IAC Archaeology

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
AT
SUMMERHILL ROAD,
DUNBOYNE,
COUNTY MEATH

ON BEHALF OF: SOLKERRY VENTURES LIMITED

ITM: 700776, 742861

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ABSTRACT

This assessment has been prepared on behalf of Solkerry Ventures Limited, to study the impact, if any, on the archaeological and historical resource of the proposed residential development at Summerhill Road in the townland of Dunboyne, Co. Meath (ITM 700776, 742861). The assessment was carried out by Johnnie Gallacher of IAC Archaeology and was also informed by a geophysical survey carried out by Ger Dowling.

There are five recorded monuments within the 500m study area, none of which are located within the proposed development area. The nearest of these comprises large enclosure ME050-027, which is located c. 124m to the northeast. No previous archaeological fieldwork has been carried out within the area of proposed development, although investigations in the wider area have identified remains from the Bronze Age and medieval periods.

Analysis of the baseline data and a field inspection failed to identify any previously unrecorded areas of archaeological potential within the development area. The geophysical survey identify several small possible pits/deposits, although an archaeological origin for these was defined as tentative.

This assessment has shown that there are no recorded archaeological sites located within the proposed development area. As noted above, the geophysical survey indicated some small potential archaeological anomalies, although this interpretation is tentative. Ground works associated with the development have the potential to result in negative impact on any archaeological remains that may survive beneath the current ground level, prior to the application of mitigation measures.

It is recommended that prior to the commencement of construction, that a programme of archaeological test trenching will be carried out across the proposed development area. This will target both the archaeological anomalies identified during the course of the geophysical survey as well as the undisturbed greenfield areas. The works will be carried out under licence to the National Monuments Service of the DoHLGH. Dependent on the results of the assessment, further mitigation may be required, such as preservation by record or in-situ and archaeological monitoring. Any further mitigation will require approval from the National Monuments Service of the DoHLGH.

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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 Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath (Figure 1; ITM 700776, 742861). 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. It was undertaken by Johnnie Gallacher of IAC Archaeology (IAC), on behalf of Solkerry Ventures Limited and includes the results of a geophysical survey carried out by Ger Dowling (Licence Ref.: 25R0521).

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 Meath, the topographical files within the National Museum and all available cartographic and documentary sources for the area. A field inspection and geophysical survey have also been carried out with the aim to identify any previously unrecorded features of archaeological or historical interest.

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will consist of a Large-Scale Residential Development comprising 248 no. residential units and 1 no. childcare facility with associated car parking, bicycle parking, public open spaces, communal open spaces and all ancillary works (Figure 2).

The development shall comprise:

a) Construction of 248 no. residential units as follows:
   - 170 no. 2 storey houses in a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached unit types consisting of 27 no. 2-bedroom units, 124 no. 3-bedroom units and 19 no. 4-bedroom units. Each house will have an associated rear private garden.
   - 26 no. apartment units in a single 4 storey block consisting of 13 no. 1-bedroom units and 13 no. 2-bedroom apartments. All apartment units will be provided with private open space areas in the form of balconies.
   - 52 no. duplex units in 4 no. 3 storey blocks (A-D) consisting of 26 no. 2-bedroom units and 26 no. 3-bedroom units. All duplex units will be provided with private open space areas in the form of balconies/terraces.
   - Communal open space associated with the proposed apartment / duplex units will be provided in the form of 5 no. landscaped areas located in the vicinity of the units (total approx. 1,340.4 sqm).

b) 1 no. childcare facility at ground floor of apartment Block A with dedicated external open space (GFA approx. 285.7 sqm).

c) Total provision of 388 no. car parking spaces including 6 no. accessible spaces and 24 no. EV charging spaces (357 no. resident car parking spaces, 18 no. residential visitor car parking spaces and 13 no. car parking spaces dedicated for the creche facility) and a total of 429 no. bicycle parking spaces (319 no. secure resident spaces and 88 no. visitor spaces for the apartment / duplex / mid-terrace units; and 14 no. childcare facility staff spaces and 8 no. childcare facility visitor spaces).

d) Landscaped public open space areas including children's play areas totalling approx. 10,775 sqm;
e) A new vehicular and pedestrian access point is proposed via a simple priority junction on Summerhill Road (L2228).
f) All associated site and infrastructural works including a foul pump station with 24hr storage and associated rising main (580m) discharging to an existing foul line at the Navan Road and Dunboyne Business Park Road junction; diversion of an existing 600 mm diameter storm pipe and proposed storm drain outfall to the R157 / Summerhill Road roundabout; internal roads, road markings, homezones, footpaths and cycle infrastructure; provision of 3 no. ESB substations; bin stores and associated bin staging areas; public lighting; all hard and soft landscaping works; natural and formal play equipment; boundary treatment works including retaining walls; green roof; PV panels and all associated site clearance, excavation, landscape and development works.

2 METHODOLOGY

A study area, defined as 500m from the boundary of the proposed development area, was assessed to inform this report. Research was undertaken in three 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. A geophysical survey comprised the third phase of investigation to inform this report.

2.1 PAPER SURVEY

- Record of Monuments and Places for County Meath;
- Sites and Monuments Record for County Meath;
- 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;
- Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027;
- Aerial photographs: and
- Excavations Bulletin (1970–2026).

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 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 Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027 was 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 1970–2026.

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.

2.3 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

Geophysical survey is used to create 'maps' of subsurface archaeological features. Features are the non-portable part of the archaeological record, whether standing structures or traces of human activities left in the soil. Geophysical instruments can detect buried features when their electrical or magnetic properties contrast measurably with their surroundings. In some cases, individual artefacts, especially metal, may be detected as well. Readings, which are taken in a systematic pattern, become a dataset that can be rendered as image maps. Survey results can be used to guide excavation and to give archaeologists insight into the pattern of non-excavated parts of the site. Unlike other archaeological methods, the geophysical survey is not invasive or destructive.

A geophysical survey was undertaken to inform this assessment in May 2026 within the proposed development area in the townland of Dunboyne (Dowling 2026, Licence No. 26R0521; Figure 5). A summary of the geophysical report is presented in Section 3.8 and the full text included in Appendix 6.

3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed development area is located in the townland of Dunboyne, within the parish of Dunboyne and barony of Dunboyne. The main portion of the site comprises one arable field of pasture bordered by hedgerows (Figure 1). The site is located in the northwestern limits of the town of Dunboyne. It is bound by the west by the Dunboyne Bypass (R157). The surrounding landscape is characterised by a combination of arable farmland, existing residential developments, as well as some industrial development. Five recorded monuments are located within 500m of the proposed development area. The nearest of these comprises large enclosure ME050-027, which is located c. 124m to the northeast.

3.1.1 Prehistoric Period

Mesolithic Period (c. 8000–4000 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.

Whilst there is no evidence for Mesolithic activity recorded in the study area of the proposed development area there are some indications in the wider landscape. During the construction of the M3 a late Mesolithic site was uncovered in a raised bog, formerly a lake land area, at Clowanstown 1, north of Dunshaughlin, c. 11km northwest of the proposed development area (Bennett 2006:1533, Licence No. E003064). Evidence for food processing and consumption was identified through the recovery of acorn and hazelnut shells as well as animal remains. Furthermore, four conical fish baskets recorded on the former lakebed.

Neolithic Period (c. 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.

Meath has experienced a long sequence of prehistoric settlement, which appears to have been heavily focused close to the Boyne River. The early prehistory of the region is dominated by several important cores including the Boyne Valley, Tara, Fourknocks and, further to the west, Loughcrew. The most renowned of these centres of the large Neolithic

complexes at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. These are protected as part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of *Brú na Bóinne*. The proposed development area is located in the southernmost section of the county where Neolithic tombs are less common. There are no recorded Neolithic sites located within 500m of the proposed development area.

Bronze Age (c. 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 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.

Structure ME050-062001 and kiln ME050-062002, located c. 354 and c. 350m north of the proposed development area, are believed to date to the Bronze Age. Regarding the structures, 31 stake and post-holes were recorded, 23 of which created a long narrow structure measuring c. 13m x c. 3.5m in plan. A radiocarbon date of 2117-1779 cal. BC was obtained from one of the post-holes. Another post-hole two sherds of mid to late Bronze Age pottery together with cremated bone, from which a radiocarbon date of 971-804 cal. BC was obtained. A sample of charcoal from another post-hole yielded a date of 1115-853 cal. BC. Additionally, a sample of hazel charcoal from a basal fill of the kiln yielded a C14 determination of 2117-1779 cal. BC. A large number of Bronze Age sites are located within the landscape, further to the east, which may suggest that the River Tolka was a focus for habitation and ritual activity during this period.

Iron Age (c. 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 Late Iron Age and Roman Ireland (Cahill Wilson 2014). 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, although there are no known Iron Age sites recorded in the study area.

3.1.2 Early Medieval Period (AD 500–1100)

The early medieval period is depicted in the surviving sources as entirely rural characterised by the basic territorial unit known as *túath*. Byrne (1973) estimates that there were probably at least 150 kings in Ireland at any given time during this period, each ruling over his own túath. During this period, enclosures known as ringforts were common throughout the country. These enclosed farmsteads were intimately connected to the division of land and the status of the occupant. A *bóaire*, for example, was a free farmer possessed of a plough team of oxen with household servants, workmen and dependants of various statuses, from free to unfree (MacCotter 2008). It is likely that many of the single univallate ringforts relate to residences of *bóaire*. Larger, more prominently placed ringforts, with more than one enclosing wall or bank are likely to have been the residences of local kings (Stout 1997).

Extant dating evidence suggests they were primarily built between the 7th and 9th centuries AD (ibid, 22–31).

At this time, modern County Meath was part of *Míde* and *Brega*, which together formed one of the five provinces of early medieval Ireland. It contained a large power centre that formed a political, ceremonial, cultural and social centre of both the territory and Ireland, which was located at Tara. The proposed development was located within the territory that was controlled by the *Ciannachta*. They were the most prominent of the subject peoples of *Brega* during the early medieval period. Although typically associated with the Baronies of Ferrad, County Louth and Duleek, County Meath there is every indication that their influence extended much further south, well into County Dublin.

