



Southern end of Vernon Avenue - 1907



Southern end of Vernon Avenue - Existing

WHAT IF? - CLONTARF

The onset of Covid-19 and associated social distancing has highlighted the congested nature of footpaths in many streets and towns, and this is particularly evident along the lower stretch of Vernon Avenue where no less than 13 food and drink outlets provide take-away options for residents and visitors. As a result, footpaths are often crowded, particularly on sunnier days and especially at evening time and weekends, leading to a series of traffic-control measures recently being installed along the southern end of Vernon Avenue.

Watching this unfold over the past year has prompted us to examine this stretch of Vernon Avenue to assess how it might be adapted to better serve community and business interests, thereby creating a pleasant and vibrant village centre for Clontarf.



Parking area - existing

Vernon Avenue is named after John Vernon, quartermaster of the Cromwellian Army, who bought 950 acres in the area in 1656. At this time, the "village" of Clontarf was centred on the stretch of Castle Avenue that ran from the coast to the gated entrance to the Castle itself. The area known as "The Sheds" – the fishing-port of Clontarf (referred to as Herringtonne in Greenville Collins' 1693 map of the area) was a collection of cabins, cottages and fish-processing facilities. However the construction of the wooden bridge and bull wall in 1824 changed the ecology off Clontarf, and by 1838, The Sheds as a fishing village had decayed significantly.

Records from 1719 and 1764 refer to an Inn (Sign of the Ship, and later Sign of the Star and Garter). This building may have later become known as Mooney's pub (now Connolly's), or it may have been on the other side of Vernon Avenue, where a Public House is indicated in an 1868 map on the site of what is now Sandbar and Thunders Bakery. A livery stable and public house (originally known as Mooney's) did open on the site of Connolly's in 1845 with a large open space to the rear, where most of the commercial buildings on the west side of Vernon Avenue now stand.

In 1896 Dagmar Villas was constructed on the west side of Vernon Avenue, which appears to be what is now no's. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11 Vernon Avenue. These houses originally all contained railed areas to the front (still extant to the front of The Travel Broker at no. 11), but over time, the railed areas were removed to facilitate the widening of the vehicular carriageway with the footpath being re-aligned tight to the front of the terrace, thereby creating the 12 parking spaces which exist today.

Reflecting on the realisation that the footpaths on Vernon Avenue had been altered from their original alignment and that Connollys was originally in part a livery stable (where horses were boarded for a weekly fee, which helps make sense of the small parking area to the front of Connollys) caused us to consider how some of these spaces might be returned to some degree to their original form and function, thereby improving this area of the village for present-day users. present-day users.



