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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
OF A
PROPOSED GREENWAY
FOR
BALLINROBE,
COUNTY MAYO**

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1. Introduction

This impact assessment was commissioned by Mayo County Council and undertaken on a proposed Greenway in Ballinrobe, County Mayo (Figure 1). The assessment involved a site visit and the research of a number of cartographic and literary sources.

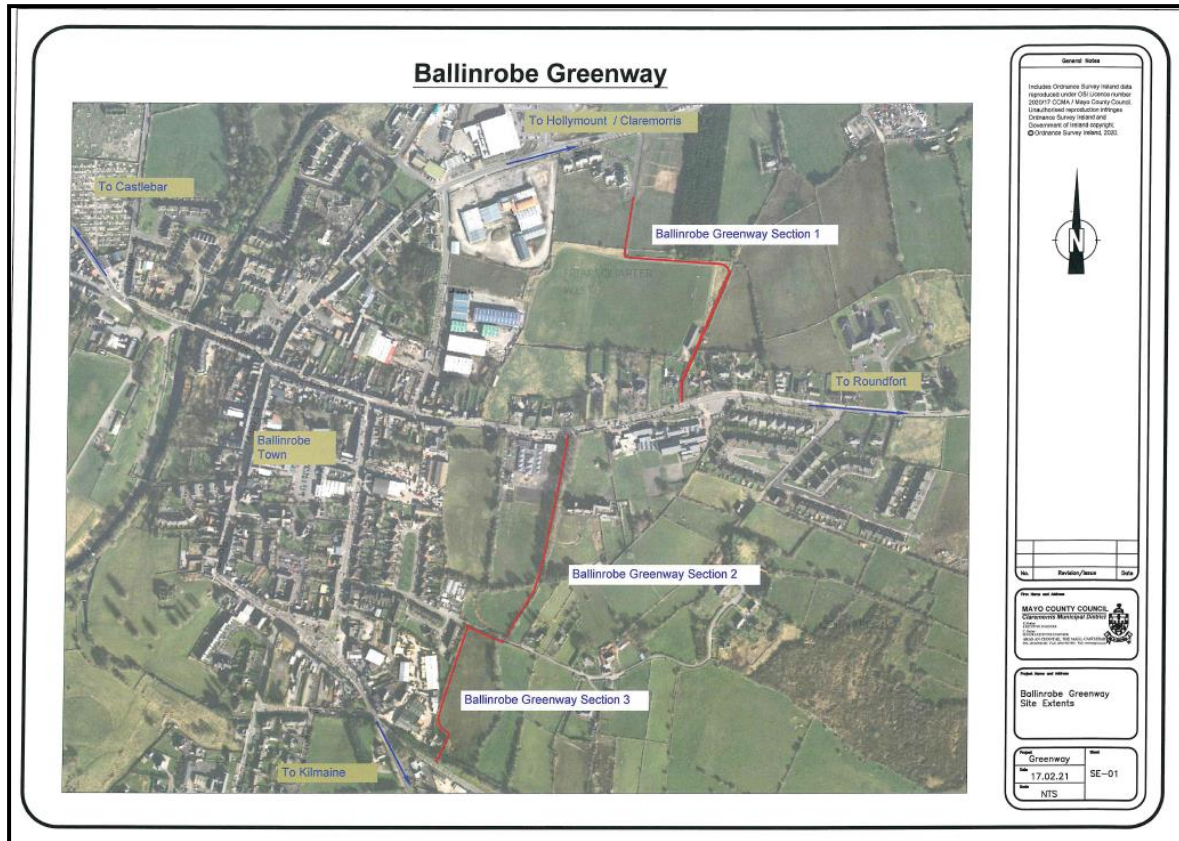


Figure 1 Site Location Map (courtesy of Mayo County Council). Route in red.

The proposed route is located along the eastern outskirts of the town in the townlands (from N to S) of Friarsquarter West, Cornaroya and Knockfereen (Figure 2).

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2. Research Sources

- Bradley, J. and Dunne, N. (1989) *The Urban Archaeological Survey of County Mayo, Part 20*. Unpublished.
- Knox, H.T. (1908) *The history of the County of Mayo to the close of the 17th century*. Dublin.
- Lavelle, D. et. al. (1994) *An Archaeological Survey of Ballinrobe and District, including Lough Mask and Lough Carra*. Castlebar.
- Ordnance Survey 1:10560 (6-inch) map of County Mayo, Sheet No. 118, 1st Edition of 1838.
- Ordnance Survey 1:10560 (6-inch) map of County Mayo, Sheet No. 118, Edition of 1929.
- Ordnance Survey 1:2500 (25-inch) map of County Mayo, Late 19th/early 20th century edition.
- Record of Monuments and Places, County Mayo, Dúchas, the Heritage Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. 1996.
- www.archaeology.ie (web-site of the National Monuments Service).
- www.excavations.ie (summary accounts of all excavations in Ireland 1969-2020).
- www.heritage.maps.ie (includes the finds database of the National Museum of Ireland).