There are no recorded ringfort sites located within the study area of the proposed development area. A church site is recorded c. 315m to the north (ME050-029) and further research regarding this site has concluded that it may occupy an early medieval ecclesiastical foundation, defined by a possible outer enclosure.

3.1.3 Medieval Period (AD 1100–1600)

Norman involvement in Ireland began in 1169, when Richard de Clare and his followers landed in Wexford to support Diarmait MacMurchadha, deposed King of Leinster, in his bid to regain the Kingdom of Leinster. Two years later de Clare (Strongbow) inherited this kingdom through marriage to Diarmait's daughter Aoife. By the end of the 12th century, the Normans had succeeded in overthrowing the previous ruling elites in much of the country. Large land grants were given by the King to his followers meaning that great swathes of land were parcelled out among the Norman elites in a process known as sub-infeudation. The territories of Dunboyne (and Mullingar, County Westmeath), were granted by Hugh de Lacy to the Petit family in 1172. In 1227, the parish of Dunboyne of endowed to the newly constructed Augustinian priory at Mullingar by Ralph Petit, then Bishop of Meath. It remained associated with the priory until its suppression in 1538. The Petits continued to hold the manor of Dunboyne until it passed to Sinolda, William le Petit's daughter and her husband Thomas Butler. After this, it was part of the extensive Butler lordship.

The remains of a possible Anglo-Norman motte and bailey castle (ME050-021007) were investigated within Dunboyne in 2004 (Bennett 2004:1230, Licence No. 04E1040), where a ditch was identified during excavations. The exposed section possessed a length of c. 72m, was 8m wide and 4.5m deep and was located to the immediate north of the Georgian Dunboyne Castle. The ditch appears to have gone out of use during the 13th century. Edmond Butler was permitted to build a castle in Dunboyne in 1475-6, which may have replaced this earlier castle. A later tower house (ME050-021005) is recorded at this location c. 965m southeast of the proposed development, which may be part of the castle that Butler constructed in the 15th century.

A recorded medieval church is also located within the town to the northwest of the castle location. This church (ME050-021001) was listed as the second most wealthy in the deanery after Ratoath at 40 marks, in the ecclesiastical taxation (1302-06) of Pope Nicholas IV (Cal. doc. Ire., 5, 254). The manor of Dunboyne developed into a town and was a small borough with a weekly market and a yearly fair in the 13th century. The zone of archaeological

potential that surrounds the town (ME050-021) is located c. 595m southeast of the proposed development area.

Whilst medieval Dunboyne was not incorporated as a town, it was a significant settlement that is further attested to by the number of recorded medieval sites located within its environs. The closest medieval site to the proposed development area comprises a large enclosure (ME050-027), the centre of which is located c. 124m northeast of the site. A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out at this site and recorded a ceramic assemblage that contained medieval pottery. The enclosure was interpreted as being 13th or 14th century in date.

Church site ME050-029, located c. 315m north of the proposed development area is also recorded as being in use during the medieval period. The grounds of this church and the other ecclesiastical properties of Dunboyne parish were attached to the Augustinian priory of the Blessed Virgin at Mullingar (WM019-089009).

Field system ME050-030, located c. 187m northeast of the proposed development area, is believed to date to the medieval period. Field systems are complex agricultural landscapes characterised by large open fields divided into smaller units by boundary features such as banks, ditches, and walls.

3.1.4 Post-Medieval Period (AD 1600–1800)

The ending of the Williamite Wars saw the beginning of a comparative politically calm era, which allowed the country's landowners the security to experiment with the latest styles of architecture without the need to refer to defensive matters. Initially, constraints on available resources resulted in mansions of a relatively modest scale and relatively plain appearance. However, as the Irish aristocracy's sense of security grew over the following decades, their greater access to wealth helped foster a shift towards more ostentatious buildings. There are no designed landscapes located within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development area. The closest is the large demesne that was laid out in associated with the Georgian Dunboyne Castle, c. 300m to the southeast.

During the post-medieval period, Dunboyne village was a small settlement with Lewis noting in 1837 that it had a population of 470 people and 82 houses, and that the town was burnt down during the 1798 rebellion.

3.2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

A review of the Excavations Bulletin (1970–2026) has revealed no previous archaeological fieldwork has been carried out within the proposed development area. A summary of investigations in the surrounding area is given below.

The Dunboyne Bypass (R157) borders the proposed development area to the northwest and this was subject to archaeological testing in 2004 (O'Hara 2004, Licences 04E0487). No archaeological sites were identified adjacent to the development area, although a field system (ME050-030) was identified c. 105m to the northeast. These were subject to excavation, where a number of drain features were recorded, which contained post medieval and modern ceramics (Elliot 2008, Ministerial Direction E003024). Its origins are however

believed to date to the medieval period. This excavation additionally uncovered kiln ME050-062002 and structure ME050-062001, both of which were shown by radiocarbon dating to date to the Bronze Age.

In 2003 archaeological monitoring was carried out on a site containing an enclosure (ME050-027) c. 124m to the northeast of the proposed development area. Works identified a V-shaped fosse associated with the enclosure (Wth 2.75m; D 1.3m), which was present in two sample trenches (Licence Ref.: 03E1112). Additional works were carried out at the site under the same licence and this revealed a post medieval re-cut within the fosse. The ceramic assemblage contained medieval pottery and the enclosure was interpreted as being 13th or 14th century in date.

3.3 CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Downs Survey Barony Map of the Parish of Dunboyne, 1655-56

This map shows a large amount of detail regarding the layout of fields and property within Dunboyne. The village of Dunboyne is annotated and shown with a castle or church. The main road to the north and west of the village are also indicated. The proposed development area is shown within a number of small plots but no structures or features are marked within this area. The site of the church (ME050-029) is possibly indicated within the mapping with the inclusion of a tower at this location.

Larkin's Map of County Meath, 1812

The map shows Dunboyne to the southeast and the main roads to the south and east of the proposed development area. The site itself is shown as an open landscape with no features marked.

First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1837, scale 1:10,560 (Figure 3)

This is the first accurate historic mapping coverage of the area containing the proposed development. It shows the main portion of the development area within three open fields. It is bound by Summerhill Road to the south. Three vernacular structures are depicted a short distance south of the proposed southern linear area. 'Newtown Bridge' is labelled near that area, with the bridge shown crossing a small stream. The village of Dunboyne is shown further to the southeast

Ordnance Survey Map, 1911, scale 1:2,500 (Figure 4)

There are no major changes to note within the cartography of this map that relate to the proposed development area.

3.4 COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Meath County Development Plan (2021–2027) 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 policies and objectives in relation to archaeological heritage (Appendix 3).

There are no recorded monuments located within the proposed development area, with the nearest consisting of large enclosure ME050-027, which is located c. 124m to the northeast (Table 1; Figure 1; Appendix 1), none of which are National Monuments or subject to any preservation orders.

TABLE 1: Recorded archaeological sites in the study area

RMP NO.	LOCATION	CLASSIFICATION	DISTANCE FROM DEVELOPMENT
ME050-027	Dunboyne	Enclosure	c. 124m northeast
ME050-030	Dunboyne	Field system	c. 187m north
ME050-029	Dunboyne	Church	c. 315m north
ME050-062002	Dunboyne	Kiln	c. 350m north
ME050-062001	Dunboyne	Structure	c. 354m north

3.5 TOPOGRAPHICAL FILES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

Information on artefact finds from the study area in County Meath 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. Six stray finds have been recorded from the townland of Dunboyne, and two have been recorded from Castlefarm which lies to the south. These are detailed in Appendix 2.

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 (2008–2026), Bing Maps, and Apple Maps revealed that the main portion of the site has remained in use for arable farming over this period. The 2013, 2018 and 2022 coverage shows a number of linear crops marks within the site, which relate to historic field boundaries shown on the OS maps. The coverage shows the construction of the road to the immediate northwest of the development area in 2006, along with the expansion of housing developments and other development to the immediate southeast. No previously unrecorded archaeological sites were identified within or adjacent to the proposed development area.

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 comprises a large flat, irregular field of tillage (long axis northeast/southwest) located immediately east of the Dunboyne Bypass. This field is bounded by a concrete block wall on the east and tree-lined hedgerows and wire fences on the north, west and south. The northern part of the site is traversed from roughly east to west by electricity cables supported on a tall metal pylon and a timber post (Plate 1). A residential estate flanks the site on the east, with agricultural land, mainly tillage, in other directions. No previously unrecorded sites of archaeological potential were noted during the field inspection.



Plate 1: Proposed development area, facing northeast

3.8 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

A geophysical survey was undertaken to inform this assessment in May 2026 (Dowling 2026, Licence No. 26R0521; Figure 5, Appendix 6). The investigation, comprising high-resolution magnetometer (fluxgate gradiometer) survey, was implemented over an area of approximately 7.7 hectares. The survey did not reveal any anomalies of clear archaeological significance. Several possible pits/deposits were mapped, although an archaeological origin for these is tentative. Evidence for former land division, as shown within the aerial photographic coverage, was also recorded.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This assessment has been prepared on behalf of Solkerry Ventures Limited, to study the impact, if any, on the archaeological and historical resource of the proposed residential development at Summerhill Road in the townland of Dunboyne, Co. Meath (ITM 700776, 742861). The assessment was carried out by Johnnie Gallacher of IAC Archaeology and further informed by a programme of geophysical survey. The main portion of the site comprises one arable field of pasture bordered by hedgerows. The site is located in the northwestern limits of the town of Dunboyne. It is bound by the west by the Dunboyne Bypass (R157).

There are five recorded monuments within the 500m study area, none of which are located within the proposed development area. The nearest of these comprises large enclosure ME050-027, which is located c. 124m to the northeast. No previous archaeological fieldwork has been carried out within the area of proposed development, although investigations in the wider area have identified remains from the Bronze Age and medieval periods.

