

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

MERRION ROAD STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Gowan Motors Compound site, Nos.169-177 Merrion Road, Dublin 4

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This architectural heritage impact assessment examines the proposed development of a vacant site to the south of Merrion Road, Dublin 4. Planning consent (DCC Reg Ref 4477/19 and 4051/21) for a residential development was granted in 2022.

The site was used over previous years as a carpark for the nearby Gowan Motors at the corner of Merrion Road and Herbert Avenue. In recent years it has served as a site compound for construction activity supporting the redevelopment of the former Gowan Motors site.

The site is characterised by its open condition arising from demolition at some time in the past of its original structures, framed by sections of surviving historic boundary walls to the west and south, still bearing traces of internal plaster adhered to the interiors of same demolished building ranges.

The subject impact assessment reviews the proposed development's predicted interaction with historic and protected structures in the vicinity of the site and historic walled boundaries, where present, based on verified views prepared by 3D Design Bureau, in turn based on a design by MDO Architects.



Plate 1 View of the site from Merrion Road

1.0 HISTORIC STRUCTURES IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Walled boundaries

Whilst the northern boundary aligned with Merrion Road has been removed, historic granite walled boundaries exist in various forms to the north and west of the site. A lower wall of similar composition has been extended with mass concrete to the southwestern boundary.

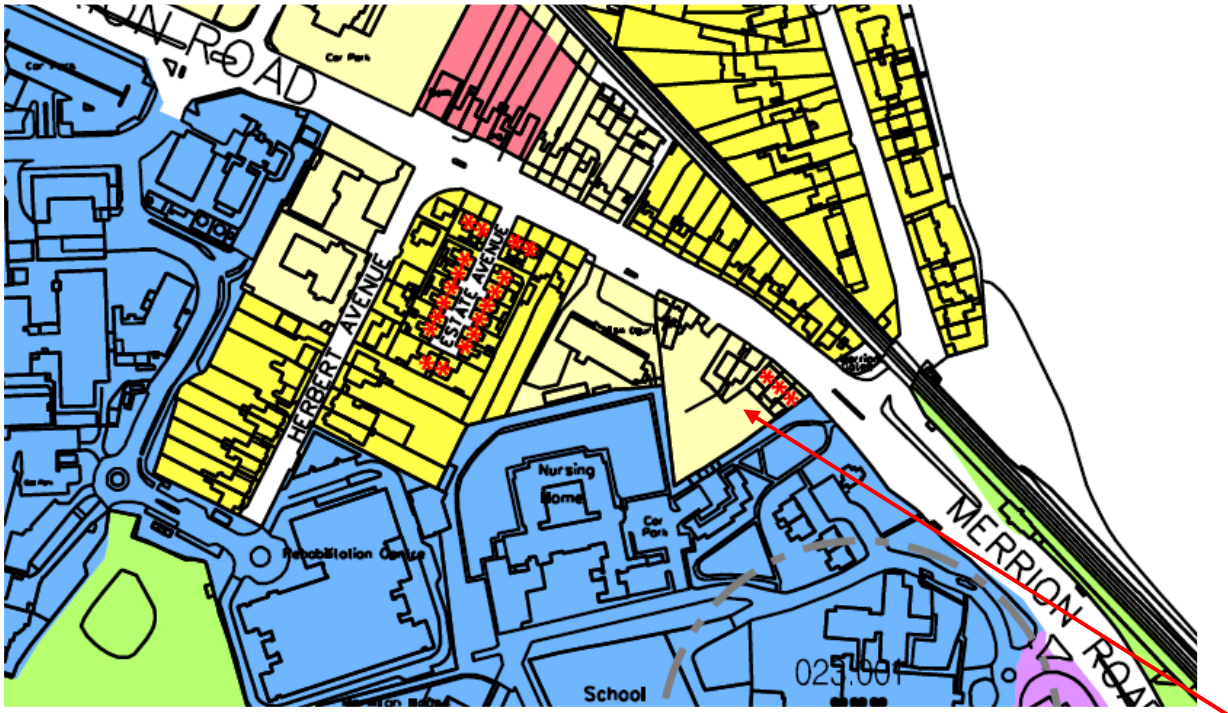


Figure 1 Extract from Map H of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028, with site denoted



Plate 2 Walled boundary to the west, with intact fragments of plaster

1.2 Protected Structures

Three protected structures at Nos 179 Merrion Road (RPS reference 5092), 181 Merrion Road (RPS reference 5093) and 183 Merrion Road (RPS reference 5094) share boundaries to the east of the development site.

Protected structures on Estate Avenue, to the northwest of the subject site, are at a sufficient distance to preclude impact.



Plate 3 Nos 179, 181 and 183 Merrion Road

1.3 Historic buildings

A semi-detached pair of houses, not included on the RPS but of general heritage interest, Nos 165 and 167 Merrion Road, around the northwest of the site.



