



26. Glimpse view into residential garden off one of the laneways

27. Modern architectural design elements can work well once 'contextually compatible' - treatment of paving and courtyards provides a good example for others to follow in the block

28. Focal building - view along West Gardens

29. Notable buildings on High Street

30. View along New Street - seen by some as the sort of intervention suited to the Courthouse Block



27.



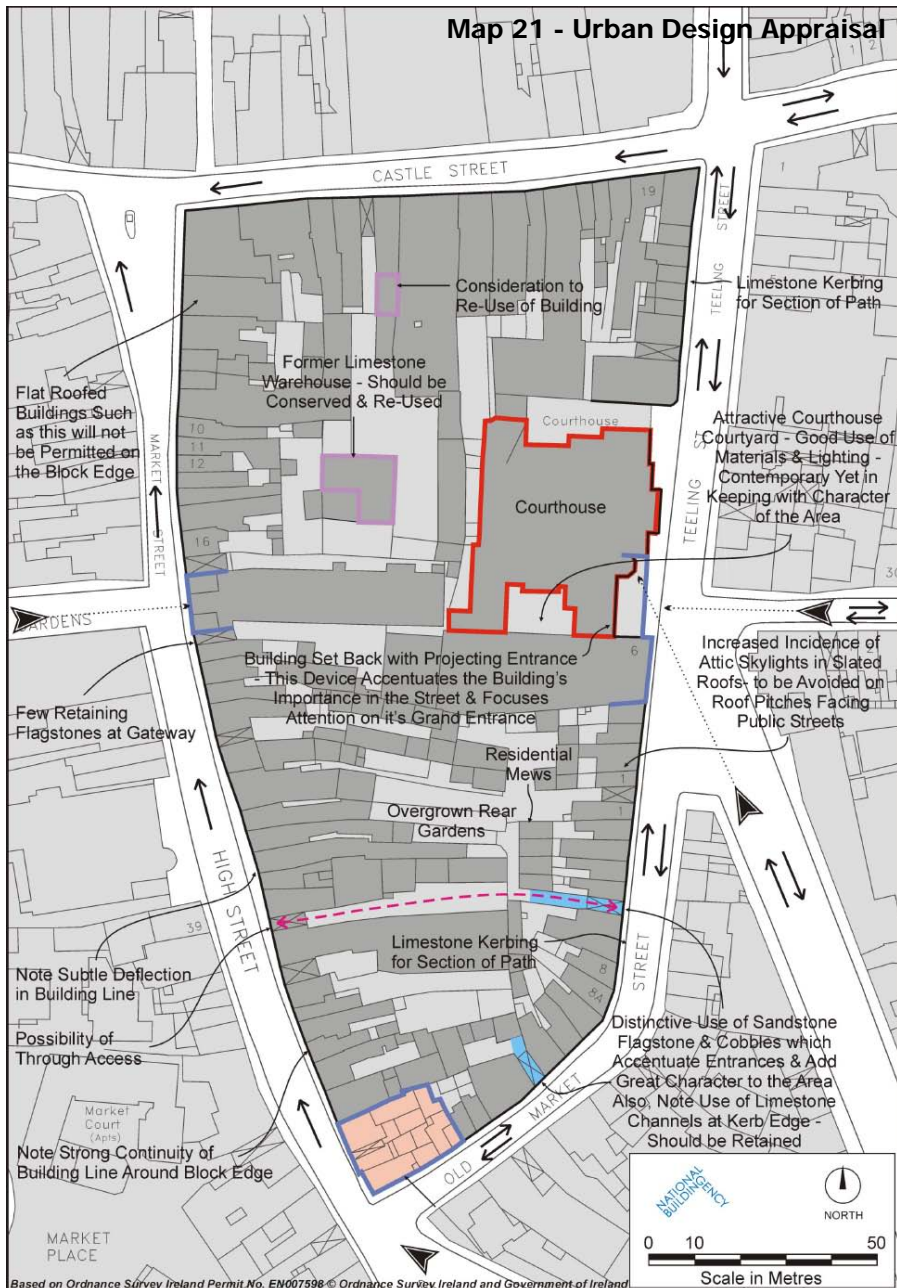
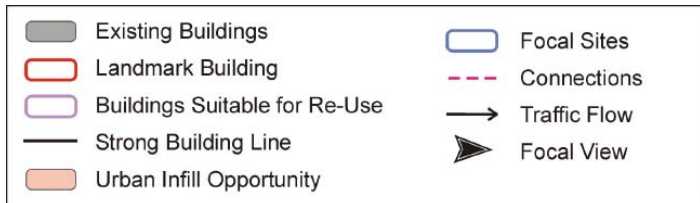
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6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The foregoing sections have highlighted some of the important characteristics and traditional details of the block which applicants should have regard for these features in any new or proposed development for the block (some of which are summarised on Map 26 - Urban Design Appraisal).

The future development framework for the area is focused on a number of core principles:

1. Architectural and Historic Character and the need to retain perimeter buildings.
2. Establishing a policy on Building Height having regard to the importance of Courthouse
3. The need for pedestrian access through the block
4. Vehicular Access and Car Parking
5. Plot Amalgamation
6. Protection of existing residential amenities.

