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Nenagh Historic & Cultural Quarter
Part 8 Planning Application

Landscape Architecture
Design Report
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Introduction

Landscape Approach

The public realm of Nenagh and the spaces within have become largely defined by road infrastructure over time and which now has a commanding presence in the town's central zone, however the collection of active street frontages within the project area along Kickham St. & Pearse St. generates a vibrancy. This, together with the setting of historic buildings creates a strong identity that endures and provides a valuable starting point to draw on for the sequence of upgrades within this application.

Key to unlocking the full potential of Nenagh lies in the spatial restructuring of its focal areas, to curtail the impact of the car and rebalance the priority of the streets in favor of the pedestrian. This is particularly evident in Banba Square, a triangular wedge shaped space containing an 'island' of trees and benches that appear to have been swallowed up by the convergence of three major arterial roads, diminished further by an array of bollards and parking to its perimeter. The abundance of street signage and a mixed language of furniture types disrupts any semblance of order or continuity, which is also true for the composition of the adjoining streets and wider context.

In order to start the decluttering process, it is important to take stock of the components of value, such as the courthouse vista with historic railing and figure of Christ monument positioned centrally on its axis, the former Rialto Cinema and Town Hall and the thriving businesses in the locale. Taking a wider look at the project area there are pockets of tranquil green spaces that offer great value to the citizens of Nenagh, both in terms of chance encounters with neighbours or the calendar of planned seasonal events. The cathedral grounds with its mature trees and lawns are used as a shortcut into town by locals arriving from the outskirts, while the Castle Field offers a parkland setting with some well used seating in the foreground of



the Castle tower. A curious gap in the wall connects to a recently rejuvenated walled garden that is protected from the elements with seating in good sunny orientation.

The necessary upgrades will require a degree of road realignment in certain areas and the reshuffling of existing car parking strategies, all with the view to consolidating the open spaces for more meaningful day to day use and maximizing the potential for programmable events. New benches with backrests and armrests positioned in sunny orientations will ensure people of all abilities can enjoy the spaces and high quality edge to edge stone finishes underfoot will simplify the ground plane while catering for all functional requirements, all with the aim of restoring Nenagh's rich cultural heritage to prominence.

Landscape concept: BSLA

Introduction

Project Zones in Landscape Scope

Banba Square (NHCQ Zone 01)

- a. Existing condition
- b. Opportunities
- c. Spatial programming
- d. Materials
- e. Street Furniture
- f. Tree Planting & SUDs
- g. Vision

Nenagh Castle - Forecourt & Field (NHCQ Zone 03 & 06)

- a. Existing condition
- b. Opportunities
- c. Spatial programming
- d. Materials
- e. Seating
- f. Lighting

Nenagh Gaol & Courthouse Carpark (NHCQ Zone 07 & 08)

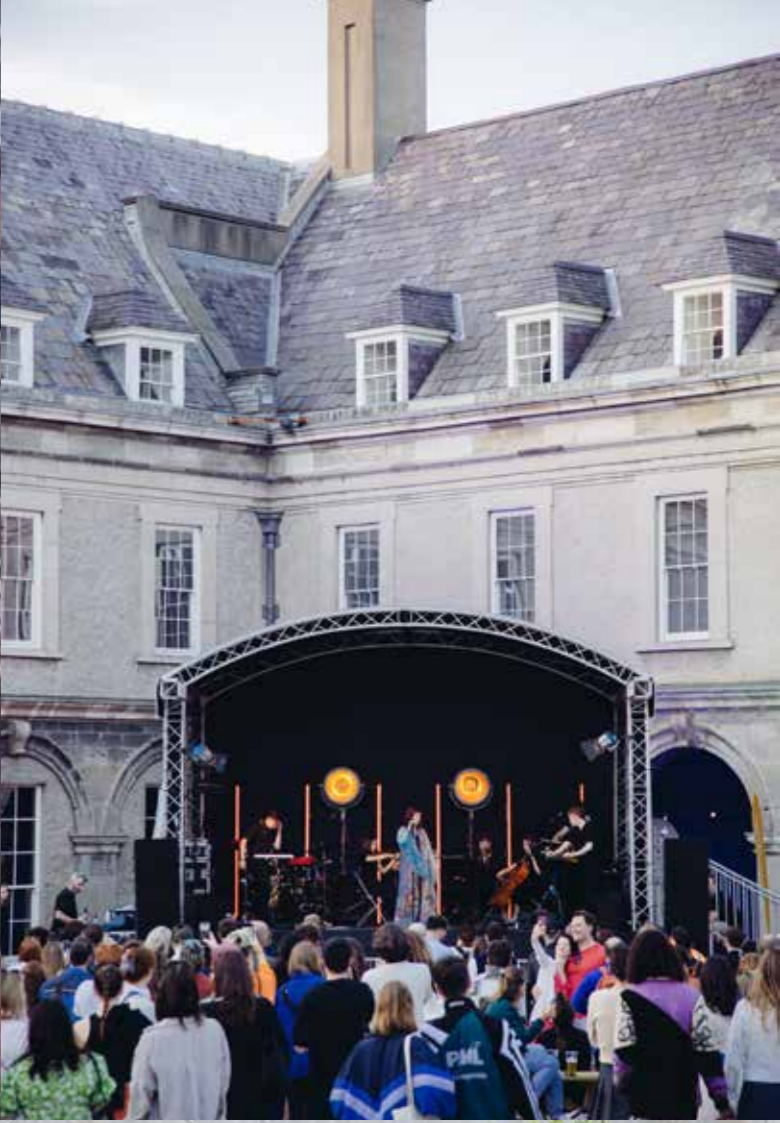
- a. Existing condition
- b. Opportunities
- c. Materials
- d. Furniture & Planting

