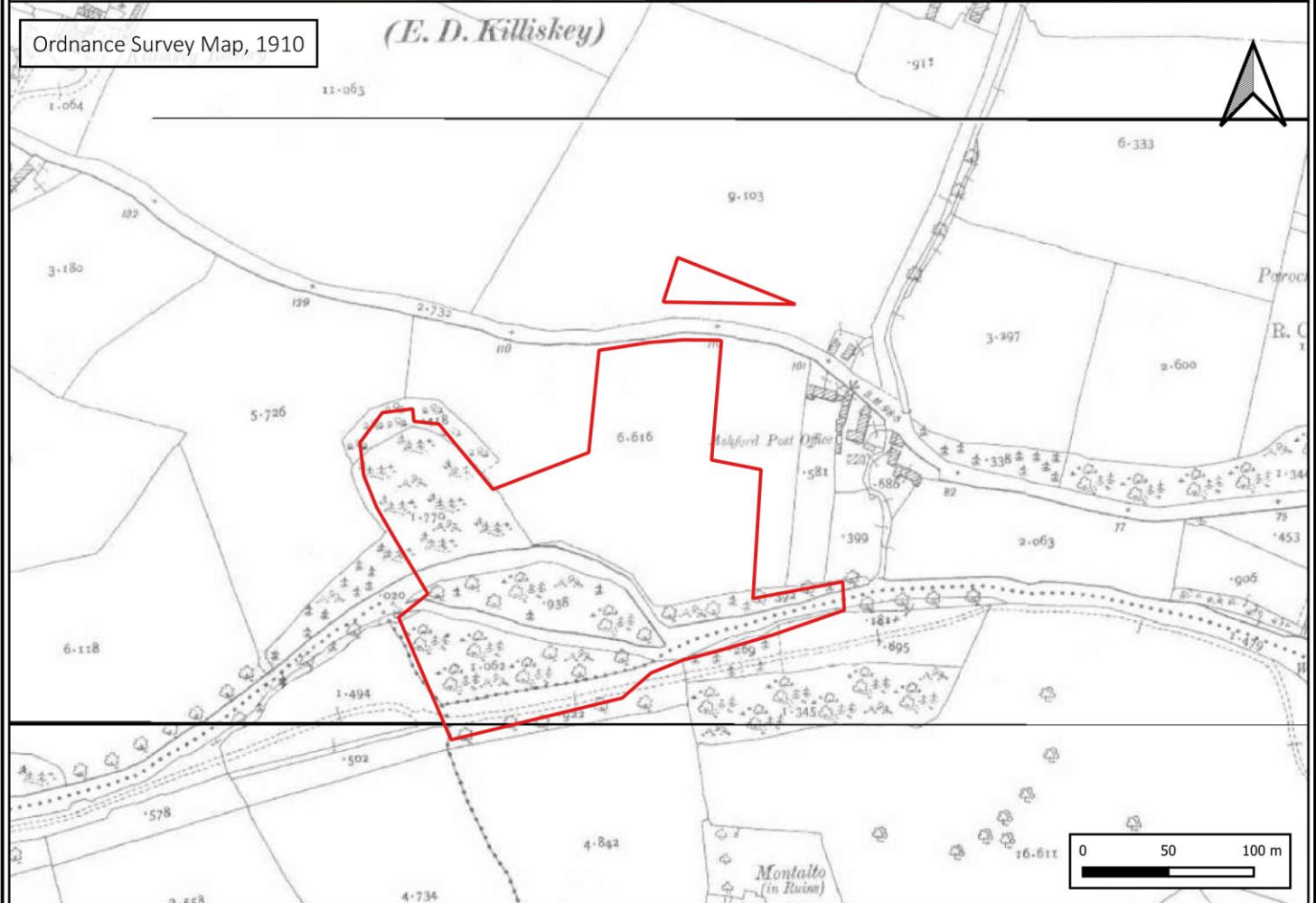
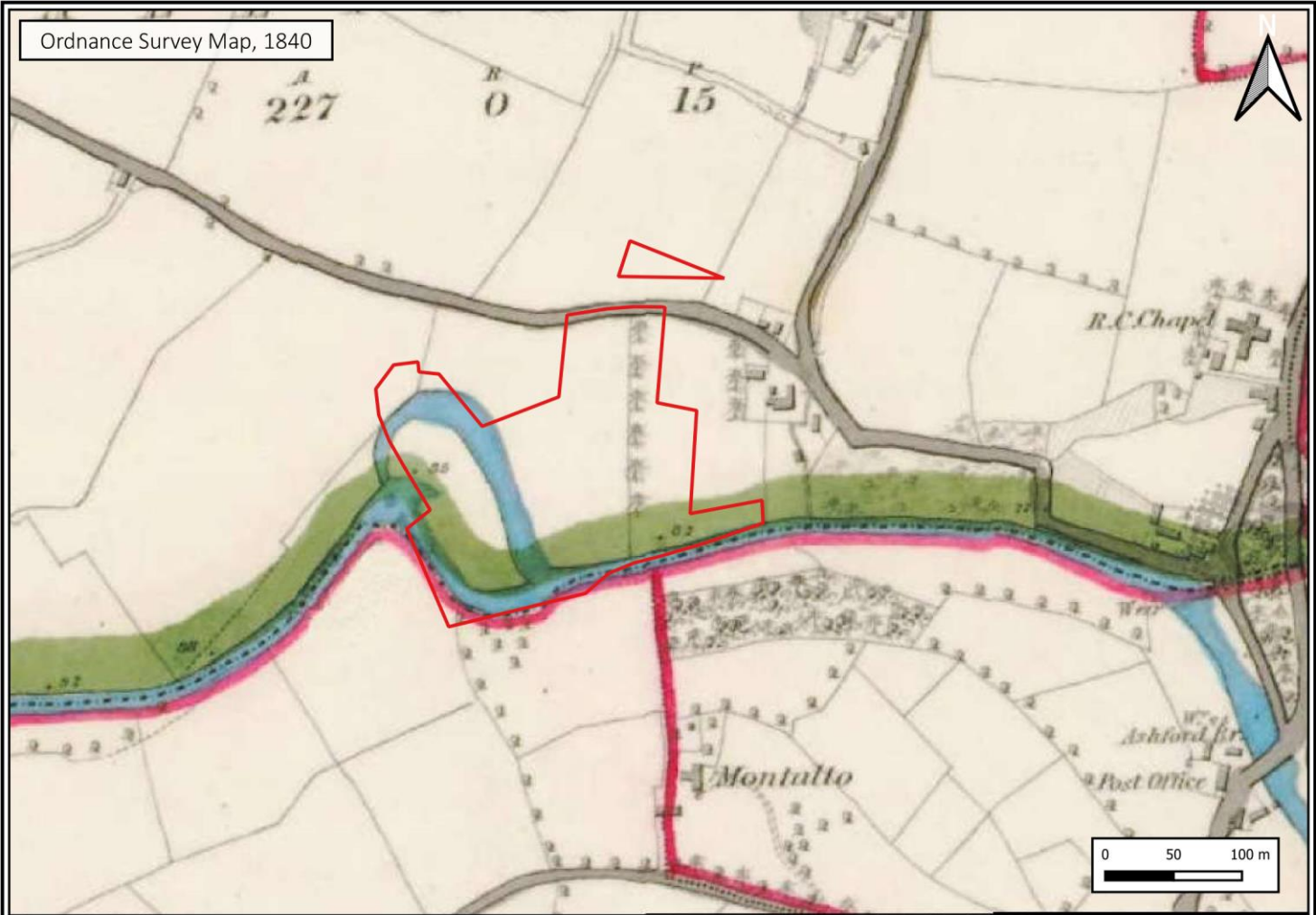
Title	Site location showing nearby archaeology	Scale	1:5000@A4	Drawn By	SF
Project	Ballinahinch, Ashford, Co. Wicklow	Date	10.03.2023	Checked By	MB
		Job No.	M053	Approved By	FB/MT





Approximate Site Location

Title	Extract from Jacob Nevill's An Actual Survey of the County of Wicklow (1760) showing approximate location of the proposed development	Scale	NTS	Drawn By	SF
Project	Ballinahinch, Ashford, Co. Wicklow	Date	10.03.2023	Checked By	MB
				Approved By	FB/MT





Ballinahinch Park housing estate, facing north



Plate 2 Field forming western portion of site, facing northwest

Plate 3

Woodland along Vartry River, facing west



Plate 4 Stone boundary wall, facing northwest