



**BUVINDA HOUSE COUNCIL CHAMBER EXTENSION, Co. Meath**  
Athlumney townland

Site Area: Approx. 1 hectare of the 3.2 hectare site

ITM: 688140 / 766730

**Record of Monuments and Places:**  
Vicinity of SMR souterrains ME025-049001, 049002, 049003, 049004  
Archaeological trial trenching: 97E0322, 97E0322 ext. (2006)  
Archaeological excavations: 98E0596 and 07E0892  
Preservation of Archaeological Remains *in situ*: 1999 and 2007

**Record of Protected Structures:** None

**Architectural Conservation Area:** None

**Desk Based Review and Assessment**

Niall Roycroft  
1<sup>st</sup> December 2022

## Non-Technical Summary

Meath County Council proposes to construct a new council chamber and other rooms extension to Buvinda House, Dublin Road, Navan, C15 Y291, ITM 688140 / 766730 in Athlumney townland. In addition, there will be a large water attenuation pond, deep drainage and foul sewers with manholes that will be to a depth of over 1m from present ground level. Other proposed works are revised accesses and parking facilities including Electric Vehicle charging points that will all involve works of up to 0.70m below present ground level.

The 3.2 hectare site at Buvinda House was subject to archaeological works (07E0892, Hession) and now includes an approx. 1.41 hectare area of preserved archaeological remains comprising:

- four early medieval souterrains ME025-049001 to 004 of which one may survive; another had been mostly demolished in antiquity; a third is well recorded; and the fourth was not noted in the 2007 works.
- A large, double or triple-ditched early medieval ringfort (perhaps with ditched annexes) of several phases containing a central graveyard of at least 11-24 individuals.
- Probable prehistoric activity and perhaps ditches
- Post-medieval (post-17<sup>th</sup> century) field ditches, furrows etc

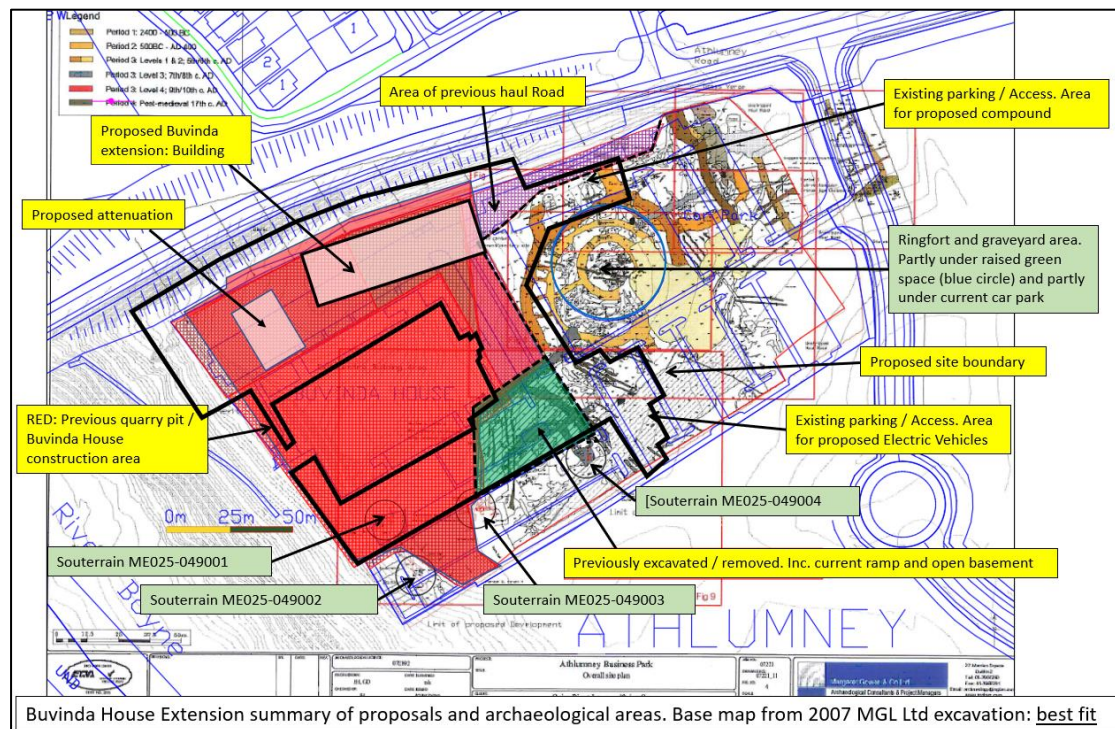
An additional area of 1,417 sqm was archaeologically excavated (preserved by record) in 2007. The remainder of the site comprised a very large sand quarry that was infilled prior to the Buvinda House construction works and a haul road and construction area around Buvinda House.

Comparison of plans and topographic levels from the archaeological report, the present car parks and other areas of Buvinda House show that the archaeological remains over most of the site are buried beneath 0.70m – 1.0m of imported material. This rises to around 1.4m in the main, walled circular area in the front grassed zone; and up to 2.50m – 3.0m in the raised car park in the SW corner, which contains the area of souterrains ME025-049002 / 049003 / 049004. Souterrain ME025-049001 is thought to have been removed during Buvinda House construction.

The proposed Council Chamber Extension impact area is confined to the previous quarry pit, the disturbed margins of this pit (seen on 1995 and 2000 Ortho photos) and the disturbed area of the haul road for Buvinda House construction noted in the 07E0892 Final Report.

The presumed archaeological impact of the Buvinda House project is considered to be minimal. Many of the services can be accommodated within the 0.70m (minimum) deep soils that overlie any archaeological remains. However, where works – particularly the deep services - are predicted to go down below 0.70m in areas outside the previous quarry pit, then these will require archaeological monitoring.

# 1 Introduction



Meath County Council proposes to construct a new council chamber and other rooms extension to Buvinda House, Dublin Road, Navan, C15 Y291, ITM 688140 / 766730 in Athlumney townland. In addition, there will be new, deep, drainage and foul sewers with manholes that will be to a depth of over 1m from present ground level. Other proposed works are revised accesses and parking facilities including Electric Vehicle charging points that will all involve works of up to 0.70m below present ground level.

The 3.2 hectare site at Buvinda House was subject to archaeological works (07E0892, Hession) and now includes an approx. 1.41 hectare area of preserved archaeological remains comprising:

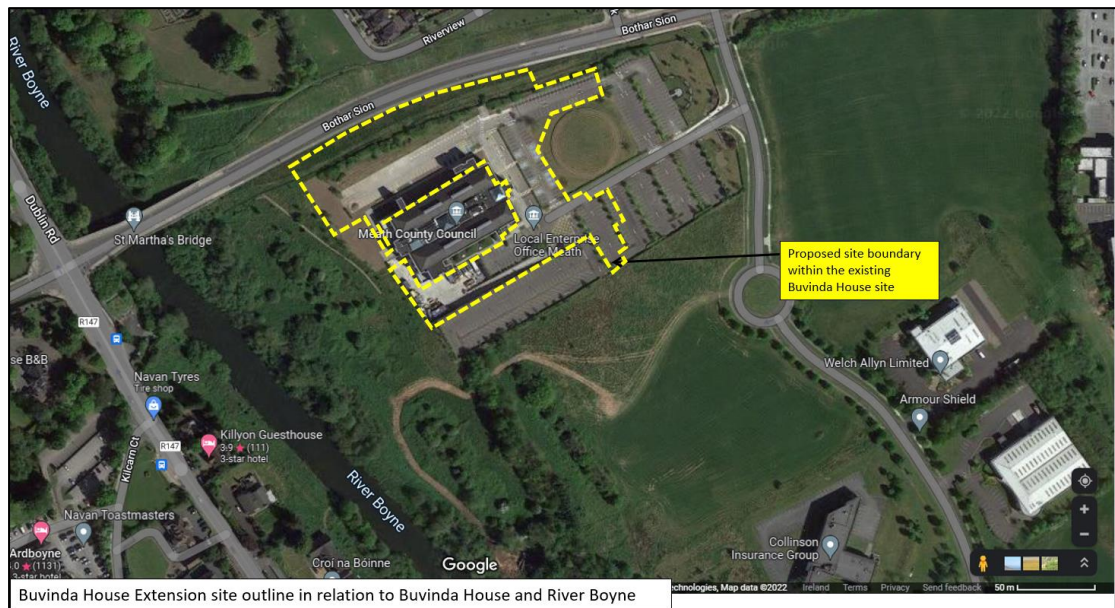
- four early medieval souterrains ME025-049001 to 004 of which one may survive; another had been mostly demolished in antiquity; a third is well recorded; and the fourth was not noted in the 2007 works.
- A large, double or triple-ditched early medieval ringfort (perhaps with ditched annexes) of several phases containing a central graveyard of at least 11-24 individuals.
- Probable prehistoric activity and perhaps ditches
- Post-medieval (post-17<sup>th</sup> century) field ditches, furrows etc

An additional area of 1,417 sqm (green above) was archaeologically excavated (preserved by record) in 2007. The remainder of the site comprised a very large sand quarry (red above) that was infilled prior to the Buvinda House construction works and a haul road and construction area around Buvinda House. Another archaeological site (prehistoric) was recorded in the IDA access road to the east of the Buvinda House site.



## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Topography and hydrology



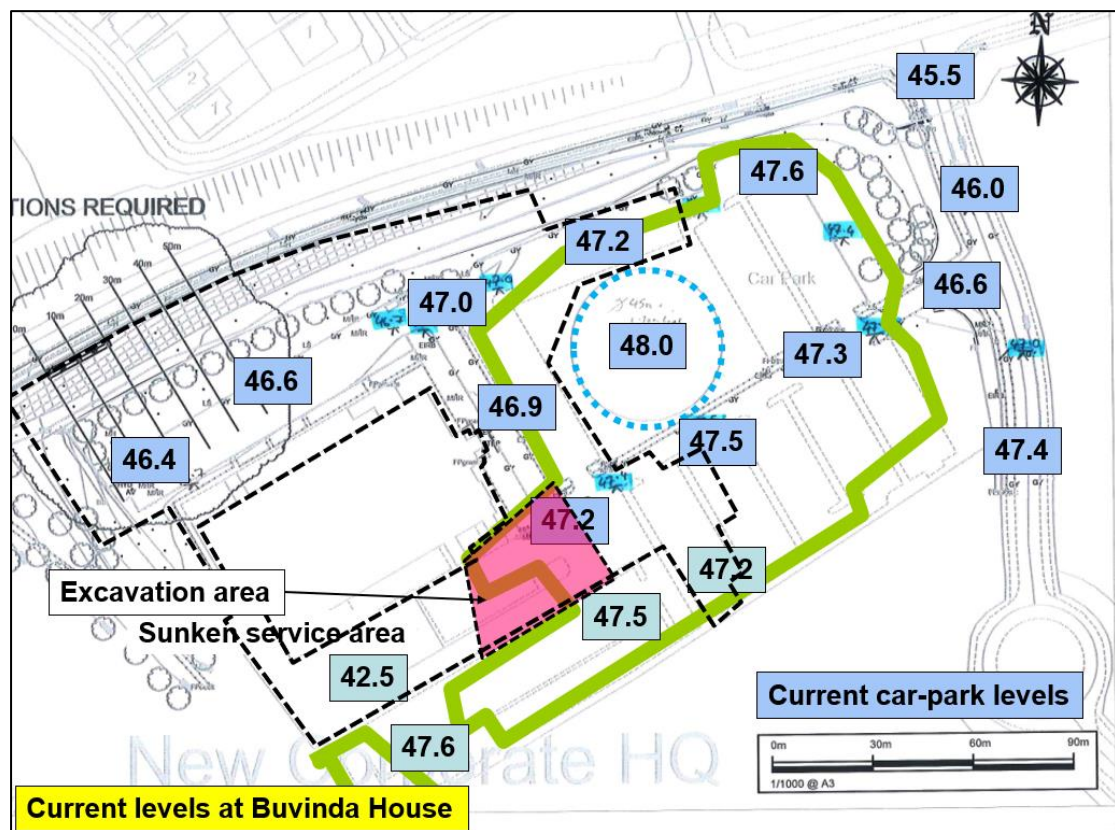
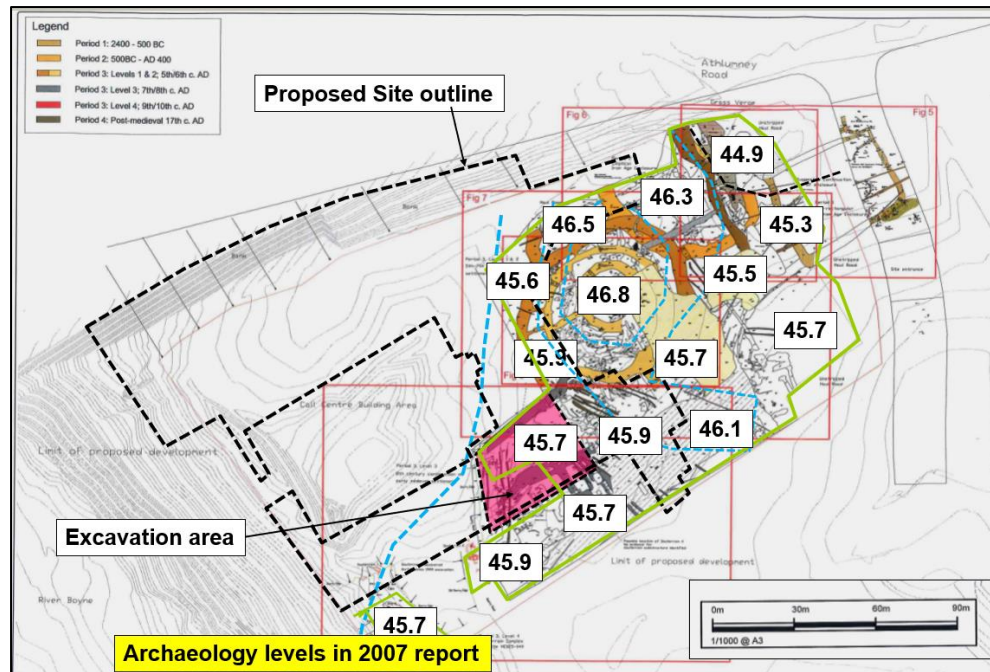
Buvinda House sits on a 3.2 hectare site that was originally a low, sandy knoll that was only slightly higher than the surrounding land, which slopes down via a western river terrace to the River Boyne. The site has excellent views both up and down the River and has been an area of settlement from the Early Bronze Age (c.2400 BC) to the early medieval period (c.1200).

The River Boyne is well known for being lined with high status archaeological sites – as well as more recent high status land holdings and demesne estates. The River access route also means that quarrying near to the river edges is also common; and most of the western half of the Buvinda House site was a 20<sup>th</sup> century, very large sand quarry pit that was in use up to around 2000, when it was filled in.

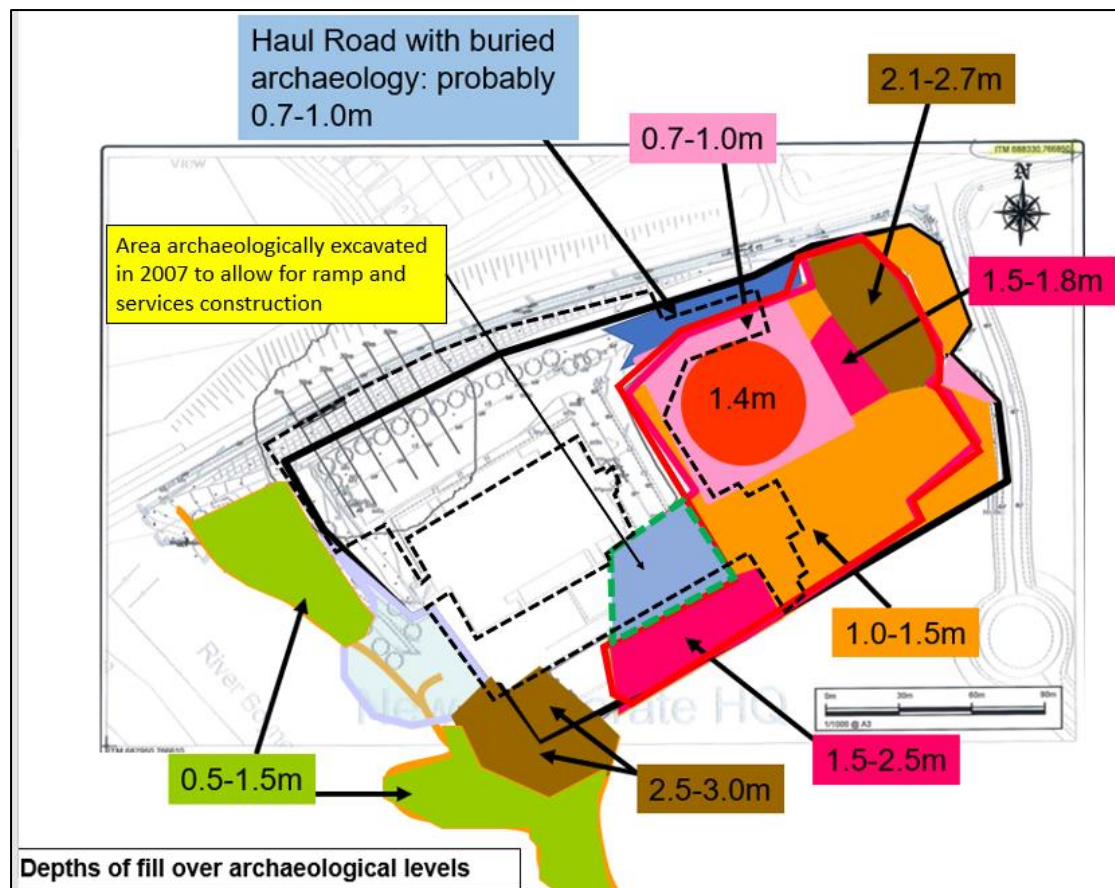
The Buvinda House site was subject to large-scale archaeological works in 2007 during its original construction. This work comprised:

- 1 A haul road along the northern site boundary fence around 15m – 20m wide which was not fully topsoil stripped so it was not possible to record the archaeological remains in detail. However, archaeological remains were noted and covered in geotextile and the haul road.
- 2 An approx. 1.41 hectare area of archaeological remains that were recorded in plan, lightly tested and then buried to be preserved in situ
- 3 An area of 1,417 sqm that was archaeologically excavated (preserved by record) to allow for the construction of the Buvinda House access ramp and adjacent services.

Limited archaeological works on the construction of adjacent Bothar Sion did not find any archaeological remains.







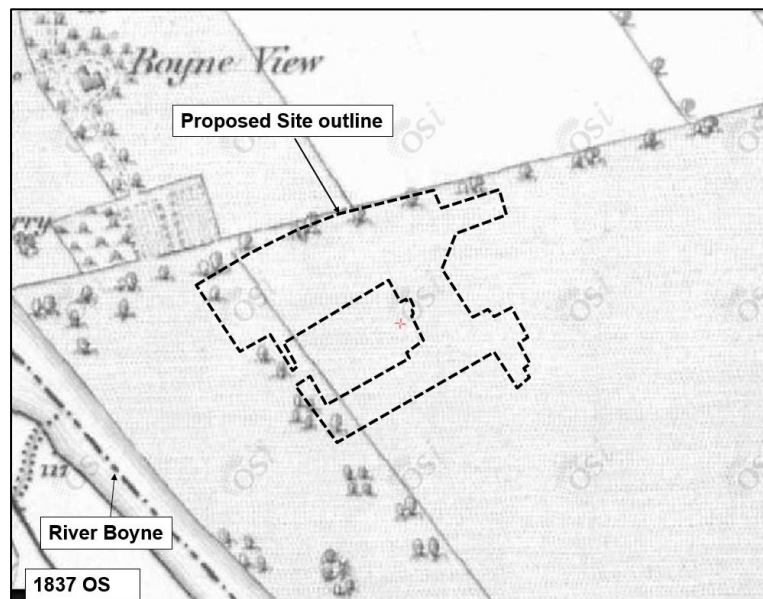
Comparison of plans and topographic levels from the 2007 archaeological report, the present car park survey and other areas of Buvinda House show that the archaeological remains over most of the site are buried beneath 0.70m – 1.0m of imported material (which includes tarmac and grass etc). This rises to around 1.4m in the main, walled circular area in the front grassed zone. In the raised car park in the SW corner, which contains the area of souterrains ME025-049002, ME025-049003, ME025-049004, the made ground is up to 2.50m – 3.0m. Souterrain ME025-049001 (already badly truncated by the previous quarry pit) was located in the present open basement area and is thought to have been removed during Buvinda House construction.

