

Archaeological Desktop Assessment Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD), Confey, Leixlip, Co. Kildare

Applicant: Leixlip and Newbridge SPV Limited
Local Authority: Kildare County Council
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Copies of this report have been presented to:	The applicant.
Please Note:	The International and European conventions, charters and directives on the protection of cultural heritage ratified in Ireland have been taken into consideration for the purposes of this report. Content reflects requirements of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014, the Heritage Act 1995, Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999, The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and The Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Act 2023. Relevant guidelines issued by the statutory bodies have also been consulted in the assembly of this report. All the recommendations made within this assessment are based on plans and information provided by the client/applicant at the time of writing. Should any alterations be made to plans or development proposals, further assessment may be necessary. Recommendations are subject to approval by the National Monuments Service at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and by the National Museum of Ireland.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This archaeological desktop assessment has been prepared by Shanarc Archaeology Ltd. on behalf of Leixlip and Newbridge SPV Limited. The assessment relates to a proposed Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) on a site at Confey, Leixlip, Co. Kildare. The assessment will form part of an application for planning to the Local Authority.

The purpose of the archaeological desktop assessment is to:

- (i) evaluate the nature and extent of known archaeological, built heritage or other cultural heritage assets at the site;
- (ii) address potential impacts on archaeological, built heritage or other cultural heritage assets, including potential impacts on sub-surface archaeological remains and potential impacts on the visual amenity and/or setting of the cultural heritage resource; and
- (iii) provide mitigation recommendations to address potential impacts on archaeological, built heritage or other cultural heritage assets.

1.2 Site Location

The proposed LRD is located on a c. 4-hectare greenfield site in Confey townland, on the northern outskirts of Leixlip, c. 1km from the core of the historic town at Leixlip (Figures 1 - 2). The site is accessed via the R149 road, and is positioned between the R149, defining its northern boundary, and the Royal Canal and Royal Canal Greenway, defining its southern boundary. As part of the proposed development, the section of towpath forming the Royal Canal Greenway between the site and Cope Bridge is to be upgraded, in agreement with Waterways Ireland. Creighton Park - the Confey GAA Club grounds - is situated to the west of the site. A small tributary stream on the western boundary, known as the Silleachain Stream, which separates the proposed LRD site from Creighton Park, functions as the townland boundary between Confey and Newtown townland to the west.



Figure 1 Location of proposed LRD (outlined in red) in wider Leixlip context.

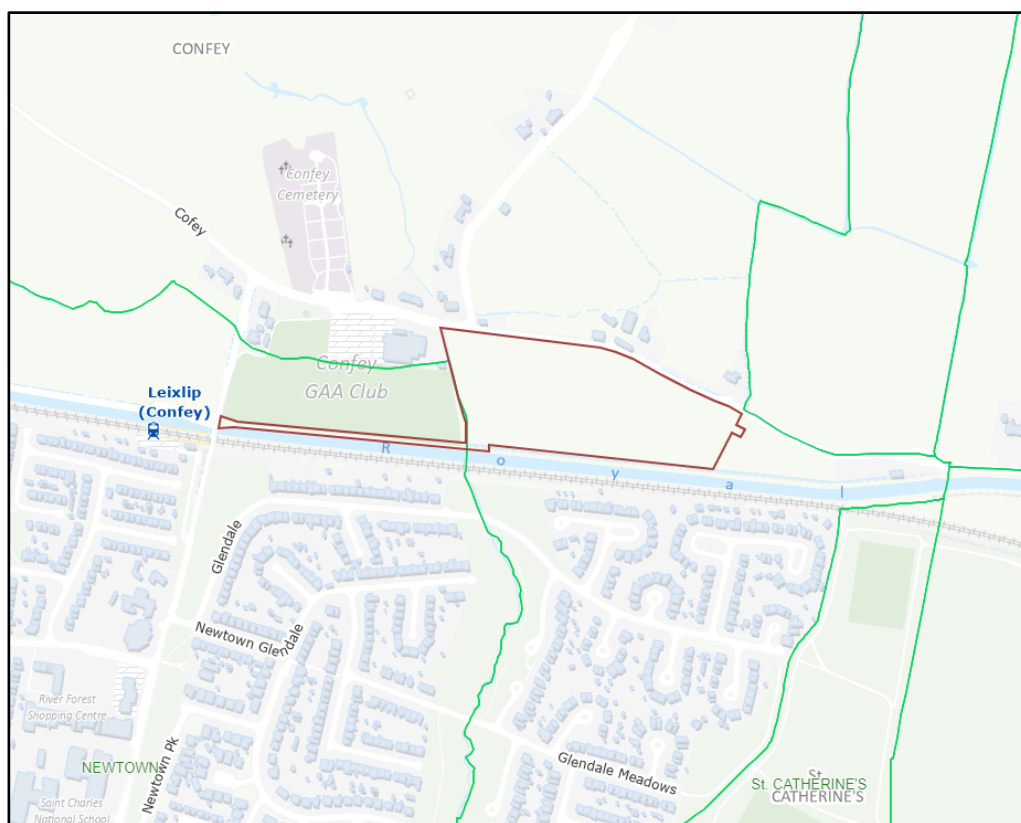


Figure 2 Location of proposed LRD (outlined in red) in local context at Confey, Leixlip, relative to the Royal Canal and townland boundaries (in green).

The Royal Canal Confey Slipway, containing facilities of the Royal Canal Amenity Group, is located just beyond the proposed LRD boundary to the east. Confey Graveyard, situated north of the R149 opposite Creighton Park, is c. 110m to the west of the proposed LRD. The graveyard contains a ruined medieval parish church, situated in proximity of surviving ruins at Confey Castle. The proposed LRD is approximately centered on ITM E701231, N737122.

1.3 Proposed Development

The proposed LRD, on an overall site area of 4.26-hectares, provides for 125 residential units, comprising 81 no. houses made up of semi-detached and terrace units ranging in height from 2 to 3 storeys, 22 no. duplex apartments within 11 blocks arranged over 3 storeys and 22 no. apartments within a single apartment block of up to 5 storeys in height. Vehicular, pedestrian, and cyclist access will be provided from the north of the site via the R149, with additional pedestrian and cyclist access provided from the south via the Royal Canal Greenway. The section of towpath on the Royal Canal Greenway between the site and Cope Bridge will be upgraded as part of the proposal. The development will provide landscaping, public and communal open spaces, car, cycle and motorbike parking and all associated site development works to facilitate the project. These include boundary treatments, plant and waste management areas, and other service provisions (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Proposed site layout plan.

2. Assessment Methodology

This assessment report is based on a desk-top study of relevant archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage sources, supported by an on-site inspection. The assessment is guided by relevant legislation, standards and guidelines in respect of archaeology, architecture and cultural heritage, as follows.

2.1 Legislative Protection for Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage

Ireland has ratified several international and European conventions on the protection of cultural heritage, principally:

- International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice Charter) 1964;
- European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (London Convention) 1969;
- UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (The World Heritage Convention) 1972;
- European Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention) 1985;
- ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (Washington Charter) 1987;
- European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valetta Convention) 1992;
- UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris Convention) 2003;
- Principals for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage Sites, Structures, Areas and Landscapes (The Dublin Principals) 2011;
- The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter) 2013; and
- EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU.

National legislation protecting cultural heritage comprises:

- National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended);
- Heritage Act 1995;
- National Cultural Institutions Act 1997;
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999;
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended); and
- Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Act 2023 (enacted and partially commenced).

The following standards and guidelines have guided this assessment:

- Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999), Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands;
- Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation (1999), Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands;
- Archaeology & Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers (2000), The Heritage Council;
- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands; and
- Guidelines for Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment of TII National Road and Greenway Projects (2025), Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

2.2 Desktop Study

The following were the principal desk-based sources consulted:

National Monuments

Under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014, archaeological sites in the ownership or guardianship of the State or a Local Authority and sites under Preservation Orders are designated as National Monuments. Such sites are offered the highest level of protection under Irish legislation, as the preservation of such sites is considered of national importance.

Record of Monuments & Places and Sites and Monuments Record

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) was established under Section 12 of the 1994 National Monuments (Amendment) Act. The statutory RMP is a list of archaeological monuments known to the National Monuments Service (NMS). The RMP is based on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) files housed at the National Monuments Service, with new sites identified being added to the SMR and then scheduled for inclusion in the statutory RMP. RMP sites are accorded statutory protection as recorded monuments under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014.

Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland

The topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) are the national archive of all known antiquities recorded by the NMI. These files relate primarily to artefacts but also include references to monuments and contain a unique archive of records of previous excavations. The find-spots of artefacts can be an important indication of the archaeological potential of an area. Any archaeological object found without a known owner at the time it was found is protected under National Monument's legislation and is deemed to be in the ownership of the State.

Excavations Bulletin and Excavations Database

The Excavations Bulletin is both a published annual directory and an on-line database that provides summary accounts of archaeological excavations and investigations carried out in Ireland – north and south – from 1969 to the present. The on-line database has been compiled from the published Excavations Bulletins from the years 1970-2010, with additional online-only material from 2011 onwards. The database gives access to summary descriptions of archaeological excavation and investigation reports and is updated on a constant basis.

The Urban Archaeological Survey

The Urban Archaeology Survey, 1982-1995, was established to record archaeological monuments and information relating to Irish towns, in particular former medieval boroughs that developed into modern urban settings. One of the main objectives was to highlight the archaeological potential of Irish towns, and the Survey produced maps and plans highlighting monuments and zones of archaeological potential (based on the available evidence) that could be used for planning purposes, as well as by archaeologists and other researchers. The Urban Archaeological Survey of Kildare,

compiled in four volumes by John Bradley, Andrew Halpin and Heather A. King, was published in 1986 by the Office of Public Works (OPW); Leixlip is covered in Volume 3.

Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Each City and County Development Plan is compiled in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and contains lists of national monuments (in State ownership or guardianship or vested in the care of Local Authorities), registered historic monuments, recorded monuments, archaeological landscapes, and archaeological sites subject to preservation orders, in addition to a Record of Protected Structures (a list of buildings which cannot be materially altered or demolished without grant of permission under the Act), Conservation Areas and Architectural Conservation Areas (to protect and enhance the special character of an area).

The Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out Kildare County Council's vision and strategy for the proper planning and sustainable management of the County's heritage. Built and Cultural Heritage are addressed in Volume 1, Chapter 11, including archaeological heritage, inclusive of industrial archaeology (Sections 11.2 – 11.11), features of historical interest (Section 11.13), and architectural heritage, inclusive of protected structures, vernacular heritage and architectural conservation areas (ACA's) (Sections 11.14 – 11.18). The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) in County Kildare is provided in Appendix 5 of the Plan. The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in County Kildare is provided in Appendix 6 of the Plan.

Archaeological Heritage is defined in Volume 1, Chapter 11 of the plan (pg. 336) as *"...the material remains left behind by past societies and includes structures, places, sites, features or portable objects, whether on land, underwater or in the intertidal zone"*. The plan acknowledges that, in addition to physical impacts, *"...development can impact on the visual appreciation, setting and amenity of recorded monuments. Such impacts should be adequately assessed and, where possible, eliminated or minimised"* (pg. 340).

Policy AH outlines Council policy to:

"Protect and enhance archaeological sites, monuments and where appropriate and following detailed assessment, their setting, including those that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or newly discovered archaeological sites and/or subsurface and underwater archaeological remains."

Archaeological Objective AH02 states it is an objective of the Council to:

"Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the archaeological heritage of County Kildare, avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest and secures the preservation in-situ or by record of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest, including underwater cultural heritage. The Council will favour preservation in situ in accordance with the recommendation of the Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (1999) and the Council will seek and have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage."

Features of historical interest contribute to the character, interest, and visual amenity of towns and villages in Kildare and are therefore worthy of retention and protection.

Policy AH outlines Council policy to:

"Secure the identification, protection and conservation of historic items and features of interest throughout the county including street furniture, surface finishes, roadside installations, items of industrial heritage, riverine heritage, and other stand-alone features of interest (items not listed on the RMP or RPS)."

Leixlip Local Area Plan (LAP) 2020-2023 (As extended to 2026)

The Leixlip Local Area Plan (LAP) sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Leixlip, including for the lands at Confey, which is the subject of a Masterplan document. The Confey Masterplan is underpinned by the policy and objectives set out in Section 12.7 of the Leixlip LAP. Built Heritage and Archaeology is addressed in Chapter 10 of the Leixlip LAP.

Policy BH3 states:

"It is the policy of the Council to safeguard the archaeological heritage of the LAP area and avoid impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest."

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is an ongoing survey within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The work of the NIAH involves identifying and recording the architectural heritage of Ireland, from AD1700 to the present day and includes country houses, churches, mills, bridges and other structures of note. The NIAH survey of Kildare is the largest survey of the post-1700 built heritage of the county. Structures rated as being of regional or above importance are included in the Minister's recommendations to the planning authorities for inclusion on the list of Record of Protected Structures.

Cartographic Sources

Information gathered from cartographic sources is fundamental to the identification of archaeological and architectural heritage sites, including cultural landscapes e.g. demesne landscapes, which, based on the level of landscape change, are now often identified from cartographic records alone. The earliest Ordnance Survey maps date to the late 1830s and early 1840s, but much change has occurred in the use and treatment of the landscape in the intervening years, particularly during the second half of the 20th century, making these a valuable resource in tracing the development of a study area.

Toponymy Sources

A townland name may preserve information relating to its archaeology, history, folklore, ownership, topography or land use. Most placenames were anglicised by the Ordnance Survey, which began in the 1830's. Despite some inaccuracies in translation, the Gaelic, Viking, Anglo-Norman and English origins of placenames are generally recognisable. The Placenames Database of Ireland website (www.logainm.ie) hosts online bi-lingual placename research and archival records for townlands.

Aerial Imagery

Aerial imagery or aerial photographs are a useful aid in identifying archaeological monuments that are not visible at ground level. Variations in plant growth can indicate sub-surface remains and the location of sub-surface monuments. Many monuments recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) have been identified through use of aerial photographs as an archaeological survey tool.

LiDAR Imagery

LiDAR is a scanning system that uses laser light emitted from equipment on low flying aircraft. The reflected light allows measurements to be taken of the earth's surface from which topographical maps are created. This data is available through Open Topographic Data Viewer hosted by the Geological Survey of Ireland (dcenr.maps.arcgis.com).

Documentary Sources

Documentary sources are a valuable means of completing the written archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage record of an area, and of gaining insight into the history of the receiving environment. A list of consulted documentary sources is provided in bibliographic form.

2.3 On-Site Inspection

On-site inspection offers the opportunity to examine a study area in light of desk-based research and evidence. Inspection is essential in determining the nature and extent of any surviving above-ground archaeological or built heritage evidence, and in predicting the potential effects of a proposal on potential below-ground remains or on the visual appreciation, setting and amenity of archaeological or built heritage assets. A site inspection of the proposed LRD site was conducted by the author on 23 September 2025.

3. Receiving Environment

3.1 Archaeological and Historical Background

The proximity of the Leixlip area to the River Liffey, to the Liffey's confluence with its tributary, the Rye Water, and to nearby fording points, one of which is recorded to the River Liffey at Leixlip (KD011-036----), would have made the area a focus of settlement in prehistory.

An Early Mesolithic flint assemblage was exposed in Cooldrinage townland (DU017-079----), on the east bank of the River Liffey, south of the town, along with a ring-barrow (DU017-075001), part of the Bronze Age/Iron Age burial tradition (c. 2400 BC – AD 400). A mound (KD011-018----) in Leixlip Demesne on the west bank of the River Liffey, also to the south of the town, may be of similar age. A *fulacht fiadh* (KD011-062----) in Barnhall townland to the west of Leixlip Demesne is part of the Bronze Age cooking tradition.

Several ring-ditches, circular monuments known only from cropmarks/soilmarks on aerial photographs, recorded in the wider area to the east and southeast of Leixlip (DU013-047---, DU017-094----, DU017-096----, DU017-101----), could also be prehistoric in origin. An example in Lucan Demesne (DU017-094----), south of the River Liffey to the southeast of Leixlip, is situated next to a possible pit circle (DU017-104----); pit circles are enclosures defined by a circular arrangement of pits of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date.

Prehistoric artefacts include a polished-stone axe provenanced to Parsonstown townland and a flint blade provenanced to Rinawade Upper townland on the southwest outskirts of Leixlip. Development of the Celbridge Interchange on the M4 on the western outskirts of Leixlip, through Castletown, Kilmacredock Upper, Collinstown and Easton townlands, also revealed archaeological sites of prehistoric date, amongst others of medieval date; sites included a Late Bronze Age ring-ditch, corn-drying kilns, *fulachta fiadh*, burnt mounds, habitation evidence and smelting furnaces.

Confey townland forms part of Salt North Barony and Confey Civil Parish. References to the placename occur in numerous sources from 1179 AD, when it was referenced as 'Letconfi'. During the Ordnance Survey in 1837 nothing could be learnt of the placename's meaning. The name Leixlip derives from the Scandinavian 'Lex-hlaup', translated as 'salmon leap' (a name applied to a former waterfall on the River Liffey

upriver of the town), which is suggestive of a Viking settlement at Leixlip. Historian John O'Donovan identified the townland of Confey with the site of the longphort of *Ceannfuait*, established in 915 AD by Sitric (Bradley *et al* 1986), which was soon after the scene of a battle between the Vikings and the Laigin; the *Annals of the Four Master* record under the year 919 that Sitric or Sygtrygg recovered Dublin and neighbouring territory as far as *Ceannfuait*. Uncertainly remains concerning the location of the battle, and an alternative suggestion for *Ceannfuait* is to a location near St. Mullins in County Carlow (Bradley *et al* 1986).

Physical evidence of a Viking settlement at, or near Leixlip has yet to be found, although a stirrup-ringed crutch-headed pin, a pin type that may have developed in Viking Dublin is provenanced to Leixlip. A probable Viking grave is also provenanced to Barnhall townland, or to the lands of Barnhall, on the southwest outskirts of Leixlip, discovered in c. 1785. Known only from an account published in Joseph Cooper Walker's (1788) *An Historical Essay on the Dress of the Ancient and Modern Irish*, the published evidence suggests the grave was an inhumation (buried human remains) accompanied by an iron axe and some other artefacts (Harrison & O Floinn 2014). A tentative location of the burial is to the Wonderful Barn, where it may have been uncovered during the structure's construction, in the earlier period 1741-1743, associated with developments initiated by the then owner of Castletown House, Katherine Conolly (Harrison & O Floinn 2014). Alternatively, the burial may have been discovered anywhere in Barnhall, or neighbouring Rinawade Upper or Rinawade Lower townlands (O Drisceoil & Fitzgibbon 2017).

In the late-12th/early-13th century Leixlip was also known by the name 'Ernia' or 'Hernie', possibly derived from *An Urnaidhe*, meaning oratory, which may indicate the presence of a pre-Norman ecclesiastical site (Bradley *et al* 1986). The earliest definite evidence for settlement at Leixlip follows the Anglo-Norman conquest, with the granting of the manor of Leixlip, initially to Robert FitzStephen by the King, and subsequently to Adam De Hereford by Strongbow; de Hereford established a castle - Leixlip castle (KD011-004002-) - and borough in the late 12th-century (Bradley *et al* 1986). The town (KD011-004001-) was confined to a narrow strip of land between the River Liffey on the south, a high ridge on the north and the Rye Water on the west, orienting the main street on an E-W axis; at its east end a road, Captain's Hill, climbed the ridge in a northerly direction through Newtown townland toward Confey, in the direction of a medieval parish church (KD006-

003----) and nearby castle (KD006-004----) in Confey. The antiquity of Captain's Hill is not known; it may be no older than the 17th century (Bradley *et al* 1986).

The medieval church in Confey (KD006-003-----), situated c. 250m to the northwest of the proposed LRD, predates the Anglo-Norman borough established at Leixlip, and the surviving stone structure, which stands in the northwest corner of the modern Confey Graveyard, originally began as a single cell structure in the 11th century; a chancel was added to the east end in the 12th century, and the building was further enlarged, in a westwards direction, probably in the 15th century. The earliest record of the church dates to 1179 AD, when it is referred to as belonging to Glendalough. In the 13th century, the right to appoint a rector to Confey Church was shared between the local bishop, William de Piro of Glendalough and St. Thomas' Abbey, Dublin to which the tithes and revenues of Confey were granted by Adam De Hereford around 1200 (O'Keeffe 1985). The church is associated with a small historic graveyard (KD006-003001-), with burial markers of 18th and 19th century date occurring around and to the south of the church. The church was still in use in 1630, when the church was described as in good repair and the tithes held by a Mr. Fegan, curate. By 1783, the church had fallen into ruin.

