



Planning Report

Prepared in respect of a Part VIII Planning Application for the provision of an Artist's Workshop Space at 8-9 Merchants Quay

23 February 2026

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Appendices

Appendix I Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028, Policies and Objectives Supporting the Proposed Development

Report title: Part VII Planning Report – 8 – 9 Merchants Quay

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Status: Final for Issue

Draft date: 23 February 2026

For and on behalf of Avison Young Planning and Regeneration Limited

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Report has been prepared by Avison Young on behalf of the applicant, Dublin City Council (DCC). The purpose of this report is to identify the relevant planning matters to be considered in the preparation of a Part VIII planning application for the proposed refurbishment of 8 and 9 Merchants Quay to provide artists' workspaces, shared facilities, a restored theatre and multi-use community venue, while preserving the unique heritage and archaeological features of the site.
- 1.2 In recognition of growing pressures on Dublin's cultural infrastructure, Dublin City Council commissioned Turley Strategic Communications to undertake an *Artist Workspaces Analysis Report* in 2020. The study, informed by over 500 respondents and a series of artist workshops, revealed widespread dissatisfaction with existing provision in terms of quality, accessibility, and facilities. Over 40% of artists reported actively seeking workspace, citing inadequate size, poor condition, and a lack of shared amenities such as storage, meeting areas, and exhibition space.

The research also highlighted the importance of central, walkable, and cycle-accessible locations, with many artists expressing concern about being displaced from the city core. These findings are reinforced by the Dublin City Cultural Infrastructure Audit, which identifies affordable creative workspaces as a strategic priority for sustaining the city's cultural ecosystem.

The proposed redevelopment of 8–9 Merchant's Quay directly responds to this evidenced need by providing accessible, high-quality artist workspaces within a conservation-led reuse of two Protected Structures, supporting DCC's wider cultural and community objectives.

- 1.3 The building will be owned by Dublin City Council and operated by an arts operator. The rationale for the proposed development is to provide a sustainable, conservation-led reuse of two Protected Structures that both safeguards their architectural and archaeological value and delivers much-needed cultural and community infrastructure, including affordable artist workspaces, a restored theatre, and accessible public facilities for the benefit of local residents and the wider city.
- 1.4 The proposed development, as described in the statutory notices, will consist of the following:

"Pursuant to the requirements of Part VIII of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), notice is hereby given that Dublin City Council proposes to carry out the following development at No's 7 and 8–9 Merchant's Quay, Dublin 8 (site area c.0.0676 ha), comprising two Protected Structures (RPS Ref. 5077):

The proposed development will consist of a conservation-led refurbishment of part ground floor of No. 7 and Nos. 8 and 9 Merchant's Quay to provide cultural, community, and artist workshop spaces, including:

- Material alterations and creation of individual and shared artist workspaces and ancillary support facilities.*
- Refurbishment and reinstatement of the former St. Anthony's Theatre as a small-scale performance venue and flexible multi-use community space (c.80 seats).*
- Accessibility improvements including installation of a lift, upgraded circulation, and a new ground floor link between Nos. 8 and 9.*
- Provision of external amenity spaces, including a roof terrace at roof level of No. 8 Merchant's Quay and a first-floor terrace above the restored theatre.*

- *Minor demolition of non-original fabric and internal alterations necessary to facilitate universal access and functional use.*
- *Sensitive external works including stair/lift and plant enclosures as well as a covered link at roof level of No. 8 Merchant's Quay, a new escape stairs, a lantern light and roof mounted plant above theatre, designed to minimise visual impact and respect the historic character of the Protected Structures.*
- *Changes to the Skippers Alley elevation, including the installation of metal panels and theatre sign element and a reconfigured access ramp.*

All works are conservation-led and will safeguard the architectural and archaeological significance of the existing buildings while enabling their sustainable long-term reuse as cultural and community assets."

1.5 The purpose of this Report is to inform the relevant stakeholders of all relevant Planning matters pertinent to the proposed scheme and to assist the Planning Authority in its determination of the application. This report will articulate the details of the proposed elements and will demonstrate continued compliance with associated planning policy. It sets out the context for the proposed elements, the sites planning history, key planning policies, and other material considerations against which the scheme will be assessed.

1.6 In summary the proposal is considered acceptable for the following reasons:

- **Conservation-led approach:** Works are designed to protect and enhance the special architectural and archaeological interest of two Protected Structures (RPS Ref. 5077), with minimal, reversible interventions.
- **Policy compliance:** The scheme aligns with the National Planning Framework, RSES and the Dublin City Development Plan 2022–2028, including *inter alia* objectives **CUO12, CUO14, CUO31, BHA2, BHA11, BHA24, and BHA 26**, supporting cultural infrastructure and adaptive reuse whilst appreciating the historic sensitivity of the site.
- **Cultural and community benefit:** Delivery of artist workspaces and a reinstated small-scale theatre/multi-use venue provides accessible cultural facilities serving local communities and the wider city.
- **Sustainable reuse:** Refurbishment of existing buildings supports circular economy principles (reuse over new build), reduces embodied carbon and secures viable long-term occupation.
- **Improved accessibility:** A new lift, upgraded circulation, and level connections between Nos. 8 and 9 deliver meaningful universal access in line with Part M and inclusive design principles.
- **Sensitive design and townscape response:** External works (roof terraces, lantern light, stair/lift enclosures) are modest, set back and visually discreet in key views along the quays and towards nearby landmarks.
- **Public realm and amenity gains:** New terraces and outdoor areas provide opportunities for community events, performance and passive surveillance, enhancing activation of Merchant's Quay.
- **Traffic and servicing proportionate to use:** The cultural/community nature of the proposal limits traffic generation; servicing can be managed within the established urban context without adverse impacts.

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- **Positive planning history context:** Prior permissions on the complex demonstrate support for conservation, sensitive alteration and modernisation where heritage is safeguarded.
 - **Deliverability:** The works are technically feasible within the existing fabric and can be phased to manage construction and conservation risks in coordination with DCC.
 - **Management and stewardship:** DCC ownership and operation provide governance, maintenance and programming capacity to secure public benefit over the long term.

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The subject site, which has a total site area of 0.0676 Ha (676 sq m), is located at 8 – 9 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8 (Figure 2.1). The site is comprised of two properties; (1) Franciscan Friary, 8 Merchants Quay Dublin 8, D08 W56T; and (2) Dublin City Archaeological Archive, 9 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8, D08 EE0X.

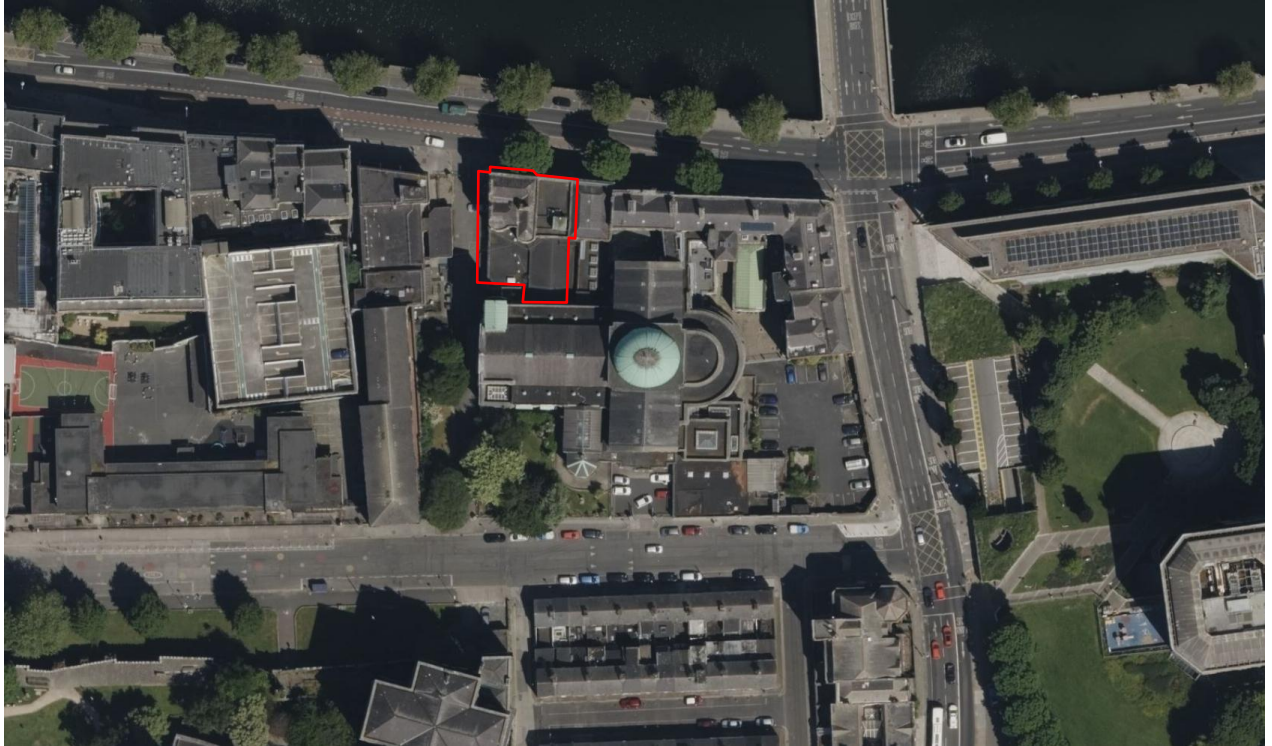


Figure 2.1: Subject Site Location, indicatively outlined in Red
Source: Bing maps, annotated by Avison Young (2025)

- 2.2 The site is generally bound by: Merchants Quay to the north, with the River Liffey past it; to the east and to the south by the Church of Immaculate Conception Adam and Eve; and to the west by an access laneway referred to as Skippers Alley and a shared car park.
- 2.3 The subject site is accessed from the main doors to the buildings along Merchants Quay to the north. However, vehicular access egress to the shared car park and laneway that passes through south to Cook Street.
- 2.4 Both No. 8 and No. 9 Merchants' Quay are designated Protected Structures and are collectively listed under a single entry in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS Ref. No. 5077).
- 2.5 The buildings are also included within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (No. 8: Reg. No. 50080509 and No. 9: 50080510) due to their architectural and cultural significance.
- 2.6 The subject site is zoned 'Z5 – City Centre' in the DCC Development Plan, the stated objective for this zoning it to: To consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area, and to identify, reinforce, strengthen and protect its civic design character and dignity."
- 2.7 The buildings are both partially located within a Conservation Area, the Dublin City Council Development Plan states the following regarding Conservation Areas: "These ... areas do not have a specific statutory protection but contain areas of extensive groupings of buildings, streetscapes, features such as rivers and canals and associated open spaces of historic merit which all add to the special historic

character of the city." The planning parameters set for sites located within such areas will be discussed in Section 6 of this report.



