

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



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

October 2024

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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 Restaurant 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 Masters 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

(i) Modifications to the existing floor plan of the tenor suite at ground floor level to provide for a new restaurant; (ii) provision of a proposed new single-storey extension of 210 sq.m. [SM1] to the proposed restaurant at ground floor and basement level to the north-west corner of the existing hotel; (iii) modifications to internal partition walls to extend the existing kitchen, provide bathrooms and to separate the restaurant from spa and gym; (iv) removal of existing external escape staircase from basement and provision of a new entrance and reception area to gym; (v) provision of new replacement external staircase from ground floor to basement and alterations to existing openings and partition walls; (vi) provision of storage room in basement; (vii) provision of 4 no. accessible parking spaces; (viii) provision of 2 no. external signs [SM2] above new restaurant and gym entrances; (ix) and all associated landscaping and site works [SM3] necessary to facilitate the development. No works are proposed to the protected structure.

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 is site to the north of the original building at ground floor level of the extension granted permission in 1999 (outlined in blue in this site map).

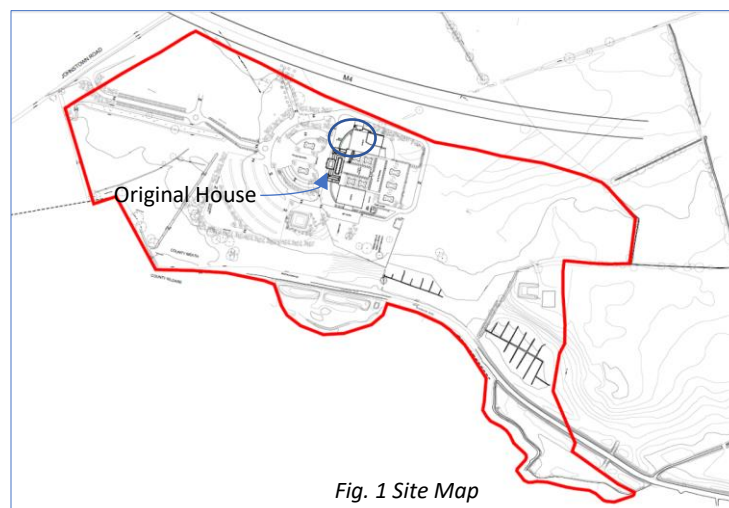


Fig. 1 Site Map

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).

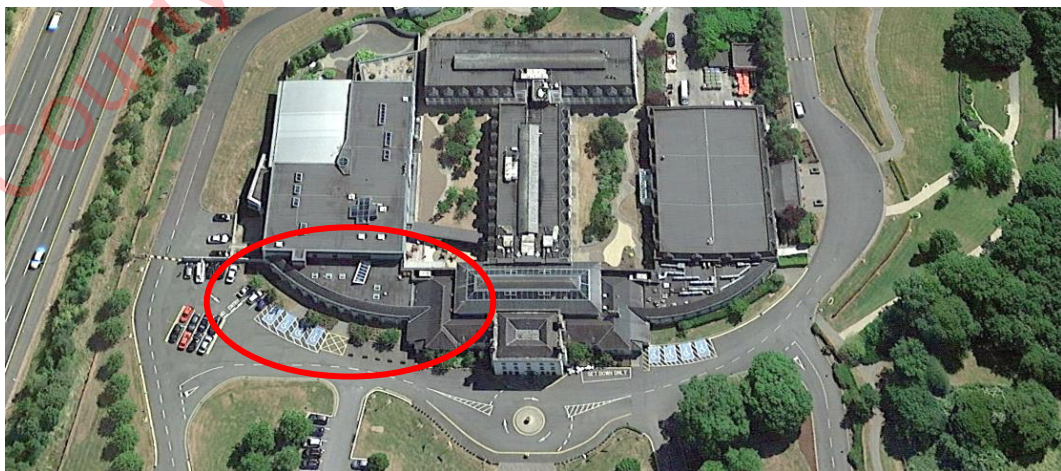


Fig. 4 Overall view of the Protect Structure with the relevant section circled in red. (Google Earth Image 2018)

It is presumed that the curved wings were erected as part of the 1999 permission, and it is at ground level in front of the north wing that the new structure is proposed to be carried out.

2.00 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDINGS

- 2.01** The 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 front of the 1999 planning permission and consequent works.



