

Demolition of Former R & H Grain Store Dock Road, Ferrybank, Waterford

Part 8 Report



Waterford
City & County Council
Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Phort Láirge

Part 8 Report – Demolition of Former R&H Hall Grain Store, Dock Road, Ferrybank.

Introduction

This report relates to the proposed demolition of the former R. & H. Hall Grain Store, Dock Road, Ferrybank, Waterford. The building occupies a central location on Waterford's North Quays within an area formerly dedicated to port activities. These lands are currently zoned for opportunity/mixed use in the Waterford City Development Plan 2013-19 and are designated as a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) – see accompanying drawing No 9 illustrating SDZ boundary and grain store location. Waterford City and County Council propose the demolition of the nine storey, ten bay reinforced concrete warehouse built in 1905 and rated as nationally important by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

This report was prepared by Waterford City & County Council to consider the proposed demolition in terms of the redevelopment of this key City Centre brown field site.

A number of site inspections have been carried out over the summer and autumn of 2017 by local authority staff and various specialists, during which the detailed built features and other characteristics of the building were recorded.

This report includes a description of the building, a history of the building and site; a summary of the impact of the proposed demolition and recommended mitigation measures in respect of the identified impacts.

Requirement for Report

This report was undertaken by Waterford City & County Council in order to provide sufficient information for the local authority to make an informed decision on the potential impact of and requirement for the proposed demolition

Scope of the Assessment

It is intended that this report and its supporting documents form a permanent record of the structure proposed to be demolished. This report is supported by an Industrial Heritage Survey and Structural Engineering Report. Due to its location beside the River Suir Special Area of Conservation an Appropriate Assessment Screening was carried out. The proposal is informed by the findings of an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, Bat Survey and Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report.

In addition the report is based on the policies and objectives set out in the Waterford City Development Plan 2013 – 2019 and the broader strategic planning policies of the draft National Planning Framework as they relate to regeneration of underutilised urban lands.

Description of Structure to be Demolished

The former R. & H. Hall Grain Store is a detached ten-bay nine-storey, flat-roofed grain store or warehouse, built 1905-6, on a rectangular plan with three-bay nine-storey side elevations. The disused reinforced concrete building has a flat roof finished in asphalt which is not

visible behind the parapet with concealed rainwater goods and cast-iron downpipes. The exterior facades are of fine roughcast reinforced concrete walls on rendered chamfered plinth with rendered pilasters supporting "Cavetto" detailed string courses, including rendered pilasters (upper floors) supporting "Cavetto" detailed cornice to parapet. The north and south facades contain square-headed window openings with concealed dressings, steel window frames with square glazing bars. The interior retains reinforced concrete floors on reinforced concrete beams supported by reinforced concrete chamfered columns set on a grid

The site comprises the last remaining building of a former industrial complex which was used as a flour mills and grain store. The former industrial complex and its immediate environs were dedicated to industrial and port related activities which finally ceased when the Port of Waterford relocated to a deep sea facility some miles downstream. The building has been disused since the early 1990s.

Significance

The building is listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as of national importance (NIAH Survey of Waterford, ref 22900908). The NIAH appraisal is outlined below;

"A grain store or warehouse erected to a design by William Friel (1873-1970) of Waterford representing an important component of the early twentieth-century industrial heritage of County Waterford with the architectural value of the composition, one recalling the Friel-designed "shipping store" (1908) at Westport Quay (1908), County Mayo, confirmed by such attributes as the compact rectilinear plan form; the construction employing the innovative "Hennebique [reinforced concrete] Technique"; the streamlined pilasters producing a grid-like geometric Classicism; and the parapeted flat roofline. A prolonged period of neglect notwithstanding, the elementary form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, both to the exterior and to the pillared interior, thus upholding the character or integrity of a grain store of warehouse making an imposing, if increasingly forlorn visual statement overlooking the River Suir."

Proposed Development

The proposed development involves the demolition of the former grain store and warehouse which is centrally located within the nationally designated SDZ. These lands have been so designated in order to facilitate the sustainable redevelopment of the City Centre along the north bank of the River Suir, reshaping and rebalancing the City with the river at its core. The building is located on a strategic portion of the SDZ site close to the landing point of a proposed pedestrian and public transport bridge linking the City's retail spine south of the river to the North Quays. Connecting the North Quays SDZ and the existing City Centre is crucial to the successful development of the City.

Impact of Proposed Development

The proposed development will involve the demolition and removal of the former grain store and in this regard the greatest impact will be realised by the removal of the former grain store from the site.

In terms of the special interest associated with the structure an Industrial Heritage Survey was commissioned by Waterford City & County Council in order to fully inform its decision in terms of the future viability of the structure. In relation to the section 3.3 and section 4 of the survey report it is important that the categories of special interest are not purely considered in isolation of both the constraints deriving from the site context and the inherent constraints within the building fabric, these latter issues being considered further in the Structural Engineers Report.

The constraints deriving from the site context can be summarised as follows:

- Retention of the building at this central location within the SDZ would very seriously compromise the viability of suitable design options for the remaining SDZ lands. The retention of the building would therefore potentially sterilise the central portion of the site and jeopardise the viability of any redevelopment of the SDZ.
- At the location of the building, the site is constrained and narrow, being bound by the river to the south and the railway line and dual carriageway to the north. It therefore is a barrier to development at this key central portion of the SDZ.
- Vehicular access to and from the site is highly restricted due to the level of traffic along the busy dual carriageway arterial route R711, proximity to Rice Bridge and necessity to cross the adjacent railway line. These issues are exacerbated by the substantial change in ground levels between the R711 and the site which will require bridges and extensive infrastructural works across the site with provision of vehicular ramps to accommodate private and heavy goods vehicles.
- The viability of the redevelopment of the SDZ lands is founded on, among other things, the provision of a new pedestrian and public transport bridge link to the South Quays and the main retail centre of the City. There are a number of constraints pertaining to the design of this structure i.e. navigation, universal access and gradients for transport, existing street layout etc, which would be exacerbated by the retention in situ of the former grain store.
- The building is located within a flood risk zone as classified in flood risk mapping by the OPW. This would restrict the nature of use in terms of flood vulnerability at ground floor level while the inflexibility of the structural technique employed in construction may render the ground floor unusable.
- Requirements to provide new building forms to generate a viable regeneration proposal for the city centre SDZ site and which considers all the above constraints will result in a building form and volume which would seriously compromise the setting of the former grain store and negate any perceived benefit accrued by retaining the structure on site.

