

The Group 91 Framework Plan 1991

In 1991 Temple Bar Properties Ltd. initiated what was the most important architectural competition held in Ireland for years, the Temple Bar Architectural Competition. What it was looking for was an Architectural Framework Plan to outline a set of architectural and urban design proposals that would provide the physical basis for the sensitive urban renewal of Temple Bar as a unique cultural quarter with substantial residential accommodation.

The brief asked competitors to put forward ideas to convert the broad objectives for the renewal of Temple bar into a plan incorporating these major elements:

- The East-West Pedestrian Route and permeability
- Public Open Areas
- Pedestrianisation, Traffic Movement and parking
- Provision of Residential Accommodation
- Streetscape and Heritage
- The need to encourage Movement and Activity

The competition was won by a group of young, like-minded and forward-thinking architects called collectively Group 91. This comprised of Shay Cleary Architects, Grafton Architects, Paul Keogh Architects, McCullough Mulvin Architects, McGarry NiEanaigh Architects, O'Donnell and Tuomey Architects, Shane O'Toole Architects and Derek Tynan Architects.

In response to the particular set of issues that Temple Bar represented, Group 91's winning entry suggested 'no single solution, rather a flexible series of integrated responses...to release the dynamic potential of Temple Bar, while reinforcing its unique sense of place in our city.' In other words it was not a rigid, prescriptive masterplan but a general, working design guide.

The plan itself envisaged a community of 3,000 citizens living in this enclave within the city. It endeavoured to consolidate and conserve the existing character of the area whilst simultaneously injecting new life and architecture.

The East-West Pedestrian Route and permeability

In its details, it sought to use the historic street pattern to reinforce a newly pedestrianised backbone (The Fleet Street-Essex Street axis) along which one would encounter 'a sequence of stimulating urban incidents'. This involved introducing social magnets such as cultural centres and housing as well as intensifying commercial and leisure activities along the axis. A network of lanes and arcades cutting through existing blocks, a new curved street, residential courtyards and a new bridge (The Poddle Bridge) all served to increase permeability to the city at large.

Public Open Areas

Three new public squares were crucial to the plan, acting as hearts punctuating the East-West pedestrian route. Each was to be created out of derelict space and corresponded to a different function. Temple Bar Square was envisaged as primarily commercial and retail while Meeting House Square was seen as a performance-based,

cultural space with Market Square serving as a residential enclave of heritage. Each would lend a distinctive atmosphere to its respective surrounding streets.

Pedestrianisation, Traffic Movement and parking

The pedestrian-priority East-West axis along with a secondary meandering route and a network of north-south 'spines', traffic calming measures and a ban on on-street parking would encourage a free flow of people through the bustling quarter.

Provision of Residential Accommodation

Residential Accommodation would be provided throughout the area with a particular emphasis on the western end beyond Parliament Street. A dynamic mix of refurbishment and new purpose built apartments, incorporating a large element of student and social housing, would be created representing 'a diverse range of residential opportunities...to stimulate a lively social mix.

Streetscape and Heritage

Both the visible and invisible heritage of the area were considered crucial to its residential and tourism roles. There would be a bias against demolition with listed buildings being conserved and the existing range of architecture enriched by imaginative modern infill buildings. Modern street furniture would be designed to be unique to Temple Bar yet rooted in historical and visual associations.

The need to encourage Movement and Activity

Mixed use was the aspiration, both between buildings in the same block and within the buildings themselves. This lively mix of uses would ensure colourful diversity and encourage around-the-clock vitality on the streets themselves. Commercial and retail activity on the ground floor coexisting with residential accommodation or cultural activity .on the upper floors.

The Development Programme for Temple Bar 1992

This initial Framework Plan was further rounded out in 1992 with the publication by TBP of a broad-ranging Development Programme, which established a fleshed out framework in terms of the architectural, cultural, retail, residential and marketing programmes for the area.

Architectural Programme

See above

Cultural Programme

TBP intended to maintain and develop the existent mix of cultural activities within Temple Bar; to develop a number of major cultural centres; to develop facilities for small cultural businesses; to adopt a public art initiative; to promote the area as a unique quarter of cultural diversity and to source the capital funding for these cultural objectives.

Retail Programme

It was TBP's intention to consolidate and expand the existing 'alternative' retail uses of the area and encourage further investment by small businesses into the area. A priority would be given to unusual retail uses.

Marketing Programme

The development programme would conduct a marketing campaign to communicate the following key messages about Temple Bar:

That it is unique

That it is alternative

That it is a community

That it is an area of economic growth

And that it has a leading creative role

Environmental Programme

In addition the Development Programme set out the commitment of TBP to respecting the archaeological significance of the area and to conducting a policy of environmental sensitivity.

Overall the Programme would rollout in two phases: **Phase 1** (1991-1996) centred mainly on the area to the east of Parliament Street and **Phase 2** (1996-2000) involving the archaeologically important land to the west of Parliament Street, most of which was originally owned by Dublin Corporation.