



CoLab 81-7
/// SEAN MCDERMOTT STREET
Interim Vision Document *December 2021*

supported by
**Justice for
Magdalenes
Research**



/// **email** colab817architects@gmail.com
/// **website** www.openheartcity.com
/// **instagram** @colab81_7

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executive summary

/// This Interim Vision Document sets out the objectives, processes and initial outcomes of the CoLab 81-7 project to develop a future vision for the site of the former Magdalene laundry at Sean McDermott Street in Dublin city.

The document presents the background to the project, including an introduction to the persons and groups involved, and the timeline of the project to date. It also summarises and illustrates collaborations undertaken with the Schools of Architecture at both University College Dublin and Queens University Belfast.

The main body of the document focuses on the Vision for the future use of the site, and details the steps undertaken to establish a framework and overall brief. The proposal draws on stakeholder and survivor feedback, including Dublin City Council's stated priorities for the provision of third-level educational facilities, housing, community services, as well as some form of memorial to survivors. The Vision demonstrates how the site and existing buildings can be brought to life, accommodating the diverse range of uses identified and arranged around a network of new public spaces. The main focus of the Vision lies with the Centre for Truth-Telling, which is proposed as an appropriate living memorial to survivors of all of Ireland's Institutions of Social Care and the country's closed, secret, coercive adoption system. It is hoped that there will also be further memorials.

The consultation process used to develop and discuss the future vision for the site is presented in detail, including the methodology for engagement and the different forms and structures of consultations undertaken to date.

The document concludes with a summary of feedback from the various forms of consultations and sets out the next steps to be addressed.

The Interim Vision Document was commissioned by Justice for Magdalenes Research.

background

Who We Are

CoLab

/// CoLab is a group of four emerging Irish architects; Denise Murray, Catherine Blaney, Jennifer O'Donnell and Jonathan Janssens, who were brought together by the Open Heart City collective in 2019 to study and develop alternative methods for practicing architecture and advancing architectural discourse in Ireland. We aim to encourage an open discussion about our collective past, searching for appropriate ways to address our history that in turn can begin to contribute to a positive, inclusive future. Each of us addresses different aspects of the architectural profession through our own practices, with CoLab serving as platform for us to combine our individual focuses to assemble a group with the capacity to address complex, challenging projects. Together CoLab aims to expand & evolve the approach to Ireland's built environment.

The project at SeanMcDermott Street has been given the project code **81-7** in acknowledgement of the former house numbers attributed to the original buildings on Railway Street, which were later replaced by the laundry.



Denise Murray

Denise is a Senior Associate at Metropolitan Workshop where she co-leads the Dublin studio. She sits on the DCC Housing Strategic Policy Committee as the RIAI representative. Denise has over 15 years experience of working on complex urban sites, collaborating with a range of actors to deliver long-term sustainable change. Metropolitan Workshop share this interest in developing a collaborative approach to operating in our cities and in enabling bottom-up groups to act. She gained a distinction for her MA thesis at The University College London investigating the potential of self-organised growth in London.



Catherine Blaney

Catherine is director of the architectural practice Dún-na-dTuar, founded in 2019, and working throughout the island of Ireland. Much of the studio's portfolio of work deals with small-scale interventions into old building fabric. Because of the sensitivity of this context, careful consideration of material culture, light and construction are central to the office's way of thinking. In Catherine's own work she has a particular interest in the city, its memory, language and collective culture. The studio received a bursary award in 2019 from the Arts Council of NI to develop its practice through model making. Catherine is also a lecturer and studio tutor at Queens University for both B.Sc. and M.Arch in the school of architecture. Catherine's M.Arch second semester project will be based on the site at Seán McDermott Street.



Jennifer O'Donnell & Jonathan Janssens

Jennifer O'Donnell and Jonathan Janssens are founding partners of architecture practice Plattenbaustudio, and are based between Berlin and Dublin. Alongside built projects the studio is active in the fields of architectural communication, exhibition and research, focusing on the realities of architecture in use and on the far-reaching consequences of our built environment on the lives of humans. The studio's work has been exhibited at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin (2021), the Irish Museum of Modern Art (2019), and the London Design Museum Tank, among others. The studio was awarded a Fellowship at the Akademie der Künste Berlin in 2020, an Irish Arts Council Architecture Bursary in 2019 and the Visual Arts Award by the Irish Embassy Berlin in 2018.

Open Heart City

/// The Open Heart City Collective organises events to equip M.Arch. students and the architectural design teams to find ways to work with the socio-economic, political and cultural constraints in order to facilitate a creative response that can move within those contexts to design a liveable future for the precarious and vulnerable heart of Ireland's capital city. The work of the Collective is guided by the question 'How do we act in this space?', a question we hold with an open heart.



/// Project Leaders

Professor Hugh Campbell – Head of School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin



Associate Professor Katherine O'Donnell – History of Ideas, School of Philosophy, University College Dublin

/// Members

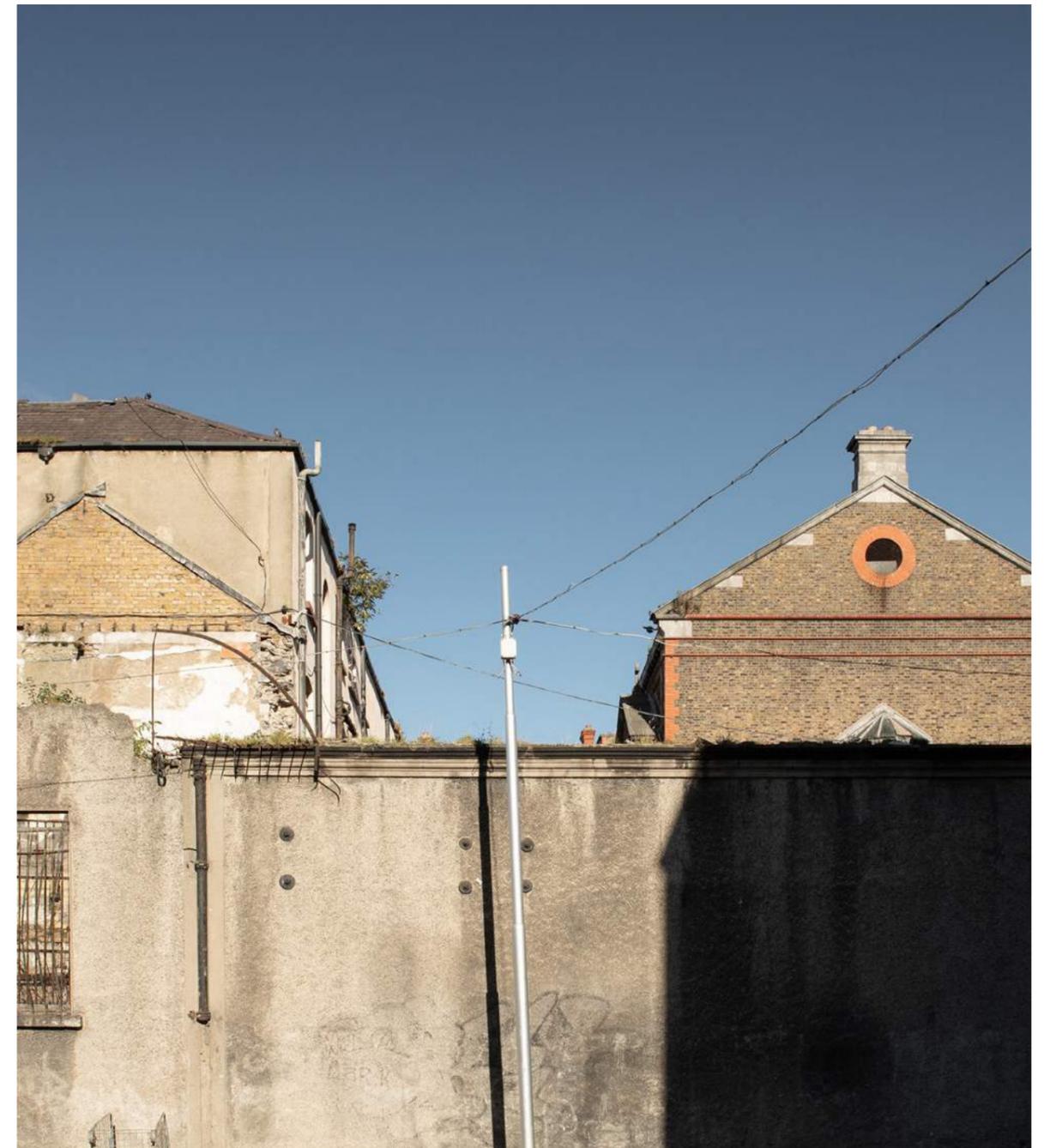
- **Professor Gary Boyd** – School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University, Belfast.
- **Alice Clancy** – Architect, Photographer and Lecturer, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin.
- **Dr Mark Coen** – Assistant Professor, Sutherland School of Law, University College Dublin.
- **Associate Professor Emily Mark-Fitzgerald** – School of Art History and Cultural Policy, University College Dublin.
- **Professor Lindsey Earner-Byrne** – Irish Gender History, School of History, University College Cork.
- **Dr Lisa Godson** – Lecturer and Programme Leader, MA Design History and Material Culture, National College of Art and Design.
- **Dr Cheryl Lawther** – Senior Lecturer, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast.
- **Declan McGonagle** – Founding Director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art.
- **Associate Professor Laura McAtackney** – Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark.
- **Dr Dervla MacManus** – Architect, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin.
- **Brenda Malone** – Curator, National Museum of Ireland.
- **Dr Samantha L. Martin-McAuliffe** – Assistant professor, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin.
- **Claire McGettrick** – Adoption Rights Alliance & Justice for Magdalenes Research Co-founder; Irish Research Council Postgraduate Scholar, School of Sociology, University College Dublin.
- **Dr Luke Moffett** – Senior Lecturer, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast.
- **Dr Jennifer Munnely** – Senior Lecturer in Business Software Development, Technology University Dublin.
- **Professor Sean O'Connell** – School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen's University Belfast.
- **Dr Maeve O'Rourke** – Lecturer in Human Rights and International Human Rights Law Clinic Director, Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland, Galway.
- **Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney** – Lecturer in Psychology, Waterford Institute of Technology.
- **Dr Eoin O'Mahony** – Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Geography, University College Dublin.
- **Professor Emilie Pine** – School of English, Drama and Film, University College Dublin.
- **Dr Martin Quinn**, Senior Lecturer, Management School, Queen's University Belfast.
- **Dr Ellen Rowley** – Research Fellow, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin.
- **Associate Professor Douglas Smith** – School of Languages, Cultures and Literatures, University College Dublin.
- **Associate Professor James M Smith** – English and Irish Studies, Boston College.

Aim of the Vision Document

/// The aim of the Interim Vision Document is to set down the aspirations, working methodology and first results of the ongoing project by the CoLab architecture group investigating the possible futures of the former Magdalene Laundry at SeanMcDermott Street in Dublin. The Interim Vision Document is intended to act as a focal point around which to engage with the public- and in particular with survivors- to help establish a consensus around what might constitute a meaningful memorial to those who had been incarcerated on this site or in any of the other institutions of social care across the island of Ireland.

To date, a wide range of desires and needs have been expressed for the future of this site, including requests for housing and education as well as the incorporation of memorialisation as a key and crucial element. This mix of uses has been acknowledged by a variety of stakeholders from Dublin City Council (current site owners), to local residents and community groups, as well as local representatives. Therefore a key purpose of this Interim Vision Document is to demonstrate the suitability of the site in accommodating a diverse mix of uses, with a view to focusing on the issue of memorialisation.

The Interim Vision Document was commissioned by Justice for Magdalenes Research in 2020 and focuses on stakeholder engagement, and in particular survivor engagement, as a model for the development of sites of dark history in Ireland. As such the Interim Vision Document sets out the different approaches used in this instance to foster discussion and encourage engagement, including the facilitation of consultations, stakeholder survey, on-site exhibition and online resources. It is envisaged that this document will undergo numerous iterations, in keeping with the working methodology of the project itself. The December 2021 Interim Vision Document is the first summary of the process to date.



Project Timeline



2019

The CoLab project began in summer 2019 when the Open Heart City collective invited the future members of CoLab to collaborate on a proposal to investigate the potential of the site at SeanMcDermott Street as a site of conscience. CoLab itself was then founded as a group with diverse skills and individual focus points but a strong sense of shared interest regarding alternative approaches to the development of our built environment. CoLab set about applying for and were subsequently awarded an Architecture Project Award 2020 from the Irish Arts Council to develop a piece of work aimed at encouraging discussion around the site at SeanMcDermott Street.

2020

The first half of 2020 was spent conducting in-depth analysis of the site, in terms of its history, its present condition and possible futures. CoLab and their collaborators at Open Heart City organized and ran semester projects for Masters students at the Schools of Architecture in UCD Dublin and Queen's University Belfast in which both studios were asked to take part in the careful studying of the site.

Following on from this intensive period of analysis and in the context of survivor demands for redress, memorialisation and justice, it was decided to undertake a study of one possible future of the site as a site of conscience, including an archive for 'care'-related state records. With the support of Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) and the Open Heart City group the decision was made to begin a series of consultations with key stakeholders in order to judge the validity of the idea and gain feedback for the proposals.

The second half of 2020 was spent undertaking these consultations. Due to the pandemic all consultations were by necessity held online, with eight consultations in total from September 2020 to January 2021.

Also during this period, Masters students at the Irish Centre for Human

Rights, NUI Galway, in collaboration with JFMR published the www.openheartcitydublin.ie website. They included on the website a summary of previous survivor consultation and state inquiry recommendations regarding memorialisation. They also included research on human rights law standards on memorialisation of historical abuses and international examples of Sites of Conscience.

2021

The completion of the first round of consultations was followed by the publishing of an online survey and accompanying recorded presentation that sought to gather feedback on proposals. CoLab then began the development of the first Interim Vision Document, with the aim of summarising the process and conclusions to date. In October 2021 CoLab hosted an exhibition at SeanMcDermott Street as part of Open House Dublin, in which the rooms of the Crinan Youth Project (formerly the nuns' quarters) were reconfigured to display the work of both CoLab and the architecture studios from UCD and Queens from the previous year. The exhibition included guided tours in which the members of CoLab sought to engage with visitors around the topic of the site, its past and possible futures. A new "wandering Nomad" pavilion, designed by CoLab, was also presented at the event and will be used in 2022 to aid CoLab in disseminating, discussing and advancing the project.

2022

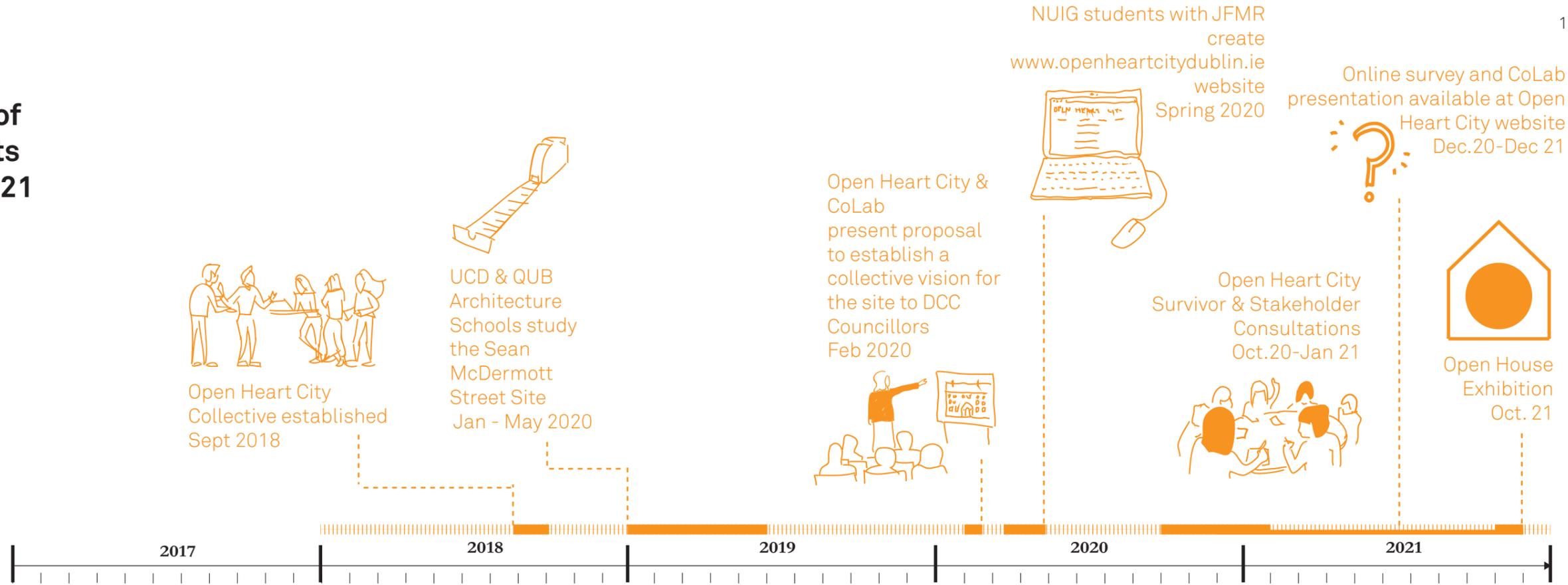
Following the release of the first Interim Vision Document at the end of 2021, it is planned to undertake a further series of consultations with key stakeholders and to extend the scope of the CoLab project towards an analysis of further similar sites around Ireland. These similar sites could potentially form a network of sites of conscience.

timeline of key events 2017 - 2021

 = Open Heart City

 = Dublin City Council

 = others



Open Heart City Collective established Sept 2018

UCD & QUB Architecture Schools study the Sean McDermott Street Site Jan - May 2020

Open Heart City & CoLab present proposal to establish a collective vision for the site to DCC Councillors Feb 2020

NUIG students with JFMR create www.openheartcitydublin.ie website Spring 2020

Open Heart City Survivor & Stakeholder Consultations Oct.20-Jan 21

Online survey and CoLab presentation available at Open Heart City website Dec.20-Dec 21

Open House Exhibition Oct. 21



Covid 19 Restrictions

Mulvey Report Dublin North East Inner City - Creating a Brighter Future suggests selling Sean McDermott Street February 2017

Dublin Honours Magdalenes June 2018

Stand4Truth march to Sean McDermott Street Laundry August 2018

DCC Councillors vote against a plan to sell the council-owned site to Toyko Inn Co. Ltd for €14.5 million. September 2018

