

4 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

4.1 Introduction

We refer the Board to discussion in the previous chapter regarding the development context and rationale that has informed the Proposed Development. Chapter 3: 'Description of Proposed Development.'

Chapter 4 of the EIAR provides an overview of the alternative sites, designs and processes that have been considered for this project.

According to the Draft Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines (EPA, Aug 2017), the EIA Directive requires an EIAR to consider alternatives as:

"A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of project design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects."

This is discussed further below.

4.1.1 New Dublin City Library

4.1.1.1 Background

The proposed Parnell Square Cultural Quarter Development has been informed by the vision, numerous studies and extensive consultation by Dublin City Council, in respect of delivering a new City Library at Parnell Square, which delivers a facility befitting a capital city, accessible to all, where it has potential to connect with other publicly accessible cultural and creative facilities (e.g. the Hugh Lane Gallery) through an enhanced public realm, in an historic setting that would also benefit from inner city urban regeneration. This has informed the ultimate brief for the project, now proposed by the Applicant.

The ambition from the outset has been to create a library that will inspire, excite, welcome. And, that will facilitate connections with other cultural and community facilities, through an enhanced public realm. This ambition focuses on 7 key concepts / themes that described a modern-day library, namely:

1. Learning at the heart of the library.
2. An inspiring place for children, young people and families.

3. A civic meeting place, a free democratic and cultural hub, a public commons and place for intercultural dialogue.
4. A place that celebrates imagination, in both the written and spoken word — making a Storyhouse Hub for Dublin.
5. A Place that nurtures ideas, a Centre for Innovation, Business, Enterprise and Design.
6. A connected place which builds relationships, partnerships acting as a catalyst for community activity, connecting with culutral providers in the quarter.
7. A Digital library for the 21st century where Dubliners have access to the latest technologies – addressing all literacies, print, media and digital.

As part of the desktop studies, carried out by Dublin City Council Libraries, it was outlined that the most successful international libraries include a list of key attributes which include:

- location beside dense residential areas;
- location at urban hubs and close to public transport;
- access to adequate outdoor public space associated with them; and
- street level access to promote interaction between outside and inside.

4.1.1.1.1 Library components

The Design Team has been guided by a specific design brief which has informed the principle, design, layout and intent of the proposed development. Figure 4.1 illustrates the key aspects of the design brief for the library.

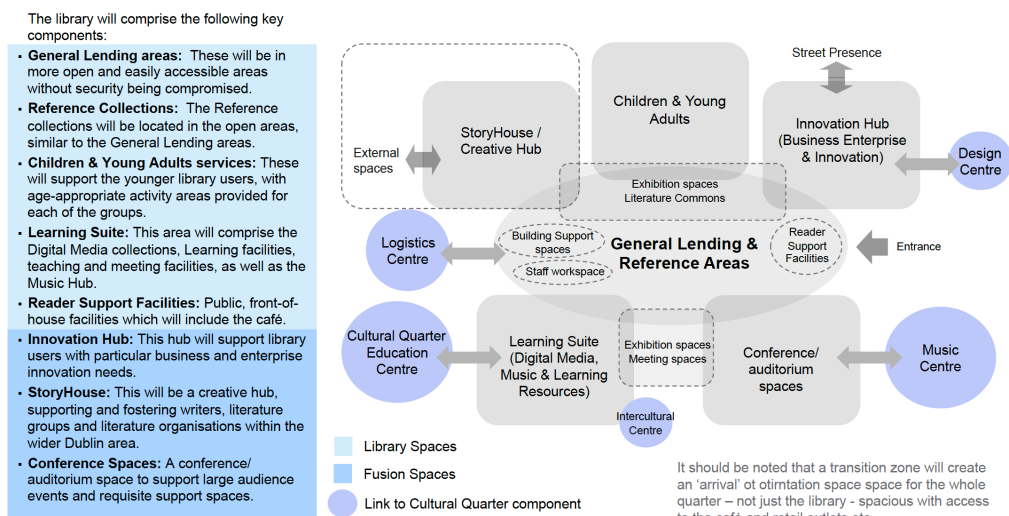


Figure 4.1: Parnell Square Cultural Quarter: Strategic Brief**4.1.1.2 Alternative Location**

Proposals for a central library have been discussed for many years, dating as far back as 1883.

