



**Archaeological Desk Study of a site at Sommerville, Dundrum Road,
Dublin 14**

For Eir

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Introduction

This report details the archaeological implications of redevelopment of a site at Sommerville, Dundrum, Dublin 14. The site was in use until recently as an Eir Data Centre, and is presently occupied by a building of recent construction. The site extends to approx. 0.79ha in area (inclusive of DLRCC lands along Dundrum Rd).

The proposed development comprises the demolition of all existing structures on site and the redevelopment of the site to provide a total of 111 no. apartments (comprising 3 no. Studios; 51 no. 1 Beds and 57 no. 2 Beds) arranged in 2 no. courtyard blocks, as follows:

Block A (Western block fronting Dundrum Road) comprises a 6-storey block (5 levels over lower ground level) that steps down to the east to 4-storeys, that provides a total of 65 no. apartments (comprising 1 x studio; 36 x 1 bed; 6 x 2 Bed (3 person) and 22 x 2 bed (4 person) units. Block A sits above a lower ground floor level (under-croft area) that provides car parking, bicycle storage, bin store, post room, comms room, plant and sub-station, switch room and entrance lobby.

Block B (Eastern block towards the rear of the site) comprises a part 2, and part 3-storey block that provides 46 no. apartments (comprising 2 x studio; 15 x 1 bed; 5 x 2 bed (3 person) and 24 x 2 bed (4 person) units.

The proposed development comprises of two u-shaped blocks that have been positioned to form a series of outdoor courtyard spaces, minimising units with a northerly aspect, and protecting the amenities of adjoining residential properties to the north, south and east by achieving generous separation distances and retaining existing mature trees along the site boundaries where possible.

Methodology

The report is based on the following:

National Monuments website (archaeology.ie)

Dublin County Archaeological database, available through Heritage Council website

Summary of archaeological investigations in the immediate area of the site on excavations.ie and on Dublin City and County Database

Relevant published works.

Archaeological background

There are no sites of prehistoric date in the vicinity of the site. A find of a stone axe-head (1935:38) was made at a location to the north of the site at Classon House, Dundrum Business Park. A find of a 'small stone cup' (1A/95/47) is recorded from Churchtown Lower, but no further information is given. Notably there were no finds of prehistoric date from the largescale excavation at Notre Dame School (see below). Continuous ploughing and dense sub-urban development will have resulted in the removal of surface traces of monuments, but traces of prehistoric activity, particularly diagnostic flint artefacts, can be included in the assemblages from many later sites.

The name Dundrum originates in the early medieval period, and means the 'fort on the ridge'. The present site of Dundrum castle, some 1.2km south west of the subject site, may be considered to be the location of this fort, but no trace of earlier occupation was uncovered in extensive excavations at the site. The name Taney comes from Teach Naithi, and the present church of Ireland church there had its origins in an early Christian period monastery at the site, whose enclosure is partly reflected in the original curving line of Churchtown Road.

Naithi is thought to have been a bishop, and lived probably in the 6th century. The significance of the defensive earthworks around the church in the early period may indicate its importance as a bishopric, possibly eliminated during the 12th century reform of the Irish church.

Viking influence on the site is attested by the finding of two grave slabs in the graveyard, which form part of the group known as Rathdown slabs. They have been found in church sites across the southern hinterland of south Dublin and north Wicklow, and feature abstract designs of Viking origin.

This area of south Dublin came into the possession of John de Clahella who granted the tenement to Holy Trinity church and the Archbishop of Dublin. The possessions of the Archbishop are recorded in Alen's register, and for the year 1326 (the manor of St Sepulchre) is as follows: 'At Thanahy and le Miltoun are certain tenants, English and Irish, holding four score acres, 3d a year in peace, nothing in war. There are 40 acres waste and untilled for want of tenants, extended at nothing because nothing can be got from them; there were four cottages now waste. For want of tenants, no value'. (Mc Neill 1950, 171). A reference to granaries at 'Tawney' indicates good land, in tillage.

Cartographic evidence

The Down Survey map of 1654-6 annotates the parish of Taney, which at the time consisted of the townlands of 'Dondrom, Ballintery, Rabuck, Ownenstown, Kilmacudd, Ballowley, Tyberstowne, Moltanstowne, and Militowne'. There are no monuments close to the subject site on this map.

Rocque's small scale survey of county Dublin of 1760 illustrates the road from Milltown to Dundrum. The subject site appears to lie in fields at the period. Development is confined to a small group of buildings around the site of a paper mill. This settlement was expanded as shown on Taylor's 1816 map of county Dublin, which annotates 'Windy Harbour'. Taylor's map shows a series of widely spaced buildings along the east side of the route, and annotates the major estates, such as Frankfort Lodge.

