



## Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement

### Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

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## Introduction

The following report has been prepared by JCA Architects and provides an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed regeneration scheme of the central area of Cahir as described in the Tipperary County Council's Project Brief for Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement document of April 2021. The following report has been provided to accompany the Part VIII application prepared for this scheme.

The client's brief states that '*..the regeneration of the Square will be conservation led and respectful of the Square's position in an ACA while catering to the needs of a modern and multi-functional town centre.*'

The project objectives are outlined in the brief as follows:

- To re-establish the historic square as an economic quarter and civic space which respects its position in an Architectural Conservation Area (Conservation Led Regeneration).
- To reduce on-street parking from the Square to a new 100+ car park just off the square and allow for public realm enhancements and traffic re-configuration with an emphasis on shared spaces and universal design.
- To curtail traffic within the town centre and provide a pedestrian focussed plaza within the Square that attracts people to meet and spend time.
- To provide an active travel hub within the town square, including bike stands and rest areas.

JCA provided a briefing document to Malachy Walsh Partners in September 2021 which identified both the protected structures and the NIAH (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage) structures located within the development area. The briefing document allowed the design team to prepare proposals for the redevelopment in the context of the architectural heritage identified within the study area. Information from this initial study has been updated and incorporated into this report. The site was visited by JCA Architects on 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2021 and all areas of the town which are to be included in the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement were inspected and photographed.

The following report includes summary information on all of the Protected Structures within the study area. A statement of significance for the relevant streets and areas of the town is also provided. The proposed development area is discussed on a street by street basis, as each street has a distinctive character or quality. The Square is discussed as one area.

## Part 1: Architectural Heritage Context of the Proposed Development Area

### **Conservation Area**

The full extent of the proposed development area is located within Cahir's Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

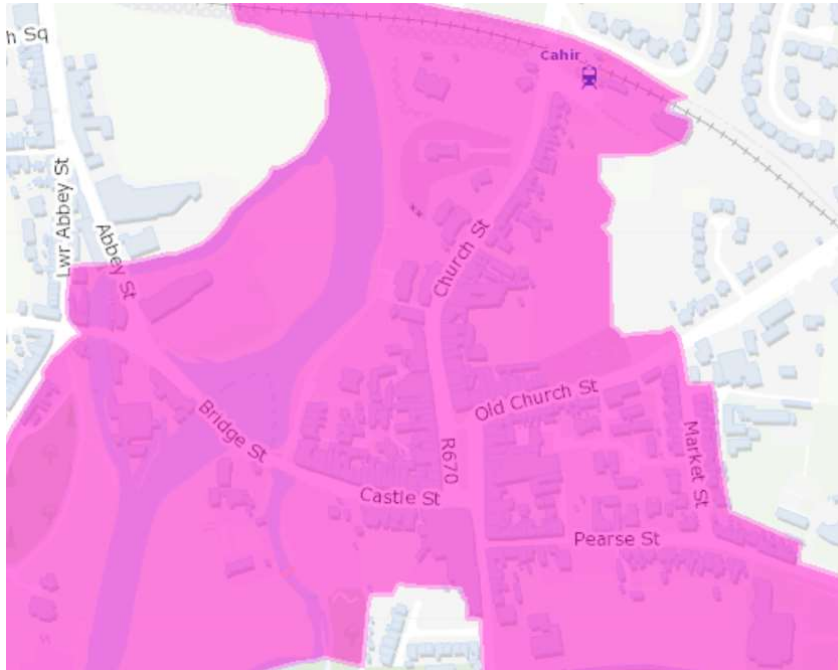


Fig. 1: The proposed development area as it falls within the Cahir ACA

An ACA is a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure or structures (whose character it is an objective of the development plan to conserve).

By designating an area as an ACA, the planning authority recognises that the protection of the architectural and special historic heritage of this area would best be achieved by controlling and guiding change on a wider scale than just an individual building. It also recognises that building lines and heights, fenestration, shopfronts, materials (including street paving), street furniture, railings and other surviving historic and architectural elements all contribute to the character of the ACA.

