

No.16 Henrietta Street - Open Ideas Design Competition. 'An enlarged home for Na Piobairi Uilleann'



Diagram 1. Proposed front elevation showing continuation of flat brick wall and openings of same proportion as no. 15. In addition the idea of 'stylobate' is continued at the base level, continuing the ground floor datum. The placement of the 'shop door' is positioned in the 2nd. bay which is probably the original position of the main door.



Plate 1. Number 4 Henrietta Street opposite 15/16 illustrating the idea of stylobate or base and probable original door position for number 15/16 opposite.

Analysis of approach:

Henrietta Street is arguably the most important Georgian Street in Ireland. Proposing a design for the site of the missing two bays of number 15 Henrietta Street raises some interesting philosophical issues.

Three possibilities appear to exist:

1. Restore the entire site to the original 1740 design, as built by Luke Gardiner.
2. Propose a design without reference to the existing building and Street.
3. Propose a design with contextual reference to the existing building and Street.

In this proposal we have taken the third approach, believing that the existing building has a life story which should be represented in its current form. The restoration of the entire building erases this story and on a practical level would be highly disruptive to the current occupiers of the building.

The second approach acknowledges the independence of number 15 but does not respect the Georgian Street facade.

The grammar of the Street is expressed through a classical language of proportion, style and materials. Devices such as: stylobate, portico, string course, continuous parapet, all aim to create an orderly Street ensemble. Interestingly, Henrietta Street on this southern side seeks to maintain its parapet height whilst the opposite side of the Street does not.

Uses for the new no.16 building:

The adjacent number 15 Henrietta Street is occupied by Na Piobairí Uilleann, who have a 99 year lease from Dublin City Council. NPU have been involved in the conservation of no.15 over many years and are therefore a major stakeholder in both the building and Henrietta Street.

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Plate 2. Uilleann pipes.

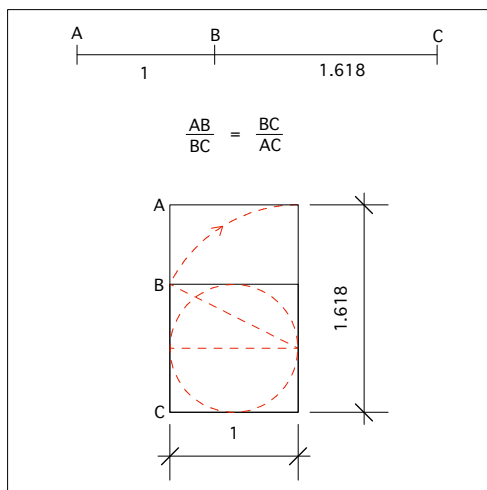


Diagram 2. Golden section and golden rectangle.

The Society of Uilleann Pipers known as Na Piobairí Uilleann was founded in 1968 at grassroots level by pipers themselves. The aims of the society are to perpetuate the spirit of the music, in particular the playing of the pipes and the production and maintenance of the instrument itself. To achieve these aims the single most important facet of the Society's activities is the teaching of the uilleann pipes, especially to young people, as it is through this that the playing of the instrument will increase, prosper and develop.

The intention of this proposal for the number 16 site is to extend the uses of Na Piobairí Uilleann and allow the organisation to grow and promote uilleann piping and Irish music generally. The scheme also provides for public music concerts by adding an auditorium at basement level. In addition, the rear garden could connect with this basement level and music recitals could take place in a courtyard/garden environment. The courtyard also serves as a space for people to spill out into at intervals during performances.

Project description:

The principal design intention is to repair the street facade. In doing this, it is important to acknowledge the nature of the street facade, which is composed of a flat brick wall with window punctuations sitting on a stone base rather like a 'stylobate', as illustrated in the proposed front elevation, shown in diagram 1. The idea of a stylobate is also seen on the no.4 house opposite the subject site, shown in plate 1. Also, as the project intends to engage with the adjoining number 15 building, we feel it is important to create minimal disturbance of the existing fabric.

The proposal therefore creates a deferential and simple front elevation which is intended to simply become a part of the street facade. A new door opening is proposed to enable disabled visitors to gain access to all levels in the building through the music shop located at ground level. This new opening is positioned in the second bay of the facade and recalls the probable position of the original door.

