

The Convent and Schools, Ballyhaunis.

Mayo County Council

Basis of Design Report

for

A Community Hub

at

the former St Joseph's School, Bridge
Street, Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo

6th Oct 2021

Reddy Architecture + Urbanism

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is intended to assist Mayo County Council in its understanding of the key design principles and considerations applied to the proposed development.

The issues addressed have been provided to ensure a sustainable and integrated development proposal that has due regard to best practice Architecture, Cultural Heritage and Engineering solutions for this site within the given strategic national and local planning policy context.

Project Brief

Funding has also been received through the Rural Regeneration Development Fund to prepare a design brief for the former convent school on Abbey Street for its redevelopment for community use as a workspace hub and to support local enterprise.

The design brief also includes a new public plaza adjoining the community hub building and a new pedestrian bridge connecting the plaza to the public swimming pool. Restoration of the existing riverside walk along the River Dalgan, the creation of a new circular walking route through the town and provision of a new cover and heating facilities at the public outdoor swimming pool have greatly improved the amenity offering of the town.



Former St. Joseph's National School – Current State

2.0 CONTEXT AND LOCATION

The Ballyhaunis Community Vision is a masterplan for the centre of Ballyhaunis, County Mayo (pop. 2,338; 2016 census), a multi-cultural settlement approximately 17km east-north-east of Claremorris, 10km from Knock Marian Shrine, 25km from Ireland West Airport Knock, and 6km west of the Roscommon county border.

Distinguishing features of the town, aside from its 19th century buildings along four main streets, include the Augustinian Friary founded in 1348 AD, the first purpose-built Mosque in Ireland, St. Patrick's Church on Upper Main St, with stained glass windows made by Joshua Clarke, the father of Harry Clarke. The town, which now lies on the Dublin-Westport railway line, is thought to have grown up around the Augustinian Friary.

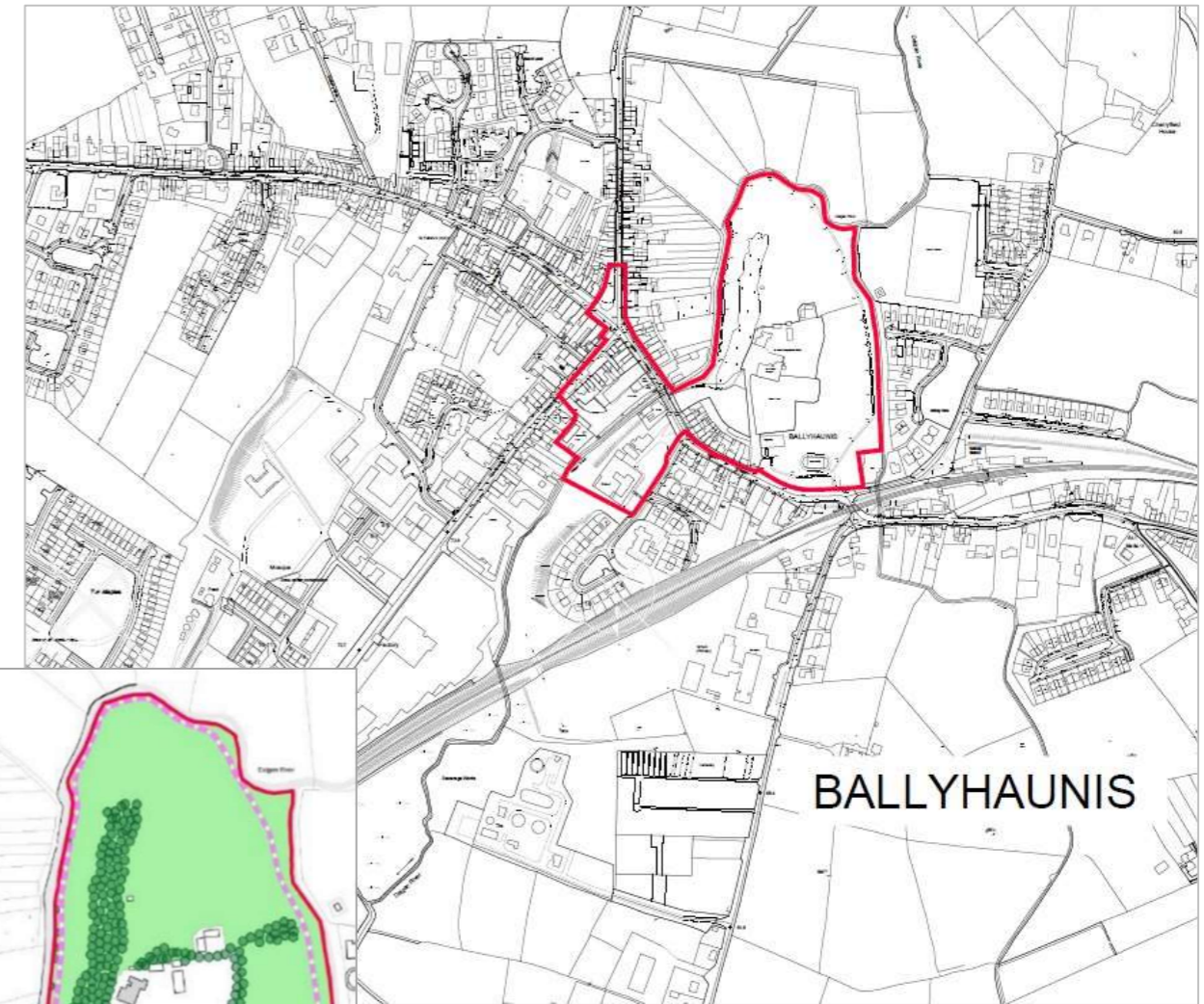
The Mayo County Development Plan 2014–2020 identifies the importance of Ballyhaunis as a service town for a wide agricultural hinterland in East Mayo and into County Roscommon. The aim of the Ballyhaunis Community Vision is to deliver a range of actions that will drive sustainable economic growth and achieve higher levels of community wellbeing and employment. Towards these aims, the project entails a range of actions designed to:

- Support local business start-ups and increase employment and job creation opportunities Raise the profile of the town as an exemplar for community development and integration
- Enhance the physical setting and attractiveness of Ballyhaunis for residents, visitors, and investors Improve accessibility and safety within the town centre for walkers, cyclists, and people with disabilities Decrease levels of town centre dereliction and decay

These will be addressed through the delivery of the following project actions:

- Redevelopment of the former convent school at Abbey Street, now Local Authority owned, to provide for a new hub for community use, workspace facility and social enterprise development
- Creation of a new public plaza adjoining the community hub building plus new pedestrian bridge connecting the plaza to the public swimming pool
- Restoration of the existing riverside walk along the river Dalgan
- Creation of a new circular walking route through the town connecting the town centre, the direct provision centre, the public swimming pool, the friary grounds loop-walk, the MUGA pitch, and the children's playground
- Provision of a new cover and heating facilities to the existing public outdoor swimming pool.

