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Final Archaeological Test Trenching Report
Licence 25E0079
Hanover Harps Football Club,
The Plots,
Rathnapish,
Carlow.

Planning application details ref: 2430
Carlow County Council

ITM E672990, N676988

January 2025.

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1 Summary:

This document is a final report completed for archaeological test trenching which was completed on the 25th January under Licence 25E0079 in advance of the construction of a new full size astro pitch, flood lighting, sports fencing, ball stop netting and all associated site works at The Plots, Rathnapish, Carlow Town, County Carlow.

The National Monuments Service (NMS) requested that an Archaeological Impact Assessment, including test trenching, be submitted as Further Information due to the scale and location of the proposed site. This request was made by Carlow County Council in September 2024 (Planning Ref 2430).

The site in question, currently used as a football pitch, is located 686 meters northeast of the medieval walled town of Carlow (CW007–018). The closest monuments to the site include:

- An enclosure in Rathnapish (CW007-021), identified through aerial photographs, which lies 500 meters north of the football pitch.
- A burial ground (CW007-063), the closest monument to the site, located 440 meters southeast in Kernanstown. This burial ground was completely disturbed before proper recording could take place and was uncovered during the excavation of foundations for a school in 1981.

The name Rathnapish translates to "Fort of the Peas," derived from "ráth", meaning a ringfort, and "pise", which refers to peas. This indicates the presence of a ringfort in the area, a characteristic feature of early medieval Irish landscapes, often associated with farming communities or defensive settlements. The earliest written reference to the townland is from 1721.

A total of 115m were excavated in order to complete an impact assessment report which fulfils the FI request (Planning Ref 2430).

The test trenching took place over the course of one day on the 25th January 2025. No finds or features of archaeological significance were found in the two test trenches excavated and no further archaeological mitigation is necessary for the development to proceed, and the client is in compliance with the FI request (Planning Ref 23/40).

2 Location description:

Hanover Harps Football Club is situated in Carlow Town, County Carlow, Ireland. The football grounds are located approximately 2 kilometres southeast of the town centre, within a predominantly suburban area. The site is bordered by residential developments and open green spaces, with easy access from nearby roads. The area is characterized by relatively flat terrain, with well-maintained grassy pitches and a clubhouse.

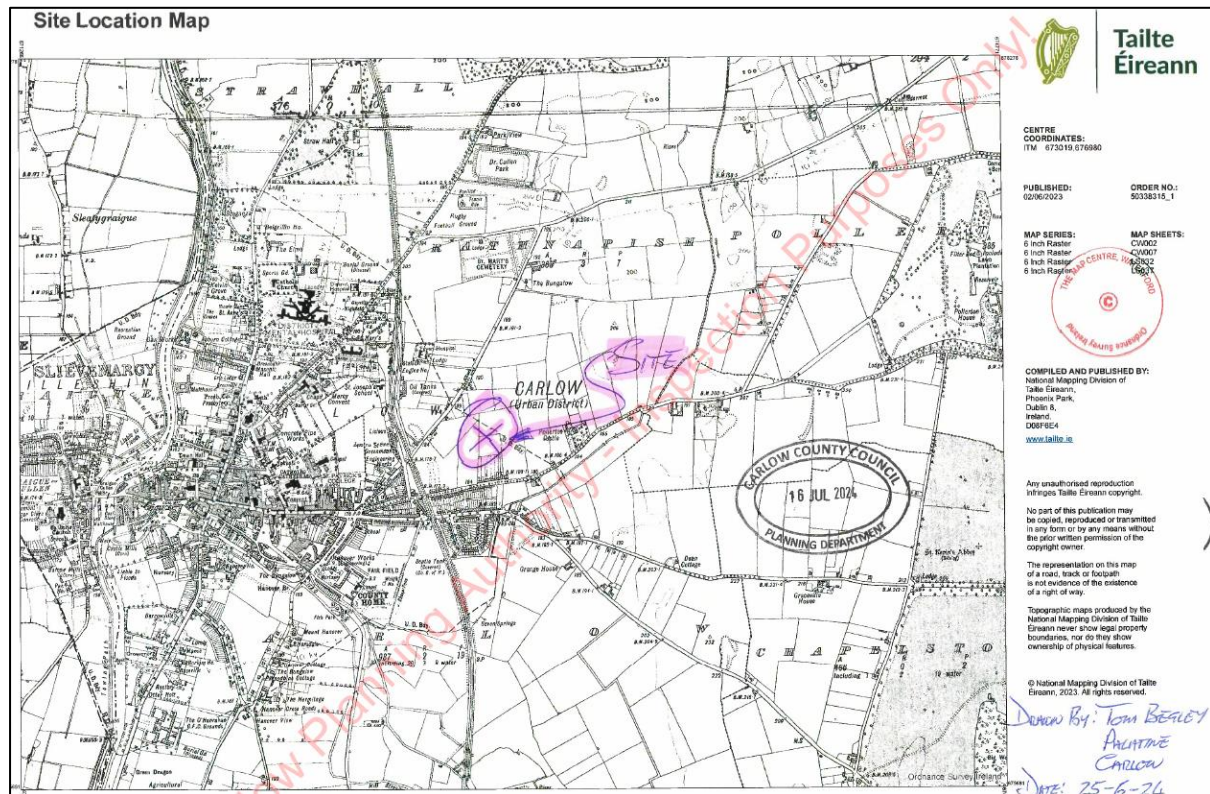


Figure 1: Site location Hanover Harps, Carlow Town, Co. Carlow.

