

Architectural Heritage Impact Review.

Proposal: Demolition of vacant house and relocation of stone pillar as part of proposed housing scheme.

Location: Junction of Derry Road and N77, Durrow, Co. Laois



**An Ghníomhaireacht
Tithíochta**
The Housing Agency

CONTENTS	PAGE NO.
Introduction	3
Site Context	4
Planning Analysis	5
Heritage Analysis	5
Stone Pillar	7
Existing Building Description	8
Assessment of Architectural Merit of Existing Building.....	10
An Bord Pleanála Inspector’s Report	10
Architect’s Description of Proposed Development	11
Conclusion	12
Roadplan Technical Note	Appendix A

Introduction

Laois County Council proposes the construction of 24 new social housing units and 4 no. serviced sites on its site located beside the intersection of Derry Road and the N77 (fig 1.) This site is located at the edge of the Durrow Architectural Conservation Area.

The location of a vacant dwelling and stone pillar at the junction, very close to both road carriageways, is creating a hazard for both pedestrians and vehicles. The location of these structures leaves insufficient space for a footpath, and obscures visibility for vehicles approaching the town from Derry Road. As the proposal to provide additional housing in this location will lead to an increased use of this junction by both pedestrians and drivers, the road safety is a concern and a road engineer was appointed to analyse this junction.

Road Plan Consulting were appointed to undertake an audit of the existing road and redesign this junction if necessary. The technical report by Roadplan is included in Appendix A. This report concludes by recommending the house and stone pillar are removed in the interests of achieving the safety objectives of the project relating to vulnerable road users.

As the existing structure is located at the edge of the Durrow Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), and the works require the moving of a stone pillar at the boundary of the neighbouring protected structure site, this report assesses the proposal in accordance with the 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities'. These guidelines state that :

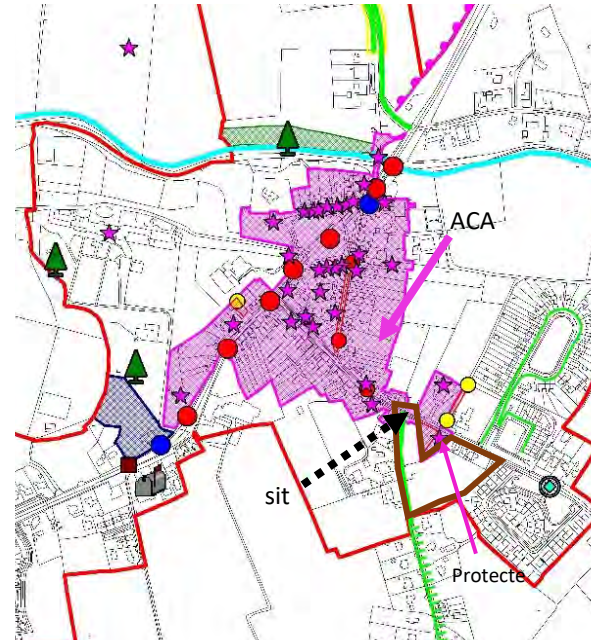


Fig.1 Durrow ACA Map -Laois Development Plan 2021-

Where it is proposed to demolish a structure that contributes to the character of an ACA or to demolish behind a retained façade, the onus should be on the applicant to make the case for demolition. When it is proposed to demolish an undistinguished building in an ACA, the proposed replacement should not be of lesser quality or interest than the existing one and should not adversely affect the character of the area.

This report sets out the reason for the proposed demolition of the existing structure and outlines the merit of the proposed development on this site. The report should be read with reference to the following documents :

Photographic and Drawing Survey of the Existing Structure .

Design team drawings indicating the extent of the proposed demolition and re-development on this site .

Road Plan Technical Note on requirement for demolition.

Site Context

The architectural style of the village proximate to the site along the Main Street is two storey vernacular. The house elevations are simple with a mix of exposed stone and render facades. The roofs are pitched slate and step with the street slope (fig.2).

The houses front directly onto the street, frequently grouped in small terraces with intermittent laneways and integral carriage arches providing access to long narrow rear back plots.

This continuous terraced frontage terminates at the junction with Derry Road, just before the site. The subject structure stands alone, detached, and does not form part of a continuous terrace (fig.3). The building has a hipped slate roof as do the properties directly to the west and north of the property.



Fig.3 Existing dwelling at corner of site



Fig.4 Protected structure – Former national school Hall



Fig.2 Main Street on approach to junction with Derry Road

Planning Analysis

The fragmented street frontage continues past the site with a predominance of large free-standing buildings. The neighbouring building is a protected structure - RPS165, Laois Infant School. This structure is set back from the road at a remove from the subject site, with a large surface area carpark located between it and the site (fig. 4). There is a stone pillar located at the boundary between the protected structure and the site. It is proposed to demolish the derelict building on the site, and to move the stone pier back from the road carriageway to create a wider footpath in this location to achieve the required visibility spay. On the opposite side of the road facing the site is a large church, also a protected structure - LA029-045, St. Fintan's Church. This large building is set back at a distance from the road (fig. 5)

Heritage Analysis.

The existing derelict property on the site is a 1-2 storey north west facing dwelling situated at the junction of Derry Road / Carrigan Street.



Fig. 5 OS Map 1829-41



Fig. 6 Griffith Valuation Map

It comprises a vernacular two storey structure with a single storey wing adjoining to form part of a south west facing rear enclosure. A number of wall types of varying heights wrap around the site to form the boundary of this enclosure; random rubble stone, in-situ concrete and blockwork.

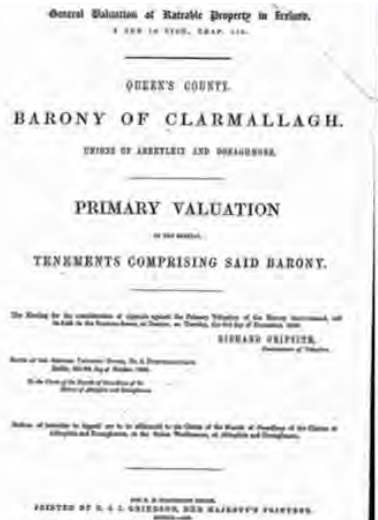
Historical Context & Description

Two separate dwellings and plots are shown on the site in the first edition OS Map. 1829-41 (fig.5).

