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Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment

Proposed re-roofing of Ballynahinch Castle
at
Recess
Connemara
Co. Galway



C/o de Blacam & Meagher Architects, 4 St. Catherine's Lane West, Dublin 8

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1 Overview and Context

Southgate Associates were engaged by the owner, to compile an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment to assess the potential impact of the proposed re-roofing of the Ballynahinch Castle ruin at Recess, Connemara, Co. Galway. The development also proposes insertion of a steel staircase and sealing window opes with glazed windows or timber louveres.

Ballynahinch tower house is a recorded archaeological monument is located within the designed landscape (attendant grounds) of Ballynahinch Castle hotel. It is positioned on a rocky outcrop within the lake which appears to have been enhanced with the addition of stone deposits to form an island enclosure. In the printed RMP, monument GA036-00102- is described as a Crannóg. In the Historic Environment Viewer website, the site is listed as GA036-001002 the site is listed as a Ringfort-cashel. We are not aware of any timber being found in the immediate environs of the island to suggest that there was any sort of palisade or revetment present. Crannógs can be built using stone also either as a primary construction material or as fill material or for extensions/rebuilding. Regardless of the description Cashel/ Crannóg, the site appears to have been used defensively in pre-history and this culminated in the building of a tower house by Donal O’Flaherty during the historic early/mid-16th century¹. The tower house was altered and added to in the eighteenth/ nineteenth century with the addition of a structure on the north elevation containing two kilns and within the tower house itself, a timber staircase, internal plasterwork and roof modifications were carried out, probably in the early 19th century by the Martin family (eighteenth and nineteenth century residents of Ballynahinch Castle County House).

The late medieval tower house and adjoining industrial building and kilns were subject to a programme of repair and conservation works between 2015 and 2017. These works were recorded pre- and post-conservation in a series of archaeological and architectural heritage reports compiled by Orla Scully, Maurice Hurley, Colin Rynne and Florence Hurley. Heritage reports commissioned by the owner in advance of the conservation works include:

- Baseline Archaeological Statement (Orla Scully and Maurice F. Hurley, c. 2015),
- The Ballynahinch Castle Kilns, Co. Galway (Colin Rynne, c. 2015), and

¹ Delany, D, 2025, 16

- Descriptive and photographic report on Ballynahinch Tower House and adjoining structure with mortar analysis (Florence M. Hurley, October 2015).

The extent of the repair and conservation works undertaken at the site are detailed in the Completion of Works Report (Florence M. Hurley, May 2018). Florence Hurley's 2015 report provides a very detailed record of the tower house and industrial building prior to conservation works.

Planning permission was subsequently granted in respect of the proposal to re-roof the industrial buildings and insert new stone floors (Planning Ref. 19/788). The floor of the building was excavated to 18th/19th century levels by Dominic Delany and Associates and is detailed in the excavation report "BALLYNAHINCH CASTLE, CO. GALWAY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION – FINAL REPORT Planning Reference Number: 19/1788 Excavation Licence Number: 23E0426, Detection Device Consent Number: 23R0226" (included as part of the current planning application documents)

The current proposed development entails the reinstatement of a roof of natural slate to a double pitched profile consistent with tower houses of this type and age. The profile of the roof is based on scholarly research and forensic inspection of the structure. The design therefore reflects a shape and form that closely mimics the original roof. It is important to note that there is historic graffiti and eighteenth-century decorative plaster corncicing surviving on the interior of the castle which has been exposed to weathering over at least one century which is threatening it's long-term survival, with the majority already lost due to exposure to the elements. The roofing of Ballynahinch tower house will shelter the graffiti and plasterwork from further weathering and ensure its long-term survival in addition to generally protecting the masonry structure. This AHIA accompanies a planning application and provides details and assessment of the impacts of the proposal.



Figure 1 Location and geographic context of Ballynahinch Tower house.

1.1 Description of Proposed Development

The owner of Ballynahinch Castle is seeking to reinstate a double pitched, natural slate roof on the ruined tower house, to insert a steel staircase internally to allow for safe access to the upper levels and seal window and door opens with either glazed windows or timber louvres (to accommodate a habitat for bats). The proposed interventions are based on a policy of minimum intervention, reversibility and quality design. The materials and design for the roof are consistent with the type and style of roof traditionally seen on tower houses i.e. slate and pitched roof. The proposed re-roofing of tower house and insertion of staircase has involved consultation with archaeologists and a conservation engineer

who formed part of the design team to ensure minimum intervention policy. Windows are designed for minimum visual impact. No other external alterations or groundworks beyond the footprint of the tower house are being proposed.

