

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
AT
ROCKBRAE HOUSE,
BRAY,
COUNTY WICKLOW**

ON BEHALF OF: WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

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ABSTRACT

This assessment has been prepared on behalf of Wicklow County Council, to study the impact, if any, on the archaeological and historical resource of the proposed residential development at Rockbrae House, Bray, County Wicklow (ITM 726312, 717956) The assessment was carried out by Matt Brooks of IAC Archaeology.

The site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of land containing Rockbrae House and outbuildings, which were constructed in the 1870s. There are no archaeological sites located within the development area. The nearest site consists of a font (WI004-001008), located c. 143m to the west. The Zone of Archaeological Potential for the historic core of Bray (WI004-001) is located c. 312m to the north.

No previously unrecorded sites or areas of archaeological potential were noted within the proposed development area during the course of this assessment. Notwithstanding this, it remains possible that ground disturbances associated with the proposed development may have an adverse impact on archaeological remains that may survive within the proposed development area. In addition, the derelict Rockbrae House and its outbuildings and gate lodge will be demolished as part of the scheme.

It is recommended that all topsoil stripping associated with the proposed development be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist. In addition, a written and photographic record should be made of the post medieval structures that currently occupy the time. If any features of archaeological potential are discovered during the course of the works further archaeological mitigation may be required, such as preservation in situ or by record. Any further mitigation will require approval from the National Monuments Service of the DoHLGH.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	I
CONTENTS	II
List of Figures.....	iii
List of Plates	iii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 General.....	1
1.2 The Development	1
2 METHODOLOGY	2
2.1 Paper Survey.....	2
2.2 Field Inspection	3
3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT	5
3.1 Archaeological and Historical Background	5
3.2 Summary of Previous Archaeological Fieldwork	9
3.3 Cartographic Analysis	10
3.4 County Development Plan.....	10
3.5 Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland	11
3.6 Aerial Photographic Analysis	11
3.7 Field Inspection	11
4 CONCLUSIONS.....	13
5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGY	14
5.1 Impact Assessment.....	14
5.2 Mitigation	14
6 REFERENCES.....	15
APPENDICES.....	I
Appendix 1 SMR/RMP Sites within the Surrounding Area.....	i
Appendix 2 Legislation Protecting the Archaeological Resource	iii
Appendix 3 Impact Assessment and the Cultural Heritage Resource	vii
Appendix 4 Mitigation Measures and the Cultural Heritage Resource	ix

FIGURES

PLATES

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1 Site location showing nearby archaeology
Figure 2 Plan of proposed development
Figure 3 Extracts from historic maps (1760 and 1843) showing proposed development area
Figure 4 Extracts from Ordnance Survey maps (1870 and 1910) showing proposed development area

LIST OF PLATES

- Plate 1 Gates, driveway and lodge, facing northwest
Plate 2 Rockbrae House, facing west
Plate 3 Two-storey building at southern edge of site, facing south
Plate 4 Northeastern portion of curtilage, facing east-northeast

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL

The following report details an archaeological assessment undertaken in advance of a proposed residential development at Rockbrae House, Bray, County Wicklow (Figure 1; ITM 726312, 717956). 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. The assessment was undertaken by Matt Brooks of IAC Archaeology (IAC), on behalf of Wicklow County Council.

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

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT

The development will consist of the demolition of Rockbrae House and gate lodge, and the provision of 53no. residential units in a combination of houses and apartments arranged in 3 blocks as summarised below, with new vehicular and pedestrian entrance to Vevay Rd, 29no. carparking spaces, external bike and bin stores, external play area, and ancillary site development and landscaping works (Figure 2).

Block A (4 storeys):

- 1 bed 2 person apartment – 10 no.
- 1 bed 2 person UD apartment – 6 no.
- 2 bed 4 person apartment – 8 no.

Block B (5 storeys):

- 1 bed 2 person apartment – 5 no.
- 2 bed 3 person UD apartment – 5 no.
- 2 bed 4 person apartment – 10 no.

Block C (3 storeys):

- 3 bed 5 person townhouse – 9 no.

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 two 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.

2.1 PAPER SURVEY

- Record of Monuments and Places for County Wicklow;
- Sites and Monuments Record for County Wicklow;
- 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;
- Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028;
- Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2025;
- Aerial photographs; and
- Excavations Bulletin (1970–2025).

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 Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2025 were 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 1970–2025.

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.

3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed development area is located within the townland of Bray, Parish of Bray and Barony of Rathdown in County Wicklow. The site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of land surrounding Rockbrae House; which survives in a derelict state. To the immediate east the site is bordered by the Vevay Road with residential housing located to the immediate south on Charnwood Road, and undeveloped greenfield to the north and west.

There are no archaeological sites located within the development area; however, there are three archaeological sites within 500m (Figure 1). The nearest consists of a font (WI004-001008), located c. 143m to the west, found in 2004 within the graveyard associated with St Paul's Church, Bray. The present location of a high cross (WI008-003), c. 486m southwest, is subject to a preservation order made under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 (PO No. 143/1940).

3.1.1 Prehistoric Period

Mesolithic Period (7000–4000 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.

The current archaeological evidence suggests that the environs of the proposed development area were first inhabited towards the later part of the Mesolithic period. At this time people made crude flint tools known as Larnian (or Bann) Flakes. Small numbers of these flakes have been found at Dalkey Island, Dun Laoghaire, Rathfarnham and Loughlinstown to the north and St. Bride's Head close to Wicklow Town and Brittas Bay to the south. These sites may indicate small-scale transient settlements along the riverbanks and seashores (Stout 1994).

