

# Proposed Strategic Housing Residential Development

## 'Kenelm', Deer Park, Howth, Co. Dublin

Submission to An Bord Pleanála

Urban Design Statement



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# Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Policy & Guidelines
  - 2.1 Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines, 2011
  - 2.2 Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015
  - 2.3 International Charters and Conventions
  - 2.4 The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
  - 2.5 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023
    - 2.5.1 Record of Protected Structures
    - 2.5.2 Designed Landscapes - Historic Gardens, Demesnes & Country Estates
    - 2.5.3 Development within the curtilage of protected structures
    - 2.5.4 Relevant Conservation Objectives
3. The Proposed Development Site
4. Howth Castle Demesne
  - 4.1 Demesne Wall
  - 4.2 Landscaping
  - 4.3 Howth Castle ACA & Record of Protected Structures
    - 4.3.1 Curtilage
    - 4.3.2 Attendant Grounds
  - 4.4 Views & Vistas
5. Conservation Approach
  - 5.1 Key Heritage Objectives
  - 5.2 Conservation Strategy
  - 5.3 Proposed Physical Interventions to Demesne Wall
  - 5.4 Mitigation Measures
    - 5.4.1 Design
    - 5.4.2 Demesne Wall
  - 5.5 Proportionate Decision Making
6. Implementation
7. Conclusion

**01**

# Introduction

# 01 Introduction

*“For each local situation a balance is reached between preservation and protection of urban heritage, economic development, functionality and liveability of a city. Thus the needs of current inhabitants are responded to while sustainably enhancing the city’s natural and cultural resources for future generations”.*

*Unesco (2013) – New life for historic cities*

The *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2018) state at para. 2.8

*“Historic environments can be sensitive to large scale and tall buildings. In that context, Planning Authorities must determine if increased height buildings are an appropriate typology or not in particular settings. An Initial assessment of the existing character and setting of a place will assist in a robust framework for decision-making that will facilitate increases in building height and involve an integrated understanding of place. With regards to large-scale and tall buildings in historic urban areas, an examination of the existing character of a place can assist planning authorities, and others to:*

- establish the sensitivities of a place and its capacity for development or change and;*
- define opportunities for new development and inform its design.”*

It is a requirement of the Guidelines that in order to consider proposals in an integrated and informed way, an **Urban Design Statement** along with a specific **Architectural Design Statement** on the individual development proposal.

This **Urban Design Statement** focusses on addressing aspects of impact on the historic built environment. It should be read together with the **Architectural Design Statement** submitted under separate cover which focusses on overarching urban design principles in accordance with the 2009 *Best Practice Urban Design Manual*.

Other related supporting information included with this application that should be referenced are;

- Architectural Impact Assessment Report - Slattery Conservation
- Cultural Heritage: Built Heritage - Chapter 15 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report
- Method Statement - Conservation of Demesne Wall (appended to the Construction Environmental Management Plan)
- Response to An Bord Pleanála Opinion

# **Policy & Guidelines**

# 02 Policy & Guidelines

## 2.1 Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011

The statutory *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines* and the Advice Series issued by the Department of Arts Heritage Gaeltacht under Section 28 and Section 52 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) offers guidelines for planning authorities concerning development objectives and also contains detailed guidance to support them in protecting the architectural heritage.

While the guidelines do not purport to be a legal interpretation of the conventions, acts, regulations or procedures mentioned therein, their aim is to assist planners and others in understanding the current guiding principles of conservation and restoration.

Policy relating to development proposals in the vicinity of protected structures is included in section 13.7, *Development within the Attendant Grounds* and states that in advance of any planning application a study identifying the significance of the site and its ability to accept change and development and those areas which could not without damaging the architectural heritage of the place should be undertaken.

Section 13.8 *Other development affecting the setting of a Protected Structure or an Architectural Conservation Area* and states that consideration should be given as if the development were actually located within the attendant grounds. Proposals should not have an adverse effect on the special interest of a Protected Structure.

The extent of potential impact will also be dependent on the quality of the Protected Structure, its designed landscape and setting.

The alteration of boundary walls to facilitate off-street carparking may sometimes seem minor; however the cumulative effect of a number of such incremental changes can have a disproportionately negative effect on the character of a group of protected structures and on the character of an ACA.

## 2.2 Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015

The Government Policy on Architecture as launched in 2009 provides the appropriate framework for architectural policy up to 2015 and beyond and is led centrally by Built Heritage, Architectural Policy and Strategic Infrastructure Section. The policy places an emphasis on sustainable development of the environment and urban design, incorporates architectural heritage in a holistic, integrated manner, and encourages and supports high quality modern architecture.

## 2.3 International Charters and Conventions

- The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice 1964).
- Granada Convention 1984 Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and urban areas (Washington Charter - 1987).
- Valetta Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992.
- The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), advisory body to UNESCO concerning protection of sites and recommendation, 1992.
- The Burra Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 1999.
- Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe ratified by Ireland 1997.
- Riga Charter 2000. Joint ICOMOS-TICCIH Principles for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage Sites, Structures, Areas and Landscapes (The Dublin Principles), 2011.

Conservation philosophy has been somewhat changed by the emergence of the unifying concept of cultural significance initially suggested by the Burra Charter as places; *'likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations'*.

## 2.4 The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

The *National Inventory of Architectural Heritage* compiled by the Department Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) provides an online register of historic buildings and features/street furniture that have been identified as having architectural interest, and is maintained by the DAHG's architectural section. Buildings identified on the inventory are not necessarily included on the current Record of Protected Structures.

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage website ([www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie)) includes entries for Howth Castle and buildings within the demesne. Howth Castle has been identified by the NIAH as a building of national importance, while St. Marys Church is of regional significance.

# 02 Policy & Guidelines

## 2.5 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

### 2.5.1 Record of Protected Structures

The Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 is the operative plan for the area and it includes a commitment to the protection and conservation of buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of archaeological, architectural, historical, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

A statement of policy provides the following strategic approach to protecting and enhancing the architectural heritage of the county

*'...through the identification of Protected Structures, the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), the safeguarding of designed landscapes and historic gardens, and the recognition of structures and elements that contribute positively to the vernacular and industrial heritage of the County.'*

The Plan contains advice on the design of new developments within historic demesnes.

