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4801 – Newbrook Luxury Suites

Newbrook House, Taylor's Lane, Dublin

Conservation Report

27 July 2021

North (front) façade of Newbrook House from Taylor's Lane

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INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared to accompany the planning application for a new care home at Taylor's Lane, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16, Co. Dublin, D16 N9C2, as Newbrook House sits within the site and is a protected structure. The house is recorded as Registration No. 11216028. The rating is "Regional". It is dated in the registration as 1820-1870, although other texts found state an earlier date.

The record includes the following:

Description

Detached single- and two-storey house, c.1840. Roughcast rendered walls. Slate hung to west. Gothic windows with Y-tracery, some set in bow fronted elevation. Hipped slate roof, conical to bow, with chimney stack to rear.

Appraisal

Small attractive house showing above the walled grounds of building supplies business. Retains much original fabric.

Aerial View of Existing Site. Boundary outlined in red. Newbrook House highlighted in yellow.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Copyright – Ordinance Survey
Historic map with current site boundary imposed.
(It is posible that the acuracy of the historic map is poor such that the eastern mill pond would fit into the eastern extension of the site.)

Newbrook House dates back to the mid-18th century, when Newbrook House and neighbouring Kingston were built as part of Newbrook Mill, a paper mill, on Taylor's Lane. It is a two-storey detached residential house with an internal area of about 67sqm.

The paper mill and manufacturing business was started in the mid-18th century by John Mansergh, who died in 1763. In the 18th century, there was a large number of mills in the area around Rathfarnham and Whitechurch on the banks of the River Dodder and the Owendoher River. Each of these mills had a mill pond and they were fed by the same mill stream, which was taken from the Owendoher River at Edmonstown. The Newbrook stream enters the present site and is culverted (possibly historically as part of the mill development), where it runs down through the location of the mill buildings and continues under Taylor's Lane.

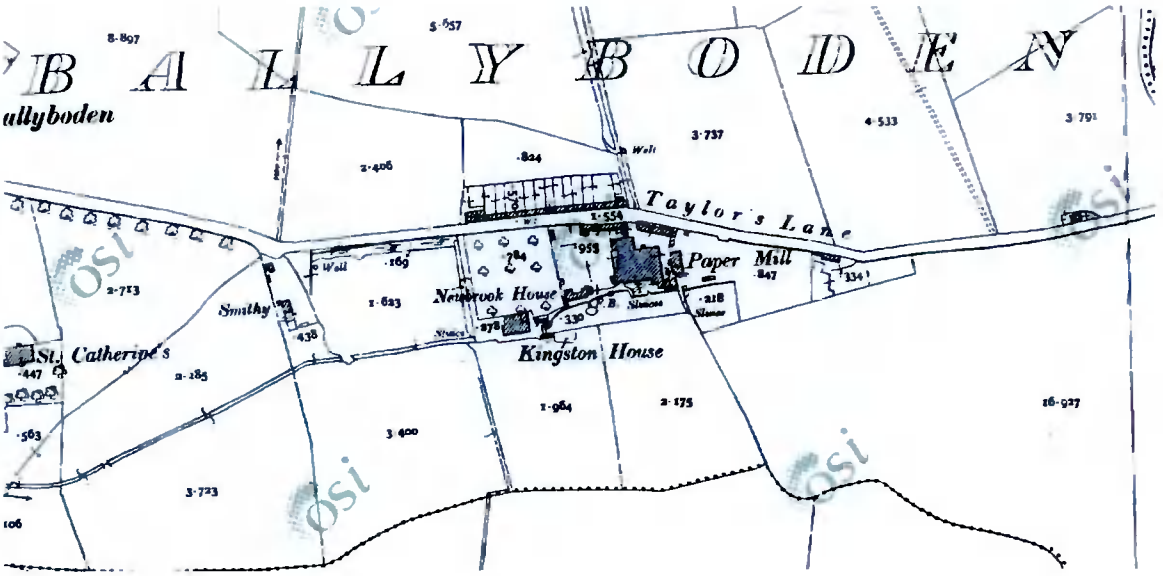
Extensive paper manufacturing continued to be carried on for many years at Newbrook Mill under the name of the Mansergh family until 1846. The McDonagh family then lived at Newbrook House for most of the Victorian period and ran Newbrook Mill until 1897 as John McDonough & Sons.