1.2 Aim of Report

Ballynahinch Tower house is a recorded archaeological monument is located within the designed landscape (attendant grounds) of Ballynahinch Castle hotel (a Protected structure, see section 2.1 below) as set out in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. Therefore, this report seeks to:

- a) establish the heritage significance of the site;
- b) outline the constraints associated in protecting any identified heritage significance by highlighting any legislation and associated required procedures drawing on national legislation, policies of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and international best practice (ICOMOS and ISCARSAH charters);
- c) assess the impacts (visual and physical) of the proposed alteration to the tower house by the reinstatement of a roof and insertion of a steel staircase on the heritage value of the site. The report will describe and assess any impacts on the architectural significance the development may have and,
- d) recommend mitigation for any identified impacts if deemed necessary.

1.3 Methodology

This report is informed by a site visit by James Byrne, built Heritage Consultant with Southgate Associates in November 2025. A desktop analysis of known historic maps and historic information, recent archaeological reports as well as local authority policies was carried out. The proposed design drawings were scrutinised to ensure international best practice standards were adhered to.

Protection and Significance

1.4 Planning and Development Act 2024

Ballynahinch Castle tower house ruin lies within the demesne of the eighteenth century Ballynahinch Castle Hotel a Country House within a historic designed landscape. The designed landscape is listed on the non-statutory National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) Garden Surveys (Ref: GA5242) in which the castle is listed as feature. More importantly, from a statutory perspective, this designed landscape forms part of the attendant grounds of the Ballynahinch Castle Country House (RPS: 620)² and any material change requires planning permission. A planning authority has the power to protect all features of importance which lie within the attendant grounds of a Protected structure³ as the “designed landscape associated with a Protected structure was often an intrinsic part of the original design concept and, as such, inseparable from the building”⁴. The castle lies 840m due south of the Protected structure however they are not visible to each other. For clarity, it is worthy of mention that Ballynahinch tower house does not lie within an Architectural Conservation Area as defined by the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.

1.5 Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023,

From an archaeological perspective both the ruin and island on which it stands are protected under the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023, Ref Nos SMR-GA036-001002/ RMP GA036-00102- (Crannóg, the island) and SMR-GA036-001001-/ RMP GA036-00101 (tower house). Any works to the castle or the island require notification to be sent to the National Monuments Service (NMS) under Section 12 of the National Monuments Acts by a qualified and licensed archaeologist.

²

<https://consult.galway.ie/en/system/files/materials/6962/Appendix%20Record%20of%20Protected%20Structures.pdf>

³ Paragraph 13.2.3. Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2004..

⁴ Paragraph 13.3.1. *ibid.*

Table 1 Heritage assets relevant to this proposal

Protection mechanism	
Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.	RMP GA036-00102/ SMR-GA036-001002- (cashel, the island) SMR-GA036-001001- RMP GA036-00101 (tower house).
Planning and Development Act 2024	Being part of the historic designed landscape of Ballynahinch Country House RPS: 620

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It is worthy of mention that the scope of previous works in 2023 to re-roof the industrial building and install a floor entailed a licenced archaeological investigation by Dominic Delaney & Associates (Licence No. 23E0426, Detection Device Consent No. 23R0226). (report included as part of the current planning application documents)

2 Historic and Cartographic Context and Site Description,

2.1 Overview of Historical Developments Relevant to the Study Area

The history and development of Ballynahinch is covered well in the Baseline Archaeological Statement on Ballynahinch Tower House (RMP GA0036-001001) and Island Enclosure (RMP GA0036-001002). by Órla Scully, MA MIAI and Dr M. F. Hurley, MA FSA MIAI and BALLYNAHINCH CASTLE, CO. GALWAY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION – FINAL REPORT Planning Reference Number: 19/1788 Excavation Licence Number: 23E0426, Detection Device Consent Number: 23R0226 by Dominic Delany.

Ballynahinch Castle (RMP GA0036-001001) is a ruined tower house first constructed in mid-16th century (before 1574 AD The castle is said to have been built by Donal O’Flaherty, known as Donal an Chogaidh or ‘Donal of the battles’, in the first half of the 16th century. In or about the year 1546 Donal married Grace O’Malley or Granuaile, the famous pirate queen of Connacht, the marriage uniting the powerful O’Flaherty’s of Iar Connacht and O’Malley’s of Murrisk. Donal was Tánaiste, the heir apparent of the O’Flaherty clan, and when he died Grace took over as head of the family. In 1584 Queen Elizabeth appointed

Murrough na dTuadh O'Flaherty as head of the family causing a rift in the clan and resulting in the capture of Ballynahinch Castle by said Murrough na nTuadh O'Flaherty. Grace O'Malley's sons, Owen and Murrough, recaptured the castle in the same year. A couple of years later Owen and eighteen of his followers were captured and killed at Ballynahinch by the local lieutenant Captain John Bingham and five hundred of his men. Owen's brother Murrough is said to have retained possession of the castle until the early 17th century.