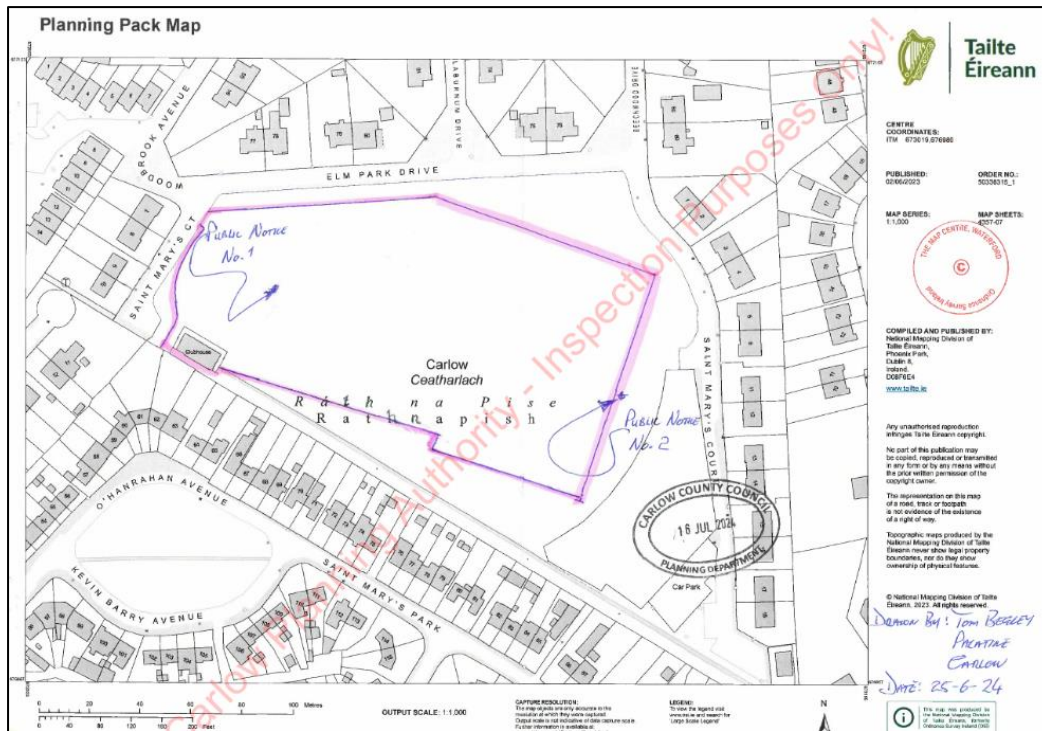


Plate 1: Site location Hanover Harps, Carlow.



Plate 2: Hanover Harps FC facing south.



Plate 3: Hanover Harps FC facing west towards club house.



Plate 4: Location of proposed test trench facing south.



Plate 5: Location of proposed test trench at the western end of the pitch facing south.

3 Aims of the excavation: archaeological potential of the site/location.

3.1 Historical Background

Carlow town which lies on the River Barrow, is Ireland's second longest river and has for millennia been a very significant settlement focus and routeway, providing an inland link between the south-east and the Irish Midlands (Bolger 2015,1). Prehistoric activity in the town comes from several iron spears and polished stone axe heads which have been recorded from the River Barrow. The most notable and dramatic prehistoric site is the megalithic portal tomb known as Brownshill Dolmen in the townland of Kernanstown west of Carlow Town— a just outside Carlow town (CW007-010 and National Monument No. 613).

The importance of the Barrow Valley as a routeway in Norman times, running from Kildare to New Ross in County Wexford has become known as the 'Carlow Corridor' to historians (Doran 2008, 173). The fortified medieval town of Carlow, on the edge of the pale and at a fording point of the Barrow, exemplifies this strategic significance (Shiels 2015, 145).

Dermot McMurrough's desperate invitation of Normans to Ireland, and their famous landing in Bannow Bay, along with the subsequent Norman invasion in the 12th century changed the landscape and social organisation forever in Ireland. Land was granted in Knights fees to supporters of the major Norman lords who themselves were granted land from Strongbow, and later William Marshall. The south-east and Wexford in particular were the focus of much Norman activity.

In order to secure their new lands, the Anglo-Normans erected an earth-and-timber castle, probably a motte and bailey, at the confluence of the Rivers Barrow and Burren. Hugh de Lacy built the castle at Carlow for John de Clahull who had been granted by Strongbow c.1180. Remains of the earlier fortifications in the form of postholes, predating the extant stone castle was found during excavations by Kieran O'Connor in 1997 (Sweetman 2000, 5, 39).

The stone castle which is extant today was built by William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke and Lord of Leinster in the early thirteenth century. It comprises a rectangular block containing the castle's main rooms which were protected by four corner towers. It's design was copied from western France (Murphy 2014).



Plate 6: Carlow Castle CW007-018002.

Its defensive location overlooking the confluence of the River Barrow and River Burren enable it to control traffic on those rivers, particularly the movement of traffic on the Barrow down to New Ross.

In the late 14th century, the castle was refortified when it became the administration capital of Ireland (1361-63 and 1364-1394). During this era the castle and town of Carlow came into the possession of the Bigod Earls of Norfolk.

The town developed to the east of the castle and was separated from the castle by boggy area known as the 'Moneen' (Feeley & Sheehan 2004, 16). The castle and defences were significantly upgraded, and it was at this time that a wall was built around the town. The centre of the town was located at the intersection of Castle Street, Dublin Street and Tullow Street which is 100m southeast of No. 1 Haymarket. The town defences consisted of a wall with a number of town gates, none of which survive or have ever been uncovered to date through excavation.

