



Archaeological Impact Assessment Report Cullairbaun Housing Development, Athenry, Co. Galway

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January 2025

Report Status: Final

ACSU Ref.: 24192



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 ACSU <small>ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES UNIT</small>	No:	PM-SF-113	Version:	01	Effective Date:	01.01.24
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PROJECT DETAILS

Project	Cullairbaun Housing Development
Report Type	Archaeological Impact Assessment
Townland(s)	Cullairbaun
RMP/SMR No.	n/a
RPS Id./NIAH Reg. No.	n/a
ITM Ref.	549878, 728494
Consultant	Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit, 21 Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, County Louth
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Report Status	Final
Report Date	January 2025
ACSU Ref.	24192

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VERSION CONTROL

Revision	Date	Description	Status	Author	Reviewed	Approved
1.0	22.01.2025	Archaeological Impact Assessment	Final	A.C	K.C	D.M

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The following report presents the findings of an Archaeological Impact Assessment prepared in relation to a proposed housing development in the townland of Cullairbaun, Athenry, Co. Galway (ITM 549878, 728494). The site is approximately 1.6 acres in size and is located on the southern edge of the current Cullairbaun housing estate, next to the R347 (Park Road), and to the northern edge of the Cluain Lara estate, next to the L3105 (Raheen Road). The proposed site is currently an open green space with no prior construction or other features visible. The assessment is based on the findings of a study of available archaeological, historical, cartographic and photographic sources and a site visit. It aims to identify and describe the known and potential archaeological and cultural heritage constraints within the site and its wider environs and, where present, offer recommendations for the mitigation of such potential impacts.

The site does not contain any known archaeological monuments, as listed in the *Record of Monuments and Places* (RMP) or *Sites and Monuments Record* (SMR), however, it is located just north of the historic town of Athenry (GA084-001----). Similarly, there are no Protected Structures, as recorded in the *Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028*, within the site boundary, nor any structures listed within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), however, just west of the site is The Old Rectory (RPS No. 3970; NIAH Reg. No. 30332003). There have been three previous archaeological investigations in the townland of Cullairbaun, none of which revealed any material of archaeological interest. This does not, however, rule out the potential for archaeological finds in future investigations. Cartographic sources and aerial imagery show that Cullairbaun was generally comprised of agricultural fields, surrounded by field boundaries with mature trees and hedgerows, from at least the post-medieval period through to the mid-twentieth century. Subsequently, Cullairbaun was subject to a large number of housing developments, the placement of the Ballydavid South Road, new access roads and industrial buildings.

Due to the undisturbed greenfield nature of the site and its proximity to known archaeology, there is therefore potential for previously unknown sub-surface archaeological remains to exist within the proposed development site. In line with national policy, as set out in the *Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage* (1999), there 'should always be a presumption in favour of avoiding developmental impacts on the archaeological heritage' (Part III, 23–25). Adequate measures to allow for preservation *in situ* of archaeological features/materials cannot be established without adequate definition of the location and extent of any potential sub-surface remains. It is therefore recommended that in order to fully assess the impact on any potential buried features, archaeological testing should be carried out in advance of any development of the site. This must be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist working under licence from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Archaeological material identified during the course of the test trenching may necessitate further mitigation, including preservation *in situ*/or preservation by record (excavation) following consultation with the National Monuments Service.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following report presents the findings of an Archaeological Impact Assessment prepared in relation to a proposed housing development in the townland of Cullairbaun, Barony of Athenry, County Galway (ITM 549878, 728494, Figures 1–2). The site is approximately 1.6 acres in size and is located on the southern edge of the current Cullairbaun housing estate, next to the R347 (Park Road), and to the northern edge of the Cluain Lara estate, next to the L3105 (Raheen Road). The proposed site is currently an open green space with no visible evidence for prior construction or other features (see Figure 7). The site is bordered by three large housing estates on the north, east and west, with a community pre-school on the south edge.

The assessment is based on the findings of a study of available archaeological, historical, cartographic and photographic sources and a site visit. The aim of this report was to assess whether or not the site contained any evidence for the presence of known or previously unknown areas or features of historical, built heritage or archaeological significance and what, if any impact the proposed development might have on such remains.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Proposal

The proposed works are for the development of a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) on a site of approximately 1.6 acres on lands in the townland of Cullairbaun, Athenry.

2.2 Archaeological Condition/Requirement

The report was prepared at the request of the client to highlight areas of archaeological interest near the proposed works and assess the potential impact of these works on any such archaeological and cultural heritage assets.

3. METHODOLOGY

This assessment comprises a literature review and consultation of various written, cartographic and photographic sources. This included the *Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)* and *Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)*, compiled and updated by the National Monuments Service and the National Historic Properties Service. The RMP is comprised of manuals that list all known archaeological sites and monuments in a county

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with accompanying maps (based on Ordnance Survey (OS) six-inch maps) locating these sites. All sites included in the RMP are protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930–2004). The SMR consists of all records stored in the Archaeological Survey of Ireland national database and is presented in the Historic Environment Viewer, which also includes sites listed in the *National Inventory of Architectural Heritage* (see below). The last published RMP for County Galway is dated 1997, and as such, many of the sites listed in the SMR are scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP.

The Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland were also consulted to assess the area's archaeological potential. These files list on a townland basis all archaeological artefacts in the care of or known to the museum. Such a record can provide evidence for human settlement or activity in the absence of physical remains or documentary references. The results of previous and ongoing archaeological investigations were also considered in order to evaluate the level of archaeological remains coming to light in the area. This was primarily achieved by searching the *Database of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (www.excavations.ie), which contains summaries of all investigations carried out under licence from 1970 to the present.

Historical maps, including Griffith's Valuation, those held by the Map Library of Trinity College Dublin and Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) were also consulted, as well as aerial photography and imagery from the Geological Survey of Ireland and Google Earth. These sources can indicate areas of archaeological potential through features like curving field boundaries, crop marks and soil marks, and can provide information regarding the nature and extent of recorded archaeological sites that have become denuded since the early nineteenth century. Historical maps are also useful in identifying other features of cultural heritage significance. Griffith's Valuation, for example, is a property tax survey with accompanying mapping that includes lists and details of every taxable piece of agricultural land or built property in Ireland (published county by county between 1847 and 1864).

The *Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028* was also consulted as this contains, among other things, a Record of Protected Structures. Further buildings and features of architectural interest in the area that are not included on the Record of Protected Structures are detailed in the *National Inventory of Architectural Heritage* (NIAH). The NIAH was developed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and identifies, records, and evaluates the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland.

As part of the assessment a site visit was also carried out. The aim of which was to assess whether or not the site contained any visible evidence for any previously unrecorded areas or features of historical or archaeological significance.