Independent Survivor Consultation Feb 2019

Facing the Future Together conference Aug 2020

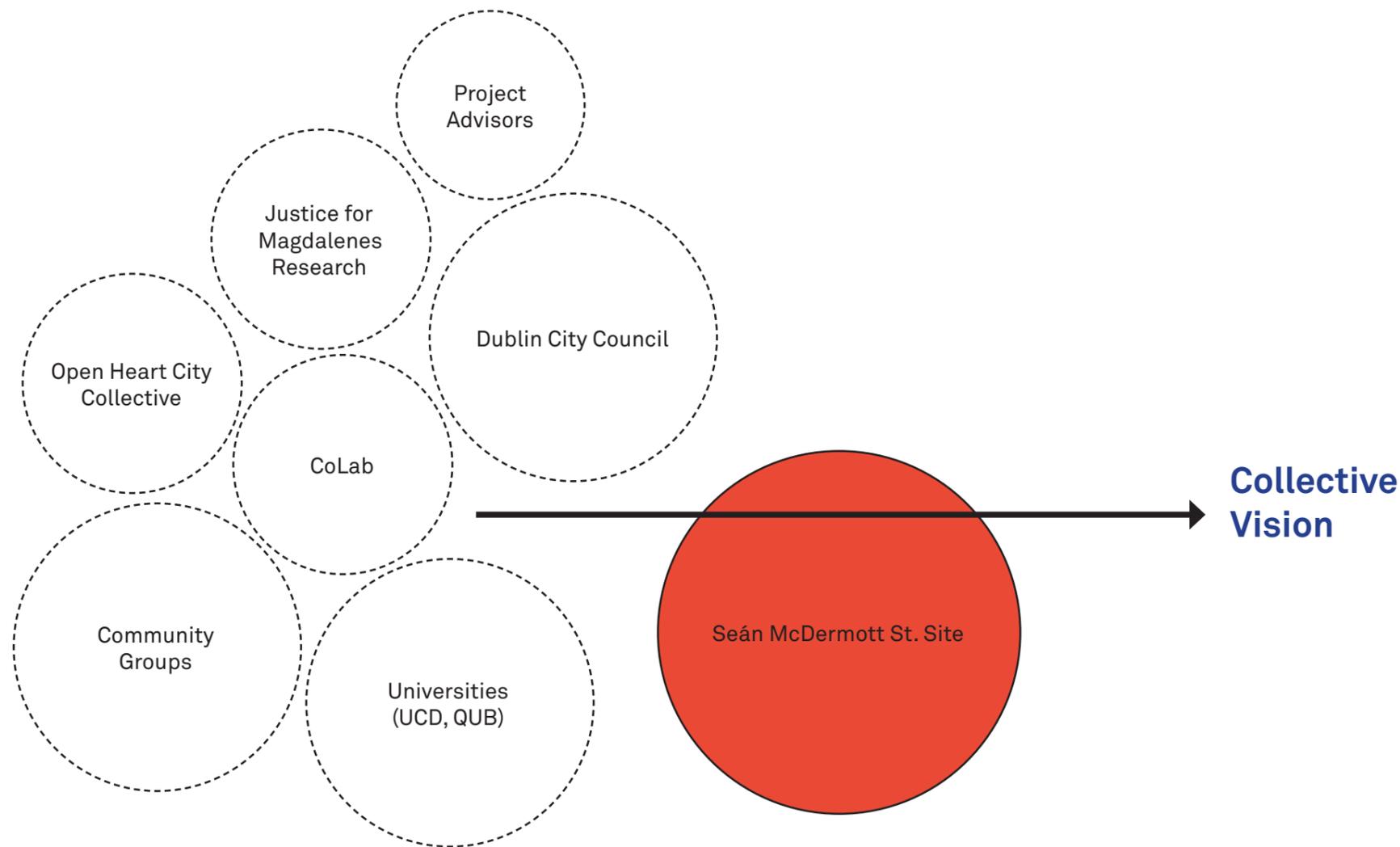
DCC establish Working Group to set the parameters of redevelopment of the former convent on Sean McDermott Street. June 2021

DCC Working Group due to give feedback October 2021



collaborative
process

Collaborators



/// The team is supported by a larger network of collaborators with connections to and interest in the development of sites of conscience in Ireland.

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) provides for the advancement of education of the general public by researching the Magdalene Laundries and similar institutions and by providing information and support to the women who spent time in the Magdalene Laundries and their families. Their work includes the Magdalene Oral History Project, through which they collected accounts from survivors who worked and lived in the Magdalene Laundries, as well as relatives, members of the Religious Orders, regular visitors and anyone else who had a story to tell that relates to these institutions. In 2018 they conducted a listening exercise with 147 former Magdalene women to ask them; what should we all know about the Magdalenes? How should the Magdalenes be remembered and what lessons should we learn from the Magdalenes? In 2020 Masters students at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway, worked with JFMR to compile and publish the www.openheartcitydublin.ie website.

School of Architecture (University College Dublin) and **School of Natural and Built Environment (Queens University Belfast)** both undertook Masters Design Studios in 2020 based around the question of the site's future. The students involved spent a semester developing ideas and responses to the former laundry. The team at CoLab played a role in this process through teaching, workshops and lectures throughout the course of the semester, ensuring that the work of the Masters Design studios was integrated into the ongoing analysis of the site.

/// Project Advisors:

Louise Lowe, ANU Theatre Company

Yvonne Farrell & Shelley MacNamara, Grafton Architects

Nathalie Weadick, Irish Architecture Foundation

Sir David Adjaye, Adjaye Associates

Professor Christoph Lindner, Dean of Bartlett

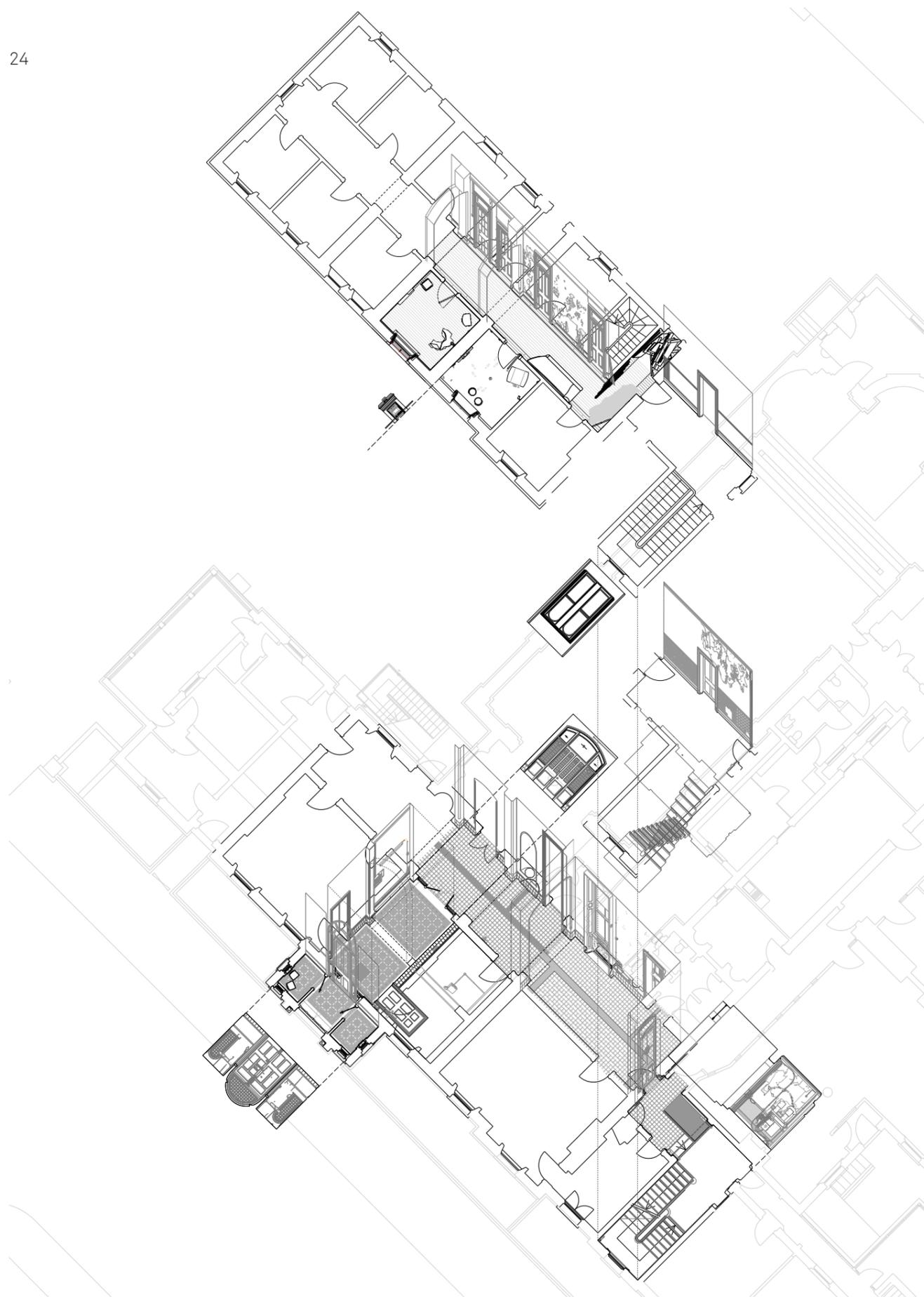
University Involvement

/// In January 2020 CoLab and Open Heart City engaged Masters of Architecture students from the universities of both UCD Dublin and Queens University Belfast to work with them in conducting an in-depth analysis of the site at SeanMcDermott Street and to develop alternative visions for its future. In total 49 students and 13 teaching staff across the two universities worked together over a period of four months to generate extensive documentation and thereby a deep understanding of the site, its history and its potential.

The students analysed and drew the existing buildings with great care; they unearthed the history and rebuilt the past using drawings and models. They then used this complex understanding of place to develop an extensive series of propositions about the potential future of the site. These were open, generous and civic-minded projects, which tended to address the need to open up the site so that it might contribute positively to its surrounding neighbourhood in the future. In essence, the students' work represents their response to Open Heart City's founding question of "how should we act in this place?" and asks us to engage with the conditions of history, of development, of city and community that are ever present at a site such as SeanMcDermott Street Laundry.

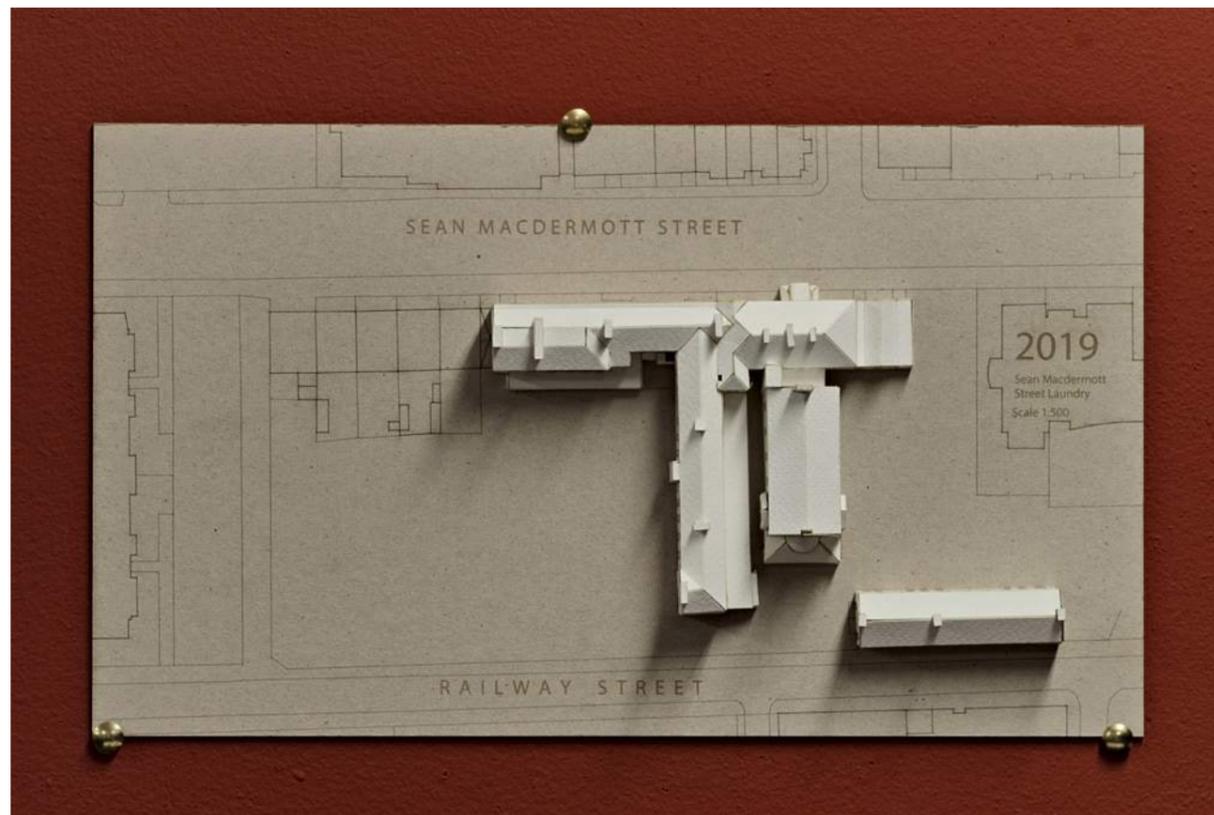
The work of the students was presented as part of the CoLab Open Heart City exhibition on SeanMcDermott Street in October 2021, and the staff of UCD were awarded a University Teaching Award on the basis of their contributions to the studios and student learning.





(right): journey from public to private space; group axonometric by UCD MArch students with plattenbaustudio

/// Student research began with a period of in-depth analysis into the existing fabric of the remaining buildings. The exercise sought to carefully study the architecture of the site in its entirety, from the scale of the city right down to the scale of the room, looking at everything from structure, spaces and materiality to the leftover traces of occupation and everyday life that still remain within the buildings. The aim was to develop a deeper understanding of the life inside the buildings at Sean McDermott Street, with the belief that we can only react to a place as complex as this when equipped with a matching depth to our own understanding.



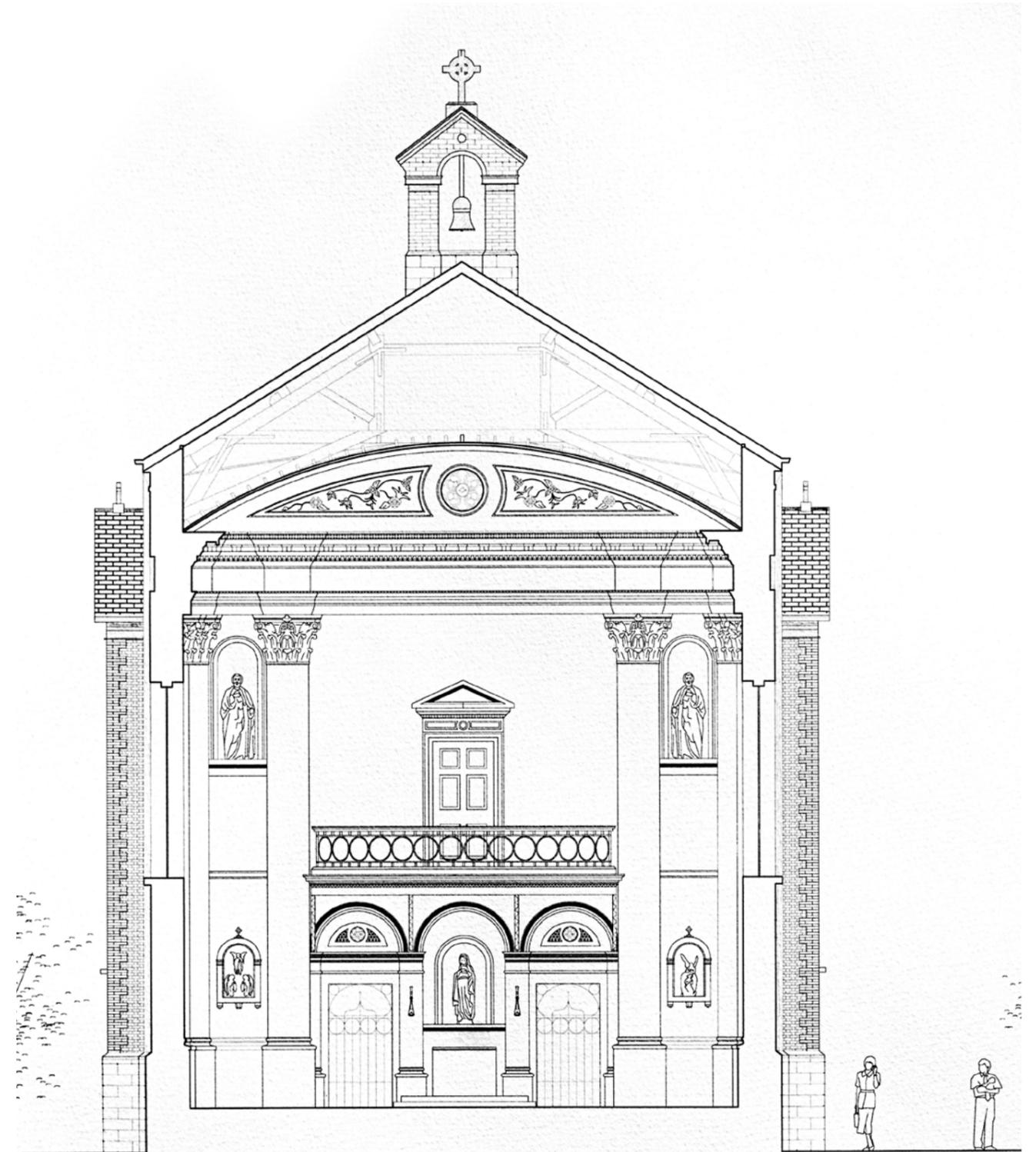
(above): model by Savvah Zaharakov (UCD) of the site at Sean McDermott Street.
(right): model by Maighread McGinley (UCD) of the entrance portico at Sean McDermott Street.



"This team award is presented to the staff involved in Architectural Design VII - Open Hearts City. The focus of this architectural design studio is on a broad and expanding vision of the role of the architect in society, illustrating that the discipline of architecture fits within a broad framework of associated disciplines of the spatial environment. An architectural design studio relies on learning through doing within the context of a project; in this case the project focused on the former Convent and Magdalene Laundry in Sean Mac Dermott Street and the surrounding area of the northeast inner city of Dublin. Particular emphasis was placed on facilitating students to understand this complex piece of city and its difficult history, and to achieve this, support was sought from other disciplines from within and outside the university. The team that came together have exceptional and diverse skills which were made available to students in innovative ways. These skills supported high quality learning by employing the practical arts of drawing, model making and engaging with communities, to unlock the potential for learning in real life contexts.

The 7-week study culminated in a presentation of students' work to all teaching contributors, the local community and QUB students who were also working on the site. The students' work was disseminated online and through published articles."

- extract from UCD Teaching & Learning Awards website,
21st March 2021



Presentation to Dublin City Councillors



/// On 11th February 2020 a presentation was made by Denise Murray of CoLab, Katherine O'Donnell of JFMR and Hugh Campbell of Open Heart City / UCD School of Architecture to city councillors during the sitting of the Central Area Committee meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to receive feedback from councillors as to CoLab's initial proposal to undertake a consultation exercise and series of studies into the site at SeanMcDermott Street. The presentation included outlines of public workshops, exhibitions and other public events that could be used to temporarily activate the site and garner support for and interest in the appropriate redevelopment of the former laundry, both at a local and national level.

Following the presentation, city councillors stressed their jurisdiction over the site and requested that CoLab refrain from engaging with the local community. Several councillors voiced their objection to the proposal.

The results of the meeting were seen as unfortunate as we had genuinely hoped to engage with DCC as the current owners and key stakeholders of the site. DCC did agree to allow us to exhibit student work within the convent buildings, however this offer was later withdrawn on health and safety grounds.



