

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION REPORT



Rathcoole courthouse: Proposed Extension and Alterations to the former Court of Petty Sessions, Rathcoole, county Dublin

Part VIII Process, carried out under Part VIII of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, Part 8.

Consultation Process stage.



The former courthouse, as existing

Issued April 2021

PART 8

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1. Introduction and summary

1.1 Description of the building.

Rathcoole Courthouse is a fine Edwardian Arts and Crafts building, built about 1914 containing many original finishes and features and is a prominent building in the village. It is located on the south side of Main Street in the centre of Rathcoole village. It was built in an Edwardian Arts and Crafts style with a half-timbered gable, a strong horizontal banded emphasis, prominent brick chimneys, and a symmetrical façade to the courtroom with classical detailing. The detached, freestanding courthouse has a simple L-plan with the prominent three-bay, double-height courtroom facing the main street and a smaller three-bay, single-storey section to the west set back from street which contains the judge's robing room, toilet and a fuel store.

The Arts and Crafts style, derived from English traditions, was being applied to Irish public buildings in the early twentieth century, including simple post offices, village halls, Carnegie libraries and banks of small towns and villages. Nearest in style and confidence to this design were the Carnegie libraries of Ballyboden, designed by Thomas Joseph Byrne and Cabinteely by R.M. Butler both in Co. Dublin and Adare Village Hall and Club House by William Clifford Smith.

The solid walls are built from buff-yellow common canal bricks and rendered with a lime roughcast render and plastered within. Including the external roughcast finish and internal wall plaster, the external walls are approximately 300mm thick (1 brick thickness, plus 25mm plaster and 25mm plaster) and approximately 5.7 metres high. There are 1 ½ brick thick piers along each side of the courtroom, with full-height blind segmental-headed arches between them. There is a large name plaque on the front façade with the date 1914 cast into the pediment above the entrance. The large windows to the courtroom are side-hung timber casements and those to the robing room and toilet are timber sliding sash windows. The entrance to the courtroom is made with flat-panelled double doors with the aforementioned pedimented surround. The entrance to the robing room is a central timber panelled door with an overlight below a bracketed, half-timbered gabled hood - a smaller version of that above the entrance to the courtroom. All of the internal doors are flat-panelled doors with bolection mouldings planted on.

The ceilings are of modern plasterboard with a skim coating, fixed to the undersides of the roof trusses and to intermediate joists. Most of the original lime, plaster-on-lathe ceiling was replaced at and only remains in the plain cornice which surrounds the perimeter of the courtroom ceiling. The small cast iron mantels, ceramic tiles and timber fireplaces and hearths in the robing room and courtroom are probably original.

The pitched roofs are covered with 3mm thick, 320m square, fibre-cement roof tiles with their corners chamfered off, laid in a diamond or hexagonal pattern, each tile being hung from a nail near the corner of each tile, rendered with a lime parging mortar to the underside. There is no roofing felt. The tiles are made from a Chrysotile asbestos and cement mixture which has been confirmed by laboratory analysis. No photographs of the building taken shortly after construction have been sourced during the research for this report which might show if these are the original roof covering or a later replacement. The courtroom roof is supported by a cut roof of 22 king-post roof trusses with a substantial attic - over 3m high to the underside of the ridge board. The prominent timber gable front is cantilevered out beyond the front façade, over the main street by 250mm. The smaller roof over the robing room and toilet is supported by 9 trusses. There is no attic above the external fuel store in the south-western corner, the underside of the roof being visible from within. The

gutters and rainwater down pipes are of cast iron, many possibly original, some were replaced during conservation work in 2013.

The ground surfaces around the courthouse are finished with modern concrete paviours and poured concrete. The ground level has been raised slightly since the building was built, as evidenced by the sunken position of the rainwater down pipe outlets to the gullies and the vent grilles along the bottom of the front and rere facades which ventilate the cavity under the suspended timber floor within. The timber floorboards are laid in a north-south direction in the courtroom and east west in the robing room. This and the width of the room suggests that the east-west joists are probably supported by series of intermediate tessel walls underneath the floor of the former courtroom. The floor of the courtroom have been covered with timber ply sheet and carpet tiles recently.

There is a small yard to the rere of the courthouse which contains outbuildings; these are offices, a kitchenette and toilet facilities, built during the 1980s with concrete block walls and a built-up felt covered flat roofs. These buildings were used by county council staff until about 2013 but have been unused for several years. The monument on the forecourt which commemorates the Rathcoole men of 1798 was unveiled in 1997.

1.2. The background of the current project

The building is administered by Rathcoole Community Council on behalf of South Dublin County Council who are the owners. The community council is a local voluntary group which uses it for public religious worship, Irish dancing lessons, theatrical productions and other public, community uses. The poor condition of the internal finishes and fixtures, the availability of only a single toilet, poor thermal comfort, difficulties for some people with disabilities in accessing and using the building and the absence of a modern central heating system are the main generators of this project.

