



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT:  
PROPOSED LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY  
PROJECT, MARSH'S STREET (THOMASTOWN  
TOWNLAND), THOMASTOWN, CO.  
KILKENNY**



**PLANNING REFERENCE:**  
PART VIII PLANNING REF 11-20

**CLIENT:**  
KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL, c/o KENNETH HENNESSY ARCHITECTS,  
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*02.10.2020*



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2.10.2020

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report details the results of an archaeological desk-top assessment in support of a Part VIII planning application by Kilkenny County Council to undertake renovation works within an existing Community Centre for use as a Library (including fit out) at Marsh's Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny (NGC 658342 641899; Figure 1). The assessment was undertaken in response to request from the client's representative Kenneth Hennessy Architects, to inform and accompany a future Part VIII planning application for the subject site. The proposed development site is located within the area of archaeological notification, as defined in section 12 (3) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 (Recorded Monument), for the historic town of Thomastown RMP KK028-040----- and is situated proximal to the line of the medieval Town Wall of Thomastown RMP KK028-040011-- (Figure 1). Town walls are recognised as National Monuments under the *National Policy of Town Defences* which was published by the National Monuments Service in 2008. The proposed development site is a modern community centre and is not a protected structure, nor is it included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. However, it is located beside the early 20th century Thomastown Concert Hall, which is included in the Kilkenny Record of Protected Structures (reference C618) and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (reference 12317063). This report begins by detailing the methodology that was employed in its compilation and this is followed by documentation of the historical and archaeological background to the development area and its environs. Finally, the report includes an Archaeological Impact Statement with mitigation measures to address any potentially adverse affects on the archaeological heritage of the site and its surrounds.

# 2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The assessment conforms to the methodologies recommended in 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' issued by the Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands (1999). It is also in conformance with the requirements of the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020, section 8.3.1 of which states the following:

- To require archaeological assessment, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring for planning applications in areas of archaeological importance if a development

proposal is likely to impact upon in-situ archaeological monuments, their setting and archaeological remains.

The content of the report is in compliance with the legislative frameworks of the *National Monuments Acts 1930-2004*, the *Heritage Act 2000* and the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (ratified by Ireland 1997)*.

### ***2.1 Assessment Components***

This assessment comprised a desk-based study and site visit and photographic survey of the application area. The desk study aims to present, through a review of primary and secondary documentary sources (see bibliography), the archaeological and historical background to the proposed development area and to comprehensively describe the archaeological monuments that are present in the site's environs.

## **3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND STATUTORY HERITAGE PROTECTIONS**

### ***3.1 Description of proposed development***

Approval is being sought from the Members of Kilkenny County Council under Part VIII procedures for the following renovation works within the Community Centre for use as a library (including fit out) at Marsh's Street, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny (Figures 2, 3):

- Refurbishment of the existing steel superstructure for retention and re-use
- Construction of new first floor level within the existing double height space in the area to be used by the library
- Demolition of existing walls and cladding and replacement with new rendered and insulated walls at ground floor and new cladding at first floor level, with associated new window openings
- Demolition of the existing roof finishes and replacement with insulated cladding system incorporating rooflights
- Construction of new entrance lobby on the front elevation, with associated ramp and stepped access
- Construction of new flat roof extension at rear elevation for sports hall/community storage
- Construction of new stepped access to new openings on front and rear elevations
- New internal layout including stairs and passenger lift
- Associated Plant & Services