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3. Research Results

The proposed route is located outside the constraint for the recorded monument that is Ballinrobe town (RMP No. MA118-022), however, it does pass through the constraint for an enclosure (RMP No. MA118-023) in Cornaroya townland (Figure 2).

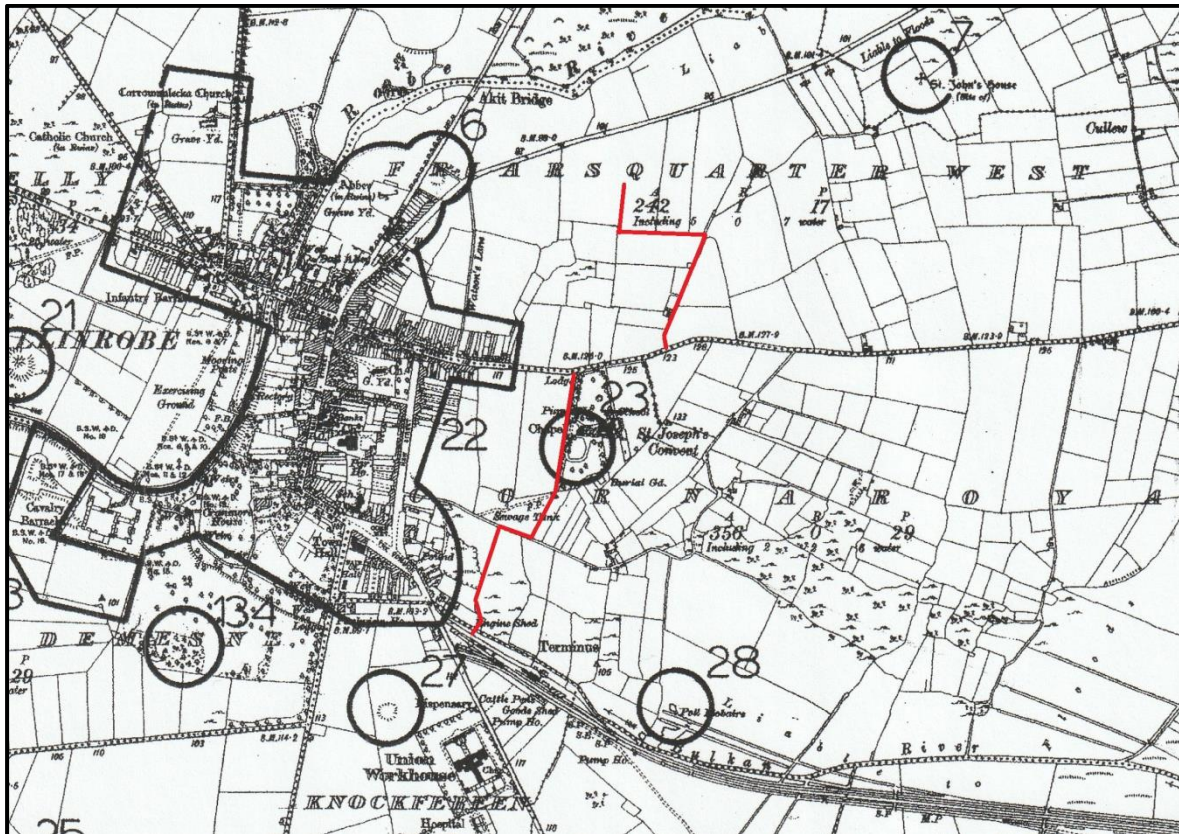


Figure 2 Site Location Map (Extract from Mayo RMP, Sheet No. 118). Route in red.

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RMP No. MA118-022

Description: ‘The borough of Ballinrobe was established in the wake of the Anglo-Norman conquest of northwest Connacht in the years after 1237. It formed part of the manor of Lough Mask which was regarded as of such importance that it was held by Richard de Burgh, the conqueror of Connacht. The date of the foundation of the borough is unknown and there are only a few passing mentions of Ballinrobe in the documentary record. In 1318 a messuage and a garden and half a weir in Ballinrobe belonged to the brother of Margaret de Baddlesmere who had inherited it. The provost of Ballinrobe is mentioned in 1349 providing a clear indication of its corporate status. The Anglo-Norman colony in Connacht began to collapse, however, after the assassination of the Brown Earl of Ulster in 1333. The Mayo

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lands, of which Ballinrobe formed a part, were seized by Edmund Burke who subsequently became known as MacWilliam Íochtair and established himself at Ballinrobe. Knox has suggested that the borough died out c. 1338 but references to the attempt in 1390 to hold assises at Ballinrobe suggest that there was still some form of settlement here at the close of the fourteenth century..... From the fourteenth century until the late sixteenth century Ballinrobe remained one of the principal fortresses of MacWilliam Íochtair In 1571 Sir Edward Fitton, lord president of Connacht, attacked and captured Ballinrobe.... After the Nine Years War' (1603) 'Ballinrobe passed into the hands of the Nolan family and from them to the Cuffs. It was those two families who laid the groundwork for the formation of the present town' (Bradley and Dunne, 1989).

