

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCILS ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION OFFICER REPORT

**RE: SD23A/0047 - 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.

A further application under Reg. Ref. SD23A/0047 is for change of use of part of existing convent building (RPS Ref.158) from staff accommodation ancillary to the adjacent nursing home/retirement home permitted under previous application SD18A/0328 to geriatric daycare centre (Age Well Centre). A previous application (Reg. Ref. SD22A/0336) was refused for a number of reasons and this current application seeks to address the concerns raised.

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.

On assessment of the previous planning application under SD22A/0336 a number of items and concerns were raised by the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer and the following was recommended;

“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 –

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.

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.

- 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.*

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.

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.

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.

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”.

Planning Permission under SD22A/0336 was refused and on foot of the decision, a meeting was held on site with the undersigned, project architects and conservation architect, fire safety consultant and developers. The areas of concern as highlighted in the assessment report completed by the Council Architectural Conservation Officer were used to form the areas of discussion in finding a suitable solution. Design mitigations were discussed, and details have been set out under Section 4.0 in the Architectural Impact Assessment Report which has been submitted.

An Architectural Impact Assessment for proposed change of use and associated works has been completed and submitted as part of the planning application. The Architectural Impact Assessment is set out to describe the proposed works and overall impact and mitigation for same. The overall approach is based on the items highlighted by the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer (as detailed above) and how these are being addressed under the new application.

Proposed works to the Presentation Covert

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. In order to address the concerns in relation to a number of areas further detail was required under the previous planning application in order to fully determine the impacts.

As part of the site meeting a pre-planning document was provided by the project conservation architect in showing how the concerns raised by the undersigned and overall impacts had now been considered and changes had been examined in order to lessen the direct impacts on the built fabric. The current proposed development consists of the following;

- The upgrading of all services and building fabric to include improved insulation; fire management of prevention treatments; disabled access compliance.
- The introduction of new vertical circulation nodes within the courtyard to manage universal access.
- Some modest internal alterations to allow for the proposed new use.

It is considered that each proposed intervention has now been considered and reviewed as detailed below based on previous concerns raised and related requirements.

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 'quiet room' from the remainder of the room. This will allow the 'quiet room' to be accessed only from the main body of the Parish Church. The proposed screen has been altered at lower level by the insertion of a modern glazed screen but retains the original gothic revival character of the upper section with six lancets split by a single mullion forming the stem of a circular trefoil upper light.

Windows within this space act as a transitional device between the smaller more domestic openings of the residential element of the building and the larger windows of the church being paired lancets below a trefoil mirrored to the courtyard but with a raised cill. The ceiling also features expressed joists as with the parlours but larger to reflect the wider span and the special nature of this space subtly recognised by the addition of small gold decorative squares added to the bevelled edges of the joists.

The proposed new fire door between the entrance hall section of the corridor and the north section leading to the Chapel and upgrading of existing door for fire rating has been designed to use a non-impactful system of fire protection. The new fire door should take account of the character of the surrounding joinery and while being functional and contemporary in form, should respect the context to minimise any impacts.

Another item of concern raised in the assessment of the previous application was the proposal 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. The proposal as originally presented was directed by the requirement to retain and conserve the character of all existing gothic revival style windows to the inner and outer facing elevations of the Chapel. The windows are fixed stained glass windows which do not provide any means of openings in order that natural ventilation can be provided. Within the context of the proposed it is now confirmed that natural ventilation system is not possible and therefore the original proposal is considered the only way to provide the required natural ventilation into the Chapel.

It is stated in the Architectural Impact Assessment that "there are some modest impacts in that some original wall fabric will need to be excised to allow for the air intake and extract locations". It is considered that a method statement should be provided detailing how the

insertion of the ventilation system will be carried out ensuring minimal intervention to the original built fabric.

Under the previous planning application, 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 loss of an original internal door from the entrance hallway.

This proposal has been re-designed under the current application when now provides for the new opening to be modest in form and scale and is clearly a modern insertion. The impacts will be less obtrusive and will allow for a functioning reception opening while retaining the character of this space. The revisions allow for the existing door and relationship between G.01 and G.02 to be retained.

Under the previous application the sub-division of one of the principal rooms as proposed resulted 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 openings and change of openings 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.

