

Archaeological assessment

**139-149 North King Street
Dublin 7**

RPS Ref. No. 8790
RMP Ref. DU018-020

By

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For

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report comprises an archaeological assessment of a 0.3263ha development site at 139-149 North King Street, Dublin 7. It is being submitted on behalf of the developer, *Ringline Investments Ltd.*, to accompany a planning application for the site's redevelopment as purpose-built student accommodation.

The development site forms the corner with Bow Street and is bounded to the south and west by Brown Street North. It is presently occupied by two large structures, with a large open yard to the centre of the property (Figure 1). The industrial elevations to North King Street and Bow Street (for many years the premises of James Crean and Son, soap manufacturers), are listed on the RPS (Ref. No. 8790)¹ and are being retained in the development.

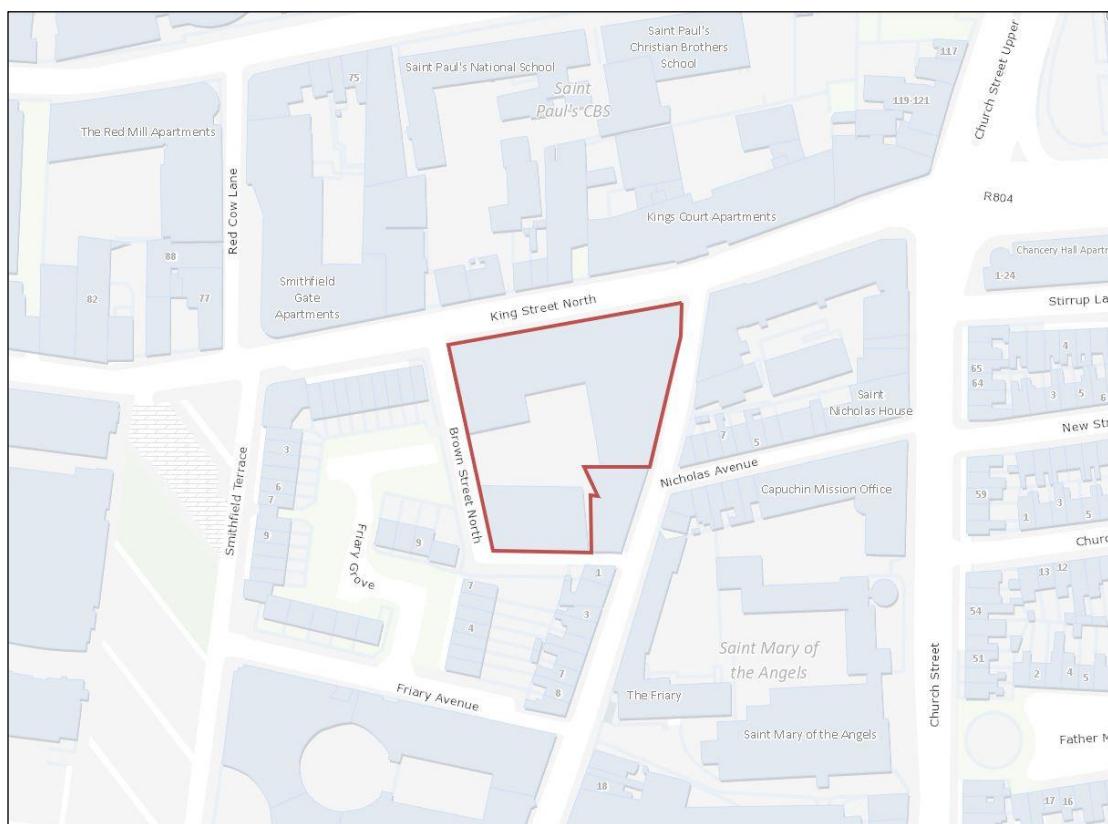


Figure 1 Site location (ASI Historical Environment Viewer)

- 1.2 The site lies within the zone of archaeological potential for the historic city (DU018-020), although there are no discrete recorded monuments within the red line boundary. The general Smithfield area saw sustained urban development with the city assembly's alienation of Oxmantown Green in 1667, however it is accepted that Bow Street is a much older

¹ The assemblage is also listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), Reg No. 50070319, with a Regional rating.

thoroughfare, where North King Street must have existed in some form prior to the laying out of the city's Smithfield applotments.²

There is moreover good documentary evidence that the urban block had already been developed by the thirteenth century, where the land likely formed part of the estate of the Augustinian Priory of the Holy Trinity, later to become ChristChurch cathedral. Suburbs are marginal places by their very nature and it is likely that this northern end of the suburb went into decline and by the end of the fifteenth century, as the western flank of Oxmantown contracted to the area behind the new gates erected at Hangman's Lane (today's Hammond Lane) and Comyn's Lane (May Lane).

Subsequent early eighteenth-century development along North King Street took the form of tall row houses with shops underneath, which were removed from the end of the nineteenth century as the soap factory expanded. Eighteenth-century cellar spaces survive in No. 149 and to a lesser extent in Nos 147 and 148 and it is likely that historic cellars survive under the factory slab associated with the adjoining historic properties to the west.

