

1 | Market Square, Letterkenny: A Place for People

Competition entry by:
Joe McCallion
Landscape Architect
jmclandscapearchitect@gmail.com

Design Concept

In response to the existing poor layout of Market Square, the Square has been redesigned to allow for maximum multifunctional use. The design incorporates the rich history of Letterkenny and celebrates this for locals and visitors to see. The layout is contemporary, yet classic, taking inspiration from European Plaza design, but with an Irish twist.

The space is split between two key zones:

1. The Main Square (facing main street)
2. The relocated tourist office/Public toilets & quieter zone (to the rear)

Importance has been placed on orientating Market Square so that it faces Main Street, thus becoming a part of the fabric of the town, which is imperative to its success. This is in sharp contrast to the existing poor layout, which turns its back on the town. Careful consideration has gone in to achieving the desired level changes so the Square becomes an open Plaza. Accessible routes for disabled users are included.

The Space encourages socialising, outdoor dining and is highly dynamic in its ability to be used for a wide range of uses, it anticipates for the positive changes and growth expected in Letterkenny in the coming years.

“ Food festivals, Farmers markets, Outdoor music concerts, Sporting fixtures on the big screen, Cinema Night, a space for Buskers, Artists, Exhibitions, speeches, Ice skating, a tourist attraction, a meeting point, a place for relaxing, see the famous Hiring Fair children, a place to learn, use the public toilets, see the switching on of the Christmas lights, ring in the new year, a place for everyday spontaneity.... an exciting new social venue in the heart of Letterkenny “



New uptake of units are envisioned, creating a vibrant social Plaza in the heart of Letterkenny.

Alterations to entrances will be required to create desired levels. It is hoped Business owners will welcome these changes

An Innovative ground fixed water fountain can be switched on and off, depending on events. The fountain signifies Growth & renewal. L.E.D lighting effects create an attractive evening space

Timber amphitheater doubles as a dynamic seating and stage area.

The Hiring fair statue should remain, forming an attractive and enticing entrance feature into the Square, as existing

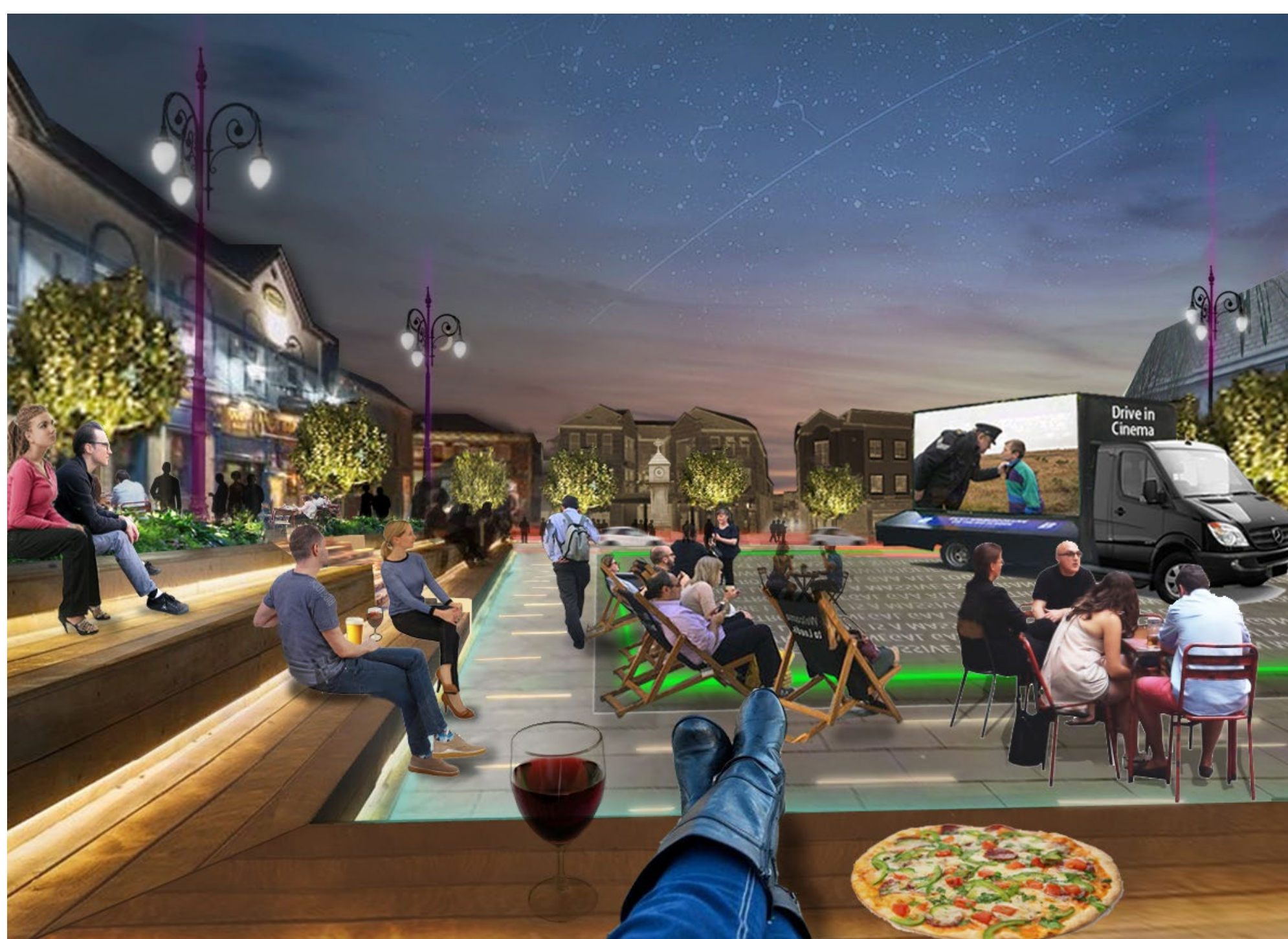
PHASE 2: Pedestrian link to Church Lane/ New Mixed-use development



