



Parks Section, Community & Cultural Development Department

**Proposed Development of St. Michaels
Square and Environs, Dun Laoghaire, Co.
Dublin within the Curtilage of a Protected
Structure
PC/PKS/01/25**

Part 8 Report

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1. Introduction

The following report is a summary of the main features of the proposed development of St. Michaels Square and Environs as a more inclusive and attractive public space. This report summarises the information given in the associated drawings and any ancillary reports.

2. Site Location and Scope

The site is located in central Dun Laoghaire. It is a prominent and strategic site sitting at the junction of Marine Road and George's Street. It is bounded by the Church to the north, Marine Road to the east, George's Street to the south and the EBS building to the west. The site is outlined in red on the site location map.

It is proposed to create a public square at the corner of the Marine Road /Georges Street junction adjacent to St. Michaels Church. This is a placemaking project to improve accessibility, the general appearance of the streetscape and to assist in the regeneration of Dun Laoghaire Town. It will provide a more inclusive welcome space to linger, congregate and provide an abundant provision of public seating to exploit the sunny aspect.

It will also help to strengthen the link between the Seafront and Town as well compliment Myrtle square as an opposing bookend on George's Street. The general upgrade works will include new surface treatment, bespoke seating, public lighting, soft landscaping, etc. The project is a continuation of the greening of Dun Laoghaire and will be characterised by trees, planting and feature public seating. Materials and finishes will match the existing suite of street furniture around the town and specifically the elements established in Myrtle Square.

3. Planning Context

3.1 Context:

The site is located in the centre of Dun Laoghaire Town with many retail units, office space and residents in close proximity. The site is directly adjacent to St. Michaels Church on Marine Road. The Interim Urban Framework Plan has set out a clear and coherent vision to assist and guide the ongoing development that will contribute to the physical regeneration of Dún Laoghaire Town.

The manner in which this project aligns with the Interim Dun Laoghaire Urban Framework Plan 2022-2028 is outlined below citing the relevant sections.

Section 2.2 Marine Road:

As part of the strategy to improve the connectivity between the Waterfront and the Town Centre, it is essential to continue to upgrade the experience and ease of movement between them. Critical to this is the streetscape of Marine Road which effectively is the main connector between the town and the harbour. Upgrading of the first section at the junction of Marine and Queen's Road was delivered as part of the Metals Projects Phase 1. Public realm works have reduced the difficulty for pedestrians crossing the complex series of exits/entrances between the Shopping Centre and the Royal Marine Hotel. It is an objective of this Interim Framework Plan to continue to reaffirm Marine Road as a major civic street by seeking the completion of this improvement scheme along its length to the junction with George's Street. Proposals to improve the frontage and relationship of the Shopping Centre (together with its vehicular access) and the Church to the public realm should be examined. This will create a narrower tree lined carriageway with wider paving, improved surfaces and new public lighting to create a stronger sense of place.

Section 2.3 Public Spaces:

It has been an objective of the Interim Dun Laoghaire Urban Framework Plan to encourage pedestrian connectivity between the Waterfront and the Town Centre by creating a series of new, well-defined public spaces along the route. At the junction of Marine Road and George's Street Lower, the underused Church space could be redeveloped and upgraded to provide an attractive civic space and to provide a more elegant setting for St Michael's Church. A new 'bookend' signature building or smaller kiosk arrangement could provide uses, compatible with church activities, to help animate this space.

Whilst the project aligns with this section of the plan, the new bookend signature building was not considered appropriate or required by the church. The space is being animated through good design and by creating a more inclusive, accessible, peaceful and calm place with ample seating and greening.

Section 3.1.2 Town Centre Quarter (a) Corrig Avenue to Marine Road)

It is an objective of the Interim Dun Laoghaire Framework Plan to undertake new planting, where feasible, in order to rescale the frontage of the shopping centre while carriageways should be reduced, where considered appropriate, to the minimum width that is required to carry traffic volumes. Trees, planting, lighting

and street furniture, common to that recently installed along the Metals, will thematically reconnect the Town Centre to the Waterfront. A simplification of the junction between George's Street and Marine Road could create easier crossing points for pedestrians and would complement the proposed new public space at the corner of St. Michael's Church.

Whilst this project aligns with this section of the plan, some of the elements are outside of the scope including reducing carriageway widths, simplification of the junction between George's Street and Marine Road to create easier crossing points for pedestrians. This section will be further considered when junction and east side of Marine Road (shopping centre side) are being upgraded.

