



## M1 DUNDALK WESTERN BYPASS

SITE 106: DONAGHMORE 8  
CHAINAGE 18.350  
NGR 302420/306020

### FINAL REPORT

ON BEHALF OF  
LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL and the  
NATIONAL ROADS AUTHORITY

LICENSEE: BRIAN Ó DONNCHADHA  
LICENCE NUMBER: 03E063

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**IAC** Irish Archaeological  
Consultancy



## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. (IAC), funded by Louth County Council and the National Roads Authority, undertook an excavation in the townland of Donaghmore in advance of the construction of the Dundalk Western Bypass (DWB). Excavations were undertaken to ensure all subsoil archaeological remains were preserved by record in advance of groundwork.

Prior to archaeological excavation a detailed geophysical and test trenching programme was carried out to define the extent, character and condition of the archaeological resource in this general area.

Resolution excavation of Site 106, Donaghmore 8, was completed at Chainage 18.350 (NGR 302420/306020). The excavation commenced on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2003 and was completed 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003 using a team of approximately five field archaeologists, directed by Brian O'Donnchadha (Licence No. 03E0063). The total area of excavation measured 10m x 30m (300m<sup>2</sup>).

The site was located in a low-lying valley that contains both a river and an area of wetland. Two ridges running east-west to the north and south of the valley define its extent in these directions.

Site 106, Donaghmore 8, consisted of a section of railway embankment and ditches that extending east-west across the proposed route of the road. The embankment was built during the construction of the Dundalk to Enniskillen railway line in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The embankment was 19.40m in width and was flanked on each side by a wide (3-3.75m) drain. These drains (or cesses) were designed to gather run-off from the embankment and prevent localised flooding. No finds were recovered during the course of the excavation and no samples were taken.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This report refers to an excavation carried out in the townland of Donaghmore as part of an archaeological mitigation programme designed to offset adverse impacts on the archaeological resource associated with the Dundalk Western Bypass (DWB). All archaeological fieldwork was directed by Brian Ó Donnchadha of Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. (IAC) for Louth County Council.

## 1.1 Site location

Site 106 (Donaghmore 8) is situated in Donaghmore townland, located c. 4km west of Dundalk (OS sheet number 7, Figure 1). The site is:

- Site 106, Excavation Licence 03E0063, route chainage (Ch) 18.350 and centred on NGR 302420/306020.

The site was identified as a result of both the test trenching exercise undertaken by IAC in March 2002, as well as intensive background research of early Ordnance Survey maps which identified the presence of a 19<sup>th</sup> century railway embankment. The area comprised an undulating landscape with the site primarily focused in a low-lying valley between two ridges running in an east/west direction through the landscape.

## 1.2 The scope of the project

### *General*

Louth County Council proposed to construct a motorway called the 'Dundalk Western Bypass – Northern Link'. The scheme also included ancillary roads and other structures.

The Dundalk Western Bypass – Northern Link connects the existing Dunleer-Dundalk Motorway, which terminates in the area of the N52 Ardee Road, to the N1 Ballymascanlan Roundabout in an arc situated c. 2.5km - 3km to the west and north of Dundalk.

The scheme was divided into two sections. Section 1 (7.8km main centre line chainage (Ch) ran from Ch16.000 to Ch23.870 (the Armagh Road, R177). Work on the southern end of Section 1 was previously commenced so that the main cutting and rough surfacing for the road had been completed to chainage point Ch17.100. The chainage zone Ch16.000 – 17.100 had therefore not been investigated archaeologically under the present contract. Section 2 (2.08km main centre line chainage) ran from the Armagh Road Ch23.870 to the Ballymascanlan Roundabout, Ch25.950.

Therefore the archaeological potential of the route represented a distance of 8.49km (Ch17.100 – 25.950). The route corridor varied between 60m and 200m (not including side roads) and was on average 100m wide. The archaeological site area was thus approximately 85 hectares.

### *Specific*

Three excavations were undertaken in this section of the townland, spread out over a distance of 700m with a distance of 300m between Donaghmore 8 and 9, while Donaghmore 2 & 3 were located 400m to the south of Donaghmore 8. This report deals with Donaghmore 8.

Background historical research undertaken as part of the EIS (Valerie J. Keeley Ltd, 2002) and this identified a site listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP LH007-062) namely, a ring ditch located c. 200m to the south of Site 106 and located c. 350m to the east of Site 106 is LH007-063 –a souterrain (01) and a millstone (02), both of these recorded archaeological sites are located within the townland of Donaghmore.

An area of 10m x 30m (300m<sup>2</sup>) was investigated during the archaeological resolution.

### **1.3 Circumstances and dates of fieldwork**

The excavation was undertaken to offset the adverse impact of road construction on known and potential subsoil archaeological remains in order to preserve these sites by record.

Topsoil stripping of the area commenced on Wednesday the 15<sup>th</sup> of January and was completed by Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> of January. Work was carried out by a team of one Site Supervisor and four Archaeological Assistants.

All features were excavated using the single context system of recording with plans and sections being produced at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10 where necessary. All features were fully excavated by hand with topsoil stripping being carried out by a machine fitted with a toothless bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Following excavation, the area was cleaned down, photographed and planned at a scale of 1:20. All works were carried out in agreement with the Project Archaeologist and the National Monuments Section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (formerly -Dúchas, The Heritage Service).

It was agreed in advance that adequate funds to cover excavation, post-excavation and any conservation and dating analysis would be made available by the developer. Typically dating would involve pottery dating through typological analysis and radiocarbon analysis.



## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following archaeological and historical background refers to the wider archaeological landscape through which the DWB passes.

The town of Dundalk lies at the N end of Dundalk Bay and is the administrative centre of County Louth, located in the northeast of Leinster. The area spans two geographical areas. To the west the rural landscape surrounding the urban district consists of undulating topography, with low drumlins rising to 30-40m from the coastal plain. As is the case with much of Louth, this covers thick strata of Ordovician and Silurian slates, with some rock outcrops notable (Gosling 1993, 237). To the east of the urban district, the flat, low lying coastal plain comprises of recent estuarine and alluvial clays and silts, shaped by the sea level changes following the end of the last Ice Age period in Ireland c. 10000 years ago.

At the time of the earliest habitation in Ireland, the Early Mesolithic period: (c. 7000BC), the sea submerged the area of the town to a depth of 4-5m, although it continued to retreat to its present level until the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age Period (c. 2500BC), replacing the submerged area with salt marshes and tidal flats. At various stages from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, these areas were improved by reclamation projects.

