

# *Appendix 4:*

# *Architectural Conservation Area Design Statement*

## 1.0 Introduction

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) are designed to protect and enhance parts of towns and villages which have special character and historic interest. Conservation seeks to promote an understanding of that character and ensure its continuity by encouraging sensitive development which respects its ethos without necessarily replicating the past.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 affords legal status to ACAs. The Act defines an ACA as a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest and which contributes to the appreciation of protected structures. The unique architectural qualities and historic significance of the streetscape in Nenagh Town warrant the designation of Conservation Areas and the adherence to the principles of conservation.

## 2.0 Purpose of Conservation Area

The primary aim of the ACA is to preserve the unique qualities of Nenagh's heritage from damage caused by insensitive development proposals. Historically, change was gradual and building alterations and additions were undertaken in a manner complementary to the built fabric of the street. Local materials were primarily used, resulting in consistency and a distinctive regional or local character. Today, the pressure for change and diversity is far greater with universal availability of building materials due to modern manufacturing processes and reduced transportation costs. Thus, without a conservation policy and the exercise of care in the design and choice of materials for alterations, repairs and new development, the unique character of the Nenagh's streetscape will be eroded and lost to future generations.

## 3.0 Implications of an Architectural Conservation Area for the Public

Normal exemptions may not apply in an ACA as set out in Section 82 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000-2004, which means that development which would materially affect the character of the area would require planning permission. This means that development to the exterior of a building in an ACA will require planning permission.

Where unauthorised development takes place within the ACA without planning permission the Council may require the owners or occupiers to restore the character of the building.

## 4.0 Historical Development of Nenagh

Nenagh has three 13th century ruins, with the keep of its castle, built by the Norman Theobald FitzWalter, 'the finest of its kind in Ireland'. A plan of the original castle complex shows it to have been fairly extensive and comprised of that

circular keep or donjon, a two-storey gatehouse, four small towers and curtain walls. The keep, part of the gatehouse and one of its flanking towers, and part of another small tower are extant. The whole is now in the care of OPW who plan to re-roof the keep, insert timber floors and give it a new purpose. They plan to retain the uppermost portion with the large openings which was only added in 1861 the view from there is spectacular.

The Franciscan Convent/Friary remarkably, a native O'Kennedy foundation built about half a century after settler FitzWalter's arrival has an unusual set of eleven evenly-spaced lancet windows, a fine east window and some interesting parts of an effigy and decorated arch. The Annals of Nenagh, which recorded local and national events, was compiled here. The entries extend from 1336 to 1528. The Franciscan vocation included alms collecting and aiding the poor.

Like most ecclesiastical ruins, the surrounding area and actual church interior have been the burial place for ordinary families for centuries. The oldest inscribed stone is that to a Mrs Frances Minchin, wife of John Minchin, Annagh, Kilbarron. She died in 1696.

The Augustinian Priory about a mile from the town centre in the townland of Tigh Eoin/Tyone had a broader purpose to that of the Franciscans. This Norman-endowed foundation had a large tract of land utilised for farming while the nearby river was harnessed for milling. The Augustinians also provided hospitality and medical care, the latter requirement written into their founding charter.

### Legacies

At the turn of the 19th-20th centuries Nenagh's complement of public buildings were its military barracks of 1832, a workhouse, courthouse and gaol of the early 1840s, and a town hall of 1889. Of these the courthouse and town hall still serve those functions. The workhouse has long been replaced by a modern hospital. The barracks stand on an elevated, triangular fortified site, surrounded by an earthen moat. It had accommodation for a company of 246 men and 4 horses; a gatehouse with detention cells, an infirmary and a barrack-master's residence. The military introduced cricket and rugby football to the Nenagh area. It was garrisoned by regiments of the British Army almost continually from 1833 to 1922 when the North Staffordshire Regiment departed after the Irish Free State came into being. The Irish army occupied it only for two years 1922-4. Today it is still comparatively intact, but in a very poor state of repair.

