

T V A S
I R E L A N D
L T D

**Andrew, Athy,
Co. Kildare**

Final Archaeological Assessment Report

for

Kildare County Council

21E0658

Graham Hull and Dylan Duane Roche

TVAS Ireland Ltd

J21/10

October 2021

ITM 667519 692885

**Andrew, Athy,
Co. Kildare**

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Summary

Site name: Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare

Townland: Ardrew

Parish: Saint Johns

Barony: Narragh and Reban West

County: Kildare

Planning Ref. No: Pre-planning

Client: Kildare County Council

Landowner: Kildare County Council

National Grid Reference: ITM 667519 692885

Naturally occurring geology: Glacial till - mid orange brown sandy silt to pale yellow brown silty clay

TVAS Ireland Job No: J21/10

Licence No: 21E0268

Licence Holder: Graham Hull

Fieldwork: Graham Hull and Dylan Duane Roche

Site activity: Testing

Date of fieldwork: 7th to 8th October 2021

Date of report: October 2021

Report authors: Graham Hull and Dylan Duane Roche

Summary of results: Archaeological testing of the site of a proposed residential development at Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare did not encounter archaeological features, deposits or artefacts.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The primary records (written, drawn and photographic) are currently held at TVAS Ireland Ltd, Ahish, Ballinruan, Crusheen, Co. Clare.

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Report edited/checked by: Kate Taylor October 2021

**Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare
Final Archaeological Assessment Report
21E0268**

Graham Hull and Dylan Duane Roche

Report J21/10c

Introduction

This report documents the results of archaeological test trenching undertaken in advance of construction of a residential housing development at Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare (Figs 1-2).

The following Government publications set out many of the procedures relating to planning/development and archaeology:

Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (DAHGI 1999a)

Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation (DAHGI 1999b)

Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers (ICOMOS 2000)

Review of Archaeological Assessment and Monitoring Procedures in Ireland (Lambrick and Doyle 2000).

Archaeology in the Planning Process (OPR/DHLGH 2021)

The planning background

Kildare County Council intends to apply for permission to construct a social housing development at Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare (Figs 1-2). The development design is not finalised and no planning application has yet been submitted.

A detailed archaeological and historical background was compiled for the site as part of an earlier desk-based archaeological assessment (Korfanty 2021) This desk-based assessment recommended that the site be subject to further assessment, namely geophysical survey and test trenching, prior to development. A geophysical survey of the proposed development site was carried out on 15th April 2021 (Leigh 2021).

Location, topography and geology

The proposal site is located in the townland of Ardrew, parish of Saint John's and barony of Narragh and Reban West, Co. Kildare (ITM 667519 692885) (Figs 1-2).

The site has an irregular shape and encompasses an area of approximately 2.6ha. The site is located within an area of undeveloped land directly west of the Fortbarrington Road, approximately 1.3km south-west of Athy town centre. The River Barrow flows approximately 700m east of the site. The eastern corner of the site was formerly developed but has since been returned to agricultural land.

The proposed development site lies at approximately 60m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Geological deposits encountered during testing were glacial till - mid orange brown sandy silt to pale yellow brown silty clay.

Archaeological and historical background

A detailed archaeological and historical background was compiled for the site as part of an earlier desk-based archaeological assessment (Korfanty 2021) and not repeated in full here.

Although not included in the earlier desk-based archaeological assessment report (Korfanty 2021) it is noteworthy that the proposed development site is bounded to the north by the now defunct Athy to Wolfhill Colliery railway which was constructed c.1917 in order to increase the production of coal during the First World War (House of Lords Debate 1917).

The proposed development site is rural in character. ‘Ardrew’ translates to the Irish *Ard Rú* meaning ‘hill of the rue’ (www.logainm.ie).

Cartographic sources (Figs 4-6)

The 1838 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 3) shows the area of the proposal site occupying a conglomeration of various sized fields. There is a cluster of small buildings adjacent to the road in the north-east corner of the site. By the time of the 1907 map edition (Fig. 4) the cluster of small buildings appears to have been replaced by two small structures. The centrally located two fields are now one larger field. The 1943 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 5) shows no changes. Modern mapping (e.g. Fig. 2) shows the site within an undeveloped field surrounded by mostly residential development associated with the expansion of Athy.

Aerial photographs (Figs 6-7)

Aerial photographs from the later 20th century onwards are available on sources such as Google Maps Pro and demonstrate the changing land use of the eastern part of the development site. In particular, a halting site was constructed on the east part of the site in the first decade of the 21st century (Fig. 6) and demolished and the field returned to agriculture in the second decade (Fig. 7).

Recorded Monuments and Protected Structures

The closest Recorded Monuments are located approximately 500m to the east (KD035-031 - enclosure) and 500m to the north-east (KD035-049 – burial) (www.archaeology.ie).

Previous archaeological investigations

The results of archaeological investigations in Ireland are published in summary form in *Excavations* (Bennett 1987-2010) and online at www.excavations.ie. A search of both sources was made for Ardrew and surrounding townlands. The most relevant are referred to here. Seven entries are recorded for the townland of Ardrew. Monitoring of a large housing development in 2001 encountered some post-medieval pottery sherds but no archaeological features (Grant 2001). Further monitoring of the same housing development found nothing of archaeological interest (Lane 2001; 2002; 2004). In 2002, monitoring took place of groundworks associated with the Fortbarrington Sewerage Scheme to the south of Athy and west of the River Barrow. One site was found consisting of oak timbers lying in river sediments which were interpreted as possible revetments set into the bank (Fegan 2002). Monitoring was carried out in 2015 of the route of a proposed overhead powerline between Athy and Ballitore, running through the townlands of Bleach, Ardrew, Ballybought, Dunbrin Upper, Ardree, Bray Lower, Bray Upper, Ballycullane, Turnerstown, Burtown Big, Burtown Little, Mullamast, Moone and Ballitore. No archaeological features were identified during the works (Hession 2015). In 2018, the route of the Athy Distributor Road was monitored, running through the townlands of Bennetsbridge, Blackparks, Ardrew, Bleach, Coneyburrow, Athy, Aughaboura, Chanterlands, Townparks and Gallowshill. No archaeological material was identified (Hickey 2018).

