



Design Report

For

Proposed Development of 21no. Social Housing units including the Refurbishment & Re-use of 4no. Existing Buildings & Associated Site Works

at

Old Barrack Road, Bantry



**Rialtas
na hÉireann**
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
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0.0 Introduction

The following report relates to an application to seek Part 8 approval for 21no. social housing units including the refurbishment and re-use of 4no. existing buildings and associated site works at Old Barrack Road, Bantry. The 21 units consist of 16 new build units with the remaining 5 units located in the existing refurbished buildings. This report has been prepared and compiled by Cork County Council's Architects Housing Directorate.

1.0 Site

1.1 Site Context

Bantry is known for its sloping hills down to Bantry Bay creating a unique townscape of varying levels and streets. The town centre is a dense series of undulating streets. The subject site is typical of that found in Bantry town centre set on a sloping laneway with varying falls across the site. The site is located on Old Barrack Road, 200m east of Wolfe Tone Square at the junction of Marino St., Barrack St & Old Barrack Road. The lower town end of Old Barrack Rd. merges into Marino St. and from there leads directly to the Wolfe Tone square and beyond to Bantry Bay. The lower section of the site fronts onto the busy N71 junction that is formed by Marino St., Barrack St. and Glengarrif Road.

The overall site is triangular in form with a substantial level change across the length of the site of approx. 10m. The site also falls in its cross section, varying from 9m on the town side to 1m at the top of Old Barrack Road. In the immediate vicinity of this town centre site there is a variety of established uses which include residential, retail, commercial and office uses. Buildings in proximity of this site range from two storey to three storeys in height.

There are a series of existing derelict buildings on the site, comprising a mixture of commercial and residential units. All buildings are in poor repair and are currently unoccupied. The 4 existing buildings in the south-western corner of the site fall within Barrack Street Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

SITE CONTEXT

01. Looking north-east up Old Barrack Road, existing two-storey residential units to right of image.
02. Looking north from Barrack Street. Gable fronted unit as well as adjacent unit to the right all fall within Architectural Conservation Area.
03. Junction between Old Barrack Road and Glengarriff Road.
04. View towards site traveling east from town square.
05. Existing parking area and store under private ownership and used by adjacent furniture shop.
06. Western boundary of site showing existing large retaining wall.
07. View from highpoint within site towards southern hills.
08. Apex of site triangle, the line of the old railway used to cross the road at this point and evidence of same is still visible.



Fig 1. Site context images

1.2 Site Capacity

The overall development site measures 0.28 Hectares. The provision of 21 units on the site provides a density of 74 dwellings per hectare which is in keeping with the *County Development Plan 2022* and the *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)*.

1.3 Local Housing Need

There are 358 approved applicants for social housing in Bantry. This breaks down as follows:

Bantry - Total - 358

- 1 Bed – 112
- 2 Bed – 187
- 3 Bed – 46
- 4 Bed – 5

Specially adapted – 8

The need for 1 and 2 bed units is particularly high in Bantry. The proposed development of 21 units consists of 14 no. 1 Bed Units and 7 no. 2 Bed Units. The 21 units are made of 17 apartment units and 4 townhouses. The 4 existing buildings in the Barrack Street Architectural Conservation

Area are proposed to be refurbished to accommodate 5 of the 21 units. Please refer to the Part 8 drawings for further information.

1.4 Strategic Site Location and Description

Bantry, which is the second largest town in the West Cork Municipal District area; with a current population of 2,657. It is located 80km west of Cork City, 64km west of Clonakilty and 32km from Skibbereen. It provides commercial, retail and tourism/leisure facilities for an extensive coastal and inland catchment area. It is an important holiday and tourist centre for the scenic and coastal area that surrounds it. The N71 National Route passes through the town, and past the subject site.

Given its close proximity to educational and recreational facilities the development site offers an appropriate location for social housing and would contribute to the creation of sustainable mixed communities, in accordance with national and local statutory planning policy.

Within 400m YELLOW circle (5 minutes' walk):

1. Bantry Harbour & Bay
2. Bantry Town Square
3. Bantry Town Council offices
4. Bantry Garda station
5. Main St.
6. St Finbarr's Catholic Church

Within 800m RED circle (10 minutes' walk):

07. Bantry Hospital
08. Nua Medical Practice
09. Newtown Medical Centre
10. St Finbarr's Boys National School



Fig 2. Subject site outlined in red, together with adjacent facilities within 400 meters of the site.

1.5 Services

There is an existing water main running along Old Barrack Road on the eastern boundary of the site, serving the residents on the southern side of the road. The intention is to connect into the main and branch into the proposed site. A confirmation of feasibility has been received from Uisce Eireann.

There is an existing Gravity Foul line running along Old Barrack Road on the southern boundary of the site connecting into a gravity combined line at the end of Old Barrack Road.

