



Slane Mill Complex

Architectural Conservation Area

Statement of Character

December 2009

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Slane Mill Complex

Architectural Conservation Area

Statement of Character

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On behalf of
Meath County Council and
County Meath Heritage Forum

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

An action of the County Meath Heritage Plan 2007-2011
supported by Meath County Council and the Heritage Council

Foreword

In 2007 Meath County Council adopted the County Meath Heritage Plan 2007-2011, prepared by the County Heritage Forum, following extensive consultation with stakeholders and the public. The Heritage Forum is a partnership between local and central government, state agencies, heritage and community groups, NGOs local business and development, the farming sector, educational institutions and heritage professionals. The Heritage plan is a cross-agency strategic plan which aims to identify, promote, enhance and conservation Meath's rich heritage. It is an action of the Heritage Plan to evaluate the character of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) in the county.

It is an objective of the county Meath Development Plan 2007-2013 to carry out an appraisal of existing and proposed Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) during the lifetime of the plan. This publication describes the special character of Slanemill ACA and will be a useful guide for the public and local authority. We would sincerely like to thank all those who contributed to this project and to the Heritage Council for providing funding.

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Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The towns, villages and landscapes of Co. Meath contain areas of architectural, historical and cultural interest, whose character is derived from the grouping of structures and open spaces, and their setting in the landscape. These areas of particular heritage value may develop and change with time, but their special character is considered worthy of protection. Planning legislation allows a planning authority to include objectives in its Development Plan to preserve the character of a place, area, group of structures or townscapes that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or contribute to the appreciation of protected structures. Such areas are known as *Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)* and may include the following:

- groups of structures of distinctiveness, visual richness or historical importance
- the setting and exterior appearance of structures that are of special interest, but the interiors of which do not merit special protection
- the setting of a protected structure where this is more extensive than its curtilage
- designed landscapes, for example, urban parks, historic demesnes, cemeteries or industrial sites
- groups of structures which form dispersed but unified entities but which are not within the curtilage of a single dominant structure.

An ACA could therefore include a terrace of houses, a streetscape, a town centre or an ensemble related to a specific building type, such as a mill or a country house. The significance of buildings within an ACA lies in their positive contribution to the character and cultural importance of the group and their protection relates to their external appearance and associated external spaces. The objective of the ACA designation is to guide change within an area and ensure that future development is carried out in a manner sympathetic to the special character of the historic place.

Works to the exterior of a structure within an ACA only qualify as exempted development if the works do not affect the character of the exterior or that of neighbouring structures or open spaces. Whilst alterations, extensions and new build may be permitted within an ACA, any new development should respect or enhance its special character and should be carried out in consultation with the Planning Department and Conservation Officer of Meath County Council, following the usual planning application process. There are currently eighteen ACAs designated in Co. Meath. This document is one in a series which identifies the special character of individual ACAs and gives advice and guidance to those seeking planning permission, such as homeowners, developers and planning professionals, on the type of works that would be acceptable within that particular ACA, to avoid loss or negative impact to its special character.

Location & Boundary of the Architectural Conservation Area

2.0 Location & Boundary of the Architectural Conservation Area

Slane Mill Complex is located in the vicinity of Slane Bridge and weir. The ensemble sits at the edge of Slane Castle demesne and circa 700 metres to the southeast of the village of Slane. Its position is approx 40 kilometres to the northwest of Dublin and 12 kilometres to the west of the port of Drogheda. The ACA includes the mill and its ancillary buildings and waterworks, Slane Bridge, the weir and floodgates, and the residential terrace of Boyne View. The mill building is situated on the northern bank of the River Boyne, while the bridge and weir are to the south west of the mill complex. The weir is located upstream and runs almost parallel to the northern riverbank. The ACA is bounded to the northeast by shear limestone walls with a low tree-lined ridge, forming a quarry, approximately 30 metres in height. The River Boyne and the Boyne Navigation bounds the ACA to the south. Its low lying position within the valley affords significant views of the surrounding area, which rises slowly to the south and west, encompassing the demesne and neighbouring agricultural lands, while Mill Hill rises steeply to the north towards the village of Slane. The location of the ACA provides equally important vistas towards the complex from various approach routes and points in the valley.

2.1 ACA Boundary

The ACA for Slane Mill Complex incorporates the area comprising the entire mill complex, its waterworks, millpond, ancillary buildings, and the former mill house. It also includes Slane Bridge, the weir, flood plains and a small terrace of six houses, called Boyne View on Mill Hill. The area of the mill complex extends eastwards for about 500 metres until it meets a man-made boundary, which separates the grounds of the complex from the adjoining agricultural lands. The ACA boundary continues along the tree-lined quarry to the north, enveloping the Boyne View cottages and then turning southwards down along Mill Hill towards the bridge. The boundary continues along the north bank of the Boyne and across the

river until it is defined by the line of the Boyne Navigation. The boundary then runs along Slane Bridge and then downstream along the centre of the River Boyne until it meets the mill complex border again. These boundaries of the ACA are delineated on the accompanying Figure 1.

The following building ensembles are located within the boundaries of the ACA:

- Boyne View Terrace
- Slane Mill gate-lodge
- Slane Mill, associated waterworks and ancillary buildings
- The Mill House (the former Boyneville Hotel)
- Slane Bridge
- Stone weir and floodgate piers on the River Boyne

