

Architects Design Statement & Report

St Finian's Study Hall /
Former St Patricks Classical School
Navan, Co Meath



Prepared For:



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Prepared By:

OC+C
architects



Introduction

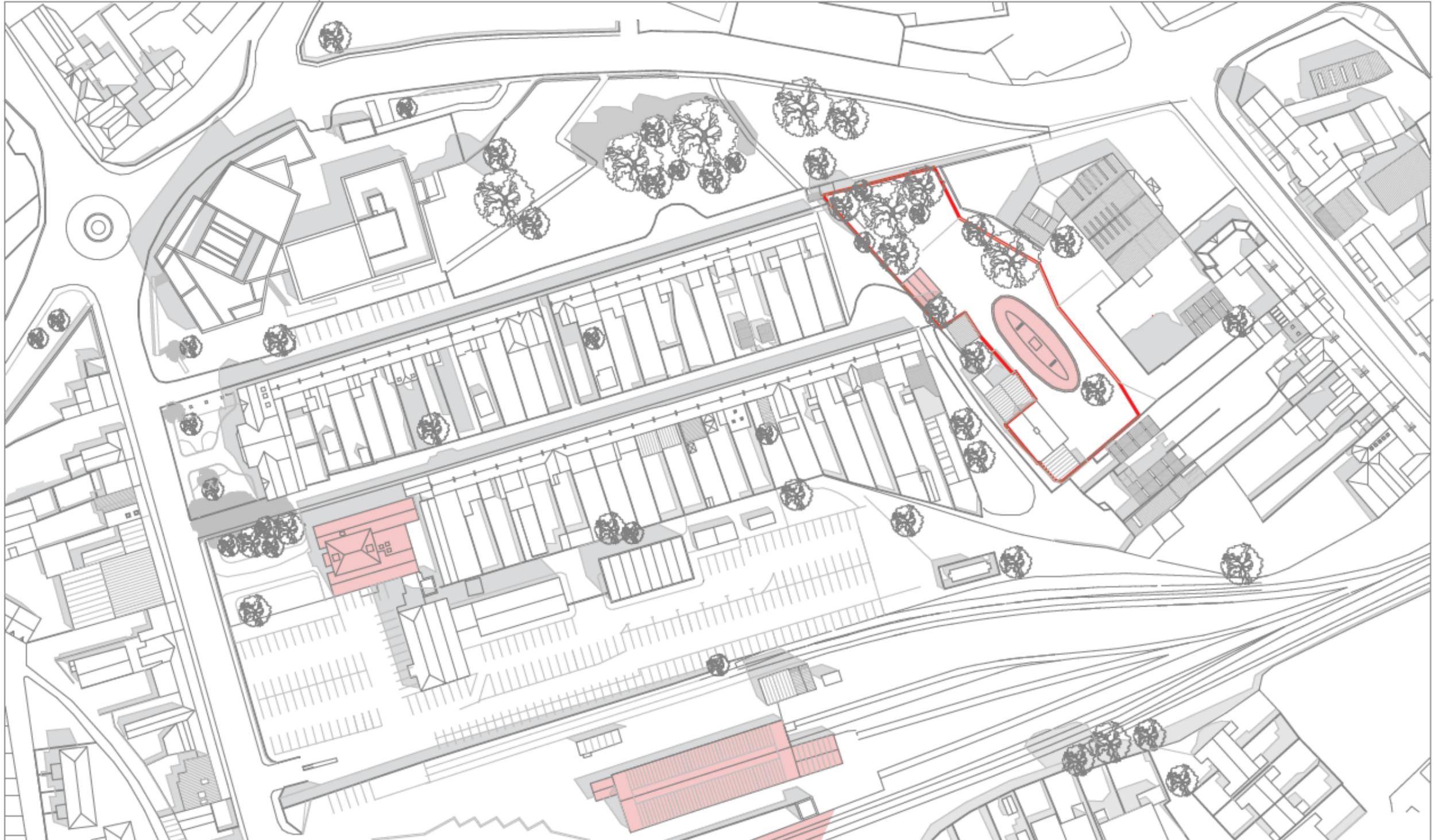
In accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2020 Meath County Council proposes to carry out development: at the former St Finian's Seminary Study Hall / former St Patrick's Classical School, located at Dillonsland, Navan, Co Meath, and bounded by Circular Road and St Finian's Terrace.

The development will consist/consists of the conservation, restoration, and change of use of the original building, a Protected Structure, for use as the Meath County Archive as well as ancillary site development works. The works will consist of the following; the restoration / replacement of original natural slate and lead roof to its original profile and the provision of two replacement roof lanterns; the removal of the modern external cement roughcast render and the provision of a new lime render external finish to match the original finish to the building; the provision of high quality external glazing and doors; the provision of new entrance signage and canopy; the provision of sundry new internal screens and partitions to facilitate the new archive function; the restoration of the original 1950's science block for use as a plant room and ground maintenance store; the removal of a number of modern ancillary site structures; the provision of new gates, a new accessible entrance and two new accessible parking spaces within the site boundary, accessed from St Finian's Terrace; The provision of eight covered bicycle parking spaces; the provision of a new public entrance and gate from Circular Road; the provision of high quality public realm and landscaping within the site boundary; the restoration of the existing handball alley; the provision of site lighting and a cctv security system within the site boundary; and temporary construction access from the adjacent Meath County Council car park which is accessed from Railway Street.

The site forms part of the formed lands of St Finian's Seminary and was originally access from Academy Street to the north East. After St Finian's moved to the Mullingar and parts of the site were sold the main access to what then became St Patrick's Classical School was from St Finian's Terrace, where the main entrance remains today. The site is currently bounded by St Finian's Terrace and a small commercial property to the south west, residential properties to the north east, a series of commercial properties accessed from Academy Street to the north east and circular road to the north west.

