



**Archaeology
& Heritage
Consultancy**
L I M I T E D

**Archaeological Assessment
relating to the Provision of 62 no. units at
Robbers Lane, Maugheraboy,
Sligo, Co. Sligo
including
the construction of public open space**

Planning ref- Part VIII

Prepared by Archaeology and Heritage Consultancy Ltd
for
Sligo County Council

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Introduction

The author, Eoin Halpin MIAI MICFA, is the Operations Manager with Archaeology and Heritage Consultancy Ltd a company founded in 2014. For the previous 25 years he worked with Archaeological Development Services Ltd. He has worked on all aspects of development led archaeological projects and has extensive experience in both the planning phase and the archaeological resolution phases. He has represented clients in numerous public enquiries, he has carried out baseline studies, site assessments, EIA's, archaeological testing, archaeological monitoring and site resolutions involving full archaeological excavations and has project managed numerous large infra-structural schemes. He is a member of the Chartered Institute for Field Archaeologists and a member of the Institute of Archaeologist of Ireland, for which he has acted as chairperson. His work has appeared in numerous publications in academic journals, historic society journals and monographs.

Site location

The site is located 1.5 km south west of Sligo Town centre, to the south of Magheraboy Estate and to the west of Robber's Lane (centered on G 67928 15129). It lies within the environs of Sligo Town in an area with residential uses (Fig 1). It is bounded to the north by housing, to the west by the Dublin-Sligo railway line and to the east and south by agricultural green fields.

The site lies on the north facing slope of an east-west running glacial ridge and consequently slopes relatively steeply down from south to north. A small unnamed stream runs east west along the foot of the slope, dividing the site roughly in two halves. The northern portion of the site, also slopes down but has been terraced by the recent construction of an albeit disused all weather playing field.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Although the site lies to the south of and out with the zone of archaeological potential associated with Sligo Town (SL.014-065---), it does lie within the sphere of influence of the historic town. Sligo occupies a strategic location on a fording point of the River Garvoge. The modern primary road pattern reflects this with the main roads from Galway, Castlebar and Roscommon to Donegal converging on the town.

By the end of the 12th Century a bridge had been built over the river and a settlement is recorded beside it. The Anglo-Normans burnt the bridge and took control of the settlement when they arrived in 1236. Sligo and the surrounding area were granted to Maurice FitzGerald and he made it the centre of his manor of Carbury. A castle was built in 1245. By 1246 the town appears to have been enclosed by defences. Maurice FitzGerald founded the Dominican friary at the eastern side of the town in 1252/3. In 1289 Sligo is described as a borough and 180 burgages are recorded. The history of Sligo from the middle of the 13th century (the castle was first taken by Aed O Conchobair in 1265) until the Williamite wars of the late 17th Century is dominated by attacks on the town and castle. While the town was strategically situated relative to the natural routeways it did not occupy an easily defended position, being surrounded by higher ground to the north, west and south. It changed hands between the O'Donnell and O'Connor families (the rival local Gaelic overlords) many times in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, the town being attacked on at least 20 occasions between 1315 and 1602.

In 1646 parliament allotted money for the fortification of Sligo, leading to the construction of the 'Stone Fort' which was garrisoned with 60 men. This fort may have been on the site of the castle built in the 13th Century. The fortification of Sligo in 1646 may have also involved the construction of the 'Green Fort' on the summit of a hill to the north of the town known as Rathvritoge. It may be that this fort is built on the site of an earlier ring fort (rath).

The earliest military activity in Sligo associated with the English revolution was the founding of a Protestant Association in early 1689. The Association occupied Sligo and a number of strategic points around it. They also formed troops of infantry and cavalry which were engaged in skirmishes in the locality with Jacobites. In March 1689 the Protestants abandoned Sligo and set off on a long march to Derry where they were led to believe that their position would be more secure. Following this exodus James II appointed Col. Henry Luttrell Governor of Sligo. From March to August 1689 Sligo was used as a base for the Jacobite siege of Enniskillen. Following their defeat at Enniskillen, and with rumours of a superior Williamite force advancing, the Jacobites abandoned Sligo.

In late October a Jacobite force under the command of Patrick Sarsfield re-took the town after fierce fighting around the 'Stone Fort'; the 'Green Fort' was evacuated by its garrison under the command of Col. Thomas Lloyd without a fight. The Jacobites repaired the 'Stone Fort' and the 'Green Fort', enclosed the town with earthen defences and built a redoubt on the northern approaches to the town.

In May 1690 Sir Teague O'Regan, a hunchbacked veteran of Charles II's campaigns on the continent, was appointed Governor of Sligo. He made the 'Green Fort' his headquarters as he felt that the 'Stone Fort' occupied a more vulnerable defensive position. According to Wood-Martin (1889, 117) O'Regan further strengthened the fortifications erected by Luttrell, however, it is not clear if this was solely around the 'Green Fort' or if it included the town defences.