The ACA in Cahir comprises a very intact urban streetscape with terraced buildings lining the streets and dating from the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Cahir House) but mainly containing buildings from the 1830s and 1840s, with some later additions. In his Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, Samuel Lewis described the town as follows:

*The present town owes its rise to the late Earl of Glengall, and has been enlarged and greatly improved by the present Earl [the Second Earl of Glengall], whose seat is within its limits; it is pleasantly situated on the river Suir and is well built and of handsome appearance.*

The buildings are generally very well constructed and architecturally proportioned and were described by Henry Bassett in 1889 as follows<sup>1</sup>:

*The houses of Cahir devoted to business as well as residential purposes, are superior to those found in most country towns in Ireland, of like population.*

### Protected Structures

There are many protected structures within the proposed development area. The image below is taken from [www.heritagemaps.ie](http://www.heritagemaps.ie) with each yellow square on the map of Cahir indicating a protected structure. All of the buildings to Castle Street and almost all to the Mall are protected structures, with many more located around the Square.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 2: Map of Cahir from [www.heritagemaps.ie](http://www.heritagemaps.ie) showing the protected structures in the proposed development area.

As well as buildings, the structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures include the water fountain in the square and the war memorial on Castle Street. Details of all the protected structures are given below, arranged by the streets on which they are located.

<sup>1</sup> Bassett, Henry, *The Book of Tipperary*, 1889

<sup>2</sup> Cahir Castle is a National Monument, while three additional recorded archaeological monuments are located along Castle Street.

### Structures included National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

Many of the protected structures in Cahir are also included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The majority of these buildings have been included on the inventory as they are deemed to be of Architectural interest and therefore make a positive contribution to their setting, in this case to the streetscape or to the group of structures in which they are located in the town of Cahir.

Elements of the individual buildings which contribute to their significance include their external materials, decorative façade elements, historic shopfronts and display windows, fenestration patterns and windows, doors and fanlights, roof profiles, chimneys and boundary treatments such as railings. Other buildings are also rated of being of Artistic (for specific architectural details and craftsmanship), Social or Historic significance.