Figure 1: Proposed development site location and Recorded Monuments in environs

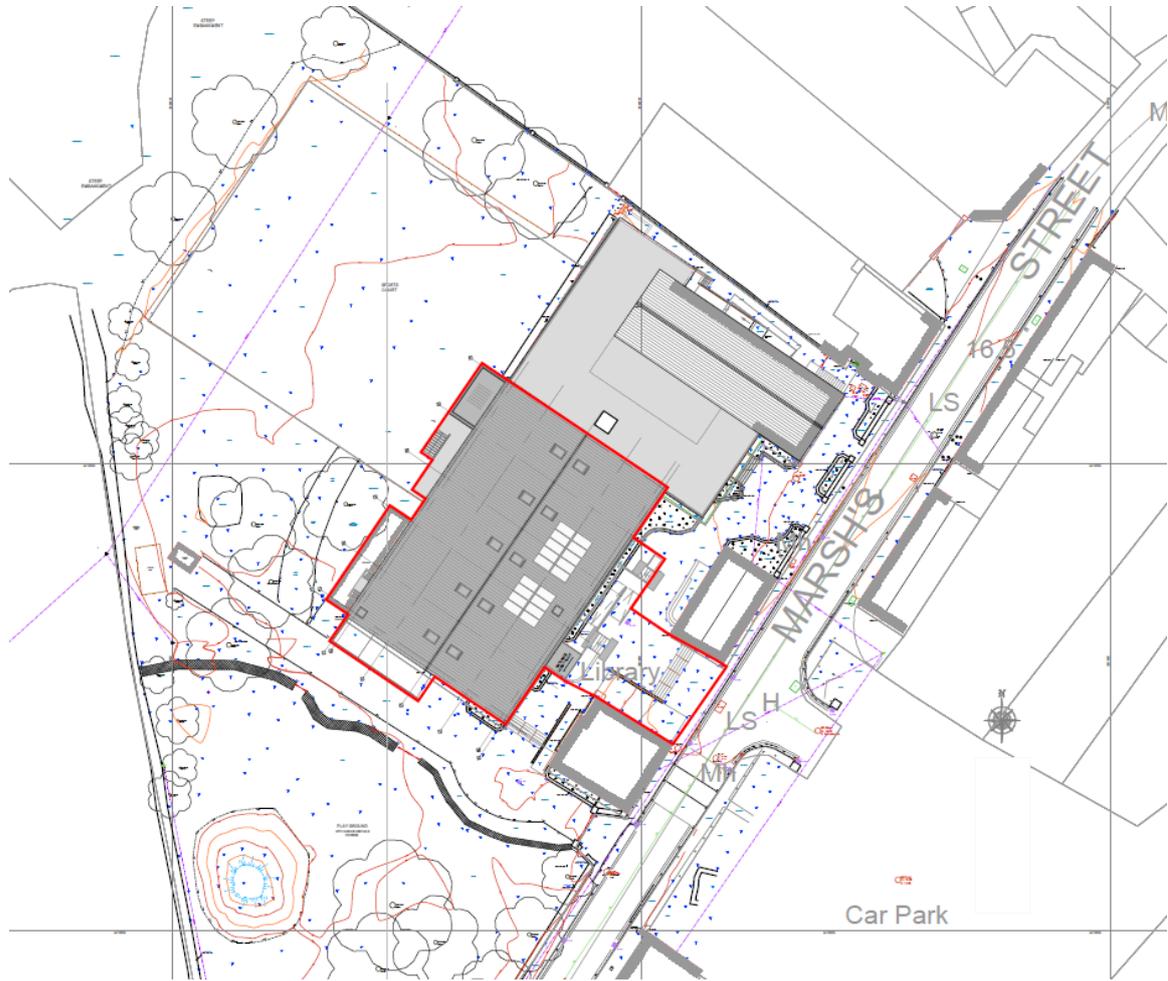


Figure 2: Proposed development site plan (Kenneth Hennessy Architects)

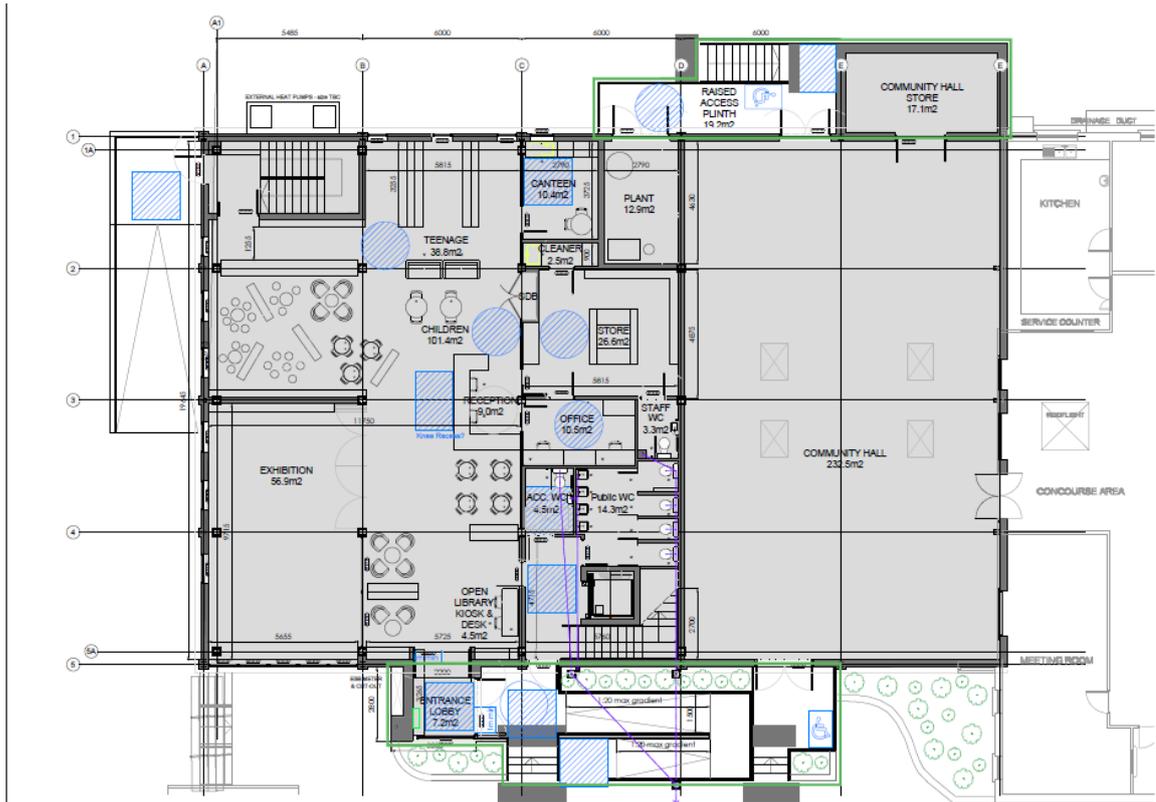


Figure 3: Proposed development plan Ground Floor (Kenneth Hennessey Architects)



