

Heritage Impact Assessment

**Monkstown Active Travel Link and Public Realm
Enhancement: Proposed works at former railway
station, Monkstown, County Cork**

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1. Introduction

The Planning Directorate of Cork County Council have prepared proposals for the Monkstown Active Travel Link and Public Realm Enhancement Project. The proposals will extend the existing network of greenway in the Cork Harbour area. The proposals will require adjustments to the existing car park in Monkstown village (see **Figure 1** below). The existing car park is on the former site of an early twentieth-century railway station associated with the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway line extension which ran to Crosshaven.

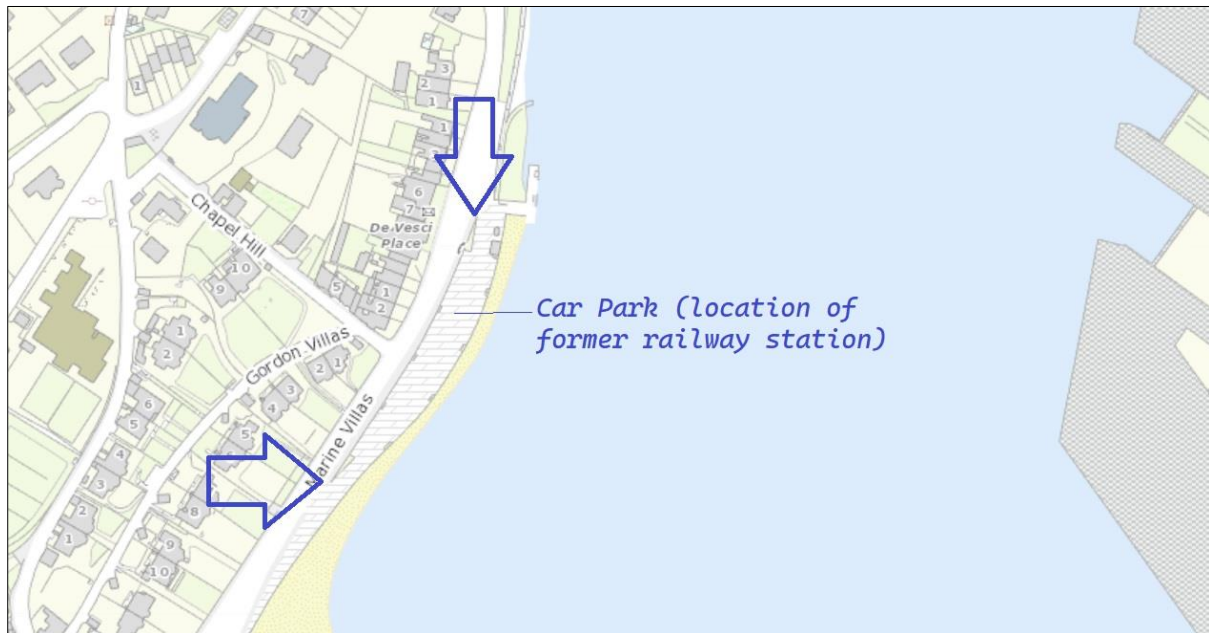


Figure 1: The ends of the subject wall highlighted by the blue arrows (Source: Historic Environment Viewer, Government of Ireland)

At the request of Cork County Council, John Cronin & Associates have prepared a Heritage Impact Assessment of the proposed works at former railway station in Monkstown. Two built heritage specialists (John Cronin BA MRUP MUBC MIAI and Ita O'Brien MA) from the offices of John Cronin & Associates undertook a field inspection of the car park to determine the nature and significance of any heritage features associated with this section of the proposed pedestrian and cycle route. The assessment also involved a review of design proposals prepared by Cork County Council's appointed public realm and transport designers, Urban Movement. This report should be read in conjunction with proposal drawings and associated documents prepared by and on behalf of Cork County Council.