A branch of the Anglo-Norman family of Martin, one of the tribes of Galway, was granted the O'Flaherty lands in Connemara in the mid-17th century, and the Westport Estate Papers record the sale of over 27,000 acres in the baronies of Moycullen and Ballynahinch to Richard Martin in 1699. The first house at Ballynahinch was built as an inn in the mid-18th century and the addition of the industrial building containing kilns on the north elevation may have been associated with this phase of development. The location of kilns on a lake island is very unorthodox and inconvenient for any industrial process and begs the question if the buildings were used for the drying of grain for the manufacture of illicit alcohol.

The tower house appears then to have received attention by 'Humanity Dick' Martin, when he moved there in 1813. The tower house was enhanced with internal decorative plasterwork in the form of cornices and a staircase and apparently used as a folly. 'Sir Bernard Burke (he of Burke's Peerage) [wrote] of it...The peasants of the neighbourhood still know these mouldering fragments by the name of Dick Martin's Prison, and will tell how the Lord of Connemara used, in somewhat doubtful exercise of his feudal rights, to confine therein such of his tenants as sinned against the laws of humanity toward the brute creation. (Robinson, 2006, 298). These later modifications to the building, although largely of 18th century date, must also be regarded as representing a significant element of the historic fabric of the building.

Later owners (The Martin's Connemara estate was acquired in 1852 by the Law Life Assurance Society 1852, the Berridge family in 1872, Indian Prince Ranjitsinhji in 1926, Frederic C. McCormack in 1933, the Irish Tourist Board in 1946 Ballynahinch 1952 onwards in private ownership) appear not to have carried out any changes to the tower house. Photographs taken by Richard Berridge in 1907 and 1921 show the buildings in ruin and partly covered by ivy.

2.2 Site Description

The subject site is located within the designed landscape of Protected structure Ballynahinch Castle Country House (RPS: 620). The demesne landscape consists of native woodland with river and lake features. The proposed site is a tower house located on a small island lake. The site is not visible from the Protected structure as the Protected structure and site are separated by a low hill.

The tower house is described in detail in the “Descriptive and photographic report on Ballynahinch Tower House and adjoining structure with mortar analysis” and the description here is a summary of same with the authors observations on details relevant to the proposal.

The tower house is squat in comparison to most other tower houses seen in Ireland, consisting of only two storeys with attic level. The lower section of the tower house is of medieval masonry, and it is built on a small island described as partially artificial⁵ and may be an enhanced natural feature which was formed into a Cashel/ Crannog-type defensive site. The masonry of the tower house is of coursed random rubble, most likely of schist which is the predominant bedrock of the area. The masonry varies between 2m and 2.30m thick. The structure was significantly interfered with in the eighteenth century (when an industrial building with kilns was added to the northern elevation which involved the “grubbing” out of a chimney into the medieval masonry⁶(see Appendix 1). Examination of the masonry and of historic photographs suggests that the uppermost courses of masonry gable could be eighteenth century in date and were added to reinstate a roof at the time (the assumption being that the original medieval roof was lost or removed by that stage).

The only evidence for a roof is the gabled western elevation. This is much less evident on the eastern wall where approximately half of this wall was removed to create a viewing platform in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. An examination of the interior of the upper wall faces did not reveal any slots, corbels, rebates or any evidence for a roof structure. This suggests a simple gabled roof for the tower house Plate 1.. This is unusual for a tower house as the roofs were usually built within castellated parapets however given

⁵ Scully, O and Hurley, F, Baseline Archaeological Statement on Ballynahinch Tower House (RMP GA0036-001001) and Island Enclosure (RMP GA0036-001002). – included as part of the current planning application documents

⁶ Hurley, F, 2015, Descriptive and photographic report on Ballynahinch Tower House and adjoining structure with mortar analysis, Unpublished report – included as part of the current planning application documents

the defensive island site, and the only form of attack would have been from the water, it may have been felt that the structure could have been adequately defended from the ground removing the requirement for parapets. Also, its island location would have conserved its attack by cannon or any other heavy artillery given attack would only have taken place from small boats. It is worthy of note that gabled tower houses do exist elsewhere such as Oola, Co. Tipperary with the gabled masonry walls seen as a feature of some of the later tower houses where "greater provision of heat and light, married to Renaissance concepts of symmetry, was incorporated into the traditional building form to create a new tower-house paradigm"⁷. It is our professional opinion however following analysis of the masonry, mortar analysis carried out in 2015 and consideration of historical developments in the demesne during the nineteenth century that the upper courses and the gabled elements are early nineteenth century modifications/ additions to the medieval masonry and introduced an usual form of roof which drained inwards⁸. It is likely then that any castellated parapets, were they existing, were removed at this time.

