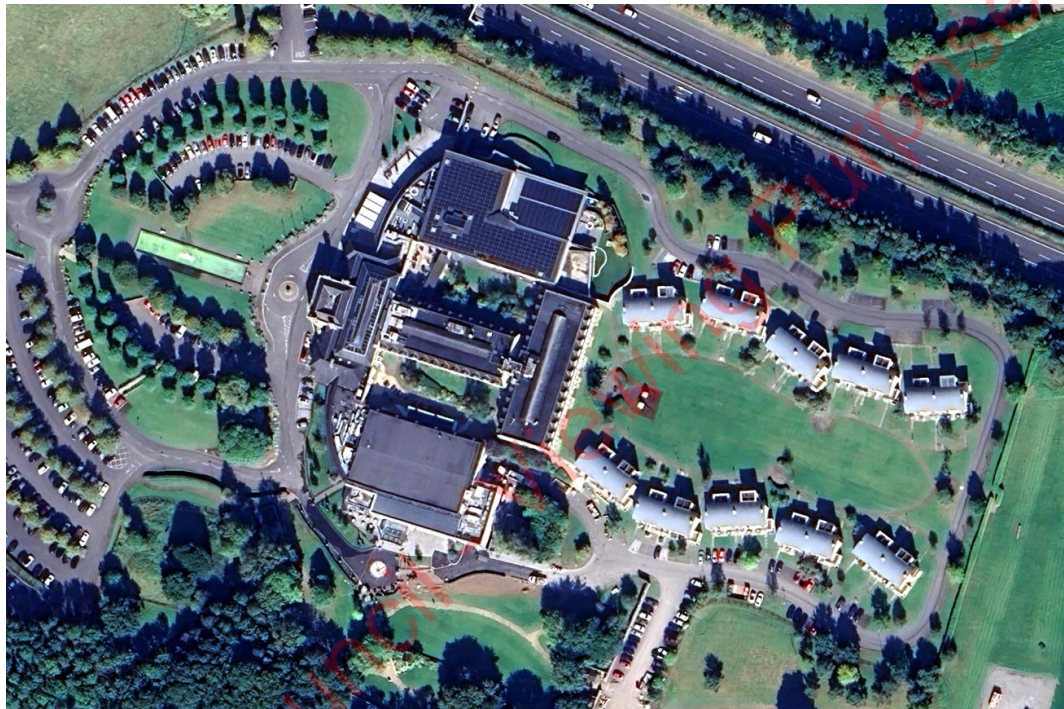


**NEW BEDROOM BLOCK
JOHNSTOWN ESTATE HOTEL, ENFIELD, CO. MEATH
A PROTECTED STRUCTURE**



**ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED WORKS ON THE
ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF JOHNSTOWN HOUSE**

November 2024

Prepared by:

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1.00 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chris Ryan Architects have been retained by Johnstown Estate Ltd. to prepare this Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment in connection with the planning application for proposed works to provide a new Bedroom Block at the Hotel Leisure Centre
Chris Ryan visited the site on 3 October 2024.

Chris Ryan is an architect with over 40 years post graduate experience, and holds a Master's Degree in Urban and Building Conservation (UCD 2003), and a post graduate Diploma in Advanced Building Repair and Conservation (TCD 2020). He acts as conservation consultant to the OPW, Westmeath County Council, Kerry County Council and numerous architectural practices and private clients.

Chris Ryan is a Grade 1 RIAI Accredited Conservation Architect, working on conservation projects including Muckross House, Killarney and Doneraile Court, Doneraile, Cork, and Valentia Cable Station, Kerry.

The application will be for

- Construction of 3 storey extension to the rear of the existing hotel comprising 90 no. guest bedrooms with an area of plant at roof level of the extension.
- Creation of ope in rear façade of the existing hotel at ground floor level with the omission of one existing guest bedroom to allow for a new single-storey connection to the extension.
- The development also includes all other associated engineering works, landscaping, and ancillary works necessary to facilitate the development.

1.01 METHODOLOGY

The report is based on cartographic and historical research, and the recommendations set out in the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2011, Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), and Ch. 8 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the various international ICOMOS Charters.

1.02 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The proposed development location, circled in red dash, is site to the east of the original buildings and the extensions granted permission in 1999.



Fig. 1 Site Map

BACKGROUND

Johnstown House was extensively gutted as part of the works granted permission in 1999 (99/833). In 2016 I examined this file for a Section 5 Submission to ascertain whether any of the original material or design details were retained as part of the works. The file had no photographs, and I understood that the soft copy held by the Council was not very legible due to the quality of the scans from that period. From a visual inspection of the property and from the photograph of the works carried out at the time, it seems highly unlikely that any material or memory of the interior was carried forward into the new works.



Fig. 2 Johnstown House 2022



Fig. 3 Johnstown House during works in early 2000's

1.03 STATUTORY ISSUES

A planning application was made in 1999 for "the extension, refurbishment and change of use of Johnstown House (List 1 Country House)...to include...a new build conference centre and gymnasium facility. This permission was granted on 16 December 1999.

A successful Section 5 Application was submitted in 2016 when the previous permission in 1999 was identified.

Johnstown House is listed on the Meath County Council Record of Protected Structures (ref: 91488) but is not listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. In the RPS it is described as "An 18th century house of 5-bays, 3 storeys with parapet and cornice rendered with pedimented door case and four chimneystacks. The house *dates from c 1750*". This is slightly at variance with the description given in the Irish Country House:

"typical of early C18 Irish House, the three storey Georgian block, almost as high as it is long with five or seven bays in its principal front". (Bence Jones).