## 2.2 Record of Monuments and Places and site archaeological history

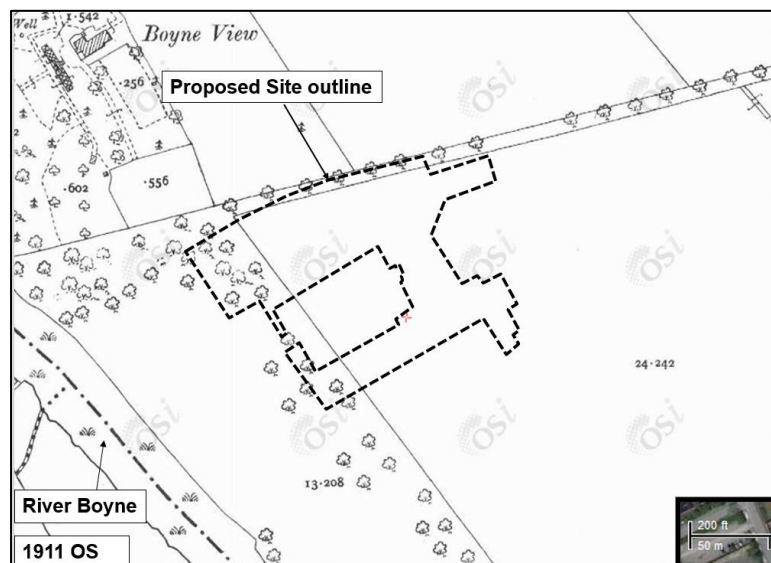
**SUMMARY:** Projecting out of the sides of the sand quarry pit were two early medieval souterrains of which one (Souterrain ME025-049003) was well preserved and archaeological recorded. The second (Souterrain ME025-049001) had been reduced to a few slabs. Further trial trenching works found another souterrain (Souterrain ME025-049003) and proposed a possible fourth (Souterrain ME025-049004). These souterrains are recorded on the SMR as if they have been removed, but the 2007 archaeological report indicates that two ME025-049002, ME025-049003 may survive, a third ME025-049004 may not have been a souterrain at all and the fourth ME025-049001 is probably gone.

The SMR website does not give details of the souterrains nor does it give details of the various archaeological works carried out here. Given the complexity of works

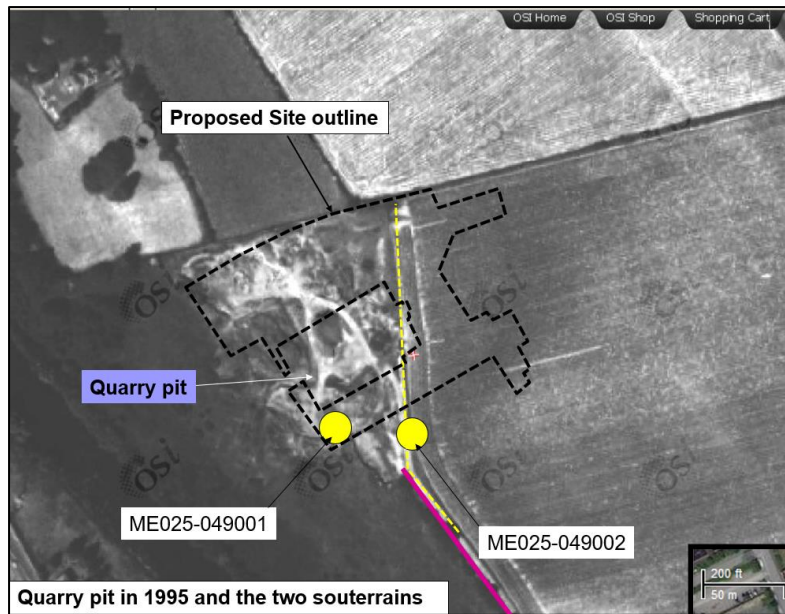
completed at Buvinda House the following text (copied from the 2014 Buvinda House assessment: for 'Civic HQ' read 'Buvinda House') is repeated here:



The 1837 Ordnance Survey shows the site as open fields. It is located in a corner of Athlumney House Demesne. The demesne boundary is lined with trees and there are various trees dotted alongside the River Boyne.



By the c. 1911 OS there is little change from the 1837 OS. It can be assumed that the main field where the Civic HQ is located was under arable cultivation at this time.



By the 1995 Ortho photograph, a large sand and gravel quarry pit has been sunk in the area of the main Civic HQ building. In 1995, an impact statement for the proposed IDA Business Park noted the remains of two early medieval (AD 500–1100) souterrains projecting from the quarry workings.

In 1997 the field now containing the Civic HQ was trial trenched by Sullivan (97E0322). This work failed to identify any archaeological remains – probably because the 1m wide JCB bucket meant the trenches were too narrow; but they were also apparently too deep. Furthermore, only a limited number of trenches were excavated and they seem to have fallen between the main archaeological concentrations in this large field. The closing paragraph in the summary below was later found to be inaccurate. There is, and were, a significant amount of archaeological remains here.

#### Excavations Bulletin Summary:

**Meath; 1997:424; ATHLUMNEY HOUSE, KILCARN; Possible souterrain N875661; SMR 25:49 97E322**

Archaeological test-trenching took place at Athlumney House, Kilcarn, Navan, Co. Meath, between 15 and 17 September 1997. The site is in a field above the flood-plain of the River Boyne. Two souterrains were identified exposed within the quarry during an inspection as part of an Environmental Impact Statement (August 1995). The features were recorded and reported to the Sites and Monuments Record. A souterrain had been recorded near Athlumney House by Sir William Wilde in 1895.

The assessment was undertaken to identify whether there were any indications of Early Christian activity associated with the souterrains.

Eleven test-trenches were mechanically excavated within the area of maximum disturbance of the proposed development. The trenches ranged from 20m to 50m in length and were opened to a depth of 1.3m, sufficient to reveal natural sand and gravel. Trenches 1 and 2 were located along the line of the eastern perimeter of the field on low ground and had a similar stratigraphy. Trench 1 was located at the north-east



quadrant of the field and produced four sherds of medieval pottery found within a grey silt layer containing occasional flecks of charcoal, at a depth of between 0.4m and 0.55m below the present ground surface.

Trench 3 was located parallel with the southern field boundary. It contained a compact brown clay (depth 0.35–0.75m) overlying a grey/brown layer of sand with a high stone content (depth 0.75–0.95m), which in turn overlay a compact gravel (depth 0.95–1.20m). No features of archaeological significance were encountered.

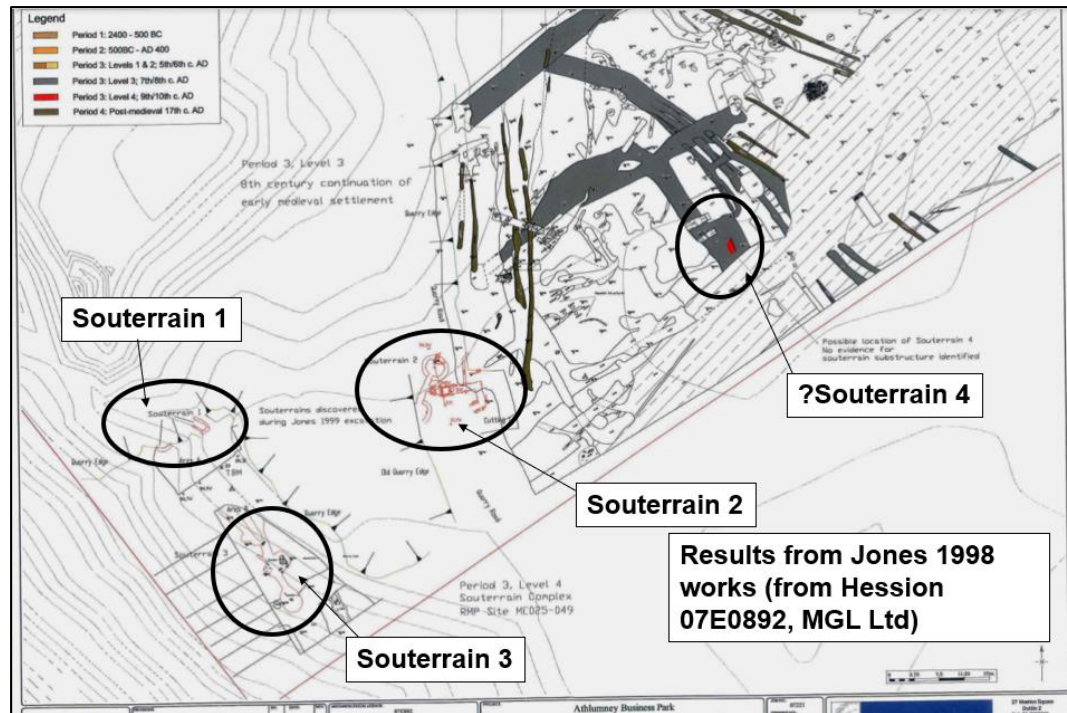
Trenches 4–7 and 10 all contained a similar stratigraphy. They were located on the hillock in the central portion of the field. They failed to produce any structural evidence or artefactual indicators for medieval activity on the site.

Trenches 8 and 9 were located at a distance of c. 50m away from, but along the line of, the quarry at the north-western quadrant of the field. Both revealed a compact stony clay (depth 0.5–0.7m) which overlay a laminated layer of coarse sand (depth 0.7–1.2m). There were no indications of a souterrain in either of these trenches.

Trench 11 comprised a fine sandy clay (depth 0.4–0.6m) overlying fine-grained sand and silt with gravel intrusions (depth 0.6–0.95m). No features of archaeological significance were encountered

There are no archaeological features associated with the souterrains within the area covered by the test-trenches. The only indication of any medieval activity on the site were the body sherds of pottery which occurred within Trench 1, at the north-eastern quadrant of the field. No further excavation was deemed necessary, but licensed monitoring was recommended should any further ground disturbance occur at the north-east of the site.

**E. Eoin Sullivan, c/o Margaret Gowen, Rath House, Ferndale Road, Rathmichael, Co. Dublin.**



In 1999, the souterrains found in 1995 were exposed by Jones (98E0596). Souterrains 1 and 2 were exposed, recorded and then backfilled to be preserved *in-situ*. Also during 1999, 11 trial trenches were cut in the field to the east of the quarry pit. These trenches exposed two further potential souterrains, as well as ditches and patches of ash, pitting and a hearth. The finds recovered (text-box below) are typical of an early medieval date. Souterrains 3 and 4 were noted as ‘potential souterrains’. Souterrain 3 was later confirmed to be an actual souterrain by Hession in 2007. Hession did not find any remains for Jones’ Souterrain 4.