It is Fingal County Council policy to include those structures that possess such special interest in the Record of Protected Structures. Howth Castle is listed as a Protected Structure. The Plan includes objectives for the protection of listed buildings and Architectural Conservation Areas.

The Act (as amended) Section 81(1) requires that a Development Plan shall include an objective to : Preserve the character of a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that –

- (a) is of special architectural, scientific, social or technical interest or value or
- (b) contributes to the appreciation of protected structures, if the planning authority is of the opinion that its inclusion is necessary for the preservation of the character of the place, area, group of structures or townscape concerned and any such place, area, group of structures or townscape shall be known as and is in this Act referred to as an 'architectural conservation area'.

The necessity to manage change when dealing with heritage in order to retain its significance is well established conservation practice and is the driving force behind the listing of buildings of special interest.

The Record of Protected Structure of the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 provides the statutory context for assessing new developments within the county and includes the following descriptions of protected structures at Howth demesne:

- Protected structure (ref 556) – Howth Castle, Howth Demesne, Dublin 13
- Mediaeval castle (with later additions and alterations) including wings, towers, stables and 19th century entrance gates.
- Protected structure (ref 557) – Grounds of Howth Castle, Howth Demesne, Dublin 13
- Ruins of mediaeval chapel in grounds of Howth Castle located close to the entrance of Howth Castle the Church of Ireland building is also protected :
- Protected structure (ref 594) – St Mary's Church Howth Road, Howth Demesne, Dublin 13 Gothic style, mid nineteenth century Church of Ireland church with spire

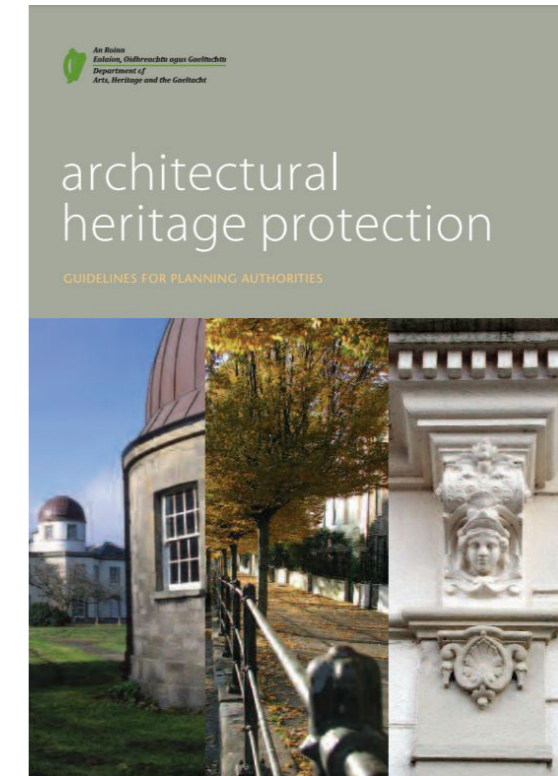
The demesne also contains Recorded Monuments :

- DUO15-025 ---- Castle Tower house
- DUO15-026 ---- Chapel
- DUO15-027001--- Castle tower house
- DUO15-027002 --- Gatehouse
- DUO15-027003--- Armorial plaque (present location)

### 2.5.2 Designed Landscapes - Historic Gardens, Demesnes & Country Estates

*'There has been substantial pressure in recent years on former country estates or historic demesnes for development, frequently drawn up without a proper appraisal of the impact on the designed landscape or a determination of the carrying capacity of the lands. The proposals can be in the form of a one-off extensive redevelopment of the historic demesne or a series of smaller schemes. With the latter the cumulative impact of each additional element needs to be considered as when combined can result in an incremental but significant transformation of the landscape.'*

- Development should be sensitive of the relationship between the principal residence and its adjoining lands and should not sever this.
- The sub-division of demesnes into different land parcels should be avoided.
- Care needs to be taken that significant views or





# 02 Policy & Guidelines

*vistas looking out of the designed landscape or into it are not encroached upon by development outside of its boundaries.*

*Generally the principal residence within a demesne or designed landscape is a Protected Structure, and often some of the buildings serving it are also protected. It should be noted that many of the larger demesnes in Fingal have been designated as Architectural Conservation Areas. Designed landscapes also provide habitats for many species of flora and fauna and the implications of any proposal for the natural heritage need to be carefully considered.*

*Large properties like country estates, institutional complexes, and industrial sites can have extensive grounds that contain a number of additional structures within their curtilage or attendant grounds which have a functional connection or historical relationship with the principal building. The location of these structures and the laying out of the lands were often deliberately designed to complement the appearance of the Protected Structure or to assist in its function. Therefore, the setting of a Protected Structure may contribute significantly to its special character.'*

