



DART+ WEST, ORAL HEARING SUBMISSION

SEPTEMBER 2023

ASHTOWN ROAD UPGRADE & ENTRANCE TO ASHTON HOUSE
FOR CASTLETHORN CONSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

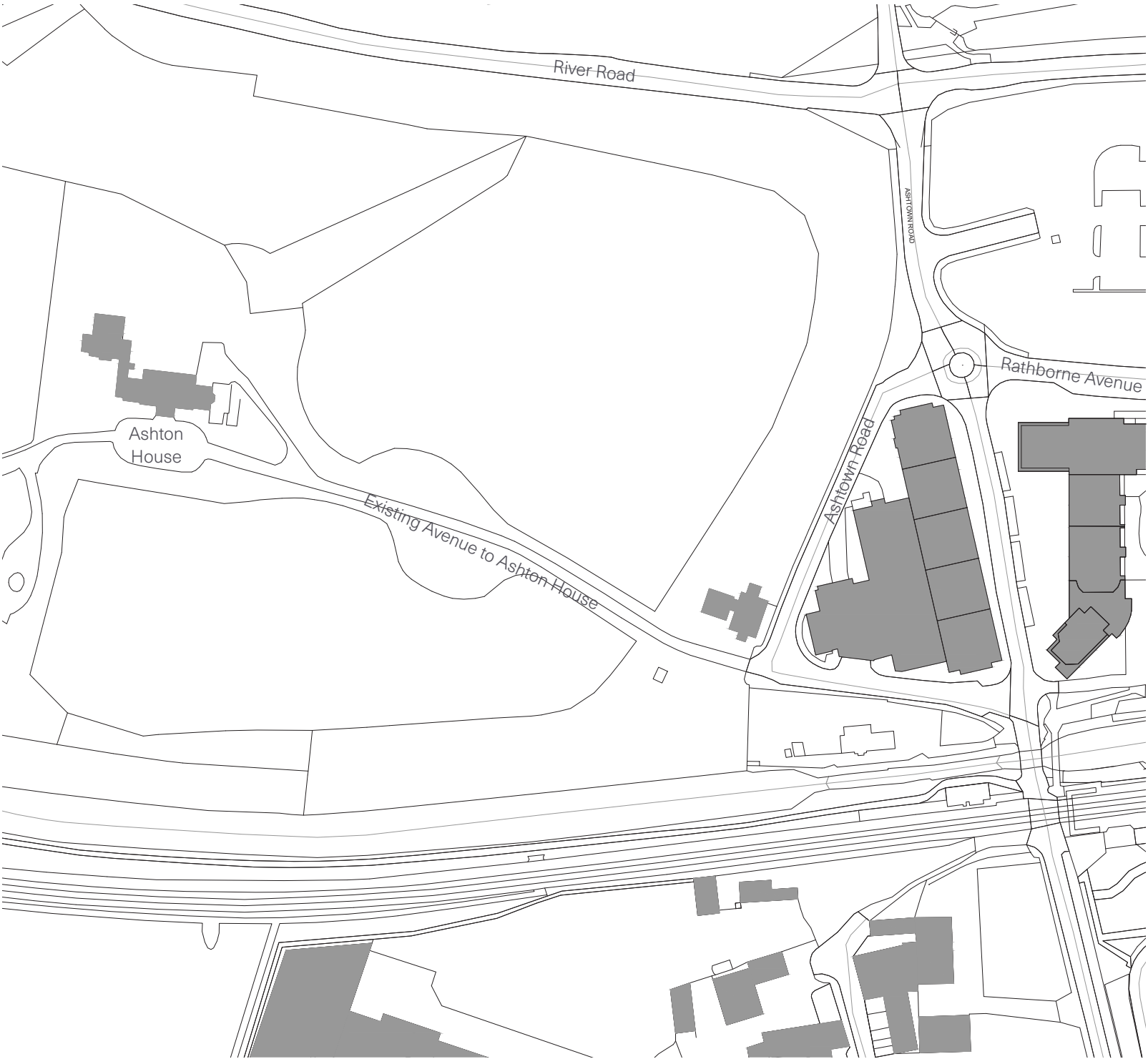
Ashton House, located in Ashtown, Dublin, is in the ownership of Castlethorn Construction. Access to Ashton House is from Ashtown Road.

Iarnrod Eireann are proposing to upgrade the Ashtown Road as part of Dart+West, and the access to Ashton House is impacted by these proposals.

Castlethorn are supportive of Dart+West, including the associated upgrade of Ashtown Road in principle, but are concerned with the impact of the proposed design on the access arrangements to Ashton House. We have proposed an alternative access arrangement to Ashton House, which is a minor design amendment to the Iarnrod Eireann proposals, which could be implemented without requiring any significant changes to the Ashtown Road Upgrade, i.e the alignment and gradient of the Ashtown Road Upgrade would not change, and any design changes would be local and limited to the relationship between Ashton House and the Ashtown Road.



Extract from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1837-43, showing Ashton House & Gatelodge. We note the existence of two access routes between the main house and Ashtown Road at this time.



Ordnance Survey Map of Ashton House and Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)

EXISTING CONDITION

The existing access to Ashton House is off Ashtown Road.

Existing stone piers and gates, located at the corner of Ashtown Road, define the entrance. Ashton gatelodge is located just inside the gates, and both the gatelodge and the stone piers with gates are Protected Structures.

The existing road level adjacent to the stone piers is c. 40.36 OD, and the base of the piers and the finished floor level of the gatelodge are all at a similar level, allowing the elements to be read together.