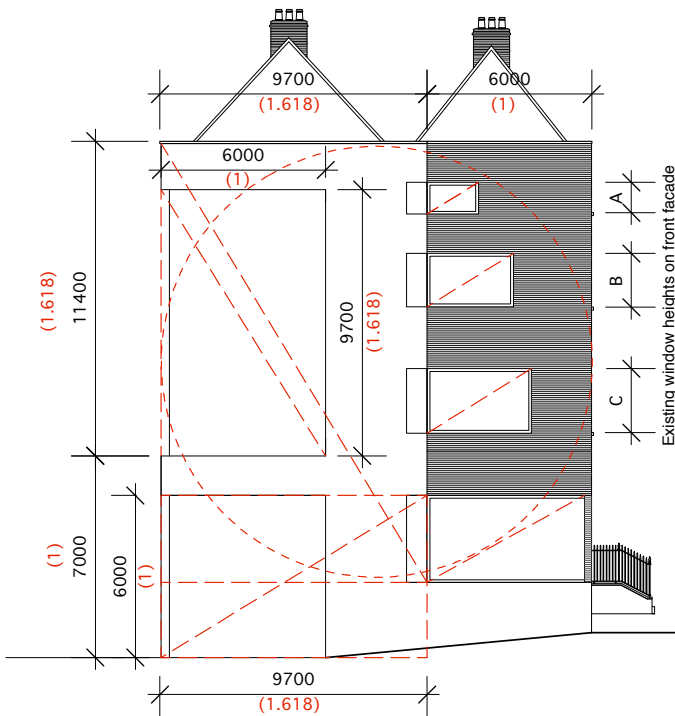


Diagram 3. Golden section and rectangle proportioning used on the side facade.

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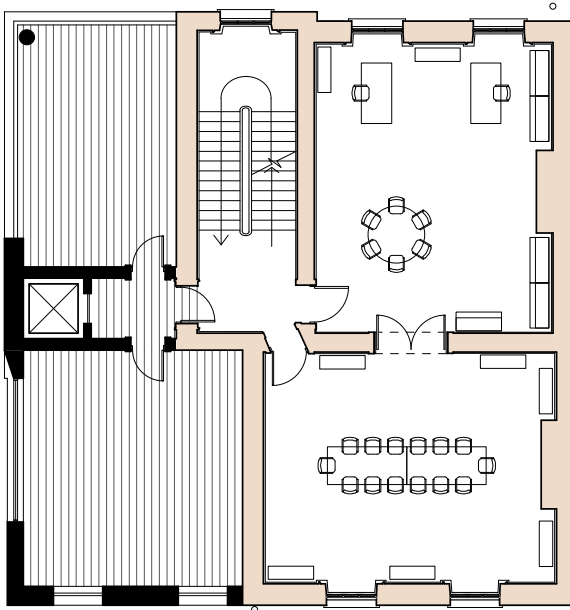


Diagram 4. First floor plan illustrating 'four room' plan with lift to enable disabled users and visitors to access all parts of the enlarged building.

The scheme uses the idea of the golden section and simple square as a proportioning system for many elements on the proposed facades. Thus the new intervention is acknowledging the importance of proportion in relation to its response to context. In using the golden section the proposal reflects a mathematical relationship with the existing context but in terms of expression the proposal is modern. The facades on the side and rear of the new building become increasingly abstract as they move away from the more formal front facade.

The sylobate of the no.16 proposal is clad in Portland stone, which is found as a capping stone on the existing wall under the railings of number 15 and elsewhere on the Street. This treatment of Portland stone is continued on the Henrietta Place facade, including the bris soleil, in an attempt to maintain a continuity of material.

Internally, the design seeks to restore a 'four room' plan around the existing main staircase. An important feature of the addition is that it includes a lift which provides access for disabled users to all parts of the enlarged building, something which is missing in the current no. 15 building.

At basement level an auditorium is proposed to enable Na Piobairi Uilleann stage concerts and recitals. The auditorium could also be used as a public facility for other users and in so doing make a positive contribution to the local community. The entrance to the auditorium level is at the lower end of Henrietta Place, which facilitates level access for disabled users. The entrance hall for the auditorium is a double height space, which visually connects with the shop at ground level. At intervals, people can take drinks in the bar area but also in the courtyard/ garden at the rear. This courtyard and garden could also be used as an outside space for musical performances. When not in use, the bar area at basement level can become a coffee shop which can be used during the day by people visiting NPU.



Diagram 5. View at high level of the the side and rear facades and also showing the landscaped courtyard/garden to the rear. The garden could be used for Summer music recitals and Na Piobairi Uilleann often run 'culture evenings' and again the garden could be used for these evenings.