There are various suggestions as to the line of the town defences, however no archaeological evidence to date supports any conjecture on the town wall circuit. Ken Wiggins suggests the southern side not walled was bounded by the River Burren. Dublin Street was encompassed in its entirety within the defences, and Dublin Gate lay at its north extent (Wiggins 2012, 8). In terms of the modern street plan of Carlow Town, authors generally agree that the Castle Gate was sited in the vicinity of the Kennedy Street and Castle Street junction (Wiggins 2012, 8).

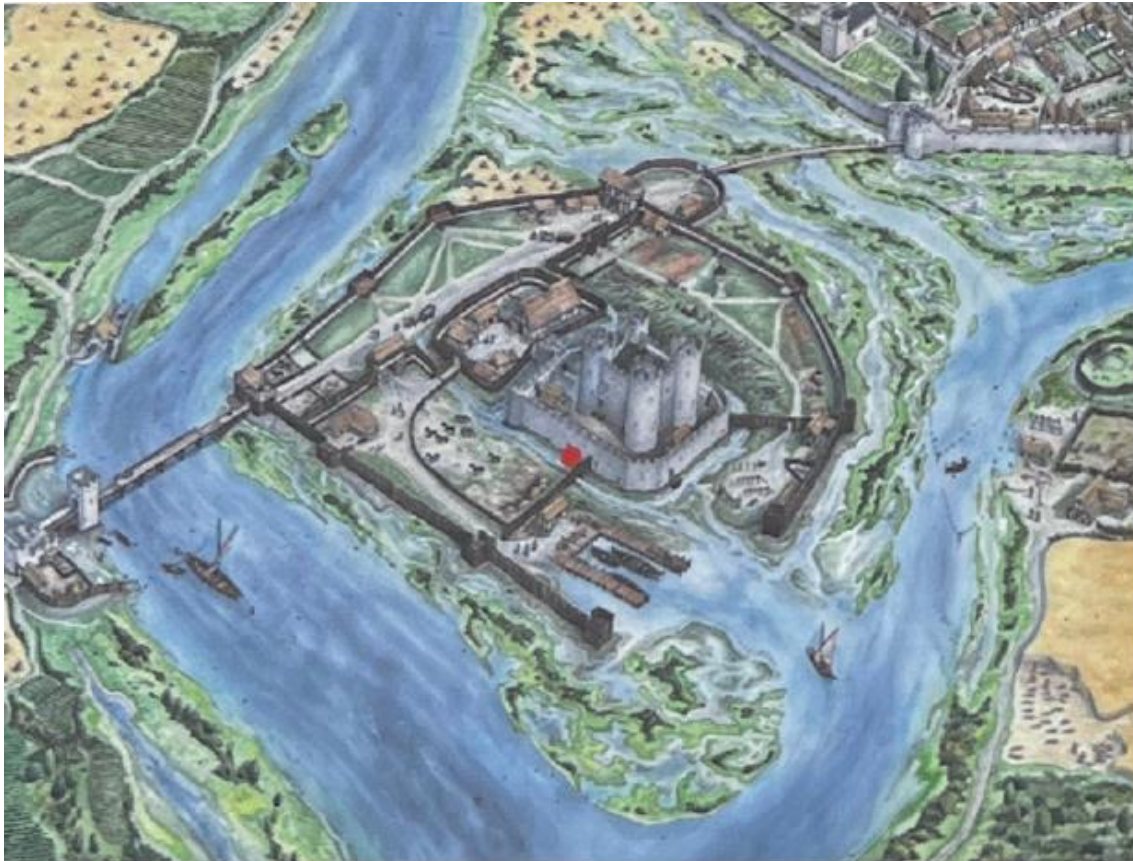


Plate 2: Reconstruction drawing of Carlow Castle and medieval town which developed to the west of the town (source interpretation panel by OPW on site).

Following constant attacks by the Gaelic Irish on Carlow castle the exchequer moved back to Dublin in 1394. Although the town declined the castle remained in the hands of the crown until the fifteenth century. During the Irish Rebellion of 1641 the castle gave refuge to English settlers and in 1647 it was taken by the Irish Confederates (Murphy, 2014). Although the castle escaped Cromwell's attack in 1650 when the town surrendered to Cromwell fearing a cannon attack, it was partially blown up accidentally in the 19th century. In 1841 a Dr Middleton leased the castle and planned to convert part of it into a lunatic asylum. The explosion left just the west wall and its towers standing.

In the 18th and 19th Carlow grew commercially reflected in the construction of several mills in the town. Many of Carlow's most impressive buildings today date from the latter part of the 18th century and throughout the 19th century. It was during this period of rebuilding that the 16th century Effigial tomb cover of Robert Hartpole, Constable of Carlow Castle (CW007-018002-) was uncovered. Robert Hartpole, Constable of Carlow Castle, High Sheriff of Carlow, and Laois in the 16th century died in 1594. He was laid to rest in the Church of the Blessed

Lady the Virgin Mary in Carlow. This was the church associated with St Mary's Abbey, which is placed by a number of sources somewhere between the present-day St Mary's Church of Ireland church and the Castle Hill area. The RMP files note however that this effigy was contained within the pre 1731 church at Saint Mary's. Hartpole is described by historian Kelly who has researched his life as 'a rapacious land grabber, a ruthless soldier of severe temperament and having of a single-minded ambition to climb to the top of the social ladder'

The RMP file notes that the effigy was originally located in the graveyard (CW007-018010-) of St. Mary's church (CW007-018007-), relocated to Oak Park House, later to the town park in Portarlinton Co. Laois (LA005-032----) and recently removed from the town park and now housed in Carlow County Museum (CW007-181----) under the 2021 Community Monument Fund.

