

SURVEY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF PORTLAOISE

Report and Inventory



compiled and recorded by

Lotts Architecture and Urbanism

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Executive Summary

Portlaoise was one of the first towns in Ireland to be recorded by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), following its establishment in 1992. The survey work began in 1993 and the survey was published in 1997. In 2002 the NIAH published its survey for the rest of Co. Laois, but this excluded Portlaoise as the survey format and recording methodology had changed considerably.

During the period since 1997, Portlaoise has expanded and its historic fabric has undergone significant change. The 1997 survey no longer provides an adequate record of the architectural heritage of the town. The buildings of Portlaoise are under-represented on the Record of Protected Structures for the county, leading to losses to its built heritage.

This survey was commissioned to redress this imbalance. The brief was to record and re-evaluate 335 buildings rated of “Local” importance or higher in the 1997 survey. However, a number of buildings rated as “Record Only” in 1997 were added to the survey, as they were found to make a significant contribution to the built heritage of the town. In the re-evaluation the importance rating of several buildings was upgraded. All structures upgraded to “Regional” importance are proposed to be added to the Record of Protected Structures.

In total 339 structures or sites were recorded following the NIAH methodology.

	<i>Inter-national</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Record Only</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Portlaoise Survey 1997	0	2	33	290	830	1,155
Portlaoise Survey 2008	0	10	210	116	3	339

Table 1: Rating of structures comparing numbers in this survey with the 1997 NIAH survey

* number of buildings recorded and downgraded to record only

<i>Changes in Evaluation</i>	<i>No. of Structures</i>
Upgraded to National	8
Upgraded Local to Regional	163
Downgraded Regional to Local	0
Upgraded Record Only to Regional (added to the survey)	25
Upgraded Record Only to Local (added to the survey)	29
Omitted from the survey	41
Structures listed twice in the 1997 survey	11

Table 2: Changes between the 1997 and 2008 survey

The recommendations resulting from the survey can be summarised as follows:

- Addition of 146 buildings to the Record of Protected Structures
- Deletion of 4 buildings from the Record of Protected Structures
- Designation of an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) to ensure protection of the historic core of the town. The proposed extent of the ACA is illustrated in Fig. 14. If an ACA is designated this would provide adequate protection to 70 of the structures within its boundaries. The number of proposed additions to the RPS would therefore be reduced to 76 sites.

- Adoption of the planning policy to refuse permission to demolish any building deemed to be of local significance.
- Promotion of a better standard of conservation practice in the town, and stricter implementation of existing policies on conservation of architectural heritage.
- Suggestion that Laois County Council carry out a best practice conservation project on an historic building in the town, as a benchmark for good practice.
- Adoption of a policy to reduce clutter in the town centre caused by the proliferation of discordant signage, street furniture, banners, seasonal lighting etc. which currently detract from the architectural coherence of the urban landscape.
- Suggestion that Laois County Council target information on conservation grant schemes to owners of protected structures in the town.
- Suggestion that Laois County Council acquire further sections of the former Fort Protector with a view to developing it as a primary historic feature of the town.
- Conservation of the former St. Peter's Church and graveyard, and of the hugely significant former Presentation Convent, which together with the Fort would form a historic precinct with the capacity to greatly raise the profile of the town.
- Longer term objective to commission a new civic building of high architectural design standard on the footprint of the former Market House, to restore the focus of the Market Square. An international design competition would attract innovative and creative responses to the site which would raise the bar in terms of the architectural design standard in the town, and would ensure a 21st century contribution to the future built heritage of the town.
- Suggestion that the visual impact of the car parking and the raised traffic roundabouts be minimised in the Market Square and a high quality landscape design be commissioned for the enjoyment of the townspeople.



Fig 1. Elegant Georgian Terrace on Church Street that forms the context of the Courthouse and Old Gaol

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Lotts Architecture team:

Richard McLoughlin
Michael O’Neill
Stephen Farrell
Livia Hurley
Rosanne Walker
Desmond Byrne
Agata Galczynska
Paddie Garland



Fig 2. Fanlight on Church Street

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Survey

Architectural heritage is seen as an essential element of cultural identity and its protection, conservation and restoration are an essential, internationally defined responsibility of modern society. The starting point in the protection of architectural heritage is the identification of the sites, structures and ensembles which make up that heritage.

The intention of this Survey of the Architectural Heritage of Portlaoise is to evaluate the buildings and urban landscape of the town in order to identify its architectural heritage, and to rate the sites identified to ensure their future protection from changes which might erode or destroy their significance.

The main focus of the survey has been to re-evaluate c. 335 sites identified in a survey carried out by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) in 1997, with the primary aim of updating the Record of Protected Structures.

1.2. Project Team

Lotts Architecture and Urbanism were appointed to carry out the survey in June 2008 by a Working Group comprising of the Forward Planning Section Laois County Council and the Laois Heritage Forum.

The site recording work was conducted from July to September by Stephen Farrell, architectural recorder and photographer, and Dr. Michael O'Neill, architectural historian, under the direction of Richard McLoughlin, conservation architect. Historical analysis of the town was made by Livia Hurley, architect and architectural historian. The database was controlled by Livia Hurley, Rosanne Walker and Richard McLoughlin.

A Project Working Group from Laois County Council comprising of Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer, and Angela McEvoy, Acting Senior Planner, oversaw the project. The project was funded by Laois County Council with support from the Heritage Council.

1.3. Form of the Survey

The survey is composed of three parts: A report, a computer database, and a set of digitised maps.

The report includes a short introduction to the architectural history and urban development of the town, a summary of the findings of the survey, and recommendations for future protection of the built heritage of the town. The appendix includes inventory sheets for all the sites recorded, generated from the database, each having one representative image.

The database is in the standardised form used by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for the county surveys. Images of all sites recorded are hyperlinked to the database.

Digitised maps have been prepared using Mapinfo. These plot the GPS location of each building or site recorded. Hand-annotated paper maps have also been provided.

2.0 Historical Development Portlaoise

2.1. Origins in the sixteenth-century

Portlaoise is the principal town of county Laois, located at an important junction at the nexus of the secondary routes between Dublin, Cork and Limerick. Known until the mid-twentieth century as Maryborough in honour of Queen Mary I, the town owes its current name to the sixteenth-century fort, the 'Fort of Leix' or the 'Fort Protector' as depicted on contemporaneous maps. Manuscript maps, in addition to the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps, contemporary newspapers and travel writings, and onsite investigation of extant structures, provide the tools towards an interpretation of Portlaoise's historical development, its archaeology and its architectural heritage.

Like much of the county, due to continual warfare, changes in ownership and a certain degree of neglect, the town of Portlaoise has suffered considerably since the mid-sixteenth century. The consequence of these events on the town is an extensive and highly complex layering of the urban form, and while each period leaves its idiosyncratic mark on the townscape, much disappears in the outcome.



Fig.3: Extract from Carew's manuscript Cotton Map of Leix & Offaly, c.1563. Courtesy of the County Council Library, Laois County Council, Portlaoise.

Following the death of Henry VIII in 1547 and the accession of Edward VI (1547-1553) successive lord deputies of Ireland struggled to establish the rule of the central government and a series of rebellions broke out among extant Irish lords. The first of these was in Leinster when the feuding O'Moore and O'Connor clans were displaced to make way for the new plantation of land. In 1548 two Crown forts were created within the plantation; the Fort Protector, now Portlaoise, and the Fort Governor, now Daingean, both named in honour of the Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, uncle of the boy king Edward VI and holder of the titles Lord Protector of England and Governor of the King's Person. The Fort Protector was built on rising ground to the southeast of

the River Triogue (a tributary of the Barrow) with the Esker ridge forming a natural defensive barricade to the east.

Eight years later the plantation was renamed Queen's County (Laois) and King's County (Offaly), for Mary I (1553-1558) and her Spanish consort Philip II of Spain, and the settlements were renamed respectively after the Catholic king and queen to Philipstown (Dainean) and Maryborough (Portlaoise). A short while later Maryborough was besieged and captured by rebels and the fort suffered extensive damage.

