



Riverbank Arts Centre and
Kildare County Library Head Quarters,
Main Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare

*Cover image; Illustrative render of proposal

DESIGN REPORT

TO ACCOMPANY PART 8 APPLICATION
12th JUNE 2026

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This design report to be read in conjunction with the following;

Table 1. Accompanying Documents

DOCUMENT	PREPARED BY
Survey, Demolition and Proposed Architectural Drawings	Studio Red Architects
Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment	Studio Red Architects
Drainage Drawings Engineering Services Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment	CORA Consulting Engineers CORA Consulting Engineers CORA Consulting Engineers
Preliminary Construction Management Plan	CORA Consulting Engineers
Energy Statement and Report on Sustainability Measures	T5 Partnership Ltd. Consulting Engineers
Roof Plant General Arrangement drawings	T5 Partnership Ltd. Consulting Engineers
Environmental Impact Assessment Screening, 2024	MacCabe Durney Barnes
Screening for Appropriate Assessment, 2024	NM Ecology Ltd. Consultant Ecologists
Bat Survey, 2026	Gerard Tobin, BSc, MA, Ecological Consultant
Hazard Evaluation / Condition Assessment And Plan Of Remedial Works	Arbor Care Ltd, Professional Consulting Tree Service
OTHER Accessibility Audit, 2016	O'Herlihy Access Consultancy

List of Abbreviations

BC(A)R	Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014
KCC	Kildare County Council
NZEB	Nearly Zero Energy Buildings
RAC	Riverbank Arts Centre
TGD	Technical Guidance Document
UD	Universal Design
UD+	Universal Design Plus

Introduction



Fig. 1 Visualisation of Proposed Foyer/ Café space, Studio Red Architects

Executive Summary

This design report has been prepared by Studio Red Architects to accompany the Part 8 application for the proposed development of Riverbank Arts Centre and Kildare County Library Head Quarters, Main Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare, on behalf of Kildare County Council.

This report gives an overview of the client vision and brief and the main elements of the project. It touches on the context of the town of Newbridge and the immediate environs of the site, as well as summarising the project's architectural, environmental and universal design principles, amongst other considerations. The report is to be read in conjunction with architectural drawings, engineering drawings and all other reports submitted with the Part 8 application, as listed under Accompanying Documents.

The proposed Riverbank Arts Centre and Kildare County Library HQ brings together a contemporary and state-of-the-art theatre, two exhibition galleries, multipurpose café / performance space, and workshop spaces. The proposal has been tested against all known constraints and developed in detail to ensure the building provides the highest level of public access and is respectful of its neighbours.

This redesign of Riverbank Arts Centre is impressive in its ambition as a transformative cultural space for the town of Newbridge in its prominent location on Main Street, adjacent to Newbridge Library and the Liffey linear park. The proposal has responded to our client's ambition to create a welcoming, innovative space that adds to this unique setting. It is at once respectful of its context and will bring a feeling of renewal and excitement to the town of Newbridge.

Design Team

A Single Point Design Team was appointed by Riverbank Arts Centre, and Kildare County Council on 27th October 2021, through a competitive tender process. The design team is led by Studio Red Architects. The full design team for Riverbank Arts Centre and Kildare County Library HQ is composed of:

Table 2. Design Team

BODY	ROLE	CONTACT
Riverbank Arts Centre, Kildare County Library, Kildare County Council	Client (the applicant)	
CORA Consulting Engineers	Civil and Structural Engineering Services	John Pigott, Chartered Engineer
	Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Services	
Profire	Fire Safety Engineering and Universal Access Consultant	Daniel Tiedemann
BPM (Brendan Merry and Partners)		Damien Morgan, M.S.C.S.I., M.R.I.C.S
Garland H&S	Health and Safety Consultants	Arran Ankers BSc, MBS(H&S)
Additional Consultant		
		Alex Wardle, Associate consultant

Site Appraisal

1.1 Context and Environs

Riverbank Arts Centre is a prominent landmark, and significant gateway building to Newbridge, when approaching from St. Conleth's Bridge. The subject site is located on the south side of Main Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare. A corner site, the existing, detached building has significant frontage onto Main street, and also addresses Liffey Terrace, a one-way residential street, to its south west boundary.

To the east of the building is Newbridge (County) Library, which comprises of a protected structure connected to a single-storey, flat roof, 1970s extension, which wraps around to Athgarvan Road. The protected structure is a two-storey International Modern-style library, built in 1936, forming the corner of Main Street and Athgarvan Road (NIAH Regional Interest, Reg. no. 11818036, RPS no. B23-41).

There is currently shared, gated access to a yard to the rear of Riverbank Arts Centre and the library complex from Main Street. While both in the ownership of Kildare County Council, this yard falls within the site boundary of the proposed Kildare County Library development previously referenced.



Fig. 2 Google earth screen capture, existing Liffey Terrace elevation



Fig. 3 Google earth screen capture, Shared rear access and Library HQ



Fig. 4 Google earth screen capture, existing view to corner of Main Street and Liffey Terrace



Fig. 5 Google earth screen capture, existing Liffey Terrace elevation

1.2 Cultural Quarter

The Draft Town Renewal Masterplan, prepared by the Public Realm Team of Kildare Co. Co. in partnership with Metropolitan Workshop, includes;

an implementation strategy for the town with several projects ready to be developed to Part 8 approval stage. The combination of projects on Main Street and on surrounding streets and public squares are proposed to cluster together to form the Newbridge Cultural Quarter.

(Section 4.3.1)

This document includes the existing Riverbank Arts Centre as one of its key projects supported by the renewal, as illustrated in the masterplan below.