Footpaths Upgrade (NHCQ Zone 09)

- a. Existing condition
- b. Opportunities



Banba Square (NHCQ Zone 01)



Banba Square (NHCQ Zone 01)

a. Existing Condition

Banba square is triangular wedge shaped space defined to the north by Nenagh Courthouse at its widest point, to the east by the former town hall and retail buildings, to the west by the Rialto cinema and Garda station, narrowing to the south where it converges with Kickham Street and Pearse Street beyond.

The square forms a key node between converging arterial roads into Nenagh and accordingly presents significant challenges to unlocking the full potential of the space from a pedestrian perspective in its current configuration.

The pedestrian zone is a small area bounded by tarmac containing an array of benches, signs and planters of differing types. The components have no obvious logic to their setting, placement or orientation and the trees planted into hardstanding line southern edge forming a delineation to the adjoining perpendicular parking spaces.



Photo of Banba Square facing east

Signage

1. Pay and display sign
2. Shop sign
3. Shop sign
4. Moveable sign
5. Directional parking sign
6. Tourist Destination totem
7. Pay and display sign
8. Tourist information sign
9. Visitor information map
10. Nenagh Castle Information

Objects

- A. Hydrant plinth
- B. Shop merchandise container
- C. Shop sales sign
- D. Monument
- E. Railings
- F. Large flower planter boxes
- G. Small flower planter boxes
- H. Bollards
- I. Litter bin
- J. Benches



Photo of Banba Square facing north

b. Opportunities

Consolidating the road alignment to one side of the square and rationalising the road widths in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets will yield more area for pedestrians. This will enhance the presentation of the courthouse onto the square, increasing the pinch points between railing and kerb to create more breathing room to circulate and navigate the streets more freely.

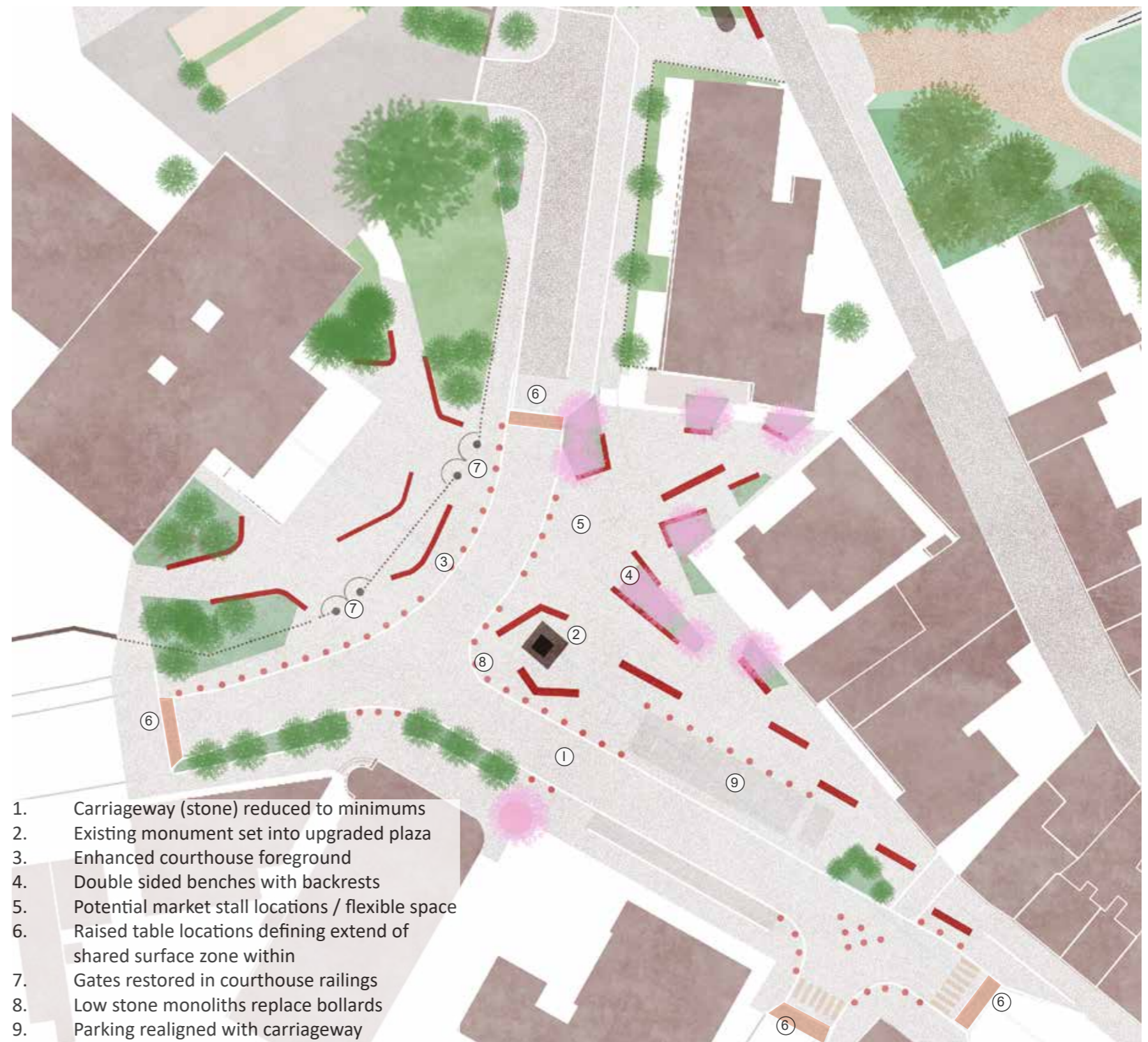
Replacing conventional street signage and bollarding with more integrated design solutions will help to declutter the composition, allowing the newly stone paved ground plane, new furniture and historic facades to register more prominently and facilitate the spill out of businesses to activate the square.

