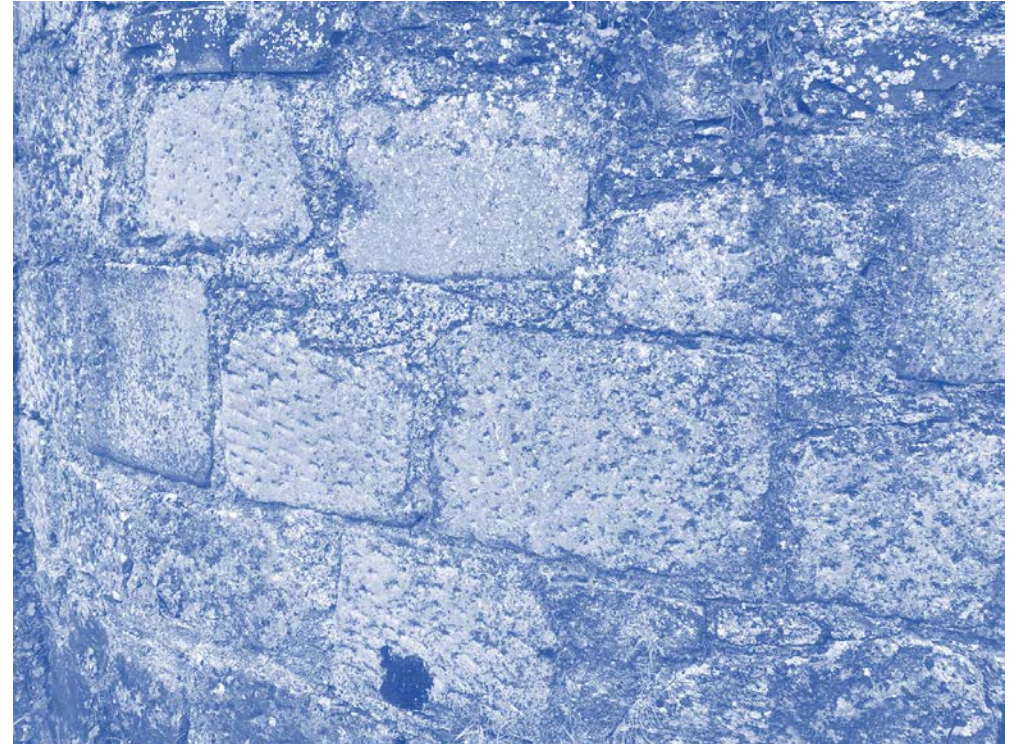


# NAVAN TOWN WALLS

CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2022



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 PREAMBLE

This conservation and management plan for the town walls of Navan was commissioned by Meath County Council. Prepared by 7L Architects in collaboration with Clare Ryan MIAI, the purpose of the plan is to assess the history, cultural significance, and current condition of the walled town – in terms of its known standing remains, buried archaeology, layout and associated buildings. It assesses the threats to its significance; outlines a conservation strategy and makes recommendations for enhancement, improved management and interpretation. Field surveys were carried out in July & October 2021.

Location	Navan, Co Meath
Grid Coordinates	686978, 767965
Local Authority	Meath County Council
Zoning	Commercial/Town Centre
Statutory Protection	SMR ref: ME025-044---;044003-07
Rating	Regional
Special Interest	Architectural, Archaeological, Social, Technical
Principal Dimensions	6 hectares
Inspection Date	July 2021
Prepared by	Fergal Mc Namara & Clare Ryan
Report Issued	September 2022



1. Aerial view of Navan showing the possible outline of the town walls and the principal features.

## 1.2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- Navan was founded in the late-twelfth century by Jocelyn De Angulo, a follower of Hugh de Lacy, although there is evidence of earlier occupation in phases from the late-Neolithic period.
- Hugh de Lacy and his barons founded a power base in Meath centred on Trim, but including a port at Drogheda, and market towns at Duleek, Kells, Athboy and Navan.
- Navan did not receive its charter until the fifteenth century but played an important role as a market town.
- Navan is an example of a purpose-built Anglo-Norman market town taking control of an important strategic site.
- The impact of the town walls remains evident in the urban morphology of Navan. The distinctive curved form of the burgage plots has been retained, except for the northwest corner.

## 1.3 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

- Today, upstanding remains of the medieval defences are found in the northwest corner in the council depot off Abbey Road and in sections of boundary walls and foundations encountered along the southern alignment.
- Several phases of construction, addition and repair can be seen along the surviving wall fragments and the bastion. Ivy has colonised the wall to varying degrees; and has rooted into the wall tops and centre of the walls.
- Developments in recent decades have uncovered valuable evidence of the former town walls but might also destroyed

sections of it. Today there is tentative evidence for most of an entire town defensive circuit detectable in short sections, buried remains, street alignments and burgage plots.

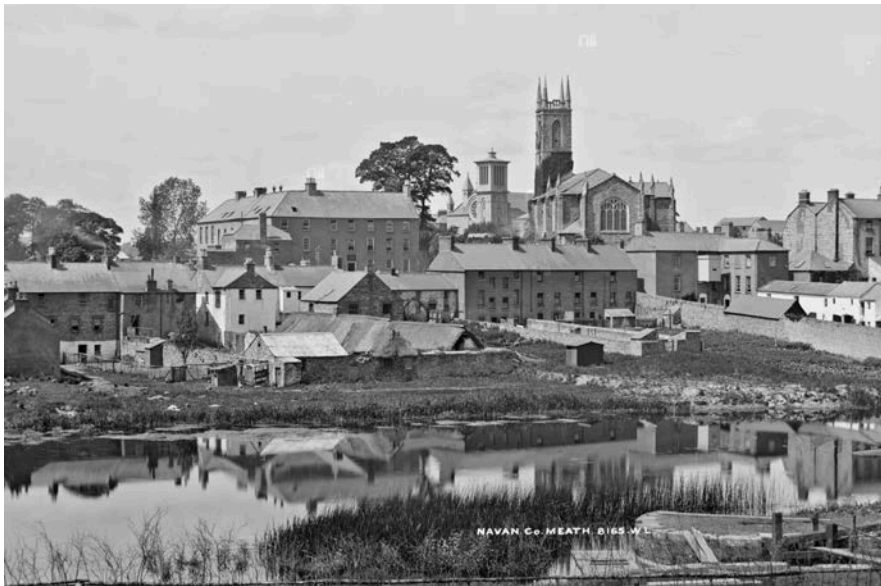
## 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE

- The immediate environs of Navan have undergone several phases in their urban development –as farming homesteads during the late-Neolithic; an ecclesiastical site in the medieval period, Viking stronghold to Anglo-Norman market town; an estate town during the Ascendancy up until the modern era. Today, it is the county town of Meath.
- The town walls and Anglo-Norman heritage of Navan deserves to be better known by locals, and more vividly presented to visitors. It makes a valuable contribution to a place of national cultural significance.

## 1.5 THREATS

- The condition of the bastion and adjacent wall section is of most concern. Careful vegetation treatment and specialist repair works will be required to ensure the preservation of this survival of the town defences.
- While the lack of knowledge about the precise location and condition of the wall circuit is a significant threat to its preservation, statutory protections, and planning policies already in place create a robust legal framework facilitating the protection of the surviving sections of town wall and its probable alignment.





2. Historic photograph (ca.1900) of Navan showing setting overlooking the Boyne towards churches (outside the town walls).

## 1.6 POLICIES

- Repairs to historic fabric should be carried out using conservation methodologies that conform to the guiding principles set out in the ICOMOS charters, using appropriate details and materials.
- Whenever possible, inappropriate interventions along the town wall alignment should be removed. The integrity of the town wall should be reinforced where necessary, replacing later additions such as fencing or blockwork with stonework that minimizes impact

on the archaeological heritage and enhance, rather than detract from, their settings.

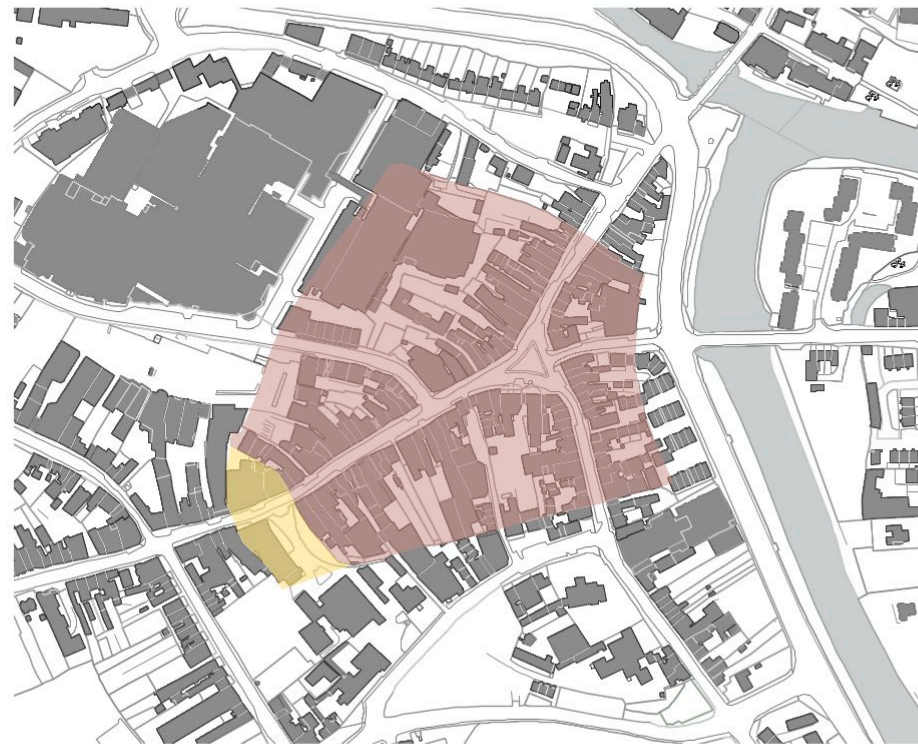
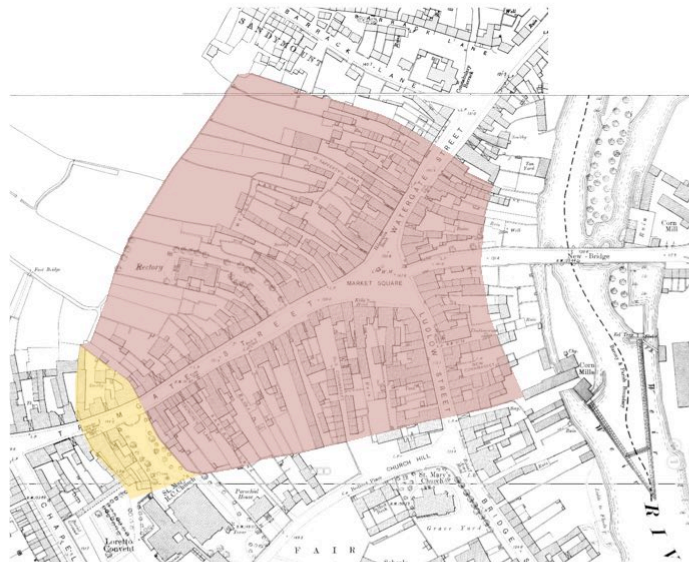
## 1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future development around the town may provide opportunities to present the walled town heritage of Navan where it is encountered. Increasing knowledge and understanding of the town walls among the local community will assist in its preservation.
- A key project is to conserve the bastion and improve access and its setting. As an architectural feature, the bastion is recognisable as medieval heritage, and can act as a starting point for visiting the town walls of Navan.
- The protection and maintenance of existing built heritage of the former town defences, especially the bastion, should take priority. In this way, the gradual process of decay is arrested, allowing this historic place to be maintained in perpetuity.
- Increasing knowledge and understanding of the town walls among the local community will assist in its preservation. In time, the development of depot site as a pocket park or outdoor museum accessible to the community could be implemented subject to funding. This would provide an improved setting to the bastion and increase the cultural heritage value of the town.

CONJECTURAL  
15 C. WALLED TOWN CIRCUIT



POSSIBLE 18 C. EXTENSION



3. Overlay of five-foot OS map of 1895 and current OS map showing extent of historic walled town.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 THE PLACE

The historic town of Navan is located approximately forty kilometres northwest of Dublin, close to the M3. It is situated at the meeting point of the Boyne and Blackwater rivers, on the main routeway between Dublin and Kells, in the county of Meath. The present landscape and riverine configuration may have changed little over the millennia, and it is likely that the rivers' confluence formed an important element of prehistoric geographies and travel routes.

Navan is a good example of a small Anglo-Norman town and its location appears to have been chosen in order to control the rivers. Early medieval settlements have been recorded in the environs of the town, all these sites being located along an elevated ridge overlooking both rivers to the north and south-east of Navan town. The fortified pre-Anglo-Norman monastery of St Mary's was located along the south side of the River Blackwater and may have influenced the Anglo-Normans in establishing a stronghold close by. Navan was founded by powerful barons for the purposes of collecting taxes, establishing administration of the hinterland and regulating markets.

Its medieval street pattern can still be seen, set within a heart-shaped wall enclosure with long burgage plots running inwards towards the three streets which were the principal arteries. Some questions remain as to the precise outline of the medieval town, requiring further archaeological investigation. Burgage plot boundaries survive, indicating that some remnants of the earlier houses could survive also. Archaeology is an important means by which to learn about Navan's past and to understand the character and form of the town. The protection of buried archaeological



4. Aerial photo showing expansion beyond the walled town of Navan (shaded pink).

deposits is hugely significant, or else risk further losses of our shared heritage without their being preserved or even recorded.

