

PLANNING APPLICATION
PART 8 P&D REGULATIONS / PART XI P&D ACT
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SWORDS CULTURAL
QUARTER

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**Brady Shipman
Martin**

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CLIENT
Fingal County Council

DATE
July 2022

Swords Cultural Quarter

Part 8 Planning Application

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Planning Report has been prepared by Brady Shipman Martin on behalf of Fingal County Council in accordance with Part XI of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

This application is seeking permission for a Civic and Cultural Building, public realm works, demolition works and all associated site works at a site located in the middle of Swords town centre, on the junction of North Street, Seatown Road, Main Street and Bridge Street adjacent to Swords Castle, and Fingal County Offices.

The proposed development, as per the statutory notices, will comprise of:

Fingal County Council (Economic Enterprise Tourism and Cultural Development Department) is proposing the creation of a Cultural Quarter, Swords Cultural Quarter (SCQ), within Swords Town centre, Co. Dublin, in proximity to Fingal County Hall and Swords Castle [a National Monument (No.340), Recorded Monument (RMP Ref. DU011-034001-) and Protected Structure (No.351)], with an overall site area of 15,751m² (3.89 acres) comprising: the road junction of North Street, Seatown Road, Bridge Street and Main Street, Swords; Fingal County Council Executive car park (site area: 2,400m²) at the junction of North Street and Seatown Road; St. Michael's House, Seatown Road (site area: 542m²); Swords District Court House (a Protected Structure (RPS No.350); 4 no. terraced 2-storey commercial vacant properties at Units 1-4 No.20 North Street; Fingal County Hall external public space (site area: 1,881m²); vacant plots at No.'s 1 – 8, 10-13, 15 North Street adjacent to Swords Castle; a single storey commercial property at 17 North Street and Chamber House 17A North Street; single storey structure located on North Street (west side); and the existing side entrance area of Swords Park accessed from North Street, Swords. The site is located within the boundary of the Zone of Notification for the Historic Town of Swords RMP DU011-35.

The proposed development will consist of:

- (a) Demolition of: 17 and 17A North Street single storey commercial property (c. 182m²) including derelict outbuildings to rear, and side boundary walls abutting Swords Castle, a Protected Structure (RPS No.351) materially affecting the character; single storey structure located on west side of North Street and adjoining railings (note that the partially enclosed public toilet block will be relocated within the town park); St. Michaels House single storey bungalow (c. 208m²), including single storey outbuilding and boundary walls, Seatown Road, Swords; demolition of 4 no. terraced 2-storey commercial vacant properties (c.171m²) at No.20 North Street, Swords including rear and side boundary walls; demolition of rear & side boundary wall and single storey outbuilding at Swords Courthouse, a Protected Structure (RPS No.350) materially affecting the character;
- (b) Minor external works materially affecting the character to the Swords District Court House (Protected Structure – RPS No. 350),

comprising the removal of a set of 2 no. granite steps to the southern entrance and the construction of an accessible entrance, provision of new garden to sides and rear of structure, with new railings to North Street;

- (c) Construction of a Swords Civic & Cultural Centre on the site of the Fingal County Council Executive car park at the junction of North Street and Seatown Road, site of St. Michael's House, Seatown Road, and site of 4 no. terraced 2-storey commercial vacant properties at Units 1-4 No.20 North Street, to provide a new public county library, theatre, art gallery and auditorium, café / bar, local studies and archives centre, associated office space and ancillary accommodation. The proposed structure ranges from two to four storeys in height with a GIA floor area of 5,686m². Landscaping, public realm works and ancillary works are also proposed as part of the development. External works include a new road entrance from Seatown Road to access a service bay for deliveries at ground floor level;
- (d) A total of 128 no. bicycle parking spaces comprising 108 no. visitor spaces within the Public Realm area, located on North Street, Main Street and to the front of the County Hall and 20 no. SCC staff spaces to the rear of the proposed SCC building;
- (e) Provide a new Civic Space & Public Realm (area: 13,200m²) including new stone paving, street lighting, street furniture and art work at the following site location: the road junction of North Street, Seatown Road, Bridge Street and Main Street, Swords; vacant plots No.'s 1 – 7, 13, 15 North Street adjacent to Swords Castle, No.17 North Street and Chamber House 17A North Street, Swords; the existing external public space (area: 1,881m²) to the immediate west / front of Fingal County Hall; and the existing side entrance area of Swords Park accessed from North Street. The existing boundary between the Town Park and North Street will be removed and relocated as part of the development abutting Swords Castle, a Protected Structure (RPS No.351) materially affecting the character.

This Planning Report should be read in accordance with all other plans and particulars including:

- Architectural Drawings prepared by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects
- Architectural Design Statement prepared by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects
- Shadow Analysis prepared by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects
- Engineering Services Report prepared by Hogan Lynch Engineers
- Engineering Services Drawings prepared by Hogan Lynch Engineers
- Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Hogan Lynch Engineers
- Construction & Environmental Management Plan prepared by Hogan Lynch Engineers
- Parking Strategy Report prepared by MHL Consulting Engineers

