

## Proposed Strategic Housing Development, Horgan's Quay ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

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# **Proposed Strategic Housing Development, Horgan's Quay Residential Quarter**

## **Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report**

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## 1. Introduction & Planning Context

The following report has been prepared by Jack Coughlan Architects, RIAI Conservation Grade 1 Architects, at the request of HQ Developments Ltd., to accompany an application for a Proposed Strategic Housing Development at Horgan's Quay, Cork.

The site contains the surviving part of the former Great Southern and Western Railway Terminus (more recently known as the Stationmaster's Building) which is a Protected Structure on the current Development Plan for Cork City:

PS 178 Old Railway Station & Carriage Shed

The Protected Structure is also included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage:  
20506291: Former Penrose Quay Railway Station,

JCA Architects have been involved with the HQ site from the outset of the preparation of proposals to convert the former railway site at Horgan's Quay into a new Hotel, Office and Residential development named HQ. Planning permission TP 17/37563 for the development was granted in 2017, and construction is now underway on site in accordance with the conditions of permission for that application.

While a proposal for a Residential Quarter in the present Stationmaster's Building sector of the site was granted permission as part of the 2017 scheme, that proposal has now been revised by OMP Architects. It is still proposed to retain the Station House as a residents' amenity building within the residential scheme, in a similar manner to the permitted scheme. However, in the proposed scheme, the scale of the garden to the west of the protected structure is increased, and the geometry of the space is changed, so as to improve the setting of the Protected Structure and improve the landscape quality of Railway Street.

## 2. Historical Context of the Railway Station site

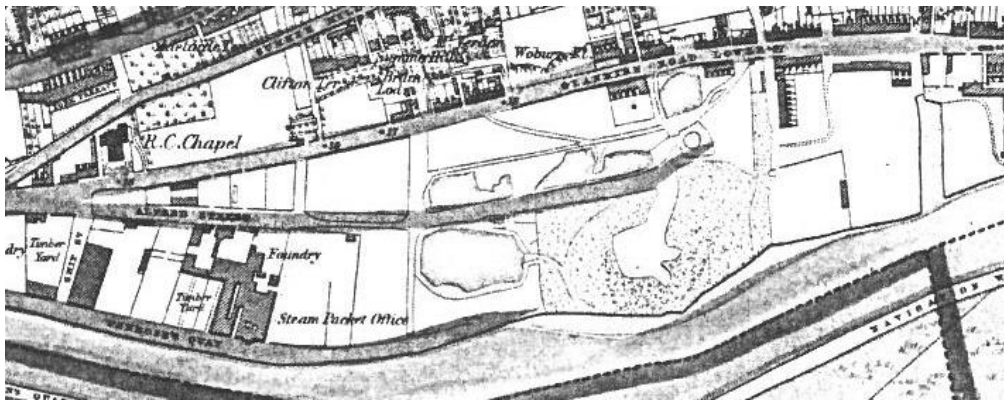


Figure 1: OS map 1841/2, showing railway station site before construction of station buildings