A review of the aerial photographic coverage and historic mapping did not identify any previously unrecorded sites of archaeological potential. The field inspection confirmed these baseline results, with the site comprising a previously undeveloped open field. No previously unrecorded sites or areas of archaeological potential were noted.

A geophysical survey was undertaken by Ger Dowling under licence 26R0521. Several small possible pits/deposits were mapped, although an archaeological origin for these was defined as tentative. Evidence for former land division was also recorded.

Despite extensive archaeological investigations that have been carried out within the environs of Dunboyne, as a result of recent residential developments, the area under assessment is defined as possessing low archaeological assessment, based on the results of this assessment.

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

- This assessment has shown that there are no recorded archaeological sites located within the proposed development area. The geophysical survey indicated some small potential archaeological anomalies, although this interpretation is tentative. Ground works associated with the development have the potential to result in negative impact on any archaeological remains that may survive beneath the current ground level, prior to the application of mitigation measures.

5.2 MITIGATION

- It is recommended that prior to the commencement of construction, that a programme of archaeological test trenching will be carried out across the proposed development area. This will target both the archaeological anomalies identified during the course of the geophysical survey as well as the undisturbed greenfield areas. The works will be carried out under licence to the National Monuments Service of the DoHLGH. Dependent on the results of the assessment, further mitigation may be required, such as preservation by record or in-situ and archaeological monitoring. Any further mitigation will require approval from the National Monuments Service of the DoHLGH.

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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William Larkin's Map of County Meath, 1812

Ordnance Survey maps of County Meath, 1837 and 1911

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

www.excavations.ie – Summary of archaeological excavation from 1970–2026.

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 – GeoHive is the State's Geospatial Data Hub, enabling search, view and access to the key authoritative geospatial information via interactive maps, data catalogues and geospatial applications (including National Townland and Historical Map Viewer and Aerial imagery 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2013).

www.googleearth.com – Satellite imagery (2005–2026).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SMR/RMP SITES WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

SMR NO.	ME050-027
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
I.T.M.	701098 , 743057
CLASSIFICATION	Enclosure – large enclosure
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 124m northeast
DESCRIPTION	Situated on a fairly level landscape. A large D-shaped enclosure (dims c. 120m NNE-SSW; c. 100m WNW-ESE) with the straight side at S where it is aligned with a mapped field bank to its E was recorded by L. Swan in oblique aerial photographs c. 1970 (http://lswanaerial.locloudhosting.net/items/show/40165.). It appears to be defined by the remains of a wide earthen bank and an external fosse. A partial magnetic gradiometer and earth resistance survey (00R0014) by I. Elliott (2000) confirmed the presence of the ditch and Elliott's research highlighted the fact that it is represented as a boundary on the Down Survey (1656-8) parish map of Dunboyne. Archaeological monitoring (03E1112) by D. J. O'Connor identified the V-shaped fosse (Wth 2.75m; D 1.3m) in two sample trenches (excavations.ie 2003:1389), but the monument had no visible profile. Further excavation was continued by F. O'Carroll (excavations.ie 2003:1390) under the same licence. This uncovered evidence of at least one re-cut of the fosse in the post-medieval period, along with modern field boundaries and drains, some of the latter within the original fill of the ditch. The ceramic finds where usually in mixed contexts and dated from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries, but the excavator concluded that the enclosure was established in the thirteenth to fourteenth century. The original V-shaped ditch had an inner bank, although the bank does not survive, and the ditch held standing water. After silting over centuries, it was re-cut as slightly larger in the post-medieval period when smaller drains from the external area fed into the fosse. Although the fosse and its bank were substantial, no evidence of any settlement or habitation was uncovered, and its purpose is likely to have been agricultural.
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	ME050-030
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
I.T.M.	700971 , 743204
CLASSIFICATION	Field system

DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 187m north
DESCRIPTION	Situated on a fairly level landscape. Aerial photographs by L. Swan (LS_AS_67BWN_00132) from the early 1970s record elements of a rectangular field system covering an extensive area (dims c. 220m NW-SE; c. 220m NE-SW) between the large enclosure (ME050-027----) to the SE and the possible church site (ME050-029----) to the NW, but not connected directly with either and different in character to both. The fields are large and rectangular (dims c. 60-120m x c. 30-50m), and appear to be defined by single ditches that correspond closely to features represented on the Down Survey (1656-8) barony and parish maps. They also run generally parallel with the current boundaries but are probably medieval in date. The area was subject to a partial magnetic gradiometer and earth resistance survey (00R0014) by I. Elliot (2000) where the features recorded in the aerial photographs are confirmed. Elliott's results suggest that the enclosing elements consisted primarily of hedges. The NE-SW by-pass road (R157) for Dunboyne cut through the area, and centre-line testing (04E0487) by R. O'Hara (2004, 10-11) noted four of these ditches of uniform character (Wth c. 1.2m; D 0.5m) with homogenous fills from which nothing was recovered except some snail shells (excavations.ie 2004:1229). Further excavation (E003024) by R. Elliott (excavations.ie 2004:1554) of Dunboyne 4 recorded the drain features in detail and recovered post-medieval and modern ceramics from them. The long structure (ME050-062001-) and its associated possible kiln (ME050-062002-) were also identified and excavated but they are unrelated to the fields (Elliott 2008).
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	ME050-029
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
I.T.M.	700914 , 743387
CLASSIFICATION	Church
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 315m north
DESCRIPTION	Situated on a fairly level landscape at the NW edge of Dunboyne townland in an area that was known as Kilbraynan. The barony of Dunboyne was granted by Hugh de Lacy to Willaim le Petit, whose caput or principal manor was at Mullingar (WM019-089001-), Co. Westmeath. In 1227 Ralph Petit, bishop of Meath, founded the Augustinian priory of the Blessed Virgin at Mullingar (WM019-089009-) and endowed it with the land of Kilbrena (Kilbraynan) and the ecclesiastical properties of Dunboyne parish, one of only two parishes in the barony, the other being Kilbride. At the dissolution of the monasteries the Augustinians of Mullingar still held the rectory of Dunboyne together with land at Kylbraynan that was let to a Thomas Lutterell and other property in the parish (White 1943, 288-9). According to the local folklore the walls of the monastery were standing until c. 1800 (IFC: Schools' Collection, vol. 0688, 068). (Cogan 1862, 188-9).

	An oblique aerial photograph by L. Swan from the early 1970s shows a complex of earthwork banks, but at the centre is a rectangular enclosure (dims c. 40m N-S; c. 35m E-W) defined by what are probably low earthen banks. This could be overlying a circular enclosure (diam. c. 50m) defined by slighter features. All these are within a larger subcircular enclosure (dims c. 100m N-S; c. 90m E-W), and elements of a field system overlie all the features. The visible profiles of these features were removed in 1972 as further photographs by L. Swan demonstrate. Human remains and a bronze-coated iron hand-bell from Dunboyne were acquired by the National Museum of Ireland at this time, possibly from this location. The area was subject to partial magnetic gradiometer and earth resistance surveys (00R0014) by I. Elliot (2000) where the features recorded in the aerial photograph were confirmed. This could be the site of an early church with an ecclesiastical enclosure, although no known saint is associated with it.
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	ME050-062002
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
I.T.M.	701098 , 743314
CLASSIFICATION	Kiln
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 350m north
DESCRIPTION	Situated on a slight rise in a generally level landscape. Archaeological testing (04E0487) by R. O'Hara on the link-road (R157) for Dunboyne set aside this area for resolution as Dunboyne 4 (excavations. ie 2004:1229). Archaeological excavation (E003024) by R. Elliott (excavations.ie 2004:1554) recorded elements of the field system (ME050-030----) as well as this structure that is interpreted as a kiln and the prehistoric structure (ME050-062001-). This consists of a large sub-oval pit (max. dims 3.35m N-S; 1.3m E-W; D 0.43m) with a clay lining. It has two bowls with a connecting flue but many of the fills contained burnt stone. Some uncharred grain was recovered, but a sample of hazel charcoal from a basal fill yielded a C14 determination of 2117-1779 cal. BC. This sample must have been contaminated somehow. A subrectangular cut (dims 1.9m x 1.35m; D 0.17m) for a bellows was connected to the S bowl by a narrow channel, but much of the bellows pit was damaged by a large modern quarry to its S. (Elliott 2008, 3-4)
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	ME050-062001
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
I.T.M.	701066 , 743342
CLASSIFICATION	Structure
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 354m north
DESCRIPTION	Situated on a slight rise in a generally level landscape. Archaeological testing

	(04E0487) by R. O'Hara on the link-road (R157) for Dunboyne set aside this area for resolution as Dunboyne 4 (excavations. ie 2004:1229). Archaeological excavation (E003024) by R. Elliott (excavations.ie 2004:1554) recorded elements of the field system (ME050-030----) as well as this prehistoric structure and the possible kiln (ME050-062002-). Nineteenth century quarrying, the importation of soils and subsequent ploughing severely truncated most of the archaeological features. Thirty one stake and post-holes were recorded in one area, and twenty three of these create a long narrow structure (dims 13m plus ENE-WSW; 3.5m NNW-SSE) extending outside the road-take to the WSW. A strictly regular pattern is not discernible but two post-holes just outside the S line towards the E end have ramps from the S, and a C14 date of 2117-1779 cal. BC was returned from one of these. A large post-hole at the E edge also has a ramp at the E edge. This produced two sherds of Middle-Late Bronze Age pottery together with cremated bone, from which a C14 date of 971-804 cal. BC was returned. A sample of charcoal from another post-hole yielded a date of 1115-853 cal. BC. The nature of this structure is uncertain, but it has neither slot-trenches nor a hearth, and the fairly even distribution of the post-holes suggests that it could be a post-alignment, except that its scale is reduced.
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

APPENDIX 2 TOPOGRAPHICAL FILES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

MUSEUM NO	1988:122
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	Polished stone axehead
FIND PLACE	Gavishes Pond
DESCRIPTION	Polished stone axehead of porcellanite. Oblique, chipped butt and flattish oval cross-section; asymmetric cutting edge. Straight narrow sides.
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

