

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCILS

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION OFFICERS REPORT

**RE: SD22A/0401AI – SCHOLARSTOWN HOUSE, SCHOLARSTOWN ROAD,
DUBLIN 16.**

Appraisal

Additional Information has been requested in relation to the above planning application. A number of items (AI Request Item 2a-2e) were requested by the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer in order to address issues raised in relation to proposed works to the Protected Structure and also with regard to the new proposed development within the curtilage.

AI Request 2 (a)

On assessment of the level of works proposed the undersigned considers the majority of the work to have modest/minimal impacts. However, there are some areas of alterations and revisions to the original layout and insertion of additional services where negative impacts are likely.

The following items proposed need to be addressed as part of a request for Additional Information: -

- It is considered that where original windows are proposed to be blocked up alternatives should be considered, or alternative designs considered in order to provide a solution and the retention.
- Removal of original architectural features is not acceptable and where this has been indicated, mitigation measures or alternative floor plans should be provided in order to negate the removal of architectural features.
- Where additional services are proposed details shall be provided on how services i.e., bathrooms and w/c will be integrated and how these will be ventilated etc.
- The Conservation Methodology provides details on the architectural elements for repair which is very helpful in directing the works in accordance with best conservation principles and practice. There are no details included on any proposed energy efficiency works to the protected structure. Clarification should be sought with regard to any such works.

It is considered that in addition to the Conservation Methodology a Schedule of Works should be provided for each floor in order to specify all the works to include; interventions/revisions, conservation repairs and routine maintenance. A Schedule of Works and Method statement for the specific elements should also include how the items listed above will be dealt with as part of the entire scope of works to the protected structure.

Response:

A Further Information response has been submitted for all items under Item 2.

In relation to Item 2 (a) it states that amendments have been made to the proposed development in order to ensure that as much of the original fabric of the protected structure is retained. The revisions made to the design include the configuration of the floor plans to allow for the retention of the original window openings in the rear return (3-storey extension) which allows light to penetrate into the proposed stairwell. Details have been provided with regard to the refurbishment and upgrading of the existing windows along with details of other energy efficiency measures.

A Schedule of Works for the installation of services and interventions has also been submitted as prepared by the Conservation Consultant (Appendix 1). A Method Statement and Schedule of Works has also been prepared on a room-by-room basis detailing the proposed interventions and the impacts of same. It is considered that the detail provided is acceptable and allows a full and proper assessment of the proposed works and interventions to Scholarstown House, a Protected Structure.

AI Request 2 (b)

On assessing the existing Outbuildings and details provided, it is felt that the Building D should be re-examined with regard to its retention and adaptive reuse as part of the overall development. It is considered that the retention of an original early 19th century outbuilding would provide additional architectural interest and character to the site and will support the association with Scholarstown House and the overall setting of the original site. The original outbuildings should be considered with regard to possible retention for reuse or using the footprint and architectural elements of the outbuildings in the design of the new build allowing a sensitive building type and visual link and association with the Protected Structure.

Response:

By way of context to the AI Request 2 (b) the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer had advised at pre-planning that the original outbuildings should be considered with regard to possible retention for reuse or using the footprint and architectural elements of the outbuildings in the design of the new build allowing a sensitive building type and link with the Main House. Neither option was presented as part of the initial planning application, so the applicants were requested to provide such consideration or justification for removal of the existing outbuildings.

In response it is stated that “the design team are still of the strong opinion that the existing outbuildings are of no architectural merit or significance” but that the selected use of corrugated sheeting will have a positive impact on the setting of the protected structure and reflect the former agricultural use of the site. Further consideration and amendments proposed for the new build at this location are noted.

AI Request 2 (c)

Although separation has been provided in providing limited but designed setting to the Protected Structure, it is considered that by virtue of the height of the proposed apartments the Protected Structure is completely overshadowed. The mass and scale of the apartment block which completely surround the Protected Structure to the rear as a backdrop and to the side, is overbearing and causes negative visual impacts. In order to less the visual impact the overall height, scale and mass of the 5-storey element needs to be reduced and overall design revised.

AI Request 2 (d)

It is considered that the overall design, mass and height should be reconsidered and revised in order to find a greater balance between the existing and new development. It is noted that the height has been reduced where the new block forms a backdrop to the protected structure, however, not enough has been done in relation to the overall design to the adjoining block to provide a building type that doesn't completely overshadow and dominate the entire site.