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- Traffic & Transportation Report (inc. Preliminary Construction Traffic Management Plan) prepared by MHL Consulting Engineers
- Travel Plan prepared by MHL Consulting Engineers
- Traffic Layout Drawings prepared by MHL Consulting Engineers
- Energy & Sustainability Strategy prepared by Max Fordham
- Site Services/ Utilities Strategy Report prepared by Max Fordham
- Site Lighting Strategy prepared Max Fordham
- Landscape Design Drawings prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects
- Landscape Design Report prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects
- Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects
- Architectural Heritage Assessment prepared by JCA Architects
- Archaeology Assessment prepared by Rubicon Heritage
- AA Screening Report prepared by Brady Shipman Martin
- EIAR Screening Report prepared by ORS
- Ecology Report prepared by Eco North
- Tree Survey Report prepared by Charles McCorkell
- Operation Waste Management Plan prepared by AWN Consulting
- Preliminary Construction & Demolition Waste Management Plan prepared by AWN Consulting
- Verified Views prepared by Digital Dimensions
- Computer Generated Images (CGIs) prepared by Picture Plane

This planning application is made in accordance with *Planning and Development Act 2001* (as amended) and the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2021*. We confirm that prior to making this planning application the drawings enclosed herewith have been checked with reference to the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2021*.

1.1 Site Context

The subject site is located in the middle of Swords town centre (also referred to as Town Parks) and has a total site area of c.1.57ha (c.15,750 sq.m.) The site is of an irregular shape and comprises the Fingal County Council car park on the junction of Seatown Road, North Street, Bridge Street and Main street.

Fingal Community College is located to the north of the site; Prosper Ireland (St. Michael's House) – an intellectual disability service for adults to the east; Fingal County Council Swords main offices to the South; and the grounds of Swords Castle to the west.

Swords District Court House is located within the subject site to the front of the Fingal County Council Car Park and is listed as a Protected Structure under the Fingal County Council Record of Protected Structures 2017-2023 (RPS No. 0350). The site also bounds the grounds of Swords Castle to the west which is a listed as

a Protected Structure (RPS No. 0351). Swords Castle is also listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP No. DU011-034001).

2 PLANNING HISTORY REVIEW

A review of the planning history has shown no recent applications relevant to the subject site. There are several applications primarily for minor works within the total c.1.57ha (c.15.75 sq.m) site area including signage, alterations, and extensions to existing buildings, of which date to 1992.

The site boundary for the previously proposed Metro North bisects the southwestern part of the site. This application was lodged in 2002 and has since been deferred. A new preferred route has been designed which does not travel through the proposed Swords Cultural Quarter site.

All applications are summarised below:

FCC Reg. Ref	Address	Proposed Development:	Decision Date
92A/1599	No. 7 North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	New shop front and two storey extension to the rear.	Permission – 30.11.1992
F95A/0670	7 North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	Alterations and revisions to already approved extension (92A/1599).	Permission – 09.11.1995
F96A/1005	3 North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	Alterations and 2 storey addition to the side of Ryan Brothers Public House.	Application Withdrawn – 29.01.1998
F98A/0662	7 North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	New two storey building at the back of the vacant yard comprising ground floor retail and first floor consulting room.	Permission – 02.09.1998
F98A/1041	3 Main Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	To replace paint and plaster front with wooden façade.	Permission – 26.05.1999
F00A/1051	Ryan Brothers Pub, 3 North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	Single storey street frontage extension to existing public house.	Refused - 22.11.2000
F01A/0183	North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	Demolish existing offices and construct new offices and associated services.	Permission – 09.11.2001
F02A/0576	3-8 North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	Alterations and the change of use of all units.	Permission - 30.10.2002
SID/02/08	From Belinstown, North County Dublin to St. Stephan's Green	Construction, operation, and maintenance of a light railway.	Permission - Project deferred.

F05A/0244	17 North Street, Swords, Co. Dublin	Demolition of existing offices and the construction of a commercial 5 floor development.	Refused – 22.04.2005
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Table 1: Planning History Summary (Source: FCC planning search).

3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023

The Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 sets out the Council’s proposed policies and objectives for the development of the County over that period with regard to social, economic, environmental, and cultural assets of the County.

Swords is a Metropolitan Consolidation Town which is identified as “strong active urban places within the metropolitan area with strong transport links” and is the designated County Town. As the County Town it is the administrative capital of the County with an estimated population of c. 54,000 people.

3.1.1 Town Centre Policies

Swords is designated a ‘Key Town’ in the Regional Economic & Spatial Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern & Midlands Region (2019-2031) and are defined as “large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres.”

In order to enhance the functionality of key or major towns the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 has set out a series of objectives:

Objective PM05: *“Develop a hierarchy of high quality vibrant and sustainable urban and village centres including the continued sustainable development and enhancement of:*

- *Swords as the County Town of Fingal*
- *Blanchardstown as a vibrant major town centre*
- *Balbriggan as a large growth town*
- *The network of town, village and district centres*
- *A range of local and neighbourhood centres.”*

The proposed development will provide a mix of cultural and community uses including a 165 no. seated theatre and public library which will improve the vitality of Swords town centre.

Objective PM06: *“Protect the primacy and maintain the future viability of the existing major towns in the County and develop them with an appropriate mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, tourism and resident.”*

As noted above, the proposed Swords Civic and Cultural Building will provide a variety of cultural and community uses with ancillary uses consisting of a café/restaurant, meeting rooms, study areas and exhibition rooms. It is envisaged that the proposed development will increase footfall in Swords Town centre which will maintain the towns future viability.