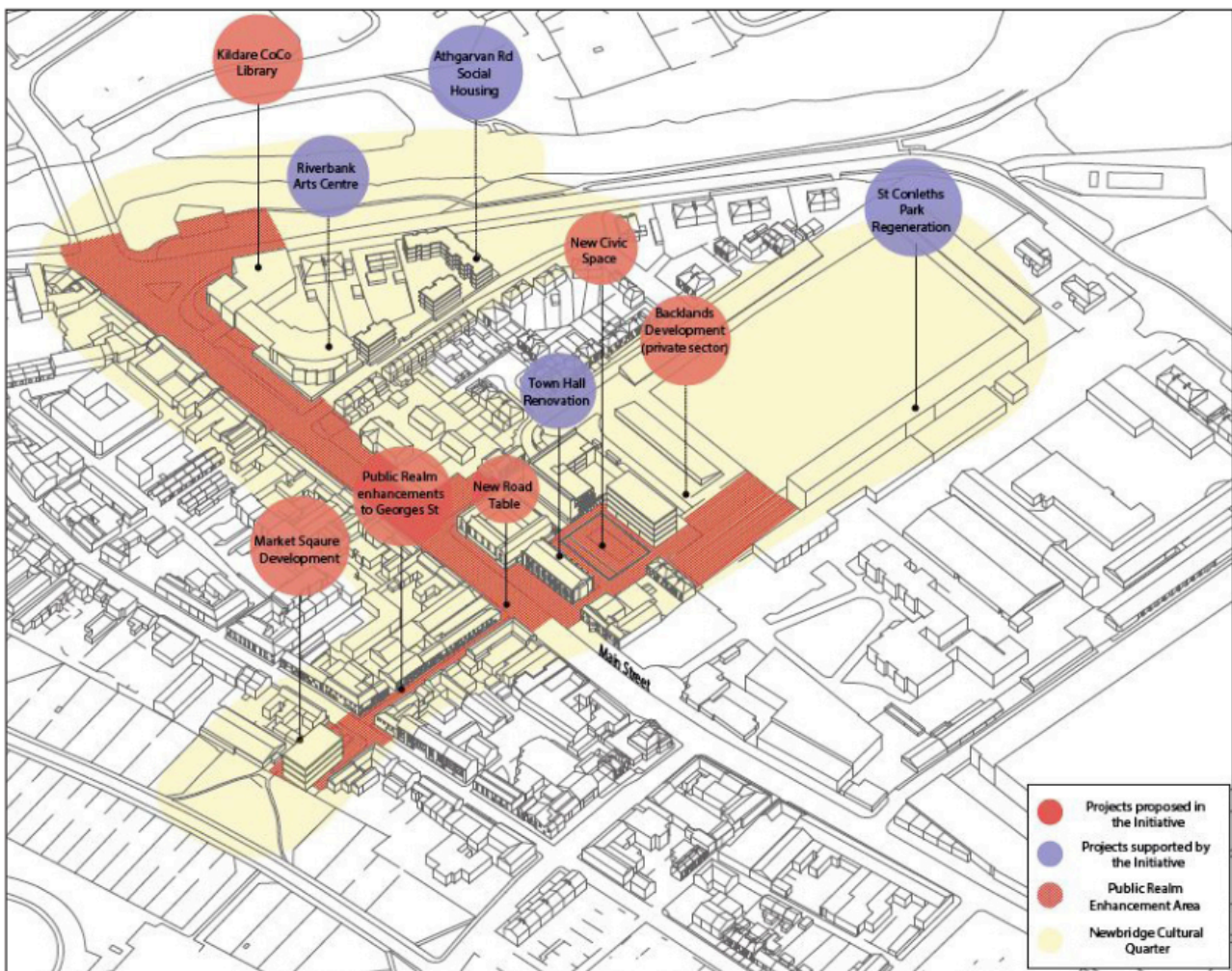


Fig. 6 Extract from Draft Newbridge Town Renewal Masterplan, Metropolitan Workshop

1.3 Historical Development

The first settlement in Newbridge was a 'mass house' built adjacent to a bridge located at the 'watering gates' circa 1730, followed by the town's namesake, an inn called 'New Bridge Inn,' recorded as early as 1750. This first bridge, destroyed by floods in 1789, was replaced by today's St. Conleth's Bridge, engineered by William Chapman. The high road was subsequently redirected to this new bridge, continuing on the route of present day Main Street. The modern town's origin lies in the establishment of the Cavalry Barracks (1815-1819) which originally encompassed everything south of Main Street as far as Military Road, bordered by the river Liffey to the east and Cutlery Road to the west. With its arrival, the homes and businesses were developed in the vicinity to serve the Barracks, until it became a thriving, industrious town.

Newbridge continued to expand rapidly, with the establishment of the new railway (1846), and Curragh Camp (1855), until the withdrawal of the British Army in May 1922 resulted in a period of decline. Little of the barracks remains today, however new industries were established from the beginning of the Irish Free State, and throughout the 20th century, including; Newbridge Cutlery (1934), Bord na Móna (1946), Polaroid (1978), Oral B (1983), Pfizer (1992) etc. These industries have cemented Newbridge as a significant commercial and retail town in Co. Kildare and the country. Extensive residential developments have and continue to arrive, serving both local industries and as a commuter town to the Capital. The population of Newbridge was recorded as 24,366 in the 2022 census.

As can be traced in the map extracts below, the subject site was initially a walled garden in the barracks, between the Commanding Officers HQ and stables, before the later development of Liffey Terrace.



