



FORMER BANK OF IRELAND PREMISES
Court Place, Carlow

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

January 2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Carlow County Council proposes to provide office accommodation on the site of the former Bank of Ireland premises in Court Place, Athy Road, Carlow and to facilitate public access to the river Barrow through the site. This process is subject to a Part 8 application under the Planning Acts.
- 1.2 The building is listed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in the Carlow Development Plan (RPS CT38 10000614) and described as ‘A complex consisting of a banking hall with a modern addition and two bays of an older Georgian building combined to form a single unit. Date circa 1900’.
- 1.3 This assessment has been prepared by architect Margaret Quinlan, FRIAI, Grade 1 accredited in Conservation. It is based on design drawings provided by Carlow County Council.
- 1.4 This assessment is to be read in conjunction with the Part 8 drawings and documentation prepared by Carlow County Council.

2 Description

- 2.1 Summary Description of the building (as listed on the RPS)

RPS No.	NIAH No.	Description	Date range	Rating Importance
CT38	10000614	Bank of Ireland ‘A complex consisting of a banking hall with a modern addition and two bays of an older Georgian building combined to form a single unit. Date circa 1900’	1840 - 1950	<i>No entry is available to view in the NIAH</i>

As set out in the RPS, the former bank premises is a composite, consisting of a single-storey banking hall with porch on the street frontage, with a more recent elongated extension to the south, and attached on the north to an older two-storey over basement building with ground floor access through a party wall. The porch opens directly from the street but there is a shallow railed area in front of the remainder to either side of the porch.

The banking hall is of smooth-faced red-brick with a gable to the front and side. The elevations have brick detailing with heavily moulded and dentilled brickwork to barges and string-courses. The ridge and eaves pieces match the profile of the moulded brick courses (standard profiles from the brickworks) but appear to be of granite -probably specially carved to match the roof pitch- or reconstituted stone. Exposed lintols appear to be of a precast material similar to coade stone to match the brick. The roof is of slate with terracotta hip and ridge tiles. The ridge tiles are ornamental crested type - not original - as evidenced in a historic photograph showing plain ridges. It also shows finials on the ridge of each gable, no longer in existence. There is a central lantern-type feature, probably part of a ventilation system for the banking hall. The porch has a flat roof finished in copper over a moulded brick eaves. The front window appears to be a replacement.

The older section to the north has an unusual fenestration pattern for a street frontage. The windows are placed to suit a stairwell, normally located to the rear of such a building. The windows do not align with those in the adjoining building, which appears contemporary. Finish is of lined render. Windows are traditional vertical sliding 6/6 sashes.

The single storey extension to the south is flat-roofed. The front wall is rendered and painted and has a string course, possibly of brick, which does not relate to the brickwork in the banking hall frontage. A modern pair of gates to the south give access to the side and rear of the site. The modern gate piers have replaced stone piers (see historic photograph).

Internally, the original banking hall was the principal and formal space within the building. It had a decorative ceiling with cornice and stucco-work on corbelled supports to beams. This has survived, while some of the supporting walls have been removed with later beams inserted. These inappropriate interventions have rendered the main space incoherent. The other feature of note is the decorative mosaic on part of the floor, designed with B and I (Bank of Ireland?) lettering as a centrepiece with surrounding patterned border and corner features.

in the older section, the stair balustrade, and perhaps the staircase, has been replaced. Cornices, picture rails and windows survive.



Existing street frontage



Historic image, date unknown

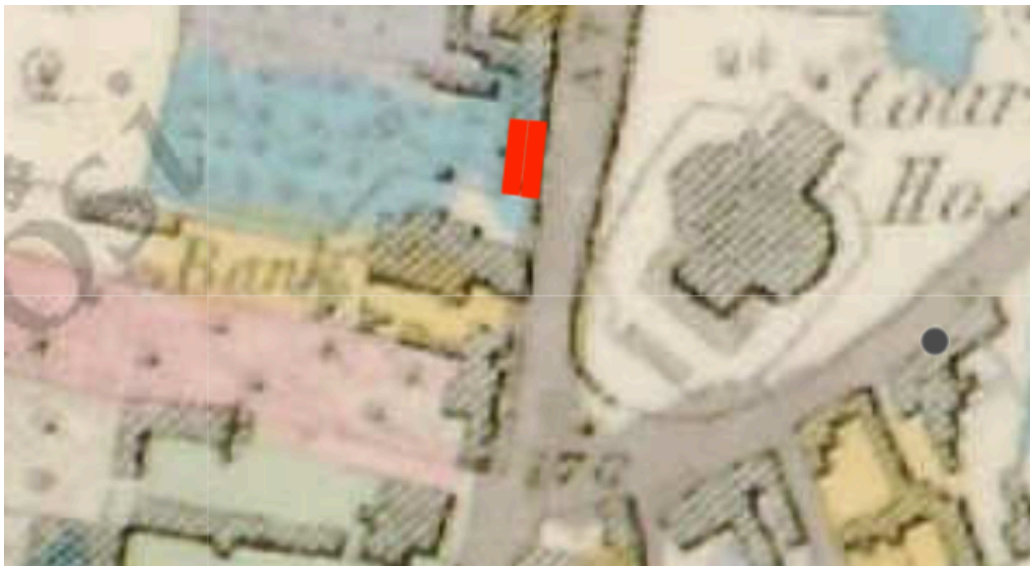
Formal ashlar gate piers and roof finials have since been removed

