

**CENTRE BLOCK MASTERPLAN FOR SLIGO
NATIONAL BUILDING AGENCY LTD 1999**

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION 1 <i>Circumstances of the Document</i>
2	SLIGO AS A REGIONAL CENTRE 2 <i>Brief Statistical Profile of Town and its Retail Circumstance</i>
3	SITE HISTORY 4 <i>Recent History</i>
4	CURRENT RETAIL TRENDS AND RETAIL OPTIONS FOR SLIGO 8
5	RETAIL STRUCTURE OF THE TOWN CENTRE 10
6	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITE AND SURROUNDING TOWN 13
7	RECOMMENDED STRATEGY 16
8	URBAN DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS OF RECOMMENDED STRATEGY 23
9	OPTIONS AND LINKAGES WITHIN THE PRECINCT OF THE SITE 28
10	DEVELOPER BENEFITS 29 <i>Concessions by the Local Authority and Fiscal Benefits</i>
11	SUMMARY OF CRITICAL FACTORS 31

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Circumstances of the Masterplan

Since the introduction of the Urban Renewal Act in 1986, and the financial provisions of the Finance Act which support urban renewal, there have been a number of programmes of urban renewal in Irish towns. Sligo has benefited from two of these and much infill development in the town centre has taken place as a result. A recent analysis of Irish towns by the Environmental Protection Agency suggests that in Sligo this has been particularly successful, helping to balance and restructure the centre of the city (Fennelly 1999).

It has been Government opinion however that in the absence of a strategy, urban renewal schemes in some towns have been misdirected, and for this reason the Minister for the Environment commissioned in 1996 a Report (The KPMG report) in order to attempt to audit the results of urban renewal and to make recommendations on the process of incentives in its support.

As one of its recommendations, the KPMG Report suggested that any further phases of urban renewal should be limited strictly to the framework of a pre-prepared plan, co-ordinating and directing fiscal incentives into particular urban development frameworks in specific areas for specific reasons. Plans would be prepared by local authorities in detailed consultation with local communities, identifying specific areas or site combinations which would be subject to urban renewal. The plans would be known as Integrated Area Plans.

An Integrated Area Plan was prepared for central Sligo in March 1998 and approved by the Minister at the end of that year. In it is included an area within the central block between O'Connell Street and Adelaide Street, which, as proposed, would be suitable for development under tax incentives subject to a master plan or set of principles, to be decided upon, agreed and adopted by the elected representatives, ensuring that the resources of this block could be maximised in a co-ordinated way in support of the town centre.

Towards this aim Sligo Corporation commissioned a retail study of Sligo, identifying the commercial and retail potential of the town centre. This study confirmed that a specific range of uses would be appropriate for the area. Sligo Corporation then commissioned the National Building Agency to prepare a masterplan as described in this report, outlining how the appropriate uses might be accommodated physically in the area.

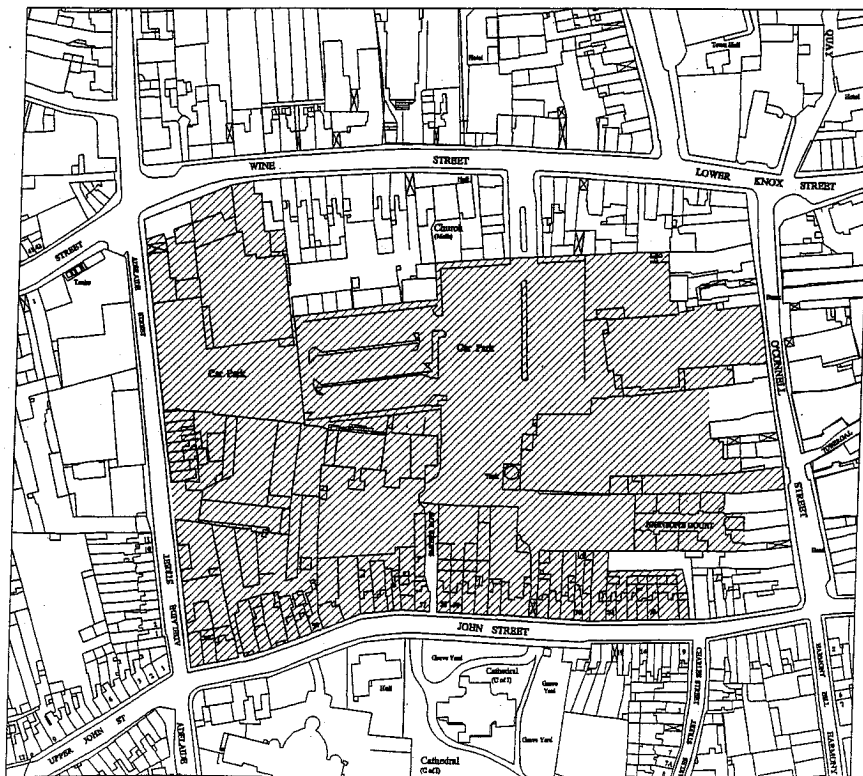
Because the retail study confirmed that the city centre was the most desirable area for the location of shopping uses, the masterplan was required to identify and consider the requirements of a number of major stores wishing to locate or expand in the centre, in order to ensure that they be encouraged to locate there, rather than at out-of-town sites.

The objective of this document as a masterplan is to outline the physical characteristics which become critical when placing a large area of shopping in the centre of Sligo, and to make recommendations towards a statement of intent by the local authority to adopt a specific set of principles by which this area of shopping would be facilitated in its development.

The masterplan would then operate as a confirmed framework under which developers, traders and retailers could invest, with a clear knowledge of the planning intention of the local authority and a clear expectation of the land use of adjacent sites.

DIAGRAM 101
PROPOSED DESIGNATED AREAS

REFURBISHMENT
COMMERCIAL
RESIDENTIAL REFURBISHMENT



CHAPTER 2

SLIGO AS A REGIONAL CENTRE

Brief statistical profile of town and its regional circumstance

Sligo is the ninth largest urban centre in Ireland. It has a borough population of 17,786 (1996). The Buchanan Study of 1969 identified Sligo as a primary development centre. As capital of the northwest, it enjoys locational primacy, the nearest centres of comparable size being 80 miles distant. For this reason it has become a key administrative and distributive centre. It has a rail terminus, a port and a regional airport.

Although Sligo has a significant base of non-indigenous manufacturing industry, its function as service centre is more identifiably established. The regional headquarters of many semi-State bodies are located there, as are some central Government offices and it serves as a regional centre for health and educational facilities. In the framework of central places, Sligo's significance as a shopping centre is well established, serving a densely populated local hinterland for most convenience goods and services, while developing as a regional centre for comparison shopping.

Sligo has suffered severe urban diffusion due to the attractiveness of its surrounding countryside. The 20 years prior to 1986 showed considerable increases in the population of Sligo's surrounding district with lesser increases in the borough. Much of the urban generated population of Sligo now resides in the surrounding countryside, commuting to Sligo for work and services over a distance of 5 to 10 miles. Statistically this has caused Sligo to lose its rank status in comparison with towns such as Ennis or Tralee.

It has been illustrated however (Meehan) that while the projections of Buchanan on the population increases of major centres from 1966 to 1986 appeared not to have been achieved by many of the middle sized towns, the urban generated population of these towns had in fact increased much above the projected levels, now residing largely outside the municipal boroughs. In this respect the commuting population of Sligo rural district must be combined with the population of the Borough of Sligo to give a true picture of the immediate population which Sligo serves. This population was in fact 36,769 in 1986, almost 7,000 more than that predicted by Buchanan.

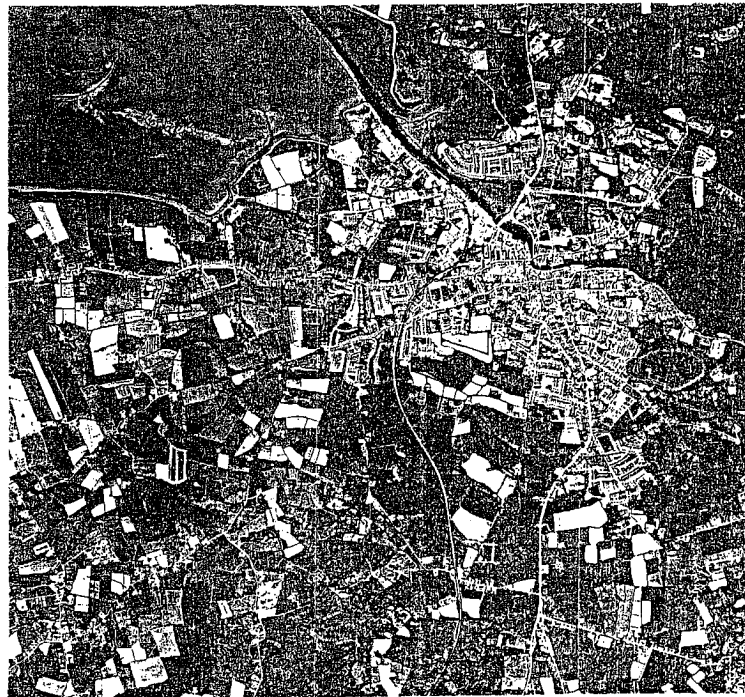
Recent studies by Fitzgerald (June 1999) show that Sligo's commuting range exceeds that of any other larger town or city in the country, a factor which should be considered significant if not alarming. In comparison with the National average, more of Sligo's working population travel longer distances to reach Sligo daily.

In this context, figures assembled by the County Planning Department in Sligo show 60,000 people living within a half-hour driving distance of the city, with 170,000 living within a one hour driving distance of the centre. (This excludes people within Northern Ireland). One hour's driving time brings one just halfway to Galway and just halfway to Derry, Sligo's two principal regional competitors.

Under recent European legislation, countries are required to prepare national spatial plans, or national settlement strategies, identifying clear hierarchies of urban centres into which investment should be concentrated in order to develop national service networks in a co-ordinated manner.

The Fitzpatrick Study, (prepared for the Regional Authorities 1999), notes that while in the southern half of Ireland there is an effective strategic network of urban centres, the network is particularly weak north of a line between Dublin and Limerick. In fact Galway is the only





large urban centre of regional service capability north of this line. For this reason it sees as essential, the development of other specific centres to ensure that all areas of the country are within a 50 mile reach of a regional urban centre in order to "fill the gaps in the national settlement framework of larger places". For this reason Sligo and Athlone are identified as strategically placed. To quote Fitzpatrick, they "select themselves" as the obvious development centres which would strengthen the national framework.

The Fitzpatrick Report suggests the enhancement of Sligo's regional role by the development of a university in Sligo, by the development of a business innovation centre in Sligo and by the designation of either Sligo or Athlone as a national centre for electronic commerce. Any of these would have a significant input in Sligo's regional role, increasing the attractiveness of the city as a regional service centre, or as a growth pole.

As with the traditional market centre, the main constituents of Sligo as a centre of any rank relate to its service role, and dominant in this is its retail service role. Fitzpatrick notes that retailing is expected to increase by approximately 40 - 50% between 1996 and 2003. This growth provides an opportunity to reinforce the functions of small and medium sized towns and to ensure that their viability is not threatened by the growth of out-of-town shopping.

In the National Composite Deprivation score (1996), (Fitzpatrick) residents in parts of Sligo and its immediate surroundings show an untypically high level of affluence. Some effects may be significant from this observation. The number of families owning two or more cars is higher, thus increasing car use in the course of living convenience. But the retail spending power of the urban area's catchment would also be higher per head, thus increasing viability in the range of shop types.

Surveys by both Parker and O'Rourke suggest catchment leakages from Sligo to Galway and Derry, but Parker suggests that these are not as high as might be expected. There is a convenience-goods leakage from the south west of the county to Ballina. The most significant leakage is that from Sligo to Dublin and of course this is event-related. A day-out shopping in an urban centre of higher rank is now a frequent family event.

Sligo does bear many of the hallmarks of a potentially healthy retail town. Vacancy levels are very low in ground floor uses at the centre. Vacancy is conspicuous only in the edge streets which are contracting at the south-east. Although migration is taking place from this sector a total reduction in floor space is not occurring. Retail rents, another indicator of retail health, have risen due to scarcity of retail space (Parker) in the town centre. In two of the centre streets rents are higher than would be expected in a town of Sligo's rank size.

Because of the diffused residential distribution of the population served by Sligo, it follows of course that many of the users of the city are car borne, travelling long distances. Car-park provision and access systems are therefore under pressure. It has been observed (Hillier) in British towns similar in size to Sligo, that as commuting distances increase, the average stay within a car-park increases in the urban centre. More car-parking space is thus ultimately required. It should be noted however, that as the distance between residence and destination increases, the acceptability of parking some distance from the actual destination also increases, a factor which may be particularly significant in the centre of Sligo.

The critical question of shopping location, and the question of access to the retail centre, have formed a major pair of interlinked issues in the recent planning of Sligo. The main elements of both are as yet unfixed. The uncertain future of these has been suggested as a major force in postponing investment in Sligo.

SITE HISTORY

Recent History

The original form of Sligo developed around a river crossing. This crossing is thought to have been close to the position of the existing Rockwood Parade footbridge (Cawley) (Bradley) (Woodmartin). Up to its sack in 1641 Sligo appears to have been centred on this crossing point, from which Thomas Street developed as its main street. After 1641, the development of Castle Street, Grattan Street and High Street extended the structure westwards. O'Connell Street is thought to have developed at a later stage, and of the two routes westwards which it links, John Street appears to have been the earliest, with Wine Street developing substantially in the 18th Century as a route associated with the developing port.

Most of the buildings of value which now line O'Connell Street, Wine Street and John Street were constructed in the latter half of the 19th Century when the town was particularly prosperous. The Methodist Church on Wine Street is probably one of the oldest surviving public building in Sligo.

Adelaide Street is in effect a late 18th Century bypass constructed to link the new Mail Coach Road via Temple Street to the developing docklands area, linking John Street and Wine Street as radials, as would a ring road.

Apart from the development of two artisan terraces, Adelaide Street never acquired facades of urban architecture, even though streets developing to the west of it such as Upper John Street and Wolfe Tone Street did. Instead Adelaide Street, as an industrial route, tended to acquire industrial uses. The city gasworks occupied a long frontage along its north-eastern end.

In the block between Adelaide Street and O'Connell Street, land ownership sub-divisions which relate to O'Connell Street and Wine Street dominate the centre of the block. The plots of John Street are shallower, with the exception of some plots at its west end which are longer. Few of these long plots however remain associated with frontage buildings to John Street.

The early 20th Century land-use of the block did contain some uses associated with the grander residences of the perimeter, such as gardens, paddocks and mews stables. Much of the block however was dominated by the town's industrial backup uses, providing support not just to companies trading on the O'Connell Street and Wine Street frontages, but to some companies not trading within any street frontage. Fuel distribution yards, coal storage yards, sawmills, a number of bakeries, two wholesale distribution warehouses and the gas works covered large pockets of land within the block almost until 1965.

The development of a car park behind and serving Johnston's drapery shop in the mid-60's with archway access from O'Connell Street, together with separate access from John Street, anticipated the development of an urban block form, under which a shop enjoys pedestrian frontage to the street with vehicular access from behind. This principle was soon developed by the new Five Star Supermarket locating in O'Connell Street which later expanded westwards to become Quinnsnorth.