There are a number of cafes in the area that furthers the potential for encouraging people to sit, dwell and activate the space.

c. Spatial Programming

While the current condition does not lend itself to extensive programmable events due to its limited size, the proposed upgrades significantly enhance the day to day use as well as permitting flexible events within the space e.g. market, festival, music event.

The parking is realigned and located more efficiently within the square to minimise its impact on adjoining footways. The road is generally level with the footways to create an edge to edge surface and enhance the perception of scale. Conventional traffic devices are replaced with more integrated and high quality solutions e.g. low stone monoliths in place of bollards denote the carriageway and are generously scaled to create informal seating to the edges of the space.



1. Carriageway (stone) reduced to minimums
2. Existing monument set into upgraded plaza
3. Enhanced courthouse foreground
4. Double sided benches with backrests
5. Potential market stall locations / flexible space
6. Raised table locations defining extend of shared surface zone within
7. Gates restored in courthouse railings
8. Low stone monoliths replace bollards
9. Parking realigned with carriageway

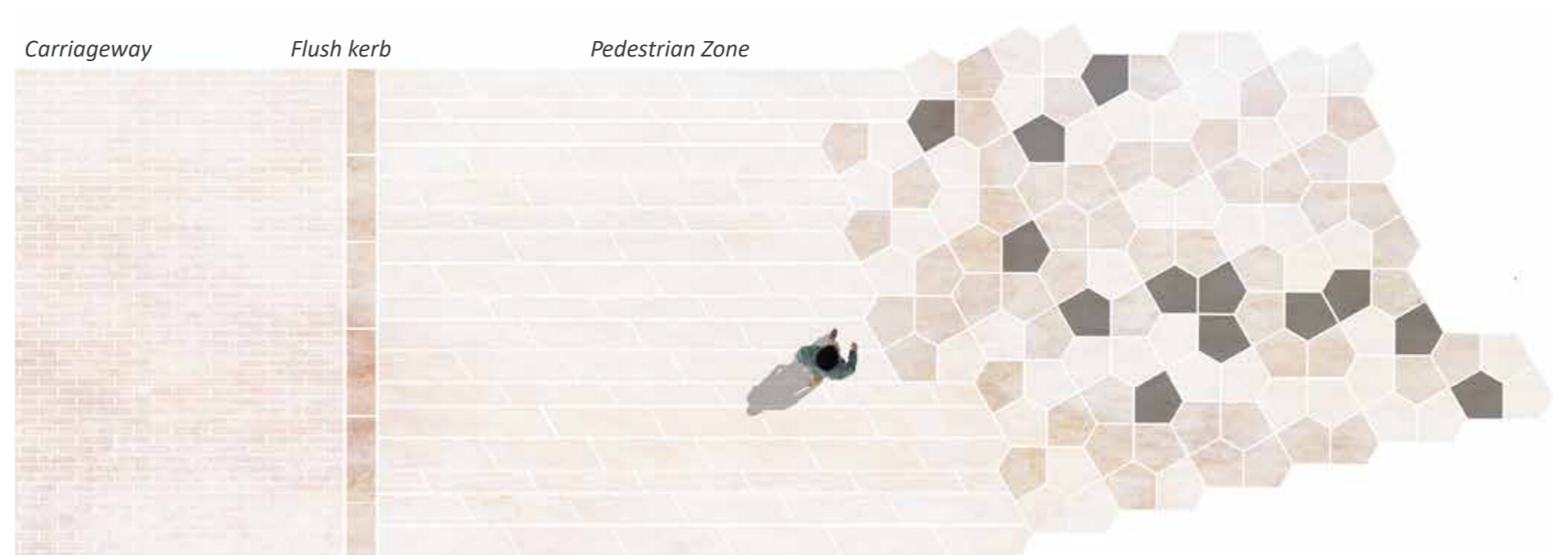
Landscape concept schematic
Refer to Part 8 scaled drawings for details

Banba Square (NHCQ Zone 01)

d. Materials

The formatting of paving unit size assists in the delineation of pedestrian (large format slabs) and vehicular zones (small format setts). This is both a visual cue and a practical consideration to ensure the surfaces can stand up to the rigors of urban use. Modifications to the shape and layout of the paving grain adds a layer of detail to the ground plane where the pattern might intensify to signal an occurrence such as a seating area or grouping of trees planted in ground.