As a first phase in delivering the above long-term project actions, Mayo Co Council now seeks a redevelopment of the former school at Abbey Street into a new Community Hub, a design for the Public Plaza adjoining the Centre and also to examine the potential for a new pedestrian bridge connecting the public swimming pool with this new development.



Site Location Plan, Mayo Co Co Ballyhaunis Masterplan Vision



Extract Ballyhaunis Masterplan Vision



Map Extract – Former School in context

2.1 CONTEXT AND LOCATION

SITE LOCATION

The former St Joseph’s School is a 3 storey imposing structure which forms part of a cluster of former institutional buildings including St Joseph’s Convent on a large site in the centre of the town.

The buildings have been vacant since 2012 and have become derelict. This has a negative effect on the area at the centre of the town.

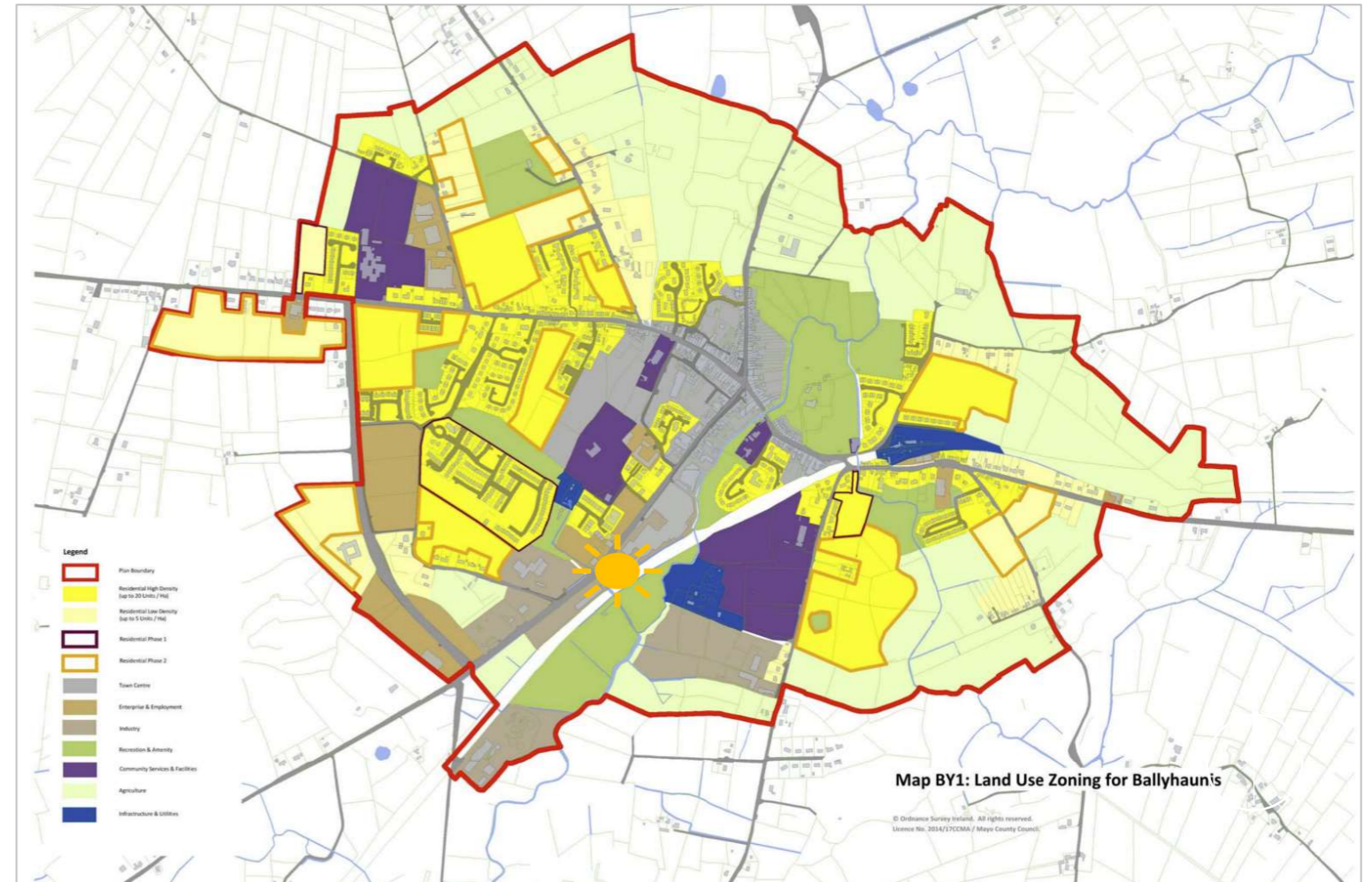
SITE ZONING

Community Services and Facilities

“To consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area, and to identify, reinforce, strengthen and protect its civic design character and dignity. The primary purpose of this use zone is to sustain life within the centre of the city through intensive mixed-use development (see also Chapters 6, 7, and 16 for policies, objectives and standards)”.

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Land Use Zoning Map Mayo County Council



Land Use Zoning Extract

2.2 SITE ANALYSIS

HERITAGE CONTEXT

The School building is a fine example of vernacular institutional school architecture. The topographical relationship and the tiered nature of the external spaces essentially split play areas to the south and south west of the building.

The school had been built in the same style as the convent. The limestone used in the building was quarried locally in Hollymount and Hazel Hill. The woodwork in the interior is mainly pitch pine. Early images indicate a roofscape complimented by chimney breasts and a double floor of semi-circular upper profiled windows.

The building was renovated in 1960, with central heating and only one chimney remains from the earlier period. The upper floor now has rectangular window profiles. Some extracts and relevant descriptions from Annagh Magazine 1978 and 1990 below:

Great indeed was the joy of the sisters when their beautiful new school was ready for occupation. As in the case of the convent local labour was almost exclusively employed. Fr. Canning acted as contractor under the Dublin Architect W.H. Byrne and employed John Charles I-it/man rice as Clerk of Works.

