
REGIONAL SPORTS CAMPUS
AT
ST. THOMAS ESTATE
PHASE 2

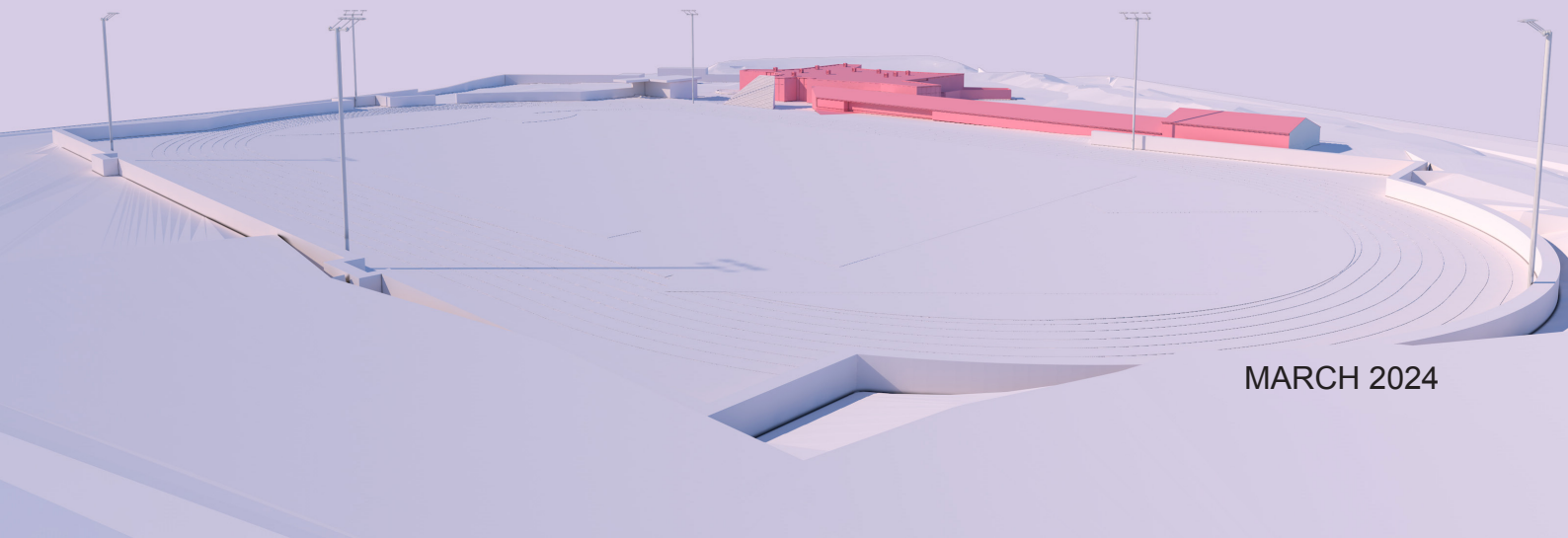
**CONSERVATION
REPORT**

to accompany the Part 8 Process

PREPARED FOR
dlr County Council

PREPARED BY
DMOD Architects

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTIVITIES AND
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND RUNNING TRACK
ENCLOSURE AT ST. THOMAS ESTATE, TIBRADDEN
ROAD, RATHFARNHAM, DUBLIN 16 IN PROXIMITY TO
A PROTECTED STRUCTURE (ST. THOMAS HOUSE)



MARCH 2024

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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council in collaboration with Dundrum South Dublin Athletics is proposing to develop a sports campus on a site at Tibbradden Road, Co. Dublin as a satellite amenity to Marlay Park. The site is located within the estate of St. Thomas House, a protected structure listed no.1657 in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council Record of Protected Structures. Phase 1 of the campus development, as permitted through Part 8 planning reference PC/PKS/01/19 and comprising a woodland running trail and an outdoor running track with field sport facilities and attendant car park, store structures and viewing platform, was completed in early 2023. Phase 2 of the campus development, comprising an activities and administrative building, a sprint track enclosure and associated landscaping, is the subject of this Conservation Report. This phase 2 development differs from that set out in Part 8 planning reference PC/PKS/01/19 and is therefore the subject of a new application process. The purpose of this Conservation Report is to evaluate the impact of this proposed phase 2 development on its site and immediate surroundings in the context of the proposal's location on the grounds in the vicinity of St. Thomas House, a protected structure. The evaluation demonstrates that the proposed development will have no material or visual impact on the protected structure and a negligible impact on its attendant grounds.