Photograph of Ashton House entrance from within Ashton House Lands (Existing Condition)



Photograph of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)



Existing Setting of Ashton House,

PROPOSED CONDITION BY IARNROD EIREANN

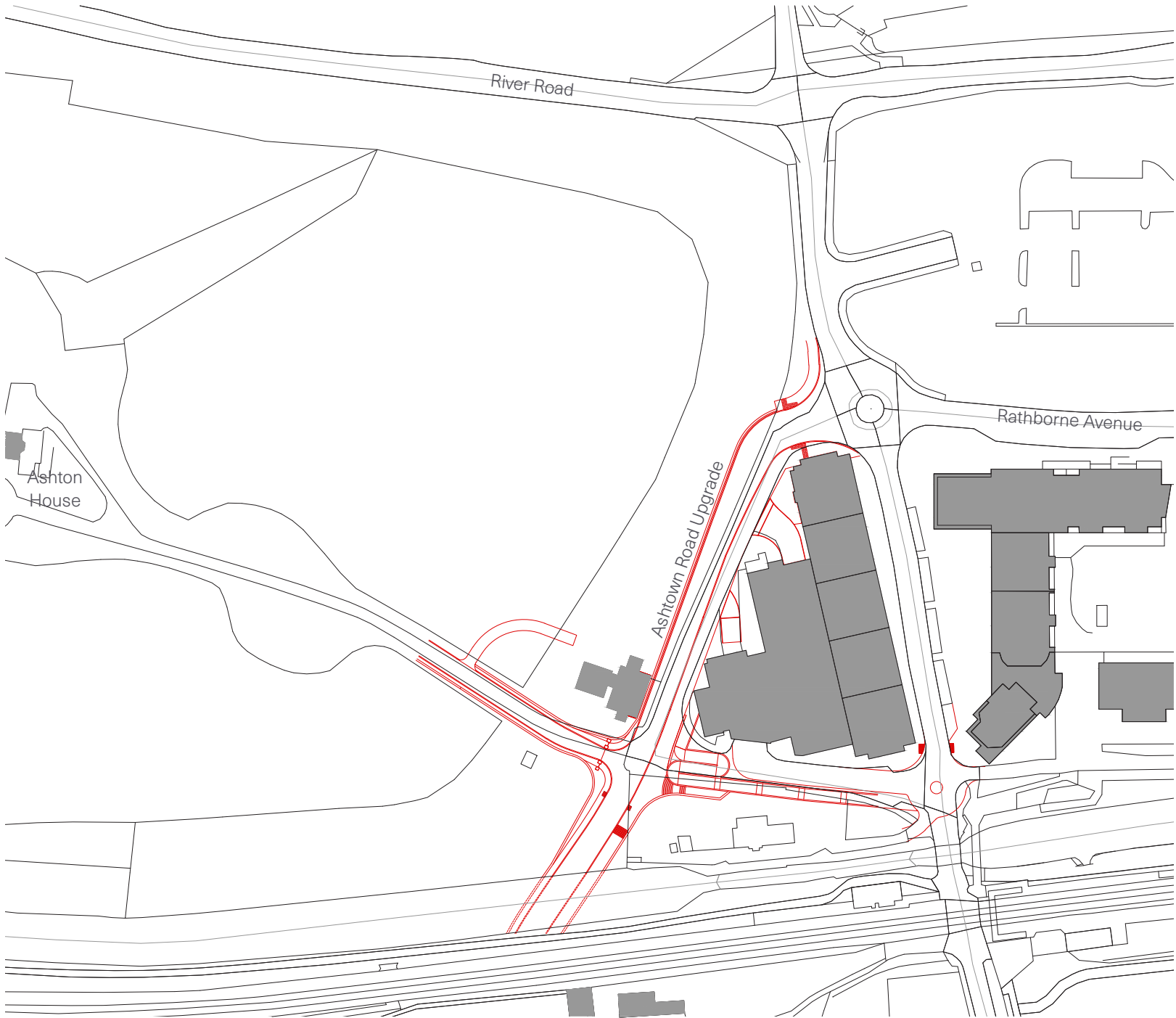
The proposed Ashtown Road upgrade by Iarnrod Eireann changes the alignment and levels of Ashtown Road. The proposed Ashtown Road upgrade passes under the existing railway & canal, and then rises back up to meet existing road gradients at Ashtown Road roundabout.

The level of the proposed road, at the point where it passes the entrance to Ashton House, with its stone piers & gates and gatelodge (Protected Structures), is c. 37.62m OD, which is c. 2.74 metres below the existing road level at that position.

The proposed Ashtown Road upgrade also widens and realigns the existing road. The new alignment overlaps with the existing position of the stone piers & gates (Protected Structures), and therefore necessitates their removal, and reconstruction elsewhere, in a position to be agreed. The details of the proposed arrangement are described in more detail on the following page.

While Castlethorn are supportive of the upgrade of Ashtown Road in principle, we are concerned that the local access arrangements to Ashton House will result in an significant deterioration in the quality and nature of the access to Ashton House, in particular in relation to the following:

- Road Safety: The existing access area is c. 30 metres from the underpass under the canal and railway, and in the proposed Iarnrod Eireann design, the Ashtown Road Upgrade is still rising steeply at the point that it passes the entrance to Ashton House, resulting in traffic from Ashton House exiting onto a steeply sloped, fast moving carriageway;
- Protected Structures: The entrance to Ashton House is defined by stone piers and gates, and a gatelodge, all of which are Protected Structures. The setting of the Protected Structures and the relationship between the piers & gates and the Gatelodge is severely impacted by the proposals.



OS Map of existing Ashtown Road (shown in grey), with Iarnrod Eireann proposal overlaid (shown in red).

