RATHDRUM, Co. WICKLOW

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

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Summary

This report has been produced as an analysis of the town of Rathdrum, county Wicklow, to assess its character and urban design qualities with a view to recommending whether or not there should be one or more architectural conservation areas in the town and, if there should, to define the edges of such areas.

The historical appraisal finds that Rathdrum has developed on a site that has been in use since early medieval times and that the present form largely stems from the eighteenth century. The town went through a period of prosperity at the close of that century, assisted by the vision and financial support of the Earl of Fitzwilliam. With the collapse of the local flannel trade, however, the economy of the town became less certain.

At present there are two urban cores to Rathdrum – the main area of the town on the hill and Lowtown close to the river – and these are separated by sufficient distance and gradient to consider them as two distinct areas.

The report examines the layout and buildings of Rathdrum as a number of individual sub-areas, defining the character of each separately to determine its qualities as potential conservation areas. This study is confined to the older cores of the town, omitting any analysis of the more recent residential developments on the periphery, principally to the west.

The analysis then examines a number of aspects of the town such as views, green spaces, urban spaces, vistas and vista stoppers, landmarks and key trees.

Finally, the report recommends that two architectural conservation areas be adopted and suggests the boundaries for these areas.

Background

This report has been prepared for Tiros Resources Ltd. on behalf of their client, Wicklow County Council as part of the input into the draft development plan for Rathdrum.

The site was inspected for the purposes of preparing this report on 5th December and 19th December 2005 on which occasions the photographs incorporated in the report were taken and the site examined to prepare the descriptions contained therein. Archive photographs have also been incorporated.

Historical research was carried out on the background history of the town and the results are set down below.

While this report contains comment on aspects of the condition of some of the buildings in the town it is not a condition report or a structural report and must not be read as such.

This report has been prepared by Rob Goodbody BA(mod), DipEnvPlanning, MA, MUBC, MIPI, MRTPI on behalf of Historic Building Consultants, Old Bawn, Old Connaught, Bray.

1. Introduction

The town of Rathdrum stands in the foothills of the Wicklow mountains adjacent to the former main road leading south from Dublin into southern Wicklow and on to Wexford. The origins of the town are obscure, but it appears to have been established in some form by the early medieval period. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries Rathdrum was an important centre for the woollen trade, particularly flannel, based on sheep rearing in the locality and spinning and weaving as cottage industries. This was aided by the provision of facilities by the ground landlord, the earl of Fitzwilliam. For a time there was also a flax mill.

After the demise of the textile industry in the locality Rathdrum continued as a market town, with two breweries and a flour mill providing industrial employment. The transport links to the town were improved in the second decade of the nineteenth century with the construction of a coach road which bypassed the Main Street, while in the mid-19th century the railway arrived.

The basic form of the centre of Rathdrum was in place by the early 18th century, and Main Street appears to have had buildings along its full length by that time. The expansion of the town into Brewery Lane and Back Lane followed later in the century, while Lowtown also expanded at that time.

Those streets today form the heart of Rathdrum and provide it with its essential historic character. This report looks at that character, seeking to define the elements that combine to provide the essence of the town, including the historic buildings, streetscapes, vistas, views and urban spaces.

Recommendations are included that certain buildings be included as an addendum to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Certain elements that detract from the town are also identified.

The report examines the potential for the declaration of Architectural Conservation Areas in Rathdrum, concluding that two such areas could be adopted, covering Main Street and Lowtown. Suggested boundaries are depicted on a map.

2. Historical development of Rathdrum

The name Rathdrum suggests an early origin for some form of settlement in this locality, suggesting a fort on a ridge. It is possible that this fort was on the site of the present town and could be the factor that led to the establishment of Rathdrum here. There are many reasons why a town might grow up in a particular location. Those that survive from an early period are generally at a crossing point on a river, a meeting point of roads or at a harbour, or they evolved from an earlier settlement such as a rath or a monastery. While Lowtown probably grew up due to the river crossing, Rathdrum did not. The road through Lowtown and up the main street is not a logical alignment for a long-distance route due to the steep gradient, the later line which bypasses the town being a more likely choice, suggesting that the town may have originated in a settlement that predated a formal road system. No early buildings appear to survive at Rathdrum, however, though there seems to have been a church here[1]. While the location of this church is uncertain it is possible that this was on the site now occupied by St. Saviour's Church of Ireland Church.

Whatever of its earlier origins and form, Rathdrum is predominantly a late 18th and early 19th century town. A town or village of significant size existed in the mid-18th century, though this was small in comparison with the later extent and was located along Main Street. An estate map produced n about 1730 shows Rathdrum in remarkable detail, as seen below in *Fig. 1*.

Fig. 1: Detail of estate map of ca. 1730 showing Rathdrum

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[1] Grogan, Eoin and Annaba Kilfeather (1997), *Archaeological Inventory of County Wicklow*, Dublin, p. 135

The map shows Rathdrum built up along the entire length of Main Street from the junction of Poundbrook Lane to the point where the road to Clara now splits from the road to the bridge[2]. Brewery Lane is shown as a route leading westwards, but no development is shown along it. Back Lane is not shown, but there is a gap in the buildings at that point, and a division between land parcels. Poundbrook Lane is shown as a through route leading on to Corballis and on to Garymore. The detail shown in this map suggest that this is an accurate representation based on an actual survey as the bends in the roads accord with those which are visible on later maps and even the property boundaries may be compared with Ordnance Survey editions. It seems reasonable, therefore, to treat the map as reliable and to draw conclusions from it. Most particularly, it shows that Main Street is wider at its southern end, not just at Market Square, but extending as far as Poundbrook Lane. The absence of buildings on the side streets may also be taken as an accurate statement of the extent of Rathdrum at the time. The position of Fair Green, and its general shape, show that it was not very much different than in the 19th century, though it may have approached a little closer to the town to include the site of the brewery shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, as discussed below.

While Main street and Brewery Lane meet at right angles today, and were shown as such on this early 18th century map, it is possible that they formed more of a Y-junction in the mid-18th century. At present Brewery Lane turns to meet Main Street at right angles, while the section further up the hill it is aligned on the front of St Saviour's Church. Poundbrook Lane is also aligned on the church and, shown in the map, was a through route to Corballis and Garrymore originally. It seems likely, then, that Rathdrum was originally built to the front of St Saviour's Church, suggesting that this was the site of the original church in medieval times and perhaps also the rath from which the town takes its name. As the market square developed the lane may have been realigned to fit in better with the development along Main Street.

Jacob Neville's map of county Wicklow, dated 1760, shows the town as it was at that time. Though the scale of this map is much smaller than the earlier estate map. It shows Rathdrum as being at a Y-shaped junction between two roads (see *Fig. 2* overleaf), which are Main Street and Brewery Lane and it seems to show that buildings had appeared along Brewery Lane since the earlier map. This is probably a reasonably accurate representation, given its small scale. Neville was a native of Wicklow and was commissioned to produce this map by the Grand Jury for Wicklow, in 1754[3]. A client such as this would have required accuracy and a

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[2] This map appears as one of the end papers at the back of Kavanagh, Joan (2002) *Rathdrum – a pictorial history*, Rathdrum, where it is labelled "Map of c.1730 showing portion of the Marquis of Rockingham's lands". The cartouche on the map reads "A Survey of several parcels of land lying in and about the Town of Rathdrum in the Manor of Fairwood Park" There is no date or surveyor's name on the map as reproduced.

[3] Andrews, J H (1985), *Plantation Acres: an historical study of the Irish land surveyors*, Ulster Historical Foundation, p. 346.

comprehensive survey, and it would not have been worth Neville's while to have included significant errors.

Major changes to Rathdrum took place in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and this may be seen in the layout of the town and in the age of the buildings. The landlords of Rathdrum and its neighbourhood had been the Fitzwilliam family since the late 16th century, who had been Earls of Fitzwilliam in the Irish peerage since 1716. The fourth earl inherited the title and property at the age of eight in 1756, and lived until 1833[4]. During this time Rathdrum boomed, as the centre of a thriving flannel industry, encouraged by the earl. There was, apparently, also a flax mill in the town during the 18th century[5].
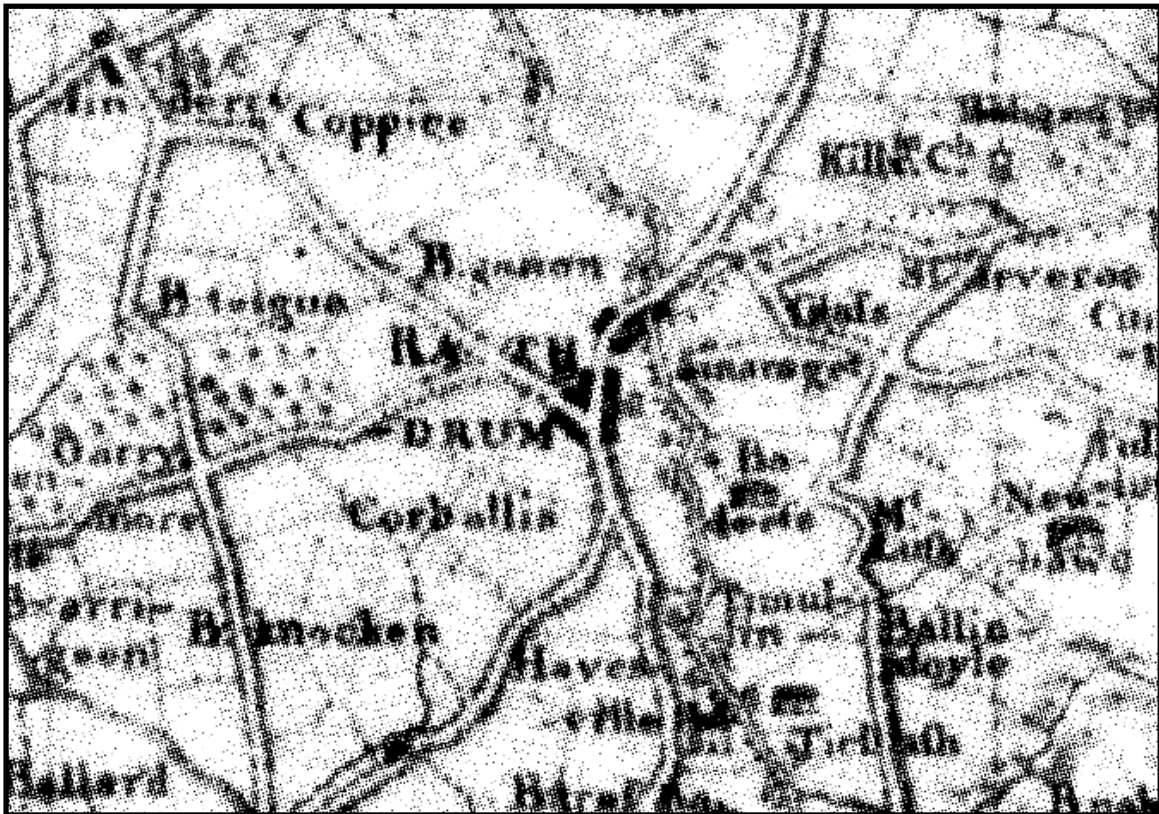
Fig. 2: Detail of Jacob Neville's map of Wicklow, 1760

Sheep farming in the Wicklow mountains provided the raw material for wool spinning and the weaving of fabric for flannel, and this was a cottage industry in the Rathdrum area at this time, rather than being based in mills. The wars with America and France between 1775 and 1783 created a large demand for woollen fabrics and this was renewed from 1793 with the outbreak of the wars with France[6]. The demand for woollens continued to the end of the war in 1815, but a

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[4] Burke, Sir Bernard (1853), *Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire*, London, pp. 400-401.

[5] Kavanagh, Joan (2002), *Rathdrum – a pictorial history* Rathdrum, p. 41.

[6] Ó Gráda, Cormac (1994), *Ireland: a new economic history 1780-1939*, Oxford, p. 293.

combination of the ending of the war with the availability of cheaper, factory-made woollens led to a downturn in the market. When the Irish woollen trade began to recover in the 1830s it was largely based on larger-scale woollen mills and the cottage industry in Rathdrum did not revive.

During the boom years the level of production of flannel in the Rathdrum area led to the appointment by the government of a seller of flannels and Earl Fitzwilliam built a flannel hall on the outskirts of the town[7]. Here flannel markets were held each month[8].

The buildings at the centre of Rathdrum, between the Market Square and St Saviour's Church, are late Georgian in appearance, and many have the characteristic Georgian doors with fanlights in a style that is typical of the late 18th and early 19th century. It would appear that at this time the market square was reduced in size through the erection of these houses further forward than their predecessors, with gardens to the front further eroding the civic space. It would have been an important factor in the development of buildings within the town that the Earl of Fitzwilliam, did not build, but leased sites to tenants who were responsible for their own building[9]. As a result there is great variety in the types of building within Rathdrum, and similar buildings on adjoining sites suggests an intermediate lessor, as was, in fact, the norm through most of the town.

A major change to the area came in 1815 with the opening of the new coach road from Dublin to Wexford[10]. This route brought with it an improved road as well as the accessibility by coach. To facilitate coach traffic new sections of road were constructed and existing sections improved or bypassed. The route through Rathdrum was relegated to local traffic in favour of a new alignment, effectively a bypass, which ran through an easier gradient, skirting the town to the east. It is probable that the bridge over the Avonmore River was widened at this time to facilitate the coaches. This bridge probably dates from the early 18th century and was in place by the time that the estate map of ca.1730 was produced[11]. At that time it allowed for a carriageway about 6 metres wide and had a pedestrian refuge on the southern parapet. At some stage it was more than doubled in width and it is most probable that this was a result of the building of the coach road. A new approach to the bridge was also provided on the eastern bank of the river, cut through the hill and leading down the slope northwards towards the bridge, in place of the steeper road leading directly westwards down to the bridge. The improved road would have facilitated trade and this would have included the

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[7] Lewis, Samuel (1837), *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, London, p. 495.

[8] *The Freeman's Journal*, 23rd August 1817.

[9] Note in Valuation Office, cancelled book, dating from ca. 1860.

[10] *The Freeman's Journal* reports new services on this road on 17th and 24th June, 24th July, 27th September and 23rd October in 1815. There had been previous coach services, but these increased with the improvements in the road.

[11] See below in the section on Lowtown.

movement of the flannel purchased in the Flannel Hall out of the town towards the ports on the east coast, and towards the shops in Dublin and elsewhere.

As the town flourished it extended northwards and westwards from the original centre, up Brewery Lane towards the Flannel Hall and along Main Street. Back Lane and Fair Green were also developed at this stage and it is likely that the extent of the town as shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map in 1842 was already in place by 1825, given the slowdown in the economy of the town that occurred after that date. The entry in Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, published in 1837, describes Rathdrum as "small but neat, the houses well-built and generally white-washed, with a few of superior appearance". He mentions the decline in the flannel industry and states that "the manufacture of woollen cloth also flourished here, but ... has declined within the last 12 years, and is now also extinct[12]". This suggests that the decline began in the mid-1820s, as has been suggested above. Another description from a few years later stated that "though Rathdrum has enjoyed more patronage and stimulating, and commands a much greater scope of country for marketing, than most places of its amount of population, it continues to be unprosperous, and is a poor and melancholy-looking place[13].

Fig. 3: Detail of first edition Ordnance Survey map, 1839

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[12] Lewis, op. cit.

[13] Fullerton, A (1844) *A Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland*, Dublin, entry under *Rathdrum*.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the buildings along Main Street stretching from the area around St Saviour's Church and Poundbrook Lane northwards to the fork in the road where the main road leads down to Lowtown[14]. Brewery Lane may be seen leading west from Market Square and meeting Back Lane at the Fair Green, where the Flannel Hall is clearly shown with its rectangular form. The town has reached its final historic form by this point, though some of the buildings were later to be demolished and replaced.

The map also shows the mail coach road leading from the top of the illustration, skirting the town to the east, turning south-west and then west, before turning back to the south at the very edge of the extract. Here, in the south-west of the map, may be seen the old townland boundary leading along Poundbrook Lane and cutting across the mail coach road to connect with the road to Corballis, suggesting the line of the previous road.

Two breweries are shown, one adjoining the Fair Green on the northern side of Brewery Lane, the other to the south of the town at Knockadosan and these were mentioned in Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary*. The map also shows a police station, mentioned in Lewis as a chief constabulary police station and evidently new, as the Royal Irish Constabulary had only been founded in the previous year. A meeting house is shown on the eastern side of Main Street and this was a Methodist meeting house, representing the only non-conformist place of worship in Rathdrum, and which was built in 1821 and rebuilt in 1857[15]. The Flannel Hall is also labelled "RC Chapel" and part of it served as a place of worship for the Roman Catholic community until the opening of the church of Saints Mary and Michael in 1859[16].

The fortunes of Rathdrum as an industrial centre continued to decline after the collapse of the woollen trade, and the two breweries were gone by 1860. The valuation notebooks held in the Valuation Office commence in that year and show that the buildings at Knockadosan were listed as "Old Brewery", while the one in Brewery Lane was not listed at all and the listings show the property as "Ruins". The Flannel Hall appears in the valuation listings for 1860 as an old woollen factory and Petit Sessions House, the Roman Catholic church having moved out in the previous year.