1.3 The proposed development will consist of

the demolition of existing structures on site, with the exception of the façade on North King Street (N) and Bow Street (E), which is a protected structure (RPS Ref. No. 8790 – north and east elevation only), which will be retained, improved and restored as part of the proposed development.

The proposal will provide a purpose-built student accommodation development in a 7-storey building over a partial existing basement with a setback at 5th floor and a further significant setback at the 6th floor level.

The proposal includes 361 no. student bedspaces, a ground level retail unit with frontage to both North King Street and Bow Street, communal facilities including a courtyard, external terrace at roof level at 5th and 6th floor and internal amenity spaces.

1.4 Although there is no basement level proposed, it is likely that the insertion of pile caps and ground beams will occasion significant disturbance across the site, impacting perhaps as much as 3000mm below existing ground levels. Considering *inter alia* the relatively shallow depth of the subsoil in this area, the development is likely to be in conflict with any surviving archaeological deposits on the site.

It is thus recommended below that archaeological test trenching is undertaken under licence in the open yard area prior to commencement.

² Myles, F. 2010. 'The archaeological evidence for John Odacio Formica's glasshouse at Smithfield, Dublin 7'. In Hearne, John M. (ed.), *Glassmaking in Ireland : from the medieval to the contemporary*. Dublin, 83 — 102.

2 Archaeological and historical contexts

2.1 Introduction

The block under discussion was not included in the new plots laid out by the city on Oxmantown Green c. 1665-6, and there is evidence that the area north of St. Michan's church had already witnessed some form of urban development. The documentary evidence suggests that the northern end of Bow Street (referred to as Lough Buoy in the eighteenth century) was granted to the Augustinian Priory of the Holy Trinity as part of the medieval manor of Grangegorman, an extensive possession of the priory just to the north.

2.2 Medieval development

Where it is impossible to identify the development site on surviving documentation, some general points can be made regarding the area's medieval occupation. An indication of the pre-Norman history of Grangegorman is given in the area's very name where it is likely the land was held by the Uí Bairrche sept, of which the MacGormáin clan were prominent. The grange element of the name relates to its medieval function as an outlying farm in the possession of Holy Trinity.

Where the area is well defined today it would appear to have been much more extensive when the boundaries of the civil parish of Grangegorman are considered. This covered an area extending from the Phoenix Park to Phibsborough and Broadstone, encompassing Cabra and extending to the southwest as far as Stoneybatter and Arbour Hill.

The medieval grange had been granted to Holy Trinity along with the lands of Glasnevin and Clonkeen (Deansgrange) relatively quickly after the arrival of the Anglo-Normans,³ where the lands of *Cilldulig* are referred to in the original grant.⁴ A secondary account of the grange culled from various sources provides a useful, though rather generic description of the buildings there, suggesting they consisted of a large hall with other spaces attached and an enclosed farmyard, around which stood a barn, a malthouse, a workshop and a haggard, all of which had thatched roofs.⁵

2.3 A more nuanced indication of the lay of the land closer to the transpontine suburb of Oxmantown on the eastern fringes of Oxmantown Green (the large area of commonage extending west from St. Michan's), can be extrapolated from the various leases and deeds in the ChristChurch archive, collected initially by McEnery with later work undertaken by Refaüssé.⁶ In addition, the account roll for Holy Trinity⁷ is particularly informative. To this can be added Murphy and Potterton's more recent analysis of the built fabric of the grange and their

³ McNeill, C. (ed.) 1950. *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's register, c.1172-1534*. Dublin.

⁴ McEnery, M.J. and Refaüssé, R. (eds) 2001. *ChristChurch Deeds*. Dublin, 37, No. 6.

⁵ MacGiolla Phadraig, B. 1945. '14th century life in a Dublin monastery', *Dublin Historical Record*, vii, 2, 41-54.

⁶ McEnery and Refaüssé 2001.

⁷ Mills, J. (ed.) 1996. *Account roll for the priory of the Holy Trinity, Dublin, 1337-1346*. Dublin.

analysis of the social economy.⁸ Although Holy Trinity was a significant landowner, other properties in the area were held by the city and other monastic foundations. The extent to which freehold properties in the area were owned by individual citizens is unknown.

The grange lands were extensive, with a defined border to the south along Oxmantown Green, the edges of which began to see unauthorised development from as early as the fourteenth century. The boundaries to the north and east are more difficult to extrapolate from the primary sources and may simply be those as defined by the boundaries of the civil parish of Grangegorman. It would appear likely in any case that the home farm and the associated settlement were located within the grounds of Technological University Dublin and that a substantial linear suburb developed along what is now North Brunswick Street which provided labour and skills for the grange.