2. Methodology

This report is based on a programme of desktop research, site inspection and desk-based assessment. The following sources were consulted as part of the desktop study:

- *Historic Environment Viewer* - The Historic Environment Viewer is an on-line digital service provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It has been developed to enhance the user's experience by facilitating access to the databases of the National Monuments Service's Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) in a seamless one-stop point of access for both built heritage data resources. The viewer is capable of being accessed on the majority of browsers and platforms, including smart phones.
- *Cartographic Sources* - The detail on cartographic sources can indicate past settlement and land use patterns in recent centuries and can also highlight the impact of modern developments and agricultural practices. This information can aid in the identification of the location and extent of unrecorded, or partially levelled, features of archaeological or architectural heritage interest. The cartographic sources examined for the study areas include the 1st edition of the 6-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (surveyed and published in the 1830s-40s), the Ordnance Survey map of 1876 and the 25-inch OS maps (surveyed and published 1887-1913).
- *Aerial photography* - In parallel with the cartographic study, a review publicly-accessible aerial photographic sources from the Ordnance Survey, Google and Bing Maps was undertaken.
- *Development Plans* - The local authority development plans relevant to the study area was consulted as part of this assessment. These plans outline the local authorities' policies for the conservation of the archaeological and architectural heritage resource and include the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and any designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The relevant development plan for the study area is the *Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028*.
- *National Inventory of Architectural Heritage* - The function of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage ('NIAH') is to record built heritage structures within the Republic of Ireland and to advise local authorities in relation to structures of interest within their areas.
- *Dictionary of Irish Architects* - The Dictionary of Irish Architects is an online database which contains biographical and bibliographical information on architects, builders and craftsmen born or working in Ireland during the period 1720 to 1940, and information on the buildings on which they worked. The Dictionary of Irish Architects was created and compiled in the Irish Architectural Archive over a period of thirty years. It was made publicly available online in January 2009. It remains a work-in-progress with new data added on a regular basis.

John Cronin and Ita O'Brien carried out an inspection of the subject site on 26/01/2023. The results of the site inspection are detailed in Section 4. The background research, assessment of impact and report preparation was undertaken by Ita O'Brien and John Cronin.

3. Context

Location

The subject site, a surface car park, is located on the waterfront of Monkstown village, within the townland of Monkstown. The site consists of the former railway station in Monkstown that was served by the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway line extension which ran to Crosshaven. The car park is not



Figure 2: Extract from Cork County Development Plan's online GIS system showing the extent of the Upper Monkstown Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) which is shaded in teal and outlined in red. The car park, indicated by the yellow arrow is located outside the ACA

Historical background

Monkstown is located to the south-east of Cork city in the barony of Kerrycurrihy, on the 'West Passage' or channel that separates the mainland from the Great Island in Cork Harbour. The name 'Monkstown' or *Baile na Monach* originated from an association with a small monastic group. It was recorded that a small group of Benedictine monks, belonging to the priory of St. John's, Waterford, in 1301 established an abbey, called Legan Abbey, in this townland. The abbey was set up on a piece of land granted to the monks by the McCarthy family. An early historical reference dating to 1450 refers to the area as *Villa Monachorum*. In 1539 King Henry VIII awarded the Monkstown lands to Sir John Travers, who was the Master of Ordnance in Ireland (Lewis 1837, 367).

Monkstown Castle was built in 1630s by John Archdeacon and his wife Anastasia. The castle is situated on high ground overlooking the south entrance into the West Passage (or Passage West) in Cork Harbour and it provides an ideal defensive location. The site of the castle itself is located to the southwest of the village, overlooking a steep glen. To the southwest of the castle is the site of Legan Abbey.

By the end of the eighteenth century “Monkstown was and important disembarkation point for soldiers and its castle was employed as a barracks” (Keohane 2020, 532). Keohane (*ibid*) states the following:

Road connection to Cork city was over the high ground to Rochestown. The coast road to Passage and Rafeen were constructed only in the 1820–30s. The village was a popular bathing and holiday resort from the early C19, increasingly so from the 1830s, set at distance from the industry at Passage West to the N, and direct access to Cork Harbour.

The Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway line was opened in 1850, making it Cork city’s earliest railway, and initially ran from the Cork terminus at City Park Station, Victoria Road as far as Passage West. The original Cork station was replaced by the Albert Street Station in 1873. The original 5ft 3in line was replaced with a narrow gauge 3ft track in 1902 and the line was extended as far as Crosshaven in 1904, with the Monkstown station opening on the 1st of August 1902.



Figure 3: Early twentieth-century photograph of the railway station in Monkstown

By 1909, eleven trains ran each way on weekdays from Cork to Crosshaven. The railway line was a popular route with passengers heading for Crosshaven on day trips and 1918 was its most profitable year with gross profits of £45,000. Extra carriages were borrowed from the Swilly and Donegal railway to accommodate the demand. During the Civil War Carrigaline bridge and part of the Douglas viaduct were destroyed. The company was incorporated into the Great Southern

Railway in 1924 but due to competition from road transport and economic depression, the line closed in 1932.



Figure 4: Historic photograph of the coastal side of the railway station platform – the platform has been removed for a large section of the landward/western platform wall

Cartographic review

The detail on historic cartographic sources demonstrates the nature of past settlements and land use patterns in recent centuries and can also highlight the impacts of modern developments and agricultural practices. This information can aid in the identification of the location and extent of unrecorded or partially levelled features of archaeological or architectural heritage interest. The cartographic sources examined for the study areas include the 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map (1837-42), the 1:1056 Ordnance Survey map of 1876 and the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (1888-1913).

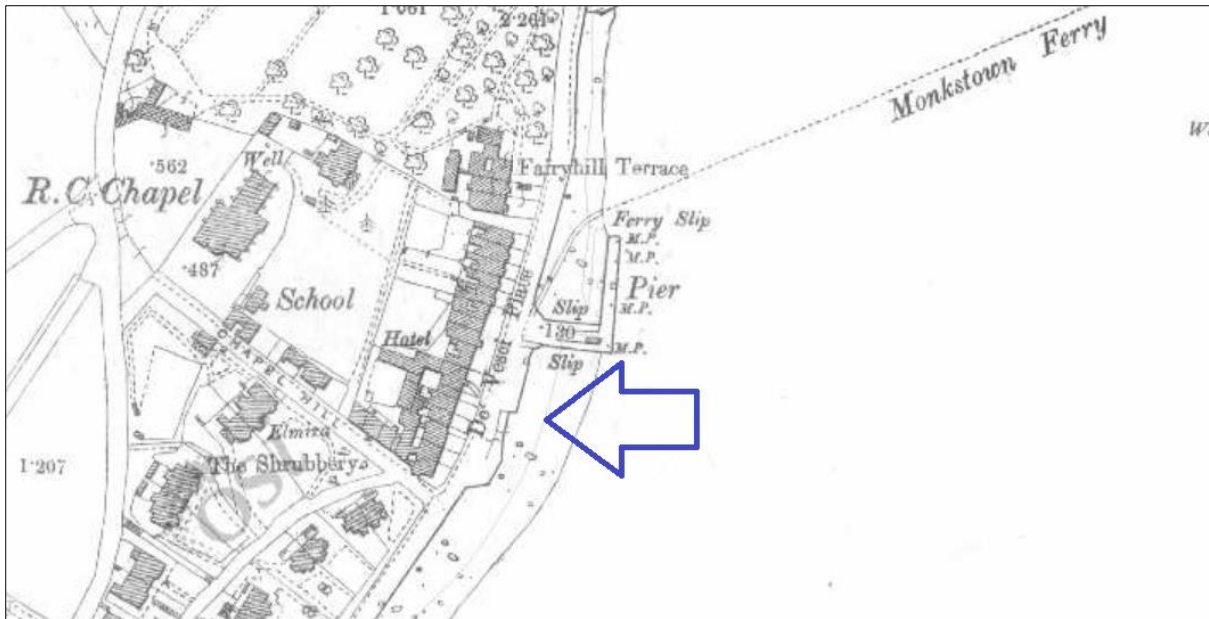


Figure 5: Extract from 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (1888-1913) showing the location of the railway station prior to its construction. The station was built immediately to the south of the pier from which the Monkstown Ferry operated (linking Monkstown and the Great Island) (Source: Government of Ireland, Historic Environment Viewer)

The 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (1888-1913) Ordnance Survey map (see **Figure 5** above) shows the area prior to the construction of the railway station. The station was built on the shoreline fronting coast road at De Vesce Place and immediately to the south of the pier from which the Monkstown Ferry operated (linking Monkstown and the Great Island).