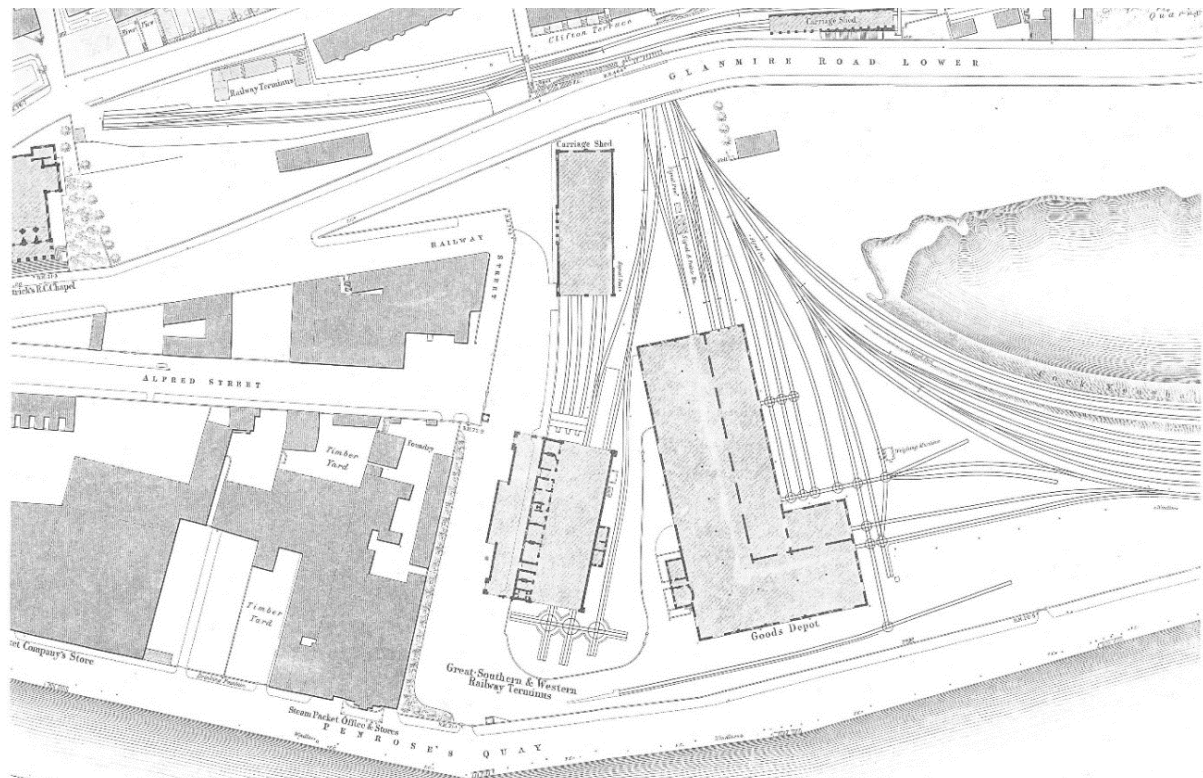


Figure 2: OS map 1869, showing the newly developed railway station buildings

The original Cork terminus on the Great Southern and Western Railway company's Dublin to Cork line was at Kilbarry (Blackpool), with the first train between the two cities in 1849, some 15 years after the first railway line had been constructed in Dublin in 1834. The Great Southern & Western Railway, still known today as 'the premier line', began with a line from Dublin to Cashel in 1844. Even before the station at Kilbarry was opened, work had begun on the very long and complex Glanmire tunnel route into the city centre. The railway company had tried to avoid the need to construct such a long and expensive tunnel, and other routes were examined, but the steep incline into the city from those routes made them unsuitable.

The first shafts were sunk in 1847, and blasting operations proceeded throughout 1848/9. Finally, on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1854, the two headings from either end of the tunnel met (less than a foot out of line!), and on August 5<sup>th</sup>, the Chairman and Directors of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company were able to walk through the whole length of the tunnel. At 1355 yards, the Cork tunnel was then, and is now, the longest in Ireland (though a longer one, now closed up, was constructed in the north of Ireland at a later date). A new station was designed to be built at Penrose Quay, just beyond the city entrance to the tunnel, and the new line was opened on 3 December 1855. For the first few months, passenger trains ran into the Goods Shed at the new station site, until the new Penrose Quay Station was opened on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1856. Penrose Quay station was Cork's principal station for almost 40 years. Its main entrance was on Penrose Quay, with a side entrance for passengers at the end of Alfred Street. Alfred Street led directly east from King Street (now MacCurtain Street), which had developed as a key route east from the city after the building of St. Patrick's Bridge in 1789. Penrose Quay had been developed in the 1820's, having previously been the location of several docks.