Response:

In response to Items 2 (c) and (d), a response has been prepared by the Project Architects detailing that the proposed apartment building has been re-designed to ensure that any visual impact on the setting of the Protected Structure is reduced. The materials have been updated to further reduce the massing of the building. The changes made to the overall design of the apartment block includes the following revisions;

In summary, the primary design changes as a result of the RFI are as follows:

- Existing windows to Scholarstown House rear extension maintained.
- Reduced massing to rear/west of Scholarstown House via removal of L04 Fourth floor element in this area and set back introduced to L03 Third Floor with alternative façade material (metal cladding).
- Reduced massing to south of Scholarstown House via removal/reduction of L04 Fourth floor elements in this area and removal of bay windows to L03 Third Floor. Alternative material (metal cladding) to L03 Third Floor.
- Additional privacy to private amenity spaces to Scholarstown House via landscape hedging and also opaque balustrades to balconies of adjoining new build. Modification to balcony positions.
- Alternative façade material (metal cladding) to recessed element which visually breaks up the building massing when viewed from northeast (please refer to 3D View – Northeast).

Details of the revised design were submitted on foot of the RFI to the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer for consideration and the undersigned felt that the revisions would lessen the overall visual impact and provide for an improved setting. It was also felt that the use of different finishes and materials as suggested would support a variation of design and overall visual impact.

The massing of the proposed apartment building has been reduced and there are substantive changes to elevation design and materiality. In particular, it is proposed to utilise corrugated sheeting as cladding on elements of the new build to evoke the memory of the twentieth-century outbuildings that are to be demolished. The massing of new build elements will improve the backdrop and setting for Scholarstown House as the visual impact is somewhat reduced.

The recess of the block form to the junction of the 3-storey block and 4-storey block in combination with a change of façade material, supports a visual break offering the view of separate block forms. The location of this recess and materiality change also aligns with the front elevation of the Protected Structure which provides alignment and respect of the existing buildings within the central composition. The reduction in the overall massing of the proposed apartment buildings is welcomed, however given the density proposed on the site within the curtilage of a Protected Structure the overall development has to deliver an exemplar design in form and materiality.

AI Request 2 (e)

As previously advised during pre-planning discussions the block form needs to be broken up in different heights and different treatments with some separation between to provide separate block forms. The outbuildings should be considered with regard to adaptive reuse and reflecting the outbuildings in the design ethos of one or two blocks or using the original footprint to provide additional new building where the existing corrugated shed is located. The elevational treatment and materiality should reflect a more rural and agricultural style of building type that would connect visually to the existing protected structure and provide high quality design and character to the site.

Response:

In response to Item 2(e) a number of design changes have been presented in order to break up the built form of the proposed apartment block. The changes include a variety of material finishes to provide different façade elements which offers the visual connection from new to old. The design element and finish to reflect the corrugated iron cladding of the old agricultural buildings in order to create a design response that reflects the former use.

As part of the response to RFI a report from the Architects has been submitted detailing the design response which includes elevation treatment as part of the materiality revisions in order to lessen the overall visual impact within the site. It is stated that “the Form of the new building evolves in response to the existing setting, location, orientation and form/pitched roof of Scholarstown House while also creating a reference to the pitched roofs of the vernacular outbuildings”.

Conclusion

It is considered that the response to the above Items 2a-2e has addressed the concerns raised as part of the initial assessment for the proposed development. It is felt that the revised amendments and reconfiguration to the floor plan of Scholarstown House, Protected Structure RPS Ref. 322 allows for a more minimal approach and retention of original features.

The new development within the curtilage has been revised and due to amended design elements and reduction in mass, the overall visual impact has been reduced particularly in relation to the new block to the rear of the Protected Structure which provides the backdrop to the existing building and ultimately provides a new element and setting. The amended design and revisions allow for more considered elevation treatments.

It is felt that more could be achieved in relation to the materiality in providing an exemplar and high quality development. The contemporary use of more traditional materials as proposed in the use of metal cladding to reflect the corrugated iron of the outbuildings is a welcomed addition. The undersigned would welcome further exploration in relation to the final choice for materials and finishes perhaps looking at how different treatment and design elements could be introduced to reinforce best practice placemaking principles by re-imagining the use of traditional materials through contemporary design.

