



D R O M O R E CONSERVATION AREA





SEPTEMBER 1992

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Environment (N.I.), after consultations with Banbridge District Council and the Historic Buildings Council, has designated a Conservation Area in Dromore, County Down. The aim is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Area, the boundary of which is shown on Pages 8 & 9.

The Conservation Area reflects Dromore's rich and varied heritage, from early Christian beginnings, through Norman conquest, seventeenth Century rebellion and war, to the industrial revolution and modern times.

The Department appointed Crawford W. Campbell Associates (Landscape Architects and Site Planners) with Desmond FitzGerald (Architect) to carry out a conservation study of Dromore and this booklet is the outcome of that commission. It sets out guidelines for development and indicates a range of possible environmental improvements for the Conservation Area.

It is hoped that the designation will provide a sound basis for involving the people of Dromore in the processes of conservation and town regeneration.

CONSERVATION AREA  
CHARACTER & APPEARANCE

**D**romore is a Cathedral town of ancient origins, situated in drumlin country on the River Lagan. It has a distinct architectural character with most of its building facades dating from the 19th or early 20th Century.

These buildings are varied in architectural style. They range from the austere classical forms of the traditional buildings of Irish country towns, through the ornate almost fanciful buildings of Ulster's great period of industrial prosperity in the late 19th and early 20th Century, to the modernist 1960's.

Many of these buildings are rich in interesting vernacular craftsmanship and give evidence of a time in the not-too-distant past when the buildings of Dromore were the subject of considerable civic pride.



The centre of the town still possesses a strong urban form, notably some narrow streets and a square. The streets have a special charm and quality, derived mainly from their narrowness, continuous frontages, and the traditional style and scale of the buildings.

Regrettably the current high levels of dereliction and vacancy, detracts in part from the town's appearance.

The Market Square and Church Street form the commercial centre and the way in which the street pattern focusses on the Square draws attention to the Town Hall, which was one of the last of Ulster's market houses to be built.

Church Street links Market Square to the Church of Ireland Cathedral, which has played a major part in the history of Dromore. The Cathedral is modest in style and scale, but is one of the few buildings to fully exploit Dromore's riverside setting. Dromore's other church buildings make a significant

contribution to defining the extent and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area contains most of the town's listed buildings and ancient monuments. These are scattered in location rather than being concentrated in one part (See Pages 8 & 9 and

Appendix 1 ).



At each end of the town a remarkable large scale abandoned structure stands in the landscape; the Norman Motte and Bailey at the east end, the old railway viaduct

at the west. The River Lagan enters Dromore from the east in a dramatic wooded valley below the imposing motte and flows through the town to the attractive park in which the viaduct stands.



E X I S T I N G   S P A C E

THE MOTTE

The ancient Norman Motte and Bailey is very well preserved.

It forms a very strong visual feature, occupying, as one would expect from its former defensive role, the highest ground in the area. The grass banks



and surrounding areas are well used for local recreation. A worn path can be traced and the eager pedestrian can make his/her way from the motte to the

river. It is interesting to note the grass sward of the Motte is extremely rich in herb species and provides a haven for wild flowers, insects and small mammals. Those who visit it can also take advantage of the scenic panorama.

VIADUCT PARK

The area around the old railway viaduct has been developed as a well used town park. This area takes advantage of the river and the visual interest of the stone constructed viaduct. The park



contains many other features and references to Dromore's industrial past. Paths are surfaced and seats provided, as well as

a children's play ground. Timber deckings allow access to the river's edge. This has been well constructed and fits into the landscape. However, the real potential is lost as the footpaths have not been linked to the town via the riverbanks.

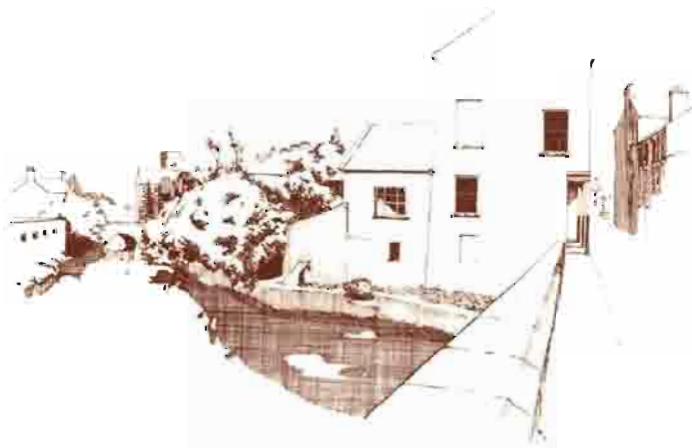
## THE RIVER

The River Lagan winds its way through the town and is visually very attractive as well as being a tremendous resource for wildlife and plants. It is a valuable habitat for fish, insects and birds whilst providing a source of recreation for local children

and fisherman. Unfortunately the town buildings ignore the river by turning their backs to it, so a potential asset is lost. The small stone bridges crossing the river allow glimpses of the water, but the

backs of riverside buildings are often somewhat drab and dingy.