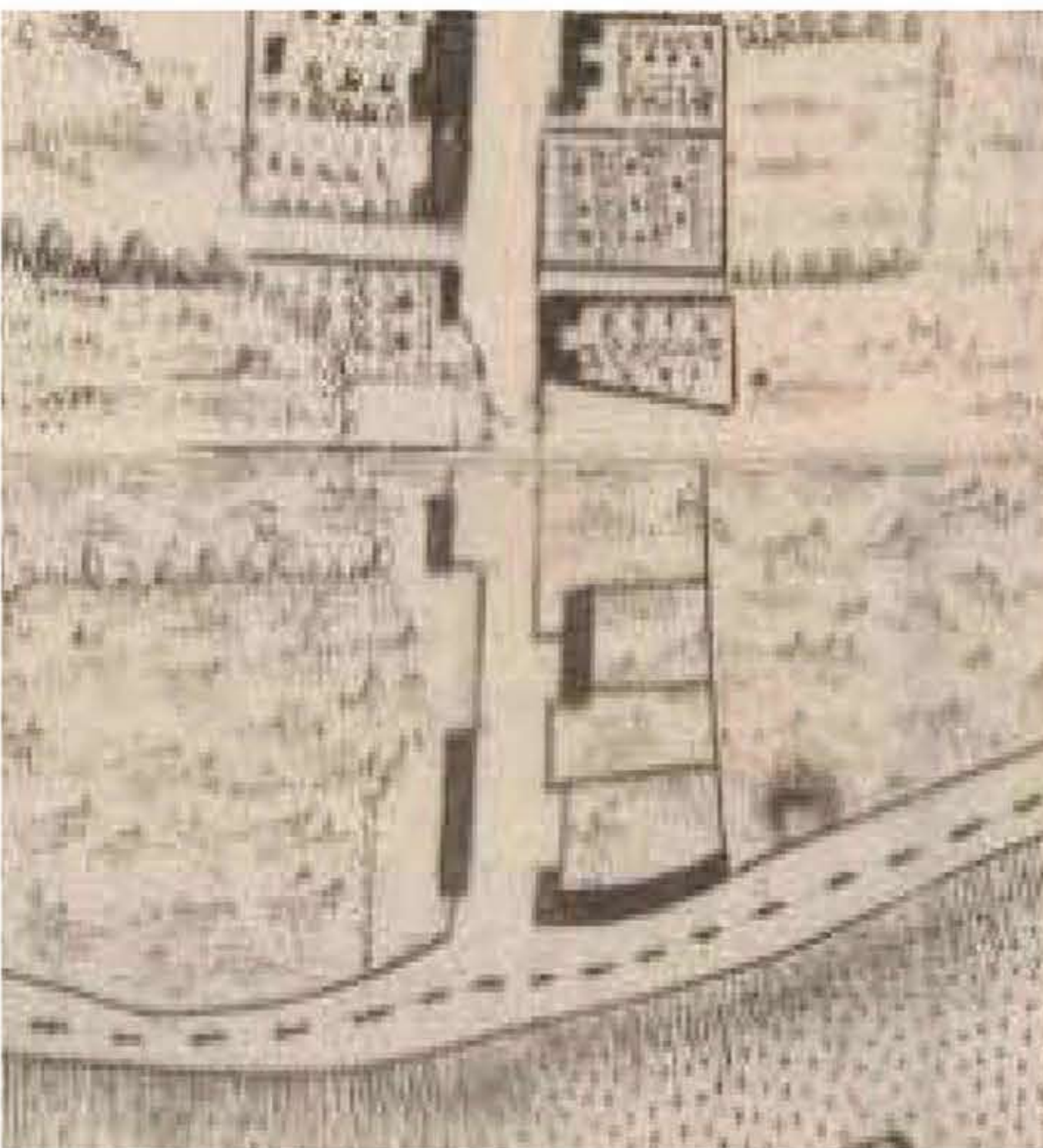
Public seating area - suggested



Sheds of Clontarf, Weekes Wharf, 1785 - John Laporte

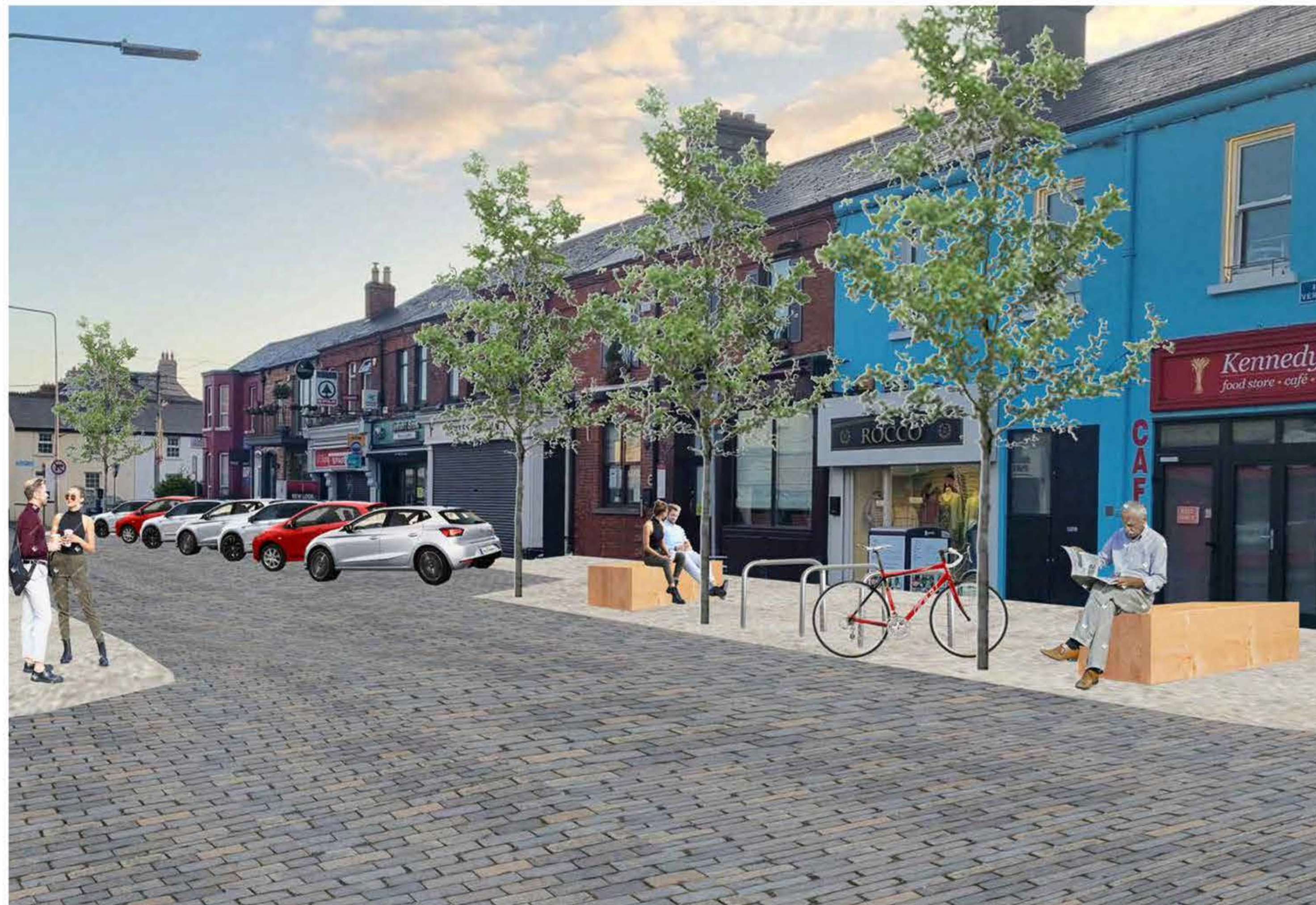


Sheds of Clontarf, 1785 - Francis Wheatley



Southern end of Vernon Avenue, 1757 - John Roque





Vernon Avenue - suggested



Vernon Avenue - existing

Our suggestions look at a number of different measures which could in theory be carried out individually or collectively.

1. Removing the 9 parking spaces to the front of The Sheds and re-establishing this area as a gathering-space with fixed & moveable seating and planting, creating a miniature village square, something Clontarf lacks, evidenced by the annual positioning of the village Christmas tree adjacent to the entrance to the Promenade car park.

2. Removing the southern-most 2 or 3 of the 12 parking spaces to the west side of Vernon Avenue, re-instating the original path and carriageway configuration, creating more space for pedestrians and installing fixed seating and planting. Consideration could be given to re-paving and raising the road level flush with the pavements either side (south of its junction with Clontarf Park).

3. Improving the existing paved area to the front of Sandbar, providing additional fixed seating around the extant 2007 landscaping scheme.



Paved area - existing

The pandemic has taken a huge toll on us as individuals and as a society, locally and globally. However it has also shown how adaptable we are, and how we can adapt spaces we thought only suited one function to work successfully as another.

It has created an opportunity for reflection on how we live, and what is important. It has shown us the importance of casual social interactions, and the benefits they have for individuals, businesses, and communities. This study is intended to facilitate a conversation on how Clontarf could help facilitate these interactions.

Reference material:

Clontarf – Colm Lennon (Irish Historic Towns Atlas: Dublin Suburbs)

From Village to Suburb: The Building of Clontarf since 1760 – Claire Gogarty



Southern end of Vernon Avenue - Suggested