

# HERITAGE REPORT

QUAY STREET & ENVIRONS, BALBRIGGAN

JUNE 2022

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.01 Paul Keogh Architects were appointed in June 2021 for the provision of Integrated Design Team Services for the public realm redevelopment of Quay Street & Environs, Balbriggan.

1.02 This Heritage Report has been prepared and compiled by Paul Keogh Architects for the purposes of the Part VIII planning process, in consultation with other design team members, to record the evaluation / assessment process and the design decisions taken. The report includes site evaluation and analysis, overview of the design development, and a description of the preferred site layout with cost information.

1.03 The design has been informed by consultation with Fingal County Council Heritage & Conservation team in Stage 1 on 9th September 2021 and Stage 2 on 1st March 2022.

## 2.0 Brief & Vision

2.01 The aspirations for the redevelopment and rejuvenation of Quay Street and Environs, as set out in the Outline Project Brief and as developed through extensive Stakeholder Consultation,, is the creation of a large pedestrian friendly event/ market space off Quay Street focused around the arches of the Railway Viaduct and upgrade of the public realm in the carpark areas and green open space on both sides of the Bracken River to transform it into a highly accessible and citizen-friendly space which can facilitate events and promotes activity with appropriately located planting zones to encourage flora and fauna and which accentuates the amenity of green space and the Bracken River. The project also includes creation of additional toilet/changing facilities and harbour buildings to provide retail, marina and leisure opportunities on the site of the existing night club at the entrance to the east pier.

## 3.0 Site

3.01 The site for the proposed Quay Street & Environs development encompasses part of Quay Street through to the beach and includes public footpaths, public roads, open green space, public carparks, the Bracken River, foot and road bridges over the Bracken River, areas beneath Railway viaduct arches, public toilets and playground. The site includes the area between the Railway viaduct, the West Pier and the Harbour Road. The site also includes part of the Harbour Road to the rear of the Railway Viaduct, and the site of the former nightclub building. The site is bordered by residential properties of varying scales from multi-storey apartment buildings to small artisan cottages. The site also includes part of Mill Street and is bordered by both residential and commercial properties of varying scales and use and which are included within the site boundary but are private properties and as such do not fall within the scope of works for the Council's Quay Street & Environs project.

3.02 The overall site area for measures approximately 19,300m<sup>2</sup>/ 1.93 hectare.

3.03 The Listed RNLI Boathouse building change of use is included in the scope of this project for the purposes of submitting the Part 8 planning permission.



Site aerial photograph from Balbriggan harbour



Site aerial photograph from Town carpark

#### 4.0 Archaeology, SAC, Protected Structures

4.01 The Quay Street & Environs site does not fall under any Environmental Preservation Areas, SAC, SPA or NHA (Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 - Sheet 4 Balbriggan).

4.02 The site is adjacent to and partially lies within an Architectural Conservation Area.

4.03 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 - Sheet 4 Balbriggan identifies 3no. protected structures within the extents of the site. Appendix 2 – Record of Protected Structures indicates:

- 0035 Former RNLI Boathouse- Mid-19th century former RNLI boat house, positioned within one of the railway arches.
- 0036 Balbriggan Viaduct- Mid-19th century eleven-arch stone railway viaduct over harbour.
- 0038 Balbriggan harbour- Original mid 18th century harbour formed by east pier with addition of west pier and breakwater in early 19th century.

4.04 The National Monuments Service historic environment viewer identifies no monuments in the vicinity.



RNLI Boathouse and Railway Viaduct



Adjacent Architectural Conservation Area



Balbriggan Harbour and Lighthouse

## 5.0 Historical Context

5.01 Since the earliest evidence of Balbriggan as an urban centre in the seventeenth century, the harbour and River Bracken have been central to the town's development.

John Rocque depicts the developing town in 1760 with recognisable elements of its contemporary plan. Where the bridge over the Bracken possibly existed prior to the nascent urban arrangement, Rocque captures the pier, possibly still under construction, with a wide Quay Street leading up from the harbour to the bridge.