Neolithic Period (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. The

focus of Neolithic tomb building in Wicklow is in the north of the county, close to the Dublin border. There are 20 passage tombs located within this area and most of these are situated above the 240m contour.

Whilst there are no Neolithic sites recorded within the immediate landscape, a number of megalithic tombs are recorded along the coast in County Wicklow and within the mountains to the southwest.

Bronze Age (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 the 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.

Over 7,000 burnt mounds or *fulacht fia* sites have been recorded in the country and c. 1,500 examples excavated, making them the most common prehistoric monument in Ireland (Waddell 2022, 164). Although burnt mounds of shattered stone occur as a result of various activities that have been practised from the Mesolithic to the present day, the Bronze Age has long been believed to have seen the peak of this activity. Dating evidence from a growing number of burnt mounds, suggests activities resulting in burnt mounds were carried out over a span of 3,500 years in Ireland (Hawkes 2018). They are typically located in areas where there is a readily available water source, often in proximity to a river or stream or places with a high water table. In the field burnt mounds may be identified as charcoal-rich mounds or spreads of heat shattered stones, however, in many cases, the sites have been disturbed by later agricultural activity and are no longer visible on the field surface. Nevertheless, even disturbed spreads of burnt mound material often preserve the underlying associated features, such as troughs, pits and gullies, intact. The closest example of a *fulacht fia* is found at Giltspur (WI008-042001), c. 2km to the southwest of the proposed development area.

Monitoring (Bennett 2001:1346, Licence No. 01E0252; RMP WI008-049) was undertaken at Putland Road, c. 770m southeast of the proposed development area in 2001. This investigation revealed 27 features containing 101 finds that dated to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age and were the result of tool production within a domestic settlement. Cremated human bone was also discovered suggestive of ritual activity in the area.

Iron Age (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 LIARI (Late Iron Age and Roman Ireland). 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. There are no known Iron Age sites located within the study area of the proposed development.

3.1.2 Early Medieval Period (AD 500–1100)

The early medieval period is depicted in the surviving sources as an almost entirely rural based society. Territorial divisions were based on the *túath*, or petty kingdom, with Byrne (1973) estimating probably at least 150 kings in Ireland at any given time. This period, with a new religious culture and evolving technologies, saw significant woodland clearance and the expansion of grassland. A new type of plough and the horizontal mill were two innovations that improved agriculture and allowed for the population to increase. Consequently, from c. AD 500 onwards, the landscape became well settled, as evidenced by the profuse distribution of ringforts, a dispersed distribution of enclosed settlements, normally associated with various grades of well-to-do farming and aristocratic classes in early medieval Ireland (Stout and Stout 1997, 20).

During this period, the proposed development area was located in an area known as *Fercoulen*. This was the territory of the *Ui Theig* from the 6th century until 11th century. From the 8th century onwards, the *Ui Briuin Cualann* appeared in the area and came to dominate it by the 11th century (MacCotter 2008). The Rathdown area is likely to have been relatively densely populated during this period, as it contains a considerable number of ecclesiastical establishments as well as occupying a fertile region near the coast.

Secular habitation sites in the early medieval period include *crannógs*, *cashels* and ringforts in addition to unenclosed settlements, which are more difficult to identify in the archaeological record. The ringfort or *rath* is considered to be the most common indicator of settlement during the early medieval period. Ringforts are strongly associated with agricultural land use and, as such, are rarely situated at higher altitudes. It is therefore surprising that there is not greater evidence for settlement in the form of ringforts, within the Rathdown area. However, owing to the consistent agricultural use of this land up to the modern period it is likely that the above surface expressions of these monuments have long since been removed.

3.1.3 Medieval Period (AD 1100–1600)

In 1169 the first of the Irish Anglo-Norman landings and invasions took place in County Wexford, at the invitation of the former king of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough Kavanagh. The Anglo-Normans, joined by 500 *Uí Chennselaig* men, took the Viking town of Wexford. Through a policy of military force and integration, the Anglo-Normans colonised much of the country. Marriages between Norman leaders and the women of Ireland's great families aided this integration. The Norman feudal culture, techniques, language, and legal systems were to have a profound effect on the county after 230 years of Norse influence.

The Anglo-Normans were an important influence in the creation of an urban network in medieval Ireland. In County Wicklow, they expanded and developed the settlements at Arklow and Wicklow and were responsible for the foundation of a number of new urban centres and boroughs (settlements which had the legal privileges of towns but seem to have functioned as large villages). These were located at Bray, Killickabawn, Mulsoes Court (Powerscourt) and Newcastle. With the possible exception of Bray, all of these settlements were to be abandoned or at least partly deserted in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The town of Bray, situated on the Dargle River, is divided into Little Bray to the north and Great Bray to the South. The manor of Bray was granted to Walter de Ridelesford before 1176 and was resigned to the Crown in 1280. It was granted a market in 1213 and by the start of the 14th century is thought to have had a population of c. 200. During 1314 the settlement was burnt by the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles and became difficult to settle, being considered as 'March lands', where upheaval from clan raids was normal rather than the exception. The first reference to a burgage is in 1225 when de Ridelesford granted a burgage 'opposite my castle beyond the river' to St Mary's Abbey, Dublin. In 1459 a new 'ten pound' castle was built in Little Bray to defend the route over the ford from marauders from the south.

