

OBFA_2123_C2A_PART 8 DESIGN STATEMENT

REV-0-221222

REF: RENOVIATION & ALTERATIONS AT “THE MANSE”, 23 NUNS ISLAND, GALWAY

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The purpose of this project note is to provide a design statement to accompany the Part 8 Architectural package to renovate and extend the existing “Manse” to the rear of the existing Nun’s Island theatre to house a new multi-purpose Creative Centre. This report is to be read in conjunction with the part 8 application drawings and documents as prepared by OBFA Architects. This appraisal has been commissioned by Galway City Council as part of a Part 8 planning submission.



Refer to “OBFA Conservation Report” for details of the existing site, its location, context and history.

DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023

BS 5588 & TGD B 2006

TGD M 2010

The “Galway City Council Development Plan 2017-2023 land zoning development & specific objectives map” shows this site within Zone R- marked Residential. The existing building has residential buildings to the south and east, with the existing “Bish” school as the immediate neighbour to the north of the site. The existing use of 23 Nun’s Island as an Arts Centre and Theatre is well established. This project is a development to improve the Arts facilities for the existing Arts Spaces. The residential zoning therefore is not applicable to this particular site, given its established use. It could be considered “Community, Cultural/ Institutional” -Zone CF.



Design Development

Galway City Council provided OBFA Architects the “Community Consultation Report” for Church house, 23 Nun’s Island carried out by “Urban Lab”. This report was very useful in informing the brief.

Church House, known as The Manse, is located to the rear of Nun’s Island Theatre, overlooking the St. Clare River. Nun’s Island Theatre is run by Galway Arts Centre on behalf of Galway City Council. Currently only part of the Manse is in use as an office space for staff supporting the theatre. The remaining areas in the Manse have not been in use (except for informal storage) and the building has fallen into a state of disrepair. Nun’s Island Theatre is a Protected Structure, this protected status extends to all buildings/ elements within the Theatre site curtilage. Therefore, The Manse itself is also protected.

The main project goals driving the design process:

- Create a new welcoming reception space that will serve the existing Theatre as well as the multi-disciplinary Creative Centre within the Manse itself.
- Consider this project within the whole of the site so that it will be part of a single identity with The Manse & the Theatre parts working together in harmony
- Provide Universal access to all levels & areas of the building
- Create a back of house space that can be used as a dressing area for visiting artists for theatre performances
- Sound proofing Creative rooms as far as practicable within the constraints of the protected structure
- Flexibility of function for Creative rooms.
- Choice of floor finishes to ground level Creative rooms to suit dancers (eg sprung wooden floors)

Historic maps indicate that the original Presbyterian meeting hall (now Nun's Island Theatre) was a simple rectangular form. The lean-to extensions and Church House are not visible until later edition maps. The lean-to extensions between the main part of Church house and the original theatre building are in poor condition as outlined the Conservation report.

Numerous sketch options were explored in collaboration with Galway City Council and Galway Arts Centre representatives, illustrating various plan/ lift options. It became clear early in the design process that the ideal location of the new lift was in the link area so that the link could provide universal access to both the lower and upper first floor levels. In addition, the structures in the link area are in poor condition.

It was agreed, following consultations with Galway Heritage Officer, that it was important to refurbish the main two storey part of Church house together with important period features (*eg existing external terrace main doorway together with all associates features, main stairway off entrance hallway, historic fire surrounds, panelled doors within main part of Church house, existing upper floors, existing plaster & lath ceilings*) with minimal alterations. Retaining the external walls of the link buildings was also determined as a constraint along with the external area to the south of the link. As the internal areas of the link buildings are badly damaged because of the roof leak it was considered acceptable to alter the link areas internally.





