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Archaeological Impact Assessment

At Church of the Annunciation, Finglas, Co. Dublin

May 2024

**Client:** Dublin City Council

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# 1 Introduction

A pre-planning archaeological impact assessment was undertaken by John Purcell Archaeological Consultancy to evaluate the cultural heritage impact of a proposed development at the Church of the Annunciation, Finglas, Co. Dublin. This report has been prepared on behalf of the Dublin City Council. The primary aim of the report is to assess the potential impact of the development on the archaeological and historical landscape.

The assessment is based on extensive documentary and cartographic research from a variety of sources, including but not limited to the Record of Monuments and Places, the Sites and Monuments Records, the topographical files of the National Museum, the Development Plan, local sources, and other literary and documentary references. Additionally, previous excavations in the vicinity were reviewed to provide a comprehensive analysis.

This report was compiled by John Purcell of John Purcell Archaeological Consultancy.



**Figure 1: Location of development**

## **2 Receiving Environment**

The study area centres on the site of the now demolished Church of the Annunciation, Cappagh Road, Finglas. The site is within the townland of Finglas West. This church was constructed in the 1960's and demolished in 2021. The site is located at the junction of Cappagh Road and Cardiffsbridge Road to the west of Finglas Village. The site contained a now demolished, 20<sup>th</sup> century church, parking spaces and a landscaped lawn area at the west (Figure 1).

## **3 Methodology**

This report has been prepared having regard to the following guidelines;

- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government, 2018)
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (European Commission, 2017)
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022)
- Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Bill, 2006
- Heritage Act 1995
- Frameworks and Principles for the protection of Archaeological Heritage 1999
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments and the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 2000
- Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.

### **3.1 Study Methodology**

This assessment consists of a paper survey identifying all recorded sites within the vicinity of the proposed development, a site inspection and the results of archaeological test trenching.

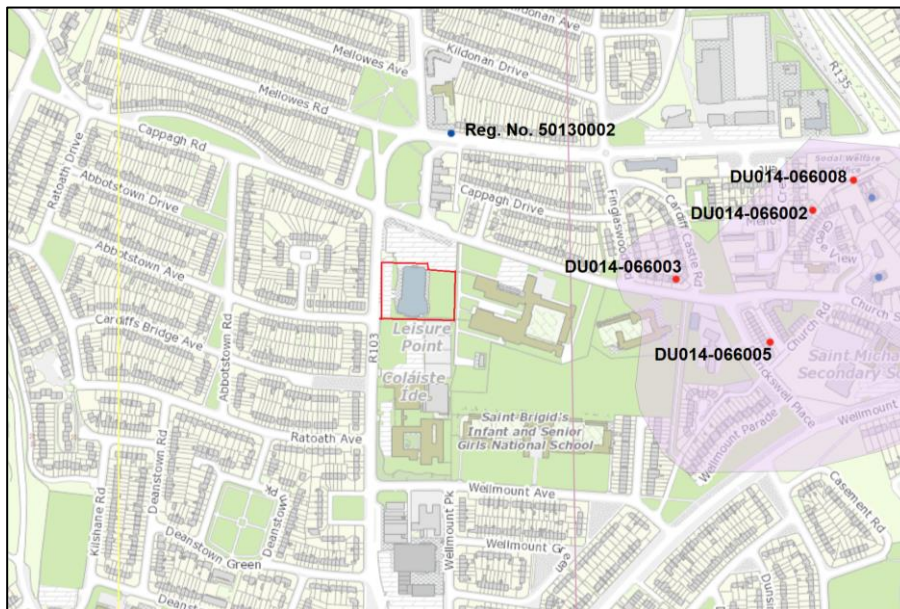
The desktop survey undertaken consisted of a document and cartographic search utilising a number of sources including the following:

- Record of Monuments and Places (RMP); The RMP records known

upstanding archaeological monuments, the original location of destroyed monuments and the location of possible sites identified through, documentary, cartographic, photographic research and field inspections.

- The RMP consists of a list, organised by county and subdivided by 6" map sheets showing the location of each site. The RMP data is compiled from the files of the Archaeological Survey.
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage; The inventory of architectural heritage lists all post 1700 structures and buildings in the country. This includes structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social, scientific or technical importance.
- County Development Plans; The county development P
- plans were consulted to ascertain if any structures listed in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and/or any Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) were to be impact by the proposed development.
- Cartographic Sources; the following maps were examined: Down Survey (1656-1658), 1st edition Ordnance Survey Maps (1836-1846) and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey Maps (1908).
- Literary Sources; various published sources, including local and national journals, were consulted to establish a historical background for the proposed development site. Literary sources are a valuable means of completing the written record of an area and gaining insight into the history of the environs of the proposed development. Principal archaeological sources include: Local Journals; Published archaeological and architectural inventories; Peter Harbison's Guide to the National Monuments of Ireland; and O'Donovan's Ordnance Survey Letters.
- Previous archaeological assessments and excavations for the area were also reviewed.
- Topographical files are located at the National Museum of Ireland and detail stray finds across the country.