### 2.2 NATIONAL & EUROPEAN CONTEXT

*The few existing remains of town-wall fortifications, which formerly enclosed and protected every important town in Ireland, and which yearly diminish in number, are, as a class, undeservedly overlooked by writers on the antiquities of such towns as they describe.*



Writing in 1914, J.S. Fleming commenced his study on the most prominent of the Irish walled towns by lamenting the poor appreciation of this essential component of urban development which emphasized the prominent buildings. In 1992, Avril Thomas, listed fifty-six Irish towns which were certain to have had town defences, thirty-five where some evidence (if only documentary) exists, and twenty other settlements for which only the tentative or indirect evidence has been found.

Walled settlements range in size from the most populous cities down to abandoned villages. Defences were installed around farmsteads during the Neolithic period and were also installed to protect early-Christian monasteries and by the Norse. Gaelic settlements usually used earthworks; but stone was also used to protect larger settlements or 'Dún', creating a place of refuge and control. There is evidence of several phases of such structures at Navan.

Irish walled towns characterise political and economic developments on the island in relation to Britain and the continent. Ireland is located on the periphery of Europe, remote from the Roman Empire, and was relatively late in developing an urban culture. Starting with the monasteries, Hiberno-Norse ports, and Gaelic settlements, the Anglo-Normans established a hold on the interior of the island for three centuries until retreating to the confines of the Pale by the early fifteenth century. The Tudor and Stuart plantations also relied on town defences. In the early modern era, defences erected during the Cromwellian and Jacobite/ Williamite conflicts quickly became redundant. This led to their gradual but widespread removal starting in the eighteenth century, so that knowledge of the extent of Irish walled towns was much reduced

The Walled Town Friendship Circle (WTFC), is the international association for the sustainable development of fortified historic towns and cities. The

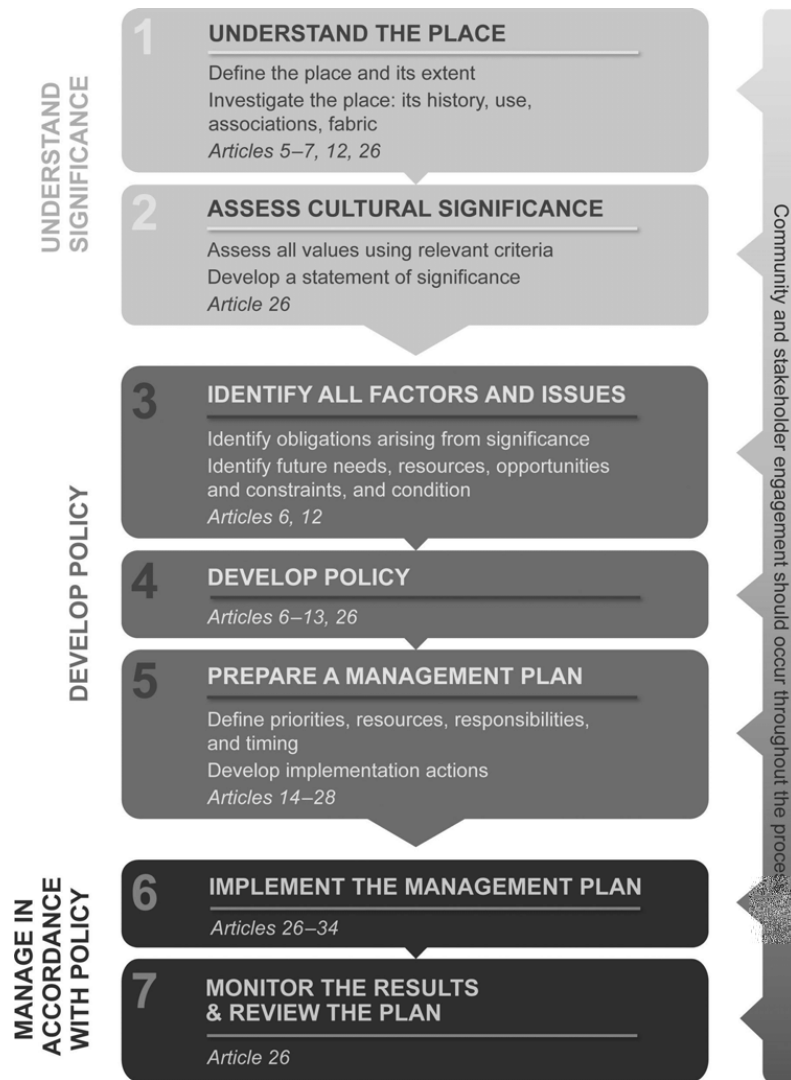
Piran Declaration, which outlines the reasons for maintaining historic walled towns, was presented at the WTFC AGM in Piran, Slovenia in 1998.

*Walled Towns are unique inheritances from times long past and should be treasured, maintained and safeguarded from neglect, damage and destruction and passed on into perpetuity as irreplaceable 'Timestones of History'.*

In 2005, the Heritage Council established the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) to coordinate the management and conservation of historic walled towns through local authorities on the island, linking into the activities of the WTFC. Navan intends to apply to submit an application to join this network; two other Meath towns - Kells and Trim, are already members.

## 2.3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Essentially, the aim of conservation is to *retain the cultural significance of a place*. Published by ICOMOS in 2013, the revised Burra Charter provides a model for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance; setting out standards and guidelines for its guardians. This group might include owners, managers and custodians, consultants, statutory advisers, opinion-formers, decision makers and contractors. *Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to – family and the community; the landscape; to the past and to lived experiences.* The charter defines conservation as - *all of the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.* Following publication of the Burra Charter, the Ename Charter was adopted by ICOMOS in 2008 and deals specifically with the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage. This charter provides a framework for the communication of the cultural significance of a place to the public. Its objectives are to facilitate understanding and



appreciation of the site; communicate its meaning, safeguard the tangible and intangible values and respect its authenticity.

As such, the aims of this Conservation Plan are to:

- provide an accurate record of the walled town of Navan, through field studies and research of the sources;
- understand the significance of its cultural heritage both tangible and intangible along with its natural heritage;
- identify any threats to this significance;
- formulate policies to address the threats, and to inform and guide the future preservation and management of the walled town and its associated cultural heritage;
- manage change by proposing a sustainable vision for the future of the historic place, to act as a guide for future decision-making;
- assess the impacts of possible future development within the setting of the town wall, devising strategies to mitigate impacts;
- identify priorities for the conservation of the walled town for capital works and ongoing maintenance.

## 2.4 LIMITATIONS

Areas that were not inspected included those that required special access at high level, private, were fenced off or locked, buried, obscured by ivy or vegetation. Specific limitations are noted within the text.

5. Methodology for conservation management plans from Burra Charter.

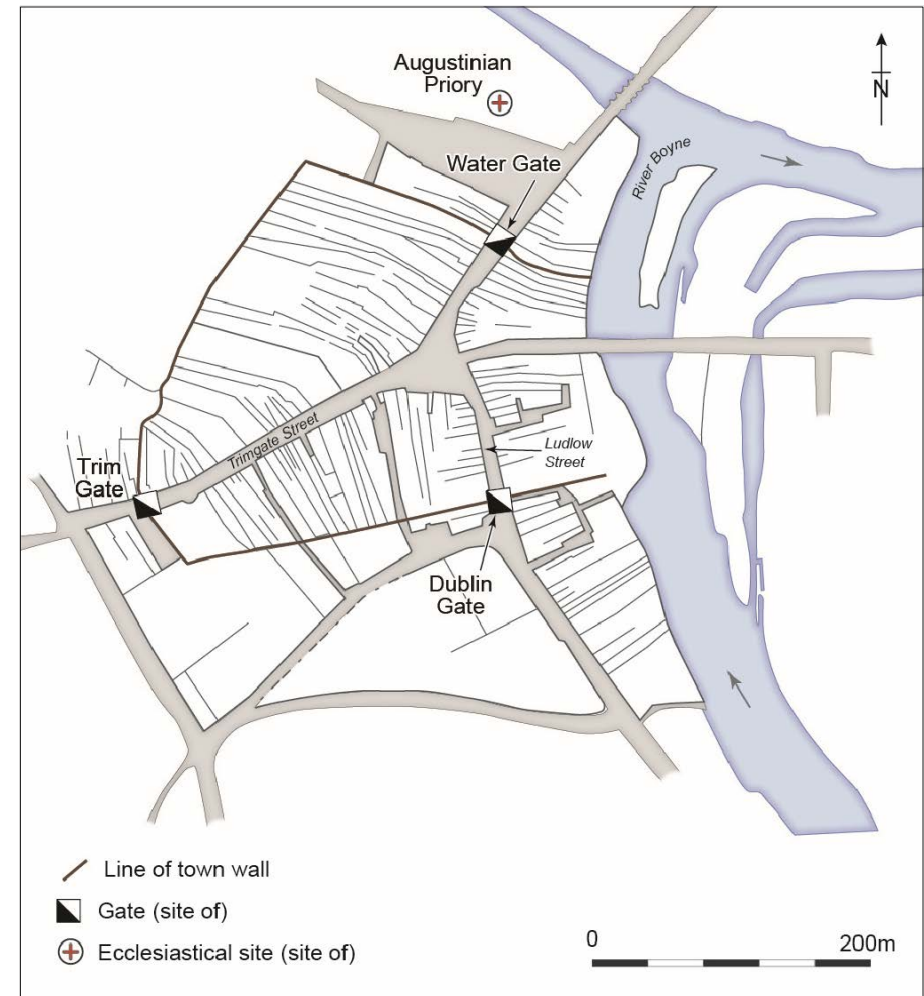
### 3.0 UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

The text below is an edited and abridged version of the chapter on Navan authored by Clare Ryan MIAI in *The Medieval Town in Ireland: in the light of recent archaeological excavation* (2021).

#### 3.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Although some historians have derived the origins of the modern name Navan from an Uaimh ‘the cave’, this appears to be a corruption of the earlier name ‘Nuachongbhail’, or ‘new holding’. In ecclesiastical terms, conghbhail was often used to indicate the existence of churches, monasteries or cloisters (Flanagan and Flanagan 1994, 59–60). The Ordnance Survey in the 1830s chose the cave explanation rather than the derivation ‘na h-aibhne’ or ‘the rivers’ (Herity 2001, 59). The Placename Database ([www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie)) attributes the origin of the name Navan to a nearby moat which was originally a prehistoric burial mound called Odbha. It also mentions its use as a fortified residence by local Gaelic tribes and, from the ninth century, occasionally by Vikings. Little is known about this early settlement at Navan.

Archaeological monitoring carried out in recent decades has revealed evidence for medieval settlement. The western side of the IDA park at Johnstown lies along a north-west/south-east-running elevated ridge overlooking the Boyne to the south-east of Navan. In 1995 two souterrains were identified at Athlumney House, in the southern area of the park, followed by four more in 1999 in the north-west corner. Subsequently, this development was redesigned to facilitate preservation of the archaeology after an extensive complex dating from the ninth/tenth century AD was uncovered. In 2006 an area to the west of the building now housing the



6. Navan in the medieval period after Bradley (re-drawn by Nylund).



7. Aerial view showing principal archaeological sites (Ryan).

Meath County Council offices was monitored to facilitate an access road. Three main phases of activity were identified on this site, from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, while the third period was early medieval and was dated to AD 551–643.

In 1848, while digging the new railway line close to where the Boyne and Blackwater meet, a quantity of human remains and the skull of a horse, along with Viking artefacts were discovered. According to William Wilde -

*'the human bodies do not appear to have been placed in any order and in the surrounding earth was found a great quantity of charcoal, extending from 2 to 10 feet below the surface. Only a small portion of the site appears to have been disturbed and no proper excavation was carried out'*. It is likely that Wilde was referring to the earthwork at Athlumney, the likely site of the Viking fortress of Dún Dubchomair.

The Anglo-Normans founded some fifty towns and established an urban network that endures over much of eastern and southern Ireland. Michael Potterton (2005) has characterised this expansion of walled towns in Ireland during this period: *For a century or so after their arrival around 1170, the Anglo-Normans were the primary drivers of urban growth in Ireland. They colonised Hiberno-Norse towns (e.g. Cork, Dublin, Limerick), expanded important church settlements (e.g. Kells, Kildare, Kilkenny and founded new towns on green-field sites or at places with just a small existing population (e.g. Drogheda, Navan, New Ross). Almost all of Ireland's fifty largest twenty-first-century towns and cities were created or expanded by the Anglo-Normans in the period 1170–1280.*

Navan and most of the more important settlements that formed the upper strata of the medieval hierarchy have survived into the present day as market towns and villages. In 1172, after the subjugation of local rulers, Henry II granted the lands of Meath to Hugh de Lacy to be held *'by the service of 50 knights'*. De Lacy selected Trim as the administrative centre of his new lordship, and smaller towns like Navan served as local markets controlled by powerful barons. Although tradition holds that de Lacy first walled and fortified the town of Navan, this can be dismissed on the compelling grounds that he was dead before the town was established. It is more likely that it was undertaken by one of his followers, Jocelyn de Angulo (or Nangle), to whom the lands of Navan were assigned. His



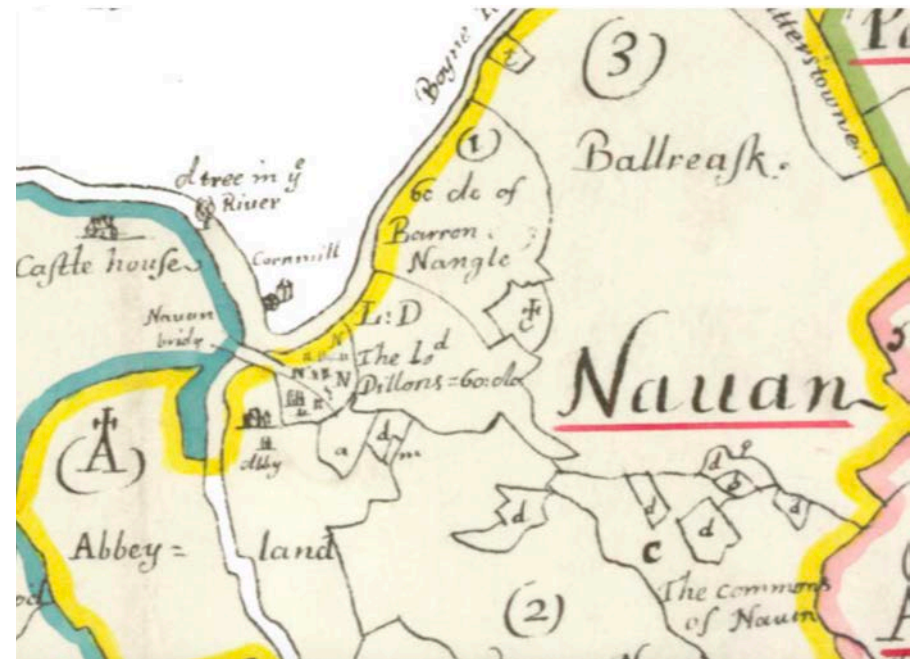
descendants retained significant property interests in and around the town until at least the seventeenth century.