It is presumed that the curved wings were erected as part of the 1999 permission, permissions were granted for a bar in 2002 (22/673), a conference Centre in 2023 (23/613).



Fig. 4 Overall view of the Protect Structure with the relevant section circled in red. (Google Earth Image 2018)

2.00 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDINGS

2.01 Protected Structure

Johnstown House is on the Meath County Council Record of Protected Structures; 91488, described as *“Johnstown House, Johnstown Enfield Hotel. an 18th century house of 5-bays, 3 storeys with parapet and Cornice rendered with pedimented door case and four chimneystacks. The house dates from c 1750.”*

The 1999 planning application refers to it as *“Johnstown House (List 1 Country House)”* indicating that it had been listed by Meath Council before the 2000 Act, and probably before the works carried out on foot of the 1999 planning permission and consequent works.



Fig. 5 Location of proposed block.

2.02 Existing Site & Buildings

The existing buildings are built behind and to either side of Johnstown House. Between the proposed block and Johnstown House are the hotel atrium and a bedroom block from the 1990's. The intervening existing bedroom block is a three-storey structure with the top floor having a mansard roof treatment.

The proposed block will be sited in the middle of collection of residential units, approx. 100m from the House.

2.03 Vulnerabilities & Threats

As the original fabric of the Protected Structure has largely been compromised, the primary threat could now be seen to be the loss of the legibility of the typology of the original house. This proposal will not aggravate this situation.

2.04 Conservation Strategies for the Protected Structure

The following are some of the guiding principles which influence prevailing conservation philosophy in Ireland and Europe:

- Minimum intervention
- Repair rather than replace
- Honesty of repairs and alterations
- Use of appropriate materials and methods
- Respecting earlier alterations of interest
- Restoration & Reversibility

As the proposed work are to a new structure, away from the Protected Structure, the relevance of these strategies is much reduced.

3.00 HISTORY & CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF JOHNSTOWN HOUSE

Lewis' entry has a commentary listed under Enfield "*the property of J. H. Rorke, Esq., of Johnstown in the immediate vicinity*". (Page 600 -Enfield)

He also has an entry for Johnstown Bridge a "*place which formerly was of much greater importance than at present (1937) had a patent granted to it for holding a weekly market on Monday but this privilege has not been enjoyed for many years*".

Lewis, S., *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* London 1837

Little is known of the JH Rorke other than an entry in the *Irish Steeplechase Calendar* where it mentions that he acted as Steward at the Johnstown Challenge Cup on March 22nd, 1846.

Corbet H, *Supplement to the Steeple Chase Calendar*, Wright, London 1846

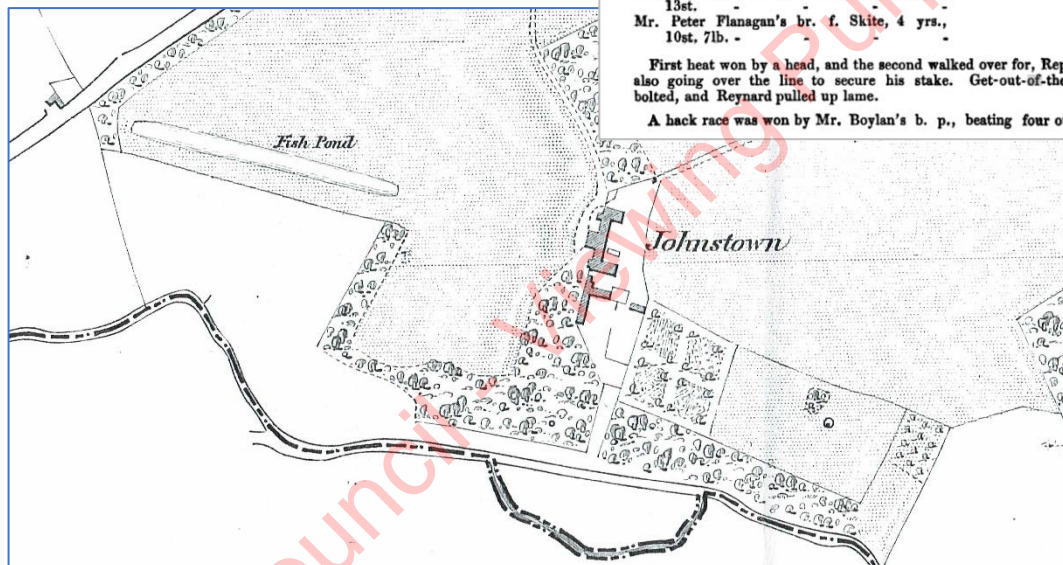


Fig. 6 Extract from the 1836 OS Map

The Skinner and Taylor map from 1783 shows that a Johnson Esq. has a residence here. The first identifiable structures are shown on the 1836 survey, and these house structures appear little changed until the 1910 map, which is that latest currently available for this report.

"Johnstown, Enfield, Co. Meath A 3-storey 5-bay early C18 house linked by blank walls to wings with Venetian Windows; parapeted roof; pedimented doorcase. The seat of the Rorke Family."

A Guide to Irish Houses (pg 161)

This entry from the second edition of 'A Guide to Irish Houses' (1998-90) is the last description found before the works granted permission in 1999 were carried out. Further research of the Meath County Archives may produce some more results.