The brief was to demolish the outbuildings in the rere yard, and to build a new extension behind the existing building with modern toilet and sanitary facilities, an office or meeting room, and a coffee-dock and kitchenette. As well as conservation of the existing building, new access ramps and mechanical aids, mechanical and electrical services (central heating, fire and intruder alarm and detection systems) and a new toilet / public convenience will be provided in the existing building to make it more accessible and comfortable for visitors.

1.3 The proposed conservation works to the existing building

In addition to the mechanical and electrical works, and works to make the building more accessible listed above, the following interventions are proposed to conserve the existing built fabric:

- The floorboards in the former courtroom will probably be mostly replaced with new; the full extent of works will be established by limited opening-up works and will be agreed in advance with the county council's Architectural Conservation Officer. The existing boards are underneath a layer of carpet tiles and modern plywood sheet. The floorboards underneath have been coated with red paint which has not adhered properly and has powdered. Parts of the floor have failed structurally: some floorboards have cracked, others have been pierced and broken, and there is excessive bounce in the floor of the north-western part of this room. Due to the difficulty in removing old paint, it is likely that the floorboards will need to be substantially replaced with new to match the existing in terms of size, edge profile, thickness and a previous finish – finish to be agreed. After light sanding to remove paint layers and cleaning with white spirits, it should be possible to salvage some of the existing boards. The extent of conservation will be agreed in advance with the Architectural Conservation Officer.

- The windows and doors of the existing building will be lightly sanded down to provide a key and re-painted with a new 3-coat system. Early or original ironmongery will be retained, lubricated and polished, modern or inappropriate ironmongery will be removed and replaced with new period pieces to match existing as closely as possible.
- The existing skirting boards will be lightly sanded down to provide a key and re-painted with a new 3-coat system. Some damage to and replacement of the skirting board is possible due to possible damage during removal of the old floorboards described above.
- The dado rail around the walls of the former courtroom of the existing building is a scroll, made by an inset mould run in the wall plaster; this decorative feature will be protected from any possible accidental damage that might be caused during and by the works.
- The ceiling of the former judge's robing room of the existing building is a modern plasterboard ceiling fixed to the ceiling rafters above. This ceiling will be checked for its stability; any loose or insecure boards will be replaced or secured. The ceiling will be joint-filled and painted.
- The ceiling of the former courtroom of the existing building is also a modern plasterboard ceiling fixed to the ceiling rafters above. The cornice around the perimeter is of plaster-on-lathe, probably original. The modern plasterboard will be checked for its stability; any loose or insecure boards will be replaced or secured and the ceiling will be painted. The cornice will be checked for stability of the plaster bond to the lathes, and the lathes nailed to the rafters, decay and security, and will be conserved and repaired accordingly. There is some water damage staining in this cornice near the south-eastern corner of the room where roof tiles were missing above this area until recently. The tiles have been replaced with new to allow this fabric to dry out naturally. The full extent of works will be agreed with the architectural conservation officer.
- A new fire-resistant plasterboard ceiling will be built in the former fuel store at the back of the existing building; it is proposed to use this space as a plant room for utility meters as part of the proposed development.
- The asbestos cement roof tiles will be removed and replaced with new fibre-cement tiles to matching profile, shape and jointing pattern as those existing. The new tiles will be not be ACMs (asbestos containing materials). Several of the existing roof tiles have slipped in recent decades and there have been multiple repairs, as evidenced by the slightly different colour and texture of the various repairs. Also, the traditional parging mortar on their undersides is cracked and much has fallen off, all of which indicates movement in the roof covering which is approaching the end of its useful life. The new roof tiles will be laid on a vapour-permeable, non-bitumen roofing felt which will allow for passive ventilation of the roof spaces and free movement of water vapour; they will not be laid with a coat of traditional parging mortar on their undersides.



Left side: Photograph sourced from the Local Studies website of South Dublin County Council, filed as "4519-rathcoole courthouse, 2006-5533" and attributed to "T. Maher. Right side: A 2012 photo of the decorative brick chimney above the judge's robing room. Note the roof tiles and accumulated moss.