The coincidental migration of earlier uses from the centre of the block at the beginning of the 70's allowed the development of a highly efficient town centre where the supermarket enjoyed total car park / loading access from the west, or from behind, by alternative vehicular routes, -

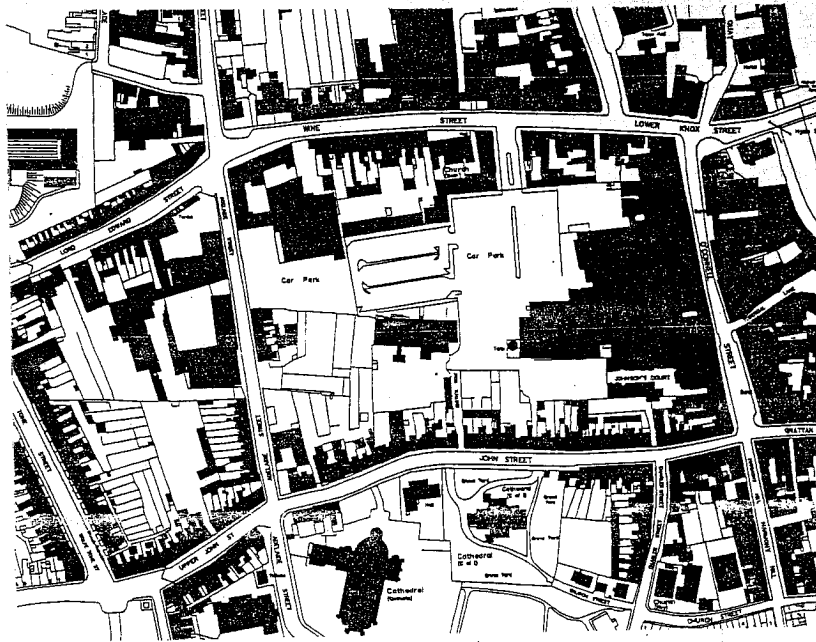
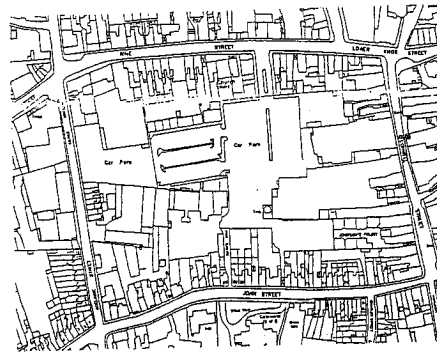


DIAGRAM 301
FIGURE GROUND MAP OF AREA SHOWING BLOCK BETWEEN ADELAIDE ST. AND
O'CONNELL ST.



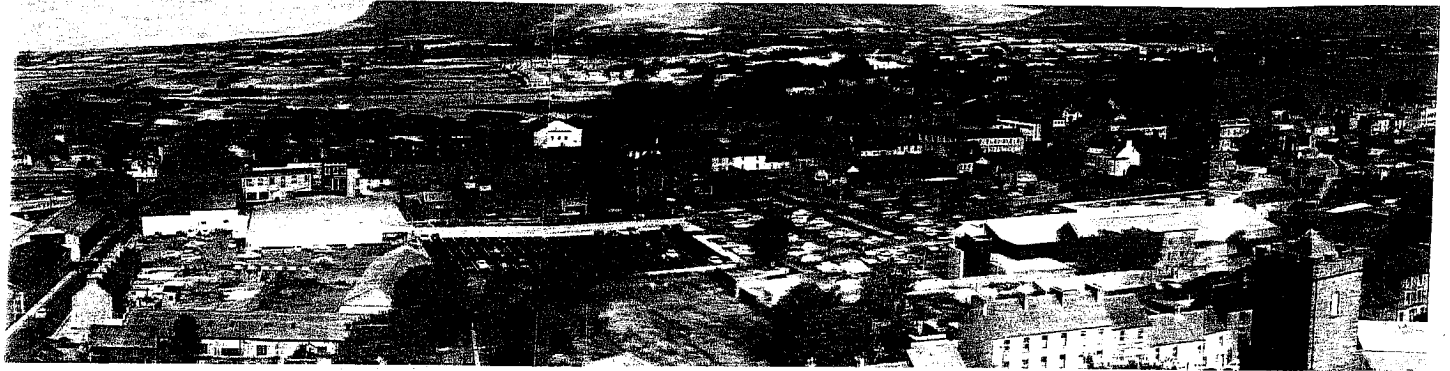
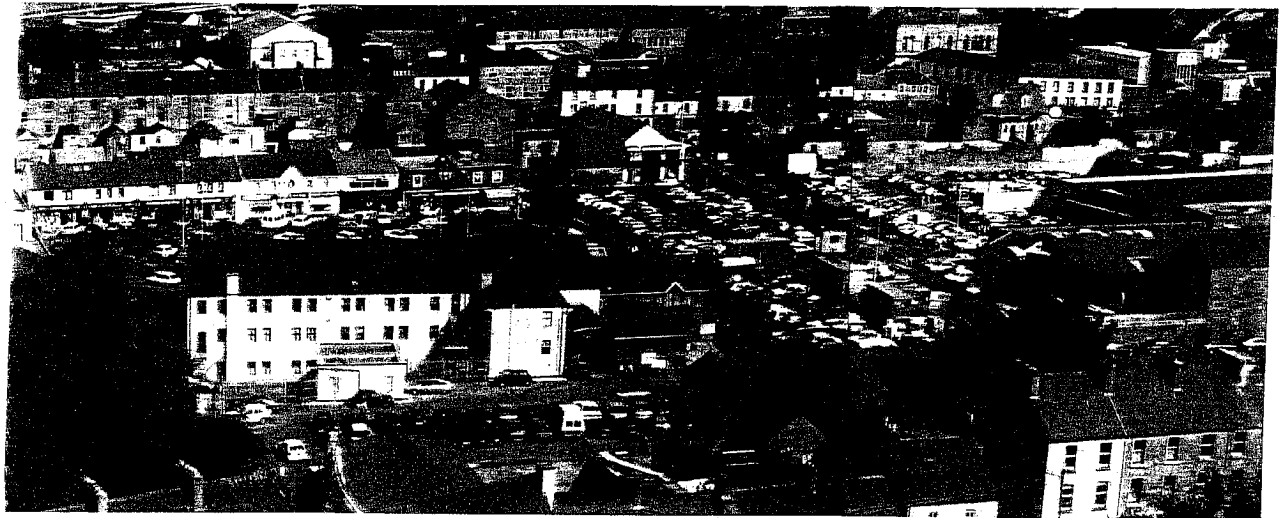


DIAGRAM 309 VIEW OF SITE 1975

DIAGRAM 31C VIEW OF SITE 1996



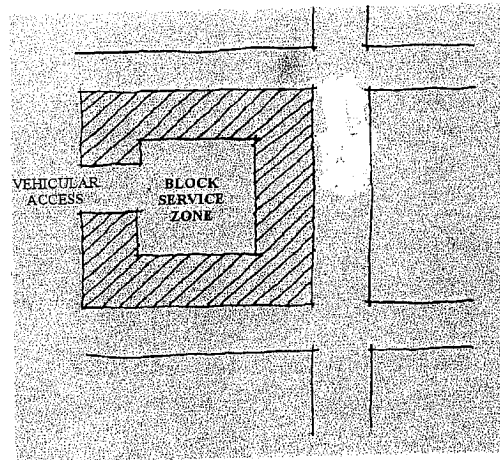


DIAGRAM 304
TRADITIONAL URBAN BLOCK STRUCTURE

separated from the street, while pedestrians had easy through-access to the remainder of shops in O'Connell Street. This basic system, in a developed form, was already becoming the model for many town centres in Britain and beyond, throughout the nineteen seventies.

The natural progression for this block-type is one where the edge of the block serves as pedestrian frontage, the centre of the block providing service backup as required.

It is essential in such a model that both of these complimentary parts expand independently, with the centre block area maintaining a service role and the edge of the block maintaining a frontage role to surrounding streets. The ultimate expanded form for such a town, as modelled in for example Canterbury, is where the block-centre graduates from surface car-park to multi-storey car-park with internal access to expanded shop floor area between it and the street, all shops having frontage to the street where pedestrian activity is free to increase as the service capacity of the block increases.

The Adelaide Street/O'Connell Street block, from its introduction to this block-type in the 1970's, was set to progress ideally along such an expansion model.

However in the early 1980's, planning permission was granted to allow shop frontages to develop onto the centre-block car-park. While the decision to permit this in the case of shops which had dual frontage, such as Penneys, was reversible, the creation of individual self-contained shops on the perimeter of the car-park, such as along its northern fringe, introduced a new urban framework which treated the surface car-park as a street space within the town's street framework. The future frontage demands assumed to be granted to these shops therefore sealed the future treatment of the car-park as a central open area. Instead of serving the block perimeter now, the block core became a frontage space in its own right with its own street edges. The expansion potential for landowners / traders around the edge of the block would therefore be limited dimensionally on their inner sides by the edge of this space. The full development potential of the large block was therefore extinguished. As illustrated in diagram 307 the development of the Adelaide Centre on the south western perimeter of the car-park further sealed the development of this urban structure by sealing its south western edge.

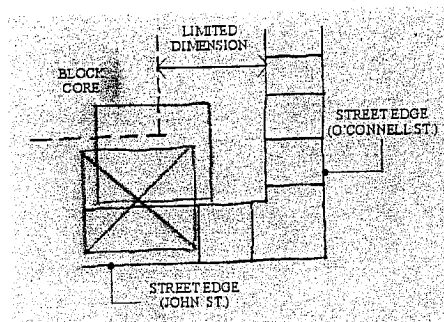


DIAGRAM 308

When in 1996 Sligo Corporation advertised for design proposals for the development of a multi-storey car-park anywhere in Sligo to avail of tax incentives offered for such development, a number of design submissions not surprisingly focused on this block as the most feasible site for a car-park. All of these design solutions however, both in their preparation and in their final proposals, unearthed the difficulties of trying to locate a car-park building within the structure of the block. Most of the proposals were forced to compromise uses on the perimeter of the block in order to respect the edge of the existing central space as a predetermined open space.

These same limitations in the block structure became apparent in 1997 when Quinnsworth, later Tesco, began to explore expansion options for its store at the south eastern corner of the block. A developer while attempting to satisfy the expansion requirements of Tesco within what was now a much shallower block perimeter, invariably graduated towards proposals to encroach onto the original residential frontages of John Street. The principle occurring here, is illustrated in diagram 308.

- A Area of land-use development within core becomes limited to sites between frontage uses to street and frontage uses to centre-block open space.
- B Large scale use (Supermarket) wishing to locate inside block as at is forced to encroach on block perimeter uses as in .
- C In the Sligo case proposal required the creation of "false" facades to preserve the visual quality of John Street.

The quality and heritage of John Street, from Charles Street westwards, is of course structurally associated with its residential use. This use is not part of the trading framework of the block behind it, as is the use in O'Connell Street. The natural land-use division between this street and the block therefore occurs at the rear garden boundary of the John Street properties, as of course it does on Culbertson Terrace, a large terrace of early 19th Century town houses on Wine Street.

The clear structure of a good town centre, where a car-park, close to primary route access, connects to the convenience superstores, on the other side of which the pedestrian is served by the comparison superstores and the smaller shops, to which alternative street routes still exist from within the urban residential areas of the town, is still possible in Sligo. But this structure would have its operation severely compromised if its commercial service area were to break through onto John Street.

The decision, by the Integrated Area Plan in 1998, with strong support from the community and business interests in Sligo, to separate the John Street frontages from the land-use designations sought for the core of the block, acknowledged the separate role of John Street and called back into decision the need to reconsider or to consider seriously even at this late stage, the potential role of the block as a whole to satisfy the needs of the town centre in a structured way.

When, shortly after approval by Government of the Integrated Area Plan, a landowner who had earlier been permitted to construct a scheme of commercial buildings fronting onto the central car-park at its south western side, declared his willingness to write off this scheme in return for its accommodation in a reconsideration of the broader block, serious opportunities began to emerge for a complete reconsideration of the block. The opportunity to reverse earlier decisions and to reclaim the full potential of the block became possible.

If the buildings of this particular scheme are eliminated, there are no other rigid frontages onto the centre block car-park on its south side. On the east side all of the major frontages onto the car-park are flexible frontages, which, in the confirmed future intentions of traders and landowners, could be considered adjustable according to opportunities presented by the redevelopment of the block. There are no frontages to the west of the car-park and Dunnes Stores, to the north west corner, though trading within the block, has no direct frontage to its core. Dunnes Stores has separately indicated its willingness to restructure its store entirely in accordance with a good development plan for the block.

The only rigid element which has established frontage to the car-park therefore at this stage is a line of shops extending from the eastern boundary of Dunnes Stores to the Wine Street car-park entrance. There are seven small two storey buildings which have developed along this frontage with eleven shops. There are a limited number of owners in this area.

A small separate shopping mall; Johnson's Court, was constructed in 1990 linking O'Connell Street with the car-park framework and containing a number of small shops on ground floor with offices and other uses on first floors. Johnson Court takes the form of an exterior uncovered mall, where shops address and an east-west circulation route from two sides, with no significant frontage space developed to the west which might compromise later centre-block uses. The centre has enjoyed mixed success. It suffers from very poor frontage profile to O'Connell Street, having a 37 metre long archway entrance to which there is no frontage. It stops short of much of the car-parking activity on its western end, and although it has its own limited capacity car-park, a walking distance of 80 metres is required, again with no frontage activity, to link it to the main car-park at the centre of the block. With just a small number of shops, it therefore offers a much less attractive route choice to the pedestrian when measured against the competing route of the current Tesco arcade. Yet in the face of these design disabilities, Johnson Court is actually placed much closer to the pedestrian desire line between the centre of the block and the Grattan Street / High Street / Castle Street area; core of the potential local-product shops and the traditional town.

The main focus of the block in question, its central car-park, is accessed from Wine Street. There is also limited access from John Street. The Dunnes Stores car-park to the west, a smaller subdivided section, is accessed from Adelaide Street. Three smaller car-parks of

limited capacity are located at Brodrick's Store, the Adelaide Centre and Johnson's Court. These are served by access from the main car-park area.

Surveys by McCarthy and Partners suggest that the car-park satisfies its needs within its existing capacity, (McCarthy and Partners' general interim report p.94 Figs. 6.8 and 6.9) but a recent survey (carried out in June and August 1997) for the Sligo Vision 2020 Study, (Bannon, O'Connell and Van Der Kamp) found that, on an average weekday, the times at which demand exceeded supply occurred quite early in the day. This time is identified as the time after which a potential user of the car-park is unlikely to encounter a legally usable space on a single circuit of the car-park.

The relationship between circulation space, and the number of car-parking spaces served, is very poor due to the layout of the car-park. The extended framework of car-parks within the complex serves a total of 497 legal spaces within a gross area of 15,468m². An organised car-park on the same footprint should be able to serve 843 spaces but this is not achievable at Wine Street due to the complex edge conditions and layout of the area. As a consequence of user frustration, illegal parking is rampant, leading to further reduction in the attractiveness of the facility.

Because the car-park at this stage no longer offers to the user the anticipation of a likely parking space, it is no longer an attraction to shopping in the area. It has therefore reached a point of failure as a service.



DIAGRAM 307

ESTABLISHED FRONTAGE USES TO CAR PARK



CHAPTER 4

CURRENT RETAIL TRENDS AND RETAIL OPTIONS FOR SLIGO

There have been significant developments in recent retail trends due to the combined factors of increasing scale economies by retailers and the increased personal mobility of the shopper.

As larger food outlets have become larger in pursuit of scale economies, the actual number of food outlets has declined and superstores have emerged as the main tier of convenience-food selling. In Britain the quantity of average household food purchased in the giants described as superstores has risen from 29.9% in 1987 to 53.7% in 1996 (Hillier).

Because, as a part consequence of this scale, the customer is now buying larger quantities of food stuffs in a smaller number of shopping trips, the link between mobility or ease of access and convenience shopping has thus become well established.

In comparison goods, the larger multiple outlet stores are able to respond to fluctuations in fashion and market demand due to the scale and bulk of their distribution and recall networks. In this way they claim to offer to the customer more immediate access to inexpensive fashion goods. This of course is often achieved at the expense of range and with the absence of long-term goods, less affected by fluctuations in fashion.

Because of the high turnover needed to sustain this process, the multiple outlet stores can only locate where shopping numbers are high. When they locate together however they attract customers cumulatively and in such context tend to increase significantly the central place function of a town.

Because smaller towns already represent quite a delicate and sensitive retail operation, retail trends are having a major effect on their market function. Very often smaller towns which exist primarily as retail service centres find that they are totally engulfed by the operational scale of the superstore. (Hillier)

In their response, small towns have been identifying ways in which they can retain purpose and preserve a living structure while developing a balanced relationship with this new retail distribution framework, assuming of course that there is a reason to protect the town's traditional retail lifestyle from total transfer to the structure of the superstore. In this response also, many towns have succeeded, largely through the art of observing and manipulating the use patterns of the shopper in a way that uses as much as regulates the power of the superstore.

It is necessary of course to examine the shopper, and the emerging patterns of the shopper, to know what it is that will maintain an attraction to the shopper and by what range of adjustments the town can harness and regulate the shopper to the town's advantage, without in fact losing the shopper in the process.

As income rises, the value of time to the individual rises, because time becomes the only commodity not purchasable or not extendable by purchase. Time therefore becomes the scarcest resource for the affluent (Convery 1999). If the more affluent shopper ceases to need to save small sums of money, time becomes the most valued resource. The shopping centre with one-stop facilities and easy access thus becomes immediately attractive.