St. Thomas Estate
Kilmashogue
Whitechurch
Dublin 16

SUBJECT SITE AND RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The subject site is located within the grounds of St. Thomas House, a protected structure, off Tibbradden Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16 and is nearby Marlay Park. The grounds are approximately 21 acres in the ownership of DSD Athletics Club and are outlined in blue on the aerial view below, bounded by Tibbradden Road, a heavily wooded river valley at the edge of the Ballinascorney Golf Club and agricultural fields to the south. The grounds are gently sloping upward to the south and are traversed by 110 kV and 10 kV electrical cables at the very southern edge. The subject site is outlined in red on the aerial view below and this area is approximately 3 acres. The subject site lies to the south of the St. Thomas House protected structure within an area formerly comprising 2 large agricultural fields and more recently developed as a woodland running trail and an outdoor running track with field sport facilities and attendant car park, store structures and viewing platform. The following are the prescribed development characteristics as set out in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council Development Plan 2022-2028 for the subject site.

Land Use Zoning Objective B

To protect and improve rural amenity and to provide for the development of agriculture.

Specific Local Objective 48

It is an Objective of the Council to support the development of a multi-sport complex at St Thomas's, Tibbradden Road.

Previous Planning Applications

DLR P/1319/15: Change of use and development of St. Thomas House and lands for sports and recreation use.

DLR PC/PKS/01/19: Proposed Development of a Running Track & Associated Facilities at St. Thomas Estate, Tibbradden Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16 in Proximity to a Protected Structure (St. Thomas House)



FIGURE 1: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE LOCATION (RED OUTLINE) WITHIN THE ST. THOMAS ESTATE (BLUE OUTLINE)

HISTORY

St. Thomas House is one of many country houses which were developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the relatively prosperous south Dublin area with rich farmland within easy reach of the city. Marlay House nearby is another example. Other significant buildings such as Killakee House, Cloragh and Larch Hill are no longer standing. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage dates the house between 1760 – 1816 and the appraisal entry states that St. Thomas House is a country house representing an important component of the late eighteenth-century domestic built heritage of south County Dublin

“with the architectural value of the composition confirmed by such attributes as the deliberate alignment maximising on scenic vistas overlooking gently rolling grounds; the compact plan form centred on a Classically-detailed doorcase not only demonstrating good quality workmanship, but also showing a simplified “peacock tail” fanlight; and the diminishing in scale of the openings on each floor producing a graduated tiered visual effect with the principal “apartments” or reception rooms defined by Wyatt-style tripartite glazing patterns: meanwhile, aspects of the composition illustrate the later “improvement” of the country house to a design (1930) by Bradbury and Evans (formed 1926) of South Frederick Street, Dublin (Irish Builder 8th November 1930, 1011). Having been well maintained, the elementary form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, both to the exterior and to the interior where contemporary joinery; restrained chimneypieces; and decorative plasterwork enrichments, all highlight the artistic potential of the composition. Furthermore, adjacent outbuildings (extant 1837) continue to contribute positively to the group and setting values of a self-contained suburban estate having historic connections with the Unthank family (Lewis 1837 II, 713); a succession of tenants of the Guinness family including William Bright (----), ‘Civil Servant – Staff Clerk’ (NA 1911); Mary Catherine “May” Guinness (1863-1955), artist and ‘the elderly godmother of the Irish Modernists [whose joined her] for regular tea parties at her home where works by Bonnard, Braque, Matisse, Picasso and Rouault lined the walls’ (Guinness 2006); and the McDowell family including Major Thomas Bleakley McDowell (1923-2009), Chairman and Chief Executive of “The Irish Times”. (NIAH, accessed February 2024)



