

The Suburbanisation of the Greater Cabragh Townland into the Parish of Navan Road 1935–1960

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Abstract: This study examines the transformation of the rural townland of Greater Cabragh into the Dublin suburban parish of Navan Road between 1935 and 1960. This evolution was an instance of the twentieth century suburbanisation of Dublin, as the previously centralised city spread into its hinterland. This change had its origins in early 20th century, when a substantial portion of Dublin's population lived in overcrowded, insanitary tenements in the city centre. A series of reports proposed that a healthier future lay in re-locating much of the populace to the city's fringe i.e. areas directly beyond the 1849 boundary of the area administered by Dublin Corporation (2-3km from the city centre). The subsequent suburban colonisation of areas to the north and west of the city would see the percentage of County Dublin's population living outside the canals grow from 47% in the 1936 to 75% in the 1961. Development beyond the canals is significant as, from the late 18th century until 1900 these were *de-facto* and *de-jure* markers of the outer limit of the city. With the map of Dublin being remade, the transformation of Greater Cabragh was an instance of the impact of the suburbanisation processes on a landscape, a legacy community and an incoming community. The initial land holdings in the townland are charted, revealing a district dominated by farmland controlled by religious institutions and a small number of private land holders. Using land valuation records, the paper maps the decade by decade transition as land passed to private developers and co-operatives, who constructed owner-occupier homes for the lower middle classes.

Keywords: *Dublin, Suburbanisation, Navan Road, Greater Cabragh, Suburb, Transformation.*

Introduction and Literature Review

The twentieth century saw a transformation in the population, geography and housing infrastructure of Dublin. At the start of the century 40% of the population of County

Dublin lived outside the Royal and Grand Canals, while by the close of the century that number was 90%. This radical change came about through the extensive expansion of suburbs, in particular in the north and west of the city. The suburbanisation of Dublin in the 20th century has been a topic of significant study in recent decades with **Ruth McManus** and **Joseph Brady** covering a span from 1910-1990 in their *Making of Dublin City* series, while **Murray Fraser's** *John Bull's Other Homes* treated with the Dublin housing experience in the 40 years up to 1922 and Irish independence. Meanwhile **Ellen Rowley's** *Housing, Architecture and the Edge Condition* and her three edited volumes of *More than concrete blocks : Dublin City's twentieth-century buildings and their stories* have focused on the built environment in the new suburbs, while **Padraic Kenna's** *Housing Law, Rights and Policy* conducted a survey of housing policy and was also significant in mapping the legislative underpinnings of the suburban housing programmes. Building on these studies, this paper explores how the mid twentieth century macro-processes of city-wide suburbanisation of Dublin manifested themselves in the 1935-1960 transformation of the rural landscape of the Greater Cabragh townland. In this period, the townland, located just three kilometres from the GPO (the location from which distances to Dublin are officially calculated), was remodelled into the lower middle class suburban parish of Navan Road. The study maps the evolution of the area's land holding and land usage as the city expanded and overlaid a suburb on what had been a sparsely populated rural community. It thus reveals how the city-wide process of suburbanisation in the decades following independence played out at the micro level in the transformation of the Greater Cabragh townland.

Suburbanisation Contexts

From the 1920s through to 1960, enabled by a series of Finance and Housing Acts, local and central government and private developers enacted a suburbanising housing strategy recommended in the series of early and mid-20th century reports (O'Connor *et al.*, 1914; Cowan, 1918; Kelly, 1918; Abercrombie, Kelly and Kelly, 1922; O'Rourke, 1925; Abercrombie, Kelly and Robertson, 1941; Colivet, 1943). The core recommendations of these reports were that the crowded, insanitary city centre housing should be replaced and that the majority of the city's population and future growth should be accommodated in single-family suburban housing built on the city's then rural fringe, beyond the Royal and Grand canals. Completed in 1779 and 1796 respectively, these canals along with the North Circular Road (1763) and South Circular Road (1777), whose route they tracked in good measure within the city, had defined the natural limits of the city since the end of the 18th century (Dickson, 2015, pp. 226–230).

From the mid-19th century, the Dublin city boundary had spread outward – as often following housing development as leading it (see Figure 1). In the early decades following independence in 1922, there was an ongoing debate among planners and decision makers with regard to the devising and implementation of housing for the tenement dwelling working classes. A core aspect of these deliberations was the relative merits of demolishing the city centre tenements and rebuilding on the same footprint as opposed to developing

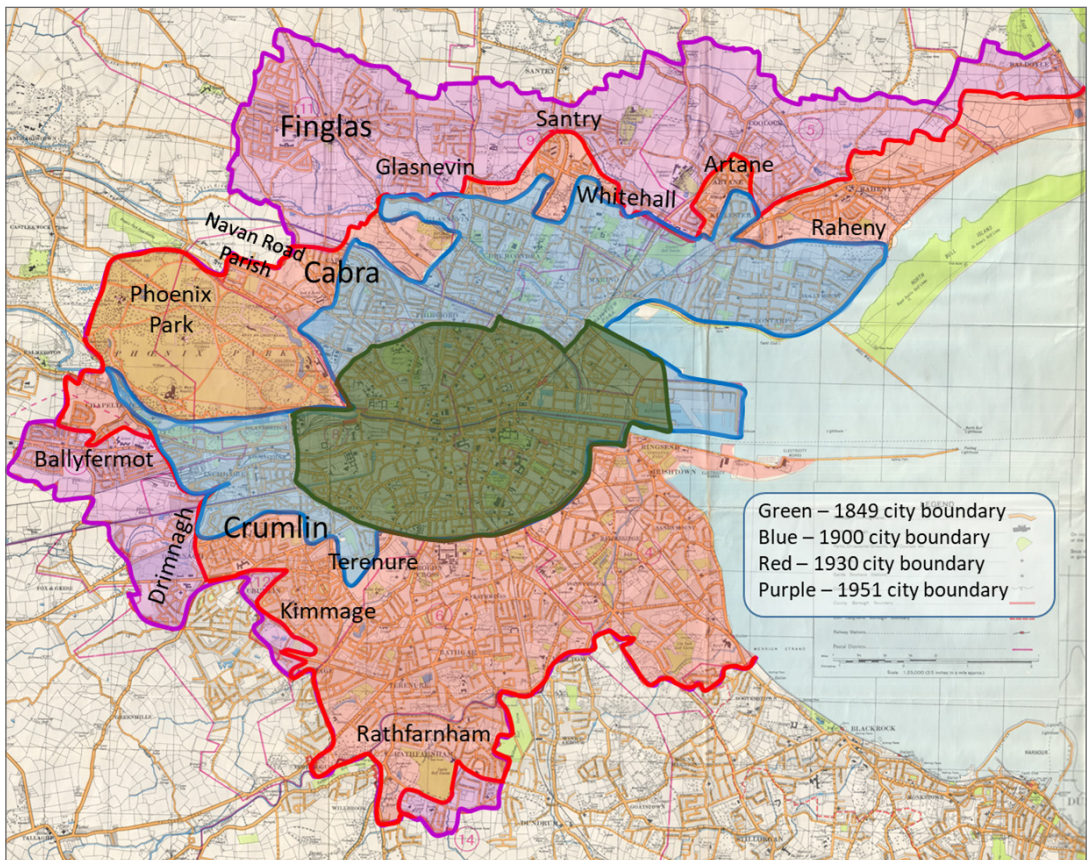


Figure 1: 1962 Map of Dublin showing the outward expansion of the city boundary from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. Reproduced by kind permission of Tailte Éireann, © Tailte Éireann.

new housing on the city's fringe. While in the aftermath of the 1931 and 1932 Housing Act there was a high interest in the refurbishment approach, this was largely unsuccessful due in particular to difficulties in obtaining houses of suitable quality for refurbishment. The ultimate decision of the Corporation was that reconditioned tenements would only form a small part of the solution to Dublin's housing problem (McManus, 2022, p. 139). A second major point of debate was the type of housing, specifically flats versus cottages. Ultimately, the direction of travel set in the Department of Local Government *Report of Inquiry into the Housing of the Working Classes of the City of Dublin 1939-43 (1943)* ('*Report of Inquiry*') and the Patrick Abercrombie's *Sketch Development Plan (1941)* on behalf of Dublin Corporation was for a preference for suburbs over the city centre for working class housing and a preference for cottage estates on the fringe over city centre flat developments. Indeed, the *Report of Inquiry* calculated the cost differential between the two being that the construction of fringe cottages (two storey local authority houses) cost £565 per four roomed unit, as against £992 per four roomed city centre flat (Colivet,

1943, p. 120). Those flats that were developed in the city centre were targeted at the poorest of the tenement dwellers, the Corporation's logic being that the higher rents charged for fringe cottages and the cost of travel to the city centre workplaces of unskilled labourers would be incompatible with their living on the city's edge (Rowley, 2020, pp. 61–62). Allied with these strategic approaches was the belief of governments of all hues in the desirability of achieving of universal single-family housing, with a bias towards home ownership through grant-enabling private housing and the facilitation of tenant purchases of local authority housing (Rowley, 2020, p. 6).