Fig. 5 View of relevant section from ground level

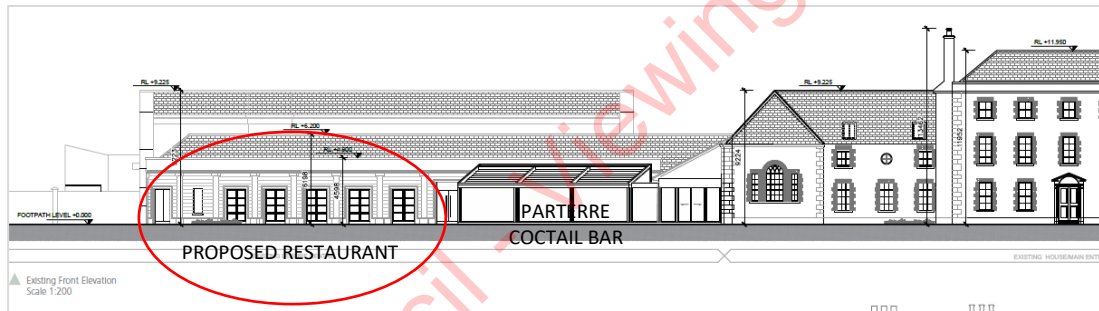


Fig. 6 Existing Southwest Elevation

What is now called the Parterre Cocktail Bar was the subject of a grant of planning permission in 2022.



Fig. 7 View of the front of Johnstown House

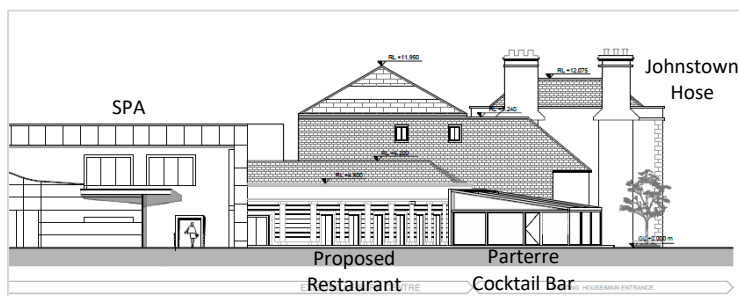


Fig. 8 North Elevation

2.02 Existing Buildings

The existing buildings up against which this proposal will be built is a flat roofed structure. It has a lightweight anodised glazing screen around a steel structure.

There is little or no demolition here.

There is definitely no loss of historic fabric.

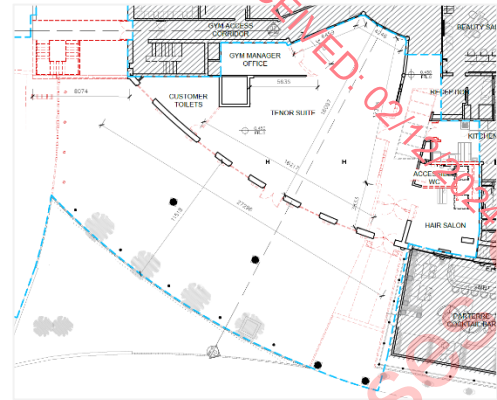


Fig. 9 Plan of Existing – Extract from EX-101

2.04 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.

2.05 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 the existing Leisure Centre and Spa, the relevance of these strategies is much reduced.