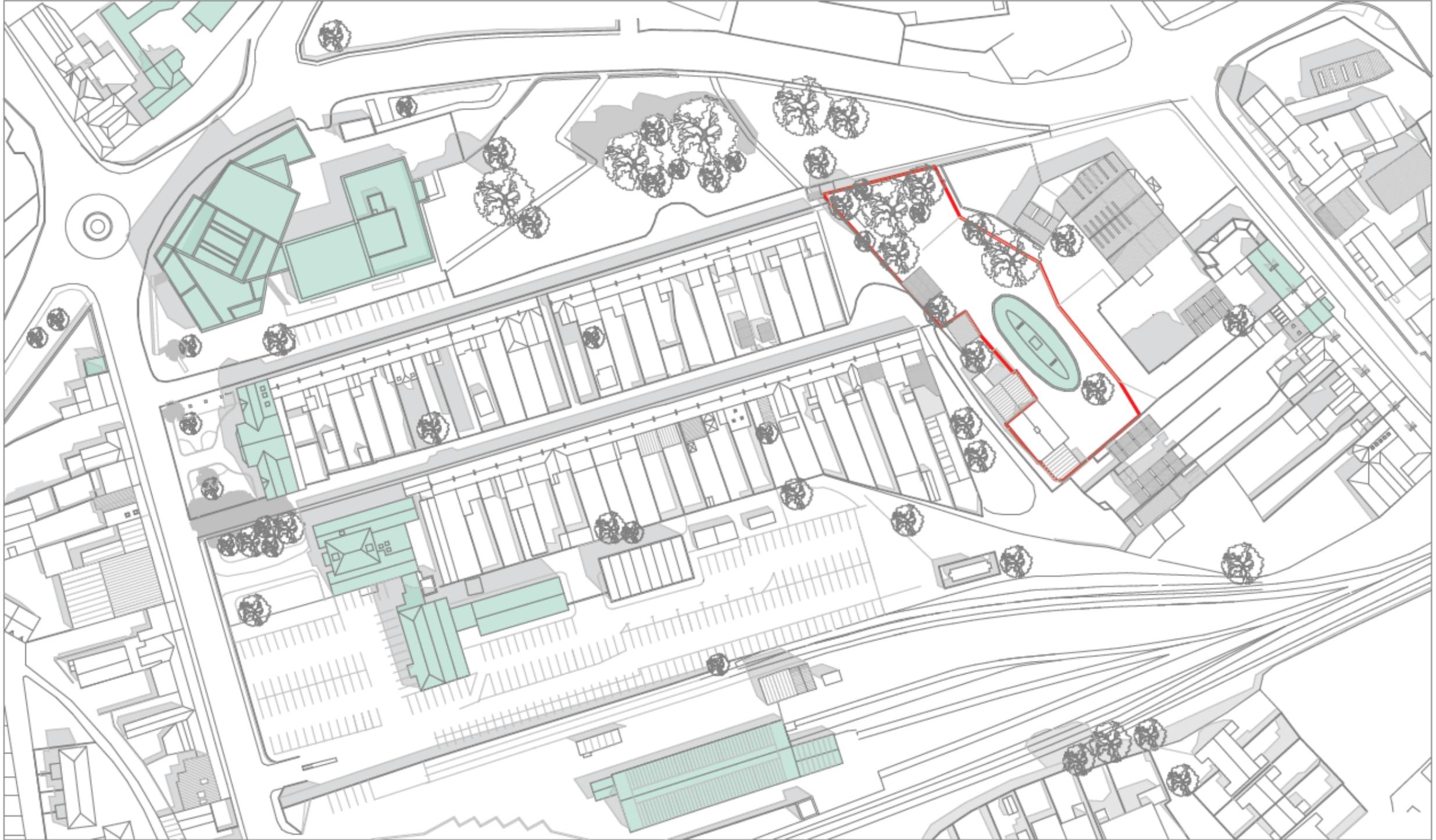


Site Analysis

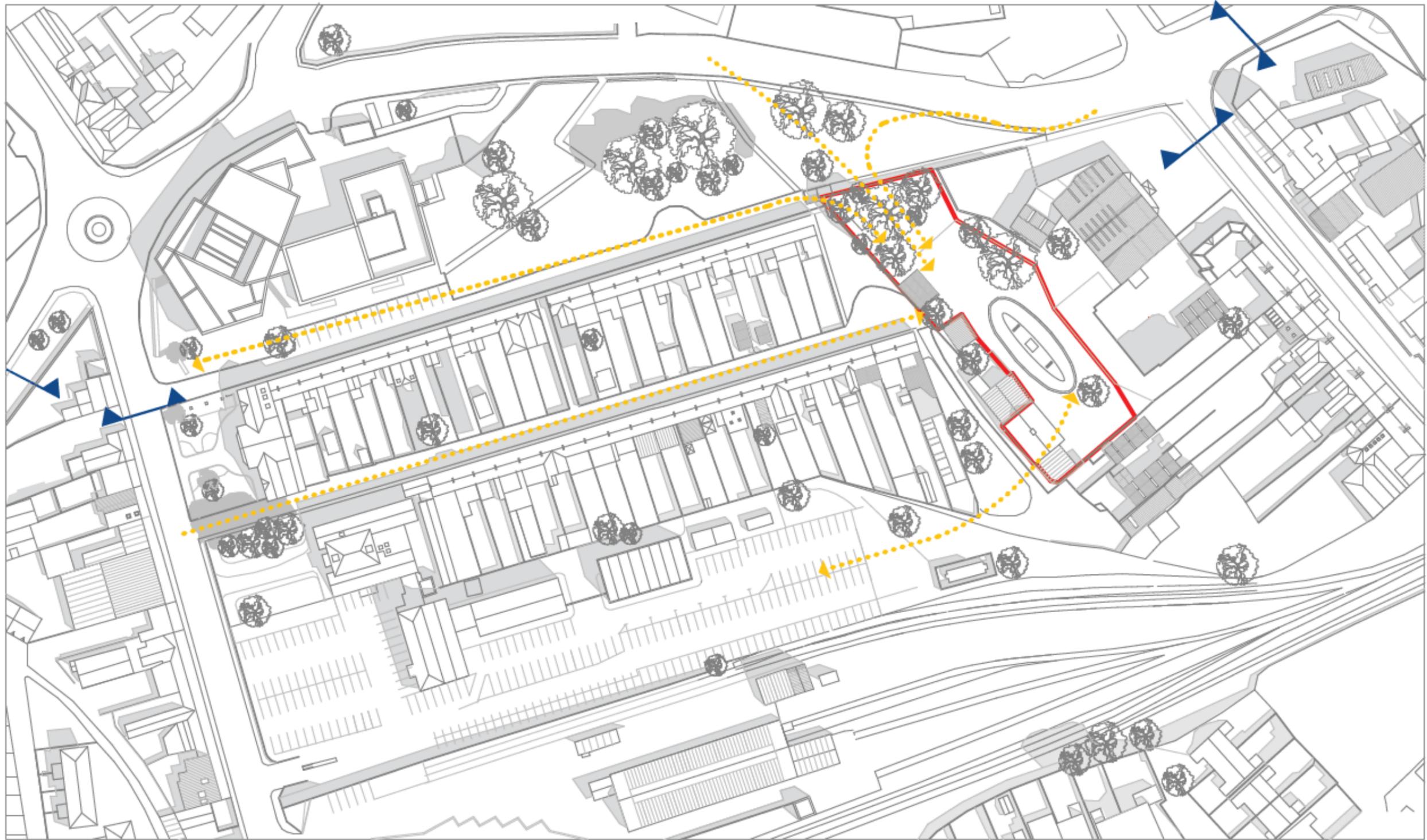


Protected Structures





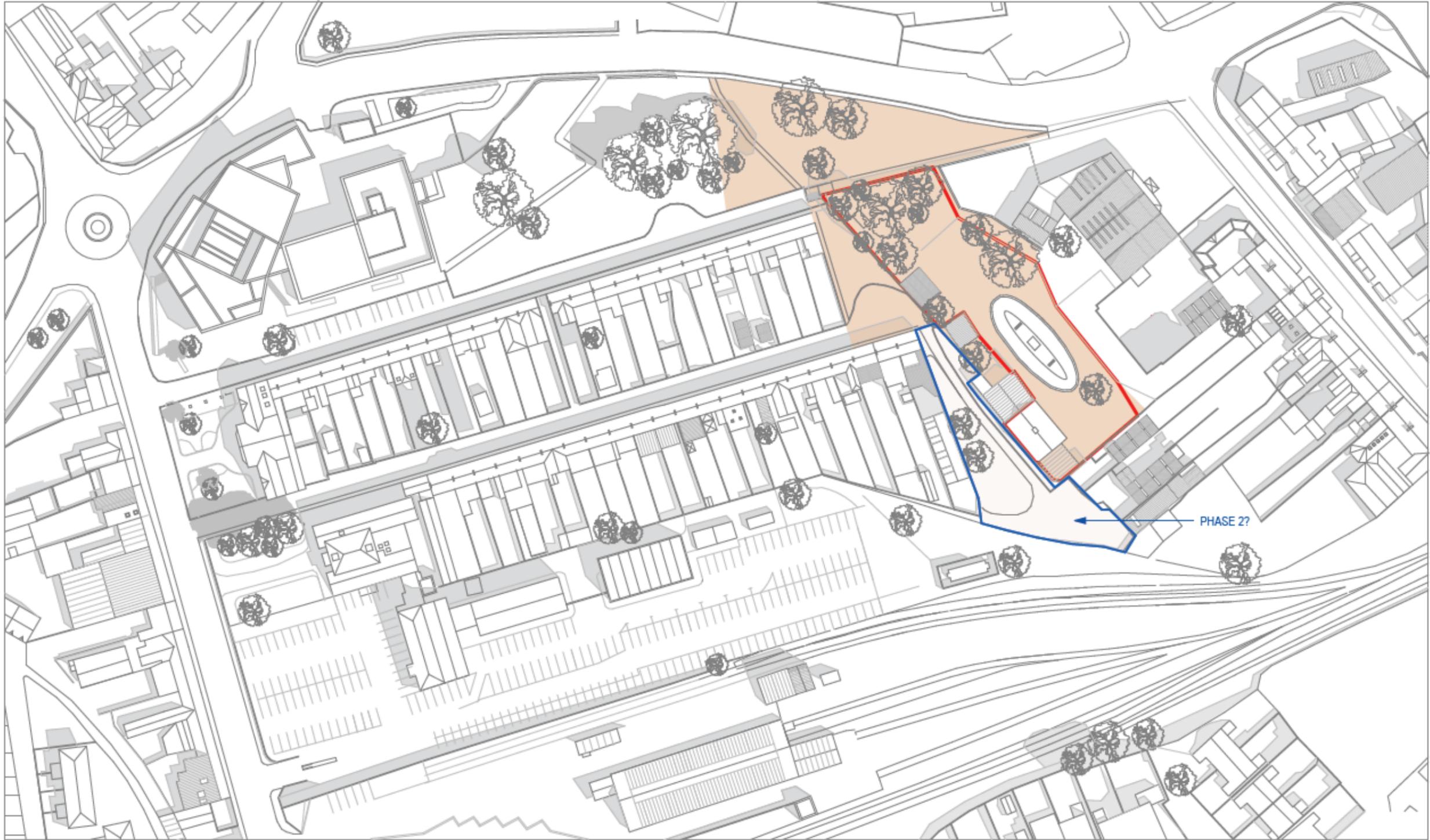
Public & Civic Buildings



Pedestrian Linkages

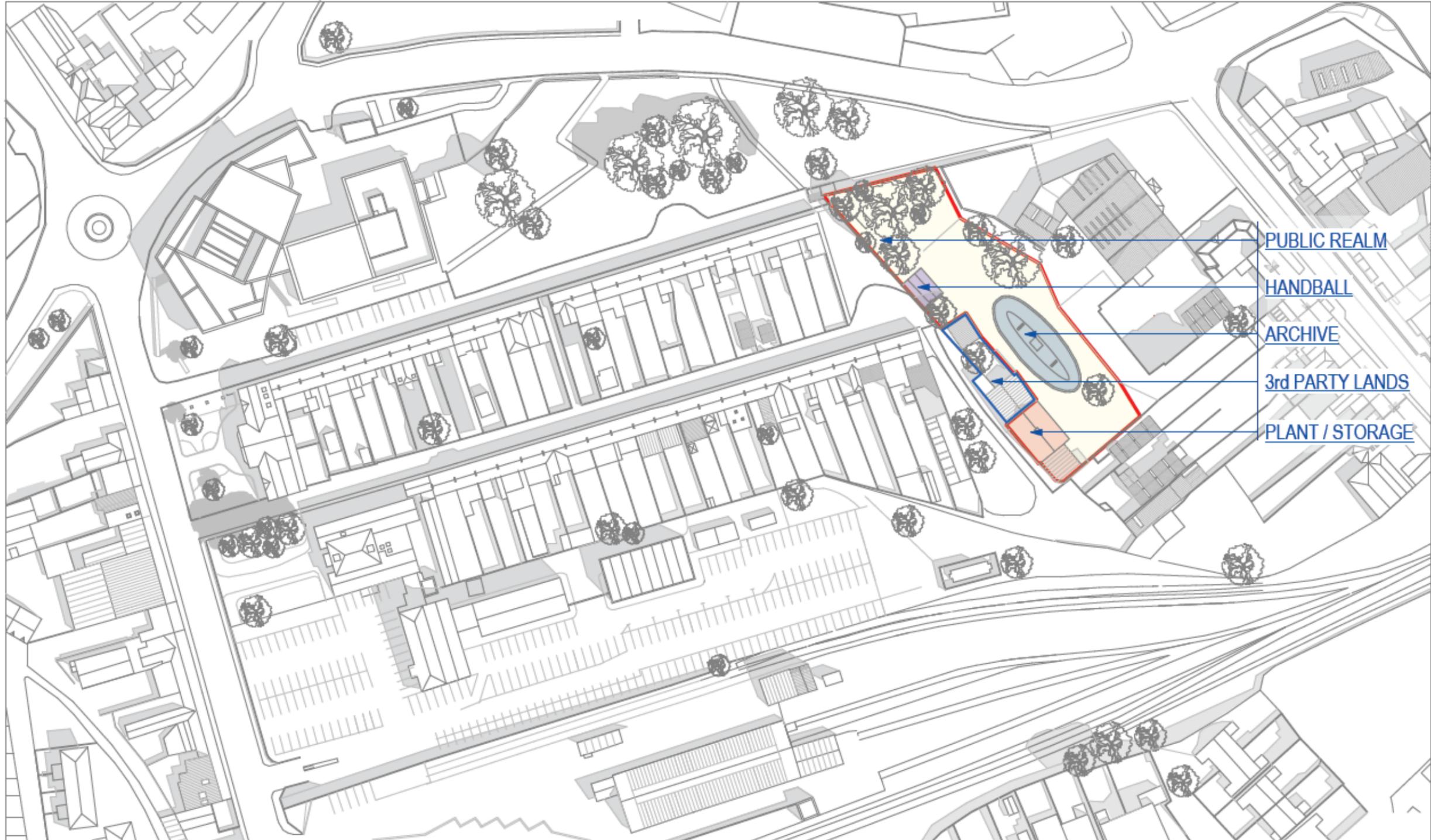
- PEDESTRIAN LINKS
- NAVAN 2030 PUBLIC REALM & MOVEMENT PLAN EXTENTS