A new school was erected facing the Fair Green to replace the one that had been in the old Flannel Hall, probably at the same time that the new church of SS Mary and Michael opened in 1859, and this was on the site of the present school. Twenty years earlier a school had been built on ground at the rear of one of the houses in Main Street[17]

A major change to the town came in July 1863 with the opening of the railway. This connected Rathdrum with Dublin and within a short period the south-bound

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[14] Ordnance Survey six-inch series, Wicklow sheet 30, surveyed in 1838 and published in 1839.

[15] Kavanagh, Joan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[16] *The Dublin Builder*, 1859, p. 103

[17] *The Freeman's Journal*, 24th September 1839.

connection was made the Wexford and then to Waterford. The line had reached Kilcommon, a mile from Rathdrum, in 1861, but the time taken to cut through the hill on the eastern side of the Avonmore, together with the construction of the stone viaduct over the river, resulted in the two-year lapse before Rathdrum was reached[18]. The railway would have brought an increase in visitors to the area and a railway hotel was opened, initially known as the Royal Fitzwilliam Hotel, and run by the Misses Breslin, probably daughters of Edward Breslin, the Bray hotelier[19]. The railway also brought an increase in goods traffic, most notably carrying lead ore. The 1860s were a boom time for the lead mines at Glendalough and the mining company arranged for the construction of a railway siding at Shankill, near Bray, to bring lead to its smelter nearby from Rathdrum station[20]. The road system available to the mining company would have given them no option but to bring their wagons of lead ore through the middle of Rathdrum, along Main Street. This was a point that had been made nearly twenty years before in a description of Rathdrum: "the town occupies ... the summit of a hill ... and is seriously and permanently disadvantageous for the purposes of both thoroughfare and trade".[21]
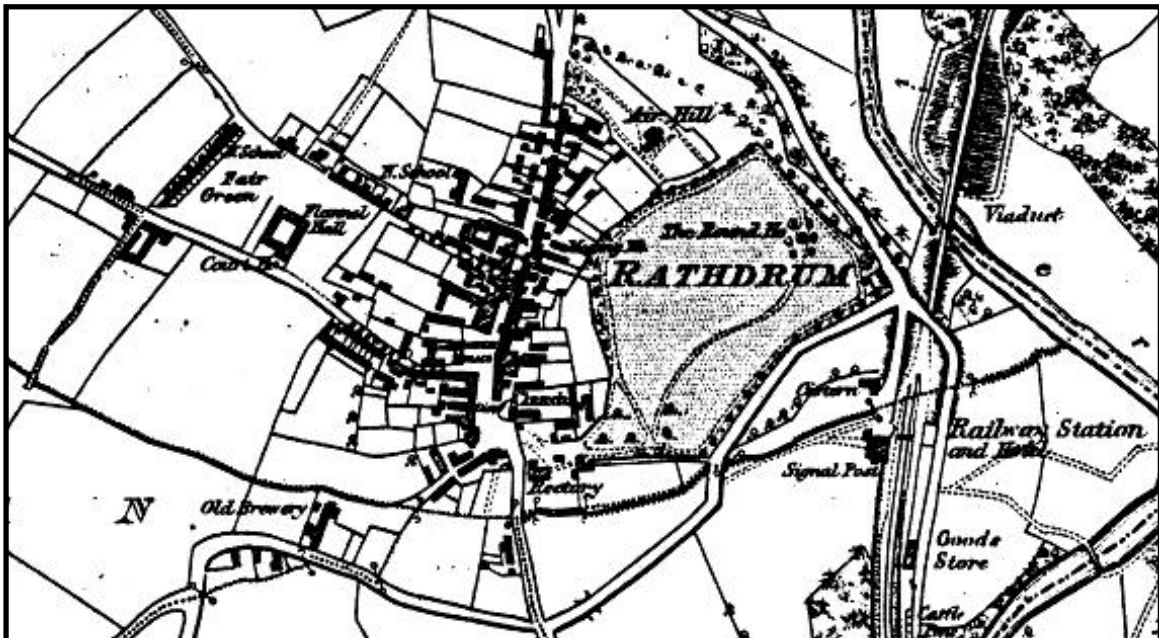
Fig. 4: Detail of Ordnance Survey second edition map of 1887

The second edition of the Ordnance Survey's six-inch maps was published in 1887 and shows the town much it had been in 1839, though the small scale of these maps makes true comparison difficult[22]. The old brewery at Knockadosan is still shown as such, though it had gone some years before as noted below. The large

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[18] Shepherd, Ernie and Gerry Beesley (1998), *The Dublin & South Eastern Railway*, Leicester, pp. 18-19.

[19] *The Dublin Builder*, 1863, p. 181

[20] Shepherd and Beesley, *op. cit.*

[21] *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland*, *op.cit.*

[22] Ordnance Survey six-inch series, Wicklow sheet 30, surveyed in 1886 and published in 1887.

house known as Ardavon has appeared on the northern edge of the town, where an open site had appeared on the previous map, though the label for the next-door house at Air Hill may cause confusion. Most importantly, the church of Saints Mary and Michael and the convent alongside it had appeared in the interval between the maps, as had the Rathdrum Union Workhouse, unseen off the western edge of these map extracts.
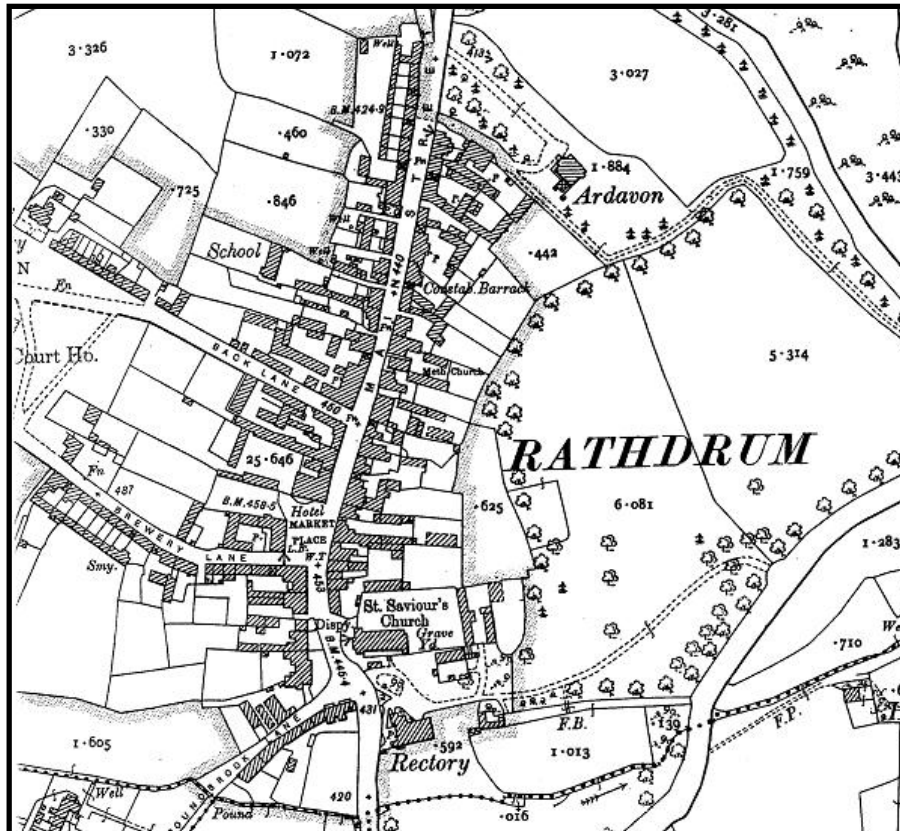
Fig. 5: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1909

A larger scale map of Rathdrum was published by the Ordnance Survey in 1909[23]. This is clearer in its detail, for instance showing the houses on the site of the old brewery very clearly at the south-western corner of the extract. The scale also permits the inclusion of the names of streets, but there is otherwise little change.

Over the years a certain amount of redevelopment took place within the town and on the outskirts. The old brewery at Knockadosan was demolished in the 1860s and houses built on the site. The houses on the western side of Main Street, at the northern end, were demolished in the 1880s and rebuilt, most of the earlier ones having been of small size and modest quality, while some were in ruins. In the 1940s the Wicklow County Board of Health acquired a group of cottages on the western side of the Fair Green and demolished them, building a more substantial group of houses in their place. In more recent years Rathdrum has expanded through the addition of new housing, some of it in estates to the south of the Fair Green and to the west of the town.

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[23] Ordnance Survey 1:2500 series, Wicklow sheet 30-10, surveyed in 1908 and published in 1909.

Lowtown

Lowtown appears to have always been distinct from Rathdrum insofar as there was a gap between the two and the towns did not coalesce. At present there is more than two hundred metres between the towns, except for one bungalow mid-way, and this distance seems to have been relatively constant over time.

As suggested above, the reason for the emergence of Lowtown was probably based on the river crossing. Liam Price was of the opinion that before the construction of the bridge at this site there would have been a ford and that there is a site further downstream, below the railway station, that would have provided a better fording point[24]. The route he suggests leading to this crossing bypasses the town, though, leading from the Main Street "almost opposite the Clara Road". It is worthy of note that the Clara Road was not shown on Jacob Neville's map of 1760 and it would be unlikely that a road to this crossing would start to the north of the town and pass to the east, rather than through it. At the crossing point he described a bridge, with a roadway leading down to it. This bridge was erected to give access to the railway station, being marked on the second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 and not the first edition of 1839. The roadway leading to it may well be of similar date. Liam Price was unable to trace any road leading from his crossing point on the opposite side of the river.

Whatever the location of the original ford over the Avonmore River at Rathdrum, the bridge at Lowtown has been there for a considerable time, and was shown on the estate map produced in the early 18th century, as noted above.

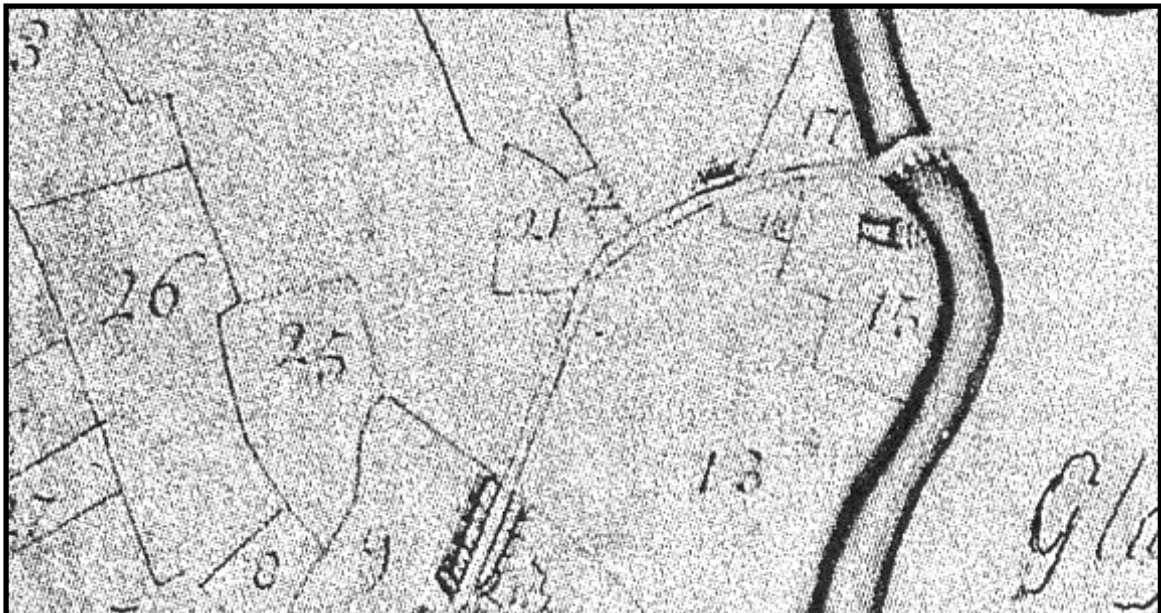*Fig. 6: Detail of estate map of ca.1730 showing bridge and Lowtown*

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[24] Corlett, Christiaan and Mairéad Weaver (eds.) (2002), *The Liam Price Notebooks: the placenames, antiquities and topography of County Wicklow*, Dublin, vol. 1, pp. 50-51.

This map also shows a small number of buildings on Low Street, and a tuck mill is shown on the low-lying ground alongside the Avonmore River to the south of the bridge, in the field marked "15".

Lowtown was also shown on Jacob Neville's map, as the extract in *Fig. 2* shows. The presence of the river, a crossing and a mill from an early date would have made it likely that a town or village would be found at this location, though it is unlikely that any of the buildings now present are as old as the bridge. The tuck mill is not shown on Neville's map, though the presence of another mill on the eastern side of the bridge would have given further impetus to the establishment of Lowtown.
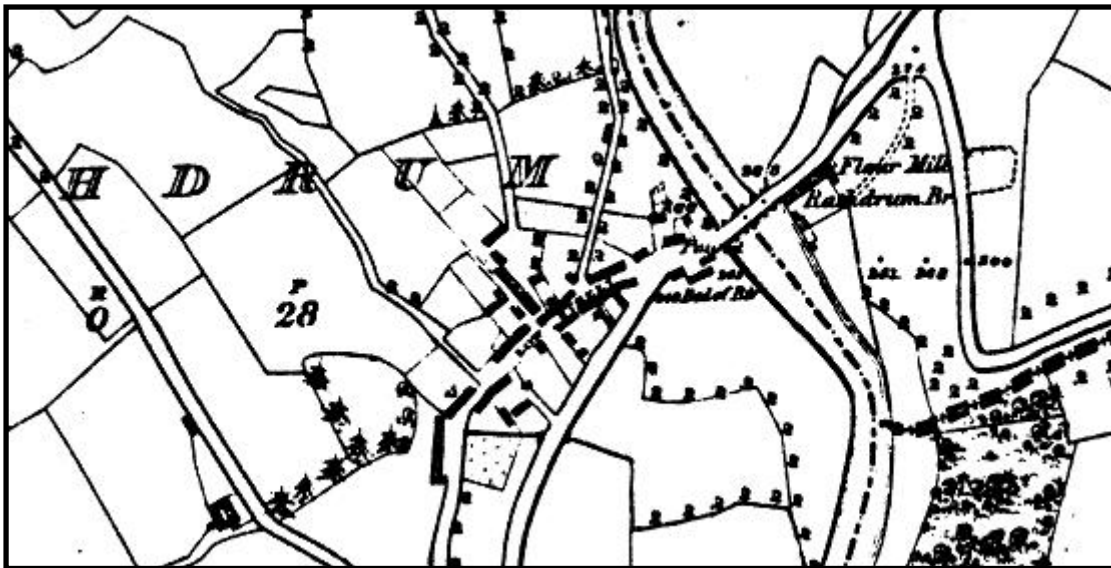
Fig. 7: Detail of first edition Ordnance Survey map showing Lowtown

The first edition of the Ordnance Survey six-inch map series shows Lowtown much as it appears today[25]. There are certain differences, such as buildings on the southern side of the town between the bridge and the fork in the road where the coach road separates from the route through Lowtown leading to Rathdrum. Little or no development is shown alongside the coach road, which may be surprising given that it had been in existence for more than twenty years, though these were not prosperous years in the history of Rathdrum, as noted above.

The second edition Ordnance Survey map, shown in *Fig. 8* shows some change, but the basic layout is similar[26]. The buildings between the bridge and the fork in the road have gone, and there are some new buildings on the coach road close to the fork. The flour mill on the east bank of the river is still shown as such and the various laneways shown leading out of the town on the first edition are also shown on the second edition map.

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[25] Ordnance Survey six-inch series, Wicklow sheet 30, surveyed in 1838 and published in 1839.

[26] Ordnance Survey six-inch series, Wicklow sheet 30, surveyed in 1886 and published in 1887.
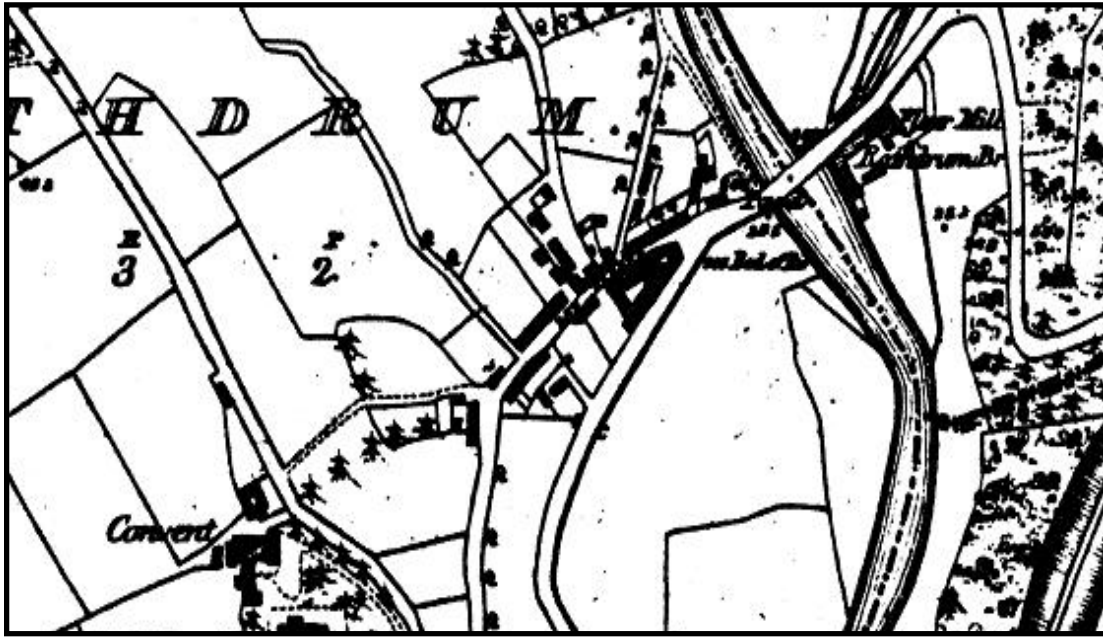
Fig. 8: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1887showing bridge and Lowtown

The 1909 edition of the Ordnance Survey map, at a larger scale, is shown in *Fig. 9*, and depicts the district in more detail. At the western end of Low Street a smithy is shown, and there had been a smithy on this site since at least the mid-19th century. This went out of use in the mid-20th century. By contrast two motor garages were established, one next to the bridge in the mid-1930s, and another, facing on to the coach road, in the mid-1940s.