A rental of Holy Trinity from c. 1326 lists the farmers of Grangegorman as 'John Serjant, tenant of a messuage near St. Michan's churchyard; John and Roger Laweless and Alexander Attewell; the rent of a messuage is about 4s. and that of an acre of land 1s.' The rental lists the cottiers as Adam Bourk; Gregory, John, William and Peter, holders [ploughmen]; Cristiana, the widow of John Catt; Robert the dryer; Roger de Kent; Adam Colby; Wm. Ferour; Walter Lymberner [the limeburner]; Henry Carney; William and Jordan, carters; Maichel Carrick; and Joseph, the thresher. The rental of a cottage was charged at between 1 and 2s. where most of the cottiers rendered service to the Priory worth 4d.⁹ The list obviously excludes the core personnel of the grange, who were presumably drawn from the Holy Trinity community.

A windmill in the possession of the priory on Oxmantown Green to the south of the grange lands and associated with the grange in terms of tenure and may have been located on Serjant's 1326 holding. In 1330 William de Bosewoth leased the land adjacent to the mill from the priory with a condition that he attend the court at Grangegorman once a year, indicating perhaps a wider area of tenurial influence over holdings to the south of the grange than has been previously appreciated.¹⁰

By the middle of the sixteenth century it can be determined that the Holy Trinity's estate on Oxmantown Green extended down Bow Street to the back gate and stile of St. Michan's,¹¹ presumably extending to the west as far as a stream which would in the 1660s form the eastern boundary of Smithfield.¹²

Although not part of the lands farmed directly by the grange, there is evidence to suggest that some feudal attendance there was a condition of some at least of the leases. Murphy and Potterton have further examined the account rolls from this period, extrapolating extraordinary evidence for consumption and sale from disposal patterns for crops and produce, thus

⁸ Murphy, M. and Potterton, M. 2010. *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages. Settlement, land-use and economy*. Dublin, 259-60.

⁹ McEney and Refaüssé, 144, No. 570.

¹⁰ Ibid. 146, No. 578.

¹¹ Ibid. 239, No. 1191

¹² Myles, 2010.

illuminating the diets of those directly connected with the grange as workers, clerics, cottiers or tenants.¹³

- 2.4 By the end of the fourteenth century, what is now North Brunswick Street had developed, ostensibly defining the open area of Oxmantown Green to the south. The houses and gardens along the northern street frontage appear to have been associated with the grange lands just to the north and it is thus likely the street developed along a lane dividing the grange lands from the commonage. Purcell has investigated the development of this linear suburb of a suburb, one catering, perhaps exclusively for the needs of the grange;¹⁴ the writer has probed the northeastern corner of the Green at Smithfield but uncovered little evidence along the seventeenth-century North King Street for medieval occupation.
- 2.5 The *ChristChurch Deeds* provide many names and occupations of tenants on the grange throughout the medieval period, giving a glimpse of the social relationships at play in the area. The deeds and leases rarely give dimensions of the holdings, but do provide details of the neighbouring properties, with indications given of the occupations of their occupants. The fees, rentals and associated conditions are also of interest and are worthy of study in their own right. In 1485 for example, a turner, John Payne was granted a messuage and garden, with a condition that he rebuild a straw roof and mud walls and repair and perform customary services at Grangegorman.¹⁵ His immediate neighbours were a husbandman and a woodcutter, both agricultural activities and occupations found in most medieval suburbs with surviving records throughout the medieval period.

An extended list of tenants is given in 1496-7 refers to the wood of Salcock, a ditch at Litecobragh (Cabra) and to a pasture called Bernleys.¹⁶ Several more leases survive from the sixteenth century, suggesting a movement of property and tenure brought on by the privatisation of the Holy Trinity's estates, which all add to a morphological appreciation of the area.

Two cases are typical. In December 1543, a labourer, Edmond Innose was leased 'his house on Oxmantown Grene, situated between the said green, on the south, Mey's farm on the north, the great place on the east, and Gwydo's place on the west for 31 years'.¹⁷ His rent of 8s. was paid to the Vicars Choral with certain agreements of rights of re-entry, building and repairs. This is a timely reference coming during a period of great change, where the monastic holdings throughout the country were divided among significant personages connected to the administration. Where the main grange land was now in the hands of Thomas Mey, other rentals were also going to the Vicars Choral in ChristChurch. Similarly, a barber (or more

¹³ Murphy and Potterton, Chapter 9, Agriculture.

¹⁴ Purcell, E. 2003. 'Land use in medieval Oxmantown' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin IV: proceedings of the Friends of Medieval Dublin Symposium 2002*. Dublin, 193-228; see also 2005. 'The city and the suburb: medieval Dublin and Oxmantown' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin VI: proceedings of the Friends of Medieval Dublin Symposium 2004*. Dublin, 188 — 223.

¹⁵ McEney and Refaussy, 217, No. 1072.

¹⁶ Ibid. 223, No. 1105.

