



Westmeath County Council

In Partnership with
Meath County Council

&

Kildare County Council



KINNEGAD – ENFIELD - KILCOCK

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
CONSULTANCY SERVICES
CONTRACT 1**

Report On
Archaeological Excavation
At Griffinstown 2
County Westmeath
Licence Number 02E1143



A.C.S Ltd

PROJECT DETAILS

Project	Archaeological Excavation
Archaeologist	Stephen Linnane
Client	Westmeath County Council, County Buildings Mullingar, County Westmeath.
Site	K-E-K M4 Motorway, Contract 1, Griffinstown 2
Townland	Griffinstown
Parish	Killucan
County	Westmeath
Nat Grid Ref.	256921, 246219
RMP No.	N/A
Licence No.	02E1143
Planning Ref.	N/A
Project Start Date	31st October 2002
Report Date	19th January 2004

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Archaeological test trenching was carried out in advance of construction along the route of the proposed M4 Kinnegad-Enfield-Kilcock Motorway Scheme. In February 2002 during centreline testing of the motorway carried out by Ian Russell under licence 02E0108 of Duchas The Heritage Service, a possible pit was identified. This site was located in the parish of Killucan, Grifftown townland in land formerly owned by Salor Co. The site was subsequently designated Grifftown 2 and was archaeologically excavated on 31st October 2002 under licence 02E1143. A large area around the possible feature was stripped of topsoil and the sod and topsoil combined varied from 0.21m to 0.45m in depth. No features were exposed and it would appear that the archaeological testing removed all traces of the pit.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report gives an account of the archaeological excavation of a site identified at Grifffinstown 2 (County Westmeath OS six-inch sheet 27, 672mm from the west margins and 140mm from the south margin, NGR 256921, 246219). Grifffinstown 2 is located to the north west of Kinnegad and to the south west of the Kinnegad–Mullingar road in the parish of Killucan, Grifffinstown townland, County Westmeath.

One pit was exposed within the centreline trench excavated within the proposed road corridor under licence number 02E0108 issued by *Dúchas* The Heritage Service to Ian Russell. The site was subsequently designated Grifffinstown 2.

The excavation was carried out in advance of the construction of the M4 Kinnegad-Enfield-Kilcock Motorway Scheme.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The Site

The site was identified during archaeological testing of the M4 Kinnegad-Enfield-Kilcock Motorway Scheme under licence number 02E0108 issued by *Dúchas* The Heritage Service, Department of the Environment and Local Government, to Ian Russell. As the proposed road would have a direct impact upon the site, a full archaeological excavation was conducted under licence number 02E1143 issued to Stephen Linnane by *Dúchas* The Heritage Service on 31st October 2002.

2.2 Proposal

The proposed M4 Kinnegad–Enfield–Kilcock Motorway scheme consists of approximately 35km of motorway commencing to the west of Kinnegad in County Westmeath and continuing in an easterly direction through counties Meath and Kildare and terminating at the western end of the existing motorway at Kilcock. The route shall include junctions and an interchange and other structures such as over bridges and under bridges as required to allow the continued flow of traffic on the existing road network. The proposed scheme ties into the existing N4 to the west of Kinnegad.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

3.1 Archaeological and Historical Background

Grifinstown 2 is located in the parish of Killucan in the barony of Farbill County Westmeath. Killucan can be translated as Cill Lúcaine or ‘the Church of Lucan’ and the patron of the parish is St. Menan. Archdall’s Monasticon Hibernicum records that St. Lucien built an abbey here (Name Books, Westmeath). By 1837, the parish supported almost six thousand inhabitants with around two hundred living in the town of Killucan. The land of the parish was considered generally fertile and was, at the time, principally under tillage though there were also some large dairy farms. There are also some extensive tracts of bog and some fine quarries of black flagstone which was used for the Custom House docks in Dublin (Lewis 1837). The parish of Killucan is coextensive with the barony of Farbill and in the 1830s, elderly people were still referring to the parish as Feara Bile. The Annals of the Four Masters record that in AD1450, MacGeoghan committed “great depredations” on the English here, burning Rath Guaire, Killucan and other places in the area (Name Books).