Plate 4 Nos 165 and 167 Merrion Road

2.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks to develop within the site, and at a distance from all boundaries. It takes particular care to improve on the condition established by a permitted residential development on the site, in its greater detachment from the row of protected structures at Nos 179, 181 and 183 Merrion Road.

Walled structures are not possible to record at this time, with a view to informing their holistic conservation, as they are obscured with temporary structures and materials. It is instead anticipated that their careful conservation will form part of the permitted works, with repair works qualified once the site is cleared, enabling detailed inspection.

At this time, following site clearance, it is proposed to execute three types of work; cautiously conserving mass concrete additions and surviving plastered finishes, in addition to execution of tradition masonry repair and consolidation. Such works will generally include the careful removal of vegetation, raking out and repointing of walled structures facing into the site. Later vertical additions, such as later brick and mass concrete sections to the southeast, will be retained as they are considered to form part of the wall's character.

Conservation methodologies otherwise will include the following:

- Any biological growth embedded within walls will be removed, and the joints raked out to a sufficient depth to remove developed root systems.
- Care will be taken to examine sections of additional masonry (ie mass concrete) to ensure that defects are marked and a suitable engineering approach agreed for their appropriate conservation
- Cement/ other repair render/ pointing will be carefully removed
- Any lime washed sections that survive will be examined with a view to retaining and safeguarding, if possible, with sealants, if considered appropriate
- All open mortar joints are to be re-pointed using a lime-based mortar. This will include the raking out of loose mortar and material prior to re-pointing.
- Prior to the application of repair mortar, the stone work will be wetted down with a fine water mist using a hand sprayer.
- The contractor will use small round stones and pins (i.e. long wedge-shaped pieces of stone) to reduce the areas of mortar in large joints. These infill pieces will be tapped into place by hand. Any displaced mortar from the joints will be carefully removed using a trowel. The contractor will carry out re-pointing to a trial section of the wall at high level for agreement with the conservation architect before re-pointing elsewhere.
- The bedding and re-pointing mortar will consist of a fine to medium-grained lime based mortar mix, formulated for stone rubble fabric in a moderately exposed location, in a moderate to severe

environment. Sands will be local, and primarily consist of local limestone. The sand used will comply with current regulatory standards. All works will be carried out complying with BS 7913:1998 Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings. The proposed lime mortar will comprise a mix of 2.5 parts aggregate to 1 part NHL2 lime. The work is to be carried out by operatives skilled in the use of lime mortars.

- The work will include grouting and deep tamping of existing open and dry joints and voids; and to consolidate sections of the wall where voids are suspected within the core. The grouting material will be lime-based with a suspension aid (such as bentonite). It is important that the final strength of the grout will not exceed that of the stone rubble masonry, that it be similar in permeability, low in shrinkage and have a good flow rate for effective penetration.
- Capping conditions might vary depending on the composition of the walled structure
- The contractor will provide details of the proposed operatives who will carry out the lime mortar repairs together with evidence of their previous experience on similar projects to the satisfaction of the conservation architect.
- A trial sample will be carried out at the outset to facilitate agreement on the work methods and finish with the conservation architect.

3.0 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 Impact for historic walled boundaries

The proposed development, similar to the previous scheme, is set back from historic sections of walled boundaries. Its open spaces are positioned to ensure effective presentation of the walls, with ample space provided for their continued maintenance into the future.

The staged approach to the effective and complete conservation of walled structures and their cappings is welcomed and will have a positive effect both for the walled structures themselves, and in the generation of an enriched character for the shared open space.

3.2 Impact for adjoining protected structures

The proximity of structures of height within the development site will clearly alter the setting of the three protected structures at Nos 179, 181 and 183 Merrion Road. However, it is held that the proposed development presents an improvement to the permitted scheme, with greater efforts at distancing from protected boundaries.

In addition to alteration of their immediate setting, vistas of the protected building group due north and south along Merrion Road will also be subject to change. It is inevitable however that this vacant site will be intensively developed, either in accord with the permitted development or a new venture. In accepting this scenario, it is

understood that mitigations extended to safeguarding boundary conditions, particularly where shared with the subject protected assemblage have been well considered and represent a genuine attempt at balancing development viability with careful urban integration.

At a granular level, sight of boundary conditions shared with the row of protected structures is not possible at this time due to the presence of protective hoarding, but a detailed record and conservation-led methodology for their repair, consolidation and presentation will follow once the site is cleared. This is the case for the western gable of No.179 Merrion Road, which will be exposed onto a ramped vehicular access road into the development. Achievement of this detail will require close inspection, following clearance of the site, further to agreement with the building owners and consultation with the Authority.

3.3 Historic buildings

The proposed boundary condition to No.167 Merrion Road to the northwest of the site, will follow an identical approach adopted for the protected building group to the east. As with the latter, the precise detail of same will require confirmation following removal of protective coverings- with a suggested approach subject to approval of the building owner.