Other pre-Norman ecclesiastical evidence is represented by St. Columb's Well (KD011-003----) and a nearby tree (KD011-003001-), situated in Newtown townland on the Silleasechain Stream, c. 340m south of the proposed LRD. A church dedicated to St. Columb (KD011-033----), mentioned in 1403, may formerly have stood in the vicinity of the well, but neither the location of this church, or that of a Monastery dedicated to the Blessed Virgin (KD011-034----) referenced in connection with the Church of St. Columb, are known. In St. Catherine's Park, to the southeast of St. Columb's Well and east-northeast of historic town at Leixlip, there is a second holy well, dedicated to St. Catherine (DU017-002001-); the holy well once had a medieval carved stone head (DU017-002003-) affixed to its arched covering. Holy wells can have roots in a pre-Christian tradition.

In the later medieval period, the Eustace family was associated with Confey and Confey Castle (KD006-004----), situated c. 275m to the north of the proposed LRD. Little remains of this tower house castle, which stands in a field system (KD006-017----) that also extends around the medieval Confey Church, c. 160m to the west-southwest of the castle; the field system comes within 95m of the proposed LRD. The Silleasechain Stream runs between the church and castle. The castle does not appear in any historical source until the middle of the 17th century, although there is a record of an 'army' at Confey in the late

13th century (O'Keeffe 1985). The Eustace family association with Kildare began in the early 14th century, the principal family seat being at Castlemartin Castle, west of Kilcullen. A branch of the family established at Confey probably built the tower house in the 15th century (Manning 2001). The family had extensive estates, and it played a vital role in the provision of defence along the western boundary of The Pale; strategically located castles stretching from Confey to Donadea, Clongowes Wood, Blackhall, Kilashee, Mullaghcash, Castlemartin, Harristown, Blackrath, Colbinstown and Ballymore Eustace formed a buffer against raids by native Irish families (Lyons 2000). In 1688, the castle is said to have been strongly garrisoned and to have sustained an attack (Lewis 1837). The castle is further described by Lewis (1837) as being of some importance, with considerable surviving remains consisting of a massive square tower of five stages with turrets at the north and west angles; Lewis also mentions a town in association with the castle, which appears to be supported by the earthworks or field system around the castle and nearby church.



Figure 4 Copy of Du Noyer's watercolour of Confey Castle (Source: www.watercolourworld.org).

The castle was illustrated as a watercolour drawing by Du Noyer in the mid-19th century (Figure 4). A note in pencil beneath the picture, written by Du Noyer, reads 'Confey Castle – not a stone is now standing, its site being now tilled 1863'. The illustration records that one half of the tower house was still standing to full height and that a heap of rubble represented the collapsed half. Square or rectangular projecting towers are shown on surviving corners. The drawing also records a hand barrow for lifting large stones to the left of two figures in the foreground; it provides evidence of the carting away of stone from the collapsed rubble of the castle, to be used as building material for reuse elsewhere (Manning 2001). The surviving remains comprise an ivy clad, single, small and now only three storeys high, rectangular corner tower, built of roughly coursed, unbattered, limestone blocks with hammer-dressed quoins. The surviving tower appears to represent the southwest angle of the tower house.

The association of a church and castle, such as at Confey, is a recurring feature of the medieval settlement pattern in Ireland, and other features of this pattern included mills and other settlement related buildings. Confey may also have had a medieval mill; O'Keeffe (1985) records that a mill is mentioned in the mid-17th century, and there is a specific reference to a corn mill at the start of the 19th century. The location of a potential former mill is unknown. O'Keeffe (1985) suggests it may have been northwest of Confey Church, sited on the Silleachain Stream, based on the presence of earthworks.

The Royal Canal, which links Dublin with the River Shannon, was a product of The Royal Canal Company, formed in 1789. Construction of the canal, established to rival the earlier Grand Canal, commenced in 1790, and included a crossing on the Rye Water at Leixlip to serve the town at Maynooth. The route by way of Maynooth was dictated by the Duke of Leinster, a prominent shareholder in the Royal Canal Company, whose seat was at Carton Demesne. The canal's route to Maynooth was constructed with significant expense, the crossing on the Rye Water requiring the construction of an aqueduct at an expense of £27,000. The canal was constructed to Kilcock, northwest of Maynooth, by 1796 (archive.waterwaysireland.org). The canal reached the River Shannon in 1817. The canal was purchased by the Midland Great Western Railway Company in 1845, constructing a parallel rail line to the south side of the canal. The railway was a key factor in the canal's demise as the canal could not compete with the speed and efficiency of rail transport. In 1944 ownership of the Royal Canal was transferred to Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ); the canal officially closed to navigation in 1961. The Royal Canal Amenity Group (RCAG) was established in 1974 to protect, restore and develop the canal as a

public amenity, and the canal, by then under the control of Waterways Ireland, reopened in 2010 (royalcanal.ie). Cope Bridge, a masonry road bridge spanning the Royal Canal on Captain's Hill, dates from 1794, named after William Cope, director of the Royal Canal Company from 1789 to 1802. It was extended c. 1846 to carry the road over the Midland Great Western Railway and now presents as a double arched limestone bridge with engaged piers and roadside parapets, with wing walls to the north and south sloping down to the canal (Blackwood Associates 2022).

3.2 Cartographic Analysis

Down Survey, 1656-58

The Down Survey is a mapped survey carried out during the period 1656 - 1658 under the direction of Sir William Petty that recorded land confiscated from Irish Catholics following the Cromwellian war in Ireland (1649-1653). The Survey recorded townland boundaries and their areas with precision throughout Ireland, as well as detail on roads, rivers, towns, churches, castles, houses and fortifications, as well as topographic and land use detail.



Figure 5 Extract from the Down Survey map of County Kildare, 1656-58, showing the approximate location of the proposed LRD (in red) (Source: downsurvey.tcd.ie).

Sir William Petty's Down Survey map of County Kildare (Figure 5) records the settlement at Leixlip, annotating the placename 'Solmonleap', at the confluence of the Rye Water with the River Liffey; a bridge on the Rye Water links the town to the east of the river to Leixlip Castle on the west side. Confey Castle is depicted directly north of the Leixlip settlement. Allenswood, a townland directly east of Confey townland, is annotated. Walterstown is annotated to the west of Confey; the nearest townland of that name is just over the border in County Meath, to the north of Confey townland. Barony or Parish level maps covering Confey do not survive.



Figure 6 Extract from Noble and Keenan map of County Kildare, 1752, showing the approximate location of the proposed LRD (in red) (Source: www.logainm.ie).

Map of County Kildare by J. Noble and J. Keenan, 1752

John Noble and James Keenan published their survey of the county of Kildare in 1752 (Figure 6), preparing their map in two sheets, one covering the north and one covering the south of the county. The map provides much more detail on the nature of the cultural landscape at and surrounding the town at Leixlip, including the mid-18th century road network at Leixlip. The map records the existence of one definite road running directly north from the town in the direction of Confey Castle; passing directly west of an enclosed park, St. Catherine's Park, the road may be the forerunner of what is today

known as Silleasechain Lane. Part of a second road running north from the town is shown a short distance to the west, which may represent present day Captain's Hill. A road branching from Silleasechain Lane to the north of St. Catherine's Park may incorporate part of the present day R149; this mid-18th century road ran eastwards into County Dublin, but its alignment from Silleasechain Lane in the present landscape is not known. The placename Allenswood is recorded, along with the unknown placename *Kilaghrea*, annotated between Allenswood and Confey.



Figure 7 Extract from Rocque's map of the County of Dublin, 1760, showing the approximate location of the proposed LRD (in red) (Source: www.dublinhistoricmaps.ie).

John Rocque's Map of the County of Dublin, 1760

Following his arrival in Dublin in 1754, surveyor and cartographer John Rocque set about producing a series of maps of Dublin City, six in all. His Actual Survey of the County of Dublin in 1760 (Figure 7) reached beyond the county boundary to depict the demesnes of Carton Park and Castletown in north Co. Kildare, illustrating the significance of these estates. In doing so, the town at Leixlip is also recorded. While showing little to the north of

the town, the map does record the ridge of high ground aligned E-W above the town. A road shown running westward out of County Dublin into County Kildare to the north of 'St. Katherine's', which represents part of the present alignment of the R149, confirms that the road bordering the north side of the proposed LRD existed in the mid-18th century.

Taylor and Skinners Maps of the Roads of Ireland, 1777

George Taylor and Andrew Skinner undertook their survey of the Roads of Ireland, commissioned by the House of Commons (Ireland), in 1777, and produced a volume of these maps, depicting towns and villages, country seats and other structures en route in 1778. Taylor and Skinner's Map 83 records the road network at Leixlip, recording little detail in respect of Confey, other than recording a church in ruins, which is taken to represent Confey Church (Figure 8). A road and adjacent stream aligned north out of Leixlip is interpreted as representing Silkeachain Lane and Silkeachain Stream.



Figure 8 Extract from Taylor and Skinners Map 83 of the road from Dublin to Galway, 1777, showing the approximate location of the proposed LRD (in red) (Source: www.swilson.info).

Kildare Grand Jury Map by Lieutenant Alexander Taylor, 1783

Lieutenant Alexander Taylor's map of County Kildare is a plan on six sheets made for the Grand Jury. Leixlip is covered on Sheet 2 of 6 (Figure 9). Taylor, a Scotsman who held the rank of captain in the Corps of Engineers, was employed on a military survey of Ireland from 1781 to 1805 but produced his map of Kildare in a private capacity. His map confirms with certainty the existence of a road running north out of Leixlip, now partly used as Silkeachain Lane, which ran all the way to the R149, forming a crossroads with the present L5052 local road; the Silkeachain Stream ran parallel with the road. If the stream alignment has not been altered, the modern location of this former road will be to the stream's immediate west side, in Creighton Park, to the west of the proposed LRD. The map also suggests the junction of this road with the R149 and L5052 has been altered, and the L5052 is now further east of its original location.