Figure 4: Site location on Urban Archaeological Survey map of Thomastown (Farrelly et al 1993).

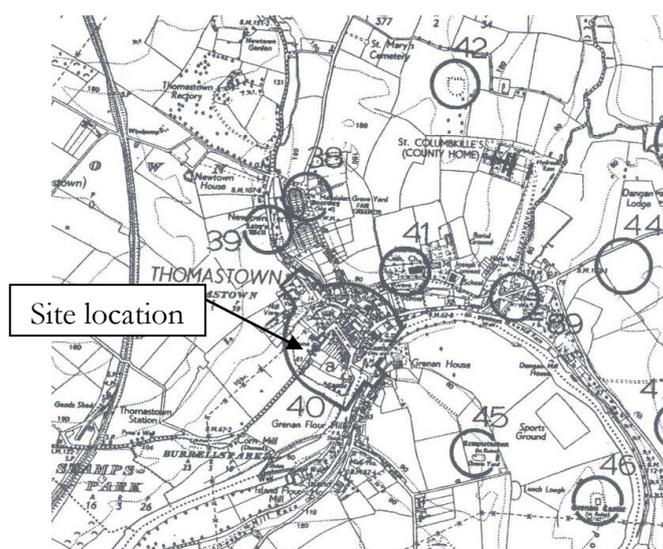


Figure 5: Site location on Record of Monuments and Places archaeological constraint map sheet 28

### 3.2 Statutory Heritage Protections

The proposed development site is located within the area of archaeological notification, as defined in section 12 (3) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 (Recorded Monument), for the historic town of Thomastown RMP KK028-040----- and is situated c. 60m south of the projected line of the medieval Town Wall of Thomastown RMP KK028-040011-- as demarcated in the Urban Archaeological Survey of County Kilkenny and in the Record of Monuments and Places maps (Figures 1, 4, 5). When the owner or occupier of a property, or any other person proposes to carry out, or to cause, or to permit the carrying out of any work at or in relation to a Recorded Monument or a Registered Monument they are required to give notice in writing to the Minister 2 months before commencing that work. This is to allow the National Monuments Service time consider the proposed works and how best to proceed to further the protection of the monument. Section 8.3.1 of the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020 states the following objectives in relation to Recorded Monuments:

- Endeavour to preserve in situ all archaeological monuments, whether on land or underwater, listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and any newly discovered archaeological sites, features, or objects by requiring that archaeological remains are identified and fully considered at the very earliest stages of the development process and that schemes are designed to avoid impacting on the archaeological heritage.

- To require archaeological assessment, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring for planning applications in areas of archaeological importance if a development proposal is likely to impact upon in-situ archaeological monuments, their setting and archaeological remains.
- Ensure that development within the vicinity of a Recorded Monument is sited and designed appropriately so that it does not seriously detract from the setting of the feature or its zone of archaeological potential. Where upstanding remains of a Recorded Monument exist a visual impact assessment may be required to fully determine the effect of any proposed development.
- Require the retention of surviving medieval plots and street patterns and to facilitate the recording of evidence of ancient boundaries, layouts etc. in the course of development.
- Safeguard the importance of significant archaeological or historic landscapes from developments that would unduly sever or disrupt the relationship, connectivity and/or inter-visibility between sites.

In addition, as a consequence of the site's location adjacent to the line of the Town Wall of Thomastown the policies and objectives in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's National Policy on Town Defences (2008) apply. No works are proposed on the specific line of the Town Wall. The proposed development site is a modern community centre and is not a protected structure, nor is it included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. However, it is located beside the early 20th century Thomastown Concert Hall, which is included in the Kilkenny Record of Protected Structures (reference C618) and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (reference 12317063).

## 4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed development site is located on Marsh's Street, on the west side of the medieval walled town of Thomastown (Figures 1, 6). The medieval borough of Thomastown was founded by Thomas Fitz Anthony, a knight in the *mesnie* of William Marshal, lord of Leinster and earl of Pembroke, in the early thirteenth century as a commercial venture and re-shipment point for the Marshal *caput* at Kilkenny, 15km to the north. The town was provided with a substantial parish church (KK028-040001-) from the early 1200s, along with a market place with Market Cross (KK028-040018-), burgage plots, quayside and a manorial castle 850m to the south-east of the town at Grenan.

