

## Trim Historic Core Architectural Conservation Area

### Location and Boundary

The Trim Historic Core ACA was designated in the Trim Development Plan 2002 and has continued to be included, with minor modifications to its boundaries, in all subsequent plans.

The following streets or thoroughfares are wholly or partly located within the Historic Core ACA:

Haggard Street, Navangate Street, High Street, Abbey Lane, Mill Street, Mill Lane, Bridge Street, French's Lane, Watergate Street, Market Street, Emmet Street, Finnegans Way, Castle Street, Wellington Place, Patrick Street.

### Historical Development

The site of Trim was known from the earliest times as a fording point of the river Boyne, at the upper limits of navigation. It is thought that the Watergate Street crossing is the original ford point. The first clear evidence of settlement is described in the Book of Armagh which details the foundation of a monastery by St Loman in 432 A.D.

At the time of the foundation of the church, Ath Truimm (Trim) was the location of the royal residence of the King of Brega. This placename 'ford of the elder tree' indicates that this residence was located with a view to controlling a folding point on the river.

When Hugh de Lacy was granted the lordship of Meath by Henry II, the site of the castle was selected in 1172 and fortified and the town became the centrepiece of a lordship that stretched from the Shannon to the Irish Sea. The castle was previously thought to have been built in the first half of that century, however it is now established that it is substantially a late 12th Century building, most of it probably finished by about 1200. The earliest reference to Trim as a borough is in the early years of the 13th C.

The dissolution of the Abbey and Friaries in 1539 and 1540 had far reaching impacts on the economic, social and political powers in Trim and by 1584 the town was a substantial and well-fortified city and recommended as the site for Trinity College.

In the 18th C Trim acted as the County town for Meath and a thriving market centre until overtaken by Navan in the 19thC.

At the beginning of the 19thC the plan of Trim had hardly changed from the pattern of the 13th C with the exception of an expansion to the south and the building of St Marys Catholic

Church. The construction of Wellington Place in 1817 added a monumental element to the townscape.

In 1835 the corporation was replaced by town commissioners who brought about major improvements in the form and fabric of the town. In 1852-3, two major projects were commenced – the building of a Town Hall, and installation of gas lighting.

Trim did not grow to any great extent during the 20thC. The workhouse was converted into a hospital and a number of large schools were established. In the latter half of the 20th century small suburban districts were developed but the greatest changes in the town occurred as a result of the growth of the commuter hinterland of Dublin in the last 10 years.

### **Character Overview**

Trim enjoys a relatively compact urban structure. The town straddles both sides of the River Boyne, with development generally well balanced on both sides. The scale of the built environment is generally low, predominantly two storey structures, though the areas along Market Street and surrounding the castle and historic buildings demonstrate a higher scale. More recent developments in the town have resulted in the introduction of modern architectural urban elements into the built landscape. The most notable new structures include the new Courthouse building, the Trim Castle Hotel on Castle Street, and the Headquarters of the Office of Public Works. Such initiatives have introduced a taller scale and contemporary architectural elements into the town's built environment.

Other than the space around the Castle and the Yellow Steeple, there is little or no soft landscaping within the historic core ACA. Consideration should be given to how planting might be incorporated into the townscape.

### **Street Pattern**

The town plan is complex for an Anglo-Norman colonial town. Its unusual layout can be read as a composite of a number of plan units. To the south of the Boyne the pattern follows a H shape with Market Street as its spine. To the north, a second H-shaped pattern was laid out, aligned along Mill Street.

The Augustinian Priory was located immediately north of the river and the curving pattern formed by High Street and Navan Gate Street is thought to represent an old monastic boundary.

The curved elements of the plan found in High St and Haggard Street were probably the result of thirteenth century expansion. All of these streets and their long, narrow medieval property plots were enclosed by a town wall that provided defence but also expressed the civic independence of the burgesses. The basic urban components of castle, streets, property plots, abbey parish church and town walls were in place by c. 1200.

The medieval burgage plot pattern is largely intact within the ACA, in Navan Gate Street, High Street and particularly in Emmet Street where it backs onto the town wall. The

presence of a clear burgage plot pattern outside the town wall at Emmet Street suggests that there may have been an early suburb there. Suburban development also occurred outside Dublin Gate and beyond Navan Gate in the thirteenth century.

### **Building Types and Materials**

Trim is notable for the survival of medieval structures, most prominently, Trim Castle, which is the largest and most impressive Norman Castle in the country.

The majority of commercial and residential buildings in the town core are two or three storeys in height and a plain and unadorned Georgian in style. The Castle Street cottages are exceptional in that they were built by the Dunsany estate in 1890 and are a row of 10 estate cottages with decorative timber bargeboards, and small diamond paned windows.

The last 15 years has seen the gradual erosion of architectural character by the removal of traditional sash windows, plaster, and rainwater goods. However, there is the potential to retain, and restore where necessary, the distinctive quality and historic character of the town.

The buildings in Trim are predominantly plastered and painted in a variety of colours, however the more important institutional and commercial buildings have dressed stone facings. There are several impressive houses on Navan Gate Street with stone facades and a small number of late 19th century commercial buildings have brick facades with interesting detailing. In common with all small Irish towns, the roofscape of Trim consists for the most part of pitched slated roofs.

### **Significant Views and Vistas**

The Castle dominates the centre of the town and its eastern approaches. Visitors climbing to the roof are given panoramic views of the town and the river valley. The skyline is pierced by churches and towers: the tower of St Loman's cathedral, the Yellow Steeple and the spire of St Patrick's church.

The Trim Town Plan contains a full list of protected views. Those which affect this ACA are :

View 3 - Trim Castle to the river valley, St. Mary's Abbey and Newtown Abbey.

View 4 - Watergate Bridge towards the river valley to the west and towards the town centre to the east

View 5 - Castle Street to Talbot Castle and St. Mary's Abbey.

View 6 - Towards Trim Castle and the Porch field from St. Mary's Abbey.

View 9 - Eastwards from Oldbridge in High Street.

View 11 - Views of the Wellington Monument from Patrick's St., Emmet St., and the Summerhill Road

**Objectives:**

It is the intention of the Council by the designation of this Architectural Conservation Area,

1. To preserve, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Trim for future generations.
2. To preserve the historic street pattern within the core of the town,
3. To require that all new developments shall observe the existing scale of the town.
4. To protect the character of the existing streetscape by giving consideration to the suitability of style, construction materials, colour and decoration to be used in any proposals for development taking place within this area.
5. To encourage appropriate new uses for empty and under-utilised buildings.
6. To avoid the destruction of minor historic elements whose cumulative loss would severely erode the cumulative cultural significance of the town
7. To require good quality design for new buildings, works to exteriors of the existing buildings including shopfronts, signage, and public realm works.