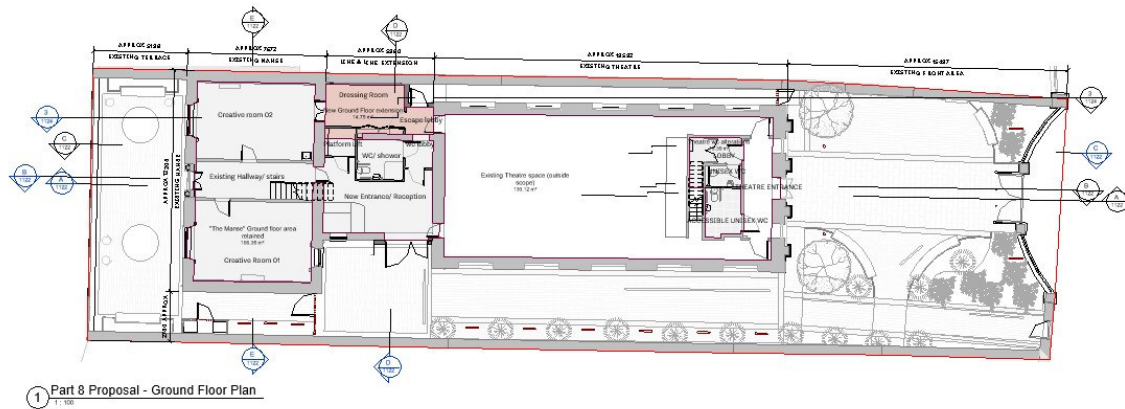
Design Proposal- Overview

One design challenge is to make the Manse and its new entrance visible and welcoming from the public street on Nuns Island. The forecourt to the street side of Nun's Island Theatre is a very important external arrival space where one can appreciate the beautiful entrance façade of the Theatre. Quality hard & soft landscaping exists here but requires maintenance. The project proposes to refurbish the existing forecourt landscaping elements with some minor adjustment, extending the quality landscaping to the whole curtilage of the site. The design of the new high quality external landscaping is envisaged to lure pedestrians towards the Manse new entrance area and riverside areas. We note below summary elements proposed:

- New landscaping elements will be designed in detail by a landscape specialist and will include planters/ new paving/ seating/ bike stands/ screens to bin store/ external lighting/ signage.
- The riverside façade of the Manse is prominent from the opposite riverbank. The existing concrete balustrading is low in height and therefore not fully functional as a guarding, in addition this element detracts from the appreciation of the Manse from the opposite riverbank. The design of the landscaping is planned to reinstate the riverside area as an important external space. We think that replacing concrete balusters with new high quality riverside railings will help to enhance the Manse riverside area.
- The roadside historic stone walls/ pillars / painted cast iron railings/ gates are important Architectural elements framing the forecourt entrance space. The stonework requires repair, the adjacent soft landscaping needs to be trimmed back so that these elements can be fully appreciated.
- There are overhead wires crossing the public street connected directly to the front façade of the theatre, detracting greatly from its quality. It is intended to underground all such overhead services.
- The traditional Yew Trees framing the Theatre façade are greatly overgrown and will be trimmed back to thin sculptural shapes in line with design intentions of the era.
- There is a modern gate screening the side fire escape path to the north of the theatre that has no particular merit, it is proposed to replace this gate with a high-quality gate designed as part of the new landscaping.
- There is also a modern double gate to the south of the Manse gable securing the riverside area. As above, this gate has no particular Architectural merit. There is a functional requirement to secure the riverside area at times, however it is hoped that this area can be left accessible to the public generally (secured only when required by the users of the Manse). This element is visible from the public street at Nuns Island therefore we propose its replacement with a new high-quality gate designed to attract pedestrians towards the riverside.

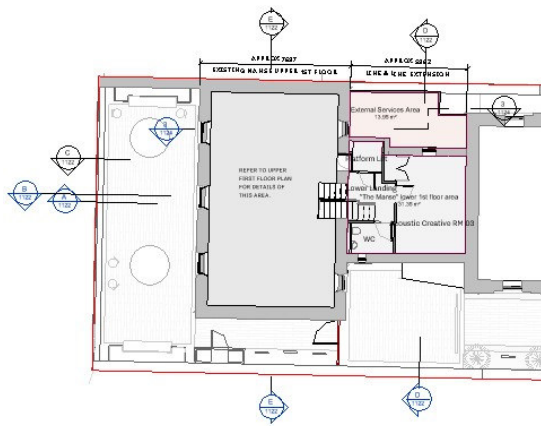
- It is understood that there is a requirement for signage to be visible from the public street and that it is not possible to provide any signage on the front façade of the Theatre building as that would detract from its character. Discreet signage is proposed as part of the new external hard landscaping design to address the signage requirement without detracting from the Architectural character of the protected structure.
- There is an opportunity to provide information to the public in general about the history of this site and its incredible buildings. The plain rendered facing of the existing tall northern boundary wall facing the main theatre entrance forecourt would be an ideal location for the provision information panels should they be desired.
- A painted finish is proposed to Manse external walls. The colour scheme details will be agreed with GCC prior to execution on site to ensure that the proposal enhances the Manse and is in harmony with the existing cut stone theatre façade. The southern gable of the Manse would make an ideal location for painted street art subject to details to be agreed with GAC & GCC.



