

HCoA
Haslam & Co Architects

For Dublin City Council



Meath Street Public Realm Improvement Project Supporting Statement

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This report was commissioned by Dublin City Council South Central Area Office to provide a vision for the renewal of the public realm of Meath Street in The Liberties. The plan provides for the environmental and physical development of Meath Street through the enhancement of the pedestrian realm and the rebalancing of public space along the street to stimulate new commercial uses and activities.

This is a capital project of Dublin City Council to revitalise the main streets in The Liberties.

- Design lead: Haslam & Co Architects
- Project Management/ Engineering: Dublin City Council Roads Design Section
- Landscaping: DCC Parks, Biodiversity and landscaping service



Project OBJECTIVES

The aim of the project is to create an **enhanced public realm** and a coherent vision for the environmental development of Meath Street. Dublin City Council is proposing to redesign the public realm of Meath Street in the heart of The Liberties. Guided by community feedback, Local Area plans, and DCC developmental guidelines.

The aims are

- Widened footpaths providing more generous pedestrian space
- More space for a range of street uses including markets and outdoor seating
- Traffic calming and easier cycling
- Universal design for ease of movement for all
- Introduction of street trees and landscaping
- Revisions to parking and loading arrangements
- New public lighting for a brighter street
- To become a destination and not a transport corridor

Terms of reference:

The Public Realm Improvement Plan should provide for:

- A design that enhances the appearance of the area of Meath Street and its immediate environs.
- The design should contain improvements/additions to all public realm areas including: footpaths, kerbs, carriageway, street furniture, street lighting, planting and landscaping etc. The principle of universal access should be supported.
- Consideration should be given to the current provision of on-street parking and loading facilities for retail premises on the street, and measures advanced to consolidate, enhance and improve these facilities. The provision of dedicated cycle parking is also required.
- Encourage and facilitate daytime activities and street animations such as cafés, bars restaurants and shops etc. around Meath Street and adjacent streets

Existing Street VISTAS



overview: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Meath Street emerged in the later 17th C as a planned residential and commercial street speculatively laid out by the Earls of Meath to run from The Coombe to Thomas Street. The street measured 44 feet and was straight and regular, but the Earl's limited ownership meant the street narrowed at either end, due to existing buildings. It was only when the Wide Streets Commissioners looked at the street in the 19th C that the junction with Thomas Street, known as Meath Row, was widened and improved.

The development of the street coincided with the growth of Dublin itself, and particularly the post-Restoration push to entice 'Protestant Strangers' to Dublin, such as Huguenots and Quaker settlers. Meath Street became a centre for these emigrant communities, developing as a commercial street. The Quakers founded their first meeting house at No 27 in the 1680s. In its early years, the street would likely have included curvilinear gable buildings, known as Dutch Billie's.

In the mid-18th C the street went into decline, as many of the thriving manufacturing industries in the area suffered under restrictive trade laws from London. The push of the city to the east also made the western quarters less fashionable. Wealth left the area and poverty and overcrowding increased. In the 19th C improvements to the street were made, the entrances into the street were widened and new terraces were built, particularly along the east side. The Liberty Crèche (now the Dublin Steiner School) was one of these buildings. In the 1850s St Catherine of Alexandria's Catholic Church, to designs by JJ McCarthy was built in fashionable gothic style.

Meath Street in the 19thC was a street of provisions shops, with bakeries and dairies listed in trade directories of the time. However, the street was also given over to tenements, and overcrowding was rife. The area was the focus in the late 19thC to build quality housing, including by the Earl of Meath and the Iveagh Trust, and Nos 19-20 date from this period. In the 20th C Meath Street continued to thrive as a commercial hub for many decades. Business tended to local needs: groceries, general provisions, covered markets and clothing retailers. The street saw much rebuilding in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly along its southern end and adjoining side streets.



This detail from John Roques' map of Dublin from 1756 shows the then-Earl of Meath's Liberty centred on Thomas Street - a densely packed city of narrow and crowded streets. Lying at the centre of Thomas Street stood the Corn Market House that was finally removed in the 19th century. Also marked is the streets famous Glib Market of street traders, a tradition that maintains to this day. Meath Street, with its then narrowed entrance from Thomas Street, runs southwards from the Glib Market.

