



Dublin City Council  
Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath

**Archaeology, Conservation & Heritage Section**  
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29/01/2025

To the Chairperson and Members of the Central Area Committee

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**Initiation of the Statutory Process for the Proposed Addition of DRUMCONDRA PUBLIC LIBRARY, MILLMOUNT AVENUE, DUBLIN 9 to the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).**

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### **PHOTOGRAPH OF STRUCTURE**



Fig. 1: Front elevation photograph.

## **Introduction**

It is proposed to initiate procedures under Section 54 and Section 55 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) to add 'Drumcondra Public Library', Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9 to Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures.

## **Request for Addition**

- Kevin Duff, DCA Planning Sub-committee, An Taisce, The Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin 8, 05/02/2003.
- Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (now Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage) on the 03/11/2021.

## **Summary of Reasons for Seeking Addition**

- Kevin Duff, DCA Planning Sub-committee, An Taisce: A request from An Taisce to add Drumcondra Library to the Record of Protected Structures as a 'Confident and expressive building(s) of mid-twentieth century'.
- *Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (now Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage)*: List of recommendations for inclusion on the RPS of structures deemed as being of Regional significance or higher identified during Stage 4 of the Dublin Survey carried out by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Drumcondra Public Library, Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9 has been assigned a Regional rating. The Stage 4 Ministerial recommendations were issued to Dublin City Council on the 03/11/21.

## **Methodology for Assessing Priority Structures:**

In November 2019, the Planning & Property Development SPC agreed a methodology to expedite the proposed additions/deletions to the RPS in a systematic manner, based on the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011 and NIAH/Ministerial Recommendations under Section 53(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). The methodology agreed to prioritise industrial, twentieth century, early buildings and underrepresented typologies. Drumcondra Public Library falls within the 20<sup>th</sup> century structures category.

Objective BHA06 of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 provides as follows: *To identify and protect exemplar buildings of the twentieth century; to categorise, prioritise, and, where appropriate, add to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS); to produce guidelines and offer advice for protection and appropriate refurbishment of such structures.*

The library was the focus of a case study in *More Than Concrete Blocks: Dublin City's Twentieth-Century Buildings and their Stories Vol. 1 1900-1940* (pp.274-281) highlighting its significance.

## **Site Location & Zoning Map**

The subject structure is located in zoning type Z1 in the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028. The objective of this zoning type is: To protect, provide and improve residential amenities.

