



Spicer's Bakery, Ramparts Car Park & Andy Brennan Park Project, Navan

Design Statement

December 2022

 comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

the paul hogarth company

HALL BLACK DOUGLAS



Introduction

This Design Statement summarises the design rationale for Spicer's Bakery, Ramparts Car Park & Andy Brennan Park Project.

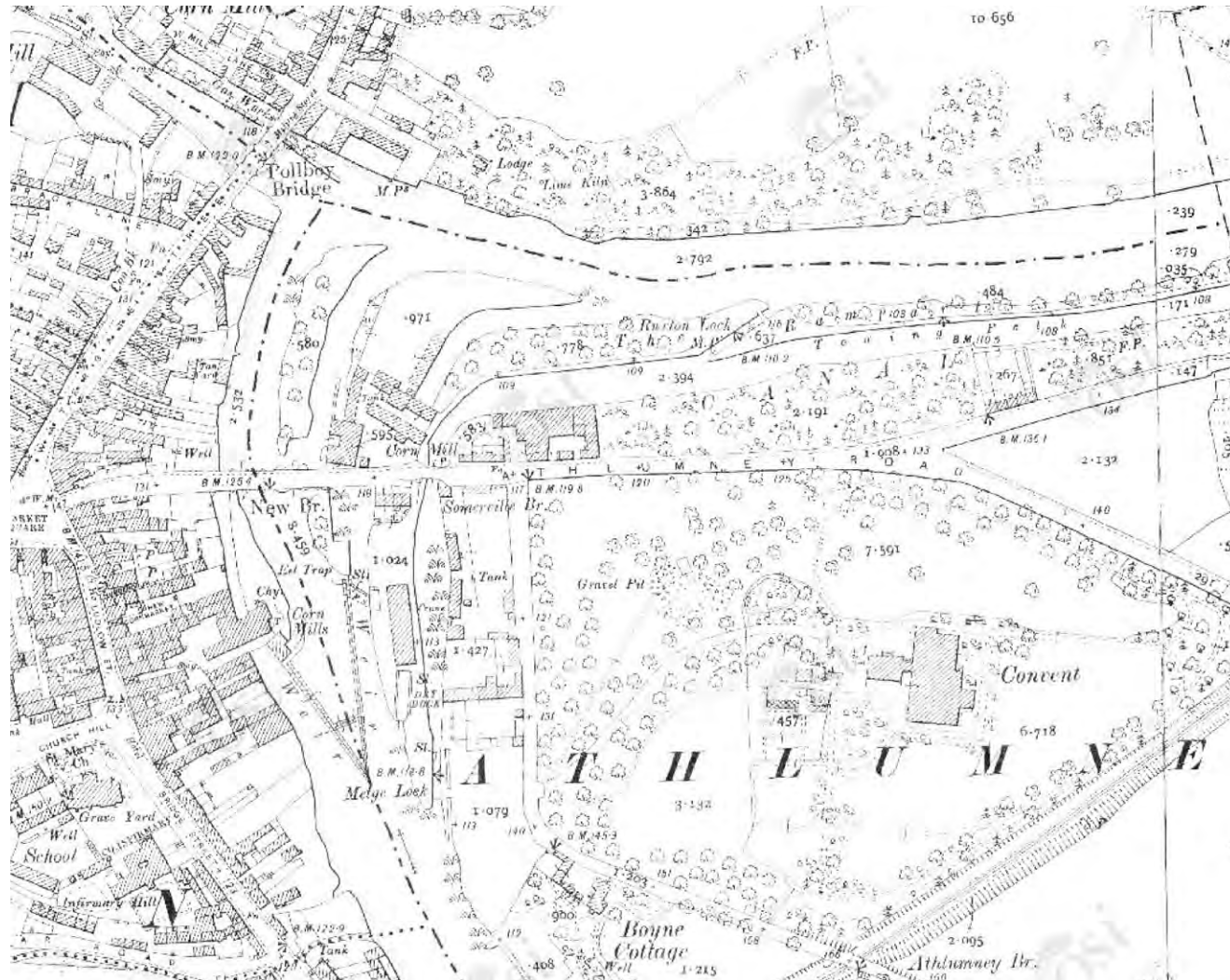
The site is located to the east of Navan Town Centre in County Meath on the right bank of the River Boyne. The R153 road traverses the site east to west. To the north is the former Spicer's Mill, associated vacant buildings and car parking for the Ramparts River Walk. To the south is Andy Brennan Park, a triangular shaped public space on the shores of the river.