Note: Ridge tiles are plain (not crested as at present), Ventilator has survived in place.

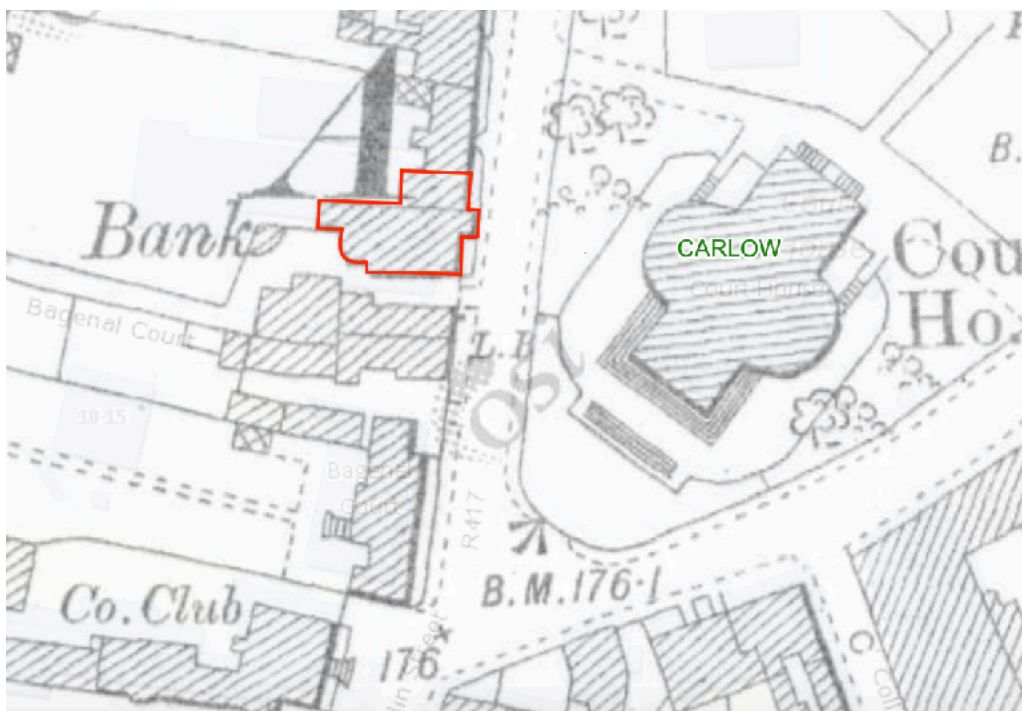
2.2 Historical Background

The building operated as the Bank of Ireland up to August 2008/9 when the bank relocated to a modern premises in Shamrock Plaza. It was offered for sale and acquired by Carlow County Council.

The first edition OS 6" map (c 1840) shows the two-bay building in existence but not the redbrick addition in its present form. However, the building to the south, adjoining the site in question is identified as a 'Bank'. The second edition OS (c 1900) shows the older components of the present complex - the banking hall and the two-bay building. The single storey extension to the banking hall is of 20c date.



1st Ed OS map c 1840



2nd Ed OS map c 1900

2.3 Summary Assessment

The setting of this building is important, opposite the fine set-piece of Carlow Court House. Because of the widening of the pavement to the south, there is potential for a significant improvement in the quality of public space in addition to the proposed public access to the river.

The main significance lies in the red-brick banking hall and its decorative elevations which are prominent in the streetscape, being emphasised by the pavement setback.

Internally, the high-ceilinged banking hall, architecturally the most important element, has had its integrity diminished by structural alterations. This will be fully addressed in the proposals which will reinstate the character of the hall by re-establishing the original enclosure under the surviving ceiling.

