

Appendix 13.3

Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Archaeological Assessment
Phase II.

Client: Steinfort Investments Fund

Licence No: 20E0343

Archaeologist: Liam Coen

Author: Liam Coen

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Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

SITE NAME	Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
CLIENT	Steinfort Investments Fund
INVESTIGATION TYPE	Archaeological Assessment
LICENCE NO	20E0343
PLANNING REF	N/A
TOWNLAND	Clonminch
IRISH TRANSVERSE MERCATOR	634898, 723333
RMP NO	N/A
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANT	Archer Heritage Planning Ltd.
ARCHAEOLOGIST	Liam Coen
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SUMMARY

This archaeological assessment report undertaken in advance of a proposed Strategic Housing Development at Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly (ITM 634898, 723333) has been prepared by Archer Heritage Planning Ltd for Steinfert Investments Fund. The site has been subject to previous archaeological assessments consisting of a desk based study and field survey, geophysical survey and Phase I test excavation. Following completion of Phase I test excavations, the application boundary was extended to the east and north, encompassing areas not previously assessed by geophysical survey or test excavation. The current report details the results of Phase II test excavations across these additional areas. The work was undertaken in July 2020 under licence (20E0343) issued to Liam Coen by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. A single archaeological site was recorded in the course of test excavation. This was a ploughed-out *fulacht fia* (burnt spread) located at the east of the site in Trenches 7-8a (Figure 6-7; Plates 1-2). Within the tested area it had overall dimensions of 7m N/S x 9m E/W.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Should development proceed at this location, it is recommended that full excavation of the burnt spread discovered during the course of Phase II archaeological pre-development testing be fully recorded and excavated under licence to the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Should development proceed at this location, it is recommended that groundworks across the remainder of the site be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

NOTE: All conclusions and recommendations expressed in this report are subject to the approval of The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) and the relevant local authorities. As the statutory body responsible for the protection of Ireland's archaeological and cultural heritage resource, the DCHG may issue alternative or additional recommendations.

Revision	Status	Date	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Issued by
1	Final	17 July 2020	LC (Archer)	AOC (Archer)	CMG

1. INTRODUCTION

The following report has been prepared by Archer Heritage Planning Ltd for Steinfert Investments Fund. It details the results of Phase II test excavations undertaken at Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly (Figure 1). The site has been subject to previous archaeological assessments consisting of a desk based study and field survey (Coen 2019), geophysical survey (Leigh 2019) and Phase I test excavation (O'Connell 2019). Following completion of Phase I test excavations, the application boundary was extended to the east and north, encompassing areas not previously assessed by geophysical survey or test excavation. The current report details the results of test excavations across these additional areas. The work was undertaken in July 2020 under licence (20E0343) issued to Liam Coen by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland.

1.1 Proposed Development

The proposed development will consist of the provision of 344 residential units (212 x houses and 132 x apartments), a crèche and all associated site works (Figure 2). The site will be the subject of a planning application under the Strategic Housing Development process.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

This site is on the south-eastern outskirts of the town of Tullamore, Co. Offaly (Figure 1). It is bounded along the north-east by the Dublin-Galway railway line; along the east by the N52 road; along the south-west by the R443 road; and along the north-west by a series of housing estates at Gayfield. The site is predominantly agricultural land in a mixture of arable and pasture with a cluster of domestic houses along the R443 road. The landscape is gently undulating with mature hedgerows comprising the field boundaries.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Brief archaeological & historical background

The site lies less than 1.5km south-east of the centre of Tullamore. Tullamore lies in the ancient district of *Fear Ceall*, translating as 'men of the woods' or 'men of the churches' and, in the Early Medieval period there were monastic centres in the wider area, including Durrow, Clonmacnoise, Birr and Lynally (Byrne 1995). The parish originally formed part of the lands of the abbey of Durrow prior to the Dissolution of 1534 (Lewis 1837). The district was acquired by the Moore family in 1620, although the family continued to reside at Croghan Castle until the early 1700's. It was around this time that they secured a barrack to house 100 foot soldiers in 1716, which provided the impetus for expansion of the town. Following the death of Charles Moore, 1st Earl of Charleville in 1764, his estates including the

lands at Tullamore passed to his the Bury family, who oversaw the development of the town including the attainment of County town status in 1833, replacing Daingean. The Grand Canal linked Tullamore to Dublin in 1798 and the county jail was built in 1826, followed by the courthouse in 1835. The earldom of Charleville was extinguished in 1874 and thereafter, merchants and farmers came to prominence with malting, distilling, stone quarrying and distribution as the main sources of employment in the area (Byrne 1995).

3.2 Summary of Desktop assessment

Previous archaeological desktop assessment (Coen 2019) and test excavation (O'Connell 2019) has been undertaken across the site. Full details of the recorded background baseline data for the site is contained within these reports and is not reproduced in full here. However, the following factors were identified in the course of desktop assessment (see Figure 3):

- The site is large in scale occupying an area of roughly 14.39 Ha.
- There are no recorded monuments situated within the site boundaries.
- No new potential archaeological sites were noted on examination of aerial photo and cartographic sources within the subject site.
- A potential enclosure was identified c. 250m to the east of the subject site.
- There are no Protected Structures within or adjacent to the site.
- No archaeological excavations have been undertaken previously within the subject site.
- Previous excavations in the wider landscape have uncovered small-scale isolated archaeological sites at Clonminch 1 & Cloncollog 2.

