The completion of the Irish Film Centre in Dublin’s Temple Bar, has acted as a standard bearer for the area’s renaissance. A seventeenth-century Quaker meeting house has been inventively remodelled to create a building that draws inspiration from its dense urban setting and a lively cultural agenda.

Although not actually part of the proposals for Dublin’s Temple Bar (p.42), the Irish Film Centre (IFC) is the first new building to be completed in the area since the Group 91 framework was adopted and has acted, to some extent, as an indirect standard bearer for Temple Bar’s urban renaissance. The new building has a strong affinity and is closely associated with the existing urban fabric. The outcome is a building that is well suited to the needs of the future of Dublin’s socio-cultural life.

The Irish Film Institute acquired the former Quaker meeting house in 1978, where it is situated on the east side of the block, one of the narrow cobblestone streets that runs down from Dame Street to the edge of the river. The brief for the new building encompassed a new building to accommodate a new building that is a mixture of volumes – three cinemas, archive film storage (the fist facility of its kind in Ireland), restaurant, bar and bookshop, surrounded by smaller ancillary offices and administration spaces.

The Quaker’s presence on the site dates from 1930 and over the centuries the society had accumulated a disparate collection of buildings for meetings and other activities. Inevitably, in the case of the IFC, the complex geometry generated by the piecemeal acquisition had a potentially restrictive effect on the form and character of the new building. O’Donnell and Tuomey have slowed rationalised the tangled assemblage, discarding some of the less distinguished elements, until a flexible fabric had been achieved. The subtle, yet effective, use of materials was aimed at creating a mixture of linear and textile patterns on the site, reflecting a process of growth and change.

The new manner of the Irish Film Centre is to create a new building on the site by the insertion of a new building that is a mixture of volumes – three cinemas, archive film storage (the fist facility of its kind in Ireland), restaurant, bar and bookshop, surrounded by smaller ancillary offices and administration spaces.