Left side: A view of the courthouse and forecourt from the south-east. Right side: A view of the rere gable of the courthouse. Note the sheds and gates to the yard. Note the small door to the attic space

1.4 Other documents

This Architectural Conservation Report should be read with the following documents which are also part of the public consultation process:

- The architectural drawings of the development, drawing numbers SHEET 01, LOCATION MAP; SHEET 02, EXISTING SITE PLAN; SHEET 03, PROPSED TAKE DOWN; SHEET 04, PROPOSED SITE/FLOOR PLAN; SHEET 05, SECTION A-A; SHEET 06, SECTION B-B; SHEET 07, SECTION C-C; SHEET 08, ELEVATIONS; SHEETS 09 up to 16 inclusive, which are drawings of the existing joinery in the building.
- The County Architect's Report by South Dublin Co. Co.'s Architectural Services department
- The Archaeological Heritage Impact Assessment report by Archaeology Plan,
- The Architectural Conservation report by South Dublin Co. Co.'s Architectural Services department
- The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report by CAAS Ltd.

2. Documentary research of the history of the former Court of Petty Sessions at Rathcoole

Research of the relevant archives and primary and secondary source documents was carried out to help identify the significance of Rathcoole courthouse, in conjunction with the examination of the actual structure. Several historic maps and reference texts were examined to trace the development of the structure, its site and context over time. Historical records were sourced and the contextual history of the area was researched. In summary, very few primary source material (original photographs, architectural drawings, specifications, building records, minutes of court proceedings, building ownership details or title deeds, etc.) were uncovered during the research phase. Most research yielded secondary source material: information from published sources.

The Petty Sessions courthouse for the area listed as Newcastle in the 1842 Petty Sessions Return and as Rathcoole by 1880 was located by the end of the 19th century, in Rathcoole on the south side of the Main Street. Baronet Sir John Charles Kennedy became a Justice of the Peace for Dublin, magistrate of the Rathcoole Petty Sessions and High Sheriff of Co. Waterford. During his time as magistrate, Rathcoole Courthouse was built in 1914.¹ Before, the sessions had been held in a still-standing, nearby building which is now in commercial use.

The site of the present courthouse was sold by a religious order to the South Dublin Rural District Council in 1913.² Two acres of land behind the site were rented by a Mr. Edward Senior (from the 1913 deeds), accessed via the lane to the side of the courthouse. In 1914, the new courthouse was built in the Arts and Crafts style a little further west from the aforementioned building on Main Street.

It is recorded in the South County Scrap Book by Mary McNally, reference in the footnote below that "the chimney didn't draw properly so that proceedings were often held in a smoky atmosphere. By 1918 the judges refused to sit in it any longer and all further business was transferred to Kilmainham and Lucan".

The same text states that "The building was closed for 7 years and re-opened in 1925 as a library The library closed in 1962 and a mobile library service was provided thereafter". The use as a library after 1925 is supported by the evidence provided by the fourth edition ordnance survey map, copied below with the text "Library" at the site of this building.

In 1938 the land was sold, and specific reference was made in this sale to the "library". An article in the Irish Times about Rathcoole village from 1973 includes a sketch of the courthouse with a caption beneath which refers to "the old library, now disused".³

¹ "A History of Saggart and Rathcoole Parishes" by Mulryan Moloney, Maeve

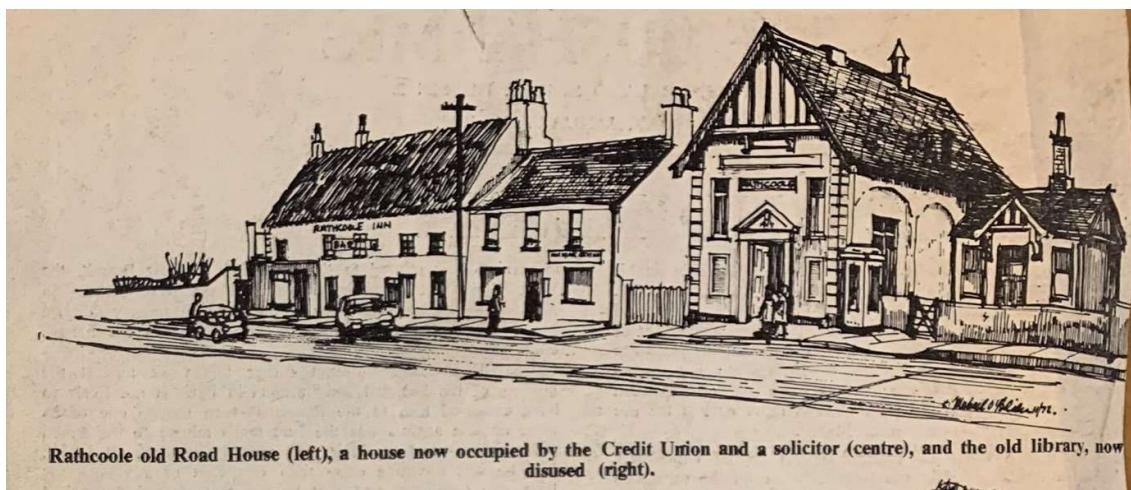
² This supports the evidence provided by building itself that the courthouse opened in 1914, and not in 1911 as suggested by "South County Scrap Book", by Mary McNally, published by SDCC library services, 1999 (pages 115-119). The Irish Times reference (Irish Times, 3rd January 1913 "Notices") also supports the 1914 date of construction. The Irish Times of 3rd January 1913 includes a notice titled "Dublin County Council", "M.E. Montgomery moved and Mr. Hanlon seconded a resolution to the appeal that the proposed courthouse at Rathcoole be adopted ... the Law Agent be instructed to take the necessary steps to acquire the site recommended by the Surveyor". Also, the 3rd edition OS maps, published 1911-12 show a courthouse at its earlier location: on the same side of the main street, but to the east of the present site, near the present site of the "Thatch" public house, as discussed above.