It was around this time in 1556, that the town's first parish church (Old St Peter's) was constructed, situated to the west of the fort and within its own burial grounds. Built as a Catholic church, as Queen Mary had re-established Roman Catholicism as the state religion, the church was used for Protestant services after the accession of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) when the reformed religion was reinstated. Two hundred years later it was the setting for sermons by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley (1703-1791).

A plan of Maryborough from 1565 (Fig.2) shows a small settlement within a walled town surrounding the rebuilt fort - the results of a reconstruction operation by the Earl of Sussex (then Lord Lieutenant as appointed by Elizabeth I). The map indicates in schematic form the scale and style of the settlers' dwellings, the names of the tenants and the presence of the stream now culverted beneath Church Avenue. Enjoying a short period of success, the town was granted a market in 1567 and was incorporated to the rank of borough by Elizabeth I in 1570 - its corporation status sustaining until 1830. The town flourished briefly in the latter decades before it was plundered by the son of the Earl of Desmond and suffered several burnings before the end of the sixteenth century.

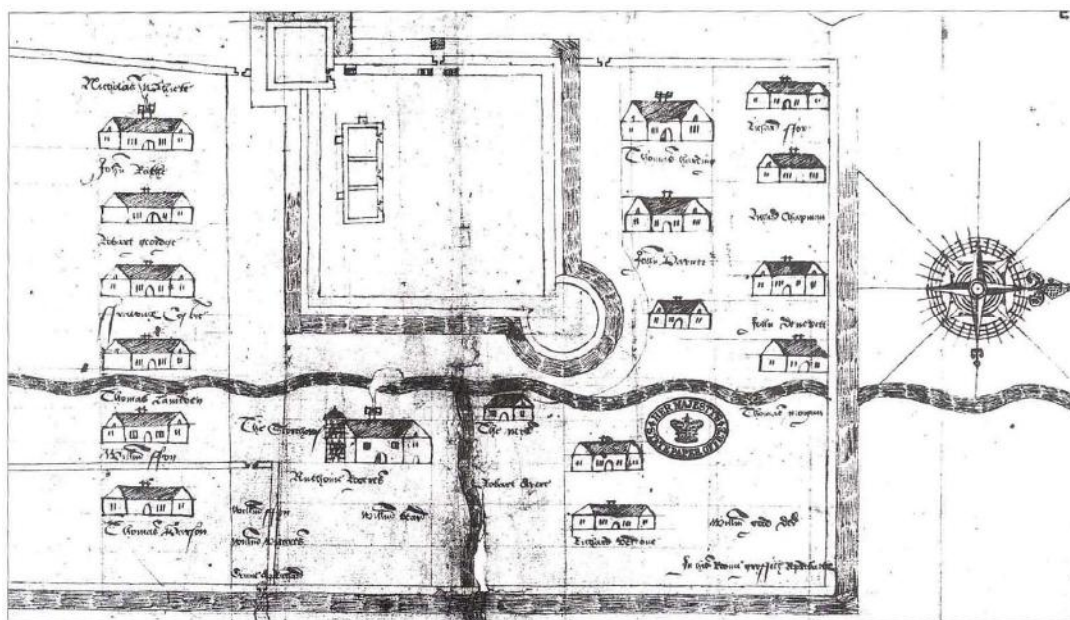


Fig.4: Plan of Maryborough, 1565.

The fort reconstructed by Sussex in 1563 comprised a rectangular enclosure with a projecting circular bastion in the north-east corner and a rectangular tower (later called the Castle of Maryborough) in the opposing south west corner. A single entrance was provided in the western wall and a range of two-storey buildings lined the southern boundary. A second range was built subsequently on the inner northern wall and used in the eighteenth century as a barracks. These buildings were removed in the nineteenth century and replaced by a new barracks to the south of the town. With the exception of most of the northern wall, some segments of the south and east walls and the circular bastion to the north east, very little remains of the full

original fort structure today. The northeast bastion was subsequently incorporated into the large industrial complex of Odlum's Mills which closed in 1991. The dwellings depicted on the 1560 map have all disappeared, other than the 'Stone House' with its circular tower to the east of the fort which was integrated into the Presentation Convent during the late nineteenth century. This building served as a constable's house, a gaol and an infirmary before the Presentation nuns took over the property in 1824. Recent excavations there have uncovered a tunnel leading towards the fort, possibly related to its occupancy by the fort's constable.

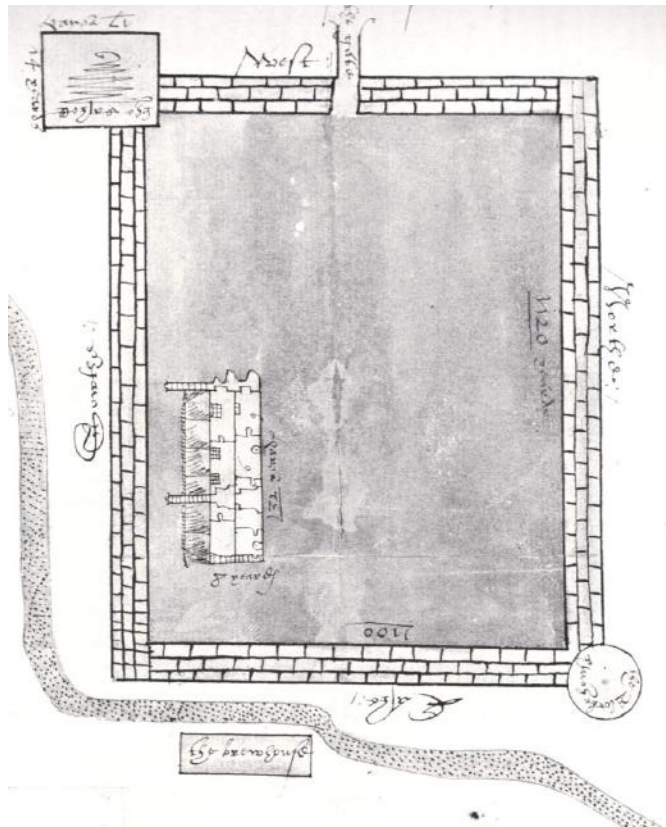


Fig.5: Plan of Fort Protector, TCD Manuscripts. Published in Niall McCullough & Valerie Mulvin, *A lost tradition, the nature of architecture in Ireland*, Dublin, 1987.

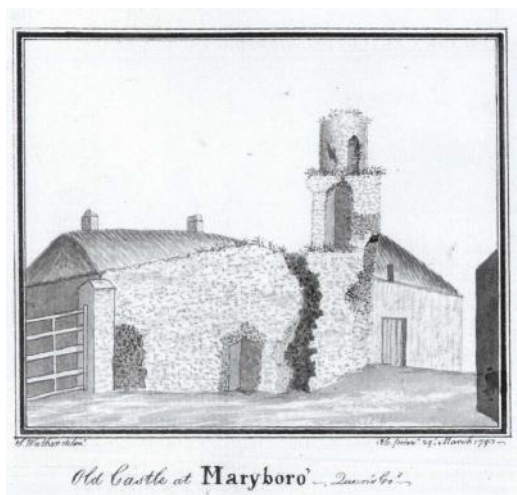


Fig.6: Austin Cooper's drawing of the southern bastion of the old fort, c. 1793.

2.2. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century developments

Due to the severity of the damage endured by Portlaoise in the late sixteenth century and during the Cromwellian Wars of 1652-3, in addition to the paucity of documentary evidence, an accurate seventeenth-century footprint is difficult to establish. Although extant remains of the fort and its bastions appear on the majority of contemporaneous and later maps, the extent of the old walls of the town at this period are unclear and were possibly partially dismantled by Cromwell's generals. An early flour mill with a horizontal waterwheel was built to the north east of the fort, later forming part of the Odlum complex, its mill stream ran towards the south until a later diversion to the Trigoue. Urban historians suggest that the only extant evidence of the form of the town defences today are the laneways to the south of Main Street, in particular Lyster Lane and Pepper Lane, which acted as entrances to the walled settlement and now penetrate the urban plan through archways leading onto the main thoroughfare, complementing the carriage arches that punctuate the historic streetscape.