The Ilac Centre library was Dublin's first central library, established in 1986. However, by 1996 the inadequacies of this facilities to meet the demands being placed on it were already becoming evident.

The existing Central Library measures c. 2,273 sq.m in size with limited room for expansion. It is located at first floor level, off the central mall internal to the Ilac Shopping Centre. The library provides an important community resource and offers a range of services. There are 40no. full time staff members. Visitor numbers amount to c.1,000 persons on average per day.

It has been identified through extensive research and consultation by the Dublin City Council Libraries that the central library in the Ilac Centre should be relocated to facilitate its expansion to meet the requirements of a 21st Century facility for an international city, and to improve the visibility and accessibility of the library and its community and cultural facilities for all citizens of and visitors to the city. The new facility would provide more space for study and learning, be adaptable to new technologies, provide ancillary facilities and function as a destination of cultural and civic importance.

Parnell Square was identified as an appropriate location for the new City Library. The selection of the project site has had regard to the assessment and findings of the following documents:

- Dublin City Library Project - Interim Report on Site Selection, February 2011
- Parnell Square Cultural Quarter: A Catalyst for Renewal growth along the Civic Spine, Vision Document, April 2013
- Dublin City Council Parnell Square Cultural Quarter: Public Consultation Green Hat 2013 Parnell Square Report, 2013

This preferred site was selected from 6no. site options, as follows:

1. Henry Street
2. Wolfe Tone Street
3. Dominick Street
4. Abbey Street

5. Parnell Square North
6. St. Michan's Street

A copy of the reports identified above are appended to the planning application report.

The project site at Parnell Square North has been selected in respect of its ability to best deliver on the following essential criteria:

1. Public thoroughfare, visitability and accessibility
2. Ground floor location or multi level building
3. Independence of access
4. Potential for expansion-on the site or into adjoining buildings
5. Access for disabled parking
6. Access for deliveries
7. Proximity to other cultural and educational services

In addition, through the restoration and adaptive reuse and extension of the existing historic buildings on site, it meets the Dublin City Development Plan objective for north inner city regeneration, reuse of protected structure, and protection of the architectural and cultural heritage and character of the area.

The location of the new Library is located a little over 500m from the existing facility. The new facility is thus located within the same general catchment area. It can deliver an expanded and enhanced range of educational and cultural facilities within a free democratic space to an increased number of visitors from the local and wider area.

Most successful international libraries are located at urban hubs, close to public transport and adequate associated outdoor space. Street level access is a key criterion. Libraries that are visible, accessible and welcoming for all have been found to be more capable of engaging their communities.

The development of the new City library at Parnell Square North has the opportunity to create a new destination building and enhance civic presence in a dense, mixed use, diverse and historic area of the City Centre, well connected and served by multi-modal transport options.

The location of the Dublin City Library at Parnell Square is promoted in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016 – 2022. The City Plan, being informed by extensive expert research and assessment, subject of extensive public consultation, and whose adoption is a

reserved function of the Elected Members of the Council, can be said to represent the vision and ambitions of the citizens of Dublin City for sustainable development during the life of the plan.

The Development Plan is subject of Strategic Environmental Assessment to ensure that its aims, policies and objectives do not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the environment.

It is a specific objective of Dublin City (**Objective CHC032**):

“To promote and facilitate the development of a mixed-use cultural facility in Parnell Square anchored by a New City Library, stimulating the Regeneration of the north inner city.”

Choosing an alternative location would not realise the implementation of Objective CHC032, or the aspiration of the City Development Plan to expand the public perception of the city core through the creation of new destinations.

Section 4.5.5 of the City Plan identifies a desire to expand and develop the extent of public realm within the city core. In this context the Plan recognises the importance of creating a new cultural quarter at Parnell Square. A key part of ensuring successful civic space at Parnell Square, as part of the ‘Civic Spine’ through the city centre, involves the re-location of the City Library to Parnell Square. This, together with enhancements to the public realm, the historic setting and connections with other cultural facilities, would allow Parnell Square North act as an identifiable and attractive destination that would expand the public’s perception of the city core.