### THE MEDIEVAL TOWN

Navan is positioned on a triangular ridge overlooking the meeting of the rivers. Ground falls away steeply along Watergate Street on the north and Ludlow Street on the south. Along Trimgate Street and Brews Hill the drop is more gradual. The central position of Navan within the newly established Anglo-Norman lordship, and its riverine setting, meant that it was of strategic importance as part of the growing network of towns and villages.

Although chequered or grid-like plans, such as at Drogheda and Galway, are occasionally found in medieval towns in Ireland, the predominant street plan for Anglo Norman towns was linear, where streets were extensions of routes that passed through the gates and out into the hinterland, as is the case at Navan. Generally the market-place was in the centre of the town, with houses positioned so that their gables formed the street frontage. Access to the houses was often by means of a side lane, giving rise to the laneways that still characterize Navan. The houses themselves were positioned on long, narrow properties—burgage plots—which frequently stretched from the main street to the town wall. Contemporary maps show the property divisions, with their distinctive curved alignments, which date back to the formation of the town. These plots, combined with an area of arable land outside the walls and common pasture, were granted by the lord of the town to the heads of household, who were given the status of burgess in return for the payment of an annual rent, usually a shilling.

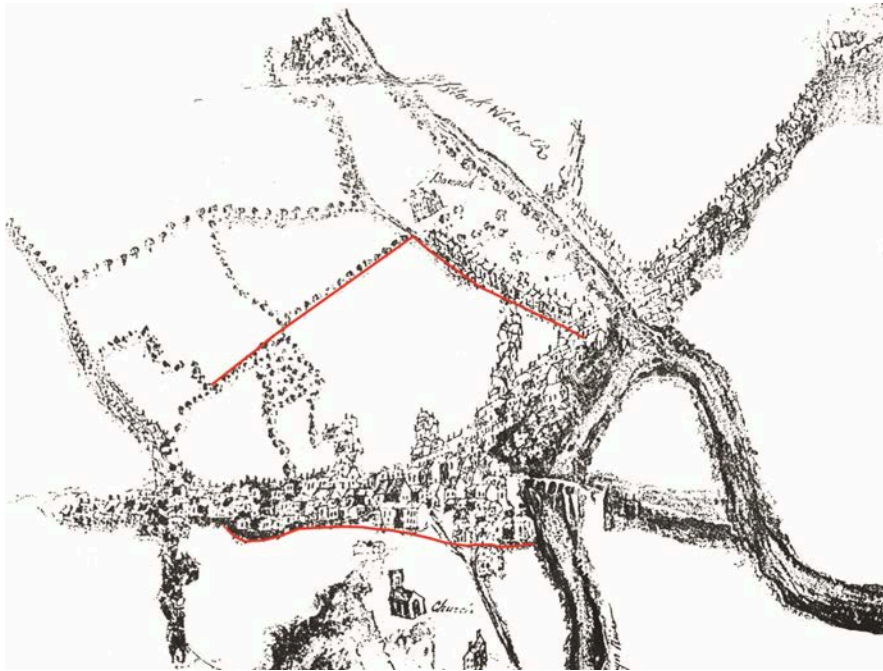
King Edward IV (1461–71) granted Navan its first charter. The most powerful position in the corporation was that of portreeve or mayor, followed by the burgesses, who were elected by the freemen. The corporation appointed



8. Extract from 1656 Down Survey map showing walled town of Navan.

a town clerk, who oversaw the day-to-day workings of the town. Other appointments were two servants-of-the-mace, who carried the mace as a sign of the portreeve's authority. Navan has a pair of silver maces from 1680 and a silver seal of the town from 1661.

The medieval parish church of Navan occupied the site of the present Church of Ireland church immediately to the south of—and outside—the town walls. It was replaced by the mid-eighteenth century; it still contains a font that probably came from the older structure.



9. William's perspective of Navan from Athlumney 1756 (red line by Ryan).

### THE MARKET-PLACE

The triangular area known as Market Square was in a central position in Navan. It functioned as the trading space for the medieval town and surrounding area and was the location for the market cross, dated to about 1585. One of the stones from this cross was found by William Wakeman in 1849 and removed to the Royal Irish Academy. Cyril Ellison recalled how Wakeman found the stone built into a wall in 'a miserable back lane, branching from Trimgate Street', and was allowed to remove it. Hearing of two similar stones being used as supports for casks in a public house in

Trimgate Street, he asked to make drawings of them and offered to pay for any trouble caused in removing the casks. The market cross of c. 1585 can now be viewed in the Solstice Arts Centre in Navan.

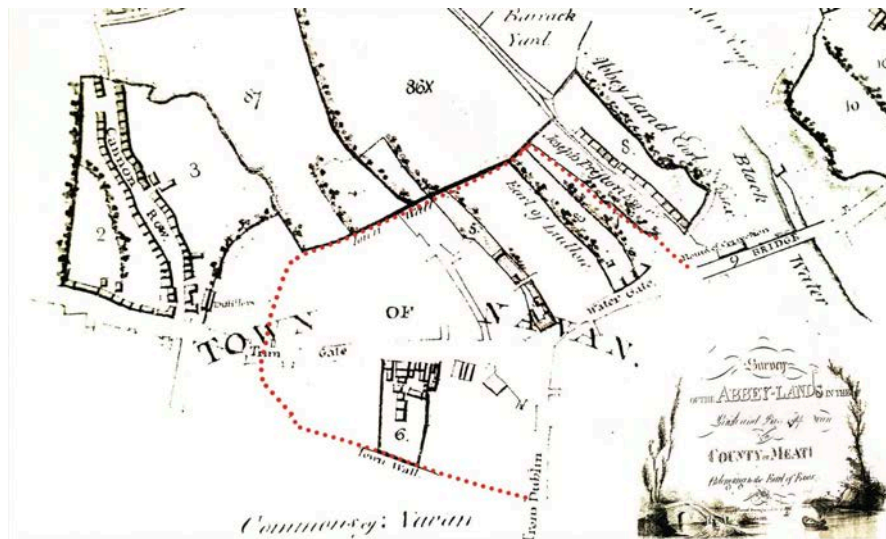
### THE MOTTES

There are two mottes in proximity to the medieval town. The first, known as Navan motte, lies 900m west of the medieval town boundary. It was probably built by Jocelyn Nangle or his son William and was contemporary with the founding of the town. The second motte—in Athlumney townland—forms part of a cluster of the Viking-era medieval monuments on the east bank of the Boyne described by Wilde. Neither motte displays any trace of stone structures but both are likely to have been part of the wider defensive strategies of the town. Both mottes would have functioned as local administrative and agricultural centres and as such would have been the focus of activity necessitating the construction of outbuildings, barns, kitchens, stables and other structures.

No trace of the 'abbey' can be identified, although its site is known. The site of the medieval monastery of St Fechin was not incorporated within the walled area of the town but lay outside to the north-west, bounded on the north by the banks of the Blackwater. It is possible that St Mary's Abbey, founded by the Augustinian Order, was established prior to the arrival of the Anglo Normans on the site of this earlier monastic enclosure. By 1450 the abbey was in a state of considerable disrepair, and the then abbot, John Bole, appealed to Rome for a papal indulgence to aid in its repair and adornment. On 19 July 1539 the abbey was surrendered to the commissioners of Henry VIII. Only fragments of the abbey survive, notably the 'Apostle Stone', which has been dated to the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century; now located a short distance from Slane. By 1693, however, the site was in ruins, and later was transformed into a cavalry

barracks. The font from the abbey is now in St Mary's Church of Ireland church, while some fragments of decorated slabs can be seen in the garden of St Mary's Catholic church.

On the Down Survey map of 1656 the town is shown as a stylised, bounded triangular wedge. It could be argued that this is a basic representation of the existence of the town walls, or it could be the extent of the town boundaries. St Mary's Abbey is clearly marked between the town boundary and the Blackwater. The earliest surviving map of the town of Navan was created in 1756 by Thomas Williams, who was commissioned to detail the properties and land owned by the Earl of Ranelagh within the town. The Civil Survey of 1654–6 had listed Arthur (Jones), Lord Ranelagh, as the possessor of 'All the Tenmts and gardens from Feshing gate to Swynes bridge', as well as 160 acres near the town. It is unclear from the map which portions of the area illustrated were Ranelagh holdings. The map



10. Sherrard et al. 1806 survey of Navan for Earl of Essex (red line by Ryan).

demonstrates the existence of the New Bridge across the Boyne, allowing access area of the walls.

Further to the north, Poolboy Street (now Flower Hill) is shown clearly defined boundaries and showed the footprint of the old road lined with houses on both sides. Even allowing for cartographical exaggeration, this indicates that extramural development in this area was well established by the mid- eighteenth century and probably before. The medieval town walls are detailed by a broken line; this may be a sketched line indicating the general area of the walls, as it does not correspond with the upstanding wall and bastion evident today in the Navan Municipal District yard. It may also represent the town boundary walls still evident along the southern side of the town.

The medieval burgage plots are visible using aerial photography and are a good indicator of the medieval landscape; in 1950 the layout of the town had clearly defined boundaries and showed the footprint of the old walled area. Structures are represented on both sides of Abbey Road as far as the possible north-west corner of the medieval town wall, a short distance to the south of the large structure on the old abbey site. No structures are depicted to the north of the burgage plots extending from Watergate and Trimgate streets or along the greater part of Abbey Road, suggesting that this area remained in use for agricultural or horticultural purposes.

The curving course of Fairgreen/Church Hill is similarly devoid of represented structures, while relatively little development is shown outside the Dublin Gate on Ludlow Street. Development is also shown along parts of Brews Hill to the west of the Trim Gate, and along both sides of Chapel Lane (now Railway Street) and Canon Row to the west of the town. The map reveals nothing of the structure of the walls, or the style of the gates or tower. No other pictorial evidence is known to exist despite the persistence

of the defences into the eighteenth century, when the gates were first widened and then removed.

A later survey was commissioned by the earl of Essex in 1806 and undertaken by Sherrard, Brassington and Greene. It details the outline of the town walls, visible along the northern side and the southern end of the earl's property, marked as 'No. 6' on the survey, clearly delineating it from the Commons of Navan to the south. By this time, the wall is no longer visible on the western side, although it appears that the surveyor was not interested in detailing all sections of the wall.

The OS map of 1836 details the area to the north of Trimgate Street and west of Watergate Street, and once again the outline of the wall is marked. The stylised detail of what could be the surviving bastion is shown along the northern side of the walls. This corresponds exactly with the extant structure in the Navan Municipal District yard today. The many laneways that make up the medieval core of the town are clearly visible, running from the main streets along the lines of the burgage plots.

### THE MEDIEVAL WALLS OF NAVAN

In the later medieval period Navan lay at the edge of the English-controlled Pale and as a result it was both vulnerable to attack and of greater strategic importance. This was recognised by Henry VIII in 1542, when an act was passed *'providing that every ploughland in Meath and Westmeath liable to subsidy should be charged for four years with the payment of 3s. 4d. towards building the walls of Navan'* (Cogan 1862–74, vol. 3, 223; Lewis



11. Extract from OS 'fair copy' map of 1836 (courtesy V. Mulvany).

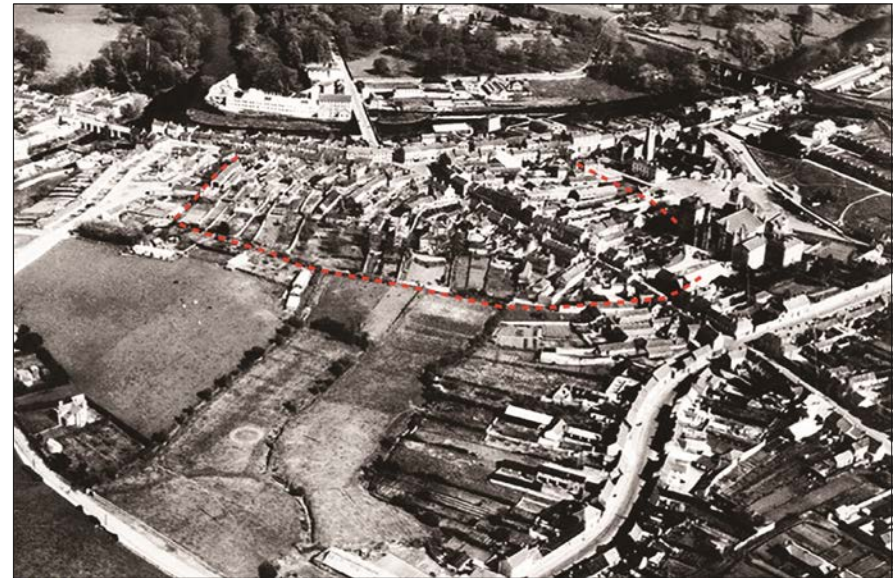


1837, vol.2, 421). At around the same time, Meath was divided into East and West Meath, 'as its proportions had been found too extensive for one sheriff' (Cogan 1862–74, vol. 1, 3).

