

Sligo City Centre  
**Stephen Street Cultural Plaza**  
2018



**BDP.**

# Stephen Street and Cultural Plaza

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Located across the river and connected to O'Connell Street by way of a footbridge and a riverside walk, the Stephen Street car park is a town centre facility that has in more recent years been adapted to allow for the holding of larger events such as concerts, festivals, markets and public screenings. It has become, in essence, Sligo's main public space, albeit one that, like O'Connell Street, is transformed back to its original purpose, in this case a public car park, at the conclusion of any event it hosts.

The Sligo and Environs Plan's 'Open Space Strategy' envisages a network of different types of open space, including play areas and parks, all linked by cyclist and pedestrian-friendly green corridors. A specific objective of the Plan is to 'establish Sligo as a premier green city of Ireland.'

'Sligo lacks public open spaces in the heart of the city.' In its Urban Design Strategy, the Council proposed the development of new, pedestrian-linked urban squares within the city centre including one, Stephen Square, 'a new urban square on the existing Stephen Street car park site which would be capable of accommodating a variety of open air activities'.

This proposed new amenity:

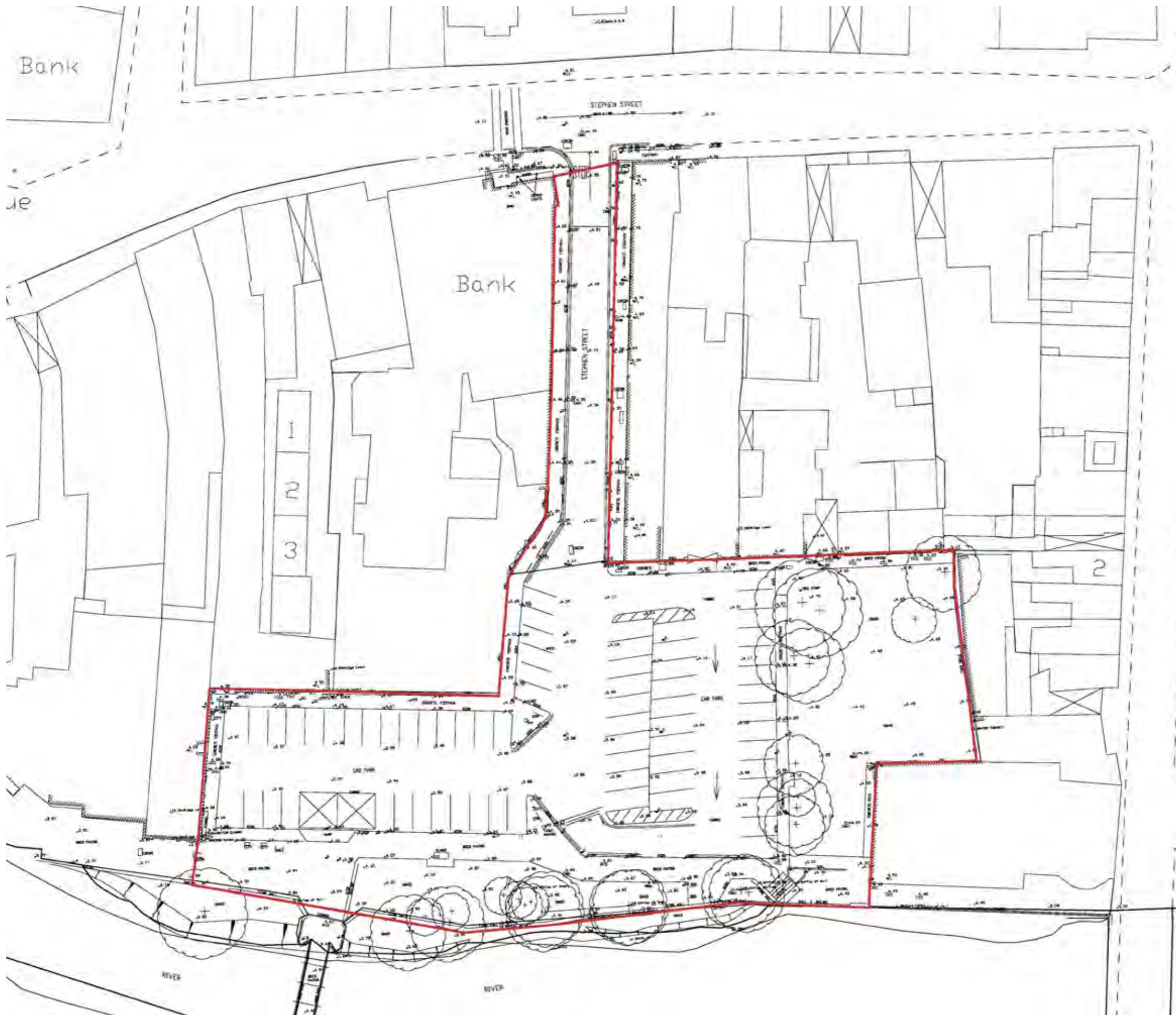
'will address the Garavogue riverside. The size of the square would allow it to accommodate a variety of open-air activities, such as an outdoor market for the sale of arts, crafts, antiques and specialist food items, including locally-produced organic fruit and vegetables on the weekends. This market could also provide an outlet for local artists and organic farmers, building on Sligo's reputation for culture and fine food produce. Stephen Square would also serve as a transition space, with a niche market between the main retail area and the emerging Greenfort cultural precinct located to the north-east, between The Mall and Connaughton Road.'

In addition to being capable of accommodating various activities, the ambition is to retain the existing mature trees and develop a children's play area in the square.

The Stephen Street car park has considerable potential for development as a public space for a range of cultural, recreational, social and other activities, given its city centre location, accessibility, and the scope for development on this site. While much has been achieved along the banks of the river with the earlier development of Rockwood Parade and the footbridge, this is an unfinished project waiting to achieve its full potential.