¹⁷ Ibid. 239, No. 1192.

possibly a surgeon) Thomas Grace was leased in 1560 a house on Oxmantown Green, with a garden extending from the Green to the south to the great orchard on the north. To the east was the house and garden of Richard Nagle with John Kelly's house and garden to the west. His terms were slightly different and he was specifically covenanted to not cut timber without the lessors' licence.¹⁸ Nagle for his part was out by 1569, to be replaced by a clerk, John Dongan of Dublin.¹⁹

There are many similar transactions recorded in the *ChristChurch Deeds* which can be specifically located immediately to the north and west of St. Michan's. Burials associated with the church have been recorded to the north of May Lane, however its western boundary did not cross Bow Street. Deeds recorded further north are less specific in terms of their exact location however it is likely that by the late fourteenth century the development site under discussion occupied at an important junction at the edge of the city. It must of course be noted that Speed does not depict much north of St. Michan's and it is likely the area declined in the late medieval period.

Medieval burgage plots fronting North King Street are hinted at on surviving lease documentation on the development site. One such denomination actually straddles what later became Nos 145 and 146 and cannot be more than 4000mm in width.

2.6 *Post medieval development*

Rocque (Figure 2) depicts the area less than a century after Smithfield and Queen Street were laid out and incorporated into an urban plan which had already formed at the junction of *Oxmantown* (North King Street) and *Lough Buoy*²⁰ (Bow Street). As referred to above, the eastern side of Smithfield was not let by the city in 1666 and was probably defined by a stream which also formed the back plots of the tenements on the western side of Lough Buoy. A second area surrounded by the new plots was located on the frontage from Smithfield to Bow Street, along a section of North King Street annotated as *Oxmantown*. Its prior existence is indicated by its awkward relationship with the northern end of the new piazza and its new, western extension to the southern end of Stoneybatter followed a straighter line.

Rocque however hints at another landscape feature which just predated the urban development undertaken from 1667. Just to the east of the proposed development and occupying the southeastern corner of the same urban block (but not within the development boundary), is evidence for an elongated embankment. This is possibly part of the northwestern *place d'armes* depicted on the Down Survey mapping and part of the defences constructed around the city during the Confederate Wars. Rocque depicts the feature just as it was being removed by the laying out of Bedford Street (today's Nicholas Avenue) and it is perhaps of interest that that area between Bow Street and Church Street is depicted as undeveloped by Brooking in 1728.

¹⁸ Ibid. 256, No. 1270.

¹⁹ Ibid. 264, No. 1312.

²⁰ The yellow lake may be a reference to the run off from documented medieval tanning activity or lime burning in the area.

The urban block containing the development site is quite legible on Rocque, and the depiction was not revised by Scalé in 1778. The frontage from Brown Street to Lough Buoy was occupied for the most part by housing accommodated in narrower, presumably medieval plots. Brown Street was opened by the 1733 and a row of houses with short back plots and outhouses occupied the eastern side. Two large, detached houses occupied the Bow Street frontage and the centre of the site was occupied by warehousing and stables.

- 2.7 Barely eighty years after Rocque's mapping, the houses on Brown Street had been cleared and turned into cattle yards (Figure 3). The central portion of the North King Street frontage also saw redevelopment with Nos 140-144 sharing a rear elevation and plot boundary lane. To the street corners it is likely that the fabric depicted by Rocque still survived, along with one of the large detached houses on Bow Street. Indeed No. 38 Bow Street survived to some degree into the 1940s.

No.149 on the corner is of interest where the cellar spaces underneath reflect the footprint of the former building above. The front cellar spaces from Nos 149 to 146 have been broken through, with a larger, possibly later cellar space to the rear again. There is a single cellar space under the former No. 146, however in most cases modern cladding obscures the fabric. An arched opening under what was No.147 is possibly a more modern intervention. Further west it would appear likely that Nos 141-144 also had cellar spaces that possibly survive under the slab.

Of additional interest is the annotation of *Cavanagh's Court* which was mostly demolished by 1913 when it was photographed by W.J. Joyce (Figure 4). The rear elevations of Nos 141 and 142 North King Street close off the vista, appearing themselves somewhat the worse for wear. They would soon be cleared to extend the present brick elevation further west towards Brown Street.

The only major change brought to the block plan on the 25 inch mapping is the addition of the Phoenix Works in the corner of North King Street and Bow Street which had resulted in the demolition of Nos 145-149 (Figure 6). *Thom's Almanac and Official Dictionary* for 1862 lists Nos.145-148 as being occupied by Patrick Farrell & Son, soap boilers and tobacconists, with an entrance to O'Farrell & Sons' chandlery and soap-boil works at No.38 Bow Street. The structures shown to the rear of these plots in 1864 may have been where soap manufacturing initially took place (Figure 5), however the new elevation to North King Street is not evident on the Ordnance Survey until the 1886 revision.

The factory occupying the initial eleven bays is depicted on the company letterhead which accompanied two applications for compensation to the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee, after the 1916 Rising (Figure 7). The first was a claim for £30 10s 5d for damage by Crown forces to the premises and contents at Nos 144-149. A payment of £27 10s was recommended by Committee.²¹ A second claim for £125 for looted soap stock was disallowed as it was

²¹ PLIC/1/3882.

received past the deadline for submissions.²² There was no application made for the repair of damage occasioned by gunfire which reinforces the narrative that the most intense fighting in this sector occurred further east at the corner of Church Street.