The Battle of Aughrim (July 1691) was the beginning of the end for the Jacobites in Sligo, Williamite forces closed in from all sides and by the middle of September the town was surrounded by superior forces and under daily bombardment by a battery of field guns which had been hauled over the Curlews.

O'Regan, realising that his position was hopeless, agreed terms with the Williamites and the Jacobite garrison was allowed to march out with "...the full honours of war, with their arms and baggage, drums beating, colours flying, match lighted and bullets in their mouths" (Simms 1965-6, 134).

Cultural Heritage Sites in the vicinity

There are no known archaeological or other cultural heritage sites from within the boundary of the subject site.

The known archaeology in the vicinity of the development consists of the site of an Early Medieval rath (SL014-127---), located some 260 m to the north and a souterrain (SL014-270---), located some 600 m to the northwest. Neither of these sites will be affected in any way by the proposed development.

The final site, SL014-282---, although located some 700 m to the east, consists of a relatively unique Early Neolithic Causewayed enclosure, which was uncovered as part of the pre-development archaeological works undertaken between 2001 and 2005 on the Sligo Inner Relief Road (N4) . In addition to the Causewayed Enclosure the remains of a previously unknown Early Medieval rath were uncovered as well as the remains of a Bronze Age Burnt Mound and other various isolated pits and post holes (Figs. 2 and 3). The northern half of the proposed development is located on the same ridge on which the Sligo Inner Relief Road (N4) archaeology was uncovered which increases the potential archaeological sensitivity of the subject site. Indeed Danaher stated in his report on the Magheraboy discoveries that it was 'only a matter of time before the domestic sites of these early farmers are discovered' (Danaher 2007 p 150).

Archaeological investigations in the vicinity

There have been a series of archaeological investigations recorded within the townland of Magheraboy. Most significantly perhaps is the Early Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure (03E0538), which as noted above was discovered some 700 m to the east of the subject site in advance of the construction of the Sligo Inner Relief Road (N4) .

More recently works on the Sligo Western Distributor Road located some 400 m to the south has uncovered evidence for Middle Bronze Age burnt mound, trough, deposit, pit and two scarped depressions (11E0372 and 12E0131). Further evidence for burnt mounds was uncovered in the townland on foot of archaeological works on the Sligo Environs Water Scheme (98E0533 ext). In addition some archaeological deposits were also recorded within the townland in the course of enhancement works on Grattan Street, Harmony Hill, Market Cross and Market Street (11E0262), with the deposits dating to the 18th or 19th centuries.

Cartographic evidence

The Ordnance Survey map of c. 1830 records the area of the subject site as green fields (Fig. 4). The Sligo-Dublin railway line has yet to be constructed (built 1862).The area is crossed by the unnamed stream with the fields to the north and south further sub-divided into smaller fields. The field to the northeast appears to be the site of a small quarry.

The map of some 70 years later (Fig. 5) now records the railway line, with just two fields one each to the north and south of the east west running stream.

Present site condition

The site runs to some 2.5 h in overall extent (Plates 1 and 2). It is roughly rectangular in plan measuring some 200 m north south by 135 m transversely. The site is divided by an east west running unnamed stream (Plate 3), to the south of which the sites rises relatively steeply to the

southern boundary. The area on either side of the stream is wet and reed covered, with the remainder of the site on the south side consisting of unimproved rough grazing. To the north of the stream the site consists of a mixture of well maintained grassland, rough ground and the remains of a disused all weather playing field (Plate 4). The ground here rises gradually towards the houses of Magheraboy Estate.

The western boundary is formed by the north south running line of the Dublin Sligo railway. The boundary itself has been demarcated by a 2.5 m high metal fence, beyond which dense vegetation cover obscures any view of the railway, with Knocknarea and Queen Maeve's Cairn prominent on the skyline to the southwest.

Nothing of archaeological interest was noted in the course of the walk over survey.

Proposed development

The proposed development will consist of the construction of 62 no. Social Housing Units of 2 and 3 storeys in height consisting of 12 no. 1 bedroom apartments, 36 no. 2 bedroom apartments, 10 no. 3 bedroom duplex apartments, 2 no. 3 bedroom houses and 2 no. 4 bedroom duplex apartments with 110 no. associated car parking spaces, 2 new vehicular estate roads accessed from Robbers Lane, road widening of Robbers Lane adjacent to development site, diversion of and connection to existing foul and surface water network, on site surface water attenuation system, partially culverting existing stream, and a surface water overflow pond. It will also include the construction of 2 no Multi Use Games Areas (pitches) and a Children's playpark and all associated landscaping and site development works.

Archaeological Impacts

Whilst there are no known archaeological sites or other sites of Cultural Heritage interest from within the boundary of the subject site, investigations within the environs have produced significant archaeology. Most notably along the line of the Sligo Inner Relief Road (N4) to the east, where a complex of archaeology consisting of an Early Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure, the remains of a ringfort and numerous pits and post holes were uncovered. Pre-construction works in advance of the South West Distributor Road to the south also uncovered archaeology, this time in the form of Bronze Age burnt mounds. The landscape of the subject site, well drained soils overlying two east west orientated glacial ridges with a stream running between would have been an attractive location for early settlement. Indeed the margins of the stream are likely to have been the site of Bronze Age burnt mound activity.