PROPOSED CONDITION BY IARNROD EIREANN

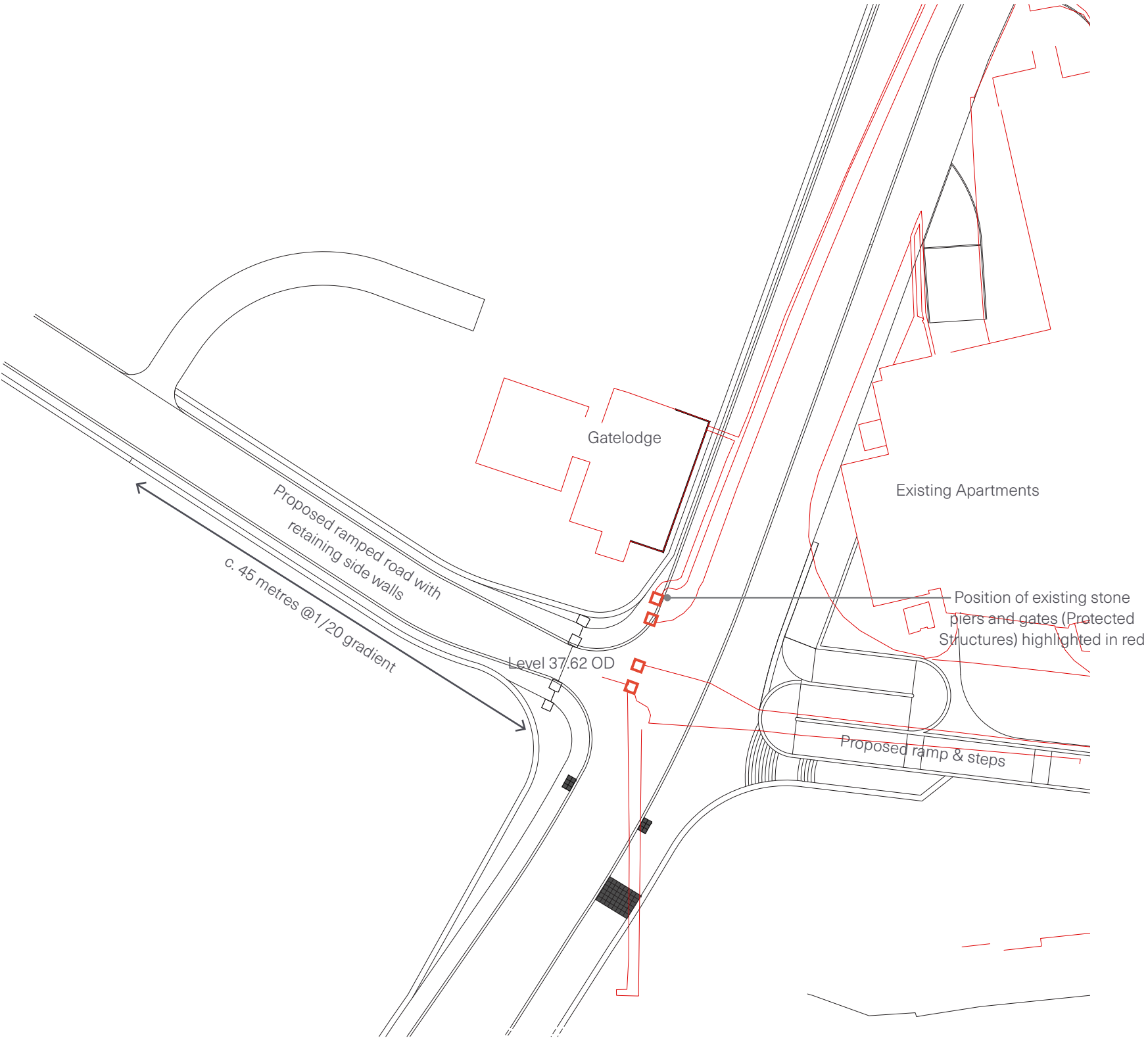
The proposed Ashtown Road upgrade passes under the existing railway & canal, and then rises back up to meet existing road gradients at Ashtown Road roundabout. The level of the proposed road, at the point where it passes the existing stone piers & gates (Protected Structures), is c. 37.62m OD, which is c. 2.74 metres below the existing road level at that position.

The proposed Ashtown Road upgrade also widens and realigns the existing road. The new alignment overlaps with the existing position of the stone piers & gates (Protected Structures), and therefore necessitates their removal, and reconstruction elsewhere, in a position to be agreed.

Iarnrod Eireann have proposed that the existing position of the stone piers & gates (Protected Structures) be removed and reconstructed in a position slightly south-west of their existing location, and that they would be placed at the level of the proposed Ashtown Road upgrade, i.e. c. 2.74 metres below their existing level.

Iarnrod Eireann have proposed that the newly positioned piers would continue to serve as the point for vehicular and pedestrian access to Ashton House, and propose that a ramped road, which would be c. 40-45 metres in length, located inside the grounds of Ashton House, would navigate the proposed level change of c. 2.7 metres between the Ashtown Road upgrade and existing ground levels. Retaining walls will be required on the sides of the ramped road to deal with the level difference between the road and the adjacent ground levels.

We are concerned that the proposed entrance condition will create an unsafe, unpleasant, “tunnel” or “underpass” effect for entrants into Ashton House, and will sever the relationship between the existing stone piers & gates and the gatelodge, all of which are Protected Structures.



Drawing showing Iarnrod Eireann proposal (shown in grey), overlaid on existing conditions (shown in red).