Great Bray Castle (WI004-001003) is recorded c. 790m to the north of the proposed development area. With a bawn, it served as some protection for the medieval inhabitants of the manor, but by the early 17th century, when it was described as a forty-foot square, three storey, stone tower, it was in a bad state of repair. It was demolished without trace at some unrecorded date in the late 18th or early 19th century. A medieval church (WI004-001004) also failed to survive and was replaced by a new structure in 1609.

3.1.4 Post-Medieval Period (AD 1600–1800)

With the ending of the Williamite Wars, County Wicklow, like the rest of Ireland, entered an era of comparative political calm. Interest in Ireland was revived and it was during this period that Wicklow Town became an important port and garrison. Consequently, the county's landowners, now secure in their positions, commenced the building of new mansions. They were now in a position to experiment with the latest styles of architecture without the need to refer to defensive matters. At the outset, many landowners were constrained by a lack of resources and therefore the first-generation mansions were of relatively modest scale and relatively plain in appearance. As the sense of security of the Irish aristocracy grew over the following decades their greater access to wealth helped foster a shift towards more ostentatious buildings.

In 1609 the Barony of Rathdown was divided in two by the establishment of the county boundary between Wicklow and Dublin. During the 17th century, despite internal conflicts, the English monarchy consolidated its rule in Ireland and by the 18th century the population of southeast Dublin and northeast Wicklow prospered.

Old Court Castle (WI008-002001) within the townland of Old Court is located c. 505m to the southwest of the proposed development and is subject to a preservation order (PO no. 143/1940). The castle is located in proximity to a 17th century house (WI008-041) and bawn (WI008-002001) and is considered an example of a 17th century fortified house. The lands on which the castle stands were owned, from the 14th to the 16th century, by the Earls of Ormond in right of their manor of Bray, and were held under them by the Archbolds, and subsequently by the Walshes of Carrickmines (Anon 1905, 429). Archaeological testing was carried out in proximity to the castle in 1996 (Bennett, Licence No. 96E0090) and uncovered a probable field boundary.

With the onset of the 18th century, the political climate settled and this saw a dramatic rise in the establishment of large residential houses around the country. This was largely due to the fact that after the turbulence of the preceding centuries, the success of the Protestant cause and the effective removal of any political opposition, the country was at peace. The large country house was only a small part of the overall estate of a large landowner and provided a base to manage often large areas of land that could be dispersed nationally. During the latter part of the 18th century, the establishment of a parkland context (or demesnes) for large houses was the fashion. Although the creation of a parkland landscape involved working with nature, rather than against it, considerable construction effort went into their creation. Major topographical features like rivers and mountains were desirable features for inclusion into, and as a setting, for the large house and parkland.

Rockbrae House was constructed during the 1870s and was located within a small demesne landscape, with gate lodge, access drive, demesne planting and a walled garden. Today the main house is derelict, having been gutted by fire in 2023. The gate lodge and some outbuildings are present, although these are also in poor condition. During the 1940s the house was used by Local Defence Force and was then taken over by the FCA. In 2005 the house and demesne were transferred to Wicklow County Council.

3.2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

A review of the Excavations Bulletin (1970-2025) has revealed that no archaeological investigations have been carried out within the proposed development area. Several investigations have taken place within the vicinity of the proposed development area and are summarised below.

Archaeological monitoring (Bennett 2019:501, Licence No. 17E0554) was carried out during the Vevay Road Watermains Rehabilitation Scheme in 2018, c. 162m to the north of the proposed development area. No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were recorded.

Testing (Bennett 2007:2005, Licence No. 01E0919 ext) was carried out in the car park area of St Cronan's House, c. 492m to the north of the proposed development area. Nothing of archaeological interest was recorded at the site.

3.3 CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

William Petty, Down Survey: the Halfe Barony of Rathdowne in County Wickow, c. 1655

On William Petty's Down Survey, the proposed development area is not depicted. The town of Bray is seen within the townland of Rathdowne close to the Bray Water (Bray River). There are no structures which make up the town on this map.

Jacob Nevill's An Actual Survey of the County of Wicklow, 1760 (Figure 3)

This map shows the wider landscape and the approximate position of the proposed development area, which is placed within mostly open land to the south of Bray. The main road that leads from Bray towards the south is located to the east. The demesne landscapes associated with Newcourt House and Oldcourt House are found in proximity to the development area.

First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1843, scale 1:10,560 (Figure 3)

The proposed development area is shown within the townland of Bray in the corner of a field. The site contains a number of small structures fronting onto the road to the immediate east. The townland boundary between Bray and Newcourt is located to the east, whilst the boundary between Bray and Oldcourt is to the south. These boundaries also form the western extent Newcourt House demesne and the northern extent of Oldcourt House. Both houses are within 400m of the proposed development area.

Ordnance Survey Map, 1870, scale 1:1,056 (Figure 4)

By the time of this map the outbuildings, entrance and gate lodge associated with Rockbrae House have been constructed but the main house has yet to be built. Exposed bedrock is illustrated within the eastern portion and may represent a quarry pit.