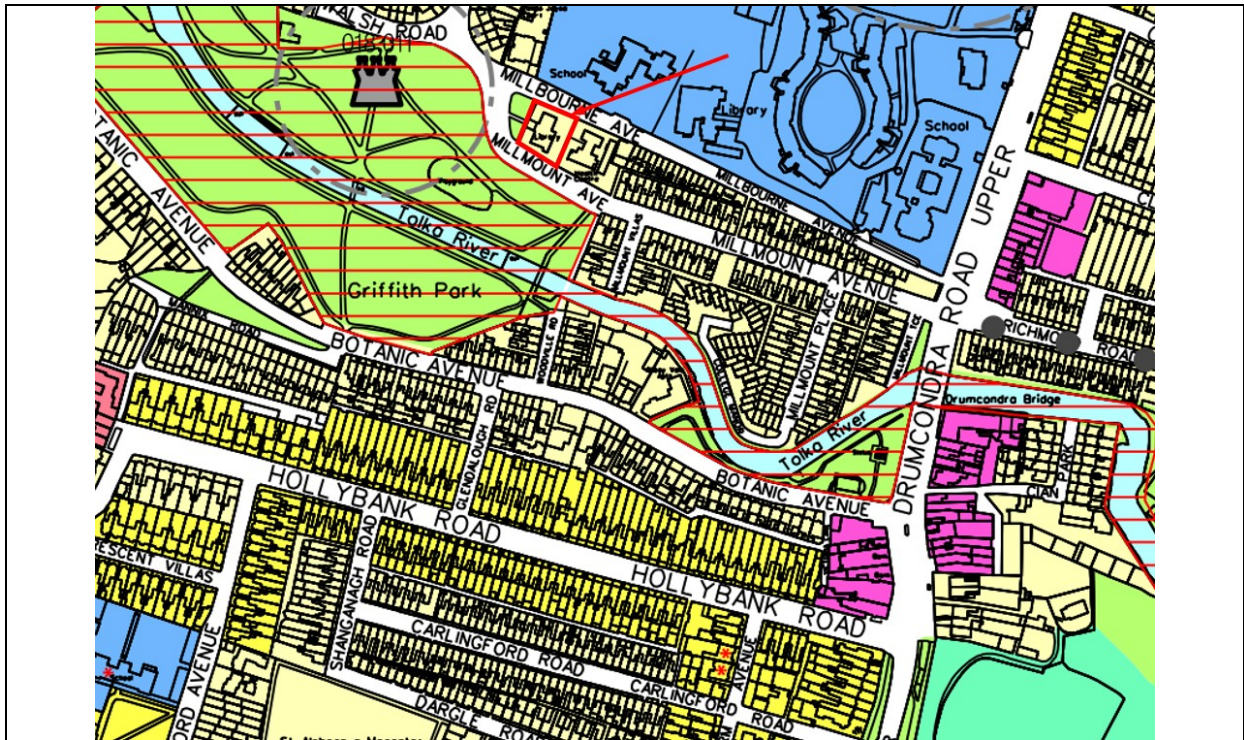


Fig. 2: Site location and zoning.

### **Recent Planning History**

There is no recent planning history relating to this structure.

### **Recent Planning Enforcement History**

There is no recent planning enforcement relating to this structure.

### **Site Access**

A site inspection was carried out by Aislinn Collins and Mary-Liz McCarthy of Dublin City Council's Conservation Section on 14/01/2025. Full access to the interior and exterior of the structure together with its surroundings was possible.

### **Summary Description**

#### *Exterior:*

Detached seven-bay, single-storey Art Deco library, built 1937, having taller entrance breakfront to front (north-west) elevation, five-bay side elevations and lean-to extension to rear (south-east) elevation. Hipped pantile roof hidden behind channelled rendered parapet with concrete coping and red brick chimneystack to rear, cast-iron and replacement gutters and downpipes. Pantile roof to lean-to to rear. Red brick walls laid in English garden wall bond with recessed brick string course, over painted rendered plinth. Square-headed window openings, with wrap-around openings to corners. Chamfered cast-concrete cills and continuous painted render course to window head level, steel framed windows with central pivot openings. Centrally placed, square-headed door opening, recessed within stepped surround with decorative saw-tooth motif; glazed timber double-leaf doors having brass door furniture, and plain overlight with decorative grill. Signage reading 'Leabharlann Phuibliidhe' in Cló Gaelach font over. Entrance doors opening onto concrete platform with concrete steps with modern access ramp to northwest. Site enclosed by mild steel railings on concrete plinth, having double pedestrian gates.

#### *Interior:*

Single open-plan reading room with modern staff desk to centre, and ancillary services within lean-to extension to north-east. Plastered walls and ceiling. Retaining original fitted timber library shelving with splayed bases to exterior walls, with built-in radiators and storage

presses. Timber and glazed entrance porch having double-leaf timber doors framed by fluted timber pilasters.

### **Historical Background**

(Incorporating information from Mero Kelly's case study, 'Drumcondra Library, Millmount Avenue, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, 1937' in Ellen Rowley (ed.), *More Than Concrete Blocks, Volume 1, 1900 – 1940*).

Following the passing of the Greater Dublin Act in 1931, Dublin Corporation reorganised the city library service, acknowledging the need for the public library provision in the city's suburbs. As part of the library design programme City Architect, Horace T. O'Rourke and Chief Librarian, Róisín Walsh undertook a research trip to investigate suitable precedents in England and Scotland. A 1934 report by Councillor Maurice O'Sullivan was followed by an announcement that new branch libraries would be constructed to serve the growing populations of Phibsborough, Drumcondra, Inchicore and Ringsend/Sandyamount. The provision of the library at Drumcondra represented the successful culmination of a long-term campaign, by the Drumcondra Library Committee, which commenced in the late nineteenth century. The site at Millmount Avenue, provided for the construction of the library, had previously contained a large woollen mill complex called Mill Bourne and a holy well dedicated to St. Catherine, depicted on the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century Ordnance Survey maps of the area (see Fig. 16). Land to the south of the site was laid out by the Corporation as a public park (see Fig. 17).

