THE CURVED STREET

Previous studies of pedestrian routes through Temple Bar had advocated creating a series of new internal passages through the fabric of a long block bounded by East Essex Street, Dienne Street, Temple Lane South and Eustace Street. Instead, the Framework Plan proposes creating a single new curved street at this point. The path of the new thoroughfare is cut through existing buildings and avoids adjoining properties, including a former Lord Mayor’s residence. The street, formed on either side by two new cultural buildings in a music centre with a 450-seat auditorium and a visual arts centre, breaks the elongated urban blocks to frame the eighteenth-century façade of the former Presbyterian Meeting House on Eustace Street. Beside this is a new entrance to Meeting House Square.

The block to the north of the new curved street, fronting on to East Essex Street is also the site of a residential pilot project. This is intended to demonstrate how the interiors of existing blocks can be remodelled as raised courtyards, giving access to dual-aspect apartments over retained commercial premises entered directly off the pavement. Residential projects such as this, and those on Temple Bar Square, are crucial to the successful renewal of the area. The current population of Temple Bar is a mere 250, but it is expected to rise tenfold during the next five years. As models for the repopulation of Dublin’s inner city - literally heaped during the past 20 years - the significance of these pilot projects cannot be overestimated.

MEETING HOUSE SQUARE

Meeting House Square is conceived as a nodal square on the converging axes of several new pedestrian routes through Temple Bar. The square itself is traversed through a new urban sequence running from the Curved Street, through the arched entrance on Eustace Street, into Meeting House Square and out on to East Essex Street. Drawing together strands of pedestrian movement from all directions of Temple Bar and beyond, the new square plugs them directly into the wider city via the new Puddle gate and pedestrian bridge across the Liffey at the mouth of the culverted river Puddle. The new Puddle Bridge links Temple Bar and the busy shopping precincts south of the river with the important Jervis Street axis on the north bank.

Located on the site of an existing car park, the square takes its name from buildings occupying two of its four sides - the former Presbyterian Meeting House (1726) and the nineteenth-century former Quaker Meeting House, transformed last year into the new Irish Film Centre (p48). Essentially an outdoor room, the square is intended to be used as an open-air performance space in the heart of Temple Bar’s cultural district. It will celebrate all forms of contemporary culture, including lunchtime music performances staged from the Presbyterian Meeting House and open-air cinema screenings on summer evenings during the film festival. The edges of the square are formed by a group of proposed new cultural facilities - a children’s centre and theatre in the former Presbyterian Meeting House, a building for housing the National Library’s photographic archives, a school of photography, a photographic gallery and a new mixed-use building on Sycomore Street to the west.