Regional Context

The town of Navan is located on the confluence of the Boyne and Blackwater Rivers. Measuring 112km in length the River Boyne flows from County Meath to the Irish Sea at Drogheda. The river has played an important role in Irish history and folklore, with sites such as Trim Castle, Bective Abbey and Newgrange to be found along its length. The River Blackwater arrives in Navan from County Cavan. Its fast flowing waters were used to power a number of mills along its length.

The river system in Navan, as well as the disused canal at the Ramparts, is a major asset for the town. Future investment is planned in river greenways and a tourism driving route.



History

The site has a number of important historical features that must be taken into full account through the design process. (see Conservation Management Plan for further details).

Notably this includes Spicer's Mill, the original building of which dates from the 1860s. This collection of buildings first operated as mill before then becoming a successful bakery up until 2012.

Another historic feature of the site is the now in-filled route of the Boyne Navigation Canal that took boats from the Ramparts beneath the Somerville Canal Bridge before rejoining the Boyne through a lock to the south.



Urban Context

The site is located to the east of Navan Town Centre, accessed by New Bridge across the River Boyne. To the immediate north of the site are a series of apartments at Rivermill View and to the North and East, an area of wooded green space known as the Ramparts, that includes the historic canal, lock gates and bridge.

To the south of the site across the R153 is the campus of the Navan Education Centre and a series of residential properties that are accessed off Convent Road and back immediately onto Andy Brennan Park.



[Link to Ramparts &](#)

Somerville Canal Bridge

Spicer's Mill

Car Park

Andy Brennan Park

Historic Canal Lock Gates

Context - Athlumney Lands



Site Conditions: North

The former mill buildings create an imposing built frontage along the R153. The historic mill building is a local landmark, visible along the main road and from Convent Road. Yet high walls, fences and modern sheds create a physical and visual barrier between the main road and river to the north.



The Ramparts Car Park is a pleasant space surrounded by mature trees. Access to the car park is very restricted, making it difficult for cars to enter and exit safely. Fencing, kerbs and other features of the car park are tired and dated, while the space is poorly lit at night.



Site Conditions: South

Andy Brennan Park is accessed through a gate at the North West and beneath the Somerville Canal Bridge from the North East. The park has some attractive young trees and views to the river in winter, when its thick vegetation has died back.

However, the park is often very quiet and is prone to antisocial behaviour, evidenced in part through graffiti and litter. The low canal bridge feels unsafe to walk through, especially after dark, with high walls and hidden corners. The park's lack of visibility from the main road further compounds this perception.

It is clear therefore, that Andy Brennan Park is in need of improvement, making it safer, more attractive and inviting to the general public.

What can be achieved?



Master Plan

Somerville underpass

Andy Brennan Park stepped plaza

Urban Sports Park

Riverfront engagement point

Flexible recreational and events lawn

Reconfigured off-street parking areas

The Conserved Mill and Cafe



The vision for Spicer's Mill is to strengthen and develop the area's existing riverfront heritage assets, environmental resources and social amenities into a dynamic range of vibrant and **attractive parkland** facilities, **ecological protected** areas and **unique visitor attractions**.