3.3 Land ownership:

DLRCC have undergone extensive negotiations with the church in relation to the transfer of ownership of the site. The church and DLRCC have agreed a mix of licence and transfer of deed.

The title to the section of the upper forecourt is to be transferred to DLRCC by virtue of deed. A licence agreement has been entered into for the lower area. This will allow for the continued use of the right of way along the church building line to the rear of the businesses on George's Street, the main church access as well as parking for funeral hearses.

3.4 Zoning:

The site zoning is Objective MTC – To protect, provide for and-or improve major town centre facilities. Under this zoning objective Open Space and Cultural Use is 'permitted in principle' and the development of a civic plaza would also be entirely consistent with this zoning. There are a number of policies within the County Develop Plan (CDP)2022-2028 which support this project, and these are outlined in section 3.5 below. The Specific Local Objectives (SLOs') in close proximity to the site will be supported through development of this Part 8. This proposal is entirely consistent with the Interim Dún Laoghaire Urban Framework Plan 2022-2028 and the County Development Plans 2022-2028.

3.5 Policy:

The development of St Michaels Square and Environs will tie in with the relevant national and regional policy and the following specific policies as outlined in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Policy ST4: Accessibility

It is Council policy to support suitable access for people with disabilities, including improvements to buildings, streets and public spaces

Policy ST6: Footways and Pedestrian Routes

The Council will continue to maintain and expand the footway and pedestrian route network to provide for accessible pedestrian routes within the County in accordance with best accessibility practice.

Policy ST10: Street Lighting

It is Council policy to provide and maintain street lighting on the public road/footway/cycleways throughout the County in accordance with commonly accepted best practice.

Policy RET4: Major Town Centres

It is a Policy Objective of the Council to maintain the two Major Town Centres - Dún Laoghaire and Dundrum – as the primary retail centres in the County and to support their evolving multifunctional role. The vitality of the towns will be enhanced by their mixed-use nature. In addition to retail, these centres must include community, cultural, civic, leisure, restaurants, bars and cafes, entertainment, employment and residential uses. Development shall be designed to enhance the creation of a sense of place

Tree and Urban Forestry Strategy 2024-2030

"It is Council policy to implement the objectives and policies of the Tree Strategy for the County - "A Climate for Trees-Tree Strategy 2024-2030" - to ensure that tree cover in the County is managed and developed to optimise the environmental, climatic and educational benefits which derive from an 'urban forest'".

Policy E16: Sustainable Drainage Systems

It is Council policy to ensure that all development proposals incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Policy EI14: Air and Noise Pollution

It is Council policy to implement the provisions of National and EU Directives on air and noise pollution and other relevant legislative requirements in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate

Policy EI 15: Light Pollution:

It is Council policy objective to ensure that the design of external lighting schemes minimise the incidence of light spillage or pollution in the immediate surrounding environment and has due regard to the residential amenity of surrounding areas.

Policy CC5: Limiting Emissions of Greenhouse Gases

It is Council policy to support National and International initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases.

Policy UD3: Public Realm Design

All development, whether in existing or in new areas, should positively contribute to an enhanced public realm and should demonstrate that the highest quality in public realm design is achieved. This will include detailed consideration

Policy UD7: Urban Tree Planting:

It is Council policy to increase the tree canopy cover throughout the County in accordance with the provisions of 'A Climate for trees: Tree Strategy 2024-2030 for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

4. Nature & Extent of the Proposed Development

The nature and extent of the proposed development is outlined below. This description of the proposed development should be read in conjunction with the supporting drawings and reports. This proposal will fundamentally alter the streetscape, greening and softening, encouraging biodiversity and creating a more inclusive, new civic space in a central location in the town.

Existing arrangement

Currently the Church space at the junction of Marine Road and Georges Street is dilapidated in appearance, is underused and does not provide for any meaningful civic congregation. There is a change of level directly off Georges Street which creates an awkward and unnecessary obstacle. At present there are 3 steps across the opening and a temporary, timber ramp to facilitate universal access. The lower

area has suffered from haphazard, illegal car parking which adds to the hostility and sense of the neglected nature of the site.

