

DRAFT STAGE SUBMISSION - LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN



for the site at:
DE LA SALLE MONASTERY
WILLIAM STREET / MOOREHALL
ARDEE

on behalf of
MICHAEL MCCOY

Issued: 11/12/2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to comment on the matters outlined to be addressed in Stage 2 - (Draft Development Plan) of Louth County Council's public consultation on Louth Development Plan 2021-2017, one of these being "zoning". This report follows on from our Stage 1 (Pre-draft) submission following the Issues Paper, highlighting our opinion that there is an oversubscription of community use areas within Ardee.

This report is prepared on behalf of our client, Mr McCoy, the Founder of Moorehall Living, providers of dedicated care for adults with intellectual and physical disabilities and independent living units in various locations throughout Co. Louth. Mr McCoy has other property interests in Ardee, where he and his family reside.

2. SITE ANALYSIS

The site that this submission relates to is the De La Salle Monastery on William Street, which is currently vacant and falling into disrepair. Significant funds are currently going towards the upkeep alone of the property to protect it from falling into further dilapidation.

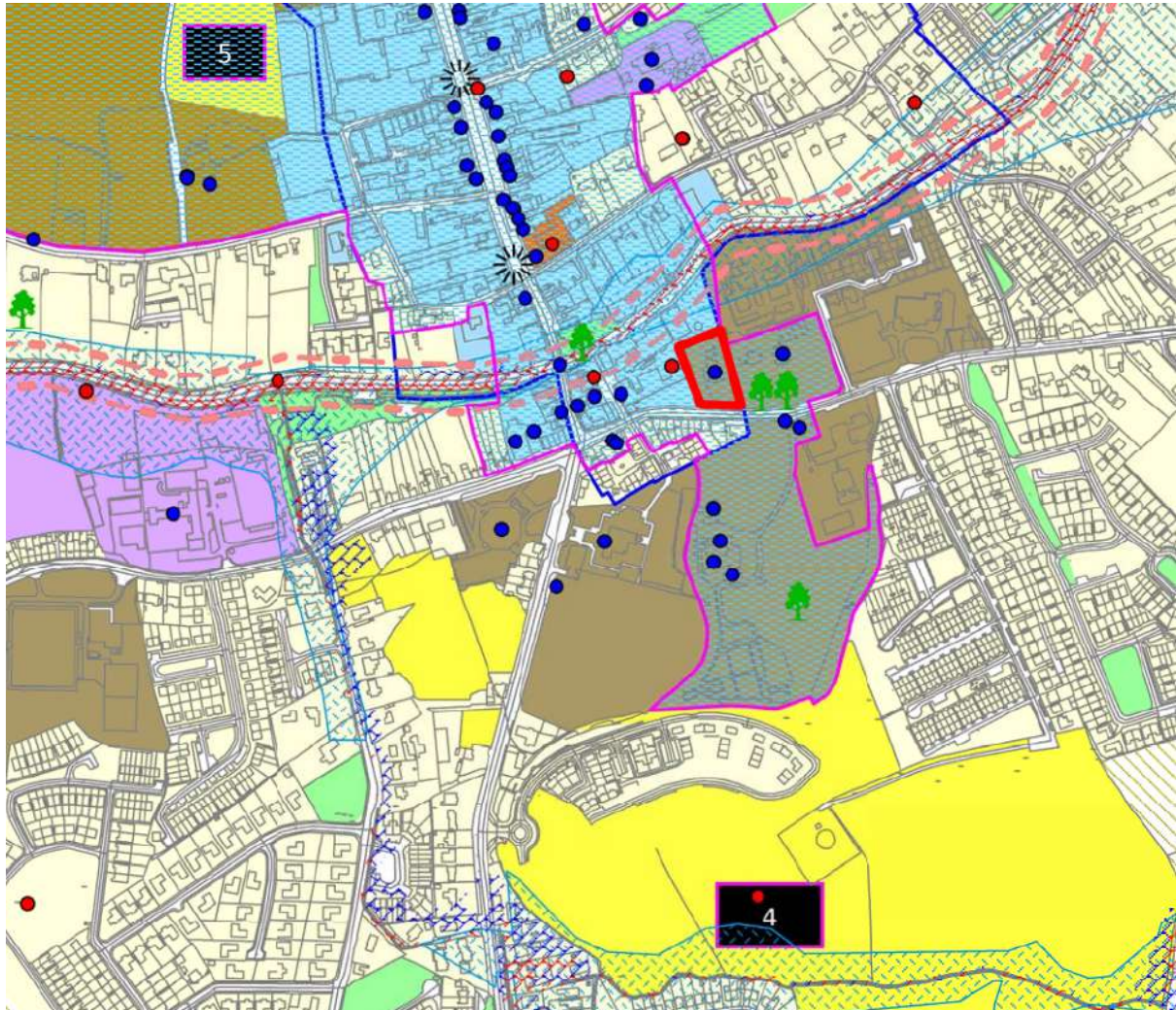
LOCATION / ZONING

The site that this submission relates to, highlighted in red, is located South of the River Dee and West of the Bridge Street bridge. Highlighted in blue is another site which belongs to our client ("Mill site") and which is instrumental to the envisaged operations of the subject site.



Aerial view of the subject site (in red) and Mill site (in blue)

The current Development Plan has the subject site zoned as “Community” use, unlike the “Mill site” immediately adjacent to the subject land, which is marked as “Town Centre”. The proposed zoning also highlights both sites as an “Architectural Conservation Area” and the adjoining site notes the “Riparian buffer zone” along the River Dee.

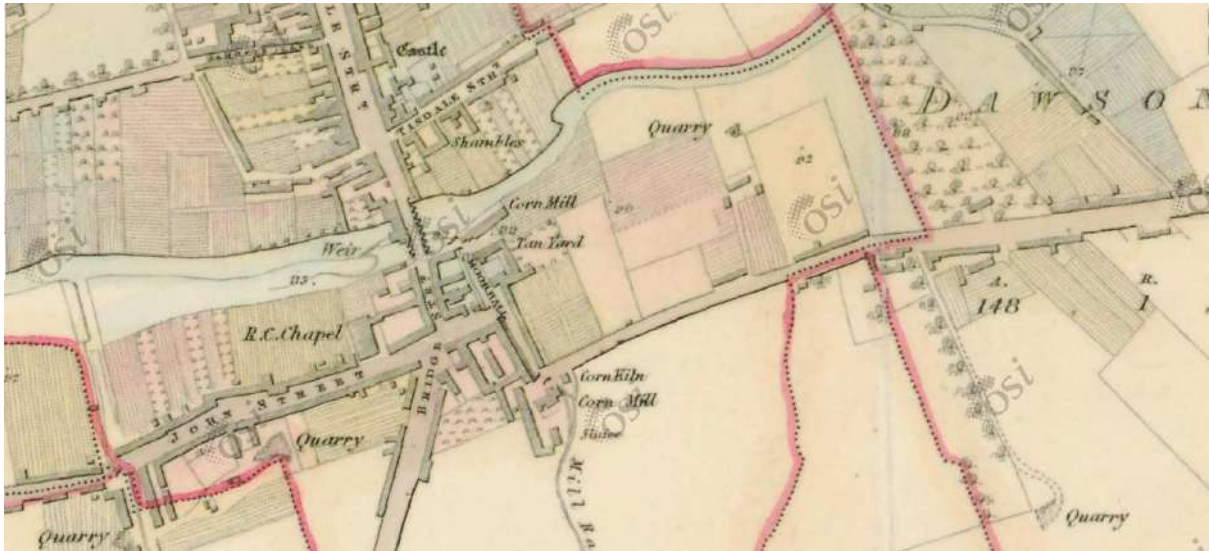


Current zoning and legend

The land belonging to the Moorehall Lodge Nursing home, immediately to the rear (North) of the subject site is also within the “Town centre” zone despite not being easily accessible to the general public and having been granted a planning permission for an extension to the nursing home (community use).