Figure 3: This drawing, taken from the collection of the Irish Railway Records Society, shows the complex arrangement of tracks running into the three buildings on the site: the large number of tracks running into the Goods Shed indicates its importance in transporting large goods by rail



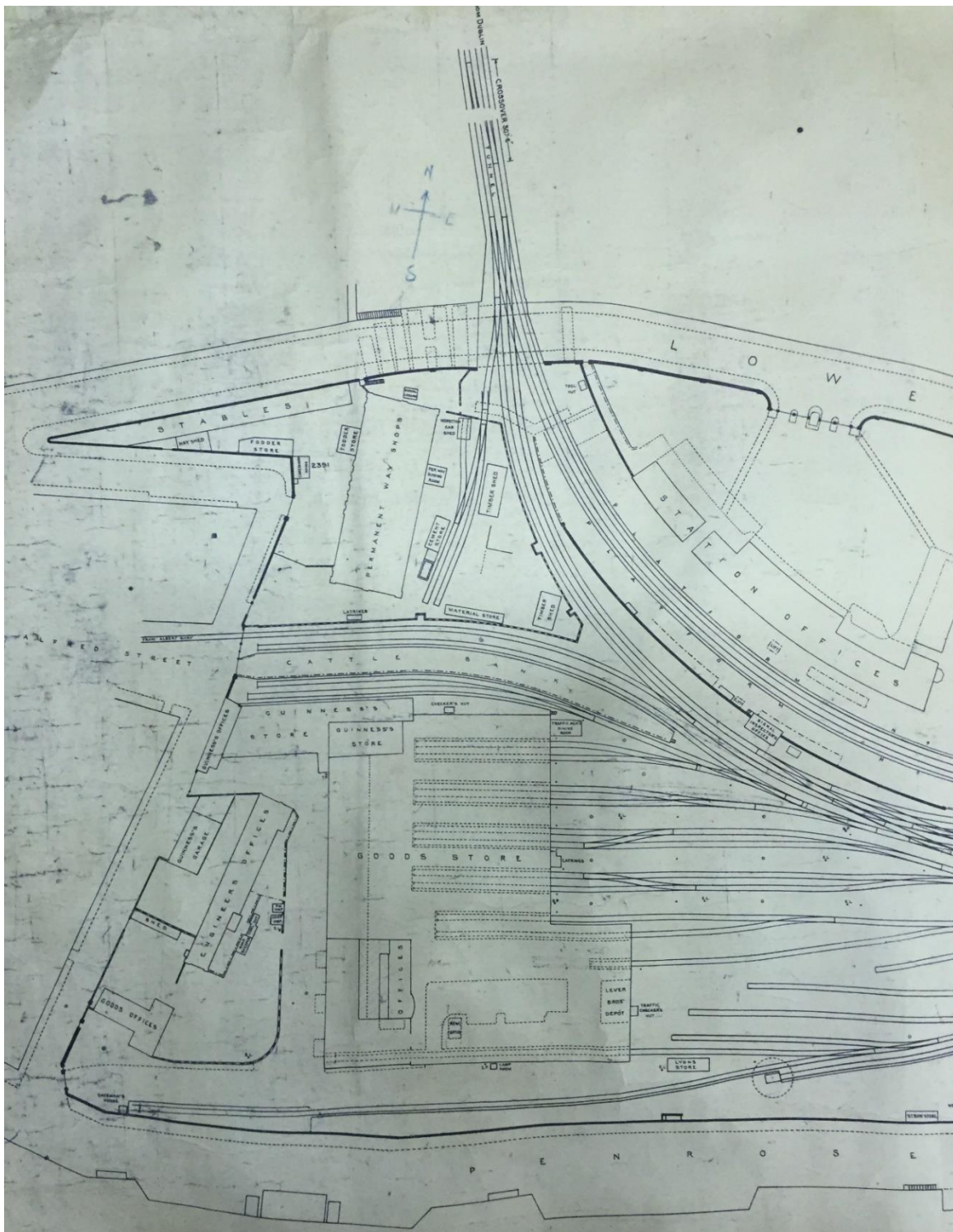


Figure 4: A twentieth-century track plan shows how the use of the early station buildings changed after the new Glanmire Road station was built in 1893. The tracks leading to the old station were removed, and much of the station building demolished, while the tracks leading to the carriage shed were also removed. The track layout leading to the Goods Shed was completely rearranged, so that all of the tracks leading into the buildings came from the east.