Please refer to the attached services drawings and engineering reports for further information regarding services.

2.0 Planning Policy

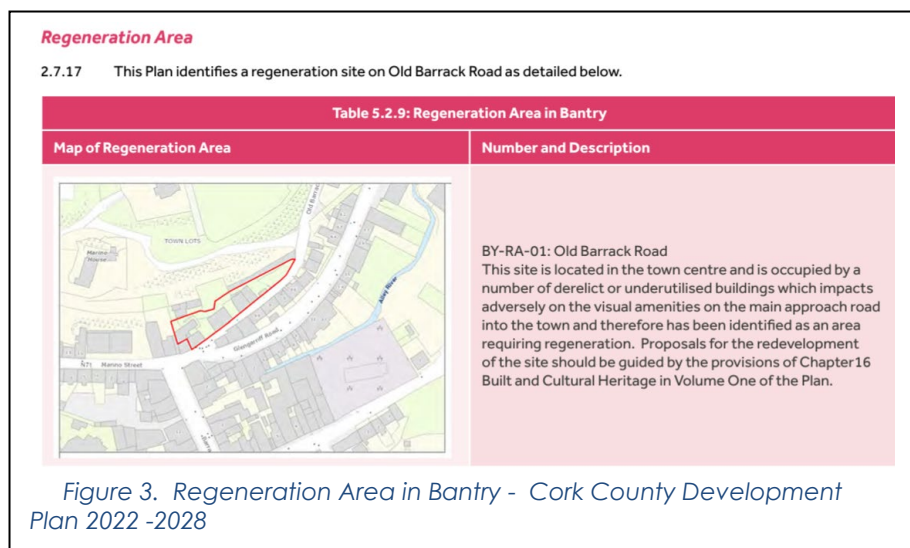
2.1 Development Plan

The overall development site measures 0.28 Hectares. The provision of 21 units on the site provides a density of 74 dwellings per hectare. The subject site is zoned ‘town centre’. The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 does not set a restriction on the maximum density for sites zoned ‘town centre’ subject to site design and normal proper planning and sustainable considerations, including built heritage policies. The proposed density is in keeping with the *County Development Plan 2022 and Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)*.

It is an objective of the County Development Plan to plan for development to enable Bantry to achieve its target population of 3,662, as set out in the objective BT-GO-01. The proposed site is also zoned as a Regeneration Area within the objective area BY-RA-01.

BY-RA-01: Old Barrack Road *This site is located in the town centre and is occupied by a number of derelict or underutilised buildings which impacts adversely on the visual amenities on the main approach road into the town and therefore has been identified as an area requiring regeneration. Proposals for the redevelopment of the site should be guided by the provisions of Chapter 16 Built and Cultural Heritage in Volume One of the Plan.*

This proposal would be supportive of these aims in that any additional housing within the town centre in such proximity to the main streets and square will help to build on a sense of community, support retail and contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of town public realm.



2.2 Access and Roads

The primary infrastructural constraint is the road and footpath network in the area where four roads converge, the N71, Marino Street, Old Barrack Road and Barrack Street. The footpaths onto this junction vary between 400-800mm and are particularly dangerous. The proposal responds to this constraint in terms of the proposed pedestrian links through the site. Please refer to the Design Statement below and the proposed drawings for further information.

It is proposed to provide a new shared surface to Old Barrack Road given the existing narrow width and absence of dedicated pedestrian footpath. This shared surface is designed to give pedestrian prioritisation over traffic in line with DMURs 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' (DMURs) section 4.3.4:

'Shared surface streets and junctions are integrated spaces where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles share the main carriageway. This may include streets where the entire street reserve is shared or where designated sections may provide for pedestrians and/or cyclists use only with a shared surface carriageway along part of the street.'

'Shared surface streets and junctions are particularly effective at calming traffic. Research has found that shared carriageways perform well in terms of safety and there is also evidence to suggest that well designed schemes in appropriate settings can bring benefits in terms of visual amenity, economic performance and perceptions of personal safety.'

The proposed shared surface uses a transition zone/gateway from the N71 road to the shared surface to highlight to users that they are entering a shared surface.



Figure 4. Example of shared surface at New Road Brighton

2.3 Car/Bike Parking

The County Development Plan describes that the car parking requirements for new developments do not apply to development located in Town Centres as identified in this plan where the development involves the re-use / refurbishment of an existing occupied or vacant building, any change of use or where small-scale infill developments (including residential) are proposed. Due to nature of the unity typology; being predominantly 1 and 2 bed apartment units in close proximity of the town centre, it is proposed to provide a designated universal access car space at the top of Old Barrack Road. This approach is also in line with the recently published *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024)*.

Bicycle parking is provided for throughout the scheme. Where possible space is allocated for bikes within the curtilage of the individual dwellings. The remaining bicycle storage is provided for at the top of Old Barrack Road adjacent to the designated universal access car parking space.