The factory was extended in the early 1920s when the company acquired Nos 141-144. In 1942 the company acquired Nos 139-140 to the corner of Brown Street²³ and other references in the *Irish Builder* suggest ongoing expansion throughout the period and into the 1950s. It is not known if the initial elevational treatment was extended as the company expanded, however subtle differences in the fenestration suggest it was developed in three phases.

2.8 Discussion

Historical documentation points to the general area having a settled population by the thirteenth century, however the site of the proposed development cannot be securely identified among the various land grants and leases consulted. It is however possible that further research will identify a corner plot at the location of the site. Where early street front development has probably been removed by eighteenth-century cellars, there may survive evidence for the site's medieval occupation in the back plots across the less disturbed areas to the rear.

The newly developed Smithfield estate surrounded the plots under discussion by the 1670s, and individual plot development can be traced on Rocque and subsequent Ordnance Survey revisions. Where the nature of the pre-Georgian fabric and form is of obvious interest, especially in relation to the two houses depicted by Rocque on Bow Street, there may survive basement levels under the existing slab from this period further west on North King Street.

The corner arrangement incorporating the earliest brick elevations does not appear to have attracted gunfire in 1916, where most of the offensive action was taken from the east and directed towards Reilly's Fort at the corner with Church Street Upper. The factory was however occupied by British forces and the repairs specified did include damage to the window opes and new glazing as well as repairs undertaken to the interiors.

²² PLIC/1/6448.

²³ *Thom's Directory*, 1941 and 1943.

