

## Part VIII Explanatory Booklet for Francis Street Environmental Improvement Scheme



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CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS

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**DIRECTORS**  
Joe Cunnane BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI MIPI, John Crean BA (Hons) MRUP Dip EIA Mgmt MRTPI MIPI,  
Ian Phillips BA (Hons) MRUP MRTPI (British), Eamonn Prenter BA (Hons) Dip TP MSc MRTPI MIPI,  
Declan O'Leary BAgr Sc (Land- Hort) Dip LA MILI MLI,

**DUBLIN OFFICE**  
3 MOLESWORTH PLACE DUBLIN 2  
TEL: 01 661 0419 FAX: 01 661 0431  
EMAIL: [info@csrlandplan.ie](mailto:info@csrlandplan.ie)

**OFFICES ALSO AT:**  
COPLEY HALL COTTERS STREET CORK  
TEL: 021 496 9224 FAX: 021 496 9012  
EMAIL: [corkinfo@csrlandplan.ie](mailto:corkinfo@csrlandplan.ie)

ARDA CONG, BALLYTRASNA, TUAM  
CO GALWAY  
TEL / FAX: 093 60854  
EMAIL: [galwayinfo@csrlandplan.ie](mailto:galwayinfo@csrlandplan.ie)  
**WWW.CSRLANDPLAN.IE**

## **1.0 Introduction**

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- 1.1 Cunnane Stratton Reynolds has been appointed by Dublin City Council to provide the explanatory text for the part 8 process for the Francis Street Environmental Improvement Scheme. This document should be read in conjunction with the scheme drawings.
- 1.2 Dublin City Council's plan for public realm improvements on Francis Street is part of a wider policy for street improvements in the city. The proposal has been developed in accordance with the policies in the relevant statutory plans and guidance documents.

## **2.0 History and Heritage**

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- 2.1 As one of the longest established streets in Dublin, Francis Street has a rich heritage which is evident in its built form and arrangement. Please see attached Baseline Archaeological Study for in-depth review of the archaeological context of the street.

### **Topographical development of Francis Street**

- 2.2 One of the factors that aided Dublin's development was its location on the convergence of four highways (Irish slighe) during the early medieval period. One of these was the Slighe Chualann which ran southwards from a crossing over the River Liffey along what was to become Francis Street (Clarke 2002, 1). This road formed a crossroads with the Slighe Mhór, a highway that ran east-west across Ireland, at the north end of what is now Francis Street.
- 2.3 Although it was outside the city defences, Francis Street was a significant part of the topography of medieval Dublin given its mention in documentary sources: it was known as Great Street in c. 1200, the King's highway in 1325, and by 1337 was known as St. Francis's Street (Clarke 2002, 14). An area called the Fair Green lay between Francis Street and the city wall and ditch, at the north end, where the Iveagh Market now stands. This had a defensive purpose, as well as hosting a market. The Franciscan Friary which gives the street its name was established by 1233, on the site of the current church.
- 2.4 Seventeenth century maps (Speed 1610 and de Gomme 1673) are somewhat conflicting, with the former showing houses on both sides of the street, and the latter showing houses on one side of the street only. By the early eighteenth century, Francis Street was firmly integrated into the urban environment of Dublin, as shown on Brooking's map in 1728. This map also shows laneways running east and west of the street, many of which survive today (Lennon 2008, map 12). Directly across from the site of the Iveagh Markets, on the opposite side of the street, was St. Nicholas's Hospital which

was founded in 1753-54. St. Nicholas's of Myra, a Roman Catholic chapel was founded on the site of the medieval Franciscan abbey in 1685, at the end of 'Chappel Lane', and a Presbyterian meeting house was founded south-east of this a short time later (Rocque's map, 1756). This same century, the Fair Green was built upon, while the defensive mural gates and extramural gates were dismantled in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