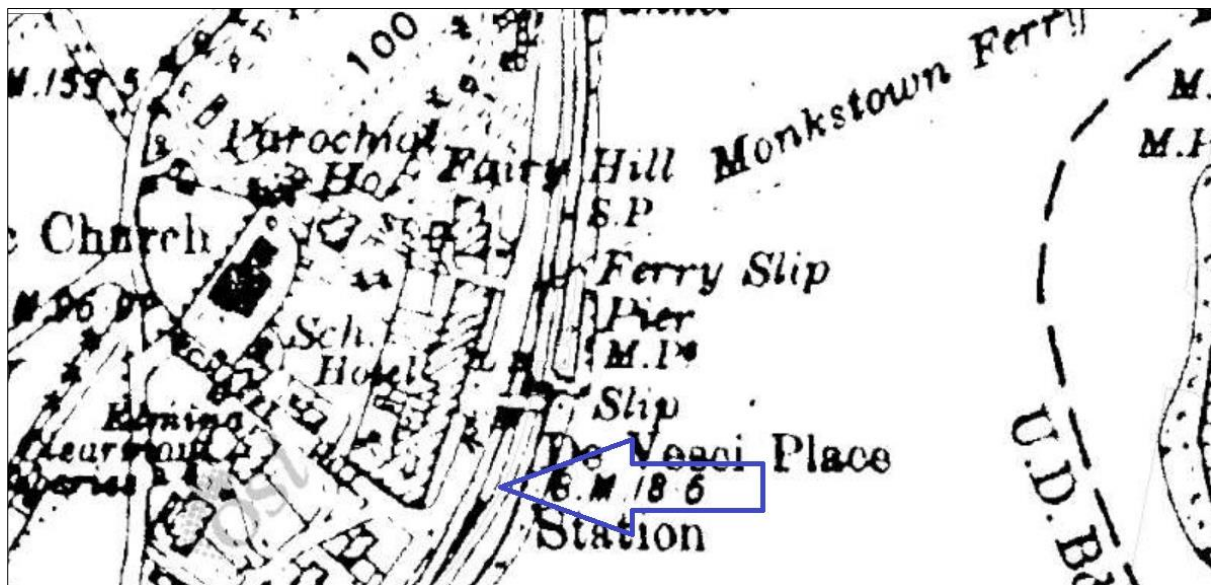


Figure 6: Extract from Cassini map c. 1934 showing railway station. By the time of publication of this map edition, the railway station and line had closed.

4. Description of the site

Little of the former railway station survives save for (a) the building that was the base for a water tank (see **Plate 1** below) and (b) the landward/western retaining wall of the former platform (see **Plates 2 – 6** below).

The base of the water tank is recorded by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH Reg. 20853010) and is described as follows:

Detached single-bay single storey former railway building, built c.1900, later in use as public convenience, now disused. Recent flat concrete slab roof set on recent red brick piers. Roughly dressed rubble limestone walls with red brick quoins and rubble limestone and red brick chamfered plinth. Square-headed air vents below roof line with concrete sill course. Round-headed window openings limestone sills to side (east, west) elevations having red brick voussoirs, block-and-start surrounds, now blocked. Square-headed door opening behind rendered concealing wall to front (south) elevation with wrought-iron gate.



Plate 1: Former base of the railway watertank

The surviving section of the landward/western retaining wall of the former raised platform is located on the eastern side of the public road (R610). A footpath runs along the western side of the wall with a carpark located to the east. The wall consists of a rubble stone wall with a flat concrete capping c. 133m in length to a height of c. 0.80m with original tapered ends to the northern and southern ends.

