

SECTION 2: Characteristics of the Area

2.1 Features of the Site

This Plan applies to Celbridge Main Street and its immediate hinterland and the Donaghcumper lands that lie on the opposite bank of the River Liffey.

The Donaghcumper lands were until recently used as a riding school and are largely kept as open grassland. In total, the Donaghcumper lands extend to 39 hectares in area.

2.2 Topography

The Main St. runs effectively north-south terminating at the entrance to Castletown House. The land here is relatively flat and the Liffey flows in parallel, to the rear of the properties on the eastern side of the street (see fig 2.2). On the opposite, (eastern), bank of the Liffey are the Donaghcumper lands, which comprise mainly open fields, which slope up from the river to a relatively flat plateau at a slightly higher elevation than the Main St (see fig 2.1). The relevant area extends northwards to a belt of mature trees that form a boundary with St. Wolstans (see fig. 2.3). The Liffey curves around from the west of the lands to form the northern boundary, and there are quite large numbers of mature trees on this river bank that act as a screen between Donaghcumper and Castletown. To the south-east lies the Dublin Road, and the lands here are also bounded by mature trees and by a stone wall that is quite fine in places. At the southwest corner of the Donaghcumper lands is a pleasant wooded area with a small stream and well established though relatively young trees (see fig 2.4).



Fig. 2.1: View west from near Donaghcumper House. The rooftops of some of the buildings on Main St. are visible over the trees.



Fig. 2.2: The rear of a property on Main St. extending to the river bank.



Fig. 2.3: View towards boundary with St. Wolstans.

2.3 Ecology

There are no known protected sites of ecological importance within the boundaries of the Action Area Plan. However, it should be noted that the River Liffey is a salmonoid river and the river and riverbank is likely to support a variety of wildlife. An assessment of biodiversity should be carried out in advance of, and to inform any development of the riverside lands.

2.4 Archaeology

The entire main street of Celbridge lies within a zone of archaeological potential and any development within this area will have regard to this. The ruinous Donaghcumper Church — which is a Scheduled Monument, SMR Mon. No. KD011-013 — lies to the south-east of Donaghcumper House and outside the AAP boundary. However, it has been suggested that there are tunnels connecting the former church and Donaghcumper House and this archaeological potential needs to be taken on board as part of any development within this area.



Fig 2.4: Small stream running through wooded area at southern end of Donaghcumper lands

2.5 Architectural Features

Existing Town Centre

Celbridge town centre is of an essentially classical character, laid out along the typical linear plan, with buildings of relatively narrow frontage and long back areas, facing the Main St. and extending out along the Maynooth and Clane Roads. The buildings are small in scale, mostly two-storey houses and shops (see figs. 2.5, 2.6), but here and there are landmark buildings such as churches (see fig. 2.7), Celbridge Mills and large houses—Kildought House and Celbridge Lodge, for example. These changes in scale and setting add variety to the townscape. Many of the buildings/structures are Protected Structures, of local, regional, national and international importance. The area also includes settled residential areas.

Castletown House and Demesne

Castletown House and Demesne, while not within the Plan area, must be considered in relation to any development of Celbridge town, as it is of international significance. Among the more important aspects of the large country house is its setting and grounds and this is particularly true in regard to Castletown. It is the largest country house in Ireland, dating from the early 18th century (c.1722). Laid out in a Palladian manner, it was designed by Alexander Galilei and since construction until relatively recently it remained a family home and has retained its original character. The house and its original demesne still largely remains. Castletown House is now owned by the State and is maintained and managed by the OPW. It must be noted that views to and from the house were carefully considered in the original planning and siting of the house and due consideration should be given to the protection of these views when considering any future developments.

Donaghcumper House

Donaghcumper House is an architecturally important house dating from the 18th century originally, but significantly enlarged and remodelled in a Tudor Revival style circa 1835. The entrance hall, stairs and living rooms are particularly fine with high quality joinery and plaster work. It has an interesting range of outbuildings, walled orchard, and gardens. The formal gardens and fine views towards Castletown House are a feature of Donaghcumper and the relationship between the two demesnes should be retained as part of any new development. The implementation of the Plan will change the context that the house has enjoyed over the years – that is of a large house in a farmland setting (see figs. 2.11 & 2.12). It is important that the immediate setting of the house is protected and, in particular, to enable it to have an appropriate future use reflecting its architectural and historic character. The historic demesne should be fully surveyed and surviving designed landscape features of significance protected and incorporated within any development. Donaghcumper House is presently not a Protected Structure, however it is recommended that it be added to Kildare County Council's Record of Protected Structures.



Fig 2.6: Typical two-storey streetscape of Celbridge



Fig. 2.9: Fine view from upper floor of Castletown House looking eastward. AAP area is to the right of the middle ground, amongst the trees.



Fig. 2.7: The set back of the church from the building line on Main St. provides a place for the public to gather.



Fig. 2.10: Entrance gates and associated buildings of Castletown House – all Protected Structures of International Importance.



Fig 2.5: Celbridge Main St.

Fig. 2.8: Kildought House, a fine house set back from the Main Street adds variety and character to the streetscape.



Fig. 2.11 (above): Donaghcumper House viewed from Celbridge Avenue.



Fig. 2.12 (right): Donaghcumper House—garden (wouth-west) façade,