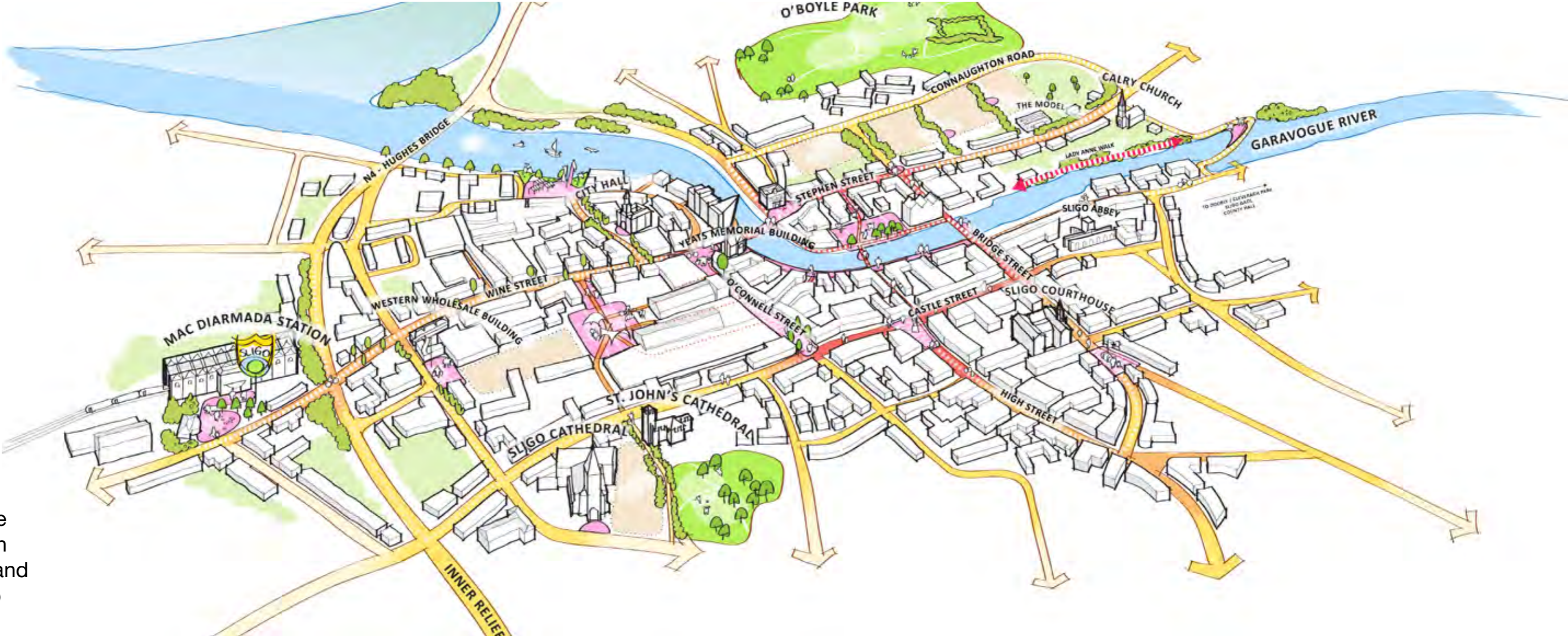
Design considerations:

- Replace Stephen Street car park with a multi-use civic space for the city.
- Incorporate existing design solutions for 'the Shell'.
- Provide a covered space or spaces.
- Provide space for large events – capacity to at least match the existing.
- Enhance existing frontages for bars and cafés.
- Provide integrated play space for children considering nature, form and location.
- Retain, where appropriate, existing trees and introduce other elements of soft landscape at an appropriate scale and link to adjacent river walkways.
- Reduce carriageway width along Markiewicz Road / Lower Knox Street / Stephen Street and improve footpath with consistent paving.
- Retain delivery and service access into car park space.
- Seek a balance between vehicles, parking and pedestrians to suit a 'High Street' environment to Stephen Street.
- Improve the setting of the buildings along Stephen Street leading to the Mall, with a focal space outside the library.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience through changes to levels along the southern side of Stephen Street.
- Introduce an appropriate palette of materials.
- Ensure the scheme is durable and consider maintenance.
- Explore the potential of the back of the Bank of Ireland building and gap site adjacent to the coffee shop as either a site for a new building or an extended space.
- Investigate the inclusion of public art.



Existing site plan

# Continuity with the public realm action plan



The new square within the vision for the streets and spaces of Sligo



- Core streets (red)
  - A defined heart of the city centre
  - A pedestrian focus
  - Minimal car parking with car-free areas
- Key defined spaces (orange)
  - Natural stone paving, potential to contrast to add variety
  - Small unit slab paving / setts relative to proposed use and vehicle overrun



# Existing vegetation



The trees along the riverfront provide a welcome softening and help identify the square along a predominantly built-up riverfront.

The trees within the square are not in good condition and create a separation between the existing grass area and the car park area, dividing the space rather than uniting it.

The grass area is a welcome softening, but it should be better integrated within the square and transformed from what is a back space into a well used pocket park in the city centre.



