

**CLAREMONT
HOWTH ROAD
HOWTH**

CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT

5th December 2019

**Historic Building Consultants
Old Bawn
Old Connaught
Bray**

1045/01

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Background

This report has been prepared for Crekav Trading GP Limited as part of the documentation to be submitted with a planning application.

The site and its environs were inspected for the purposes of preparing this report on a number of occasions, the latest of which was on 21st August 2019. During the visits the photographs incorporated in the report were taken and the site examined to prepare the descriptions contained therein.

Historical research was carried out on the background history of the property and the results are set down below.

While this report contains comment on aspects of the condition of the buildings it is not a condition report or a structural report and must not be read as such.

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Proposal

The proposed development will occur at a site bounded to the south by the Hawth Road, to the east by a private dwelling, to the north by the DART line, and to the west by Local Authority lands. The site incorporates the former Techrete manufacturing facility, the former Beshoff's Motors showroom, and the former Hawth Garden Centre.

The proposed development will include the demolition of all structures on site (c.8,162sqm GFA) and excavation of a basement. The proposed development comprises of the provision of a mixed-use development of residential, retail/restaurant/cafe uses and a creche in 4 no. blocks (A to D), over part basement. Blocks A, B, C and D with a height up to a maximum of seven storeys of apartments over lower ground floor and basement car parking levels (a total of eight storeys over basement level). The residential component will consist of 512 no. residential units. The proposed development includes the provision of two vehicular entrances on to Hawth Road, excavation of basement to provide for car parking, plant, waste storage and ancillary use. Additional car parking spaces shall be provided at lower ground floor level. A total of 439 no. car parking spaces and 1,335 no. bicycle parking spaces, including 49 no. bicycle spaces to cater for the retail units and creche shall be provided. One vehicular access is located at Block A, serving car parking spaces. The second is at Block C, providing access to the basement, residential and retail parking, and a service area for the retail units. A service route will be provided along part of the northern perimeter of the site with access from the western end of the site at a junction with Hawth Road and at the main vehicular entrance at Block C;

A publicly accessible walkway/cycleway to the north of the site shall be provided at podium level. A civic plaza will be provided between Blocks D and C, and a landscaped park to the west of Block A. A channel to the sea for the Bloody Stream with associated riparian strip shall be incorporated as a feature within a designed open space between Blocks A and B. Communal gardens will be provided for Blocks A, B and C;

The residential component consists of 512 no. residential units, which includes 4 no. studio, 222 no. one bed, 276 no. two bed, 10 no. three bed apartments, and communal facilities of 708 sqm. Ground floor units onto the Hawth Road will have own door access. The units will be served by balconies or terraces on all elevations;

Block A, with a maximum height of seven storeys of apartments over lower ground level car park (a total of eight storeys), will provide for 234 residential units, with residents' amenities to include a gym, residents' lounge, residents' support office, and 2 no. residents' multi-purpose rooms. Block B, with a maximum height of seven

storeys of apartments over lower ground floor and basement car park (a total of eight storeys over basement), shall provide for 154 no. units, residents' lounge, residents' multi-purpose room, and creche of 236 sqm with outdoor play area. Own door access will be provided at ground floor. Block C, with a maximum height of seven storeys over basement car parking (a total of seven storeys) will provide for 83 no. residential units in two wings over a retail unit and Block D, with a maximum of 6 storeys over basement, shall provide for 41 no. residential units over retail units;

The commercial component in Blocks C and D consists of 4 no. units with 2,637 sqm gross floor area. In Block C, it consists of a 1,705 sqm anchor unit, accessed from the civic plaza. In Block D, it consists of a restaurant (243 sqm) and retail unit (603 sqm) and café (86 sqm). The restaurant and retail units are accessed from Hawth Road, and the café is accessed from the upper level of the civic plaza.

The proposed development includes the provision of public and communal open space, green roofs, landscaping, boundary treatments, set down locations, substations, meter rooms, waste management and all ancillary site works, including upgrading of the public paths along Hawth Road and relocation of bus stop in new setback with a bus shelter. Two set down areas are provided at either end of the site;

The gross floor area of the proposed development is 48,252 sqm (excluding enclosed car parking) on a site of 2.68 ha.

Conservation context

Record of Protected Structures

There are no protected structures within the application site. There are some protected structures within sight of the application site and with 100 metres including:

556	Howth Castle	Medieval castle (with later additions and alterations) including wings, towers, stables and 19 th century entrance gates
558	Former station master's house	Mid-19 th century former station master's house
559	Howth Railway Station	Mid-19 th century railway station, signal box
594	St Mary's Church (C of I)	Gothic-style mid-19 th -century Church of Ireland Church, with spire

These protected structures are indicated on the map below by the yellow disks, in which the reference numbers are shown.

