

# Guidelines for the Management and Development of Architectural Conservation Areas



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## Introduction

County Cork has an exceptional tradition of vibrant country towns and villages with unique architectural qualities and an outstanding number of demesne landscapes. The people of Co. Cork take great pride in this distinctiveness and variety. The designation of a large number of architectural conservation areas (ACAs) in the County Council and its Town Council areas reflect the size and diversity of the county. These include village cores, areas within towns and designed landscapes.

The County Council and its Town Councils have long been aware of the need to balance heritage protection and economic development through sustainable development. The Councils have been to the forefront of heritage-led regeneration and urban renewal projects where the potential value of the heritage assets of an area have been understood and used to initiate strategic development. This has led to environmental improvements and to the renewal of urban commercial and business life.

The purpose of these guidelines is to promote the unique character of architectural conservation areas and to establish an understanding of what constitutes that special character and to provide guidance to building owners, prospective developers and others in relation to development within these areas.

## What is an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)?

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000-2010, a planning authority must include an objective in its development plan to preserve the character of a place, area, group of structures or townscape if it is of the opinion that its inclusion is necessary for the preservation of the character of that area. Such an area is known as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and it is defined as a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures.



## Reasons for Designating an ACA

An ACA is designated in recognition of the special character of an area where individual elements such as building heights, building lines, roof lines, materials, construction systems, designed landscapes, public spaces and architectural features combine to give a place a harmonious, distinctive and special quality which merits protection.

Protecting the special character of such areas is important as this serves to reinforce the identity of local towns and villages, recognises our cultural and architectural heritage and contributes to the attractiveness of these areas as places in which to live and work. From an economic perspective, Ireland's heritage is a key element of the tourism experience. It draws visitors here and is a significant part of what they enjoy once they are here. This is particularly true for Cork where the network of towns and villages acts as an attraction for visitors who are seeking a genuine heritage experience.

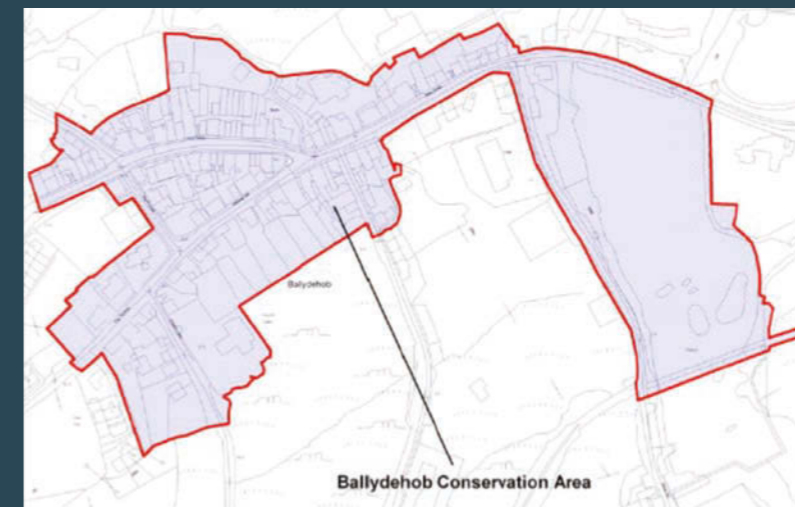
In acknowledging the architectural and historic significance of our towns and villages throughout the county by designating Architectural Conservation Areas, the primary aim is to provide for change while protecting character. In this way it is accepted that Architectural Conservation Areas are not open-air museums but living communities that will inevitably continue to develop and change.

The aim of the planning process in managing development within ACAs is therefore to focus on ensuring that future development is carried out in a manner sympathetic to the special character of that area. This is achieved by giving particular consideration to the impact of proposed development on the character of the ACA, in order to achieve a balance between the need for change and the objective of retaining the special qualities for which the area was designated.

## Architectural Conservation Areas in Cork County

Cork County Council and its Town Councils have designated over fifty Architectural Conservation Areas. These include designed landscapes, such as Glenville Park, Castlemartyr and Castlebernard Estates, urban cores such as Cobh, Clonakilty and Fermoy towns, and village centres such as Killeagh, Castletownsend and Castletownroche.

The character of these areas has been moulded by progressive development over time, with each made up of a variety of built, natural, economic, social, religious and archaeological elements.



The designated ACAs in Cork County are listed individually within the county development plan or town plans, while the boundaries of each area are identified in a separate map section. Objectives for the preservation of the character of these areas are included in the main text section of the relevant plan.

Above: Cork County Development Plan, 2009-2015, map indicating the designation of an architectural conservation area and its boundaries.

The physical character of an architectural conservation area (ACA) is determined by a combination of events in the history of a settlement and its natural setting. Several historic layers make up the character of a settlement. Elements of the different layers may be seen in monuments such as town walls, abbeys or castles; the layout of a town and form of its principle streets or its predominant building type. Some of the oldest towns contain traces of Early Christian settlement and while trade initiated during the Medieval period led to the creation of many fortified walled towns, it was the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that witnessed the shaping of many of our settlements as we know them today.

**Facing page:** Medieval town walls of Youghal built around Anglo-Norman town established early 13th century.

**Right:** First edition of 6" Ordnance Survey Map (1841), showing the relationship of Castlemartyr village (top right) to Castlemartyr House and Demesne.

**Far Right:** Detail of the Valuations Office Map (c.1900) showing a variety of building types in the village of Castlelyons.



### Significant Elements of Architectural Conservation Areas.

The special character of an architectural conservation area is made up of its architectural features, its setting, its spatial qualities and its land-uses. The purpose of this section is to consider what constitutes the special character of an ACA by examining various qualities and physical features.

#### Architectural Features

The architectural features that make up the special character of an area are many and probably contribute to the strongest sense of place in an area. Such features include the building typology, design, roofscape, joinery, material finishes, decorative motifs and street furniture.



**Typology** - Building typology consists of the type and variety of buildings in an area and includes religious, institutional, administrative, commercial, residential, and industrial structures. In a hierarchy of building types, public buildings will tend to be of the highest quality design, material specification and often of the greatest scale. These types of buildings were designed with the objective of achieving landmark quality. While institutional, commercial and industrial buildings will tend to be of the largest scale, the predominant type of building in a town or village is the townhouse.