Fig. 10 Location of Proposed Restaurant



Fig. 11 View looking south towards Johnstown House

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

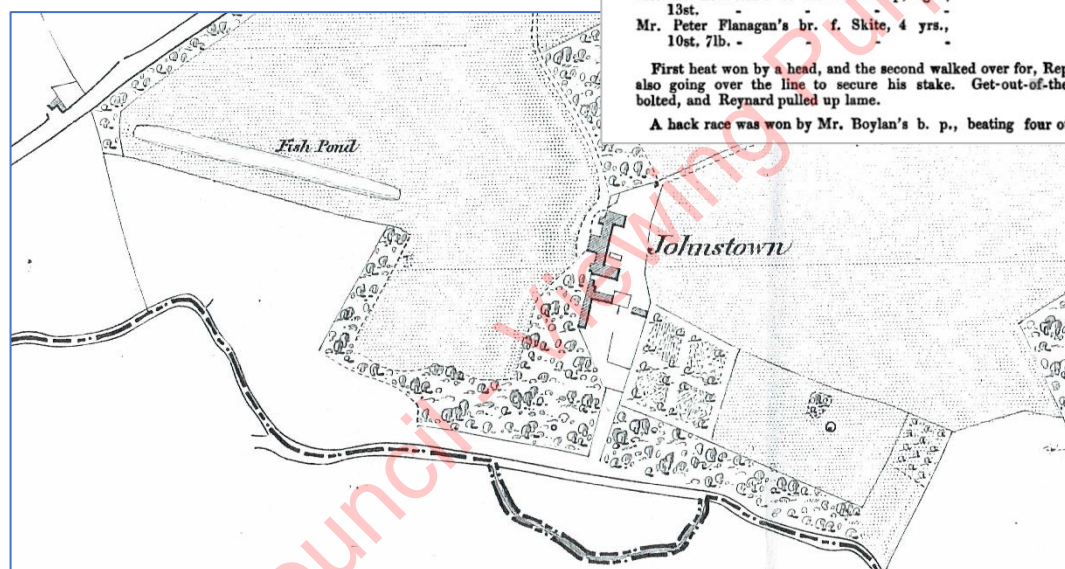


Fig. 11 Extract from the 1836 OS Map

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.