Fig 7 Taylor and Skinner's Road Maps of Ireland (2nd ed. 1783)

TCD Library Collection, Archive CD Books Ireland, Dublin 2005

The road to Dublin was built around 1735. The New Inn (Enfield) refers to the Royal Oak Inn which has associations with Bianconi's horse-drawn carriage network from 1816 to the late 1850's.

enfieldonline.net/local-history

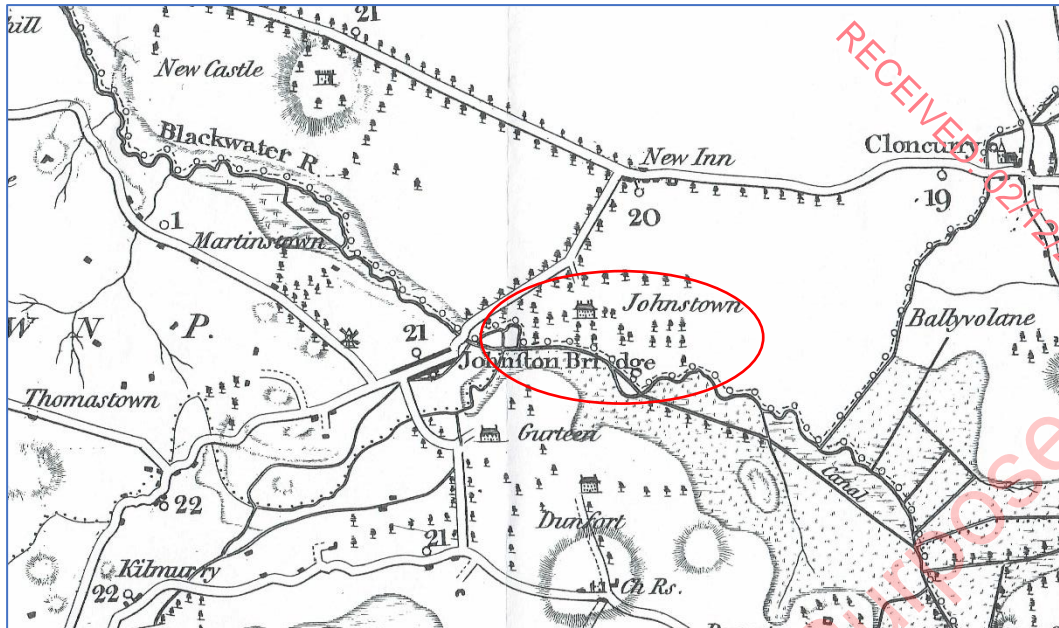


Fig. 8 Alex Taylor Map – County Kildare; 1783

Similar to the last map. It is presumed that the mile markers (19-22) are in Irish Statute Miles
Note the different spellings for Johnston Bridge and Johnstown

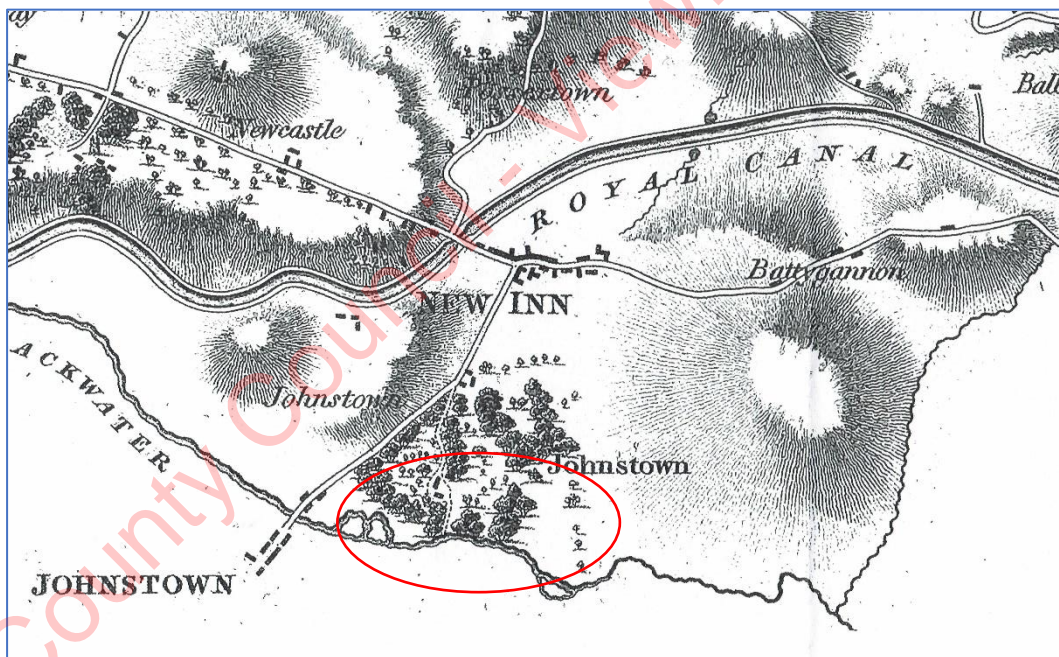


Fig. 9 William Larkin Map – Co. Meath; 1812

The Royal Canal, the construction of which began in Dublin in 1790, reached Thomastown (Enfield) by 1805.
Cox & Donald
The parkland around the avenue to the house is shown, planted to shield the house as one enters from the gate lodge from the north.

ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS

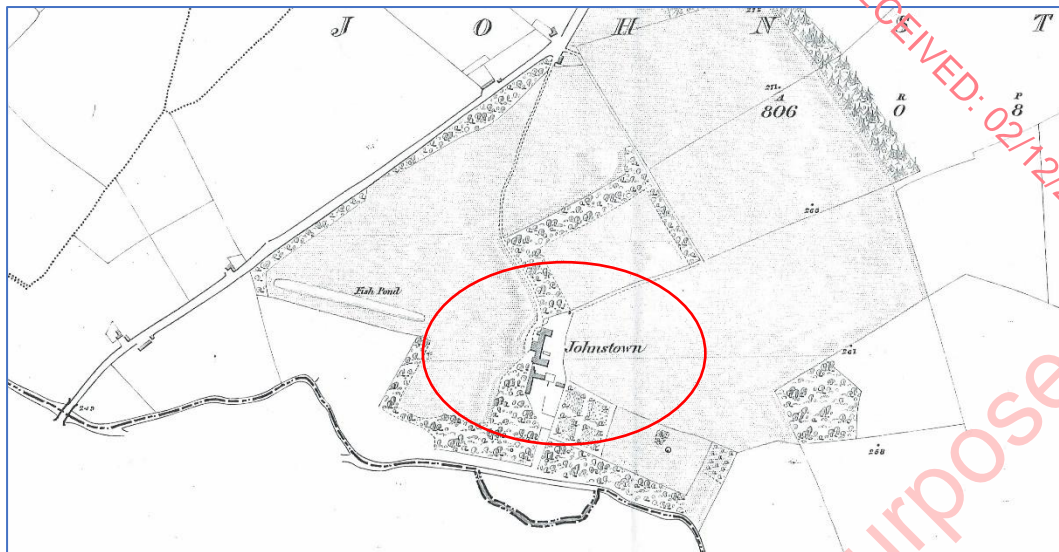


Fig 10. OS Map; Meath sheet 48; Surveyed 1836; Published 1837; scale 1:10,560

This is the first representation of the house as it is shown for the next 70 or so years on the OS maps. It shows the Gate Lodge, and avenue, both wings to the main house, a kitchen garden to the south-east, and a fishpond on an axis with the main house. Again, the view of the house as one moves up the avenue is blocked by the stand of trees on the left-hand side.

The structures to the south of the house are probably stables/coach house, with access from the east side of the house. The meandering River Blackwater to the south of the house, which forms the County boundary, has been canalised.

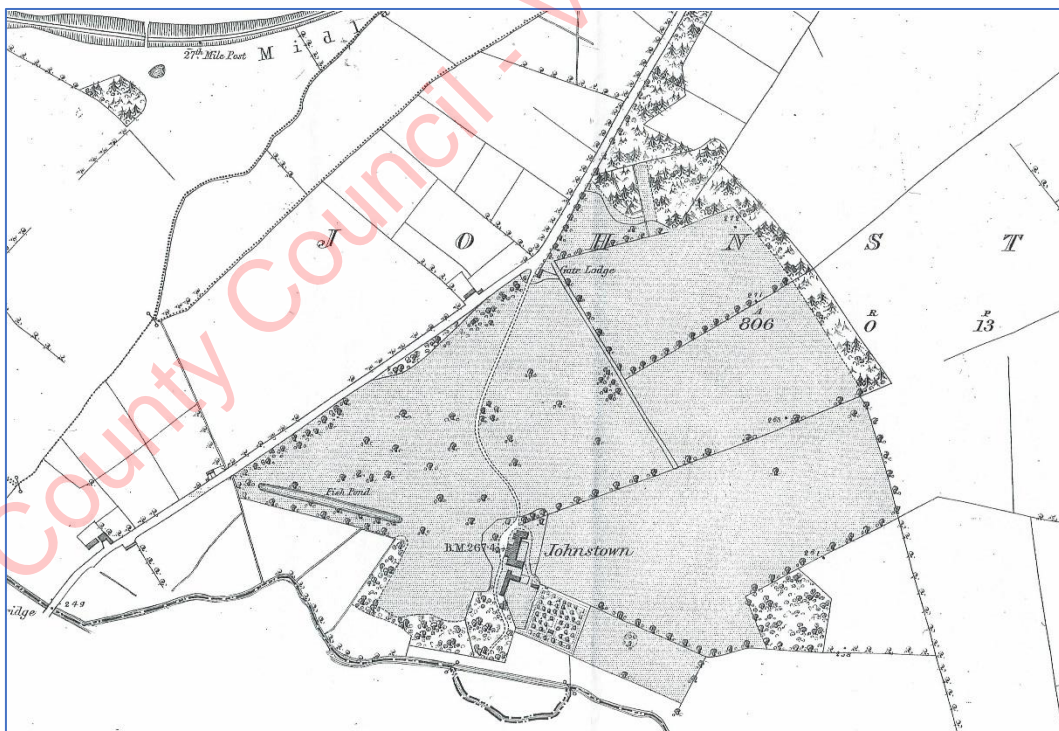


Fig. 11. OS Map; Meath sheet 48; Surveyed 1883; Published 1884; scale 1:10,560

The stand of trees mentioned previously has been removed and the curve of the avenue tightened, suggesting improvements to the parkland and probably the house. The Midland Great Western Railway line is shown at the top of this map showing the 27th. Milepost, making the house much more accessible from Dublin or Mullingar.

The Mullingar line was opened for public traffic as far as Enfield on July 2nd, 1847.