Balbriggan harbour retains much of its eighteenth century plan and fabric. The harbour was built by George Hamilton in 1761, and to consolidate the town he acquired patents for a twice yearly fair and market.

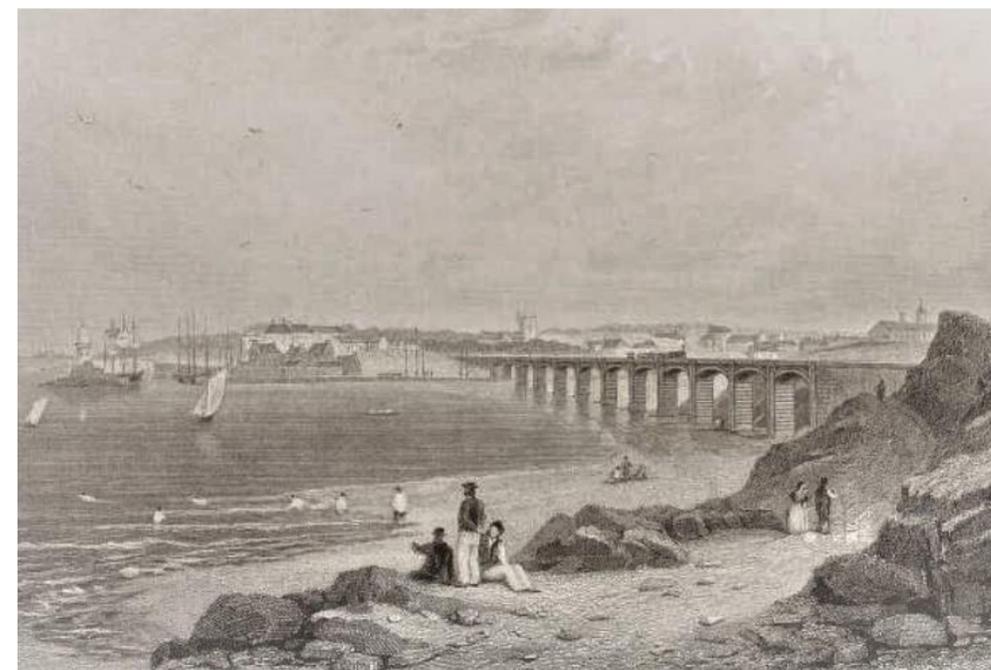
The completion of the Drogheda-Dublin railway in 1843-1844 all greatly aided the growth of the town, including the alignment of the railway and the 11-arch granite viaduct spanning the harbour.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century maps indicate industrial expansion and increased population growth. The Quay Street area represented the junction of major industry and the more civic/ residential parts of the town.

The concept behind the Quay Street & Environs design focuses on protecting the architectural heritage and those elements which are essential to the character and quality of Balbriggan, while adapting it to the social, economic and environmental requirements of a twenty-first century Irish town.



John Rocque, Actual Survey of the County of Dublin, 1760



'Balbriggan, Dublin & Drogheda Railway', E. Radclyffe 1840



OS Map, 1840



OS Map, 1906

## 6.0 Design Proposals

6.01 The design focuses on protecting the architectural heritage of the Quay Street & Environs area, which is essential to the historic character and quality of Balbriggan, while adapting to the social, economic and environmental requirements of a modern and progressive public realm scheme.

Specific attention is paid to the sensitive interface of the public realm improvements with protected structures on the site, such as the historic harbour wall and railway viaduct.

The proposals involve level paving surface brought from plaza through viaduct arches to harbour edge, with the aim of providing improved level access in line with Universal Design principles.