## Stationmaster's Building (original Penrose Quay GS&WR Terminus)

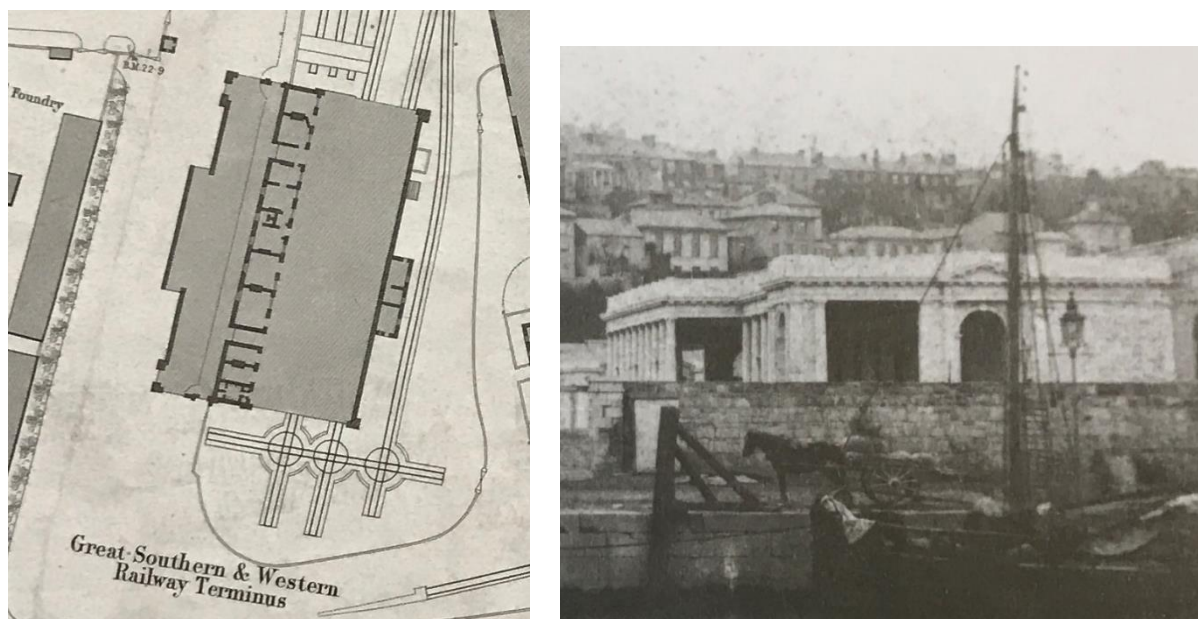


Figure 5: OS map 1869, left & early photograph of original station, c. 1857, (IAA Collection), right

**Original Date of Construction** 1856-1860

**Architect** Sir John Benson

The Stationmaster's building is all that remains now of the original Penrose Quay station, which had been a very substantial and impressive building when first fully completed in 1860, designed by the prominent Cork architect and engineer, Sir John Benson, and built of local white limestone. Benson was at this time the City Engineer of Cork, was involved in a number of railway projects, and had designed the present St. Patrick's Bridge, The Lee Road Waterworks, and the Athenaeum on the site of the present Opera House, among many other buildings. To the west side of the new station building was an elegant colonnade of twenty Doric columns, forming a covered way of 200 feet long in the centre, to which passengers could be brought by carriage in order to enter the station building. The building standing today formed the offices at the centre of the building (including waiting rooms and booking offices), while to the east of the present building were the covered railway platforms.

