In common with many other European cities, the centre of Dublin shows the effects of years of chronic neglect and depopulation. Unlike the ambivalent superstar master plans for Berlin and Genoa, the proposed rejuvenation of the Dublin’s Temple Bar area by a consortium of local architects is a much more low-key affair – yet its combination of responsive public space and mixed uses is an instructive paradigm for those involved in urban repair.

Gouged into the crumbling epicentre of Dublin, Temple Bar’s location has been both a bane and a boon. The 30-acre site is bounded by the northern edge by the Liffey Quays and to the south by Dame Street in the city’s financial area. The network of narrow streets extends from Trinity College and the eighteenth-century Parliament complex in the east, to City Hall and Christ Church Cathedral in the west. The western third of Temple Bar incorporates part of the medieval city, the remainder of the area, originally subject to flooding, was not established until the seventeenth century.

Despite its prominence, much of Temple Bar is today an area of white spaces, a dormitory for tourists, andinker with the shadow of Lord Edward Fitzgerald’s murder and the tenements where the Dublin Tenants’ Union operated.

The area was, however, one of the city’s most vibrant districts until the 1960s, when developers stripped the area of its character and desolate. Since the 1980s, the area has been rejuvenated and is now home to a thriving arts and cultural scene.

**Temple Bar Square**

There is a certain inevitability in the location and character of Temple Bar Square. In the area was the main bus station, which has been converted into a vibrant public space, intended as a forum for the area’s colourful and pleasant street culture.

The realisation of this new square is planned to cause the existing chamber to the existing fabric and involve the demolition of only one small building, strengthening the relationship between two nineteenth-century red-brick buildings.

**New pressures.** Despite the changes, the original form of Temple Bar – its topography, street names and character – remains legible, but this apparent continuity obscures a lengthy series of radical interventions during succeeding centuries. These include the construction of the Ha’penny Bridge, a cast-iron footbridge across the Liffey, and the linking of the impressively turreted tower of Temple Bar and its eastern extension by a new pedestrian footbridge across the Liffey (the Poddle Bridge) and a proposal to divert most through traffic away from Parliament Street, which is subsequently reconfigured as a tree-lined boulevard facing City Hall.

Planning permission has recently been obtained for three main elements in the Framework Plan – Temple Bar Square, the Curved Street and Meeting House Square, as well as the associated buildings that define their edges. Construction work on these projects is planned to start during the first half of this year, with completion by the end of 1994. Realisation of the second phase of the plan – the largely residential area between Parliament Street and Christ Church is scheduled for completion in 1996. In the meantime, work has already begun on a broad range of private sector and other associated infill developments throughout the area – among them the Irish Film Centre (p49).