³ "Rathcoole" by Fleming, Lionel, The Irish Times, Thursday, January 11th, 1973.

Based on similarity of date, inscription and lettering to the similar Court of Petty Sessions building at the north end of Rathfarnham main street, both buildings may be attributed to Dublin County Surveyor, William Collen (circa 1860 – 1932). ⁴ Collen was awarded a BA degree at Trinity College Dublin in 1882, a BAI in 1884 and later a MAI degree. He had experience of railway engineering and other work in Ireland. He was appointed Dublin District Surveyor in 1896. The builder is recorded as J. Cromer of Lucan. ⁵

The South County Scrap Book reference to a smoke problem in the building might explain the vents in the piers of the external walls of the courtroom. The small size and domestic scale of the fireplace in such a large courtroom is also unusual. The change of use from courthouse to library use and subsequent abandonment of use, is mentioned in the Irish Times article of 1973, mentioned as "disused". The library use was later reinstated.

The relevance of all the above research is that the courthouse appears to have been mostly continually in use since it was built, if sometimes sporadically, and that it was modified during the 1950's or 60's and again around 2000 (as per the Tidy Towns report ⁶). This explains its fair condition and the presence of so many original fittings and fixtures. The construction of the outbuildings, toilets and offices around the yard behind the courthouse is the single most significant intervention on the site since construction of the courthouse. The intensity of use has declined in recent years as the cost of heating and maintaining the building continued to rise and more community activities are now accommodated in the comparatively modern community centre beside the R.C. church to the north of the village main street.

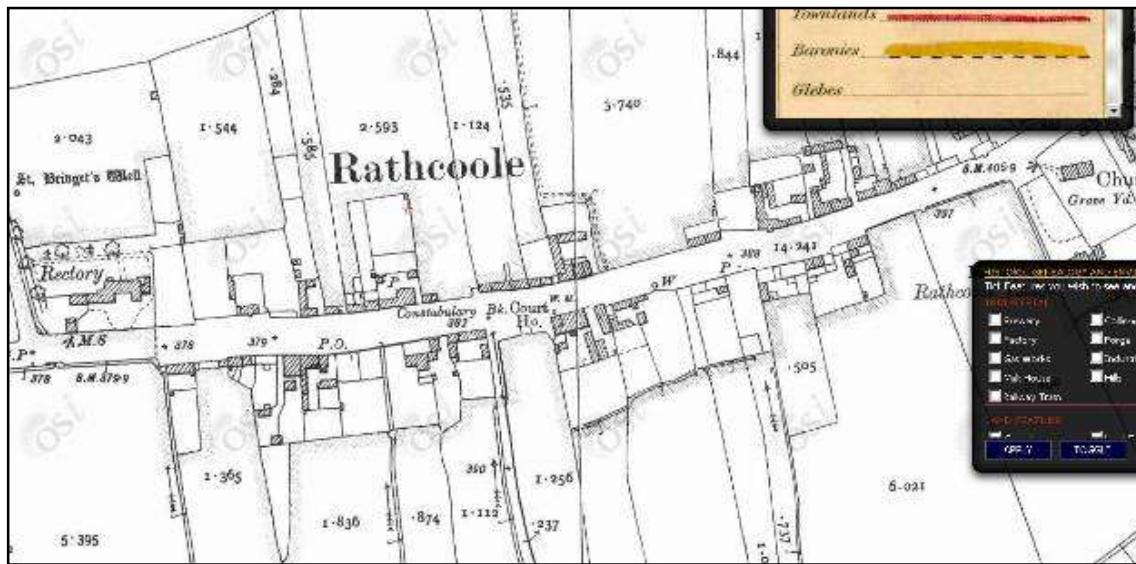


Rathcoole" by Fleming, Lionel, The Irish Times, Thursday, January 11th, 1973.

