

**TARA HALL
BALSCADDEN ROAD
HOWTH**

**ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

6th May 2026

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

1363/01

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Background

This report has been prepared for John Roe as part of the documentation to be submitted with two applications to An Coimisiún Pleanála. The first application (“application no. 1”) is for substitute consent for the following development:

The retention of demolition at lower ground floor, ground floor and first floor levels and the substantially constructed part two/part three-storey extension at the north elevation of the existing dwelling and a new on-site Sepcon wastewater treatment plant with sand polishing filter, percolation area, and surface water drainage upgrades including SuDS devices;

The second application (“application no. 2) submitted under section 37L of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) is for the following further proposed development:

The completion of the construction of a part two-, part three-storey extension with proposed modifications at the north elevation of the existing dwelling including setting back the east elevation at lower ground and ground floors, the removal of newly installed window openings and reinstatement of previous window openings, one at ground floor level and two at first floor level, at the north elevation, and associated development works including SuDS devices.

The site was inspected for the purposes of preparing this report on 28th July 2025 on which occasion 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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Historical background

The town and harbour of Howth have a long history, though Balscadden Road is a latecomer to the area. In 1807 construction began on a new, enlarged harbour at Howth in order to provide a new terminus for the packet boats carrying the mails between Ireland and Great Britain. This was shortly after Ireland became part of the United Kingdom and lost its parliament, with the result that the government administration in Dublin was now at a remove from the parliament to which it answered. Furthermore, the 1798 rebellion and the abortive attempt at rebellion by Robert Emmet in 1803 indicated that the country was volatile and it was possible that a further rebellion could break out. Should that happen, information would need to be communicated to London as swiftly as possible, as, indeed was also needed for routine administration. The new harbour at Howth was intended as the port for the mail ships that would provide the vital link between the Dublin administration and London.

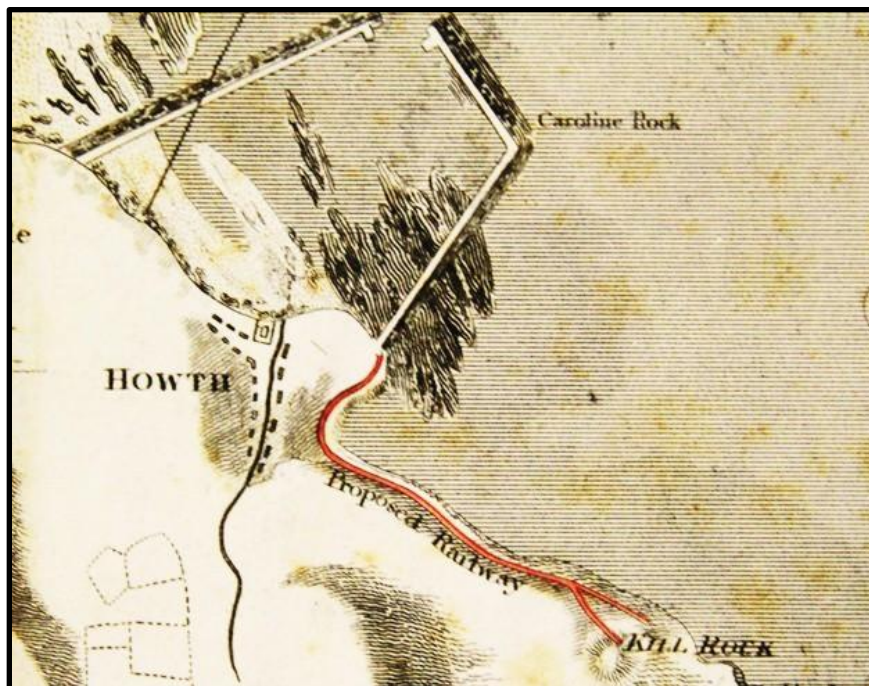


Figure 1: John Rennie's proposal for Balscadden Road

In 1809 responsibility for the design of the harbour was taken over by John Rennie, who engaged fellow Scottish engineer John Aird as the site engineer. At this stage the design and construction details of the harbour were changed from the use of limestone from Burrow to quartzite from Kilrock, faced with granite from Dalkey. The quartzite quarries at Kilrock were at a distance from the harbour and at a higher elevation and this required the construction of a railway to carry the stone down to the harbour construction site. John Rennie and John Aird cut a linear platform out of the cliff face to facilitate the construction of the railway and this became Balscadden Road after the completion of the harbour and the lifting of the track.