Fig. 7 "County Kildare : Newbridge : sheet 7", (1872) OSI 19th Century Maps, UCD Digital Library

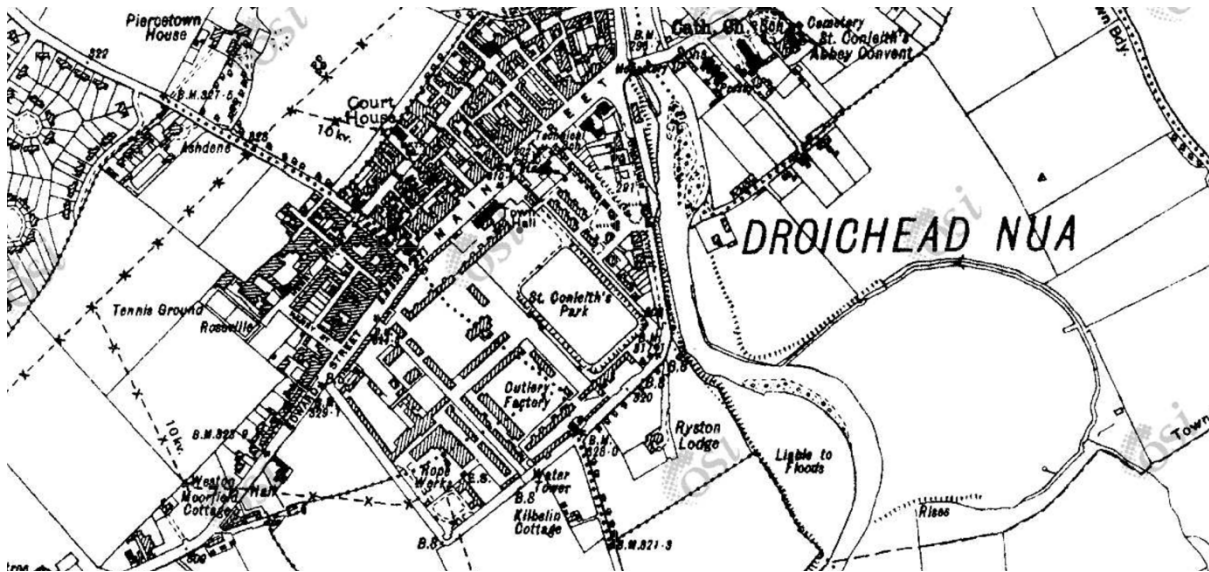


Fig. 8 Newbridge 6 inch, last edition map.

1.4 Planning Context

The redevelopment of Riverbank Arts Centre has been through a pre-planning process, and a draft proposal has been well received when presented to the Kildare Municipal District meeting in December 2024.

The design team has engaged with all relevant departments in KCC throughout the design process to incorporate their feedback, including;

- Planning
- Strategic Projects and Public Realm
- Heritage
- MD Engineer
- Transportation
- Water services
- Environment
- Fire Officers
- Parks

The proposal has also been developed with regard to all relevant national, regional and use specific guidelines and development plans, including;

- Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns (2022). (DHLGH)
- Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029
- Newbridge Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031 Pre-Draft
- Newbridge Social Infrastructure Audit, 2025, (section 3.6 Arts and Culture)
- A Cultural & Civic Quarter for Newbridge: Strategies for enhancing public life
- Newbridge Settlement Plan: Volume 2: Settlement Plans Part A: Self-Sustaining Growth Towns (2026)
- Draft Newbridge Town Renewal Masterplan

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REPORT

As per Town Centre Objective (TCO) 3.6, “Newbridge is considered well-served by arts and cultural facilities, primarily through the Riverbank Arts Centre, which offers regular music, theatre, comedy, family events and workshops.” (Pp. 71) It is apparent that KCC recognises the value of Riverbank as a social and cultural centre for residents, and in section 4.3.1 of the current development plan, KCC has committed to supporting “The redevelopment to one of Kildare’s premier cultural facilities which to attract international acts and further support the production of all categories of art at a local level.”

Notably, the neighbouring Newbridge (County) Library has been granted planning permission for the development of the Kildare County Library, Archives and Cultural Centre, under Development Reference No. P82022.21. This includes works to the public realm on Main Street and to the shared courtyard to the south of both developments. This proposal for Riverbank Arts Centre is considered to be complementary to the Library development, while independent of it.

Map 14: Locations of Arts and Culture Facilities



Fig. 9 AC4 denotes location of Riverbank Arts Centre



Fig. 10 Visualisation of Proposed Kildare County Library, Archives and Cultural Centre, Metropolitan Workshop.

1.5 Current Condition and Building Use

The existing building for Riverbank Arts Centre and Library HQ was purpose built in 2000. However, despite its relatively recent development, the current condition of the building is not fit for the programming of the arts centre, nor does the building layout promote accessibility, which is a poor reflection of the Arts Centre's universal access ethos.

A fundamental flaw in the existing public building is that the only public access to the Arts Centre is via an upper ground floor plaza, and the existing stepped access and ramp to this plaza are both non-compliant with Part M. Similarly, while the existing auditorium includes 2no. wheelchair spaces, both of these spaces are to front of stage with poor visibility, inadequate wheelchair turning space, and without provision for accompanying persons. As such, it is a spurious claim that there are authentic wheelchair spaces at all. Neither is there accessible WC or adult changing facilities provided back-of-house for performers of limited ability, or who use wheelchairs. Even for able audience members, reports of discomfort and access issues due to the quality and closeness of the auditorium seating are widespread.

Under Section 25 of the Disability Act 2005, "a public body shall ensure that its public buildings are, as far as practicable, accessible to persons with disabilities." Under this act, all existing public buildings must be brought in line with Part M Regulations.

An accessibility audit carried out almost 10 years ago in 2016, highlighted the building's short-comings in accessibility, and recommended a series of high priority actions in both management/operations and remedial works to the building design. The latter included;

- Public realm improvements/ maintenance
- Provision of accessible parking bays
- Addressing existing non-compliant stepped/ramped external access routes
- Provision of a street level access-route / platform lift
- Improved signage and way-finding
- Addressing internal public stair so as to comply with Part M ambulant disabled requirements
- Addressing non-compliance issues with escape stairs
- Additional / improved wheelchair spaces in auditorium
- Improved comfort and access to standard auditorium seating
- Remedial works to inconsistent risers and goings to raked seating
- Improved accessibility to performer facilities/ back of house spaces i.e. accessible WC/shower, greenroom
- Provision of fully compliant accessible WC
- Provision of adult Changing Places toilet
- Improved accessibility and greater number of standard WCs for ambulant disabled persons

It is clear from the above, that even without the proposed expansion of the Arts Centre, major alterations to the existing building are long overdue, to bring it in line with energy and accessibility standards.

