

Design Team appointed to Swords Cultural Quarter project

written by Rose Barrett 14/07/2021



The Swords Cultural Quarter has taken a major step forward with the appointment of the integrated design team which will be led by award-winning architects O'Donnell and Tuomey.

The announcement was made at this evening's monthly meeting of Fingal County Council by County Architect Fionnuala May when she gave councillors an update on the project.

With the design team now in place, the project, which was launched in 2016, will now proceed at pace with the Council intending to initiate a Part 8 planning public consultation process in May 2022. The project is expected to go to tender in April 2023 with construction works scheduled to commence in Quarter 3 of 2023.

The Civic and Cultural Centre will be the first part of the project to be constructed and is expected to take 24 months to complete.

The Swords Cultural Quarter will be located in the civic heart of Fingal's County Town and will be a major new public and civic space with the new Civic and Cultural Centre and a Hub Building sitting alongside the existing Fingal County Council Offices and historic Swords Castle at the junction of North Street and Seatown Road.

The Civic and Cultural Centre will be at the core of the Swords Cultural Quarter and will include a library space, performance venue and arts venue with a number of support facilities that can be utilised for artistic, cultural and community needs.



Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey PHOTO – (c) Al Higgins

The Centre is intended to be the town's centre of knowledge, arts and culture with a strong focus on people and experiences which, through the delivery of a modern, dynamic, inspirational and educational programme of events and activities, will become a destination and a focal point for the local community and visitors.

The Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Seána Ó Rodaigh, said: "This is great news for Swords and Fingal as this is a flagship project for the county. The objective of the Swords Cultural Quarter project is to energise this area of Swords in order to make a balanced town that provides places, buildings and spaces for both cultural and economic activity for all its citizens and to create a new sense of place."

Established in 1988, O'Donnell and Tuomey is an award-winning architectural practice led by Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey, with studios based in Dublin, Cork and London. They have received over 120 national and international awards for their completed buildings.

O'Donnell and Tuomey have an international reputation for its engagement with complex urban situations and sensitive landscapes. Much of their work has involved the meaningful integration of new structures into historically significant contexts, often involving the radical transformation of existing buildings.



Central European University

PHOTO – (c) Tamas Bujnovszky

Among their most famous works are the Central European University in Budapest, the Glucksman Gallery at University College Cork, the Lyric Theatre in Belfast, the London School of Economics Student Centre and London's Stratford Waterfront Masterplan. They were involved in the development of Temple Bar, Dublin, including the design of the Irish Film Institute, the DIT College of Photography and National Photography Archive, and the Gallery of Photography.

They are currently developing competition-winning designs for the V&A East Museum and Sadler's Wells dance theatre in London's East Bank, an Academic Hub and Library for TU Dublin and a new School of Architecture for Liverpool University.

John Tuomey said: "We are excited by the vision for the Swords Cultural Quarter, with its emphasis on the inherited landscape, its civic-minded programme for public space, its socially-minded provision of library, theatre and arts amenities. It was with an ambition to participate in projects like this, where architecture can contribute to the shape of society, that we set out in practice. We have been busy abroad in recent years, we are delighted to bring some of that experience back home."

Fingal County Architect, Fionnuala May, said: “I am delighted with the appointment of O’Donnell and Tuomey Architects to the Swords Cultural Quarter project. This important milestone heralds the start of the design period for our new County Library and Arts Centre. Our aspiration is for a design that appropriately signals our pride in Swords as our county town and I have no doubt that this will be realised by O’Donnell and Tuomey and their team.”

Fingal County Council’s Director of Economic Enterprise Tourism and Cultural Development, Emer O’Gorman, whose department is responsible for the development of the Swords Cultural Quarter, said: “The appointment of the integrated design team is a key moment in the project. We now have a clear roadmap for the next four years and look forward to turning this important project into a reality.”