Situated in Killucan parish, Farbill barony, County Westmeath, this townland was labelled ‘Grifinstowne’ on the Down Survey map of Farbill. The Name Books mention a patch of bog along the eastern boundary which is shaded on the first edition OS map of 1837. Another patch of bog and furze was located 15 chains (300m) west of the eastern townland boundary. Several small plantings across the townland were also noted as was the small wood located four chains (80m) north of the southern boundary. This must have been the remnants of the Great Wood of Grifinstown which was shown on the Down Survey map of Farbill barony in the mid-seventeenth century. This wood was not felled completely until the Second World War (Geraghty 1984). An Ordnance Survey trigonometric station was located eleven chains (220m) southeast of the church and burial ground (WM027:061, Site 1) and the townland was used in the 1830s for both tillage and pasture. Two ‘Danish Forts’ were noted in the northern portion (Name Books, County Westmeath).

The Name Books mention the graveyard, the church of which they said there was no sign, and a castle ruins standing up to fifty feet (c.15m) in height (Name Books). The ecclesiastical remains in Grifinstown (WM027:061) comprise the ruins of a rectangular church built of limestone rubble and aligned east-northeast–west-southwest. The gable at the western end remains intact almost to full height but the eastern end of the church is completely ruined and overgrown. The church measures c.5.5m in width by 15m in length and it is set within a roughly oval graveyard bound by a bank with the remains of drystone facing in places with a shallow fosse at the foot (RMP, Dúchas). Grifinstown also contains a ringfort (WM027:063) which is located c.170m from the road take on a gentle southeast-facing slope (Keeley et al 2000).

Piers' map of Westmeath in 1682 shows that the main crossroads in Farbill was located in Grifffinstown. Its location near the main crossroads meant that the graveyard was probably the most important in the barony. In 1640, Edward Griffin of Grifffinstown let 493 plantation acres (323Ha) to George Fitzgerald and the bishop of Killalowe (Anonymous 1982) and sometime before the 1830s, Mr. Fetherston-Haugh of Grifffinstown House laid down a railroad to facilitate the draining of the bog on his estate (Lewis 1837). During ploughing in Grifffinstown, two tin vessels were uncovered containing coins from the reigns of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), James I (1603–25), Charles I (1625–49) and the Protectorate (1649–59) (Lewis 1837). The Topographical Files of the National Museum record worked flint from Grifffinstown (NMI ref. 1934:5946) as well as the remains of four individuals which were uncovered by Irish Land Commission workers twenty yards (c.18m) from a fort there in December 1938.

3.2 Stratigraphical Report

A large area around the possible feature was stripped of topsoil by machine under archaeological supervision. The sod (F001) and topsoil (F002) combined measured between 0.2m and 0.45m in depth and directly overlay the subsoil (F003). The topsoil comprised a brown sandy clay and the subsoil was an orange stony boulder clay. No features of an archaeological nature were encountered and it would appear that the pit that had an original depth of less than 0.2m was removed during the testing phase.

3.3 List of Contexts

F001	Sod
F002	Brown sandy topsoil
F003	Natural boulder clay

4. CONCLUSION

Excavation at this site failed to identify any features of an archaeological nature. It would appear that the shallow pit identified during the testing phase was removed at this time. There was no evidence to suggest that it formed part of a larger site, it most likely existing in isolation and being of little significance.

It is highly unlikely that further features survive in this field as previous archaeological testing failed to identify any other potential archaeology. In light of this further archaeological mitigation is not considered necessary.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

References

Keeley, V., Sullivan, E., Brady, N., & Barton, R. (2000) *Draft Report Phase 3 Archaeological Assessment: N4 Kinnegad–Enfield–Kilcock Road Improvement Project*. Unpublished report prepared by Valerie J. Keeley Ltd.

Lewis, S. (1837) *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. Lewis & Co. London.

Other Sources

Historical Maps courtesy of the Map Library, Trinity College, Dublin 2 and Meath County Library, Navan.

Ordnance Survey Field Name Books of the County of Westmeath, 1837.

Ordnance Survey Field Name Books of the County of Meath 1835–36. Vol. V.

Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), formerly the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), of Dúchas The Heritage Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, 7 Ely Place Upper, Dublin 2.

Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.