1.6 Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities:

- Rich arts programming with high audience attendance and visitor engagement
- Long elevation to Main Street, presents opportunity for stronger visual connection with passers-by
- Opportunity for public realm, streetscape improvements
- Access to shared rear courtyard, under-utilised at present
- Proximity to Newbridge (County) Library
- Located within future 'Newbridge Cultural Quarter,' as discussed under section 1.2
- Existing character and plot grain of Main Street streetscape facing front elevation
- Central Location in Newbridge, with proximity to public transport and parking
- Proximity to Liffey Linear Park

Constraints:

- Building occupies entire site, with exception of Liffey Terrace street frontage
- Multiple entry points
- Main public entry point at raised upper ground floor level
- Lower ground level entry point to rear carpark only, limited to staff
- Courtyard to rear and access shared with County Library building.
- Relationship with adjacent low density single and two-storey housing to Liffey Terrace
- Sloping streetscape
- Cluttered streetscape, under-utilised, raised public space
- Restrictive auditorium seating
- Restrictive theatre and backstage facilities



Fig. 11 Existing stepped entrance condition to Riverbank Arts Centre.

1.7 Site Investigation and Surveys

Detailed topographical surveys of the existing building and Liffey Terrace were carried out, and site analysis was conducted by the design team. A survey of existing trees on main street was also procured from a qualified arborist. Information was shared between the design team led by Metropolitan Workshop for the proposed neighbouring *Kildare County Library, Archives and Cultural Centre* development, and Studio Red Architects.

1.8 Character and Heritage of Adjacent Structures

Please refer to the accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Nicola Ryan, Conservation Architect Grade 2 of Studio Red Architects, for detailed analysis of the character and heritage of adjacent structures.

Design Approach/ Proposal

2.1 Client

Riverbank Arts Centre is the Kildare County arts centre, based in Newbridge. Funded by The Arts Council and Kildare County Council, Riverbank works in partnership with international, national and local artists to deliver an accessible and consistently high quality arts programme in an intimate environment. Their multi-disciplinary programme includes theatre, cinema, comedy, music, dance, workshops and visual arts. Riverbank is also a producer and co-producer of new work, both with visual and theatre artists. They commission exhibitions, host residencies and have presented world premieres of work by leading theatre companies. Riverbank has a particular focus on promoting early engagement with, and access to, the arts, through their dedicated children's gallery and theatre and workshop programming for younger audiences. The arts centre prides itself on being a

welcoming, friendly, accessible space to bring arts and culture to the centre of civic life and community in Newbridge and environs. We aim to germinate and generate a future audience for the arts in Newbridge and the wider county, by supporting lifelong participants and advocates for the arts.

(Riverbank Arts Centre, 2025)

2.2 Project Vision and Brief Development

The objective for the proposed Riverbank Arts Centre (RAC) is to serve as a unique centre for culture, creativity, learning, and community building. The design team has worked to develop this ambitious brief throughout this early design stage, a process made richer through discussions with the client, including the RAC and Kildare County Library HQ teams, members and representatives of Kildare County Council, and technical experts. Consultations were also held with immediate neighbours during the design process.

The level of arts provision by RAC as outlined in section 2.1 is impressive in its scale and reach. However, it is clear the organisation has outgrown the fabric of their building, to the point that it is now hindering its potential to positively impact the local community of Newbridge, wider population of Kildare, and indeed Riverbank's capacity to draw audiences and visitors on a national scale.

Throughout the brief development for the extension and refurbishment of the building, three core principles were held to the fore to maintain Riverbank's vision for the project;

1. Accessibility

- Accessibility to the arts – a major goal of the client is to break down barriers to entry, both physically and psychologically. The building must form part of the invitation for the local community to engage with the art centre's programme.
- Accessibility for all - regardless of ability, age, characteristics, background, the building must work hard to enable, rather than disable its users.

- To achieve both these aspects of accessibility, a holistic universal design approach was taken from the outset. Wayfinding was considered integral to the design, to naturally feed the user information on how to navigate through the space, and encourage engagement regardless of personal circumstance. It is essential that the building is a friendly and inviting space.
- The measures taken to address this brief requirement are outlined in section 2.3.

2. Energy Efficiency

- Building regulations, and the collective approach to climate change, has changed and evolved since the millennium, when RAC was originally built. All new works must incorporate best practice in energy efficiency: high levels of insulation, air tightness, ventilation, energy production on site through the use of solar panels, dealing with rainwater on site using a series of blue and green roofs and using the building layout to reduce heat loss.
- The measures taken to address this brief requirement are outlined in sections 2.10.

3. Community

- Riverbank strives to build community, both within the building, and through their outreach programs, with the belief that the Arts unite us. The building must support that principle, by creating a strong presence on Main Street which responds to the Proposed Kildare Library development. Together they will form a core part of the proposed Cultural Quarter referred to in section 1.2., and a new landmark focal point on entering the town from St. Conleth's Bridge. RAC aims to become a destination venue for the wider community of Kildare and beyond.

2.3 Access for all / Universal Design

As elaborated on in section 2.2, the client emphasised the importance of Accessibility For All from the outset, to include not only staff and the public, but also visiting players. The design team followed best practice for Universal Design when configuring the building's layout. This core principle has been integrated into the scheme design with the following measures;

- One entrance for all from Main Street, Newbridge
- Lift access close to main entrance
- Natural wayfinding with good visibility and clear movement through public spaces
- 2no. Changing place bathrooms: one for the public, another back of house.
- Choice of seating for wheelchair users within auditorium
- Seating in the round, at the café, for members of the Deaf Community
- Break out spaces for neurodiversity
- Consideration of turning circles to all circulation routes
- Accessibility considered for back-of-house staff and performers
- Stair-lift access to projectionist's booth

2.4 Form, Massing and Orientation

The proposed Riverbank Arts Centre and Kildare Library HQ incorporates elements of the existing structure, while extending outward to make the best use of the subject site's footprint and creating a welcoming and accessible presence on Main Street, Newbridge. The massing approach evolved from our careful reading of the place, its history and morphology, with the proposal intentionally remaining deferential to the existing protected Art Deco style library building.

