New public realm and plaza East and North of Waldemar Terrace, Main Street, Dundrum, Dublin 14

Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

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Introduction

This Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment was prepared by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in support of Part 8 application for proposal to construct a new public realm and plaza East and North of Waldemar Terrace, Main Street, Dundrum, Dublin 14.

The proposed development is set out below:

- Reallocation of c. 1057 m^2 of road as public realm;
- New public realm of c. 3001 m^2, including a new civic plaza with high-quality paving, resurfacing, street furniture, and public lighting on independent columns; new accessible, raised podium; new incidental play areas; new mobility hub for cycle parking; retention of existing bike shelter and associated cycle parking; upgrade of existing pedestrian crossing;
- New landscaping, including tree planting and sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS); removal of 7 existing trees on site; removal and relocation of 5 existing trees on site; and retention of 1 existing tree on site.
- Drainage, utility, and all ancillary works.

This Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) has been undertaken due to the presence of the Usher Monument within the proposed development site. The Usher Monument listed in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Record of Protected Structures. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the architectural heritage significance of the monument, establish its baseline condition and setting, and evaluate the potential effects of the proposed development on its significance, character and appreciation.

This document has been prepared on behalf of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council by:

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Site Identification

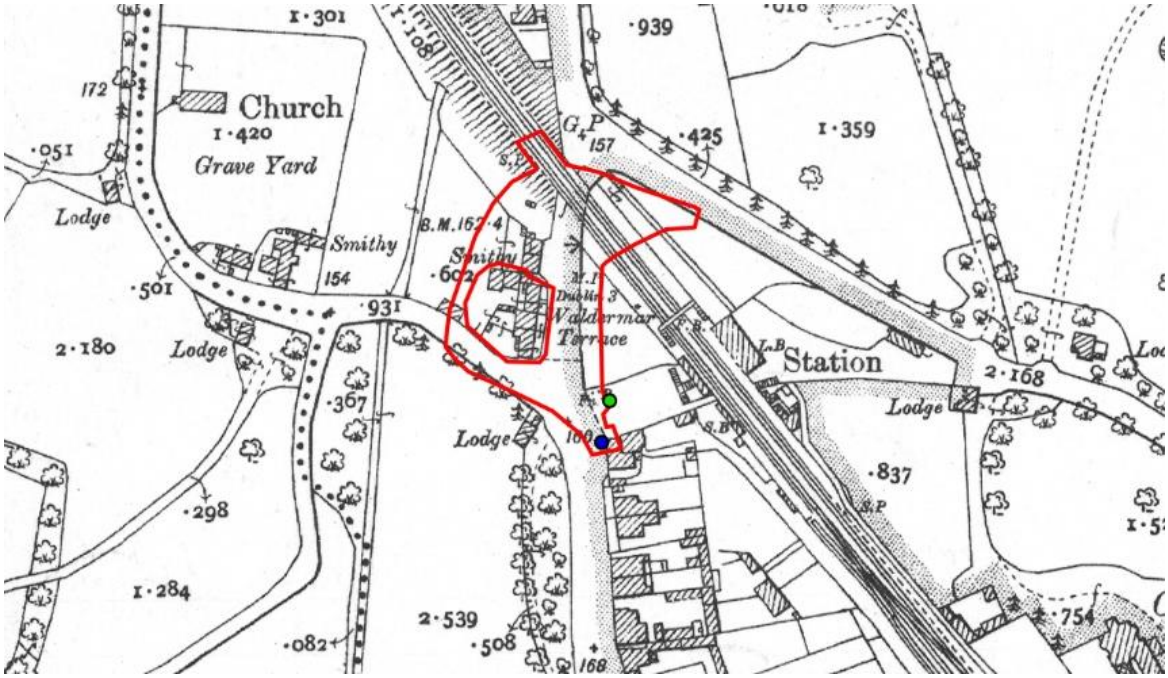

Image 1. Site location superimposed on 1907 25-inch OS Map. Original monument location marked green, current location marked blue.