Geophysical survey (Fig. 8)

A geophysical survey of the proposed development site was carried out on 15th April 2021 (Leigh 2021). The survey revealed numerous ferrous responses that indicate modern disturbance and refuse in the topsoil, particularly on the southern side of the site and at the east (Fig. 8). Faint responses suggestive of ploughing and a former field boundary are visible at the north and west. There is nothing of clear archaeological potential.

Test Trenching – Objectives and methodology

Test excavation took place at the proposal site in order to supplement the documentary research and geophysical survey for this assessment and, specifically, to establish the nature and extent of any archaeological deposits and features.

The National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 provide the legislative framework within which archaeological excavation can take place. A licence to excavate was issued to Graham Hull by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The licence number is 21E0268.

The development site has an area of approximately 2.42ha (24,168m²). It was proposed to excavate 13 test trenches, each 50m long and 1.80m wide plus one trench 25m long and 1.8m wide, giving an area of investigation of approximately 1,215m². Some of the trenches were targeted to examine some of the geophysical survey anomalies. In the event, trenches with a total length of 673.95m were dug. At 1.80m wide this gave an area of investigation of 1,213m².

These trenches gave approximately 5.0% coverage of the proposal site, which sits well with simulation modelling based on empirical studies of archaeological testing (Hey et al. 2000) that has shown that the optimum sample fraction for the most commonly encountered conditions is in the order of 4-5%. Beyond this percentage the information gain suffers from sharply diminishing returns, while smaller fractions offer low probabilities for intercepting many potential sites. Higher sample fractions can be justified in exceptional circumstances (Orton 2000).

Topsoil and overburden was stripped from the test trenches using a 13 tonne 360 degree tracked excavator fitted with a 6 foot (1.8m) toothless grading bucket and operated under direct and continuous archaeological control. Mechanical ceased at the top of potential archaeological deposits or the surface of the natural geological deposits, whichever was encountered first. Archaeological deposits or potential archaeological deposits were hand-cleaned. The spoil was spread and visually scanned for finds. The purpose of the testing was to establish the presence/absence of archaeological deposits and features and where these exist, establish their nature and extent. It was not proposed that such features or deposits be fully investigated without consultation with the licensing authorities.

A full written, drawn and photographic record was made in accordance with the TVAS Ireland Recording Manual (First Edition). Copies of this manual have previously been submitted to the National Monuments Section and the National Museum of Ireland. The proposed works complied in full with government guidelines (DAHGI 1999a; 1999b).

The test trenching was undertaken by Graham Hull, with assistance from Dylan Duane Roche, between 7th and 8th October 2021.

Test Trenching – Results (Figs 8-9 and Plates 1-12)

The proposed area is a cultivation field with a slight incline to the west away from the entrance on Fortbarington Road.

Fourteen test trenches were excavated across the proposal area. The trenches ranged in length from 24.50m to 53.20m and were 1.80m wide. A total length of 673.95m was dug, giving an area of investigation of 1,213m². The test trenches revealed evidence of previous modern development, agricultural furrows and former field boundaries. Detailed descriptions of the trenches are given as Appendix 1.

Topsoil across the site is a mid to dark brown silty sand between 0.20m and 0.80m thick that broadly overlies natural deposits. The underlying natural geological deposit here is glacial till, consisting of a mix of mid orange brown sandy silt to pale yellow brown silty clay with frequent sub-angular stone inclusions.

Results by trench (Fig. 9 and Plates 1-12)

Trench 1, with a length of 52.50m and a depth of 0.25m, revealed agricultural furrows. The topsoil contained modern refuse.

Trench 2 was 50.50m long and 0.30m deep; evidence of previous development was visible, including construction gravel, brick and a waterpipe.

Trench 3 had a length of 50.75m and a depth of between 0.40m and 0.70m and contained evidence of previous recent development similar to that seen in Trench 2.

Trench 4, with a length of 24.50m and a depth of 0.20-0.45m contained the skeletal remains of an animal at the same depth as the previous development disturbance seen in Trenches 2 and 3.

Trench 5, with a length of 50m and a depth of between 0.30m and 0.80m, contained agricultural furrows and frequent shiny black mineral deposits spread throughout the natural deposits. The trench was deepest at its southern end.

Trench 6 was 51m long and 0.50m deep with agricultural furrows visible cut into the natural deposits on a east-north-east to west-south-west alignment.

Trench 7, with a length of 48m and a depth of 0.35m, contained a former north-west to south-east aligned field boundary, 1.70m wide.

Trench 8 was 53.20m long, 0.30m deep and revealed agricultural furrows aligned east-north-east to west-south-west. The furrows were typically 2.5m wide and were spaced at approximately 5m.

Trench 9 had a length of 5.50m and a depth 0.35m and showed evidence of east-north-east to west-south-west aligned agricultural furrows, typically 2.5m wide and 5m apart.

Trench 10, with a length of 51m and a depth of 0.40m contained agricultural furrows similar in appearance and distribution to those in Trenches 8 and 9.

Trench 11, 49.50m long and 0.32m deep, contained a former field boundary ditch located 19.40m from the southern end of the trench. The 2.30m wide ditch was aligned east-north-east to west-south-west and contained mid brown silty sand with abundant stone and brick. The trench also contained modern agricultural furrows similar to those seen in Trenches 8-10.

Trench 12, with a length of 43m and a depth of 0.40m, revealed the same former field boundary as was seen in Trench 11. This ditch was located 9.30m from the southern end of the trench and was 2.5m wide, with a fill of mid brown silty sand with abundant stone and brick. The trench also contained similar agricultural furrows.

Trench 13 was 49m long and 0.80m deep and contained agricultural furrows on two different alignments. The majority were aligned north-east to south-west and the remaining ones on a north-west to south-east alignment. There was evidence of coal and brick within the furrows.

Trench 14, with a length of 50.50m and a depth of 0.50-0.80m, contained agricultural furrows aligned east to west and north-east to south-west with evidence of coal and brick within the furrows. The trench was deepest towards the southern end.

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were observed in any of the trenches.

Finds

No archaeological artefacts were observed during the excavation.

Samples

No samples were taken.

Test Trenching – Discussion

The proposal site is located within a moderately rich archaeological environment. Geophysical survey identified faint responses suggestive of ploughing and a former field boundary, although there was nothing of clear archaeological potential. Targeted test trenching established the presence of previous recent development, modern agricultural furrows and former field boundaries; None of the potential geophysical survey anomalies proved to be of archaeological origin. The test trenching did not reveal archaeological features, deposits or artefacts.