PROPOSED CONDITION BY IARNROD EIREANN



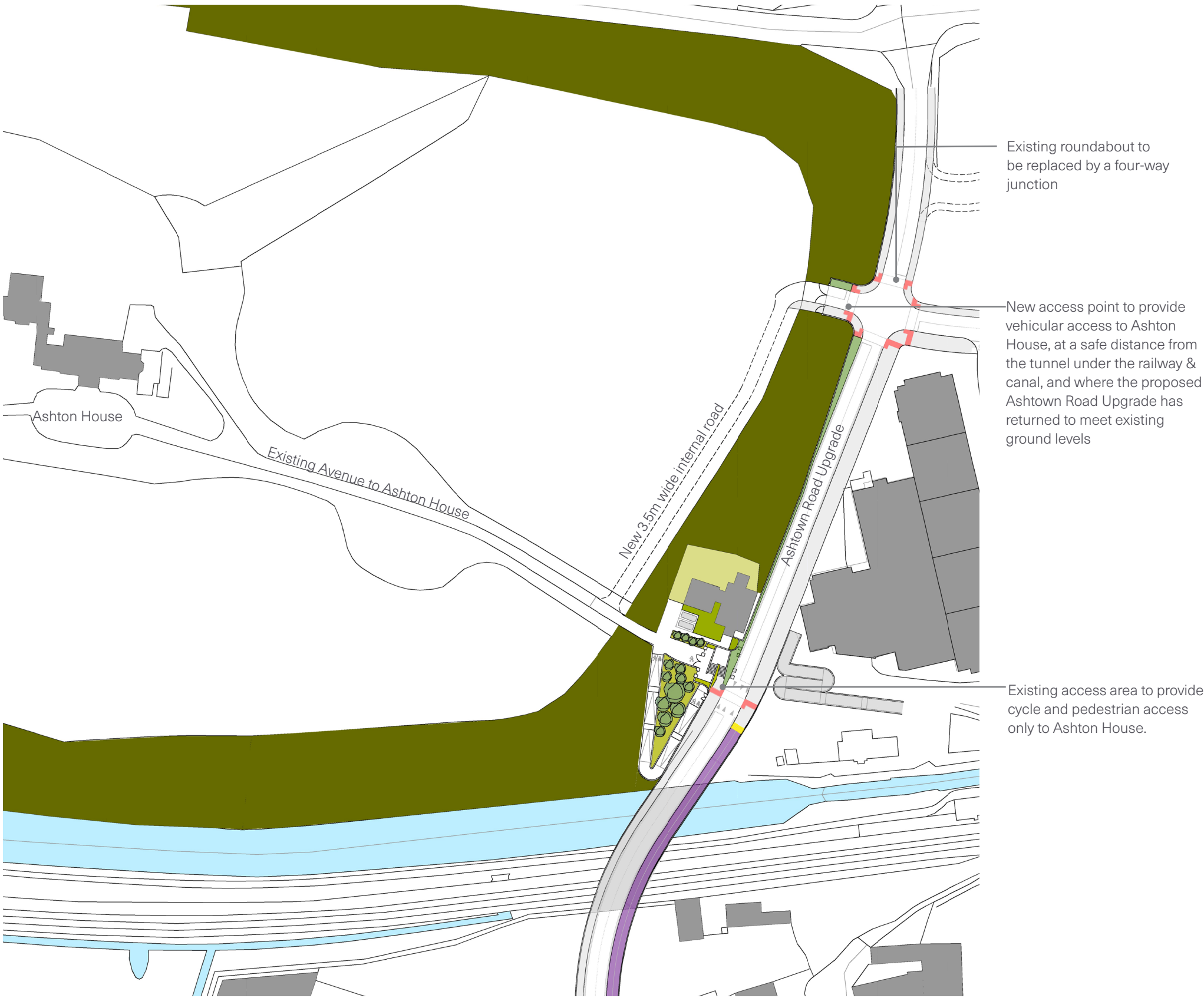
Proposed Ashtown Road Upgrade & Ashton House entrance by Iarnrod Eireann, with change in ground level of c.2.7metres at the existing entrance to Ashton House. As can be seen in the 3d model, the stone piers and gates are dwarfed by the scale of the retaining walls required by the Ashtown Road Upgrade, and the relationship between the stone piers & gates and the Gatelodge is severed.

PROPOSED CONDITION BY CASTLETHORN

Castlethorn are supportive of the upgrade of Ashtown Road in principle, but are concerned with the impact of the level change on the access arrangements to Ashton House, and have proposed an alternative access arrangement. This alternative access arrangement does not impact on the realignment or proposed levels of the Ashtown Road upgrade, which would not be impacted by this alternative access arrangement.

Castlethorn are proposing that vehicular access to Ashton House be moved from its existing position to a point further north along its boundary with the Ashtown Road, opposite the existing Rathborne Avenue. At this point, the Ashtown Road Upgrade has reached existing ground levels, and the existing junction could be reconfigured to provide a safe vehicular access at grade at this location.

Castlethorn are proposing that the existing access to Ashton House would become an access point for pedestrians and cyclists only. This arrangement is described in more detail on the following pages.



PROPOSED CONDITION BY CASTLETHORN

The proposed Ashtown Road upgrade necessitates the removal, and reconstruction elsewhere, of the existing stone piers & gates (Protected Structures). The proposed Ashtown Road upgrade also necessitates a level change of c. 2.7 metres at the existing entrance point.

Castlethorn have considered the impact of both the repositioned piers & gates, and the 2.7m level change, and are proposing that the existing entrance is redesigned to become a pedestrian and cycle access only, with steps and ramps to navigate the level difference, and that vehicular access to Ashton House is moved further northwards, adjacent to the existing roundabout, where the levels of the proposed Ashtown Road upgrade and the existing levels align.

Castlethorn are proposing that the piers be repositioned so that they remain at the same ground level as the gatelodge (Protected Structure), and are aligned with the western wall of the gatelodge, effectively defining a threshold area outside the gatelodge on the Ashton House side of the boundary. This arrangement maintains an appropriate relationship between the gatelodge and the gates & piers, all of which are Protected Structures.

The proposed position of the piers in the Castlethorn scheme creates a bellmouth on the Ashtown Road side of the boundary. The bellmouth area can be used to provide steps which navigate the proposed level change of c. 2.7 metres between the Ashtown Road upgrade and existing ground levels, and some soft landscaping.

A pedestrian and cycle access ramp, discreetly located behind the boundary wall, provides universal access between the new Ashtown Road upgrade and the Ashton House lands.



PROPOSED CONDITION BY CASTLETHORN



Alternative entrance design to Ashton House by Castlethorn, with the stone entrance piers retained at their existing ground level, and new steps and ramp to negotiate the 2.7m level change. This proposal does not require any changes to the alignment or levels of the Iarnród Éireann design for the Ashtown Road Upgrade.

VIEW FROM ASHTOWN ROAD, LOOKING SOUTH

EXISTING CONDITION (PHOTO)



Photograph of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)
The existing road has a narrow carraigeway and footpaths. The existing boundary wall to Ashton House will be removed as part of the Ashtown Road upgrade, and it is expected that some trees will also be removed.

EXISTING CONDITION (MODEL)



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)

VIEW FROM ASHTOWN ROAD, LOOKING SOUTH

IARNROD EIREANN PROPOSAL



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Iarnrod Eireann Proposal)

CASTLETHORN PROPOSAL



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Castlethorn Proposal)

In both of the above views, the proximity of the entrance to Ashton House from the underpass that is part of the Ashtown Road Upgrade is clear. The significant level change necessitates high boundary walls along the western edge of the Ashtown Road Upgrade, where the walls will effectively be retaining structures of c. 4.0 - 5.0 metres in height. The tall walls will overshadow the entrance area to Ashton House, which, when combined with the noise and traffic movements from the tunnel, will create a very traffic-dominated environment.