While operating as a cohesive series of spaces internally, the external envelope is broken down to appear as a collection of volumes stepping upward with the natural rise of Main Street, Newbridge.

The entrance volume housing foyer/café is demarcated both materially and in its form as a horizontal volume designed to appear to float above glazing that visually connects passers-by to events in the Arts Centre. This volume extends beyond the ground level footprint to create a canopy over the entrance door. Meanwhile the gallery volumes take simple monolithic form in brick, with generous picture windows and chamfered brick reveals.

The elevational treatment to Liffey Terrace similarly divides what would otherwise be a monotonous plane, into three blocks to avoid dominating the two-storey terraced houses opposite, and single-storey housing adjacent. These facades are punctuated with a limited number of opes, predominantly to back-of-house spaces. This retains privacy for residents, while animating the elevation.

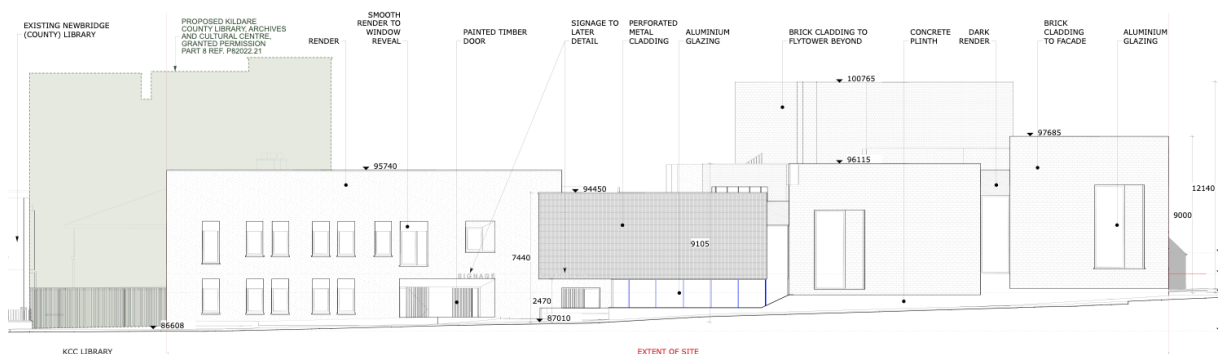


Fig. 12 Proposed Main Street elevation, Studio Red Architects

While the proposed fly-tower is necessarily of a significant height, it's positioning to the rear of the development ensures it will recede in elevation, and not be apparent at all to pedestrians on Main Street.

By knitting into the existing plot grain and fabric of Main Street and Liffey Terrace, the large floor plate of the arts centre is visually reduced. This presents Riverbank Arts Centre as a building of a more human scale, proportional and appropriate to surrounding streetscapes and the size of Newbridge town. It also corresponds to the client's vision for a welcoming rather than imposing front to the arts centre.

The proposal has been designed to avail of natural daylighting to main front-of-house spaces wherever possible, including through the introduction of clear-storey glazing to the foyer.



Fig. 13 Visualisation of stepping volumes in context of Main Street and library proposal, Studio Red Architects



Fig. 14 Visualisation of proposed RAC in context of Liffey Terrace, Studio Red Architects

2.5 Scheme Proposal – Layout and Programming

The project entails alterations and extensions to the existing arts centre element of the building, and alterations to the existing Library Headquarters element of the building, elaborated upon below in section 2.6.

The proposed works to Riverbank Arts Centre include:

- Relocation of entrance to street level, to provide equitable access
- Relocation of lobby, café and box office space to street level
- Increased audience capacity and accessibility of the theatre space
- Increased stage depth and addition of a fly tower to the theatre space
- Addition of 2no. Changing Place Bathrooms
- Improved backstage and ancillary service spaces
- Addition of a ground floor children's workshop space
- Addition of 2no. purpose built gallery spaces
- Improved staff facilities
- Overhaul of accessibility features

The above accommodation is facilitated through considerable alterations to the existing structures and extensions to the front, side and roof spaces. The key improvements are further elaborated on below.

Entrance

The proposed equitable entrance is approached by a gentle slope, or by a set of steps, from street level. In the existing condition, external steps and ramps leading upwards to an entrance at podium level had created a barrier to entry both physically and psychologically. In comparison, this considered threshold sequence will be inviting rather than daunting, and aims to create a strong street presence which engages passers-by and brings a new vibrancy to Newbridge's Main Street.

Gathering places and Access

Further to this approach, a generous foyer/café space has been located at the entrance and facing onto Main Street. This is a multi-purpose space – it functions as a gathering space for before or after an event, and equally as a welcoming café to entice members of the public, who might not otherwise have been aware of, or encouraged, to participate in a workshop, or to attend a performance. With the box office located in this space, as well as access to 2no. Changing Place toilets, the design has prioritised accessibility for all and community building. A draught lobby prevents heat loss to the exterior – so it's a safe, bright and warm place for people of all ages to socialise. Stairs leading to the first floor have been extruded into tiered seating, to offer opportunities as a stage/ raked seating for informal performance. Circulation at first floor level, which is served by a lift located next to the main entrance, is also generously sized. This provides a secondary foyer/ break-out space for interval audiences at upper seating levels, and gathering space for visitors to the galleries on exhibition opening nights etc. This circulation is open to the double-height foyer at ground level, which allows users to orientate themselves within the building.

The proposal also embraces its connection to a rear courtyard shared with Newbridge library, where the client envisions a multitude of outdoor events to be hosted in future, discussed under section 2.9.

Workshop

A workshop space has been located off the foyer area, to accommodate school programs, or any other community group gathering. The space is fully accessible, with good connection to the public spaces within the building, and also to the landscaped, multi-functional shared courtyard to the rear, to be carried out as part of the Kildare County Library development.