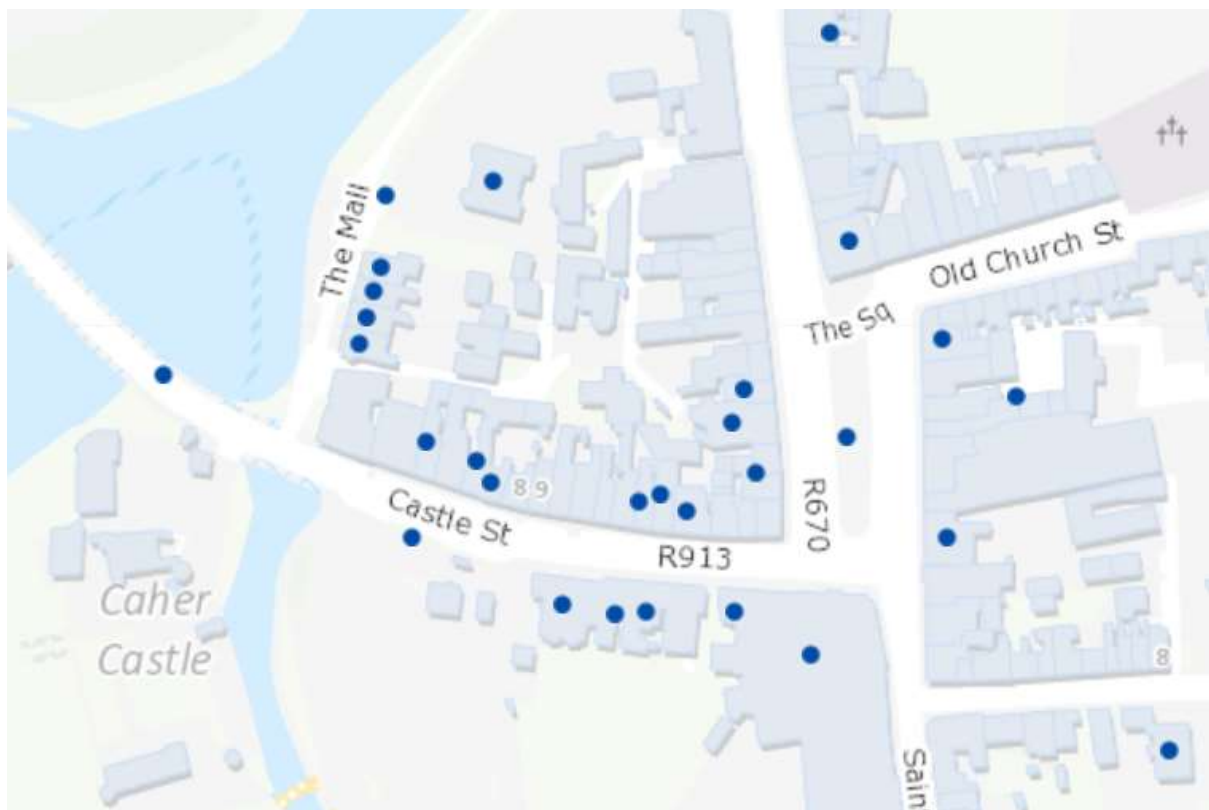


Fig. 3: Structures included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage within the proposed development area.

### The Square/Individual Streets

A description of the structures is provided below, with information from both the NIAH and the details given on the Record of Protected Structures compiled by the local authority. The information is arranged on a street by street basis due to the number of structures included on the RPS. The significance of the structures (or pairs or groups of structures) is also provided to illustrate their special character and the reasons why they were chosen for inclusion on the NIAH and RPS.

## The Square (including St Mary's Street)

### The Square – West Side



#### Description:

This side of the Square was developed in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Michael Burke using a long lease for the property granted by Lord Glengall on the condition that his plans for the improvement of the town were carried out.<sup>3</sup>

#### Significance:

Architectural, Technical, Archaeological

#### Notes:

A memorial fountain, dated 1876, is located to the central area of the Square and is a protected structure. The east side of the Square includes buildings by the architect William Tinsley. This range of buildings is very intact and although alterations have been carried out to the shopfronts and fenestration, all of the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings survive.

RPS	Yes	S243 – the fountain S244 - 1 The Square S244a - 2-3 The Square S244b - 4-5 The Square S244c – Galtee Inn (3 bay) S244d – O'Brien's Pharmacy S244e – Opticians S244f – Roma Café
NIAH	Yes	Reg. 22111050 – fountain

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cahirhistoricalsociety.com/articles/cahirhistory.html>

		<p>Reg. 22111074 – Irwin’s (two houses, integral carriage arch. NIAH images of 2211173)</p> <p>Reg. 22111073 – Lazy bean, two-bay three-storey building, one of three designed as group by Tinsley (images are of 2211174)</p> <p>Reg. 22111072 – Kennedy’s, two-bay three-storey, one of three by Tinsley (wrong NIAH image)</p>
RMP	Yes	—

### The Square – East Side



#### Description:

The majority of the buildings on this side of the Square are protected structures and include notable examples such as Glengall House and the Bank of Ireland. Only three of these are included on the NIAH (the Corner House, Glengall House and the Bank of Ireland).

#### Significance:

Architectural, Artistic, Social

#### Notes:

The Corner House has distinctive curved elevation following the line of the street. Unclear if shopfronts as described in NIAH have been fully retained. Glengall House has very distinctive former Carriage Arch.

RPS	Yes	<p>S245 – The Corner House</p> <p>S245a – The Corner House (Chair Communication)</p> <p>S245c – B. Ross Pharmacy</p> <p>S245d – Glengall House</p> <p>S245e – Antiques Showroom</p>
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		S245f – Bank of Ireland S245h – 31 The Square S245j - Auburn House
NIAH	Yes	Reg. 22111049 – Corner sited, originally two houses. Reg. 22111051 – Glengall House Reg. 22111052 - Bank
RMP	No	—

### The Square – North Side



#### Description:

The northern side of the Square is primarily made up of the former Market House, Court House and Town Hall, now in use as a library. Built in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at approximately the same time as Cahir House to the Southern side of the Square, it is a significant building, both architecturally and historically.