Figure 9 Extract from Taylor's map of County Kildare made for the Grand Jury, 1783, showing the approximate location of the proposed LRD (in red) (Source: virtualtreasury.ie).

A single residential structure is depicted on the north side of the R149 opposite the proposed LRD. Taylor's map also records the existence of the road known as Captain's Hill; the map pre-dates the construction of the Royal Canal and the provision of Cope

Bridge on Captain's Hill. Both Confey Castle and Church are depicted by Taylor, separated by the Silkeachain Stream; both were in ruins at this time.

Ordnance Survey Maps

The first ever large-scale survey of Ireland was undertaken by the Ordnance Survey between 1829 and 1842, producing highly accurate maps at different scales. The first edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, Sheet KE006, surveyed in 1836 and published in 1839 (Figure 10), is the first to record the proposed LRD site with accuracy. The map records significant landscape change with the development of the Royal Canal, with towing paths to either side, which bisected the 18th century road recorded by Taylor on his 1783 map. The road wasn't carried over the canal, and by 1836 trace of the road between the canal and the R149 was gone. The alignment of the L5052, where it meets the R149, also appears to have been moved further east of its original location.

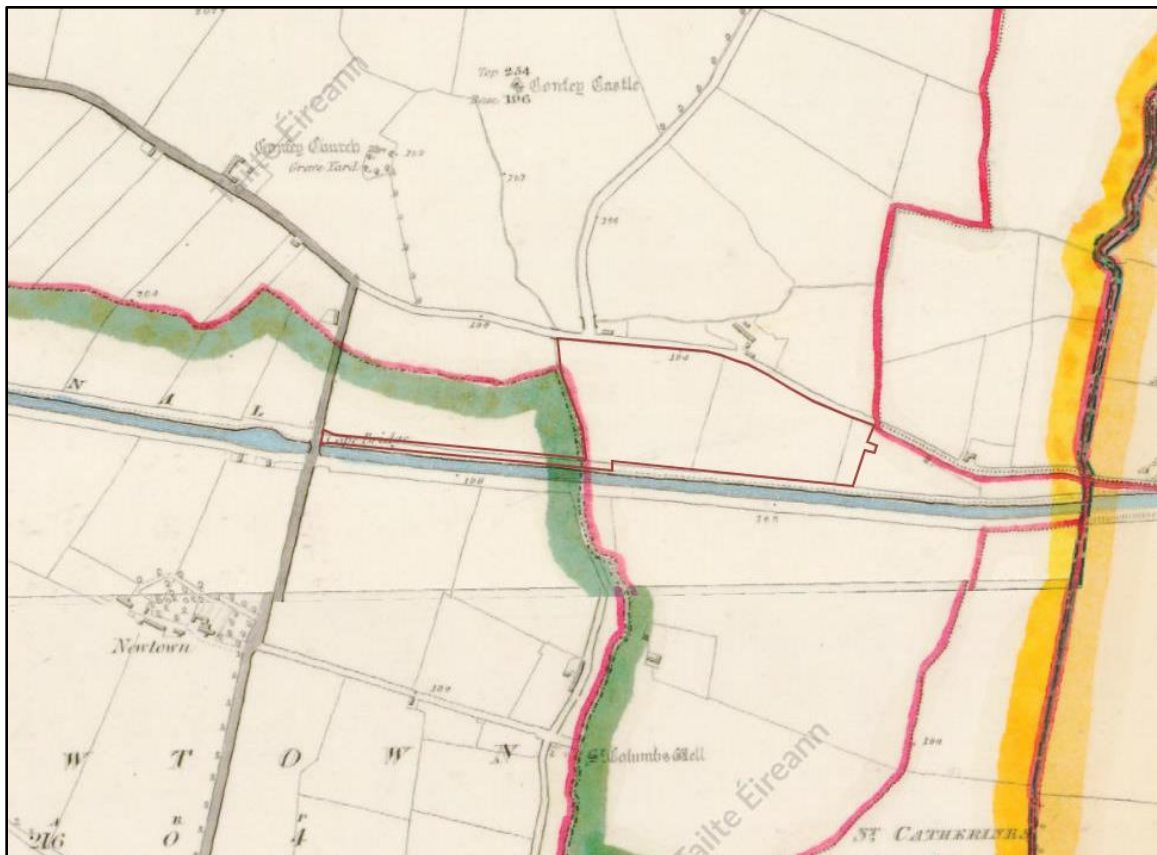


Figure 10 Extract from first edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map published 1839, showing the location of the proposed LRD (in red).

The proposed LRD site is shown comprising the whole of two fields between the canal and the R149, with part of a third. The Silleasechain Stream on the western boundary is carried beneath the R149 via a clearly depicted bridge; the L5052 is carried over a second bridge c. 30m to the northeast. Cope Bridge is named on the Captain's Hill crossing on the Royal Canal. A residential structure on a small rectangular enclosed plot is depicted opposite the proposed LRD, in the angle between the L5052 and the R149; a larger property comprising multiple buildings and enclosed yards is shown a short distance to the east, also fronting the R149 opposite the proposed LRD. This farmhouse is associated with the Gaffney family, who resided and farmed in Confey at the time of Griffith's Valuation, the first full-scale valuation of property in Ireland, published between 1847 and 1864. A third residential structure with a small yard is recorded fronting the south side of the R149 just beyond the proposed LRD boundary to the east.

Confey Church is shown on the map as a rectangular structure sited to the northwest corner of an enclosed rectangular graveyard; the perimeter of the graveyard is lined internally with trees. Confey Castle is recorded a short distance to the northeast, on the opposite side of the Silleasechain Stream.

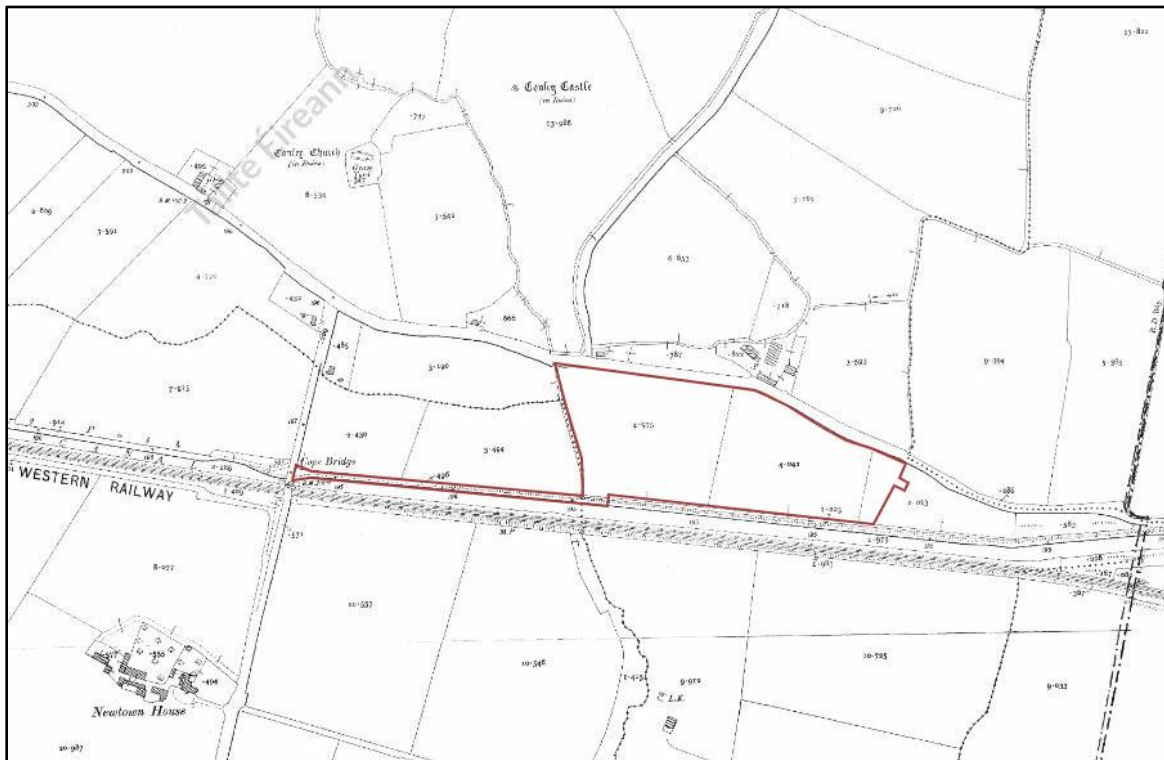


Figure 11 Extract from Ordnance Survey 25-inch map published 1910, showing the location of the proposed LRD (in red).

The 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, Sheet KE006-15, was surveyed in 1908 and published in 1910 (Figure 11). The proposed LRD is unaltered and remains as depicted on the first edition 6-inch map. A key change in the immediate landscape relates to the construction of the Midland Great Western Railway on the south side of the Royal Canal; at Cope Bridge, the towpath on the north side of the canal curves beneath the bridge, and pedestrian access between the canal and Captain's Hill is via a path on the northwest side of the bridge. The number and arrangement of buildings within the farmyard fronting the north side of the R149 opposite the proposed LRD is recorded with greater clarity. The small residential structure in the angle between the L5052 and the R149 remains. A third residential structure shown on the first edition 6-inch map fronting the south side of the R149 just beyond the proposed LRD boundary to the east is no longer present. Confey Church, in ruins, is recorded within an enclosed graveyard measuring 0.347 acres. A bridge crossing on the Silkeachain Stream is recorded between the church and the ruins of Confey Castle.

