



Planning Ref: **P82024.10**

18 July 2024

Director of Services-Planning
Kildare County Council
Head Office Áras Chill Dara
Devoy Park
Naas
Co Kildare
W91 X77F

Upload: <https://planning.localgov.ie/>

Re: Notification under Article 28 (Part 4) or Article 82 (Part 8) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

Proposed Development: Kildare County Council: Part 8 for the Proposed Redevelopment of The Wonderful Barn: Barnhall, Leixlip, Co. Kildare

A Chara,

I refer to correspondence in connection with the above further information received.

Outlined below are heritage-related observations/recommendations co-ordinated by the Development Applications Unit under the stated headings

Archaeology

The Department has reviewed the documents submitted in support of the planning application. These include two desk-based Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) reports (Options Appraisal stage and Planning stage) prepared by AECOM Ltd; dated November 2022 and May 2024. It is noted that the desktop study does not include all available documentary research¹ and the reports appear to erroneously rate the archaeology of this unique 18th century designed landscape as being of 'low significance' (Planning Stage AIA report - 'Potential Impacts' - Sections 7.5 to 7.8).

The Department does not concur with this rating/categorisation and considers it prudent to highlight that the heritage value of this landscape has been significantly eroded in recent years and thus, what remains (both above and below ground) must be considered to be significant and should be sensitively protected and enhanced.

¹ e.g. Ó Drisceoil C. *The wider Castletown: the designed landscape of the Wonderful Barn and Barn Hall* in Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies, Journal of the Irish Georgian Society, Vol. XX, 2017.



Notwithstanding the 'low' heritage value assigned to the sub-surface archaeology of this designed landscape in the AIA reports, the Department broadly concurs with the recommended mitigation strategies contained therein. Therefore, in line with national policy – see *Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (1999) – the Department recommends that a Project Archaeologist, with experience of buildings archaeology, be appointed to work with the Conservation Architects in the design and implementation of all conservations works to the Wonderful Barn structure and its environs. It is further recommended that the appointed Project Archaeologist carry out a comprehensive programme of Archaeological Test Excavation of areas where ground disturbance is proposed, in advance of commencement of the development. Thereafter, the appointed Archaeologist should be retained to carry out licensed Archaeological Monitoring all other groundworks during the construction phase.

The Department further recommends that the below wording be reproduced *verbatim* in any approval of planning that may issue. This will ensure that all appropriate mitigation strategies for the protection of the archaeological heritage are applied to the project. These conditions align with Sample Conditions C.5 and C.6 as set out in *OPR Practice Note PN03: Planning Conditions* (October 2022), with appropriate site-specific additions/adaptations based on the particular characteristics of this development and the recommendations of the Archaeological Impact Assessment report.

Archaeological Conditions – Pre-development Phase

1. All mitigation measures in relation to archaeology as set out in the Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) report (AECOM Ltd; May 2024) submitted in support of the planning application shall be implemented in full, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the below conditions. In this regard, the developer shall:
 - (a) Retain/engage a suitably qualified Project Archaeologist, with experience of buildings archaeology, to work with the Conservation Architects to advise on, and input to, the design and implementation of appropriate mitigation strategies to protect, enhance and record the archaeological heritage of the Wonderful Barn structure and its environs. The Archaeologist, in consultation with the Planning Authority and the Department, shall advise on the development and curation of the proposed 'Archaeological Yard'.
 - (b) In advance of commencement of development, the Archaeologist shall carry out a comprehensive programme of Archaeological Test Excavation of all areas where significant ground disturbance is proposed.
 - (c) The Archaeological Test Excavation must be carried out under licence from the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and in accordance with an approved method statement; note a period of 4-5 weeks should be allowed in any schedule to facilitate processing and approval of the licence application and method statement.



- (d) Test trenches shall be excavated at locations chosen by the Archaeologist, having consulted the site drawings. Excavation is to take place to the uppermost archaeological horizons only, where they survive. Where archaeological material is shown to be present, the Archaeologist shall suspend works in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Department, regarding appropriate mitigation. Please note that all features/archaeological surfaces within the test trenches are to be hand-cleaned and clearly visible for photographic purposes.
- (e) Archaeological Test Excavation shall be informed and supplemented by licensed metal detection survey.
- (f) Having completed this element of archaeological works, the Archaeologist shall submit a written report on the results of the Archaeological Test Excavation for the written approval of the Planning Authority and the Department. The report shall comment on the degree to which the extent, location and levels of all sub-surface works required for the development will affect the archaeological remains. This should be illustrated with appropriate plans, sections, etc.
- (g) Where archaeological material is shown to be present, further mitigation measures will be required; these may include redesign to allow for preservation *in situ*, excavation and/or monitoring as deemed appropriate. The Department will advise the Planning Authority with regard to these matters.