## 2.5.3 Development Within The Curtilage of Protected Structures

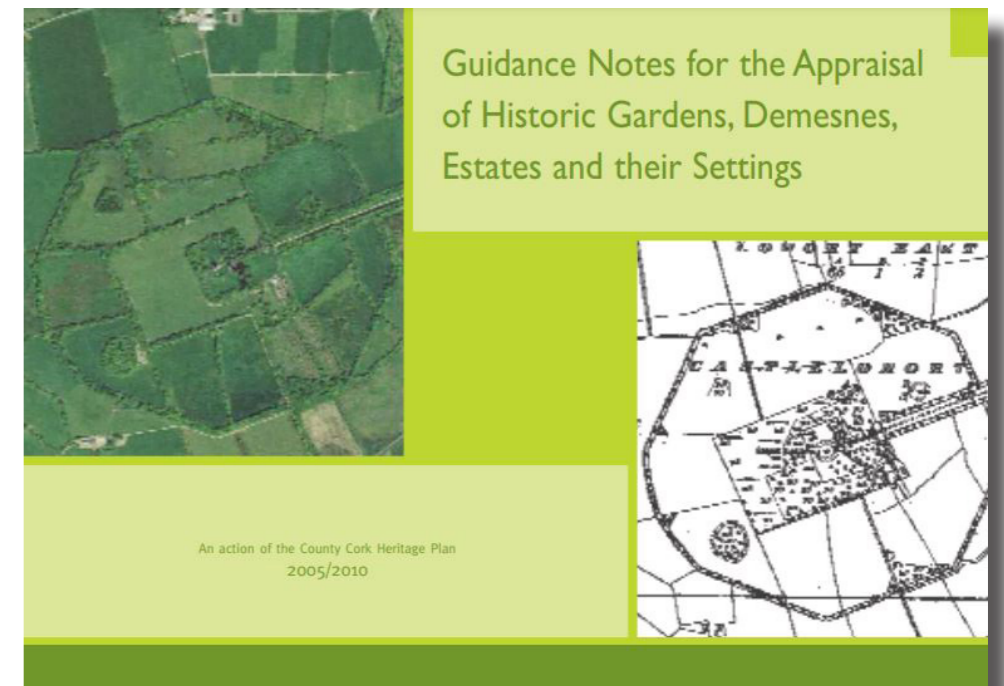
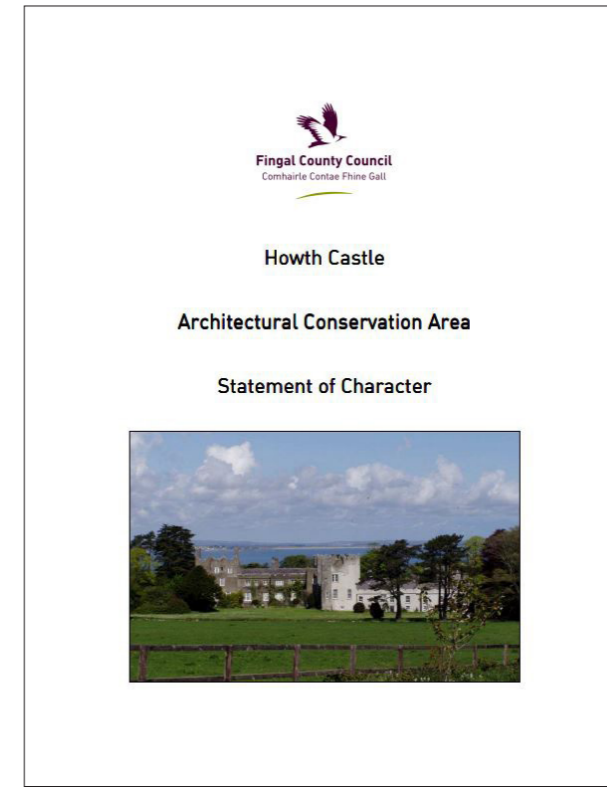
*'A sensitive design approach is also required for development that adjoins or is in close proximity to a Protected Structure as it could have a detrimental visual impact on it, adversely affecting its setting and amenity. The scale, height, massing, building line, proportions, alignment and materials of any development proposed within the curtilage, attendant grounds or in close proximity to a Protected Structure need to respect and compliment the structure and its setting.'*

## 2.5.4 Relevant Conservation Objectives

- Objective HOWTH1 - Ensure that development respects the special historic and architectural character of the area.
- OBJ CH20 - Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a Protected Structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, materials, impact on architectural or historic

features, and junction with the existing Protected Structure.

- OBJ CH21 ACA – Howth Castle demesne A protected structure within an ACA protection 'extends to the interior and curtilage of these properties'
- OBJ CH32 Avoid the removal of structures and distinctive elements (such as boundary treatments, street furniture, paving and landscaping) that positively contribute to the character of an Architectural Conservation Area.
- OBJ CH45 Utilise existing surveys to identify and evaluate the surviving historic designed landscapes in Fingal and promote the conservation of their essential character, both built and natural.
- OBJ CH46 Require that proposals for development within historic designed landscapes include an appraisal of the designed landscape (including an ecological assessment) prior to the initial design of any development, in order for this evaluation to inform the design which must be sensitive to and respect the built heritage elements and green space values of the site.
- OBJ DMS157 Ensure that any new development or alteration of a building within or adjoining an ACA positively enhances the character of the area and is appropriate in terms of the proposed design, including: scale, mass, height, proportions, density, layout, materials, plot ratio, and building lines.
- OBJ DMS159 A Designed Landscape Appraisal should accompany any development proposal for an historic demesne and/or designed landscape, to include:
  - › Identification and description of the original development, history, structures, features and boundaries of the designed landscape.
  - › Ecological assessment, including identification of any protected habitats or species.
  - › Evaluation of the significance of the historical landscape.
  - › Determination of the carrying capacity of the lands which should not be exceeded, to be agreed with the Council.
  - › Assessment of the development proposal and its impact on the designed landscape.
  - › Recommendations for mitigation and management of the built and natural heritage.



# The Proposed Development Site

# 03 The Proposed Development Site

The site is comprised of a large field, on the south side of the Howth Road, and a small portion of the Deerpark golf course to the rear/south of the field. The field slopes down towards the road. It has approx.130m road frontage but is set back from the road behind a green verge (with footpath) that widens towards the east where there is a copse of trees outside its north east corner.

The site is enclosed along the roadside boundary by an approximately 3.5m stone wall, a typical demesne boundary wall. The upper section of the wall is thought to be a later addition, see reports prepared by the project conservation architect, Slattery Conservation, included under separate cover.