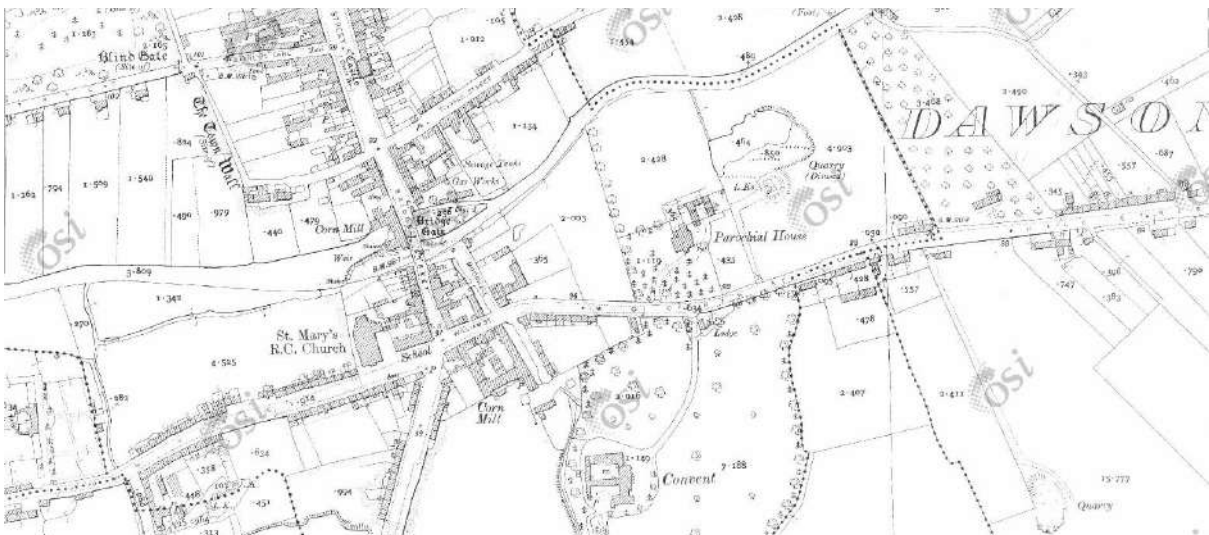
HISTORY

The subject site is in close proximity to the town centre, just across the River Dee, which holds a prominent position throughout history. The river being a natural barrier between the site and the town centre, it appears that the area acquired an industrial use in the early 19th century, as is often the case with sites located on the outskirts of towns. A corn mill and a tan yard are shown to one side of the subject site, and a quarry to the other.

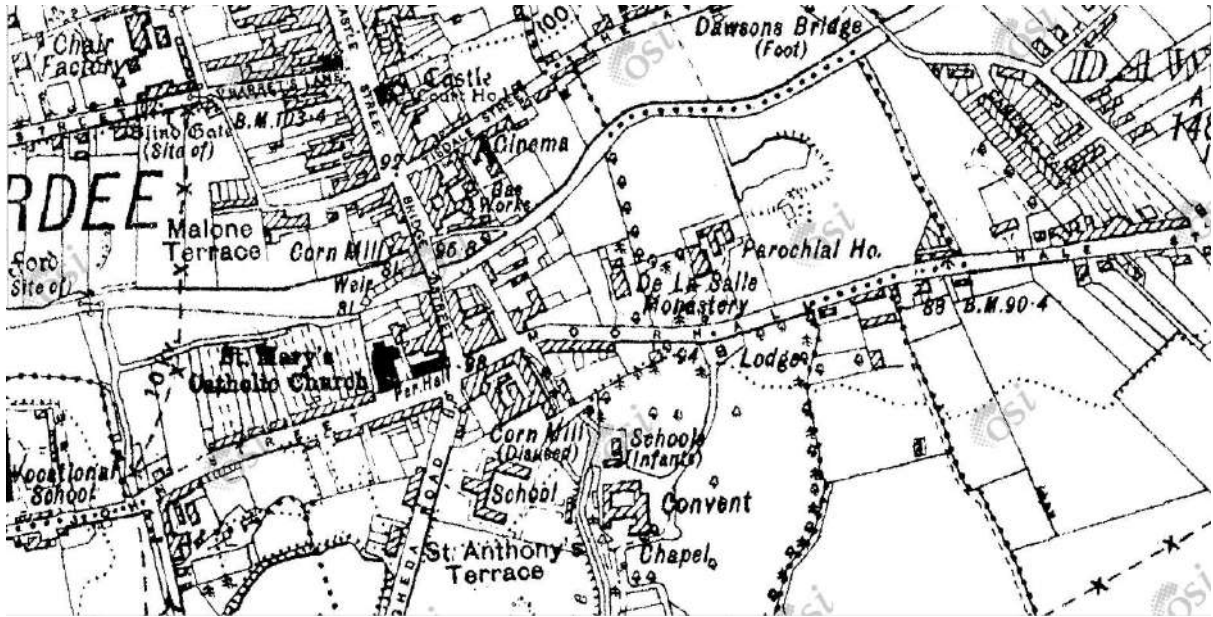


Ardee in the 1840s

A map from the 1880s shows the quarry as “disused” and additional mill buildings appear at this time (some of these still exist today). A parochial house was constructed to this side of the subject site as was the convent across Moorehall (present day William Street). In cca. 1890, the De La Salle monastery was built.