Dr. Douglas Hyde called it "not a school but an academy"..The first Mayo Feis was held in the Convent school Easter Week 15-16 April 1903. Among the notabilities who gathered were: Douglas Hyde, President of the Gaelic League who delivered an address and announced the names of the prizewinners each night; Padraig Pearse who dealt with the subject editorially in "An Claidheamh Soluis";

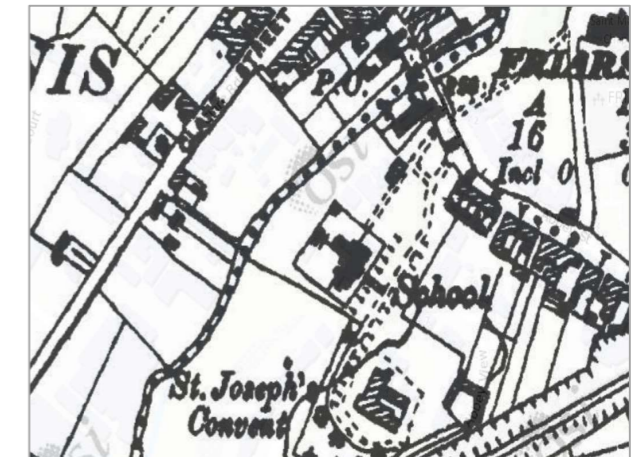
Around 1960 the condition of the National School was a cause of great anxiety. There was dampness and dryrot. in some of the woodwork, ceilings were very high and parts of the walls were in bad condition. The only source of heat was the open fire. The toilets for children were in a separate building from the School. They were flush toilets but in bad weather it was very unpleasant for children going out in the rain. The playground was in a very poor condition, indeed, it was not fit for children to play in. Because of these conditions the Dept. of Education agreed to renovate the old school. Mr. Boyd Barrett, Chief School's Architect from the Office of Public Works, in consultation with Fr. Rushe and the Sisters, re-designed the old national school.

The building is captured on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage under the number 31213015 and is listed as of regional importance. The building description refers to the aspects of particular interest as follows:

Detached seven-bay two-storey national school, designed 1897; begun 1899; dated 1901, opened 1901; extant 1911, on a cruciform plan centred on single-bay full-height gabled breakfront with single-bay (three-bay deep) two-storey over part raised basement central return (north-west).



View of School (former outbuildings noted as removed in 1945)



Historic Map circa 1940



View of Convent and School Circa 1940

2.3 SITE ANALYSIS

HERITAGE CONTEXT

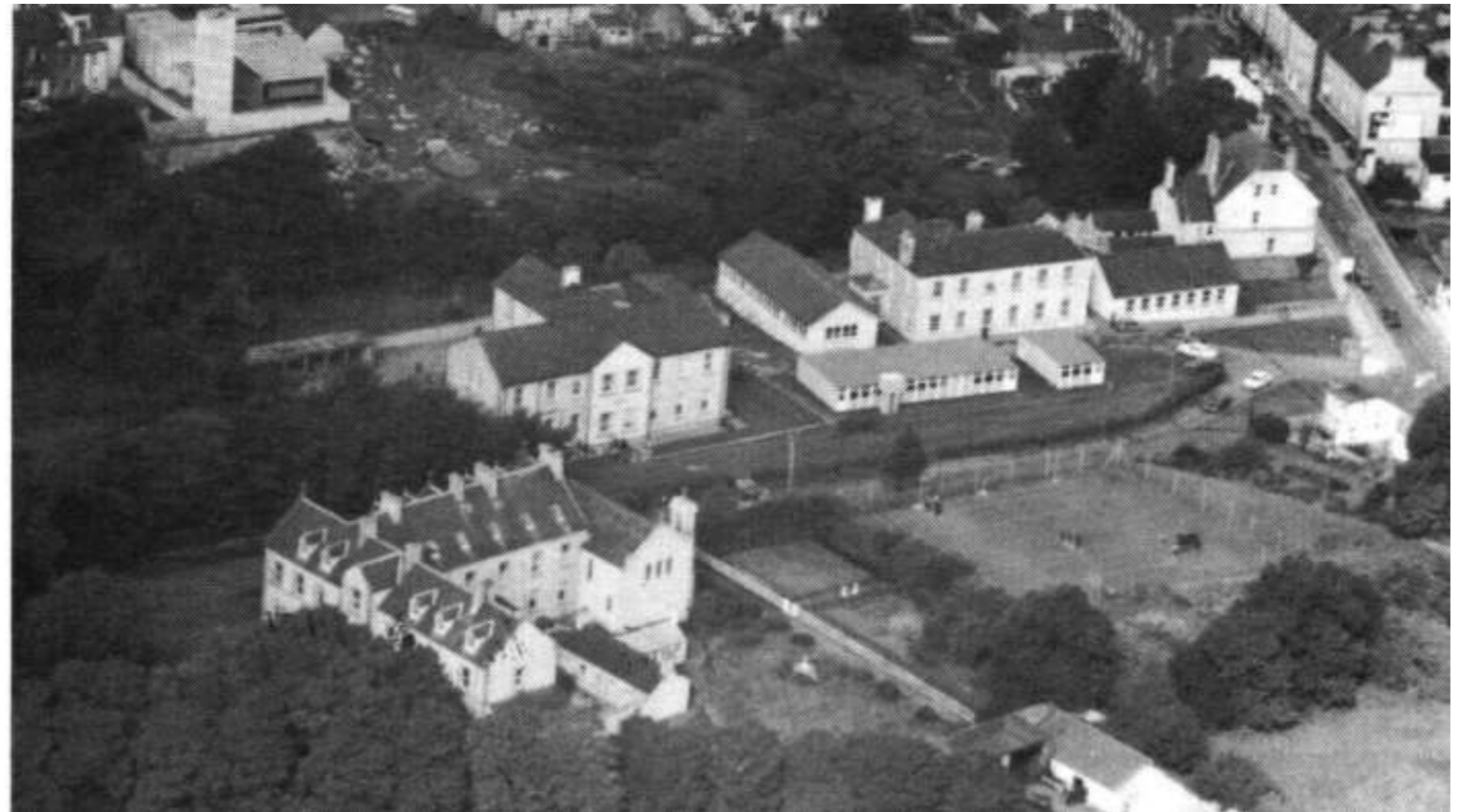
National Inventory of Architectural Heritage contd.