High quality natural stone deployed edge to edge across the entire space ensures visual continuity and a contiguous surface that unifies the various elements of the streetscape placed on top of it.



Material plan of a paving study

e. Street Furniture

In 1980 American sociologist William H. Whyte wrote of the hostility of public spaces and the challenge that confronted people trying to find a simple place to sit:

"There are too few (benches); they are too small; they are often isolated from other benches or whatever action there is on the plaza."

— The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces

Comfortable seating of generous proportions, grouped at strategic locations is a key component of creating successful urban space. The existing benches in Banba Square are not optimally placed and feel overshadowed by the low, dense canopy of the ornamental pear trees.

The renewed square commands a site specificity to the elements placed within it to reinforce the identity of place, perhaps in the form of a bespoke 'Banba Bench'. An element that can become synonymous with Nenagh and a linking device that creates continuity within the town.



New public seating and stone paving in Clonakilty, Co. Cork



Inspiration to potentially create a bespoke 'Banba Bench'
Generous, wide, double sided and responsive in form to the environment

Banba Square (NHCQ Zone 01)

f. Tree Planting & SUDs

Street trees need uncompacted, healthy soil to expand their roots in order to grow to a size where they provide the full benefit to the urban environment. Trees planted in hard landscape environments such as Banba Square that grow will require between 20-30m³ of soil, provided in a structural cell tree pit system installed beneath the surface. The cells are load bearing and provide free draining conditions of the tree pit, as well as providing space for roots to establish, preventing them from penetrating / buckling the surface above it.

Where in-ground planting is proposed, these areas are designed as rain gardens, to be integrated with the sitewide drainage strategy whereby surface water is diverted into the catchment pits, attenuated in the soil / planting before being released into the water table / wider drainage network.



Structural tree pit diagram



Tree grille and aeration vent



New street tree planting by BSLA on Molesworth Street, Dublin



Rain garden diagram

Banba Square (NHCQ Zone 01)

g. Vision

Concept image compiling a number of strands of possible approaches, namely the consolidation of the roadway to maximise the pedestrian offering for day to day activity while maintaining flexibility for programming of events throughout the cultural calendar.

Key buildings such as the courthouse come into prominence since the foreground has been simplified and decluttered, now unified with a contiguous edge to edge stone ground plane.



Dynamic, freeform benches positioned carefully so people can move freely between them



Landscape concept: BSLA

Nenagh Castle Forecourt & Castle Field





a. Existing Condition

The Castle forecourt is accessed from O’Rahilly Street and currently functions as a pay and display car parking servicing the town of Nenagh. The castle tower features prominently along the northern edge of the space, currently cordoned off by a simple black railing circa 2.5m height. There are a number of more recent outbuildings and sheds backing onto the space along the western and eastern boundaries and the fine stone facade at the back of O’Suilleabhain’s pub forms the southern boundary. There is an electricity sub station located in the south east corner, adjoining a boundary wall where O’Rahilly Street continues down a narrow lane to join Pearse Street.

The Castle Field is accessed from O’Rahilly St. further north and consists of grassed parkland with a perimeter tarmac path circuit. There are a number of benches that are well used by locals positioned just off the main route. The paths connect through a recently added archway in the boundary stone wall into a walled garden with self binding gravel pathways symmetrically laid out between rectangular planting beds.



Photo taken from Castle Tower looking south west over O’Rahilly Street car park

Key

- 1. Space fully occupied with cars
- 2. Tarmac surface in varying condition
- 3. Markings in traditional road paint
- 4. Vista to historic building obscured
- 5. Path connecting to walled Castle Garden
- 6. Tarmac path through grassed parkland
- 7. Timber bench with back/arm rests
- 8. Entrance with tourist information sign
- 9. Path connecting to Castle Tower



Photo taken from Castle Tower looking north west over Castle Field

b. Opportunities

The Castle Forecourt enjoys a south east facing orientation with the prominent backdrop of the Castle Tower to the rear. The scheme identifies a potential connection from the Castle Forecourt to the Castle Park by way of a ramped bridge threading its way sensitively up and over the historic ruins. This move alone increases the value of the forecourt space currently occupied by car parking, given the attraction of the Castle ruins and the increased permeability this new link creates in terms of footfall.

c. Spatial Programming

The boundaries of the forecourt are carefully managed to allow potential future expansion of businesses from the rear of their premises out onto the space, while providing a degree of greening and softening to the edges. Some car parking is maintained along the eastern boundary, freeing up the majority of the space for public use and providing potential flexible event space.



1. Surface repaved in natural stone
2. Car parking contained to one side
3. Potential spill out from businesses
4. Greening of the edges to soften boundary
5. Ramped bridge connection
6. Cafe tables and chairs on level surface
7. Access to sequence of Castle ruins
8. New paved surface to provide access
9. South facing seating steps

Landscape concept schematic
Refer to Part 8 scaled drawings for details

d. Materials

The Castle Park sees a new arrangement of path based around a central green space that is south facing. The northern edge of the green is tiered up with the levels retained by seating steps, providing a sunny location to informally sit with a view towards the Castle Tower.

The Castle Forecourt is to be repaved in natural stone, with the levels absorbed in carefully considered slopes to maximise the degree of usable space. A simple retaining element plays towards the Castle Tower, retaining a level terrace on one side for cafe tables and chairs to be placed and taken away as necessary. Functional requirements such as the marking of car parking spaces is captured within the paving design, avoiding the requirement for painted line markings.