#### Significance:

Architectural, Historical, Social

#### Notes:

A plaque to the retaining wall of the area in front of the Market House reads, '11<sup>th</sup> Hussars – underneath lies Crimean Bob a veteran troophorse who after passing unharmed through the memorable Crimean campaign died at Cahir Barracks on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1862 aged 34 years.'

RPS	Yes	S241 - Library
NIAH	Yes	Reg. No.22111047 – Market House/Library
RMP	Yes	—

## St. Mary's Street



### Description:

Two protected structures (245h and 245j) are listed with the eastern side of The Square, above, as their addresses are The Square rather than St. Mary's St. No NIAH buildings.

### Significance/Notes:

Development area on this street is dominated by Cahir House Hotel and two PS. Architectural.

## Castle Street – South Side



### Description:

There are three protected structures to this side of the street, while several more are included on the NIAH. One of the protected structures is the war memorial. Partly built by John Egan with a long lease from Lord Glengall.<sup>4</sup> The hotel is the former Cahir House, built by James, 9<sup>th</sup> Lord Cahir in the 1770s.

### Significance:

Architectural, Historical, Social, Artistic

### Notes:

Railings to front of Cahir House and adjacent building (Lava Rock restaurant)

RPS	Yes	S273 – War Memorial S1007 – House and Railings
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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cahirhistoricalsociety.com/articles/cahirhistory.html>

		S242 – Cahir House and Railings
NIAH	Yes	Reg. No.22111053 (memorial) Reg. No.22111054 (AIB) Reg. No. 22111055 (Castle St Stores) Reg. No. 22111056 (two-bay house) Reg. No. 22111057 (three-bay house) Reg. No. 22111058 (18 <sup>th</sup> century Cahir House, now hotel)
RMP	No	—

### Castle Street – North Side



#### Description:

All of the buildings to this side of Castle Street (Nos. 1-18) are protected structures, and several are also included on the NIAH.

#### Significance:

Architectural, Technical, Archaeological

#### Notes:

In general area of Castle St, east bank of River Suir, location of historic town, noted in SMR

Railings to No. 1 Castle St.

RPS	Yes	S254a-s  Note: 254s and 254s are both listed as No. 17 Castle St. on the RPS. 254s should be No. 18
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NIAH	Yes	Reg. Nos. No. 4 – 22111041 No. 6 – 22111042 No. 7 – 22111043 No. 14 – 22111044* (*NIAH incorrectly notes as No. 13)) No. 15 – 22111045* No. 16 – 22111046
SMR	Yes	TS02772 – carved head on No.7  TS075-048---- Site of historic town, east banks of Suir

### Bridge over River Suir, Bridge Street



#### Description:

Road bridge spanning two branches of River Suir, built c.1750 on site of medieval bridge, consisting of two separate sections, six arches to north-west and three-arches to south-east, northern side of latter having one visible arch.

#### Significance:

Architectural, Technical, Archaeological

#### Notes:

Recorded archaeological monument. National Monuments Act applies.

Stone parapet walls, modern paving to footpath. Adjoins Cahir Castle at northwestern end.

RPS	Yes	S1003
NIAH	Yes	Reg. No.22111032
SMR	Yes	TS075-048006-

### The Mall



#### Description:

Terrace of four two-bay three-storey over basement house, built c. 1830, with the house to the southern end of the terrace having a full height bowed bay. Rendered plinth with limestone coping and spearhead wrought-iron railings to basement area to front and limestone entrance steps to all houses.

#### Significance:

Architectural and Artistic.

#### Notes:

Stone gate piers retained at entrance to The Mall. Houses are well maintained, of high architectural merit and retain external features and historic fabric such as limestone steps and railings to basement. Paving is modern.

RPS	Yes	S255a-d
NIAH	Yes	Reg. No. 22111037 - 40
SMR	No	—

## Church Street



### Description:

The west side of the street is a continuation of the Square with the same three-storey building type. There is more variation of building on the eastern side of the street and the facades are a little less formal.