Pitched slate roof on a cruciform plan centred on pitched (gabled) slate roof with clay ridge tiles, coping to gables on drag edged dragged cut-limestone thumbnail beaded kneelers, drag edged rock faced limestone ashlar chimney stack (north-west) having cut-limestone stepped capping supporting terracotta pots, and cast-iron rainwater goods on timber eaves boards on box eaves retaining cast-iron downpipes.

Roughcast walls on dragged cut-limestone chamfered cushion course on roughcast plinth with drag edged dragged cut-limestone quoins to corners centred on rusticated cut-limestone date stone ("1901"; "1964"). Camber (ground floor) or square-headed (first floor) window openings centred on paired square-headed window openings in tripartite arrangement with concrete sills, and concealed dressings framing six-over-six timber sash windows centred on six-over-six timber sash windows having two-over-two sidelights.

The siting of the school and its attendant grounds are in a prominent location at the centre of the town. The Convent and Abbey, located either side of Bridge Street at a higher topographical level (above the school building) suggests a hierarchy of use typical of the prominence of religious and institutional buildings of the period. Such buildings are a critical part of the local and national heritage of our towns, despite the changing context of their status.

As the more modern facility at Abbeyquarter (National School expanded), St Joseph's became unfit for its intended purpose and became vacant in 2012. Formerly a hive of activity at the town centre, it is now in danger of becoming a derelict structure without intervention.



Aerial View dated 1970



Current condition (Aug 2021)

2.4 SITE ANALYSIS

HERITAGE CONTEXT

The EIAH reference correctly notes the context of the building to the town and states that it is an integral component of the built heritage of Ballyhaunis. It also refers to the grouping of buildings of which it is an element, including the convent and the national school which form an important cluster of structures of heritage value at the centre of the town.

“A national school erected to a design (1897) by William Henry Byrne (1844-1917) of Suffolk Street, Dublin (IAA), and with the financial assistance of a bequest from Miss Elizabeth Taafe of Roscommon (Daly 1978, 20), representing an integral component of the built heritage of Ballyhaunis.....a period of apparent neglect notwithstanding, the elementary form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the historic or original fabric, thereby upholding the character or integrity of a national school forming part of a neat self-contained group alongside an adjacent secondary school (see 31213016) and the opposing Saint Joseph’s Convent of Mercy (see 31213014) with the resulting ensemble making a pleasing visual statement in Abbey Street”.

Like all rural towns of its scale, Ballyhaunis is facing challenges, exacerbated by the run down visual appearance of the convent lands and St Joseph’s adjacent the retail core of the town.

Therefore, any proposals to reinstate the structure and refurbish the building as an enterprise and innovation hub needs also to comprehensively cater for the external public realm and immediate context of the school to re invigorate the lands as an amenity for the town and its community.

BUILDING CONDITION

The plan of the school is a simple cruciform shape, with the ground floor accommodating 4 classrooms, 2 stairwells and a small toilet block.

The upper floor also houses 4 classrooms with the roof trusses visible as part of the primary structure of the building. A part lower level houses plant areas.

All windows are intact but boarded up due to vandalism. The roof and main rainwater systems are in reasonable condition with little evidence of water penetration.

The main staircase is in good condition with oak balustrade and handrails a significant feature of the building interior.



View of Former School from Bridge Street (Current State)



EXISTING NORTH -WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



EXISTING NORTH-EST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200

2.5 PROPOSALS

Ground Floor and First Floor – Proposed Works

The removal of non-load bearing internal walls/partitions, introduction of limited light-weight glass partitions with glazed doors and framing (see drawings for details of proposals). Introduction of a small glazed extension to the North Elevation to house a passenger lift and new building access.

Conservation Principles

These proposed works (see above) form a strategy to continue to allow this building to provide appropriate facilities as a Community Hub so that the building can be put to continued sustainable use by the local community. There is no effect or impact to any period detail including the plasterwork and fabric of the building planned under the proposal. The impact of these works is neutral, imperceptible and long term. The works will be carried out under the direction of Reddy A+U who will ensure that best conservation practice will be adhered to in the carrying out of the works.

Impact of the Works

The impact of these works is neutral, imperceptible and long term. The works proposed ensure the long term sustainability of the building by removing non-structural internal elements and using modern transparent glazing in lieu with no impact to the existing fabric and enable ongoing usage by minor refurbishment works.

Conservation Philosophy

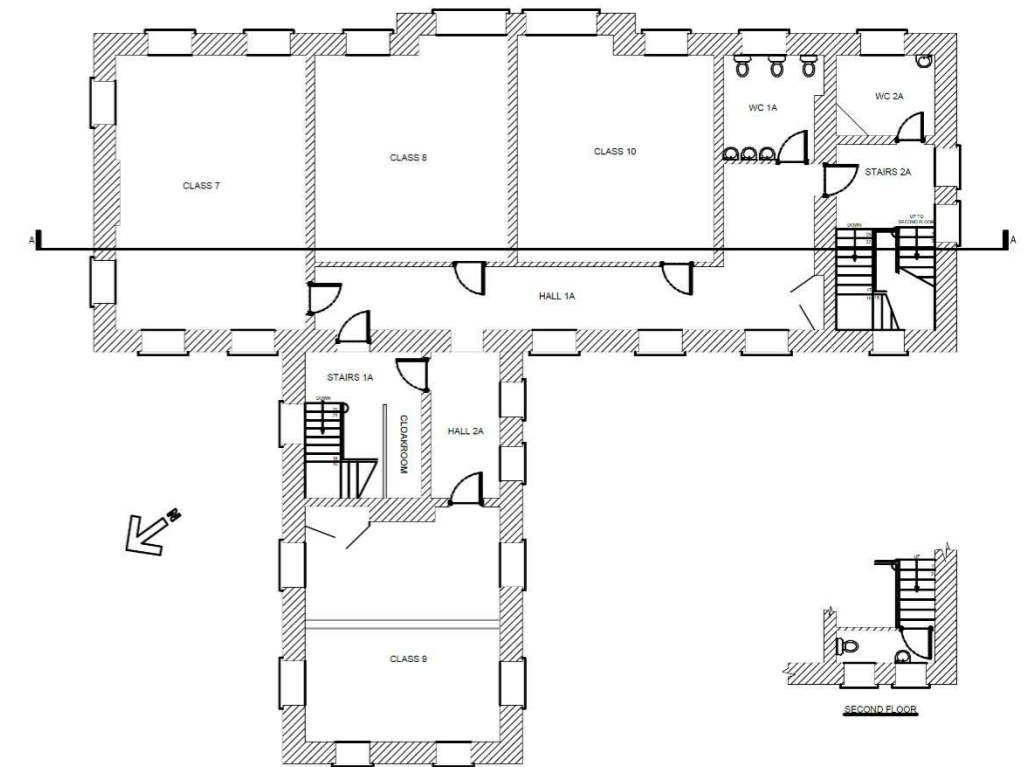
The proposed work will be carried out in accordance with the principles of the Venice and Burra Charters (COMOS 1979, as amended in 1981, 1988 and 1999). All features and materials of importance to maintain the structures character will be retained including relevant features of all ages. It should always be the intent to restrict all interventions to the minimum that is consistent with the established philosophy and the appropriate use, reuse and continued survival of the building.

