

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE
AT
NEWCASTLE NORTH
NEWCASTLE
COUNTY DUBLIN



For JFOC Architects

On Behalf Of

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Planning Report

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Abstract

This report contains the results of an archaeological assessment carried out on behalf of Deane Homes Ltd c/o JFOC Architects. The assessment was undertaken as part of a Pre-Planning investigation for a proposed residential development located in the townland of Newcastle North, Newcastle, County Dublin. The development site is located within the *zone of archaeological potential* of the site of a tower house (RMP Ref: DU021-017002) of which no visible trace survives and of the wider historic village of Newcastle (RMP Ref: DU020-003008).

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report contains the results of an archaeological assessment carried out on behalf of Deane Homes Ltd c/o JFOC Architects. The assessment was undertaken as part of a pre-planning investigation for a proposed residential development located in the townland of Newcastle North, Newcastle, County Dublin. The development will consist of 30 houses of which there are 28 no. 3 bed houses and 2 no. 2 bed houses, carparking, green area and ancillary works on a 1.25ha site.

The development site is located within the *zone of archaeological potential* of the site of a tower house (RMP Ref: DU021-017002) of which no visible trace survives and of the wider historic village of Newcastle (RMP Ref: DU020-003008). The settlement dates to the early 13th century when Newcastle was first mentioned as a royal manor in 1215. The settlement was a linear one based on a single street, running east-west with a marketplace located in the roughly sub-triangular space in front of the church at the western end.

The aim of this pre-planning archaeological assessment is to have a clear understanding of potential for archaeological remains and ascertain the nature and extent of those remains. The study involved detailed analysis of the archaeological, architectural, and historical background of the development area. This included information from the Record of Monuments and Places of County Dublin; the County Development Plan; the topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland and cartographic and documentary records. Aerial photographs of the study area held by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and Google Earth were also reviewed supported by a field inspection.

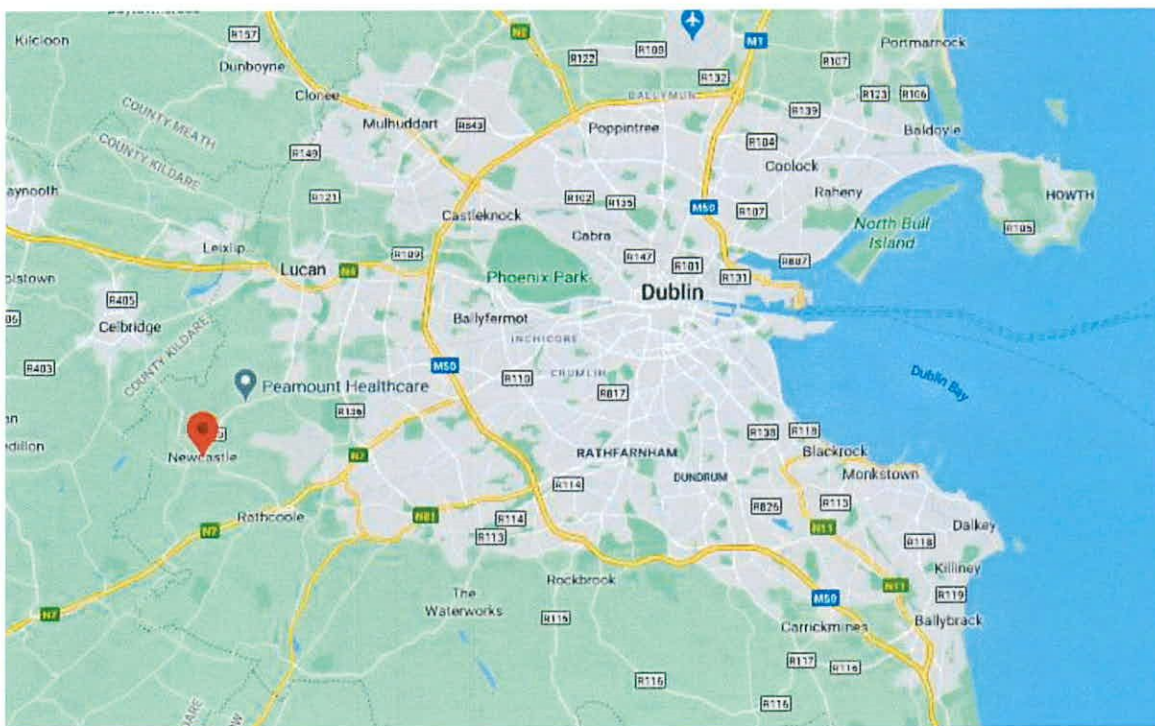


Figure 1 Area Location Map, Newcastle North, Newcastle, County Dublin



Figure 2. Site Location Map, Newcastle North, Newcastle, County Dublin

2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development site is located on the western side of Newcastle village behind a commercial premises on the north side of main street. The site will be accessed through a relatively new housing complex just to the east. It is bounded by fields to the north and by the commercial premises to the south. There is an existing development to the east and a farm building and green area to the west. The farm building will be demolished as part of the development plan.