The extant medieval remains at Ballinrobe consist of a parish church (RMP No. MA118-022006) and an Augustinian Friary (RMP No. MA118-022002).



'Carrownalecka Church' (RMP No. MA118-022006) stands in the NE corner of a graveyard (RMP No. MA118-022007) and is heavily overgrown with ivy (Plate No. 1). It is located at the N end of the town to the W of the River Robe (Figure 2).

Plate No. 1 Carrownalecka Church, from SE.

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Plate No. 2 Augustinian Friary from ESE.

The friary (Plate No. 2) was founded *c.* 1312, probably by Elizabeth de Clare and was the first Augustinian house in Connaught. It is located just E of the river at the N end of the town (Figure 2). Its buildings were repaired in 1400 and 1431 with friars in occupation in 1574 and again after the rebellion of 1641.

It was excavated prior to its restoration and conservation between 1990 and 1994. Burial still occurs in the surrounding graveyard (RMP No. MA118-022003).



Plate No. 3 Cavalry Barracks from N.

According to Knox (1908), a Norman castle was erected here in the 1230s. The medieval borough included a castle (RMP No. MA18-022001), which changed ownership many times and was transformed into a manor house, before being levelled to build a military barracks in the late 18th century (Plate No. 3).

The ruins of the Cavalry Barracks stand on the southern bank of the River Robe (Figure 2).

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RMP No. MA118-023



Plate No. 4 Enclosure from SW.

Description: According to An Archaeological Survey of Ballinrobe and District (Lavelle, 1994) the enclosure (RMP No. MA118-023) consists of a 'Roughly circular area (37.8m N-S; 28.2m E-W), enclosed by low earthen bank (H 0.3m) SW to ESE. Standing stone... in interior' (Plate No. 4).



Plate No. 5 Standing Stone from S.

The standing stone (RMP No. MA118-023001) is described as 'Rectangular in plan (max. dims. H 2.16m; Wth 0.6m; T 0.3m), of limestone material' (Plate No. 5). These descriptions were based on site visits which took place in March 1990.

The enclosure (RMP No. MA118-023) is located to the front (S) of the former Sisters of Mercy convent, which dates to the mid 19th century and is now in use as a crèche (Figure 2 and Plate No. 4). A tarred access road is located around the circumference of the monument.

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Cartographic History

A number of buildings, possibly dwellings, are indicated along the WNW side of the NNE/SSW aligned breen/road located along the S half of Section 1 of the proposed Greenway route on the 1838 edition of the OS six-inch map (Figure 3). None of these buildings are extant.



Figure 3 Site Location Map – extract from 1st edition of OS six-inch sheet of 1838 (courtesy of www.archaeology.ie).

The enclosure (RMP No. MA118-023) is clearly indicated as a ringfort on the 1838 edition of the OS six-inch sheet in Cornaroya townland (Figure 4). The remainder of the route in Sections 2 and 3 appear as featureless fields on the same edition with rock outcrop is indicated in the field at the SSW end of Section 3 just NNE of the Bulkan river (Figure 4).

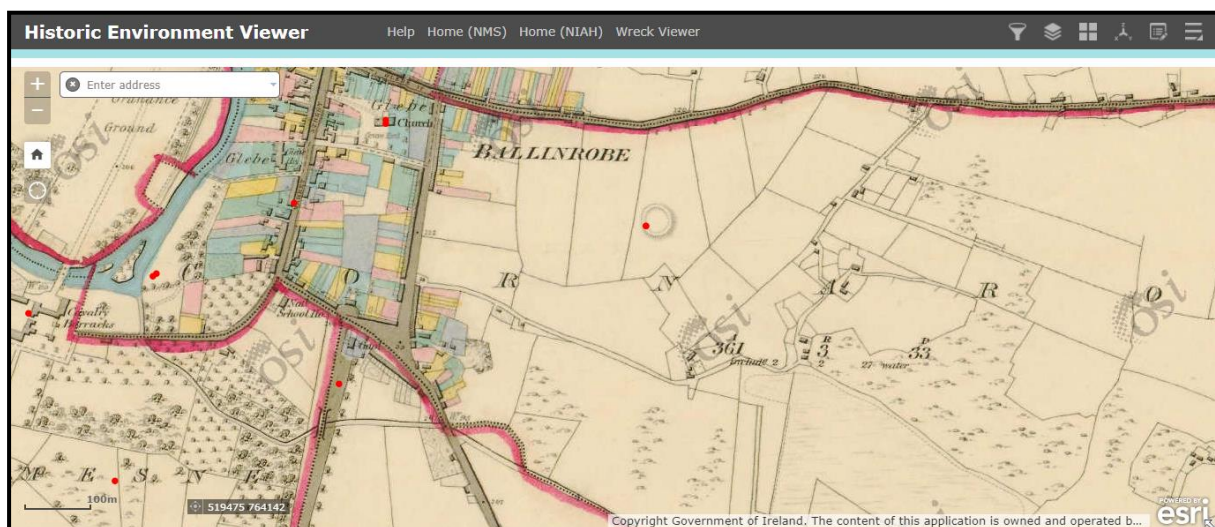


Figure 4 Site Location Map – extract from 1st edition of OS six-inch sheet of 1838 (courtesy of www.archaeology.ie).

