MMA

CONSERVATION-BIODIVERSITY 10-YEAR STRATEGY PLAN

for

St Colmcille's Church, Ballinahown, Co Westmeath

Martin Murray Architects

'A Place of Rest in a Restless World'

CONSERVATION-BIODIVERSITY 10-YEAR PLAN FOR ST COLMCILLE'S CHURCH, BALLINAHOWN.

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CONSERVATION-BIODIVERSITY 10-YEAR PLAN
St Colmcille's Church, Ballinahown, Co Westmeath
(NIAH REG. 15403512, AND WCC RPS: 035-008),

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

This proposed 10-year plan for St Colmcille's Church, Ballinahown, has been prepared on behalf of the *Ballinahown Community Development Co. Ltd.,* (BCD) who are the representative local voluntary body tasked with the responsibility of protecting and developing the community facilities within the village of Ballinahown, (*Baile na hAbhann*). Their efforts have given rise to significant recognition within national and international competitions, resulting in Ballinahown being designated Ireland's Tidiest Village in 2024 and achieving as Ireland's representative, a European Gold Medal within the Entente Florale (2024) Initiative, being the smallest Irish community to have done so, to date.

This report and conservation-biodiversity 10-year plan for St Colmcille's is therefore an integral part of the ongoing aspirations of a congregation and a community for their village church and grounds. Its purpose is to guide a considered and optimal use into the future of the various elements of the church structure and grounds, recognizing those elements which give rise to its special character and indeed its protected status. The study follows across two trajectories: (a) the need to identify actions according to their urgency and organized to their appropriate critical pathways and (b) contextualize this urgency within an overall long-term strategic plan. Having identified such objectives and timescales, the report suggests appropriately scaled interventions, being mindful of the legislative and liturgical criteria to be complied with.

The methodology of the report document is to (i) understand and record the current condition of the building and grounds, (ii) set this condition within the communities' aspirations to frame a resilient and sustainable future for this prominent and important protected structure within the village, (iii) frame these aspirations as short-term, medium and long-term objectives, and (iv) create a clear understanding of the future estimated costs associated with same. These are set out in summary below reflecting major project areas: -

	Terms	Church Interior	Costs	Church Fabric	Costs	Church Grounds	Costs	Totals
01	Short:	Sanctury Installations	10,000.00	Water ingress	40,000.00	Bio based drainage(s)	80,000.00	130,000.00
02	Medium:	Electrical / Lighting	135,000.00	External Lighting	10,000.00	Foul Drainage / landscaping	85,000.00	230,000.00
03	Long:	Heating /Redecoration	200,000.00	Reroofing	400,000.00	Landscaping	40,000.00	640,000.00
	Totals	Church Interior	345,000.00	Church Fabric	450,000.00	Church Grounds	205,000.00	1,000,000.00

2.0 EXISTING CONTEXT

The overall study site, including church and presbytery, consists of approximately 3.8 hectares (c.9.4 acres) located within the village of Ballinahown. Its two dominant boundaries align with the N62 on its southwest, and the river worm to the northeast. The highest part of the site is occupied by the church which has the presbytery adjacent to the southeast. Together they form an important and strategic nexus within the village. The church is the dominant structure on the site described in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, (NIAH), as a detached Roman Catholic Church, built c.1902, with steeply pitched natural slate roofs (now removed) with raised stone verges to gable ends having Cross-type finials over, (in both cast-iron and cut stone).

The NIAH assessment identifies the church as being built to an Early English Gothic-style to designs by William Hague (1836 - 1899) and later completed by his younger partner T. F. McNamara (1867 - 1947). The facades are constructed of snecked rock-faced stone with extensive ashlar limestone detailing, including clasping buttresses between nave openings and to the corners of entrance gable (south). Notable also are the string courses, the quoins to the corners and a stepped plinth to the base, a belfry and a spired tower is constructed of ashlar limestone. It is noted that the building retains much of its early form and character, whilst the spire dominates the small village and is important to its skyline. In summary the building and overall church grounds represent an important part of the architectural heritage of the village and form an important part of the village's amenity and beauty.

The Church is in good condition overall and would reflect an acceptable status quo. However contextual circumstances change, the fabric will need continued attention as climate change brings increased rainfall, biodiversity attracts an increased attention, the celebration of liturgy attracts different patterns of use, and the heating, lighting and decoration of the interior will require future attention. Such change requires an accompanying strategy, and so the plan oscillates between detail and overview. Some very specific parts of the study reflect concerns over the longevity of the roof coverings, and a number of isolated leaks which exist within the fabric, along with concern as to how the church might operate within a future zero-emission energy context. These are all discussed below creating a holistic conservation management plan, referencing the following items of importance within the following sequence: -

(a) **Church Interior:** Review the liturgical nature of the interior, and address how the experience of the church interior might create a context for an improved experience of attendance, either for quiet reflection or communal congregation.

(b) **Church Fabric:** Identify the key aspects in need of repair and maintenance and advice as to the long-term protection of the fabric.

(c) **Church Grounds:** Review the overall site and structures, including archaeology and biodiversity. Identify the challenges of use and develop a design ethos which addresses current site issues and opportunities, particularly for expressing spiritual endeavour.

3.0 . CHURCH INTERIOR

The interior of the church is of a high standard, having an interesting array of stained-glass windows (some by Watson & Co of Youghal), some fine timber joinery, a number of marble monuments and a cast-iron staircase of some design merit. It's construction across the turn of the 19th century into the 20th century, only 50 years after the famine, was like so many churches across Ireland, an extraordinary statement of faith by a community. A contemporaneous ten-year plan offers a real opportunity to shake off perhaps the curse of complacency which familiarity can engender and rediscover the crafts-based beauty of the interior and augment it along a consistent aesthetic pathway. This report offers guide-rails along this pathway. It is predicated on being a primer to allow engagement within the community and the congregation. Specifically: -

3.1 **Interior Setting:** Despite some recent alterations, the interior of the church retains its 19th century-derived liturgical setting and aesthetic. There remains the fine quality stained-glass windows, joinery, statuary and cast-iron staircase. *Actions required:* Being aware of and working within this aesthetic is important as the church would be regarded as being on the cusp of requiring significant expenditure in the immediate years ahead. Establishing a church committee to prioritise work and establish expenditures would be a worthwhile step forward. The cost centres might focus on the following areas of concern, in order of importance and urgency:

3.2 **Water Penetration:** The interiors of the building are of a high decorative quality, however the external structure discussed below is beginning to reflect the wear of time. The stone external details, to parapets, finials, valley gutters are all areas of potential ingress. Clearly water is penetrating to the rear of the gutter formed behind the main belfry spire (photos) and this will require immediate attention, to minimise internal damage. Additionally the raised 'key coping stones' of the parapets (those which stabilize the parapet) are beginning to allow water ingress back into the walls which are beginning to show signs of dampness in such places along these gables.
Actions required: Investigate immediately the roof top gutter and repair. Allow for specialist examination of joist ends in the external walls to examine the fixing methods and standard of workmanship used. This opening up and cleaning out of works is absolutely essential for the long-term survival of wood elements within the structure. Carry out appropriate focused in-depth Boron gel and spraying preservative works to the wall openings, lath and plaster abutting damp masonry, joist ends and wall plates to underside of gutter. Internally all damaged plaster will need to be investigated for bonding and boosting from fabric. Check as necessary adjacent timbers; these to be isolated where possible by a 50mm air gap from direct masonry contact. All timbers on completion of works to be supported free of contact with damp masonry where possible. Carry out woodworm treatment to roofing timbers generally and as opportunity presents itself. Utilize localized Boron technology diffusion treatment around all at-risk timbers. The works will need to reflect a conservative approach to opening up the roof, only areas capable of being completed and weathered adequately will be attempted during each working session and a supervisory foreman with responsibility for same is to be on site at all times health and Safety will be critical in this regard. (See also photos below).

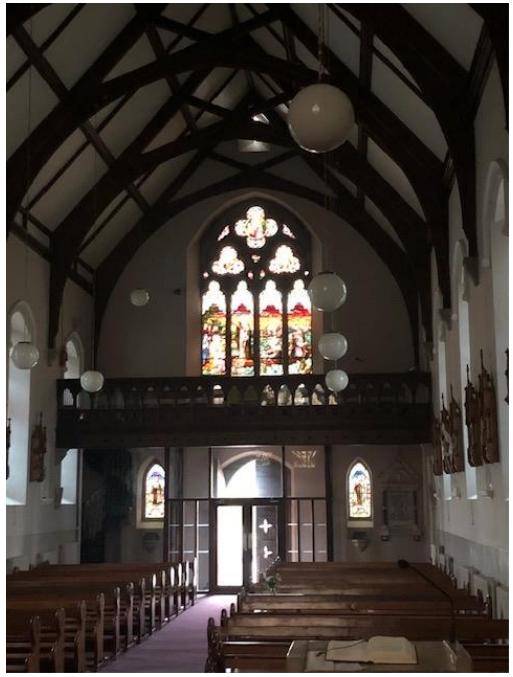
3.3 **Clarity of Liturgical Space**: The clarity of spacial use across any building can be lost over time, due to a combination of alteration, decoration conflicting fit out, or poor lighting. The focus of any liturgical space is quite obviously the Sanctuary along with the associated setting of altar tabernacle, celebrant's chair and ambo. The present celebrant, Fr Brendan O Sullivan, has expressed reservations and concerns as to the visual prominence of the tabernacle which I would share, it is too small for the setting of the main altar and has none of the visual support which might have been offered previously from the reredos. *Actions required:* Progress the aesthetic review of the church and its liturgical clarity particularly in regard to the sanctuary area and the side transepts, as these are currently dark and uninviting. Investigate the replacement of the existing tabernacle with a design in scale to the space, (create mockup as required) and relocate the artistically valuable existing tabernacle to the side altar. Reconsider the display of the St Ciaran Clonmacnoise Chalice, (dating to 1647), is association with the Ambry. There may be an argument that the location is incorrect as they distract from the view toward the altar, (this is particularly the case when the display box is lit), however a matter easily resolved during the Liturgy. It is noted that there is no inherent connection between the two exhibits and so their individual importance may be diluted and confused.