Red - consider removal of trees and replacement with a group of new specimens

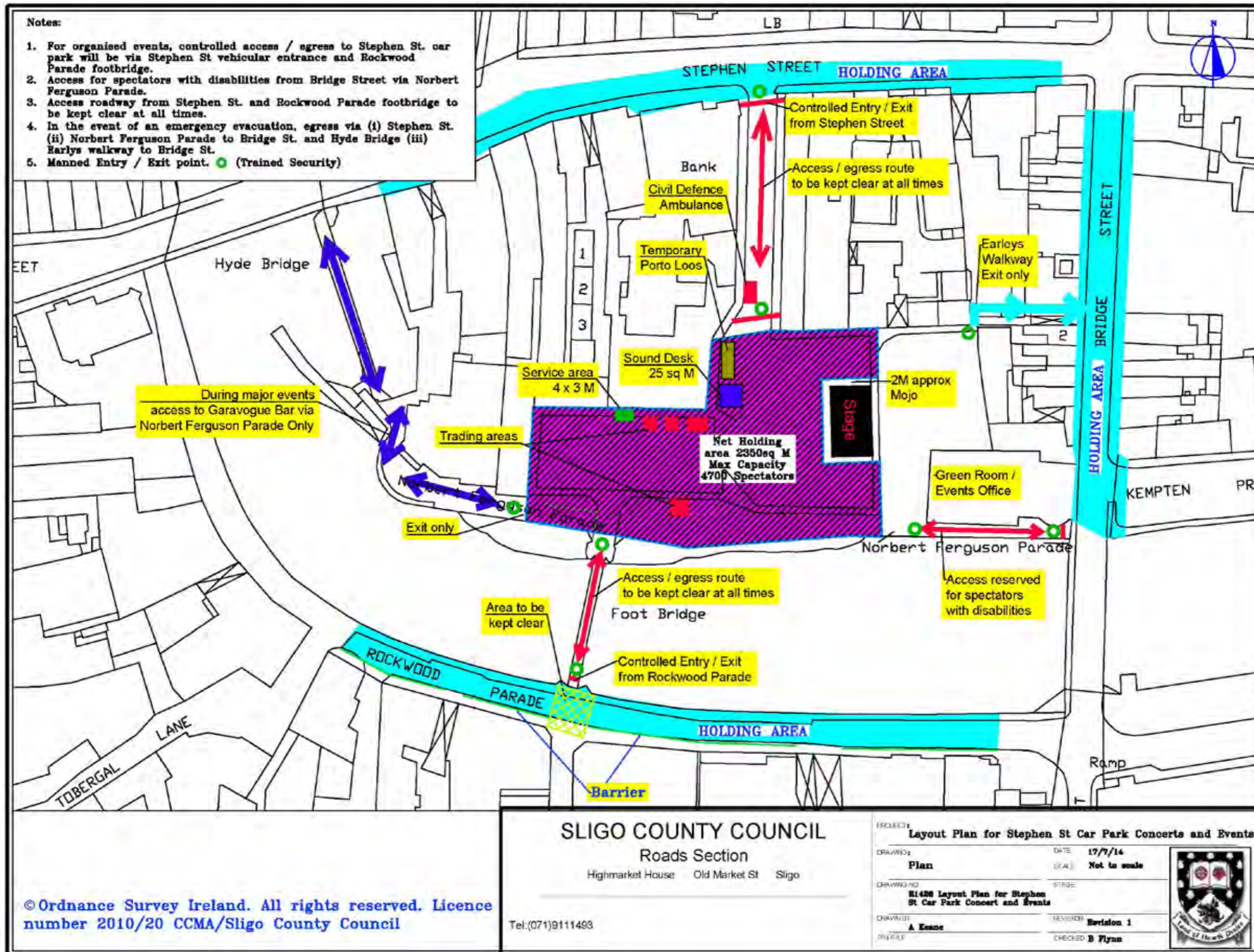
Green - retention of trees



The existing grouping of trees works well along the river front and provides both identity and character.