The site is roughly square and measures 100m across. The total development area is 1.25ha. The development will consist of 30 houses of which there are 28 no. 3 bed houses and 2 no. 2 bed houses.

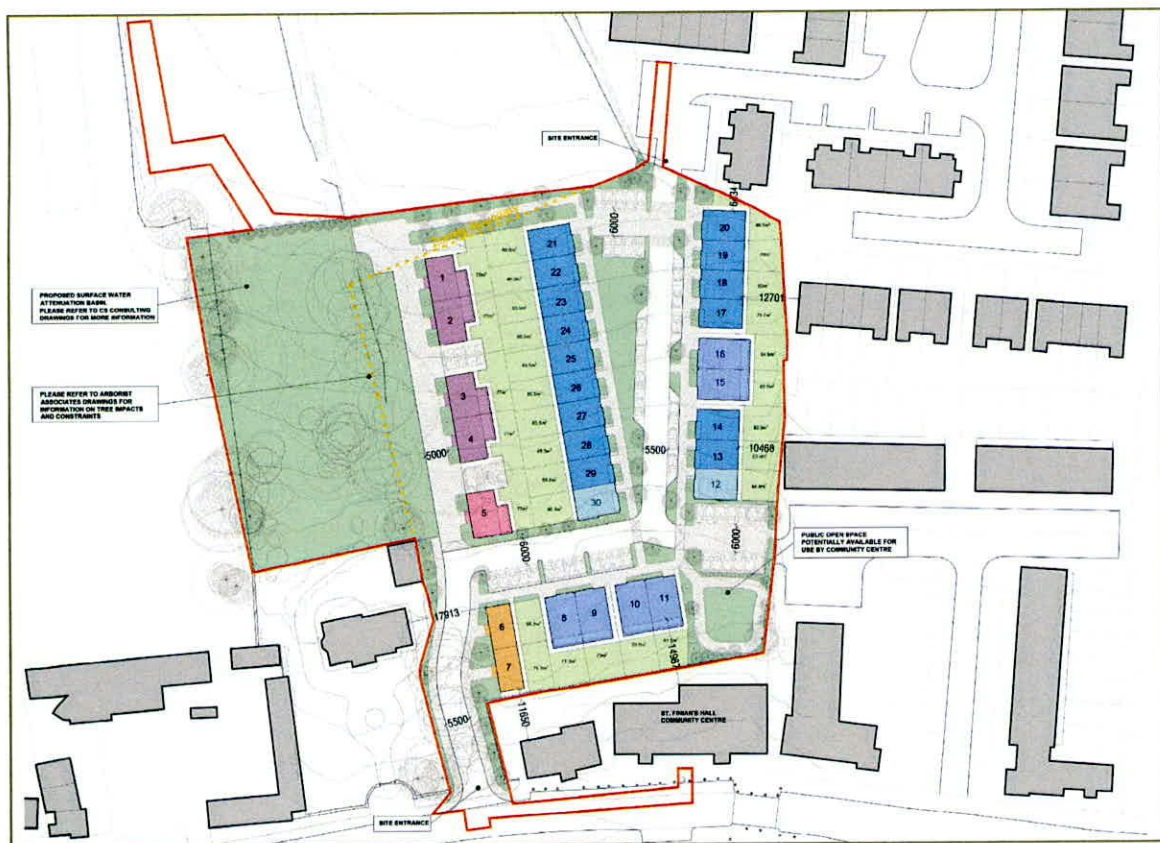


Figure 3 Plan of Proposed Development, Newcastle North, Newcastle, County Dublin

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Historical Evidence

Before the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169 the area of Newcastle belonged to Mac Giolla Mo-Cholmóc. After the invasion a fortification (motte) was erected and Mac Giolla Mo-Cholmóc was granted some land back under conditions of feudal tenure. Later his nephew and heir lost much of the property as the English king allocated the lands around Newcastle to one of the royal manors of the Vale of Dublin.