The library was designed by Scottish Architect Robert Sorley Lawrie in consultation with the Chief Librarian and constructed by Messrs. H. and J. Martin. Lawrie joined the City Architect's Department as assistant to the City Architect. Drumcondra Library was one of four new public branch libraries, designed by Lawrie, which Dublin Corporation completed between 1935 and 1937. Drumcondra library was completed at a cost of £4,500 and was formally opened by Rev. Joseph Dwyer, parish priest, on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1937.

The International Exposition of Modern Decorative Arts and Industrial Arts, held in Paris in 1925, heralded the introduction of Art Deco style. Though Art Deco became a popular style internationally in the 1930s, surviving buildings of this style within the city are relatively uncommon. Extant examples include structures used for leisure and entertainment as well as industrial and public buildings. Lawrie's Art Deco libraries, including that at Drumcondra, are fine examples of Art Deco style and have been described by Susan Roundtree (2004) as 'modest but important examples of public buildings in Art Deco, a style that marked the transition between classicism and the Modern Movement'. Art Deco detailing is evident in the emphasis on horizontality with recessed brick string courses, projecting rendered plinth, and channelled rendered parapet. The prominent entrance bay, which advances forward of the building line contains deeply recessed entrance doors within a stepped surround, emphasised by decorative elements including the saw-tooth motif to the surround, steel grill to the overlight and bold signage in Cló Gaelach font over the entrance doors.

While works to improve accessibility to the library and refurbish the interior, were undertaken by Dublin City Council in 2010, much of the original fabric survives including the steel windows and purpose-built shelving survives.

### **References**

- Kelly, Merlo, 'Drumcondra Library, Millmount Avenue, Drumcondra' pp. 274-281 in Ellen Rowley, (ed.) *More Than Concrete Blocks: Dublin city's Twentieth-century buildings and their stories, Volume 1 1900-1940*, Dublin 2016
- Roundtree, Susan 'Three City Branch Libraries', in *Architectural Ireland* No. 193, pp. 62-63.

- The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Survey of Dublin City, Stage 4 Ministerial Recommendations issued on the 03/11/2021

**NIAH Significance/Rating**

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) has been carried out for this area. The NIAH uses eight categories of special interest (architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical & social) and identifies five categories of rating in seeking to rank buildings. The NIAH rating values are International, National, Regional, Local and Record Only (I, N, R, L, O). Structures which are considered of International, National, and Regional significance are deemed worthy of inclusion on the RPS.

The NIAH record (50130157) provided in Appendix 2 of this report has assigned Drumcondra Public Library, Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9 a Regional rating. The NIAH in its 2024 handbook identifies these as structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area. They also stand in comparison with similar structures or sites in other regions or areas within Ireland. Examples would include many Georgian terraces; Nenagh Courthouse, Co. Tipperary; or the Bailey Lighthouse, Howth. As a result, this structure was included in the list of Ministerial Recommendations for inclusion on the RPS of structures deemed as being of ‘Regional’ significance or higher identified under Stage 4 of the Dublin Survey.

**Assessment of Special Interest under the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)**

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage assigned this structure Architectural, Artistic & Social interest.

The Conservation Section, following an internal and external inspection of the site on 14/01/25 has considered the opinion of the NIAH and is in agreement with the categories of special interest assigned.

**Conclusion**

Dublin City Council Conservation Section has carried out an assessment of Drumcondra Library and has also considered the NIAH record for the site (see Appendix 2). The Conservation Section concludes that Drumcondra Public Library merits inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures.

The extent of the proposed Protected Structure status and curtilage is outlined in Fig.3 of this document (below).

The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Central Area Committee of Dublin City Council for the initiation of the statutory process for the proposed addition of this structure to the Record of Protected Structures. This includes undertaking a statutory public consultation process in accordance with Section 55 of the Act. Following the statutory consultation process, a further report will be prepared taking any submissions and observations received into consideration, with a recommendation to the City Council to proceed or not with the proposed addition, or with a recommendation including amendments to the proposed addition.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that Drumcondra Public Library, Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9 be added to the Record of Protected Structures, in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

<b>Recommendation</b>	
<b>Address</b>	<b>Description (to appear on RPS)</b>
Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9	Drumcondra Public Library



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Senior Planner  
Conservation & Heritage

