



**Archaeology
& Heritage
Consultancy**
L I M I T E D

**Archaeological Impact and Method Statement
relating to the proposed developments of
Stephen Street Cultural Plaza
Sligo**

Planning ref- Part 8

Prepared by Archaeology and Heritage Consultancy Ltd
for
Sligo County Council

Archaeological Impact and method statement the proposed development of Stephen Street Cultural Plaza Sligo

1. Introduction

1.1 The site which is the subject of this assessment is located in the townland of Rathquarter, on the south side of Stephen Street, mid way between Bridge street to the east and Hyde Bridge to the west (Figs 1 and 2). It is currently in use a public car park (Plates 1 to 4)

2. The proposed development

2.1 The proposed development will consist of the refurbishment of the existing carpark, with new street furniture, including public benches and interpretive panels, and new paved surfaces. It is proposed to include two covered activity areas, space for outdoor performances and a children's play area as well as two reinforced lawn areas (Fig 3).

2.2 The final proposed surface level will be as it is currently, and it is proposed to utilise existing service conduits for the required power and drainage.

3. Historical background

3.1 The town of Sligo occupies a strategic location on a fording point of the River Garvoge. The modern primary road pattern reflects this with the main roads from Galway, Castlebar and Roscommon to Donegal converging on the town.

3.2 By the end of the 12th Century a bridge had been built over the river and a settlement is recorded beside it. The Anglo-Normans burnt the bridge and took control of the settlement when they arrived in 1236. Sligo and the surrounding area were granted to Maurice FitzGerald and he made it the centre of his manor of Carbury. A castle was built in 1245. By 1246 the town appears to have been enclosed by defences. Maurice FitzGerald founded the Dominican friary at the eastern side of the town in 1252/3. In 1289 Sligo is described as a borough and 180 burgages are recorded.

3.3 The history of Sligo from the middle of the 13th century (the castle was first taken by Aed O Conchobair in 1265) until the Williamite wars of the late 17th Century is dominated by attacks on the town and castle. While the town was strategically situated relative to the natural routeways it did not occupy an easily defended position, being surrounded by higher ground to the north, west and south. It changed hands between the O'Donnell and O'Connor families (the rival local Gaelic overlords) many times in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, the town being attacked on at least 20 occasions between 1315 and 1602.

3.4 In 1646 parliament allotted money for the fortification of Sligo, leading to the construction of the 'Stone Fort' which was garrisoned with 60 men. This fort may have been on the site of the castle built in the 13th Century. The fortification of Sligo in 1646 may have also involved the construction of the 'Green Fort' on the summit of a hill to

the north of the town known as Rathvritoge. It may be that this fort is built on the site of an earlier ring fort (rath).

- 3.5 The earliest military activity in Sligo associated with the English revolution was the founding of a Protestant Association in early 1689. The Association occupied Sligo and a number of strategic points around it (Fig 4). They also formed troops of infantry and cavalry which were engaged in skirmishes in the locality with Jacobites. In March 1689 the Protestants abandoned Sligo and set off on a long march to Derry where they were led to believe that their position would be more secure. Following this exodus James II appointed Col. Henry Luttrell Governor of Sligo. From March to August 1689 Sligo was used as a base for the Jacobite siege of Enniskillen. Following their defeat at Enniskillen, and with rumours of a superior Williamite force advancing, the Jacobites abandoned Sligo.
- 3.6 In late October a Jacobite force under the command of Patrick Sarsfield re-took the town after fierce fighting around the 'Stone Fort'; the 'Green Fort' was evacuated by its garrison under the command of Col. Thomas Lloyd without a fight. The Jacobites repaired the 'Stone Fort' and the 'Green Fort', enclosed the town with earthen defences and built a redoubt on the northern approaches to the town.
- 3.7 In May 1690 Sir Teague O'Regan, a hunchbacked veteran of Charles II's campaigns on the continent, was appointed Governor of Sligo. He made the 'Green Fort' his headquarters as he felt that the 'Stone Fort' occupied a more vulnerable defensive position. According to Wood-Martin (1889, 117) O'Regan further strengthened the fortifications erected by Luttrell, however, it is not clear if this was solely around the 'Green Fort' or if it included the town defences.
- 3.8 The Battle of Aughrim (July 1691) was the beginning of the end for the Jacobites in Sligo, Williamite forces closed in from all sides and by the middle of September the town was surrounded by superior forces and under daily bombardment by a battery of field guns which had been hauled over the Curlews.
- 3.9 O'Regan, realising that his position was hopeless, agreed terms with the Williamites and the Jacobite garrison was allowed to march out with "...the full honours of war, with their arms and baggage, drums beating, colours flying, match lighted and bullets in their mouths" (Simms 1965-6, 134).

