

REASSESSING ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREAS ONE-DAY CONFERENCE

CONSERVING HERITAGE
MANAGING CHANGE
PROMOTING INVESTMENT

Wednesday 21st May 2014

George's Hall, Dublin Castle



SPEAKERS

Dr Michael Short is an academic and writer interested in issues of design quality in the historic environment, undertaking practice-based projects and research in two main areas. Firstly, he is concerned with how design issues in historic contexts are negotiated through the planning process and how they are implemented on site. Secondly, he is interested in the conservation of buildings of the recent past and the challenges that this presents for conservation practice. At the heart of both areas of research is an interest in articulating the significance of the historic environment through decision-making.

Colm Murray is the architecture officer of The Heritage Council, with qualifications in architecture, planning and building conservation. He previously worked with the National Monuments Service on the conservation of sites in State care, and as an architectural heritage advisor with Dúchas - The Heritage Service. He undertook town and interim county surveys for the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and has worked in private practice with architects in Dublin and Portugal. His current work areas include the development of traditional building skills training provision and heritage-led urban regeneration. He has a particular interest in the role that the built heritage can play in achieving sustainable development.

Philip Geoghegan is a partner in iCON Architecture | Urban Design | Conservation, specialising in integrated and sustainable environmental design solutions. His practice has developed expertise in urban design guidelines and framework plans which have been applied to towns and villages in various parts of Ireland. A former senior lecturer in housing, urban design and conservation in University College Dublin, Philip has conducted extensive urban design research in many European countries and has led an EU joint research project on 3D modelling and energy conservation. He is a Council member of Europa Nostra and is Chairman of the Wicklow Uplands Council.

Tiernan Lowey BL was called to the Bar in 2006 and has a general civil practice with a specialisation in administrative and employment law. A graduate of University College Dublin and King's Inns, Tiernan began his career in IBEC before moving into legal practice. He has extensive experience in civil litigation, both before expert statutory bodies and the superior courts. An active member on a number of professional committees, Tiernan has lectured in the National College of Ireland, King's Inns and the Law Society of Ireland.

Nicki Matthews is the Conservation Officer for Dublin City Council (DCC) and is a Grade I Conservation Architect. Following practice for a number of years in several Dublin offices, Nicki completed a Masters in Urban and Building Conservation in UCD in 1997. Her specialist topic was the evolution of Dublin and the construction of the late 18th-century to early 19th-century city, focusing on the development of Merrion Square. This research was published as part of the *Georgian Squares of Dublin* publication. Nicki is part of the Grade I Conservation Team within DCC City Architects Division and is a member of the RIAI Historic Building Committee.

Helena Bergin is the Architectural Conservation Officer for Fingal County Council. She has worked in the area of architectural conservation for over 15 years, initially with Dublin City Council and currently with the Conservation Office of Fingal County Council since 2001. She holds a Masters in Conservation (Historic Buildings) from the University of York and a Masters in Spatial Planning from the Dublin Institute of Technology. Helena is currently Vice-chair of the Association of Architectural Conservation Officers (AACO), having previously held the position of Chairperson of the association from 2011 to 2014.

Garrett Fennell is Chairperson of The Mountjoy Square Society, a company limited by guarantee aimed at improving Mountjoy Square as a place to live, work and visit. A solicitor by profession, Garrett is also director of GFC Consulting Limited, a public affairs consultancy and Public Affairs Ireland, an education and training company. Garrett is the chair of the RIAI Admissions Board. He operates his businesses from 25 Mountjoy Square, an original Frederick Darley-built house on the east side of the square.

Alan Mee is an architect and urban designer working in urbanism, architecture, research and education. His research interests include evolving definitions of spatial practice at multi-scalar levels, design and public life. He has published and spoken nationally and internationally on the specificity of context related to the recent dramatic changes in the Irish designed environment. Alan is also a Lecturer in Architecture at University College Dublin.

Graham Bell is Director of North of England Civic Trust and is Chairman of the Hungarian Renaissance Foundation. As a graduate architect, Graham worked on Ralph Erskine's Byker social housing, later preparing a conservation management plan when it was given heritage protection. This transformation from innovation to preservation established his commitment to considerate development. He is on the Council of Europa Nostra, is an adviser to the National Trust, is an independent broker on sensitive development issues, and was involved in a £200m urban regeneration project recognised internationally for best practice. Graham set up a foundation in Hungary teaching cultural heritage management and the relationship between national heritage and European nation states.

Dr Gabriel Ahlfeldt is Associate Professor of Urban Economics and Land Development at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, and is an Affiliate of the Spatial Economics Research Centre (SERC), the Centre for Metropolitan Studies, Berlin, and CESifo. He previously worked for the University of Hamburg and the Free University of Berlin. His research concentrates on the effect of large transport projects and architectural developments on local house prices, local political preferences and urban structure. His research on conservation areas has been supported by English Heritage and The Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics.