Theatre

The introduction of a fly tower with access gantries, and deeper stage to the auditorium will greatly expand the number and type of shows that can be accommodated at Riverbank Arts Centre. Charcoalblue theatre consultants have been engaged to specify spatial requirements, seating, equipment, theatrical lighting and acoustic materials in order to ensure the upgrade amounts to a world-class intimate venue.

Accessibility within the theatre space was a key factor in the design, for both performers and audience members. A choice of accessible seating has now been incorporated in the venue, in terms of sitting at the front or back of the auditorium - making it one of the most inclusive theatre spaces in Ireland. Seating for the general public has also been hugely improved in terms of comfort, all while expanding capacity to 215 no. seats. Access to the tiered seating is located as side aisles, allowing improved usability and safety.

Galleries

Two new gallery spaces are located in a prime location to the corner of Liffey Street and Main Street. This will give visibility to the work, and invite interest from passers-by. The galleries can act separately, or be opened into one space, with the flexibility of a bi- folding partition wall. Glazing has been considered to allow natural light and connection to the street, while maintaining significant wall space for exhibiting visual arts.



Fig, 15,16 Illustrative renders of Gallery Spaces, Studio Red Architects

Flexibility

Important for Riverbank is that each of these key areas is designed to promote flexibility. The foyer/café can double as an informal teaching space for schoolchildren, the galleries can be used for podcast recording, the theatre will support international acts and local theatre groups. The children's workshop is another fluid space that being well connected to the foyer and rear courtyard presents many programming possibilities. Equally the conference and meeting rooms at first floor are designed to be shared between the Library HQ and RAC, promoting flexibility and encouraging the most use out of each space.

Along with the key spaces described above, the proposal also provides highly upgraded back-of-house facilities and administration spaces. The proposed works will result in an accessible, enabling, energy efficient and world-class community building serving the people of Kildare.

2.6 Kildare Co. Library HQ Layout

Provision for the refurbishment of the Kildare Co. Library Headquarters is included in the proposal. These works will include;

- Relocation of book deposit entrance/ store
- Relocation of fire escape stairwell
- Shared accessible lift access to first floor with the RAC.
- Improved staff facilities
- Improved WC facilities
- Improved access to roof level for maintenance
- Solar array to roof

The above is facilitated through alterations to the front and rear elevations, along with internal alterations and new fit out. The proposal renews the façade treatment to Main Street, marking the HQ building as contemporary rather than borrowing elevational treatments from adjacent heritage buildings.

2.7 Material Palette

The existing building is finished in painted cement render, with a glazed tensile foyer structure at the entrance's upper ground level. Newbridge has a strong tradition of rendered buildings, however brick is also a material found on more prominent buildings in the town. Newbridge was once home to a Brickworks, established in 1894, in order to supply the rebuilding of the Curragh Camp and construction works at Newbridge Barracks. Nodding to this, and to other historical industries of the local area, such as Newbridge Cutlery and Silverware (1934), the proposed material palette is a combination of painted render, brick and perforated metal cladding.

A band of concrete at street level is designed to resolve the slope of the street, and clearly delineate a horizontal datum for the brick facades to emerge from. The brick facades will be further elevated by introducing recessed brick reveals to the window opens.

This material selection will sit cohesively with adjacent buildings, including the proposed County Library and the residential terraces on Liffey Terrace. The brick will be selected to complement the brick chosen for the Library development.



Fig. 17 Elevation of neighbouring Liffey Terrace, with material palette of brick, painted render, and use of smooth banding.



Fig. 18 Proposed elevation to Riverbank Arts Centre, with material palette of brick, painted render, perforated metal, and smooth concrete banding at low-level.



Fig. 19, 20 Material Reference: Perforated metal cladding



Fig. 21 Material Reference: Perforated metal at the Bottleworks, Barrow Street, Dublin, Henry J Lyons



Fig. 22 Visualisation of proposed brick volumes on corner of Main Street / Liffey Terrace, Studio Red Architects



Fig. 23,24 Material Reference: brick window reveals

2.8 Site Access and Services

CORA Consulting Engineers' have considered Site Access and Services during the construction works, as detailed in their Preliminary Construction Management Plan, included in the accompanying suite of documents.

As a corner site, access will be available from three points during the works; construction access and material deliveries from Main Street and Liffey Terrace, and Site Office access through the shared access from Athgarvan Road.

2.9 Public Realm

Shared Public Realm

As this proposal has been developed in tandem with the Kildare County Library proposal, a majority of the public realm surrounding RAC fall under the extensive works granted as part of that development. An extract below summarises the extent of public realm works to Main street and the shared rear courtyard:

Landscaping, public realm works, and ancillary external works are also proposed as part of the development. External works include the relocation of the vehicular entrance from Main Street to Athgarvan Road, landscaping works to create a new external courtyard (707 sqm) including 13 no. parking spaces, a bicycle parking store, and a refuse store. Public Realm works (2365 sqm) include - new hard landscaping to the footpaths around the library, modifications to the Main Street public realm to provide a loading bay, bus stop and 2 no. accessible car parking spaces alongside the provision of a new cycle lane.

Part 8 Development description, Ref. No. P82022.21

The courtyard space to the rear of Riverbank Arts Centre, which falls within this shared ownership, presents a real opportunity to create an outdoor event space, that is south-facing, sheltered from traffic and noise and therefore very family-friendly. The RAC proposal has been designed to open outwards to the courtyard to support future festivals and events that could be programmed for this space.

Main Street

The proposal includes the re-landscaping of public realm in the immediate front entrance area to RAC. This will include robust seating facing onto the street, covered by the entrance's overhang, alongside a set of steps and gently sloping ramp to the front entrance. Sensory planting borders have been introduced on the entrance approach, which also act as a measure to form barrier edges, and introduce biodiversity into the scheme with native Irish planting specified.

