

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment:

Lady's Lane, Limerick

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Co. Tipperary

Planning Authority: Limerick City and County Council

Planning Status: Pre-Planning Submission

Development type: Student Accommodation

Developer: Lanehunt Ltd.
C/O Clairsford (Architects)
First Floor,
Howley's Quay,
Limerick

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1. Introduction

This Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Assessment provides a review of potential impacts on the cultural heritage of a proposed student housing development within a c. 0.19ha site in Limerick City (Figs 1–3). The site is on the south side of Lady’s Lane within Limerick City centre in an area that has existing residential, educational, retail and commercial developments. The proposed development comprises an eight-storey apartment block for student accommodation. The development will include all associated site works and the demolition of existing buildings.

Cultural Heritage includes visible archaeological monuments and sub-surface archaeological remains. The monuments and sub-surface sites are the vestiges of past human interaction with the landscape. Knowledge of these sites is achieved by survey and excavation and by comparison with similar sites within the archaeological record. The architectural record, both upstanding and levelled is included in Cultural Heritage and comprises structures, the curtilage and setting context of structures, groups of structures and buildings and places of historic, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

Guidelines for the compilation of Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Assessments include EU Directives and Planning and Development Acts¹.

2. Methodology

This report was compiled using a desk-top study and site inspection. The archaeological component of this report is guided by *The National Monuments Acts and Amendments 1930–2004*; *Local Government Planning and Development Act [2000]*; *Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (DAHGI 1999) and *Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavations* (DAHGI 1999).

Architectural Heritage is protected by the *Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act* (1999). National policies are outlined in the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG 2004)

¹ EU Directive 85/337/EEC [Amended Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC; 2009/31/EC; 2011/92/EU; 2014/52/EU2]; Planning and Development Acts 2000–2015 and Planning and Development Regulations 2001–2015.

and *Action of Architecture 2002–2005* Government Policy on Architecture. These guidelines inform this assessment.

1. The desk-top study included a review of the available Ordnance Survey Maps; the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR); the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and the available archaeological and historical literature for the area.
2. A site inspection was carried out in March 2026.
3. The report assesses the proximity of known archaeological, architectural sites and sites of potential historic value in the environs of the development site. There are no recorded archaeological sites or buildings listed in the Architectural Inventory within the curtilage of the development landbank.

1. Desk-top study

The desk-top provides an over-arching review of the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage of the landscape within the proposed development zone. This is informed by the following records:

- A. Sites and Monuments Database (www.archaeology.ie) provides the record of archaeological sites in the Limerick region.
- B. Lists of Monuments in State Ownership which will require Ministerial Consent to carry out works in the vicinity of the monument.
- C. Lists of Monuments subject to preservation orders.
- D. Register of Historic Monuments. The National Monuments Act (Amendment 2005) requires two-months written notice to the Minister (Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) in advance of proposed works in relation to a registered archaeological or historic site listed in the register.
- E. National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) for Co. Limerick. This includes building surveys and historic garden surveys of sites dating from 1700 AD to the modern period.
- F. Limerick City and County Development Plan. This includes the Record of Protected Structures and architectural conservation areas.
- G. Database of Irish Archaeological Excavation Reports (www.excavations.ie). This provides extra information on potential archaeological finds which may occur during on-site groundworks and guides the mitigation strategies.

- H. Aerial Photographs (Digital Globe; Google Earth).
- I. Ordnance Survey mapping (1:50000 [Discovery Series]; 1:5000; OS 6" scale [First and Second editions]; OS 25" scale).
- J. Published literature on the historic landscape of the area (see references).

3. The Receiving Environment

3.1. Present Landscape

The development is located in the centre of Limerick City (Figs 1–3). The site is on the south side of Lady's Lane which links Parnell St. on the east to Dominic St. on the west. The site comprises modern buildings surrounding a car-park on the north side (see Fig. 2; Figs 4–7). A three-storey north-facing building (Fig. 7) with a pebble dash façade and two ground floor entrances has a metal sign on the third floor which reads 'Tait Business Centre' and is connected to the Victorian period Tait enterprises in Limerick, albeit the building has no particular architectural merit. Peter Tait arrived in Limerick as a penniless draper's apprentice and built a large textile empire from the late 1850's including clothing factories and suppliers of uniforms to the British Empire (O'Flaherty 2010).

The surface of the car-park is tarred and some shrub beds are located adjacent to the modern buildings. Modern buildings front onto the north side of Lady's Lane (Fig. 8). Dominic St. to the west of the development also includes mostly recently constructed buildings; a house adjacent to Costello's Tavern may be nineteenth century in date. Parnell St. on the east side of the development is also largely a modern construct. One building at the junction of Lady's Lane and Parnell St. appears to nineteenth century in date (Fig. 9).

