

Appendix B: Conservation Plan & Historic Landscape Study

MOUNTJOY SQUARE PARK



CONSERVATION PLAN & HISTORIC LANDSCAPE STUDY

Final Report

July 2014



Parks & Landscape Services
Mountjoy Square Society



HOWLEY HAYES ARCHITECTS

This conservation plan has been prepared for the Mountjoy Square Society (MSS) and the Parks & Landscape Services within the Culture, Recreation and Amenity Department of Dublin City Council (DCC) by Howley Hayes Architects. and Dermot Foley Landscape Architects. It considers the history, development and changes within Mountjoy Square in Dublin over a period of approximately 200 years. Illustrated with drawings, historic maps and numerous photographs, the plan examines the development of this historic park, with its planting, buildings and features and how these have changed over time. An assessment of the significance of the park as an integral part of the cultural landscape of the Georgian city, in accordance with its designation as an Architectural Conservation Area, is also included together with recommendations for a number of policies to inform future conservation and development strategies. These are intended to provide guidance for the on-going maintenance and management of the park to ensure that the significance of the landscape is preserved and presented clearly to the public as both a public amenity and an important historic place. Dermot Foley Landscape Architects provided research and analysis on the designer of the park, John Sutherland, its original design, planting schemes as well as its historic development. Aecom provided traffic management and budget cost analysis. The measured, photographic and condition surveys were carried out in December 2013 and February 2014.

The authors would like to acknowledge the valuable advice and insight of the entire project team as noted in the introduction, along with Merlo Kelly, Belinda Jupp, Dr. Ellen Rowley and the helpful staff at the Irish Architectural Archive.

The Mountjoy Square Society would also like to gratefully acknowledge the financial support received from the Irish Public Bodies Corporate Social Engagement Framework.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- Mountjoy Square Park is located in the north inner city of Dublin. Together with other garden squares in the city, it forms an integral part of the rich Georgian heritage of Dublin.
- The Georgian era in Dublin was a period of unrivalled growth. The Gardiner estate stretched from Capel Street in the west as far as the North Circular Road in the east, encompassing much of the north inner city. The first Luke Gardiner's development at Henrietta Street arguably established a template which was followed across the city for the next one hundred years.
- Mountjoy Square best represents the rational approach to urban design based on classical principles of form and proportion that prevailed in Georgian Dublin. The terraces that surround it were arranged to create a perfect square, within which a beautiful and refined garden was designed around a circular form the most sophisticated designed landscape to be found in the city.
- The urban square has historic antecedents with many variations in form and purpose; but the model of the garden square is particular to Britain and Ireland. Key characteristics include- metal railings enclosing a private shared garden; surrounded by terraces of townhouses to give an overall formality and visual coherence.
- Garden squares have in many cases been re-designed or redeveloped with buildings for new uses. They were originally designed to be for the sole private use of the *keyholders* who used the garden to socialise and to promenade among their neighbours, detached from the busy surrounding streets.
- The second Luke Gardiner's ambition for a square then known as *Gardiner Square* is first shown on a map prepared in 1779 by Thomas Sherrard. Drawings for *Mountjoy Square*, in a similar location, were drawn up by Sherrard eight years later. This included a grandiose residential scheme, along with a proposal that nearby St. George's church be relocated to the centre of the garden.
- When first laid out in 1790, Mountjoy Square was carefully sited to exploit the topography of the north city; placed on the crest of a promontory overlooking the Liffey estuary so that the surrounding streets fall steeply away to the west, south and east down to large tracts of newly reclaimed land. The leases were distributed in small parcels, with control retained in relation to quality of building materials, design proportions and parapet heights. The square was not fully completed until 1818, twenty years after Gardiner's death.
- The landscape design and procurement of materials for the park in the centre of the square was commenced in 1801 by order of Parliament. The Mountjoy Square Commissioners were formally instituted in 1802, and were active up until 1938. They represented the residents and property owners, who paid levies for improvements to the square. One of their first acts was to arrange the enclosure of the park with railings.
- Scottish-born John Sutherland (1745?-1826) is listed in the Commissioners minutes as being the designer of the garden; comparing favourably against three celebrated London squares. However, the level of his involvement after completing the initial plan is unclear. He was also responsible for the design of demesnes at Ballyfin and Rockingham. Works at Mountjoy commenced in 1803, after the railings were erected in 1802.
- Sutherland's plan responds to the precise geometry of the square with a symmetrical layout featuring a spacious circular lawn surrounded by winding paths to create an attractive Rococo composition. The planting was intended to be informal, although ascending in scale and screening from the inner circle out to the corners.

- The park was opened to the keyholders in 1805. By 1830, residents living in the surrounding neighbourhood were given access to the garden for one guinea per family per annum. Six years later the general public could pay to enter and see military band performances. From the 1870s, the central lawn was used for croquet and tennis, by which time a caretaker's hut was built in the north-east corner.
- Dublin Corporation took over the park in 1938, after which public toilets, a nursery and a community building were constructed, and the central lawn bisected with tennis courts screened by fencing. Later changes were made in the late 1960s when a park works depot was created and in 1993 re-planting and path resurfacing were carried out. Ten years ago a new playground was installed.
- The original wrought iron railings survive, but are in poor condition and have lost their lamps and arches over the gates. A programme of repairs to the ironwork and carved granite plinths is due to commence shortly.
- The park buildings are generally in poor condition and nearing the end of their life span. In the context of the restoration of the historic garden design, their removal is desirable. However, this should only take place after alternative community facilities are provided in the vicinity of equal or higher quality.
- Improvements to the public realm could include uncontrolled pedestrian crossings opposite park gates. These would increase the visibility of the park gates, while making the park more accessible and the public realm around the square more hospitable to pedestrians. In association with the Swiftway bus stop proposed for Mountjoy Square North, these improvements should encourage more locals and tourists to visit the square.
- The original path network should be restored, using a combination of archaeological investigation and map analysis. This project should be undertaken in stages, starting on the west side. The central lawn could be restored as soon as the hardcourts are relocated, leaving the existing buildings in place until such time as new facilities are provided nearby.
- The park would benefit from the provision of new facilities such as a café and toilets, in order to facilitate longer visits. These facilities should be sited beside the proposed Swiftway stop which enjoys the best aspect. Any new structures should be sensitively designed and respond to their historic setting.
- Another option would be to provide a new bandstand and shelter close by that with a newly designed playground, will create a vibrant section of the park that would allow the remaining areas to be used as originally intended, for the appreciation of nature and the historic architecture of the square.
- Mountjoy Square is an historic place of national significance and makes a major contribution to the European significance of Georgian Dublin. It illustrates the urban planning ideas of the Enlightenment that flourished throughout the continent during the eighteenth century.
- Mountjoy Square Park has become an important part of the social fabric of Dublin City as well as being a valuable amenity for locals and visitors alike. It is an ideal setting to illustrate Georgian garden heritage, its historical associations and its ongoing conservation and preservation.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Place

Mountjoy Square Park is located in the north inner city of Dublin in an area known as the North Georgian Quarter. Together with contemporaneous garden squares on the south side of the city Merrion and Fitzwilliam Squares, and the nearby Parnell Square; Mountjoy Square is an integral part of the rich Georgian heritage of Dublin.

The Georgian era extended from 1714 to 1830, and in Dublin was a period of unrivalled growth of the nation's capital, sometimes described as the second city of the British Empire. In the 1720s, when the first Luke Gardiner was laying out Henrietta Street to the north side of the Liffey, he established a precedent which future developments over the next one hundred years were to follow. Palladian-styled redbrick townhouses with austere, yet beautifully proportioned facades, containing rich interiors

featuring fine joinery and stuccowork, were arranged in uniform terraces along wide streets and generous squares. In 1757 the Wide Streets Commission was established to guide urban development in the city. Their achievements included newly planned streets and bridges that transformed and extended the tighter urban grain of the medieval core of the city. Architectural competitions were held that attracted entries from eminent architects, and great Palladian and neo-Classical institutional buildings adorned and punctuated the streetscapes. Commissioners such as John Beresford and the second Luke Gardiner laid out new streets on their own lands, extending development eastwards on the north side of the river. On the south side of the river, the Fitzwilliam Estate initiated the eastern expansion of the city centred on Merrion and Fitzwilliam Squares. Their collective achievements can compare with the best of town planning carried out within the Age of Enlightenment¹.



Fig. 1 Aerial view of Mountjoy Square Park (Ordnance Survey Ireland).

Mountjoy Square best represents the rational approach to urban design based on classical principles of form and proportion that prevailed in Georgian Dublin. The terraces were arranged to create a perfect square, within which a beautiful and refined garden was designed around a circular form in the most sophisticated designed landscape to be found in the city. The square in turn influenced the layout of the whole precinct creating pleasing vistas that terminated in splendid public buildings and spaces. Luke Gardiner's grandiose proposals for the west side of Mountjoy Square and the Royal Circus at the end of Eccles Street did not progress beyond drawings; his ambitious plans for the estate being curtailed by his early death. Despite the widespread demolition of townhouses and streetscapes in the north inner city, so much of the built heritage and public realm of the Georgian era remains to be cherished and protected.

Aims & Objectives

This conservation plan is drawn up in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Florence Charter and the revised Burra Charter published by the International Council on Monuments & Sites (ICOMOS) in 1982 and 1999 respectively, which provide models for the conservation and management of historic gardens, buildings and places of cultural significance. These charters, in particular the Florence Charter, set out standards of practice for those with responsibility for

the guardianship of such places. This group might include owners, managers and custodians, consultants, statutory advisers, opinion-formers, decision makers and contractors. Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection: to the community; the landscape; to the past and to lived experiences.

A fundamental principle of the Burra Charter is that places of cultural significance should be conserved for the benefit of both present and future generations. Conservation being recognized as - *all of the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.*

As such, the aims of this Conservation Plan are to:

- Provide an accurate record of Mountjoy Square Park.
- Understand its evolution in relation to Georgian Dublin, Ireland and Britain with emphasis on the landscape heritage of garden squares.
- Understand the significance of the built and natural heritage. This includes research on the role of John Sutherland in the original design of the garden, its implementation and subsequent changes over time. Also important is understanding the original historical planting scheme, through written sources and on-site survey.



Fig.2 Detail from James Mahony's *Dublin from the spire of St George's Church, Hardwicke Place 1854*

- Identify any threats to its significance. Formulate policies to address the threats, and to inform and guide the future preservation and management of the park.
- Outline proposals for necessary conservation work. This includes an assessment of the extent and condition of historic fabric that has survived.
- Provide accurate documentation of the site to guide future decision-making. The impact of traffic and transport infrastructure is also presented with proposals for improvements to access into the park.
- Outline how best to interpret and present the social and architectural significance of the square, using a range of interpretative media.
- Manage change by proposing a sustainable vision for the future of the historic place, including enhancement of amenities for locals and visitors alike.
- Present proposals for the restoration of the historic landscape design, along with options for alternative sites close by for the relocation of community facilities.
- Provide sketch proposals for new buildings and facilities that could enhance the use of the park in a way that is sensitive to the architectural heritage.

The Florence Charter was adopted by ICOMOS in 1982 and deals specifically with the preservation of historic gardens, providing a framework for their preservation as architectural compositions and living monuments. The charter emphasizes the importance of historical research, maintenance, conservation and restoration, and a respect for authenticity together with the use of the garden as an amenity. More recently, the Ename Charter was published in 2008, which deals specifically with the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage. This charter provides a framework for the communication of the cultural significance of a place to the public. Its objectives are to facilitate understanding and appreciation of the site; communicate its meaning, safeguard the tangible and intangible values and respect its authenticity. These charters are particularly relevant for Mountjoy Square Park given its position as a popular public space within an important urban setting. While the garden has retained some of its original built fabric, there have been many losses and changes to its historic character due to re-design, demolition, decay and additions to meet the changing demands of this public space. The plan will illustrate how the garden

square can best be presented and its significance understood and appreciated by Dubliners and visitors today.

The policies outlined include ideas that are intended for implementation following consultation with the various stakeholders including the local authority, public bodies, and the 1,400 residents of the Square.

Nomenclature

As some of the features have no formal names, in the interests of clarity we have used the following nomenclature in describing the various structures and places, as illustrated on Fig. 3:

These include - *the Park, the Townhouses, the Square, Depot, Playground, Nursery, Community Centre.*

Project Team

This conservation plan was prepared by Howley Hayes Architects, in association with Dermot Foley Landscape Architects & Aecom with valuable input and assistance from; Karin O'Flanagan, Mary Laheen & Garrett Fennell of the Mountjoy Square Society; Charlie Lowe Central Area Manager; Leslie Moore City Parks Superintendent and Kieran O'Neill Senior Executive Landscape Architect of the Parks & Landscape Services Division of Dublin City Council; Nicola Matthews, Conservation Office, Oiseen Kelly Architect and Alec Dundon Executive Engineer of the Roads Division at Dublin City Council. The principal stakeholders and funders of this plan are Dublin City Council and the Mountjoy Square Society.

Consultation

In 2011, a group within DCC known as The Studio carried out a public consultation on the future of the park. On the 5th of June 2014, during the preparation of this plan, DCC Parks & Landscape Services undertook consultation with local interest groups that use the park facilities; St. Brigid's Nursery, Community After Schools Project (CASPr) and North City Centre Community Action Project (NCCCAP). They gave valuable insight into their use of the park, and were understanding of the proposed restoration of the park, as long as new facilities of at least equal quality were provided, or the existing facilities maintained. See Appendix for full reports.



Fig. 3 Site map of square showing main features and surrounding streets.

2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

Garden Squares

The form of the urban square originated in the Greek agora and the Roman forum; later revived during the Renaissance in Italy and later in the rest of Europe during the seventeenth century. There were many variations in form and purpose, but the model of the urban garden square is particular to Britain and Ireland. Amongst the earliest were those laid out in Covent Garden and St. James's Square in London that date from the mid-seventeenth century². St. Stephen's Green also dates from this period, pre-dating Mountjoy Square by over one hundred years, albeit later re-developed, largely with brick townhouse terraces, during the early Georgian period. A number of key characteristics evolved in the garden square typology. These include- residential use; metal railings enclosing private gardens; simple planting schemes; and path layouts surrounding open lawns, adorned with statuary and other memorials using classical precedents. Continuity combined with restraint in the architectural treatment of the townhouses gave an overall coherence to the form.

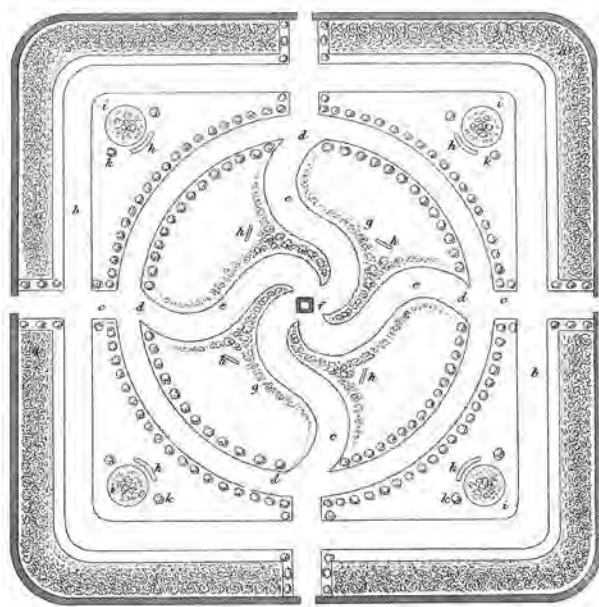


Fig.4 Loudon's 1812 design for a model London square (from Longstaffe-Gowan).

Writing in his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* of 1822, John Claudius Loudon describes the main characteristics of squares, emphasizing the importance of an *uninterrupted promenade*, preferably close to and parallel to the boundary railings. He also advocated wide open spaces so that parents looking from their windows *may not long at a time lose sight of their children*, and open and shaded walks to suit the changing seasons. Resting places were important, and shelter from showers at a point equidistant from the entrances³. Loudon also published a design for a model square in 1812, which has many similarities to both Russell Square in London and Mountjoy Square in Dublin.

These parks were originally designed to be for the sole private use of the subscribers or *keyholders* who used the garden to socialise and to promenade among their neighbours, detached from the busy surrounding streets. Today, most of the gardens have been opened to the public, and societal change over the decades has in many cases led to their re-development or alteration.

The Gardiner Estate

*..the Gardiner estate on the north side of the river, the greater part of which was within the last twenty years an universal cabbage garden, is now covered with superb streets. Elegant mansions seem to vegetate and propagate there, like the former produce of the soil;*⁴

The Gardiner family were bankers, politicians and aesthetes that made a fortune planning and developing the splendid streets and squares on the north side of the Liffey. The first Luke Gardiner (c.1690-1755) was a self-made banker who married Anne Stewart; from an aristocratic family whose titles of Viscounts Blessington and Mountjoy his descendants were to inherit⁵. Through the acquisition of the Moore estate in 1714, his family controlled the future development of these newly fashionable suburbs for the remainder of the century. Commencing at the grandest of scales at Henrietta Street, he persuaded the aristocracy to employ the finest architects and craftsmen of the time to help realise his vision, which established a template which was followed across the city for the next one hundred years. In his lifetime, Sackville (now O'Connell) Street, Rutland (now Parnell)



Fig. 5 Detail of portrait of the first Luke Gardiner 1690-1755.



Fig. 6 Detail of portrait of the second Luke Gardiner 1745-1798.

Square and Dorset Street were also commenced by Gardiner; to be completed by his son Charles who died in 1769. Streets were named to commemorate family members, their titles and estates, or peers that they wished to flatter. The second Luke Gardiner (1745-1798), eldest son and heir of Charles, received a fine education and travelled on the Grand Tour, commissioning artists that he met such as Joshua Reynolds and Gavin Hamilton⁶. Through his grandmother, he inherited the title Baron Mountjoy in 1789 with a large estate at *Mountjoy Forest*, near Rash outside Omagh, Co. Tyrone, after which the square is named⁷. He proved entrepreneurial and resourceful like his grandfather, and brought new impetus to the development of the estate. He was responsible for Gardiner's Row (1769), Eccles St. (1772), Temple St.

& Hardwicke Place (1773), North Great George's St. (1776), Gardiner Place (1790) moving the edge of the city eastwards as far as Mountjoy Square, Gardiner Street, and beyond to Gloucester Street, Summerhill, and Rutland Street before his untimely death at New Ross during the Irish Rebellion of 1798. His plan for a large oval known as the *Royal Circus* remained on maps until the middle of the nineteenth century, it would have exceeded Mountjoy Square in splendour and was key to the proposed expansion of the estate north of Dorset Street. The Act of Union of 1800 eventually led to the end of building speculation of this quality and scale; when those with the means to acquire and live in such grand houses relocated to London. The estate was dissolved by parliament in 1846; leases were auctioned off and redistributed. However, this was a long process involving disputes between putative heirs that was not settled until 1876⁸.

Sherrard Drawings 1787

Gardiner's ambition for a square at this site, then known as *Gardiner's Square*, is first shown on a map⁹ prepared in 1779 by Thomas Sherrard, a surveyor employed by the Wide Streets Commissioners. Eight years later, Sherrard drew up a revised scheme for an unnamed square of equal sides at the confluence of eight streets, located approximately sixty metres to the east. Gardiner Place, Gardiner Street and Grenville Street are all identified on the plan. A new church was proposed for the centre of the park to replace the existing *George's Church* on nearby Hill Street. This church was later built nearby at Hardwicke Place at the focus of another urban set piece to the competition-winning designs of Francis Johnston.

Sherrard's proposed elevation of the west side shows a residential terrace that in appearance and scale took its inspiration from the new Custom House, nearing completion at the bottom of the hill alongside the Liffey¹⁰. Its decorated stone end bays either side of a central stone palazzo surmounted with a shallow dome, linked by terraces of three red-brick townhouses. This proposal was not practical; and despite their grand appearance the end bays would have concealed cramped interiors with no private open space. Pragmatism prevailed, and

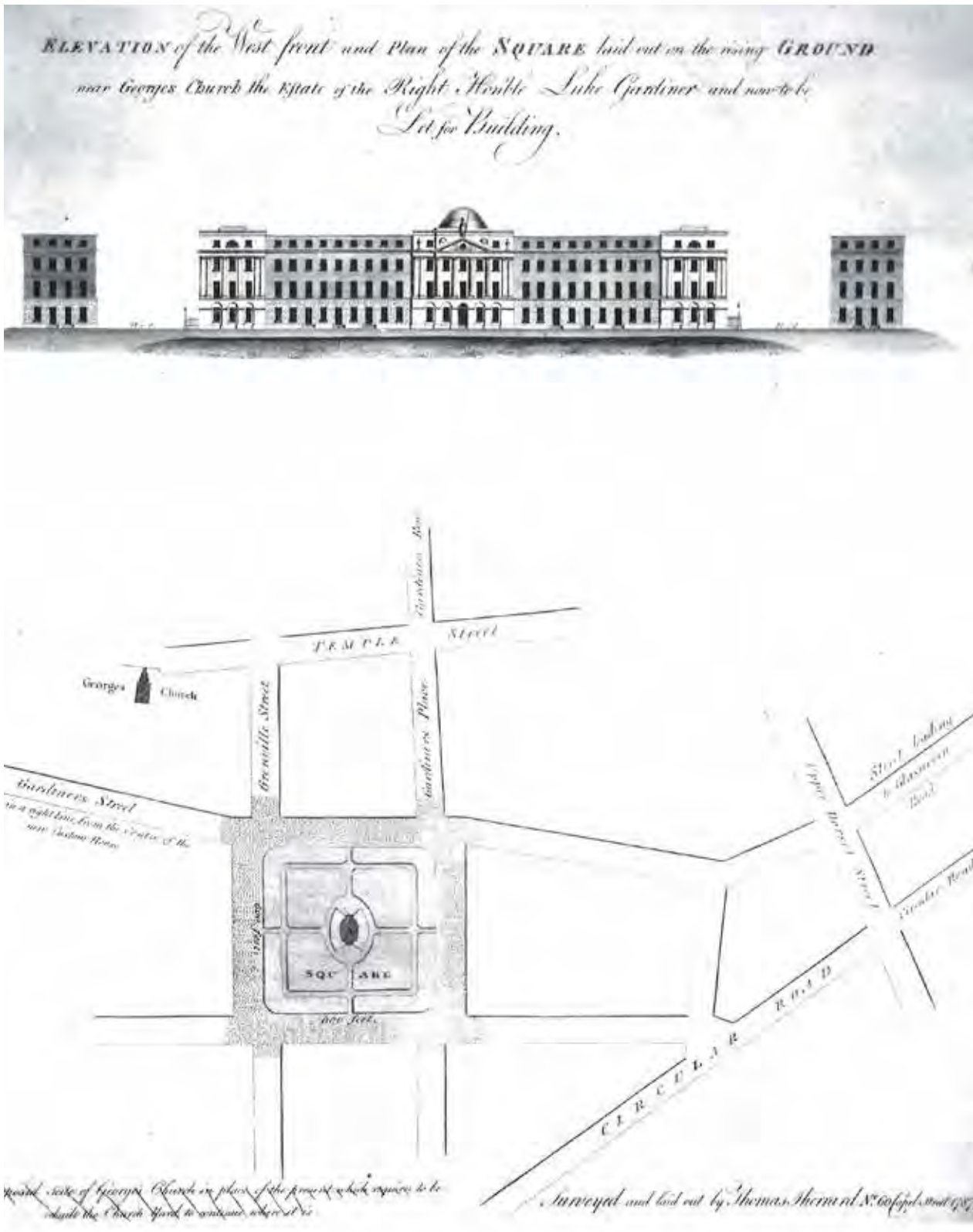


Fig. 7 Sherrard's 1787 drawing of Mountjoy Square.

the leases were distributed in smaller parcels, with control retained in relation to the quality of building materials, design proportions and parapet heights. The problems of the all-important corners were left to the individual developers to solve within the strictures set down by the leases.