### Significance:

Architectural, Technical, Archaeological

### Notes:

Some sections of historic limestone kerb stones are retained to the pavement on this street. Only the southern end of the street is within the proposed development area.

RPS	Yes	S244h – Morrison’s Pharmacy S246c – McCarthy’s/Looby’s S246f – Sampson’s
NIAH	Yes	Reg. No.22111035 – McCarthy’s/Looby’s
RMP	No	—

## Old Church Street



### Description:

This street begins in the northeast corner of the Square and extends east past the graveyard and former market place.

Significance:

No NIAH buildings are include on this section of the street. A pair of three storey buildings adjoin the library building (former Courthouse and Market House) and the remaining buildings are smaller, two-storey houses. The building immediately adjoining the former Courthouse was historically used as Dwyer’s Hotel.

Notes:

There are no buildings to the area of the street within the proposed development area on the NIAH or RPS.

RPS	No	—
NIAH	No	—
RMP	No	—

**Architectural Heritage, Character and Statement of Significance**

The town of Cahir, and particularly the areas of the Square, Castle Street, and the Mall, retains a very strong and distinctive architectural character. With the terraced buildings lining the streets mainly constructed during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the architecture has a cohesive quality and a distinctive character. Interspersed among these (largely three-storey terraced) buildings are a number of significant earlier buildings, notably Cahir House and the former Market House which have very clear Georgian proportions and qualities.



Fig. 5: Cahir House, created 1850-1860, Rae and Firtzgerald, 34 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin (NGI)

The designation of the area as an Architectural Conservation Area, in addition to the multiple inclusions on the Record of Protected Structures, recognises the architectural and historical significance of the architecture of the town centre. In addition is the social significance associated with the historical uses of

many of the buildings, with the individuals who funded or designed the buildings, and in structures such as the water fountain to the Square and the war memorial on Castle Street.

Unfortunately, the protective measures afforded by these designations has not always protected the special character of these structures, and inappropriate development and alterations to the buildings have occurred most notably in the form of replacement of historic windows and the insertion of badly designed and/or oversized shopfronts. There are a number of distinctive stone-fronted ground floors to buildings on Bridge Street and to the eastern side of the Square, and some of these are hidden or impacted by the recent shopfronts. These interventions have affected the overall character of some individual buildings and of the streetscape more generally.

Very little in the form of historic street finishes appears to have survived. An area of limestone kerbing was noted to Church Street along the edge of the pavement and there are a small number of historic limestone jostle stones in carriage archways. Elsewhere there has been widescale re-surfacing with concrete sets.

A number of buildings retain wrought or cast iron railings to the front and these are generally noted in the building records on the RPS. Set in to cut stone or rendered rubble stone plinths, these railings should always be recognised as part of the building's historic curtilage. Many limestone thresholds, doorsteps and entrance steps also survive to buildings around the town, and likewise must be considered an integral part of the historic fabric of the building.

The Square itself appears historically to have had no particular landscaping or planted features. The small number of trees which now stand to the centre around the fountain are a welcome addition and the use of this space should be encouraged for seating and gathering of people. A reduction in the amount of car parking to the Square would be of benefit to the town users and residents and would have a positive impact on the setting of the historic buildings which overlook this space.



Fig. 6: Extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the town, c.1840.





## Part 2: Impact Assessment of Development Proposals

### **Description of Proposed Development**

The proposed development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Cahir's Town Centre comprising the upgrading of the existing Square and approach streets with new high-quality paving, kerbing, landscaping, public lighting, improved street furniture and utility diversions/works.

The proposed development will be carried out on Castle Street, Cahir Town Square, St Mary's Road, Old Church Street and Church Street in the townland of Townparks, Cahir, Co. Tipperary.