MUSEUM NO	1995:24
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	Line impressed tile fragment
FIND PLACE	Church of Ireland cemetery
DESCRIPTION	Fragment of line impressed tile
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

MUSEUM NO	1995:187
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	Stone mortar
FIND PLACE	Found in an outhouse in Dunboyne village. OS6sheetNo 50, 11.8 cm from east, Ossouth 19.6cm
DESCRIPTION	Small limestone mortar, roughly round in outline, with flat base. Outer surface roughly pocked. Four small lugs on rim, one of which is hollowed for pouring.
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

MUSEUM NO	1972:13
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	Glazed red earthen ware
FIND PLACE	Unknown
DESCRIPTION	Possible North Devon gravel-tempered pipkin handle.
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

MUSEUM NO	1972:10
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	Bronze-coated iron bell
FIND PLACE	ME050:029. Possibly a monastic site. Found c. 45cm in surface soil of field.
DESCRIPTION	Iron brazed early medieval hand-bell. Most of the suspension loop is lost and some irregular holes are in evidence in side A and in both faces, although filled in the course of conservation. There are three rivets in each side. Copper alloy survives on inner and outer surfaces and as a cordon in side the lip. There is a probable impression of woven textile above the lip on face B. (Bourke 2020, 334)
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

MUSEUM NO	2009:30
TOWNLAND	Dunboyne
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	Copper alloy stick pin
FIND PLACE	ITM 701885, 742204
DESCRIPTION	Copper alloy stick pin with biconical head. Three concentric lines around the head of the pin. Otherwise without decoration and heavily painted.
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

MUSEUM NO	1967:105
TOWNLAND	Castlefarm
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	Flint adzehead
FIND PLACE	Found in field after ploughing. Os6sheetNo 11, Oswest 19 cm, 17.5cm from north
DESCRIPTION	Miniature.
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

MUSEUM NO	1998:101
TOWNLAND	Castlefarm
PARISH	Dunboyne
BARONY	Dunboyne
FIND	North Devon gravel-tempered body sherd
FIND PLACE	Boylan's tree ring. OS6sheetNo 50, Oswest 90.5cm, Ossouth 13.4cm
DESCRIPTION	Internal brown glaze.
REFERENCE	NMI Topographical Files

APPENDIX 3 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.

MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2021–2027)

The Meath County Development Plan contains several policies and objectives that relate directly to archaeological heritage. It is the policy of the Council:

HER POL 1

To protect sites, monuments, places, areas or objects of the following categories:

- Sites and monuments included in the Sites and Monuments Record as maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;
- Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under the National Monuments Acts;
- Historic monuments and archaeological areas included in the Register of Historic Monuments as established under the National Monuments Acts;

- National monuments subject to Preservation Orders under the National Monuments Acts and national monuments which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a local authority;
- Archaeological objects within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts; and Wrecks protected under the National Monuments Acts or otherwise included in the Shipwreck Inventory maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

HER POL 2
To protect all sites and features of archaeological interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monument and Places, in situ (or at a minimum preservation by record) having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and The Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999).

HER POL 3
To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual impact assessment may be required.

HER POL 4
To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length; or developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery as identified by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

HER POL 5
To seek guidance from the National Museum of Ireland where an unrecorded archaeological object is discovered, or the National Monuments Service in the case of an unrecorded archaeological site.

It is the objective of the Council:

HER OBJ 1
To implement in partnership with the County Meath Heritage Forum, relevant stakeholders and the community the County Meath Heritage Plan and any revisions thereof.

HER OBJ 2
To ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential is sited and designed in a sensitive manner with a view to minimal detraction from the monument or its setting.

HER OBJ 3
To protect important archaeological landscapes from inappropriate development.

HER OBJ 4
To encourage the management and maintenance of the County's archaeological heritage, including historic burial grounds 2, in accordance with best conservation practice that considers the impact of climate change.

HER OBJ 5
To promote awareness of, and encourage the provision of access to, the archaeological resources of the county.

HER OBJ 6
To work in partnership with key stakeholders to promote County Meath as a centre for cultural heritage education and learning through activities such as community excavation and field/summer schools.

APPENDIX 4 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 5 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, inter-tidal 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 2023a).

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, inter-tidal 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 2023b).

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 (CIfA 2023c).

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.

APPENDIX 6 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

Geophysical Survey Report
Dunboyne townland, Dunboyne, Co. Meath

License No.: 25R0521
RMP/SMR: N/A

ITM: 700800, 742900



Ger Dowling, PhD MIAI
May 2026

Summary

This report details the results of an archaeo-geophysical survey (Licence No.: 25R0521) of lands at Dunboyne townland, Dunboyne, Co. Meath. The investigation, comprising high-resolution magnetometer (fluxgate gradiometer) survey, was implemented over an area of approximately 7.7 hectares. There are no recorded monuments or sites within the area targeted for survey. The work was conducted as part of a pre-planning archaeological assessment.

The site had not previously been subject to geophysical survey and the present investigation sought to identify and map any subsurface archaeology that may be present.

The survey did not reveal any anomalies of clear archaeological significance. Several possible pits/deposits were mapped, though an archaeological origin for these is tentative. Evidence for former land division was also recorded.

Survey details

Site Name: Dunboyne
Townland: Dunboyne
County: Meath

Parish: Dunboyne
Barony: Dunboyne

RMP/SMR No.: N/A
ITM (project centroid): 700800, 742900

Land use: Tillage
Geology: Dark limestone & shale (`calp') (Lucan Formation)
Soils: Fine loamy drift with limestones (Elton Series)

Detection License No.: 25R0521 (reactivated licence)
Planning Reference No.: N/A

Survey Type & Instrumentation: Magnetometer – Seven-channel fluxgate gradiometer system
Sample/Transverse Interval: 0.05m/0.50m

Area Surveyed: *c*.7.7 ha
Survey Dates: 13 May 2026

Licence Holder: Ger Dowling
Report Author: Ger Dowling
Report Date: 14 May 2026

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Plate 2. Looking northeast along the electricity cables that extend across the norther part of the site

Abbreviations

GPS	Global Positioning System
ITM	Irish Transverse Mercator
ME	Meath
nT	nanoTesla (unit of magnetic measurement)
OS	Ordnance Survey
QGIS	Quantum Geographical Information Systems
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record

Coordinate System

All GPS coordinates given in this report are in Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM)

1 Introduction

This report details the results of an archaeo-geophysical survey (Licence No.: 25R0521) of lands at Dunboyne townland, Dunboyne, Co. Meath. The investigation, comprising high-resolution magnetometer (fluxgate gradiometer) survey, was implemented over an area of approximately 7.7 hectares. There are no recorded monuments or sites within the area targeted for survey. The work was conducted as part of a pre-planning archaeological assessment.

The site had not previously been subject to geophysical survey and the present investigation sought to identify and map any subsurface archaeology that may be present.

2 Site Location

The area targeted for geophysical investigation is in the townland of Dunboyne, Co. Meath (**Figure 1**). The site, which lies on the western edge of the town of Dunboyne, is in the Civil Parish and the Barony of Dunboyne.[1]

[1] Dún Búinne/Dunboyne | logainm.ie: accessed on 12 November 2025.

3 Survey Background

The survey was conducted as part of a pre-planning archaeological assessment.

It was originally intended to conduct the survey in December 2025 but due to the presence of crop, the work did not proceed at that time and detection licence 25R0521 was cancelled. However, following a recent assessment of newly planted crop height in May 2026, it was decided that the survey could now be completed and following a request to the Licencing Section of the National Monuments Service, detection licence 25R0521 was reactivated.

4 Archaeological Background

4.1 Recorded/Known Archaeology

There are no recorded (RMP/SMR) monuments or sites within the area targeted for survey (**Figure 2**).[2] The nearest known site is an enclosure (ME050-027) less than 100m to the northwest. Defined by a bank with outer ditch, the enclosure is D-shaped in plan with maximum dimensions of approximately 120m northnortheast/southsouthwest by 100m westnorthwest/eastsoutheast, with the straight side on the south. Seemingly defined by a wide earthen bank and an external fosse, the enclosure was partially subjected to magnetometry and earth resistance survey in 2000, which confirmed the presence of the ditch. Test trenching in 2012 yielded evidence for a post-medieval recut to its defining ditch. The enclosure may have been constructed in the medieval period, perhaps for agricultural, rather than settlement, use.[3]

Other known sites and monuments in the surrounding landscape include the reputed site of a church (ME050-029), some 300m to the north, and a potentially associated rectangular field system (ME050-030).[4] A variety of structures and features of Bronze Age date were also identified in this area during excavations conducted in advance of the construction of the Dunboyne Link Road (R157) in 2004. Excavated features include a post-built structure (ME050-062001) and a kiln (ME050-062002).[5]

The survey area is shown as farmland on historic mapping (**Figures 3 & 4**).

4.2 Previous Investigations

There is no record of any previous archaeological investigations within the subject lands.[6]

[2] Historic Environment Viewer (arcgis.com): accessed on 12 November 2025.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Excavations: accessed on 12 November 2025.

5 Survey Location, Topography and Aims

The geophysical investigation, comprising high-resolution magnetometer (fluxgate gradiometer) survey, focused an area of approximately 7.7 ha (**Plate 1; Figure 5**).

The target area comprises a large flat, irregular field of tillage (long axis northeast/southwest) located immediately east of the Dunboyne Bypass. The field is bounded by a concrete block wall on the east and tree-lined hedgerows and wire fences on the north, west and south. The northern part of the site is traversed from roughly east to west by electricity cables supported on a tall metal pylon and a timber post (**Plate 2**). A residential estate flanks the site on the east, with agricultural land, mainly tillage, in other directions.

The underlying bedrock of the locality comprises dark limestone and shale (`calp') (Lucan Formation).[7] The local soils comprise fine loamy drift with limestones (Elton Series).[8]

The geophysical investigation aimed to:

- identify any geophysical anomalies of potential archaeological origin within the specified survey area
- accurately locate these anomalies and present the findings in map form
- describe the anomalies and discuss their likely provenance in a written report
- incorporate the above in a report to the Client

[7] Geological Survey of Ireland Spatial Resources, Public Data Viewer Series: https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228 [accessed on 12 November 2024].