The philosophy of doing as little as possible and as much as necessary applies here. It is the objective to carry out repairs rather than replace materials. In relation to any new work required to the structure the use of processes that are reversible will be used. Repairs will be carried out without an attempt to disguise or artificial ageing and new repairs shall be discernable without detracting from the structure. It is intended that unsatisfactory alterations that disfigure earlier work of greater merit should be reversed where feasible.

It is an objective that the highest conservation standards will apply to the project. As a general principle all of the original material as possible is to be retained and reused in its present location. Only appropriate materials and methods of construction and contemporary methods or materials will be used where alternatives do not exist.



Window Detail (EIAH Reference)



St Joseph's National School – Floor Plan Existing



North Elevation (Current State)



South Elevation (Current State)

3.0 PROPOSALS

DESIGN CONCEPT

There have been a number of influences on the emerging design proposals which centred around the following design drivers:

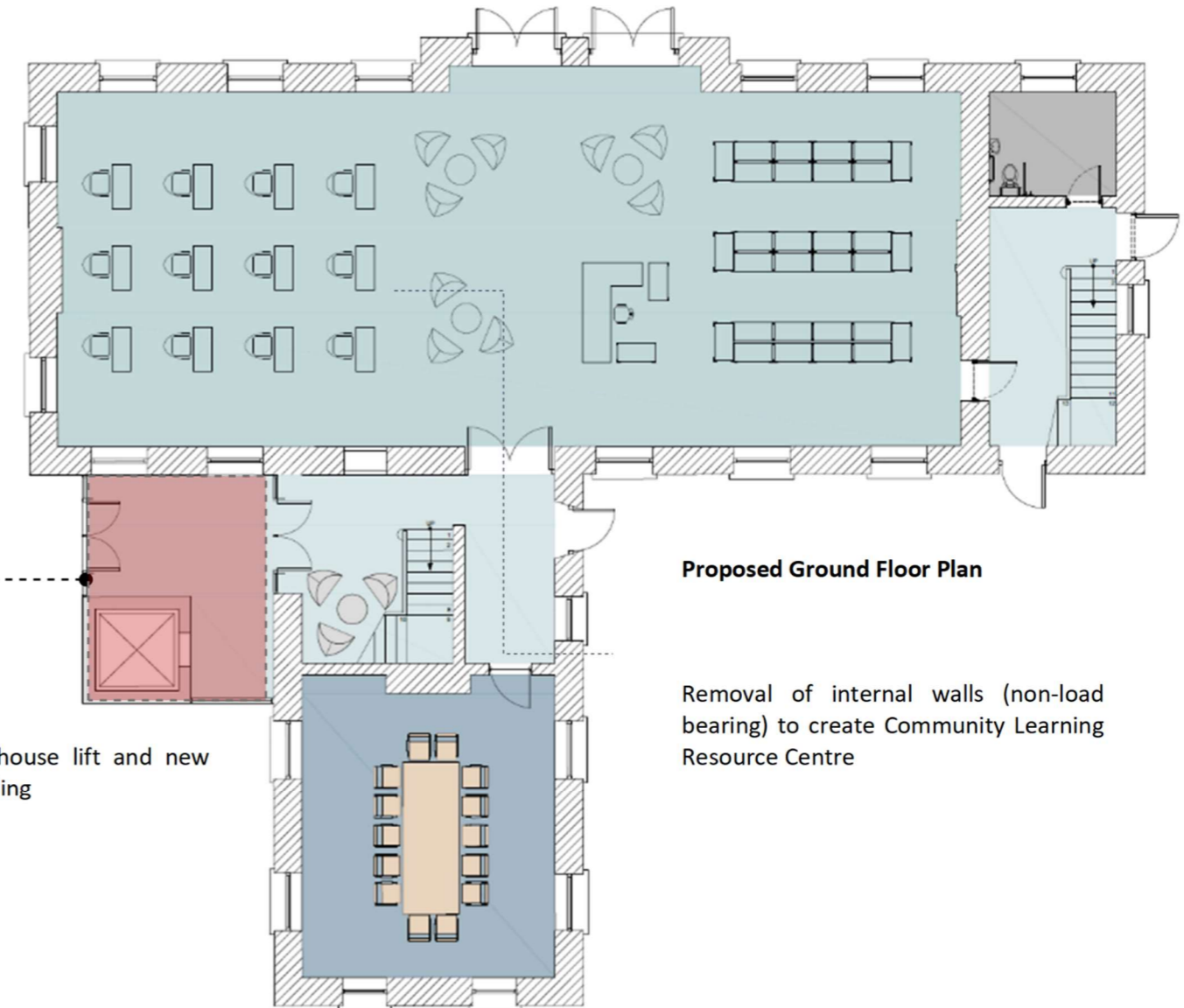
- an intervention to the building of an extension housing a new entrance and passenger lift which would add a “light box” effect to the building
- the Introduction of accessible and usable public realm to activate the immediate area
- connect the lands back to the community with permeable connections and physical access

A universal access passenger lift and new reception area will be added with a lightweight glazed effect to ensure there is a clear differentiation between the existing and the new.

The use of curtain all glazing, glazed spandrel panels and exposed structure internally will ensure the scheme is a modern and exciting addition to the existing building. A similar intervention has been the Guinness Enterprise Centre which utilises similar architectural language to provide an authentic and meaningful addition to this busy enterprise hub.

Rainwater goods and the original roof will be the subject of repair and renewal works. The windows will be reviewed, and appropriate works identified including reglazing and re purposing of the weights, sashes and the cills/joinery.

The electrical and environmental controls will be renewed and repaired to ensure minimal intervention whilst allowing for rewiring, replumbing and replacement of obsolete or damaged fabric and services.