In the mid-late thirteenth century a masonry Town Wall (KK028-040011-) was constructed around the core of the medieval town (Carrigan 1905 iv, 258-59; Pilsworth 1951, 36; Pilsworth 1952, 2-3; Thomas 1992 ii, 190-92; Farrelly et al 1993, 184) (Figure 6). Standing remains of the Town Wall (RMP KK028-040011--) are present in the south-west of the town, stretching from the river Nore up towards Mill View House and there is also what appears to be a section incorporated into the buttress of a house fronting Low Street, on the northern side of town. The section in the south-west of the town is up to 1.15m wide and 1.45m high; along this stretch are the remains of a possible bastion or dovecote in the garden of Mill View house. Little is known about the eastern circuit of the Town Wall but it is regarded by Thomas (1992 ii, 191) and Farrelly et al (1993, 184) as being represented by the line of the Thomastown townland boundary (Figures 1, 6, 10). The present stone-rubble wall situated 40m to the west of the development site, bounding the existing playground at this location, is thought to be an upstanding section of the town wall but no diagnostic architectural features are visible within its makeup (Figure 7). A gatehouse on the town wall is thought to have been situated on the west side of Marsh's street, 75m south of the development site (Thomas 1992 ii, 190). Another mural gatehouse known variously as the Kilkenny Gate/Yellow Gate was situated on the north side of Logan Street/junction with Maudlin Street (Thomas 1992 ii, 190). A large spud stone which is regarded as having been associated with this gate was found in the early 1930s during roadworks and is now set into a small public garden on

the east side of Maudlin Street. Medieval suburban development outside (east of) the Kilkenny Gate was documented in archaeological excavations on Chapel Lane, Thomastown in 1997 (Murtagh 1998).

The parish church (KK028-040001-; National Monument ref. 191) of the borough of Thomastown, dedicated to Saint Mary, is situated 85m north-west of the proposed development site at the north-western end of Market Street, at the junction between Pipe Street and Lady's Well Street (Carrigan 1905 iv, 259-65; Hunt 1974 i, 198, iii, pl. 36; Farrelly et al. 1993, 184) (Figure 1). This church, dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was built in the later thirteenth century and was a benefice of the Augustinian priory of Inistioge. The church originally consisted of an aisled nave with a tower in the south-western corner and a chancel with a sacristy and detached chapel. After the Reformation, only the chancel continued in use as a place for Protestant worship. In 1809 the south wall and south aisle of the church were removed to make way for the Protestant church. At the same time, and possibly to provide building stone for the new church building, the chancel was also removed. The main surviving features of the church are part of the west gable, the arcaded north wall and the north aisle and the chancel arch. In the south part of the latter there is a doorway leading to a stairs which formerly gave access to the roof-walk. The foundations of much of the rest of the church can still be traced. A First Fruits Church of Ireland church, remodelled into a dwelling-house, occupies its south arm. An Ogham Stone, which was reputedly been taken from the nearby River Nore, is reset at the base of the chancel arch and a 'Cornish-type' cross head (KK028-040002-) is situated in the graveyard. A badly weathered thirteenth century effigy is to be found in the north wall of the chancel and the church also contains a number of medieval cross-slabs (KK028-040027-). Located 400m north of the proposed development area is the site of a church, graveyard and hospital known as the 'Magdalen' hospital (KK028-038004-), of which nothing now remains but its graveyard (Farrelly et al 1993, 190-1). A doorway of possible medieval date had been a feature of the old graveyard wall until it was removed c.1870 and a new wall erected in its place.

In the late medieval period a series of fortified houses, known as 'urban tower houses', were erected in Thomastown. A 15<sup>th</sup> century example, 'Brady's Castle' (RMP KK028-04005) is located at the southern end of Low Street (Farrelly et al 1993, 188). Another example is the 15<sup>th</sup> century 'Bridge Castle' or 'Sweetman's Castle' (RMP KK028-04010)

which is located on the west bank of the River Nore (Farrelly et al 1993, 190). The medieval bridge of Thomastown (RMP KK028-04016) was located 20m south of the present bridge crossing. It was destroyed by floods in 1763 and may be the same bridge which was granted tolls and customs for erection and repair in 1346 (Farrelly et al 1993, 193). Timbers exhibiting complex carpentry from the bridge were retrieved from the river recently. The site of the market cross and market/fair RMP KK028-04017 and KK028-04018 is most likely Market Street, the widest and most centrally located street within the town wall. The market cross comprised a series of stepped stones with a cross inserted in a groove in the uppermost stone (Farrelly et al 1993, 193-4). Its present location is unknown.