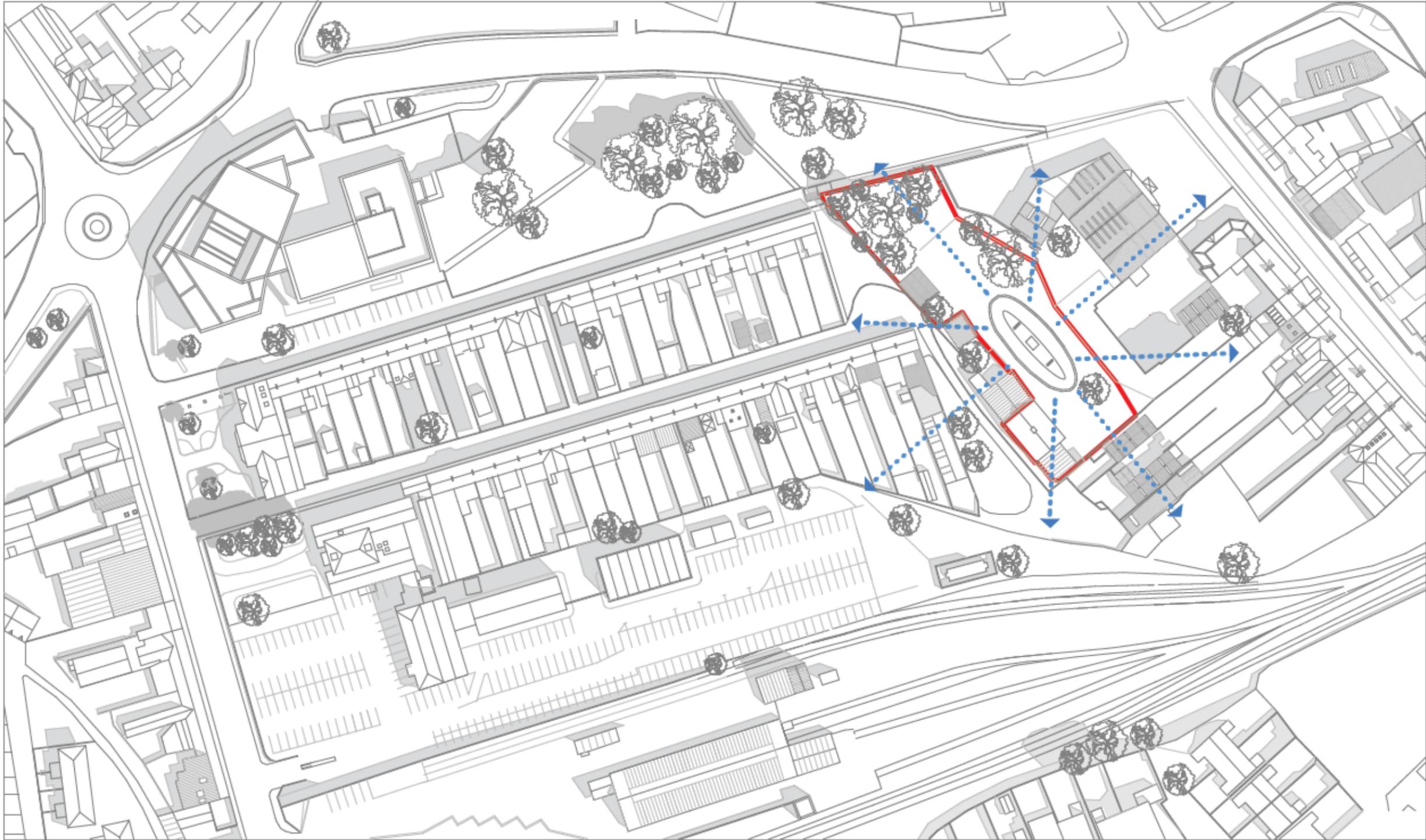
New Public Realm





Site Strategy

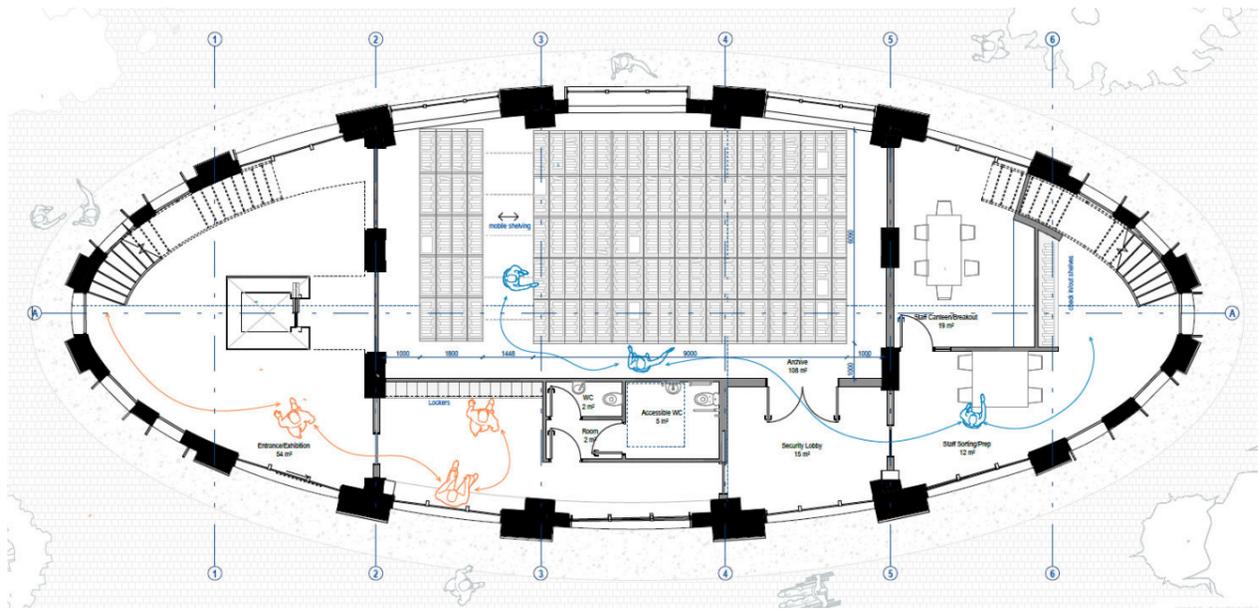




Views Out



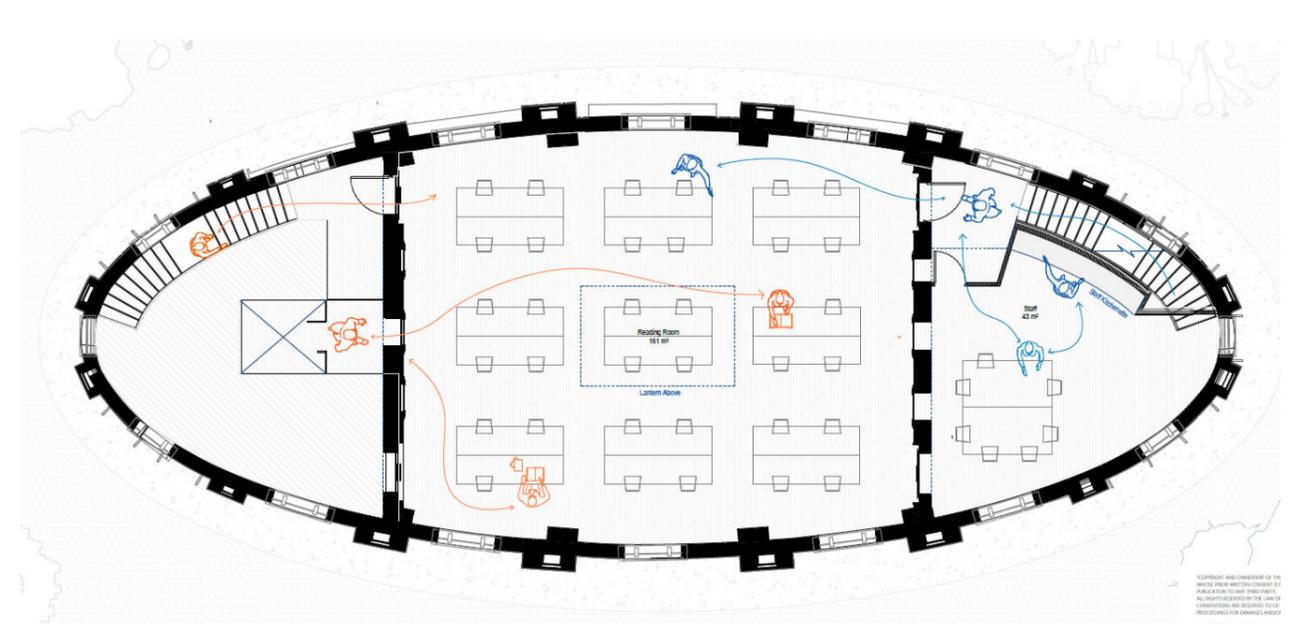
Description of the Project & Architectural Intent



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

St Finian's Study Hall / the former St Patrick's Classical School building is an important