3.3 Geophysical Survey

Geophysical survey was undertaken across the site under detection device consent 19R0209 issued to J Leigh by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Leigh 2019; see Figure 4). Some responses of potential interest were recorded in the northern half of the application area. A small area indicative of a burnt spread of material was located towards the northwest of the subject site (1) and is of potential interest. Several linear responses and trends forming a vague rectilinear pattern were also recorded. Although it is possible these may represent former field divisions, it is also possible that they represent archaeological ditch-type features. An archaeological interpretation must be considered. Further linear responses and trends within the data most likely represent former field divisions and are considered most likely agricultural in origin. Modern magnetic disturbance in the south-eastern field results from modern material that has been ploughed through the field. Although former field divisions are discernible in the magnetic disturbance, more subtle responses of potential interest may be masked and remain undetected.

3.4 Phase I Test Excavation

Test excavation was undertaken within a large part of the subject site in October 2019 in mixed weather conditions (O'Connell 2019). A total of 43 test trenches with a combined length of 4135 linear metres were excavated within the site (8% of the available area, 92447 sq m; see Figure 4). Three areas of the site were not subject to Geophysical survey or Phase I Test Excavations. These were the northern boundary of the site, the area for the provision of piped services/pumping station running northwards from the site and a portion of land to the NE of the site. These areas comprised approximately 2ha and were assessed during the Phase II excavations.

Test trench locations were agreed in advance with the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. The fieldwork was carried out under licence 19E0658 issued to Aidan O'Connell. Trenching sought to test geophysical anomalies and the general archaeological potential of the site. All test trenches were excavated with the aid of a 14 tonne mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Trenches were excavated as far as the upper subsoil surface or the top of the upper archaeological horizon. Trenches were backfilled following completion of archaeological works.

A single archaeological site was recorded in the course of test excavation. This was a ploughed-out *fulacht fia* located at the northwest of the site in Trenches 1-3, which was initially identified in the preceding geophysical survey. Within the tested area it had overall dimensions of 15m N/S by 10m E/W, but extended to the east under an overhead powerline which hampered further trenching beyond the eastern side of Trench 1. There were six separate features associated with the *fulacht fia*:

- F1 was an area of burnt mound material located in Trench 1. It had dimensions of 10.5m N/S x 2.7m E/W and extended beyond both sides of Trench 1.
- F2 was an area of burnt mound material located at the intersection of Trench 2 and Trench 3. It had dimensions of 4.7m E/W x 1.9m N/S and may mark the location of one or more pits or troughs.
- F3 was the remains of a possible pit located towards the south of Trench 2. It comprised an area of mid-brown peaty silty clay with dimensions of 3.7m N/S x 1.8m E/W. It was cut at the north by a modern land drain.
- F4 was a possible pit or trough filled with burnt mound material located in Trench 2 with dimensions of 2.9m N/S x 1.8m E/W.
- F5 was the possible remains of a pit located at the north of Trench 2. It comprised an area of mid-brown peaty silty clay with dimensions of 3.7m N/S x 1.8m E/W.
- F6 was a thin spread of charcoal enriched staining on the subsoil surface in Trench 3 with dimensions of 2m E/W x 1.7m N/S.

A final potential archaeological feature (F7) was recorded towards the western end of Trench 3 and consisted of a mid-brown peaty silty clay with dimensions of 2.7m E/W x 1.8m N/S. This may be the remains of a pit, cut on its eastern side by a modern land drain. Further geophysical anomalies throughout the remainder of the site were interpreted as variations in the underlying geology with the exception of a field boundary ditch recorded in Trenches 33-37. No further archaeological features were recorded.

4. PHASE II TEST EXCAVATION

4.1 Methodology

Test excavation was undertaken 13 July 2020 in dry overcast conditions. A total of 9 test trenches with a combined length of 566 linear metres were excavated within the site. Trenches were targeted on the footprint of the proposed development at locations agreed in advance with the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. There were 3 variations to the agreed trench layout (Figure 6-7). Two trenches at the north of the site were not accessible at the time of the assessment due to the location of a standing crop. A third trench at the east of the site was unexcavated to reduce damage to the planted crop. Finally, an additional trench (T8a) was excavated in order to better assess the location and extent of a burnt spread recorded in the course of the assessment. All trenches located within the footprint of proposed buildings were excavated and assessed.

All test trenches were excavated with the aid of a 14 tonne mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Trenches were excavated as far as the upper subsoil surface or the top of the upper archaeological horizon. Trenches were backfilled following completion of archaeological works.

4.2 Results

A single archaeological site was recorded in the course of test excavation. This was a ploughed-out *fulacht fia* (burnt spread) located at the east of the site in Trenches 7-8a (Figure 6-7; Plates 1-2). Within the tested area it had overall dimensions of 7m N/S x 9m E/W. It consisted of a thin spread of charcoal enriched silty clay with frequent burnt stone inclusions. This is a distinct form of Bronze Age monument known as *fulacht fia*, or simply burnt mound (in the Clonminch example, the mound has been effectively levelled). These are the most common form of prehistoric monument recorded in the country at large, and are regularly identified ahead of development. In general, a surviving *fulacht fiadh* will be characterised by a U-shaped or crescent-shaped mound of heat-fractured stones and charcoal inclusions, and is frequently associated with a hearth and a trough / pits, that may sometimes be lined

with stone, clay or wood. They were probably multi-function sites (bathing/ industrial/ cooking); the common activity at each however was the creation of hot water through the addition of heated rocks. Though not technically settlement sites, they are a good indication of contemporary settlement in the wider area. These sites reach their pinnacle of use in the middle Bronze Age between 1500-1000 BC (Brindley et al. 1989-90) but are identified across the Bronze Age period. As the Clonminch burnt spread was so thin, no further hand cleaning or hand excavation was undertaken in order to minimise damage to the site. No further archaeological features were noted in the course of the assessment. Details of the excavated trenches are provided below in Table 1 (Plates 2-8).

