



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

*Cover image; Illustrative render of proposal

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TO ACCOMPANY PART 8 APPLICATION
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List of Abbreviations

NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
TGD	Technical Guidance Document
UD	Universal Design
UD+	Universal Design Plus
RAC	Riverbank Arts Centre

Introduction



Figure 1: Computer generated image: Proposed new entrance to Riverbank Arts Centre

Executive Summary

This report assesses the impacts of the proposed works at Riverbank Arts Centre, Kildare County Arts Centre, and Library Headquarters buildings at Main Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare on surrounding buildings and setting.

The existing RAC building requires extensive adaptations, renovations and extensions in order to meet current building regulations including fire, accessibility and energy efficiency.



Figure 2: Google earth screen capture, existing shared rear access and Library HQ



Figure 3: Google earth screen capture, existing Main Street Elevation



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

Description of the Project

Riverbank Arts Centre and Library HQ buildings are set back from the street and the RAC entrance is approached from a podium terrace via a set of steps or a ramp.

Whereas the northeast of Main Street is formed with terraced facades, creating a strong streetscape, the south west side of the street is very varied with the building line stepping along its length. This results in a disengagement from the public sphere for RAC.

The proposed 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.

The works to the arts centre include:

- Relocation of entrance to street level
- Relocation of lobby, café and box office space to street level
- Increased 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 works to the Library Headquarters include:

- Relocation of book entrance
- Relocation of fire escape stairwell and lift
- Improved staff facilities
- Improved WC facilities

The above is facilitated through alterations to the front and rear elevations, along with internal alterations and new fit out.

Description of Area

1.1 Development of Newbridge Town

Newbridge is located at an early Christian settlement. In the early 13th century, Great Connell Priory was founded by the Augustinian Canons, situated to the south east of the town of Newbridge. Little remains of the priory structure now except for the east window of the priory- see figure 5. It is thought that much of the masonry from the priory buildings was utilised in the building of the military barracks in the town in the early 19th century.



Figure 5 Google earth screen capture, existing Liffey Terrace elevation

1.2 Barracks Town

The modern layout of the town is derived from the establishment of British Military Barracks in the early 19th century. The area was selected owing to its proximity to the River Liffey, its natural contours allowing surveillance of the surrounding land and the ready availability of both building materials and food in the area.

Local landowners were in favour of the development in this location as it gave them the opportunity to sell parcels of land, and gave value to surrounding land in terms of supplying food and labour to the operating barracks.

The barracks was developed in the years 1814-1819 and was first occupied in 1819.

The plot of land to the north of the barracks (now Main Street) was developed concurrently as commercial units and housing for local workers to support the barracks.

Figure 6 shows the RAC current position as a blue dot on a map of Newbridge dated to 1872. This map shows the barracks to the south east of Main Street, and the commercial/residential plots developed along the north west of the street.



Figure 6: County Kildare : Newbridge : sheet 7", (1872) OSi 19th Century Maps, UCD Digital Library – blue dot shows site position

In the period 1819 – 1922 Newbridge was a thriving town, with expansion including construction of churches, schools and further housing and businesses. The train line was opened in 1846, improving the connectivity of the town.

Figure 7, is an aerial photograph of Newbridge taken by the Royal Air Force in 1918. The military barracks is seen to the left of the shot and appears as a large complex with a series of buildings, stables and land. The immediate area surrounding the town is made up of rural landscape and the route of the River Liffey is evident.



Figure 7: Aerial Photograph dated 1918, source Royal Air Force

The British Army withdrew in 1922 with the formation of the Irish Free State, and there followed a decline in the town. The town has since revived with numerous industries and businesses being based in the locality. The town has developed significantly with large tracts of housing development and a new commercial retail centre at the top of Main Street. The majority of the barracks buildings have been lost, but the tracts of land that were left in its wake have been formative in the development of Newbridge over the last century.

Structures of Note

2.1 County Library

In 1936, Newbridge Library was established as Kildare County's Central Library and Headquarters. It is located on the prominent site at the junction of Main Street and Athgarvan Road, where the barracks' linear stables block was located. It forms a strong corner presence at the river crossing and is located adjoining the subject site.

The library building is a protected structure (RPS B23-41) and is listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (ref. 11818036).