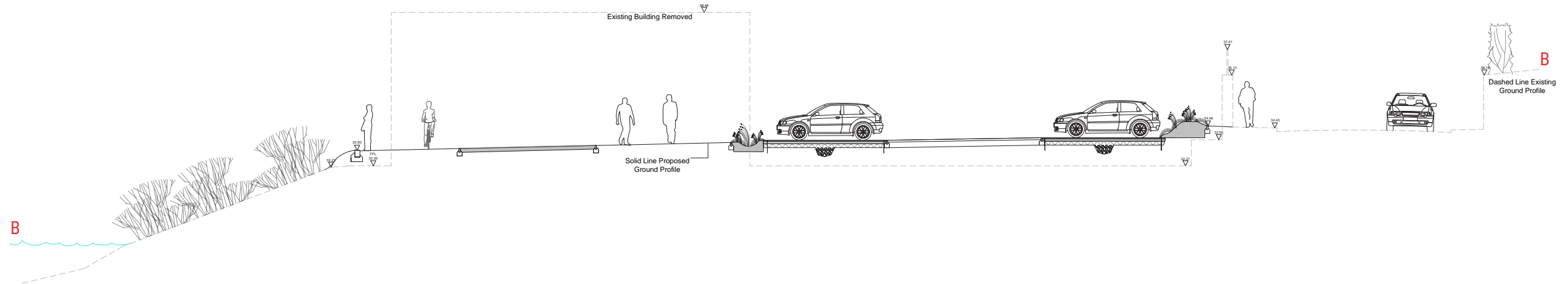
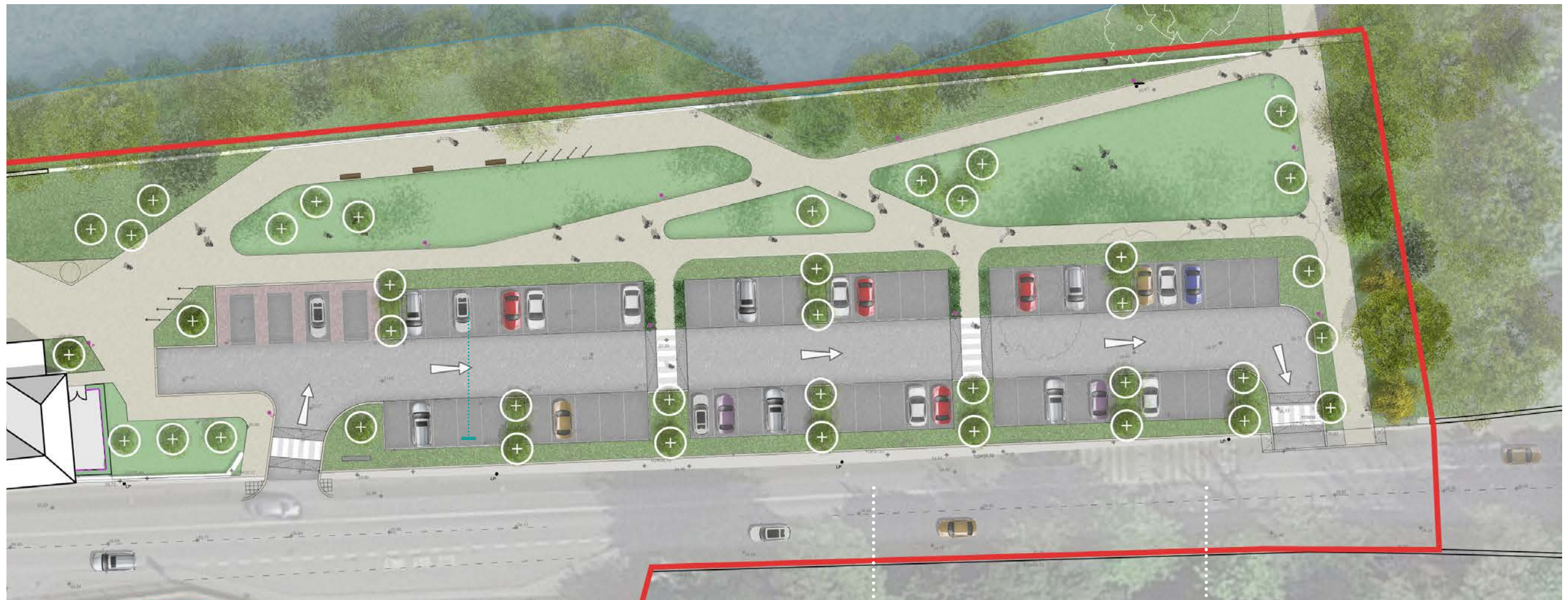
These are tied together through the development of a sitewide **parkland network** that connects the site to Navan Town centre to the west, to the Ramparts walk to the east, and to the **Boyne Valley** trail network that traverses the site and wider region.