Trench	L x B x D (m)	Orientation	Description
1	45 x 1.8 x 0.43	E-W	No archaeology found
2	17 x 1.8 x 0.40	N-S	No archaeology found
3	17 x 1.8 x 0.37	N-S	No archaeology found
4	45 x 1.8 x 0.31	E-W	No archaeology found
5	50 x 1.8 x 0.33	WNW-ESE	No archaeology found
6	49 x 1.8 x 0.36	NE-SW	No archaeology found
7	21 x 1.8 x 0.38	N-S	F1; Burnt Spread
8	110 x 1.8 x 0.35	E-W	F1; Burnt Spread
8a	7 x 1.8 x 0.33	N-S	F1; Burnt Spread
9	205 x 1.8 x 0.41	NE-SW	No archaeology found

Table 1: Details of excavated test trenches.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1:

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6. REFERENCES

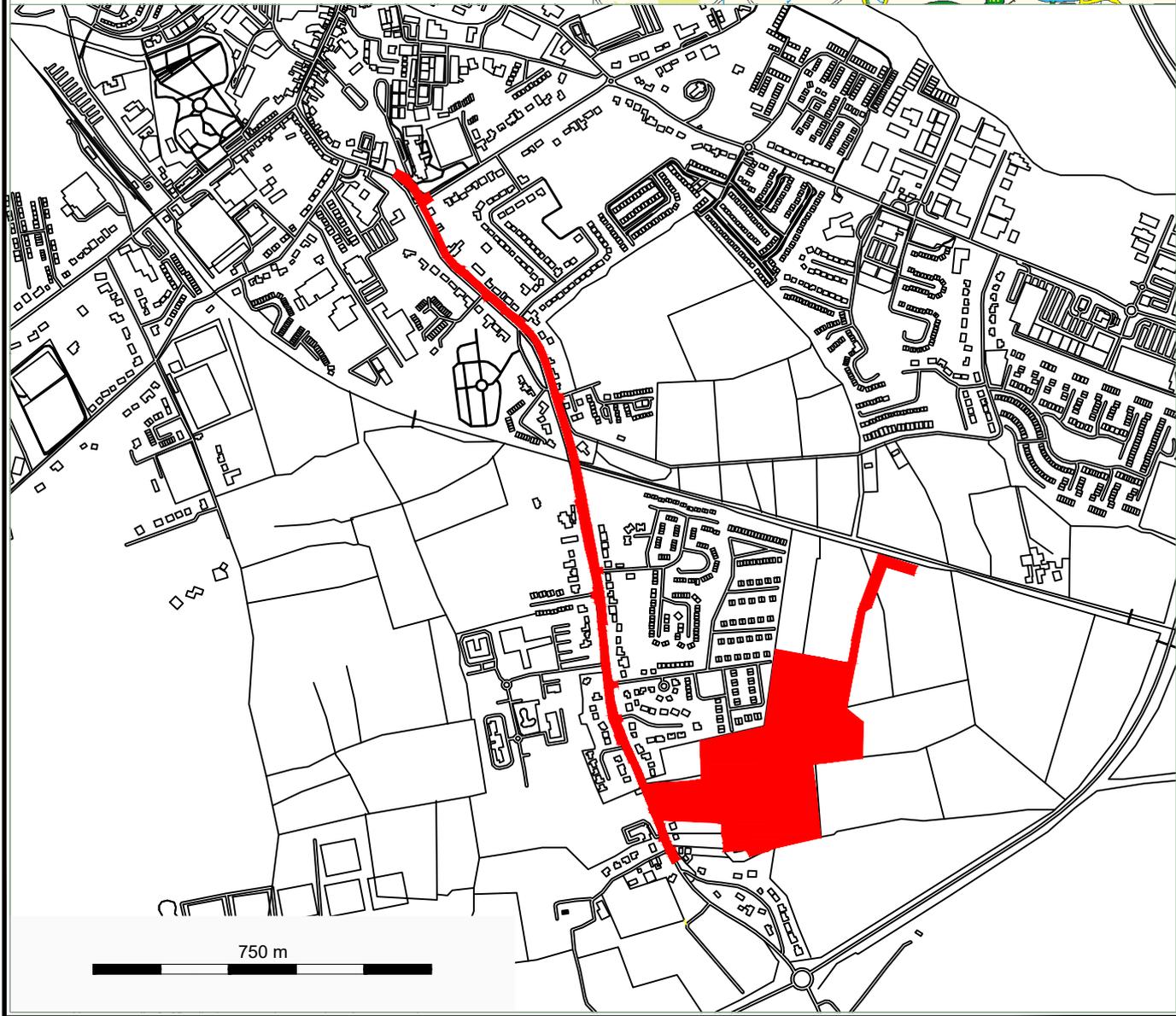
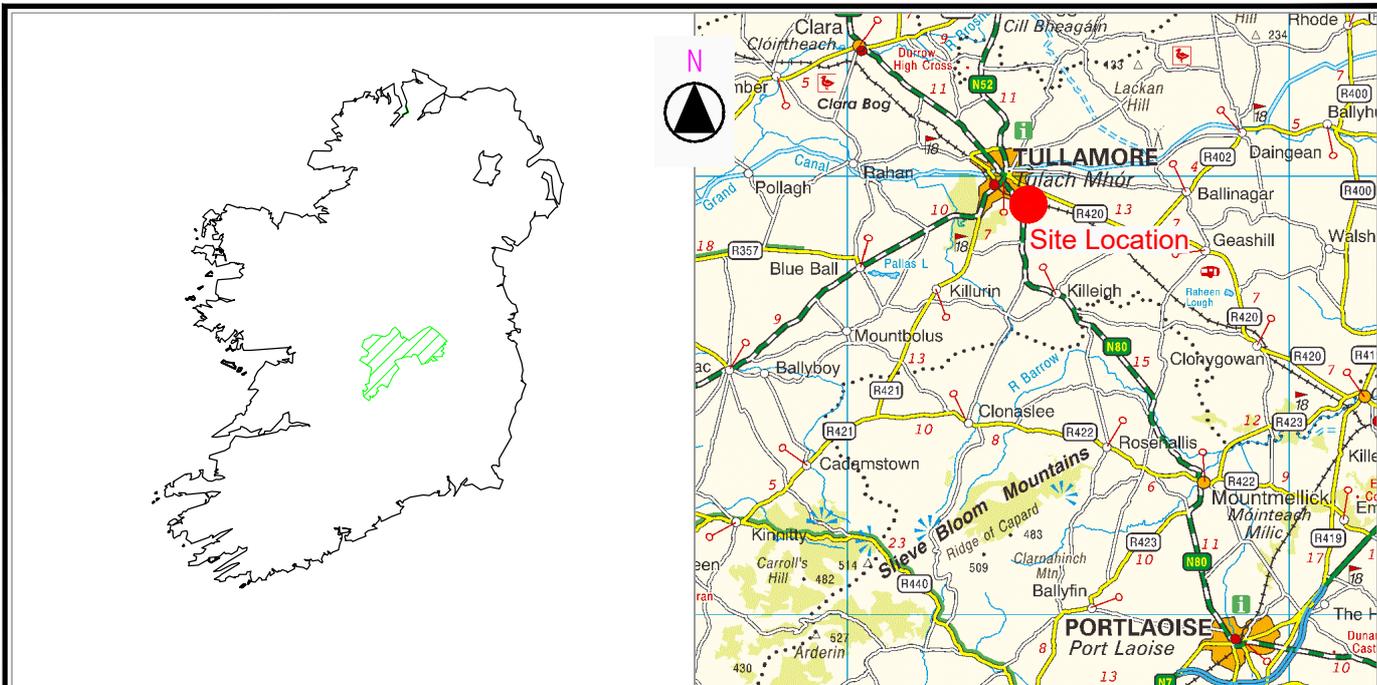
6.1 Bibliography