29/01/2025

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Date

**Extent of Protected Structure Status**

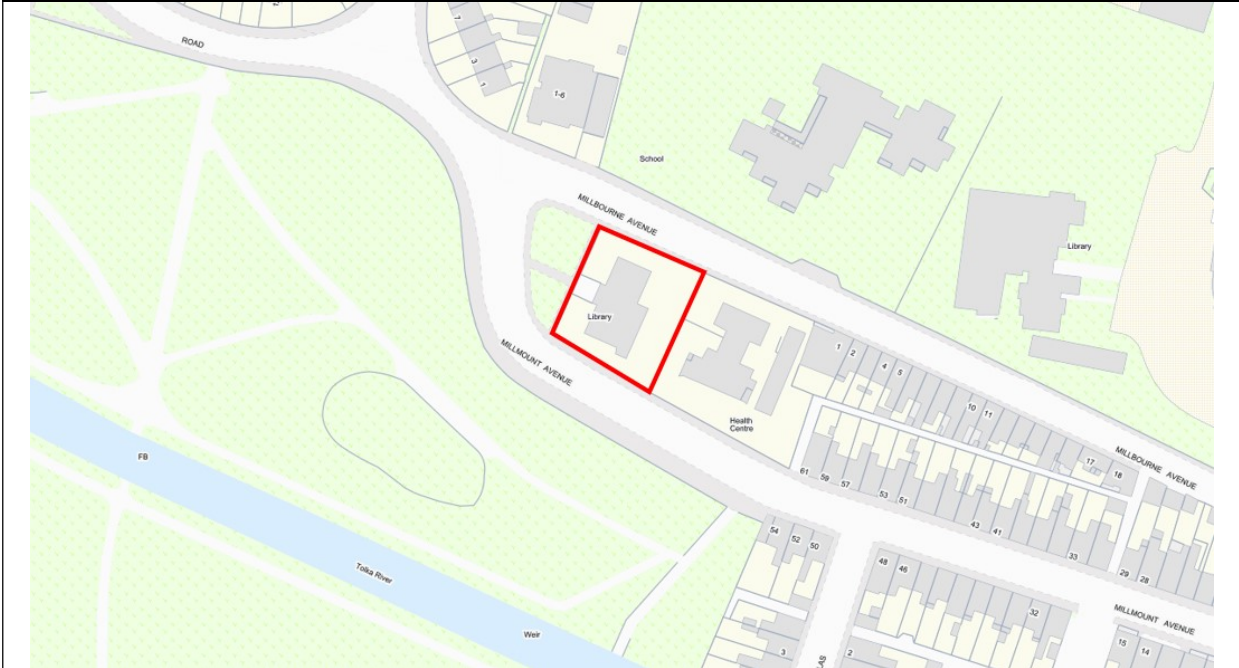


Fig. 3: Drumcondra Public Library, Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9: extent of Protected Structure status and curtilage outlined in red.