However, an account written in 1895 supposedly 50 years after the discovery of the tomb in a local newspaper notes that the tomb was unearthed in Saint Mary's burial ground but that this was situated on Castle Hill and stretched the whole way along Coal Market to the Present Protestant Church Saint Mary's (SMR File CW007-018002-). This was the church associated with St Mary's Abbey, which is placed by several sources somewhere between and even at the site of the present-day St Mary's Church of Ireland church and the Castle Hill Centre . The radiocarbon dating by Queens University Belfast (QUB) of four individual burials in different areas of Castle Hill/Kennedy Street and Mill Lane turned out to centre on the 14th century.

Given the discovery of human remains on Church Street as part of the Carlow Main Drainage Scheme Saint Mary's burial ground (CW007-018010-) was also built over with housing in the 19th century. The burials uncovered at Church Street returned C14 dates of the 17th/18th century. This indicates that the burial ground at St Mary's extends beyond the confines of the graveyard walls.

The original parish church of the borough which was dedicated to Saint Mary is noted in the RMP files has being situated on the site of the present Saint Mary's Church. The earlier church possibly medieval was pulled down in 1726 and replaced with a building in 1731. This latter church was itself largely replaced in 1832 by the present Church of Ireland designed by architect Thomas Coddin.

3.2 Archaeological Survey of Ireland

3.2.1 Register of National Monuments

A National Monument is 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. Carlow Castle (CW007- 018002) is a National Monument in the guardianship of the State (No. 306). Carlow's Town Defences (CW007-018006-), of which the exact circuit remains unsubstantiated, but which lay in proximity of College Street, are also considered to be a national monument under the meaning of the National Monuments Act (1930) (as amended). There are no National Monuments within the footprint of the proposed development site.

3.2.2 Record of Monuments and Places (RMP); and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

RMP sites have statutory protection in accordance with the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The ZoN for Carlow Town is 686m southwest of the Hanover Harps Site location CW007-018----. A burial ground is located 440m southwest of the football pitch and an enclosure is located 550m north of the pitch (CW007-021). There are no SMR sites within the footprint of the proposed football pitch.

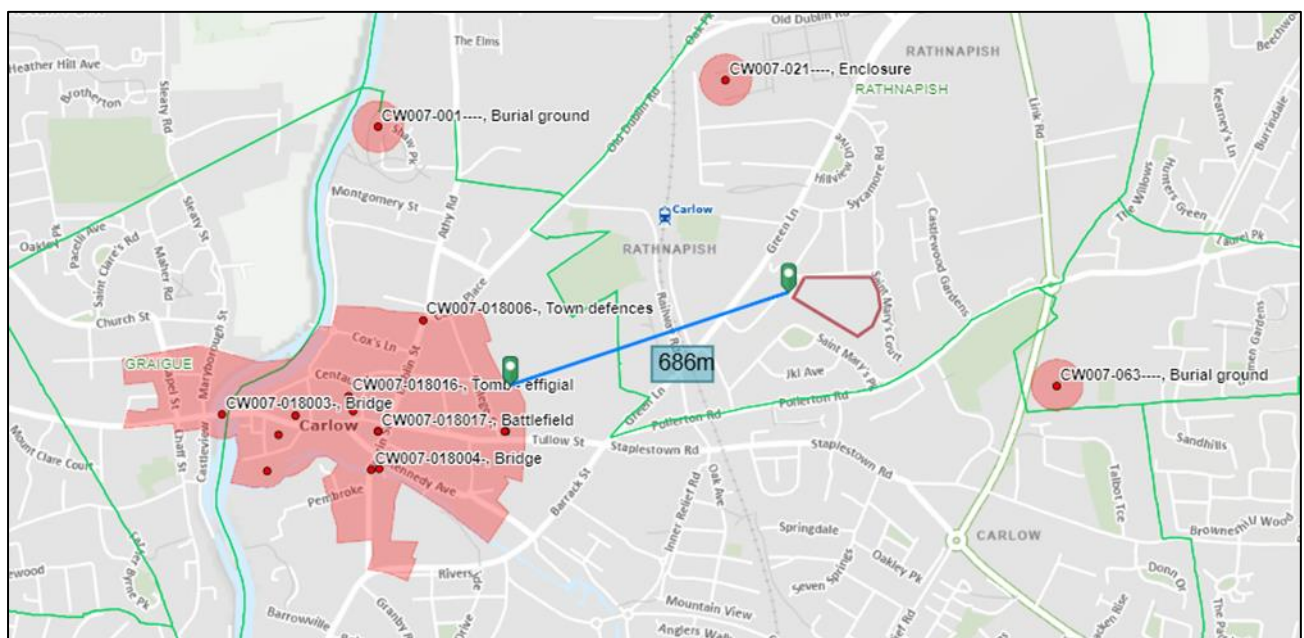


Plate 7: Zone of Notification for Carlow Historic Town CW007-018----.

Detailed descriptions from the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) files, available at www.archaeology.ie, are as follows:

- **CW007-063 – Burial Ground: Kernanstown**

Description: This burial ground was completely disturbed prior to recording. Human bones, a segment of a fosse (width 1.5m; depth 0.5m), and a patch of charcoal were uncovered during the excavation of school foundations in 1981. (Source: Cahill and Sikora 2011, Vol. 2, p. 462).