The Rathdrum Mill is shown at the right-hand side of this map extract. There was a mill shown on this site in the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1839 and this had probably been there for many years before that. In the mid-19th century it was owned by James Comerford and in about 1880 it was enlarged, with the addition of a new water wheel running four pairs of mill stones, bringing the total numbers of stones in the mill to nine pairs. A shop was added in the opening years of the 20th century and in the 1950s the mill was acquired by the Wicklow Co-Operative Agricultural Society, following which it was expanded to included a large complex of buildings, while the water mill went out of use for grinding corn.
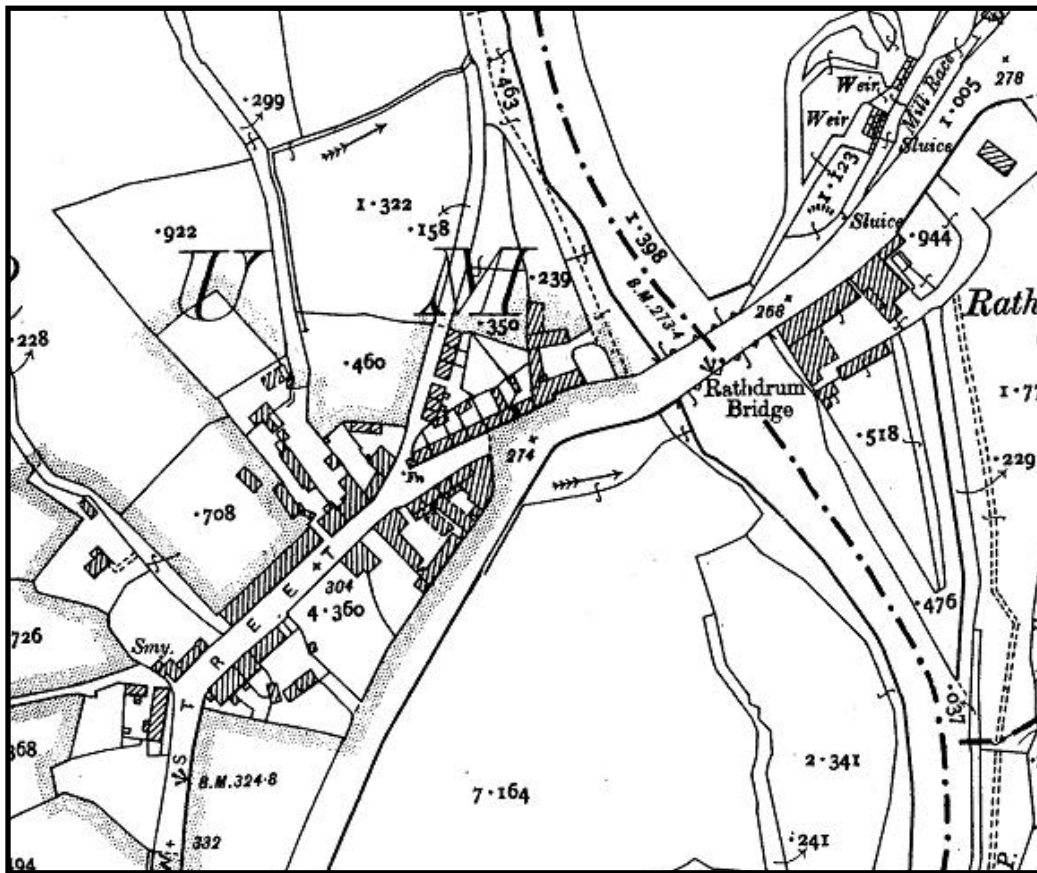
Fig. 9: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1909

3. Rathdrum : Character

The town of Rathdrum is in two distinct parts, Rathdrum itself, and Lowtown. For the sake of clarity, these names are used to denote the two areas, the name Rathdrum only being used to denote the two settlements combined where the context makes this clear.

Character overview

The town of Rathdrum is built on a hill and the streetscapes are strongly influenced by the slope. Over a distance of four hundred metres from the northern end of the town to the crossing of the Poundbrook stream the Main Street rises about 4 metres over the first 45 metres travelled, rising a further four metres over the next 90 metres of the street, reaching a crest at the Woolpack licensed premises before falling again. At the junction with Brewery Lane the street is still more than 11 metres above the northern end of the town, but over the final 140 metres to the river the road falls a further 10 metres in elevation.

Rathdrum does not run over the crest of the hill, but over the eastern end, so that the ground rises sharply up the two side streets at Back Lane and Brewery Lane, the latter rising more than twelve metres along its 165 metre length where the slope reduces, but still rises a further eight metres over a similar distance. By contrast, Poundbrook Lane falls away from Main Street to the level of the brook, in contrast to the Main Street which crosses it on an elevated causeway.

The layout of the buildings within the town follows traditional patterns in essence, with the older building plots facing on to the streets and generally occupying the full width of the plot, many with an archway leading to the rear, though some with a passageway to the side of the building. One group of houses in Main Street have front gardens, in the area opposite St Saviour's Church. The buildings along the streets generally have plots extending to the rear, many with outbuildings. The largest plots are on the west side of Main Street where the plot depth is generally around 100 metres, while those on the eastern side vary from 55 metres to 100 metres and are mainly around 60 metres in depth. Plot depths in the side streets are smaller, with those in Brewery Lane and Back Lane around 10 to 20 metres, while the older houses in Fair Green have plot depths of 15 to 18 metres.

In the main the houses built in the 20th century have front and rear gardens and are built in substantial groups. The Wicklow County Board of Health built about two dozen houses at the Fair Green in about 1940, and a further fifty or so at Ballygannon. Subsequently about twenty houses were built at Woodbine Avenue and Grove, off Fair Green, another forty or so further out at Hawthorn Drive and Kingsbrook and several small groups of houses scattered around the vicinity of the town. The largest development close to Rathdrum is Parnell Park, with about seventy houses leading off Fair Green and built in the 1970s. These 20th century

developments have little effect on the historic character of the town as they are generally too far removed from the centre to have an influence.

Throughout Rathdrum the buildings are almost exclusively two-storey, late-Georgian style with rendered, painted facades and slate roofs with the ridge parallel to the street. It is more than likely that virtually every building in the town built before about 1930 was constructed in rubble granite and then plastered. Within this type there is a large variation, ranging from two bays in width to seven, with the majority being three and four bay. Most are full two-storey, though some have a half-storey at the upper level, with dormers. Many of the windows are typically Georgian in their proportions, with a strong vertical emphasis, though a significant number have wider Wyatt windows typical of the opening years of the 19th century, while some have had some or all of their original windows enlarged in recent years. One house, formerly five bays, now has a blank ground floor façade and three windows on the upper floor. About twelve of the buildings have arches to give vehicular access to the rear, most of them being in Main Street.

While the majority of the buildings in Rathdrum accord with the general type described above, there are exceptions to this pattern. A few buildings include stone, notably the two churches, St. Saviour's at the southern end of the town which is rendered but with cut stone at the quoins, parapets, architraves and eaves, and Saints Mary and Michael to the north which is faced in cut stone externally. There are some single storey buildings, mostly in the plots at the rear, though some on street frontages, notably the national school and Flannel Hall in the Fair Green.

Some of the buildings have been altered over time, most particularly through the replacement of the original timber sash windows with later casements, initially in timber, more recently in uPVC, and with some in metal. Some slate roofs have been replaced with artificial slate and in a few instances the plaster has been removed from the external facades – in the church of SS Mary and Michael it has also been removed from much of the interior.

Character areas

In examining the character of Rathdrum the town has been subdivided into a number of character areas, the basis of which is discussed below for each area. The sequence in which these areas are considered has no particular significance. In broad terms, Main Street is examined first and the sequence then works outwards from the centre, finishing with an examination of those furthest from the centre of the town, in Lowtown and by the river.

These character areas are depicted on the accompanying map, each shown with elliptical boundaries that overlap in many instances, as there is generally no hard and fast point at which character may be said to end, and the character of one area may merge into another, no matter how distinct each may be overall. More detailed maps are given with each individual area and a more tightly-drawn boundary is shown.
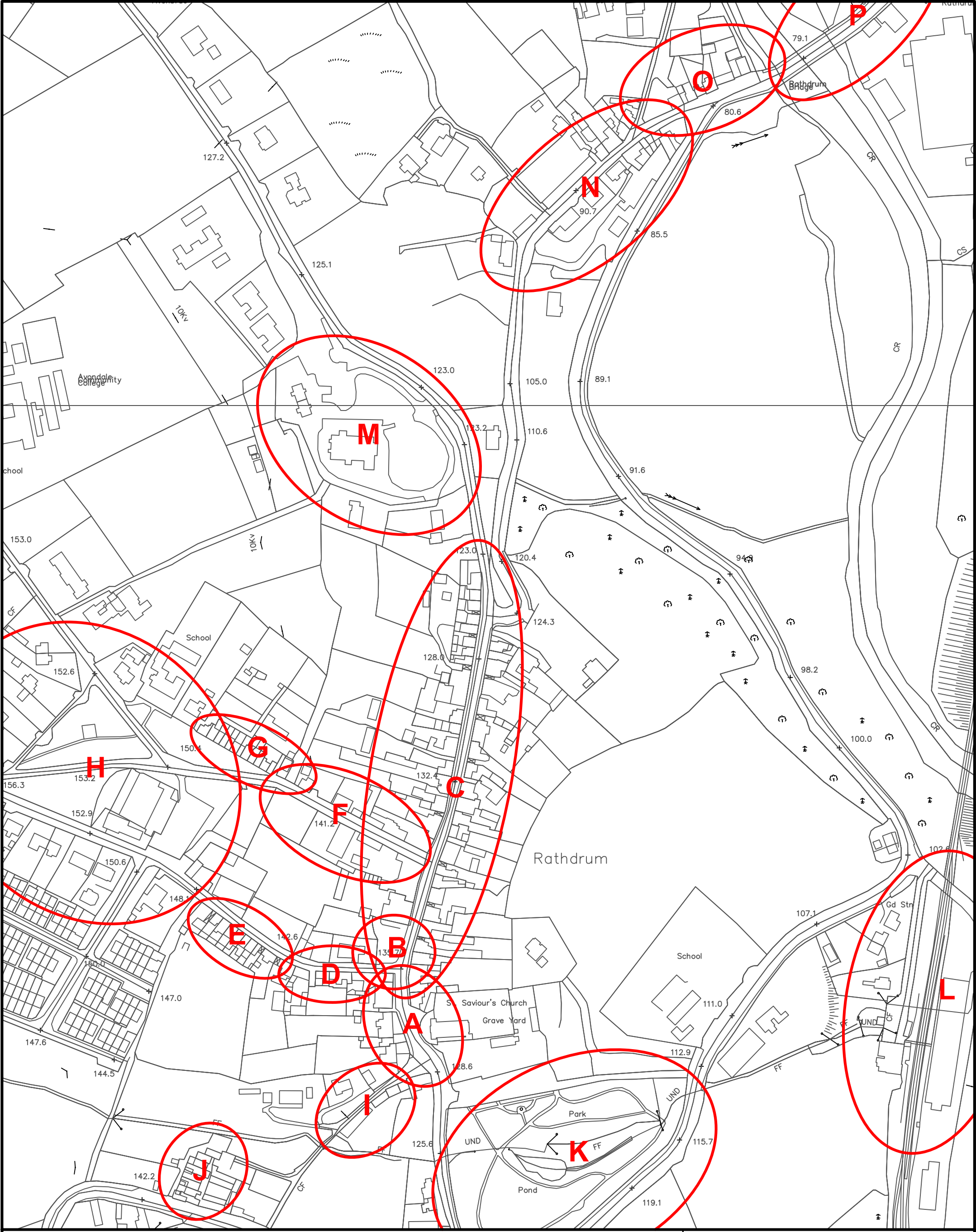
Title:	Character areas - general outlines
Job:	Rathdrum: Conservation Area Appraisal
Drawing no.:	129 - 01
Date:	January 2006	Scale:	1 : 2500 at A3

Historic Building Consultants, Old Bawn, Old Connaught, Bray.   ph/fax: 01 282 3508 - mob: 087 689 9708 - email: rob.goodbody@ireland.com

A. Precinct of St Saviour's

While there is no formal precinct to the front of St. Saviour's church the houses that face the church are of a similar period and are distinct from those found elsewhere in the town. Five of these houses have front gardens, being the only ones in Main Street with this amenity. The houses also have semicircular fanlights, a feature that is not found on more than one or two houses elsewhere in the town. Most importantly, there is a concealed urban space here, that is more evident on maps than on the ground. The building line of the houses continues in a straight line from the Market Square, though the road curves, and one house at the end is at right angles to the others, facing north. If the front gardens were to be removed there would be a distinct town square here, to the front of the church. It is notable that the church dates from 1793, which is roughly the same period as the houses.

The buildings on the east side of Main Street between this area and Market Square do not accord with this character, being more part of Main Street, though they form an important link.
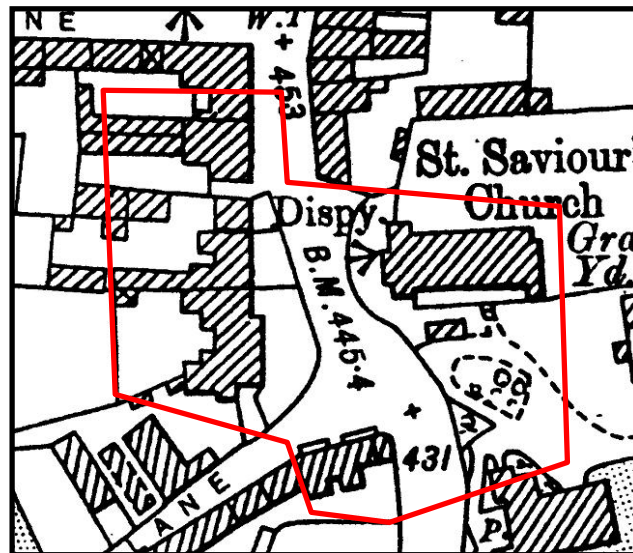
Detailed appraisal:

As shown above, there is a junction between Main Street and Poundbrook Lane within this character area. The layout of the houses on the southern and western sides forms two sides of a rectangular area that may have been an early market place. Now the gardens of the houses directly opposite St. Saviour's Church project into this space. The road surface is macadam, as are the footpaths and the latter are demarcated by granite kerbstones.

In the light of the steep slope the boundary walls which surround the roadway are generally retaining walls and these are constructed in rubble stone. The front gardens of the houses have granite coping on the boundary walls and cast iron railings with matching pedestrian gates. The church wall also has granite coping and iron railings. The original gate piers to the now-demolished rectory building are still in place, with modern steel gates.

The buildings are also built of rubble stone, and are faced with smooth render. The church has cut granite detailing to the tower and main structure, while the main faces of the building are rendered. The church was built in the 1790s to replace an earlier building, the materials of which were used in the reconstruction. The houses are probably of slightly later date, in the early 19th century. Two have hipped roofs, and one of these has had another, gable-fronted house added on its northern side in the 1930s. The house that faces north from Poundbrook Lane differs in having Wyatt windows, but also appears to date from the early 19th century. The bank building is probably slightly later, and has no front garden. All of the houses are two-storey and have slated roofs, some hipped, some gabled.

All of the houses on the western side of the road have vertical windows and would originally have had Georgian-style small-paned sliding sashes.

This is an important group of buildings and should be retained with as much of its original character as possible. The intrusion of inappropriate replacement windows and artificial slate roofs should be resisted, while front garden areas should remain as such with the railings and low walls intact.

There is scope for improving the street surface, particularly on the downhill side of the bank, where a ramp has been added with no proper consideration for materials or finish.