**This page:** Examples of building typologies found in County Cork.

**Facing page:** Typical townhouse with height proportionally greater than that of the width.

**Design** - The scale, massing and proportion of traditional buildings are relative and generally dictated by the urban environment in which they are located. In most towns and villages plot sizes were long and narrow. Structures were therefore built to the front of the street, with long narrow gardens and/or yards and outbuildings to the rear of the plot. This also led to houses, especially in urban locations, being tall but often quite narrow. This scale and massing is particularly obvious when the roofscape of a traditional street is considered; while it may not be contiguous, it is indicative of the relationship of buildings on the street.

Carpenters and builders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used pattern books with fixed proportional ratios when designing buildings and different types of doors, windows and mouldings. This may be seen in the relationship of height to width in buildings, and in window and door design whereby the height appears proportionally greater than the width.

**Material Finishes** - The palette of material finishes in an area contributes significantly to its character. The traditional finish of most buildings is a smooth plaster finish, usually in lime, painted and sometimes scored (also known as ruled and lined) to look like dressed stone. In this regard, dashed finishes tend to denote a mid- to late-20th century date and are not typical in the traditional streetscape.

In coastal areas painted finishes tended to be brighter than in more inland areas where an unpainted grey plaster finish was often the norm. Traditional paint colours were based on earth pigments mixed with minerals and lime washes, which gave a variety of muted pastel shades.

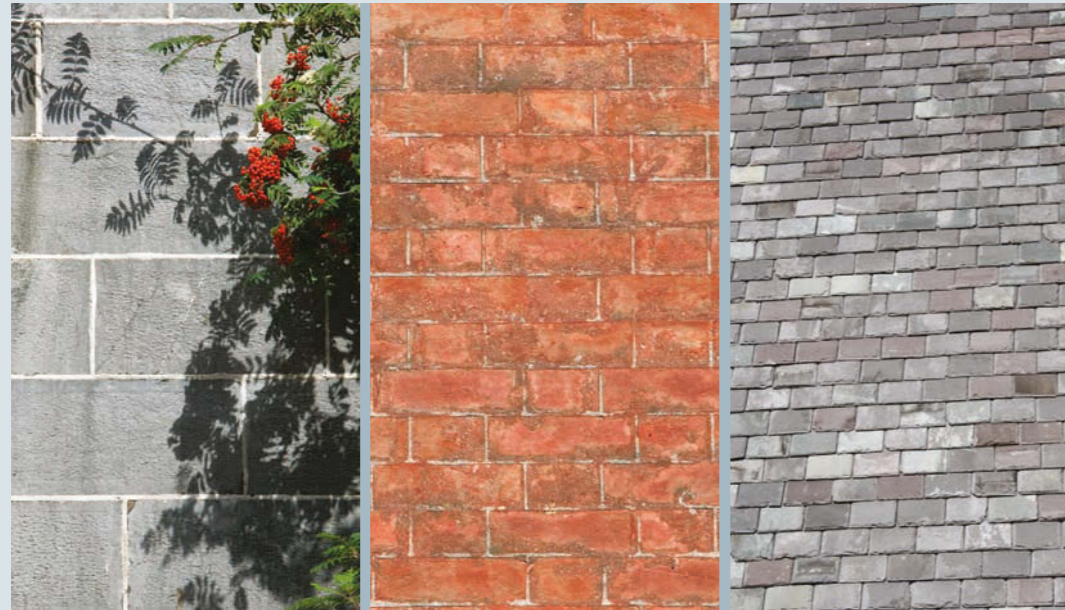
In parts of County Cork, weather-slating has been used traditionally since the 17th century. While not unique to Cork it appears to have been quite common especially in coastal areas and is a very distinctive feature adding texture and colour where it occurs locally. Brick and stone finishes add colour and texture to the patina of a street. Some buildings use a combination of both, with brick used to dress the wall and stone for edges such as sills, plinths, quoins, stringcourses and cornices.



The type of brick and stone used to face buildings would be specially finished to a uniform surface and was often moulded. It is noticeable that a complete stone finish tends to be reserved for landmark buildings and that the stone is usually of good quality, with a dressed finish and fine joints between stones.

Pointing in lime render is the characteristic material for bedding brick or stone finishes in traditional structures. It is a common misconception that rubble stone walls are more authentic than a lime plastered finish. This is in fact not correct, most buildings tended to have a plaster finish. The removal of a plaster finish, in order to expose the underlying stone can not only change the character of an area but can cause long term damage to the masonry.

**Top Row from left:**  
Examples of traditional finishes, Dressed Ashlar Stone, Pointed Brickwork and Weatherslating.



**Below left:**  
A mix of material finishes used at the Tholsel Kinsale, c. 1706, with weather slating on the 1st floor and brick and rough plaster on the ground floor.

**Below Right:**  
Traditional building with exposed rubble masonry. This type/quality of stonework would originally have had a lime plaster finish.



**Joinery** - In the design of a building, the treatment of joinery - windows, doors and shop fronts - forms another essential part of the character of an area. The relationship of solid to void, in terms of openings in the wall, is affected by classical and symmetrical proportions but so too are the different elements of joinery design.

**Windows** - Windows contribute to the symmetrical design and aesthetic appeal of most traditional buildings. Timber sliding sash windows are the most common window type, where sash windows can be divided into multiples of three such as three-over-three, six-over-three, six-over-six or nine-over-six, these windows tend to date typically to the 18th and 19th century windows. Some sash windows may also have elliptical or a camber-head to the top sash. Bowed and oriel windows are also a distinctive feature in County Cork.



Dormer windows tend to be a feature of 18th and 19th century buildings. True dormers will sit at a low point on the front ridge of the roof. The more common 19th century versions contain a two-over-two or plain sash window and are often surrounded by attractive ornamental barge boards. A variation on the dormer is the half-dormer, which rises out of the wall plate just below where it meets the roof. The design will be similar but the half-dormer may sometimes feature gutters running in front of them. Traditionally, roof lights tend to feature on the rear roof elevation. They were typically made of cast-iron with a single dividing bar and were usually flush with the roof.



**Above from left:**  
Oriel window projecting from first floor.

Six over Six timber sliding sash window.

One over One timber sliding sash window, set within a decorative plaster window surround.

**Left:** Traditional style dormer sitting low at the roofline.

**Right:** Conservation style roof light.





**Doors** - Panelled timber doors, located at the centre or to the side of a building are common to most traditional buildings. Light to the hall and stairwell behind the door was achieved by means of a fixed glazed unit, usually overhead. A fanlight is the semicircular version of this and the transom light is the rectangular version. The decorative joinery detail of these lights contributes to their aesthetic appeal.