4. Archaeological background

- 4.1 While there are no known archaeological sites within the development area (Fig 2), the development area is itself within a known archaeological site. The area of Stephen Street carpark lies within the zone of archaeological potential associated with Sligo Town (SLO014-065-).
- 4.2 Archaeological test trenching in the area has not produced any substantial archaeologically significant remains. The nearest two investigations took place to the rear of Stephen House and to the rear on No 14 Stephen Street in 1996 (96E0284) and 1998 (98E0012). Neither of these revealed anything of significance.
- 4.3 Likewise the pre-development testing which took place in the properties at the west end of the street, 97E0138 and 97E0346, on the northern side of the street 97E0330, at the south end of Bridge Street to the east, 06E1188, or the archaeological monitoring

which took place along the length of Stephen Street 04E1490 and 13E0300, did not produce anything of archaeological significance (see appendix one).

- 4.4 It is likely that Stephen Street or some sort of thoroughfare existed from the earliest of times as it lead to the Old Bridge crossing of the Garvogue. The earliest documentary evidence dating to 1663 records 17 houses and 16 cabins on the street, properties are listed as have long gardens, presumably stretching, at least on the south side of the street from the rear of the house to the river. This layout, houses and buildings on the southside of the street, with plot extending southwards to the river, continued well into the 20th century (Figs 4 to 8).

5. **Architectural background**

- 5.1 Although there are numerous buildings of architectural interest in the vicinity, the closest to the development is the Bank of Ireland building which is located on the western side of St Stephen's Court, the access road leading to the carpark. In its appraisal the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH Ref 32007126 Sligo Co Co RPS No 153)) noted that the somewhat austere classical proportions and heavy rustication to ground floor of the handsome building are typical of nineteenth century bank design. Fine classical detailing makes it an eye-catching building on the street and relates well to the AIB and Ulster Bank Buildings to its north-east and north-west respectively. Symmetrical Ionic porticos contribute variety and depth to the streetscape and they rated it as being of regional importance.

6. **Archaeological impacts**

- 6.1 Testing in the vicinity of the proposed development suggested that no significant archaeological deposits survive in the vicinity of the proposed development. The results suggested that to the rear of the buildings on the south side of the street, some 1 to 1.5 m of 19th and 20th century deposits lie directly on either the natural glacial sub soil or riverine gravels. In a number of cases the excavator considered that the deposits uncovered were evidence for the deliberate backfilling and levelling up of the sloping ground between the street and the river.
- 6.2 The proposal will involve the construction of a series of pads on which the 'covered areas' will be constructed. It is likely that the foundations for these pads will not extend much below 500 mm under present ground levels. Allied to this it is proposed that the new services in terms of power and drainage will use existing service lines.
- 6.3 Given the fact that previous archaeological testing in the vicinity has indicated some 1.5 m of relatively modern backfill in the area, that it is unlikely that any ground disturbance will extend below 500 mm, and that the new services will, where possible, reuse existing service lines, the level of adverse impacts on potentially significant archaeological deposits are considered slight.

7. **Mitigation strategy**

- 7.1 It is proposed that a programme of licence archaeological monitoring be instigated during the phase of initial ground works associated with the construction of the foundations for the 'covered areas' and the insertion of the services, to ensure that nothing of archaeological significance is disturbed in the course of the works.