[8] Irish National Soils Map, 1:250,000k, V1b (2014): http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/map.php [accessed 12 November 2025].

6 Survey Methodology and Instrumentation

The geophysical investigation at Dunboyne comprised high-resolution magnetometer (fluxgate gradiometer) survey (**Table 1**). This technique measures variations in the magnetic properties of the soils and is widely used in archaeological prospection due to its ability to detect and map a broad range of sub-surface archaeological remains, including ditches and pits as well as burnt/fired features and deposits associated with domestic and industrial activities.

The survey was conducted using a seven-channel fluxgate gradiometer system, combining a Sensys MAGNETO MX V4 ('flexible scalable') digitizer and Sensys FGM650 probes, with cm-precision GPS (Trimble R12 antenna and TSC5 controller) georeferenced to Irish Transverse Mercator and Ordnance Datum. The system, which is mounted on a cart that can be hand pushed or pulled by a quad bike, records geophysical and GPS data simultaneously into a single data file. The data capture strategy involved logging readings at 0.10m intervals along transects spaced 0.5m apart, with a maximum traverse width of 3.5m. The sampling strategy produces a high-resolution dataset, giving clarity to any archaeological features detected.

The highly accurate positioning of the survey data provides strong confidence when integrating the geophysical results with other datasets such as aerial imagery in GIS and ensures repeatability should further investigation of anomalies (e.g., test excavation) be required.

Table 1. Geophysical survey details

Technique	Instrumentation	Sensor spacing	Sample rate	Survey Area	Number of recorded data
Magnetometry	Seven-channel fluxgate gradiometer array	0.5m	100 Hz	*c*.7.7 ha	1,748,569

7 Data Management, Processing and Interpretation

Geophysical data was logged to a laptop computer and archived daily to an external hard drive. The collated data was processed using the following methodology:

- Real-time positioning of magnetometer data based on GPS measurements;
- Processing (track correction and equalisation) of collated magnetometer data; and
- Export of georeferenced greyscale images at optimum visual range

The processed data was imported into QGIS for final image production (**Figures 6–8**). Final geophysical datasets have been formatted as raster data models/GeoTiffs (projected to ITM, EPSG:2157) to enable subsequent geospatial analysis. Fieldwork, data processing and reporting adhered to the most up-to-date guidelines for conducting archaeo-geophysical surveys.[9] All geophysical raster datasets will be digitally archived to best practice.[10]

[9] Schmidt A., Linford P., Linford N., David, A., Gaffney C., Sarris A., and Fassbinder J. 2016. *EAC Guidelines for the Use of Geophysics in Archaeology*: *Questions to Ask and Points to Consider*. EAC Guidelines 2. [Online] Available from: https://f64366e3-8f7d-4b63-9edf5000e2bef85b.filesusr.com/ugd/881a59_fdb1636e95f64813a65178895aea87cf.pdf

[10] Niven, K. 2012. *Raster Images: A Guide to Good Practice*. Archaeology Data Service/Digital Antiquity, Guides to Good Practice. [Online] Available from: http://guides.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/g2gp/RasterImg_Toc; & Schmidt, A. and Ernenwein, E. 2012. *Guide to Good Practice: Geophysical Data in Archaeology*. Oxford: Oxbow.

8 General Considerations and Complicating Factors

8.1 Access and Ground Conditions

The survey area comprises a large, flat tillage field. A metal electricity pylon and a nearby timber electricity post in the northern half of the site were avoided by the survey. There were no other obstacles to the investigation.

8.2 Modern Interference

Multiple small-scale, 'ferrous-type', dipolar (positive–negative) responses are evident in the results of the gradiometer survey. These are a common occurrence in magnetic surveys and in most cases represent modern metal debris and other magnetised material (e.g., fired brick) within the topsoil.

Areas of enhanced magnetic responses mapped by the survey along the line of former field boundaries likely represent imported material or dumping and/or the result of ground disturbance (e.g., a levelling event).

Small areas of magnetic disturbance ('noise') deriving from survey in proximity to field boundaries, field gates and buildings were recorded in places around the edge of the survey fields. The electricity cables that cross the site were another source of magnetic disturbance.

8.3 Former Land Use

Relict and possible relict field boundaries/field drains were identified.

9 Survey Results

Table 2. Survey results

Area	Dunboyne		
ITM (centroid)	700800, 742900		
Area	*c*.7.7 ha		
Figure Numbers	6–8		
Anomaly Number	***Form/nature of anomaly***	***Potential source(s) of anomaly***	***Interpretation***
1	'Figure-of-eight/shaped' positive anomaly	Possible archaeology	Possible pit/deposit. Magnetic strength (up to 16nT) is suggestive of burnt/fired material, such as might be associated with a hearth-, oven- or kiln-type archaeological feature. Tentative interpretation. ***See Figure 8 for detailed view***
	Several 'pit-type' responses	Possible archaeology/ modern/natural	Possible isolated pits/deposits. Archaeological interpretation is cautious. Responses may have a modern (i.e., ferrous/agricultural) origin and/or reflect 'noise' from natural geological/soil variations and/or disturbance by modern ploughing. ***Not individually numbered on Figures 7 & 8***
	Tow, lengthy positive curvilinears	Agricultural	Relict field boundaries. Recorded on historic mapping.
	Several faint, positive linears	Possible agricultural	Possible relict field boundaries and/or field drains. Not recorded on historic mapping.
	Positive tends	Possible archaeology/ agricultural/natural	Possible ditches/drains.
	Multiple 'ferrous-type' responses	Modern	Ferrous debris and other weakly magnetised material.
	Areas of increased response	Modern	Mapped by survey along the line of former (levelled) field boundaries. May represent imported material or dumping and/or the result of ground disturbance, such as that associated with a levelling event.

	Two amorphous areas of weakly enhanced magnetism	Possible natural	May reflect localised natural variations in underlying soils.
	Areas of magnetic disturbance	Modern	Disturbance from adjacent field boundaries, fields gates, houses and overhead electricity cables.

10 Conclusion

Magnetometry survey of lands at Dunboyne townland did not identify any anomalies of clear archaeological interest.

Several 'pit-type' responses were mapped across the site and while some may have an anthropogenic (possibly archaeological/agricultural) origin, they could equally reflect natural variations in the underlying soils. That said, one of the 'pit-type' responses [1] appears to be of 'figure-of-eight' plan and may contain burnt/fired material in its fill; this might be a hearth-, oven- or kiln-type archaeological feature. The latter interpretation is tentative. Evidence for former land division is also discernible in the survey results. Several possible relict field boundaries (and/or possible drains) were also revealed and although not recorded on historic mapping, they may be of post-medieval date given their apparent linear layout.

10.1 Statement of Indemnity

The geophysical properties of sub-surface features must contrast sufficiently with the surrounding soils/background variation to enable them to be detected and mapped using geophysical methods. As such, the clarity and definition of buried features can vary considerably, with some having well-defined signatures while others are only barely visible, or not discernible, in geophysical imagery. A lack of geophysical anomalies cannot be taken to imply the absence of archaeological features.

The interpretations presented here are invariably provisional and further work (e.g., test trenching) is required to fully assess the nature and archaeological potential of the anomalies identified by the present investigation.

11 Figures

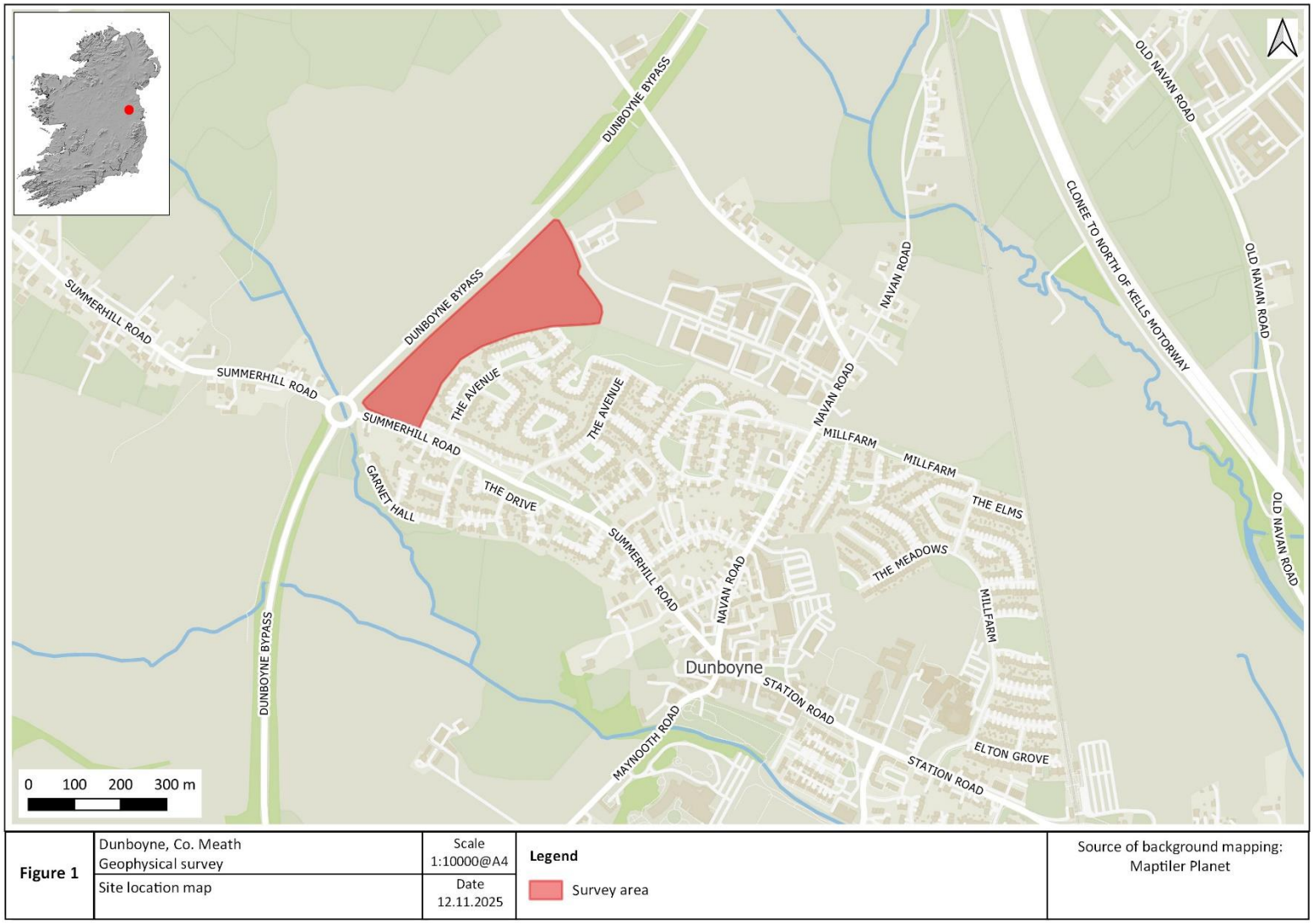


Figure 1. Site location map, showing survey area highlighted in red.