Landscape concept: BSLA

e. Furniture & Planting

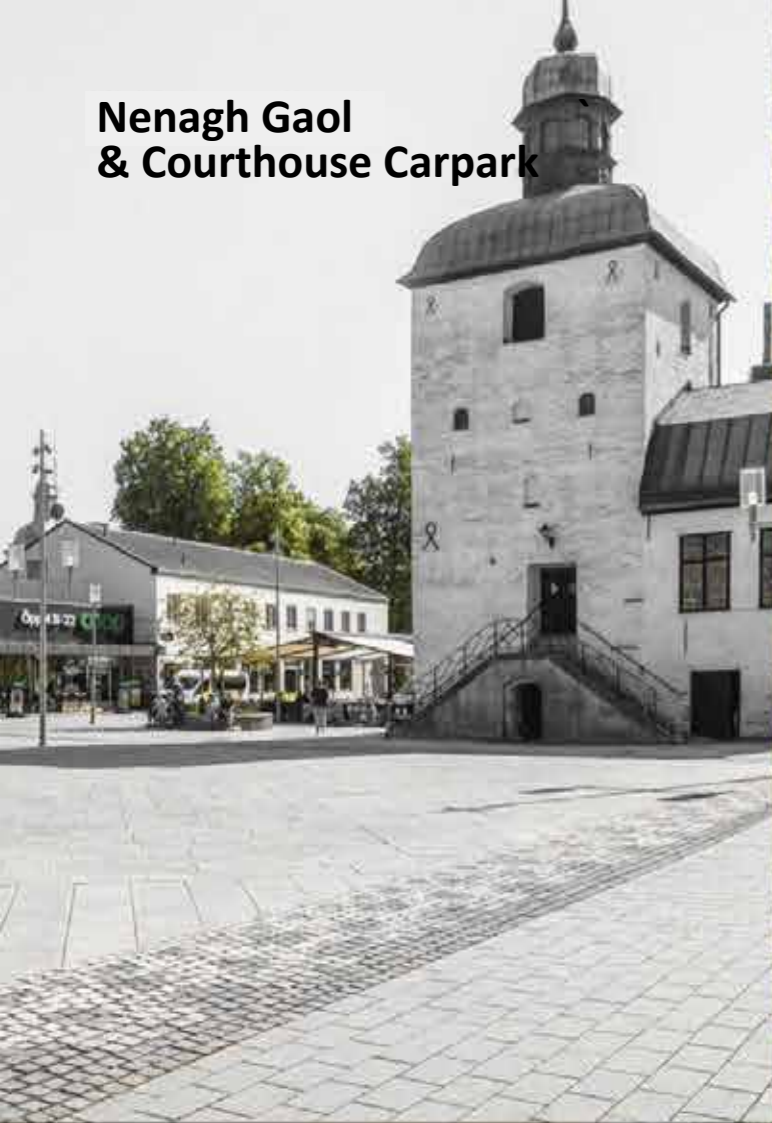
The boundaries of the Castle Park are bolstered with the addition of ornamental planting, particularly on the eastern boundary with the Castle Garden to signal the entrance through the stone wall and enhance the linkage of the two spaces.

The addition of tree planting and lower ground cover to the edges of the Castle Forecourt aims to frame the Castle and a suitably scaled canopy ensure the historical buildings are not obscured. The Castle Moat is planted with a less manicured type of meadow that will give a seasonal impact and enhance the experiential quality of traversing the new ramped bridge.