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Only one of the buildings marked on the 1838 edition of the OS six-inch map (Figure 3) along the S half of Section 1 of the proposed Greenway route appears to have survived by the time of the OS 25-inch map of the late 19th/early 20th century (Figure 5).

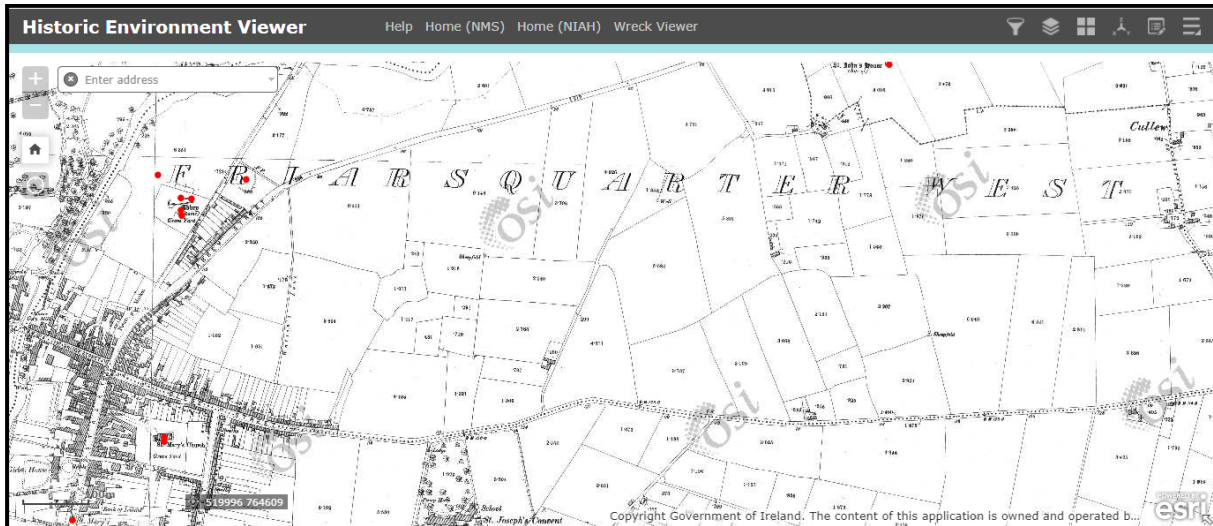


Figure 5 Site Location Map – extract from OS 25-inch sheet of late 19th/early 20th century (courtesy of www.archaeology.ie).

The only change along the route of Section 2 of the proposed Greenway is the appearance of ‘*St. Joseph’s Convent*’ with the depiction of the adjacent recorded monument (RMP No. MA118-023) having changed, probably as a result of the construction of the convent (Figure 6).