protected structure which is currently at risk. The most important first step in protecting the building is to identify a suitable, sustainable and long term use that is compatible with its protection. In the author's opinion the proposed use of County Archive is an excellent use for this building that is highly compatible with its original purpose as a study hall. The proposed archive use does not require significant alterations to the external envelope of the building, nor any unsuitable extensions that would detract from its original, pure, elliptical form. It would also return the great study hall room at first floor into civic use.

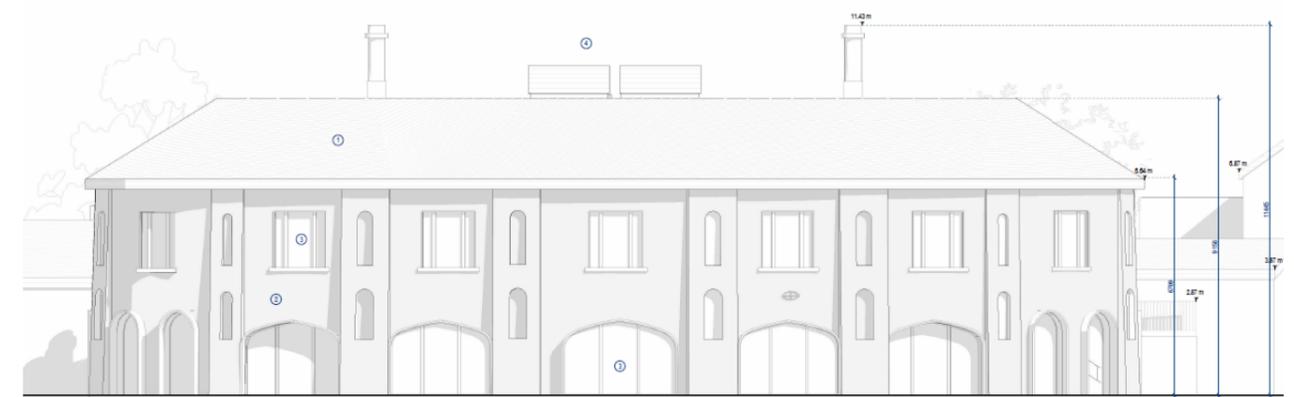