⁷ Donnelly, Colm (2011). "The Tower Houses of Co. Limerick". In Brown, Sarah; Stalley, Roger (eds.). *Limerick and South-West Ireland: Medieval Art and Architecture* (1 ed.). Routledge. pp. 189–201.

⁸ Section 14, *ibid.*



Plate 1 1907 Richard Berridge or Arnold Mathews courtesy of Dominic Berridge (grandson) showing gabled west elevation of the tower house



Figure 2 Gabled west elevation..

A very important features of the tower house is the historic graffiti contained on the walls. There are remnants of eighteenth-century plasterwork cornices, and these are significant in their own right and are described in detail in the attached report Descriptive and photographic report on “Ballynahinch Tower House decorative plasterwork Ballynahinch, Recess, Connemara, Co. Galway”⁹ however the plaster has also been etched into over the last number of centuries by visitors. This is described in

⁹ Hurley, F, 2015, Descriptive and photographic report on Ballynahinch Tower House decorative plasterwork Ballynahinch, Recess, Connemara, Co. Galway, Unpublished report – included as part of the current planning application documents

detail in the accompanying report “Descriptive and photographic report on Ballynahinch Tower House graffiti Ballynahinch, Recess, Connemara, Co. Galway”¹⁰ and is summarised here

The south and east interior walls of the tower house were plastered in the eighteenth century. This is based on the style of the attached cornicing. Over time this provided an ideal surface for visitors to inscribe initials to mark their visit and in some instances inscribe images. There are 64 examples of graffiti recorded. Only one example is an illustration, and this is of a Galway Hooker, a type of boat that would have been a common sight in the nearby coastal areas in the past. Almost all of the graffiti was located in the entrance lobby, stairwell and garderobe chamber of the tower house with only one example being found in the main ground floor chamber. It is noted that the graffiti is either etched into the plaster or in two instances of pencil which suggests that the act of leaving initials etc was a spontaneous act rather than planned.

The majority of the graffiti is initials of individuals. These named individuals can be divided into those with obvious local or Irish names and those with non-local and non-Irish names. Local names include Joyce, Kane; Hayden; Nee; Conneely; O Malley, King; Mannion and Vahey (a variation of Fahey). Other names are clearly non-native. These include Widenbach, Quayle, Dense and Heinritz.

The breakdown of dated graffiti shows that it could be broken down into five broad date ranges. These are early nineteenth century, the date on this is not clear and could be 1813 or 1818. Mid-nineteenth century: 1858--1886 (six examples); early twentieth century: 1905--1910 (six examples); mid-twentieth century 1921--1951 (nine examples); and modern 1968--1983 (five examples) and 1991--2007 (eight examples).

¹⁰ Hurley, F, 2015, Descriptive and photographic report on Ballynahinch Tower House graffiti Ballynahinch, Recess, Connemara, Co. Galway. Unpublished report – included as part of the current planning application documents



Plate 2 Graffiti "WPN 1813" suggesting it was inscribed in 1813.