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

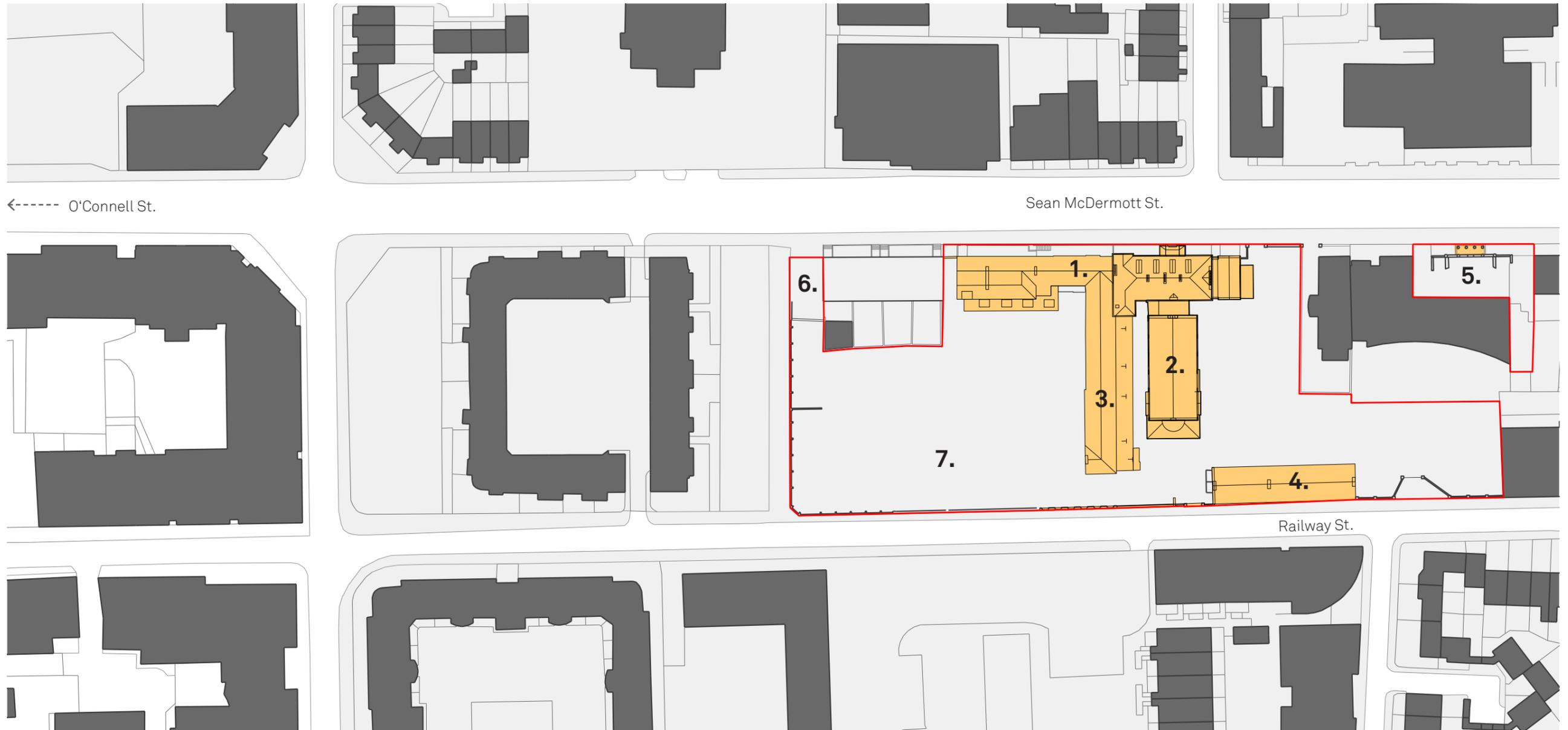
MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL AREA COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2020

- 1 **With reference to the minutes of the Central Area Committee meeting held on 10th January, 2020**
ORDER: Agreed.
- 2 **With reference to questions to the Area Managers**
ORDER: Noted.
- 3 **With reference to a presentation on potential consultation steps - former convent Sean McDermott Street, Dublin 1.**
ORDER: Presentation noted.
- 4 **With reference to a presentation by the Planning Department ; public consultation for proposed amendment to the North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock SDZ Planning Scheme to revise location of planned pedestrian bridge across the River Liffey, from Forbes street to Blood Stoney Road.**
ORDER: Presentation noted.
- 5 **With reference to a presentation on the City Parks Strategy**
ORDER: Presentation noted.
- 6 **With reference to the proposed grant of a 5 year licence in respect of the Ground Floor and shared access to the First Floor, 53 Dorset Street Upper, Dublin 1.**
ORDER: Agreed. Recommend to City Council.
- 7 **With reference to the proposed grant of a licence of Unit F15 of the Markets Area Community Resource Organisation (MACRO) Building, No. 1 Green Street, Dublin 7**
ORDER: Agreed. Recommend to City Council.
- 8 **With reference to the proposed grant of a licence of Unit G04 of the Markets Area Community Resource Organisation (MACRO) Building, No. 1 Green**

1

(above): Minutes from Area Committee Meeting, 11th Feb 2020

**how should
we act in this
place?**



existing site 2021

Site location plan 1:1000

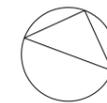
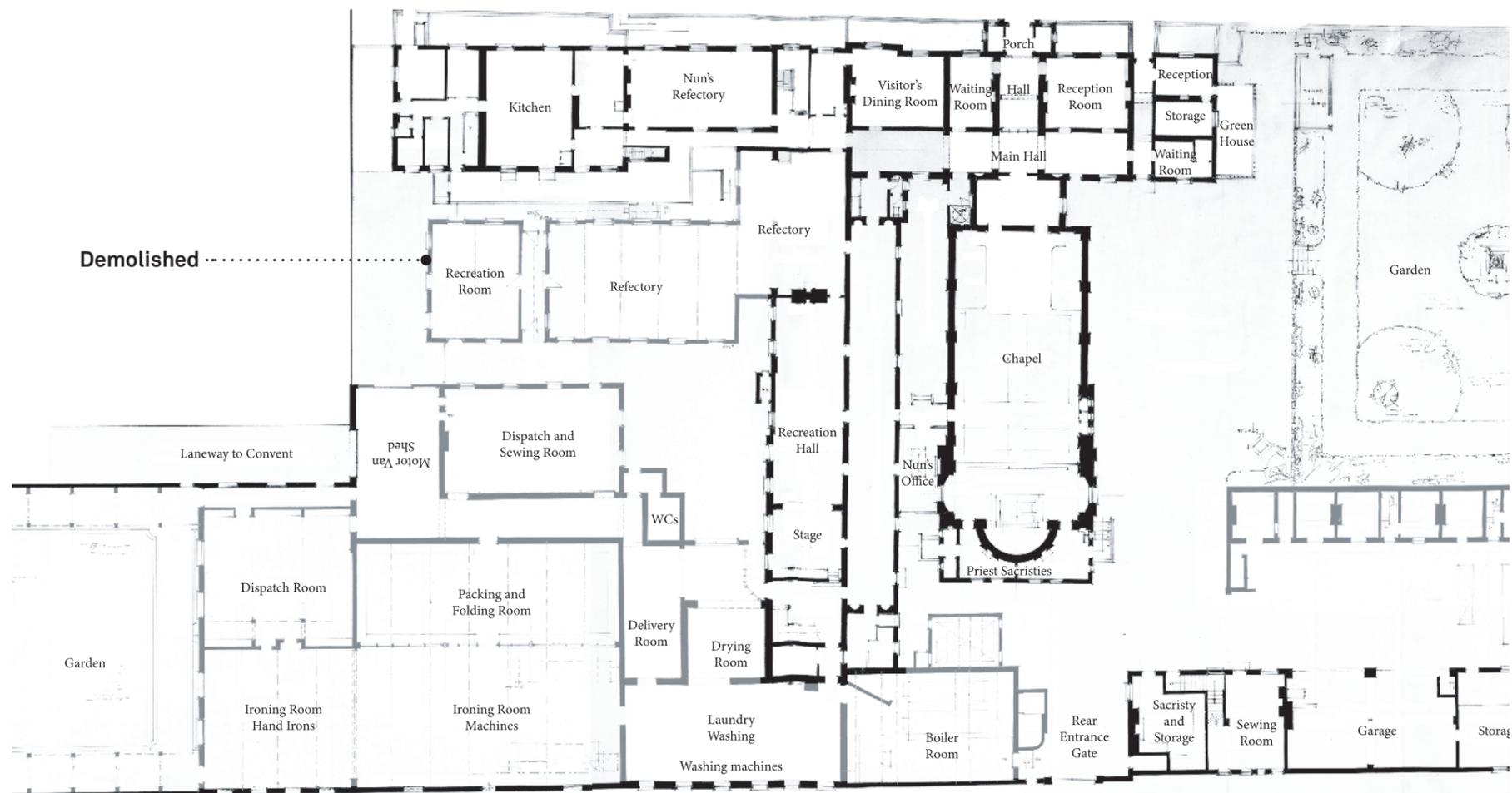
— site boundary

- 1. Former convent building to Sean McDermott St.
- 2. Chapel
- 3. Dormitory wing
- 4. Dispensary building
- 5. Portico of former presbyterian church
- 6. House (now demolished)
- 7. Former laundry buildings (now demolished)



Understanding the Site

(below): Historic plan showing laundry rooms now demolished. This plan is from the General Survey Plan by William H. Byrne & Son, 1954. The lighter grey areas show parts of the site already demolished after a fire. Source: Irish Architecture Archives



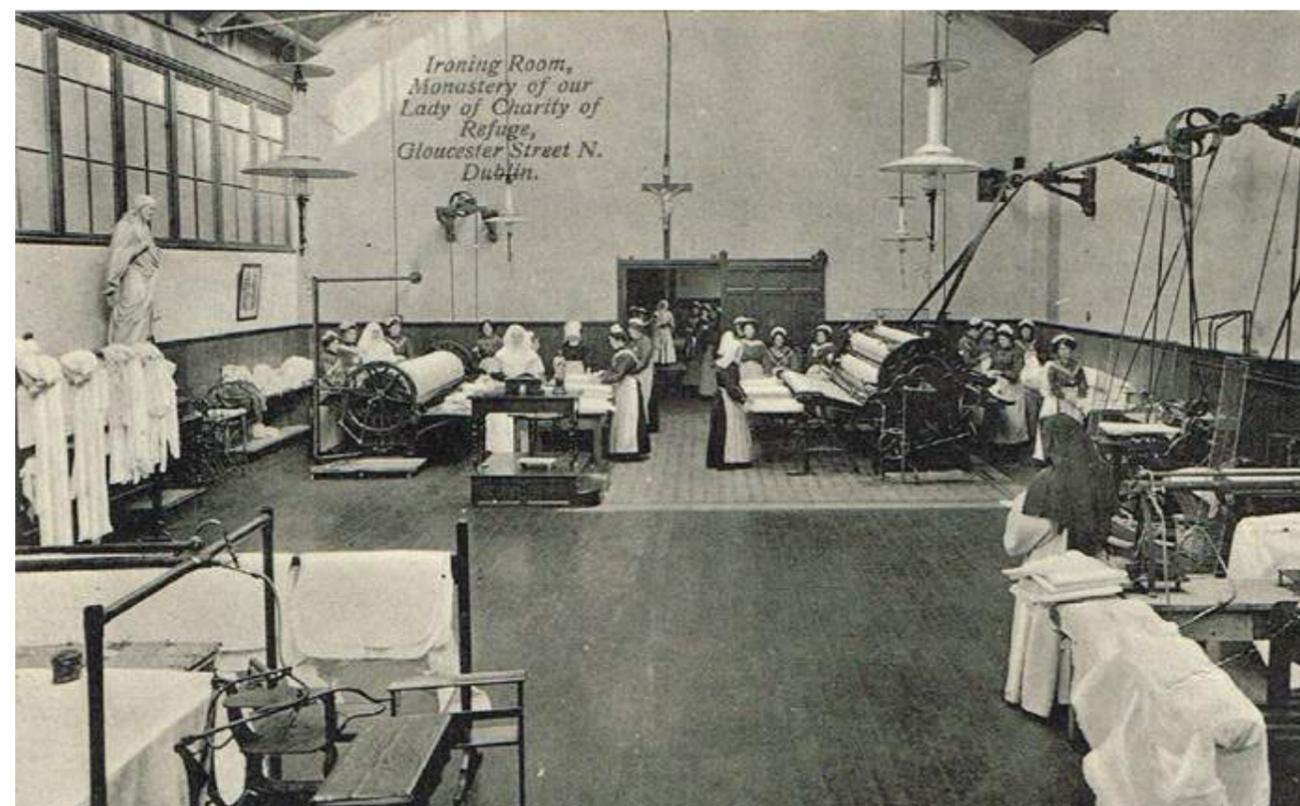
/// A full, in-depth understanding of a place is only achieved through the careful, prolonged study of its historical, material, social and spatial identity and context. Only in this way can we ensure a comprehensive awareness of- and therefore a valid response to- our built heritage. In this case, it is crucial that we continuously study our topic throughout the process of imagining a different future for the site, ensuring that analysis, awareness and response form a continuous feedback loop informing any proposals.

history of the Magdalene Laundries

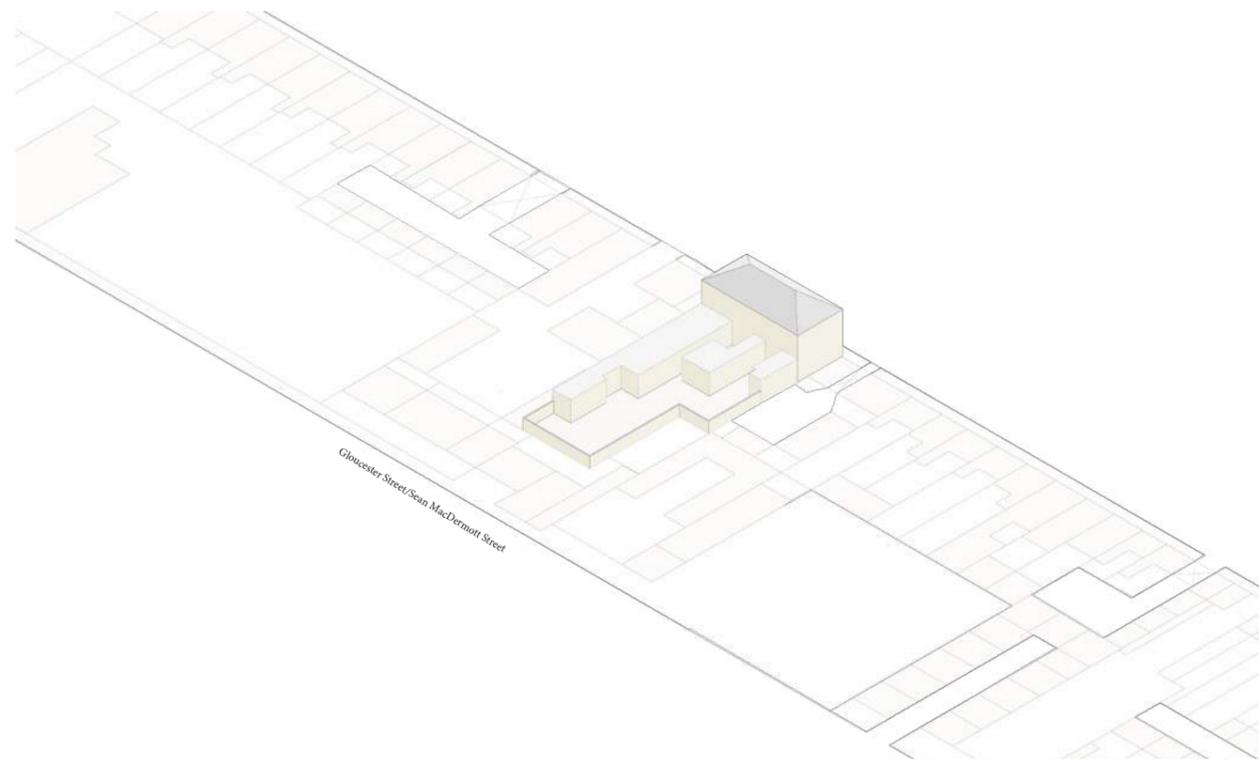
“There were ten Magdalene Institutions in twentieth-century Ireland and in contrast to their nineteenth-century forebears they were carceral Institutions. The twentieth-century Irish Magdalenes were punitive Institutions where socio-economically vulnerable girls and women were held under lock and key and forced into unpaid hard labour at laundry or needlework. The rationale for the incarceration was religious: girls of the Magdalene were frequently victims of rape and incest, and other girls and women were regarded as being guilty of or vulnerable to being sexually active outside the bonds of marriage. The Magdalene Institution was designed so that the girls and women confined there could do penance to atone for the sexual sins that they were adjudged to have committed or be in danger of committing.

Survivor testimony portrays a system in which girls and women were: involuntarily detained in behind locked doors and high walls, with no information as to whether or when they would be released and subject to the threat of arrest by An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) if they escaped; stripped of their identities, including through the imposition of house names and/or numbers, uniforms, haircuts and a prohibition on speaking; banned from communicating with the outside world except under strict surveillance; verbally denigrated and humiliated; kept in cold conditions with minimal nourishment and hygiene facilities; denied any education; and forced to work, constantly and unpaid, at laundry, needlework and general chores through the coercive force of the above factors and additional punishments including deprivation of meals, solitary confinement, physical abuse and humiliation rituals.”