**Figure 2: Site boundary with archaeological monuments marked**



## **4 General Archaeological and Historical Summary**

### **4.1 Brief Archaeological Background Dublin**

Finglas village is located to the northwest of Dublin City. Dublin city's origins trace back to the 9th century when it was founded by Viking settlers on the banks of the River Liffey. The name "Dublin" is derived from the Irish "Dubh Linn," meaning "black pool," which referred to a dark tidal pool where the River Poddle met the River Liffey. Archaeological excavations have revealed Viking longhouses, burial sites, and artifacts, underscoring Dublin's significance as a Viking trading and military hub. By the late 11th century, there was a suburb of Dublin north of the Liffey centred around Smithfield and Stonybatter.

Following the Norman invasion of Ireland in the late 12th century, Dublin underwent significant transformation. The Normans established Dublin Castle as a seat of power. In 1152, the Bishop of Dublin was made an Archbishop. Between 1172 and 1191, the Cathedral of Christchurch was rebuilt. In 1213, the parish Church of St. Patrick was also made a cathedral. In the early 13th century, a stone wall was constructed to protect the settlement. In 1229, Dublin gained its first mayor. Dublin

grew rapidly and may have had a population of 8,000 by the 13th century. The street pattern from this period survives in parts of the city's current layout.

During the late medieval period, Dublin continued to grow as a commercial center.

The city saw the establishment of numerous religious institutions, such as monasteries and abbeys, which played vital roles in education and healthcare, extending the city's wealth and influence. The dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII led to the transfer of this wealth to a new ruling elite.

In the 16th century, Dublin expanded outside the walled town. In 1591, Queen Elizabeth granted a charter for a new university, Trinity College. The first students were admitted in 1594. In 1621, a Custom House was built. In 1662, Phoenix Park was laid out as a deer park. The 17th and 18th centuries marked continued expansion of Dublin. The city saw the construction of Georgian buildings, wide streets, and public squares. Developments include the construction of St. Stephen's Green, the Four Courts, and several hospitals. The 17th century also saw an influx of Huguenot settlers expelled from Catholic France. Many of these settled in the Newmarket area of the city.

The 19th century brought industrialization, further urban expansion, and social changes. Dublin's port facilities were modernized, facilitating increased trade. The development of the canal, railway networks, and improved road networks connected Dublin more efficiently with the rest of Ireland.

#### **4.2 Brief Archaeological Background Finglas**

Finglas Village, located northwest of Dublin city, has a rich history and significant archaeological heritage dating back to early medieval times. The village's name, derived from the Irish "Fionnghlas," meaning "clear stream" or "white stream," reflects its ancient origins and natural features. Historical records indicate that Finglas became an important ecclesiastical site from the 6th century, with the establishment of a monastic settlement by St. Canice.

Archaeological investigations in Finglas have revealed significant remnants of its monastic past, including early Christian burial sites, cross slabs, and the foundations of ecclesiastical building.

The village also saw substantial development during the Norman period, with the construction of defensive structures like motte-and-bailey castles marking it as a site

of strategic importance. Evidence for a wall surrounding the medieval settlement of Finglas has been recorded. This wall dates from the 13-15<sup>th</sup> century and appears to have been reinforced in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Cardiffstown Castle was constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A number of other 17<sup>th</sup> century structures are recorded in the area showing the continuation of the settlement. 19<sup>th</sup> century maps for the areas show Finglas as a small village. The areas became a large suburb for Dublin in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **4.3 Archaeological Monuments**

A number of archaeological monuments are located in the wider environs of the proposed development, these are centred around the medieval settlement of Finglas to the east of the study area. The details of these sites have been taken from archaeology.ie and are outlined below.

DU014-066008-

Class: Town defences

Townland: FINGLAS EAST

The N section of 'King William's Rampart' forms a boundary wall to the present Vicarage garden and the S boundary of the car park. It runs in a NE-SW direction (L 80m, Wth 3.5-6m, H 1.5-3.5m). Both faces are revetted with stone walling. In the W end of the rampart is a vaulted chamber entered from a round-arched opening. The vault runs N-S (dims. L 3.7m, Wth 3.6m, H 2m. ). It is lit by slit opes. Between 1986 and 1994 excavations in the immediate vicinity of the site produced 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>-century pottery and evidence for an E extension to the rampart (Cotter 1992, 16). This site may be interpreted as fortifications erected by the Duke of Ormonde in 1649 (Anon 1897, 452; Joyce 1912, 270-1).