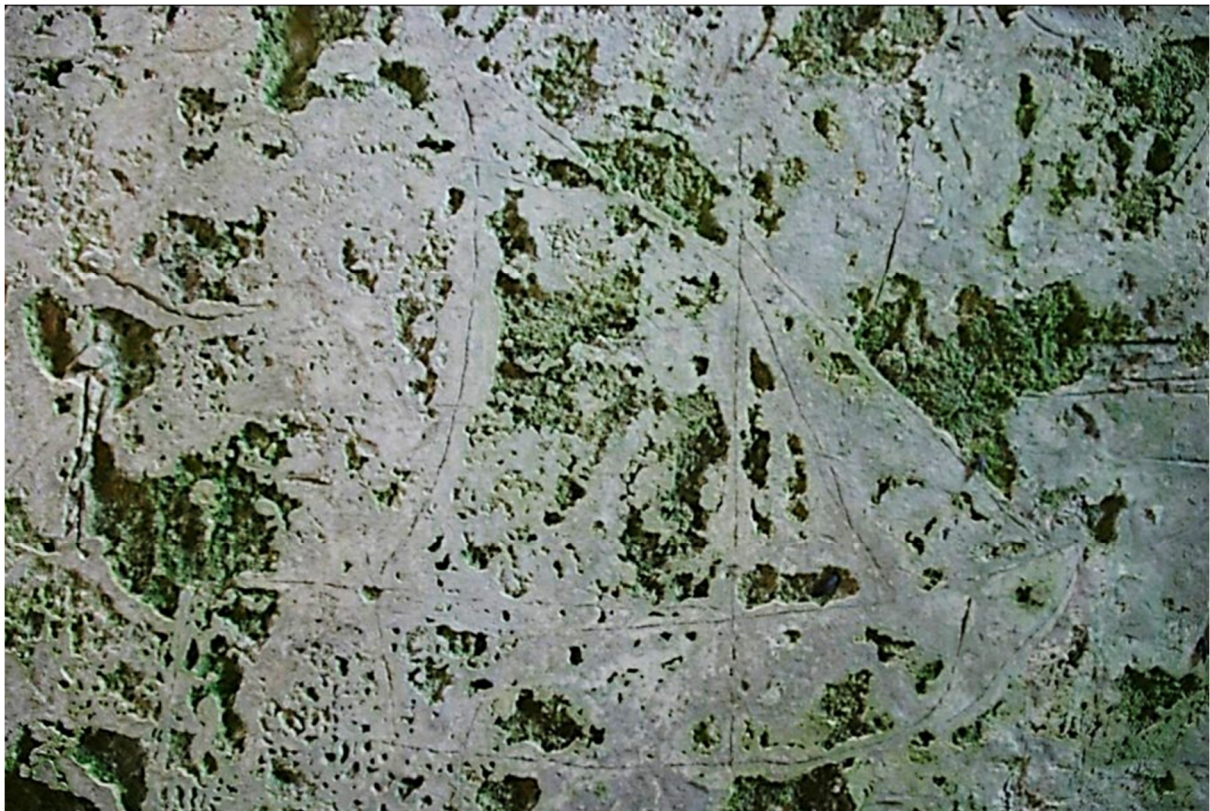


Plate 3 Etched drawing of a Galway Hooker.



Plate 4 There is many examples from the nineteenth century such as this "Fadden 1863".

This graffiti is currently exposed to the weather and the wetting and drying cycles of exposed masonry which is having a deleterious effect on the condition of the plaster. While it has survived for centuries it is degrading and without a long-term shelter solution it will be lost. The proposal therefore to roof the structure which will stabilise the masonry and plaster will assist in the survival of the historic graffiti.

3 Conservation Policy Context

This section of the report seeks to set out an understanding of the relevant national and international legislation that governs Protected structures to reassure Galway County Council that they have been considered as part of the design process of the proposal.

3.1 The Galway County Council Development Plan, 2022-2028 Volume 1

Volume 1, Chapter 12, of The Galway Country Development Plan, 2022-2028 discusses architectural heritage and archaeology and its protection, objectives and standards in relation to development which is relevant for this application.

Relevant Development Plan Policy	Design response to policy
<p>AH 10. Designed Landscapes</p> <p><i>“Protect the surviving historic designed landscapes in the County and promote the conservation of their essential character, both built and natural....</i></p> <p><i>Development proposals in designed landscape shall be accompanied by an appraisal of the contributing elements and an impact assessment.”</i></p>	<p><i>The proposal involves the reinstatement of a missing feature of an existing structure.</i></p> <p><i>Design decisions to ensure that traditional materials are used as surface treatments (natural slate). The inclusion of this impact assessment adheres to this policy.</i></p>
<p>ARC 1 Legislative Context</p> <p><i>“Support and promote the preservation, conservation and appropriate management and enhancement of the County’s archaeological sites and monuments, together with the settings of these monuments, having regard to the legislative, statutory and policy provisions relevant to the conservation of the archaeological heritage.”</i></p>	<p><i>Correct legislative procedure is being followed by applying to GCC for planning permission and to the NMS for approval under Section 12 notification process. The reinstatement of a roof on the tower will protect the exposed masonry, internal eighteenth-century plasterwork fragments and the historic graffiti which are exposed to weather. In this way the proposal supports this policy.</i></p>
<p>Arc 4 Protection of Archaeological Sites</p> <p><i>“Protect archaeological sites and monuments their settings and visual amenity and archaeological objects and underwater archaeological sites that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, in the ownership/guardianship of the State, or that are subject of Preservation Orders or have been registered in the Register of Historic Monuments, or that are newly discovered and seek to protect important archaeological landscapes”.</i></p>	<p><i>The reinstatement of a roof on the tower will protect the exposed masonry, internal eighteenth-century plasterwork fragments and the historic graffiti which are exposed to weather. The dry masonry will also discourage vegetation growth which can damage masonry. In this way the proposal supports this policy. Great care has been taken to design an effective roof that will protect the structure mitigating any impact on its character as much as possible.</i></p>
<p>ARC 5 Development Management</p> <p><i>All planning applications for new development, redevelopment, any ground works, refurbishment,</i></p>	<p><i>The status of the monument has been the foundation of the design constraints and due regard has been paid to the status of the</i></p>