6.1 Architectural and Historic Character and the need to retain perimeter buildings.

The delineation of two Architectural Conservation Areas within the block seeks the protection of the character of the streetscapes in those areas and their historical context. The Market Cross ACA is focused on the Lady Erin Statue at the junction of Market Street with Grattan Street and Castle Street, where the street splays. The area extends about half-way along High Street.

The second ACA is the Courthouse ACA, and it's focus is the Courthouse, though includes the distinctive curved streetscape of Old Market Street and some of the grander buildings along Teeling Street.

These two ACAs seek to protect traditional streetscapes, including the historical prominence of the Courthouse in the wider townscape. In some areas they include buildings and structures which individually may not merit specific protection on the RPS, though collectively they either enhance the overall setting of a protected structure or provide a sense of harmony to the street. Each of the ACAs include a very significant amount of buildings that were identified on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (refer to Map 18).

The overriding objective should be to retain the continuous building line around the perimeter of the block. Demolition of structures contained on the Record of Protected Structures should be strenuously resisted. Within the defined ACAs, the exterior of structures identified on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) should be maintained. Any new vehicular access points to the block should focus on former/traditional means of access or should be restricted to buildings that were not rated on the NIAH Survey. One exception to this may be required along High Street only so that an alternative option for vehicular ingress/egress to the block is possible (refer to Vehicular Access and Car Parking below). Any new pedestrian access will be assessed on its merits though there will be a presumption against alterations to the façade of a structure on the RPS.

In relation to the design of new buildings in the block, it should be borne in mind that however fine a new building is, there must be proper concern for its effect on its surroundings. Good architecture is not just about good design, it is a matter of harmony with its surroundings.

6.2 Establishing a policy on Building Height having regard to the importance of the Courthouse

The Courthouse, is the only building in the block to be identified on the NIAH as a structure of National importance. It is just one of a relatively small number of buildings in Sligo that have National status. Its architecture is a fine example of the Gothic-revival and it rises to three storeys over a half raised basement. It was constructed between 1875-1840 and has a three bay gabled, turreted and arcaded breakfront with a three storey, octagonal tower to the side. By the time this building was completed, Pearse Road had been developed as a major radial route into the town on an axis with the Courthouse (Pearse Road did not exist on the 1837 O.S.I Map, but is shown on the 1887 O.S.I Map). This does not appear to have occurred by chance, but appears to have been deliberate and planned. In this way, the Courthouse is not just an important landmark for the City, but it also is an important focal point on entering Sligo from the Pearse Road.

The Courthouse, like City Hall, is an important feature of the wider townscape and is symbolic of Sligo's identity. It represents a fine legacy that has, to date, been safeguarded by generations of building activity in Sligo. Its civic importance cannot be overestimated. It represents a certain iconography – it is an architectural icon in the multitude of building masses and fabric that represent Sligo town. In order to safeguard the architectural integrity of this fine building and, just as importantly, its context, it is important that only structures of modest scale and design are situated within its immediate vicinity. This is best achieved, by maintaining the existing character of the streetscape, but it also implies that new building design in the backlands must maintain certain height limitations, as outlined below.

6.2.1 Building Height

In relation to building height, there are a number of important considerations:

1. **Character - The need to continue the characteristic pattern of building heights on the perimeter of the block.**
In keeping with the principles and policies of an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) all perimeter buildings should be retained (particularly those identified on the NIAH survey) and this implies that all existing building heights should



31. 32. 33.

31, 32 & 33.. Clean and consistent approaches to paving help unify different developments in the one area - the example of Temple Bar, Dublin

34 & 35. Pedestrian access from street to square (Temple Bar)

36, 37 & 38. Consistent movement of pedestrians along desire lines is facilitated and works exceptionally well in these examples

39. Current vehicular and pedestrian access to Gurries Yard



34. 35.



36. 37. 38.