Griffith Valuation Map 1850 shows an increase in the number of structures on the sites (fig. 6) .

The dwellings are included as part of Durrow Townparks valuation. The dwellings contain a significant number of tenants as listed in the 1850 Valuation Book (fig.7)

The 25 Inch map s1897-1913 shows two adjoining plots at the site and a number of structures here (fig.8). By 1955, the aerial photograph indicates one plot with two storey and single storey dwelling on the site with a boundary wall, similar to the current configuration.



DURROW TOWN-PARKS—con.				A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
d	Patrick Broderick,	Honoria Walsh,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
e	John Jones,	Rev. Charles Harte,	Land,	1 1 19	1 10 0	—	1 10 0
f	John Quernoy,	Rev. Charles Harte,	Land and lime-kill,	1 3 0	2 0 0	—	2 0 0
a	Anne Bowne,	John Quernoy,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
b	John Fitzpatrick,	John Quernoy,	House,	—	—	0 8 0	0 8 0
c	Elizabeth Mansfield,	John Quernoy,	House and garden,	0 0 14	0 5 0	—	0 15 0
d	Mary Curry,	John Quernoy,	House,	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
e	James Connors (in care),	John Quernoy,	House and yard,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
f	Vacant,	John Quernoy,	Ruins,	—	—	—	—
18	Edmund Delany, Esq.,	Joseph Palmer, Esq.,	Waste under houses & yds.,	0 0 16	—	—	—
a	Mary Holohan,	Edmund Delany, Esq.,	Land,	7 0 22	7 15 0	—	7 15 0
b	Sarah Delany,	Edmund Delany, Esq.,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
c	Patrick Nugrath,	Edmund Delany, Esq.,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
d	Mary Bryan,	Edmund Delany, Esq.,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
e	John Holohan,	Edmund Delany, Esq.,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
f	Edmund Buggy,	Edmund Delany, Esq.,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
19	Mrs. Ellen Palmer,	Rev. Charles Harte,	Land and quarry,	7 0 16	9 0 0	—	9 0 0
a	James Thornton,	Mrs. Ellen Palmer,	House,	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
b	John Bergin,	Mrs. Ellen Palmer,	House and garden,	0 0 12	0 4 0	—	1 4 0
c	John Lawler,	Free,	House,	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
20	Eleanor Delany,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	1 3 28	3 5 0	—	3 5 0
21	Thomas Fletcher,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	0 3 10	1 0 0	—	1 0 0
22	William B. Swan,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	3 0 35	5 15 0	—	3 15 0
23	Sylvester Dooly,	Joseph Palmer & Co.,	Land,	10 1 12	22 0 0	—	22 0 0
24	John Hickey,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	71 0 30	70 0 0	—	70 0 0
25	Robert Ford,	Sylvester Dooly,	House and office,	—	—	1 0 0	1 0 0
a	Patrick Finn,	Rev. Charles Harte,	Land,	1 3 34	2 0 0	—	2 0 0
b	Robert Ormsby, Esq.,	Rev. Charles Harte,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
c	Robert Ormsby, Esq.,	Rev. Charles Harte,	Garden,	0 2 13	1 5 0	—	1 5 0
26	Patrick Bowman,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	48 0 15	46 0 0	—	46 0 0
27	Patrick Byrne,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	23 2 8	2 15 0	—	2 15 0
28	Sylvester Dooly,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	19 3 5	5 15 0	—	5 15 0
29	James Whelan,	Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	9 1 34	4 5 0	—	4 5 0
30		Viscount Ashbrook,	Land,	3 1 14	3 10 0	—	3 10 0