Landscape concept: BSLA

Nenagh Gaol
& Courthouse Carpark

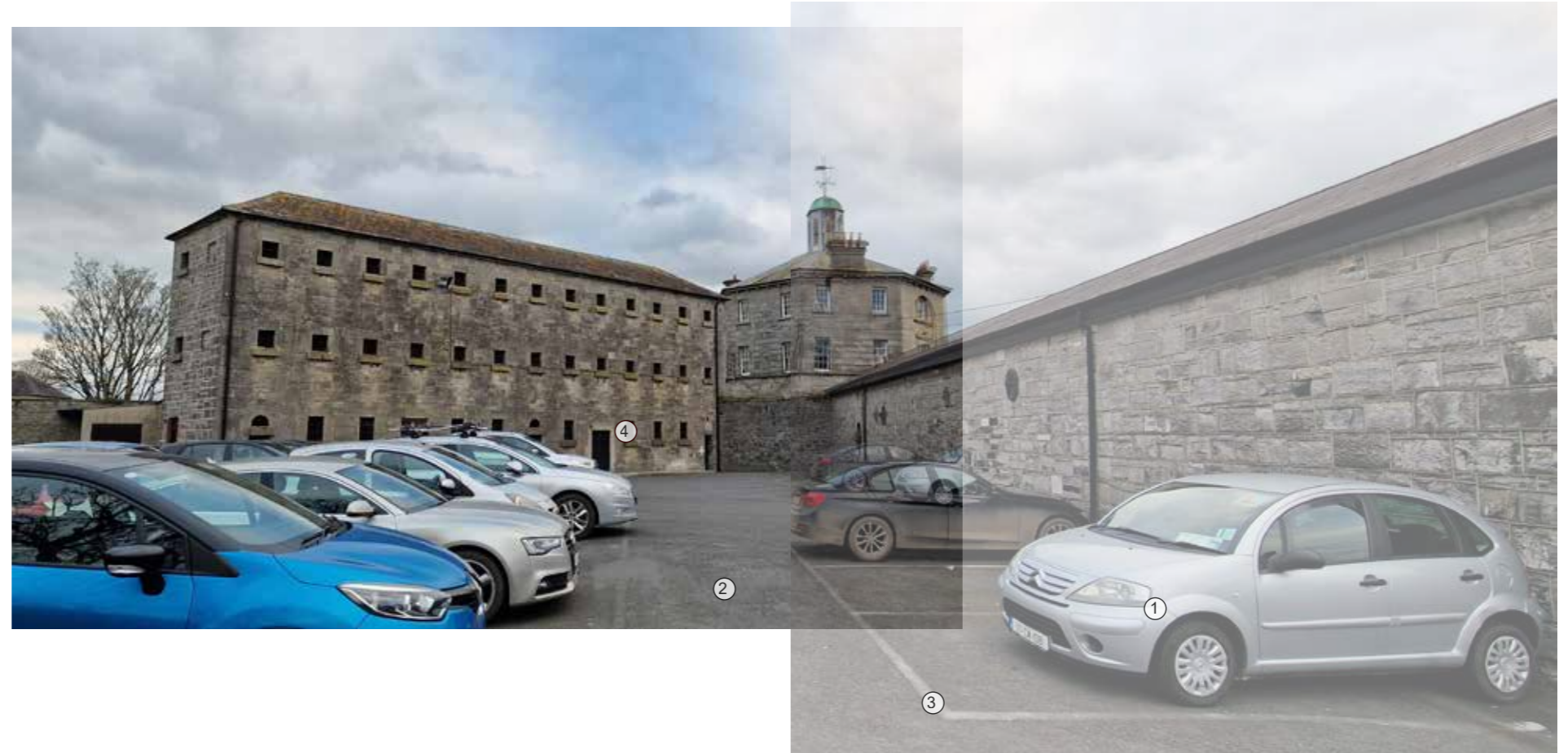


Nenagh Gaol & Courthouse Carpark (NHCQ Zone 07) (NHCQ Zone 08)

a. Existing Condition

Located to the rear of Nenagh courthouse, the prison yard is currently functioning as a car park / servicing area, accessed from O'Rahilly Street approximately 50m from the junction with Ashe Road. There are currently two gated vehicular entrances flanking a pedestrian access through the stone wall with two benches either side. The car parking is contained within the arms of the cell blocks, splaying out from the Governor's house located to the rear of the yard and accessed from a separate gate house further north along O'Rahilly Street.

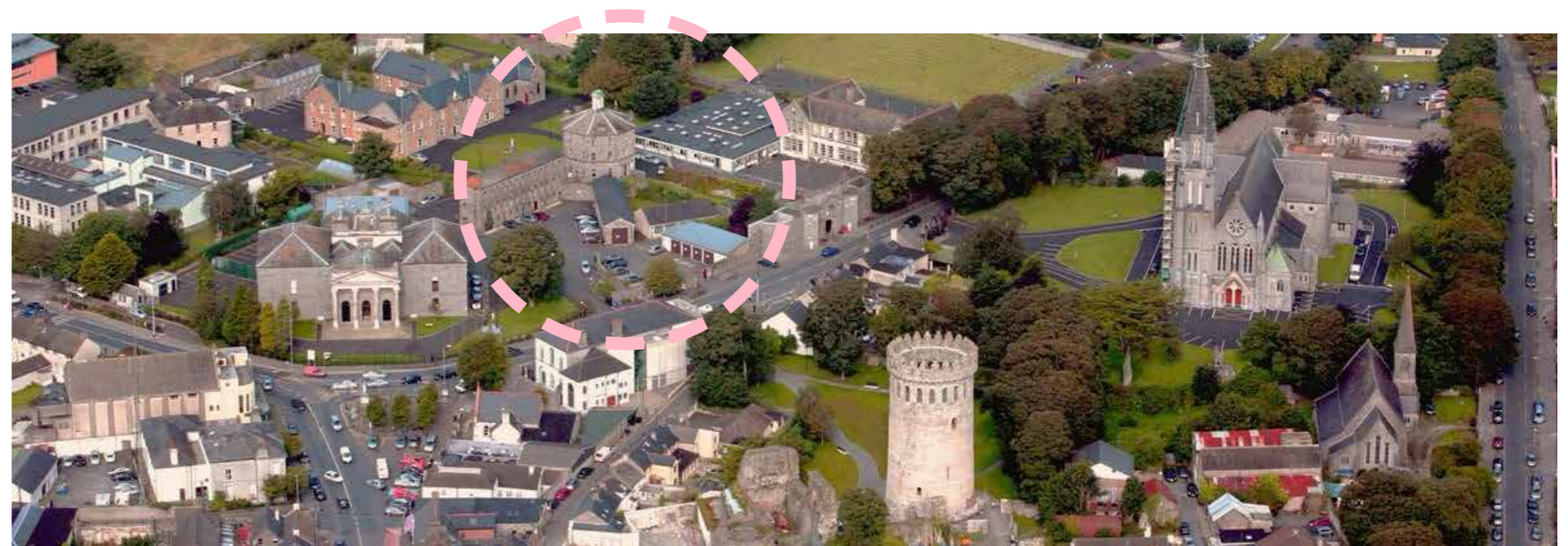
The parking is pay and display and so the bays are marked out with white paint on a tarmac surface. The layout of the parking is ordered but is not performing to the most efficient layout possible, both in terms of maximising spaces and improving the circulation to and presentation of the historic buildings of value around it.