The earliest origins of the urban core emerge in the early eighteenth century, with the nascent growth of the town form surrounding the fort and uniformly developing from there to the east and west. A manuscript map from 1721 indicates the extent of this urban growth, with the formation of the Main Street curving beyond the fort to the south and a former mill stream to the east, culverted and built on, creating a natural sweep in the streetscape, which today forms the junction of Lower Square with Church Avenue. This little square, which was lined to the north with the face of the fort walls and to the south with the widening of Main Street, served as the town's central market place until the establishment in the early nineteenth century of a more formal market square at the larger (and perhaps then more appropriate), diamond to the west of Main Street and south of Maryborough Commons. Despite the foundation of the latter public space, the informal Lower Square still serves as the heart of Portlaoise and today provides fine vistas from either end of Main Street and through the laneways from the south.



Fig.7: Nineteenth-century view down Main Street towards the Lower Square.

The form of the town in the mid-eighteenth century is clearly shown on a manuscript map dated 1766, from the estate of William Bridges. While the streetscapes are illustrated schematically as uniform terraces, the main contribution of this manuscript to the architectural history of Portlaoise is the elevational depiction of the first St. Peter's Church, to the west of the fort, and the original Courthouse on Main Street, a two-storey over basement building with a central clock tower, highly

representative of its genre and period. The map also indicates the early formation of the diamond to the west of the town at the junction of Main Street with the roads to Limerick and Mountmellick (Coote Street). The eighteenth-century also saw the building of many fine residential late-Georgian terraces, still extant today on Church Street, and on the same street the construction of the sombre stone-clad gaol in 1789 by Richard Harman, James Gandon's clerk of works at the Custom House in Dublin.



Fig. 8: Extract from manuscript survey of of 1766 of lands surrounding the town of Maryborough. Courtesy of the County Library, Laois County Council, Portlaoise.



Fig. 9: View of Lower Main Street and the junction with Well Road in the background, showing historic shopfronts and the boundary of the former Munster and Leinster Bank.



Fig.10: Twentieth-century Lawrence photograph of Main Street with Lower Square.

2.3. Nineteenth-century expansion & new public buildings

The town's greatest thrust of development occurred during the early nineteenth century, which generated the central town plan as we know it today and produced most of Portlaoise's prominent public buildings in addition to varied streetscapes created with a mix of archetypal pattern-book designs and vernacular terraced residences. The first edition six-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1839 reveals much about the town's urban fabric and public architecture, and illustrates clearly the form generated by the early historic core of development surrounding the fort and the town's expansion shaped by the nature of the many new roads projecting out from the core.

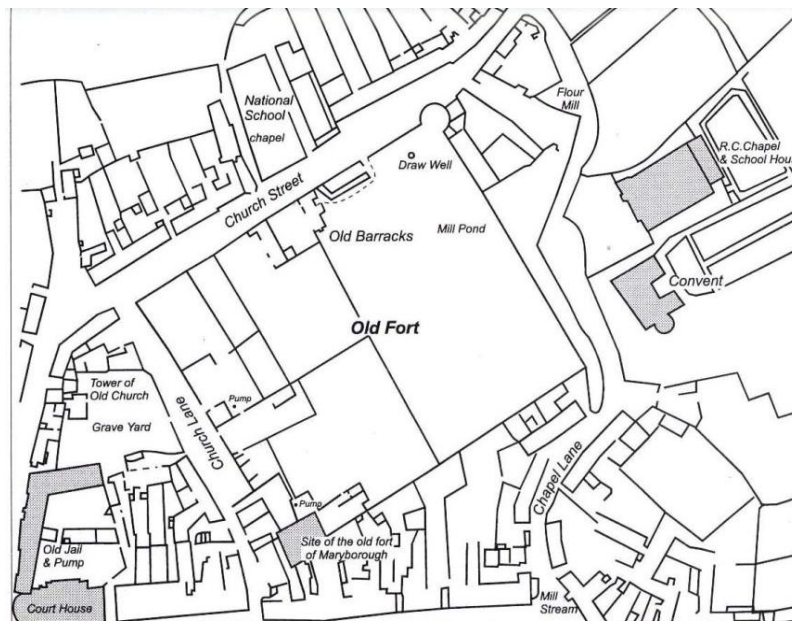


Fig.11: Reconstruction of unpublished 5ft O.S. Map of Maryborough, c.1839. From Michael Deignan, 'Portlaoise: Genesis and Development', in Lane, P.G. & W. Nolan (eds), Laois: History and Society. Dublin, 1999.

The old gaol followed suit and was replaced with a much more substantial County Gaol & House of Correction, built in 1830 outside the town on the Dublin Road by William Deane Butler in the Gothic Revival style. Complementing the institutional landscape on Dublin Road were the modestly designed County Infirmary built in 1808 to house 55 patients and the neo-classical St. Fintan’s Asylum erected in 1832 on Cosby estate land.

On the opposite side of Portlaoise on the Cork Road (Abbeyleix Road) a large barracks with an ancillary drill ground was constructed to replace the smaller cavalry range located within the grounds of the old fort. The barracks became the Garda County Headquarters at the foundation of the state. Following the narrative of the construction of institutional buildings, we find three schools built by 1839, one in the rural setting of Stradbally Road, the second on the north side of Church Street opposite the old fort and the third attached to the highly sophisticated R.C. Chapel of St. Peter & Paul. This fine church was built c. 1837-8 in an attractive late-Gothic style, and together with the adjoining Presentation Convent of 1824, formed a significant architectural set-piece within the town.

A further addition to the architectural landscape of Portlaoise were the more substantial private residences dotted along the periphery of the town, namely Newpark, Portran House, Annebrook House and the renovated Annefield House, the birthplace of Dr. Bartholomew Mosse, founder of the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin.



Fig.13: Nineteenth-century Lawrence Collection photograph showing the Town Hall on Market Square with St. Peter’s Church in the background.

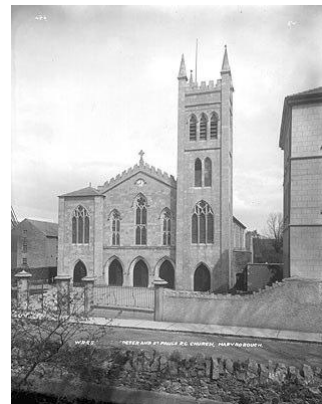


Fig.14: Twentieth-century Lawrence Collection photograph showing St. Peter & Paul’s R.C. Church, built c. 1837-8.



Fig 15. View of Portlaoise town from Ridge Grave yard showing the Presentation Convent, former Catholic Church, Trigue River and Odlums Mill.

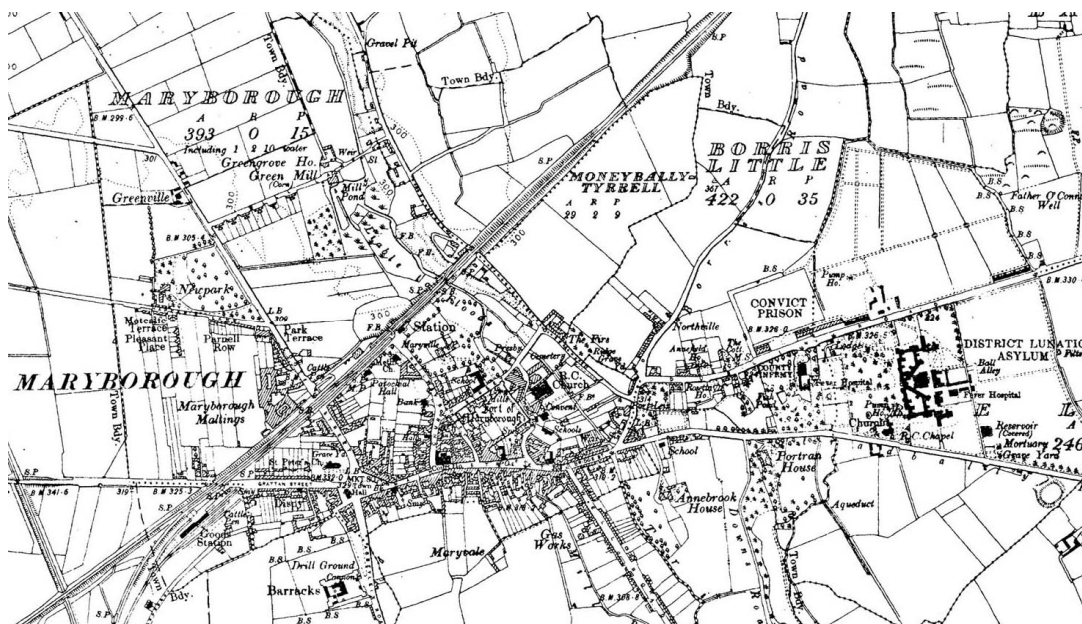


Fig. 17: Extract from the Ordnance Survey second edition 6" map, published 1907. Courtesy of the County Library, Laois County Council, Portlaoise.