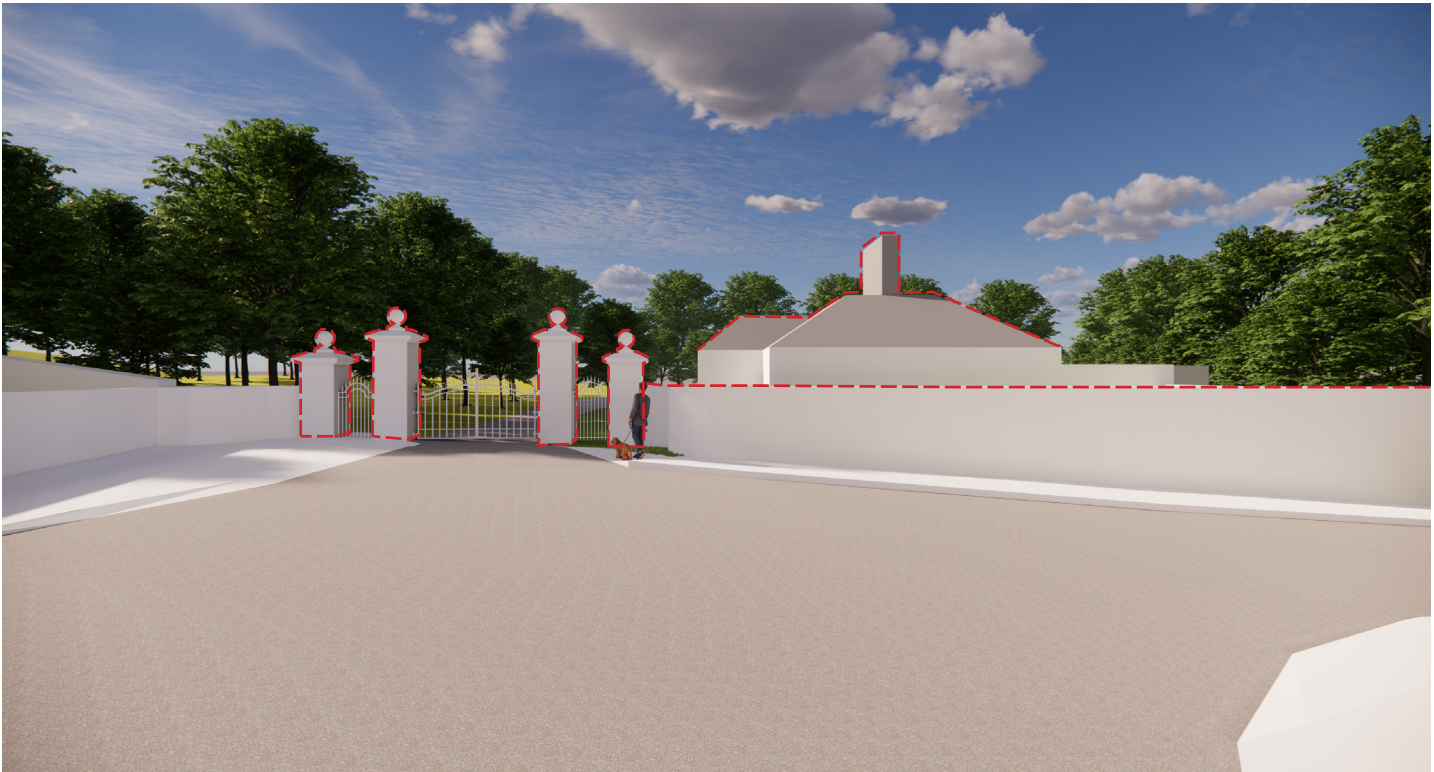
VIEW FROM ASHTOWN ROAD, LOOKING AT ENTRANCE

EXISTING CONDITION (PHOTO)



Photograph of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)

EXISTING CONDITION (MODEL)



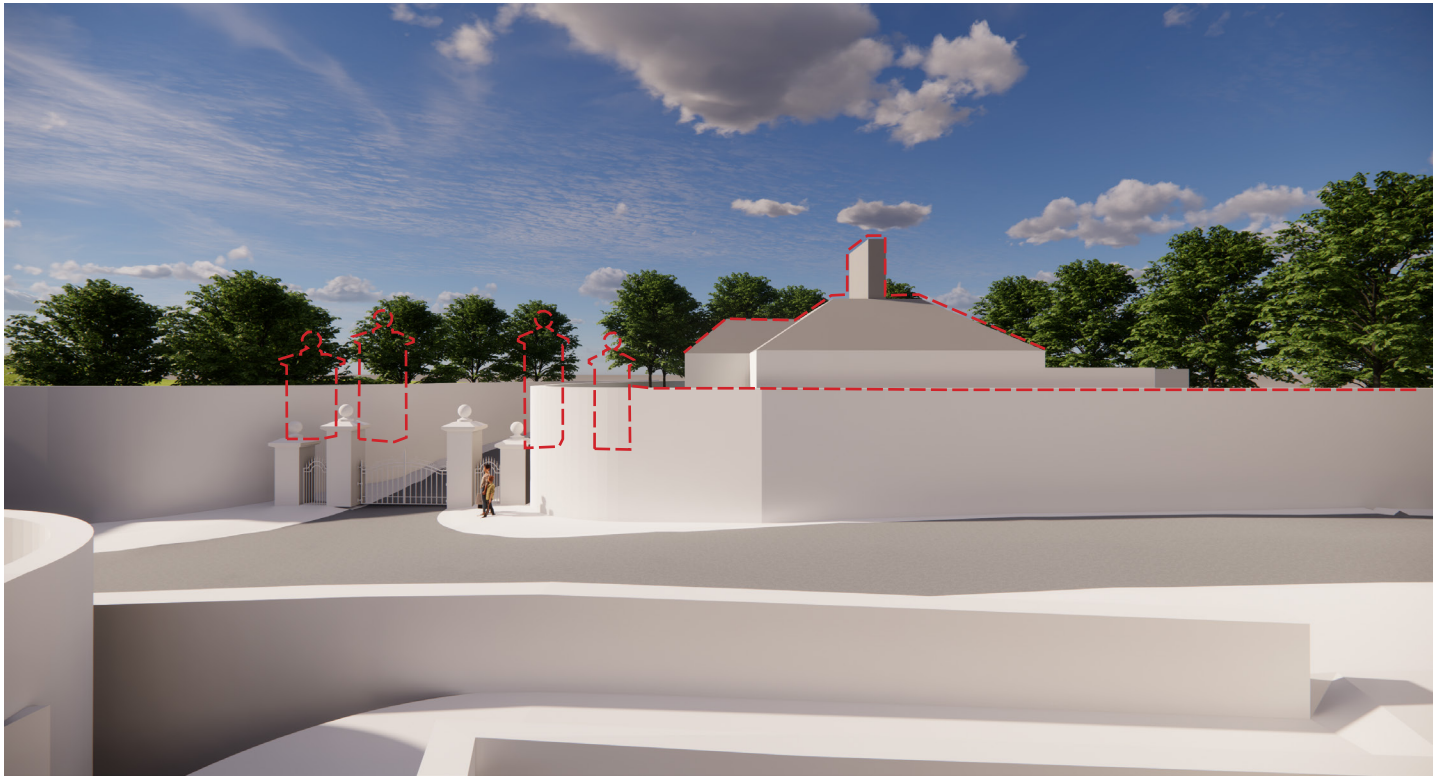
3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)