FIGURE 2: VIEW OF ST THOMAS HOUSE AND FORMAL DEMENSE



FIGURE 3: ORDNANCE SURVEY 1837 MAP WITH THE SITE LOCATION (RED OUTLINE) WITHIN THE ST. THOMAS ESTATE (BLUE OUTLINE)

Figure 3 Extract from the 6 inch map indicated date of 1837

St. Thomas House appears as a substantial property with a walled garden laid out to the south of the house and three ranges of farm outbuildings and farmyard enclosures to the west of the house. The house is approached via a tree lined avenue accessed from Mutton Lane (now Tibbradden Road). The area shaded appears to indicate the formal demesne and the farmland attached is unclear. There is a stream indicated along the boundary to the east of the estate. The areas within which the subject site is located appear to be agricultural fields and have no direct connection to Saint Thomas House. There appears to be an access to the farm outbuildings.

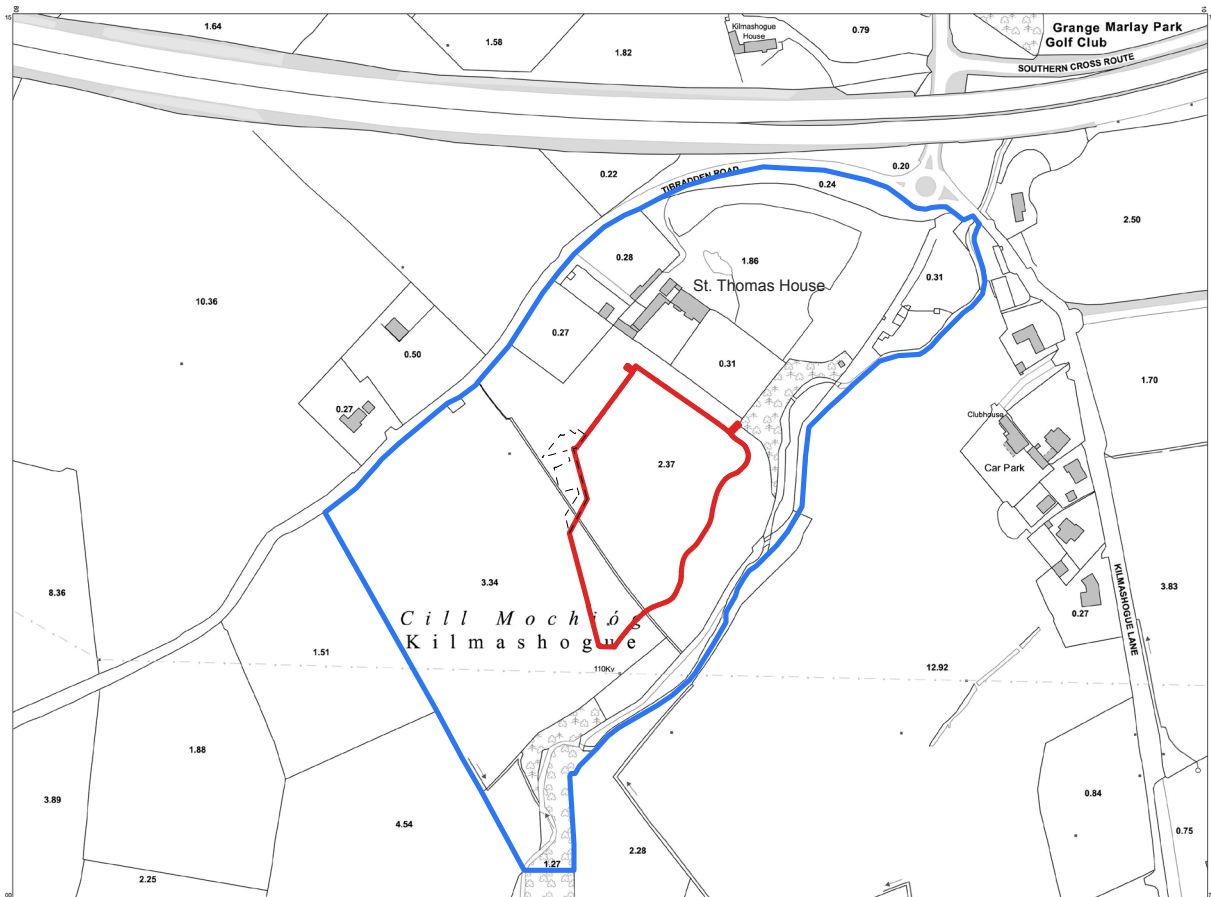


FIGURE 4: OSI 2024 MAP WITH THE SITE LOCATION (RED OUTLINE) WITHIN THE ST. THOMAS ESTATE (BLUE OUTLINE)

Figure 4 Extract from the OSI 1:2,500 map indicated date of 2024

The development of the M50 motorway in the late 1990s has had a major impact on the demesne of St. Thomas. As can be seen in Figure 4 the motorway has cut through the original parkland to the front of the house significantly altering the views north from the house. Spoil from the development of the M50 has been piled up along the new front boundary of the estate creating a very high berm along the northern edge of the site and completely altering the site levels. The new boundary wall is formed with unrendered concrete block. A small ornamental pond has been developed in front of the house. This is not part of the original setting and it has been suggested that it was formed in order to deal with the surface water run off caused by the altered ground levels in this area. There has also been a loss of material from some of the farm outbuildings although the enclosing walls of the farmyard areas remain intact. The area to the south of the farm outbuildings and walled garden, within which the site is located, remains accessible through a pillared gate. To note, the recent development of phase one of the sports campus has significantly altered the agricultural character of the original fields and these lands are now almost entirely separated from the immediate context of the house and its attendant grounds.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development comprises (1) a single storey activities and administration building of 1,517m² with 4.5m floor to ceiling clearance generally, (2) a single storey sprint track enclosure of c.858m² with 3.5m rising to 5.0m floor to ceiling clearance and (3) site landscaping to settle the building into its immediate context and to tie in with existing facilities delivered in phase 1. To note, the massing and extent of the proposed development is significantly smaller than that of the building granted planning permission under PC/PKS/01/19 which is comprised of a four court multipurpose sports hall, a gymnastics hall and an indoor sprint track.