The OS map of 1869, shown above, indicates the rail lines running through the eastern side of the building, with turntables to the south and an additional rail line to the east.

The photograph above (Fig. 5) from the Irish Architectural Archive's collection, taken in about 1857, shows a very rare photographic view of the original railway station, viewed from the river to the south. The projecting entrance portico to the east is clearly visible, as is the block to the east of it, part of which now survives as the present Stationmaster's Building. The covered platform to the east of this is also visible. The 1857 Carriage Shed is just visible to the north-east.



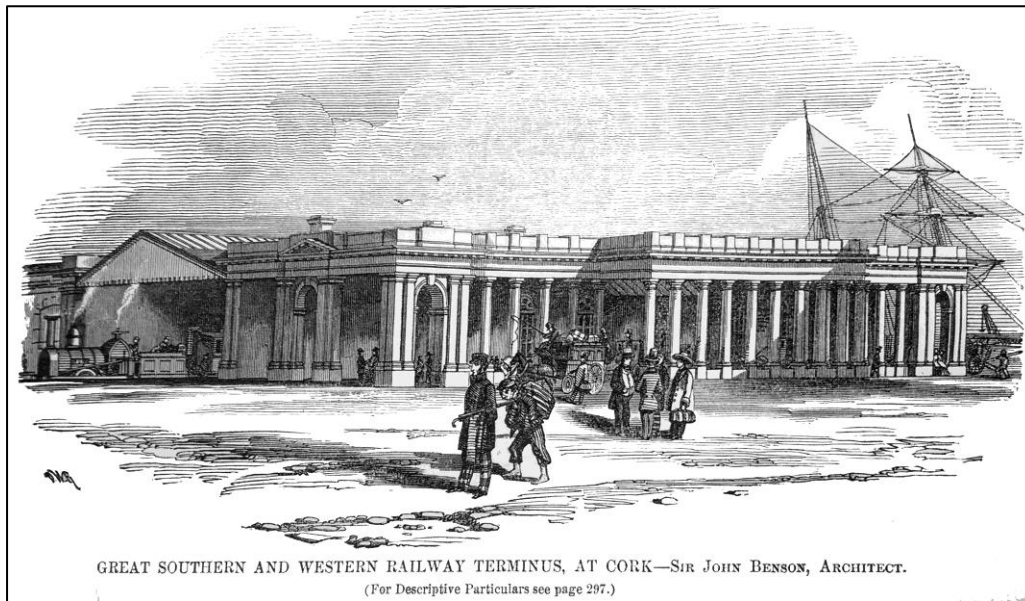


Figure 6: Image of newly built Penrose Quay GSWR Terminus, *Dublin Builder*, 1 July 1860



Figure 7: Early photograph of original station, c. 1857 (IAA Collection)

The Western façade was shown in an illustration (Fig. 6) from the *Dublin Builder* of 1<sup>st</sup> July 1860, above, viewed from the north-west, and the accompanying article described the new station as having been built using ‘the beautiful white limestone of the district’, with a ‘colonnade of twenty Roman Doric columns, forming a covered way of 200 feet long in the centre’. The article also notes that ‘the foundations of the building were of an expensive character, owing to the site being marshy: 600 beech piles, averaging 24 feet long, were used with concrete in this part of the works. An earlier article, in *The Builder* on 17 January 1857, referred to the newly built station having ‘arrivals and departure platforms, waiting rooms, with the usual offices, a convenient space for cabs and omnibuses, so that passengers can be taken up or sit down under cover: this is a colonnade, 200ft long and 30ft wide at each end, and 43ft wide by 80ft in length at centre. There are 20 columns 14ft 6in



high supporting the roof. The entablature is plain, with block-in course and a low attic to screen the roof'. Drawings from the Irish Architectural Archive of the Penrose Quay Terminus, below, show original construction details of the roofs and of the stonework of the colonnade.