# Existing use - events & car park

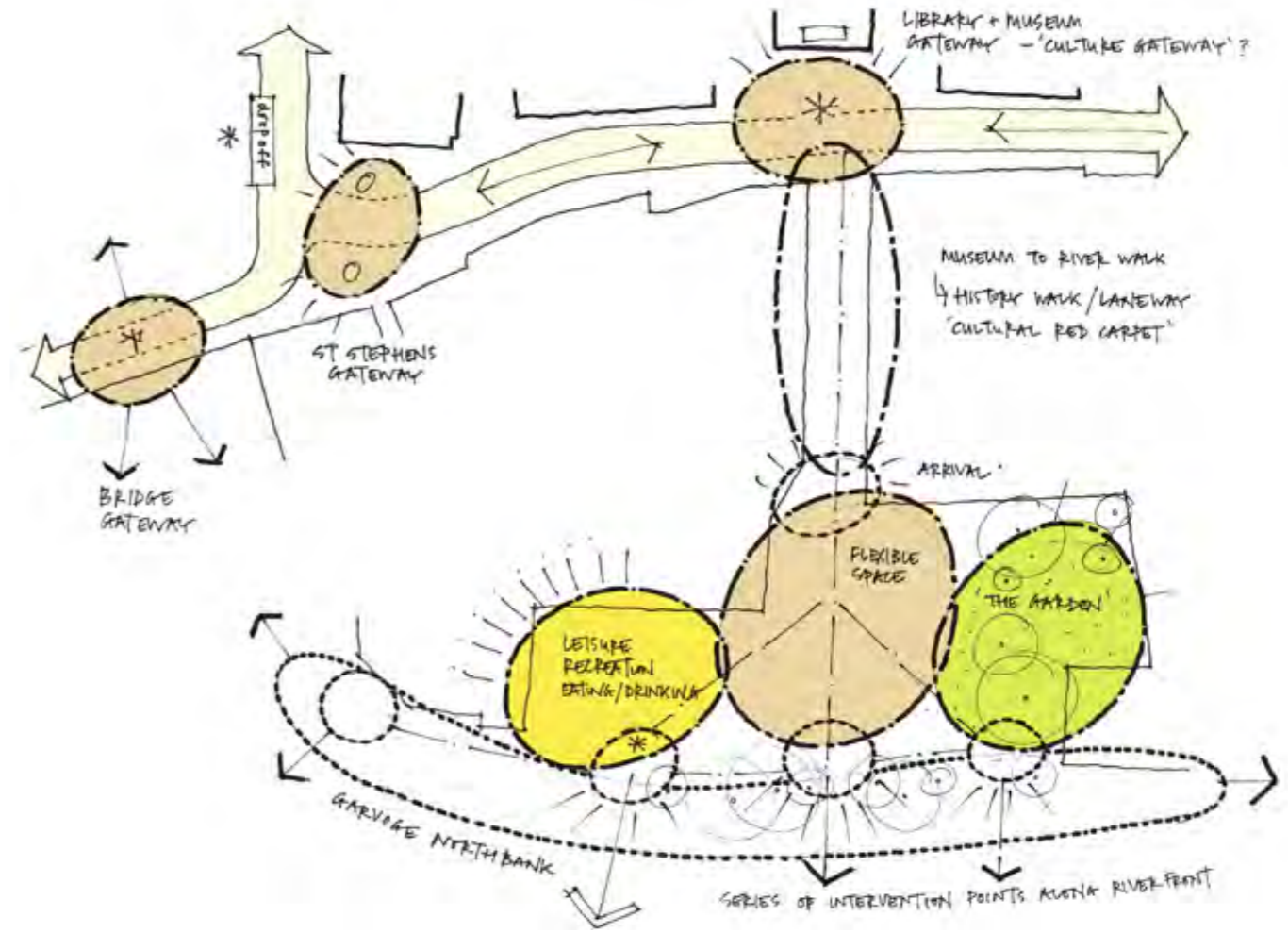
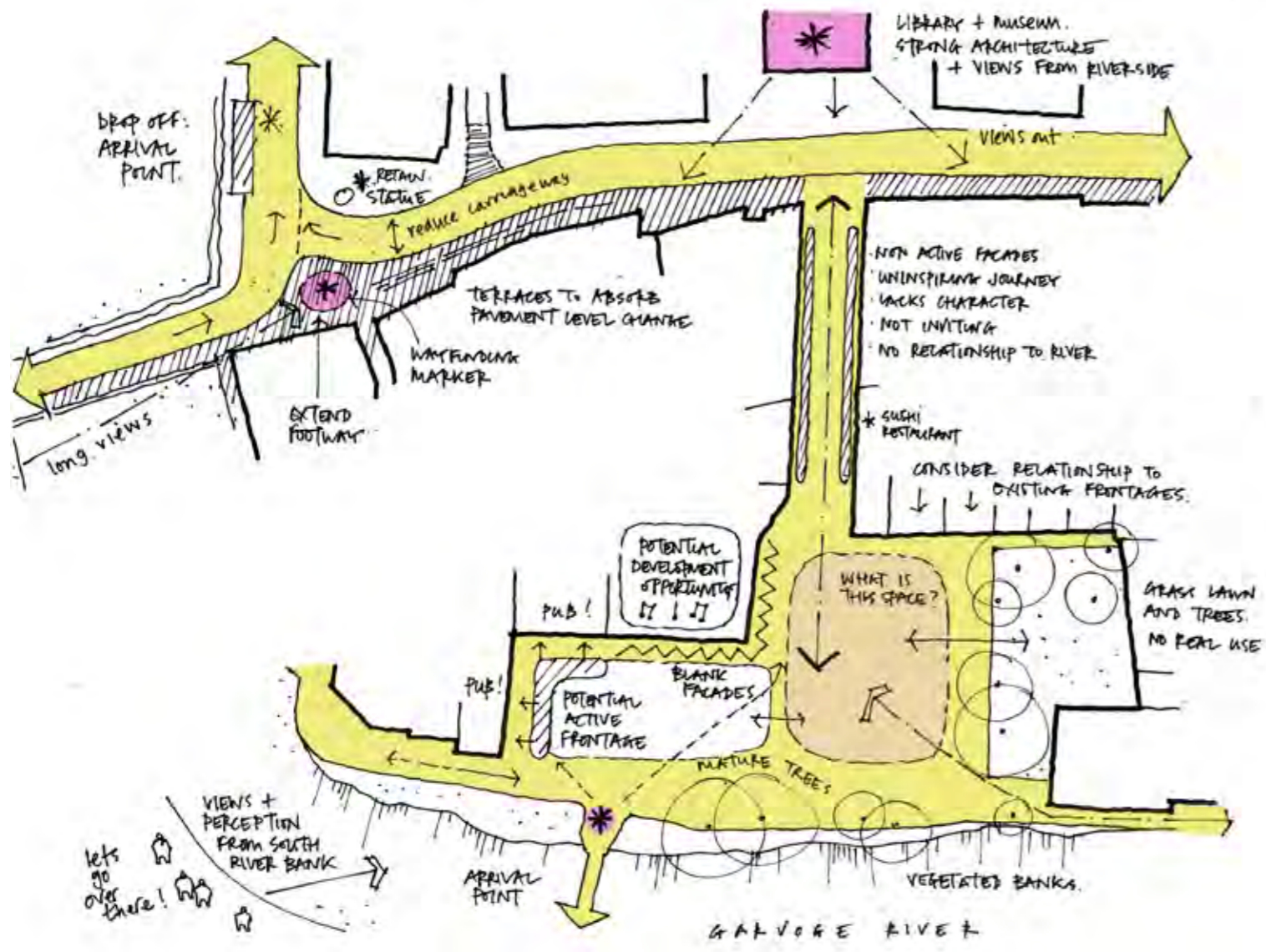