The following describes the nature and extent of the proposed development:

- New raised table shared surface on Castle Street from Cahir Castle to the Castle Car Park entrance to the East and The Mall entrance to the North.
- New kerb alignment and pavement surfaces from the Castle Street Car Park entrance to The Square junction, including upgrading of pedestrian crossing, installation of new public lighting and soft landscaping.
- New streetscape layout for Cahir Square with new alignment design for footpaths, parking areas and trafficked areas incorporating a raised table shared surface from the junction with Castle Street, to the Junction with St Marys Road and to North of The Fountain, new kerb and pavement surfaces throughout The Square, new hard and soft landscaping, new street furniture, new bollards, new bicycle racks, installation of new and upgrade of existing public lighting.
- Alteration of on-street parking for Castle Street, The Square, Church Street, Old Church Street and The Square end of St Mary's Road.
- New pavement surfaces on St. Mary's Road, Old Church Street and Church Street.
- New controlled pedestrian crossings and soft landscaping on Church Street and Old Church St.
- Undergrounding of overhead electrical cables, installation of new public lighting and upgrading of existing public lighting across the entire project area.
- Development of associated drainage services and utilities across the entire project area.
- All associated site works.

## Likely Impacts of the Proposed Works

The proposed works will provide a more favourable pedestrian environment within the town centre, while the use of uniform surfacing materials throughout the proposed project area will improve the visual setting of the Architectural Conservation Area and the historic streetscapes. The assessment of the potential impacts on the architectural heritage of the town, as discussed below, is based on MWP and Nicholas de Jong Associates proposed scheme as illustrated in the Masterplan Proposals drawing dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 (Drawing No. 00000-MWP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0021).

The proposed works are assessed below on a street by street basis.

### Proposed Works:                      The Square

It is proposed to alter the road layout of the Square, to resurface the entire area, and to provide areas of seating and planting to pedestrianised zones (Drawing No. 00000-MWP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0023). Parking is to remain within the square, but some of the existing capacity is to be relocated to a new car park entered off Church St.

#### Physical Impacts:

The layout of the square currently includes for facilitating routes for traffic on all sides, with parking located to the central area and only a small area around the fountain for pedestrians with seating. The proposals will involve the provision of one route of traffic to the eastern side of the square and a large pedestrian area to the centre and west. The existing paving and surface finishes will be replaced with granite slabs of varying sizes. The existing surface materials are not of historic significance, and with the exception of the fountain, there is no historic fabric extant in this area. The fountain is to be retained, as are the four existing mature trees which surround it.

Adjustments to the area immediately to the south of the Market House are proposed, including the provision of a set of steps from Church Street up to the level outside the building. A plaque which states that there is a burial of a horse to this area outside the Market House is located in the wall where the new steps are proposed, and therefore will require relocation. No further known fabric of architectural or historical significance will be affected by these proposed works.

#### Visual Impacts:

The proposed granite surfacing will be of varying sizes with the larger slabs used to pavements adjacent to the buildings and around the fountain. This stone and paving slab size is to be continued on the pavements along the surrounding streets which will result in an improved and unified setting to the buildings within the ACA. The

removal of traffic flow from the western side of the square will have a positive visual impact on the streetscape along this side, where seating and tree planting is also proposed. The proposed works to the Square will improve the visual setting of the buildings in this area of the ACA.

The proposed new steps and provision of planters and new paving to the area immediately south of the Market House will not impact negatively on this protected structure. The replacement of the various bollards and individual planters with one larger planter and seating will improve the setting of this building and remove the visual clutter from the area to the front of the main elevation.<sup>5</sup>

Proposed Works: Castle Street and Bridge Street

The works proposed to these areas comprise resurfacing of the pavements, the provision of a pedestrian crossing and planting of a small number of trees.

**Physical Impacts:** The existing pavement surfacing to these areas comprises modern materials and no surviving historic finishes were noted. Therefore, the proposed works will not result in the damage or removal of any elements of historical or architectural significance. Features of significance in this area which lie adjacent to the pavements include the railings to the basement lightwells of two houses on the north side of Castle Street, the war memorial, the stone gate piers at the entrance to the Mall, and the parapet walls of the bridge. These elements should be protected from damage during the course of the works.

**Visual Impacts:** The proposed resurfacing works will have a positive visual impact on the streetscape and the individual historic buildings by replacing the concrete sets with granite paving slabs of varying sizes.