### Heritage Centre

In the last century every county in Ireland had its own gaol/prison. As County Tipperary was divided into two ridings in 1838 it had two gaols, one in Clonmel and one in Nenagh. The transition of most of Nenagh's buildings from gaol to Convent of Mercy and national school in 1886, to post-primary school (1913) and to heritage centre and family history research centres (1981), is typical in a sense of

very many recent developments throughout Ireland a vibrant new life for old and storied buildings for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

The Heritage Centre is in the former gaol Governor's House an eight-sided limestone building in Georgian style. The cupola on the roof had a three-faced clock and large bell the latter still in good sound. The Centre is open on weekdays 9.30-5, and on Sundays 2.30-5. Guided tours by arrangement, phone 067 - 32633. Folk life and prison life are recalled in its several rooms through text, graphics, models, recreated classroom, shops, forge and dairy, a three-dimensional model of the gaol complex with attendant history. The gaol chapel was in this building, so all prisoners, including the hundreds transported to Australia from North Tipperary, attended here on Sundays.

The facade of the gaol's Gatehouse gives little indication of the extensive accommodation within two stairways, seven medium-sized rooms, four small cells (for persons awaiting public hanging) and two enclosed exercise yards. Seventeen men, including three sets of brothers, were hanged here between August 1842 and May 1858.

## 5.0 Architectural Conservation Areas

The extent of the ACA is as presented on Map 2.

In order to preserve the character and identity of Nenagh, an ACA has been designated in and around the town centre; Summerhill, Pearse Street, Kenyon Street Kickham Street/Banba Square. Section 7 of this plan contains a detailed study of the ACA specifying the types of development allowed and providing guidelines for the design of buildings and development within the Conservation Area. Development within the ACA will also be subject to the policy objectives contained in *Nenagh Historic Core – A Conservation Plan 2005*.

The Council considers that the protection of the historic townscape within this area is a critical element in the successful regeneration of the town as an attractive retail, tourism and heritage product, but also acknowledges that many of its buildings, frontages and open spaces require improvements and visual enhancement.

### 5.1 Architectural Conservation Areas – Guidelines for Development

The following guidelines need to be read in conjunction with the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG 2005).

Sensitivity is required in the design of buildings or extensions within the Conservation Areas. The intention is to provide a framework of policies which will permit the maximum degree of flexibility in terms of design and choice, consistent with the objective of preserving and enhancing the buildings and spaces which give the Conservation Areas their character. The following general principles apply to development proposals in the area.

**5.1.1 Traditional Design** is often accepted as the right approach for development within a Conservation Area especially in relation to infill development in a street frontage. By noting the important characteristics of surrounding property and applying these features in a traditional way, new buildings and extensions can be produced to respect the existing form. Architectural innovation can still exist within this framework, thus avoiding hollow pastiche styles.

**5.1.2 Conversion/Adaptation** of an existing property should be considered before the need to demolish and replace. Older buildings can be successfully adapted to new uses and conversion can make good economic sense. Conversion can often enable an important street facade to be retained.

**5.1.3 Extensions and Alterations** must complement the existing building. The extension should be subordinate in scale and in a form which allows the identity and character of the original structure to be retained. Important architectural details should be preserved and protected, including stone walls, iron railings, sash windows and moulded plasterwork;

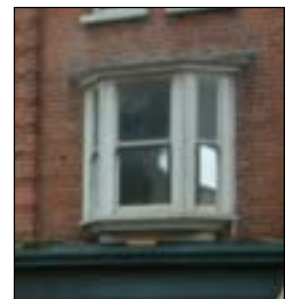
**5.1.4 New Buildings** will have to take proper account of the neighbouring properties and adjacent spaces. Proposals should have regard to the continuity of rhythm, scale, mass and outline of adjacent buildings and their details, materials, texture and colour.

