

# LISTOWEL

| ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA *toolkit* |





Listowel  
3<sup>d</sup> April 1824

LISTOWEL | APRIL 1824

## INTRODUCTION

Listowel town was planned by Thomas Fitzmaurice, 1st Earl of Kerry (1668 - 1741), son of William FitzMaurice, 20th Baron of Kerry and Lixnaw. Thomas married Anne Petty, the daughter of scientist and philosopher Sir William Petty and Elizabeth Waller, Baroness Shelburne, in 1692. It was around this time that the layout of the town's main streets and square evolved.

Listowel's role as a vibrant and bustling agricultural market town was firmly established in the early 19th century when Listowel Bridge was constructed linking the town with the butter road leading to Cork. During this period many of the town's iconic buildings were built; its Georgian and Victorian shops and townhouses, its churches, bank buildings and railway infrastructure.

During the late 19th and early 20th century, Listowel's renowned shopfronts were renovated by master craftsman Pat McAuliffe and others; providing a lasting and unique contribution to Irish decorative art.

The 'Listowel Heritage and Community Led Regeneration Strategy 2017 -2022' sets out a shared vision for the regeneration of Listowel. The vision is supported by a series of initiatives and actions, designed to maximise the benefits of Listowel town's heritage assets. Project 2a of the strategy seeks to audit each street façade to establish its current condition, character and impact on the streetscape.

An audit of the Square, Church Street, Main Street and William Street has now been completed. This toolkit provides an overview of its findings. It contains advice and guidance on how best to conserve the town's built heritage and is designed to benefit the entire community. Buildings representing the character of each of the audited streets have been included in the toolkit as samples of what is on offer.

The full survey is available to view on the **kerrycoco.ie** website. The project has been funded by The Heritage Council, LEADER, Listowel Tidy Towns and Kerry County Council.



## KEY FEATURES

### MAIN STREET & CHURCH STREET

Main Street and Church Street represent the dense commercial heart of Listowel. It is defined by 19th century three-storey terraced townhouses with shopfronts. Many façades were embellished in the early 20th century. The more ornate façades are attributed to master craftsman Pat McAuliffe. Listowel contains a unique collection of stucco façades that collectively represent the best of Irish 19th and early 20th century urban architecture.

Upper Church Street marks a transition of dense urban development to rural hinterland. Plots are larger than those of Lower Church Street, and this stretch has a leafy and more suburban character. Church Tower and the Youth Centre (former Carnegie Library) add historic interest while the intervening buildings are fine examples of twentieth-century townhouses.



## THE SQUARE & WILLIAM STREET

The Square presents an impressive urban space, with St. John's Theatre and Arts Centre as a central architectural set piece. The perimeter, predominantly comprising 19th century townhouses, forms a strong enclosure with eye-catching landmarks, notably Listowel Castle and St. Mary's Church. The townhouses are also punctuated by impressive late 19th and early 20th century bank buildings that stand as excellent examples of Irish bank architecture, a very specific typology. The townhouses constitute a wonderful example of urban dwellings that activate the Square and provide sustainable homes, as well as contributing handsome aesthetic values to the streetscape.

William Street is part of the commercial heart of Listowel. Buildings are predominantly terraced three storey mixed use premises. The street is characterised by the presence of render detailing such as quoins, architraves and courses. Overall, William Street benefits greatly from well designed and executed signage be that historic or recent. In some instances, hand-painted signage contributes positively to the visual appeal of the streetscape.