Nevertheless, the river is clean and extremely picturesque.

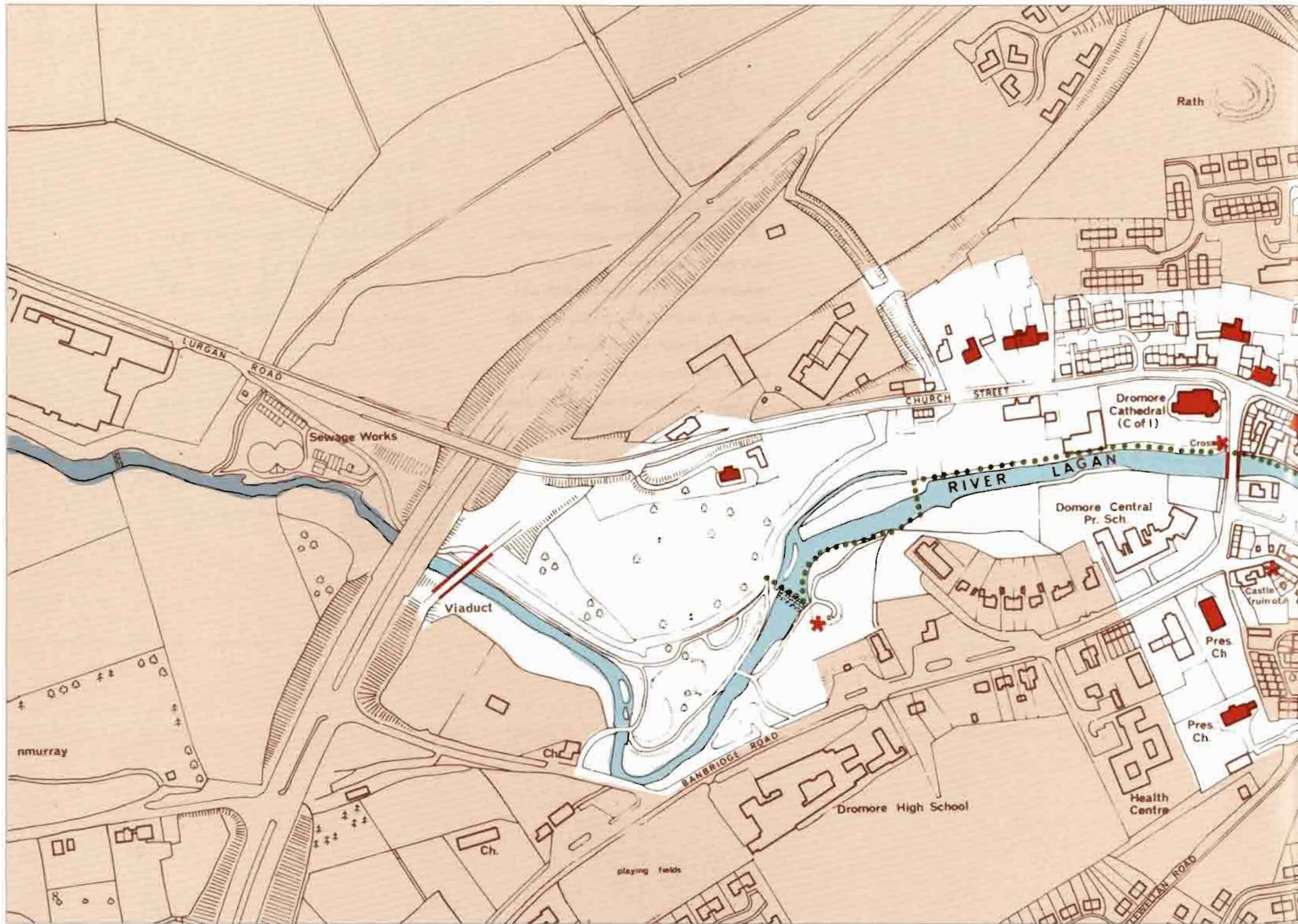


## THE TOWN HALL

The brick Town Hall not only provides a municipal building but the space surrounding it assumes the role of the town square. There has been a recent environmental improvement scheme carried out here, providing seats, planting, railings and street lighting.

Further enhancement is needed which would complement it. Parking provision also needs to be rationalized in the square.







EXISTING LAND USE AND  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



## DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**D**romore offers urban design opportunities in both architectural and landscape terms. The river, if developed in such a way as to provide a walkway from the viaduct, through the centre of the town to the Motte, would form an extended linear park. A new crossing of the river, along the line of the existing lane, at the eastern end of the Square should be made to Meeting Street. Market Square and Bridge Street should be the main targets for refurbishment. Conservation should also be seen as a process capable of contributing to the regeneration of Dromore town centre. Several major new development opportunities exist which could assist regeneration. In time a new development at the junction of Mount Street and Market Square could help revitalise the town centre, as would the development of smaller *infill* sites. Together these elements form the basis of an enhancement strategy for the town.