The organic footprint of the building and enclosure responds both to the internal functions of the distinct spaces and activities and to the surrounding landscape to create character areas with distinct captured views from inside. The entrance area is located to be immediately visible from the main gates on Tibbradden Road, constructed as part of phase one of the sports campus development. The arms of the café and lounge open up to gently shelter/welcome athletes and visitors alike to the main foyer reception space; from there to the existing athletics track, the activity studios, the offices, etc. The irregular planform allows the building to operate with the minimal amount of corridors resulting in a highly efficient floor plate. The main activity studios contain a combination of folding partitions and movable dividing acoustic curtains providing very flexible space to cater to multiple activities and classes. The changing rooms are located close to the external track and include a secondary changing area for specific track days where larger crowds are expected. Support facilities for the café, along with offices, consultation rooms and a teaching kitchen are provided close to the main foyer and will each contribute to the goal of ensuring the building is used and occupied by as wide a range of ages and abilities as possible at all hours of the day. The proposed hybrid structural scheme will look at a cost effective way of providing the required clear span spaces in the activity halls. Primarily using steel and concrete with wall coverings comprised of acoustic boards will give the most durable finish to the spaces that will take the most impact. The more publicly accessible 'front of house' areas will be constructed in timber giving a warm welcoming environment for all entering the building whether using or waiting for others to use the building. The mechanical and electrical schemes will provide the most efficient use of services and where possible will provide natural ventilation instead of mechanical ventilation. In certain spaces mechanical services will be provided such as kitchens, showers and WC's. Space heating will be provided through an underfloor heating system that allows the heat energy to be concentrated at lower levels instead of heating large open spaces at high level which often results in high operation costs relative to the benefit received.