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4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

4.1 Archaeological & Historical Background

The proposed development site lies in the townland of Cullairbaun (*An Coiléar Bán*), in the Barony of Athenry in County Galway. The name *An Coiléar Bán* translates as ‘*the White Collar*,’ which might refer to the limestone quarry found in the northwest of the townland (logainm.ie). The records for this area are a bit scant due to the vicissitudes of the history of Athenry. The Down Survey map (1656–1658) for the Barony of Athenry was destroyed in an accidental fire in AD 1711, however, the written records show that the townland of Carrowbane was owned by Darby O’Daly before AD 1641 (downsurvey.tchpc.tcd.ie).

The main factor for the siting of the town of Athenry was to control the ford across the River Clarin, it was also in close proximity to the *Esker Riada*, the ancient highway which crossed Ireland from east to west (Coyne & Fitzpatrick, 2013). The name of the town derives from *Áth na Rí*, ‘*ford of the kings*,’ or *Baile átha an ríogh*, ‘*the town of the river ford*,’ (ibid.). While the area now known as Athenry was granted to Piers de Bermingham in AD 1178, the town itself was not built until after Meiler de Bermingham was granted the lands in AD 1235 by Richard de Burgo, for his support in conquering Connaught (ibid.).

Prehistoric period

Archaeological evidence uncovered in the landscape surrounding the townland of Cullairbaun points to a long history of settlement in the area. Several polished stone axe-heads from the region point to occupation probably in the Neolithic (4000–2450 BC), while prehistoric graves to the west of Athenry reportedly included an ‘earthenware urn’ (Thompson, 2008). A probable Bronze Age cist grave (GA084-101----) located less than one kilometre southwest of the townland of Cullairbaun included a crouched inhumation and vase (Anon, 1928–9). Several copper and bronze artefacts collected from the surrounding area, such as a halberd, palstave axe-head, spearhead, sword, shield and scabbard chapes, also indicate human occupation during the Chalcolithic (2450–2200 BC), Bronze Age (2200–800 BC) and Iron Age (800 BC–AD 400) (Thompson, 2008).

Early medieval period

Although the Galway area is largely understood to be an area of low ringfort density (O’Sullivan & Downey, 2007), the remains of at least six ringforts (GA084-108----, GA084-011----, GA084-012----, GA084-075----, GA084-032---- and GA084-034----) are found less than two kilometres from the townland of Cullairbaun, indicating the presence of cattle farmers in this area during the early medieval period (AD 400–1100).

The Vikings also made their presence felt in this area, as indicated by the townland of Tisaxon (*Teach Sachsen*), meaning the ‘*Saxon’s House*’ (Thompson, 2008), which is less than 5km northeast of Cullairbaun. The ford at

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Athenry is also thought to be the dividing border of three great Irish Kingdoms at this time: Aidhne (territory of O’Heyne and O’Shaughnessy), Hy-Many (territory of O’Kelly) and Moyseola (territory of O’Flaherty) (ibid.).

Late medieval period

Following the invasion of Ireland by King Henry in AD 1171, members of the de Bermingham family headed west in search of more conquest, reaching deep into the heartland of the O’Connor territory in Connaught. The first Baron of Athenry was Piers de Bermingham after he was granted the lands as a reward for his assistance in conquering Connaught (Mohr, 2015). Piers’ son Meiler was the second Baron of Athenry and is generally credited with the construction of the town. Having assisted Richard de Burgh in the conquest of Connaught and deposing Fedhlim mac Cathal Croibhdhearg Ua Conchobair, Meiler was granted lands to the east of Galway city in AD 1235 and erected a castle overlooking the ford of the River Clareen in c. AD 1238 (ibid.). Meiler was also responsible for allowing the construction of the Dominican Priory to the east of the town, where he was buried in AD 1258 in the unfinished church (Rynne, 1987).

The fourth Baron of Athenry was Richard de Bermingham, he was Sheriff of Connaught in AD 1299, 1310 and 1316. The Kingdom of Connaught was in a period of massive upheaval during this period and the Anglo-Normans were able to suppress the Gaelic Chieftains with relative ease. There were thirteen Kings of Connaught between AD 1275 and 1315, with some only lasting a fortnight before being murdered (Cosgove, 2008). Indeed, Richard aided Fedhlim O’Conchobair in defeating his rival claimant to the title of King of Connaught, Ruaidhri O’Conchobair, in AD 1315. However, the ambitious Feidhlim began plundering and expelling the English from West Connaught. On 10 August 1316, Feidhlim mustered a great army and descended on the Castle of Athenry; over a thousand Irish fighters died, including Feidhlim himself (Mohr, 2015).

The town of Athenry was further developed during the fourteenth century, with the addition of a surrounding curtain wall and an 8m-wide fosse or ditch protecting the river ford. The inner area of the walls was an impressive 28 hectares, signifying the wealth and high status de Bermingham had achieved, and, it is said, to compete with his overlord de Burgh, with whom he had a difficult relationship (Thompson, 2018). By the fifteenth century the town of Athenry was quite prosperous, it had its own member in the Irish parliament and the de Bermingham family were considered the premier barons of Ireland (ibid.). There was continued resistance to the Anglo-Norman occupation of Connaught, however, and in AD 1574 the sons of the Earl of Clanricard captured Athenry, destroying the walls, houses and castle, leaving it in ruins for a long time thereafter. The town was attacked by the Clanricard family again in AD 1577, soon after repairs had begun,

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and twenty years after that again, in 1597, Red Hugh O’Donnell sacked and razed the town during the Nine Years War (ibid.).


Post-medieval to early modern period

Following these periods of conflict and upheaval the town slowly bounced back and was granted permission to hold a regular market in AD 1629, where the market cross still stands (Coyne & Fitzpatrick, 2013). The Catholic de Bermingham family remained loyal to King Charles I during the Irish Rebellion of 1641. Francis de Bermingham, the nineteenth Lord of Athenry, continued to support the crown against the Parliamentary forces of Cromwell and had his lands, including Athenry, taken from him. All titles and lands were restored to him after the fall of the Commonwealth, however, and he took his seat in the first parliament of the Restoration in 1661 (Mohr, 2015). His successor, Edward, was granted even more titles and over five thousand acres in the Barony of Dunmore. He supported King James II against the Protestant King William III and as a result was outlawed in 1691 but was able to organise a reversal years later in 1707, continuing their ownership of Athenry. His successor, Francis de Birmingham, converted to Protestantism and took his seat in Parliament as the premier Baron of Ireland in 1713. In 1799, upon the death of Thomas de Bermingham, the twenty-second Baron of Athenry, the Barony of Athenry fell into abeyance, as Thomas had no surviving descendants (ibid.).