- extract from the Open Heart City website, December 2021



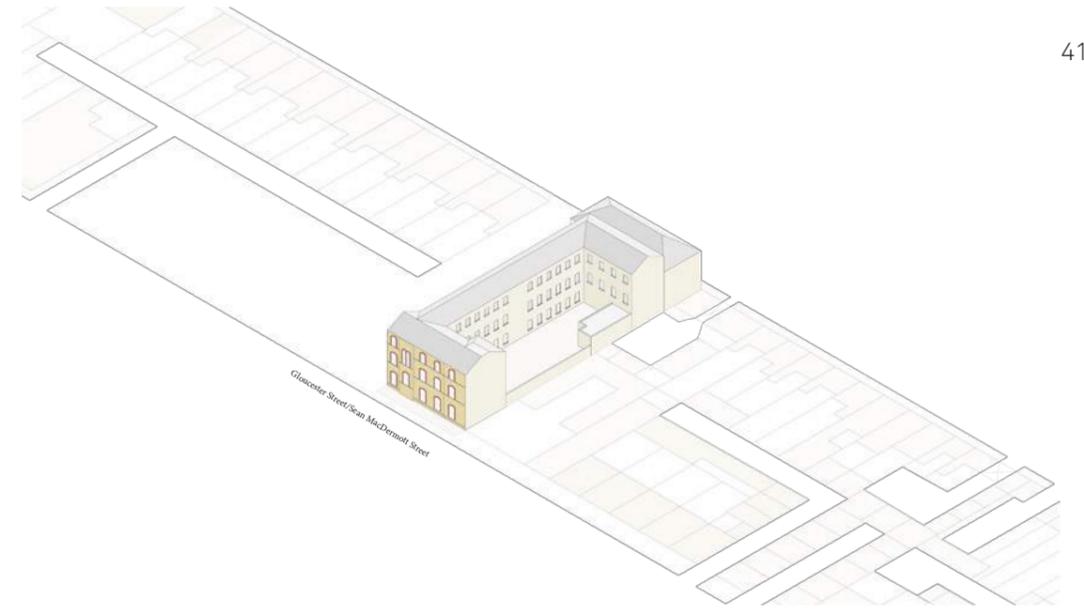
(above): Postcard circa 1925 with the caption: “Ironing Room, Monastery of our Lady of Charity of Refuge, Gloucester Street, N. Dublin”
Source unknown



evolution of the site

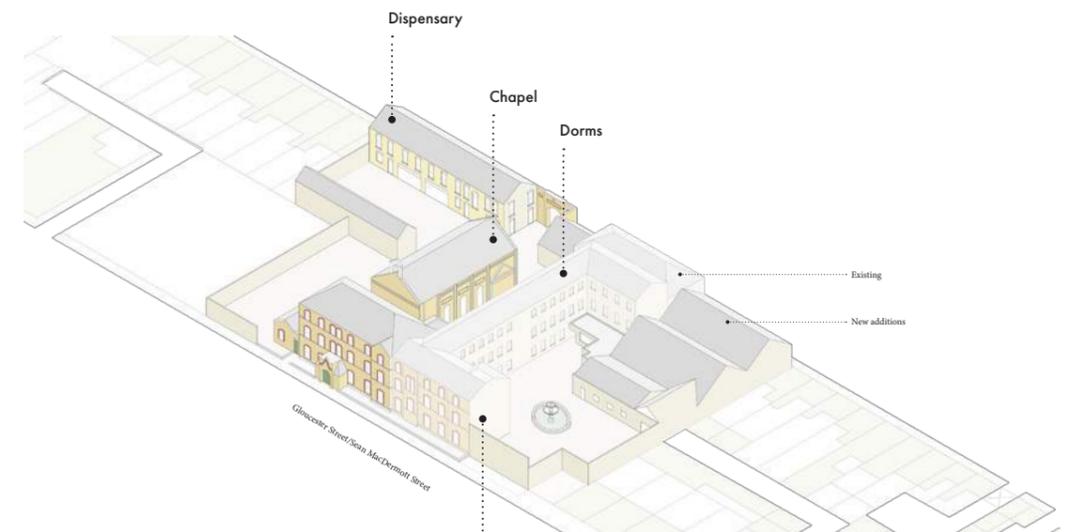
1847

The first building on the site was known as the “Female Penitents Retreat”, established on Mecklenburg Street (known today as Railway Street). In contrast to the Laundry of the 20th century, the function of the Female Penitents Retreat was to act as a refuge for homeless women in the area, a large percentage of whom worked as prostitutes in the Monto. The Penitents Retreat offered shelter, respite and the opportunity for vocational training, and women were allowed to come and go as they pleased.



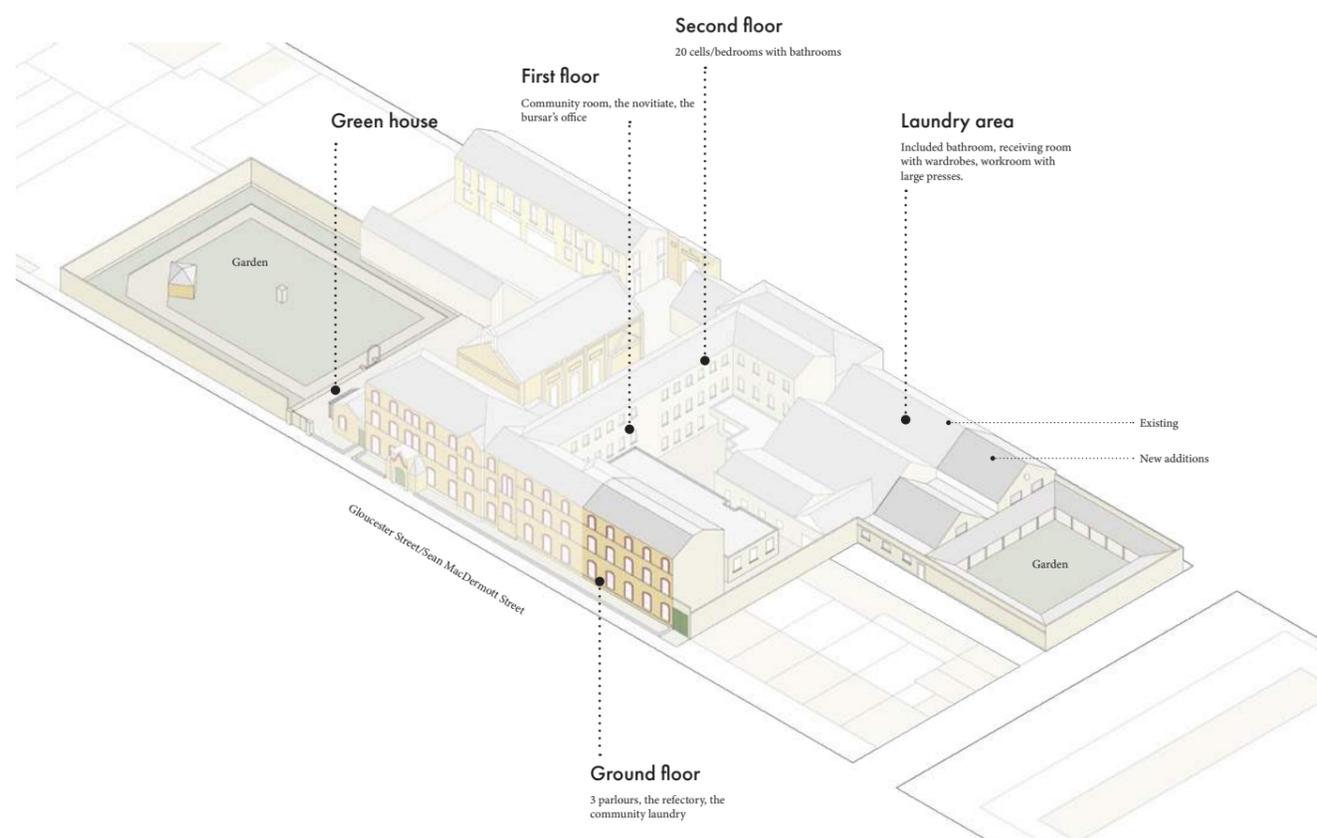
1889

The site began to expand, eventually absorbing the adjacent a row of cottages, then growing further to include 104 Gloucester Street.



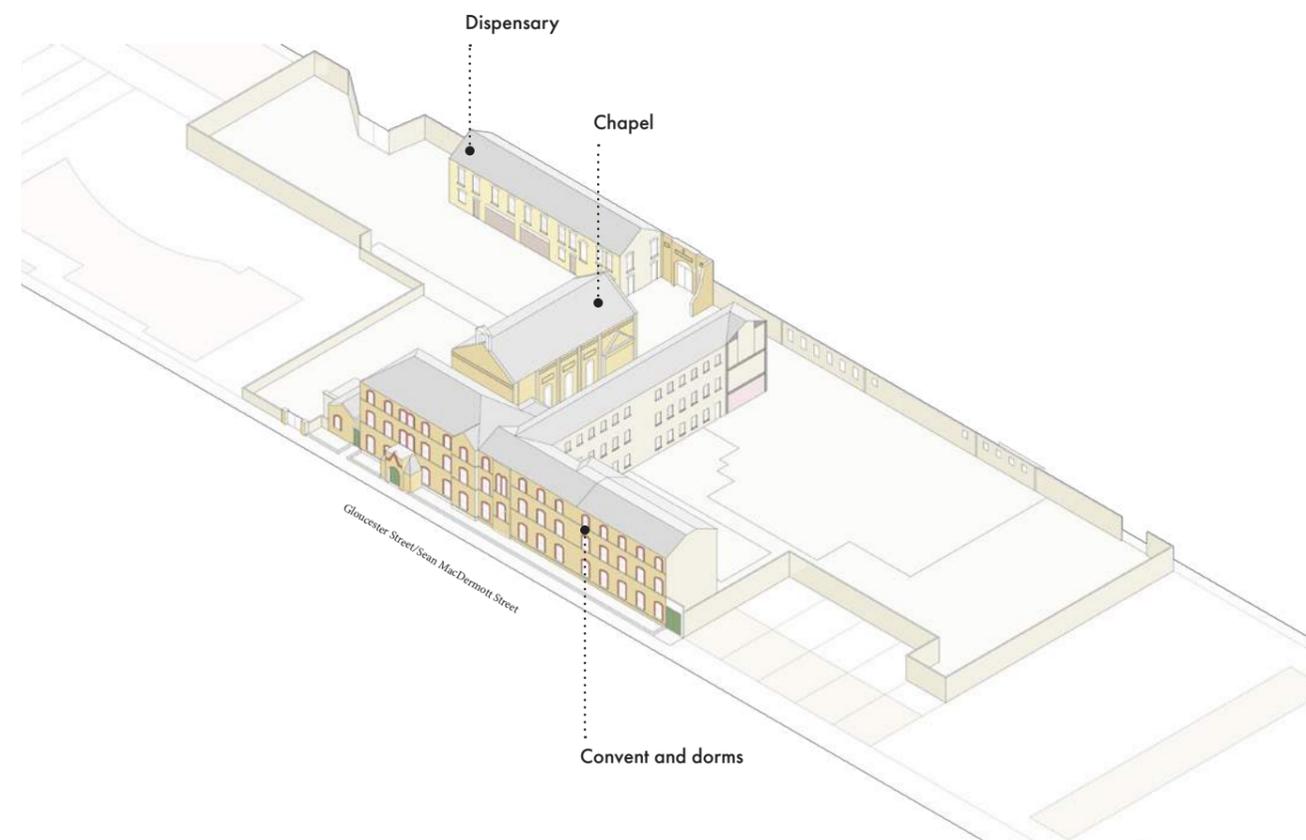
1909

The largest development occurred around the turn of the century with the expansion of the Convent on Gloucester Street and the construction of the chapel, dispensary and laundry buildings.



1954

By 1954 the existing ensemble had been extended by the addition of a new building on Gloucester Street, along with an ornamental garden and recreational yard.



2021

Following a fire in 2006 the laundry buildings were demolished, and a portion of the site to the north-east- the location of the ornamental garden was sold for redevelopment. Today the site still includes the buildings of the Convent to the main street, the women's dormitory wing to the rear, the chapel and dispensary building, along with the walls of the laundry along Railway Street.

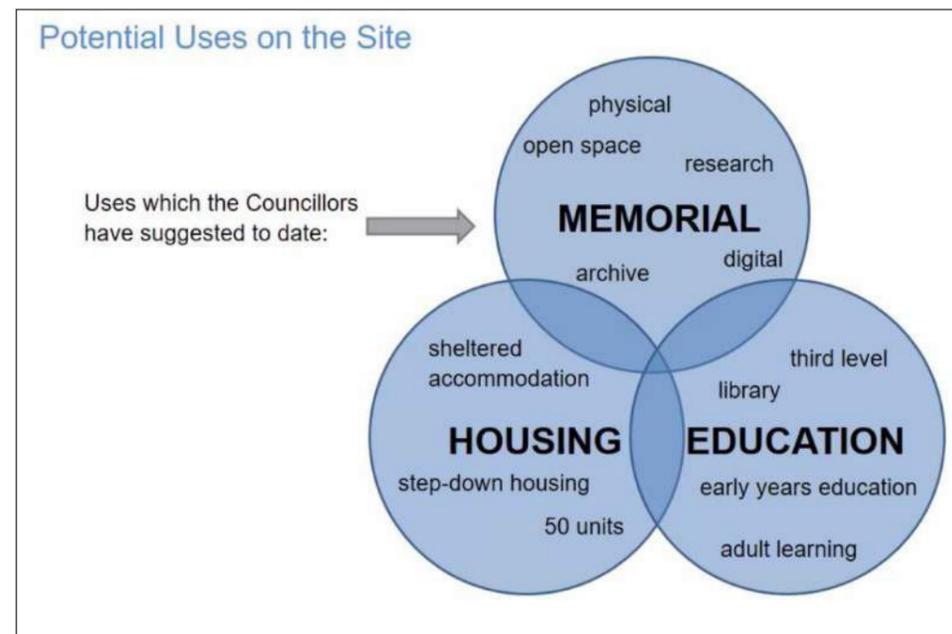


recent developments

/// Following the closure of the Laundry in September 1996 the site was slowly vacated, with the last Magdalene women being moved out in January 2010. Today, it is owned and operated by Dublin City Council, and the external spaces are used for storage. The Crinan Youth Project and a number of local priests still occupy one of the former convent buildings to the street, and on singular occasions the convent and chapel buildings have been used for theatre and film productions (for example Laundry by Anu Productions in 2011).

After a long period of relative dormancy the future of the site at Sean McDermott Street was abruptly called into question in 2018 when Dublin City Councillors voted to stop the sale of the site by Dublin City Council to a budget Japanese hotel chain, signalling a willingness to address the site in ways that might be more aware of its former function and therefore difficult history. A presentation was made to Councillors by DCC Architects Department in July 2021, in which the inclusion of some form of memorial was recognised as one of three key uses, the others being housing and education. The councillors then established a Working Group within DCC to investigate the potential of the site, and a report had been expected in October 2021.

The majority of the site at Sean McDermott Street is currently vacant, and as of autumn 2021 the last tenants were getting ready to move out. It is understood that repair works have taken place within the buildings.



(far left): view along Sean McDermott Street, copyright Peter Malloy

(left): extract from DCC Architect's Department presentation to Councillors (July 2021) highlighting memorial as a potential use

(below): external spaces of the site being used for storage in 2020



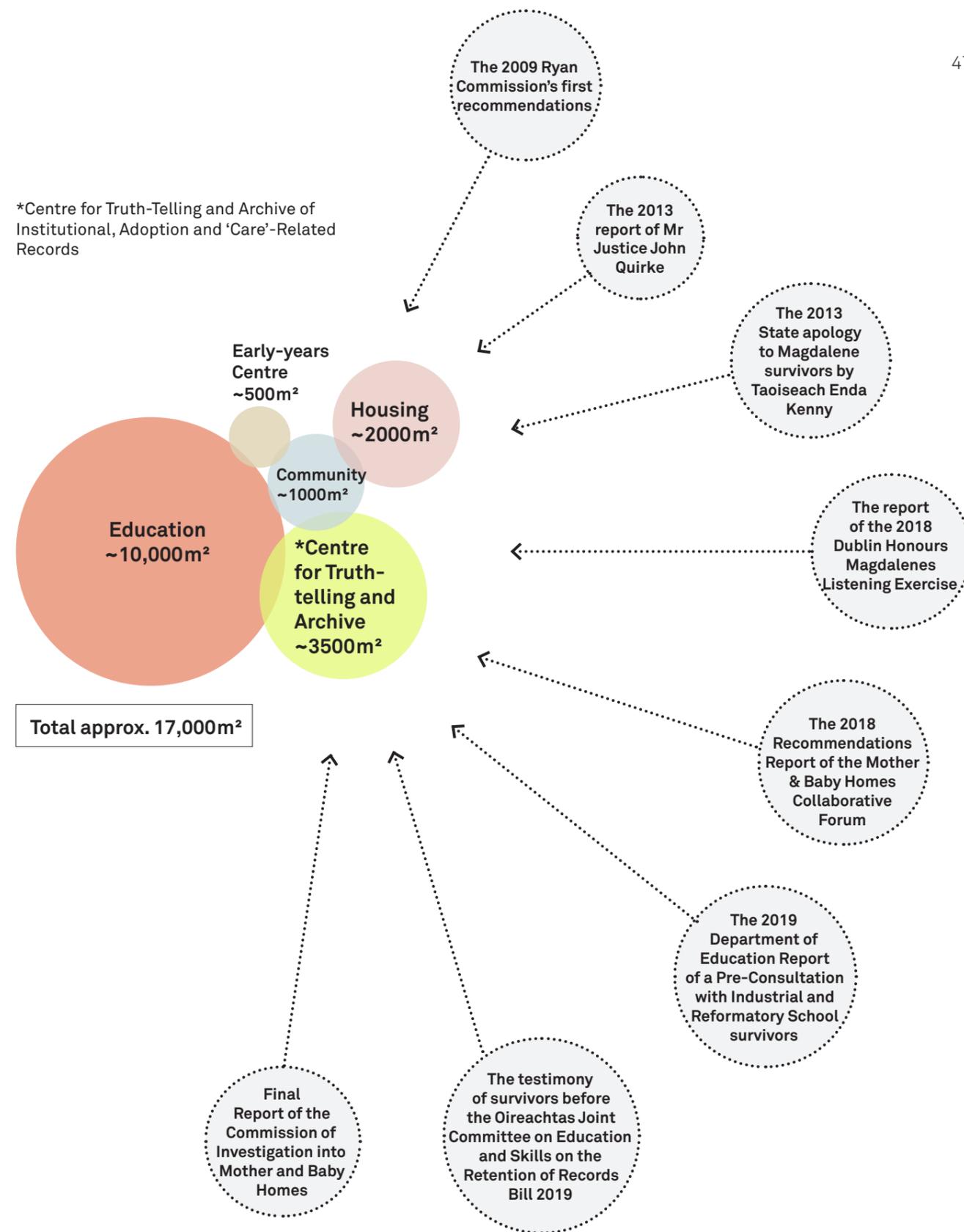
Developing the Brief

/// The brief for the site at SeanMcDermott includes for the provision of educational facilities, local authority housing, community services, an Early Years centre, a Centre for Truth-Telling and a related National Archive for Institutional and 'Care'-Related Records. The starting point for this programme draws from previously stated priorities of survivors and other stakeholders combined with the recommendations of the various reports and studies (see *diagram opposite*). In particular it takes into account Dublin City Council's preference to secure an anchor tenant with an education-based programme for the site, which, it should be noted, subsequently impacts the amount of space available for other key functions, including housing.