and restoration, etc. within areas of archaeological potential or within close proximity to Recorded Monuments or within the historic towns of County Galway will take account of the archaeological heritage of the area and the need for archaeological mitigation. structure as a recorded monument and the form and materiality of the proposal was informed by the status of the structure.

ARC 9 Recorded Monuments Great care has been taken from the outset of the design process to choose a form, finishes, materials and fixings that minimise impact on the monument and its visual character and setting. It is believed that the existing design is appropriate and sensitive and does not impact on key views.

Ensure that any development in the immediate vicinity of a Recorded Monument is sensitively designed and sited and does not detract from the monument or its visual amenity.

4.3 The Burra Charter, ICOMOS, 1979

The Burra Charter was adopted by the International Council on Monuments and Sites in 1979 to guide the conservation and management of sites of historic and cultural significance. The central approaches suggested by the I.C.O.M.O.S Burra Charter for new development in important areas are set out below. They provide a framework for assessing the visual and physical impact of the proposed alterations.

Good and sensitive design is of paramount importance when designing new additions visible from significant locations and the guidelines below should provide for a new addition that is visually unobtrusive and does not dominate the structures that contribute to the special character of the historic landscape.

Relevant I.C.O.M.O.S. Burra Charter Policy	Design response to policy
Significance, character and setting – New building design should relate to the significance of the heritage place and the character of the adjoining buildings and the surrounding heritage place. A	The significance, character and setting of the Protected structure will be unaffected by the proposed scheme. While reversible alterations are proposed the scale of the

<i>preferred approach is to design new buildings in a contemporary manner that is sympathetic to the surrounding area.</i>	intervention is considered to be modest enough not to have a negative impact on significance, character and setting
<i>Materials, colour, details – New building design should relate to and use as reference points, the materials, colour and details of adjacent buildings and the surrounding heritage place. New materials may be introduced provided that they are complimentary to the significance of the heritage place.</i>	New elements of the roof are using traditional materials to mitigate impact on the setting. Any steel elements will not be visible. The pitch and appearance of the roof form is similar to those traditionally found on tower houses i.e. double pitched.
<i>Additions and alterations should not damage significant fabric or intrude on historic buildings or the area as a whole.</i>	The addition of the roof and the proposed staircase/viewing platform was designed to have minimal interaction with the historic masonry and is designed to be reversible.

4 Assessment of Physical and Visual Impact; Mitigations and Recommendations

4.1 Description of proposal

The proposed works entail the reinstatement of a double-pitch, natural slate roof, the installation of a steel staircase internally and glazed windows and door to window and door opens and wooden vent to two windows on the north elevation (provision for bat entry and egress). The aim of the intervention is twofold: to arrest deterioration of the masonry, plasterwork and important historic graffiti within the structure of the tower house, preserving its contribution to the Romantic setting and archaeological integrity and to enable enjoyment and interaction of visitors with the structure in a manner that is safe for both visitors and the building.

4.1.1 *Specification for Proposed Roof*

The roof proposed will be of quality materials. The roof will be a steel structure which will be fixed into masonry at eaves level. The fixings will be at 895mm centres, drilled into the stone and anchored in lime mortar (see drawing A-Pa-331, A-Pa-331 wall plate detail 01 and 02 and A-Pa-335). The custom steel plates ensure that the roof is not in physical contact with the masonry on the internal face, see drawing A-Pa-336. There are areas where it is required to re-build the masonry at the gables. It is proposed that this be carried out in geologically similar stone to match but also be subtly distinguishable from the existing original masonry (see drawing A-Pa-222 and A-Pa-223). The aim is to be discernibly a contemporary addition without visually clashing or jarring. The roof cladding will be of natural slate with the masonry gables forming barges and a simple double pitch form which is traditional for tower houses. The roof structure will be fitted with oak rafters internally in order to be sympathetic to the character of the structure (see drawing A-Pa-336). While the roof materials are traditional materials it will be subtly clear that this is a twenty-first century intervention.

