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PROPOSED COLLEGE GREEN TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES.
ARCHITECTURAL IMPACT; PARLIAMENT STREET

Dear Sirs,

Parliament Street is the grandest street in Temple bar, appropriately constituting its principle North South axis connecting Capel Street Bridge to City Hall. At the junction with Essex Street the street opens to allow continuity of Temple Bar's central pedestrian artery linking Temple Bar Square and the East along Essex Street across Parliament Street to Essex Gate, Cows Lane and its Western street network. The junction of Parliament Street and Essex Gate is the 'crossroads' of Temple Bar. Its social significance as a 'cross roads' is evidenced by the location on opposite Parliament Street corners two of Temple Bar's most popular pub-restaurants.



Parliament Street is architecturally unique in scale and form, and in its particular style of urban intimacy. It is also historically unique. Laid out and opened in 1762 by the Wide Street Commissioners Parliament Street was the first instance of formal axial planning in Dublin in the mid. 18th Century. It was conceived as an integral part of “a grand new approach” to Dublin Castle from the north city along Capel Street and the new Essex Bridge, which is now Capel Street Bridge. The part of this new approach, which is now Parliament Street, was prescribed to be exactly the same width as the bridge at 15.5 mtrs. Street and bridge together form a single integrated architectural entity.

The buildings lining Parliament Street were designed to be four stories over ground floor in height, which is practically the same dimension as that of the street’s width. In plan form the new buildings were allotted a narrower footprint than up to then had been the norm. The narrow buildings combine with the street’s height-to-width ratio to create an intimate urban scale and a sense of place unique to Parliament Street. The aspect as one approaches from Capel Street Bridge to City Hall in terms of streetscape is one of Dublin’s most iconic set pieces. For the street user the experience is one of being in a great continuous tree lined urban room. Completing the sense of enclosure at its Southern end is the elegant classical architecture of City Hall.



In terms of function the Parliament Street design was directed by the Commissioners to accommodate commercial activity at ground level with residential accommodation at upper levels. This was a first for Dublin. Those far thinking design intentions of the Wide Street Commissioners, despite many material alterations and social changes

over the years, have survived pretty well intact to the present day in terms of both function and grandeur.

The physical dimensions of Parliament Street allow easy cross street eye-to-eye contact and spontaneous social encounter. That intimacy is entirely appropriate to its rich mixture of commercial, leisure and residential life. Its slow moving mixed mode two lane motor and busy cycle traffic movement is integrated into street life. It does not disrupt it, which supports the recent findings in the Netherlands that vehicular traffic does not require to be strictly separated from pedestrian movement to allow quality street life to develop. The "slow moving" factor is crucial to maintaining eye-to-eye contact and visual curiosity amongst the various categories of street population. In Parliament Street movement and street function are in harmony. The place is teeming with life, commerce and the dynamic of its many various uses – residential, commercial, restaurants, cafes, hotel, shops, bars and professional offices. The large volumes of visitors who are attracted throughout the year comfortably integrate into the street's every day life. Together these qualities vividly demonstrate what distinguishes the elegance of the urban life of a sophisticated capital city.

Parliament Street's physical design, street activities, its rich functional mix and balance – all those many vital interrelated elements synthesize to create quality architecture in the larger sense and a quality urban life which is uniquely sustainable. This means it plays a vital role in creating and maintaining a robust system of public spaces which are recognizable as fit for the character of the city.

Parliament Street is thus at the centre of a finely balanced urban ecology, which shall be destroyed by the traffic proposals contained in the College Green Traffic Management Proposal. It could not possibly survive. The damage shall impact on all of the interrelated urban elements outlined, from physical elements of architecture and its perception, but most seriously, on the vitality and quality of the commercial and social life between and in its buildings.

It is proposed to make Parliament Street a two-way 'bus only' corridor conveying an enormous volume of bus movement in excess of 1.690 Dublin City Bus, plus those of other operators, on a daily basis. Its function is more akin to that of a motorway than that of an inner city commercial street. Motorways require surrounding space to act as a buffer between their inherently noisy disruptive activities, and the rhythm of human life relevant to a city street. That space is not available here.

Noise levels shall exceed acceptable norms to an intolerable level as shall pollution emissions. Parliament Street shall not be a healthy location for residents or for the many who work there. Residential use shall no longer be feasible, commercial offices shall be required to relocate in the interest of staff well-being. The negative impact on street and kerbside life shall be terminally damaging to restaurants and café activities. The street shall die. Parliament Street, as we know it, shall no longer fulfill one of its most traditional roles, that of integrating diverse activities. On the contrary, it shall repel. The socio-economic damages shall be devastating and far reaching. Parliament Street shall become a hostile place for pedestrians, intolerably noisy with a constant stream of buses blocking day-light, belching fumes, and obliterating visual aspect, visual curiosity, and urban calm.

There shall inevitably be alterations and probable reductions to pavement width and design. Bus movement requirements shall impact along the whole street but particularly at its junctions with Wellington Quay and Lord Edward Street. The existing trees could not possibly survive such physical changes, nor could they survive the street's increased pollution levels.

Without any doubt there shall be serious negative impact on the physical fabric of the street. These are for the most part 18th Century structures. The buildings are highly sensitive and to a degree physically delicate due to their age and construction methods. Building standards of the 18th Century would have been much inferior to those of later periods. Some external walls are single-brick in width. Building foundations as we have come to understand the concept would not apply. A consequence of the greatly increased traffic shall be greatly increased vibration and structural movement to danger levels. In the context of protected structures as these buildings are, it is worth remembering that in this context minor changes such as the introduction as double-glazing have not been permitted elsewhere. It is not an exaggeration that in this situation the traffic proposals could be described as a deliberate act of vandalism.

Parliament Street is being sacrificed for possible urban gains elsewhere. It shall no longer be the organic hub of the area. It shall be a congested motor corridor the sole purpose of which shall be to get through the street as efficiently and quickly as possible. The urban design impact on the total entity of Temple Bar shall be particularly corrosive. East and West Temple Bar are subtly different in character, urban usage and cultural emphasis. They yet combine to achieve a clearly integrated sense of community and totality. The traffic measures proposed shall sever Parliament Street's role as a binding element between East and West Temple Bar. It shall separate, not integrate the concept of Temple Bar; a project in which urban integration was a central objective and for which substantial amounts of public and EU funds were invested

Yours faithfully,

Des McMahon
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