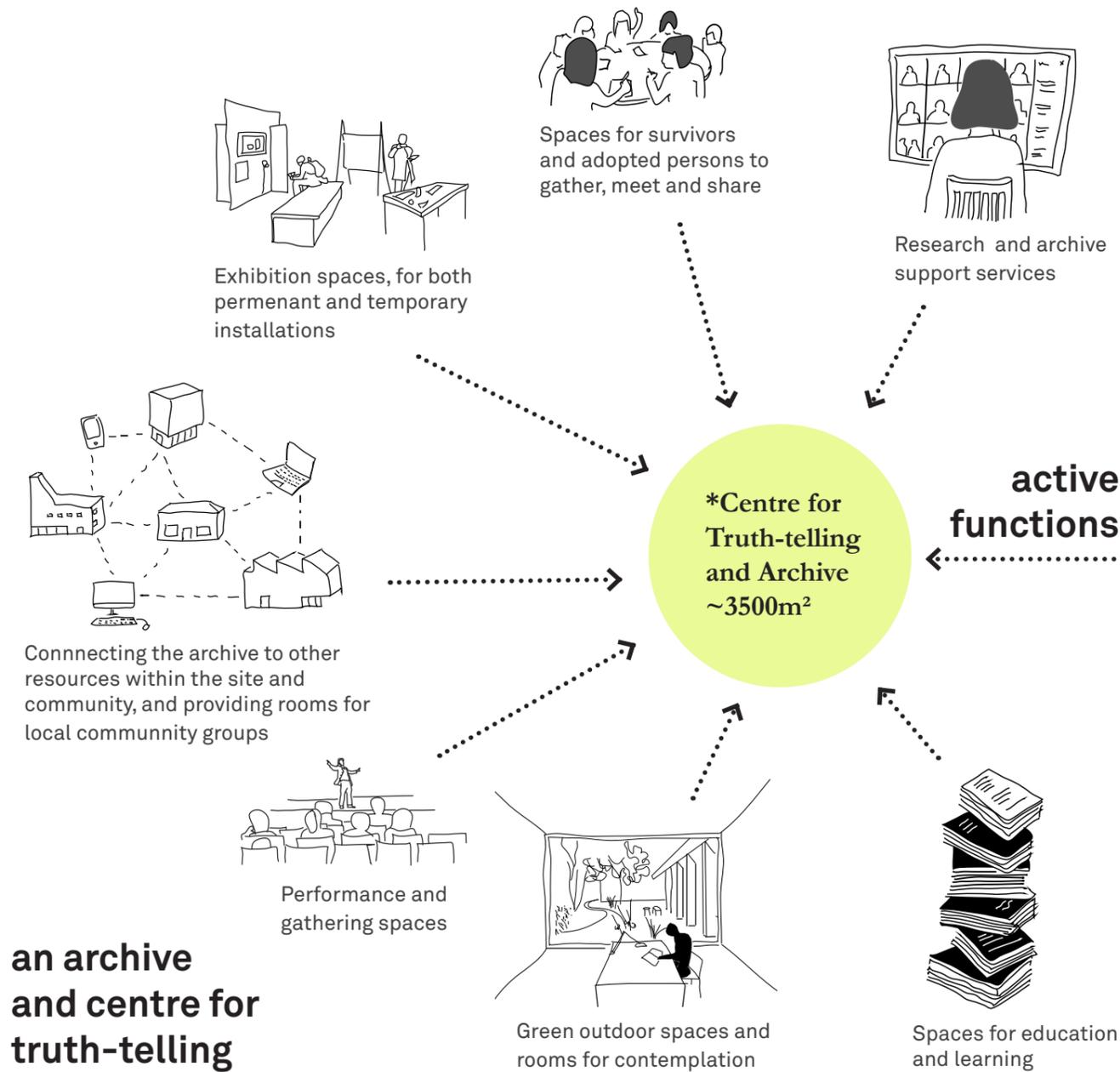
The basic programme is then built upon using advice gathered from a range of contributors. To do this CoLab undertook a series of conversations with DCC, local, national and international archivists, artists active in visual and performance arts, activist and advocacy groups, academics and local elected representatives, with the aim of refining the broader programme with insight gained from a broad spectrum of viewpoints and contributions. On the request of DCC CoLab did not engage directly with local community groups.

On establishing a notional brief for the site, the aim of resulting proposals is to demonstrate the capacity of the site to accommodate all of the desired functions, proving that these uses can coexist, and moreover benefit from proximity to and overlap with each other. The proposed functions are also notable for their ability to address both local and national needs.

Priority in the case of the CoLab project is given to the study of an archive and Centre for Truth-Telling as arguably one of the most important, and yet under-examined elements of any future reuse of the site.

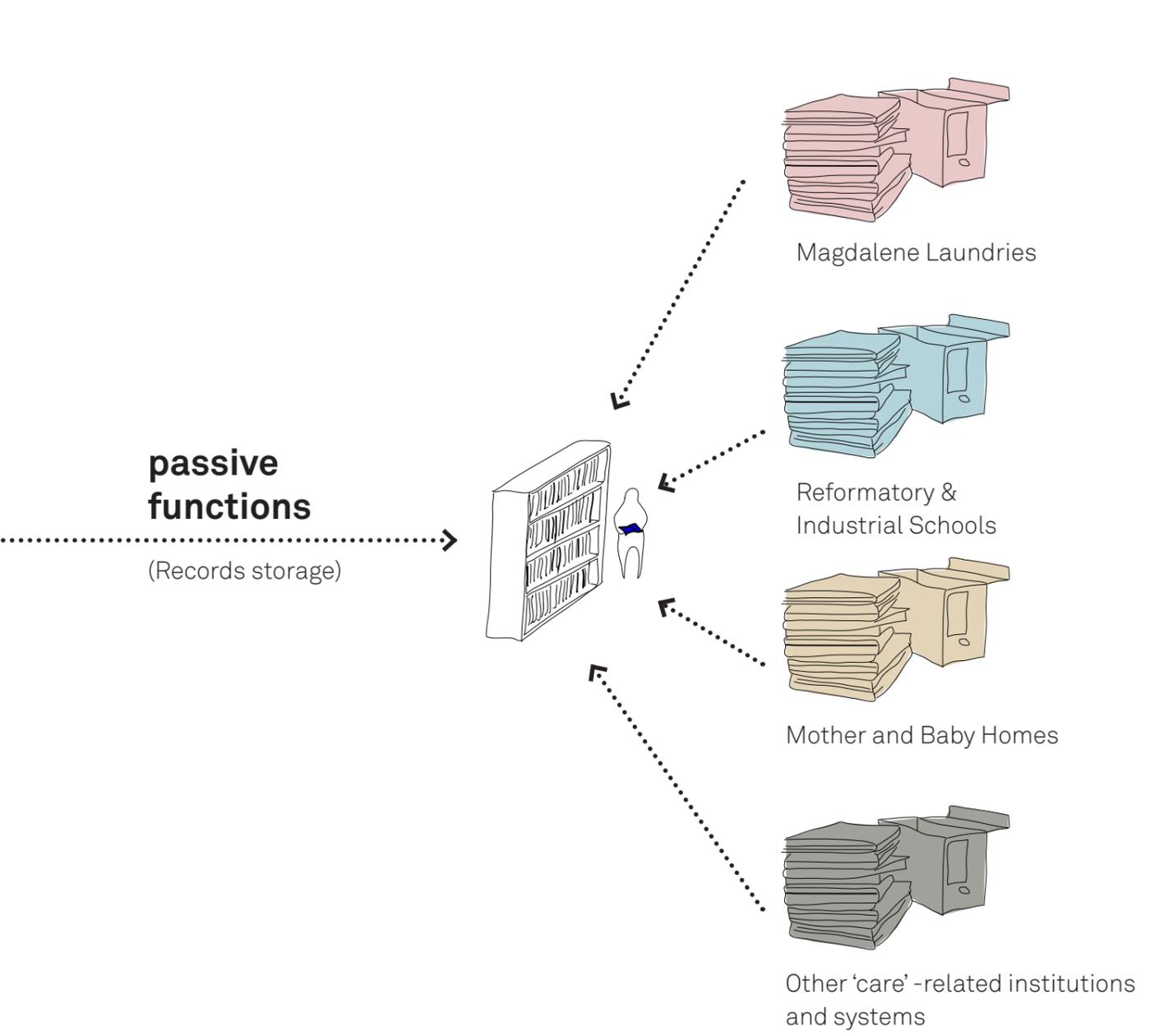


(above): Diagram indicating reports and studies which directly influenced the development of the brief



an archive and centre for truth-telling

/// The Centre for Truth-Telling and Archive of Institutional, Adoption and 'Care'-Related Records are seen as fundamental elements of the proposed brief. The archive buildings are seen as having two parts, divided into active and passive functions. The passive functions take place in the more "closed" parts of the building, where records are safely stored on archive shelving in climate-controlled rooms. The active parts of the archive are inhabited with more public functions. These include support spaces for survivors and adopted persons in the process of reading personal records, spaces for survivors to gather and meet, spaces for education, learning and research, and a range of other facilities



acting as additional supports. It is proposed to use parts of the original convent building supplemented by a purpose-built archive building to safely house records and other archival material.

Precedents for the proposals include the Mary Robison Archive in Galway and the Stasi Archive in Berlin. CoLab held conversations with archivists involved in the Mary Robison Archive and conducted a site visit to the Stasi archive as part of their research in this area.



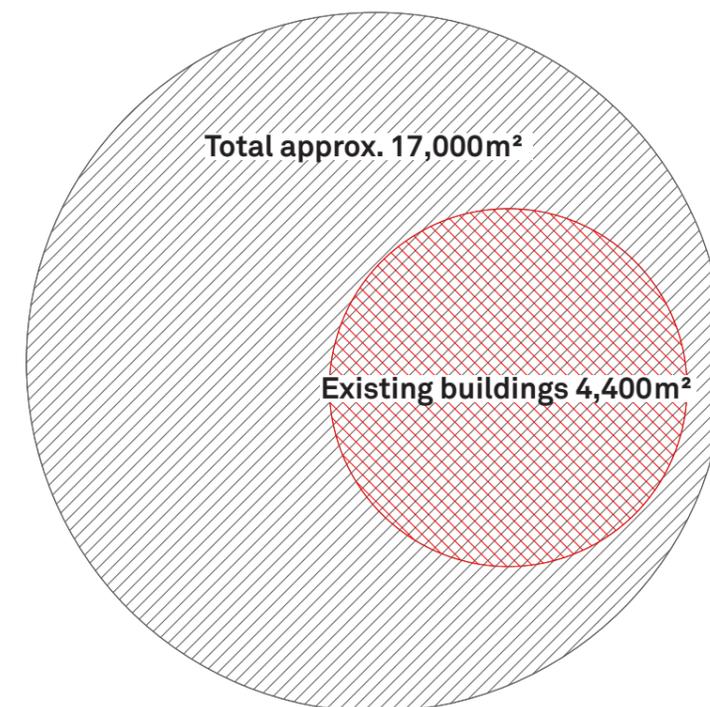
(above): Diagram of proposed areas

● Education	10,000m ²
● Early-years Centre	500m ²
● Centre / Archive	3,500m ²
● Community	1,000m ²
● Housing	2,000m ²



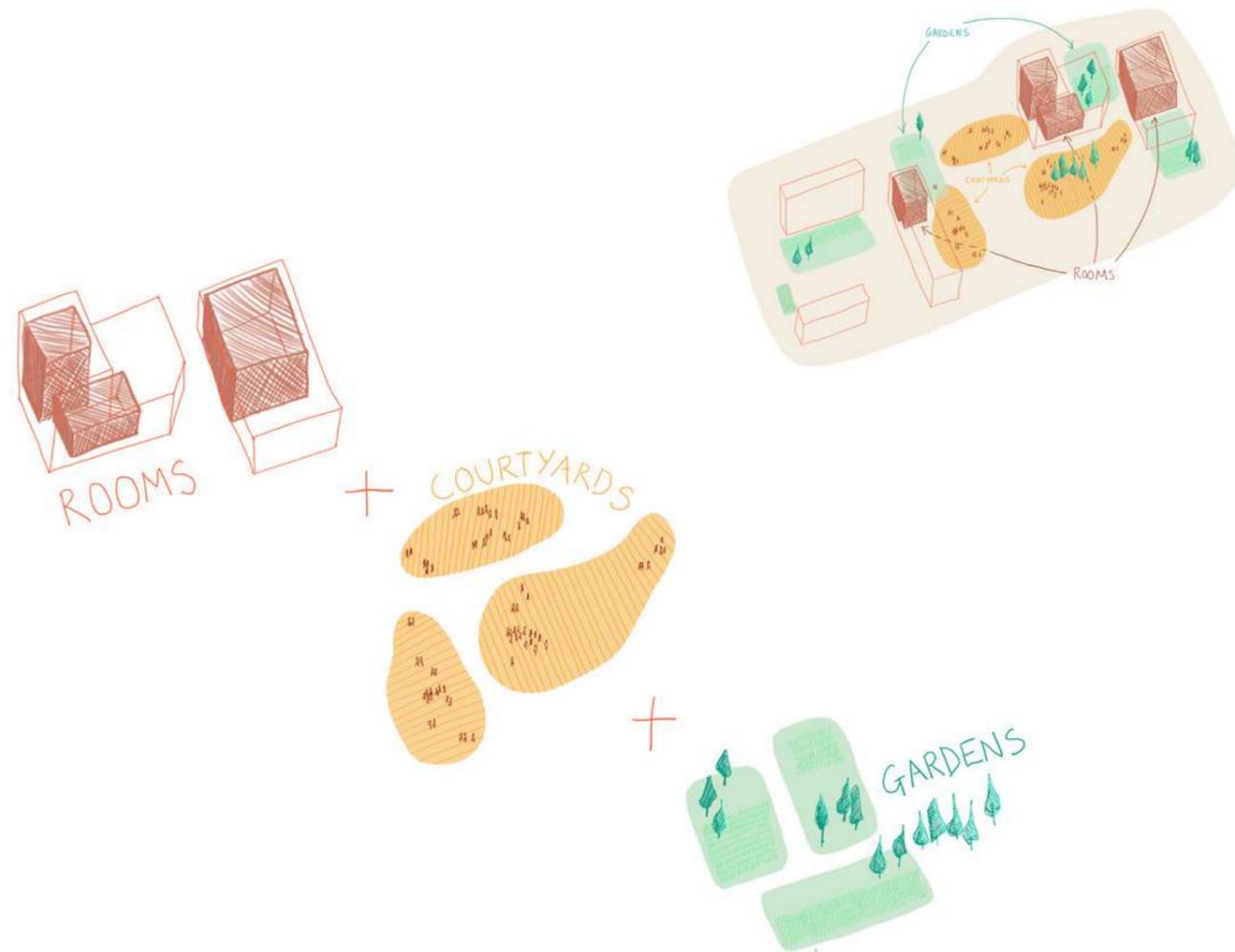
site strategy

/// It is proposed that the new functions on-site be accommodated using both existing and proposed structures across the site. Each of the main functions are integrated into the parts of the site deemed most appropriate, allowing for buildings and functions to connect where necessary. The scheme proposes placing the larger function of education in the vacant, currently unbuilt part of the site along Railway Street. The Centre for Truth-Telling is positioned in the middle of the site, acting as the focal point for the project. A childcare facility is located on the ground floor of the convent. Housing is located in the vacant plot beside the dispensary building. Lastly, a community function is proposed for the L-shaped plot behind the former Presbyterian church facade along Sean McDermott Street.



/// The existing buildings have the capacity to accommodate approximately 4500m² of floor area. Assuming a total required square area of 17,000m², the existing structures could therefore be activated to house up to one quarter of the required programme.

The Vision



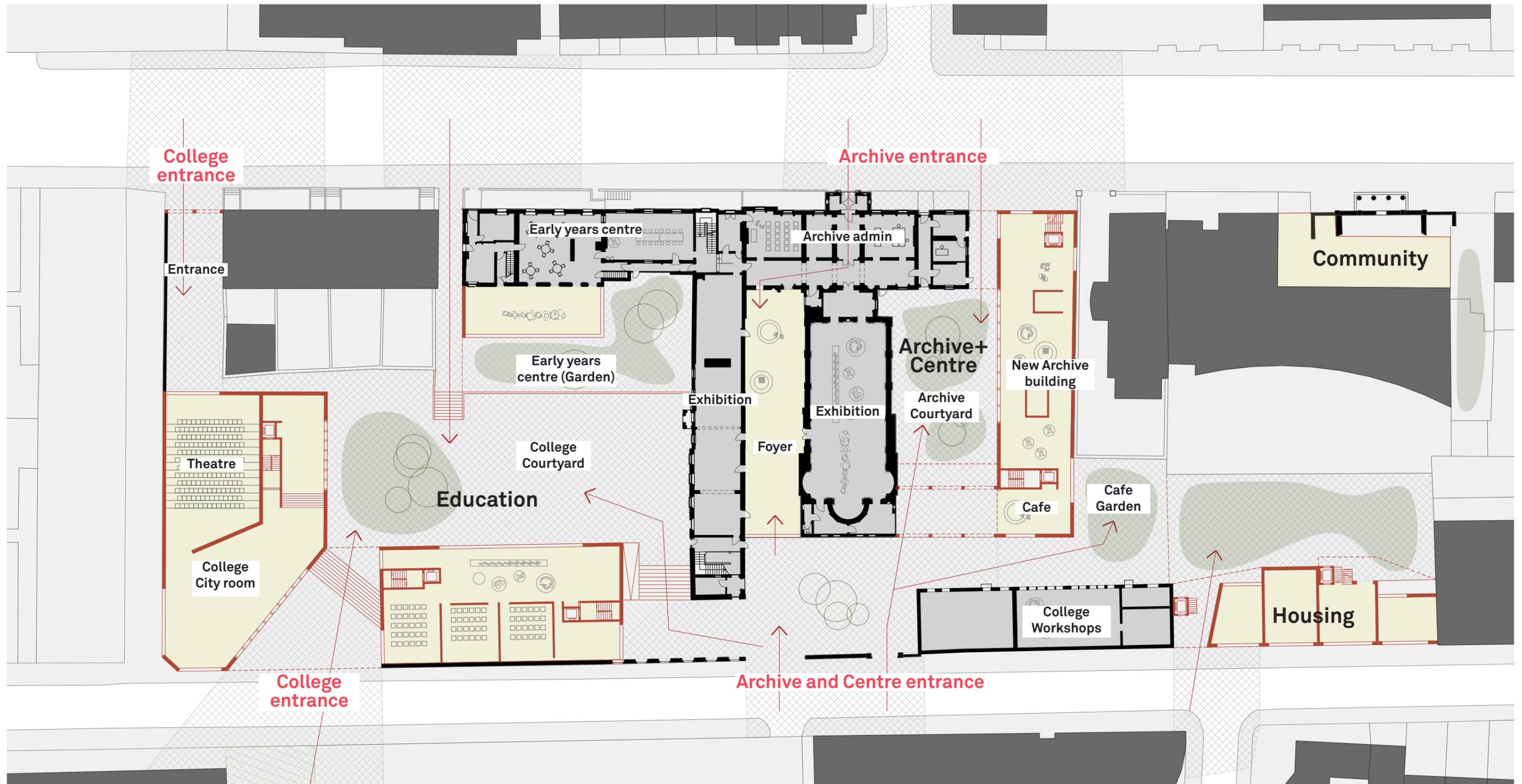
concept

/// The design of the proposal is guided by a concept of interwoven rooms, courtyards and gardens as a way of stitching spaces together. This “stitching” is intended to encourage exchange in multiple ways; between different functions, between old buildings and new, between indoor spaces and outdoor spaces, and between the site and its surrounding neighbourhood. Of key importance is the act of opening up the site to the streets and community surrounding it. In doing this the proposal signals a new beginning for this place while ensuring that the future of the site is fundamentally connected to its surrounding neighbourhood.



(above): Site diagram connecting site and city
(far left): concept diagram

/// The mix of diverse functions within the site create a series of large-scale rooms in the city (e.g. reading rooms, lecture theatres, exhibition spaces) which can communicate with each other across a series of courtyards. These courtyards are thought of as active spaces, which connect the buildings within the site as well as the site to the city. As unprogrammed spaces they offer opportunity for weekend markets, outdoor cinema screenings, performances or community events. The rooms and courtyards are then interspersed with gardens, acknowledging the power and potential of green spaces in creating healthy, positive places within the city.



city rooms and gardens

/// A key focus of the proposal is the (re)opening of the site towards the local neighbourhood and wider city. The attempt is to create a **permeable** site, with multiple entrances and routes ensuring that the outdoor spaces are lively and can contribute to an active public realm.

(above): Proposed plan for site



It is also important to note the symbolic importance of opening the site to the public, thereby signalling a new future where the contrast to the past is also legible in the spatial, civic moves that are made.