[enfieldonline.net/local history](http://enfieldonline.net/local-history)

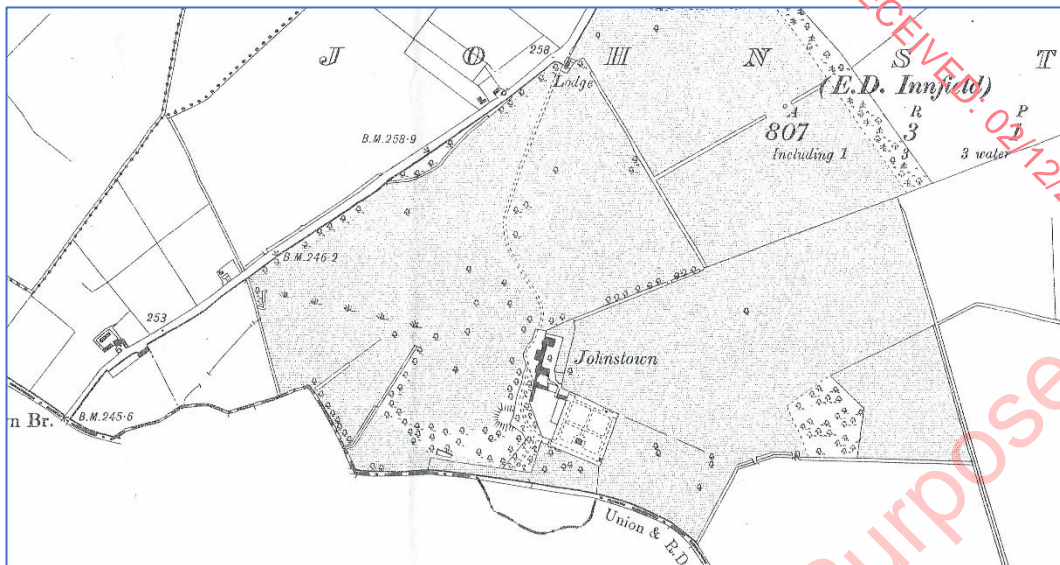


Fig 12. OS Map; Meath Sheet 48; Surveyed 1909-1910; Published 1913; scale 1:10,560

The fishpond is no longer marked.
The stables to the south appear to be connected now to the main house

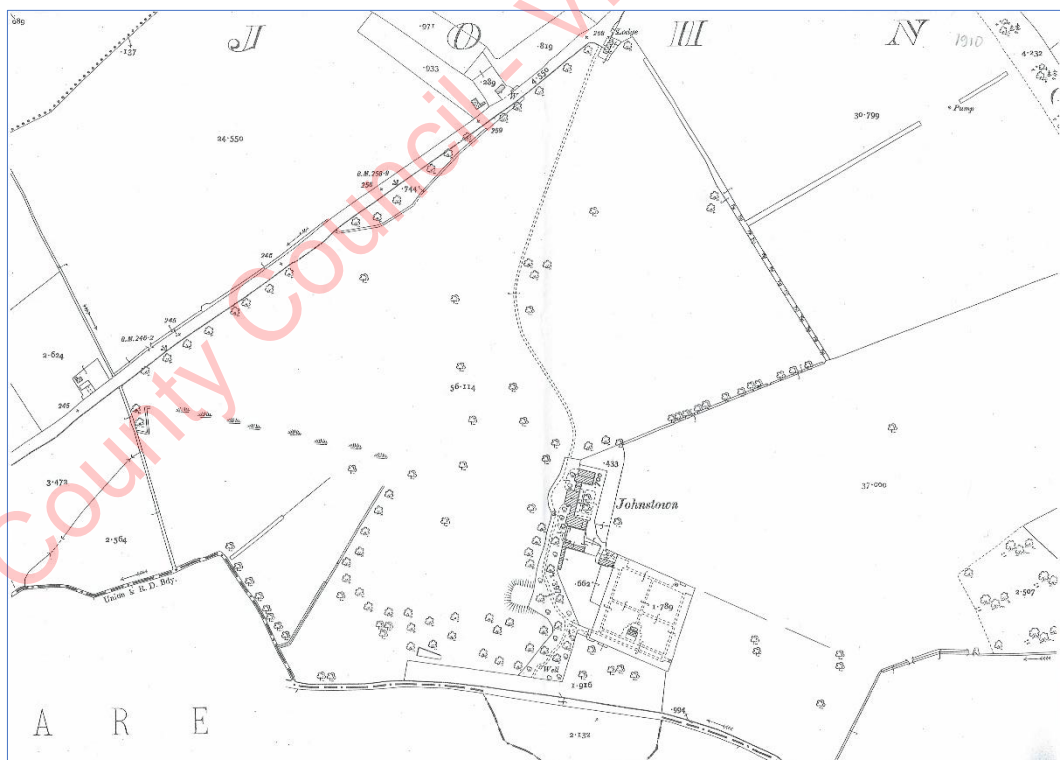


Fig. 13 OS Map; Meath sheet 48-14; Surveyed 1910; Published 1911; scale 1:2,500

The connection to the stables mentioned above is shown, possible a covered walkway.
What is now the lean-to structure we see on site to the north of the house is clearly shown here. The well to the south is shown and the kitchen garden has a glasshouse attached to the structure shown in earlier maps.

4.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.01 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING SIGNIFICANCE

Significance can be defined as the sum of the cultural values which make a building or site important to society. As well as the physical fabric, age and aesthetic value and more intangible qualities such as communal value, association with historic people and events and former uses are all important in defining the significance of a place.