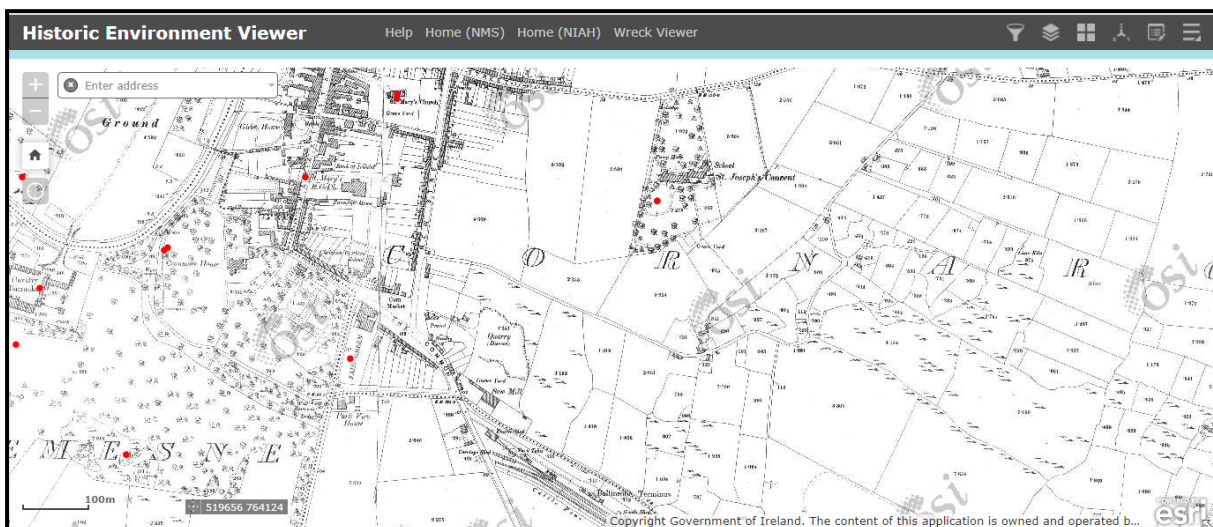


Figure 6 Site Location Map – extract from OS 25-inch sheet of late 19th/early 20th century (courtesy of www.archaeology.ie).

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There is little change along the proposed route between the Os 25-inch map (Figures 5 and 6) and the 1929 edition of the OS six-inch sheet (Figure 2).

National Museum of Ireland Finds Database

There are no entries in the finds database of the National Museum of Ireland for the townlands of Cornaroya, Friarsquarter West or Knockfereen in Ballinrobe.

Excavations

There are at least 30 entries for Ballinrobe on www.excavations.ie, which records summaries of all excavations undertaken on the island of Ireland between 1969 and 2020. Those closest to the proposed development are:

- Excavation Licence No.08E0855. Pre-development testing by Fran Wilkinson on Convent Road (Friarsquarter West townland), in advance of a housing development, revealed nothing of archaeological significance.
- Excavation Licence No.10E0503. Pre-development testing by Antoine Giacometti, N of the Claremorris Road (Friarsquarter West townland), in advance of a retail development, revealed nothing of archaeological significance.
- Excavation Licence No.10E0089. Pre-development testing by Dominic Delaney, W of the Kilmaine Road (Knockfreen townland), in advance of a housing development, revealed nothing of archaeological significance.
- Excavation Licence No.15E0038. Pre-development testing by David O'Connor, S of the Claremorris Road (Friarsquarter West townland), in advance of the development of a Primary Care Centre, revealed two burnt spreads.
- Excavation Licence No.15E0474. Rescue Excavation of the two burnt spreads found during previous testing (Licence No. 15E0038) by Bruce Sutton.
- Excavation Licence No.18E0194. Pre-development testing by Sue Zajac, S of the Claremorris Road (Friarsquarter West townland), in advance of a housing development, revealed nothing of archaeological significance.
- Excavation Licence No. 16E0285. Pre-development testing by the author, N of the Convent Road (Friarsquarter West townland), in advance of a housing development, revealed nothing of archaeological significance.

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4. Description of the Proposed Greenway

The proposed development will consist of the construction of a 3m wide bituminous track with a 0.65m wide grass verge on either side, the erection of boundary fences and the construction of a footbridge over the Bulkan River at the S end of Section 3 (Figures 1 and 7-9). The construction of the track will entail a reduction in existing ground levels of 500mm. The boundary fences will require concrete bases which will measure 400m square and 600mm deep. There are no specifications for the footbridge at the time of writing.

