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**Howth Old Courthouse - Proposed Development Works.**

**Conservation Planning Statement (Part 8 procedure)**



**September 2017**

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**Contents:**

**1. Introduction.**

1.1 Objectives of the project.

1.2 Description of the existing site and building.

2. History of the existing site and building.

3. Approach to interventions and repairs and proposed materials.

3.1 General approach.

3.2 Masonry walls.

3.3 Doors.

3.4 Windows.

3.5 External works to courtyard.

4. Photographs.

## 1. Introduction.

### 1.1 Objectives of the project.

The main purpose of the project is to provide a tourist office within part of the building, re-locating the existing tourist services, currently located in a small kiosk across the Harbour Road. In addition, the main hall of the building will be upgraded, which will include the provision of a disabled access ramp and new lighting and other services. Externally, a new entry courtyard is proposed, to create a better entry sequence and provide a small public realm and to provide disabled access into the building.

### 1.2 Description of the existing site and building.

The existing building is a detached, four-bay single-storey structure with a double pitched slated roof with a rendered chimney stack and a projecting entrance porch to the western gable. The exterior walls are rendered. The Northern elevation features five pilasters containing cross shaped recessed capitals. The Northern elevation has round headed moulded windows with keystone rendered reveals with '6 over 6' pattern timber sash windows. The Southern elevation is composed of plain render with pilasters either end of the elevation with the same cross shaped recessed capitals. It contains four circular windows, two of which are currently blocked up.

Internally, the main hall of the building has a small mezzanine floor at the eastern end of the room, with the balcony railing donated from church of Assumption, Howth<sup>1</sup>.

Internal walls and ceiling are generally of plain plaster and the main hall has a concrete floor.

To the west of the building there is small raised planted area and a small entry yard.

Church Street runs alongside the Southern side of the site and the Harbour Road runs alongside the Northern side of the site. The pavement level on the Southern side of the building is at a significantly higher level to the pavement level on the Northern side of the building.

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<sup>1</sup> As cited in the National Inventory for Architectural Heritage, Reg. No. 11359006.

## **2. History of the existing site and building.**

The building is a nineteenth century building dating from circa 1845.

A notice within the building states that the building was originally designed as a place of worship for fishermen. It was later used as rent collection office by Lord Howth's agents. By 1870 it served as a local courthouse, continuing this use until 1970. It is now in used as offices for An Taisce and also community use.<sup>2</sup>

## **3. Approach to interventions and repairs and proposed materials.**

### 3.1 General approach.

The project is concerned with providing a new entrance court to the building and also some refurbishment works to the interior. The approach taken to conservation works will be guided by the principles set out in the Venice Charter.<sup>3</sup> This means that repair rather than replacement will be preferred in all instances. Where new work is required within the protected structure this work will be done on the basis that, where possible, this work will be capable of being reversed.

### 3.2 Masonry walls.

No significant works are proposed to the existing masonry walls and the focus will be on repair of the existing fabric where required. Where such repairs are required these repairs will be carried out using best practice conservation methods, involving materials such as lime mortars.

### 3.3 Timber doors.

The existing four panel timber doors will be retained and where necessary repaired.

New timber doors, will be made as four panel doors in profile and detail to match the existing four panel doors within the existing building.

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<sup>2</sup> Summary history as cited in the National Inventory for Architectural Heritage, Reg. No. 11359006.

<sup>3</sup> The Venice Charter of 1963, issued following the IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, ICOMOS, Venice, 1964.

### 3.4 Windows.

The existing timber sash windows on the Northern elevation will be repaired and re-decorated by an approved specialist sub-contractor.

The circular timber windows on the Southern elevation will also be repaired and re-decorated. In addition, two of these circular windows, currently blocked up, will be opened up and timber circular windows will be re-instated in a detail to match the existing circular windows.

### 3.5 External works to courtyard.

The existing raised planting will be removed and a new entrance courtyard will be provided, as shown on the submitted drawings. The purpose of the proposed new courtyard is:

- (i) Provide a new public realm relating to the existing building.
- (ii) Provide disabled access into the existing building.
- (iii) Provide a clearer entrance sequence into the existing building.



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#### 4. Photographs.



Plate 1. Exterior view of Northern side of building.



Plate 2. Exterior view of Southern side of building. The circular windows at either end of the elevation are currently blocked up and it is proposed that these windows are opened up to provide natural light to the interior of the building. All existing windows within these opes will be repaired and re-decorated.



Plate 3. Exterior view of building from East.



Plate 4 Porch window on west elevation.



Plate 5. Entrance door on Porch.

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Plate 6. Door on North elevation.



Plate 7. Window on North elevation. These timber sash windows will be repaired and re-decorated.



Plate 8. Interior of main hall looking East to mezzanine floor. A small tea station and store is proposed under this balcony, which will involve the addition of 2no. new doors to match the existing four panel doors within the building.



Plate 9. Interior of main hall looking West. It is proposed to remove the existing peg board from the walls and return the walls to a simple plain plaster finish. New pendant lighting is also proposed within the space. The current raised stage at the end of the hall will also be removed as part of the works. This stage does not appear to be original and was probably used when the building was used as a courthouse.





Plate 10. Typical four panel door within the building. It is proposed to retain these doors and make any necessary repairs .



Plate 11. Photo illustrating difference in level between main hall and small western room. A ramp is proposed as part of the works to facilitate disabled access between these two rooms.



Plate 12. Circular window at high level in main hall. These windows will be repaired where necessary by a specialist sub-contractor and re-decorated.



Plate 13. Circular window seen from exterior. This is one of two windows located at either end of the Southern elevation which is currently blocked up. It is proposed in these works to unblock the opening and reinstate a window to match the two central circular windows in detail.

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