3.2. Archaeological and Historical Background

The development site is located within Limerick City and outside the original Viking and Medieval core. The Zone of Archaeological Potential surrounding the medieval city is c. 250m east of the development site (Fig. 10).

The earliest Viking (Norse) fortification ('*longphort*') on the River Shannon may have been established in the 840s at Athlunkard, Co. Clare, c. 2km north of the historic core of Limerick City. Earthworks at Athlunkard have been identified as the likely location of a '*longphort*' (Kelly and O'Donovan 1998). Limerick City developed from a ninth century Viking settlement. Based on annalistic evidence, Ferrar (1767, 4) gives the date of 853 A.D. for the

Viking settlement and Hall (2007, 88) suggested a date before 887 A.D. The precise location of the Hiberno-Norse settlement within the modern city has not yet been identified by archaeological investigation but is possibly in the area around the St. Mary's Cathedral. O'Flaherty (2010, 1) locates the Viking (Hiberno-Norse) settlement on the south-west side King's Island from the tenth century. The Hiberno-Norse settlement was captured by Brian Boru and he made it his capital by 1100. While there is little archaeological evidence for occupation in Limerick City before the twelfth century (O'Rahilly 1995) archaeological excavations at King John's Castle recorded limited evidence for Hiberno-Norse settlement.

The city expanded under Anglo-Norman influence in the late twelfth century and became the major urban centre of the west coast of Ireland (Thomas 1992, 142). The Anglo-Norman city is divided into English Town and Irish Town. The walled town of English Town extended from the bridge at Ballsbridge to the east bank of the Shannon River and northward to Thomand Gate and thereafter extended northwards; the east section continued southward along the line of Island Road to link with the bridge at Ballsbridge. Irish Town was smaller, extended south from Ballsbridge and included the area west of Charlotte's Quay to St. John's Church and the west circuit extended to West Water Gate St. Notable features in Limerick City include King John's Castle built in the early thirteenth century, St Mary's Cathedral founded by Donál Mór O'Brien in the late twelfth century, remains of medieval monasteries and upstanding medieval town walls. Limerick was captured by the Confederate Army in 1642, fell to the Cromwellian New Army under Ireton in 1651 and the Williamite forces in 1691.

Like many Irish cities, Limerick expanded outside the confines of the walled town in the eighteenth century. Within 70 years of the Cromwellian campaigns, the city recovered from being a gloomy fortress to an 'extended and beautified...metropolis (Fitzgerald and McGregor 1826).

By 1769 a blueprint for the development of a new suburb in Newtown Pery was in place and was set out on a north-south grid on the Pery Estate in South Prior's Land along the axis of a central street, now O'Connell St. and formerly George's St. (O'Flaherty 2010). The layout of this new suburb is shown as a grid in Colles' map of 1769 (Fig. 11). The development site in Lady's Lane is within this Georgian quarter of Limerick City. Development in this area after 1750 is associated with Edmond Sexton Pery and followed by significant developments by two wealthy merchant families – the Authurs and Roches and funded by commercial

enterprise within the city (O’Flaherty 1995). The Georgian grid was largely complete by 1823 (O’Flaherty 2010). The Georgian Quarter comprised a mix of street-fronting large residential buildings with smaller houses on the side streets and the area was interspersed with public buildings including churches, schools and commercial enterprises (milling, tanning, slaughtering, brewing and distilling) (O’Flaherty 2010; Fig. 7).

Victorian Limerick developed from the Georgian period and to some extent the older parts of the city (English Town and Irish Town) declined in terms of fabric and in some areas became slums while the periphery of the original medieval city prospered in terms of industrialisation and housing. Many of the Georgian houses in Newtown Pery where the development site is located continued as family residences until the twentieth century, particularly to the west of the development around Cecil Street and Pery Square (O’Flaherty 2010). Areas further north, including the laneways such as Lady’s Lane tended to become crowded tenements (*ibid.*).

Ordnance Survey mapping shows the evolution of the area around Lady’s Lane from 1840. The First Edition (1840) Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 12) shows large street-fronting properties fronting onto Nelson St. (now Parnell St.) and Dominic St. with lanes, including Lady’s Lane linking both streets. Cartographic evidence suggests smaller terraced houses along these laneways. The Second Edition (1904) Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 13) recorded that the terraced houses had been cleared from Lady’s Lane. A Bacon Factory shown on the Second Edition (1904) Ordnance Survey map on the north side of Lady’s Lane was owned by Matterson and Sons and opened in 1820. The complex included a bacon curing facility, sausage factory, abattoirs, piggeries, chill rooms, smoke houses and other ancillary buildings (O’Flaherty 2010). The factory closed in 1986.