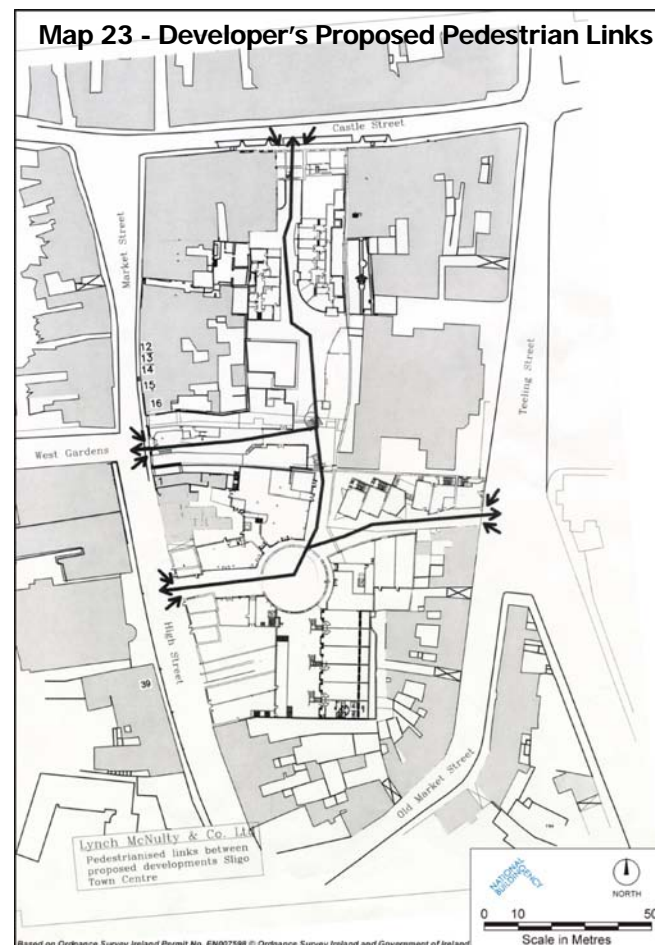
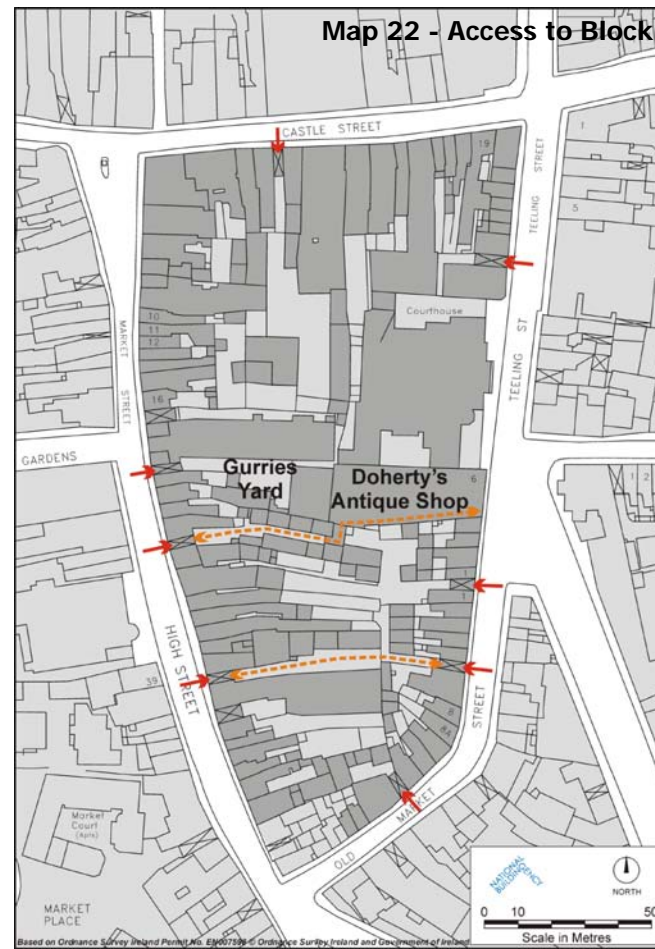
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Maximum building height level within block

No building to exceed this level within 50 metres of tower



be maintained. Most of the buildings along the edge of the block are three storeys in height – and there are a smaller number of buildings which are two storeys. Even where a substantial portion of the streetscape is comprised of three storey buildings, there is a considerable amount of variation among building heights within a limited range. This gives rise to the characteristic and distinctive rhythm in the streetscape, achieved by the constant stepping up and down of building heights. Any new infill development along the perimeter of the block should respect this distinctive characteristic - and not assume that it is appropriate to tie into the height of the nearest (or highest) neighbouring property as this will only be acceptable along Castle Street where significant uniformity already exists.

- 2. Minimising Impacts** - Significant increases in building heights can be achieved within the block so long as the buildings' tops are not visible or have a minimal visual impact when viewed from streets in the immediate vicinity. These streets include West Gardens, Grattan Street, Thomas Street, Abbey Street, Chapel Street, Burton Street, Connolly Street and Pearse Road. For the purposes of clarification, 'minimal visual impact' would be at or below one additional storey in height when viewed from these streets and should not generally exceed this (i.e., below 3-4 metres above existing ridge lines).
- 3. Shadow, Overlooking and Residential Amenity** - The degree of shadow and overlooking that is likely to be created from increased building height is also a factor to be considered. Open spaces, such as balconies, courtyards, new streets and civic spaces that are cast in shadow for a significant portion of the day are less likely to be used to full capacity. Another important consideration is the impact that new buildings might have in reducing the residential amenity of existing residents in the area. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that these factors have been considered.

At present there is hardly any residential development within the block (the sole area includes a few residential mews/cottages accessed by a gateway off Old Market Street. A tall wall some 16 feet or so in height lies just a few metres in front of these cottages and currently casts a shadow and blocks out natural light). But residential activity does take place in the perimeter buildings, especially along Old Market Street and Teeling Street, there are isolated residential units on Market Street and High Street, including upper residential floors.

Of particular concern would be the loss of residential amenity to these residents through excessive scale, overlooking and shadow. This implies that any increase in building height should also be balanced with some form of set-back from existing established residences. A set-back of 15 metres is required from opposing bedroom windows.