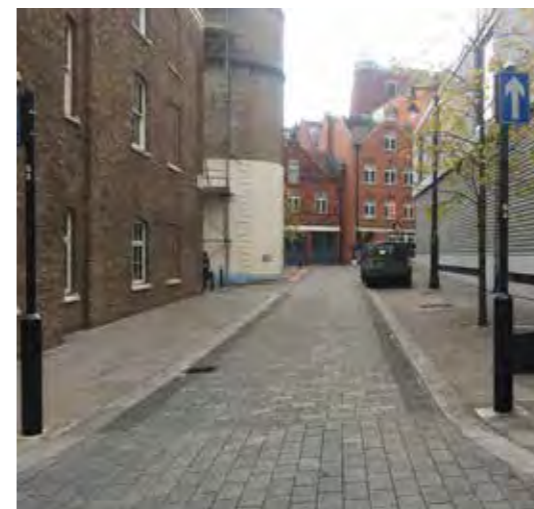
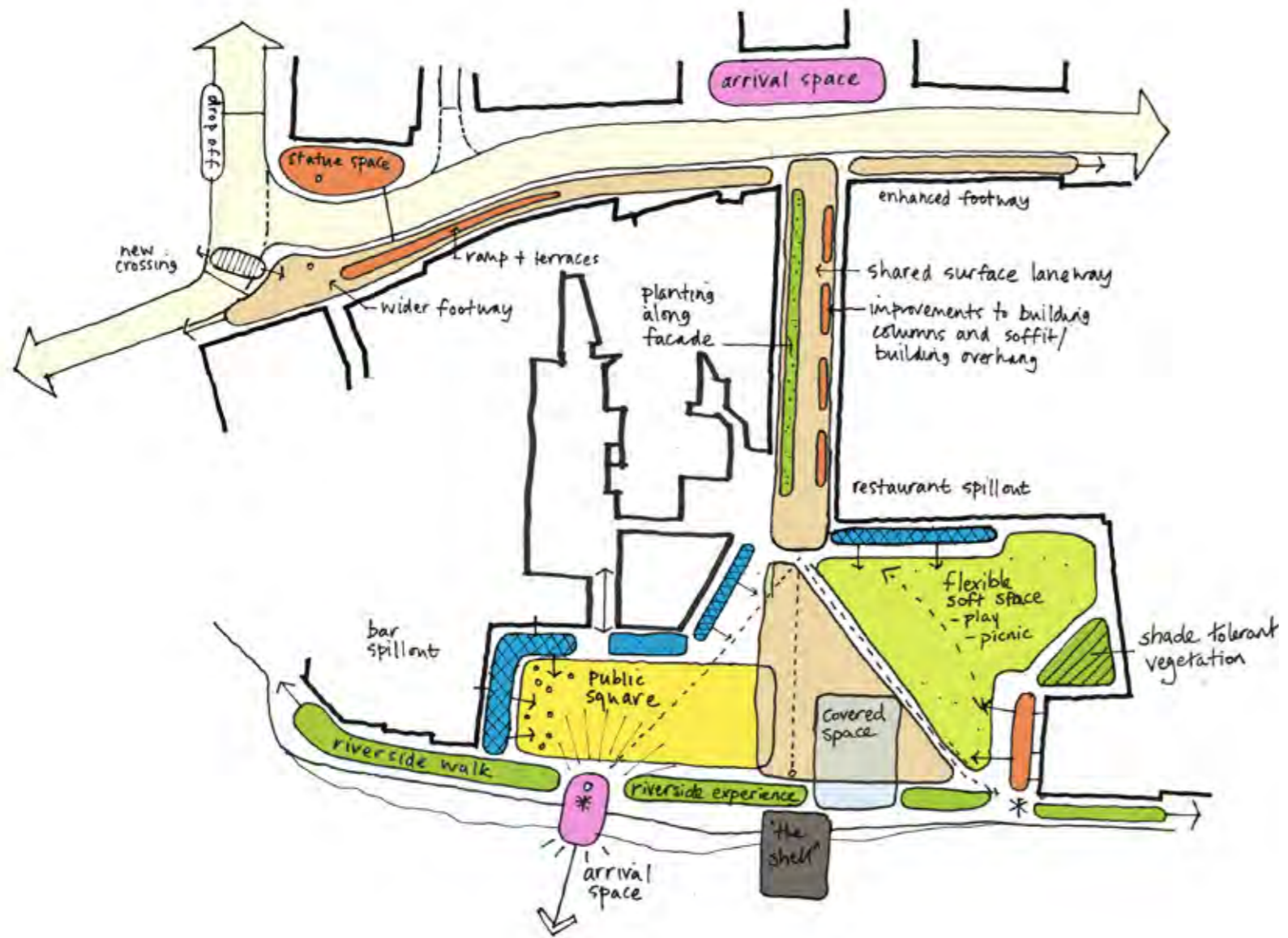
This drawing illustrates the existing strategy for large events. The new square will allow for both existing large events and more regular, smaller events to help animate the square and the city.





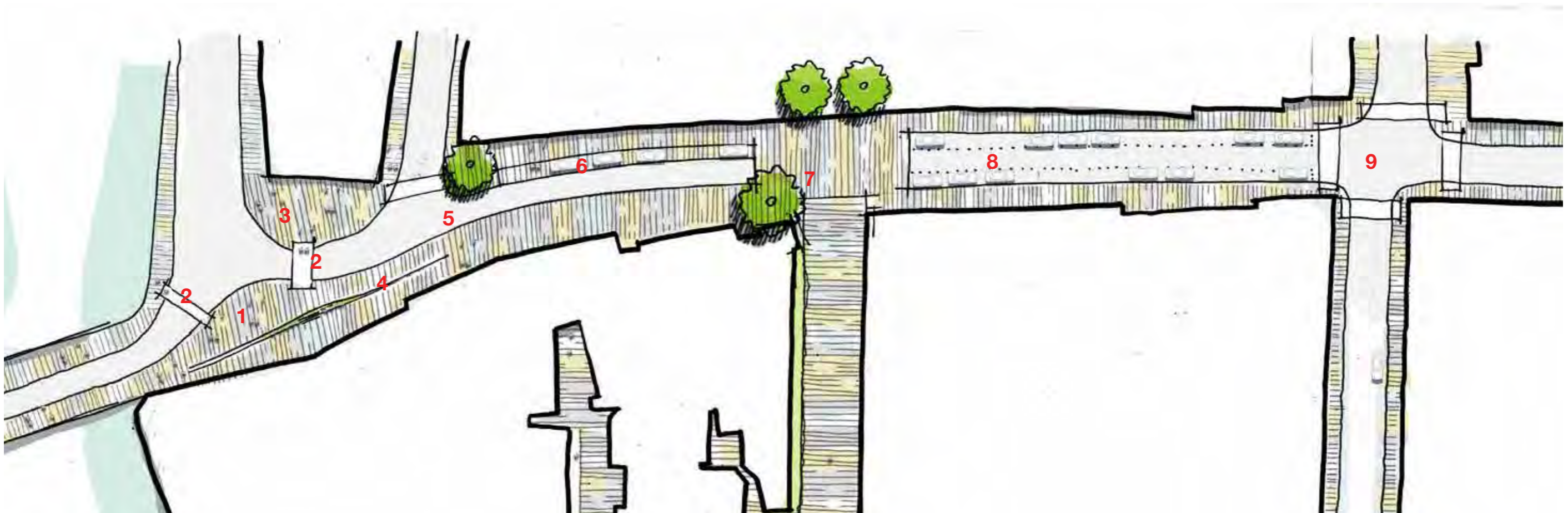
The proposal necessitates the removal of all existing car parking spaces. Within 500m of the Lady Erin statue in Market Cross, there are 2,424 other car parking spaces. This is a sizeable amount of spaces within easy walking distance of the city and compares well with other Irish towns of a similar size. It is therefore considered that the removal of these spaces will not adversely affect the availability of car parking in the city centre.