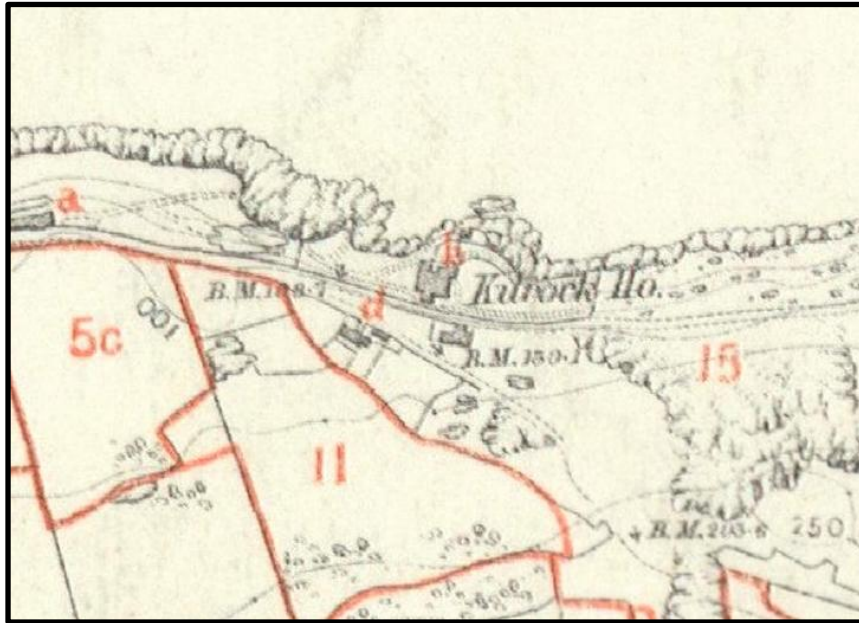


Figure 2: Detail of second-edition Ordnance Survey map, 1871

At the time that the harbour was completed in 1818 there were several small houses in and around the quarry and along the line of the railway and the first-edition Ordnance Survey map of 1843 shows two buildings on the future site of Tara Hall, possibly small houses. Gradually over the years larger houses were built along Balscadden Road and in the vicinity and in about 1870 Tara Hall was built and given the name Kilrock House. The house was depicted on the second-edition Ordnance Survey map of 1871, as seen above, though it was not listed in the street directories of the late 1860s.