- **CW007-021 – Enclosure: Rathnapish**

Description: Aerial photographs (GSI S 22) reveal a cropmark of a circular feature, with an estimated maximum diameter of approximately 30 meters. The site is now covered by an extension of a graveyard, and no visible surface traces remain.

3.3 National Museum of Ireland Topographical Files.

The topographical files are held in the National Museum of Ireland in Kildare Street. These files identify all recorded finds which are held in archive and have been donated to the state in accordance with national monuments legislation. Consultation with the NMI identified that there have been numerous finds recorded from Carlow; prehistoric, human remains and clay pipes which date to the post medieval era. There are no stray finds recorded specifically from the townland of Rathnapish.

NMIRRegisterNo	SimpleName	Component	Townland	ID	FindPlace	County
1933:1258	Axehead	Stone	GRAIGUE (PART OF CARLOW TOWN)	29604	River Barrow	CARLOW
1941:342	Spearhead	Bronze	N/A	65309	Probably Carlow	CARLOW
1944:413	Spear	Iron	CARLOW	112501	River Barrow at Carlow	CARLOW
1944:414	Spear	Iron	CARLOW	112502	River Barrow at Carlow	CARLOW
2000:32	Ring	Bronze	N/A	5618	? Carlow	CARLOW ?
2000:33	Axehead	Stone	CARLOW	5619	Barrack Street	CARLOW
2012:226	Axehead	Stone	CARLOW	262731	East bank of River Barrow	CARLOW
2014:200	Human remains	Bone	CARLOW	284126		CARLOW

NMIRegisterNo	SimpleName	Component	Townland	ID	FindPlace	County
2019C1:100	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292681	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:101	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292682	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:102	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292683	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:107	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292696	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:108	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292697	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:120	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292709	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:121	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292710	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:122	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292711	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:123	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292712	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:124	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292713	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:125	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292714	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:126	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292715	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:127	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292716	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:128	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292717	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:129	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292718	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:130	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292719	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:131	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292720	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:132	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292721	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:133	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292722	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:134	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292723	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:135	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292724	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:136	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292725	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:137	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292726	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:138	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292727	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:139	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292728	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:140	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292729	N/A	CARLOW

NMIRRegisterNo	SimpleName	Component	Townland	ID	FindPlace	County
2019C1:141	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292730	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:142	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292731	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:143	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292732	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:144	Debitage	Stone	CARLOW	292733	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:145	Debitage	Stone	CARLOW	292734	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:146	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292737	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:160	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292752	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:161	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292753	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:162	Clay pipe	Stone	CARLOW	292754	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:163	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292755	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:164	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292756	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:165	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292757	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:166	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292758	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:167	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292759	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:168	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292760	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:189	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292781	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:190	Flake	Stone	CARLOW	292782	N/A	CARLOW
2019C1:191	Clay pipe	Clay	CARLOW	292783	N/A	

Table 1: Stray finds from Topographical Files.

3.4 Cartographic Analysis

Analysis of historic mapping shows the human impact on the landscape and its evolving nature over clearly defined time intervals. It is also useful for looking at boundaries which may preserve earlier land divisions. Townland boundaries comprising rivers and streams may be older than those represented by straight lines. Townland boundaries which are also parish or barony boundaries may preserve much earlier land divisions and may even date back to medieval times incorporating territorial divisions.

The proposed site at Rathnapish is located in the Barony and Parish of Carlow.

The following maps were consulted as part of this assessment:

- Down Survey map of County Carlow, 1656-58
- Down Survey map of the Parish of Catherlough, 1656-58;
- First edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 1838
- Third edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map, 1907

The Down Survey is a mapped survey carried out between 1656 - 1658 under the direction of Sir William Petty, which recorded land forfeited after the Cromwellian Wars, recording townland boundaries, their areas and proprietors with precision throughout Ireland. The resultant maps contain other detail, such as on roads, rivers, towns, churches, castles, houses and fortifications, as well as topographic and land use detail.



Figure 2: Down Survey maps, 1656-58 (source www.downsurvey.tcd.ie).

The Down Survey map of County Carlow depicts the town of 'Catherlagh' on a bridge at meeting of the River Barrow with the River Burren , 'Barriacary' (Figure 2). The castle and a church site are depicted. The town appears to be laid out on a north south street alignment pattern. On the Down Survey Parish Map the defences and the castle are clearly depicted (Figure 2). There is no detail for the townland of Rathnapish.

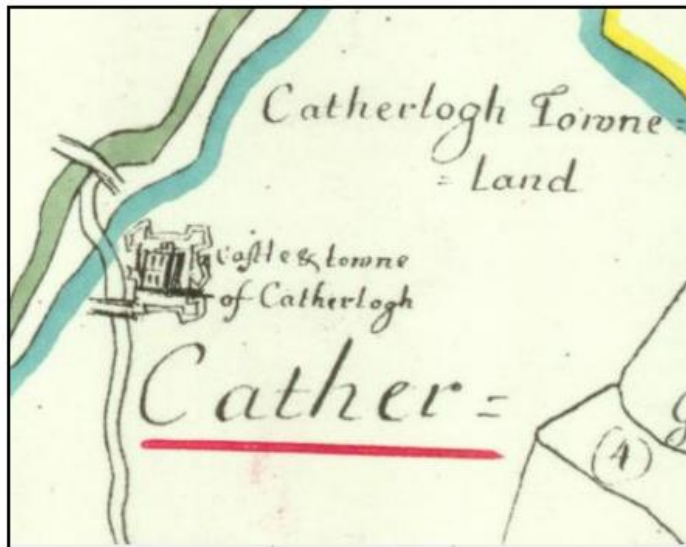


Figure 3: Extract from the Down Survey map of the Barony of Catherlogh 1656-58 (Source: downsurvey.tcd.ie).