4.1.2 *Specification for Proposed Staircase*

It is proposed to improve access at the upper levels by inserting a steel staircase with a viewing platform at the top. This is an independent structure isolated from the historic fabric and will be fixed to the structure using removable steel connections onto the masonry below and to the side which is an approach based on minimum intervention and ultimately reversibility (see drawing A-Pa-324 and A-Pa-325). The aim of this intervention is to allow safe access and enjoyment of the upper levels of the structure.

4.1.3 *Specification for Proposed louvre vents on north elevation*

These vents are of oak timber and are set within an oak frame bedded in lime mortar (see drawing A-Pa-334). The purpose of these vents is facilitating entry and egress of bats. The design is completely reversible without damaging the medieval masonry.

4.1.4 *Specification for Proposed Glazed Units to Window and Door Operes*

Windows and doors will set back 150mm from surface of the masonry elevations. Frames will be fixed and sealed against masonry with a lime mortar intermediary layer. Plywood templates for windows and doors will be made of each ope, templates will be 20mm larger on all sides that the window frame, this gap will be built up with lime mortar to form an intermediary layer onto which to fix the window frame. Windows will be installed with small straps and pointed into place using Sikaflex 11 FC to seal between the frame and the lime intermediary layer. Fixings will be evident on the internal reveal. Frames will be coloured anthracite grey and fitted with anti-reflection glass. The design is fully reversible without physically affecting the medieval masonry.

4.2 Classification of impacts

Assessment of impact is informed by the

- ‘Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements’, 2022, EPA;
- ‘Advice notes on Current Practice (in preparation of Environmental Impact Statements), 2003, EPA;
- ‘Guidelines for the Assessment of Architectural Heritage Impacts of National Road Schemes’, National Roads Authority and Guidelines for Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment of TII National Road and Greenway Projects, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, 2024. (While this proposal is not associated with a road scheme the guidance is best practice and is useful).

Impacts are generally categorised as either being direct, indirect, or as having no predicted impact:

Direct impact	occurs when an item of architectural heritage is located within the centreline of the proposed development works and entails the removal of part, or all, of the architectural feature or direct alteration of an architectural feature (whether positive or negative)
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Indirect impact	may be caused where a feature or site of architectural interest is located in close proximity of the proposed development.
No predicted impact	occurs when the proposed development option does not adversely or positively affect an architectural heritage site.

The impact categories are assessed further in terms of the quality of the impact, which is deemed to be negative, neutral, or positive:

Negative Impact	is applied when a change will detract from or permanently remove an architectural monument from the landscape.
Neutral Impact	is applied when a change does not affect the architectural heritage.
Positive Impact:	is applied when a change improves or enhances the setting of an architectural monument.

A significance rating for these impacts is then applied; whether profound, significant, moderate, slight, or imperceptible:

Profound	applies where mitigation would be unlikely to remove adverse effects. This is reserved for adverse, negative effects only. These effects arise where an architectural site is completely and irreversibly destroyed by a proposed development.
Significant	applies when an impact, by its magnitude, duration or intensity, alters an important aspect of the environment. An impact like this would be where the part of a site would be permanently impacted upon leading to a loss of character, integrity and data about the architectural feature/site.
Moderate	applies when a change to the site is proposed that, though noticeable, does not compromise the architectural integrity of the site and which is reversible. This arises where an architectural feature can be incorporated into a modern-day

	development without damage and where all procedures used to facilitate this are reversible.
Slight	applies when changes are caused to the character of the environment that are not significant or profound and do not directly impact or affect an architectural feature or monument.
Imperceptible	applied where an impact is capable of measurement but does not carry noticeable consequences.

These criteria are applied to the proposal in Section 5.2 and 5.3 below.

The assessment below also provides mitigations and recommendations which aim to ensure that the significance and character of the tower house, the island and Romantic character of the demesne setting of Ballynahinch Country House do not suffer a negative visual impact. It should be noted that all changes are shown on drawings that accompany this planning application.

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4.3 Assessment of Physical and Visual impacts

Building/ Element:	Level of significance of element:	Description of Impact	Potential impact, level of impact and significance of impact:	Mitigation and Recommendations:
Designed Landscape of Ballynahinch Castle Country House (PS: 620)	Regional significance. Recorded on NIAH Gardens Surveys	Reinstallation of a pitched roof on Ballynahinch Castle tower house	Indirect Impact; Neutral; Slight significance of impact	<p>The design of the roof is based on scholarly research of the form of tower house roofs and a similar approach was adopted i.e. double pitched timber roof with natural slate and is therefore in keeping with the original character of the structure.</p> <p>The proposed oak viewing platform is a contemporary intervention designed to enhance the enjoyment of the monument safely. It has been designed so as to be reversible with minimum intervention especially with regard to fixing points. It will not be visible externally.</p> <p>The proposed timber louvre vents are of oak and while a contemporary addition to the castle, they are</p>