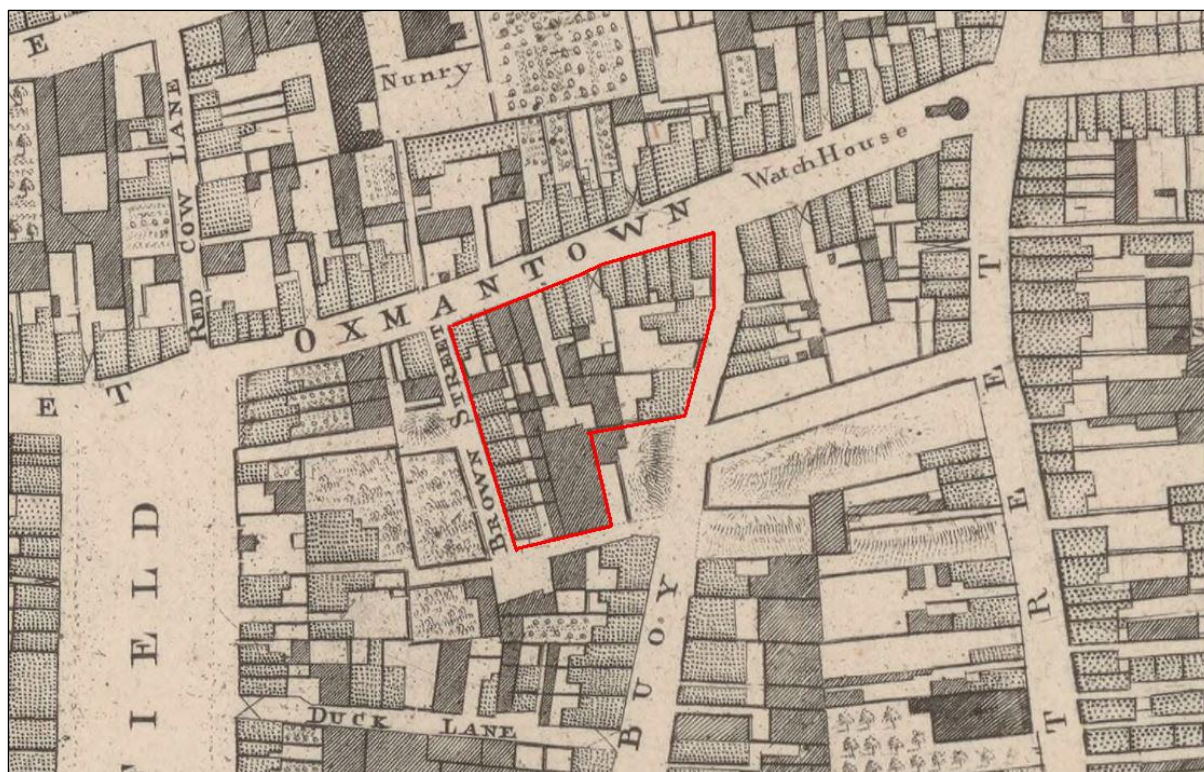


Figure 2 John Rocque, 1756

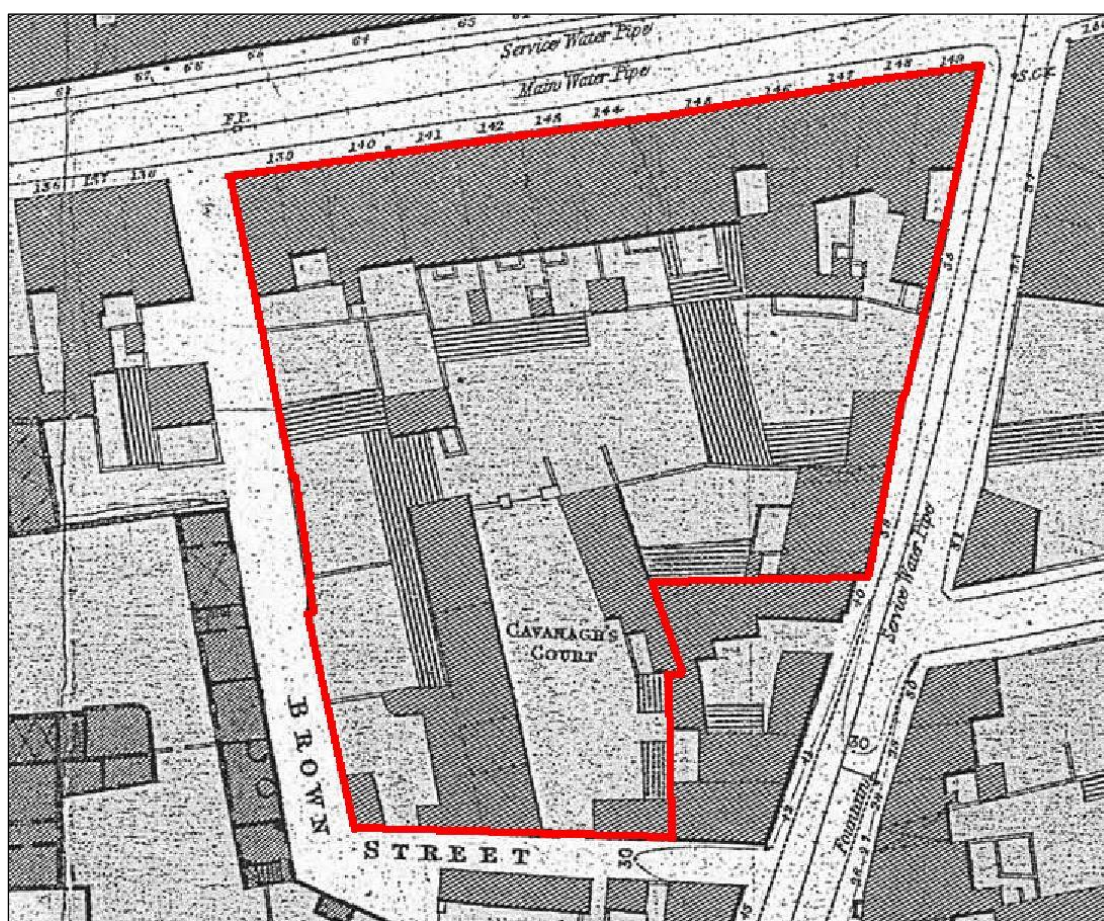


Figure 3 Ordnance Survey, Dublin sheet 13, 1838 (1847)



Figure 4 Cavanagh's Court. W.J. Joyce, 1913 (Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland)