This S portion of 'King William's Rampart' lies S of Cappagh Road. A lane runs along the S face of the earthwork. It comprises a continuous section of flat-topped bank which takes a sharp bend (H 3m, Wth 3.2m, L 48m. ). The S face was formerly faced by a buttressed wall (Joyce 1902, 270). It is overgrown with ash and thorn.

Traditionally associated with King William, who is said to have camped in Finglas



after the Battle of the Boyne, 1690, (Anon 1897, 452). Investigations by OPW of the site uncovered 15th-century pottery which suggests that the ramparts may be the remains of a stockade built to protect the manorial estate founded by Archbishop Comyn in 1181. Test excavations in 1995 confirmed that the rampart continued along the N perimeter of the present site. Archaeological deposits with a date range of 14th-17th centuries were built up around it (Halpin 1995, 25).

DU014-066002-

Class: Ritual site - holy well

Townland: FINGLAS EAST

This is a natural spring enclosed within a railing and embellished with a monument to St Patrick, murals and a grotto. A stone-lined bath in the front may have been built in the 1760's when the well was developed as a spa (Daly 1957, 20; Ó Danachair 1958, 76). This was a station well according to the Ordnance Survey Name Books. The waters were thought to cure sore eyes and inveterate ulcers. Still venerated. Daly (1957, 20) recorded the following details about this well; 'Near Finglas village was another St. Patrick's well. A short time prior to 1760 a stone arch was built over it, on account of cures which it had effected and for many years people visited there for the curing of sore eyes and inveterate ulcers. Patients applied rags dipped in the water to the affected part as well as drinking some of the water'.

DU014-066003-

Class: House - 17th century

Townland: CARDIFFSCASTLE

Named on the 1st edition OS 6-inch map (1837) as 'Cardiff castle in ruins'. The OS 6-inch map shows an L-shaped building N of the road. This area has since been developed. Not visible at ground level.

DU014-066005-

Class: House - 16th/17th century

Townland: FINGLAS WEST

A manor established by Archbishop Comyn in 1181 appears to have been on the present site of the convent which on the 1st edition OS 6-inch map (1843) is called Springmount, later known as Fortwilliam. In 1228 Archbishop Luke established an

episcopal residence on the site. During the period that Alexander de Bicknor held the See of Dublin 1317-1319, this residence became known as the Court. It was a substantial mansion. There are references to stone walls, leaden gutters, iron bars, kitchen, brewhouse and furnaces (Ball 1920, 85). The Civil survey (1654-6) mentions a 'stone house' at Oldcourt on the church farm at Finglas (Simington 1945, 140). Excavations in 1992 failed to reveal any traces of the site (O'Flanagan 1993, 27). Further excavations in 1995 revealed the walls of a rectangular, two-roomed structure (L 20m, Wth 4.5m) associated with 16th-17th century material. This has been interpreted as an out-building associated with Fortwilliam (Halpin 1996, 24-25).

### **4.3 Previous Archaeological Works**

The archaeological excavation database ([excavations.ie](http://excavations.ie)) was searched for archaeological excavations and reports in the environs of the proposed development. Two entries are listed for Finglas West and are detailed below.

Licence Number 080991

A test excavation was carried out to assess the archaeological potential of a greenfield site at Finglas West, Finglas, Dublin 11. The proposed development of a community centre was located within the zone of archaeological potential of Finglas village (DU014–066). During the course of the test excavation a single narrow gully and possible pit were uncovered. No artefacts were retrieved. An excavation is scheduled for 2009.

Licence Number 23E0201

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken at nine utility slit trench locations along the proposed Luas Finglas scheme; test excavation was also carried out at three locations within the scheme. The work was carried out between 17 May and 14 August 2023. A post-medieval wall was identified to the immediate east of the extant remains of King William's Ramparts (RMP DU014-066008). The wall was aligned north-east/south-west and its surviving top was located 0.45m below the existing

ground surface. It had dimensions of 0.75m excavated height by 0.5m thick. The wall was constructed of angular limestone blocks, bonded with lime mortar. No remains associated with King William's Ramparts were recorded and the wall is likely to be a boundary/demesne wall associated with Fortwilliam House, as marked on the OS first edition 6-inch mapping (1844). A solid lime mortar surface was identified at the base of a utility slit trench located directly south of Finglas Wood Bridge (RPS\_DCC\_906). The mortar was identified at a depth of 1.45m below the existing ground surface and interpreted as a localised dump of material possibly associated with the construction of the bridge. A small quantity of cut stone was recorded in another utility slit trench located a short distance to the south of the bridge. No further archaeological material was identified.