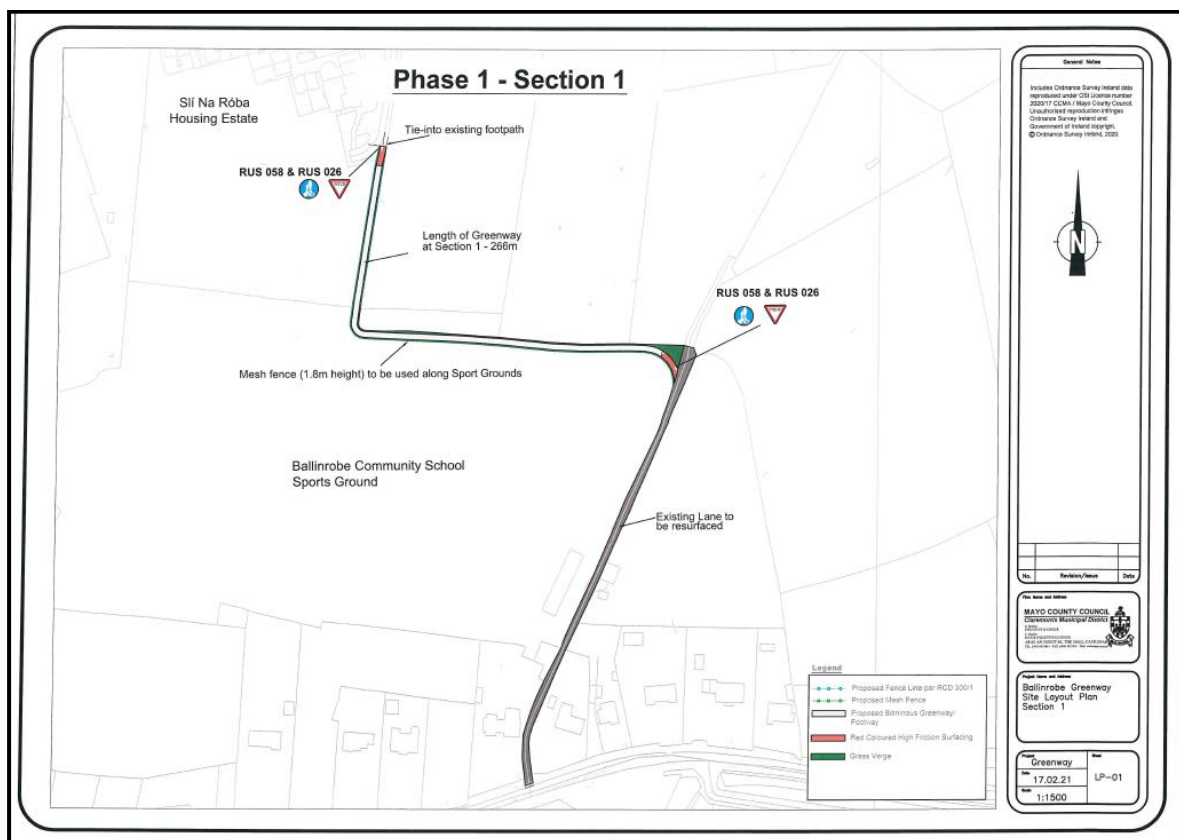


Figure 7 Section 1 of the proposed Greenway.

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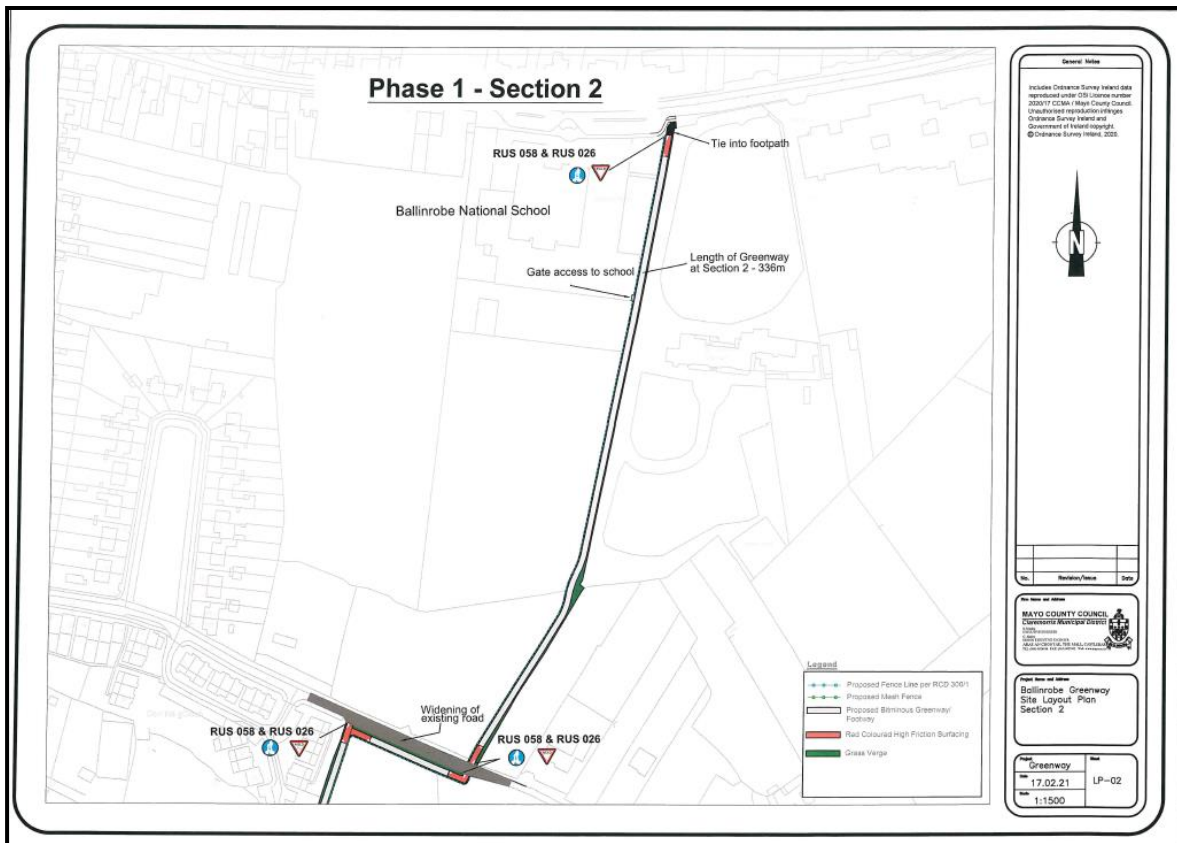


Figure 8 Section 2 of the proposed Greenway.