Today Meath Street is part of an Architectural Conservation Area with two protected structures:

- 5071 - Meath Street, Dublin 8 Dublin 8 St. Catherine's Roman Catholic church (built after Catholic Emancipation in 1829)
- 5072 - 92 Meath Street, Dublin 8 Dublin 8 Liberty Crèche

overview: EXISTING USES

Meath Street is in a process of flux: in the last 20 years, retailing has declined both suffering from larger scale competition and general changes in shopping habits. As a result there are a number of empty commercial premises and a few derelict buildings on the street. There has been a steady reduction in more traditional pavement trading and in clothes and grocery sales. In their place there are a number of short-term leases but we also see an increase in new uses such as small offices and cafes the former of which has little street presence but the latter have the possibility of re animating the street scene.

Architecturally, Meath Street still retains much of the original tight urban grain and, in the upper half of the street, the plot width of c 5m is largely intact giving a distinct shop front scale and rhythm. In the central section, redevelopments such as the Bull Ring, although broken with this scale, have sought to replicate the rhythm at street level – though with mixed aesthetic success.

The lower end of the street is of a different scale and feel, notably with the largely residential Ash Grove scheme completed in 1978 - although street level rhythm is subtly maintained. Commercially, this is a less successful end of the street and is generally of a quieter character.



Ashgrove in the early 1980s



references and POLICY CONTEXT

The project is supported by policies including:

- Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028
- Thomas Street & Environs Architectural Conservation Area
- Liberties Local Area Plan 2009 – 2020
- Liberties Greening Strategy 2015
- Dublin City Public Realm Strategy 2012
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013
- Francis Street Environmental Improvement Scheme 2017

OVERVIEW: Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

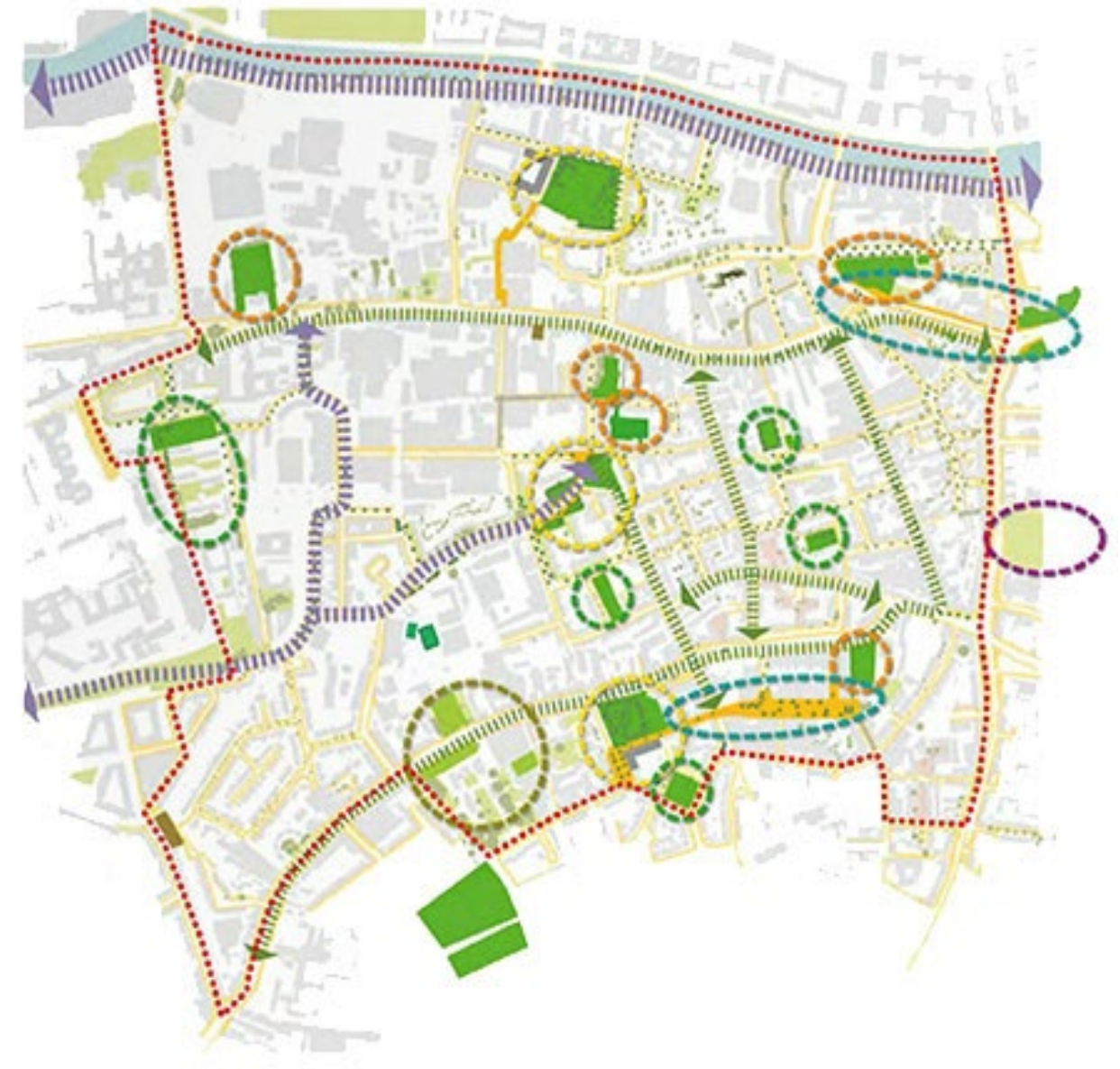
This proposal is supported by the following policies