3.1.2 Land Use Zoning

The subject site is zoned 'MC – Major Town Centre' with an overall objective to 'protect, provide for and/ or improve major town centre facilities.'

The following uses are permitted in principle under the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023:

Permitted in Principle	<p><i>Bed and Breakfast, Childcare Facilities, Cultural Facility, Exhibition Centre, Garden Centre, Health Practitioner, Hospital, Office <100 sqm, Open Space, Public House, Research and Development, Residential Institution, Retail – Convenience < 500 sqm nfa, Retail – Supermarket <2,500 sqm nfa, Retail – Factory Outlet Centre, Sheltered Accommodation, Training Centre, Vehicle Sales Outlet – Small Vehicles, Wholesale, Betting Office, Community Facility, Dancehall/ Nightclub, Fast Food Outlet/ Take-away, Guest House, Holiday Home/Apartments, Hotel, Office >100 sqm and < 1,000 sqm, Petrol Station, Public Transport Station, Residential, Restaurant/Café, Retail – Comparison < 500 sqm nfa, Retail – Superstore > 2,500 sqm nfa, Retail Warehouse, Taxi Office, Traveller Community Accommodation, Vehicle Servicing/ Maintenance Garage, Carpark – Non Ancillary, Conference Centre, Education, Funeral Home/ Mortuary, Health Centre, Home-Based Economic Activity, Office Ancillary to Permitted Use, Office > 1,000 sqm, Place of Worship, Recreational Facility/ Sports Club, Residential Facility/ Sports Club, Residential Care Home/ Retirement Home, Retail – Local < 150 sqm, Retail – Comparison > 500 sqm, Retail – Hypermarket > 5,000 sqm nfa, Telecommunications Structures, Utility Installations, Veterinary Clinic.</i></p>
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Table 2: Uses Permitted in Principle - Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023



Figure 3-1: The subject lands indicatively outlined in black (Source: Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023, adapted by BSM 2022).

The land use zoning designation and the permitted in principle uses remain the same under the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029, which is currently on display for public consultation.

Each of the designations on the zoning map are addressed further below.

3.1.3 Cultural Facilities

The Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023 (FCC Development Plan) highlights the importance of arts and culture within County Fingal noting “it is important for the identity of the County and its population that this culture is protected and promoted.”

As part of the Development Strategy for Swords, the FCC Development Plan aims to “provide for a much-expanded employment, retail, commercial, educational, civic and cultural base.”

The Development Plan seeks to increase the accessibility to arts and culture facilities through the retention of existing facilities and the introduction of new facilities.

The proposed Cultural Centre will help promote and preserve the cultural integrity of Swords and will assist Fingal County Council in achieving the objectives of the Development Plan below:

Objective SWORDS 1: “Encourage a range and quality of retail, commercial, civic, cultural, leisure, community and other services commensurate with the role of Swords Town Centre as a Metropolitan Consolidation Town.”

The proposed development will provide a Civic and Cultural building for multi-purpose use by the community located centrally in Swords Town Centre. As the

designated County Town, the proposed development will introduce a vitality to the town centre through the range of cultural, café/restaurant and exhibition uses.

Objective PM90: *“Encourage the provision of new or improved arts and cultural facilities in Fingal, particularly in parts of the County where there is a deficiency in such provision.”*

There are 2 no. cultural centres within Fingal, the Seamus Ennis Cultural Centre in Naul and the Draiocht in Blanchardstown.

The proposed development will fill the void in facilities for those in the north and east of the County and will provide a cultural facility in closer proximity to towns such as Malahide, Donabate, Rush, Skerries and Lusk. The population of these towns can avail of the civic and cultural centre and associated services without travelling as far as existing cultural centres.

The proposed development will act as a focal point within the centre of the designated County Town creating a strong sense of place through the main plaza area and public realm works, where people can socialise and gather for organised events.

Objective PM92: *“Ensure that facilities where possible are accessibly by public as well as private transport”.*

The proposed development is strategically located in Swords Town Centre. Within the development area there are 2 no. bus stops which are served by Dublin Bus and Go-Ahead Bus Services including route 33, 33A, 33B, 41, 41B, 41C, 43, 196, 197 which serves Swords and its environs, Dublin Airport and Dublin City Centre frequently. The Swords Express is a 22km bus route which runs from Dublin City Centre to Swords every 30 minutes.

There are also a number of new bus services proposed for Swords under the new Bus Connects programme, this includes the A4 Spine Route which will serve Swords, Dublin City Centre and Dundrum every 12-15 minutes. Other city bound and local routes include bus routes X84, L83 and L89.

Malahide Train Station is located less than 5km from the subject site and is served by Dublin – Dundalk Commuter Route and Dublin Commuter Route services approximately 25 no. times daily between 7am and 11pm (weekdays). The DART serves Malahide Train Station approximately 85 no. times per day between 06.20 and 23.40 Monday-Friday and varying times at the weekend.

The new preferred MetroLink route, connecting north Dublin to Dublin City Centre via Dublin Airport, has a proposed stop on the junction of Seatown Road and R132 c. 400m from the proposed Cultural and Civic Building. The MetroLink is currently subject to appraisal and its delivery is envisaged post 2027. The project when it is delivered will have the potential to unlock significant long-term capacity in Swords and its environs.

Further details of accessibility through sustainable transport modes are set out in the Traffic & Transport Assessment prepared by MHL Consulting Engineers.