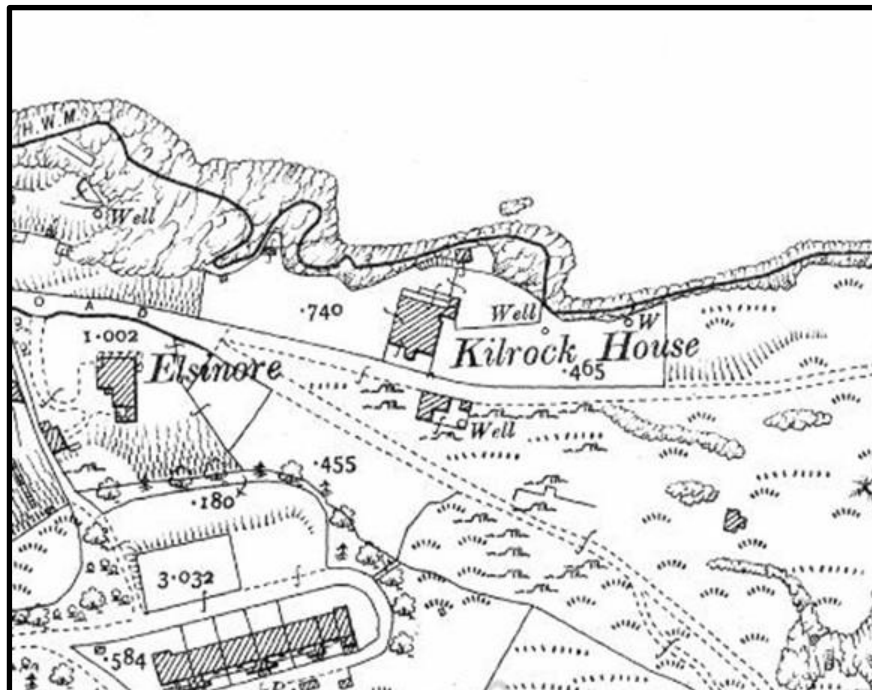


Figure 3: Detail of larger-scale Ordnance Survey map of 1909

The first occupiers of the house were Joseph Wright and his son, Sydney Wright, who were solicitors, and Joseph's daughter Louisa. Following Joseph Wright's death Sydney and Louisa Wright remained in the house and Louisa lived on in the house following the death of her brother in 1901.

Kilrock House was occupied by a Mr Lloyd in the mid-1920s. In 1927 Miss Murtagh moved to the house and renamed it Tara Hall.



Plate 1: Tara Hall prior to works being carried out

Conservation context

Record of Protected Structures

Tara Hall is not included in the record of protected structures as set down in the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029.

Conservation areas

Tara Hall does not lie within an architectural conservation area.

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

Tara Hall is not included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage survey of the Howth area.

Special Amenity Area Order

Balscadden Road and its vicinity, including Tara Hall, lie within the Howth Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO). The Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 contains a number of policies relating to this SAAO.

Policy CSP23 – Howth SAAO

Protect the Howth Special Amenity Area Orders (SAAO), including the Buffer zone, from residential and industrial development intended to meet urban generated demand.

Policy GINHP27 – Howth and Liffey Valley Amenity Orders

Protect and enhance the special amenity value of Howth and the Liffey Valley, including its landscape, visual, recreational, ecological, geological, and built heritage value, as a key element of the County's Green Infrastructure network and implement the provisions of the Howth and Liffey Valley Special Amenity Area Orders (SAAO).

9.6.14 Landscape Character Assessment

Coastal Character Type

Coastal Character Type is categorised as having an exceptional landscape value. The type forms the eastern boundary of the County and contains a number of important beaches, islands and headlands that together create a landscape of high amenity and landscape value. A number of important settlements are located within this area, including Balbriggan, Skerries, Rush, Malahide, Portmarnock and Howth. The land is generally low lying, with the exception of some prominent headlands and hills in the northern part of the area, Howth and the offshore islands. Most of the Howth peninsula is covered by the 1999 Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO).

There are a number of important demesne or estate landscapes containing important woodlands in or adjoining this area at Ardgillan, Hampton, Milverton and Portrane. Horticulture (around Rush), golf courses and individual dwellings are prevalent land uses in the area also. Views along the coast are generally contained within headlands, ridgelines and harbours, creating a number of visual compartments.

The Coastal Character Type is categorised as having an exceptional landscape value. This value is arrived at due to the combination of visual, ecological, recreational and historical attributes. The area has magnificent views out to sea, to the islands and to the Mourne and Wicklow mountains and contains numerous beaches and harbours. The area's importance is highlighted by the High Amenity zoning covering substantial parts of the area. The area is rich in archaeological, architectural and natural heritage and is of high ecological value.

Building survey



Plate 2: South-easterly view of Tara Hall from Balscadden Road

Tara Hall is a three-bay, two-storey over basement, double-pile detached house on the northern side of Balscadden Road. The house is rendered and painted, with plaster quoins and with raised plaster architraves to the window openings. A single-storey parapetted porch projects to the front. The main entrance to the house is at a slightly lower level than the adjacent road and to the rear the land falls away sharply to the sea. The road frontage is marked by a stone wall that conceals the garden beyond, the garden being at a significantly lower level than the road.



