



6.



7.



9.



8.



10.



11.



12.

6, 8 & 9. Views of distinctive traditional paving with limestone, sandstone and cobbles

7. Note limestone kerbing to footpath edge - noted along sections of Teeling Street

10. Note Distinctive variation in building heights within a limited range

11. Uniform building heights on Castle Street

12. Note variation in heights of 2 storey buildings on Old Market Street

13. Remnants of flagstones at gateway entrance to Gurries Yard

14. Note Limestone channel along kerb edge



13.



14.

5. TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

5.1 Materials and Other Features

Most buildings on the street front are finished with a cement render, though there are two buildings with a brick finish and a few with a stone finish (one with brick trim). The most notable building in the block, is the finely detailed Courthouse is constructed with fine cut limestone and yellow sandstone quoins, mouldings and architraves.

Roof tops are pitched in the traditional manner and tend to be roofed in natural slate. On a number of gateway entrances there is distinctiveness in the traditional design and use of materials, notably large red sandstone flagstones aligned for former cart-tracks and detailed with the use of cobbles (see Photo 9). Limestone kerbing is intermittently maintained along concrete footpaths and has been used to accentuate the traditional gateway entrances in places by the creation of a drainage channel on the footpath edge made of parallel limestone kerbing (see Photo 14). Spur stones at the entrances to these gateways are also in tact. Such detailing should be retained and/or reinstated in any future development and renewal of the area.

5.2 Scale, Massing and Composition

Most of the building fabric on the perimeter of the block consists of two and three bay, three storey structures, though two storey developments are not uncommon. On the Market Street/High Street area there are a number of quite fine facades, some with up to seven bays.

The scale of development within the block is predominantly three storeys on the street edge and immediately to the rear of these frontage buildings, properties step down to two storeys as they extend into their respective plots. Deeper into the plot, single storey sheds and outbuildings predominate, though there are a few notable exceptions, such as the five storey stone warehouse in the yard to the rear of McCoskers.

The composition of some facades has been enhanced by decorative detailing in the form of pedimented and shouldered architraves, hood mouldings, aedicules and quoin stones – particularly on Castle Street and High Street.

5.3 Building Heights

Building and eave heights are fairly consistent along much of Castle Street, however along the rest of its length and along each of the other streets in the block there is considerable variation of heights within a limited range (two to three storeys). This creates a distinctive rhythm in the streetscape, achieved by the constant stepping up and down of building heights. With the exception of parts of Castle Street and smaller groups along Old Market Street, uniformity in building heights and/or eaves is not a common feature. refer also to Section 6.2 and 6.2.1 where the issue of building heights is expanded.

5.4 Building Lines

So much of the traditional character of the block is intact that there is an almost continuous building line around its perimeter. The only exception to this is where site clearance has occurred at the junction between Old Market Street and High Street (though this site has been the subject of a planning application which was granted PD 103/03).

One of the important subtleties of the Irish townscape is the manner in which building lines deflect or meander slightly, while the street might otherwise appear fairly straight. This is an important characteristic that should be maintained, if any existing street front building is proposed and permitted for redevelopment.

The continuous building line is only interrupted at one point and this is for the set-back of the Courthouse. This deliberate set-back accentuates the building's civic importance and should only be reserved for such important public architecture.

5.5 Plots

Careful attention is given to the dimensions of plots within the block, as plot dimension and configuration can either promote or hinder the development or redevelopment of the block.

The smallest plots within the block are found on Teeling Street, near the junction with Castle Street (where 11 metres depths are recorded) and particularly along Old Market Street (where depths of 13-15 metres are noted). On Market Street (No.s 11 – 16) plots are about 22 metres in depth and for most of High Street plot depths range from approximately 45-65 metres. Along Castle Street plot depths are also very significant, typically at about 40-45 metres long, however the longest plot in the block is also found here, extending to approximately 80 metres (the yard to the rear of McCoskers).

Most properties would have a plot width of 5-6 metres, though there are several that have widths of under 4 metres. A number of the larger buildings on High Street have plot widths close to or wider than 10 metres and similar plot widths are found on Castle Street where it has already been noted, that significant plot amalgamation has already taken place.