3.0 Environmental & Heritage Considerations

3.1 Environmental Parameters

The proposed site does not lie within a Special Area of Conservation or any Special Protected Areas as can be seen on the map below from Natura Impact Report that forms part of Cork County Development Plan 2021 (Vol.6 pg.1394). It does not pose a significant effect on any European Sites associated with the development. An Appropriate Assessment Screening and Determination have been completed and forms part of this application.

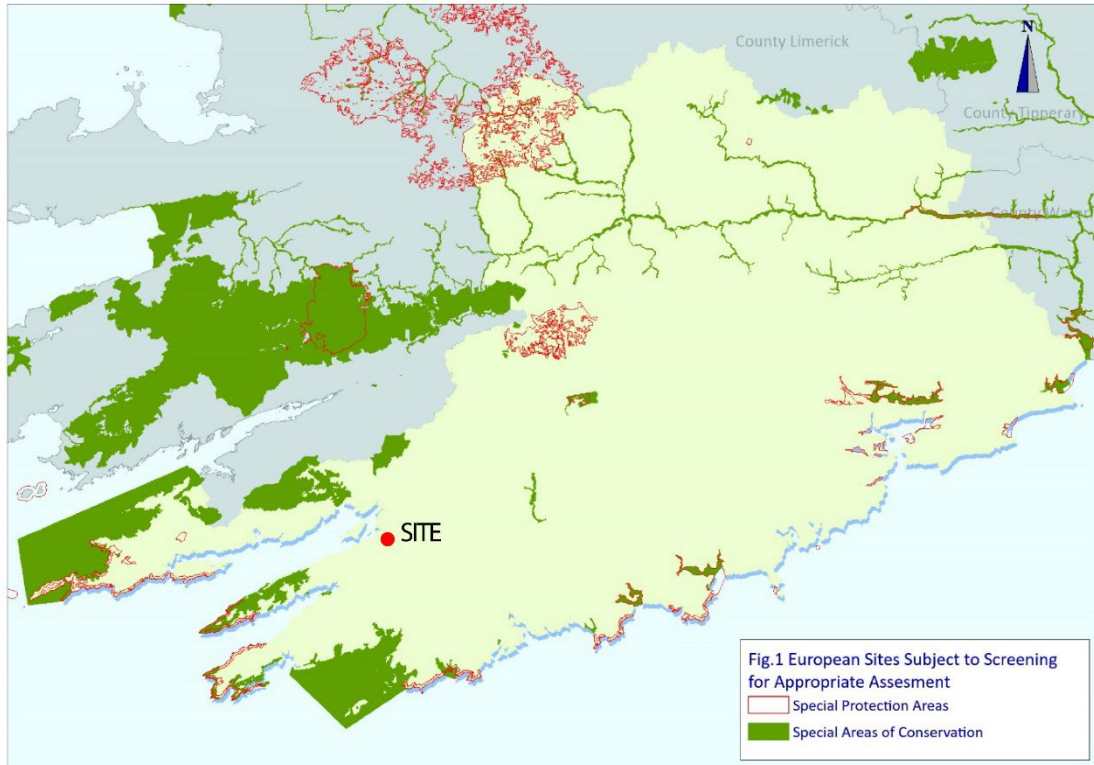


Figure 5. Cork County Development Plan. Natura Impact Report - EU Sites in Co. Cork and Within 15km of Co. Cork showing SAC and SPA screening zones.

As per Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) an Preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report has been prepared and this Preliminary EIA Screening Report has concluded that the proposed development does not fall under any of the thresholds in Schedule 5 Part 1 for mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment and it does not or even meet the threshold regarding 'Infrastructure Projects – Urban Development' as the development occupies 0.28ha and involves the development of only 21 residential units. The Screening Report concludes that an Environmental Impact Assessment will not be necessary for this proposed development.

3.2 Architectural Heritage

The subject site does not contain any protected structures or recorded monuments as recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage: Buildings of Ireland.

The existing 4No. derelict buildings that form the corner of the junction of Marino St and Barrack St. on the south-western corner of the site (Phase 2) fall within the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) - Barrack Street Conservation Area.

CCC have appointed Gareth O’Callaghan (Jack Coughlan Architects) to carry out a conservation report on the 4 buildings in the ACA which forms part of this application. This report informs the conservation approach to retain these corner buildings which form a critical bookend to the Barrack Street ACA streetscape. Please refer the Conservation Report accompanying this application for further information.