## 12 MAIN STREET | The Maid of Erin

*Historic use:* Shop with accommodation above

*Date of Construction:* c.1880

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Terraced building with shopfront. High-relief stucco figurative 'Maid of Erin' sculpture between bays to first floor. Replacement uPVC windows. Shopfront comprising pilasters and curved brackets, Celtic strapwork patterning, surmounted by urns, fascia render lettering, cornice supporting balustrade, acanthus leaf foliage and wrought-iron railings.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

An iconic, monumental work by Pat McAuliffe c.1912. The elaborate and exuberant stucco design employs an eclectic mix of classical, Celtic Revival and Art Nouveau influences. The vivid colour scheme further enhances the elevation. Activity at ground floor level enlivens the streetscape

## 15 MAIN STREET | Listowel Travel

*Historic use:* Public house & grocer with accommodation above

*Date of Construction:* c.1840, refurbished c.1880

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Terraced building with shopfront. Textured render block-and-start quoins and window keystones to upper floor. Moulded shopfront comprising pilasters with Corinthian capital brackets, finials with foliated decoration, fascia with hand-painted lettering, and cornice with jewel motif over.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Elaborate stucco detailing was executed by Pat McAuliffe c.1880 fusing a broad vocabulary of architecture and ornament. Similar in proportion to neighbouring buildings, presenting a sense of continuity in the streetscape. The vivid colour scheme further enhances the elevation.



## 15 CHURCH STREET | The Emporium

*Historic use:* Post office with accommodation above  
*Date of Construction:* c.1840, refurbished c.1905-1910

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Terraced building with shopfront. Decorative moulded rendered parapet comprising curved broken pediment surmounted by figurative eagle. Smooth rendered walls with incised render pilasters to upper floors. Timber panelled doors and over-lights.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

An elaborate work by Pat McAuliffe c.1910, with a balanced composition and narrative that encompasses the full façade mixing classical, Celtic Revival and Art Nouveau influences. Activity at ground floor level enlivens the streetscape. Cast-iron rainwater goods add material interest.

## 60 CHURCH STREET | Liam Dillon

*Historic use:* Shop with accommodation above  
*Date of Construction:* c.1880

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

End-of-terrace building with shopfront. Early stucco shopfront having nailhead moulding to pilasters, ornate corbels and moulded cornice to fascia. Square-headed openings to shopfront having vermiculated rusticated vertical surrounds.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Shopfront and embellishments add visual interest to the streetscape. The stuccowork is attributed to Pat McAuliffe c.1910. Hand-painted signage displays skilled craftsmanship. Retention of the original scale and window proportions, shared with those neighbouring buildings, contributes a sense of continuity and uniformity to the streetscape.



## 12 THE SQUARE | Butler Centre

*Historic use:* Bank with accommodation over (National Bank)  
*Date of Construction:* 1865

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Detached bank building. Slate roof. Ashlar limestone walls and cut limestone chimney stacks with clay pots. Carved keystone with figurative representation. Segmental and round headed window openings. Cut limestone steps to entrances, with carved limestone boundary wall having cast-iron railings to front elevation.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Displays high-quality skilled artisanship in the carved limestone detailing, the figurative sculptural elements are particularly noteworthy features. Retains finely-crafted and unusual timber sash windows which lend delicacy to the elevation. An excellent example of Irish nineteenth century bank architecture.



## 19 THE SQUARE

*Historic use:* House  
*Date of Construction:* c.1840, remodelled c.1910

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

End of terrace house. Rendered walls, channelled to ground floor and smooth to upper storeys, with moulded stringcourse above ground floor, render quoins, all surmounted by entablature comprising moulded cornice, panels to frieze and elaborate layered cross motifs to the architrave.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Elaborate and contrasting facade textures, with skilfully-crafted render features, add variety and interest to the streetscape. Retains early building elements including sash windows, cast iron rainwater goods and stone threshold. This adds material interest to the streetscape.



## 24 THE SQUARE | Kerry Writers' Museum

*Historic use:* House  
*Date of Construction:* c.1820, refurbished 2000

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Terraced former house. Slate roof with rendered chimney stacks, decorative clay pots and cast-iron rainwater goods. One-over-one timber sash windows in tripartite arrangement. Cut limestone steps with metal railings to entrance with 'Peacock' decorative fanlight to front door.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

An elegant building of balanced proportions, occupying a prominent location and forming a pleasing feature in the streetscape. The finely crafted boundary walls and gates are similar to others running along this side of The Square, contributing a sense of continuity and uniformity to the streetscape.