The report for the 1999 work was sent to the National Monuments Service. However, the mapping contained within this report showed the souterrains and areas of trial trenching in the wrong place. This was due to a lack of reference points within the quarry area and no unique survey had been completed for the archaeological works. This resulted in the souterrains being initially recorded in the wrong place on the National Monuments Service Record of Monuments and Places and digital mapping on [archaeology.ie](http://archaeology.ie) (now corrected).

#### Excavations Bulletin Summary:

**Meath. 1999:701. IDA BUSINESS PARK, KILKARN, ATHLUMNEY, NAVAN**  
**Souterrains. SMR 25:49. 98E0596**

The site is set on the high east bank of the River Boyne and consists of four souterrains, an overlying occupation layer and several large ditches. A disused sand quarry had removed the north-western portion of the site. Excavations were carried out between 12 January and 15 March 1999.

Souterrain 1 consisted of two portions truncated by the quarry, a short section of passage and a small portion of a circular chamber. The preserved portion of passage was very short, only 2.1m from the quarry edge to the end of the passage. The passage

was 0.94m wide, ended abruptly and did not widen or constrict at its end. The abrupt south-east end of the passage may be a 'drop' entrance.

Souterrain 2 (See Fig.16) was almost completely intact. It had a ramped entrance, two right-angled left-hand turns in a gradually descending passage, a drop-creep, another short section of passage and then a T-junction with a passage that terminated at each end in a beehive-shaped chamber. The entrance to the souterrain was deliberately blocked with a fill of midden material and stones.

Only the very top stones of Souterrain 3 were exposed. It was planned and photographed and then covered again for preservation. The portion exposed was a 6.5m length of straight passage.

A possible fourth souterrain was encountered in a machine trench and subsequently reburied for preservation. The feature as exposed in the trench was a drystone wall, three courses high. It appeared to be the outside of a souterrain passage wall.

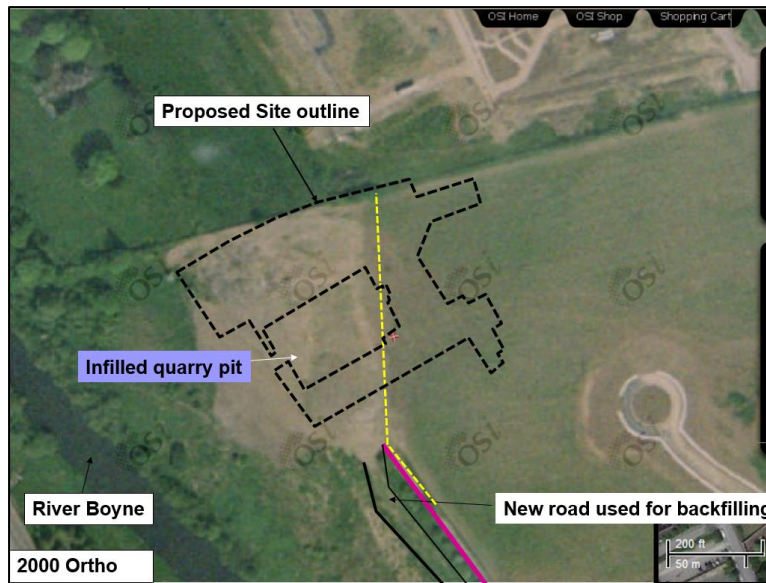
Where the site had not been disturbed by the quarry there was an occupation soil directly below the topsoil. Two hearths and a shallow ditch segment were associated with the occupation layer. Several large ditches were also discovered. All of these ditches contained charcoal and/or domestic animal bones. The ditches do not form an integrated pattern that would suggest a single-phase enclosure. The ditches appear to be the result of several different phases of use of the site but may all be assumed to be roughly contemporary with the souterrains, as there was no evidence of significant activity on the site at other times.

Ditch A was 1.98m deep and 7.2m wide. Ditch B was 1.38m deep and 5m wide. Ditch C was very irregular in the section revealed, and this section may represent two ditches cut into each other. It was 1.5m deep at its deepest and 8.2m wide. Ditch D was 1.6m deep and 3.8m wide. Ditch E was 0.7m deep and 5.1m wide. Ditch F was at least 0.5m deep and 1.2m wide.

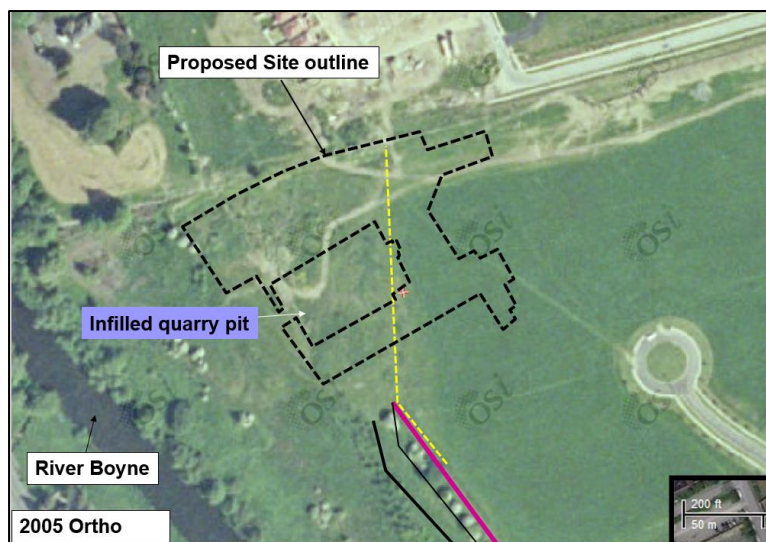
Finds were very scarce on the site. They are awaiting analysis, but a preliminary list includes two bone pins, a glass bead, fragments of lignite bracelets, a bone bead, a few lithic flakes and some metal finds. Carbonised remains of both domestic and wild plants were recovered. The domestic plants were oats, barley, rye and wheat.

**Carleton Jones, 63 Cregaun, Tobartescain, Ennis, Co. Clare.**





Around 1999-2000 the sand and gravel quarry pit was completely filled in. The deep cuttings for the quarry pit are easily visible in the 1995 Ortho. But between the cut-away, central zone and the quarry boundaries are dumped, undulating spoil heaps. These spoil heaps may or may not overlie areas where the sand and gravel (and consequently any archaeological remains if they were there) have been removed. There is a low possibility that archaeological remains still exist in these areas. However, in the works of 2007 (below) it was assumed or seen that all areas within the quarry pit, apart from the preserved souterrains, had been disturbed. On this basis it is still assumed that the quarry pit will probably have disturbed any potential archaeological remains within the quarry boundaries. The quarry pit in the area of Souterrains 1 and 2 had been filled with up to 5m of material in order to level the site (Hession report, 2007).



In 2005 the business park access road was being constructed and these works were archaeologically monitored by M. McQuade for Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd. The monitoring works discovered a site adjacent to the Civic HQ and the 1997 Licence was reactivated as 97E0322 ext. for this work. The summary appeared in the 2007 Excavations Bulletin. The features discussed were fully excavated and removed from the area of the access road (preserved by record).

Excavations Bulletin Summary:

**Meath; 2007:1254; Athlumney; Multi-period settlement; 288358 266708 97E0322 ext.**

This site was located on a greenfield area upslope and to the east of the River Boyne. It lay at 45m OD. A series of archaeological features were identified during monitoring of topsoil-stripping along the route of a local access road joining the IDA business park to the Bothár Sion. It was subsequently agreed that an area measuring 84m by 18m should be excavated in advance of road construction. Three main periods of activity were identified on site. Period 1 was dated to the Final Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. Period 2 was probably Bronze Age, although a precise date was not determined. The third period of occupation was early medieval.

Period 1 was characterised by three cooking pits, a deposit of fire debris and a large pit/ditch. The cooking pits were scattered across the site and ranged from 0.6m by 0.38m to 1.05m by 0.86m. They all had charcoal-rich fills which contained fire-heated stone. A date of 2851–2463 cal BC was obtained on charcoal from one of the pits. A large pit or ditch was partially exposed at the western edge of excavation. The exposed portion measured 2m long, 1.84m wide and 0.38m deep. It had a U-shaped profile and was filled with silty clay.

The second period of occupation was characterised by a large sub-rectangular ditched enclosure which was partially exposed within the area of excavation. The remains of Structure 3 were uncovered within the enclosure and a circular enclosure joined the northern end of the sub-rectangular enclosure.

The eastern side of the sub-rectangular enclosure was represented by a substantial L-shaped ditch, F23, and a linear ditch, F63, which enclosed an area of at least 27.5m by 15m. The ditch F23 measured 2.1m wide and 0.64m deep. Five different fills were identified within it.

Structure 3 was defined by three closely set slot-trenches within the north-eastern part of the sub-rectangular enclosure. These foundation trenches represent the northern (2.2m) and western wall (9m) of a windbreak or some similar type of open-ended structure.

The remains of the circular enclosure were represented by a curvilinear ditch, F59, which was immediately north of the sub-rectangular enclosure. The northern end of the curvilinear ditch had been truncated by modern disturbance, but the remaining section was 15m long, 1.5m wide and 0.54m deep.

There was evidence for two phases of activity during Period 3. Phase 1 was represented by Structure 2 and two linear ditches (probable plot boundaries) to the south of the building. The ditches were cut through the ditch (F23) of the Period 2 sub-rectangular enclosure. During Phase 2, Structure 2 was truncated by a linear ditch which may mark a revised plot boundary and Structure 1 was built. There was also an unused figure-of-eight-shaped kiln on the south of the site. Structure 1 has been dated by radiocarbon analysis to the early medieval period (cal AD 551–643) and it is likely that the other Period 3 features date to in and around the same time. Structure 2 was defined by a curvilinear slot-trench which represents its eastern wall.

The curvature of the slot-trench indicates that Structure 2 had a diameter of 5m. An entranceway at the south of the structure is suggested by a 2.2m-wide gap between the terminal of the slot-trench and the western limit of excavation and it is likely that further remains of Structure 2 lie beyond that edge of the excavation area. There was no evidence for a hearth or for any form of floor surface within Structure 2. The two linear ditches (F17 and F25) were set 8.5m apart and were almost parallel to each other. Both of the ditches were orientated north-east/south-west and extended beyond the limits of excavation. The northern ditch was 0.95m wide and 0.4m deep and the southern ditch was 0.64m wide and 0.38m deep.