The ecological survey of the site (see Biodiversity Chapter of EIA) included an examination of the demesne boundary wall and reports that;

*“it is entirely obscured by growth of ivy Hedera helix, which has developed into a dense bush on top of much of the wall. Butterfly bush Buddleja davidii has also colonised sections of wall in the north-west corner, and sycamore Acer pseudoplatanus has taken foot in cracks in the wall along the northern boundary. Floristically, the stone wall is not particularly unusual in the context of the locality, however it supports a range of fauna species. It has been valued as local importance (lower value) for its floristic interest.”*

*“Some narrow cracks were visible and inspected with an endoscope device, with no signs or evidence of roosting bats detected. It is likely to be of low suitability for roosting bats. It contains some cracks and crevices, but no large cavities that could accommodate larger numbers of bats. Nonetheless, the wall contains a few suitable cracks (some of which may be obscured by ivy), which may be exploited by bats as a day roost on occasion.”*

There is a modern wall along part of the west boundary where the site borders on two residential properties.

Along the southern boundary of the site there is a belt of maturing trees approx. 25 years old, part of the framework of woodland that encloses the Deer Park golf course. The age of this tree belt is confirmed in aerial photography of the site accessible at heritagemaps.ie.

The site includes a triangular area beyond this belt of trees – an area currently occupied by part of a fairway and green associated with the golf course.

To the east of the site there is a mature woodland belt alongside the avenue that leads to Howth Castle and the golf club. Most of the trees are outside the site boundary



Proposed Development Site and Immediate Context



Northern boundary stone wall, obscured by scrub vegetation.

but their canopies overhang the site.

The neighbouring lands include:

- to the north across the Howth Road - between the road and the DART line along the coast - a public park (Baltray Park), and the extensive Techrete factory, now disused and the site of the permitted Claremont mixed use Strategic Housing Development which extends to the town centre 500m to the east;
- to the west, a corridor of low density housing on both

sides of the Howth Road;

- to the south, the Deer Park Golf Club and Howth Castle (protected structure), including an extensive area of historic demesne woodland surrounding the castle, and the National Transport Museum housed in a complex of outbuildings near the castle;
- to the east, the entrance gates (protected structure) and main access road to Howth Castle and Deerpark Golf Club, and beyond that St Mary's Church (protected structure), surrounded by historic demesne woodland.

# Howth Castle Demesne

# 04 Howth Castle Demesne

The demesne has at its focus Howth Castle, a significant castle complex dating from the fifteenth century, a unique family seat overlooking the Irish sea and Ireland's Eye. The setting of the building, beyond its curtilage, requires careful management of any significant change.

It is a portion of the original Deer Park, lying between the castle and the Howth Road, that is the subject site of the development proposals. The Ordnance Survey map of 1847 shows this as an area, originally part of the Deer Park, cleared of trees and with a perimeter track for horse racing.

## 4.1 Demesne Wall

A boundary wall defines the extent and grandeur of an estate with a public announcement to the outside world. Beside the main entrance the demesne wall originally followed the seashore but since then it has been infilled with the railway tracks into Howth. The demesne wall which enclosed the Deer Park followed the land boundary of the Castle and what is now the Howth Road between Sutton Cross and the town and enclosed Corr Castle. Along the road very little remains of the original wall on this stretch of the road due to the development of houses.

The wall is constructed in a simple random rubble construction using locally available limestone. The section that bounds the site on the Howth Road was a boundary wall to the Deer Park. A considerable height would have been required in order to stop the deer from escaping. It later enclosed the race course.

Only the lower section is of historic construction. The precise age of the wall is difficult to ascertain as the materials and methods of construction changed little over centuries. The later stonework is clearly identifiable within the upper portion of the wall as the random rubble stonework blends into a section constructed with larger stones in more varied tones. A considerable amount of repointing has been carried out with a cement based mortar.

Rebuilding and repairs can be identified where different mortars were used but this type of wall construction changed little over centuries.

Parts of the wall are covered with ivy and until it has been fully removed the condition of the underlying structure cannot be fully assessed. Ivy roots have embedded within joints and these require careful removal so as to do no further damage. Natural erosion of mortar can be seen

between some stones and generally the wall appears in sound condition.

At the location of the proposed residential development, the wall height varies, this overall height increased by the supporting bank. The construction is simple and no architect is identified with the work.

The boundary walls of the Howth Demesne, including the northern boundary wall of the subject site, are included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Reg. Ref. 11358027. This record refers to the Entrance Gateway, Walls and Railings to the Castle Demesne from the Howth Road. The rating assigned is Regional and the identified categories of special interest are, architectural and artistic.

The description provided in the NIAH record reads:

*Entrance gateway, c.1835, comprising four Hindu Gothic style limestone ashlar piers with friezes and moulded cappings, flanked by pedestrian gateways. Cast-iron gates and railings. Secondary gateway to rear with cast-iron bollards. WALLS: Limestone ashlar to pedestrian gateways; undulating profiles to piers; moulded capping (broken in parts). OPENINGS: Pointed-arch to pedestrian gateways; cast-iron gates and double gates.*

The northern boundary wall on the subject site does not fit this description, and is constructed of rubble limestone rather than ashlar.



Ordnance Survey Map 1847



Existing View of Demesne Wall (Right of Image)



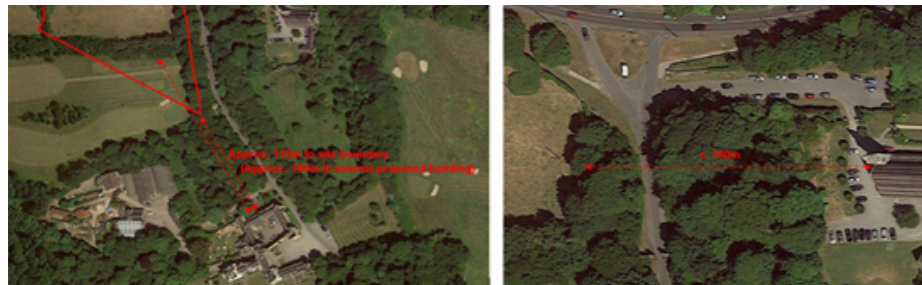
# 04 Howth Castle Demesne

## 4.2 Landscaping

Tree planting was a symbol of the landlord class that particularly flourished from the end of the eighteenth century until the mid nineteenth century famines. Encouraged by the Royal Dublin Society, the patron of tree planting, improving landlords planted one third of a million acres of hardwoods.