Ardee in the 1880s



Ardee in the 1890s

The 19th century mill building (O'Dea Agri Seeds Limited) is now a protected structure. In the 1960s a concrete warehouse was attached to it and further industrial buildings were constructed around what was the original tan yard. The yard appears to have retained this function throughout the last two centuries.

In present time, the industrial buildings are all disused and vacant and falling into disrepair.



Protected O'Dea Agri Seeds corn mill building



De La Salle Monastery

De La Salle monastery has also been designated as a protected structure. While it has some architectural interest and additional merit in terms of craftsmanship, it is likely its historical context within the Roman Catholic Church that most of its value is derived from.



But perhaps the most significant aspect of the site's history is that it may be the location of St John the Baptist's Priory and hospital, known to have existed in Ardee but no longer identifiable.

Founded in 1207 by Roger Pipard, the history of this complex is known through historical writings. In 1612 it was granted to Garrett Moore by James I, and the name association may well locate it on "Moorehall", where the monastery was subsequently built. The remnants of this building could potentially be located undisturbed under the concrete yard and / or the rear of the monastery site. Richardson's map from 1677 is known to be depicting this structure South of the River Dee and East of the bridge.

Medieval human remains have been discovered around the area in the 20th century, further supporting the theory that the medieval hospital was located here.

The complex is designated as a National Monument and its rediscovery could grant the subject site an additional "town centre" value.

SITE POTENTIAL AND USE

In light of these historical findings, it seems likely that the town would benefit from having the subject site opened up to a much wider audience. It has the potential of becoming a vibrant area, benefitting from town amenities and green open spaces linked to the Riparian / wildlife zone. A River Dee pathway link could be created through the sites to join up with the path on the other side of Moorehall Lodge nursing home and open up the opportunity of some additional assisted-living dwellings overlooking the public path, which would allow for community engagement. The suggested use for De La Salle monastery would be a restaurant / high end guesthouse, which could benefit visitors to the occupants of Moorehall Lodge, its residents and their visiting relatives, as research suggests that a significant demand would exist in Ardee for such a development. Other uses associated with this redevelopment would be retail / office and residential, similar to what we see on Bridge Street or conference facilities for booking.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

CHALLENGES HIGHLIGHTED IN LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL'S ISSUES PAPER

- Creating town centre living with increased densities in multi storey buildings
- Promoting town centre vibrancy and vitality with multi-functional uses including entertaining, living, gathering, shopping, etc.
- Creating high quality urban and rural environments
- Building on the provision of high quality employment and economic opportunities at appropriate and sustainable locations.
- Delivering a balance between social and private housing.

RELEVANT KEY QUESTIONS:

- How can the Plan best support new and evolving work patterns which reduce the demand to travel to work, including e-business and home based economic activity?
- How can we make our town centres more attractive, vibrant and welcoming for all?
- Is there an adequate range of uses available in the town centres (retail, commercial, social, cultural, etc)?
- How can we encourage the reuse of vacant properties and address dereliction?
- How can we retain vibrancy in our town centres?
- Which towns and villages would benefit from improvements to the public realm?
- Which rural towns or villages have the capacity to accommodate new development?
- How can natural heritage and biodiversity be enhanced?
- How can we balance the protection of our heritage whilst providing for the development and future needs of the County?
- How can the Plan strike a balance between conservation and renewal to encourage the reuse of Protected Structures that have fallen into disrepair?
- How can we best promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport?
- How can the Plan improve transport and connectivity for older and less-abled people and children?
- Are the needs of different cultural, ethnic, youth, elderly and less-abled groups being adequately accommodated in our community? If not, how can they be addressed?
- What are Louths' key tourist assets and how can we capitalise on these without damaging our rich built and natural landscape?
- What can Louth do to attract more domestic and overseas tourists and lengthen their stay?
- Are there potential tourist attractions including experiential tourism which remain to be developed?
- How can the Plan achieve a balance between the growth of the county and the protection of the environment?