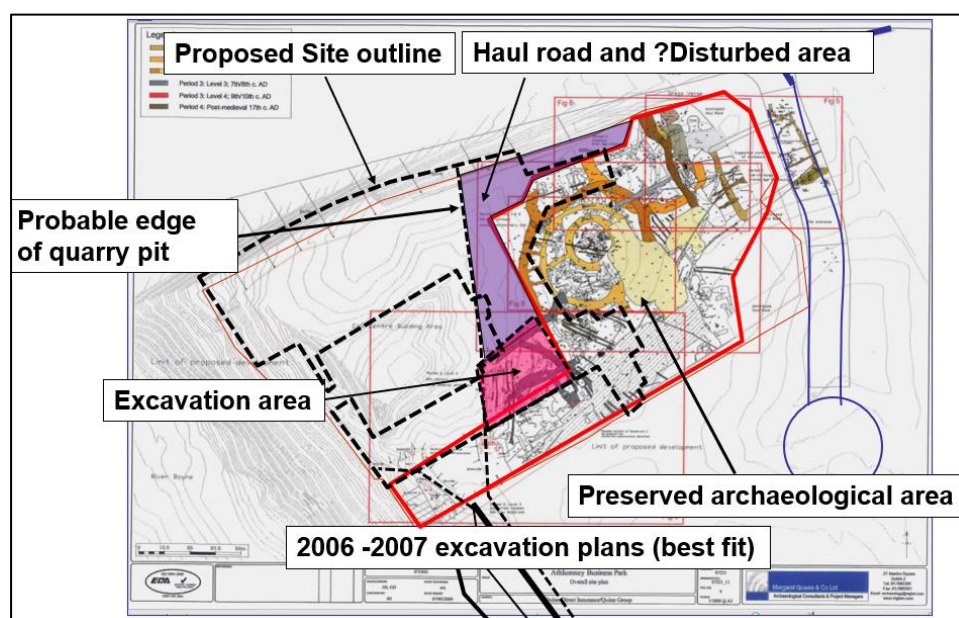
The revised plot boundary, F45, was 4.8m to the north of the boundary ditch F17 and was similar in size.

The foundation remains of Structure 1 were located 6m to the south of the boundary ditch F45. The structure was characterised by three adjoining slot-trenches, F15, F31 and F29, and its remains extended beyond the western limit of excavation. It was similar in size to Structure 2 (6m diameter) and there was a porched entrance (2.5m long) at the east. The entrance feature was represented by the linear slot-trench F31 at the east of the structure.

There was a figure-of-eight-shaped pit on the south of the site. It was 2.44m long, between 0.35m and 0.98m wide and up to 0.2m deep. If this was a kiln there was no indication that it had ever been fired.

Finds from the excavation included several worked flints and a piece of a stone spindle-whorl.

**Melanie McQuade, Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd, 27 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.**



Following on from the creation of the IDA Access Road, the site of the Civic HQ was developed for Quinn Direct Insurance Ltd. The main car parking area was test-trenched in 2006 and a significant amount of archaeology was discovered. The car-park was then



stripped of topsoil in 2007. The stripped area did not include a c. 5m-10m wide haul road around the northern and eastern sides of the site. The boundary to the previous quarry pit was recorded and Souterrains 1, 2 and 3 from the 1999 excavations were found and/or re-exposed. Souterrain 3 was confirmed as a souterrain, but potential Souterrain 4 from 1999 could not be found.

Following exposure and recording of the remains in plan, a phase of ‘preservation *in situ*’ meant that the archaeological remains were covered with geotextile and then a layer 0.80m thick of inert material, with the car park surfacing and planting overlying this. Due to the need to create a roughly level car park with minimal drainage gradients, the actual quantity of dumped, raising material differs in various locations across the site.

The north-eastern corner has a 2-2.7m high bank for planting. This leads to the main car-park area where the central cemetery area now underlies a circular landscape feature 45m in diameter, which is a further 0.50m higher than the car park. This circular feature overlies a cemetery of at least 11-24 human burials dating c.500-1000 AD. To the west of this area, the main car-park surface drops slightly towards the Civic HQ building.

On the northern side of the Civic HQ building is the backfilled quarry pit and it is assumed that no archaeological remains survive here. The Civic HQ building is located within the quarry pit itself. On the southern side of the Civic HQ building is a service ramp leading down to a service/loading area at approx. 5m below adjacent ground level to the south and 2m below embanked lands to the west. Due to the depth of this service area, it is presumed that Souterrain 1 has now been removed. However, due to the ‘best fit’ overlaying from the Hession 07E0892 report, the exact locations are not known. There is an architect’s plan (Todd Architects for Quinn Direct Insurance Ltd, Site Plan No 06076 PL(2-) 03 REV C, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007) that indicates the souterrain locations, and Souterrain 1 is clearly shown in the sunken service area.

Near to the south-western corner is a large cutting for the previous quarry road (now a cul-de-sac) that was used for backfilling the quarry.

Due to the artificially high level of the car park in the south-western corner of the site, a large, embanking spoil heap overflows from the Civic HQ site into the surrounding green area. This large bank runs along the western side of the site, includes a wooden-surfaced path, and forms a kind of terrace. A part of this western area outside the Civic HQ site boundary is located within the previous quarry pit workings, but in an area of dumping.

The new Bothár Sion along the northern side of the site was built without any archaeological discoveries. This road is in a deep cutting that would have removed any archaeological remains if they had been there. Between the fenced boundary for this road and the fenced boundary of the Civic HQ site, there is a grassed footpath owned by the IDA. The Hession report 07E0892 shows the existing iron fence-line to the Civic HQ was already constructed by the time of the archaeological works, and this report also states that almost all the northern limit of the site had already been disturbed and this disturbance is presumed to continue into the grassed footpath. The disturbance could be connected with the previous field boundary or a haul road for backfilling the quarry pit to the west.

**Meath; 2007:1255; ATHLUMNEY; Multi-period site; 288266 266722; ME025–049; 07E0892**

The site is located in the north-west corner of the IDA Navan Business & Technology Park, Dublin Road, Navan, Co. Meath, and is being developed by Quinn Projects as a substantial call centre with associated car-park for the Quinn Direct insurance company.

The site incorporates an archaeological complex, ME025–049, which consists of three souterrains, a fourth possible souterrain and several large contemporary ditches which were excavated by Carleton Jones (on behalf of Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd) in 1999 (Excavations 1999, No. 701, 98E0596). Excavation was also carried out by Melanie McQuade (Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd) in 2006 under licence 97E0322 ext. in an area directly to the east of the current site. The results from this excavation yielded evidence for multi-period settlement which was characterised by a series of cooking pits, a large sub-rectangular ditched enclosure, the remains of three structures, a circular enclosure and several other pits and linear ditch features. Dating evidence indicates that there were four phases of occupation on the site dating to the Final Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, Bronze Age and early medieval periods (McQuade 2006).

In association with the current development testing was carried out by Eoin Sullivan (Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd) under licence 97E0322 (reactivated) which identified a substantial amount of archaeology within the proposed area of development (Sullivan 2006).

The results of the testing programme initiated a mitigation strategy whereby the development was redesigned to facilitate preservation *in situ* of the underlying archaeology. This was accomplished by relocating the building away from its proposed location (the call centre was originally designed to be located at the south-western side of the site where the remains of the four souterrains are located) closer to the Bothár Sion, to the north-west of the souterrain complex, in an area void of archaeological remains (a disused sand quarry). The proposed car-park was also redesigned; the finished level of the car-park was raised, creating a buffer zone or protective layer between the car-park and the archaeology beneath.

The programme of preservation *in situ* was carried out from 10 October to 14 December 2007. Monitoring of the removal of topsoil uncovered an extensive multi-phased complex site which was recorded prior to the construction of the protective buffer zone.

In general the site can be dated to the Early Christian period but there is also evidence of residual prehistoric activity. The archaeological site presents as a multi-vallate enclosure with associated field systems, additional rectangular ditched enclosures and a souterrain complex. The centre of the multi-vallate enclosure was later reused as an Early Christian graveyard.

The multi-vallate enclosure is located centrally within the development site. The most central enclosure ditch (c. 30m in diameter by 3.3m wide by 1.75m deep) is situated on a plateau of high ground on the site. The inner area is characterised by a multitude of intercutting domestic and habitation activity which has been heavily truncated by the later reuse of the enclosure as an Early Christian graveyard. The burials in turn have

been truncated by agricultural features which were present throughout the entire site. The secondary enclosure ditch (50m in diameter by 3.4m wide by 1.25m deep) and tertiary enclosure ditch (70m in diameter by 5.7m wide by 1.3m deep) are positioned around the inner enclosure in an elliptical fashion, with a number of radial link ditches connecting the inner ditches to the outer ditch. The area between the inner and secondary enclosure is characterised by domestic activity (pits, ditches, kilns and hearths). Domestic activity was also evident in the space between the second and third enclosures.

To the east of the enclosure, a series of intercutting rectangular ditched enclosures were identified, which provisionally tie in with the results of McQuade's 2006 excavation. To the south-west of the multi-vallate enclosure a plethora of intercutting domestic and habitation features were evident (pits, ditches, post-holes and slot-trenches) leading towards the souterrain complex. The souterrain complex lay in an area heavily disturbed by quarrying activity which resulted in the truncation of features in proximity to the quarry edge.

The habitation features within the inner enclosure, between the enclosing ditches and the souterrain complex, indicate that the multi-vallate enclosure functioned primarily in a domestic capacity. The rectangular ditch enclosures to the east point to a series of earlier and later activity having taken place. The enclosure has also been reused as an Early Christian burial-ground with the remains of eighteen east-west inhumation burials identified within the inner enclosure/inner enclosing ditch. A number of individuals have been buried in stone-lined lintel graves within the inner enclosure itself, with seven individuals buried within the inner enclosure ditch. On the basis of the recovery of the ring from a ringed pin (Fanning 1994), a bone comb, and a bone pin from within the inner enclosure area, it can be concluded that the site was active in the 9th/10th century AD (although both earlier and later activity was evident).