Particular geographical constraints presented themselves to the twentieth century suburbanisation programme – the airport at Collinstown restricted certain northward expansion, to the east was the Irish Sea, while development to the south-east was limited by the pre-existing 19th century suburbs built for the professional middle class in the Rathmines/Rathgar and Pembroke areas (Brady, 2016, p. 13). In consequence, the focal areas for mid-twentieth century suburbanisation were to the west and north-east. The annotated 1962 Ordnance Survey popular edition map of Dublin (Figure 2) illustrates the resultant suburban transformation that the city underwent in the period from the 1930s to the early 1960s.

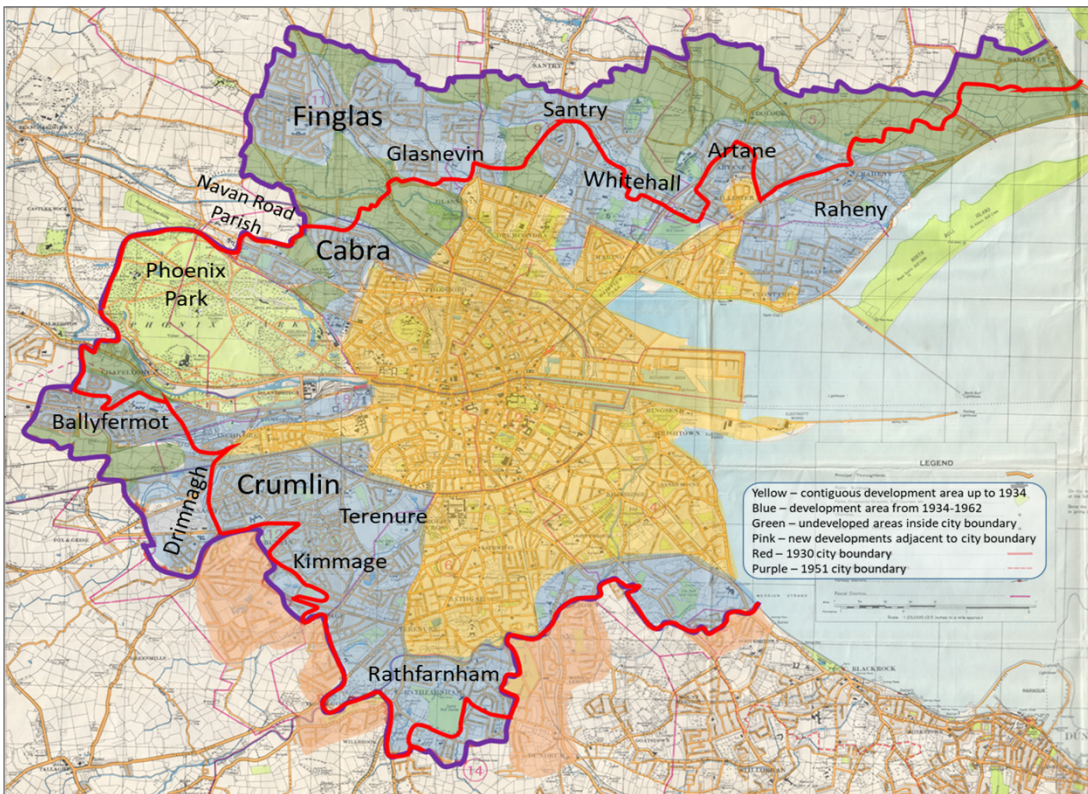


Figure 2. 1962 Map of Dublin showing the phases of contiguous development from the city centre since 1934. (OSI Popular Edition Map 1962). Reproduced by kind permission of Tailte Éireann, © Tailte Éireann.

Significant developments spread out to south-west, with local authority housing in Crumlin, Kimmage and Drimnagh augmented by private developments in areas including Terenure, Templeogue and Rathfarnham. Meanwhile, extensive local authority house construction saw the population of Ballyfermot, in the west of the city, grow to in excess of 30,000 by the time of the 1961 census. On the north-side of the city, the sweep from the Phoenix Park to Glasnevin, which was open land in 1930, was substantially filled by the new suburbs of Navan Road (primarily private housing) and Cabra (primarily local authority housing), while to the north of the old city boundary, significant local authority developments augmented by private housing resulted in substantial increases to the populations of East and West Finglas on what had previously been agricultural lands. Moving east from Finglas, mixed public and private developments occurred in Santry and Whitehall/Ellenfield, while towards the sea, Artane and Raheny also experienced significant housing and population growth as the city continued to expand towards its new 1951 northern boundary (see Figure 2 above).

That the provision and facilitation of housing was seen as a central mission of the State is illustrated in the wartime and post-war planning and execution undertaken by the government. In 1944, Sean Lemass, as Minister for Industry and Commerce, introduced a white paper, *The Post-War Building Programme*, which envisaged that housing would be the State's number one economic programme at war's end (Rowley, 2020, pp. 125–126). The subsequent 1948 Housing White Paper, *A Review of Past Operations and Immediate Requirements*, set an objective of 100,000 houses to be built nationally within 10 years, of which 60,000 were to be provided by local authorities and 40,000 by private builders. On its heels, the Housing (Amendment) Act 1948, increased the grants available for private houses to £275, as well as further enabling local authorities to prioritise groups most in need (Kenna, 2011, p. 40).

In addition to such grant assistance, government loans had been available since the Small Dwellings Acquisitions Act (SDAA) of 1899. This Act was the seed for much of the legislative assistance to enable private home ownership in independent Ireland. The original Act empowered Local Authorities to lend £400, repayable over 60 years, to those wishing to purchase the house in which they lived. The Housing (Ireland) Act 1919 extended the British post-World War I 'Homes fit for Heroes' provisions to Ireland, including doubling the SDAA loan level to £800 and this was updated a number of times in the coming decades in line with cost and price rises. The 1948 Housing Act included such an amendment to the SDAA, this time to increase the maximum advance to £2,000, specifically targeting assistance to middle class house purchasers (Kenna, 2011, p. 40). The 1952 Housing (Amendment) Act further assisted private house acquisition by legislating for a supplementary grant for house purchases by persons who were qualified to be local authority tenants. This supplementary grant was payable by the local authority and its value was set at 50% of the £275 grant introduced in the 1948 Housing Act. Such investment of state money in housing programmes was seen as a vehicle to stimulate the mid-century economy, in line with the post-war popularity of Keynesian economics (Kenna, 2011, p. 42).

Nature of Navan Road Parish

Largely overlapping with the Greater Cabragh townland, the Navan Road parish is a suburb which developed between 1935 and 1960 as an owner-occupied, lower middle class housing area. Aside from 14 local authority houses in a development named Darling Estate, houses in the parish were advertised and sold for owner occupation. Moreover, apart from a small number of detached houses developed adjacent to the Navan Road in the mid-1930s, the predominant house types in the area were a combination of semi-detached houses and housing blocks of four to six houses, each of which had three bedrooms. All houses were provided with front and back gardens, of varying sizes, dependent on location and price bracket.