3.1.4 Protected Structures

Each Local Authority has a legal responsibility to compile a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) where buildings may be included if they are deemed of special architectural, archaeological, historical, cultural, artistic, scientific, social, and/or of technical interest.

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Within the development area there is 1 no. Protected Structures: the Sword's District Court House (RPS No. 350); and 1 no. Protected Structure adjoining the red line boundary (Swords Castle RPS No. 351) as shown above on Figure 3-1. The FCC Development Plan lists objectives regarding Protected Structures:

Objective CH20: *"Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a Protected Structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, materials, impact on architectural or historical features, and junction with the existing Protected Structure."*

As part of the proposed development, the Civic and Cultural Building is proposed on lands immediately adjacent to the Sword's District Court House (RPS No. 350). The Swords District Court House does currently not have an accessible access and minor external works are proposed to the southern entrance of the courthouse to allow for a universal access.

Objective CH26: *"Prevent the demolition of inappropriate alteration of Protected Structures."*

Further works at Swords Courthouse include the removal of the rear and side boundary wall between the Court House and the adjoining properties to the north, and the removal of a single storey outbuilding, are proposed as part of the development..

Further information regarding the relationship between the Protected Structure and the proposed development are set out in the Architectural Design Report Prepared by O'Donnell + Tuomey. Further details of the proposed works to the Protected Structure are set out in the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by JCA Architects.

3.1.5 Recorded Monuments

Swords Castle is a National Monument, recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record (Ref No. DU011-034001-). As stated in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023:

Objective CH03: *"Protect all archaeological sites and monuments, underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects, which are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places and all sites and features of archaeological and historic interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places, and to seek their preservation in situ (or at a minimum, preservation by record) through the planning process."*

As part of the proposed development Architectural Heritage Consultants, JCA Architects, have prepared a 'Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment' and a 'Protection of Swords Castle Walls & Swords Court House during Construction Phase Report' which sets out potential impacts and mitigation measures with regard to both Protected Structures and the Recorded Monuments designation.

3.1.6 Zone of Archaeological Interest

The site falls within a Zone of Archaeological Interest and is subject to a specific objective:

Objective SWORDS 17: *"Protect and conserve the historic core of Swords including the Zone of Archaeological notification in the centre of the town and implement the Swords Castle Cultural Quarter Architectural Masterplan"*.

The proposed development has considered the potential impact on archaeology since the early design stage in order to avoid impacts on archaeological features and their settings.

Recommended mitigation measures are listed in the Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Rubicon Heritage.

Objective CH07: *“Ensure that development within the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Notification does not seriously detract from the setting of the feature, and is sited and designed properly.”*

Recommendations for the Protection of Swords Castle Walls during construction phase have been prepared by JCA Architects. These recommendations include actions to be taken during and prior to construction in order to protect the fabric and structural integrity.

3.1.7 Preservation of Tree’s, Woodlands and Hedgerows

There is an objective relating to the front of the FCC County Hall, located immediately south of the proposed Swords Cultural Centre, to ‘Protect & Preserve & Hedgerows’. With regard to Tree Policy, the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 sets out a number of policies including:

Objective DMS77: Protect, preserve and ensure the effective management of trees and groups of trees.

Objective DMS80: Ensure trees. Hedgerows and other features which demarcate townland boundaries are preserved and incorporated where appropriate into the design of developments.

The trees to the front of the FCC County Hall will be preserved as part of the proposed development and will be incorporated into the scheme as canopy over a key pedestrian area. Further details on landscaping are noted in the Design Rationale prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects and the Arboricultural Report prepared by Charles McCorkell Arboricultural Consultancy.

3.1.8 Indicative Cycle and Pedestrian Routes

As shown above in Figure 3-1, there are indicative cycle and pedestrian routes through the subject site. As part of the Seatown South Masterplan, the main objective is to:

“Develop direct, attractive and overlooked pedestrian and cycle routes, within the subject lands and connecting these lands to the indicative route for New Metro North; Swords Town Centre and the Malahide Estuary.”

The proposed public realm has been designed to respect the development of this future linkage.

3.1.9 Car Parking

Car Parking standards are set out in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029.

Car Parking standards and provision are discussed further in Section 4.3 of this Report.

3.1.10 Cycle Parking

Cycle Parking applicable to the proposed development is set out in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029.

Cycle Parking Standards are discussed further at Section 4.3 below.

3.2 Draft Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Draft Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out the strategic vision for the County where the vision is healthy place making, building cohesive and sustainable communities, where our cultural, natural and built environment is protected.

The Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 is currently on display for public consultation until May 12th 2022 and it is envisaged that the Development Plan will be adopted in April 2023. Whilst the proposed development will be assessed under the current statutory Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023, this section makes reference to the Draft Fingal Development 2023-2029 for information purposes only.

Objective CSO38 – Enhanced Urban Environment: *“Facilitate the strategic regeneration of Swords to build on the resilience of the local economy and provide for an enhanced urban environment with a particular focus on the development of Swords Civic Centre and Cultural Centre, the delivery of the conservation plan for Swords Castle, and the delivery of an enhanced public realm in the town centre and to promote recreational and amenity uses in accordance with a healthy placemaking strategy.”*

The proposed development is in accordance with Objective CSO38 and will provide for a Civic and Cultural Centre alongside extensive public realm upgrade works which is discussed in further detail in Section 4.3 of this Report and the Design Rationale – Landscape Architecture prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects.