Mountjoy Square

We shall only add, that the elevation of the houses, the breadth of the streets, with the dimensions of the lawn so harmonize together, as to give pleasure to the eye of the spectator, and added to the neatness, simplicity, and regularity every where visible, entitle this square to rank high among the finest in Europe¹¹.

Mountjoy Square, along with other Dublin squares, was largely developed by small-scale speculators who included master-craftsmen and builders. The townhouses and their gardens were built over a period of fifty years, within a scheme set by the landowners that allowed for some variation. Because of this development strategy, the architectural character of Dublin's Georgian city differs from the more regular designed compositions found at London, Edinburgh

and Bath. The character of Dublin's Georgian heritage is distinguished by the irregularity and individual expression that occurs within the overall discipline best described as *variety within uniformity*. Austere brick facades create an urban uniformity to the exterior that is coupled with vibrant individuality in its entrances and interiors, the central focus of which is a communal private garden. Into the natural landscape of this garden, the privileged key holders could escape the bustling streets, creating what became known as *RUS IN URBE*; Latin for *country in the city*.

When it was laid out in 1790, Mountjoy Square was sited to exploit the topography of the north city; placed on the crest of a hill overlooking the Liffey estuary. This caused the surrounding streets to fall away steeply to the west, south and east, descending to large tracts of newly reclaimed land. When constructed it was at the eastern edge of the city, expanding the Gardiner Estate and facilitated by the strategic relocation of the Custom House. Gandon's masterpiece is the city's most magnificent public building, terminating the vista from the west side of the square down steeply sloping Gardiner Street.

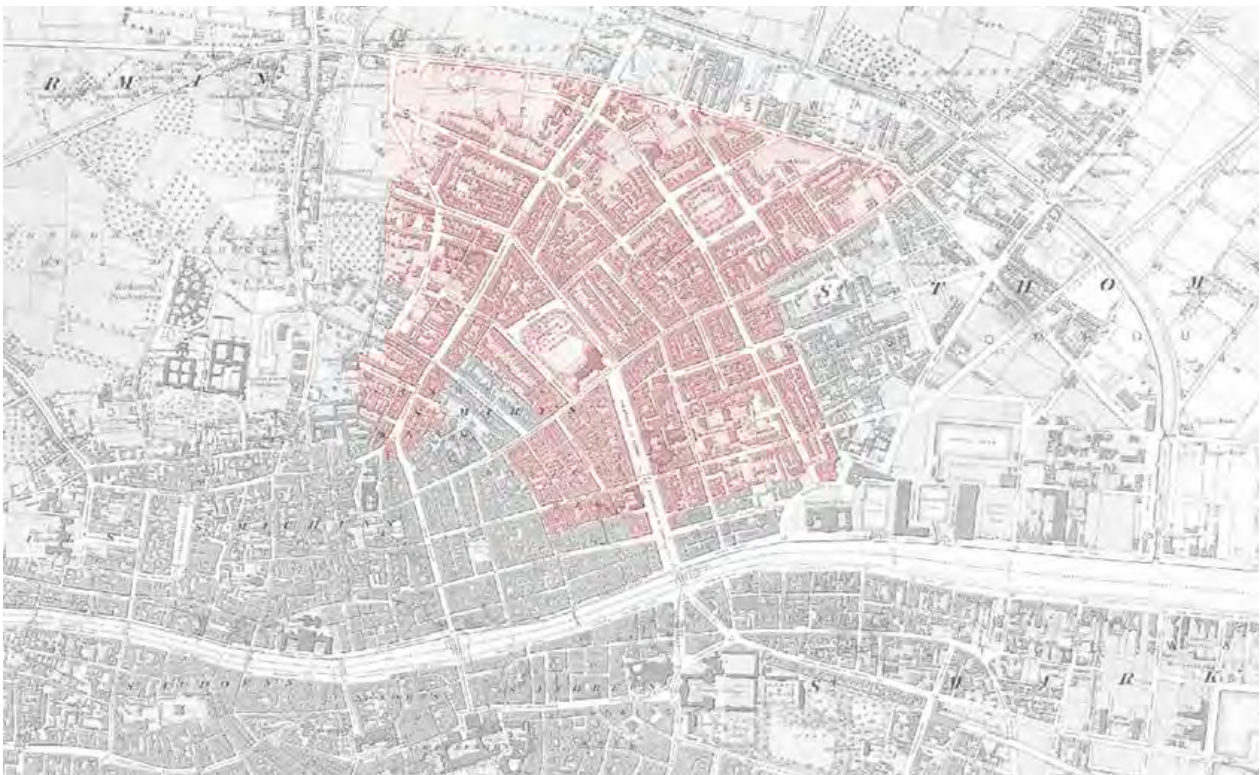


Fig.8 Wilson's map of 1844 with extent of Gardiner Estate shown in red (after Prunty).



Fig.9 Extract from lease map held in Dublin City Archives.

The square articulated the urban form of the entire district; as the focus of Gardiner Street Upper and Lower, Gardiner Place, Mountjoy Place, Grenville Street., Belvedere Place, Fitzgibbon Street, Great Charles Street. The full potential of the urban connectivity was not however realised as only a narrow lane known as Hutton Place linked Mountjoy Place to Summerhill to the south. This was later absorbed into the present bus depot along with the adjacent coach factory. Notwithstanding this, the square represents innovation in urban planning by accommodating eight broad streets, two per corner, yet retaining a sense of enclosure by offsetting those on the east-west axis to create shorter terraces and closing off vistas at the corners. The prominent buildings at each corner remain compromised due to their lack of private gardens or yards. This suggests that the unified architectural expression of the townhouses took precedence so that they would form an ordered backdrop to the shared public garden in the centre. Another example of compromise is the empty plots or garden walls behind the corner houses that disrupt the rhythm of the terraces on the approaches to the square at Gardiner Place and on Gardiner Street.

Gardiner started by leasing out plots on the north, south and west sides from 1789¹². While the square had equal sides, there was some variation in plot width with nineteen houses fitting on the south side of the square, seventeen to the north. On the east and west sides are two houses either side of the fourteen plot wide central terrace. Although they are contiguous with the terrace on the approaching street, they form part of the square and are numbered accordingly. The red-brick townhouses all have four storeys over basement, with minor variations in parapet heights of forty seven feet. There are variations in the windows; some of the houses have three bays, others two. The slight variation of entrance levels also create variations in the windows. At the corners of the square, most of the houses have their entrances off the approach street, with one, two or three bays of windows



Fig. 10 Extract from Taylor's map of 1811 showing site contours and extent of development of Gardiner Estate by that date. (Prunty)

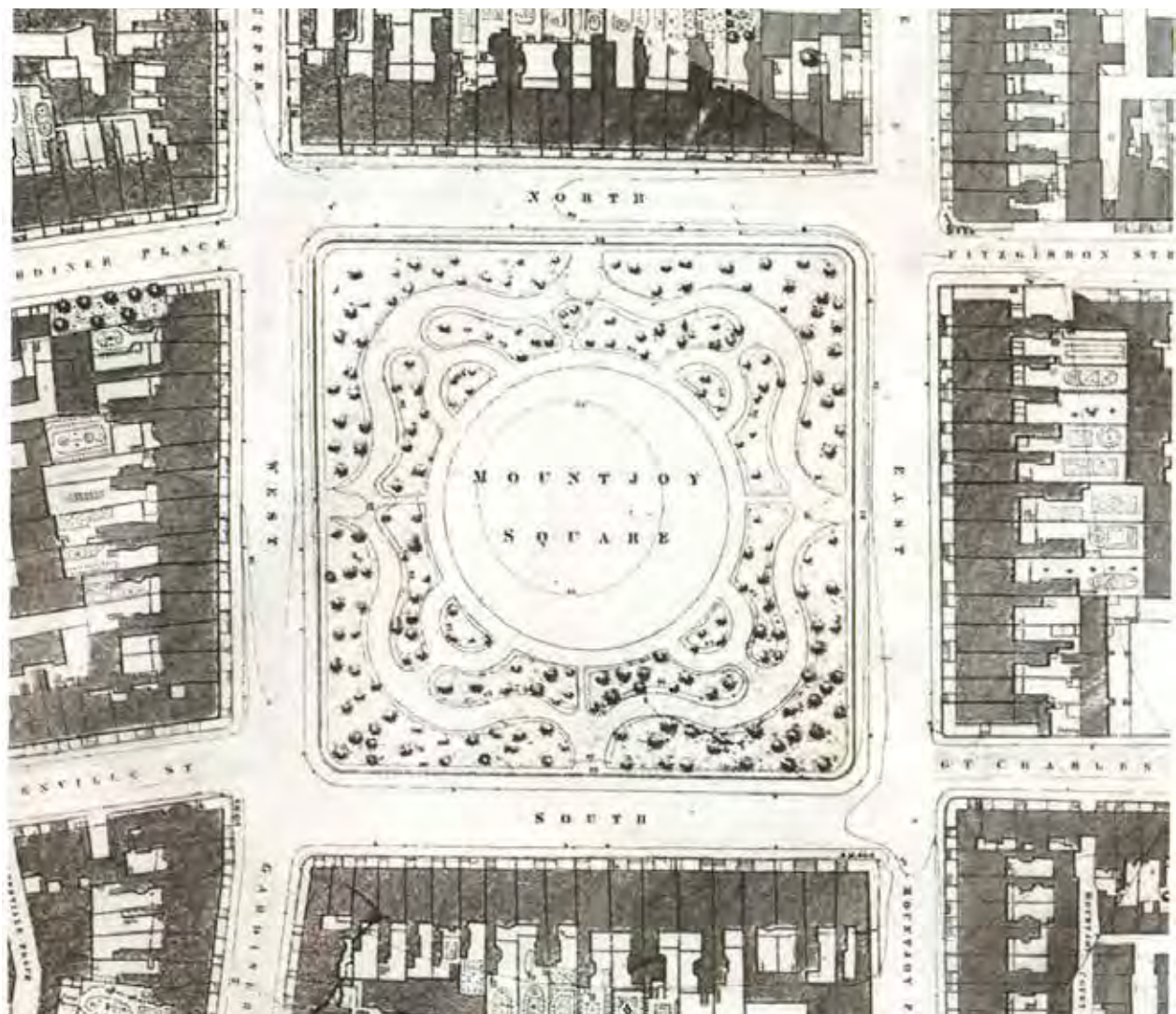


Fig.11 Extract from 25inch Ordnance Survey map of 1843.

overlooking the square. This allows the corners to have an uninterrupted curve of railings. Some of the houses have wider windows to the entrance floor, and square windows under the parapets. Doorcases also vary considerably, together with the decorative ironwork of the balconies.

The uniformity of the townhouse terrace was achieved by using stable lanes with mews buildings that linked through to the adjacent streets leading into the square. These mews were substantial buildings, many of which were accessed from a yard behind a screen wall with the rear wall of the mews formed the end of the garden. Although the gardens and many of the mews buildings to the rear of the

houses have been altered or removed, historic maps record formal planting schemes that complemented the geometric designs of decorative plasterwork within the houses, featuring ovals, lozenges formed by paths, hedges and planting beds.

The townhouses were built by the leaseholders, with strict guidelines about their form and materials. Among the leaseholders who developed these plots were celebrated stuccadores such as Michael Stapleton and Charles Thorp, and master builders such as Frederick Darley, William Pemberton and John Russell¹³. They used the opportunity to decorate the interiors behind the uniformly austere brick facades with plasterwork decorations of the highest quality;



Fig.12 Portrait of John Sutherland in 1822 held at Slane Castle. (Lambe)

suitable for wealthy residents to buy or lease. The leases stipulated that plots left undeveloped for six years would revert to the estate, and certain categories of use were proscribed. By 1818, the square was completed¹⁴; twenty years after the death of Luke Gardiner, almost four decades after Sherrard's 1779 map and three decades after advertisements for leases were first published in newspapers. At this time, Mountjoy Square was described as one of the finest residential developments in the British Empire.

Public Realm

Like the other garden squares, there was an established hierarchy of spaces making the transition from public to private space as follows- lane, stable mews, private garden, dwelling, broad entrance steps and railed area, pavement over cellar to street, broad carriageway, with a pavement running around an enclosed private garden accessible only to the leaseholders. In 1818, the public realm was described as being *inclosed by a handsome iron palisade, along which runs a raised path-way for foot-passengers of mountain granite ten feet wide: a raised path-way of similar dimensions environs*

the interior square, leaving an intermediate space of about fifty feet for carriages, which is kept well¹⁵. Notes compiled during the progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1837 describe Mountjoy Square north as a street wide and clean, macademized footways, gravelled and flagged, lighted with gas¹⁶. This description is somewhat ambiguous, but suggests that some of the paths had been replaced with tarmacadam by that time. This was a relatively new technology datign from 1820 onwards and would have been seen as a novelty. The commissioners noted that a memorial shall be presented to the Commissioners for paving requesting that they will give directions to have the foot path next the rails mended and small powder pavement substituted in the place of the paving stones thereof¹⁷. Although there are no flags remaining to the perimeter pathway to the park, it is curious that the granite pavings would be replaced so soon after their installation.

Park Enclosure

The landscape design and procurement of materials for the square was commenced in 1801 by order of Parliament. By that time, it had become *obvious that the waste space now known as the Square itself would, if levelled and cultivated, greatly enhance the surrounding property¹⁸. Richard Annesley chaired the first general meeting of residents in 1801, three years after Gardiner's death, in order to consider an application to enclose and improve the square. Gardiner's heir Charles was a minor at that time and did not interest himself with the subsequent development*



Fig.13 Undated photograph along north side taken by Maurice Craig.



Fig.14 Undated photograph of Mountjoy Square taken from the spire of St. George's held at the RSAI.

of the estate¹⁹, for this reason the Mountjoy Square Commissioners were formally instituted in 1802. This body was active up until 1938, and represented the residents and property owners, who were willing to impose levies on their own properties in order to help pay for improvements to the square. Permission was received for the enclosure in 1802 and the railings were almost completed that year. In 1803, a Mr. Clarke (supplier of the iron railings for the square) requested use of the square in order to grow potatoes for charitable purposes²⁰. This means that the square may have resembled a field or waste ground for several years thereafter.

John Sutherland

In his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, J.C. Loudon despaired that *information respecting the ancient state of gardening in Ireland was very scanty*²¹. There remains little information about John Sutherland other than that he was born in Scotland around 1745, and is renowned for his work at large demenses such as Rockingham, Co. Roscommon and Ballyfin, Co. Laois- both of which demonstrate the influence of earlier English landscape designers such as Capability

Brown and William Kent²². It is likely that the design for Mountjoy Square was a minor commission for Sutherland, despite its public location and importance as an urban set-piece. There is only one mention of him in the Mountjoy Square Commissioners Minutes, and no other archival material relating to his contribution to the design. However, as is common throughout Georgian Dublin, procurement and design of the buildings was largely carried out by skilled craftsmen and builders such as the Darley family, Sherrard, Stapleton, West and Thorp.

Sutherland was described by Loudon as *the most distinguished Irish landscape designer*²³. He was commissioned to work on substantial projects from the 1770s, and was probably at the peak of his career with an office at 24 Brunswick St. when appointed to work on Mountjoy Square. He was appointed by Richard Annesley in the 1790s to work on the park at Annesley Lodge, five miles to the north-east near Baldoyle²⁴. He was recommended to the commissioners by Annesley and his brother, the second Earl Annesley, both of whom had houses on the square.

The only entry of Sutherland's name in the Commissioners' minutes was on 26th February 1803, which records that his plan for the gardens was inspected and compared with plans of three (unnamed) London squares²⁵. Russell Square park in London also dates from the first decade of the nineteenth century, and was designed by the celebrated and influential landscape designer Humphry Repton. Some sources suggest that Repton was given the commission to design Russell Square between 1802-1805²⁶. It is also square in plan, and shows a similar approach to the design of Mountjoy Square by Sutherland. This would suggest a sharing of ideas between London and Dublin, perhaps stretching back into the seventeenth century leading to the development of the garden square typology in both cities. It is likely that innovations that arose in either city were quickly adopted in the other.

It is not possible to be certain of the extent of Sutherland's involvement after completing the initial plan. Records of meetings between 1803 and 1808 are scant, and these years would have been the critical period of for planting, establishment and early maintenance.

Landscape Design

Sutherland's plan responds to the precise geometry of the square with a symmetrical layout featuring a 70m diameter circular lawn, surrounded by winding paths to create an attractive Rococo composition. This plan is recorded accurately on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1843. The plan figure appears to be rigid, however the layout has no dominant axes and would have been experienced on the ground as a relatively passive spatial device. The planting was intended to be informal, although ascending in scale and degree of screening from the inner circle outwards to the corners. The promenade is facilitated by a continuous inner circular path, and the more enclosed, sinuous outer path circuit that links through to the central lawn at eight points, four of which divide around a crescent-shaped bed at the edge of the circle. The gardens were designed to be private and sedate; a contrast to the public pleasure grounds of nearby Rutland (now Parnell) Square that were developed to impress and entertain in order to raise funds for the Rotunda *Lying-In* Hospital.

Planting

While no planting plan or schedule of plants by John Sutherland has been found, there are references to planting in the commissioner minutes. The first substantial planting took place during the winter of 1803-04. Records indicate that changes to planting occurred very shortly after the garden was first laid out and continued throughout the nineteenth century. The Mountjoy Square Commissioners procured the planting stock directly from nursery men, and there is no further evidence of Sutherland's involvement. The Commissioners' minutes refer to the procurement of trees, shrubs and seed (presumably for the lawn), but not to flowers, bulbs, bedding or herbaceous species. This suggests that the planting scheme was a mix of native and exotic tree and shrub species. At this time a wide range of native and exotic species, varieties and cultivars were available from Irish sources, and Sutherland practised what was then known as the *new informal style of planting*²⁷.

By the 1790s, Gardiner had established extensive nurseries of 600,000 trees at his demesne at Mountjoy Forest²⁸. The Royal Dublin Society was founded in 1731, and their Botanic Garden at Glasnevin was opened to the public in 1796. Walter Wade catalogued all of the plants grown there in 1802²⁹; a map of the gardens that accompanied the publication was prepared by Thomas Sherrard. The catalogue includes reference



Fig.15 Extract from 1890 edition OS map.

to American tree and shrub species, but there were few examples of exotics from Asia. How newly arrived exotics would cope with the Irish climate was difficult at that time to predict. Therefore it is possible that landscape designers did not know what spatial and atmospheric effects any given species would eventually contribute to a landscape design. We can only speculate as to what Sutherland's intentions would have been in terms of his own taste in planting design, species selection, placement, cultivation and management. Similarly, we do not know whether Sutherland involved himself in the finer detail. He has been categorised as a *landscaper* rather than a *plantsman*, *breeder* or *collector*. This defines him as an expert in the formation of landscapes for aesthetic affect rather than someone with solely practical and technical expertise³⁰. Also, his taste in planting might not have included the marvellous new discoveries to be found at Glasnevin. A weeping ash was located in the centre of the square but was transplanted in 1837 to the south-east corner³¹ and was felled prior to 1941 to make way for the hard tennis court. The date for its relocation would suggest that it was not part of the original planting scheme as a centrepiece in the lawn as it would need to have been relatively immature to thrive. A different weeping ash remains today in the western side of the square. Curry's account of the garden in 1835 describes a margin *decorated with a variety of flowering shrubs through which winds a spacious gravel walk*³². This feature is shown on Mahoney's view of 1853; also of note is the lack of a centrepiece and a planting hierarchy that emphasized the corners by using taller trees. Grading of planting in borders had been used since the mid eighteenth century.



Fig.16 Undated photograph of central lawn being used to play tennis.

Materials, Maintenance and Use

Mountjoy Square residents were given keys to the garden in 1805, and it did not take long before complaints regarding the maintenance of the garden and anti-social behaviour were raised with the Commissioners. A labourer was employed full time and three of the four gates were chained *until some fixed plan can be adopted to prevent further injury to the Plantation...that the treasurer could obtain plans and estimates for the building of a lodge at the north west corner of the Square for the Residence of the gardener*³³. Later, constables were employed on Sunday evenings to improve security. In 1830, residents living in the surrounding neighbourhood were given access to the garden for one guinea per family, by 1836 the general public could pay to enter and see military band performances.

The materials of which the landscape was constructed included *hewn mountain granite* plinths, railings of *English iron* painted a *lead colour*, with the upper cross rail arched over four gates, 80 lamp irons, rolled *small powder paving*, gravel paths, rolled lawns and planting³⁴. Sutherland's design included a narrow path inside the railings, so that the railings were not intended to be hidden within perimeter vegetation, but rather left on display. The Commissioners decided to remove the path in 1830, but it is shown on the 1838 25-inch Ordnance Survey, which suggests that it was not removed immediately. Seating and a *military* *marquee* were installed in 1836 where the *Union Flag* was flown for events³⁵. In 1866 croquet was permitted on the lawn, the first sport to be permitted in the garden. By the 1870s, tennis was being played on the central lawn. This evolved into a formal tennis club at the square; similar clubs were set up at Merrion Square, Fitzwilliam Square, and a club is based within Mount Pleasant Square to this day.