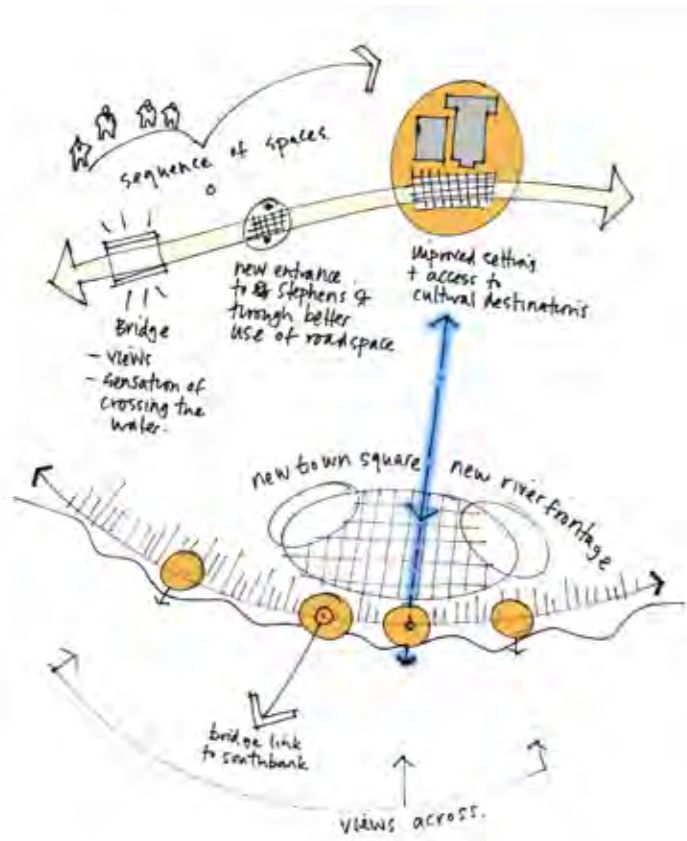




**Key - Future Stephen Street improvements (not proposed with this Part 8 process)**

1. Continuity of pedestrian space and footpath from the bridge.
2. Improved pedestrian crossing points.
3. Enhanced setting of bank building and Yeats sculpture.
4. Removal of parking, replaced with continuous split-level footpath.
5. Reduced carriageway widths.
6. Parking pads, parallel to street, time-limited bays.
7. New paved tabletop highlighting link to the new square and setting of former church building.
8. Retained car parking on both sides of the road, carriageway narrowed where possible.
9. Improved 4-way pedestrian crossing.





# Canopy options

## Design considerations

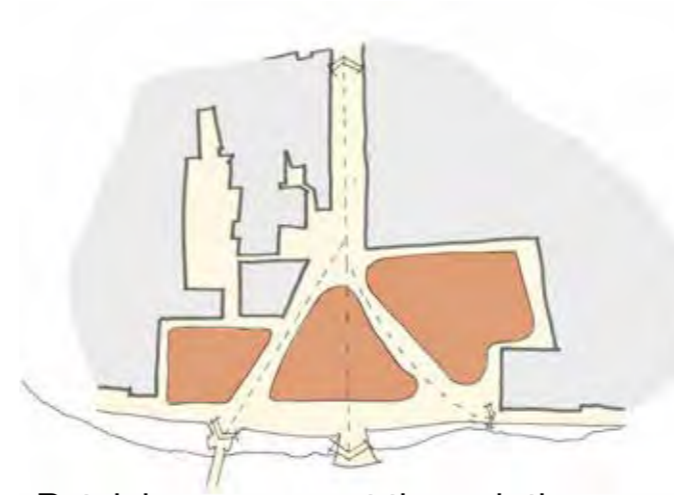
The following were considered as part of the design approach to providing a covered areas within the square:

- The positioning of any covered space must not inhibit the circulation of people and occasional vehicle flow, i.e. delivery vehicles.
- With usable open space lacking in the central areas of Sligo, it is important that this new built structure does not dominate the proposed plaza.
- A balance between covered space and open space to allow for green areas within the square.
- The inclusion of both permanent and temporary cover.
- The size of any potential cover and its suitability for both current and future events.

## Conclusion

- A large cover to cater for existing events which attract thousands of people is not deemed appropriate.
- Currently the square is used either as a car park or for large events. With the exclusion of car parking, a smaller cover would accommodate a new offer of smaller events on a more regular basis. Therefore a permanent structure of approximately 150m<sup>2</sup> is deemed to be the most appropriate.
- The design of the structure should be iconic and the opportunity should be taken to launch a design competition.
- A raised stage area should not be provided. Instead the square should be flat and continue under the canopy.

- The structure of the canopy should accommodate lighting and electrical power supply for events.
- To help promote outdoor seating, additional large, retractable umbrellas should be considered in front of the existing pubs and restaurants.
- These should consist of a vertical structural column, fixed to the ground via a socket to aid removal and maintenance. The umbrella canopies would be folded down when not in use and remain in the square, then opened when required.
- Additional sockets should be included as a continuous line to the east of the initial grouping.