(below): Proposed axo drawing of site



community

housing

archive

college

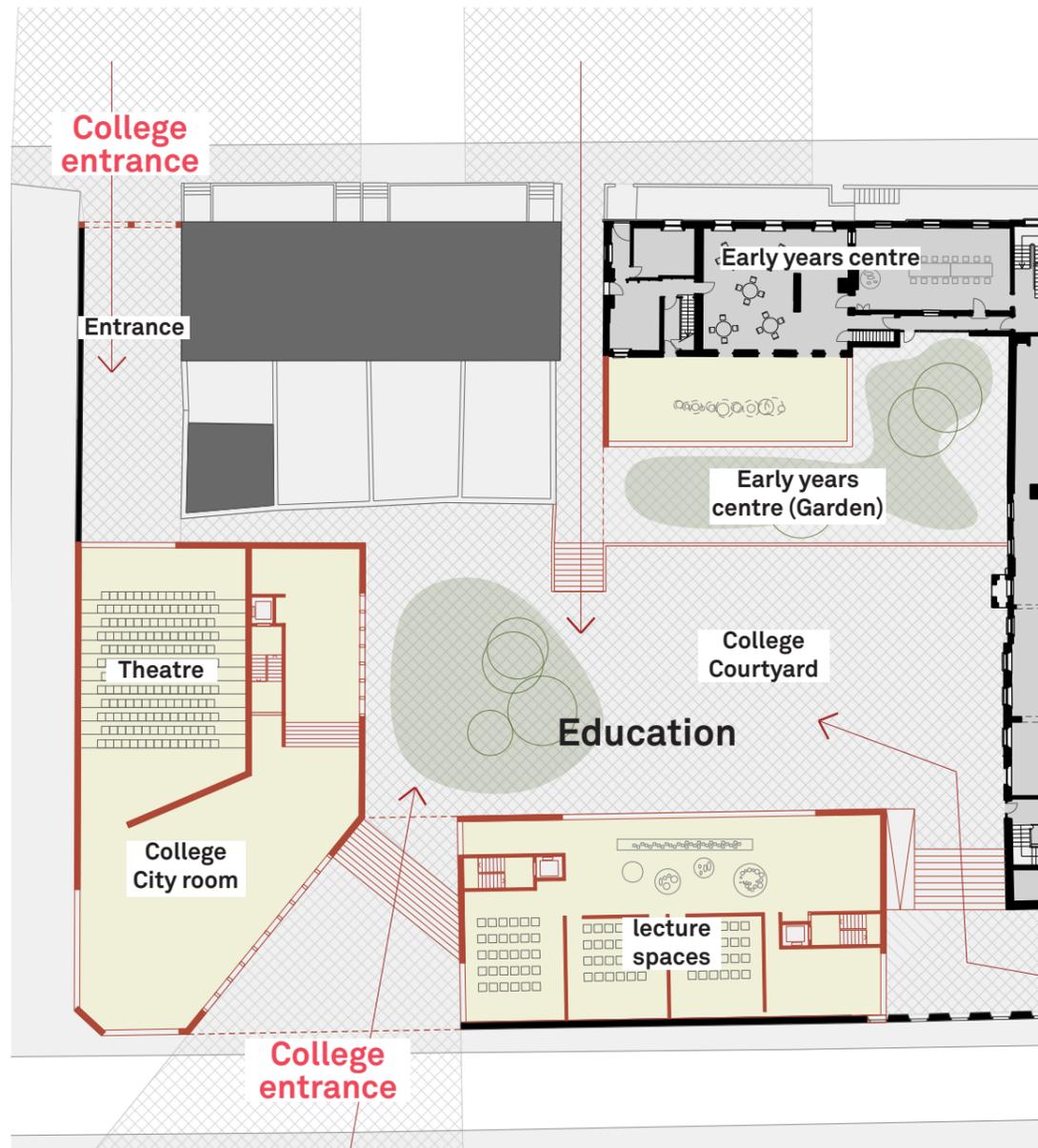
exhibition

child-care

/// References for the project include:

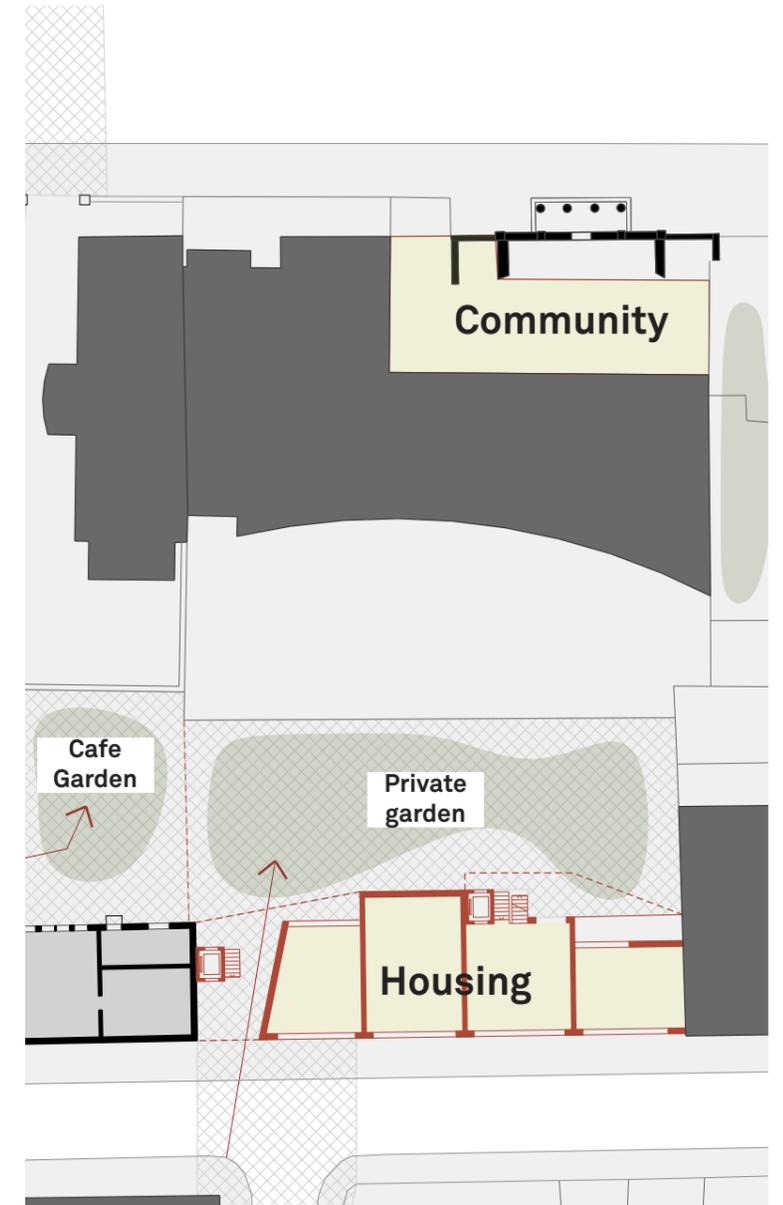
- Community spaces: *Sean O'Casey centre, East Wall (O'Donnell + Tuomey)*
- Housing: *collective housing Berlin, (Zanderroth Architects)*
- Archive: *Stasi Archive, Berlin*
- Museum/education: *National Gallery of Ireland (Heneghan Peng)*
- Education: *Bocconi University, Milan (Grafton Architects)*

(above): sketch drawing of the CoLab proposal for the former Laundry, emphasising the concept of rooms, courtyards and gardens



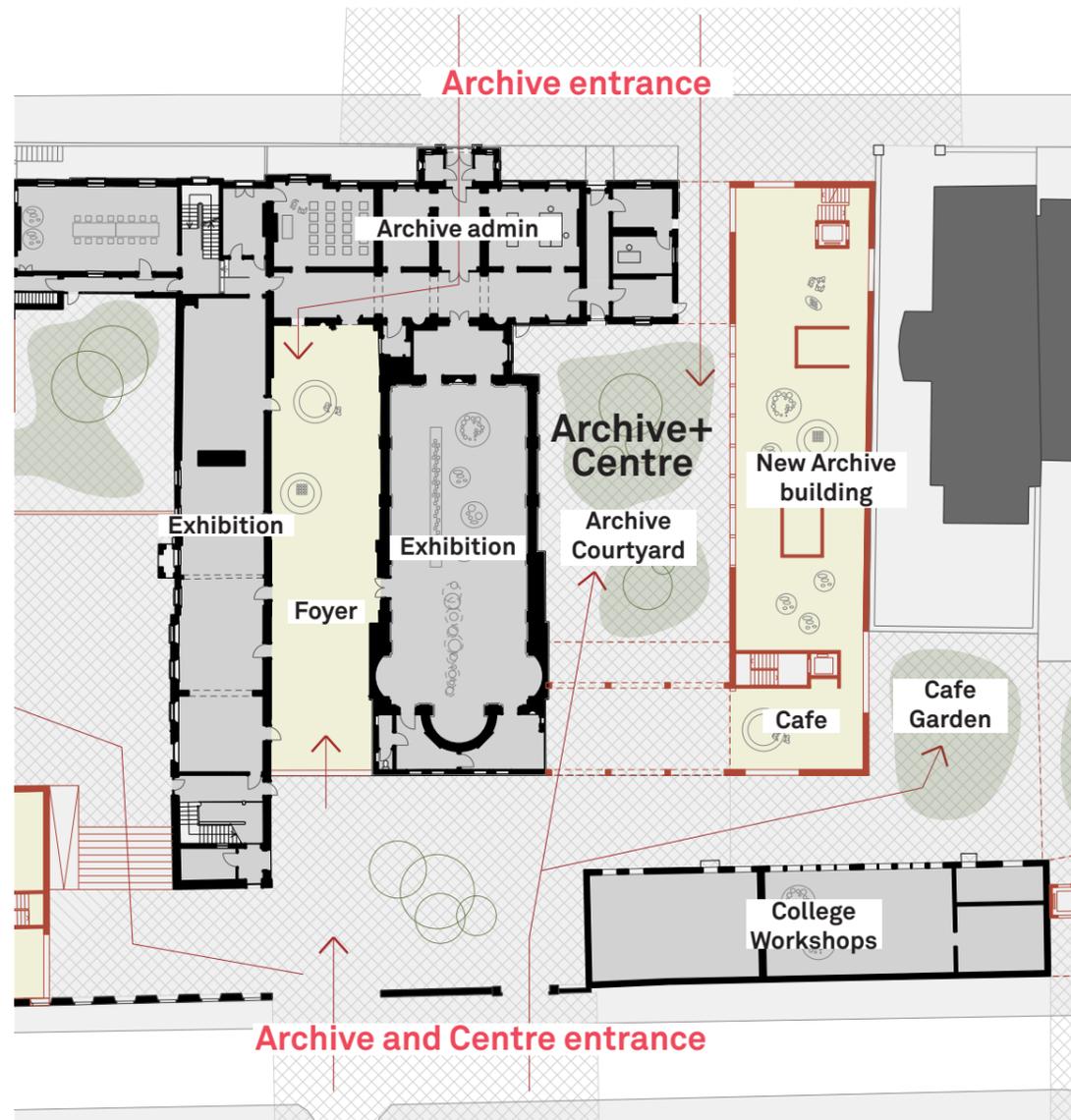
university

/// Proposed university buildings are identified as being best suited to the southern corner of the site along Railway St. The plan above shows the creation of the new university courtyard located between new and old buildings, with the entrance set in such a way as to draw visitors deep into the site. Entrance and lecture spaces are purposefully orientated towards the street as a source of animation and activity.



housing and community

/// The plot located between the former Dispensary building and an existing apartment block fronting onto Railway Street is identified as the most suitable location for a new housing development on the site. It is envisaged that 12-16 housing units could be accommodated in this location, designed in such a way as to afford privacy from the other spaces and functions on the site. It is important to note that the amount of housing feasible is related to the amount of space envisaged for other uses and that a re-allocation of priorities and square metres away from a college/educational facility could in principle increase the amount of space available for housing.



(above): sketch of proposed archive courtyard

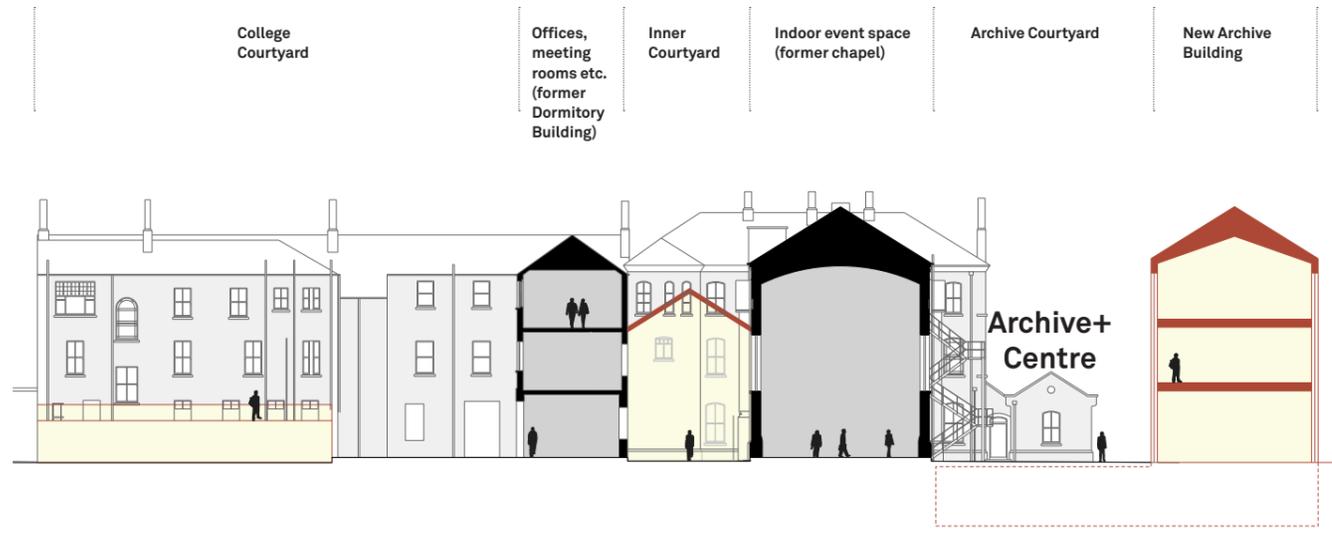
(right): axo sketch of new archive volume next to former convent buildings

(far left): plan of the archive in relation to the existing convent buildings

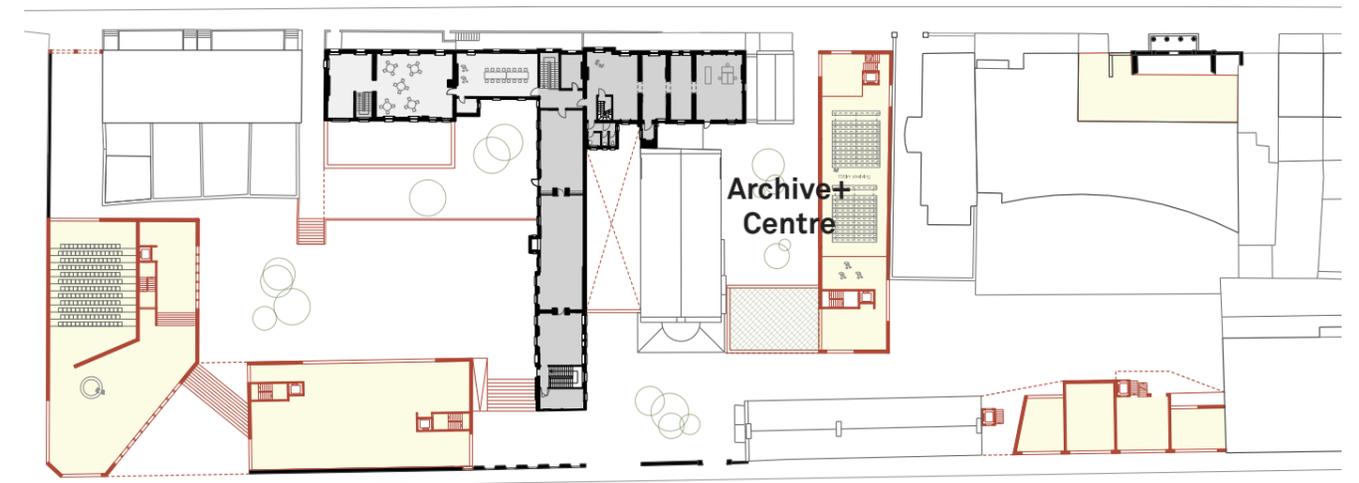
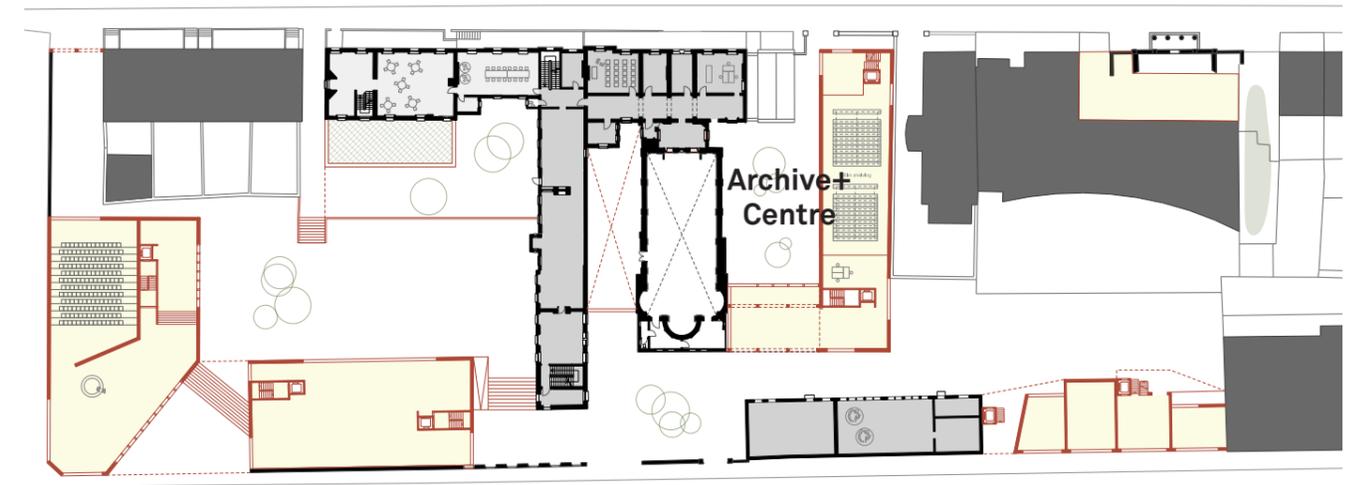
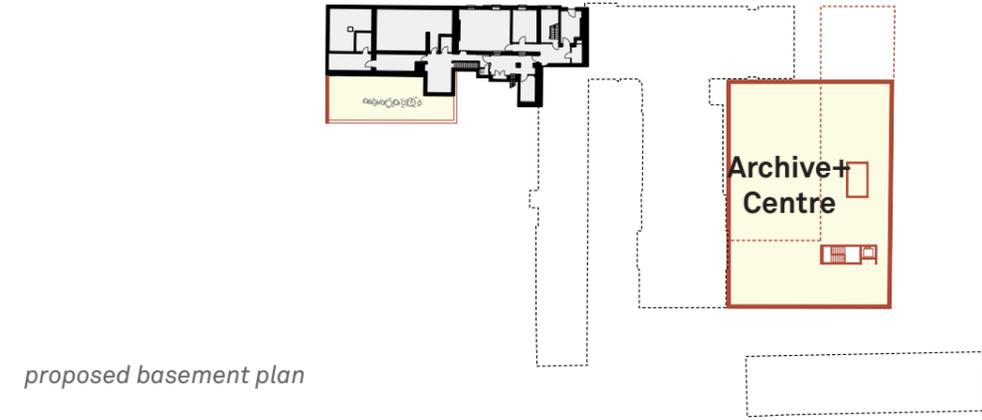


centre for truth-telling and archive

/// The Centre for Truth-Telling and National Archive of Institutional, Adoption and 'Care'-Related Records is located in a central position on the site, creating a new smaller courtyard between the existing chapel and a new three-storey archive building. This courtyard can be accessed for north and south, allowing for a new through-way between Railway and Sean McDermott Street. Active functions as part of the archive programme are proposed as opening onto the courtyard, creating a vibrant new city space. This space could also house other events; such as plays, cinema screenings or memorial events.