Location & Boundary of the Architectural Conservation Area

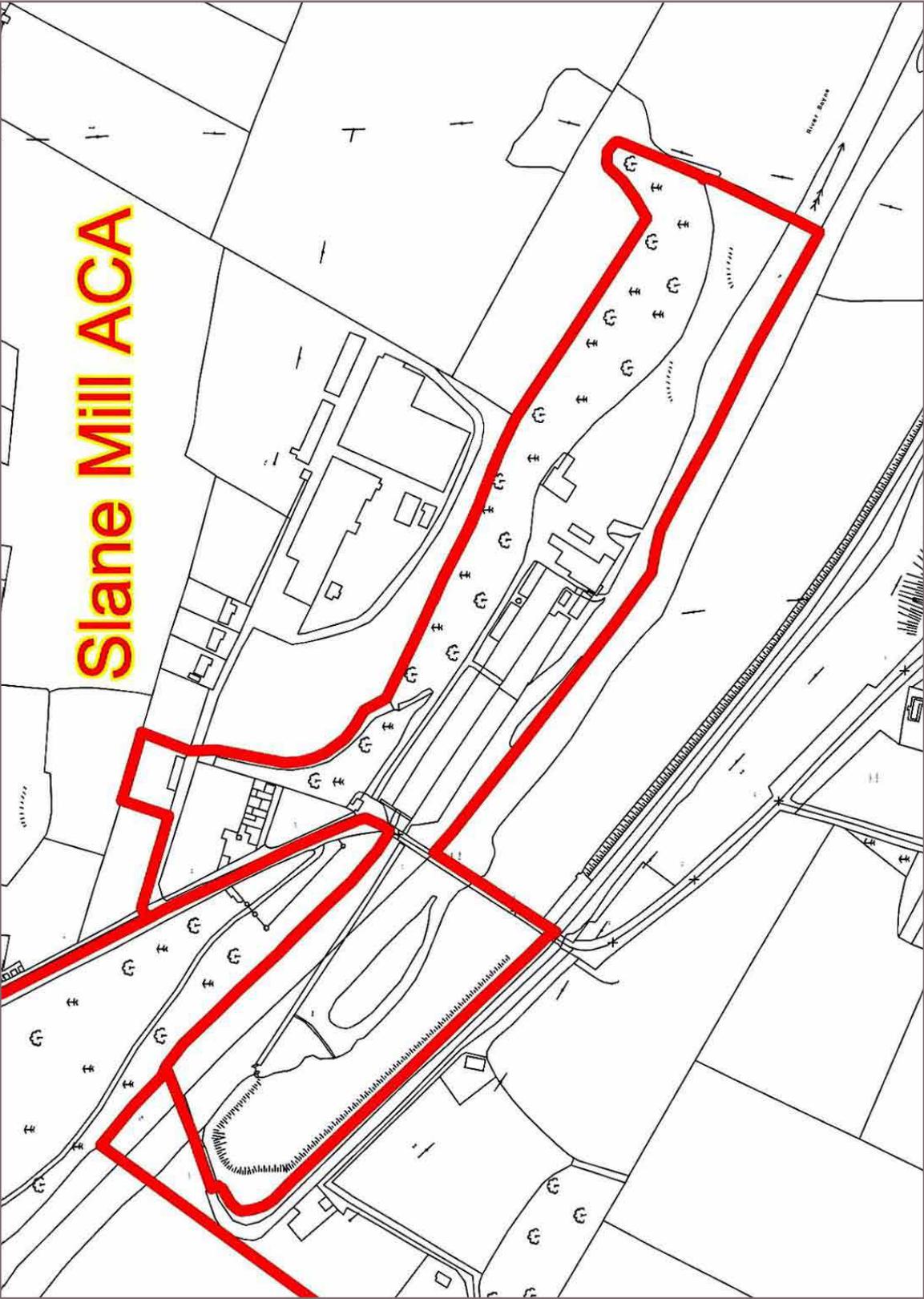


Fig.1: Boundary of Slane Mill Complex ACA (© Ordnance Survey of Ireland 2006)

Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments

3.0 Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments

There are a number of protected structures within the boundaries of the Slane Mill ACA that are protected under Part IV of the Planning & Development Act 2000. A protected structure is a structure or part of a structure that a Planning Authority considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. The full extent of a protected structure includes the land lying within the curtilage of the protected structure and other structures within that curtilage and their interiors. The concept of curtilage is not defined by legislation, but is understood to be the parcel of land immediately associated with that structure and which is or was in use for the purposes of the structure. The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) is contained in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, Appendix V.

The Record of Monuments and Places lists structures and sites of archaeological heritage. The schedule is available to the public at the Planning Office of Meath County Council, Teagasc Offices and Town Councils and on the internet on the website of the National Monuments Service, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (www.archaeology.ie).

Protected Structures

Within the boundary of the Slane Mill Complex ACA there are 14 protected structures. They are mainly structures from the eighteenth and nineteenth century and they form focal points in the cultural landscape.

- RPS No. MH 019-242 Stone weir & flood gates on River Boyne
- RPS No. MH 019-250 Slane Bridge
- RPS No. MH 019-251 House at Boyne View Terrace
- RPS No. MH 019-252 House at Boyne View Terrace
- RPS No. MH 019-253 House at Boyne View Terrace
- RPS No. MH 019-254 House at Boyne View Terrace
- RPS No. MH 019-255 Gatelodge at Slane Mill Complex
- RPS No. MH 019-256 Set of gates at Slane Mill Complex
- RPS No. MH 019-257 House at Boyne View Terrace
- RPS No. MH 019-258 House at Boyne View Terrace
- RPS No. MH 019-259 Set of granite bollards at Slane Mill Complex
- RPS No. MH 019-260 Slane Mill
- RPS No. MH 019-261 Brick free-standing chimney at Slane Mill Complex
- RPS No. MH 019-262 Former Boyneville Hotel at Slane Mill Complex

3.2 Recorded Monuments

The following archaeological sites, features and artefacts within the ACA for the Slane Mill Complex are protected by National Monument legislation as they are listed as Recorded Monuments in the Record of Monuments and places:

- RMP Ref. ME019-24 Slane Bridge

Development Plan Zoning & Objectives

4.0 Development Plan Zoning & Objectives

The Meath County Development Plan 2001-2007 has been superseded by the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013. The Slane Local Area Plan was adopted on the 20th of August 2009. Detailed policies and objectives are prescribed in the aforementioned plans. In considering new development within this LAP area the policies and objectives prescribed in the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Slane Local Area Plan 2009-2015 are of relevance.

Historical development of the area

5.0 Historical development of the area

5.1 Slane Mill, related buildings and waterworks:

Slane Flour Mill was built by William Burton Conyngham, Blayney Balfour (Burton Conyngham's neighbour at Townley Hall) and David Jebb a local miller and engineer. The building work commenced in 1763, on the site of a smaller mill built by the Conyngham family, and took three years to finish at a cost of £19,187. This sum included the miller's house which was located to the north-east of the main mill block. Arthur Young visited Slane Mill in 1776 during his celebrated tour of Ireland and described the mill building as being "138ft long, the breadth 54ft and the height to the cornice 42ft, being a large and handsome edifice, such as no mill I have seen in England can compare with it". This was the beginning of a highly successful enterprise which would continue until the mid-nineteenth century when its role changed to adapt with new developments in the industrial world. A small gate lodge at the main gates of the mill was also built during this period. In his journal Young notes the 650ft long weir on the River Boyne and the 800ft long stone-lined millrace to the front of the mill. The weir is located upstream on the northwest side of the bridge. It was originally used as a salmon weir by Boyne fishermen and was raised by David Jebb prior to the construction of the complex in order to increase the water power for the mill. The headrace acted as a canal as well as a wharf and dry dock for lighters which brought grain to and from the mill via the River Boyne and the navigation. Three tail races exited the building on the eastern end, into the River Boyne. Floodgates built at the western end of the stone weir controlled the water in times of flooding, while surplus water washed onto the flood plains to the south.



Fig.2: Extract from the 1836 Ordnance Survey Map of Slane Mill, County Meath.

The mill complex contained a highly sophisticated mechanism comprising three water wheels, six mill stones and two kilns in addition to a grain cleaner, a flour boulder and generous granaries. Young recorded the mill's output as being upwards of 17,000 barrels of flour (20 stone each) per annum and the granaries held 5000 barrels. The mill was operated by only 10-12 people despite being the largest mill of its kind in Europe at that time. The miller's house (then called Janeville), which was originally quite modest in scale and style, was extended in 1799 into a fine residence by Jebb, who lived there until he left for England in 1810. Although flour milling was the main activity carried out at Slane Mill, oatmeal was also being produced by the 1820s. This would have required the installation of ancillary equipment to shell and clean the oats and to process the oatmeal. Evidence from the 1836 Ordnance Survey six-inch map of the Slane area indicates the addition of a narrow block running perpendicular to the south side of the main mill building. There are two further narrow buildings running along the south side of the headrace to the west of the mill on the same map. In the mid-nineteenth century the property was sold to Messrs Wetherill, Powell & Co who continued the flour milling business, but by 1877 the business returned to the Balfour family. Despite the decline in the flour milling industry the business was maintained until the turn of the century when it was sold to a Mr. James McCann, who used the buildings as a coal and

Historical development of the area

goods depot and converted the former miller's house into a hotel called Boyneville, catering for pleasure boat trips along the Boyne Navigation, while the canal was still in use. The next owners, Messrs Leitch & Co. who took over the business in the early twentieth century, began a flax scutching operation. They removed two of the water wheels and installed turbines to generate electrical power in order to operate the new machinery. The tall freestanding brick chimney and the buildings along the south side of the headrace date from this period. It is also likely that an early electric-powered lift was installed in the mill building at this time. The Leitch's enterprise however was relatively short-lived.