3.3 Clarity of Liturgical Space	The tabernacle lacks visual prominence and would benefit from a redesign to address both scale and lighting. The addition of a specific reredos might be adequate in itself to resolve the visual weakness.

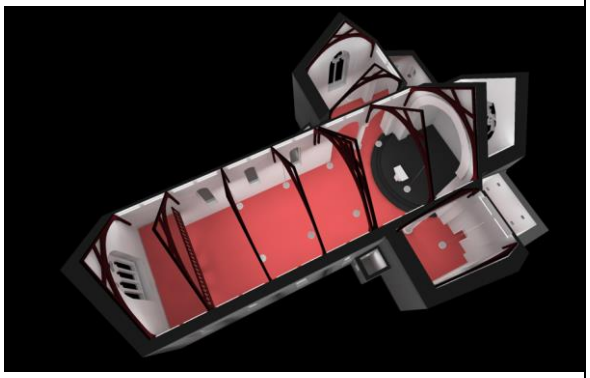
3.4 Electrics: The current wiring within the church needs inspection as to operational quality prior to progressing any works related to lighting or services generally. As all heating is inextricably becoming electrical, (due to its potential to be fossil fuel free). *Actions required:* Set up an electrical pathway for the church and grounds, which would constitute an important action area to be addressed by the community.

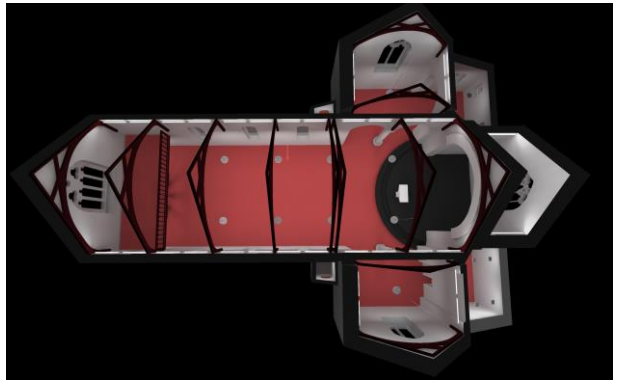
3.5 **Lighting:** The lighting within the church would benefit greatly from upgrade in the short to medium term. The scale, energy efficiency and colour options available through new fittings have transformed the aesthetic possibilities available through lighting. A review of the wiring is required prior to progressing any lighting design as a rewire would expand the possibilities of the design, but also the cost. New lighting is proposed for the internal spaces (and externally) although there may be differences in regard to the priority of aesthetic and visual expression. *Actions required:* Progress design of lighting in association with congregational committee and/or celebrant.

3.5 Lighting	A number of options were discussed in regard to the church lighting. Reusing existing connections would be the most economical solution and is the option indicated within the visual images.



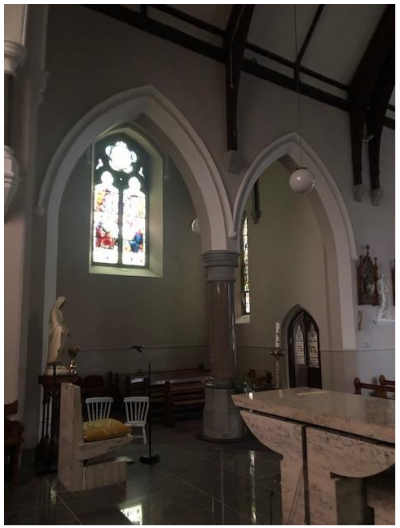
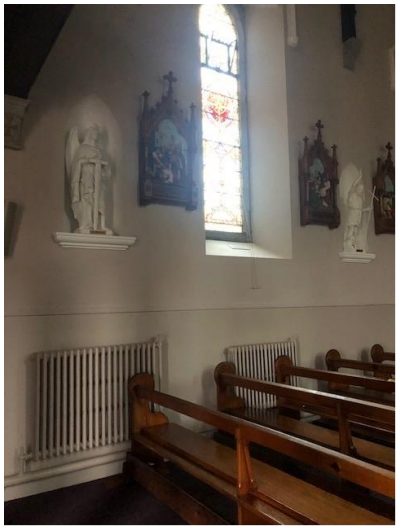
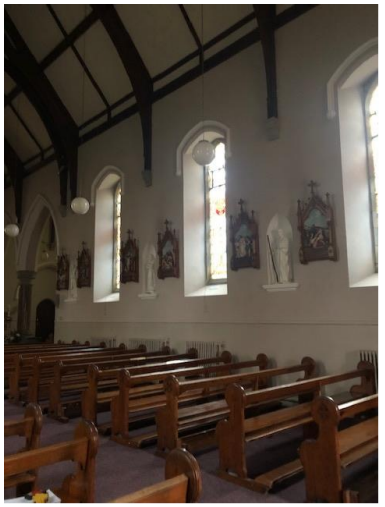
3.5 Lighting	The long-term costs reflect the rewiring of the Church, a decision in this regard could be made in 2026. External lighting could go hand in hand with landscape initiatives to improve biodiversity. The external lighting might focus on site circulation and on celebrating the architectural features of the church.



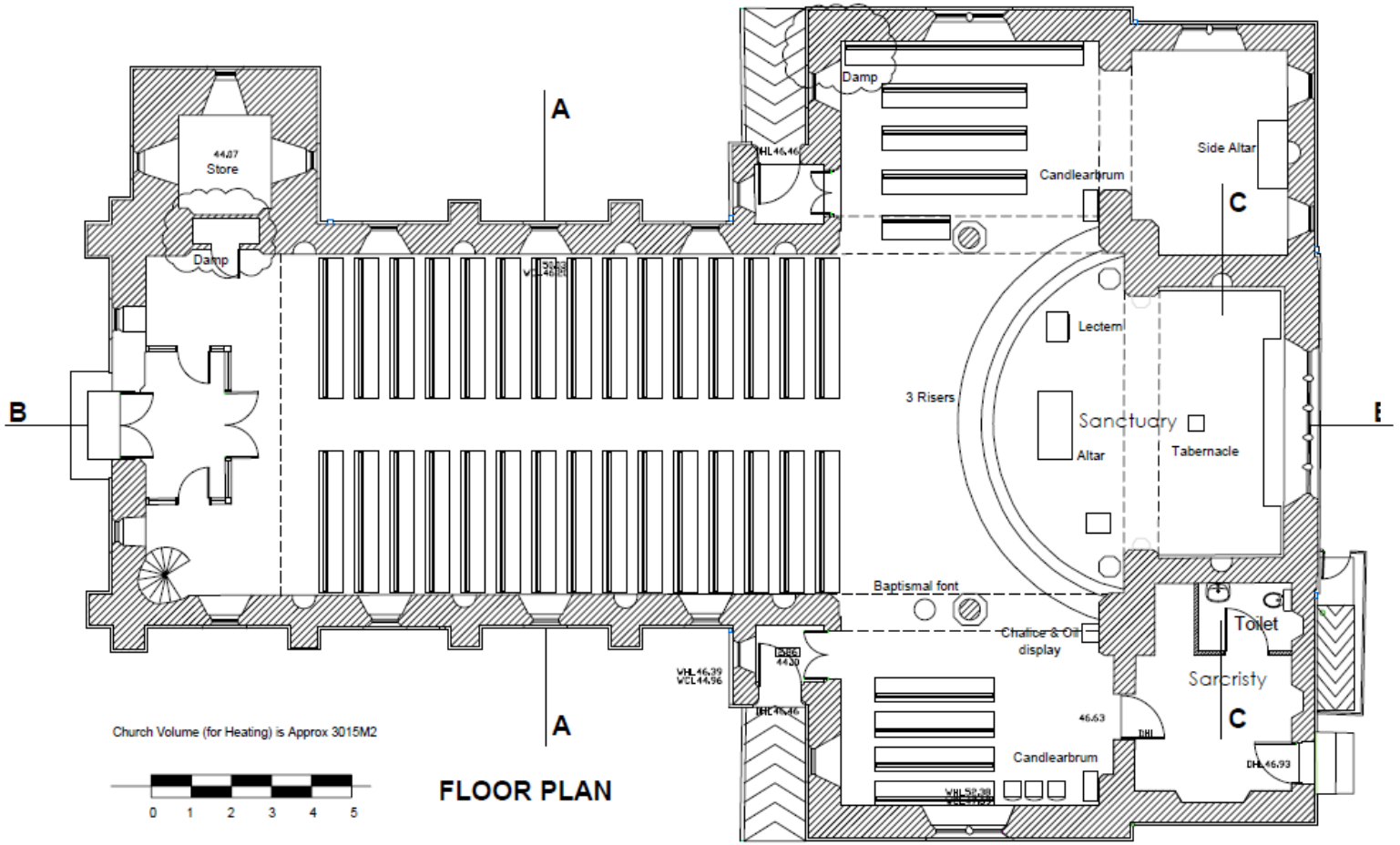


3.6 **Heating:** The existing heating system consists of boiler and associated radiators. Fr O Sullivan has confirmed that the annual expenditure for heating is not considered problematic nor is there any such concern among the congregation. Notwithstanding this, the study recommends that further investigation be progressed in regard to the future heating alternatives. *Actions required:* Development of a heating system for the church will involve, in the long-term, significant expenditure. Conversion to electrical heating will entail renewed radiators, potential radiant panels at high level, potential for phased insertion of underfloor heating and inevitably, significant disruption. In the short term, localised thermostats, improved timer controls and an improved efficiency boiler would provide undoubted benefits and should be instigated.