The levy was aimed not only at strengthening existing walls but also at reconstructing defences damaged during the sacking of the town by Con O'Neill and Manus O'Donnell in 1539. Considerable damage was caused during these raids, with destruction of property and the seizing of valuables (O'Donovan 1856). The plundering of the town also suggests the wealth and prosperity of Navan as a commercial entity. It is not clear whether the walls were ever re-established and strengthened; Bradley and King (1985, 98) suggested that by 1593 Navan was grouped with Duleek among the 'market towns' as opposed to the 'walled towns' of Meath.

Town walls served several purposes - most notably taxation, trade and defense. At Navan, the town walls enabled the control and exploitation of the bridges across the Boyne and Blackwater, which converged to the north-east of the medieval town. The burgesses of Navan had been granted the right in around 1470 to impose tolls on all goods coming for sale into the town for three miles around, to build and maintain the pavements of the town (Moore 1893, 59). The walls ran for 870m and enclosed an area of 320m by 275m, covering six and a half hectares and served by three principal streets: Trimgate, Ludlow and Watergate. Access to the walled area was controlled by three gates named Dublin, Trim and Watergate.

Navan's earliest town defences were earthen, and two medieval ditches have been excavated on Abbey Road (Russell 2002). A continuation of this defensive ditch was observed in section at the shopping centre car park to the south (Corcoran 2007) (Fig. 16.8: 11 and 8). Defences of earth and timber could be every bit as strong and difficult to breach as stone walls, but from about the 1220s onward the larger towns began to replace earthen ramparts with mortared stone walls. Stone defences were more



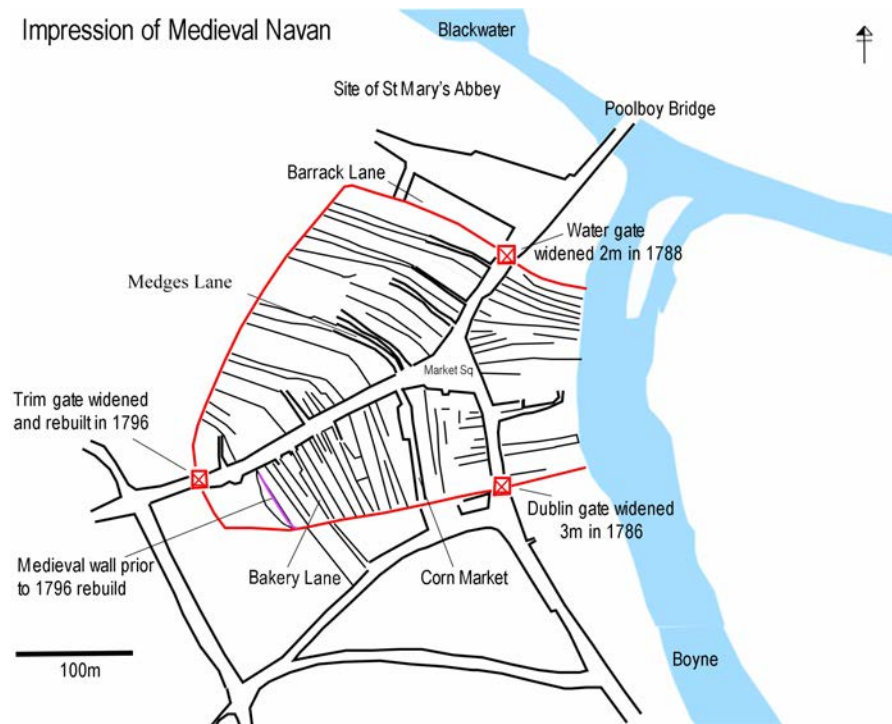
12. Aerial photo of Navan from 1950 (courtesy NDHS).

expensive to build and maintain but they were also more prestigious, and in medieval art and cartography they were depicted as the symbol of a town. The walls not only served as a barrier to attack but also enabled the control of movement into and out of the town. The gates were important points for gathering tolls. Among the tolls collected was murage, a tax on goods coming into the town for sale, which was used to pay for the construction and maintenance of the town's defences. Navan was granted a charter by Edward IV which was confirmed 'with additional privileges' by Henry VIII (Lewis 1837, vol.2, 421).

According to Avril Thomas (1992, vol. 2, 171), the earliest known murage grant for Navan dates from 1469–70 and was part of a general charter (Gale

1834, 230), but murage must have been granted at least slightly earlier, as the provost was fined in 1467 for not producing a murage account (*ibid.*, 127). Navan was included in the review of murage grants to Meath towns in 1463 (*ibid.*, 119). Damage inflicted by the Irish in 1539 was such that Navan was described as being *'not walled nor defensible'* and a grant based on a county subsidy for four years was made for *'building the walls of Navan'*, with certain merchants bound over for £1,000 on condition that *'they shall in 10 years build a wall of lime and stone ... as the lord deputy and council shall appoint'* (*ibid.*, 232; Thomas 1992, vol. 2, 171).

The walled town was one property plot deep; from the street front along the main street as far as the town wall. Plots on the west side are noticeably longer than those on the east, while those on the south are also long but more interrupted (Thomas 1992, vol. 2, 172). A photograph taken in 1950 clearly shows the medieval layout of the town, and the outline of many of the burgage plots still can be identified today. Thomas (1992, vol. 2, 172) suggested that the 1756 map by Thomas Williams shows the line of the walls clearly, but it does not correspond with his own perspective map of the town, which details a different view of the southern and northern areas of the town wall and may indicate an alternative line more in keeping with Bradley and King's (1985) survey. No wall is marked along the Boyne waterfront, but the wall may also have been set further back or submerged, and the 1746 incident of repair may relate to this area: *'repair of breach in town wall at tan yard—in Watergate Street'* (Ellison 1963, 46). In 2008, while digging trenches for broadband cabling, evidence was found for a riverine wall/structure along the eastern side of the footprint of the medieval town (2008: 973).



13. Impression of medieval Navan (Ryan 2020).

### POST-MEDIEVAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the town began to expand beyond its medieval walls. As with other Irish towns, during this period the gates started to be removed and the walls demolished, likely following decades of neglect. In times of relative peace, technological advances in warfare and the increase in traffic meant that the town walls became obsolete. Despite these changes, town walls were partially repaired in 1745



14. Plaque affixed to bastion.

and part of the wall near Trimgate Street was rebuilt in 1796. The Dublin Gate was widened by 3m in 1786 and the Watergate by 2m in 1788. Facilitating traffic through the town was of greater importance than preserving the integrity of the medieval defences. Between 1733 and 1756 the 'New Bridge' was erected, creating a route from the centre of the town at Market Square across the Boyne to the east. The most significant period of post-medieval development in Navan was the approximately 30 years spanning the final decades of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth. Navan town was described by Samuel Lewis in 1845 as containing 4,416 inhabitants and about 850 houses, many of which were well-built. He went on to say that the town had a cheerful and thriving

appearance. The decades following the Famine were characterised by gradual modernisation. This included the improvement of the state of the roads in Navan, which were described in 1861 as being in a state of '*unparalleled filth*' (Connell 1978, 28). Major infrastructural projects were undertaken in the early 1870s, when the existing limited sewerage system was extended to Ludlow and Academy Street. Footpaths were laid down throughout the town in 1873, while a new water system installed in 1882.

### 3.2 THE WALLED TOWN TODAY

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the laying of services in and around the town have caused a major loss to the archaeological record. The centre of the medieval town to the north of Trimgate Street underwent considerable disturbance with the construction of Kennedy Road and the building of Navan Shopping Centre between Trimgate Street and Abbey Road. There has been a general acceleration of house-building and infrastructural projects in Navan in the last 50 years, while many housing estates were built in the neighbouring rural townlands.

Many of the modern shops and houses follow the footprint of the earlier medieval walls and later town boundary walls. It is quite possible that the foundation of the earlier street structure survives. On the west side of Watergate Street, vaulted street cellars were associated with earlier foundations. In the absence of archaeological excavations, little can be said about the extent and depth of archaeological deposits. Considerable disturbance through development of the urban footprint has obliterated material along the heavily trenched roadways throughout the town. Little survives of the early structures that could identify the types and styles of dwelling houses and civic areas.





15. View looking west along wall to rear of bastion.



16. View towards river down Watergate St.



17. Toberorum well off Ludlow Street.



18. View of paving marking the former location of Dublin Gate.



19. View along lane across wall alignment.



20. Lane leading from rear of bastion to Watergate Street.



## 4.0 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The descriptions below are based on a survey carried out in July & October 2021. The purpose of the survey is to identify defects and recommend remedial works to improve the condition and presentation of the putative town wall structures.

### 4.1 SETTING

The town walls of Navan are described in *The Walled Towns of Ireland* (1992), by Avril Thomas, based on the earlier assessment of Bradley (1987). In summary, the defences consisted of a stone wall, three gates and at least one bastion, enclosing an area some six hectares in extent. Today roughly 120-150m of the 900m-long enclosure survives above ground, up to four metres in height. In area, it is one of the smaller walled towns, far smaller than other prominent towns in the Meath such as Trim or Kells. There is considerable uncertainty about the alignment of the wall circuit facing the Boyne (east) side, and also at Trimgate, which are discussed below. The physical evidence for the walled town of Navan is not confined to standing walls or fragments, but also the impact of its alignment in the street layout. Navan retains its strong burgage plot pattern, much of the west side was removed with the development of the cinema in the 1990s.

### 4.2 BASTION

The most prominent and impressive survival of the town walls of Navan is the bastion and adjacent wall section, which are located to the rear of a council depot located off Abbey Road to the northeast of the town circuit, facing towards the meeting of the rivers. Although it has been affixed with a plaque identifying it as a bastion, there remains a possibility that it is the surviving base of a mural tower. The bastion survives to approximately 4m

in height and is approximately 6.5m wide close to the base, albeit its east end is concealed by a red-brick shed structure. Although it takes the appearance of the bases to surviving mural towers at nearby Kells and Athenry, it is larger in diameter to those structures, up to 8.5m when complete. The walls are built predominantly of limestone random rubble. A section of stonework to the base of the wall are more finely dressed and show distinctive peck marks possibly re-used from an earlier structure. There are some stray pieces of sandstone and brick visible on the wall, evidence of repair over the centuries.



21. View along wall section towards bastion.

These walls will remain unstable until the masonry is consolidated using lime mortar, which is the main priority and should not be delayed. Several stones have fallen out, and rainwater is seeping into the wall core. Poor quality limestone can be vulnerable to erosion, being prone to decomposition along layers that have impurities such as oxides or shale in the case of the lowest quality stone. Often it was used as rubble to form walls, and then rendered with lime mortars to give a neat and regular appearance to the building at a lower cost than ashlar stone.



22. View through entrance gate towards bastion.



23. View along wall section towards bastion.



24. View along internal side of town wall section.



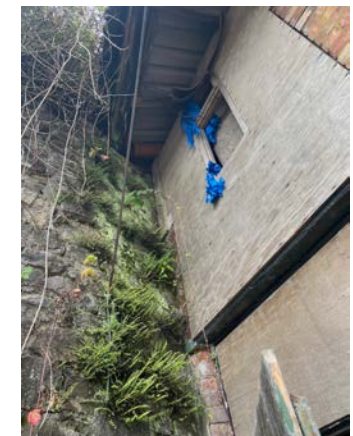
25. View towards bastion.



26. View towards MCC depot shed.



27. View along plinth.



28. Junction between shed & bastion

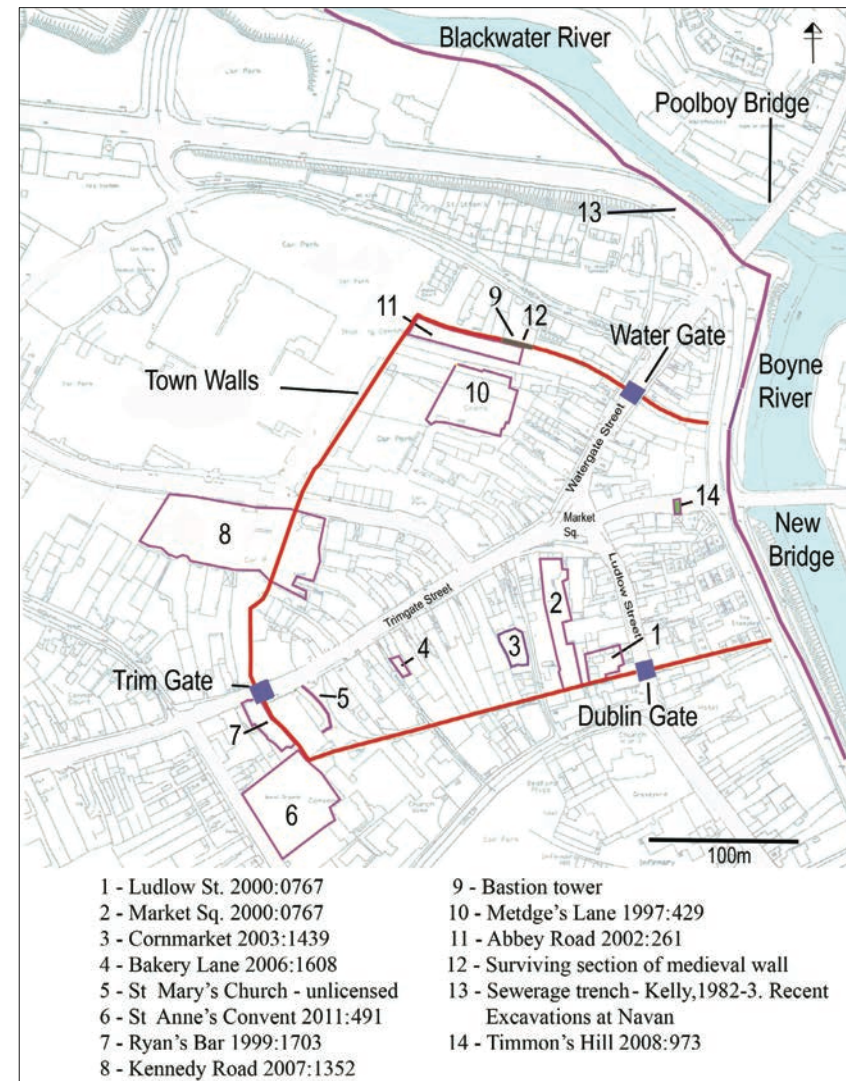


### 4.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

There was no evidence for town walls in seven archaeological trenches excavated at Medges Lane to the rear of properties fronting onto Watergate Street. The site was in the north-western area of the medieval walled town and was monitored in advance of the construction of a new cinema. The surface area was levelled, and the only upstanding remains were two stone walls representing property boundaries running back from Watergate Street. Despite this lack of material, an entry in the minutes of the Navan corporation for 5 February 1746 suggests that a stretch of wall existed at the rear of the properties along Watergate Street (Ellison 1963, 46).