James McDonagh, JP, who was a magistrate for Rathfarnham, lived at Kingston House, which has since been demolished but it is remembered in street names nearby. His sons Richard McDonagh, also a Justice of the Peace for Rathfarnham, and Thomas McDonagh lived at Newbrook House. Newbrook later returned to the Irwin family, and from 1901 to 1935 the mill was operated by Sir John Irwin, who lived in Newbrook House.

Newbrook Mill was extensively damaged in a fire in 1942 and it was demolished later. The site was used latterly as a builder's merchant, but is now vacant. The house has been vacant for a number of years.

BUILDING CONDITION

The building appears to have been extended to the west at some point as evidenced when comparing the footprint on the historic map with the current building. There is no visible evidence on the building itself to indicate that there has been an extension or where the extension line started.



Copyright - Ordinance Survey
Map showing the historic building with no curved bay, and no extension to the west.

The building has suffered from years of neglect, particularly recently where the site has been vacant.

The rear elevation of the house – note projected ground floor wall face.

On the rear elevation there is evidence that a single storey structure existed. This could have been a single storey building or a courtyard wall. The more modern upper storey wall is set back from the ground floor wall and the set back composed of an angled section of render. This render will be vulnerable to water ingress and should be detailed to protect the ground floor structure. An intrusive survey should be instructed to establish the construction of both sections of the building. This survey should establish the original finish condition of the wall with a view to re-establishing this finish if possible.

The following conditions were noted during inspection:

GENERAL

The building is being overgrown with vegetation. All vegetation should be cleared from the building face and to a 2m perimeter around the building footprint.

Remove redundant services and metalwork from building façade.

Carry out full structural survey of building and act on recommendations.
[Note: Large structural crack is evident in the west side of the bow frontage.]

ROOF

There is significant evidence of water ingress internally. The full roof requires to be striped and replaced to protect the interior.

Bowed concrete tile roof.

Roof under concrete tiles appears to be bowed. Carry out structural assessment and repair as necessary.

Strip all roofing back to sarking.

Note patterned slates to rear of main façade.

[Take care to rescue methodically, the shaped slate patterns to the rear of the main upper section.]
Discard redundant services.
Discard concrete tiles.
Repair sarking and roof timbers where required.
Repair/renew lead flashings in accordance with The Lead Sheet Association guidance.
Lay breather membrane
Fix reclaimed slates to from existing and new (Cupa 9" Heavy) as required (use existing for front elevations).
Fix lead ridge flashings in accordance with The Lead Sheet Association guidance.
Install ventilation to roofs through concealed continuous vents over gutter and at new ridge flashing (to allow insulation to be installed in loft).


Rainwater staining at north east corner.

There is evidence of water shedding out from behind the front elevation parapet at the east end. This should be inspected and roof alterations considered, or installation of cast iron hopper and downpipe considered at this location.

Gutters
Replace rear plastic gutters with cast iron half round.
Jet all downpipes to ensure clear running.

Replace parapet gutters with new code 8 lead sheet, stepped in accordance with The Lead Sheet Association guidance.
Install overflows to all sections of parapet gutters.

Flashings
Closely inspect all flashings. Replace where necessary in accordance with The Lead Sheet Association guidance.

Chimneys and pots
Remove TV aerial.
See below for render.
Ensure drip on chimney caps (closely inspect caps to establish condition).
Allow for lime mortar repairs/replacement for haunching of pots.
Install vent caps in terracotta to match pots.

Downpipes
Replace with cast iron where required.

Parapet stones

Part of front elevation showing stains at every parapet joint.

Closely inspect and repair/replace as required.
Install lead flashing cap over parapet stones with drip clear of face.

Eaves boards
Closely inspect all roof edge woodwork and replace as necessary with redwood timber (assuming existing wood is pine) to match existing profiles.
Decorate on completion.

Rooflights?
None thought to be present.