In 1935, Thomas Taylor & Brothers, a Wigan-based textile firm, trading under the name 'Slane Manufacturing Co.' took over the lease for the site, where they engaged in the weaving of cotton for flour bags. The weaving shed, which adjoins the western side of the main mill building, to the south of the pedimented front return, dates from this period. The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) were the lessors of the site at this time. The Boyne historian C.E. Ellison states that they intended to dam the Boyne River at Slane in order to create a hydroelectric power plant. This plan was never realised but it forced the Slane Manufacturing Co. to relocate its operations to a new site, on higher ground, to the north of the original site. The original mill building was used for storage purposes until 1945 when J. & L.F. Goodbody took over the operation for the purpose of weaving of cotton and rayon. The industrial sheds on either side of the brick chimney, on the north side of the millpond date from this period. The firm expanded its production during the 1950s to include calicos, interlinings, muslins and handkerchiefs. The business was to change hands again in 1965 and in 1967. This was then the only surviving factory in Ireland that manufactured the raw cotton to the finished product. In 1983 the entire enterprise closed and the mill building and the Boyneville Hotel was bought by Peter Quigley, its present owner, who is currently in the process of converting the complex into a hotel which would cater for water-sports on the River Boyne.

5.2 Boyne View Terrace

Boyne View Terrace was built at the end of the beginning of the nineteenth-century (c.1800) to house employees from the mill. Unlike other milling ventures in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Ireland, where ample housing was provided for the workers, there is no evidence of other accommodation for the mill hands within the mill complex or at the village and this little terrace of six houses was the only provision made by David Jebb and his partners. The terrace of two-storey houses was built on the slope above the mill's gate lodge, on Mill Hill. Its elevated location affords impressive views of the river and the surrounding landscape of the Boyne valley.



Fig.3: Lawrence photograph from the late nineteenth-century showing the limestone piers to the flood-gates, weir, bridge and the original mill building beyond, without the addition of the brick chimney. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

5.3 Slane Bridge

The original bridge dates from the fourteenth century to sixteenth century. Two of the northern pointed arches were removed by King James's army during the Williamite Wars in 1691 and were replaced in the early-eighteenth century after the battle at Oldbridge. Breakwaters and stone piers to the structure date from various early periods and the higher semi-circular arches at either end of the bridge were added in the mid-eighteenth century during the construction of the Boyne Navigation. The bridge underwent a major overhaul around the same period and was widened by c. 8ft, resulting in the straightening

Historical development of the area

of the roads leading to and from it. Slane Bridge is one of the earliest crossings on the River Boyne and has played an important role in the economic life of the village of Slane and Slane Mill. Today, it maintains an extremely high level of traffic due to its position on the Dublin to Derry route.



Fig.4: Slane Bridge from the southern flood plains

Character overview of the Slane Mill Complex ACA

6.0 Character overview of the Slane Mill Complex ACA

The Slane Mill & Bridge ACA is set in an area of outstanding natural beauty within the Boyne valley. The imposing stone bridge unites the various elements within the ACA, with the weir and floodgates to the northwest, and the mill complex and residential terrace to the east. The character of the ACA must be considered in connection with the adjoining ACAs of Slane Village and Slane Castle Demesne, to which it is inextricably linked geographically, architecturally, historically and socially. Although the Boyne Navigation is not within the boundaries of the ACA, it was crucial to the success of the mill and is still an integral part of the industrial landscape.

Slane Mill is a highly significant early industrial site in both an Irish and European context, and characterizes the change in Ireland from traditional milling to mass production on an industrial scale. Strategically placed on the northern side of the Boyne the original mill building forms a focal point in the cultural landscape of the ACA. The entire ensemble commands significant vistas from various points in the valley but most importantly from the approach road from Dublin, from the bridge and from Slane Castle, where the improving landlord could admire the enterprise from his seat. An impressively long millrace, which operates as a canal, leads to the front of the mill from the northern end of the bridge, heightening the impact of the frontispiece. The millrace was used for lighters to arrive at the mill from the river along the raised stone weir, under the bridge and into the pond where they would dock and unload goods. It provided water power for the mill, exiting through the three tailraces at the eastern end of the building. Changes to the millrace and the additions of ancillary buildings to the front area of the mill occurred during the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century. These included the freestanding hexagonal redbrick chimney and various warehouses and industrial buildings, which line the millrace and river front. Although the brick chimney adds to the industrial aspect of the ensemble, the

relationship of the mill to the bridge and canal has been dramatically altered and the original intention of the architects to evoke a classical setting within the industrial realm has been lost.



Fig.5: Main, west facing façade of the mill building, with overgrown millpond and ancillary structures on either side

To the rear of the mill building a large expanse of open ground once contained the formal gardens of the former miller's house. This building sits close to the sheer walls of the quarry to the north, its late eighteenth-century frontispiece facing out towards the entrance avenue of the mill. Its relationship to the mill building is unusual, an odd location for a residence, but one which benefited from spectacular views of the mill building itself, the River Boyne and the natural landscape rising up the valley towards the south. The positioning of these two significant buildings has created an generous open space, currently planted with fruit trees and landscaped with gravel paths, which lead to the various amenities of the new hotel enterprise.

Character overview of the Slane Mill Complex ACA

Beyond the mill complex the simple gatelodge, placed to close the axis across Slane Bridge, and the terrace of two-storey houses of Boyne View on Mill Hill, add a residential aspect to the character of the area, which is predominantly industrial and riparian.

6.1 Socio-economic functions

Other than the residential properties of Boyne View Terrace and the Gate Lodge, which are in private ownership, the buildings within the mill complex are based mainly in commercial and industrial use. Currently known as The Mill House, the former Boyneville Hotel, has been converted into a small boutique-type hotel and has facilities for conferences and weddings. The original mill building, which is in the same ownership, is being restored and will eventually be used as part of the hotel complex, where it will offer water sports amenities on the River Boyne. The setting of the buildings is also used as a location for film and television productions. The various sheds and ancillary buildings to the front of the main mill building and around the millpond are used for storage and light industrial use. Although the adjoining navigation is no longer in use as a canal, the River Boyne is now frequently used for water sports, namely kayaking, and the weir above Slane Bridge features as a highlight on the canoe route between Navan and Rosnaree.

6.2 Building types

There are seven common building and engineering typologies found within the Slane Mill Complex ACA.