### 5.2 Fabric of Conservation Area

The built form of Nenagh is composed of very traditional materials such as brick, stone, slate and timber. The materials used and the manner in which they are used in the buildings all possess historical significance and render a sense of place and identity. Construction and architectural details such as doors, windows, cornices, consoles, cast iron gutters, decorative plaster hood mouldings and brick dressings are critical elements in determining the heritage character of the town.

The fabric of the town therefore is made up of elements which themselves may be quite small,

but when taken together are important in determining the character of the town. The accumulative effect of small changes to these elements whether by removal, crude repair or tactless additions can have a long-term detrimental effect on the character and visual amenity of the town. Whilst the fabric of the town is simple in detail, it reflects almost 200 years of local craftsmanship and is an important expression of the town's vernacular architecture.



Despite the value of these simple details there is an unfortunate change towards aluminium and PVC window replacement which has meant that many original sash windows are lost to Nenagh's streetscapes. Unity and harmony existed when all windows were traditional up and down sash, now windows vary in design, glazing, pattern and colour and are out of character with the 19<sup>th</sup> Century streetscape into which they are inserted. The replacement of traditional shopfronts with inappropriate modern designs further erodes the underlying fabric of the town's heritage.

## 6.0 Shopfronts

### 6.1 Traditional Shopfronts

The traditional Nenagh shopfront is a significant piece of the architectural heritage of the town and contributes enormously to the fabric and texture of the town.

The variety of different shop designs and colour is undoubtedly one of the most attractive features of Nenagh. The preservation of the remaining examples of this art and craft is vital for the retention of the identity and character of Nenagh.

Traditional shopfronts display the vernacular architecture of Nenagh and are an important expression of local history.



The name and signboard of a traditional shopfront may be identified with a particular family style and tradition. A family which has been trading in a town for many generations will often take particular pride in the shopfront sign. Thus, rather than a faceless multiple, the sign records the service of a respected local trader. Such shopfronts are living examples of local craftsmen; the carpenter, painter and sign writer, working at their best and with local materials. The protection of old shopfronts within Nenagh will serve to record local history and enhance the character of the town.

Refer to Chapter 12 of *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2005)*.



Highly decorative vertical mullions (vertical divisions between the panes), dividing the windows, are a common feature of the traditional Irish shopfront. Typically, these often have a slim profile and can be plain or intricately carved. The triangular sections above them may have carved panels. These perpendicular shopfronts date from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century and derived from the introduction of 4 feet x 2 feet panes coupled with the unacceptability of large plate glass until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Many traditional fronts have been spoiled by the removal of the original vertical mullions to introduce a larger window. Where this has happened consideration should be given to dividing up the window with new mullions, producing a window with vertical strips.

### 6.2 Decorative Details

Many traditional shops were adorned with wrought iron railing or frill at the top of the cornice or nameboard and a few had a little metal gate in front of the doorway when it was recessed.



These are part of local history and deserve retention. In a few rare instances these survive and should be preserved.

Traditionally, shutters were painted wooden panels which lifted out. Shutters for the outside of shop windows were mainly for practical use and were therefore quite plain; however, some were carefully crafted to give the shop an attractive appearance when closed. Such features are always worth preserving as they are unusual and pleasant features on the street.

### 6.3 Lettering and Painting

The hand-painted lettering of the nameboard is a special Irish craft and is one of the most important components of the traditional Irish shopfront.



Generally, fascia boards are of timber with painted or raised lettering, and may occasionally be carved. Old shop names, particularly family names help to give the town a sense of place and identity. The old nameboard should be preserved or restored using traditional lettering and local signwriters.

Hand-painted advertisements on walls, old enamelled signs and hanging signs representing trades are features which add to the decorative quality of buildings. Shop-fronts are traditionally painted in strong colours.