#### RIVERSIDE WALK

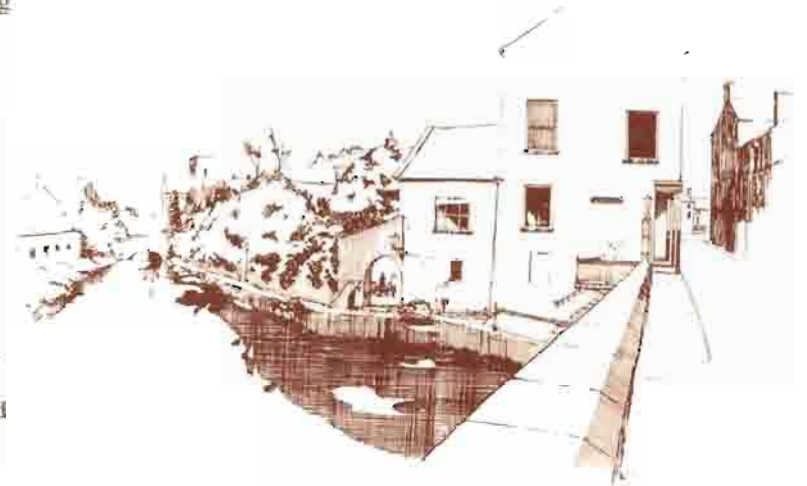
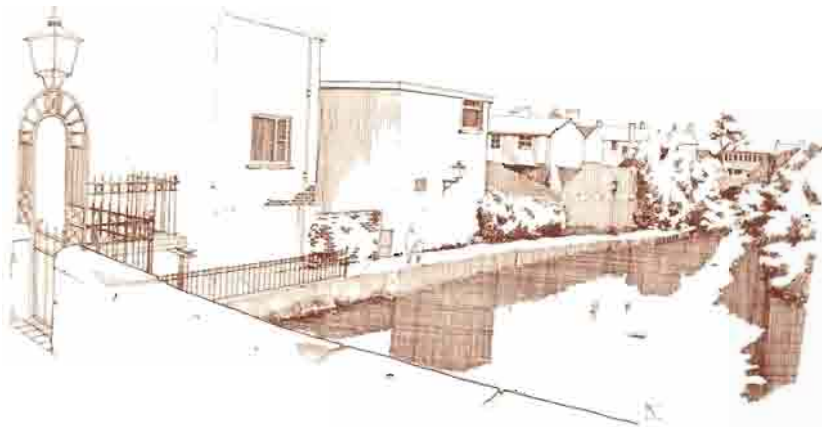
Whilst it has become clichéd to say that Irish towns turn their backs on the river, Dromore is

just such a town. There is great potential for creating a footpath network, linking the town's two dramatic features - the Motte and the Viaduct. The small park at the viaduct is well used, as is the open space around the Motte.

By linking these features, a mutual reinforcement of the town's recreational and leisure resources could be achieved. Indeed there is

scope for the provision of many links which could be made from the new and older housing stock in the town to this new riverside park.

Furthermore, the backs of the riverside buildings have great development potential.



D E V E L O P M E N T  
O P P O R T U N I T I E S



**M**OUNT STREET site is situated to the rear of the small shopping units and the river between the laneway and Grahams site. This is a very important location being one corner of the Market Square. The present shopping units are characterless 1970 grey brick and flat roofed construction. The site falls gently from the Square to the river. Directly opposite on the other side of the river is a car park. This is perhaps the most important development opportunity within the conservation area as it offers the redressing of unfortunate existing modern buildings as well as providing a large central space for either commercial or civic development. This site would also allow a new building to respond to the riverside setting with access both from the existing car park on the opposite bank via a pedestrian bridge and the proposed riverside walk. Any new development on this site must be of the right scale and massing as to blend with the existing pattern without dominating the small scale individual buildings of the town.

**V**ACANT SITES, of which there are two on Market Square spoil the visual continuity of this central space. Not only is the hoarding protecting these areas unsightly, but being vacant gives the entire area a down at heel appearance. In terms of enhancement it is very important that these sites are developed. A suggested treatment of a new building is shown on Fig. B Page 19. This elevational solution could blend into the existing facades in a restrained manner providing a timeless solution to infill.

**G**ALLOWS HILL, the open space between St. Colman's and the rear of the buildings of the Market Square has been cleared of the terrace housing it once possessed. This now creates development opportunities. There is a considerable fall from the chapel down to the Market Square and except for this there are few constraints to any suitable development. It will be necessary to produce a developers brief which will allow the proposed development to relate to adjoining buildings and to the existing street pattern.