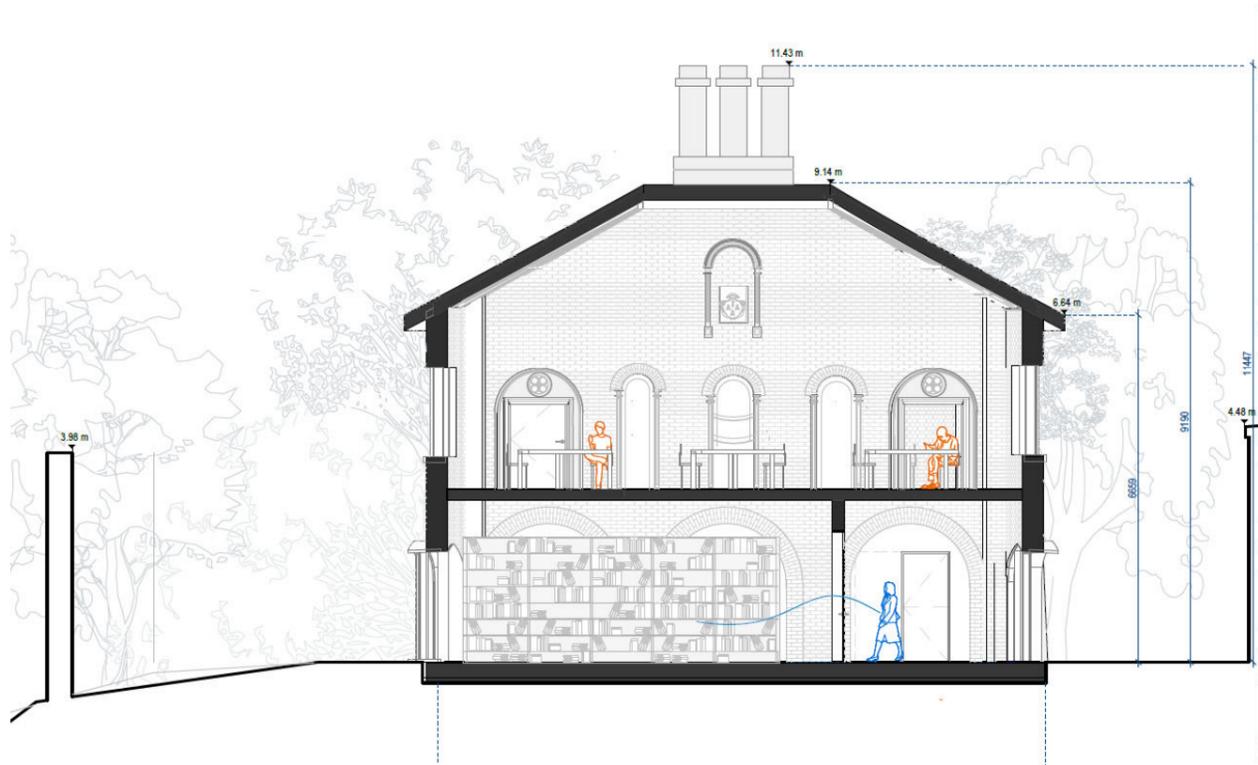
The design of the new County Archive building proposes to retain the greatest amount of historic fabric possible, as well as to re-use historic fabric that was salvaged from the unfortunate collapse of the roof in June 2021. This historic fabric is currently stored under cover onsite in a safe manner awaiting its re-use.