A gap between the gable of the proposed development and that of No.167 is considered to provide a sufficient buffer between the two. As with interactions between the scheme and the extant protected group described in section 3.2 above, it is accepted that some form of development will occur on this site. The proposed scheme is found to make efforts to anticipate impacts with enclosing structures of heritage significance and address same in its configuration.

4.0 SUMMATION

The proposed development, addressing a busy road, seeks to construct an infill building of scale between two lower scaled, established, building groups of heritage interest. Its modulated form introduces flexibility at boundaries shared with both groups, enabling it to better integrate with what is an inconsistent, but acceptably diverse streetscape, reflecting both the rhythm of extant fenestration and pitched roof typologies dominant in the vicinity. The resulting scheme in its dynamic interpretation of common local characteristics, blends successfully with its environs and introduces an enrichment that does not dominate either the setting or character of buildings of heritage interest adjacent.

5.0 PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD



Plate 5 View of the site from Merrion Road, towards row of protected structures



Plate 6 Nos 179-183 Merrion Road



Plate 7 No.165 and 167 Merrion Road



Plate 8 View towards No.167 Merrion Road



Plate 9 Gable forming boundary, shared with No. 179 Merrion Road



Plate 10 Shared boundary with No.167 Merrion Road

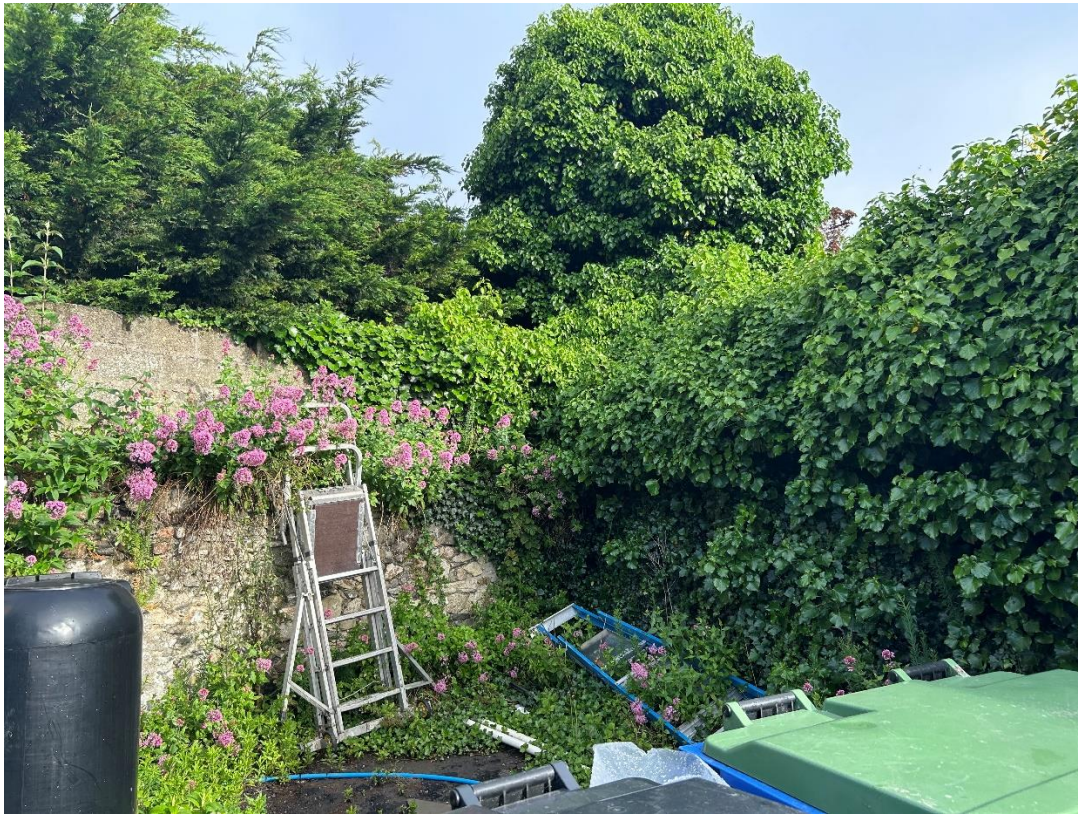


Plate 11 *Northwestern boundary*



Plate 12 *South eastern wall*



Plate 13,14 *View of sections of original wall and later brick sections, with historic lime surfaces evident*



Plate 15,16 *View of extended capping, to rear of temporary structures*



Plate 17 *Extended wall section*



Plate 18 *Detail of concrete capping above original rubble section*



Plate 19 View of the site from Merrion Road, with temporary structures aligned with perimeter boundary walls, obscuring some



Plate 20 View of temporary structures to west of site