The wall is penetrated with a new opening allowing pedestrian access to the carpark and has been partially rebuilt in this section.



Plate 2: View to subject former platform wall looking south showing tapered end



Plate 3: View to subject former platform wall looking north



Plate 4: Modern opening in wall with replacement concrete capping



Plate 5: Modern interventions including new opening and service units



***Plate 6:** Rebuilt portion of wall (with modern cast concrete capping)*

5. Assessment of significance

On the basis of the site survey for this assessment, the site of the former railway station contains very little upstanding remains. Furthermore, the site does not include any protected structures and the car park **does not** form part of the Upper Monkstown Architectural Conservation Area.

The former water tank survives and is recorded by the NIAH which has accorded the structure a **regional** significance rating. The NIAH describe the significance of the building as follows:

Formerly associated with the Cork-Monkstown railway line, this small building is representative of the high quality materials which were utilised by railway companies in their nineteenth and early twentieth century building campaigns. The red brick and grey limestone add colour and textural interest to the site. Though altered in the mid twentieth century to accommodate a new use, it retains much of its original character and fabric.

The low roadside boundary wall to the car park is the only remains of the former raised platform at Monkstown. While of basic construction and of no particular architectural significance, the wall does serve as a physical reminder of the presence and extent of the former railway station. In and of itself, the wall is of limited heritage significance but does, in a small way, contribute to an understanding of the history and morphology of Monkstown. Better and more intact examples of railway platforms of the former Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway survive elsewhere, most notably at Rochestown and Carrigaline.

7. Assessment of impact

Cork County Council have prepared proposals for the Monkstown Active Travel Link and Public Realm Enhancement Project. The proposals include works that will upgrade and enhance footpaths and cycleways along with improvements to the public realm. The works also include enhancement measures at and adjoining the existing public car park in Monkstown which is the site of a former railway station. Little of the former railway station survives save for (a) the building that was the base for a water tank and (b) the landward/western retaining wall of the former platform.



Figure 7: Extract from proposal drawings prepared by Urban Movement on behalf of Cork County Council

The proposed works have been designed and will be constructed in a manner that avoid direct or indirect impacts on the former water tank which is recorded by the NIAH. The impact on the former water tank is adjudged to be ***neutral***.

The existing low roadside boundary wall is to be removed as part of the proposed works. The wall is low heritage value by virtue having been compromised by poor preservation and poor survival of contextual associations. Nevertheless, the proposed removal will represent a ***slight/moderate negative direct impact***.

Finally, the proposed works are outside but adjoin the Upper Monkstown Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). The proposed upgrade to the public realm will have ***slight/moderate positive indirect impact*** on the ACA.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Cork County Council have prepared proposals for the Monkstown Active Travel Link and Public Realm Enhancement Project. The proposals include works that will remove a low roadside boundary wall at the existing public car park in Monkstown. The existing car park is the site of the former railway station. A site inspection was undertaken by John Cronin & Associates to determine the nature and significance of any heritage features within the car park. It was found that little of the former railway station survives save for (a) the building that was the base for a water tank and (b) the landward/western retaining wall of the former platform.

The existing low roadside boundary wall is to be removed as part of the proposed works. The wall is low heritage value by virtue having been compromised by poor preservation and poor survival of contextual associations. Nevertheless, the proposed removal will represent a ***slight/moderate negative direct impact***. It is recommended that measures be adopted to mitigate this impact – these are outlined below.

The proposed works will have a ***neutral*** impact on the former water tank that is present within the existing car park; the former water tank is to be retained.

Finally, the proposed works will have ***slight/moderate positive indirect impact*** on the Upper Monkstown Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

Mitigation measures

It is recommended that that a scaled, drawn and measured survey of the section of former platform wall to be removed be prepared prior to commencement of any site development works. The survey should include ground plans, a number of representative sections and elevations of the tapering ends of the wall. There should be no requirement to produce a scaled elevation as it would be meaningless and unnecessary. The resultant survey should be retained by the Local Studies Section of Cork County Council's Library Service for archival purposes and also be made available (without charge) to the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland.

8. References

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