Ordnance Survey Map, 1910, scale 1:2,500 (Figure 4)

This detailed map edition shows Rockbrae House and its walled garden, outbuildings and gate lodge within the proposed development area. Bray at this time has grown significantly and includes a number of newly built country houses. Within proximity to the development area are Carrigbrae and Bray Rectory to the north, Ryecroft House to the west and Ardbury to the south. Newcourt House has now changed its name to Loreto Convent and Newcourt House is now Vevay House.

Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1940, scale 1:10,560

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 Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018-2024 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 aims and objectives in relation to archaeological heritage (Appendix 2).

There are no archaeological sites located within the development area, although three sites are recorded within 500m (Table 1; Figure 1; Appendix 1). The nearest recorded monument consists of a font (WI004-001008), located c. 143m to the west. The Zone of Archaeological Potential for the historic core of Bray (WI004-001) is located c. 312m to the north.

TABLE 1: Recorded Archaeological Sites in the Study Area

RMP NO.	LOCATION	CLASSIFICATION	DISTANCE TO FROM DEVELOPMENT
WI004-001008	Bray	Font	c. 143m west
WI004-001	Bray, Ravenswell, Little Bray	Historic town	c. 312m north
WI008-003	Oldcourt	Cross - High cross (present location)	c. 486m southwest

3.5 TOPOGRAPHICAL FILES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND

Information on artefact finds from the study area in County Wicklow 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. A review of the topographical files revealed that no stray finds have been recovered from within the study area of the proposed development.

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 (2008–2025), and Bing Maps revealed that the proposed development area has experienced minimal changes since 1995. The site from this period to the present day has remained within the confines of Rockbrae House, which includes fields, roadways, woodland and associated structures. No previously unknown archaeological sites were identified during the aerial photographic analysis.

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 field inspection was carried out prior to the gutting of Rockbrae House by fire.

The site is occupied by Rockbrae House and its associated driveway, curtilage and ancillary buildings, including a gate lodge and entrance gates (Plate 1). Mature trees and dense vegetation occupy large portions of the site. The buildings, abandoned and boarded up, remain in derelict but upstanding condition (Plates 2 and 3). The buildings and garden in the walled portion of the curtilage at the southern side are more overgrown. The site is scattered with modern rubbish and debris (Plate 4).

No previously unrecorded features of archaeological significance were identified during the course of the inspection.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This archaeological assessment was commissioned by Wicklow County Council to assess the potential for the survival of archaeological features in advance of a proposed residential development at Rockbrae House, Bray, County Wicklow.

The site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of land containing Rockbrae House and a number of derelict outbuilding and gate lodge, along with demesne planting. The structures date to the 1870s and the main house was gutted by fire in 2023.

There are no archaeological sites located within the development area, although three are recorded within 500m. The nearest recorded monument consists of a font (WI004-001008), located c. 143m to the west, which found in 2004 within the graveyard of the post medieval parish church. The Zone of Archaeological Potential for the historic core of Bray (WI004-001) is located c. 312m to the north.

A review of the Excavations Bulletin (1970–2025) has revealed that no archaeological investigations have been carried out within the proposed development area. Archaeological monitoring carried out at Vevay Road and testing at St Cronan’s House did not record any features of archaeological significance.

Analysis of cartographic sources has revealed that the proposed development area has been subject to a number of changes from the post-medieval to modern periods. Historically the site was located within open land to the south of Bray town. In the 1870s Rockbrae House was constructed, along with a gate lodge, stables and outbuildings. The buildings survive in an abandoned derelict condition.

Analysis of aerial photographic record available for the area failed to identify any previously unknown archaeological features in the area. A field inspection has been carried out, which revealed that the site is in a derelict and overgrown condition. No previously unrecorded features of archaeological potential were noted during the course of the inspection.

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

- Ground disturbances associated with the proposed development have the potential to result in adverse impacts on archaeological remains that may survive within the proposed development area. In addition, the derelict Rockbrae House and its outbuildings and gate lodge will be demolished as part of the scheme.

5.2 MITIGATION

- It is recommended that all topsoil stripping associated with the proposed development be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist. In addition, a written and photographic record should be made of the post medieval structures that currently occupy the time. If any features of archaeological potential are discovered during the course of the works further archaeological mitigation may be required, such as preservation *in situ* or by record. 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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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– Ordnance Survey Ireland National Townland and Historical Map Viewer (including Aerial imagery 1995, 2000, 2005, 2013)

www.googleearth.com – Satellite imagery (2005–2025).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SMR/RMP SITES WITHIN THE SURROUNDING AREA

SMR NO.	WI004-001008
RMP STATUS	Scheduled for inclusion
TOWNLAND	Bray
PARISH	Bray
BARONY	Rathdown
I.T.M.	726107 717948
CLASSIFICATION	Font
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 143m west
DESCRIPTION	A sandstone cube (52cm x 50cm across) with a central hole (diam. 28.5cm) almost the full depth of the cube. The central hole has a small hole at the base of each of the four corners of it. Three of the external faces are decorated with the same design which features a central boss with foliage extending from it to each corner in false relief. Found in August 2004 in the graveyard of St. Paul's Church, Bray. (Corlett 2006, 144-6)
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	WI004-001
RMP STATUS	Scheduled for inclusion
TOWNLAND	Bray, Ravenswell, Little Bray
PARISH	Bray
BARONY	Rathdown
I.T.M.	726225 718292
CLASSIFICATION	Historic town
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 312m north
DESCRIPTION	The town of Bray is situated on the Dargle River and is divided into Little Bray to the N and Great Bray to the S. The manor of Bray was granted to Walter de Ridelesford before 1176 and was resigned to the Crown in 1280. The first reference to a burgage is c. 1225 when de Ridelesford granted a burgage 'opposite my castle beyond the river' to St Mary's Abbey, Dublin. A mill stood below the castle (WI004-001003-) and a number of Roman burials were discovered near the seafront (WI004-004----). (Scott 1913; Davies 1986, 22; Bradley and King 1989, 12-17).
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