Household rates were a mechanism used for the funding of local government in Ireland until their abolition in 1977. The annual rate payable to the local authority was determined as a percentage of the valuation of the property. By comparing household rates for different areas of Dublin, one can derive an indication of the relative property values in the areas and thus an indication of the social class that inhabited an area. With regard to Table 1, note that Ailesbury Road (Dublin 4) was, and is, home to some of Dublin's most expensive housing, including the embassies of several countries. Blackrock, Clontarf, Castleknock and Ranelagh are areas of Dublin with a substantial professional class among their residents. Crumlin, Cabra and Finglas are areas where extensive local authority housing, constructed from the 1930s to the 1950s. The household rates recorded in 1960 for streets in the Navan Road parish place it firmly in the lower middle class bracket – as is reflected in the selected streets in Table 1 below. Streets in the Navan Road parish are highlighted in blue.

Table 1. 1960 Household Rates from sample areas of Dublin with streets in the Navan Road parish highlighted in blue. (Thoms Street Directory 1960).

Street	Household Rates Range	Street	Household Rates Range
Derry Road (Crumlin)	£8/10s to £10	St Alphonsus Road (Glasnevin)	£17 to £25
Faussagh Road (Cabra West)	£8/10s to £10	Hampstead Avenue (Glasnevin)	£18 to £21
Offlay Road (Cabra East)	£9 to £10	Navan Road	£18 to £26
McKee Road (Finglas)	£12 to £13/10s	Mount Pleasant Square (Ranelagh)	£19 to £35
Darling Estate (local authority)	£12/10s to £14/10s	Beechpark (Castleknock)	£22/10s to £23/10s
Croaghpatrick Road	£15/10s to £18	Ballymun Avenue (Glasnevin North)	£23 to £29
Darling Estate (private)	£15 to £19/10s	Mount Prospect Avenue (Clontarf)	£26 to £40
Lorcan Avenue (Santry)	£15 to £23	Mount Merrion Avenue (Blackrock)	£30 to £47
Villa Park Road	£17 to £19	Dartry Park (Dublin 6)	£36 to £37
Kinvara Avenue	£17 to £19/10s	Ailesbury Road (Dublin 4)	£43 to £101

Method

Between 1935 and 1960, the city wide suburbanisation processes described above played out at a micro level on previously rural areas of Dublin county outside the city boundary. The 1849, 1900, 1930 and 1951 official city boundaries are illustrated in Figure 2. The transformation of the Greater Cabragh townland into the parish of Navan Road was an instance of these developments. The physical and social morphology of the area went from a rural world of religious institutions, cattle lairs, farm labouring, market gardening and Saturday dances in a local thatched cottage to one of suburban streets and the infrastructure of a mid-20th century Catholic parish. This study explores how the rural community and landscape was overlaid with a lower middle-class suburb. The start date of 1935 corresponds to the development of the first suburban streets in the parish. The end date of 1960 reflects the fact that, while suburban growth in the Navan Road parish (an entity known colloquially as ‘the Navan Road’) would continue up to the 1990s, the nature of the processes at work and their impacts were set by 1960.

The area under study here consists of all of the Navan Road parish and those parts of the Greater Cabragh townland not in the parish (Figure 3). This area is selected as a logical unit when considering the experience of non-local authority suburbanisation of the area. Townlands as divisions of land in Ireland date back to Gaelic times. Until

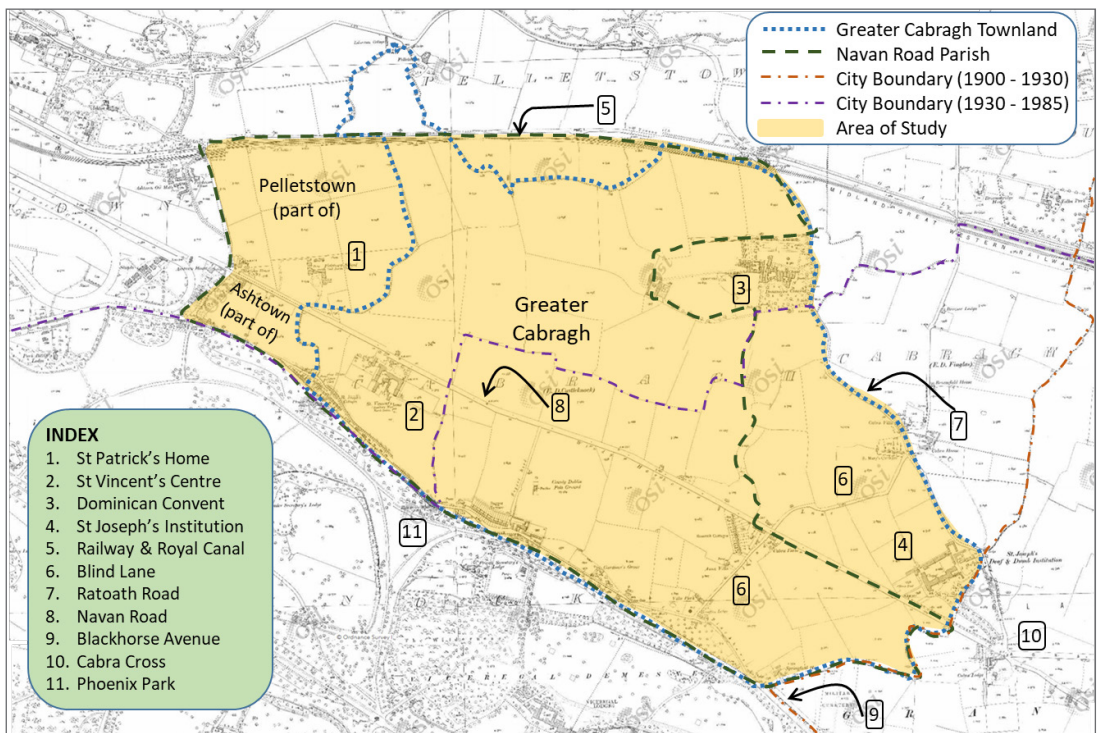


Figure 3: The boundaries of the Greater Cabragh townland, the Navan Road Parish and the area under study, with prominent pre-suburbanisation locations identified (Ordnance Survey, 1907). Reproduced by kind permission of Tailte Éireann, © Tailte Éireann.

the early 20th century, the spelling of Cabragh was used for the townland, the general area and in road names. From that time the spelling of ‘Cabra’ was adopted in the road and area names, however, the townlands in the area – Cabragh, Greater Cabragh and Little Cabragh maintained the original ‘Cabragh’ spelling. The Navan Road runs for 42km from the junctions of the Old Cabra Road, New Cabra Road and Ratoath Road (a junction termed Cabra Cross) to Navan in County Meath. The Navan Road parish is an area of 180 hectares located to the west of Cabra Cross (Figure 3). The parish of Navan Road was created in 1955, the district having previously been part of Chapelizod parish (Behan, 2002, p. 23). The parish encompasses 75% of the Greater Cabragh townland’s 190 hectares, the remaining 25% being in the parish of Cabra West. The Navan Road parish also includes 32 hectares of Pelletstown townland and 5 hectares of Ashtown townland.

This article examines the transition of the Greater Cabragh townland to the suburban parish of Navan Road using a number of sources, in particular Tailte Eireann Valuations Office (VO) Records. The VO Records are central to tracking of changes in land holding and use. Tailte Eireann is the custodian of a manuscript archive containing rateable valuations for land and property from the mid-1850s until the early 1990s. Ratebooks record the occupant, lessor (who was often, but not always, the owner), nature of the tenement (land, house, garden etc.), area of holding, rateable value and a map reference for the property boundaries. The property boundaries and their reference numbers originate from Griffith’s Valuation 1847 to 1864 boundary and valuation survey of all property in Ireland.