- 7.2 It is proposed that all archaeological deposits uncovered during monitoring be recorded and investigated to best archaeological practice. If uncovered, they will in the first instant be cordoned off using high visibility tape and access to these areas by machinery and personnel denied until the deposits have been resolved.
- 7.3 The licensed archaeologist on site is responsible, on behalf of the developer, for the identification and appropriate treatment (e.g. excavation and recording) of all archaeological remains encountered. In order to fulfil the responsibilities of the developer therefore, the licensed archaeologist will have the authority to temporarily stop machining where potential archaeological material has been identified, in order to evaluate the character of said remains. It should be possible for work to continue (under archaeological supervision) in areas where no archaeological deposits have been encountered. Should archaeological remains be present, the licensed archaeologist will be responsible for communicating this to the client or appointed representative, as well as to the relevant Heritage authorities.
- 7.4 In the event of the discovery of any archaeological remains during the monitoring, the deposits will be hand excavated to assess their nature date and extent and time will be allowed for the archaeologist to undertake the appropriate level of recording. The level of recording will depend on the complexity of the archaeological remains encountered and in all cases sufficient time will be allowed by the developer for this purpose.
- 7.5 If the archaeological deposits are extensive an interim report will be compiled, outlining the nature of the archaeological deposits uncovered and the impacts of the proposed development on these remains. The report will also recommend a mitigation strategy for further archaeological works on site, which could consist of preservation of the remains in situ and/or archaeological excavation.
- 7.6 During the monitoring, recording will be by means of the standard methods employed during archaeological fieldwork. A day book will be maintained while all archaeological features will be recorded in writing utilising pro forma context sheets by means of scaled field illustrations and by appropriate photography.
- 7.7 It is recommended that the developer allow enough time in the development programme for a possible archaeological excavation. It should be noted that the results of all excavation including site evaluation and monitoring, must be compiled into a fully illustrated report.
- 7.8 FINDS STRATEGY
- 7.9 In the course of the monitoring all finds will be logged according to context, washed (if appropriate), bagged and catalogued prior to dispatching to the various specialists. A contract conservator will be on hand if necessary. All finds will initially be housed in our post excavation store in Drogheda and will ultimately be stored in whatever facility the State will provide. All artefacts will be numbered and treated in accordance with NMI guidelines.
- 7.10 TIMESCALE
- 7.11 The monitoring will extend as long as ground works are taking place and will be carried out by the licence holder.
- 7.12 ARCHIVE
- 7.13 The archive will be stored at AHC Ltd, post-excavation store in Drogheda. Ultimately it will be stored in whatever permanent facility the State may provide.

7.14 REPORT

7.15 A report will be compiled that will set out the results of the archaeological monitoring in accordance with the terms of the National Monuments Acts and best professional practice. It will address the archaeological & historical background of the site. The location and levels (corrected to Ordnance Datum) of any archaeological deposits found will be clearly shown, an impact statement and mitigation strategy will also be given. Relevant ground plans and cross sectional drawings of the site and the proposed development will be included.

References

Gallagher, F. 2008 *The Streets of Sligo*

Gallagher, F. And Legg, ML. 2011 *Historic Towns Atlas - Sligo*

Simms, J G, 1965, 'Sligo in the Jacobite War 1689-91', *Irish Sword*, 7, 1965, 124-135