Some fine twentieth-century structures were added to Main Street, including banking institutions, two good hotels, and an elaborately decorated Medical Hall & Pharmacy, reflecting the town's prosperity and enhancing the already vibrant streetscape. Following the conversion of the former barracks to the Garda County Headquarters at the foundation of the state, a highly unusual red-brick gymnasium was constructed within the drill grounds for the use of young recruits.

Just over ten years later, the Modernist Midland Regional Hospital built by Michael Scott, one of Ireland's most illustrious architects, graced the Dublin Road, adding to the architectural ensemble of the modest County Infirmary and the impressive St. Fintan's Hospital.



Fig 18. Michael Scott's Midland Regional Hospital for Portlaoise built in 1933-36. John O'Regan & Nicola Dearey (eds), *Michael Scott Architect: In casual conversation with Dorothy Walker*, Kinsale, 1995.

In the early years of the century a picturesque row of houses were built for prison officers of the County Gaol on the Dublin Road (demolished later in the century), but the main thrust of speculative and social housing came during the mid-twentieth century when some well-considered housing estates, such as O'Moore Place, were built on the periphery of the town. The laying out of James Fintan Lalor Avenue in the 1970s as an inner relief road to divert the Dublin-Cork traffic away from the town centre changed the face of Portlaoise, and facilitated new commercial and industrial development in its vicinity, as well as the building of the new County Hall in 1982.

3.0 Survey Methodology

3.1. Survey Methodology

The main starting point of the survey was the Portlaoise Inventory Study, carried out in 1997 by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). That study created a basic summary record for every structure located within Ordnance Survey maps 3942-04, 3942-05, 3942-09, 3942-10 and 3943-01, embracing the entire historic town centre and its immediate outskirts, and including over 1,100 buildings and objects of heritage interest. That survey consisted of an 8-digit registration number for each site recorded, a map cross-reference, address, approximate date, importance codes, and a single-line description of the composition of the building. Ratings of “National”, “Regional”, “Local” or “Record Only” were attributed.

The brief for the present survey was to re-evaluate the c. 335 sites rated as “Local”, “Regional” or “National” in the 1997 survey, omitting the c. 831 sites rated as “Record Only”.

However, rather than strict adherence to the specified list, it was found that an open critical view was more conducive to the aims of the project. The passage of 11 years had seen replacement or remodelling of many “Local” or “Regional” buildings to the degree that they no longer contributed to the architectural heritage of the town. On the other hand, a certain number of structures considered in 1997 to be of lesser significance and given the rating “Record Only”, were seen in the context of today to make a positive contribution to the architectural heritage of the town. A total of 41 buildings were therefore omitted from the survey list, and an additional 54 buildings were added. The total number of buildings recorded was 339 (11 sites had been included twice in the 1997 survey)

The buildings, structures and sites were recorded following the NIAH methodology, as set out in the NIAH Handbook, Edition June 2006. The registration numbers allocated in the 1997 survey have been used. A summary description is given for each record, the length of which is proportionate to the complexity of the building and to the level of detail required to establish a full appreciation of its heritage value.

A digital photographic record to high resolution was made of each site. Generally access was not gained to interiors, with the exception of public buildings. GPS readings were taken at each site.

3.2. Assessment Criteria

Identification of heritage sites must be conducted in a critical and informed way to ensure that a true and comprehensive assessment of the built heritage is made. The starting point of the survey has been to establish an essential understanding of the history of Portlaoise and the development of its urban morphology from its foundation as the Fort Protector to the present form of the modern town.

The evaluation of the buildings is based on current international practice in defining architectural heritage, based on a broad range of values which have evolved to embrace modest structures of social heritage interest, industrial heritage, modern works of architectural quality as well as open spaces, groupings and cultural landscapes. The significance of the buildings of Portlaoise cannot be judged in isolation. In every case, therefore, consideration has been made of the relationship of the particular building to the urban fabric in which it is set, and the role it plays in the wider historic environment of the town.

A written appraisal is provided in each record, and this is seen as a primary tool in guiding owners, occupants and planners in the future protection of the site. Appraisals of each structure or site have been based on objective analysis of the categories of significance set down in the Planning and Development Act, 2000, namely: architectural, historical, artistic, archaeological, social, cultural, scientific and technical. The

assessment of the sites under these headings has been conducted following the guidance and parameters defined in the NIAH Handbook. Aspects such as group value, contribution to the urban setting, curtilage, rarity and the survival level of authentic historic features have been considered in this analysis.

In addition to the appraisal, the architectural heritage significance of the structure or site, given in the 1997 survey was re-evaluated and a new overall rating attributed to each record, rated in accordance with the NIAH rating values International, National, Regional, Local or Record Only.

3.3. Mapping

All buildings recorded have been positioned using GPS six-digit Irish Grid readings taken at each site. This data can be plotted in the mapping of the county using the Mapinfo programme used by Laois County Council.

Hand-annotated paper maps have also been provided with this report.



Fig 19. Detail of the Old Gaol of 1789 by Richard Harman

4.0 Survey Findings

4.1 NIAH Portlaoise Inventory Study of 1997

The recording for the 1997 Survey was begun in 1993 and this survey was only the third town survey to be published. It was seen as a “test-bed” in the development of the NIAH recording methodology, which has developed considerably in the intervening time to include a photographic survey with longer descriptions and an appraisal of each site.

Whilst the assessment criteria set out in the text section of the 1997 study have remained substantially the same, the interpretation today of what is regarded as contributing to our architectural heritage has changed somewhat. The enormous scale of development in all parts of the country has led to much loss of more modest historic buildings, and this has increased the value of what remains. The town of Portlaoise has expanded considerably and many modest structures at its periphery have come to form the sole features of historic character remaining, and thus add considerable character to otherwise featureless settings.

It was found that many of the sites which were rated “Record Only” in the 1997 survey would in today’s terms be regarded as being of at least “Local” significance. It would appear that more emphasis was laid on the quality of the individual building and less on its contribution to its setting. This is evidenced by the evaluation “Record Only” for the former Methodist Chapel of 1810, which though internally destroyed, makes a strong contribution to its urban context on Church Street, a key street in the town. Several less distinguished houses of considerable vintage which add to the architectural coherence of the urban fabric of the town were also rated as “Record Only”. The National School of 1897 (reg. no. 12505044), which makes a good contribution to the social and architectural heritage of the town, was rated “Record Only”, surprising even under the criteria and legislative context of 1997. Some 16 buildings currently on the RPS were rated “Record Only” in the 1997 survey.

Examples of buildings which may be more highly valued today include Dr Murphy Place, an early 1950s local authority housing scheme of accomplished urban design quality off the Borris Road (reg. no. 12505100-03), and many modest cottages and vernacular buildings, which though by no means intact, nonetheless contribute to the built heritage quality of their surroundings.