Later Development

By 1936, Constance Maxwell described the condition of the square as being *now decayed and forlorn, a contrast to St. Stephen's Green and the other two Squares (Merrion and Fitzwilliam) to the south of the river, which still flourish*³⁶. Using maps and historical photographs, it is possible to trace these changes up to the present. The 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1838 is the most complete record of the original

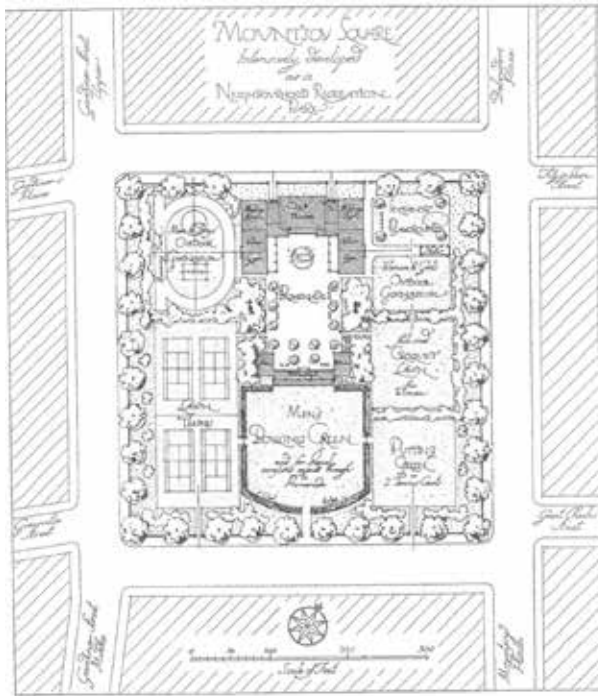


Fig.17 Abercrombies 1922 plan for Mountjoy Square.

layout of the garden when it still retained its idealized geometrical perfection. Also recorded on the map are the subtle changes in level between the paths, planter beds and lawn to give the effect of low-relief geometric plasterwork such as is found on the ceilings of the townhouses. In the next edition of 1890 the path layout remains intact but two small buildings have been introduced to the north corner. These were perhaps a public toilet, shelter and a caretaker's hut with a small yard to the rear. This edition also indicates the locations of *seats*; four facing into the central lawn centred on the semi-circular beds and seven to the outer circuit facing out of the park with views through the screen of trees. The next edition does not show the seats, but as the map is more abstract with less detail, so perhaps they were still in place.

In 1922, Patrick Abercrombie as part of his comprehensive plan to re-cast the city included a proposal entitled *Mountjoy Square- Intensively developed as a Neighbourhood Garden Park*³⁷. This town plan made proposals to clear the tenement slums, proposing new suburbs at Marino, Crumlin and Cabra. It also proposed large-scale interventions to the city centre to improve connections between

existing public buildings and their settings as well as proposing new ones. His proposal for Mountjoy Square included facilities for outdoor pursuits, most of which would have been associated with the better off; such as lawn tennis, a putting green, croquet, bowling; separate outdoor gymnasiums for men and women; infants playground; a clubhouse with reading rooms and indoor gyms similarly segregated. The clubhouse was located in the centre of the north side of the park and overlooked a bandstand and promenade; that could be opened into the bowling-green on special occasions. Abercrombie's plan would have obliterated all that remained of Sutherland's layout, and introduced new entrances on the north and south sides. His proposals were very influential for a



Fig. 18 Photograph of children playing with bats in 1960s. (DCC)

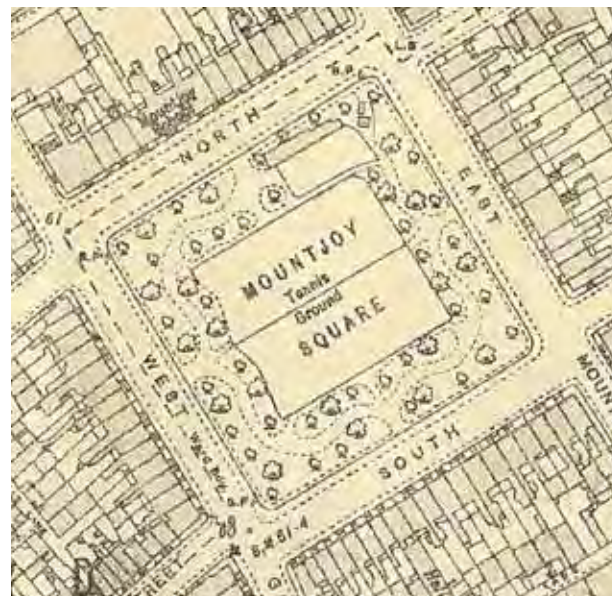


Fig.19 Extract from 1939 edition OS map.

number of decades in the planning of the capital of the newly established independent state, but not always conforming to the precise detail. Later developments at Mountjoy Square followed the intention of this plan, but for public use and as relief for those living in poor residential conditions.

Abercrombie's proposal suggests that a constituency remained in the area that would enjoy genteel pursuits; evolving from the established private use of the park for tennis. However, the 1925 Civic Survey noted that the Mountjoy Ward in the environs of the square was one of the most densely populated in the city at 117.6 persons per acre, well in excess of the *hygienic density* of 50 persons. The survey noted that three sides of the square, with the exception of the west, as being slum tenements. This suggests a sharp decline in living conditions in the early decades of the twentieth century³⁸.

In 1938, the park passed from private to public ownership. An act was passed by the Oireachtas for Dublin Corporation *to maintain Mountjoy Square as a public park or pleasure ground*³⁹. Denis Brady and James McClean, the existing gardeners who

worked for the commissioners were to be taken into employment by the corporation. The opening of the park to the public was the culmination of lobbying over many decades, and would have reflected the societal change that saw the townhouses no longer occupied by the wealthy, but let out to poorer families as tenements. Like Parnell Square, the park had been made accessible for the enjoyment of the general populace with the payment of the fee many decades previously. The new residents of the square would have not had the means to pay such a fee, nor the leisure time to play tennis, and this initiative by the Corporation ensured that those who now lived around the square had an opportunity to enjoy it without charge. Elsewhere in the city; St. Stephen's Green was opened to the public as a gift from Lord Ardilaun in 1880, whereas Merrion Square was purchased from the Fitzwilliam Estate by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in 1930 and retained as a private park, intended as a site for a new cathedral until it was leased to Dublin Corporation in 1975.

On the map of 1939, many of the changes we can see today have begun to be implemented. A pavilion has been added along Mountjoy Square North, close



Fig. 20 1965 photograph by David Davison, possibly from no. 50 (MSS).



Fig. 21 1960s, photograph of no.50.(O'Byrne).

to the caretaker's hut, with a sizeable area fenced off to its south. It is likely that this was a tennis pavilion that the corporation offered to the Civics Institute for the establishment of the first nursery centre for children in the state⁴⁰. A large rectangular *Tennis Ground* has replaced the circular lawn, with only the outer paths remaining intact on three sides. An historic photograph showing tennis being played on this lawn could well predate this map, it is unclear whether the map is indicating that the centre of the garden has been flattened and fenced off.

The next edition OS map dates from 1966, and follows the transition of the garden from private use to a public park. It shows the former public toilets, dating from 1941, and the present community building. The pathways are shown largely as they are found today, with the rectilinear interior path introduced to re-create a central lawn, albeit with the garden now essentially cut in two by the imposition of fencing to

the nursery and community building. A total of three new gates have been added to give direct access to the park facilities.

A photograph from the mid-1960s taken by David Davison, probably from the upper floors of No.50, was contained in papers belonging to Desmond Guinness and given to the Mountjoy Square Society. This photograph confirms the relative scarcity of planting to the south side of the square, with patchy shrubberies and tree planting being replenished with saplings. The internal paths have no edging, and would appear to be in concrete or tarmac. The hedge around the hardcourt is low and straggly. Benches are visible along the footpath along the south side, which appears to be paved in concrete with its granite kerbing already removed. The banked sides to the bed inside the railings appears to have been levelled since this time. The community centre still retains its flat roof and has not yet been altered.

The OS map of 1970 shows the parks depot for the first time. This appears in the north corner, replacing the caretaker's hut that had survived for approximately 100 years. An aerial photograph from 2000, shows the 1983 extension of the nursery by architects Peter & Mary Doyle as well as the planting and paving works carried out by Dublin Corporation



Fig. 22 Extract from 1966 Ordnance Survey map.

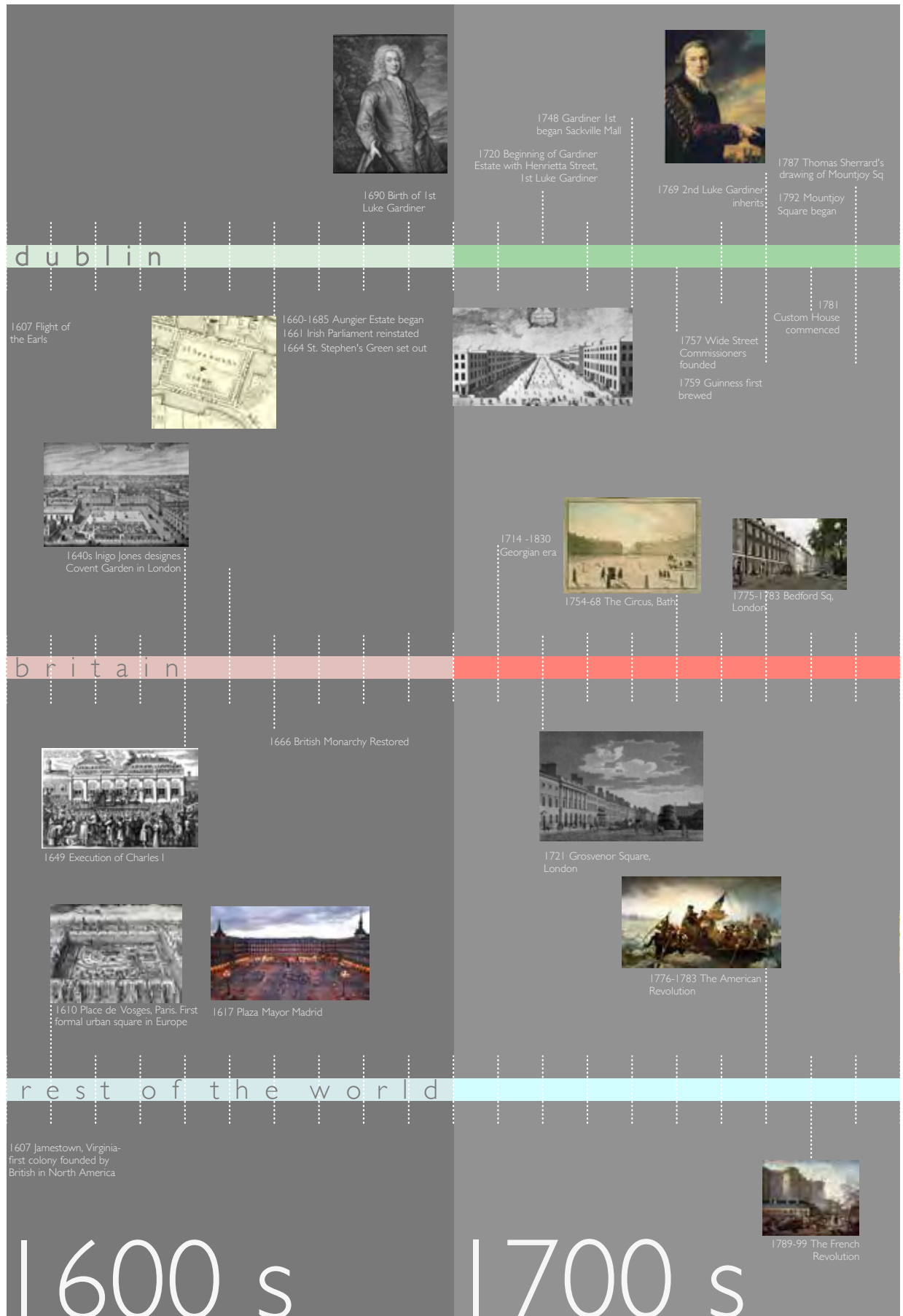


Fig. 23 Illustrated timeline showing development of Mountjoy Square relative to historic events.

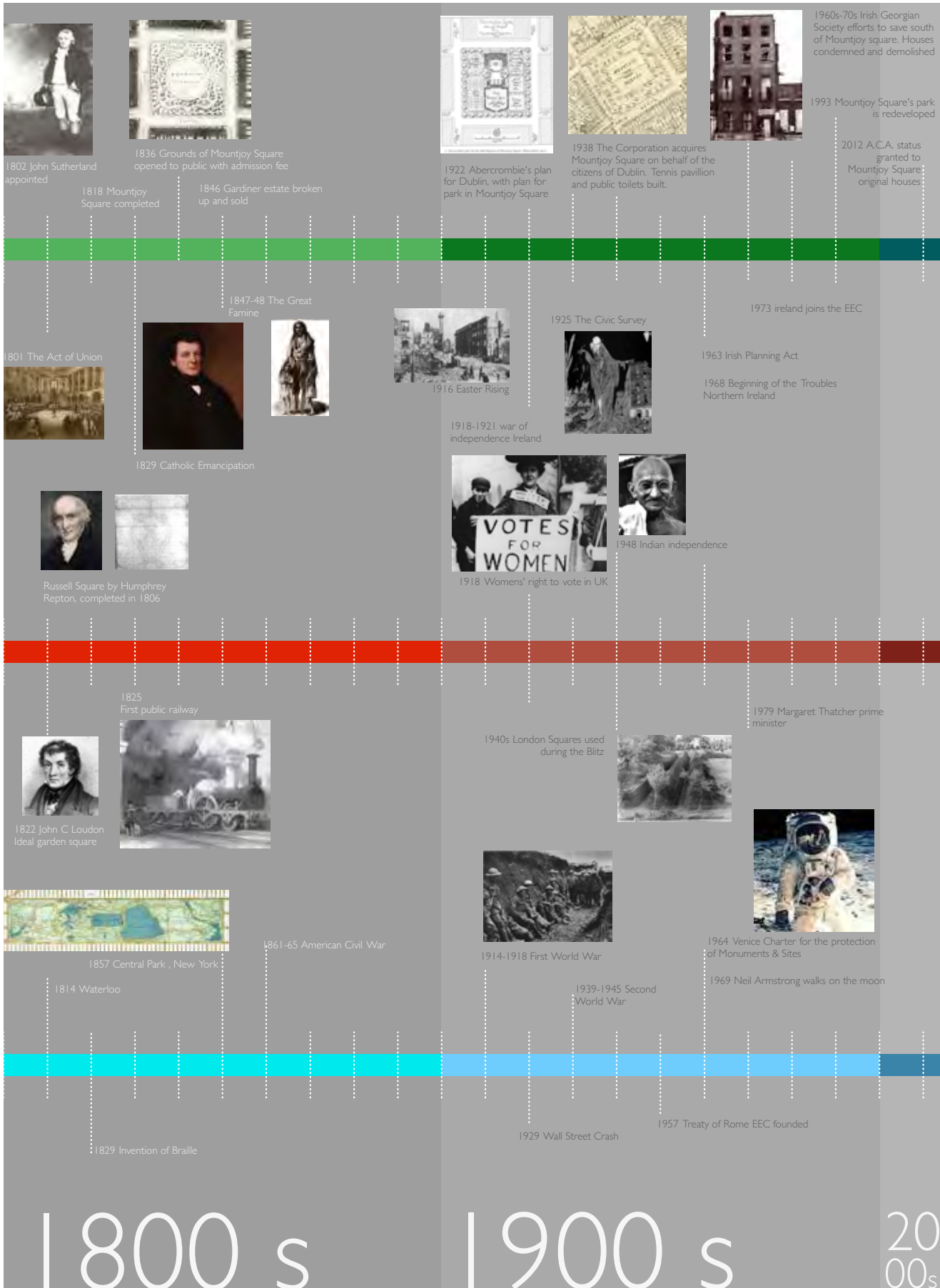




Fig. 24 View of park in April 2014.

in 1993. These works included large circular rose beds and tree planting within the perimeter footpath, as well as the installation of new granite kerbs. The current playground installed to the south side is visible on a photograph dated 2005; another more recent photograph shows the toilet block removed and a fenced-off biodiversity corner.

Preservation & Development

The maps from the 1960s and 1970s are also instructive as they record the devastation of the square at that time. Empty plots are shown along the south and west sides; Mountjoy Place has been hollowed out and Grenville Place redeveloped with modern housing. These decades witnessed concerted efforts on the part of the Irish Georgian Society led by Desmond & Mariga Guinness and John & Ann Molloy⁴¹, to arrest the acquisition and intended demolition of the townhouses by the Gallagher Group. At the time there were struggles to protect the architectural heritage of Fitzwilliam Street and Hume Street on the south side from destruction in similar circumstances. Although the Gallagher Group eventually sold out to the preservationists, this did not lead to the preservation of the houses at risk. The south and west sides were largely rebuilt in the 1990s under the Urban Renewal Scheme as apartments, offices and the School of Art, Design & Printing; part of the Dublin Institute of Technnology. The facades of the new buildings reproduced the appearance of the Georgian architecture so that the terraces were once again intact.

Park Today

Today the park remains a well-loved and much used local amenity; the alterations to its layout reflecting changes in Irish political and social history over the last two hundred years. Now a park of two distinct halves separated by a tall hedge; the west used largely as was originally intended as a leafy retreat from the city; and the enclosed eastern half continuing to be used for sport and community events. While Fitzwilliam Square remains private, and is the best preserved of the Dublin Squares, it is much less vibrant with very few of the houses in residential use. Merrion Square still retains much of its planting and pathways, but has lost its original railings. Most of Mount Pleasant Square has been redeveloped as a tennis club, leaving little public space to be enjoyed by its residents. Parnell Square is the most heavily redeveloped with modern hospital buildings, a carpark and the Garden of Remembrance to its north side.

The reinstatement of the terraces to the south and west sides of Mountjoy Square, although controversial at the time, have been successful in re-establishing the architectural unity and coherence of the square. It has also remained a residential area, with up to 1,400 inhabitants facing directly onto the park. The original wrought iron railings that enclose the garden, along with those of most of the houses, have been preserved, although many are vulnerable and in need of repair. Previous improvements within the park have not been carried out to follow best conservation practice, and the original garden design has not been preserved. New introductions, such as the rose beds and the biodiversity corner, have been returned to lawn.

As the overall appearance of the square has been enhanced by the infill developments, the next stage would be to improve the historical character of the garden in a way that the entire community can support and enjoy the benefits. Historic gardens, as set out in the Florence Charter, are *living* works of art that require renewal to survive. The founding of the Mountjoy Square Society, along with the designation of the square and its environs as an Architectural Conservation Area have been important steps towards the protection and improvement of the park.

3.0 BUILT & LANDSCAPE HERITAGE SURVEY

Setting

Mountjoy Square is the only true garden square in Dublin, having four equal sides of approximately 134m within the railings, or 600 feet length to each terrace of townhouses. All sides of the square are lined by brick residential terraces, of four storeys over basement but with minor variations in parapet height, window alignment, proportion and detail. The individual houses are adorned by splendid stuccowork to their interiors and often highly ornate entrances consisting of elaborate door surrounds and decorative fanlights that contrast with the overriding restraint of their brick facades. Forty two of the original houses remain intact, and many of these would benefit from programmes of consolidation and repair. Several of the houses have been lovingly restored by committed individuals over the decades; some of these are opened to the public on occasions so that the architectural and social heritage can be enjoyed by all. Others have been subdivided into apartments, in some cases compromising historic fabric. Some plots have been combined into larger properties over time, with links between townhouses and extensions within the rear yards. The gardens to the rear of the townhouses have largely been paved over and their mews re-developed, the former stable lanes to the rear being disordered in comparison.



Fig.25 View looking east along Mountjoy Square North.



Fig. 26 View of townhouses to Mountjoy Square North.



Fig.27 View of community centre from upper floor of no. 25.

Park Buildings

The following survey concentrates on the condition of the fabric of the park facilities and other historic features found within the park. The purpose of the survey is to identify defects and recommend outline repairs and remedial works to improve the condition and presentation of the structures.

Community Centre

This 175sqm building was designed using an early modernist idiom of flat roofs with copper sheet trims, red-brick with metal-framed windows of which there are some good examples close by. It may well have been built to the designs of the Dublin city architect, and dates from the late 1930s when the park was first opened to the public. A toilet block was built



Fig. 28 View of community centre from north-east.



Fig. 29 View of DCC depot and yard.

in the south-western corner at this time, and was removed in 2009. Since then, the building has been altered; the walls were raised (using matching English bond) to form a shallow pitched corrugated metal roof, the entrance canopy infilled, windows blocked and replaced, and the brick walls painted to obscure graffiti. While the building is of modest social and architectural merit, it has been much altered in the past and has a detrimental impact on the character of the garden. It is used as a homework club for local schools as part of the Community After Schools Project (CASPr) facilitated by the North Inner City Drugs Task Force (NICDTF). The North City Centre Community Action Project (NCCCAP) also use the building and the hardcourts.

Depot

The 60sqm depot dates from before 1965, and is a modest redbrick building with a pitched roof of no architectural merit or social significance. The yard includes containers for storage and skips for waste. New vehicular gates were installed, mounted on metal posts. The depot is visually unattractive and its yard takes up a large amount of space in the historic park. Replacement of this depot is currently being considered by Dublin City Council.

St. Brigid's Nursery

In 1940, an existing timber-clad tennis pavilion was adapted into a nursery centre by a young architect Mairin Hope⁴² as part of an initiative by the Civics Institute. Another of these nurseries was provided in Marylands on the south side of the city to provide daycare for young children. It is entered from the



Fig. 30 View of nursery from Mountjoy Square North.



Fig. 31 View of nursery extension from the west.



Fig. 32 View of entrance gate to Mountjoy Square West.



Fig. 33 View along railings to Mountjoy Square West.

footpath along Mountjoy Square North through a new pedestrian gate. Palisade fencing lines the 1150sqm site, providing a secure, south-facing outdoor play area that is an essential for the running of the facility. The fence sits in front of a dense thicket lining the hard ballcourt; where netting has been installed at high level to stop stray balls entering the play area. The nursery was sympathetically extended in 1983 to designs by architects Peter & Mary Doyle; a timber clad steel framed room with metal folding screens in front of glazed doors overlooking the outdoor play area. The 220sqm building has been altered in the past with new windows, security screens and synthetic roof tiles. While the building is of social and architectural interest, its removal should be considered in relation to the wider context of the restoration of the square. As with the community centre, the visual impact on the park is negative and

its location inhibits the reinstatement of the original path circuit and garden layout. This is, however, an important service for the area, funded by the Health Services Executive, within a secure and beautiful park setting and a new facility should ideally be found nearby.

Park Furniture & Fittings

Railings

The original wrought iron railings that enclose the garden have survived, but are in poor condition and in need of careful repair. The palisade exceeds 520 metres in length, and to the original four gates, a further five entrances have been added at different times in the last century. At the moment there are new gates dedicated to the nursery, depot and playground. The two gates to the former public toilets have been



Fig. 34 Detail of infilled gate to removed public toilets.