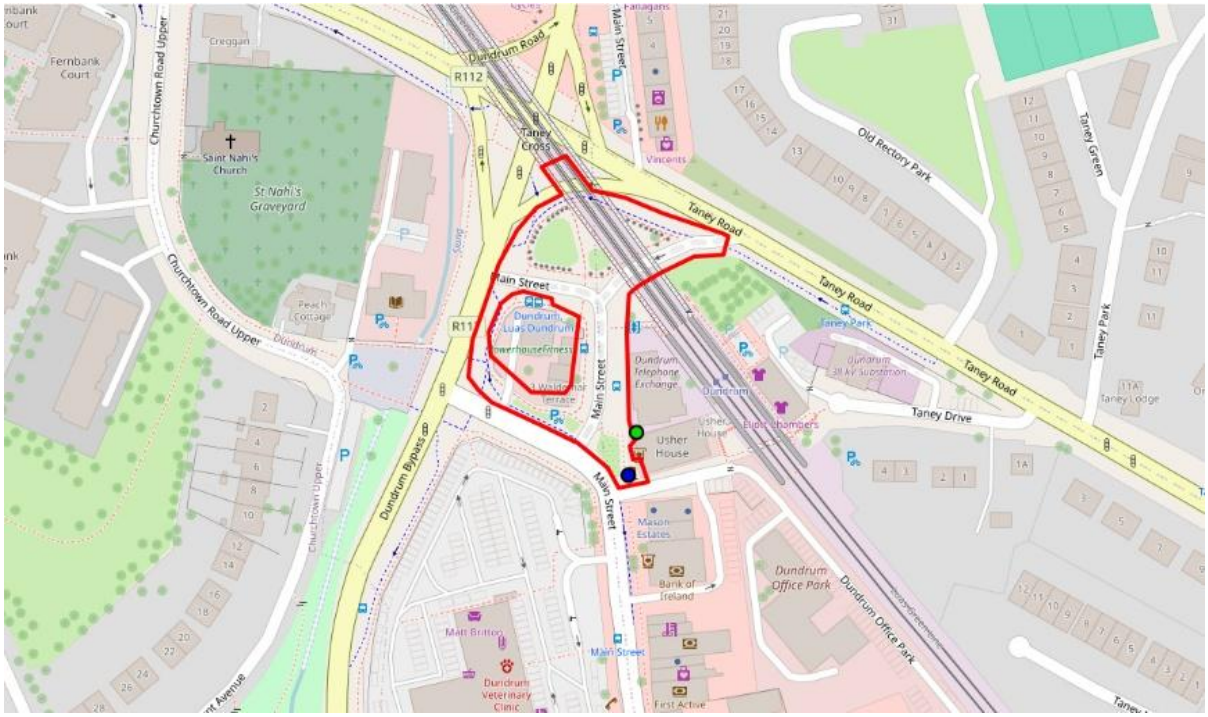

Image 2. Current site layout. Original monument location marked green, current location marked blue.

The subject site comprises lands located within east and north of Waldemar Terrace, and north of Main Street, partially under the Luas cable-stay railway bridge. The site is currently occupied by the bus terminus and associated hardstanding areas together with adjoining streetscape and public realm areas.

The Usher Monument is situated at the southern extent of the proposed development area, adjacent to Main Street.

The monument occupies a prominent position on the south side of the designated site at the interface between the village core and the bus terminus. Although neighboured by modern commercial development, it remains clearly visible in the public realm and continues to function as a local landmark.

Historical Background



Image 3. Site extent in heritage context: 1. Usher Monument, 2. St. Nahi's Church and Graveyard, 3. Former Railway Station, 4. Carnegie Library.

Statutory Protection and Inventory Status

The Usher Monument on Main Street, Dundrum, is entered on the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Record of Protected Structures (**RPS No. 934**) as a Monument of special architectural, historical, and social interest. Its setting and conservation are further addressed in the Dundrum Local Area Plan, which identifies the enhancement of the monument's public realm setting as a specific urban design objective.

Commemoration and Origins

The monument was erected by public subscription in memory of Dr. Isaac William Usher (1839–1917), a prominent local physician and member of the Rathdown District Council. Dr. Usher was fatally struck by a reversing motor car while walking toward Dundrum Railway Station in 1917 - one of the earliest recorded pedestrian motor fatalities in Ireland.

Following his death, a memorial committee commissioned the monument as a utilitarian civic tribute. Designed as both a commemorative stone obelisk and a functional public drinking fountain, the structure originally incorporated an integrated water pump, chained brass drinking cups for pedestrians, and cut-stone troughs at its base for watering horses.