WALLS

Render
The rear elevations appear to be rendered with a modern material. Take samples and establish materials used.
Agree with Planning on repair material.
Investigate possibility of installing insulated render to rear elevation only to improve the thermal performance of the building.

The chimney and front façade are rendered with roughcast which is likely to be modern. Take samples and establish original material.

Whilst the render may not be original, it appears to be in good condition (to be hammer tested to confirm) and to remove it could involve damage to neighbouring fabric. It is proposed to retain the render and paint white with Keim mineral paint on completion. This includes smooth cornice band at top of building.

[Graffiti should be partially removed to avoid showing through first.]

There is a large section of render which has delaminated at the west end of the front elevation. One, or perhaps two, full elevation sections are to have remaining render removed and walls re-rendered to match the existing material.

Window/Door surrounds

No surrounds on rear elevation, only minimal stone cill. No action required.

Window surrounds in front elevation are generally in good condition. Remove loose paint, closely inspect, repair with mortar repairs to match existing mortar type, decorate.

Window frames

The windows visible to the rear appear to be modern in relation to the original building. They appear weather worn and will likely require significant repair. As they are modern, they should be repaired with highly insulated windows (double/triple glazed) to improve the overall energy performance of the building.

The ground floor windows should be replaced with glazed, aluminium framed doors to allow access to the rear external amenity space (see "Design Development" below).

The front window frames appear in reasonable condition given their delicate patterning. Closely inspect, repair, restore any damage with matching materials, decorate.

Install secondary glazing within existing front windows to reduce energy loss.

There are a number of the main gothic style windows which are blocked up internally with what appears to be modern interventions. All these elements are to be removed to restore the original window opening.

Window glass

There are a significant number of broken glass panes. Where in the high quality original windows to the front elevation, these should be replaced with crown glass.

Doors

Retain existing front door and restore/decorate.

Replace rear door and frame with glazed aluminium framed door as required for new care home function (see "Design Development" below).

INTERIOR

Remove all modern fittings, fixtures and furniture.
Remove all services and establish methodology for installing new services concealed by finishes.

Where there are no, or minimal, cornices, install internal mineral wool insulation with new plasterboard on gypliner metal framing to improve thermal performance of building.

One of the primary room interiors.

There are a few rooms where high-quality finishes (shaped timber, decorative plasterwork) still exist. These rooms should be restored to a higher level with all finishes, made good and decorated.

Rot

Interior missing/disturbed structural timbers.

Closely inspect for rot and replace defective timbers.
Allow for repairs to stabilise structure.
[There is one floor which has collapsed and should be replaced.]

Plasterwork

Repair as necessary. Where existing plaster and lath exists, replace with lime based plaster. Where no historic plaster exists, repairs with plasterboard and skim coat.

The upper sections of some walls are textured. This is thought to be modern compared to the original building. This material should be tested for asbestos and the removed back to smooth finish (may require new lime based wet plaster on base brickwork).

Decorate.

Ceilings

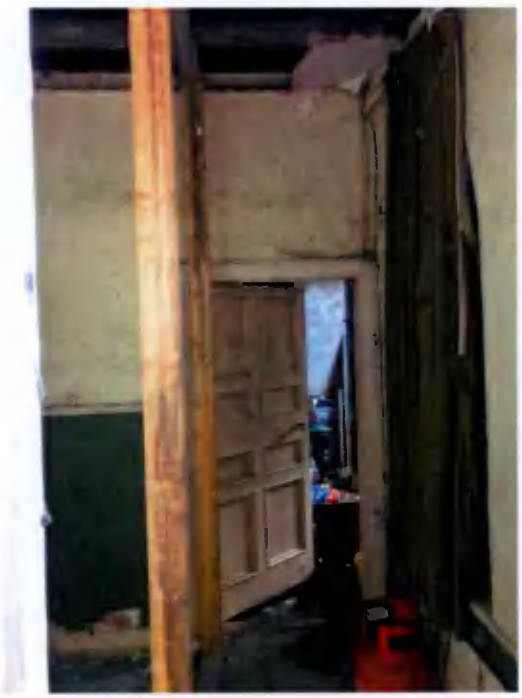
There are significant areas of ceilings which are either missing or damaged beyond repair. There will be significant new ceilings required. Where full new ceilings are to be installed these may be replaced with new plasterboard and skim coat finish.