- Eighteenth-century industrial structures
- Nineteenth-century industrial structures
- Twentieth-century industrial structures
- Eighteenth-century detached residences
- Nineteenth-century residential terrace
- Masonry bridge dating from various periods, c. 1350-1770
- Riparian and canal related construction

6.3 Palette of materials

The prevailing building materials are limestone (in both ashlar and exposed random rubble form) and red brick. In the eighteenth century the limestone was quarried locally, usually from the Ardraccan or Sheepphouse quarries. This can be observed in the majority of the eighteenth-century structures within the mill complex, where the stone is used extensively in decorative façade treatment and also in Boyne View Terrace. Stonework to the weir and floodgate piers carries the same detail as the chamfered edges to the millpond and to the northern bank of the river. The bridge masonry dates from various periods but the fine semicircular arches from the mid-eighteenth century have the typical hue of Ardraccan stone. Red brickwork, with cement mortar joints, was used in the hexagonal freestanding chimney and in many of the twentieth-century ancillary buildings on the site. Here it is exposed to embellish the door and window surrounds. Timber is used for windows and doors, wrought ironwork is found in the railings adjoining the main gates to the mill and many buildings within the ACA retain their natural slate roofs, which add to the visual richness of the area.

Built fabric appraisal

7.0 Built fabric appraisal

All of the building and engineering ensembles within the boundary of the ACA make a positive contribution to the character of the area. In general the condition of the built fabric is very good and pays testament to the craftsmanship executed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This section provides a description of each structure in terms of its architectural character and significance within the ACA.

7.1 Slane Mill complex

The set-piece of the mill complex is accessed through an impressive set of gates, between the gate lodge and the northern end of the bridge. Modest in scale, with painted render facades and an elegant red brick chimney, the gate lodge is located to complete the visual axis along Slane Bridge. The lodge was built during the same period as the mill and it was extended to the front in the early-twentieth century. Two pairs of limestone ashlar gate piers with carved limestone caps frame the modern cast-iron gates to the mill buildings. The long entrance avenue is lined to the north with mature trees and to the south with circular and hexagonal granite bollards along the tarmac and gravel driveway. The stone-lined millrace, 210 metres long, has been altered to some extent during works to the area in the mid-twentieth century. However the chamfered detail to the ashlar stonework at the eastern end still survives, a detail which is repeated in the flood gate piers by the weir and also in the canal walls of the Boyne Navigation. The design of the millpond is noteworthy, not only with regard to the workings of the mill but also architecturally where its relationship to the mill building evokes strong tenets of classicism.



Fig.6: Gate Lodge at the main entrance to the mill complex

The main mill building, built between 1763-6 and arguably the finest of its kind in the country during that period, is still very much intact. The narrow, t-shaped building is built in two types of grey limestone. An impressive 138 feet in length and five storeys high, the tail of the 'T' is in the form of a deep pedimented breakfront. Of nine bays, the main façade faces west towards the bridge, the millpond completing the frontispiece. High quality stonework embellishes the façades of the mill, which Craig describes as having 'virtually all the refinements of elevation proper to a country house'. The mill's distinctive architectural style lies in the marriage of this country house idiom with the pure industrial function of the building. The front façade is dressed in high quality hewn ashlar stone, while the rear elevation, like the gable ends, is of simply coursed limestone. A small bellcote with finely cut ashlar surrounds and semicircular head adorns the centre of the uppermost section of the northern gable. This would have held the bell to call the mill-hands to work. The building sits on a salient base course and has raised chamfered quoins and is finished with a fine decorative cornice at the eaves. The five storeys are of graduated height, with an ashlar string-course separating the ground floor and first floor windows, suggesting a rusticated basement. This classical idiom is exploited again by the larger piano nobile windows at first floor level and diminishing fenestration to the upper levels. Gibbsian surrounds frame the lower floor windows and doors, while moulded

Built fabric appraisal

ashlar architraves decorate the upper floors. At the beginning of the twentieth century a large opening was made in the northern side of the front return; it currently holds a large timber sliding door on metal rails. This intervention was one of the only changes made to the mill's external face other than the addition of the weaving shed on the southern side of the return.



Fig.7: East elevation of the mill

The construction of the mill at Slane marked the departure from the smaller vernacular structures, containing horizontal millwheels or the workings of one vertical waterwheel which ground the grain while it was still uncleaned, leaving the process of bolting and sieving to the bakeries. It was the largest of its kind in mid-eighteenth century Europe and is of outstanding importance as an example of an early purpose-built industrial building dating from the beginning of the rural industrial revolution in Ireland.

7.1.1 Ancillary buildings within the complex

The ancillary buildings to the front of the mill were added between c. 1820 and 1958. They have altered the relationship between the original mill building, the millpond and the northern bank of the River Boyne. As a result, the vistas of the mill have been obscured by the monolithic warehouses and saw-tooth roofscape. The first additions ran perpendicular to the mill building. An early shed, which forms another T-shape to the south, has been replaced by a similar structure in the early twentieth century and it

projects beyond the eastern façade. The external walls are made of randomly coursed limestone rubble with coarsely dressed, flush limestone quoins. There is a full height timber sliding door entrance on the projecting north elevation and a small pedestrian entrance immediately to the west of this. Both of these doorways have red brick surrounds. The east-facing gable has a recently inserted concrete-headed door towards its southern side. Five segmental-headed window openings with red brick surrounds and concrete cills punctuate the south elevation. Some of the timber frames to the windows have survived, as have the natural slate and cast-iron gutters to the pitched roof. The west gable is abutted to the weaving shed which can be entered through two openings in the party wall. Although of little architectural merit, this addition dates to around the same period as the brick chimney and is of some historical importance in the context of the industrial history of the mill. The freestanding hexagonal chimney, built with machine-cut red bricks and cement mortar joints, adds another architectural layer to the ensemble and despite its role in marring the setting of the original eighteenth-century structures its archetypical form enhances the special character of the ACA.



Fig.8: Southern elevation of the mill with early twentieth-century buildings to the foreground

The remaining buildings in the form of the weaving shed, which is directly attached to the mill building and the other free standing structures vary in scale but are all warehouse or industrial structures. The earlier buildings, namely on the southern side of the millpond, are

Built fabric appraisal

built either with randomly coursed stonework, brickwork, or concrete block. Those made of stonework or brick have exposed redbrick to their window and door openings, the others have a rendered finish. The weaving shed has a painted render finish to the external walls and a typically industrial saw-tooth roof, with six 'teeth' and north facing roof-lights. The largest of these ancillary buildings is on the southern side of the millpond, at the west end, closest to the bridge. It replaced two smaller narrow structures visible on the early Ordnance Survey maps of 1836 and 1909. Monolithic in scale, the building has a rendered finish to its façades and a saw-tooth corrugated roof with four 'teeth' and north facing roof-lights. The façade to the mill pond is punctuated with four tall windows with segmental arches and timber framed windows. At some stage the building was used as Museum of Transport when the building was accessed by a concrete bridge which divides the millrace. It is now derelict. The most recent structures on either side of the chimney are of brickwork, with simple steel frames at upper levels, and fixed with corrugated cladding to the higher wall level and roofs. These aforementioned structures are of little consequence architecturally and although they have some tangible historical associations with the mill complex they fail to make a positive contribution to the area.