Conservation areas

There are two architectural conservation areas (ACAs) in the vicinity of the application site. To the south, on the opposite side of Howth Road, is the Howth Castle Demesne ACA, which extends to the road frontage on the southern side of the road. To the east is the Howth Historic Core ACA, which is at a distance from the site. The ACAs are indicated by the broken purple lines in the map below, which is a detail of sheet 10 of the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023.



Figure 1: Detail of development plan map, sheet 10

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) carried out its survey relating to the Fingal area in 2000 and the results have been published. The survey included each of the four protected structures in the vicinity of the application site in addition to some other structures. The structures in the vicinity of the site are as follows, with their reference numbers:

11358054	Howth Castle	Howth Castle. [note that various constituent parts of the castle are listed individually in the NIAH but are at a distance from the application site.]
11358027	Howth Castle	Entrance gateway
11359001	Howth Road	Former station master's house
11359004	Howth Road	Howth Station
11358026	Howth Road	St Mary's Church of Ireland Church
11359002	Howth Road	Single-arch bridge

Building survey

The application site is on the northern side of Howth Road, to the west of Howth Station and lies between Howth Road and the DART railway line.



Plate 1: Industrial buildings in the central part of the application site

The application site is entirely on land that was reclaimed from the sea after the construction of the railway line to Howth, which was laid down in 1846 and completed in 1847. The section of Howth Road that runs to the front of the site was laid out in about 1810 as part of the construction of Howth Harbour, the previous Howth Road being the one that rises from the entrance to Howth Castle, passing the front of St Mary's Church and originally connecting to Dunro Hill.



Plate 2: Commercial buildings at eastern end of application site

Howth Castle



Plate 3: Howth Castle

Howth Castle, with its associated stables and other structures is an extensive range of buildings for the most part constructed with stone. The main walling is of rubble stone and with detailing, such as string courses, window surrounds and crenellation finished with dressed stone. The style is Gothic, with turrets, towers, battlements and other features of the genre. The castle dates from medieval times, and has been altered and added to at various times up to the nineteenth century.



Plate 4: Howth Castle

The castle is a protected structure and is located within the Howth Castle Demesne ACA. Howth Castle is more than 100 metres from the application site but is included in this assessment as it is of national significance.

Howth Castle gates



Plate 5: Gates to Howth Castle

The present gateway to Howth Castle dates from the nineteenth century, circa 1810. The gateway consists of four piers faced with engaged columns, each with a decorative capital. The gateway has a central vehicular entrance, with wrought-iron gates and there are pedestrian gates on either side, spanned by gothic arches; the pedestrian gates are also of wrought iron.



Plate 6: Approach towards gates from Howth Castle

The gateway is a protected structure and is located within the Howth Castle Demesne ACA. It is set back from the public road, part of the way up the driveway to Howth Castle. Within the gates the driveway curves towards the east and is lined with trees and with a wall of brick and stone on the eastern side.

Former station master's house



Plate 7: Station master's house

The former station master's house associated with Howth station is to the west of the station and the former tramway viaduct. The house is two-storey and three-bay and is faced with red brick, with buff-coloured brick quoins and arches. The roof is gable-ended, with an overhang and there is a gablet over the centre of the eastern façade. The house is a protected structure.



Plate 8: Gable end of station master's house

The house is set at an angle to the road. The original alignment of the public road included a double curve that was straightened in the twentieth century, leaving the house no longer facing the street.

Howth railway station



Plate 9: Howth railway station

The railway station at Howth is a protected structure. It is a long two-storey building facing Harbour Road. It has a central breakfront with the main entrance at the upper level, approached by a flight of stairs. The façade is rendered and painted. The station was completed in 1847 to replace a temporary station opened the previous year.



Plate 10: Howth railway station, seen from the platform

On the track side, the station is single-storey and faced with buff-coloured brick. The down platform is protected by a timber canopy supported on cast-iron columns and with pierced cast-iron brackets. The station is more than 100 metres from the application site, but is included as the protected structure includes the signal box that is described below.

Howth Railway Station signal box



Plate 11: Signal box at Howth Railway Station

To the west of Howth Station, on the southern side of the DART line and adjacent to the northern boundary of the application site there is a signal box. This is set on a high brick plinth and is faced with shiplapped timber. The roof is gabled, with decorative barge boards and with finials at the apex. The northern side and half of the eastern and western ends have large windows.