The first edition of the Ordnance Survey (1843) shows that the subject site is located on the south side of a large house called Sommerville. The 1890 map shows the site bordering with a group of outbuildings in the neighbouring house called Larchfield.

The estate is now largely built over and now called Sommerville.

Record of Monuments and Places (National Monuments)

The subject site is not close to any known sites listed on the Record of Monuments and Places. The closest site is the ecclesiastic enclosure at Taney Dundrum Td (DU022-016001-5) which lies c. 600m distant. Dundrum Castle (DU022-023002) lies over 1.2km south-west of the subject site.

Evidence from archaeological excavations

A major excavation was undertaken in advance of development at the former Notre Dame school off Churchtown Road, Dundrum (O' Donovan 2012). Substantial remains of the early medieval defences were uncovered. The site later developed into a medieval farm. This site lies on a flat promontory or ridge to the north-west of the village of Dundrum and overlooks the course of the river Slang, now mostly in a culvert. The extent of the defences of the enclosure around the church suggested the importance of the site to the excavator and of its proximity to the Viking powerbase in Dublin.

Test excavation and geophysics had been undertaken in advance of O' Donovan's excavation.

Monitoring of water main installation (12E0219) in Dundrum Main Street did not uncover anything of archaeological significance.

Monitoring of the Luas Milltown Viaduct (01E1185) to Dundrum did not uncover anything of archaeological significance.

Conclusions

The subject site lies in an area of low archaeological significance. There are no records of archaeological significance in close proximity to the site. Historically it was farmland, and first built on in the later 18th or 19th century, when a large house called Summerville occupied the site.

There is a very low likelihood of any deposits of archaeological significance remaining on this site, due to the construction in recent years of the Eir Data Centre. Preparation of the ground for construction of this building, attendant services, drainage and other utilities, will have removed all topsoil and the upper level of subsoil. Any archaeological features which may have been present on the site will have been removed in the construction of the present building.

There is no requirement for an archaeological mitigation strategy for this site.

Sources

Archaeology.ie

Dublin County Heritage maps

McNeill, C. 1950. Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register.

O' Donovan, E. 2012. Early Christian and medieval excavations at Teach Naithi in S. Duffy, ed. Medieval Dublin XII.



Figure 1. Site location, approx. on Down Survey 1654-6.