Objective EEO43: *“Direct the provision of tourist related facilities, such as information centres and cultural centres, into town and village locations to support and strengthen the existing economic infrastructure of such town centres.”*

The proposed development is strategically located in Swords Town Centre and can be accessed from North Street, Seatown Road, Main Street, North Street and Bridge Street. The site is well served by sustainable transport modes, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

3.3 Your Swords – Strategic Vision 2035

This document sets out a strategic vision for Swords through a set of long-term objectives focusing on the creation of a coherent and legible spatial structure.

The document acknowledges the deficiency in the provision of social, cultural, recreational and community facilities in Swords and therefore proposes to provide services in new defined areas, including both the Cultural Quarter and Civic Quarter which have been identified as Town Centre nodes.

3.4 Swords Castle Cultural Quarter Architectural Masterplan

The Swords Castle Cultural Quarter Architectural Masterplan (the Masterplan) was prepared in 2015 and *‘seeks to energise the layout potential of the existing town centre – focusing on the castle environs as a new cultural hub’*.

With regard to Swords Castle and its environs, the Masterplan notes *“poor quality of the experience of Main Street including finishes, pedestrian spaces, landscaping, materials and interface with its buildings”*.

The proposed development will enhance the quality of Main Street through proposing a Main Street Plaza to the front of the Fingal County Hall. As part of the design the Main Street will be re-aligned, and the pedestrian zone will be widened to allow for increased pedestrian activities. The proposed public realm upgrade works will create pedestrian usable spaces through design, landscaping and the use of street furniture.

The Masterplan further acknowledged the lack of *“no singular civic space or vision for a town centre focal point”*.

It is envisaged that the proposed Main Street Plaza would create an attractive focal point within Swords Town Centre where North Street, Seatown Road, Main Street and Bridge Street meet. In addition to this, the proposed Swords Civic and Cultural Plaza which forms a fulcrum of intersecting pedestrian circulation will provide a defined area for various community events.

With regard to public realm the Masterplan is committed to *“linking together the front of the Castle to the County Hall through the removal of boundary fences and gates, unifying the space”*.

Widening the pedestrian zone to the front of the Fingal County Hall, as part of the proposed public realm upgrade works, improves the permeability through the designated pedestrian crossing which will connect Swords Castle and Fingal County Hall.

4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development relates to lands located in Swords Town Centre. The site consists of lands at Swords Castle, North Street, Existing Fingal County Council Carpark on Seatown Road and existing public realm along Seatown Road, Main Street, Bridge Street and to the front of Fingal County Hall. The proposed application includes for minor external works to the Swords District Court House (Protected Structure).

The proposed development will comprise of the construction of the proposed Swords Civic and Cultural Building, located on the existing Fingal County Council car park site at Seatown Road, ranging in height from 2-4 storeys. The proposed Swords Civic and Cultural Building will include for:

- A 165-no. seated theatre with associated control/ sound rooms & light lobbies
- Dressing rooms and rehearsal spaces
- An art gallery
- Café/theatre bar
- Exhibition spaces
- Workshop and study areas
- Meeting rooms
- Public library
- Offices
- Storage rooms, toilets and other ancillary uses.

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The proposed development will be delivered in 2 no. phases:

Phase 1 will comprise the construction of the proposed Civic and Cultural Building and associated public realm works, reduction of garden lengths to 1A-5 Seatown Road to allow for 3 no. accessible spaces, a drop off zone and the installation of a temporary raised table and crossing point to the east of the junction between Seatown Road and North Street.

Phase 2 will comprise of public realm works around Swords Castle including the installation of the Main Plaza, terraced seating area to the front of FCC County Hall and the completion of the public realm works. The proposed scheme includes for significant upgrades in public realm and alterations to existing road layouts for North Street, Seatown Road, Main Street and Bridge Street, including for public realm/ landscape schemes to the east of Swords Castle and west of existing Fingal County Hall.

The relationship between the proposed development and Swords Castle has been carefully considered. A folded roof is proposed above the 3-no. storey section of the library towards the centre of the block which creates lightness to the building form when viewed from the Castle Walls and softens the interface between the proposed development and the Protected Structure and Recorded Monument.

All building components of the Swords Cultural Quarter (Swords Castle, Swords Civic and Cultural Building, public realm) are physically linked at ground level by the proposed public realm improvement works and further visual links at upper levels through a series of terraces.

In order to promote energy and sustainability through design a significant part of the flat roof is proposed to comprise green roof and PV panels, the maximum area of flat roof available for mounting PV panels is c.250 sq.m. Layering both PV panels and green roof are proposed on the east and western sides of the roof plan. Full details are set out in the Energy Statement accompanying this planning application.

4.1 Height, Scale and Mass

The proposed development ranges from 2-4 storeys with a max height of c.19.75m. The building is of varying heights due to the changes in ground level and ranges from c.7m to c.19.75m. The building height steps down from c.19.75m to c.15.25 with respect to Swords District Court House (Protected Structure).

The proposed massing has been developed by the articulation of the spaces and functions within it. Through design, recessed entrances, library external terraces and a folding roof the scale of the proposed building has been broken down.

As the design progressed, modifications were made to the massing to allow for more light penetration into the building form in certain areas. These areas included the corner at the main junction, the sloping roof behind Brise Soleil, the cut-away to the southwest corner and a pullback external terrace to the north of the building.