The woodlands at Howth were man made. Located west of the castle they were laid out in the French *foret ornee* style with axial avenues cutting through the trees and a boundary walk separating the designed landscape from the countryside. Apart from ornamenting the estate, the woods shielded the castle and produced income. On the deep soil of the lower slopes of the hill oak woodland would once have been the main vegetation. Other than individual specimens, trees and woodland were always intended to be part of a regime of felling and replanting.

Woodlands now conceal the castle buildings from the parkland and views on both of its principal fronts and the golf course now encompasses most of the former demesne lands.



As early as 1790 Rhododendron was introduced at Howth and initially retained as a wind break. Celebrated still today, for its rhododendrons and flowering shrubs, the sub tropical garden is located to the south of the castle nestling at the foot of Muck Rock. The first major plantings were carried out c. 1850 and added to every year until 1909, the year of the incumbent Earl's death.

In the 1920s there were already about 1000 rhododendron and azalea, half species and half cultivars. A wonderful variety of sub tropical plants can be seen. The sheltered northern slope simulates the conditions in China and the Himalayas where these species thrive.



## 4.3 Howth Castle ACA & Record of Protected Structures

The Architectural Conservation Area extends from the Howth Road to just south of Howth Castle and includes St. Mary's Church, the formal gardens and old orchard to the castle, the ruins of an ancient church, the National Transport Museum complex, a large copse of trees to the west of the castle, as well as Howth Castle itself and adjoining outbuildings.

The ACA does not include the proposed development site. The boundary is immediately to the east and encompasses the tree belt that lines the avenue.

The Fingal Record of Protected Structures includes three

listings within the demesne of Howth Castle;

1. RPS No.0556 Howth Castle - Medieval castle (with later additions and alterations) including wings, towers, stables and 19th century entrance gates
2. RPS No.0557 Church (ruin), medieval chapel in grounds of Howth Castle.
3. RPS No.0594 St. Mary's Church (C of I) Howth Demesne, Gothic-style mid 19th century Church of Ireland church with spire.



# 04 Howth Castle Demesne

## 4.3.1 Curtilage

Planning legislation gives protection to buildings included in the 'Record of Protected Structures', including its 'Curtilage', the area of ground that is directly connected with the functioning or inhabitation of the structure.

This protection recognises that buildings create places, through the zones of influence that surround them. It addresses the practical necessities of protecting the values of those places along with the building.

Curtilage has its limits and may alter over time, as the utilisation of the land around the principal structure changes.

In describing the existing built environment of the demesne, the Howth Castle Architectural Conservation Area Statement states that *'The landscaped elements of Howth Castle demesne, like the built fabric, have changed and evolved over the centuries and it is the current surviving features that contribute to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area, rather than any features*

*that existed in the past.'*

The rationale for the area captured in the ACA is described in the Statement;

*'As much of the demesne lands have been altered to accommodate the golf course and hotel complex, the boundary of the Howth Castle ACA is limited to a core area surrounding Howth Castle and the entrance avenue.'*

Given the above statement, the curtilage is considered restricted by the ACA boundary.

## 4.3.2 Attendant Grounds

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provides a definition of Attendant Grounds;

*"attendant grounds", in relation to a structure, includes land lying outside the curtilage of the structure"*

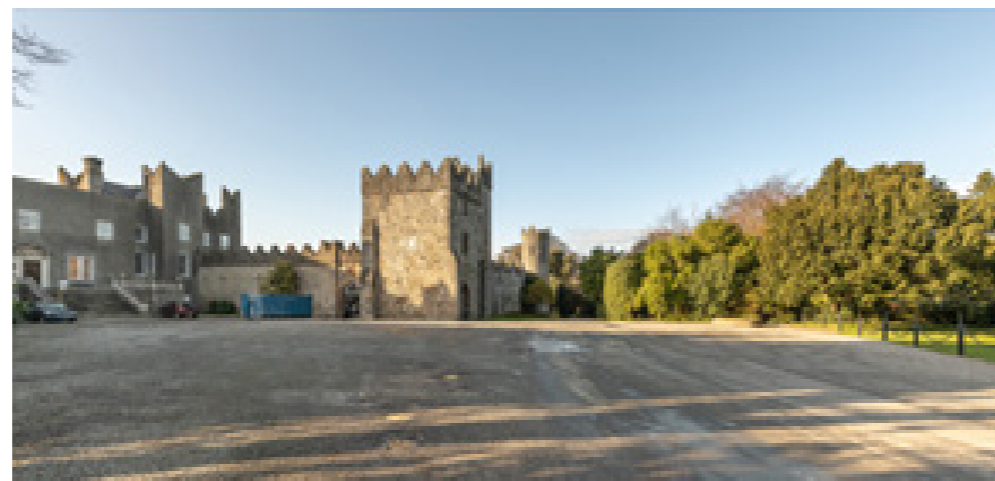
The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities provides the following description;

*"attendant grounds of a structure are lands outside the curtilage of the structure but which are associated with the structure and are intrinsic to its function, setting and/or appreciation"*

Features within the curtilage and attendant grounds of a protected structure can make a significant contribution to the character of that structure.

Ideally there should be reference to the boundary walls within the RPS or ACA. There is none and the wall doesn't seem to enjoy any such protection in fact. However, it is a fact that the wall is part of the historic construction and for the purpose of this application is considered to be within the attendant grounds.

**Although not protected, it is treated as such in this application and accordingly any interventions are limited in nature, sensitively designed, and, the opportunity to rehabilitate/consolidate the northern boundary wall will be used during the construction phase.**



# 04 Howth Castle Demesne

## 4.4 Views & Vistas

Many buildings and places are located within the setting of a heritage asset and there are few settings that will not be subject to some degree of change over time. While setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset. This is because the surroundings of a heritage asset will change over time, as can be clearly seen at Howth Castle where the original setting greatly differs from the present environs. It is inevitable that, over time views change, and new views and vistas will be introduced.