The north-eastern corner of the site contained evidence of recent development in the form of construction gravels, broken brick, disused water pipes and modern refuse. This development can be seen in aerial photography from 2009 (Fig. 6) which shows a site immediately north-west of Ardrew Halting Site. A local resident explained during fieldwork that the area had been used as a temporary halting site while the current halting site was under construction, it was then returned to agricultural use. The area was also identified in the geophysical survey (Fig. 8) but with no distinct shape due to magnetic disturbance likely from the refuse associated with the development.

Many of the trenches contained evidence of agricultural activity in the form of cultivation furrows which were visible cut into the natural subsoil deposits on an alignment parallel with the northern field boundaries. Ploughing was also evident and can be seen in recent aerial photography of the site (Figs 6-7).

Former field boundaries identified in the north-west corner of the site correspond with boundaries shown on historic mapping of the site (Figs 3-5) and recent aerial photography (Figs 6-7). The north-west to south-east aligned boundary continues across the field on the same path and ends beyond the proposed site area. The east-north-east to west-south-west boundary was only removed recently as can be seen from aerial photography of the site (Fig. 6) and continued towards the road to the east where it created a narrow field. This boundary also previously continued to the west as seen on the 1838 map (Fig. 3) but was removed by the time of the 1907 map (Fig. 4). These former field boundaries were also identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 8).

Trenches in the centre of the site yielded fragments of hard black shiny mineral deposits which appeared to be within the natural deposits in that area of the site. It is possible that these fragments are naturally occurring coal, given that the collieries of Castlecomer and Wolfhill are between 10 and 16

miles south of the site. The site is also bounded to the north by the defunct Athy to Wolfhill railway that was constructed c. 1917 to help increase coal production during the First World War (House of Lords Debate 1917).

Archaeological Impact Statement

In accordance with *Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation* (DAHGI 1999b), an archaeological impact statement is to be made. The impact statement should describe the following:

...possible direct or indirect effects of the proposed development on archaeological deposits, features or objects. The archaeological impact statement must be based on the results of the overall archaeological assessment as well as the results of the test excavation. (DAHGI 1999b, 21).

The documentary research has demonstrated that the proposal site is within an area of relatively high archaeological potential.

The geophysical survey identified ploughing and a former field boundary but nothing of clear archaeological potential. Ground truthing by test trenching located these former field boundaries. Bar the relatively modern field boundaries, the test trenching did not encounter archaeological features, deposits or artefacts. Large parts of the site have been disturbed by former development.

On the basis of the results of this assessment it can be stated with confidence that the proposed development will not impact on any below-ground archaeological features or deposits. No further archaeological work is recommended.

The opinions given in this archaeological assessment report are made subject to approval by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Recommendations and further work

Fieldwork

Test trenching did not reveal evidence of archaeological features or deposits and no further archaeological intervention is recommended for the proposed development.

Post-excavation

An accessible archive of primary records will be prepared for long term storage and will be deposited with the National Monuments Service's Archive Unit in Swords in accordance with their guidelines (Barrett 2012).

Publication and dissemination plan

A summary of the findings of the excavation will be submitted to *Excavations 2021*.



Graham Hull and Dylan Duane Roche
TVAS Ireland Ltd
October 2021

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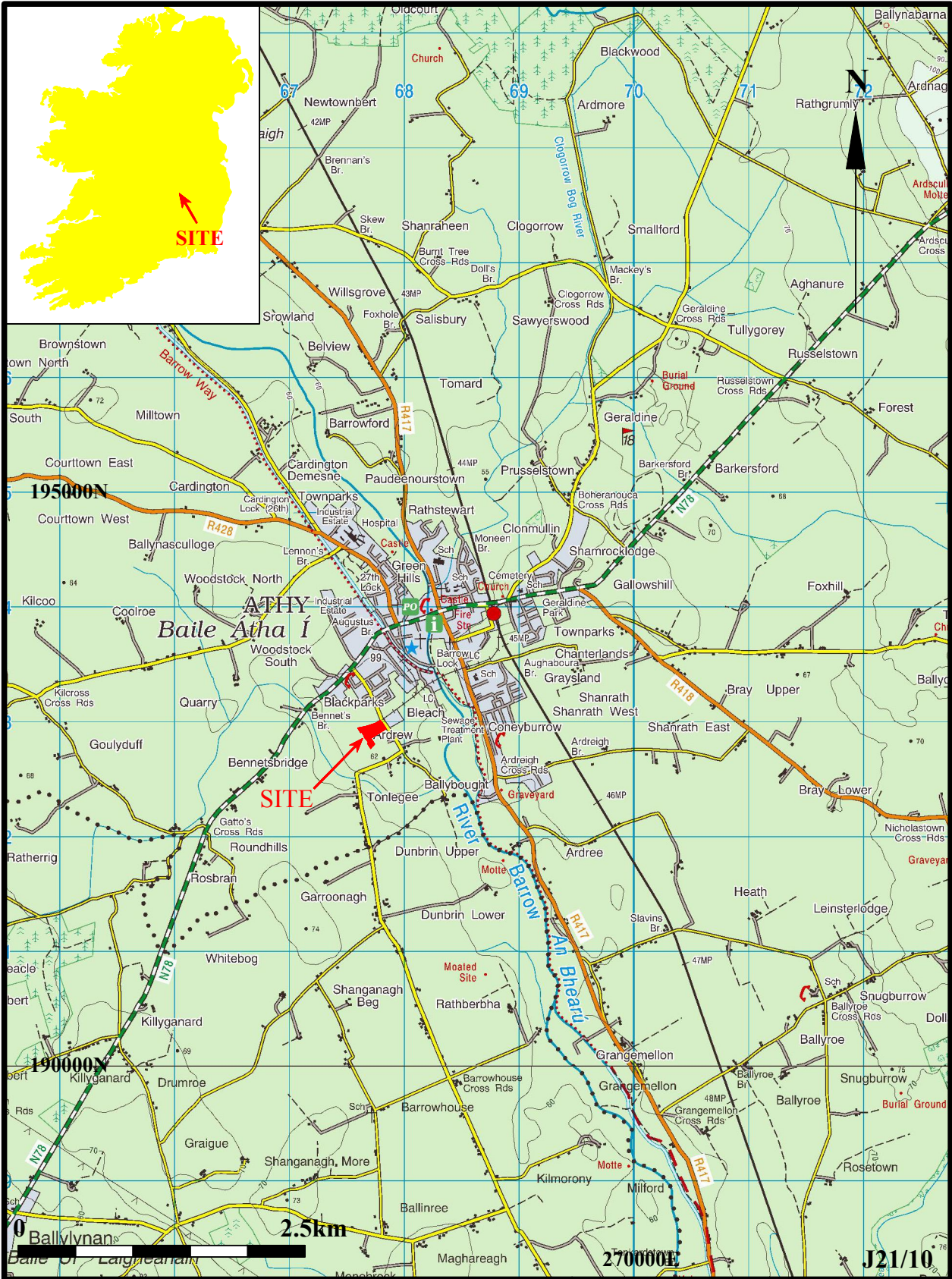
www.excavations.ie