The proposed route for the Dundalk Western Bypass–Northern Link is located within an area that avoids the major recorded archaeological monuments in the vicinity. This is a particularly rich archaeological landscape but the great majority of known sites lie beyond the perimeter of the original study area. It is important to note, however, that a significant number of sites in this part of County Louth survive as crop marks, where the above ground indication of the monument has been destroyed. The recognition of such monuments has often been the result of chance discovery from ploughing and construction work, or by observation from the air where the distinctive traces of the buried features can sometimes be observed. The strong tradition of arable agriculture in the locality has been largely responsible for this occurrence.

### 2.1 Prehistoric Period (7000BC-AD400)

The archaeological record provides evidence that the locality was occupied from the Late Mesolithic period (c. 4200BC) onwards, with the excavation of Mesolithic shell midden sites with flint material at Rockmarshall, (O Sullivan 2002, 10-11) c. 5km northeast of the town of Dundalk.

Although we can say with confidence that substantial Neolithic activity is evidenced by the archaeological record from c. 4000BC onwards, which had many similar features with contemporary sites in Britain and near Europe, uncertainty still remains concerning the circumstances of the arrival of Neolithic customs and traditions within Ireland and how the new economy altered the environment.

#### 2.1.1 Neolithic Period (c. 4000BC – c. 2500BC)

The origins of Neolithic activity in Ireland are disputed. Pollen records reveal forest clearances occurring before our earliest dated Neolithic sites or monuments; however this may be a reflection of some modern dating methods being too crude to discriminate between early and late Neolithic habitation rather than an indication of the true chronology (Mitchell & Ryan 1997). A debate ensues over whether the culture evident in Ireland during the Neolithic was a product of a migrating people into

Ireland or an indigenous development from Mesolithic populations. The introduction of certain flora and fauna species, landscape management techniques, traits in architectural construction and domestic crafts, bearing with a striking resemblance to contemporary evidence in Britain has lead some authors to suggest colonisation from outside of Ireland Mitchell & Ryan (1997). Recent studies (Cooney 2000, 13) have suggested that a combination of small-scale movement across the Irish Sea by migrating communities and developments within the existing Mesolithic populations within Ireland resulted in the innovative beginnings of this era.

The vast majority of the archaeological evidence for this period is to be found at the 4-5m (25ft) contour, which reflects the coastline during the maximum post-glacial marine transgression, and it has been suggested that this settlement location would have facilitated the exploitation of the higher ground for farming and the lower ground for summer grazing (Gosling 1993, 242). There is a concentration of megalithic tombs in the Flurry valley to the northeast of the site at Donaghmore 2/3 (with the nearest example located at Faughart lower (LH004-062), c. 6 km to the N) and the remainder scattered throughout the Cooley peninsula. Archaeological discoveries elsewhere on the DWB scheme revealed habitation evidence from the Neolithic period, with a the truncated remains of a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age house identified at Site 101, Littlemill 1 (O'Donnchadha forthcoming (d)), located c. 1km to the south of Site 105 (Donaghmore 8.)

Other Neolithic activity identified as part of the Dundalk Western Bypass consisted of Neolithic occupation at Site 120, Fort Hill (Bayley, forthcoming (a)), Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age hearths and pits at Site 113, Newtownbalregan 5 (Bayley forthcoming (c)), a possible structure at Site 108 Donaghmore 1 (Ó Donnchadha forthcoming (e)) and a collection of pits possibly Neolithic/Early Bronze Age in dating at Site 103, Littlemill 4/5. (Ó Donnchadha (c)).

#### 2.1.2 The Bronze Age Period (c. 2500BC – c. 500BC)

Bronze Age discoveries along the DWB consist of an Early Bronze Age Beaker (c. 2500BC - c. 2200BC) habitation site at Site 112, Newtownbalregan 2 (Bayley forthcoming (e)), located c. 2.4km north of site 106, Donaghmore 8. A number of Bronze Age ring-barrows, a cist and a cairn were excavated at Site 127, Carn More 5 (Bayley, D. forthcoming (g)), located c. 5.5km northeast of Site 106.

Burnt mounds or *fulachta fiadh* are the most prevalent prehistoric monument in Ireland (Waddell, 1998, 174), with over 4500 burnt mounds recorded to date. The quantity of this site type is ever increasing as a result in most instances of development led archaeological investigations. In some cases burnt mounds or *fulachta fiadh* can occur in clusters, with a complex of 18 previously unrecorded sites excavated in 2001 on the N11 Newtownmountkennedy to Ballynabarney road scheme by Archaeological Development Services Ltd (ADS Ltd 2001) in Co. Wicklow. In County Louth, there are 18 recorded burnt mounds/*fulacht fiadh* noted in the Records of Monuments and Places, a figure which must be regarded as a minimum representative of the original number (Buckley & Sweetman, 1991).

This is further supported by the discovery of 4 burnt mounds/*fulachta fiadh* as part of the DWB scheme at Site 111, Newtownbalregan 1.1, located 2km to the south, Site 113, Newtownbalregan 5 located 2.8km to the north and at Site 128, Faughart 1, 2 and 3 located 5.6km northeast of Site 118, Donaghmore 8. At Site 102 at Littlemill 2, located 0.7km to the south, proved to be Early Medieval in dating (Cal 890-1250AD; Donnachada, forthcoming (f)). A further 6 burnt mounds/*fulachta fiadh* were excavated by Archaeological Development Services Ltd (ADS Ltd.) as part of the archaeological resolution of the Dunleer/Dundalk Motorway.

### 2.1.3 The Iron Age Period (c. 500BC –c. 500AD)

There is a marked lack of known Iron Age (c. 500BC -c. 500AD) activity within the surrounding area. The ring barrow identified at Site 131, Donaghmore 7 (Ó Donnachada 2002, forthcoming (g)) is the sole example of a definitive Iron Age site identified through the DWB archaeological investigations. The site is located 1.2km to the north and consists of a small ring barrow and a single piece of unworked flint was found in the barrow with remains of three charred wooden planks found within the barrow ditch. These were taken for specialist analysis and were submitted for Carbon 14 dating (WK 18564). The dates returned confirmed that the ring barrow belongs to the Iron Age period, specifically the mid-Iron Age based on Cal 120BC-60AD.

## 2.2 Early Medieval Period (AD400-1169)

The Early Medieval period is depicted in the surviving sources as entirely rural characterised by the basic territorial unit known as *túath*. Byrne (1973) estimates that there were probably at least one hundred and fifty kings in Ireland at any given time during this period, each ruling over his own *túath*. During this sometimes violent period, roughly circular defensive enclosures known as ringforts were constructed to protect farmsteads. Although most of the ringforts that have been excavated are shown to date to this period, some have earlier origins and may have been originally constructed during the Iron Age, or even earlier.