Proposed First Floor Plan

It is proposed to retain all of the extant masonry walls of the building and to add modern partitions to create the functional spaces required of a modern archive building. It is also proposed to express, in a modern form, the original openings at ground floor level that gave access to the undercroft of the study hall. These will be internal spaces in the new archive however the blocked up central arches will be reopened and with high quality, modern glazing placed in these openings. It is proposed to remove the modern cement roughcast render and to re-apply the original lined stucco render visible in the early photographs of the building. In all interventions it is proposed to create a very clear juxtaposition of original and modern fabric, retaining the clarity of expression of the original building.

The original roof structure was surveyed in great detail, both prior to its collapse and during the emergency safety works immediately post collapse. A full three-dimensional model has been generated of the original roof structure and the original timbers to aid in the restoration of the building. As noted above three of the original four trusses are not in a serviceable state. The primary timbers were retained onsite however, due to long term rot and degradation they are not in a usable state. It is proposed to faithfully restore the roof profile and to maintain the original materiality of the roof finishes, ie rolled lead sheeting and natural slate throughout. It is also proposed to re-instate the original decorative paired timber eaves brackets which are safely stored onsite from the emergency works, (some also remain in-situ and will be retained in-situ).



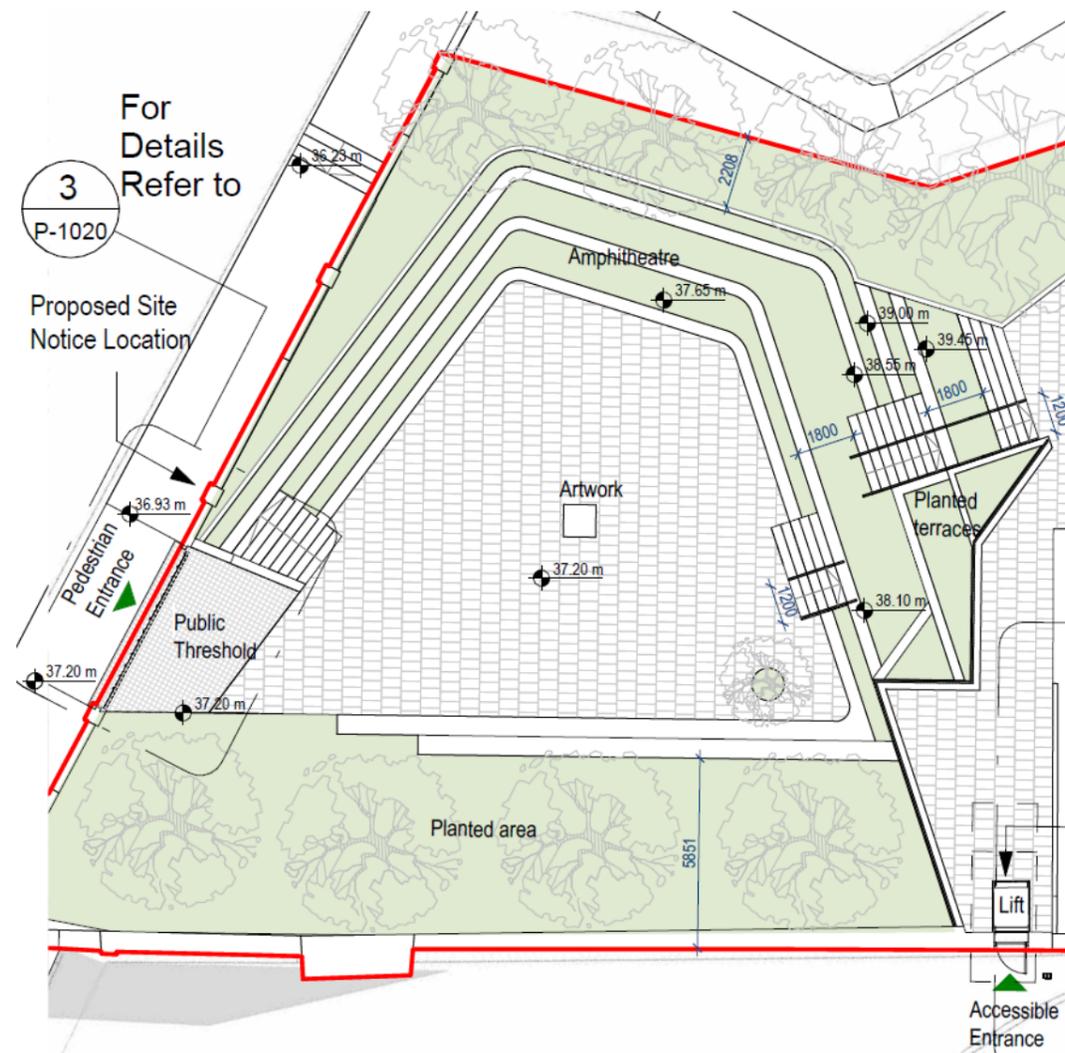
Planimetric “Memory”