St Mary's Church



Plate 12: St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church is a protected structure and is located within the Howth Castle Demesne ACA. It was built in the mid-1860s to the designs of James Edward Rogers. The site had been in use for a longer period and the present church replaced an earlier church that had been built in 1816. That church, in turn, was a replacement for a church on a site further up the hill close to Howth Castle.



Plate 13: St Mary's Church, seen from approach road

The church is built with rock-faced limestone and with decorative elements of granite and sandstone. The most striking feature is the tower, which was raised in height in the 1890s to improve the visibility and proportions of the church.

Tram viaduct



Plate 14: Northern side of tram viaduct

The Hill of Howth tramway opened in 1901 and ran from Sutton railway station around the summit of the hill of Howth, in an anti-clockwise direction, descending to run alongside the main railway line westwards from Howth railway station. The tram crossed Harbour Road/Howth Road on a viaduct, with a bridge spanning the road and a brick railway arch on the northern side of the road. The tramway ceased to operate in 1959, following which the bridge over the road was removed.



Plate 15: Northern side of tram viaduct with Howth Station at rear

The tram viaduct is not a protected structure. The tramway arch on the northern side of the road is included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

Howth Castle Demesne ACA



Plate 16: View through gateway to Howth Castle

The Howth Castle Demesne ACA includes the lands surrounding Howth Castle and extends over a wide area. This area includes the southern side of Howth Road opposite the application site. The northern part of Howth Castle Demesne has a dense tree cover and the trees run down the driveway towards the castle gate. The view of the gate and the land beyond is seen in the view above.



Plate 17: Northern end of Howth Castle Demesne ACA

Along the northern perimeter of the ACA there is a belt of trees. The roadway approaching St Mary's Church runs uphill inside this belt of trees. The area around the entrance to Howth Castle has no trees at the roadside, though there are trees further up the hill near the gate.

Howth Historic Core ACA



Plate 18: View towards site from Howth Historic Core ACA

The Howth Historic Core ACA covers the heart of the urban area of Howth. At its western extremity the ACA reaches slightly westward from the junction of Harbour Road and Church Street. The photograph above shows the view towards the site from that point.



Plate 19: View towards site from Dunro Hill

The Howth Historic Core ACA includes properties on the upper level, above the harbour at Dunro Hill. The photograph above shows the view from Dunro Hill towards the application site.

Appraisal

The potential impact on the historic built environment arising from the proposed development would have its focus on the protected structures and on the two ACAs. Each of the protected structures and the two ACAs is considered below, with an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal.

Howth Castle

Howth Castle is separated from the application site by a distance of approximately 250 metres. Within that space there is extensive tree cover, while the application site is at a significantly lower level than the castle, ensuring that the development could not be seen from the castle. The castle has two vistas – the entrance front faces slightly to the north of due east and that view is funnelled through tree cover on either side with the result that the application site would not be seen from that angle. The garden front of the castle faces southward over the rising ground of the golf course. The northern side of the castle is a curtain wall that encloses the stable yard, and which has no windows. This side faces into the trees to the north. It is clear from this layout of the castle that the application site and the proposed development would not be visible from the castle and hence there would be no impact on the character of the protected structure, while the separation between the site and the castle ensures that there would be no impact on the setting.

Howth Castle gateway

The gateway to Howth Castle is at a distance of approximately ninety metres from the nearest point of the application site. The approach to the gateway from Howth Road is the principal point from which the gateway is seen as the principal purpose of a finely sculpted gateway such as this is to impress the visitor who approaches the property. The next most important element is the detail of the design and sculpting of the stonework. The approach from Howth Road, on the northern side of the gates is along a broad avenue flanked with trees, a wall and shrubs. There would be no impact on the setting as seen on the approach to the gateway from this side as the proposed development would be behind the viewer and out of sight.

The appreciation of the design and sculpting of the gateway is best experienced from close proximity and the presence of a building of any kind at a distance of 90 metres would have no impact on this appreciation.

The approach to the gateway from the southern side is via a curved avenue, diminishing the impact of the approach, while the gateway is partly obscured by vegetation. There would be a slight long-term negative impact when seen from the south, as the proposed development would only come into view as the viewer approached close to the gateway and the gateway is partly obscured by vegetation when seen from this side.