The motte (RMP DU020-003001) at Newcastle, west of the proposed development area, was built in the first phase of major castle building for the outer defences the city of Dublin. This is supported by the absence of a bailey, which indicates that it was constructed within the initial stages of Norman settlement in the area, when less emphasis was placed on security. A series of motte's were constructed by the Anglo-Normans, forming a large circle around the city curving north from Howth to Swords then south to Castleknock and finishing at Dun Laoghaire. Strategically placed some four miles apart, these primary castles date from the 1170's. The motte at Newcastle guarded the most important inland route to Naas and the south. This phase of building was followed in the 13th century by the construction of moated or ditched castles and in the 15th and 16th centuries by tower houses.

Newcastle was one of four royal manors together with Saggart, Esker and Crumlin, which meant it was a demesne manor in the hands of the English king. The manor came to constitute the parish of Newcastle which contained seven townlands covering c. 2000 acres (Civil Survey). The western end of present-day Newcastle reflects its history as a medieval manorial village. Visible at this end of the town are a motte (RMP DU020-003001), a medieval church (RMP DU020-003002) with a residential tower, and four tower houses (RMP DU020-003004/6/7, RMP DU021-017002) all in close proximity to each other.

A substantially built wall, on the southwest side of the settlement, may represent the remains of the town walls. The basic plan of the medieval village must have been determined by the alignment of the motte, the church and the tower houses with thatched houses of the peasants lining the single road, which runs in a roughly east-west direction (Simms, 1983, 133-135). The dwelling houses of the medieval town would have fronted the road and burgage plots would have stretched back perpendicularly from the road (Manning, 1998, 136).

The location of some of these burgage plots has been supported by an excavation c. 178m to the west (Licence 13E348, Bennett 2014:143). The eastern end of the village, on the other hand, has been transformed by the construction of modern building estates.

The fact that Newcastle was a border town and under constant threat of attack from Irish invaders may have been part of the reason why Newcastle, together with other manorial villages in Ireland, was given the legal status of borough, as an incentive for people to settle and stay. The first reference to the burgesses of Newcastle is in the Statute Rolls for the late 14th century. Shortly after this we see that Newcastle is granted a special subvention, 'to well and securely make their ditches', fortifications were clearly an issue at this time. This would suggest that the village defences were relatively limited and confined to field ditches rather than walls (Simms, 1983, 138).

The medieval church (RMP DU020-00302), to the west of the proposed development area, was the church which the Anglo-Norman invaders found upon the lands of Newcastle and following their conquest it became the central church of the parish, having a chapel in Colmanstown subservient to it. It is dedicated to St. Finian and is an interesting medieval structure; there is a battlemented tower at its west end and a turret with a spiral staircase at its northwest corner. A carved head, locally identified as St Finian, is inserted high up near the east end of the south wall of the nave and may have been part of a Romanesque church which previously stood on the site. In the graveyard (RMP DU020-003010) to the south of the church is a medieval granite cross (RMP DU020-003003) with a ringed cross on one side and a simple cross on the other. St Finian's holy well (RMP DU020-003005) is located c. 100m west of the church (Harbison, 1970, 134).

3.2 Record of Monuments and Places

The Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) is a list of all archaeological sites known to the National Monuments Service. The Record of Monuments & Places includes RMP maps based on OS 6" Sheets, which indicate the location of each recorded site. The RMP list is based on The Sites and Monument Record (SMR) files housed in the National Monuments Services offices. Buildings belonging to the 17th century and later are considered as archaeological sites today, though not all sites are represented in the SMR archive. There are eight recorded monument located 70 to 160m from the proposed development site.