Archaeological Conditions – Development Phase

- 2. During construction, the Archaeologist shall monitor (licensed as required under the National Monuments Acts) all remaining ground works, including breaking/removal of surfaces, service installations and/or the implementation of agreed preservation *in situ* measures associated with the development. The use of appropriate machinery to ensure the preservation and recording of any surviving archaeological remains shall be necessary. No ground disturbance shall take place in the absence of the Archaeologist without his/her express consent.
- (a) Should further archaeological remains be identified during the course of Archaeological Monitoring, works shall be suspended in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Department, regarding appropriate mitigation (preservation *in situ* / excavation).
- (b) The developer shall facilitate the Archaeologist in recording any remains identified. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the Planning Authority, following consultation with the Department, shall be complied with by the developer.
- (c) Following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation specialist analysis, the Planning Authority and the Department shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of the monitoring



and any subsequent archaeological investigative work/excavation required. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

- (d) The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall include the location of any and all archaeological constraints relevant to the proposed development, as set out in the AIA report and as may become relevant during the course of the Archaeological Test Excavation and subsequent monitoring. The CEMP shall clearly describe all identified likely archaeological impacts, both direct and indirect, and present appropriate mitigation measures to be employed to protect the archaeological and cultural heritage environment during all phases of site preparation and construction activity.
- (e) All contractors and construction personnel shall be apprised of the locations and sensitivities of the heritage assets within the development site. This shall be done through the appropriate dissemination of the CEMP and tool-box talk/s given by the Archaeologist.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation (either *in situ* or by record) of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.

Built Heritage

The Wonderful Barn, designed to close the great vista of the eastern axis from Castletown House, is an integral part of the cultural landscape of this nationally/internationally significant C18th estate. The subject site in the ownership of the Local Authority has unique architectural character arising from the design intent to create an ‘eye catcher’ in the landscape, the diversity of building typologies, and their unusual structural form and courtyard arrangement. The conservation of this complex to benefit the wider community is welcomed.

The Department notes that it is very important that all proposed interventions to the cultural landscape are carefully considered as part of a fully co-ordinated approach to the overall landscape design and setting of the historic Castletown House. In particular, attention should be given to the retention of historic specimen trees, and to planting appropriate to the historic setting and informed by assessment of the surviving garden spaces. The appropriate enhancement of historic boundaries and the screening of this cultural site from the impact of adjoining residential development is welcomed.

The Department understands that the proposed redevelopment of the Wonderful Barn aims to restore the existing structures on the site, including one house, one barn (two dovecotes, a walled garden and two adjacent courtyards containing two stable buildings (all protected structures – RPS no. B11-15). The proposed works will protect and enhance the architectural heritage and cultural landscape of the site and provide an integrated public amenity park and tourism destination at the Wonderful Barn and associated lands, informed by a detailed conservation plan.



The Department recognises the benefit this proposal offers to community engagement, to the provision of diverse recreational and cultural amenities and to the creation of a tourism offer that complements the principal structure (Castletown House). Furthermore, the Department welcomes the carefully considered conservation and reuse as an exemplar to inform regeneration of other under-utilised traditional buildings.

It is recommended that:

1. The Local Authority should engage the services of a Grade 1 Conservation Architect or equivalent to guide and advise on areas of historic fabric intervention, remaking, repair and discovery in order to achieve a high-quality design and conservation outcome in accordance with the architectural heritage protection guidelines, 2011, best practice and conservation principles and with regard to the conservation plan for the Wonderful Barn.
2. The design of replacement windows in historic openings should be informed by research into the correct proportions and details based on a detailed analysis of drawn/photographic evidence, surviving joinery or features in the structure.
3. The Conservation Architect should record as necessary all conservation works undertaken as part of the project to maintain a permanent record. The unusual use of clay roof tiles as a historic roof covering in this context is noted. The restoration/salvage of this roof covering is supported where detailed assessment suggests that this roof finish is appropriate.
4. Interventions to the cultural landscape should have regard to the protected views and vistas and should be carefully considered as part of a fully co-ordinated approach to the overall the landscape design setting of the historic Castletown House

You are requested to send any further communications to this Department's Development Applications Unit (DAU) at manager.dau@npws.gov.ie :

Is mise le meas,

Diarmuid Buttimer
Development Applications Unit
Administration