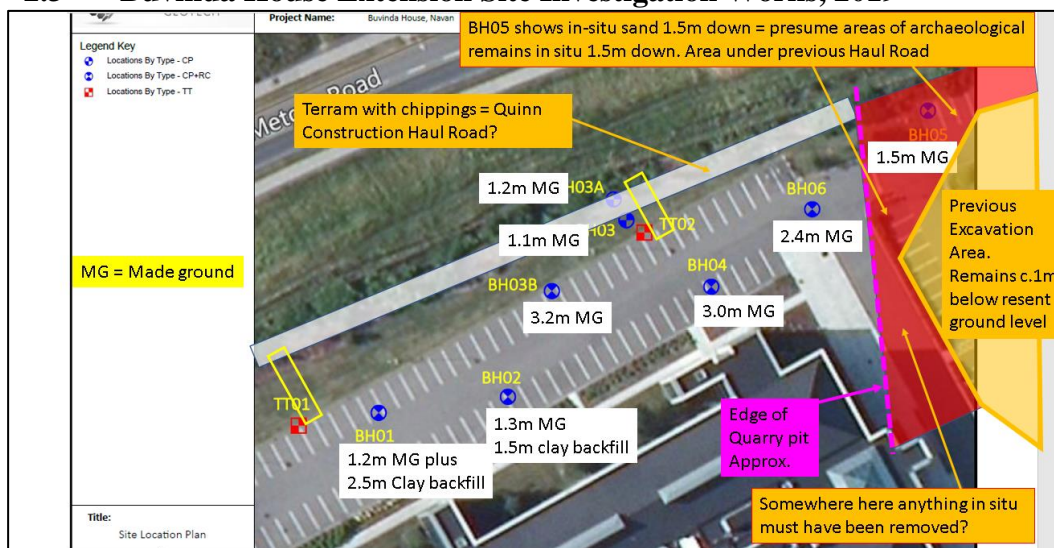
#### References

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McQuade, M. 2006 Archaeological Monitoring and Excavation, Athlumney, Co. Meath. Unpublished report for Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd.  
**James Hession, Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd, 27 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.**

A review of the Excavations bulletin has shown that between 1994 and 2008 there were 12 licensed archaeological works in Athlumney townland. Of these, only those within and adjacent to the boundary of the Civic HQ revealed archaeological remains (summarised in the text boxes above). The rest found nothing of archaeological significance.



## 2.3 Buvinda House Extension Site Investigation Works, 2019



The above shows BH1, BH2, BH3, BH4 + BH6 are all in the previous quarry pit. BH5 appears to be in an area of in-situ sands that are 1.5m down. The Red Area is possibly an area that was preserved in situ underneath the construction haul road for the Quinn development. This is an area that is outside the area shown as preserved in situ on the 2007 Hession report and also does not seem to be the area of the quarry pit as seen on 1995 and other archaeological report mapping.

Limited archaeological remains are possible in this area. Somewhere in the southern half of this area, the construction works for the present Buvinda House must presumably have truncated the zone between the previous quarry pit and the preserved excavation area. However, the details of this zone are not clear.

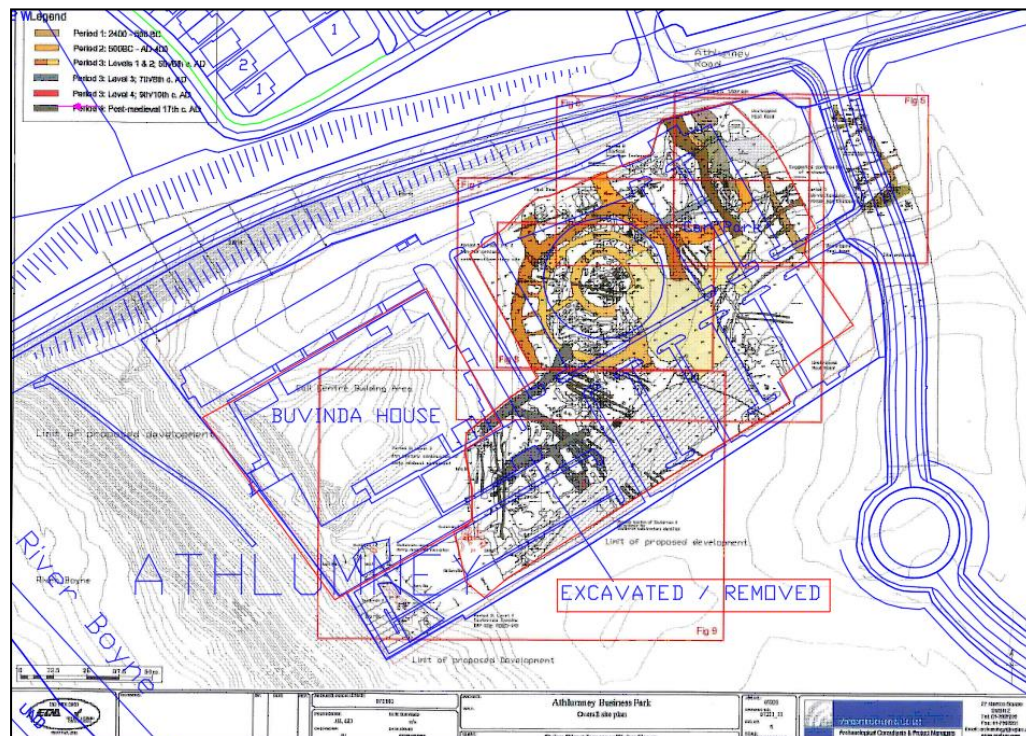
The orange area is the approx. extent of the previous mapped excavation. This area was recorded with archaeological remains preserved in situ. Below is a compilation map of previous excavation area, Buvinda House and Red Area of uncertainty with dashed pink line showing edge of the quarry pit.

TT1 and TT2 both showed geotextile and chippings and this is presumed to be the Quinn Construction Haul Road as seen in photos from the 2007 archaeology report.

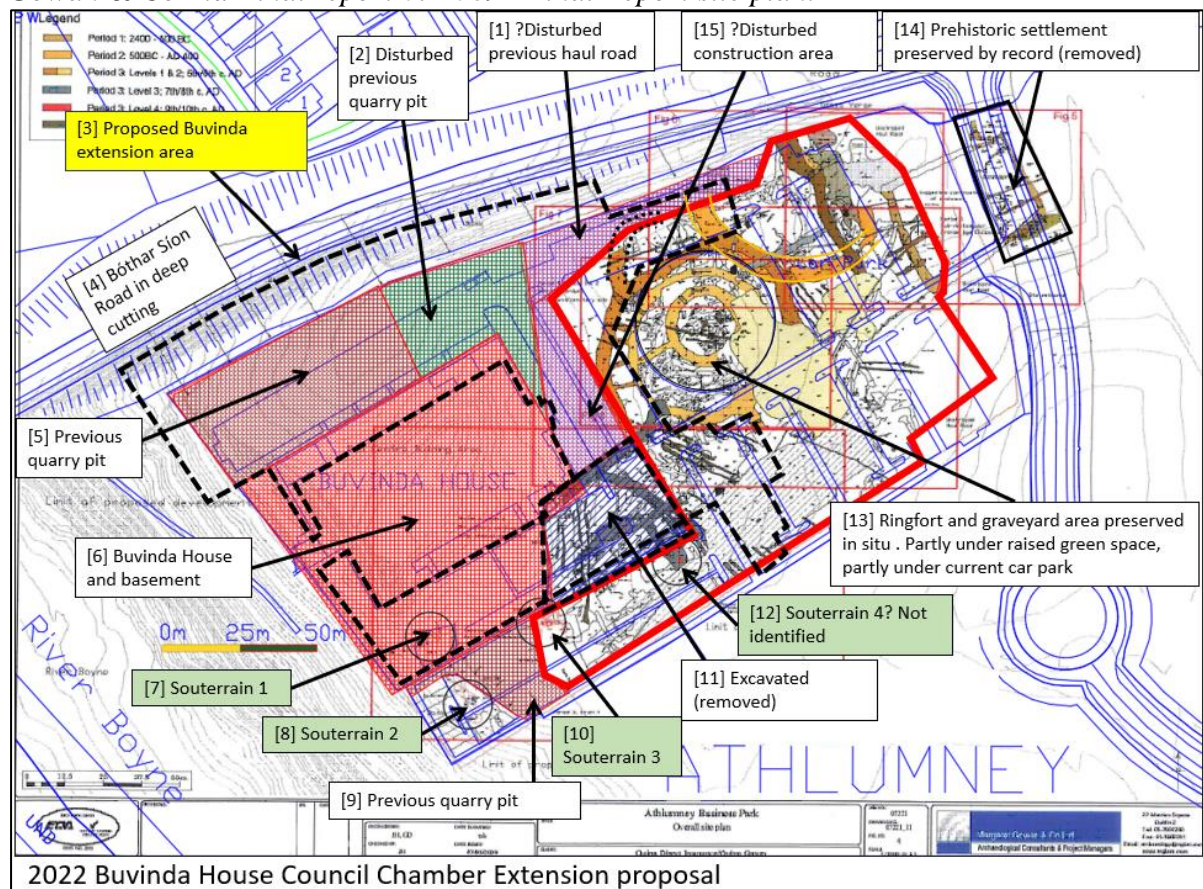




### 3 OUTLINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO PROPOSED WORKS



*Buvinda House AutoCAD drawing overlaid on the James Hession c/o Margaret Gowan & Co Ltd Final report 07E0892 Final Report site plan.*



*Buvinda House discussion areas.*



**[1] ?Disturbed previous haul road**

The two 'Plates' below show the area that is subsequently referred to as the 'Haul Road' in the 07E0892 report. This area runs along the southern side of the Buvinda House northern boundary with Bothar Sion. The irregularities in the fenceline show this is facing ENE in the NE part of the site. A considerable amount of uncleared topsoil can be seen remaining on the stripped surface and Plate 2 shows a layer of geotextile being laid in advance of stone being imported for the haul road. NOTE: this geotextile was for haul road construction, not for preserving any archaeological remains in situ. In the 2007 archaeological report this area is referred to as 'modern disturbance' – perhaps visible on left in Plate 1 - so no (or few) archaeological remains are expected here.

Ditch C295 referred to in Plate 1 can be seen to be curving around to the east and this curve is not reflected in the Final Report plan, presumably because it was under the haul road area. By overlay the Haul Road works seem to be around 8.5m wide from the northern boundary, flaring to 15m wide at the western end.

The 07E0892 Final Report figures show no archaeological remains to the west of Ditch C295 or north-west of western enclosure ditch C94 (both ditches appear contemporary).



Plate 1 Topsoil removal along Area A. Ditch C295. Looking northeast  
Topsoil stripping in advance of the haul road along the northern side of the site





**Plate 2** Placing of terram over stripped area prior to importation of stone

The geotextile is the white mass in the distance. This shows the haul road to be around 15-20m wide

### **[2] Disturbed adjacent to previous quarry pit**

This area is seen in the Ortho photos from 1995, 2000 and 2005. This area is certainly disturbed, but to what depth is not known. The disturbance may be limited to the topsoil only, in which case archaeological remains, if any occurred here, may have the potential to survive.