## D E V E L O P M E N T   G U I D E L I N E S

Developers will be encouraged to refurbish, upgrade and convert existing property. New developments, including alterations and extensions should be designed to enhance the visual quality of the Conservation Area. Residential development and development which makes use of the upper floors of buildings is particularly appropriate, given the large amounts of underused commercial floorspace.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS for development in the Conservation Area, if designed in accordance with the guidelines set out under the headings MAKING FACADES & BUILDING DETAIL, will normally receive sympathetic treatment in relation to design considerations.

Where Listed Buildings (see Page 30) are involved, strict planning controls are exercised.



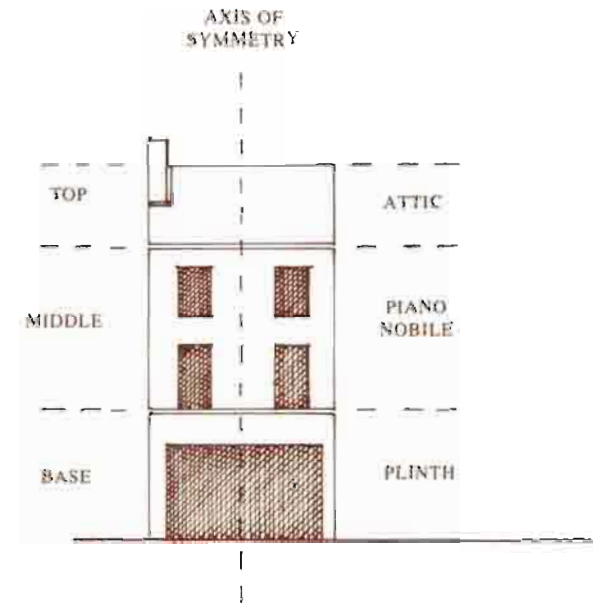
## M A K I N G F A C A D E S

Although Dromore's buildings are varied, their facades tend to abide by strict rules and it is this that gives the town much of its character. The analytical drawings draw attention to these rules which were rarely broken until the 1960's.

☛ Most street buildings have relatively narrow frontages and are built in cross wall construction in one, two or three bays. More than three bays in a street building rarely occur other than in highest quality town residences or large institutions.

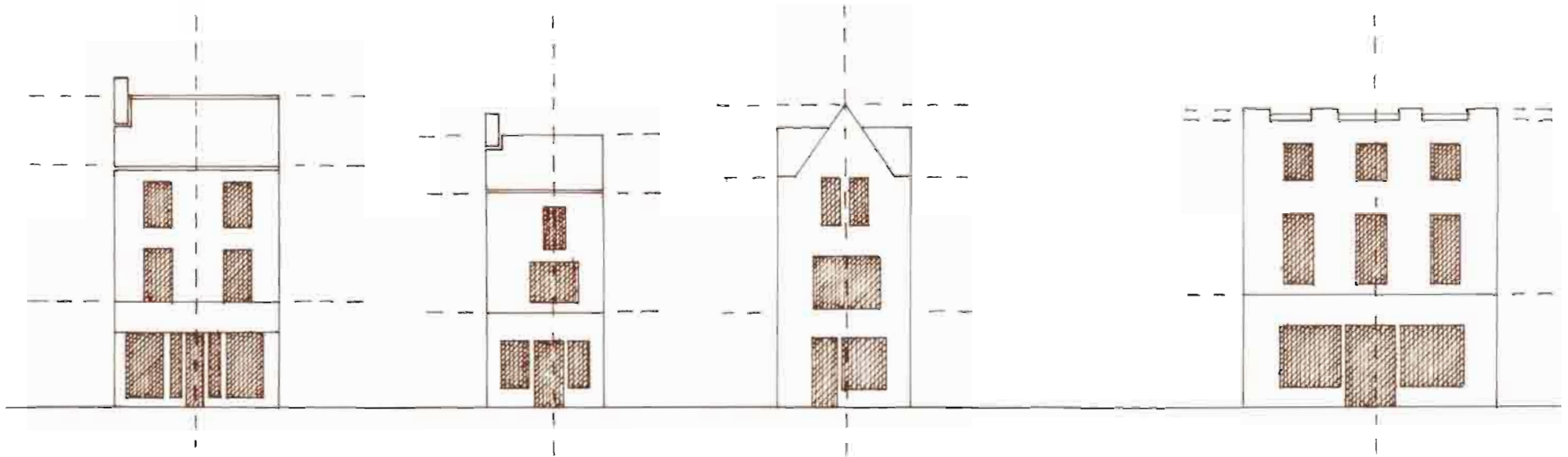
☛ Buildings facades are usually threefold in vertical organisation : a base, a middle and a top - in classical architectural terminology : plinth, piano nobile and attic. These are clearly demarcated from one another. Important buildings and buildings on important sites tend to be three stories in height.

