

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCILS

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION OFFICERS REPORT

RE: SD21A/0202–ROOKWOOD HOUSE, STOCKING LANE

Protected Structure

Rookwood House is referred to in the Council's Record of Protected Structures - Schedule 2 of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022 under Map Ref. No. 327. Under Section 2 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, the term 'structure' means "*any building, structure, excavation, or other thing constructed or made on, in, or under any land, or any part of a structure so defined, (a) where the context so admits, includes the land on, in or under which the structure is situate, and (b) in relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, includes (i) the interior of the structure, (ii) the land lying within the curtilage of the structure, (iii) any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors, and (iv) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures*". Therefore, the entire site is a protected structure, including all existing buildings on site including their exteriors, interiors, fixtures and fittings. The Protection also extends to the lands of the site and as such come under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Appraisal

The proposed development consists of the following; the setback, widening and relocation of a site entrance northwards along the public road, allowing for improved sight lines and it's repositioning, reordering and construction; a new pedestrian entrance; demolition of small shed/garage structure; filling-in of an existing swimming pool; demolition of a portion of the west flanking courtyard wall to re-establish a historic courtyard entrance. Construction of 11 residential units located surrounding Rookwood House (protected structure) on its associated grounds, made up of Section 1: The Gate Lodge consisting of Unit 1, [1.5-Storey two bed, 4 person detached dwelling (83.50sq.m); Section 2: Mews Houses consisting of Units 2, 3 & 4, (two storey three bed, four person terraced dwellings (105.10sq.m) and Unit 5 (two Storey, three bed, six person detached dwelling (138.00sq.m) and Section 3: Woodland Houses consisting of Units 6 & 9 (2.5-storey, four bed, six person detached dwellings (152.00sq.m), Units 7 & 10 (2.5-storey, four bed, six person semi-detached dwellings (152.00sq.m) and Units 8 & 11 (2.5-storey, three bed, six person semi-detached dwellings (125.90sq.m) and maintaining the existing Rookwood house (protected structure) as a residential house, as is; 22 car parking spaces, new pedestrian footpaths, internal road network, detailed landscaping, services and all associated works.

A pre-planning application was submitted and a meeting took place with the Planning Authority on the 14th November 2021. The principle of some development within the curtilage of the Protected Structure Rookwood House was considered to be acceptable if the proposed development could demonstrate its sensitivity to the setting of the Protected Structure and the retention of sufficient setting/grounds to Rookwood House. A number of items were highlighted by the undersigned and the undersigned advised that a design rationale and architectural impact assessment of the proposed development and justification for the alterations and relocation of the existing entrance would be required. Also it was advised that the proposed new gate lodge should be reduced in height and scale to ensure it reflected a more traditional type of gate lodge structure but should of contemporary design and materials so to read as a new addition to the site.

On foot of the pre-planning meeting the proposals to widen and relocate the existing entrance were discussed in greater detail and 3 sketch options for the treatment of the site entrance were proposed and submitted to the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer for consideration and to aid further discussion. The poor condition of the original wall was noted along with previous bad repairs and inappropriate methods/materials. It was generally agreed that road safety mitigated against retention of the original boundary and that the basic features of the original entrance should be incorporated in any new design i.e. gate piers, wing walls and guard stones.

The basis of the design rationale for the proposed development within the curtilage of Rookwood House has been considered using distinct typologies “woodland houses” reflecting the heavily wooded setting to the north. The “Mews Houses”, reflecting the outbuildings once associated with the Main House, and a “Gate lodge” to add interest and a level of surveillance to the main site entrance.

A design statement has been submitted as part of the planning application details, along with an Architectural Impact Assessment. Both look at the site context and setting of the protected structure while providing justification and rationale for the specific location of the proposed new dwellings, design type and materials. In particular a conservation development strategy has been provided as part of the Architectural Impact Assessment in providing an evaluation of the main house and its relationship with its grounds from a historical and contextual perspective. As part of this assessment a landscape capacity study identifies visual zones of influence and defines the boundary protection for the setting of the protected structure.

The enclosure and setting of the Protected Structure maintain sufficient space to provide an appropriate setting to Rookwood House. The design response provided allows distinct character areas within the original grounds that reflect the site context. This has allowed defined areas to be identified in delivering a building types and designs to reflect the site context and provide for a sensitive proposal.

The entrance and avenue will remain as a formal presence and approach to the Main House (Rookwood House), the proposed gate lodge structure was redesigned to be more modest in scale following pre-planning discussions. The undersigned advised that the insertion of the ‘Gate Lodge’ structure should reinterpret a traditional gate lodge in form with a contemporary finish. The proposed new gate lodge dwelling is two-bedroomed and mainly single-storey with attic space in one and a half storey section.