The town of Athenry was struck hard by the famine of 1740–41, before the loss of the de Bermingham’s patronage, the town then lost its corporation status in 1840, just before the Great Famine of 1845 hit Ireland. The town layout had changed little from the seventeenth century, it lacked a public water supply, and the narrow streets remained unpaved (Thompson, 2018). The town did bounce back once again with the advent of the Land League in 1879, when a building boom took place that included new roads and houses within the town. The Great Western and Midland Railway reached Athenry in 1851 and the railway junction was added in 1875, further adding to the economic boom by making Athenry a distribution and transport centre. The importance of Athenry continued and during the Easter Rising in 1916, it was held by the Western Division of the IRA for a week (ibid.).

4.2 Previous Archaeological Investigations

Based on the *Database of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (www.excavations.ie), there have been at least three previous archaeological investigations in the townland of Cullairbaun, all undertaken in the past two decades, including in advance of the existing Cullairbaun housing estate (see Figure 2). While none of these

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revealed any material of archaeological interest this does not rule out the potential for archaeological remains to be uncovered during future investigations, particularly given the sites proximity to the historic town of Athenry.

4.3 Recorded Monuments

The site does not contain any known archaeological monuments; however, it is located just north of the medieval fortified town of Athenry (GA084-001----). Furthermore, between c. 400m and 600m NNW of the site there are also two early modern (post-1700) quarries (GA084-068---- and GA084-069----), which reflect past industrial activities in the area. While c. 430m to the northeast, a mound (GA084-007----) in the adjacent townland of Ballydavid South was investigated in the 1980s and found to include a variety of artefacts that suggested a late medieval date. Approximately 190m northwest of the site there is also a redundant record (GA084-070----), originally thought to represent a mound but subsequently determined to be a natural feature, forming part of a gravel ridge (Rynne 1983).

Below (Table 1) is a list of the recorded monuments located in the environs of the site (Figure 2). These descriptions are derived from the National Monuments Service Archaeological Survey Database (<https://heritagedata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/>).

Table 1: Recorded archaeological monuments in the environs of the site

GA084-068----	Quarry	Cullairbaun
<p>A hachured feature marked on the 1933 edition of the OS 6-inch map proved on inspection in 1983 to be a gravel quarry. As it is of post-AD 1700 date it does not come within the remit of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.</p> <p>Six-Inch First edition: Not indicated</p> <p>Six-Inch Latest edition: Hachured</p> <p>ITM Coordinates: 549682, 728946</p> <p>Latitude and Longitude: 53.308402, -8.755012</p>		
GA084-069----	Quarry	Cullairbaun
<p>A hachured feature marked on the 1933 edition of the OS 6-inch map proved on inspection in 1983 to be an overgrown sand pit. As it is of post-AD 1700 date it does not come within the remit of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.</p> <p>Six-Inch First edition: Indicated</p>		

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Six-Inch Latest edition: Hachured
ITM Coordinates: 549704, 728798
Latitude and Longitude: 53.307074, -8.754658

GA084-007----

Mound

Ballydavid South

On the highest point of an E-W running esker ridge. A small subcircular mound (7.5m N-S; 6.5m E-W; H 1.3m), threatened by quarrying, was excavated by Rynne (1985, 24). It consisted of a 'cairn-like core covered with earth and stones and contained within a low, rough kerb forming three sides of a square, open on the NE side'. Finds included animal bones, oyster shells, iron, bronze and glass fragments and a decorated bone plaque. Rynne (ibid.) proposed a late-medieval date for this 'enigmatic structure', of which no visible surface trace survives. (Knox 1917-18, 119-20, no. 221; Cody 1989, 380-81, no. 165)

Compiled by: Galway Archaeological Survey, UCG Date of upload: 17 July 2019

References: Cody, E. 1989 An archaeological survey of the barony of Athenry, Co. Galway. Unpublished MA thesis, University College Galway. Knox, H.T. 1917-18 Ballygurraun and Raheen group of works in earth and stone. *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 10, 101-124. Rynne, E. 1985 Ballydavid South. In C. Cotter (ed.), *Excavations 1985: summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland*, 24. Dublin. Irish Academic Publications.

Six-Inch First edition: Not indicated

Six-Inch Latest edition: 'Mote'


ITM Coordinates: 550081 , 728879

Latitude and Longitude: 53.307838 , -8.749015

4.4 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and Record of Protected Structures

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) identifies, records, and evaluates the post-1700 architecture of Ireland in order to protect and conserve our built heritage. It is under the administration of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It also forms the basis of a list for structures that should be included in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) compiled by local authorities. A Protected Structure is a structure that a planning authority think is of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical point of view. The structured is recognised as important and is protected from harm under legislation. Every local authority in Ireland must keep an RPS in their development plans.

There are no Protected Structures, as recorded in the *Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028*, within the site boundary, nor any structures listed in the NIAH, however, just west of the site is The Old Rectory (RPS

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No. 3970; NIAH Reg. No. 30332003; Figures 2 and 6), which was built in the late nineteenth century and has an associated garden, yard of outbuildings and rusticated gateway. Located c. 180m to the southeast is Banba House (RPS No. 3971; NIAH Reg. No. 30332004), which was built around the same time, and c. 240m to the northwest of the site is Cullairbaun House (NIAH Reg. No. 30332001), built in the early twentieth century. South of the site there are a suite of buildings and structures related to the railway and these form part of the Athenry Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

Table 2: Buildings and structures included in the NIAH and/or the RPS in the environs of the site

NIAH No.	RPS No.	Name	Description	Importance
30332003	3970	The Old Rectory, Raheen Road	Detached three-bay two-storey former rectory, built c.1880, facing south-east and having canted projecting bay to end of façade, projecting shallow porch to middle bay, and four-bay south-west elevation with canted bay window to front end. Flat-roofed addition to re-entrant corner of rear. Now in use as private house. This pleasing detached house is typical of late nineteenth century higher status domestic architecture. The varied facades, use of canted projections and the elegant balcony to the porch are part of the repertoire of details of the era. The house is enhanced by the retention of its timber panelled door and timber sash windows and by the polychromatic effect of the light grey limestone and the red brick.	Regional
30332001	-	Cullairbaun House, Raheen Road	Detached three-bay two-storey house, built c.1920, having gable-fronted projecting bay to front elevation having two-storey box-bay to its front, flat-roofed entrance porch, box-bay window to west elevation, single-bay two-storey block with flat roof to rear elevation, and recent single- and two-storey extensions to rear elevation. This attractive middle-sized house forms a noteworthy addition to the town of Athenry. Although it has been extended and somewhat altered, it retains its basic form. The box-bay windows to the front and side elevations enliven the facades and contribute to its visual appeal.	Regional
30332004	3971	Banba House, New Line	Detached three-bay two-storey L-plan house, built c.1880, having gable-fronted projecting bay to west	Regional