Figure 2.2: Street View of the Subject Buildings, outlined in Red
Source: Google Maps (Imagery October 2024), annotated by Avison Young (2025)

Surroundings

- 2.8 The immediate context of the site is primarily institutional and civic in character, with adjacent uses including religious buildings, cultural institutions, and public services. The Franciscan Church forms part of the subject site and nearby uses include St. Audoen's National School and various local authority and charitable services. The broader urban context includes a mix of residential, office, and tourist-related developments, particularly to the north along the quays and east toward the city centre core. While residential uses are limited immediately adjacent to the site, they become more prominent moving west toward the Liberties and south into the residential neighbourhoods of Dublin 8.
- 2.9 The surrounding street network is characterised by a high level of pedestrian activity, particularly along nearby routes such as Thomas Street, High Street, and Bridge Street. These routes form part of a well-established urban grain connecting key civic and historic quarters, including the Liberties, Christchurch, and the River Liffey quays. The wider context includes a concentration of significant cultural and civic landmarks, such as Christchurch Cathedral, St. Audoen's Church, and Dublinia, all within approximately 5–10 minute walking distance.
- 2.10 The site benefits from strong public transport accessibility. Heuston Station (serving intercity rail and Luas Red Line services) lies approximately 1 km to the west¹, while the nearby high-capacity public transport node / interchange is located approximately 1 km to the northeast² at Abbey Street. Multiple Dublin Bus routes operate along nearby corridors including Thomas Street, Ushers Quay, and Bridge Street, offering direct connections to the city centre and suburbs. Additionally, several Dublin Bikes stations are located within a short walking distance, including at High Street which provides roughly 30 publicly accessible bicycles.

¹ As the crow flies.

² As the crow flies.

3. Proposed Development

3.1 The proposed development, as described in the statutory notices, will consist of the following:

"Pursuant to the requirements of Part VIII of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), notice is hereby given that Dublin City Council proposes to carry out the following development at No's 7 and 8-9 Merchant's Quay, Dublin 8 (site area c.0.0676 ha), comprising two Protected Structures (RPS Ref. 5077):

The proposed development will consist of a conservation-led refurbishment of part ground floor of No. 7 and Nos. 8 and 9 Merchant's Quay to provide cultural, community, and artist workshop spaces, including:

- Material alterations and creation of individual and shared artist workspaces and ancillary support facilities.*
- Refurbishment and reinstatement of the former St. Anthony's Theatre as a small-scale performance venue and flexible multi-use community space (c.80 seats).*
- Accessibility improvements including installation of a lift, upgraded circulation, and a new ground floor link between Nos. 8 and 9.*
- Provision of external amenity spaces, including a roof terrace at roof level of No. 8 Merchant's Quay and a first-floor terrace above the restored theatre.*
- Minor demolition of non-original fabric and internal alterations necessary to facilitate universal access and functional use.*
- Sensitive external works including stair/lift and plant enclosures as well as a covered link at roof level of No. 8 Merchant's Quay, a new escape stairs, a lantern light and roof mounted plant above theatre, designed to minimise visual impact and respect the historic character of the Protected Structures.*
- Changes to the Skippers Alley elevation, including the installation of metal panels and theatre sign element and a reconfigured access ramp.*

All works are conservation-led and will safeguard the architectural and archaeological significance of the existing buildings while enabling their sustainable long-term reuse as cultural and community assets."

3.2 The proposed development at Nos. 8-9 Merchant's Quay seeks to deliver a conservation-led refurbishment that safeguards the architectural and archaeological significance of the protected structures while reimagining them as vital cultural and community assets.

3.3 The scheme provides for:

- **Artists' Facilities:** Creation of individual and shared workspaces for artists and arts administration, tailored to visual arts, music, and literature.
- **Theatre Restoration:** Refurbishment of the former St. Anthony's Theatre as a professional small-scale theatre and flexible multi-use venue for concerts, conferences, workshops, and community activities (minimum c.80-seat capacity).
- **Accessibility and Connectivity:** Installation of a lift within No. 8 for improved universal access, and the formation of a ground floor link between Nos. 8 and 9.

- **Amenity and Public Realm:** Provision of external amenity spaces including a first-floor terrace above the theatre and a roof terrace over No. 8, alongside maximisation of outdoor areas for public use and performance.
- **Sensitive Design Approach:** All works are carefully designed to respect the protected status of the buildings, minimise intervention at upper floors, and respond sensitively to the site's historic and visual context, particularly in relation to the Four Courts and the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

Rationale for the Proposed Development

- 3.4 The proposed refurbishment of 8–9 Merchant's Quay is rooted in a balance between heritage conservation, cultural renewal, and community activation. The buildings, both designated Protected Structures, present a unique opportunity to safeguard significant architectural and archaeological features while reimagining them as vibrant, multifunctional cultural assets.



Figure 3: Proposed Concept Section viewed from the West
Source: McCullough Mulvin Architects

- 3.5 The scheme is conservation-led, ensuring that interventions are minimal and sensitive to the historic fabric, particularly the 18th-century townhouse at No. 9 and its early 17th-century basement slipway. By carefully preserving these elements, the project ensures that heritage is not only safeguarded but also interpreted and made accessible to the public.
- 3.6 The development rationale is also driven by the cultural and social role of the site. The reinstatement of the former St. Anthony's Theatre as a professional, flexible performance space supports Dublin City Council's wider arts and cultural objectives. With a capacity for small-scale productions and multipurpose use (concerts, conferences, workshops), the theatre will become a critical community resource. Similarly, the provision of dedicated artist studios and shared workspaces addresses an identified shortage of affordable creative infrastructure, enabling long-term sustainable use by artists working across visual arts, literature, and music.

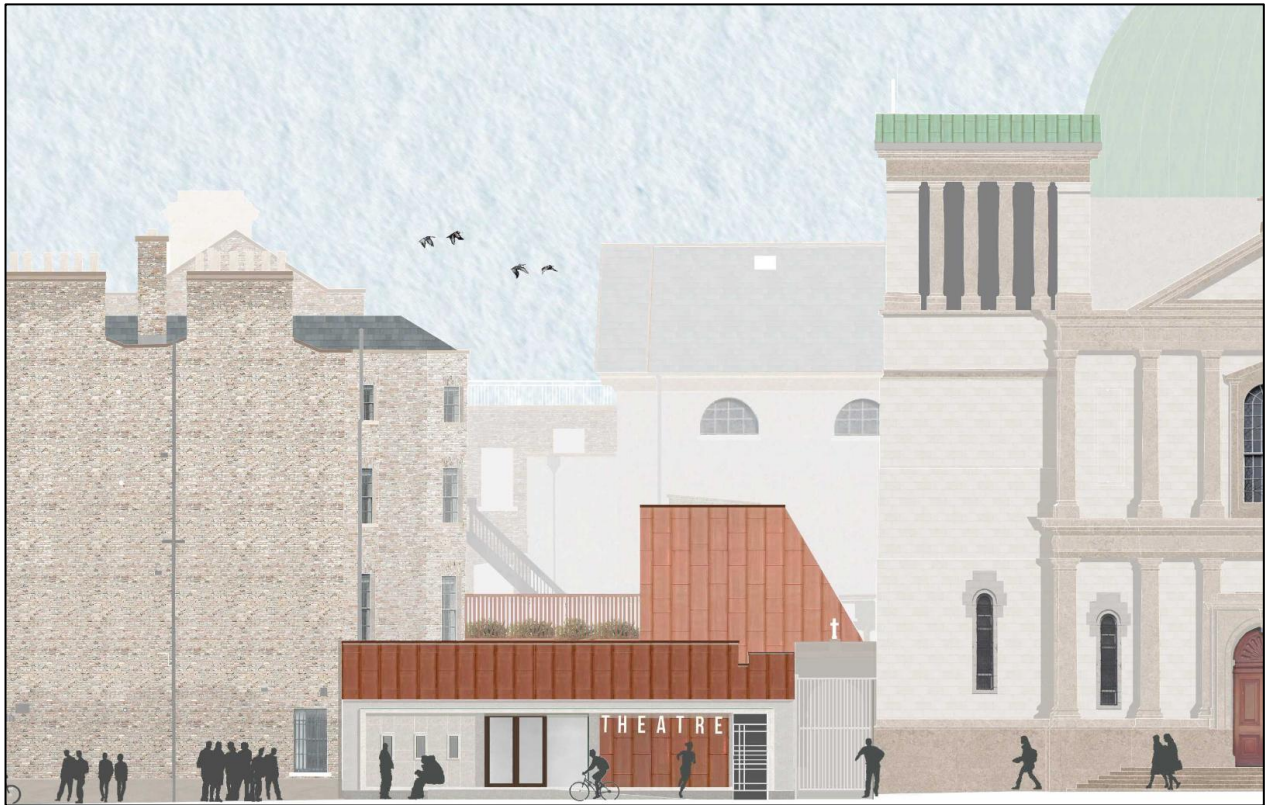


Figure 4: Proposed West Elevation - Photomontage
Source: McCullough Mulvin Architects

3.7 Key design moves, such as the insertion of a lift for universal access, the creation of roof terraces and external amenity areas, and the formation of a link between Nos. 8 and 9, are justified in terms of improving accessibility, functionality, and contemporary use, while remaining proportionate in scale and impact. Visual considerations, particularly the proximity of the Four Courts and the adjacent Church of the Immaculate Conception, have been addressed through setbacks, careful massing, and orientation of new elements like the lantern light.