The buildings which we have selected to add to the survey are the most significant among these, several of which merit inclusion in the RPS. All “Record Only” buildings were not reassessed, as this was outside the scope of the project. It is therefore important to note that some buildings, which remain outside of this survey may deserve to be upgraded to “Local” significance, particularly those dating from before 1950.

The distinction in 1997 between “Local” and “Regional” must be understood in the legislative context before the enactment of the Planning and Development Act 2000, under which the current system for drawing up the Record of Protected Structures was introduced. Evaluation as “Regional” recommends a building for protection, and under the previous Act planning authorities tended to list only the most outstanding buildings. It was possibly for this reason that only 35 buildings were rated as Regional. The rating of “Local” to such striking buildings as the Methodist Church of 1883 (reg. no. 12504136), three nearby mid-19th century houses of high quality at Bank Place/Railway Street (reg. nos. 12504126, 12504127, 12504128), the elegant early 19th century terrace to the western side of Church Street and the entire fabric of Main Street and Market Square, renders these important buildings unacceptably vulnerable to damaging alterations.

Several administrative errors were found in the in the 1997 survey, possibly the result of the time lapse between the recording work and publication of the inventory. There were instances where neighbouring buildings were mixed up, and dates, descriptions and rating values attributed to the wrong structure. An example of this is an externally intact building of strong architectural character at 41 Grattan Street (reg. no. 12506196), which was wrongly dated to 1980 and rated “Record Only”.

4.2 International Rating

The rating “International” is reserved by the NIAH methodology for “structures or sites of sufficient architectural heritage importance to be considered in an international context. These are exceptional structures that can be compared to and contrasted with the finest architectural heritage in other countries.

No sites were given this rating in this survey or in the 1997 inventory.

4.3 National Rating

The NIAH Handbook attributes “National” significance to structures or sites that “make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage of Ireland. These are structures and sites that are considered to be of great architectural heritage significance in an Irish context”.

Two sites were rated “National” in the 1997 survey, the Courthouse and St. Peter’s Church of Ireland Church, associated respectively with Richard Morrison and James Gandon, architects of national stature.

In addition to these the remains of the Fort of Maryborough, built as the Fort Protector in 1560 and forming the genesis of the town (reg. nos. 12504200), the associated Presentation Convent incorporating the historic “Stone House” (reg. nos. 12505169 and 12505199), the original Francis Johnston block of St. Fintan’s Hospital, dating from 1831 (reg. no. 12508088) and the important Modernist group at the General Hospital of 1940 by Michael Scott (reg. no. 12508013, 12508069 and 12508071) have been upgraded to “National” importance. All of these structures are currently included in the RPS with the exception of the mortuary which lies within the curtilage of the hospital, but is not protected in its own right.

4.4 Regional Rating

The NIAH attributes “Regional” significance to “structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area”. These can “stand in comparison with similar structures or sites in other regions or areas within Ireland”. The handbook recommends that more modest building types can belong to this rating such as “modest terraces and timber shopfronts”.

Under the Planning and Development Act, the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government recommends those structures which have been considered of “international”, “national”, and “regional” significance be included by local authorities in their Record of Protected Structures.

33 Structures were rated regional in the 1997 survey. These are now included in the RPS, alongside the two which were rated national, and 40 other lower-rated structures. In total the RPS now contains 84 structures within the town of Portlaoise.

The present survey to date has attributed regional significance to 76 sites that are recommended for addition to the RPS and an additional 70 structures are recommended for inclusion within an ACA or addition to the RPS.

4.5 Local Rating

Local significance is attributed to “structures or sites of some vintage that make a contribution to the architectural heritage but may not merit being placed in the RPS separately. Such structures may have lost much of their original fabric”.

290 sites were rated “Local” in the 1997 survey. These were reassessed in this survey. However, 41 structures which had been replaced or had undergone such changes that they would be down-graded to “Record Only”, were omitted from the survey.

29 structures were upgraded from “Record Only” to “Local”. The number of buildings rated Local could be increased to 185, if the historic core of the town were designated an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

4.6 Record Only

The “Record Only” category is defined in the current NIAH Handbook as “not deemed to have sufficient presence or inherent architectural or other importance at the time of recording to warrant a higher rating. It is acknowledged, however, that they might be considered further at a future time.”

Structures rated as “Record Only” in the 1997 survey were not included in the brief for this survey. However, as discussed above, the considerable changes which had taken place to the historic fabric of Portlaoise in the intervening 11 years have shifted the relative value of many of the buildings, and it was found that a good number of buildings given this lesser rating would now be regarded as making a positive contribution to the architecture of the town. Indeed 13 examples had been included in the RPS.

54 buildings given the rating “Record Only” in 1997 have therefore been added to the survey. Of these 29 were upgraded to “Local” and 25 upgraded to “Regional” value.

There are three buildings rated as Record Only in the survey; These are the County Hall buildings, included for their prominence in the town and 12506249, a protected structure that has been recommended for removal from the RPS.

4.7 Sites Omitted from the Survey

Several structures rated as Local or higher in the 1997 survey have since been demolished or completely remodelled and no longer merit this rating. Heavily remodelled buildings have been downgraded to “Record Only” and omitted from the survey along with demolished structures and sections of limestone kerbing which have been removed. Three buildings, 1250843, 1250844 and 12507110 have not been substantially remodelled but do not merit local rating.

The table below accounts for records omitted from the survey.

12504121	12504328	12506016	12507043	12504158	12505146
12504122	12504329	12506337	12507045	12504163	12505177
12504152	12504337	12506338	12507116	12504164	12505202
12504153	12505010	12506164	12507117	12504277	12506015
12504154	12505017	12506197	12507141	12504324	12507145
12508043	12508044	12507110	12506305	12506313	12506200
12506247	12505180	12505180	12506311	12506347	

4.8 Summary Condition of the Historic Urban Fabric

Portlaoise is a vibrant commercial town and an important urban centre in the Midlands. Although much of the commercial activity is located in the late 20th century expansion around Lyster Square and James Fintan Lalor Avenue, the Main Street and to a lesser degree Market Square have managed to retain their historic function as the commercial centre of the town.

The presentation of the historic fabric of the main thoroughfare is nevertheless poor. The level of survival of historic windows, doors and shopfronts is relatively low, and the presentation of the buildings fails to make advantage of the potential which their intrinsic architectural character offers.

Economic development pressures have resulted in the loss of many buildings in the historic core of the town, and this has greatly compromised the integrity of the historic urban fabric. 38 buildings rated “Local” or higher in 1997 have since been demolished,

including four protected structures. The curtilage and rear sites of many historic buildings have been developed in an over-intensive manner which has detracted from their architectural heritage value.

New developments and infill buildings are mostly of quite poor design quality, and many appear not to have been designed by architects. Although most developments of the past twenty years have sought to imitate traditional building forms, in the main these fail to reflect the architectural scale, materials and simple detailing of the historic buildings, and often disregard historic building lines. A number of buildings have been built in contemporary architectural style, and though less bland these often do not respond to the historic character and scale of their context. A number of well-designed contemporary shopfronts provide an exception to this pattern.

The public realm of the town is visually dominated by the motor car, even in the Main Street where a one-way system and traffic calming is in operation. The visual and spatial integrity of the Market Square is severely comprised by its use as a traffic junction and car park. Very little historic paving material survives in the town. Five sections of limestone kerbing recorded in the 1997 survey have since been removed. The public realm is further marred by clutter made up of discordant traffic signage, street furniture, banners, seasonal lighting etc. which detract from the architectural coherence of the historic town centre.

The urban fabric of Portlaoise is punctuated by a number of imposing buildings which play a key role in shaping the architectural character of the town. These include the Courthouse attributed to Richard Morrison, the Old Gaol, the former Munster and Leinster Bank, St Peter's Church of Ireland Church of which the steeple is attributed to James Gandon, the former Kelly's Hibernian Hotel and O'Loughlin's Hotel in Main Street, and a number of substantial houses such as Portleix House. The periphery of the town on the Dublin side is graced with a series of institutions, the Gothic Revival Portlaoise Prison, the neo-classical St Fintan's Hospital and the Modernist Midland Regional Hospital complex by Michael Scott.