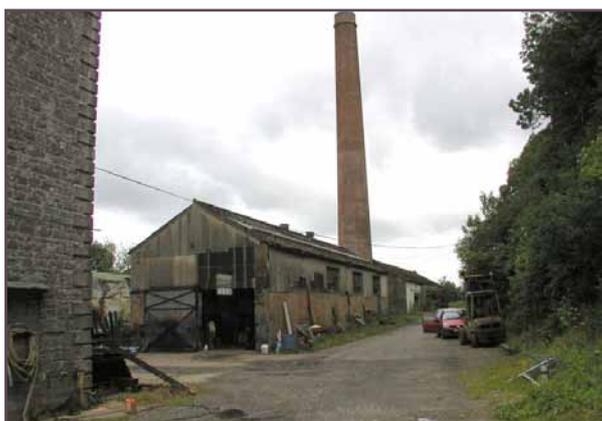


Fig.9: Free-standing brick chimney with industrial sheds on either side

7.1.2 The Mill House

Beyond the mill building the former miller's

house is set against the sheer limestone face of the grounds to the north. Built in 1765 it was originally a plain two-storey house faced with coursed rubble limestone, flush quoins and a projecting stone cornice. While the main façade of three bays looked onto the river Boyne, its rear quarters remained permanently in the shade of the quarry to the north. At the end of the eighteenth century the building was enlarged as a two-storey over basement building, of double pile construction. The older millhouse is connected to the new addition by a decidedly odd link, which may in fact have been an earlier extension with stables and a courtyard to the west. The walls are faced with finely hewn limestone on the main façades, with simply moulded architraves to the windows and a projecting decorative cornice at the eaves, complimenting the worked details of the mill building. The front elevation, of three bays and single storey breakfront entrance, faces west towards the entrance avenue. The building's idiosyncratic character lies in its elegant, entrance doorcase arrangement and its overstated fenestration, primarily in the six-over-nine sash windows on the east façade, which faced onto the former private gardens and afforded generous views of the river. The house belongs to a genre categorised by the eminent architectural historian, Maurice Craig, as 'Classic houses of the Middle Size'. Its architectural, historical and social associations with the mill building add to its significance, and its form and position within the complex enhances the ACA.



Fig.10: Front façade to the Mill House

Built fabric appraisal

7.2 Slane Bridge and weir

The southern approach to Slane Mill and village is controlled by the multi-arched stone bridge, which has played a significant role in the development of both mill and village. Developed at various periods, the bridge dates from between 1330 and 1599, with restoration works at the beginning of the eighteenth century and further developments circa 1766-7 during the construction of the Boyne Navigation. Seven of the thirteen arches on the downriver side have pointed segmental intrados. Five of these are in the river and the remaining two are flood arches at the southwest edge of the flood plains. Semicircular arches at either end of the bridge were added in the mid-century and are obviously higher than the original fourteenth-century intrados to cater for the access of craft along the canal and into the millpond. Some interventions at the headrace of the mill and various accidents on the bridge in the late-twentieth century have resulted in repair works to the bridge structure. These works have been poorly executed and fail to adhere to good conservation practice. The thirteen-arch bridge is the oldest structure within the ACA; its imposing form considerably enhances the area and is a focal point in the cultural landscape.

7.2.1 The weir

An impressive 215 metres long, the stone weir extends from the northern end of the bridge (at the entrance to the millrace) towards a spit of land which juts out into the river on the southern bank of the Boyne. A fine set of floodgate piers sit at this junction, formerly used to divert surplus water towards the southern flood plains; their limestone faces and chamfered cap stones reflect the detail at the eastern end of the millpond. Comparable in significance to the bridge, the weir and piers have strong historical connections to the mill and Boyne Navigation, and they add to the special character of the ACA.

7.3 Boyne View Terrace

This terrace of six two-storey cottages built for the mill workers c.1800 is accessed from the east side of Mill Hill, directly opposite the Gothic Gate entrance to Slane Castle. The row occupies an elevated site with fine views over the river, bridge and surrounding valley. It also forms a major part of the vista of the mill ensemble when observed from the southern side of the valley. Little has changed since the nineteenth century and the terrace is still very much intact. The houses maintain their irregularly coursed walls, limestone quoins and limestone block-and-start surrounds to the windows and doors. Although some of the original doors and timber sash windows have been replaced, the terrace retains its limestone sills and thresholds and also its natural slate roof with three fine yellow brick chimneystacks. As an excellent example of nineteenth-century mill workers houses, its association with Slane Mill is highly significant and its presence in the Boyne landscape enhances the architectural character of the industrial set-piece.



Fig.11: Boyne View Terrace

Summary of significant views & vistas

8.0 Summary of significant views & vistas

Owing to the low-lying nature of the riverine setting of the mill complex, bridge and weir, significant and dramatic views are afforded to and from the ACA from various points in the valley. The mill building and its associated structures are the most conspicuous features within the ACA and are highly visible from all points, forming important vistas in the landscape. The terrace of Boyne View sits at an elevated position on Mill Hill, with fine views of the bridge, river and demesne landscape.

8.1 Views from the south and the west towards the ACA

The most noteworthy view towards the ACA is from the southern bank of the river and the Dublin Road. This view embraces all the elements of the ACA, including the entire mill complex, the bridge, weir and Boyne View terrace, and it illustrates the imposing setting of the industrial complex in an area of outstanding natural beauty. This vista also incorporates elements of adjoining ACAs, such as the Boyne Navigation, the southern demesne entrance (Gothic Gate) designed by Francis Johnston, features of Slane Village and the mature plantations of Slane Castle demesne framing the ensemble to the west and to the north at the top of Slane Hill. Although these elements lie within the ACAs of Slane Village and the Slane Castle demesne, they are connected architecturally, historically and geographically to the Slane Mill Complex and the three ACAs together form a single cultural ensemble, which is best captured by this vista from the south.



Fig.12: View of mill complex from the southern approach road from Dublin

Secondary views of the mill complex are formed from the southern and western banks of the River Boyne, from the bridge and from the hinterland of the demesne to the west. The latter view from Slane Castle is a striking scene, with the Boyne sweeping towards the weir and bridge and the backdrop of the mill's frontispiece crowning the set-piece. This was a carefully planned panorama where the Conyngham landlords could cast an eye over their improvements and enterprises. Other than the augmentation of the plantations within the demesne, this view has not changed since the castle was built, indicating its importance in the context of maintaining these eighteenth and nineteenth-century scenes in the landscape.

8.2 Views from the east towards the ACA

The view from the east is best appreciated from the south-eastern river banks at Fennor, from the low lying flood plains, from the old canal and from the Boyne itself. Looking towards the complex, the eastern elevation of the mill is observed from the Boyne, as it presides over its waterworks and the northern river banks. The background of the demesne landscape and the impressive multi-arched bridge to the west completes the scene. From this view the relationship between the mill and former miller's house is best appreciated; with the generous forecourt and garden between the two buildings and the tall elegant windows of the mill house forming an exceptional frontispiece to the river, a highly unusual aspect on the banks of the Boyne.