In considering the proposed alterations for the new reception space, a balance has now been achieved between where alterations or new openings are being proposed. The new proposals for the proposed reception space the design have been altered in order to provide an overall layout that achieves the retention of the original layout and original features/historic joinery. The proposal has been designed to be free standing (a new separating and free-standing screen between G.02 and adjacent G.03 to create a working reception and a more private but connected reception office) and to avoid dividing this space into two areas but rather it inserts a screen which will not affect the original integrity of the room. The new proposal has been well considered and has taken the concerns raised by the undersigned and direction to address the concerns in providing for a more measured and more sensitive approach. This revised design significantly mitigates the previous impacts which were noted in the undersigned report as being unacceptable.

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 was considered that the current proposals would 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). This proposal has been redesigned to allow a functioning direct connection between the proposed equipment store (G.04) and the proposed Physio/therapy Room (G.05). It forms a new opening within the existing arch headed recess to the right of the chimney piece. This will not affect the room integrity and the use of an existing recess will result in a very modest change in character which provides for a more sensitive proposal at this location.

The proposals to upgrade the door openings to FR 30 are driven by a strategy to retain the maximum number of retained doors and using a proprietary system as specified by the fire consultant and set out in detail in the separate fire strategy document. The system proposed (Sealmaster FireFace) is designed to be low impact in conservation impacts while providing for the necessary performance and fire safety requirements.

The previous application 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 were a number of areas where the proposed alterations and interventions required to facilitate the change of use and new use of areas/rooms required further details and a clear fire strategy, details have now been provided in submitted Fire Strategy documentation.

Under the previous application it was proposed to provide a new waiting room and WC (G-09 & G-11) within the former communal dining room. The room to 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 would impact on the original character and plan form, however the position of the new partition allows the retention of existing features and joinery. It was requested that this room should be examined with regard to its requirements under the change of use.

This proposal has now been revised under the current application. The new proposal addresses those concerns by mitigating those issues and presents a simpler plan layout which retains form and character. In particular the presentation of the large tri-partite window in the former kitchen.

The requirements under Part M are fully appreciated and the overall design and feasibility within the original GF plan has been achieved providing a balance between the original layout and architectural character of the principal rooms and a sensitive new use.

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 tower 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.

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 have been provided and details are included in the Architectural Impact Assessment Report.

Recommendation

It is considered that the proposed development is acceptable with the following conditions:

- All works should be carried out in accordance with the details and particulars submitted and in accordance with the details and methodology provided in the Architectural Impact Assessment Report. All works should adhere to best practice in minimising and direct impact on the original built fabric and should adhere to conservation principles in achieving the best overall approach.
- Safety measures should be put in place during the proposed works on site. A Safety Statement should be provided detailing how the Protected Structure and all original architectural features and fixtures will be protected. A safety statement should be submitted for written agreement with the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer prior to the commencement of development.
 - To ensure the protected structure and all associated architectural features/decorative internal fabric are being safeguarded during the proposed development and appropriate safety measures are put in place to prevent and minimise any possible damage.
 - Once works commence on site the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer should be contacted with regard to inspecting the safety measures put in place to safeguard and protect the protected structures and original fabric and features.
- A suitably qualified Architect with Conservation expertise or Conservation Architect should be engaged to supervise the proposed works ensuring that works are carried

out in accordance with the current proposals and mitigation measures are carried out in full in achieving a sensitive overall approach and minimal intervention. The Conservation Architect should continue to liaise with the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer throughout the proposed development and the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer should be notified during the key stages of works.

- The proposed new fire door between the entrance hall section of the corridor and the north section leading to the Chapel and upgrading of existing door for fire rating has been designed to use a non-impactful system of fire protection. The new fire door should take account of the character of the surrounding joinery and while being functional and contemporary in form, should respect the context to minimise any impacts. All fire safety and upgrading works should be carried out in accordance with the fire strategy provided and all works should take account of the original joinery and minimise any overall impact.
- It is proposed to create two new service openings into the inner (courtyard side) 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. The original windows are fixed stained glass windows which do not provide any means of openings in order that natural ventilation can be provided.
 - It is considered that a method statement should be provided detailing how the insertion of the ventilation system will be carried out ensuring minimal intervention to the original built fabric.
- 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.
 - A schedule of materials should be submitted for the new staircase towers.

The above conditions should be submitted to the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer (Ms. Irenie McLoughlin) for agreement and written approval.

Irenie McLoughlin
Architectural Conservation Officer

Date: 20th April 2023