Cultural significance is unique to each place. The following assessments consider the values outlined in Part V of the 2000 Planning Act and the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2011 which recommends making assessments under the following categories: architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. These characteristics have been considered when providing the assessments of significance in this section.

The significance of the study area is assessed using a number of significance ratings: High, Medium, Low, Neutral and Intrusive. The definitions of these ratings are provided below. Also provided is a significance plan, which gives a broad understanding of the overall significance for the buildings on the site and in the heritage assets in the surrounding area.

- **High Significance** is attributable to a theme, feature, building or space which has a high cultural value and forms an essential part of understanding the historic value of the site, while greatly contributing towards its character and appearance.
- **Medium Significance** is attributable to a theme, feature, building or space which has some cultural importance and helps define the character and appearance of the site.
- **Low Significance** is attributable to themes, features, buildings or spaces which have minor cultural importance, and which might contribute to the character or appearance of the site.
- **Neutral Significance** relates to themes, spaces, buildings or features which have little or no cultural value and neither contribute to nor detract from the character or appearance of the site.
- **Intrusive Significance** relates to themes, features or spaces which detract from the values of the site and its character and appearance.

Impact is then assessed as either positive, neutral, negative, temporary, short-term, medium term and long term.

Planning & Development Act 2000-2018 (as amended).

Part IV of the 2000 Act sets out the criteria for contributing to the significance of a protected structure as being architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2011

The following objectives are set out in these guidelines.

- *Established Conservation Principles:*
- *Conservation work is based on an understanding of the building and its historical development. The primary aim is to retain and to recover the significance of the building.*
- *Alteration can be carried out in accordance with the principle of 'minimal intervention.'*
- *Repairs to original fabric should be favoured over replacement. Where the replacement of an original element is unavoidable this is to be based on historically correct profiles and materials*
- *Where elements must be re-constructed, the proposals to be historically correct and authentic and to avoid conjectural propositions.*
- *Modern interventions to be reversible and where appropriate visually identifiable. New works to be recorded*
- *Works to be carried out by suitably skilled craftsmen with proven record in the trade of working with historic buildings.*

MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

The overall planning policy for the protection of structures in the County is set out in development plan Chapter 8 Cultural and Natural Assets. The following policies and objectives are relevant:

It is the policy of Meath County Council:

HER POL 14

To protect and conserve the architectural heritage of the County and seek to prevent the demolition or inappropriate alteration of Protected Structures.

HER POL 15

To encourage the conservation of Protected Structures, and where appropriate, the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and sites in a manner compatible with their character and significance. In certain cases, land use zoning restrictions may be relaxed in order to secure the conservation of the protected structure.

HER POL 16

To protect the setting of Protected Structures and to refuse permission for development within the curtilage or adjacent to a protected structure which would adversely impact on the character and special interest of the structure, where appropriate.

And:

It is an objective of Meath County Council:

HER OBJ 15

To review and update the Record of Protected Structures on an on-going basis and to make additions and deletions as appropriate.

HER OBJ 16

To identify and retain good examples of historic street furniture, e.g., cast-iron post boxes, water pumps, light fixtures and signage, as appropriate.

HER OBJ 17

To promote best conservation practice and encourage the use of appropriately qualified professional advisors, tradesmen and craftsmen, with recognised conservation expertise, for works to protected structures or historic buildings in an Architectural Conservation Area.

HER OBJ 18

To provide detailed guidance notes and continue to develop the Council's advisory/educational role with regard to heritage matters and to promote awareness, understanding and appreciation of the architectural heritage of the County.

These policies and objectives have been taken into account in preparing this proposal.

4.02 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Using the information gathered in the historic and cartographic analysis and the information in 4.01 above, the original significance of the building of the protected structure could be said to derive from its origins as a Country House, the seat of JH Rorke (yet to be discovered).

The setting of the House, a mile outside the town, of Enfield, with its gate lodge on the town side, its accessibility to transport, and leading to the bridge over the County boundary, and to which it gave its name, was clearly important in the local scheme of things.

The House, with its sweeping approach to the 3-storey 5b-bay house, stables, kitchen garden and fishpond, would have required quite a few local staff. The stables alone, if it can be assumed that Mr Rorke was part of the local hunt, would have needed a full complement of staff.

It appears that the original surface fabric was stripped back to the bare structure as seen in Fig. 3, with little of the original fabric remaining except for the basement and the roof.

The layout of the house is still discernible despite the additions of 1999, and attempts have been made to reinstate some of the interior 'historic' finishes as was set out in the 2016 Section 5 submission.

The significance now could be described at an emotional attachment by its patrons to having the 'Irish Country House' experience with all the contemporary comforts

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE -SUMMARY	
JOHNSTOWN HOUSE	
Meath County Council RPS No.	91488. the proposed bedroom block being within the curtilage of the Protected Structure
Architectural Significance	"typical of early C18 Irish House, the three storey Georgian block, almost as high as it is long with five or seven bays in its principal front". (Bence Jones)
Historical Significance	None established.
Archaeological Significance	None established.
Artistic Significance	None established.
Cultural Significance	None established.
Scientific Significance	None established.
Social Significance	JH Rorke, in acting as steward at the Enfield Steeplechase, appears to have strong connections with the hunting community.
Technical interest	None established.
Other:	None established.
OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE	Medium

POSSIBLE LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE	
High Significance is attributable to a theme, feature, building or space which has a high cultural value and forms an essential part of understanding the historic value of the site, while greatly contributing towards its character and appearance.	
Medium Significance is attributable to a theme, feature, building or space which has some cultural importance and helps define the character and appearance of the site.	
Low Significance is attributable to themes, features, buildings or spaces which have minor cultural importance, and which might contribute to the character or appearance of the site	
Neutral Significance relates to themes, spaces, buildings or features which have little or no cultural value and neither contribute to nor detract from the character or appearance of the site.	
Intrusive Significance relates to themes, features or spaces which detract from the values of the site and its character and appearance.	
AUTHORS ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Medium Significance.	