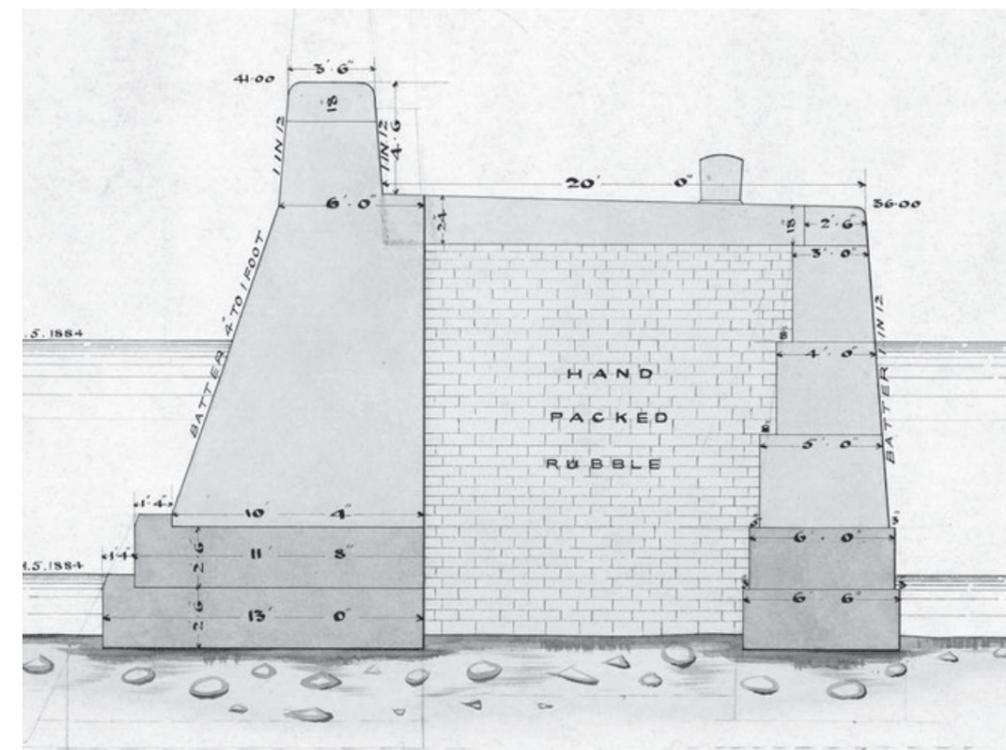
In the four arches which contain existing cobbles, the proposal looks to retain the cobbles in place where possible and build up the new surface level on top. A separating layer is laid on the existing cobbles before new sub base and paving is built up to protect the existing cobbles and ultimately ensure the interventions are largely reversible. The non-original low level walls are also proposed to be removed.

Design options have been explored to expose the existing cobbles and address archaeological layers, however these have been deemed to detrimental to the practicality and operation of the public realm scheme as a whole.

The resurfacing along the historic harbour edge retains the existing kerbstone with new surface in place of existing, non-original asphalt road surface. In situ concrete paving with marine aggregates are proposed- as per Dun Laoghaire east pier.