The stone piers, gates and Ashton Gatelodge , all Protected Structures, are intended to be read together, as an assembly of elements that define the approach to Ashton House. The piers, gates and the gatelodge all are sitting at very similar ground levels.

We accept that the position and level of the Ashtown Road Upgrade will inevitably change the environment in the vicinity of the existing entrance to Ashton House, with the wider carriageway, increased traffic volumes and the 2.7m level change all having a significant impact.

VIEW FROM ASHTOWN ROAD, LOOKING AT ENTRANCE

IARNROD EIREANN PROPOSAL



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Iarnrod Eireann Proposal)
The stone piers & gates (Protected Structures) are removed from their existing position and rebuilt as shown, at a level c. 2.7metres below their existing position. A new boundary wall, which forms the western edge of the Ashtown Road Upgrade, with estimated heights of between 4.0 - 5.0 metres, acts as a retaining wall to the Ashton House Lands.
Vehicular and pedestrian access to Ashton House is via the repositioned gates, and the new, steeply sloped access road that would be required within the Ashton House Lands is visible through the gates. Retaining structures will be required on both sides of the new access road to Ashton House, which will create a “tunnel” effect, and overshadowing on the access road.

CASTLETHORN PROPOSAL



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Castlethorn Proposal)
The stone piers & gates (Protected Structures) are removed from their existing position and rebuilt as shown - their position aligns with the western wall of the gatelodge, and their ground level is the same at their existing ground level.
The new position of the stone piers and gates creates a “bell mouth” area, where steps and planting are located, which facilitates pedestrian movement between Ashton House and the Ashtown Road Upgrade.
A new boundary wall, which forms the western edge of the Ashtown Road Upgrade, with estimated heights of between 4.0 - 5.0 metres, acts as a retaining wall to the Ashton House Lands - the position of the proposed steps and planting creates a landscape transition in scale that mitigates the visual impact of their height.

We accept that the position and level of the Ashtown Road Upgrade will inevitably change the environment in the vicinity of the existing entrance to Ashton House, with the wider carriageway, increased traffic volumes and 2.7m level change all having a significant impact. However, in the Iarnrod Eireann proposal on the left, the stone piers are dwarfed by the new retaining walls, and the ramped access to Ashton House will be dark and tunnel-like. In the Castlethorn proposal on the right, the stone piers maintain a relationship with the gatelodge, and the proposed steps and planting mitigate the visual impact of the inevitable level changes that arise from the Ashtown Road Upgrade.

VIEW FROM ASHTON HOUSE LANDS

EXISTING CONDITION (PHOTO)



Photograph of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)

EXISTING CONDITION (MODEL)



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)

The stone piers, gates and Ashton Gatelodge , all Protected Structures, are intended to be read together, as an assembly of elements that define the approach to Ashton House. The piers, gates and the gatelodge all are sitting at very similar ground levels.

