

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCILS ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION OFFICER REPORT

**RE: SD22A/0336 - PRESENTATION CONVENT, CONVENT ROAD,
CLONDALKIN, DUBLIN 22.**

Record of Protected Structures

Presentation Convent & Church of Immaculate Conception is referred to in the Council's Record of Protected Structures - Schedule 2 of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 under Map Ref. No. 158. Under Section 2 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, the term 'structure' means *"any building, structure, excavation, or other thing constructed or made on, in, or under any land, or any part of a structure so defined, (a) where the context so admits, includes the land on, in or under which the structure is situate, and (b) in relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, includes (i) the interior of the structure, (ii) the land lying within the curtilage of the structure, (iii) any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors, and (iv) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures"*. Therefore, the entire site is a protected structure, including all existing buildings on site including their exteriors, interiors, fixtures and fittings. The Protection also extends to the lands of the site and as such come under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Appraisal

Under the previous application (Permission Granted under Reg. Ref. SD18A/0328) for a new 4-storey Nursing Home building located on the lands to the south and west of the existing Presentation Convent and Church of the Immaculate Conception, Protected Structure (RPS Ref. 158) as detailed above. The previous application also included for a retirement home in a two-storey wing to the southeast of the convent and internally connected to the nursing home in order to accommodate the retired nuns who will relocate from the existing Convent building. It was also proposed to carry out internal alterations and improvements to part of the existing Convent Building to allow a new use for nursing home staff accommodation.

The current application is for change of use of part of existing convent building (protected structure from staff accommodation ancillary to the adjacent nursing home/retirement home permitted under previous application SD18A/0328 to geriatric daycare centre (Age Well Centre). It is proposed to carry out internal alterations and interventions to the interior of the convent at GF, FF and SF and external alterations to accommodate 2 external staircase towers, one of which will include a lift within the courtyard space.

As with the previous application for the Nursing/Retirement Home It is of utmost importance that the existing Convent Building continues to be used and provide a use within the site which is adjacent and adjoining the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The convent building needs to remain as an integral part of the new complex and associated use with the Church and within the wider community.

It should be noted that the Parish Meeting Rooms/Community Rooms were to be retained in their current use under the previous granted permission and under the current application for change of use no works are proposed to these rooms which are connected and used by the Church and do not form part of this application. It was noted as particularly important to ensure that the community link to the church and convent was retained as part of any application for future use of the Convent building.

A comprehensive conservation report and Architectural Assessment for proposed change of use and associated works has been completed and submitted as part of the planning application.

Proposed works to the Presentation Convent

A number of internal changes and alterations/interventions within the Protected Structure are proposed in order to facilitate the change of use. In some instances, the alterations are similar with those previously granted permission under SD18A/0328, however having assessed the work required under the current application there are a number of areas where further detail is required in order to fully determine the impacts.

The proposed interventions and overall impacts of the proposed works are assessed on a room-by-room basis in the Conservation Report and Architectural Impact Assessment. An assessment of the impacts is provided. In assessing the application for the change of use the impacts are highlighted below in particular where impacts are identified as having a negative direct impact on the original fabric/features.

Under the current application the addition of changes to internal courtyard and new opes to provide a connection to the proposed new staircase towers, which will be located in the courtyard. The insertion of new additions into the existing courtyard and alterations to connect the new staircase towers to the original building will also require consideration.

Ground floor

Subdivision of the convent chapel to provide a 'quiet room', which will be accessed from the adjacent church only and a new proposed Physio/therapy room. This will result in the existing Chapel being divided into two separate rooms with a new full height partition dividing the newly created 'quite room' from the remainder of the room. This will allow the 'quite room' to be accessed only from the main body of the Parish Church. The former chapel off the Parish Church will remain as granted under the previous application, however it is also proposed to create two new openings on the wall to facilitate air handling. The two new wall vents would be placed centrally on the west facing courtyard wall between two gothic style windows.

It is considered that the insertion of the new air vents needs to be justified and detailed as to why a natural ventilation source for air handling cannot be used rather than the insertion of vents which will directly impact on the original built fabric and cause an overall visual impact on existing features/joinery.

The former reception room off the entrance hallway is proposed to be converted into a reception space. The two main alterations are the opening up of a new opening between the entrance hallway and the adjacent room to create an open reception/counter facing into the reception area and to insert a new partition to divide up the room into two areas not connected. This intervention will involve the insertion of a full height partition and the door from the entrance hallway will be removed.