Timber Carts, make reference to historic photos of Market Day on the Square, and double as attractive planters and as seating. They can be wheeled away during events, if more space is required.

The “Letterkenny Timeline”, an interactive timeline of important dates & events in the towns rich history can form a centre piece to the Square. From the Capture of Wolf Tone, to Market days at the Square, these events can educate visitors & locals about the towns important history & heritage. Space should be left for future generations to make their mark on the town. Walking tours of Letterkenny can start from here.

Inside the Timeline, the present and future of the town is celebrated with a poetically aspirational message or good omen to the towns future, which can be laser engraved into the paving. Donegal has a rich literary heritage and this theme can continue elsewhere in the public realm of the town, adding an interactive element to the towns streetscape. Locals can contribute to these messages/anecdotes, but they should be inspiring and encompass the character and people of the town. Accompanying Sculpture or Artwork can also be implemented, telling the story visually.



An Evening Destination: Special events such as Outdoor concerts, Cinema Night and Culture night can all take place at the New Market Square creating an exciting space where people will want to gather. L.E.D lighting can enhance the space further and ensure the space is well light at night.

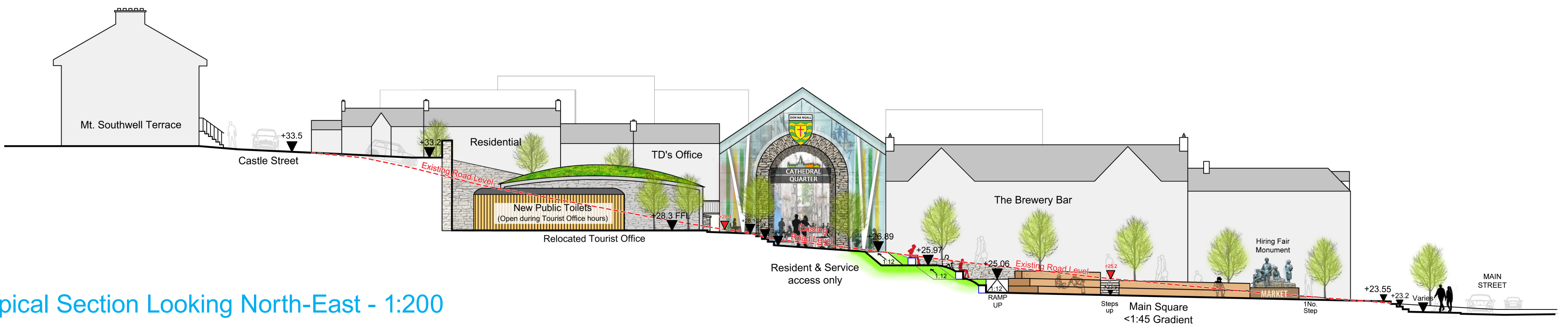
The ability for vehicular access into the square means that ice cream/coffee vans, mobile Cinema screens, band stages and emergency vehicles all have access to the Square. It is envisioned the success of the Square will lead to new uptake of vacant units and a revitalised evening and night culture, attracting families into the town during the evenings, something currently unheard of. The already well known night-life of the town should be capitalised upon further, cementing Letterkenny as Irelands best night-time destination, a unique selling point.