The site is occupied by and adjoins other protected Georgian buildings, including the Hugh Lane Gallery, within the context of a traditional Georgian Square. Choosing an alternative location would likely result in no significant change to this unused, brownfield city centre site, risking further damage to the 8no. protected structures through lack of use.

Further discussion of the planning policy context supporting the proposed development at the project site is provided in the planning application report, prepared by Stephen Little & Associates, that accompanies the application.

4.1.1.3 Alternative Design & Layout

Upon determining the most suitable site location, the design and layout options for the proposed Parnell Square Cultural Quarter,

including new City Library and public realm works, were subject of an in depth planning design process to achieve the optimal design solution in the context of the site sensitivities and complexities.

Dublin City Libraries brief for the new City Library seeks to deliver sufficient floor space to accommodate all of the library components required to meet the requirements of a 21st Century facility. The new library would also provide more space for study and learning, be adaptable to new technologies, provide ancillary facilities and perform as a destination of cultural and civic importance befitting a new City Library in the Capital City. It is expected to accommodate c.3,000 visitors per day.

The library brief is proposed to be delivered generally through the adaptive conservation and reuse of the original Georgian Houses and a new extension to the rear of the houses. The design evolution is described in further detail in the Design Statement and the Protected Structures Impact Statement (PSIS) prepared by the project architects. This is also summarised in Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development of this EIAR.

A conservation design strategy and design options have been identified, which relate to the proposed interventions to the original houses. Design options are identified in order to ensure that the best balance between conservation and adaptive reuse as the City Library and cultural use is achieved. While the design strategy and options have been identified, the final determination of which design option to take in some cases will not be possible in advance of commencement of further site investigation and conservation works on site in consultation with the relevant conservation expert.

All of the floor area and library use requirements cannot be accommodated within the Georgian buildings, and must be accommodated in a new extension to the rear of the existing buildings (House Nos.23-28). Due to the specific characteristics of the open rear area to the rear of Nos. 23-28, the alternative design and layout options are limited. There is no surviving rear curtilage at Nos. 20 & 21.

The project architects, working with Dublin City Libraries, carried out a series of studies of the various possibilities for a new build extension and associated interaction with the protected structures (House Nos. 23-28). The design and layout of the proposed development has been subject of an iterative design process. A shortlist of three development options has been provided for the purposes of this section, which are discussed below.

The chosen scheme amalgamated the advantages of the different schemes, and was further refined and developed to reflect the best options for the New City Library in the context of environmental considerations.

The proposed development provides a unique opportunity for free and welcome public enjoyment of the Georgian buildings and the proposed new space, as a library facility. This would not be replicated in the reuse of historic buildings for private homes, offices or hotels.

4.1.1.3.1 Strategy for Protected Structures

The Georgian buildings have already been subject to change of use and design modification over time. Their last use was as a school. The proposed development would see a further layering of institutional use as a City Library, through conservation and adaptation.

The brief of the Dublin City Libraries has influenced the scope of the proposed conservation and design alterations to the Protected Structures, in order to deliver a functional modern library and a safe, attractive, public building.

The design approach and intent behind the proposed changes to the Protected Structures are outlined in the accompanying Protected Structure Assessment Report (PSIS), prepared by Shaffery Conservation Architects.

The principal driving force behind the development is guided by the conservation and adaptive re-use of the existing protected structures on site.

The proposals submitted are based on extensive considerations of the works necessary to deliver the requirements of the new City Library functions in line with the design and conservation strategies. We refer to the Protected Structure Impact Statement prepared by Shaffery Conservation Architects for further details.

4.1.1.3.2 New Build Design Approach

The project architects, working with Dublin City Libraries, carried out an iterative series of design studies for a connected new build extension to the rear of House Nos. 23-28. A shortlist of three development options is provided for the purposes of identifying design alternatives considered. These are discussed in turn below.

Option 1 - Building Design & Layout

Option includes for the preservation of the protected structures by extending to the rear in 'tree like' structure that allow for the creation of space at ground level and outdoor landscaped terraces at roof level.