Ramparts Car Park

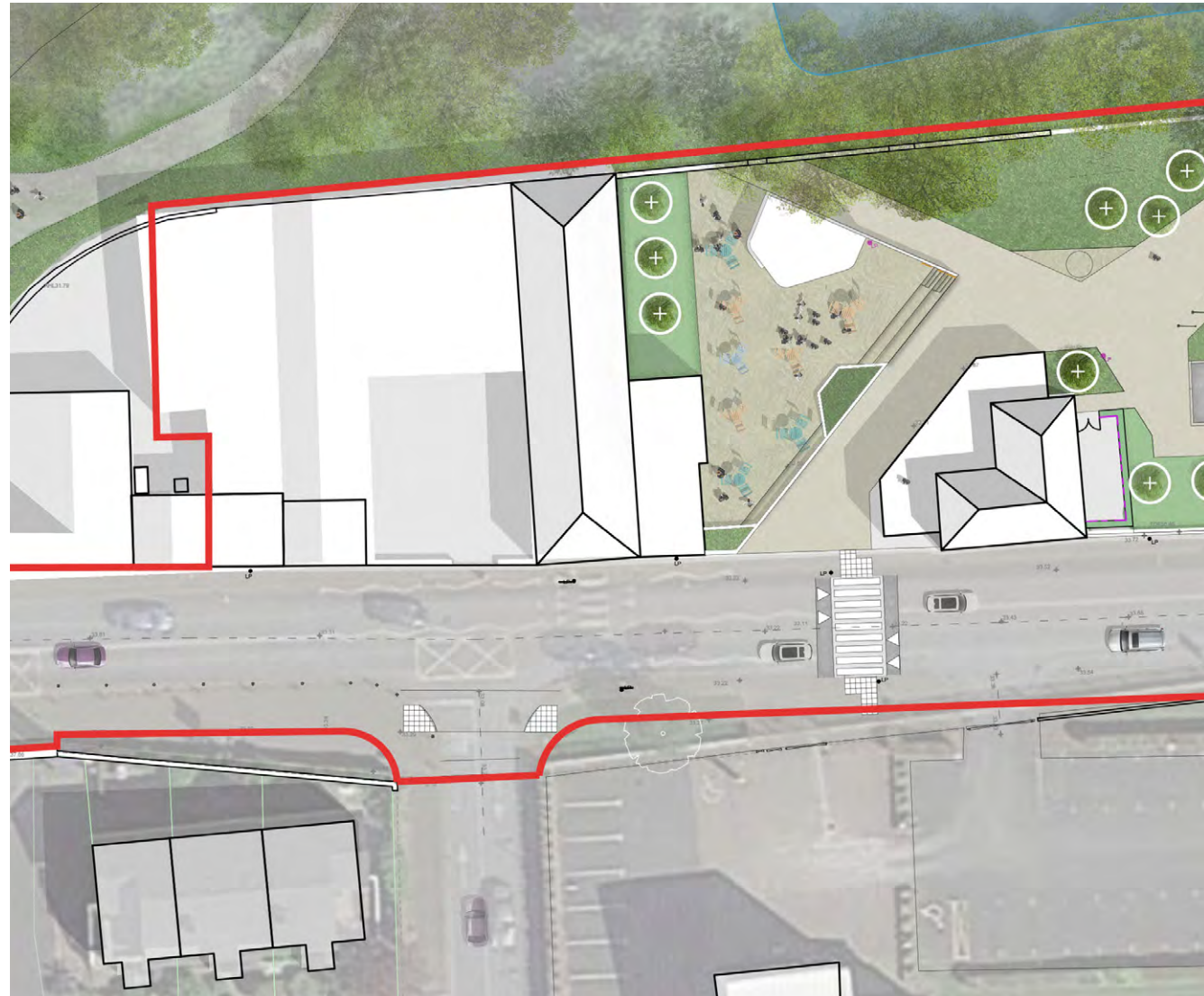
The Ramparts Car Park will be extended and comprehensively upgraded, providing a high quality facility for the Ramparts Walk and the proposed cafe. Entrances will be widened and perimeter walls removed. The car park will include many new trees and permeable reinforced grass parking bays, increasing its greenery while introducing sustainable urban drainage.