NIAH RATING: None.	AUTHORS RATING: Regional.
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Table 1 Assessment of Significance

5.00 PROPOSALS & ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

5.01 OVERVIEW

It is proposed to construct a new bedroom block to accommodate 90 bedrooms to the rear of the site, starting approx. 100m to the east of the primary structure, Johnstown House.

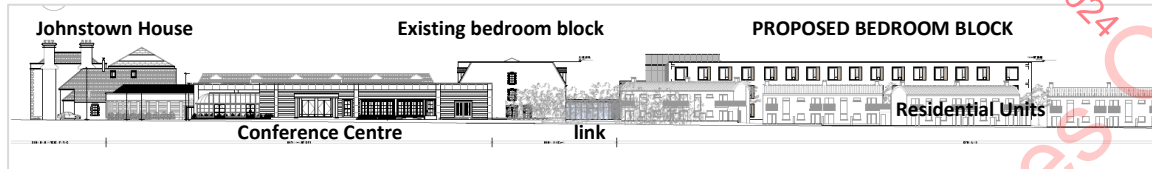


Fig. 14 Contiguous elevation showing the proximity of the new block to Johnstown House.

The proposed block is sited in the middle of a group of residential units. Three storeys high, it does not exceed the height of the existing bedroom block, or Johnstown House itself.

5.02 DEMOLITIONS

Demolition will consist of removing a bedroom, an early c21 construction. There will be no loss of historic fabric.

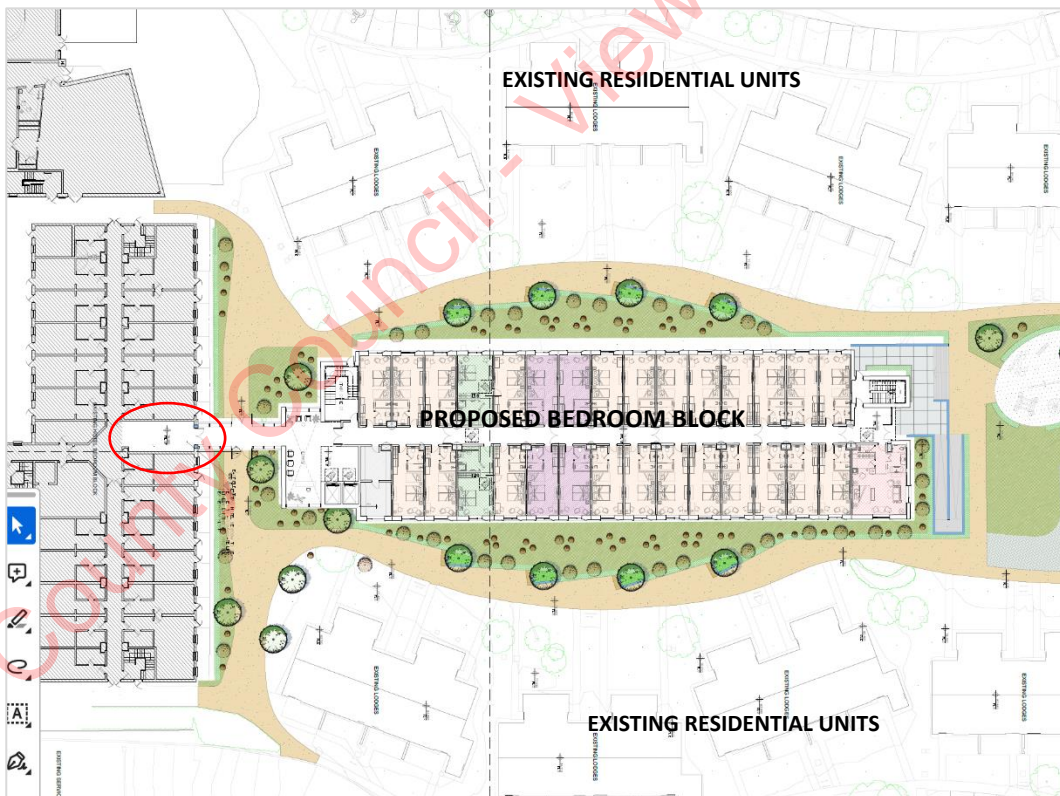


Fig. 15 Plan showing proposed block with demolition circled in red

There are no historic structures with a heritage value within the immediate vicinity of the proposed structure

5.03 PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION

The new structure will be removable and will not cause any damage to any historic fabric. Its impact on the Protected Structure will be minimal.



Fig. 16 Location of Proposed Bedroom Block.



Fig. 17 CGI of Proposed Bedroom Block.