However, the architectural quality and spatial hierarchy of the town has suffered from the disappearance of two significant landmark buildings, the Market House and the former Catholic Church of SS Peter and Paul. The loss of these buildings has left their historic surroundings bereft of important focal points, and the historic character of Church Lane and Market Square is much diminished. Furthermore the oldest structures in the town, the walls of the Fort Protector, the Presentation Convent building and the ruins of the first St Peter's Church are in a very poor state of repair and presentation. These sites, each of which dates back to era of the Laois-Offaly Plantation and the foundation of the settlement, have great potential to enhance the historic appeal of the town, but the immense significance of these elements of the architectural heritage of Portlaoise is almost entirely obscured.

There are few examples of best practice conservation in the town, a notable exception being the current restoration of the steeple of St Peter's Church of Ireland Church.



Fig 20. Historic sash windows with original glass on Grattan Street.

5.0 Comment on Current NIAH Methodology

An aspect of the brief for this project was to comment on the current recording methodology of the NIAH. This method is a comprehensive system of identifying, recording and evaluating the architectural heritage of Ireland and was used in the preparation of this inventory.

5.1 Recording Method

The NIAH methodology for recording individual structures and sites was found to be thorough and systematic, and allowed all aspects to be covered to a level of detail demanded by the complexity and significance of the building.

The omission of the interiors of all but openly accessible public buildings from the survey was seen to be one shortcoming. Inspection of interiors would provide much greater insight into the age and evolution of each structure, and it is probable that many seemingly insignificant structures would prove to be of greater significance if viewed from the inside. It is however recognised that the difficulties which interior inspections would present in terms of arranging permission for access would greatly impede the progress of a survey and would therefore contribute significantly to its cost. Given the scale of the task of creating the first comprehensive nationwide inventory of architectural heritage the omission of interiors would appear to be justified.

It is however important that local authorities be mindful of this limitation when considering planning applications for alterations, as unrecorded interiors may contain features of great significance. Particular vigilance is necessary with regard to buildings rated as “Local” which are not included in the Record of Protected Structures, as these are the structures whose full value may not have been identified by the NIAH survey.

5.2 Scope of NIAH County Survey

The current NIAH methodology does not examine the entire historic fabric of towns and villages, but is primarily concerned with the identification of buildings suited for designation as protected structures. Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government recommends structures to each local authority for inclusion on its RPS. It is a primary function of the NIAH, as a division of the Department to identify buildings of “Regional” value which are to be included in these ministerial recommendations. The structures selected for recording in an NIAH county or town survey are therefore those which are likely to be rated “Regional”, though many subsequently rated “Local” are also recorded.

The Architectural Conservation Area is the mechanism set down in the Planning Act for the protection of groupings, and this follows the stipulation in the Granada Convention that signatory states identify such groupings and protect them by law. The Planning and Development Act, 2000 leaves designation of Architectural Conservation Areas entirely at the discretion of the local authority, and no ministerial recommendations are provided for these. Although the NIAH methodology requires that consideration be given to groupings and to the contextual value of the structures recorded, the legislative framework of the Planning Act under which the NIAH operates does not require that a systematic record be made of all buildings which contribute to the historic built environment of a town, village, or other grouping. Prior to introduction of the 2000 Act NIAH town surveys did record all buildings, as in the 1997 survey of Portlaoise.

Many local authorities lack the professional resources to identify groupings suited to designation as an ACA and it is regrettable that the legislation has not endowed the NIAH with this role.

The brief for this survey was to record all buildings of “Local” rating and above and this allowed an intimate understanding of the architectural heritage of the Portlaoise, taking

into account the historic urban context in an inclusive whole, rather than a collection of isolated buildings.

5.3 Evaluation

The NIAH methodology for the evaluation of historic structures and sites was found to be comprehensive and covered all aspects of significance, closely following the stipulations included in the Granada Convention of 1985, which was ratified by Ireland in 1992.



Fig 21. Detail of Whelan Bros historic shopfront on Main Street

6.0 Recommendations

The survey of the historic urban fabric of Portlaoise found many buildings and historic urban spaces to be in a poor state of repair and presentation, and identified some deficiencies in the systems, structures and practices that are in place for their protection, care and enhancement.

The following recommendations are put forward as a starting point for the renewal of the historic built environment of the town.

6.1 Argument for Good Urban Conservation

The first step in the conservation of the historic fabric of a town is to be aware of its significance and to appreciate the benefits which conservation can bring to the profile, cultural value and ultimately to the prosperity of the town.

The standing of Portlaoise as a regional centre in the Midlands is important to its economic health and to the quality of life of its inhabitants. At present the condition of the historic core and the presentation of its buildings compares unfavourably to other competing county towns in the region such as Tullamore, Naas, and Nenagh. The historic fabric of these towns has been less adversely affected by insensitive development, and key public buildings are preserved in good condition or restored to a high standard. Significant works of high quality contemporary architecture have been added in recent years. These further enrich the quality of these towns, and enhance their national image.

Historic buildings define the character and identity of a place, and create an attractive environment for residents and visitors alike. Aside from their visual appeal these structures and places are tangible evidence of the history of a town, and if presented in an appropriate manner can deepen the understanding among town residents of the cultural heritage of their home place. Well maintained historic buildings are an expression of a confident, caring community and foster civic pride amongst residents and admiration from visitors.

The incremental loss of features of the historic environment erodes this value and depreciates the character of a town, and this leads to a feeling of decline and low self-image.

Aside from the desirability of conservation of historic towns there are considerable legislative responsibilities also. Part IV of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 is the legislative framework for the protection of architectural heritage, and places onerous demands on building owners and local authorities with regard to the conservation and protection of historic buildings and sites, principles which are also enshrined in international law.

Section 10 of the Act sets out mandatory objectives, which shall be included in local authority Development Plans, and this includes the preservation of the character of the landscape, the character of architectural conservation areas, as well as the protection of structures or parts of structures which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.

A strategic aim of the Laois Development Plan, 2006 -2012, is to “protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, through promoting awareness, utilising relevant heritage legislation and promoting good quality urban and rural design”. It furthermore requires that “consideration and conservation of heritage is an integral part of coherent policies of physical, economic and social development of the county and of urban and rural planning” (Section 9, BH 1). With regard to towns, the Development Plan aims to “protect, conserve and where necessary restore or enhance the quality, character and distinctiveness of the townscapes of the county (Section 9, BH9).

6.2 Record of Protected Structures

To better protect the architectural heritage of Portlaoise, it is proposed that the following 76 buildings (NIAH Reg. no.) listed below be added to the RPS:

12508071	12505142	12504205	12505117	12505002	12505044
12504117	12505147	12507002	12506308	12505003	12507030
12504167	12505149	12507006	12507080	12505007	12507035
12504168	12505166	12507009	12507082	12505031	12507040
12504171	12505168	12507010	12507122	12505056	12507058
12504183	12505167	12507014	12507124	12506062	12507059
12504217	12505192	12507016	12507027	12506063	12507064
12504322	12506007	12507018	12507028	12506088	12508080
12504116	12506018	12507019	12507029	12506157	12508081
12504323	12506019	12507020	12508067	12506162	12508082
12504333	12506051	12507025	12508068	12506213	12508084
12504336	12506060	12507026	12508077	12506215	12508086
12504341	12508087	12505001	Curragh Camp Prefab		

If an ACA is not designated, the following 70 buildings are also proposed for addition to the RPS.

