



APPENDIX III

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREAS

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Architectural Conservation Areas

The Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) identified in County Galway are located in

- 1. Athenry Town Centre**
- 2. Bearna Pier Road**
- 3. Clarenbridge Village Centre**
- 4. Clifden Town Centre**
- 5. Craughwell Village Centre**
- 6. Gort Town Centre**
- 7. Headford Town Centre**
- 8. Loughrea Town Centre**
- 9. Oranmore Town Centre**
- 10. Oughterard Town Centre**
- 11. Portumna Town Centre**
- 12. Tuam Town Centre**
- 13. Ballinasloe Town Centre**
- 14. St Brigid's Hospital, Ballinasloe**

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of a development plan to preserve. Further information is to be found in the relevant Local Area Plan.

Objectives

- To protect, conserve and enhance the essential character of the ACA through the control of the design, location and layout of new properties or the alteration or extension of existing ones.
- To require proposals for development outside the ACA but which would affect its setting or views into and out of it, to respect its character and appearance.
- To promote the conservation and retention of traditional features and building elements such as shop fronts, windows, glass, doors and door cases. Where replacements are necessary to ensure that they respect the original character of the building or setting in which they are situated.
- To protect existing street patterns, spaces and relationships which contribute to the setting of the ACA.
- To respect the character of existing buildings, important views, spaces and the historic settlement in terms of scale, height, grouping, density, design and materials.
- To encourage rehabilitation of an existing building as a more sustainable option than redevelopment.
- To avoid the waste of unnecessary building demolition, foster the development of specialised conservation skills, and maintain the contribution of old buildings to the character of their area.

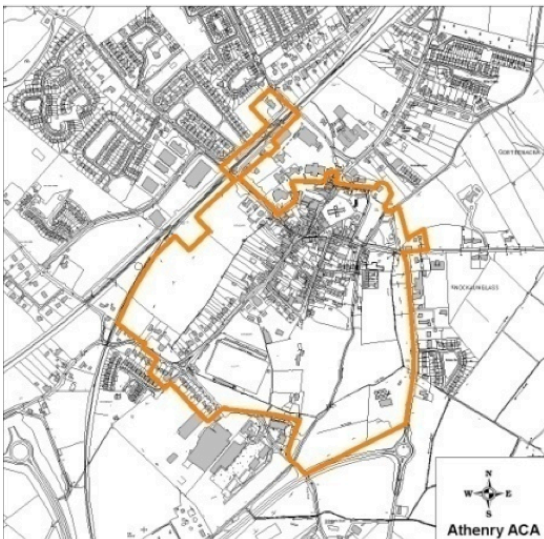
Athenry ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage

The compact town centre of Athenry, which lies inside the historic town walls, is characterised by narrow radial streets which converge on Market Square. Buildings both old and new follow the medieval pattern, radiating from the compact centre at Market Square along the narrow streets. The extent and degree of survival of the Town Walls give Athenry the accolade of one of the most complete and, in terms of area within the walls (28 hectares), one of the largest walled towns in Ireland. The Castle, Dominican Priory and St. Mary's Collegiate Church also add significantly to the architectural heritage assets of Athenry. The combination of its various built features within a defined medieval townscape is remarkably intact. Opportunities to capture the original views of Athenry as a walled town set within a rural landscape are valuable. The railway line reached Athenry in 1851 and by 1875 it was a railway junction where the Great Western and Midland Railway lines crossed, giving a further economic boost to the town that now also served as a distribution/transport centre. Many of the current buildings within the town centre date from the 19th /20th century.

Statement of Significance

Athenry's principal significance lies in its degree of survival as a medieval fortified town, embracing a number of fine monuments and archaeological remains. The street pattern, plot sizes, buildings and architectural coherence visibly emerge directly from this historic role. The majority of town buildings span the late 19th century and share many characteristics. Surviving traditional shop fronts are important features. The open fields within the walls are notable. The form, attractiveness and uniqueness of the town are of international significance and a potentially greater cultural attraction.