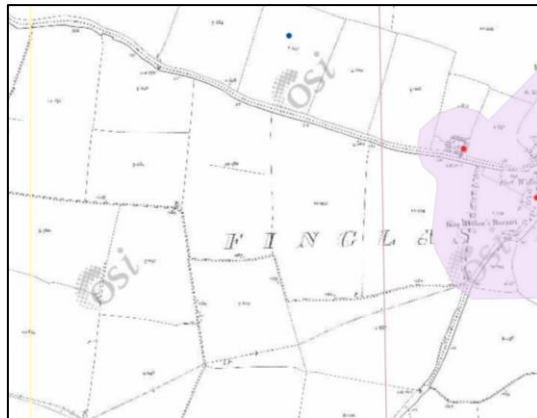
#### **4.4 Cartographic Evidence**

The first edition OS map and the 25" map shows the site as an open area consisting of a number of fields (Figure 3-4). The aerial photographs for the site show it occupied by a church constructed in the 1960's. This occupied much of the site and was demolished in 2020 (Figure 5). The most up to date aerial photographs show the site partially covered with hardcore (Figure 6). No features indicative of archaeological remains were identified in the aerial photographs or the early maps for the site.

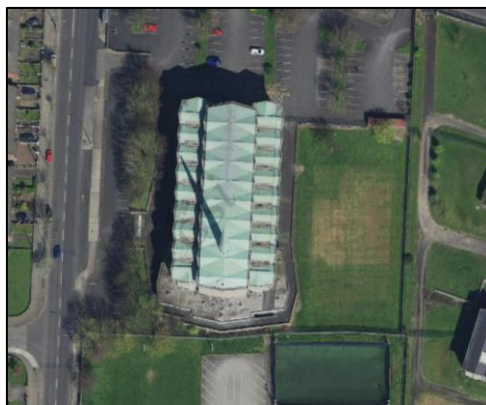
**Figure 3: First edition OS map for the site**



**Figure 4: Second edition OS map for the site**



**Figure 5: Aerial Photograph for the site (taken from geohive.ie)**



**Figure 6: Google maps image for the site**



#### **4.5 Protected Structures**

The site at Finglas West does not include any structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures or the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The closest protected structures is a post-box located over 180m north.

#### **4.6 Topographical Files**

The topographical files are a record of stray finds and artefacts reported to the National Museum of Ireland. A database is available for research and the artefacts are listed by townland. An examination of the topographical files did not reveal any stray finds for the townland of Finglas West.

### **5 Cultural Heritage Assessment**

The proposed development does not include any recorded archaeological monuments, and there are no such sites within the immediate vicinity. The closest monuments are centered on the medieval church and settlement of Finglas, which dates back to the 6th century and later included a medieval walled settlement. This is located over 220 meters to the east of the proposed site and will not be impacted by the proposed works.

The site covers an area of 0.77 hectares and previously housed the Church of the Annunciation, constructed in the 1960s and demolished in 2020. The site is currently

partially covered in hardcore. The construction and subsequent demolition of the church have reduced the potential for sub-surface archaeological remains. However, in accordance with the Dublin City Development Plan (2022-28), Policy Objectives BHA26.4: Development proposals within the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994, notification of sites over 0.5 hectares size with potential underwater impacts and of sites listed in the Dublin City Industrial Heritage Record, will be subject to consultation with the City Archaeologist and archaeological assessment prior to a planning application being lodged. The pre-part 8 process allows for Technical departments such as City Archaeologists to provide feedback on the documentation and plans submitted and outline any issues prior to the formal initiation of the Part 8 procedure. In this regard, it is considered that the pre-part 8 process and the archaeological assessment submitted as part of the pre-part 8 process meet the requirements of BHA26.4 (Section 11.5.5).

## **6 Mitigation And Conclusion**

A recent review of the archaeological evidence for a site at the site of the Church of the Annunciation Finglas, indicates that no historic structures or archaeological remains have been identified within the immediate environs, suggesting a low potential for discovering historic remains. However, due to the scale of the proposed development and in compliance with Dublin City Council (DCC) requirements, archaeological testing is recommended. This testing will be conducted under a license issued by the National Monuments Service (NMS) and should adhere to the framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage. The testing process must be thorough, utilizing appropriate methods to ensure comprehensive examination of potential subsurface remains. If any archaeological remains are identified, further mitigation measures will be required, which could include either avoidance or preservation by record, depending on the significance of the finds and the development's impact. A detailed method statement must be prepared, outlining the impact of the development on any potential remains and including a strategy for resolving any identified remains. This statement and strategy will be formulated in consultation with the NMS to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and best practices. While the current review suggests a low potential for historic remains, the recommended archaeological testing is crucial to

safeguarding any potential archaeological heritage, ensuring any discovered remains are appropriately managed and preserved in accordance with established archaeological principles and regulations.

All recommendations are subject to agreement with the Office of the Dublin City Archaeologist and the NMS.





## References

Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands, 1999, Policy and Guidelines on archaeological excavation.

National Monuments Acts 1930-2004.

Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.

Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage.

[www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)

[www.Buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.Buildingsofireland.ie)

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