#### EASTERN OR RIVERINE WALL

In 2008 evidence for a possible riverine wall was uncovered during monitoring of a trench on Timmon’s Hill (Halliday 2008). The monitoring programme identified two truncated walls, both running north–south, 19m west of the river towards Market Square. The larger wall measured at least 2.4m and possibly as much as 5m in width. Construction was of large limestone blocks bonded with a creamy mortar of coarse sand with crushed shell aggregate. The size of the wall suggests that it formed part of the medieval town defences, the original course of which is unclear in this area. It is also possible that the remains were part of a docking area along the river. No further investigation was carried out, however, as the trench was moved to accommodate the broadband works. The New Bridge to the east of the medieval town was added in the eighteenth century and connected the central area of the town with Athlumney. Prior to the construction of this bridge, a fording point in this area was accessible when the waters were low. The second crossing point of the Boyne was Babe’s Bridge, 2km northwest of Navan.



29. Archaeological sites along wall circuit and dates (Ryan 2020).





30. View along gated passage over wall circuit.



31. Part of southern alignment.



32. Southern alignment (internal) in yard.



33. Southern alignment (external) to rear of RC St Mary's church



34. View along curved alignment continuing towards Trimgate St



35 & 36. Views at possible location of Trimgate.





37. Upstanding wall at rear of 13 Ludlow Street (courtesy V Mulvany).

### SOUTHERN TOWN WALL

The line of the medieval wall on the south side of the town coincides with the long boundary wall formed by the burgage plots on the southern side of Trimgate Street. Monitoring of demolition and foundation works was undertaken at the rear of 13 Ludlow Street in 2000 (Byrne 2000). The southern boundary of the development was believed to preserve the line of the medieval town wall. A photograph taken in July 2011 shows the upstanding stone wall to the rear of the Oriel shop at 13 Ludlow Street. Underpinning works along the southern boundary wall did not reveal any material or features associated with the town wall. The general topography

of the area is of sloping ground, from west to east, towards the River Boyne, as preserved by the surface of the nearby Church Hill. Removal of part of the rear boundary wall indicated that the levels across the site had been reduced by up to 1.3m, probably during the construction of the existing late eighteenth-century buildings. A post-medieval well discovered during monitoring was roughly circular and at least 8.9m deep. No additional features, structures or finds of archaeological interest were revealed.

In 2003 testing was undertaken on the site of a proposed hotel and nightclub redevelopment, extending from behind 22 Market Square towards Church Hill (Elder 2003). The requirement for testing was part of a further information request from Navan Municipal District Council, which made specific reference to the impact of the development on the suspected line of the medieval town wall. The site had been cleared of most standing structures and demolition debris prior to excavation of the



38. Upstanding wall at McDermott's bakery (courtesy V Mulvany).



39. Detail of sign at Trimgate marking 1796 extension.

trenches, but a building at the southern end of the site precluded testing in this location. To the north of the development site, another structure and demolition debris precluded testing up to the rear of the protected structure. The discovery of a basement in the central area of the site also precluded testing in this location. Despite these restrictions, three long north–south trenches and a short east– west trench were opened across the site. Two wall foundations were discovered towards the southern end of the site, in trenches 3 and 4, and a possible rubbish pit was noted in trench 1, at the western side of the site (Elder 2003). Further test-trenching on the Market Square site in 2005 (05E0330) exposed the medieval town wall 35cm below the concrete surface at the entrance from Church Hill. The wall survived to a height of 55cm on the inner face. A clay and stone deposit abutting this face yielded four sherds of thirteenth/fourteenth-century pottery, which suggests that this section of the wall dates from the earliest phase of construction. A further section of the town wall may exist to the east, beneath a block-built structure presently standing there (Elder 2005;).

The large stone wall running east–west evident in McDermotts’ Bakery on Bakery Lane is only partially exposed; limewash covers most of it. The exposed section shows that it is constructed with large cut-limestone blocks and runs along the exact route of the wall, so it is reasonable to expect that it contains fragments of the original wall and/or has a medieval stone base. A section of wall running north of the parochial house may contain a medieval base; it appears to cut through St Mary’s Catholic church and travels along this section into Ryan’s public house. This area has been noted as containing one of the three gates, although test-trenching in 1999 within the footprint of Ryan’s Bar revealed no evidence to suggest that remnants of an earlier wall existed under the standing wall. Nineteenth-century material was evident underlying this wall. A plaque on the wall of Ryan’s public house on Trimgate Street reads: *‘This part of the town wall was rebuilt in 1796’*. If true, this may suggest that the original line of the wall



40. View towards medieval town wall base along south alignment.



was further to the east and ran along the boundary line of the present churchyard.

In 2011, the site of St Anne's School was tested to establish the line of the town wall there (Meenan 2011). Thomas (1992, vol. 2, 171) and Bradley and King (1985) had suggested that the town wall traversed this site in the central area. The absence of any material associated with the wall reinforces the assertion that the original line of the wall was further to the east and may have run along the eastern boundary of the present churchyard.

### WESTERN TOWN WALL

The western line of the wall may be preserved within the upstanding shops near Navan Shopping Centre. In 2007, during the redevelopment of a car park at Kennedy Road, eleven test trenches were excavated to assess the archaeological potential of this redevelopment. The majority of the trenches revealed no features of archaeological interest and a large amount of modern disturbance was exposed. The main features were on the eastern side of the site along the line of the medieval wall. Other possible medieval features (pits and ditches) were exposed within the line of the town wall. The possible continuation of this large ditch and a robber trench were evident along Abbey Road.

### NORTHERN TOWN WALL

The only section of the town wall to survive is on the northern side of the circuit, in the Navan Municipal District yard at Barrack Lane. This consists of a 15m stretch of wall and a semi-circular bastion to the west, 80cm thick and rising to a height of 5.5m. In 2002 a site was excavated just south-west of this remaining section of wall as part of a strategy for mitigating the impact of a proposed development on archaeological remains within this site on Abbey Road. Two medieval ditches were exposed that may have functioned as a form of medieval defence during the early stages of the

development of Navan. Early and late medieval pottery as well as animal bone were recovered. Both ditches appeared to be slightly curved and continued into the adjacent garden to the south-east. They were also observed in section at the shopping centre car park to the south.

### EXTRAMURAL SUBURBS

The Dissolution documents of St Mary's Abbey indicate that a suburb had already formed in Canon Row on the west side by 1540 (White 1943, 250; Bradley and King 1985, 103). The town records and property documents in 1551–2 refer to '*Cannon Row without the walls*' (Thomas 1992, vol. 2, 170), suggesting that it was established as a street by 1552 and that the town walls were no longer fully intact. It is also evident from the Civil Survey that suburbs existed on the northern, western and southern approaches to Navan by 1654. At that time the western Trim Gate of the walled town was no longer in situ: there were '*fourteene tenants with their gardens and all ye Tenements and gardens on the North side of Cannon-row Street without west gate*' (Simington 1940, 222). As noted above, this gate was rebuilt in 1796, over 100 years after it was no longer visible above ground, possibly reinforcing the suggestion that the southern line of the original walled town and gate was further to the east. Medieval activity was recorded during an excavation in 2003, when evidence of the back gardens of medieval plots fronting onto Canon Row were investigated. The features consisted largely of pits and gullies containing medieval pottery.

## 5.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Guidelines to the Burra Charter state that: *Cultural Significance is a concept which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations.*

There are a variety of categories used to evaluate the level of a place's cultural significance. *Archaeological, Historical, Architectural and Social* interest categories will be used to assess the significance of the walled town of Navan, Co Meath.

### 5.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

- Excavations at Navan have confirmed several phases of occupation prior to the establishment of a walled market town at this location by the Anglo Normans in the thirteenth century.
- The walled town of Navan covers an area of six hectares, which makes it less than a third the size of either Kells or Trim.
- The medieval street pattern has largely been retained, although later developments and clearances including the loss of all its gates have made the medieval character more difficult to appreciate on the ground.
- Although Navan has lost most of the standing sections of the former town defences, excavations and research have contributed to our understanding. However, much remains to be discovered about their design and extent.



41. Images of the market cross now held in the Solstice Arts Centre.

- The fact that few standing sections of the town wall remain enhances the significance of surviving remnants, or more modern walls on medieval alignments, as well as any that may be discovered in future. It is hoped that they will provide vital information as to the design and scale of the town defences.

### 5.2 HISTORICAL INTEREST

- Along with nearby historic walled towns of Trim, Kells, Ardee, Athboy and Drogheda - they make a valuable cluster with similarities and differences that provide rich evidence of the medieval period in Ireland, especially frontier towns of the Pale.



- The central position of Navan within the Anglo-Norman lordship, and its riverine setting, meant that it was of strategic importance.
- The walls played an important part in the history of Navan and were essential in its development as an Anglo-Norman market town.
- Despite being a relatively small town when first founded by the Anglo Normans, Navan has grown to become the county town of Meath with a population in excess of 30,000.

### 5.3 ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

- The outline of the defences as formed is key to understanding the urban morphology of the town. They define the pattern of the medieval layout of the streets and burgage plots, that have remained largely unaltered despite the walls being removed.
- The surviving bastion provides clues as to the former scale and design of the walls as well as the gates and any other bastions or towers that may once have been set along the circuit.
- Its distinctive burgage plot boundaries separated by narrow lanes give Navan its urban grain, contributing to its medieval character.
- Navan is unusual in that the gates and walls appear to have been maintained up until at least the end of the eighteenth century.

### 5.4 SOCIAL INTEREST

- The former defensive walls contribute to our understanding of the development of Irish society during the medieval period. They were built to protect an Anglo-Norman market town at a strategic location guarding two major rivers.
- Although the extent and outline of the town walls may not be well understood by the general public, there is a demonstrable sense of

pride in the town's medieval heritage as demonstrated by the vibrant heritage group and the several initiatives to promote understanding of the town's medieval heritage.

- The removal of the walls is also of interest, attesting to both developments in the technology of warfare as well as political and social change in the Early Modern period.

### 5.5 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

There have been settlements at the confluence of the Boyne and Blackwater rivers since the late-Neolithic period. During the late-thirteenth century, the Anglo-Normans founded a walled market town at Navan, close to the walls of an Augustinian abbey, which itself likely replaced an Early Christian ecclesiastical site dedicated to St Feichin. Along with many other walled towns in Ireland, only scant evidence of its former extent has survived along with its urban form and references in annals and official documents.

As part of the colonization of the island of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans, existing defences and enclosures were fortified or enlarged with stone-built defences. These towns were defensive outposts on the boundaries of the colony, while forming new trading networks. Town walls reflect their setting - topography, geology, economic, political and temporal, and are an essential component in the development of our towns and cities. Its medieval heritage deserves to be better known by locals, and more vividly presented to visitors.

Evolving knowledge of the medieval heritage of the walled town will remain a subject of debate. With its medieval street pattern and distinctive urban grain of burgage plots, Navan is an interesting example of a purpose-built Anglo-Norman town, and a place of regional significance.

## 6.0 DEFINING ISSUES & ASSESSING VULNERABILITY

### HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT

The town walls of Navan are protected under national legislation and statutory guidance. These include the *National Monuments Acts 1930-2014*, the *Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended)* and the *Meath County Development Plan 2021-2026 (CDP)*. Other state and local government initiatives such as the *National Policy on Town Defences (2008)*, the *County Meath Heritage Plan 2015-2020 (2015)* also have a bearing on any proposed policies and actions in this conservation management plan. Consideration is also required of the following directives and acts dealing with natural heritage: the *European Birds (1979)* and *Habitats (1992)* directives, *Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011*, the *Wildlife Acts 1976*, and the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000-2010*.

### NATIONAL MONUMENTS ACTS 1930-2014

The town defences of Navan are listed in the *Record of Monuments and Places (ME025-044---*). As a result, the town walls are protected under the *National Monuments Acts 1930-2004*. When the owner or occupier of a property, or any other person, proposes to carry out any work at, or in relation to, a recorded monument, they are required to give notice in writing to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage two months before commencing any work. For a national monument in the ownership or guardianship of a local authority, the written consent of the Minister is required for any works at the monument.



42. Extract from NMS RMP map (1996) showing extent of ZAP at Navan.

- The full course of the town wall is located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP).
- Any proposed works to the town walls would require the consent of the Minister.
- Consult [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) for further details.