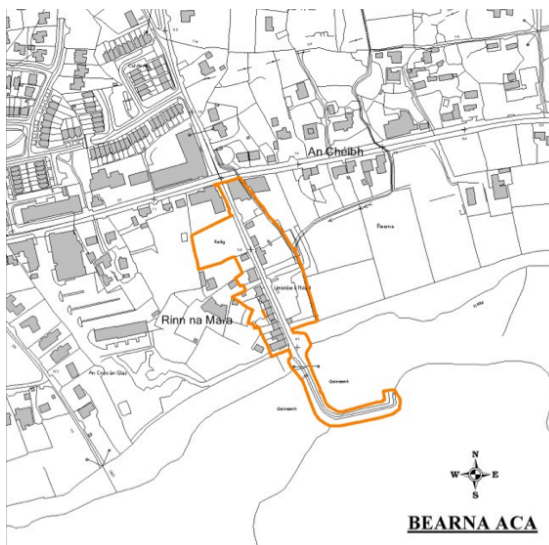


Bearna ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Mainly concentrated in Freeport townland, the traditional pattern of development in the village consists of a predominantly linear form distributed primarily along Pier Road (including the constabulary, a lighthouse and a coastguard station), the Galway-Spiddal Road and, to a lesser extent, the coastline (fishermen's cottages). There is a dense network of roads and laneways in the village that extend out into the surrounding area. The village is centred on the main coastal road, which forms the village's 'spine,' and Bearna Pier, which acts as a major focal point. In the surrounding countryside, development generally consisted of the traditional *clachán* type pattern, i.e. nucleated clusters of buildings typically related to farming activities and/or the family unit, set into and surrounded by the rural landscape.



Statement of Significance

The pier and its environs principal significance lies in its cohesive development as a predominantly 19th century fishing village. The street pattern, plot sizes and architectural coherence span the late 18th century to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics within the designated area. The form and character that the Pier Road ACA has developed over the last two hundred years reflects its history. Any development in the future should reflect and respect its established character. The special interest in the Pier Road ACA lies in its historic and ongoing connection to the sea, with its distinctive approach to the landmark pier, and ancillary features, such as the arch and mooring posts.

Clarenbridge ACA Summary



Architectural Heritage

The history of Clarenbridge village is closely associated with the Redington Family, owners of the adjacent Kilcornan Estate. In 1820, Sir Thomas Redington obtained a patent to hold a market in Clarenbridge and built the terrace of houses on the triangular green. The Celtic cross in the green was erected in his memory.

The former Sisters of Charity convent built in 1844 under the auspices of Mrs. Thomas Redington was built on an axis with the entrance to Kilcornan estate which is a significant feature beside the village; it currently runs as a residential centre by the Brothers of Charity. The Church of the Annunciation was built between 1936 and 1938 in a classical style of architecture. The shop and pub fronts bounding the Main Street have retained their character and are an attractive feature in the village.

The village green, which is walled and triangular in shape, is a defining feature of the village centre and an important amenity for the local community. A number of houses face onto the green which adds to the character of the area and a monument to Thomas N. Redington stands in the centre. There is a strong streetscape on the western side of the village centre and this is complemented by the more open areas on the eastern side including the green and the church. An improvement scheme was completed on the village green in 2005. Stone walls, mature trees and traditional shop fronts all contribute to the character of this rural village.

Statement of Significance

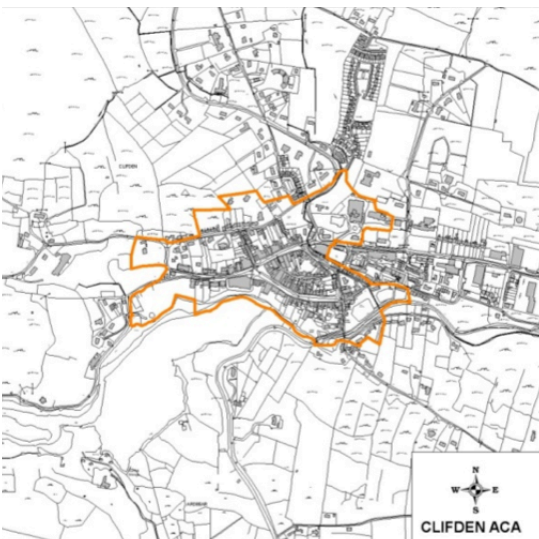
Clarenbridge's principal significance arises from a combination of elements including its development on a river crossing from where it derives its name, the landmark buildings and the formally laid out village green which reflects the influence of a benevolent landlord.

Clifden ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Clifden, one of the last towns to be built in Ireland, is substantially linked to the vision of John D'Arcy (1785-1839). The first house was built in 1809 and Clifden Castle, D'Arcy's own home, was constructed circa 1815. The town is dominated by two fine nineteenth century churches. At the eastern gateway, St. Joseph's R.C. Church was built in 1879 by emigrant's money in this post-famine period. At the opposite end of town, Christ Church, (Church of Ireland), was built in 1853 on a small drumlin, thus securing a commanding vista. The gateway to Clifden is marked by the classical courthouse, the tall tower and steep roofs of the large St. Joseph's Catholic Church rising up behind.