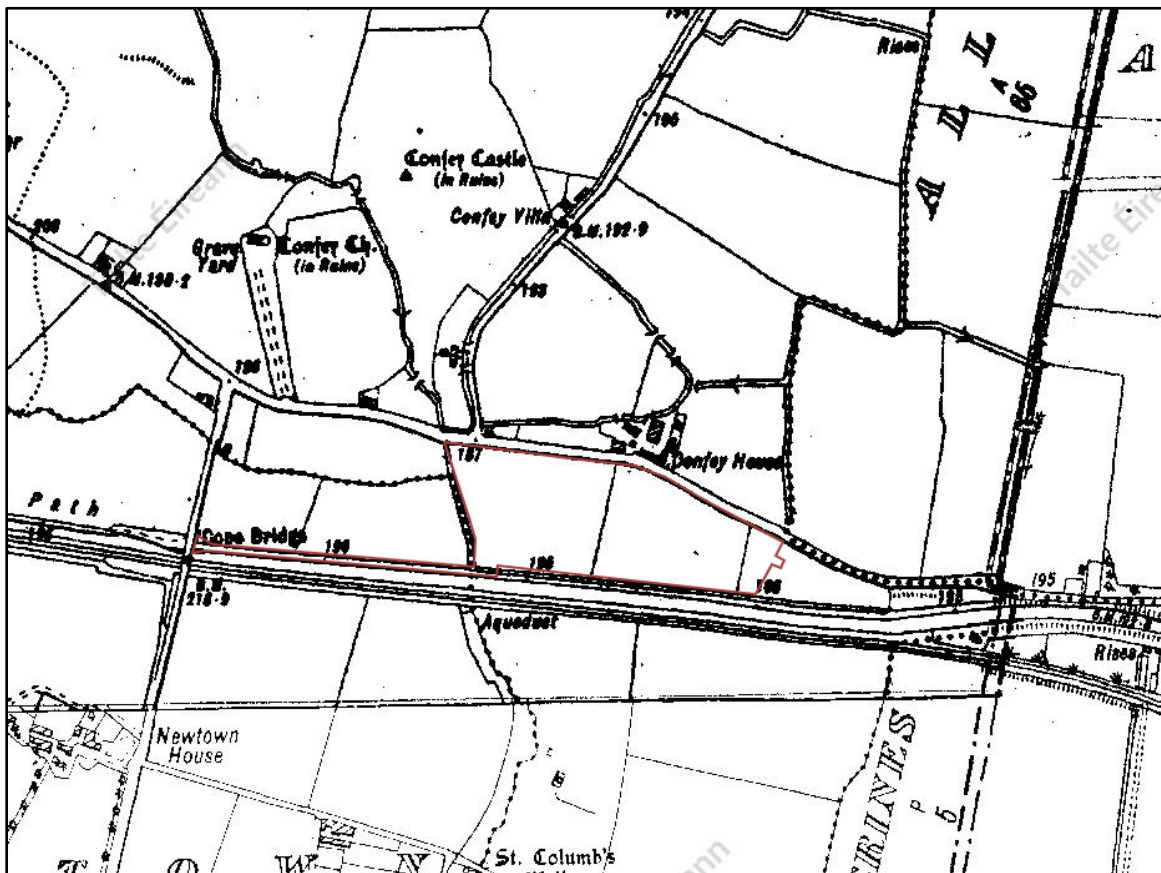


Figure 12 Extract from last edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey map published 1942, showing the location of proposed LRD (in red).

The revised 6-inch Ordnance Survey map, published in 1942 (Figure 12), records the same arrangement of fields across the proposed LRD, and a broadly similar surrounding landscape, including that on the Royal Canal and at Cope Bridge. The map annotates an 'aqueduct' on the Royal Canal crossing on the Silleaseachain Stream, to the southwest corner of the proposed LRD. The farmhouse fronting the north side of the R149 opposite the proposed LRD is annotated as 'Confey House'. The small residential structure in the angle between the L5052 and the R149 remains.

A notable change is recorded at Confey Church, with the addition of a new boundary extending from the graveyard's southwest corner to the R149; the resultant linear plot has been developed with a footpath providing access to the church and graveyard from the R149. This change reflects the purchase of land by the Celbridge Rural District Council from Lieut. Col. Richard A. Hartley in 1910 for the provision of a graveyard (kildarelibraries.ie); the graveyard was further extended eastwards later in the 20th century to serve the wider Leixlip community.

3.3 National Monuments

No National Monuments in State Care or in the ownership of the Local Authority are situated within, or in the vicinity of the proposed LRD.

3.4 Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)

No archaeological monuments recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) or the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) are situated within the proposed LRD.

The proposed LRD is located outside the core of the historic town (KD011-004001-) at Leixlip; the site is located 1km north of the outer edge of the Zone of Notification associated with the historic town. The closest monuments are the complex of medieval remains at Confey, comprising Confey Church (KD006-003----) and graveyard (KD006-003001-), and nearby Confey Castle (KD006-004----). The church and castle are associated with a surrounding field system (KD006-017----); the Zone of Notification associated with the field system is 95m from the northern boundary of the proposed LRD (Figure 13). A redundant record within the complex at Confey (KK006-018----) relates to a

possible medieval bridge crossing on the Silleachain Stream; there is insufficient evidence for a bridge having stood at the recorded location during the medieval occupancy of the site.

A field system is defined as a group or complex of fields that appear to form a coherent whole (NMS monument class and scope notes). The field system at Confey is likely to relate to a settlement that existed in the medieval period around the church and castle.

A Zone of Notification does not define the extent of an archaeological monument but is intended to highlight recorded monuments for the purpose of notification of works under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994.

Recorded monuments within an approximate 1km radius of the proposed LRD are listed in Table 1; monuments within an approximate 500m radius are shown on Figure 13.

Table 1 Recorded monuments within a 1km radius of the proposed LRD.

SMR/RMP No.	Class	Townland	ITM Grid Reference (E, N)	Proximity (m/km)*
DU017-001----	House - 16th/17th century	St. Catherine's Park	701654, 736019	1km
DU017-002001-	Ritual site - holy well	St. Catherine's Park	701623, 736280	755m
DU017-002002-	Ritual site - holy well	St. Catherine's Park	701623, 736277	755m
DU017-002003-	Stone head	St. Catherine's Park	701624, 736280	755m
DU017-003----	Church	St. Catherine's Park	701680, 736053	948m
KD006-003----	Church	Confey	700883, 737407	245m
KD006-003001-	Graveyard	Confey	700904, 737321	168m
KD006-004----	Castle - tower house	Confey	701044, 737476	275m
KD006-017----	Field system	Confey	701031, 737413	95m
KD006-018----	Redundant record (bridge)	Confey	700991, 737440	265m
KD011-003----	Ritual site - holy well	Newtown (Leixlip Ed)	701105, 736726	312m
KD011-004001-	Historic town	Leixlip, Leixlip Demesne, Newtown (Leixlip Ed), St. Catherines Park	700609, 735966	1km
* Distances are measured from the boundary of the proposed LRD to the outer edge of a monument's Zone of Notification (shaded pink).				

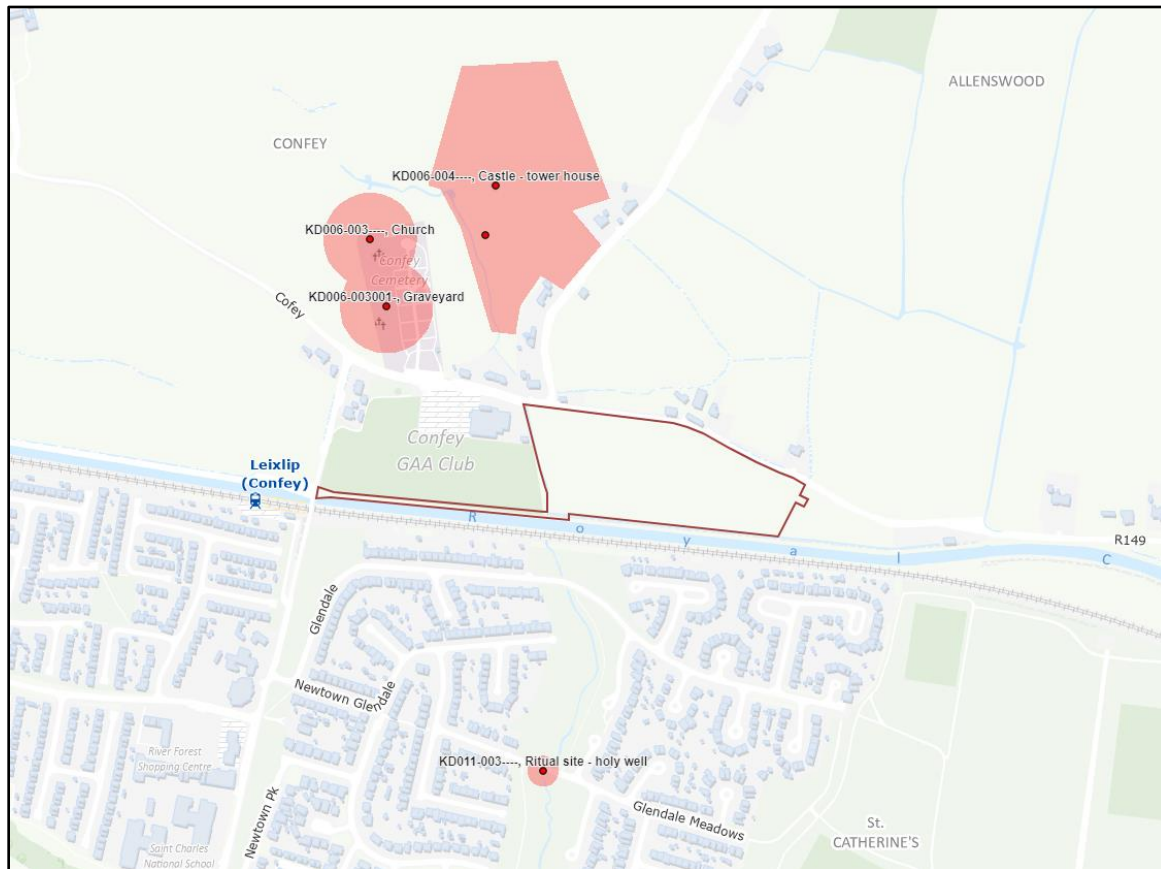


Figure 13 Distribution of sites listed in the SMR and RMP (red dots) and associated Zones of Notification (shaded pink) relative to the proposed LRD (in red).

3.5 Previous Archaeological Investigations

Archaeological investigations that have been undertaken in the vicinity of the proposed LRD have been carried out in respect of service provision or upgrade (waste water, sewerage, gas), including works on the R149, works linking with Bord Gáis Éireann's (BGE) above ground installation (AGI) at Confey, and works relating to the North Leixlip Sewerage Scheme, also known as the Lower Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme.