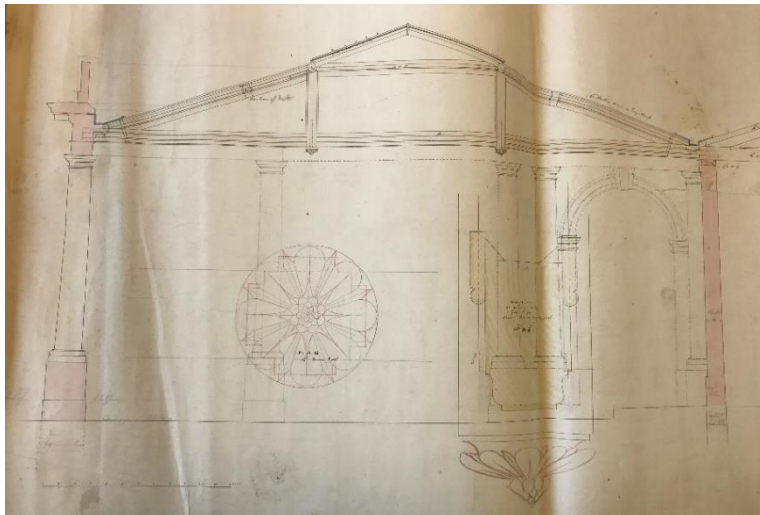


Figure 8: Section through Penrose Quay Station roof (Irish Architectural Archive)

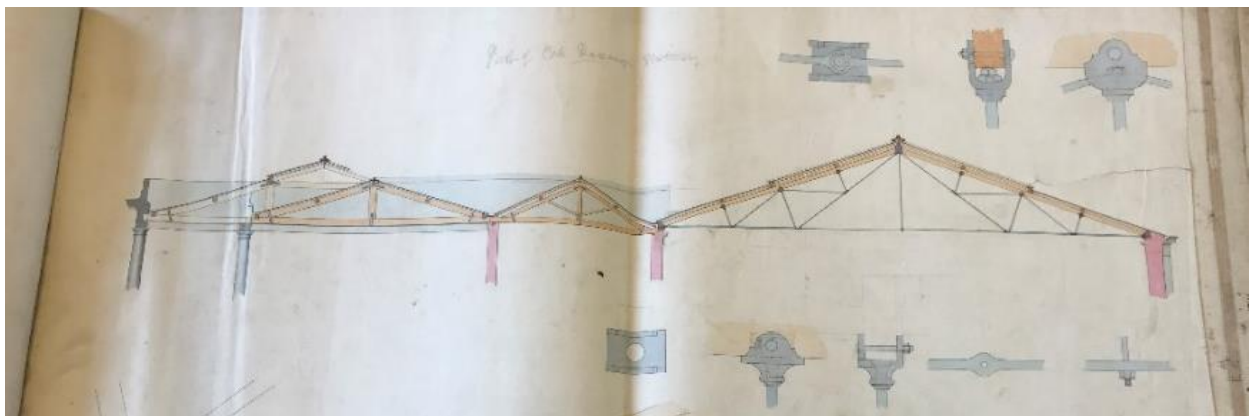


Figure 9: Section through railway station and platform roofs (IAA)

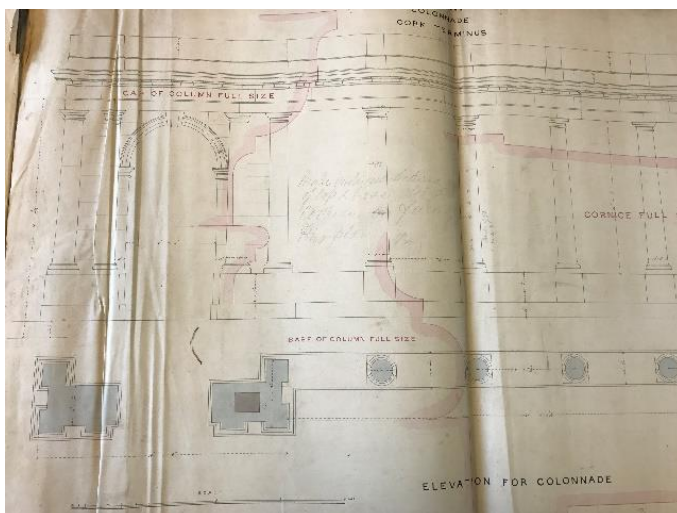


Figure 10: Sketches of details of Penrose Quay Station colonnade (IAA)