(above): section cut through site



proposed second floor plan

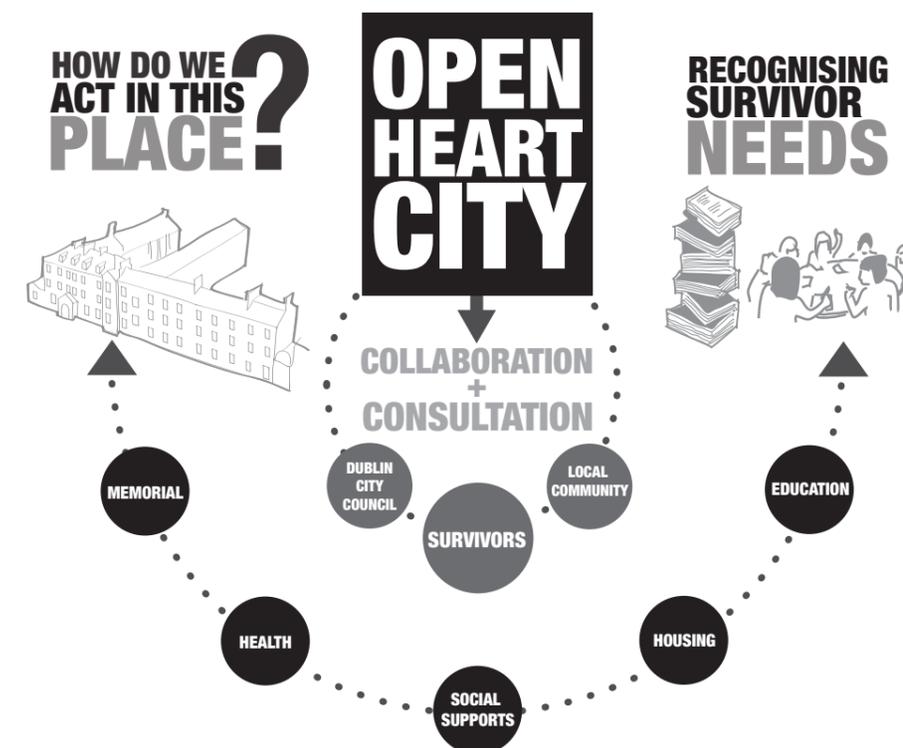


(above): collage showing a proposed public entrance from Railway Street, with gardens and courtyard spaces visible within.

(far left): collage showing proposed repurposing of the chapel as a community space / exhibition space

consultation process

Consultation on the Idea to Create an Archive and Centre for Truth-Telling



/// Continued consultation with survivors and members of the public has formed a key part of CoLab's working process since the project commenced in summer 2019. Presentations and discussions have taken place with survivors, elected representatives, Dublin City Council, local community groups and residents, students, academics, artists, archivists and activists. Information is shared on various social media platforms and through the Open Heart City website.

As part of this process, CoLab initiated two key events:

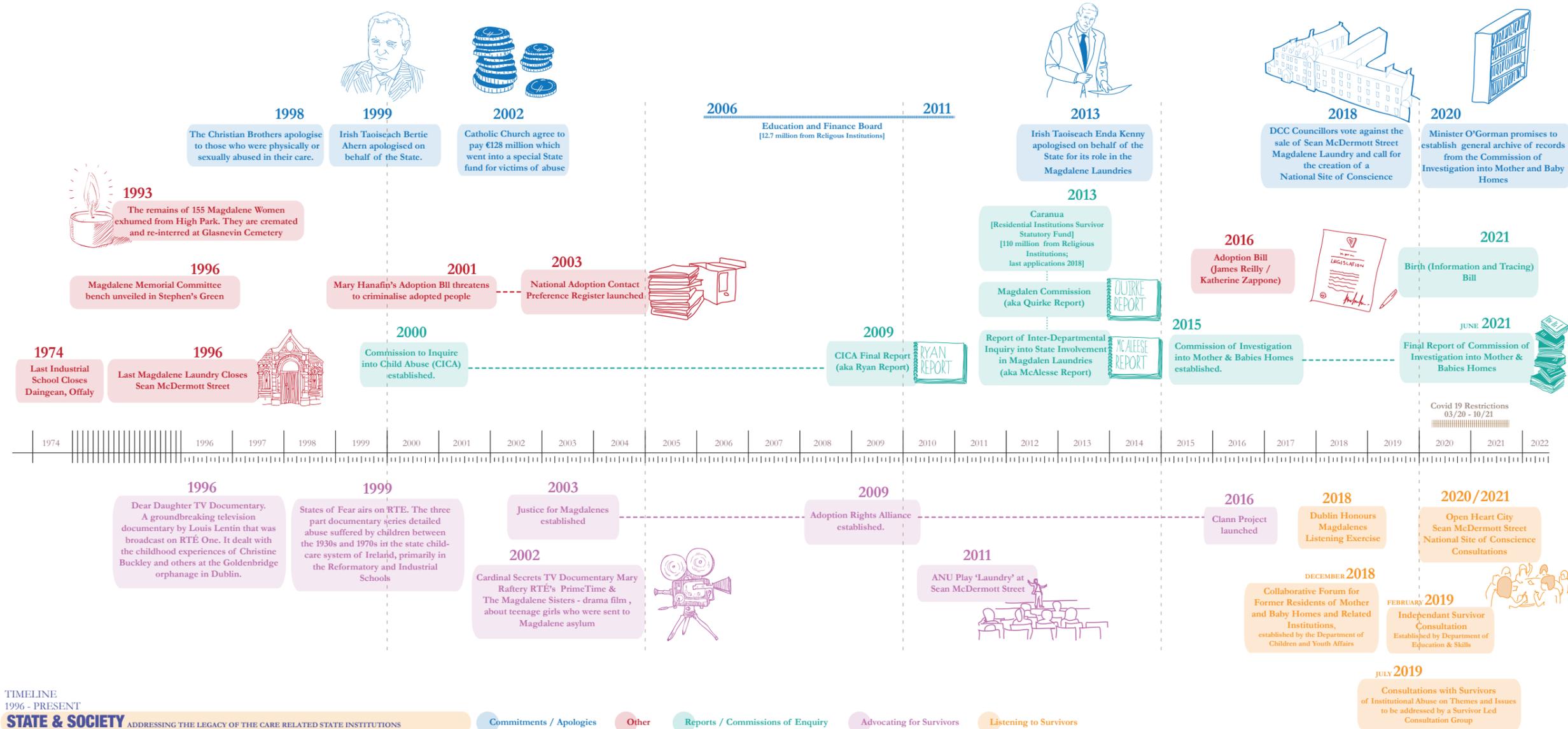
- Online Consultations: September 2020- January 2021
- Open Heart City Exhibition: October 2021

The objective of these events was to engage with as many survivors as possible- and with members of the public- on the idea of memorialisation and the concept of establishing a National Site of Conscience for Ireland's 20th century institutional, adoption and other 'care'-related abuses. **It is important to note that while this work is centred on advocating for survivors views to be taken into account when determining the future of the site, neither CoLab nor JMFR have any official role in terms of defining the development of the site.**

/// Why Engage with the Public?

A seminal moment in the history of this place occurred in 2018 when local councillors stopped the sale of the site to a Japanese hotel chain. The move was seen as an expression of the public's opinion that this site should not be redeveloped without taking into account its dark history. Engagement with the wider public on the future of the site has now become an essential component in any attempts to move forward and establish a positive role for this place in the local area.

The acknowledgment that there should be some sort of memorialisation on the site means that not only should the local community be consulted but also that consultation should take place with survivors about what would constitute an appropriate memorial. As with all forms of public engagement, the aim is to engage with a diverse range of voices who may not normally be involved in determining the future of our towns and cities. The objective in this case is to create places that are more inclusive and address the needs of the many rather than the few. Public engagement around the future of the site at Sean McDermott street is particularly complex due to its history as a former Magdalene Laundry.



/// Previous Commissions, Reports and Consultations

The CoLab proposal attempts to incorporate the recommendations, feedback and outcomes of previous reports and consultations carried out by other parties. These include a long line of commissions and reports as illustrated in the timeline above. A series of more recent consultations or events have tried to put survivors at the heart of the process:

- Dublin Honours Magdalenes Listening Exercise 2018
- Independent Survivor Consultation established by Department of Education & Skills (February 2019) and followed by the
- 'Consultations with Survivors of Institutional Abuse on Themes and Issues to be addressed by a Survivor Led Consultation Group' in July 2019, led by Barbara Walshe and Catherine O'Connell

- Facing the Future Together Conference – Discussing Ireland's Lifelong Responsibility to the Survivors of Institutional Abuse. The conference organisers were the Christine Buckley Centre for Education and Support, Barnardos Origins & Tracing, Caranua, One in Four, HSE National Counselling Service, Right of Place Second Chance and Towards Healing.

Commitments and findings from many previous reports and consultations fall broadly under the following headings:

- Health supports
- Educational supports
- Housing supports
- Social Supports
- Memorialisation

Online Consultations

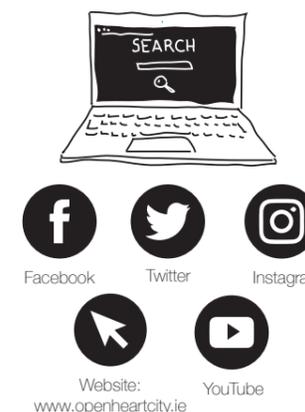


/// The primary consultation events carried out by CoLab and JFMR took the form of online consultation conducted between September 2019 and January 2020. The necessity for an online format was due to Covid19 restrictions.

/// Who was consulted?

In order to clarify who should be consulted on any project it is important to carry out stakeholder mapping in order to establish who the interested or affected parties are, and how to best engage and connect with them. This site is connected to a broad range of stakeholders, including traditional stakeholders such as local residents, community groups, business and educational groups as well as elected members and the site owners, Dublin City Council. In addition to this, and given the dark history of the site, the survivors of Institutions of social care are also considered a key group of stakeholders. This is a diverse and complex group spread across the island of Ireland and abroad who identify themselves as first second and third generation survivors of a wide variety of institutions. Using the network of the Clann Project and Justice for Magdalene's Research Group we attempted to reach as many survivors as possible.

While the longer term intention is to engage with all stakeholders on the future of the site, for this initial consultation phase the focus was placed on engaging primarily with survivors.



/// How many people were made aware of the Consultation Events?

The consultation events were advertised online, social media and email.

In terms of social media, the consultation event details were shared on the following platforms:

- Justice for Magdalene's Research Group (JFMR):
 - JFMR Facebook Group: 3,312 members
 - JFMR Twitter: 4,430 Followers
 - Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA)
 - ARA Facebook Group: 2,555 members
 - ARA Twitter: 4,430 Followers
- Clann: Ireland's Unmarried Mothers and their Children: Gathering the Data:
 - Clann Project Facebook Page: 1,830 followers
 - Clann Project Twitter: 2,592 Followers
- The event was also publicised on www.openheartcity.ie, and over 11,000 unique visitors to the site were recorded between January 2020 and September 2021, compared to 3000 visitors for all of 2020

During the initial consultation event survivors noted in their feedback that more people than were present had wanted to attend that particular event. In response to this, CoLab conducted a total of 8 online workshops over 5 months from September 2020 to January 2021 to ensure that we could reach as many interested parties as possible.



/// Format and Content of Consultations

The act of public participation can take many forms, from workshops where stakeholders co-design proposals, to more information-sharing type presentations, where the public are being informed of decisions that have already been made. The consultation that took place as part of this process lies somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. The objective is to adopt a partnership approach whereby survivors are part of defining and instigating the meaning of memorial as a part of the redevelopment of the site at Sean McDermott Street.

In order to kick start this process a very deliberate decision was made to develop a vision for the site that would serve to generate discussion and debate. This approach was taken in order to demonstrate that the various uses required on the site can be accommodated so that the discussion could focus on the key issue of whether establishing a National Site of Conscience on the site would be an appropriate form of memorialisation.

The online format did have its limitations, in that the events were not as accessible as they might have been if they had been in person. This was of particular concern in relation to survivors as the majority are part of an older demographic who tend to be less IT-literate. On the other hand, the fact that people did not have to travel for an event made it more convenient and accessible to others, especially those living abroad in the UK or the USA.

Each of the online consultation events took the same format, beginning with a 30min introduction and presentation from CoLab. The presentation part of the consultation centred on setting out the site history and context, the proposed site framework and the illustrative proposal for the National Site of Conscience as detailed. This was followed by a 2-3 hour open round table discussion amongst all attendees. The consultations were chaired by Katherine O'Donnell from JFMR, who ensured that every effort was made to hold space for all attendees to contribute. The chat function of the online consultation also allowed for people to share their thoughts, even if they felt reticent about voicing their views or experiences. A total of 154 people attended the 8 consultation events including 99 survivors. Refer to figure above for a detailed breakdown of attendees.

A recording of the presentation was shared via the Open Heart City YouTube channel and has been viewed 182 times between January 2021 and December 2021:

<http://openheartcitydublin.ie/previous-survivors-consultations-and-statements/>

Open Heart City Exhibition

/// Exhibitions offer a focused period of engagement with a topic in the public forum, and the curation and preparation of exhibitions requires the exhibitors to refine and distill the key points to be made, which in itself offers an opportunity to reassess and reevaluate a project. From 16th – 17th October 2021 CoLab hosted an on-site exhibition at SeanMcDermott Street as part of the Irish Architecture Foundation's annual Open House Dublin weekend. The works presented included a selection of student work from the UCD and Queen's University Open Heart City semesters, as well as site and historical analysis carried out by CoLab, supplemented by models and film. Guided tours were given by the members of CoLab every 30 minutes over the course of the two days, with 24 tours in total.

Due to health and safety concerns sited by Dublin City Council, it was not possible to carry out the original plan to exhibit the work of Colab and the UCD and Queens students in the Laundry spaces themselves. An alternative was found in the spaces of the Crinan Youth Project, which offered the use of their spaces during the weekend of Open House Dublin. CoLab chose the spaces of the former nuns' refectory and constructed a temporary exhibition with custom-made reconfigurable shelving to display the student work. A site model made by CoLab for use in future consultations was displayed beside a historical film by Father Jack Delaney (on loan from the Irish Film Institute archives) depicting the laundry in the 1940s. In the first room (the former servery between kitchen and refectory), CoLab used historical plans and analysis alongside new drawings of the site to introduce visitors to the project and provide background information regarding the Magdalene Laundries.

Over the course of the Open House Dublin weekend the exhibition was visited by over 240 people, including survivors and members of the local community. CoLab also presented the exhibition to the Lord Mayor of Dublin and several local and national politicians.

CoLab also unveiled a new travelling exhibition known as the Nomad as part of the exhibition, which was used over the course of the weekend to gather stories and further disseminate the project from the pavement on SeanMcDermott Street to passers-by.



(above): CoLab give public tours of the Open Heart City Exhibition at SeanMcDermott St. in October 2021



/// The main pillar of consultation is supported in this project by various other additional approaches which further seek to foster discussion and encourage engagement with the topic of our (dark) built heritage. This includes, for example, the use of exhibition as a medium for disseminating information and encouraging debate, site specific installations, travelling exhibits and online resources.



(above): The first of three exhibition spaces as part of the Open Heart City Exhibition at SeanMcDermott St., where visitors were introduced to the history of both the laundries and the site, using drawings and diagrams made by CoLab

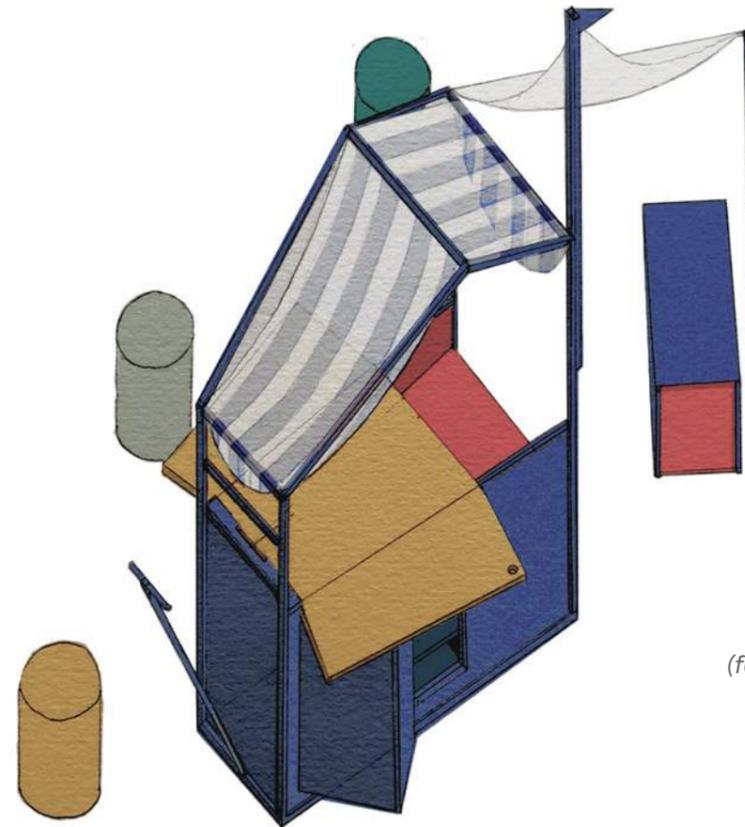
(far left): Jennifer O'Donnell gives a tour of the exhibition and Denise Murray presents the project to the Lord Mayor of Dublin

Nomad



/// With an eye to future events, CoLab designed and commissioned the construction of a small travelling pavilion or “apparatus” which would allow us to bring the minimum in communication tools (drawings, models, leaflets etc) on the road with us. Our “Nomad” is intended to travel along predefined routes, stopping at particular sites across Ireland as a type of pop-up installation, gathering interest, and offering us a place to listen to stories and hear feedback directly from local communities as to their own thoughts and opinions on our built heritage.

Constructed from painted timber and steel, the Nomad functions as a cabinet of curiosities, with drawers for drawings, extendable table space, a roof to protect from weather, and a removable seat and built-in bench. The Nomad was first used as part of the Open Heart City Exhibition on SeanMcDermott Street, where it was positioned on the pavement outside the entrance to extend the exhibition into the the street. Its colour and form helped to draw attention and further signal that an event was taking place on the street. In taking the Nomad for its first “walk” around the neighbourhood, the action of pushing this strange cart along the road helped to provoke discussion, which in turn helped us to engage with members of the local community. In its form the Nomad references the long tradition of local women street traders who worked on Moore St. and adjacent areas, selling goods from prams.