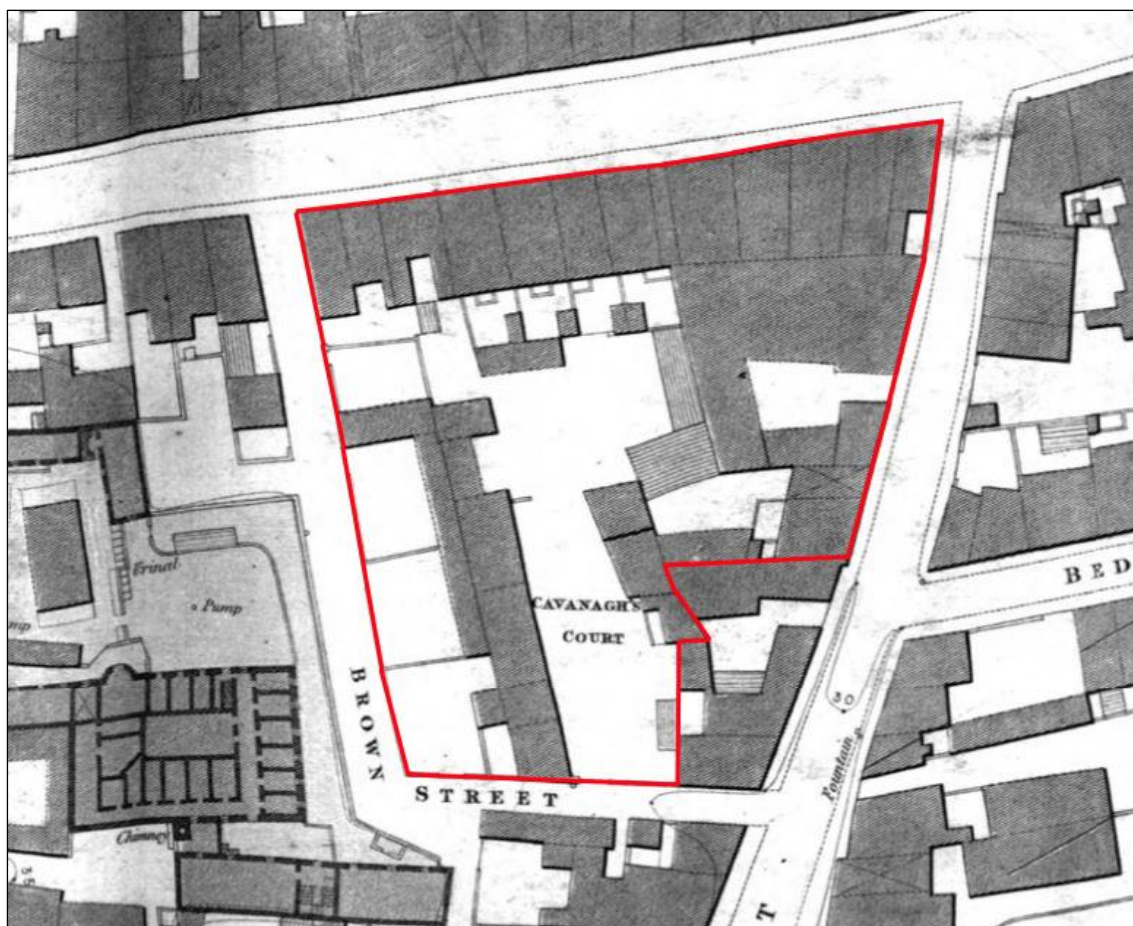


Figure 5 Ordnance Survey, sheet 13, 1907 (1911)



Figure 6 Ordnance Survey, DN018-07, 1907, (1911)

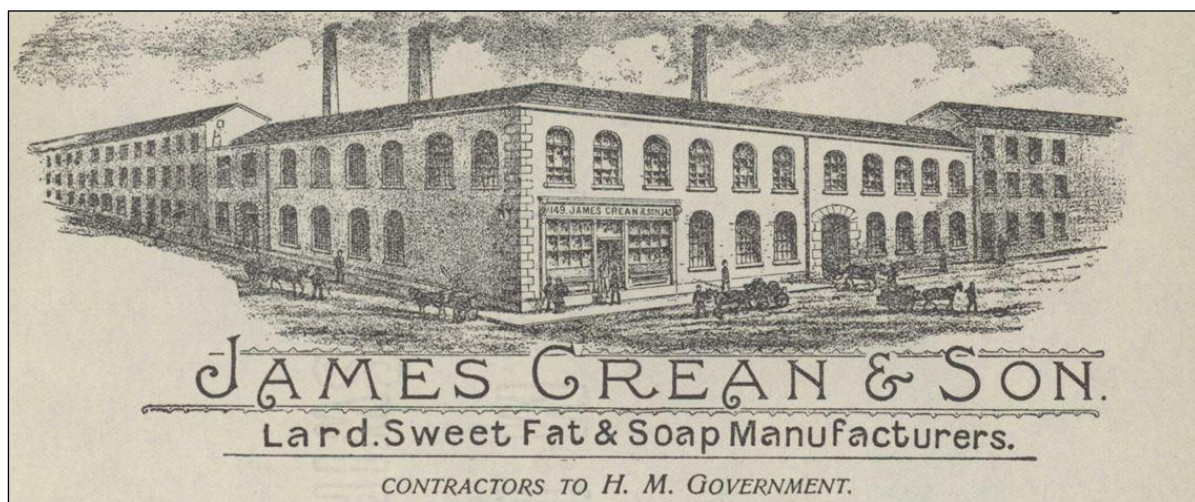


Figure 7 James Grean & Son. Company letterhead. Note generic depictions of buildings in background

3 Projected impact of proposed development

- 3.1 It is evident that the development site was occupied prior to the 1660s. In the absence of targeted archaeological investigation, the nature and extent of this occupation remains unknown. It would nonetheless appear likely that any street front activity relating to the area's medieval occupation has been truncated by later cellars.

Monitoring undertaken by the writer at the northern end of Smithfield recorded undisturbed subsoil at 1500mm sub-surface at several locations. Where there have been no ground investigations undertaken to date, it is likely that the existing structures have truncated into natural deposits. In any event any archaeological deposits or structures surviving on site enjoy the protection of the National Monuments Acts (as amended).

- 3.2 The scheme retains the existing historic brick elevations and the proposed new build rises from behind, offset slightly. This extends around the perimeter of the site as an angular 'C', enclosing a courtyard at the centre (Figure 8). There is no basement level proposed however there are several lift pits where localised excavation will be required.
- 3.3 It is likely that the new structure will be formed from a piled foundation after the retained elevations have been underpinned and protected. The new build will be supported on pile caps and a lattice of connecting ground beams. This may have a significant impact in plan and will most likely involve ground disturbance across the site to a depth of 3000mm, if a substantial piling mat is required.
- 3.4 The impact on surviving archaeological substrates is thus likely to be profound, although corrected levels of projected disturbance have yet to be determined.