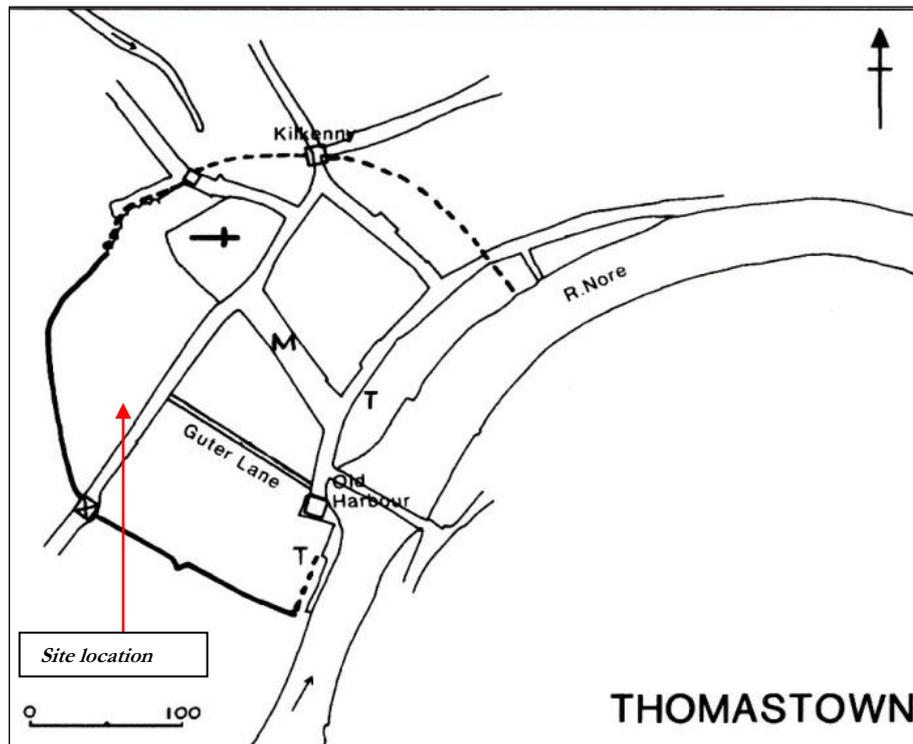


Figure 6: Proposed development site on map of medieval walled town of Thomastown (Thomas 1992 ii, 191).



Figure 7: Possible medieval line of the town wall to west of development site, from north.



Figure 8: Detail of 1791 map of Thomastown by John Byrne with approximate location of proposed development area arrowed (Manning 2008, fig. 3)

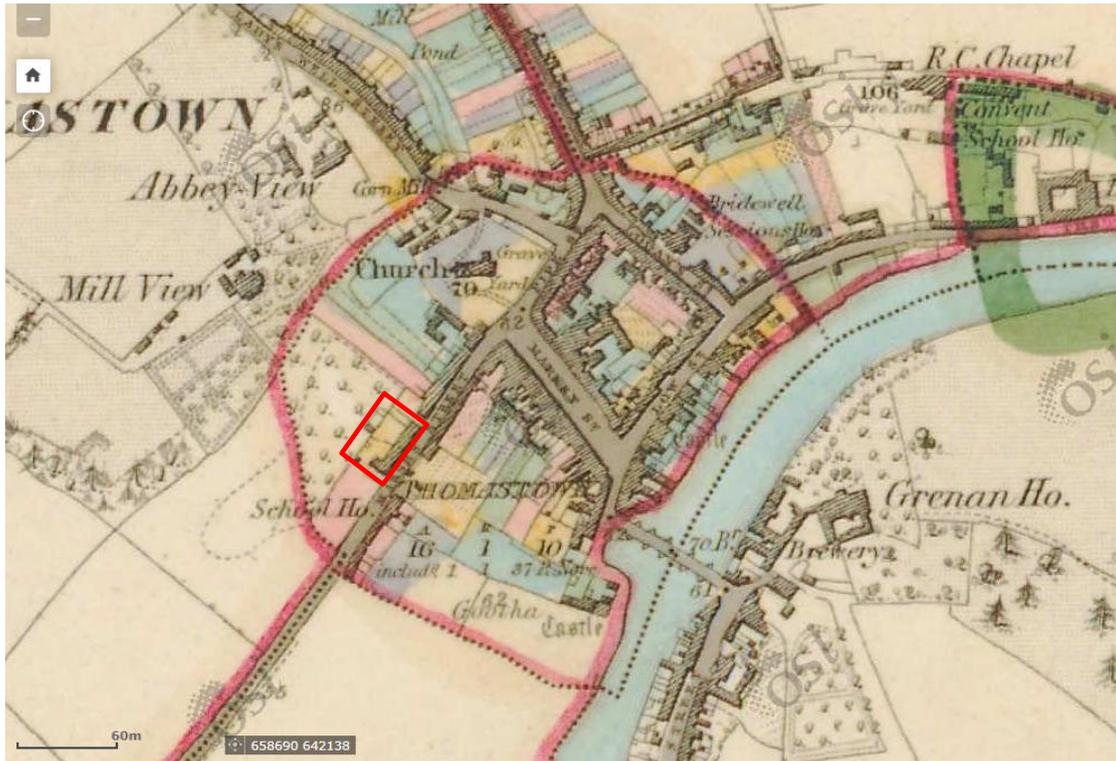


Figure 9: Location of proposed development area on first edition 6-inches to a mile scale Ordnance Survey map (1840) sheet 28 (extract). The Thomastown townland boundary is thought to generally correspond, on land, with the line of the Town Wall.