SC2 ... To develop the city's character by: *cherishing and enhancing Dublin's renowned streets, civic spaces and squares; developing a sustainable network of safe, clean, attractive streets, pedestrian routes and large pedestrian zones lanes and cycleways in order to make the city more coherent and navigable and creating further new streets as part of the public realm when the opportunities arise; protecting the grain, scale and vitality of city streets and encouraging the development of appropriate and sustainable building heights*

CCUV37 Plan Active and Healthy Streets: *to promote the development of a network of active, healthy, attractive, high quality, green, and safe streets and public spaces which are inviting, pedestrian friendly and easily navigable. The aspiration is to encourage walking as the preferred means of movement between buildings and activities in the city.*

CCUV38 High Quality Streets and Spaces: *to promote the development of high-quality streets and public spaces which are accessible and inclusive in accordance with the principles of universal design, and which deliver vibrant, attractive, accessible and safe places and meet the needs of the city's diverse communities regardless of age, ability, disability or gender.*

CCUV43 Public Realm - Key Urban Villages/ Urban Villages: *to provide environmental and public realm improvements in Key Urban Villages and urban villages around the city through the implementation of Local Environmental Improvement Plans / Village Improvement Plans and placemaking strategies in order to support the regeneration and revitalisation of the city's urban villages.*



The Liberties Greening Strategy 2015

Meath Street lies within **Strategic Development & Regeneration Area SDRA15** (The Liberties & Newmarket Square) in the DCC Development Plan 2022-2028; this plan notes the considerable urban consolidation and regeneration in The Liberties in recent years and seeks to take forward the relevant elements of the former Liberties Local Area Plan which have yet to be realised. It notes in this respect the importance of linkages, public realm and specifically:

- *To recognise the importance of The Liberties medieval street network.*
- *To carry out public realm works at ...Meath Street... as identified in the Guiding Principles Map*
- *Improve the quality of the Liberties main thoroughfares ...Meath Street...through improvements to the public realm and greening strategies.*
- *To support the implementation of the projects identified in the Liberties Greening Strategy... that offer opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, SuDS interventions and increasing the tree canopy coverage of the area.*

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013

To encourage more sustainable travel patterns and safer streets, designers must place pedestrians at the top of the user hierarchy.