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Liam Coen

17 July 2020

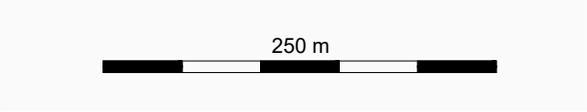
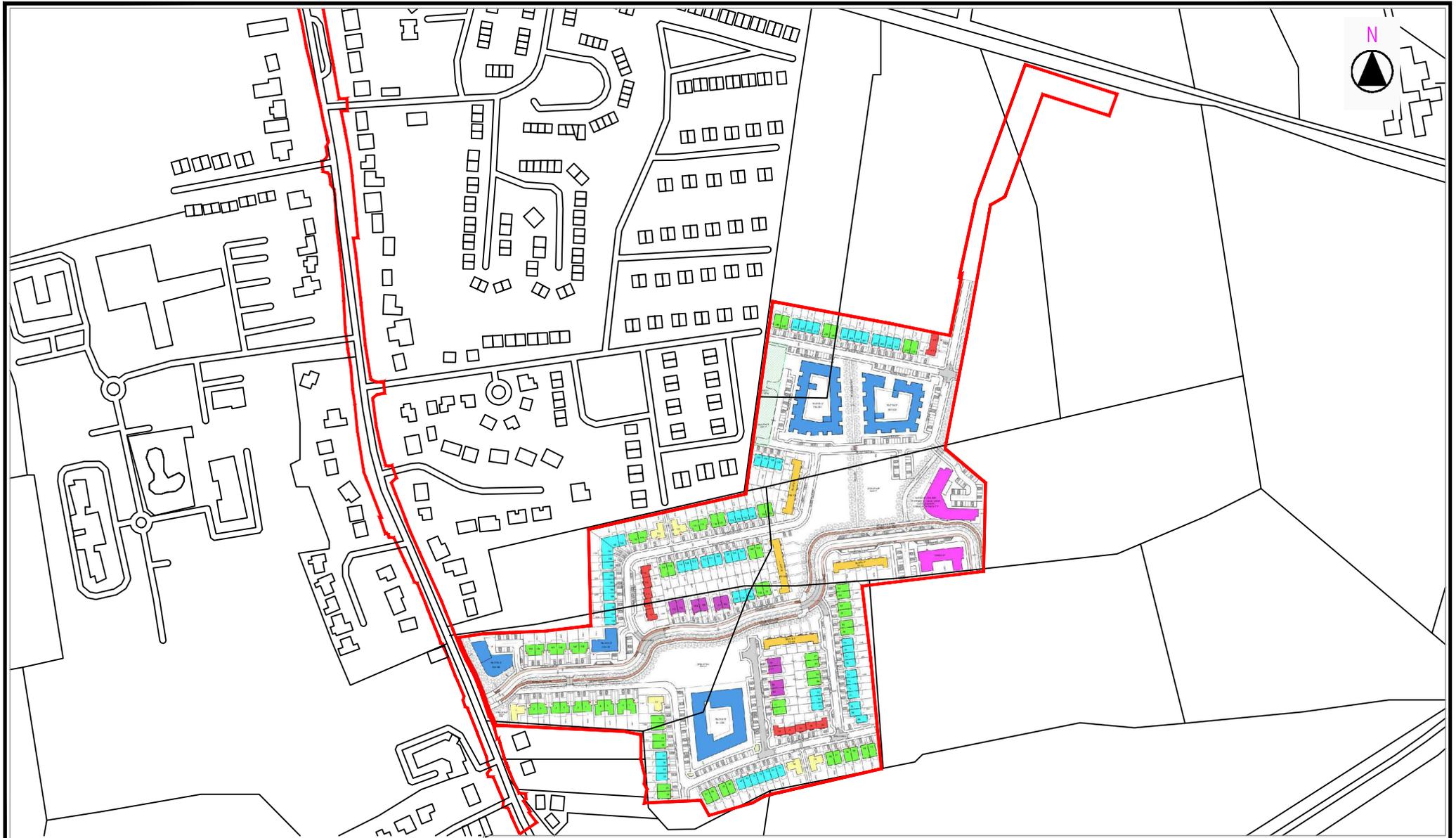