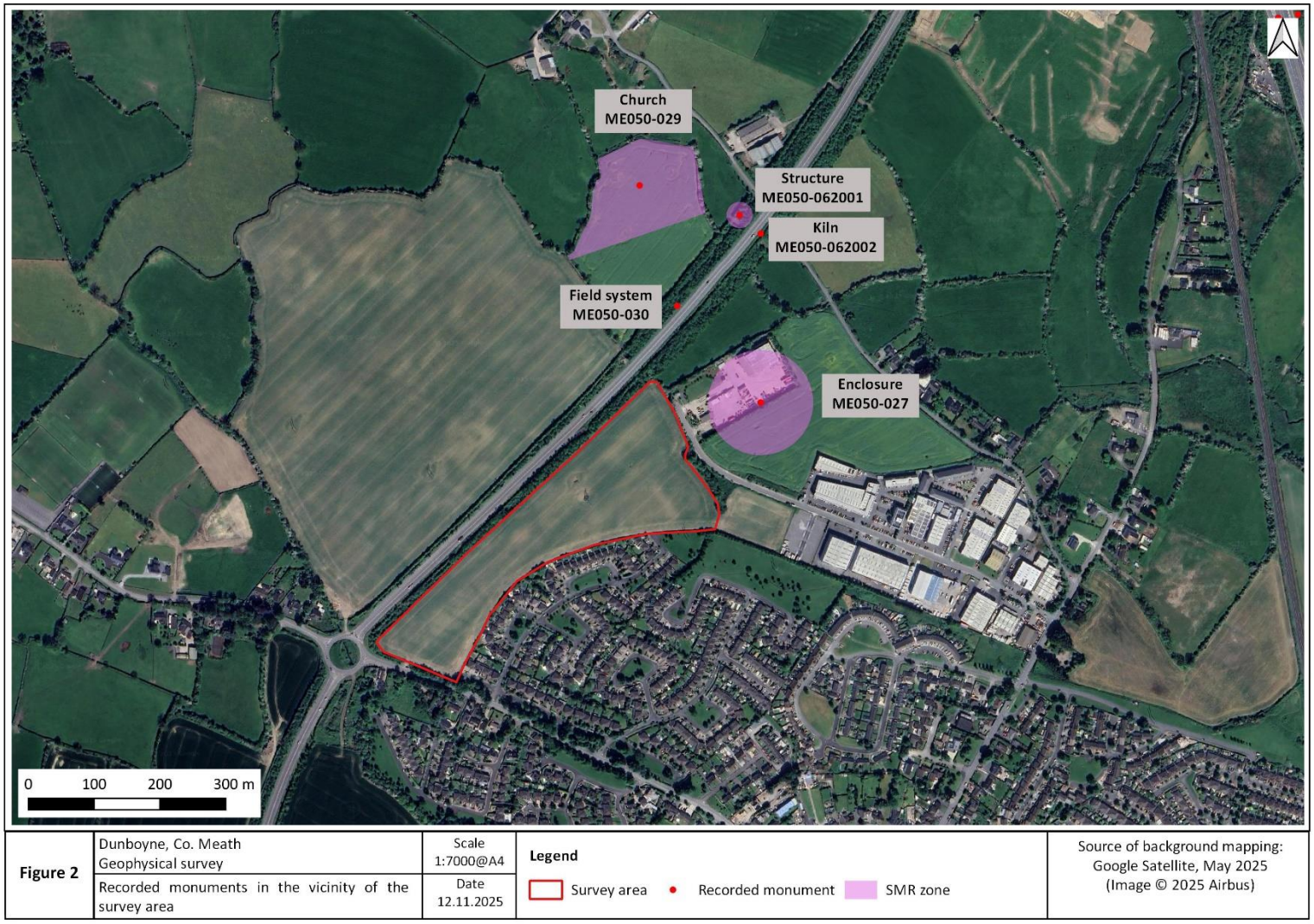


Figure 2. Location of recorded archaeological sites in the vicinity of the survey area.

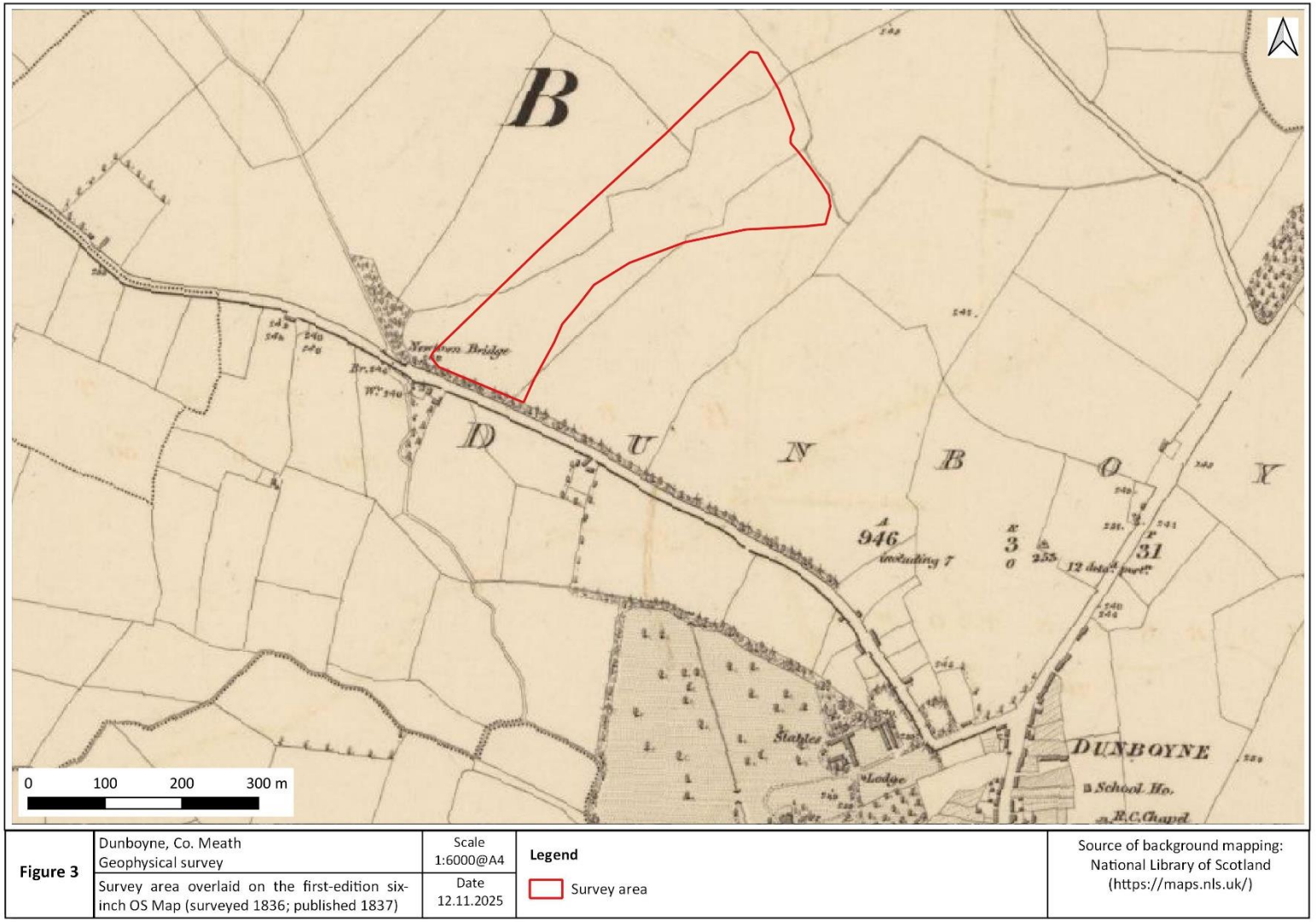


Figure 3. The survey area overlaid on the first-edition six-inch Ordnance Survey Map (surveyed 1840; published 1844).