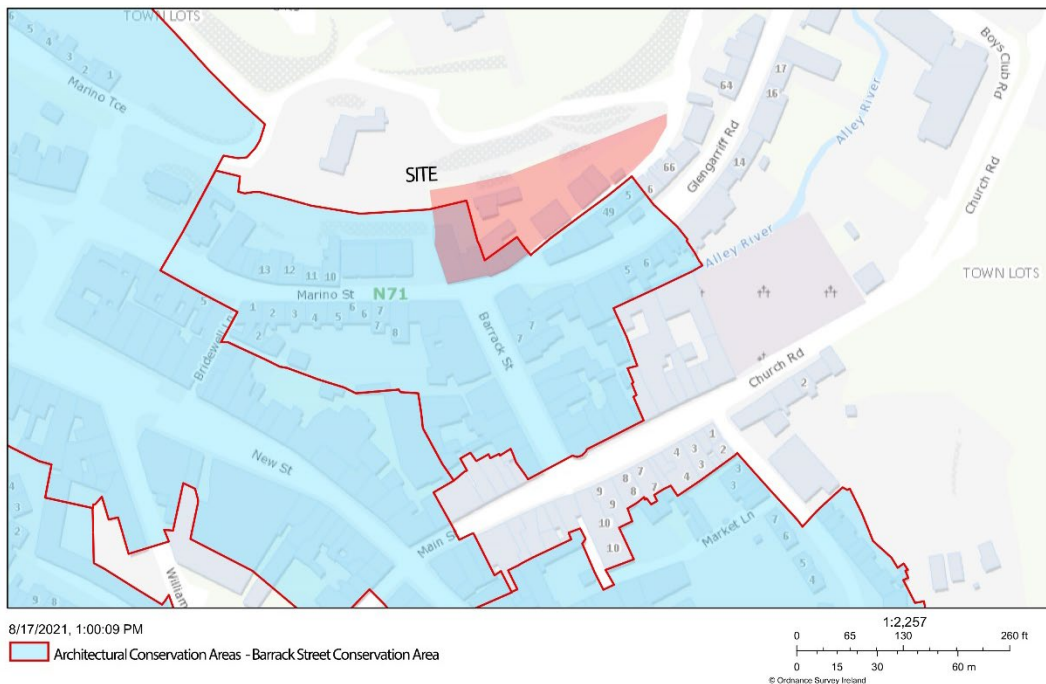


Figure 6. Development Plan 2022 Map Viewer. Showing Architectural Conservation Areas - Barrack Street Conservation Area.

ACA BUILDINGS

01. Two-storey derelict building. The ground floor use was previously commercial with the first floor being used as a store. A later extension is present to the rear and it is proposed to be demolished to reinstate the building to its original form.

02. Three-storey derelict building. Commercial use on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors. A couple of lean to extensions to the rear are proposed to be demolished.

03. Two-storey derelict building. The ground floor use was previously commercial with the first floor being used as a residential. A rear extension / shed is to be removed to reinstate the building back to its original form.

04. Two-storey derelict building formally a butcher shop. Multiple outbuildings to be demolished to the rear.

Internal Pictures

01. Inside the ground floor of building no.01 looking out through the original shop front down Barrack Street.

02. Inside the ground floor of building no.02 looking out through the original shop front down Barrack Street.



Figure 7. Diagram and images of ACA buildings

3.3 Flooding

The proposed location of the housing units is outside the Low, Medium and High risk coastal flood zones. Flooding events have occurred in Bantry town previously, but no past flood events have been recorded on the subject site as recorded on the Floodinfo.ie website.



Figure 8. OPW Coastal Flood Extents – Present Day Maps.

3.4 Invasive Species

An Invasive Species Specialist Survey Report has been carried out on the site and is included in the Part 8 documentation. This report has identified the presence of 2no. ‘Schedule 3’ species under EU regulations, namely Japanese Knotweed and Giant Rhubarb. A chemical treatment plan is in place to treat these species as set out in the report.

3.5 Bat Survey

Cork County Council appointed Karen Banks, Greenleaf Ecology, to undertake a bat survey on the subject site. This survey identified the presence of bats in one of the existing buildings which is being retained. The report sets out the mitigation measures required to address the presence of the bats. Cork County Council have liaised closely with the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) and Karen Banks in relation to these findings and will continue to liaise and implement the recommendations of the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) as the project progresses.

4.0 Design Statement

The project proposal responds to the site constraints to create a high quality urban infill development with a particular focus on placemaking and public interface. One of the key constraints is the existing topography on the site. The site can be broken into two tiers, an upper tier which follows the level of the old railway platform, and a lower tier which follows the level of Marino street and Old Barrack Road.

The change in level between these two tiers varies from 1m to 9m across the site and is typically retained by old battered stone walls. The historic OSI maps show the presence of two terraces of buildings on both the upper and lower tiers. The design proposal is informed by these historic footprints, where the proposed units follow a similar east-west arrangement. The upper terrace follows the line of the old railway platform curving gently from east to west along the upper tier.