Retaining movement through the square



Determining two suitable positions - one iconic and permanent, the other temporary and retractable



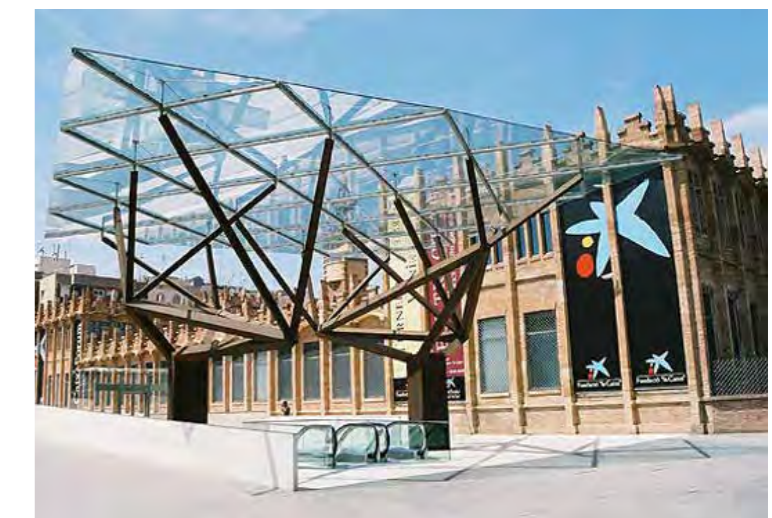
## Precedents



Renens, Switzerland



Avenches, Switzerland



Barcelona, Spain

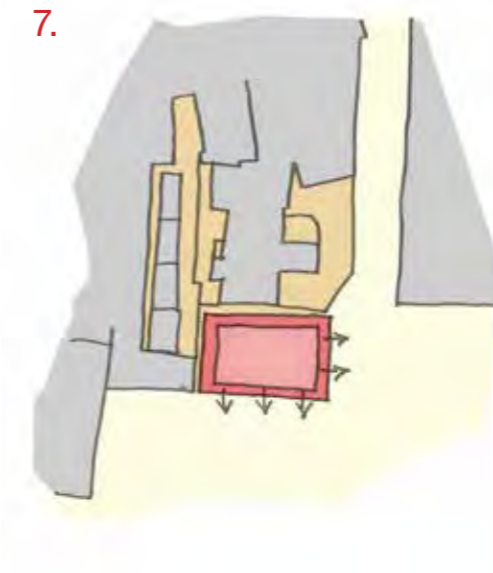
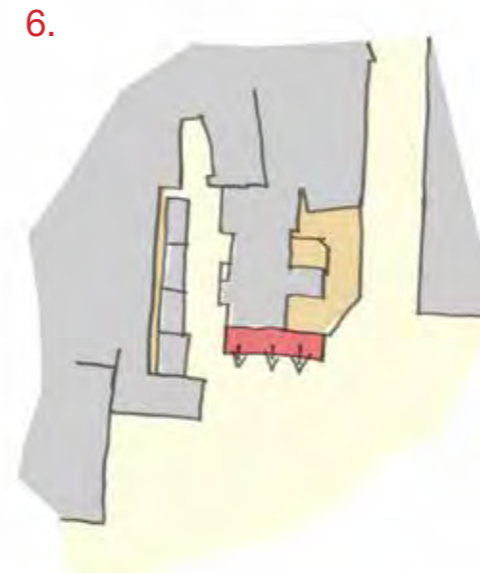
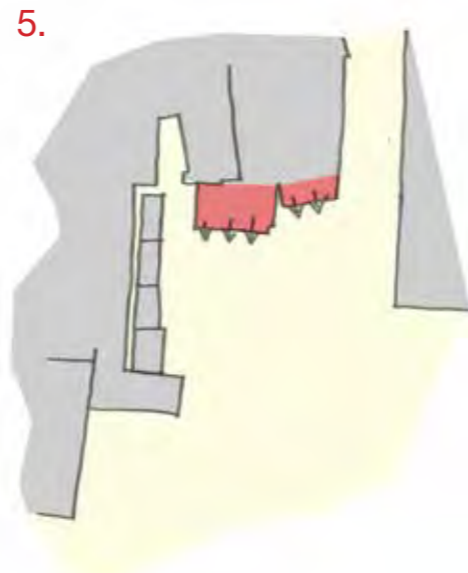
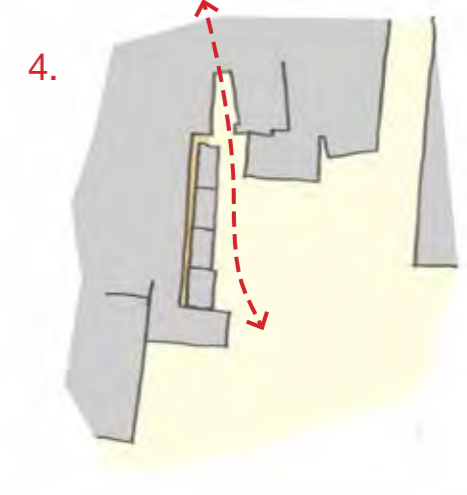
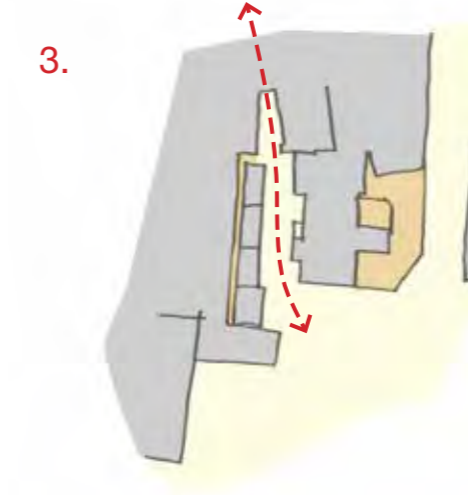
# Additional space / building infill options



The proposed design has been developed with flexibility to allow for future built additions within the square.

Adjacent site layout options which explore the possibilities:

1. Existing layout with retained wall to car park.
2. Open wall to include Bank of Ireland delivery bay area in scheme.
3. Create new link through existing laneway.
4. Remove garage / delivery building to retain the parts of the building with interesting masonry.
5. Use as much space as possible for the plaza with a new facade to the square.
6. Retain much of the existing building, with a new building used for retail.
7. Use as much of the BOI space as possible for a new focal building.
8. A new link to Stephen Street through the laneway, with a building layout that doesn't impose on the public space. Active frontage on all sides that face the plaza.