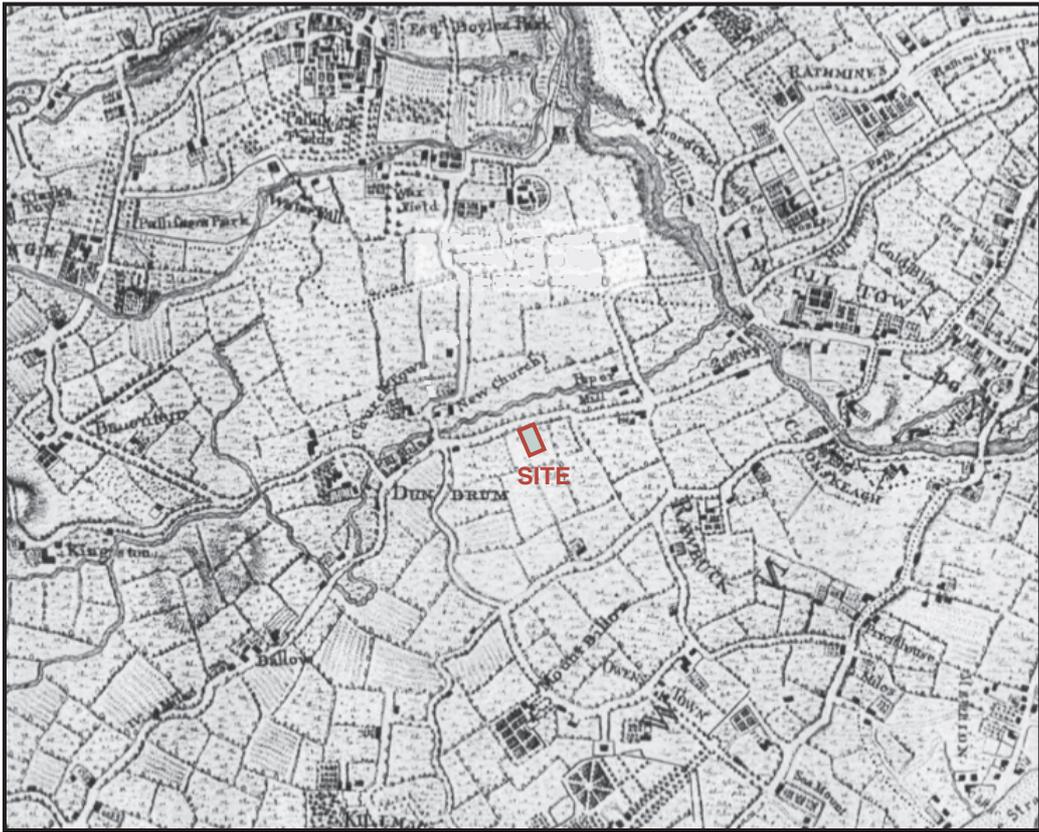


Figure 2. Site location on Rocque's 1760 map of county Dublin.

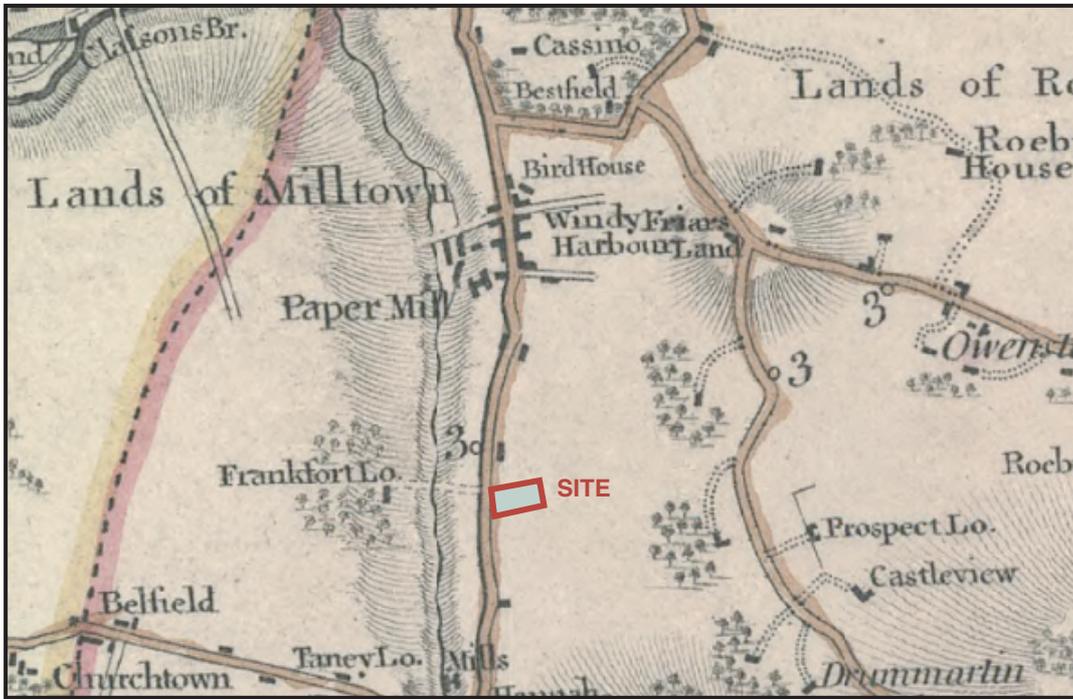


Figure 3. Site location on Taylor's 1816 map of county Dublin.