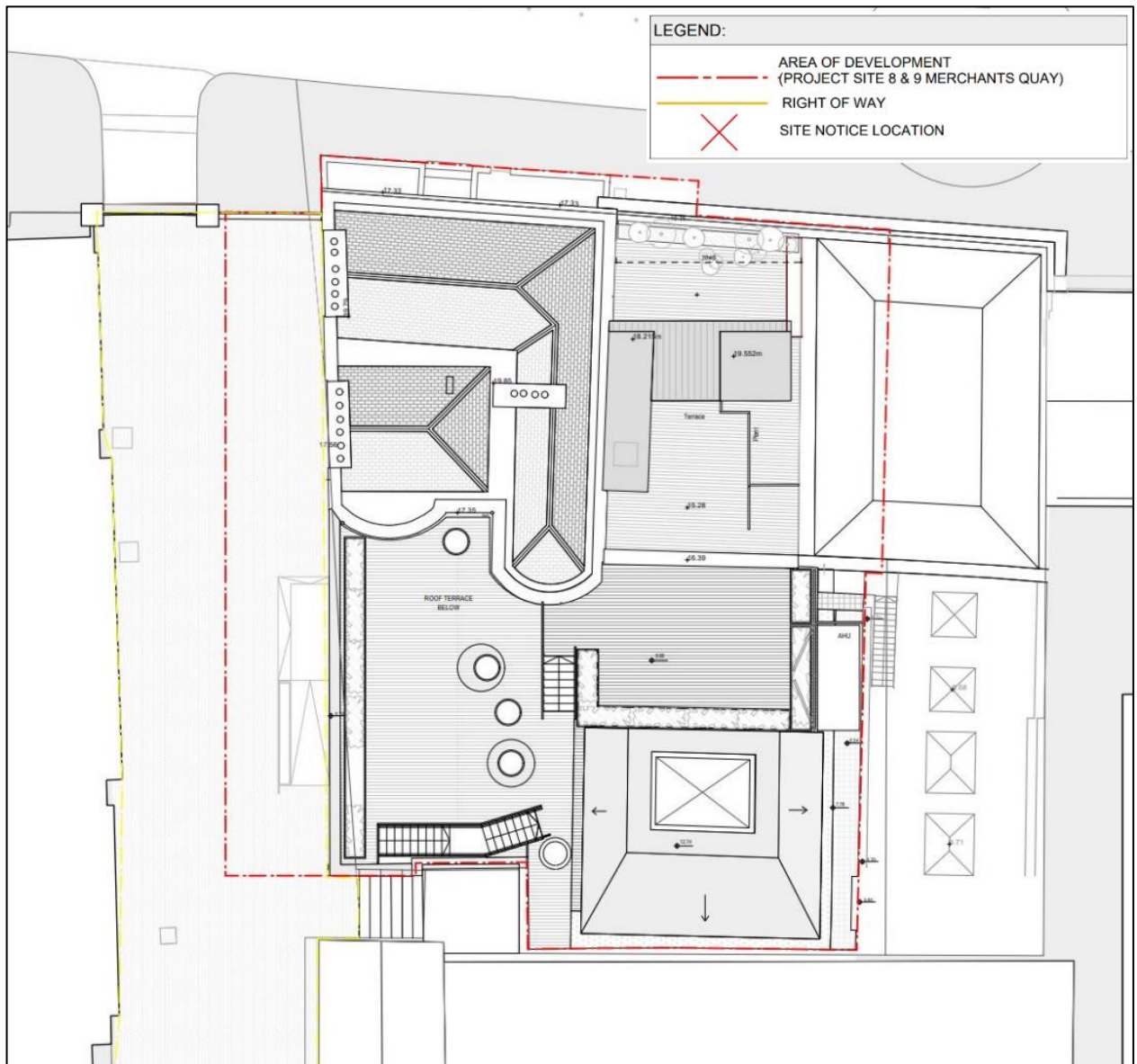


Figure 4: Proposed Site Layout
Source: McCullough Mulvin Architects

- 3.8 The rationale further rests on the project's capacity to enliven Merchant's Quay and its surroundings. By maximising outdoor space for performance and public interaction, and through improved access and passive surveillance, the proposal enhances vibrancy, safety, and inclusivity in the area.
- 3.9 The proposed development represents a sensitive, conservation-first approach that unlocks the cultural, social, and architectural potential of 8-9 Merchant's Quay. It protects the historic legacy of the site while creating a sustainable, accessible, and future-facing home for the arts and the local community.

4. Section 247 Pre-Planning Consultation(s) and Pre-Part 8 DCC Feedback

Initial Meeting

- 4.1 A Section 247 pre-planning consultation was requested by Avison Young with Dublin City Council (DCC) on 24 April 2025. The meeting was held on 17 June 2025 and attended by DCC Planning Officers Nicola Conlon and Rebecca Greene, Conservation Officer Niamh Kiernan, and City Arts Officer Ray Yeates. The project team in attendance included McCullough Mulvin Architects and Avison Young Planning.

DCC Attendees:

Nicola Conlon (NC)	Senior Planner
Rebecca Greene (RG)	Executive Planner
Niamh Kiernan (NK)	Senior Executive Architectural Conservation Officer
Ray Yeates (RY)	City Arts Officer

Design Team Attendees:

Brian Kelly (BK)	Avison Young
Brian Maher (BM)	Avison Young
Valerie Mulvin (VM)	McCullough Mulvin Architects
Ruth O’Herlihy (RO’H)	McCullough Mulvin Architects
Louise Clavin (LC)	McCullough Mulvin Architects

- 4.2 The design team outlined the historic significance of Nos. 8 and 9 Merchant’s Quay, including the 17th-century slipway located in the basement of No. 9, and presented the conservation-led proposals. Key elements included the reactivation of St. Anthony’s Theatre as a flexible performance and community venue, provision of artist workspaces, and the introduction of carefully considered interventions such as a lift, a link at ground floor between Nos. 8 and 9, and external amenity areas.
- 4.3 The proposals received broadly positive feedback. The Conservation Officer welcomed the approach as a sensitive conservation project, noting the value in retaining the theatre and supporting the principle of accessible roof-level spaces. Recommendations included the preparation of a servicing strategy, detailed design of the glass floor to expose the slipway (the glass floor has since been omitted from the proposal), and engagement with DCC Archaeology. The Planning Officers supported the conservation-led use, highlighting the importance of addressing access arrangements to Skipper’s Alley, clarifying site management during construction, and ensuring transport planning is fully considered.

Second Meeting

- 4.4 A follow-up meeting was held with all the same attendees, with the exception of Ray Yeates, who was unable to attend. The meeting took place on 14th October 2025.
- 4.5 The purpose of this follow-up meeting was for the Design Team to provide an update on the project to Dublin City Council (DCC) and to seek further input on the proposed scheme. Key points raised by DCC, particularly in relation to the conservation of the building, included the following:
- A revised design approach to Skippers Alley;
 - Further consideration of the glazed floor (which has since been omitted from the design) to the new slipway below, as it involves significant fabric removal, which was noted as a concern;

- The importance of providing high-quality visuals, to portray the scheme in the best light;
- The proposed green iron for the west elevation was positively received, with a query as to whether it could also be used on the main roof.

4.6 Overall, the consultation confirmed strong support for the project vision, subject to the resolution of technical details and ongoing collaboration with the relevant DCC departments.

Pre-Part 8 DCC Feedback

4.7 A Pre-Part 8 submission was issued to the relevant internal departments within DCC on 31 October 2025. This submission outlined the proposed scheme and invited each department to review the material and provide comments or feedback.

4.8 The comments received from each department, along with the Design Team's corresponding responses, are set out in the table below.

DCC Department	Summary of Department Feedback	Design Team Response
City Archaeologist	<p>The City Archaeologist recommended the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Archaeological monitoring under S26 licence of all demolition and excavation at Ground floor/basement. 2) Provide further detail on the proposed glass floor panel / or omission of the proposed glass floor panel / or provide alternative design the proposed glass floor panel (eg illuminated holes / use of the existing basement windows and lightwell for viewing). 3) Refurbish the basement slipway display area / refresh the heritage interpretation panels and provide proposals for limited public access (eg Open House/Culture Night etc.). 	<p>The below responses have been informed by the design teams Archaeology consultant, Archaeological Projects Ltd.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Archaeological monitoring under S26 licence of all demolition and excavation at Ground floor/basement will take place as recommended in the enclosed Archaeological Impact Assessment. 2) The glass floor panel has been omitted from the design due to feedback from other departments. 3) The proposals include refurbishment of the basement slipway display area, a refresh of the existing heritage interpretation panels, and provision for limited managed public access (for example during events such as Open House or Culture Night).
Environment & Transportation	<p>The Environment & Transportation Department recommended the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Active Travel & Cycling: Proposal is supported and will not impact the existing cycle route, provided the cycle lane remains open during construction in accordance with a Construction Traffic Management Plan. 2) Roads & Public Realm Works: Any works affecting public roads or footpaths must comply with Roads Maintenance standards and be carried out under a Road Opening Licence. 	<p>The below responses have been informed by OCSC Consultant Engineers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Noted-please refer to Section 4.8.3 of the Construction Management Plan noting that Cycle Lane to remain open during construction with appropriate Traffic Management. 2) Noted-Contractor will be required to apply for any Road Opening Licences required. 3) The existing manual gates are being retained as they are.

