

NAAS TOWN HALL (A PROTECTED STRUCTURE)

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE TO TOWN LIBRARY, CONSTRUCTION OF EXTENSIONS, INTERNAL ALTERATIONS, REVISED LANDSCAPING, AND SIGNAGE

PLANNING REPORT



INTRODUCTION

The Town Hall in Naas is “a dramatic and imposing large-scale building that has a prominent impact fronting onto Main Street North” (NIAH). Originally built as a gaol building in 1796, it is a Protected Structure listed in the Kildare County Development Plan and is rated as of National Importance in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (ref. 11814041). It is one of the earliest civic buildings in the locality, having been built by Naas Town Commissioners in 1796, on the site of an earlier medieval castle.

The 3-storey building was remodelled in 1904 in Italianate Classical style and was used throughout the 20th century as a Town Hall, with the ground floor converted to use as a Carnegie Free Library.

The front façade is artistically as well as architecturally a showpiece, with extravagant ornamentation of the external render, which is of very high quality. The building was renovated in 1990, with many early or original features retained, from early twentieth-century timber casement fenestration, a cast-iron clock of unusual profile, early multi-pane timber fenestration to the rear elevation and the slate roof, with cast-iron rainwater goods.

Following the abolition of Naas Town Council under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the building lost its main function, and has been used for a variety of community uses in the years since, while being maintained by Kildare County Council. The rear yard and outbuildings has been used as a Council depot.

NATIONAL INVENTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE (ref 11814041).

Description

Detached seven-bay three-storey former gaol, built 1796, retaining early fenestration with three-bay three-storey canted advanced entrance bay to centre having single-bay single-storey flat-roofed advanced doorcase to centre, two-bay three-storey gabled flanking and bays, two-bay three-storey side elevations to north-east and to south-west, and three-bay three-storey return to rear to north-west and three-bay three-storey return to rear to north-west. Extensively renovated 1904, with façade remodelled in Italianate Classical style to accommodate use as town hall. Renovated 1905, with right ground floor converted to use as Carnegie Free Library. Renovated c. 1990. Gable-ended (gable-fronted) roofs behind parapet walls with slate. Clay ridge tiles. Rendered chimney stacks. Cut-stone coping to gables. Cast-iron rainwater goods. Replacement render, 1904, to ground floor front (south-east) elevation. Channelled. Painted. Roughcast walls to upper floors. Painted. Rendered dressings including stringcourses, paired pilasters to first floor and moulded surrounds to gables to flanking bays forming open bed pediments with scalloped course. Rendered profiled parapet wall to canted entrance bay on moulded cornice with clock on a triangular plan, recessed panels, inscribed date stone and moulded coping. Replacement roughcast, c 1990, to remainder. Unpainted. Cut-stone dressings to gables forming open bed pediments. Segmental-headed openings to ground floor. Rendered sills. Round-headed openings to first floor. Rendered sills and surrounds. Round-headed window openings to top floor in tripartite arrangement in round-headed recessed panels (continuing down to first floor). Rendered sills and surrounds. Paired round-headed window openings to top floor canted entrance bay. Rendered sills and surrounds. Timber casement windows to all openings. Square-headed openings to remainder. Stone sills. 2/2 and 6/6 timber sash windows. Segmental-headed door opening. Rendered advanced doorcase with stringcourse, pierced frieze and moulded rendered cornice. Glazed timber panelled doors. Road fronted. Tarmacadam footpath to front.

Appraisal

Naas Town Hall is a dramatic and imposing large-scale building that has a prominent impact fronting on to Main Street North. The building is of considerable social and historical importance for its original use as a gaol (built by the Naas Town Commission) – thereby one of the earliest civic buildings in the locality – and its subsequent conversion to use as a Town Hall (by Naas Corporation), with a Carnegie Free Library incorporated in the early twentieth century. The front (south-east) elevation, while symmetrically-planned with graceful proportions, is a riot of ornamentation, and the quality of decorative render work is exceptionally high – the building is presented as an artistic, as well as architectural, piece. Many early or original features and materials are retained throughout,

including early twentieth-century timber casement fenestration, a cast-iron clock of unusual profile, early multi-pane timber sash fenestration to the staid rear (north-west) elevation, together with a slate roof having cast-iron rainwater goods. The Town Hall is a prominent feature in the locality, most notably on the approach road into the town from the north-east, and forms an attractive foil to the sombre courthouse, of similar scale, located nearby.