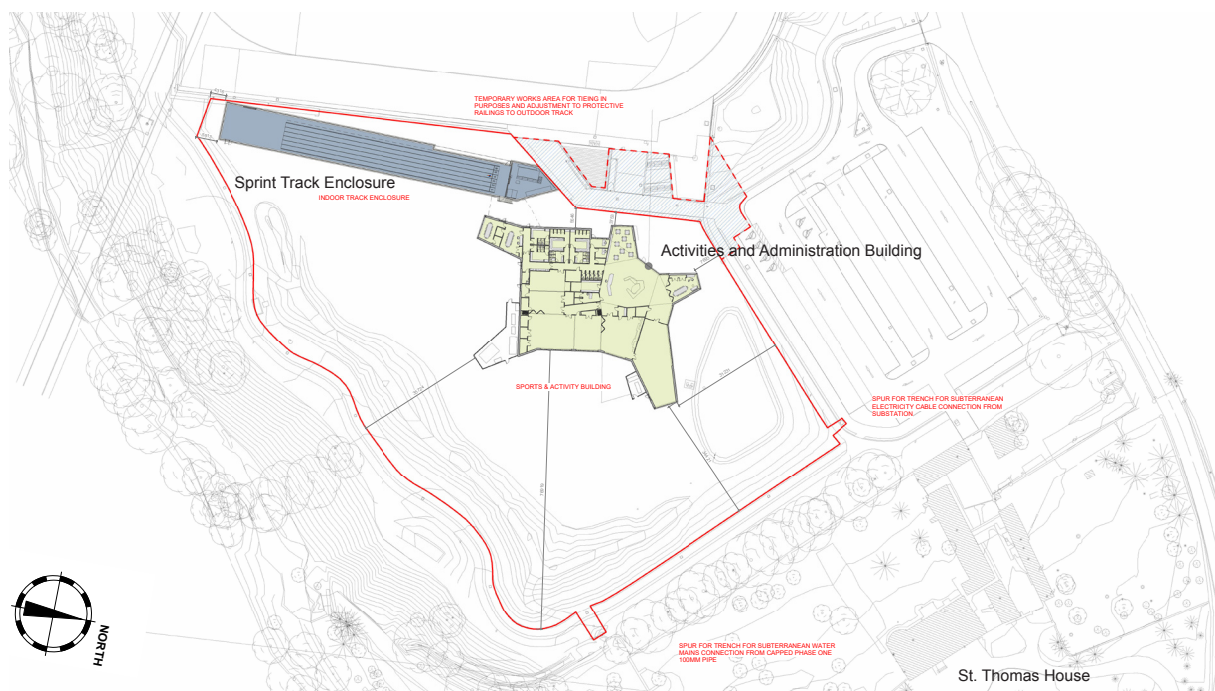


FIGURE 5: SITE LAYOUT



FIGURE 6: VERIFIED VIEW OF APPROACH TO ACTIVITIES AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING FROM MAIN GATES