As suburban terracing developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the upper section of many front doors was divided in two and glazed with coloured glass and sometimes leaded lights. Doors could also feature lateral fixed side lights giving a tripartite configuration to the door. The ironmongery of door hinges, other door furniture and door surrounds also add colour and texture to the character of an area. These features may include letterboxes, door knobs, boot-scrapers, porches, plaster or stone surrounds.

**Shop fronts** - The commerce and trade of County Cork may be seen in the significant number of original shop fronts in its towns and villages. People have become increasingly aware of the value of traditional shop fronts in attracting customers to do business and to come to an area. Many have been successfully renovated to accommodate new businesses. There have also been innovations in designing contemporary shop fronts, which take account of traditional scale and the relationship to the wider streetscape.

The design of the traditional shop front is again inspired by classical proportioning. Essentially, the glazed unit rests on a horizontal plinth, which may be made from stone or timber. The shop front is defined vertically on either side by a pilaster, which may accord with classical detailing such as fluting and capitals. The pilasters and a pair of brackets support the horizontal lintel that is the fascia, which contains the name of the business. The timber fascia is protected by a lead-dressed cornice, which projects over the whole. The shop front glazing may feature a door to the side or to the centre. The door is often recessed and the glazing may be divided by thin timber mullions.

The shop front will always be contained on the ground floor with a space between it and the first floor windows. A separate door to the upstairs accommodation or storage space may be contained within the shop front or separately to the side of the building. In this way, the shop front is very much an integral part of the design of a traditional building and an element that tends to dominate the streetscape. When considering shop front restoration or reproduction, this should relate to the overall design of a building as well as the streetscape as a whole.



**Facing page and above:** Traditional style doors with fanlight and historic ironmongery.

**Below from left:** Nineteenth and early twentieth century traditional shop of painted timber with traditional arrangement of vertical pilasters, fascia with end brackets containing the shop name and cornice overhead.

Detail of shop front showing the elaborately carved console bracket at end of fascias.



**Above:** The components of a shop front: **A** - Cornice, **B** - Fascia, **C** - Bracket, **D** - Pilaster, **E** - Mullion, **F** - Stallriser or plinth

**Roof Profile** - The roof profile and its treatment is a very important feature and immediately announces the extent of the survival of a traditional street and its building stock. The configuration of pitched roofs in a row, covered with traditional slate and punctuated by chimneys can also be a very attractive feature depending upon topography and vantage points. The continuity of roofscape (albeit not always contiguous) and the relative scale of new elements introduced to it are important but also easily maintained if understood.

Chimneys are usually plastered but can also be dressed with exposed brickwork. The position of a chimney stack on a roof usually indicates the position of fireplaces within a house. Traditional chimney pots are also an important feature completing the chimney stack.

Left: Roof profile within a historic settlement.

Right: An example of a brick finished chimney.

Below: Example of traditional rainwater goods with decorative hopper.

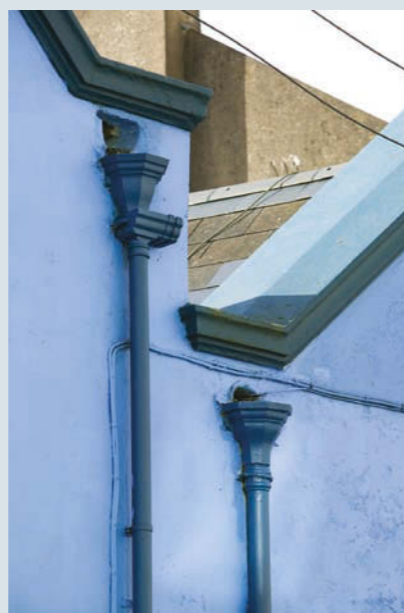
Facing page top: Example of traditional boundary treatments such as decorative cast or wrought iron railings.

Facing page below clockwise: Example of surviving historic water pump, examples of historic cobbles and limestone kerbing.



**Rainwater Goods** - Rainwater goods traditionally consisted of painted cast-iron. The horizontal gutter runs discretely at eaves level, is emptied into a hopper head and water is taken down a shoot at the side of the façade to drain at ground level. Rainwater goods perform a critical task in removing water from the building but are also designed to cause minimum intervention to the appearance of the elevations of the building.

**Decorative Details** - Decorative details of structures provides great aesthetic attraction in our buildings. Often these may include finishes that are used to highlight elements in a wall and are arguably both functional and decorative. These include the decorative use of brickwork on window and door surrounds or in chimneys; the use of contrasting stone or painted plaster to define stringcourses, sills, and quoins. In other instances, details may be highly ornamental and not strictly functional, e.g., decorative lead or ironwork at ridge level or on roof finials. Other examples such as ornamental plaster banding are purely decorative.



**Boundary Treatments** - Boundary treatments consist of those elements that separate a building from public open space or from secondary private space such as laneways to service yards. In terms of our experience of an area these are features that tend to engage our attention and add a further dimension to the texture and character of an area. Features include iron railings, boundary walls, timber or iron gates, stone spur stops (to prevent the wheels of horse-drawn carriages from scraping walls), and threshold steps at the front door of houses.



**Street Furniture and Paving** - Street furniture adds colour and interest to the streetscape. Items of street furniture include post-boxes, horse troughs, lamp standards, water pumps, fountains and benches, iron sign posts and telephone boxes. Date plaques with street or terrace names also contribute to the distinctiveness of an area. Historic paving may include cobble sets, flagstones or stone kerbing. The differentiation and definition of space may also be achieved through minor changes in surface treatments such as the use of paint colour and material finishes.



**Spatial Qualities** - Spatial qualities encompass those aspects of an area that we experience as a result of its natural setting and its built form. Walking down a street, or within a garden, this might include glimpses around corners and up lanes to rear views or to distant fields. It includes the orientation of an area, its principal route and the impact of light and shade. In a town with a medieval footprint this could be a meandering main street with narrow lanes running off of it, or in a planned 18th century town set out on a grid, this could involve a feeling of wide open spaces set out regularly with focal points and terminating vistas.