### **Above ground Architectural Heritage on Francis Street**

- 2.5 Francis Street prospered in the 17th and early 18th century due to the increase in population in what was then the western suburb of Dublin, including skilled craftspeople attracted by the ready access to watercourses for brewing, tanning and textile trades. Its fortunes subsequently declined along with the wider area of the city due to a number of factors, including the development of fashionable suburbs to the east, the decline in fortunes of the Liberties' industries, and the Act of Union in 1801. By 1830, it was described by the Ordnance Survey as follows:

*The street is of ordinary breadth but very dirty. Houses, Four stories high, old and in bad repair. Occupied by shop Keepers, the Upper part of the houses let to room Keepers. There is a Roman Catholic Chapel in this Street.*

- 2.6 In 1901, merchants and traders premises were still prevalent, including cigar manufacturers, bacon curers, timber yards, and a dozen "grocery, tea, wine, & spirit" dealers. Many of these are likely to have had cellars, which typically extend under the pavement. These merchants' houses were interspersed with tenement houses, with many families living in single rooms in houses in poor repair.



**Figure 1 Kehoe's, now Myra House**



**Figure 2 Dereliction at Thomas St end, now the site of Reilly's Pharmacy and Bertram Court**

- 2.7 Today the architecture of Francis Street is varied, a testament to the street's early origins and its development and redevelopment over time. Most of the surviving early structures are commercial in nature. The houses used as tenements fell into poor repair and many were demolished in the twentieth century. The residential buildings today are largely a result of late twentieth-century urban regeneration developments which were built on the site of these.

- 2.8 A number of protected structures line the street. The most striking of these are the Church of St. Nicholas of Myra (construction 1829-1834, alterations 1850s; presbytery, 1834) on the site of the Franciscan Friary, and the Iveagh Markets (construction 1902-1906) on the site of the Fair Green.
- 2.9 The other protected structures include many commercial structures with attractive shopfronts, including the Liberty Belle pub at no. 33, with its Victorian plasterwork, nos. 41-42 with paired Victorian timber shopfronts, the late Georgian building at no. 59, with an Edwardian shopfront, and no. 77 at the corner of Dean Street, which shows the influence of the Wide Streets Commission's work in the area in the early nineteenth century. Myra House at no. 100 was formerly a bacon merchant's premises, and no. 79 Thomas Street, a former bank, forms the north-west corner of the street.
- 2.10 A number of other buildings are more modest in appearance, but nonetheless by their scale and fabric make a contribution to the character of the street. In some cases, their architectural significance and early date is evident in their interiors or rear elevation, such as no. 43 and no. 44, which are among the earliest on the street. Some of the early spirit/grocery stores survive as today's public houses; others may have surviving cellars under the pavement.
- 2.11 In addition to the buildings, Francis Street has existing granite kerbs, protected under Appendix 8 of the City Development Plan.

### **3.0 Policy Context**

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- 3.1 Dublin City Council's plan for public realm improvements on Francis Street is part of a wider policy for street improvements in the city.
- 3.2 The proposal has been developed in accordance with the policies in: the *Dublin City Development Plan 2016-22*, the *Liberties Local Area Plan 2009* (extended to 2020) the *Liberties Greening Strategy 2014*, the *Dublin City Public Realm Strategy 2012*, the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (2013), and the Ministerial Guidelines *Paving: The Conservation of Historic Ground Surfaces*.

#### **Dublin City Development Plan 2016-22**

- 3.3 The Dublin City Development Plan contains a number of policies of relevance. In accordance with the National Transport Authority strategy, a hierarchy of transport users is supported, with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the top of this hierarchy, having their needs considered first in the planning of transport provision.



*MT10: To provide 30kph speed limits and traffic calmed areas at appropriate locations throughout the city and subject to stakeholder consultation.*

*MT12: To improve the pedestrian environment and promote the development of a network of pedestrian routes which link residential areas with recreational, educational and employment destinations to create a pedestrian environment that is safe and accessible to all.*

- 3.4 The historic granite kerbs are protected under Appendix 8 of the Dublin City Development Plan 2016.