This station building was closed to passenger traffic in 1893, when the present Lower Glanmire Road station was built. The Penrose Quay station was converted into a cattle loading depot, as it was convenient to the quays, with the original passenger arrival platform widened and fitted with cattle pens.

The western elevation was apparently demolished in around 1895/6, with the limestone columns and decorative elements possibly sold for re-use elsewhere. The central railway offices, which had originally housed waiting rooms, booking offices and other functions, were retained as offices for Civil Engineers.



Figure 11: Early 20th century photograph of GSWR Terminus (Lawrence Collection)

Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century photographs of the Penrose Quay Terminus show the station at this date, having lost the western entrance façade and the covered passenger platform to the east



Figure 12: Early 20th century photograph of GSWR Terminus (Lawrence Collection)

Some further sections of this remaining building were demolished in the late 1960's or early 1970's, so what survives now is the central, six-bay block of the original station offices, just under half of the original length of the station building. A lean-to and return added to the east side of the remaining building date from about 1900-27.

## **Description of the Existing Stationmaster's Building**

The present building is a detached, double-height former railway station, built in 1855-6. It has large, round-headed window openings and ashlar chimney stacks. The present building comprises six bays of what had originally been a thirteen-bay building, and this was the central block of the passenger station, with a projecting colonnade to the west and covered platforms to the east, both now lost. A return and lean-to extension were added to the east in the early twentieth century, when the building was converted to office use.

The building has a pitched, artificial slate roof, tall ashlar limestone chimneys topped by projecting cornices, cement rendered walls with a moulded stucco stringcourse and window heads. The existing walls are likely to be of brick, although early photographic evidence suggests that the original gable walls may have been of limestone. The round-headed openings are mostly now blocked windows, though would originally in some cases have been doors, and vice versa.

### **Extent of Historic Building Fabric Retained**

The Industrial Archaeology report clearly outlines the gradual reduction in size of the original station building to its present form. Essentially, the west-facing colonnade was the first part to be removed (presumably because of the re-use value of its materials), with the covered platform structures to the east removed shortly afterwards. Of the central block, two bays to the north were removed in the 1920's, and five bays to the south removed in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A long, narrow extension was also added to the eastern facade in the 1920's.

The construction material of the surviving bays of the central block appears to be brick, with a painted cement render. The architectural character of the original building is now more apparent on the western façade, with its arcaded openings, though this was originally an internal façade. All of these arched openings are original, although some have been modified. Much of the surviving timber window joinery in these openings is original.

Externally, the tall, ashlar limestone chimneys are a significant original feature, though they now appear oversized in comparison with the scale of the rest of the partially surviving building.

Internally, the plan form of the building has undergone a number of changes, but there are some surviving features which are likely to be original. The semicircular timber fixed windows set into the upper parts of the wall dividing the principal rooms and the corridor are part of the original arcade, from which the station platforms were accessed from the main station building. On the western side of the building interior, the timber pilasters at either side of the original arched openings (now blocked) also survive.



## **Assessment of the Significance of the Site**

The group of Protected Structures occupying this site represent a very significant surviving piece of Cork's urban, industrial and railway heritage. The fact that the three buildings were constructed during a relatively short period of intense activity on the site between 1854 and 1860, in conjunction with the opening of the Glanmire tunnel, further adds to their group significance. These buildings were built to a very high standard in terms of material quality and architectural design, reflecting the ambition and sophistication of the new age of railway technology in Ireland. These are relatively early buildings in the history of railway infrastructure in Ireland, giving them an additional importance.