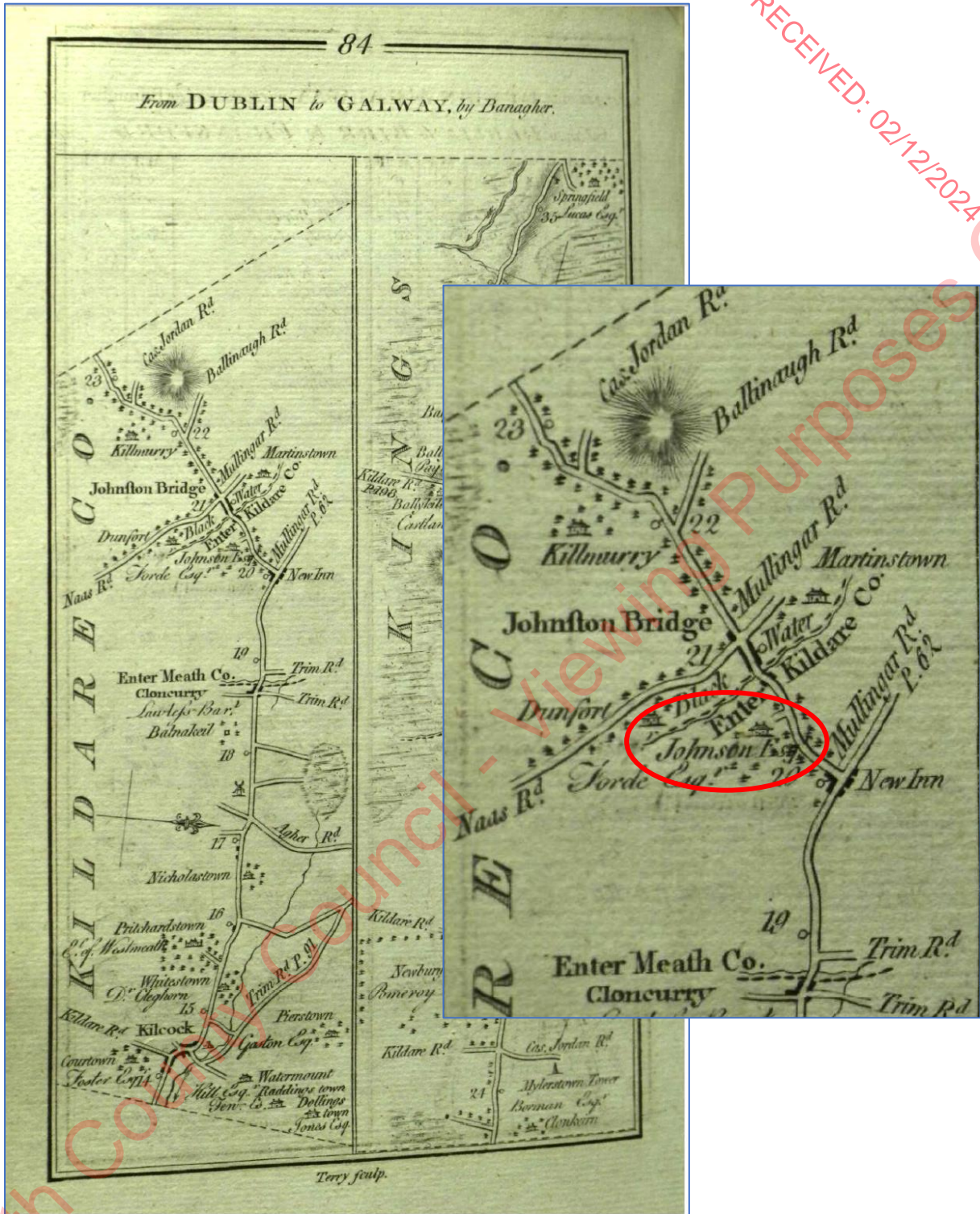


Fig 13. Taylor and Skinner's Road Maps of Ireland (2nd ed. 1783)

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](http://enfieldonline.net/local%20history)