The proposed demolition of modern sheds to the west of Spicer's Mill will not only facilitate the increased car park, but also a new landscaped space with lawns, pathways and seating. This will open up views northwards to the Ramparts, canal and River Boyne.





View to enhanced Ramparts Car Park from Athlumney Road, looking east.



Spicer's Mill

A number of modern structures will be demolished to enhance the setting and open up space around the historic Spicer's Mill and adjacent office building.

The mill building will be carefully conserved to ensure it is structurally safe and watertight.

The office building will be restored and extended with a contemporary structure on its rear elevation, providing space for a new cafe and flexible working space.

Between these two buildings a new stepped plaza will be created, providing space for outdoor seating and musical performances in a proposed band stand.



Aerial view looking south west, showing cafe (left) and conserved mill (right)



Andy Brennan Park

Andy Brennan Park will be the subject of a comprehensive redesign to enhance the space, make it safer and more usable. Derelict buildings on its northern boundary will be removed and replaced with an open stepped plaza. The Somerville Canal Bridge will be restored and lit, with a lowering of the ground level beneath to increase head room. Steps from this space up to the main road will be redesigned and built to improve accessibility.

The main body of the park will be redesigned as an urban sports park, suitable for skateboarding, roller blading, parkour and other activities. At the end of a straight path reminiscent of the former canal there, will be a canal themed accessible play facility.

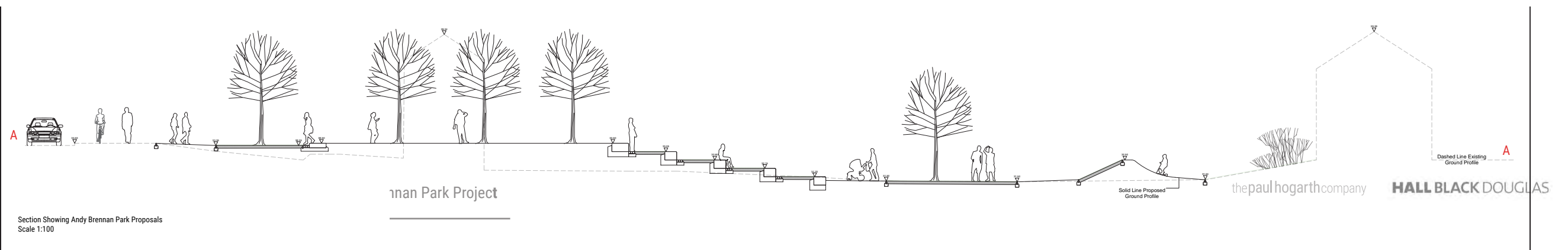
Access to underground Irish Water infrastructure will be retained and enhanced, including a new viewing platform over the River Boyne.



View south to Somerville Canal Bridge showing redesigned steps



View south to Andy Brennan Park





The urban sports park will be designed in detail with the input of specialist advice and local users. The above illustrations show the proposed character, with sleek surfaces and lush greenery.

The canal themed play structure will be similar in character to the above example from Oldham, England. It will be designed to ensure accessibility by all users and to enhance interpretation of the site's fascinating history.



Character of proposed equipment, subject to detailed design and community engagement processes.



Landscape Design

The quality of landscape design is a key aspect of the approach, ensuring that the ecology of the adjacent riverside and woodland areas are complemented and enhanced, while overall biodiversity and greenery is boosted.

Within the park the planting will consist of deciduous trees (including pollinator species) and lush grasslands, providing for nature while ensuring the space is visually open and safe.

Planting at the car park will include a series of new trees, as well reinforced grass parking bays and semi-aquatic planting associated with the project's sustainable urban drainage.



The vision for Spicer's Mill is to strengthen and develop the area's existing riverfront heritage assets, environmental resources and social amenities into a dynamic range of vibrant and **attractive parkland** facilities, **ecological protected** areas and **unique visitor attractions**.

These are tied together through the development of a sitewide **parkland network** that connects the site to Navan Town centre to the west, to the Ramparts walk to the east, and to the **Boyne Valley** trail network that traverses the site and wider region.