

BALLINAHOWN **Community Hall**



***Conservation Report in support of S.57 Application
Regarding roof works at Ballinahown Community Hall***

August 2024

On behalf of

Ballinahown Community Development Co. Ltd.

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CONTENTS

- (i) INTRODUCTION.**
- (ii) CONSERVATION CONTEXT.**
- (iii) CONSERVATION PRIORITIES AND CONSIDERED IMPACT OF WORKS.**
- (iv) CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS.**
- (v) SUMMARY OUTCOMES**
- (vi) APPENDIX (Drawings)**

(i) Introduction

Ballinahown Community Development Co. Ltd., (BCD Ltd) is the local representative voluntary body tasked with protecting and developing the community facilities of the village of Ballinahown, (Baile na hAbhainn). Protecting facilities against redundancy is a key responsibility and the conservation of the Community Hall is a key aspect of this responsibility, particularly so given its functioning as a Community and Parish Hall since 1938. It is noted that the Community (Parish) Hall is an emblematic building within the community due to its location and visual prominence. The hall is also listed as a protected structure under the Westmeath Development Plan, being declared as of local interest, (Ref: RPS.035-007).



To this end any intended new works to the hall need to be assessed against the established character of the protected structure, and understanding reached as to the influence/effect of the proposed works on that character. The intended works described within this submission constitute the replacement of the roof finish to address ongoing leaks which have become manifest over the past few years within the Hall. It is submitted below that the intended works would constitute a positive effect on the protected structure and would in no way diminish the character which renders it a protected structure. The current artificial slates are c. 75 years old, are brittle, nail fixings have deteriorated, and the bitumen felt below is in poor condition.

(ii) Conservation Context

The Community Hall was originally constructed as a former Roman Catholic chapel based on a T-shaped plan, of c.1810. Its previous NIAH listing (Ref 15403510), (the hall is now delisted), records that it comprises a two-bay nave to the north, and single-bay transepts to the east and the west, retaining and reflecting still the early T-plan form and early proportions which contribute greatly to its current character. The building has been extensively used over the years and has lost some of its early fabric and historic character through various interventions. These have included a variety of new windows to the existing openings within the hall area, the construction of a rear extension lower in scale and volume to the main structure, internal upgrades to toilets, kitchen, studio spaces and services, disabled access to the front entrance and a roof covering consisting of asbestos cement slates fashioned with a chamfered shape. The style and weathering of the roof covering and felt as existent, would appear to suggest a date from c. 1950. This Section 57 Application of which this report forms a part, is focused on addressing the replacement of this existing roof covering and felt, with repairs to roof timbers only as necessary. The limited opening up which has occurred to address the current leaks reflects a very brittle bitumen felt, loose slates with rusted fixing nails and the self-evident existence of internal water penetration. It is these defects that the new slated finish is intended to address, combined with the visual benefit of returning the roof finish to a natural slate.



(iii) Conservation Priorities and Considered Impact of Works.

The roof works will follow the format of the existing roof. All existing features, rainwater goods, vents will be repaired where possible and reinstated. Existing flashings and upstands will be replaced with lead detailing appropriate to the detail and exposure. Eaves ventilation will be installed to ensure attic ventilation above improved attic insulation. The works will by necessity be phased, to reflect availability of funds. The Community wish to install Welsh natural blue banger slate across the entire roof, the cost of which is approximately 66% more expensive than Canadian slate and 500% more than Brazilian slate. The works therefore will concentrate on the areas of greatest deterioration, which are primarily the front pitched roofs, associated valleys and north facing slopes above the cross transept.

It is intended that a review of the energy performance of the Community Hall will be executed across 2025 under 'Just-transition Funding' which will require assessment of the hall's associated fabric and services. This will include the roofing of the south facing transept pitched roof (photo adjacent) which will accommodate either PV panels or PV integrated slates subject to investigation of these alternatives. All of these additional works will be part of a separate Section 57 application to be made to the Local Planning Authority later in the year.

In conservation terms the priorities for this Section 57 Application is for the roof works only which would be: -

- 1) *To record the existing roof fabric inside and outside prior to specialist asbestos removal. All rainwater goods to be repaired and reused where possible*
- 2) *New felt to be fully breathable and battened to underside of natural slates.*
- 3) *All opening up will be carefully planned and considered to allow for protective weathering as required across the works.*
- 4) *The existing configuration of the East and West transept gables will be retained.*

The beneficial impact of the proposed works will ensure the longevity of the roof for generations, enabling the property to be maintained in constant use and kept open to the public, both as an anchor community building within the area, and as a tourism attraction in its own right.

The overall impact of the intended roof works may be summarised as follows: -

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

- 1 The existing structure is not negatively altered by the repair interventions proposed, provided that minimum material replacement is achieved within the timbers, and that all details are considered aesthetically and conservation-led.

POSITIVE IMPACTS

- 2 The repair of the roof finish, the feature upstands, and roof flashings will protect the fabric of the structure below from water ingress into the future, the existent leaks and exposed nature of the site makes this an absolute necessity.

NEUTRAL IMPACTS

- 3 Improved ventilation of the internal attic environment will protect the ceilings and joinery from exposure to environmental extremes



(iv) Conservation Recommendations.

In order to achieve meaningful conservation objectives within the context of the proposed repair and enhancement works, this report suggests that the intended works ought to adhere to the following principles of conservation: -

- (a) The roof works to be progressed in such a manner as to ensure careful opening up and assessment of timbers and careful assessment of bitumen felt. Protective weathering of the existing structure is of paramount importance at all times.*
- (b) Under no circumstances are hot works to be instigated without permission and correct on-site precautions and preparation for any such works will be required.*
- (c) All finishes and colours to façades to be retained with all existing proportions and detailing retained in so far as the structure and repairs allow.*
- (d) Roof finish to be natural slate, (preferably blue banger), to be agreed with the local planning authority prior to being put in hand.*
- (e) The proposed works to reflect the character, scale, mass, roofline and colour of the existing context and building. All repairs to be finished to match the surrounding colours and textures.*
- (f) Any alterations to distribution of services to be organised in such a way as to minimise alterations to structure and fabric.*
- (g) Any new joinery (not anticipated) installed, or timber used for repairs should be sourced from sustainably managed forests.*
- (h) Only neutral colours (or those to match existing) to be used throughout the scheme. The colours to the facias/soffits to be further investigated in regard to appropriate historical authenticity. Any materials, which are reusable, and are resulting from works within the site, are to be reused within the site.*



(v) Summary Outcomes.

In summary the proposed roof works will seek to respect and retain the character of the structure, ensuring that the eaves detailing, the rainwater goods, the roof ventilation features and upstands are all protected and reinstated as found. The structure's character will not be affected in any substantive way by the new slating and the works will be to the long-term benefit of the hall and its continuance in use into the future. In particular the removal and careful disposal of the asbestos cement slates, their replacement with a blue/banger slate will ensure the longevity of the roof for another generation and will enhance the heritage value and aesthetic of the structure as a whole.

MARTIN MURRAY ARCHITECTS

(vi)

APPENDIX



Drawings.