⁴ Source of this information: Ireland's Court Houses (2019, O'Riordan, Colum, O'Connor, C. et al.), page 282

⁵ "South County Scrap Book", by Mary McNally, pub. SDCC Library Services, 1999 (pages 115-119). The same text states that "The building was opened "with pomp and ceremony" in 1911 (this date is incorrect. Refer to notes above). The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (N.I.A.H.) survey of south county Dublin records that the building was still in use as a library at the time of survey, circa 2001-2002. The 1998 South County Dublin Development Plan also records it being in use as a library. Therefore, there is a lack of clarity about the periods of use and disuse.

⁶ The Tidy Towns Report on Rathcoole, dated 2000 refers to the "restoration work completed on the Court of Petty Sessions in the past was undoubtedly worthwhile – this has been a wonderful restoration of a heritage property which provides a great focus for the village." (sourced on 19th September 2012 at http://www.tidytowns.ie/u_reports/2000/2000%20COUNTY%20DUBLIN%20RATHCOOLE-DUBLIN.pdf)



An extract from the 25" to 1 mile map taken from the historic mapping page of the website of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. The online map is not dated, but probably describes the town during the early twentieth century, before the construction of the present courthouse. Note that the court proceedings were then held in the shop building just to the right of the note "Court Ho." – the aforementioned "Jacob's shop". The present courthouse was yet to be built on a site further west along the street, near the site then occupied by the post office, "P.O."



An extract from the fourth edition Ordnance Survey published in 1935. Note the reference to the "Library" at the site of the Court of Petty Sessions, also the new location of the post office.

RATHCOOLE AND SAGGART.

Rathcoole, an inland village and parish in Newcastle barony, Dublin county, 16 miles S.W. from Dublin, comprising an area of 4,705 acres. Population, 191. The village, which was anciently called Radcull, is situated upon the road to Naas, and consists of one street, about a quarter of a mile in length, chiefly of small houses, irregularly built. The only public building is the Church of Ireland Church, a neat plain edifice. It has a Dispensary. It is the head station of the Constabulary force of the district of Uppercross. About two miles and a half N.W. from Rathcoole is the parish and village of Newcastle, comprising an area of 4,358 acres. Population, 1,108. It is situated on the Grand Canal. The village was formerly a borough, having a portreeve and burgesses under charter of James I., and prior to the Union, sent two members to the Irish Parliament. The Church of Ireland Church is an ancient picturesque edifice, having a fine eastern window. The Roman Catholic Church is a neat building, with a belfry. There is a Dispensary and National Schools. There is also a Postal Telegraph Office.

Magistrates attending Petty Sessions at Rathcoole, first Friday in each month at 12 o'clock noon.—Sir John C. Kennedy, Bart., Chairman; W. J. Walsh, Dr. J. P. O'Riordan, Thomas Baron Johnson, James Harvey, S. C. O'Carroll, N. E. Drury, J. V. Verschoyle Campbell, Clerk—Joseph Foxe, Lucan.

| | | |
|---|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Constabulary Station — Sergeant Leahy, J., vintner | £6 | O'Carroll, Patrick, vintner |
| Danl. Boyle, in charge | | Rathcoole Sub-Post-Office and Pos- |
| Crinson, N., Greenogue £11, £44 | £103 10s. | tal Telegraph Office—Mrs. R. W. |
| Dunne, Miss Bridget £5 5s. | | Croner, sub-postmistress £11 |
| Jacob, John, general merchant £16 | £20. £4 5s. | Rathcoole Church—Rev. W. T. L. |
| Kennedy, Sir John, bart., J.P., | £4 10s. | Shea, M.A., incumbent—res. The |
| Johnstown-Kennedy £419 10s. Noble, Montgomery, farmer | £29 | Glebe House £27 |

An extract from the 1920 edition of Thom's Street and Trade Directory

3. Statutory Protections

Rathcoole Courthouse is protected under the Planning and Development Acts as follows: referred to as the "Library Building, Rathcoole" it is referred to in the Council's Record of Protected Structures (R.P.S.) (Map Ref. No. 319) under the County Development Plan - Schedule 2, Record of Protected Structures: "Court of Petty Sessions". The reference to a library comes from its former use, as discussed in the previous section of this report. The effect of this protection is that the proposed works are not "exempted development" and are the subject of a public consultation under Part VIII.

In the maps of the County Development Plan the lands around the courthouse are zoned "to protect, provide for and/or improve Local Centre facilities" (red). The courthouse and its site are part of the Rathcoole Village Architectural Conservation Area (A.C.A.).

The site of Rathcoole courthouse is also protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930 – 1994, as amended. It is within the Rathcoole Zone of Archaeological Interest, identified on the map and referred to in the Council's Record of Monuments and Places (R.M.P.) (Recorded Monument Reference Nos. DU021-030) under the County Development Plan 2010 - 2016 - Schedule 1, Record of Monuments and Places, described as a "Village". The effect of this is that any excavation of the site associated with the proposed works will require a license to excavate and will be monitored by an archaeologist.