	<p>3) Power Operated Units (POUs): Clarification required on whether powered gates/doors are proposed. Any POUs must comply with relevant legislation, CE marking, risk assessments, Declarations of Conformity, commissioning procedures, and maintenance documentation.</p> <p>4) Site Access & Servicing: Existing access arrangements are generally acceptable, however servicing via Skipper's Alley should be reviewed due to restricted vehicular access and proximity to the protected cycle lane.</p> <p>5) Mobility Management & Parking: No car parking proposed and no objection raised. Reliance on public transport, cycling and walking is supported, though the potential for limited secure staff cycle parking should be explored.</p> <p>6) Construction Management: A detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan is required, including measures to maintain cycle lane operation throughout construction.</p>	<p>4) Please refer to CMP and particularly Section 4.8.3 of same.</p> <p>5) Noted-development will rely on public bicycle parking as no space on site for dedicated bicycle parking.</p> <p>6) Noted-please refer to Section 4.8.3 of CMP</p>
<p>Drainage Planning & Development Control</p>	<p>The Drainage Planning and Development Control Division (including Flood Defence Unit and Air Quality & Noise Control) recommended the following:</p> <p>1) Engineering Report to fully address SuDS requirements, including roof planters as SuDS features, runoff destination and potential rainwater re-use, noting limited options due to no increase in hardstanding.</p> <p>2) Red line boundary to be clarified, as services and utility works are required outside the site in Skipper's Alley, potentially requiring third-party consent.</p> <p>3) Proposed new surface water pipe in Skipper's Alley to facilitate drainage separation requires clarification on ownership and maintenance, provision of a Type H manhole, and protection of existing private services.</p> <p>4) Further detail required on basement flood protection measures and structural works identified in the Construction Management Plan.</p> <p>5) Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment requires substantial revision to</p>	<p>The below responses have been informed by OCSC Consultant Engineers.</p> <p>1) Please refer to updated Engineering Services Report and Section 5.3 of same for discussion on SuDS.</p> <p>2) The redline boundary has been amended to fully incorporate all drainage works proposed in Skippers Alley. A Letter of Consent from the landowner is also included in the Part 8 pack for this amended redline.</p> <p>3) Noted-new pipe is being provided to separate storm and foul on site. Type H manhole to be provided prior to discharge to public system.</p> <p>4) Please refer to updated Flood Risk Assessment.</p> <p>5) Please refer to updated Flood Risk Assessment.</p> <p>6) Please refer to section 4.8 of the Construction Management Plan prepared by OCSC.</p>

	<p>correct errors (tidal distances, flood probabilities and levels), clearly define basement uses and levels, assess structural integrity under daily tidal influence, address pluvial flooding, identify mitigation measures, and confirm no adverse impacts beyond the site boundary. Non water-compatible uses below 4.0m MHD are not acceptable.</p> <p>6) Construction Management Plan to be submitted for approval and to comply with the Air Quality Monitoring and Noise Control Good Practice Guide for Construction and Demolition.</p>	
<p>Culture, Community Leisure & Area Services – Parks, Biodiversity & Landscape</p>	<p>1) The proposals of artist workshops, theatre and associated facilities within existing protected structures at Merchants Quay are fully supported by Park Services.</p> <p>2) Please clarify if external scaffold will be deployed to the building facades on Merchant’s Quay. The existing mature tree canopy is in close proximity to the building façade and will require appropriate protection measures and arboricultural advice if scaffold is to be erected. If the street area is also to be used for deliveries/works access, then the tree trunk shall also require protection.</p> <p>3) The roof terrace arrangement of planters/seating should avoid the creation of a ‘step’ at the roof parapet for safety.</p> <p>4) The AA screening report and conclusion are noted. Mitigation measures noted in the Ecological impact assessment (Table 4) shall be carried out and included within construction contract or as pre-construction requirements. Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement within the scheme shall be reviewed with the project ecologist, e.g. bat boxes /swift boxes.</p>	<p>1) No response needed.</p> <p>2) It is not currently intended that external scaffold will be required to the Merchant’s Quay façade as part of the proposed works; however, if scaffold becomes necessary at a later stage, appropriate protection measures will be implemented for the adjacent trees in accordance with arboricultural advice. Likewise, should deliveries or works access to the street area have the potential to affect the trees, suitable trunk and root protection will be put in place to ensure no adverse impact.</p> <p>3) No step will be created at the roof parapet. This is demonstrated in the attached section drawings prepared by McCullough Mulvin Architects, which illustrate that the proposed planters and seating are set out in a manner that avoids the formation of any climbable element or change in level at the parapet edge.</p> <p>4) Noted. Altemar will collaborate with Project Team to determine biodiversity enhancement measures (e.g. insect hotels, swift / bat boxes) appropriate to site & appropriate pla</p>
<p>Housing & Community – City Architects</p>	<p>The City Architects section recommended the following:</p> <p>1) New proposed accessible roof-level spaces: Roof deck (items 12 and 44) including finishes and structure to be non-flammable. Accessible roof-level spaces with flammable construction can pose a fire risk to the entire building.</p>	<p>1) Noted. Fire performance and compliance have been key considerations in the development of the design to date. The roof deck areas (Items 12 and 44), including all associated finishes and structural elements, will be specified and constructed using non-flammable or appropriately fire-rated materials in accordance with current Building</p>

	<p>2) Glass floor above historic slip way in no. 9 (item 13): While City Architects consider the glass floor a good idea, a more focussed view of the slipway in the reception area only would be preferable to limit the loss of historic fabric. The rationale for the intervention should be clearly explained.</p> <p>3) Metal Screen to AHUs at roof level (item 24): The design of this screen should be informed by a noise analysis study.</p> <p>4) New external stairs from roof terrace to Skipper's Alley (item 29): This staircase is shown as not covered. If this is a fire escape route it needs to be confirmed that this is acceptable due to the danger of slippery surfaces when wet.</p> <p>5) New metal gate (item 49) at entrance/exit from new external stairs from roof terrace: If this gate is made in an open construction, it could invite vandalism. Security measures that might impact the Part 8 information should be reviewed.</p>	<p>Regulations and relevant fire safety guidance. Detailed material specifications will be confirmed at the next stage of design to ensure that the completed works do not present any increased fire risk to the building or its occupants.</p> <p>2) This has been omitted from the design to feedback from other sections.</p> <p>3) Amplitude Acoustics have been appointed and have prepared an External Plant Noise Impact Assessment Report which is submitted as part of the Part 8 pack. The assessment concludes that "based on the results of the assessment the roof top noise is predicted to meet the Dublin City Council's typical noise criteria at the nearest sensitive receptors."</p> <p>4) McCulloch Mulvin Architects engaged with a fire consultant who reviewed the external stairs from roof terrace to Skippers Alley. The fire consultant is satisfied that this fire escape is safe and accords with best practice.</p> <p>5) The design intent for the proposed new metal gate (Item 49) at the entrance/exit from the external stairs to the roof terrace has not yet been finalised and will be developed in the next stage of detailed design. We acknowledge the concern that an open construction could potentially invite vandalism or unauthorised access, and the gate specification will therefore be reviewed to ensure that appropriate security measures are incorporated, including consideration of alternative construction types, materials, and locking mechanisms. Any design refinements arising from this review will be assessed to ensure they remain consistent with the approved Part 8 information, and if necessary, appropriate amendments will be made to address security requirements while maintaining the overall architectural intent.</p>
Park Services	<p>Parks Services commented the following:</p> <p>1) The proposals of artist workshops, theatre and associated facilities within existing protected structures at Merchants Quay are fully supported by Park Services.</p>	<p>1) Duly noted.</p> <p>2) The requirement for external scaffolding to the Merchant's Quay facades has not been determined at this stage. However, should it be established at a later date that scaffolding or access from the street</p>

	<p>2) Please clarify if external scaffold will be deployed to the building facades on Merchant’s Quay. The existing mature tree canopy is in close proximity to the building façade and will require appropriate protection measures and arboricultural advice if scaffold is to be erected. If the street area is also to be used for deliveries/works access, then the tree trunk shall also require protection.</p> <p>3) The roof terrace arrangement of planters/seating should avoid the creation of a ‘step’ at the roof parapet for safety.</p> <p>4) The AA screening report and conclusion are noted. Mitigation measures noted in the Ecological impact assessment (Table 4) shall be carried out and included within construction contract or as pre-construction requirements. Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement within the scheme shall be reviewed with the project ecologist, e.g. bat boxes /swift boxes.</p>	<p>area is necessary, appropriate protection measures for the adjacent trees will be implemented in all cases. This will include protection of the tree canopy and trunks as required, together with consultation with a suitably qualified arboricultural specialist. Notwithstanding the above, due to the nature of the proposed works it is currently intended that scaffolding will not be required, although this remains subject to detailed design development and future confirmation.</p> <p>3) With regard to the comment on the roof terrace arrangement, we can confirm that no step will be created at the roof parapet. This is demonstrated in the attached section drawings prepared by McCullough Mulvin Architects, which illustrate that the proposed planters and seating are set out in a manner that avoids the formation of any climbable element or change in level at the parapet edge.</p> <p>4) Noted. Altemar will collaborate with Project Team to determine biodiversity enhancement measures (e.g. insect hotels, swift / bat boxes) appropriate to site & appropriate placement of enhancement features.</p>
Conservation	<p>Conservation provided the following recommendations:</p> <p>1) A RIAI Grade I Conservation Architect with proven and appropriate expertise shall be employed to lead, design, manage, monitor and implement the works to the site and to ensure adequate protection of the retained and historic fabric during the works. In this regard, all permitted works shall be designed to cause minimum interference to the retained building and facades structure and/or fabric. Reason: To protect the fabric, character and integrity of this protected structure.</p> <p>2) It is recommended that the proposed glazed floor at ground level in No. 9 be omitted and an alternative solution – to provide visual connection to the slipway, that shall be less invasive - be considered.</p>	<p>The below responses are informed by McCullough Mulvin Architecture (MMA).</p> <p>1) Valerie Mulvin, a Grade 1 Conservation Architect is overseeing the project.</p> <p>2) McCullough Mulvin has revised the design to omit the proposed glazed floor at ground level in No. 9.</p> <p>3) This information will be submitted for the agreement of the Conservation Officer.</p> <p>4) This information will be submitted for the agreement of the Conservation Officer.</p> <p>5) Material samples will be submitted for the agreement of the Conservation Officer.</p> <p>6) Specifications and methodologies will be submitted for the agreement of the Conservation Officer.</p>