www.logainm.ie

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (m ²)	Depth (m)	Comments
1	52.50	1.80	94.50	0.25	Topsoil 0.25m. Agricultural furrows and modern refuse in topsoil (50).
2	50.50	1.80	90.90	0.30	Topsoil 0.30. Remains of previous development.
3	50.75	1.80	91.35	0.40-0.70	Topsoil 0.40-0.70m. Remains of previous development.
4	24.50	1.80	44.10	0.20-0.45	Topsoil 0.20-0.45m. Remains of articulated animal skeleton.
5	50.00	1.80	90.00	0.30-0.80	Topsoil 0.30-0.80m. Natural contains shiny black mineral deposits. Agricultural furrows.
6	51.00	1.80	91.80	0.50	Topsoil 0.50m. Agricultural furrows.
7	48.00	1.80	86.40	0.35	Topsoil 0.35m. Former field boundary.
8	53.20	1.80	95.76	0.30	Topsoil 0.30m. Agricultural furrows.
9	50.50	1.80	90.90	0.35	Topsoil 0.35m. Former field boundary.
10	51.00	1.80	91.80	0.40	Topsoil 0.40m. Agricultural furrows.
11	49.50	1.80	89.10	0.32	Topsoil 0.32m. Former field boundary and agricultural furrows.
12	43.00	1.80	77.40	0.40	Topsoil 0.40m. Agricultural furrows.
13	49.00	1.80	88.20	0.80	Topsoil 0.80m. Agricultural furrows. Natural deposits contain shiny black mineral deposits
14	50.50	1.80	90.90	0.50-0.80	Topsoil 0.50-0.80m. Agricultural furrows. Natural deposits contain shiny black mineral deposits

NB Depths are from current ground surface

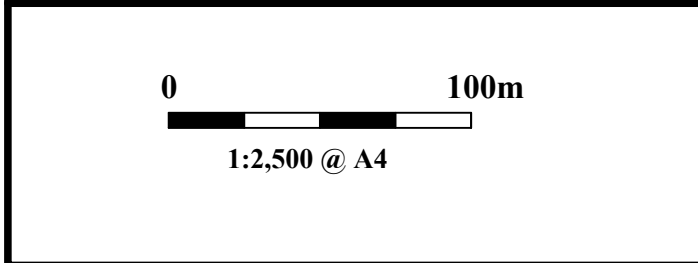
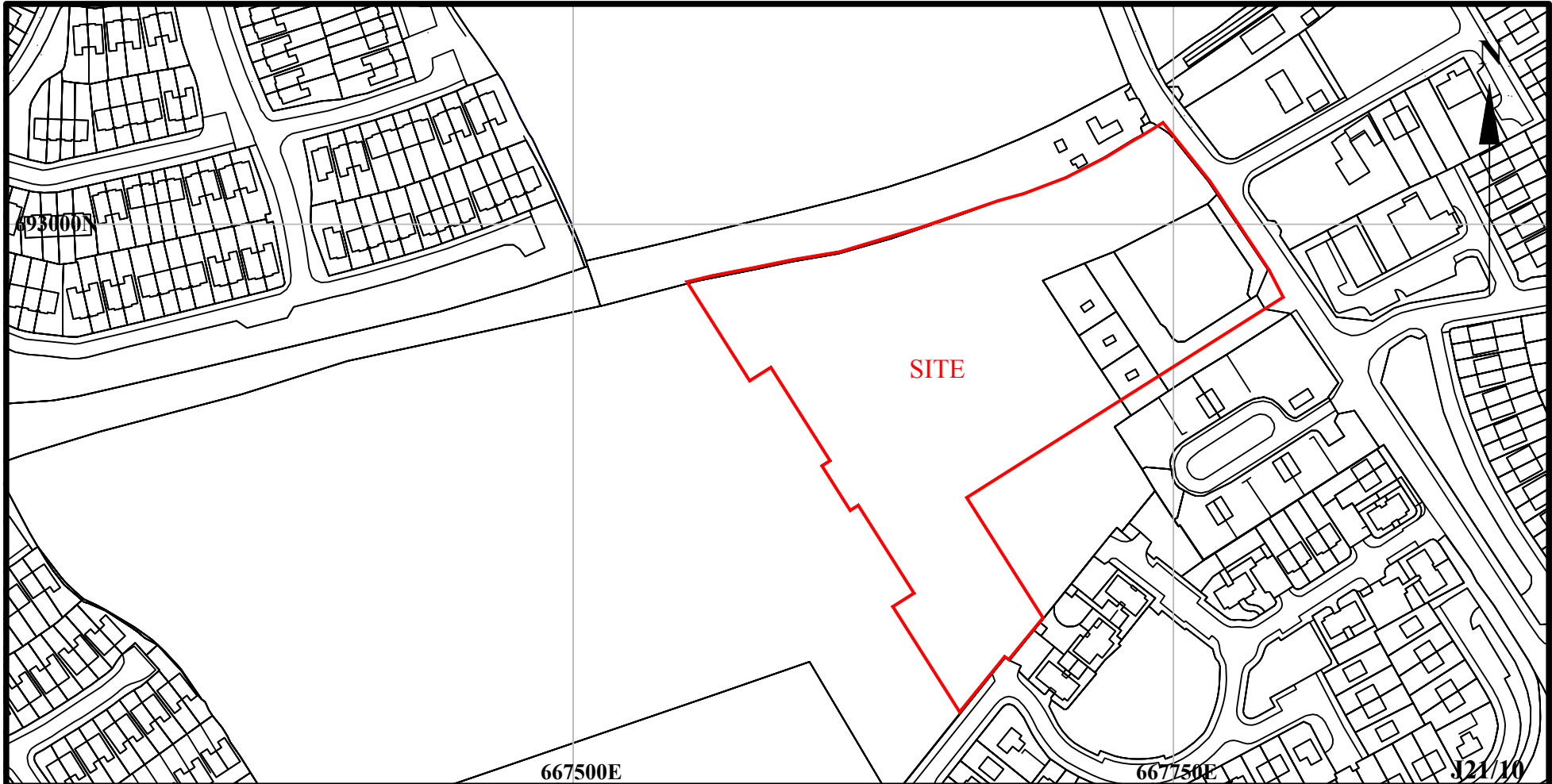