There are no recorded archaeological sites or protected structures within the development footprint or in the immediate vicinity of the site.

3.3. Architecture – Protected Structures

The environs of the development have a number of nineteenth century buildings listed in the Architectural Inventory as protected structures. Two houses to the south of the development (Reg². Nos 21518015 and 21518016) were built in 1830 and 1895 respectively and are terraced houses of the late Georgian and Edwardian/Victorian periods (Fig. 14: 1 and 2). A Victorian period shop (Reg. No. 21518020) to the north was built in 1860 (Fig. 14: 3).

² Architectural Inventory of Protected Structures (NIAH)

Carmody's house (Reg. No. 21518052) on Wickham St., built in 1850 and north of the development is a three-storey terraced building (Fig. 14: 4). A former corn store (Reg. No. 21518021) on Roche's St. was built in 1810 and retains many original features on the upper floors (Fig. 14: 5). A house on Cecil St. (Reg. No. 21518010) is a four-storey terraced house built in 1890 (Fig. 14: 6). A house (Reg. No. 21518009) at the junction of Cecil St. and Catherine St. built in 1890 is a terraced two-storey building (Fig. 14: 7). A Georgian period house (Reg. No. 21518011) on a corner site on Cecil St. was built in 1830 (Fig. 14: 10). The Athenaeum Theatre and Hall (Reg. Nos 21518012 and 1518013) on Cecil St. were built in 1856 and 1855 (Fig. 14: 8 and 9). St. Saviour's Catholic Church (Reg. No. 21518014) to the south-west of the development was built in the Gothic Revival style in 1815 (Fig. 14: 11). The Tait Monument (Reg. No. 215117289) on Baker Place to the south-west of the development is a free-standing Gothic style clock tower designed by William Edward Corbett and erected in 1867 as a tribute to Alderman Peter Tait (Fig. 14: 12)

4. Characteristics of the proposed development

The development comprises demolition of existing modern buildings and the construction of an eight-storey building for student accommodation within a c. 0.19ha site in Limerick City centre. Building design has yet to be finalised.

4. Review of potential impact of development on the archaeological and historic landscape

Visual impact

The proposed development is located outside The Zone of Archaeological Potential surrounding the medieval city which is c. 250m east of the development site and there are no upstanding archaeological sites within 600m of the development.

The historic buildings (Protected Structures) are also some distance from the development site and separated from the site by intermediary upstanding housing and retail units which will partially obscure the proposed eight-storey structure.

Archaeological Impact

The archaeological assessment is based on documentary and cartographic records, review of the archaeological literature for Limerick City and a site inspection. This information is used to predict the archaeological potential of the development site in terms of archaeological remains. The Zone of Archaeological Potential surrounding the medieval city is c. 250m east

of the development site. There are no recorded archaeological monuments on the site. There is therefore no direct impact on the known archaeological landscape.

Cartographic evidence records the building history of the area around Lady's Lane from 1840. The First Edition (1840) Ordnance Survey map shows lanes, including Lady's Lane, linking Parnell St. and Dominic St. with small terraced houses along these laneways. The Second Edition (1904) Ordnance Survey map recorded that the terraced houses had been cleared from Lady's Lane. Modern buildings fronting onto an open space (now the car-park) replaced the earlier houses.

6. Mitigation Strategies

The proposed development area does not include any recorded archaeological sites. The method of construction will be dependent on engineering requirements and constraints. Based on the review of known archaeological sites within the area, it appears the site may be sterile of archaeological remains. Planning requirements may however, require some archaeological input including test trenching and/or monitoring of the groundworks phase of construction. If archaeological remains are uncovered, these sites become an archaeological site and are protected by the National Monuments legislation. Further work on the site will require consultation with the archaeological staff of The Heritage Service, National Monuments Division, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Provision, including financial and time should be made from at the outset of the project to facilitate any excavation or recording of archaeological material that may be uncovered during the developmental works.

7. Predicted impacts

There is no predicted impact on any recorded archaeological site or feature.

References

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Fig. 3: Site Location



Fig. 4: Modern two-storey building on east side with red brick front façade and pebble-dash finish on the rear (west) side. The roof appears to be corrugated iron. The building is in two units with separate entrances.



Fig. 5: Modern two-storey building on west side with red brick front façade. The roof appears to be corrugated iron. The building is in three units with separate entrances.



Fig. 6: Modern two-storey building on south side with red brick front façade. The roof appears to be corrugated iron. The building has two units with separate entrances.



Fig. 7: Modern three-storey on south side with pebble-dash front façade. The roof appears to be corrugated iron. The building has two separate entrances.



Fig. 8: Modern buildings fronting onto north side of Lady's Lane



Fig. 9: Rear of building at junction of Lady's Lane and Parnell St.