	<p>3) In advance of works commencing on site, the applicant shall submit details of any proposed new signage for the agreement of the CO. The information shall provide details of new signage, plus details of any illumination required, plus fixing details.</p> <p>4) In advance of works commencing on site, the applicant shall submit details of any interventions to the railings to the front of the Protected Structures.</p> <p>5) In the course of development works and in advance of the respective works package commencing on site, the applicant shall submit to the CO, samples of proposed materials for new build elements.</p> <p>6) In the course of development, detailed conservation-led specifications and methodologies pertaining to any conservation works required (including but not limited to: structural repairs, repairs of roofs and roof finishes, repair of historic windows/ replacement of non-original windows, repair of historic joinery, (including doors, door casings, skirtings, architraves, dado rails, window casings etc.), repair of lath and plaster ceilings and historic decorative elements, repair of floorboards, repair of fireplaces, masonry cleaning and repair, pointing repair etc.) be submitted to the CO for their prior agreement. It is recommended that a series of site visits be facilitated so that the CO may inspect the conservation works and agree samples of conservation repair work on site.</p> <p>7) All existing original features, in the vicinity of the works shall be protected during the course of the refurbishment works.</p> <p>8) All repair of original fabric shall be scheduled and carried out by appropriately experienced conservators of historic fabric.</p> <p>9) The architectural detailing and materials in the new work shall be executed to the highest standards so as to complement the setting of the protected structure and the historic area. Reason: To protect the character and integrity of the protected structure.</p>	<p>7) MMA will ensure existing facilities will be protected during the course of the works.</p> <p>8) MMA will ensure all repair will be carried out by appropriately experienced conservators of historic fabric.</p> <p>9) Noted by MMA.</p> <p>10) Noted by MMA.</p> <p>11) MMA will submit survey drawings, photographs and building reports as required.</p> <p>12) MMA will confirm as required.</p> <p>13) MMA will engage as required.</p> <p>14) MMA will submit as required.</p>
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	<p>10) All works to the protected structure shall be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice and the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) and Advice Series issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Any repair works shall retain the maximum amount of surviving historic fabric in situ. Items to be removed for repair off-site shall be recorded prior to removal, catalogued and numbered to allow for authentic re-instatement. Reason: To ensure that the integrity of this protected structure is maintained and that the proposed repair works are carried out in accordance with best conservation practice with no unauthorised or unnecessary damage or loss of historic building fabric. • In advance of works commencing on site, the applicant shall submit 2 No. copies of survey drawings, photographs and building reports to be lodged with the Irish Architectural Archive for record purposes. Reason: To ensure that an accurate record of the surviving historic fabric of this protected Structure is provided and available on public record</p> <p>11) In advance of works commencing on site, the applicant shall confirm with the Conservation Section if any surviving elements of are concealed behind and if any hitherto unknown historic fabric is found elsewhere on site. The presence of historic fabric may inform an overall strategy for a design proposal that will enhance the character of the Protected Structure.</p> <p>12) The applicant shall engage with the Planning & Property Development Department / Conservation Section in relation to potential impacts on architectural heritage arising from the project implementation and operation, ensuring such impacts are monitored by the design team so as to inform the design and mitigate against any adverse impacts on architectural heritage during rather than after the design process.</p> <p>13) The Applicant shall seek the written authorisation of the Conservation</p>	
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	Officer for any deviation from the methodology, materials and process described in the documentation submitted. Reason: In order to ensure that development takes place with regard for the importance of any remaining fabric at this Protected Structure.	
Arts	The Heritage Officer expressed strong support for the proposal, describing it as an exemplary conservation-led adaptation of protected structures that sensitively balances architectural conservation, cultural activation and community benefit. The careful retention of historic fabric, imaginative interpretation of the medieval slipway, provision of affordable artist workspaces, reactivation of St Anthony's Theatre, and the project's positive social, urban and sustainability impacts are all strongly welcomed.	No response required.

Pre-Part 8 DCC Feedback

- 4.9 The Area Committee Meeting was held on 18th February 2026. McCullough Mulvin Architecture attended on behalf of the design team and assisted in presenting the proposed scheme to the Committee.
- 4.10 The Planner's Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and provides a clear and supportive assessment of the proposed development at Nos. 7–9 Merchant's Quay. The report acknowledges the architectural and cultural significance of the Protected Structures and recognises that the proposal adopts a conservation-led approach, carefully balancing renewal and adaptation with the protection of historic fabric.
- 4.11 The positive findings of the report highlight the thoughtful refurbishment and adaptive reuse of the buildings to create a cohesive cultural and artistic centre serving both the local community and the wider city. It supports the provision of much-needed affordable artist studios and shared workspaces integrated within the existing building fabric in a manner that enhances functionality while respecting historic character. The report also welcomes the revival of the former St. Anthony's Theatre as an intimate 80-seat venue for performances, workshops and community events, with sensitive upgrades to services, circulation and backstage facilities.
- 4.12 Further positive aspects include a strong emphasis on accessibility improvements, including the introduction of a lift, improved internal connections and upgraded circulation routes; the inclusion of modest, largely concealed external additions designed to sit comfortably within the architectural context and protect key views; and the discreet integration of modern building services, minimising disturbance to historic fabric. The report confirms that extensive internal departmental consultation has been undertaken and that issues raised have largely been addressed.
- 4.13 Importantly, the report concludes that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required, as the development is not likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site. It further determines that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is not required, as the proposal is sub-threshold, conservation-led and limited in scale, and is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

Subject to specified documentation updates and clarifications, the Planning Department confirms that it has no objections to the scheme progressing to application stage.

- 4.14 A number of actions were identified arising from the report, principally relating to final documentation updates, confirmation of screening determinations and public display requirements. These actions have been addressed and incorporated into the final suite of documents.

Planners Report Comment	Response
<p><i>ensure that there is clarity in the final documentation that where relevant, recommendations from the other divisions have been taken into consideration and where necessary, changes have been made.</i></p>	<p>All feedback from internal departments has been addressed (see previous table). The proposal reflects the comments of its internal departments. This can be considered resolved.</p>
<p><i>ensure that the EIA and AA Screening Reports have been updated accordingly if any changes have been made to the development since the initial appraisal was carried out.</i></p>	<p>Both reports have been updated in February 2026, reflecting the latest proposal and changes, their conclusions stand.</p>
<p><i>a final determination note for the EIA and AA screening report is required to be completed by the Planning Department, a copy of which must be put on public display as part of the public documentation. This determination can only be finalised on confirmation by the Proposing Department that no further changes have been made to the proposal since the EIA and AA Screening Reports have been carried out. If amendments to the proposal have been made since the initial Screening Reports have been completed, the Proposing Department is advised that the EIA and AA Screening Reports will require updating to ensure an accurate appraisal was carried out. The Proposing Department is advised to contact the Senior Planner for the area a minimum of 1 week prior to proposal going on public display in order to finalise this determination.</i></p>	<p>DCC, as the planning department, will prepare the final determination note.</p> <p>Both AA and EIA Screening Reports have been updated and their conclusions relate to the scheme in its updated form.</p>
<p><i>ensure that all submitted documentation is easily accessible and legible when displayed on the online consultation portal. All documents and drawings should be clearly labelled and appropriately referenced at the time of upload. Drawings should not be identified solely by a Drawing Number and should be categorised and referenced in a manner that facilitates ease of use and review.</i></p>	<p>DCC will upload of submitted documentation and ensure it is easily accessible and legible.</p> <p>The design team have ensured that all drawings are titled appropriately and numbered also.</p>
<p><i>... provide one complete hard copy of the planning application to the Planning Department, to be used as a planners copy in the assessment of the proposed development.</i></p>	<p>One hard copy of the planning application documents will be submitted to the Planning Department.</p>

5. Planning History

Subject Site

5.1 According to the Dublin City Council Online Planning Database, there have been several relevant planning applications made on the subject site, details of each are provided below.