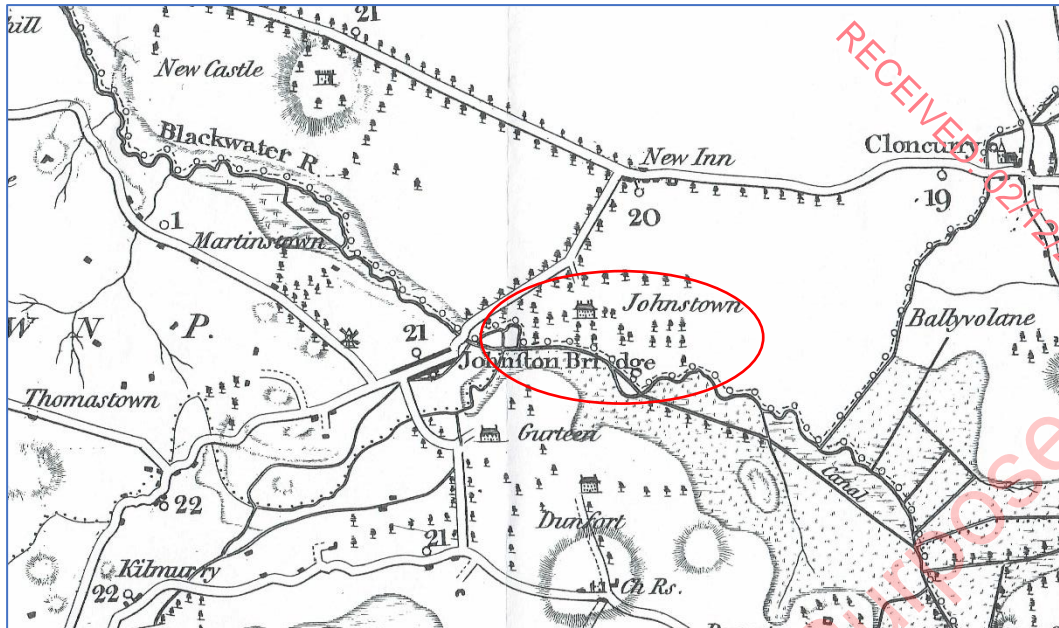


Fig. 14 Alex Taylor Map – County Kildare; 1783

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

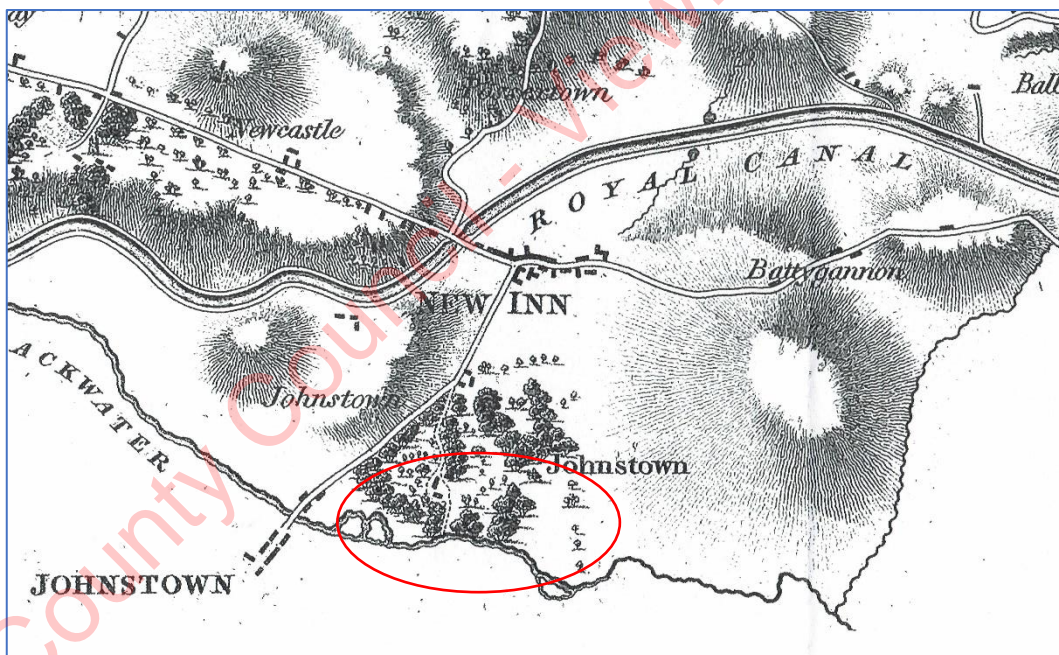


Fig. 15 William Larkin Map – Co. Meath; 1812

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

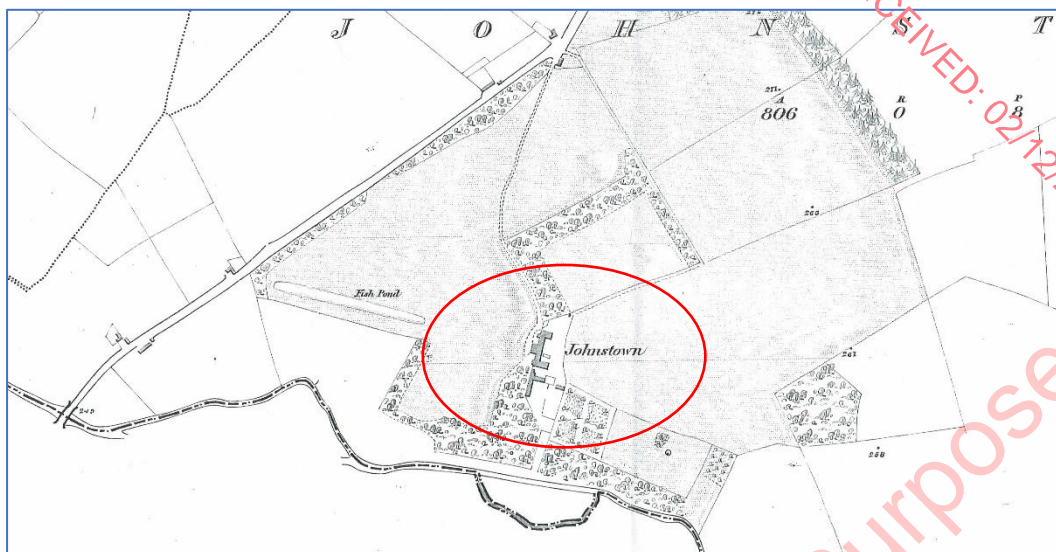


Fig 16. OS Map; Meath sheet 48; Surveyed 1836; Published 1837; scale 1:10,560

This is the first representation of the house as it is shown for the next 70 or so 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 fish pond 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.