This design option involved the incorporation of the Project brief to the selected site

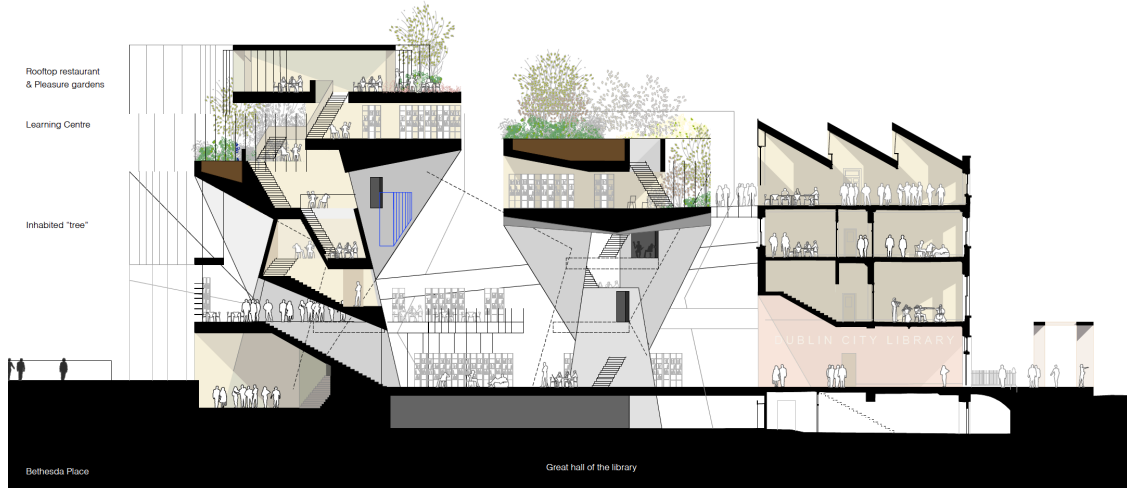


Figure 4.2: Option 1 - cross section through the site.

Advantages

- Interventions to the Protected Structures reduced with respect to: loading, fire, accessibility, servicing etc.
- Unique library setting and design and panoramic views across the Dublin City and Mountains.
- The new building would be enclosed within a glass façade.

Disadvantages

- The layouts present a less efficient use of space.
- The development incorporates significant amounts of glazing around the building.
- The required floorspace would be entirely contained within the new build, creating a large scale development to the rear of the site.
- Building height and scale towards the rear of the site – away from the Protected Structures, but in close proximity to residential uses.
- No detailed design plan for site services (fire, deliveries and access along the rear of the site)

Option 2 – Building Design & Layout

Following on from Option 1, the Design Team sought to maintain the advantages and re-examine the disadvantages of this design approach, in the context of the design brief.

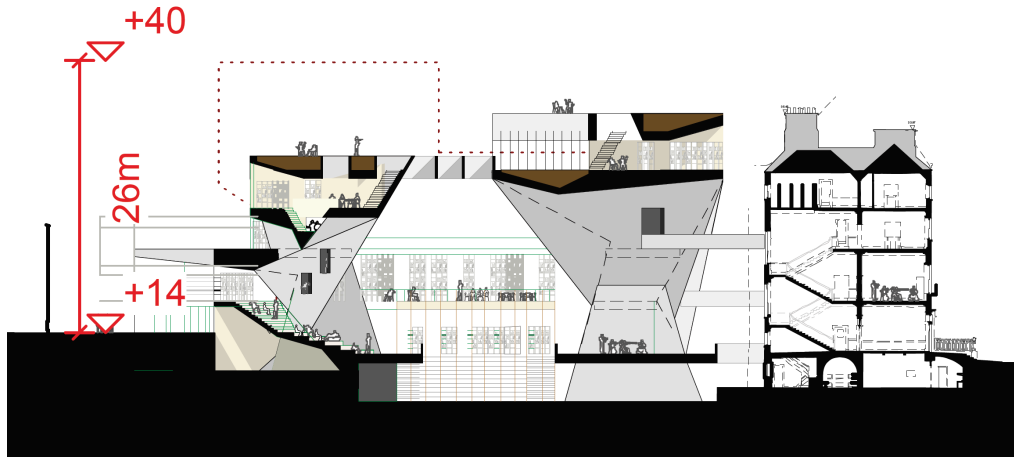


Figure 4.3: Option 2 – Cross Section through the site.