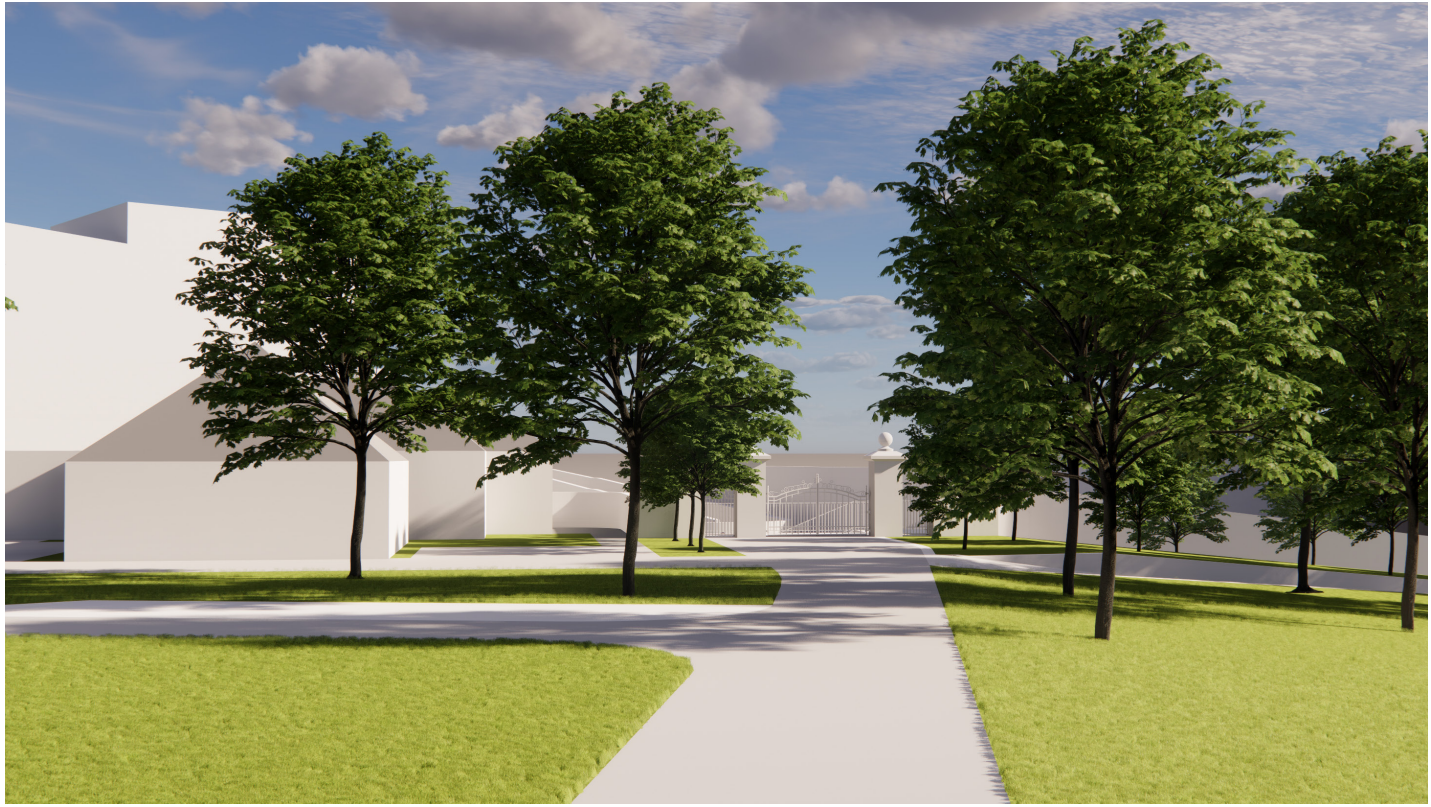
VIEW FROM ASHTON HOUSE LANDS

IARNROD EIREANN PROPOSAL



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Iarnrod Eireann Proposal)
As the level of the Ashtown Road Upgrade, where it meets the existing entrance area, is c. 2.7 metres below existing levels, the Iarnrod Eireann proposal includes a new access road within the grounds of Ashton House, which is a ramped road of c. 45 metres in length, at a gradient of c. 1:20. The proposed new access road will require retaining walls to both sides. The visual impact of the new access road is shown in the above image - the new access road effectively divorces the gate lodge from the entrance sequence, as it is positioned at a different level, and will be visually separated by the access road and its surrounding retaining walls and fence.

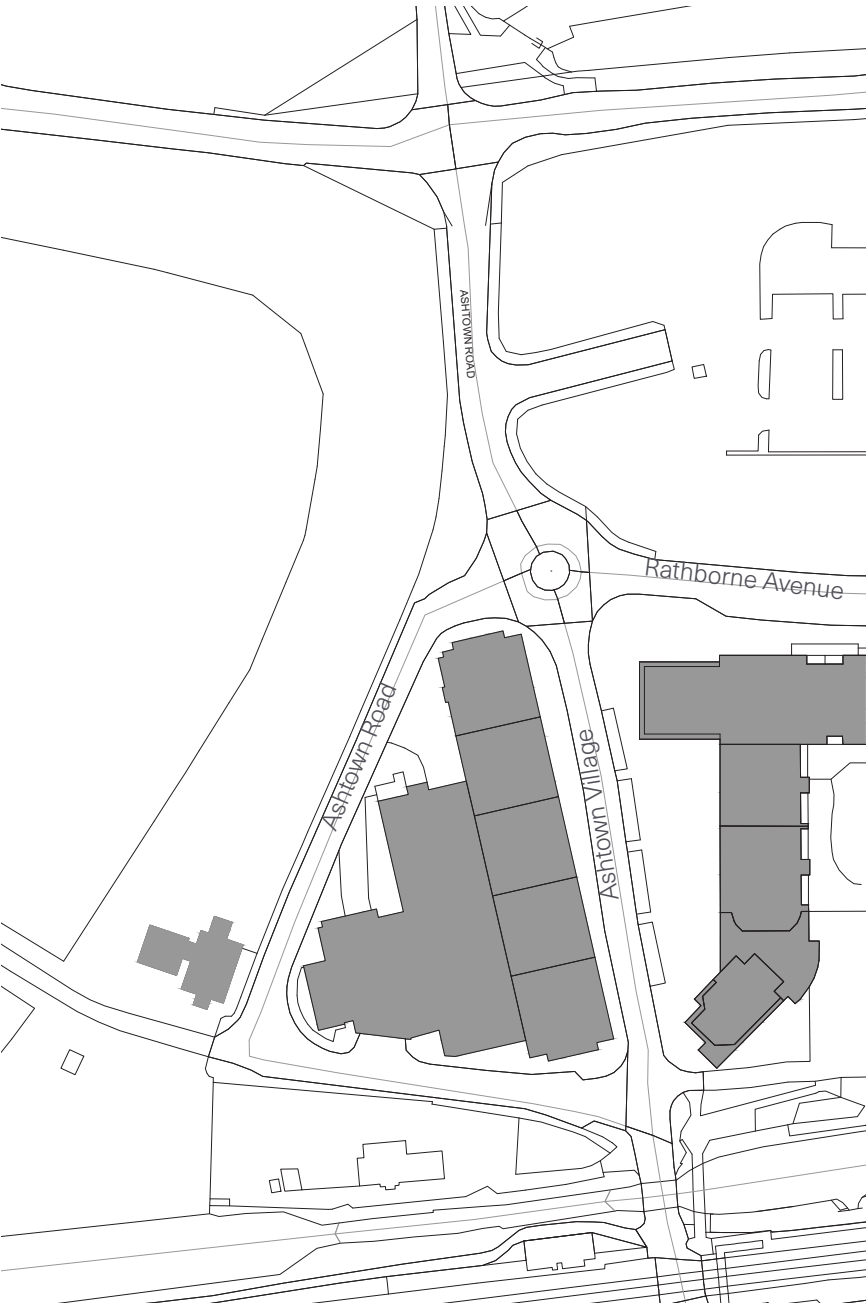
CASTLETHORN PROPOSAL



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Castlethorn Proposal)
In the Castlethorn proposal, the stone piers and gates are repositioned at the same level as their existing level, which maintains a harmonious relationship between the gate lodge and the piers, all of which are Protected Structures, and are intended to be seen together.
The proposed steps, located outside the repositioned gates, are not visible in this view, and the proposed ramp, located on the right hand side of the image, is very discreet, as it is combined with a generous area of planting.

We accept that the level change of c. 2.7 metres in the vicinity of the entrance to Ashton House is inevitable. However, we maintain that this level change, and the proximity of the entrance area to the Ashtown Road Underpass render the existing access point unsuitable as a vehicular access point, and that the existing entrance should become pedestrian and cycle only, with vehicular access to Ashton House to be provided further north along the Ashtown Road, and at grade.