NAAS LIBRARY SERVICES

This proposal is for the redevelopment and rejuvenation of Naas Town Hall into a new library and cultural centre in Naas which will meet the needs of one of the fastest growing towns in Ireland. The current library which was developed in the early 90's does not meet the significant requirements of this rapidly expanding population currently recorded in the Municipal District at 49,278. As the population of the County town has grown from 11,000 to 21,393 in 2016, so too has demand on library services. In tandem with the town's population growth, village population on the periphery which this library will serve have also expanded in Sallins, Caragh, Kill and Johnstown.

The new resource will occupy a key landmark town centre site. 2,048 sqm of cultural and community public realm space will be delivered to transform the heart of the County town. This consists of 1,275.3 sqm indoor space and 770 sqm of outdoor public realm space. The outdoor space will incorporate a Market space, outdoor workshop area, public amphitheatre which will accommodate outdoor events, author readings, cinema screenings and theatre performance and a public space which will be an oasis for people to connect and engage.

A key strength of this project lies in the integration of the history and built heritage to transform a historic community space into a modern public realm facility. Indeed, the original market can be traced back to an 1870 Ordinance Survey Map in the same location. This sensitive consideration of history and heritage creates opportunities to further embed a 'sense of place' in the community. Key to the redevelopment is the future role of this new cultural space acting as a driver in lifting the cultural geometry of the town. This new synergy will provide the area with a distinctive new character and will attract increased public interest and cultural tourism.

The schedule of accommodation provides for the modern needs of a thriving and proactive community. Access to digital facilities and technologies has been a key consideration of the plan, to ensure citizens are prepared for a changing world and play their role in the '*successful development of the knowledge economy*' (National Development Plan 2018-2027). The ability of the facility to adapt and respond to future challenges has also been incorporated, to support and underpin the changing economic, social and environmental needs of the town.

Staff experience, user feedback, focus group and community consultations have told us that citizen engagement will only increase in a location purpose-built that can accommodate the community needs of Naas. As one of the key public agencies charged with civic leadership and cultural/community development '*To ensure that County Kildare is an attractive place to live and work*', Kildare County Development Plan, 2017-2023: p239), this development of a key cultural community space in Naas has been identified as a key strategic enabler. The objective to provide an inclusive cultural, economic and educational space to enable social and cultural cohesion is reiterated in '*Ideas Realised – Spreading the Word*', Kildare Library Services Development Plan, 2014 - 2019: p32).

It is now fitting that the library is returning to its former home. With the transformation of this iconic building the vision for Naas is to create a modern, public library with cultural and public spaces in the heart of the historic town, this Library and Cultural Centre will deliver positive impacts through people, place, experience, memory and future sustainability

(LOCAL HISTORY PUBLICATION)

Castle, Jail and Centre of Administration

The Town Hall has been at the hub of civic and community life in Naas for over 130 years. Many are the stirring words which have echoed through its chambers as the town's public representatives locked in argument over matters of municipal policy.

As well as its prime function of meeting chamber and offices for the town council (the Town Commissioners from 1858 and the Urban District Council from 1900), the Town Hall has fulfilled many other roles.

Naas cinemagoers saw their first films in its assembly rooms in the early years of this century (projected by gas light at one time), and many a travelling show and fit-up graced the stage in the assembly room, while upstairs the ballroom's dance-floor reverberated with glittering Hunt Balls and dances run by a wide variety of organisations. It was also the venue for question times and debates. Its side-chambers too were humming with activity – groups such as the League of the Cross, the Catholic Institute and the Naas Workingmen's Club occupied committee rooms fitted out for billiards and card-playing.

The assembly room was the scene of innumerable meetings down the years – political, social and charitable. The local papers reported at length during the land war and the independence struggle on meetings of all shades of opinion.

Many a schoolboy will also remember getting a tooth pulled or an inoculation in the Town Hall.

During the 1950s the Christian Brothers held some of their classes there while it was also occupied by county council staff after their offices had been damaged in the Courthouse fire of 1952.

Mentioning fires, the Town Hall yard accommodated the Naas Fire Brigade up to 1975: the Doyle family, who were the Town Hall caretakers for many years, have been involved with the Naas brigade for generations. The Christmas market was also held in the yard for years – with feathers flying in all directions.