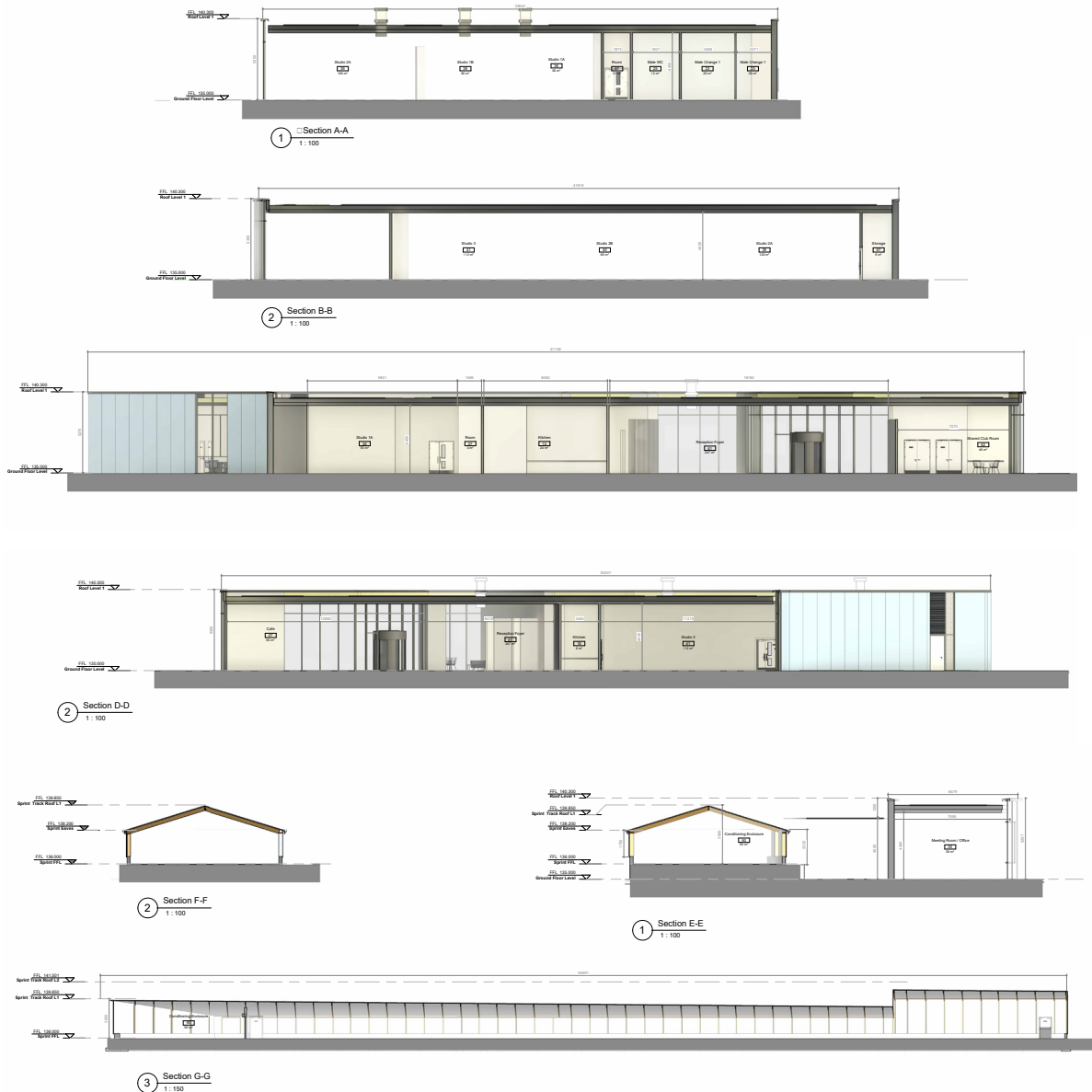


FIGURE 7: PROPOSED SECTIONS AND ELEVATIONS

APPRAISAL OF IMPACT WITH REFERENCE TO HERITAGE

This statement has been prepared in response to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht requirement that all development proposals potentially impacting on Protected Structures and places designated as Architectural Conservation Areas and candidate Architectural Conservation Areas shall have regard to the 2011 Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines (AHPG). While the proposed development set out in this instance does not materially impact on St Thomas House, a protected structure, and no Architectural Conservation Areas or candidate Architectural Conservation Areas are involved, the fact that it is situated in the extended attendant grounds of St Thomas House warrants an appraisal of impact with reference to heritage, specifically as set out in Chapter 13 Section 7 of the AHPG 'Development within the Attendant Grounds'. To follow is an item by item account of this appraisal. In developing this appraisal a full consideration has been given to the Conservation Report prepared by O'BFA Architects to accompany the Part 8 application for planning permission for more extensive development in the attendant grounds of St Thomas House with reference PC/PKS/01/19.