Athy, Co. Kildare
21E0268

Figure 1: Site location

Scale 1:50,000 @ A4. Grid NGR
 Based on Ordnance Survey Discovery Series 1:50,000
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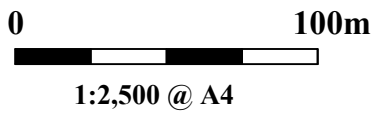
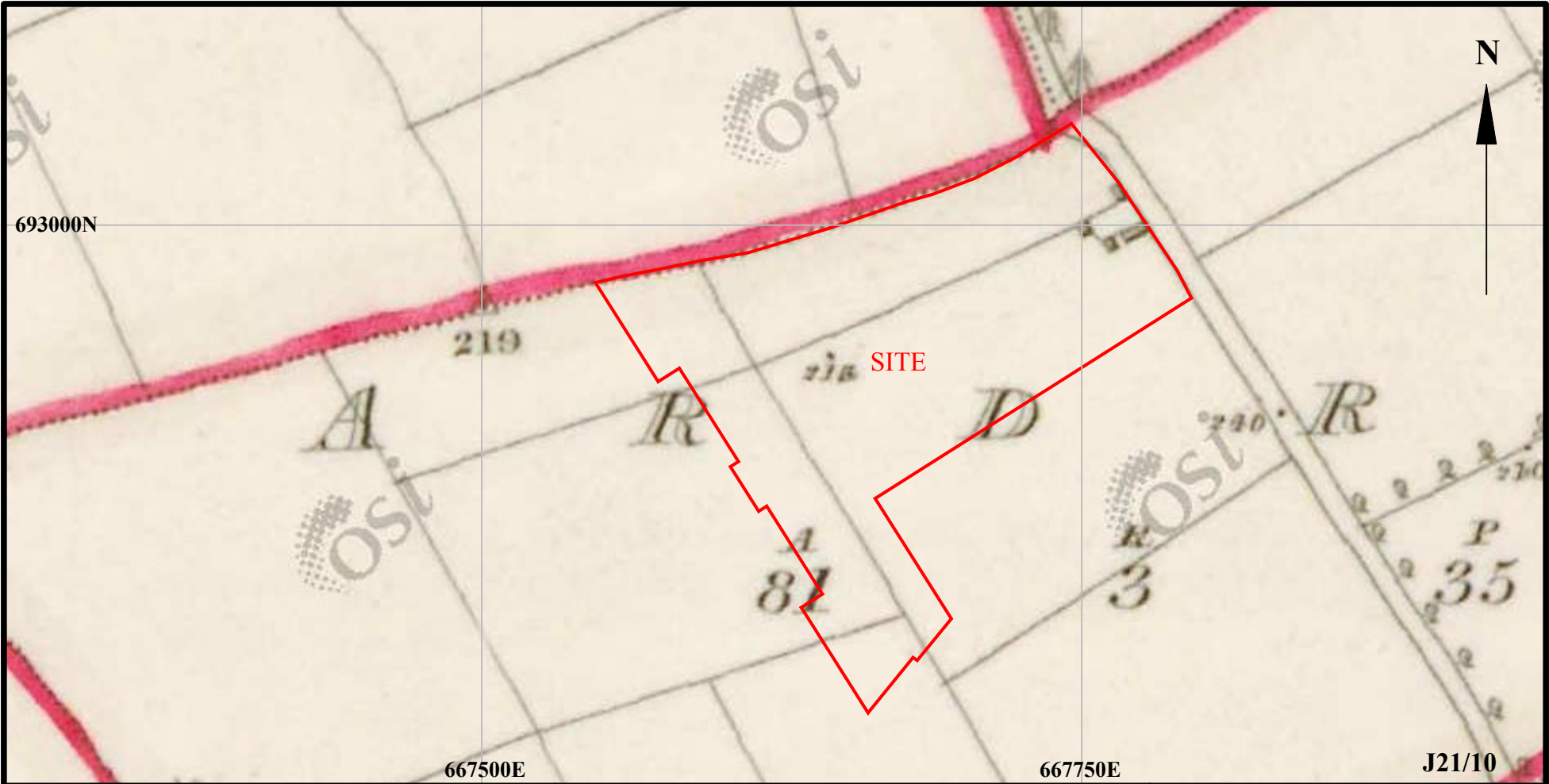


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Figure 2: Existing site layout