3.7 **Overall Decorative Condition:** In the context of the protected nature of the Church, all works instigated on the site would reflect best conservation practice as defined by the International Council on Monuments and Sites, (ICOMOS) and the 1964 Venice Charter and subsequent charters. Therefore, any specialized repair work would need to be carried out by specialist sub-contractors and suitably skilled craftspeople to ensure that only minimal interventions and/or demolition occur within the site allowing for the maximum amount of reuse of existing materials, and resulting in minimal, nuisance, dust and damage to the existing fabric, *Actions required:* Establish a palette of colours to augment the architectural quality of the space; this needs to be progressed in association with lighting and heating resolutions.

3.7 Decoration	There is significant detail within the church which would warrant careful development of a colour scheme in association with progressing the liturgical clarity of the space		
			

3.7 Decoration	The decoration can go hand in hand with developing greater liturgical clarity and lightness within the overall space.



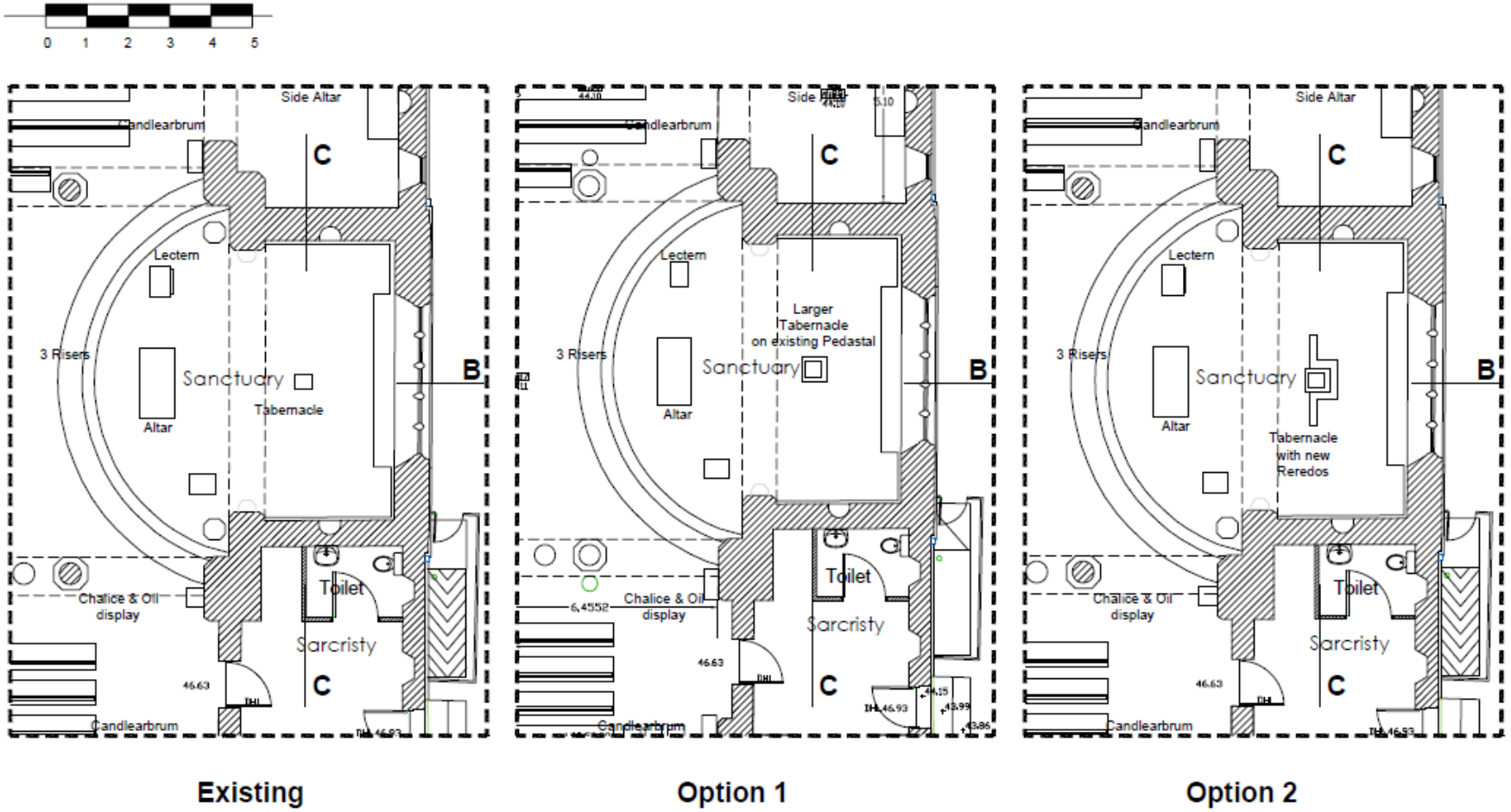
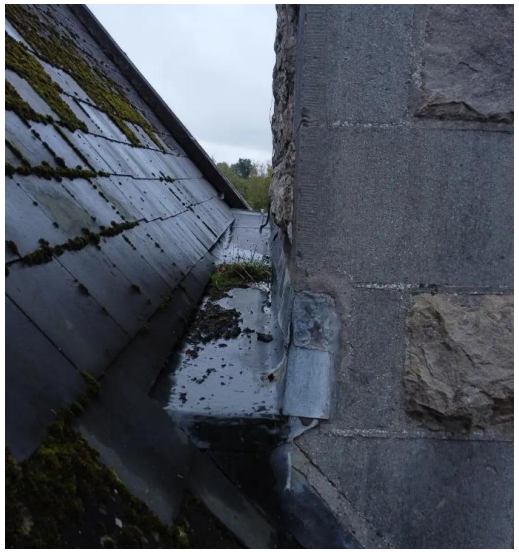


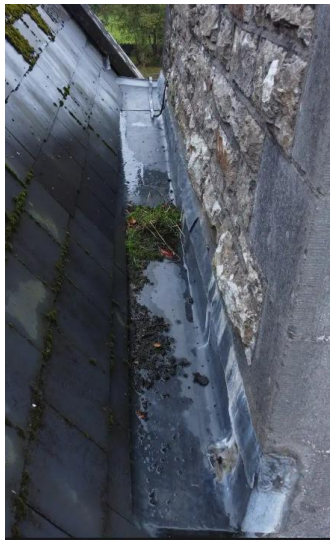
Illustration 01: Alternative approaches (1 & 2) to addressing prominence of Tabernacle within Sanctury Area.

4.0 CHURCH FABRIC.

This church was originally built for the Very Revd. Canon M. Columb. The foundation stone was laid on 11 October 1896 and was opened on the 15 of October 1902, the fabric is therefore 123 years old. The fabric by its nature is a robust solid walled structure with details which will be prone to water ingress as the structure ages settles and materials deteriorate. (Specific areas are refenced below). The areas of greatest concern would reflect the guttering and valley gutters. The short and medium terms costs reflect repair to valley gutter and replacement of guttering with cast iron gutters to match existing. It is important to emphasise that prior to disposal of any existing guttering they should be considered for possible reuse with the architect. All reused guttering/downpipes will need to be completely wire brushed, primed and painted. The down pipes are also an area of considerable danger in regard to water ingress as they fail out of sight and can discharge large amounts of water prior to being discovered. Prior to completing all RWP's unto walls, remove as necessary fixing plugs, and fill out defects behind the RWPs. Re-fix sound salvage units, or new replacements, and where possible stand RWP off the finished external wall face. Where water butts are installed, they are to be arranged to be visually non-obtrusive and all connections to minimise alterations to existing rainwater goods.

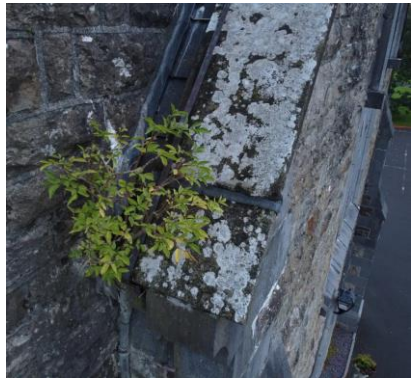
4.1 Gutter to rear of belfry tower.	The upper gutter and flashing are leaking; the photo-record of the gutter indicate that it is holding water and that the lap lacks evidential thickness to indicate a fold in the lead as would be good practice. Opening up needs to be performed internally in the first instance to establish the location of the water ingress, and its extent





4.2 Miscellaneous roof repairs (Including verges and parapets)	The church has an architectural expression of steeply raked stone parapets, typical of the design ethos at the time. These are prone to water penetration is the long term and will require phased inspection over the 10 year plan and localised repair. A lead capping to the parapets may be a long-term solution.