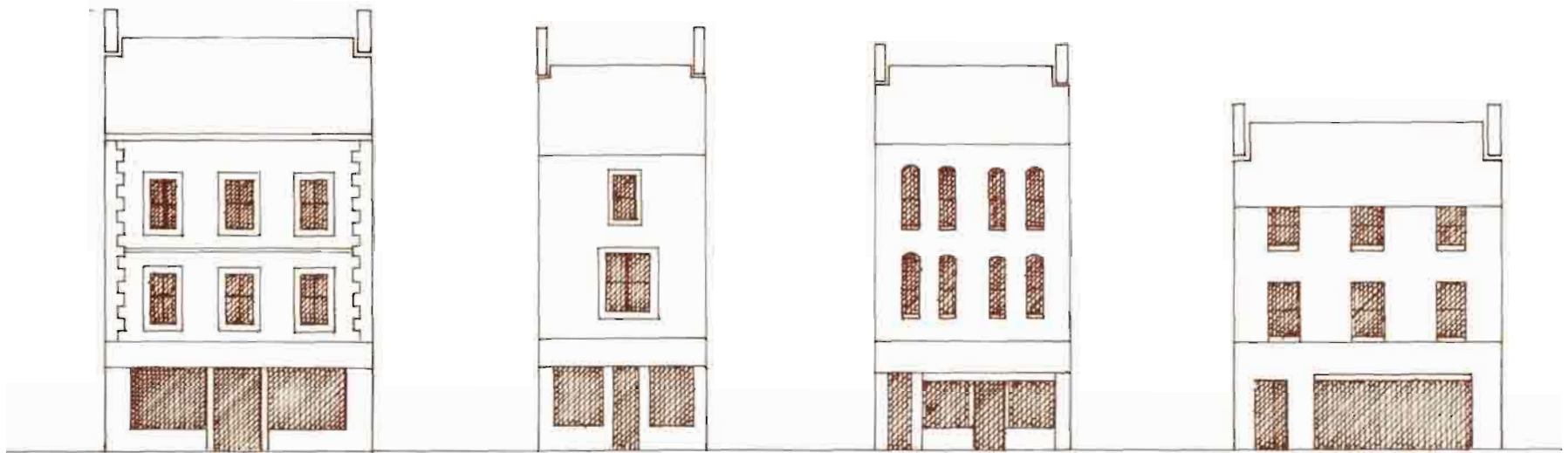
☛ Commercial buildings have what amounts to a separate facade at ground level made up of an ample fascia carrying signage, supported by piers at each end and occasionally centrally placed columns. This fascia expresses the need for depth of structure to span the wide openings required by shop windows. The pattern of windows above the fascia is frequently distinct and discontinuous from the pattern of openings below. The materials of these upper and lower elements are rarely the same throughout. Dromore has a number of facades with centralised doors in the shop front and columns of cast iron on each side, supporting the wall overhead. In these cases the shop door is often set back and the entry is sometimes paved with attractive patterns of mosaic. This particular type of shop front is not found in such numbers in other towns in the area.

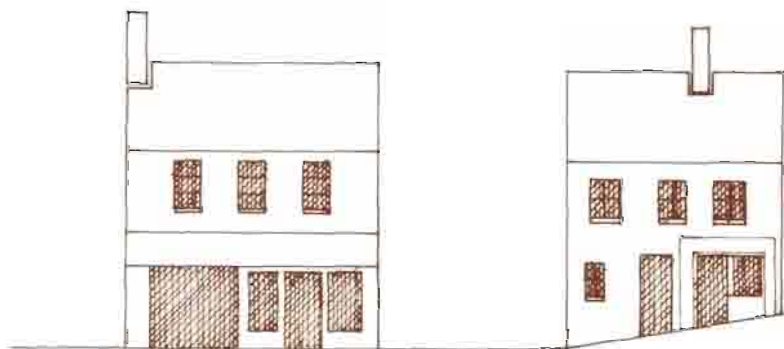




EXISTING ELEVATIONS  
ILLUSTRATING THE RULES OF MAKING FACADES







☞ There is inevitably something happening at the skyline. In 18th and 19th Century buildings this means a roof with a pitch in the region of 45 degrees. The buildings have relatively shallow floor plans. The few early 20th Century buildings with flat roofs in Dromore have elaborate parapets at the skyline.

☞ Patterns of openings in both upper and lower facades tend to try to be symmetrical - although they are rarely perfectly so.

☞ Openings in walls tend to be above openings and solid wall tends to be above solid wall. There are obvious structural reasons for this.

☞ Window widths are usually the same throughout the facade of a building and always so in each storey. Upper windows are never taller than the ones below them.