It is proposed to construct the housing development by terracing the existing hill side with a cut and fill technique, with the proposed three rows of houses constructed on the leveled ground (Fig. 7 and 8). At the southern, high end of the site, the current ground level is c. 31 m OD this will be reduced to c. 28 m OD. The level of the next 'terrace' will also be at 28 m OD in this case increased from the existing level of 27 m OD. Finally the lower terrace, the house level here will be at 26 m OD, again with the levels increased from their current 23 m OD.

The northern end of the site will consist of a playground and two multi use games areas. It is proposed to re-use the level area of the existing all weather playing field, however these works will entail some leveling of the existing ground.

Finally it is proposed to divert the existing stream from its present east-west course and run it out of the development area to the northwest, via a newly constructed wild life pond. The existing stream will be backfilled with a new stream course cut.

All of these ground works associated with the development, including new access roads and service lines, will have a negative impact on any surviving archaeological deposits which may exist within the subject site.

The development is on a largely green field site, located on the southwestern limits of Sligo Town. As with all other locations in this part of the town, there are relatively unrestricted views to the west towards Knocknarea and Maeve's cairn. Carns Hill, the other important Neolithic site, is only visible from the extreme southern boundary of the subject site, seen low on the horizon to the south east. The cut and fill nature of the proposed construction will mean that the ground floor levels of the houses built along the highest part of the site, along the southern boundary, will be set some 3 m below the present ground level and the final ridge height at 40 m OD, some 10 m above present ground levels. An embankment will be retained running along the southern boundary and the boundary with the railway to the west, the lines of which will be planted with a hedge of native species.

Archaeological Mitigation Strategy

The Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (SEDP) was adopted in November 2009 and was due to expire in 2015. When Sligo Borough Council was abolished in 2014, the lifetime of the SEDP was automatically extended in accordance with the legislation. In August 2017, the provisions of the SEDP were further extended through incorporation into the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (CDP). Within the SEDP there are two archaeological heritage policy objectives relevant to the proposed development:

- P-AH-14 Protect the vulnerable archaeological and cultural landscape and to protect views within and adjacent to Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, Knocknarea and Cairns Hill
- P-AH-15 Protect the context, amenity and integrity of archaeological heritage and the landscape at Cairns Hill, including the direct inter-visibility between cairns on Cairns Hill, the direct views between Cairns Hill and Knocknarea and Carrowmore and the direct views between Cairns Hill and other relevant locations within the wider Cuil Irra passage tombs complex.

In the case of P-AH-14, it is proposed, via the cut and fill construction method, to lower the overall ridge heights of the buildings, none of which will be over 40 m OD. In addition an embankment will be retained around the southern and western boundaries, with a hedge of native species planted on top. Together these two elements will reduce the impacts from Knocknarea and Carns Hill, with the views to the new development broken and largely hidden by maturing vegetation.

With respect to P-AH-15, the location of the subject site is some distance to the north of the sightline between Knocknarea and Carns Hill (Fig. 9), with the inter visibility between the two complexes unaffected

Due to the fact that a particularly important archaeological site was found on the same ridge as the proposed development, albeit some 700 m to the east, it is proposed that the main part of the subject site, the southern field, extending to some 1.5 ha, should be the subject of a geophysical survey, both magnetometer and resistivity. The results of which will dictate the level and extent of the follow-up testing.

The precise pattern of the testing will depend on the results of the geophysics, however it will consist of machine dug test trenches, the locations of which will be precisely located within the development project through either GPS or Total station and tied into OS grid.

The testing will be carried out using machine equipped with a 1.5 m wide toothless bucket which is under the constant supervision of a suitably qualified and licensed archaeologist. The archaeologist will monitor the trenching until either the surface of glacial subsoil, formation level or the surface of archaeological remains is uncovered, whichever is encountered first. It should be noted that this testing may only constitute the first phase of archaeological mitigation with the possibility of further excavation works if required.

It is proposed that all archaeological deposits uncovered during testing be recorded and investigated to best archaeological practice. They will in the first instant be cordoned off using high visibility tape and access to these areas by machinery and personnel denied until the deposits have been resolved. The licensed archaeologist on site is responsible, on behalf of the developer, for the identification and appropriate treatment (e.g. excavation and recording) of all archaeological remains encountered. In order to fulfill the responsibilities of the developer therefore, the licensed archaeologist will have the authority to temporarily stop machining where potential archaeological material has been identified, in order to evaluate the character of said remains. It should be possible for work to continue (under archaeological supervision) in areas where no archaeological deposits have been encountered. Should archaeological remains be present, the licensed archaeologist will be responsible for communicating this to the client or appointed representative, as well as to the relevant Heritage authorities.