In addition, the Development Plan contains a number of Objectives of relevance:

*CHCO19: To promote the Liberties as an area of historical, archaeological, industrial and cultural heritage in Dublin City through authentic exhibits, improving access to cultural heritage sites and fostering engagement through community archaeology and heritage projects.*

*MTO9: To develop, within the lifetime of this plan, the Strategic Cycle Network for Dublin city - connecting key city centre destinations to the wider city and the national cycle network, and to implement the NTA's Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan; to bring forward planning and design of the Santry River Greenway, incorporating strongly integrative social and community development initiatives.*

*MTO10: To improve existing cycleways and bicycle priority measures throughout the city, and to create guarded cycle lanes, where appropriate and feasible.*

*MTO13: In accordance with cycle routes identified in the National Transport Authority's Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan:*

*(i) To improve permeability for cyclists by reducing speed limits to 30kph and allowing contraflow cycling on all single lane one way streets, and to provide a segregated contraflow cycle lane on all one way streets with two or more lanes, except where engineering report demonstrates risk is too high.*

*(ii) To improve the traffic environment for cycling by reducing traffic speeds through the introduction or expansion of 30kph zones in compliance with the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport document 'Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland'.*

*MTO15: To provide Sheffield Stand type parking near the entrance to all publicly accessible buildings such as schools, hotels, libraries, theatres, churches etc.*

**Liberties Local Area Plan 2009 (extended to 2020)**

- 3.5 The Liberties Local Area Plan (LAP) notes that (along with Cork Street, Thomas/James's Street, Meath Street and Marrowbone Lane) Francis Street is one of the main thoroughfares of the Liberties (p. 103). The plan has several key objectives for the Liberties/The Coombe character area which are relevant to the public realm of Francis Street and the side streets off it, including:
- the creation of continuous street frontage to the back of the pavement;
  - development of active ground floor frontage;
  - development of new pedestrian connections;
  - enhancement of the setting of existing buildings with improvements to the public realm; and
  - the development of a highly permeable network of narrow pedestrian friendly alleys, streets, and squares (p. 65).
- 3.6 Economic objectives of note include:
- encouraging destination shopping and markets;
  - encouraging attractive cafés, bars and restaurants;
  - improving pedestrian links to the city centre;
  - improving the established specialist retail offer on Francis Street (p. 94).
- 3.7 The public realm strategy for the LAP (p. 118) sets out general guidelines including the provision of stone pavements and speed tables, convenient crossing places, the widening of pavements, improving pedestrian permeability and provision of generous walking and cycling space. These are reiterated specifically for Francis Street on p. 119 (Table copied below).

9	Francis Street:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a pedestrian orientated realm, wider pavements where possible and easier street crossings using stone paved speed tables.</li> <li>• Stone paved sidewalks throughout.</li> <li>• Plant semi-mature trees where possible and provide places to sit and rest in regular intervals.</li> <li>• Provide public art/ accentuating lighting to highlight gateways into the Liberties area, such Swifts Alley.</li> <li>• Explore the potential for a cycle lane on the street in accordance with the City Council's Cycle Strategy.</li> </ul>

**Figure 3 Extract from The Liberties LAP**

- 3.8 The *Liberties Greening Strategy 2014* aims to provide additional planting and greening to streets in the Liberties, as well as enhancing and creating parks and public open spaces. Francis Street is indicated as a key linking route, which would benefit from street tree planting, and a variety of greening interventions. The *Dublin City Public Realm Strategy 2012* has the aim of creating a more

pleasant street experience in the city area between the canals. The *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (2013) has as a core principle the creation of comfortable safe streets for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users by using design to modify driver behaviour and slow motor traffic speeds. The Ministerial Guidelines *Paving: The Conservation of Historic Ground Surfaces* note that granite kerbstones should be kept in situ where possible.

## 4.0 Analysis of Existing Situation

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- 4.1 Francis Street is approximately 500 metres in length, running between Thomas Street at the north (R810) and Dean Street (R110) at the south. It is a one-way street, variable in width between 6.5 and 9.5 metres, narrower at the north end.
- 4.2 Community members and stakeholders (local residents and business owners) highlighted a number of key issues in consultation in 2014 and 2015, both positive and negative.