The proposed lower street is defined by the historic road network where the existing buildings are refurbished, and the vacant plots in between are infilled with housing units as was the case historically.

There is no direct connection between the two levels on the existing site. The proposal introduces a new direct pedestrian connection through the centre of the site to the town centre. This forms a new landscaped public open space between both terraces free of cars. This connection gives a safe alternative route to Old Barrack Road which, by its historic nature, is quite narrow.

The central space provides for public open space and landscaping including wildflower meadows, native planting and new trees while providing opportunities for seating, community engagement and a safe place for people to enjoy.

The existing stone retaining walls running east west through the site are incorporated into this public realm creating a sense of place in keeping with the heritage of the site.

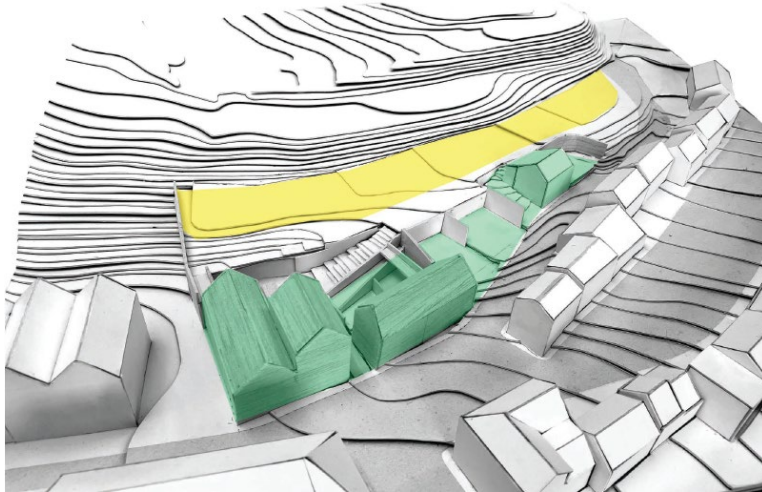


Figure 9. Diagram and Model showing the two tiers across the site

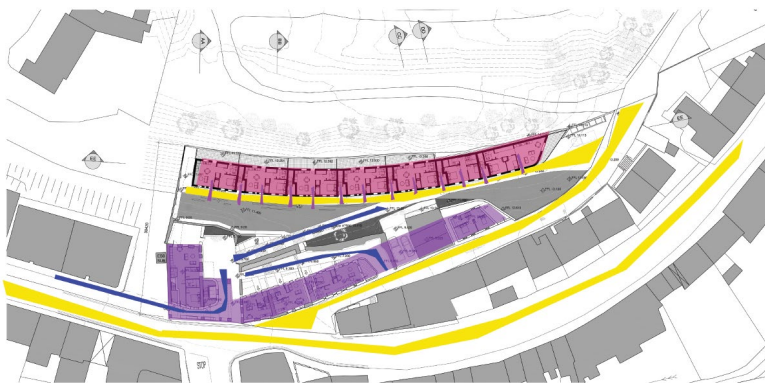


Figure 10. Proposed connections through the site

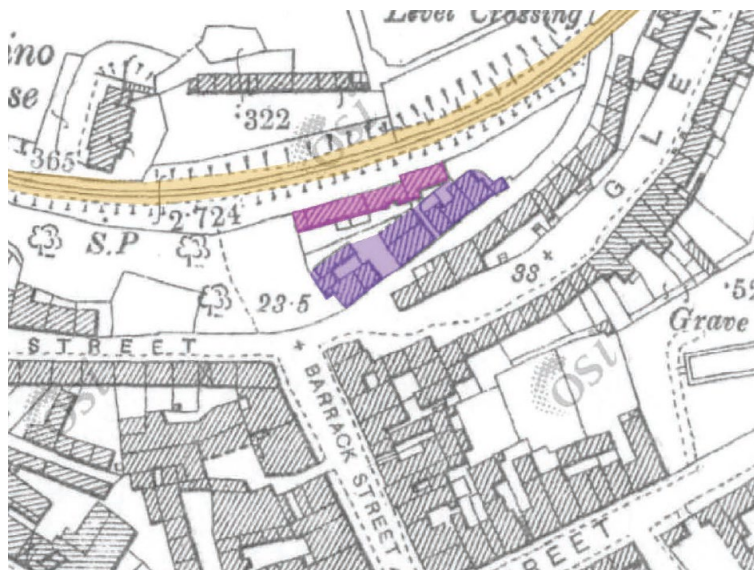


Figure 11. Original OSI map highlighting the upper and lower terraces and the train line.