### **[3] Proposed Buvinda extension area**

The basic outline to the Buvinda House extension is to keep it within areas that have already been truncated from previous quarry or construction works as far as possible. To this end the building is proposed to be an extension northwards of Buvinda House, separated by a narrow green / public space. The Council Chamber Extension would comprise a chamber to the north-east of Buvinda House so that it could face the front (east) end of Buvinda House and also any approaching persons. A paved apron would surround this building and there would be amendments to the road pavements and car parking areas. From an outline sketch the area of construction works is outlined above.

### **[4] Bóthar Síon Road in deep cutting**

Bóthar Síon was trial trenched with minimal archaeological trenches and monitored during construction (03E0613 Testing 2003 and monitoring 2004 below). Neither works found any archaeological remains. Map overlay also shows that the previous quarry pit extended into this area (excavation summaries included below as they were not included in the 2014 report).

### **2003:1356 - Athlumney and Limekiln, Meath**

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Athlumney and Limekiln  
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 03E0613  
**Author:** Graham Hull, Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd, 2 Killiney View, Albert Road Lower, Glenageary, Co. Dublin.  
**Site type:** No archaeological significance  
**ITM:** E 687132m, N 758337m  
**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.567686, -6.68459

Test-trenches were excavated on both banks of the River Boyne in advance of construction of a new road bridge. The bridge is 2km east of Navan town and links the R161 to the R153. Modern made ground and alluvial silts were noted, but archaeological deposits or artefacts were not identified.

### **2004:1172 - ATHLUMNEY/LIMEKILNHILL/BALREASK OLD, Meath**

**County:** Meath **Site name:** ATHLUMNEY/LIMEKILNHILL/BALREASK OLD  
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** SMR 25:49 **Licence number:** 03E0613  
**Author:** Emer Dennehy, Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd, 27 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.  
**Site type:** No archaeological significance  
**ITM:** E 688194m, N 768386m  
**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.657794, -6.665718

Monitoring of all topsoil clearance associated with the construction of the R161-R153 link road, Navan, Co. Meath, took place over a four-day period in June/July 2004. The proposed road passes through the townlands of Athlumney, Limekilnhill and Balreask Old to its crossing point on the River Boyne. A portion of this road had previously been built during the construction of the IDA industrial estate and neighbouring housing developments. As a result, the portion of the road monitored under the current licence measured just 615m in length, the western 85m of which relates to the construction of a bridge over the River Boyne. The location points of the pier beds and bridge abutments were tested by Graham Hull in 2003 (Excavations 2003, No. 1356, 03E0613) and were found to be archaeologically sterile.

In total the area of road-take subject to monitoring measured 530m east-west by 17m. The site compound, measuring 100m east-west by 20m, was also monitored. A track machine utilising a flat grading bucket removed the topsoil to an average depth of 0.4m. The underlying subsoil was predominantly composed of a yellow/brown silt clay with occasional pockets of sand. Larger deposits of sand occurred at Chainages 1470-1510 and 1560-1580, supporting the presence of sand quarried in the area. The topsoil on the east wall of the River Boyne valley survived to an average depth of just 0.1m; in this area the underlying subsoil was a leached yellow/blue clay. No artefacts or stratigraphy of an archaeological nature were identified during the course of monitoring ground disturbance works.

#### **[5] Previous quarry pit**

**[6] Buvinda House and basement.** Originally constructed 2007-8 for Quinn Insurance Ltd.

### **[7] Souterrain 1**

There is a large, deep basement area for Buvinda House, but this end of the site is raised considerably from the previous ground level. As a result it is possible that parts of souterrain ME025-049001 (already truncated by the quarry pit) survives below the basement slab. However, such a survival is considered as unlikely.

### **[8] Souterrain 2**

Remains preserved in situ below car park. Most of this souterrain appeared to have been dismantled or robbed in antiquity.

### **[9] Previous quarry pit**

The quarry pit [5]=[9] ran to a haul road alongside the River Boyne upper side in the south-east direction.

### **[10] Souterrain 3**

Souterrain ME025-049003. This is the only substantial remains of a souterrain on the site. The souterrain was planned in detail in 1998 (98E0596). It was left in situ during the 2007 works and not re-exposed.

### **[11] Excavated (removed)**

This is an area of the site that was archaeologically excavated in 2007. However, there is no surveyed area of the limits of this excavation. The excavation was required by the Buvinda House basement and associated ramp.

### **[12] Souterrain 4? Not identified**

A souterrain ME025-049004 was proposed here in 1998 (98E0596). However, the 2007 works did not find a souterrain here: but they did not dig down very far into a few large areas of disturbance.

### **[13] Ringfort and graveyard area preserved in situ. Partly under raised green space, partly under current car park**

A substantial area of buried archaeological remains. However, map overlay shows that the archaeological levels are consistently a minimum of 0.70m-1.00m below present ground level and sometimes up to 3m below.

### **[14] Prehistoric settlement preserved by record (removed)**

### **[15] ?Disturbed construction area**

This area is not really mentioned in the 2007 report. It is clearly outside the limits of excavation at that time and it seems reasonable to assume it was disturbed either through quarry pit works or from construction of Buvinda House.

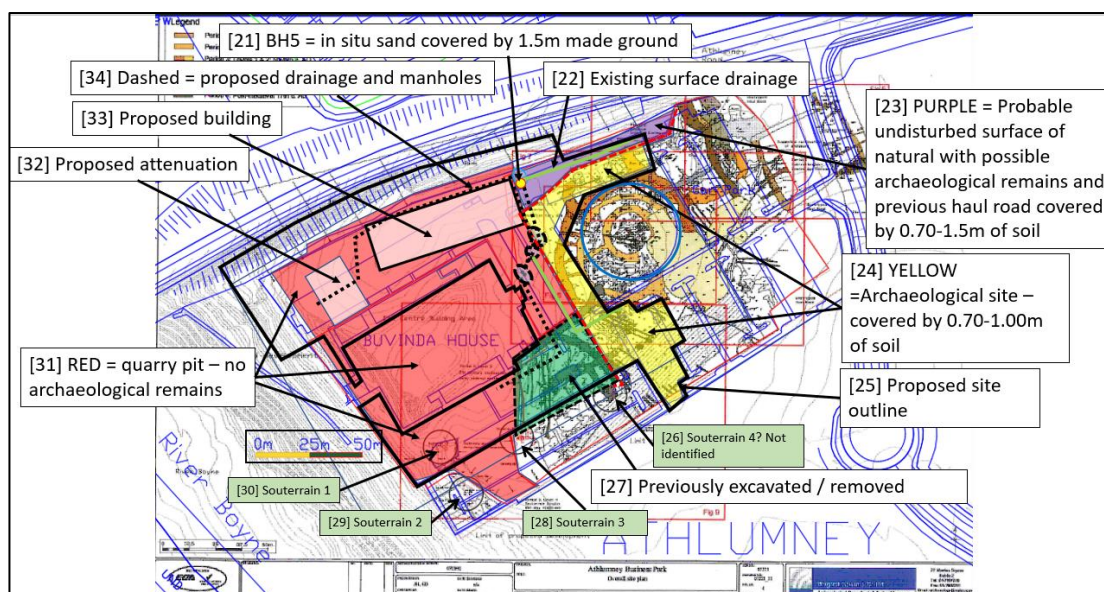
#### **4      ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE**

There are no Protected Structures on or adjacent to the site.



## 5 DETAILED DESIGN PROPOSALS

Detailed design progressed in 2022 has lead to a more accurate assessment of the potential of the site as shown below.



[21] BH5 = in situ sand covered by 1.5m made ground. This might be the top of truncated natural levels cut by archaeological features (if they exist) or the upper c. 0.50m-0.70m of natural sand levels may have been truncated. In that case, this truncation would also have removed any potential archaeological remains.

[22] Existing surface drainage. Some to be reused – some to be made redundant.

[23] PURPLE = Probable undisturbed surface of natural with possible archaeological remains and previous haul road covered by 0.70-1.5m of soil

[24] YELLOW = Archaeological site – covered by 0.70-1.00m of soil

[25] Proposed Extension site outline to include compound and proposed car parking

[26] Souterrain 4? Not confirmed. May survive in situ.

[27] Archaeological area previously excavated / removed– no archaeological remains

[28] Souterrain 3: probably preserved in situ

[29] Souterrain 2: probably preserved in situ

[30] Souterrain 1: probably removed

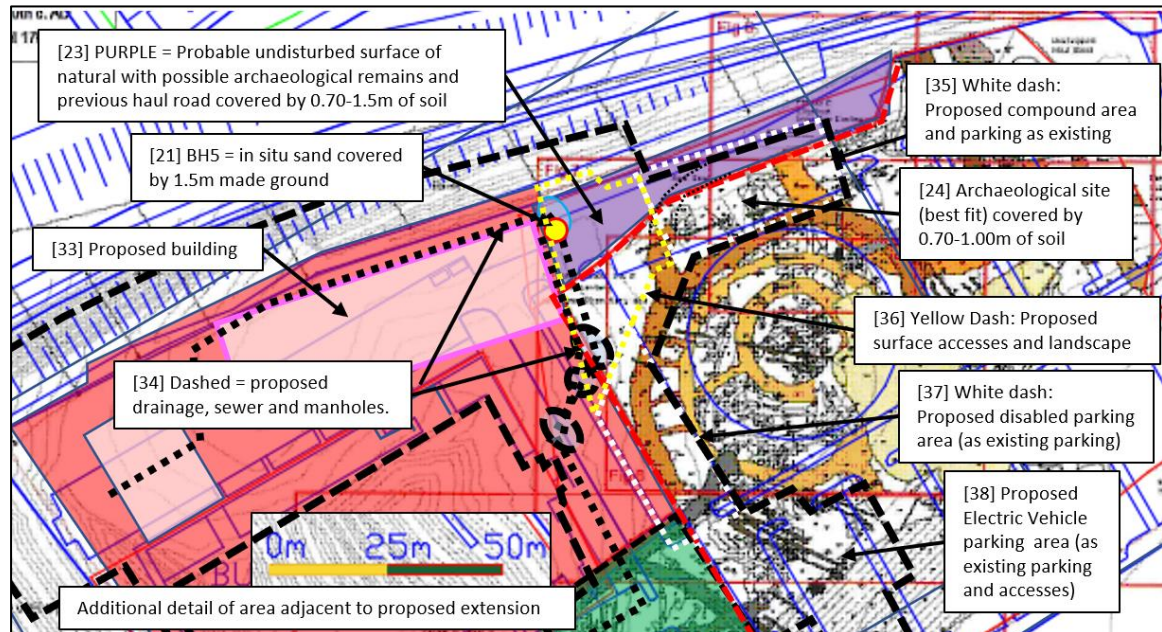
[31] RED = quarry pit – no archaeological remains

[32] Proposed attenuation in previous quarry pit– no archaeological remains

[33] Proposed building in previous quarry pit– no archaeological remains

[34] Dashed = proposed drainage and manholes

The image below shows a more detailed view of the area at the eastern and north-eastern end of the proposed Buvinda House extension where some drainage runs are likely to run through the area of the previous archaeological site. However, this is not considered to be an issue since no archaeological remains are noted in this area on the 2007 archaeological plans.