Further details on height, scale and massing are discussed in the Architectural Design Report Prepared by O'Donnell + Tuomey.

4.2 Overshadowing

A Shadow Analysis was prepared by O'Donnell + Tuomey which analysed over shadowing at 12.00 noon and 15.00 on 3 no. days throughout the year, 21st March, 21st June and 21st December. The report concluded the following findings:

- 21st March – The proposed building does not significantly increase the amount of overshadowing to Fingal Community College. The reduction is limited and does not impact the school yard however there is some reduction in direct sunlight across the entrance points. There is partial overshadowing to the eastern side of the District Court House at first floor level and no additional overshadowing to Swords Castle.
- 21st June – The proposed building does not significantly increase the amount of overshadowing to Fingal Community College and the reduction is limited to the northern boundary of the Civic and Cultural Building, without having an impact on the school yard. There is some reduction of direct sunlight to the entrance point of the grounds to the college but will have no additional impact on either the Swords District Court House or Swords Castle.
- 21st December – The proposed building increases the amount of overshadowing to the western section of Fingal Community College, as per above the reduction in direct sunlight is directly to the north of the Civic and Cultural Building. There will be an overall positive impact on direct sunlight available to the District Court House as the removal of remaining buildings allows for more sunlight into the western window at first floor level. There will be no additional overshadowing to Swords Castle.

4.3 Car Parking and Cycle Parking

4.3.1 Car Parking

There are several public car parks within Swords Town Centre providing a total provision of c. 1,265 no. car parking spaces.

In addition to this there are approximately 250 no. car parking spaces provided on Main Street, North Street, Chapel Lane, Church Road, Colmcilles Drive, Crescent and Park, Castle Avenue and Longlands.

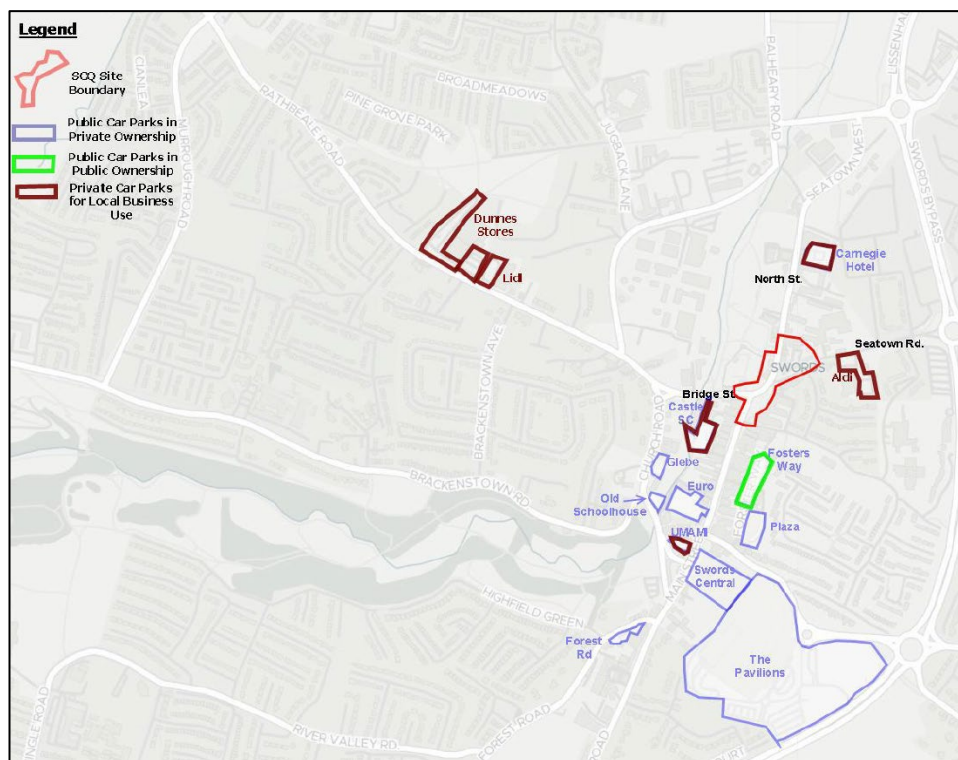


Figure 4-1: Map showing existing car parks in Swords (Source: Parking Review Report - MHL & Associates).

The proposed development will result in the loss of the FCC Executive’s Car Park on Seatown Road (c.90 no. car parking spaces). However, FCC are committed to leasing car parking spaces to replace the loss of spaces in the FCC Executive’s Car Park. Full details of car parking agreement are set out in the Car Parking Strategy Report prepared by MHL Consulting Engineers.

The carparking standards provided by MHL Consulting Engineers as set out in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 are set out below:

	Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023		Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029	
	Parking Standards	Parking Numbers	Parking Standards	Parking Numbers
Library	1 per 20 sq.m	140	1 per 40 sq.m	70
Art Gallery	1 per 50 sq.m	18	1 per 100 sq.m	9
Theatre	1 per 3 seats	55	1 per 10 seats	17
Total		213		96

Table 3: Car Parking Standards of the FCC Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Draft FCC Development Plan 2023-2029

The proposed development will provide for minimal parking facilities including 3 no. accessible spaces along Seatown Road and a set down only area. It is considered that providing minimum carparking is appropriate given the town centre location, existing car parking provision, and existing public transport facilities amongst other reasons set out in documentation produced by MHL Consulting Engineers.