12504126	12506001	12506320	12506174	12504174	12506049
12504140	12506008	12506184	12506175	12504177	12506050
12504141	12506009	12506187	12506176	12504184	12506052
12504142	12506010	12506193	12506177	12504185	12506053
12504143	12506330	12506208	12506178	12504186	12506054
12504148	12506331	12506211	12506179	12504197	12506055
12504149	12506333	12506214	12506180	12506238	12506173
12504150	12506339	12506217	12506181	12506239	12506253
12504151	12506345	12506221	12506169	12506246	12506168
12504159	12506034	12506223	12506171	12506251	12504198
12504160	12506042	12506224	12506170	12506252	12506237
12504173	12506048	12506231	12506172		

It is proposed that the following structures be deleted from the RPS, as they have been demolished or have lost their significance to such a degree that protection is no longer warranted:

- RPS 197, NIAH Ref 12506337, 43 Main Street
- RPS199, NIAH Ref 12506016, 34 Main Street
- RPS 206, NIAH Ref 12507043, 111 Bridge Street
- RPS 219, NIAH Ref 12506249, 76 Main Street

Several buildings on the RPS have been demolished since the 1997 survey. The stated policy of Laois County Council, set down in Part 5.3 of the Portlaoise Local Area Plan, 2006-2012, is to refuse permission for demolition of protected structures except in exceptional circumstances. It is recommended that this policy be strictly implemented to prevent further losses to the town's heritage.

6.3 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

The Council of Europe Granada Convention of 1985 was ratified by Ireland in 1992 and requires signatory states to protect groups of “urban or rural buildings conspicuous for their historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest which are sufficiently coherent to form topographically definable units”. This is reflected in Irish law by the provisions for the creation of Architectural Conservation Areas in the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which allows local authorities to designate such areas for special protection.

The Portlaoise Local Area Plan, 2006-2012, sets out the policy of Laois County Council to investigate the opportunity to identify and establish Architectural Conservation Areas in appropriate areas of Portlaoise and to establish special planning controls for these areas.

The urban centre of Portlaoise is more than the sum of its parts - it can not be conserved effectively simply by adding its significant buildings to the Record of Protected Structures. An ACA would define a wider entity, also embracing the open spaces of the town. It would allow strict design parameters to be imposed on new infill developments, and place limits on what constitutes exempted development, which might otherwise erode the significance of the whole. It is therefore recommended to designate an ACA in the historic core of the town. The proposed extent of the ACA is shown in fig. 14.

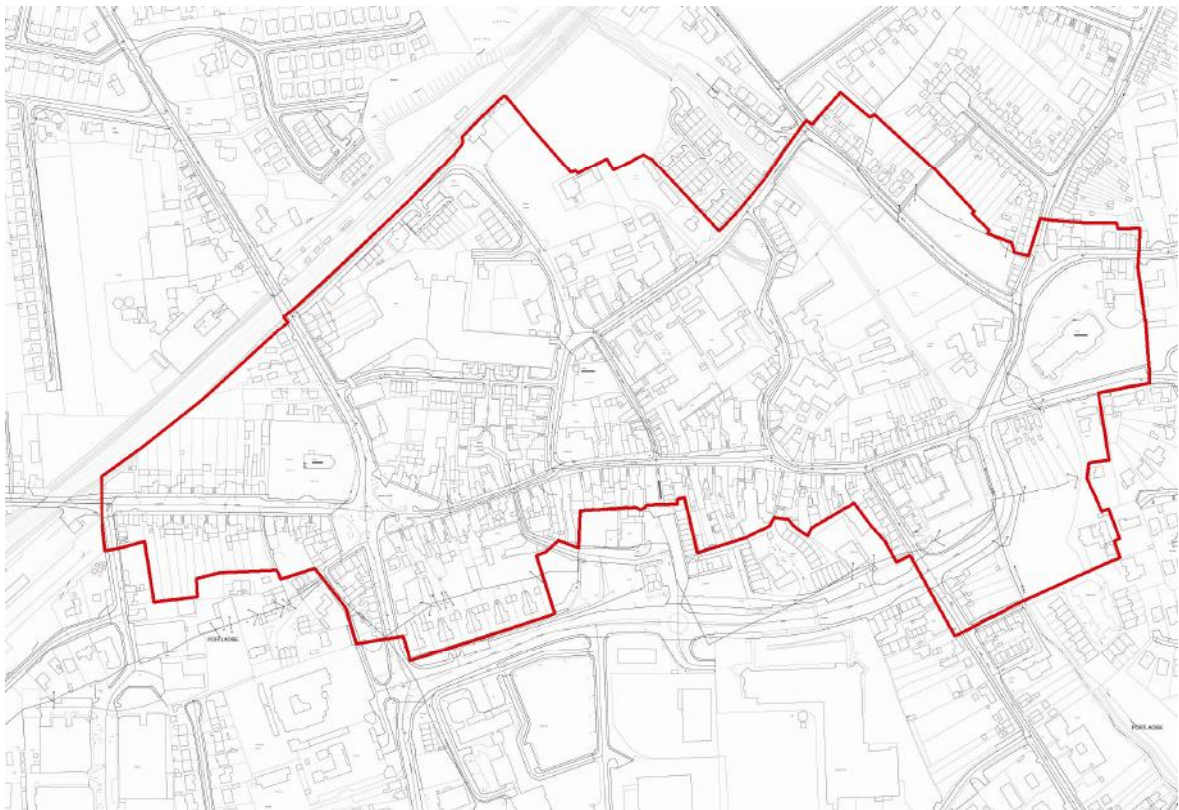


Fig. 22: Proposed extent of an ACA of the historic centre of Portlaoise

6.4 Conservation Standards

In general there is a need to promote a better standard of conservation practice in the town. Existing planning policies for the protection of the architectural heritage of the county should be used to impose conditions for the enhancement of historic buildings in all planning applications involving historic buildings in the town.

Existing policies in the Laois County Development Plan, 2006-2012 include:

- To “ensure the protection, conservation and where necessary restoration of the Architectural Heritage of the County for future generations”.
- To “refuse permission for the demolition of a Protected Structure, except in exceptional circumstances, generally only those in which it can be shown that a greater public interest will be served through the demolition of the building, outweighing the loss to the architectural heritage”.
- To “look favourably on proposals for change of use of a Protected Structure where this would secure the future conservation of the building and where proposals are in keeping with the character of the building”.
- To “ensure that any interventions to Protected Structures are undertaken in accordance with best conservation practice and using sustainable and appropriate materials”.

It is important that assessment of planning applications should follow the guidance included in “Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities”, published by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2004, superseding the draft document of 2001.

To halt and reverse the incremental loss of historic features it is recommended that a more stringent regime is needed for the implementation of the guidelines contained in the DoEHLG document. We would recommend that special attention is needed in the following areas, and further specific policies should be adopted accordingly:

- Retention and repair of all historic windows and doors.
- Where planning applications are submitted for protected structures whose historic windows have been lost, reinstatement with exact replicas to correct historic detail should be imposed. This condition should also apply to buildings within ACAs.
- Retention, repair and suitable presentation of all historic shopfronts.
- Retention or reinstatement of slate roof coverings to protected structures or within the ACA. In planning applications this should be imposed as a planning condition.
- Retention of characteristic chimneystacks to all historic buildings in the town, including those not which are not protected structures. Removal seriously upsets the visual balance of the buildings and damages the streetscape of the town. Several instances were noted where chimneystacks have been removed from buildings, e.g. reg. no. 12504159 (removed during the course of the survey), 12507003-4, 12506003 and many others.
- Retention or reinstatement of lime-rendered facades to correct historic detail. Facades which were not historically painted should be left unpainted. Garish chemical paints in gloss finish should not be allowed.
- Retention and repair of all significant site features such as boundary walls, railings, gates, piers, etc. Where such features have been lost, a policy of reinstatement should be followed.
- Removal of large of obtrusive signs or advertising billboards. spanning across large areas of the façades
- New Uses: Whilst new uses for unused historic buildings are essential to their sustainability, it must be strictly ensured that all elements from which the building derives its significance are retained in the adaptation of the building to this reuse.



Fig. 23: Roofs along Main Street

6.5 Buildings of Local Significance

The policy for the refusal of planning permission for the demolition of protected structures should be extended to include buildings deemed to be of “Local” significance, as these contribute to the coherence of the historic environment of the town.

Furthermore It is recommended that the council be mindful that closer inspection of buildings rated “Local” may reveal features not identified in this survey, particularly in the interior or parts of the curtilage which may not have been accessible. Detailed photographic surveys should be requested for all structures of “Local” rating.