(far left): CoLab talking with locals during the Open House Dublin weekend
(left): design sketch for the Nomad
(below): first outing of the Nomad along railway Street in front of the former laundry sheds.



**initial
feedback and
next steps**

Feedback from Consultations



/// This is a summary of the feedback gathered during the 21 hours of discussion and debate held round the concept of memorialisation and the proposal to create a National Site of Conscience at the former Magdalene Laundry at Sean McDermott Street.

/// Consultation Event – Key Emerging Themes

The following were the key emerging themes in the discussions that took place as part of the online consultations:

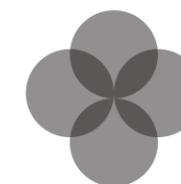
- Honouring Previous Commitments
- Location and Site History
- Diversity, Inclusivity and Accessibility
- Memorialisation
- Access to information and records
- Education - for survivors and the wider population
- Social Supports – a place to meet

These themes are expanded in the following pages, and set out the main points communicated by survivors under each theme.

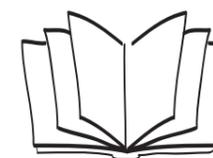
emerging points of discussion:



LOCATION



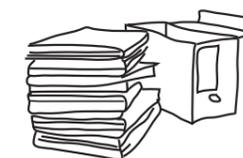
DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY



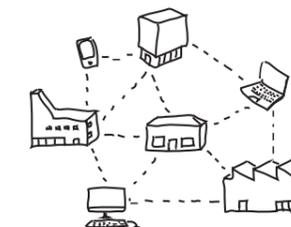
EDUCATION



MEMORIAL



ACCESS TO INFORMATION & RECORDS



SOCIAL SUPPORTS

1. Honouring Previous Commitments

During each event, reference was made by survivors to previous recommendations or commitments made by the state following various consultations or commissions of enquiry. Survivors felt strongly that any project on Sean McDermott Street would have to be accompanied by action on previous commitments made by the State in order to regain the trust of survivors and their families, allowing them to start the journey towards justice.



“... the site is large and in public ownership”

“... well connected by public transport”

... large enough to accommodate a lot of uses”

“... need more locations around the country to provide local support to people”

“... a large amount of engagement with survivors required to convince them to support a former Magdalene site as a national centre for all survivors”

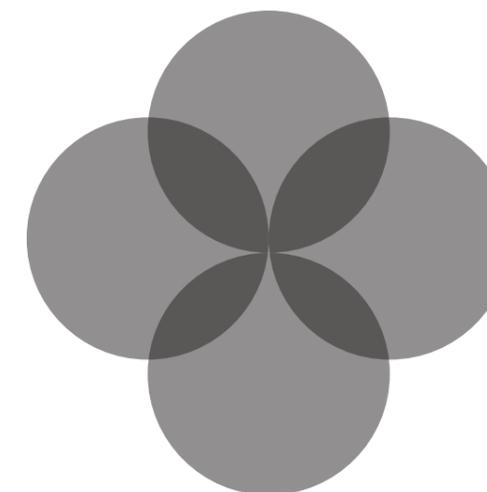
2. Location and Site History

Positive aspects of the site and buildings:

- Site is in public ownership
- prominent location- 500m from O’Connell Street, one of the main streets in the capital city
- accessible - well connected by public transport, especially for those visiting from abroad
- potential for regenerative effect on the local community
- large enough to accommodate a lot of different uses- housing, education and the needs of survivors
- Former Magdalene Laundry- one of the types of Institutions that was home to many survivors

Problematic aspects of the site:

- Location in Dublin not easily accessible to survivors living outside of Dublin
- Located in one city- survivors need more local support facilities
- Former Magdalene Laundry- some survivors felt it would be problematic for other survivors, such as industrial school survivors, to have their story remembered on the site of a former Magdalene Laundry; also could be traumatic for survivors to visit



“... nothing about us without us”

“... the experiences of those of all faiths north and south of the border needs to be reflected”

... the diverse nature of people affected by Ireland’s 20th century institutional, adoption and other ‘care’ related abuses.”

3. Diversity, Inclusivity and Accessibility

- The Board of any Site of Conscience should include survivors from the outset
- Any project would need to reflect the diverse nature of people affected by Ireland’s 20th century institutional, adoption and other ‘care’-related abuses
- The diaspora needs to be involved
- The experiences of those of all faiths, north and south of the border, needs to be reflected



"... memorialisation only happens after justice"

"... some survivors survived multiple institutions and that the project represents something we can gather around"

.... there needs to be a space for people to claim ownership of their own stories & information"



"... will the church hand over their archives?"

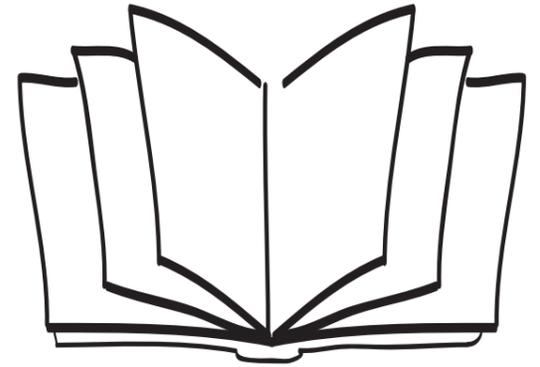
"... survivors need to be on the Board of any organisation deciding the future of the site and running any institution on the site"

"... importance of privacy when physically viewing personal records"

"... digitisation of archives as a way of extending access to international communities"

4. Memorialisation - Access to information and records

- The priority has to be placed on immediate access to records for survivors
- The archive should be part of the National Archive
- A space is needed for people to claim ownership of their own stories and information
- Digitisation of the records could make them more accessible to a wider group of people all over the country and across the globe
- A specialist archivist would be required in order to be able to offer the appropriate supports to survivors and their families, due to the very personal nature of the records



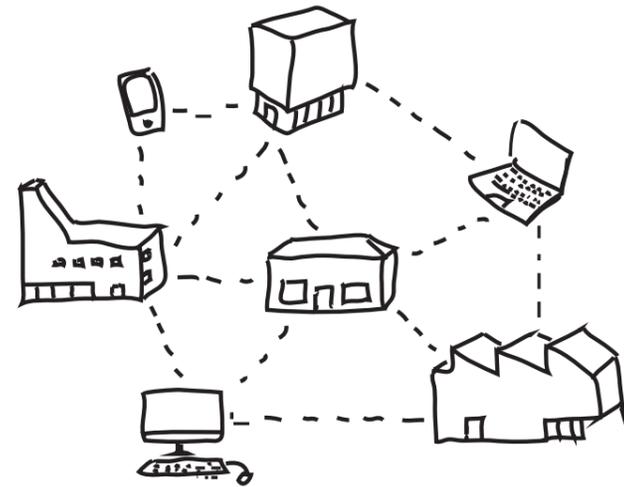
"... education for survivors and the wider population"

"... the curriculum of any third level institution on the site should relate to its history"

"... somewhere for school children to visit to learn about what happened so it can never happen again"

5. Education – for Survivors and Wider Public

- The curriculum of any educational college on the site should address the legacy of the site; in that there should be courses for social justice, social and child welfare etc
- There should be scholarships available to survivors and their families to attend the college.
- The site should have a space for adult education
- The Site of Conscience should be a destination for school tours, allowing schoolchildren to learn about what happened, so it can never happen again
- The story of all these institutions should be made part of the national curriculum and be included in the national history text books.



"... a place to meet and share past experiences"

"... the importance of housing on the site"

"... where survivors can learn about their rights and entitlements"

6. Social Supports - a place to meet and to access social supports

- The Site of Conscience should provide as centralised place where survivors can come to access and learn about available supports
- Survivors felt there should be housing for older persons on the site and that survivors should be given an option to avail of housing on the site
- Survivors thought that the site could act as a place to meet up and share stories with other survivors (informally)
- The site could also be a place to share stories through theatre, music and other forms of art
- It was strongly felt that more locations around the country are required in order that all survivors have equal access places providing these kinds of supports



Feedback from Open Heart City Exhibition



/// CoLab are currently in the process of collating and analysing feedback given by visitors to the Open Heart City Exhibition. Ballot cards were distributed as part of every tour and visitors encouraged to write down their thoughts, feelings or stories in reaction to what they had seen and heard during the tour.

Tell us your thoughts, feelings, stories:

fold here -----

name: _____ email address: _____

I am a:
 survivor local other (please specify): _____

instagram: @colab81_7
 colab817architects@gmail.com

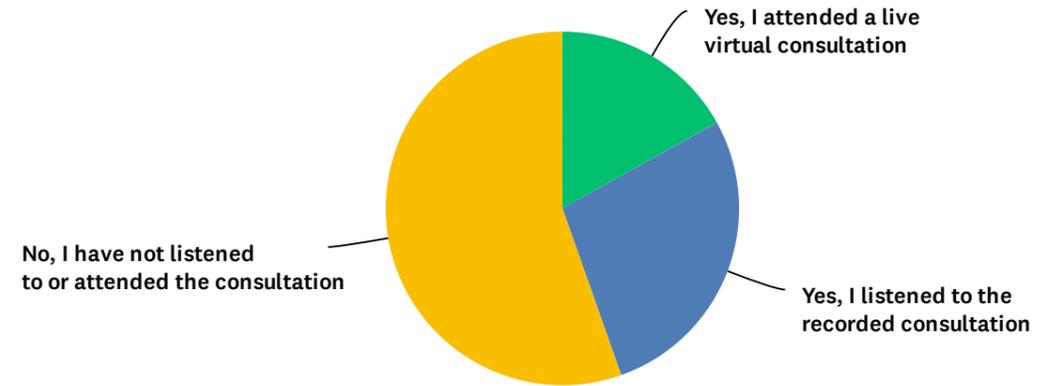
CoLab81-7

(above): example of a ballot card used at the open Heart City Exhibition to collect feedback

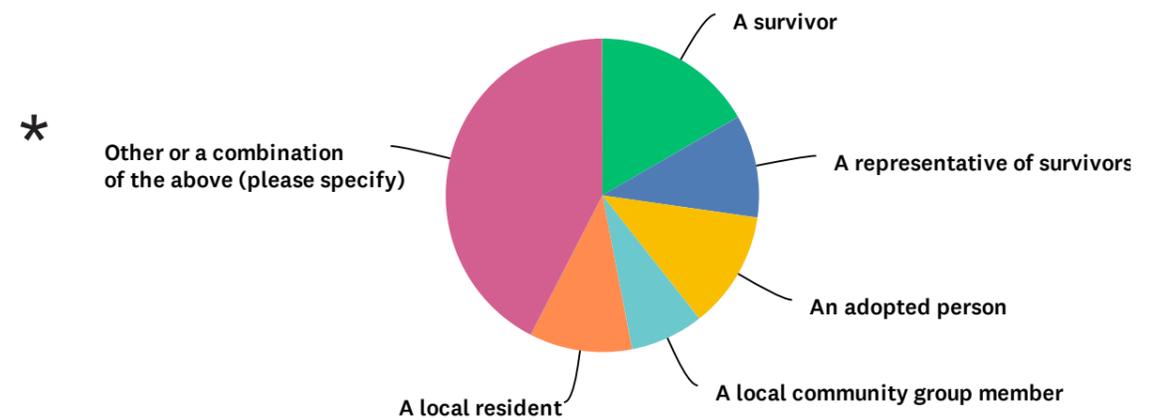
Feedback from Online Survey

/// From December 2020 to December 2021 CoLab ran an anonymous survey hosted on the online platform Survey Monkey. The survey had a number of questions related to the information that was shared as part of the online consultation and the Open heart City Exhibition. There were a total of 67 responses, 67% of which were made in early 2021 after the online consultations and 33% in late October/November 2021 after the exhibition in Sean McDermott Street. The results of the questions are set out as follows.

Did you attend one of the live virtual consultation workshops or listen to the recorded consultation?

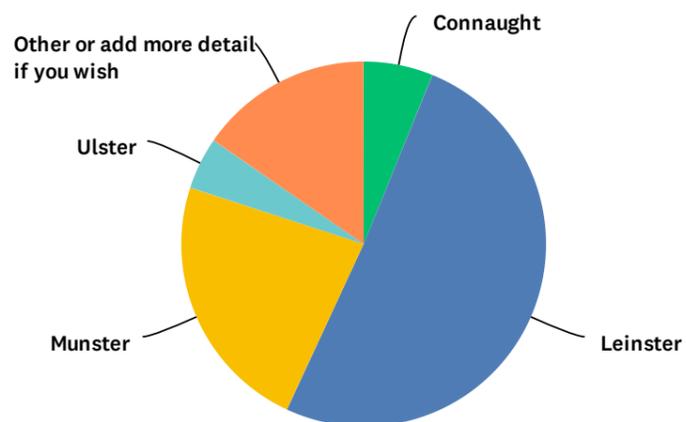


Would you describe yourself as:



* Answers within Category "Other":
 7 - relatives of survivor
 13 - members of public
 8 - architect / academic / archivist / artist

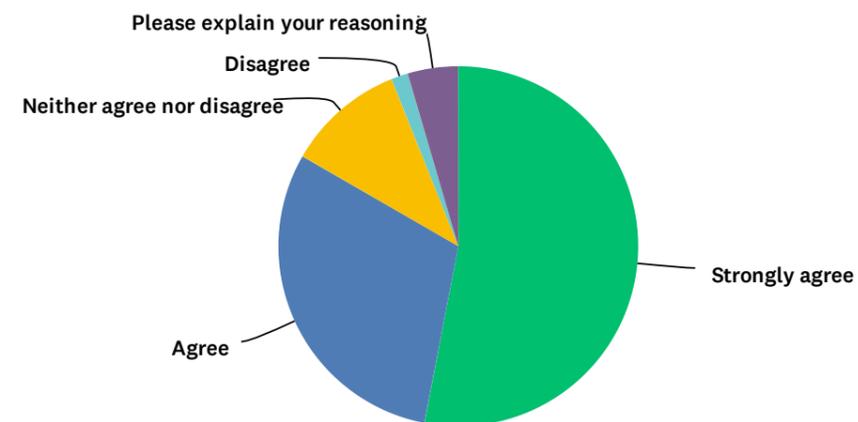
Where are you from?



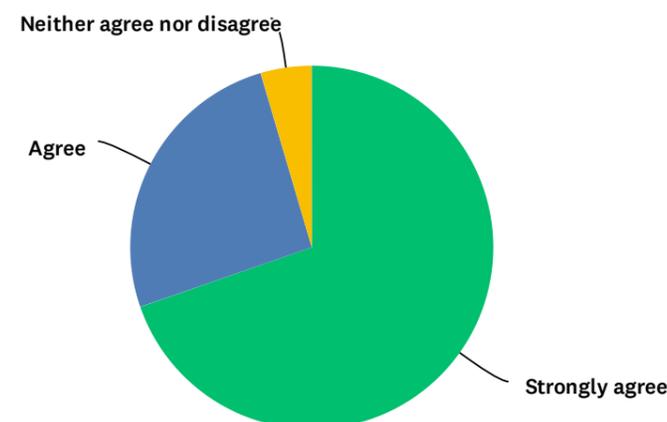
“... the site must be both a Site of Conscience and also an antidote to the poison of Magdelene Laundries. Fill the rooms with laughter and outspoken words... host events, debates, live music, a children’s playground, arts exhibits, gardens.”

“Please make this happen. We owe so much to the women whose lives were effectively taken from them...”

Do you agree that a National Site of Conscience needs to be part of a wider network of regional and local Sites of Conscience?



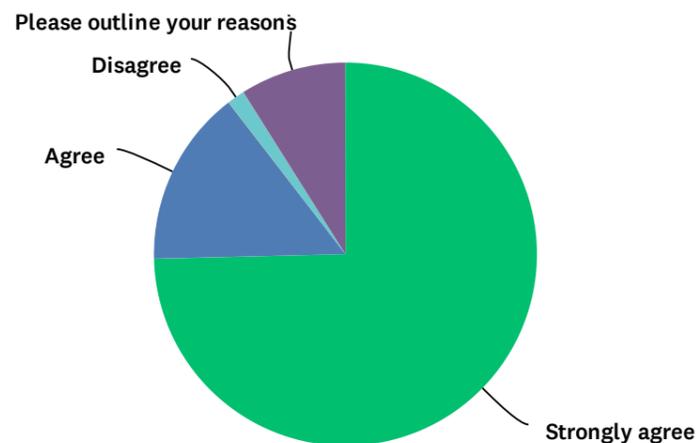
Do you agree that the former Magdalene Laundry at Sean McDermott Street could be home to a National Site of Conscience?



“... include a committee that has members made up of survivors, group representatives and any additional experts that help bring the proposal along.”

“Every institution where people were detained should be marked and recorded as a site of local history.”

Do you support the establishment of a National Archive which will gather all of the papers relating to Ireland’s residential institutions? This would be a key part of the National Site of Conscience.



Do you have any particular suggestions, comments or concerns?

There were 26 comments posted under Q8, which covered a variety of topics, the main themes of which are set out below:

- Placing survivors at the heart of the process (9 answers)
- Suggestion for references – other Museums/ Archives (6 answ.)
- Museum for survivors’ stories (6 answ.)
- Accessibility and inclusion-a centre for all survivors from a variety of intuitions including, psychiatric institutions, County Homes etc (4 answ.)
- Education about the history of these institutions (3 answ.)
- Treat survivors’ history with respect and sensitivity (3 answ.)
- Incorporate the arts and creativity as a means of healing (2 answ.)
- Collect and tell survivors stories alongside official records (2 answ.)
- Access to official records (2 answ.)
- Query about details of the other uses on site such as housing third level institution (2 answ.)

“... this particular site should be preserved, restored and presented as a museum/ memorial ...as a reminder of this terrible chapter in our history...We need a place to remember, and to educate those who come after us, in the hope that nothing like this will ever be allowed to happen again.”

Next Steps

/// The project to imagine a positive, inclusive future for the site of the former Magdalene Laundry at SeanMcDermott Street in Dublin is focused on the idea of centring public engagement at the heart of any discussion. The project takes the view that any form of memorialisation on the site should only take place following consultation with survivors and local community. It acknowledges that, as with all forms of public engagement, the aim is to engage with a diverse range of voices who may not normally be involved in determining the future of our towns and cities. In this way we hope to propose and present alternative ways of discussing and developing our buildings, with the understanding that more inclusive environments can constitute steps towards a more just society.

The work of CoLab and the Open Heart City collective to date has demonstrated how the site and existing buildings can be brought to life by accommodating a diverse range of functions that, when properly planned, can help to reorganise this site as one that is inviting, and outward-looking, directed towards survivors as well as towards the local community and the wider city .

It is proposed that any next steps involve a series of meetings with the local community in order to add their voices to the feedback gathered to date.

CoLab also intend to continue the process of studying and mapping sites of dark history in Ireland, drawing on knowledge gained through the study of SeanMcDermott Street. Many of the remaining sites have not undergone any kind of detailed analysis of the sort conducted as part of this project, and yet the value of these exercises is evident. It is hoped that further studies will not only add to our collective understanding of these sites, but also help to identify the regenerative potential of many of Ireland's sites of dark history.