The proposed ‘Mews’ type development is a small terrace of three dwellings (Nos.2-4) as it was considered that this would help achieve a greater variety in the proposed house sizes across the site and this type of terrace would be more in keeping with the nature of a mews development as it located to the rear site of the Protected Structure. The design is intended to be simple to reflect the form of outbuildings associated with a larger house. The terrace roof is hipped at one end, in deference to Rookwood lodge and the ground floor is at a lower level. The plan form is double fronted and narrow in depth allowing rooms to face away from the site of the adjacent house at Coolamber. House type No. 5 has been in a similar form but includes a ground floor bedroom. It has been designed so that it could possibly adapt to suit specific needs and living type.

With regard to materials and finishes it is proposed to finish the new entrance walls, the gate lodge structure and the Mews Houses in lime render in keeping with the Main House, with slate roofs, timber windows and doors and small areas of zinc detailing.

Woodland development was revised after pre-planning discussions and a number of options were considered. The final proposal is considered the best approach given the location of this area to the Protected Structure with regard to views and taking account of the existing constraints within the woodland setting. It is proposed to cluster two small groups of houses, one at each end of the woodland area, retaining a large area of communal open space as an amenity area at the centre.

The overall design of the houses provides a wide frontage and shallow plan depth to provide for flexibility in place fenestration. Gables have been designed to act as principal elevations, clad with dark stained timber, aluclad timber windows, slate roofs and zinc cladding to the projecting elements on the gables and entrance canopies provides for a high quality building type that reflects the location setting reflective of woodland structures.

Where an opening is to be made in the wing wall to the west of the Main House, to create the new access route to the tennis court area, it will be done in the location of an historic opening which has been identified through historic resources/maps. Details of materials and finishes should be submitted for agreement and approval ensuring the overall design and finishes are appropriate at this location.

The proposed development is considered to be a contemporary high quality proposal and will be executed using materials that reflect the setting of the new dwellings allowing the new build to sit sensitively within the site. It is felt that the proposal has been sensitively designed to minimise any visual impact on the existing Protected Structure. The overall design and use of materials provide architectural interest and quality to the existing site providing contrast with the Georgian House and immediate setting. The new dwellings work well in the overall site context and in contrast to the historic setting and existing house which will remain identifiable as the dominant structure on the site.

Conclusion

Based on the above appraisal of the proposed development within the curtilage of Rookwood House, a Protected Structure, is considered to be a sensitive and high quality new development, which allows the immediate setting of Rookwood House to remain. The proposed development is considered a low density development that has provided a very considered response to maintain the character of the Protected Structure and its landscaped setting.

Recommendations

Based on the above it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable with the following conditions attached.

It is recommended that the following conditions be attached to a grant of permission:

The proposed development at Rookwood House, Protected Structure (RPS Ref. 327) should be fully completed in accordance with the details and particulars provided

Reason: To ensure all works are done in accordance with the agreed details and particulars ensuring best conservation practice, good design practice and high quality new build.

Safety measures should be put in place during the proposed works on site. A Safety Statement should be provided detailing how the existing structures will be protected during the proposed site works.

A safety statement should be submitted for written agreement with the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer prior to the commencement of development. Appropriate measures should be put in place to safeguard and protect the Protected Structure and all associated architectural features and landscape elements. It is considered that a suitable temporary boundary should be provided during construction as a buffer zone ensuring no construction machinery goes beyond the areas of proposed development.

Reason: To ensure the Protected Structure and all associated features are being safeguarded during the proposed development and appropriate safety measures are put in place to prevent any possible damage.

A schedule of materials and finishes should be provided for the proposed new additions/elements prior to commencing development. Although details of materials and finishes have been indicated there are elements which need to be confirmed ensuring the full and proper execution of these designed elements. This should include full details on materials and finishes for all elements of the proposed development.

Reason: To ensure high quality and appropriate material type throughout the proposed development and new build within the curtilage of a Protected Structure thereby promoting good design and practice.

It is proposed to reinstate an opening in the wing wall to the west of the Main House, to create the new access route to the tennis court area, it will be done in the location of a previous opening which has been identified on historic maps. The proposed opening is acceptable as it is considered that there are no negative visual impacts, however details of materials and finishes should be submitted for agreement and approval ensuring the overall design and finishes are appropriate at this location.

Reason: To ensure the correct materials and finishes in providing a reinstated entrance to the west of the Protected Structure.

A Method statement should be submitted detailing the works to the front boundary and main entrance detailing the works required and the revisions for the new entrance. Details and samples of the proposed materials should be included.

Reason: To ensure the proposed repairs and redesign element of the main entrance and boundary walls are carried out adhering to best practice using the correct materials.

The above conditions should be submitted to the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer (Ms. Irenie McLoughlin) for agreement and written approval prior to the commencement of development.

Irenie McLoughlin
Architectural Conservation Officer

Date: 10th September 2021