Wood-Martin, W G, 1889, *History of Sligo County and Town*, Vol. 2, Dublin

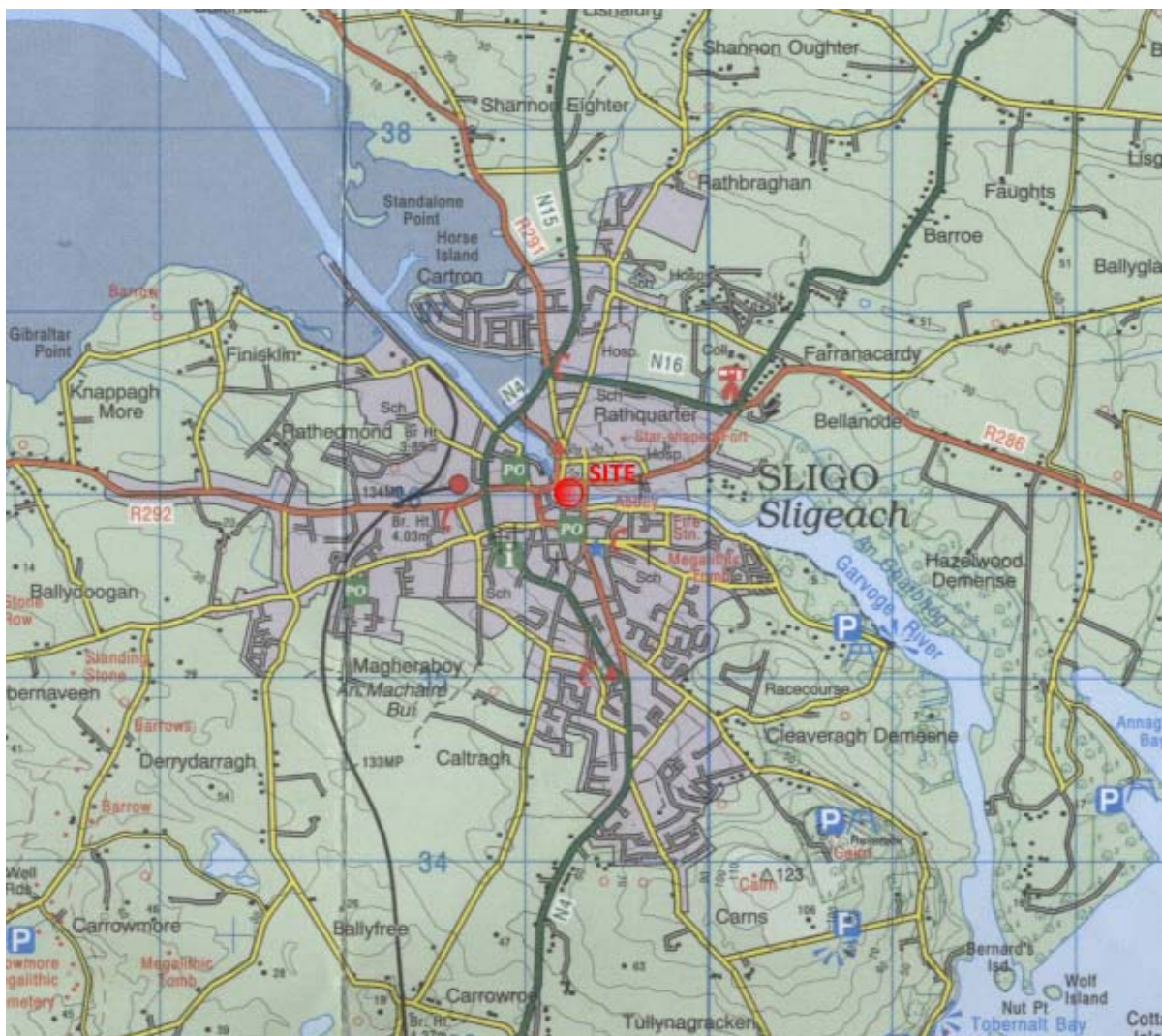


Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Red line boundary to development, sites of cultural heritage interest in the vicinity and locations of archaeological investigations