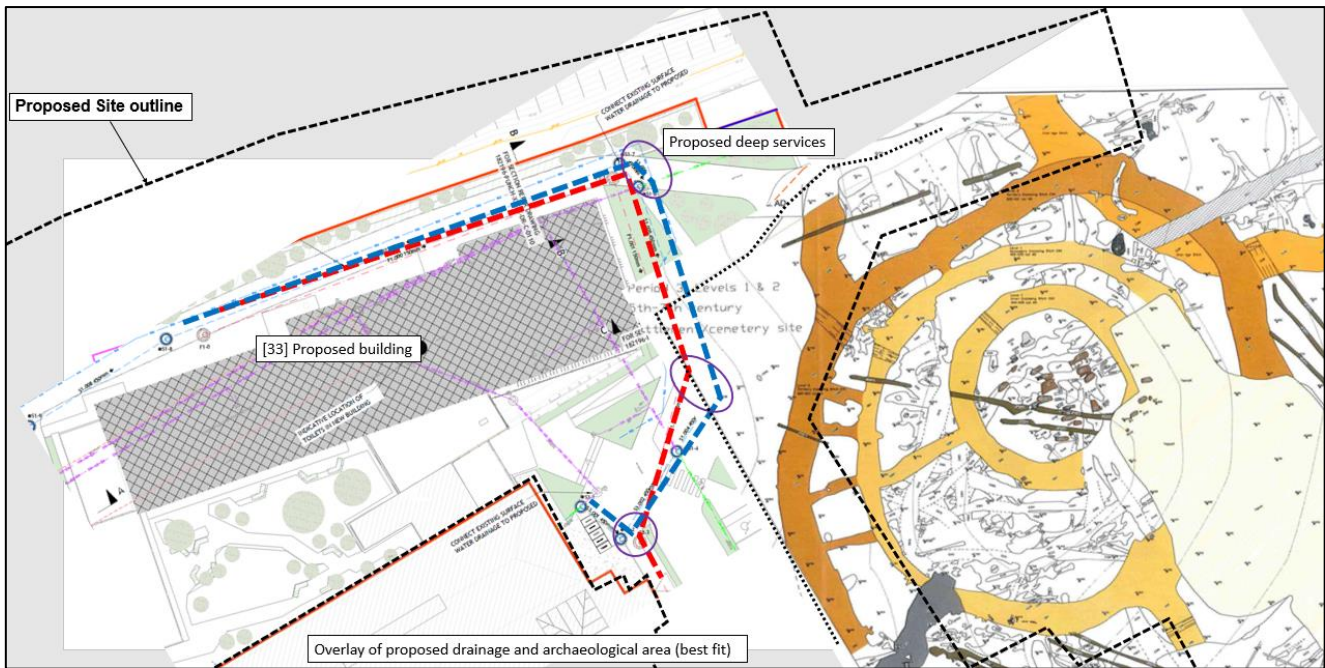


[35] White dash: Proposed compound area and parking as existing. No deep works or impact.

[36] Yellow Dash: Proposed surface accesses and landscape. Includes some deep works [34], but otherwise no impact.

[37] White dash: Proposed disabled parking area (as existing parking). No deep works or impact.

[38] Proposed Electric Vehicle parking area (as existing parking and accesses). No deep works or impact.

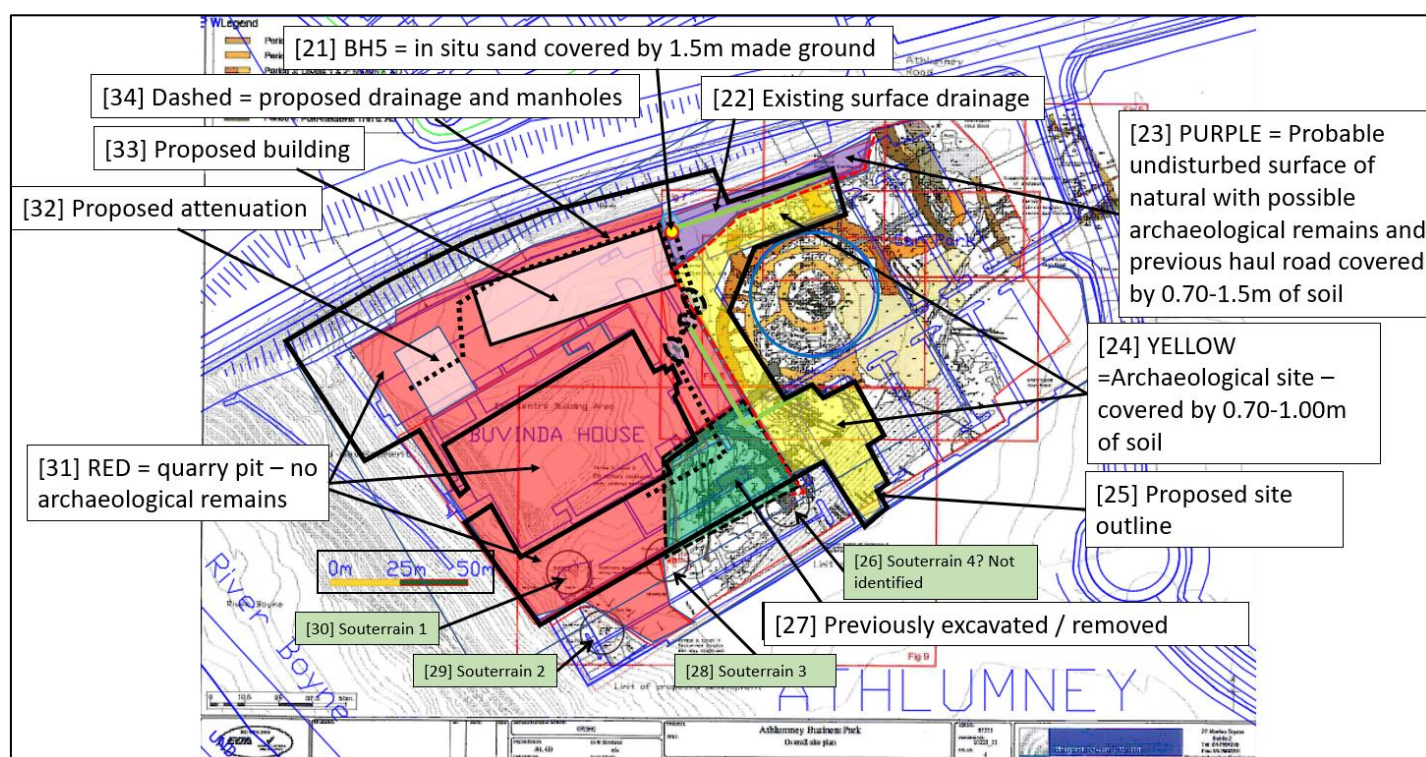


Extract from design drawings focusing on existing and new drainage (Blue) / foul sewers (Red) (dashed lines as [34] above). The 2007 report does not show any archaeological remains in this corner of the site to be crossed by the proposed services.



## 6 DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Discussion



The finalised design is summarised in the image above. The red zone [31] represents the now-backfilled sand quarry with Buvinda House in the middle and the proposed Extension [33] on the northern side. The quarry runs into the deep cutting for Bóthar Sion to the north and also into an area of previous archaeological excavation [27]. The presumption for the areas [31], [27] and Bóthar Sion above is that there are no archaeological remains.

The zone [24] in front of the eastern face of Buvinda House is the present access road, hedge and western line of car parking. Some of this area [31] (marked in red above) is not shown as under excavation in the previous archaeological report, but it also does not seem to be part of the quarry pit seen on ortho and other mapping. However, it is presumed that this area has been removed either from the quarry or from the construction of Buvinda House. If there is any archaeological remains here, they are 1.0m-1.50m below present ground level.

Along the northern side of the site was the 2007 haul road [23] that was around 10-15m wide. This area was stripped during 2007 construction works and not fully assessed archaeologically before the haul road was built. The 2007 archaeology report and the 2019 Extension Site Investigation Test Pits shows a layer of terram / geotextile and chippings which seem to match the haul road noted in 2007. Along most of the haul road area [23] above, there is a moderate to high potential for archaeological remains below the layer of geotextile – which is itself between 1m and 1.50m below present ground level.



The northern side of the archaeological site yellow area [24] is a sensitive zone of preserved archaeological remains that are located around 0.70m – 1.00m below present ground level. The western side (in front of Buvinda House) part of area [24] shows archaeological remains associated with the preserved ringfort. The southern part of yellow area [24] overlies some medieval or post-medieval furrows and a field system that was not fully assessed during the 2007 works. This whole yellow [24] area was probably not covered by geotextile and is currently occupied by various rows of existing parking spaces, accesses and green landscaping.

The large multi-vallate ringfort that underlies most of the Buvinda House eastern car park has been preserved at an average of 0.70m below present ground level. The main area of known human burials is below the raised, circular grassed area (blue circle above)

The area [23] was not very thoroughly investigated before it was reburied and at least half this area was never planned: so its archaeological potential is not really known. Some archaeological remains – probably some deep ditches at least – are likely to occur in this area.

Souterrain [26] was labelled from an early survey but the main excavation phase did not confirm it. Again, this area was not subject to overall detailed works. Souterrains [29] and [30] had been previously recorded, but the details of how they were ‘preserved’ are not known. They are thought to lie around 2.5m-3.0m below present ground level. It is assumed that Souterrain [28] was removed during Buvinda House construction.

## **6.2 Archaeological Impact**

The presumed archaeological impact of the Buvinda House project is considered to be minimal. Presumably most of the services can be accommodated within the 0.70m (minimum) deep soils that overlie any archaeological remains.

However, where works are predicted to go down below 0.70m *where they are not within the zone of the previous quarry pit* then these will require archaeological monitoring.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Meath County Council  
Bucholz McEvoy Architects  
Punch Consulting Engineers

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[www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie) – Ordnance Survey aerial photographs (1995, 2000 & 2005) and historic OS mapping (first edition 6" and 25"). <http://map.geohive.ie/mapviewer.html>

<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/> -National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php> Down Survey mapping  
Google Maps