However wealth increases education and the discerning shopper then moves to the tier of requiring variety, shopping choice and a stimulating shopping environment in which heritage and fringe range become as important as mere access, price or time efficiency. These factors



have become part of the backlash which has left many first-generation out-of-town superstores empty throughout Europe (Colmar, France).

In pursuit of this backlash is the recent trend by Department Stores in comparison shopping to seek town centre sites which capitalise on the unique attraction of specific places, as more educated shoppers react against the sameness of standardised international multiples (Horgan).

In Ireland tax incentives towards urban renewal have collected activities back to the centre of towns and the Government directive which limits the size of new retail floor space in single developments (Tim and Blackwell) has decreased the scale viabilities of out-of-town centres.

Tim and Blackwell of course point out that out-of-town shopping is not sustainable anyway for a variety of reasons and should be resisted. The recent Irish Government guidelines on shopping provision (1998) follow the same principle of three tier assessment as the U.K. Directive PPG 6, suggesting that out-of-town centres may only be justified to occur after a series of more desirable processes have failed in the locational strategy of a town.

Hillier (1999) finds that mode choice (such as for example the car) influences the decision on where to shop rather than vice versa. In family needs shopping, the bulk of food shopping is now carried out on a once-a-week single operation to the supermarket. For this the shopper requires to get the car to within trolley range of the convenience store.

In towns which are not sufficiently large to develop a high-frequency public transport system or in towns which have a diffused car-dependent catchment, the inescapable relationship between car access and convenience shopping will thus persist for some time. Hillier suggests that this relationship exists also for comparison shopping, particularly for shopping in department stores, where bulk household items may need to be carried to a car over short distances.

Many towns such as Sligo have captive customers for convenience shopping. It is the comparison shopping element which attracts the regional, long distance, or event shopper.

A shift to comparison goods shopping is predicted (Blackwell) (Fitzpatrick) as the Irish economy strengthens and the individual has more spending power beyond the requirement to buy limited food stuffs. Long-distance event-shopping is a significant part of the comparison goods market now, particularly in clothes, though less so in hardware. The size of the centre, as an indicator of the range of goods available, is the principle attraction to the event shopper. At present Dublin retails 41% of comparison goods through 23% of national floor space, whilst the third tier towns, of which Sligo is one, retail 18% of comparison goods through 24% of national floor space (Clear).

There are a number of established requirements which a centre must have in order to attract event-shopping, in addition to its critical mass. It has been observed (Convery 1999) that few shoppers will depart for a destination which they think is unlikely to have the products and services which they desire. This will of course be important to the resident of Claremorris, planning a day out shopping in either Sligo or Galway. The presence or absence of a national multiple outlet store which has been advertising nationally will be important. The availability of easy access to the town centre and to car-parking, or its absence from a previous experience will be important. The quality of the indigenous local shops for backup browsing for items which would not be available elsewhere will also be important. The ability of the town to provide all day shopping without the need for the customer or visitor to be required to work around lunchtime or half day closing hours will also be important and of course an essential element of long distance shopping. Sunday shopping is however not regarded as a specific requirement to maintain the vibrance of a regional centre. (Convery) (Hillier)

Of these it has been observed (Clear) that because event shopping is essentially a day out, the browsing condition induced by range and diversity of backup shops is now calculated to be critical. Event shopping requires a good specialist shop domain.

The shopping product sought by the long distance shopper in Sligo involves a combination of traditional town centre and large scale comparison shops, with the backup of large scale convenience shopping. This is a product which could not be provided by an out-of-town shopping centre.

Parker has identified that Sligo's strengths lie in its compact nature and the reach potential of the centre with its full range of shops close together, undiluted by the development of any out-of-town shopping competition. Sligo has also retained a number of specialist local shops which has survived the internationalisation of the 1980's to now become attractive individual elements of what Parker recognises as a unique retail offer, making Sligo's retail offer different from that of other towns.

CHAPTER 5

RETAIL STRUCTURE OF THE TOWN CENTRE

If it is decided that the edge-of-core option is the best for Sligo, what this means is that major shopping should occur at the edge of the shopping centre of the town in such a way that it and the town centre are reached from a single parked position within the same shopping trip.

It has been observed (Hillier) that in medium-sized towns of Sligo's size, even with a very close edge-of-centre store, it is difficult to ensure that the shopper will not undertake multiple linked trips with shopping in the town centre. If the urban fabric intervening between the edge-of-centre store and the smaller shops does not represent a strong linkage, the linked trip by a retail shopper will involve more than a single car-park stop, thus increasing traffic circulation in the immediate vicinity of the centre, where it is least needed.

It has been found (Hillier) that the location of edge-of-centre stores relative to central activity is a delicate area requiring considerable understanding of the local operational framework. Success or failure is very much related to town centre size and to the relationship between size and range of catchment.

The retail area of Sligo is centred on O'Connell Street, extending via Grattan Street to Castle Street and High Street and extending along Wine Street for approximately half of that street, while just reaching over the bridge to Stephen Street.

The filling of the Rockwood Parade precinct in recent years has helped to balance the centre and strengthen O'Connell Street from the east while the Wine Street car-park serves the larger stores already located on its edge which connect to O'Connell Street. Dunnes Stores at Adelaide Street is not ideally placed within this structure but the activity of the car-park has tended to link it to the structure of similar use elsewhere in the block.

Up to now the superstores backing onto the Wine Street car-park have tended to act as the edge of centre larger stores, serving and being served by a large edge car-park which then links to the primary traffic circulation system or regional circulation system via Adelaide Street.

The place of the supermarket and trolley access car-park is critical in the framework of the town as is the facility to link other parts of that framework with suitable tiers of access and transportation, as of course is the protection of the retail heritage or retail amenity for heritage shopping.

In Sligo however the linkage system which operates over the Wine Street car-park has become chronically overloaded, all of its elements now requiring expansion. The large stores need to expand, the car-park needs to expand and the connection to the national primary system needs to expand in capacity. What is more significant however is that the whole central footprint of the retail area is requiring expansion.

If Sligo has fallen short of its retail threshold and is therefore likely to expand rapidly following investment, all of its respective parts must be able to expand individually without becoming landlocked by adjacent expansions or without reaching thresholds which require the relocation of land uses and the subsequent write-off of investment. In a plan for the centre therefore a flexible structure is required which accommodates expansion in the most appropriate directions.

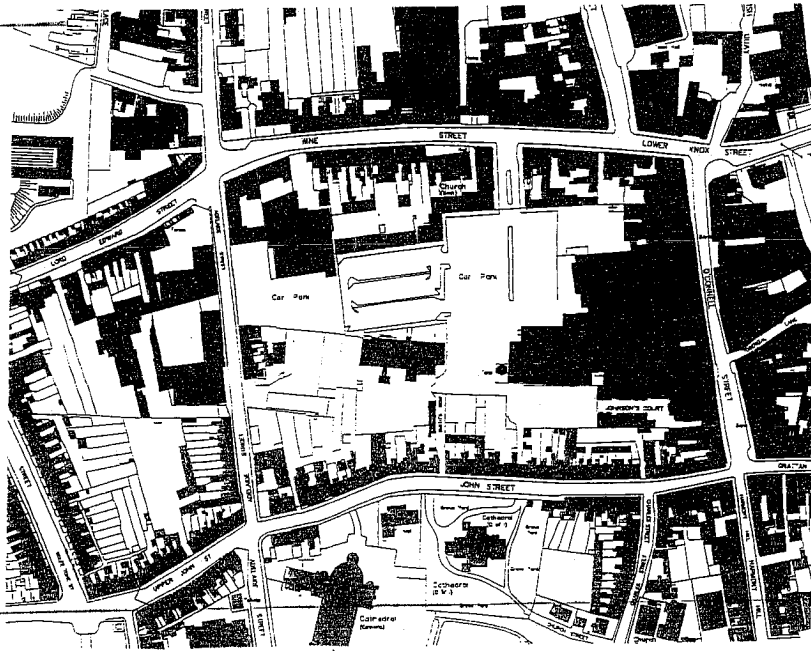




DIAGRAM 511

The established distance which the average shopper will walk from the position of a parked car is 400m (Hillier) (Parker) (PPG6) (Tim and Blackwell). The multi-storey carpark, and the edge of centre convenience stores must be within walking reach of the area which encloses other shops of the centre, in order for the ideal interactive support systems to operate.

Diagram 511 shows the centre of Sligo with a circle of radius 400m superimposed. The centre of the circle is placed at the junction of Tobergal Lane and O'Connell Street, judged to be the centre of activity of the town. The circumference should be drawn inwards at its southern and north-eastern edges in order to reflect the uphill routes to its perimeter in these directions, a factor which would reduce the effective distance. Diagram 511 also shows the distribution of derelict or underused land, or land in transition, within the area defined by this circle.

We also include a circle of 300m radius about the same centre as, even within a 400m circle, the distance from a parked car at, for example, Lower Quay Street would not reach High Street within 400m. Within the smaller circle however, reach distances of 400m would be more achievable.

When we look at the directions of expansion by which the central footprint of Sligo might extend, the suitability, or absence of it, in various directions becomes very clear. To maintain the traditional centre as the centre we must look inside the 400m circle for opportunity land. If we go outside this, the centre-linked shopping trip becomes too extended. When we look inside the circle we find that to the east the fabric is very dense as it is to the south-east. Small streets of small plots define a fabric which is very attractive but only for the development of smaller trading space. The impact of larger edge units would destroy this quarter. Access to the edge would also be difficult for any significant circulation routes on this side. Although Pearse Road is significant as an access route, it is terminal, and any extension of its system to serve the town from the east would have severe consequences on the fabric of the old town.

To the north-east, the river separates Stephen Street from the town centre. Stephen Street, though now linked to pedestrian flows, holds the clear distinct character of a commercial/financial quarter, which also contains an arts and cultural bias. Any extension of large scale shopping over here would be required to jump existing land-uses which would in time be under pressure to turn ground floor space into frontage retail space. This would alter significantly the heritage of this part of the centre.

To the south, the established character of John Street, Temple Street and the cathedrals form a major integrated amenity as an urban area of particular attraction, linking as it does in the west to Churchill and Wolfe Tone Street.

It is to the north-west however, in the area of the railway station, Quay Street and on both sides of Adelaide Street that the most significant large pockets of transitional land occur within or touching the 400m circle. It is on this side also that access from the national primary road system, whether by the proposed W5 or otherwise, is most facilitated in and out of the core without significant damage to the fabric of the town.

As the centre expands, its edge of centre convenience stores, placed between the centre and the large car-parking facility, need ideally to move outward with this expansion, but not ahead of it.

We know with a caution from Hillier that if we jump too far with a convenience superstore, it will remove support from the centre for a significant number of years. With its recent downturn in rank priority this would be a dangerous course for Sligo to take in the immediate short-term.



However as the centre expands also it attracts comparison goods stores of increasing size and these need space. Many comparison goods stores do not need to be as close to car-parking facilities.

As the centre increases in size, it also becomes less appropriate to bring traffic into its core. Instead the penetration by the car moves slightly outwards as the car-borne shopper is prepared to walk greater distances in a larger urban footprint.

A combination of all of these trends would be satisfied in Sligo by a process in which land would first be occupied at the centre by the large convenience store with, on its outer edge, the car-park. At a later stage this land or floor space would then be taken-over by expanding comparison goods floorspace while the superstore and its car-park move outwards to a site which is still on the edge of the centre but on the edge of a larger central footprint.

In Sligo the outer site might be at Prin Mill Road in 2030, the inner site being at Wine Street until then. In this way a careful support structure nurses the retail balance of the city through its expansion.

Parker clearly identifies Sligo's opportunity in its compactness and strongly advises that consolidation of the core is the route to take in the location of superstores.

Parker observes that pedestrian counts in Sligo are consistently high relative to the size of the city. These observations are taken from counts (by Parker) in 1993 and 1998. Pedestrian counts taken in the course of the Rockwood Parade study in 1992 may at first appear to show slightly higher numbers than those of the Parker surveys. This however is explained by the fact that the 1992 counts are of all persons passing a cordon while those of 1993 and 1998 are of only adults.

It has been observed that the range difference in pedestrian activity between Monday and Saturday is very high in Sligo. In the case of some small market towns in Britain the imbalance between days of the week tends to be greater when the hinterland and thus the travel distances are larger, suggesting a greater latent potential perhaps for event-shopping development.

In addition to traffic congestion however, the lack of a pedestrian domain is perceived as a major disincentive to attract shoppers to Sligo. Yet O'Connell Street, a north-south space expanding towards the south, is already an ideal spatial form and with pedestrianisation could become a new pedestrian focus with the specialist shopping of the Rockwood Parade to High Street precinct to one side, and the main anchor stores to the other, close to public transport and car access all within a cross section of 350m reach. The core therefore even in an expanded form would still have the capability to provide an unusually compact and attractive shopping environment.

CHAPTER 6

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITE AND SURROUNDING TOWN

The relationships between the block development and its edge, and with surrounding uses through its edge, will be significant.

A number of existing buildings should of course be preserved on O'Connell Street. This however should not create any limitations since frontage uses on O'Connell Street operate through existing retail ground floors which may still carry any connections under perimeter buildings, between increased retail activity within the block and the increased activity of O'Connell Street. This principle would apply also within the Wine Street frontages between O'Connell Street and the existing Wine Street car park entrance and in John Street between O'Connell Street and Charles Street.

The John Street frontages of the block, between Charles Street and Adelaide Street have of course both a use and building heritage to protect. Connections into and out of the block and between these frontages and the block must therefore be handled sensitively. Any pedestrian exits, however minor, will tend to generate frontage activity in the surrounding residential buildings, encouraging the transfer of ground floor use to retail.

The principal desired connection through the John Street edge would be the link with the existing car park of the Catholic Cathedral. This car park is extensively used on all days of the week as an overflow facility for town centre car parking. It is entered via Temple Street. The car park is connected to John Street by flights of steps which negate its use for trolley-borne convenience goods shoppers. For this reason its user is more likely to be in a position to select alternative routes to the centre, via Adelaide Street or John Street / O'Connell Street, each of which adds just three minutes walking time to the block core. The need to maintain a direct route through John Street frontages would therefore appear to be less critical. The charge system at the Cathedral car park, by which the owners charge a flat rate at exit, irrespective of time spent, is also more likely to attract longer stay users of the town centre.

The relationship between the centre-block site and Wine Street is critical. Wine Street is an attractive street with important buildings in the city's heritage. For discussion it may be divided into two halves, east and west. The eastern half is a retail area which should be supported by centre-block retail development. The western half is an area of former residence and office use, now almost exclusively turned to office use. Buildings in this area have, like those in John Street, a high rating on the heritage inventory. It must be pointed out however that Wine Street is not a particularly attractive space at its west end, between Culbertson Terrace, of the early 19th Century and Vernon Terrace of the late 19th Century, as the former, on the south side of the street, is taller than the latter on the north side. For this reason it is often a dark street, and does not therefore have the same quality as John Street. Office use, generally of small professional offices, is however a good preserving use for its important built heritage.

This part of Wine Street should not be penetrated by retail activity as, like in John Street, this would induce the eventual opening of retail frontages close to pedestrian routes. At the west end of Wine Street, a recessed Dunnes Stores frontage leaves a gap which, combined with a vacant building next door, would allow frontage or route connection between the centre block activity and the west-end of Wine Street. This represents an opportunity which might be developed close to an externally active corner of the block. However the long route to this corner from the core of the block, is something not easily developed without the creation of fragmented sites on its flanks. This difficulty is illustrated in the development of strategies in Chapter 7.



