

Headfort Place Architectural Conservation Area

Historical Development

In 1706, the town of Kells was purchased by Thomas Taylor of Ringmere in Sussex, who had come to Ireland in 1653, as chief surveyor to Sir William Petty, the author and originator of the Down Survey, the earliest accurate map of the country.

The first three generations of Taylors lived in Headfort Place, but moved in 1770 to their estate at Headfort. The first Earl adapted Kells to an attractive estate town which relates to the Headfort estate in the manner of many English estates. The improvements to the town included the development of Headfort Place with its substantial Georgian houses and the courthouse built to the designs of Francis Johnston.

Layout

Headfort Place contrasts to the narrower medieval streets of the historic core of the town and creates a linear enclosure of the space between the principle public buildings of the town – the former courthouse, town hall, church, convent and large townhouses. The edge of the road is marked by a line of trees.

Built Form and materials

This ACA contains the majority of the principle public buildings of the town. These are of two and three storeys. The convent, parochial house and catholic church are enclosed by railings on stone plinths.

The materials of this ACA follow the pattern of the rest of the town with natural slate roofs, plaster and stone facades. Windows are traditionally timber sash although some have been inappropriately replaced.

Objectives:

1. to require that all new developments shall observe the existing scale of the street.
2. to protect the character of the existing streetscape by giving consideration to the suitability of style, construction materials, colour and decoration to be used in any proposals for development taking place within this area.
3. to retain the specific visual qualities of urban space, protect and enhance the relationship between buildings and open space, and to enhance the view and vistas along the streets by encouraging the removal of visually intrusive elements such as overhead cables and intrusive signage.
4. To avoid the destruction of minor historic elements whose cumulative loss would severely erode the cumulative cultural significance of the area and encourage the reinstatement of appropriate details and material.

Landmark view: From the courthouse towards the Church of Ireland.