Fig. 35 Detail of section of railing repaired using mild steel.

infilled. Carved granite plinths remain intact for the most part apart from the new entrances, but there is extensive damage to these caused by corrosion of the railings. For the most part the railings are simple and unadorned, but would once have featured globe lights, and arches at the entrances. Similar arches have survived at Fitzwilliam Square. Design of the railings and the plinths is almost identical to that found to the front of the townhouses, of which many



Fig. 36 View of granite plinth damaged by rusting pale.

have suffered similar damage.

Bushy Park Ironworks carried out a comprehensive condition survey of the square in 2010 on behalf of Dublin City Council. Each length of railing was surveyed, and its condition and necessary repairs scheduled on elevations. Although generally well preserved, especially in comparison to other squares of this period, the wrought iron railings require specialist repair and redecoration on all sides of the park. The carved granite plinths are in a poor condition in many places, and remedial work is necessary especially in the south-western corner. Most of the damage to the stone has been caused by the rusted ironwork. While redecoration of the railings is necessary, structural repairs should be the first priority, and these are necessary in locations all around the enclosure.

Lighting

As the park is closed at night, there is no park lighting in the public areas to the interior of the square other than floodlighting to the hard courts. There is street lighting on the public footpaths around the square

consisting of a mixture of Scotch standard type dating from the first two decades of the last century and the Shamrock standard type dating from the 1940s, manufactured by the Hammond Lane Foundry.



Fig. 37 Detail of public light standard.

Benches

The existing benches are a mixture of cast iron and steel types with timber slats. All would appear to be relatively recent manufacture, an elegant metal strap type is visible in Evelyn Hofer's photograph of 1967 (fig. 48), which has since been removed. The benches close to the playground are of a contemporary design. Timber slat benches have also been installed along the outside of the park railings to the north side close to the bus stops. One of these benches has been painted yellow and stencilled with text.



Fig. 38 View of modern cast iron bench.



Fig. 39 Detail of granite sundial.

The benches visible to the south side on the 1960s photograph have also been removed.

Sculpture

Sundial

When installed, the granite sundial was flanked either side with large circular beds planted with roses. There is an inscription on the dial, *TEMPUS*, and it is set on a base of salvaged cobbles.

Mosaic Tree Surrounds

The Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, which is based in the Free Church nearby on Great Charles Street, commissioned two concrete tree surrounds that are decorated in mosaic depictions of traveller life. The themes were developed and the mosaics undertaken during workshops with the artist.

Pathways & Playing Surfaces

Interior Pathways

The paths to the interior of the park were re-paved in 1993 with buff and red concrete brick setts laid in a herringbone bond. The paths are considerably narrower than the original path network, and the sides of the lawn slope down to the edgings. The

outer circuit of the path corresponds to the original layout except for the north-east quadrant. The linking and inner circuits have been considerably altered, based around a half-square central lawn, with the sundial forming the focus.

Exterior Pathways & Street

The external path encircling the railings has been much altered. While the granite plinths to the railings have survived, the granite flagstones and the original kerbs have almost all been removed to be replaced with concrete flags and newer granite replacement kerbs. Lengths of historic granite kerbstones have survived along the south-east corner, and along the north side. Along Mountjoy Square North, the original limestone cobble drains are visible to each side of the road. The pavement has been widened at the pedestrian crossing at Grenville St. and on Mountjoy Sq. East, parking bays have been provided on the west and south sides, with a bus stop on the north side. On the footpaths lining the terraces, granite flagstones have largely been removed except to the front of number 54. Well-dressed granite slabs also surround beautiful cast iron coal covers with decorative patterns, now worn and prone to loss and replacement. Along the paths can be found numerous items of modern street furniture; including waste bins, a telephone kiosk, an ESB substation, some bicycle stands, a Dublinbike stand, ESB poles, parking meters, and miscellaneous road signage none of which enhances the beauty of the square.



Fig. 40 Detail of coal hole cover set into granite kerb stone surround.



Fig. 41 Detail of modern concrete sett paving.



Fig. 42 View of children's playground from west.

Play Surfaces

The 2700sqm central hard court to the rear of the community building has been fitted with goal posts, basketball hoops and sockets for posts to support tennis nets, creating a multi-purpose tarmac playing surface, which is line-marked for all three sports. On the west side of this playing area is a poor quality hedge and chain link fencing that is no longer secure. The adjacent basketball court is also fenced off, with a single outdoor table tennis table located close by. A spacious and well-appointed playground takes up the south-east quadrant of the park, with appliances set on multi-coloured play surfaces located to either side of the winding footpaths. A playground for younger children is railed off separately.

Ecology

Biodiversity

Dublin's eighteenth-century parks were essentially wide, open lawns with walks running around their

outer edges. In the nineteenth century, they were transformed into ordered areas of horticultural beauty and open spaces intended for contemplation and leisure. Trees, shrubs and bushes were selected and planted for appearance so that exotics were often favoured and ahead of native species. Concern for the natural environment is a relatively recent concept and the value of a park as a habitat was not really considered in a time when the square was located at the edge of the city, close to the countryside.

Existing Planting

The existing planting consists of a range of informally distributed tree, almost exclusively deciduous broad leaf species, of varying ages and lawn. There is little



Fig. 43 View over hardcourts towards hedge and Mountjoy Square West.



Fig. 44 View of weeping ash.

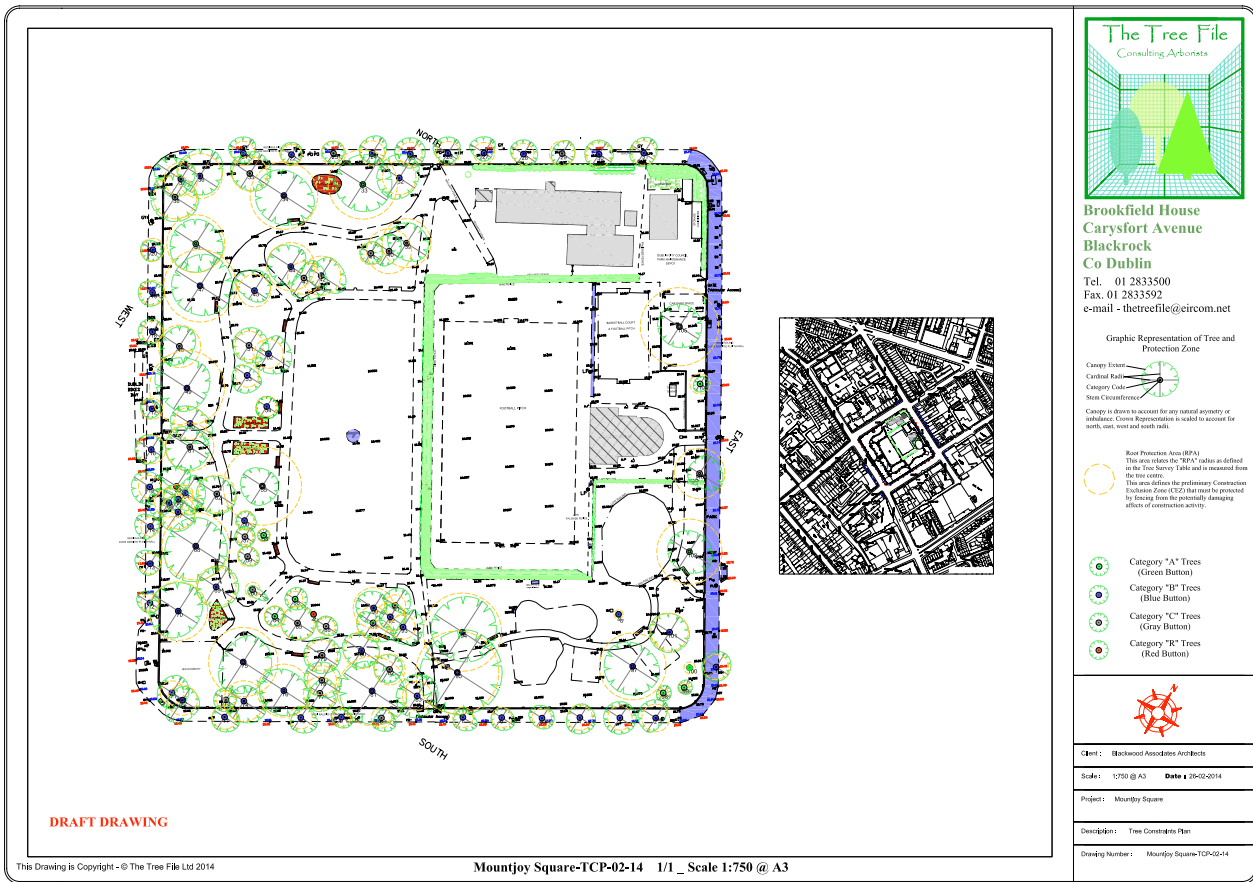


Fig. 45 Drawing from The Tree File arborist report showing tree survey.

groundcover or shrubby under-storey vegetation. A hedge encloses the hard-standing tennis courts. The trees constitute the most important planting element, both in terms of the garden's current spatial composition and any plans which may be developed for future restoration of the landscape. The tallest tree is measured at 19m in height and most of the trees are in a healthy condition. It is unlikely that any of the existing trees date from the early planting period, but this would need to be confirmed by expert analysis.

Local geographic and climatological effects on the character and spatial quality of gardens should be considered. The mature London Plane trees in London's squares can grow to 30m⁴³, and have a taller, more imposing form than those of similar age in Dublin⁴⁴. In Edinburgh, at the northern extreme of the tree's geographical range, the stunting effects are more pronounced. The combined effects of taller trees and taller buildings in some of London's

Georgian squares is that of heightened enclosure and modified perception of scale. Georgian Dublin, in contrast, is well known for its openness to the sky, and its long vistas south to the foothills of the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains.

In February 2014, Dublin City Council commissioned a tree survey in order to assess the condition of the existing trees. The survey concludes that: no trees are listed on the Tree Register of Ireland; the majority of trees are in good condition with good longevity expected; many of the larger trees, which include lime, sycamore and beech, are in reasonable or good condition; the large weeping ash is in reasonable condition but would need attention if works were to be carried out adjacent to it; there is no particular remedial action required, other than the removal of a small number of dead or fallen trees. Nevertheless, all existing trees should be treated in accordance with the recommendations contained in BS5837:2012.

4.0 ASSESSMENT & STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

General

The Guidelines to the Burra Charter state that: *Cultural Significance is a concept, which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations.* There are a variety of categories generally used to evaluate the level of cultural significance and of those – Archaeological, Historic, Architectural, Ecological and Social interest categories will be used to assess the significance of Mountjoy Square Park.

The following articles are contained within the ICOMOS Florence Charter (published 21 May 1981) and they address the conservation of gardens:

Art 1: An historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view. As such, to be considered a monument.

Art 2: The historic garden is an architectural composition whose constituents are primarily vegetal and therefore living, which means that they are perishable and renewable.

Art 4: The architectural composition of the historic garden includes:

- *Its plan and topography*
- *Its vegetation, including its species, proportions, colour schemes, spacing and respective heights.*
- *Its structural and decorative features.*

Art 5: As the expression of the direct affinity between civilisation and nature, and as a place of enjoyment suited to meditation or repose, the garden thus acquires the cosmic significance.

Art 10: In any work of maintenance, conservation, restoration or reconstruction of an historic garden, or any part of it, all its constituent features must be dealt with simultaneously. To isolate the various operations would damage the unity of the whole.

Art 11: Continuous maintenance of historic gardens is of paramount importance. Since the principal material is vegetal, the preservation of the garden in an unchanged condition requires both prompt replacements when required and a long-term programme of periodic renewal (clear felling and replanting with mature specimens).

Art 19: By reason of its nature and purpose, an historic garden is a peaceful place conducive to human contacts, silence and awareness of nature. This conception of its everyday use must contrast its role on those rare occasions when it accommodates festivity.

Art 20: While historic gardens may be suitable for quiet games as a daily occurrence, separate areas appropriate for active and lively games and sports should also be laid out adjacent to the historic garden, so that the needs of the public may be satisfied in this respect without prejudice to the conservation of the gardens and landscapes.

Art 21: The work of maintenance and conservation, the timing of which is determined by season, and brief operations, which serve to restore the garden's authenticity, must always take precedence over the requirements of public use.

Art 22: If a garden is walled, its walls may not be removed without prior examination of all the possible consequences liable to lead to changes in its atmosphere and to affect its preservation.

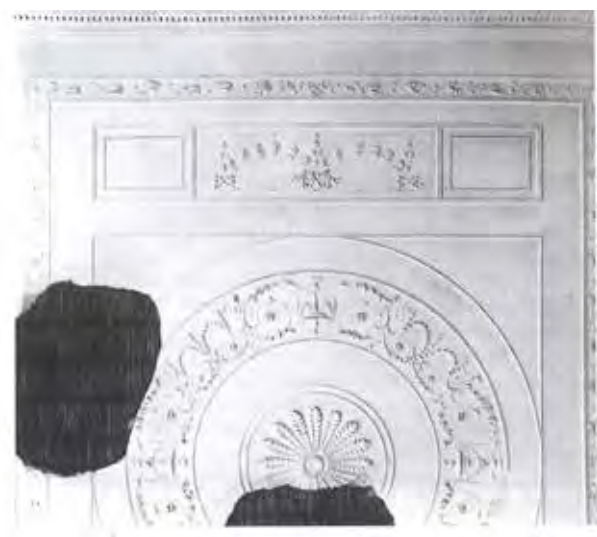


Fig. 46 Ceiling from No.59, now demolished. (IAA)



Fig. 47 James Mahony's *Dublin from the spire of St George's Church, Hardwicke Place* 1854 with North Georgian City to foreground.

Art 25: Interest in historic garden should be stimulated by every kind of activity capable of emphasising their true value as part of the natural heritage.

Historical Significance

Mountjoy Square and its garden park are amongst the highest architectural achievements found in Georgian Dublin. This period that extended from 1714-1830 was the most important phase of the city's development and provides its distinctive architectural and historic character.

Georgian Dublin compares favourably to the other great planned cities of the Enlightenment that have been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as those found in Edinburgh, London, and Bath.

Its original boundary railings dating from the early nineteenth century, survive largely intact.

The special character of Mountjoy Square garden is enhanced further by the well-preserved terraces that surround it, both in the square and adjoining streets.

The severe facades of the buildings, enriched by their elaborate entrance doors and ironwork, contain

richly decorated interiors that looked onto the perimeter planting that protected the privacy within their shared private garden park. This reflected the social structure of the period; where the aristocratic and wealthy resided in large townhouses, with private gardens from which others were rigorously excluded.

Due to the many social changes that have taken place since then, the townhouses have been subdivided for use as apartments, offices or cultural institutions, while the park has been opened for free public use.

Notwithstanding the radical nature of these changes, the architectural and historic garden heritage survives in a very good state of preservation. In contrast to most of the other Georgian squares of Dublin, Mountjoy has retained its primarily residential use.

Architectural Significance

Mountjoy Square Park is the centrepiece of one of the finest examples of Georgian urban design in the city. It is situated centrally in the North Georgian Quarter extending west to Parnell Square, and beyond to Henrietta Street, and east to North Circular Road, all of which contribute significantly to the architectural character of the city.

The character of Georgian garden squares in Dublin consists of red-brick residential townhouses with elaborate decorative entrances and interiors, forming terraces along broad, granite footpaths and cobbled streets, at the centre of which was an enclosed garden created for the resident's exclusive use.

In accounts from the early nineteenth century, Mountjoy Square is praised as being the most impressive of its kind in Dublin, comparing it favourably to the best in Britain and Europe. Many garden squares of similar age were paved over, built on or altered irreversibly in other Georgian cities in Britain during the last century.

Although the architectural setting of the park has been significantly altered, especially during the last forty years, infill developments have restored the

urban form so that it no longer gives the impression of being incomplete. It is more important to emphasize how much of the square has been retained, despite long decades of neglect in the twentieth century.

Innovative characteristics of the original design relative to other garden squares in Dublin are its symmetry and elaborate, formal design of the pathways. The Rococo style of the paths and planting beds reflects the interior plaster decorations, contrasting with the austere but well-proportioned exteriors.

Strict relationships were established in the sequence of spaces leading from the stable lanes, rear gardens, through the townhouses, broad entrance steps and railed areas, footpath, street, park pavement, railed enclosure, screen planting and open central garden.



Fig. 48 Evelyn Hofer's photograph of the south east side of the park from 1967.

Social Significance

As early as the 1830s, the park was made available to the general public upon payment of a fee. In later decades, the park was used for croquet and tennis, while retaining its essential character. Subsequent alterations to its layout reflect changes in Irish political and social history over the last two hundred years.

Since its full opening to the public in 1938, Mountjoy Square Park has become an important part of the social fabric of the city as well as being a valuable amenity for the local community.

St. Brigid's Nursery was one of the first such centres established in the state, being renovated from a tennis pavilion and later altered and extended.

Number 3, owned by Walter Cole, was used as a meeting place to organise the 1916 Rising by Pearse, Connolly, Clarke and McDonagh. Dáil Éireann used to meet in the same house after its suppression in 1919 by the British authorities.

Other figures of note linked to the square include Arthur Guinness, the brewer, and his descendant Desmond Guinness and his late wife Mariga who were active in raising support for the preservation of the square and Georgian Dublin in general.

Artistic Significance

Dublin was designated as an UNESCO City of Literature in 2010, attesting to the rich literary heritage of its inhabitants, several of whom had



Fig. 49 Engraving of flower show in Russell Square (Longstaffe-Gowan).

associations with Mountjoy Square and would have enjoyed its amenity when it remained a private park including – Sean O'Casey, James Joyce and WB Yeats.

Sean O'Casey lived at no.35, and set his play *The Shadow of a Gunman* in a tenement in Hilljoy Square. Characters in Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Dubliners* visit the square and garden as they journey through this part of the city. The opening chapter of *The Real Charlotte* by Sommerville and Ross was also set in a house on Mountjoy Square.

Archaeological Significance

Historic map evidence shows the location of pathways, planting beds and an earlier structure on the site in the north-east corner. There is scope to carry out a scholarly restoration project that would use archaeological investigation and research on Georgian garden design and planting.

Natural and Ecological Significance

Mountjoy Square Park provides a substantial green area freely available to the public, in contrast to the private houses and other holdings that surround it. This would prove to be invaluable to a part of the city that is not well-served with public green areas, and where the gardens of the surrounding townhouses have long been removed.

Statement of Significance

Mountjoy Square is an historic place of national significance, and could be considered the best resolved example of an urban square in Georgian Dublin, while not necessarily the most intact. It makes a major contribution to the European significance of the city, with its fulfillment of Enlightenment urban planning ideas that flourished throughout the continent during the eighteenth century. Due to more extensive alterations to Parnell Square, Mountjoy Square is the best place to present the garden heritage of the Georgian period to visitors and locals alike set within the North Georgian Core. In 2010, The Historic City of Dublin was included onto the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List, with specific reference to the Georgian city. The key characteristics of the park, their significance and purpose are outlined below:



Fig. 50 *Ghost House, Mountjoy Square* by Peter Pearson 1988.

Views

The garden was established to enhance the views from the townhouses, and also the vistas of the architecture of the square along its broad streets and granite-flagged footpaths. Many of the townhouses have been preserved, and gaps filled with new replica developments designed to reinstate the integrity of the square. The streetscape has been largely modernized with concrete and tarmac, leaving precious little of the historic street surfaces in the public realm. Fortunately, the original wrought iron railings and granite plinths have been retained, albeit in poor condition. Although it has lost some historic character due to the changes in the planting, alterations to the path layout, and inappropriately sited twentieth-century buildings, it still remains a very pleasant place to sit and enjoy views the architectural heritage of Georgian Dublin.

Paths

The paths installed as part of the original layout were intended to form a promenade to be used by the residents and their families, providing opportunities to exercise and socialize in a relatively informal setting. The symmetry and formality of the paths were to be appreciated as an idealized geometrical landscape from the upper rooms of the townhouses. While the original layout has been largely altered, enough evidence remains that it could be restored to its former arrangement.

Planting

The original planting scheme likely provided a garden landscape within, but also apart from, the city. Trees probably included both native and imported species to create a restrained aesthetic of broadleaf greenery that was scaled down towards the central lawn using shrubberies. The most mature trees that survive today are located to the west side; none of which appear to date from the earliest planting plan. While the shrubberies have been covered over by lawn, evidence of the original beds is identifiable in the subtle slopes and variation of the landscaping.

Use

The garden was originally intended as a secure shared amenity for the wealthy residents of the square. Over time, it has evolved from a private to a public amenity, reflecting societal changes over two hundred years. In the mid-nineteenth century, the central lawn was used for public entertainments and sports such as tennis. At this time, public parks were being opened as an amenity for the urban populace, and sporting organisations instituted for the first time. In the decades following independence, urban planning initiatives were proposed to alleviate the conditions for the urban poor then living in tenements within the once grand townhouses. The opening up of the garden to the public, as well as the founding of community facilities such as the clubhouse and nursery, were intended as a means to improve the lot of the local residents. This led to the loss of original features, and the historic character of the garden has been obscured. However, much has been retained and it remains a well-loved public park used daily by residents of the square and surrounding areas.

5.0 DEFINING ISSUES ,VULNERABILITIES & THREATS

Statutory Protection

Mountjoy Square Park is located within a Conservation Area in the Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017. Conservation Areas are designated *in recognition of their unique architectural character and important contribution to the heritage of the city.* Designated conservation areas include extensive groups of buildings or streetscapes and associated open spaces, such as the Georgian Core area *in recognition of Dublin's international importance as a Georgian city.* Within these areas Dublin City Council seeks to ensure that *development proposals within all conservation areas complement the character of the area, including the setting of protected structures.*

In 2012, the protection of the architectural, urban design and landscape heritage was strengthened when the square was designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). This followed a detailed submission from the MSS in 2010, cogently setting out the case for the further protection of the square. The ACA boundary was defined to include the streets along the immediate approach. The ACA designation was carried out under section 81

of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and in compliance with the Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017, Policies FC43, FC45 and Objective FC034. The document includes maps and photographs that define the distinctive architectural character of the area including the buildings, green space and public realm. This means that any works to the exterior of any building (including unprotected structures) within the ACA will require planning approval where they materially affect the character of the area.