Another key constraint is the interface between the existing buildings in the Architectural Conservation Area and the N71 (National Road). This is a very busy junction where Old Barrack Road meets Marino Street, the N71 and Barrack Street. Gareth O’Callaghan (JCA Architects) has prepared a Conservation Report on these existing buildings highlighting their significance to the streetscape and critical bookend to Barrack Street. The footpath to the front of these buildings is particularly narrow ranging from 400-800mm in width. The narrow footpath combined with the four roads and poor visibility from each road makes this junction particularly challenging from a pedestrian safety point of view. The proposal responds to this challenge by creating a new safe pedestrian connection behind the line of the derelict shop fronts of the two corner buildings.

The building at street level evolves to form a loggia giving safe access from the town centre to the proposed development behind. The new street level treatment of these buildings is informed by the original warehouse proportions as seen in the historical Robert French photo.

The original laneway between the ACA buildings is re-opened bringing light into this under-croft space. The ACA buildings form a type of gateway to the development creating a sense of arrival from the town centre. The ACA buildings themselves will be refurbished to provide dwellings above and behind the loggia. All the units fronting onto this busy junction can be accessed from this new pedestrian route.

The rear terrace is informed directly by the old railway platform and the railway buildings that use to occupy this tier. The curved nature of the terrace picks up on the old railway line with a compact terrace of units defining the new pedestrian corridor. The narrow block and monopitch roof picks up on the old railway buildings which can be seen in Robert French’s photos from 1865. The materiality of this new element is intended to be simple and robust picking up on the local context using dash render finish. The scale and make up of the façade is directly informed by Marino Street which contains a number of protected residential buildings. The proportions of the windows, continuous eaves line, panelled doors and vertical emphasis are all informed by Marino Street. Each unit in this terrace has own door access and each unit has a private amenity in the form of balconies or patios accessed off living spaces. The punctuation of the balconies combined with the sweeping nature of the terrace give the terrace a distinct character while remaining sensitive to the local context. The proposal embraces a modern expression of the Irish terrace in

the rear block while respecting and enhancing local distinctiveness and heritage in the lower section of development.

The overall scheme sets about rejuvenating this derelict town block through sensitive conservation and placemaking. The proposal includes new and existing elements and connects them through landscaping and public realm creating a sense of place directly informed by the history and story of the site. This will provide much needed town centre housing while also improving the quality of the streets, footpaths, public realm and character of the town centre itself.



Figure 1 View of Internal Courtyard Looking North East



Figure 2 View of Communal Open Space

5.0 Conclusion

The development of this challenging site presents huge opportunity for Bantry town centre. The proposed development will regenerate this derelict, under-utilised town block creating a new street front in the town centre and will foster new usage patterns and help create positive social interaction. The height, scale and massing of development in particular responds positively to enhance the established pattern of development in Bantry town and creates opportunities for new linkages.

The development of this site is critical to meet the ever-increasing housing needs of this West Cork town on Council owned lands. The proposed development is consistent with the policies and objectives of Cork County Council Development Plan 2022 and other relevant statutory documents. There is adequate service infrastructure in the area to accommodate the development proposal including water and transport infrastructure. The subject site's proximity to education, commercial and recreational facilities and it's position relative to Bantry town centre offers an appropriate location for housing. The proposed development of the site, accommodating 21 dwellings, will assist in meeting the need for social housing accommodation and to facilitate a broader objective of enhancing place making on this vacant infill site.

6.0 Appendices – Diagrams, Studies, Models & 3D Visualization

BARRACK STREET ACA

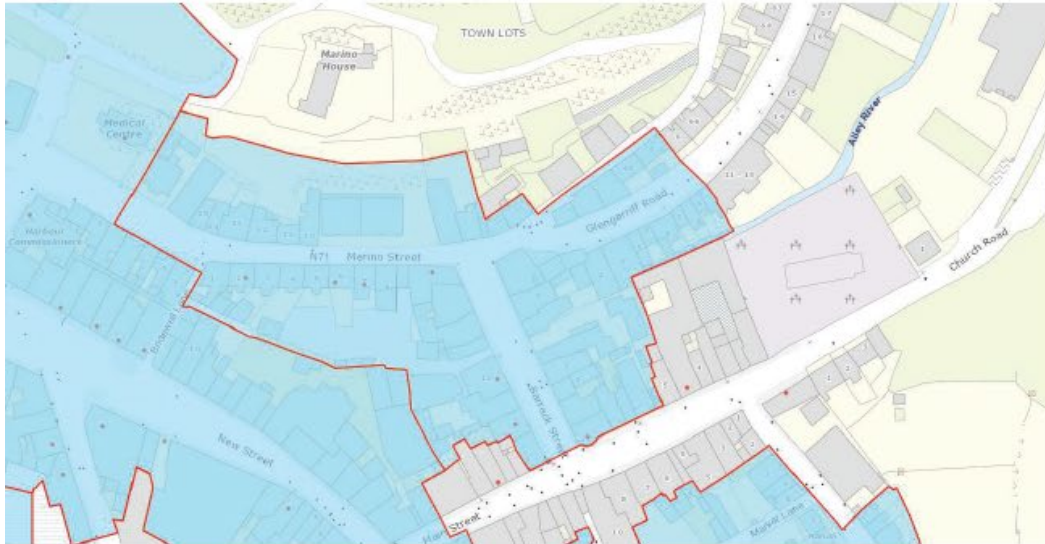


Figure 6 - Griffith Valuation Survey Map c. 1851-3 with buildings highlighted.