The ringfort or rath is considered to be the most common indicator of settlement during the early medieval period (c. 400AD – c. 1100 AD). The most recent study of the ringfort (Stout 2000) has suggested that there are a total of 45,119 potential ringforts or enclosure sites throughout Ireland. They are typically enclosed by an earthen bank and exterior ditch, and range from 25m to 50m in diameter. The smaller sized and single banked type (univallate) were more likely to be home to the lower ranks of society while larger examples with more than one bank (bivallate/trivallate) housed the more powerful kings and lords. A previously unrecorded souterrain was identified at Site 114, Newtownbalregan 6 (Bayley 2003, forthcoming (d)) located c. 5km to the N of site 106, Donaghmore 8. Located in the interior of the extensive souterrain, a capstone decorated with Megalithic and possible Iron Age carvings was identified demonstrating the reuse of materials within the area. At Site 124, Carn More 1 (Delaney forthcoming (b)) located 5km to the northeast, a ringfort was identified in Area 1 and is listed in the Records of Monuments and Places as LH004-067 was excavated in advance of the motorway's construction. The site was originally listed as a circular enclosure.

Early Medieval activity was also identified at Site 109, Donaghmore 6 located 1.7km to the north, where two pits were identified (O'Donnchadha forthcoming (a)) and at Site 110, Donaghmore 5 (O'Donnchadha forthcoming (b)), located 1.9km to the north where two pits were identified in addition to the discovery of copper alloy fragment and a blue glass bead, which supports Early Medieval dating.

Souterrains are artificial underground structures, usually built of dry stone walling and comprising of passages and chambers with creeps connecting them. Souterrains are generally regarded as having had a defensive or protective function, as evidenced by the complex construction of many of the sites, with narrow winding passages, deliberate obstructions and small chambers. Raiding was endemic to Early Medieval society, and souterrains are thought to have served to house portable valuables and non-combatants during a raid. There is a previously recorded souterrain located 30m to the E of the CPO line at Ch17.640 (LH007-071), in Littlemill townland. A further two enclosures with associated souterrains were also excavated by Archaeological Development Services Ltd (ADS Ltd) in advance of the construction of the Dunleer/Dundalk Motorway.

The *fulacht fiadh* identified at Site 102, Littlemill 2 (Ó Donnachada, forthcoming (f)), located 0.7km to the north of Site 105 and was Carbon 14 dated to Cal 890AD - 1250AD (968 +/- 85BP). Site 102, Littlemill 2 is roughly circular in shape and it is suggested that these sites which are identified as early medieval and medieval in date, tend to be circular to oval in shape with no evidence for pit lining (O'Neill, pers.comm, 2007).

The historical sources for the early medieval period indicate that the main population group in north Louth was the *Conaille Muirtheimne*. They controlled the areas of *Cuailgne* (Cooley) and *Mag Muirtheimne* (Plain of Muirtheimne) –corresponding to the area S of Dundalk, roughly equating with the modern baronies of Lower and Upper Dundalk. It has been suggested (Gosling 1993, 46) that the ancient boundaries of this kingdom may coincide with the dense concentration of souterrains in north Louth. Though nominally a branch of the *Ulaid*, who had their capital at *Eamain Mhaca* or Navan Fort, Armagh; the *Conaille Muirtheimne* appear to have been subject to the kingdom of *Brega*, which had its capital at *Cnógbha* or Knowth in Co. Meath at the time of its greatest political cohesion, during the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Their earliest appearance in the annals is in 688 AD, as allies of the Knowth branch of the *Síl nÁeda Sláine* at the battle of *Imblech Pich* (Emlagh, Co. Meath), which was a key event in the political fragmentation of the *Síl nÁeda Sláine* dynasty. They were subsumed by the *Airgialla* or Oriel in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

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### 2.3 Medieval Period (AD1169-1700)

The motte and bailey at Castletown (LH007-11807) located c. 2.2km north northeast of Donaghmore 8, represents the initial phase of Anglo-Norman activity in the area. Although there are some suggestions that John de Courcy was responsible for this development, it is generally accepted that it represents the initial headquarters of the de Verdon family in their new territory. The Anglo-Normans were responsible for the construction of a network of towns throughout Ireland, with Louth being the most urbanised county.

The land in Castletown and Dundalk environs was granted to the Anglo-Norman Bertram de Verdon following his arrival in 1185 and corresponds to the modern barony of Upper Dundalk (Gosling, 1993, 252). The de Verdon estate passed onto the Bellew's with many of tower houses constructed at this time. The Bellew's contributed two large examples in 1472 and 1479, of which only the later survives in the grounds of St. Louis convent (LH007-11801). The earlier tower house is known to have stood at Castletown cross (LH007-11803), but no traces of the tower house survive above ground. In 1429, Henry IV introduced a £10 subsidy to encourage the King's 'liege men' to build towers houses in the Pale, under the condition that they

were built within ten years. This venture was so successful that twenty years later a limit was imposed on their construction. In Counties Louth, Kildare and Meath, the towers were mostly concentrated along the borders of the Pale (Davin 1982). The surviving tower house at Castletown (LH007-11801), most likely functioned as the centre of the Bellew manor of Dundalk during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Garstin's map of 1655 shows it protected by a bawn wall, which also enclosed outhouses.

For information of the Anglo-Norman land ownership we are reliant on documentary sources, and in Louth this is recorded in the 'Dowdall deeds'. The lack of documentary sources and archaeological excavation in the area has led to gaps in the record regarding the size of the Anglo-Norman settlement and how it was laid out. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century it seems that Castletown had its own church and burgesses. Garstin's map does point out the existence of burgage plots and streets in the vicinity of Mill road and Castletown cross. A watermill, most likely attached to the manor, is known from documentary sources although its precise location is not known.

At this time the new town of Dundalk, which lies c. 2km to the east of Castletown, developed as the major urban centre. This was due to its market centre and port in addition to its more strategic siting on the major routeway linking Dublin with Ulster. It is probable that another factor influencing the move of the de Verdons was the nature of the topography of the general area. The unsatisfactory nature of the river at the Castletown location must have made it inaccessible to shipping even in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. The new town also had the advantage of considerable natural defences. The site of the new town was thus better situated than Castletown from a commercial and defensive perspective. As Dundalk developed and became the focus for Anglo-Norman settlement in the area, Castletown fell into decline and Dundalk became the economic heart of the Lordship. The precise date for the foundation of the "Newtown" of Dundalk is unclear. However, by the late 13<sup>th</sup> century surviving property deeds make the distinction between the late 12<sup>th</sup> century settlement at Castletown and the Newtown or '*nove ville de Dundalc*'.

As a result of the low-lying nature of the surrounding landscape and the form of the gravel ridge on which the Newtown (Dundalk) was located, the town developed a markedly linear aspect, which is still apparent today.

## **2.4 Post-Medieval Period (1700-1900)**

Post-medieval remains identified in the study area relate to industrial structures particularly mills and kilns using the Castletown and Kilcurry River waters, with these structures usually being fed by a mill race. Two mills and associated races occur near to the Castletown-Kilcurry river confluence. There was also a mill race and mill located c. 75m to the south southwest of Donaghmore 2 & 3, which is located 240m to the S of Donaghmore 8.