DIAGRAM 605

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING EXISTING BLOCK WITH CENTRAL CAR PARK

(SOURCE: IRIS)

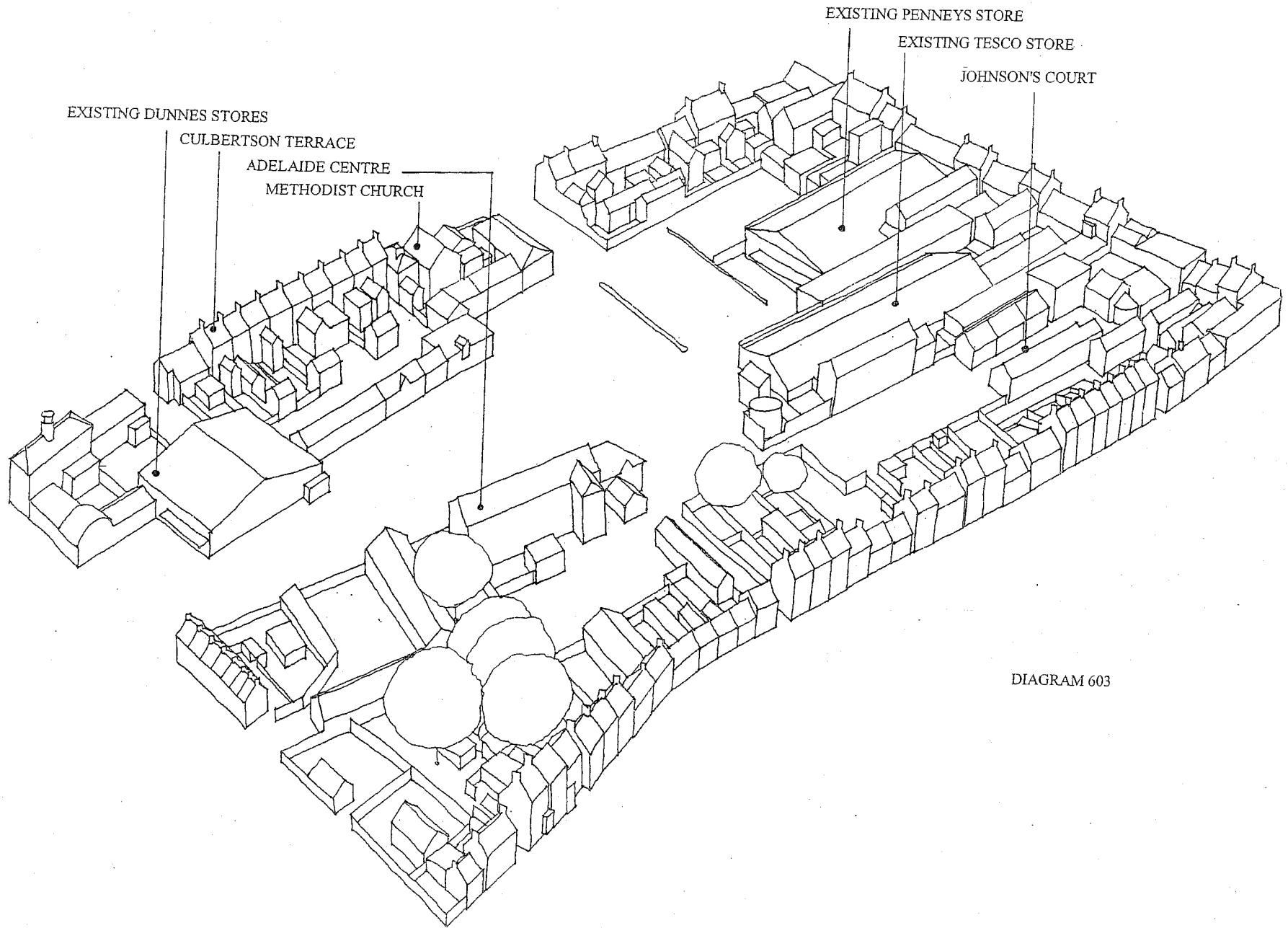


DIAGRAM 603

The current centre of activity in Sligo is between O'Connell Street and the Tesco mall. It is suggested that the central activity of the town will continue to be centred about the new central spaces of this block and O'Connell Street. Pedestrian connections between the block and O'Connell Street are therefore critical. Block permeability by pedestrian routes is an attractive characteristic, as it gives the user plenty of route choice, making shopping more attractive. With too many routes however, the route share of pedestrian activity drops and routes lose their share balance leading to dominance of some and death of others. Distances, frequency of routes, eventual desire lines and projected intensity of footfall must be carefully co-ordinated therefore in feasibility judgements. It is recommended that no more than three routes be permitted to link the block core with O'Connell Street, based on potential distances between routes and the ability of these to satisfy desire lines while securing comfortable activity. The ideal positions for these are developed in the subsequent strategy (Chapter 7). It is recommended that a route to Wine Street should be maintained at or about the position of the existing exit and that no alternative route should be permitted through the block edge between this position and O'Connell Street, or between this position and the current Dunnes Stores recessed frontage to Wine Street. This strong block edge will then use the activity of the north end of O'Connell Street and that of Knox Street to generate sustained activity in the area, in order to support the existing shops without leakage.

The emerging urban structure by which large scale retail activity in the central sites of a block, connects to similar activity in the central sites of adjacent blocks, by developing pedestrian links across existing live streets, onto which the existing smaller scale shops are maintained, is an urban typology not inappropriate in this type of urban structure, as long as service access can be achieved without putting the existing streets under strain.

The way in which centre-block sites connect across Adelaide Street however, being both on east and west sides of this street, without any significant facade activity of a smaller scale to the street, offers an immense opportunity to connect the block in question to that on the west side of Adelaide Street, whether to the W5 route, or to other uses within this block. It is critical here however that the crust of high quality residential properties around this western block, to Wolfe Tone Street, to Lord Edward Street and to Upper John Street, be substantially maintained, and be maintained with sufficient back garden provision to support residential amenity.

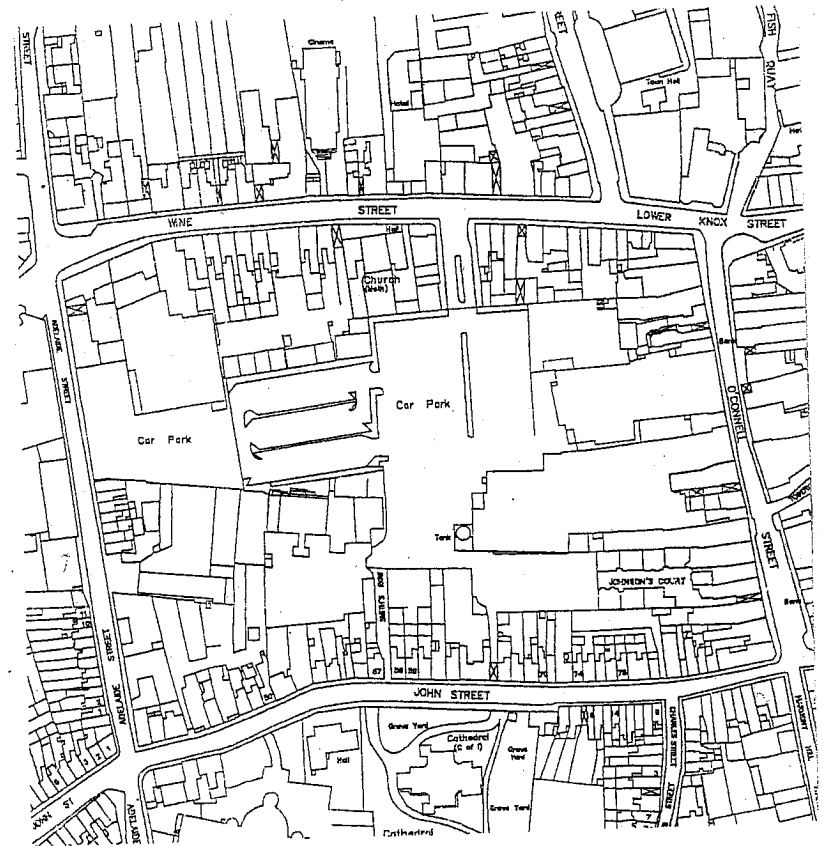
The Bus Eireann service depot on the junction of Adelaide Street and Lord Edward Street is identified as a site which may in the future be regarded as transitional, offering immense opportunities to consolidate the relationship between the Wine Street block and the activities of transportation access from the north west, in the course of developing an urban space of significant quality.

Links between the block north of Wine Street and the block south of Wine Street should be an important consideration of site design also. The development of the block north of Wine Street might have been seen in the ideal sequence as a stage beyond development of the southward block. However, the development of retail space is already underway here. The ideal point of connection between the southward block and the northward block would be in the vicinity of the Bohemian Pub, sufficiently westward to permit deep mall sites on its Quay Street side. Route entry should not be further west than the Gaiety Cinema. If it is, the link to the southward block would become disjoint, without continuous frontage activity. Ultimately pressure would develop to open access through Culbertson Terrace which would be undesirable for reasons already outlined. (Chapter 3).

The centre block site is west of the retail core and, whatever road structure takes place in the serving of the core, it can be assumed that access to the site will be from the west. This is so essentially because the large scale urban uses requiring access together with the road and transportation networks feeding this access, all take place to the west of the centre, the east

being an urban fabric of more high density, where smaller plots are more rigid, and where the creation of any large scale access would damage immensely the urban fabric.

When we come to consider the actual edges of the central block therefore, for the same reasons access would be from the Adelaide Street side. John Street is part of a residential precinct. O'Connell Street is part of the pedestrian domain of the town centre and Wine Street is a secondary access system requiring its primary access from either Adelaide Street or from another westward alternative.



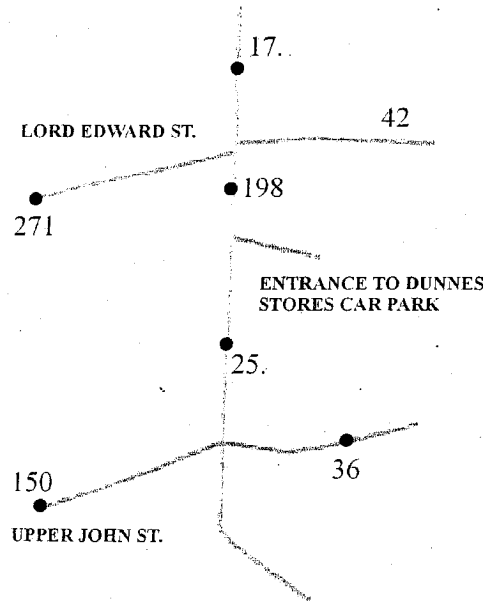
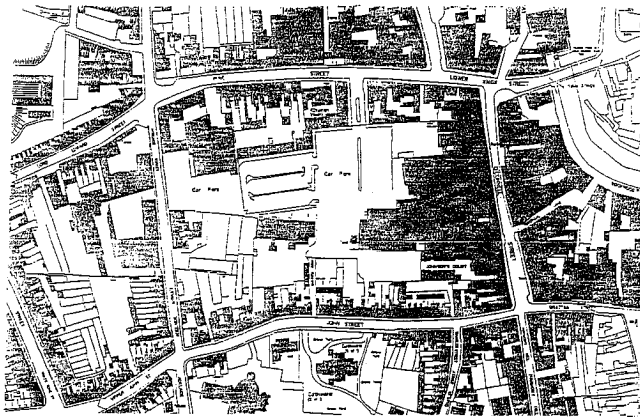


DIAGRAM 716
PEDESTRIAN COUNTS

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

Here we take the uses which are proposed for the site together with the cues from the surrounding town and the identified requirements of users and we consider the optimum layout in which these factors may be placed.

Two superstores, one of approximately 5,500m² and the other of approximately 4,000m² wish to locate in the block subject to specific service access requirements.

In order to use these as anchor constituents of a regional event shopping centre, which consists currently of substantially local shops of the 60m² average size with a street frontage, a middle-ground support framework of large shops should be accommodated, possibly in the expansion of existing established shops on O'Connell Street and with a support framework of smaller units in the 100m² size range.

The shops should be laid out in disposition which supports most efficiently the existing shopping to the east and should include a multi-storey car park providing over 1,000 spaces which should be accessible from the west and placed in such a position that pedestrian activity between it and the shops will offer maximum frontage exposure.

There is also a specific local authority requirement that a large public space of strong identity be included centrally in the development.

Existing pedestrian activity surrounding and crossing the site is an important consideration in the recognition of desire lines. It has been established that the shopper is attracted by the activity of comfortable crowd numbers (Convery). O'Connell Street represents an area of high pedestrian activity, as does the east end of Wine Street. (Parker).

Some extra pedestrian counts were taken on the western side of the site to examine pedestrian activity from residential areas and from transport setdown facilities to the west.

Diagram 716 shows figures for Lord Edward Street and Upper John Street for a mid-afternoon thirty minute period. Proportional split from these routes is traced through the eastward connections to the centre. Two interesting observations can be made. First of all the activity from Upper John Street shows a two-to-one preference from the John Street route to town, with the southern end of Adelaide Street showing insignificant activity. Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly, the Lord Edward Street distribution shows an enormous bias towards the Dunnes Stores carpark, indicating a centre block or cross block desire line. It is suggested that as transportation routes develop, pedestrian activity from this corner into the block will increase as this becomes the major route to the town centre from all modes of the surrounding regional transportation system.

The anticipated activity which this "shopping centre" would generate points to its main space as being a dedicated pedestrian domain. However, the concept of bus, taxi and delivery access being permitted to penetrate the block to a limited extent might be examined as might the facility for private car pickup points at the edge of the block close to shopping trolley exit routes.

All surveys recognise lack of car-parking in the centre of Sligo as a major negative decision factor in the choice of venue for long distance shopping. Access to the car-parks should therefore be clear, efficient and easily understood in its relationship to regional routes and of course, for reasons already identified, should be from the western side of the block.

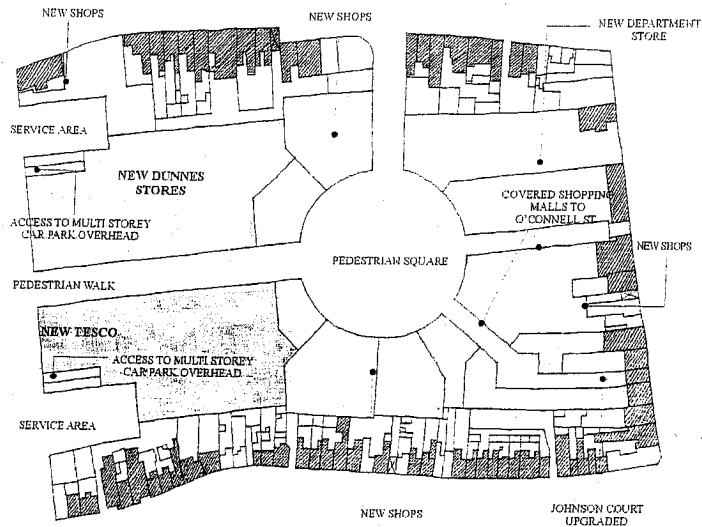
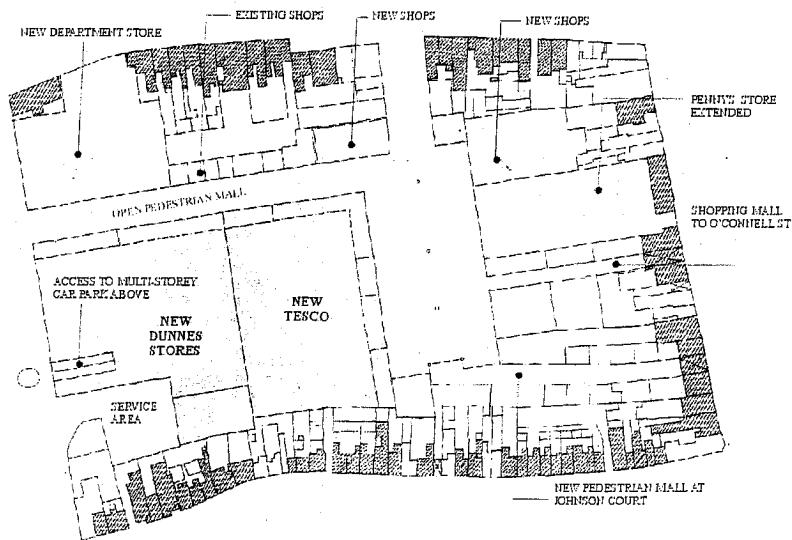


DIAGRAM 701

DIAGRAM 702



In the urban design process, an optimum distribution is laid down, almost in model form, in which land uses are positioned in ideal functional relationships to each other. On-the-ground adjustments are then carried out after which form and spatial quality are tested through a number of options with orientation and light as significant factors in an attempt to identify public space combinations which would be attractive, and edge conditions between uses and spaces which would facilitate good architecture.

The anticipated pedestrian desire lines must also be carefully assigned to a number and form of routes which will maintain "buzz" in order to create the "comfortable crowd" characteristic. Pedestrians must not be drawn too far off their ideal desire lines (as such causes irritation to the shopper), but must nevertheless be led through routes of sufficient interest to induce browsing. It is essential of course in the layout of spaces that no terminal cul-de-sacs are created which might at any time of the day become unattractive as spaces.

For the block to be maximised in the public space layout, it is suggested that the public space framework should extend within the core of the block west of the existing exit to Wine Street. If this is pursued however, without the creation of east facing cul-de-sacs, a public route must exit either to Adelaide Street or to the west end of Wine Street.