SMR NO.	WI008-003
RMP STATUS	Scheduled for inclusion
TOWNLAND	Oldcourt
PARISH	Bray

BARONY	Rathdown
I.T.M.	725976 717538
CLASSIFICATION	Cross - High cross (present location)
DIST. FROM DEVELOPMENT	c. 486m southwest
DESCRIPTION	<p>Situated on the edge of a small stream in Oldcourt Demesne; said to have been found in a nearby roadside hedge in the eighteenth century (Ó hÉalidhe 1988, 98). A tall semi-pyramidal block of granite (H 1.13m; 0.78m x 0.72m at base) with centrally placed mortice. The lower two-thirds of the E, W and S faces are framed by roll-moulding and are divided into two panels by a horizontal bar, while the upper third comprises a separately framed panel. The N face is undecorated. The lower panels all contain figure sculpture although some are badly eroded. The upper panels may have been sculpted originally. Recognisable scenes include St Michael Weighing Souls and Daniel in the Lions' Den (E face); The Fall of Adam and Eve (W face); a hunting scene and two rearing animals (S face). (Harbison 1992, 158-9; Mason 2010, 26-29). This monument is subject to a preservation order made under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 (PO no. 143/1940).</p>
REFERENCE	www.archaeology.ie/ SMR file

APPENDIX 2 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.

THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000

Under planning legislation, each local authority is obliged to draw up a Development Plan setting out their aims and policies with regard to the growth of the area over a five-year period. They cover a range of issues including archaeology and built heritage, setting out their policies and objectives with regard to the protection and enhancement of both. These policies can vary from county to county. The Planning and Development Act 2000 recognises that proper planning and sustainable

development includes the protection of the archaeological heritage. Conditions relating to archaeology may be attached to individual planning permissions.

Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

Archaeology Objectives:

CPO 8.1

To secure the preservation of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally. In the development management process, there will be a presumption of favour of preservation in-situ or, as a minimum, preservation by record. In securing such preservation, the Planning Authority will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

CPO 8.2

No development in the vicinity of a feature included in the Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) or any other site of archaeological interest will be permitted which seriously detracts from the setting of the feature or which is seriously injurious to its cultural or educational value.

CPO 8.3

Any development that may, due to its size, location or nature, have implications for archaeological heritage (including both sites and areas of archaeological potential / significance as identified in Schedules 08.01 & 08.02 and Maps 8.01 & 8.02 of this plan) shall be subject to an archaeological assessment.

CPO 8.4

To require archaeological assessment for all developments with the potential to impact on the archaeological heritage of riverine, intertidal or sub tidal environments.

CPO 8.5

To facilitate new or improved public access to and erection of appropriate interpretive signage at National Monuments, archaeological sites, castles, sites of historic interest and archaeological landscapes in State or private ownership, as identified in Schedule 08.02 and Map 8.02 of this plan, in co-operation with landowners.

CPO 8.6

To protect the integrity of Baltinglass Hills archaeological landscape including identified monuments and their wider setting by resisting development that may adversely impact upon the significance and understanding of this important landscape.

CPO 8.7

To support the inscription of Glendalough to Ireland's tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site list and promote a conservation led approach to facilitating visitor access and enjoyment of this internationally significant landscape.

CPO 8.8

To protect and promote the characteristics of historic towns in County Wicklow identified as zones of archaeological potential in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), ensuring that cognisance is given in relevant development proposals to retaining existing street layout, historic building lines and traditional plot widths where these derive from medieval or earlier origins.

CPO 8.9

To protect and promote the conservation of historic burial grounds (those that are generally no longer in use but which may contain sites and features on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and/or RPS) and support greater public access to these where possible.

Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan, 2025

It is the heritage strategy:

- To protect the natural, architectural, archaeological and maritime heritage of Bray MD;
- To enhance the quality of the natural and built environment, to enhance the unique character of the towns in the district as a place to live, visit and work;
- To promote greater appreciation of, and access to, local heritage assets.

APPENDIX 3 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 4 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.