Although surrounded by a large amount of archaeology from the prehistoric and medieval periods, the site at Donaghmore 8 consisted of the remains of a defunct railway embankment that was built during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ordnance Survey Maps of the area show the railway present on the second edition map of 1863, but not on the first of 1835. It is then shown on the 1:10, 560 scale maps dating to 1909 and 1939, until the railway was decommissioned in 1957. This section of railway dates to the late 1840s, and was the first section of railway to enter county Monaghan. It was developed by two companies who wanted to develop lines from Dundalk to Enniskillen and Newry to Enniskillen, to bring trade to the port in Dundalk.

The two separate companies were the Dundalk and Enniskillen Railway and the Newry and Enniskillen Railway. The plans of the latter were to connect the port of

Newry to Enniskillen by way of Armagh, Monaghan and Clones while the Dundalk and Enniskillen railway were to connect Dundalk with Clones and thereby Enniskillen. The companies were to share the responsibility and the cost of the remaining 22 miles to Enniskillen with the NER. Financial problems saw that plan abandoned and the line did not come further than Armagh but a new company was formed and obtained powers to build the Armagh to Clones section. The Dundalk and Enniskillen Railway Company had been constructing its line from Dundalk and had reached Newbliss, Co. Monaghan in 1855. Progress over the next two years was slow and the Newbliss to Clones to Lisnaskes section was not opened until July of 1858.

As time moved on, the advent of buses and increased road transport for freight meant that by the mid 1940s the railways appeared to be facing a bleak future and closures were predicted. Traffic was declining, costs were rising and the railways were not subsidised in anyway. The Great Northern Railway Company (GNR), which now covered the railways in Monaghan was struggling as an independent company and a crisis point was reached in late 1950 when the company reported a financial loss on the previous years work. In January 1951 the GNR announced its intention to close the system and served notice on its employees, the beginning of the end for the railways in Monaghan. There was a temporary reprieve when the governments of Northern Ireland and The Irish Free State stepped in to negotiate with the GNR. The outcome was that the two governments, after meeting the company's current deficit as an interim measure, purchased the GNR a 4.5 million pounds as and from September 1st 1953, each paying half of the cost. This created a unique situation with the GNR being effectively nationalised but owned by two separate states and to administer the company a board was created called The Great Northern Railway Board.

Viewed in the current context of cross-border bodies this was a bold step but almost immediately there were difficulties as every decision with regard to finance had to be agreed by the two governments. There was a further development in this in 1953 when ministers were allowed to make unilateral decisions affecting the lines within their specific jurisdictions and there was also the added problem that the Northern Ireland government wanted rid of the GNR and it resented having to co-operate with the Irish Republic over its transport policy. So the railways in Monaghan became hostages to fortune and the political intrigues of the time and following the closure of a number of branch lines in Northern Ireland it came as quite a shock when the Northern Ireland government proposed in 1956 that it was going to close all lines that had any connection with cross-border traffic. The knock-on effect of this was catastrophic and meant that services into Monaghan and across the county to Clones could not remain open as they would be unable to sustain the services on the Cavan to Monaghan and Clones to Dundalk sections after their connections had gone and rail traffic effectively ceased in the county completely in 1957. This marked the end for the section of the railway line that contains Site 106, Donaghmore 8, and by 1959 all the permanent tracks had been lifted (<http://www.hoganstand.com>).

## 3 THE EXCAVATION

### 3.1 Introduction

The excavation of Site 106, Donaghmore 8 was undertaken as part of the archaeological mitigation for the DWB in the townland of Donaghmore. Hand excavations began on the 15<sup>th</sup> January and were completed on Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2003. A team of one Site Supervisor and four Archaeological Assistants were used to excavate the site.

### 3.2 Methodology

Topsoil stripping of the area commenced on 15<sup>th</sup> January and the fieldwork in the areas below was completed on 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2003, using a team of one Supervisor and four Assistant Archaeologists.

The topsoil was removed by a machine equipped with a flat toothless bucket under strict archaeological supervision. After initial bulk stripping the area of excavation was hand cleaned in order to identify potential archaeological remains. All features were subsequently fully excavated and recorded by hand, using the single context recording system with plans and sections being produced at a scale of 1:50 and 1:20 (sections were recorded generally at 1:10) and photographs where necessary. All works were carried out in agreement with the Project Archaeologist and *Dúchas*-The Heritage Service/Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). All contexts are described in Appendix 1.

### 3.3 Legends and Brackets

In the following text, the authors have used three types of brackets:

- { } = These enclose Subgroup numbers.
- ( ) = These enclose Deposit numbers.
- [ ] = These enclose both Cut and Masonry Structure numbers.

#### CONTEXT KEY;

- prof = profile
- NSEW = Compass points, Eg: 'N-S' = North-South oriented feature
- All dimensions are given in metres
- d/l/w = depth/width/length
- s/m/lg = small/medium/large
- ang/sub-ang/rou/sub-rou = refer to stones, Eg: 's sub-ang' = small sub-angular stone
- mixed = ang + sub-ang + rou + sub-rou
- Dk/Lt = dark/light
- mod = moderate/moderately
- freq/occ = frequent/occasional
- ch = charcoal
- Hb/Ht = Human bone/teeth
- Ab/At = Animal bone/teeth
- frags/fls = fragments/flecks
- vert = vertical
- constr = construction
- sk = skeleton
- t'd/unx/s'd = truncated/unexcavated/segmented
- w/- = with
- pres = preservation

#### PERIOD KEY:

- PH: Prehistoric
- EM: Early Medieval
- MD: Medieval
- PM: Post-medieval
- MOD: Modern



## 4 EXCAVATION RESULTS

### 4.1 GROUP 1: The Natural Drift Geology

#### 4.1.1 SUBGROUP {1000}: Natural drift geology

##### CONTEXTS:

C	Type	Fill Of	Filled by	Basic Interpretation	Description	Area
2		N/A	N/A	Natural	Light brown/grey silty sand	D.8

**FINDS:** N/A

**INTERPRETATION:** Natural drift geology.

##### GROUP 1 DISCUSSION: The Natural geology

Group 1 is the natural drift geology on which the railway embankment was built. The topsoil was stripped away to allow a firm foundation on which the bank could be built.

The sites at Donaghmore were all located in a low-lying valley that contains both a river and an area of wetland. Two ridges running east/west to the north and south of the valley define its extent in those directions. The valley itself runs from the town of Dundalk to the east in the direction of Carrickmacross in the west. Well drained and sheltered by the surrounding ridges it would have served as an ideal location for the establishment of habitation sites throughout history.