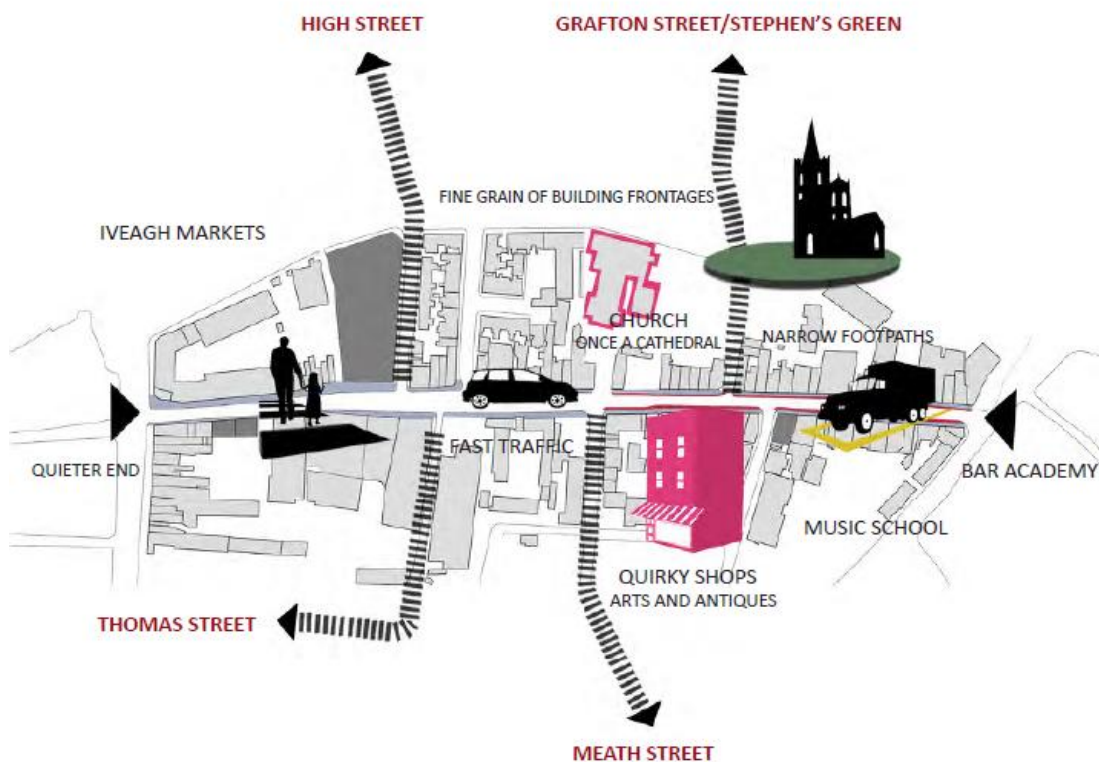


Figure 4: Francis Street Environmental Improvements-Draft Proposals November 2015: Headline Issues  
By Áit Urbanism & Landscape



- Derelict Buildings - Iveagh Market, 92-93 Francis St. (Barley Mow)
- Carmans Hall Community Centre - no longer open
- Fly tipping and anti-social activity (John Dillon Place, St. Nicholas Place)
- Strong sense of community.
- Arts and Antiques brand
- Traffic - speed is a problem not volume
- Narrow footpaths
- Importance of granite kerbing
- Lack of litter bins (disincentive for pet owners)
- Use of high quality materials and more greening
- Rat-running by horse drawn carriages
- Car-parking? No major issues raised.

- 4.3 Since then, An 'Arts & Antiques Quarter' branding exercise has been undertaken. Carman's Hall has been converted to a homeless hostel. Some greening has taken place, with semi-mature trees in planters. The other issues highlighted above can be considered to still stand.