Signed:

Stephen Linnane, Archaeologist.

19th January 2004

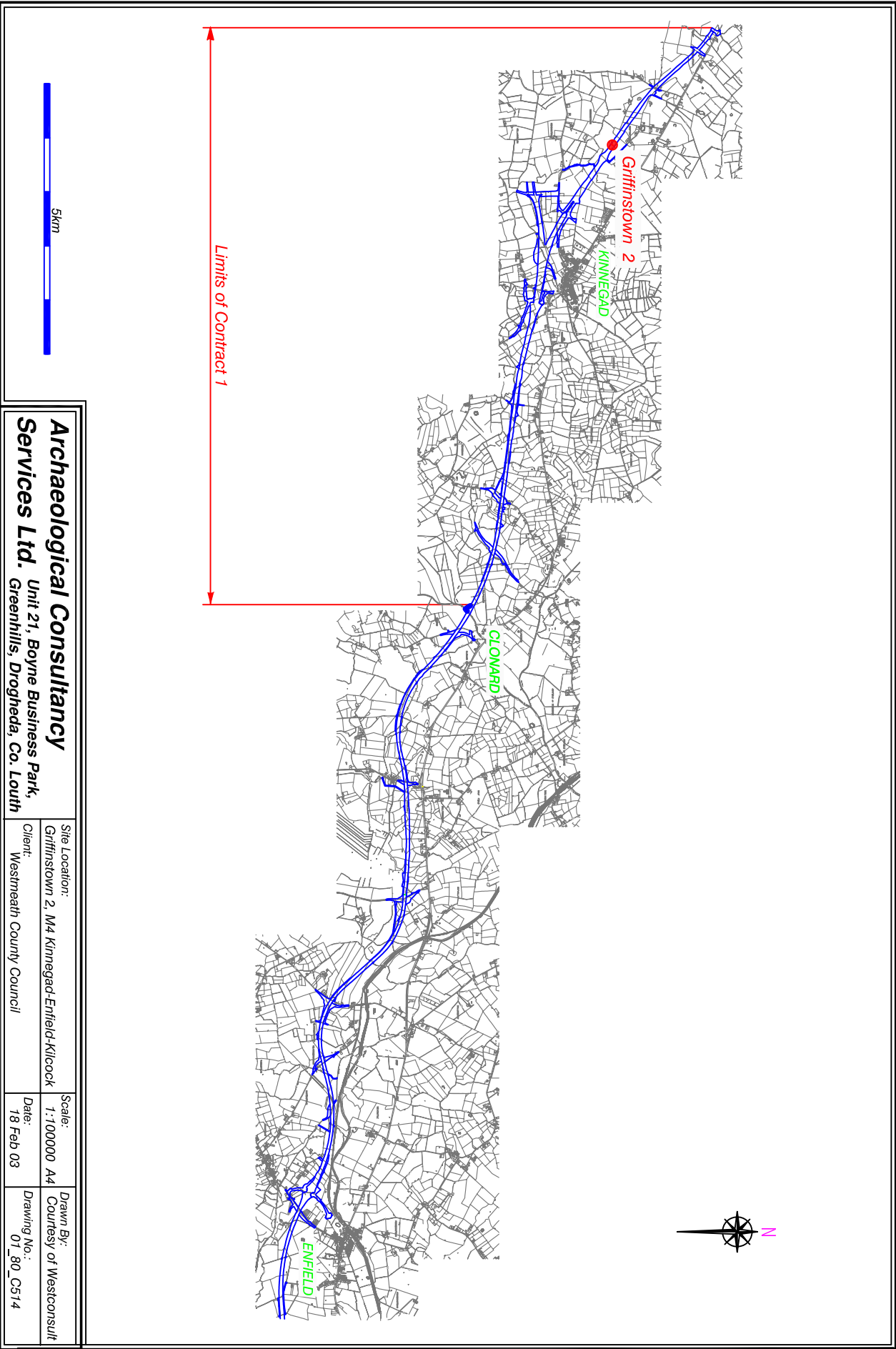


Figure 1: Location of Griffithstown 2 along proposed route

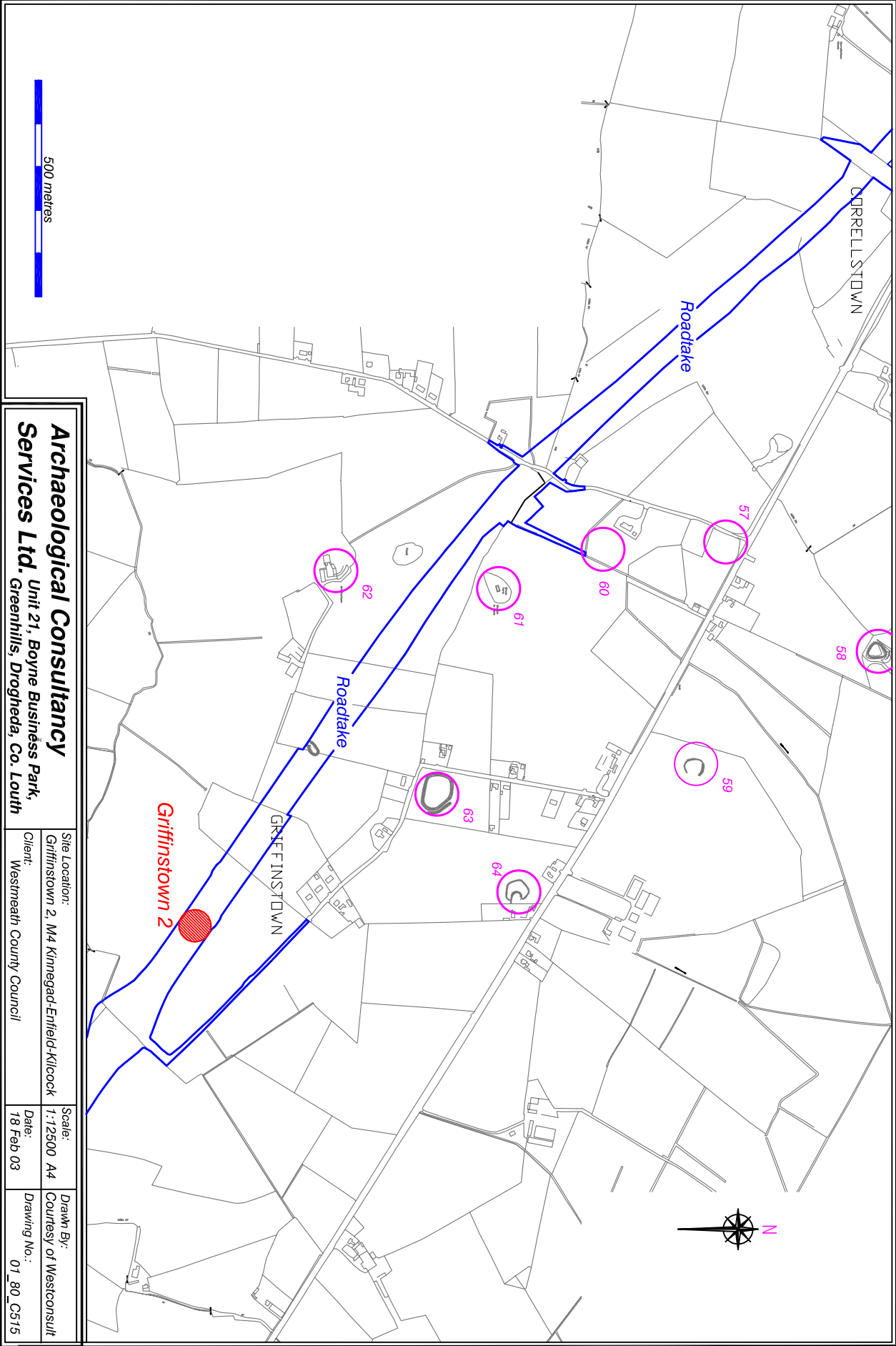
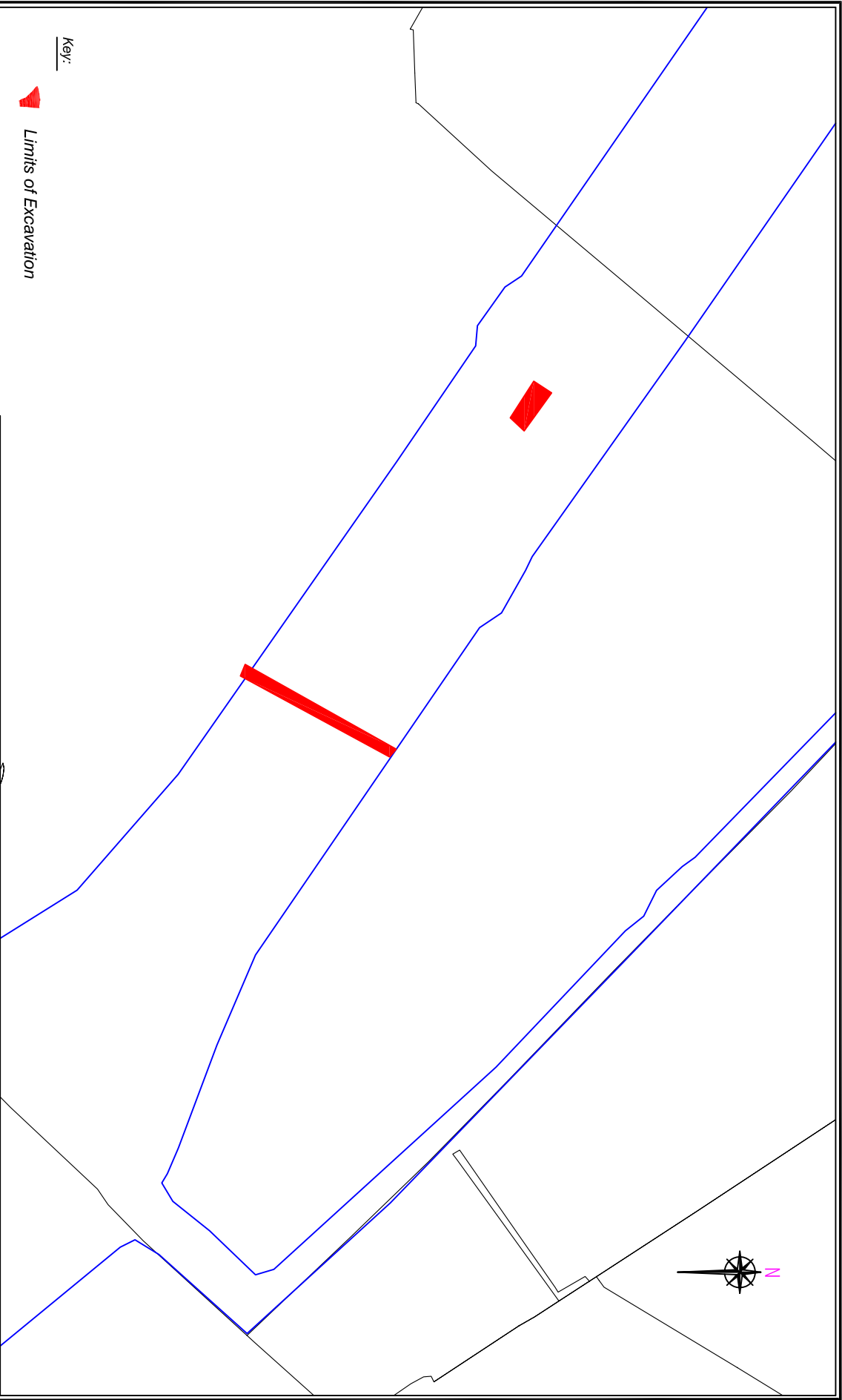
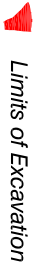


Figure 2: Detailed location of Griffithstown 2 in relation to RMP sites, Westmeath Sheet 27



Key:



100 metres

Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.		
Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth		
Site Location:	Scale:	Drawn By:
Griffithstown 2, Kinnegad-Enfield-Kilcock	1 : 2500	ACS ltd
Client:	Date:	Drawing No.:
West Meath County Council	18 Feb 03	01_80_C516

Figure 3 : Griffithstown 2, Area of Excavation



Plate 1: Location of cutting from north-west.

(01:80_CP1:15)



Plate 2: Location of cutting from south-east.

(01:80_CP1:12)