#### 4.1 GROUP 2: The Construction of the Railway Embankment

##### 4.2.1 SUBGROUP {1001}: Embankment Material

###### CONTEXTS:

C	Area	Fill Of	Filled By	Interpretation	Description
3	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Grey sandy gravel on top of bank
4	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Grey clayey sand below [3]
5	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Light brown/grey silty sand, main deposit that is bank
6	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Lens of grey clay at base of embankment

**FINDS:** N/A

**FIGURE:** Figures 4, 5 & 6

###### INTERPRETATION:

The railway bank material (**C3**), (**C4**), (**C5**) and (**C6**) runs east-west from Dundalk and Enniskillen. To secure this material, and to provide a solid foundation for the railway tracks and sleepers, a layer of compacted coarse sand and rubble (**C3**) and (**C4**) was placed on top of the clay to a depth of 2m. This layer would have been the 19<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of hardcore used by engineers as foundation for roads today. The whole embankment was 19.40m in width and was flanked on each side by a wide drain known as a cess, which had a maximum width of 3.75m, designed to gather run-off from the embankment and prevent localised flooding, which may have undermined and damaged the embankment.

No finds were discovered, however they are not necessary to date the railway embankment. Cartographic sources confirm that it was constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

##### 4.2.2 SUBGROUP: {1002} Drainage Ditches

###### CONTEXTS:

C	Area	Fill Of	Filled By	Interpretation	Description
7	D.8	N/A	1	Drainage ditch	On north side of bank approx. 3m wide and 1.20 deep
8	D.8	N/A	1	Drainage ditch	On south side of bank 3.75 wide and 1.60m deep

**FINDS:** None

###### INTERPRETATION:

The drainage ditch [**C7**] is located along the base of the north side of the railway embankment. The drainage ditch [**C8**] is located on the south side at the base of the embankment. These ditches were contemporary with the embankment and functioned as means of draining excess surface water/run off from the bank, which would otherwise comprise the integrity of the bank.

#### GROUP 2 DISCUSSION: The Construction Of The Railway Embankment

Group	Sub Group	Subgroup Type	Period By Finds/Strat.	Period By Interp.	Group Interp.
2	1001	Bank deposits	PM	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Post Medieval Activity
2	1002	Drainage ditches	PM	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Post Medieval Activity

###### SUMMARY:

The railway embankment was constructed by building up a mound of soil 2.20m in height. The embankment was composed of a mixture of natural subsoils and topsoil

was used, combined with sand and gravel to consolidate the bank, prior to the laying of railway lines.

Group 2 consists of the bank {1001} and the drainage ditches or cesses {1002}. Taken together these features represent the construction of the railway embankment and its accompanying ditches. The bank deposit was laid directly onto natural drift geology, indicating that the area had been stripped of the existing topsoil before construction began.

The Bank {1001} and the ditches {1002} were constructed in the late 1840's and went out of use in 1957. The railway tracks were removed by 1959.

## 4.2 GROUP 3: Topsoil

### 4.2.1 SUBGROUP {1003}: Topsoil

#### CONTEXTS:

C	Area	Fill Of	Filled By	Basic Interpretation	Description
1	D.8	N/A	N/A	Topsoil	Grey clayey sand with inclusions of post medieval delft and black ware

**FINDS:** None

#### INTERPRETATION:

Topsoil located on upper surface and sides of the embankment and in ditches.

#### GROUP 3 DISCUSSION: Topsoil

Group	Subgroup	Subgroup type	Period by finds/ stratigraphy	Period by interpretation	Group Interpretation
1	1003	Topsoil	PM	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Post-Medieval

Subgroup {1003} is topsoil contained within the railway embankment built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and decommissioned in the 1950s. The topsoil has naturally covered the embankment since it was abandoned 45 years ago.

#### SUMMARY:

The topsoil (**C1**) was used, combined with sand and gravel to consolidate the bank, prior to the laying of railway lines.

Group 3 consists of the topsoil {1003} and represents the material which was stripped from the area prior the construction of the embankment {1001} and {1002} drainage ditches. Post-medieval finds such as black ware and delft pottery were found in the topsoil, which has naturally covered the embankment since its abandonment 45 years ago.

#### **4.4 Synthesis**

Site 106, Donaghmore 8 is situated in Donaghmore townland, located 4km west of Dundalk (OS sheet 007).

##### **Open Area 1: The Natural Geology**

The sites at Donaghmore were all located in a low-lying valley that contains both a river and an area of wetland. Two ridges running east-west to the north and south of the valley define its extent in those directions. The valley extends west from the town of Dundalk (to the east) towards Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. The land is well drained and sheltered by the surrounding ridges and it would have served as an ideal location for the establishment of habitation sites throughout history.

##### **Open Area 2: Railway embankment and Ditch construction**

A section of an east-west oriented railway embankment, with associated parallel ditches on both sides was identified at Donaghmore 8. The embankment was built during the construction of the Dundalk to Enniskillen railway line in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The embankment was 19.40m in width and was flanked on each side by a wide (3-3.75m) drain known as a cess. These drains were designed to gather run-off from the embankment, which would otherwise compromise the stability of the embankment and prevent localised flooding. No finds were recovered during the course of this investigation and no samples were taken.

##### **Open Area 3: Post Medieval Activity**

The railway embankment construction was post-medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century) activity. Other post-medieval finds such as black ware and delft pottery were found in the topsoil.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Realisation of the original research aims

This section examines the extent to which preliminary assessment of the results of the excavation reveals how the original research aims have been or can be answered.

Original Research Questions (**ORQ**) were prepared after the results of the test-trenching exercise were known and before the rescue excavation began. The following are the Original Research Questions relating to the excavation at Site 106, Donaghmore 8 and Responses (**R**) based on preliminary analysis of the site data.

**ORQ 1:** *How was this section of the railway constructed?*

**R:** The stepped section revealed a core of redeposited glacial clay that had been built-up until it reached a height of 1.70m. To secure this, and to provide a solid foundation for the laying of railway tracks and sleepers, a layer of compacted coarse sand and rubble was placed on top of the clay to a depth of 2m. The whole embankment was 19.40m in width and was flanked on each side by a wide drainage ditches that were designed to gather run-off from the embankment and prevent localised flooding which may have undermined and damaged the embankment.

**ORQ 2:** *How much of the present construction relates to the primary building phase, and what parts are later additions?*

**R:** From the section opened it was clear that all work contemporaneous with no evidence for later additions or alterations.

### 5.2 Conclusions

The excavation at this site addresses all the original research questions without posing further questions. The excavation was carried out to validate the existence and investigate the construction techniques of a section of the Dundalk to Enniskillen railway that was constructed during the late 1840s. In terms of potential, while adding to the post-medieval/industrial knowledge base in this part of Donaghmore townland, it provides little additional knowledge to the area of Dundalk or County Louth in general. In terms of archaeological importance, apart from illustrating the construction techniques of the railway builders, this site has very little bearing on archaeological discoveries at a national scale.