The diagram framework used for discussion in the subsequent layout formation process illustrates merely the distribution of land uses. The shapes laid down do not imply buildings of such shapes. The application of architecture and building form to these shapes is developed in Chapter 8.

A first simple layout illustrated in diagram 701 places the two superstores on each side of a central axial spine following closely pedestrian desire lines on site, in a simple statement of organisational logic. Because of the space constraints created by halving the north-south dimension of the block in this process however, two multi-storey car-parks would be required, each superstore requiring associated access to parking. Two service access areas with large land takes would also be required. As an alternative, the central mall could of course be covered, allowing the car-parks above to link, but for reasons outlined elsewhere (spatial review of 705) this is considered undesirable.

The process of reacting to and moving from this idea therefore leads us to the concept of grouping both superstores, and as an economic consequence multi-storey car-parking overhead, to a single side of the so-called spine of the site.

To select a position for this we regard as fixed, the frontages of the existing shops to the north edge of the site first, together with their requirement for frontage space, and we fix similar frontage lines for the western extremities of properties in O'Connell Street, both of these lines by implication forming the edges of public spaces.

The presence of these lines means that, in having the two superstores and their associated parking overhead to one side of the block, we may locate them only on the southern side, at the south-eastern corner.

These two existing frontage lines also serve to fix the edges of the public space framework. We only therefore have control over the widths of these spaces, or of their "other" sides.

In order to create identity and place it is suggested that one of these spaces might be broad (as a square) and the other might be long (a street).

A number of solutions with these constituents are explored and a typical scheme is represented in diagram 702, using a broad space in north-south configuration.

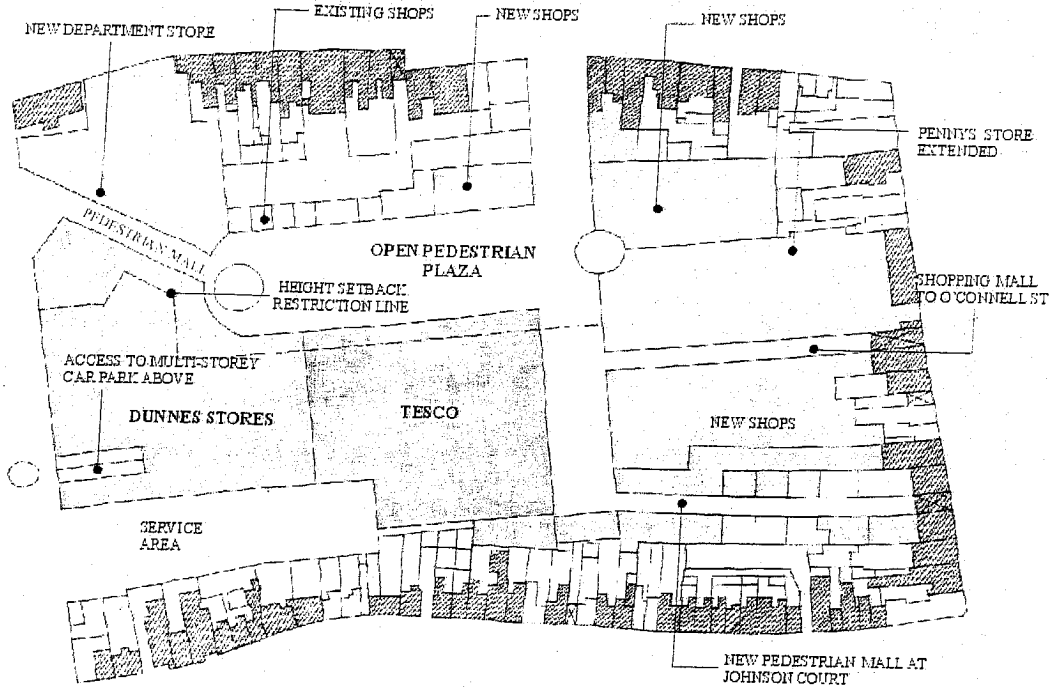


DIAGRAM 705

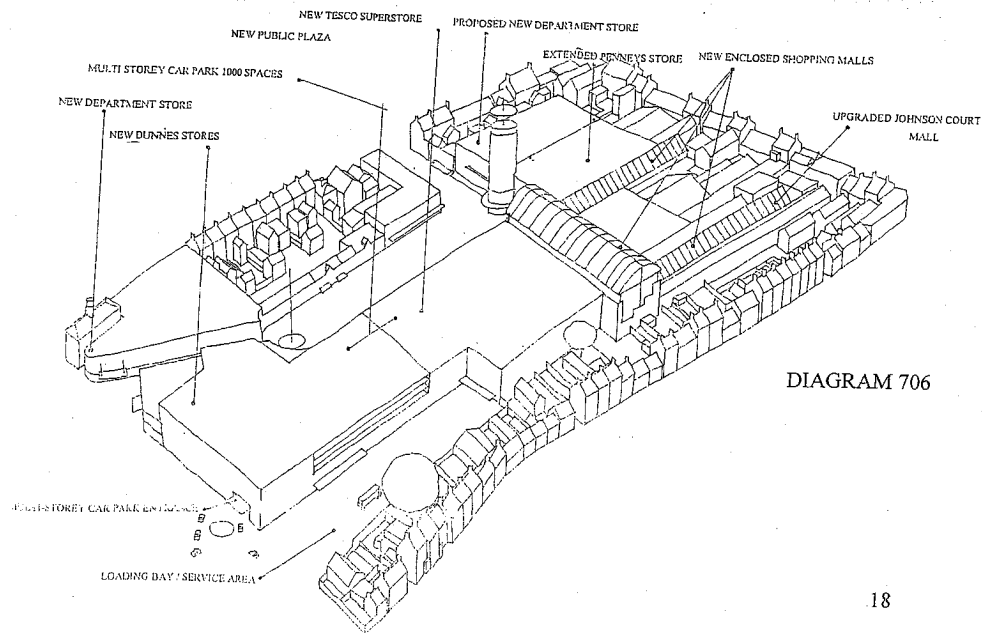


DIAGRAM 706

The pressure for space by the superstores suggests movement northwards of the western street route but this movement is limited again by the line of the existing small properties north of the existing car-park.

This leads us to reverse the public space configuration, creating a large east-west space on the northern side which ends two-thirds westwards to give way to a north-westwards pedestrian mall which exits to Adelaide Street, as far north as is possible without weakening the parallel circulation through Wine Street. By this we reach solution 705.

Although this solution could be adjusted to take traffic from the existing circulation system, solution 705 accepts the presence of the proposed W5 route as the main vehicle feeder to the scheme.

When we reach solution 705 however, the north-south space, now of street dimensions, which connects to pedestrian routes from O'Connell Street is tending to deviate quite far from direct pedestrian desire lines. It is tending to create an "elbow" route. It is therefore proposed to add activity to this by internalising it; to cover it for example by a glazed roof, in which case it would also be desirable to internalise the two smaller scale routes to O'Connell Street.

At this stage, in 705, we reach the framework of a workable scheme according to our land use brief. This scheme has been viewed and tested by representatives of the superstores and found to be acceptable. It is a scheme which has the added advantage of allowing both superstores to trade on their existing premises while constructing their new premises, thus reducing to a minimum any discontinuity in transfer.

When we test this scheme however with an assessment of the character and orientation of the central spaces we find that the buildings which require greatest mass and volume; the multi-storey carpark over the superstores, all occur on the south or south-western side of the main public spaces.

It would be possible to improve moderately the sense of orientation in these spaces by allowing the buildings on the north side of the space to become significantly taller than those on the south side. To do this within the sites and form of the existing already-constructed buildings however would be extremely difficult as since these have a depth of approximately 8m, the required height of 18 to 20m would not be economic within their shape or floor space distribution.

In order to make the spaces attractive therefore it will be necessary to create setbacks on the upper floors of the larger buildings. Otherwise much of the spaces would be in shade. The way in which these buildings may present or assert themselves to the street will as a consequence be limited. The actual presentation of facades on the south and west side of these spaces may have to be limited to two storeys, other floors being considerably set back. This is a major disadvantage, which originates in the obligation to locate the bulk of the scheme's building mass on the south side of the block. It represents restrictions both in the initial building forms and in any future expansions. When we look back through our design process we find that this situation is necessitated almost solely by the requirement to maintain the existing two storey buildings along the north side of the car-park.

In order to exhaust our consideration of optimum layouts therefore, we should consider solutions, or an optimum solution in which the requirements of these shops as a limitation might not apply. To do this we take the process back to the transition between 701 and 702 where the two superstores were taken to be grouped to one side of the block. In diagram 702 we took them to the south side. Refer now to diagram 708 however where instead we take them to the north side of the spine. In this position they would again take access from

Adelaide Street as does the car-park which goes over them. The advantage here however is that the bulk and mass of the larger structures is placed on the northern side of the site where height and shadow are least offensive. Height is instead used to advantage to take sunlight and reflect it back down into the surrounding spaces.

The ideal position for the main space in this solution would therefore be to the south side where a large formal contact or 'agora' emerges. The balanced position within the block by which this space connects to the existing mall pickup routes from O'Connell Street is much more satisfactory since all of the routes into the site now experience equal pedestrian tension; that is there are no "elbows" in the circulation system and routes stay close to pedestrian desire lines.

A lower stack of supporting shops is placed against the southern side of the main space, with easy circulation access from Adelaide Street for services behind. The second major space, the connection to Wine Street, now becomes clearly linked to the existing space.

The disadvantage with this scheme is however its disregard for the existing line of small two-storey shops along the northern edge of the existing car-park. A distinct advantage could however be offered to these shops to move them to the south side of the major space, with comparable but distinctly advantageous units.

Parker, referring to these particular shops, recommends that some of the retailers trading in the Wine Street car-park might, as an incentive to move in this manner, be given customer concessions in the multi-storey car-park. It has however been suggested that since recent use of the Wine Street car-park has become saturated for most of the day, the convenience of car-parking to these units is in fact no longer a convenience. It is clearly no longer a service to their customers.

Any movement of the small traders en masse would of course be possible only if the total project were under the involvement of a major developer who could both provide the new position and use the vacated position within the domain of a single operation.

If a major developer were to develop all of the block in a single operation of course, other economies also present themselves. Diagram 712 suggests a highly organised version of scheme 708. Here, permitted by the scale of investment, a completely flexible service spine is proposed under the main pedestrian spaces, which would be raised slightly to a level equal to that of the south end of Adelaide Street, which is approximately 2.8m above the existing Wine Street entrance to the existing car-park. Diagram 712 is perhaps a direct expression of the ideal relationship briefed for the whole project.

If a large comparison-goods shopping centre (of Jervis, Dublin scale) wished to fill expected retail demand in this position within a forty year horizon, as suggested in the long-term analysis (Chapter 5), it could expand vertically and do so inoffensively in the northern section of the block. It could not do so in the southern section.

Within all of the above solutions, the O'Connell Street third of the site remains significantly unaltered. There is a clear reason for this. The west side of O'Connell Street has supported the existence of a number of large comparison-goods shops which in turn have supported O'Connell Street with a balance in floor space unit sizes.

If too many pedestrian routes, which are also centre block open spaces, develop in this sector, thereby creating too much frontage in proportion to depth space, the result will compromise the ability of larger units to trade or to expand.

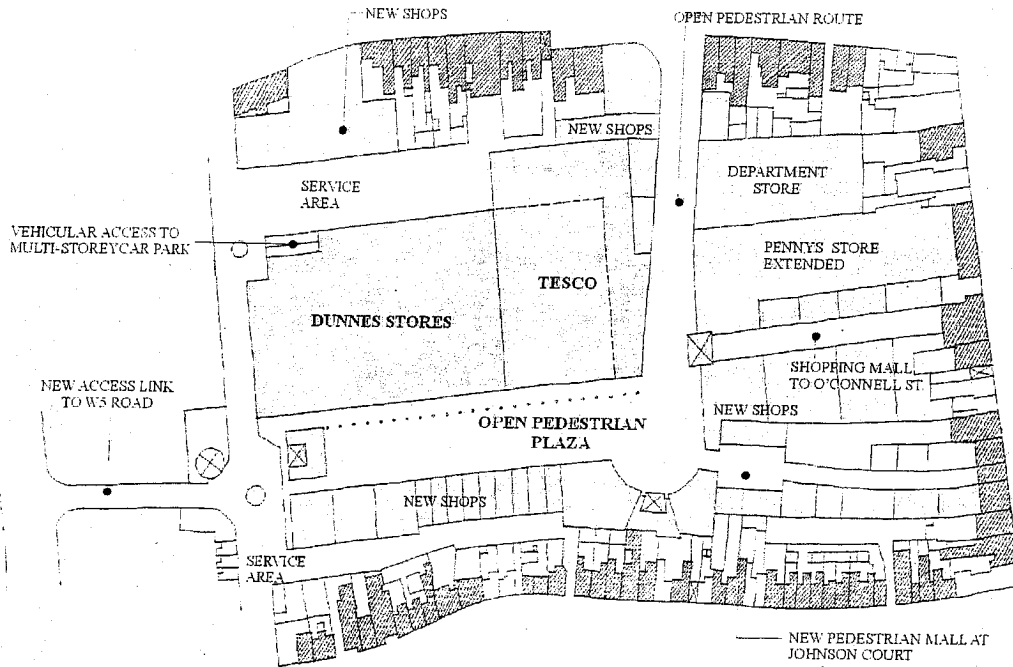


DIAGRAM 708

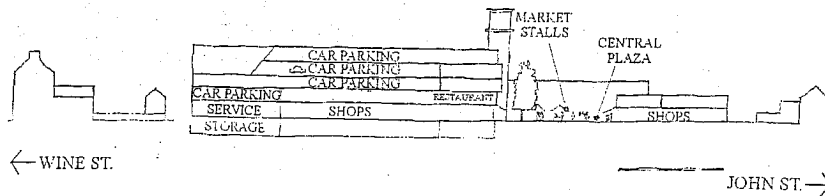
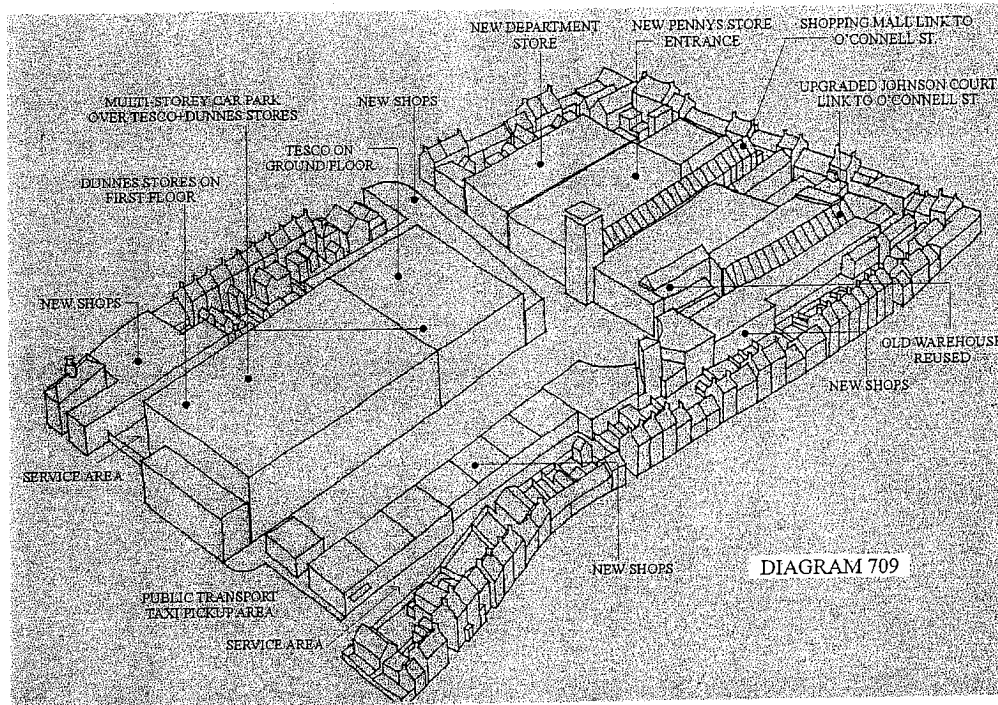


DIAGRAM 710



If as a result, smaller units were to force larger units out of this sector, the resultant mass of small comparison goods shops within the town centre would be out of balance with the larger shops. It is suggested that with the majority of shops of larger floor space situated west or north-west of here, the reach distance to smaller local shops in High Street and Castle Street would be too great, causing an eventual pressure on those shops to migrate to either O'Connell Street or farther west.