It was constructed in the International Modern style as a detached 2-storey building. A single-bay sits at an angle at the corner. Parapet walls conceal slated hipped roofs. Some original iron framed windows remain intact. The external walls comprise a combination of rough and smooth render with brick headers to windows.

The street boundary is formed with a roughcast wall and iron railings, with rendered piers and iron gates sited at the corner.

A single storey extension was constructed in the late 1970's to the south of the building.

Notably, the County Library has been granted planning permission for the development of the Kildare County Library, Archives and Cultural Centre, under reference: PART 8 REF. P82022.21. This includes works to the public realm on Main Street and to the courtyard to the south, which is shared with RAC.



Figure 8: Google earth screen capture, existing County Library and shared entrance to yard beyond



Figure 9: Illustrative Render of Proposed Kildare County Library, Archives and Cultural Centre, Metropolitan Workshop

2.2 Newbridge Town Hall

The Town Hall began life as a chapel-school as part of the Newbridge Barracks complex c.1865 and is set back from Main Street, south west of the subject site. The building is a protected structure under Kildare County Council RPS B23-40. It is registered on the NIAH under ref. 11818029.

It is rectangular in form, with a pitched slate roof and limestone walls. The building was converted to a town hall in 1927 and is in community use.



Figure 10: Historic Photograph: Gate & Church c.1900



Figure 11: Google Street screen capture: Current Town Hall

2.3 Saint Conleth's Bridge

Saint Conleth's Bridge, spanning the River Liffey, was constructed c.1936. It is listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (ref. 11818035). It is a good example of 20th century engineering in the county of Kildare. It was built in a three-arch form with rendered walls. The bridge leads to Main Street and creates an important vista approaching the town, with the County Library building sited to form a strong corner at the bottom of Main Street.

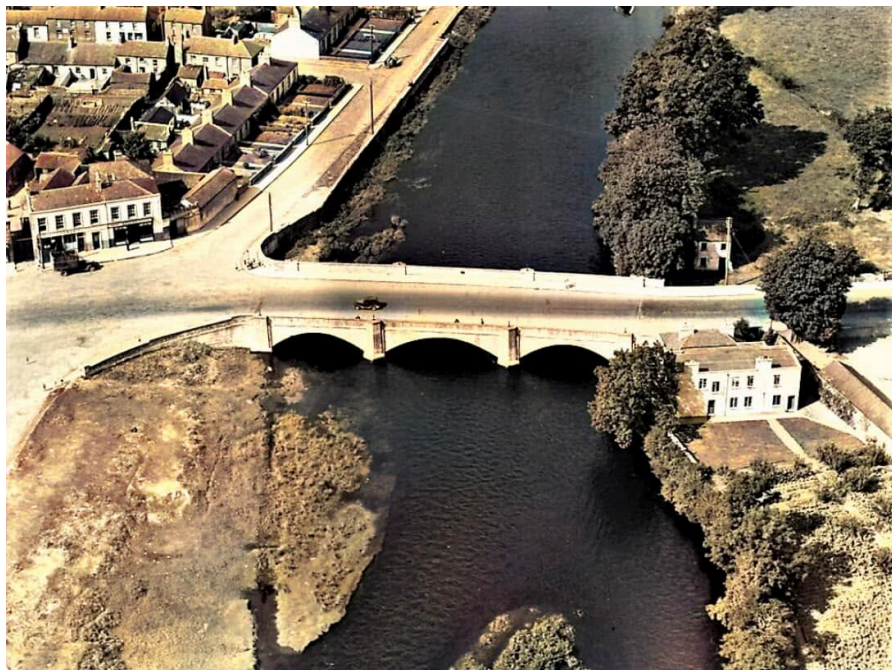


Figure 12: Aerial photograph dated c.1950

2.4 Other Structures

A number of houses/shops, a hotel and a bank on Main Street are also protected structures and/or listed on the NIAH as buildings of regional importance. Main Street is made up of an eclectic mix of buildings to the south east side, whereas the north west side of the street is more regular with a mix of 2- and 3- storey commercial/residential buildings – predominantly showing a material palette of render facades, shopfronts and slate/tiled roofs.

The Bank of Ireland building, at the corner of Main Street and Charlotte Street, shown at Figure 13, is set apart from neighbouring properties displaying a public prominence through the use of brickwork to facades.