4. PROPOSAL

MASTERPLAN

The masterplan suggested below addresses many of the questions from the Issues Papers (as above) in the context of the town of Ardee. Most of the site required for this redevelopment is under the ownership of our client and could realistically be put in place without needing to involve any additional landowners.

The proposal is to create a secondary public plaza with retail and office spaces as well as a digital hub and business centre on the ground level, (including some trendy converted spaces within the industrial buildings), and high quality residential spaces or Live / Work units on the upper floors overlooking the public areas and green (wildlife friendly) spaces. It is also suggested to link the plaza, by the way of the River Dee pathway from the bridge, to the nursing home, and across the plaza to William Street.



Service yard and rear garden to be developed into a public plaza

It is anticipated that in the course of the construction, archeological discoveries might be made within the site designated for the plaza and if that was the case, the applicant would like to give these back to the residents of Ardee, in the form of an excavation display or demarcations, which would bring additional value to this satellite amenity.

The existing industrial buildings are proposed to be converted into unique high-quality residential apartments above retail and office ground floor. A link to the river is to be enhanced through this scheme and a satellite marketplace could be established in this part of town, where it would be easily accessible to the residence of the nursing home.

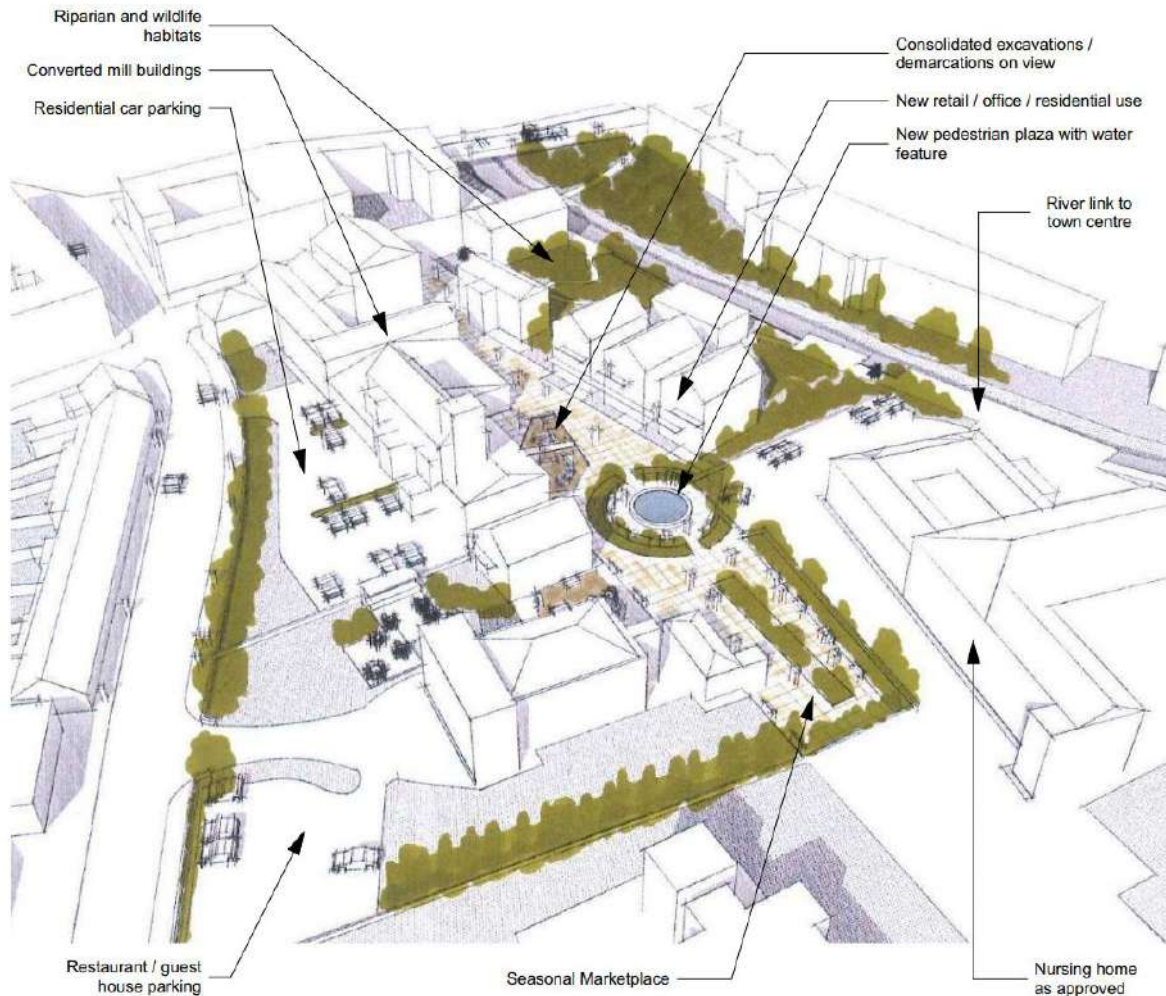


River Dee path link / Entrance to public plaza / Riparian (wildlife) zone



Legend

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| 1 | Public path along River Dee |  | Existing buildings |
| 2 | Approved extension to nursing home |  | Riparian buffer zone line |
| 3 | Public plaza with water feature and seating |  | New residential / commercial on ground floor |
| 4 | New commercial ground floor with residential apartments upstairs |  | Existing buildings to be converted |
| 5 | Wildlife / riparian green space |  | New commercial |
| 6 | Boardwalks / viewpoints along river walk |  | Existing buildings to be converted - commercial |
| 7 | Connection to bridge and main street |  | Private amenity space |
| 8 | Car parking for new residential properties |  | Public amenity (open) space - paved |
| 9 | Well overlooked public playground |  | Public amenity (open) space - green |
| 10 | Outdoor bar / De La Salle Restaurant decking |  | Hardstanding / Car parking |
| 11 | Connection to William Street |  | Protected Structures (NIAH) |
| 12 | Connection to nursing home |  | Denotes a potential excavation display (indicative) |
| 13 | New converted high-end guesthouse and restaurant | | |
| 14 | Private amenity space for guesthouse customers | | |
| 15 | Seasonal market stalls | | |

