

Historic Landscape Impact Statement for the Development at St Teresa's, Blackrock

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The purpose of this statement is to identify and comment on the impact of the proposed development at St Teresa's, Blackrock on the historic character and setting of the site. The report should be read in conjunction with the separate report *St Teresa/Craigmore: an Historic Landscape Assessment of its Lands and Environs*.

The current proposals for St Teresa's sit within a site and setting radically transformed from that enjoyed by the nineteenth-century house of Craigmore. Craigmore boasted a miniature demesne with walled garden, formal gardens, boundary planting and, developed some time later, the transformation of a quarry into an ornamental miniature landscape with pond, footbridge, turret and planting. The principal rooms enjoyed a framed view of Three Rock Mountain to the southwest and from the eastern bow a view of the Mount Mapas Obelisk was likely. Minor rooms to the north would have enjoyed a view of the sea across Dublin Bay to Howth.

Gone are the formal gardens around the house, replaced in the twentieth century by utilitarian accommodation for St Teresa's community activities of boys home and school. Lost from the site are the walled gardens and the original boundary planting to Temple Road lost with the creation of the Blackrock bypass. Also the widened Temple Road involved the removal of the double entrance gates and piers which were anachronistically relocated to the northwest corner of the site. This left the lodge uncomfortably close to the new road.

The re-establishing of some boundary planting to the widened Temple Road, then on higher ground and closer to Craigmore House, greatly diminished the opportunity for sea views from the house's secondary rooms. Any view from the south-eastern bow of the principal rooms to Mount Mapas Obelisk has been lost with the maturing of the planting on the approach drive and with the addition screen of self-seeded trees. The addition, the overlay of stained glass on the first floor bow windows to the east has obscured any view.

The original views to the Dublin Mountains are currently all but lost with the construction of the boundary wall and the recent planting in Rockfield Park in addition to the self-seed trees along the boundary in the site.

Both the urban character of Blackrock and the setting of the site of St Teresa's have undergone a series of significant transformations particularly from the eighteenth century to the present. These are outlined in the report *St Teresa/Craigmore: an Historic Landscape Assessment of its Lands and Environs* and highlight the increasing intensity and scale of development.

The current redevelopment of the Frescati and Blackrock Shopping Centres has established a new leap in scale along the bypass in both height and bulk. This has happened notwithstanding some neighbouring domestic scale two-storey housing. Also along the bypass, the bulk of individual buildings of offices and commercial

have established scale above the domestic that was common place from the 1930's through to the 1980's.

The proposed development at St Teresa's pushes this increase in scale further along the bypass. Notwithstanding the proposed height and bulk of the units of the development, because of the residential nature of the development, it presents a human scale in its detail in comparison to current development at Frescati Shopping Centre. The development also represents within the increasing pressures for housing and the forces driving development in Blackrock an alternative approach to that which befell other eighteenth century and nineteen-century villas and their immediate lands in the Blackrock area. At neighbouring St Joseph's and Temple Hill House the grounds, planting, and prospect has all but been eliminated as residential development has strangled their setting and effectively ignored the eighteenth century houses, their architecture and any relation they had to the wider landscape. At St Teresa's the mid-nineteenth villa is to become a centrepiece with its principal facade being presented to the development and revealed to more distance view from Rockfield Park. In return the view of Three Rock Mountain will be restored to the principal rooms on both ground and first floors again framed by the pairs of Austrian Pines. The house will be visually reunited with its former lands. This will be achieved by removing the recent boundary of blockwork wall and the intervening self-seeded trees and elements of the young planting in Rockfield Park.

It is proposed to re-establish a sea view to the secondary rooms of the house on the first floor. The placing of blocks of buildings in there position either side of the house will now dominate the views from the bows of all the principal rooms. As such there is no possibility that the views to Killiney Hill and the Mount Mapas Obelisk could be explored and restored to the house in the future in the process of the management and renew of the planting to the original drive and boundary.

Important elements of the planting surviving from the nineteenth century are to be retained. The boundary planting that divided the site from the drive to Dunardagh (now St Catherine's) is to be effectively retained. The non-native specimen trees, such a characteristic of a nineteenth century villa garden and designed landscape are to be mainly retained.

The lodge, will be removed from its uneasy proximity to the Blackrock bypass and reconstructed in the more tranquil location bordering on Rockfield Park with no interference with the surviving original planting.

The area of the miniature landscape in the southwestern corner of the site lies mostly within the proposed landscape scheme and beyond the proposed building lines. The turret/folly is to be retained. It will sit in arbitrary isolation within the proposed landscape design, its original setting as part of a miniature landscape lost. As has been speculated in the Historic Landscape Assessment, the area may have been another of those large outcrops of granite still to be found in Rockfield Park and possibly the origin of the name Craigmor (*Creig Mór*). It had been partially quarried and later exploited to create a miniature landscape of which the turret was a constituent element.

The site of St Teresa's is particular because of its separation from adjacent residential area by the wide dual carriageway of Temple Road, the southerly open space of Rockfield Park, and the mature boundary planting to the east screening the site from the triangle of two-storey residential development. All this diminishes the visual impact upon neighbouring residential areas. Furthermore the proposals deprive no one of a view of the mountains or the sea.