The North Leixlip Sewerage Scheme involved the provision of a rising main and a foul sewer on an Uisce Éireann wayleave running E-W along the southern portion of the proposed LRD and running NW-SE along the western portion of the proposed LRD, with a crossing to the north end of the Silleaseachain Stream (An Bord Pleanála reference number 09.JP0008). Topsoil stripping on the wayleave (17m-20m in width) through the proposed LRD was subject to unlicensed archaeological monitoring in 2014 (Gregory 2014). Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered.

The presence of 19th century pottery was noted during archaeological monitoring, as well as a concentrated area of red brick fragments arising from the remains of a 19th century brick kiln. The remains of the kiln principally consisted of heat staining of the subsoil with residual rows of friable red brick, oriented E-W. Rectangular in plan, the kiln measured 11m E-W by 14m N-S and extended beneath the northern edge of the wayleave. An upcast area of red brick fragments was situated 4m west of the kiln and similarly extended beneath the northern edge of the wayleave. The kiln remains were located just beyond the eastern boundary of the proposed LRD, where the single large field comprising the proposed LRD narrows in the direction of the Royal Canal Confey Slipway and facilities of the Royal Canal Amenity Group.

Archaeological monitoring was carried out under licence 03E0870 (Excavation Bulletin No. 2003:906) for Bord Gáis Éireann (BGE) on the line of the BGE pipeline between Confey and Collinstown, Leixlip. The 3.1km pipeline ran from the above ground installation (AGI) at Confey, located on the L5052, and westward along the R149, partly on the northern boundary of the proposed LRD, to a new AGI at Collinstown. All the features exposed, which were on greenfield portions of the pipeline, related to 20th century agricultural activities and nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered (Phelan 2003).

Uisce Éireann's Maynooth Transfer Pipeline route between Maynooth and Leixlip, which includes the R149 through Confey, was subject to a full archaeological assessment that included testing on existing road under licence 20E0414. No testing was carried out on the R149, but the assessment established there was no previously unrecorded features or deposits of archaeological significance within the pipeline route (Stanley 2021).

Archaeological monitoring under licence 20E0277 on the wayleave of Uisce Éireann's Leixlip WWTW to 9C Sewer, part of the Lower Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme, led to excavations in Allenswood townland, just inside the county boundary with Dublin, c. 350m to the northeast of the proposed LRD. The site consisted of three main features close to a modified watercourse representing the natural county boundary between Kildare and Dublin. The features were a cluster of two pits and a trough associated with burnt mound activity (Coughlan and Lacey 2021) and are indicative of prehistoric activity. The scheme also consisted of a broadly E-W aligned pipeline, the SIC to Leixlip WWTW, within the existing Uisce Éireann wayleave along the southern and western portions of the proposed LRD that was subject to archaeological monitoring during construction in 2014. No further

archaeological monitoring on the SIC to Leixlip WWTW pipeline route was carried out under licence 20E0277.

3.6 Previous Archaeological Finds recorded in Topographical Files

Two finds are provenanced to Confey townland in the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) Topographical Files, Refs. 1993:6 and 2011:239 (Figure 14).

The find under Ref. 1993:6 is described as a decorated iron prick-spur found by metal detecting around Confey Church and Confey Castle. The find is an iron child's spur with a child's face and floral motif decoration on either side.

The find under Ref. 2011:239 is described as a copper alloy zoomorphic penannular brooch (cloak fastener) found during OPW flood alleviation works on the Silleasechain Stream in 2011. The flood alleviation works were carried out to either side, and beneath the R149; the archaeological artefact was found just north of the R149. The ring of the brooch was cast in one piece with animal heads at each of the terminals, their snouts facing inwards towards the ring. The terminals are flattened and display a Maltese cross in relief.

The two finds point to the survival of medieval artefactual remains around the medieval Confey Church and Confey Castle complex, and the possibility of finds being washed down the Silleasechain Stream, including the stretch on the western boundary of the proposed LRD.

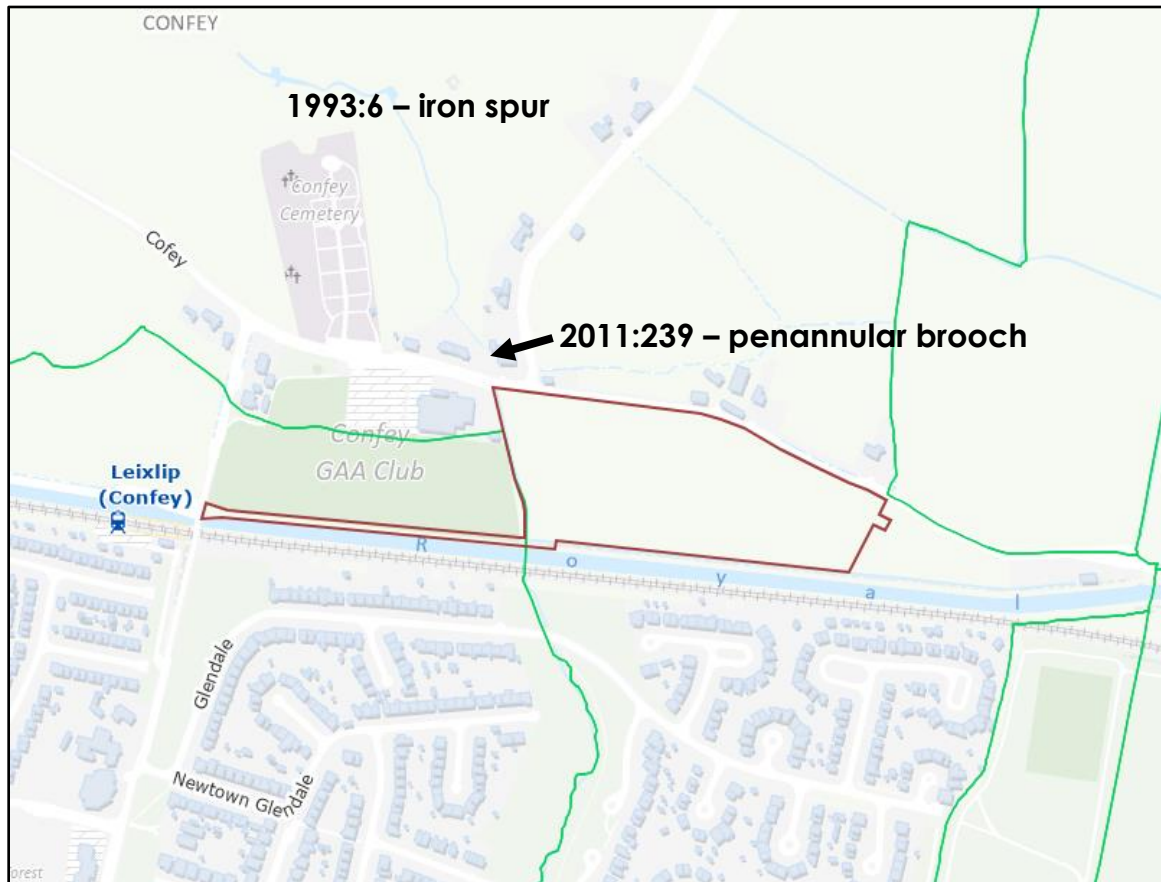


Figure 14 Location of finds recorded in the NMI Topographical Files in Confey townland relative to the proposed LRD (in red).

3.7 Record of Protected Structures

The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in respect of Kildare County is listed in Appendix 6 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029. No structures listed in the RPS are situated within the proposed LRD (Figure 15). The RPS includes the medieval Confey Church ruins and graveyard, RPS Ref. B06-03, and the surviving ruin at Confey Castle, RPS Ref. B06-04. No additional structures are listed in the RPS within a 500m radius of the proposed LRD. Cope Bridge over the railway and Royal Canal is not included in the record of protected structures.

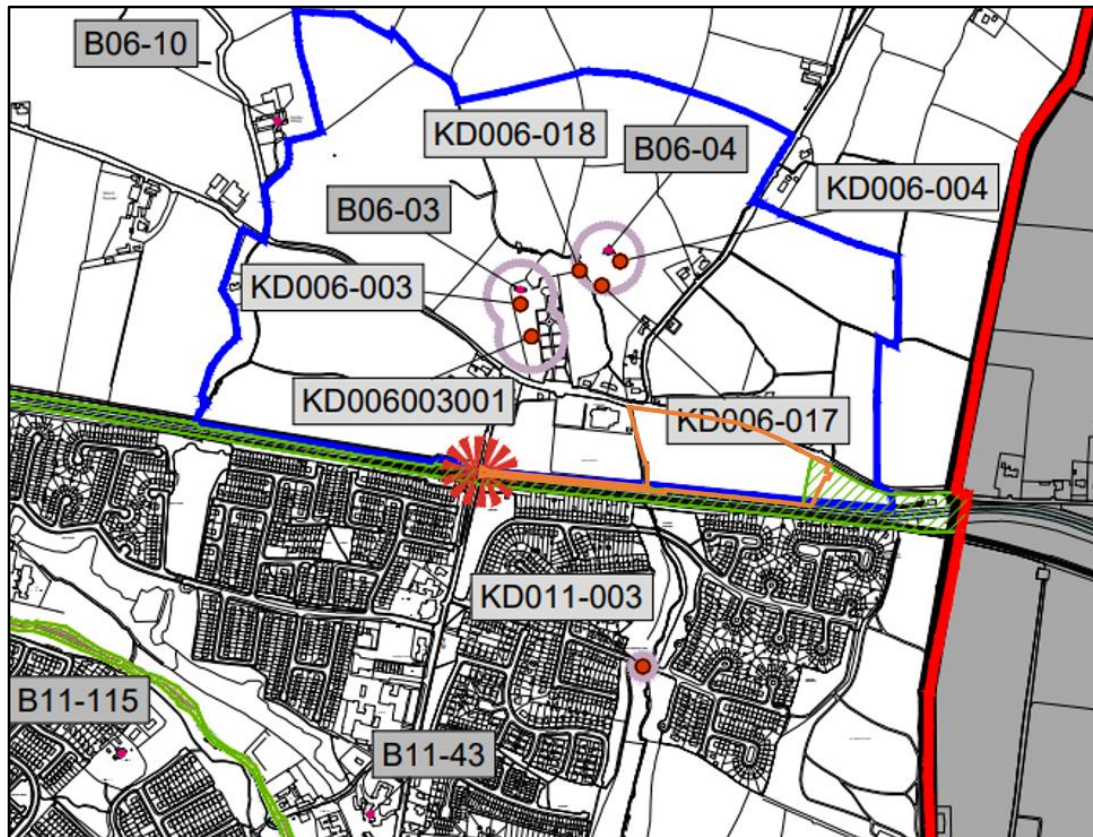


Figure 15 Extract from Map 2, Leixlip Built Heritage and Archaeology Map, Leixlip LAP 2020-2023 (as extended) showing archaeological monuments and protected structures relative to proposed LRD (in orange) (Source: kildarecoco.ie).