## B U I L D I N G D E T A I L

### S H O P F R O N T S

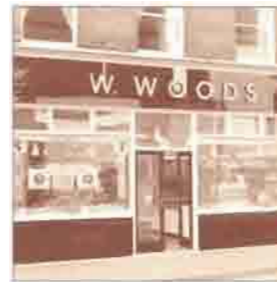
Shopfronts, with their attendant signage and advertising, have traditionally been of painted timber or occasionally of stone with carved or applied lettering. Stucco shopfronts are to be found elsewhere in Ireland, north and south. Very high standards of craftsmanship were commonplace until relatively recently, including skills such as gilding and graining. Particularly notable are a set of black "Vitrolite" shop fronts presumably dating from the 1930's to 1950's.

Shopfronts in the Conservation Area should normally consist of a fascia, to carry signage, along the whole length of the building facade. This should have visible support on either side. Many traders may wish to use Victorian style shopfronts though this is not

compulsory. Re-instatement of shopfronts to their original condition will be encouraged.

### S I G N S

Some very fine old signwriting of typographical rarity survives in Dromore and should be preserved if possible, but Dromore also provides many examples of high quality, modern and 20th Century work using applied metal letters on polished black marble. Illuminated perspex signs will not normally be allowed on new shopfronts, nor will protruding shutter boxes or crude, wide aluminium sections to glazing and doors. Some of the wide range of attractive shopfront detailing surviving in Dromore is illustrated.



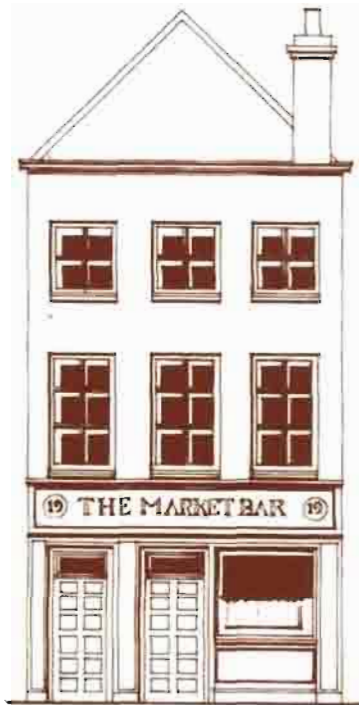


Figure A

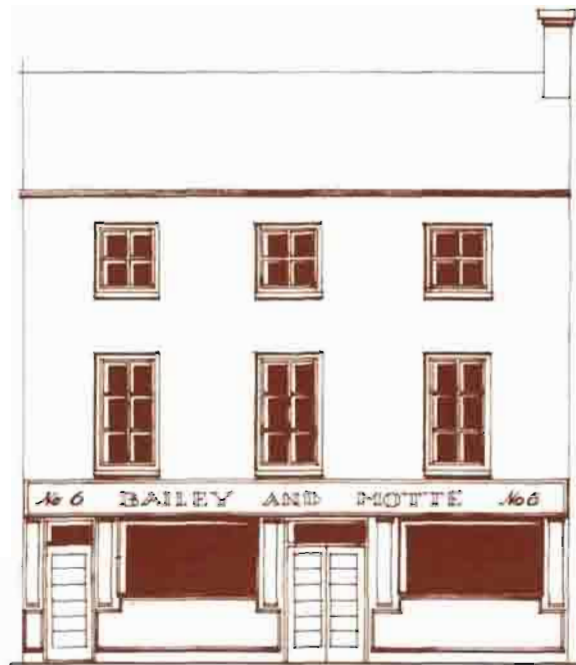


Figure B

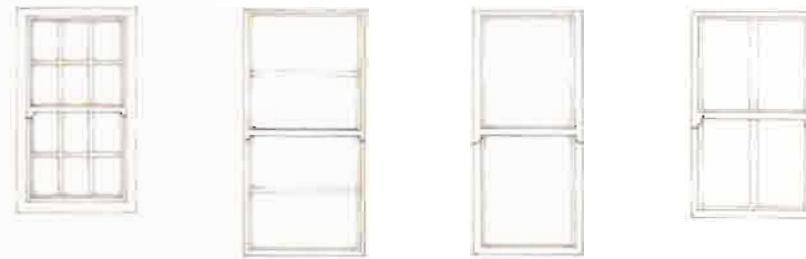
The two elevations illustrate acceptable approaches to new building and refurbishment. Fig. A shows the refurbishment of a building, rebuilt in the 1960's. Fig. B shows how the principles set down in MAKING FACADES could be adopted to infill buildings in the Market Square.

## W I N D O W S ( O T H E R T H A N S H O P F R O N T S ) A N D D O O R S

A set of architraves from windows around the Market Square is shown together with characteristic glazing types. Such architraves and windows are very fine aesthetically and in terms of craftsmanship. These should be replaced meticulously when old buildings are being renovated. Replacement windows in uPVC or aluminium for original joinery are inappropriate in the Conservation Area. Wherever possible original crown glass, with its remarkable reflective qualities, should be retained and re-used.