Grid ITM
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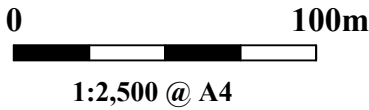
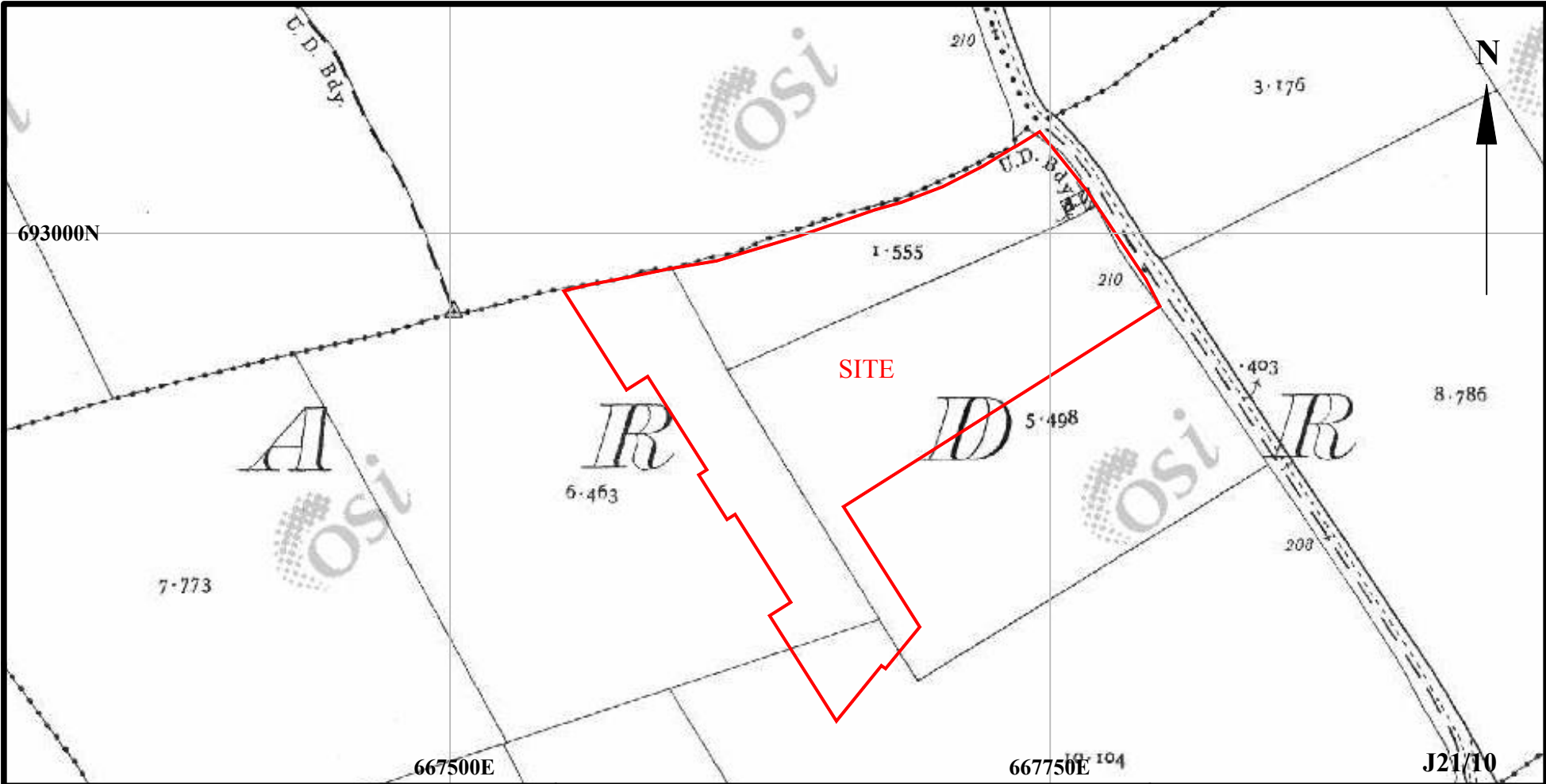


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Figure 3: Site on Ordnance Survey 1838 map

Grid ITM
Based on Ordnance Survey 1st edition map 6" to 1 mile, sheet KE035
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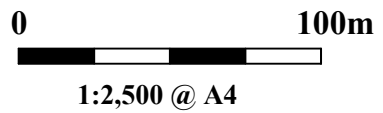
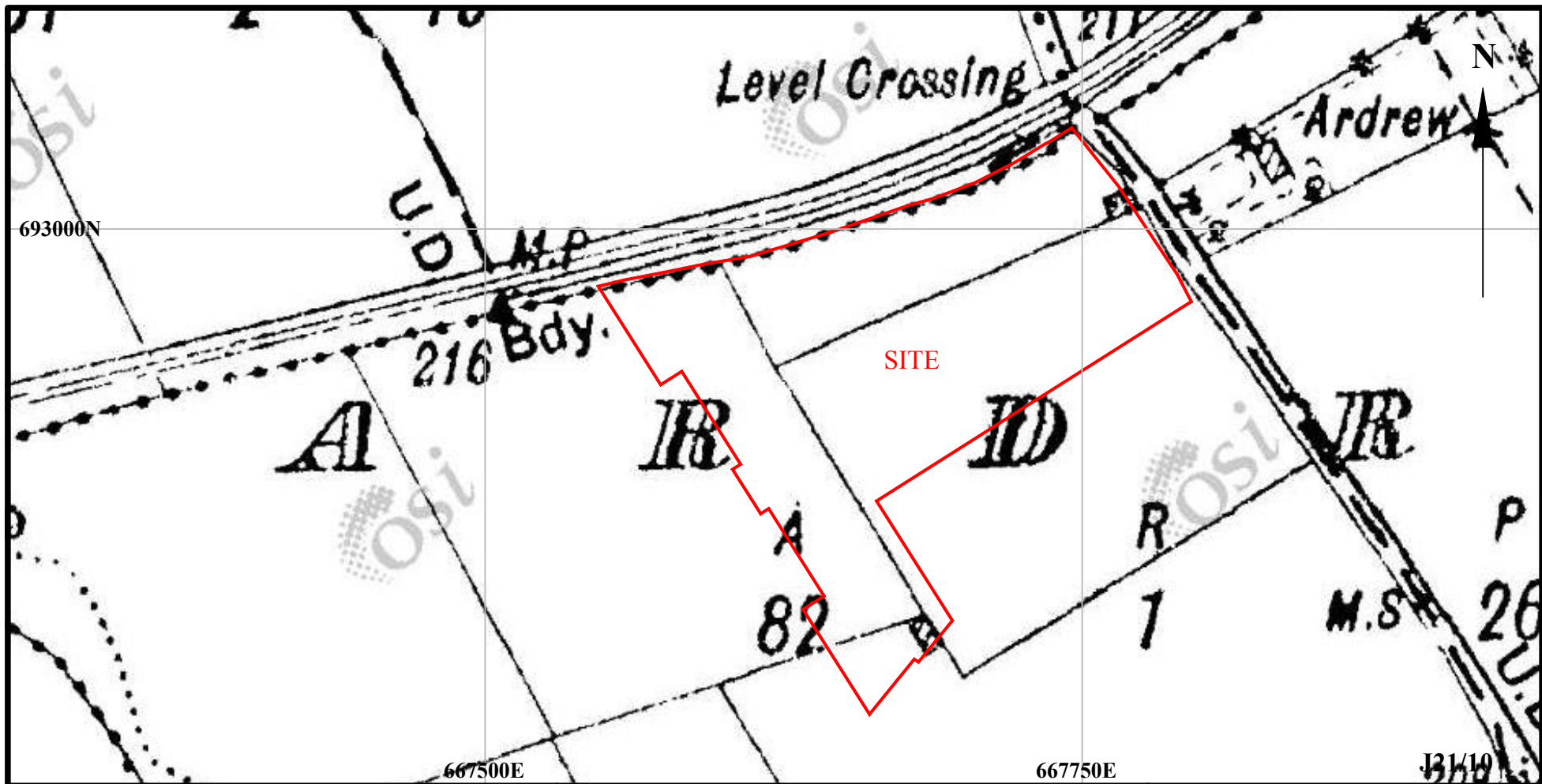