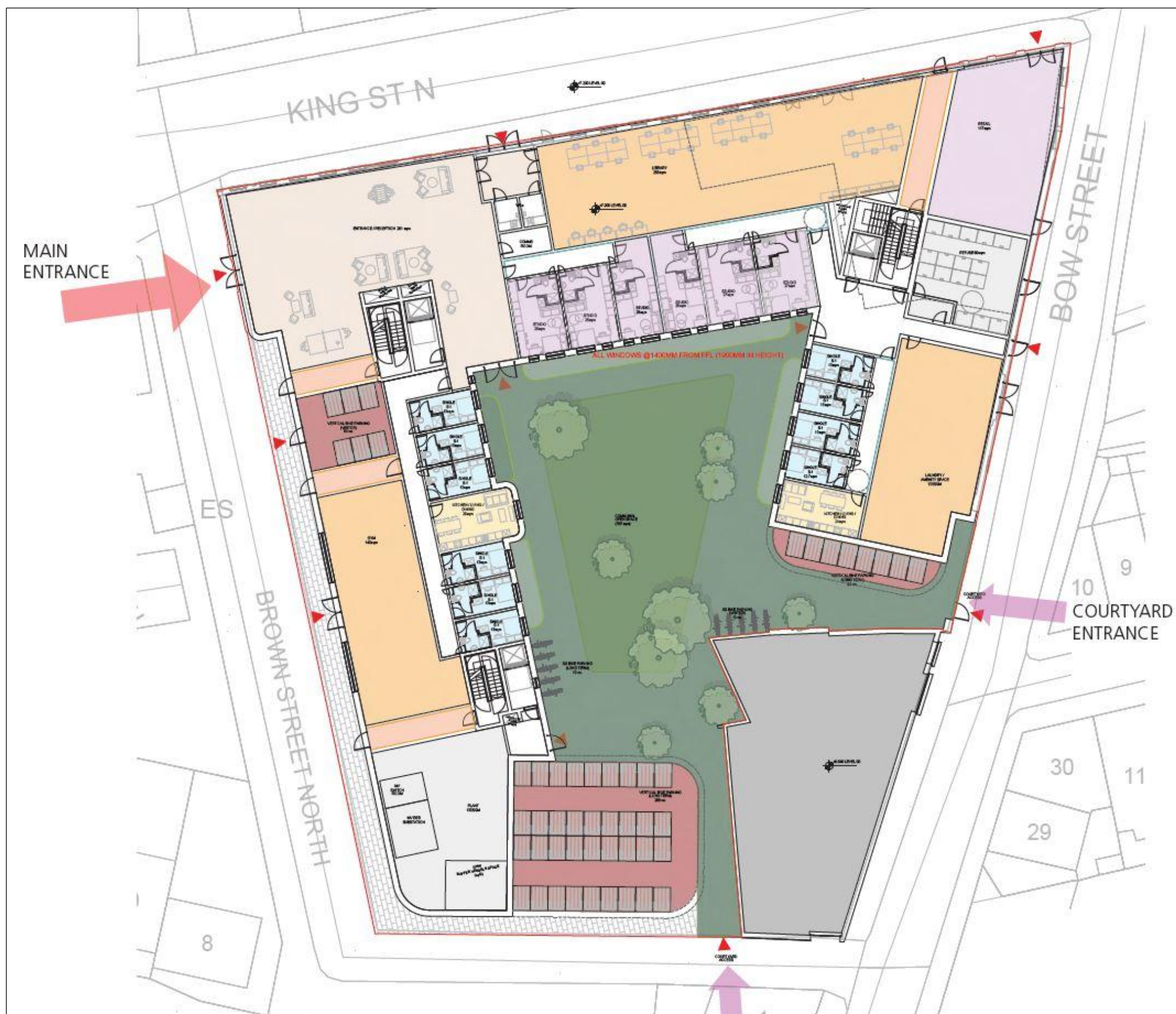


Figure 8 Ground floor plan of proposed development (after MOLA Architecture)

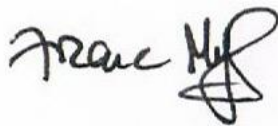
4 Conclusion and recommendations

- 4.1 This assessment has examined the historical morphology of the development site, where there is every likelihood that more modern development has already truncated into geological deposits. There remains nonetheless the possibility of cultural deposits surviving *in situ* behind the North King Street and Bow Street frontages. Where Brown Street is a later development, there may be less expectation of encountering medieval deposits, however evidence for the early eighteenth-century row of houses depicted on Rocque may survive beneath the slab.

It is thus recommended that where backfilled cellars are found to be present that they be cleaned out and recorded as an archaeological exercise.

- 4.2 The formation design of the proposed development will occasion ground disturbance which may potentially be in conflict with archaeological levels. It is therefore recommended that test trenches are excavated under licence across the existing open yard to investigate for the level and nature of any such deposits.

Should there be significant, legible archaeological deposits surviving, the testing report will contribute to a more robust impact assessment of the proposed development. This will be submitted well in advance of commencement to inform an agreed mitigation strategy with the planning authority and statutory bodies.



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