Suitable glazing arrangement for domestic buildings and upper floors in new buildings is as shown on previous page. Windows should be of painted timber or steel using fine sections and should normally be subdivided into smaller sections. Wide windows should be subdivided by mullions.

Traditionally domestic doors and doors to the private, upstairs parts of shop buildings were of painted, panelled wood. This practice should be continued.



W I N D O W S



A R C H I T R A V E S



## W A L L S . M A T E R I A L S A N D C O L O U R S

Shop front construction has already been dealt with separately. Most of the older buildings in Dromore have walls which are faced in painted render, though there are one or two 'rather Scottish looking' houses of black granite. Dromore also possesses a number of brick street buildings from the early 20th Century. One or two of these have elaborate brick, stone and terracotta detailing. Such standards of materials, design and workmanship are difficult and expensive to achieve in brick in modern conditions.

Generally speaking new building in Dromore should preferably be faced in painted render. Suitable colours include whites, light greys, creams, ochres, chocolates, blues, turquoises and crimsons. Detail such as architraves, quoins and cornices can be picked out in contrasting colours.



## ROOFS . RAINWATER GOODS

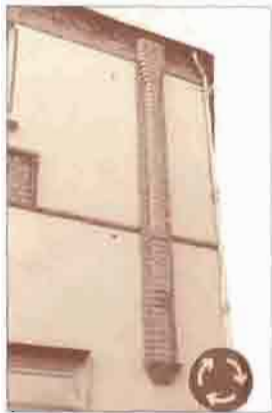
Roofs should preferably be of medium pitch - ie in the region of 45 degrees.

They may incorporate dormers and in special cases gables to the street.

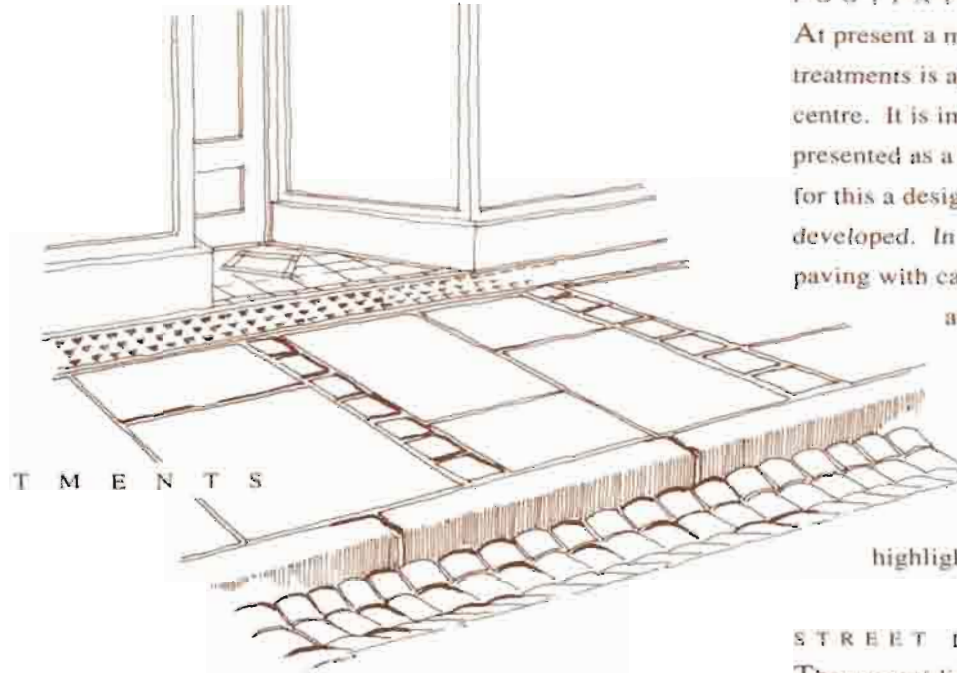
Elaborate and complex roof shapes such as mansards, double pitches, gambrels and Dutch gables will not be acceptable. Generally speaking, monopitches, flat roofs or barrel roofs will be unsuitable for the street frontages of buildings.

Roofs should normally be finished in natural slate, with red or blue grey ridge tiles. It is usual in most Irish vernacular construction for eaves and verges to be clipped and tight. Overhanging eaves, elaborate cornices and verges will not normally be encouraged in new work.

Rainwater goods that appear on street building facades should normally be of cast iron.



## S U R F A C E   T R E A T M E N T S



### F O O T P A T H S

At present a mixture of materials and treatments is apparent within the town centre. It is important that this area is presented as a cohesive visual unit, and for this a designed approach should be developed. In general a "flagstone" paving with cast iron drainage furniture and possibly granite kerbs should be used.

Many of the shops have recessed entrances with coloured tiling. The illustrated design

highlights these attractive features.