Most of the nineteenth century streetscape and fabric survives. Apart from the ecclesiastical and public buildings, there is a remarkable degree of consistency in the buildings that line the principal streets. Set mainly at the back of footways, they vary from town house to cottage proportions, the grandest, which are still relatively modest, tending to occur nearest Market Square. The only open spaces of note within the town are the graveyard opposite St. Joseph's Church, the graveyard of Christ Church and the Market Square itself. Unsurprisingly, plot widths vary, reflecting the 19th century economic climate in which the town was developed. The evident 19th century mixture of houses and ground floor shops has since given way to largely tourism oriented retail, restaurant or accommodation on the ground floor.

Statement of Significance

Clifden's principal significance lies in its historical origins, period of development, Planned layout, building style, picturesque townscape, architectural coherence, distinctive landmark buildings, dramatic, coastal peninsula setting and mountain backdrop. The majority of buildings span the early to mid 19th century and share many characteristics. A large proportion is in simple vernacular style, ranged around a central core, along two wide roads which focus on Market Square. The river and its banks form a distinct southern boundary and a series of viewpoints. Clifden contains a number of buildings of national or regional significance. The town has long been a tourism destination, and is vulnerable to excessive or insensitive development and alteration.

Craughwell ACA Summary

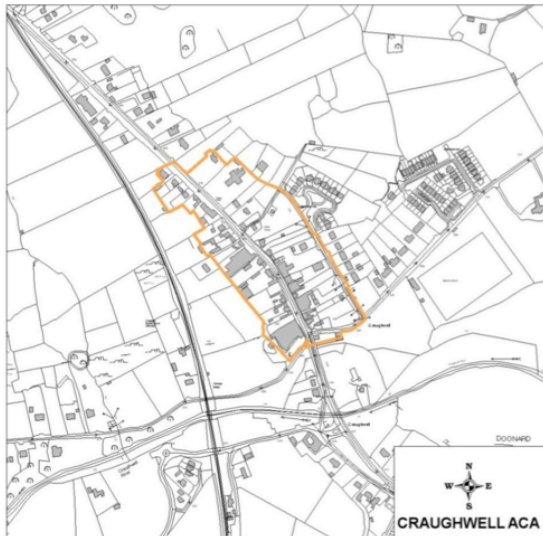
Architectural Heritage

Craughwell, an attractive and well maintained village, developed at a bridging point over the Craughwell / Dunkellin River and continued to develop in a linear form along the main road. There was modest development in the village and its environs in the 19th and early 20th century though there has been significant growth in the late 20th and early 21st century.

Ballymore House has significant regional value because of the date and style of the building, the quality of architectural detail, the quality of internal joinery including the staircase and the design of the stables. The church dates from the 1840s; a monument to the congregation of the time, who built a place of worship following Catholic Emancipation in 1829 while enduring the hardships of the Great Famine. The single thatch house on the Main Street in the village core is a reminder of how the street may have looked in the past. The 19th century houses of the shopkeepers and traders retain their original aspect, while continuing to contribute to the streetscape and economic life of the village. The parochial house is one of several houses built in Craughwell in the 1930s. The earliest buildings in Craughwell date from the late 18th century, with various phases of development evident from the late 19th century to the 1930s and up to the present. The street pattern, plot sizes, and architectural expression are characteristic of the late 19th to the mid 20th century.

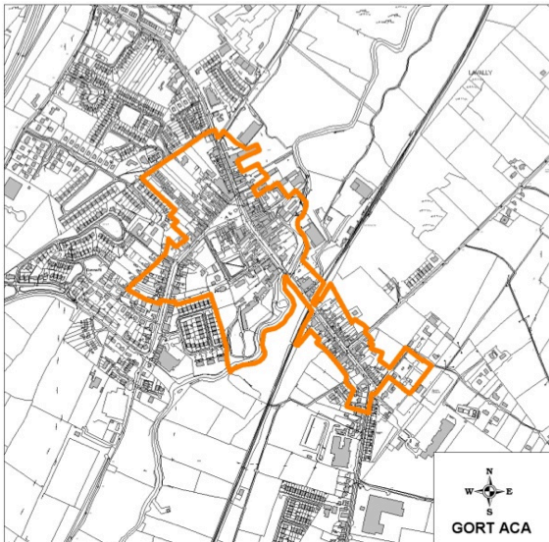
Statement of Significance

Craughwell's significance is found in its development as a linear village at a river crossing, bridged by a five arch masonry stone arch bridge. It flourished with its strategic location on the rail line in the 19th century and 20th century, while maintaining its rural setting amid open countryside demarcated with stonewalls and hedgerows.