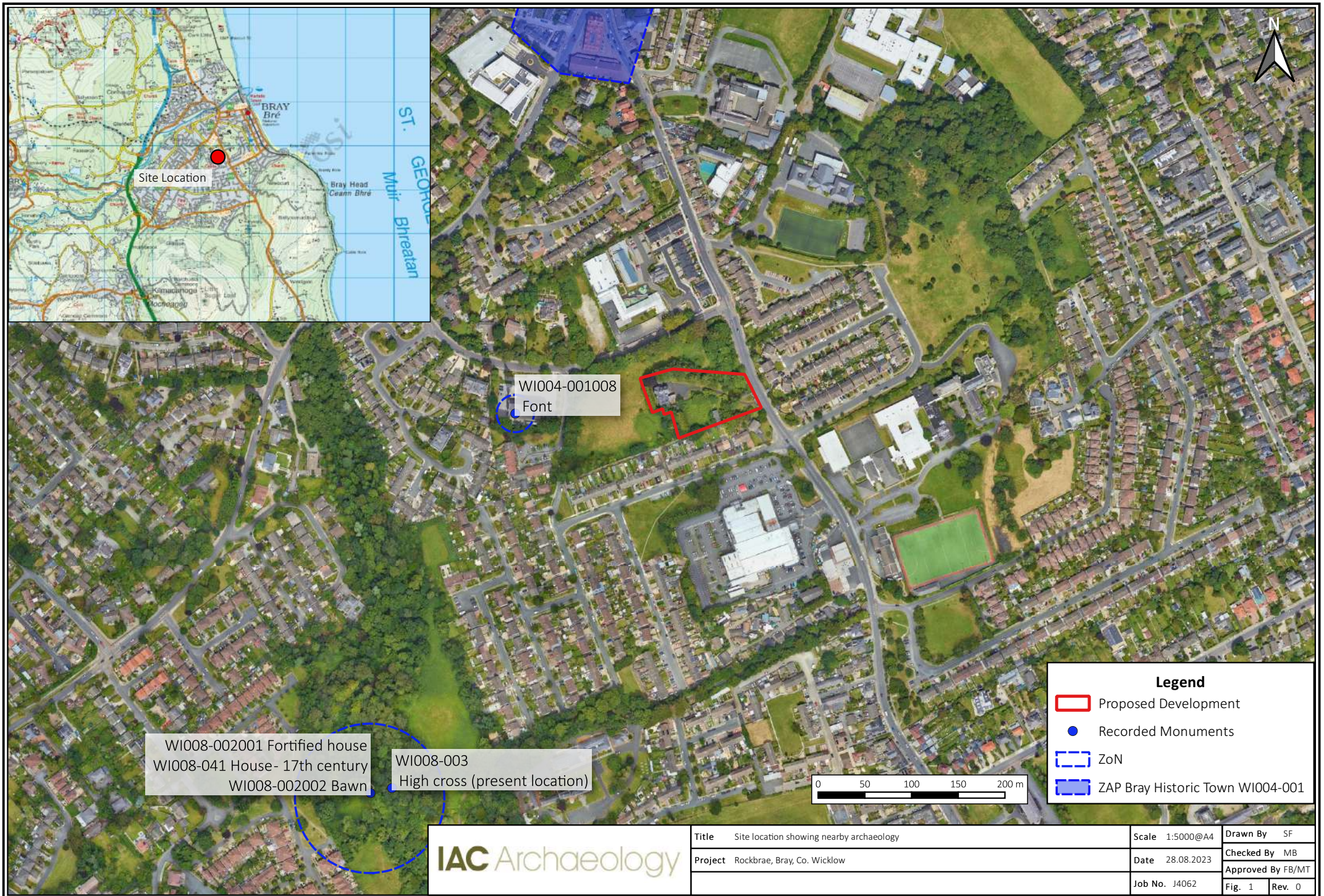
Archaeological Test Trenching can be defined as ‘a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological 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’ (ClfA 2020a).

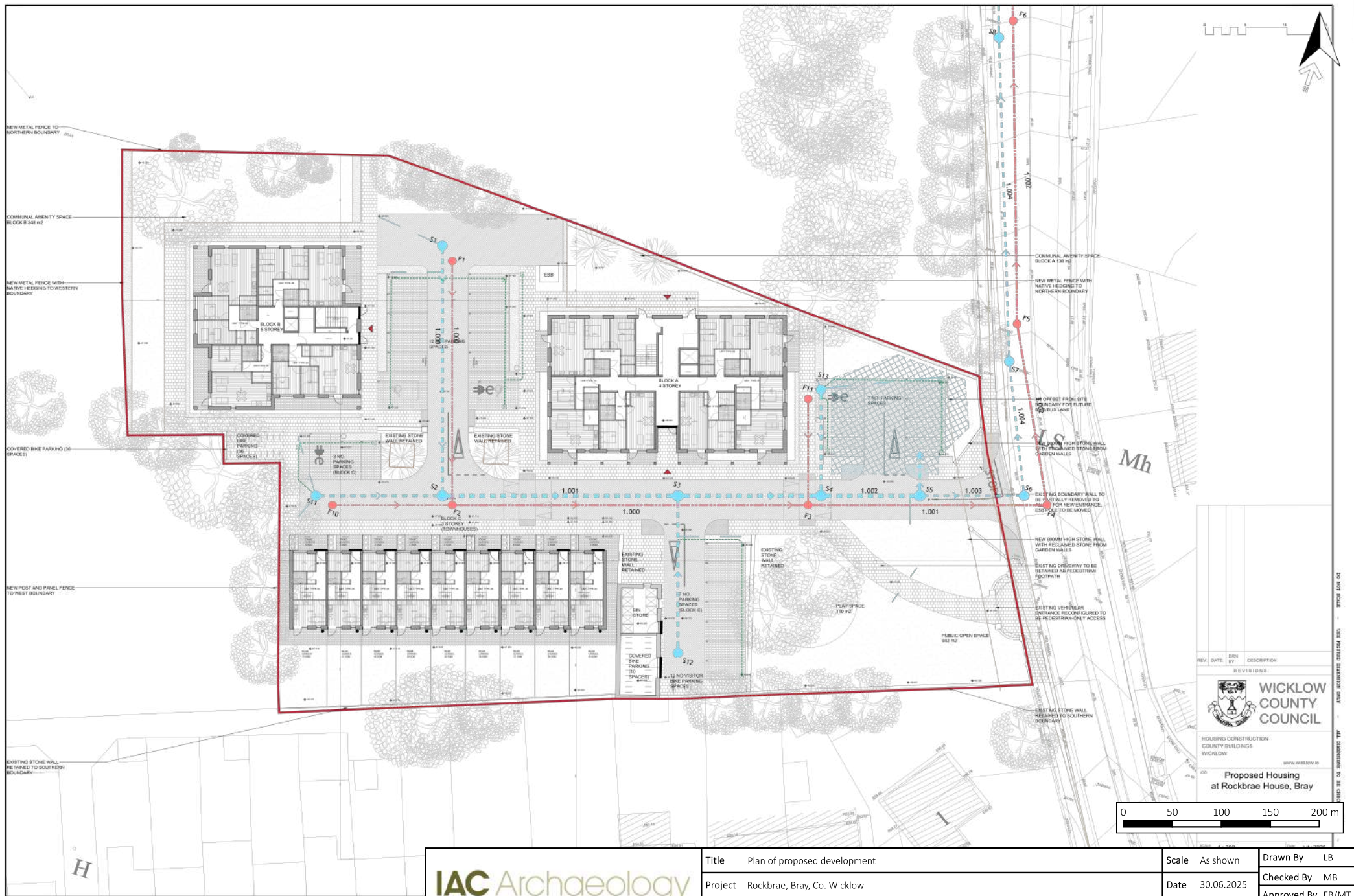
Full Archaeological Excavation can be defined as ‘a programme of controlled, intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features and structures and, as appropriate, retrieves artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within a specified 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’ (ClfA 2020b).