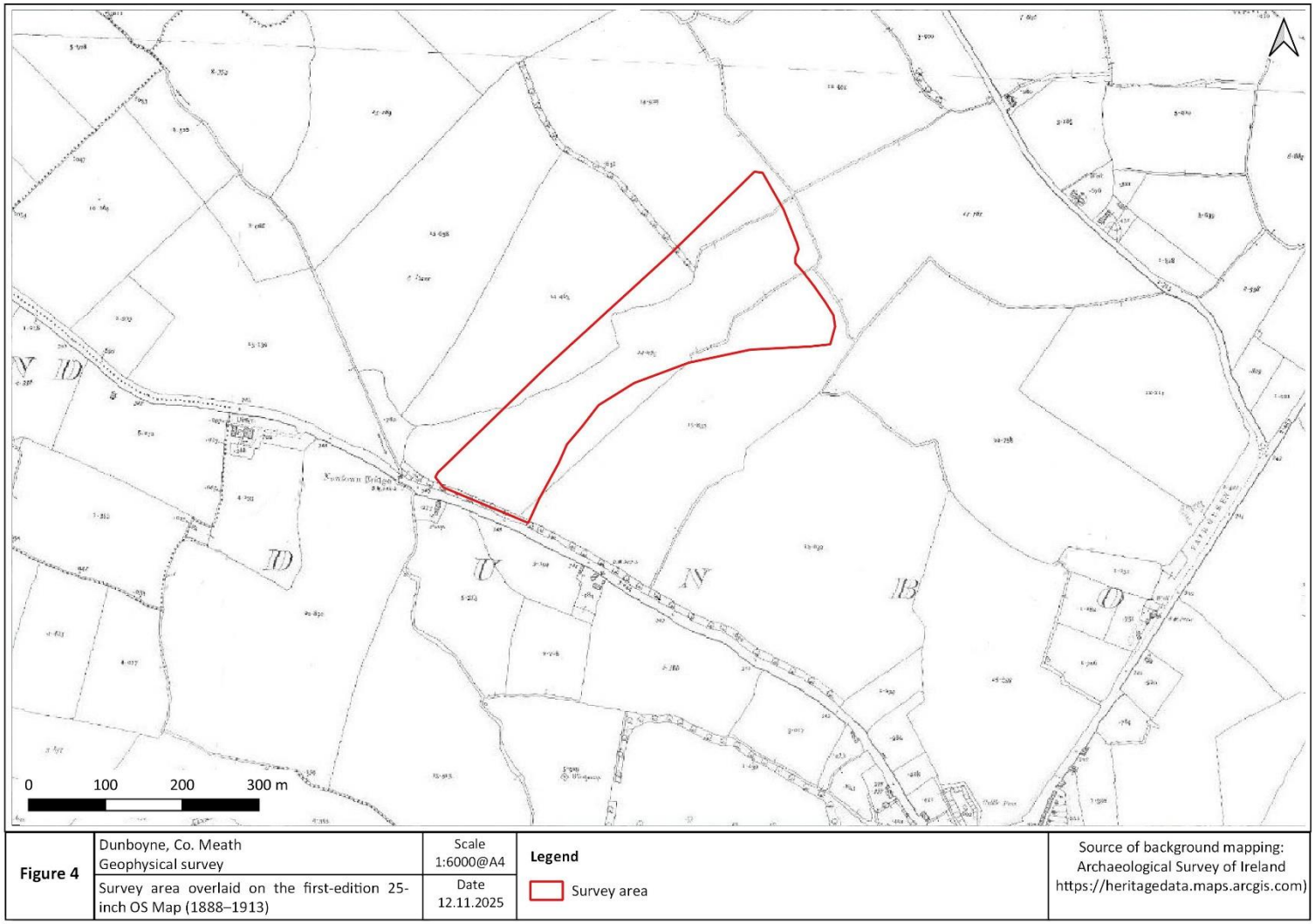


Figure 4. The survey area overlaid on the first-edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey Map (1888–1913).



Figure 5. The survey areas, outlined in red.



Figure 6. Greyscale image of gradiometry results.

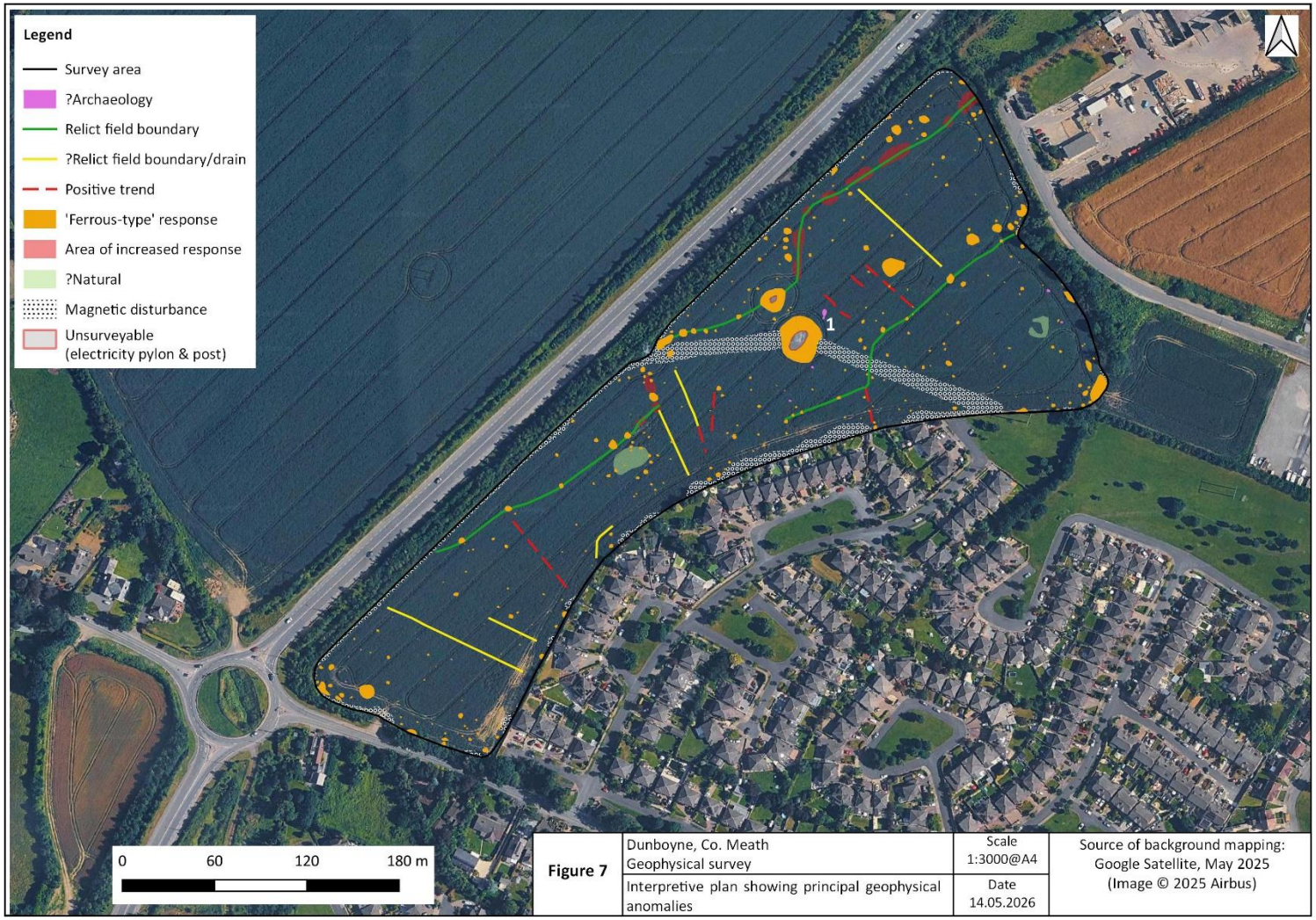


Figure 7. Interpretive plan showing principal geophysical anomalies.

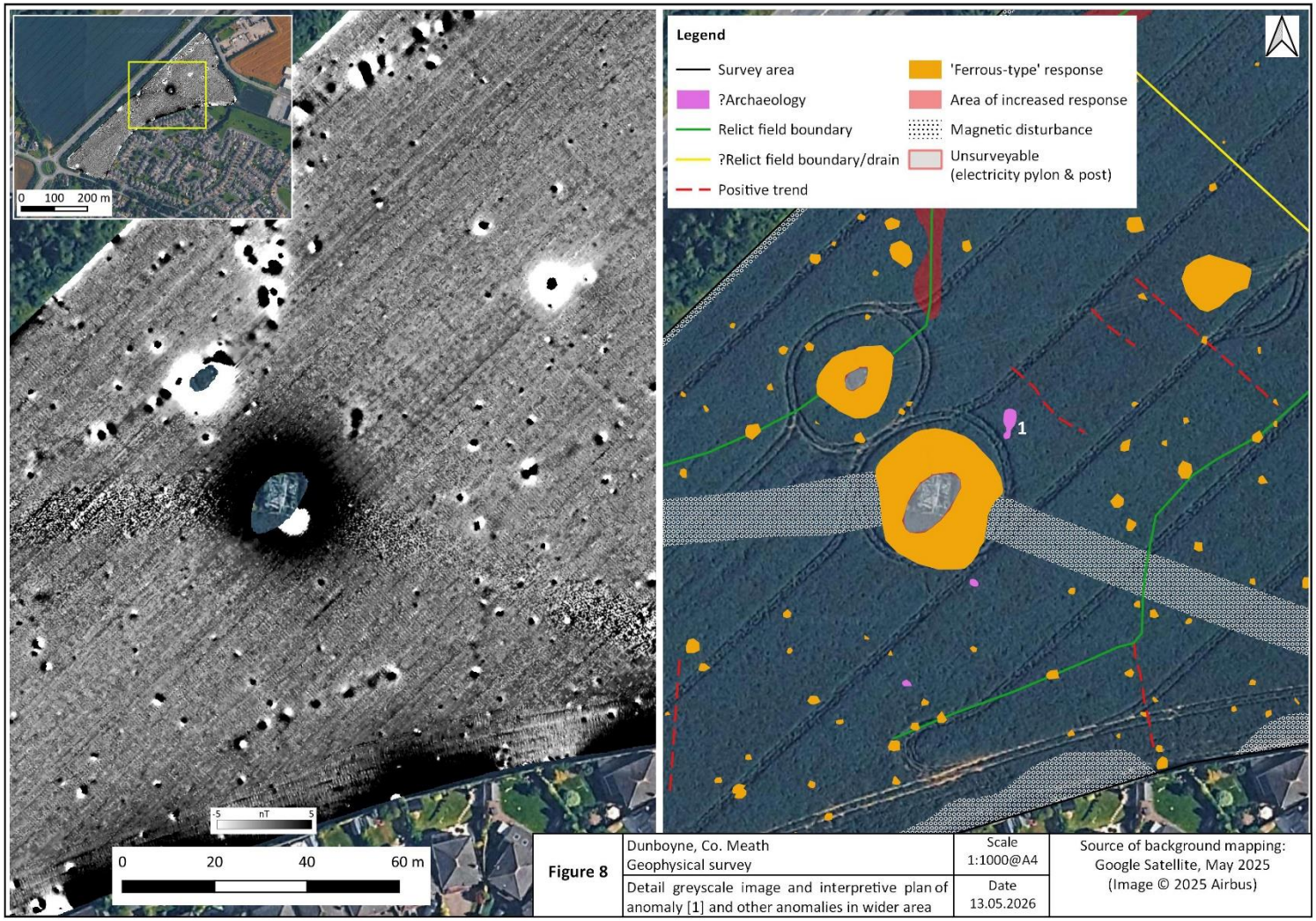


Figure 8. Detail greyscale image and interpretive plan of anomaly [1] and other anomalies in wider area.