B. Market Square

The market in Rathdrum may originally have been at the front of St Saviour's Church, which is the traditional location in many towns and cities. This is where the roads met in Rathdrum, creating space for a market. However, the slope of the ground is significant and a more logical location is the present Market Square. This space is defined by three buildings, all licensed premises, while the post office and two more licensed premises close the space on Main Street to the east. All of the surrounding buildings are traditional, two-storey, dating from the late 18th/early 19th century and it is Mackey and Sons, to the west, that dominates. This has the appearance of a late-18th century five-bay house that has been extended by a further two bays. In the mid-19th century it was the police station. The space defined by these buildings suffers from its use for car parking, which severely reduces the impact of this important urban space.
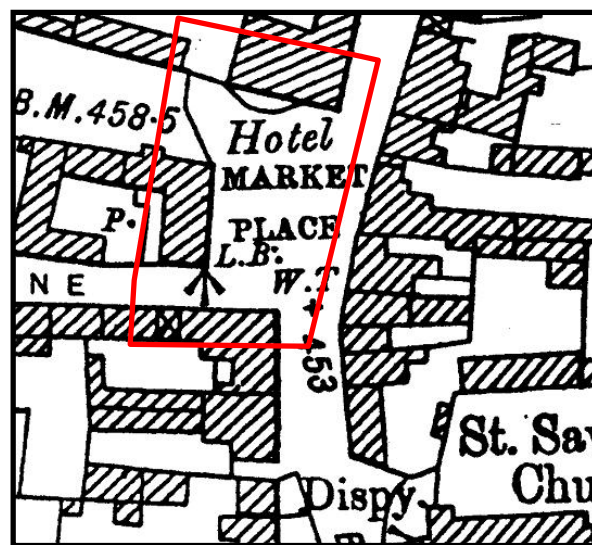
Detailed appraisal:

The market square is the area to the north of the junction of Brewery Lane with Main Street and hence it has roads passing it on two sides. There is no demarcation as to where the carriageway ends and the surface of the square begins, the entire area being defined with footpaths adjoining the buildings on all four sides, enclosing a large tract of tarmacadam. These footpaths are of macadam edged with granite kerb stones. Within the open area of the square there is a signpost at the junction and this is protected by a circular arrangement of concrete kerbing within which is planted.

The three buildings surrounding the square are two-storey in height and of late-Georgian form, with vertical windows, generally with one-over-one sliding sashes. These buildings have slate roofs, partly hipped and partly gabled and the facades are rendered. Two are smooth rendered and painted and the other is roughcast rendered and unpainted, with architraves to the windows that are painted.

All three buildings have been extended at some stage. Mackey's, in the centre, was a five-bay house with a gabled roof. A further two bays, with a hipped roof, were added. The Woolpack, on the northern side, is two buildings with different window heights at first floor level. The Railway, on the southern side, has been extended up hill along Brewery Lane.

The shopfront on the Railway has been modified and is now a modern approximation to a traditional style, with small windows flanked by pilasters that in some cases don't reach the ground. Mackey's has a traditional shopfront and the

doorway in the centre of the original five-bay façade is a notable late 18th century Gibbsian style executed in cut granite.

The Woolpack has an incongruous ground floor façade with poorly-proportioned windows. There is a cast iron and glass canopy projecting from this building, the uprights of which are cast iron former street lamps bearing the crest of Dublin city.

Market Square fails to make its full impact through lack of adequate definition in the surface and through its use as an undisciplined parking area. This space could be turned into a great asset to Rathdrum by returning it to an open area, free of parked cars and with well-thought out paving and street furniture.

The space at the rear of Mackey's is currently the subject of a major planning application. Whatever the outcome of this proposal there is scope for completing the western side of the square where there is a gap between Mackey's and the Woolpack.

C. Main Street

While Main Street is not a designed urban space in the way that the church precinct and Market Square are, it is probably the most important area in defining the character of Rathdrum. The variety of buildings within the basic type, with two-storey, painted render, slate roof, Georgian-style windows and occasional arches leading to the rear, brings interest to the street that is heightened by the slope and the gentle curvature. Added value is provided by the shopfronts which are spread through the area rather than being concentrated in a small group, and many of these are traditional types, though some are now no longer in use as shops.
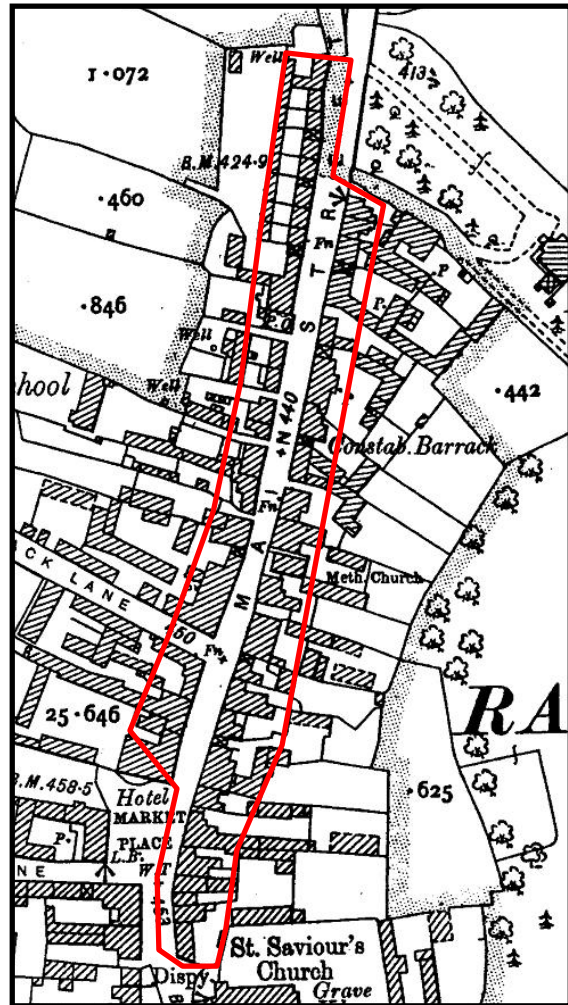
Detailed appraisal:

As shown above, Main Street rises considerably from the northern end to Market Square, before falling again and as it does so it curves gently in various directions. The carriageway is macadam throughout and the footways are generally mass concrete and have granite kerbstones along much of their length. In some places there are cut granite rainwater channels running across the pavement from a basin-shaped depression beneath the shoe of a downpipe across to the gutter.

Throughout the length of Main Street, from Market Square northwards, the buildings open directly onto the street without any front area or railing. In places there are arches or gaps between buildings giving access to the rear, and where these entrances are not gated they afford glimpses to a space beyond where there are various outbuildings, some in poor condition, others inhabited. Beyond this, on the eastern side of the street, there are occasional views through to the landscape beyond.

The buildings in Main Street are almost exclusively constructed in rubble stone, smooth rendered and painted. They are all two-storey in height, two having dormers at first floor level, and all have slated roofs. The age of this type of building is remarkably difficult to assess on stylistic grounds as the style persisted for a long period, while alterations to windows and other features removed or

disguised the few means of distinguishing one period of building from another. In a few cases the dates of construction are known, such as the eight houses on the northern end of the western side of the street which were all built in the mid 1880s.

The slope of the street results in stepped effects in various elements of the buildings, notably the ridge lines, eaves and windows. This effect is magnified by the turn of the street through its various curves. The different colours of the facades add more to this, combined with the occasional feature such as quoins or window surrounds picked out in a different colour, and the break in rhythm afforded by the shopfronts and arches.

A few individual details appear on some of the buildings to add further spice to the street scene, such as a door, an iron guard on a window sill, a plaque.

One of the most important elements of Main Street is the shopfronts. Many traditional shopfronts survive, though not all still in retail use. Some have been modified, others are modern, but the number of high quality early shopfronts spread along the length of the street adds greatly to the character.

Main Street has recognisable character that could be eroded easily through ill-thought out alterations or unsympathetic additions. One building has had the render removed from the façade, following an ill-informed trend that has sought to reveal the so-called "original" stonework. Others have had windows replaced with modern casements.

The principal means of enhancing the character of the street is to guard the elements that are there already. This should ensure that the granite kerbstones are retained and, most particularly, the cut granite drainage channels remain in place.

D. Brewery Lane – lower

The part of Brewery Lane that is nearer to Market Square differs from that part that extends up the hill to Fair Green. On the southern side of the street the buildings are two-storey and extend along the length of the street, one being modern, but broadly in character with the rest. These continue on the line of the Railway Inn that forms the southern side of Market Square and runs for a significant distance along Brewery Lane. On the northern side the side of Mackey and Sons and stone walls define the edge of the area.

This is an area that has limited merit in its own right, but which forms a link between other areas without incongruity.
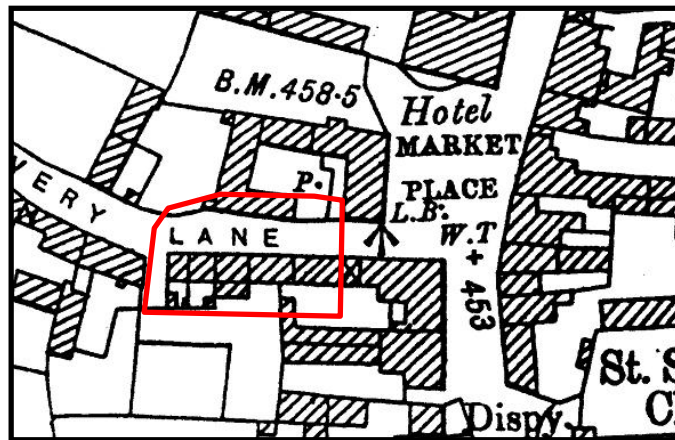
Detailed appraisal:

The lower part of Brewery Lane has a high rubble-stone wall on its northern side, bounding the land at the rear of Mackeys' premises in Market Square. The road is narrow and with a footpath only on the southern side. This is a mass concrete footway, while the carriageway is of macadam, with extensive repairs.

On the southern side of the street there are houses broadly in keeping with the general character of Rathdrum, but not typical. One is a modern two-storey house with dry dashed ground floor and rendered upper floor. The other is a single-storey house of more traditional construction.

E. Brewery Lane – upper

The upper part of Brewery Lane is defined by a terrace of two-storey houses on the south-western side. These form a unified front to the street, though with variety provided by the slope of the street, slight differences in the style of house and the mix of painted and unpainted render. The north-eastern side of the street makes less of an impact, being the inside of the curve of the street, and much of it is taken up with a stone wall, punctuated by the occasional building in a mix of styles.
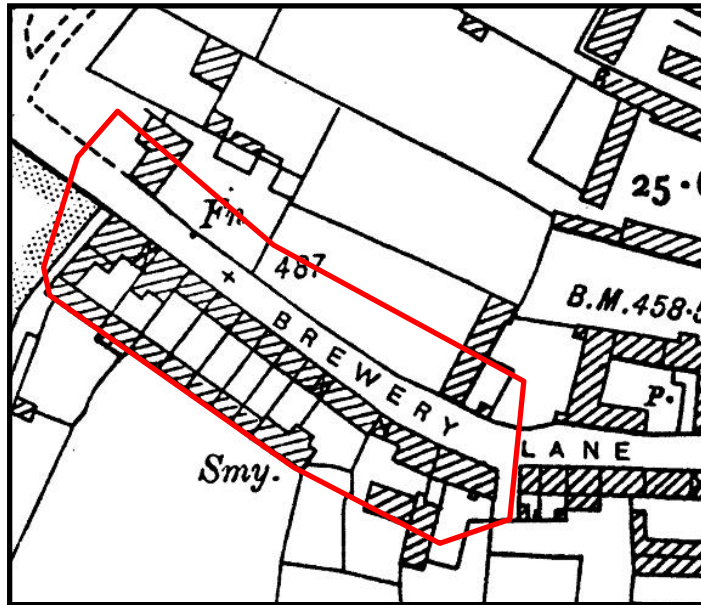
Detailed appraisal:

The upper part of Brewery Lane has a footpath on the southern side, this being of mass concrete and with some repairs in asphalt. The carriageway is of macadam, with extensive repairs.

On the northern side of the road there are significant remains of a cobbled rainwater channel, though partly covered over with macadam and concrete. This feeds in to a substantial granite-lined gully mid-way down the street.

For the most part the northern side of the street is bounded by stone walls, with some buildings, which generally present a poor appearance to the street.

On the southern side the street has a line of two-storey terraced houses generally of 19th century date, with some mid-20th century, and which open directly onto the footway. These are generally in good order and contribute to the street scene. They are all faced with render, some with smooth render, ruled and lined, others being dashed. Many of them have been painted, with a range of colours, while others are unpainted. They have slated roofs with ridges parallel to the street.

In a large number of cases the windows on the fronts of these houses have been replaced. The replacement windows are in a variety of styles and materials, including timber casement, anodised aluminium and uPVC, with some diamond leading. In some cases the window opes have been altered, affecting the rhythm of the street.

The most important element in the character of this street is the rising curve of the terrace of houses on the southern side. The unity in the terrace is given to it by the continuity in heights and building line and is enhanced by the stepping of the eaves as the terrace rises up the hill. This feature is strong enough to carry the character despite the variety of styles and finishes in the terrace. Care would be needed, however, to ensure that further alterations do not go too far and interrupt the rhythm of the street nor the unity of scale and style.

F. Back Lane

Back Lane is one of the few areas in Rathdrum where there is a preponderance of single-storey buildings. These are ranged down the northern side of the street, opening directly onto the street. They fit into the pattern of building type found elsewhere in the painted and rendered facades with pitched slate roofs and, generally, Georgian-style windows. On the southern side of the street there is a mix, with much of the street defined by boundary walls. The principal building on the southern side is stone-faced and presents its gable to the street, with a traditional shopfront.
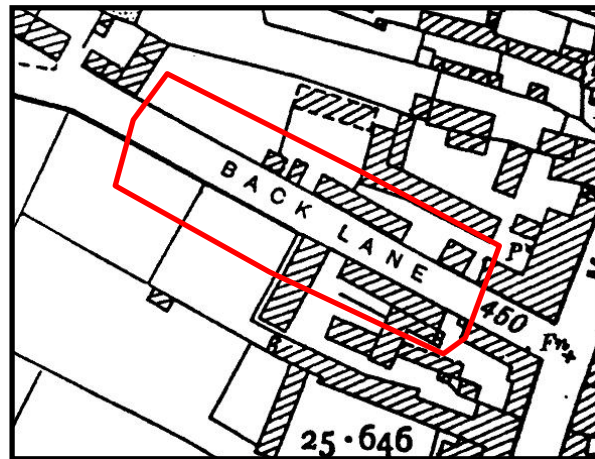
Detailed appraisal:

The street at Back Lane is paved with macadam, with various repairs and damaged sections. There is a footpath on the northern side only, though a small paved section of mass concrete remains outside the stone shop building on the southern side. The footpath is generally of mass concrete, with some asphalt, though faced with granite kerbstones through much of its length. In places areas of cobbled rainwater channel are visible, as survivors of an earlier paving.

As seen in the photographs some repairs are necessary to the paving and this should be done with due regard to the original character of the street.

As far as is possible the granite kerbstones should be retained and, if necessary, reset. Repair work should be carried out to the cobbled rainwater channels and where covered over these should be carefully uncovered and repaired to fulfil their original function in carrying the water away.

The original building type in the street is single-storey with rendered and painted finishes and with slate roofs. In contrast to the style in the much of the rest of Rathdrum, the eaves in some of the buildings in Back Lane slope down the gradient rather than stepping, which is much more common. The original doors and windows in these buildings have been replaced and many of the houses no longer have chimneystacks, with a resulting diminution in the rhythm of the street and in the character of the buildings. Some alterations have been carried out on the buildings in Back Lane to adapt them to current expectations of lighting and access.

There is a great deal of potential for change in Back Lane. There are vacant buildings on the southern side of the street, including the stone-faced structure with the shopfront and one of the single-storey houses. At the higher level there is a substantial vacant site. It is important that whatever changes take place in this street reflect the predominantly single-storey nature of the street and do not result in new buildings that are over-dominant.

There are several places in Rathdrum that have striking views over the town to the countryside beyond. One of these is Back Lane, and the view over the Main Street towards the east as one descends the street is important. This view is enhanced by the low ridge heights of the buildings so that they do not restrict the breadth of view unduly.

G. Fair Green - terrace

At the point where Back Lane enters Fair Green there is a terrace of houses that differs in character from the rest of Fair Green and from Back Lane. This is a two-storey terrace of two-bay houses opening directly onto the street. The three houses at the eastern end are of a different type, though fit the general style.
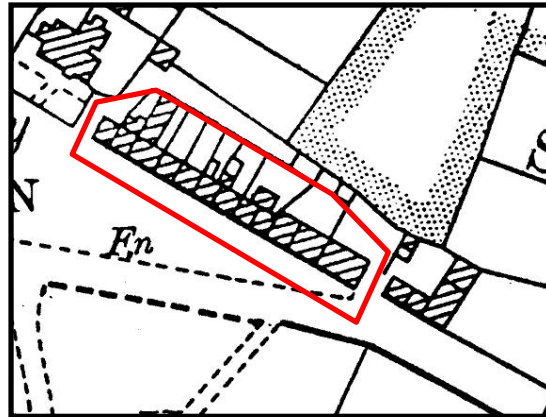
Detailed appraisal:

The terrace of houses in Fair Green at the top of Back Lane is unified in design, apart from the eastern, or down-hill end. These are two-storey, two-bay houses with doors that alternate from left to right of the elevation reflecting mirroring of the plan form, and with consequent effects on the rhythm of the terrace. The roof slopes, rather than stepping, as is found on some of the houses in Back Lane, but rarely elsewhere in Rathdrum.