The Penrose Quay railway terminus became almost forgotten in Irish architectural history as a result of the loss of so much of its fabric in the late nineteenth century. Despite the survival of contemporary newspaper accounts of its original appearance, there had developed a perception that these accounts were inaccurate, and that the terminus had never been built as described. This has resulted in an underestimation of the significance of the terminus in comparison with other railway termini in Ireland. It is now clear, following the discovery in the Irish Architectural Archive of previously unknown photographic evidence of the impressive original appearance of the Penrose Quay terminus, that it was an important building. The formality and elaboration of its 200 foot long white limestone Doric colonnade represented the stature of rail travel during this period, and are reflective of the sophistication of its notable architect, Sir John Benson. While this colonnade has, sadly, long been lost to the city, the survival of the remaining part of the terminus is significant. The present appearance and recent use of the building, along with poorly considered later additions, have led to an underestimation of its architectural qualities. Some of the formal character of the building remains in the symmetrical arcaded openings and tall, stone chimneystacks, and these, along with the building's history and design by Benson, mean that it remains a significant building.

### 3. Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

It is proposed to convert the existing building in order to provide a Residents' amenity building. A new floor is proposed within the building to provide a new first floor, which will have independent access from the landscape deck and the apartments.

#### Physical Impacts

All significant surviving fabric of the former Penrose Quay Railway Terminal will be retained. The proposed new use has been guided by the desire to retain what survives of the former Railway Terminal, and to present it in a way that recognises its architectural significance, which is currently underexploited. The external walls of the original building will be fully retained, while the later 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to structures to the east of the building will be removed.

The original arched window openings to the western façade, which are currently partially blocked, will be re-opened and windows re-instated. The central arched window ope will be used as a new entrance door, which will require the removal of a small amount of original building fabric below the cill level of the original window. The existing door ope to the north end of the building is to be widened, and a new double door introduced at the south end, in order to meet contemporary building safety regulations. Four existing openings in the eastern external wall, three of which appear to be original, are to be blocked, although this will be reversible. Remnants of existing window joinery will be retained where possible, and used to inform the profile and design of new joinery elements. The existing roof will be retained and repaired, using natural slate, and existing tall limestone chimneys, among the most notable features of the original building, retained and repaired.

The permitted scheme had an orthogonal space adjacent to the Stationmaster's Building and angular landscaping to Station Square and Waterfront Square. The proposed scheme has increased the scale of the garden to the West of the Protected Structure. The geometry of the space is changed in order to reduce the impact on the setting of the Protected Structure, by allowing more open space around it. This will allow the re-opened arcaded façade to be read more clearly.

The landscape quality of Railway Street has also been improved in the proposed scheme, permitting an improved relationship between the Stationmaster's Building and Railway Street. The Stationmaster's Building is the focal point of the Residents' garden, organised over two levels: the street and podium levels. The courtyard elevation of the proposed Residential Quarter building is to be faced in white render, in order to provide an appropriate backdrop to the Stationmaster's Building and to reflect light within the courtyard.

Internally, a new floor is to be introduced, by means of an independent steel frame, with a double-height space on entry with a contemporary stair to a gallery above. This will involve the removal of some existing ceiling fabric. The existing internal plan form, which appears to have been modified in some places from the original, will be retained. There will be no loss of internal fabric of decorative significance.

## Summary

The architectural heritage impact of the proposed development on the fabric of the Stationmaster's Building is neutral overall. The removal of some areas of the external walls to the north, and to a greater degree to the south, and the blocking of existing opes to the east will have a moderate impact in terms of loss of historic fabric, but the loss will not lead to a significant impact on the existing historic character of the building. The sustainable re-use of the currently disused building, appropriate repairs to the building fabric, the removal of poor quality later additions and the opening up of the original arched openings will all make a positive contribution to the long-term retention of the buildings' historic character