Fig. 7 Durrow Townparks Valuation Book

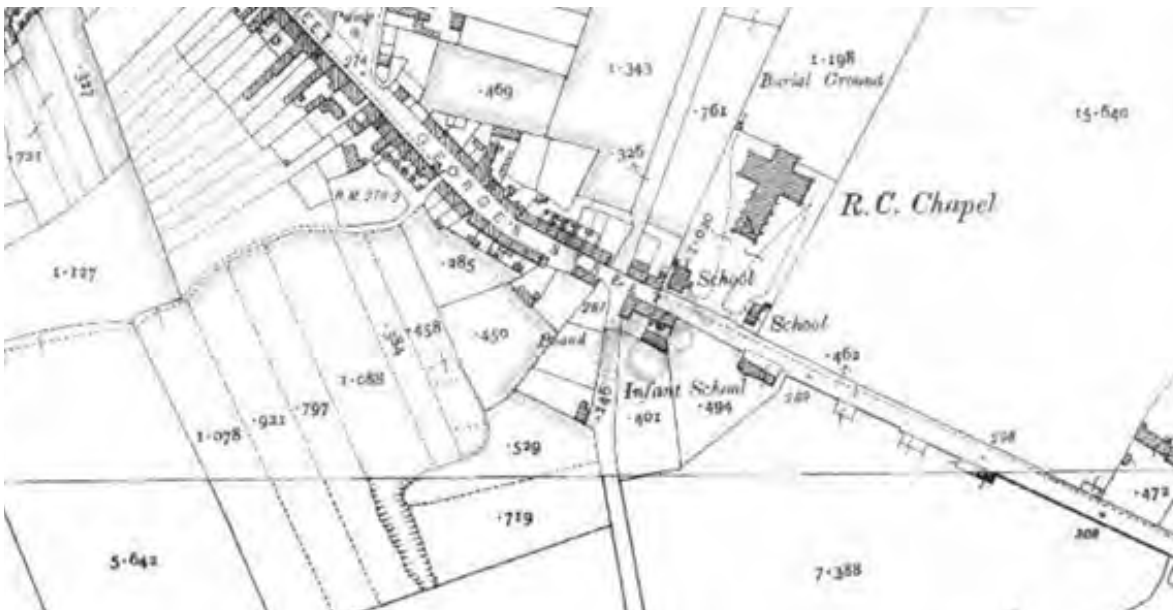


Fig. 8 25 Inch B&W 1897-1913



Fig. 9 NLI Morgan Aerial Photography Collection

Stone Pillar

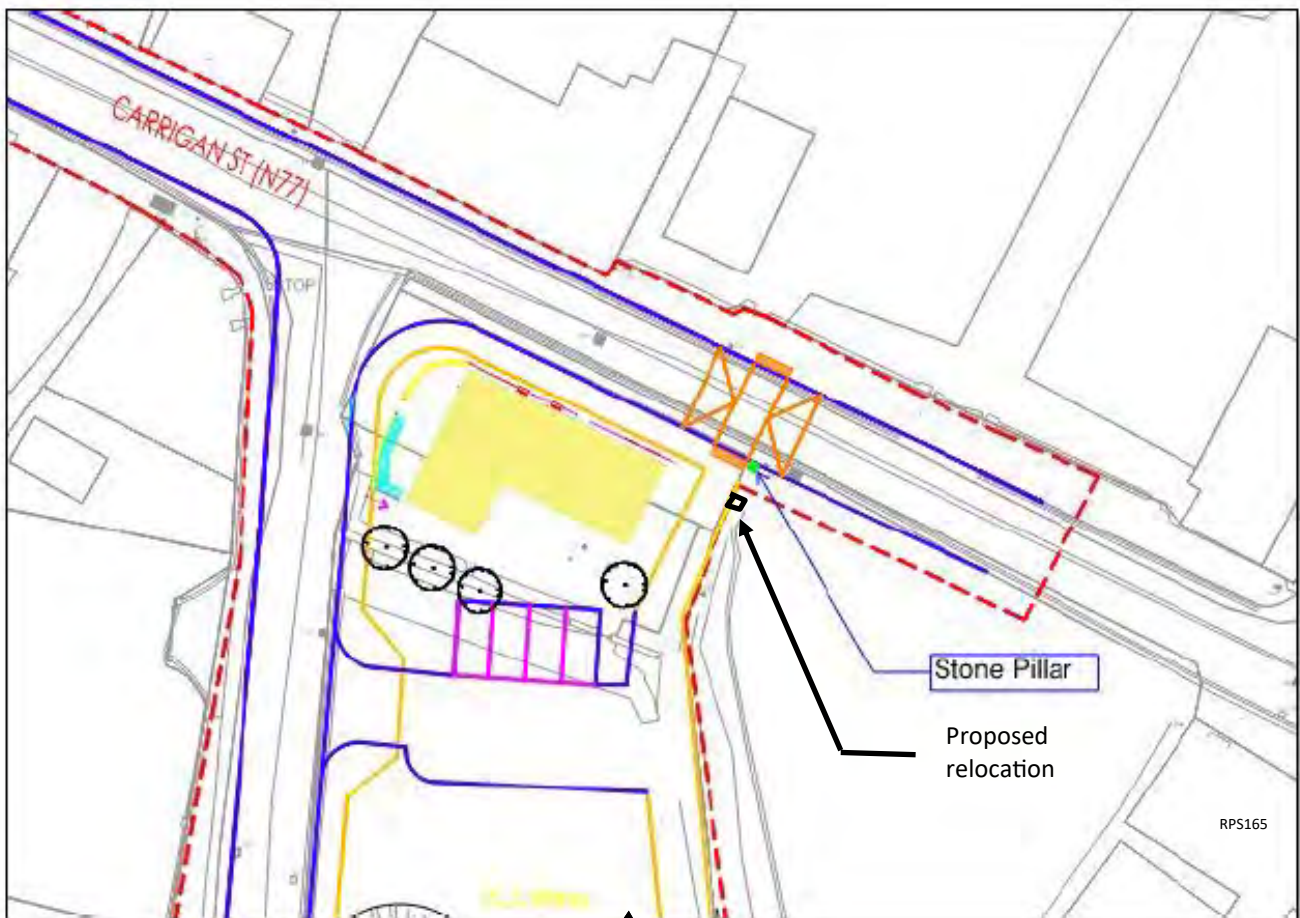
The stone pillar adjoining the subject property would create a visibility hazard at the location of the proposed pedestrian crossing if it were to remain is-situ after the demolition of the building.

To address this concern, it is proposed to move the pillar to the rear of the new footpath in the same alignment.

This pillar is located at the corner of the site occupied by the protected structure RPS165, Laois Infant School. The pillar is not connected to any street boundary and stands in isolation at considerable remove from the school building.



Stone Pillar Location



Stone Pillar proposed re-location site Plan

Existing Building Description

The two-storey dwelling with a centrally located entrance door fronts directly onto Derry Road. The walls of stone construction are approx. 500mm thick rendered with plaster internally. Externally the walls are plastered and painted at ground floor level with a cementitious dashed render applied to the three of the first floor facades. A concrete ground floor has been laid internally. The original windows and external doors have been replaced with white uPVC throughout.

Square headed window opens with cut stone sills are positioned symmetrically either side of the door; at both ground and first floor level. Window opens to the north elevation are centrally located. A natural slate roof is hipped with the roof sloping from eaves to ridge on all four sides. A centrally located rendered chimney stack is positioned at the ridge. Rainwater guttering affixed to the eaves wrap around the perimeter of the roof.