Early History

The Town Hall's previous history was equally varied. It stands on the site of White's Castle, which was pulled down in 1792 to make way for a jail. A detailed plan of the jail exists which shows the yard divided into sections for different classes of prisoner.

The building ceased to be a jail about 1833 but it retained its grim jail façade until the early years of this century.

It did not become a Town Hall until 1858 when it was purchased from the Grand Jury by the Town Commissioners who had been meeting in the Courthouse since their formation in 1855. They were the town's first democratically elected local authority and forerunners of the Urban District Council.

The Town Commissioners modified the "old gaol" for office purposes but did not have the money to reconstruct it as a Town Hall proper. It was only when they were replaced in 1900 by the UDC (which had greater powers to raise money) that the reconstruction project was taken seriously.

A grant of £500 from the Carnegie Foundation to set up a public library was the spur: the library sub-committee of the Council recommended that the library be incorporated as part of a rebuilt Town Hall with better accommodation to serve the needs of the town.

The contract was awarded to local builder John Eacret who completed the work in 1904. He extended the ballroom block and built an annexe with large skylights (now the Town Clerk's office) to house the library.

Eacret's most obvious contribution was the new façade which replaced the old forbidding frontage. He constructed the projecting front lobby which included a branched balustraded timber staircase leading to a series of mezzanine floors from which access was gained to the Town Hall offices and rooms.

This was swept away in 1987-88 when another renewal programme got under way. The impressive staircase was replaced with a plain stairway and the mezzanine floors converted into ordinary entrance lobbies. The circular window on the ground floor facing the main door was also removed.

The assembly room has been refurbished and at time of writing plans are in hand to convert the ballrooms into a meeting room for the Urban District Council.

Town Hall Clock

The Town Hall clock was installed in 1866, paid for by public subscription. The mechanism was by John Chancellor of Dublin. Two weight-driven pulleys drive the mechanism – one for the clock and the other for the chime. The chime (now deactivated) notes are produced by a bell housed in a louvred shelter on the roof. The bell bears the inscription "Sheridan 1866": it also bears a harp with the inscription "Eireann Go Brágh". The present twin dials date from Eacret's 1904 reconstruction when the clock was relocated – however, the mechanism which keeps time to this day is Chancellor's 1866 original.

A letter in the UDC files provides a charming postscript to the story of Naas' premier timepiece. In 1957 Mr J Coleborn, watchmaker, wrote to the Town Clerk: "I have been winding the Town Hall clock thrice weekly since 1914. The Council then paid me £4 a year. As you know the value of money has changed greatly since then but I am still only paid £4. Would you kindly ask your Council if they could give something better." He was subsequently given an increase to £10 per annum.

PLANNING APPLICATION DETAILS

1. PLANNING AUTHORITY ; KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL
2. LOCATION; NAAS TOWN HALL (A PROTECTED STRUCTURE), NORTH MAIN STREET, NAAS.
OS MAP REF. 3559-02 , 3559 – 07 ; GRID REF . 689232 – 719471
3. TYPE OF PLANNING PERMISSION ; PERMISSION
4. APPLICANT ; KILDARE ARTS AND LIBRARY SERVICES
7. AGENT; DEATON LYSAGHT ARCHITECTS, 44 SOUTH RICHMOND STREET, DUBLIN 2
8. PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAWINGS; MARTA WALL
9. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT;

- a. Demolition of outbuildings and offices in rear yard area.
 - b. Change of use of building from Town Hall to Library.
 - c. Construction of two rear extensions (single- and 2-storey) to provide extended library on ground floor, study facilities, meeting room, additional fire escape stairs and plant room.
 - d. Changed levels and landscaping of rear yard area to provide space for market, educational area and car-parking spaces. A new pedestrian access gate will be formed on the rear wall opening onto Abbey Street. New openings with wrought-iron grilles will also be formed on the side yard walls, opening on to Town Hall Lane and Moat Lane. The existing arch at Moat Lane will be opened out to form a glazed side entrance to the Library.
 - e. Internal alterations to existing building.
 - f. Alterations to access steps at front entrance and revised landscaping.
 - g. New signage
11. SITE AREA ; 1994 sq. metres
12. AREA OF EXISTING BUILDINGS ; 1475 sq. metres
- FLOOR AREA OF PROPOSED EXTENSIONS ; 481 sq. metres
- FLOOR SPACE OF WORK TO BE RETAINED ;
- FLOOR SPACE OF DEMOLITION ; 404 sq. metres
15. EXISTING USE ; TOWN HALL / LOCAL AUTHORITY USES
- PROPOSED USE ; LIBRARY, ARTS AND COMMUNITY USES
21. PUBLIC NOTICES ; Published in Leinster Leader 6th November 2018;
- Site Notices erected on site 6th November 2018