Gort ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Gort is a historic town with a rich architectural heritage and a number of key features, including ecclesiastical, monastic and religious buildings and structures, a historic core, street pattern, plot arrangement and historic streetscapes, mainly within the town centre. A unified cornice at eaves line indicates the controlling interest of a landlord in the development of the town. The retention of the character of the historic core is recognised as being a major attraction. Gort contains a significant number of buildings of national or regional significance for a town of its size. The river and its banks, surviving military buildings, traditional shopfronts and narrow lanes entered through carriage arches are distinctive and important features. The majority of buildings span the late 18th to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics. A large proportion of buildings are in a classical vernacular style, ranged along two wide intersecting roads which focus on Market Square. Stone walls are another significant feature of the area, particularly those around Slipper and Barrack Streets.

Statement of Significance

Gort's principal significance lies in the arrangement of its street pattern, plot sizes, architectural coherence, distinctive landmark buildings or groups and countryside setting. The combination of architecturally coherent buildings, narrow lanes with overhead carriage arches, extant military structures and traditional shop fronts mark Gort's unique significance. For its size, Gort contains a generous number of buildings of national or regional significance. The town as a whole is potentially very attractive.

Headford ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



After the Cromwellian reconquest in 1641 the St. George family was closely associated with the development of Headford. Large parts of the estate were put up for sale in 1874 through the Landed Estates Court and the remainder was sold off through the Land Commission in 1892. Headford Castle burned down in 1906. The town is laid out in a linear fashion with a triangular open space midway along its length from which the landlord's house was approached. The names of the various streets and spaces reflect their history and functions. Headford's two squares are St. George's Square in the centre of the village and Market Square on the west end. The nature of the 19th Century commercial market village is witnessed today by the important corner siting of the bank, and by the survival of some early 20th century shop fronts. The churches of the main denominations are situated outside the commercial heart of the village, as is the former constabulary barracks, now incorporated into the Garda station.



Two of the most important landmark structures in Headford are St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church and the ruins of St. John the Baptist Church. The main street, within the core of the town, demonstrates a strong sense of enclosure, marked by a dense arrangement of plots and buildings. This creates a near continuous building line, with occasional gaps providing glimpses to outbuildings to the rear. The typical plot widths are narrow, with buildings fronting directly onto the footpath in the core of the town, and long rear gardens. Later buildings to the edges of the village have narrow front gardens and

plots become larger. The majority of the buildings are of two storeys, with some of three, and with single storey cottages. The row of single storey cottages to the rear of the main street is a cohesive area of interest.

Statement of Significance

Headford's principal significance lies in its cohesive development as a predominantly 19th century commercial market village, laid out as a Planned settlement in relation to the landlord's mansion and demesne. Landmark buildings, such as the Catholic Church and the ruin of the former Church of Ireland church are situated outside the core of the village. The former constabulary barracks is now used by the Garda Síochána. The form and character, including the street pattern, plot sizes and architectural coherence, which Headford has developed over the last two hundred years, reflects its history. Any development in the future should reflect and respect its established character.

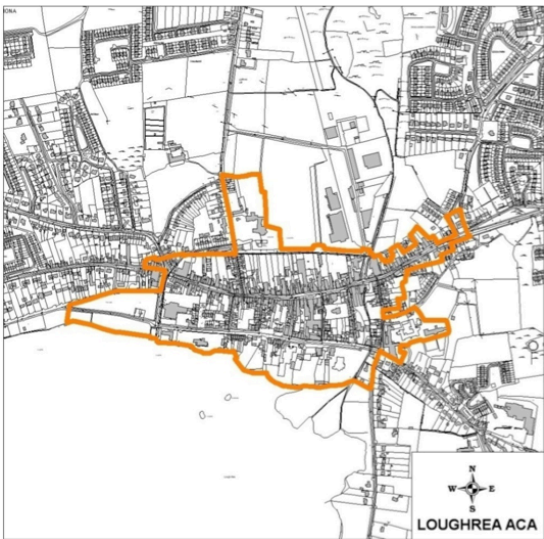
Loughrea ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Loughrea has developed in linear form along an east-west axis, constrained as it is by the lake to the south and higher ground to the southeast. The historic core is surrounded by an extensive network of water related infrastructure of the town of Loughrea, with a canalised river, culverts, millrace and sluices, partly following the line of medieval defences.