The plan comprises two rooms at ground and at first floor level separated by a centrally located chimney stack. A small internal lobby at the entrance door with a screen wall parallel to the front wall of the house provides access to the two main living rooms. This entrance layout is common in the southeast of Ireland. The Parlour, situated on the northern side of the chimney stack, adjacent to Carrigan Street; is dual aspect and retains an open replacement fireplace. The former kitchen lying to the south of the chimney stack has a staircase to the upper level and a doorway providing access to the rear wing. The painted timber staircase has closed string boards, unadorned timber balusters rebated to the handrail, winder steps to the base and an elongated timber newel post here also. The internal doors at ground floor are modern replacement.



Fig. 10 Derry Road Elevation

The first floor bedrooms retain the original timber floor boarding and have original traditional simple boarded, ledged and braced internal doors of reduced height. There are original hearth stones adjacent to the central chimney breast where former fireplaces were located. Window sills are at skirting level and no original features of the windows remain. The ceiling to these rooms follows the form of the existing hipped roof .

centrally located rendered chimney. Windows of a smaller scale than the two storey element, are irregularly placed along this façade. Window opens to the yard are of modern construction and do not adhere to any pattern.



The plan comprises a series of interlinked rooms with a ceiling following the line of the timber rafters and a concrete floor laid throughout. Within this wing there is a space only accessible externally and likely used as an out house. A bathroom annex adjacent to this wing is of later (1960's) modern blockwork construction and is in a bad state of repair.



The single storey element of the dwelling fronts Carrigan Street and abuts the two storey dwelling. The pitched roof is both tiled and slated and has a



Assessment of Architectural Merit of Existing Building.

The subject structure for proposed demolition is not included on the record of protected structures for County Laois and is not in itself of particular architectural merit. The siting of the building does not contribute directly to the character of the streetscape as it is detached and at a remove from the continuous street terrace. There is no defined relationship between the dwelling and the neighbouring protected structures due to the large surface area car park and distances between these buildings. The stone pier located against the boundary with the property will be relocated, set back in its current alignment to allow for a wider footpath and adequate visibility (see proposed site layout drg.).

The dwelling does have a prominent position in the streetscape as it is located on a corner. The replacement should respect the existing character of the building and be designed to provide active elevations to both streets.

An Bord Pleanála Inspector's Report

This site was subject to a previous submission where it was proposed to demolish the existing structure and provide housing along Derry Road. The application was granted by LCC, appealed

and refused by the Bord (ABP-309342-21). However, the inspector's report was in favour of the proposed demolition, the refusal was relating only to issues of design for the proposed new dwellings. The excerpt below from the inspector's report supports this proposed demolition.

Inspectors Report Extract

7.2.3. I note the fact that the report of the Planning Officer makes reference to the fact that the demolition of the existing house on the site would enable the sightlines at the junction of the Derry Road and the N77 to be significantly improved and I would agree with this point and consider it a valid consideration in the assessment of the principle of demolition of the existing building on the site. As discussed at section 7.5 below, the existing visibility at the junction of the Derry Road and the N77 is very restricted and constitutes a significant traffic hazard given the volume and nature of the traffic on the N77.

7.2.2. The development proposes the demolition of the existing structure on the site. This structure is not included on the record of protected structures for County Laois and is not in my opinion in itself of any particular architectural merit.

7.2.5. Overall, on the basis of the existing

condition, location, and design of the existing structure, subject to detailed assessment of the alternative design proposed, I do not consider that there is a strong case for the retention of the existing building on the site and I consider that the principle of demolition is acceptable.

Architect's Description of Proposed Development

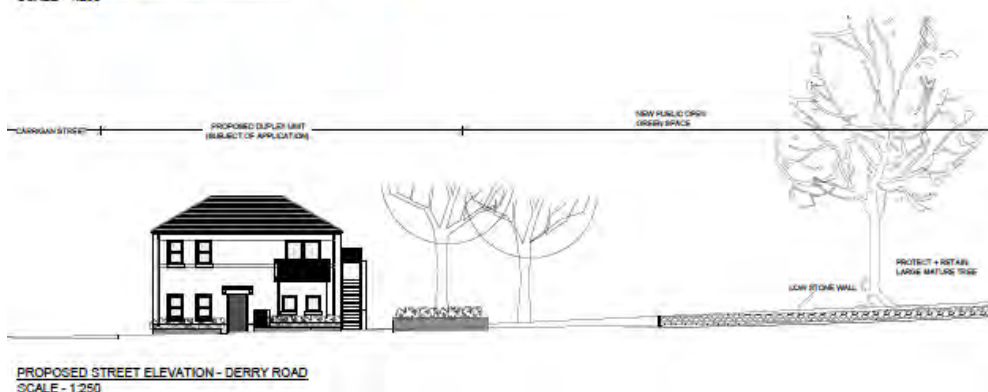
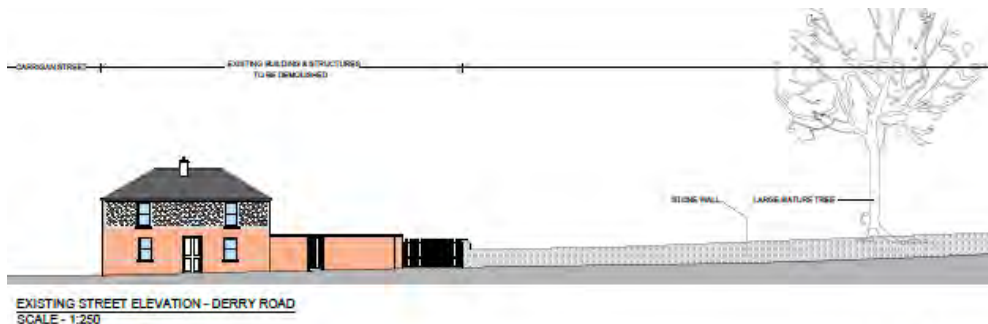
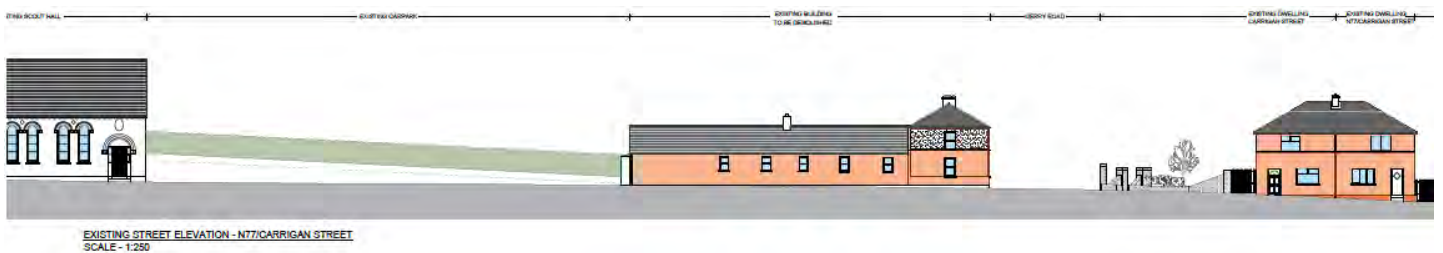
The proposed replacement development is designed to have regard to the prominent position of the site, and of the general architectural context of the A.C.A. The images below are extracted from the architect's drawings and illustrate how the proposed and existing structures have similar massing and detailing to the existing building.