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NIAH No.	RPS No.	Name	Description	Importance
			end of front elevation with canted-bay windows, and gabled entrance porch. Pitched slate roof with smooth rendered chimneystacks, cast-iron rainwater goods, and rendered crenellations to canted bay. Painted lined-and-ruled rendered walls having continuous sill course to first floor. Segmental-headed window openings to first floor, square-headed openings to ground floor, with one-over-one pane timber sliding sash windows. Square-headed timber panelled door. Wrought-iron gates and rendered piers to front boundary set into rubble limestone walls.	
30332008	139	Athenry Railway Hotel, Station Road	Detached two-storey limestone former railway hotel, built c.1870, having half-basement to east, side, elevation. Four-bay front, south, elevation has projecting gable-fronted west bay with open-bed pediment and timber lean-to verandah with elliptical arcading. Five-bay east elevation has slightly advanced gable-fronted end bays with open-bed pediments. Three-bay west elevation, and recent two-storey extension recessed to rear. The careful design and execution of this former railway hotel are typical of the high standards employed in the construction of railway architecture and associated buildings in the nineteenth century. The gable-fronted bays to the front and side elevation, the mix of window sizes, and the veranda, are all features typical of the Victorian period. The snecked chased limestone walls, the carved window surrounds, the chamfering of the corner stones, and the carved eaves brackets demonstrate the skills of nineteenth-century stonemasons.	Regional
30332009	137/138	Athenry Railway Station, Station Road	Detached seven-bay single-storey former railway station, built 1851, having two-bay side elevations. Entrance façade has flat-roofed blank end bays, and second bay from each end is slightly advanced and pedimented. Platform elevation has recessed middle bays with colonnaded canopy to front, flanked by projecting pedimented gabled-fronted bays and in turn by flat-roofed end bays. An appealing, well-built	Regional

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NIAH No.	RPS No.	Name	Description	Importance
			and elegant mid-nineteenth-century railway station representing an important element of the transport and civil engineering heritage of County Galway. Built of brick with extensive high-quality cut-stone dressings, it reflects the former wealth and ambitions of the Midland Great Western Railway Company and the level of architectural design that went into the stations of small country towns.	
30332010	-	Athenry Train Station Footbridge	Freestanding single-span cast-iron foot bridge over railway track, erected 1851, with staircases to west elevation. Depressed-arch span supported on round-plan cast-iron columns, four to each platform, with fluted and banded bases and decorative capitals. Latticed parapets to walking surface and staircases, base of latter terminated by decorative fluted and banded cast-iron colonettes. Still in use today, this well-preserved foot bridge forms part of the group of interesting railway structures at Athenry Railway Station. Its visually appealing design is embellished with decorative cast-iron detailing, including corbelled arches with quatrefoils to the spandrels.	Regional
30332011	3974	Tuam Road Bridge	Single-arch limestone railway bridge, built 1851, carrying road over Galway-Dublin railway line. Rock-faced rusticated walls and piers, voussoirs and string course, with buttresses flanking elliptical arch, latter having ashlar soffit. Cut-stone string courses and copings to parapet walls. The simple form is typical of several railway bridges on this railway line. It shows evidence of highly skilled craftsmanship in its stonemasonry - rustication to the piers is finished with a straight edge to the corners and the rusticated voussoirs are given recessed edges, enhancing and emphasising the formal properties of the structure.	Regional
30332012	-	Athenry Railway Station, Waiting Area	Detached eight-bay single-storey waiting room, built 1851, with full-width canopy to platform (north) elevation, supported on cast-iron columns. Shallow pitched roof, covering not visible, supported by decorative cast-iron brackets supported cast-iron roof beams, and having carved timber bargeboards. Red brick walls with blind red brick window recesses	Regional

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NIAH No.	RPS No.	Name	Description	Importance
			having moulded brick surrounds. Segmental-headed openings with half-glazed timber panelled doors, and replacement timber window. Timber newspaper kiosk to one bay, erected c.1920.	
30332013	135	Athenry Train Station Outbuildings	Detached ten-bay single-storey goods shed, c.1850, with three-bay end elevations. Coursed rubble limestone walls having tooled capping to long sides. Segmental-headed window openings to long sides having tooled limestone surrounds and sills, and metal multi-paned windows. Round carriage arch entrances to gable ends having tooled stone surrounds, one having metal door. Square-headed door openings to east gable, having metal doors. Remains of windows to middle of gable ends at loft level.	Regional
30332014	-	Athenry Train Station Signal Box	Detached two-storey signal box, built c.1900, having three-bay long and single-bay short sides. Hipped slate roof with terracotta ridge tiles, rendered chimneystack, and cast-iron rainwater goods. Squared coursed limestone block walls to ground floor with smooth render and glazed timber sides to first floor. Square-headed window openings to ground floor of north elevation having stone sills and timber nine-pane fixed windows. Square-headed replacement timber windows to first floor of trackside and end elevations. Square-headed timber battened door to ground floor of west gable. This signal box plays an important role in the functioning of Athenry Railway Station. It stands as a reminder of the great railway era in Ireland. The squared limestone walls and slate roof give the functional structure architectural appeal.	Regional
30332015	134	Athenry Train Station Worker's House	Detached single-storey cruciform-plan railway crossing keeper's house, built 1851, having canted-bay to rear and canted-bays to front re-entrant corners, that to south having entrance. Hipped slate roof with clay ridge tiles, and having snecked limestone cruciform-plan chimneystack to centre of roof with terracotta pots, cut limestone eaves course, and cast-iron rainwater goods with some decorative	Regional

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NIAH No.	RPS No.	Name	Description	Importance
			detailing. Sneaked limestone walls set on tooled limestone plinth. Round-headed window openings, paired to end elevations and having raised tooled limestone surrounds with knees, keystones, imposts, sills with brackets, and replacement timber windows. Round-headed door opening with raised decorative tooled limestone surround with scroll keystone, knees and timber battened door. Round-headed window openings to other canted walls having similarly detailed surrounds and replacement timber windows.	
30332016	136	Athenry Train Station Stationmaster's House	Detached three-bay two-storey L-plan station master's house, built 1851, having projecting gabled bay to front (north) elevation, flat-roofed entrance porch to re-entrant corner, and single-storey extension to west elevation. Pitched slate roofs with clay ridge tiles, red brick chimneystacks and cast-iron rainwater goods. Concrete parapet to porch. Rock-faced sneaked limestone walls. Square-headed window openings having red brick block-and-start surrounds with replacement timber windows, and stone sills. Similarly detailed door opening with glazed timber panelled door and overlight.	Regional

4.5 Finds listed within the Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland

The Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland were requested to further assess the area's archaeological potential. These files list all archaeological artefacts in the care of or known to the museum. Such a record can provide evidence for human settlement or activity in the absence of other physical remains or documentary references.