Plate 3: South-westerly view of Tara Hall from Balscadden Road



Plate 4: View westwards from Balscadden Road

The demolition and substantially constructed extension in application no. 1, which it is proposed to be completed with proposed modifications at the north elevation and the reinstatement of previous window openings in application no. 2, is entirely at the rear of the house and is not visible from the public road in close proximity to the house. Due to vegetation within the site the substantially constructed extension is not visible until the viewer is at a significant distance to the east of the house, at which point it is seen as in the photograph above.



Plate 5: View eastwards from grounds of Tara Hall

The boundary wall and the lie of the land ensure that the substantially completed extension is not readily visible from Balscadden Road to the east or west of the house. The above photograph shows the western side of the house with the extension at left, when seen from within the grounds of the house at a distance of approximately fifty metres.



Plate 6: View of Tara Hall from East Pier

The full extent of the substantially complete or as built rear extension (per application no. 1) and the proposed modifications (per application no. 2) cannot be seen other than within the grounds of the house, at which point the viewer is below the addition and close to it, or from the sea beyond.

The photograph above shows the public view of the house from the East Pier, at a distance of approximately 700 metres from the house. This is the only significant view that is available other than from the sea. This photograph was taken with a 60mm lens and hence represents a slight zoom, the human eye being generally taken to be more equivalent to a 50mm lens. In this image the as built rear addition may be seen, but only if the viewer is specifically looking out for it.

Assessment

Application No. 1: Substitute Consent

Prior to the recent works to add an extension, Tara Hall had a small canted bay projection to the rear on the upper two floors, rising from a full-width balcony, below which the rear of the house at basement level projected beyond the upper floors. This arrangement has now been replaced with a projection across much of the rear of the house – though not the full width, at basement level, a shallower addition at ground-floor level across two-thirds of the width, and a central addition on the first floor at one-third of the width of the house.

The works have also included the replacement of the three remaining windows on the upper two floors with larger windows. In preparation for the construction of the rear extension the canted bay was demolished. A wastewater treatment plant has been installed on land to the rear of the house, in the western part of the lands and with the percolation area to the east of the house. The render and painting of the house, with plaster quoins and raised plaster architraves at the window openings is work that has been carried out recently as exempted development.

This application seeks substitute consent for a number of works as follows:

- Retention of demolition of the lower ground floor extension and the canted bay at ground-floor and first-floor levels;
- The substantially complete rear extension;
- Provision of a wastewater treatment plant with associated facilities;

Each of these issues is addressed below with respect its impact on architectural heritage.

Retention of Demolitions

The features that were demolished were at the rear of the house, facing north towards the sea. There were two principal elements to this demolition – the two short projections at lower ground floor level, with the flat roof spanning across the width of the house, and the two-storey canted bay on the upper floors. A further element affected by the demolitions was the widening of the window openings on the upper floor at the rear and these are discussed separately below.

It is noted that the first Ordnance Survey map to show the house clearly shows two projections to the rear and no projection in the centre of the rear façade. This strongly suggests that the canted bay at the rear was a later addition and not part of the original house. This conclusion is consistent with the Council's conservation officer whose report on Reg. Ref.: F24A/1034E acknowledges that "*the two storey canted bay is an early addition*" i.e. it is not original to Tara Hall. The photograph in Plate 1 above shows the rear of the house prior to the recent alterations. The two

lower ground floor level projections at the rear had large, horizontal windows and in their external appearance retained no semblance of an original part of the house. Their demolition has no significant impact on the character of the house.

As noted, the canted bay seems not to have been an original feature of the house. Its demolition would not have had a significant impact on the character of the house or the area, particularly as the rear of the house is not visible from any public place other than from the sea, or from a significant distance on the East Pier.

Rear Extension

The as-built rear extension extends across the greater part of the width of the house at lower ground floor level to the rear, approximately two-thirds of the width of the house at upper ground floor level and approximately one-third of the width on the first floor. The lower-ground-floor level of the extension runs back from the rear of the main house by 5.43 metres, which is 1.95 metres deeper than the original rear returns. On the upper-ground-floor level the extension projects 2.9 metres beyond the main house, while on the first floor the extension is 2.77 metres deep. The extension is clad in glass.