Care must be taken to safeguard the existing retail centre of gravity. O'Connell Street as a spine will secure this in its present position. Direct and obvious links from the centre of any new shopping centre to the centre of the existing small shop network will thus be critical.

In the creation and definition of urban space however, it will be desirable to have a building fabric of more than single storey to the east of any centre-block spaces, in order to provide enclosure and definition of an appropriate scale to urban spaces.

Some shop types do have the capability to work on more than one floor. Size threshold is an important characteristic for medium to upper size comparison goods retail units who venture to do this. It relates to the exposure of goods to casual pedestrian traffic, but also to the scale economies of providing access for all goods or users to upper floors.

Consideration of other uses for upper floors however does enter the discussion, as it is generally accepted that retail space works less successfully on upper floors in the Irish town.

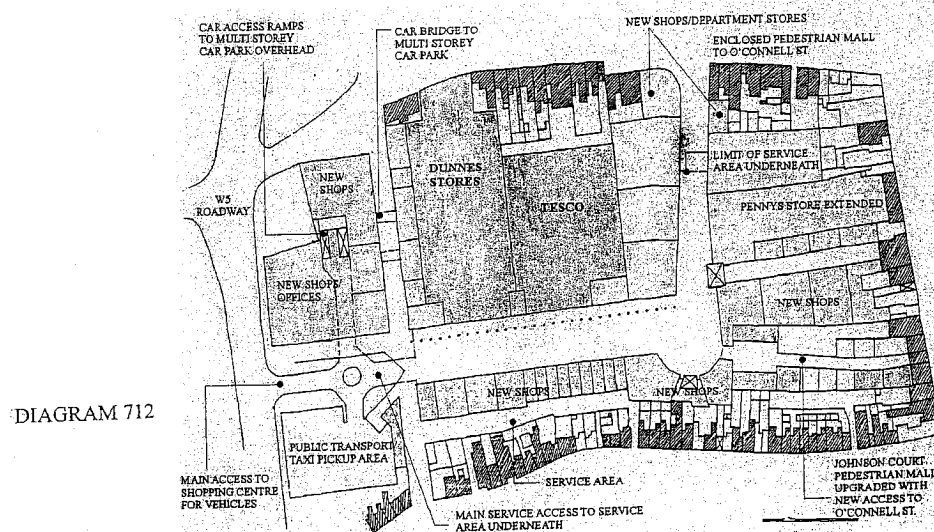
While for reasons of future flexibility already outlined it would not be desirable to introduce residence into the core of this block, leisure uses might be suitable in the area. Leisure uses which popularly support town centres are those such as swimming pool, gymnasium, crèche, library, bowling arena, indoor sports courts, cinemas, internet cafes or eating or drinking establishments of various forms. Offices such as those for the business innovation centre identified or recommended for Sligo in the Fitzpatrick Report might of course also be suitable. Parker suggests that Sligo's central area has relatively less restaurant floor space in comparison with other towns of rank size, and suggests this as ideal use for upper floors in the central area.

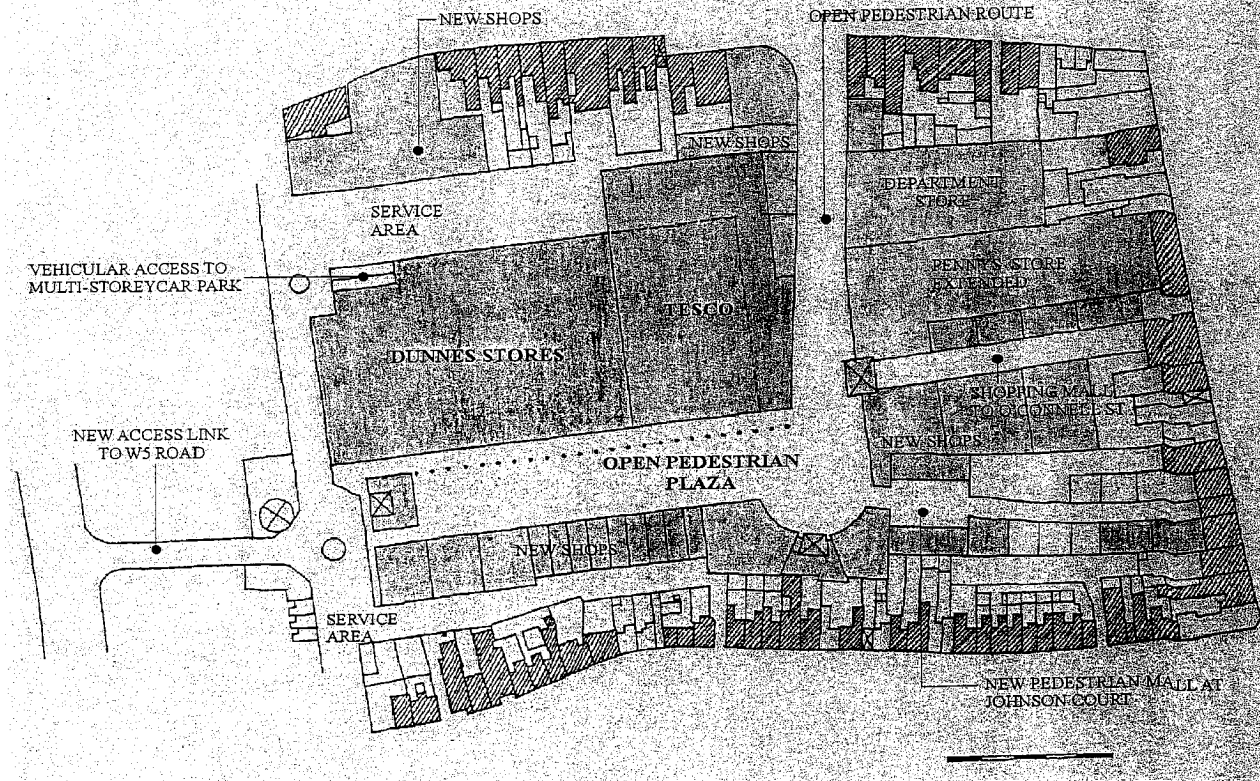
The inclusion anywhere in the development of space for new uses in which current landowners are not trading or operating, would provide the development with an attraction for external developers as it is in the sale of such new space that the most significant profit would be made.

There is however another factor under which the east, or O'Connell Street, end of the site becomes perhaps even more critical. Since Parker has identified that Sligo has not increased its retail offer in recent years, a mere expansion of the two large existing stores in the centre will not increase the range, or will add nothing new to the perception from a distance, of Sligo's retail offer unless this expansion can be used to attract other retailers of value or to upgrade the centre to a more attractive environment.

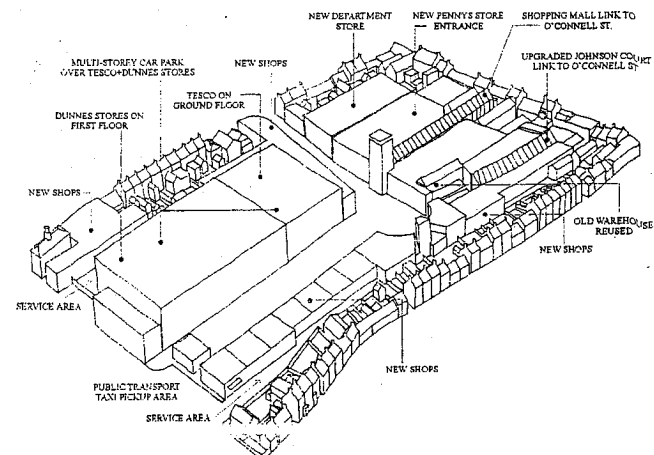
Parker recognises the critical role of comparison-goods "anchors" in supporting the centre of Sligo as an event shopping destination and surveys carried out by O'Rourke confirm the demand for UK multiples to be present in Sligo in order to foster event shopping.

There is a good reason to look at the capability of the centre to retain or accommodate medium sized multiples or a large comparison goods store in the short term.





RECOMMENDED SCHEME 708



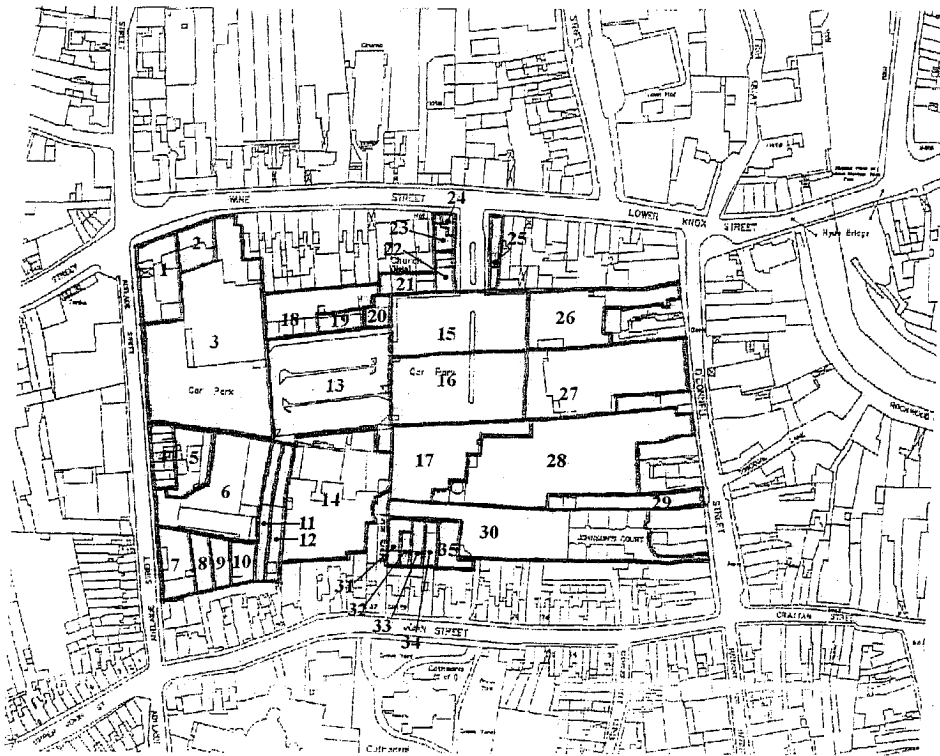


DIAGRAM 715
LAYOUT OF PRIMARY LAND TITLES

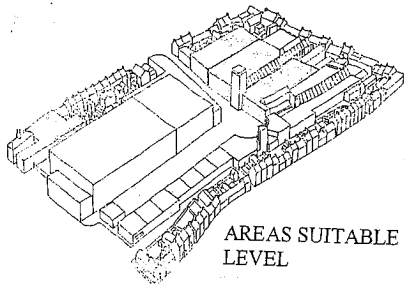


DIAGRAM 720
AREAS SUITABLE FOR DEPARTMENT STORES ON MORE THAN ONE LEVEL

The eastern third of the site is of course the ideal area for the provision of medium sized units of the 150m² to 1,000m² floor space size, the size range sought by many of the medium sized UK multiples (Parker). Diagram 720 suggests positions which might with the adjustment of surrounding uses provide for the location of larger units.

The central structure however does not facilitate easily a further space footprint for a very large comparison goods store of say 5,000m² at ground level, without severe redistribution of the existing medium sized stores to the O'Connell Street/Wine Street corner of the block. In fact there is no room for further large department stores in the central block, after the existing two have expanded to their required floor space.

Respondent user surveys quoted in Parker, and O'Rourke, show a strong demand for stores such as Marks and Spencer or Debenhams, to locate in Sligo. The trading footprint of either of these stores at say 4,000m² could not be accommodated together with an expanded Tesco and an expanded Dunnes Stores, at ground level in the Wine Street block. Although the Swangale development, one block to the north, may provide this trading space in sufficiently close relationship, there is also a good reason in the context of Wine Street to look at the possibilities of extending into, or considering available in the medium to long term, the only adjacent underused land bank; that on the opposite side of Adelaide Street.

It is in this context too of course that it may be appropriate to review the whole future relevance or function of Adelaide Street if its circulation role is taken over by the W5.

The role of this western block should be considered, to provide town centre floor space either between Adelaide Street and the W5, if the W5 comes to pass, or on the whole site area of the centre block west of Adelaide Street with access, through another entry if traffic is coming from a W7 route or other equivalent to the west.

There also of course appears to be another scenario on standby. If either Tesco or Dunnes Stores were to move to another site entirely, a land area would be available for a large comparison-goods store to enter the Wine Street block in combination with the remaining superstore in a comprehensive shopping centre. If the haste of one large store to move outwards were matched by the hesitancy of another not to do so, this scenario must not be omitted as an alternative.

The land ownership and plot distribution framework of the central block is highly favourable to redevelopment. First of all the block is essentially rectilinear, a facility which offers very efficient site shapes and connections to edge sites. Secondly the block is untypically large in the context of a normal Irish town centre. Blocks of up to 100m in length would be normal in such a town centre, as are blocks elsewhere in the centre of Sligo to the east of this area. A block length of 270m, as is the east-west dimension of this block, is untypical however and offers a rare opportunity to concentrate a large range of associated uses in a close relationship. Thirdly the site or plot sizes in the centre of this block are large, much larger than those which make up the main town centre to the east. This means that there are fewer titles. Diagram 715 shows the primary title distribution within the area proposed for redevelopment. Thirty-five primary titles are shown. Within this thirty-five however the bulk of the area is occupied by eleven large ownership pockets, with a number of smaller owners grouped to the south-east and north-centre. The owners of all of these eleven titles have already endorsed the principle of redevelopment. The local authority, on behalf of the public, have access to four of these; nos. 13, 15, 16 and 17.

URBAN DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS OF RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

This section develops the physical forms of what have up to now been segments of juxtaposed land uses, suggesting how architecture or design might be controlled or facilitated within the master plan. It explores both the opportunities within the site to create places or spaces of specific quality and the restrictions on the other hand which should be laid down to ensure that the existing environment which surrounds the site is not reduced in quality by anything which occurs on the site.

The planning of such a large area requires an unprecedented opportunity to co-ordinate the physical presentation of a section of the city. These guidelines therefore, while suggesting limited flexibility to facilitate variety in the presentation of buildings, attempt to maximise on this co-ordination, such that the plan may have an identity.

Guidelines attempt to ensure that the plan creates good urban spaces and facilitates, around these, good buildings. Where new forms will connect with the existing town the requirements of these connections are carefully stipulated with sensitivity for the existing buildings.

A number of critical recommendations on the form of buildings are made. Positions are identified where key buildings or distinct features would be appropriate. These might differ in form from their surroundings and might be quite tall. A tower for example might be appropriate acting as a punctuation form within the overall fabric.

A number of new buildings are also suggested at key positions to link the development to the existing streets around the perimeter. Important profile buildings here would be those of the entrance from Wine Street and those which surround the existing stone office building at the junction of Wine Street and Adelaide Street. Diagrams 802 and 803 show suggested treatments of buildings at these important locations.

Flexibility should be permitted in the interpretation of edge lines between buildings and spaces as laid down by the land use configuration plan of the previous chapter. The diagrams of Chapter 7 would become architecture in this process. An "adhesion zone" might be suggested. Within this the lines shown as the edge of buildings might have flexibility of 3m in either direction in order to permit articulation of the edges. However the final line of each space edge, end to end, must be agreed between the Planning Authority and all properties, before any development would proceed.

Recommendations for the above factors are developed for schemes 708 and 705 and sketch 801 illustrate examples of how these conditions might be treated.

The main physical impact of the development would be through its height over the forms of surrounding buildings. Height restrictions are therefore considered critical. Diagrams 804 and 805 show critical recommended heights for buildings throughout the block.

The forms of taller buildings, if properly controlled, would of course be largely hidden from the surrounding streets by the edge buildings of these streets, since the development is substantially a centre-block scheme. The physical perception of the scheme from O'Connell Street or John Street would be negligible. Only the frontage buildings will change Wine Street in very limited positions. Physical connections to the existing street frontages are few, with the exception of Adelaide Street. Adelaide Street could however be described as a street of limited frontage amenity. It is essentially industrial in character.