Appendix 1: Short Photographic Record & Historical Maps



Fig. 4: Drumcondra Library, context photo



Fig. 5: Front (north-west) elevation



Fig. 6: Side and rear elevation



Fig. 7: Side and front elevation

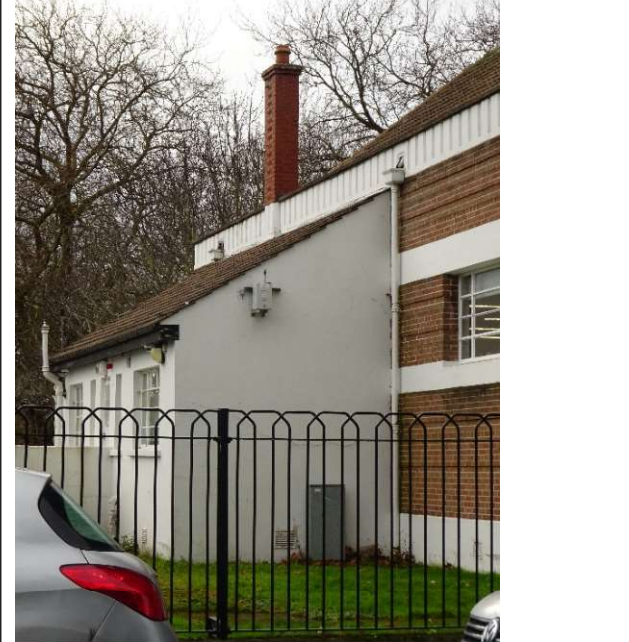


Fig. 8: Lean-to and chimneystack



Fig. 9: Entrance bay





Fig. 10: Window



Fig. 11: Wrap-around window



Fig. 12: Boundary railings



Fig. 13: Library interior



Fig. 14: Fitted shelving



Fig. 15: Timber and glazed entrance porch

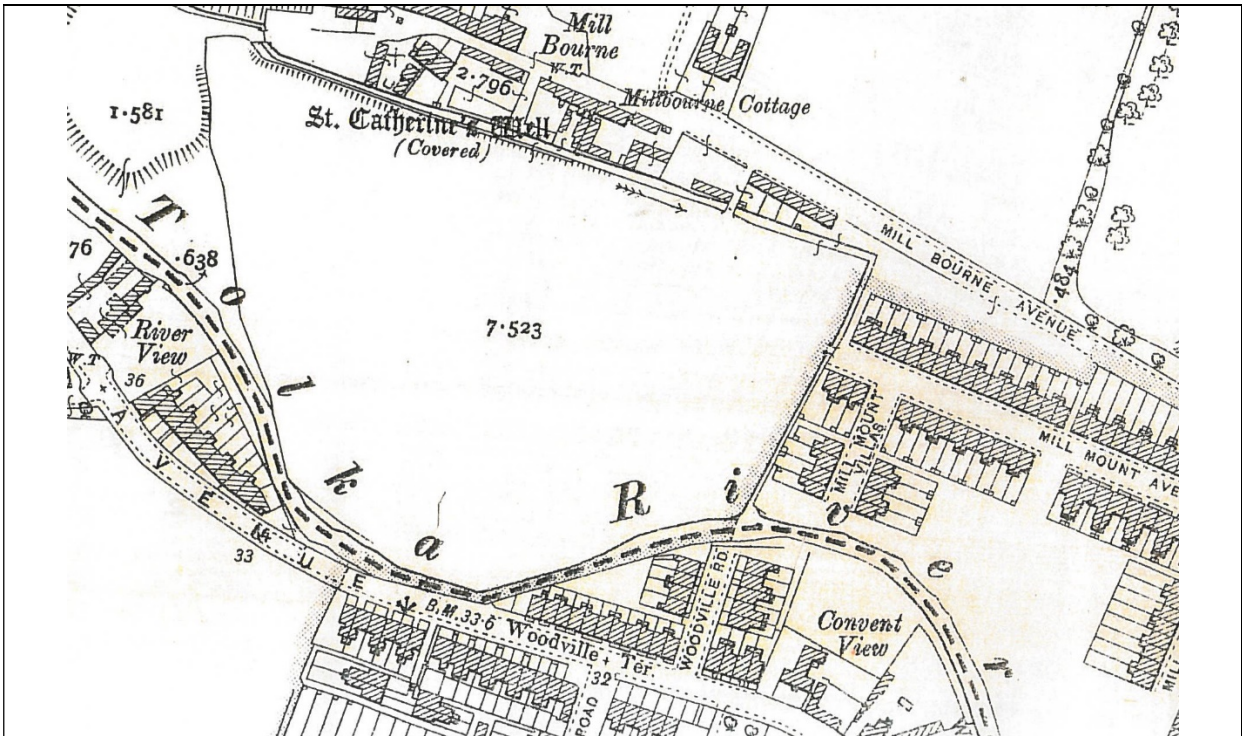


Fig. 16: Ordnance Survey map of Dublin, 1907.