Figure 13: Google Streetview: Bank of Ireland at Main Street/Charlotte Street

Remnants of the Barracks walls/gates can be found along Athgarvan Road, at a distance from the subject site.

The terraced dwellings along Liffey Street, facing the RAC, set a tighter residential rhythm off Main Street. The buildings are 2-storey with brick and dash facades with strong rendered bands, slate roofs and small overhanging porch roofs.



Figure 14: Google Streetview: Liffey Terrace

Impact Assessment

The proposals must be considered for their impact on the immediate surroundings and buildings, but also on a wider context – to consider the impact on the town of Newbridge, and beyond.

3.1 Impact of Development on the Area

The existing Riverbank Arts Centre and Library HQ building are sited on the sloped garden/landscaped area of the original barracks site. Little of the original Barracks structures remain.

The proposed works will allow RAC to strengthen their arts offering to both local and county-wide patrons. They will also allow streamlining of book processing, and improved staff facilities within the Library HQ quarters. Along with the permitted works at the County Library, the entire development will provide a strong entry point to Main Street, animating the street and neighbourhood throughout the day and into night. This will be a very positive enhancement to Newbridge Town.



Figure 15: Computer Generated Image of Proposed Works alongside Proposed Library Extension



Figure 16: Night time view of RAC entrance with Library buildings beyond



Figure 17: Computer generated image: New Galleries at corner of Main Street & Liffey Street

The proposed location of the new gallery spaces at the prominent corner of Main Street and Liffey Street forms a bookend to the cultural quarter, without detracting from the prominence of the original County Library building. The presence of activity at the street front will improve the public realm, and the sense of enclosure and safety at this point on Main Street.

The elimination of raised and dark exterior corners along Liffey Street will mitigate anti-social behaviour along this stretch, and has proven a very welcome proposal in community consultations.

3.2 Impact of Development on Structures of Note

The existing Riverbank Arts Centre and Library HQ building are sited adjoining the County Library. As previously stated, The County Library is to undergo significant expansion under a scheme designed by Metropolitan Workshop and granted permission by Kildare County Council.

The proposed works at County Library change the shared entrance to the courtyard to the rear of RAC and the Library. A new main entrance foyer is to be located at the current gateway. This intervention creates a terraced effect between the buildings, but also creates a clear vertical delineation between the 1930's library building, and more contemporary buildings within the RAC/HQ site.

The existing HQ façade shows window divisions and render patterns that appear to have been derived from the original County Library building. The proposals include changes to this façade to create a distinct contemporary fenestration pattern and detailing. This

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proposal will have a positive impact on the original library building as it clearly defines old from new.

The proposed RAC building extends out to meet the public footpath. As illustrated at figure 15, this creates a strong presence on the street with an equitable entrance for all, and also a framed view along the new cultural quarter of Newbridge from St. Conleth's Bridge. This will have a positive impact on the setting of the County Library building, and enhance the views from St. Conleth's Bridge.

The proposed works lie a distance from Newbridge Town Hall and do not have an immediate impact on the setting of this building. However, as stated above, the proposals will generally enhance the street frontage, and resulting public realm, along Main Street in Newbridge. Thus all buildings and public space will be positively impacted by the completed works.

The proposed works along Liffey Street, including a new footpath and enhanced accessible parking facilities, and elimination of raised, dark, external areas, will improve the public realm along this street. The breaking down of massing, to align with existing plot grain along Main Street will tie in to the residential and commercial rhythms already established on Main Street and Liffey Street.



Figure 18: Computer generated image: Proposed View along Liffey Street showing broken massing

It is important to note that during the construction phase, the street and neighbouring buildings will be temporarily impacted by: noise, disruption to traffic, vibrations and other construction-related disturbances. A full set of mitigation practices must be employed by the appointed contractor to minimise disturbance to residents, businesses and buildings.

Also important is that the proposed works will vastly improve the existing facilities, accessibility and energy efficiency of the existing buildings, bringing them in line with current building regulations.

Conclusion

We submit that the works to the Riverbank Arts Centre and Library Headquarter buildings will result in enhancement to public realm, streetscape, adjoining building setting (including the original library building) and the cultural and community offering available in Newbridge Town to both local and wider patrons.



Figure 19: Computer generated image: Interior Foyer RAC