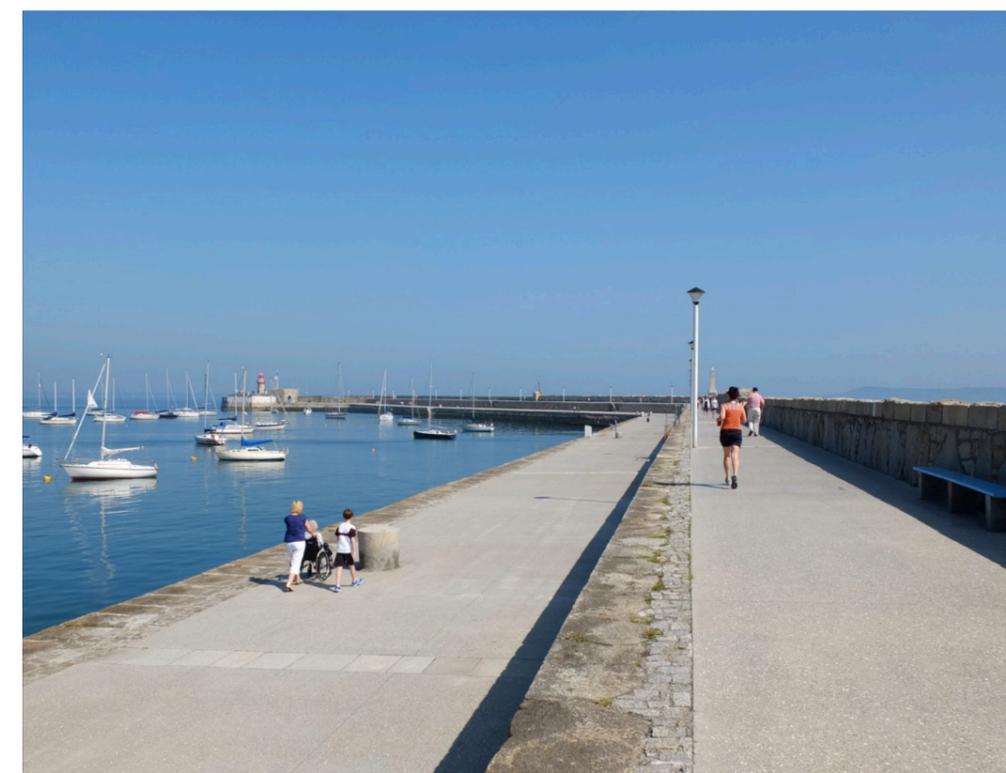
Viaduct, non original low level walls removed



Typical historic harbour construction



4 no. arches with depressions containing existing cobble paving



Dun Laoghaire, East Pier resurfacing

Demolition of the former O’Shea’s nightclub building and the associated archaeological monitoring by Paul Duffy of IAC Archaeology for that site is underway. The design team will continue to monitor the demolition and consider the reuse of recovered materials throughout the detailed design stage.

6.02 An emphasis on materials that are sensitive to the existing architectural heritage of the site with are selected with an awareness of the harsh marine environment.

The proposed resurfacing of the plaza articulates the existing rhythm of the viaduct structure. Granite bands establish a staggered grid infilled with an in-situ concrete surface made up of marine aggregates and seashells. The hard surfacing of the plaza steps down in an wide expanse of granite clad tiered seating to the river edge, integrating tree pits.

The materiality of weathering steel is continued in cladding for the proposed harbour buildings and toilet block. The massing of the two pitched roof harbour buildings makes reference to the harbour’s historic structures and seaside vernacular.

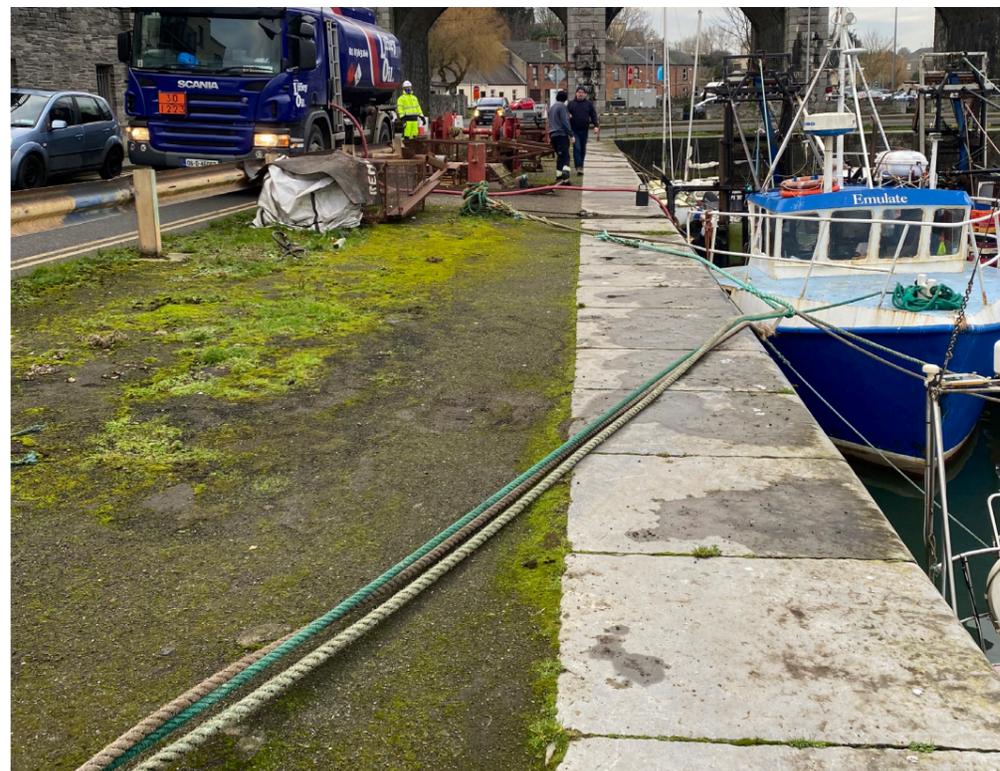
It is a core objective that materials are sourced from the most environmentally- responsible locations – to reduce the carbon emissions in the transportation of material from afar when similar – and frequently better – can be sourced closer to home, ideally Irish sources if possible.