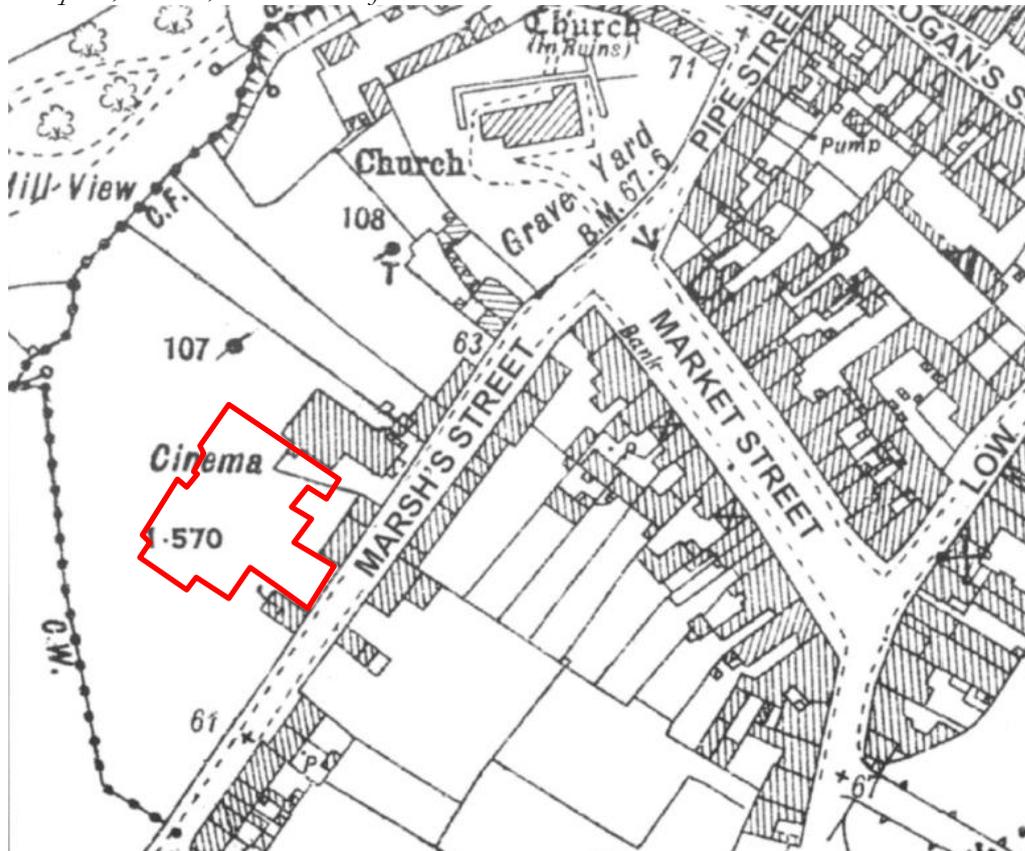


Figure 10: Location of proposed development area on Ordnance Survey 25-inch to the mile map: Co. Kilkenny 28, X (surveyed in 1901 and revised in 1948) (extract).

For 600 years Thomastown, situated at the head of navigation on the Nore, functioned as a trading depot, connecting Kilkenny city, the largest inland town in medieval Ireland, with the seaports of Waterford and New Ross, both of which had strong trading links with southwest England, Spain and France. A number of factors led to the demise of the inland port of Thomastown. Among these was the absence of regular maintenance works, which led to the eventual silting-up of the river between Thomastown and Inistioge. By the mid-nineteenth century the commercial navigation that once linked these two towns had been severed and the newly established railway linking Kilkenny to Thomastown, Waterford and New Ross now facilitated the movement of commercial goods.

The street on which the proposed development lies probably derives its name from a family name and may refer to Rev. Jeremy Marsh, dean of Kilmore, who purchased properties in the town in 1714 (Manning 2008, 130). The street is depicted on the 1791 map of Thomastown as 'Marches Street' and it shows large areas of the town, including on the street, in the ownership of a Mr Marshes (Figure 8). Marsh's Street originated in the medieval period as a thoroughfare that linked the Market place with the road to the borough of Newtown Jerpoint and Jerpoint Avenue via the Marsh's street gatehouse. A list of forfeited property in Thomastown dating from about 1660 or slightly earlier includes a list of, generally low quality, tightly-packed dwellings, many in ruins, on the street at this time:

- 1 A thatched house, stout walls, in breadth 21 ft., in length 22 ft. This house is always let with the tithes and the glebe lands in the present tenancy of Christopher Hewetson, Protestant & will repair, charges to repair £20, worth to be let for 31 years £5 per annum.
- 2 A thatched cabin in length 27 ft., in breadth 21ft., the former propriety of Edward Sweetman, Irish Papist, in the tenancy of Michael White, Irish Papist, out of repair to the value of 30s, worth to be let as aforesaid £1 per annum. It has a garden containing 4 perches.
- 3 Another cabin, in breadth 21 ft. & the same in length, the aforesaid propriety and tenancy, out of repair [to the] value of £1, worth to be let for the said term £1 per annum.
- [4] Several small cabins, length 99 ft., breadth 10, one small garden plot 9 perches, the former propriety of the said Sweetman and now in the tenancy of George Andrews Protestant, charge to repair £11, to be let for the aforesaid term £4 per annum.
- [5] .cabin stone walls, a garden plot 2 roods, the said cabin stands on a house plot 30 ft. long &.ft. broad, the former property of Patrick Denn & now in the tenancy of the said Andrewes, worth to be let [as] aforesaid 10s per annum.
- 6 [Old] walls & a garden plot 10 perches, in breadth 42 ft., length 47, belongs to Michael

Cantwell, Irish Papist & now in the tenancy of aforesaid Christopher Hewetson, worth for 31 years 10s per annum.

7 Old walls, breadth 42 ft., length 45, a garden plot 2 roods and 20 perches. The former propriety of Thomas Archer and in the tenancy of the aforesaid George Andrewes, worth for 31 years £1 per annum.

Part of the street aforesaid

8 An old small cabin in length 56 ft. and in breadth 40 ft. with a garden 8 perches, the former propriety of Edward Sweetman & in the tenancy of the aforesaid George Andrewes, worth to be let for 31 years 10s per annum.

9 A thatched small cabin, stone walls, in breadth 12 ft., in length 30, a garden 6 perches, the propriety and in the tenancy aforesaid, and worth for 31 years 15s per annum.

10 A. thatched cabin, stone walls, length 34 ft., breadth 21, a garden 4 [perches] belonging to the burgess etc of the town, charges to repair ?2 8s in [tenan]cy aforesaid, worth for 31 years £2 10s per annum.

11 .cabin length 21 ft., breadth 20, a garden 3 perches, belongs to Patrick. Irish Papist & in the tenancy aforesaid & worth for 31 years 15s per annum.

Part of the street aforesaid

12 Small cabins, stone walls, length 63 ft., breadth 20, a garden plot 12 perches in the propriety and tenancy aforesaid and worth for 31 years ?1 10s per annum.

13 A thatched house, stone walls, in length 56 ft., breadth 21 ft. & half a garden plot 9 perches, the former propriety of Patrick Denn & in the tenancy of Christopher Hewetson aforesaid, charges to repair ?20, worth for 31 years £3 10s per annum.

14 A small cabin with a garden plot, length 29 ft., breadth 23 ft. The former propriety and now in the tenancy of the said George Andrewes, worth for 31 years 10s per annum.

[P. 2.]

15 A small cabin with a garden plot, length 40 ft., breadth 19ft., which belongs to Walter Archer Irish Papist, now in the tenancy aforesaid & worth for 31 years 10s per annum.

16 A thatched cabin, stone walls, breadth 16 ft., length 42 ft., a garden plot 5 perches, belonged to Thomas Denn Irish Papist, under the tenancy aforesaid, worth for 31 years £1 5s per annum.

Part of the street aforesaid

17 A thatched cabin, stone walls, length 45 ft., breadth 21 ft., a garden plot 6 perches, the former propriety of Thomas Denn, Irish Papist, now in the tenancy of George Andrewes, Protestant, worth for 31 years £1 per annum.

[18]A slated house, stone walls, in length 84 ft., breadth 18, a garden plot 20. belonging to Michael Cantwell, Irish Papist, in the tenancy of Lt. Thomas Barnes, Protestant, out of [repair to] the value of £20, worth for 31 years £6 per annum.

[19] .stone walls, breadth 18ft., length 84, a garden plot 20 perches, which [be lo]nged to Edward Sweetman, Irish Papist, & in the tenancy aforesaid, worth for 31 years 10s per annum (Manning 2008, 108-10).

It is not possible to determine which of the property plots described above is the development site. However, on the 1791 map of Thomastown by John Byrne, the area is shown as being occupied by a series of long property plots, presumably originally medieval burgage plots, in the property of the Shaw family and Sir John Blumb (Manning 2008, 132) (Figure 9). A terrace of houses, to the rear of which is a large orchard, is shown on the 1840 first edition Ordnance Survey map of Thomastown occupying the proposed development site (Figure 9). The current forge building on the street frontage to the south of the subject site corresponds with the first edition map and may therefore be of similar, or earlier, date. On the 1948 Ordnance Survey map the concert hall (protected structure) is marked as a 'cinema' and otherwise the area of the development is open space (Figure 10).