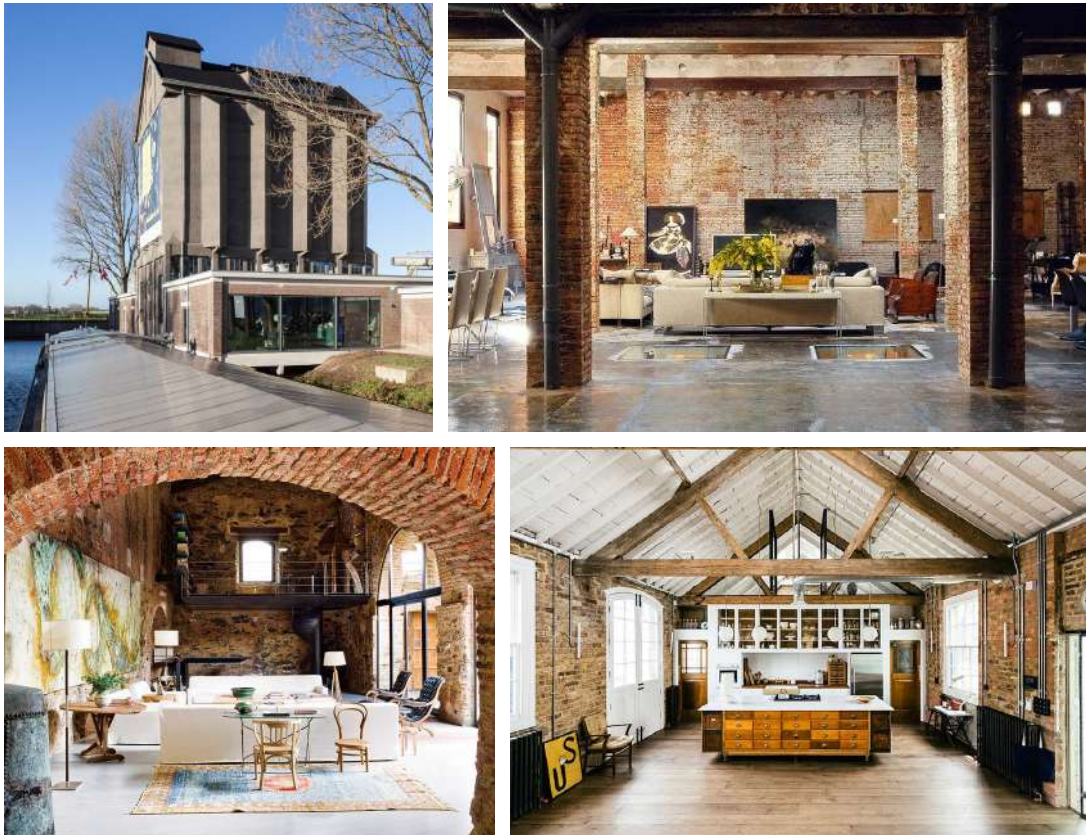


3D representation of the Masterplan

The existing town centre is currently very busy, however this busy-ness is predominantly created by vehicular traffic which has a negative impact on the town centre amenity. A pedestrian river link plaza could easily become a vibrant place of focus for outdoors activities taking away some of the Bridge Street

It would also be a much more convenient and safer place for the residents of Moorehall Lodge nursing home to reintegrate into the community within a town centre atmosphere, and without the hazards of frequent car and HGV traffic that Bridge Street experiences. The Easternmost end of the plaza would be well placed to host a secondary market (with the current market square being virtually inaccessible to the residents) at the doorstep of the nursing home.

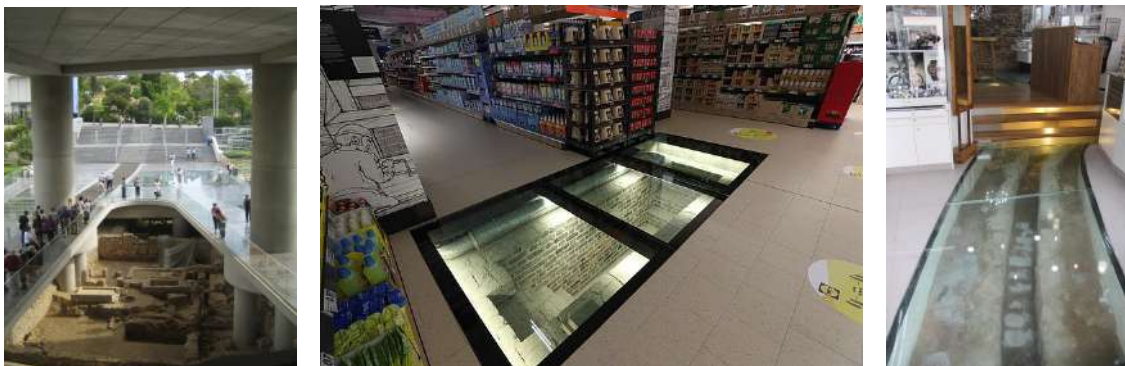
Additionally, the industrial character of the mill site would, in this instance, contribute to a very unique and, more importantly, a significantly different character to that of the original town centre thus avoiding imitation and pastiche. Contemporary architecture has demonstrated time and time again just how sensitively such industrial-to-residential conversions can be handled and how unique and effective their results can be.



Examples of converted industrial buildings / mills / warehouses

RECOMMENDED ZONING AND USE OF LAND