It is further noted that the operation of the library, theatre and other uses will have varying opening hours from one and other, therefore this will result in a lower demand for car parking.

As part of the proposed development, 108 no. cycle spaces will be provided for visitor parking and 20 no. secure bike spaces will be provided for staff parking.

4.4 Public Realm and Landscape

Public Realm within the FCC Development Plan is defined as *“those parts of the County where people can gain unrestricted access for the purpose of passing through, meeting, visiting, and enjoying. It is where we come together as a community, not merely a place for functional movement.”*

A Landscape Strategy has been prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects and is included within the Design Rationale – Landscape Architecture Report and is submitted as part of this Part 8 Planning Application.

There are several components that make up the Landscape Strategy which include the main primary character areas consisting of the Main Street Plaza, Amphitheatre/ Park Entrance, the Castle Green Space, the Courtyard Space and the carriage way. Other elements of the Landscape Strategy include pedestrian and cycle links, the integration of functional spaces and a planting strategy to create external spaces.

- 1) **The Courthouse Greenspace** – The Courthouse Greenspace is the dedicated garden area to the sides and rear of the District Court House (Protected Structure). The District Court House will be kept separate from the proposed new building but will be connected through this green accessible space.
- 2) **Proposed Amphitheatre/ Park Entrance** – The proposed park entrance/ amphitheatre will create a visual connection between the District Court House, proposed building and Swords Community Park. The amphitheatre and entrance space will be a proposed transition between the public realm area to the south and the Swords Community Park to the west with informal seating and will provide space for small events.
- 3) **Main Street Plaza** – The Main Street Plaza is proposed to the front of Fingal County Hall and will provide for an open market space connecting the County Hall and street space to the front of Swords Castle and Main Street. Pedestrian zones are proposed to be widened and seating is proposed to be integrated into the terraces creating a strong creating a key central area within the Town Centre.
- 4) **Swords Castle Green Edge and SCC Plaza** – The Swords Castle Green Edge comprises the edges of the Swords Castle Grounds and organise a loose route from the crossing at the north of Main Street to the entrance of Swords Community Park. It is proposed that the plaza will form a fulcrum of intersecting pedestrian circulation providing a space for seasonal pop-up and events.

It is proposed that a species mix of proposed trees will be planted and arranged either individually in a loose grouping or in organised grid along with a low level of groundcover planting.

Full details on the proposed public realm and landscaping are set out in the accompanying Design Rationale – Landscape Architecture Report prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects.

4.5 Materials

Materials are considered to be a sustainable design element alongside density, building orientation, height and form as discussed above.

The materials selected for both the proposed building and public realm works have been carefully considered with respect to Court House Building (Protected Structure) and the setting of the town centre. The building line of the Swords District Court House is maintained through the use of pre-cast material on the front façade of the Swords Civic and Cultural Building as it is the same height as the Swords District Court House parapet level.

The external façade has been broken down by careful design fenestration elements including large glazed screens and slot windows against a combination of precast concrete and aluminium curtain walling.

Precast concrete is proposed for the majority of the SCC façade and for the detailing around the brise soleil structures. The light and warmed colour material is similar to a natural stone and is consistent with the surrounding streetscape.

Full details of materials, internally and externally, are set out in the Architectural Design Report prepared by O'Donnell + Tuomey.

4.6 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact

The archaeological assessment of the proposed Swords Cultural Quarter identified 23 no. sites of archaeological and/or cultural heritage significance and interest, including Swords Castle which is a listed Protected Structure and Recorded Monument.

As stated in the Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed Swords Cultural Quarter prepared by Rubicon Heritage Services, it is expected that impacts to archaeology and cultural heritage will occur as a result of construction ground works and the development of the public realm and proposed Civic and Cultural Building. It is also envisaged that impacts may occur during soft and landscaping proposals adjacent to Swords Castle and the entrance to Swords Park.

The Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment sets out recommendations in order to mitigate impacts prior, during and after the construction stage.

Further details on archaeological and cultural impacts are set out in the Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Rubicon Heritage Services.

4.7 Protected Views and Visual Impact

The proposed development has been designed with consideration to the protected view corridor from Main Street to the Swords Castle Main Entrance. In 'Your Swords – An Emerging City Strategic Vision 2035' notes that the view of Swords Castle from Main Street should be protected.

The design of the Civic and Cultural Building is cognisant of not over competing with the castle visually from Main Street. The trees to the front of the Fingal County Hall screen the proposed building when looking north from Main Street, in which it is only possible to see the Civic and Cultural Building when you have entered the Swords Cultural Quarter area.

With regard to visual impact, a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects. The assessment concludes that the visual and landscape sensitivity of the subject site is medium and has a high capacity to accommodate built change. It is noted that the proposed development will change the streetscape significantly but provides a positive response to the existing site.

Further information on views from Main Street looking towards the Civic and Cultural Building can be found in the Verified Photomontages prepared by Digital Dimensions and in the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects.

4.8 Protected Structures

As noted above in section 3.1.4, there is 1 no. Protected Structure within the subject site (Swords District Court House RPS No. 350) and 1 no. Protected Structure adjoining the red line boundary (Swords Castle RPS No. 351).

The Swords District Court House is a detached three-bay single story courthouse building to the front of the proposed development. The Proposed Development has been designed with consideration to its setting through design principles including the use of materials as discussed in section 4.5 and landscaping.