There is some non-residential use at the lower end of the terrace, including the branch library for Rathdrum.

The majority of the houses in the terrace have been painted, using a variety of colours, though some retain their unpainted cement render. Other alterations have taken place including replacement of windows in a substantial number of the buildings, using aluminium, uPVC and timber. In some cases the chimneys are

now missing, including the library building and the smaller house adjoining it. In all cases the original front doors have been replaced.

It is possible that the main terrace of ten houses had projecting canopies over the front door, with wrought timber frames holding a slate roof. Only one house now has this feature and the surface modelling of the terrace, and its rhythm, have changed as a result.

To the front of these houses an area of the street has been enclosed to provide parking and to remove traffic. This is a welcome concept, but it is a very large area of macadam and it needs to be redesigned so as to make better use of the space and to ensure that it does not become unsightly through inappropriate uses.

Any further changes to the original appearance of this terrace should be resisted. It presents an attractive appearance as a result of its general unity of opes set in a continuous façade, with roofs that draw the composition together. This remains a strong element despite the replacement of doors and windows with materials and types that are less appropriate. In particular, care should be taken to ensure that the window and door opes are not altered and that the roof remains unchanged. The use of the houses for non-residential purposes should be resisted, there being adequate accommodation in the commercial parts of Rathdrum for business and other non-residential uses.

H. Fair Green

The fair green dates from at least as early as the mid-18th century, though it may be considerably older. At present the space extends to about 1.4 hectares and is roughly rectangular, though it is broken up by the line of two roads passing through it. The space was also interrupted in the 1790s by the construction of the flannel hall which still sits in isolation, now looking somewhat incongruous with modern extensions and alterations that disguise the original character, which would have been outward-looking. This effect is not improved by the large surface car park adjoining to the east. The remainder of Fair Green is in keeping with a traditional village green or fair green, with a large area of grass with houses facing onto it. For the most part the architectural character of the green has not survived, most of the houses being mid-20th century semi-detached. Only on the north side have earlier buildings survived, with two mid-19th century houses flanking the mid-20th century school.
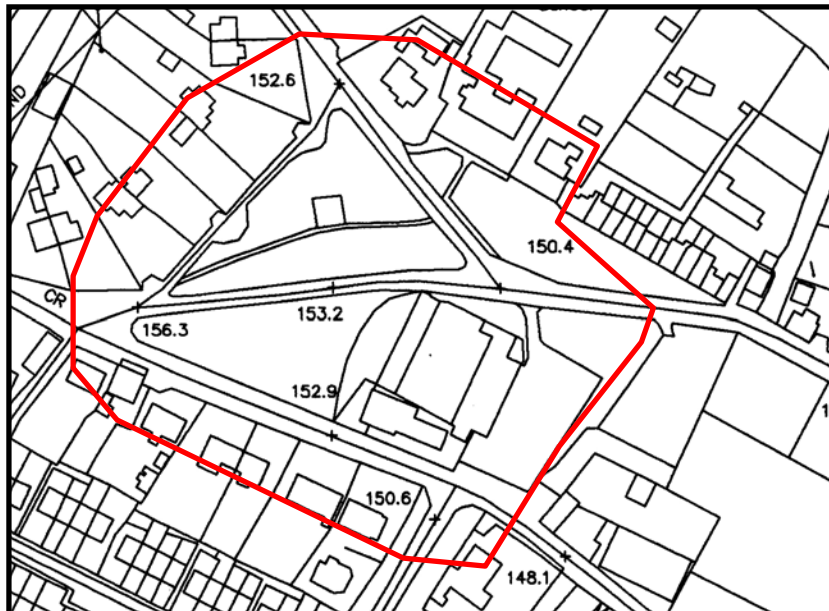
Detailed appraisal:

By the 19th century the fair green had been surrounded by houses, though the green itself extends over a large area and the houses would not have affected its use or character unduly. In the mid-20th century the houses were cleared and new two-storey houses built in their place. These face onto the green on the western and southern sides and are of low density with single-storey and two-storey detached houses on large sites.

On the northern side there are older buildings, consisting of two 19th century houses and a mid-20th century national school. These are of similar scale to the houses on the western and southern sides of the green.

On the eastern side of the green the open space is enclosed by the complex of buildings centred on the old Flannel Hall. This building appears never to have addressed the space that is the Fair Green, having an enclosed yard and

outbuildings separating the hall from the green. Alterations over a period of nearly two centuries have copper-fastened this separation, with a 20th century shop building – seen in the photograph below, with the fair green to the left - flanking the open space on the southern side of the building complex and with the open area to the east of the hall now divided between a large extension to the hall and a substantial area of parking.

The Flannel Hall was severely damaged in a fire in the 1890s and much of its character would have been lost at that time. What remained has now been concealed behind the extension seen in the above photograph, and the principal element of the building that remains is the arcade now visible in the lobby within the building. This includes archivolts of cut granite, now painted.

The Fair Green itself is a large area under grass with a substantial number of trees planted throughout. In the centre there is a paved area on which sits a sculpted memorial surrounded by railings.

The Fair Green is cut by two roads which cross the green space and which meet at a Y-junction to the front of the Flannel Hall. In places the original cobbled rainwater channels remain in place and in reasonably good condition.

While the Fair Green is an important area in the town and a significant element in its history, it does not rely on architecture for its character. The buildings that surround the green are generally not of special architectural interest and are set back to such a degree from the green that they do not form a composition that would warrant status as an architectural conservation area.

I. Poundbrook Lane

As suggested above, Poundbrook Lane appears to have been a through road leading to Corballis and Garrymore until the mail coach road was built in the second decade of the 19th century. The lane also led to one of Rathdrum's breweries, which closed in the mid-19th century. Now the lane is downgraded from its original state, with some derelict outbuildings on the southern side and some houses on the northern side. This lane does not contribute greatly to the character of the town in its present form.
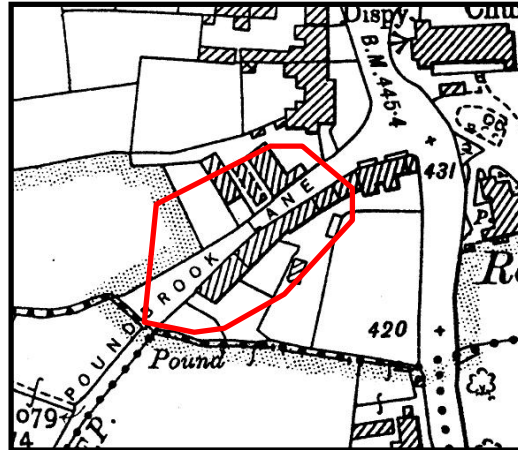
Detailed appraisal:

Poundbrook Lane has a group of older buildings at its eastern end, those on the southern side being predominantly in poor condition. On the north side the buildings are part of the Main Street and do not abut the lane. The lane does not have a good quality paved surface and in all the lane does not read as part of the essential character of the urban area of Rathdrum, except at its eastern extremity where it adjoins the buildings in Main Street as seen in the photograph below.

J. Knockadosan

To the south-west of Rathdrum there is a group of houses lying between the end of Poundbrook Lane and the main road. These consist of a terrace of houses built in the 1860s on the site of the former brewery, together with an older house at the northern end of the terrace, possibly a surviving part of the brewery complex. These houses are two-storey, but taller and narrower than the style of the typical building in Rathdrum. They are faced in render, the terrace having ruled and lined smooth render, while the end house is roughcast. All have decorative facings to the window and door opes. The end house is three-storey with a hipped roof and while it is in accordance with the character of its neighbouring terrace, it is quite different to the prevailing style in the town.
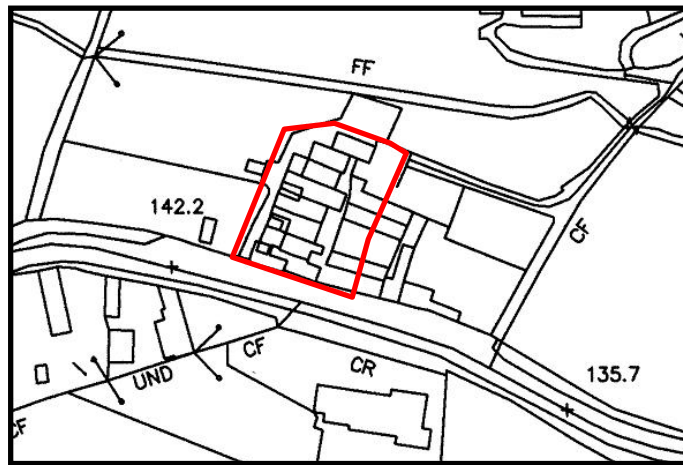
Detailed appraisal:

This group of houses is accessed via the main road leading towards Avoca from Rathdrum and does not have a frontage onto a public road.

The main terrace retains its unified roof with chimneys, but the individual houses have been altered by the replacement and enlargement of windows and the addition of extensions to the front. At the rear the properties have substantial extensions covering much of the space between the main houses and the access lane to the rear.

While this appears to have been a terrace of some character originally, it now lacks the qualities of an architectural conservation area in its own right. It is too remote from the principal areas of the town to warrant inclusion within the bounds of an architectural conservation area centred on the principal built-up area.

K. Parnell National Memorial Park

The town park at the southern end of Rathdrum is an important part of the amenities of the town, none the least for the visual effect it provides to those who pass by the town on the main road, without entering. It straddles the Poundbrook stream and includes the site of the old rectory, which was turned into an orphanage in the 1950s and demolished more recently. The park has few architectural elements, apart from the statue of Parnell and the causeway and culvert over the river.
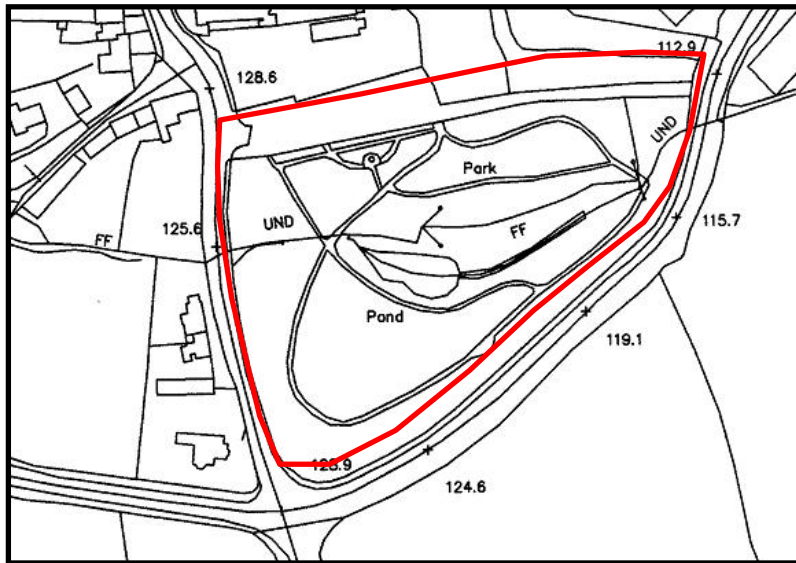
While forming an important urban space in its own right, the park does not depend on architectural elements to define its character, and those structures of architectural significance that adjoin are predominantly within one of the other character areas discussed. This park does not warrant inclusion in an architectural conservation area.

L. The railway

Rathdrum station is at a distance from the town itself and makes no visual contribution to the town, whatever of its merit in itself. Approached via a road leading off the main road, the station is at a distance of 350 metres or so in a direct line from the rear of Main Street and through its distance and its position lower down the hillside. The principal elements of the area are the railway, with the station and its platforms, the road bridge over the railway, and the large hotel building.

While it has qualities of its own, the group of buildings at the railway station is too remote from the central part of Rathdrum to warrant inclusion within the boundaries of any architectural conservation area that may be adopted.
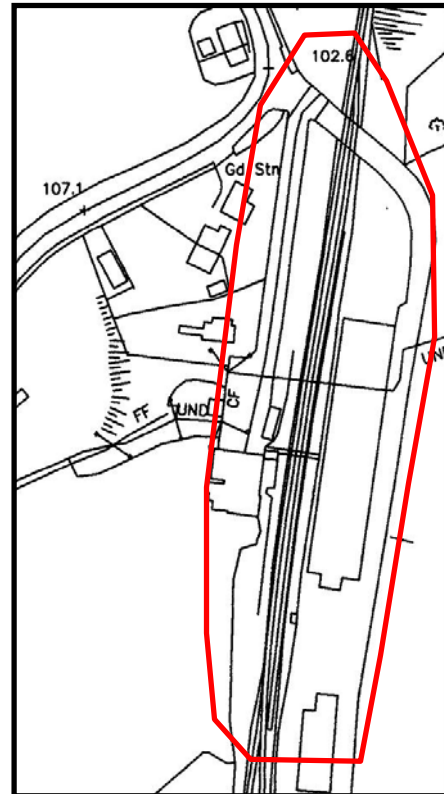
M. Church of SS Mary and Michael

One of the most important architectural elements of Rathdrum is the church of Saints Mary and Michael. This was designed by the eminent architect J J McCarthy, a proponent of the gothic style and a follower of Pugin. The church is situated in extensive grounds, landscaped as parkland with lawns, paths and a number of substantial trees of the type favoured in the mid-19th century for park settings. An important element in this composition is the lych-gate of cut granite. This site is of high quality, but does not read with the rest of the town, being somewhat remote from it and visually separated by the topography, and through being approached around a distinct bend which obstructs the view.

As such, the church precinct would not warrant inclusion with an architectural conservation area for the central area of Rathdrum.
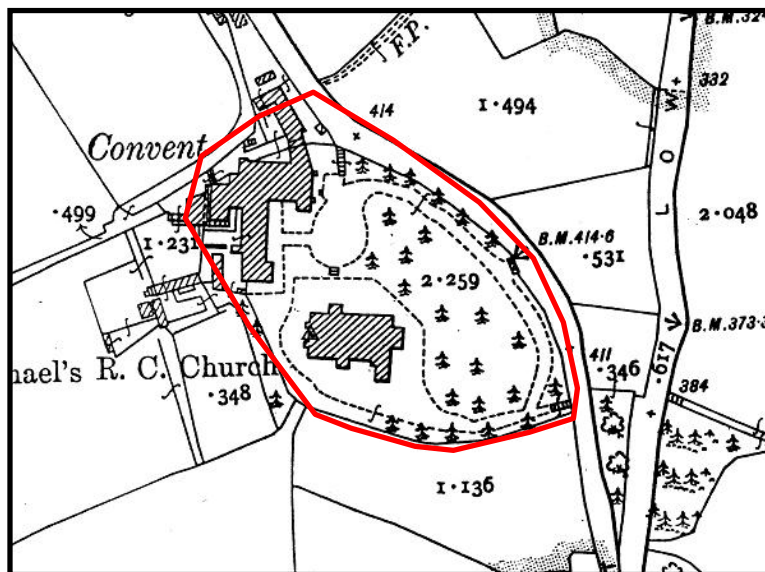
N. Lowtown – upper part

Lowtown consisted originally of a single street, but with the construction of the mail coach road in the early 19th century a new street arrived. This was not exploited as a part of Lowtown until the 1930s, and has never become an important part of the streetscape. Lowtown may be divided into two areas on the basis that one part consists of a narrow street with buildings on both sides and situated on a steep hill. This gives qualities to the townscape that are absent in the lower part of the town, notably stepped building profiles, flights of steps projecting into the footway and buildings that are considerably higher at one end than at the other. In general the houses fit the typology for Rathdrum, with early 19th century styles, two-storey, rendered and painted facades and Georgian windows. The adherence to the type is not as close as is found in Main Street, however.
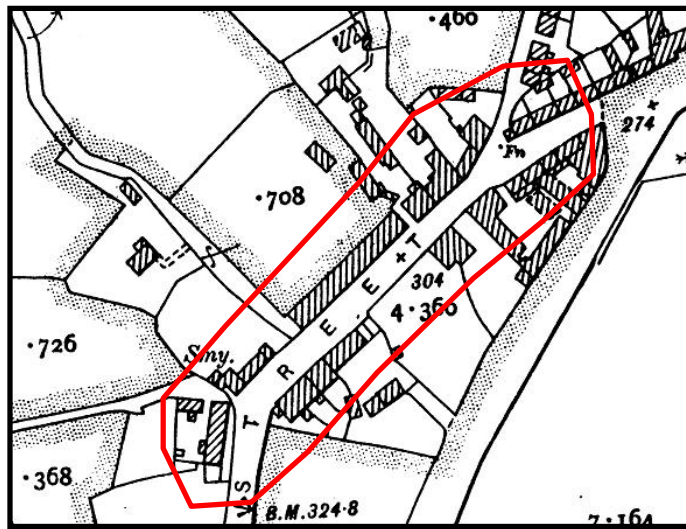
Detailed appraisal:

The upper part of Lowtown is on a substantial slope and is enclosed by buildings on both sides, giving a distinctive character to the street. This is enhanced by occasional steps projecting into the footway from front doorways.