The original townhouses that surround the square have Z8 zoning that has the objective- *to protect the existing architectural and civic design character, to allow only for limited expansion consistent with the conservation objective.* This zoning is shared by areas of the city where Georgian character and fabric have been preserved. A range of uses is permitted in such zones, primarily residential, office and industrial uses that do not impact negatively on the architectural character and setting of the area. Further protection is provided through a number of Development Plan policies:

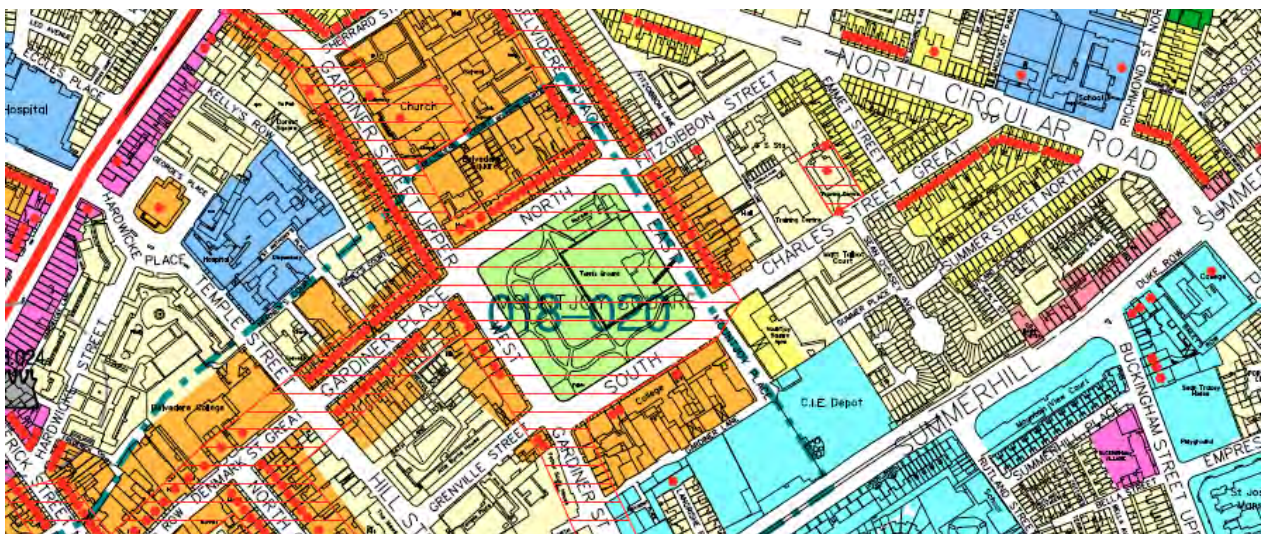


Fig. 51 Extract from DCC Development Plan 2011-2017 map showing zoning and protections to square.

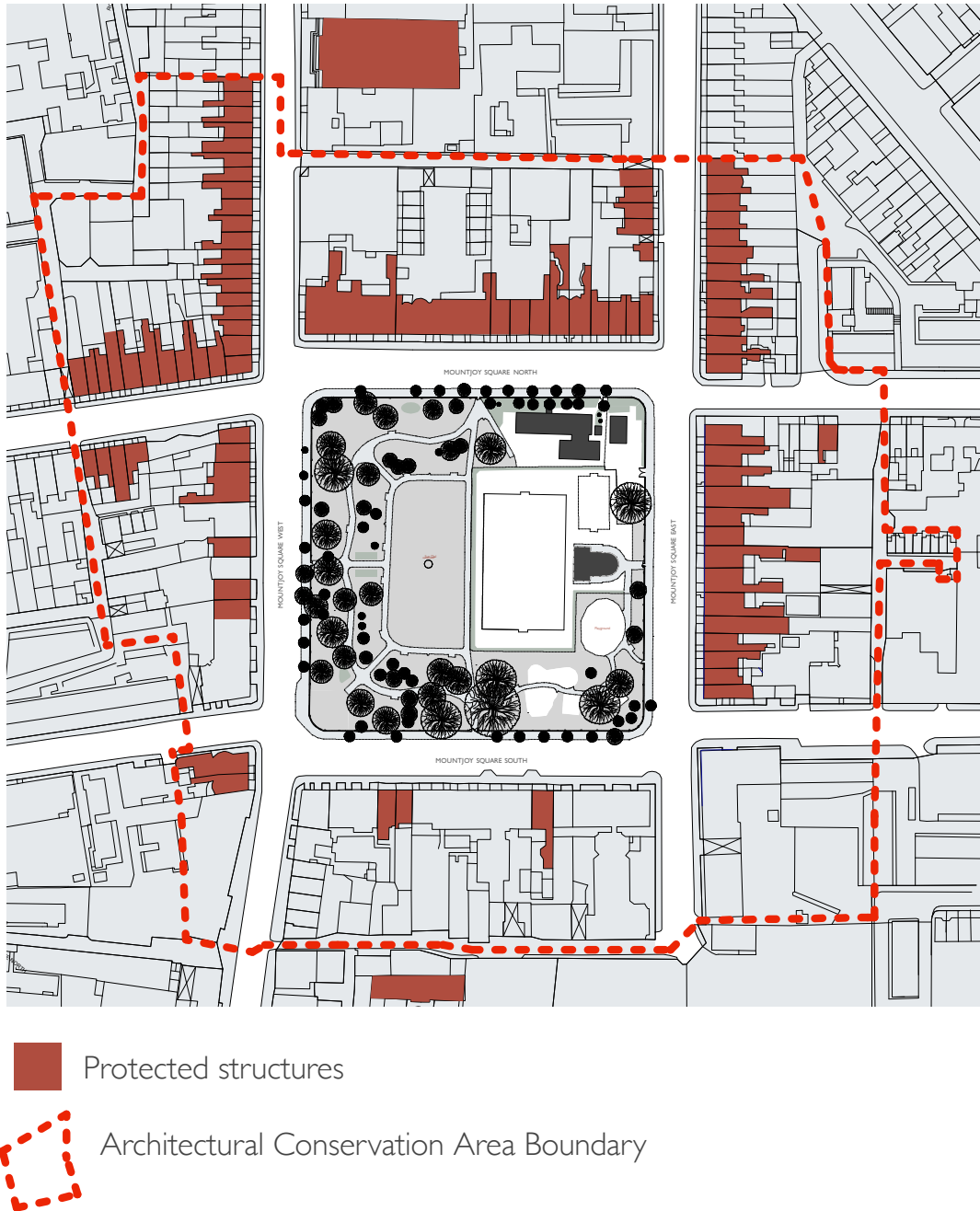


Fig. 52 Map showing extent of ACA and protected structures.

- Protection and enhancement of the character and historic fabric of conservation areas in the control of development.
- Consideration to any new signage erected in order to preserve the character of the area.
- New buildings in conservation areas to complement the character of the existing architecture in design, materials and scale.

The park itself is zoned Z9 with the objective- to *preserve, provide and improve recreational amenity and open space & green networks*, a zoning common to all of the historic parks in the city. In general, the only new developments allowed in these areas are those associated with public and private open space and privately owned sports facilities. The Development Plan goes on to state that a number of uses are open to consideration in public parks including - community facilities, craft shops, creches, cultural and or recreational buildings, kiosks or tea rooms.

The square, except for the townhouses along Mountjoy Square East, is included within a *Zone of Archaeological Interest* associated with the known extent of the city before the year 1700. Any developments within the square will require consultation with the National Monuments Service, and will involve an archaeological assessment of the site.

Under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010, local authorities are obliged to include a Record of Protected Structures in their Development Plans



Fig. 53 View along curving path towards Mountjoy Square West.



Fig. 54 1949 photograph of entrance to house at Middle Gardiner St. by Maurice Craig.

that lists structures or parts of structures that are of *special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest*. All of the original townhouses on the square are listed as protected structures in the Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017, the modern infill structures to the south and west sides are not protected. However, as noted above, any proposed alterations to their exteriors that would affect the architectural character of the area will require planning approval.

Interpretation

Mountjoy Square Park has the potential to be one of the finest urban squares in the country. However, it has been altered over time, and would benefit from a long-term management plan combining its importance as a place of historic cultural significance with a program of removal of existing buildings and facilities in tandem with new development to support its use as a very popular public amenity.

The changes to the layout to the eastern half of the park have altered its original character and affect its appearance. The hard surface courts are lined with fences and dense hedgerow, which

inhibit the appreciation of the scale of the park and its architectural heritage. Buildings such as the community centre and the nursery also compromise the use of the park, but are nonetheless long-established services.

Mountjoy Square is a public park that, in comparison to nearby Parnell Square, where twentieth century alterations are relatively easy to reverse. This is therefore a real opportunity to restore the finest of the garden squares in the city to a layout that is close to its former condition, while extending the use of the park for passive amenity.

Central to the restoration of the park should be a clear definition and re-emphasis of its identity as an important historic garden surrounded by fine examples of architectural and cultural heritage. It is also a vibrant residential area, a characteristic that has been lost to many of the other garden squares of Dublin.

Ownership

Due to the demise of the large landed estates in the city following Independence, many of the garden squares were acquired or gifted to the state whereas in Britain they often remain the property of the descendants of their original owners. When Dublin Corporation took over the park in 1938, the park was no longer for the exclusive use of the residents and the tennis club.

A legacy of private ownership of the square is the lack of a grand public entrance, such as the Fusiliers Arch at St. Stephen's Green, which was erected after the establishment of the public park. Entrances to private city parks were deliberately anonymous and relatively numerous to ensure that key holders did not have far to walk from their front doors. Discreet entrances of this nature tend to inhibit use by large numbers of people, however, this characteristic is integral to the original design intention and should be preserved, notwithstanding the desire to make the park more welcoming. The Mountjoy Square Society (MSS) was founded to promote the square as a valuable part of Dublin's architectural and landscape heritage; and to enhance its use as a public amenity for all. It was founded by a group of local volunteers



Fig. 55 Mountjoy Square Society Ltd. logo.



Fig. 56 View of toddler's playground at east side.

who live and work in the area, and is a not-for-profit limited company. Their activities have included the setting up of a website, hosting seminars and events on the history of the square, making the case for improvements to the public realm and strengthening statutory protections.

Condition & Use

Currently Dublin City Council parks department staff maintain the open areas of the park and keep it free from litter. The pathways, open areas and playground are used throughout the day, and the hardcourts are very popular with groups during the summer. The former use of the square as a parking terminus by private bus companies detracted greatly from the setting of the square and park. This practice has been largely, but not fully, curtailed following submissions from the MSS. At present, the park is only open

during daylight hours. Should it be considered desirable that the park remain open at night, public lighting would be required.

Access & Settings

Any decisions about improving or extending access to the park will need to be balanced with matters concerning preservation, conservation, efficient management and public safety. The park has level entrances on all sides, making it eminently suitable for use for wheelchair users, ambulant disabled and those with infirmities. Inside, the pathways are level and wide along most of their length. The park entrances do not have traffic calming measures nor pedestrian crossings directly opposite them, but are entered off broad, level footpaths. A key consideration in the improvement of the park must be its permeability. Despite having four entrances open during daylight



Fig. 57 View of flower bed to north side of park.



Fig. 58 View along railings at bus stop to north side.



Fig. 59 Artist's impression of new Swiftway stop in Georgian setting.

hours, access is inhibited somewhat by their location away from the main thoroughfares or *desire lines* and the small, discreet gates can be difficult to discern along the palisade. The square is quite well served by public transport with Dublin Bus, with four bus stops around the square serving a number of routes. The proposed Bus Rapid Transit Corridor (Swiftway) that would travel along Mountjoy Square North between Parnell Square to Dorset Street would be a significant improvement in the visibility and accessibility of the square, especially to tourists travelling from the airport. The proposed stop would be similar to the Luas terminal on St. Stephen's Green, and could act as a popular gateway to the park and square.

Public Safety

In a public space such as Mountjoy Square Park, a reasonable balance is required between the need for adequate health and safety considerations and the need to conserve and present the natural and built heritage, while maintaining access to a popular public amenity. Periodic inspections of the condition of the trees can determine whether tree surgery is required to reduce the risk to the public from fallen boughs.

Vulnerabilities

In relation to the issues outlined above, the vulnerability of the natural and built heritage can be summarised as follows:

Preservation

- Generally the park is well maintained, however, some areas would benefit from removal such as the overgrown hedge to the tennis courts.

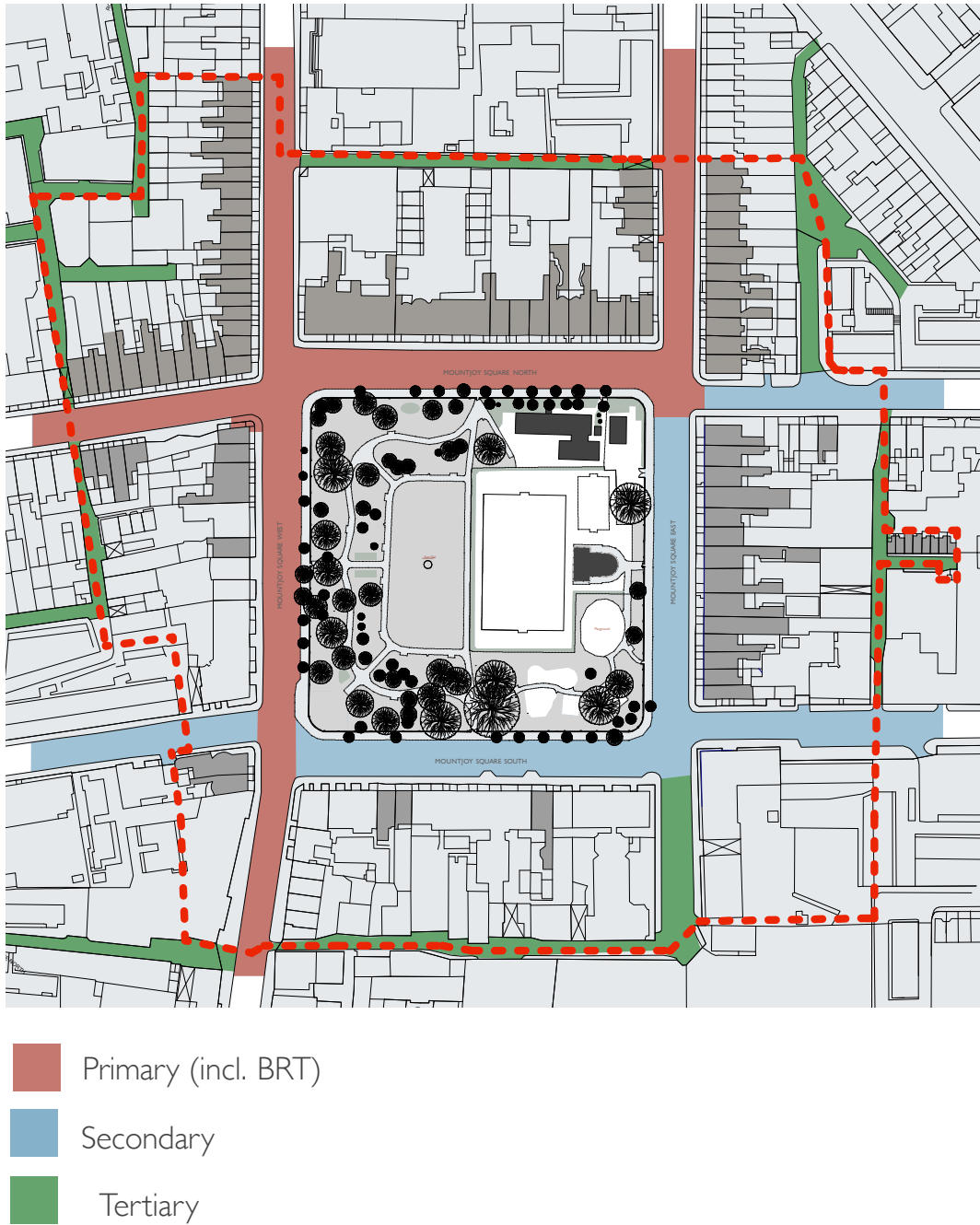


Fig. 60 Map showing hierarchy of traffic flows on streets around the square, with proposed Bus Rapid Transit to north side.



Fig. 61 View of dublinbikes stand to Mountjoy Square West.



Fig. 62 View of stump of tree cut down after damage in high winds.

- Over time, the original planting scheme has not been maintained, and there have been unsympathetic alterations to the path network to the east side during the late nineteenth century when, as found on other garden squares in Dublin, the green area was used for lawn tennis. At a later date, these courts were covered in tarmacadam, leading to further losses of historic planting and character. The planting of a thick hedge to hide the courts has meant that the scale of the park, and the surrounding architecture cannot be fully appreciated.
- Planting when not managed can spread rapidly obscuring form and detail and diminishing original qualities that can only be preserved by a regime of regular, on-going maintenance.
- Interventions may be necessary to provide improved access, or to repair or stabilise existing structures, or to create new amenities. This work should be -

informed by current best practice in conservation, easily reversible and should be sensitively designed so as not to detract from the setting of this important historic place.

Understanding

- Although Mountjoy Square Park is a well-loved public amenity, the historical significance of the park, its original design and use, and its connections to famous individuals who lived around it, could be much better presented to locals and visitors alike.
- There is a general lack of appreciation of - the value of Georgian Dublin; the extent of its contribution to European culture; and the importance of conserving the well-preserved, built and landscape heritage of the place.
- At present the garden is much altered and includes a number of unsatisfactory interventions. The original path layout and its place among the other garden squares is not widely appreciated. Historic failures to recognise the significance of this underlying pattern have led to inappropriate and ill-informed interventions that have compromised the historic landscape.



Fig. 63 View of west side of the Community Centre.

General Approach to Built Structures

The general approach to the conservation of the original design structure of the park will be to do – as *little as possible and as much as is necessary* to ensure its continued survival. Historic fabric should always be treated with respect, and should be retained and repaired wherever possible. There should be a general presumption against the loss of existing fabric, unless a compelling, beneficial and well-argued case is put forward.



Fig. 64 Detail of paving being disturbed by tree in footpath.

Repairs to the historic building fabric should be conservative in nature – to avoid the appearance of over-restoration – but should be carried out to the highest conservation standards using good quality, durable materials of suitable or matching quality. The concept of *local distinctiveness* of materials is a key component of most historic buildings and places, as they were for the most part constructed from



Fig. 65 View of mosaic covered tree surround.

building materials sourced in the immediate area. This is particularly important in path and pavement finishes that were traditionally finished in stone sets or flags. When exotic imported stone is used this important sense of local distinctiveness is very often lost.

Any interventions should be honest, simple and where possible easily reversible. Where existing design interventions, such as additions to the original path network are found to be necessary, they should be designed or finished in such a way as to make them identifiable from the original. Similarly, where new interventions are planned they should be designed sensitively to respect their setting and to express honestly their own era.

Public Art

The public art currently located in the park is more important for its social significance than its artistic interest. Introduction of new art pieces should be carefully regulated, and seek to represent the best of our cultural heritage in accordance with the *Policies & Strategies for Managing Public Art* adopted by Dublin City Council.

Landscape & Planting

Unfortunately, none of the original trees appear to have survived, although the western half of the park is still well planted, with many planted some twenty years ago which are now approaching maturity. The retention of the remaining trees and the enhancement of their setting is crucial for our understanding of the initial design intention for both the garden and the townhouses. Trees that do not conform to the original design intent should be considered for removal. This is particularly important for those trees that are planted into the footpaths that surround the square. Shrubberies and understorey planting could be increased to re-instate the separation of the garden from the surrounding streets while retaining desirable views.

6.0 CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Approach & Objectives

All conservation works considered within this plan are guided by the principle of minimum intervention as set out in the Burra Charter, under the general aim of doing - *as little as possible, but as much as is necessary*.

The conservation and management objectives for Mountjoy Square Park can be summarised as follows:

Protection of Built Heritage

Ensure the protection of the built heritage through its repair and the preservation and improvement of its historic fabric and its settings.

Repair & Maintenance

Provide regular on-going maintenance as the most effective way to preserve historic places. Repairs and landscape management are to be carried using methodologies that conform to the guiding principles as set out in the ICOMOS charters, using appropriate details, quality materials, and historically accurate planting schemes. Repair works are to be prioritised in terms of urgency, and informed by regular inspection and expert advice.



Fig. 66 Image of demonstration on repairing historic ironwork.



Fig. 67 View of tennis net post re-used in fencing.

Intervention

Where interventions are found to be necessary to provide improved access, visibility, or to repair or stabilise a structure, these are to be designed to the highest standards of best conservation practice and should not detract from the interpretation of the architectural heritage.

Reversibility

All interventions should follow the principle of the reversibility, so that a structure can be returned to its former state where possible.

Expert Advice & Skills

Ensure that all conservation works are carried out under the direction of suitably qualified professionals (architects and structural engineers) and undertaken only by suitably skilled and experienced tradesmen.

Continued Liaison

Liaise between the different stakeholders (Dublin City Council, local residents, visitors, Mountjoy Square Society and others) in relation to proposed development works within and adjacent to the park to share knowledge and ensure that best practice is adhered to in relation to any future proposals for improvements or adjacent developments.

Settings & Key Views

Protect and enhance the settings of the square, park and associated structures including key views through planning policy and landscape management plans.

Inspections

Set in place procedures for on-going monitoring of the condition of the park, its associated structures and the planting to ensure their long-term preservation.

Monitoring

Review this Plan at agreed intervals (to coincide with Development Plans or Local Area Plans) to benchmark progress in implementation, reassess priorities, assimilate new information or changes in legislation or methodologies.



Fig. 68 Example of good quality interpretative panel to Essex Quay.

Further Research & Investigation

Multi-disciplinary research into the built and landscape heritage of the square and its wider context should be supported.

Depth in Time

Ensure that the conservation and preservation of the park along with the historic structures lining the square, respects all the layers that contribute to the cultural significance of the place.



Fig. 69 Folio of Mountjoy Square Commissioners Minutes at NLI.

Authenticity

Ensure that the importance of continuity and change in the proper understanding of the built and landscape heritage is communicated to the general public. This is particularly important for the park and associated structures that have become overgrown and difficult to interpret.

Ownership

Consider rights of stakeholders in relation to the access, conservation and presentation of the built and natural heritage.

Stakeholder Consultation

Consult with stakeholders regarding proposed interventions or the conservation of the park. Foster good communication and cooperation in the best interests of the heritage of the place.



Fig. 70 Screen grab of MSS website.

Access for All

Where the integrity and character of the park can be maintained, ensure that access is improved for the benefit of people with disabilities.

Interpretative Infrastructure

Provide interpretive facilities and signage within the park so that the general public can understand the cultural and natural heritage while enjoying the amenities. A broad range of media should be used to communicate the significance of the square to a wide audience.

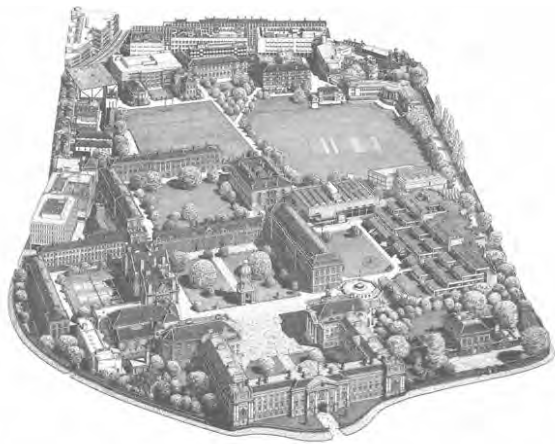


Fig.71 Example of aerial view of Trinity prepared by Michael Craig.