The cathedral spire, castle gate, the former Church of Ireland tower (now library), the Abbey ruins and monastery off Abbey Street are the architectural landmarks of Loughrea. The Convent of Mercy and School, with its chapel off Moore Street, and the courthouse, on the Fair Green, are also buildings of interest as well as the town hall and, to a lesser extent, the former barracks. With few exceptions, Loughrea buildings have the appearance of having been developed over a relatively short time span, from about the middle of the 18th to the last quarter of the 19th century. Few structures exceed 3 stories, although sometimes the floors are quite tall. The majority of Main Street buildings are of 3 stories and 3-5 bays wide.



Statement of Significance

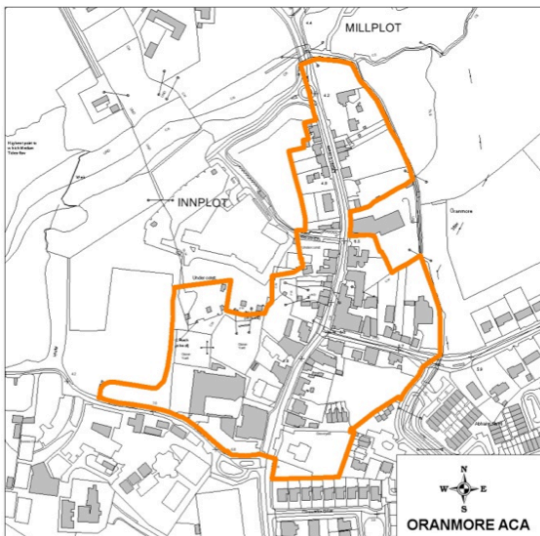
Loughrea's principal significance lies in the combination of its street pattern, plot sizes, architectural coherence, distinctive landmark buildings and unique setting. The vast majority of buildings span the late 18th to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics. Surviving traditional shop fronts are important elements within the town. For its size, Loughrea contains a generous number of buildings of national or regional significance. The town as a whole is attractive and inviting as a place to live. The lakeside setting is a major and vital feature.

Oranmore ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Oranmore is located at the inner shoreline of Galway Bay. The restored medieval tower house behind the village demonstrates its strategic importance in the past. The heart of the town is located at the junction of two roads, Main Street and the Old Dublin Road, which meet at a T-Junction. The core of the town demonstrates a strong sense of enclosure, created by a loosely knit arrangement of plots and buildings. This is created by terraces, pairs and detached houses, with occasional gaps, providing glimpses to outbuildings to the rear. The typical plot widths are narrow, with buildings fronting directly onto the footpath in the core of the town, and large rear gardens.



There are several significant structures within Oranmore that show the town's development. Primary among them is the former St. Mary's Church, which is now a library. The pre-Emancipation structure (1800-1805) retains its essential elements including decorative stained-glass windows, exterior render detailing and setting within a graveyard. Scoil Mhuire (1886) remains a fairly intact example of the smaller, more modest educational buildings found throughout Ireland. Ard na Mara, (1880-1890), a former convent, contains characteristic gothic influenced detailing of nineteenth century religious structures along with a decorative carved limestone window in the half-hexagonal central bay. Together with the associated school building, it forms an important religious and social group in the village. There is a thatched building (1780-1820) that now serves as a pub on Main Street and a monument to Commdt. Joseph Howley, placed

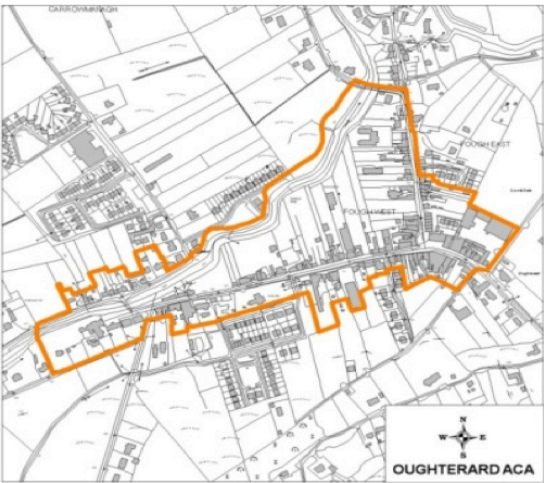
in the centre of the village, is a prominent feature in the village and a local landmark. The compact town of Oranmore is characterised by a narrow main street with a unique character that is derived from the combination of buildings of significant architectural and historic value and of simple vernacular architecture.