Changes to any aspect of a holding such as the occupier or tenement type were registered by hand in a ratebook. The information can therefore be used to establish the land and property holdings before the commencement of suburbanisation and to then track changes regarding occupiers, lessors and holding size, property size and the number of properties as the suburb developed. It is also possible to use information in the ratebooks to make reasonable deductions regarding land usage. After a period of time, varying from ten to fifty years, a new ratebook for an area was created – recording the status of land holdings, size of property etc at the point at which the new book was created. From that point forward, new changes regarding occupiers, lessors, land size etc. were recorded in the new book. From 1930, the city boundary ran through the area

Associated Map		Townland		County Borough of Dublin.		Ward		No 3		Borough Electoral Area	
Reference to Map	Land Number	Occupier	Immediate Lessor	Description of Tenement	Area	Lands	Buildings	Other	Total	OBSERVATIONS	
OS. # 28° 05' XVIII - 1.2.6		Baggot Terrace	Henry Baggot	10.4 0m garden			4 10 0		4 10 0	Year of change to entry (red ink)	31
Change in red ink	BA-1	Henry Thomas Little									

Figure 4. Ratebook extract showing a sample record for a premises on Baggot Terrace and the information which can be deduced from it (Tailte Eireann Cabragh 1927-1937).

under study (see Figure 3), the parish thus straddled two local authority domains (Dublin Corporation and Dublin County Council), it also consists of a number of townlands and is examined over three decades. In consequence, the relevant data for the study is recorded in multiple ratebooks, which was required to be correlated in order to build up a record of changes in land holdings for the area and time under study.

The practice of interpreting updated ratebook entries requires one to use the colour of ink as a marker of when a change occurred. Figure 4 is used here to illustrate the interpretation of entries in the ratebooks. The page in question concerns land in the townland of Cabragh, within the electoral district of Castleknock and in the ward of Cabragh, with the associated map being OS XVIII – 1.2.6. In the selected record the original entry for the property in black ink tells us that its map reference is 6A_1 on the OS XVIII map. The occupier at the creation of the record in 1927 (in black ink) was Thomas Little and the immediate lessor was Henry Baggot. The Description of the Tenement tells us that it is a house (Ho.) with a small garden (sm. garden). The annual rate for the building is £4 10s 0d. An entry of “31” in the Observations column is recorded in red ink, indicating a change to the record in 1931. In the Occupier field, we can observe that ‘Thomas’ is crossed out, also in red ink and replaced with ‘Mary’, indicating a change in occupier, perhaps from husband to wife following the death of the former.

The Evolution of the Greater Cabragh Townland

The pre-Suburbanisation Townland

In 1930, the area that was to become the Navan Road parish was part of a rural community just beyond the extent of Dublin city’s developed urban area, straddling the electoral districts of Castleknock and Cabragh. It is on a main trunk route west – with the road between Dublin and Navan running through its heart with a south-east to north-west orientation. Figure 2 illustrates the location of the area within the broader city while Figure 3 shows the area in more detail. To its south the district is bounded by the wall of the Phoenix Park and Blackhorse Avenue which runs alongside the wall, while to the north its boundary is the Dublin-Sligo railway line. Ashtown, with its railway station and gate to the Phoenix Park is its western limit. To the east, the boundary is just before Cabra Cross, the meeting point of the Old and New Cabra Roads, Ratoath Road and the Navan Road.

The usage of the units of land holdings in the early 1930s for the area under study is illustrated in Figure 5. This shows a near ubiquity of farmland, a small number of rural dwellings and a split between religious institutions and private land. Before suburbanisation commenced in the 1930s, the northern side of the Navan Road was sparsely populated outside of religious institutions. Immediately north-west of Cabra Cross was St Joseph’s residential Institution for deaf boys (see Figure 3). Since 1857 the Institute had provided boarder based education on 10 hectares of land formerly in the possession of the Seagrave family. Based in Cabragh House, the Seagraves had been a major landholder in the Cabragh area since 1590 (Neary, 2016, p. 67). Proceeding west past Blind Lane, immediately to the north-west were significant land holdings of the nuns

of the Dominican Convent in Cabra and Garrett Begg, a member of another longstanding land-holding family, with ties to the area dating to 1533 (St. Joseph’s School for Deaf Boys, 1957, p. 89).

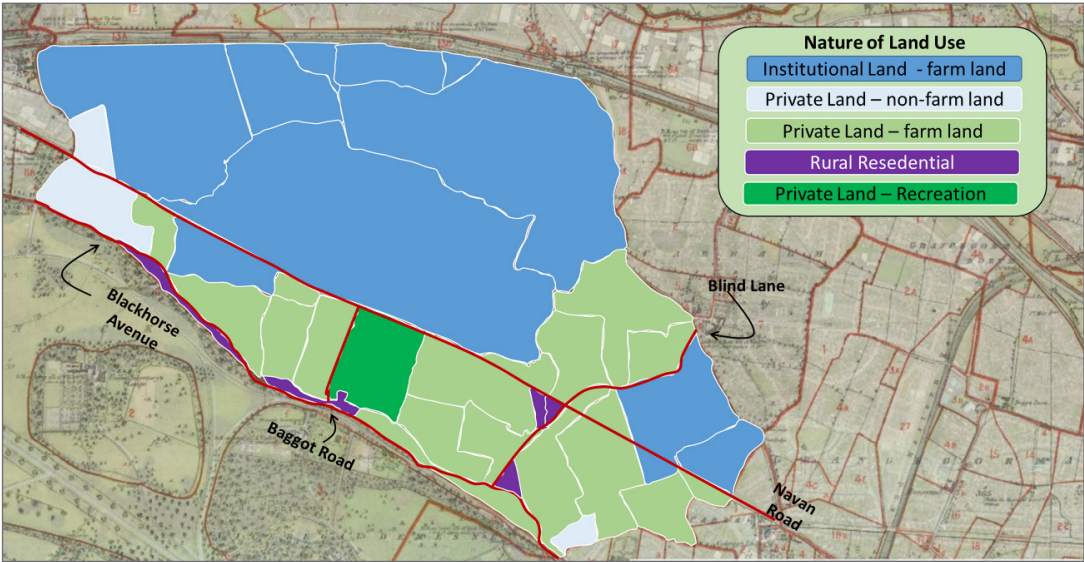


Figure 5. Navan Road area showing the status of land holdings and use in advance of the commencement of suburban development in the 1930s (Griffiths Valuation Map).

Land Holdings in 1930

The landholdings as of 1930 in the area that would become the Navan Road parish are illustrated in Figure 6 and tabulated in Table 2 on the next page.

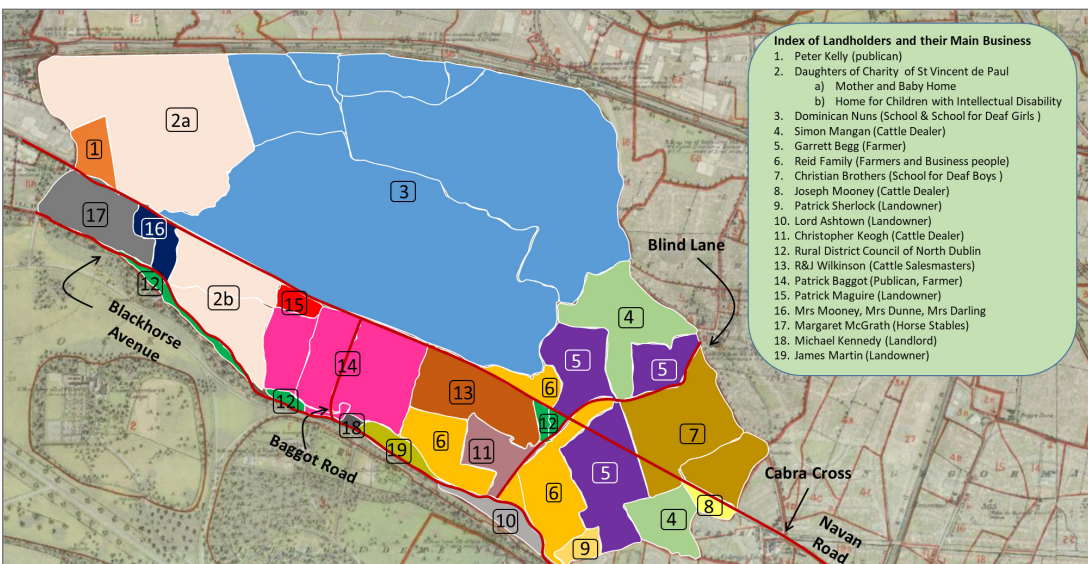


Figure 6. Map of the Navan Road area showing the pre-suburbanisation land occupants in 1930 and their core businesses (Base map: Griffiths Valuation).