- 4. Skyline Considerations** – Respecting the context of the Courthouse as an architectural gem, a signature building, a recognized landmark and an icon of beauty. The Courthouse is not just the most important building within the block, but its importance has to be set within the wider context of Sligo town centre. There are just a handful of buildings in Sligo that punctuate the skyline to any dramatic degree and thus stand out for their surroundings. These buildings would include the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Temple Street), the Church of St. Mary the Virgin and St. John the Baptist (John Street) the spire of St. Mary's Church (on the Mall), the Town Hall and of course the Courthouse. There are a number of other public buildings that punctuate the skyline to a lesser degree (and depending on the viewpoint, such as St. Columba's). Each of these are important public buildings of their time. The fine stone work and intricate sandstone detailing of the Courthouse are much admired and reflects a fusion of aesthetics and craftsmanship that was typical of fine buildings of the time.

Any new development within the block must respect this unique context. Proposed architectural designs should not try and compete for attention with it. In order to protect the contribution that the Courthouse makes to the skyline of Sligo, it is proposed to introduce a building height limit in its immediate vicinity. Within 50 metres of the belfry tower no building part should exceed the moulded sandstone base from which the slated part of the spire springs (the architrave-cornice/intermediate parapet (refer to Photo 40). This height has been established at approximately 25 metres Ordnance Datum. Any structure within 50 metres of the Courthouse tower should remain below 25 metres O.D. in height. This includes all roof top mechanical rooms, etc.

The maximum height of any structure within the block should be maintained below the top of this moulded base (the springing point of the spire). This height is approximately 28 metres.

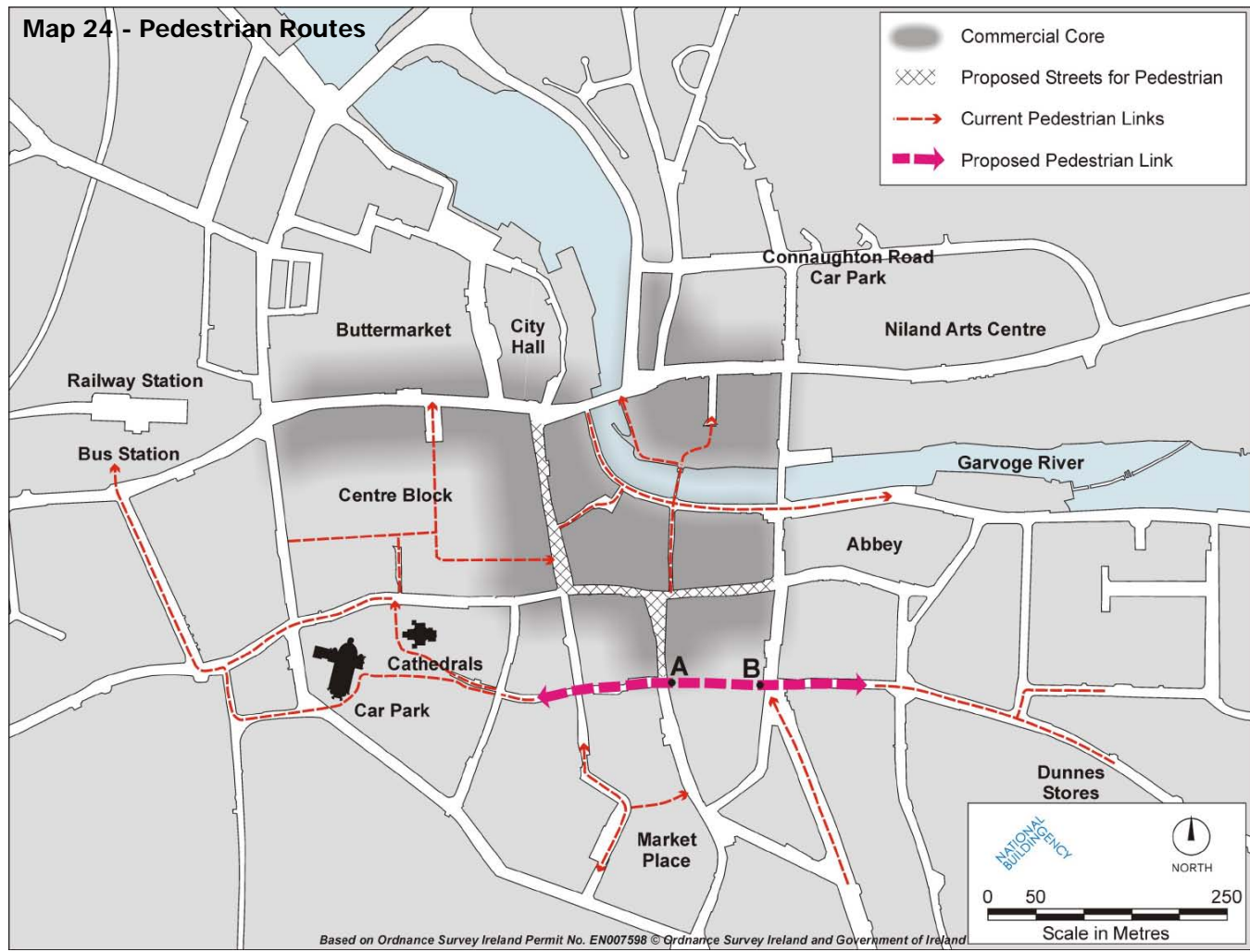
New development proposals should respect these height caps though it would be inappropriate for all new developments to be constructed to the maximum allowed. Variation in heights throughout individual development schemes will be expected.