Design Rules and Guidelines

Cyclists:

- Shared bike / car route – 3.25 – 3.5 m wide

Pedestrians:

- Minimum pavement widths 1.8m
- Pedestrian crossings 4m wide on main streets

Vehicles:

- Parking bays 2.4m x 6m/ Loading bays 2.8 x 6m
- Accessible parking 3.6 x 7 m
- Corners: 4.5m radii when local street into arterial/ 6m radii between arterial streets

Furniture:

- Market stalls 1.8m/ 2.4m/ 3m long 1.2 m deep
- Spacing of bike hoops – 1m apart and offset 800mm from edges

reports and CONSULTATIONS undertaken

Supporting Reports:

- Appropriate Assessment screening statement
- Environmental Impact screening statement
- Topographical/ GPR/ Utilities survey
- Conservation report
- Archaeological report
- Vehicle tracking
- Road safety audit

Consultations:

Consultations with local residents and businesses were undertaken in October 2018 and early 2019 which highlighted the issues and aspirations of the community for Meath Street and which helped to shape the initial concept design, prepared in June 2019. Further community meetings were held in April 2021 to present the preliminary design and gain feedback. A draft design was also placed on display on Meath Street at this time. A number of adjustments to the design were made following these meetings.

In addition, extensive engagement has been undertaken with technical departments and other stakeholders within Dublin City Council to ensure that the proposal is fully consistent with current plans and policies of the City Council as well as national guidance and standards.

The design team also sought to engage with identified Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) and this engagement has informed aspects of the design.



Meath Street 1930s

creating a pedestrian friendly PUBLIC REALM

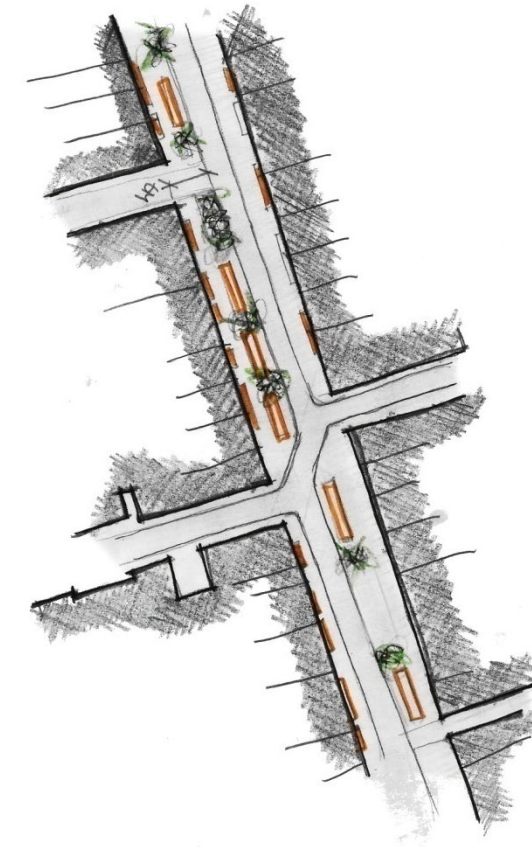
A critique of Meath Street existing public realm would note the car parking dominated streets with a consequently diminished pedestrian space and a poor visual environment. The pedestrian realm at present is characterised by the following:

- Less than optimal pavement widths
- Lack of seating and places to enjoy sitting
- Lack of visual coherence in details
- Poor quality surface materials
- Lack of greenery
- Dominated by traffic

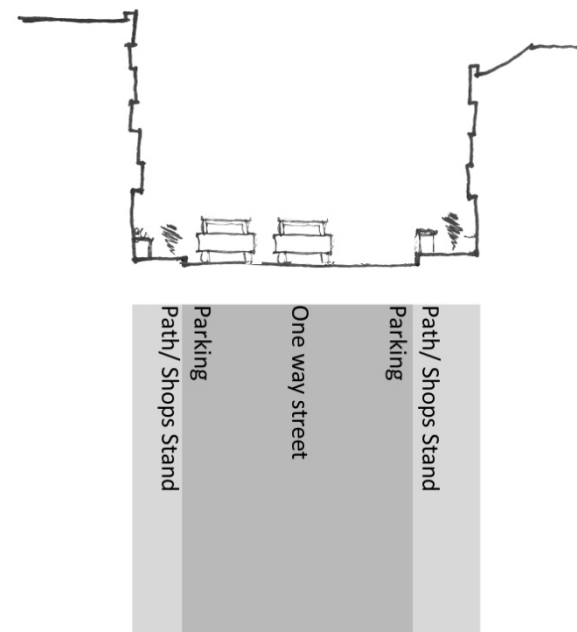
For the urban planner Jan Gehl, the goal in public space design is to ensure that cars can be “present, but not king” (*Gehl: The spaces between buildings*) and UK studies show this makes economic sense.