## 28 THE SQUARE

*Historic use:* House  
*Date of Construction:* c.1860

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Terraced house. Slate roof with rendered chimneystacks, clay pots and cast-iron rainwater goods. Remnant of sill course connecting to neighbouring house (No. 27). Segmental-headed carriage arch with voussoirs and keystone, having timber battened gates. Iron railings with Fleur-de-Lis finials on cut granite plinth wall, with matching pedestrian gate, to street.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Skilfully-crafted render features, add variety and interest to the façade. Vivid and matching colour scheme. The presence of the carriage arch with decorative render voussoirs adds interest and allows permeability to the rear. Boundary attests to the quality of historic stonemasonry/metal craft.



## 20 WILLIAM STREET | Con Dillon

*Historic use:* Public house with accommodation above

*Date of Construction:* c.1830

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Attached building with shopfront. Dentillated eaves course with render nailhead quoins. Bipartite timber sliding sash windows with some historic glass, having moulded architrave to second floor, and faience tile architrave with moulded entablature to first floor. Floral and fruit motifs to mouldings and tiles. Early limestone threshold to door

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Façade detailing, including hand painted signage, displays skilled craftsmanship. The faience tiled architrave is a rare surviving example of art nouveau influences in the decoration of facades in the late nineteenth century. Rare historic glass to the sash windows adds depth and character.

## 21 WILLIAM STREET | O Gealbáin/JJ Galvin & Sons Ltd.

*Historic use:* Public house with accommodation above

*Date of Construction:* c.1840

### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Attached building with shopfront. Render quoins and moulded sill course to second floor. Carved timber shopfront pilasters having console brackets and colonnettes to capitals, dentillated cornice and mosaic tiling to fascia signage. Arched timber frame and multi-pane frame to upper portion of window and to overlight, both having Celtic motif to spandrels and coloured glass roundels.

### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Unique decorative carved timber work, decorative glazing and mosaic work to the shopfront displays skilled craftsmanship, adds relief and interest to the streetscape. Attractive colour scheme.



### 39 WILLIAM STREET | Stacks Furniture & Carpets

*Historic use:* Commercial unit with accommodation above  
*Date of Construction:* c.1840

#### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Terraced building with shopfront. Quoins, string course and bracketed eaves to first floor. First floor windows having moulded architrave with interlace motif. Shopfront comprising elongated nailhead profile render pilasters, interlaced motif capitals and moulded cornice to fascia.

#### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Render shopfront embellishments add relief and interest to the streetscape. The nailhead profile to the shopfront pilasters is an unusual and dynamic feature. Early cast-iron rainwater goods add character to the streetscape.



### 48 WILLIAM STREET | John Griffin Craft Butchers

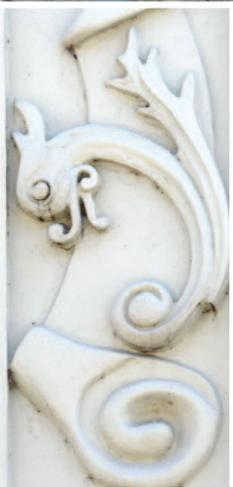
*Historic use:* Commercial unit with accommodation above  
*Date of Construction:* c.1890

#### CORE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Attached building with shopfront. Quoins, dentillated eaves cornice and bracketed sill course to upper floors, plinth course to ground floor. Shopfront comprising dentillated cornice and decorative capitals to fascia, render panelled pilasters with decorative capitals.

#### HOW THE PROPERTY ENHANCES THE STREET CHARACTER

Retains traditional shopfront arrangement. Hand painted signage displays skilled craftsmanship and is in keeping with the traditional character of the street. Good example of a wealthy merchant house with neo-classical embellishments that became popular in Irish towns in the late nineteenth century.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS TO SPECIAL CHARACTER

**Vacancy:** After demolition, vacancy is the single biggest threat to the survival of historic properties. Without occupation, properties can quickly fall into a state of decay. Where shop units are vacant some owners maintain the façade and in some instances a shop window display has been installed. This approach is to be encouraged to maintain visual interest.