Advantages

- Massing to the rear reduced. A dotted line shown on Figure 4.3 illustrates the previous extent of the building.
- More interaction with and linkages to the Protected Structures.

Disadvantages

- The massing in proximity to the protected structures to the south.

Option 3 – Building Design & Layout

Follows on from findings regarding Options 1 & 2 above.

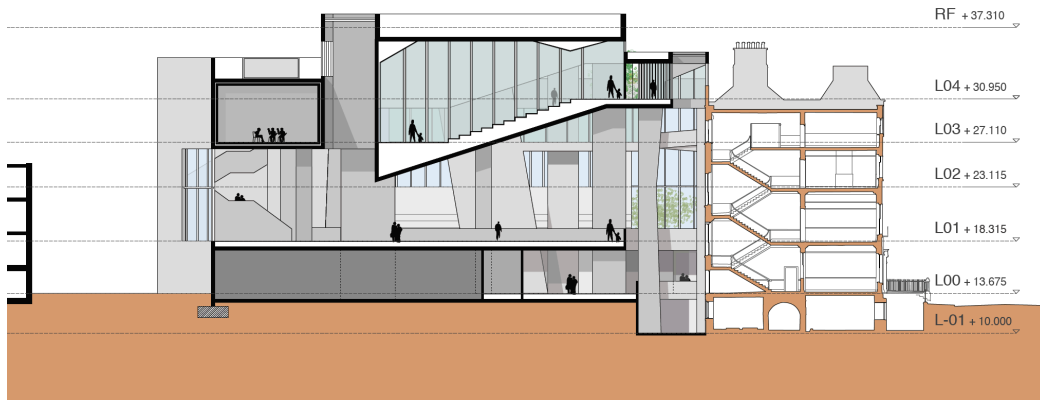


Figure 4.4: Option 3 – Cross Section through the site.

Advantages

- Building height re-organised into the centre of the site.
- More interaction with and linkages to the Protected Structures.

Disadvantages

- The proposed height adjacent to Protected Structure. To be subject of visual impact assessment.
- The proposed elevations and interactions with neighbouring properties to be further explored.

The emergent preferred scheme amalgamated the advantages of the different study outcomes. This was then refined and developed to reflect the best design option for the New City Library, in the context of site constraints.

The preferred new build design option has due regard to the following immediate potentially long term environmental impact considerations associated with same: **Cultural Heritage (architectural heritage and archaeology), Land, Visual Impact, Sunlight & Daylight.**

Having reviewed the pros and cons of the multiple design alternatives considered, the principal reasons for choosing the preferred new build design option include:

- The floorplates have been carefully designed to accommodate the functional requirements of the library and its use as a public space.
- The development engages with the Protected Structures in a manner that seeks to minimise interventions in the historic character and fabric of the original houses, while also seeking to minimise the bulk of the new building to the rear.
- Room function, window placement (including window level relative to internal finished floor level) and window treatments within the new extension have been carefully considered to prevent any significant opportunity for overlooking of neighbouring properties (particularly residential accommodation) to the north, east and west.
- Brick finish elevations tie in appropriately to the character of the surrounding environment.