The constraints deriving from the inflexibility of building fabric can be summarised as follows:

- Redevelopment and reuse without compromising the buildings integrity involves finding a sympathetic use which would require minimum intervention and which

would be compatible with city centre location. The finding of such an economically and physically repurposing use would prove exceptionally challenging.

- The original commercial success of the building type resulted from its practicality and application to a specific use. Flexible planning and adaptability were not considered by the original client and designers.
- The building has a rigid structural grid across its floor plan and restrictively low floor to ceiling height (2.3 metres minimum to underside of beams and a column grid of 3.75 / 3.9 metres) which curtail reuse without substantial structural intervention.
- The success of the structural technique employed relies on its efficiency. Because of the interdependent construction/structural technique, removing individual structural elements without mitigation i.e. adding additional supporting structure would render the structure unstable. This would destroy the technical/structural integrity of the building which is one aspect of the buildings special interest.
- Achieving acceptable modern building standards including thermal transmission and energy conservation is rendered difficult given the construction technique and would involve considerable and material alteration to the building such as being wrapped by an external cladding or encapsulating within other structures.
- The inflexibility imposed by the rigid structure restricts the identification of a new economically sustainable use for the entire building given its valuable City Centre location.

Taking cognisance of the constraints listed above and having due regard to the Industrial Heritage Survey and the Structural Engineers Report, it is the considered view of Waterford City & County Council that due to the inflexible nature of the structure and the site constraints, the demolition of the structure as proposed is required to ensure the redevelopment of the North Quays and the SDZ lands can take place. This is critical to ensuring that urban regeneration takes place which is consistent with the land use and zoning objectives of the Waterford City Development Plan 2013 – 2019 and the broader urban regeneration policies at a National level as enshrined in the draft National Planning Framework.

With regard to the categories of architectural, historical, cultural and technical interest referred to in the Industrial Heritage Survey it is considered that:

- Architectural interest would be compromised by the site constraints and the need to provide viable options for building out the remainder of the SDZ lands.
- Historical interest – while acknowledging that the structure is one of the few Hennebique grain stores built in this country before 1914, the system was

however used in over 1000 buildings completed in Ireland and Britain with over 20,000 constructed world-wide.

- Cultural interest – the location of port activity has changed over time. For most of Waterford's history, economic activity was based on the South Quays and its facades are a tangible reminder of its long maritime history and contribution to economic role in international trade. For much of the buildings life it was part of a greater inter-related industrial complex and indeed largely hidden from view.
- Technical interest based on the structural technique would be seriously compromised in attempting to facilitate a reuse.

Waterford City & County Council would also recognise that while the building is representative of a stage in the development of grain stores and in the former economic role of Waterford City, the Council would hold the view that its retention on site, coupled with the inherent constraints within and without the structure, would compromise future development of the City Centre. Therefore, the proposed demolition is outweighed by the need to ensure the future sustainable economic development of Waterford City which is also focussed on the North and South Quays.

It is vital for Waterford City to ensure that this city centre riverside site which has been underutilised since closure of the port operations and which is designated by national legislation as an SDZ is brought back to use for the benefit of the City. Retaining the existing structure, although of some heritage significance, would severely curtail the design options and viability of future development on the broader North Quays. This is exacerbated by the substantial difficulties posed in identifying a viable new use for the structure due to the inflexibility and robust monolith nature of the structure for reuse.

Proposed Mitigation Measures

In addition to the commissioning of a very detailed Industrial Heritage Survey which has informed this report and Part 8 process, Waterford City & County Council propose the following mitigation measures to support the proposed demolition and in order to address the elements of special interest associated with the former grain store:

1. Scan & Computer Model: It is proposed to carry out a 3D laser scan of the building and produce a 3D computer model recording the building's exterior and interior features.
2. Report: A comprehensive Industrial Heritage Survey and Report have been carried out, see supporting documents attached.
3. Retain original and other machinery & equipment: Existing machinery and equipment on site will be recorded and carefully removed. The work will be carried under the direction of the Conservation / Heritage Officer / Waterford Museums staff items of historical interest will be retained for exhibition purposes on the site as part of future redevelopment.

4. Structure: It is proposed to retain one of the columns to beam connections, expose the reinforcing steel details, the essence of the Hennebique System and retain for exhibition purposes on the site as part of future redevelopment.

Conclusion & Recommendation

Notwithstanding the NIAH designation and the condition of the building and taking account of the constraints above, Waterford City & County Council considers that the viability of the future redevelopment of the SDZ lands outweighs the benefit derived from retaining the structure which by its construct will seriously restrict the identification and facilitation of a new use for the former grain store. It is therefore proposed to demolish the structure pursuant to this part 8 process.

Date: 8th November 2017

Supporting Documents

- **Industrial Heritage Survey**
- **Photographic Record & Detailed Description**
- **Structural Engineers Report**
- **Appropriate Assessment Screening Report**
- **Environmental Report.**
- **Bat Survey**
- **Drawings**
- **Maps**