For the most part the buildings fit the general type for Rathdrum, with two-storey houses with eaves to the front and with slated roofs and with rendered

facades. Like others in the town many of these houses have been altered by the replacement of windows and, in some cases, doors. The heights of buildings vary, and with the slope to add to this, there is a visual quality to the street arising from the difference in heights at the eaves. The northern side of the street is built up in a more or less continuous line, while the southern side has individual houses separated by significant spaces, bounded by walls. There is a small Victorian letterbox set into one of these walls.

The street carriageway is paved with macadam, in common with the rest of the town, while the footpaths are of mass concrete.

The buildings are mostly rendered, except for a group of three houses with rubble stone finish that appears to have had its original render removed. Most of the rendered buildings are painted and there is a variety of colours. Many of the windows have been replaced, with a predominance of uPVC casement windows. Some original timber sliding sash windows survive. Since the photograph below was taken in 2004 a substantial amount of the render has gone from the corner of the building in the foreground to reveal the structure of rubble stone with more substantial rubble stone quoins.

There is an important view up the street towards the church of Saints Mary and Michael and a lesser view looking down the street towards the bridge, seen in the photograph above.

On entering Lowtown from Rathdrum the former forge is in a prominent position on the sharp bend at the top of the street. This building presents a poor gateway to the street, being in very poor condition and has the appearance of abandoned construction. Behind it another derelict building sits in the view on the hillside and also severely takes from the vista.

O. Lowtown – lower part

The small group of houses that makes up the lower part of Lowtown differs from most of the rest of Rathdrum in that it is a single-sided street, facing the open fields that border the river. The street is also relatively level, in contrast to the rest of Rathdrum. The houses broadly fit in with the character of the historic buildings in the area, generally being two-storey, painted and rendered. The café that faces the bridge at the junction between the main road and Low Street adds greatly to the character of the area.
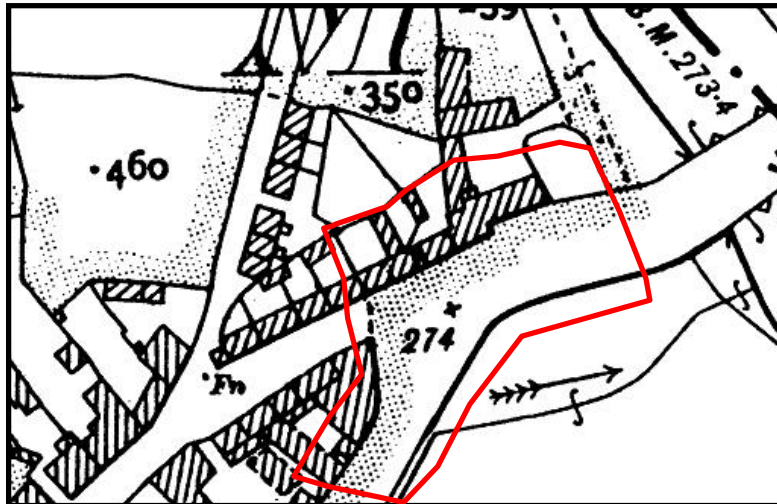
Detailed appraisal:

This part of Lowtown differs from the upper part in that it is on a comparatively level site, thereby not having the elements of character related to the slope as detailed above. It is also single-sided, having a low wall on the southern side beyond which are fields leading across the river's floodplain. This is also the through route to Avondale, Avoca and beyond, bypassing the town of Rathdrum on the old mail coach road, and hence has more traffic than the upper section.

The houses in this part of Lowtown are generally of the same type as elsewhere in Rathdrum, with two-storey houses faced in painted render and with slate roofs. There are just six buildings in this section, one of which is derelict with planning permission for demolition and redevelopment, and one is a mid-20th century building with a hipped roof, not entirely in character with the other houses, seen in the photograph.

Another house, visible at left in the photograph above, is also a later building, though it is in scale with its neighbours, resorting to half-dormers in order to achieve modern standards of ceiling height without raising the eaves too high above those of its neighbours.

At the fork in the road there is another building in keeping with the type, this one having a traditional shopfront and placed in a prominent location directly in front of the approach from the bridge. This is an important building in view of its high profile in the streetscape.

To the south-west of this building there is a group of premises facing on to the coach road, ending with a filling station. These structures do not warrant inclusion within any architectural conservation area on the basis of their design.

A significant issue facing this part of Lowtown is the future of the land on the southern side of the main road. There were buildings shown on this site on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1839 and the lie of the land would suggest that the flood levels of the river do not penetrate this far. Any development on this site should reflect the essential character of the existing buildings in terms of scale and materials, though development on greenfield sites such as this should also be in a modern idiom and should not attempt a pastiche reproduction of the existing buildings.

It is assumed that the development proposed on the filling station site adjoining the bridge would be implemented and this would remove the principal issue in this part of the town – that of the derelict buildings on this prominent site.

P. Rathdrum Mill and bridge

At the north-eastern extremity of Rathdrum the road crosses the Avonmore river on a stone bridge. To the east of the bridge stands Rathdrum Mill, a late-19th century structure that is the highest and most substantial building in the town other than the two churches. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage made the point that the bridge "along with the large and equally impressive neighbouring former corn mill, forms a visually interesting rubble-built mass on the northern approach to Rathdrum". The point is stretched a little, as bridges rarely make an impact on those crossing over them and the full impression may only be seen from the river's edge, from where the mill is partly obscured. Nonetheless, the point is made that these two structures are important and share their rubble-stone appearance, which sets them apart from the majority of buildings in Rathdrum and emphasises their rugged strength.
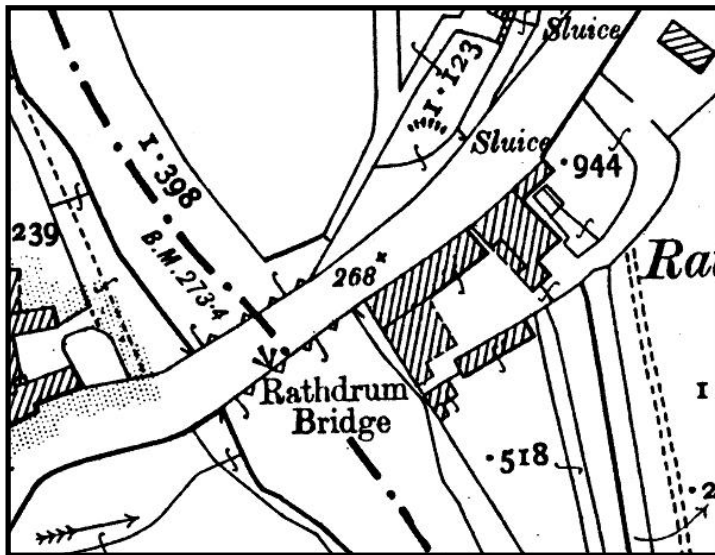
Detailed appraisal:

The bridge has four principal arches, with a fifth to serve the overflow from the mill headrace, and also to relieve flow during a flood. This bridge was built in two phases, the earlier one seen in the photograph below, while a second bridge was built on the upstream side to widen the original carriageway. This bridge is a protected structure.

The corn mill is also a protected structure and for the most part dates from the late 19th century when the old mills on the site were replaced with a larger, more modern mill. The site is substantial and includes large areas that could be developed at some stage in the future. There are extensive industrial-type structures on the site stretching southwards from the old mill buildings.

The view from the street of the bridge and the mill are important, though the bridge is mainly perceived as a pair of parallel walls flanking the roadway.

As the bridge and the mill are protected structures they have adequate protection in their own right, without requiring the benefit of an architectural conservation area. They are different in character to the rest of Lowtown, and of Rathdrum in general, and hence do not make an obvious addition to any potential architectural conservation area that may be defined for the town.

It is considered that while these structures are of merit, they should not be considered as part of a proposal for an architectural conservation area.
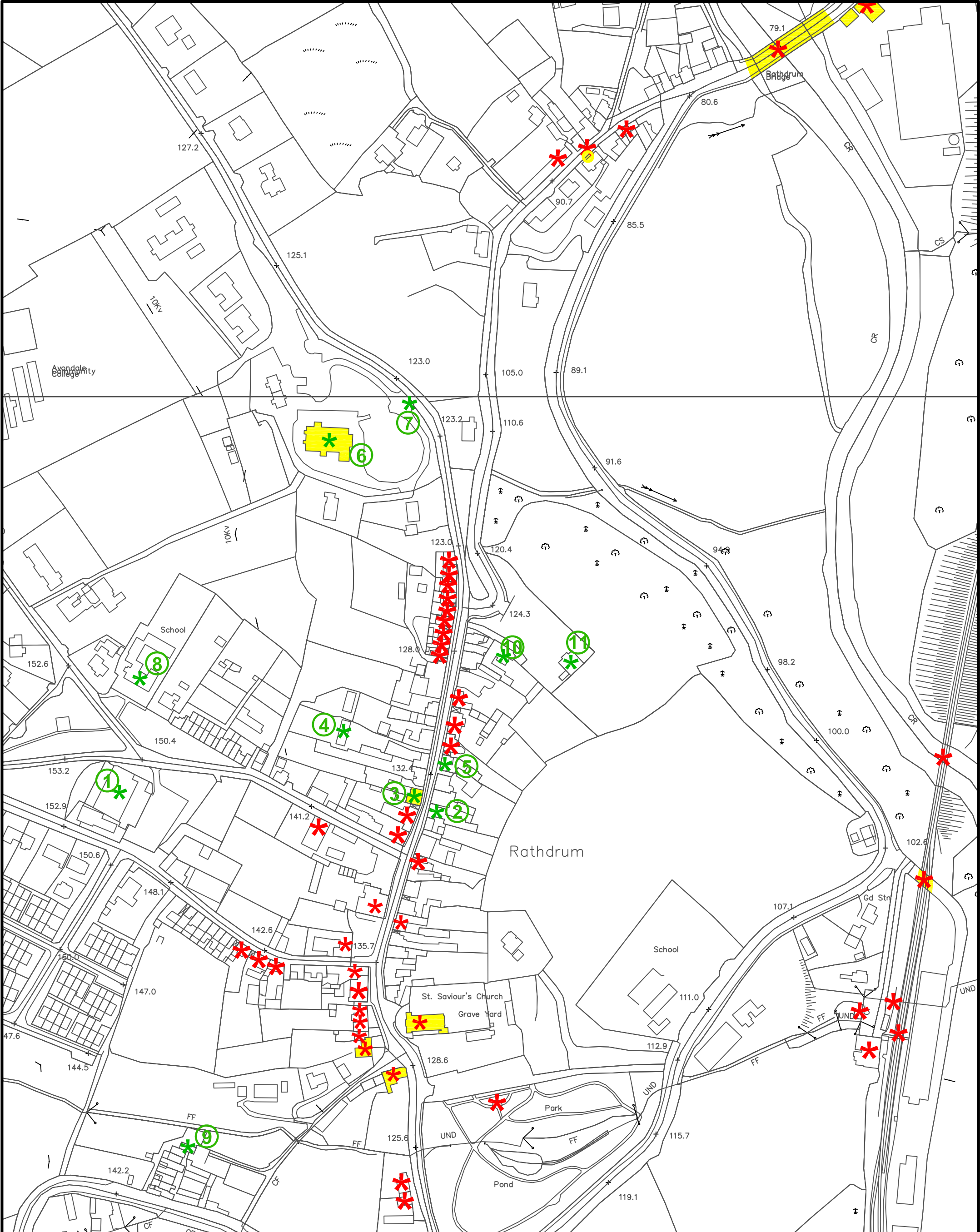
4. Buildings of Special Interest

The County Wicklow Development Plan 2004-2010 was adopted in November 2004 and includes nine structures in Rathdrum within its Record of Protected Structures. Amongst these are the bridge over the railway at the station, the bridge over the river at Lowtown, the mill at Lowtown, the Victorian letter box at Lowtown and the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland churches. Only the facades of the churches are included.

The remaining three protected structures are buildings within Main Street, namely the Glebe House opposite St. Saviour's Church, the house next to the Glebe to the south and the former Market House mid-way along the western side of Main Street. These are shown in yellow on the accompanying map.

Also during 2004 the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) carried out its inventory survey of Wicklow , though the results were not available in time to influence the development plan. The inventory included some forty-five structures within Rathdrum, some of which are small elements such as a drinking fountain at the railway station and the letter box at Lowtown. Most are buildings, however, and all forty-five are shown as red asterisks on the accompanying map.

While the coverage of the NIAH is relatively comprehensive, some of its choices are questionable. For instance, it includes a line of comparatively modest two-storey cottages built in the 1880s, without any obvious reason for including them rather than other, older and more substantial buildings in Main Street. It excludes the stone-built school at Fair Green, though other similar schools in Wicklow were included. The former market house in Main Street was overlooked, although included in the Record of Protected Structures in the draft development plan that was available at the time of the survey. Most glaringly, it omits the church of Saints Mary and Michael, which is one of the best-known buildings in Rathdrum and one of the few by a known architect.

In the present study a number of buildings were identified that might have been included in the NIAH. While the precise scope of the inventory is, perhaps, subjective, nine structures are described below that are considered to be the most significant omissions. Two of these are among the nine protected structures. In each case a photograph of the building is presented with some information on the background to the building and a comment on its possible inclusion in a future revision of the Record of Protected Structures. These buildings are shown with a green asterisk on the accompanying map and are given a number that corresponds with the description below.

1.   Former Flannel Hall

As shown above, the Flannel Hall was built in the late 18th century to assist the marketing of flannel, as a major source of employment in the Rathdrum area at the time.

Following the collapse of the industry the hall continued to be used for the benefit of the town. Part of the building complex was used as the town's Roman Catholic church until the opening of SS Mary and Michael, and it also provided space for a school. It was used as a meeting place, including political meetings, though not indiscriminately. Earl Fitzwilliam permitted the hall to be used for meetings of O'Connell's Catholic Association[27], but refused its use by the anti-Catholic Brunswick Club[28].

While the building was gutted by fire in the 1890s, a great deal of it survives, and it is an important part of the history of the town, warranting at least a local rating for its special historical and social interest.

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[27] See, for instance *The Freeman's Journal* during October 1811 and January 1813.

[28] *Freeman's Journal*, 23rd December 1828.

2.   Former Methodist church, Main Street

A Wesleyan Methodist chapel was opened in Main Street, Rathdrum in 1821 and in 1857 it was rebuilt. The church remained in use until the 1960s. It has subsequently had an extension built to the front to provide for a shopfront for the business that now occupies it, but the original building still survives at the rear.

This building is worthy of classification as being of regional importance for its social interest. More detailed examination may show whether it is also of architectural interest.

3.   Former Market House

This building is listed in the County Wicklow Development Plan 2004-2010 as being the former market house. The description in the record of protected structures refers to it as "a three-bay, two-storey building with an advanced central bay which contains a two-storey arch (now filled in)."

There is no mention in the records of the Valuation Office that this was used as a market house, however, those records only commenced in the 1850s.

Whether or not this building was used as the market house it is of an unusual and attractive design and is worthy of being classified as of regional importance.

4.   Former school

This building was erected at the rear of premises in Main Street in the early 19th century as a school and served as such until well into the 20th century. It is now a private house.

With its Gothic windows this building is unique in the context of the Rathdrum area and warrants being rated as of regional interest for its special architectural and social qualities.

5.   Main Street

This two-storey, three-bay building in Main Street has particular interest for its applied quoins and surrounds to its opes, including a shopfront. The two-over-two timber sliding sashes survive, though the shop windows have been altered. The building is tastefully picked out in contrasting colours.

This building is more than equal to the ten houses on the opposite side of the street that were included in the NIAH and is deserving of a rating as of regional importance for its special architectural interest.

6.   Church of Saints Mary and Michael

This church was erected in the late 1850s to the designs of J J McCarthy. This building was the favourite church of Archbishop McQuaid, and understandably so. It has a superb granite exterior, including a corbelled bellcotes that is typical of McCarthy. The building is a protected structure, though previously this extended only to the façade, which is a pity, as the interior is very fine, despite the removal of much of the plaster, which is the kind of unnecessary work that protection is designed to prevent.

7.   Lychgate at church of Saints Mary and Michael

The church of Saints Mary and Michael is unusual in the Irish context in having a lychgate, and this is fashioned in granite rather than the more usual wrought timber. This is a fine structure in cut granite and deserving of protection as being of regional, if not national importance.

The of the protection given to the church itself would appear to include the lychgate as it is within the curtilage and, more particularly, it is included in the description of the church, which states that "on the road is an arched granite entrance gate with granite roof".

It is worth considering whether this structure is deserving of its own individual entry in the Record of Protected Structures.

8.   National School at Fair green

The present school at Fair Green is typical of the type of national school being built in the 1920s and 1930s, with long windows reaching to the eaves, but with the sills not low enough to enable a seated pupil to watch the world go by outside.

The building is well cared for, with window boxes on the sills, though the original windows have been replaced.

This building is worthy of inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures for its social interest.

9.   House on brewery site

The free-standing house at the end of the terrace at Knockadosan has design elements in common with its neighbours in the terrace, most particularly the window surrounds. Overall, however, it is different in its massing and height and in other details and may be an earlier building. The terrace was built on the site of a brewery and it is possible that this house is a survivor from the brewery complex.