6.3 Pedestrian Access

According to some local residents, the block is comprised of a number of public rights of way, via the numerous 'town gates' – those gateways that provide access to backlands and the rear of plots. Local people used to use these gates to cross the block (i.e., from Old Market Street to High Street; Teeling Street to High Street) to access the Cathedral or as a short cut to other shopping streets. Two known routes that existed at one time are shown on Map 22.

The current and recent planning applications for the area propose a new network of pedestrian malls or pedestrian ways through the block. These proposed routes are shown on Map 23. These routes include one east-west link through the block, linking Teeling Street with High Street, with spurs north and south. This first route is designed so that it may link into a second north-south route that would provide access from the centre of the block to Castle Street. However, for this new pedestrian system to operate it relies on the success of each of the three schemes, with amendments.

The route from Castle Street is designed to be independent of the others should the neighbouring planning applications be refused.



The north-south route would then pass westwards through two retail units that lead to Market Street/High Street. The success of the pedestrian scheme, therefore depends very much on the success of the two retail units and/or the ability to link with the adjoining proposed routes in the southern portion of the block.

The proposed routes open up the centre of the block for rejuvenation and renewal and this is to be commended. However, one potential concern is that given the rather low levels of footfall on the adjoining streets – particularly Old Market Street and High Street – can the block’s footfall levels sustain the commercial viability and success of those retail units on the edge of the block and within the centre of the block.

For the block to function to its optimum level, the proposed pedestrian ways need to be properly designed and strategically located along principle ‘desire lines’. The majority of pedestrians will always take the shortest route from A to B and these routes are referred to as ‘desire lines’. Given the fact that the block is longer than it is wide, the most important pedestrian route will be the east-west connection. The most natural and obvious location for this route is through the centre of the block and as close as possible to the adjoining streets, namely Chapel Street (to the east) and West Gardens (to the west).

There are currently two traditional or former ‘gateways’ in the vicinity of this route – one entering into Gurries Yard off High Street and the other through Louis Doherty’s Antique premises. It is imperative that if the pedestrian route is to be successful, then this route needs to be implemented. A shift of the east-west route southwards (as proposed in PD 141/03 is a poor second choice as it does not conform with any natural desire line when considered in the wider context of likely desire lines (refer to Map 24).

In addition to the critical path of the pedestrian route, it is important that the route is carefully designed to include windows and entrances along the ground floor level in particular and other openings (such as balconies) on the upper floors so as to provide natural surveillance of these new pedestrian passages. In order to enliven the area, uses that contribute to both the day time and evening economy should be encouraged (i.e. retail and office uses for day time activity; and internet cafes and restaurants for the evening economy). However, in order to protect existing and future residential amenity, there should be a restriction on bars, pubs and night clubs within the block.

The Sligo IAP (1998) sought as an objective, independent access to the upper floors of properties on Castle Street from within the block (refer to Sketch 1). Own door access is not an issue on Old Market Street, where residential buildings, individual homes and buildings converted into apartments, have own door access from the street. It is an issue on the more commercial streets such as Castle Street, Market Street and High Street. New development proposals within the centre of the block should ensure that certain reasonable provisions are made to link into other developments from within the block so that the independent access to the upper floors is possible. This will not be feasible in each and every case, but applicants will be expected to demonstrate that this matter has been given adequate consideration (either through consultation with adjoining landowners) or through provisions in the design and layout of each scheme.

In possible cases where dead-end pedestrian passages are provided, applicants will be expected to provide some form of security, such as railings and gates operated by electronic swipe cards, which can be closed in the evenings or at end of business. In such cases, it might be appropriate to consider solely residential use in these areas with the use of that space for those residents living there.

In light of statements of anti-social behaviour associated with some to the small residential mews to the rear of Old Market Street, any initiative that could increase passing surveillance through pedestrian activity should be encouraged. Any pedestrian access however, should not simply allow for unrestricted access by pedestrians through the block at this point, but should cater as an alternative access to future residents within the block (this implies some form of electronic swipe card mechanism).

The quality of the pedestrian way will very much depend on the strategic location (i.e., along the desire lines), the generation of uses and activities along the routes, natural surveillance (windows, balconies, etc.), public lighting, quality of materials and detailing. For this reason a unified approach to the design, lighting and materials should be considered.

6.4 Car Parking

One of the dominant features to emerge in the modern structure and operating systems of urban blocks is the role car parking plays in the transformation of the block structure. In many Irish towns, and as clearly evident in Sligo, roads and car parking occupy a significant proportion of urban land, but not only has this infrastructure become an essential part of the new urban fabric, but it has been the principal agent of urban change. In the redevelopment of most blocks, car parking is been one of the most significant uses in terms of its spatial impact or land take.