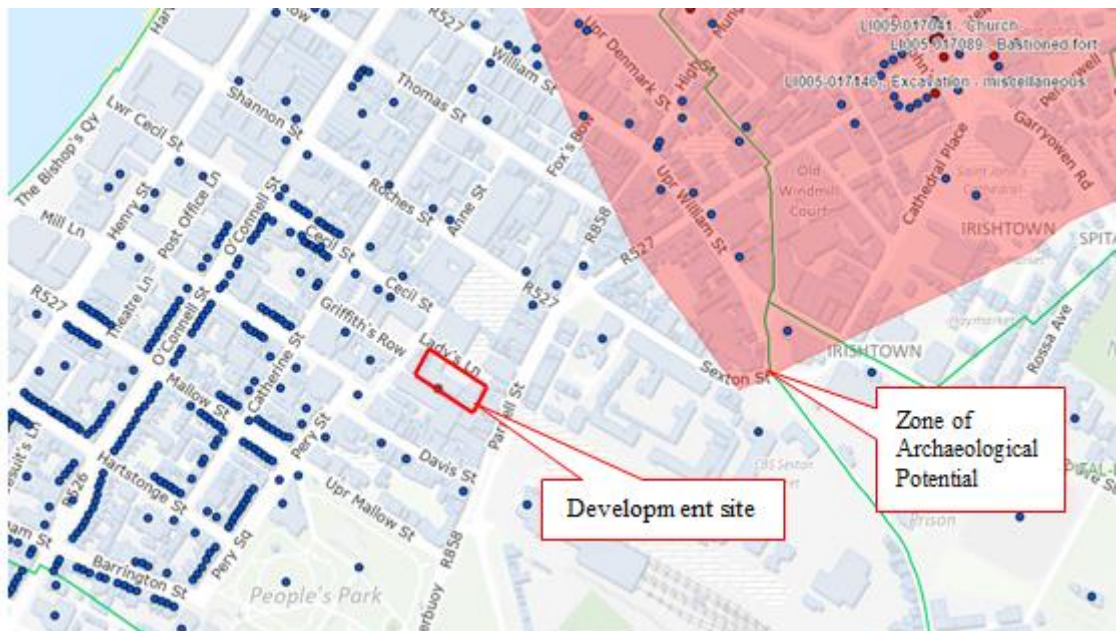


Fig. 10: Zone of Archaeological Potential surrounding medieval city of Limerick to east of development site.



Fig. 11: Christopher Colles' Map 1769



Fig. 12: First Edition (1840) Ordnance Survey map; Development Site outlined in red



Fig. 13: Second Edition (1938) Ordnance Survey map; Development Site outlined in red

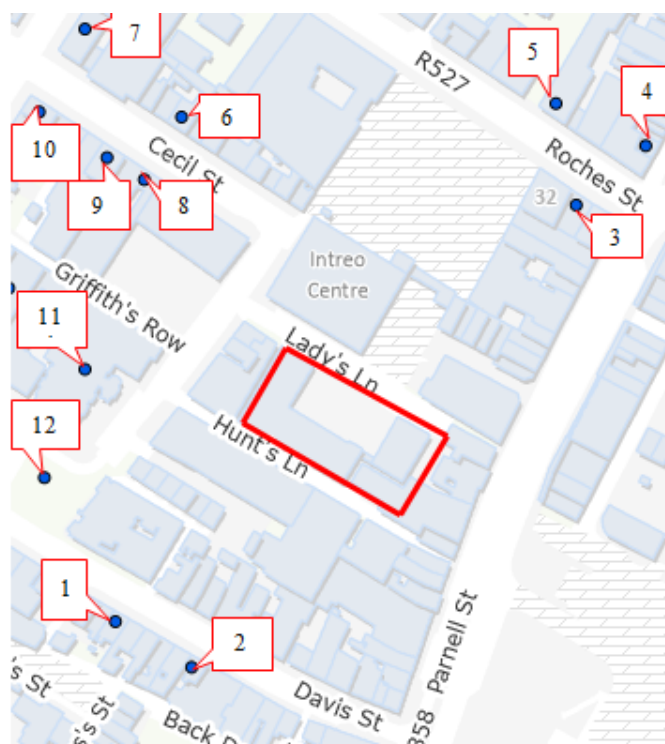


Fig. 14: Protected Structures in environs of development (outlined in red).

Key: 1: House (1830); 2: House (1895); 3: Shop 1860; 4: Carmody's House (1850); 5: Former grain store (1810); 6: House (1830); 7: House (1890); 8: Athenaeum Hall (1855); 9: Athenaeum Theatre (1856); 10: House (1830); 11: St. Saviour's Catholic Church (1815); 12: Tait Monument (1867)