

Reference: Proposal to add 'Old Market House' to RPS of County Offaly

Building Location: Main Street, Banagher

This submission concerns the proposal that this pre 1700's property is added to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) for County Offaly on account of its historic, archaeological, architectural, social and economic significance. A brief argument for the buildings inclusion to the RPS is as follows:

In the Urban Archaeological Survey of County Offaly (1986), John Bradley identified Banagher as an important archaeological centre on account of it being a seventeenth-century plantation town established on the site of an earlier Early Christian foundation, and recommended the need for further studies on the town's heritage. It was out of this recommendation that the town was included in the statutory Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as a 'historic town'. In his survey Bradley was of the opinion that no above ground remains of the seventeenth-century plantation town have survived, however this was called into question by subsequent studies including the work undertaken as part of the Conservation, Interpretation and Management Plan, titled 'Historic Banagher' prepared in 2018 by Howley Hayes Architects in conjunction with The Heritage Council and Offaly County Council. Furthermore, these same studies have identified that Banagher likely existed as a native Irish settlement before the Tudor plantation town, (refer to Pevsner Architectural Guide, The Buildings of Ireland, Central Leinster, Kildare, Laoise and Offaly by Andrew Tierney) and that the Tudor plantation was an expansion of the existing urban settlement rather than the building of a new town, which is of particular interest to studies relating to the interaction between seventeenth-century planters and the native Irish and for Banagher itself, suggesting it is among the oldest urban settlements in the midlands.

Strong evidence of Banagher as a native Irish historic settlement predating the Tudor plantation includes:

- Ortelius' map of Ireland c.1572 (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).
- The granting of a license to Sir John MacCoghlan in 1612 (local chief of Delvin Eathra /Delvin MacCoghlan) to hold a weekly market and a two-day annual fair at Banagher.

The building which is the subject of this recommendation for inclusion in the RPS of County Offaly, is directly associated with this native Irish settlement and a town market. The property is known locally as 'Kieran Donegan's shop', is located on the corner of Main Street and Crank Road and is composed of two-bay two-storey structure with traditional pitched roof, and a flat roofed single storey element. Until recently, the former shop was located in the single storey element, while the two-storey element housed the living accommodation. The historic significance of this building is unrecorded to date, and has only come to light in early 2020, when renovation works uncovered significant historic building fabric.

The historic map record and recent photographs indicate that a masonry arch was connected to the structure, along the north aspect of the Crank Road, which lead to an internal courtyard, but has since been demolished. This masonry arch, now appears to have been part of the structure and also contained pre 1700s building fabric.

John Logan's survey of the town of Banagher (1828) describes the building as 'Old Market House' and is evidence of its significance. A survey of the property, submitted with a recent retention planning application indicates a historic structure, with external masonry walls approximately 800mm thick, with existing historic masonry arched openings infilled and historic masonry rendered over with modern cement renders, thus concealing its historic fabric from the street front.

In consideration of the historic, archaeological, architectural, social and economic significance of Banagher's 'Old Market House', and its association with the following:

- Native Irish urban settlement of Banagher pre-dating the seventeenth-century plantation town and Corporation of Banagher Borough 1628.
- Studies relating to the interaction between the native Irish and the seventeenth-century planters.

- Banagher as a historic market town, with one of the longest running annual fairs in Ireland dating to c.1612
- The early architecture of native Irish market houses

I strongly recommend that this building is added to the Record of Protected structures for County Offaly.

As the only known standing remains of a historic building directly associated with the native Irish settlement of Banagher, pre-dating the seventeenth-century plantation town and possibly one of the oldest standing market houses in Ireland, I would ask that Offaly County Council strongly consider this proposal in the interest of preserving this important historic structure and its historic fabric, which is of significant heritage value for the town and for the wider region. Its protection will serve as a means to enhance public appreciation and understanding of Banagher as a historic town, to help safeguard its preservation for future generations to enjoy and to provide further scientific and archaeological understanding of the evolution of the town. As noted above, research and investigations of the building (subject to approval of the building owner) will be of special interest to the following research areas:

- The early architecture of native Irish market houses
- The early architecture and archaeology of native Irish urban settlements
- Studies relating to the interaction between the native Irish and the seventeenth-century planters.

To assist with OCC's review of this recommendation, I attach the following:

- Extract from John Logan's survey of the town of Banagher, 1828
- Extract from the conjectural map of this section of the town from the Historic Banagher Conservation Plan by Howley Hayes Architects (Pg42).
- Site photographs, taken February 2020.