Reg. Ref.	Development Description	DCC Decision
3277/12	The development will consist of alteration works to the Franciscan Friary Complex and Church of the Immaculate Conception 4-8 Merchants quay (a protected structure) on a site bounded by Merchants Quay and Winetavern street and Cook Street: internal alterations to ground floor areas of the existing Friary (a protected structure) to relocate mechanical and electrical plantrooms from basement level, including replacement of existing window to rear with louvred panel, demolition of two existing walls, provision of new service routes above ceiling level from the new mechanical plantroom to the existing services riser; and external works including provision of a new external water storage tank and screen in yard area to the rear of the Friary, and provision of new underground service routes between non-contiguous basement areas between the Friary and the Church buildings (a Protected Structure).	Grant Permission, Final Grant issued on 3 rd January 2013
2111/12	PROTECTED STRUCTURE: The development will consist of single storey extension, new garage and shed to rear and associated alterations. The alterations include the following: (1) The construction of a single storey, flat roofed extension to rear linking existing Store and Annex, and conversion of existing Store to Utility/Bathroom. (2) Breaking out of opening in back wall of Kitchen to incorporate lean-to into the Kitchen and installation of 2 no. Velux conservation rooflights to roof of lean-to. (3) Construction of a pitched roof double Garage to rear, with solar panels, and accessed from laneway. (4) Alterations to partitions to First Floor return Bathroom. (5) Installation of En Suite to First Floor rear Bedroom. (6) Treatment of existing dry rot, rising damp and woodworm. (7) Upgrading of thermal insulation throughout. (8) Replacement of existing windows with timber sash windows. (9) New concrete floor to Ground Floor return. (10) Provision of new heating, electrical and water services throughout. (11) Construction of small pitched roofed structure to rear to contain Boiler House, Fuel Store and Garden Store.	Grant Permission, Final Grant issued on 27 th November 2012
2650/08	Planning permission on a site bounded by Merchants Quay and Winetavern Street. The development will consist of refurbishment works at the Franciscan Friary, a Protected Structure comprising: internal alterations to provide office and reception accommodation at ground floor, private living accommodation at first floor, ensuite	Grant Permission,

	bedroom accommodation at second and third floors, renewal of mechanical and electrical services and redecoration; external works, all at the rear, comprising the demolition of a single storey kitchen structure and construction of a new single storey reception room and parlour, changes to fenestration, the installation of new external escape stairs and the installation of 30sqm of solar panel on the existing slate pitched roof.	Final Grant issued on 5 th August 20
2175/00	Planning permission on a site bounded by Merchants Quay and Winetavern Street. The development will consist of refurbishment works at the Franciscan Friary, a Protected Structure comprising: internal alterations to provide office and reception accommodation at ground floor, private living accommodation at first floor, ensuite bedroom accommodation at second and third floors, renewal of mechanical and electrical services and redecoration; external works, all at the rear, comprising the demolition of a single storey kitchen structure and construction of a new single storey reception room and parlour, changes to fenestration, the installation of new external escape stairs and the installation of 30sqm of solar panel on the existing slate pitched roof.	Grant Permission, Final Grant issued on 5 th August 2025
0963/93	Erection of a pitched roof.	Grant Permission, Final Grant issued on 16 th September 1993

Table 5.1: Planning History of the Subject Site
Source: Dublin City Council Online Planning Database

Lesson Learned from Planning History

5.4 The planning history of the site and its adjoining lands demonstrates a long-standing recognition of the heritage sensitivity of Nos. 8–9 Merchant’s Quay and their relationship to the Franciscan Friary and the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Several consistent themes emerge which are directly relevant to the current proposals:

1. **Heritage-Led Interventions:** Previous permissions (e.g. Reg. Ref. 2650/08 and 2175/00) confirm that development on the site has historically been acceptable where proposals respect the protected status of the buildings and focus on conservation, repair, and sensitive adaptation. This reinforces the need for a conservation-first approach in the current scheme, with minimal intervention and careful treatment of significant fabric.
2. **Building Services and Modernisation:** More recent applications (e.g. Reg. Ref. 3277/12) highlight the practical challenges of accommodating modern building services within a protected structure. Relocations of plant rooms, new service routes, and upgrades to heating and electrical systems were permitted once demonstrated to be discreet and reversible. For the present project, this

underscores the importance of developing a robust servicing strategy that integrates mechanical and electrical upgrades without compromising historic character.

3. **Extensions and Alterations:** Reg. Ref. 2111/12 also indicates that limited extensions and structural alterations to the rear of protected structures can be considered acceptable where design is sensitive and interventions are justified by improved functionality. This provides precedent for the current scheme's proposals for roof terraces, linkages, and amenity spaces, provided their visual and heritage impacts are carefully mitigated.

5.5 Overall, the planning history demonstrates consistent support for projects that prioritise conservation while enabling adaptive reuse. The key lessons, ensuring heritage-led design, discreet servicing solutions, sensitive alterations, and proactive structural repair, directly inform and reinforce the approach taken in the current proposals.

6. Planning Policy Context

6.1 This section outlines the relevant planning policy context of the proposals. These policies and objectives provide the overarching planning policy framework that governs the development of the site and have will be given due regard in preparing the planning application.

National Policy Context

National Planning Framework

6.2 The National Planning Framework – First Revision (NPF), adopted in April 2025, is the Government's high-level overarching strategic plan that aims to shape future growth and development of the country.

6.3 Section 1.3 of the NPF sets out a series of shared goals, termed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). Two NSOs are relevant and supportive of the proposed development, as detailed below:

- **NSO 6** 'A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills;
- **NSO 7** 'Enhanced Amenity and Heritage'.

6.4 In addition, the following National Policy Objectives (NPOs) are supportive of the proposed development:

- **NPO 38:** *"Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services."*
- **NPO 63:** *"Support the coordination and promotion of all-island tourism initiatives through continued co-operation between the relevant tourism agencies and Tourism Ireland, pursue the further development of sport, and invest in the diverse heritage, arts and cultural and linguistic traditions of the island."*
- **NPO 67:** *"Support the circular and bio economy including in particular through greater efficiency in land and materials management, promoting the sustainable re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings and structures, while conserving cultural and natural heritage, the greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development."*
- **NPO 89:** *"Protect, conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural, cultural and built heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their cultural and environmental significance."*
- **NPO 90:** *"Enhance, integrate and protect the special physical, environmental, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets, including streetscapes, vernacular dwellings and other historic buildings and monuments, through appropriate and sensitive investment and conservation."*

Regional Policy Context

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031

6.5 The subject site is located in the Eastern & Midland Region, where the elected members of the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly agreed to make the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 on the 28th of June 2019. The RSES is a strategic plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. The RSES vision is to "create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health

and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all”.

6.6 Importantly, the RSES supports the principle of development, with the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), as follows:

RSO	Description
RSO 2	Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region’s citizens. (NSO 1)
RSO 5	Creative Places: Enhance, integrate and protect our arts, culture and heritage assets to promote creative places and heritage led regeneration.

Source: Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031

Local Policy Context

[Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028](#)

6.7 The relevant statutory Development Plan for the subject site is the Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (hereafter the “Development Plan”). This Plan came into effect in November 2022 and sets out the policy framework against which all planning applications at this site will be assessed. The Development Plan objectives and policies that apply to the subject application are outlined below.

6.8 The subject site is zoned ‘Z5 – City Centre’, where the stated objective is; “To consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area, and to identify, reinforce, strengthen and protect its civic design character and dignity.”

6.9 The subject site, as identified in Figure 5 below, is also partially located within a ‘Conservation Area’, as indicated by the red hatching. These red-hatch areas do not have a specific statutory protection but contain areas of extensive groupings of buildings, streetscapes, features such as rivers and canals and associated open spaces of historic merit which all add to the special historic character of the city.

The Development Plan states that all planning applications for development within Conservation Areas shall:

- *“Respect the existing setting and character of the surrounding area.*
- *Be cognisant and/ or complementary to the existing scale, building height and massing of the surrounding context.*
- *Protect the amenities of the surrounding properties and spaces.*
- *Provide for an assessment of the visual impact of the development in the surrounding context.*
- *Ensure materials and finishes are in keeping with the existing built environment.*
- *Positively contribute to the existing streetscape Retain historic trees also as these all add to the special character of an ACA, where they exist.”*

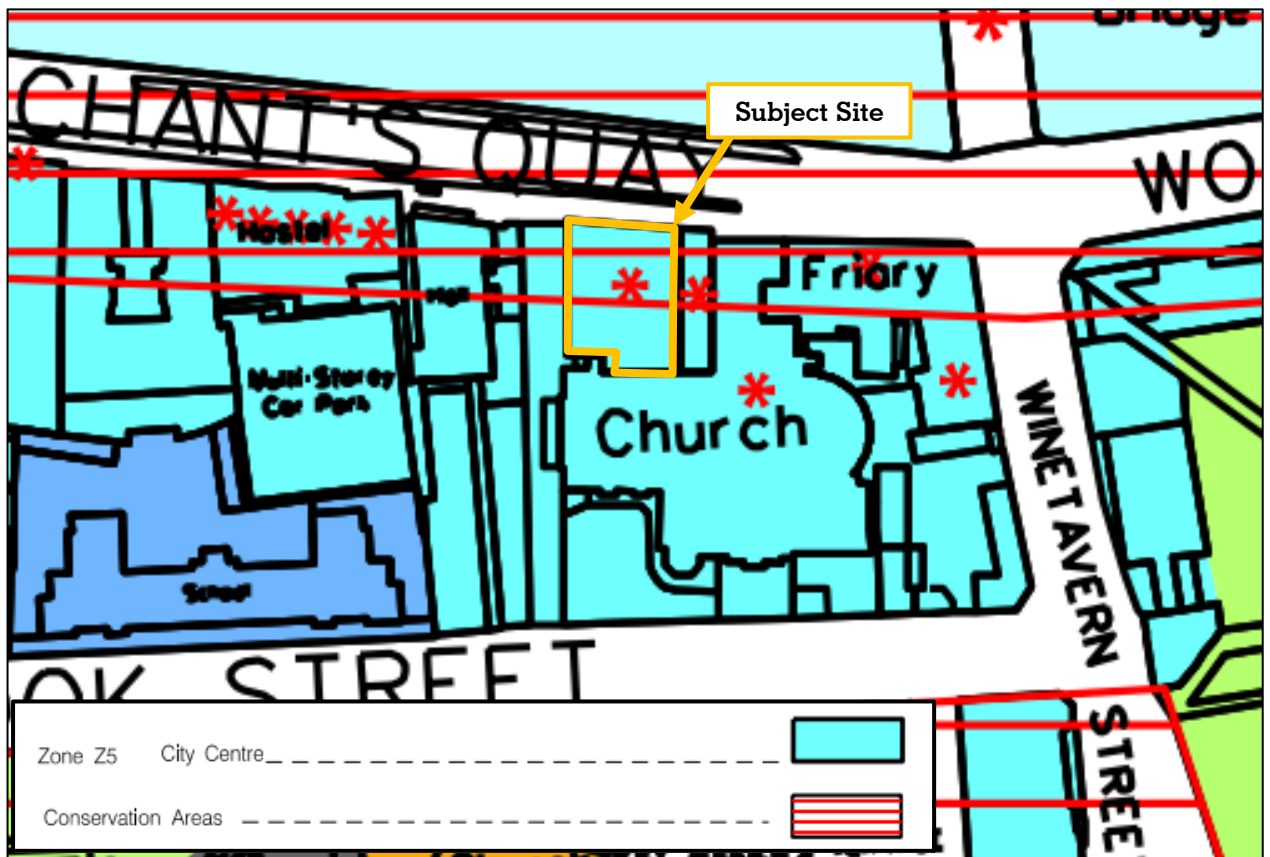


Figure 5: DCC Zoning Map E with the Subject Site indicatively annotated
 Source: Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028, annotated by Avison Young (2025)