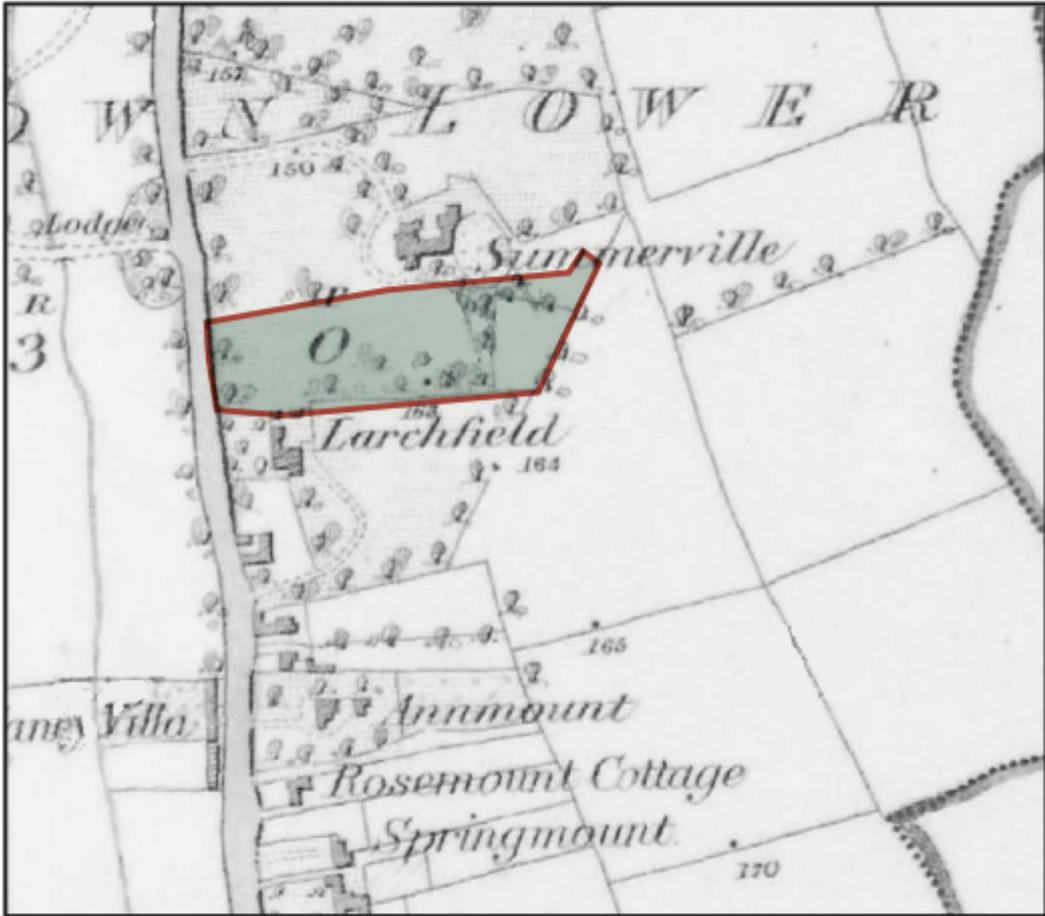


Figure 4. Site location on Ordnance Survey 1843 6 in.