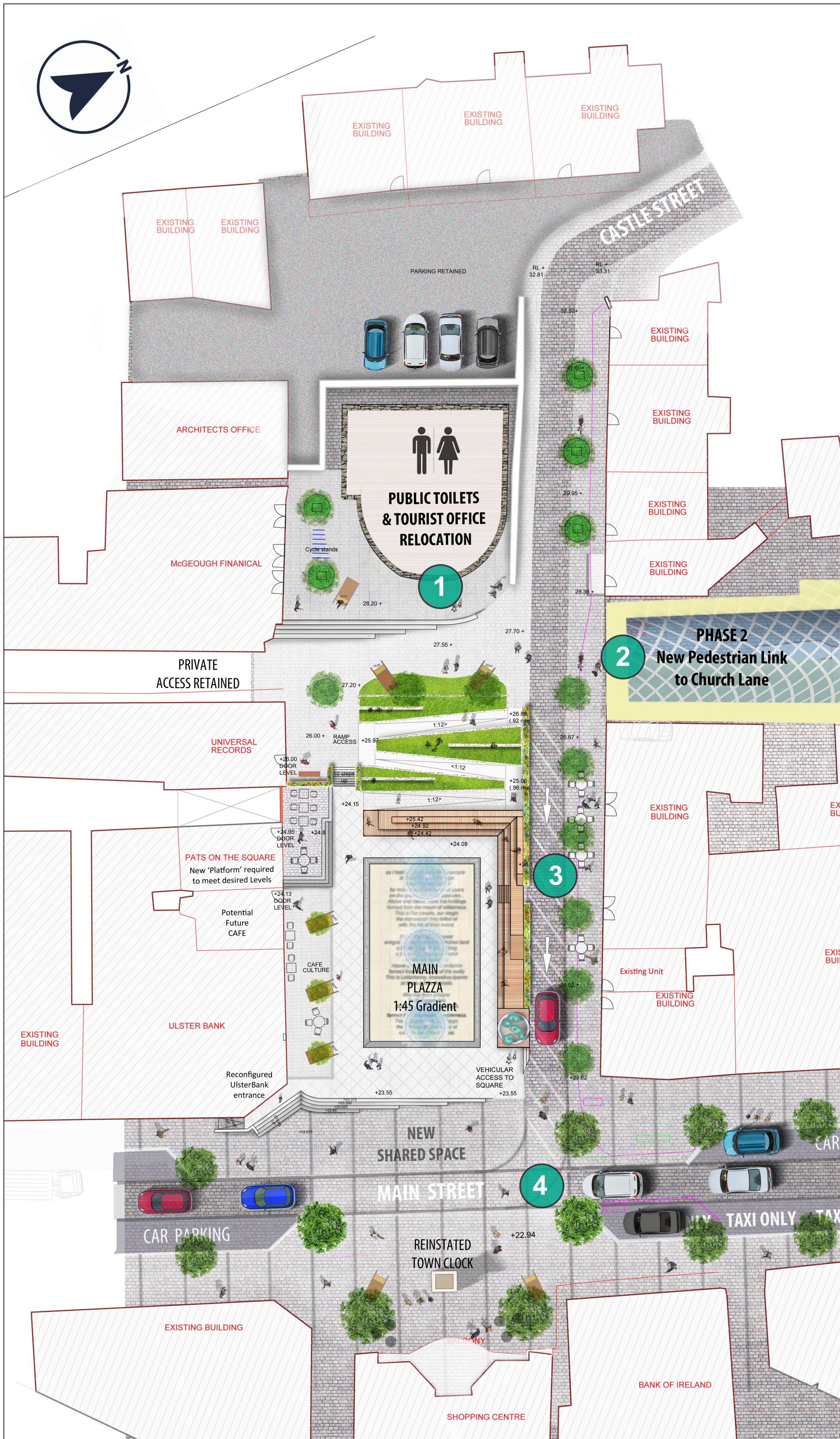
The Multifunctional Square: An open layout encourages a wide variety of uses. Here, a pop-up Farmers Market encourages footfall into the town centre where local Donegal produce is on show. Letterkenny struggles with high traffic, so a move towards semi-pedestrianisation is encouraged. Principles of Shared space can be incorporated along Main street, reducing traffic speeds, widening footpaths and returning ownership to the people. Improved walkability into the town, should be encouraged, especially from retail parks and outside car parks. The town can be transformed, flourishing like other towns in Ireland, where new boutique shops can open and the already renowned Bar and dining scene can continue to grow.