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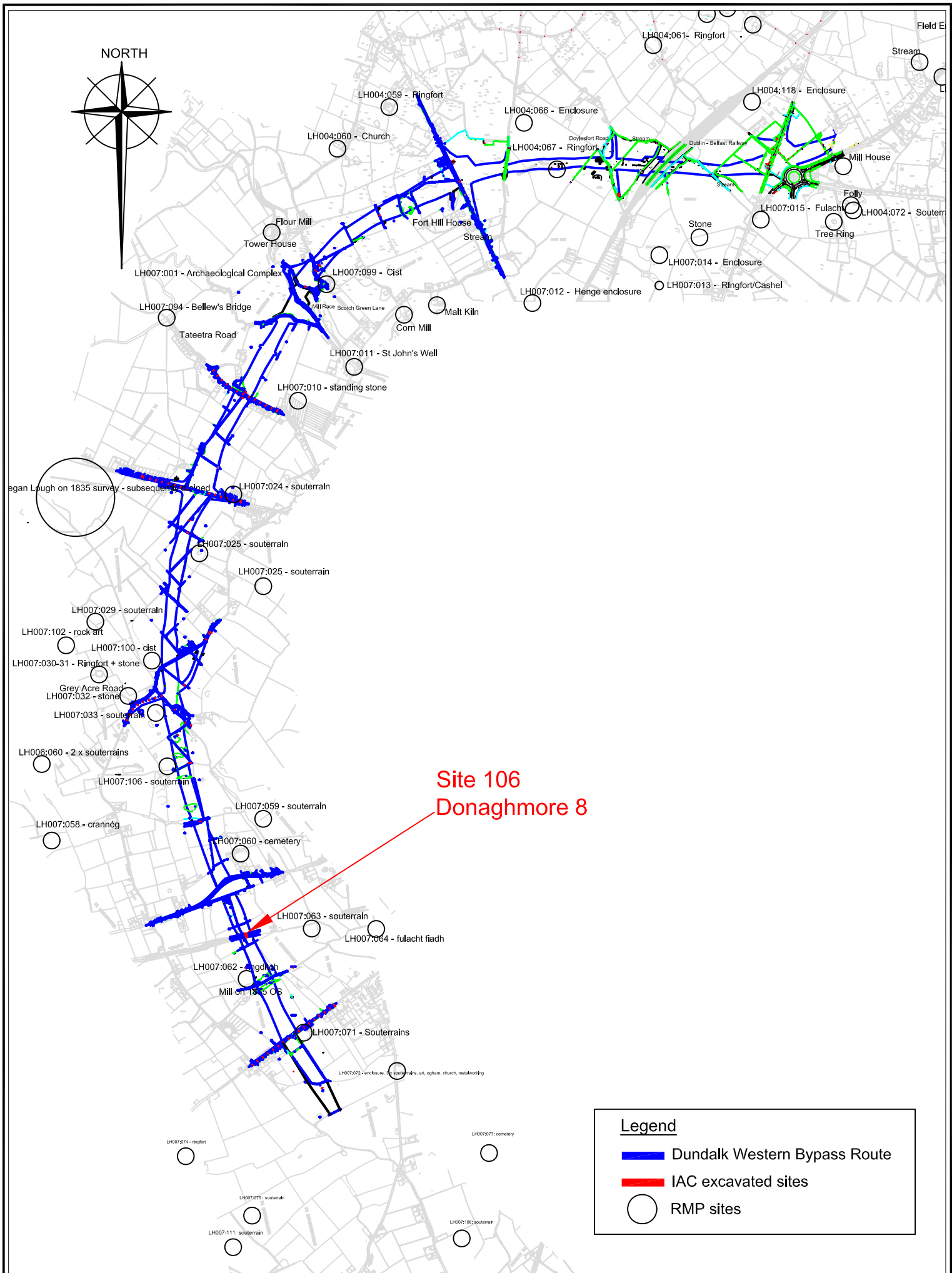


Irish  
Archaeological  
Consultancy Ltd.

Title: Site 106, Donaghmore 8 Site location  
Project: M1 Dundalk Western Bypass  
Client: Louth County Council

Scale: N.T.S.  
Date: 16/11/07  
Produced by: P Higgins  
Job No: J2041  
Figure No: 1





Irish  
Archaeological  
Consultancy Ltd.

Title: Extract from RMP map showing location  
of Site 106, Donaghmore 8

Project: M1 Dundalk Western Bypass

Client: Louth County Council

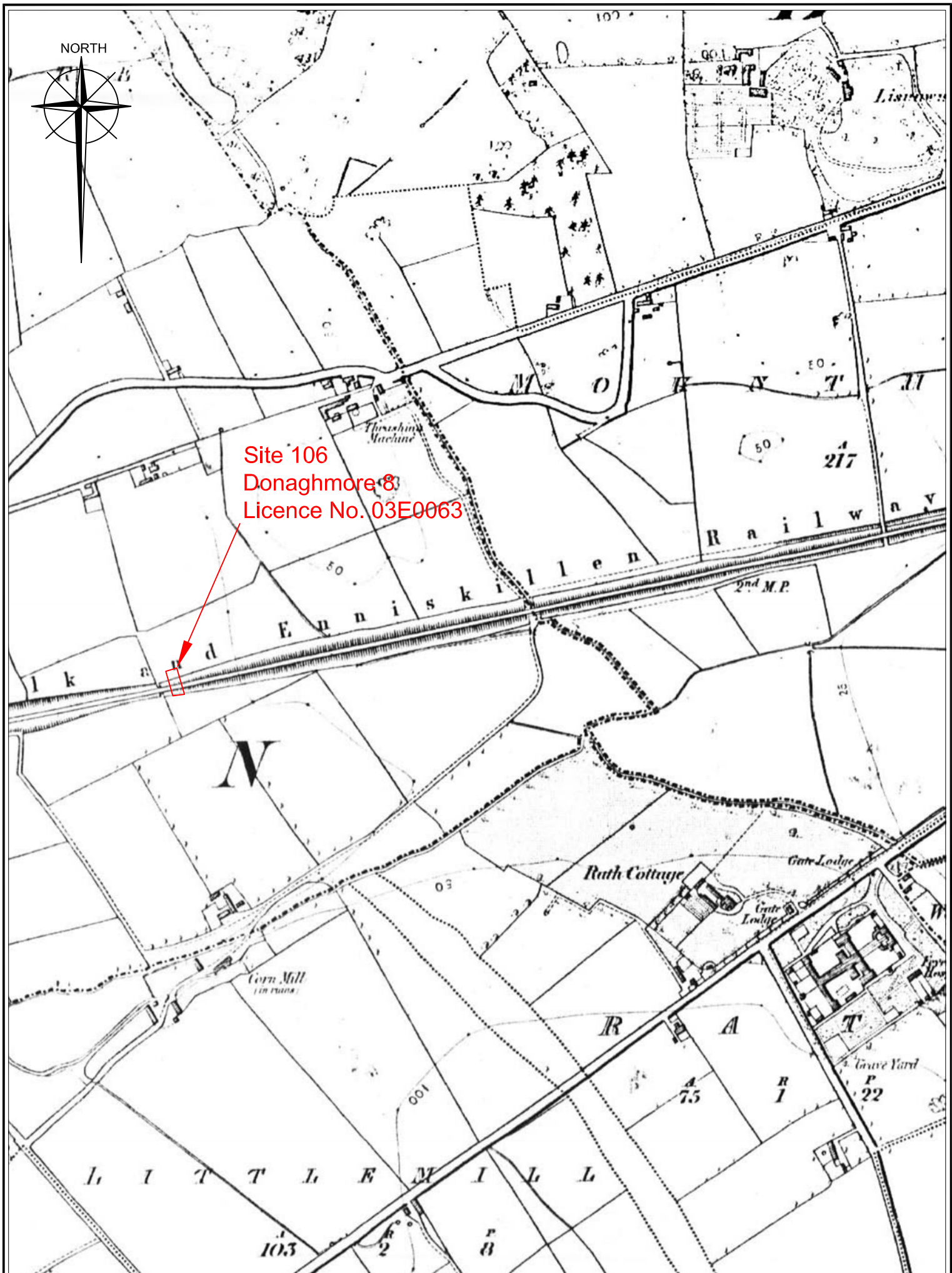
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Date: 26/11/07