One key aspect of the proposed adaptive reuse of the building is to retain the planimetric memory of the building. The ground floor was once a largely external space, with a spacious undercroft for students to shelter from the worst of the weather. The detailing of proposed archive will reflect this with a stone paving to ground floor level and floor to ceiling glazing in the original openings, making a very clear connection between inside and outside. Critical services such as bathrooms etc are kept to the centre of the plan so that the elliptical shape is experienced at all times as one circulates around the building.

At first floor we propose to return the building to its original form with the grand study hall restored to its original proportions, providing expansive views over the town from its elevated position. One of the service rooms to the north western side of the building is used as a double height entrance and exhibition space and to provide a lift to make the building accessible to a full range of users. The space to the north eastern end reverts to its original use as an anti-room for staff to observe readers in the new archive reading room.

In the area of the roof to the north western end of the building it was possible to dismantle the original primary roofing timbers and it is proposed to re-use and expose these timbers in the construction of the new roof. This area will form a double height space inside the public entrance area of the archive, bringing these previously hidden timbers into public view. As historic fabric is not available for the remaining roofed areas of the building it is not proposed to re-create these areas of roof using modern fabric to mimic the historic fabric. These areas will have an identifiably modern roof structure, to the original, historic profile, and using traditional construction details – ie a cut timber roof. It is proposed that this design solution of re-using historic fabric where available and clearly identifying modern fabric etc, is the most suitable design solution given the historic fabric, performance and historic legibility imperatives. It will be clear to the trained observer, in 100 years time, which elements are original fabric and which elements are later additions.

Proposed Public Realm Works



A high quality public realm design is proposed to create a new entrance to the Meath County Archive from Circular Road. This public realm will take advantage of the natural gradient of the site to create an amphitheatre space that can be publicly accessible during the day and secured at night. This high-quality public realm creates a smooth transition between Circular Road and the new County Archive. It will also make the archive building and site more visible and welcoming from within the town itself, particularly the Fairgreen.

A generous set of terraced steps and seats will be provided to negotiate the significant level change. In the centre a more urban space can be used for small gatherings, plays, etc with a heavily landscaped perimeter providing vegetation cover and a degree of shelter to the site around the site perimeter.

Site & Building Entrance

The building's primary function will be to safely house the Meath County Archive collection, managed by the archivists. It is anticipated that the building will have approximately two staff present on a daily basis. Public access to archive material will only be available by pre-booking and the anticipated footfall for the building is quite low. Anticipated visitors include academic and genealogical researchers, and it is anticipated that the building may host a number of events every year and conduct outreach to local educational institutions etc.

The primary entrance to the site will be via Circular Road and the new public realm works to the north west. As the building is located centrally in Navan it is anticipated that users will take public transport or park locally, (for example in the Fairgreen), and make their way to the building on foot. No public parking is provided as part of these proposals and no public vehicular access is possible via St Finian's Terrace.

Vehicular access is provided for accessible parking or drop off via the existing site entrance off St Finian's Terrace. This access point will also serve deliveries / maintenance and the emergency services. As noted above there will be no general public access by car to the archive building.



Proposed Entrance from St Finian's terrace

Access into the building on foot for wheelchair users and/or the mobility impaired will be via the new pedestrian entrance from St Finian's Terrace. At this location a new canopy and signage will identify the entrance and provide a fully accessible entrance to the building via an external lift, to negotiate the significant change in level.

Entry into the building is via one of the existing arched openings at ground floor level. There is also a secondary staff and delivery entrance to provide more direct access to the secure archive storage area. The public entrance will be identified with signage and will be a fully accessible entrance with automated entry door to the exhibition area and the reading room at first floor. At ground floor level the public facilities include toilets and lockers.



Proposed new accessible pedestrian entrance via St Finian's Terrace



Proposed public entrance to the archive building.