No artefacts have been recorded from the townland of Cullairbaun, Co. Galway, in the NMI topographical files.

4.6 Cartographic Evidence

A review of available historic mapping for the area was carried out to include Petty's map (1655), Taylor and Skinner's map (1777), Larkin's map (1819) and the Ordnance Survey (OS) of Ireland first edition 6-inch (1840)

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and Cassini edition 6-inch (1925–34) maps (Figures 3–6). Unfortunately, the Down Survey barony maps (1656–58) for County Galway were destroyed in an accidental fire in AD 1711 and this is also one of the regions where the OS 25-inch map is unavailable. Potential archaeological or cultural heritage features are often marked on historic maps and they can provide a useful resource in identifying sites, particularly if they no longer have any above ground remains.

The Down Survey county map (1655), drawn by Sir William Petty, shows the walled town of Athenry and its surrounding hinterland, the names of various townlands are indicated but with little geographic accuracy. The townland of Cullairbaun does not appear on the map, with the earliest known recorded reference to the townland dating to the 1780s (logainm.ie).

Taylor and Skinner’s *Maps of the roads of Ireland* (1777) depicts Athenry, the L3105 (Raheen Road) and the R347 (Park Road/Tuam Road), but no further information relevant to the site (Figure 3). Larkin’s Grand Jury map (1819) similarly depicts the two roads with the area in-between illustrated as open agricultural land and the adjacent townland of Caherroyne labelled ‘Cahirowen’ (Figure 4).

The first edition OS 6-inch map of 1840 (surveyed 1837) illustrates the townland of Cullairbaun extending from the north gate of the surrounding wall of Athenry to the northwest, comprising of 184 acres, 1 rod and 32 perches. The northwest of the townland area crosses over the modern L3105 road, just north of the neighbouring townland of Raheen, and abuts the northern townland of Moanbaun. The townland is divided into several agricultural fields, with a few features depicted on the map, including a gravel pit in the northeast and two farmhouses in the northwest, on either side of the L3105 road. The gravel pit coincides with quarry GA084-068---, just west of the current R347. A Roman Catholic Chapel is noted in the southwest corner, near the townland boundary as it meets the Spiddle Gate of the walled town of Athenry. The church is depicted as being surrounded by mature trees and the street in front is noted as Chapel Lane; it coincides with the modern site of the Church of the Assumption, currently on Church Street. The proposed development site straddles two large agricultural fields, with a no longer extant northeast–southwest field boundary extending through the middle of the site (Figure 5).

The mid-twentieth-century Cassini edition OS 6-inch map (1925–34) illustrates the restructuring of the townland boundary between Cullairbaun, Raheen and Moanbaun, in the northwest of the townland. The northwest extension of Cullairbaun no longer exists and the area is now assigned to the townland of Moanbaun, which reflects the modern boundary. Cullairbaun townland now comprises of 135 acres, 3 rods and 13 perches. The site of the Catholic Church next to the walls of Athenry remains *in situ* and is joined by a convent and Parochial house to the northwest and a girls’ school to the north; these features are still *in situ*

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today. The Midland Great Western Railway track, constructed in 1851, is also depicted on this map, along with the associated railway buildings and bridges listed in the RPS (see Section 4.4). A ‘Rectory’ (RPS No. 3970; NIAH Reg. No. 30332003) now also appears approximately 300m northwest from the railways’ goods shed on the L3105, the rear of which backs onto the proposed development site (Figure 6). The site itself is now within a large open field, with the northeast–southwest field boundary removed. A new reservoir is also noted on this map, just south of quarry GA084-069---. Both quarries (GA084-068--- and GA084-069---) are indicated as hachured features on this map, while the agricultural field boundaries are much changed since the previous map.

4.7 Aerial Photography

A review of available aerial photography for the area was also undertaken as part of this assessment. Aerial photographs dating between 1995 and 2018 from the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSi, now Tailte Éireann) were assessed, along with Google Earth imagery dating between 2011 and 2024. Unrecorded archaeological sites can often be identified in aerial photographs as cropmarks or differential growth in a field, particularly during periods of drought, such as those experienced in the summer of 2018.

The townland of Cullairbaun, as visible in OSi aerial imagery from 1995, shows many changes from the OS 6-inch map of 1933. Large housing developments sprung up on the western edge of the townland from the railway tracks, along the L3105, stopping at the Rectory. Similarly, on the eastern edge of the townland the Cullairbaun housing development was constructed approximately 180m northwest of the railway tracks, continuing along the R347 for 260m. The proposed site for development is to the rear of these houses and to the rear of the Rectory on the west side and appears as an unused field or green area for the Cullairbaun estate. Sometime in the early 2000s, the Cluain Lara estate was constructed along the L3105, next to the Rectory, surrounding the building on the west and north sides. Further housing developments are visible between the years 2006 and 2012, being constructed northwest of the Cullairbaun estate along the R347. The Cáisleán Rí development is built over one of the quarries (GA084-069---) mentioned above (Section 4.3). A large area is cleared for the development but only half of it is built upon at this time. The only visible changes between the years 2011 and 2013 are the preparations for the construction of the Ballydavid South Road, in the northwest area of the townland. More recent Google Earth imagery shows the Cáisleán Rí housing development as finally finished in 2024, closing off a large green space, part of which contains the proposed development site (Figure 7).

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Notably, on the aerial imagery some of the field boundaries in the northwest of the townland appear to be similar to those depicted on the 6-inch Cassini map of 1925–34 and are visible as stone walls dividing the agricultural fields.

4.8 Field Inspection

A site inspection was carried out on 17 January 2025 by Ciarán Davis of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit (ACSU) Ltd (Plates 1–4). This was conducted in accordance with the *IAI Code of Professional Conduct* (Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland, 2006). The site consists of low grass and has been used as a communal sports pitch/playing area. The northeast boundary is a low stone wall and kerb that separates the site from the current Cullairbaun housing estate and facilitates access to the greenfield playing area. The southeast and southwest boundaries consist of modern concrete and stone walls, separating the site from existing housing estates and a community pre-school. There is currently no boundary along the northwest side of the site, which extends further as a greenfield site also used as a playing field.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this impact assessment was to establish whether or not the proposed development site contains any evidence for the presence of known or previously unknown areas or features of historical, built heritage or archaeological significance. The site itself contains no known archaeological sites, built heritage or protected structures. There are also no recorded archaeological monuments within the immediate environs of the site. The Old Rectory (RPS No. 3970) is the closest protected historic building to the site, being less than 70m to the west, however, it is fully enclosed in its own site and will not be impacted by the proposed development. The site is, however, located within an historically and archaeologically sensitive area, given its proximity to the medieval town of Athenry. Little archaeological investigation has previously taken place close to the proposed site. Consequently, it has the potential to contain previously unknown sub-surface archaeological remains and further archaeological mitigation is required.