Unit 8 Beat Centre
 Stephenstown,
 Balbriggan,
 Co. Dublin

Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
 Phase II Test Trench Assessment

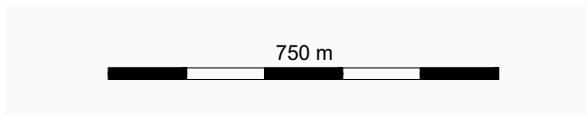
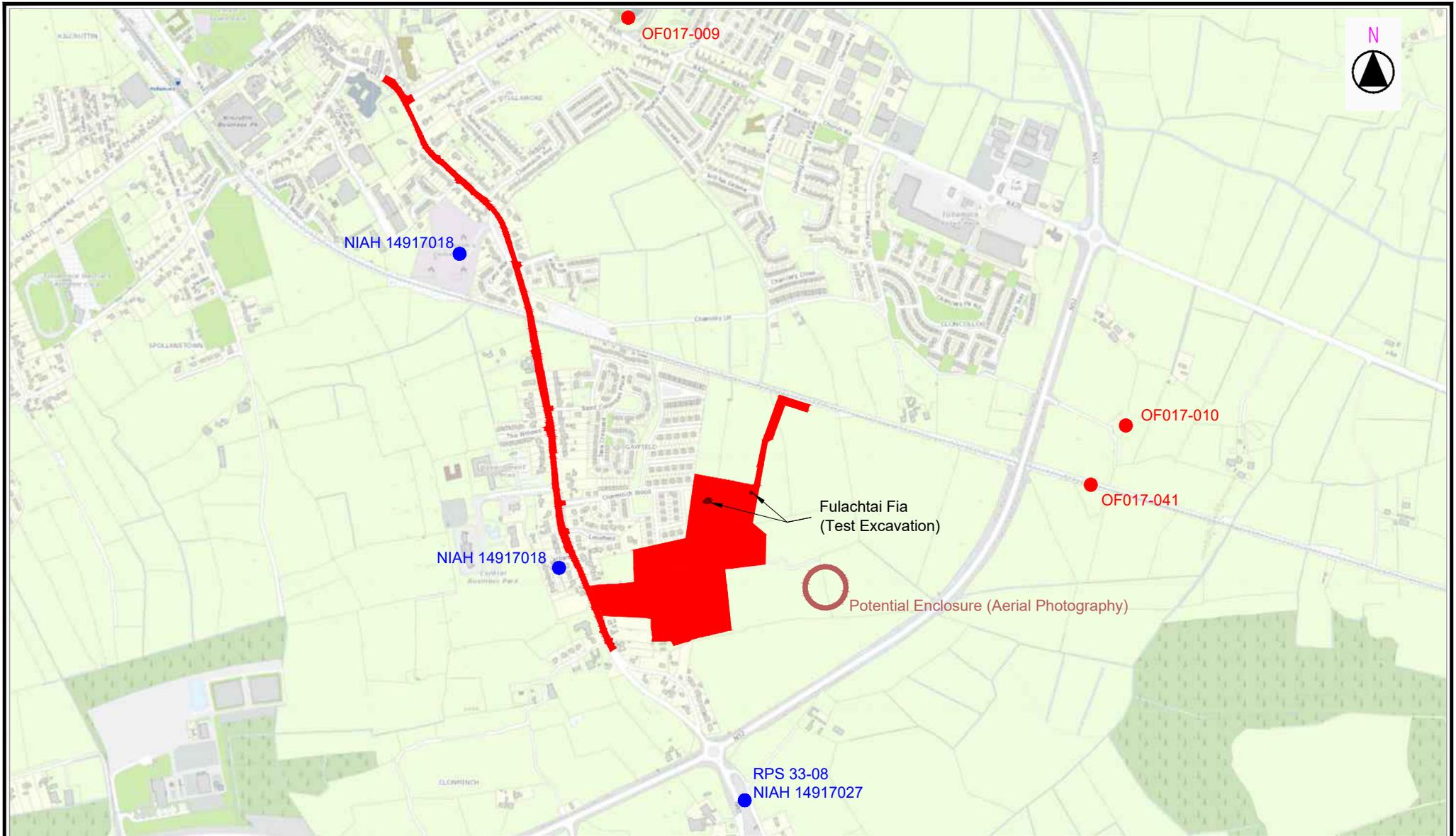
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 Origin: Client
 Ref: 2019_02_Ass(ii)_01

Figure 1: Site Location



	Unit 8 Beat Centre Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	Scale: 1:5000 A4
	Phase II Test Trench Assessment		Date: July 2020
			Origin: Client
			Ref: 2019_02_Ass(ii)_02