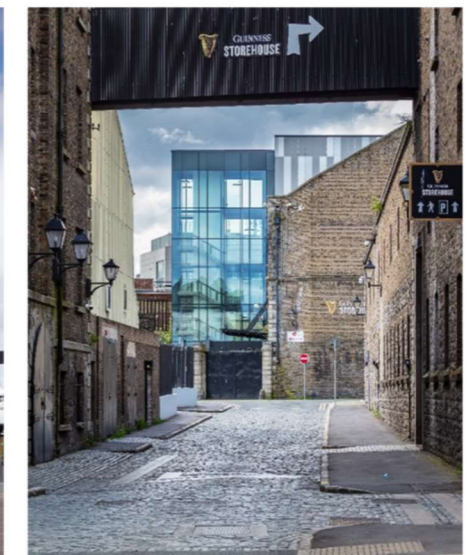
Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Removal of internal walls (non-load bearing) to create Community Learning Resource Centre

Extension to house lift and new access to building

Benchmarking

Guinness Enterprise Centre, Dublin 8



4.0 SITE ANALYSIS

DESIGN CONCEPT

Topography plays an important part in the landscape around the former school.

1. The lower areas (southwest) are hard surfaces – tarmacadamed areas with an adjoining single level pavilion – purpose built shelters, intended to cater for children during inclement weather – now somewhat redundant in the context of the enterprise usage. It is proposed to repurpose this lower level with a basketball and multi-purpose play area for sports.
2. At the intermediate level, a tiered grassed seating area is proposed, to integrate the lower play area with the building, its new entrance whilst simultaneously providing an inviting aspect to the proposed new plaza area which in future could connect with the pedestrian bridge which will cross the river from the swimming pool.
3. An amphitheatre carved out of the hill, with low level seating is proposed for the foremost area to the east of the former school, facing onto Bridge Street and providing an informal play area and contemplative zone for the community.

It is proposed that by integrating the landscape areas externally with the proposed Community Hub, that it will attract a more sustainable use of the lands, encouraging young and old alike to visit the grounds, drawing activity and regenerating the area with increased footfall, movement and activation.

It's intended that this would be a catalyst for the area, to foster collaboration, industry and community to integrate and work together to manage and support the area.

The landscaping works will remove the low boundary stone wall to Bridge Street, realign the car parking spaces from an end on to a side on arrangement thereby widening the footpath and removing any barriers to access to the former school lands.

5 new car parking spaces and additional bicycle stands will be created to activate further the public realm and service the facility.