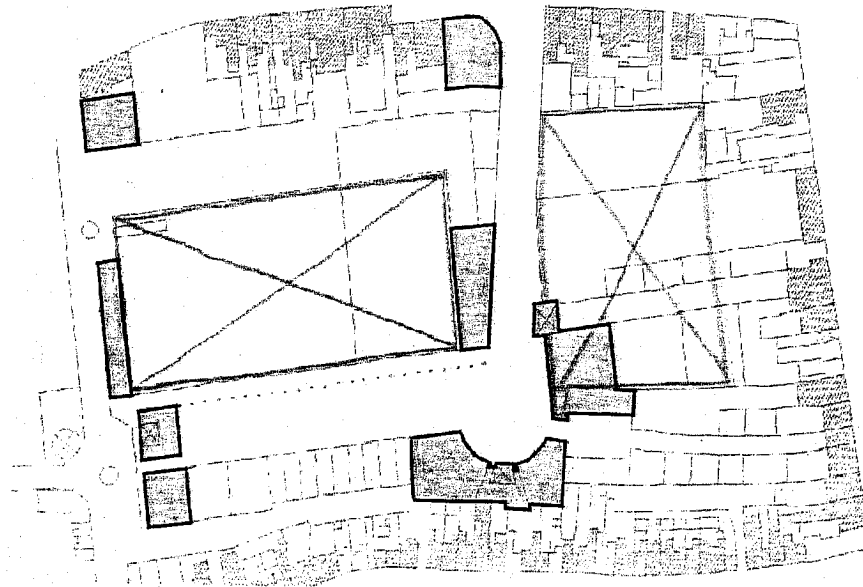




DIAGRAM 801

-  AREAS WHERE TALL BUILDING MASS WOULD BE ENCOURAGED
-  SUGGESTED FOCAL BUILDINGS

ANY STRUCTURE WHICH ADJOINS TURRETED CORNER BUILDING SHOULD MAINTAIN A GAP OF 3M HIGH BY 2.5 WIDE BELOW THE EXISTING EAVES HEIGHT OF THE CORNER BUILDING.

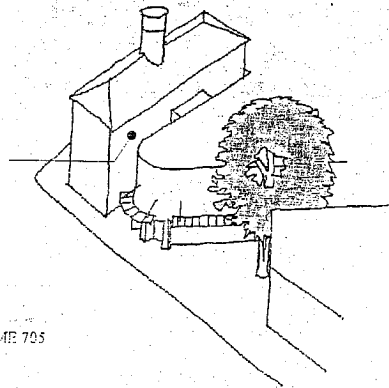


DIAGRAM 802

ADELAIDE ST. ENTRANCE TO SCHEME 705

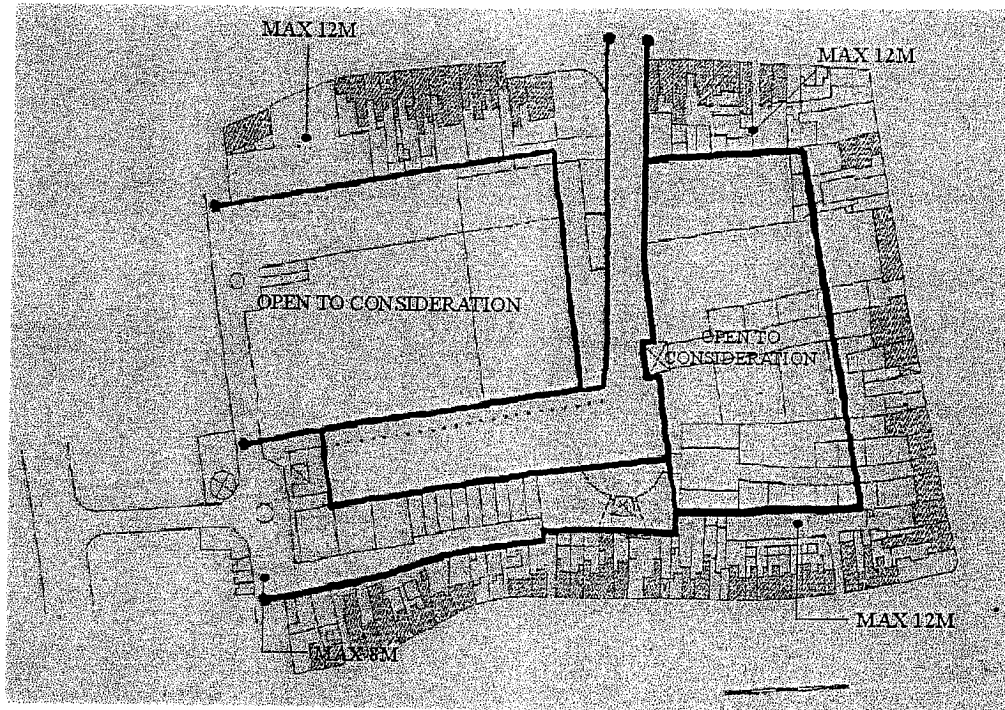


DIAGRAM 804 BUILDING HEIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS SCHEME 708

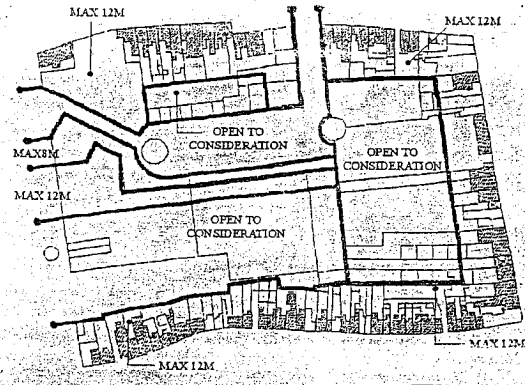


DIAGRAM 805 BUILDING HEIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS SCHEME 705

Because John Street is south of the proposed scheme, the impact of mass and overshadowing on John Street will be minimal. Back gardens to John Street which run right to the wall of the new scheme will still have the amenity of back gardens, using the perimeter walls of the scheme to trap sun. No pedestrian exits onto John Street are thus proposed, in order to safeguard the residential amenity of the street and to prevent a leakage of commercial activity into its facades.

There are a number of significant views within the town in which the presence of the new building forms will be felt. The following are the most obvious:

The view across Hyde Bridge from Stephen Street would be slightly altered as new structures would appear behind the existing buildings at the north end of O'Connell Street.

The view westwards along the river from Thomas Street Bridge to Rockwood Parade will take on a new skyline.

The view eastwards from Knappagh Road would also do so.

From the area of the cathedrals in Temple Street a new skyline would be visible above the existing one in John Street.

Two existing views outward from the site are particularly striking and should be maximised. One is the view of the cathedrals to the south, a background view beyond the lower forms of the foreground. The other is the view of Knocknarea to the west, a particularly rich view in the orientation of place. Both of these views could easily be facilitated in scheme 708 and could to some degree be incorporated into scheme 705.

Throughout the development, it is recommended that floor to floor dimensions for ground floor to first be 4m minimum with 3m minimum floor to floor dimensions on all other floors including car-parking decks. This would facilitate both short-term co-ordination and flexibility over time.

Some of the open spaces are laid out with cross-sectional dimensions which would have an intended suitability for market stalls and street market activity. Diagram 809 illustrates the type of effect which might be facilitated by the spatial sequence.

To give some indication of the scale of the development, sample footprints of two existing well known shopping centres, the St. Stephen's Green Centre in Dublin and the Eyre Square Centre in Galway are overlaid on the block in diagram 812 at an identical scale.

The image of the area as a shopping centre is something which merits consideration. The O'Rourke surveys show a strong identification by respondents of the importance of a "shopping centre" or the presence of such in a town as being the major constituent of a more attractive environment. The boundary between the concept of town centre as a shopping centre and the distinct "shopping centre" should of course be indistinguishable in a good town, but perhaps the "buzz" created by an indoor place is what creates an association in the mind of the user. A small proportion of enclosed covered malls is therefore important as a constituent of the town centre, especially when in an occasionally wet climate it is not desirable that only private shops be under cover while the public domain of the town centre remains totally exposed to weather.

Single image shopping centres under a single roof or in a single management do of course suffer from obsolescence in style, while external streets of differing shop profiles undergo a natural shop by shop regeneration which maintains variety in a much less conspicuous

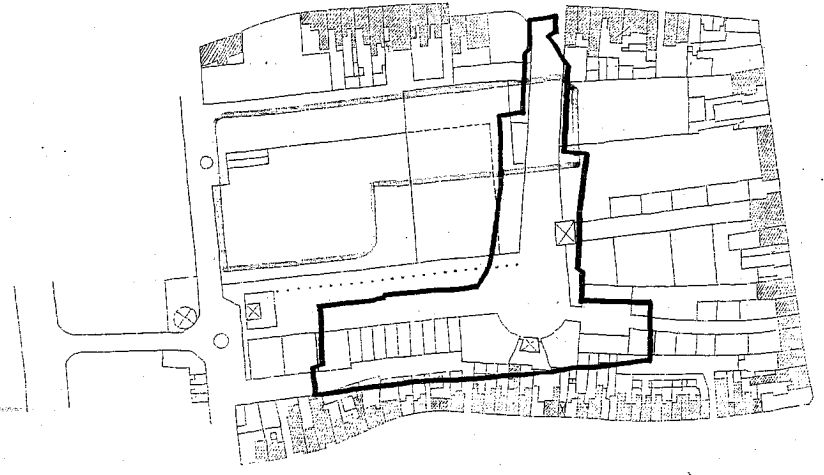
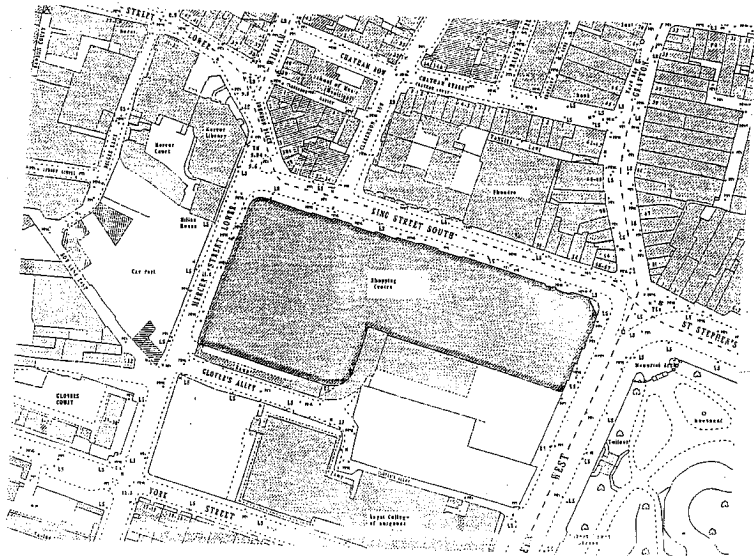
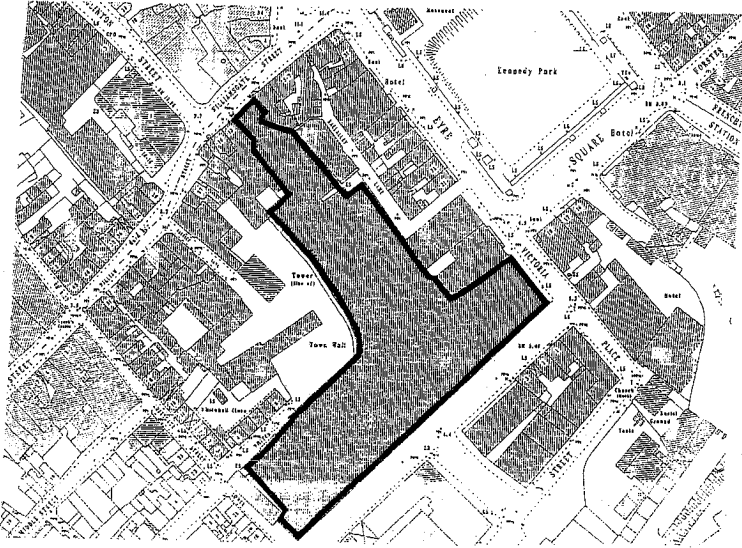
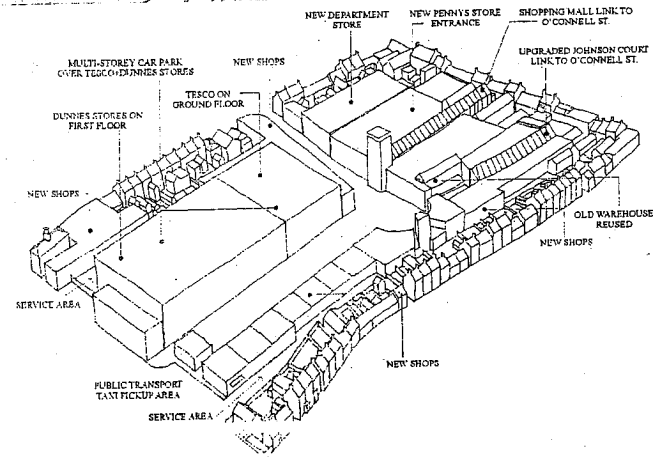


DIAGRAM 812

FOOTPRINT AREAS OF ST. STEPHENS GREEN SHOPPING CENTRE, DUBLIN AND EYRE SQUARE CENTRE, GALWAY SUPERIMPOSED OVER SLIGO PROPOSAL 708, AT EQUAL SCALE.



DIAGRAM 809 EASTWARD VIEW ALONG CENTRAL SPACE



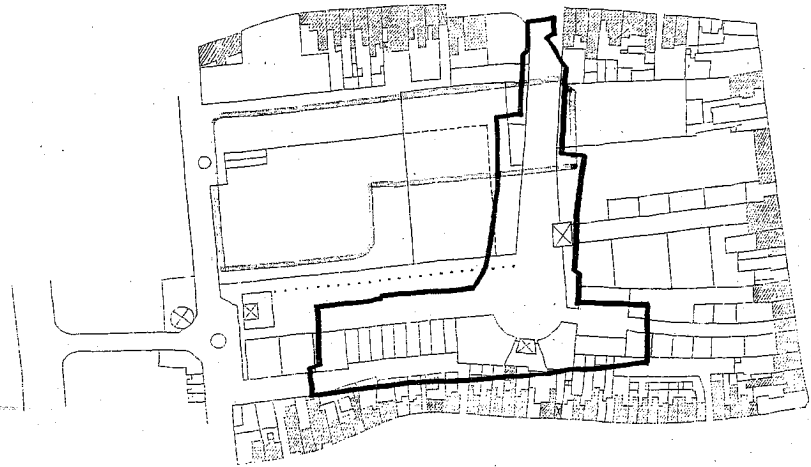
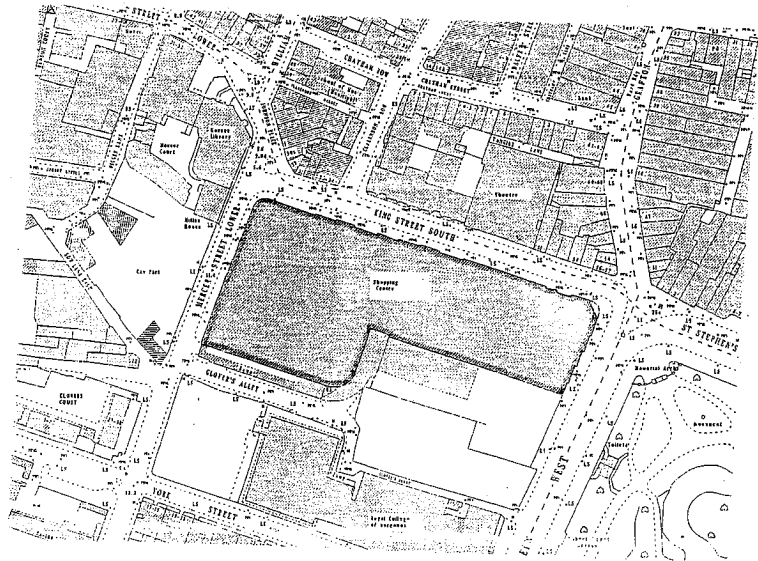
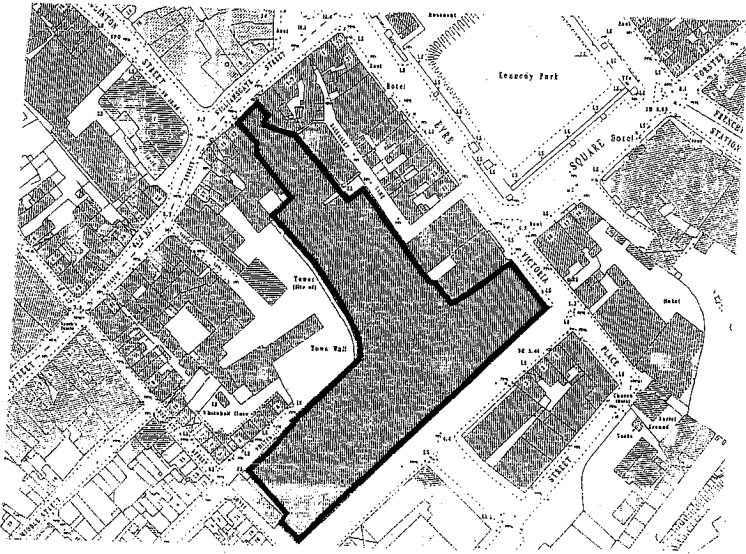


DIAGRAM 812

FOOTPRINT AREAS OF ST.STEPHENS GREEN SHOPPING CENTRE, DUBLIN AND EYRE SQUARE CENTRE, GALWAY SUPERIMPOSED OVER SLIGO PROPOSAL 708, AT EQUAL SCALE.

manner. Parker notes that more frequent and comprehensive shopping centre re-imaging programmes will become the norm in future retail scenarios.