Branding

Build on the brand development of the square initiated by the Mountjoy Square Society for the promotion of the park as a tourism asset.

Visitor's Facilities

Provide refreshment facilities – shelters, café and toilets, to provide social meeting points and allow visitors to extend the length of their visits to the park.

Settings for Events

The use of the park and square as a setting for cultural events should be promoted and enhanced, as long as it does not cause damage to the heritage.

Formal & Informal Learning

Ensure that the presentation of the cultural heritage of the square and park is aimed at as broad an audience as possible.

On-Going Interpretation

Ensure that as knowledge and understanding of the park improves through further research and that interpretation media are updated accordingly.

Sustainability

Promote and support development of amenities that can raise revenue to be allocated to the conservation and improved presentation of the square.

Public Safety

Prioritize public safety in relation to the condition and use of the park, especially due to its location.

Architectural Conservation Area

Ensure that the Architectural Conservation Area designation and other local authority development plan objectives are enforced, and promote understanding of the park to aid forward planning and coordination for service providers, building and planning professionals.

Outreach & Participation

Organize and support events that promote understanding of the architectural, landscape and natural heritage and that will help to communicate its cultural significance.



Fig. 72 View of Archaeofest being held in Merrion Square.

School Outreach

Encourage schools to take advantage of the potential of the park as a teaching resource, a place to explore the city's Georgian cultural heritage or enjoy nature in an urban setting.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION & PROPOSALS

Audiences

The conservation of a complex, historic urban site involves input and collaboration from many different sources, often with differing interests and objectives. These stakeholders are the intended audience of this Conservation Plan. Their understanding and adoption of the conservation and interpretation policies is crucial to the successful maintenance and promotion of Mountjoy Square Park, enhancing its position as a valuable local amenity and tourism asset. The responsibility for the park should be collective, each group acting in the best interest of the built and natural heritage.

State Bodies

The local authority and the state have a responsibility to ensure that our shared heritage is conserved for future generations. Increasing knowledge of the park among public bodies and their officers in various departments will help coordinate initiatives or works that impact on the park and direct funding for its protection and enhancement.

Landowners & Leaseholders

The use of the park is no longer exclusive to the key holders, Dublin City Council have owned and maintained the garden as a public park for almost eighty years. Most of the townhouses, and the modern infill developments surrounding the garden



Fig. 73 View of Russell Square in London, good example of garden square restoration with new tea rooms.



Fig.74 View of restored garden to rear of Royal Society of Antiquaries.

are in private ownership and remain in residential use. There are a few offices, commercial units and a third level institute. A group of local stakeholders formed the Mountjoy Square Society with the aim to enhance and promote the historical character and amenity value of the square and its park.

General Public

As a city centre park, its proximity to tourist sites and the central commercial area enhances its potential to be a place to present the architectural and landscape heritage of the city. Improving understanding and appreciation of the park will enhance pride in the Georgian heritage amongst the general public, which will make people more actively involved in how the park is protected and presented to visitors. This is especially important in an area where residents consist of a wide range of ethnic groups, some of whom are new to the country, together with a local community long established in the area.

In 2011, a consultation process regarding the park was undertaken by The Studio, a group within DCC. They set up stands around the park for a number of days in midsummer, making themselves available to have a conversation about the park. They also asked the respondents their age, nationality and how often they use the park and for what purpose, providing valuable data on how the park is used and by whom. The Studio sought responses to a number of simple questions- *Why do you use this park?; What do you like about this park?; How would you improve this park?; How does this park make you feel?.* The study's conclusion was that the park was well-used and loved by the

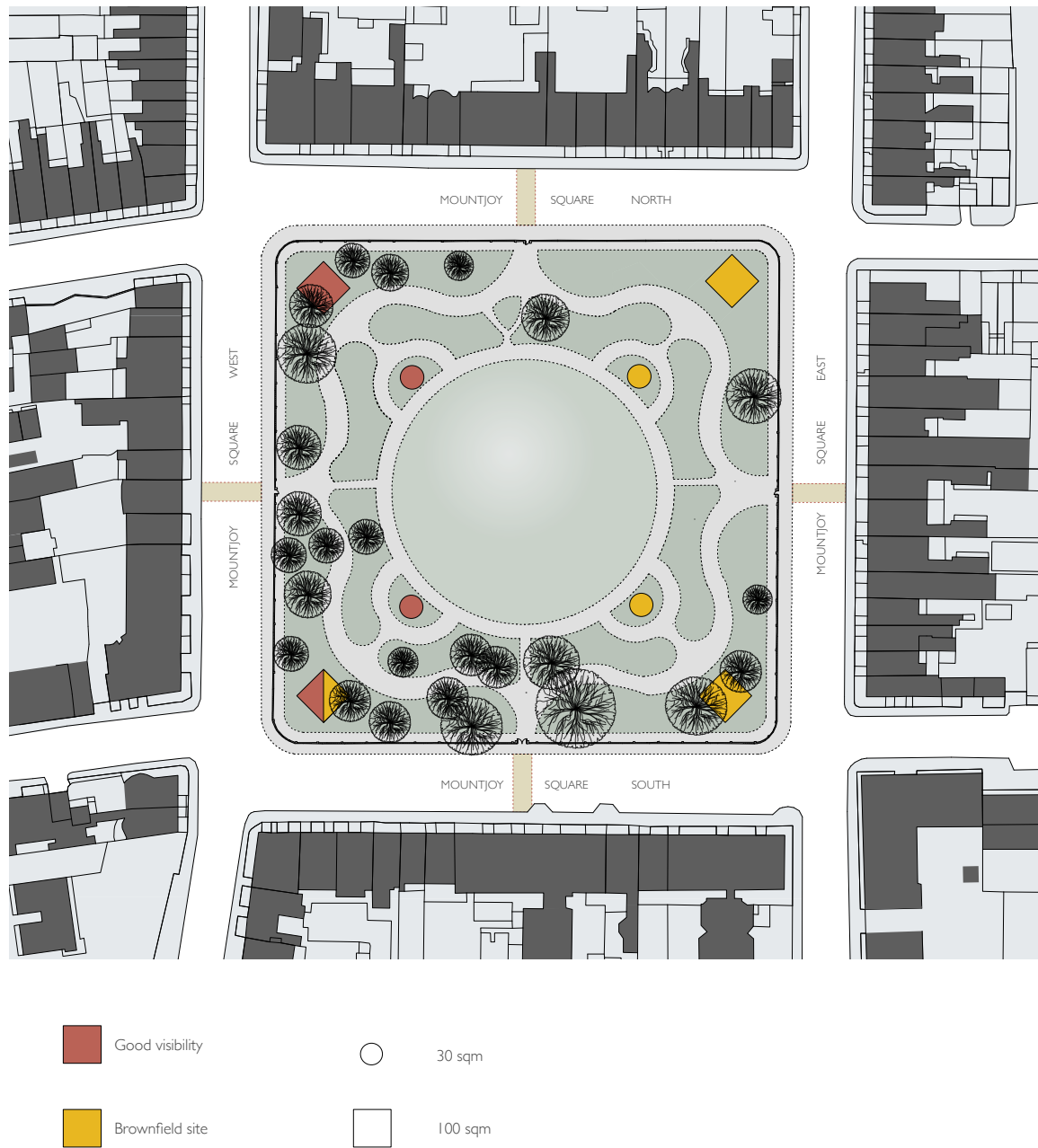


Fig. 75 Plan showing analysis of siting new park facilities within historic path layout.

local community. While there were some concerns about anti-social behaviour, there was widespread appreciation of how the park was maintained, and the opportunity to enjoy fresh air, space and nature in the city centre. A lot of people expressed a wish that the central hedge be either maintained or removed, and that community facilities and security should be improved. However, it was clear that there was very little awareness of, or importance attached to, the architectural heritage of the park or square.

Visitors

Both domestic and foreign visitors should be addressed when designing interpretation material. Domestic visitors may include locals who take the opportunity to improve their understanding of their city's heritage or simply to enjoy exercise or reflection in beautiful surroundings. Consideration should be given to providing interpretive information in foreign languages; probably best using a dedicated website rather than placing too much information on on-site signage. The park should be promoted as a place to orientate the visitor to heritage sites around the square, and the rest of the North Georgian Quarter.

Schools & Universities

The best way to foster interest and appreciation of the built and natural heritage is to include education



Fig. 77 Flyer used to promote Dublin Squares Day in 2013.



Fig. 78 View of cast iron park sign at gate.



Fig. 76 Possible logo for Mountjoy Square using the historic path layout.

programmes for schools. The garden is a valuable teaching aid for students of architecture, landscape design, horticulture, history, together with tourism and heritage protection. The architecture students at UCD carried out a comprehensive study of the square in 2010, using census data, historic maps and drawings and undertaking field studies and measured surveys. Research questions that relate to the historic development of the park could be of interest for students of architectural history, town planning and archaeology.

Cultural & Heritage Groups

Heritage groups should be encouraged to engage with the cultural heritage of the square and communicate with both locals and visitors. Collaboration and involvement in popular city-wide cultural events such as the Dublin Garden Squares Day, Culture Night,

Open House. The Drawing Room at No.36 Parnell Square has already been established and should be encouraged and expanded. Links to cultural institutions such as the Abbey & Gate Theatres; the Dublin Writers Museum; and the proposed new City Library should be strengthened and encouraged to host cultural events in the park.

Built Environment Professionals

Those involved with the conservation and development of the city should have access to information that will improve their understanding of the extent of the square and the associated structures and landscape, their on-going needs and means of protection, together with ideas for their enhancement. Repair of park railings to be used as training for local community in the maintenance and repair of historic ironwork.

Key Messages & Themes

In order to frame the interpretation of Mountjoy Square Park, it is important to set out clear messages and themes to be communicated to the relevant audiences. As the heritage of the place consists of many facets; historical, architectural and social- it is important that a clear understanding of their importance and how they are interdependent is communicated to the wider public.

Historic Development

The history of the park might take the form of an illustrated walking route around the park, commencing with the early development of Georgian Dublin up



Fig. 79 Comparative analysis of Georgian Squares by UCD students.

to the present day, including the shift in attitudes to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings and landscapes that have come about during the past thirty years. The historic fabric of the square is characteristic of that era, and exemplifies good urban design of European cultural significance.

Local Knowledge

In order to understand the context of historical developments, the story of the day-to-day lives of the residents who once lived either in or close to the square, can provide insights as to how the garden was used and enjoyed by previous generations.

Built & Natural Heritage Conservation

The importance of conserving natural and built heritage is also a key theme, acknowledging the need for change while emphasizing the need to preserve the valuable remnants of former days. The methodology and conservation strategy for the square and garden should also be presented to the public, in order that the place can be more easily interpreted and understood.

Interpretation Strategy

Modern media provide exciting opportunities to present the cultural heritage of the square to the widest audience in a way that is adaptable and interactive. A dedicated website would be an excellent way to host a number of initiatives that would enhance the authentic experience of the square with GPS functionality. A map of the North Georgian Quarter could allow the user locate themselves relative to the sites of historic interest around the square, as well as other interesting sites nearby.

Signage should make good use of historic images or artistic reconstructions to engage the viewer. Mahoney's view of 1854 could be very useful in orientating the viewer within the North Georgian City, as well as providing insight into how it looked at that time, and how much has been preserved. Providing links back to a website will reduce clutter on the signs. QR codes mounted on signs or benches could link to information hosted on the site; text, video or audio files that relate to cultural heritage and enhance the experience or view from the particular location. Podcasts of the heritage value

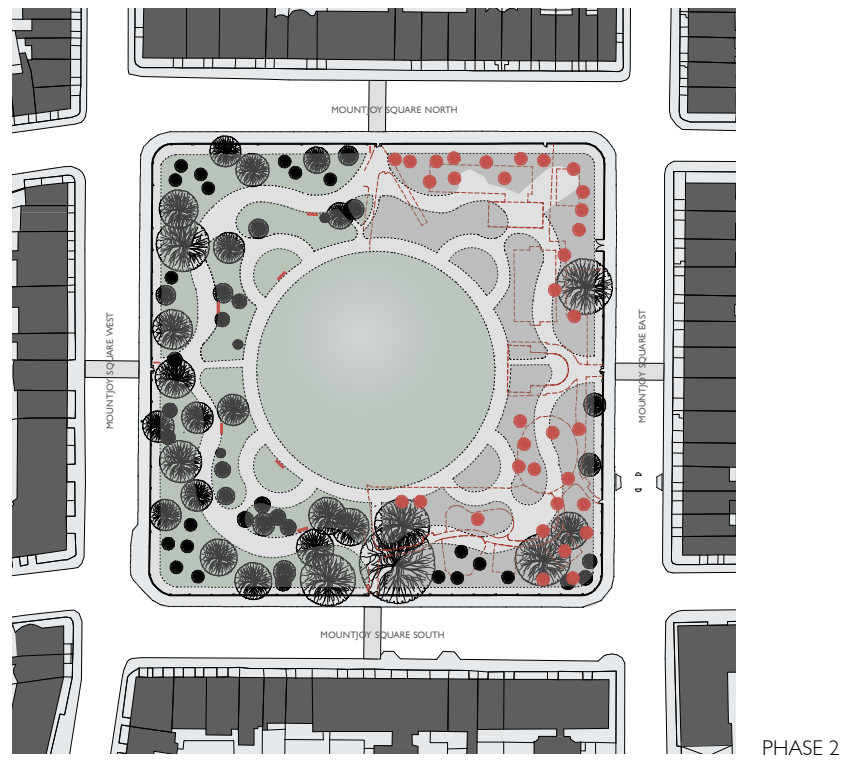
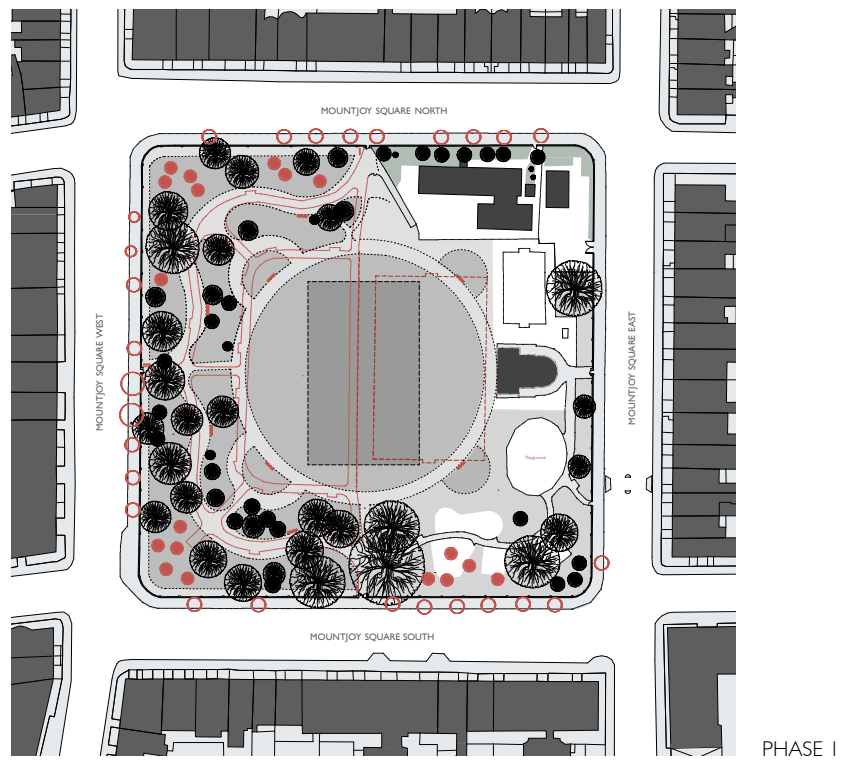


Fig. 80 Plans showing proposed phasing of works to restore park. Note possible use of central lawn for sports until new pitch provided.

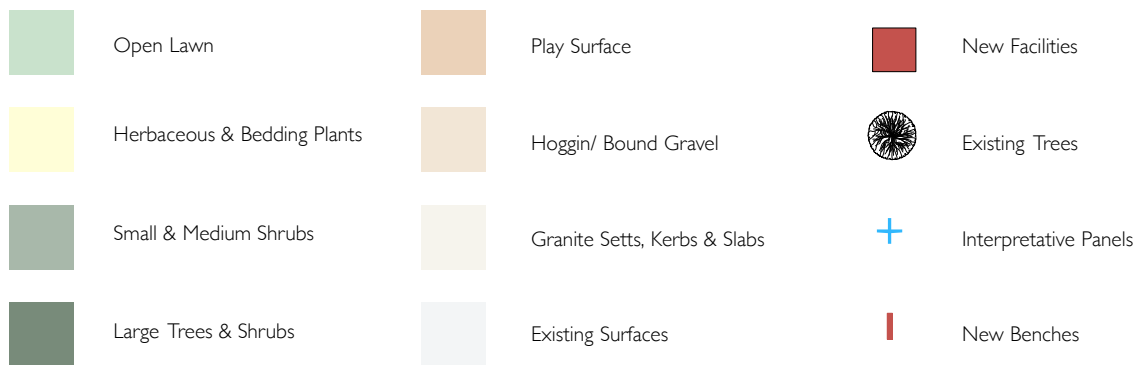
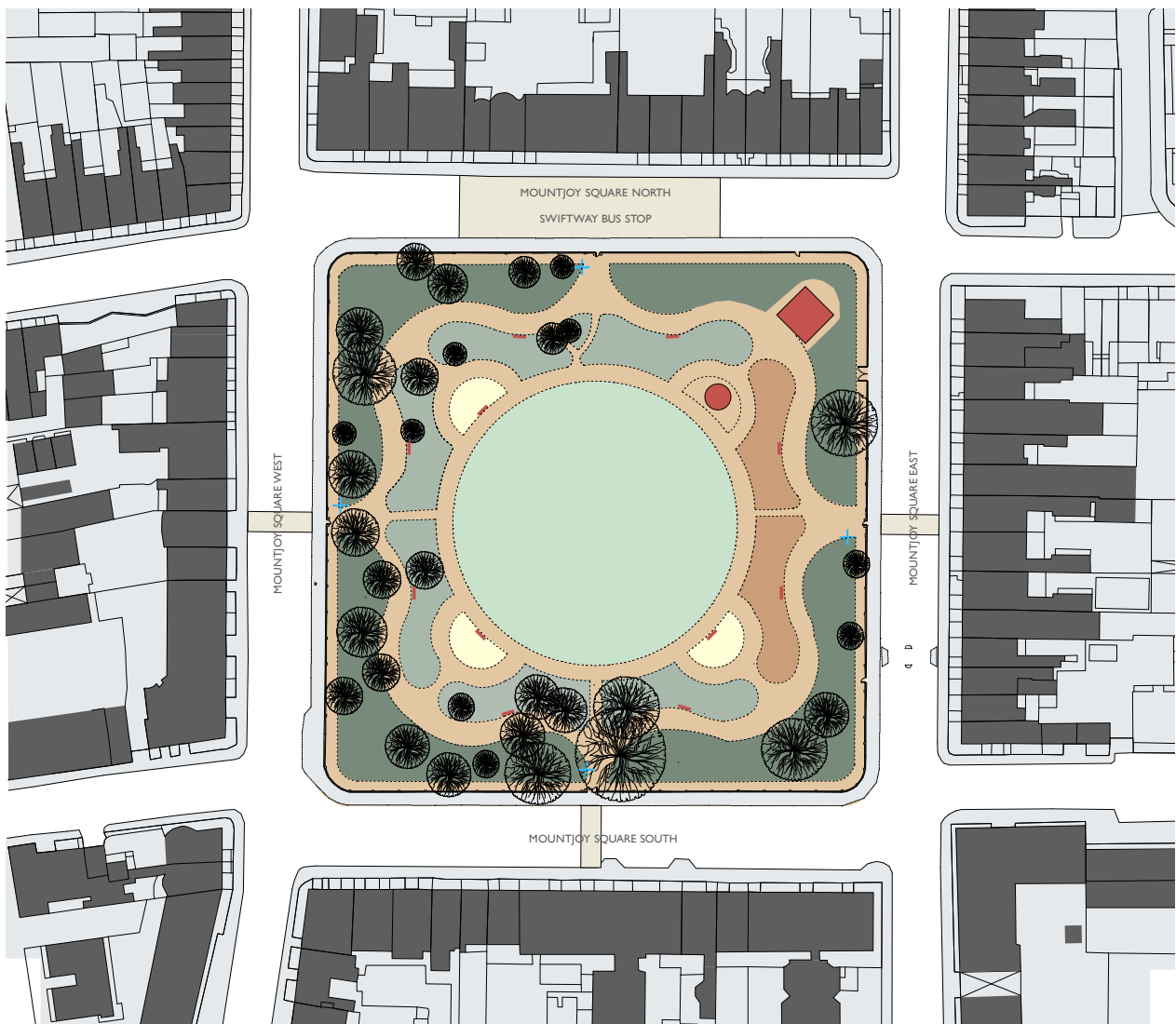


Fig. 81 Plan showing proposed park restoration, new facilities and public realm improvements.



Fig. 82 View looking east towards hedge.

of the park could be made available for tourist and rambler websites.

A pictorial map of the area or a printed guide book could be used for orientation and also as a souvenir; while also giving visitors an impression of what the square would have looked like in the past by emphasizing its historic character. Sutherland's path layout would make a unique logo and identifier for the square, and could be used on associated livery and souvenirs.

Active Amenity Provision

The extensive hard courts and the basketball court are very popular during the summer months and at weekends. The playground is also well used, and enjoys the pleasant setting and security provided by the park. Consideration should be given as to how some active amenity provision can be retained within the restored landscape in the short term, to be relocated close by when circumstances permit.

Passive Amenity Provision

The park was designed for relatively sedate enjoyment; pleasant views within and without, leafy walks with seasonal colour; enjoyment of flowering plants and greenery. It was intended as a place to socialize in public, securely and away from the busy streets. Over time, these activities have been restricted to the western side of the square; while active use, although relatively intermittent, has now taken over the eastern side. Other public garden squares such as St. Stephen's Green and Merrion Square are located on

the south side of the city. As green areas intended for passive enjoyment are relatively scarce in the north inner city, opportunities for active leisure are available elsewhere. When the existing sport facilities are relocated, it is proposed that the square be returned to predominantly passive use. However, this should not exclude provision of play facilities, which could be accommodated within the restored layout.