Minor removal of external historic building fabric from the Swords District Court House is proposed in order to create universal access for users of the Court House. The proposed works will include for the removal of the set of two granite steps to the southern entrance to allow for a sloping pavement.

The removal of the wall bounding the Swords District Courthouse to the north is proposed as part of the development. A small concrete shed structure to the rear of the courthouse, containing electrical meters, will also be removed. Please see report prepared by JCA Architects – ‘Protection of Swords Castle Walls & Swords Court House during Construction Phase’ for further details on proposed works and mitigation measures.

The proposed development has been designed in a manner that allows the Swords Court House to be easily read with the new development.

Whilst the proposed materials for the Civic and Cultural Centre do not replicate those of the courthouse, this allows the courthouse to retain its own significant character. The scale and massing of the west elevation, to the north, directly behind the courthouse mimics the proportions of the courthouse without competing with one and other.

Historic building elements, including Protected Structures, immediately adjoining the site will be protected during demolition and construction works under the supervision of a Conservation Architect. Recommended actions for the protection of Swords District Court House have been included in the Protection of Swords Castle Walls & Swords Court House during Construction Phase report prepared by JCA Architects.

Further details on the relationship between the Swords District Court House and the proposed development are outlined in the Architectural Design Report prepared by O’Donnell + Tuomey.

Swords Castle and grounds are located to the west of the red line boundary. Mitigation measures have been prepared by JCA Architects to protect the Protected Structure prior, during and after construction. Mitigation measures

are listed in the Protection of Swords Castle Walls & Swords Court House during Construction Phase Report prepared by JCA Architects.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Flood Risk Assessment

The proposed development is within Flood Zone C as defined by CFRAM Maps (fluvial and coastal). A review of the current & mid-range future CFRAM flood risk maps found that the site is outside the extents of the coastal and tidal flood zone.

The proposed development is at low risk of fluvial, tidal and groundwater flooding and is at moderate risk of pluvial flooding or flooding due to human or mechanical error.



Figure 5-1: Extract from Flood Extents Map: 0.5% (1:200 year) Flood Extent. Source: Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment, Horgan Lynch).

As summarised in the Specific Site Flood Risk Assessment, prepared by Horgan Lynch Engineers, it is considered that the proposed development can be delivered at the subject site in the context of flood risk. Lands in Flood Zone C are suitable for all types of land use, the proposed Civic and Cultural Building is classified as a 'less vulnerable development' with regard to the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' and therefore passes the sequential approach.

5.2 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report was prepared by ORS and will be submitted as part of the Part 8 Planning Application to Fingal County Council. The EIA Screening Report has been drafted in accordance with EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU.

This EIA Screening Report determines whether or not the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment and if an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) will be required when seeking planning permission.

The EIA Screening Report concluded that the construction, demolition and operation of the proposed development does not trigger any thresholds for mandatory EIA/EIAR as set out in the EU Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended, and transposed into Irish Law by the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018.

The overall risk posed to the environment is considered to be low with no significant impacts anticipated.

5.3 Ecology Survey

An Ecology Survey was prepared by Eco Éireann to provide an ecological overview of the site and surrounding area to inform BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method) assessment for the site. This Report will be submitted as part of the Part 8 Planning Application.

The survey report concludes that despite the relative proximity of the subject site to the nearest Natura 2000 sites, the lack of functional supporting habitat on site and lack of distinct pathways, there will be no potential impacts to Natura 2000 impacts predicted. A range of non-native species are present on site and works could potentially result in the spread of these.

The demolition of 17 and 17A North Street single storey commercial property and derelict outbuildings to the rear and side boundary walls abutting Swords Castle, single storey structure located on the west side of North Street, St. Michaels House single storey bungalow and boundary walls, and Units 1-4 at 20 North Street are proposed as part of the development. Survey data provided by Eco Éireann notes that the proposed demolition will have no impact on species that are predicted.

5.4 Appropriate Assessment Screening

A desk-based assessment was undertaken in April 2022 of the subject site and surrounding area. This focused on habitats and species that are listed as Qualifying Interests (QI) (in the case of SACs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) (in the case of SPAs) in the designations for European sites.

The Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report conducted by Brady Shipman Martin concludes that there will be no loss of any habitat or species listed as QI or SCI of any designated site as a consequence of the proposed development.

A number of other plans were also considered in assessing in-combination effects, but it was determined that there would be no in-combination effect with the following:

- National Planning Framework;
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy;
- Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study;
- Greater Dublin Transport Strategy;
- Climate Action and Mitigation Plan;
- National Biodiversity Plan; and,
- River Basin Management Plan.

The proposed development at the Swords Cultural Quarter, individually or in combination with another plan or project, will not have a significant effect on any European Sites.

6 CONCLUSION

This Planning Report has been prepared on behalf of Fingal County Council to accompany the Part 8 Planning Application for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Swords Cultural Quarter (SCQ), comprising a Civic and Cultural Building and Public Realm works.

The Civic and Cultural Building will contribute significantly to the cultural facilities in the north of the county. The proposed development will create a focal area for the designated County Town of Swords generating vitality within the town centre.

It is submitted that the proposed development as outlined in the report, and the accompanying drawings and reports, fully comply with the objectives of the Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023, whilst taking into consideration the Swords Castle Cultural Quarter Architectural Masterplan and the Your Swords – Strategic Vision 2035.