Statement of Significance

Oranmore's principal significance lies in its development as a predominantly 19th century settlement. Landmark buildings, such as the former Catholic church, now library, in the core continue to contribute to the streetscape of the town. The street pattern, plot sizes and architectural coherence span the late 18th century to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics. The form and character which Oranmore has developed reflects its history.

Oughterard ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Claremount (or Clareville) on the west of the river was the home of the Martin family who acquired immense lands following the Cromwellian upheavals. Road improvements between Galway and Clifden in the 1820s, directed by the famous Alexander Nimmo, included a triple arch masonry stone bridge over the Owenriff River. It would appear that most of the plots around Main Street were developed during this period. Main Street continues west from the square; Kilcummin Church of Ireland church was built along its length on the south side, in 1808, with the courthouse nearby, built c.1840. The vista to the west along the street was closed in 1829 with the erection of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The school in its foreground dates from 1888. The railway station, built in 1862, failed to attract significant development towards it, situated as it was to the southwest of the town. Adjacent to it was the large area occupied by the Union Workhouse. The further extension to Clifden did not occur until 1895. While parts of the original station building and platform structure still remain, the Galway/Clifden line fell into gradual disuse after the closing of the line in the 1930s. The town retains many significant buildings which reflect the circumstances and the period in which they were built, whilst others, such as the workhouse, have disappeared. Other important buildings such as the railway station have been adapted to other uses. Oughterard's location as a gateway to tourist based enterprises, dating from the mid 19th century, is reflected in the survival of significant three storey buildings, with rendered exterior decoration. Terraces of two storey houses (some with basement) reflect a coherent approach to development in the mid to late 19th century along the north side of Main Street. Interspersed amongst these are single storey houses.

Statement of Significance

Oughterard's significance lies in its development as a town on the intersection of the limestone based farmland to the south and east with the rugged Conamara landscape to the north and west. Its development was influenced by its location at a river crossing and on a road network which was significantly improved in the early 19th century. It retains buildings of architectural significance built for administrative purposes, such as the courthouse, and for religious needs, such as the two churches. Oughterard's special significance lies in its development in response to the early presence of a landlord's house, Claremount, on the west of the river, and the efforts during the early 19th century to open up Conamara, by the development of the road to Clifden, the bridge spanning the river, and the presence of the army barracks. The street pattern and architectural variety of buildings, both designed and vernacular, creates a streetscape which reflects its history.

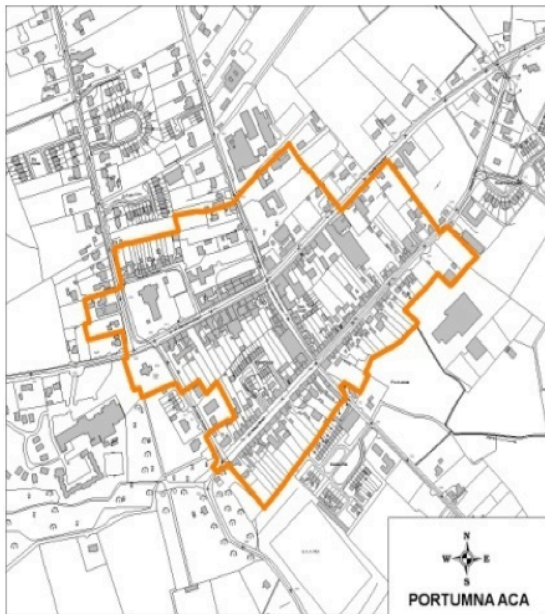
Portumna ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Portumna's historical associations are linked with its strategic location on a crossing along the river Shannon, which could only be forded at a few points. The Shannon was later to become the last great line of defence against the advancing Cromwellian armies, and Ireton's 'castle', built as a battery against Clanricarde's castle, can still be seen on the eastern bank opposite Portumna Demense.

In 1610 Richard, 4th Earl of Clanricarde, received confirmation of his rights for his new castle, the monastery, fairs and markets of Portumna. The first bridge to be built dated from 1796, though it suffered flood damage in 1814 and was eventually replaced by another bridge in 1841, which in turn was replaced by the present bridge in 1910. The semi-fortified Jacobean castle built c.1618 reflects the wealth and sophistication of Clanricarde. It marks the transition from the fortified structures of the medieval period to the country houses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Destroyed by fire in 1826, it was conserved by the OPW and is now a major tourist attraction. The former workhouse from 1851 is also getting a renewed lease of life following a programme of conservation works as a visitor attraction and community facility.