The proposed new dwelling is a two-storey hipped roof structure that will provide four 1-bed

apartments - two on each level. The new building maintains the dominant building line along the N77. This set-back will create a wider footpath along the N77 (currently only 500mm wide), allow for the provision of a footpath on Derry Road (currently none,) and provide sufficient visibility for pedestrians and vehicles approaching from Derry Road onto the N77.

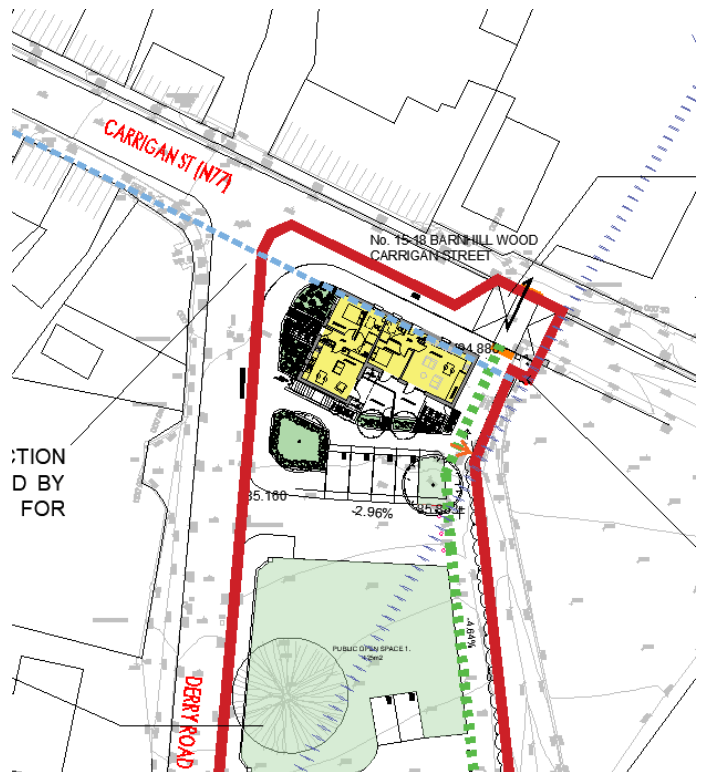
The proposed plan is L-shaped, as per the existing building. The elevation will turn the corner and provide active elevations to both the N77 and the Derry Road, holding this corner edge visually.

A new public open green space will be located to the rear and will be overlooked by the balconies of the first floor apartments. The architectural language is simple vernacular with rendered walls, vertical windows and hipped roofs.





Existing Site Plan - L-shaped plan addressing both sides of junction.



Proposed Site Plan - L-shaped plan addressing both sides of junction and maintaining building line of terrace on Carrigan St.

Conclusion

The demolition of the existing building will greatly improve the road safety at this junction. The redesigned junction will provide footpaths and safe crossing points for pedestrians in this town centre location.

The existing building has low architectural merit and has been vacant for many years. The new building has been designed to respect the vernacular architectural style of the village and to knit into the existing street fabric. The massing and plan form of this replacement structure is similar to the existing building.

The stone pillar sits in isolation and is not part of a larger boundary treatment. The moving of this stone pillar to the back of the footpath is a low impact intervention.

Taking into consideration the road traffic safety concerns outlined above, the low architectural merit of the existing structure, the minor impact of moving the stone pillar, the sensitive design of the new structure and the greatly enhanced road safety and public realm, it is considered appropriate to demolish this structure and provide

the proposed new dwellings as indicated in the architect's drawings. An additional benefit to the proposal is the increased provision of housing from 1 to 4 units which is desirable in such a central location.

Derry Road, Durrow.

Technical Note 1
Existing ACA House and Stone Pillar
Demolition

for

Laois County Council

July 2023

23071-01-0002



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



7, Ormonde Road
Kilkenny.
R95 N4FE

Tel: 056 7795800
info@roadplan.ie

1. Introduction

A residential development has been proposed in Durrow, Co. Laois, at the junction between the national road N77 and the local road Derry Road. This development extends south of the junction along Derry Road. The project includes junction improvement of the N77 and Derry Road and improvements continue along Derry Road to the proposed residential development access location. Figure 1-1 indicates the site location.

As part of the proposed development and junction improvement, demolition of an existing house which is an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), is required and it is proposed to demolish an adjacent existing stone pillar at the same time.

This technical note assesses the proposal to demolish the ACA house and the stone pillar in the context of road safety, considering two scenarios as follows:

Scenario 1: Existing conditions where both the ACA house and stone pillar are present.

Scenario 2: Proposed design scenario where ACA house has been demolished and the stone pillar has been retained.