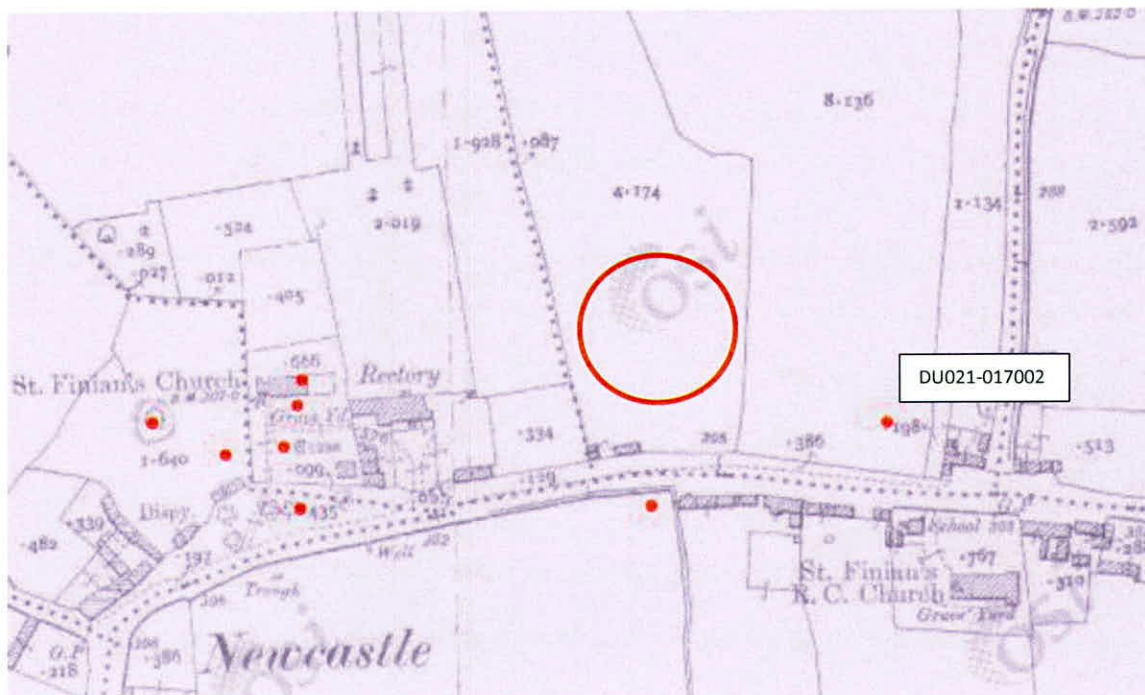


Figure 4 Record of Monuments and Places Map, Newcastle

RMP Ref	Townland	Monument Type	Distance
DU020-003008	Newcastle South, Cornerpark, Glebe (Newcastle By., Lucan Ed), Newcastle Demesne, Newcastle Farm	Settlement deserted - medieval	Within the zone of archaeological potential
DU021-017002	Newcastle North	Castle - tower house (site of)	c.80m to the east
DU021-017001	Newcastle South	Well	c.70m to the south
DU020-003004	Glebe (Newcastle By., Newcastle Ed)	Castle - tower house	c.155m to the west
DU020-003010	Grange (Newcastle By.)	Graveyard	c.145m to the west
DU020-003003	Glebe (Newcastle By., Newcastle Ed)	Cross	c.145m to the west
DU020-003002	Newcastle North	Church	c.145m to the west
DU020-003001	Newcastle North	Motte	c.160m to the west

DU021-017002 - Towerhouse

Description: The site is located in a level field of tillage W of the road that leads N to Lucan and opposite the present RC church. According to O'Keefe (1986, 55, No. 6) a tower house was indicated in manuscript form on an old copy of the Ordnance Survey 6 inch sheet of the area held by Mr Paddy Healy, Dublin. There are no visible remains at ground level.

3.3 Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland

The National Museum of Ireland Topographical Files is the national archive of all known antiquities recorded by the National Museum. These files relate primarily to artefacts but also include references to monuments and also contain a unique archive of records of previous archaeological excavations. The find spots of artefacts can also be an important indication of the archaeological potential in the surrounding area.

1. Museum No M.1948:71

Townland Newcastle South

Find Brass shoe buckle

Find Place Vicinity of tower house (RMP DU020-003007)

Description 18th century brass shoe buckle, originally had an iron centre bar

Reference NMI Topographical Files

2. Museum No None given

Townland Newcastle South

Find Flint axehead

Find Place Unknown

Description Flint axehead

Reference NMI Topographical Files

3.4 Previous Excavations

Two previous archaeological investigations are particularly relevant to this development project;

- The first is the on the site of the adjacent towerhouse DU021-017002 which was subject to archaeological testing in 2017 (Licence 17E0197, Planning ref: SD17A / 0010). Test excavation has shown that deep ploughing of recent years has taken place. The level of bedrock on this site is very high, and no remains of a medieval plough soil were uncovered. No remains of either the tower house or foundations of the later 18th and 19th century cottages on the street front remained.
- The second was a site immediately to the north east of the subject site was tested in 2002 (02E0859) following geophysics over the entire area. Shallow burgage plot ditches extending north -south were uncovered. However, no further work appears to have been carried out, and the area was developed extensively in a housing development called the Glebe.