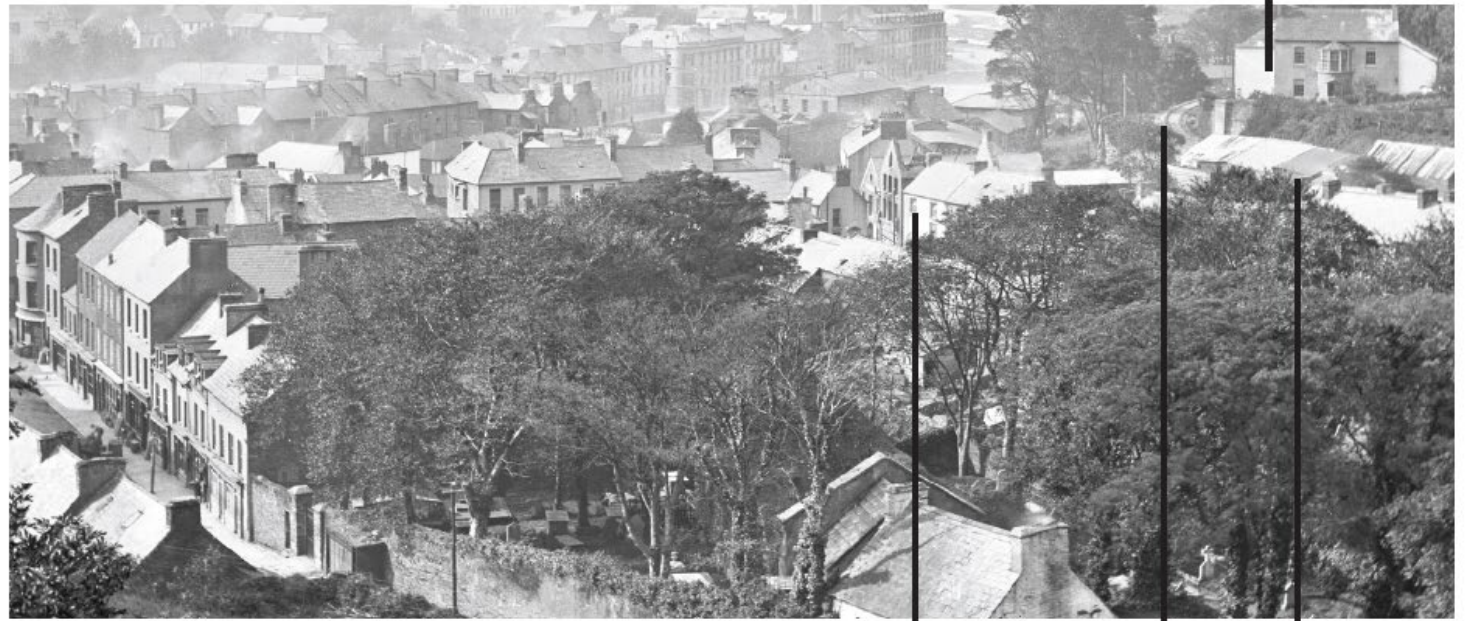
Figure 10 - Extract of 1897 OS Map of Bantry Town.



Figure 11 - Extract from c.1937 OS Map of Bantry Town

HISTORICAL IMAGE

Robert French, NLI, (c1865 - 1914)