#### **Land Uses**

- 4.4 Francis Street can be described as a typical multi-function urban street, with commercial and residential activity running its length. It is notable as Dublin's 'antiques quarter'. Other significant uses are the church and the Tivoli Theatre, which both generate considerable pedestrian and motor traffic on occasion. A live planning application (reg ref 4447/16) for the Tivoli Theatre and its surface car park proposes its redevelopment as an aparthotel with no parking. This is currently under consideration. The Iveagh Markets complex is currently unused, and has a grant of permission for a major redevelopment (reg ref 1238/07, extended under 1238/07/x2). The Dublin Bikes stand outside the Markets is well-used.

#### **Pavements**

- 4.5 The pavements are a mix of concrete pavers, poured concrete and concrete blocks. There are granite kerbs in place. The pavements are approximately 1.3 to 2.5 metres in width, with some localised wider areas. The pavements are not sufficiently wide enough to allow two people pass each other comfortably on the footway.

#### **Lighting**

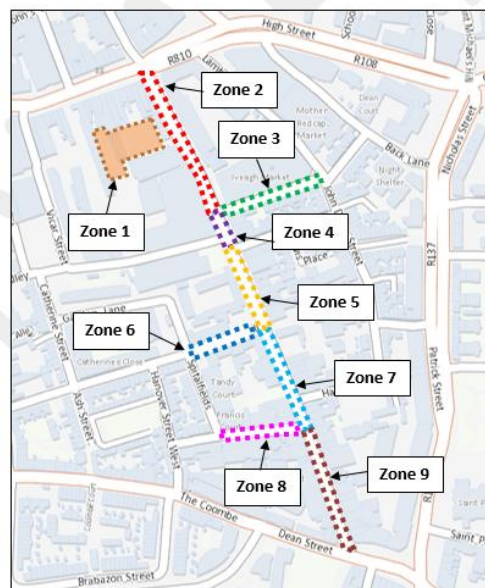
- 4.6 The street is lit by pole-mounted lamps, on alternate sides of the street.

#### **Other Street Furniture**

- 4.7 A series of trials of street furniture was undertaken in 2016 including planters and a bench, to assess public attitudes to changing the street environment. There are a number of pole-mounted street signs aimed at motorists, set into the pavement. There are bollards at the junction of Thomas Street and at the junction of Dean Street.

### **Vehicular Traffic**

- 4.8 A series of traffic surveys were undertaken in January & February 2017. These included the following elements:
- I. Parking & Loading Surveys on Francis Street and adjoining streets.
  - II. Classified Junction Turning Counts at several junctions along the length of Francis Street including pedestrian surveys at the Thomas Street/Francis Street junction.
  - III. Automatic Traffic Counts to determine vehicular speeds.
- 4.9 Parking surveys were carried out in 5 designated zones around the vicinity of Francis Street (Figure 5 below) on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2017 between 07:00-10:00 and 16:00-19:00, Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2017 between 12:00-15:00 and Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017 between 12:00 – 18:00. The parking surveys recorded a maximum occupancy rate of 73%/45 spaces of the 62 designated pay & display parking spaces along Francis Street recorded between 14:00 & 14:15 on the 4<sup>th</sup> February. A similar maximum occupancy rate was recorded on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January when a pantomime show was being held in the Tivoli Theatre. There were no events in the Tivoli on the 4<sup>th</sup> February.
- 4.10 The maximum occupancy of pay & display spaces recorded on Francis Street on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January was 32 spaces or 52%. This was recorded between 09:45 & 10:00.



**Figure 5: Designated Zones for Parking Survey**

- 4.11 In terms of the quantum of traffic on Francis Street, the peak hours as well as the corresponding volumes on approach to the Dean Street junction are presented below.

Peak Period	Traffic Flow (No Vehicles)
Weekday AM Peak (07:00 – 08:00)	337
Weekday PM Peak (16:00 – 17:00)	356
Saturday Peak (12:00 – 13:00)	317

**Table 1: Traffic Flows**

- 4.12 The posted speed limit was 50 Km/hr on Francis Street when the survey was undertaken. The speed surveys conducted adjacent to Carman's Hall recorded an 85th percentile of 40 Km/h. That is, 85% of drivers were travelling at or below 40 Km/h. As of 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2017, the speed limit is now 30 Km/hr on Francis Street.
- 4.13 A stage 1 Road Safety Assessment carried out by NRB in November 2016 found evidence of collision clusters at the Thomas Street junction and the Dean Street junction.