## 6.4 Materials

**6.4.1 Wood** was the principal material used for the traditional Irish shopfront. The majority of the surviving shopfronts are in *wood* as this was the easiest material to prefabricate the various parts of the front and the assembly on site was relatively simple and quick.

**6.4.2 Plaster** was an economical substitute for cut stone to imitate all sorts of classical details and its use was widespread in Ireland. Whole shopfronts were constructed with nameboards, cornices, pilasters and decorative details, all executed in the manner of stone carvings. These fronts are usually quite robust and long lasting and need little maintenance except for repair of broken details and repainting. Nenagh exhibits fine examples of these plaster fronts and these should be preserved.

**6.4.3 Cut Stone** shopfronts are rare and found only in the larger towns and cities. They were traditionally used for a pub/grocery business and often rivalled the banks with their splendid palazzo facades with the living quarters over the shops. They either have stone lintels or round headed arches decorated with flat panels or floral motifs. Mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century examples often have exotic carved foliage, animals and marble columns. These facades require little or no maintenance and must rank with the best examples of architecture in a town.

## 6.5 Advertising and Signs

1. Shop-front advertisements normally should be restricted to fascia signs placed immediately above the shop window. Signs which extend higher than the sill of first floor windows will not be acceptable.
2. Hanging signs can have a place in the traditional streetscape; however, they should not be mounted higher than first floor windows. There should be normally not more than one hanging sign to each property frontage, and the bracket should not extend more than 80cm from the wall face and the lowest part of the sign a minimum of 2.2m above pavement level.

3. In the case of properties with multiple tenancies, the ground floor shop may have a fascia sign and one additional projecting sign may be permitted to the first floor premises. All additional tenants should be served by a plaque located at the front door.
4. Where there is insufficient fascia space decorative lettering can be painted directly onto the display window, provided it is of an appropriate form.
5. Illuminated fascias and projecting signs require consent and will normally be allowed only where it is demonstrated that the premises relies significantly on trading after dark all year round - such as restaurants and pubs. Back lighted signs and internally illuminated plastic box signs are not considered appropriate in the ACA.

*Note: Murals require planning permission and applications for wall painted advertising will be assessed against the visual impact on the character of the area, particularly in the ACA.*

## 6.6 Public Utilities and Street Furniture

It is the aim of the Council to improve the pedestrian environment in Nenagh. To this end the Council will encourage the removal of incongruous items of street furniture, including poles, public signage, sandwich board lottery stands or other items which add to the visual clutter and detract from the streetscape and pedestrian safety.

Careful consideration will be given to the siting of new dustbins, street lighting, seating and bollards, particularly in spaces dominated by pedestrian movement.

The Council intends to remove cables and poles that are unsightly and to underground services in the centre.

The Council will pay particular attention to the nature and quality of materials used for pavements, streets, roads and car parks. Large expanses of tarmac are to be avoided, as are inappropriate colour brick and cobblelock in sensitive areas. The Council intends to continue with the pavement improvements within the ACA as funds allow.

## 7.0 Opportunities for Conservation Area Enhancement

1. Encourage the redevelopment and reuse of derelict, vacant and under-utilised properties within the ACA.
2. Promote the use of plaster render and mouldings on new development to ensure harmony with existing historic properties.
3. Encourage the preservation of all remaining traditional shopfronts, decorative plasterwork, sash windows and Victorian doors. Where any such elements have been removed, the Councils will encourage reinstatement.
4. Improve the pedestrian environment throughout town.
5. Seek the removal of unauthorised advertising, signs and pavement furniture.

6. Promote the provision of visually aesthetic street lighting based on classical designs.
7. Review all signage in the ACA to reduce visual clutter.
8. Encourage the provision of finger post signs harmonious with the historic buildings to convey the town's heritage status.
9. Ensure the provision of co-ordinated signage, bollards, litterbins and seating to reflect the historic character of the town.
10. Encourage the provision of planters and trees to yield colour and continuity to the heritage streetscape.