43. View along wall section in yard to rear of Barrack Lane and bastion.

### NATIONAL POLICY ON TOWN DEFENCES 2008

The Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government issued a policy directive on Town Defences in November 2008 which states:  
*The known and expected circuits of the defences (both upstanding and buried, whether of stone or embankment construction) and associated features of all town defences are to be considered a single national monument and treated as a unit for policy and management purposes. There should be a presumption in favour of preservation in-situ of archaeological remains and preservation of their character, setting and amenity.*

### PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTS 2000 (AS AMENDED)

Two sites along the town wall are included in the Record of Protected Structures in the County Development Plan:

90964 R (MH025-205) Navan Abbey Road, Navan Navan Town Wall Town Wall Possible location of section of former town wall c. 1542-3

90853 R (MH025-077) Navan Trimgate Street, Navan Navan Town Wall Town Wall Length of rubble walling, possibly part of town wall. Inscribed stone stating " this part of the town wall rebuilt April 1796 "

Both sites are also included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage ref:14009536 (Trimgate) and ref: 14009568 (Abbey Road). While the Navan Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) includes some of the town wall alignment to the south and east side, its primary focus is on the built heritage of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Any development that would materially affect the character of an Architectural Conservation Area will require planning permission as set out in Section 82 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2013. The walled town circuit is contained within the Zone of Archaeological Importance (Map 3). It is unclear why the walled town circuit as shown has a tail to the south side encompassing the entirety of Railway Street.

### COUNTY MEATH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

It is a policy of the Council:

HER POL 13- *To protect and preserve in situ all surviving elements of medieval town defences.*

HER POL 14 - *To retain the surviving medieval street pattern, building lines and burgage plot widths in historic walled towns.*

## WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Protection to a number of species and designated landscapes is provided under the European Birds (1979) and Habitats (1992) directives, Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011, the Wildlife Acts 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000-2010. Where development is proposed that impacts upon a protected species or place, a derogation license must be sought from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Although there are no designated sites along the line of the town walls, any potential impacts of works on protected species (e.g. bats) must be appropriately considered.

## 6.2 OWNERSHIP & USE

The conjectural wall circuit passes through lands such as public roads and open space which are the responsibility of the local authority. There are numerous private landowners around the circuit where the conjectural line of the wall forms boundaries, on both the internal and external sides, or travels underneath their property. This makes access to the walls and responsibility for their care complex, involving negotiation and collaboration between all the stakeholders.

While the walls no longer serve their defensive purpose the sites along its conjectural line are now used as private dwellings, gardens, car parks, commercial or industrial spaces and yards. Much of the alignment is not within public ownership, fortunately the most impressive and intact section is owned by MCC and used as a works depot.

## 6.3 BUILT HERITAGE

Of most concern in relation to the conservation of the town walls is the condition of the bastion and the adjacent wall. Encroaching ivy and trees will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency to prevent further losses.

### CONDITION

The bastion and masonry retaining wall located to the rear of the municipal district depot accessed from Abbey Road is the most visible and accessible section of the historic town wall circuit. It is assumed that the wall continues for approximately 65-70m to the east, forming the rear boundaries of the adjacent properties. Along their entire length there is damage caused by general neglect and invasive vegetation including ivy, trees and shrubs. To repair the walls, extensive clearance, treatment of ivy and encroachment of trees, immediately followed by consolidation and repair of the masonry will be necessary.

Elsewhere along the circuit, upstanding remains may not be medieval, having been reconstructed on earlier foundations where they had fallen away. These are nonetheless of historic importance and require assessment by conservation experts and consolidation by skilled masons trained in the use of lime mortar and traditional techniques.

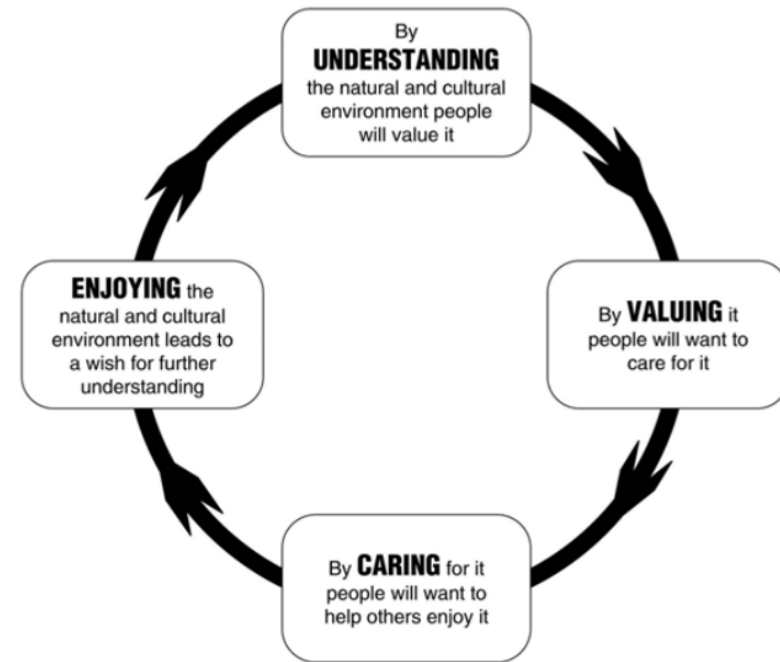


## 6.4 ACCESS & SETTINGS

Issues such as access, health and safety and rights of way present challenges for the wall circuit. These can be overcome to some extent in several ways by means of interpretation and presentation, and by proper management and consultation. Parking is available in many places around the town, including close to the municipal district depot and bastion, which is a natural place to start and finish a walled town tour. Until the depot site is considered suitable to accommodate public access, the town walk could be based at the market square, which will be best for wayfinding and orientation. Restrictions on access to different sections of the wall outline should be made clear to those undertaking the tour to avoid disappointment. Establishing a route that follows the wall circuit as close as is possible will be an important strategic initiative that will enhance visitor experience and assist in the protection of the town wall and conservation into the future. This will involve extensive consultation and the cooperation of the various stakeholders.

## 6.5 HEALTH & SAFETY

Given the current setting and condition of the town defences, health and safety are an important consideration to ensure that adequate management procedures are in place, and steps taken to address areas of concern. It is only possible to visit the bastion by prior arrangement due to its use as a MD depot. The use of the monument setting as a works area could pose risks to the health and safety of anyone accessing the site in case of stone falling from the ancient structure. Heavy machinery or certain work practices could also impact on the monument. Freestanding sections of wall, such as in McDermott's Bakery are of concern due to their condition. Every effort should be taken to identify areas at risk and attend to their repair to prevent incidents from occurring.



44. Cultural Heritage Virtuous Circle diagram Godden Mackay Logan Ltd. (2008)

## 6.6 INTERPRETATION

The lack of visibility and alterations to their setting make the town defences difficult to interpret. When carrying out our field surveys, locals encountered along the route were surprised to hear that their property or a place for which they were familiar formed part of the walled circuit and contained fabric that was possibly five hundred years of age.

Navan has been identified as the gateway to the Boyne Valley, being convenient to Dublin and centrally placed in relation to Trim, Kells, Brú na Bóinne and numerous other cultural destinations in the region. Tourists with a particular interest in these sites may also be interested in the medieval heritage of Navan, albeit it is more difficult to see and interpret. The design of high-quality interpretative material is essential for greater public understanding of the walled town. The existing tourism information point at the Solstice Arts Centre could include information the town walls, being updated where necessary. The display at the Solstice Arts Centre could be supplemented with information panels or markers erected at key locations.

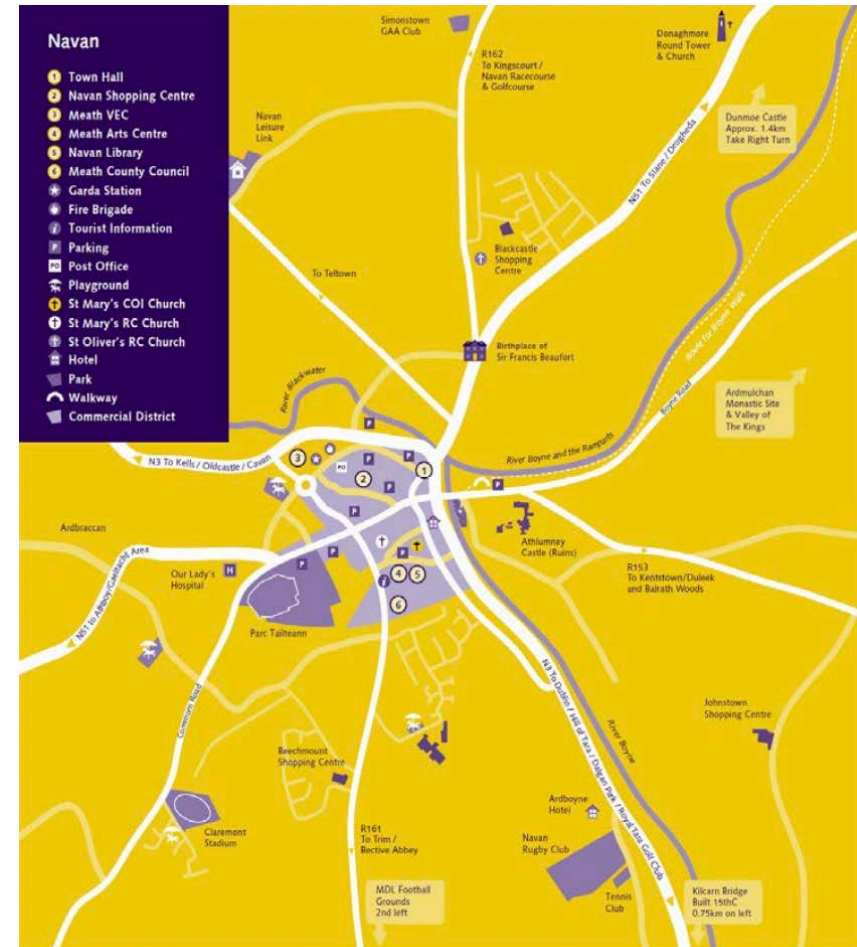
An important step would be to identify key locations where the town walls can be encountered, and to include the circuit on tourist maps. Navan is fortunate in that much of the route is contained within the public realm. An obvious place to start or complete a tour of the circuit would be at the Market Square. This formed the civic focus of the medieval town, all the main streets pass through, allowing views in all directions.

## 6.8 VULNERABILITIES & THREATS

In relation to the issues outlined above, the vulnerability of the archaeological heritage can be summarised as set out below:

### Preservation

- Interventions may be necessary to provide improved access, or to repair or stabilise surviving sections of the town defences. This work needs to be informed by current best practice, be reversible and should not detract from the setting of the monument.



45. Tourist map of Navan showing historic core in purple shading.

- The complex ownership of the walls can make it difficult to assign responsibilities for their maintenance, as well as obtaining access for their inspection and presentation. It also makes it difficult to carry out archaeological investigations, even using non-invasive methodologies, on private properties in built-up areas.
- Where sections do survive, some parts of the town wall walls are in a vulnerable state, and will require significant repairs and consolidation.
- Defects when left unchecked can bring about rapid deterioration, resulting in considerable financial loss that can be avoided by a regime of routine maintenance.

#### Understanding

- At present, the focus on the early modern built heritage is understandable, being the most prevalent and visible. However, the urban form and streets belong to its late-medieval origins, and it is important that this is presented to visitors.
- Surviving fabric from the town defences are located under current ground levels on private properties, embedded in buildings or along boundaries, so our knowledge is confined to evidence gleaned from historic maps, documentary records, individual surveys or where archaeological testing follows development of sites.
- While the lack of knowledge about the precise location and condition of the wall circuit is a significant threat to its preservation, statutory protections and planning policies already in place could lead to a much-improved awareness and setting for the surviving sections of town wall.



## 7.0 CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT POLICIES

### 7.1 APPROACH & OBJECTIVES

All conservation works are guided by the principle of minimum intervention as set out in the Burra Charter – or *as little as possible, but as much as is necessary*. The conservation objectives for the former town defences of Navan as well as boundary walls associated with burgage plots that may have survived can be summarised as follows:

- to provide guidance on best conservation practice for the preservation of the built heritage; the bastion, surviving wall sections, the conjectural alignment, and any associated earthworks and buried archaeology
- to provide for the effective management of the flora and fauna that may inhabit standing walls, including timely treatment of invasive species, and assessment of the impact of the natural heritage on the cultural heritage to find the correct balance
- to set out an approach as to how to improve access to the town walls to locals and visitors, as well as the presentation of the cultural heritage
- to increase knowledge, awareness and understanding of the town walls, including its several phases and their importance to the development of Navan
- identify key messages and themes to be communicated to visitors
- ensure that interpretations of the built and cultural heritage of the walled town are well-researched and engaging

- to provide for the use of the settings of the town walls as a cultural, amenity and educational resource
- ensure that the town walls are accessible to as many people as possible, but not to the detriment of its built heritage or to the safety and health of the public
- to maintain the town walls, seeking capital funding for repairs and the enhancement of its setting
- to promote the town walls as a heritage asset for Navan, making links and forming networks with the many other heritage sites in the county and region in Ireland's Ancient East

### 7.2 CONSERVATION POLICIES

#### 7.2.1 PROTECTION OF BUILT HERITAGE

Ensure the protection of the built heritage through its maintenance and repair and the preservation and improvement of its settings. Repair works are to be prioritised in terms of urgency (physical stability, public safety), and informed by regular inspection and expert advice. Of particular interest in Navan is the conservation of its street pattern, back lanes and burgage plots that give it its distinctive historic character.

#### 7.2.2 PROTECTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE (BURIED)

Non-intrusive methods of archaeological investigation should be used, combined with traditional excavation only when justified by a comprehensive research and best conservation practice. A research framework should be followed and impacts on the subterranean archaeology are to be minimised. Any proposed excavation should have a

strong rationale and contribute to the understanding and interpretation of medieval Navan.