Existing courtyard condition looking north towards the Governor's house

Key

- 1. Space fully occupied with cars
- 2. Tarmac surface in varying condition
- 3. Markings in traditional road paint
- 4. Vista to historic building entrances obscured



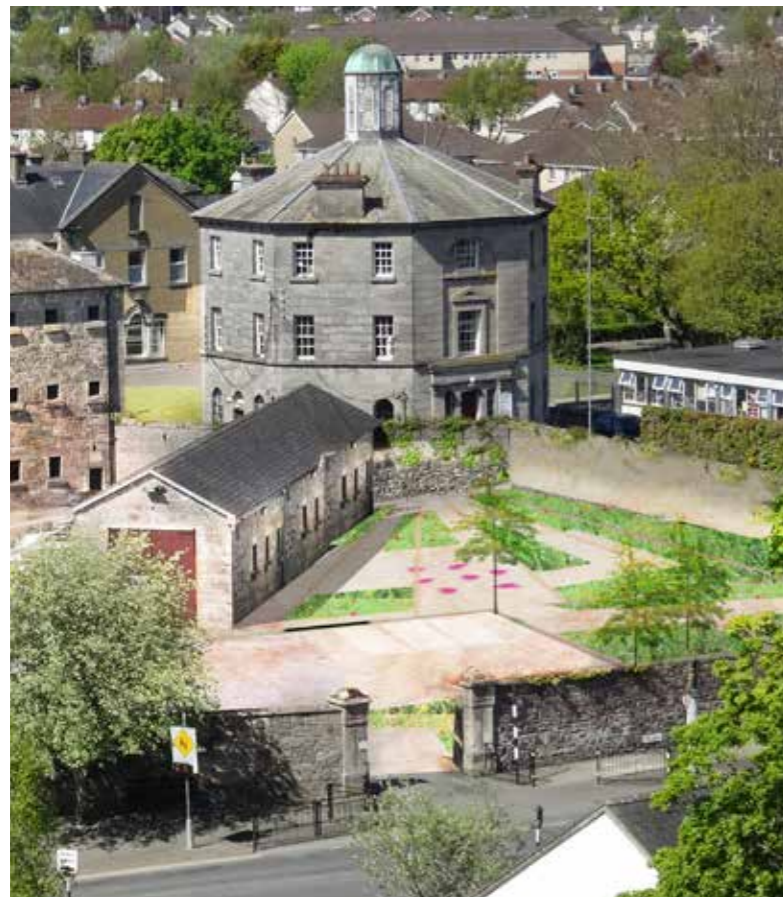
Aerial photograph identifying the Gaol and courthouse car park

**Nenagh Gaol (NHCQ Zone 07)
& Courthouse Carpark (NHCQ Zone 08)**

b. Opportunities

The proposal seeks to consolidate the parking to the front portion of the space adjacent to the entrances in order to free up the prison yards and the immediate building foreground of cars. This works in tandem with the planned museum tour sequence, as envisaged by STW architects, which commences at the Gate house and terminates in the prison yards.

The yards are well protected and are south east facing, making them ideal locations for garden spaces and cafe spill out. They span over 20m at their widest point, narrowing to 5m where they meet the Governor's house, making them viable spaces for performance / flexible events.



Concept image of landscaped courtyard now revealed by demolition of more recent outbuildings



1. Car parking rationalised for efficiency
2. New pedestrian entrance
3. Planted courtyard
4. Paved courtyard
5. Garden courtyard
6. Coach parking
7. Gate house
8. Governor's house
9. Cell block

Landscape concept schematic
Refer to Part 8 scaled drawings for details

c. Materials

The proposals seek to temper the impact of car parking by incorporating high quality, permeable materials on the ground plane. Functional requirements such as line marking and simple wayfinding can be integrated in ways other than traditional paint, by way of embedding a contrasting material in the surface to segregate the parking bays or to deploy directional arrows. This will greatly improve the setting of the foreground and overall context of the heritage buildings beyond. Areas of planting are introduced between runs of parking to break the mass and soften the ratio of hard to soft landscape.



Surface delineations using natural stone unit & texture types



Embedments in the surface instead of paint

d. Furniture & Planting

The enclosed nature of the yard spaces provides a natural degree of protection from the wind. In addition, the radiant heat generated from the stone walls on a sunny day creates a microclimate for more exotic planting opportunities.

The addition of seating amongst the planting edge detail makes the space very inviting, adding value to the setting of the proposed shop and cafe offerings adjoining the yard. This combination of factors will encourage visitors to dwell and for the landscape to attract people in its own right.