#### **Cycling**

- 4.14 A constructability statement by DBFL in February 2015 found that cycling was popular on the street, with bicycles locked to any available fixed structures. Additional cycle parking has recently been installed at the north end of the street and at Carman's Hall. Cyclists are observed travelling both south and north. A stage 1 Road Safety Assessment by NRB also found relatively high levels of pedestrian and cyclist activity along the street. The Dublin Bikes stand is used regularly.

#### **Underground Services**

- 4.15 A Ground Penetrating Radar Survey was carried out to ascertain the number and location of underground services. These include electricity, gas, telecoms, and water supply and drainage pipes.

#### **Trees**

- 4.16 Some small trees in planters have recently been installed on the street on a temporary basis. There are currently no trees requiring pits.

## **5.0 Proposal Aims and Objectives**

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### **Aims and Objectives**

- 5.1 The following are the project aims and objectives:
- Provide a more pedestrian friendly environment which encourages people to visit Francis Street on foot, and to remain longer on Francis Street;
  - Create a safe environment for vulnerable road users (pedestrians and bike users);
  - Provide an environment suitable for people of all ages and levels of physical ability, including wheelchair users and those with walking aids;
  - Ensure sufficient access, parking and loading is maintained to facilitate and encourage the continued commercial operation of the Arts and Antiques quarter, in light of the sale of typically bulky and heavy goods;
  - Maintain Francis Street as a through route for motor traffic;
  - Assess the feasibility of a separate cycle lane, including a contra-flow cycle lane;
  - Use high quality durable stone materials in keeping with Francis Street's existing character, and in compliance with the adopted Local Area Plan;
  - Increased greening and landscaping.
- 5.2 The brief was developed from the existing policies adopted in statutory and advisory documents, and advanced by consultation with stakeholders from 2014 onwards (as noted in Section 4 above).

## **6.0 Proposal**

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### **Overview**

- 6.1 The proposal comprises improvements to the public realm along the full length of Francis Street, Hanover Lane and part of Dean Street to include kerb buildouts on both sides of the carriageway along with footway repaving, raised junction plateaus, kerb buildouts to formalise parallel parking and loading bays, greening, landscaping, bicycle stands, carriageway resurfacing, raised pedestrian crossings and ramps, public lighting improvements and all associated ancillary works.
- 6.2 Following on from extensive analysis of existing underground services, road and footpath layouts and widths, parking, loading bay and bus bay usage, existing hardscape materials, street furniture, lighting, urban fabric and heritage structures and street furnishings, the following landscape concepts were developed by Áit Urbanism & Landscape in conjunction with DBFL and Dublin City Council, to inform the design of the overall landscape plan.



- Concept - street carpet
- Thresholds - 'doormats'
  - Key buildings - 'rugs'
  - Hanover Lane - Home Zone

**Figure 6 Francis Street Environmental Improvements-Draft Proposals November 2015: Concept-Street Carpet**  
**By Áit Urbanism & Landscape**

6.3 The design of the 'carpet' of the streetscape is defined by a series of thresholds. These thresholds are at the junctions with Thomas Street and Dean Street, as the entry and introduction points into Francis Street itself. The key nodes along the streetscape are the 'plazas' or 'rugs' fronting the two protected heritage structures: The Iveagh Markets and St. Nicholas of Myra Church. In order to address many of the key headline issues identified at the public consultation stage of the project, the roadway has been narrowed to facilitate widening of pavements generally and allow for build-outs to improve the pedestrian experience of the public realm. The reduced road widths, combined with raised tables at the Iveagh Markets and St Nicholas of Myra Church, will assist in the reduction of traffic speeds locally. The reduced road width provides for the extension of the pavement widths for user comfort in accordance with DMURS guidelines. Buildouts will provide for additional streetscape improvements such as street tree planting and greening interventions, benches and cycle stands.