Presently the development area is occupied by a large concrete and steel community hall which extends to the west of the early 20th century Concert Hall (protected structure) (Figures 11-13). Inspection of the site 2nd October 2020 did not indicate anything of archaeological significance upstanding within the proposed development site or within its immediate environs.



*Figure 11: Proposed development site from south-west.*



*Figure 12: Proposed development site and present library building (foreground) from south.*



*Figure 13: Proposed development site from north-west.*

## **5. PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS**

The proposed development area has not been the subject of prior archaeological investigation. However, a number of archaeological investigations have taken place in the immediate environs of the site. Test excavations by C. Ó Drisceoil were undertaken within the area of the present playground to the west of the proposed development site in 2005 (Ó Drisceoil 2007). Three trenches were cut across the site, revealing a 'garden soil' deposit containing Kilkenny type medieval pottery at a depth of 1m. Test excavations in 2003 on the south side of Marsh's street by Sheila Lane revealed nothing of archaeological significance (Lane 2005). Two hundred metres to the north-east of the proposed development site on Chapel Lane, test excavations by Ben Murtagh uncovered evidence for extra-mural suburban activity in the medieval period, represented by quarry pitting, cess pits and trenches, which were backfilled with soils containing medieval pottery and iron slag (Murtagh 1998). Test excavations and subsequent archaeological monitoring at the former Comerford's Bakery site/rear of Carroll's Bar, Logan Street, 35m south-west of the proposed development site, in advance of a large residential development uncovered nothing of archaeological interest (Jordan and Lohan 2005; Lohan 2007). At Low Street, Thomastown, part of a nineteenth century garden wall was uncovered in monitoring (Purcell 2004).

## **6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The proposed development area on Marsh's Street is located within the area of archaeological notification for the medieval town of Thomastown RMP KK028-040---- and is situated to the south of the projected line of the medieval Town Wall of the town RMP KK028-040011-- (Figure 1). Cartographic and historical evidence both indicate that Marsh's Street originated as a medieval street and that it was occupied by a series of burgage plots that ran off the street-line. The 1791 Byrne map shows the subject site occupying what are probably one or two burgage plots running north from the street towards the town wall (Figure 8). Previous archaeological investigations undertaken in

the playground immediately to the west of the development site has uncovered evidence for medieval deposits at a depth of 1m below present ground level (Ó Drisceoil 2007). The proposed development site is presently occupied by a large modern community hall building (Figure 11-13). The present floor level (17.27m OD) inside the building is raised c. 1.2m above the ground level outside the structure to the west and therefore approximately 2.2m above the abovementioned medieval deposits. Ground investigation works undertaken for the proposed development in June 2020 by Ground Investigation Ireland indicated between 1.6m-2.5m depth of 'made ground' of modern infill of 'grey sandy gravel with some to many cobbles and contained fragments of concrete and red brick' below the existing concrete floor (GII 2020). The 'made ground' was situated on top of the natural boulder clay and sandy gravels. Construction and engineering works for the proposed development will require the removal and replacement of the existing concrete floor but will not exceed c. 500mm in depth.

Accordingly, although the site can be considered to be of archaeological potential and may contain sub-surface archaeological structures, features, deposits and artefacts associated with the various landuses of the site from the medieval period onwards, the potential impact on these materials can be considered low. No buildings are proposed within the projected area of the town wall. Groundworks for the new development may thus lead to an impact on archaeological structures, features or materials and accordingly, and in compliance with the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014 and associated guidelines, as well as the objectives of the Kilkenny County Development Plan in relation to the protection of archaeology the following archaeological mitigation strategy is recommended:

1. The developer shall retain a suitably qualified licensed-archaeologist to advise regarding the archaeological implications of site clearance, demolition and/or construction methodology and to make appropriate recommendations for mitigation as necessary.
2. The developer's archaeologist shall undertake licensed archaeological monitoring of all demolition and sub-surface works associated with the development including the breaking and removal of any surfaces, levelling of ground, site investigations. The archaeologist shall consult with and forward their Method Statement in advance of commencement to the National Monuments Service. In the event of archaeological

features being located in the course of the monitoring all works in the specifically affected area shall cease and the developer shall facilitate the archaeologist in fully assessing and recording such features, including if necessary the archaeological excavation of such features and/or redesign of foundations to allow for preservation in situ. In the event of significant archaeological features on site, the archaeologist retained by the developer shall immediately contact the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The National Monuments Service shall determine the further archaeological resolution of the site. The site contractor will be aware of this requirement and the monitoring archaeologist will be provided with a programme of works. No sub surface work shall be undertaken in the absence of the archaeologist without his/her consent. Following the completion of works a written report and a digital report containing the results of the archaeological monitoring shall be forwarded on completion to the Planning Authority and National Monuments Service, Department Arts Heritage and Gaeltacht.

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