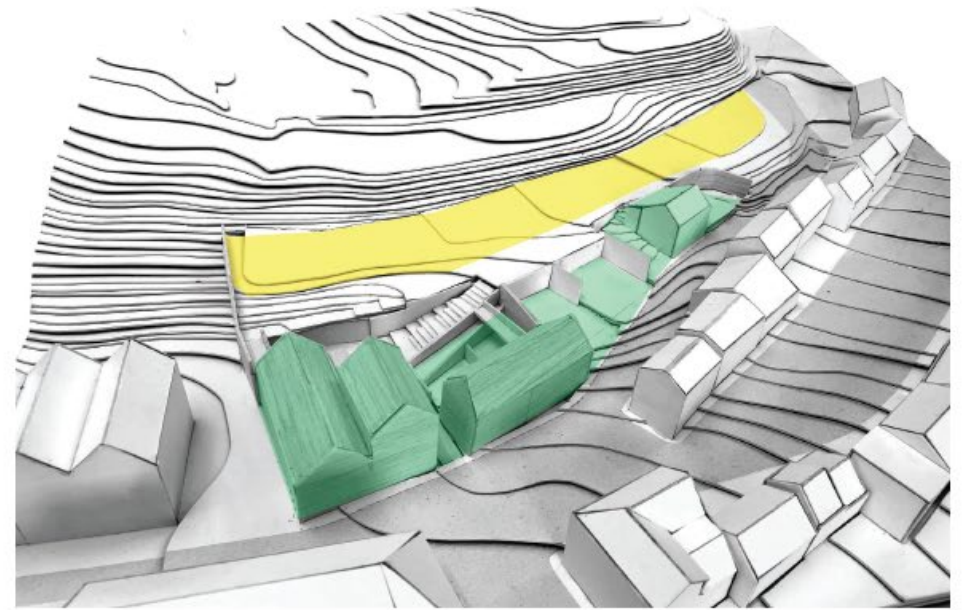
4no. buildings with the ACA

Railway line

Buildings along the railway line



SITE ANALYSIS - Tiers 1 & 2



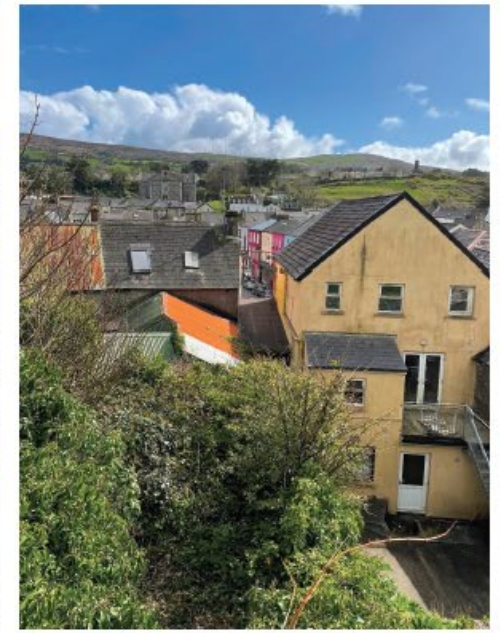
01. Diagram highlighting existing site levels highlighting 2 tiers with approx 4-5m change in level. Note upper yellow section is gently sloping as it formed part of the old railway platform.



View of gently sloping area to rear of site



View of change in level between upper and lower



View from rear of site across Bantry

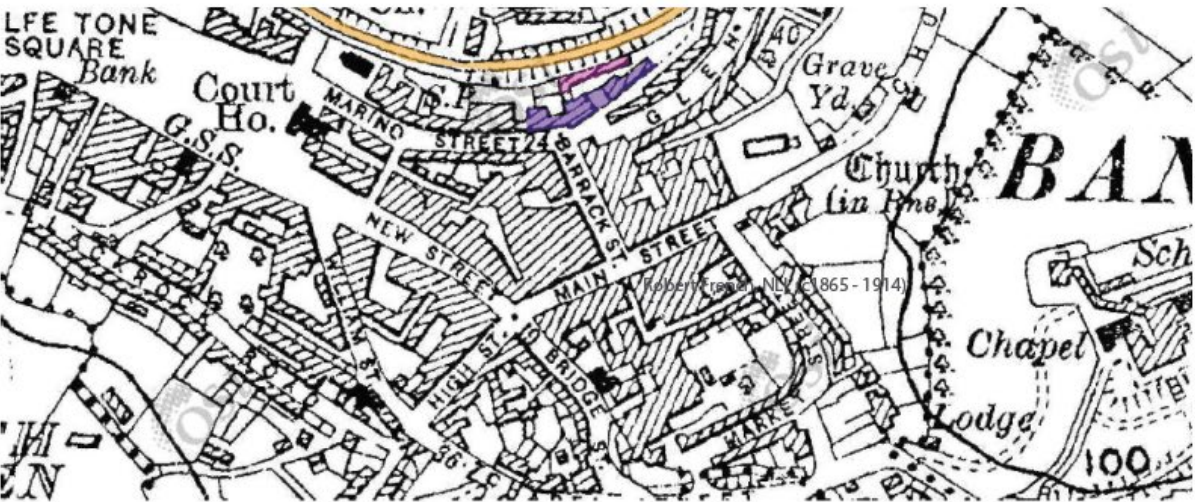


SITE ANALYSIS



OS 1900

OSI 1900 note upper and lower terraces and railway infrastructure



OS 1943 note upper and lower terraces and railway infrastructure



MATERIALITY, REFERENCES, ELVATIONS



3D IMAGES



Aerial View looking west



Aerial View looking east

3D IMAGE



Aerial View looking east

3D IMAGE



View from the central landscaped area looking west

3D IMAGE



View from the central landscaped area looking east

3D IMAGE



View from Barrack Street/Marino Street Junction toward Old Barrack Road