In the event of the discovery of any archaeological remains during the testing, the deposits will be hand excavated to assess their nature date and extent and time will be allowed for the archaeologist to undertake the appropriate level of recording. The level of recording will depend on the complexity of the archaeological remains encountered and in all cases sufficient time will be allowed by the developer for this purpose.

If human remains, or any suspected grave cuts, are observed, machine excavation will cease, the Department, development sponsor and, in the case of humans remains uncovered, the Garda and the National Museum of Ireland will be informed immediately and a suitable methodology for dealing with the human remains or grave cuts will be agreed in writing with the appropriate authorities. Work will not recommence in the area containing the human remains until such a methodology has been agreed, and all works subsequently undertaken in this area will be in accordance with this methodology.

If the archaeological deposits are extensive an interim report will be compiled, outlining the nature of the archaeological deposits uncovered and the impacts of the proposed development on these remains. The report will also recommend a mitigation strategy for further archaeological works on site, which could consist of preservation of the remains in situ and/or archaeological excavation. During the testing phase, recording will be by means of the standard methods employed during archaeological fieldwork. A day book will be maintained while all archaeological features will be

recorded in writing utilising pro forma context sheets by means of scaled field illustrations and by appropriate photography.

It is recommended that the developer allow enough time in the development programme for a possible archaeological excavation. It should be noted that the results of all excavation including site evaluation and monitoring, must be compiled into a fully illustrated report.

FINDS STRATEGY

In the course of the testing all finds will be logged according to context, washed (if appropriate), bagged and catalogued prior to dispatching to the various specialists. A contract conservator will be on hand if necessary. All finds will initially be housed in our post excavation store in Drogheda and will ultimately be stored in whatever facility the State will provide.

All artefacts will be numbered and treated in accordance with NMI guidelines.

ARCHIVE

The archive will be stored at AHC Ltd, post-excavation store in Drogheda. Ultimately it will be stored in whatever permanent facility the State may provide.

REPORT

A report will be compiled that will set out the results of the archaeological testing in accordance with the terms of the National Monuments Acts and best professional practice. It will address the archaeological & historical background of the site. The location and levels (corrected to Ordnance Datum) of any archaeological deposits found will be clearly shown, an impact statement and mitigation strategy will also be given. Relevant ground plans and cross sectional drawings of the site and the proposed development will be included.