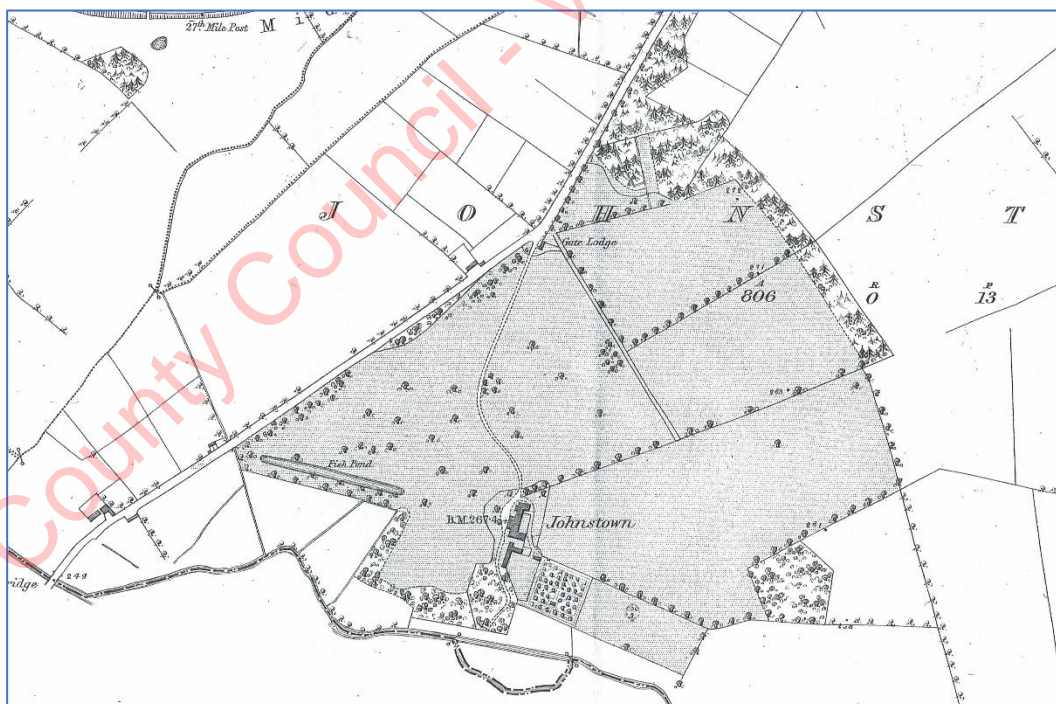


Fig. 17. OS Map; Meath sheet 48; Surveyed 1883; Published 1884; scale 1:10,560

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

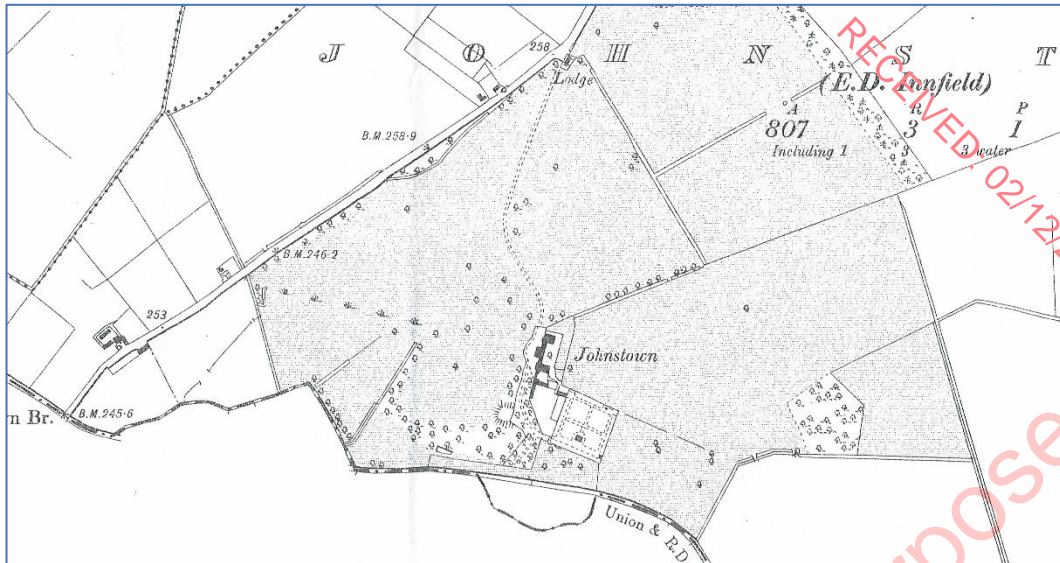


Fig 18. OS Map; Meath Sheet 48; Surveyed 1909-1910; Published 1913; scale 1:10,560