Produced by: P Higgins

Job No: J2041

Figure No: 2



Irish  
Archaeological  
Consultancy Ltd.

Title: Extract from second edition OS map (1863)  
showing location of site

Project: M1 Dundalk Western Bypass

Client: Louth County Council

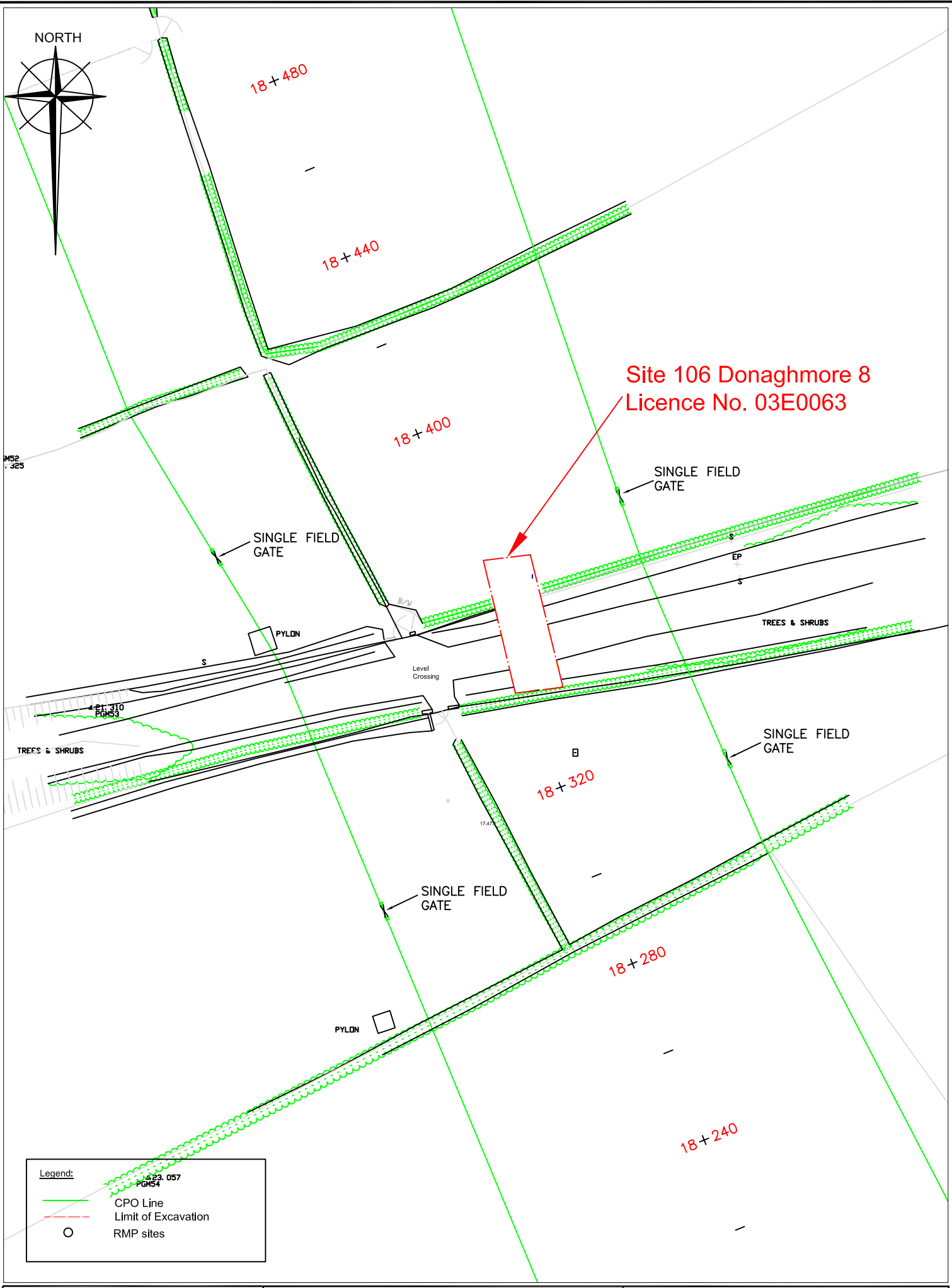
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Date: 18/11/07