6.10 Section 14.7.5 of the Development Plan sets out the 'Permissible' and 'Open for Consideration' uses within the subject sites Z5 zoning designation. These uses are listed below:

Permissible	Amusement/leisure complex, beauty/ grooming services, bed and breakfast, buildings for the health, safety and welfare of the public, café/tearoom, childcare facility, civic offices, community facility , conference centre, craft centre/ craft shop, creative, artistic, recreational building and uses, cultural/recreational building and uses, cultural , delicatessen, education, embassy office, enterprise centre, financial institution, funeral home, guesthouse, home-based economic activity, hostel (tourist), hotel, industry (light), internet café/call centre, live-work units, media-associated uses, medical and related consultants, mobility hub, nightclub, office, off-licence, off-licence (part), open space, place of public worship, primary health care centre, public house, public service installation, recycling facility, residential, restaurant, science and technology-based industry, shop (district), shop (local), shop (major comparison), shop (neighbourhood), sports facility and recreational uses, student accommodation, take-away, training centre, veterinary surgery, warehousing (retail/non-food)/retail park.
Open for Consideration	Advertisement and advertising structures, betting office, Build to Rent residential, car park, car trading, civic and amenity/recycling centre, household fuel depot, laundromat, motor sales showroom, outdoor poster advertising, petrol station, postal hotel/motel, transport depot.

'Permissible' and 'Open for Consideration Uses' on Z5 zoned lands (Source: Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028)

6.11 The Development Plan strongly supports conservation-led regeneration, adaptive reuse of buildings, and the expansion of cultural infrastructure. The following policies and objectives are of particular relevance to the proposed development:

- **CUO31 Artist Workspaces:** *“To further develop and provide for artist workspaces and spaces for creative production within the city and avail of opportunities for utilising underused buildings within communities for artistic and cultural purposes.”*
- **CUO32 Artist Live-Work Space:** *“To support the development of a feasibility model and pilot project for provision of artist live-work space during the lifetime of the Development Plan and to seek to provide a clear community benefit as part of the project”*
- **CUO12 Cultural Spaces in Dublin 8:** *“To deliver a number of new cultural spaces and artists workspaces in the Dublin 8 area, including the renovation of Kilmainham Mills and the establishment of the Creative Campus space.”*
- **CUO14 Dublin 8 Regeneration:** *“To ensure that the wider regeneration of Dublin 8 contributes to the cultural assets of the community with new spaces provided at street level in larger regeneration projects that will accommodate and provide for new local cultural uses.”*

6.12 In parallel with these cultural policies, the Development Plan’s Built Heritage and Archaeology (BHA) policies provide a robust framework for how works to Protected Structures should be managed. These include:

- **BHA2: Development of Protected Structures:** *“That development will conserve and enhance protected structures and their curtilage and will: (a) Ensure that any development proposals to protected structures, their curtilage and setting shall have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) published by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. (b) Protect structures included on the RPS from any works that would negatively impact their special character and appearance. (c) Ensure that works are carried out in line with best conservation practice as advised by a suitably qualified person with expertise in architectural conservation. (d) Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a protected structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout and materials. (c) Ensure that the form and structural integrity of the protected structure is retained in any redevelopment and ensure that new development does not adversely impact the curtilage or the special character of the protected structure. (d) Respect the historic fabric and the special interest of the interior, including its plan form, hierarchy of spaces, structure and architectural detail, fixtures and fittings and materials. (e) Ensure that new and adapted uses are compatible with the architectural character and special interest(s) of the protected structure. (f) Protect and retain important elements of built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, entrance gates and piers and any other associated curtilage features. (g) Ensure historic landscapes, gardens and trees (in good condition) associated with protected structures are protected from inappropriate development. (h) Have regard to ecological considerations for example, protection of species such as bats.”*
- **BHA11: Rehabilitation and Reuse of Existing Older Buildings:** *“(a) To retain, where appropriate, and encourage the rehabilitation and suitable adaptive reuse of existing older buildings/structures/features which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and streetscape, in preference to their demolition and redevelopment. (b) Encourage the retention and/or reinstatement of original fabric of our historic building stock such as windows, doors, roof coverings, shopfronts (including signage and associated features), pub fronts and other significant features. (c) Ensure that appropriate materials are used to carry out any repairs to the historic fabric.”*

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- **BHA24: Reuse and Refurbishment of Historic Buildings:** *“Dublin City Council will positively encourage and facilitate the careful refurbishment of the historic built environment for sustainable and economically viable uses and support the implementation of the National Policy on Architecture as it relates to historic buildings, streetscapes, towns and villages, by ensuring the delivery of high quality architecture and quality place-making, and by demonstrating best practice in the care and maintenance of historic properties in public ownership.”*

6.13 Together, the cultural policies (CUO31, CUO32, CUO12, CUO14) and heritage policies (BHA2, BHA11, BHA24) provide a strong and mutually reinforcing policy basis for the proposed conservation-led reuse of Nos. 8–9 Merchant’s Quay. The project directly addresses identified deficits in cultural and artistic workspace, while ensuring that interventions are minimal, reversible where possible, and compatible with the architectural and archaeological significance of the Protected Structures. In doing so, it aligns with both the cultural expansion and heritage protection priorities of the Development Plan. A fuller extract of the relevant policies is provided at Appendix I.

7. Town Planning Assessment

- 7.1 The proposed development at Nos. 8–9 Merchant’s Quay will involve a series of carefully considered conservation-led interventions within two Protected Structures (RPS Ref. 5077), both of which are also recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The works are designed to secure the long-term sustainable reuse of the buildings as cultural and community assets, while protecting and enhancing their architectural and archaeological significance.

Land Use Zoning

- 7.2 The subject site is zoned ‘Z5 – City Centre’, the objective of which is:

“To consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area, and to identify, reinforce, strengthen and protect its civic design character and dignity.”

- 7.3 Under this zoning designation, the proposed development can be appropriately categorised within a number of use classes that are identified as ‘Permissible’.

- *“community facility”;*
- *“craft centre/ craft shop”;*
- *“creative, artistic, recreational building and uses”;*
- *“cultural/recreational building and uses”;* and
- *“cultural”.*

- 7.4 The proposed uses – artist studios, shared workspaces, a restored theatre, and community facilities – are consistent with the zoning objective and directly support Development Plan objectives CUO31 and CUO12. The scheme also aligns with CUO14, which seeks to ensure regeneration in Dublin 8 contributes to cultural assets.

Demolition and Alterations

- 7.5 Demolition is limited to localised interventions, including the opening of a link at ground floor between Nos. 8 and 9 and removal of non-original elements that do not contribute to the structures’ special interest. Please refer to the accompanying Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment and Method Statement, prepared by McCullough Mulvin Architects, for further detail. These works are necessary to improve accessibility and functionality and are in line with Development Plan Policies BHA2 and BHA25, which support sensitive interventions where justified and for the betterment of the Protected Structure.

Circulation and Accessibility

- 7.6 A key objective of the scheme is to significantly improve universal access. The introduction of a lift within No. 8, along with new stair enclosures, ensures compliance with Part M standards. Access between Nos. 8 and 9 at ground level will improve circulation, while external terraces provide new amenity opportunities. These works respond to NPO 38, which supports a more socially inclusive society through greater accessibility and are consistent with Development Plan guidance on adapting heritage buildings for contemporary use.

Internal Interventions and Heritage Interpretation

- 7.7 Minimal interventions at upper floors ensure retention of the historic plan form and fabric.

External Impacts and Visual Considerations

- 7.8 External changes are confined to the introduction of two roof terraces: one located at first-floor level above the restored theatre in No. 9, and a second at roof level above No. 8. Additional minor elements include new stair and lift enclosures and a discreet lantern light. All interventions are set back from the

primary façades, subordinate in scale, and designed to minimise visual impact in sensitive views, particularly towards the Four Courts and the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The proposed terraces are modest in scale, intended for controlled cultural and amenity use, and their location, facing onto Merchant's Quay and internal courtyards rather than directly adjoining residential properties, ensures they will not give rise to undue noise or disturbance. The conservation-led design approach is fully consistent with Policy BHA2, which requires works to conserve and enhance the special character of Protected Structures, while ensuring compatibility with the amenity of immediate neighbours.

Transport and Access

- 7.9 The site is highly accessible by sustainable modes, with frequent Dublin Bus routes along Merchant's Quay and Thomas Street, the Luas Red Line and Heuston Station within c.1 km, and Dublin Bikes stations nearby. It is anticipated that the majority of users, particularly local community groups using the theatre, will arrive on foot, by bike, or via public transport.
- 7.10 No on-site car parking is proposed, consistent with the city-centre location and Development Plan policy. Provision for secure cycle parking will be included to support active travel.
- 7.11 Operational needs are manageable within the existing urban context: the service lane to the west of the site provides capacity for occasional loading/unloading of stage equipment and can also facilitate supervised minibus drop-off for community or school groups when required. These activities will be coordinated under DCC's operational management to minimise disruption.