### 7.2.3 PROTECTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE (BURIED)

The sub-surface archaeology should be disturbed as little as possible so that it can be preserved intact. Provide physical protection where appropriate.

### 7.2.4 PROTECTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE (ABOVE GROUND)

As protected structures, the bastion and wall sections at Trimgate Street (St Mary's RC Church) and Abbey Road should be conserved by implementing programmes of repair and maintenance, together with the preservation of their settings. The opportunity should be taken during the works to determine whether they contain medieval masonry or sit on the foundations of the town wall. Ensure that any actions, or any other works proposed in the vicinity of the monument, do not cause damage to the walls.

### 7.2.5 PROTECTION OF NATURAL HERITAGE

Carry out a habitat study for the town wall settings, with an aim to increase species diversity. Avoid the use of herbicides, seeking to maintain the planting on a seasonal rather than a weekly/monthly basis. Ensure that any works proposals for the walls are informed by an arboricultural impact assessment.

### 7.2.6 REPAIR & MAINTENANCE

Provide regular on-going maintenance as the most effective way to preserve historic structures and landscapes. Repairs to historic fabric should be carried out using conservation methodologies that conform to the guiding principles as set out in the ICOMOS charters, using appropriate

details and materials of matching quality. Conservation should proceed to an overall strategy for repair and maintenance of built and natural heritage.

### 7.2.7 URGENT WORKS

The condition of the bastion and adjacent wall section is of most concern. Vegetation removal and careful sequencing of specialist repair works will be required to ensure that the risks to the safety of the public, and preservation of this survival of the town defences are addressed.

### 7.2.8 INTERVENTION

Where interventions are found to be necessary to improve access, or to conserve a structure, they are to be designed to the highest conservation standards and should not detract from the interpretation of the built heritage. Future projects should be focussed on conserving and improving access to historic features such as the bastion, southern alignment, and the wall circuit, with each initiative seen as a learning opportunity to come to a fuller understanding of the cultural heritage of the walled town.

### 7.2.9 USE

The preservation of the few sections of town defences and settings that have been identified depended on their former and present uses. Ensure that redevelopment or refurbishment of such sites with new uses do not put the preservation of the monument at further risk, and where possible, existing uses that are potentially damaging to the monument are discontinued.

### 7.2.10 REVERSIBILITY

All interventions should follow the principle of the reversibility, so that a structure or site can be returned to its former state where possible.

### 7.2.11 EXPERT ADVICE & SKILLS

Continue to ensure that all conservation works are carried out under the direction of suitably qualified professionals (specialist conservators, conservation architects and structural engineers) and undertaken only by suitably skilled and experienced artisans and tradesmen.

### 7.2.12 CONSULTATION

Consultation with stakeholders regarding proposed interventions to the town walls and bastion is important given several different ownerships along the surviving section.

### 7.2.13 SETTINGS & KEY VIEWS

Protect and enhance the settings of the built heritage. New developments should not negatively impact on existing monuments and settings through their placement, scale and design.

### 7.2.14 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

As the historic core of Navan is included in the Meath County Development Plan zoned as suitable for 'town centre' development, it is essential that the town wall alignment is maintained, and the surviving historic fabric conserved and presented as part of the new public realm.

### 7.2.15 ENCROACHMENT & INVASIVE SPECIES

The surviving wall sections and bastion are at risk of encroachment by trees, shrubs and ivy, along with invasive plant species establishing in quiet corners unseen. Monitoring and treatment should be undertaken, using best practice by avoiding the use of herbicides and reducing potential impacts on the environment and built heritage.

## 7.3 MANAGEMENT POLICIES

### 7.3.1 CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Review this Plan at agreed intervals to benchmark progress in implementation, re-assess priorities, assimilate new information or changes in legislation or methodologies. This overview reduces the risk of cumulative impacts due to incremental change without an agreed plan.

### 7.3.2 LICENSING & APPROVALS

Any archaeological investigation will need to be licensed, notice for works will need to be sent to the National Monuments Services two months in advance of works commencing in accordance with the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004.

### 7.3.3 INSPECTIONS

Set in place procedures for on-going monitoring of the condition of the walls to ensure their long-term preservation.

### 7.3.4 DEPTH IN TIME

Ensure that the conservation and preservation of the built and cultural heritage of Navan Walled Town requires that all the aspects that contribute to its cultural significance be valued.

### 7.3.5 RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Ensure that on-site archaeological research is governed by an approved research strategy that seeks to answer specific questions, using non-invasive methodologies followed by targeted excavation, when opportunities and resources allow.

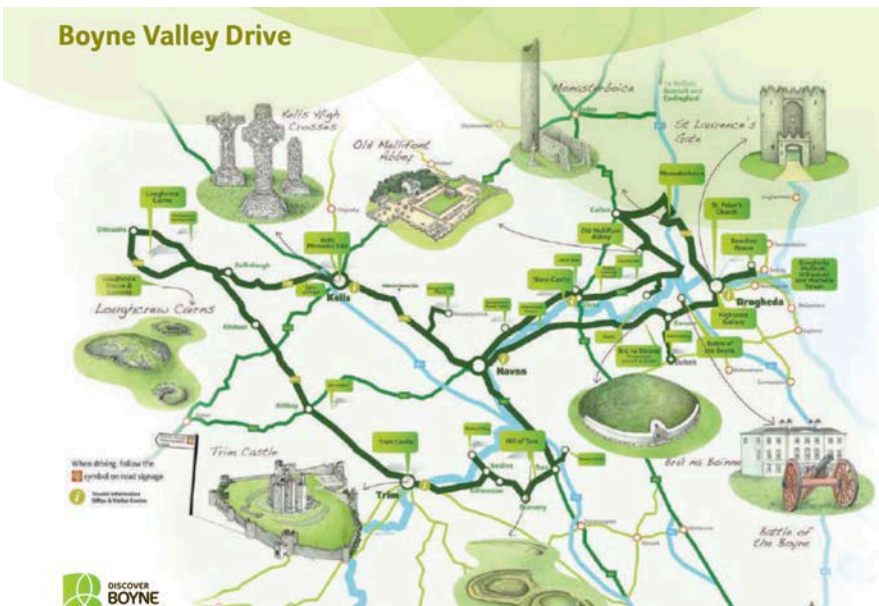
Ensure that the dissemination of research findings, in a variety of media involving the community where possible, is made accessible to the public.



Seek to develop a research framework addressing gaps in the current knowledge of the town defences of Navan – the full extent of surviving town walls as foundations or embedded in buildings.

### 7.3.6 WIDER ASSOCIATIONS

Historic places and sites should not be considered in isolation, but rather as parts of a wider cultural landscape, where each element relates to the other. This is particularly important in Navan and Co Meath which are rich repositories of built heritage with strong associations between sites through each period of history.



46. Boyne Valley Drive map with Navan in centre but without landmark.



47. View towards bastion from inside depot gate.

### 7.3.7 AUTHENTICITY

Ensure that the importance of continuity and change in the proper understanding of the built heritage is communicated to the public. This is particularly important for Navan, as its Anglo-Norman town walls have been reduced to remnants.

### 7.3.8 OWNERSHIP

Consider rights of private owners in relation to the access, conservation and presentation of the archaeological heritage. Public access and preservation of the town walls will require the cooperation, agreement and understanding of landowners in partnership with the local authority.

### 7.3.9 PUBLIC SAFETY

Prioritise public safety in relation to the seclusion of the sites, overhanging branches, uneven ground, the proximity and condition of the monuments. However, the present condition of the wall section and bastion is of primary concern, and further inspection following ivy treatment will allow a programme of specialist works to be devised.

### 7.3.10 LEAVE NO TRACE

Visitors to the walled town section and bastion are to be informed of their shared responsibility for its conservation by avoiding activities or behaviour that put it at risk. This would include but not limited to littering, vandalism, graffiti, unauthorised access, lighting fires, ground disturbance or anything that would cause disturbance to other visitors or the local community.

### 7.3.11 INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES

Update interpretative signage, designed in accordance with an overall masterplan, so that the public can more meaningfully interpret the cultural heritage represented by the town defences. Signs should be well-designed and located so as not to detract from their setting. Current heritage trail maps could be updated to show the conjectural town wall layout as well as the surviving sections, along with the gate sites that are shown at present.

### 7.3.12 MARKING THE ALIGNMENT

Where the conjectural wall circuit is in the public realm, the line of the wall should be marked with stone paving or lighting. This would be particularly effective at the gate locations to mark the outer limits of the medieval town to the public, or for those following the heritage trail. A paving stone could be inscribed with a description of the feature and a location map identifying its location along the wall circuit. Placing these plaques at high level, like the example at Trimgate, would contribute to an engaging visual language to emerge.



48. Example of town wall paving marker in Kilkenny.



49. LIDaR scan of cleared bastion in January 2022 (Ryan).

### 7.3.13 FORMAL & INFORMAL LEARNING

Ensure that the presentation of the cultural heritage of Navan Walled Town is aimed at as broad an audience as possible.

### 7.3.14 ON-GOING INTERPRETATION

As knowledge and understanding of the town defences grows and changes through further research and investigations, ensure that interpretation media are updated accordingly.

### 7.3.15 INAPPROPRIATE INTERVENTIONS

Whenever possible, inappropriate interventions along the town wall alignment should be removed. The integrity of the town wall should be reinforced where necessary, replacing later additions such as fencing or

blockwork with stonework that minimizes impact on the archaeological heritage and enhance, rather than detract from, their settings.

### 7.3.16 DEVELOPMENT PLAN OR LOCAL AREA PLAN MAPS

Where possible local authority publications are to reinforce understanding of the extent and location of the walls to the public and to aid forward planning for service providers and building professionals.

### 7.3.17 SETTINGS & KEY VIEWS

Protect and enhance the settings of the monuments and key views by implementing the policies and objectives set out in the County Development Plan.

### 7.3.18 SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure that all events and initiatives in relation to the cultural heritage of the walled town of Navan are carried out in accordance with sustainable practices.

### 7.3.19 OUTREACH & PARTICIPATION

Support initiatives that promote understanding of the archaeological heritage and that communicate its cultural significance. The stakeholders should seek to participate in and promote the aims of the Irish Walled Towns Network and the Walled Towns Friendship Circle.

Encourage local schools to use the town wall circuit as a teaching resource. Field trips could be managed by appointment and would have relevance to history and civics subjects.



## 8.0 CONSERVATION & ACCESS STRATEGIES

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Navan has expanded rapidly over recent decades, an almost ten-fold increase since 1991. It takes its place among once small towns and villages that surround the greater urban area of Dublin that have experienced rapid growth in recent decades such as Swords, Balbriggan, Drogheda, Newbridge and Bray. This is evident when viewing the development plan map for the town where the historic core that persisted for centuries now forms a relatively small proportion of the town area. This development should be viewed as an opportunity for the medieval heritage of the town, if robust protections are in place ensuring that sensitive and imaginative responses are devised to works that involve the town defences, street layouts, frontages and burgage plots. Other heritage towns can suffer from a lack of investment and declining populations. The town walls and medieval heritage of Navan should be conserved and presented, thereby enhancing the quality of life for residents, strengthening their connection to this historic place, and providing opportunities for tourism and employment in heritage.

### 8.2 AUDIENCES

The conservation of a complex site involves input from many different sources, each with their own expertise or areas of responsibility. These stakeholders are the intended audience of the Conservation Management Plan. Their understanding and adoption of the conservation and interpretation policies are crucial to the preservation of the town defences

of Navan as a valuable cultural place for the benefit of the whole community.

#### 8.2.1 STATE BODIES

Meath County Council has responsibility for their maintenance and for implementation of planning policy and ensuring the statutory protection of the town walls. The National Monuments Service in the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage also oversee the statutory protection of the town walls, being a national monument.

#### 8.2.2 LOCAL COMMUNITY

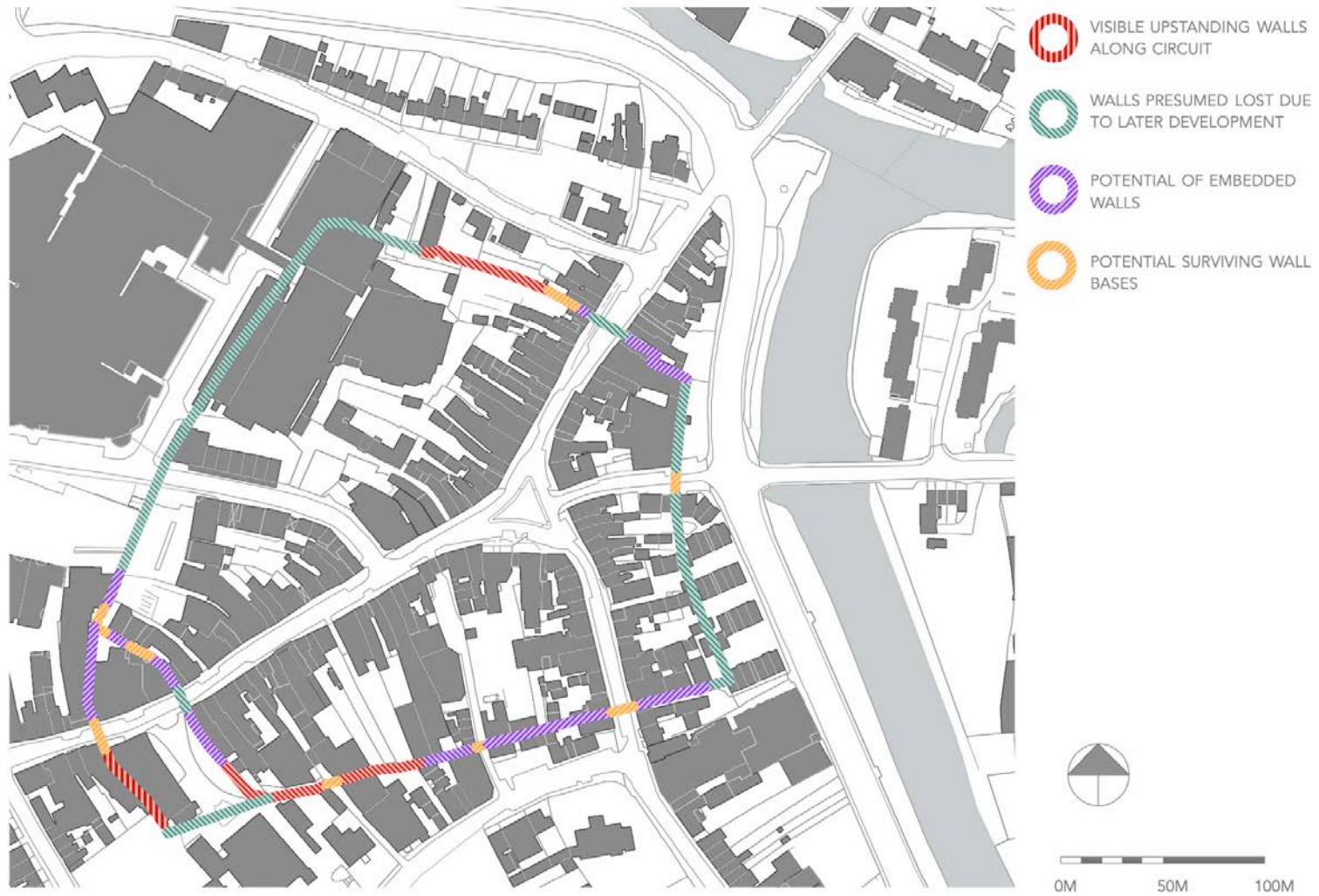
Improving understanding and appreciation of the town walls among the local community will enhance local pride in their cultural heritage, and assist motivated residents to become active stakeholders in preserving the monument in its separate, but linked, settings that form part of private land holdings.