12 Plates



Plate 1. The survey area, looking south.



Plate 2. Looking northeast along the electricity cables that extend across the northern part of the site.

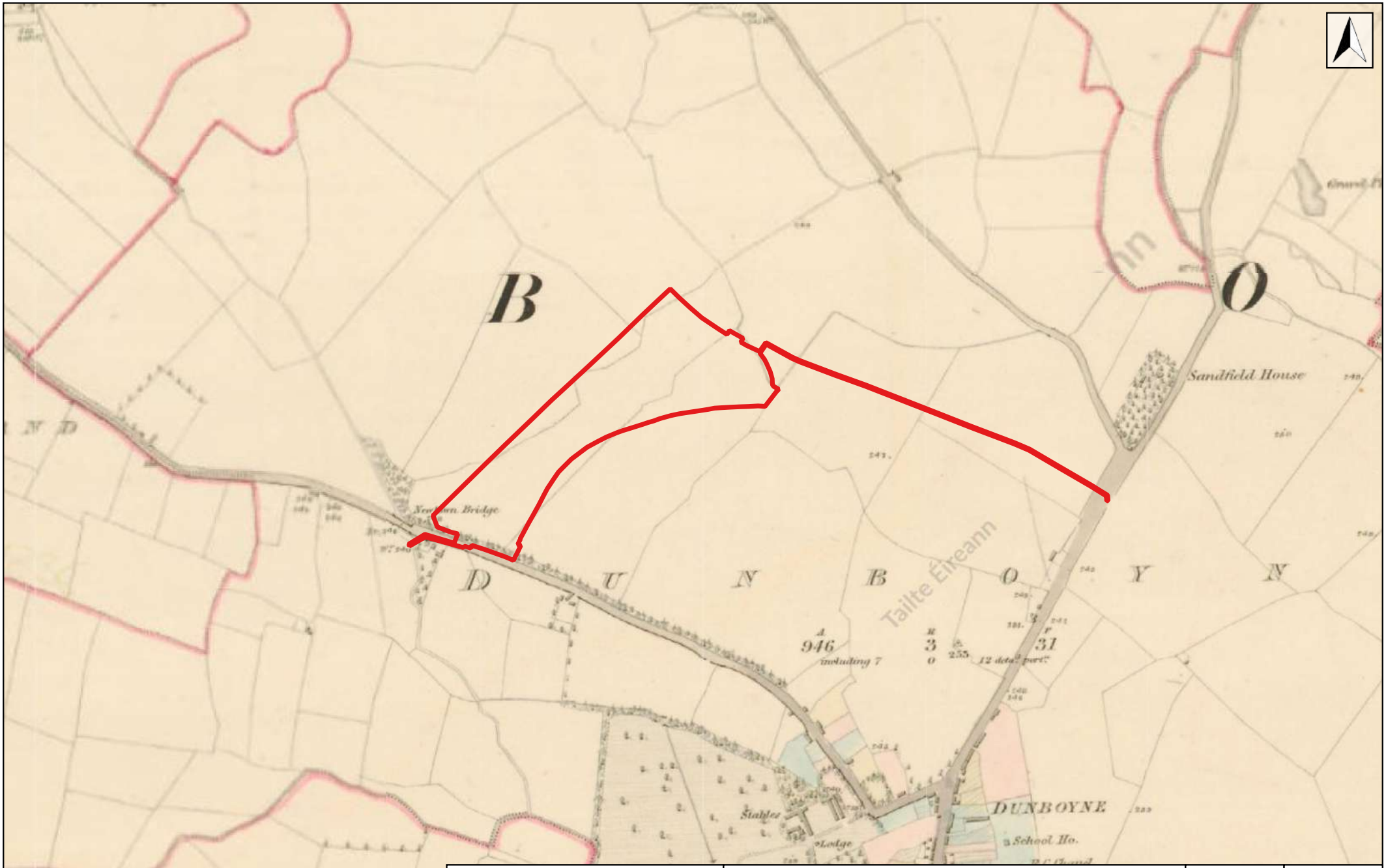


IAC Archaeology

Title	Site location showing nearby recorded monuments
Project	Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath
Scale	1:7500
Date	22.07.2026
Job No.	J4739
Drawn By	JG
Checked By	FB
Approved By	FB
Fig.	1
Rev.	-

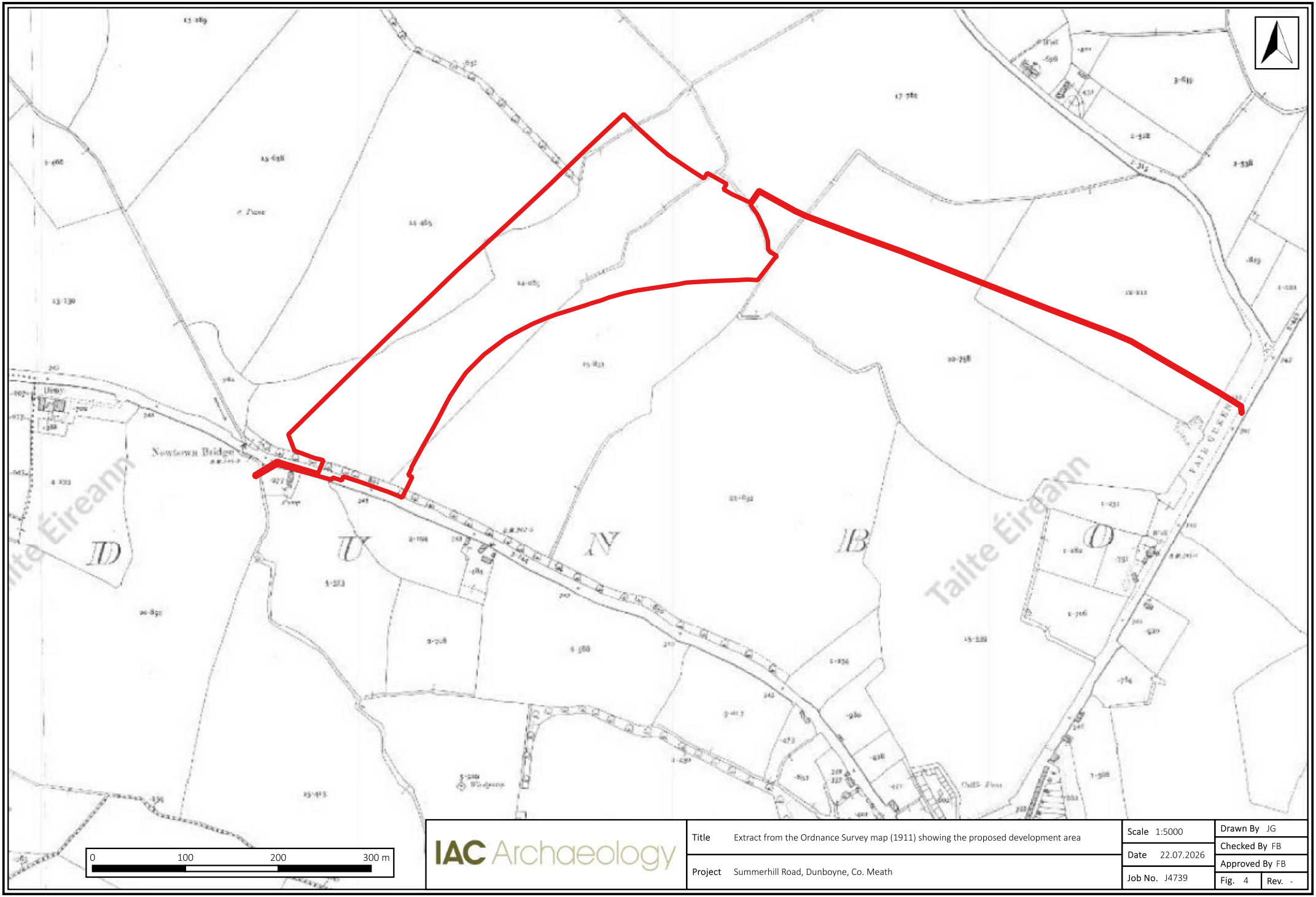


IAC Archaeology	Title: Plan of proposed development	Scale: NTS	Drawn By: JG
		Date: 10.08.2026	Checked By: FB
	Project: Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath	Job No.: J4739	Approved By: FB
			Fig.: 2 Rev.: -



IAC Archaeology

Title	Extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1843) showing the proposed development area
Project	Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath
Scale	1:7500
Date	22.07.2026
Job No.	J4739
Drawn By	JG
Checked By	FB
Approved By	FB
Fig.	3
Rev.	-



IAC Archaeology

Title	Extract from the Ordnance Survey map (1911) showing the proposed development area
Project	Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath

Scale	1:5000
Date	22.07.2026
Job No.	J4739
Drawn By	JG
Checked By	FB
Approved By	FB
Fig.	4
Rev.	-



IAC Archaeology

Title	Interpretive plan showing principal geophysical anomalies	Scale 1:2750	Drawn By JG
		Date 22.07.2026	Checked By FB
Project	Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath	Job No. J4739	Approved By FB
			Fig. 5 Rev. -