The courthouse is identified in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (N.I.A.H.) survey of the South Dublin County Area, under Registry Number 11213015. The NIAH rates the structure as being of Regional Rating, and being of architectural, social and technical interest.

4. Conservation Philosophy

The proposed works have been designed to conserve the significance of the building, to allow the existing use of the building to continue and intensify, to address the shortcomings identified in the existing building, and to allow greater use by all members of the community, abled and less-abled.

Although some of the proposed works will cause some loss of some early fabric, the possible adverse effects on the character of the building would be minimised. For example, the installation of new mechanical and electrical services will require some holes to be drilled for new pipes, ducts and electrical cables to be routed through the building. However, they will also make the building more comfortable and safer to use than it is at present. Also, we would try to re-use any existing chases and holes as much as possible to minimise making new. On balance, the proposed works will enhance people's appreciation of the building, their access to it and enjoyment of it. The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment in section 9 of this report considers these effects or impacts and mitigations of the impacts in more detail.

If nothing happens, there is a possibility that this building could be abandoned, and the proposed uses accommodated elsewhere in the modern community building beside the R.C. church, or another building. Article 5 of the Venice Charter, 1964 states:

"The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable but it must not change the lay-out or decoration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted. "

The design of the proposed extension, works and conservation of the existing building and its site is based on the principles of minimal intervention, repair rather than replace, honesty of repairs and alterations, use of appropriate materials and methods and respect of previous alterations and interventions made.

5. Methodology and extent of inspection

The exterior of the courthouse was examined from the perimeter at ground level. Parts of the roof, chimneys and rainwater goods were also inspected in greater detail at eaves level from a ladder. Both attics were accessed. The interiors were accessed and surveyed. This report includes a short condition assessment of the existing building.

The inspection was superficial; one small area of floor covering was lifted and closed parts of the structure and cavities were not opened up for further examination. Where windows are painted shut and cavities are sealed they were not forcibly opened. No paint, plaster or external render was removed during the examination.

As stated in the last section, the site of Rathcoole courthouse is protected under the National Monuments Acts 1934 – 2004. Therefore, any excavation of ground associated with this proposed development and any enabling or investigative works would be monitored under license by an archaeologist.

If the proposed development is approved at Part VIII stage, the selection of a contractor for any works will require the contractor to have proven experience and competence in the conservation of the built heritage. Rathcoole courthouse and its site are a Protected Structure so all works would be designed and specified by a conservation accredited architect and would be inspected regularly during the course of the works.

The information gathered by the preliminary research of the historical documentation was used to establish an outline history of the building and its site, and to support and inform the evidence available from the building itself which is the primary evidence. Should any additional or unexpected works be anticipated or intended, the county council's Architectural Conservation Officer will be informed and consulted, the structure will be more closely examined, some limited opening up would be done and the historical documentation and relevant archives would be more thoroughly researched as necessary.

6. Condition Assessment

6.1 Summary of General Condition

In general, Rathcoole courthouse is in fair-to-poor condition; it is dirty and dusty within and maintenance of the building has been sporadic and uneven. After the preliminary assessment the main defects in the building requiring remedial works are summarised as follows.

6.2 Blocked drains and broken rainwater goods:

Blocked and distorted rainwater goods: Most of the cast iron rainwater gutters and down pipes are probably original to the building, some were replaced by conservation work in 2013 – 2014. The gullies to which the rainwater down pipes discharge are mostly blocked with debris, leaves and mud, causing the water to flow at high concentrations to the surrounding subsoil and into the walls and foundations. This is causing localised rising dampness in the walls and damage to the internal finishes near some of the gullies. This defect is the result of inadequate maintenance.

6.3 Roofs

There are two roofs: that over the former courtroom and another over the former judge's robing room, toilet and former fuel store. The roof covering is made up of 3mm thick, 320mm wide chamfered tiles, laid in a hexagonal pattern on horizontal timber battens. It has been confirmed that the tiles are made from White Chrysotile asbestos fibres bound in a cementitious matrix.

Some of the roof tiles have slipped or fallen in recent decades and been secured with lead and copper tingles or replaced with new tiles. This which has admitted rainwater to the attic which has caused localised decay of structural roof timbers and damage to internal finishes. The tiles are coated with a parging mortar on their undersides which was a common, traditional building technology to secure the tiles in place and to allow the gradual passage of any moisture out of the roof covering. Most of this layer of parging mortar has fallen away which indicates movement in the roof covering. This and the ongoing slippages of roof tiles means that this roof covering is approaching the end of its useful life.

The tiles themselves are in places covered with a spongy organic growth of moss where shaded by trees – a common feature of these asbestos cement roof tiles. This growth has added to the weight of these tiles and to the mossy debris accumulating in the gutters below. This organic growth retains water and causes breakdown of the surface of the tiles during hard frosts and freezing weather. The removal of this growth is desirable, but its removal is a specialist skill because of the risk of releasing asbestos fibres during any mechanical cleaning.