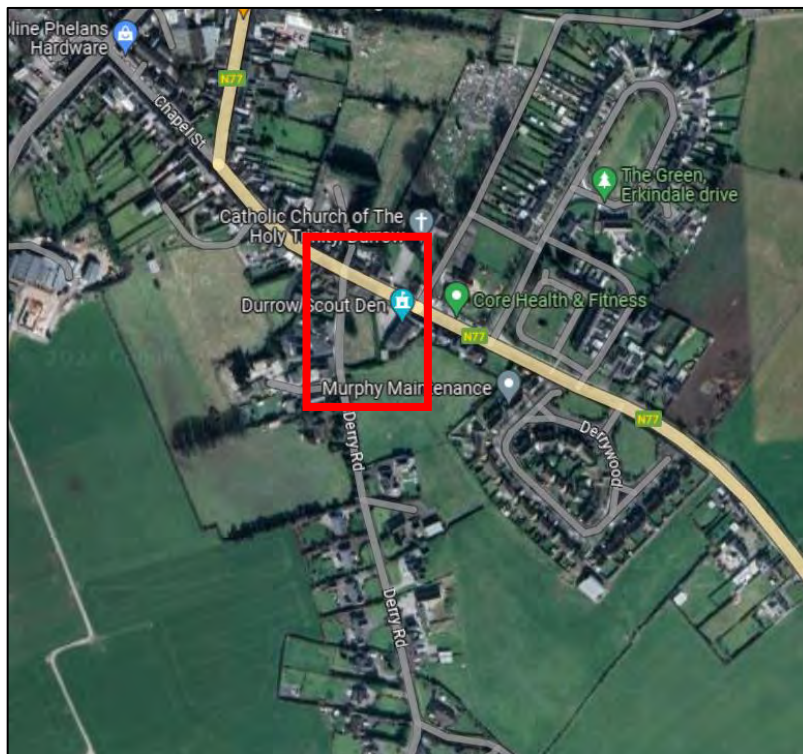


Figure 1-1: Site Location

2. Existing Conditions

The ACA house extends 26m along the N77 with the western end of the building forming the eastern edge of the junction with Derry Road.

The stone pillar is located adjacent to the eastern end of the house and immediately adjacent to the footpath along the N77. It has a square footprint with 500mm sides, and is approximately 1.8m in height.

The ACA house and adjacent stone pillar define the N77 road corridor and junction with Derry Road at this location due to the proximity of the outer walls and pillar to the mainline carriageway. This forms a pinch point along this stretch of the N77, with limited road and footpath widths available.

East and west of the house and pillar, the N77 cross section provides adequate facilities for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic however this changes on the approaches to and at the location of the house and pillar as described below and indicated in figure 2-1.

- Approximately 85m east of the ACA house the road corridor comprises footpaths on both sides of the roads along with parallel parking bays and approximately 7.2m of carriageway. Footpath widths are below the minimum standard of 1.8m and range from 1.3m to 1.5m. Footpath widening would benefit a broader range of pedestrians however the cross section can be considered to provide adequate facilities for vehicular and pedestrian traffic at this location.
- Approximately 85m west of the ACA house, the cross section comprises footpaths on both sides of the roads and approximately 7.6m of carriageway. Footpaths are less than the minimum standard of 1.8m but are of reasonable widths at approximately 1.6m on each side.
- The cross sections to the east and west of the ACA house narrow as they transition to the pinch point at the house. Double yellow lines are present on both sides of the road at this location.
- The carriageway along the eastern approach reduces to 5.9m while parking is removed and footpaths widen due to available space in front of the church to the north and parking area to the south. Double yellow lines are present on both sides of the road at this location.
- The carriageway along the western approach similarly reduces to 6.3m and footpath widths change while maintaining the road centreline. The northern footpath reduces to 1.15m due to the presence of properties and the southern footpath increases to 1.8m. Double yellow lines are present on both sides of the road at this location.
- The cross section at the ACA house comprises 5.0m of carriageway with 1.6m of footpath on the northern side of the road and only 0.7m of footpath on the southern side of the road in front of the house.
- At the exact location of the stone pillar, the total corridor width is 9m, comprising 0.9m of footpath on the southern side of the road, 5.1m of carriageway, and 3m of footpath in front of the church to the north.

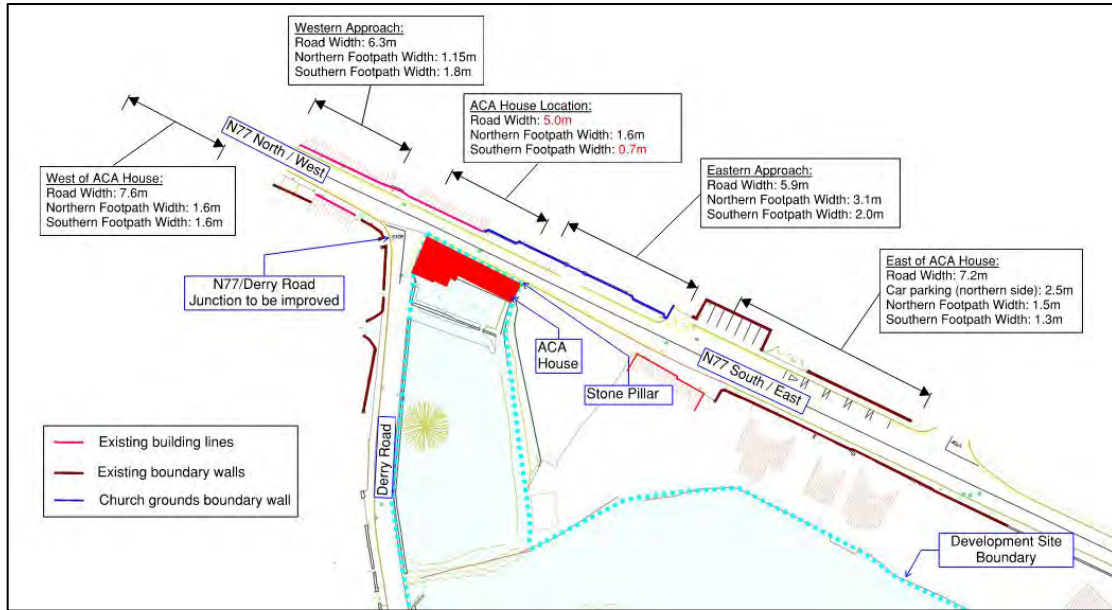


Figure 2-1: Existing Conditions



Figure 2-2: Stone Pillar Location - view westbound

3. Proposed Development

The proposed development includes the realignment and widening of the existing N77 immediately adjacent to the ACA house and stone pillar, along with the introduction of a controlled pedestrian crossing serving both the development and nearby church and community hall. An active travel link is proposed within the development site linking the residences with the N77 and which connects to the proposed widened footpath along the N77 at the location of the stone pillar.