One of the key elements of the landscape proposals is to concentrate future investment in high quality materials throughout the scheme and also to the frontage of the two key heritage buildings, in accordance with The Liberties Local Area Plan.

### **Land Uses**

6.4 The proposal accommodates access to the existing and proposed land uses. The Dublin Bikes stand is to be retained in situ.



### **Pavements**

- 6.5 As noted above, the pavements are to be widened for user comfort. The proposed hardscape materials are the re-use and relaying of existing heritage Leinster granite paving. Granite paving flags are proposed along the pedestrian pathways. Granite paving is proposed to the 'plazas' or thresholds of the Iveagh Markets and St. Nicholas of Myra Church with reinforced concrete bands in carriageway to enhance the plaza effect. Existing historic stone setts will be re-used and re-laid in appropriate locations such as the 'homezone' to Hanover Lane, an important linkage from Francis Street to St. Patrick's Park and St. Patrick's Cathedral.

### **Lighting**

- 6.6 The current proposals include for contemporary column mounted lighting, bracket mounted lighting where feasible as well as under-soffit lighting to planters and benches. Uplighting of the key historic buildings will also be addressed at the detailed design stage of the project. It is intended to retain existing heritage lighting along the streetscape.

### **Other Street Furniture**

- 6.7 The proposed street furniture will be contemporary in design, such as powder coated to a select RAL stainless steel bins, bollards and cycle stands. The proposed tree planters and seating will also be of contemporary design and finish.
- 6.8 Although street art and signage have not been detailed for the purposes of this Part 8 application, it is proposed to address both of these elements at a future date to enhance the overall quality of the public realm along Francis Street.

### **Motor Traffic**

- 6.9 As noted above, the reduced road width combined with raised tables at the Iveagh Markets and St. Nicholas of Myra Church will assist in the reduction of the speed of the flow of through traffic to 30km/hr.

### **Cycling**

- 6.10 In line with the LAP and the objectives of the Dublin City Development Plan, the potential for a cycle lane was explored as part of this development. In particular, the feasibility of a contra-flow lane to allow Dublin Bike users to follow the natural desire line to Thomas Street was examined in detail. Due to the busy and complex nature of the junction at Thomas Street it is not possible to create a safe design without considerable impacts on the Thomas Street junction, which is outside the remit of this brief.
- 6.11 A toucan crossing and cycle contraflow lane from the Dublin Bikes stand at Iveagh Markets to Thomas Street is indicated for further detailed design at a later date, following further consultation with wider stakeholders including the NTA.

### **Underground Services**

- 6.12 Following on from a review of recent Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) surveys, it appears that it may not be feasible to excavate tree pits due the presence of extensive underground services.

### **Trees and Greening Interventions**

- 6.13 Tree planting will be utilised to reinforce the key nodes and intersections along the streetscape. Due to the location of large amounts of underground services, tree pits may not be feasible in certain locations. As an alternative, planter boxes may be utilised to facilitate street tree planting. Additional greening interventions will also be explored at the detailed design stage of the project. Proposed tree species will include *Betula* and *Amelanchier* spp.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

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- 7.1 The proposed scheme will result in substantial improvements to the existing public realm and will enhance the pedestrian users' experiences of Francis Street and the surrounding junctions. The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area and is in accordance with the relevant planning policies and objectives and national guidelines.

7.2 **For Further Information, contact:**

David Healy  
Administrative Officer  
Dublin City Council  
South Central Area Office  
Eblana House, First Floor  
Marrowbone Lane, Dublin 8  
E: david.healy@dublincity.ie  
T: (01) 222 5112

## **8.0 References**

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Baseline Study for Archaeology, Dr. James Lyttleton, 2017, attached.  
*Meath & Francis Street*, Graham Hickey, Dublin Civic Trust, 2008.  
*Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* Department of Tourism Transport and Sport, 2013  
Liberties Local Area Plan 2009-2015 (extended to 2020)  
Dublin City Development Plan 2016-22  
Paving: the Conservation of Historic Ground Surfaces, DAHG and Dublin City Council, 2015

## 9.0 Proposed Design