We propose that the subject land be zoned as “Town centre”, much like the adjoining “Mill site” property, in order to allow the applicant to redevelop both sites together as one auxiliary vibrant town hub, comprising retail, office and residential uses, with open public spaces both paved and green. The “Town centre” zoning would encourage this combination of uses which will play a big part in making this development successful and at the same time bring the town centre facilities and a new market square closer to the residents of the nursing home, to allow easy pedestrian access for the elderly or those with impaired mobility.



Examples of excavations displayed in public spaces

5. CONCLUSION

Bridging the gap between the town core and the Moorehall Lodge Nursing Home offers the opportunity to open up the pedestrian route along the River Dee and link up to the existing path either side of the site.

As such, creating a public plaza with retail and hospitality facilities would offer a suitable redevelopment of this brownfield area and turn it into a trendy auxiliary town centre which is not only unusual in its appearance (though the use of converted industrial buildings) but could potentially exploit several periods of the town's rich history layered on top of one another in one space. It would be an opening for the nursing home community to be able to enjoy the town's atmosphere on their doorstep and for the town to become more inclusive in return. This scheme would encourage the creation of a riparian buffer zone that can be enjoyed rather than remain a dumping ground for litter and encourage vandalism. An overlooked public space would contribute to the feeling of safety and engagement within this part of town.

It is our belief that the zoning of the subject land of De La Salle monastery should be changed to "Town centre" to enable the redevelopment of this vacant site.