Where possible, ceilings in the main rooms will be retained and repaired with lime based plaster. All ceilings are heavily cracked, and skim coating will be required on completion of repairs.

Cornicing
Skirtings/facings

Retain all finishing timber facings and skirtings where suitable for new use.
Decorate.

Doors



The existing door pattern.

Restore existing doors where suitable for new use.

Decorate.
Install new doors where required to existing pattern.

Stairs

Existing stairs – note sagging tread.

Repair timber stair structure where required.
Repair finishes timber.
Decorate.

Floors

Strip all floor finishes. Repair floor boards as required.
Assess opportunities to install insulation below floors.

Ironmongery (doors/windows)

Remove modern ironmongery.
Install new ironmongery to suit the care home use.

Other features

The two fireplaces.

There are several existing fireplaces in the house. One (left above) appears to be original. Others appear to be modern. Without a suitable replacement available and with recognition to the damage to adjacent fabric, it is proposed to retain the modern fireplaces in position.

EXTERNAL

Ground cover immediately around building perimeter
Clear to a perimeter of 2m and reassess wall/ground detail.
Investigate methods (including possible "French" gravel drain) to lower water level around building perimeter.

HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

The history of the site is strongly linked to the mill which is now lost. The house was originally shown with a formal garden to the north, down to Taylor's Lane, and parkland to the south. The parkland is now outwith the current site and built over with housing. The formal garden to the north is now returned to overgrown grassland.

The historic fabric is therefore confined to the house itself. The house is not particularly grand however it is composed of a definite style, particularly in the repeated gothic arched window and door openings (albeit two different window forms). It retains some of the original detailing as below:

- General form including curved bay and castellated parapet
- Gothic window and door forms
- Some existing window frames
- Main door and frame
- Shallow, curved eaves board
- Original (or at least historic) roof slates
- Internal plaster and timber features.

The presence of the mill stream is a reminder of the historical genesis and function of the house, and a reminder of an important time in the history of Rathfarnham, when the mills were a vital part of the local economy.

The house is of reasonable importance in terms of the local heritage.

ACTION REQUIRED

The house should be retained and restored in its current form, with original materials. As the site is to be developed into a care home, the opportunity should be taken to incorporate the house into the new design.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The design of the care home proposes to use the house as the primary entrance which enhances the status of the historic building. However, the main access to modern care homes required generous entrances with automatic, powered doors. It is also proposed to use the house interior as communal public space and as such a draught lobby is needed at the entrance.

The proposal includes a glass lobby constructed in front of the main entrance door. Whilst this is a modern structure sitting in front of the historic fabric it is to be constructed from minimally visible materials to show the original building façade as clearly as possible. The original door will act as an inner door to the lobby (with powered hydraulic opening devices) such that those entering will be able to appreciate the entrance façade of the historic building from the lobby, and yet the glass box will signal the entrance point down to Taylor's Lane and provide a comfortable access arrangement.

This intervention is viewed as appropriate due to the focus being put on the historic fabric and the overall retention and restoration of the original house.

The primary external amenity area for the care home will be behind Newbrook House and it is proposed to open up the rear ground floor of the building to this area. This is to be done by retaining the opening jambs on plan, but dropping the window cills to ground level, and installing glazed aluminium framed doors allowing access to the exterior.

Whilst this is a loss of historic material, the fabric to the rear of the house is of a lower quality and of limited historic value being plain rectangular openings and likely to be non-original replacements. In addition, the historic value of the retained house is enhanced by making it a primary node in the function of the house, and coupling the visible access to the amenity space to the rear of the house with the front entrance to the care home will enhance this value and allow greater appreciation of the historic asset.

It is noted that the mill stream is to be taken further out of the culvert and used as a landscape feature, further enhancing the historic nature of the site.

An explanatory board/display should be installed in the primary entrance space informing all those who take the time to read it about the history of the house and the mill site as a whole.