The sub-division of one of the principal rooms results in changes to the architectural character of the room with the loss and alteration of the original door and door joinery which will result in negative conservation impact. There are other areas where new opens and change of opes are proposed in order to facilitate improved connectivity within the existing building and in particular to allow connection to the new stair tower in these areas the interventions can be justified. However, in considering the proposed alterations for the new reception space a balance needs to be achieved between where alterations or new opes can be justified and where in the case of the proposed reception space the design should be altered in order to provide an overall layout that achieves the retention of the original layout and original features/historic joinery.

It should be noted that under the previous application concerns were raised initially with regard to the sub-division of the original principal spaces within the body of the Convent Building and in particular the Chapel (G-05) and the main GF rooms which retain a high level of architectural detail and features. It is considered that the current proposals will result in consequent changes and architectural character of the existing chapel and formal layout of the entrance hallway (G-01) and former reception/parlour room (G-02).

It should also be noted that if the requirements of fire compartmentalisation between floors results in the covering of the original exposed decorative joists within the Principal rooms, this will also represent a change of character which is unacceptable. It is therefore recommended that all Fire safety upgrades need to be identified and detailed, allowing a full assessment in achieving the best overall approach. Proposals involving revised layouts should be redesigned or revised to support the protection of the original built fabric and features of the Protected Structures while allowing the necessary Fire compliance.

If requirements of fire compartmentalisation between floors results in the covering of original exposed decorative joists this would represent a change of character which would be an unacceptable and therefore any such alterations and interventions would have to be carefully weighted up between fire safety requirements and the protection and retention of architectural features.

Those concern remain in the assessment of the current application for Change of Use in that Fire Safety requirements need to be fully outlined in order that any fire safety upgrades under Fire Compliance/Building Regs are detailed and that alternative approaches are proposed and reflected in the design approach where/if impacts alter the character of the protected structure and important architectural features. There are a number of areas where the proposed alterations and interventions required to facilitate the change of use and new use of areas/rooms as detailed above.

It is considered that the proposals relating to the Ground Floor rooms in particular should be re-examined taking account Fire Safety Requirements, fire upgrading, new proposed partitions and where proposed alterations result in the loss or removal of original features. The reconciliation of necessary fire upgrades, compartmentalisation and treatments approaches to conservation should be driven by the requirement to retain original fabric.

It is considered that a Method Statement and Schedule of Works is required detailing the necessary alterations, modifications and requirements for walls, floors, ceilings, doors and windows with regard to Fire Safety/Building Regulation requirements, where requirements will most certainly result in the loss of original features. In particular if/where the requirements of fire compartmentalisation between floors results in the covering of the original exposed decorative joists within the main principal rooms, this will represent a significant change of character which would be unacceptable.

It is proposed to provide a new waiting room and WC (G-09 & G-11) within the former communal dining room. The room will be divided to form two rooms by the insertion of a new full height partition. The majority of the room will be the new waiting room and a new Part M complaint WC will be provided in the other section of the new divided room. It is considered that the sub-division of the room will impact on the original character and plan form, however the position of the new partition allows the retention of existing features and joinery. It is felt that once again this room should be examined with regard to its requirements under the change of use. The requirements under Part M are fully appreciate however other locations for a WC should be considered as part of the overall design and feasibility within the original GF plan, in achieving a balance between the original layout and architectural character of the principal rooms and a sensitive new use.

A revised ground floor plan should be provided by way of additional information in addressing and minimising the direct impact to the original plan form and proposed use of the existing parlour/former reception rooms and chapel at ground floor level. It is felt that the modifications and interventions could be further considered in order to provide a suitable design for the new use and the necessary interventions to facilitate the use. In particular the insertion of a new reception area which could be designed within the original space without the need for changes that will directly impact on original features/opes and historic joinery.

First Floor and Second Floor

It is proposed that the simple cellular nature of the rooms on the first floor (F-01 to F-11) will be retained in cellular form for the new use as consultation rooms. Interventions proposed are modest in nature and include minor adjustments to internal partitions. Original window joinery will be retained. Also at FF level, it is proposed to form a new door to connect into the proposed new stair town and that the existing exit door to the present escape staircase will be blocked up and the wall and joinery made good.

Where new exit routes or new access doorways are proposed along access corridors or in particular where egress to the west side of the building is required and/or to access the new staircase block, these have been achieved in a sensitive way.

However, details of the proposed works should be included as part of a Method Statement and Schedule of Works detailing the interventions and making good of original fabric. Details shall include where possible the retention and re-use of all original doors and retain as much original joinery as possible.