I envision a revitalised town centre, where in the coming years people will flock to; to live, to work and to visit. **Phase 2**, can be a catalyst for this change, seeing a link to Church lane created, turning derelict land into a new street full of boutique shops and urban living to compliment the already successful Cathedral Quarter, taking inspiration from Galways Latin Quarter and other pedestrianised Irish towns like Waterford.

2 | The Master Plan: A wider vision for Market Square & Letterkenny



Typical Section Looking North-East - 1:200



Master Plan - 1:200

1. Relocated Tourist Office

By relocating the Tourist Information Office, people are encouraged to visit the town centre directly. Within the relocated Tourist office, Public Toilets can provide a much needed service to the town and the opening hours can coincide with office hours, ensuring no anti-social behaviour ensues.

To the front, grass mounding provides informal seating and breaks up the Hard Landscape element of the main Square. An accessible path allows disabled access into the Square. Vehicular access is retained, but limited to private access (shown) & services only.

2: Phase 2 Potential - Link to Church Lane

In future years, following the successes of Church lane and taking inspiration from the likes of Kirwan's lane in Galway, a pedestrianised lane can link Market Square with the Cathedral Quarter.

Units along Main Street can be reconfigured, providing a back door entranceway and spill-out space for new business ventures, Boutique Shops, Cafes, office space or a Hotel can accompany Urban Apartments, resulting in a stylish mixed-use development. The lane could have a partially covered open air glass roof, fit for the changeable Donegal weather. The result, a unique must-see cultural destination in Ireland.

A 40% increase in Letterkennys population is expected by 2040 (Source: RSES Executive Summary) Careful planning can prevent the mistakes of the past, preventing urban sprawl into the countryside, benefiting the town centre further.



Image above: Kirwan's Lane, in Galways Latin Quarter

3. Retained Castle Street Access

Retained access via Castle street - Main Street remains, but is re-imagined. A new shared space is proposed. The existing Taxi-rank is to be moved along Main Street, thus giving more space to outdoor dining and new attractive tree planting as shown.

The road is to remain one way, but restricted to residents & emergency vehicles only.

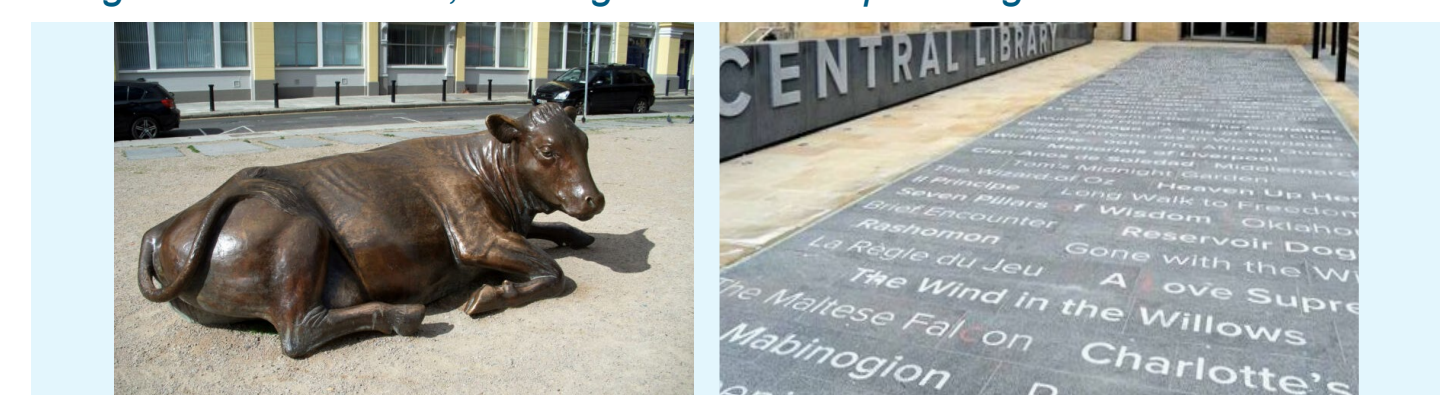
4: A Re-imagined Main Street

New tree planting along main street breathes new life into the towns most important street. Widened footpaths and reduced parking spaces sends a clear message that cars are no longer welcome in the town centre. Shared space reinforces this further, giving ownership back to the people.

Main street can be enhanced further by incorporating themes of Poetry/anecdotes engraved into the streetscape, with accompanying Artwork, as seen on Page 1. New bench seating and reinstating the old Town clock, which once stood in Market Square, can further enhance the area.



Image above: Preston, Fishergate Shared Space high street in the U.K



Sculpture, Placemaking & Storytelling