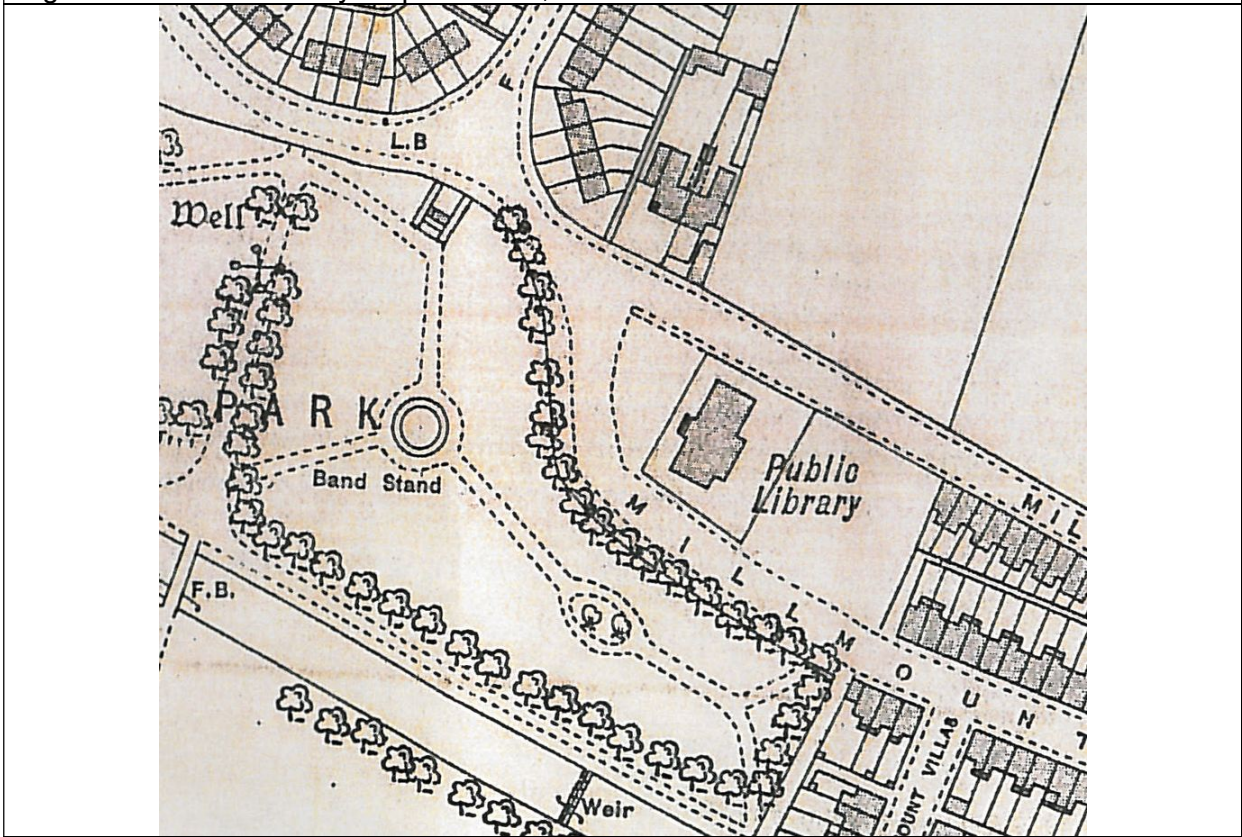


Fig. 17: Ordnance Survey map of Dublin, 1935.