PROPOSED NEW VEHICULAR ENTRANCE



OS Map of Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)



OS Map of existing Ashtown Road (shown in grey), with Iarnród Éireann proposal overlaid (shown in red).



Castlethorn Proposal, with proposed new 4-way junction in lieu of existing Ashtown Road roundabout.

At the moment, the junction between the Ashtown Road, Rathborne Avenue and Rathborne Village is a roundabout. The Ashtown Road Upgrade proposes to maintain this roundabout, as shown in the middle image above. However, the road hierarchy between Ashtown Road, Rathborne Avenue and Rathborne Village will be changed by the Ashtown Road Upgrade, with the Ashtown Road Upgrade becoming a more important route, and Ashtown Village becoming a vehicular cul-de-sac.

The Castlethorn scheme proposes that the existing roundabout be replaced by a 4-way junction, between the Ashtown Road Upgrade, Rathborne Avenue and the proposed new vehicular access to Ashton House. The proposed new vehicular access to Ashton House is located where the Ashtown Road Upgrade is at existing levels, thereby avoiding any requirement for vehicular ramped access and retaining structures within the Ashton House lands. The proposed access point is c. 130 metres from the underpass that is part of the Ashtown Road Upgrade, is at grade and at an existing junction, which is a much more efficient, safe and logical location for a vehicular entrance that would maintain a successful relationship between Ashton house and Rathborne Village.

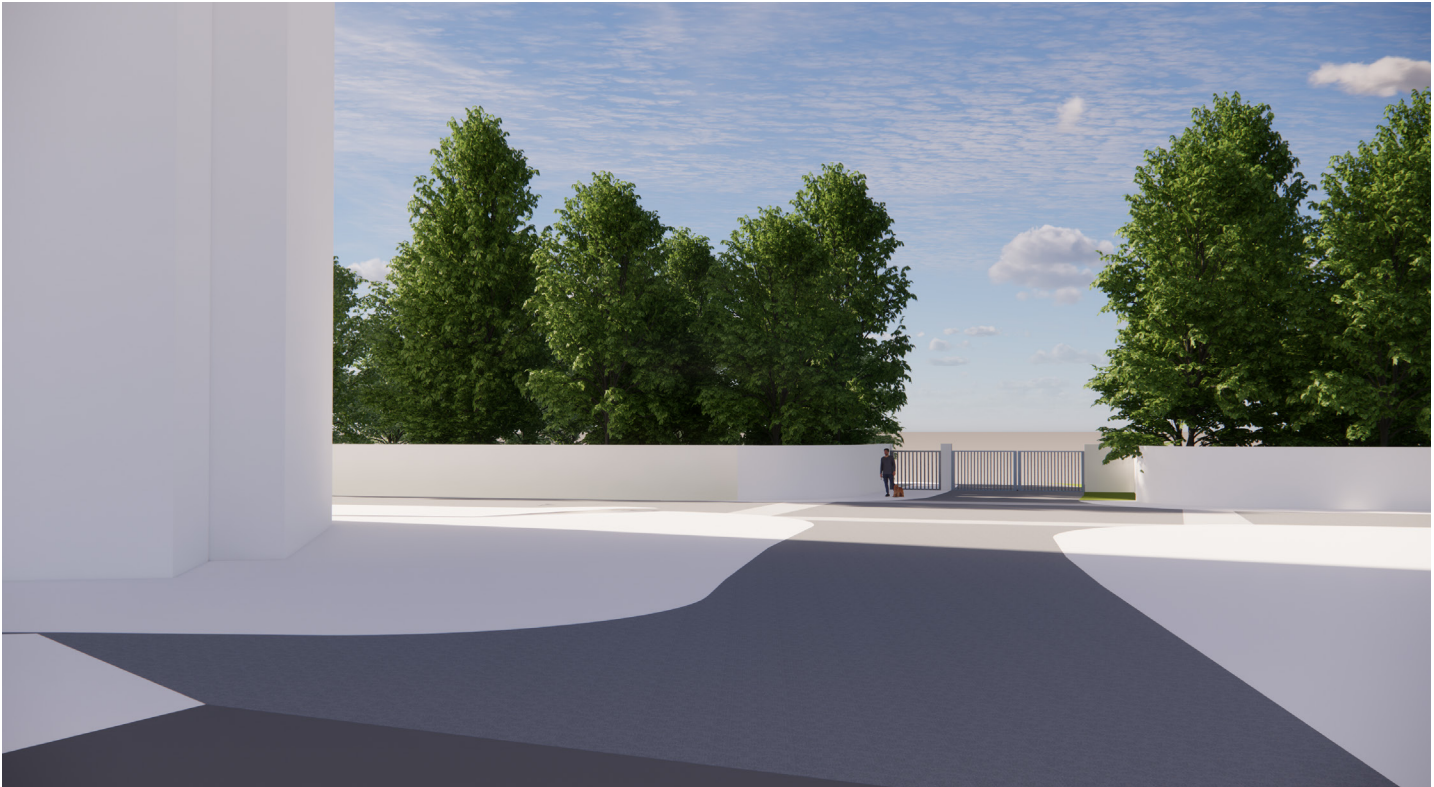
PROPOSED NEW VEHICULAR ENTRANCE

EXISTING CONDITION (PHOTO)



Photograph of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Existing Condition)

CASTLETHORN PROPOSAL



3d view of Ashton House entrance from Ashtown Road (Castlethorn Proposal)
The proposed new vehicular entrance to Ashton House is 5.5 metres wide, with a 2.0 metre wide pedestrian access adjacent. The proposed entrance is at grade and is similar in scale to the existing entrance, i.e. it is a comparable provision.

CONCLUSIONS

Castlethorn are supportive of Dart+ West, and the associated upgrade of Ashtown Road in principle, but are concerned with the impact of the proposed design on the access arrangements to Ashton House.

We have proposed an alternative access arrangement to Ashton House, which is a minor design amendment to the Iarnród Éireann proposals, which could be implemented without requiring any significant changes to the Ashtown Road Upgrade, i.e the alignment and gradient of the Ashtown Road Upgrade would not change, and any design changes would be local and limited to the relationship between Ashton House and the Ashtown Road.

We would appreciate if the Iarnród Éireann proposals could be modified to take on board our proposed access arrangements for Ashton House, which we believe is a more appropriate design response to this planned infrastructure upgrade.