Fig.13: View of the Mill House from the Boyne

Summary of significant views & vistas

8.3 Views from the north towards the ACA

Although the entire mill complex is not completely visible from the northern descent of Mill Hill there is a fine view of the bridge, weir and the low-lying flood plains upstream. Their setting is completed by the outstanding natural beauty of the demesne's agricultural landscape as it rises slowly towards the west and forms an integral part of the general views of the valley to and from the ACA.

8.4 Views out from the ACA

The position of the mill complex at the edge of the demesne and river affords some of the most spectacular views of the surrounding Boyne Valley, to the south, east and west. The eastern views from the bridge and mill complex take in the level plains of the valley as it winds its way downstream towards Rosnaree, with the wooded slopes to the north and rolling hills to the south east. Direct views south from the mill complex comprise the picturesque setting of the flood plains, the canal and the valley rising to the south, crowned with the ruins of Fennor Castle and church above.

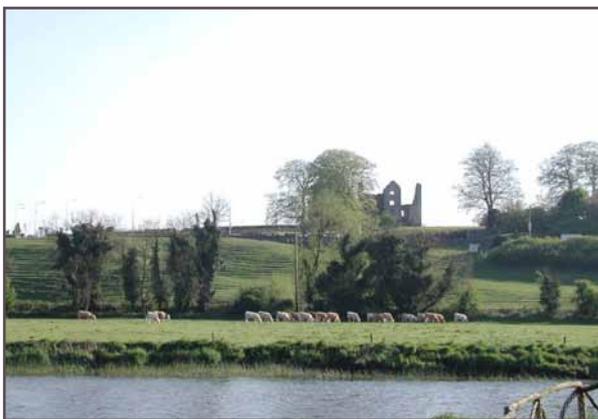


Fig.14: View south towards Fennor from the mill complex

Undoubtedly one of the most impressive views from the mill and bridge is westwards, encompassing the expanse of the weir and the river as it sweeps upstream towards the castle, which sits on the western promontory above the river, surrounded by what could be considered

the most picturesque demesne landscape in the Boyne Valley to the north, south and west. Like the views from the castle towards the mill, this vista towards the west has not changed since the eighteenth-century.



Fig.15: Picturesque view west towards the weir and castle from the bridge

Summary of Special Character

9.0 Summary of Special Character

The Slane Mill Complex ACA forms an integral group of industrial buildings, waterworks, engineering works and terraced residences, all located in an unrivalled setting of natural beauty. Each element has its own special character and together they make a well-preserved ensemble, the characteristics and the fabric of which have changed little since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The adjoining ACAs of Slane Village and the Slane Castle demesne are connected architecturally, historically, socially and geographically to the Slane Mill Complex, and the three ACAs together form an important cultural landscape, which must be considered when assessing the special character of each.

There are a number of interrelated factors which contribute to the special character of the Slane Mill Complex ACA. One of the most obvious aspects is its position in an area of outstanding natural beauty. At the edge of a formally planned village and demesne, with a backdrop of wooded slopes and on the banks of one of Ireland's most scenic rivers, the mill complex setting is spectacular, rendering it one of the highlights of the Boyne Valley. Fine views are afforded to and from the ACA, from all points in the surrounding valley. Like the buildings within the ACA, the natural landscape has not changed dramatically since the eighteenth century. However, some low scale modern development on the southern slopes of the valley and exaggerated traffic signals on Mill Hill have not positively contributed to the ACA and are highly visible examples of a negative impact on the area.

The mill building and its associated waterworks are a focal point within the ACA. An exceptional example of an intact purpose-built industrial building dating from the beginning of the rural industrial revolution in Ireland, the mill and its site is of national importance. Unlike the vernacular structures of the early-eighteenth century, or the monolithic castellated structures from the later period the mill at Slane was unique. Its architectural significance is in the marriage of the country house idiom with

the pure industrial function of the building. Despite the weight of the industrial setting, the relationship of the main building to the millpond and bridge evokes strong tenets of classicism and adds a layer of sophistication, not seen in contemporaneous buildings of this genre. Other merits lie in the stone detailing, not only to the mill building but also in the former mill house, mill pond, bridge and floodgate piers by the weir, which have paid testament to the excellent craftsmanship of the period. Furthermore, its historical association to the improving landlords of the Conyngham family and to their builders and craftsmen adds to its special architectural significance. The addition of unsightly extensions during the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries has interfered with primacy of the main facade of the mill. These interventions devalue the architectural character of the area and do not make a positive contribution to the ACA. In terms of economical and social interest, the mill was the first of its kind in Ireland and the largest in Europe, which moved the concept of traditional milling towards mass production on a grand scale and put Slane on the map economically.