Table 2: Landholdings in the area of study as of 1930 (before suburbanisation commenced), against the numeric identifiers in Figure 6.

ID on Map	1930 Land Holder	Business of Land Holder	Land Use	Size (Hectares)
1	Peter Kelly	Publican	Licensed Premises	1.6
2a	Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul	Charitable Organisation	Mother and Baby Home	21.9
2b	Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul	Charitable Organisation	Home for Children with Intellectual Disability and Farmland	8.0
3	Dominican Nuns	Charitable Organisation	School & School for Deaf Girls and Farmland	93.0
4	Simon Mangan	Cattle Dealer	Cattle Park	3.6
5	Garrett Begg	Farmer	Cattle Park and Farmland	12.9
6	Reid Family	Farmer and Business People	Farmland	9.3
7	Christian Brothers	Charitable Organisation	School for Deaf Boys and Farmland	12.5
8	Joseph Mooney	Cattle Dealer	Cattle Park	0.4
9	Patrick Sherlock	Landowner	Farmland	0.8
10	Henry Lawlor	Farmer	Market Garden	1.2
11	Christopher Keogh	Cattle Dealer	Farmland	2.8
12	Rural District Council of North Dublin	Local Authority	Residential Cottages	2.1
13	Richard & James Wilkinson	Cattle Salesmasters	Market Garden	6.5
14	Patrick Bagot	Publican and Farmer	Licensed Premises and Farmland	12.1
15	Patrick Maguire	Landowner	Farmland	0.4
16	Mrs Mooney, Mrs Dunne, Mrs Darling	Landowner	Farmland	2.0
17	Margaret McGrath	Landowner	Horse Stables	5.3
18	Michael Kennedy	Landlord	Rental Housing	0.2
19	James Martin	Landowner	Farmland	1.0

In 1819 the Dominicans had moved into an old Seagrave Mansion in Cabragh and commenced educating the poor of the neighbourhood (*Annals of the Dominican Convent of St. Mary's, Cabra: 1647-1912*, 1912, pp. 82–83). In addition, the Dominican Nuns founded St Mary's Boarding School for Deaf Girls in 1846 (Broderick and Duggan, 1997, pp. 16–17). The convent lands covered over 93 hectares and stretched from Ratoath Road to Pelletstown in the west and from the Royal Canal to the Navan Road (see Figure 6). Where the Dominicans lands ended in Pelletstown, another religious institution's land began. This was the 22 hectares of land associated with St Patrick's Mother and Baby

Home. Since 1910 the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul had run a variety of institutions on this site on behalf of the Dublin Board of Guardians and its successor organisations (Murphy, 2021, pp. 1–4). As with the Dominican convent and St Joseph’s school for deaf boys, this facility incorporated a working farm to supply the needs of its residents.

The southern side of the Navan Road was more secular in nature (see Figure 6 above). Immediately west of Cabra Cross were cattle lairs known locally as Mooney’s Field, belonging to cattlemen Joseph Mooney and Simon Mangan (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1927 to 1937*, p. 17). This land was in weekly use, housing cattle the night before their Wednesday appointment at the nearby cattle market. West of the Mooney/Mangan land was 6 hectares belonging to Garrett Begg and 5 hectares in the ownership of the Reid family, another significant private land holder in the locality. The main Reid land constituted Cabra Farm at the junction of Blind Lane and Navan Road (see Figure 6). In 1941 at 2 years of age, future TD Dermot Fitzpatrick moved to Skreen Road next to Mooney’s Field. In 2007 he recalled ‘Skreen Road, at that stage, was part of rural Ireland. Apart from Roosevelt Cottages, the left hand side of the Navan Road outbound was farmland dedicated to market gardening’ (Breen, 2007, p. 78). These Roosevelt Cottages, leased by the Rural District Council (RDC) were immediately west of Blind Lane and dated from the turn of the 20th century (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1927 to 1937*, p. 9, pp. 15-16). The western side of Blind Lane’s southern stretch fronted three tranches of farmland owned by market gardener Kathleen Kenna, cattleman Christopher Keogh and sibling cattle sales-masters Richard and James Wilkinson (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1927 to 1937*, pp. 10-14).

West of these holdings lay the Baggot Estate, which consisted of three parcels of land totalling some 13 hectares. The Baggot family had a long association with the area as publicans of Baggot’s Rose Tavern on Blackhorse Avenue since 1881. A noteworthy leaseholder of 7 hectares of the Baggot holding was O’Neal Seagrave, a descendant of the Seagraves of Cabragh House referenced above (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1927 to 1937*, p. 6). Immediately west of the Baggot holdings was another estate run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, which dated from 1881 when an auxiliary workhouse had been established on the site. From 1925 this institution had specialised in residential services for children with intellectual disabilities on the 8.5 hectare site (Robins, 1992, p. 33).

The southern boundary of the Greater Cabragh townland was the Phoenix Park wall and Blackhorse Avenue which snaked along beside it. In a locality dominated by large farms and religious institutions, Blackhorse Avenue contained most of the domestic premises prior to suburbanisation. The 1927-37 VO records itemise 61 premises on the 2 kilometres of this road within the Greater Cabragh townland, including two public houses (the previously referenced Baggot’s and Blackhorse Tavern run by a Mrs Kate Doyle). Adjacent to Baggot’s pub were Ryan’s Cottages, known locally as The Alley. These small, damp, one storey cottages were at the bottom end of housing spectrum and were typically occupied by newly wedded couples and those who could not afford accommodation elsewhere (Flanagan, 2022). Further west and further up the housing scale were a series of solid redbrick terraced farm labourers’ cottages: Baggot Terrace, Elm Grove Cottages,

St Joseph Cottages and St Vincent's Cottages. The latter three first appear in ratebooks in the 1931-34 period, with the lessors being the Rural District Council and its successor organisations (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1936 to 1947*, p. 490).

The ratebook entries for Elm Grove Cottages each record a rateable value of £2, 15s in 1931, reflecting the frugal comfort of the RDC cottages (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1936 to 1947*, p. 490). The wide spectrum of housing quality along Blackhorse Avenue is in sharp focus when one contrasts Hampton Lodge, a fine two storey, four windows wide farmhouse on at 239 Blackhorse Avenue rated at £6 15s while the low roofed, two roomed, pre-famine cottages of The Alley were just 500 meters away and rated as low as £1 (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1936 to 1947*, p. 485). In 1927 the former premises, Hampton Lodge, was the residence of Fredrick Reid, a relative of the landholding Reid family based at Cabra Farm. A further granularity of premises is illustrated by 'Primrose Cottage', located opposite Hampton Lodge. This thatched cottage was part of Henry Lawlor's market garden which nestled in a crescent by the park wall. In addition to its role as a residence for the market garden, the cottage served in the 1930s and 1940s as the venue for so-called 'subscription dances'. Such 'hoolies' had an admission fee of 6d and allowed patrons to bring their own alcoholic refreshments, though the premises was cleared by midnight in order that the attendees could undertake sufficient fasting to receive holy communion the following day (Flanagan, 2022).

1930s and 1940s Suburban Development

By the early 1930s, the city was spreading with the development of north-side schemes including Marino, Killester and Cabra East. The Navan Road parish was to become another instance of this trend with the first steps in suburbanisation happening in the 1930s and illustrated in Figure 7 below.