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				reversible and the form and materials are considered to be visually compatible with the historic structure.
Ballynahinch Castle tower house	Regional significance Recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record and protected under the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023	As above	Direct Impact; Positive impact; Moderate significance of impact	<p>The design of the roof is based on scholarly research of the form of tower house roofs and a similar approach was adopted i.e. double pitched timber roof with natural slate and is therefore is visually in keeping with the original character of the structure. The design has taken into consideration the status of the structure and the physical anchoring parts of the proposed intervention minimised in as far as is practically possible (see section 5.1.1 above). Should the roof ever be removed these anchoring parts will not be visible from ground level and will only be visible from above.</p> <p>The positive impact of the reinstatement of a roof will be the protection of the historic fabric from the weather which is damaging the historic graffiti and threatens the long term survival of the masonry which was originally designed to be sheltered by a roof.</p>

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			<p>The proposed oak viewing platform is a contemporary intervention designed to enhance the enjoyment of the monument safely. It has been designed so as to be reversible with minimum intervention especially with regard to fixing points. These are detailed above in section 5.1.2. It will not be visible externally. The positive impact will be the safe enjoyment of visitors to this historic structure.</p> <p>The proposed timber louvre vents are of oak. They are a contemporary addition to seal the building from bad weather while enabling entry and egress of bats. The louvres will be physically connected to a lime intermediary layer which will be bonded to the surrounding masonry. Because this is lime mortar however it will be completely reversible. The form and materials are considered to be visually compatible with the historic structure.</p> <p>The proposed windows will introduce a new architectural element however will be fixed in such a manner that will be reversible with minimum</p>
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				<p>impact on the medieval masonry. Dark grey frames and anti-reflection glass will ensure minimal visual impact while sheltering the interior from rain and wind exposure.</p>
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5 Conclusion

The proposed development consists of reinstating the missing roof on a medieval tower house, inserting a steel stairs at first floor level and sealing the structure with glazing/ louvres. The tower house sits at the heart of the Ballynahinch Castle Country House demesne/ attendant grounds. The tower house and the island on which it stands is listed on the Site and Monuments Record and on the Record of Monuments and Places (Ref: GA036-00101 tower house, GA036-00102 Crannóg) and is therefore protected under the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023. The tower house also lies within the much larger attendant grounds/ demesne setting (designed landscape) of Ballynahinch Castle Country House which is a Protected structure (RPS: 620) and therefore requires sensitive design and planning permission. It is within this context of the sensitivity of the site that this report was commissioned to inform the planning authority on the extent of the impact on the monument itself and its setting.

Great care was taken in the proposed design with de Blacam and Meagher Architects working with archaeologist, Flor Hurley and conservation engineer, Chris Southgate to design a roof structure that would have minimum physical impact on the tower house masonry and the Cashel/ Crannóg island (during construction), is easily reversible and is sympathetic in appearance to the character of the ruin within a designed landscape.

The proposed works will therefore have a moderate physical and visual impact on the tower house. It must also be considered that the impact will be positive in protecting the historic masonry which was originally designed to be shelter by a roof, doors and windows. Importantly the fragile surviving plasterwork fragments and the historic graffiti etched into the plasterwork of the tower house interior. The tower house was roofed originally during the first phase of its existence and was re-roofed in the nineteenth century when it was altered and added to by the then owners the Martin family, when the decorative plasterwork was added to the medieval structure. This roof was lost and the owner now seeks to reinstate the roof. This will reinstate a missing element of the building and have the benefit of protecting the fragile features of the interior which are exposed to weather.

The visual impacts are considered to be slight and have a neutral impact on the wider demesne landscape. The castle is situated on an island in the lake and is generally viewed at a distance the impact of re-roofing the ruin should not detract from it's appearance as a romantic ruin. Given its minimal visual and physical impact and its relatively easy reversibility, this proposal is thought to have a moderate, direct (physical) impact on the historic character of the recorded monument that is the tower house and the setting of the Protected structure Ballynahinch Castle Country House. The positive impacts however of the sheltering affects of the roof on an unroofed structure must also be taken into consideration.

It is our professional opinion that the reinstatement of the roof and glazing of openings, while not a small intervention, is not injurious to the character of the structure within this sensitive landscape. The methodology and materials proposed in reinstating the roof has priorities minimum intervention, minimum visual impact and reversibility and has the important benefit of protecting the historic graffiti within the structure, which without shelter into the future would be lost.

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