**Right and facing page:** Example of terminating vistas and formal open spaces within historic towns.

**Below:** Example of historic masonry wall. This construction type of vertical stones is very distinctive to West Cork.

Formal public open space such as village greens, town parks or squares contribute both to the social and physical character of an area, often providing a stage for which surrounding buildings and streets are the backdrop. Planting in open spaces, particularly of deciduous trees, adds seasonal colour and form to an area as well as a sense of well-being. It is important that between the different types of space – commercial, public open space and private, there are links and that they appear open and safe. Such links might include riverside walks, well-lit paving, or partially or fully pedestrianised laneways and streets.

**Setting & Land-use** - The natural landscape setting of an area is an integral part of its character. Natural attributes such as a harbour, fertile agricultural land or location along a navigable river, are in many cases the reason for the foundation of a settlement. Setting is also significant as an amenity value of an area whether adjacent to, or within, a settlement. These include woodland, quayside or riverside walks or the potential for outdoor pursuit activities. Where a settlement is associated with a country estate, this can often provide a fine natural and architectural setting. Perimeter-belt tree planting, the presence of stone boundary walls or planned features set against the skyline or raised ground within a designed landscape are the elements that contribute to the setting of an area.



To a large extent the land-use of an area and its hinterland will define its character. For example, grain produced in the surrounding countryside was processed in a mill and its associated buildings including the presence of a stream or river determined the siting of the mill. Equally, a quayside location was useful for shipping of raw materials or finished product. The variety of commercial, educational, institutional, service and industrial activity in an area contributes significantly to its character both in terms of building type and understanding its history.



This section deals with the redevelopment of existing elements and new development within architectural conservation areas. The different issues affecting both types of development are considered as well as potential solutions and mitigations.

At this point, it is useful to establish a set of guiding principles for conserving the special character of architectural conservation areas. The physical character of an area should be maintained by conserving its historic fabric and spaces. In this regard, it is understood that the ongoing use of any building is critical to its long-term conservation and equally the long-term sustainable development of an area is critical to its character.

An area retains its character by maintaining economic vibrancy, commercial and community activities. It is therefore, a core principle of the following guidance that balanced sustainable development should allow for the ongoing development of traditional centres while also maintaining essential character.

For those considering undertaking development within an ACA it would be greatly beneficial to have pre-planning discussions with the planning authority. Pre-planning discussions can be very helpful as a means of providing advice and guidance on the proposed development and the planning process generally.

**Facing page:** Example of historic laneway still in use allowing access to rear of properties.

**Left:** Example of a tall historic masonry chimney.

**Right:** Fine example of a red brick terrace, retaining its original features such as timber sash window, tall red brick chimney's, decorative window and door surrounds, cast iron rainwater goods and traditional roof covering.



## Elements to be Retained and Conserved

In a building the overall design, including its proportions, scale and material finishes should be maintained. The roof profile and its covering are critical to maintaining the overall design. Original features in the building such as timber sash windows, timber doors, rainwater goods, wall finishes and shop fronts should be conserved and/or made good where possible.



In such cases, proposals for restoration or reinstatement should be based upon historical records - photographs or illustrations where these are available. If a building is one of a terrace it may be possible to match design details, moulding profiles and colour for the elements proposed for conservation. Where there are no records for a building and it is not one of a terrace, it should be possible to design an appropriate replacement based upon an understanding of the period and design of the building. A number of publications deal with this type of information and are listed in the appendices. Such proposals can be discussed at pre-planning stage.

Boundary treatments of existing buildings such as iron railings and their stone plinths, boot-scrappers, hedging and tree planting should be maintained during development. In certain circumstances, it may not be possible to maintain elements in-situ during construction. In this case, elements may have to be moved off-site for safe storage. It is usually feasible to restore and/or make good features that have to be removed which can be reinstated subsequently.

However, where it is not possible to reinstate some elements in their original position, efforts should be made to have the feature re-used, ideally in another part of the development. All of these issues can be identified and discussed at pre-planning stage and proposals should focus on minimising the loss of character to the structure and/or area.

The function of laneways and other external openings should be maintained. In some cases, service buildings to the rear of a site may contribute to the overall character of an area, for instance where there is a group of uniformly constructed buildings with good finishes or in an historic industrial site, a service building may be an integral part of our understanding of the overall area.

**Right:** A good example of an unpainted traditional townhouse retaining its historic detailing and commercial shopfront.

**Facing page:** Air ventilation units and satellite dishes can detract from the rear views of buildings resulting in an untidy and cluttered space.

**Surface Treatments** - Surface treatments are the final covering given to buildings and may include paint colour, plaster and/or stone finish. Particular areas have developed distinctive local finishes over time. Surface treatments can have a very big impact on both the character of the building and cumulatively on the character of an area. Within the curtilage of a building or group of buildings, a variety of boundary and surface treatments may also serve to differentiate and enhance spaces.

The weathering coat for most traditional buildings is a lime plaster. Although perceived as plain by some, this is the historic, authentic and functional finish for most buildings. Some plastered buildings were never painted, giving a weathered grey look that is relieved by colour in the shop front, windows, doors and slates. However, the recent trend of exposing rubble stone walls that were never intended to be seen changes the character of a building and the street by implying an impression of age which is clearly not in keeping with the area. Pebbled-dash finishes are not typical for traditional pre-1920s buildings and should therefore be avoided on such buildings.



Paint colour can be effective in giving outward expression to moves towards regeneration and improvements in a town. Deciding on a group colour scheme has the advantage of integrating palettes and avoiding garish or stand-out hues. Bright neon-like colours should be avoided.

Where a franchise of a business chain is to redevelop an existing building it may be necessary to moderate normal branding for special buildings or highly sensitive areas. Otherwise, where a business has an established branding in its shop front or colour scheme, efforts should be made to vary external treatments so as to integrate more sympathetically and not detract from the character of the ACA.

**Change of Use** - A number of issues arise with change of use when existing buildings are being redeveloped in architectural conservation areas. A change of use from a single town house to apartments will generally have implications for the interior of a building with the need to comply with building regulations, in particular; fire safety. On the exterior of a building this may be manifest in escape stairs to the rear, or on the front, of a building. In the past, the case has been made for altering existing window openings or replacing historic windows to allow for escape. With adequate planning and consultation, every possible design alternative should be explored to mitigate the potential impact of such alterations and to avoid unnecessary negative impacts on the character of the building or the area within which the ACA is located.

A change of use in commercial activity is likely to affect an existing shop front. The existing shop front should be retained and readapted for a new user where possible. Where a shop front is not of architectural interest, there is an opportunity to improve this element. This may apply to shop fronts that are plastic or a poor reproduction of traditional examples. The servicing requirements of businesses should be accommodated discretely to the rear, including air conditioning units and expel-air units, however, the impact on rear views of such services should also be considered.