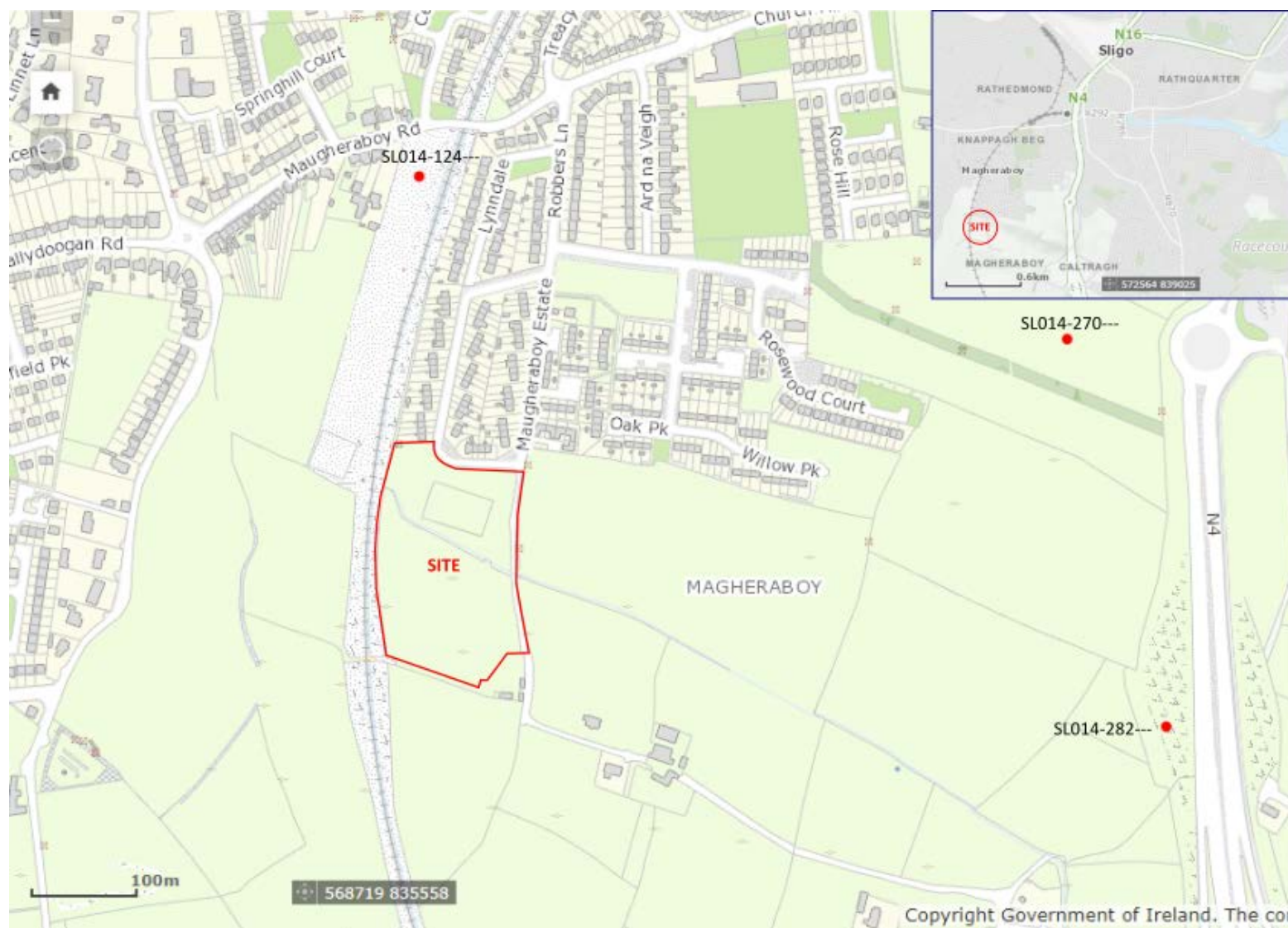


Fig. 1 Subject site location and location of Sites and Monuments in the vicinity



Fig. 2 Location of subject site on 2000 AP, showing location of the archaeological sites uncovered in advance of the Sligo Inner Relief Road (N4) works

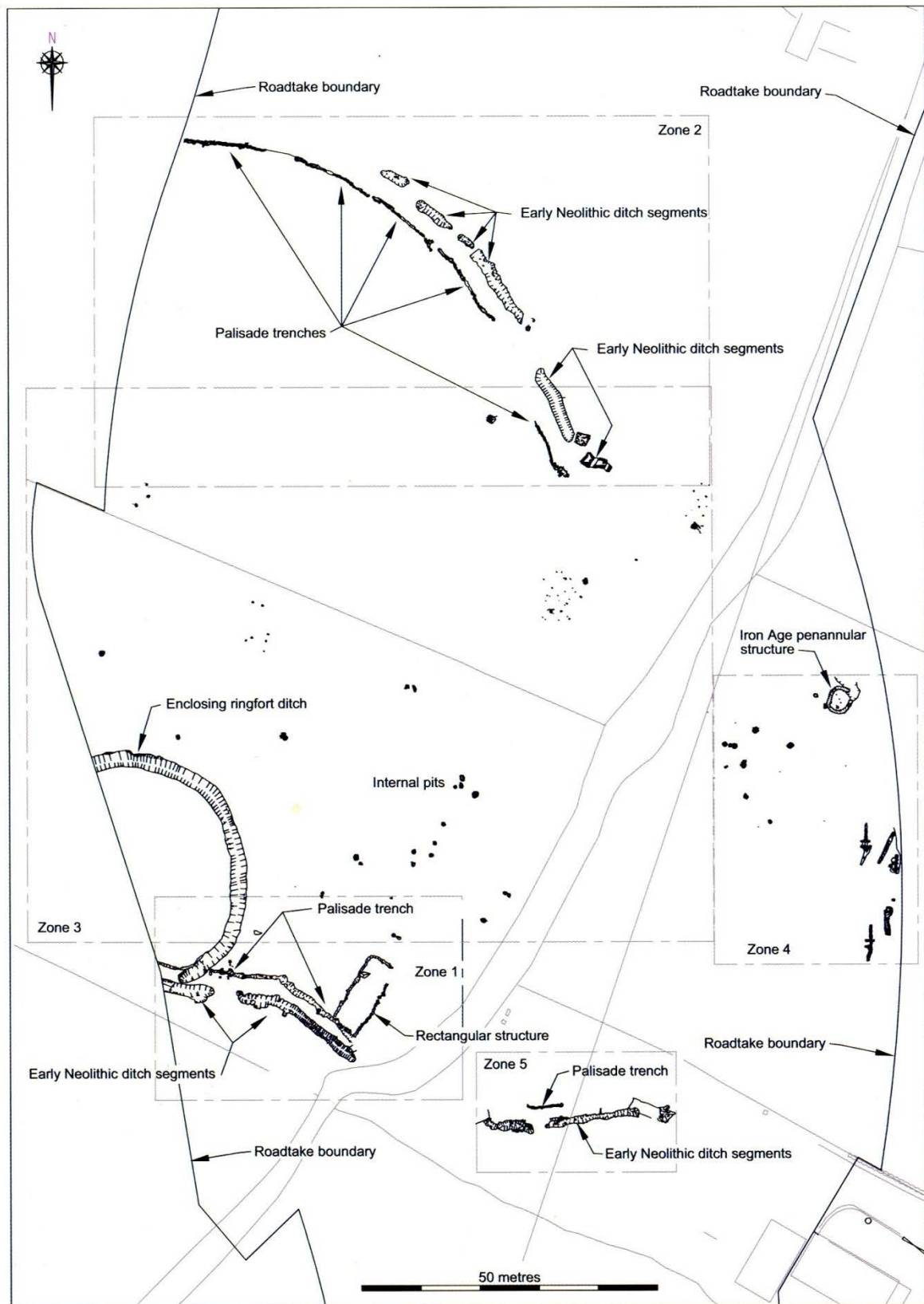


Fig. 3 Detail of the archaeology uncovered in Magheraboy in advance of the Sligo Inner Relief Road (N4) construction