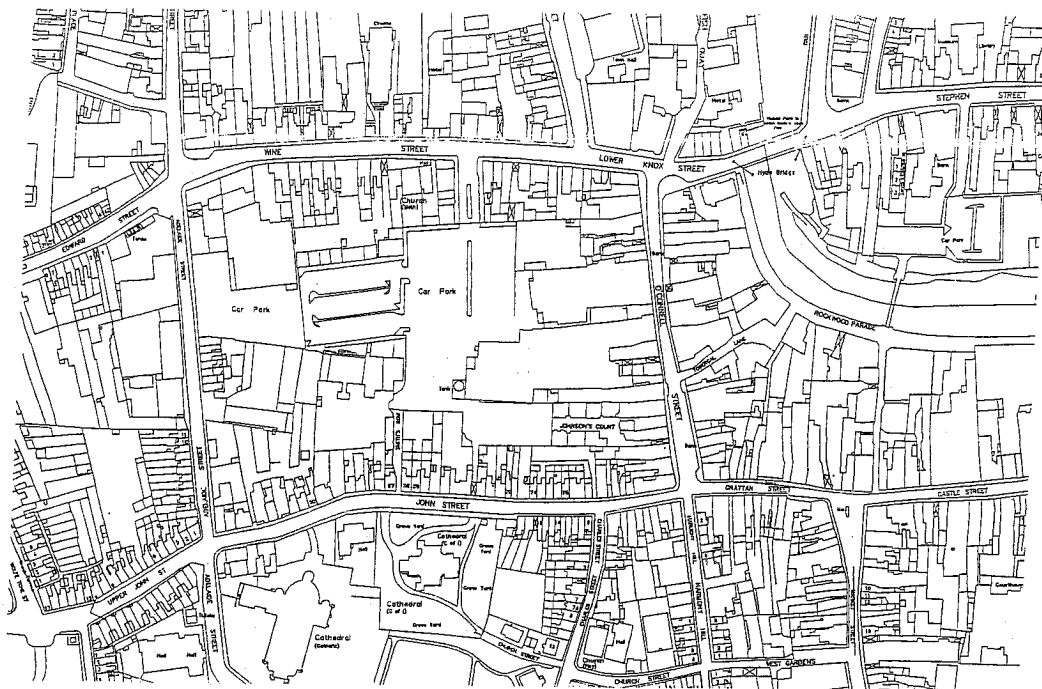
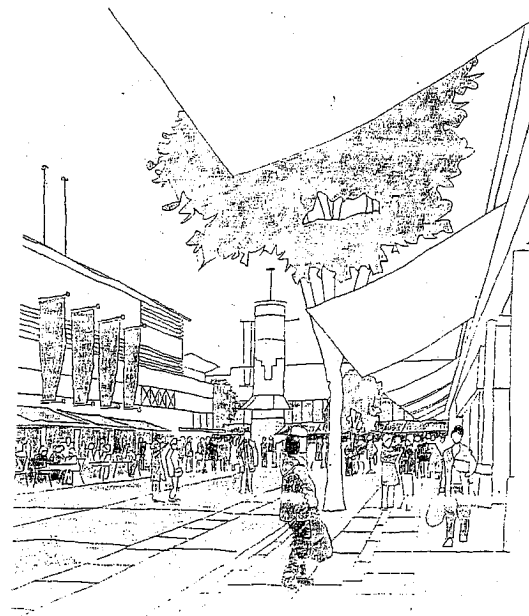
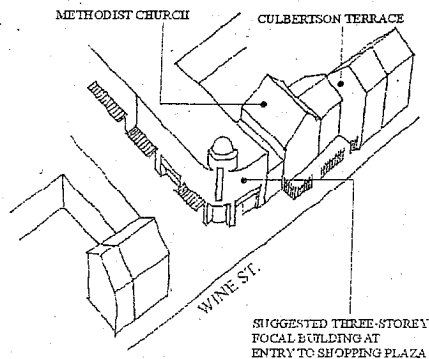


DIAGRAM 803



OPTIONS AND LINKAGES WITHIN THE PRECINCT OF THE SITE

It is worth considering the direction of land use activities which would be set up by the development of the centre block as indicated.

The proposed shopping concentration would draw the centre of gravity of the central shopping area of Sligo further to the northwest, but in doing so would firmly establish the large stores in a position which would reinforce the domain of the traditional and smaller shops to the immediate east and south-east. The increase in shopping activity would increase the footprint of the greater centre.

While the plan, under either schemes 705 or 708 would not create any demand for commercial activity south of John Street or west of Wolfe Tone Street, because firmly established uses would block such activity, the critical mass of the activity generated within the shopping centre would increase development pressure for lands to the north, north of Wine Street, between Wine Street and Quay Street.

Although some development is underway in this area, with similar access from the road system to its west, the centre of this block in its existing state is removed from the core activity of the town centre. Routes to it would not at present offer a contiguous shopping experience to the pedestrian. It has been found that such a contiguous route should not be broken for a gap of more than 10m. (Hillier) (Parker).

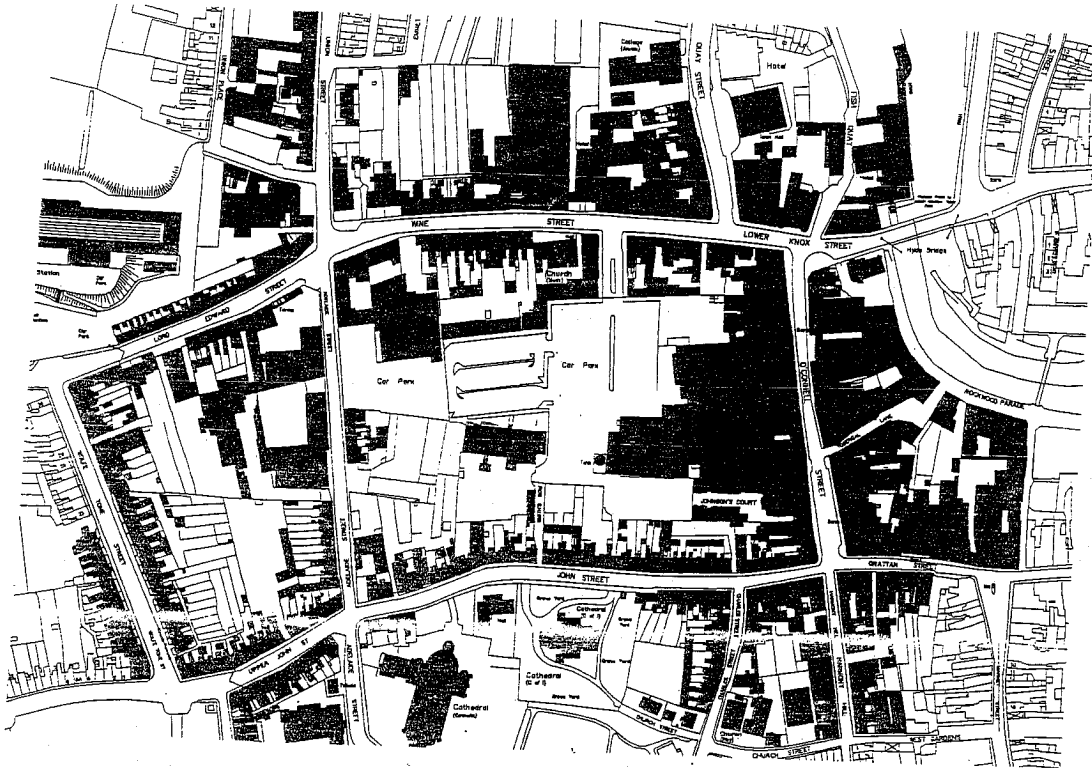
As the central block develops however, and activity increases as a result, the development of the block north of Wine Street will be less premature and must be seen as the most likely next stage. When this occurs, it must be an objective of the local authority to preserve the western half of Wine Street from retail use as earlier described.

The centre block development as proposed is designed to provide for a large bank of carparking to serve the town centre. Scheme 705 would provide for 1,000 spaces. Scheme 708 would have the capacity to provide almost 2,000. (400 per floor plate for five floors.) The access system from the west of Adelaide Street, to serve activity into and out of this facility has been carefully considered.

If the W5 roadway is constructed, a separate route will link it with the point of direct access to the multi-storey carpark. Sligo Corporation are of the opinion that this route will meet the capacities required of it for access to the facility.

If the W5 route is not constructed there are other access options which may be developed to increase the capacity to that required in the Adelaide Street area. Diagrams show the use of a large urban square as a collector / distributor space for routes from the west should another westward solution replace the W5 under any eventuality.

The availability of land, on the eastern side of Adelaide Street, will facilitate the creation of roundabouts on the Adelaide Street route, thus offering the opportunity to reduce the delays caused by right-turning movements from this route.



DEVELOPER BENEFITS

Concessions by the Local Authority and Fiscal Benefits

Development under this plan will carry a number of specific benefits for developers. Under the Integrated Area Plan as approved development which adheres to the principles of the plan will qualify for fiscal benefits, specifically for the provision of commercial/retail uses, or for multi-storey car-parking, if such is provided within the requirements of the masterplan.

The incentives to apply, as listed in the integrated area plan, are as follows;

Owner Occupier Capital Allowances

Fifty percent in year one, or
Twenty-five percent in year one and allowance of two percent per annum up to a maximum of fifty percent.

Investor/Lessor Capital Allowances

Twenty-five percent in year one and annual allowance of two percent per annum to a maximum of fifty percent.

Double Rent Relief

For first 10 years of lease.

For existing residential buildings fronting on to John Street in the areas specifically indicated in diagram 101, incentives to refurbish and reinforce residential communities will be applied as provided for in Integrated Area Plan (section 6, page 27), in order to maintain the equilibrium of such communities beside adjacent commercial developments. Refurbishment only will be permitted to buildings identified as a value in the architectural inventory (Integrated Area Plan Diagram 401) and only works which comply with the strict conservation guidelines of the Planning Authority will be eligible. (See also Integrated Area Plan P. 31, Col. 2, Clause 5.7)

It is proposed that relatives of owner/occupiers may claim benefits under covenant to the resident for approved refurbishment to a residential unit, where this refurbishment is funded under contract by the relative. Here the incentives, to apply only to residential refurbishment, would be as follows;

Owner Occupier Capital Allowances

For new construction five percent per annum over 10 years against total income.
For refurbishment ten percent per annum over 10 years against total income.

Investor/Lessor Capital Allowances

Section 23 Relief.

i.e. up to one hundred percent in year one against Irish rental income.

In summary, where a resident has a tax liability, a full write-off of construction costs will be available against tax liability. Where a resident has no tax liability, or insufficient liability to be of significance, a member of family, successor, or approved investor may write-off full cost of works against own tax liability.



The Integrated Area Plan has recommended rates remission for all non-designated area development occurring in the general business zone within the time-frame of the current Urban Renewal incentives. (Integrated Area Plan 31, Col. 1, Clause 8.2 Para. 3). This will be facilitated on a sliding scale over a ten year period, excluding the pre-development rating evaluation.

For developments which are granted designation, and subsequently granted planning approval, the Local Authority shall issue a licence to permit development. If the area so licensed includes buildings for refurbishment only, this shall be so indicated. Refurbishment shall be strictly in accordance with standards of conservation issued by the Planning Authority. Failure to adhere to these Standards shall render the development liable to loss of designated benefits. This loss of benefits shall be extended to the total site as licensed and not just to the portion which was the subject of refurbishment.

Where refurbishment works or such that they would not normally require planning permission, a licence to develop must first be issued by the Local Authority before works commence, if these works are to be certified for designated benefits.

From a planning perspective, development in the centre block area will also carry particular benefits. Because the Local Authority has, in addition to its approval of the principals of development on the site as outlined in the Integrated Area Plan, also sanctioned a number of more detailed accommodating factors within and through this masterplan, the planning process will be significantly predetermined, with trader and community backing. It is reasonable under the setting of these circumstances, to assume that the process by which the community and its Local Authority will grant approval to proposed development, will be rapid and straightforward.

The current development plan for the Borough of Sligo is shortly due to be renewed. Because its renewal will take place before the expiry of the Integrated Area Plan for central areas which has already been passed by the elected representatives and sealed by Government approval, it follows that the Development Plan must incorporate the proposals of the Integrated Area Plan. If the centre block masterplan is a constituent of the Integrated Area Plan, the Development Plan must in its course incorporate this plan also or must at least incorporate those provisions or principles which are adopted by the elected representatives. Since the Development Plan will then be current for a period of at least five years (this time is itself currently under review by central Government and may be extended under revised legislation) the masterplan as adopted is secured as the stable development framework for the block for some time to come. This certainty thus gives developers and traders a secure framework within which to work towards its implementation.

In the area of this plan it is the Local Authorities intention to relax car-parking requirements in favour of corresponding levies and also to relax site coverage and plot ratio standards in order to encourage appropriate use densities in the town centre. For these aspects each planning application will be subject to individual assessment.

Chapter 10 contains the principal ingredients of the masterplan as adopted by Members of Sligo Corporation on 24 January 2000.

The increase in floor space over existing areas for each of the large superstores would presumably be within regulations were it not for the fact that the plan proposes slightly different locations within the block as "shopping centre" for these stores. It must therefore be confirmed that within an agreement to cease trading in their existing floor space, the larger stores will be able to justify each that their total expansion relative to the town and within the same identified location does not exceed that laid down by Government floor space limitations.

An Environmental Impact Statement will of course be required for components of the development proposal or singularly for all of it should it all be under a single development proposal.

All developments which benefit by designation shall be subject to a levy of 2% of development cost, the monies so generated to be directed to a trust fund or community trust from which funds shall be directed to community facilities or towards the support of communities which experience changing circumstances due to adjacent designation in the town centre.

All of the block under review falls within an area regarded as archaeologically sensitive as identified by Duchas in the National Urban Archaeological Survey. Archaeological monitoring and investigation must therefore be facilitated under the relevant National Monuments and Planning Acts. While the block in question falls within the section of the town which was planned to be fortified in the pre-Cromwellian period however, it is outside the more valuable Medieval quarter to its east or south-east. The yield of archaeological material might not therefore be particularly high.

Notwithstanding the fiscal and planning benefits described above the real developer benefits from this masterplan relate to the opportunity to create significant areas of extra marketable floor space, particularly at upper levels, with the encouragement of the Local Authority and surrounding commercial interests, in a fully serviced site with guaranteed pedestrian exposure.



CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY OF CRITICAL FACTORS

The following objectives were adopted in principle by Members of Sligo Corporation at a meeting of 24 January 2000:

- A The development of 15,000m² of retail floorspace in the centre of the Adelaide Street / O'Connell Street block, as outlined indicatively in diagram 708 of this Plan.
- B A new network of pedestrianised urban spaces.
- C The elimination of all surface car-parking within the block in tandem with the development of a multi-storey car-parking facility for the accommodation of at least 1,000 cars.
- D Permitted building heights of up to five and seven storeys as represented indicatively on diagrams 804 or 805 of this plan.
- E Discouragement of any residential use within the block except within its perimeter buildings to Wine Street, O'Connell Street and John Street.
- F The development of two covered pedestrian malls between O'Connell Street and the centre of the block.
- G The elimination of any public pedestrian access between the centre of the block and John Street.
- H The development of bulk vehicular and service access to the block only from its west or Adelaide Street side.
- J The encouragement of leisure uses on upper floor levels within the block subject to satisfaction by the Corporation that no disturbance shall be experienced by surrounding traders and residents.
- K Support for the trading environment of existing business in Wine Street and O'Connell Street.