## The Introduction of New Elements

The redevelopment of existing buildings is very likely to involve the introduction of new elements. These include new extensions, shop fronts, signage and lighting, attic spaces, equal access and security.

**New Shop Fronts** - New shop fronts should respect the scale and proportion of the traditional formula. This is broadly a glazed unit with central or side opening and sign overhead. The shop front should take into consideration the scale and design of the existing streetscape and adjacent properties. Three approaches may be taken to shop front design. The first approach involves conservation of historic shop fronts, including the glazing, timber and lead, with minor alterations or interventions to change the business name or display. This will involve minimal loss of historic fabric.

The second approach involves the restoration or reproduction of an entire historic shop front. In the recent past, there has been a tendency to reproduce the traditional model off-site to a generic appearance. This type of shop front is visually distinguishable by its inaccuracy in terms of the understanding of traditional proportions and relationships between the various elements of a shop front. The individual elements (i.e fascia, pilasters, mullions, transoms, stall riser etc), of this type of shop front will generally appear 'over-sized' in relation to each other, the building itself and the streetscape as a whole. When shop fronts are reproduced in an appropriate manner and respecting the traditional principles of design and proportions, they can contribute significantly to the architectural conservation area, however, careful planning and thought is necessary to achieve this.

The third approach involves designing a contemporary shop front. This may be suitable where a historic shop front has previously been replaced inappropriately, or where a shop front is to be introduced to a building for the first time. It is imperative that contemporary shop fronts are of a high quality architectural design that respects traditional principles and incorporates the use of materials that are compatible with the existing built environment. Contemporary shop fronts, like other well-designed quality pieces of new build have the same potential to be an attractive feature in the streetscape and enhance the overall quality of an architectural conservation area.

**Left:** A traditional family butchers within a historic town centre where a contemporary shop fitting and front blends well with the existing streetscape and contributes to its special character.



**Right:** Example of surviving traditional shopfront.

**Below left:** A good example of a new hanging sign. (The size, design and material specifications of hanging signs should be given careful consideration so as not to detract or create a cluttered appearance to the streetscape. These should be placed ideally at fascia level or just above fascia level.)

**New Signage and Lighting** - Where new signage is required it should be minimal, discreet and complement the streetscape. Lighting should be sensitively located within the shop front. Neon or internally illuminated signage is not considered appropriate within an architectural conservation area. Multiple projecting lanterns or other lamps overhanging the fascia of a shop front should be avoided as they detract from the unity of the streetscape and produce a cluttered appearance.

**Below right:** Overhanging lighting detracts visually not only from the shopfront itself, but also creates a cluttered or untidy appearance in the streetscape. Lighting should be located discreetly within the shopfront. Signage should not be internally illuminated.



**Attic Spaces** - With change of uses, the conversion of attic spaces will often require additional lighting. The introduction of dormers, particularly of a large scale contemporary square profile, should be avoided to the front of the roof and only considered for the rear, if absolutely necessary. Conservation style roof lights within a dividing central bar are a preferable alternative to dormers and again more suited to the rear of a building.

**Equal Access** - The requirement to provide access to those with reduced mobility may necessitate the provision of a ramp or lift as well as the widening of existing door openings or the provision of new alternative entrances. Essential access should be provided by considering all design options available, on a case by case basis. Where alterations to existing openings/railings etc may need to be made, this should be discussed at pre-planning stage.



**Left:** Equal access provided by means of a ramped entrance which is functional, has preserved the historic wall fabric with minimal intervention and which does not detract from the character of the front of the building.

**Security** - For security reasons, it may be necessary to install shutters over shop fronts. Metal roller shutters hung from a large box housed over the fascia of the shop front detract considerably from the character of an area when businesses are closed and they also hide any architectural detailing at pedestrian level and prevent window shopping. Ideally, shutters should be hung internally and be perforated. Where a shop retains its own removable metal grill or timber-ledged shutters these are preferable. There may also be a requirement for security cameras and alarm systems to a commercial property. It is now possible to obtain small sized fittings for security cameras and alarms, which can be erected in a discreet location to the front of the building without being visually intrusive. Ideally all wiring should be internalised within the building or discreetly within the shop front, the routing of cables across the front of a building should always be avoided.



**Below from left:** Example of perforated shutters to shopfront.

Modern alarm units should be discreetly located and not near decorative stonework or fabric.

Once left derelict, historic structures can deteriorate quickly.

**Dereliction** - Dereliction can be a significant marker of the economic health of an area. Dereliction should be discouraged so as to avoid long-term conservation issues. Furthermore, it detracts from the overall appearance of an area and the efforts made by other owners and occupiers in maintaining their properties. In removing dereliction, all those features of a building that are integral to its design and the character of an area should where possible be retained and made good or where necessary matched on a like for like basis.

**Demolition** - Demolition of historic buildings within ACAs should be avoided, particularly where a building(s) forms part of the streetscape and contributes to the character of the area. The removal of a historic building either in whole or in part, may seriously detract from the character of an area. In certain circumstances, where it is agreed that a building does not contribute to the character of an area, for reasons of poor or undistinguished construction or design, the Planning Authority may consider the replacement of a building with a new structure. The new structure should be of a high architectural quality to contribute to and enhance the character of the area. While each case will be decided upon its own merits, it is generally preferable to redevelop the site of a demolished building rather than leave unsightly vacant plots, which discontinue the streetscape and the building-line.

## New Development within ACAs

Proposals for new development in ACAs should demonstrate that the special character of an area has been understood. This can be clarified by a statement submitted with development proposals outlining how the new design refers to the existing streetscape, relative scales and finishes of an area. This should not necessarily be done by means of pastiche or imitation. The following are the different categories of new development, which may arise. The concerns are generally the same as for redevelopment of existing elements, in so far as conserving the special character of an area while allowing for sustainable development is the core recommendation of each.

**Extensions** - Extensions to buildings in ACAs are broadly acceptable. Generally, extensions will be to the rear of an existing building and in some instances to the side. Extensions to the rear should be smaller than the original building. If the rear of an existing building is of interest, a glazed link between it and the extension could be considered and would conserve any views of the elevation. The material finishes and roof profile should be in character and/or contribute positively to the character of the architectural conservation area.