Subject to further investigation, this house would appear to be worthy of inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures.

10.   Ardavon Lodge / Air Hill

Air Hill was an early 19th century villa, or single-storey house. It has the hallmarks of a building of about 1800, with tripartite, or Wyatt windows, as seen in the photograph above, together with blocked doorway, or Gibbsian doorway, with square blocks of cut stone interrupting the architrave.

This was once a fine house, but is now derelict and is deserving of renovation to bring it back into use.

11.   Ardavon

Ardavon is a substantial house, built in the mid-19th century for the Comerford family who ran the mill beside Rathdrum bridge. The house was burned a few years ago and has remained as a burned-out shell ever since.

The house occupies a prominent site at the northern end of the town, facing the junction of Main Street with the roads to Lowtown and to Clara. The land to the front has recently been cleared of stored material and given a covering of macadam.

This house is a surprising element in the townscape, sitting right next to the heart of the town, and yet not being of it, remaining aloof in its secluded grounds.

Ardavon is worth refurbishment to return it to a useful purpose.

5. Visual analysis

In the visual analysis undertaken here a number of aspects will be examined, namely:

- Views and prospects
- Green spaces
- Landmarks
- Urban spaces
- Urban landscape
- Visual pivots
- Vista stoppers
- Pinch points
- Key trees

These will be taken in this sequence, though it is recognised that there is a certain amount of overlap in a list such as this and this will be borne in mind.

Views and prospects

Rathdrum's hill location has the potential to ensure that the town is prominent in the views from a number of surrounding locations, particularly as there is high ground to the south and east beyond the valleys that define the edge of the town. The absence of public roads from some parts of the potential viewing areas and the presence of tree cover ensures that Rathdrum is not a visible in the landscape as it might be. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as the back view of a town is not always its most presentable side. In the text below each photographic view has a number in the bottom left-hand corner, corresponding with a location on the map.

Development plan views and prospects

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2004-2010 identifies a number of views and prospects of special amenity value or special interest. Two views at Rathdrum are listed, both relating to the Avonmore river valley, as seen in the following extract from schedule 10.6 of the plan:

| 20 | R752 at Rathdrum bridge, Parnell Drive | View of Avonmore river valley from bridge |
| 21 | North of Rathdrum, Parnell drive | View of Avonmore river valley towards Rathdrum. |

No prospects are identified in the plan in relation to the town of Rathdrum. There are various views and prospects in the wider Rathdrum area, but these do not affect the town.

Map labels and annotations:

127.2

125.1

Avondale Community College

10KV

123.0

123.2

110.6

105.0

89.1

91.6

85.5

90.7

80.6

79.1

Rathdrum Bridge

CR

CR

CS

CR

10KV

123.0

128.4

124.3

128.0

School

152.6

150.4

153.2

152.9

150.6

148.1

160.0

142.6

141.2

132.4

135.7

147.0

47.6

144.5

142.2

FF

CF

CF

CF

125.6

UND

128.6

St. Saviour's Church
Grave Yard

Rathdrum

98.2

100.0

94.0

107.1

Gd Stn

School

111.0

112.9

115.7

119.1

UND

FF

UND

FF

UND

CR

UND

Park

Pond

FF

Title:	Views of Rathdrum
Job:	Rathdrum: Conservation Area Appraisal
Drawing no.:	129 - 03
Date:	January 2006	Scale:	1 : 2500 at A3

Location and direction of views

View number 20 above need not concern this assessment, as it concentrates on the river valley rather than the town. View number 21 also addresses the valley, but with the potential to view parts of the town as is seen below.

The descent into the valley of the Avonmore on the R752 provides less view than might be imagined. The winter view seen in this photograph demonstrates a very narrow field of view between trees, across the valley, towards the church of Saints Mary and Michael on the ridge in the distance. Rathdrum itself is totally hidden behind trees on the left of the view. There is a hint of the existence of Lowtown through the branches. The trees continue down the entire length of the slope, allowing only one view, over the cacophony of sheds that cover the land associated with Rathdrum Mill.

Were the trees to be better controlled the view could be opened up as shown in the photograph above. This view was taken at the same time as the previous one,

but off the public road onto the depot in the disused quarry at the bend in the road. While Rathdrum bridge can be seen from this viewpoint it would be obscured by sheds on the mill site if viewed from the public road.

If it is desired to maximise this view, as is implied in the development plan, a moderate amount of pruning could be undertaken at the viewing point. Care would be required to ensure that the cutting back would not remove the screen from the sheds on the site below.

Other views

There are views in the opposite direction to the one shown above. The two principal viewing points are by the gate to the church of SS Mary and Michael and on the road to Lowtown just below the junction with the road to Clara.

In this view the absence of trees and other vegetation alongside the road is an important factor, as is the clear view over the field in the foreground. This view is important for its subject matter, having a broad expanse of countryside stretching into the distance, with far-away hills to enhance the view, and with the cluster of buildings that is Lowtown in the middle distance to give focus and interest.

The view is also important for its accessibility. It would be experienced by those who travel along the road between Clara and Rathdrum, but it is also seen by all of those who attend the church. The view is also seen in a modified form from the church grounds, though the slope of the ground and the presence of mature trees reduces the impact.

A similar view is gained from just below the town on the route to Lowtown, as seen in the photograph below.

This view is given dramatic impact by the slopes of the valley and the hills in the distance. The focus, however, is on the built heritage elements in the view, with the eye being led by the curve in the street, past the strong drawing-power of the brightly-reflective houses in Lowtown, to the bridge and the mill, each of which vies with the other for the attention of the viewer. The effect is reduced slightly in summer with the leaves on the trees in the foreground, but this is not significant.

There is also potential for a view of Rathdrum bridge and mill from the bridge leading to the railway station. This view is largely blocked by trees at present, but nonetheless offers a tantalising peephole towards the bridge.

This view is more open when seen from the roadside descending towards Lowtown, as seen in the photograph below.

The southern end of Rathdrum is bounded by the Poundbrook stream as it makes its way eastwards towards the Avonmore river beyond the railway station. While this is a small stream it runs through a significant valley that affords good chances for views of the town. This is particularly important as the road here was designed as a bypass in the early years of the 19th century, and continues to act as such. Many visitors to Rathdrum are heading for Avondale or Avoca and the only view of the town of Rathdrum that they experience is what they see across the valley.

The view across the park is an extremely important one, as it is clear and open, presenting the clearest view of the town to any passer-by who does not chose to enter. This is a composition that depends on the slope, the buildings on the crest of the slope, the vertical focus of the church tower, and the group of trees that fronts the buildings, tantalising the viewer with hidden objects of interest revealed as the eye moves along the road.

This view is marred by the dilapidated buildings on the right hand side of the view, at the rear of the church.

There are also important viewing points further along the road, though these are less obvious to the passer-by than the view over the park. They nevertheless offer a superb view of the southern end of the town, again with the church tower as the principal focus. As with the previous view, dilapidated buildings do little to enhance the picture.

Title: Visual analysis

Job: Rathdrum: Conservation Area Appraisal

Drawing no.: 129 - 04

Date: January 2006   **Scale:** 1 : 2500 at A3

Rathdrum

St. Saviour's Church
Grave Yard

School

School

Avondale Community College

Park

Pond

Green spaces

There is a variety of green spaces in the heart of Rathdrum. These range from large parks to small planted areas and all contribute to the visual strength of the townscape. These areas are shown on the accompanying map and are depicted in the photographs below. Each is given an identifying letter so as to enable the photographs to be matched with the map.

A. Parnell National Memorial Park

The town park at the southern end of Rathdrum is superbly sited, being close to the heart of the town so as to provide a good quality recreation ground and retreat for those living and working locally. It also makes good use of the existing landscape, particularly the river valley and the mature trees that survive from the grounds of the now-demolished former glebe house. The park is also an excellent foreground to the town for the many visitors to the area who are bound for Avondale or Avoca or elsewhere, but who pass Rathdrum without entering.

B. Poundbrook Lane

At Poundbrook Lane there is potential for a high class open space, again along the valley of this river and with a focal point at a small waterfall near the route through the valley.   This is a well-used pedestrian way. At present the land is in need of a more formalised approach to turn it into an attractive walkway.

C. Fair green

The fair green is the most important open space in the history of the town. It has been in existence since at least the beginning of the 18th century and today it has been planted with trees and given a central focus at the memorial.

D. Area at top of Back Lane

This small area of planted ground is, in reality, a part of the fair green, but has been isolated from the rest of the green by the Flannel hall and the roads. It has been tastefully planted with a line of birch trees to give a firm edge to the roadside.

E. Grounds of church of Saints Mary and Michael

The church grounds are beautifully laid out with trees and lawns, making good use of the prominent hillside site and providing a tranquil setting for the church.
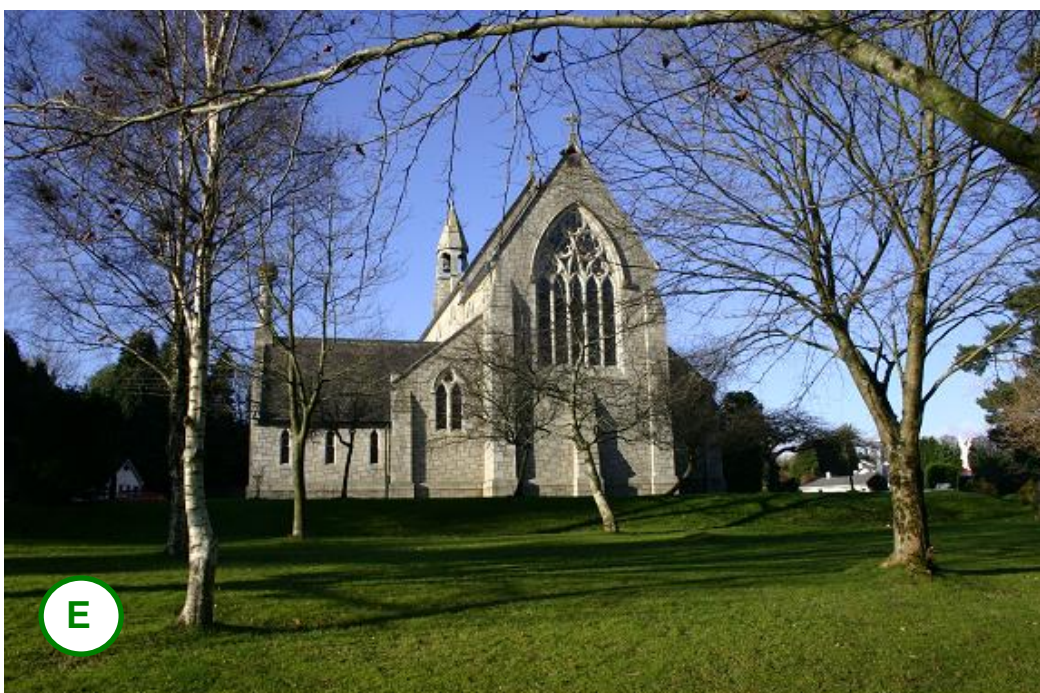
F. Roadside planting

At the northern end of Main Street, at the junction between the roads leading to Clara and to Lowtown, there is an island created by the diversion of the road to Lowtown in a wide sweep. While this is not open space in the strict sense of being usable for sitting out or other recreation, but it is a positive contribution to the townscape.

Landmarks

There are few true landmarks in Rathdrum, taking this to mean structures that are imposing in the landscape and are visible from a distance, rather than in the American sense of being buildings of significance regardless of their stature in the landscape. The Flannel hall, for instance, is an extremely important building in the history of Rathdrum, but is not a landmark insofar as it cannot be seen from a distance.

Four structures are identified as being landmarks in Rathdrum. The railway bridge over the Avonmore is a possible fifth candidate, but does not register sufficiently from a distance due to the lie of the land and the tree cover.

The two churches are obvious landmarks, each standing on commanding sites, one at each end of the town.

By contrast, the other two landmarks are in a valley. The mill and bridge at the Avonmore in Lowtown are both prominent structures that may be seen from a distance. Particular care needs to be taken to ensure that new buildings on the mill campus do not obstruct the views of the building, or take from its landmark qualities.

Urban spaces

There is a number of important urban spaces in Rathdrum, and others that are in need of careful consideration. The sequencing in the list below follows on directly from the open spaces considered above.

G. St. Saviour's precinct

The first is the one that was identified above as possibly the first urban space in Rathdrum, though less obvious in its present form. This space still exists as somewhat more than a street, and has particular importance due to the double curve of the road, adding interest to the street scene, as well as leaving spaces that are not intruded upon by through traffic.

There is potential to upgrade this space to a more attractive precinct, though probably not to return it to use as a town square as it would not be possible to eliminate traffic.

H. Market Square

Market Square has great potential as a focal point for the town. At present it has been taken over by cars to the exclusion of people, with the exception of the small sitting-out area outside the Woolpack Inn. With Mackey's on the western side and the Woolpack on the northern, the space has potential to be lively and to add to the vitality of the adjoining businesses. The Railway Inn is separated by Brewery Lane, making it less attractive as an additional focus to the square.

I. Space to front of Flannel Hall

To the front of the Flannel hall there is an area laid out for parking. This is poorly defined and poorly finished and takes from the general ambience of the fair green, which has been carefully maintained and planted with trees. This space has the potential to be an asset to the area or to be tidied up to make a greater visual contribution to the fair green area.

J. Area to front of terrace in Fair Green

On the opposite side of the road to the Flannel hall there is another paved area that has been mentioned above. This appears to have been cordoned off from the street to give it some definition, and to provide parking. It would benefit from a more structured layout.

K. Space at Ardavon

The burned out shell of Ardavon faces the street across a substantial area that is surfaced with macadam for parking.

This area has been greatly improved recently, having previously been used for the storage of materials such as pipes, sand and gravel.

The area has the potential to help relieve the pressure of parking in Main Street and for use for other purposes.

L. Car park at town park

There is a car park above the town park, adjacent to St Saviour's Church, laid out with a macadam surface and an attractive set of gates and railings. This is a potentially useful amenity for the town and serves the park well. It suffers from a degree of vandalism, however, a telephone call box at the entrance has been destroyed. Adjoining the car park at the rear of the church there is a number of derelict buildings that detract from the car park, particularly if it is seen as a place for tourists to use, as it reflects badly on the town.

Vista stoppers

There are several buildings in Rathdrum that are important due to their position at the ends of vistas. Some stand at the ends of streets facing a junction, others are at bends. In all cases these are buildings where careful consideration should be given to their visual qualities, particularly if changes are proposed. In one case the current state of the building needs to be addressed.

These buildings are shown below, working from south to north.

St Saviour's Church

It has been noted above that St. Saviour's Church is a landmark building, visible from a number of places, and forming an important element in certain views. It is also the closer of the vista as one approaches Rathdrum from the southern side, travelling from Avoca, or from Avondale.

The gateway to the former glebe house form an important minor element in this vista.

House opposite St. Saviour's

This early 19th century house is an attractive closer to the vista on approaching from the north, the road then turns towards the left and passes the house. The dilapidated house alongside is not as visible in the vista.

Avondale restaurant

This building, with its attractive shopfront, lies directly opposite the end of Brewery Lane. Despite a fibre-cement roof, changed windows and rooflights it presents a fine appearance at the end of the vista. Care should be taken of any alterations that may follow a change of ownership.

Building opposite Back Lane

This is one of the buildings singled out by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and is enhanced by plaster linings to the window and door opes.

Former forge, Lowtown

The former forge at Lowtown lies directly ahead when approaching Lowtown from the upper part of the town. From the amount of building materials on site it would appear that work began on this building but stopped again, leaving it dilapidated and unsightly.

Bridge House, Lowtown

Bridge House stands in the fork between the original road to Rathdrum and the coach road that was built in the early 19th century. It faces the road approaching across the bridge and forms an attractive closer to the vista. Originally a relatively symmetrical three-bay house, the addition of a shopfront on the right-hand side of the façade balances the building within the view, as the approach is not via a straight line. This vista should be borne in mind if the land on the left-hand side of the road is developed.

Elements of detail

There is a number of small elements in Rathdrum that help to add to the character of the streets. A number of these have been considered above, including:

- Cut stone rainwater channels across footpaths on Main Street
- Cobbled rainwater channels alongside carriageways in Back Lane, Fair Green and Brewery Lane
- Granite kerb stones in Back Lane and Fair Green
- Post box in Lowtown
- Boot scraper in Lowtown
- Stone steps in Lowtown and Main Street
- Window surrounds and guards in Main Street
- Shopfronts in Main Street
- Plaques in Main Street
- Doorways in Market Square and in vicinity of St Saviour's

Some other details are included here.

Canopy at the Woolpack, Market Square

This canopy is an asset to the square, and is one of the elements that could help in establishing the square as an attractive space if it could be cleared of parking and redesigned. The uprights of the canopy are recycled from old cast iron lamp posts and bear the arms of Dublin Corporation.

Painted-over signs

Sometimes part of the history of a property is painted on the façade as a sign, denoting the former use of the premises. Three examples from Rathdrum are given below, though there may be others.

Mackeys, Market Square

The word "Hotel" is visible between the two right-hand ground floor windows of Mackeys. Some other letters may be discerned, but the face of the building has been repaired to the extent that only fragments of the original sign seem to survive.