Conservation and Heritage Strategy

- 7.12 The project adopts a "conservation first" approach, with all interventions designed to be minimal, sensitive, and reversible where feasible. The proposals have been developed with specialist conservation input and in direct consultation with DCC's Conservation Officer. Ensuring compliance with the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) and Development Plan Policy BHA27.

Environmental Considerations

- 7.13 No significant environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposals. The works are modest in scale, confined to existing Protected Structures, and conservation-led in design. As confirmed in the EIA Screening prepared by Avison Young, the development is below the relevant thresholds and presents no likely pathway for significant environmental effects. Similarly, the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening prepared by Altemar Marine & Environmental Consultancy has concluded that no adverse effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site will arise. On this basis, the scheme is environmentally acceptable in addition to being policy compliant.

Alignment with Wider Policy

- 7.14 The scheme demonstrates clear alignment with policy at all levels:
- **National Policy – NPF:** Supports compact growth, cultural renewal, reuse of existing buildings, and enhancement of heritage (e.g. NPO 38, NPO 63, NPO 67, NPO 89, NPO 90, NSO 6 and 7).
 - **Regional Policy – RSES:** Reinforces RSO 2 (Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration) and RSO 5 (Creative Places).
 - **Local Policy – Dublin City Development Plan:** Strongly supports artist workspaces, cultural infrastructure, adaptive reuse, and heritage interpretation, particularly in Dublin 8.

7.15 The proposed development represents a sensitive and policy-compliant scheme that will protect and enhance the significance of Nos. 8–9 Merchant’s Quay while securing their viable long-term reuse. It will deliver tangible cultural, community, and heritage benefits in line with national, regional, and local planning objectives.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposed development at 8–9 Merchant’s Quay represents a sensitive, conservation-led scheme that both safeguards the architectural and archaeological significance of two Protected Structures and secures their long-term, sustainable reuse. By providing artist workspaces, a restored small-scale theatre, and associated community facilities, the project delivers cultural and social infrastructure that is demonstrably aligned with the objectives of the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and the Dublin City Development Plan 2022–2028.
- 8.2 The proposals are proportionate in scale, technically feasible, and respectful of the historic fabric, with interventions limited to those necessary to improve accessibility and enhance functionality. The scheme addresses an identified need for affordable creative space, provides meaningful community benefit, and activates this important riverside location in a way that is consistent with adopted policy.
- 8.3 This report, together with the supporting plans and particulars prepared by the Multi-Disciplinary Design Team, provides a comprehensive justification for the proposed development. The scheme has been carefully designed in accordance with the overarching design principles and policy objectives at national, regional, and local levels. Accordingly, Avison Young is of the professional opinion that there is no reasonable or policy-based basis to refuse planning permission for the proposed development.

Appendix I

Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028, Policies and Objectives Supporting the Proposed Development

Policy / Objective	Description
BHA2: Development of Protected Structures	<i>That development will conserve and enhance protected structures and their curtilage and will: (a) Ensure that any development proposals to protected structures, their curtilage and setting shall have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) published by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. (b) Protect structures included on the RPS from any works that would negatively impact their special character and appearance. (c) Ensure that works are carried out in line with best conservation practice as advised by a suitably qualified person with expertise in architectural conservation. (d) Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a protected structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout and materials. (e) Ensure that the form and structural integrity of the protected structure is retained in any redevelopment and ensure that new development does not adversely impact the curtilage or the special character of the protected structure. (f) Respect the historic fabric and the special interest of the interior, including its plan form, hierarchy of spaces, structure and architectural detail, fixtures and fittings and materials. (g) Ensure that new and adapted uses are compatible with the architectural character and special interest(s) of the protected structure. (h) Protect and retain important elements of built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, entrance gates and piers and any other associated curtilage features. (i) Ensure historic landscapes, gardens and trees (in good condition) associated with protected structures are protected from inappropriate development. (j) Have regard to ecological considerations for example, protection of species such as bats.</i>
BHA11: Rehabilitation and Reuse of Existing Older Buildings	<i>(a) To retain, where appropriate, and encourage the rehabilitation and suitable adaptive reuse of existing older buildings/structures/features which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and streetscape, in preference to their demolition and redevelopment. (b) Encourage the retention and/or reinstatement of original fabric of our historic building stock such as windows, doors, roof coverings, shopfronts (including signage and associated features), pub fronts and other significant features. (c) Ensure that appropriate materials are used to carry out any repairs to the historic fabric.</i>
BHA24: Reuse and Refurbishment of Historic Buildings	<i>Dublin City Council will positively encourage and facilitate the careful refurbishment of the historic built environment for sustainable and economically viable uses and support the implementation of the National Policy on Architecture as it relates to historic buildings, streetscapes, towns and villages, by ensuring the delivery of high quality architecture and quality place-making, and by demonstrating best practice in the care and maintenance of historic properties in public ownership.</i>
CU2: Cultural Infrastructure	<i>To ensure the continued development of Dublin as a culturally vibrant, creative and diverse city with a broad range of cultural activities provided throughout the city, underpinned by quality cultural infrastructure.</i>
CU4: Cultural Resources	<i>To support the development of new and expanded cultural resources and facilities within the city that enrich the lives of citizens and visitors, provide new opportunities for engagement and celebrate aspects of our history and culture.</i>
CU5: Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 - 2027	<i>Support the planned upgrade and investment in national cultural institutions within the city as outlined in Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 - 2027; including the new collections and Learning Centre at IMMA, Collins Barracks, The National Library, National Archives, Natural History Museum, IMMA, National Concert Hall and the Chester Beatty Library and other projects proposed during the lifetime of the Development Plan.</i>
CU7: Cultural Clusters and Hubs	<i>To support existing, and encourage the growth of, emerging cultural clusters and hubs within the city, which bring together cultural activities interlinked with supporting uses (such as restaurants, retail, galleries and venues) to create vibrant, defined cultural quarters and communities within the city that give a variety of cultural experiences to all.</i>

CU012: Cultural Spaces in Dublin 8	<i>To deliver a number of new cultural spaces and artists workspaces in the Dublin 8 area, including the renovation of Kilmainham Mills and the establishment of the Creative Campus space.</i>
CU014: Dublin 8 Regeneration	<i>To ensure that the wider regeneration of Dublin 8 contributes to the cultural assets of the community with new spaces provided at street level in larger regeneration projects that will accommodate and provide for new local cultural uses.</i>
CU12: Cultural Spaces and Facilities	<i>To grow the range of cultural spaces and facilities in tandem with all new developments and across existing developments such as in basement or rooftop spaces where suitable to meet the needs of an increased population within the city.</i>
CU17: Design of Cultural and Arts Facilities	<i>To promote a co-design approach to cultural and arts facilities and that applicants and developers consider the Toolkit guide for artform specific workplace to inform the design of such spaces.</i>
CU029: Performing Arts Venue	<i>To undertake a feasibility study to assess the need for; and the possible form and scale of a new performing arts space (and ancillary spaces) within the inner city and the options for achieving successful implementation.</i>
CU031: Artist Workspaces	<i>To further develop and provide for artist work spaces and spaces for creative production within the city and avail of opportunities for utilising underused buildings within communities for artistic and cultural purposes.</i>
CU032: Artist Live-Work Space	<i>To support the development of a feasibility model and pilot project for provision of artist live-work space during the lifetime of the Development Plan and to seek to provide a clear community benefit as part of the project.</i>
CU18: Music as a Key Cultural Asset	<i>To support music as a key cultural asset of Dublin City and seek the retention and expansion of venues and facilities that allow for expression and experience of music in a wide variety of forms to enhance the cultural life of the city.</i>
CU033: Music Rehearsal Spaces	<i>To seek opportunities to include facilities for music rehearsal spaces within communities to enable and encourage more people to engage with music, with a particular focus on young people</i>
CU035: Music Venues	<i>To encourage the development of new music and dance venues at accessible locations that will provide opportunities for music artists to perform and spaces for people to experience music at a range of venue sizes.</i>
CU20: Cultural Activities in the Evening	<i>To support the growth in cultural activities within the city and to encourage cultural institutions and amenities within the city to operate into early evening time on a regular basis, and to explore the development of more regular evening cultural experiences on a pilot basis.</i>
CU22: Range of Cultural and Amenity Options	<i>To seek and encourage a range of cultural and amenity options for residents and visitors within the city that are independent of licenced premises to allow options for younger people, families, elders and others to engage and enjoy a range of activities in the city during evening hours.</i>
CU23: Performance and Entertainment Spaces	<i>To protect and support Dublin city's cultural assets by facilitating the enhancement and/or growth of existing cultural spaces, including performance and entertainment spaces, while protecting the existing amenities of an area.</i>
CU041: Music and Dance	<i>To recognise the cultural value of a thriving club and dance scene for all music types and audiences to the City and to the night time economy; and to support and protect existing club venues and the future growth and development of such facilities as a distinct part of the cultural life of the City.</i>
CU34: Civic Arts and Cultural Spaces in Urban Villages	<i>To seek to deliver new civic arts and cultural spaces in urban villages across the city in areas where there is a deficit and to prioritise such areas for investment.</i>

CU045: Buildings within Communities for Arts and Cultural Spaces	<i>To seek to acquire buildings of merit within communities that can become important arts and cultural spaces; and give a new purpose to local buildings with heritage value and to promote the expansion of cultural uses within existing spaces, particularly within buildings in public ownership.</i>
CU27: Traditional Arts	<i>To support the traditional arts within the city including music, dance and sports and to support key language and cultural investment projects in the city. DCC supports the UNESCO recognition sought for Irish cultural heritage elements, including hurling, harping and piping which have already achieved protection.</i>

Source: Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028

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