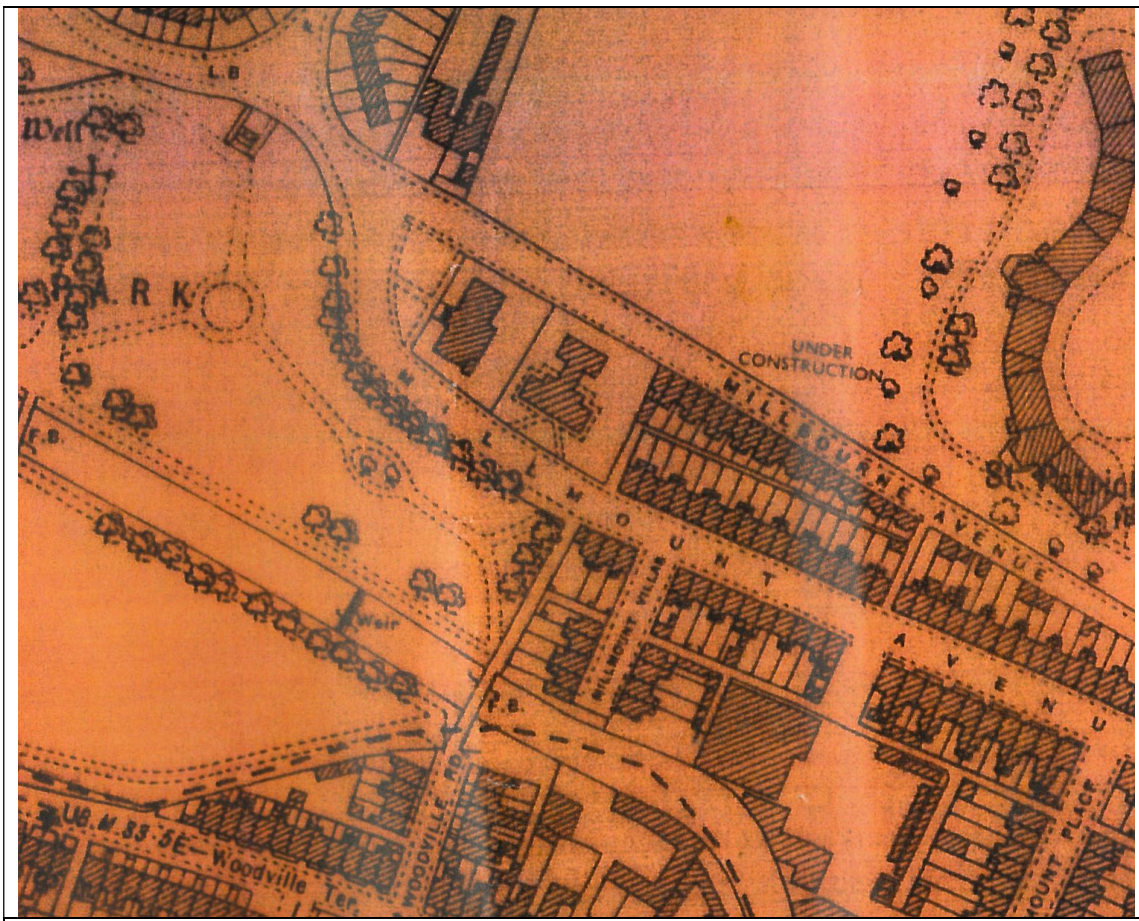



Fig. 18: Ordnance Survey map of Dublin, 1966.

## Appendix 2: NIAH Ministerial Recommendation

### NIAH Assessment for Drumcondra Library, Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9

	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Reg.</b></td> <td>50130157</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Date</b></td> <td>1935-40</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Previous Name</b></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Townland</b></td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>County</b></td> <td>Dublin City</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Coordinates</b></td> <td>315934, 236910</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Categories of Special Interest</b></td> <td>Architectural, Artistic &amp; Social</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Rating</b></td> <td>Regional</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Original Use</b></td> <td>Library</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>In Use As</b></td> <td>Library</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Reg.</b>	50130157	<b>Date</b>	1935-40	<b>Previous Name</b>		<b>Townland</b>	N/A	<b>County</b>	Dublin City	<b>Coordinates</b>	315934, 236910	<b>Categories of Special Interest</b>	Architectural, Artistic & Social	<b>Rating</b>	Regional	<b>Original Use</b>	Library	<b>In Use As</b>	Library
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<p><b>Description:</b> Detached seven-bay single-storey library building, built 1937, having five-bay side elevations and added lean-to block to rear. Pitched and hipped pantile roof with concrete hip and ridge tiles having single red brick corniced chimneystack to east wall with clay pot. Concealed gutters and cast-iron downpipes. Brown brick walls laid in English garden wall bond, with rendered and painted plinth and incised parapet with concrete coping. Square-headed wrap-around window openings with continuous painted cast-concrete chamfered sill and lintel; margined metal-framed windows having central pivot openings. Square-headed stepped Art Deco doorway, set in geometric portal breaking eaves level; stained timber door with glazed panels and brass furniture opening onto concrete platform with five granite steps with access ramp. Set behind grass margins enclosed by wrought-iron fence and gates on concrete plinth</p>																					
<p><b>Appraisal:</b> An Art Deco library attributed to British architect Robert Sorley Lawrie. A prominent public building, it stands adjacent to Griffith Park with a restrained but notably well-proportioned exterior characteristic of the period, with strong horizontal lines balanced by the dominant central portal. As a public service building, the library is representative of the suburban development of the surrounding area in the 1930s and is complemented by other Modernist buildings in the district, including the postal sorting office and Garda station on Griffith Avenue.</p>																					