### S T R E E T   L I G H T I N G

The present lighting system would appear to have been installed when the main Dublin - Belfast road ran through the town. A more sympathetic approach should now be adopted. The Motte and the Cathedral could be floodlit, as the viaduct is, and the river walkway could and should be lit with an attractive pedestrian lighting scheme. This would also back up a process of lighting of

alleyways, to better police them. The Market Square should be specially treated to emphasise the Town Hall and War Memorial.

#### R O A D S

The possibility of paving Bridge Street, which has a narrow carriageway and footpaths should be investigated. Commercially, this street is in difficulty though with its strong character and relationship to the river it would respond to upgrading. The colonnaded shop with its gardens has great potential to develop its riverside location. The picturesque architectural massing of this street suggests that it would lend itself to a treatment as a cobbled laneway.

#### W I R E S C A P E

Within the Conservation Area, when new paving and footpaths are being laid the opportunity of putting statutory services (telephone, electricity, wiring) underground should be taken (ie BT, NIE.) Street lighting should, where appropriate, be wall-mounted.

#### S I G N A G E

A review of traffic signs is required to clear the footpaths of the present surplus of uprights. Signs should identify and demarcate the Conservation Area .

A strong logo would help to identify this area.





SUGGESTED RANGE OF STREET FURNITURE

## SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- ✦ Develop a riverside walkway linking the Motte and Viaduct Park, as shown on the Development Strategy Plan.
- ✦ The opportunity should be taken when developing the riverside walkway to visually upgrade the buildings abutting the paths.
- ✦ The Motte and the Cathedral should be flood-lit to dramatise their night time silhouette.
- ✦ The footpaths within the town centre should be upgraded together with street furniture and lighting to give a distinct character to this area.
- ✦ The possibility of paving Bridge Street from Market Square to Meeting Street should be investigated.
- ✦ A new crossing of the river along the line of the existing lane at the eastern end of the square linking to Meeting Street should be constructed to maximise the use of the riverside walk.

### ARCHITECTURAL

- ✦ All new buildings as well as refurbishment of existing should conform to the rules of Making Facades and Building Detail.
- ✦ A number of development opportunities have been identified in Market Square and Gallows Hill.
- ✦ In time a new development at the junction of Mount Street and Market Square could help revitalise the town centre.

## ADVICE, IMPLEMENTATION & FUNDING

Developers, property owners and tenants should familiarise themselves with this booklet. Architects, designers and builders should have a clear understanding of the Conservation Area context within which they are working. The Department will expect planning applications to graphically and accurately illustrate the relationship of proposed developments to adjoining properties.

If considering work involving demolition, alterations, extensions or new buildings, early contact should be made with the Department, which will also be able to advise on the range of grants available from public bodies and Government Departments.

The enhancement strategy suggested in this report has the general support of Banbridge District Council. The Department will promote the strategy subject to further consultations with the District Council and the availability of funds. Several development opportunities have been highlighted and landowners or developers are welcome to discuss these at any stage. For further details contact:  
The Town and Country Planning Service,  
Department of the Environment (N.I.),  
Marlborough House, Central Way,  
CRAIGAVON BT64 1AD  
Telephone 0762 341144

## FURTHER READING

- ATKINSON E.D. Dromore - an Ulster Diocese (Dundalk) 1925.
- BASSETT G.H. COUNTY DOWN GUIDE AND DIRECTORY (DUBLIN) 1886.
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Banbridge District Council and the Historic Buildings Council for their support in the designation of the Conservation Area.

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the National Library of Ireland for the use of old photographs from the Green and Lawrence collections.

Ordnance Survey (N.I.) for permission to reproduce maps.

Report Designed by Joanne McCrum. Illustrations by Roy Knox.

## A P P E N D I X

### LISTED BUILDINGS & MONUMENTS

Listed Buildings and Monuments contribute significantly to the character of Dromore's Conservation Area. Buildings which have been 'listed' because of their special architectural or historic merit are subject to strict planning controls. Grants are available for their repair or maintenance.

### LISTED BUILDINGS

Rath House, 40 - 42 Prince's Street  
Town Hall, Market Square  
Town Stocks, Market Square  
30 Market Square

11 Church Street (Ulster Bank)  
15 Church Street (Small & Co.)  
24 Church Street (Northern Bank)  
28 Church Street (Rectory - gates, walls, railings)

80 Church Street (Mariville)  
84 Church Street (Manse and entrance gates)

Cathedral Church of Christ the Redeemer, Church Street  
St. Colmans, Gallows Street  
Regent Bridge, Banbridge Road  
Percy Monument - within Park  
Viaduct - within Park  
Percy Lodge, off Church Street

Banbridge Road Presbyterian Church  
First Presbyterian Church (Non-subscribing), Rampart Street  
24, 26 Meeting Street  
40 - 46 Meeting Street  
Downshire Bridge, Bridge Street  
10/12 Bridge Street

### HISTORIC MONUMENTS

Motte and Bailey, Mount Street  
Dromore Castle, Castle Street  
Dromore Cross, Banbridge Road





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