**Scale:** The fine grain of the established streetscape, determined by plot sizes, should be maintained. The amalgamation of properties, if not carefully considered, can interrupt the rhythm of the streetscape and the long urban vistas. The proportions of ground floor window and door openings should be retained.

### BUILDING ELEMENTS

**Roofs:** Very few roofs have original slates in place. This may indicate that the original slate was of poor quality. Where surviving, efforts should be made to maintain it as it is now extremely rare.

**Chimneystacks:** Of all building elements, chimneystacks are those that appear to be most neglected due to inaccessibility and their falling into disuse. This impacts on the overall streetscape views as the former rhythm of repeating units is lost. Neighbours could consider working together to share cost of maintenance.

**Rainwater goods:** Some early cast-iron goods remain; however, a large number have been replaced with uPVC. Where cast-iron remains efforts should be made to retain it. It is as an inherently more robust material and can be painted to match the façade resulting in less visual clutter to the streetscape.

**Walls:** Most walls are smooth rendered with decorative detailing which lend visual and contextual interest. Removal of plaster to expose the underlying rubble stonework is out of character with traditional finishes leaving the structure more vulnerable to decay from water ingress.

**Windows:** Very few early timber sliding sash windows remain with many replaced with uPVC. Many of these new windows are outward opening, which is out of character with the historic streetscape. Efforts should be made to retain and repair the historic windows that do remain.

**Doors:** Very few early timber doors remain, presumably due to wear and tear and universal access. Where new doors are required, they should be sympathetic to the traditional streetscape. Many limestone thresholds and plinth blocks remain and where possible these should be maintained. Issues of universal access can be addressed by resetting early stone to form a level threshold.

**Shopfronts:** Many shopfronts received ‘face-lifts’ at the end of the nineteenth or early twentieth century by way of decorative stuccowork. Every effort should be made to maintain early stuccowork as this is such a strong defining characteristic of the Listowel streetscapes.

New timber shopfronts with bulky pilasters and fascias are at odds with the elegant proportions of the overall façade. They encroach on the public footpath and their material character is inherently unsuitable to placement directly on the ground resulting in rot giving an impression of neglect. A colour scheme that unifies the entire building should be chosen as using different colours adds to clutter.

**Signage:** Overall, Listowel benefits greatly from well designed and executed signage be that historic or recent. In some instances, hand-painted signage, perhaps not of historic interest, contributes positively to the visual appeal of the streetscape and alleviates clutter.

**Services:** exposed cables are very common. They add clutter and detract from both the plain and modest façades as well as the more ornate shopfronts. Some buildings also have floodlights which adds visual clutter to the façade, detracts from the render detailing and is a source of light pollution

**Carriage-arches:** Carriage-arches make a significant contribution to the streetscape; they add visual interest, recall historic usage of the site and allow permeability. They should be retained. Jostle stones served an important purpose in the protection of buildings from the jostling wheels of traps and carts still stand at many carriage arches and add material and historic interest to the street.

**New interventions:** Vacant plots offer an opportunity for renewal. New buildings should avoid pastiche and follow existing plot boundaries to retain the existing grain, an important determining factor of the special character of the streetscape.

## BOUNDARY TREATMENT

Overall, property boundaries such as railings and walls are in very good condition with a variety of plinth walls with cast and wrought-iron railings and pedestrian gates intact, particularly in the Square. These have been well maintained and add to its special character, and should be retained.





Funded by The Heritage Council



Supported by



**Listowel Tidy Towns**  
WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY FOR A LITTER-FREE TOWN



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Coiste Forbartha Pobail  
Áitiúil Chiarraí  
Kerry Local Community  
Development Committee



CARSON & CRUSHELL ARCHITECTS