6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report presents the findings of an archaeological impact assessment prepared in relation to a site in the townland of Cullairbaun, Athenry, County Galway (ITM 549878, 728494). The site is approximately 1.6 acres

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in size and is located on the southern edge of the current Cullairbaun housing estate and the northern edge of the Cluain Lara estate. The land is currently an open green space, with no prior construction or other features visible (Figures 1–7; Plates 1–4).

Little archaeological investigation has previously taken place within the environs of the townland. The wider area is, however, known to have produced several polished stone axe-heads, prehistoric graves, and both copper and bronze weapons and tools, all indicating human occupation from the Neolithic to the Iron Age. Early medieval activity in the area of Cullairbaun is evident by at least six ringforts within a 2km radius of the proposed site. The southern border of the townland also abuts the historic town of Athenry, which was founded around AD 1235 by the Anglo-Normans. There are also two recorded quarries (GA084-069---- and GA084-068----), between 400m and 600m respectively, NNW of the proposed site and these present part of the post-1700 industrial heritage of the area.

Cartographic sources and aerial imagery show that the townland of Cullairbaun was generally comprised of agricultural fields, surrounded by field boundaries with mature trees and hedgerows, from at least the post-medieval period through to the mid-twentieth century. The road layouts, and many of the field boundaries, remain recognisable from the late eighteenth century through to the twentieth century. The area of the townland next to the town of Athenry, along the R347 and the L3105, are subject to the most change during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the northern section and the centre of the townland, where the proposed site lies, remaining relatively untouched until a series of housing estates were developed in more recent years.

Due to the undisturbed greenfield nature of the site and its proximity to known archaeology, there is therefore potential for previously unknown sub-surface archaeological remains to exist within the proposed development site. In line with national policy, as set out in the *Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage* (1999), there 'should always be a presumption in favour of avoiding developmental impacts on the archaeological heritage' (Part III, 23–25). Adequate measures to allow for preservation *in situ* of archaeological features/materials cannot be established without adequate definition of the location and extent of any potential sub-surface remains. It is therefore recommended that in order to fully assess the impact on any potential buried features, archaeological testing should be carried out in advance of any development of the site. This must be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist working under licence from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Archaeological material identified during the course of the test trenching may necessitate further mitigation, including preservation *in situ*/or preservation by record (excavation) following consultation with the National Monuments Service.


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- Down Survey of Ireland (<https://downsurvey.tchpc.tcd.ie/index.html>).
- Extract from William Larkin’s Grand Jury map of County Galway, 1819.
- Extract from Taylor and Skinner’s *Maps of the roads of Ireland*, 1777.
- Extract from the First edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map, 1840.

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Extract from the Last edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map, 1925–34.