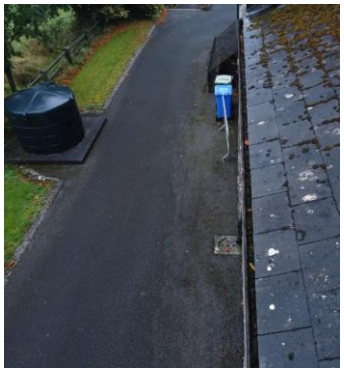

5.0 CHURCH GROUNDS.



The overall land-holding is agricultural in nature, draining down to the local river Worm, which renders the town its name, (Baile na hAbhainn). To the roadside the ste has an attractive boundary wall and some good quality cast-iron gates. The overall Site consists of 6.7 acres of ground (2.73 hectares) currently broken into 4.6 acres of agricultural land and 2.1 acres dedicated to the functionality of the Church, the Presbytery and its access and parking areas. There is also an existing shrine to the Virgin Mary located within a grove of mature trees and maintained grassed lawns. The overall layout would reflect a layout typical of such environments across the country. These are discussed below in detail, referenced within the context of the ten-year plan. However, the site has an inherent biodiversity, which has been referenced previously within a detailed Biodiversity Plan completed for the village, carried out on behalf of the community and appropriate excerpts of which are included herein. The site is also intended to play an important role within the bio-based surface water disposal scheme for the village, and this is also discussed below. Overflow parking for Mass is provided across the road within the village car park as per picture above.

5.1 Existing carparking	The car parking is functional and lacks potential for biodiversity unless some alterations are carried out; existing disabled access ramps are not compliant with current regulations and might be considered for expenditure in medium term.





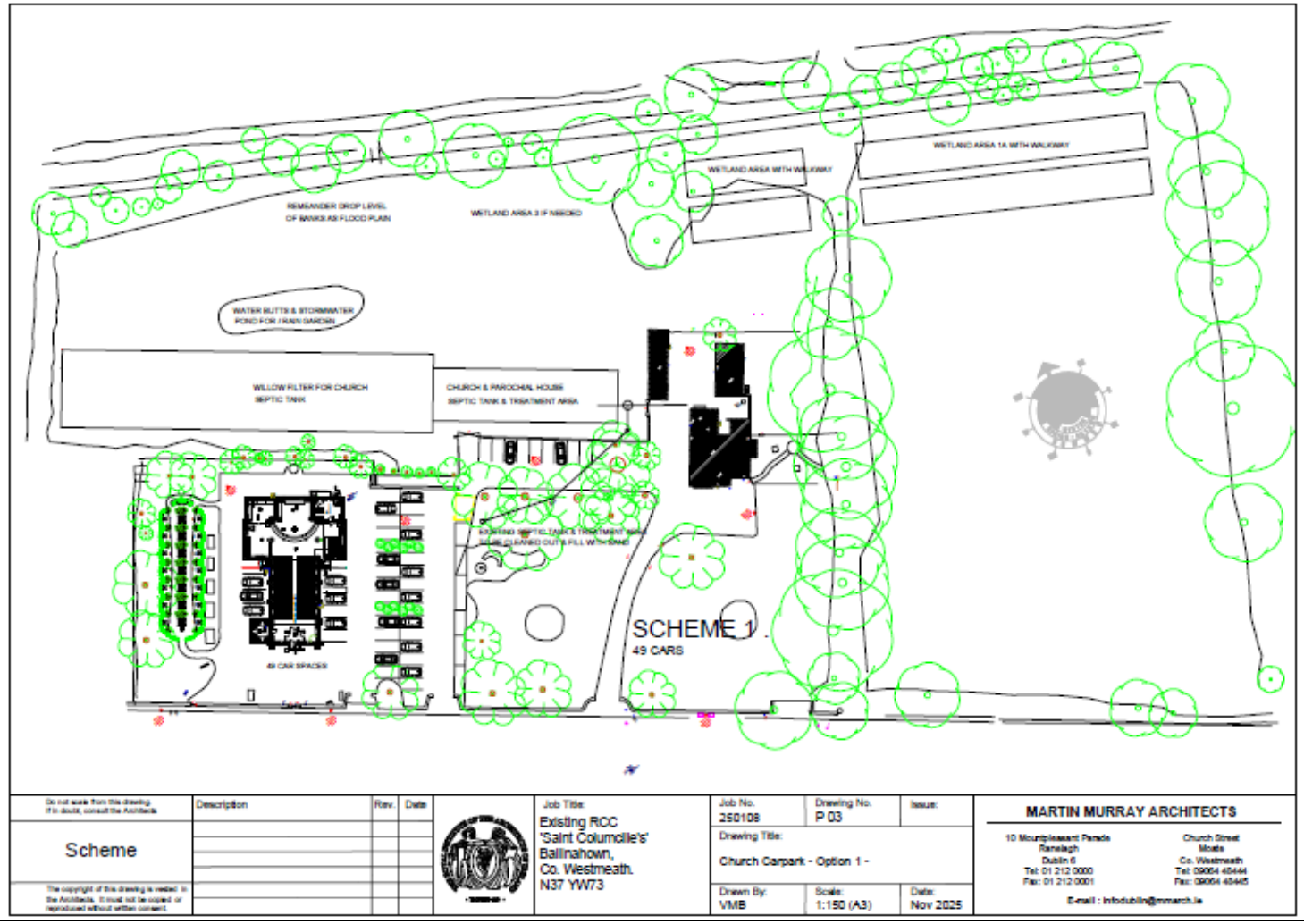


Illustration 02: Proposed long term site profile, reflecting bio based surface water drainage for the village as a whole, and foul drainage for the site.

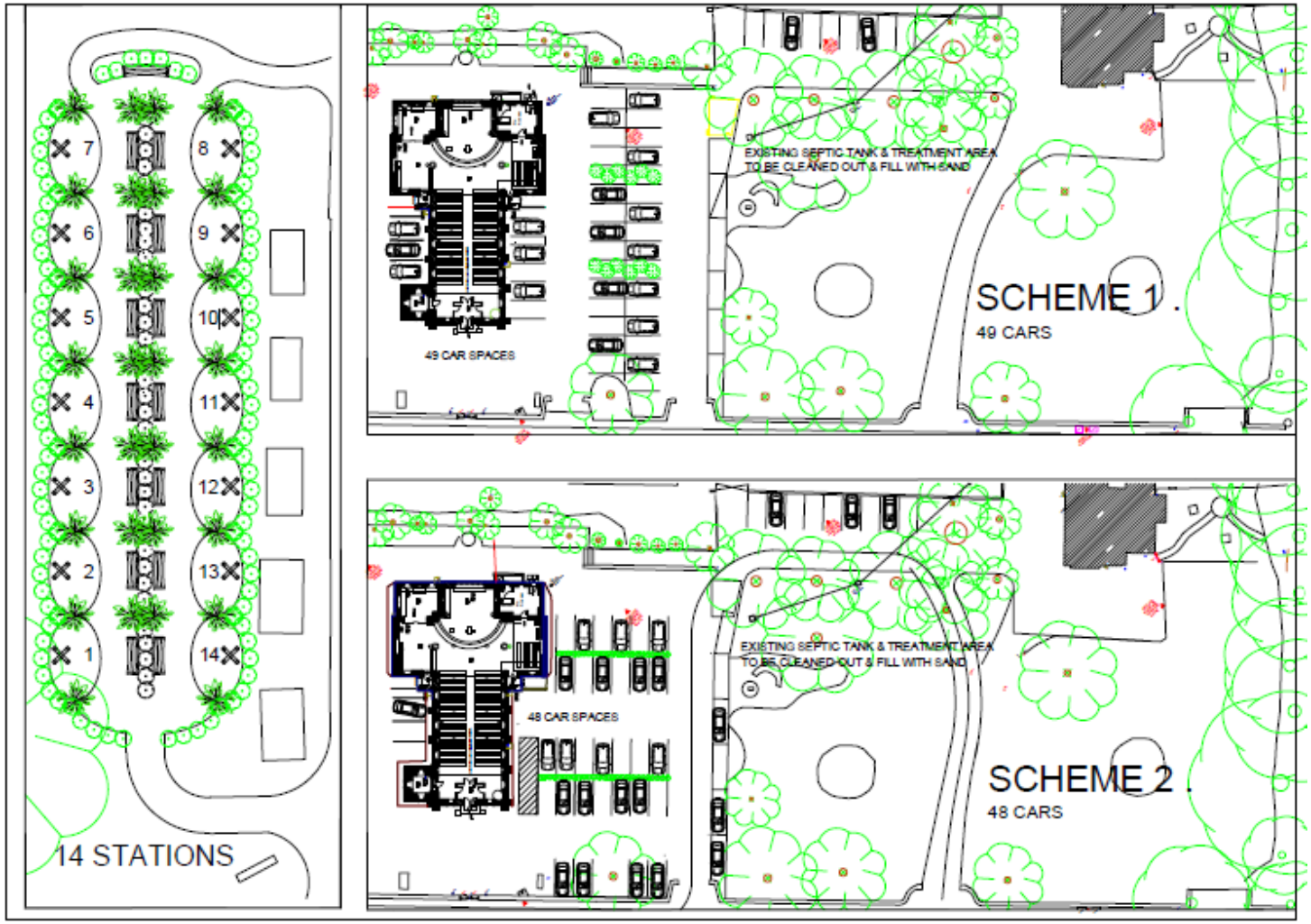


Illustration 03: From left to right (i) Proposed External area for reflection within the church grounds (set out as a stations of the Cross). Scheme 1: Parking alterations to existing layout to facilitate biodiversity or Scheme 2: Parking reflecting significant redesign in layout, (may be unwarranted).