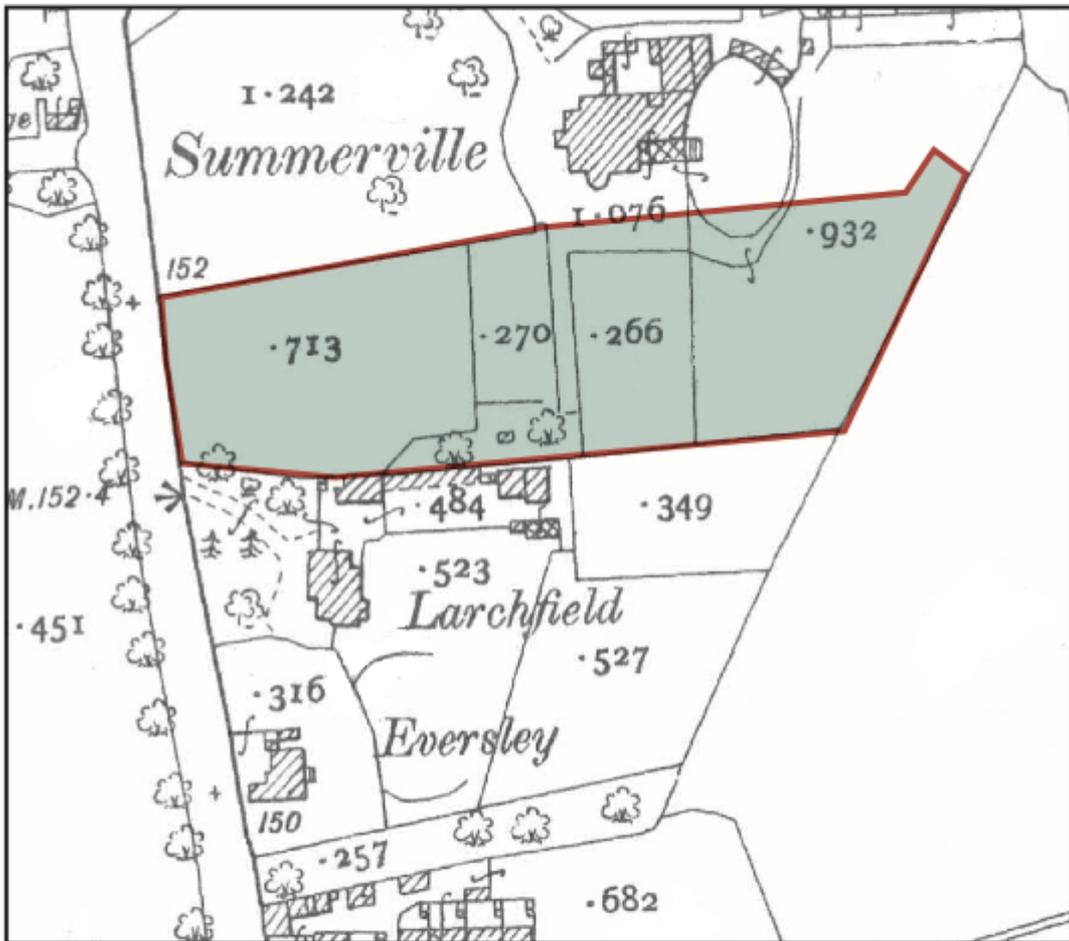


Figure 5. Site location on Ordnance Survey 25 in 1890-1913.

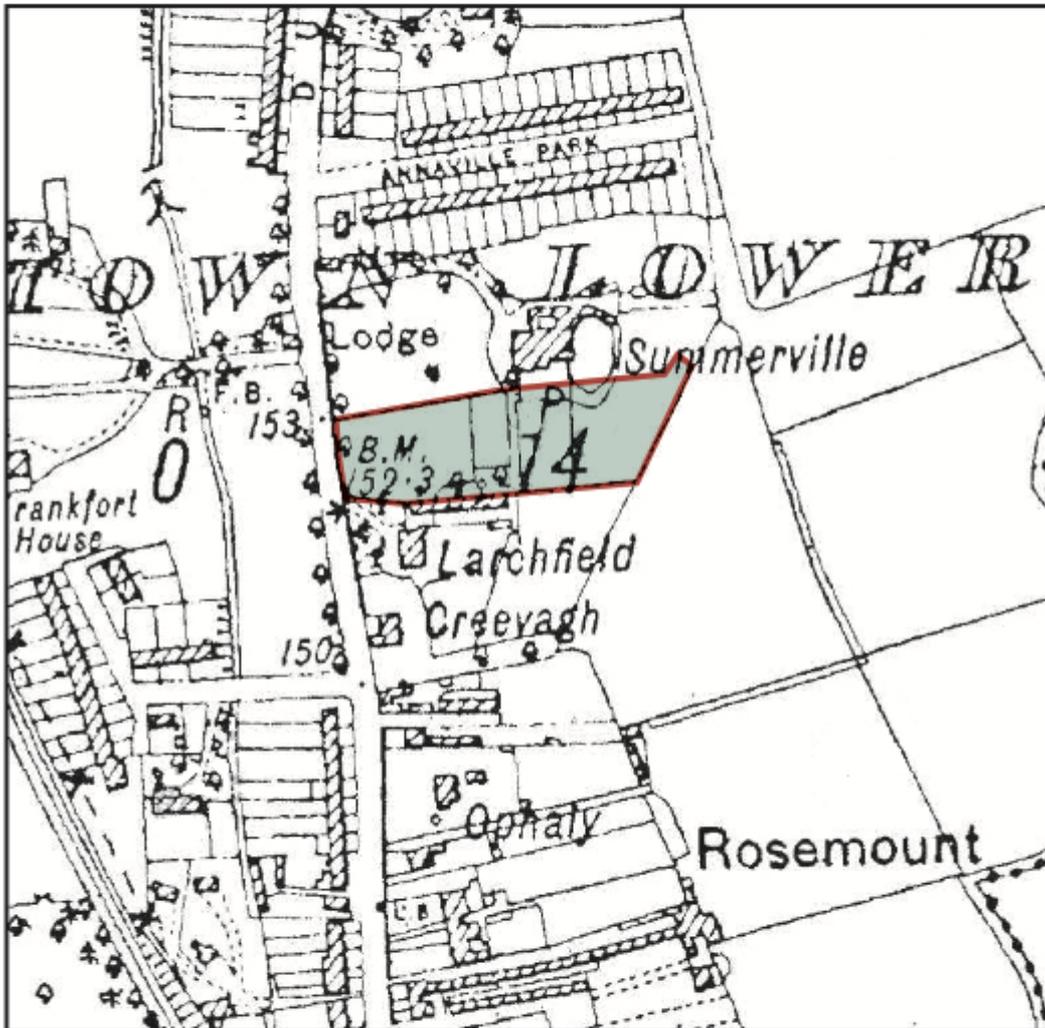


Figure 6. Site location on Cassini 1940s map.