Second Floor

The second floor is divided into a larger section on the southern wing and a small section of storage rooms on the western range at SF level. It is proposed that rooms on the second floor will be used for administration offices and staff facilities. The interventions at SF level are minor changes to the layout are proposed. It is proposed that an existing window on the landing adjacent to the proposed new stair tower 02 be replaced by a new doorway. This is adjacent to existing internal staircase 04. This will result in the loss of some original fabric, however in order for the structure to be viable and compliant with Fire/Building regulations, the necessary fire escape is required.

External

It is proposed to add 2 no. Staircase towers within the courtyard, one which will contain a lift. These are to facilitate access and escape and to replace the existing metal open fire escape stairs. The design of the proposed new staircase towers will be modern in form and the material finish will reflect the materiality of the Protected Structure. These new additions will allow the clear reading of an additional contemporary structure within the context of the existing Convent Building. A glazed interface will provide a clear separation between the original built fabric and the new Staircase towers. Details of how the new staircase towers will connect to the original built fabric ensuring minimal intervention at this junction is required. A methodology should be provided along with a detailed Section of the junction.

Recommendation

It is considered that a Request for Further Information is required in order to provide additional detail to address the concerns raised in the above assessment –

1. It should be noted that under the previous application concerns were raised initially with regard to the sub-division of the original principal spaces within the body of the Convent Building and in particular the Chapel (G-05) and the main GF rooms which retain a high level of architectural detail and features. It is considered that the current proposals will result in consequent changes and architectural character of the existing chapel and formal layout of the entrance hallway (G-01) and former reception/parlour room (G-02) these concerns need to be addressed;
 - A revised ground floor plan should be provided by way of additional information in addressing and minimising the direct impact to the original plan form and proposed use of the existing parlour/former reception rooms and chapel at ground floor level. It is felt that the modifications and interventions could be further considered in order to provide a suitable design for the new use and the necessary interventions to facilitate the use. In particular the insertion of a new reception area which could

be designed within the original space without the need for changes that will directly impact on original features/opes and historic joinery.

2. It is proposed to create two new openings on the wall of the Chapel to facilitate air handling. The two new wall vents would be placed centrally on the west facing courtyard wall between two gothic style windows. It is considered that justification for the new air vents needs to be justified and detailed required as to why a natural ventilation source for air handling cannot be used rather than the insertion of vents which will directly impact on the original built fabric and cause an overall visual impact on existing features/joinery.
3. It is proposed to provide a new waiting room and WC (G-09 & G-11) within the former communal dining room. The room will be divided to form two rooms by the insertion of a new full height partition. The majority of the room will be the new waiting room and a new Part M complaint WC will be provided in the other section of the new divided room. It is considered that the sub-division of the room will impact on the original character and plan form. It is considered that this room should be examined with regard to its requirements under the change of use.

The requirements under Part M are recognised, however other locations for a WC should be considered as part of the overall design and feasibility within the original GF plan, in achieving a balance between the original layout and architectural character of the principal rooms and a sensitive new use.

4. It is recommended that all Fire safety upgrades need to be identified and detailed, allowing a full assessment of interventions and associated work. It is considered that a Method Statement and Schedule of Works is required detailing the necessary alterations, modifications and requirements for walls, floors, ceilings, doors and windows in compliance with Fire Safety and Building Regulations. It is felt that where direct impact and loss of architectural character is a consequence of required fire regs the proposals should be redesigned or revised to support the protection of the original built fabric and features of the Protected Structures, while allowing the necessary Fire compliance.
5. Where new exit routes/access doorways are proposed along access corridors or in particular where egress to the west side of the building is required to access the new staircase block, these have been achieved in a sensitive way. However, details of the proposed works should be included as part of a Method Statement and Schedule of Works detailing the interventions and making good of original fabric. Details shall include where possible the retention and re-use of all original doors/windows and retention of as much original joinery as possible.

6. In areas where new partitions are proposed details should be included as part of the Method Statement with regard to how the new partitions will be inserted. Where it has been identified in the Architectural Impact Assessment that the insertion of new partitions will result in a direct loss of architectural character or features the layout or design of the partition should be revised.

7. The proposed design of the new staircase towers within the courtyard will allow these new additions to read clearly within the context of the existing Convent Building. A glazed interface will provide a clear separation between the original built fabric and the new Staircase towers. However, in order to fully assess any direct impact, details of how the new staircase towers will connect to the original built fabric is required. A methodology should be provided along with a detailed Section of the junction.

Irenie McLoughlin
Architectural Conservation Officer

Date: 7th October 2022