Proposed amphitheatre 1



Proposed tiered landscape 2



Site Plan with access and permeability connections to town

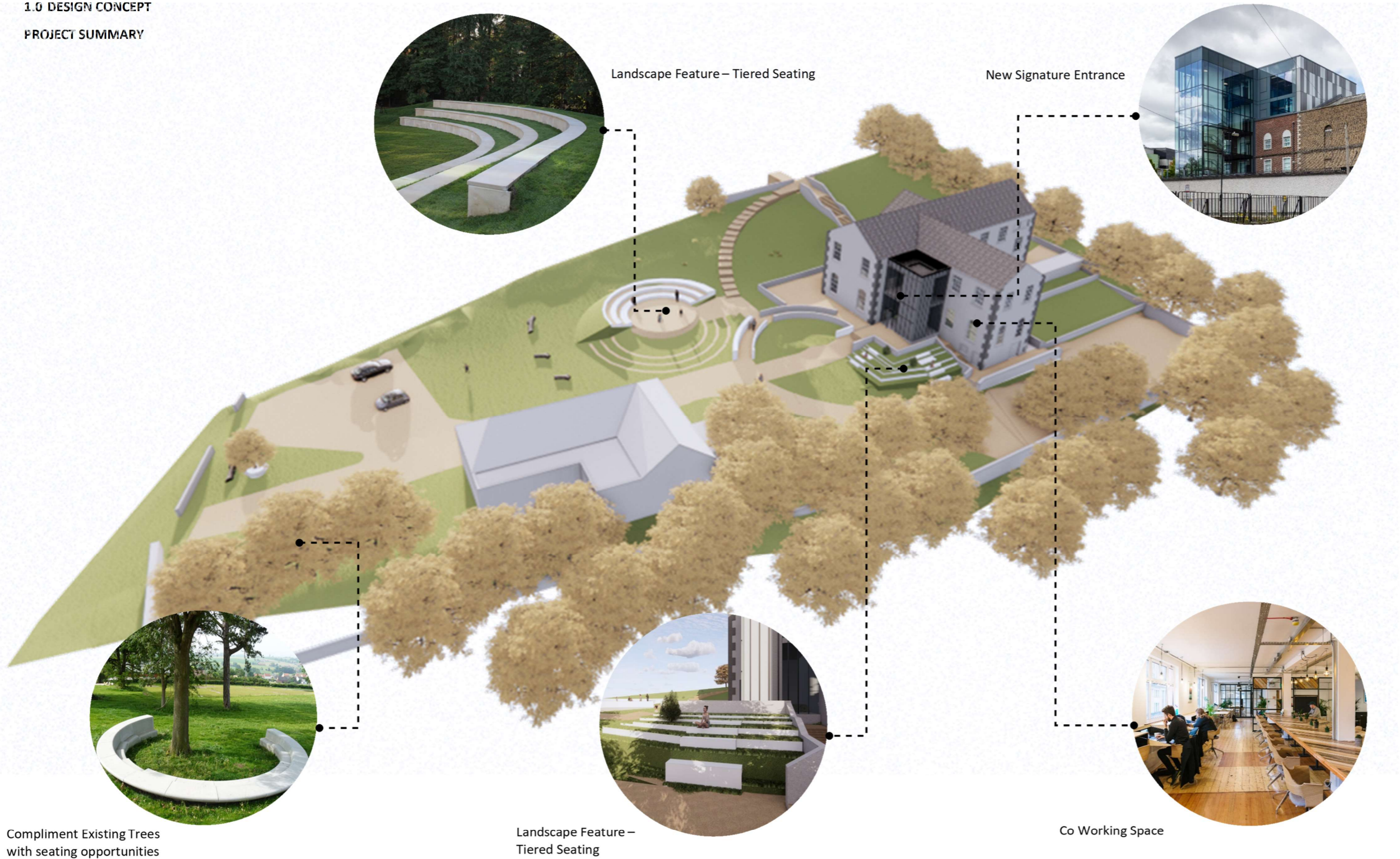
3

Proposed Play Area



1.0 DESIGN CONCEPT

PROJECT SUMMARY



Compliment Existing Trees with seating opportunities

Landscape Feature – Tiered Seating

Co Working Space

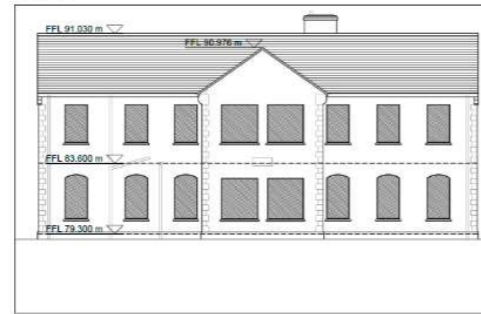
Existing Building Survey Information



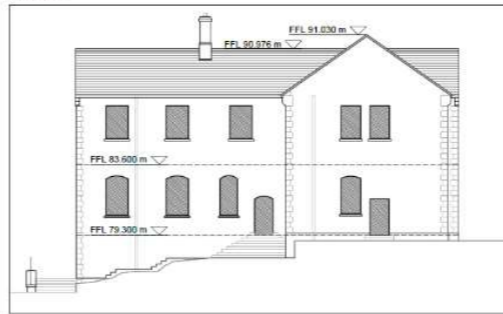
EXISTING NORTH -WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



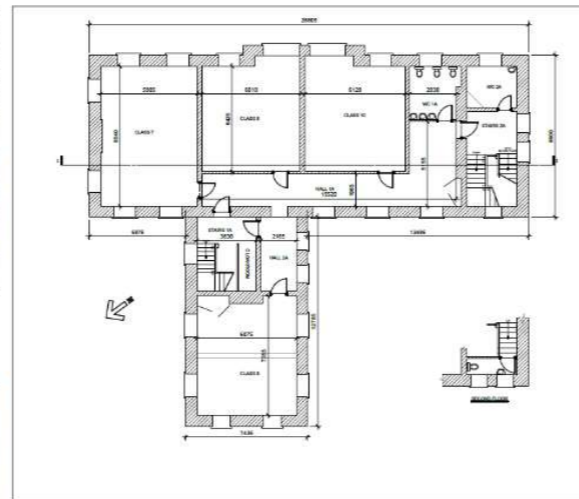
EXISTING NORTH-EST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



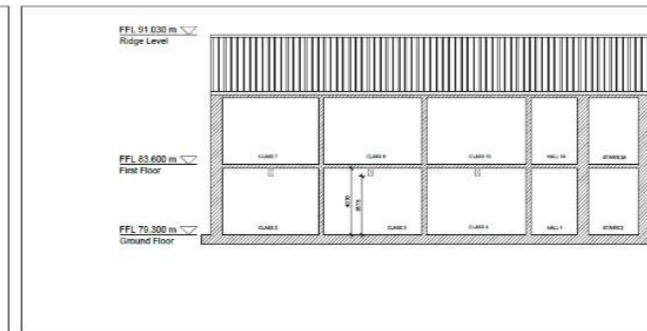
EXISTING SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



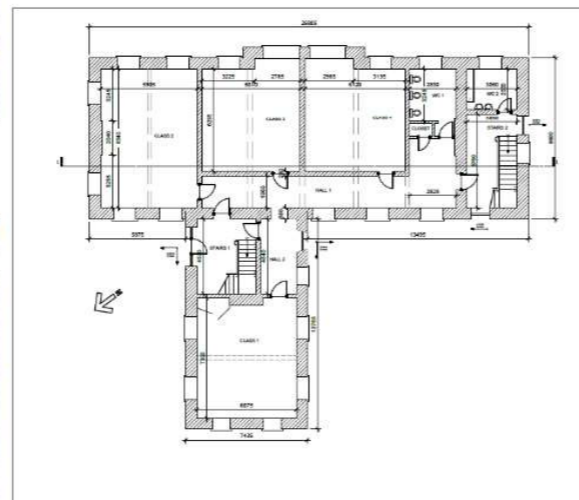
EXISTING SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



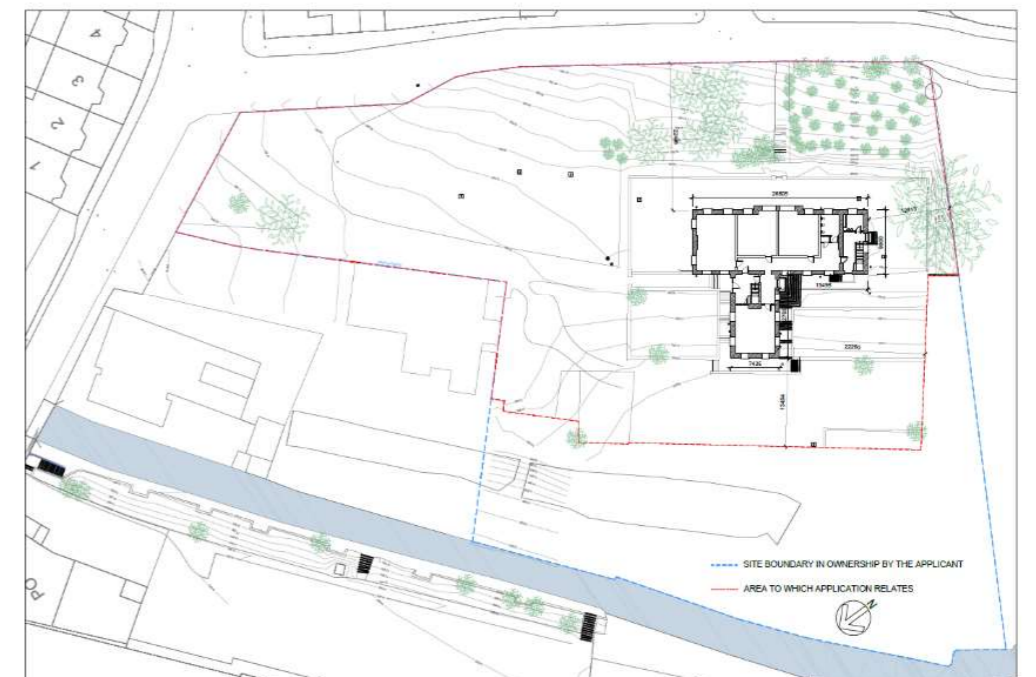
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:200