Proposed Works: The Mall

**Physical Impacts:** New shared pavement resurfacing is proposed for the entranceway to the Mall, with granite slabs to the pavement. This entrance off Castle Street is marked with historic stone gate piers with limestone jostle

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<sup>5</sup> As part of the Cahir Revitalisation Plan (but outside the scope of this Part VIII application) it is proposed to restore the façade of the Market House and to provide a business centre/digital hub use within the building. The proposed public realm design works to be carried out as part of this Part VIII application will enhance the building's prominent position in the Square and provide a more suitable arrangement to the front of the proposed new digital hub.

stones to the central piers which should be retained. No works are proposed to the area inside the entrance gates.

Visual Impacts: There will be no visual impacts on the buildings of the Mall terrace with works confined to the entranceway. The existing gate piers and jostle stones should be retained and protected during the works in order to preserve the historic character of the entrance to the Mall.

Proposed Works: Old Church Street

Physical Impacts: The proposed works here comprise resurfacing of the pavements with granite slabs. If carriage archways and any surviving historic stone steps and jostle stones are retained in situ, the proposed works will not result in the loss of any historic fabric.

Visual Impacts: The resurfacing works will provide an improved visual setting for the terraces of modest houses which line each side of this street, and will tie the area in with the Square and the remaining streets of the ACA.

Proposed Works: Church Street

Physical Impacts: Resurfacing works, using the materials proposed to the other areas of the scheme, will provide new finishes to both the street and pavements. With the exception of one area of historic limestone kerbing located to the southern end of Church Street, the existing finishes here are all modern.

Further north along this street, the demolition of a number of buildings is proposed in order to allow access off Church Street to a new car park. It is understood that this intervention does not form part of the application for this scheme, but was the subject of a separate Part VIII application.

Visual Impacts: In addition to the resurfacing, trees and planted areas are proposed to the street, particularly in the location of the entrance to the new car park. The proposed works will improve the streetscape in this area.

## Mitigation Measures and Recommendations

- Historic architectural elements such as limestone doorsteps, doorcases, limestone steps, railings and plinth walls, carriage archways and doorways should be protected during the course of works from any physical damage which may occur during the installation of the new surfaces, lighting etc. and from damage caused by materials such as cement and grouting.
- Historic street furniture elements such as limestone kerbs and jostle stones should be retained and reused in their original locations rather than discarded and/or replaced.
- A number of the buildings in the centre of Cahir have stone shopfronts and/or stone pilasters, including Glengall House, the Bank of Ireland and the shops to the west side of the Square. These architectural features must be protected during resurfacing works and should not be altered or damaged by the laying of new surfacing material.
- Some of the works are proposed in locations which may be archaeologically sensitive and may require monitoring, for example in the vicinity of the north side of Castle Street and on the bridge.
- Some buildings along Castle Street have visible basements and others may be retained below street level. These are often vaulted structures with the top of the vault quite close to the surface of the street which should be considered where trees are proposed for planting.
- To the front of the Market House a plaque marks the location of the burial of a military horse in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This will require further investigation before commencing works to install a new set of steps. The plaque should be relocated.
- Works to the bridge on Castle Street may require monitoring by an archaeologist as both the bridge itself and the castle are recorded archaeological monuments.

## Appendix I – Photographic Record

The Mall



Castle Street





Castle Street (Cont.)



The Square – West Side



Fountain at Centre of the Square



The Square – East Side



The Square – North Side



Church Street



Old Church Street



St. Mary's Street



## Appendix II - Historic Photographs (NLI Collection)



Early W. Lawrence photograph of Bridge Street.



The Square (west side) with view to north showing former Market House (now the library) and Church Street



View to south of the Square, showing Cahir House and the eastern side of the square.



View to northeast corner of the Square





Spear head railings, cobbled drain, flagged pavement, limestone kerb stones and jostle stones to corner – details from c.1900 photograph of Bridge Street (NLI)



Details of paving and railings to the Square - flagged pavement, cobble stone drains, spearhead railings set in limestone, limestone kerb stones.