The smaller plots of around 4m X 11m are less adaptable in a commercial environment, but nonetheless can be utilized for specialist niche goods and/or office/service space. In general there is not a significant concentration of such plots in any one area of the block that would raise concerns about the ability to trade from them. They are so interspersed with larger units that overall economy of scales is sufficient.

Most of the plots that have widths of around 5-7 metres or above, tend to have longer depths and these are generally similar in





15.



16.



17.

15 & 16. Impact of overhead wires on streetscape; note also wall mounted cabling (16)

17. Typical Stepping down of building heights with individual plots



18.

18. Architectural detailing on Castle Street



19.



20.

19. Note alterations to fenestration and windows

20. Vernacular windows on a dwelling on Market Street



21.

21. Note arrow - this represents a narrowing of the plot to approximately 2 metres - restricting redevelopment potential

22. View down Pearse Road to Courthouse - an important architectural landmark and a focal point at the end of Pearse Road

23, 24 & 25. Views of the Courthouse and it's important impact on Sligo's skyline



22.

scale to the standard retail units found in modern shopping centres. Medium to large scale retail units would require plot widths in excess of 10-15 metres in which to operate, with depths of 45 metres and above. At present there are approximately four plots within the block which could or do provide for such retail scales, these include:

- The McCosker Site on Castle Street
- Louis Doherty's Antiques on Teeling Street
- The former Savoy Cinemas site on High Street, and
- The premises of Sligo Furnishings, also on High Street.

Each of these premises could cater for medium scale retail development such as a significant national or international brand name multiple, though the lower footfall on High Street would make the area less attractive for such big name traders and anchors, who are likely to want to locate in the Wine Street/Centre Block area.

Of critical importance is the configuration of the plots. Close examination of Ordnance Survey Maps and on-site inspection, reveal that in a number of instances plots narrow or taper in the backland areas to dimensions that are little more than 2 metres. In at least one instance the plot narrows immediately behind the dwelling to approximately 2 metres (Photo 21), but then expands out to about 4 metres and continues at that width to the end of the plot. Such configurations make it very difficult to redevelop such properties without serious consideration to plot amalgamation.

In quite a few instances, particularly in the High Street area, plots are 3-4 metres wide but extend to approximately 55 metres making proper utilization and redevelopment within the plot both costly, cumbersome and problematic. In addition to this, many of the plot boundary walls are up to 15-16 feet high (circa 4.5+ metres) meaning that any serious attempt at redevelopment – even at very modest levels of intervention - is likely to require demolition of some or part of these old stone walls. Given these site characteristics, some consideration needs to be given to plot amalgamation too.

The question is - should amalgamation be restricted to those exceptionally narrow plots or extended to wider plots that have capacity to function under a variety of uses anyway? In seeking the renewal of the area, it has to be borne in mind that the renewal and regeneration of the area on a plot by plot basis, would potentially restrict building typologies to those that are already extant in the block and would thus be likely to conform to the areas designated as Architectural Conservation Areas within the block. However, the process of renewal (either in the principal street frontage buildings or in the backlands) has been so minimal or even none existent, despite the area's designation for urban renewal tax incentives since 1999. Prior to designation the area's designation, there has been little evidence of any significant development activity in the backland areas over the past two decades or so. In light of this any impetus that can be provided to rejuvenate the area should be given serious consideration.

The IAP requirement that only residential development on the perimeter of the block appears overly restrictive, as average retail floor area required for the specialist shops that are catered for in this area do not generally require areas in excess of 100 square meters. Plot sizes at 80-90% site coverage could accommodate significantly in excess of this and the question arises as to what becomes of the remaining portion of land to the rear of the plot. Newer retail, commercial and office space with separate access is an option as is additional residential development particularly in light of the significant residential element to the south of the block at present (refer also to possible uses outline in Section 4.3).

In light of the fact that the block has been designated for urban renewal tax incentives since 1999 with little or no progress, it would appear that in the interests of developing a sustainable and living town centre, that more comprehensive redevelopment initiatives should be explored or at least a new mechanism to create the impetus to renewal (such as opening up access to the backlands). In essence however, the long term benefits to the area outweigh concerns about plot amalgamation and demolition to provide access to backlands.

Within all of this discussion, it is important to realize the particular character of the area, including the streets and older buildings, are nonetheless an important resource in the town which has the potential to develop into a dynamic living, shopping and tourist asset.



23.



24.



25.