Liffey Terrace/ Parking

The proposal includes the re-landscaping of public realm on Liffey Terrace directly alongside the RAC elevation, to provide 4no. Universally Accessible car parking spaces, and a widened footpath. Planting areas are also introduced here to demarcate fire escape exits etc.

2.10 Public Consultation

A public consultation with Liffey Terrace residents was carried out, prior to submission of pre-planning documents. This consultation further informed the design of this street elevation, and the urban domain discussed above. The residents' reaction was overwhelmingly positive to the development, as they have great appreciation for the Riverbank Arts Centre's programming, and are keen to resolve issues raised with dead-end areas in front of RAC which promote anti-social behaviour. Consultation was also conducted with a resident and property owner on Athgarvan road, whose concerns about the height of the development were alleviated.

For these consultations, a series of existing and proposed daylight studies were prepared, to illustrate how orientation, avoidance of overshadowing where possible and controlled instances of overlooking were resolved in the design.

A presentation to the Municipal District meeting was held in Kildare Co. Council as part of the pre-planning process, with a high level of Councillor attendance. There was strong support for the development on the basis of the presentation, and positive discussion in particular regarding the measures to increase accessibility to the venue.

2.11 Sustainability Strategy

The proposal, in line with the clients' brief and legislative requirements, has been designed with a comprehensive sustainability strategy, including on-site renewable energy generation in accordance with NZEB and compliance with TGD Part L- Conservation of Fuel and Energy 2022 (Buildings other than Dwellings). The required checks have been made on the design proposal to review flooding and environmental factors. Key aspects of this strategy are summarised under their relevant headings below.

T5 Partnership have prepared a Provisional Compliance Document, demonstrating that the design is in accordance with Part L.

Flood Risk Assessment

A site specific flood risk assessment was prepared by CORA Consulting Engineers, as is included in the accompanying suite of documents. The development is located within Flood Zone C for fluvial flooding, and as an Amenity and Commercial development is considered 'less vulnerable'. The report concludes that surface water run-off will not be increased from the existing development, and CORA engineers have mitigated potential flood risks in their design of the proposed drainage network, which includes for a 30% climate change allowance.

EIA screening

An Environmental Impact Assessment screening report was conducted by MacCabe Durney Barnes consultants, which concluded that with regard to the scale, nature, and location of the development, it would not likely have a significant effect on the environment, and an EIA report was not required.

Reuse / Embodied Energy

The nature of the redevelopment of the Riverbank Arts Centre and Library HQ has sustainability at its core, in its fundamental reuse of existing structures where possible, and limited outward expansion. In particular, the scheme has been designed to work within the existing footprint of the Library HQ, with an improved layout devised to work within the existing fenestration for the most part.

For further detail, please refer to accompanying Energy Statement and Report on Sustainability Measures prepared by Design Team member T5 Partnership.

Renewable Energy

On appraisal of renewable technologies, T5 Partnership identified that Photovoltaics were an appropriate strategy for the site. Provision for a PV array has been made to the gently sloped Library HQ roof, with a new permanent access stair for easy maintenance. This array can service both Library HQ and RAC.

An Air Source Heat Pump will replace the existing fossil fuel gas boiler, and significantly contribute to the development's compliance with TGD Part L.

For further detail, please refer to accompanying Energy Statement and Report on Sustainability Measures prepared by Design Team member T5 Partnership.

Building Fabric Upgrades, BER

The development will be detailed in accordance with TGD L and all other relevant guidelines, in order to achieve necessary U-Values, and to an excellent standard of workmanship to achieve air tightness and prevent cold bridging.

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

For further detail, please refer to accompanying Energy Statement and Report on Sustainability Measures, and Roof plant drawing prepared by Design Team member T5 Partnership.

Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The proposal includes a number of strategies for SuDS, including;

- Light-weight sedum roof to fly tower and main auditorium
- Blue roof sections
- Green /blue roof section over foyer
- Permeable paving to relandscaping on Liffey Terrace

For further detail, please refer to accompanying Drainage drawings, and Roof Layout drawing prepared by CORA Consulting Engineers.

Biodiversity

The developments site boundary has limited unbuilt surface area. However despite this, biodiversity measures have been introduced wherever possible, with native planting to the front entrance landscaping, and a sedum roof specified to the fly-tower flat roof, (for further detail please refer to accompanying drawings prepared by CORA Consulting Engineers).

Technical Considerations

3.1 Natural Daylight and Ventilation

The scheme has been designed to avail of natural daylight afforded by the site's orientation wherever possible. Glazing in the building's front north-west facing elevation onto Main Street will allow evening light into the Foyer, Café and galleries. Conversely, this glazing will illuminate and activate Main Street on winter evenings.

Additional high-level glazing to the foyer will introduce steady east/morning light into these breakout and circulation spaces. A tall glazed slot and doors connects this main congregation space to the shared courtyard to the south, affording a shaft of afternoon light.

The children's gallery has significant glazing to the south, for day-time natural lighting, and a secure connection with the rear shared courtyard. Similarly the conference/ meeting space shared by the Library HQ and Arts Centre will be pleasantly south-lit environments.

Natural lighting and ventilation were also considered for back-of-house areas, despite being partially below street level, for the benefit of performers and staff. The green room has been designed as a double height space with glazing at a high-level, i.e. at street level to Liffey Terrace. This will also subtly animate the elevation to Liffey Terrace. This natural light will filter through a glazed block internal wall to light the internal circulation at sub-street level.

Glazing has been included in ancillary spaces such as public bathrooms, plant rooms and stairwells also, for ventilation, and equally good orientation and emotional well-being of users.