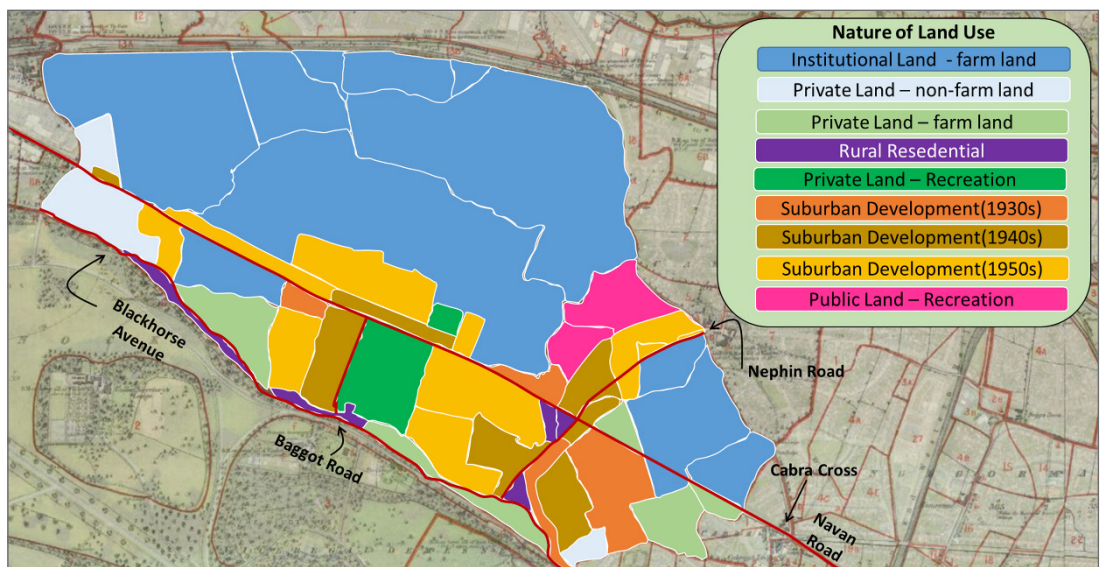


Figure 7. Overview of Suburban Development in the Navan Road District from 1930 to the end of the 1950s (Base map: Griffiths Valuation).

The suburbanisation process commenced in earnest in 1935 with the laying out of new roads in what had been Reid's Cabra Farm and the adjacent Begg land in the south east of the district by the National Housing Society Public Utility Society (PUS). The 1932 Housing Act had triggered a boom in PUSs as vehicles for grant-assisted private housing development, with the number of PUSs registered nationwide growing from 35 at the end of 1931 to 103 at the end of 1932 (McManus, 2004, pp. 625–627). The transfer of the Begg lands to the south of the Navan Road to the National Housing Society PUS in 1934 and 1935, as recorded in the VO ratebooks, was an example of this trend in operation (Tailte Éireann, *Cabragh 1927 to 1937*, pp. 17–18). A newspaper advertisement announced that these 'all electric' semi-detached houses with garages were for sale for £790 and could be secured with a 'small deposit', with loans at 4.5% interest available (Irish Press, 9 Oct. 1937, p. 7).

The mid-1930s saw the development of Villa Park Avenue (another PUS-led development) on Keogh land on the opposite side of Blind Lane to the National Housing Society houses (see Figure 8). This scheme was the creation of the Tram and Omnibus Workers' PUS, and was launched with some fanfare in August 1936 by Minister for Public Health and Local Government, Seán T. O'Kelly. In his address at the opening, the future President observed that the houses (two storied, six roomed premises), would be offered at 12/- per week and that after 20 years, the occupiers would own them. O'Kelly's presence was indicative of the importance of housing to the Fianna Fáil governments of the 1930s and the roles of nationalism, state modernisation and PUSs as agents of change in this cause. O'Kelly saluted the trade union involved in the PUS as having 'given a demonstration of nation work and nation building that should be an example to every class' (*Evening Herald*, 24 Aug. 1936, p. 7.). In parallel to these estate developments, Figure 8 shows new housing along the main Navan Road, spreading from east to west (Tailte Éireann, *Cabragh 1927-1937*, p. 2).

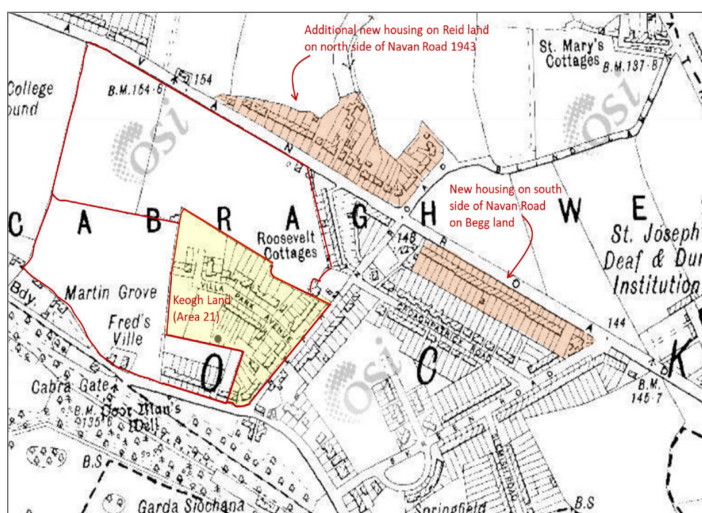


Figure 8. 1930s–1944 developments of new housing on Villa Park Avenue and the Navan Road (OSI 1944). Reproduced by kind permission of Tailte Éireann, © Tailte Éireann.

As early as 1935 some development had started further west on the Baggot lands, adjacent to Patrick Baggot's public house (see Figure 6). The developer in this case was the Economic Public Utility Society, who initially built eight premises facing onto the Navan Road and advertised in the *Irish Press* as being targeted for sale to owner occupiers (*Irish Press*, 6 July 1935, p. 8). Entries in the 1936-47 ratebook relating to Baggot's land reflect some of the external setbacks that could impact suburban development. In 1937, building at numbers 1-6 Baggot Road commenced under the auspices of the United Ship and House Painters' PUS. However, in 1944 lessor-ship passed to New Ireland Assurance Company Ltd., the Painters' PUS having gone into liquidation in 1938 (*Irish Times*, 17 Sept. 1938, p. 16).

The suburban lifecycle of supplantation is very evident in the changes in the Baggot landholdings following the 1941 passing of local grandee, Patrick Baggot. In 1943 the one time British Army Polo Grounds section of Baggot's land were sold to Belvedere College, who, to this day, continue to use them as their sports ground ('Annals of the Parish of Mary, Help of Christians', p. 4). In 1946 Baggot's pub was sold to Edward Cumiskey, while four hundred years of Seagrave land interest in the area ended with the 1963 sale to the Baggot family of the lease on the pub land. In 1983, one hundred years of Baggot interest would end with the sale of the same lease to the pub proprietor (Tailte Eireann, *Ashtown 1987-Present*, p. 16).

Further west along the southern side of the Navan Road the domain of the Daughters of Charity in the St Vincent de Paul centre remained unchanged in the 1940s. However, a change that the Daughters would have noticed was the increased numbers in their chapel for Sunday mass. This was an instance of a situation which can occur in the early stage of a suburb's lifecycle, where services to accommodate the incoming population are not in place by the time of their being housed in the new suburb. The lagging behind service in this case being a parish church. To save new parishioners the long walk across the Phoenix Park to mass in Chapelizod, in 1949 the parish had arranged with the Sisters for their oratory to serve as a chapel-of-ease ('Parish of Chapelizod – District of Cabra', 1949). On the northern side of the Navan Road there had been fewer changes, though development had commenced. By 1943 there was a row of 25 houses on the Navan Road stretching from opposite Baggot Road eastwards. These houses were the first, of what was to be many hundreds of residential premises to be built on the lands of the Dominican Nuns in the coming decades.