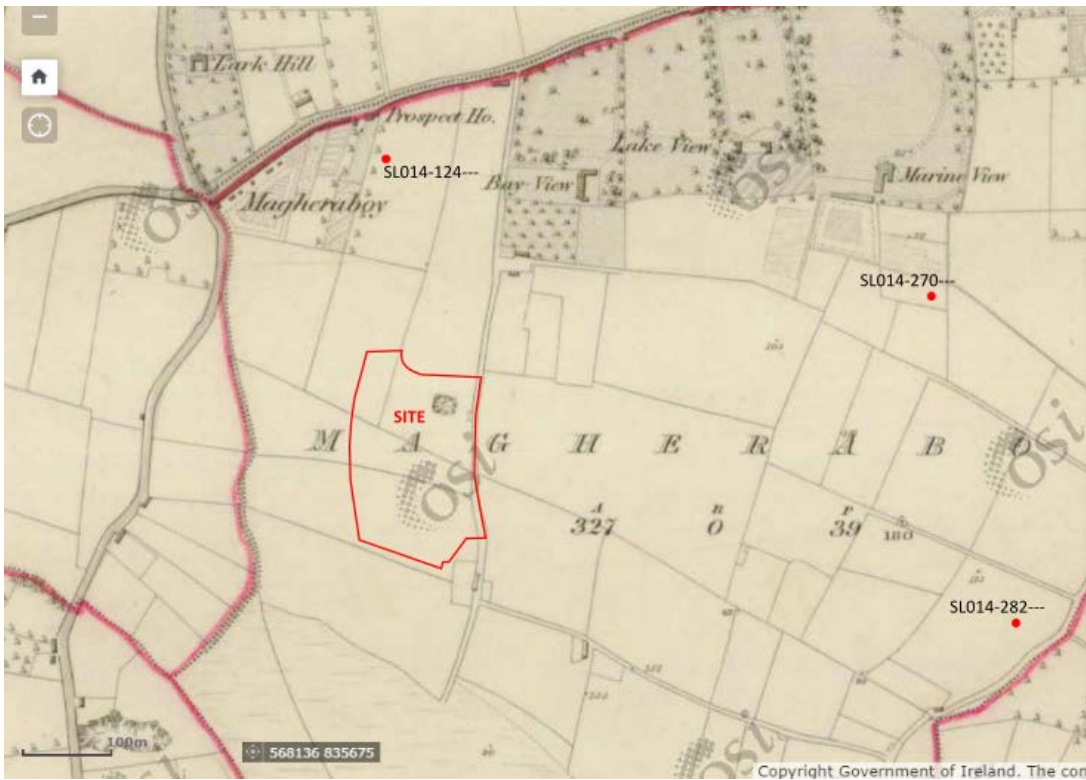


Fig. 4 Subject site on OS map of c. 1830

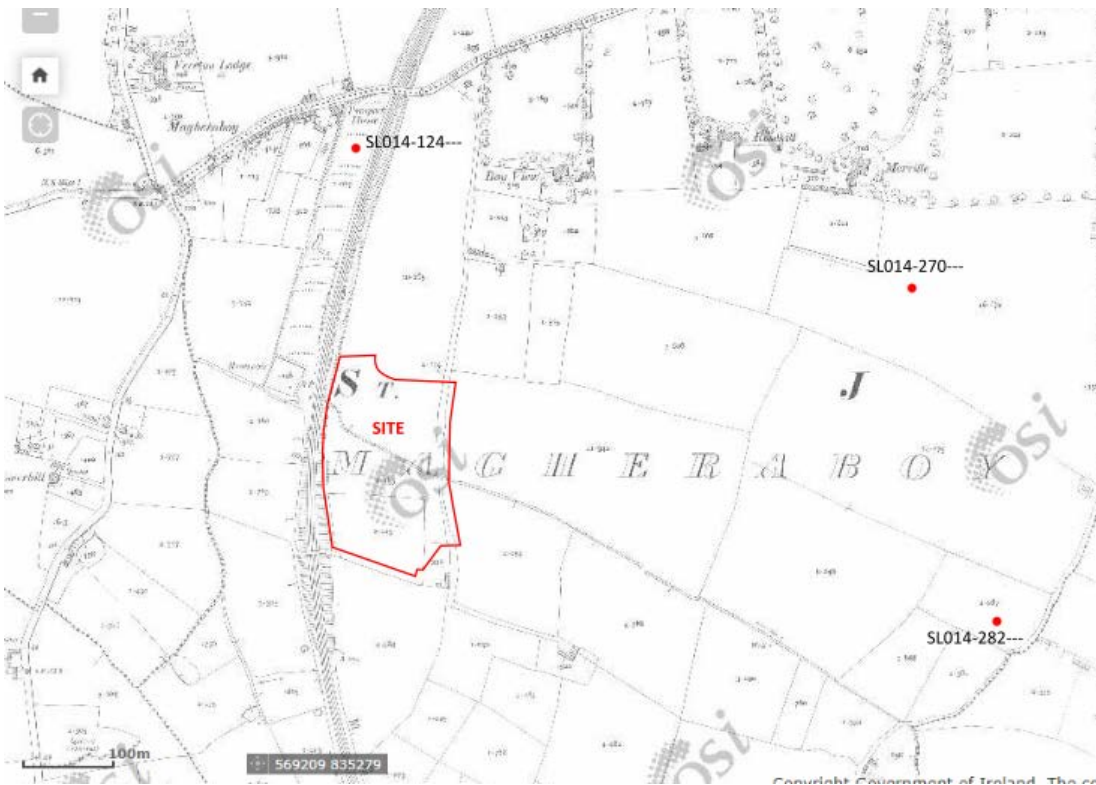