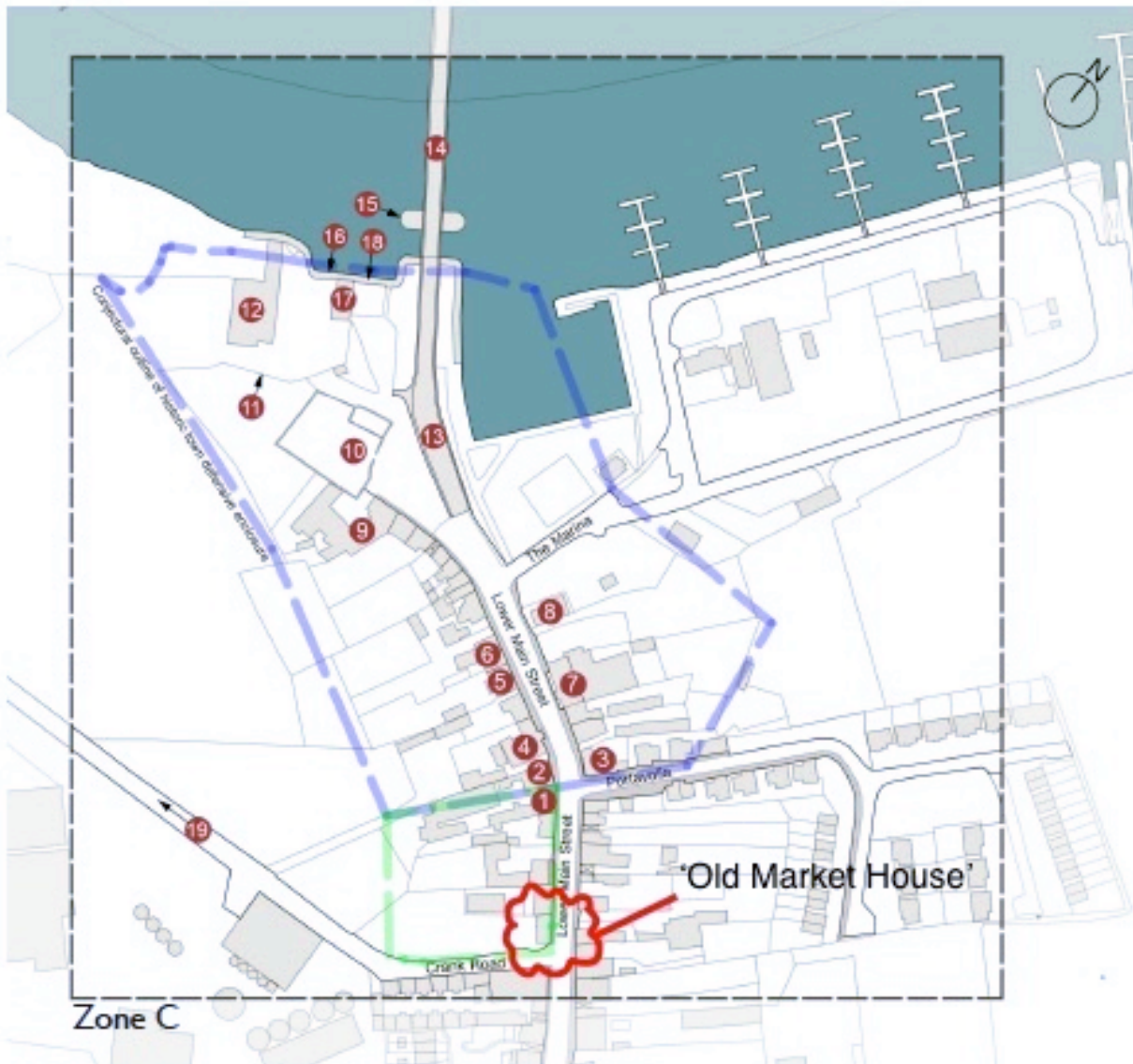
Details on the recent planning application for the property is as follows:

Grant of Planning (retention): 23/04/2018

Planning Application (retention) Reference no.: 18101

Zone C – Lower Main Street and the Old Town

Zone C is defined as the area of Main Street which extends from the intersection of the Crank Road and Main Street, to the River Shannon and includes the extent of the historic defensive enclosure of the old town.



Drawing Key

C1 = Quigley's Merchant Drapery	C8 = Banagher Billiard Hall	C15 = Swivel Bridge Pier (Banagher Bridge)
C2 = Shannon Ballroom / Quigley's Hall	C9 = Vine House	C16 = Harbour Wall and Quay
C3 = Town House	C10 = Military Barrack and Fort Falkland	C17 = City of Dublin Steam Packet Company Building
C4 = The Railway Bar	C11 = Bridge Malt House Site Boundary Wall	C18 = Hand Wharf Crane
C5 = KP Egan's Shop and Town House	C12 = Bridge Malt House	C19 = Fort Eliza
C6 = Robinson's Town House	C13 = Banagher Bridge Ramp	
C7 = Royal Shannon Hotel	C14 = Banagher Bridge	

Fig. 66: Zone C - Lower Main Street and the Old Town. OSI license 2013/32/KCMA/Offaly County Council

Plate 01: Extract from HHA Conservation Plan 'Historic Banagher' (Pg.42) Lower Main Street and the Old Town.