The road widening seeks to eliminate the pinch point created by the house and pillar, and adjacent utility poles, providing consistency for road users and allowing continuity of footpath through this location. It further provides appropriate sight distance to and from the junction and proposed pedestrian crossing. Removal of the two existing utility poles adjacent to the stone pillar is proposed as part of the design.

The proposed road width at this location is 6.0m which is consistent with the widths available on the existing approaches. The increase in carriageway width from 5.0m to 6.0m at this location is achieved by distributing extensions to the north and south while maintaining a smooth horizontal alignment. This results in a proposed footpath width of 1.8m on the southern side of the road while on the northern side of the road the proposed footpath width is 2.2m in front of the church and 1.0m in front of the existing properties west of the church.

The proposed pedestrian crossing is a raised table Zebra crossing which will include belisha beacons.

The existing stone pillar is located immediately east of the proposed pedestrian crossing and extends within both the proposed roadway and the proposed footpath at this location.

The demolition of both the house and the pillar are required to achieve the proposed design as illustrated in Figures 3-1 and 3-2 below.

Where retention of the stone pillar is required, the design would be amended to reduce the extent of road widening at this location.

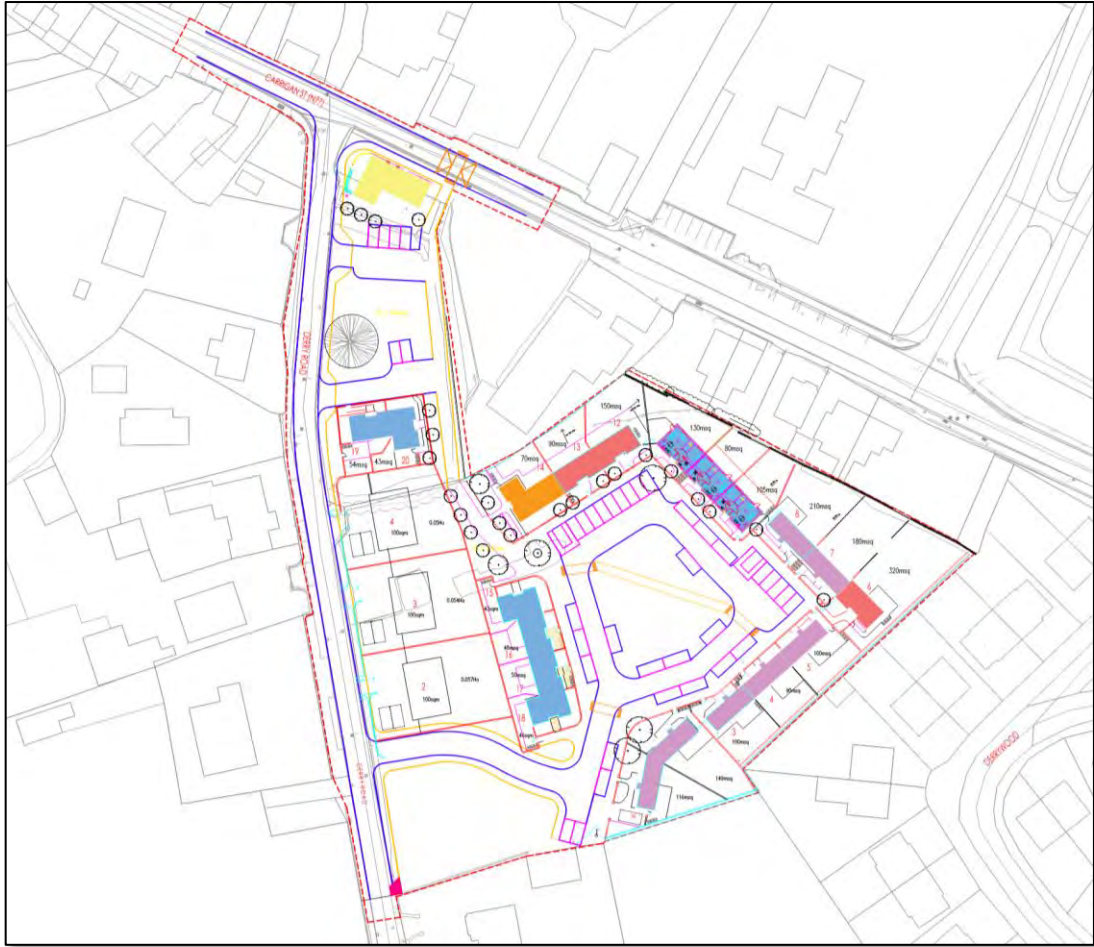


Figure 3-1: Overall Development and Road Improvement Layout

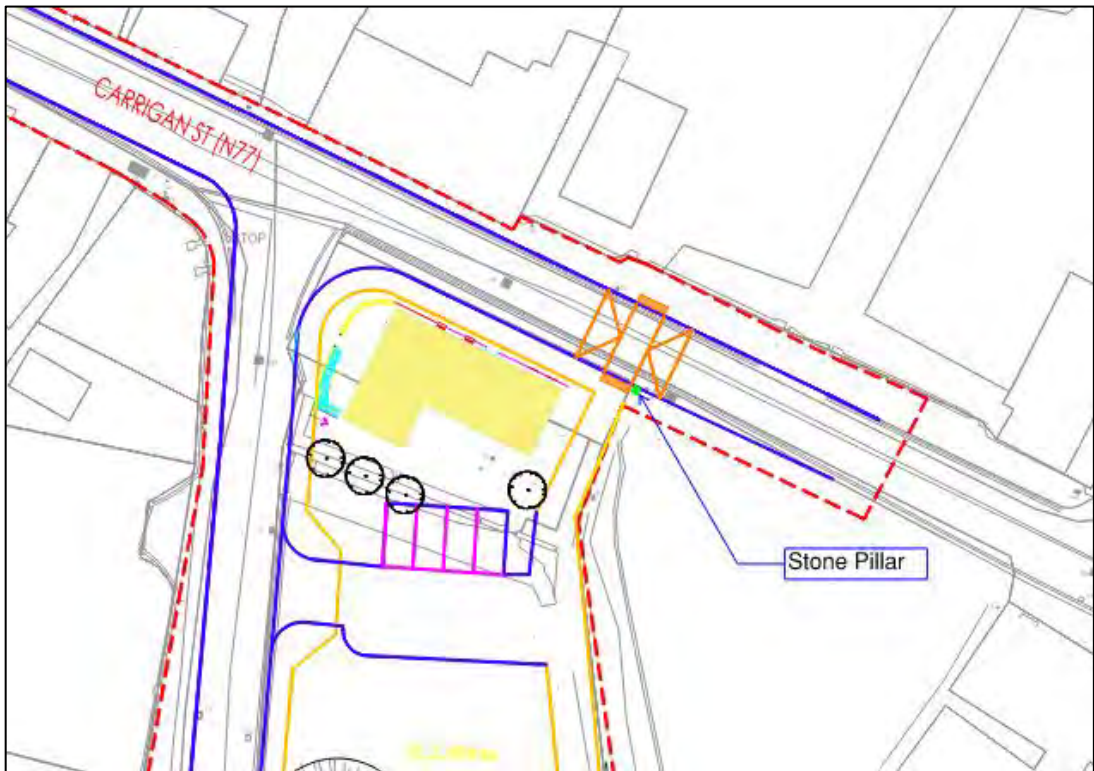


Figure 3-2: Junction and N77 Improvement Layout

4. Scenario 1 (Existing Conditions) Assessment

4.1. Problems Identified:

The presence of the ACA house and stone pillar present the following safety problems, both of which can be attributed to the house and pillar independently of each other:

1. Narrow carriageway:

The cross-section width is limited by the house and pillar resulting in a pinch point along the N77 route where the carriageway is very narrow. This may not be fully appreciated by approaching motorists due to reasonable widths available on the approaches and may result in collisions between vehicles travelling in opposite directions. In addition, large vehicles travelling in opposite directions may have difficulty passing at this location.

2. VRU travel obstructed:

VRU travel along the southern side of the road is obstructed by the house and pillar and travel by those with buggies and those using mobility aids may not be possible. This may result in VRUs travelling within the carriageway around the pillar and house exposing them to the risk of collisions with vehicles.

The presence of the ACA house presents the following safety problem which is independent of the stone pillar:

3. Junction visibility limited:

The house limits visibility between eastern N77 approach to the junction at Derry Road, and the Derry Road approach to the junction. This may result in collisions between vehicles joining the N77 from the Derry Road and vehicles travelling westbound along the N77.