The spires of the Catholic church and, to a lesser extent, the Church of Ireland church dominate the town from many viewpoints. The 1832 Church of Ireland parish church was built on land donated by the Earl of Clanricarde with the tower added in 1858. Saint Brigid's Catholic Church is a large and surprisingly late, stone-built Catholic church, dating to 1958 by architect Simon Aloysius Leonard of W.H. Byrne & Son. The neo-classical, stone-built courthouse is architecturally distinguished.

Some of the domestic architecture on Abbey Street is very fine. The old Roman Catholic graveyard on St. Brigid's Avenue is of picturesque interest and important as open space and part of the setting of surrounding buildings.

Statement of Significance

Portumna's principal significance lies in the combination of its street pattern, plot sizes and architectural coherence. The vast majority of buildings span the late 18th to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics. Surviving traditional shopfronts are important features. For its size, Portumna contains a generous number of buildings of national or regional significance. The town as a whole is attractive and inviting as a place to live as well as for visitors to the Lough Derg area, Portumna Castle and other attractions, and exhibits delightful inventiveness and variety.

Tuam ACA Summary

Architectural Heritage



Tuam's significant ecclesiastical heritage dates back almost 1500 years. In the early sixth century, Jarlath founded a monastery at Tuam. Between c.1120 to 1220, the physical face of the monastic settlement appears to have been transformed by a number of bold architectural and artistic projects, most of which were executed under the patronage of the O'Connors. These included four high crosses, a 'castle' and a cathedral, as well as the foundation of two monastic houses. The foundation c.1140 of the priory of St. John the Evangelist, probably an Augustinian order, resulted from the influence of early church reformers.



In 1613, Tuam was issued a charter by James I, giving the town its first urban constitution. In the early 18th century, a new palace and the demesne were constructed under the Protestant archbishop. To the south of a newly widened Bishop Street ran the Dublin Road and Vicar Street, the latter skirting the original market place at the Shambles. The other side street in this area, Circular Road, was not created until the mid-eighteenth century. By the late eighteenth century, Tuam was second only to Galway City as a regional trading centre. A market house (now demolished) had been completed by 1718. Industries included a brewery, three tanneries, at least two watermills and a pair of windmills. The new Catholic Cathedral was begun in 1827 while the adjacent St. Jarlath's College was built in 1858, creating an ecclesiastical precinct with the neighbouring convents of the Sisters of Mercy and the Presentation order.

After the Great Famine, Tuam, like many towns, witnessed much emigration. However, construction of the present Town Hall in 1857, and the railway in 1860 maintained its status as a route way and market centre well into the twentieth century. Tuam has two nineteenth-century cathedrals as well as prominent remains of their medieval and Romanesque predecessors. At Temple Jarlath, the curving eastern and southern boundary wall of the graveyard probably mirrors the line of a sub-circular enclosure which once surrounded the church. In addition to the churches, the 1857 Town Hall and its tall clock tower mark the rise of Tuam as an important hub of activity and authority. Apart from the cathedrals, ecclesiastical, public and education buildings, there is a remarkable degree of consistency in the structures that line the principal streets. Set mainly at the back of footways, they are of domestic scale, flat fronted, with vertically proportioned openings throughout, where wide shop fronts are absent.

Statement of Significance

Tuam is significant as a historic town on account of its ancient origins, with a number of archaeological sites within and around the town. Its principal significance however, lies in the combination of its ancient street pattern, plot sizes and architectural coherence. The vast majority of buildings span the late 18th to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics. Surviving traditional shop fronts are important features. Although possessing individual buildings of national and regional significance, it is the town centre as a whole that presents a level of inventiveness and variety in use.

Ballinasloe Town Centre ACA

Summary



Architectural Heritage

The River Suck played a main role in the development of the town, with the first significant development in the form of a Norman castle constructed on its western banks, the remains of which still survive just off Bridge Street. Development before the eighteenth century was generally confined to the eastern bank of the river.

The present day town centre results from the intervention of the local landlords, the Trench family. Under their direction, firstly Main Street and then Brackernagh on the outskirts of the town were developed in the 1790s. In the early 19th Century, Society and Dunlo Streets were laid out in the new town centre, expanding it westward from the river towards the area now known as Townparks. The Trench family also laid down Garbally Estate, the Fair Green and many of the town's substantial buildings, including the Parochial Hall and the Town Hall. The expansion of the Grand Canal to the town in 1828 assisted the expansion of the corn trade and effectively opened up Ballinasloe as a market town to the wider hinterland and the rest of the country. Accessibility was further enhanced by the arrival of the railway in 1851. The October Fair was established during this prosperous time and still remains one of the most important social and economic events in the life of the town.