EXISTING SECTION A-A
SCALE 1:200



EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:200



EXISTING SITE PLAN
SCALE 1:500

Proposed Works – Elevations/Plans

O.S. Data from O.S. Sheet Numbers 2215-02, 2215-03, 2215-A
 TM CO-ORDINATES OF SITE IS: 562658, Y: 779400
 Ordnance Survey Ireland, Licence No: AS-052221
 Ordnance Survey Ireland, Government of Ireland
 All levels are given in metres and are referred to
 O.S. Datum Mean Irish Co. Geoidal (1975) Adjustment

--- BALLYHAUNIS COMMUNITY VISION SITE BOUNDARY
--- SITE BOUNDARY IN OWNERSHIP BY THE APPLICANT
--- AREA TO WHICH APPLICATION RELATES
--- PROPOSED EXTENSION
--- EXISTING WALLS/DOORS TO BE DEMOLISHED/REMOVED



PROPOSED SITE SECTION B-B
SCALE 1:200



PROPOSED SITE SECTION A-A
SCALE 1:200

- Works / Finishes Legend**
1. New Aluminium glazing
 2. Painted render to elevation to match existing
 3. Repair works to gutters and rainwater goods
 4. Refurbish/replace existing windows to match existing
 5. Repair and renew to roof as required
 6. Refurbish/replace existing hardwood door



PROPOSED NORTH -WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



PROPOSED SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



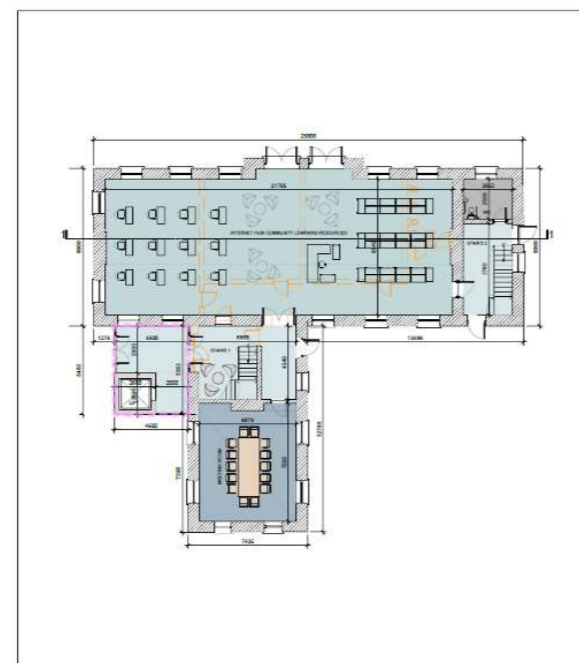
PROPOSED SECTION 1-1
SCALE 1:200



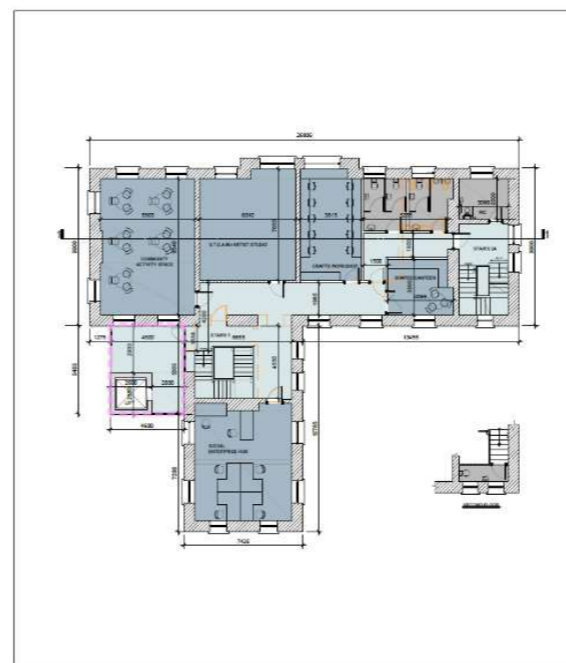
PROPOSED NORTH-EAST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



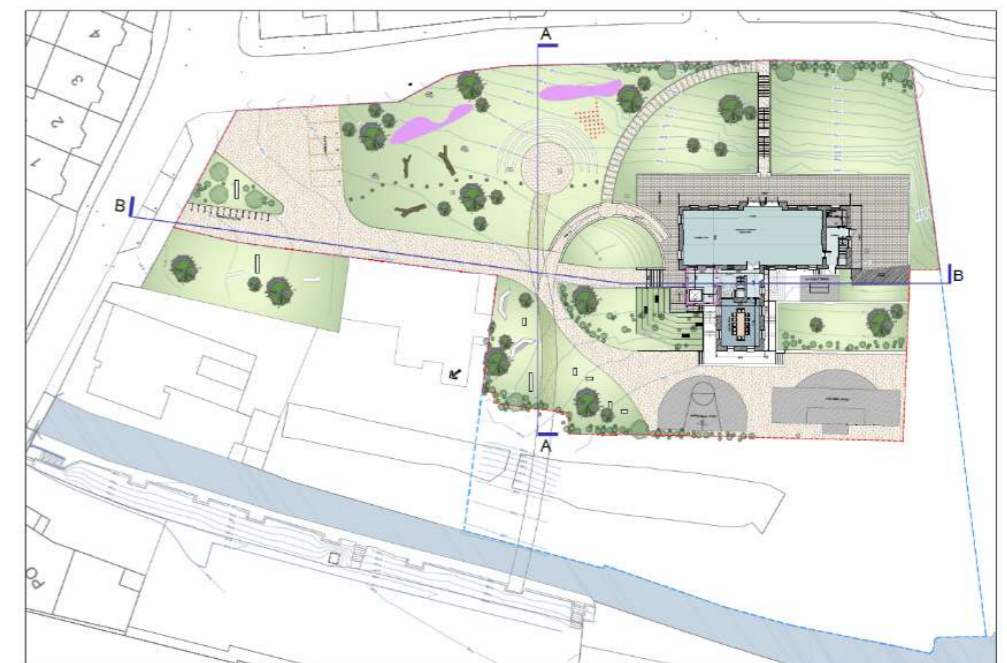
PROPOSED SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:200



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:200



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:200



PROPOSED SITE PLAN
SCALE 1:500

Site Sections (Proposed)



PROPOSED SITE SECTION B-B
SCALE 1:200



PROPOSED SITE SECTION A-A
SCALE 1:200

View 1 – Proposed Works



View 2 – Proposed Works