In relation to the courthouse block, the issue of car parking becomes critical to the organization of the block in its redeveloped state. There are a number of options that could be considered:

1. Restrict or ban all cars from within the block
This implies either significantly scaling down any future development, with minor car parking provisions within the block or providing adequate car parking elsewhere (i.e., the Abbey Street Block, Market Yard or between Burton Street and Pearse Road). Under this option it is likely that cars accessing the block would be restricted to using existing ‘gate passages’.
2. Permitting plot amalgamation to accommodate future car parking.
This implies that car parking will either be surface parking, underground or multistory.

Each of these options will obviously have repercussions on the development potential of the site. By permitting plot amalgamation, this would pave the way for more comprehensive redevelopment options. By restricting cars within the block, the area is likely to remain less attractive for the modern car dependant resident – as generally people like to know that their car is in a safe and secure place and have ease of access to it for their required trips.



41. Existing vehicular access off Castle Street



42. The importance of active frontages along pedestrian streets. Note also outdoor seating and canopies can enliven the street

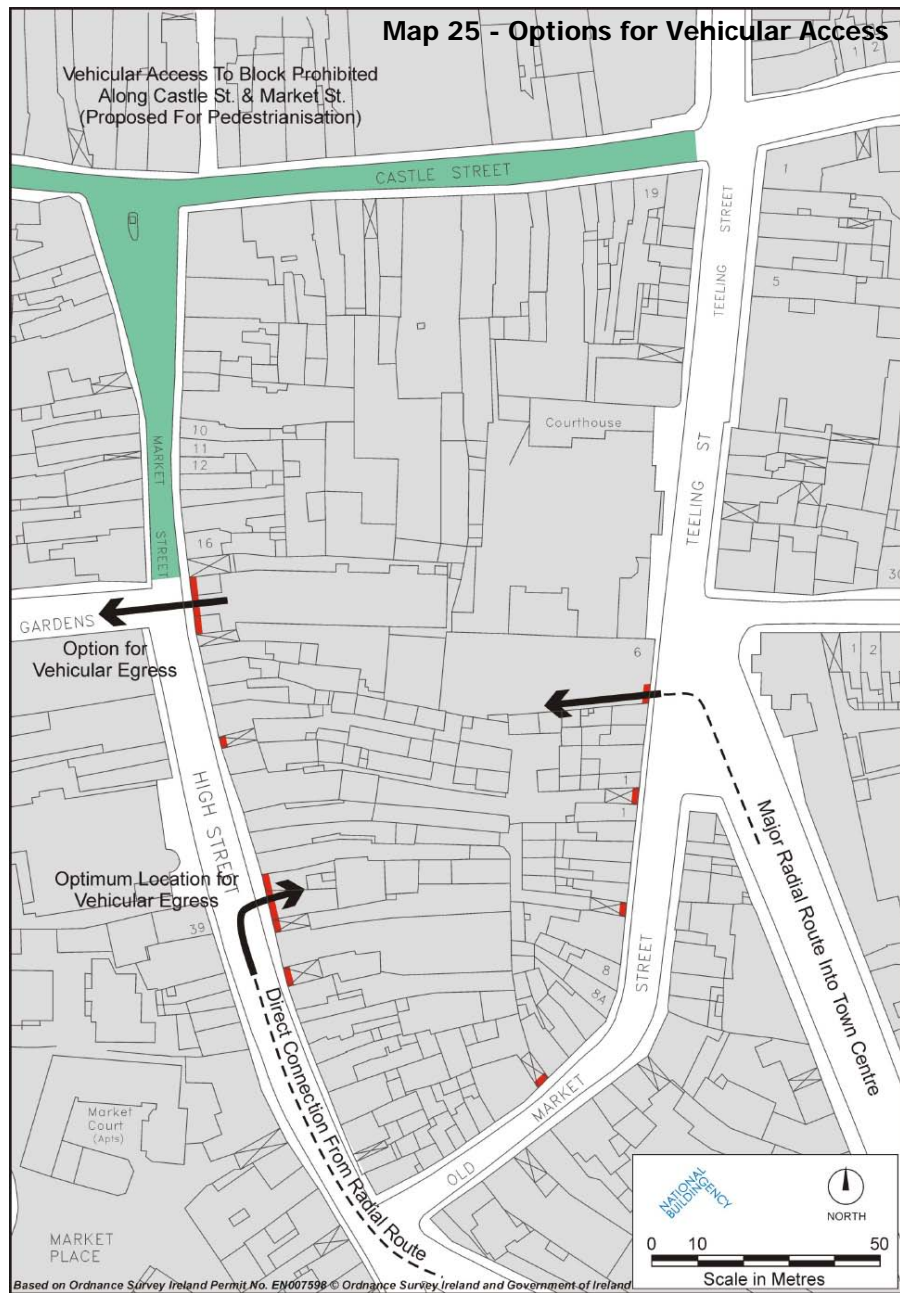


43. The importance of active frontages along pedestrian streets. Note also outdoor seating and canopies can enliven the street



44. The importance of active frontages along pedestrian streets. Note also outdoor seating and canopies can enliven the street

41. Existing vehicular access off Castle Street
42, 43 & 44. The importance of active frontages along pedestrian streets. Note also outdoor seating and canopies can enliven the street



— Options for Vehicular Access
→ Principal Options for Significant Vehicular Ingress or Egress to Shared Car Parking within the Block

It is of course possible that the two options could co-exist side by side, for example permitting multi-storey or underground car parking at the lower (northern) end of the site (where two significantly sized sites already exist, namely the former Savoy Cinema and the rear yard to McCoskers) and reserving the higher (southern) end of the site for more careful development intervention that respects the distinctive character of that area, with its tighter plot pattern and stronger residential pattern (including mews).