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Diagram 6. View of the proposed scheme on Henrietta Street. The idea of stylobate or base is continued in the scheme and the missing 'brick wall' of the facade is re-instated with the new front facade of the new building.

At ground floor level a new shop is provided, creating a public space within the building, in addition to promoting traditional music through sales of CD's and other related items. The shop space looks into the double height space of the auditorium foyer below and the coffee shop at basement level can be accessed from the shop. In the three floors above, the functions of NPU are continued and expanded. At first floor level there is a museum of piping and this museum might also tell the story of Henrietta Street and its history, further opening up the public realm of the building. The existing archive and research facilities of NPU are extended on this floor. On the second floor, the additional two rooms provide for a pipe making workshop and tuition room, which compliments the reed making tuition room existing at this level. Finally, at third floor level, a stock storeroom for the shop is provided and also a dance studio for Irish dancing.

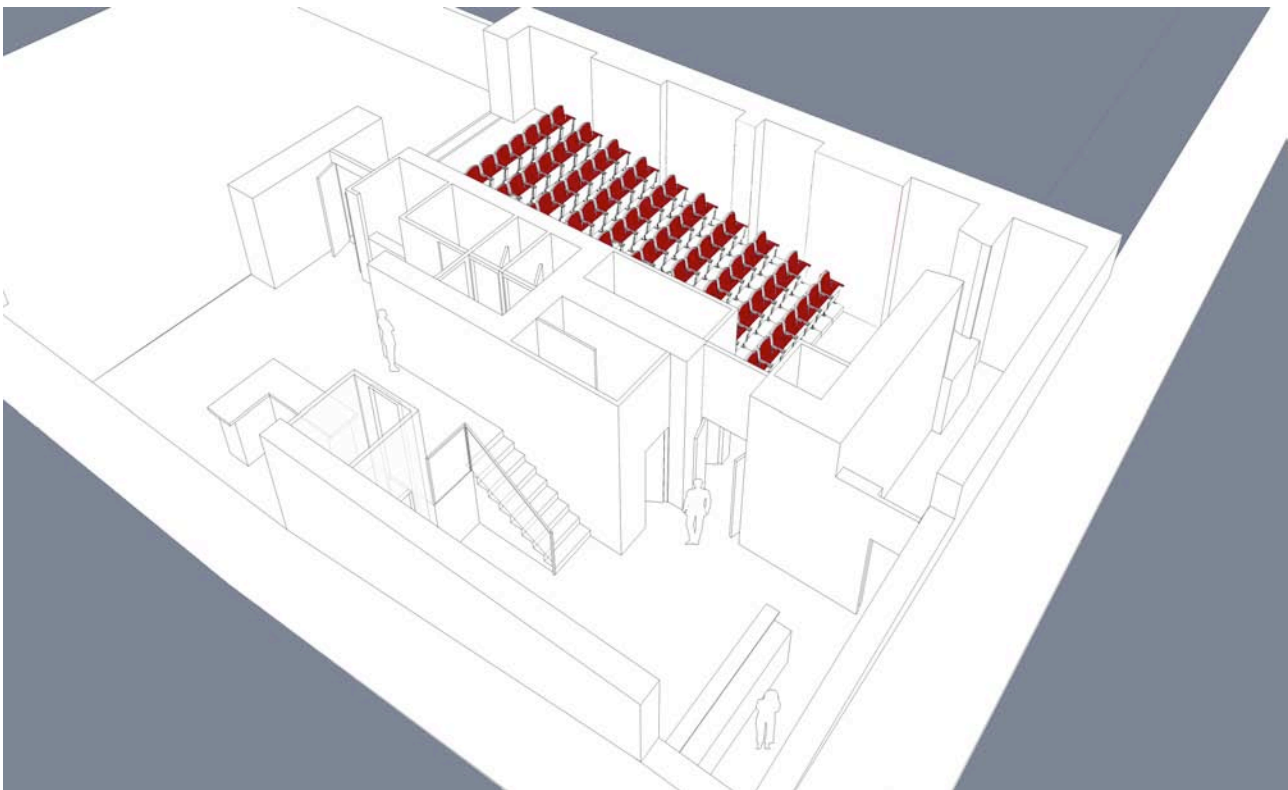


Diagram 7. Three dimensional cut away view of basement. The objective at this level is to integrate the new scheme with the existing building with minimal disturbance of the existing fabric. The auditorium is designed to seat 80 people with adequate means of fire escape provided in more than one direction. There is also a good connection provided with the landscaped courtyard garden at the rear, which could be used for spill over from the bar at intervals.