Summary of Special Character

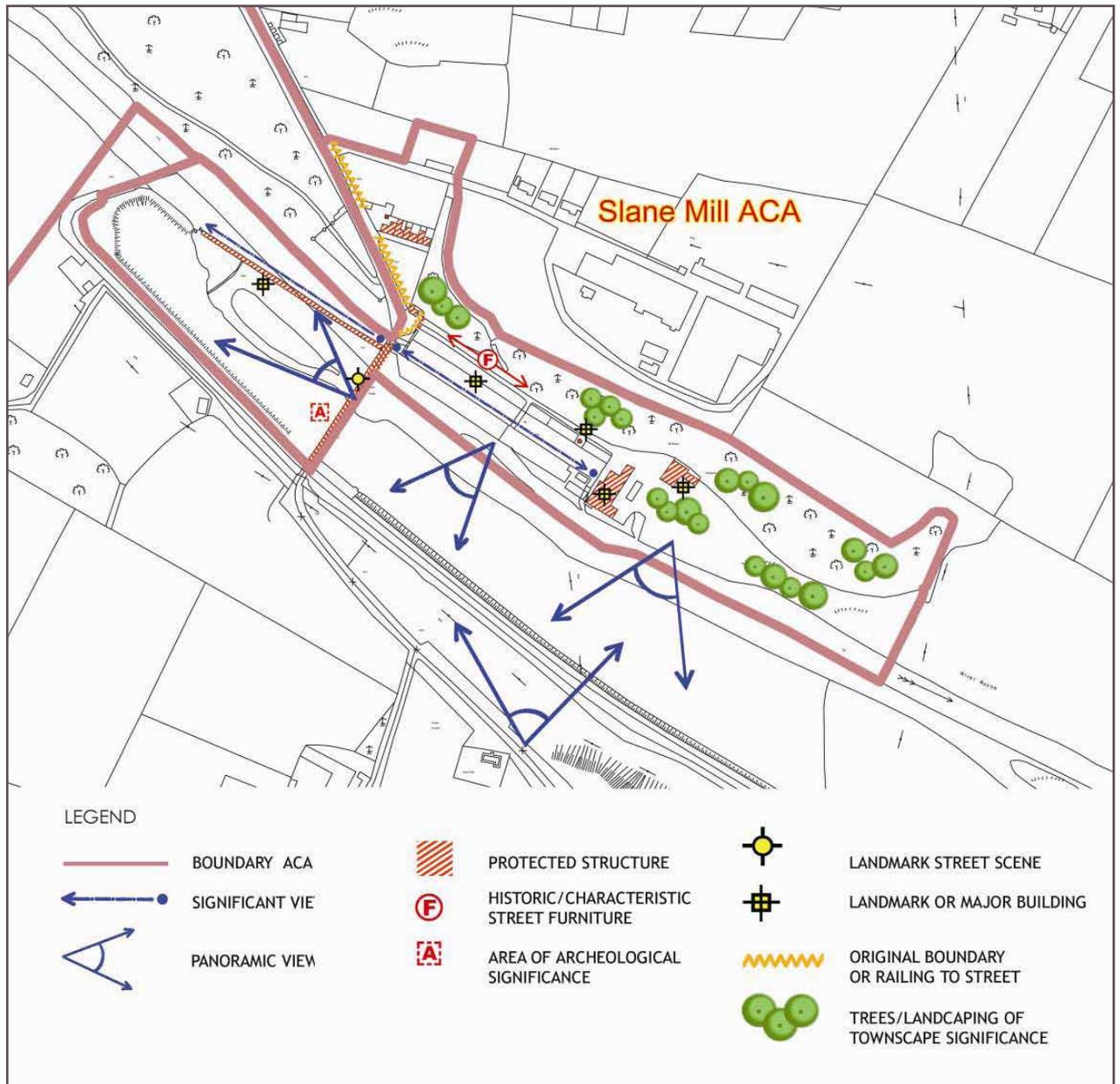


Fig. 16 Slane Mill ACA

The erection of a terrace of houses for the mill workers was a typically benevolent move, often shown by other milling entrepreneurs, such as the Quakers, at the end of the eighteenth century in Ireland. At Slane it was modest in comparison but it adds another important architectural layer to the ACA and enhances its special character. A palette of materials particular to the area, namely limestone, redbrick, slate and ironwork provides unity of character in a highly eclectic and diverse range of buildings in the ACA.

All of these elements within the ACA make up a highly significant cultural landscape, as defined by UNESCO as “distinct geographical areas or properties uniquely representing the combined work of nature and of man”. It is imperative that the character of the area, its natural and designed landscape and built features are preserved by preventing interventions and development that would have an adverse affect on the buildings or their setting, or the views into and out of the ACA.

Implications for Planning and Development

10.0 Implications for Planning and Development

The objective of Architectural Conservation Area designation is to protect the special character of an area through rigorous control and positive management of any changes made to the built environment. Under the Planning & Development Act 2000 there is a requirement to obtain planning permission for all development works which do not constitute exempted development. Section 4 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 lists developments which are constituted as exempt, for the purposes of the Act. With regard to Architectural Conservation Areas it is important to take into account Section 4(1)(h) of the Act which states that the following shall be exempted development:

“Development consisting of the carrying out of works for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of any structure, being works which affect only the interior of the structure or which do not materially affect the external appearance of the structure so as to render the appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of the neighbouring structures.”

Protected structures:

Planning permission is required for all works that would materially affect the character of a protected structure, or any element of the structure including its curtilage, which contributes to its special character. Under Section 57 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 an owner/occupier may request a declaration from Meath County Council as to whether any works they propose require planning permission. A declaration issued under this section sets out the type of works the Planning Authority considers would or would not affect the character of a structure or any elements thereof, which contributes to its special interest.

Non-protected structures:

Owners and occupiers of non-protected structures located within the Slane Mill Complex

ACA should be aware that works, which in the opinion of the Planning Authority would materially affect the character of the Architectural Conservation Area will require specific grant of planning permission under Section 82(1) of the Planning & Development Act 2000.

10.1 Works requiring planning permission

10.1.1 External walls

The majority of buildings within the Slane Mill Complex are constructed with limestone facings, in particular the early mill building, the bridge and Boyne View Terrace. Later buildings, including early twentieth-century buildings within the mill complex have either a mixture of stone and brickwork facades or painted and unpainted render to their external walls. Many of the existing stone facades have had their original lime mortar pointing removed and replaced with an unsuitable cement based mortar. This type of repointing in a style or manner other than existing would be deemed unacceptable by the Planning Authority and the restoration of suitable render will be encouraged. The painting of natural stone, brick or unpainted render-finished structures can damage the special character of the ACA and would not be deemed acceptable. Use of modern paints which can be detrimental to the building's fabric, or the sand blasting of external surfaces which may lead to porosity and water ingress are also unacceptable.

10.1.2 Roofs

The following works require planning permission:

- The removal of the original roofing material such as natural slate and ridge tiles. Their replacement with modern materials like fibre-cement tiles will not be deemed suitable by the local authority
- The removal of existing chimney-stacks and early terra-cotta or clay pots or other features of the roofscape such as cast-iron gutters and down-pipes.

Implications for Planning and Development

- The removal of timber bargeboards and other eaves details and their replacement in a material other than the existing.
- The installation of roof lights or dormer windows on the front or prominent elevation of a structure, visible from the public realm. There is no tradition of dormer windows at the Boyne View Terrace or in the industrial buildings in the mill complex and their installation will not be deemed appropriate by the local authority.
- The erection of, or alterations to, externally mounted signs and advertisements at roof level, including banners.
- The provision of awnings, canopies, flags and flagpoles.
- The erection of solar panels, TV satellite dishes, communication antennae or support structures for same. These are considered to have a highly negative impact on the character of the area and should be avoided when visible from the public realm. Where existing aerials have become redundant they should be removed.

10.1.3 Window and door openings

The buildings within the ACA of the Slane Mill Complex retain a considerable number of original window and doors. However, at Boyne View Terrace a large number of windows have been replaced with uPVC or timber windows of inappropriate design. Original elements should be retained where possible, and repaired and reused rather than replaced. The following works require planning permission:

- The alteration or enlargement of original openings.
- The removal of original timber and metal windows, and their replacement with modern, artificial materials such as uPVC and aluminium.
- The removal of stone sills and doorsteps.
- The removal of fanlights and original

timber doors, and their replacement with modern, artificial materials such as uPVC and aluminium.

- Repairs to historic windows and doors should be carried out following consultation with the conservation officer of Meath County Council.

10.1.4 New build

New development within the ACA of the Slane Mill Complex includes extensions, including porch extensions to the front of buildings, infill sites and all new build that impacts on the street facing elevations of buildings that are visible from the public realm and that impact on the curtilage of existing protected structures, including those not visible from the public realm. Designation as an ACA puts an obligation on prospective developers to produce a very high standard of design, which should contribute to the visual enhancement of the area while respecting its physical character. There is very little scope for development within the ACA as most of the area is occupied by the River Boyne, riparian structures such as the bridge, weir and floodgate piers, and also by the sheer limestone quarry walls and steep tree-lined slopes to the north of the area. The following guidance regarding new development in specific areas within the Slane Mill Complex should be adhered to:

- The main mill complex: The mill building and all its associated structures represent an exceptional example of an eighteenth-century industrial ensemble, which is a focal point within the ACA and is of national importance. The relationship between the eighteenth-century structures has been dramatically altered over the years by the addition of various warehouses and industrial sheds to the front of the mill. Most of these buildings have little architectural merit. Their addition has interfered with the primacy of the main façade of the mill (an important elevation to the public realm) and the spatial quality to the front of the mill and around the millpond has been lost. In the

Implications for Planning and Development

interest of preserving the existing built fabric, restoring the inherent spatial quality and maintaining the significant vistas of the mill, it is recommended that no new development will be carried out in this area. Of all of these ancillary structures, the freestanding brick chimney and the stone and brick extension to the south of the original mill make the most positive contribution to the site and add to the special character of the area. Their restoration and preservation will be encouraged. However, in the event that the southern extension becomes derelict, its removal is recommended on the basis that no new structure, either in contemporary or in traditional form, will take its place. The removal of the remaining early twentieth-century structures surrounding the millpond and on either side of the freestanding brick chimney is recommended on the same basis. Their re-use for recreational purposes or as additional hotel amenities is inappropriate. In essence the reinstatement of the original eighteenth-century layout of the millpond fronting the mill building and without its current appendages is the most desired result here.