In conclusion, we propose to remove the existing roof tiles and to replace them with new, similar fibre-cement tiles in a similar colour, profile, shape, size and pattern, laid on a breathable roofing felt.



A view of the north end of the attic above the court room. Note the King Post roof truss and the inner surface of the gable to Main Street, the remains of the lime parging mortar on the undersides of the tiles, the original plaster-on-lathe of the cornice (behind the parapet wall) and the modern plasterboard of the main ceiling to the left of it. The debris in the far corner is the remains of a bird's nest

6.4 Interiors

The walls are finished with a smooth lime plaster to all interiors. The external walls are finished with a lime wet-dash, also known as harling. All of the walls of the courthouse are constructed from a common canal brick, yellow-brown in colour. As stated previously in this report, the ceilings are of modern plasterboard but the cornice of the courtroom ceiling is a traditional plaster-on-lathe construction, probably original. There are signs of previous water ingress on some of the ceilings. It is likely that there is some timber decay: soft, friable timber, possibly infested with insect boring holes, where water has reached them from gaps in the roof tiles above. These should be carefully cut out and have new pressure treated timber spiced in, or have new timbers fixed to them on either side to provide the support which has been lost from the decayed timber.

Like many older buildings, the wall surfaces and doors and windows have been over-painted with multiple layers of paint which have accumulated and have obscured previously-visible detail. The timber windows and doors are dusty and dirty and have been over-painted, so that many of the doors are sticky to operate and windows can no longer be opened to properly ventilate the building.



Left side: The cast iron fireplace in the former judge's robing room. Right side: A close up view of one of the asbestos cement tiles and debris-filled cast iron gutters.



Left side: The chimney above the robing room and part of the southern roof pitch of the smaller roof. Note the eroded mortar joints in the bricks and under the ridge tiles. Right side: The northern pitch of

the same roof. Note the spongy accumulation of moss and organic colonisation on the sheltered side.



Left side: A corrugated metal roof above the boiler house and built-up felt roof over the offices. Right side: The southern end of the east pitch of the main roof. Note the grey-coloured tiles from a previous repair, two lead tingles, one gap where a cut tile has fallen away and slipped tiles. The most seriously

decayed timber in the roof space is below this area. The grey tiles also contain asbestos fibres.



Left side: Historic rolled glass in the upper sash of the window to the former judge's robes room, probably original. Modern replacement patterned glass below. Right side: Modern float glass in the upper sash of the adjacent window to the toilet. A different patterned glass is used in the lower sash.

The large scrolled horns at the junction of the sash meeting rails and stiles are typical of the Edwardian period



Left side: The casement window in the north-west part of the courtroom. Right side: The inside of the window in the south-east part of the courtroom. Note the cord which operated the upper vent lights

6.5 Structural Condition Report

The structure of this building is quite simple. The unusually thin walls (an approximate thickness: height ratio of 1:20) rest on simple footing foundations and support a series of King-post roof trusses of both roofs. The large gable to Main Street, a prominent feature of the building's design, is cantilevered out over the public footpath from the wall below and is tied back to the roof trusses behind. No serious structural defect in the walls or roof has been identified for this report, subject to the limitations of the inspection which is stated in the methodology in a previous section.

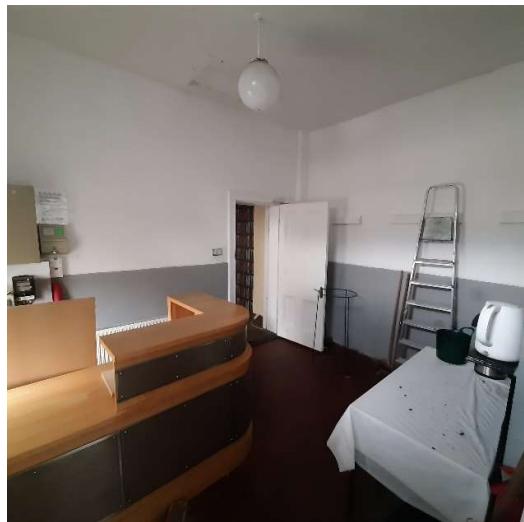
Two former window openings in the back wall of the courtroom were filled in with mass concrete or concrete blocks at some time in the past. No photographs which show the previous appearance of the wall and windows was discovered during research of the historical documentation.



Left side: A part of the old western calp limestone boundary which is being colonised by ivy. Right side: The same wall viewed from the yard side where it has been rendered with sand and cement.



Left side: A blocked and overflowing rainwater gully. Right side: The two former window openings in the rere façade which were blocked up.