An extension to the side of a building may be more sensitive. The scale and proportioning of the extension should respect those of the original building and not exceed them. The ratio of void to solid in the wall design will be important as well as the roof treatment and material finishes. A contemporary treatment of an extension, which may be acceptable in certain cases, can provide an opportunity to add quality contemporary architecture to the existing layers of the area.

Regardless of the design approach taken, what is of fundamental importance is the overall quality of the proposed development to ensure that it does not compromise the integrity and character of the architectural conservation area.

**Facing page:**  
Modern glass extension  
to an original historic  
structure, at Youghal  
Town Council Offices.

**Vacant Street Plot** - Where development of a single vacant plot is to occur, the overall design of the new building should reflect the proportions of the existing adjacent properties. The bulk and massing of the new building should relate to the plot size and to the scale of surrounding buildings in terms of height and width.

High quality contemporary designs can contribute to the character of a streetscape and the area. If handled sensitively it should be possible to design so as to complement and integrate with the existing character of the area. New design should also interpret and refer to the inherent qualities that make up the architectural conservation area in a modern idiom.

The impact of contemporary materials and design should be considered on a case by case basis and based upon an understanding of local character. Where there is a strong relationship between adjacent properties in terms of different floor heights and rooflines, these should be maintained or referred to in the new design. The positioning of drainage is important in this regard, traditionally it is discreet and should not be placed in the middle or running at angles on the front of a building.

In the interests of maintaining the character of the streetscape, the profile of the existing roofscape should be referred to in the new design, especially where a plot once contained a building that was one of a terrace. Roof terraces on the front of the building should be avoided. Balconies or other cantilevered projections into the streetscape should also be avoided. All proposed development will also be subject to the proper planning and development of an area.



**Large Vacant Town Centre Sites** - The opportunity may arise to redevelop a large town centre site due to the sale of a large institutional site, the move of a large green field owner to another site or the move of a single business that occupies a group of buildings from a town centre to a new site.

Any new development, proposed for such sites should be sympathetic and reflect the existing character of an area in terms of plot size, variety of pedestrian and vehicular laneway and routes, and building scale. The development scheme should be broken up into units avoiding a single-block type effect with one single flat roof and one uniform finish that is clearly out of character with the surrounding area. A variety of design, scale and finish is therefore preferable in order to maintain the established grain of the architectural conservation area.

Quality contemporary design that refers to, but does not replicate the existing building forms is preferable (in locations where such a design approach is acceptable) to a bland design that has little to distinguish it. In this regard, the quality of material finishes is extremely important.

**Left:** an example of a traditional plot layout in an Irish town.



**Right:** traditional plot layout altered by the insertion of a large-scale development.



**Facing page:** Example of public realm works including new surface treatments and lighting.

**Other New Development** - The sense of place within the historic core of a town should be considered an asset and a reference point for the growth and development of a settlement. In order to maintain the vibrancy of historic cores, new development should not be isolated, but where possible, physically linked to the existing town or village.

**Public Realm** - Environmental improvements within the public realm of an ACA may be carried out by, or on behalf, of public utilities, local authorities, or community groups. The type of work covered may include infrastructural projects, planting schemes, signage, the erection of commemorative plaques and public art, or the provision of new community facilities such as playgrounds.

Improvements to existing public infrastructure and the provision of new services, such as upgrading of road surfaces or increasing car-parking provisions, can be enhancing as well as necessary in an area. At the outset, elements of existing street furniture such as original kerbing, paving, setts, post-boxes, railings, bollards etc. should be identified, with a view to retaining the original fabric where possible. Particular care should be taken to ensure the protection of such fabric during the course of works. A range of alternative engineering and design solutions should be considered to mitigate and avoid works that will detract from the special character of an area or cause damage to elements that contribute to the character of an architectural conservation area.

**Designed Landscapes** - New development within designed landscapes will be considered on a case by case basis and will depend on the capacity of the landscape to absorb development. The Planning Authority will consider the particulars of each case on its own merits. For proposals within designed landscapes that are ACAs, the Council's Guidance Notes for the Appraisal of Historic Gardens, Demesnes, Estates and their Settings should be consulted.





## CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CARRYING OUT DEVELOPMENT IN AN ACA.

It is clear that the character of an area is made up of many parts - from the smallest architectural details to a planned landscape setting. Once the nature of these qualities is understood and identified, it is possible to incorporate their conservation and enhancement in planning for and carrying out development. It is also understood that the special character of an architectural conservation area is both an asset to the economy of an area and an amenity to visitors and residents alike.

**Facing page:** This picture illustrates the manner in which development has followed the natural topography of the area and has centred around and close to the waterfront.

The redevelopment of existing buildings within ACAs requires consideration of the impact on the overall character of the building in question and to the area as a whole. A proposed new development should also demonstrably contribute to the ongoing evolution of an area and its social and economic vibrancy.

Where an owner/occupier is considering works, either to an existing structure located within an ACA or developing a site within an ACA, the following points may be of relevance in terms of development principles;

- When considering development of a site within an ACA, proposals should be sympathetic to the existing character of the area and reflect or refer to the established architectural environment in terms of:
  - Design, massing, scale, established plot layouts and their relationship to historic streets and lanes
  - Material finishes
  - Landscape setting
  - Characteristic features unique to the area
- Where minor works are involved, the conservation of historic fabric will be important and proposals for the introduction of new elements should respect the existing character of the building and the wider area.
- When carrying out work to an existing structure in an ACA, elements which contribute to the character of the building and the area, should be conserved or where this is not possible replaced on a like for like basis. Regular maintenance of a property can help extend the life of the building fabric and prevent serious and ultimately costly damage occurring to the building as a result of minor defects going unchecked for a long period of time.
- Where works to public spaces are proposed:
  - The historic layout of an area should be understood.
  - Efforts should be made to integrate historic elements into new designs.
  - New proposals should enhance the overall character of the area.
  - A variety of engineering and design solutions should be considered.

It is recognised that not all elements of an architectural conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. In such instances it is desirable to ensure that new development will contribute positively to the existing built environment in terms of design, scale, setting, and material specifications. Where appropriate, high quality contemporary designs, which respect the character of the ACA, can enhance the special aesthetic qualities of the area.



### Planning Issues within ACAs

In an ACA, the carrying out of works to the exterior of a structure will only be considered exempted development if these works would not materially affect the character of the area. Therefore, development that may normally be considered 'exempted development', may not be considered so if such works would materially affect the character of an Architectural Conservation Area.