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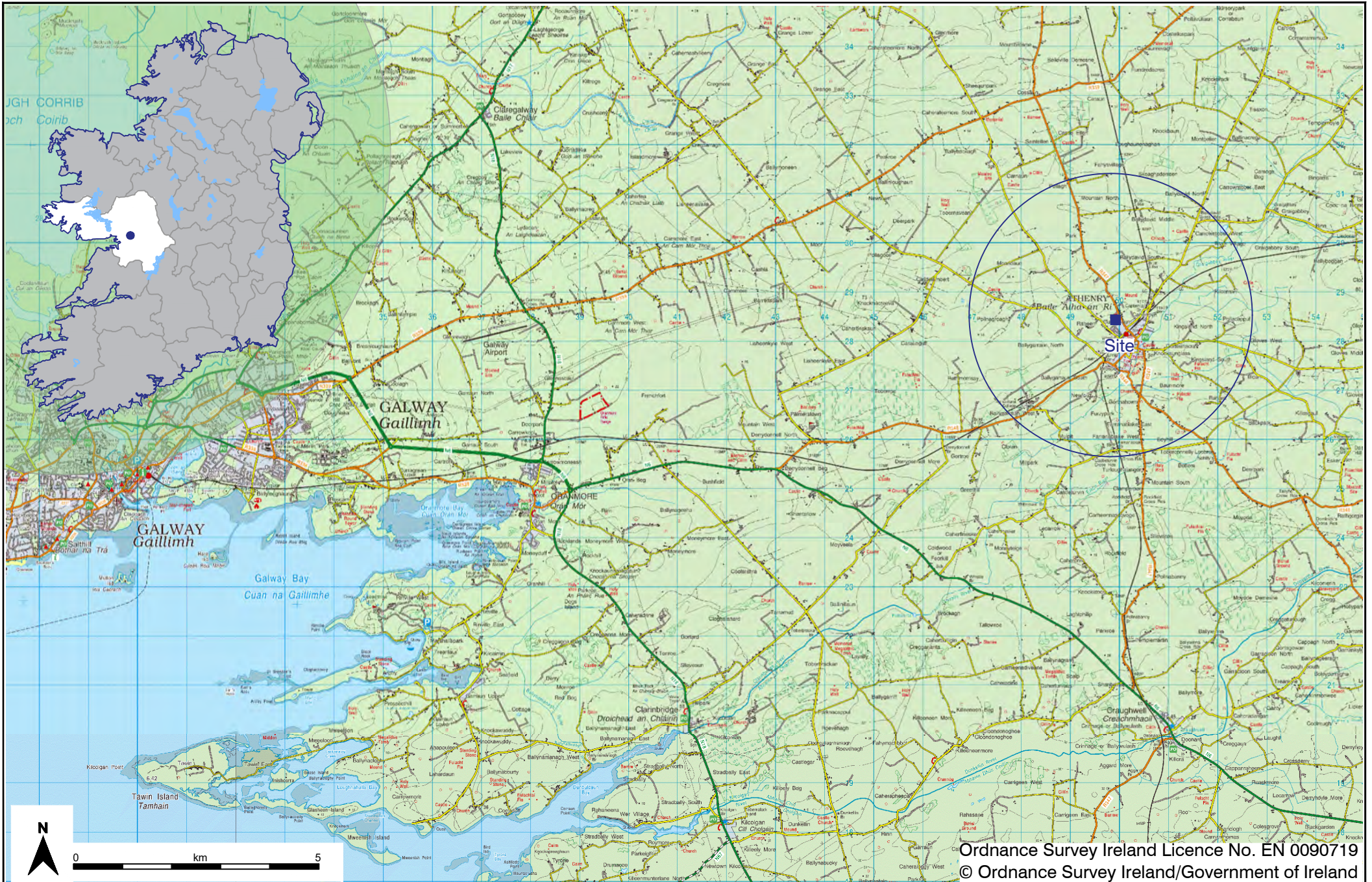
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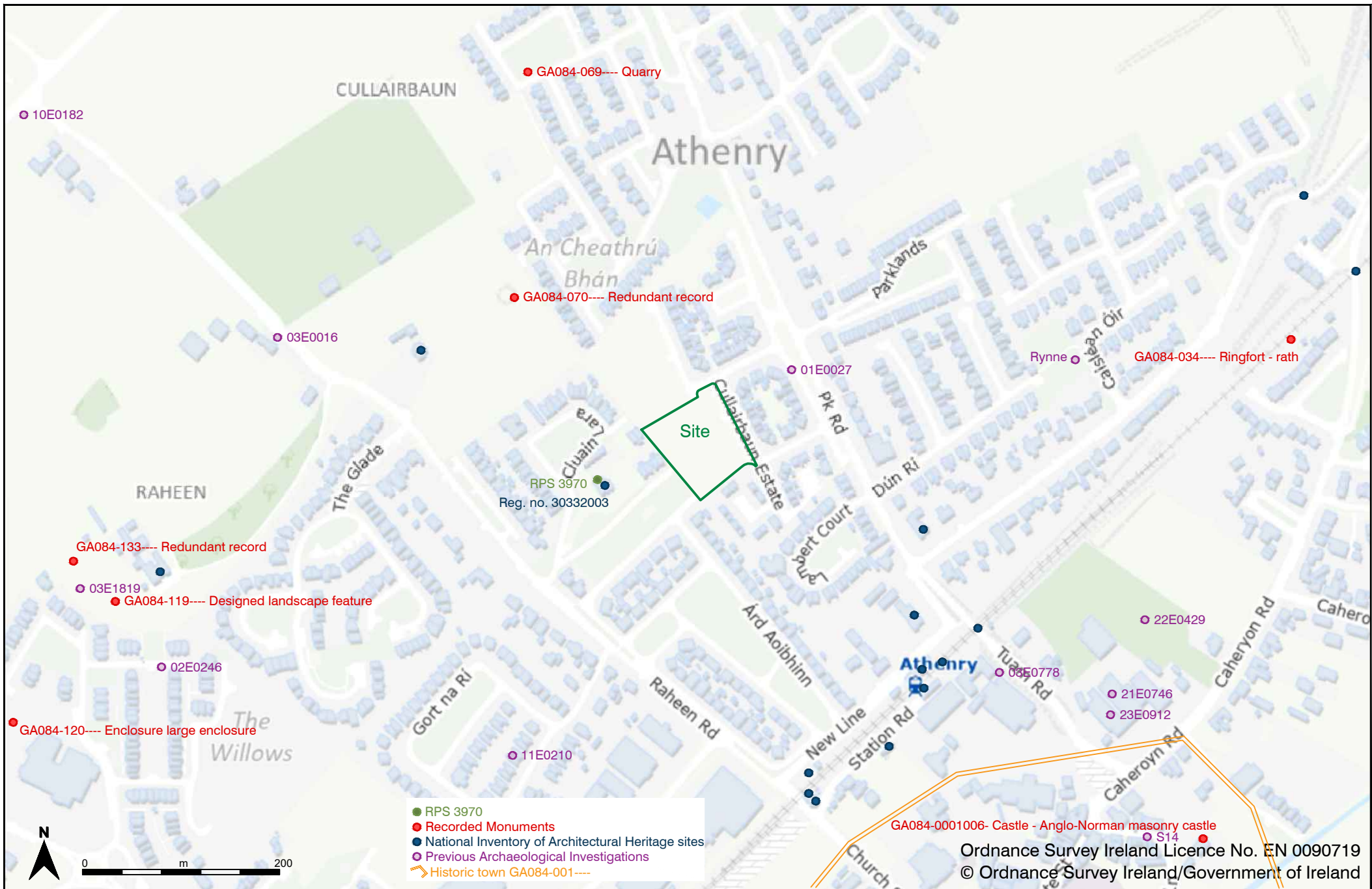
Date January 2025


Drawing No. 24192_C0001

Figure 1 Location of site


Scale 1:100,000 @ A4





Project Cullairbaun, Athenry, Co Galway	Date January 2025	Drawing No. 24192_C0002	
Figure 2 Location of site, previous archaeological investigations, built heritage and nearby Sites and Monuments Record sites		Scale 1:5,000 @ A4	



Project Cullairbaun, Athenry, Co Galway	Date January 2025	Drawing No. 24192_C0003	
Figure 3 Extract from Taylor and Skinner's 'Maps of the roads of Ireland' - Map 89 Road from Dublin to Galway (1777), showing approximate location of site		Scale Not to scale	