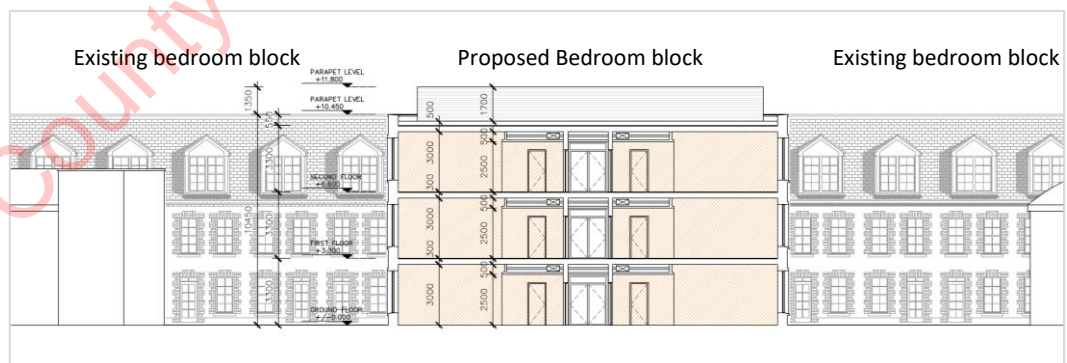


Fig. 18 Section through of proposed Bedroom Block showing existing bedroom block behind.



Fig. 19 Image of proposed link of new bedroom block to existing.

Though far removed from Johnstown House, materials used, forms and design will identify this new structure as being 'of its time'.

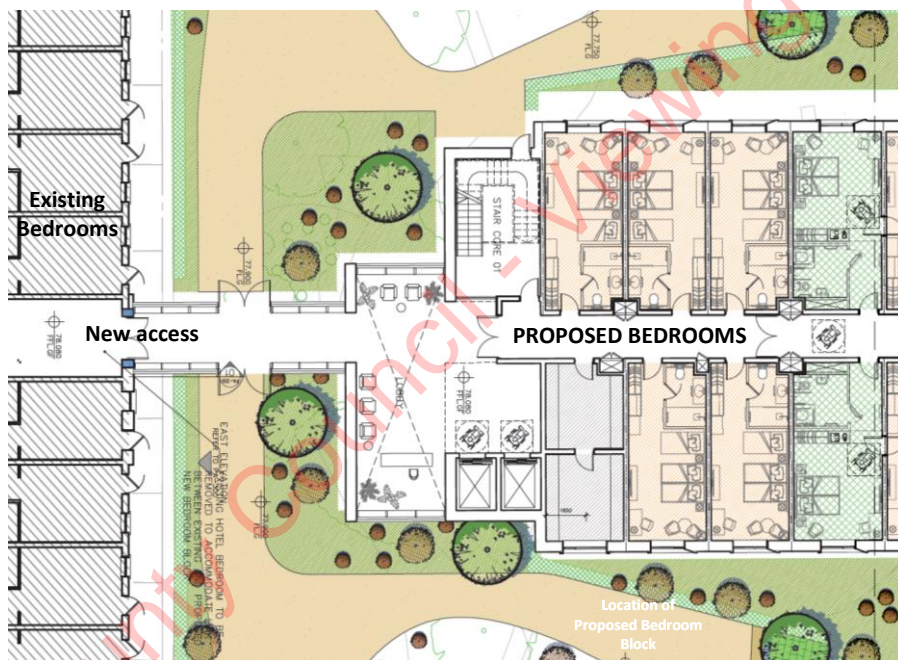


Fig 20 Plan of connection to the new block to the existing, as shown in the image in Fig. 19 above.

5.04 ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Anticipated Visual Impact

The proposed bedroom block is over 100m from the original structure of Johnstown House, with the 1990's structures of the restaurant, atrium, and existing bedroom block in between.

The proposed structure's height is 3-storey, similar to the existing bedroom block and Johnstown House, and will not affect the skyline around Johnstown House when viewed from the west.



Fig. 21 View of connecting structure between existing and proposed

The high quality of design here in the proposal will be in contrast with the mansard roofed 1990's block.

Montages of the proposed development in context with the hotel grouping were produced as part of the design process to assess the likely impact of the scale, form, materiality and proximity - with variations on these conditions explored visually at each stage of the design's progression.

The resultant design is found to be respectful of the extant building group and its height defers to that of the existing structures. The scale of the proposals does not dominate, and its form is compatible with that of the building group. The materiality of the proposed works contrasts with the painted rendered original structure, and the mixed contemporary materials and styles of the intermediate structures.

Anticipated Physical Impact

Due to the distance from the original structure, there is no adverse impact on the physical fabric of the Protected Structure.

Anticipated morphological impact

The current setting of the original buildings is not adversely impacted by the proposed development.

Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

When this work is carried out in accordance with the plans and specifications, the impact on the character and significance of the primary elements of the protected structures will be minimal.

6.00 CONCLUSION

The works proposed to be carried out in this application are approx. 100m to the east of the Johnstown House which lost a considerable amount of historic fabric in the late 1990's. However, the reconstruction aimed to give the house a 'country-house-hotel' feel. This may not have been historically accurate in its detailing, but it has created a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the House and facilities beyond.

The subsequent additions of bar, conference centre and restaurant seek to add to the facilities for the hotel, as does this application for additional rooms. The designs put forward in this proposal are contemporary, using sympathetic contemporary materials and whose size and bulk are very much of their time and are sympathetic to the various structures in the site

The research consisted of a site visit on the 3rd October 2024, a review of the Darmody Architecture design proposals, Millimetre Design proposals, the 3-D imagery, and various desktop research.

Sufficient information was then available to the writer to form the opinion that the proposals will not adversely affect the character and significance of the primary elements of the Johnstown House



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12 November 2024

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