The ACA has identified significant views *'The principal views of note within the boundaries of the ACA are of Howth Castle itself. There are some views out of the ACA, namely from the entrance gates and from the castle over the golf course. These views contribute to the character of the area and it is important that new development within the ACA does not negatively impact on or obscure these views.'*

A historic view from Muck Rock *'From a bridle road leading to the summit of the hill is a fine panoramic view of the bay of Dublin with the numerous seats and villas on its shores, backed with the Dublin and Wicklow mountains.'* is seen on the Bartlef engraving.

A review of protected views presented in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023, those included in the ACA, engagement with the planning authority and professional opinion informed the selection of sensitive 'heritage views' that may be affected by the proposed development. The Figure below identifies the location of these views and the Table provides a description of each of the 11 no. views.

The site is located at the margins of the demesne nonetheless makes an important contribution to its historic character by historical association.

The visual envelope for the site extends beyond its immediate environs on account of the height and massing of the proposed development and the likely visual impact on the surroundings includes views from key vantage points which have been prepared by 3D Design Bureau and submitted with the application documentation.

The vista along the avenue from the castle is sensitive to any redevelopment proposals that occur in the background of the main entrance gates and to the definition of a new skyline arising from the proposed development.

The proposed development is located to the side rather than on the main access and this is a thoughtful design response, whereby the buildings include a generous set back from the eastern boundary, to eliminate any visual impact on this vista.

An important view taken from the Muck's rock has been featured in 1847 Bartlett print – A similar view from the elevated level of the golf club carpark has been included as there will be

an impact from the development in the background, although at considerable distance.

Other vantage points experience no change on account of distance and the intervening tree belts in the grounds of the castle.

The proposed development is in the vicinity of sensitive buildings, in particular Howth Castle and St Mary's Church. However, they are heavily screened by the existing mature woodland that surround them.

Views from the Howth Road in front of St Mary's Church to the west will experience the height and scale of the building elements proposed within the site. The views along Howth Road will change significantly with the development of the Claremont scheme on the Techrete site as illustrated in this image. Combined this proposal together with the Claremont scheme will result in urbanising effect on the road corridor at the gateway to the town.

### View Ref | Description

- 6** Howth Rd entry to Howth Castle demesne – View south
- 7** Howth Road alongside site - View east
- 11** St Mary's Church – View west
- 12** Exit From Howth Demesne – View north
- 13** Howth Castle grounds near 'Black Jack's well' – View northwest
- 14** Howth Castle east façade – View northwest
- 15** Howth Castle upper floor window – View north
- 16** Howth Castle outbuildings (National Transport Museum) – View north
- 17** Howth Castle grounds west of castle – A – View north
- 18** Howth Castle grounds west of castle – B – View north
- 19** Muck Rock – View north





# 04 Howth Castle Demesne



View 11 - Looking west from St. Mary's Church



View 19 – Proposed development nestled in amongst trees & Claremont development to the right



View 3 View looking west along Howth Road (Claremont to right & Proposed Development to left)



View 15 – Howth Castle, view from upper floor

# Conservation Approach

# 05 Conservation Approach



Southern Contiguous Elevation

## 5.1 Key Heritage Objectives

The key heritage objectives applied during the design development phase are outlined below.

- Appraise and evaluate the elements of heritage significance.
- Ascertain and communicate the architectural, urban and social values of the site and ensure appropriate integration within the proposed development to enable a distinctiveness of place and identity.
- Protect special interest of protected structures.
- Identify immediate conservation priorities and develop a coherent conservation strategy.
- Provide specific strategies for repair, intervention, adaption and extension to the demesne wall.
- Ensure architectural design approach to integrate historic, contemporary architecture and landscaping with an overall coherence and integrity.
- Respect existing context and scale.
- Record all surviving features of architectural, historical interest.
- Provide a salvage strategy for historic building materials.
- Have due regard to architectural policies, standards and objectives of Universal Access.

## 5.2 Conservation Strategy

This conservation strategy is underpinned by relevant International Charters and the policies and objectives of the Fingal Development Plan (2017- 2023) to which the development proposals have given due regard.

The design, as proposed, was developed to align with a conservation strategy that recognises and emphasises a significant heritage value and will have regard to the stated Key Heritage Objectives that have been specifically developed for this site.

The approach to the conservation follows the principles of research, understanding and analysis prior to any commencement of works in line with international conservation charters and all works will be carried out in accordance with the statutory guidelines and advices of the Department of the Arts Heritage and Gaeltacht.

The design is based on respect for the existing fabric and the least possible intervention.

There are sufficient elements of heritage remains and intrinsic character to make the site unique. The principal elements of heritage interest identified are;

- the historic origins of the site
- the presence of the historic demesne wall
- the proximity of the fine gateway to the castle, a protected structure of significant architectural merit.

The origins of the site were as a deer park followed by a race course that encircled a fifteenth century structure Corr Castle, now physically separated from the site by modern housing development.

Legibility is at the heart of the conservation strategy. The vision, layout and use strategy were developed and refined with ongoing input from conservation to the architectural and landscape designs and include site specific considerations.

A priority is the retention of historic legibility and authentic character within the new development in a manner that will enhance new spaces, engage with the local streetscape and in particular contribute a positive sense of place to the development within the context of the wider area.

The proposed development will have an impact on the character of the site and its environs. Protecting and enhancing the legacy ensures that it will be appreciated and enjoyed by many and this has underpinned the vision for the development, to create a new residential experience strongly linked both physically and evocatively with the demesne.

Following an informed character appraisal it has been a consistent imperative to test and align the design with the conservation strategy in order to protect the built heritage of the site, to integrate with the proposed development in a meaningful way, to assist in placemaking and most importantly to retain the heritage significance for future generations.

# 05 Conservation Approach

## 5.3 Proposed Interventions to Demesne Wall

The original purpose of site was that of a deer park. It consisted of a large field with clusters of trees, streams and bounded on one side by the demesne wall. It also contained Corr Castle. In 1829 the large field was turned into a racecourse by the third Earl of Howth. Between the field and Howth Road a section of the demesne wall remains.