At the time of the first edition map in 1838 what is now Hanover Harps Football club is within an agricultural setting and straddles four fields. There is nothing of note in any of the fields which are within the footprint of the football club's pitches.

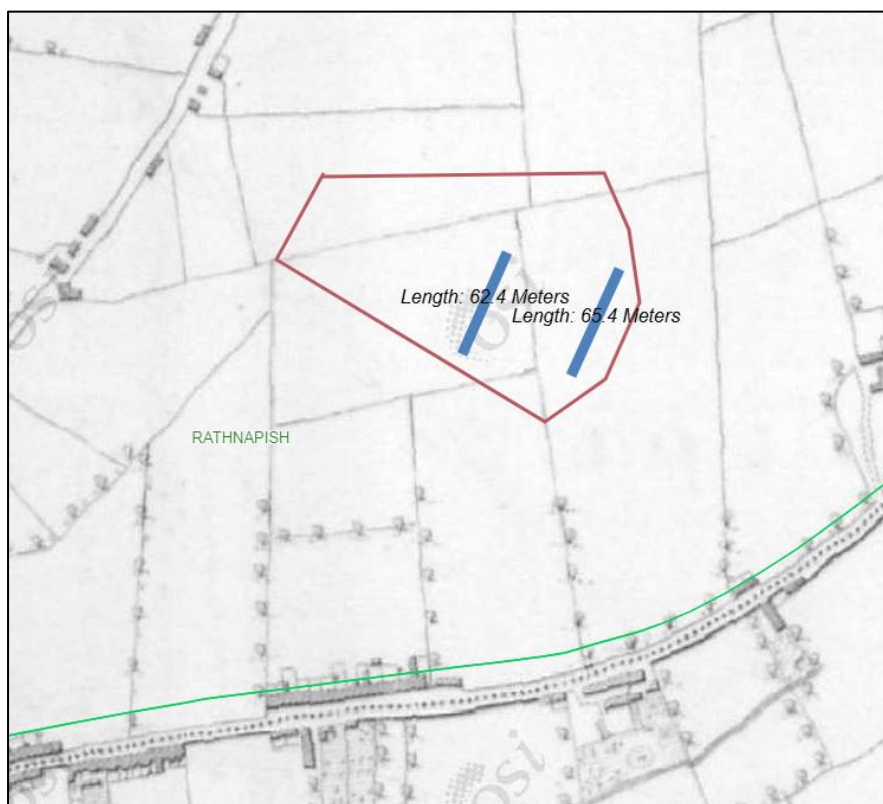


Figure 4: First edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 1838

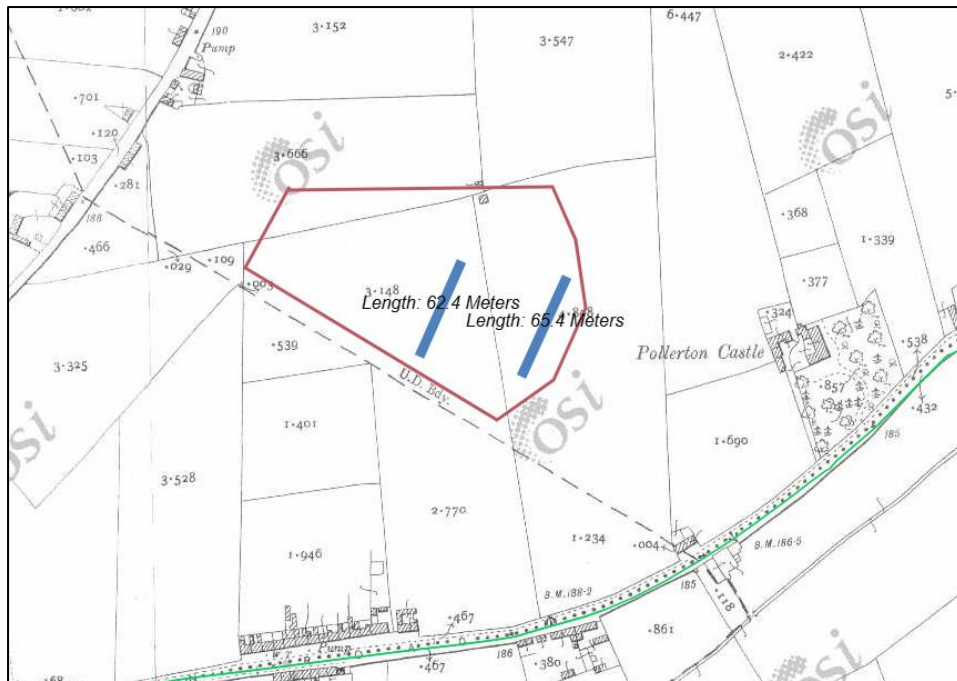


Figure 5: Third edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map, 1907

At the time of the third edition map the football pitch occupies three fields. A small building is depicted at the northern boundary of one of the fields. The Urban District boundary line is also labelled as a dashed line.