PROGRAMME

08.45 - 09.15 Registration

09.15 Welcome and Introduction
Geraldine Walsh, Chief Executive Officer, Dublin Civic Trust

09.25 Opening Address
Robin Mandal, President, Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland

Session 1 Chaired by Conor Skehan, School of Spatial Planning, Dublin Institute of Technology

09.35 Defining Townscape Character and Significance
Dr Michael Short, Senior Lecturer in Planning and Urban Conservation,
University of the West of England

10.00 ACA and the 2000 Act
Colm Murray, Architecture Officer, The Heritage Council

10.25 ACA as a Planning and Design Instrument
Philip Geoghegan, Architect, iCON Architecture, Urban Design & Conservation

10.50 Discussion

11.00 Tea/Coffee Break

Session 2 Chaired by Nigel Walsh, Solicitor and Committee Member, Dublin Civic Trust

11.30 The Legal Framework - Enforcing the 2000 Act
Tiernan Lowey, Barrister-at-Law

11.50 ACA as an Ethical Framework for Sustainable Development
Nicki Matthews, Conservation Officer and Conservation Architect, Dublin City Council

12.15 Developing Custodianship on the Ground - Fingal's Experience
Helena Bergin, Conservation Officer, Fingal County Council

12.35 Mountjoy Square ACA - A Catalyst for Regeneration?
Garrett Fennell, Chairman, Mountjoy Square Society

12.50 Discussion

13.00 Lunch

Session 3 Chaired by James Kelly, Chairman, Dublin Civic Trust

14.00 ACA as an Urban Design Tool
Alan Mee, Architect and Lecturer, School of Architecture, University College Dublin

14.25 On the Ground in the UK - Managing Historic Areas
Graham Bell, Director, North of England Civic Trust

14.50 The Economics of Conservation Areas
Dr Gabriel Ahlfeldt, Associate Professor of Urban Economics and Land Development,
London School of Economics

15.15 Panel Discussion - Questions and Answers
Chaired by James Kelly, Conservation Architect and Chairman, Dublin Civic Trust

15.30 Concluding Remarks and Close

CONFERENCE THEME

AREA-BASED built landscape conservation has been a planning designation of many European countries since the mid 20th-century, recognised as a means of protecting areas of distinctive heritage value. From urban to rural, conservation areas are used to preserve the character of places as diverse as formal neoclassical streetscapes, market squares and isolated religious settlements. Designed to encompass more than individual buildings and structures, conservation areas typically aim to consolidate the character of what makes a place distinctive by protecting elements such as traditional materials, rooflines and settlement patterns, public realm and planting, and by controlling the nature of new development.

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) were first introduced in Ireland as a legally binding instrument under the Planning and Development Act, 2000. An ACA is defined as *"a place, area, group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures."* Since 2000, ACAs have been adopted by most Irish planning authorities in their respective Development Plans, and are administered by their planning departments and conservation/heritage offices. To date, the relative success of ACAs has yet to be quantified in terms of public awareness of designation, protection of heritage, tangible enhancement of places, encouragement of design excellence in new development, and related socio-economic impacts.

PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

The aim of the event is to highlight the purpose of ACA designation as originally designed under the 2000 Act, to assess how it has performed to date, and to learn from international best practice in the implementation and management of similar area-based conservation initiatives. The proceedings focus on the need to translate ACA written policy into active development control, planning enforcement, enhancement initiatives and forward planning schemes. The array of national and international expert speakers articulate a role for the ACA instrument as a means of guiding high quality development through management and framework policies, including the conservation of period buildings to best practice standards, the intuitive design of new buildings and structures, the preservation and design of landscape and planting, and contextual treatment of the public realm. Many speakers recognise this guidance as an attractive, stable environment for investment, rather than a constraint on market forces that is often perceived. The conference aims to promote active discussion about the ACA instrument amongst all interested parties and stakeholders.

DUBLIN CIVIC TRUST

Dublin Civic Trust an independent charitable organisation that works to recognise, promote and protect Dublin's architectural heritage. As an educational trust, it is dedicated to the principles of building identification, best conservation practice and appropriate use and reuse of the city's historic building stock. The Board of Dublin Civic Trust, and its executive staff that have organised this conference - Chief Executive Officer, Geraldine Walsh and Conservation Research Officer, Graham Hickey - hope that the event will stimulate a meaningful reassessment of the ACA instrument that will frame it as a tool for best practice conservation and sustainable development nationwide.

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The conference venue is George's Hall, constructed as a Supper Room for the royal visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Ireland in 1911. It comprises part of the rich historic layers at Dublin Castle that is expertly managed by the Office of Public Works.

Cover image: Francis Street and St. Patrick's Church (1834-c.1915), Dundalk, Co. Louth