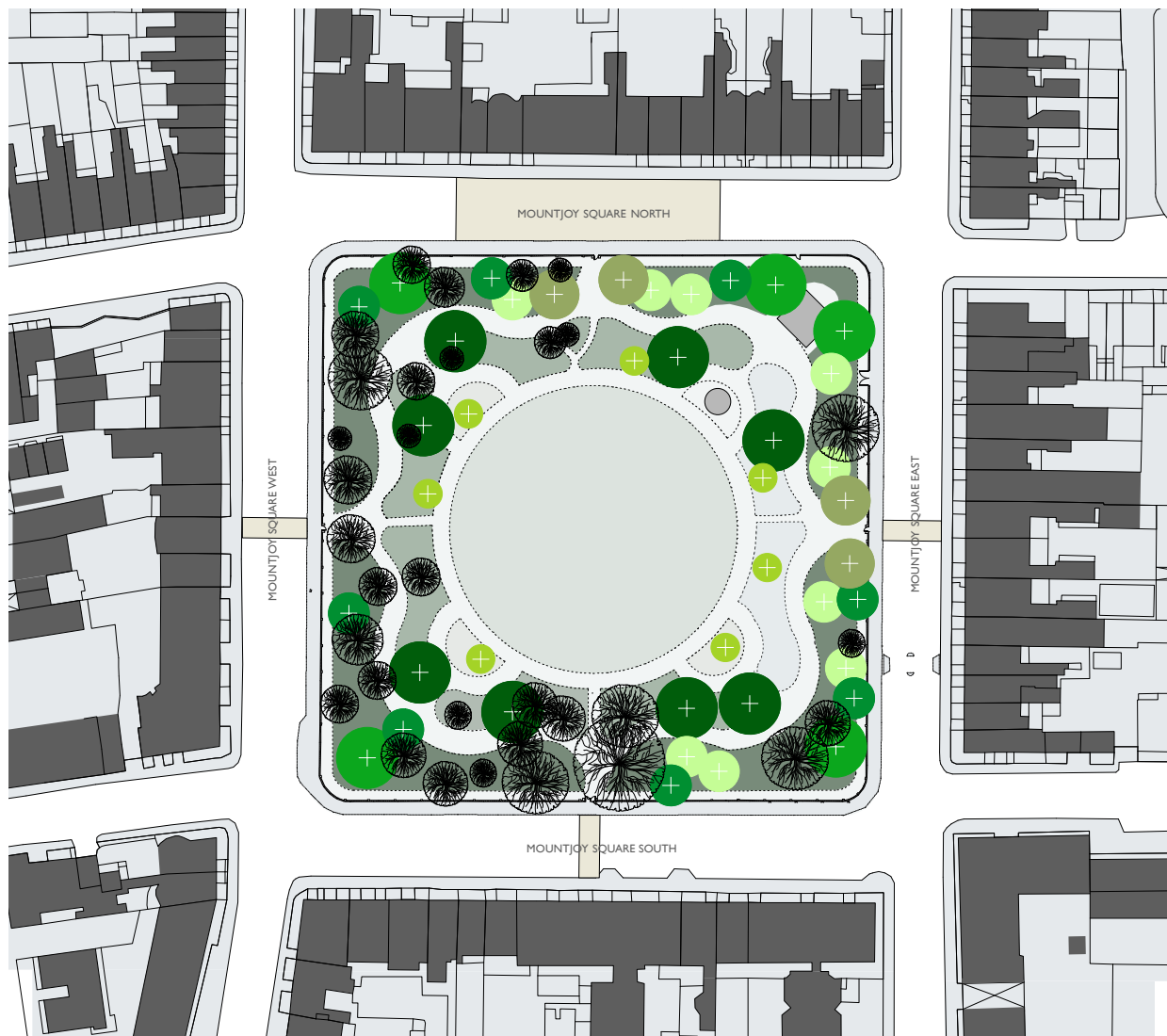
Conservation Strategy

Reinstatement of Planting Scheme & Paths

It is fortunate that in Fitzwilliam Square, we have a largely intact and almost contemporaneous garden square that can provide some guidance in terms of planting, materials and groundworks that will help in the restoration of the historic planting in Mountjoy Square. However, more investigations are needed to determine the design intention where the map evidence shows considerable differences from the other squares- wide curving pathways, perimeter path alongside the railings, contoured beds and central lawn. These questions could be answered by means of archaeological test trenching to determine the original path widths and locations.



Fig. 83 Example of arched gateway surviving at Fitzwilliam Square.



- | | | | |
|---|---|--|----------------------------------|
|  | Quercus ilex (HOLM OAK) |  | Ilex aquifolium (HOLLY) |
|  | Fagus sylvatica (BEECH) |  | Juglans nigra (WALNUT) |
|  | Platanus x hispanica (LONDON PLANE - POLLARDED) |  | Existing Trees |
|  | Tilia x europaea (LIME) | | |
| | | | 42 New trees |
| | | | 33 Existing trees to be retained |
| | | | 51 Existing trees to be removed |

Fig. 84 Plan showing proposed new tree and planting layout, including existing trees to be retained.



Fig. 85 Photomontage of restored path layout from above.

A long-term strategy should be put in place to manage existing trees and plan for their eventual replacement. This will reduce the risk of leaving large gaps in the individual stands and their canopies. In the absence of detailed original planting plans or schedules, an indicative planting design has been prepared by DFLA. The proposed planting is graded in height from the herbaceous beds around the central lawn, to small to medium shrubs in the middle zone, then out to the periphery where large trees and shrubs are found. Further detail design will establish the plants available to John Sutherland and the Commissioners during the period 1803-1813, and the range of plants that they would have selected from that palette. In conjunction with this, a schedule of tree removal and tree pruning would be required in order to eliminate any inappropriate tree species and improve the structure and reduce the shadow cast by retained trees. Finally, an assessment of historically-used species or plant types would be required to narrow the planting palette, retain good intervisibility within the garden, maximise establishment rates and reduce future maintenance requirements.

The reinstatement of the garden also brings an opportunity to interpret the garden at its very early stages of development, prior to its full establishment

over time. Interpretative material will present the more sparse and immature planting on the eastern side of the garden as a *window* on the past. Having confirmed the alignment and extent of the historic paths by test trenching, the original path network, including the perimeter pathway, should be reinstated. While a hoggin surface would be desirable, it is difficult to maintain in our climate, and bound gravel surface is a good alternative solution.

Relocation of Community Facilities

The park buildings within Mountjoy Square should be considered for removal in the context of the restoration of the historic landscape design. This should not be undertaken prior to proper facilities being provided elsewhere in the locality, and the west side and central lawn could be reinstated while these buildings remain in-situ. Although of some social and architectural significance, the nursery and community building are poorly sited in relation to the original path layout, obstructing circulation around the garden and detract from its historic character. The buildings themselves are much altered, and all require significant repairs in order to extend their usefulness and longevity.

Opportunities to relocate these facilities elsewhere should be identified by DCC, and plans put in place in consultation with the stakeholders in advance of any proposed restoration of the park. As part of this plan, a number of potential sites were identified in the locality, and their merits considered. However;



Fig. 86 View of former convent school at Rutland Street Lower.



Fig. 87 Map showing sites in vicinity with potential for relocation of community facilities.



Fig. 88 Sketch aerial view of proposed new park facilities including tea rooms, bandstand and playgrounds with restored path layout.

the future relocation of existing facilities would be carried out in consultation with the stakeholders.

A possibility for replacing the existing community building include the street-level units along Gardiner Street as part of Father Scully House, the sheltered housing scheme beside the square on Gardiner Street Middle. The nursery could be relocated to the HSE building on Summerhill, which is in turn being replaced by the new Primary Care Centre across the street. The hardcourts could be replaced in facilities close by, at Hill Street or Liberty Square, until such time as an alternative site is provided.

The site of St. Michael's House training centre along Great Charles Street is a potential site for hosting community facilities following refurbishment or redevelopment. Vacant sites to the rear of Fitzgibbon Street are adjacent to the training centre, and also have potential for these uses. The former convent school at Rutland Street Lower is owned by DCC, and is currently used by community groups. This building is mostly vacant, and it could be refurbished to increase

its current capacity. The site along Gardiner Place that is used for advertisement hoarding has potential to be infilled with a new building that could incorporate signage, or this could be relocated or reformatted under a partnership scheme between DCC and JC Decaux much as the successful *dublinbikes* initiative.

Dublin City Council intends to relocate the existing depot as part of a wider scheme to rationalize its maintenance infrastructure around the city. If not redeveloped for new park facilities, this site should be landscaped and the original path layout reinstated.

Access & Public Realm Improvements

The west side of the square forms part of the busy thoroughfare (R802) travelling north-south along Upper & Lower Gardiner Street. This is an important commuter route into the city for those travelling from the city centre to the airport or suburbs such as Drumcondra, Glasnevin and Phibsborough and beyond. In order to improve the visibility and accessibility of the existing park entrances, it is proposed to provide uncontrolled pedestrian

crossings opposite the gates in the middle of each side of the square. These would consist of 10m wide crossing plateaus using good quality paving. This could be carried out in conjunction with the Swiftway stop, and would act to attenuate traffic speeds in a primarily residential area, opposite a public park. Consideration should also be given to expand the citywide 30kph zone to Mountjoy Square. Previously granite kerbs were lifted and reset to form the edge of the widened footpaths at crossing points. A better approach would be to use new granite kerbs and setts with bush hammered finish and lime mortar joints, leaving the original kerbs in situ. Any salvaged granite slabs and kerbs found elsewhere in the city that are lying in storage could be put to good use in improving the appearance of the public realm around the historic square. Slabs could be placed at the gates to mark the entrance opposite the new crossings. Any gaps could be filled with new bush-hammered granite setts, that would sit among the slabs. New granite slabs tend to detract from the beautifully aged historic slabs and plinths, with their precise edges and surfaces, while smaller setts maintain consistency of materials and surface plane without detracting from the larger units of the weathered flagstones.

New Park Facilities

Tea Rooms/ Café

In order to improve the park facilities and accessibility, there remains the need to provide adequate WC and baby changing facilities, which for efficiency, security and maintenance reasons should be part of the new café. Providing simple refreshment facilities



Fig. 89 View of training centre on Gt. Charles Street.

and toilets would transform the life within the park and the dwell time of visitors. It is anticipated that it will act as a hub for the area, and might also include a more permanent exhibition on the history of the square and Georgian Dublin. Initially, a concession could be offered for a serviced space in the park for a temporary kiosk. If successful, a more permanent fixture could be installed.

Due to the sensitivity of the site, the new structure should be well-sited and designed in a sensitive contemporary style. Possible locations include the generous corners, where they would be visible from the street, or within one of the crescent-shaped beds along the inner circuit that face onto the central green opposite the corners. Of these, the north-east corner has the sunniest aspect, is close to the proposed Swiftway stop, and would be placed on the site of the depot and the former caretaker's hut, reducing the visual impact on the garden.

The new buildings should respond in a contemporary way to the Georgian architecture of the square, as well as the rich heritage of garden buildings in Ireland to create a memorable destination in its own right, but with its visual impact of the garden minimised. A playful response to the geometrical figures of *square* and *circle* that the urban form and the garden layout were derived, as well as their proportions and materiality, could make suitable themes for the new buildings. Use of quality, traditional materials in a fresh, modern way would give the new buildings a sense of local distinctiveness.

Bandstand & Playgrounds

A new park shelter could relate to the Victorian era when the public paid a nominal fee for access to entertainments. It could be used to host cultural events in the garden. Along with the tea rooms, interpretative panels could be incorporated into its design. It is intended that the bandstand, along with the tea rooms/café, would create a vibrant centre of activity in the north east corner alongside two new playgrounds for different age groups. The playground appliances and surfaces could be based on historic themes, presenting the social and architectural history of the area in an engaging way.

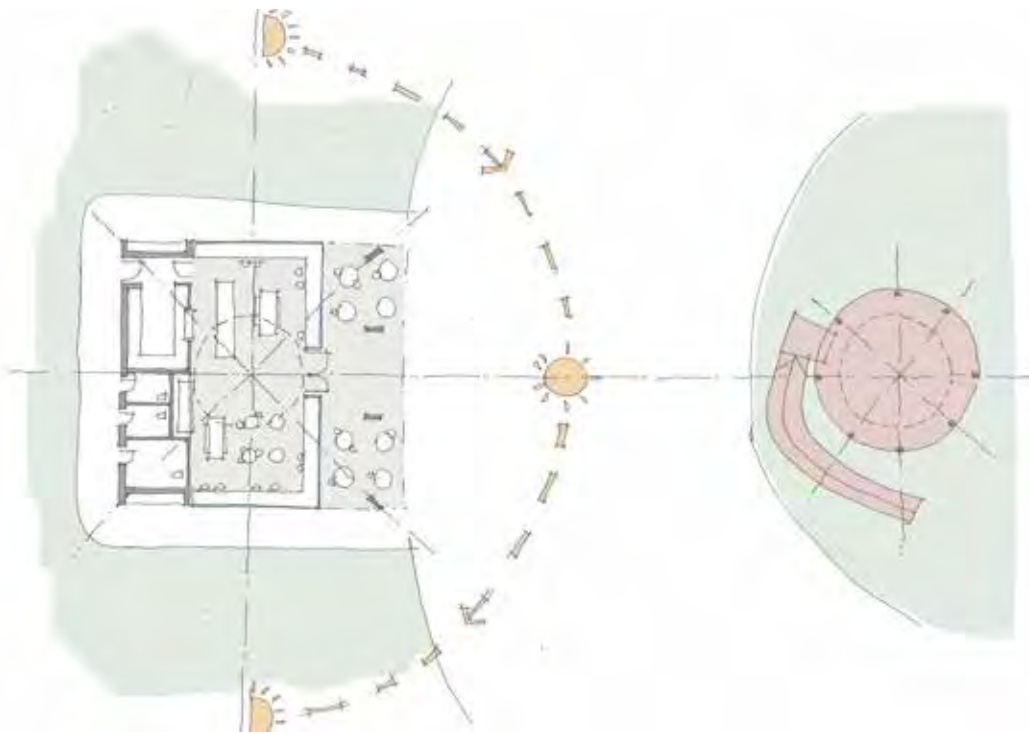


Fig. 90 Sketch plan of proposed new tea rooms and bandstand.

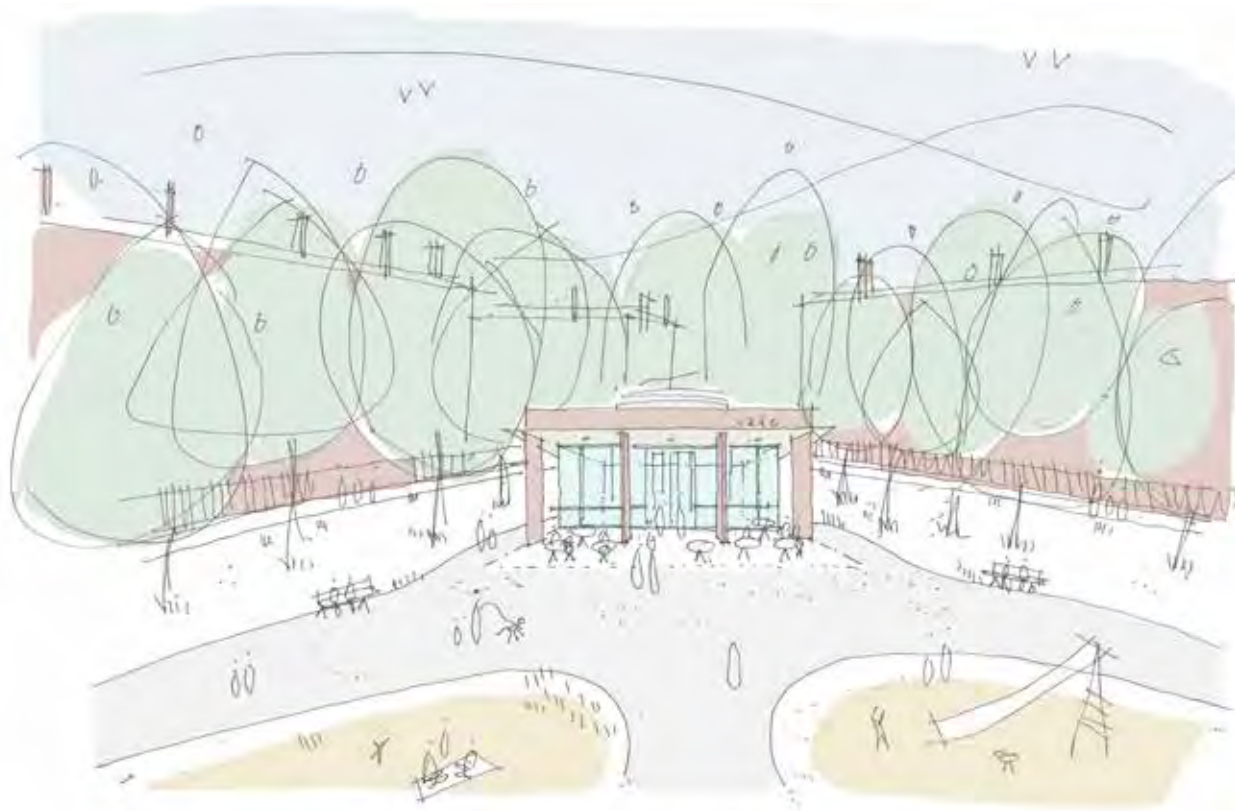


Fig. 91 Sketch view of proposed tea rooms in historic context.

Budget Costs

Note: These costs were prepared by Aecom, HHA & DFLA and are only intended to indicate the overall order of magnitude costs of the project. Budget costs would need to be revised at such time that detail designs and specifications are prepared. Design team fees; VAT; inflation; site acquisition; legal and development charges; specialised disposal or mitigation costs are excluded. The installation of a new Swiftway bus stop to the north side of the square is also excluded.

Item	Project	€ (excl.VAT)
<u>Phase 1</u>		257,000
	Clearance of trees; pilot phase repair of railings; reinstatement of central lawn, planting beds and historic path layout; installation of signage & seating	
<u>Phase 2</u>		1,340,000
	Removal of existing buildings; completion of railing repair; improvements to footpaths & pedestrian crossings; completion of paths, planting beds, signage and seating to areas where buildings removed	
<u>Phase 3</u>		760,000
	Installation of new tea rooms/ café; new bandstand, themed playground and exercise facilities	
Total for Park Refurbishment & Improvements		2,357,000
<u>Outline Costs for Relocation (excl. site acquisition)</u>		
	Crèche: new build on brownfield site	630,000-730,000
	Crèche: refurbishment of protected structure	770,000-900,000
	Community building: new build on brownfield site	360,000-460,000
	Community building: new build on brownfield site	500,000-650,000
	Depot: new build on brownfield site	120,000-150,000
	Hardcourts	1,350,000-1,750,000

APPENDICES

Bibliography

Notes on London Squares

Notes from Mountjoy Square Commissioners Minutes

Reports on Consultation with Local Interest Groups

Endnotes

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NOTES ON LONDON SQUARES

History of the London Garden Square

While the first formal urban square in Europe was constructed at Place des Vosges in Paris during the earliest years of the seventeenth century, the garden square is an English phenomenon. Some thirty years after Henri IV created the French prototype of a residential city square, Inigo Jones is thought to have designed the English equivalent at Covent Garden. On three sides of the Covent Garden Piazza, as it was formerly known, the pattern of three-storey upper levels over an arcaded ground floor repeated the Parisian design, while the fourth, west end was dominated by Jones's fine Doric style church. The principal intention behind the creation of this new urban form was to provide convenient residences for persons of quality who could enjoy light, ventilation and views, while living within the metropolis. Other London squares followed during the subsequent decades of that troubled century, both pre- and post-the restoration of the monarchy. These including Charterhouse, Lincoln's Inns, Hoxton, Bloomsbury, Soho and St James's Squares, establishing a precedent that would multiply a hundred fold during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



Fig. 92 View of Covent Garden in seventeenth century.

Urban Typology

The great building boom of Georgian London, that grew from the ducal estates of Bedford and Westminster led to many new residential squares

being constructed in the city. New urban blocks appeared, where formerly there had been either, large town mansions and their private gardens, or the farmland or common grazing lands that once surrounded the outskirts of the more compact city. Areas such as Bloomsbury are dominated by squares of varying sizes and shapes, mostly orthogonal, but occasionally crescent shaped, circular or elliptical. The increasing number of residential squares became the defining characteristic of the city, which is acknowledged as England's greatest contribution to European town planning. Other large towns and cities in Britain were to follow this pattern during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most notably those of Edinburgh and Bath. Dublin was to follow later in the eighteenth century, but no other city has quite the abundance of squares that were created in London, most of which survive to this day.

Characteristics

The early squares were generally dull, flat and rather featureless, consisting of grass plats and gravel walks, with possibly a fountain or a statue marking the centre point, and a simple post and rail fence around the perimeter. Anti social behaviour, and robberies, due to the lack of control over access, rendered many of the squares unusable by the privileged classes whose houses looks onto them. While they did bring much needed light and air into the city, they were frequently criticised for their lack of ornamental planting. By the end of the eighteenth century the idea of controlling access to the central area, through the erection of metal railings, had been established and the first serious attempts at creating gardens – dressed in the country manner, had begun.

Planting & Thomas Fairchild

Early planting schemes in London appear to have been created by nurserymen, such as Thomas Fairchild who had a nursery just off Hoxton Square. Fairchild set out his ideas in *The City Gardener*, which was published in 1722. In this he advocates that the square gardens be laid out in the form of a wilderness, which he argued would delight the eye and attract songbirds. His garden designs were decidedly formal and geometrical, with grass plats, gravel walks arranged within symmetrical planting beds containing shrubs and flowers, arranged in



Fig. 92 Portrait of Thomas Fairchild (1667?-1729).

the style of a wilderness. Species recommended by Fairchild included – lilac, laburnum, Spanish broom, jasmine, guelder rose, apple, pear, grapevine, Virginian Acacia, elm, lime, mulberry, fig, whitethorn, plane, horse, chestnut, morello cherry, almond, currant and honeysuckle. For the flower borders he recommends – scarlet thrift, lilies, martagons, perennial sunflower, sweet-William, primrose tree, asters, scarlet lynchnis, campanula, French honeysuckle, dwarf iris, monkshood, colchicum, valerian, feverfew, pinks and carnations.

Humphry Repton

The two greatest English landscape designers of the early nineteenth century were Humphry Repton and John Claudius Loudon. Both had strong ideas about how the gardens in the London squares should be laid out and planted. Repton believed strongly in the – seamless integration of landscape and architecture and had the opportunity to illustrate his theories in the gardens of a number of prominent London squares. During the first decade of the nineteenth century Repton designed schemes for Bloomsbury Square, Sloane Square and what many consider to be his masterpiece at Russell Square. Repton recognised the dual function of a garden square as being both public object and private garden that would contribute to the embellishment of the capital. In

his - *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening* (published in 1806) he sets out his design principles for landscaping garden squares. This include such matters as – displaying natural beauty, creating a sense of extent and freedom, by disguising the boundaries with planting, omitting functional objects that are not ornamental, and creating a central space that is secluded and in character somewhere between a garden and a park.