Recommendation

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

- The proposed development shall be carried out in accordance with the details and particulars provided in the Method Statement and Schedule of Works (Submitted in response to RFI) as part of an overall Conservation Strategy which should include any necessary repairs and maintenance work. Works shall be carried out adhering to best conservation practice and principles.

Reason: Ensuring works are carried out in accordance with the details provided adhering to best practice and conservation principles.

- A suitably qualified Conservation Architect or Conservation Professional with proven expertise and experience in the area of Architectural Conservation should continue to be engaged to supervise and oversee the proposed works to the existing Protected Structure (Scholarstown House, RPS Ref. 322), ensuring that all conditions relating to the architectural conservation and status of the existing building are addressed and submitted for agreement with the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer as set out below.

South Dublin County Councils Architectural Conservation Officer should be informed when works commenced and should be provided with a final Work Programme in order to facilitate site inspections.

Reason: To ensure the engagement of a suitably qualified conservation architect to advise and oversee the works in accordance with best practice.

- The proposed works including refurbishment, repairs and interventions to the Protected Structure (Scholarstown House, RPS Ref. 322) shall be carried out in accordance with the particulars as detailed in the Method Statement and Schedule of Works submitted as part of the formal response to RFI. All works should be carried out in accordance with good conservation practice and principles ensuring minimal intervention and no damage or risk to the original built fabric.
 - Those areas being affected by new opes or widening of new opes/interventions or new additions should be made good using the appropriate materials and methods.
 - A maintenance programme should be submitted detailing on-going maintenance in highlighting areas of repair and maintenance to include roof, roof valley and rainwater goods. Long-term access to the roof/valley should be considered and detailed in the compliance with this condition.

Reason: To ensure works and long-term maintenance to the Protected Structure are carried out according to good conservation practice and principles, using traditional methods and materials.

- Safety measures should be put in place during the proposed works on site. A Safety Statement should be provided detailing how the existing structures will be protected during demolition works and site clearance/excavation and construction. Details shall include how the Protected Structure and original architectural features and fixtures will be protected during works. Details should also be included as to how the site will be accessed during the works and location of site set up etc.

A safety statement should be submitted for written agreement with the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer prior to the commencement of development. 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 on site.

Reason: To ensure the Protected Structure and all associated features are being safeguarded during the proposed development and appropriate safety measures are put in place to prevent any possible damage.

- A Schedule of Materials and Finishes should be provided for the proposed new building within the curtilage of the Protected Structure prior to commencing of development. Details should be provided for approval and agreement by submitting the necessary images and samples of the final materials and finishes for all elements.

Although the elevation treatment has been improved to provide more variety and to reflect the former agricultural use of the site in association with Scholarstown House, it is considered that some further consideration should be given to expanding this design element and the final colour finish of materials throughout the new apartment block. It is felt that the materiality is a very important element of this development in justifying the proposed density and therefore a high quality, exemplar development is required.

Final details of all materials and finishes are required including additional elements and design features to go further to provide variety and high quality finish. Images and sample materials should be included as part of the Schedule of Materials and compliance with this condition.

Reason: To ensure the materials and finishes for new development within the curtilage of a Protected Structure are appropriate in terms of finish and colour and are of a high quality, delivering the design ethos proposed.

- The new development within the curtilage has been revised and due to amended design elements and reduction in mass the overall visual impact has been reduced particularly in relation to the new block to the rear of the Protected Structure, which provides the backdrop to the existing building and ultimately provides a new element and setting. The amended design and revisions allow for more considered elevation treatments.

However, it is felt that more could be achieved in relation to the materiality in providing an exemplar and high quality development. The contemporary use of more traditional materials as proposed in the use of metal cladding to reflect the corrugated iron of the outbuildings is a welcomed addition. The Councils Architectural Conservation Officer would welcome further exploration in relation to the final choice for materials and finishes perhaps looking at how different treatment and design elements could be introduced to reinforce best practice placemaking principles by re-imaging the use of traditional materials through contemporary design. Details should be submitted as part of the overall Material Schedule and final design elements for elevation treatments for the proposed apartment block.

Reason: To ensure the final choice of materials and finishes and design elements result in a high quality exemplar development within the curtilage of a Protected Structure.

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

Irenie McLoughlin
Architectural Conservation Officer

Date: 19th May 2023