INITIAL AIMS and Objectives

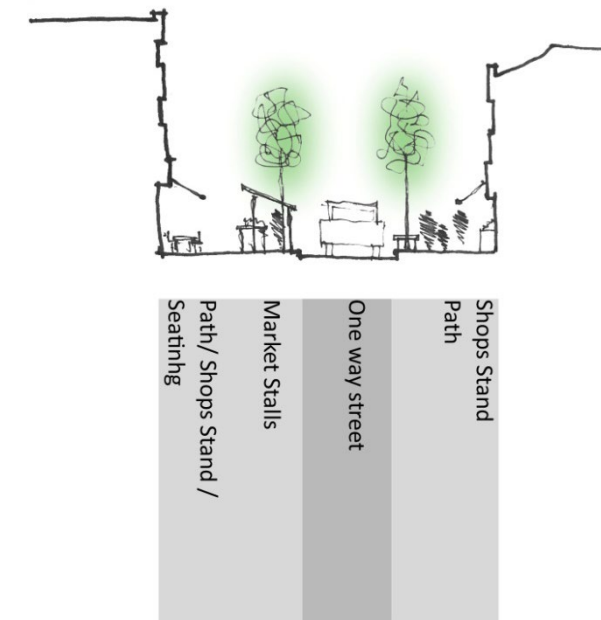
- To Provide a more **pedestrian friendly** environment encouraging people to visit Meath Street on foot and stay longer
- Regularise **market activity** on the street and strengthen the retail offer
- Create a **safe and accessible** environment for all street users
- Ensure sufficient **access, parking and loading** is maintained to facilitate and encourage commercial operation
- Maintain Meath Street as a through traffic street
- Use **high quality** materials and contemporary street furniture and lighting
- Increase **greenery** in the streetscape



Initial proposal for increased pedestrian realm



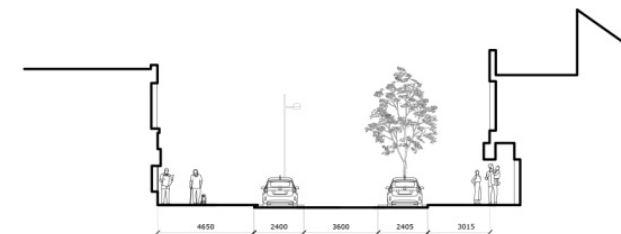
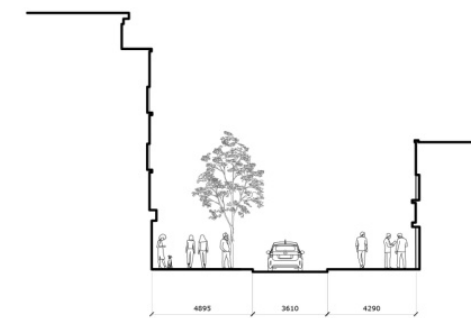
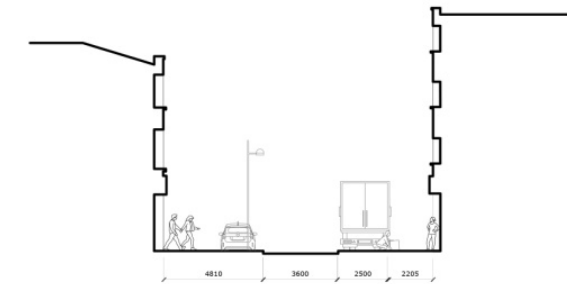
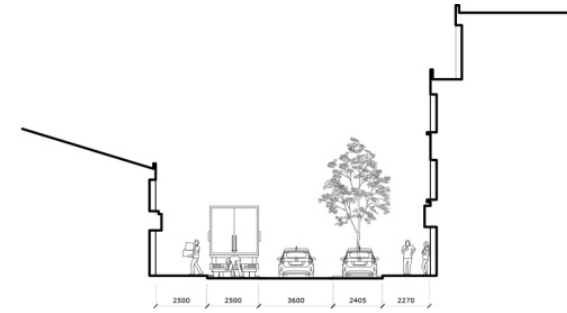
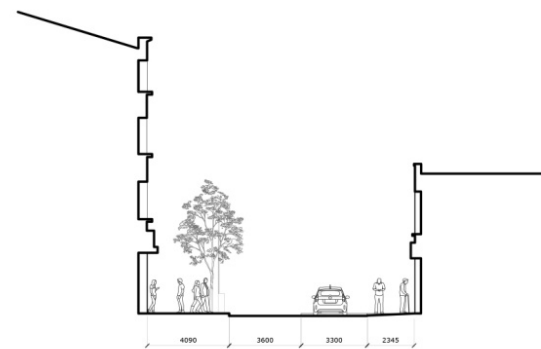
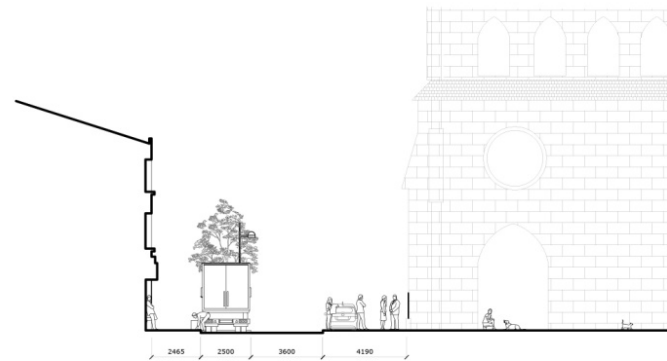
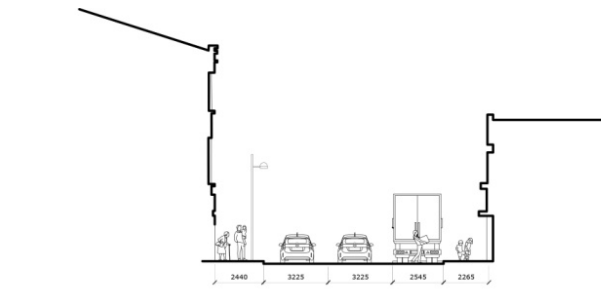
Existing typical Meath St section