3.8 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

No structures listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) are situated within the proposed LRD, or within a 500m radius. Most structures recorded in the NIAH are located within the core of Leixlip town. The nearest structure, Newtown Hill House (Ref. 11804075), incorporated into the northern suburbs of the town, is c. 625m to the south-southwest of the Cope Bridge crossing on the railway Royal Canal and c. 755m from proposed LRD. Cope Bridge is not included in the NIAH.

3.9 Aerial Images

The following aerial images, available on the Tailte Éireann website Geohive (<http://map.geohive.ie>), were consulted: 1995, 1996–2000, 2001–2005, 2006–2012, Digital Globe 2011–2013, and Aerial Premium 2013–2018. Recent and historical Google Earth satellite imagery (<https://earth.google.com>) was also examined.

There is consistency at the proposed LRD across all images. The LRD site presents as a single, large, cultivated field lacking internal field boundaries; the field boundaries recorded on historic maps were removed post-dating publication of the last historic Ordnance Survey map in 1942 and prior to 1995 (Figure 16). A temporary field division recorded on the 2001-2005 image in the eastern portion of the proposed LRD (Figure 17), placed in a similar position as a historic boundary, is removed by the 2011-2013 image (Figure 18). The field is accessed via a single entrance directly opposite the associated farmhouse and yard at Confey House. The towpath on the north bank of the Royal Canal is discernible on all images.



Figure 16 Proposed LRD (in red) on extract of aerial photograph 1995.

None of the consulted images provide any evidence of potential sub-surface archaeological remains at the proposed LRD. Earthworks relating to the archaeological field system (KD006-017----) surrounding Confey Church and Confey Castle are evident in all images, and there is no evidence in the images of similar earthworks continuing southwards beyond the R149.

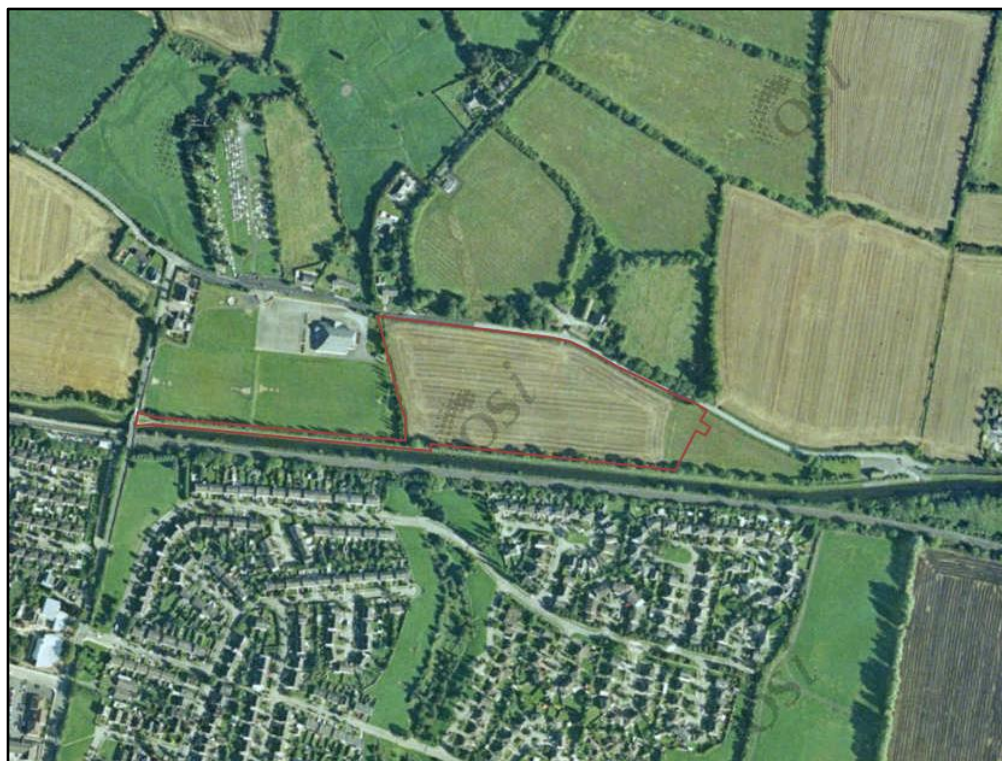


Figure 17 Proposed LRD (*in red*) on extract of aerial photograph 2001-2005.



Figure 18 Proposed LRD (*in red*) on extract of Digital Globe 2011-2013.



Figure 19 Proposed LRD (*in red*) on Google Earth Satellite historical image dated 04/04/2021 (Source: <https://earth.google.com>).



Figure 20 Proposed LRD (*in red*) on Google Earth Satellite historical image dated 20/03/2022 (Source: <https://earth.google.com>).

The Royal Canal Confey Slipway and a green space to its immediate west, located beyond the proposed LRD boundary to the east, are recorded with a similar arrangement throughout the images. This area, as well as the southern and western parts of the proposed LRD, were subject to groundworks during 2021 and 2022 on the wayleave of Uisce Éireann's SIC to Leixlip WWTW pipeline route, part of the Lower Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme; the wayleave and nature of these groundworks are evident on historical Google Earth satellite images (Figures 19-20). The development of the Confey GAA club buildings in Creighton Park bordering the proposed LRD to the west post-dates the 1995 image (Figure 16).

3.10 LiDAR

Existing LiDAR data covering the proposed LRD was captured as part of the Office of Public Works (OPW) National Aerial Survey Contract (NASC) in 2011. The consulted LiDAR image is the Hillshade OPW NASC 2m Digital Surface Model (DSM) (Figure 21). Digital Surface Models (DSM) are current state earth models that show elevations from buildings, tree canopy, electrical power lines and other features. Hillshade is a method that gives a 3D appearance to the terrain, which has captured the earthworks relating to the archaeological field system (KD006-017----) surrounding Confey Church and Confey Castle in remarkable detail.

The LiDAR data captures the current topographic surface expression at the proposed LRD. No anomalies indicative of unrecorded or potential sub-surface archaeological remains is evident in the data. Two generally N-S oriented linear trends visible in the data are expressions of former field boundaries. A very gentle gradient down to the Silleaseachain Stream on the west boundary of the proposed LRD is also discernible.



Figure 21 Proposed LRD (in red) on LiDAR image (<https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com>).

3.11 On-Site Inspection

A site inspection at the proposed LRD was carried out on 23 September 2025. The proposed LRD comprises tillage agricultural land and covers most of a single, large field bordered on three sides by mature hedgerow. The land is generally flat with a gradual westward sloping trend down to the Silleachain Stream on the western boundary (Plate 1). A second deep ditch runs at the base of the northern embankment of the Royal Canal towpath along the southern boundary; the towpath embankment has a compacted earth surface that is largely grass-covered. An uncultivated buffer borders the Silleachain Stream, and to its north end there is existing visible Bord Gáis and Uisce Éireann service infrastructure (Plate 2). Two metal-covered service inspection points are located along the southern boundary, on the Uisce Éireann wayleave (Plate 3).

The exposed tilled topsoil contained frequent angular limestone, as well as occasional pottery sherds of 19th-20th century date. The frequency of visible red clay building material/red brick fragments increased beyond the eastern boundary of the proposed LRD, where the field narrows. The concentration of brick fragments here may mark the

location of a brick kiln exposed and recorded in association with the North Leixlip Sewerage Scheme in 2014 on the Uisce Éireann wayleave (Plate 4).

Access to the proposed LRD is via a field gap opposite Confey House; the present stone-built, two-storey, three-bay, hipped roof house dates to the latter half of the 19th century (Plate 5); the remains of an original later 18th to early 19th century stone-built cottage survives in the farmyard. A linear stone-built outbuilding with curved corrugated iron roof bordering the R149 includes more than one building phase, the earliest part being contemporary with the original house (Plate 6). The property formed part of an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (McNamara 2022) undertaken as part of Uisce Éireann's Maynooth Transfer Pipeline project. The assessment identified Confey House and outbuildings as being of architectural heritage value or vernacular built heritage interest, forming part of the rural character of the R149.

The remains of lime mortared rubble stone walls within the hedgerow on the northern boundary of the proposed LRD, c. 35m to the west of the field gap opposite Confey House, may relate to a former field entrance (Plate 7). The remains comprise sections of two walls; one section aligned parallel to the R149 and the other returning into the field at an oblique angle; the wall measures c. 1.2m high at its highest point (with a curved capping in stone) and measures c. 0.80m wide. A 20th century water pump was previously situated on the south side of the R149, c. 100m west of the rubble stone walls, but no remains were found in the field.

The northwest corner of the proposed LRD is marked by the crossing of the Silleasechain Stream under the R149. An 18th or early 19th century arched stone bridge is present at the crossing, visible to both sides of the R149, next to a flood alleviation culvert installed by the OPW in 2011 (Plate 8). A similar arched stone bridge is present beneath the L5052, c. 30m to the northeast. The original stone side walls to the bridge on the R149 have been modified; the bridge side wall to the south of the R149 is a modern rebuild (Plate 9); the bridge side wall to the north contains original as well as modern fabric. A stone wall on the north side of the R149 curves around the junction with the L5052, linking the two bridges. This appears to have been rebuilt in 2011 on the R149, using stone from the earlier wall as capping stones. According to local accounts, the stone used in the original construction of the walls at the junction of the R149 and L5052 were robbed from Confey Castle.

The intervisibility of the proposed LRD with the medieval Confey Church and Confey Castle was considered during the site inspection. Confey Church is enclosed in a small graveyard in the rear northwest corner of the modern Confey Graveyard; large mature yew trees on the perimeter of the medieval graveyard enclose the church, obscuring views outwards from the church in the direction of the proposed LRD (Plate 10).