5.2 **Biodiversity: -** The site was included within of a village-wide biodiversity study carried out by Dr C A O Connell in 2022. The *Biodiversity Plan for the Village (2022-2026)* acts as a point of departure to frame the biodiversity of the village, identifying key habitats (14) and proposing methodologies for their protection and long-term sustainability. This is all extremely valuable, reflected in the fact that four of the bird types identified around the village were in the category of conservation concern. In regard to the Church and grounds it was recognized (in the study) as a distinct biodiversity area with six distinct types of habitat from parkland to ornamental shrub beds, to hedgerows, tree lines, stone walls and the buildings themselves. None of the actions profiled within this strategy plan are intended to negate the biodiversity actions described within the biodiversity study, a number of which are shown below. Proposals for alterations to parking and stations of the cross will be carried out in consultation with the biodiversity team within the village. The biodiversity study recommends that the church join the online community of 'Eco-Congregation Ireland', (ECI), a helpful resource which encourages churches of all denominations to reflect an eco-approach to their property and financial management, and their worship and lifestyle. The current alterations within the grounds, being implemented reflect this approach.

Figure 3: Biodiversity Study Areas in the village of Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath. 1. St Colmcille's Church Grounds; 2. Market Square and the Back of the Community Centre; 3. St Colmcille's National School; 4. Woodland at the back of the school; 5. Ballinahown Sports Park; 6. Ballinahown Biodiversity Park and 7. N62 and Road to Clonmacnoise Village Gateways and Woodlands Housing Estate Map: © osi.ie.

Figure 4: St Colmcille's Roman Catholic Church, Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath location and habitat map. Photo: modified C. O'Connell and www.osi.ie.

Illustrations 04 & 05: - (Ref Dr C A O Connell) indicating biodiversity study areas and habitat delineation within Church grounds (2022 – 2026). (Ref: Biodiversity Study for larger illustrations)

5.2 Biodiversity Action Plan for Church Grounds and Parochial House, (*Ref Dr C A O Connell)*.

Table 4: Biodiversity Action Plan for St Colmcille's Church and Parochial House, Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath.

Action Number	Timescale Short 1-2 years, medium 3 years, long 4-5 years	Action	Notes
8.1.1	Short	Ensure that grass cuttings and weeded material from regularly maintained areas and flower beds of the church grounds are disposed of to a composting area in the village.	All brown and green waste should be picked up, chopped up and placed in a large composting system. This should be located conveniently to the church grounds and labelled so that users understand the policy of composting. Compost produced can be used on flower beds or in the village polytunnel.
8.1.2	Medium	Scented screen planting of rail and post fencing to rear of Church	The rail and post fencing to the rear of the Church should be screened with scented, wildlife attracting climbers including ivy, honeysuckle, travellers joy (*Clematis*), brambles (blackberries) and wild rose
8.1.3	Short	Change existing hedge management	The hedge on the south eastern margin of the Church grounds beside the Parochial House is being cut too frequently and is shaped incorrectly. Teagasc advise that hedges should be trimmed to an 'A" or triangular profile from a wide base to allow light at the base, leaving the peak at least 1.5m (5 feet) from ground level, or the top of the hedge bank. Occasional thorn saplings should be encouraged to grow into individual trees. This will create the ideal conditions for birds to nest, providing cover from predators above and below the nest, and providing flowers in summer for bees and other pollinators, and berries in autumn for birds and small mammals. The hedgerow maintenance period runs from September 1 to the end of February. Hedges should be cut every two to three years in rotation around the village amenities to maximize the wildlife benefits.
8.1.4	Short	Create naturally defined corridors for wildlife (see Plate 3)	Provide natural corridors along which insects or animals can pass by allowing a strip of grassland 1-2m wide to grow, flower and set seed along all hedges and under large trees in the parkland habitat. Once a year mow the entire grassland meadow area and remove waste to the compost heap. This helps to control vigorous grass growth. Scarify the ground with rakes to help wild flower seeds make contact with bare soil and germinate to increase the abundance of wild flowers in subsequent years. This action helps to promote biodiversity around the perimeters of species poor habitats such as amenity grassland within the parkland habitat.
8.1.5	Short	Enhance wildlife value of existing flower Beds and install bee insect hotel to front of the Parochial House	The permanent flower beds to the front of the church could be planted with pollinator friendly flowers (in the blue and pink flower colour range) preferred by insects between the structural elements of the permanent shrubs. These would include Lavender, Tutsan, Hebe, thyme and self seeding herbs such as *Calendula*, *Aquilegia*, Marjoram, Michaelmas daisy (*Aster*), *Sedum* or iceberg plant, *Eupatorium*, Salvia, Echinops. Some thought should be given to planting bulbs for early spring interest such as Crocus, Anemone, Snowdrop and wild daffodil and winter flowering heathers to provide a source of nectar in the lean months. A bee insect hotel can be installed in the bed to provide habitat for bees.
8.1.6	Medium	Redesign courtyard garden as a pollinator friendly wild flower meadow (see Plate 4)	A new design should be provided for the courtyard garden next to the parochial house. This should be pollinator friendly. The hard surface material needs to be lifted to expose the soil beneath. This soil may be poor and ideally suited to the development of a wildflower meadow developed from a seed mix.
8.1.7	Medium	Create a woodland wildlife garden under the specimen trees e.g. Cedar of Lebanon and Copper Beech (see Plate 5)	The specimen trees are a focal point in the Church grounds. The shaded conditions under these trees where grass does not grow are ideal for woodland plants such as snowdrop, cow parsley, lesser celendine, wood anemone, primrose, bluebell, lords and ladies, ramson and native ferns.
8.1.8	Short	Go peat-free in all planters in the Church grounds	All planting in tubs, containers and window boxes should be peat free. Use compost generated from heaps established in the village for planting.
8.1.9	Medium	Screen planting of wall to front of parochial house (see Plate 6)	The low brick wall to the front of the parochial house needs to be screened by planting ivy and a beech hedge to provide habitat for overwintering wildlife and to green this rendered brick wall.
8.1.10	Short	Stop the use of sprays in the church grounds	There is evidence that sprays are being used in the Church grounds. This practice needs to stop in the interest of health and safety and wildlife enhancement
8.1.11	Short	Facilitate Community Engagement on the management of the grounds of St Colmcille's Church	Form a discussion group regarding the management regime for the Church grounds with the local community. Find out what is important to local people. Decide what can be changed now and what might take longer to achieve. Please visit www.ecocongregationireland.com and take the environmental check up to help get started.

Plate 1 left: Fine specimen of copper beech in the scattered trees and parkland habitat in the grounds of the Church of St Colmcille. Photo: © C. O'Connell. Plate 2 right: Rose bed with evidence of spraying Action 8.1.10 recommends spraying is stopped in the interest of enhancing biodiversity. Photo: © C. O'Connell.

Illustration 06: Control spraying to be stopped to protect biodiversity

Plate 3: the image on the left shows the hedge and tree line on the south eastern margin of the church grounds. The image on the right shows the development of a herb layer of cow parsley in Bushy Park, Dublin through the absence of mowing in spring (see Action 8.1.4 in Table 4). This action creates wildlife corridor. Photos © C. O'Connell and A. O'Connell

Illustration 07: The creation of wildlife corridors to be respected through the site.

Plate 4: The image on the left shows the gravelled courtyard garden adjacent to the parochial house with a paved path. The image on the right shows a wildflower meadow pollinator friendly garden developed in Herbert Park Dublin. Action 8.1.6 in Table 4 proposes this biodiversity enhancement for the courtyard garden. This kind of management in the enhances biodivesity and creates a spring/summer display of wild flowers to the delight of those using the Church for prayer and special occasions. Photos © C. O'Connell & A. O'Connell

Illustration 08: Pollinator friendly planting to support biodiversity.

Plate 5: The image on the left shows the cedar of Lebanon tree in the St Colmcille's church grounds. The image on the right shows a beech specimen tree in Emo Gardens Co. Laois where native bluebells (***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***) have been naturalised under the tree. For many people the emergence of bluebells is a sign that spring has sprung. Action 8.1.7 in Table 4 proposes this biodiversity enhancement for large trees in St Colmcille's Church in Ballinahown. Photos © C. O'Connell

Illustration 09: Underplanting of decorative trees to be implemented

Additional to the Biodiversity profile of the site a detailed *Arboricultural Safety and Management Assessment Report* was carried out in April 2024 by *Noel Lane, Tree Care Services* on behalf of the Municipal District of Athlone. The report notes the prominence within the church grounds of a number of feature trees with management recommendations set out within the report (Illustration 10 below). The proposed 10-year plan recommends that tree management and biodiversity principles be carried through in their entirety.





Illustration 10: Trees are considered of significant amenity value within the grounds and their protection underlined within the strategy report

5.3 **Archaeology: -** The site has been reviewed for the purposes of archaeological potential. An assessment carried out by Dr Niall Gregory of Gregory Archaeology indicates that the nearest recorded archaeological site (WM035-012-Enclosure) is located 510m from the site and would have no bearing in regard to the church site itself, a fact which cartographical records also confirm.
The Church was built on a greenfield site early in the 20th century and no site features or anomalies are evident from mapping as would indicate archaeological potential. (Ref: Appendix for overview letter from Gregory Archaeology).

5.4 **Bio-based Drainage: -** The rear of the site which drains down to the river Worm has been reviewed for the purposes of creating an Ecological Surface Water Management Plan for the village under the auspices of the Local Authorities Waters Programme (LAWPRO) and designed by FH Wetland Systems Ltd. Any future plans for the Church and grounds will necessitate consultation with Féidhlim Harty, of FH Wetland Systems Ltd, the author of the Water Management Plan, the layout of which is indicated within the site plan above. The strategy plan also indicates an existing septic tank located adjacent to the shrine within the Church grounds, and which is in need of significant medium-term attention. Investigations completed by *Independent Drain Testing Ltd*, indicate that the tank is susceptible to ground water infiltration, has no differentiated percolation area and drainage pipes have back-flows and leakage. A biobased drainage solution is recommended as part of this report.