Approximate site location

Project Cullairbaun, Athenry, Co Galway

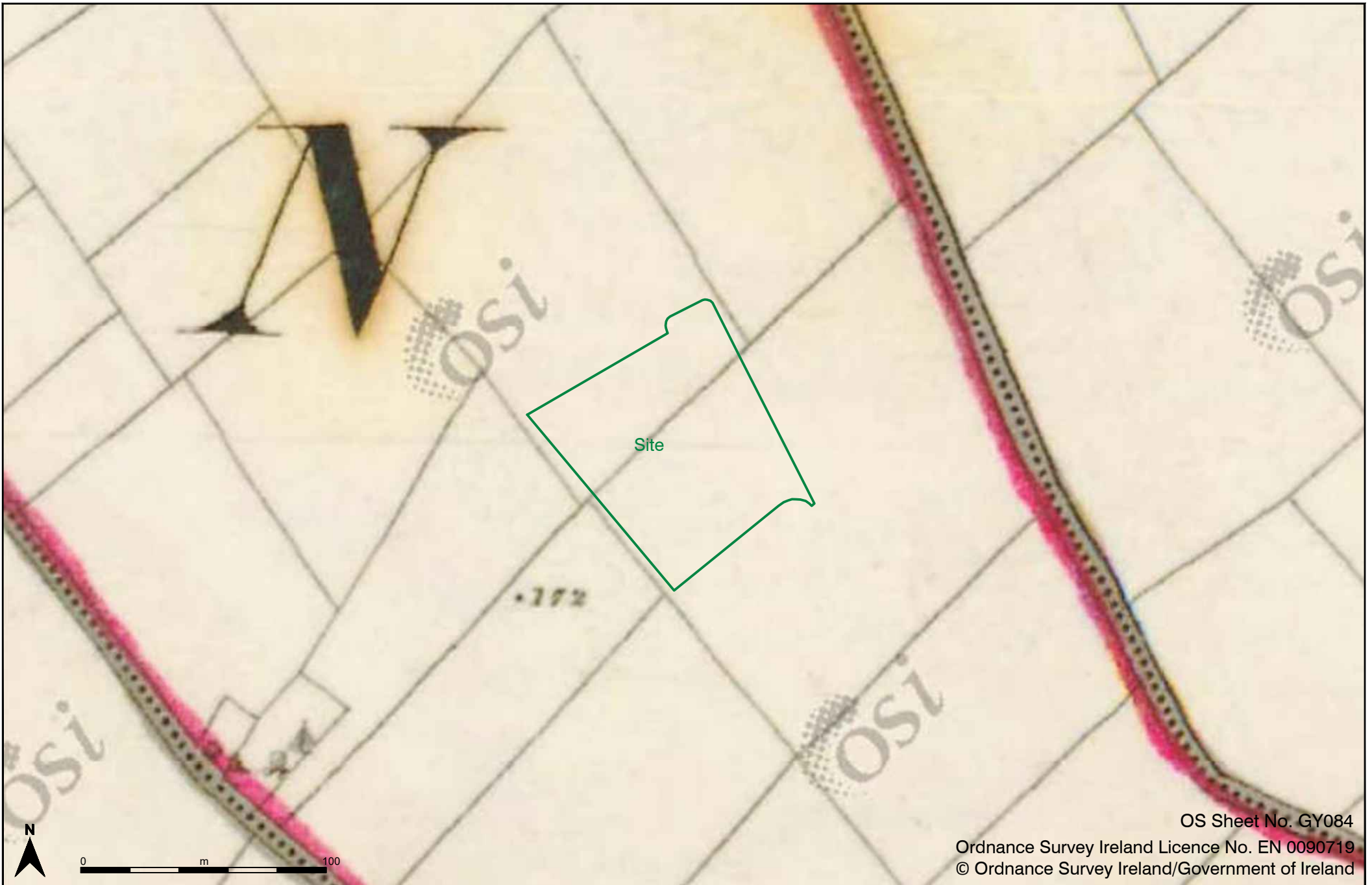
Date January 2025

Drawing No. 24192_C0004

Figure 4 Extract from the Grand Jury map of County Galway, by William Larkin (1819), showing approximate location of site

Scale Not to scale





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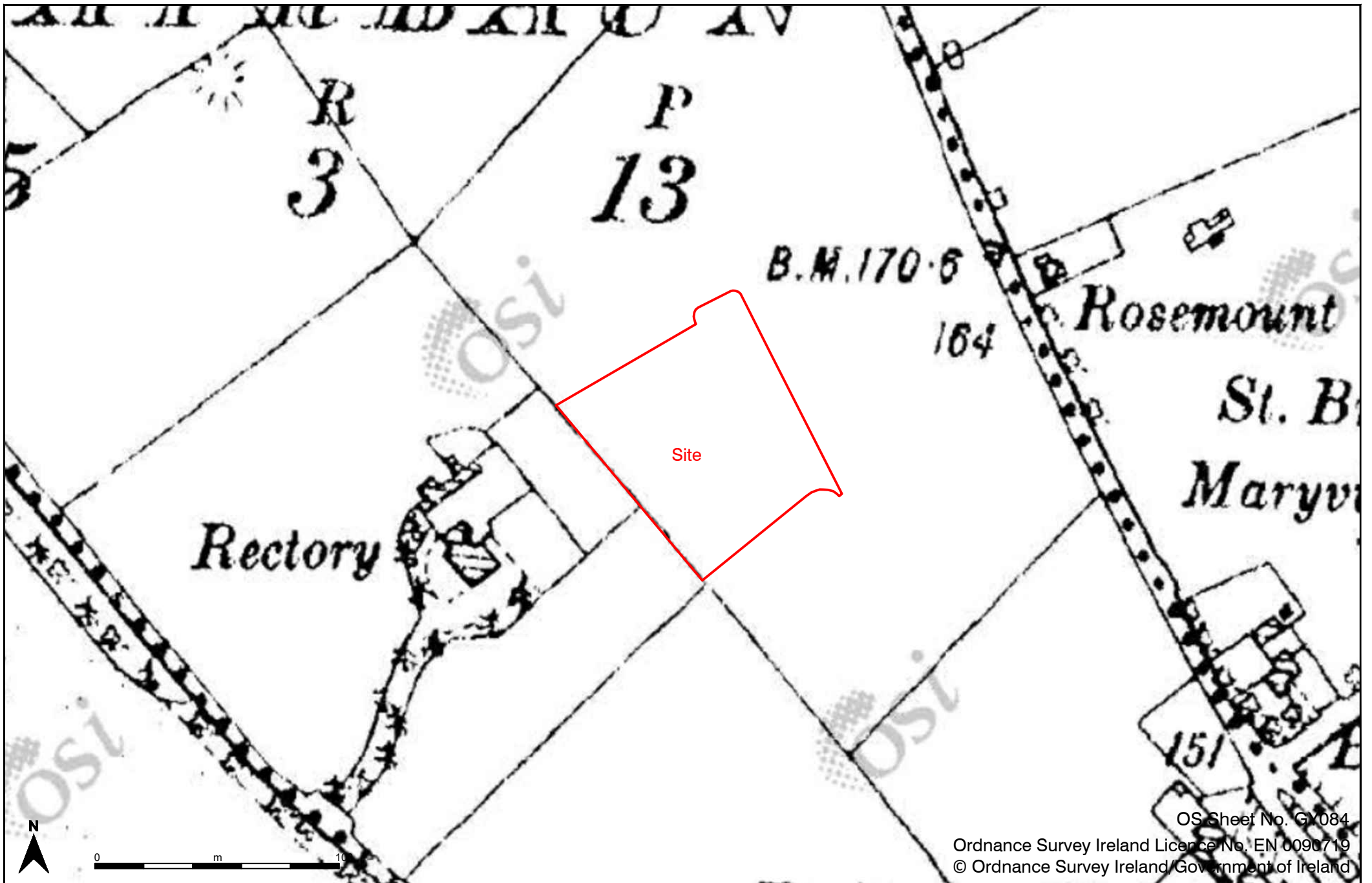
Date January 2025

Drawing No. 24192_C0005

Figure 5 Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (surveyed 1837 - published 1840), showing location of site

Scale 1:2,000 @ A4






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Project Cullairbaun, Athenry, Co Galway	Date January 2025	Drawing No. 24192_C0006	
Figure 6 Extract from Cassini edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (1925-34), showing location of site		Scale 1:2,000 @ A4	



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Drawing No. 24192_C0007

Figure 7 Aerial view of site

Scale 1:1,000 @ A4





Plate 1: Proposed development site, looking south from the current Cullairbaun housing estate



Plate 2: Proposed development site, looking northwest from the current Cullairbaun housing estate



Plate 3: Proposed development site, looking north from the current Cullairbaun housing estate



Plate 4: Proposed development site, looking east from the current Cullairbaun housing estate