

Conservation Architect's comments

The Paul Hogarth Company's proposals for Morrison's Island, Cork

We welcome the beginning of improvements to the city quaysides through this landscape regeneration project. The present urban park at Morrison's Island is a poor complement to the wider built environment and detracts from the legibility of the historic setting. The proposals from The Paul Hogarth Company intend to enhance the historic context of the city and its river setting through adoption of a contemporary design approach with which to integrate the necessary flood defences. We have the following suggestions and comments relating to the evolving design:

- **Improved setting:** It is an established principle that modern design adopting appropriate materials and details can sit comfortably in close proximity with historic fabric. Our view is that the current proposals largely achieve this aim and will help to enhance the setting of the important historic buildings and structures on Morrison's Island.
- **Retention/ Conservation of the quay walls:** We are pleased that the proposals incorporate the retention and repair of the historic quay walls and their associated coping stones and steps, concurrent with the contemporary designs for the regeneration of the urban park. The repair, consolidation and repointing of the quay walls affected by the works is important to ensuring that the relevant historic assets are respected and maintained. This will set a good precedent for future works, balancing flood defence, conservation of the historic assets, and cultural interpretation.
- **Retention/ Conservation of significant quayside artefacts:** Similarly we welcome the retention and repair of a number of historic quayside artefacts such as handrails, bollards, mooring hoops, capstans, and the heavily decayed fenders and their associated metalwork. At present they suffer from a legacy of neglect, some features ignored in parking bays or submerged in tarmacked surfacing. The approach to repairing or restoring the fenders, many of which are in an advanced state of decay, will require particular discussion in terms of their heritage significance. Additionally we hope that, where possible, historic artefacts will be preserved in-situ and incorporated into the urban landscape.
- **Reversibility:** The principle of the reversibility of alterations is considered good practice in conservation and we recommend that this is adopted in the specifying and carrying out of works. This allows for the correction of unexpected problems while avoiding damage to the architectural heritage.
- **Archaeological investigation:** The proposals present a useful opportunity for research and recording. Ground preparation works will expose sections of original quay surfaces, the details of which will likely inform understanding of Morrison's Island and contribute to broader knowledge of the site. Details that may be uncovered, such as the building out of various layers of historic quay walls, will prove valuable to the development of future interpretative schemes. Appropriate licenses will need to be in place for all archaeological works.
- **Interpretation strategy:** The proposals are an opportunity to develop and begin to implement interpretation of the quayside heritage of Cork city centre. The proposed viewing platform at Morrison's Island and the boardwalk at Trinity Bridge will be beneficial in this regard, offering space for interpretive information, and useful vantage points for views both up and down the channel and of the quays themselves. Interpretation should aid the viewers' understanding of their historic surroundings and we have welcomed preliminary discussions with The Paul Hogarth Company for integrating interpretation into the evolving designs. This should seek to accurately reflect and inform of the specific quayside and architectural context of Morrison's Island against the wider background of the city quays.

- **Signage:** At present there is a clutter of signage across the area affected by the proposals, much of which is inappropriately attached to historic masonry. Replacement signage should not be attached to or mounted on the historic quay walls.

- **Input at RIAI work stages:** We envisage our continued involvement throughout the RIAI work stages, advising on the detailed design process and on site application of conservation standards during construction. This would include detailed scheduling of stonework prior to repairs to the quay walls and the assessment of pointing and stonework during and after repair.