The provision of off-street car parking in the form of a multi-storey development elsewhere (i.e., in a neighbouring block) is not likely to be a satisfactory solution to the future patrons of the development, particularly tenants and residents, though would be appropriate for any element of a shortfall. Also, proposals for multi-storey car parking in nearby blocks, notably the Abbey Street block, has been fraught with opposition in the past. It would be difficult to permit a development proposal in the Courthouse Block and defer any decision on the location of its parking, unless specific options and proposals were and could be realistically pursued.

Two of the proposed developments that were outlined in planning applications proposed their own separate underground car parks (refer to PD141/03 and PD 04/09 – See Map 12) – one on the southern end of the block and the other in the northern end of the block. Each of these proposed their own separate points of ingress and egress. Any such openings will have an impact on the streetscape and will erode some of its character. In order to minimise the likely potential impact it would be highly desirable to have one point of ingress and one point of egress shared by both schemes. A difference in levels has been cited as an obstacle to achieving this objective, however, despite significant differences in levels, this is technically possible, without a significant loss in spaces due to access ramps (this could be overcome through a number of means, including the provision of an underground car park surface, on the southern end of the block, the entirety of which is gradually sloped to meet with the lower level car park at the northern end of the block which could be provided perfectly level). There are practical difficulties though, which include:

- The timing and phasing of development i.e., there is an interdependence between two separate developments, so that if one scheme is approved and the other is not, then the approved development will be dependant on another scheme that it has no control over.
- There are landownership issues – at the time of this report, agreements have been entered between landowners and at least one developer. Offers on land purchases are, at least in some cases, subject to planning approval, the binding nature of these are unknown. In the world of property development, this is a tenuous relationship, subject to personal whims which could change.
- Thirdly, there is the issue of the future management and operation of a shared car park.

It is possible that the first two difficulties could be overcome through the Council's use of compulsory acquisition, however the process, timing and cost are issues which are unlikely to be overcome within the period that the tax incentives can be availed. Despite management difficulties in the future operation and maintenance of a shared underground car park, this is not a substantive issue and it could be overcome more readily.

In keeping with the IAP, significant surface car parking within the block will be prohibited, as it would erode the character of the area, with no significant or long term net benefit to the area. Where small redevelopment schemes are proposed, limited surface car parking will be open for consideration. Such spaces will be limited to approximately 5-6 cars in small courtyard type developments that may be accessed from existing traditional gates, subject to ensuring that the design of courtyards also provide for some area of amenity, such as outdoor seating, landscaping or similar amenity provision.

The Council will also encourage the provision of a shared underground car parking facility, with one means of access and one means of egress. However, in light of the difficulties, highlighted above, it will not mandate this and proposals for more than one means of ingress and egress will be considered on their merits, subject to the following criteria:

- Vehicular access shall not be permitted through any Record of Protected Structure (RPS) unless there is or has been an entrance or traditional gateway there in the past.
- No new vehicular ingress or egress shall be permitted along the length of Castle Street or Market Street.
- In the event of a shared underground car parking facility being viable, access to such a facility will only be considered at existing or former gateway facilities into the block or through structures that have not been rated on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH).
- For strategic reasons and in the interests of the future circulation of traffic around the block and the town centre, ingress/egress will be permitted through the former Savoy building as it would permit a one way flow of traffic either from or to the block direct to West Gardens.
- Where vehicular ingress and egress is provided, the entrance shall be minimized to reduce the visual impact of the entrance on the streetscape.

Map 25 shows the option of vehicular traffic approaching the block from the Pearse Road – a major radial route leading to the town – and the possibility of ingress being provided by Teeling House through a former gateway. However, in light of the important pedestrian desire line across the block at this point, this vehicular option would not be desirable.

All underground car parking facilities will be required to ensure that there is adequate consideration to mechanical ventilation, separate sprinkler systems in the event of a fire, fire compartmentation and fire proof smoke vents.

6.5 Plot Amalgamation

In the interests of maintaining the character of the area, while at the same time facilitating backland development, the block has been subdivided into two principle areas (refer to Map 26).