The canted bay on the upper levels of the house, which has been demolished, projected to the rear to a lesser extent than the lower ground floor extension, forming a balcony that was bounded by mild steel railings. The substantially completed extension repeats this format, retaining a balcony on the upper ground floor (albeit without railings as all external work has ceased).

The substantially complete extension is not readily visible to any extent from the land, except for a small area on the eastern side of the house, which could be seen from the eastern end of Balscadden Road. Even then, the view is generally obstructed by vegetation. The view from the East Pier is too far to be of any consequence. When seen from the sea, the extension is subservient to the main house.

The enlargement of the three window openings at the rear, one on the upper ground floor and two on the first floor, has increased the area of glazing and, more significantly, has modified the appearance of the house. This change runs contrary to the traditional façade of the house, which follows the nineteenth-century preference for windows with a vertical emphasis.

Wastewater treatment plant

The wastewater treatment plant is largely underground and it has no impact whatsoever on the architectural heritage of the property or of Howth Head. Both the wastewater treatment plant and the percolation area are concealed from views from either the sea or from Balscadden Road

Application No. 2: Further Development

This application seeks permission for the following further works:

- Completion of the rear extension, with modifications to the extension as constructed;
- Reinstatement of window openings on the northern elevation, including the reduction in the present size of the openings.

Each of these issues is addressed below with respect its impact on architectural heritage.

Rear Extension – Proposed Modifications

The proposed modifications to the rear extension would pull back the eastern end of the extension at lower-ground-floor level by 200mm to ensure that the corner of the main house is visible, while on the upper-ground-floor level the extension is to be set back 700mm from the corner. This upper level is significantly more visible than the lower-ground-floor level and this reduction in width will have a significant impact in ensuring that the main house remains prominent with the extension clearly subservient.

The canted bay on the upper levels of the house, which has been demolished, projected to the rear to a lesser extent than the lower ground floor extension, forming a balcony that was bounded by mild steel railings. The proposed further works to the as built extension will repeat this format, retaining a balcony on the upper ground floor, on the roof of the lower extension that will be bounded by new railings. These railings will run across the full width of the house and will help to break up the visual impact of the glazed façade of the extension.

The rear extension with modifications will not be readily visible to any extent from the land, except for a small area on the eastern side of the house, which could be seen from the eastern end of Balcadden Road. Even then, the view is generally obstructed by vegetation. The view from the East Pier is too far to be of any consequence. When seen from the sea, the extension with modifications will be even more subservient to the main house than the as built by pulling the eastern ends of the lower and upper ground floor levels away from the corner of the house. As noted, the railing will break up the vertical face of the extension.

Reinstatement of Window Openings

The proposal is to reinstate the original size of the three window openings at the rear/north elevation and to provide them with plastered architraves, replicating the original style. The windows on the first floor were divided into four panes and this will be replicated. The window on the upper ground floor had been modified into a glazed doorway to give access to the balcony and a glazed door is to be reinstated into the reduced opening. This will be a significant reduction in the size of the

doorway, returning it to the scale of the original opening, with the traditional proportions seen in a house of this character.

Conclusion

Application No. 1: Substitute Consent

It is important to note that the house is not a protected structure and is not located in an architectural conservation area. The sole concern in the assessment of these works is the potential impact on the Howth Special Amenity Area Order as some of the works involved, notably the demolition of the rear additions and canted bay and the enlargement of the windows, would have been exempted development under the terms of the Planning and Development Regulations had it not been for the existence of the SAAO.

Application No. 2: Further Development

The proposed modifications to the works that have been carried out include the reinstatement of the sizes of the three windows as described above, and this change is very significant. The extension is to be pulled back on its eastern side to ensure that the corner of the main house is revealed. These two changes will ensure that the character of the original house will remain dominant when seen from the rear, with the extension reading as a later addition, subservient to the original.