It is proposed to create two openings in this wall to provide access to the residential site. An opening to the northwest in the existing wall is to be formed so as to create a vehicular entrance to the proposed development and there will be clear legibility between new and old. A secondary pedestrian entrance will be located (to the north east) in a position that will align with the most direct route to the railway station and Howth town centre.

The two openings will be elegantly framed in a simple and contemporary manner to announce and identify the entrances to the development, employing selected bronze-toned metal panels to complement the stone wall, and reference the zinc cladding used throughout the scheme. These openings will not be gated.

The removal of historic structural fabric (part of the demesne wall) is a significant intervention. However, as the wall forms an uninterrupted boundary to a proposed

residential development site that is zoned for residential development in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023, the provision of an opening is essential. The development proposals seek to minimise loss of the original wall and retain as much as possible of the structure whilst permitting access to the proposed residential development.

This section of demesne wall is at a considerable distance and not visible from the buildings or the landscaped setting of Howth Castle. The impact of introducing entrances through the demesne wall will not have an affect on the castle and the designed landscape around it has been long dislocated from this extremity of the estate by woodland and golf course development.

## 5.4 Mitigation Measures

### 5.4.1 Design

Mitigation for visual impact has been considered during the design process of the proposed development to provide an aesthetically considered series of buildings of high quality architectural design using modern cladding materials and colours that reflect the local context.

Whilst the development is in proximity to the main entrance gateway to the castle, the buildings have been stepped back from the eastern boundary to introduce the furthest distance from this boundary possible.

Where attributes of a development affecting setting

cannot be adjusted, screening has a part to play in mitigating the effect. There is dense woodland planting along the avenue between the castle entrance gates and the site and this will be supplemented by further tree planting within the site. At the north east corner where the site addresses the entrance from Howth Road to the Castle, mature tree planning has been introduced as illustrated below.

The building height strategy has responded to its context with height ranging from 4 storeys + recessed 5th storey along the northern (Howth Road) elevation and 5 storeys + recessed 6th storey to the south (golf course). This approach reduces of the blocks so as to reduce their impact whilst also creating a gateway design into the village of Howth.

The buildings - set back behind the existing road-side verge, the retained demesne wall and the trees - are five storeys at the road-front (with the fifth storey set back). This is an appropriate scale for a development intended to have an urbanising effect on the road corridor at the gateway to the town. They would generate a degree of built enclosure - but with no buildings directly opposite, a sense of space would be retained, orientated towards the coastline and sea to the north. There would be no sense of excessive enclosure. The buildings each step up to six storeys in their rear volume, the step in height reflecting the gradient of the site (like the top floor of the front volume, the sixth storey of the rear volume is set back).

The architectural treatment of designing the buildings as pavilions within a landscaped setting is a direct



Northern Contiguous Elevation

# 05 Conservation Approach



Howth Road/Howth Castle Junction



response to the context of a parkland site. This permits views between the buildings to the green spaces beyond whilst maintaining the privacy of collegiate courtyards for the residents. The location and site planning of the residential blocks has been constantly refined to distance these buildings in as far as possible from the gateway and avenue of the demesne.

## 5.4.2 Demesne Wall

Following the removal of the ivy presently covering the wall a full measured survey will be carried out to include dimensional information on the walls including length, depth, height and relative levels. Rectified photography will be used to identify the construction materials. It will inform the strategy for the entrance provision and the making- good of the wall.

A condition survey of this section of the historic demesne wall will also be carried out by the structural engineers.

In accordance with the principle of minimal intervention it is proposed to retain as much wall as possible along the boundary of the new development. Openings are limited to the minimum that is required to provide safe access for residents, visitors and emergency services. The existing height of the wall will be maintained.

Any stone salvaged from the wall will remain on site and will be used to carry out repairs to the remaining walls and

where possible any remaining stone will be incorporated into the landscaping designs.

The residential scheme includes landscaping works, courtyards, and extensive tree planting.

A landscaping strategy has been evolved that will evoke historical associations by:

- Enhancing the sense of association with the Howth Demesne and environs
- Incorporation of the existing strong boundaries and key references to the demesne landscape design.
- Retention of the historic woodland belt (part of the demesne woodland framework) outside the site's east boundary. Only one tree, inside the boundary, is proposed to be removed in this area. It is proposed to reinforce and enhance the woodland belt with supplementary planting inside the boundary.
- A part of the golf course perimeter woodland belt (a modern/late 20th century intervention) would be removed from the rear portion of the site. This would be replaced with a new belt of woodland planting along the rear (south and west), resulting in a net gain in woodland cover.
- Frame the development and create a mid layer that is absent within the existing boundaries associated historically with the demesne.

## 5.5 Proportionate Decision Making

It is important, when dealing with the visual impact, to consider proportionality. A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the

significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it. A landscaped setting has very different constraints to a city context but due regard must be had to the very complex and sometimes contradictory demands of issues that arise regarding the

development of previously undeveloped sites. The scale of the proposed residential development means that wider considerations require factoring in when determining the best balance of sustainable urban development for the common good and the appropriate conservation approach to the heritage assets of the demesne. Setting is not itself a heritage asset, although its importance can lie in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.

**06**

# Implementation

# 06 Implementation

The residential development at Howth Road will have due regard to the conservation strategy. It is an objective of the architectural design to increase awareness of Howth demesne as experienced from the public realm and maintain the robust integrity and character of the demesne setting.

The design principles and conservation strategies that inform the development proposals that are the subject of this planning application include;

- permeability,
- public access and
- connecting the proposed development with Howth village in a manner that welcomes visitors and engages with passers-by.

The openings in the demesne wall are intended to facilitate activity and invite entrance. The pedestrian entrance will allow a greater number of people experience the quality of the landscaped site. The proposals to create a new living environment and the ambition to retain a strong element of heritage value and memory underpin the design and landscaping proposals.