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Figure 3: Site on Ordnance Survey 1907 map

Grid ITM
Based on Ordnance Survey 25" to 1 mile, sheet KE035-13
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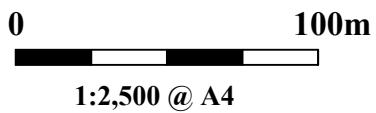


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Figure 5: Site on Ordnance Survey 1943 map

Grid ITM
Based on Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile, sheet KE035. Revised 1939.
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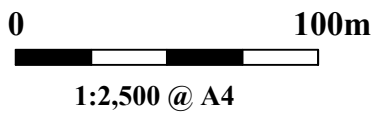


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Figure 6: Site on aerial photograph April 2009

Grid ITM
Based on Google Earth Pro image
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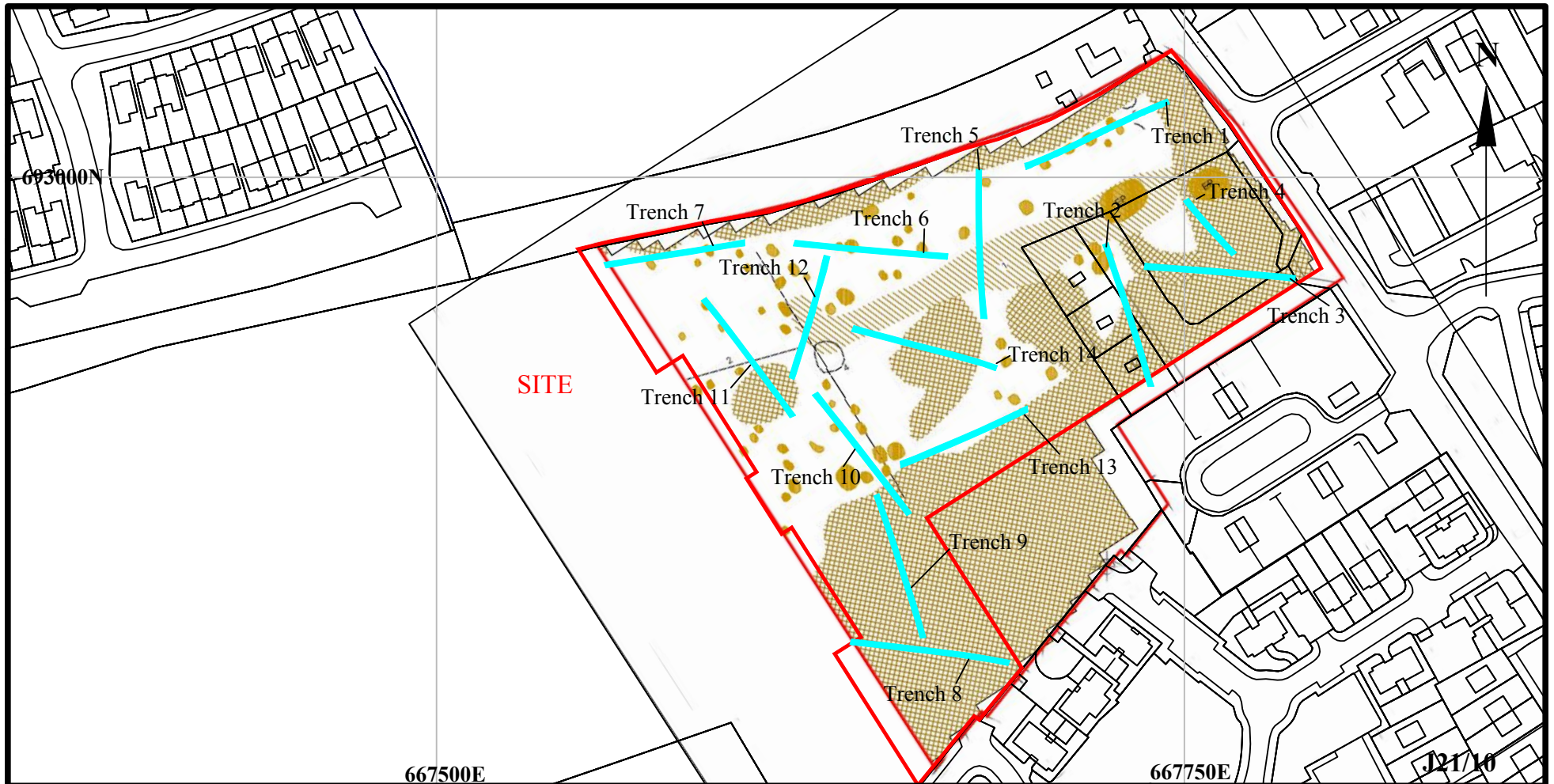


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Figure 7: Site on aerial photograph July 2019

Grid ITM
Based on Google Earth Pro image
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667500E

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Figure 8: Geophysical survey summary interpretation diagram with trench layout