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

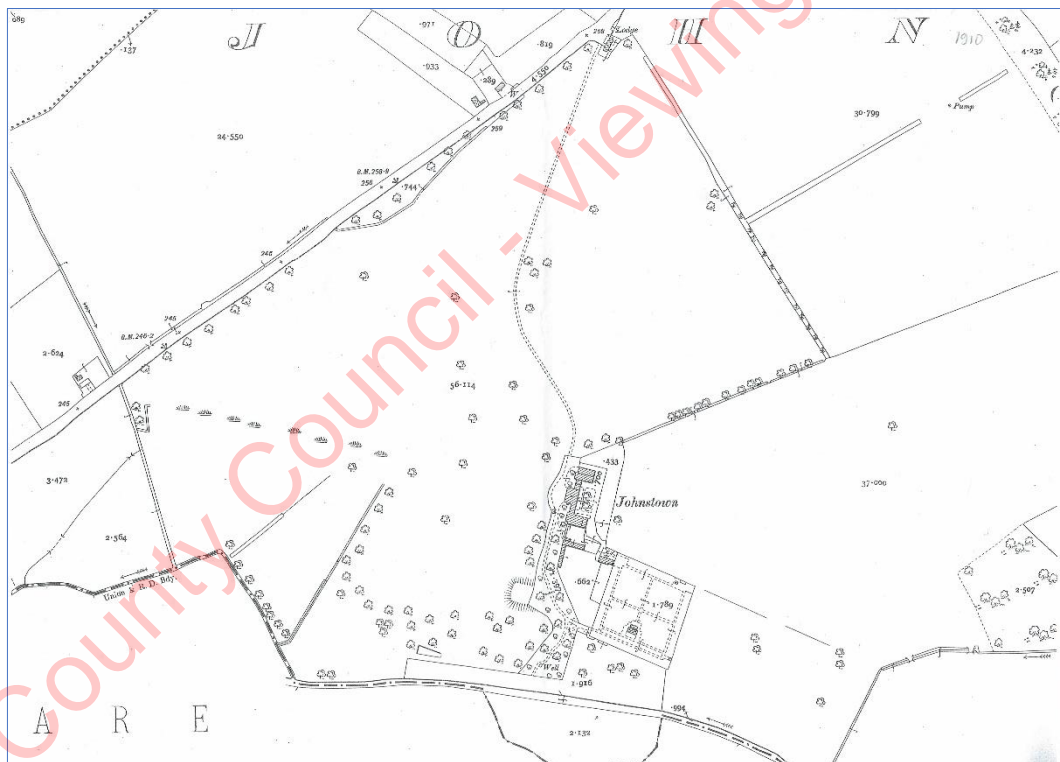


Fig. 19 OS Map; Meath sheet 48-14; Surveyed 1910; Published 1911; scale 1:2,500

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 assessment considers the values outlined in the 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 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 craftsman 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 as 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 restaurant 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 DEMOLITIONS

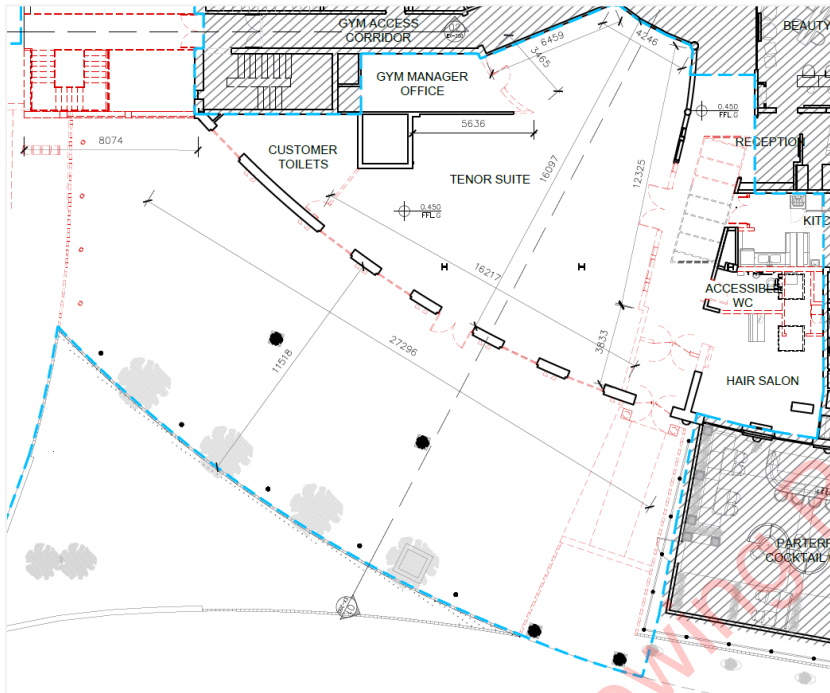


Fig. 21 Existing plan with demolition shown in red

Demolition will consist of removing early c21 elements. There will be no loss of historic fabric. Its impact on the Protected Structure will be minimal.