A newly designed landscape, includes a botanical garden framed by the demesne wall, echoing the early origins of the parkland site is intended to provide an enhanced spatial quality for residents and visitors and to contribute to a unique sense of place.

The public are to be allowed freely access the development and to enjoy its public landscaped spaces.

The conservation challenge will be to maintain the balance between the necessary interventions and retention of historic fabric in as far as possible, carrying out honest repairs to the demesne wall, making sure that decay is halted and that the wall is stable and safe.

The approach to any intervention, from a small repair to structural works, is based on the principle that the new material will behave in the same way as the original. The integration of new and old follows recognised principles of legibility and minimal loss of original building fabric.

The interface between the modern entrances and the heritage wall has been carefully considered within the architectural design both in terms of the physical impact and the visual, as indicated by the detailed drawings and the Architectural Design Statement accompanying this application.

The choice of materiality employs a palette of materials that harmonizes with both existing buildings in the area and the local context.



Landscape Proposal Plan

**07**

**Conclusion**



# 07 Conclusion

In evaluating the physical impact on the demesne wall and the visual impact on Howth castle, the demesne and nearby protected structures it has been a consideration as to whether the wall and demesne can accommodate such intervention without significant loss of character. It has reflected on whether the architectural design has respected the critical features of the historic context, in particular the loss of sections of the wall and assess whether the loss would not outweigh any benefits. This loss of elements of a protected structure was unavoidable in order to provide access to the development and deliver new homes.

The design adopts the internationally recognised approach that a conscious decision was made to secure the demesne wall's future but entail as little intervention as possible that might compromise its historical integrity.

The historic environment at Howth demesne contributes to a unique and distinctive place and although its parkland landscape has been compromised by the golf courses, protecting and enhancing this legacy ensures that the remaining special interest will be appreciated and enjoyed by future generations This concept underpins the architectural vision of the proposed development.

In continuous use since the fifteenth century the castle and lands were the historic home of the St Lawrence family. Its rich legacy includes an iconic landmark building, outstanding and rare garden and intangible heritage. An understanding of the urban, architectural and social values of the site has been used by the design team used to identify opportunities to influence a distinctive design character and sense of place that will contribute to its successful social and economic as a sustainable residential development. Sustainability and quality of life will be delivered through this architectural and landscape design.

Located in an area that offers excellent public transport connections to the city and economic benefits for the village, the development proposal envisages a vibrant new residential environment that enhances the existing suburban context.

Design principles that inform the development proposals include character, permeability and openness, of reinforcing the site as a destination that welcomes locals and visitors alike. The design incorporates contemporary architecture within the site in ways that are sensitive to the atmosphere of the parkland, balancing a need for conserving as much of the character as possible with the sustainable development of the site.

Visitors exposure to the materiality and scale is a significant part of the 'vision experience'. It is intended that a creative



General view from 200'

Swords Castle Masterplan Extract

tension will be generated between the parkland character of the context and the contemporary world created within the site by the new buildings.

A recurring theme of widely accepted urban planning and policies is that of linkages and connections. Public access and permeability are principles underpinning the planning of the site. By opening up new routes through the demesne wall a greater permeability is achieved and the pedestrian is encouraged and attracted to move within or linger by introducing attractive public open space.

The design concept embodies an ambition to protect and conserve historic legacy, in a meaningful fashion in order to ensure the long term survival of the demesne. The development proposals include building specific strategy for the conservation of the historic stonework, the intervention of the entrances and any necessary repairs to the wall.

A development which can be seen within a view of a listed

building lies within the setting of that listed building. It cannot be disputed that such a development could potentially affect the setting of the listed building. The nature and character of the listed building is clearly an important factor in judging its setting, in the case of Howth Castle it is a very a significant building. In the case of St Mary's Church, less so.

It is necessary not only to consider these buildings but also the nature and appearance of the existing surroundings immediately prior to the proposed development being carried out. In this case the immediate surroundings have and are (Claremont development) undergoing significant change. The new development proposals will inevitably alter the meadow setting and will have significant visual impact on the roadway but the design and materiality has been thoughtfully considered to reflect the site's historic past. The visual impact of the proposed development on the protected structure and the historic and composed protected views has been assessed and shown to be of

# 07 Conclusion

an acceptable level when balanced with the significant benefits of the development as a whole within the interests of sustainability.

The site demands a high quality design proposal that is contemporary in character but also contextual and distinguished by its architectural design and nuanced detailing. When considering the proposed development within the context of its surroundings it is an issue as to whether as such the design of a development may be considered to enhance or detract from its background. The quality of design and sensitivity must be weighed against the impact.

A fundamental approach to examining character uses the approach of similarity and diversity. Should the aim be uniformity or diversity when dealing with new building in a historic context? It is generally accepted that a successful environment is able to evolve and develop over time in accordance with its heritage. A relevant example of this is the Swords Castle Masterplan illustrated on the previous page.

The management of this historic environment will be an evidence led, strategic approach underpinned by a clear understanding of its condition, value and challenges. This will magnify the project's contribution to the image iconography and suburban context. The approach to the conservation of the historic building fabric of the demesne wall will follow the principles of research, understanding and analysis prior to any commencement of works in line with international conservation charters and all works will be carried out in accordance with the statutory guidelines and advices of the Department of the Arts Heritage and Gaeltacht. The implementation will be based on respect for the existing fabric and the least possible intervention to historic fabric.

Change is inevitable and the conservation process is receptive to development that is recognized as being of positive value to the appearance of an area. A balance of conservation and development is sought, in other words sustainable development. *'For each local situation a balance is reached between preservation and protection of urban heritage, economic development, functionality and liveability of a city. Thus the needs of current inhabitants are responded to while sustainably enhancing the city's natural and cultural resources for future generations.'* (Unesco – 'New life for historic cities').

Notwithstanding change, at the core of the design vision is a commitment to communicate heritage values and to conserve and make accessible this heritage for inhabitants and visitors to the development.