Suburbanisation had first come to the Navan Road parish's neighbouring district of Cabra West, where, in decade from 1939, an extensive housing scheme was constructed. In contrast to the owner occupier suburb of the Navan Road, Cabra West was made up almost entirely of local authority housing. Indeed, the area had been identified as a target location for local authority housing in a series of reports dating to as early as 1912. Despite the scheme not being completed, the first houses were occupied in 1941 in response to families having been made homeless by the North Strand bombings of May 1941. Cabra West's local authority housing development saw its population grow from 1,667 in the 1936 census to 20,653 in 1951. In 2022 Aidan Mulligan, born in 1941 on

Skreen Road (off the Navan Road) recalled playing in the street as a child and how, in those days of minimal traffic on the Navan Road, he could hear the noise of the thousands of children playing in the booming new suburb, less than a kilometre distant across the fields (Mulligan, 2022). In the Navan Road parish, the suburbanisation process came at a more leisurely pace. As recalled in lifelong local resident Frank Flanagan’s evocative sketch of the late 1940s – life was still very rural:

‘Horse carts from the Park going up Blackhorse Lane, each with a passenger, a fellow worker from the Peoples Gardens or the Vice Regal. Others slowly cycling home, side by side discussing racehorses, the weather and the crops. Smoke from chimneys ascending straight into the air, gave a sign of frost tonight. Life was easy, the pace was slow, everybody had a word and time for each other.’ (Flanagan, 1997).

However, despite this enduring rural environment and the slowing of housing development due to war shortages, by the end of the 1940s the cumulative suburban development in the Navan Road area was having a noticeable impact on the landscape (Figure 7).

1950s – Accelerated Suburban Development

As illustrated in Figure 7, in the 1950s the suburban development in the study area would accelerate, as both Dominican and private farmland were repurposed for housing development. Cabra Cross, the area closest to the city, did not see housing development, however, in 1956 lands here, known locally as ‘Mooney’s Field’, were acquired by the Department of Health who planned to relocate the Richmond hospital from its central location to this site. This ‘thinning-out’ initiative had been commended by Patrick Abercrombie in his Dublin Corporation commissioned, *Sketch Development Plan* (Abercrombie, Kelly and Robertson, 1941). The move never came to pass and the Richmond Hospital ultimately moved to Beaumont in 1987. So, while the Prussia Street cattle market which it had served continued until 1973, Mooney’s field lay fallow for 40 years until senior citizen housing was built on the site in the 1990s (Neary, 2016, p. 67).

Further west along the Navan Road from Cabra Cross, there were to be some significant housing additions. In 1950, the Villa Park estate, opened by Seán T. O’Kelly in 1936, still consisted of just one road and 43 houses. However, by 1960 housing numbers in the 10 hectares of Reid-Kenna and Wilkinson land would increase



Figure 9. Villa Park Road showing the house style change at a pre-development land ownership interface. (Image Credit: Enda Finnan).

to 219 (Thoms, 1971, pp. 731–732). The development phases of this estate in the 1950s illustrates the impact of the pre-suburbanisation land ownership on the physical morphology of the new developments. The VO records show the first entries for Crouch Builders houses on the Reid-Kenna land in 1956, while houses built by McGee Brothers on the Wilkinson land followed three years later. The impact of the two builders working in what had been two adjacent but separate land holdings which ultimately became part of the same housing estate, can be seen in the differing nature of the houses shown in Figure 9.

Change and continuity were the watchwords in the 1950s in the area around Baggot Road. Substantial plans for this area were flagged in a parish circular in 1949 which referenced '87 houses in the course of erection on the Baggot estate' (Annals of the Parish of Mary, Help of Christians, 1949). These houses would be developed by Suburban Homes Limited, a vehicle for Lynam Brothers Builders, who constructed much of the 1950s housing in the locale. Meanwhile, continuity was provided on the adjacent Blackhorse Avenue with the 1950s ratebooks showing longstanding landholders, the Reid family, continuing their prominence as lessors, even as the district transformed around them – see Table 3 below:

Table 3. Extract from Valuation Office Ratebook with highlighting illustrating the continued prominence of the Reid Family on a section of Blackhorse Avenue (Tailte Eireann).

County Borough		Dublin		Rating Annual Valuation		
Street		Blackhorse Avenue		Lands (£ s d)	Building (£ s d)	Total (£ s d)
Electoral Division / Ward		Cabra West E				
Local Number	Occupier	Immediate Lessor	Description of Tenement			
313	James Nangle	Joseph Reid	House & garden		17 50	17 50
315	Sean Keane	Mrs S Smyth	House & garden		15 50	15 50
315A	Alan Ruane	same	House & garden		15 50	15 50
317	John Kelly	Mrs S Gavin	Shop		16	16
371b	John O'Driscoll	same	House & small garden		10 50	10 50
319	Eugene O'Sullivan	James Leigh	House & small garden		16	16
321	Thomas Chaerton	Elizabeth Reid	House & small garden		11	11
323	Michael Joseph Gargen	Reps Mrs S. Reid	House, office & garden		17	17
325		same	Building site			
327	Mrs Brennan	Joseph Reid	House, office & garden		3	3

As referenced above, before 1950 there had been minimal development on the land of the Dominican Nuns on the northern side of the Navan Road. However, there were already plans in place. Following a 1952 acquisition of 7.2 hectares from the Nuns, Lynam

Brothers builders commenced the building of the Kinvara estate the following year (Tailte Eireann, *Cabra West 1970-1987*, p. 13). By the mid-1950s, the first roads of what would become a four hundred house estate had been commenced. Further development was undertaken in the Kinvara Estate in the 1950s and 1960s following the 1956-1958 sale by the Dominicans of additional parcels of land totalling 22.5 hectares to three developers: Donnelly Estates, P. Freaney and E&J Lynam Builders. From 1956 onwards, these builders expanded the Kinvara Estate (Tailte Eireann, *Castleknock_1947-86*, pp. 31-32). Their combined 22.5 hectares would, within a decade see the development of over 400 houses.

In the 1950s, Lynam Brother were more active in newspapers advertisements than other Navan Road developers; an example from the Evening Herald in 1955 is reproduced in Figure 10. The impact of housing grants on the private market can be discerned in this advertisement for these houses on Kinvara Avenue. The advertisement highlights possible qualification for a supplementary government grant of £137 10s, a

SUPERIOR HOUSES for Sale
 at **KINVARA AVENUE** (opposite Baggot Rd.)
 NAVAN RD. (opposite Baggot Rd.)
 DEPOSIT **£160**
 from **£1,680**
 LESS **£137 10/-**
 Supplementary Grant in certain cases.
 ACCOMMODATION:
 3 Bedrooms, 2 Reception, Kitchen, Bathroom, separate W.C., large Gardens, outside W.C.
E. & J. LYNAM Building Contractor's office on Site. Phone 43788.
 LOAN REPAYMENTS **35/9 WEEKLY**

Figure 10. Advertisement for houses on Kinvara Avenue, promoting the availability of a supplementary grant. (Evening Herald, 26 Aug. 1955).

grant that originated in the 1952 Housing Act. Such advertising reflects how legislation could have a very practical effect on the marketing of private housing to a targeted group. In this case the target group were those who qualified for public authority housing, but wished to instead purchase their own private house, which was a qualification criterion for the grant. It also reflects that in the development phase of the suburb under study here, the housing was almost exclusively for owner-occupiers.

A central presence in the Dublin's new mid-century suburbs was the Catholic church. Arnold Horner has observed how a characteristic of suburbs during Archbishop John Charles McQuaid's 1940-1971 tenure was the 'intimidatingly huge Catholic church' and 'comparably large-scale, and separate boys and girls national schools' (Horner, 1992, p. 336). The Navan Road parish church, which opened in January 1952 with capacity for 1,800 worshippers, adhered to this model, as would the national schools when they followed in the 1960s. In 1949 0.4 hectares had been acquired by the Dublin Diocese from the Dominican Nuns for the development of a parish church. In a subsequent 1951 transaction, the neighbouring 1.2 hectare field was secured for future national schools (Tailte Eireann, *Cabragh 1970 to 1987*, pp. 23-25). Church construction commenced in 1950, with the church being dedicated by Archbishop McQuaid himself on 20 January 1952 (*Irish Press*, 21 Jan. 1952, p. 5). That ever more housing and population were expected in the parish is reflected in the fact that so large a church was the subject of correspondence between the parish priest Fr. McMahon and Archbishop McQuaid in 1949, when there were just six roads with houses in the area (Flanagan, 1997).