Fig. 10.1 – Examples of sizing options for a stormwater wetland for the full village

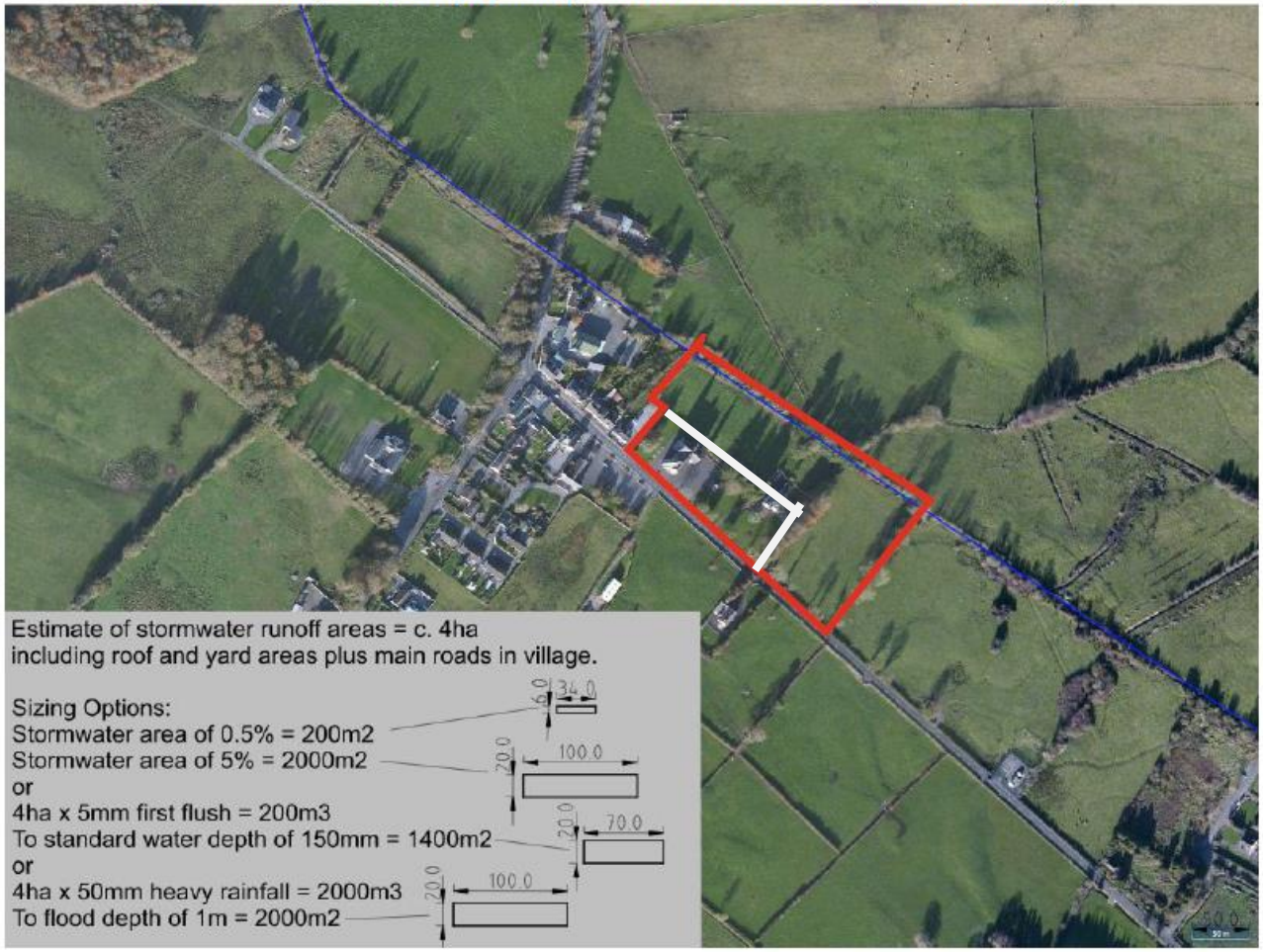


Illustration 11: Biobased Surface Water Drainage Area calculations:- The red enclosed area is the overall study area for this plan, while the white line differentiates the active Church grounds to the front from the drainage area to the rear.

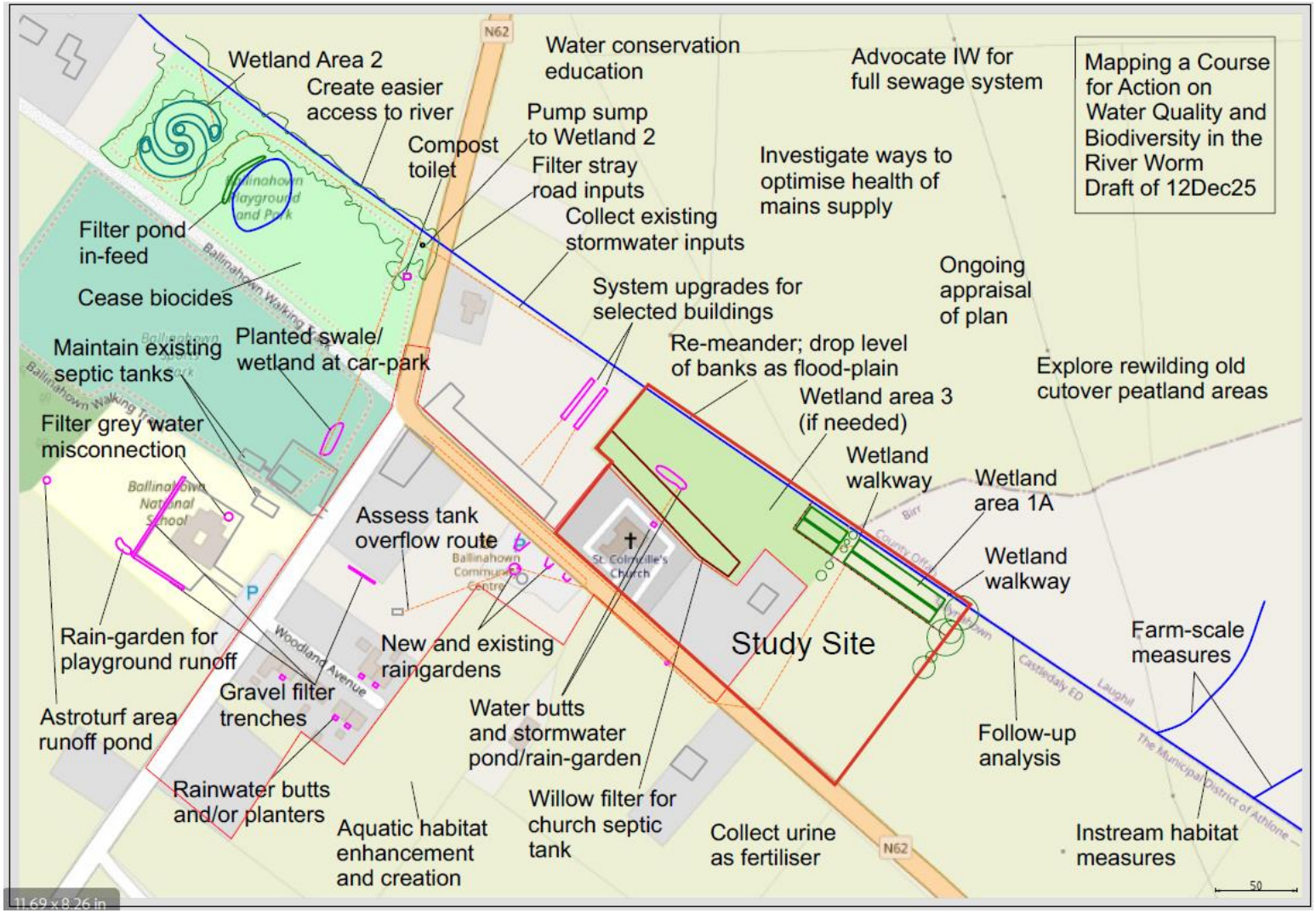
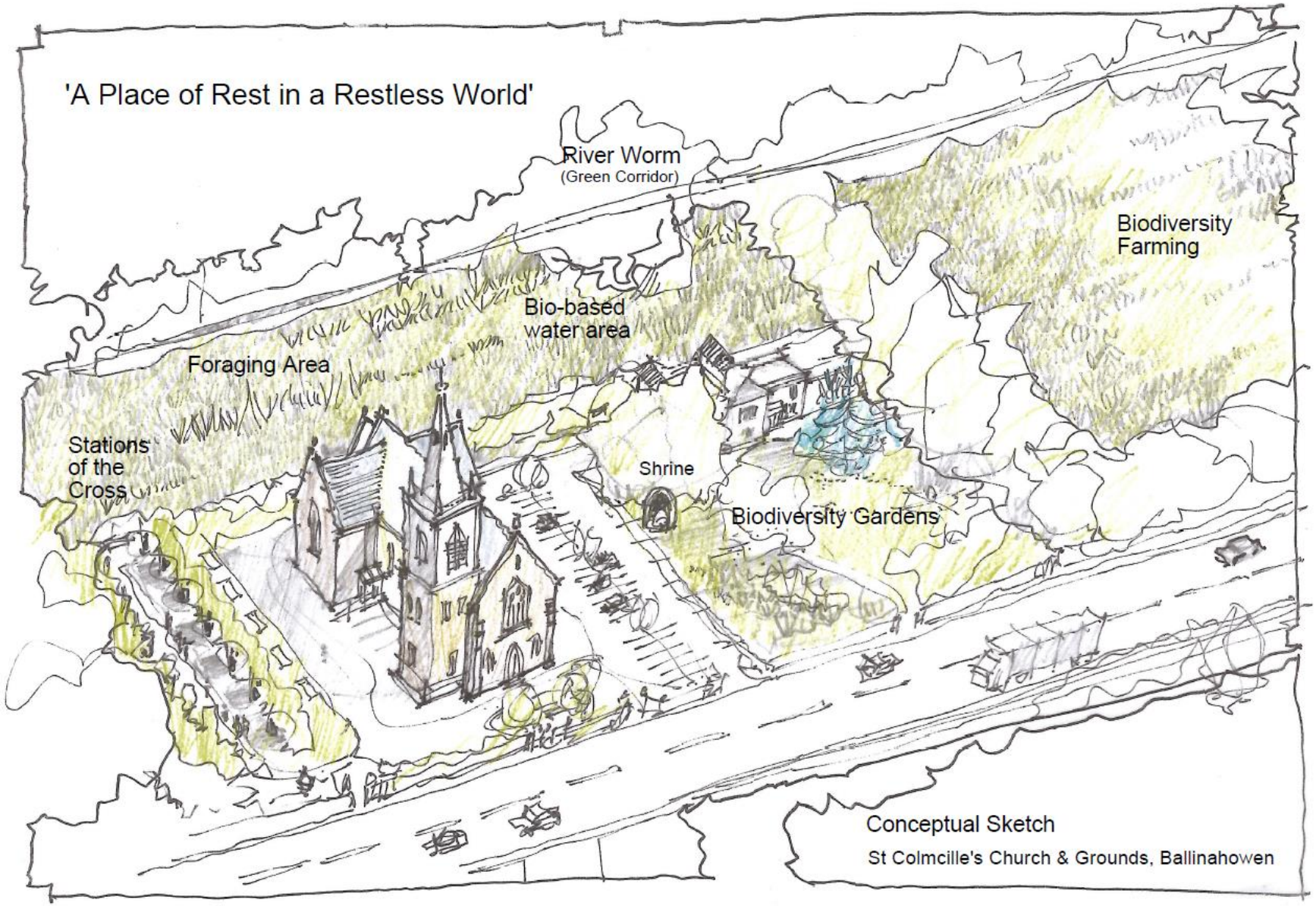