Fig 3 Proposed development

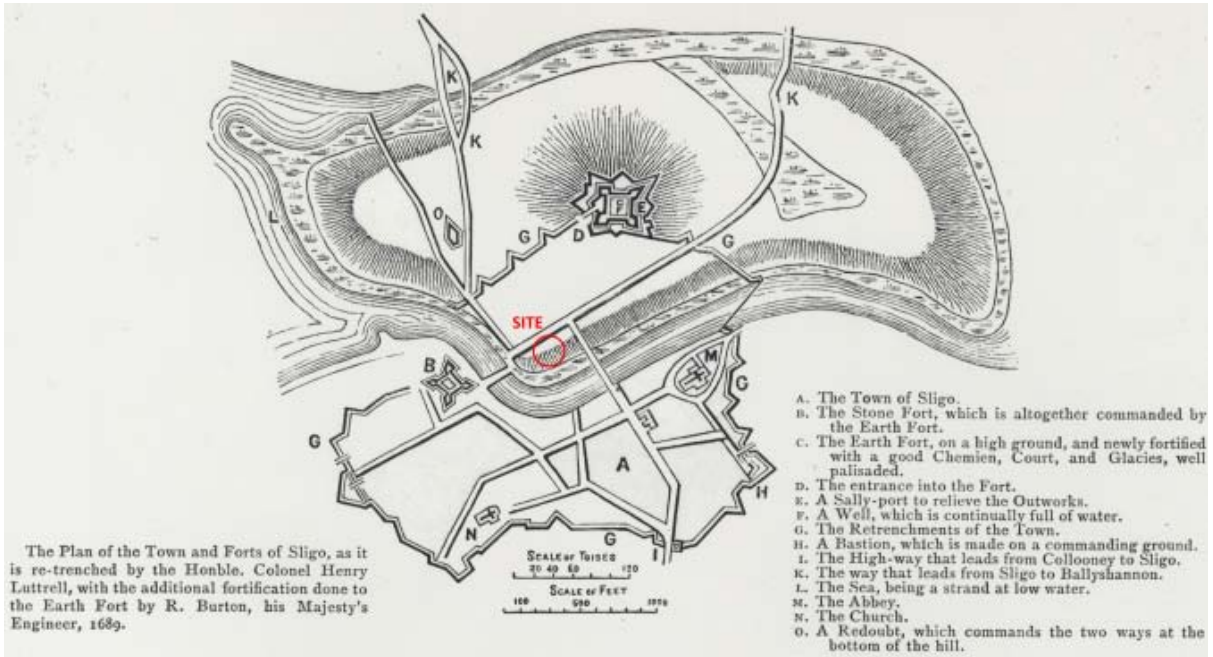


Fig 4 Location of site on Luttrell's map of 1689

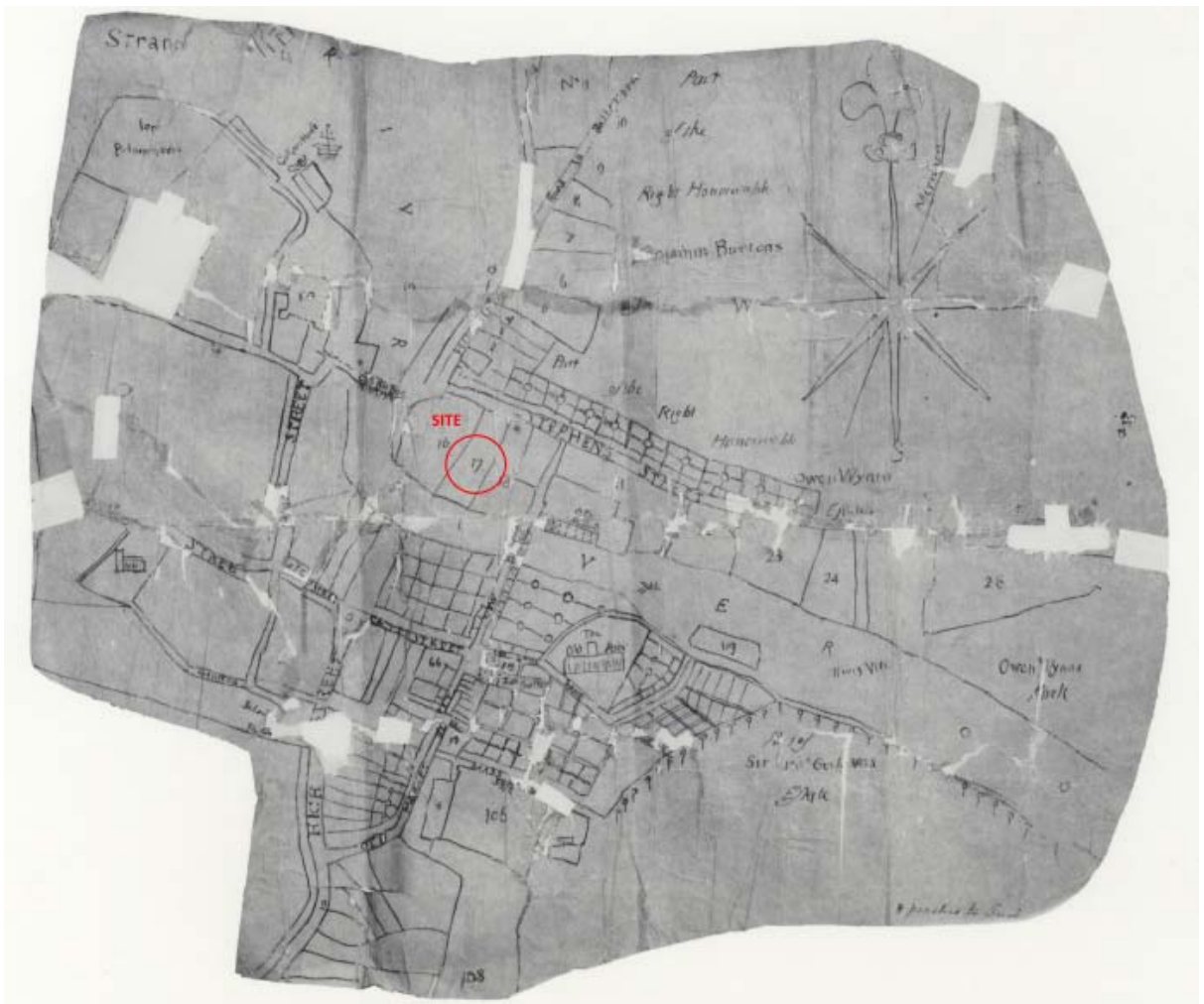


Fig 5 Location of site on 1750's map



Fig 6 Site of OS map of 1837

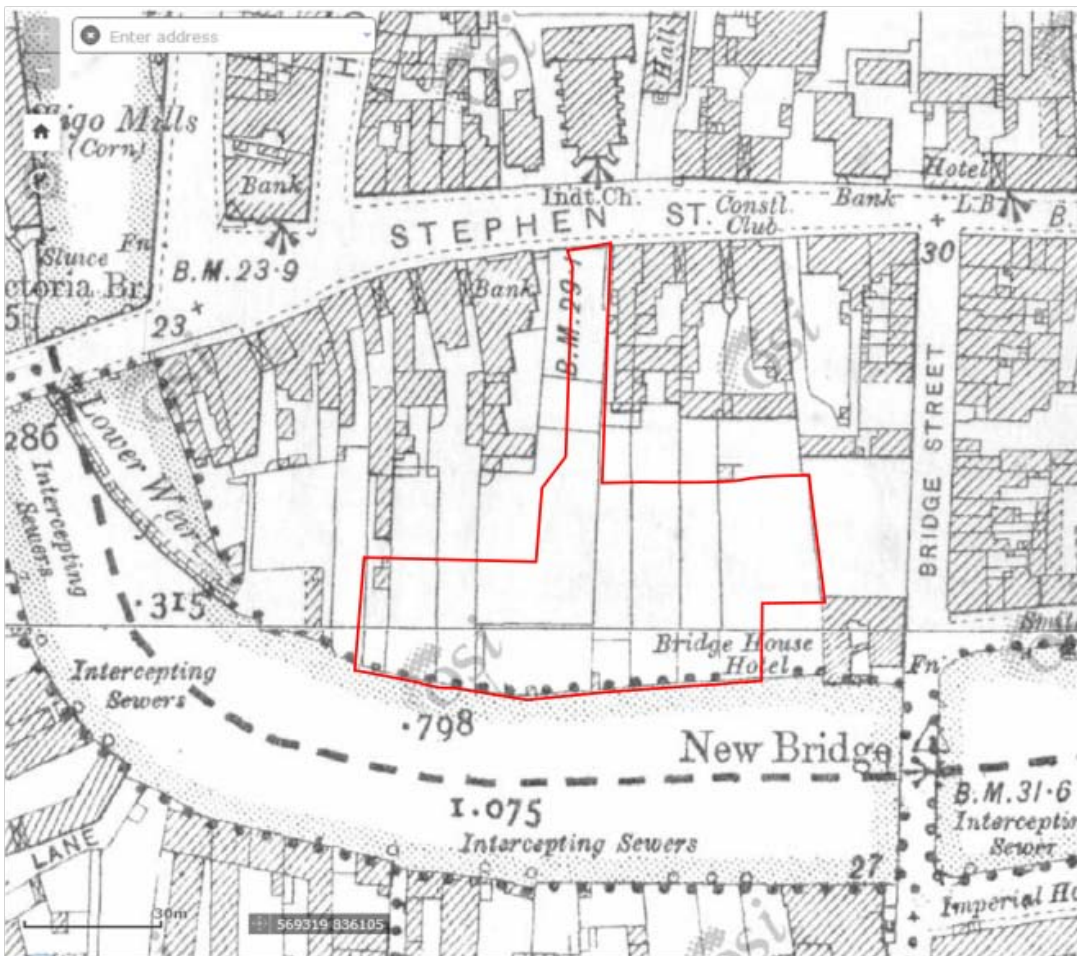


Fig 7 Site on OS map of c. 1910



Plate 1. View of site from south towards St Stephen's Court, with the rear of the Bank of Ireland building on the left.