Proposed typical Meath St section

Meath Street – PROPOSAL overview

- Single lane one way traffic route northwards.
- Defined zones for set down parking, loading bays, cycle parking, trees and seating
- Designated pedestrian crossing points at junctions to provide continuity along length of street and provide safe crossing points.



overview: Traffic and PARKING

To encourage more sustainable travel patterns and safer streets, designers must place pedestrians at the top of the user hierarchy

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013

Enhance pedestrian realm and provide easy crossing points at key junctions of the emerging route network.

On-street parking should be integrated within soft and hard landscaping.

Liberties LAP

Surveys have been carried out to assess both the existing number of car parking spaces and followed up with a review of weekend and evening parking needs. Total car parking on Meath Street at present:

- Disabled: 3
- Standard bays: 27
- Loading: 11 (specific times)

Total: 41

- additional parking at weekends provided but not fully utilised.

Our revised design proposal for Meath Street reduces the amount of on-street parking and proposes to discourage all-day parking so that drop-off and pop-in shopping parking are facilitated. In order to achieve this and broaden Meath Street's pedestrian realm a coordinated parking strategy for this and the surrounding streets is required so that residential car parking is not hindered. Revised car parking proposal is:

- Disabled: 3
- Standard bays: 12 - corresponds with existing parking permits
- Loading: 10 (double bays)

Total: 25

OVERVIEW: Bikes

One way bike traffic with slower moving cars

Total bike parking on Meath Street at present:

- 20 hoops – 40 spaces

Revised design proposal for Meath Street

- 26 hoops – 52 spaces



Existing

Proposed

Meath Street: DETAIL layouts

Car parking should not dominate the first impression of Meath Street and the northern end is critical as a visual enticer from Thomas Street; hence the tree planting opposite the Church and local greening of the street in front of the Steiner School. Loading bays and parking bays are proposed to be integrated into the paving area.

To help define the priority given to pedestrians and to facilitate ease of movement, pedestrian crossings will be provided at junctions with all the side streets.