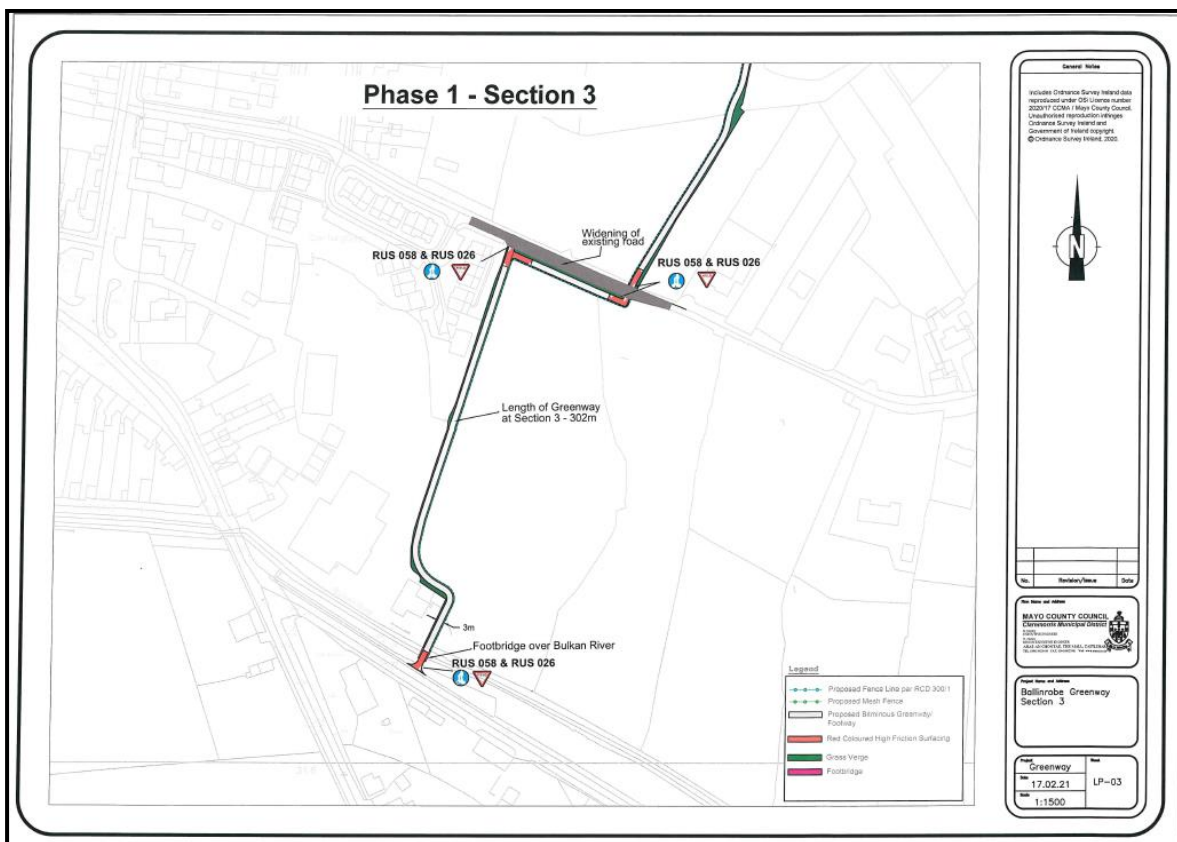


Figure 9 Section 3 of the proposed Greenway.

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5. Site Description

Section 1- 266m long



Plate No. 6 N end of Section 1 from SSW.

The N end of Section 1 of the proposed Greenway route is located at the 'Slí na Roba' housing estate on the Claremorris Road (Figure 7). From here the proposed route runs S across a field of pasture (Plate No. 6) before turning E along the N boundary of the Ballinrobe Community School playing pitches (Plate No. 7).



Plate No. 7 Looking W along N side of Ballinrobe Community School playing pitches.

The pitches have necessitated ground disturbance during their construction with a fall in ground levels of over 1m along the E side of the playing field, indicating the filling up of this side of the area.

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Plate No. 8 Looking NNE along grassy boreen.

The proposed route then turns SSW along the E side of the playing fields and runs along an existing grassy boreen enclosed by drystone walls overgrown with ivy, hawthorn, elder and briars (Plate No. 8).



Plate No. 9 Looking SSW along stoned access road.

To the SSW of the Ballinrobe Community School pitches the proposed route will utilise an existing stoned access road which runs from pitches to the S end of Section 1 on the Convent Road (Plate No. 9).

Section 2 – 336m long

The majority of the length of Section 2 of the proposed Greenway route is located within the grounds of St. Joseph's Primary School (Figure 8). The NNE end of this section runs along the E boundary of the school in a landscaped area along an ivy-covered mortared stone wall. An obsolete boiler house enclosed by concrete block walls is located along this section of the route adjacent to a recently completed extension to the school. To the rear (SSW) of the school building, adjacent to the tarmac school yard, the ground levels rise through a grass-covered area planted with trees and flowers.