- Medieval activity in the study area was uncovered in the form of three 13th century burgage plots fronting onto Newcastle Main Street (Licence 13E0348). Two of the plots contained kilns to the rear. Three medieval burgage plots had been tested c. 147m to the north identifying three ditches and two rubble drains of post-medieval date (Licence 07E0817).
- A double-ditched early medieval enclosure was excavated to the east of the proposed development site (Licence 06E0176). The enclosing ditches were almost square with rounded corners, with a possible gate feature identified at the terminals. Habitation features included pits, gullies, and kilns. Five iron knives of early medieval date were recovered from the site. There was a single inhumation identified between the inner and outer enclosures while a dog burial placed within a pit was also identified. The kiln excavated under Licence 06E1137 is thought to be associated with the enclosure due to their proximity.

3.5 Cartographic Sources

The Down Survey maps were compiled at a scale of 40 perches to one inch (the modern equivalent of 1:50,000) and represent the first systematic mapping of a large area on such a scale attempted anywhere. On Petty's map, the village is depicted with the annotation '7 old castles. The accompanying notes record 'Seaven old castles on New Castle Towne Land and the Ruines of a Church on the parcel of Glebe'. Four of these tower houses are recorded within the RMP, as is St Finian's Church.

The 1st and subsequent editions of the Ordnance Survey show the site as an open field with several small buildings fronting onto Main Street. Traces of old burgage plots can be seen and the townland boundary runs along the western edge of the site. The adjacent towerhouse site is not recorded on any OS map.

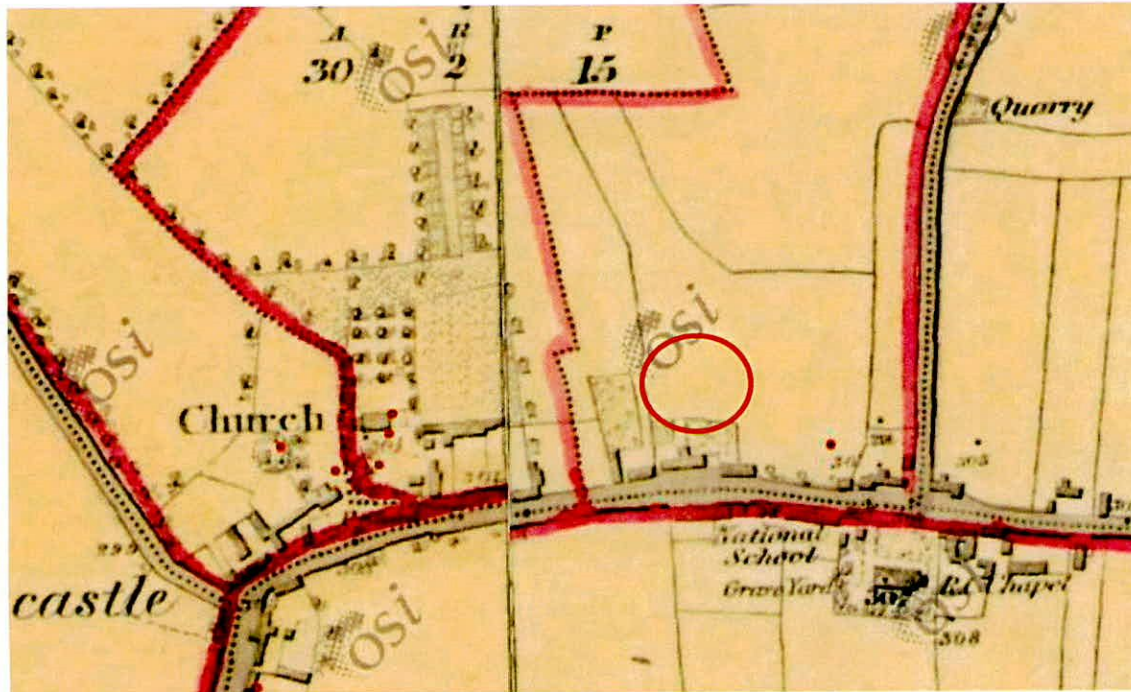


Figure 5 1st Edition OS Map, Newcastle

3.6 Aerial Photography

Aerial photography and satellite imagery shows no subsurface features or anomalies. No other features of potential archaeological significance were noted.