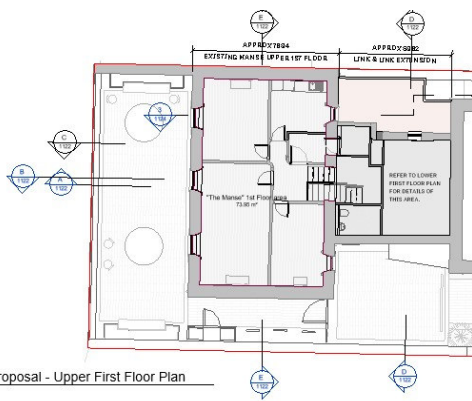


Ground Floor Plan Proposal Notes

- The capacity of the “Manse” upper levels will provide for less than 50 persons per storey. The travel distances to all areas are within single escape route limits. Therefore, the existing stairway will be the escape stairs.
- It is proposed to remove the internal partitions of the link for the provision of a new public reception space with direct access from the external area south of the link. In this location the reception is connected directly to the theatre as well as to the main hallway of the Manse.
- A new lift accessing all levels is proposed adjacent to the new reception area. The lift position is aligned with the existing external walls at upper level to allow a landing with turning space at the stairs lower landing-serving the lower 1st floor level. It is necessary to remove part of the external link wall at ground floor level to accommodate the lift. The new lift will be as compact as possible within a self-supporting proprietary structure (platform type allowable for a building of this scale).
- The new reception will be as large as possible within the limits of the existing external walls and spaces required for lift/ accessible wc/ shower & associated lobby. The location of a potential pop-up reception desk is suggested inside existing window, this is not intended as a permanent feature allowing flexibility to reception space.
- A new generous external glazed entrance doorway is proposed to replace the existing single door becoming an inviting public entrance to the new reception. A new decorative canopy element incorporating new signage is proposed to frame this new entrance and enhance it as a feature.
- Both the reception and associated external area will allow as much turning area as now exists in the northern yard to bring props into the theatre (access limited by existing doors of the theatre itself which must not be altered).
- The existing main doorway to the riverside Manse façade will remain as an important entrance / access to the waterside external terrace area.
- It is proposed to remove the partition between old back kitchen and adjacent riverside room to provide a second large sized room at ground floor level “Creative rm 02”. It is proposed to include a sink for art workshops in this space.
- A new single storey extension to house a room that can function as a dressing area for the theatre space is proposed at ground level to the north of the link with access through the escape lobby to theatre and shared sanitary facilities. This room can be used for other purposes when not required for performances so that desired flexibility of function is built into every area. It is planned to replace the existing back kitchen casement window with double doors-so that the dressing room can be linked with “Creative RM 02” when desired to allow for overflow dressing accommodation.
- A new accessible wc/ shower is proposed off the access lobby to the proposed dressing room (simultaneously serving the public areas and the dressing room).



② Part 8 Proposal - Lower First Floor Plan
1:100



① Part 8 Proposal - Upper First Floor Plan
1:100

First floor level (lower & upper main) Plans- Proposal Notes

- It is proposed to retain the main external link walls and remove the internal link walls as described above. To allow a more generous floor to ceiling height in the new reception area it is proposed to extend the existing lower flight to a maximum of 16 no equal risers (allows new lower first floor level to be as high as possible to create generous height to new reception area). It is proposed to adapt the upper existing flight to suit this raised level by reducing the number of risers. This creates a turning area outside the lift so that it can serve the lower 1st floor level.
- The new creative room positioned off new lower landing is proposed to be fully sound proofed so it can be used for music rehearsals. It is proposed to block up windows to link south façade to avoid nuisance to the existing residential apartments to the south. One existing window will be retained & adapted to the north side of this room (where sound nuisance is less of an issue) so that it will act as a maintenance access to the flat roof over the single storey extension.
- The arrangement of upper main 1st floor level will not be altered apart from where new lift turning area is proposed beside new lift (reducing the size of "Creative RM 07").
- The external flat roof area over the new single storey extension is proposed as a space where external air handling services can be located. It is proposed to move the external units, currently mounted to the outside wall on the southwest corner of the theatre, to this location.
- A second wc is proposed off the lower landing.



External Design Proposal Notes

- The proposal retains the existing external link wall generally between main part of the Manse and the existing theatre with minor alterations to openings.
- The existing lean-to roofs will be removed fully as currently too low to accommodate a new lift. A new pitched roof is proposed to the link areas to allow height for the lift with junctions to adjacent roofs determined by heights of existing link walls retained.
- New lightweight external walls will be formed above and in line with the existing external link walls to extend walls to new roof line. New painted rendered finishes are proposed generally.
- A new slimline framing element incorporating a small porch canopy and signage is proposed to frame new entrance.
- New solar pv panels are proposed on both the east & west facing slopes of the new extension pitched roof. In this location the panels will not be visible from the ground level external entrance area.
- New external signage elements are proposed as indicated on the Architectural drawings.
- The hope is that the existing main gates will generally be left open so that the external areas within the site curtilage will become an inviting public space creating an important amenity for Galway citizens. We believe that increasing passive surveillance will alleviate security concerns. We propose removable bollards within existing gateway entrance to prevent rogue parking when the gates are open. The desire of the project is ensure that The Manse, combined with the Theatre and the associated external amenity spaces, will be a creative facility in constant use.

Summary

The Creative Centre at the Manse is envisaged to be as flexible as possible in terms of function. The larger room sizes at ground floor level are open and adaptable. The scheme allows for “multifunctional” space that can be used for rehearsals, studios, meetings, events and administration” as suggested in report from “Urban Lab”.

Universal Access to all levels is achieved with the installation of a new lift.

The proposal is in line with the feedback from the Community Consultation carried out by “Urban Lab”.

Prepared by: CM
Checked By: COB

22.12.2022
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