The surviving features of the older section give historical continuity and should be retained and conserved.

The single-storey extension to the south is of little architectural or historical merit or significance. However, the relocation and redesign of the entrance creates an opportunity to improve the streetscape, forming the approach to the building as well as to the riverside walk along the Barrow.



Modern single-storey extension - front, side and rear elevations

PROPOSAL	JUSTIFICATION	IMPACT
<p>Exterior Conservation of the exterior including treatment of the brickwork and stone eaves pieces by a specialist contractor. Removal of all attachments - flag pole, alarms etc</p> <p>Repair/restoration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of external joinery • of cast/wrought iron railing • of octagonal ventilator by specialist 	<p>To improve the appearance and maintain the character of the original structure. The brickwork appears to have been sand-blasted in the past damaging its surface and leaving it vulnerable to weathering. Special care needed.</p>	<p>Positive impact for the protected structure and the streetscape</p>
<p>Redesign of extension including new metal cladding Retention of the existing single storey extension</p>	<p>The existing 20c building has a negative visual impact on the protected structure</p>	<p>Positive impact The proposed new cladding will have a positive impact. The pre-patinated copper effect will act as a foil to the brickwork of the old bank frontage</p>
<p>Formation of a new entrance A new set-back entrance is proposed at the gable of the protected structure with steps and a pedestrian ramp, stainless steel plain handrails.</p> <p>The rendered section on the brick gable will be clad as shown and could incorporate well-designed signage.</p>	<p>Necessary to allow flexible access to the development and to transition from street level to floor level of the protected structure. Removal of render from the lower gable is likely to damage the brick so cladding is the better option</p>	<p>No adverse impact on the protected structure. The entrance forms a transition between the protected structure and the new building.</p> <p>The pre-patinated copper effect finish of the canopy and cladding echoes the copper roof of the porch</p>
<p>Interior of banking hall Various alterations including the reinstatement of the original banking hall enclosure. The new replacement partitions will align once again with the fine corniced ceiling.</p> <p>Retention of decorative mosaic section of floor</p>	<p>The proposals will fully implement restoration of character to the fine high-ceilinged main space in the building</p>	<p>Positive impact in the restoration of character to the main space and the mosaic reference the building's history</p>
<p>Interior of Georgian building Retain, repair/conservate plaster, cornices, mosaic and joinery.</p>	<p>Retain what survives of features and finishes. The staircase balustrade is not original</p>	<p>Positive impact</p>

4. Summary Assessment of Proposal

The proposal will not have any adverse impact on the protected structure of the former Bank of Ireland premises and will be effective in restoration of character of the original building.

The scheme will be of considerable benefit to the streetscape opposite the courthouse which has become degraded but has much potential, particularly with the proposed pedestrian access to the river from Court Place.

The surviving features of the older section give historical continuity and should be retained and conserved.

The single-storey extension to the south is of little architectural or historical merit or significance. However, the redesign of the entrance creates an opportunity to improve the streetscape and also forms the approach to the riverside walk along the Barrow. The pre-patinated effect metal cladding will act as an effective foil to the brick facade of the protected structure


Margaret Quinlan FRIAI



Street view of frontage



Eaves pieces (granite or reconstituted stone) formed to match profile of brick barge



Original entrance porch



Pier at porch where nameplate had been attached, protecting the brick from the abrasive cleaning. Note line under where the protective skin has been removed from bricks by an inappropriate cleaning method



Octagonal ventilator feature on roof, to be retained



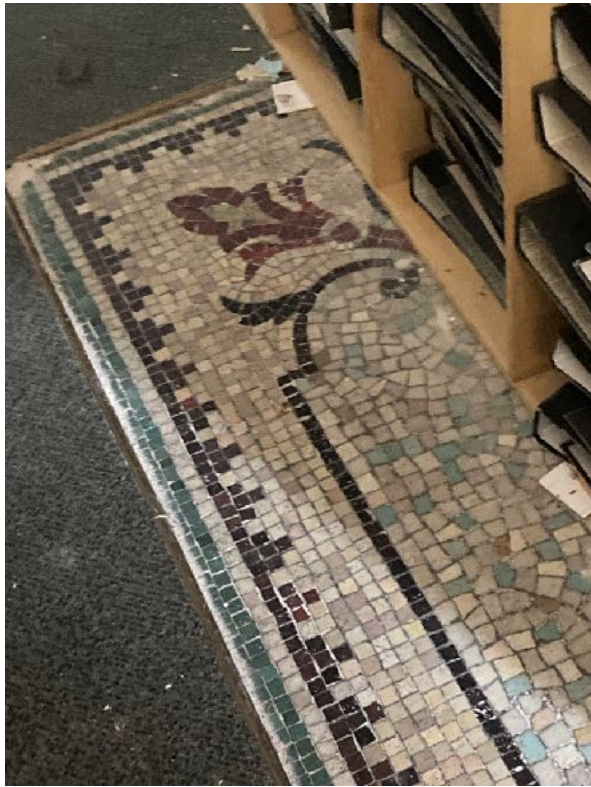
Front railings to banking hall - probably wrought and cast iron