With regard to the east end of the mill complex site, where there is currently a generous open forecourt and landscaped garden, the same aforementioned principles apply and new development here is also deemed to be inappropriate. This includes temporary structures accommodating watercraft, such as kayaks or dinghies, or any water related equipment. In addition to this the avenue to the Mill House should provide access only to the guests of the hotel and residents of the complex and should never be used as an access route to any future developments to the east of the ACA.

- Boyne View Terrace: Extensions should be kept to the rear of properties and be of an appropriate scale, built with suitable materials and finishes. Due to the geographical location of Mill Hill rear

extensions may often be visible from higher streetscapes and their design must follow the same principles for new development as laid out above. Extensions to the side or front of the terrace will not be encouraged by the local authority, nor will windows in the gable ends of the row, as these could be particularly detrimental to the character of the ACA.

10.1.5 Demolition works

Proposals to demolish structures of architectural merit within the ACA, whether it is a protected structure or not, require planning permission. Demolition will normally only be permitted where the structure makes no material contribution to the character or appearance of the area. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining structures that a positive contribution to the character of the area. In the case of the majority of the ancillary structures attached to the mill building, in particular those that do not make a positive contribution, their removal would be recommended. However, their replacement within a similar type or with a new building of contemporary design is not deemed appropriate and this area should remain free of extensions and additions, which interfere with the primacy of the mills elevations. (See also preceding section 10.1.4). Where permission is sought for demolition on the ground of structural defects or failure, a report containing annotated photographs and drawings will be required. The report is to be produced by a suitably qualified and experienced professional regarding the existing condition. As part of the justification for any demolition within the ACA on structural grounds, details will be required of repairs and remedial works usually carried out in similar circumstances and details of why they are not deemed suitable in this case.

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Fig.17: Eighteenth-century granite bollards lining the avenue to the mill

10.1.6 Boundary Treatments

There are few man-made boundaries in this ACA and the majority consist of natural borders such as the riverbanks, sheer quarry walls and tree-lined slopes. Removal of any railings, bollards, boundary walls, piers, gates, etc. always requires planning permission. Loss of such features can be seriously damaging to the character of the ACA and is therefore not acceptable. Reinstatement of lost features to correct historic detail will be encouraged by the planning authority, or required by condition where appropriate when granting permission for developments within the ACA.

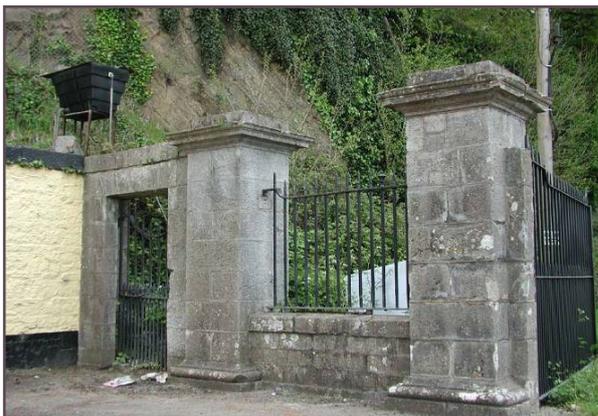


Fig.18: Main gates to mill complex, with wrought ironwork railings

10.1.7 External Lighting

Proposals for the illumination during night-time hours of certain buildings and landmark features within the ACA should be agreed beforehand with Meath County Council. The method of lighting, i.e. type of fitting, fixing method and type of light would need to be specified by the applicant in seeking permission and should be designed so that it does not result in light pollution or negatively impact on other structures in the ACA.

10.1.8 Preservation of views

The significant views clearly outlined in this document are those looking out from the ACA towards the valley to the south and the east, and towards the demesne and Slane Castle to the west. Equally important are the views towards the ACA from all points in the valley, in particular from the demesne to the west and from the lower reaches of the Boyne and the Dublin Road to the south. It is vital to the special character of the village that these views are preserved and any works within the ACA should not adversely impact or block these views.

10.2 Works not requiring planning permission

10.2.1 Internal Alterations

The ACA designation does not prevent internal changes or re-arrangements to structures which are not listed as protected structures within the ACA, provided that these changes do not impact on the exterior of the structure. However, all internal changes must comply with current building regulations.

10.2.2 Works to the public realm

Generally, works to the public realm will be carried out by Meath County Council or major utility and service providers, and may be exempt from planning permission. However, prior to commencement of the works, consultation with the Conservation Office of Meath County Council

Implications for Planning and Development

will be required, to ensure that these works enhance and improve the special character of the ACA and do not negatively impact on it. The following areas will require careful consideration:

- Works to public footpaths, including the preservation of historical street surfaces such as cobbles or original kerbing. New pavements should not be of poured concrete or tarmacadam with reconstituted stone kerbing, but should reflect the natural materials of the area. When cobble-lock style paving is used it should be of an appropriate scale, colour and detail to complement the character of the area.
- The installation and location of utility boxes, such as large ESB metre boxes, should be given careful consideration with regard to their position within the ACA and the impact of its colour and massing on the adjoining boundary treatment and surrounding buildings. Painted finishes of muted colour rather than galvanised finish should be considered.
- Changes to traffic management within the ACA. This should take into account its ACA designation and seek to preserve and enhance the character of the area in the design and provision of signage, ramps, renewed surface treatment and pavement layout. Suitable design of public signage, in particular tourist information will be encouraged and that which does not obstruct views of the landmark buildings, focal points and significant vistas throughout the ACA.

10.2.3 Maintenance & repairs to non-protected structures only

Planning permission is not required for regular maintenance works and genuine repairs within this ACA (such as roof, rainwater goods or window repairs) as long as original materials are retained where they exist, or where replacement is necessary that it is on a like-for-like basis.

Please note that some of the works listed in Section 10.0 and all its subsections above require planning permission irrespective of whether the area is protected or not, but are included to highlight the need for careful consideration of the design of the proposed works. This is to ensure that they do not impact negatively on the special character of the area. The list is not in itself a comprehensive list of all works, in all circumstances that require planning permission, but identifies those works that would impact on the character of the ACA. Development works would still have to adhere to the general provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 and Planning Regulations. The area planner and conservation officer of Meath County Council can be consulted if there is any doubt as to whether planning permission is required or not.

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council