This project aims to develop the space in collaboration with St Michael's Church authorities as part of an overall greening strategy for Dún Laoghaire Town. The development of this space is an opportunity to reimagine an important node in the urban grain and to provide a green refuge for congregation, reflection and relaxation. The overarching aim is to create a space that addresses both Georges Street and the Church in a manner that is accessible for all.

Proposal

The proposal includes for level access off Georges Street into an accessible and inclusive seating/congregation space at the upper level. This entry point will be pinched to create a defined threshold, framed with specimen trees and ornamental planting. The raised planters will be at seating height (approx. 450mm high) to anchor the space and take account of the south facing aspect. A bespoke, free standing mesh fencing will enclose the space and be used to grow climbing plants. The fence will secure the ROW access in lower area and help to green the expansive gable wall of the EBS building. Allowance is being made for discreet, ornamental lighting, power points for events and a socket for a Christmas tree.

A new set of steps leading from the upper level to the lower level with handrails either side is proposed.

The existing planting in the lower area including the large, native Oak tree and groundcover will be retained as part of this proposal. Further seating, tree and ornamental planting will be provided at the lower level while allowing space for two hearses to park when required. There is a right of way to the rear of the properties on Georges Street Lower which will be maintained and managed with a new gate. The haphazard car parking will be removed through the inclusion of street furniture, planting and bollards and space for hearse parking only will be retained. A brass, cruciform motif is to be inlaid into the surface centred at the main entrance to the church. The existing step and ramp at the entrance will be removed and replaced with level access through revised finished ground levels improving accessibility and inclusiveness.

The surfacing, colours and organic shapes take inspiration from the stained-glass windows of the church. The surface of the square is proposed to be an exposed

aggregate concrete to reflect the quality of the concrete and fine craftsmanship within the church and to match exposed concrete used in public realm schemes elsewhere in the town.

A 1.2m high metal railing will run from the gable of the EBS premises through the proposed soft landscape area, break as it crosses the entrance off George's Street, run through the opposite, proposed soft landscape area and then straddle the top of the existing, low, curved wall with a consistent 1.2m height and finally drop off the wall to finish as a 1.2m high railing terminating before the access for hearse parking. This subtle railing detail will act to re-establish a stronger definition between the proposed space and the streetscape.

5. Climate Action Considerations:

The design is strongly aligned to all aspects of the National Policy on Climate Action and more specifically the DLR Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024. It is consistent with the greening of Dun Laoghaire vision which seeks to achieve a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable town with place-making through greening at its core. The space seeks to communicate awareness of climate change through interpretation or other means. The project aligns with the DLR Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024 by incorporating the following actions/initiatives.

- The removal of the haphazard parking spaces at St. Michaels Square (Transport)
- Management of the rainfall runoff and use of the rainfall to add the greening through rain gardens and other SUDS measures (Flood Resilience)
- The planting of trees and ornamental planting to enhance biodiversity and sequester carbon (Nature Based Solutions)

6. Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening is required in order to form an opinion whether or not the proposed development should be subject to an EIA, and if so, whether an EIAR should be prepared in respect of it. The EIA screening concludes that there is no requirement for an EIA to be carried out and no requirement for an EIAR to be prepared, The EIA screening has been undertaken by CAAS Ltd and is included as an appendix to the main Part 8. All recommendations as outlined in this report will be implemented as part of the proposed development.

7. Appropriate Assessment – Screening Statement

The proposed development is subject to the Guidance for Planning Authorities on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, November 2009) and S.I. No. 476 of 2011 Planning and Development (Amendment) (No.3) Regulations 2011. This requires that screening is carried out for all projects to examine if any effects are likely on Natura 2000 Sites, that is, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). A Screening Report has been prepared by CAAS Ltd which concluded that a full Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment is not required. Therefore, in accordance with SI 476, 2011, Section 250, Planning and Development (Amendment) No. 3 Regulations 2011, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council has determined that an Appropriate Assessment is not required. The AA Screening Report is included as an appendix to the main Part 8 report (see appendix 2). All recommendations as outlined in this report will be implemented as part of the proposed development.

Reports:

Appendix 1: Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Appendix 2: Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Appendix 3: Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Determination

Appendix 4: Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Drawings (list):

2478-01 - Site Location Map.pdf

2478-02 - Existing Site Layout pdf

2478-03 - Proposed Layout Plan.pdf

2478-04 - Living Streets.pdf

2478-05 - St Michaels Sections a.pdf

2478-06 - St. Michaels Sections b.pdf

St. Michaels Square & Environs Part 8 image