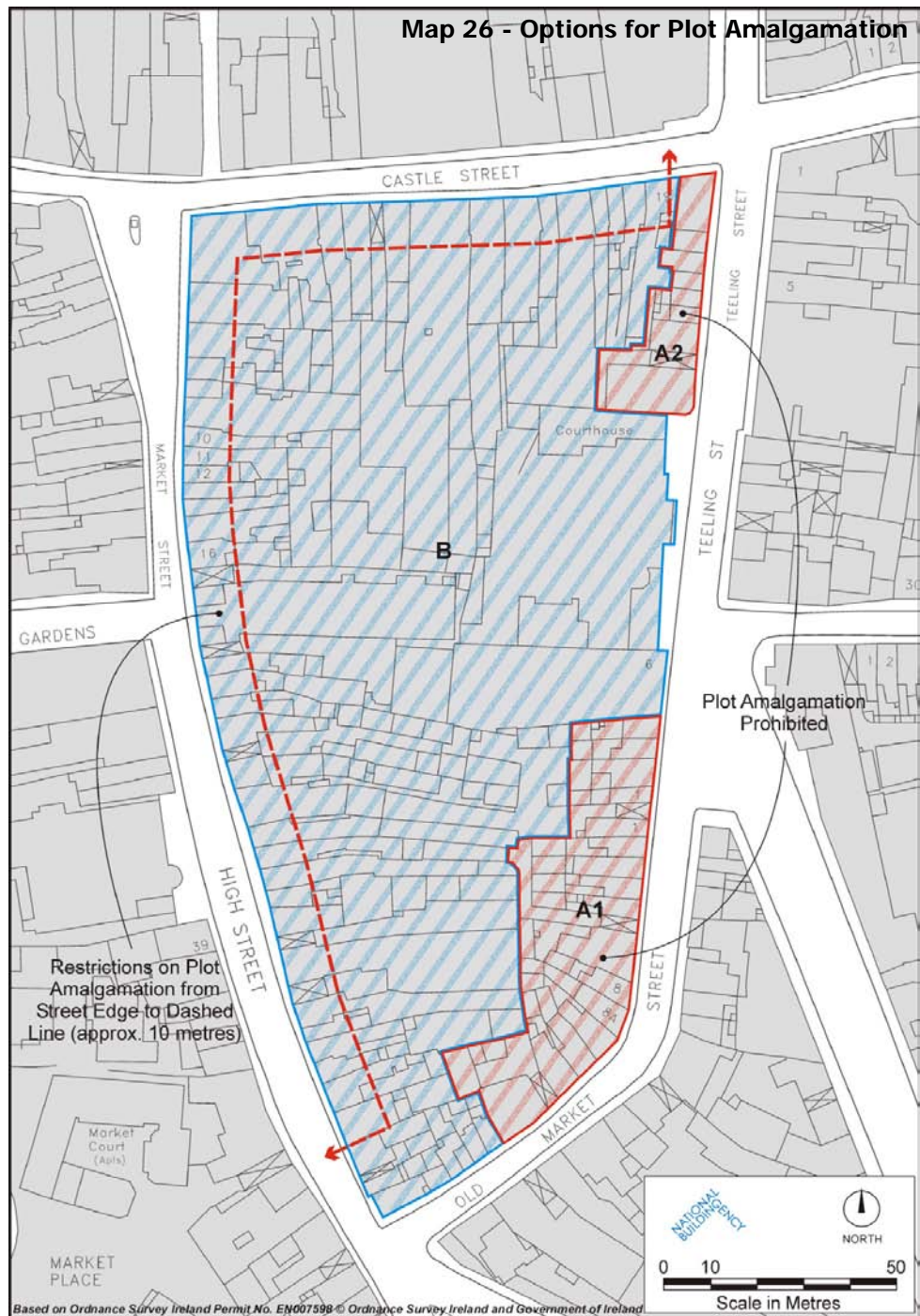
In Areas A1 and A2, plot amalgamation shall be prohibited outright – this will include entire plots from street front to rear property boundary. This area comprises a significant area of residential use along Old Market Street in addition to the smaller property plots along Teeling Street.



45. View of building fabric that could be altered to provide enhanced vehicular access
46. Existing exit from multi-storey car park in Dublin - note minimal impact to streetscape and discreet design



47. View from exit entrance shown on photo 36 - note how one way system enabled extended pavement and other environmental improvements - similar opportunities exist for High Street and Old Market Street



In Area B, plot amalgamation shall be permitted, but will be restricted to the rear of the plot, i.e., to that area behind the building on the street front. Where a building has already been significantly altered or redeveloped in recent years and there is no clear demarcation of the rear façade, a distance of 10 metres will apply from the front façade.

6.6 Conclusions

Although the Development Plan and the Integrated Area Plan sought the renewal of the area ideally on a plot by plot basis, in an incremental manner that would be in keeping with the character and designation of the area as an Architectural Conservation Area, this is an aspiration that has not been achieved to date. In general, the success of the Urban Renewal Tax Incentive Scheme depends to a degree on the tax liability of those property owners in the area, otherwise the incentives are of little benefit. As little progress has taken place to date, it would appear that the focus for renewal (and tax designation) should enable a more comprehensive development approach. A remarkable degree of coordination has taken place between the larger developers and interested parties in the area and this is to be commended. The energy and commitment shown to date needs to be harnessed, though in a manner which integrates better into the existing context of the block and respects concerns of local residents.

The following section summarizes the key principles for the development of the block.

48. Negative impact of multi-storey car park entrance - to be avoided in courthouse block

49. Plot amalgamation at the corner of Old Market Street and High Street



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