Illustration 12: Indicating general masterplan for the Bio-based SW drainage solution, (including willow filter for church septic tank as noted).


'A Place of Rest in a Restless World'
River Worm
(Green Corridor)
Biodiversity
Farming
Bio-based
water area
Foraging Area
Stations
of the
Cross
Shrine
Biodiversity Gardens
Conceptual Sketch
St Colmcille's Church & Grounds, Ballinahowen

6.0 SUMMARY AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 TO 2035.

The Church and its attendant grounds are an integral part of the village of Ballinahown and contribute greatly to its sense of place and its amenity value. Any strategy plan is therefore an opportunity for both the church congregation, and the wider village community to progress and define a shared vision as to how these important facilities might be used in an optimal way, across the next few years and into a fossil free and biodiverse future. This will be to the benefit of all. To identify such a future, in a cogent and structured way, is also to protect that future.

In such a manner the report and assessment is the first of many steps across short, medium and long term aims which will create an understanding of the opportunities and challenges ahead. The implications of these and the decisions required now to ensure an optimal future for the facilities for future generations will ensure that the community now becomes the ancestor which those future generations will reflect kindly on.

The priority works intended are: -

Item	**Short Term Works**	Timescale	Funding source	Approximate Costs
01	Attend to leakages within Church (including repairs and localised redecoration)	2026	BHIS 2026	€40,000.00
02	Commence design/installation of bio-based SW drainage solution within grounds	2026 - 2027	Climate Action Fund	€25,000.00
03	Invesigate and commence altering surface water disposal within site	2027	LAWPRO	€15,000.00
04	Implement review of Church layout, including sanctuary and tabernacle	2027	Church	€10.000.00
05	Progress and complete bio-based SW drainage solutions	2027 - 2028	Climate Action Fund	€40,000.00
			SUB-TOTALS	**€130,000.00**
Item	**Medium Term Works**	Timescale	Funding source	Approximate Costs
01	Complete bio based foul drainage solution for grounds	2028	LAWPRO	€25,000.00
02	Commence review of Church Services	2028	Church / SEAI	€5,000.00
03	Instigate update of services (Electrical & builder's work)	2029	Church / SEAI	€100,000.00
04	Commence review/installation of Church lighting	2029	Church / SEAI	€50,000.00
05	Commence works to carpark & Stations of the Cross	2030	CF of I / LAWPRO	€50,000.00
			SUB-TOTALS	**€ 230,000.00**
Item	**Long Term Works**	Timescale	Funding source	Approximate Costs
01	Instigate update of services (Heating & builder's work)	2030 - 2032	Church / SEAI	€120,000.00
02	Consider reroofing (including insulation) of entire church	2032 - 2034	Church / SEAI / BHIS	€400,000.00
03	Commence Redecoration	2034 - 2035	Church	€80,000.00
04	Complete Stations of the Cross and biodiversity actions	2034 - 2035	CF of I / LAWPRO	€30,000.00
05	Complete Works within Church	2035	Church	€10,000.00
			SUB-TOTALS	**€640,000.00**
	Conservation and Biodiversity Actions across 10 years	**TOTALS**		**€ 1,000,000.00**

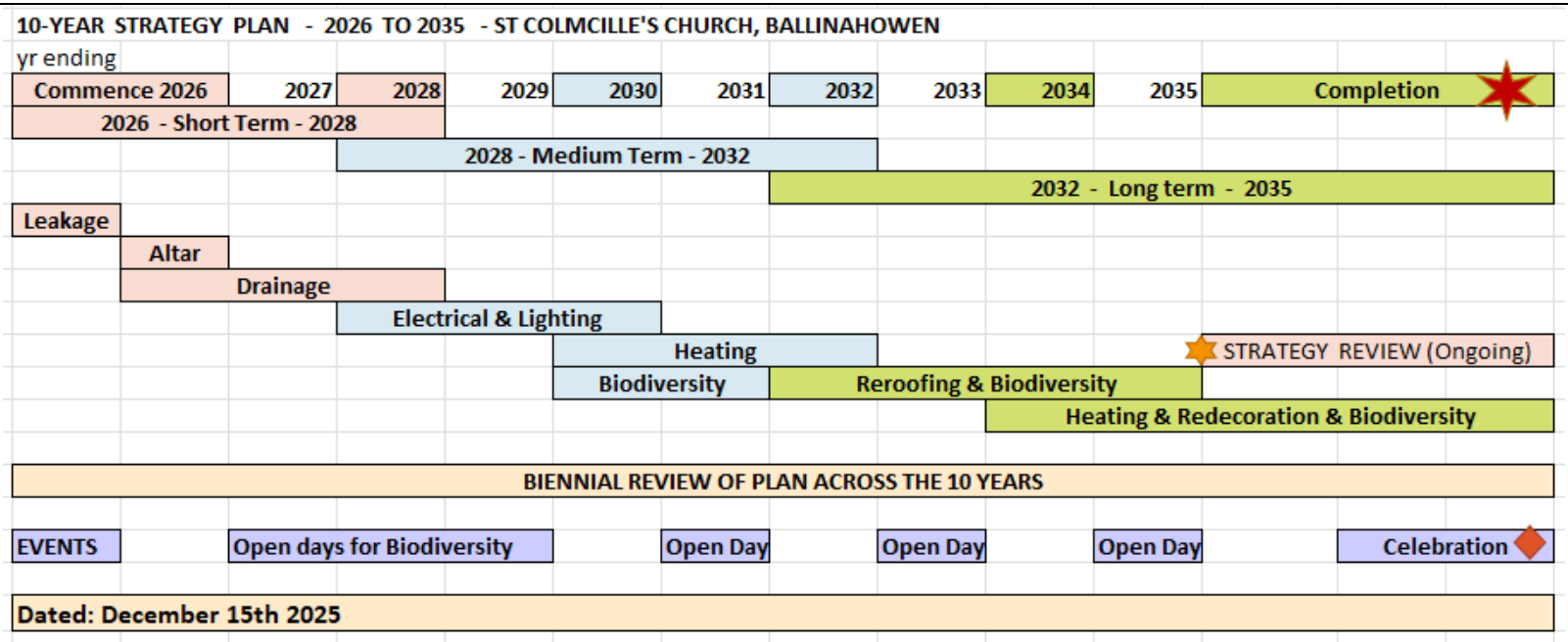


Illustration 14: Pathways across the ten years of strategic progress reflecting short, medium, and long term actions.