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 (ClfA 2020c).

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.





IAC Archaeology

Title	Plan of proposed development	Scale	As shown	Drawn By	LB
Project	Rockbrae, Bray, Co. Wicklow	Date	30.06.2025	Checked By	MB
		Approved By	FB/MT	Fig. 2	Rev. -
		Job No.	J4062		

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

HOUSING CONSTRUCTION: COUNTY BUILDINGS WICKLOW

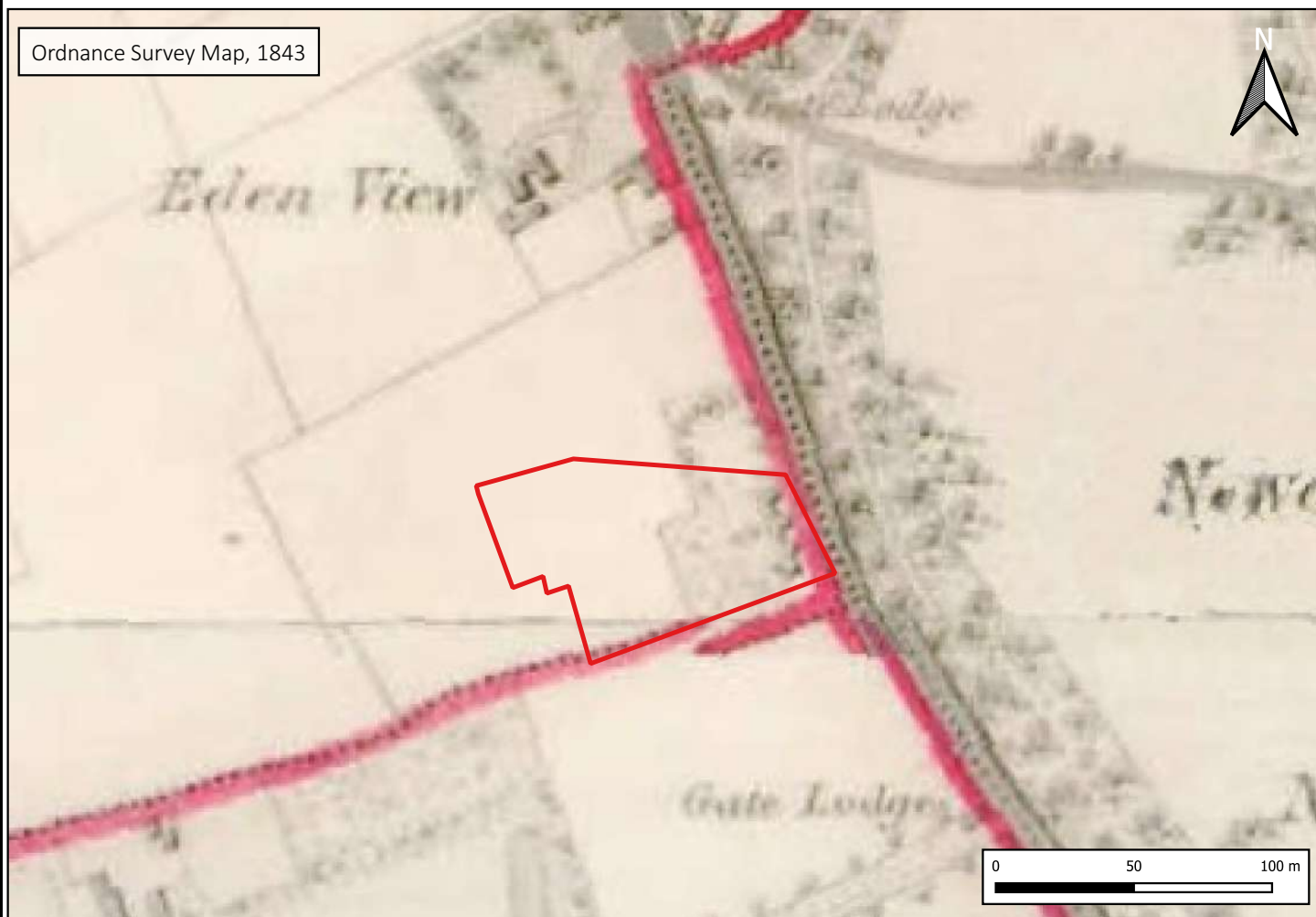
www.wicklow.ie

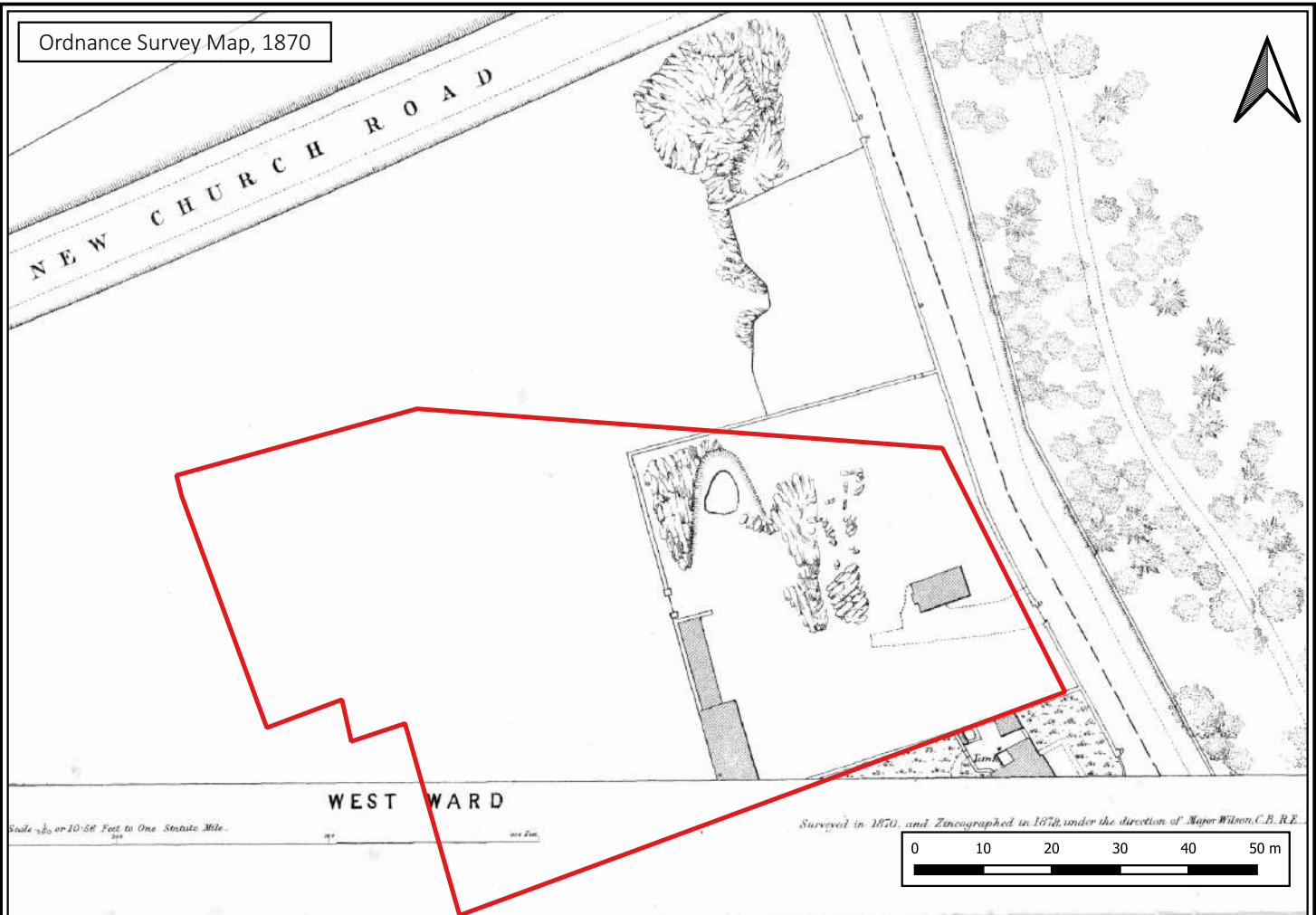
Proposed Housing at Rockbrae House, Bray

Jacob Nevill, 1760



Ordnance Survey Map, 1843





IAC Archaeology	Title	Extracts from ordnance survey maps (1870 and 1910) showing proposed development area	Scale	As shown	Drawn By	SF
	Project	Rockbrae, Bray, Co. Wicklow	Date	28.08.2023	Checked By	MB
			Job No.	J4062	Approved	FB/MT
					Fig. 4	Rev. 0



Plate 1 Gates, driveway and lodge, facing northwest



Plate 2 Rockbrae House, facing west



Plate 3 Two-storey building at southern edge of site, facing south



Plate 4 Northeastern portion of curtilage, facing east-northeast