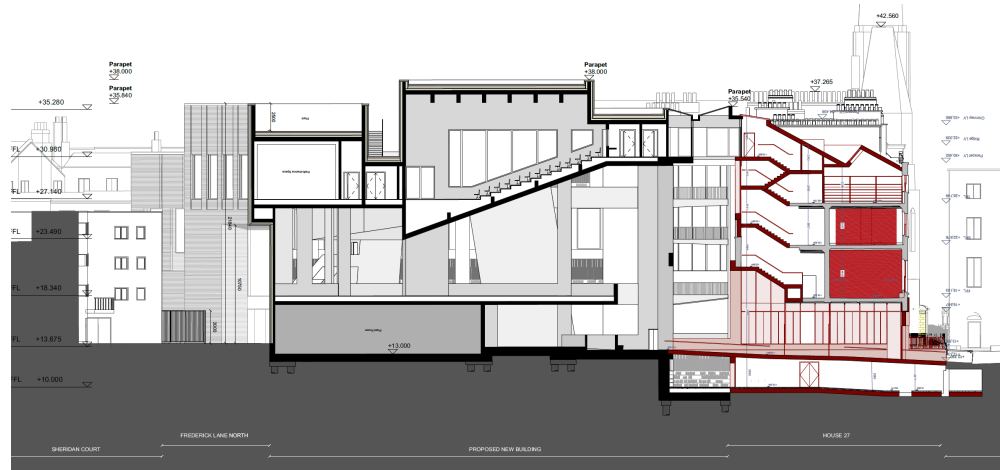


Figure 4.5: Planning Design Scheme

Further design information is provided in Chapter 3 of the EIAR and in the accompanying Design Statement, prepared by Grafton Architects and Shaffrey Architects.

4.1.1.3.3 Public Realm Works

The alternative landscape design and layout of the public enhancements along Parnell Square North has been guided by Aecom Consulting Engineers report, titled 'Parnell Square Cultural Quarter – Options Assessment Report Options Assessment'.

A copy of this report accompanies the planning application documentation. This report has been prepared to assess the potential street configuration options for Parnell Square North from a transportation perspective. We refer the reader to the

specific details of the report which in summary outlines the following options considered:

Option 1 - Do minimum. Existing Situation

Option 2 - Two 3m-wide traffic lanes for all traffic,

Option 2A - Two 3m-wide traffic lanes, (One lane for Public Transport and One for general traffic)

Option 3 - One 3m-wide traffic lane for all traffic

Option 3A - One 3m-wide traffic lane for Buses, Coaches, Taxis and Cyclists

Option 4 - Pedestrianisation of Parnell Square North



Figure 4.6: Proposed Public Realm Option 2A

Option 4 scored highest in respect of design context, due to the proposed removal of the traffic lanes along Parnell Square North. The removal of traffic lanes would remove vehicle conflicts and increase the overall attractiveness of the scheme area for cyclists and pedestrians.

Conversely, Option 4 score lowest in respect of the traffic criteria, due to the proposed restrictions on through traffic on Parnell Square North, the impact on journey times on the local road network, the impact on existing bus routes, and vehicular access to businesses along Parnell Square North.

Options 3 and 3A scored lowest in respect of the delivery context criteria, as their proposed designs depart furthest from the existing situation and do not have the advantage of fully closing the road during the construction period as Option 4.

Options 2 and 2A scored well under the traffic and delivery contexts and are consequently the highest ranked options overall. The two differ only in terms of whether the near side lane would be used as a bus lane.

Option 2A as shown in Figure 4.6, comprises two 3m-wide traffic lanes, (one lane for public transport and one for general vehicular traffic). This would allow for bus stopping and delivery set down on Parnell Square North. Hence, Option 2A is identified as the strongest design option in the Aecom report.



Figure 4.7: Illustration of Option 2A, extract from the AECOM Roads Option Report

This decision was agreed within the Design Team and through consultation with the various transport related stakeholders outlined below.

In overall terms, the provision of a shared surface for cyclists and pedestrians on Parnell Square North, is likely to have to be a positive long term significant impact on the transportation environment during the operational phase. For further details in relation to the impacts on Transportation, we refer the reader to Chapter 5.5: 'Transportation' of this EIAR.

4.1.1.4 The Chosen Scheme – Principal Reasons for Choice

The site has been identified through a careful site selection process. The nature of development proposed is actively promoted in the statutory Development Plan for this particular location.

The chosen design scheme amalgamates the advantages of the various study outcomes for the existing and new build elements, and for the public realm options.

The preferred scheme was then refined and developed, having regard also to the baseline EIAR impact findings, to reflect the best fit design option for Parnell Square Cultural Quarter, in the context of the site sensitivities, opportunities and constraints.

Particular attention is paid to achieving appropriate architectural heritage conservation, visual impact (massing), accessibility, space (including open space) and library functions. Conservation impact was of paramount concern throughout the design process.

Ultimately, the proposed development provides a unique opportunity for free and accessible public enjoyment of the Georgian buildings and the proposed new space, as a library and cultural facility. This would not be replicated in the reuse of historic buildings as private homes, offices or hotel accommodation.