Conservation reports should be requested in cases where there is reason to suspect a greater degree of significance, and alterations which might compromise its significance should not be granted permission.

6.6 Model Conservation Project

To lead by example it is suggested that Laois County Council carry out a best practice restoration of a building in its ownership, or acquire such a structure for this purpose, to demonstrate the possibilities and benefits of proper conservation.

Ideally the building selected would be a prominent structure in the town such as the Presentation Convent, Portleix House or one of the prominent three-story houses in the Main Street, Church Street or Market Square, where the impact of the restoration on the urban context would be maximised.

6.7 Quality Residential Use in Town Centre

The tendency since the 1960s for families to live outside the town or in peripheral housing estates results in under-used upper floors in the houses of the town centre or use as rental accommodation, often of a lower standard. This detracts from the vibrancy of the historic core and results in the degradation of the historic buildings.

Many houses in the town centre were built as homes for prosperous citizens and restoration of these buildings to residential should be encouraged. It is recommended that policies be adopted to promote larger family-orientated units in these houses. Building over back gardens and internal subdivision of houses should be discouraged.

6.8 Streetscape Clutter

It is recommended to adopt a policy for the reduction of clutter in the public domain within the town centre caused by the proliferation of discordant signage, street furniture, banners, seasonal lighting etc. which currently detract from the architectural coherence of the urban landscape.

6.9 Grant Assistance

Information on grant schemes such as the DoEHLG Civic Structures Conservation Grant Scheme, the Heritage Council Buildings At Risk Scheme should be promoted to agencies and private groups or individuals who might be eligible to apply. Local Authority conservation grants could be targeted at key buildings in the town.

6.10 Fort Protector, Presentation Convent and Old St Peters Church

The Fort Protector is a rare built element of the first of the English Plantations in Ireland and as such a heritage site of enormous significance and potential. It is currently subdivided into multiple ownership and its importance cannot be appreciated. It is essential that this site should not be regarded as a backlands area of the town and its key historical significance as the genesis of the settlement of Portlaoise actively recognised. Great care should be taken to prevent irreversible development which would damage this enormous asset to the identity of Portlaoise.

It is recommended that Laois County Council acquire further properties within the historic boundaries of the fort in order that it may be consolidated as a heritage attraction. If acquired by the council and restored to a high conservation standard this unique structure could become a resource of enormous benefit for the understanding of the town's history and heritage.

Uses on this site should be reserved for civic and public functions and should integrate later layers of architectural significance which have been built within the original confines of the Fort. A plan, currently under consideration, for the relocation of the County Library and Archive to this site would be an appropriate use, however a high standard of architectural design would be demanded of such a proposal and an architectural design competition is recommended as the best way to achieve this.

In order to provide a framework for the consolidation and enhanced presentation of the Fort Protector as a heritage site, it is recommended that a Conservation Plan be carried out before plans for the site are progressed, by a multi-disciplinary team in consultation with a range of stakeholders, representing the concerns of heritage conservation, property owners, tourism and the townspeople of Portlaoise. The ICOMOS Burra Charter sets out a methodology for how such a Conservation Plan may be conducted.

Conservation of the adjacent former St. Peter's Church and graveyard, and of the hugely significant former Presentation Convent, which faces the Fort wall, would create an historic precinct of great heritage value and interest, with the capacity to greatly raise the profile of the town.

6.11 Market Square

It is recommended that car parking in the Market Square be removed or significantly reduced, and the present raised traffic roundabout should be replaced with a less visually obtrusive alternative. It is recommended that a high quality landscape design be commissioned, possibly by means of an architectural design competition, to reconfigure the space for the enjoyment of the townspeople and to improve the visual environment to better complement the historic building fabric around the space.

The Market Square has lost its focal point since the demolition of the free-standing French Renaissance style Market House/Town Hall. Significant views of this building from Main Street, Coote Street and Abbeyleix Road formerly enriched the spatial and architectural experience of the town, but have now been lost.

We suggest that a longer term objective be considered to commission a new civic building of modest size to fill the void left by the loss of the Market House, in order to restore the focus of the square. Once outer relief road projects are complete, occupation of this space in the Market Square could serve traffic calming and could enhance the experience of the pedestrian within the town. Such a building should attain the high standard of public architecture which the town has inherited from former generations, and contribute to the architectural heritage of the future.

An architectural design competition would be a good way to ensure an innovative response and a high design standard for such a building, and could serve to raise the architectural quality and profile of the town.

6.12 Public Awareness

To generate ideas and discussion amongst the townspeople for the regeneration of the historic town centre as a cultural resource, contact could be made to the postgraduate courses in urban and building conservation, landscape architecture and urban design in UCD. An urban and landscape design workshop would serve to open debate and generate ideas on the form, presentation and better use of historic urban space in the town. Detailed design projects for various areas of the historic town could be discussed in public meetings and resulting designs presented in a public exhibition.

The brief for such studies should focus on the retention and enhancement of the historic buildings of the town and on the better presentation of the town's history and heritage.

The views and aspirations of Portlaoise and of its hinterland should be actively researched. A forum for the discussion of ideas would promote appreciation and generate commitment in the community for the conservation of architectural heritage and the improvement of the urban environment, setting higher standards and expectations for architectural and urban design.

Appendix I: Documentary Sources

Maps Consulted

O.S. 6 inch, 1839
 O.S. 5 foot, unpublished 1839
 O.S. 6 inch, 1889
 O.S. 6 inch, 1907
 O.S. 1:5000, 1959
 O.S. 25 inch, 1976
 O.S. 1:1000, 1985

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Appendix II: Inventory

Glossary of terms used on each record sheet

Registration Number: The registration number is an eight digit number ascribed to each building recorded by the NIAH during the Portlaoise Inventory Study 1997. It is unique to each structure recorded in the country.

Site Number: The site number was ascribed to each building recorded by the NIAH during the Portlaoise Inventory Study 1997. It is used to identify each structure with the associated index map. The number is not unique and there is a site no. 1 for each map sheet.

Location: The location gives the name (if applicable) and address of the structure. The townland name is given in capital letters.

Map info: This refers to the 1:1000 Ordnance Survey Maps. Five Ordnance Survey sheet plans are relevant to the survey area: 3942-04, 3942-05, 3942-09, 3942-010 and 3943-01.

Original Type: The original type refers to the original function of the structure, based on the evidence presented by the structure and historical record, for example house, shop, stable, etc. Categories and sub-groups given are those standardised in the NIAH database, for example house, shop, stable etc.

In Use As: Refers to the current primary use of the structure.

Additional Use: Refers to any other secondary use, for example a house that may have a shop at ground floor.

Historical Use: Refers to a former use of the building that was not its original use, for example a country house used as a school for a time and is now in use as a hotel.

Description: A detailed record of the physical form and detail of the building. The description follows the a systematic methodology developed by the NIAH.

Appraisal: Draws attention to the essential character and significance of the structure and identifies the reasons for the importance value and rating which have been attributed to it.

Date: For most structures an exact date is not known and the date refers to the likely time interval within which the structure was constructed. A narrower span is used for structures with stylistic architectural features which make the date more clearly identifiable. A wider time span is needed for vernacular buildings or plainer structures whose style remained constant over longer periods.

Condition: The six categories used by the NIAH are “Excellent”, “Good”, “Fair”, “Poor”, “Derelict” and “Ruin”. This is a comment on the overall state of repair and the level of intactness of historic features.

Categories of Special Interest: The categories identified in Section 51 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 are Architectural, Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, Cultural, Scientific, Technical or Social. These are the essential qualities from which the structure derives its special interest.

Former Rating: Refers to the rating attributed in the Portlaoise Inventory Study of 1997

Rating: The rating proposed by Lotts Architecture in this survey.

RPS No.: Reference number to the Record of Protected Structures, for buildings which are listed for protection in the Laois County Development Plan under the Planning and Development Act, 2000. In several instances neighbouring houses share the same RPS number.