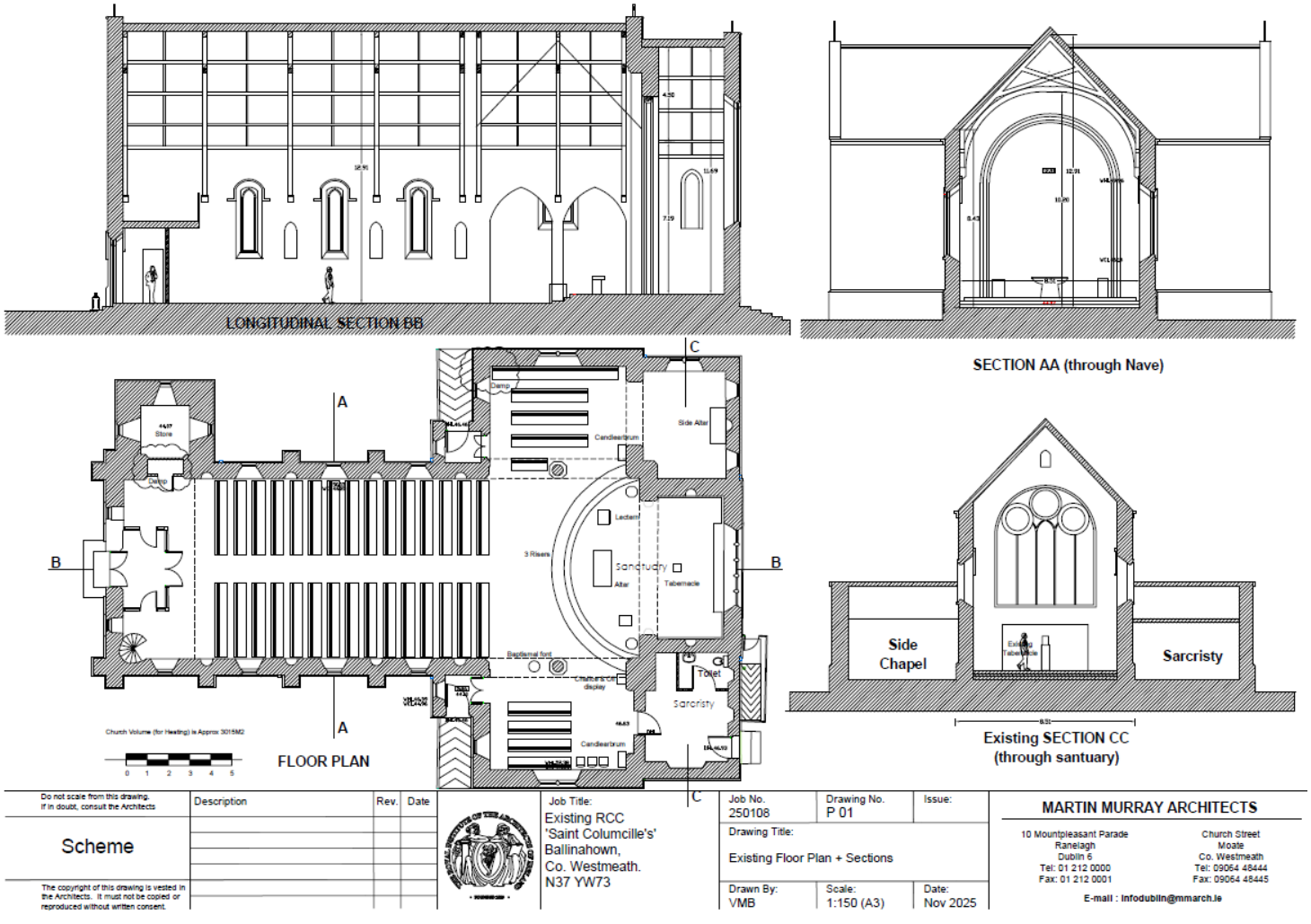
The works referenced and described, are intended to progress the overall conservation and optimal use and facility of the church and grounds for the congregation and community at large. They will not affect the characteristics of the structure or setting which are considered worthy of protection. The intent of the works and the future intended strategy is not to achieve a 'new context' but rather to ensure that the church and grounds continue to offer a comfortable place of reflection and spirituality whilst retaining those qualities of the setting and its patina of history which are at the core of the properties importance and authenticity.

Martin Murray FRIAI

Dr Martin Murray FRIAI
MARTIN MURRAY ARCHITECTS
December 2025

7.0 Appendix

(1) Architect's drawing of Church
(2) Letter from Gregory Archaeology
(3) Church lighting design



7.1 Architect's Drawing of Floor Plan and Section of Church

Gregory Archaeology

Dunburbeg
Clonmel Road
Cashel
Co. Tipperary

12th November 2025

Micheál Coughlan
c/o Martin Murray Architects
Church Street
Moate
Co. Westmeath
N37AY83

Re: Response to Heritage Council's Condition for Archaeological Input - St. Colmcille's Church, Ballinahowen (Ref: CH4695)

Dear Micheál,

I have reviewed the potential for archaeological impacts as outline assessment in relation to the proposed restoration works of St. Colmcille's Church. This has been undertaken with regard to the Heritage Council's **Specific condition**: *Please ensure that the conservation report includes archaeological and ecological input from qualified practitioners* (dated 3rd July 2025).

The outline assessment entailed review of available databases being National Monuments Service's record of archaeological sites through their map viewer (www.archaeology.ie) and record and findings of previous archaeological work (www.excavations.ie). Further examination of available historical cartographic records was also undertaken.

The findings of these resources have determined that the nearest recorded archaeological (WM035-012---- : Enclosure) resides *circa* 510m to the north-northwest of St. Colmcille's Church and thus has no impacted upon the church, which itself was built at the start of the 20th century. Excavations Bulletins (www.excavations.ie) presents no archaeological work in the vicinity of Ballinahowen village and thus presents no impacts. Historical cartographic records has determined that the location of St. Colmcille's Church was a greenfield site until the early 20th century after which the church was the built and no features or anomalies are mapped that could be construed as having any archaeological potential.

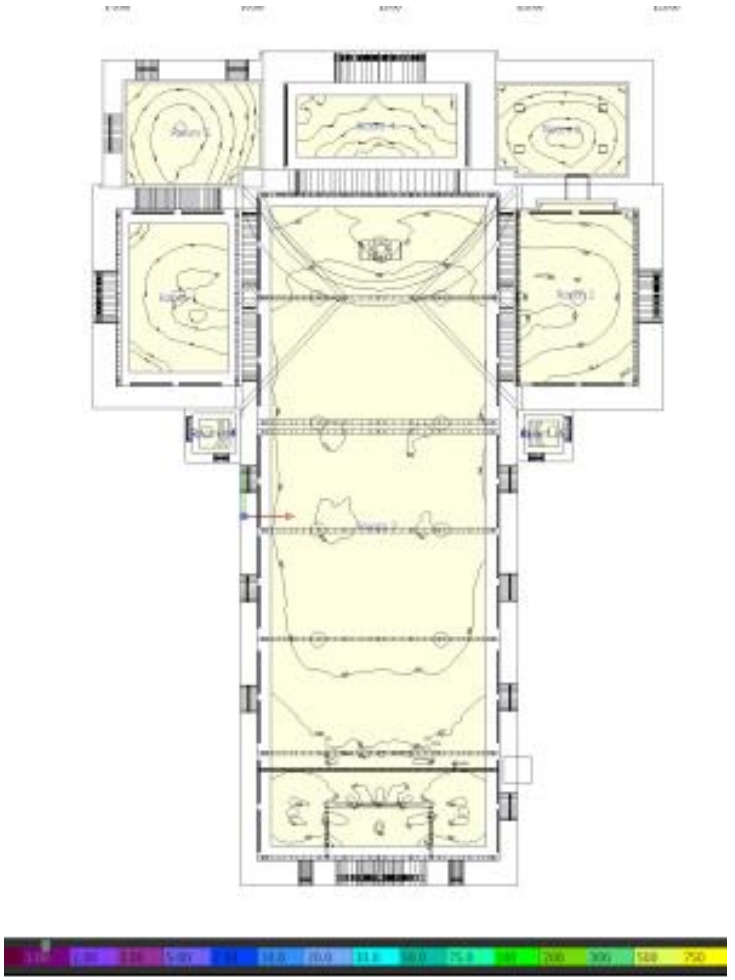
It is therefore recommended that there are no impacts upon any archaeological potential with specific regard to your proposed works. It is recommended that the Heritage Council should adopt these findings and consider this matter satisfactorily concluded.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Niall Gregory
Archaeologist

Gregory Archaeology, MIAI
Dunburbeg, Clonmel Road, Cashel, Co. Tipperary – Skuna Bay, Donaghmore, Gorey, Co. Wexford – 62 Knocknashee, Goatstown, Dublin 14
Mobile: 086 4096899 Email: info@gregoryarchaeology.com Website: www.gregoryarchaeology.com
VAT Reg No 4238323PH

7.2 Letter from Gregory Archaeology regarding Church Grounds



7.3 Lighting analysis of Church Interior (new lighting)

Sky

Body
Aluminium body with electrostatic 100% polyester paint finish.

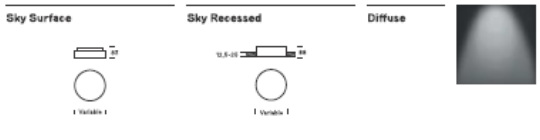
Diffuser
Frosted acrylic diffuser with perfect light uniformity.

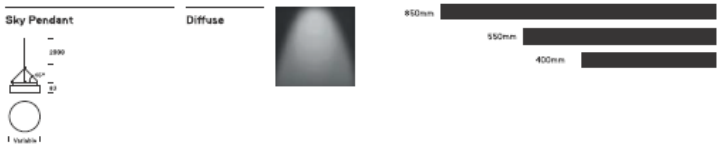
Accessories
Fitting accessories for different applications are available. Suspension fitting accessories include power supply base and 2m of 1,2mm steel suspension cables with millimetric height adjustment system. Power supply base made of clear polycarbonate and supplied with clear power cable.

Light Source
LED modules with excellent colour consistency (3 step-MacAdam) and long operating lifespan (>50.000h; L80/B10). LED CRI >80 3000K, 4000K.

Power Supply
Drivers On/Off or DALI included.

Sky Surface / Sky Recessed / Sky Pendant





7.3 (cont.) Sample of suspended light fittings for potential use within church, (reusing existing connections)