Fig. 25 Visualisation of high-level glazing in proposed foyer space, Studio Red Architects

3.2 Schedule of Accommodation

Table 3. Schedule of Accommodation – Combined Totals

COMBINED RAC & KILDARE LIBRARY HQ SQM		
Accommodation	Existing SQM	Proposed SQM
GFL	796.9	1,161.1
FFL	564	771.3
TOTAL	1,360.9	1,932.4
TOTAL INCREASE		571.5

Table 4. Riverbank Arts Centre Schedule of Accommodation

RIVERBANK ARTS CENTRE		
Accommodation	Existing SQM	Proposed SQM
Entrance Lobby	11.7	13.1
Lift	3.3	6.9
		(shared with Library HQ)
Aggregate Circulation	44.1	43.2
Escape Stairs	33.7	82.4
		(2no.)
Foyer/ Café	191.7	137.9
		(incl. break-out)
Café Servery	27.9	22.3
Upper Foyer	NA	113.8
Bar	NA	11.6
Box Office	4.9	13.9
Children's Workshop/ Gallery	39.9	37.9
Gallery	63.9	94
		(2no. and store)
Stage and Auditorium	179.5	223.8
Auditorium lobby/ upper floor	NA	82.1
Projector Booth	17.4	26.1
Backstage and wings	49.7	124.7
Green Room	15.6	24.4
Dressing Room	12.2	71.7
	(1no.)	(2no.)
Changing Places Toilet aggregate	NA	25.9
		(2no.)
WCs and lobbies aggregate	63.2	61
Arts Centre Office	NA	34.9
Conference and meeting rooms (shared with Library HQ)	33.4	40.2
Plant aggregate	66.4	76.8
		(incl. service risers)
Store aggregate	55.2	66.1
TOTAL	913.7	1,434.7

Table 5. Kildare County Library HQ Schedule of Accommodation

KILDARE LIBRARY HQ

Accommodation	Existing SQM	Proposed SQM
Entrance Lobbies	12.9	NA
Open plan office	181.6 (2no.)	163.2 (2no.)
Book store	20.8	19.1
Meeting room	8.8	9.9
Offices aggregate	107.8 (10no.)	72.3 (8no.)
WCs aggregate	12.7	16.8 (incl. UA WC)
Store aggregate	19.6	11.7 (Server room and CCTV)
Canteen	24.1 (2no.)	9.8
Escape stairs	25	37.2 (shared with RAC)
TOTAL	413.3	340

3.3 Design of Theatre and Fly Tower

Theatre consultants Charcoalblue were engaged to consult on the scheme design of the project in 2023. Charcoalblue conducted a site visit of the existing venue, and spoke extensively to management and technical staff to obtain an understanding of the clients' brief. In collaboration with the design team, they then peer reviewed the auditorium seating layout, and assembled outline information on concept designs for the stage engineering, stage lighting and audio-visual systems, and their associated structural, mechanical and electrical loadings and cost estimates. Key technical and spatial provisions that have been considered at this point include;

- Auditorium seating specification and layout
- Acoustics
- Ventilation
- Noise mitigation/ internal sound separation
- Accessible Technician's Control booth
 - o Wheelchair lift to half-level
 - o Digital cinema projector set up considered
- Removable seating to 2no. rear rows, to accommodate flexible positioning of production desks/ sound engineer mixing within auditorium
- Fly tower – notably confirming required height for planning purposes
- Technical stage infrastructure;
 - o access galleries to each side of stage at two levels
 - o accessible grid floor at high level over stage
 - o cross stage bars and travelling beams over grid floor, allowing easy and safe operation and maintenance
 - o Lighting bridge spanning width of auditorium with acoustic drape, connected to side galleries

- Spatial provision for AV plant
- Deliveries directly to rear of stage
- Back of House accommodation
 - o 3no. dressing rooms with showers
 - o Green room with daylight from above
 - o WCs, accessible WCs
 - o 1no. Changing Places toilet



Fig. 26, 27 Photos of existing RAC auditorium



Fig. 28, Photo of specified seating for new auditorium

Fig. 29 Visualisation of proposed auditorium, Studio Red Architects

3.4 Fire Protection and Escape Strategy

A fire protection and escape strategy was devised in consultation with design team member Profire, who audited the scheme layout and other design factors at key junctures during the early design phases, and engaged with the Chief Fire Officer in KCC.

All fire escape routes, and building capacities were addressed to ensure complete compliance with TGD Part B regulations.

- 1no. protected escape stairs shared between Kildare Library HQ and RAC
- 2no. additional protected escape stairs to RAC
- Protected lobbies
- Escape route considered for Projectionist's booth

3.5 Access Strategy

Public access to the building will be improved with the proposed public realm works, which have been designed to ensure the building is accessible to visitors be they walking, cycling or travelling by public transport, and suitable for all user groups including the mobility impaired, with provision of 4no. accessible parking spaces.

Delivery access to the site is improved with the relocation of the courtyard access point to Athgarvan road (under the remit of County Library development) catering to all delivery and servicing for the Riverbank Arts Theatre. The Library HQ book deposit store room has been located to the front façade onto Main Street, with a wide, direct door access positioned close to the end of the gently sloped approach.

Accessibility within the building has been holistically addressed, as detailed in section 2.3, in order to rectify accessibility issues with the existing building addressed under section 1.5. The proposed development will truly embody the RAC's ethos of access for all.

3.6 Operation and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance of the proposed building was considered throughout the early design stage. This included consultation with current maintenance staff for both Riverbank and the Library HQ, as well as input from all consultants on their packages, and attention to Health and Safety provisions by the PSDP. Key aspects considered include;

- Specification of robust materials: Brick, metal and sand cement render were selected for their durable and weather resistant properties.
- Safe and secure permanent stair access to all roofs for maintenance of solar array, blue and green roofscapes, and all external M&E plant.
- Safe and secure access to all internal plant rooms
- Safe and secure access within the theatre space as detailed under section 3.3.

Conclusion

We trust this design report gives a thorough overview of the wide-reaching considerations which fed into the design of the proposed development, and the collaboration between all design team members to achieve the best possible outcome for the client within the constraints of budget and site.

Consultation with members of the public, and input from members of the MD were taken on board at key junctions, to ensure that the building will meet the needs and expectations of the local and wider community.

The proposed works will provide a state-of-the-art, inclusive, arts facility for the people of Kildare, and beyond.