Loading bays and parking bays are offset from the main carriageway while accessible car parking spaces and an informal lay-by for a hearse close to St Catherine's Church are integrated into the paving area. Immediately in front of the Church the widened pavement is edge protected with bollards.

OVERVIEW: SUDs

The street drainage pattern is largely unchanged with drains extended out to meet the new kerb edge. SUDs are introduced with the open planting areas in front of the Church and to the southern end of the street where subsurface space allows. A permeable finish to the parking bays is also to be considered, again if site conditions allow.



St Catherine's Church Meath Street, proposed street layout

Part plan showing, superimposed, the existing kerb edge – purple lines – and the proposed kerb line in black

Meath Street: DETAIL layouts

The central section of Meath Street is seen as the commercial hub, with the Liberty Market being a focus of activity both within the building and spilling out onto the street as it does at present.

The widened pavements here create opportunities for future event markets. Discrete electrical service points are proposed to serve clusters of stalls. Loading bays and parking bays are proposed to be integrated into the paving area.

The operation of markets on Meath Street will be undertaken in accordance with the Casual Trading Bylaws or may be facilitated as events at certain times of the year.

Designated crossing points along the street improve accessibility.

The southern section of Meath Street is the less commercial end and with a wider street. More parking is envisaged here both bikes and cars; tree planting and lower-level planting complement the streetscape.

New traffic controls are envisaged at the crossing points at the junction of the Coombe with Meath Street and again at the controlled crossing halfway up Meath Street at the Liberty market.



Central market area of Meath Street



Southern end of Meath Street junction with the Coombe

MATERIAL Palette

“Ensure that high quality and well co-ordinated paving, street furniture, planting and lighting characterise the improved public realm while creating opportunities for public art”. **Liberties LAP**

The ambition of the proposal is to provide a unifying palette of details and materials across the public realm which gives a sense of coherence. The materials are chosen with regard to the varying contexts of Meath Street, their integration into surrounding areas and, in consultation with Dublin City Council, with regard to durability and replace-ability.

The **pavement** material palette is seen as an extension of the Francis Street improvement scheme: namely granite kerbs and concrete pavers. This facilitates a seamless connection along linking streets such as Carmen’s Hall and allows for reuse of existing granite kerbs on Meath Street. (1& 2)

A concrete block paver system is foreseen in the accessible **parking and hearse parking bays** (3)

A dished **granite channel** is used to demarcate the paving and to facilitate the drainage from the downpipes on the flanking buildings utilise granite (4)

Tree surrounds should also respond to the higher quality of finish within the vicinity in terms of appearance, permeability and durability. Paved street surrounds are foreseen providing a flush, even surface and drainage (5).



1. re used wide granite kerbs and concrete pavers



2. concrete paver with textured finish



3. concrete block paver for accessible parking bays



4. granite dished channel



5. paved tree surround

MATERIAL Palette

Street Lighting: this follows the lead established in Francis Street with the Urbis Schreder Hestia proposed for Meath Street (6) which is positioned to follow standard spacing from DCC road light guidelines.

Planting: tree planting which respects the existing palette used in Dublin and the scale of space of the street should be selected. Recommended is a flowering pear (*pyrus calleryana chanticleer*) although the final choice of tree will be agreed at detailed design stage. A formal alignment of tree planting is proposed opposite St Catherine's Church to define the importance of this building in the streetscape. (7)

Meath Street has a dense network of sub-surface service runs which has limited the placement of trees along the street. Nevertheless, working with DCC Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape, a rhythm of tree planting has been defined.

Meath Street has been traditionally a hard paved commercial street reflecting the level of trading activity. However, certain areas have been marked out for lower-level planting beneath the trees in front of the church and at the more residential southern end of the street.

Street furniture is proposed to be colour and style coordinated so that all elements sit harmoniously together (8, 9). Colour contrast with the surrounding paving needs to be maintained but street furniture plays a supporting role in the street and should be correspondingly toned. Seats and benches are to be provided at regular points along the street (10, 11).



6. street lighting



7. flowering pear trees



8. litter bins



9. bollards



10. bike hoops



11. benches

PROPOSED photomontage – Church and Street



PROPOSED photomontage – Liberty Market

(*indicative market stalls only)



PROPOSED photomontage – Southern end



Design OVERVIEW – from Thomas Street southwards