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This area and the NNE end of the school pitch to the SSW borders the former Sisters of Mercy Convent (to the E). Further to the SSW is the school pitch, at the ESE end of which the route is located on a landscaped raised area along the same mortared stone boundary wall (Plate No. 10).

Plate No. 10 Looking NNE along ESE side of St. Joseph's Primary School pitch.



The SSW end of Section 2 of the proposed route is located in the grounds of a garden centre, which consists of pasture sloping down to the S and W, which is divided into a number of paddocks by modern wooden post and rail fencing (Plate No. 11). A number of saplings are found along this section.

Plate No. 11 Looking SSW along Section 2 through garden centre grounds.

Along the ESE side of this section is a drystone wall overgrown with hawthorn and briars (Plate No. 11).

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Section 3 – 302m long



Most of the length of the third and final section of the proposed Greenway is located within a large field of undulating pasture which is enclosed by drystone walls lined with ash, hawthorn and briars (Plate No. 12).

Plate No. 12 Looking N along proposed route of Section 3.

The route is located along the NNE and WNW field boundaries of the field. Adjacent to the NNE end of the WNW boundary is a modern housing estate, while a commercial premises is located adjacent to the SSE end of the same WNW field boundary.



The route of the track then turns ESE for a short length along a high mortared stone wall to the rear of a domestic dwelling, before resuming its SSW direction to meet the Bulkan river. The river channel measures *c.* 9m wide and *c.* 5m deep and appears to have been artificially deepened in modern times (Plate No. 13).

Plate No. 13 Looking SE along the Bulkan River.

The 3rd section of the proposed route terminates SSW of the river in a green landscaped lawn/verge along the NNE side of Station Road (Figure 9).

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6. Relevant Legislation

- Recorded Monuments in Ireland and specifically within County Mayo are protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 and the Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020 (the draft Mayo County Development Plan 2021-2027 is at the public consultation phase).
- The National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 gave legal protection to recorded monuments through the establishment of the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), which incorporated the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for each county into law.
- Under AoH-01 of the Archaeological Heritage section of the Environment, Heritage & Amenity Strategy of the Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020, it is an objective of the Council to:
 - (a) Protect the archaeological heritage and especially sites identified in the *Record of Monuments and Places*, National Monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the State, and National Monuments that are the subject of Preservation Orders, and to safeguard the integrity of the archaeological sites in their setting.
 - (b) Require that planning applications within the zones of archaeological potential as outlined in the *Record of Monuments and Places* include an archaeological assessment as set out in the Development Guidance document accompanying this Plan.
 - (c) Require that all large scale planning applications (i.e. development of lands on 0.5 ha or more in area or 1km or more in length) include an archaeological assessment as set out in the Development Guidance document accompanying this Plan.

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7. Potential Impacts

- Research has shown that there are no entries for Ballinrobe in the database of files in the National Museum of Ireland.
- Research has also shown that there are seven excavation licences related to the general area around the proposed development. Five of these revealed nothing of archaeological significance. Two (Excavation Licence Nos. 15E0038 & 15E0474) are related to the discovery of two burnt spreads and their excavation in advance of the development of the Primary Care Centre located S of the Claremorris Road in Friarsquarter West townland. These discoveries were made *c.* 60m E of the N end of the proposed greenway, however, the testing of the housing development immediately N of the N end of the proposed Greenway (Excavation Licence No. 18E0194) revealed nothing of archaeological significance.
- The proposed greenway is not located within the constraint for Ballinrobe (RMP No. MA118-022) (Figure 2), however, it is located within the archaeological constraint for an enclosure (RMP No. MA118-023) in Cornaroya townland (Figure 2). The proposed route is located 6.5m away from the recorded monument (RMP No. MA118-023). Due to the proximity and the possibility that a ditch/fosse was located outside the extant bank of the enclosure, associated sub-surface features and/or deposits may be adversely affected by the construction of the greenway.

7. Mitigation

Along a 50m section of the proposed route nearest the enclosure (RMP No. MA118-032), the following methodology will be used in the construction of the Greenway:

- Excavate to a maximum depth of 100mm.
- Lay terram membrane as a separation material
- Pour 150mm depth of reinforced concrete base with a 300mm deep upstand to support fencing.
- Fence posts to be anchored to upstand.
- The reduction in existing ground levels along the 50m long section to be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

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8. List of Abbreviations

Av. Th.	Average Thickness	c.	circa
C	Context	E	East
Illus.	Illustration	m	metre
max.	maximum	mm	millimetre
N	North	NGC	National Grid Co-ordinates
OD	Ordnance Datum	OS	Ordnance Survey
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places	S	South
SAC	Special Area of Conservation	SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
Th.	Thickness	W	West

**ALL RECOMMENDATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO THE FINAL
APPROVAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING,
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HERITAGE**