4. FIELD INSPECTION

A site inspection was carried out in April 2021 to complete a walk over of the site and check for anomalies indicative of surface or sub-surface archaeological remains. The site is located behind two existing buildings (Plate 1) and is accessed via a laneway off Main Street. There is an adjacent development on the site of the towerhouse investigated in 2017 (Plate 2).

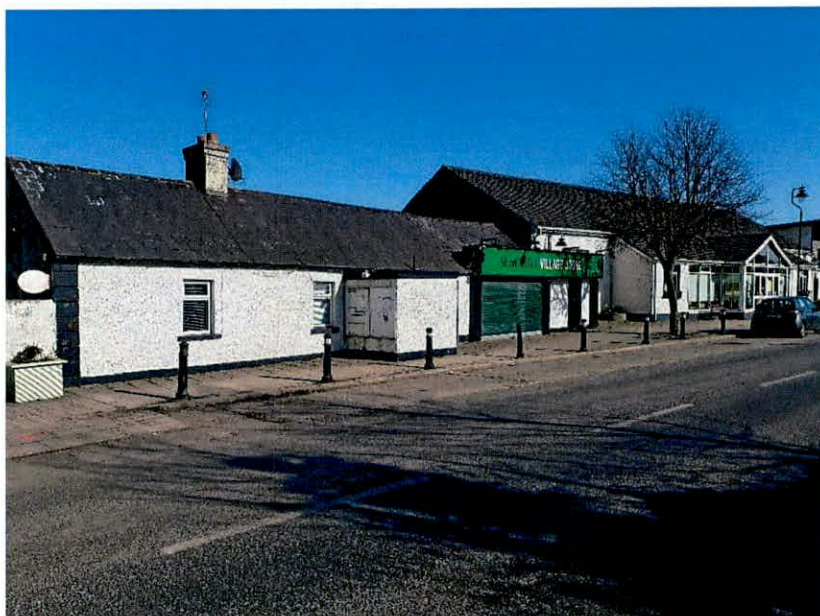


Plate 1 Existing Buildings at Front of Site



Plate 2 Adjacent Existing Development on Towerhouse site

The development site is bounded by existing buildings to the south and east and by a small farmyard complex to the west (Plate 3). The northern boundary is not defined (Plate 4). The field is relatively flat with no traces of any subsurface anomalies.



Plate 3 View of Site Looking West



Plate 4 View of North End of Site

5. RESULTS & FURTHER MITIGATION

5.1 Summary Findings

The archaeological assessment was carried out to ascertain the nature and extent of archaeological remains within and close to the development site. The assessment was requested due to the location of the development in the historic village of Newcastle, County Dublin and the proximity of a towerhouse site c.70m to the east.

The results of the assessment were as follows;

- There are no known archaeological sites within the footprint of the proposed development.
- The field survey identified no surface anomalies indicative of sub-surface archaeological remains.
- Aerial photography and satellite imagery revealed no further archaeological remains.
- The towerhouse DU021-017002 originally recorded in the adjacent site to the east was not found during a test excavation in 2017. The 17th century Down Survey and early manuscript edition of the 1st Edition OS record a towerhouse in or around this location. It is possible that elements of this medieval site may extend into the current site. Further investigative work will be required to rule out this possibility.
- Test excavations to the north east of the development site found traces of medieval burgage plots at the rear of buildings fronting on to Main Street.

5.2 Development Impact

The proposed development will not impact any known archaeological remains and there is no indication of sub surface remains. However, the development site is within the zone of archaeological potential of the historic village of Newcastle and within close proximity to a towerhouse site.

5.3 Mitigation Measures

Based on the results of this assessment the following recommendations are made;

- All program of archaeological testing should be completed by a suitably qualified archaeologist under licence from the National Monuments Service.
- In the event that archaeological material is uncovered, additional mitigation measures may be required subject to consultation with relevant authorities.
- A report detailing the results of archaeological testing shall be submitted to the relevant authorities within 4 weeks of the completion of on-site works.

The recommendations contained within this report are subject to the approval of the National Monuments Service and Local Authority who may issue additional or alternative recommendations.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Environmental Impact Assessment, Newcastle South, IAC

Previous Excavations, Newcastle, County Dublin

1st, 2nd and 3rd Editions of Ordnance Survey, County Dublin

Record of Monuments and Places, County Dublin

SMR files for Newcastle, County Dublin

Topographical Files, National Museum of Ireland