Artist's impression of the new square and ideal infill and feature building edges, to further animate the space



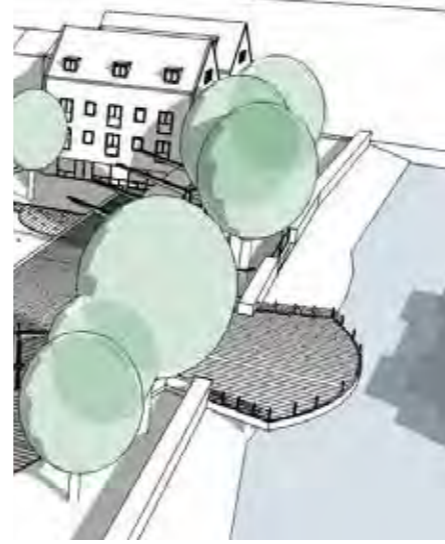
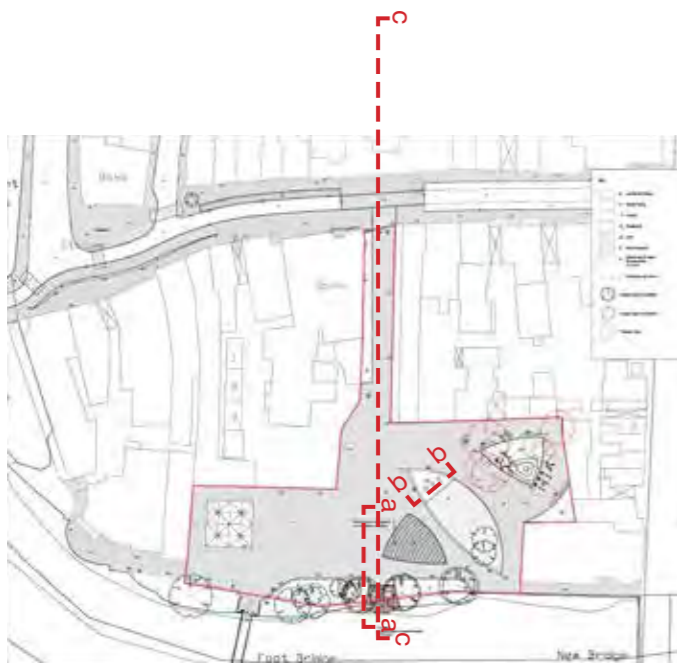




Key

1. Fixed canopy to be subject to architectural competition.
2. Retractable canopy.
3. Granite paving.
4. Retractable bollard.
5. Feature bench.
6. Interpretation and heritage.
7. Play elements.
8. Art feature.
9. Low shrub planting.
10. Lawn.
11. Reinforced grass.
12. Notional area for stage for large events - 10 x 5m.
13. "The Shell" - Cantilevered walkway subject to separate Part 8 process.





The adjacent sketches show the intention for the proposed 'Shell'. The structure is yet to be developed and sits sufficiently above the water level so as not to cause an obstruction to the water flow. That said, rather than having steps and ramps to access the plinth, the intention is to slope the square up towards the plinth at a maximum 1:25 slope.



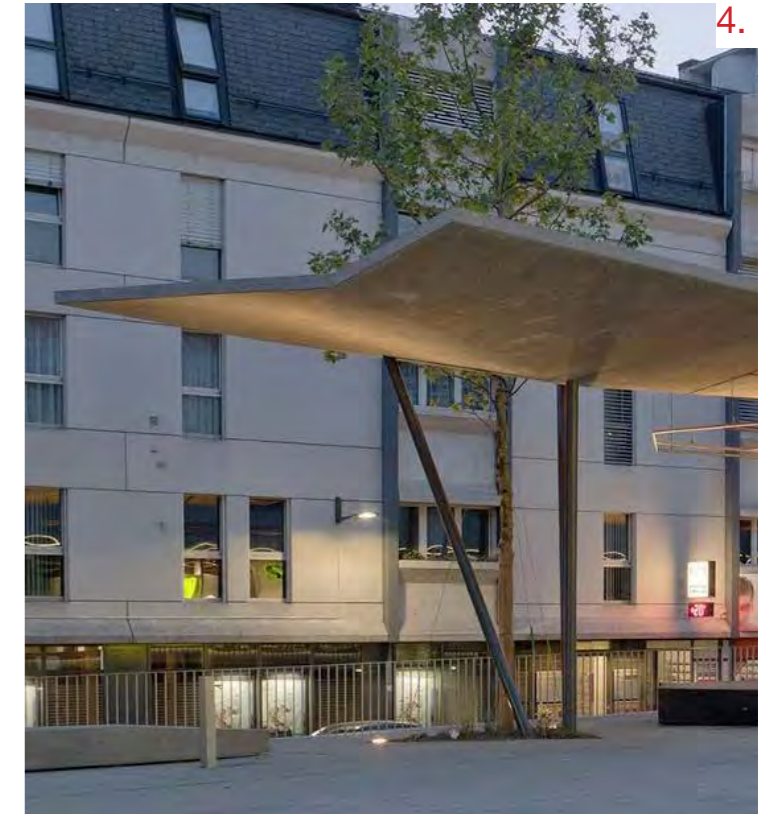


Section b-b:  
 Typical indicative section through  
 raised mound and bench walls.



Section a-a:  
 Typical indicative section elevation showing the relation between the  
 water level, the 'Shell' and the proposed iconic canopy.





Stephen Street Cultural Plaza components:

1. Granite seating.
2. Outdoor café / restaurant seating.
3. Retractable canopies to forecourts.
4. Large multi-use canopy.
5. Granite boulders inset in reinforced lawn.
6. Granite paving.
7. Coherent palette of street furniture.
8. Street lighting.
9. Low shrub planting.



**BDP.**

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BDP  
Blackhall Green  
Dublin D07 V0RF  
Ireland

Contact:  
gareth.maguire@bdp.com  
mehron.kirk@bdp.com