Plate 2. View across the site from east.

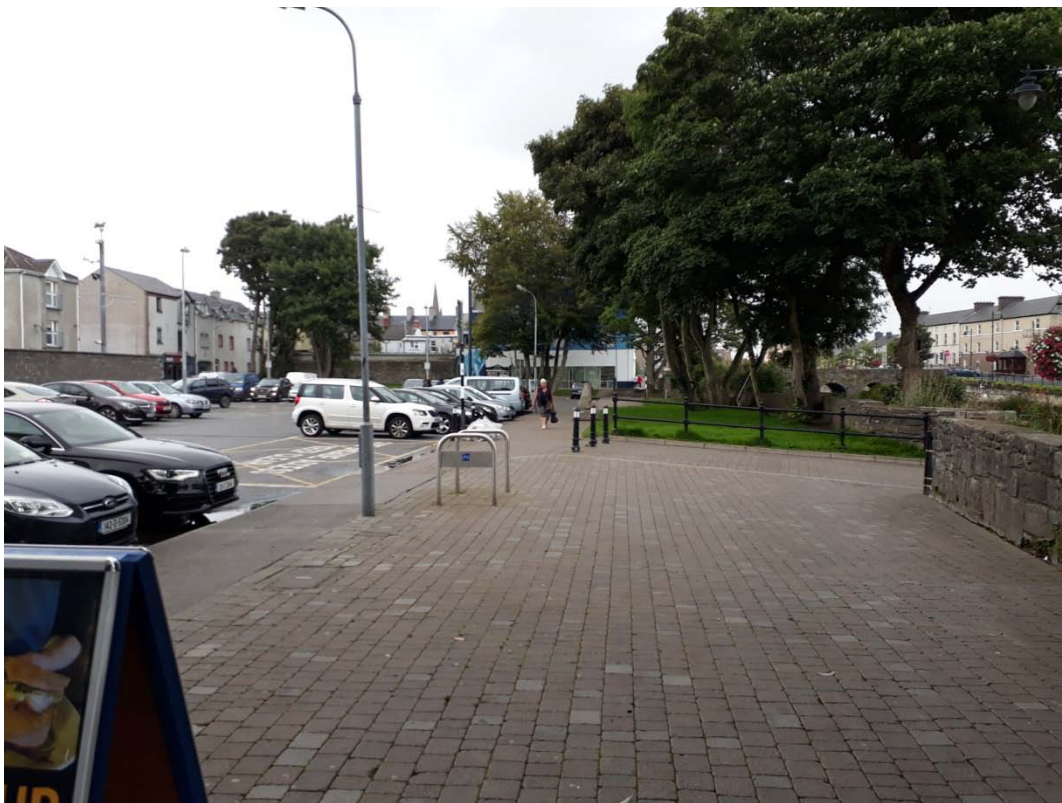


Plate 3. View from south west along riverside walk.



Plate 4 View across the site from west

APPENDIX ONE

Archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the subject site

96E0284

1996:347

Stephen House, Stephen Street, Sligo

An archaeological impact assessment was carried out at Stephen House, Stephen Street, Sligo, during October 1996. Two test-pits and two trial-trenches were machine-excavated under archaeological supervision to the rear of the property. The results showed that, at the southern end of the development area, there were no significant archaeological remains. However, at the northern end deposits up to 2m in depth survive, the lowest of which appeared to be contained within a pre-seventeenth-century, rock-cut feature.