Woulahans' Undertakers, Main Street

One of the houses at the northern end of the street, opposite Ardavon, carries a painted-over sign reading:

> J Woulahan & sons
> Undertakers
> Carriers
> Coffins &c
> Motors for hire

This business still operates from the rear of Main Street.

Saul's, Main Street

The fascia over the shopfront at the front of this butcher's shop in Main Street carries marks in the paint that show where the letters SAUL'S were removed. The Saul family had a number of properties in Rathdrum and in about 1889 Thomas Saul acquired this house. Four generations of the family occupied the property over a period of about eighty years until the mid-1960s when Henry Saul was the last of the family in the building.

Key trees

There are trees all around Rathdrum, but few of them are significant in the townscape. There are several at the rear of premises in Main Street, where the plots are often very long, but these are at the rear of the premises and do not make a large contribution to the urban scene. This includes a magnificent specimen of birch that, while large and mature, is only visible to a limited extent from the town at large, and is not considered to be a key tree.

St Saviours / Parnell Memorial Park

There is a group of trees at the southern end of the town that is comparatively small, and yet extremely important in the townscape. It has been seen above in considering views and in looking at the open spaces. These trees are in two groups, set on either side of the car park above the park, but would originally have been a single group, standing in the grounds of the former glebe house. They are typical of Victorian garden trees, including evergreens such as cedar, yew and cypresses.

Church of Saint Mary and Saint Michael

The planting to the front of the church of Saints Mary and Michael is also Victorian in its choice of trees, with a strong emphasis on exotic evergreens such as Wellingtonia, eucalyptus and Corsican pine. This is consistent with the date of the church, which was built just five years after the introduction of the Wellingtonia into these islands.

These trees are important on the skyline when seen from across the valley on the approach along the R752. However, they have only a limited impact on the townscape, not being readily visible from Main Street and do not form an essential part of the character except in the immediate vicinity of the church grounds.

North-east of Rathdrum

There is a strong belt of trees along the slopes on either side of the R752 as it climbs from the valley towards the railway station and beyond. This belt acts as a screen in the views seen across the valley from the R752, adding to the natural appearance of the view and concealing the view of Rathdrum.

While this belt of trees is immensely important in the wider landscape, it has little effect on the town itself. The enclosed nature of the Main Street, with buildings facing the street without setbacks, ensures that the trees are not visible from within the town. The only exception is the western extremity of the tree belt which closes the vista down Main Street.

New planting

Some new planting in Rathdrum has been noted above, and the valuable contribution it is making to the town will increase as it matures. Particular groups of trees that have been noted are:

- On the Fair green

- Alongside the car park to the Flannel Hall, on the northern side

- Along the edge of the parking area to the front of the terrace in Fair green.

Architectural Conservation Area

In the light of the above analysis of the historical background, character and visual aspects of Rathdrum the potential for the adoption of one or more architectural conservation areas is examined below.

The legislation relating to architectural conservation areas (ACAs) is contained in sections 81 to 83 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which are set down in Part IV, chapter II of that act.

Section 81 requires that a planning authority must include in its development plan objectives to establish architectural conservation areas where necessary to ensure the preservation of the character of the place which:

> (*a*) is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or

> (*b*) contributes to the appreciation of protected structures,

The principal control over the character of an ACA is set down in section 82, which states that works to the exterior of a structure in an ACA would only be exempted development if they would not materially affect the character of the area.

Section 83 gives a planning authority the power of compulsory acquisition of property, other than a dwelling, to assist in the preservation or enhancement of the character of an ACA.

Guidance in the establishment of ACAs is given in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities*

The guidelines suggest that an ACA may be used for a number of purposes, including the protection of groups of structures of distinctiveness or visual richness or historical importance. It also suggests that "the physical expression of the significance of an area may consist of building lines and heights, patterns of materials, construction systems, or architectural elements that are repeated within the area and give it a sense of harmony".

This suggested use of ACA legislation can refer to the protection of a streetscape, and this may be appropriate for use in Rathdrum.

Another reason given in the guidelines for adopting an ACA would be to protect the setting and exterior appearance of structures that are of special interest, but the interiors of which do not merit protection. In this instance the nature of the interiors of the buildings in Rathdrum is not known, in the absence of any inventory or survey carried out. The protection of the exteriors on their own may be warranted where the significance of the interiors is not known.

Assessment of character areas

Some sixteen character areas have been considered above, in some cases noting whether or not they would be appropriate as ACAs in the context of Rathdrum. Each of these is examined briefly below to set down a recommendation as to whether it might be put forward for status as an ACA, either in its own right or as part of a larger area.

Precinct of St. Saviour's

As has been shown above, this area is historically the centre of Rathdrum and may have formed the original market place or centre of the town. It has also been noted that this area has special architectural qualities, with the church, its railings and the gateway to the former glebe house on one side of the street and a group of houses of architectural character on the other side. Most of the buildings in this character area were listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) and may be considered for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), three of them already being protected structures. Although the status as protected structure safeguards a building and its curtilage, including its boundary treatment, this area would still be a valid area for an ACA, particularly in conjunction with the adjoining area to the north, for which see below.

Market Square

The area included in Market Square is comparatively small, but has significant architectural character at present with the potential for enhancement. The buildings on three sides of the square were included in the NIAH, while those facing the square on Main Street were not. There is also potential for infill on the western side of the square. This character area would be a valid area for an ACA, particularly in conjunction with the areas to the north and south.

Main Street

The part of Main Street that lies to the north of Market Square has a unified character in terms of the scale and facing of the houses, as noted above when considering the character areas. Almost half of the buildings in this section were included in the NIAH and one is a protected structure. The character of the remaining buildings is of high quality and many of them would warrant inclusion in the NIAH, at least as being of local interest. It is possible that many of the buildings that were included in the NIAH may be added to the RPS as a result of their inclusion. An ACA is a particularly effective tool for the protection of the character of an area if there is a mix of protected structures and buildings that are not protected structures.

Brewery Lane – lower

The buildings at the lower end of Brewery Lane do not form a cohesive group, nor do they have the special character expected of an ACA. The Railway inn would be included in the Market Square character area, and the others do not merit being incorporated in an ACA.

Brewery Lane – upper

The upper part of Brewery Lane has a terrace of houses on one side, though not unified in period or detail. The other side has few buildings, mainly of a different character and predominantly vacant and of poor appearance. Three of the houses at the lower end of the terrace were included in the NIAH and may be considered in the future for inclusion in the RPS. These three houses have retained their sash windows, while few others in the terrace have done so. It is not considered that the other houses in Brewery Lane would warrant inclusion in an ACA, while inclusion in the RPS would give sufficient protection to the three houses at the lower end.

Back Lane

As has been shown above, Back Lane has a character that differs from Main Street, being mainly single-storey buildings. While this is a character trait, the overall presentation of this part of the street does not have the special quality that would warrant inclusion in an ACA, either in its own right, or as an adjunct to an ACA in Main Street.

Fair Green – terrace

The terrace of houses, with non-residential use at the lower end, has a certain architectural quality. The terrace lacks its original windows and doors, however, and in only one case does a porch canopy survive as an example of what may have been on the other houses originally. It is not considered that this terrace has the special architectural quality to warrant its inclusion in an ACA.

Fair Green

The fair green is a very important element in the history of Rathdrum. However, it is not important for its architectural qualities. There are few older buildings adjoining the green and those that survive are mostly heavily altered, particularly the Flannel Hall. It is not considered that the Fair Green has the architectural qualities that would warrant inclusion in an ACA.

Poundbrook Lane

Poundbrook Lane has very few buildings and they are not of such character as to warrant ACA status. One dilapidated house at the north-eastern end adjoins a protected structure and this would be included in the character area at St Saviour's Precinct.

Knockadosan

The terrace of houses at Knockadosan has a certain character on its eastern elevation. It is not considered, however, that this is sufficient to warrant status as an Architectural Conservation Area.

Parnell Park

The Parnell National Memorial Park has a strong character. However, this is not an architectural character and it derives little of its qualities from the adjoining architectural elements. It is not considered that this area would warrant consideration as an ACA.

The railway station

The enclave of buildings in and around Rathdrum railway station have a character that is typical of the railway age. This is too far removed from the town of Rathdrum to be considered for inclusion within an ACA as part of the town. The enclave would not warrant ACA status in its own right, particularly if the structures included in the NIAH are to be included in the RPS and would achieve a protection through this means. The road bridge over the railway is already a protected structure.

Church of Saints Mary and Michael

The church of Saints Mary and Michael is a building of high architectural quality and stands within well-landscaped grounds. This area does not warrant the declaration of an ACA, there being sufficient protection in place with the church being a protected structure.

Lowtown – upper

The upper part of Lowtown has a character that is partly based on its buildings, which have similarities with the styles in Main Street, with projecting granite steps. The gradient is steeper than Main Street, however, and gives a further quality to the street scene. Two of the buildings were included in the NIAH, along with the Victorian letter box that is already a protected structure. This area has the special quality that would warrant its inclusion within an ACA.

Lowtown – lower

The lower part of Lowtown has similar qualities to the upper part, though without the steep gradient and with buildings on one side of the street only. While it would probably be too small an area for an ACA in its own right, this would form a natural adjunct to an ACA in the upper part of Lowtown.

Rathdrum Bridge and Rathdrum Mill

The bridge at Rathdrum and the adjacent mill are both protected structures and were both included in the NIAH. The only element of their respective characters that they share is the facing materials, the two being of different forms, heights and periods. It is not considered that there would be anything to be gained by including these structures within an ACA either on their own or as part of an ACA at Lowtown.

Proposed ACAs

In the light of the above assessment of the character areas, five have emerged as being of sufficient quality and character to warrant inclusion in an ACA. These form two distinct groups, with St Saviours Precinct – Market Square – Main Street forming one group with a strongly unifying character through the styles of buildings fronting the streets; and Lowtown, which was arbitrarily split into two character areas for the discussion above, but which would warrant being joined into a single ACA.

As has been shown above, the legislative background to ACAs envisages that there would be stronger controls over the exteriors of buildings within an ACA. The character of the areas as defined above is purely based on the frontage presented to the street – in some cases this being two frontages at street corners. While there are many buildings at the rear of the houses in Rathdrum that are of great character, they do not read with the street, nor may one building at the rear generally be seen with others as the walls bounding the properties tend to enclose the areas at the back of buildings and preclude a general vista. It is not considered, therefore, that the boundary of an ACA should extend to the rear of the buildings as this would impose burdens on the occupiers of the properties

without creating any improvement to the character, and without giving protection to any overall scene that is available to the general public.
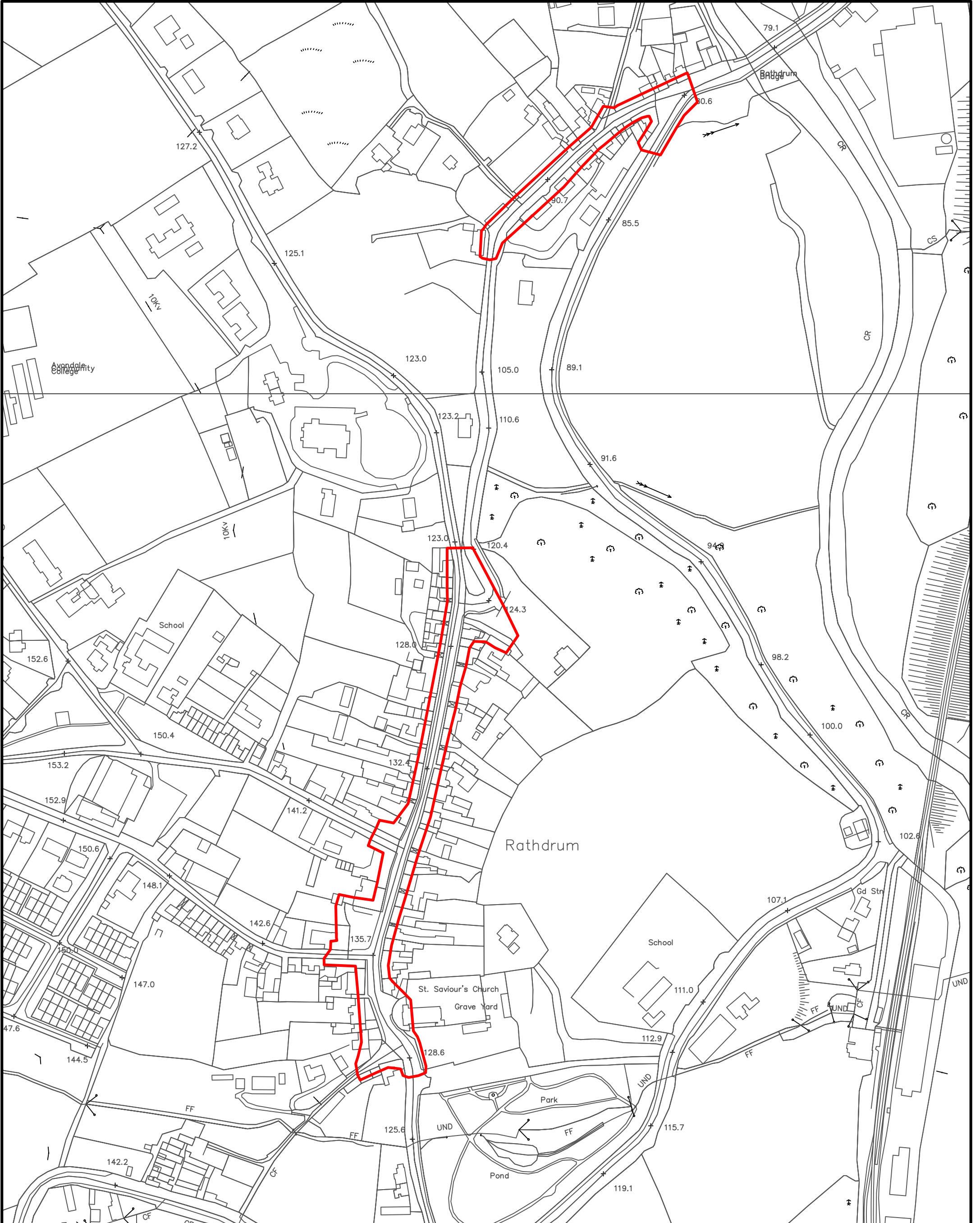
Main Street – proposed ACA

The boundaries put forward for this ACA would include the facades of the buildings, as explained above. This would include the wall and gateway to the front of the former glebe house to the south of St Saviour's Church and would also include the dilapidated building at the eastern end of Poundbrook Lane. At street corners, notably at the junctions of Brewery Lane and Back Lane, the sides of the buildings that front on to Main Street would be included.

The buildings facing onto Market Square would be incorporated in this ACA, with the open land between Mackey's and the Woolpack.

Northwards along Main Street the facades of the buildings would be included, and this definition would include any granite steps, cut granite rainwater channels and surviving kerbstones. At the northern end the area would be extended to include the façade of Ardavon Lodge as this has the potential to form a closer to the view leading up the hill from Lowtown, although blocked by a line of trees at present. The space between Ardavon Lodge and Main Street is also important in the vista up from Lowtown, and the opportunity has been taken to include the planted island in the middle of the road.

Lowtown – proposed ACA

As with Main Street, it is proposed that only the facades of the buildings be included and the areas to the front, while excluding the rear of the buildings and any other structures at the rear. The projecting steps and boot scraper would be included in this area. At the junction between the road leading up to Rathdrum through Lowtown and the old mail coach road the boundary would include the Bridge House in the division of the roads. It would also include the wall on the opposite side of the road and would thereby allow for the possibility that development may happen on that side of the street and may need to be considered carefully so as not to take from an ACA.

127.2

125.1

125.1

Avondale
Community
College

10Kv

123.0

123.2

110.6

10Kv

123.0   120.4

124.3

128.0

School

152.6

150.4

153.2

152.9

141.2

132.4

148.1

142.6

135.7

147.0

160.0

47.6

144.5

142.2

FF

CF

CF

CF

79.1

Rathdrum
Bridge

80.6

90.7

85.5

105.0   89.1

91.6

94.0

98.2

100.0

102.6

Gd Stn

Rathdrum

107.1

School

111.0

St. Saviour's Church
Grave Yard

128.6

112.9

FF   UND

UND

FF

Park

UND   115.7

125.6   UND   FF

Pond   119.1

CR

CS

CR

CR

UND

FF

Conclusion

Rathdrum has been identified above as a town with a long history, and the line of the Main Street has been in place and fully developed for the best part of three hundred years, or possibly longer. It appears that Lowtown has also been in existence, more or less in its present form, for a similar period, or at least since the bridge was built.

The buildings in Main Street and in Lowtown appear to be predominantly 19th century in date, with some dating from the closing years of the 18th century and opening years of the 19th. Above all, there is a unifying style running through the older parts of the town, with two-storey buildings, rendered and painted and with slate roofs. There is a great variety of buildings within the unifying parameters, and this lends a great interest to the basic character, all being enhanced by the natural slope of the land and the consequent bends in the roads.

The heart of the town, as represented by the long run of Main Street, together with the outlying auxiliary centre of Lowtown, are deserving of protection and would make suitable candidates for Architectural Conservation Areas.