Fig. 5 Subject site on OS map of c. 1900



Fig 6. Proposed development

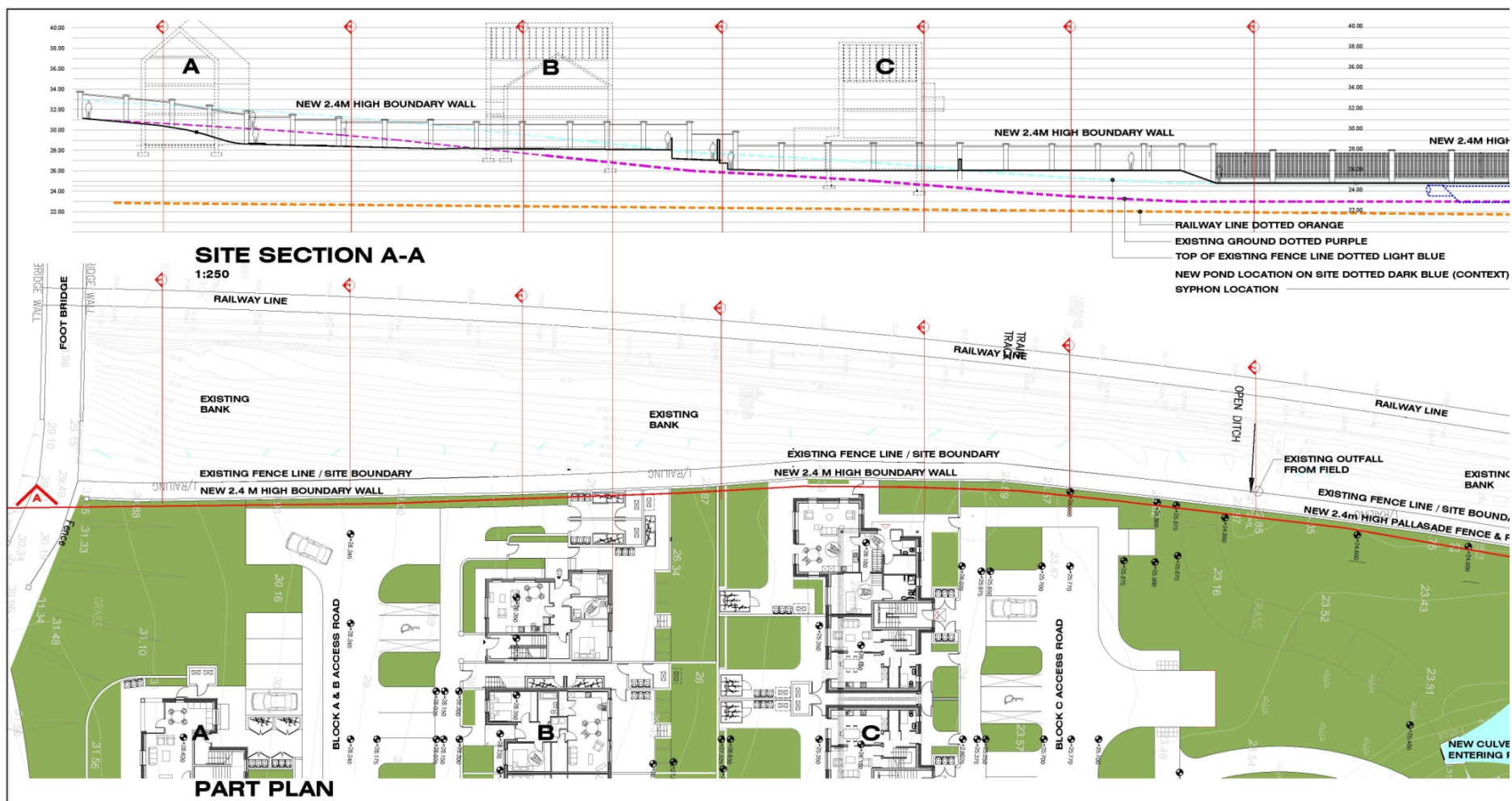


Fig. 7 Plan and section of proposed site (south end)