Dun Laoghaire, East Pier resurfacing



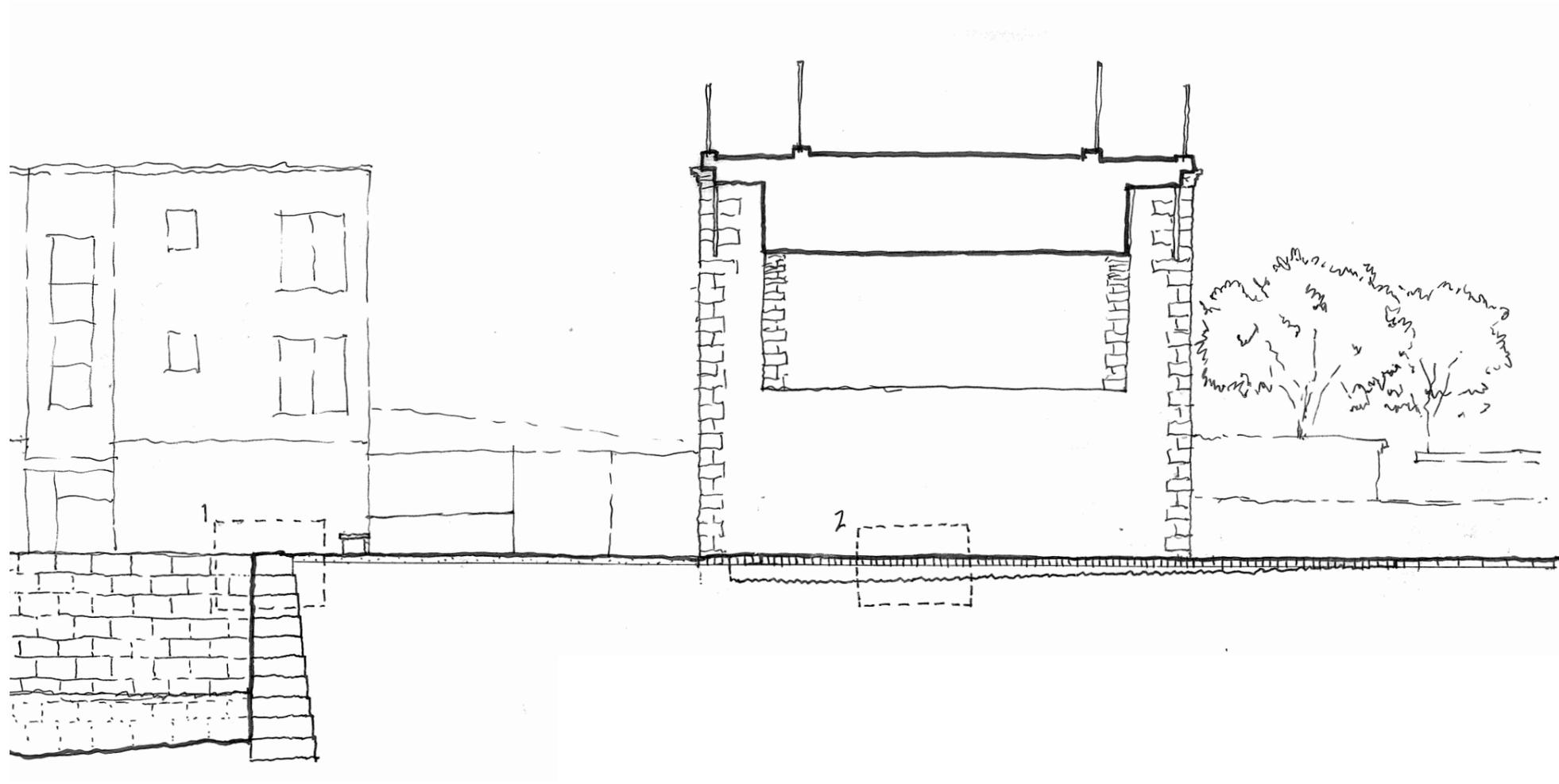
Historic harbour structures



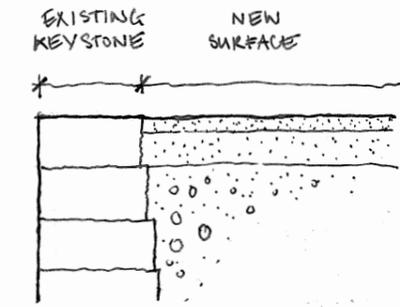
Existing harbour wall kerbstone



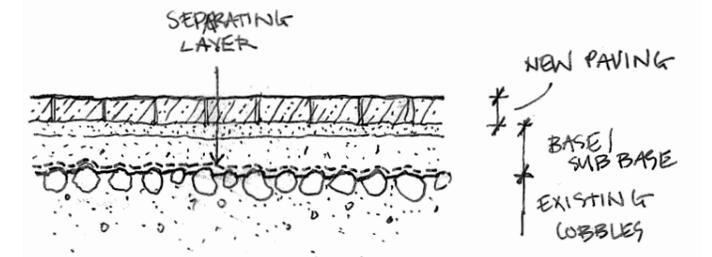
Visualisation of Harbour/Viaduct resurfacing



Sketch section through Viaduct and Harbour wall showing proposed treatment



Detail 1



Detail 2

## 7.0 Conclusions

7.01 The public realm design will seek to protect the architectural heritage of Balbriggan and those elements which are essential to its character and quality, while reconfiguring the space as an exemplar public space for the twenty-first century and beyond.

The Quay Street & Environs design seeks to be an exemplar of best practice: in terms of urban design, environmental responsibility, heritage conservation, universal access and architectural excellence.



CGI aerial view

**To be read in conjunction with:**

- PKA Design Report
- PKA Existing / Proposed drawings
- Hayes Higgins Partnership Civil & Structural report
- Hayes Higgins Partnership Utilities & Electrical Services report
- Hayes Higgins Partnership Traffic & Access report
- Hayes Higgins Partnership Construction Management Plan
- Topographic survey & GPR survey
- Austen Associates Tree Survey and report
- Stakeholder Engagement report
- Turner & Townsend Project Management report
- McCloy Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessment

**Reference Documents**

Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan 2019-2025

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (Dept. of Transport, Tourism & Sport 2013)

NTA Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, North Fingal

Fingal Coastal Way - Stage 2 Route options Overview

Our Balbriggan: Active Travel Strategy, DBFL

Our Balbriggan: Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Assessment