Further detailed discussion of design considerations are set out in the accompanying Architectural Design Statement prepared by Grafton Architects and Shaffrey Architects, the Protected Structure Impact Statement prepared by Shaffrey Architects, the Parnell Square Options Report prepared by Aecom Transportation Consultants, and the Public Realm and Landscape Report prepared by Bernard Seymour Landscape Architects.

The final planning design scheme is now represented in the plans & particulars which accompany the planning application to the Board.

4.1.1.5 Consultation about consideration of alternatives

Non-statutory consultation on the Parnell Square Cultural Quarter, including a New City Library and civic space, was carried out by Green Hat (May to June 2013), on behalf of Dublin City Council. A copy of this report is enclosed with the

planning application and can be found as an Appendix to the Planning Report. The consultation has informed the design brief for the proposed development. This has in turn guided the proposed development.

The identification of Parnell Square as the most appropriate location for the development of a mixed-use cultural facility anchored by a New City Library is given statutory weight in the democratically adopted Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022, following a period of public consultation, consultation with Prescribed Bodies, Appropriate Assessment Screening and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The project itself has been subject of further consultation with the various departments of Dublin City Council, prescribed bodies, and local stakeholders, prior to the making of the application to An Bord Pleanála.

4.1.2 Alternative Processes

Alternative processes for the new build and public realm works at construction and operational phase of the development are outlined as follows:

4.1.2.1 Construction Phase

The proposed construction works comprise relatively standard building construction processes for the new build element, and in the context of its relationship with the protected structures.

Conservation works to the protected structures represent an additional challenge to the project. However, these are not unusual for a project of this nature, involving the adaptive reuse of Georgian buildings. Design methodology and options have been identified and best conservation practice determined on site in the case of the works identified by Shaffrey Grade 1 Conservation Architects. Where necessary it is expected that the Developer will be allowed to engage in further consultation with the appropriate authority (Dublin City Council) and its Planning and Conservation Officers, on certain matters of detailed design, specification, methodologies in advance of their implementation.

No specific alternative construction processes are identified for this EIAR.

4.1.2.2 Operational Phase

In terms of alternative processes during operational phase, the City Library will incorporate best practice design & management, for example internal climatic control, appropriate lighting and sound, often found in typical modern-day libraries.

There are no new, unusual or technically challenging operational techniques required.

No alternative operational processes have therefore been considered at this point.

4.1.3 Alternative Mitigation Measures

The proposed mitigation measures contained within this EIAR, summarised under Chapter 6: Summary of Mitigation Measures, represent best practice principals at the time of preparing this EIAR.

No alternative mitigation measures for construction or operational phase have been proposed at this point.

4.1.4 'Do-Nothing' Alternative

The 'do-nothing' alternative represents the 'likely future receiving environment' description of each of the receiving environments, described under Chapter 5.

Do-nothing alternative is not considered an option, particularly in the context of Cultural Heritage – Architectural Heritage. Such an approach would represent the continued deterioration of the quality of the existing protected structures through lack of appropriate use. It is beyond the scope of this EIAR to evaluate an unknown future use for the site.

The existing services provided at the Central Library have been under stress since 1996. As the City population increases the demand for an appropriately designed City Library - capable of accommodating modern library facilities and freely available to the public - has been identified.

The adaptive reuse and extension of the existing buildings at this site for another institutional use, in this case the Dublin City Library, and enhancements to the public realm at Parnell Square north, is considered appropriate in the context of the specific objectives of the Dublin City Development Plan.

The 'Do-Nothing' alternative is not considered an appropriate option.

4.1.5 Conclusion on Alternatives Considered

It is submitted that an appropriate site has been identified for this project. The existing site characteristics have informed the design response to the conservation, adaptive reuse and extension of a new building at this site and associated public realm enhancements.

The proposed development achieves the vision for the Parnell Square Cultural Quarter, by implementing the objective of the Dublin City Development Plan to deliver a mixed use cultural facility anchored by a new 21st century City Library and enhanced public realm, extending the perception of the city core to the northern end of the 'Civic Spine', and stimulating the regeneration of the north inner city in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.