ARCHITECTS' REPORT ;

A detailed survey of the building has been carried out, encompassing dimensional measurement, history, architectural conservation, building fabric condition, assessment of heritage value, photographic, archaeological, environmental, and building services surveys. These surveys established the suitability of Naas Town Hall for conversion to the Town Library. Its location in North Main Street is central and accessible, and it is considered important to re-establish an active use for the building, which will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the Historic Core of Naas.

The proposed design seeks to remove the rear outbuildings and accretions, to restore the building to the original Gaol footprint; then to add two extensions. On the south side of the building a single-storey glazed Library Room will be added, linked to the existing ground-floor Hall by the opening of the existing window openings to floor level. This will be the main Library, and will provide the space needed to cater for the increased demands of the growing population of Naas.

On the north side of the building, a two-storey extension is proposed, providing space for study rooms, meeting rooms, toilet facilities, disability access facilities, and service rooms.

The extensions are designed as contemporary structures which make a clear distinction between the original and new parts of the building. The Library room will look out at the original Gaol Wall, and explanatory plaques will be placed to inform the visitor of the history of the site, from its medieval origins to its 18th century Gaol, 20th century Town Hall, and 21st century Library facility.

The original parts of the building will be altered mainly to remove the modern partitions and finishes in the scheduled rooms, retaining as much as possible of the original building fabric. These works are scheduled in the enclosed Heritage Impact Assessment Report. In particular, the fine finishes of the Second-Floor Council Chamber will be preserved, with minor alterations to provide for disability access to this room, which will be used for exhibitions, cultural and artistic events.

The Gaol Wall is a distinctive element of the Protected structure, and it is proposed to retain it generally; however, existing arched openings are to be opened up to provide a glazed access point at Moat Lane, a pedestrian rear access gate onto Abbey Street, and a fixed grille at Town Hall Lane. A further two openings with grilles will be opened out onto Moat Lane and Town Hall Lane to provide a visual link into the rear yard.

The rear yard, which is steeply sloping, is to be re-levelled from its entrance point at the existing gateway on Abbey Street. The upper courtyard will be re-surfaced in paving stones and gravel surfaces to provide a multi-functional space. This will be used as a Market Square for the traditional Friday market, and provision is made for staff parking and disability parking when the Market is not operational. Visitors to the Library can avail of the public car-park opposite the Library, and can access the Library via the new pedestrian gate and the Lower Courtyard entrance.

The Lower Courtyard opens directly off the glazed Library area, and can be used for outdoor arts activities, music and dance. The stepped area can be used as seating for outdoor reading, theatre or cinema productions. The Library Service promotes a range of educational and artistic programmes, and this space, sheltered between the two extensions, will enable these programmes to develop in a wider range of pursuits.

The architectural treatment of the new extensions will comprise a limited palette of materials, mainly concrete and glass. The simplicity of the finishes will demand a high level of quality in the construction and assembly of the building. The mechanical and electrical services will be discreetly located, with the larger items of equipment screened from view behind the parapet of the new extensions. Internally, the original groin vaulting of the rooms at ground and first floor levels will be highlighted by bespoke lighting and partition systems.

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION

A detailed Architectural Conservation study, incorporating a Heritage Impact assessment Report, is provided, which itemises the work to be carried out in each room of the existing building, and the impact on the original building fabric.

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PLAN

A detailed Preliminary Health and Safety Plan will be prepared by the Design Team, and issued with the tender documentation. A full Risk Exclusion Procedure will be followed in the design process to eliminate the avoidable risks of the project. The Design Team will require the preparation and implementation of a detailed Construction Management Plan. This will include method statements for all works, particularly demolition and alterations works. Full details will be given of;

1. Limited working hours.
2. Safety hoardings.
3. Traffic Management Plans.
4. Timing of deliveries.
5. Position of site cabins.
6. Avoidance of dust, cleaning of roads.