Figure 2: Proposed site layout



	Unit 8 Beat Centre Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	Scale: 1:15,000 A4
		Phase II Test Trench Assessment	Date: July 2020
			Origin: NMS
			Ref: 2019_02_Ass(ii)_03

Figure 3: Summary of archaeological constraints

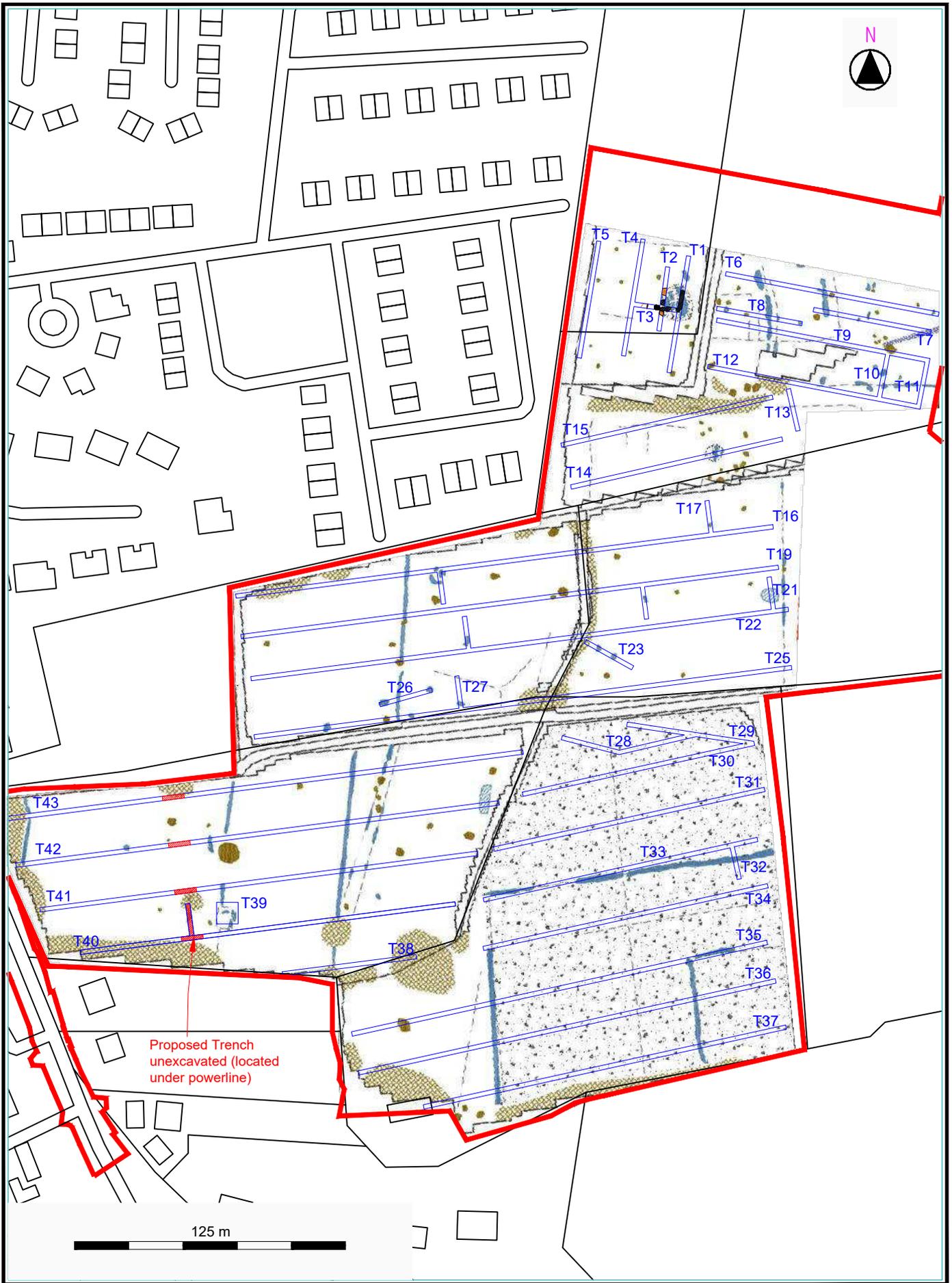


Figure 4 Results of Geophysical Survey and Phase I Test Excavation

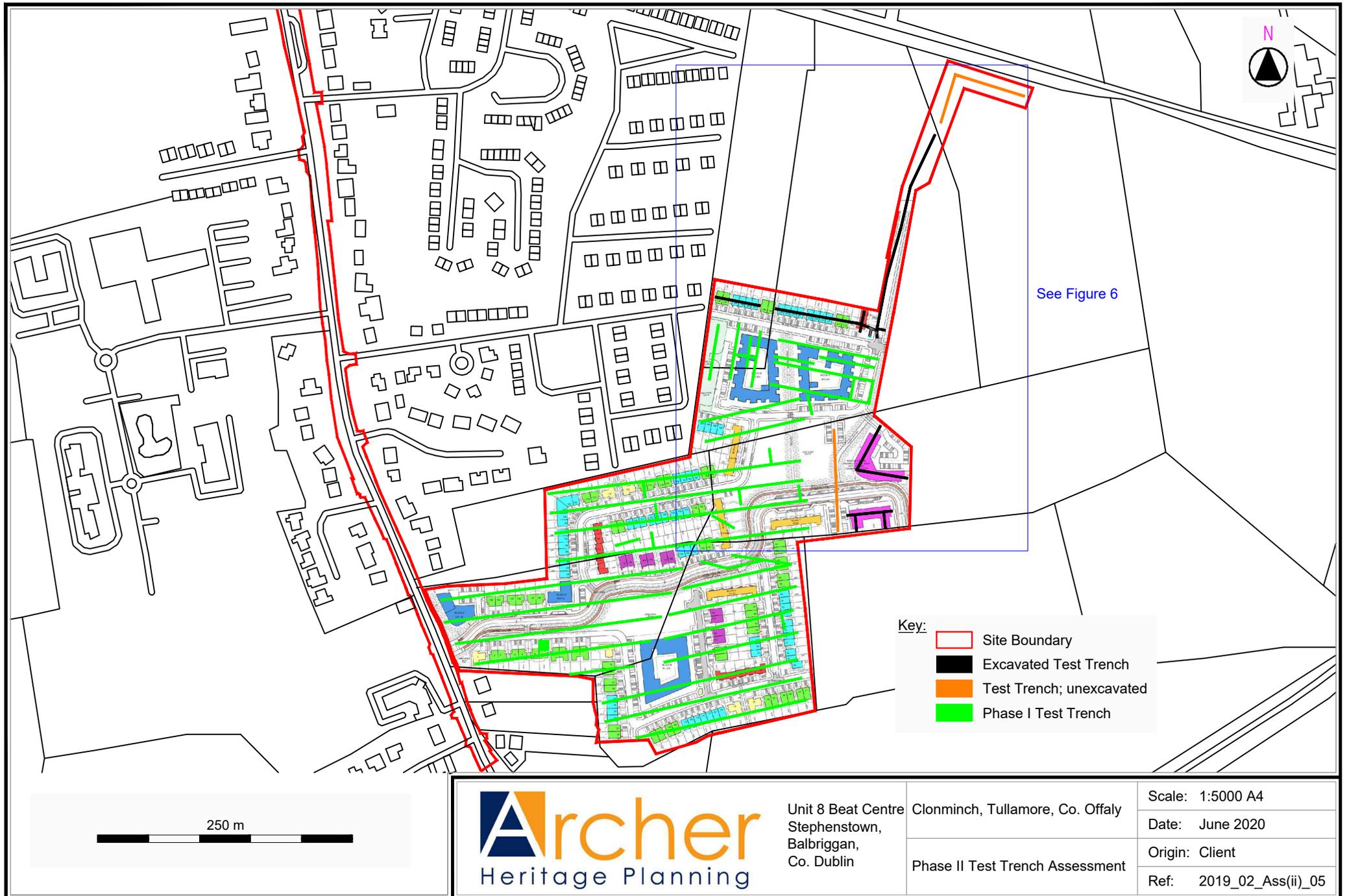
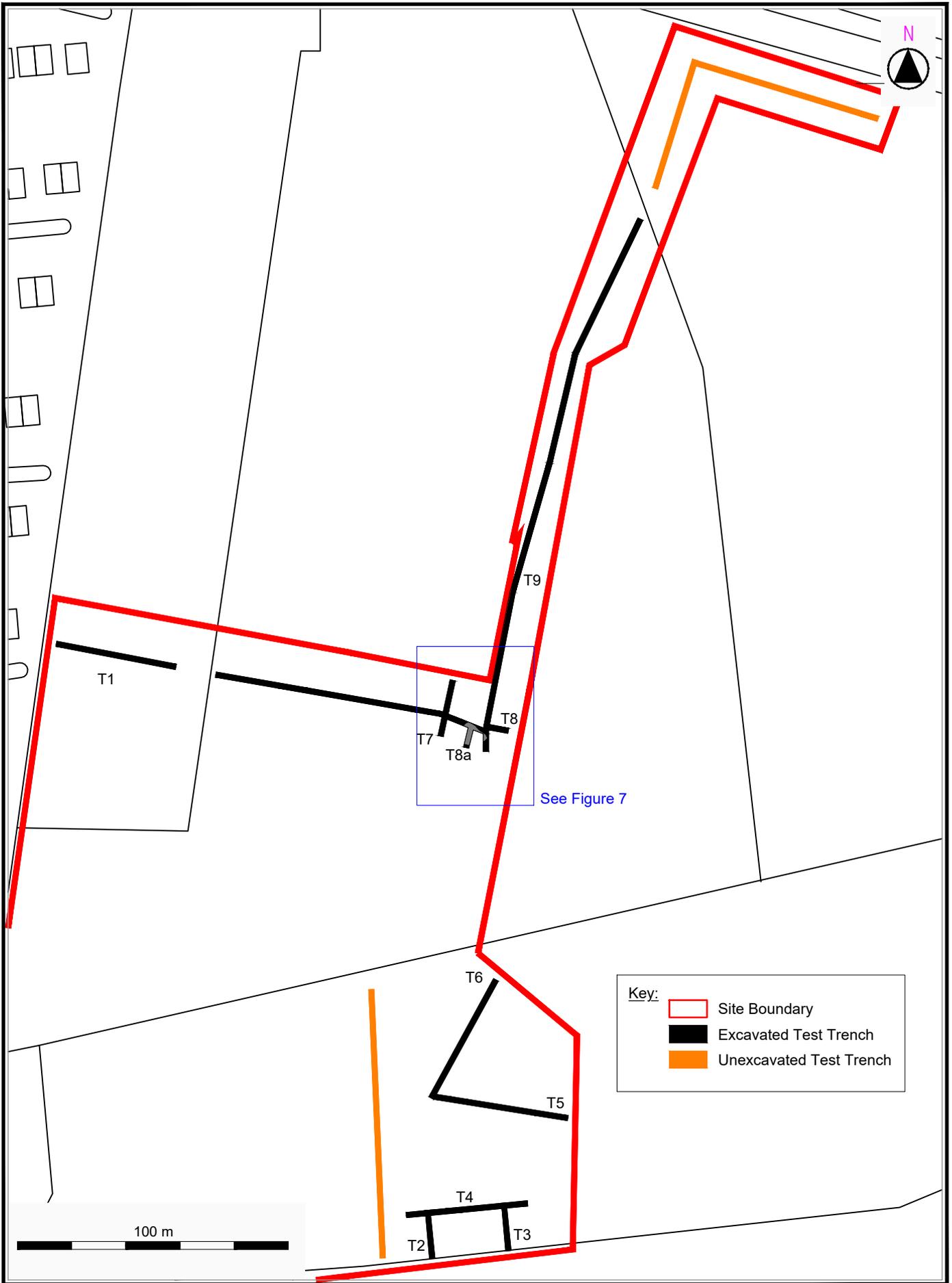