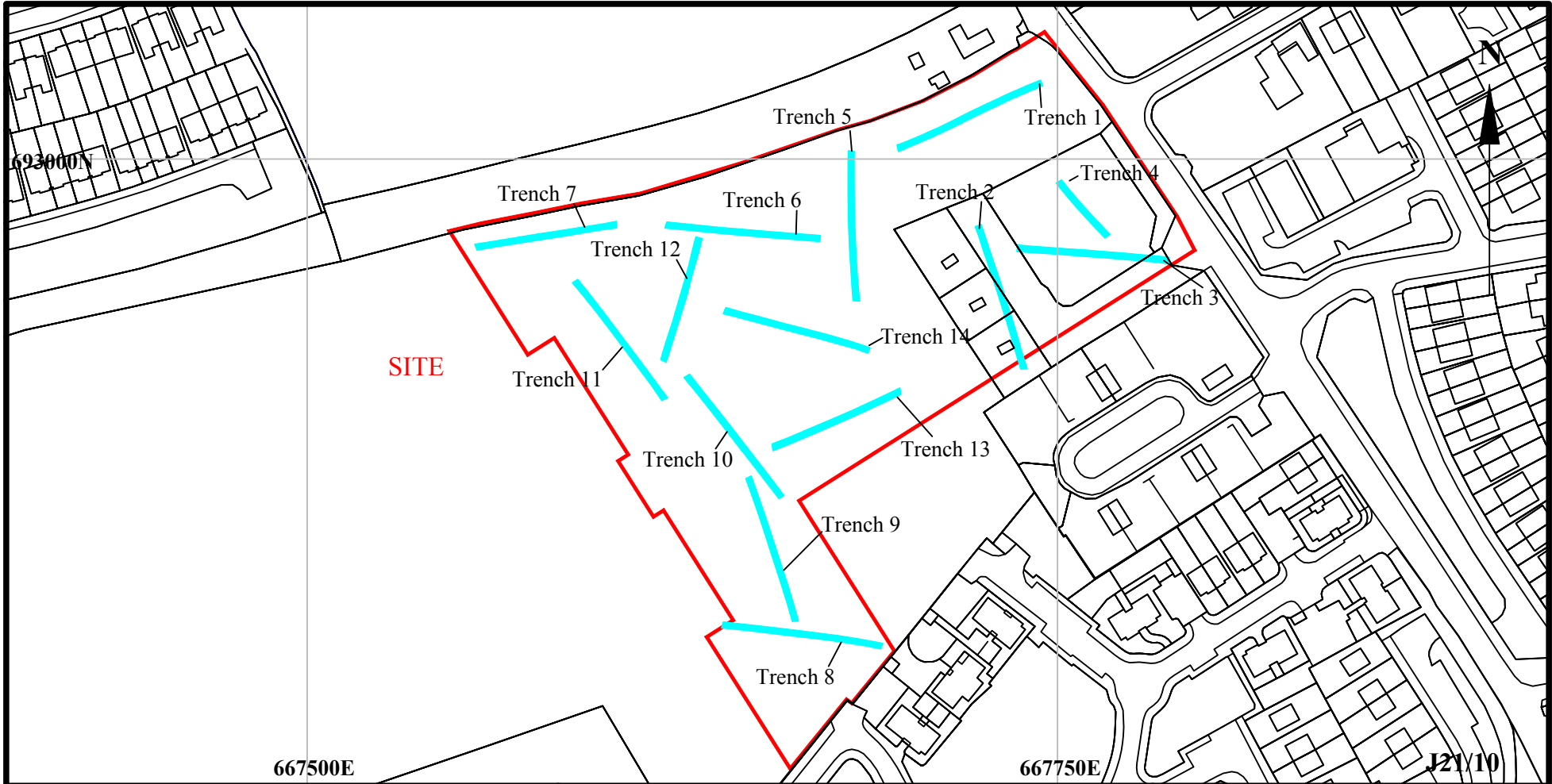
Grid ITM

Based on Ordnance Survey Ireland digital mapping provided by client

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Geophysical survey data from Leigh 2021

T V A S
I R E L A N D
L T D



SITE

667500E

667750E

J21/10



1:2,000 @ A4

Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare
21E0268

Figure 9: Trench layout

Grid ITM
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**Plate 1: Trench 1. Looking south-west.
Scales 1m & 1m**



**Plate 2: View of site from south-west
corner. Looking north.
Scales 1m & 1m**



**Plate 3: Trench 2, with gravel from
previous development. Looking
north-west. Scales 1m & 1m**



**Plate 4: Trench 3, with gravel from
previous development.
Looking west. Scales 1m & 1m**



**Plate 5: Trench 4. Looking south-east.
Scales 1m & 1m**



**Plate 6: Trench 4, view towards road.
Looking south-east.
Scales 1m & 1m**

J21/10

**Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare
21E0268**

Plates 1-6

**T V A S
I R E L A N D
L T D**



Plate 7: Trench 6, agricultural furrows visible. Looking west. Scales 1m & 1m



Plate 8: Trench 9, agricultural furrow visible. Looking south-west. Scales 1m & 1m



Plate 9: Trench 7, former field boundary. Looking west. Scales 1m & 1m



Plate 10: Trench 7, former field boundary. Looking west. Scales 1m & 1m



Plate 11: Trench 11, former field boundary. Looking north-west. Scales 1m & 1m



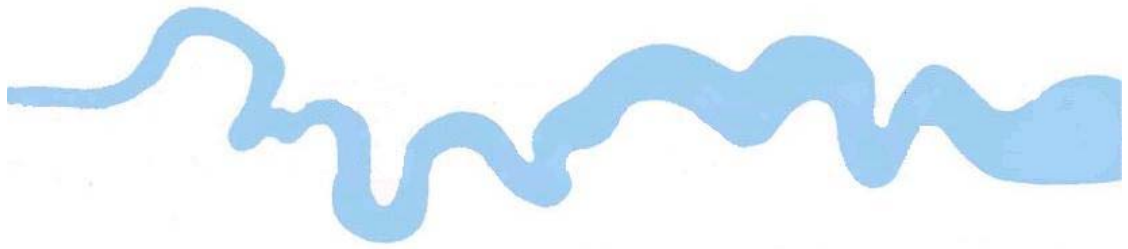
Plate 12: Trench 12, former field boundary. Looking south-west. Scales 1m & 1m

J21/10

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21E0268**

Plates 7-12

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