Ballinasloe town has a large number of buildings, structures and places of historical and architectural value, which contribute to its essential character. The existing urban form of the town was established by the Trench Family in the late 18th and early 19th century with the development of the broad pattern of streets lined with substantial three storey buildings, St. Michael's Square and the Fair Green. Interspersed between the groups and blocks of buildings in the town centre, the archways and lanes give access to the rich variety of outbuildings. In contrast to the principal streets, the lanes and entrances are tight knit and contain remnants of some older 18th century buildings and surfaces. The opening of the Ballinasloe Canal in 1828, which was an extension line of the Grand Canal, marked a very prosperous time in the town history. The canal became the primary means of transport for industry and agriculture to Dublin until the arrival of the railway in the 1850's. This old redundant canal system, which was closed in 1961, has left some structures on the site of the basin which was filled in following the canal's closure.

Statement of Significance

Ballinasloe town centre's principal significance lies in the combination of its Planned, formal street pattern, laid out by the Trench family, its plot sizes, architectural coherence, and distinctive landmark buildings. The imposing main streets have large three storey buildings with important traditional architectural features such as; cut stone sills, window and door surrounds and slate roofs. The large chimneystacks make a significant contribution to the roofscape of the town. One of the most attractive characteristic, of the houses on the main streets, is the Diocletian windows to the upper floors. The ground floors of many buildings still retain traditional shop fronts. The narrow streets rising to St. John's Church of Ireland, a major land mark in the town, form a tighter urban grain with great charm and many houses of vernacular style, displaying classically derived features, such as decorative fan lights. The Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael is a balancing landmark, situated as it is at the focus of St. Michael's Square. Society Street at its western end has a variety of institutional school buildings, developed around the Convent of Mercy. The Courthouse is a fine cut stone building. The opposite side of the Fair Green, and on a height overlooking it, has the Church of Ireland parish hall, and the Le Poer Trench Memorial. The Fair Green contributes hugely to Ballinasloe's special character, being the focus of the annual horse fair in October. On its western side, is the former entrance to the landlord's house, framed by twin lodge houses. The public realm in the town also retains some limestone kerbing. Ballinasloe contains a generous number of buildings of regional or national significance, which together with the characteristic buildings of the town, its distinctive form, shaped by its history, and its setting close to the River Suck give it its special character.

St. Brigid's Hospital, Ballinasloe

ACA Summary



Architectural Heritage

As Saint Brigid's Hospital was formerly the Connaught District Lunatic Asylum, it housed patients from all over the province. It is an important part of the history of the town, and forms an interesting architectural group with the other buildings on the site. Designed by William Murray, the building was based on an earlier design by Francis Johnston. The plan was influenced by the 'panoptic' prison concept, first advocated by the economist Jeremy Bentham. The principle behind this layout was to allow a governor, his family and turnkeys to occupy a central structure, with radiating wings from which they could monitor and administrate life within the institute. The arrangement allowed the wings to be viewed from the centre, while access was only possible from one wing to the other by passing through the centre. The high quality of stone masonry is notable; especially in the entrance block, whose door case and clock tower are accomplished works. The X-plan provides interesting elevations to all sides and the various blocks, recessed and slightly lower, provide contrast in stone dressing and roof lines.



The monumental gateway makes a fine contribution to the streetscape of Church Street. It presents a suitable public face and prelude to the classical hospital building behind. The limestone ashlar that has retained crisp joints is a notable example of the high quality of stone masonry traditionally employed in public buildings in the Georgian era. The gate lodges are enhanced by the retention of timber sash windows.

Statement of Significance

St. Bridget's special significance derives from the architectural quality of the main building, designed by Francis Johnston, and dated 1832. It is a classical style group of mental hospital buildings on an X-plan two-storey block with a cupola surmounting the entrance bay. Smaller scale two-storey buildings are attached, with pavilions at the ends. A detached single-cell chapel in the grounds, with later ancillary buildings through the extensive grounds, demonstrates the continuous use of the complex as a health facility over a long period of time, with the subsequent changes in developing practice. The tripartite entrance gateway with original cast and wrought ironwork is a significant landmark to the eastern approach to the town of Ballinasloe. The complex is of national value because of its special architectural quality as exemplified by its composition, plan and degree of craftsmanship in construction. In addition, it is a work by one of the most respected architects of the period and one of the earliest of its type.