Figure 5: Proposed site layout with location of test trenches



	Unit 8 Beat Centre Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	Clonminch, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	Scale: 1:2000 A4
		Phase II Test Trench Assessment	Date: July 2020
			Origin: AHP & Client
			Ref: 2019_02_Ass(ii)_06

Figure 6: Location of Phase II Test Trenches

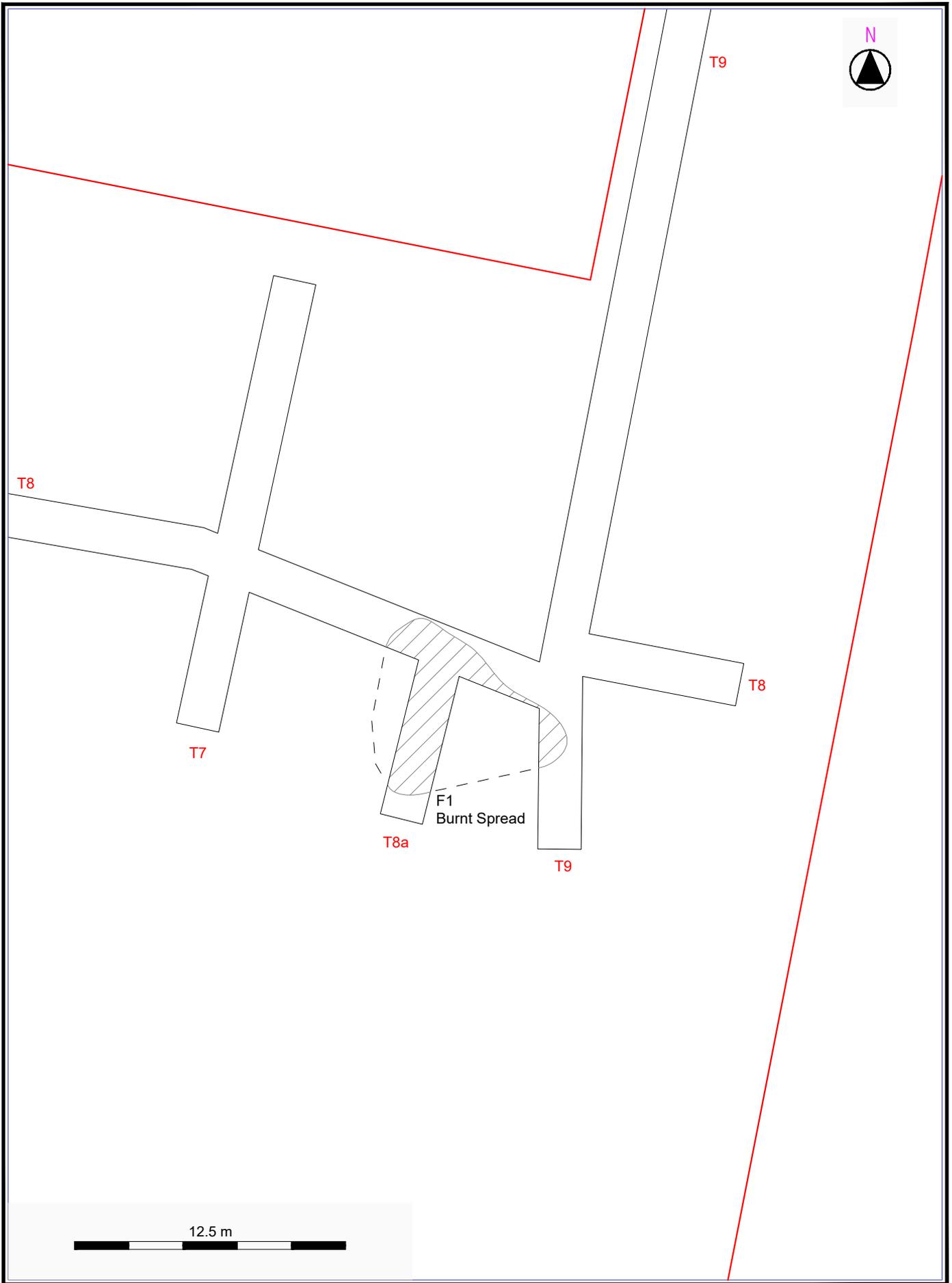


Figure 7: Detail of recorded burnt spread



Plate 1: F1, Trench 8 from west



Plate 2: F1; Trench 8a from north



Plate 3: F1, Trench 1 from east



Plate 4: Trench 2 from north



Plate 5: Trench 5 from west



Plate 6: Trench 7 from north



Plate 7: Trench 8 from west



Plate 8: Trench 9 from north