5. Scenario 2 (Proposed Development with Stone Pillar Retained)

5.1. Consideration of Scenario 1 Problems:

Narrow carriageway: Where the stone pillar is retained, the extent of improvements along the N77 east of the Derry Road junction will be limited, and the pinch point in the cross section will remain in the vicinity of the stone pillar.

The location of the pillar coincides with the proposed location of the raised table, controlled crossing. This crossing, including a raised table, belisha beacons and advance warning signage, will serve to calm traffic on approach to the crossing and the pinch point and will therefore largely mitigate the risk present in Scenario 1 of head on collisions between opposing traffic due to the narrow carriageway.

The presence of the narrow carriageway will, however, present an issue for large vehicles travelling in opposite directions at this location who may have difficulty passing at this location.

VRU travel obstructed: The risk of VRUs using the road to navigate around the pillar may be mitigated within the design where the footpath on the eastern approach is widened to provide a minimum of 1.8m clear width around the southern side of the pillar to facilitate VRU travel. This proposal is subject to availability of land for such a footpath widening and the arrangement with the retention of the pillar may make travel in this location difficult for some VRUs.

Junction visibility limited: the stone pillar does not obstruct junction visibility.

5.2. Problems Identified:

Notwithstanding the above, the retention of the stone pillar within the design scenario presents the following safety problems:

1. The stone pillar will be located within the visibility splay of the pedestrian crossing and will obstruct sightlines of westbound vehicles approaching the crossing. This may result in collisions between vehicles and pedestrians where pedestrian crossing movements are not expected by oncoming vehicles.
2. The stone pillar will be located in the footpath adjacent to the proposed crossing, obstructing VRU travel and access to the crossing facilities.

It is noted that relocation of the crossing would not be preferred as the crossing serves an identified travel desire line along this stretch of the N77 while maintaining appropriate separation from vehicular accesses to the church on the northern side of the road, the car park on the southern side of the road and the junction to the west.

6. Conclusions

The presence of the ACA house and stone pillar presents safety problems in both the current and proposed scenarios.

Mitigation of problems relating to the existing conditions may be achieved by modifying the proposed design, however implementation of the proposed design requires demolition of both the ACA house and stone pillar.

Where the stone pillar is retained, safety problems would exist relating to visibility of and access to the proposed pedestrian crossing.

It is therefore recommended to remove the ACA house and stone pillar in the interests of achieving the safety objectives of the project relating to VRU travel.