The following works to the exterior of a building in an ACA may materially affect the character of an area and may therefore require planning permission:-

- Removing render/plaster from a wall.
- Plastering an un-rendered wall.
- Changing the type of slate or roofing material or changes to the form of a roof.
- Changing the type, design or material of windows.
- Changing the design or materials of a shopfront.
- Changing the design or material of doors.
- Changing the design, dimensions, position or material of a chimney.
- Changing the design or materials of window cills.
- Adding, removing or altering architectural details, elements, finishes such as quoins, mouldings, fascias, barges, ridge-tiles, jostle stones, paving or kerbing, chimney caps or pots, plaques, railings, gates etc.
- Changes to the design or materials of boundary treatments.

Where there is any doubt as to whether or not works will materially affect the character of an ACA, clarification should be sought from the Council's Planning Officer and/or Conservation Officer.



#### Above from left: - Section 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2000-2010

Example of an architecturally designed modern extension to a historic courthouse. The courthouse is a protected structure and located within an architectural conservation area.

Under Section 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2000-2010, any person may request in writing from the planning authority a declaration as to what, in any particular case, is or is not development, or is not exempted development, within the meaning of the Planning & Development Act 2000-2010.

An application form for a Section 5 Declaration, can be obtained from the relevant planning authority. A statutory fee of €80 applies. It is important that all documentation requested by the planning authority is included with the application in order to prevent delays in processing the request.

A limestone spur stop set against the chamfered edge of a building in a historic laneway.

Decisions on Section 5 Declarations are issued in four weeks from the receipt of application. Where further information is requested by the planning authority, decisions will be made three weeks from the date of receipt of that further information.

### - Pre-Planning

The local authority does offer pre-planning discussions with applicants prior to the submission of a formal planning application. Pre-planning discussions can be very helpful in terms of providing advice on the proposed development and in guiding an applicant through the planning process and minimising delays later in processing the application. Pre-planning can also be beneficial in identifying areas of concerns and advising in how to address such concerns. It is important to note that guidance given at pre-planning discussions are given in good faith and do not guarantee a definitive undertaking that a proposal is likely to be acceptable to the planning authority.

To arrange a pre-planning meeting, an applicant should contact their relevant local authority to make an appointment with the relevant Planning Officer and/or Conservation Officer.

### - Planning Process

Under the planning regulations when making a planning application for development which consists of works to the exterior of a structure located within an ACA, that in addition to meeting the standard requirements for the making of a planning application, be accompanied by such photographs, plans and other particulars as are necessary to show how the development would affect the character of the structure.

When making a planning application for development within an architectural conservation area, the planning authority may require supporting documentation to assist in assessing the proposed development. Depending on the nature and scale of the development such information may include the following:

- Clearly labelled photographs of the existing structure (or elements of a structure to which the application specifically relates).
- Scaled plans, sections and elevations of the existing structure. Elevation drawings should be clearly labelled to indicate the existing material finishes and decorative details to the buildings, for example; timber windows, natural slate roof, cast iron rainwater goods, smooth plaster finish, dressed stone work, plaster mouldings, etc.
- Scaled drawings of the proposed development. Elevation drawings should be clearly labelled to indicate the proposed material finishes of the building(s).
- In particular cases, scaled drawings at a specified scale may be requested, for example in the case of a new shopfront, the planning authority may require drawings of this element to be submitted at a scale of 1:20 and/or 1:50.
- Contiguous streetscape elevation.
- Conceptual images.
- Design statement and/or written statement outlining the approach to the proposed development and how it will integrate with the surrounding built environment.
- Details in relation to proposals for restoration/conservation or where deemed necessary replacement of elements that are considered to contribute to the character of the area.
- Details and material specifications for new shop fronts, signage, lighting and security measures, etc.

The level of detail required (or submitted) as part of a planning application should be proportionate to the nature of the proposed development and be sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposed development on the ACA. The level of information required for a proposed development is something that could be discussed and clarified at pre-planning stage, and again this may help in preventing delays at a later stage of the process.

When assessing a planning application for development within an ACA, should the planning authority be of the opinion that sufficient information has not been submitted with the planning application, they may make a request for further information. The request for further information will be made to the applicant(s) in writing. This correspondence will outline the type of further information that planning authority requires in order to allow a decision on the application to be made.

Whereon, permission is granted for a proposed development, the planning authority may attach specific conditions to protect the character of the ACA. These conditions may relate to design, material finishes, landscaping, boundary treatments etc.

It should be noted that an appeal can be made to An Bord Pleanála against a planning decision. An appeal can generally be made within four weeks beginning on the date of the decision of the planning authority. The applicant as well as any person, body or interested group etc who made submissions or observations in writing to the planning authority in relation to a planning application (in accordance with permission regulations) may make an appeal to An Bord Pleanála against the decision of the planning authority.



#### Other Designations.

**Above from left:** The carrying out of repairs to the original timber sliding sash windows to a building located within an architectural conservation area.

An area that is part of an architectural conservation area, may be of interest for a number of reasons including architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, social, technical, cultural or scientific may also be protected under other legislative frameworks for the architectural, natural and archaeological heritage. Structures located within an ACA may also be protected structures, archaeological monuments or be within an area of natural heritage. The designation of an ACA does not affect other statutory designations. For guidance on these designations advice should be sought from the relevant officers in the County Council and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Example of a surviving and well maintained historic shop front. While the property no longer has a commercial function the shop front has simply been maintained and incorporated as part of the residential use of the property.

#### Further Information

Information on useful contacts, publications and websites are included in Appendix two and three.

## APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

Bargeboard:	a carved timber board which projects from the gable of a roof to prevent rain dripping into the wall, often decorated.
Bowed:	where the façade of a building or the portion of wall containing windows through each floor is built to a shallow curve.
Cantilevered projection:	a structure which projects over open space which springs from a vertical support, usually hidden.
Capital:	the crowning feature of a vertical column or pier whose function it is to carry a horizontal load, usually decorated with mouldings of foliage or abstract motifs.
Curtilage:	the area surrounding a building and historically associated with it.
Cornice:	a horizontal moulding marking the meeting of two surfaces - in a room this may be the meeting of the wall and the ceiling; on the exterior of a building it may be the meeting of the front of the wall-plate with the end of the roof, or the final horizontal moulding on the upper section of a shop front.
Dormer:	a projecting upright window on a sloping roof with a roof of its own.
Dressed finish:	the worked finish given to carved stone by a mason, usually on stone intended to be exposed or on the façade of a building.
Eaves:	the projection of the lower edge of the roof over the front wall-plate.
Fascia:	a horizontal board projecting from a wall surface; at eaves level used to protect roof timbers and to act as the surface to which a gutter may be attached; in the structure of a shop front a fascia is the horizontal board which is supported by the vertical pilasters or piers and which contains the name of the business.
Fluting:	a moulding found on pilasters and columns in timber or stone and in the shape of extended vertical grooves.
Hopper head:	a container found at the meeting of the gutter and downpipe where water is drained downwards, may be of lead or cast-iron and feature decorative motifs.
Lights:	a window or part of a glazed opening, usually fixed.
Lime render:	render or mortar containing lime used for pointing brick or stonework and for plastering wall surfaces.
Morphology:	the study of the form of things.
Mullion:	a vertical bar dividing sections of a window.
Oriel window:	a window which projects from the main wall of a building from first floor and upwards.
Parapet:	a low wall rising from the top of the wall-plate at its junction with the roof on the façade of a building.
Pantile:	a roofing tile with an S-shaped profile, laid so that the down curve of one tile overlaps the up curve of the next one.
Patina:	the sheen on a surface produced by age and exposure.
Perimeter-belt:	referring to the planting of trees on the edges of an enclosed demesne, usually inside a stone boundary wall.
Pilaster:	a vertical post with a flat surface, deriving from Classical architecture, and featuring Classical detailing; found on public buildings two storeys and higher, and as part of the structure of a shop front where a pair serve to frame the shop front and support the fascia overhead.
Plinth:	the base or platform supporting a vertical structural member, usually found at the base of a wall.
Quoins:	a succession of corner stones along the length of the meeting of two perpendicular walls, may also be created by means of raised plaster.
Rubble stone:	stones placed together to form a wall, without a dressed finish, in a random formation of size and colour or in a coursed fashion where stones are aligned on horizontal courses.
Sliding sash:	a window consisting of two parts, generally hung vertically, where one slides over the other to effect the opening of the window, operated by means of a hidden pulley and weights system.
Stringcourse:	a horizontal moulding banding the length of a wall, often used to indicate a change in floor levels, usually stone but often brick or plaster.

## APPENDIX 2: USEFUL CONTACTS

**The Heritage Unit,**  
Cork County Council,  
Planning Department,  
County Hall,  
Cork City.  
Telephone: (021) 4276891  
Web: [www.corkcoco.ie](http://www.corkcoco.ie)

**Architectural Heritage Advisory Unit,**  
Department of the Environment, Heritage  
and Local Government,  
The Customs House,  
Dublin 1.  
Telephone: (01) 888 2000  
Web: [www.viron.ie](http://www.environ.ie) & [www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie)

**Heritage Council,**  
Áras na hOidhreachta,  
Church Lane,  
Kilkenny.  
Telephone: (056) 7770777  
Web: [www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie)

**The County Library,**  
County Hall,  
Carrigrohane Road,  
Cork City.  
Telephone: (021) 4546499  
Web: [www.corkcoco.ie](http://www.corkcoco.ie)

**The Cork City and County Archives Institute,**  
Great William O'Brien Street,  
Blackpool, Cork.  
Telephone: (021) 4505886  
Web: [www.corkarchives.ie](http://www.corkarchives.ie)

**The Irish Architectural Archive,**  
45 Merrion Square,  
Dublin 2.  
Telephone: (01) 663 3040  
Web: [www.iarc.ie](http://www.iarc.ie)

**The Irish Georgian Society,**  
74 Merion Square,  
Dublin 2.  
Telephone: (01) 676 7053  
Web: [www.igs.ie](http://www.igs.ie)

**The National Monuments Advisory Service,**  
Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local  
Government,  
Dún Scéine,  
Harcourt Lane,  
Dublin 2.  
Telephone: (01) 888 3139  
Web: [www.viron.ie](http://www.viron.ie) & [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)

**The National Parks and Wildlife Service,**  
**Department of the Environment,**  
Heritage and Local Government,  
Ely Place,  
Dublin 2.  
Telephone: (01) 888 2000  
Web: [www.viron.ie](http://www.viron.ie)

## APPENDIX 3: USEFUL PUBLICATIONS &amp; WEBSITES

**Policy and Legislation**

- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Government of Ireland, 2004
- Building Control Act, 1990
- Building Regulations and Technical Guidance Documents, 1997-2004
- Draft County Development Plan, 2009-2014, Cork County Council, 2009
- National Monuments Acts, 1930-2004
- Planning and Development Act, 2000
- Planning and Development Regulations, 2001
- Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000

**Architectural Conservation**

- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Government of Ireland, 2004
- Conservation Guidelines, Department of the Environment, 1996 (available in pdf from [www.viron.ie](http://www.viron.ie))
- Period Houses - A Conservation Guidance Manual, Frank Keohane, Dublin Civic Trust, 2001
- Conservation of Historic Buildings, Bernard Feilden, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1995

**Architectural History**

- An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of EAST CORK, Government of Ireland, 2009.
- An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of NORTH CORK, Government of Ireland, 2009.
- Buildings of Irish Towns, Patrick Shaffrey and Maura Shaffrey, The O'Brien Press, 1983.
- Historical genealogical architectural notes on some houses of Cork. Vol. I. North Cork. Anna-Maria Hajba, Ballinakella Press, 2002.

**Websites**

<a href="http://www.corkcoco.ie">www.corkcoco.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.riai.ie">www.riai.ie</a>
<a href="http://www.corkarchives.ie">www.corkarchives.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.dublincivictrust.ie">www.dublincivictrust.ie</a>
<a href="http://www.iarc.ie">www.iarc.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk">www.historic-scotland.gov.uk</a>
<a href="http://www.viron.ie">www.viron.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.spab.co.uk">www.spab.co.uk</a>
<a href="http://www.buildingsofireland.ie">www.buildingsofireland.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.english-heritage.gov.uk">www.english-heritage.gov.uk</a>
<a href="http://www.archaeology.ie">www.archaeology.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.icomos.org">www.icomos.org</a>
<a href="http://www.heritagecouncil.ie">www.heritagecouncil.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.icrom.org">www.icrom.org</a>
<a href="http://www.igs.ie">www.igs.ie</a>	<a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a>