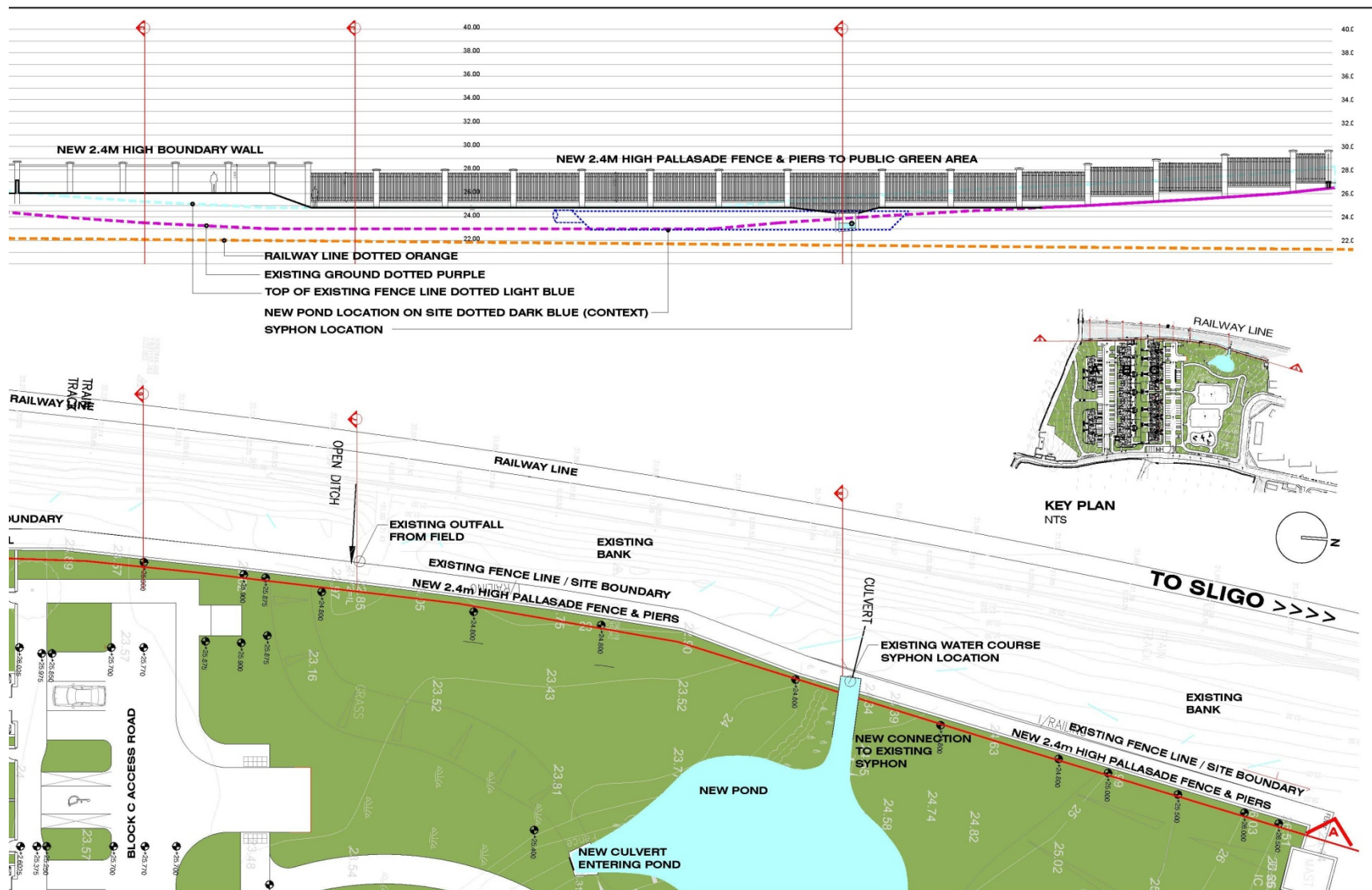


Fig. 8 Plan and section of proposed site (north end)



Fig. 9 Aerial photograph showing subject site in relation to Knocknarea and Carns Hill.



Plate 1 View of subject site from NE with Knocknarea to the W



Plate 2. Subject site from the southern boundary looking north



Plate 3 View of the stream crossing the site, looking west with the railway line in the background



Plate 4 Northern half of subject site looking NW toward Magheraboy Estate. All weather playing field to the left