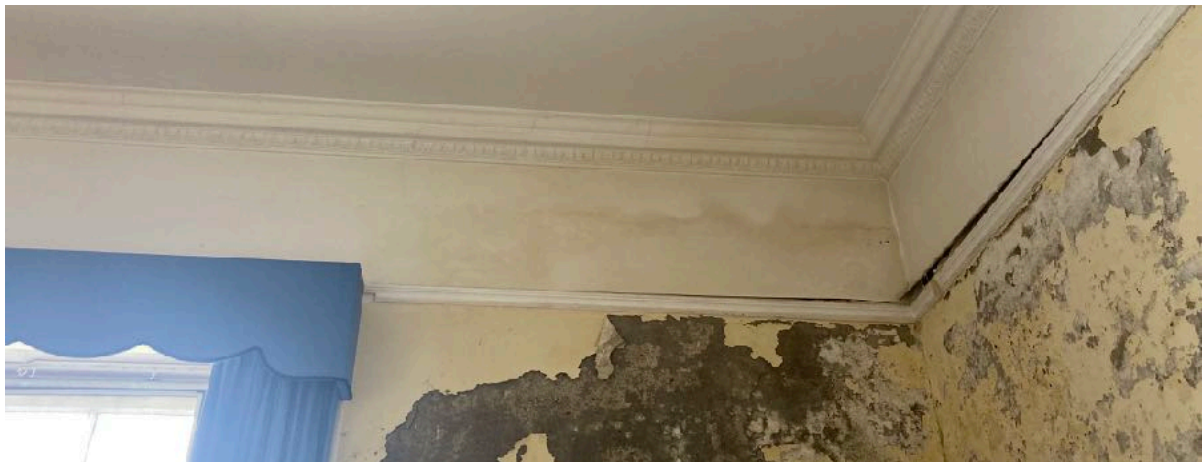
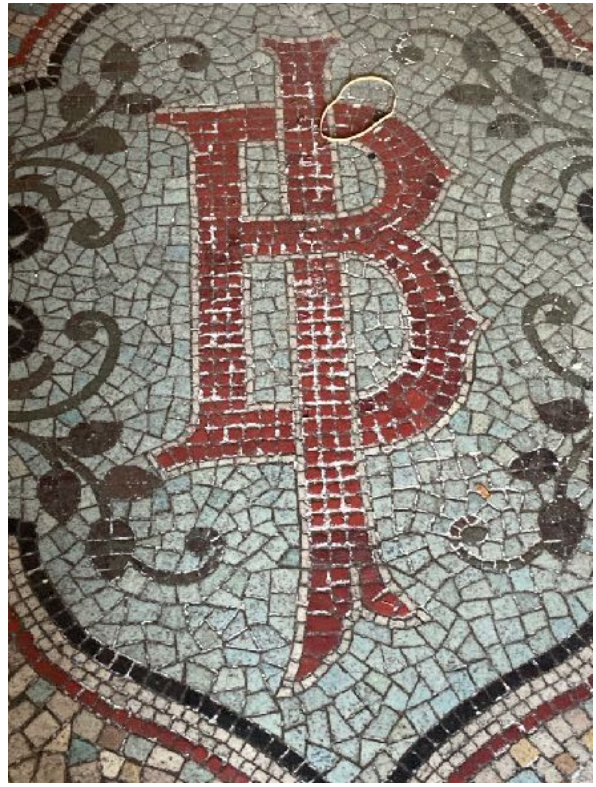
Rear corners of banking hall where original walls have been removed and beams inserted. It is proposed to reinstate the partitions/walls in this space to reinstate the original enclosure



Detail of banking hall ceiling



Detail of mosaic (to be retained) in banking hall



Features of adjoining Georgian building - windows, egg-and-dart cornice, picture rail - to be repaired and retained

Stair balustrade - which is of no architectural significance