Nature of Proposed Development

Construction of an activities and administrative building (single storey), an indoor running track enclosure (single storey) and associated landscaping at a site within the grounds of St Thomas House, Tibbradden Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16. St Thomas House is on the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council Record of Protected Structures, Register Reference no.1657, Map no.5.

Mitigation of Proposed Development

The buildings and the enclosure are set back some distance (over 80 metres and over 100 metres respectively) from the walled perimeter along Tibbradden Road and the single storey frontage provides limited but appropriate visual register from the main gates. The single storey frontage is not high enough to register visually from St Thomas House beyond the high courtyard garden walls and tree lined perimeter avenue beyond those walls to the south. In addition, site constraints that require the berming of any excavated material within the formal site outline for the proposed development provide for further visual screening of the proposed development from St Thomas House.

Impact of Proposed Development

The proposed development does not impact on St Thomas House either materially or visually and therefore the essential character of St Thomas House is not altered.



FIGURE 8: BERMING, AND TREE LINED AVENUE TO OUTSIDE COURTYARD WALL TO SOUTH OF ST THOMAS HOUSE

re AHPG Section 13.7.2

a) Would the development affect the character of the protected structure?

The proposed development does not impact on St Thomas House either materially or visually and therefore the essential character of St Thomas House is not altered.

b) Would the proposed works affect the relationship of the protected structure to its surroundings and attendant grounds?

The proposed development does not impact on the relationship between St Thomas House and its surroundings and attendant grounds - see Figure 9.



FIGURE 9: ELEVATED VIEW TOWARDS ST THOMAS HOUSE ACROSS THE FRONT OF THE SUBJECT SITE

c) Would the protected structure remain the focus of its setting? For example, a new building erected between a structure and a feature within the attendant grounds will alter the character of both.

Yes, the essential character of St Thomas House remains unaltered.

d) Do the proposed works require an alteration of the profile of the landscape, for example, the creation of a golf course? How would this affect the character of the protected structure and its attendant grounds?

The proposed development will require excavation for foul water treatment and foundations. Site constraints require the berming of any excavated material within the formal site outline for the proposed development, over and above that already existing. This will extend the existing visual screening of the proposed development from St Thomas House leaving any visual connection, or lack of, unaffected.

e) Do the proposals respect important woodland and parkland? Do they conserve significant built features and landscape features?

The proposed development does not impact on existing woodland and parkland, and additional tree planting to enhance surrounding woodland and parkland is proposed.

f) Are there important views of or from the structure that could be damaged by the proposed development? Would important vistas be obstructed by new development?

No, Figure 3 would suggest that since 1837 the high walled garden laid out to the south of Saint Thomas House precludes a visual connection between St Thomas House and the site of the proposed development.

g) Would distant views of important architectural or natural landmarks be blocked or changed? Would a significant skyline be altered?

No, there are no distant views of important architectural or natural landmarks from St Thomas House to be blocked or changed by the proposed development.

h) Even where the proposed development is at a distance from the protected structure, could it still have an impact? This could include tall or bulky buildings interrupting views of or from the protected structure and other features of the designed landscape.

No, there are no distant views of important architectural or natural landmarks from St Thomas House to be blocked or changed by the proposed development.

i) Where the new works would not be directly visible from the protected structure, would they be visible from the approaches to the structure or from other important sites or features within the attendant grounds? If so, would this be acceptable?

The proposed development is not visible from the principal approach to St Thomas House but is visible from the gateway between the farm outbuildings and the former agricultural fields beyond to the south. The single storey extent of the proposed development and the introduction of berming in the area to the north of the proposed development will ensure that the visual impact from that gateway location is negligible.

j) What effect would the scale, height, massing, alignment or materials of a proposed construction have on the protected structure and its attendant grounds?

The proposed development will have a negligible impact on the attendant grounds and no material or visual impact on the St Thomas House protected structure.



FIGURE 10: VIEW ACROSS THE SUBJECT SITE TOWARDS ST THOMAS HOUSE AND THE FARMYARD ENCLOSURE