Seating integrated with the planting edge condition



Walled garden microclimate conducive to exotic planting

Footpath Upgrade (NHCQ Zone 09)

a. Existing Condition

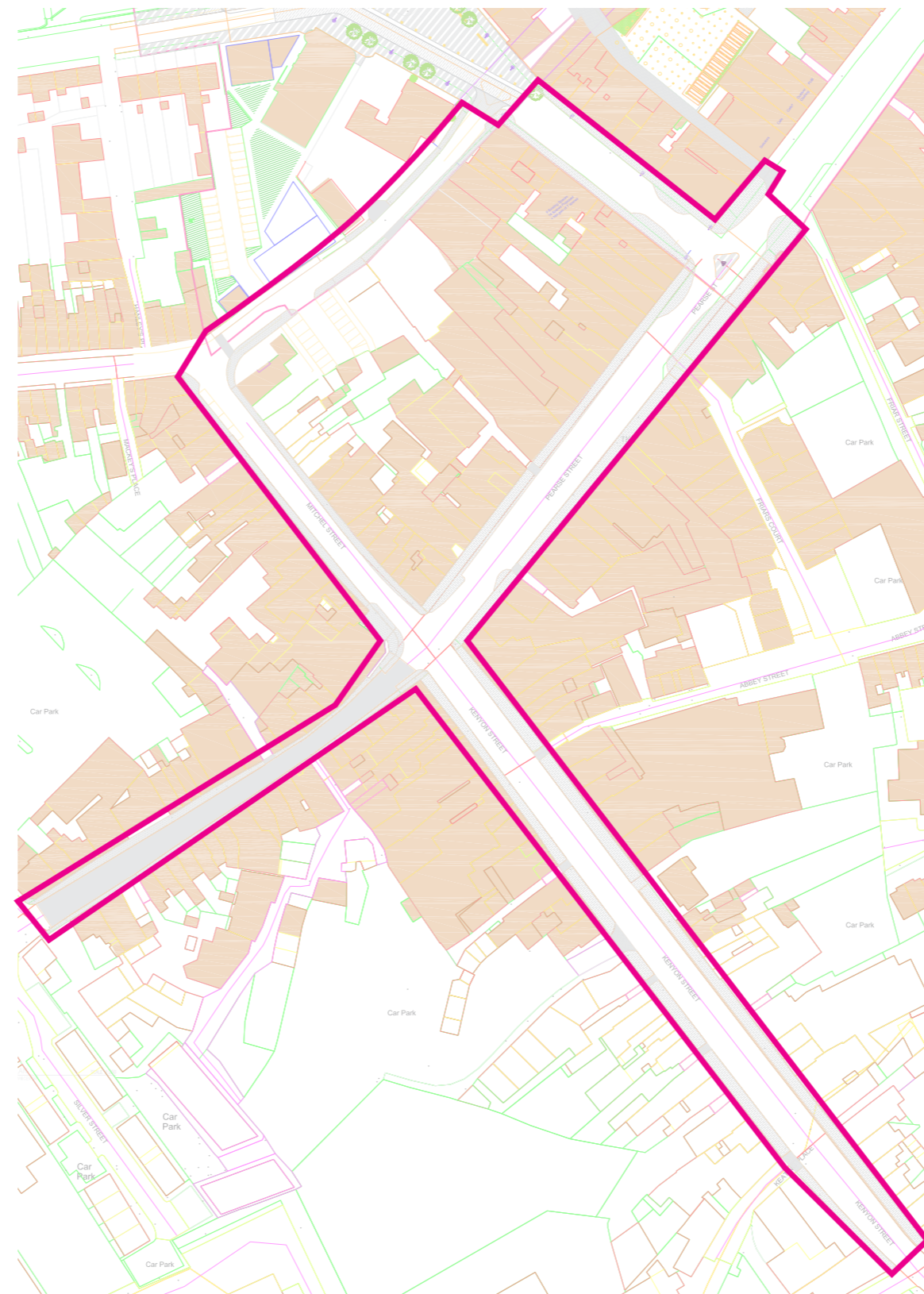
The wider masterplan improvement area comprises a series of upgrades to the existing footpaths on Kickham Street, Emmet Place, Pearse Street, Mitchel Street, Silver Street & Kenyon Street.

The surfaces in these areas primarily consists of grey precast concrete kerbing, grey / red precast concrete block paving (laid in herringbone pattern) and insitu grey concrete. Footway junctions and uncontrolled crossing points are treated with a buff coloured precast concrete blister paving.

Some extents of footway have build outs finished in resin bound gravel where outdoor dining and canopies are installed by businesses. The interface between build out and pre-existing footway is delineated by a drainage channel.



Precast concrete paving in poor condition, Silver street



Key plan of footpath upgrade scope



Myriad of surface materials at Kickham Street junction



Recent build outs for outdoor dining on Kenyon Street

Footpath Upgrade (NHCQ Zone 09)

b. Opportunities

The existing surface condition appears dated overall, with some portions of footway having deteriorated and cracked over time. Upgrading the surfaces of the footways would greatly improve the presentation of the businesses street frontages. A natural stone treatment would give a vibrancy to the ground plane compared with the precast concrete products that have been installed in some locations for over 20 years.

Natural stone blister units can also be deployed in place of concrete blister units at uncontrolled crossing points which will greatly improve the integration of these functional requirements with the wider ground plane.



Surface delineations using natural stone unit & texture types



Business frontages greatly improved with stone paving, seating and tree planting



Services integrated with paving pattern



Upgraded footway with natural stone (Limestone) in Clonakilty, Co. Cork.