Original Siting and Legal Protections

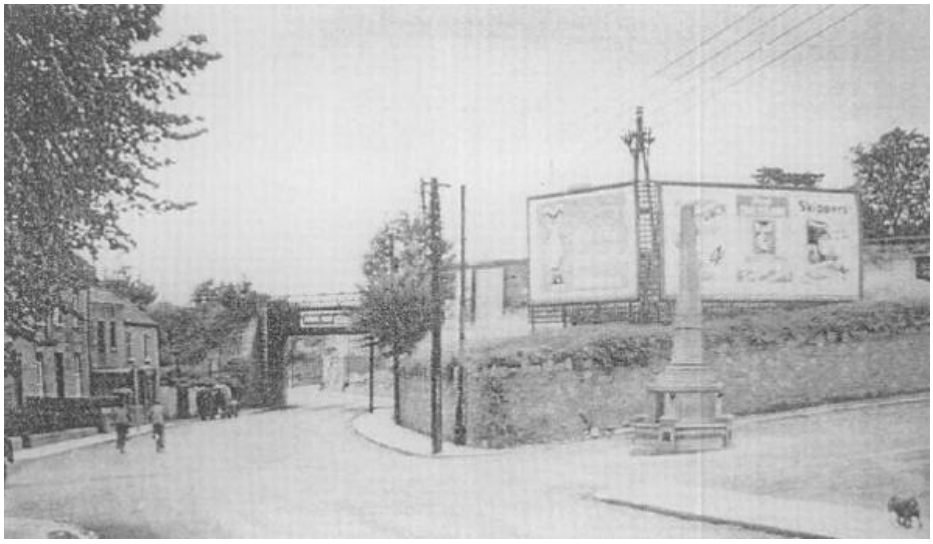

Image 4. Dundrum Main Street. c.1950. Usher Monument in its original location.

The monument was originally sited prominently at the centre of the northern crossroads of Dundrum village, functioning as a focal landmark and practical watering point along the main thoroughfare. Local heritage records note that a legal condition or covenant established by Dr. Usher's associates stipulated that the memorial could not be permanently removed from the village.

20th Century Alterations and Relocations

As motorised vehicular traffic superseded horse-drawn transport during the mid-twentieth century, the monument's central roadway position became an obstruction to traffic flow. Consequently, the obelisk was relocated onto the adjacent footpath, its water supply was decommissioned, and the stone horse troughs were infilled.

A further alteration to its siting occurred during the late-twentieth-century commercial redevelopment of the adjoining plot for the Usher House. During the construction of the office development, the monument was temporarily screened and removed from public view. Subsequently, it was reinstated within the public realm and remains a prominent feature of the streetscape.

Other notable structures in vicinity:

The monument and the development site are situated within the historic core of Dundrum village, which developed around an early Christian ecclesiastical settlement and later expanded as a prosperous nineteenth, and early twentieth-century Victorian and Edwardian suburb. Several key heritage landmarks in the immediate vicinity illustrate the civic evolution of this place:

- St. Nahi's Church and Graveyard: RPS No. 1488 (also recorded as Archaeological Monument RMP DU022-083). Located a short distance west of Main Street, St. Nahi's occupies the site of an early medieval monastery founded around 600 AD. The present Church of Ireland building was erected in 1760 and underwent major restoration in 1910.
- Dundrum Railway Station (former): RPS No. 905 (including the underpass and granite steps). Opened in 1854 as part of the Dublin and Wicklow Railway (Harcourt Street to Bray line), the station transformed Dundrum from a rural mill village into an accessible residential commuter town. The former station building survives immediately adjacent to the modern Dundrum Luas stop.
- Dundrum Carnegie Library: RPS No. 883. Opened in August 1914 with a £1,500 grant from Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, this two-storey Edwardian public library is located immediately to the west of the site across Dundrum Bypass Road.

Condition Survey and Assessment of Significance



Image 5. Usher monument with Waldemar Terrace and Luas bridge in the background.



Image 6. Usher monument - view towards Dundrum village.



Image 7. Usher monument - water troughs converted into planters.

The monument is a civic memorial in the the form of a classical obelisk, executed in granite and originally incorporating a public drinking fountain.

The monument has retained its integrity, however it has been relocated from its original location due to the development of the area. It remains within the immediate vicinity of the site with which it is historically associated and consequently retains a strong commemorative relationship with its original context.

The original utilitarian function of public fountain is now lost and there are no services connected to the structure, and the associated toughs had been repurposed as decorative planters.

The monument possesses historical significance as a commemorative structure associated with local tragic event and contributes to the collective memory and identity of the area.

The structure occupies a prominent position within the pedestrian space and acts as a local landmark within the public realm. Its scale, form and setting contribute positively to the legibility and character of the area.

Impact Assessment and Mitigation



Image 8. Artist's impression of proposed public realm adjacent to the Usher Monument.

The proposed development will not directly affect the fabric of the Usher Monument. The monument will be retained in situ and incorporated within a significantly enhanced public realm setting. The replacement of the existing bus terminus environment with a pedestrian-focused streetscape will improve the visibility of the monument and strengthen its contribution to the character of the area.

It will act as a gateway feature on the approach from Main Street into the newly created civic space.

Services of consultant Conservation Architect will be engaged to ensure appropriate protection during construction period.