Loudon Theories

The other great landscape garden designer and author of that period was Loudon, who also wrote about garden squares and produced theoretical strategies for them rather than fixed designs. Like Repton, Loudon believed that the owners of garden squares had a responsibility to enhance the beauty of the metropolis, beyond their own private use and internal enjoyment. He anticipated, prophetically, that these private squares would one day be open to the wider public. His schematic design for a garden square is a fairly formal mandala-like arrangement, with a dynamic central section divided by four double curved spokes meeting at the central point. The model included - perimeter planting, of trees and ever-green shrubs; an outer walk; sloping lawns falling to a circular inner walk lined on both sides by trees; with a network of paths leading to a central

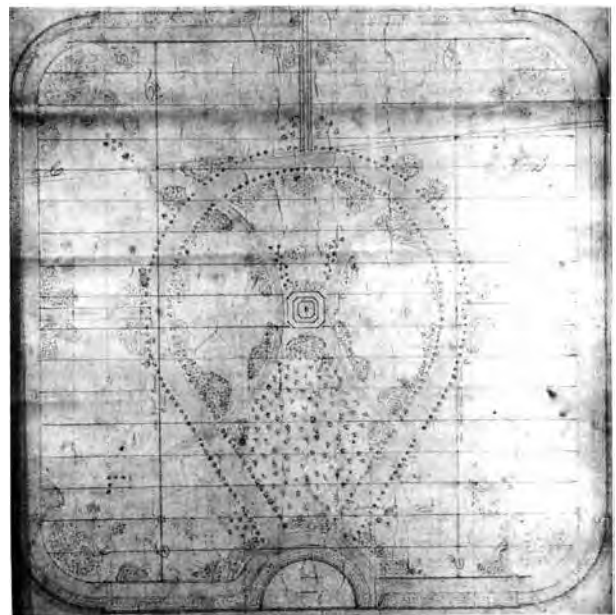


Fig.93 Repton's plan for Russell Square.

column or statue, between raised banks enriched with shrubbery and planting beds. Full of common plants, singular for beauty, fragrance and luxuriant growth – within a general mixture of variety and uniformity.

Health & Security

Garden squares were popular not only for their aesthetic beauty but for the health benefits of the greater levels of light and air; that they brought to the metropolis generally, and especially to the lucky beneficiaries who were fortunate enough to be able to play there, unaffected by the filth and disease common to other parts of the city. For some critics garden squares were little more than leafy resorts for the exercise of privileged children, while other commentators noted that the strict levels of control imposed by parents and other attendants afforded little freedom or joy to their charges.

Issues

As the planting matured and garden squares became less open and more discreet, impropriety and indecorous behaviour increased, culminating in some high profile members of the nobility being caught in flagrante within the shrubberies. Noise and disturbances were common in other squares due to prostitution, causing nuisance to residents. Recognising the importance of the elevated vantage point provided by first floor drawing rooms, Loudon noted that – planting in a square should not preclude surveillance of the central area from the first floor level of the houses surrounding it. Doubtless not only for the geometry of the layout, but also for passive surveillance that could curb antisocial behaviour.

Later Developments

During the final two decades of the nineteenth century, reforming landlords such as the first Duke of Westminster and his friend the twelfth Earl of Meath founded an organisation called the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association MPGA, the aim of which was to create playgrounds and public spaces for the benefits of all. This movement and the various impacts of the two world wars that marked the first half of the twentieth century, saw almost all of the private square parks become accessible to public. A combination of the blitz; the removal of iron railings

to be recycled as armaments to support the war effort; the erection of air raid shelters; the planting of crops to increase food supplies; and a general lack of maintenance – led to a dramatic change both in terms of planting, layouts and boundary treatments. Whether or not owners wanted their parks to be public, they were now and with the exception of those mature specimen trees that survived the bombing, much of the planting was lost.



Fig. 94 View of recently restored Russell Square.

London Garden Squares Today

Today new railings and some hedges have been erected around most of the park gardens, and while they are nearly all closed at night, most are now publicly accessible by day. With over three hundred square parks in central London the levels of maintenance are not consistently high, but the high amenity value is unquestioned. Many of the finest squares in Bloomsbury, Westminster and Belgravia have been restored to some degree in recent years, and provide many of their former aesthetic qualities to add to the amenity value of being relatively quiet places into which one can go to escape the noise and bustle of the city. They remain as London's most striking urban characteristic and a joy for citizens and visitors alike.

NOTES FROM MOUNTJOY SQUARE COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES

Notes & extracts from the Minutes of Meetings of the Commissioners for Mountjoy Square 1801-1884 from the period 1802 to 1830, which refer specifically to design, materials, and maintenance of the gardens, railings and streets. This material is held in the National Library of Ireland Manuscripts Department.

14th May 1802

...Clarke's proposal for iron railings with *four doors and forty four globe irons with locks...the same as round Merrion Square* within six months....

29th May 1802

Mr. Clarke produced a sample of the globe irons which was approved.

26th June 1802

Resolved to apply to the Corporation of the City of Dublin for the statue of the late king so that it could be placed in the centre. Mr. Thomas Baker's proposal for the foundation *for the rail* was discussed. (Note: no statue was placed in the centre of the gardens)

18th October 1802

Thirteen tenders for painting the railings were read out. They ranged from c. £34 to £90. The lowest tender, from Richard Dunn of Capel Street, was accepted. He was to paint the railings with three coats of *lead colour*. Clarke was to arch the upper crossbar over the gates to rise 2' above the height of the railings. The kerb stones were to be taken up and put back close to the *base stonework erected for the iron railing*.

26th February 1803

The treasurer has obtained according to desire three plans or drawings of squares in London much admired which he presents together with one obtained by the Rt Honble Lord Annesley drawn by Mr. Sutherland for inspection. The Commissioners examined the several plans and approved of that designed by Mr. Sutherland.

Mr. Clarke had completed the railing.

30th April 1803

Mr. D'Olier noted that he had received only one proposal for *trenching, planting, gravelling and finishing the interior of the square*, that *the terms are very extravagantly dear* and that those nursery men to whom he had applied were of opinion *no planting could be performed with effect sooner than October next*.

A decision was made to *trench the ground by day works for one fortnight* in advance of the planting season.

8th June 1805

Accounts from 1802 to 1805 are included. Sums were paid for administrative, printing and building works. Among the entries are:

Dec 16 1803	McGuire	Trees	£10.2.4
	Greenwood	Trees	£6.16
Mar 1804	McGuire	Trees	£6.16.4
	Carroll	Trees	£11.12.11
	McGuire	Trees	£11.-.1

20th June 1805

Resolved that ...*the Plantation shall not be destroyed or ignored...*and refers to ...*any of the Trees, Shrubs or Plants and the Improvements that have been made.*

15th June 1808

A request by inhabitants of the square to address the *Depradations...*committed in the interior of the Square.

24th August 1809

That three gates be chained ...*until some fixed plan can be adopted to prevent further injury to the Plantation.... that the treasurer could obtain plans and estimates for the building of a lodge at the north west corner of the Square for the Residence of the gardener.*

12th March 1811

Accounts show that Simpson was paid £5.-5 for garden seeds.

25th May 1812

....*that it appears expedient to increase the Lamps on the flagways and diminish the number in the Square....*

21st May 1818

Accounts indicate that Greenwood had been paid for trees in 1811 and Simpson for shrubs that had been supplied in 1813.

July 1830 (no date)

A beautifully written entry refers to a person to be employed at £20 per year in a full time capacity to look after the square and, among other things, to ... *prevent anyone walking on the Borders or the portion of the Ground under Shrubbery.*

....*that the walk next to the rails should be taken into the plantation.*

It was also resolved to ... *procure the assistance of a competent person to suggest such alterations in the plantations of the Square as may contribute to its further Improvement.*

....*that a memorial shall be presented to the Commissioners for paving requesting that they will give directions to have the foot path next the rails mended and small powder pavement substituted in the place of the paving Stones thereof.*

REPORTS ON CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL INTEREST GROUPS

Community After Schools Project (Caspr)

05 June 2014, 9.30am-10.30am

Attendees: DCC Parks : Kieran O'Neill CASPr: Anne Carrol & David Little (Secretary)

CASPr use the community building and external hardcourt areas and have a one year licence from DCC to do so. They consider the park is essential to their operation.

CASPr coordinate approximately 40 to 50 children each weekday, which involves picking them up from their school (designated schools – O'Connell's, Vincent's) and bringing them to use the community centre. There they are given lunch and planned activities, including a place to study which may not be available at home, and games such as tennis or basketball outside in the park subject to weather conditions.

A summer programme is also operated by CASPr including a musical programme, swimming and tennis.

Staff are present with the children and are from the local area and typically in training themselves.

They provide a safe environment for children who may be educationally disadvantaged.

They are concerned about issues of safety/anti-social activity in the park currently and consider that their presence in the park contributes to helping security there.

CASPr have no objection to the proposal for historic landscape reconstruction of the park if a suitable alternative location is available nearby for their organisation's activities. In review of the alternative locations currently proposed in the study, only the old training centre on Charles Street Great was considered to have potential. However, the suitability and condition of the existing building is unknown and is probably unsatisfactory.

In discussing the first phase of park reconstruction (western half of park) they noted that the removal of the existing hard-court area and replacement with lawn would restrict them in its use e.g. for tennis. Additionally they were concerned that weather conditions would affect use of a lawn.

CASPr consider the playground should be retained and they were shown the proposed location on the eastern side of the proposed plan for this.

CASPr considered that they would still use/visit the park after reconstruction.

North Centre City Community Action Project (Ncccacp)

05 June 2014, 11.30am - 12.30pm

Attendees: DCC Parks- Kieran O'Neill NCCCACP- Trina O'Connor (General Manager).

NCCCACP are based in Buckingham Street and use the community centre (curved part) and hard-courts for Fetac level training in sports (Soccer/ Basketball). Their programme is both educational but also partly behavioural modelling.

They coordinate 30 learners of ages 16-21 who may be early school leavers or referred to them by the courts. They aim to provide alternative positive directions in life for these youths.

NCCCACP use the community centre and hard courts areas from Monday to Friday. Ideally they would like to have shower facilities on site for the learners to use after outdoor training and before they return for the indoor academic part. Typically they are sent home to change before they return to classes.

In general terms as an organisation with various projects the ideal situation would be to have all their training in one location that has all the required facilities.

In reviewing the proposal NCCCACP had no objection to the historic landscape restoration and could see its value to Dublin subject to suitable alternative facilities for their operation. The old training centre site on Charles St Great presented the best opportunity for an alternative location however their first preference would be the old Bord Failte premises on Amien Street.

In the phase one proposal they would use a pitch on the lawn if available and requested if shower units could be made available during that period. In the longer term if relocated they would see great value in their learners being involved in the maintenance of the restored park as part of one of their training programmes.

Suggestions were made for the restoration plan and included location of the café closer to the playground, if possible providing fitness equipment for older citizens and if a community garden could be included.

St Brigid's Day Nursery

05 June 2014, 2.30pm-3.30pm

Attendees: DCC Parks- Kieran O'Neill St Brigids- Sinead Jones (Manager)

St Brigids is a charitable organisation and provides an early childhood care & education services for 60 children of ages 2-5 years who are typically referred on to them by public health nurses, Summerhill Family Resource service, Mater CAMHS, social workers and the HSE, North Great Georges St. Assessment & Intervention Team. Children attend the nursery five days a week from 9am until 3pm, 44 weeks of the year. The facility has never had to advertise to maintain numbers of children. Given the popularity and professionalism of the operation, it remains full to capacity each year by 1) local agencies liaising with the school & 2) word of mouth in the Dublin's North Inner City.

Their relationship with the wider park was discussed. St Brigids consider the park location itself as an asset to their nursery, as it creates a 'magical' environment for their children. This was obviously key in identifying a location in 1940 by the Civics Institute of Ireland. The school then went on to be managed by the Presentation Sisters and for the past 15 years it is now a Limited Company by Guarantee with Charitable Status, (CHY16017). The Board of Directors work in a voluntary capacity. It is a community-based facility with a parent representative on the Board of Management. Parental involvement is very much encouraged with a policy supporting this. The school has seen generations of families attend, many of which visit regularly. Open days are a great opportunity for the community to visit the school, reminisce and notice the progression of the service.

They have built up a good relationship with park staff. There is concern about anti-social activity in the park, more notably on fine weather days but this is minimal and separate to the school environment. Access by children to the park is limited by a supervising adult to children ratio requirement as this ratio may not always be met. To fulfil insurance criteria, the ratio must be 3 children:1 Garda cleared supervising adult when leaving the school, a ratio which is not possible most days.

The nursery premises dates from the 1930s with an extension dating from the 1980s. There was a Scandinavian influence in the original design of the building and a female architect, Mairin Hope was the designer.

An external space is provided within the Nursery grounds for outdoor activities which assist the children's physical & social development. A local youth organisation, Youth Reach assisted two years ago to improve the aesthetics of the outdoor area by planting bamboo, an herb garden which provides sensory experiences for the children, hanging baskets and flowers. This was an exciting project and important for the teenagers of the community to be involved in a feel good scheme. This blog is on our website www.stbrigidsnursery.ie, along with many more projects for the community to see.

The current relocation options were reviewed and while the old training centre on Charles Street Great was possibly the best; discussions with the Board of Directors of St Brigids would be required before a preference could be suggested on relocation. To keep in line with purpose built childcare facilities, Childcare Regulations, 2006, a site would have to be carefully chosen, such as Tir Na nOg, Sillogue Rd., Ballymun and St. Helenas Childcare, Finglas. DCC will assist with any further meetings if required with the Board. Ideally St Brigids would like to remain part of the current plans being proposed in order to continue to maintain a valuable service to the local community in Mountjoy Square Park North.

ENDNOTES

1. Submission to UNESCO for inclusion of The Historic City of Dublin on World Heritage List 2010
2. Longstaffe-Gowan gives an extensive overview of the development of London's Squares
3. Loudon 1822 p.1188
4. Dublin Evening Post 22/06/1790 cited in Mc Parland p.71
5. Murphy 2010 p.29
6. Coleman 1999 p.164
7. Murphy 2010 p.32
8. Ibid. p.34
9. Kelly in O'Kane 2012 p.71
10. McParland p.118
11. Warburton p.467
12. Heagney in Clark M. 2006 p.36
13. Rowan <http://www.dia.ie/works/search/mountjoy%20square>
14. Heagney in Clark M. 2006 p.34
15. Warburton p.467
16. Prunty 1998. P. 333. Quoting the Dublin Civic Survey (1925)
17. Minutes of Mountjoy Square Commissioners July 1830
18. Ashe 1941 p.99
19. Kelly in O'Kane 2012. p.74
20. Ashe 1941 p.101
21. Lamb, J. 1979. p.102
22. Lambe
23. Lamb, K., Bowe, P. 1995. p.44
24. Rowan <http://www.dia.ie/architects/view/5212/sutherland-john>
25. For Repton's design intentions regarding Russell Square see Stephen Daniels, pp.180-183.
26. Minutes of Mountjoy Square Commissioners 1802 – 1884, 26th Feb. 1803.
27. Reeves-Smyth, T. 1997, p.555
28. Lamb, J. 1979. p.102
29. Earl of Rosse, 1979. p.137
30. Lamb, K., Bowe, P. 1995. pp.43-50. An important distinction, which meant that Sutherland was an expert not only in the practicalities of laying out land, drainage systems and so on, but also in the field of aesthetic judgement, thereby elevating his activity to an art form, and setting him apart from the technical experts (e.g. plantsmen, breeders, estate managers).
31. Ashe, F.A. 1941. p.105
32. Anon., 1991. Gardiners' Dublin: a history and topography of Mountjoy Square and environs. p.36
33. Minutes of Mountjoy Square Commissioners 1802 – 1884, 24h Aug. 1803
34. Ibid. 18th Oct. 1802. References are made to English iron and British iron to be used wherever it was not possible to procure Swedish iron. (84 were globe irons were paid for)
35. Ibid. Ashe provides a detailed description of the changes to the square from 1801 up to the 1930s.
36. Maxwell 1936 p.81
37. McManus 2002, P.63
38. Prunty 1998 p.333
39. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1938/en/act/prv/0002/print.html> accessed March 2014
40. Dr. Ellen Rowley pers. corr. re: paper *The architecture of childcare in 1940s Dublin: Mairin Hope and the Civics Institute*
41. O'Byrne 2008 p. 90
42. Rowley pers. corr.
43. Kew Royal Botanic Gardens. http://apps.kew.org/trees/?page_id=119, accessed 23.01.2014
44. Tree Council of Ireland - Heritage Tree Database cites a small number of London Planes in Ireland of 28-31m in height. Only one is located, however, in constrained urban locations.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- Mountjoy Square Park is located in the north inner city of Dublin. Together with other garden squares in the city, it forms an integral part of the rich Georgian heritage of Dublin.
- The Georgian era in Dublin was a period of unrivalled growth. The Gardiner estate stretched from Capel Street in the west as far as the North Circular Road in the east, encompassing much of the north inner city. The first Luke Gardiner's development at Henrietta Street arguably established a template which was followed across the city for the next one hundred years.
- Mountjoy Square best represents the rational approach to urban design based on classical principles of form and proportion that prevailed in Georgian Dublin. The terraces that surround it were arranged to create a perfect square, within which a beautiful and refined garden was designed around a circular form the most sophisticated designed landscape to be found in the city.
- The urban square has historic antecedents with many variations in form and purpose; but the model of the garden square is particular to Britain and Ireland. Key characteristics include- metal railings enclosing a private shared garden; surrounded by terraces of townhouses to give an overall formality and visual coherence.
- Garden squares have in many cases been re-designed or redeveloped with buildings for new uses. They were originally designed to be for the sole private use of the *keyholders* who used the garden to socialise and to promenade among their neighbours, detached from the busy surrounding streets.
- The second Luke Gardiner's ambition for a square then known as *Gardiner Square* is first shown on a map prepared in 1779 by Thomas Sherrard. Drawings for *Mountjoy Square*, in a similar location, were drawn up by Sherrard eight years later. This included a grandiose residential scheme, along with a proposal that nearby St. George's church be relocated to the centre of the garden.
- When first laid out in 1790, Mountjoy Square was carefully sited to exploit the topography of the north city; placed on the crest of a promontory overlooking the Liffey estuary so that the surrounding streets fall steeply away to the west, south and east down to large tracts of newly reclaimed land. The leases were distributed in small parcels, with control retained in relation to quality of building materials, design proportions and parapet heights. The square was not fully completed until 1818, twenty years after Gardiner's death.
- The landscape design and procurement of materials for the park in the centre of the square was commenced in 1801 by order of Parliament. The Mountjoy Square Commissioners were formally instituted in 1802, and were active up until 1938. They represented the residents and property owners, who paid levies for improvements to the square. One of their first acts was to arrange the enclosure of the park with railings.
- Scottish-born John Sutherland (1745?-1826) is listed in the Commissioners minutes as being the designer of the garden; comparing favourably against three celebrated London squares. However, the level of his involvement after completing the initial plan is unclear. He was also responsible for the design of demesnes at Ballyfin and Rockingham. Works at Mountjoy commenced in 1803, after the railings were erected in 1802.
- Sutherland's plan responds to the precise geometry of the square with a symmetrical layout featuring a spacious circular lawn surrounded by winding paths to create an attractive Rococo composition. The planting was intended to be informal, although ascending in scale and screening from the inner circle out to the corners.

- The park was opened to the keyholders in 1805. By 1830, residents living in the surrounding neighbourhood were given access to the garden for one guinea per family per annum. Six years later the general public could pay to enter and see military band performances. From the 1870s, the central lawn was used for croquet and tennis, by which time a caretaker's hut was built in the north-east corner.
- Dublin Corporation took over the park in 1938, after which public toilets, a nursery and a community building were constructed, and the central lawn bisected with tennis courts screened by fencing. Later changes were made in the late 1960s when a park works depot was created and in 1993 re-planting and path resurfacing were carried out. Ten years ago a new playground was installed.
- The original wrought iron railings survive, but are in poor condition and have lost their lamps and arches over the gates. A programme of repairs to the ironwork and carved granite plinths is due to commence shortly.
- The park buildings are generally in poor condition and nearing the end of their life span. In the context of the restoration of the historic garden design, their removal is desirable. However, this should only take place after alternative community facilities are provided in the vicinity of equal or higher quality.
- Improvements to the public realm could include uncontrolled pedestrian crossings opposite park gates. These would increase the visibility of the park gates, while making the park more accessible and the public realm around the square more hospitable to pedestrians. In association with the Swiftway bus stop proposed for Mountjoy Square North, these improvements should encourage more locals and tourists to visit the square.
- The original path network should be restored, using a combination of archaeological investigation and map analysis. This project should be undertaken in stages, starting on the west side. The central lawn could be restored as soon as the hardcourts are relocated, leaving the existing buildings in place until such time as new facilities are provided nearby.
- The park would benefit from the provision of new facilities such as a café and toilets, in order to facilitate longer visits. These facilities should be sited beside the proposed Swiftway stop which enjoys the best aspect. Any new structures should be sensitively designed and respond to their historic setting.
- Another option would be to provide a new bandstand and shelter close by that with a newly designed playground, will create a vibrant section of the park that would allow the remaining areas to be used as originally intended, for the appreciation of nature and the historic architecture of the square.
- Mountjoy Square is an historic place of national significance and makes a major contribution to the European significance of Georgian Dublin. It illustrates the urban planning ideas of the Enlightenment that flourished throughout the continent during the eighteenth century.
- Mountjoy Square Park has become an important part of the social fabric of Dublin City as well as being a valuable amenity for locals and visitors alike. It is an ideal setting to illustrate Georgian garden heritage, its historical associations and its ongoing conservation and preservation.

Howley Hayes Architects are recognised for their work in both contemporary design and for the sensitive conservation of historic buildings, structures and places. The practice has been responsible for the conservation and reuse of numerous buildings of national and international cultural significance, several of which have received RIAI, Opus or Europa Nostra Awards. Under the Conservation Accreditation System, implemented by the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland, Howley Hayes Architects is accredited as a Conservation Practice Grade 1 and its director and associate director James Howley and Fergal Mc Namara are Conservation Architects Grade 1. Over the years the practice has completed many projects for the restoration and conservation of numerous historic buildings and places including – Russborough, Lambay, Larch Hill, Dromoland & Carton. Howley Hayes Architects have to date been responsible for over one hundred and twenty conservation plans, reports and strategic masterplans for clients such as the Heritage Council, the World Monument Fund, the Office of Public Works together with numerous local authorities and private clients.