Confey Castle in comparison is in an open setting, within a large pasture field with a surrounding field system. The castle is not visible from the proposed LRD at ground level, having a buffer of residential properties at the junction of the R149 with the L5052 obscuring the view north-northwest to the castle from the proposed LRD. From the castle, looking south-southeast toward the location of the proposed LRD, the tops of trees on the boundary, particularly the line of tall trees on the boundary with Creighton Park, are visible (Plate 11); structures of multi-storey height will similarly be visible from the setting at Confey Castle.

Site Inspection Plates



Plate 1 View SE across proposed LRD from NW corner; gradual slope down to Silkeachain Stream on W boundary is apparent.



Plate 2 View S along the line of the Silleachain Stream, with uncultivated buffer, on the west boundary of the proposed LRD.



Plate 3 View W across proposed LRD from location of surface level service infrastructure on Uisce Éireann wayleave across southern portion of site.



Plate 4 View into proposed LRD from narrow portion of field beyond the eastern boundary; narrow portion of field is location of former 19th century brick kiln.



Plate 5 View N across R149 to Confey House from N boundary of proposed LRD.



Plate 6 View NE to linear outbuilding range at Confey House from entrance into proposed LRD on R149.



Plate 7 Remains of lime mortared rubble stone walls at probable former field entrance on the R149; view N from inside hedgerow on N boundary of proposed LRD.

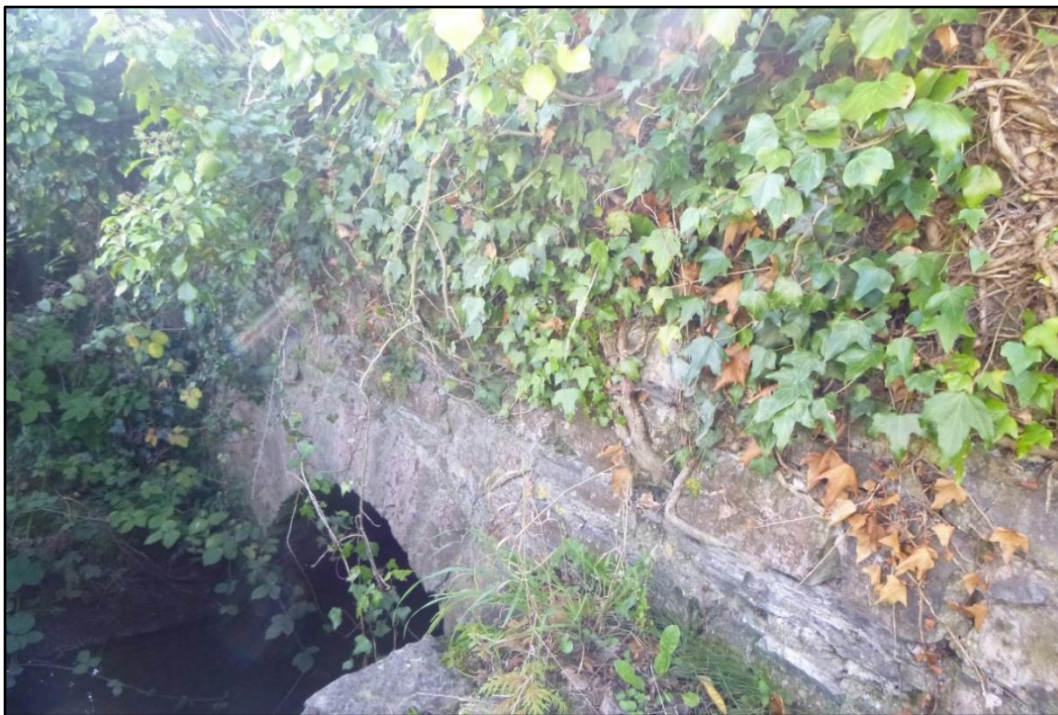


Plate 8 Arched stone bridge on the R149; view to upstream arch on north side of R149.



Plate 9 View NW from inside NW corner of proposed LRD to rebuilt bridge side wall on the south side of the R149.



Plate 10 View NW in modern Confey Graveyard to mature yew trees enclosing the location of the medieval Confey Church and graveyard.



Plate 11 View SSE from field system at Confey Castle in direction of proposed LRD; LRD location to E of tall trees on Creighton Park boundary (marked by arrow).

4. Conclusions, Impact Statement and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions and Impact Statement

The proposed LRD at Confey is located on a greenfield site between the R149 and the Royal Canal, c. 1km from the core of the historic town at Leixlip. The R149, on the northern outskirts of Leixlip, is generally rural in character, and the road appears from historic cartographic sources to have existed from at least the 18th century.

The R149 crosses the Silleachain Stream via an arched stone bridge of 18th or early 19th century date in the northwest corner of the proposed LRD; this crossing was modified with the addition of a modern culvert during flood alleviation works by the OPW in 2011. Based on local knowledge, it is possible that the arched stone bridge, along with roadside walls at the junction of the R149 with the L5052, were originally built with stone robbed from nearby Confey Castle (KD006-004---). Bridge fabric or roadside walls on the R149 will not be directly impacted by the proposed LRD.

Cope Bridge, carrying Captain's Hill over the railway and Royal Canal, marks the western terminal of proposed surface upgrade work on the canal towpath. The masonry bridge is effectively two arches recording separate phases of historical infrastructural development in Leixlip, the northern arch, of late 18th century origin representing the construction of the Royal Canal and the southern arch, mid-19th century in origin, representing the arrival of the railway. The bridge will not be directly impacted by the proposed development, but its associated masonry wing wall, on the northeast side of the bridge, could potentially be impacted during upgrade works. The bridge is not included in the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 Record of Protected Structures.

Confey House, situated directly opposite the proposed LRD on the R149, is of vernacular built heritage interest but has no current designation and is not listed in the NIAH or as a protected structure. Confey House will not be directly impacted by the proposed LRD; however, its historically rural setting will be altered significantly by the proposed LRD.

There is no record of known archaeological remains at the proposed LRD; the closest archaeological monuments are the complex of medieval remains at Confey, comprising Confey Church (KD006-003----) and graveyard (KD006-003001-), and nearby Confey Castle (KD006-004----). The church and castle are associated with a surrounding field system (KD006-017----) which relates to a medieval town or settlement focused on the church and castle. The Zone of Notification associated with the field system is 95m from the northern boundary of the proposed LRD. There is no evidence that similar earthworks continued southwards beyond the R149. The discovery of a medieval artefact however, during flood alleviation works in 2011, highlights the possibility of finds from the medieval Confey settlement being washed down the Silleachain Stream, including the stretch on the western boundary of the proposed LRD.

The existence of a medieval road or routeway linking the town at Leixlip with the Confey area is a possibility, but the location of such a road is not known. 18th century cartographic sources record that the present Silleachain Lane at Leixlip extended as far as the R149, prior to the construction of the Royal Canal from the 1790s. The exact line of the road between the canal and R149 is not clear, but it may have ran immediately west of the Silleachain Stream in the grounds of Creighton Park.

The proposed LRD was the subject of unlicensed archaeological monitoring in 2014, during the installation of a foul sewer and rising main on an Uisce Éireann wayleave along the southern and western portions of the site. No evidence of a former road or other remains of archaeological significance were found on the wayleave. The residual remains of a 19th century brick kiln were identified on the wayleave just beyond the proposed LRD boundary to the east, where the field narrows; remains of the kiln continued beyond the northern edge of the wayleave and likely survive outside the eastern boundary of the proposed LRD. No further archaeological mitigation is necessitated within the Uisce Éireann wayleave monitored in 2014.

The proximity of the proposed LRD to the complex of medieval remains at Confey (which may have been the location of a 10th century battle between the Vikings and Leinstermen), along with its proximity to the Silleachain Stream, which produced an archaeological artefact during OPW flood alleviation works in 2011, and the identification of prehistoric remains c. 350m to the northeast of the proposed LRD in nearby Allenswood townland (on the line of the Lower Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme) points to the proposed LRD being an area of archaeological potential. Any potential sub-surface

archaeological remains will be directly impacted in the absence of archaeological mitigation.

The proposed LRD will alter the predominately rural character of its immediate setting, and the scale of the proposal, involving blocks up to five storeys, will result in intervisibility between the proposed LRD and the complex of medieval remains at Confey. Visibility will be greater from Confey Castle and surrounding field system, but this is buffered at ground level by existing residential properties at the junction of the R149 with the L5052, and the distance between the castle and proposed LRD ensures the sense of open space at the castle will not be significantly adversely affected.

4.2 Recommended Mitigation Measures

It is recommended that the proposed LRD site be subject to a pre-development programme of licensed geophysical survey followed by a pre-development programme of targeted archaeological test excavation to comprehensively address its sub-surface archaeological potential.

The results of geophysical survey and archaeological test excavation will determine whether further mitigation at the site will be required, such as a strategy for the *in situ* preservation of confirmed archaeological remains, archaeological monitoring of groundworks during construction, or archaeological excavation and recording to full resolution of archaeologically significant remains that cannot be preserved *in situ*.

In the event of groundworks on the bed and/or banks of the Silleachain Stream, it is recommended that such works be archaeological monitored, and excavated soil subject to a licensed metal detection survey. This will address the potential for archaeological objects from the medieval Confey settlement being washed down the Silleachain Stream.

As the Uisce Éireann wayleave running E-W along the southern portion of the proposed LRD and running NW-SE along the western portion of the proposed LRD was archaeologically monitored in 2014, the existing wayleave is archaeologically resolved. No further archaeological mitigation is recommended on the wayleave.

In the event the eastern portion of the field immediately outside the eastern boundary of the proposed LRD is to be temporarily used during construction, it is recommended that

the area be considered part of the developable area for archaeological purposes and be subject to the aforementioned archaeological mitigation.

It is further recommended that existing mature hedgerow and trees be retained or augmented in the interests of mitigating changes to the rural character of the R149 and to provide a visual buffer between the setting of Confey Castle and the proposed LRD to minimise the scale of change to the castle's setting.

To mitigate inadvertent impact on the wing wall at Cope Bridge during proposed surface upgrade work on the canal towpath, the wing wall should be isolated and protected using an appropriate barrier system. Any alteration to the built heritage at Cope Bridge should be preceded by the preparation of a built heritage record in accordance with best cultural heritage practice.

PLEASE NOTE: Recommendations are subject to review and approval by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and by the National Museum of Ireland.

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