

Somerville Demesne Architectural Conservation Area

Historical Development

Somerville was built by Sir James Sommerville, who was Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1736 and also served as MP for the city. The area of the home farm was substantially enlarged between 1812 and 1836 and the demesne was then laid out in the romantic naturalistic manner of the picturesque English Landscape Garden that is evident in many contemporary demesnes in Co. Meath.

Built Form

The plan of this house can be traced today only at basement level, where a series of vaulted rooms survive with joinery details that suggest a date of c. 1730. The back of Somerville was at that time four windows wide, while the front had five.

A two-storey, stone-built stable yard lies to the north of the house. At the centre is a pedimented archway surmounted by an octagonal castellated tower. A pair of houses flanks the archway, with tripartite windows looking into the courtyard.

On the western drive, Archway Lodge is a high-rusticated arch flanked by pilasters, with substantial square rooms on either side.

The demesne contains landscaped grounds which includes areas of protected woodland, a walled garden, and ice house.

Summary of Special Character

The historic demesne of Somerville House is a complex landscape of cultural significance. The site encompasses a major country house of National architectural and artistic value, set within a well conceived designed landscape of harmoniously overlaid layers, and is a good example of the picturesque English Landscape Garden in Ireland. The designed landscape is enlivened by outbuildings of fine architectural quality and a rare example of an underground ice house.

Objectives:

1. To preserve the character of the demesne, its designed landscape and built features, by limiting the extent of new development permitted within the demesne and requiring that any such development, both within the demesne and in the surrounding area, should not have an adverse affect on the special qualities of the demesne.

2. To require that all works, whether of maintenance and repair, additions or alterations to existing buildings or built features within the demesne shall protect the character of those buildings and features by the use of appropriate materials and workmanship.

A detailed statement of character and planning guidance is available to download from the website