Produced by: P Higgins

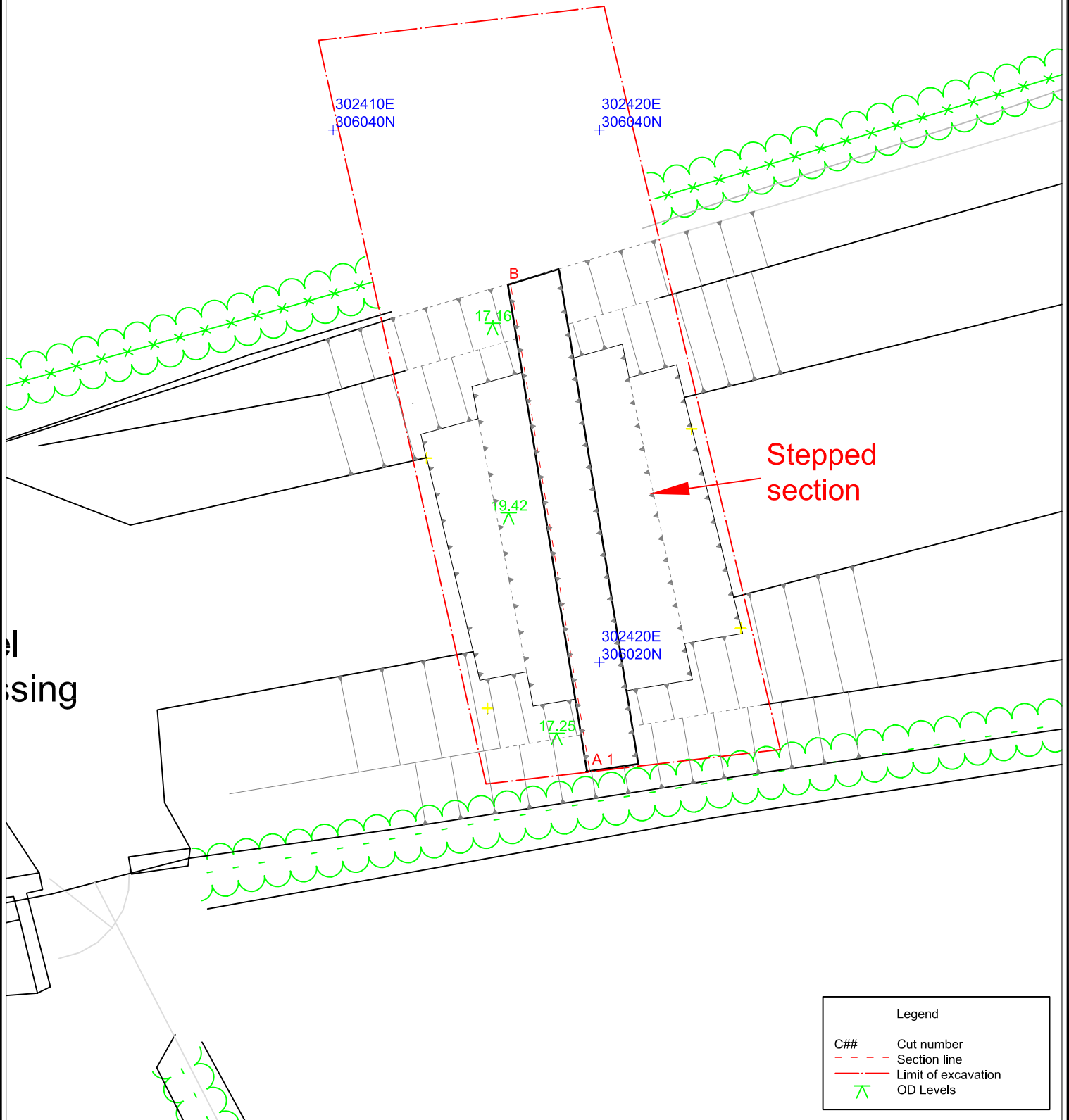
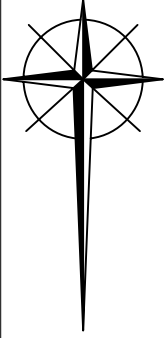
Job No: J2041

Figure No: 3



 <p>Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.</p>	Title: Location of site within the Dundalk Western Bypass Road Scheme	Scale: 1:1000
	Project: M1 Dundalk Western Bypass	Date: 17/11/07
	Client: Louth County Council	Produced by: P Higgins
		Job No: J2041
		Figure No: 4

NORTH



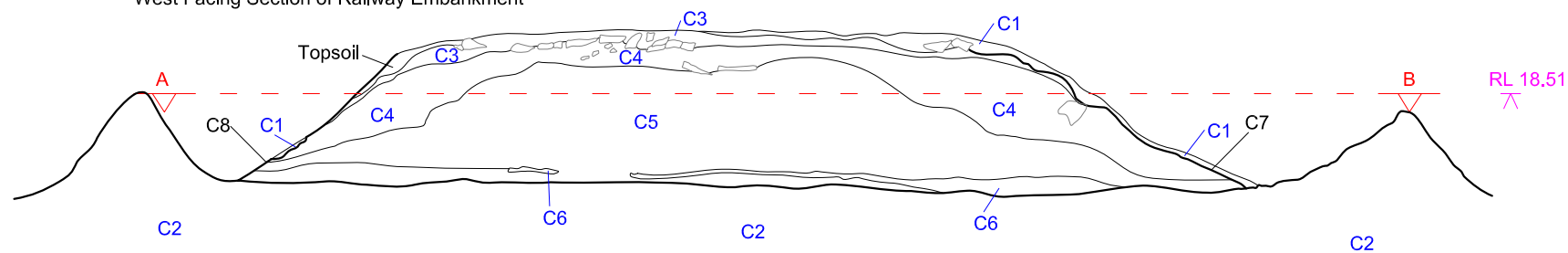
Legend	
C##	Cut number
- - -	Section line
- - -	Limit of excavation
X	OD Levels





Irish  
Archaeological  
Consultancy Ltd.

Title:	Post Excavation Plan of Site 106, Donaghmore 8	Scale:	1:200
Project:	M1 Dundalk Western Bypass	Date:	16/11/07
Client:	Louth County Council	Produced by:	P Higgins
		Job No:	J2041
		Figure No:	5

Donaghmore 8  
West Facing Section of Railway Embankment



Legend	
C##	Cut numbers
C##	Fill Numbers
	Stone
###.##	Reduced Levels
	



Irish  
Archaeological  
Consultancy Ltd.

Title:	Section through railway embankment (Group 2)	Scale:	1:100
Project:	M1 Dundalk Western Bypass	Date:	16/11/07
Client:	Louth County Council	Produced by:	P Higgins
		Job No:	J2041
		Figure No:	6



## PLATES



Plate 1 – Aerial view of trench across embankment (Studiolab)



Plate 2 – West facing section of disused railway embankment



Plate 3 – Aerial view of disused railway line looking west (Studiolab)

## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

C	Area	Fill Of	Filled By	Interpretation	Description
1	D.8	N/A	N/A	Topsoil	Grey clayey sand with inclusions of post medieval delft and black ware
2	D.8	N/A	N/A	Natural	Light brown/grey silty sand
3	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Grey sandy gravel on top of bank
4	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Grey clayey sand below [3]
5	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Light brown/grey silty sand, main deposit that is bank
6	D.8	N/A	N/A	Bank Material	Lens of grey clay at base of embankment
7	D.8	N/A	1	Drainage ditch	On north side of bank approx. 3m wide and 1.20 deep
8	D.8	N/A	1	Drainage ditch	On south side of bank 3.75 wide and 1.60m deep