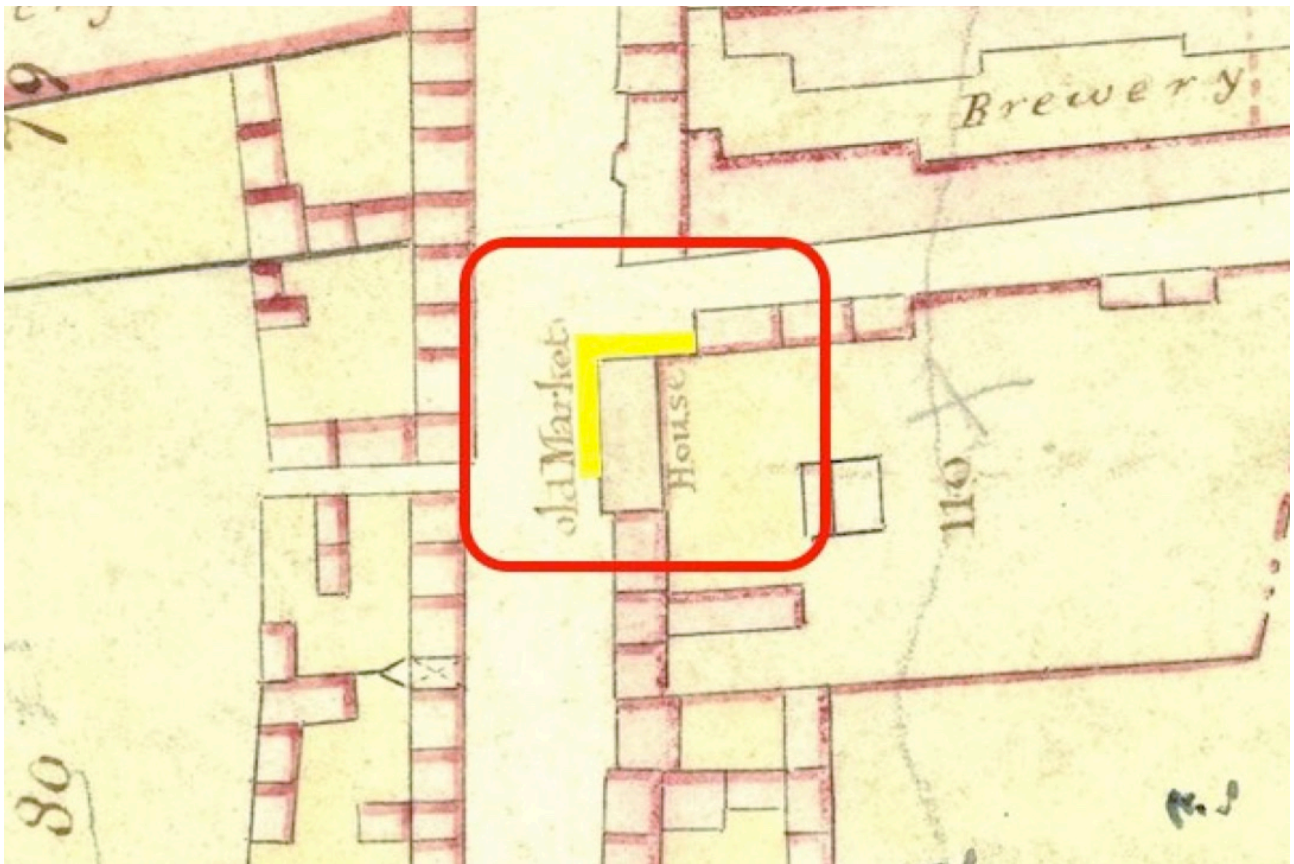


Plate 02: Detail of John Logan's survey of the town of Banagher, 1828 (UL map library), indicating 'Old Market House'



Plate 03: View from Main Street (February, 2020)



Plate 04: View from Crank Road car park (February, 2020)



Plate 05: View from Crank Road of south gable with splayed detail in plan and evidence of former cut stone masonry arch and recent addition of door opening (February, 2020)



Plate 06: Detail of south gable facing onto Crank Road with splayed detail in plan and deep masonry construction as evidence by depth of internal window reveal (February, 2020)