97E0138

1997:478

15 and 16 Stephen Street, Sligo

During a pre-development assessment at the rear of Nos 15 and 16 Stephen Street, Sligo, carried out in February 1997, a wall was discovered running in an east–west direction across the site. As a result, it was recommended that an excavation take place to determine the nature and date of this feature. The excavation was carried out between 19 and 22 May 1997. The area available for investigation was close to the northern bank of the River Garvoge and on the periphery of a building site where commercial and domestic buildings fronting onto Stephen Street were being constructed. The excavation revealed several courses of walling and stratigraphy dating from the 18th century and later. These may be the earliest evidence for river defences so far investigated in Sligo town and were probably erected as the town expanded in size once more after the end of the turbulent 17th century.

97E0330

1997:477

12 Stephen Street, Sligo

A pre-development archaeological assessment was carried out at a site at the rear of No. 12 Stephen Street, Sligo, on 16 September 1997. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed during the investigation. All stratigraphy and artefacts appear to date from the 19th century and later. It seems that the stratigraphy encountered probably reflects the deliberate dumping and infilling of the intertidal region on the northern side of the River Garvoge, as Sligo further expanded in the 19th century. This town expansion was given further substance by the development of Stephen Street in the early 19th century.

97E0346

1997:476

11 Stephen Street, Sligo

A pre-development archaeological assessment was carried out at No. 11 Stephen Street, Sligo, on 28 October 1997. The site is close to but east of several properties previously tested by the writer which lie within that area of the town, on the northern side of the River Garvoge, which underwent expansion in the 18th century. A trench roughly 39m long north–south x 2m wide east–west was excavated along the western side of the proposed development area. Nothing of archaeological

significance was uncovered during the investigation and all deposits and artefacts appear to date from the 18th–20th century.

98E0012

1998:581

14 Stephen Street, Sligo

Two long trenches and a test-pit were machine-excavated as part of the assessment of this site. The northern trench and test-pit were investigated within the upstanding remains, owing to structural problems that may have arisen had the buildings been demolished before testing. The southern trench was excavated in the yard to the rear. Results showed that the floors and associated hard-core of the buildings rested, at the northern end, directly on grey, natural till. About two-thirds of the way back the level at which the till appeared dropped and was overlain by a dark grey/brown, organic soil. This deposit was noted as a continuous feature to the southern end of the development area. It contained glass, fragments of clay pipe, red brick and pot, all of which suggested a post-medieval date, probably in the late 18th or early 19th century. This soil appears to be the remains of gardens that once existed to the rear of Stephen Street. Nothing else of archaeological significance was uncovered during the testing.

04E1490

2005:1379

Sligo town centre, broadband project

Trenches excavated for broadband internet were monitored along Connolly Street, Quay Street, Market Street, High Street, Bridge Street, Chapel Hill, Cranmore Road, Chapel Street, Wine Street, Teeling Street, Stephen Street, O'Connell Street and Castle Street. The trenches were located along existing roads and were up to 1m deep. Nothing of archaeological interest was recorded.

06E1188

2007:1546

Bridge Street, Sligo, Sligo

The proposed development site is located to the rear of three small terraced buildings, fronting on to Bridge Street and adjacent to Shanigan's pub, Sligo town. The site is located just north of the Garavogue River on the east side of Bridge Street. The site lies within the zone of archaeological potential for the medieval town of Sligo (SL014–065). The site is bordered to the north, south and east by commercial premises. Two trenches measuring 10m by 1m were excavated across the only portions of the site that will be subjected to excavation as part of the proposed development. The trenches were excavated to the level of undisturbed natural. There was no evidence of archaeological activity.

13E0300

2013:144

Various sites, Sligo

Enhancement works in streets in the centre of Sligo town were monitored in phases from 2011 to 2013. At Bridge Street, ground openings were monitored for adjustment of traffic control features and water gullies at the very busy junction of Lake Isle Road, Bridge Street, The Mall and Stephen Street in the centre of the town. All four openings were into road make-up in which there were existing ducts in places. In the deeper openings for the new gullies the underlying natural glacial deposits were cut into for less than 0.2m, reaching a maximum depth of about 0.8m. Except for one tiny fragment of an oyster shell there were no finds.