#### 8.2.3 SCHOOLS/ UNIVERSITIES

The best way to foster interest and appreciation of the cultural heritage among the local community is to include education programmes for schools. It would be a valuable teaching aid for students in subjects such as archaeology, religion, architecture, as well as tourism and heritage protection, flora and fauna.

#### 8.2.4 CULTURAL HERITAGE & HISTORICAL GROUPS

Local groups with interest in heritage and culture, or groups with specialist interest, should be encouraged to engage with the cultural heritage that the town walls represent and communicate this to both their neighbours and visitors.



50. Map showing current evidence and understanding of wall circuit.

### 8.3 KEY MESSAGES/ THEMES

To frame the interpretation of the walled town of Navan, it is important to set out clearly the messages and themes that are to be communicated to the relevant audiences. It is essential that all information be communicated clearly to the public in a structured yet engaging way.

#### 8.3.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Further research is necessary to understand the historic development of medieval and early modern Navan and how this relates to the town walls. It is important that existing knowledge is accurately conveyed, and further research questions outlined and presented in ways that make visits to the town walls interesting.

#### 8.3.2 CONSERVATION & MAINTENANCE

While further development of the historic core will continue in order to ensure that suitable facilities are being provided, it is essential that the process of conserving the town walls (where identified) and their settings is continued.

### 8.4 PRESENTATION & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 8.4.1 STATUTORY PROTECTION

While the town walls are a national monument, it is important that the description of its extent and identification of possible fragments is kept up-to-date. This will provide an additional level of oversight and protection for any proposed interventions, or developments adjacent to the sites. Meath

County Council will continue to consult with the National Monuments Service whenever development is proposed that has potential impacts.

#### 8.4.2 IMPROVED LINKAGES

Online resources, such as [discoverboynevalley.ie](http://discoverboynevalley.ie), introduce Navan to a wide audience, and present the town as a gateway to the numerous cultural heritage sites along the Boyne and Co Meath. Being the largest town in the region, tourist groups can avail of services and facilities while travelling during the day to sites such as Newgrange, Slane, Tara, Trim or Kells.



51. Pigmented concrete and inscribed mural at Dublinia interpreting Norse navigation by stars.



### 8.4.3 COMMUNITY USE

Increasing knowledge and understanding of the town walls among the local community will assist in its preservation. In time, the development of the bastion as part of the public realm, accessible to the community and conserved to best conservation practice, subject to availability of funding and the necessary consents being in place, has the potential to transform the tourist potential of the town.

### 8.4.4 INTERPRETATIVE MEDIA

Using several different strategies to communicate to your audience can lead to wider and more meaningful participation. Information panels should be carefully designed so as not to detract from their settings and should be capable of being updated. Signs should also link into online resources using QR (Quick Response) codes or other devices.

## 8.5 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

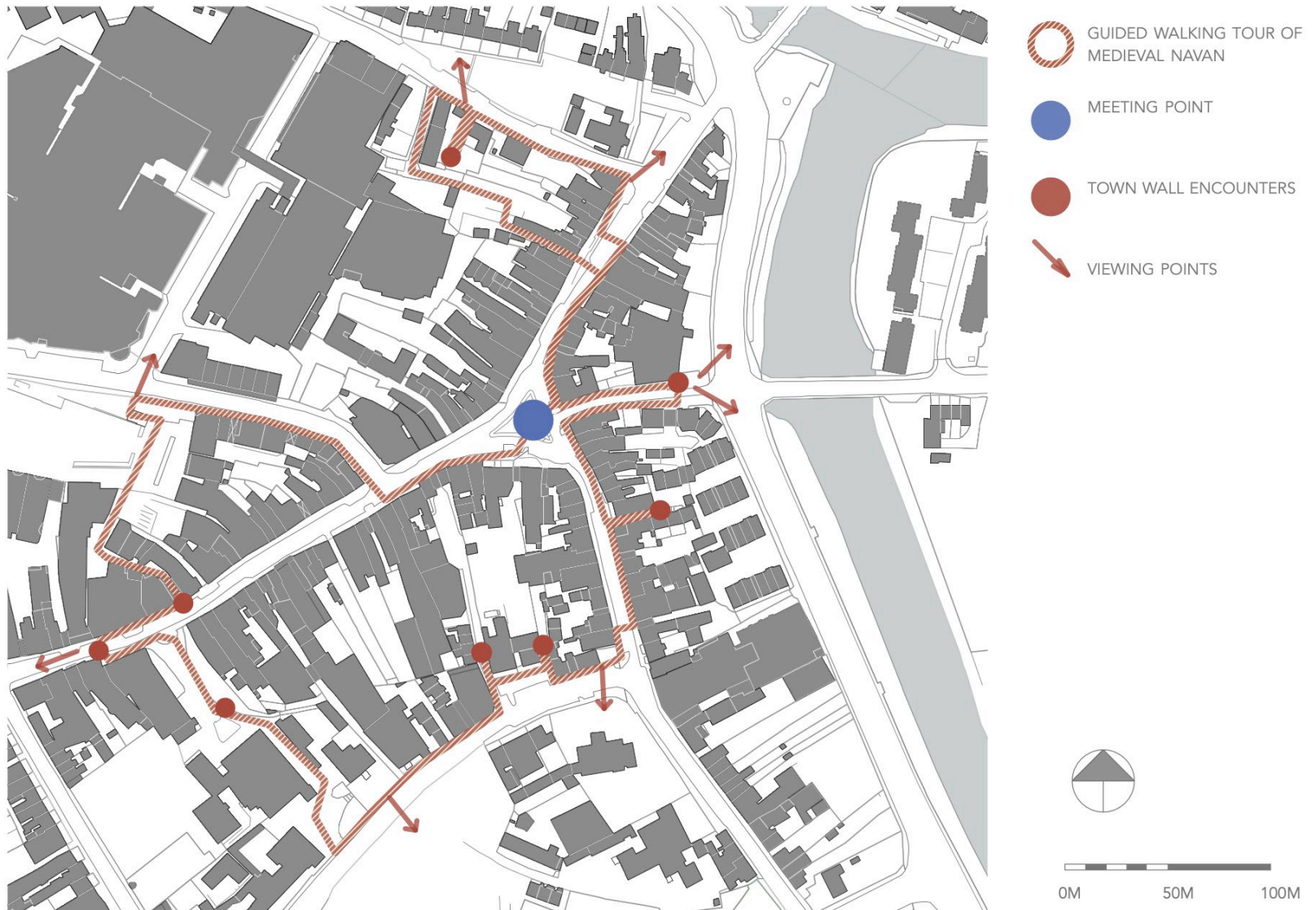
The conservation of the masonry walls associated with the town defences of Navan is restricted by our lack of knowledge regarding their extent and location. Buried remains that remain undisturbed are not at significant risk; statutory protections within the town such as the Zone of Archaeological Importance should assist in their preservation into the future. There should also be an awareness of the possibility of sections of town wall, or associated medieval fabric, which may survive embedded in walls of townhouses that have the external appearance of eighteenth or nineteenth century fabric.



52. Detail of stonework in poor condition to base of bastion.

### 8.5.1 MAINTENANCE & REPAIR OF BUILT HERITAGE

- The protection and maintenance of existing built heritage of the former town defences, especially the bastion, should take priority. In this way, the gradual process of decay is arrested, allowing this historic place to be maintained in perpetuity.
- The cultural heritage value of the town walls would be enhanced by improving accessibility, in a way that respects the sensitivity of the sites. This should be a key objective of any proposals to develop the municipal district depot site on Abbey Road in the future.



53. Potential walled town walking route using Market Square as meeting point.





54. Visitors on walled town guided tour at St Audoen's Gate in Dublin.

- Proposals for the development of these settings should be considered in relation to the management and preservation of the town walls and bastion, providing funding for their repair and maintenance.
- Emergency repairs to the walls and selective removal of trees will be required to assist in their preservation as well as the security of the site and safety of the public. This work is to be carried out by conservation specialists and be implemented outside the nesting season in accordance with an arboriculture impact assessment.

### 8.5.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Geophysical survey techniques are constantly improving and may well yield interesting data that will provide insights into the archaeological heritage. This might include the identification of other defensive features, town gates and the foundations of former sections of town walls.

#### PROJECT: WALLED TOWN WALK

Walking along the town wall circuit would be an interesting way of seeing Navan, but sections of the conjectural alignment are difficult to access and hard to appreciate. In time, linkages along the town walls could be enhanced whenever sites are proposed for re-development. At present, awareness and appreciation of the town walls could be enhanced by drawing attention to the location of the three town gates. A granite sett band had been installed across the street at Dublin Gate as part of a recent public realm enhancement. At Trimgate, there is already a plaque commemorating the rebuilding of the town wall. It might be an idea to combine both these approaches at each of the former gates.

This could form part of a public realm enhancement scheme to link different sites of interest around Navan. Using quality contrasting materials such as stone setts, a platform crossing could be installed to allow pedestrians to cross safely at these locations, where interpretive material would allow them to imagine the setting when the gates were still intact. Reusing historic setts that may be in storage and combining with specially commissioned plaques and signage together can assist in wayfinding as well as creating a sense of discovery. Guided walking tours of the town would emphasize these locations to discuss the history of the town. For those entering the town by vehicle, the ramps recreate a 'threshold' at the entries to the historic core that was been lost with the removal of the gates





55. Site layout plan showing town wall walk (dotted blue) and a potential outdoor museum dedicated to Medieval Navan in town depot.

### PROJECT: WALLED TOWN SETTINGS

Future development within the historic core, and to infill sites along the circuit are important opportunities to enhance the conservation and presentation of the walled town heritage. Lanes and burgage plots are as essential to the medieval heritage of Navan and should be protected. Projects to conserve sections of wall or improve access and settings may be implemented over time as part of proposals for redevelopment of sites.

### PROJECT: OUTDOOR MUSEUM

A potential future project is to conserve the bastion, improve access and enhance its setting. It is presently accessed from a municipal district yard and is usually obscured by parked vans or IBC water containers. Being in council ownership however is a great opportunity to provide a new cultural attraction for Navan that can be enjoyed by locals and visitors. Further to funding, design development and statutory approvals, it has the potential to be the principal meeting point for heritage walking tours around Navan, and benefits from car parking directly across the road.

Following the conservation of the bastion and adjacent wall section, archaeological testing should confirm whether the ramp and podium to the base of the wall can be removed to expose more of the town wall. If it is demonstrated that the podium is necessary for the preservation of the monument, consideration should be given as to how best to enhance its presentation and functionality.

Rationalisation of facilities at the depot is an opportunity to remove the metal and brick shed that is presently attached to the bastion. This will allow the entire section to be conserved and presented, while allowing the depot



56. Plan of outdoor museum with town map inscribed in pavement.



to remain without further detriment to the monument. The bastion could continue to be accessible to groups or visitors by appointment. By replacing the existing gates with a bespoke design relating to the monument, the bastion can have more presence on the street.

In time, and subject to funding, design development and statutory approvals, the former yard could become a pocket park and outdoor museum dedicated to Navan. Planting areas could be provided to soften the hard surfaces of the walls and yard and provide greenery without impacting on the monument. Displays could be mounted on the walls along the north side of the yard that will screen adjacent properties. Benches could be provided, facing south looking towards the bastion and town wall.



57. Proposal for feature gates to outdoor museum when closed.



58. Clare Ryan giving a talk to children during Heritage Week.

As the meeting point along the town wall circuit, a large-scale map of the medieval town could be presented on the ground of the yard. There are several methods that this could be achieved such as casting an imprint into concrete panels, steel inserts or paving patterns.

Using the conserved town wall as a backdrop, with sensitively designed lighting, the former yard could become a small performance space or outdoor sculpture garden. A stage in the form of a permanent podium could be installed along the west side, with a new canopy installed for performers but also for shelter in poor weather for visitors.



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