3.5 Place name analysis

Rathnapish, a townland in the barony and parish of Carlow is also in County Carlow. It has a rich history of recorded names and spellings that highlight its evolving identity over centuries. Below is a chronological overview of its documented names from www.logainm.ie.

The townland has been referenced in historical documents with various spellings over the centuries. Early records include spellings such as Rathnepissg in 1721 and Rathnapish in 1728. The Ordnance Survey conducted by John O'Donovan in 1839 recorded the name as Ráithín na Pise, translating to "Little Rath or Earthen Fort of the Peas." This diminutive form suggests the fort may have been smaller or less prominent compared to other regional examples. Ringforts are a characteristic feature of early medieval Irish landscapes, often associated with farming communities or defensive settlements.

- 1721: Recorded as Rathnepissg
- 1728: Listed as Rathnapish
- 1753: Again documented as Rathnapish
- 1839: Appeared as Rathnepish on Butler's Map (1789)
- 1839: Also recorded as Rathnapish

- 1839: Described as Ráithín na Pise, meaning "Little Rath or Earthen Fort of the Peas," by John O'Donovan during the Ordnance Survey
- 1839: Documented as Raheenapisha (recte, or corrected form) in OD records
- 1839: Named Rahinapish Townland in Rec. Name records
- 1839: Listed as Ranapish in the Tithe Applotment Books

The translations and phonetic records suggest its significance as a location tied to early medieval settlements, likely centered around a ringfort or earthen fort. Its name, Ráithín na Pise, indicates its association with agricultural practices, specifically peas, further underscores its role in local heritage and the region's rural past.

4 Description of Excavation Strategy

To complete a detailed archaeological assessment of the proposed development, archaeological test trenching is proposed, a total length of 115m of trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision. The maximum depth of excavations for the football pitch is 0.40m however the trenches will be excavated to natural ground. This strategy is proposed, to determine the full impact of the proposed works on the archaeological heritage and to develop an informed archaeological strategy to be agreed with the Department and implemented in advance of any development/construction works commencing, should archaeology be encountered within the footprint of the proposed extension.

The ground was excavated under the strict archaeological supervision of the licence holder using an 1t machine with a flat grading bucket in carefully controlled increments. The topsoil was visually inspected for finds retrieval. The trenches were excavated to natural ground as no archaeological features were identified.

5 Description of Development

The development is for a new full size astro pitch, flood lighting, sports fencing, ball stop netting and all associated site works at Rathnapish, County Carlow.

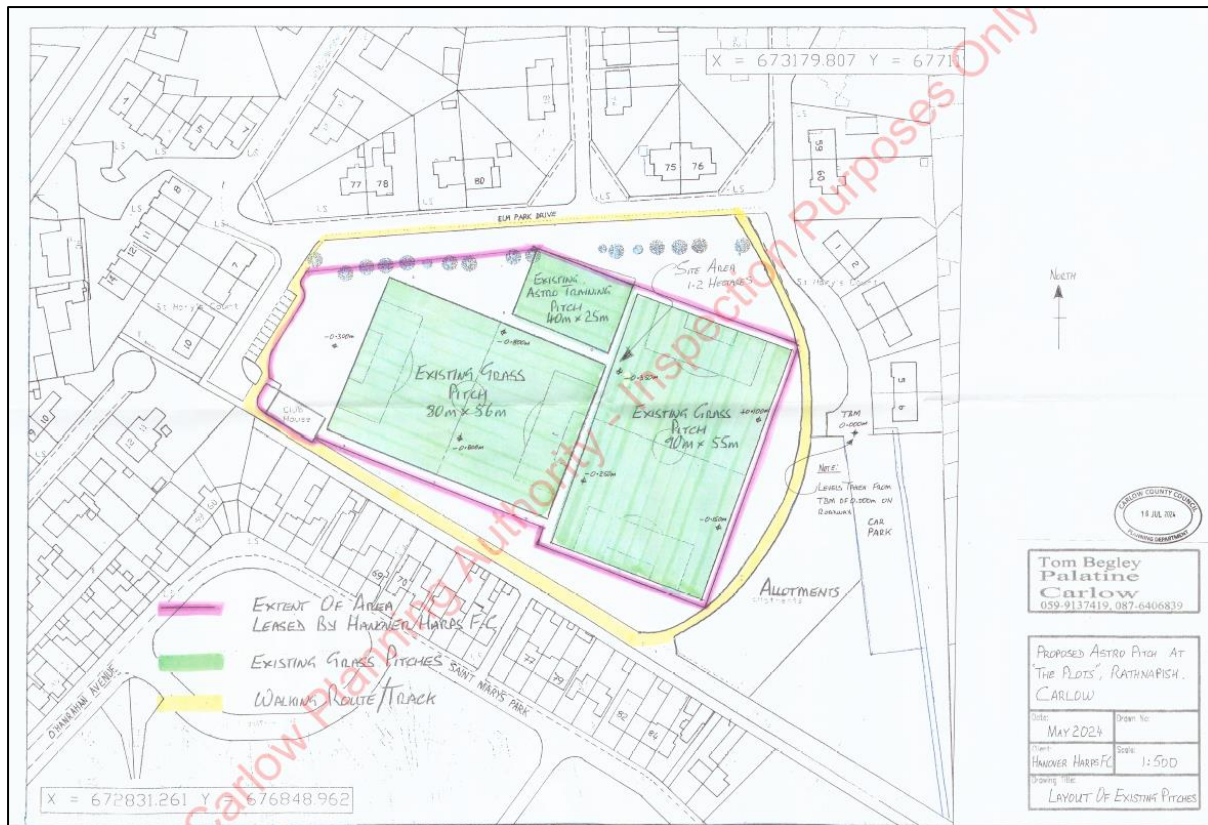


Figure 6: Site location Hanover Harps Football Club existing pitch layout.