7. Scaffolding designed to maintain use of side lanes at all times.
8. On-site storage of materials and parking.

ROADS AND PARKING PROPOSALS

The existing entrance to the rear yard is to be retained, it is recommended that viewing mirrors are provided to assist vehicular exit from the gateway. There will be parking for 6 cars and one disabled space in the rear courtyard. The 6 spaces will be allocated for staff and consultant use only. Car-parking facilities for Library users are available in the public car-park opposite the rear gate. There will be 15 bicycle parking stands to cater for cycle users.

A new pedestrian entrance gate will be provided off Abbey Street, to separate pedestrian visitors from traffic. Deliveries to the Library (approx. 3 per week) are generally in small or medium-sized vans, which can park and turn within the courtyard area.

The side entrance onto Moat Lane is to be recessed, so that visitors exiting the Library do not encounter traffic immediately on exit of the building. A barrier rail will be mounted outside the doors, and a change of road surface outside the new entrance are proposed.

The market is to be held in the rear courtyard once per week (currently on a Friday morning). Car-parking in the courtyard will not be permitted at these times.

The new Library will provide additional public lighting within the new courtyard, and at all points on the perimeter wall, to increase the visibility of library users when accessing the Library facilities. This will be included within Safety Audits to be prepared before and after construction works.

DRAINAGE / SANITARY SERVICES

Generally, toilet services are to be retained in their existing locations, and the existing piped connections are to be re-used. Rainwater from the building will largely be similar to existing loadings, and existing connections are to be re-used.

The rear courtyard area is to be re-levelled and re-paved with permeable paving. This will reduce the loading and impact on the existing storm water system in the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The site has been assessed for flora and fauna including a bat survey. It is intended to provide additional landscaped areas with trees and shrubs within the rear courtyard to promote and enhance suitable habitats for birds and wildlife. A swift-box is to be installed in a sheltered eaves location to provide a nesting area for birds. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been commissioned to examine and report on the environmental impact on Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

As part of the pre-planning evaluation of the site and buildings, an archaeological study and monitored excavations were carried out by IAC Archaeological Services. This survey confirmed that the original Gaol building foundations have been fully encased in mass concrete during earlier

renovations, and are therefore inaccessible for archaeological study. The survey did conclude that the existing building is constructed largely on the original footprint of the Gaol building.

FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety is of paramount importance, and will be enhanced in the proposed layout. Escape routes from the upper floors will be enhanced, and the existing external escape stairs will be removed. Two alternative escape routes are available to users of the Library from all rooms. The building will have updated emergency lighting and alarm systems. The existing masonry walls will be augmented by rated fire doors to ensure that any outbreak of fire is limited, and cannot spread to other areas of the building. The detailed design of these fire safety measures will be carefully assessed by the Design Team and agreed with the Chief Fire Officer of Kildare Co. Council.

DISABILITY ACCESS

Access to the building and its facilities will be fully available to disabled persons in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

Access at the front entrance is currently via a ramp starting at Town Hall Lane. This access route will be enhanced by the provision of a larger landing created by the elimination of the steps at this point. This will make the front door more easily accessible.

Access at the rear is also provided. A disabled parking space is provided adjacent to the rear entrance doors. These will be fitted with automatic opening units. A lift is provided to bring disabled visitors from the level of the upper courtyard down to the existing ground floor level.

A disabled toilet facility is available on each floor level of the building, also to incorporate baby-changing facilities.

BUILDING SERVICES

The building's mechanical and electrical building services will be comprehensively renewed with highly-efficient and low-energy systems, which will reduce the energy required to operate the building. The main Library area will be air-conditioned, to provide the optimum conditions within which the books will be maintained. A/C units will be mounted on the roof of the new extensions, screened from view with discreet metal louvred screens. Heating in the Library room will be underfloor, which will maximise the flexibility of furniture re-arrangement. Lighting will be predominantly LED-based with special non-glare fittings providing the required light levels. The building will be extensively rewired to cater for the Library Service's computer systems, including the Open Library concept, whereby Library members can access the Library without staff supervision.

The Design Team have carefully considered the routes to be taken by piped and ducted building services around the building, and have ensured that the original building fabric is not to be damaged in the process of installation.

DEATON LYSAGHT ARCHITECTS

NOVEMBER 2018