5.02 PROPOSED WORKS; GENERAL SUMMARY

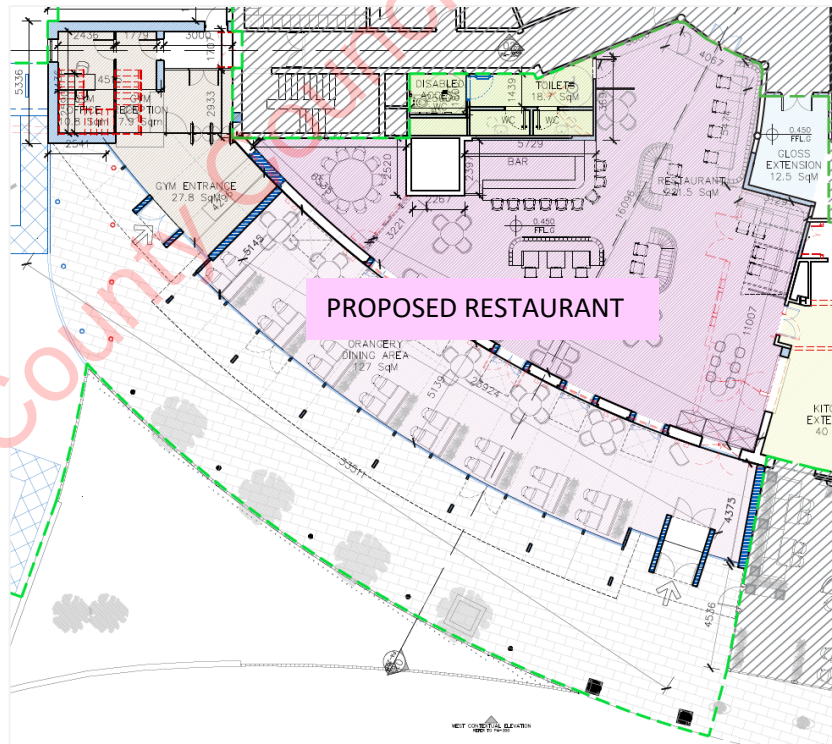


Fig. 22 Plan of Proposed Restaurant.

The new structure will be removable and will not cause any damage to any historic fabric.

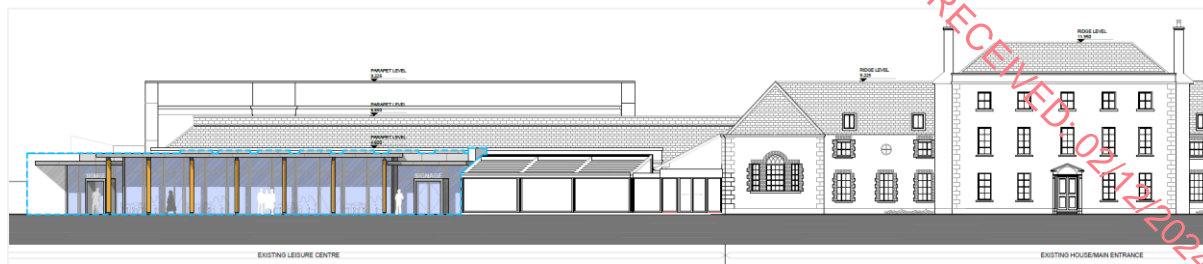


Fig. 23 Restaurant proposal shown in relation to Johnstown House



Fig.. 24 Location of proposed restaurant



Fig. 25 Image of proposed restaurant



Fig. 26 View looking south towards Johnstown House



Fig. 27 Image of proposed restaurant entrance

5.03 ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Anticipated visual impact

The side wings constructed in the early 2000's, are subservient to the main structure, the original house. They are at a lower level and are receding from the front of the original building. Montages of the proposed development in context with the hotel grouping have been 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 central structure and the mixed contemporary materials and styles of the side structures.

The proposed design treatment relates to these later extensions.

The proposed revised car parking layout does not affect the Protected Structures in any way.

On the whole, the proposed development, in deferring to the extant grouping as the dominant building type in the hotel campus, is found not to conflict with the assessment of the significant characteristics set out above.

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 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 at Johnstown House are to the additional structures granted permission by Meath County Council in 1999, just before the 2000 Planning and Development Act.

The research was 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 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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RIAI Grade 1 Conservation Architect

24 October 2024

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