Figure 7: Proposed pitch layout at Hanover Harps Football Club.



Figure 8: Test trench layout.

6 Results of Test trenching

Archaeological test trenching was carried out at Hanover Harps football club on Saturday 25th January 2025.

Trench 1 was north to south aligned was in length, 1m wide, 55m in length and was 0.50m in depth The sod was 0.10m deep. and the topsoil was a dark brown silty clay which contained modern debris, ring cans etc it was 0.40m in depth.

The natural ground was a dark yellowish brown medium sand, which contained moderate rounded small stone inclusions. No finds or features of archaeological significance were found in this trench.



Plate 8: Trench 1 facing S.



Plate 9: Trench 1 facing S.

Trench 2 was north to south aligned. It was 1m in width, 60m in length and 0.55m in depth. The sod was 0.10m in depth and the topsoil 0.45m in depth was a dark brown silty clay. The

natural was a mid-yellowish brown sandy clay. No finds or features of archaeological significance were uncovered in this trench.

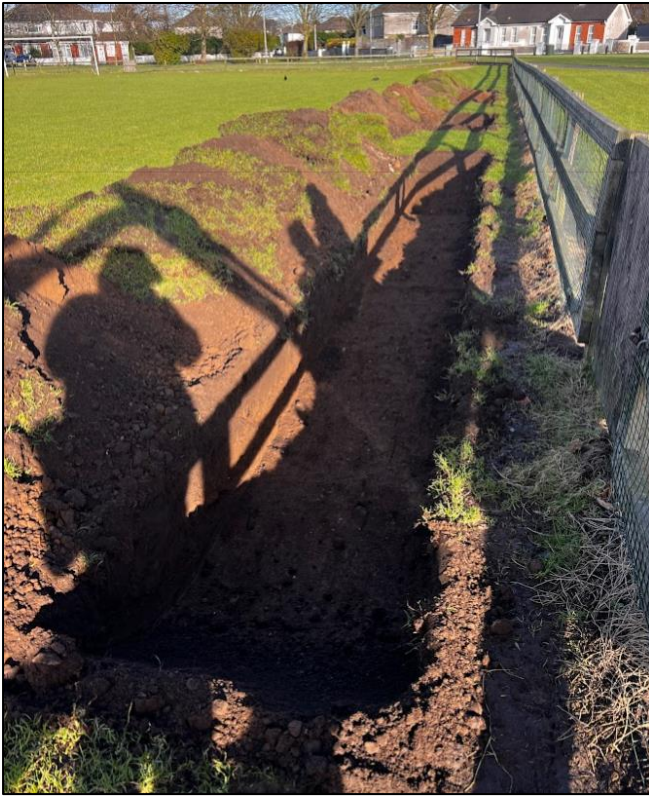


Plate 10: Trench 2 facing S.

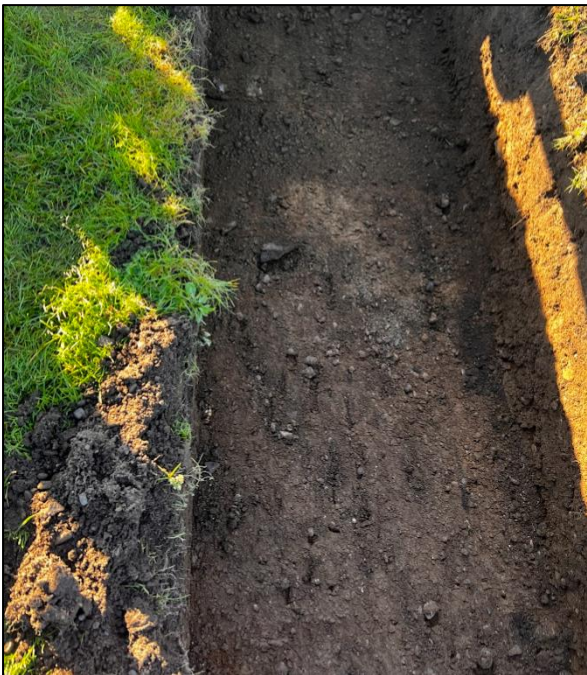


Plate 11: Trench 2 natural ground.

7 Conclusion

An archaeological impact assessment, including test trenching under Licence 25E0079, was conducted on 25th January 2025 in advance of proposed development works at The Plots, Rathnapish, Carlow Town, County Carlow (Planning Ref 2430).

The site, currently used as a football pitch, lies 686 meters northeast of the medieval walled town of Carlow (CW007-018). Nearby monuments include an enclosure in Rathnapish (CW007-021), 500 meters north, and a burial ground in Kernanstown (CW007-063), 440 meters southeast. Rathnapish's name suggests the historical presence of a ringfort, highlighting the area's archaeological significance.

Two test trenches, totalling 115 meters, were excavated. The trenching and desk-based assessment revealed no features or finds of archaeological significance.

Based on these results, there will be no impact on archaeological remains from the proposed development. No further archaeological mitigation is necessary, and the client is in compliance with the FI request from Carlow County Council (Planning Ref 2430).

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.

This assessment is guided by relevant legislation, standards, and guidelines in respect of archaeology, built and cultural heritage and is subject to approval by the relevant bodies.

8 Bibliography

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