Former station master's house

The former station master's house is the closest protected structure to the application site, standing some twelve metres from the eastern end of the site. However, the nearest building to the protected structure would be Block D, which

is set back significantly from the road frontage above ground-floor level. The nearest point of Block D to the former station master's house would be at a distance of approximately 24 metres, though this would not be in a direct line to the rear or side of the protected structure but set at an angle to the north-west. Being set back, this element is less visible in the street view. The part of the building closest to the former station master's house will be four-storey, while the remainder, at a distance of about 33.5 metres from the house, will be six-storey. Beyond block D, to the west, block C is to rise to six-storey in the eastern part and seven-storey to the west, while blocks A and B, at a further distance would also rise to seven-storey.

The effect of the proposed development would be to create a new street frontage to the west of the former station master's house, with the height rising gradually as the distance from the protected structure increases. The impact would change the character of the landscape beyond the station master's house, but by creating this new building line would bring the house into the streetscape in a way that would incorporate it. The angle of the protected structure to the street is unusual, as was noted in the survey above, and this ensures that the proposed buildings would be neither in a direct line to the rear nor to the side. The impact on the setting of the protected structure would be a moderate long-term negative effect, as the alteration to the character of the environment would be consistent with emerging trends.

Howth Railway Station

Howth railway station is set back from the public road. To the west the station forecourt is closed off by the ramp leading to the former tramway viaduct, while beyond this is the station master's house. The focus of the railway station is on its forecourt and the proposed development would not impinge in any way on this setting or on the character of the station building.

On the platform side of the station building it would be possible to see the proposed apartment buildings running westward. However, the setting of the railway station does not depend on the character of the lands to the west and the proposed development would have no significant impact on the character or setting of the railway station.

Howth Railway Station signal box

The signal box associated with Howth Railway Station is part of the protected structure that encompasses the station building. The signal box is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the application site. It lies just beyond the eastern end of the station platforms and while it has a functional relationship with the station this does not extend to the visual element, as it is not built with the same materials and is in a different style. Signal boxes, by their nature, tend to be solitary structures and are not sensitive to their settings, other than the expectation that they would be located adjacent to the railway track.

The layout of the proposed development is such that the signal box would be located adjacent to the open area between blocks C and D. This ensures that there would not be a high building directly adjacent to the signal box. As signal boxes are not sensitive to the presence or nature of buildings on the adjoining land

the proposed development the impact on the protected structure would be a slight long-term positive effect. The buildings on the application site at present are of visually poor quality and their replacement with a well-designed and well-landscaped development would improve the setting of the signal box.

St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church is located directly to the south of the application site and is separated from it by a distance of just over sixty metres. Within that space there is a high tree-covered bank, with the former roadway that now gives access to the church located between the bank and the churchyard. It will be possible to see the upper part of the proposed buildings from within the churchyard in the view of the church from the south, which would reveal the proposed buildings rising slightly above the trees to the north of the church. The proposed buildings would be at a distance of 100 metres and more from that viewing point. Within the rest of the church grounds the buildings will be visible when seen through the trees in winter, though this will not be significant.

The proposed development will have a moderate long-term negative impact on the setting of the church. The separation between the church building and the proposed development and the belt of trees, with the rise in land will all ensure that the magnitude of the impact is not greater.

Single-span arch in tramway viaduct

The remnants of the viaduct of the former Hill of Howth Tramway is on the northern side of the road to the west of the railway station. This structure is not such as to have a setting or to be sensitive to its surroundings. At present there are substantial advertising hoardings on the structure. It is not considered that the proposed development would have any impact on the character of this viaduct or the brick arch that runs through it.

Howth Historic Core ACA

As has been demonstrated in the two photographs above, the Howth Historic Core ACA is at such a remove from the application site and is separated from it by buildings and topography, that the proposed development would have no impact on the character of the ACA.

Howth Castle Demesne ACA

The core of the Howth Demesne ACA is separated from the application site by a belt of trees and the rise in level that occurs to the south of Howth Road. The small areas of land adjacent to Howth Road that are within the ACA are of lesser significance than the demesne itself. The proposed development will be visible from parts of the ACA and hence there will be some level of impact. As this is in line with emerging trends the impact would be moderate.

Conclusion

The examination of the potential impact of the proposed development on architectural heritage has shown that the effect would range from no impact to moderate impact. The placing of a new development within an area that has been zoned for development will always result in changes to the character of the area. The key issue is whether these changes are within acceptable limits and in this instance the analysis has shown that the impacts would be in keeping with emerging trends and would not have damaging effects on architectural heritage.