Landholdings in 1960

By the end of the 1950s there had been significant changes in landholdings in the Navan Road parish since 1930 – see Table 4. When compared to Table 2 – those holding on which there had been a change in land usage are highlighted in blue in Table 4 and show substantial additions of private housing to the parish in the intervening period.

Table 4: Landholdings as of 1960 in the area of study. The first column refers to numbers on Figure 6 and the shading highlights changes in land usage since 1930.

ID on Map	1960 Land Holder	Business of Land Holder	Land Use	Size (Hectares)
1	Giles Kelly	Publican	Licensed Premises	1.2
	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	0.4
2a	Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul	Charitable Organisation	Mother and Baby Home	21.9
2b	Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul	Charitable Organisation	Home for Children with Intellectual Disability and Farmland	8.0
3	Dominican Nuns	Charitable Organisation	School & School for Deaf Girls and Farmland	73.0
	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	20.0
4	Dublin Corporation	Local Authority	Public Park	3.6
	Department of Public Health	Government	Cattle Park	3.2
5	Dublin Corporation	Local Authority	Public Park	4.0
	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	8.9
6	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	9.3
7	Christian Brothers	Charitable Organisation	School for Deaf Boys and Farmland	12.5
8	Department of Public Health	Government	Cattle Park	0.4
9	John W Leinster	Landowner	Farmland	0.8
10	Henry Lawlor	Landowner	Market Garden	1.2
11	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	2.8
12	Dublin Corporation	Public Authority	Local Authority Housing	0.9
	Dublin County Council	Public Authority	Local Authority Housing	1.2
13	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	6.5
14	Edward Cumiskey	Publican	Licensed Premises	0.2
	Belvedere College	Education	Sportsground	5.9
	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	6.0
15	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	0.4
16	Dublin County Council	Public Authority	Local Authority Housing	1.5
	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	0.5
17	Vincent Hendron	Industrialist	Horse Stables	5.3
18	Brigid Ryan	Landlord	Rental Housing	0.2
19	Private Homeowners	Various	Private Housing	1.0

The Co-Existence of the Suburban and the Rural

The continued rural nature of the parish, even as this church was being constructed for an incoming suburban population is typical of the transitory phase of the Dublin suburban lifecycle in the mid-20th century. Even as housing schemes were constructed beyond the city's two canals (which had formed the *de-facto* boundary of the city from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries), the rural nature of the original landscapes and communities continued to exist, sometimes incongruously, beside developing suburbs. In their 2007 paper, 'Suburbs in transition: new approaches to suburban history' McManus and Ethington analysed the lifecycle of suburbs and noted how each: 'evolves in a way that incorporates both continuity and change, in terms of the built and social fabric. Generations of families go through their life-cycles in these places; successions of socio-economic or race-ethnic groups lay claim to these places; residents enacting these life-cycles tear down and rebuild these places'. (McManus and Ethington, 2007, p. 327.)

The lifecycle of the Navan Road suburb from 1935 to 1960 can be seen as a case in point. Many elements of the pre-suburbanisation rural landscape, economic activities and living conditions maintained their nature into the 1960s, even as the new communities overlaid their physical and social morphology onto the parish. An aerial photograph taken in 1954 (Figure 11) captured the enduring rural nature of the north side of the Navan Road, the encroaching housing that would make it a suburb and the developing Cabra West scheme beyond.

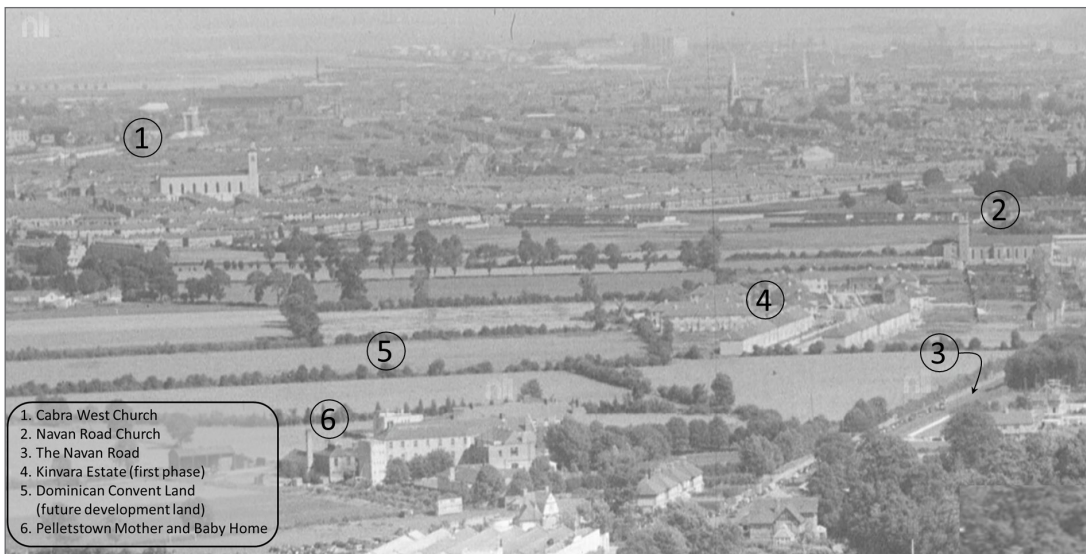


Figure 11. 1954 Aerial Photograph looking east, showing Navan Road area in its development phase (Image reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).

On the right hand side, midway up the photograph is the Navan Road Church, opened in 1952, while on the left is the imposing presence of the Church of the Most Precious Blood in Cabra West, dating from 1953. In the foreground of the Navan Road church, the initial development of the Kinvara estate is evident, while beyond that to the west and north, the rest of the Dominican land remains as farmland. The presence of two churches, just over a kilometre apart and each with a capacity of over 1,500, projects a sense of the Catholic Church planting its position in the new communities onto the landscape.

Less than a kilometre from the farmland depicted in Figure 11, a less pleasant rural remnant was relayed by lifelong Blackhorse Avenue resident, Frank Flanagan. Born in 1931, in 2022 he recalled the rural poverty which he witnessed in his childhood. Those living in the wretched row of cottages that made up ‘The Alley’ would speak of their homes being ‘awash with rats’, while human waste for all Alley cottages was still deposited into a common ashpit (Flanagan, 2022). This at a time when new suburban homes, just 600m away on Croaghpatrick Road, were being advertised as cosy houses with all modern conveniences including hot and cold water WC, neat kitchen, electric light and gas (*Irish Press*, 5 May 1939, p. 17).

Conclusion

Strategies developed by the city authorities and national government in the early decades of the 20th century resulted in the suburbanisation of Dublin in the mid-20th century. These policies were undertaken as solutions to the catastrophe that was Dublin housing, a situation with its origins in the 18th and 19th centuries. In response, governments in independent Ireland became focused on universal single-family suburban housing with a strong leaning towards home ownership. As the south-east of Dublin had been suburbanised in the late 19th century by middle class professionals, by the time the city came to explore working class and lower middle class suburbanisation the direction of development was, by necessity, to the north and west. Despite the official terminology of the day, the building of these suburbs beyond the canals did not go into virgin territory. The targeted areas had existing rural communities and economies, which initially would co-exist with the new suburbs before ultimately being subsumed by them. Greater Cabragh is a case in point for all of these trends, actors, processes and agents of change. Here was a long standing rural community dominated by religious-order-run institutions and a small number of private land holders. From the mid-20th century there was a gradual transfer of land holdings to builders and from them to the families who bought their houses. These people collectively lived out the suburbanisation strategy set out by planners at the start of the 20th century and legislated for by politicians from the inception of the Irish State.

Having begun its suburban journey in 1935, by 1960 the area under study had become the Navan Road parish, a predominantly lower middle class suburban district. Planned with the Catholic church at its physical and devotional centre, the church would be at the spiritual, educational and social fulcrum for the new community. The Navan Road parish is thus an example of a suburban morphology that was repeated across Dublin in this era, with old community displacement and new community formation.

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