Left side: The lower granite step at the entrance to the former judge's robing room has been partly buried beneath the modern pavement. Right side: A view of the former judge's robing room.



Two views of the interior of the former courtroom from a similar vantage point, in 2012 before the carpet tile and ply was laid on the floorboards and the interior was repainted, and 2021

6.6 Mechanical and Electrical Services Condition Report

Although the building is occasionally used, it lacks many of the basic requirements of a public building such as a proper fully functional security-intruder detection and alarm system, an integrated fire, heat and smoke detection and alarm system and fully functional emergency lighting.

Sanitary facilities, toilets and wash hand basins are insufficient in number, basic and sub-standard for modern uses and unsuitable for less-abled users of the building. Other devices which would also facilitate a wider use, such as audio-loops, emergency pull cords, etc. are not provided at present.

At present, the building is difficult to heat and maintain at a comfortable temperature for many community uses for which it is otherwise well suited. This has resulted in its being under-used for short periods with long periods of un-heated and un-ventilated vacancy between. There is a crude, oil-fired boiler with exposed, uninsulated flow and return pipe runs in open, excavated trenches in the back yard. The main electrical supply is from an overhead cable to the northwest of the courthouse. A cable connects to the northwest corner of the courtroom building below the eaves and gutter and runs along the eaves and into the north-eastern corner of the former judge's robing room. The emergency lighting is not working properly. There is no intruder alarm or detection system. The mains-powered fire detection and alarm system is not up to standard. General electrical accessories like light fittings, switches and sockets are not in good condition and would need to be replaced. There is a mix of metal and plastic fittings.

Many of the services are antiquated and have been incrementally installed in an ad-hoc way. Exposed cable runs, boxed out corners for ducts and pipes and a plethora of chases, holes and cuts in partition walls, through windows, eaves timbers and ceilings are evidence of this. The underground mains drainage is terracotta pipes, some of which have been exposed where they were laid behind the courtroom. Many are damaged and no longer properly jointed. There are exposed cables near floor level, near the south-western corner of the courtroom, beside the step up to the stage and the door to the former judge's robing room.

Therefore, the following mechanical and electrical works are proposed by this project:

- Close-Circuit Television (C.C.T.V.) outside and inside for security of the building
- An Audioloop to help people with hearing disabilities and an automatic opening device to open the proposed main entrance door to help people with mobility difficulties or encumbrances (for example, less-abled persons, able-bodied persons with a buggy or pram, etc.)
- A new gas-fired central heating system with separate zoning for the old building and the proposed, new extension with room thermostat controls.
- Replace the old light fittings over doorways with LED type of similar lux rating and from triple e listing
- Install new light fitting selected for main hall. Conduit drops could be reused for these fittings
- Replace all emergency light fittings due to their condition with LED type for better performance. Additional emergency fittings maybe required in front entrance lobby, main hall and WC to meet current standards IS3217:2013
- Install a fire alarm system to be installed to the existing building and the proposed extension to meet current standards IS3218:2013
- Disconnect all services to all the outbuildings in the rere yard to allow demolition of same.

7. Assessment of the significance

Rathcoole Courthouse is a fine example of an Irish Arts and Crafts building. Its significance lies in its prominent location in the village, its use of good-quality materials, the existence of many early and original fittings and fixtures, and its particular architectural style which is evident in the design of the facades, the interior spaces and in the constructional detail.

The courthouse is of architectural, social and historical interests. Its site could be of archaeological significance. It is a fine example of the courthouse as a building type and is unusual in having so many of its early and original fittings still intact.

It is the intention of this project to preserve and protect this significance, and to reveal it to future generations and users of the building.

8. Recommended Stabilisation works, Recovery Works, Explorative Opening-up Works and Protective Measures

The following works are being considered in advance of the main construction and conservation works:

The archaeologist might specify some explorative, pre-development test trenching in advance of the main works if he / she believes there are good reasons for this from their Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment.

The civil and structural engineer might specify some explorative works to assess the existing walls, foundations and roof structure and to reveal the extent, depth, location and condition of the existing water and drainage services. Any excavation of the ground for these works would be monitored by the archaeologist. Any removal or chasing of internal finishes and wall plaster would be discussed with the architect.

The architect, electrical and mechanical engineer might require some opening up and explorative works to test services, to check on the condition of a feature or fixture.

All of the above would be considered by the architect and would be agreed with the county council's Architectural Conservation Officer in advance of any works being carried out.

The interiors of the former courthouse will be protected from dust, fire and accidental damage during the works by a series of temporary works to be agreed with the Architectural Conservation Officer: Protective Measures and Protective Mechanisms to protect the special interest of this building from any possible accidental damage that might be caused during and by the works. As part of the works, the following Protective Measures and Mechanisms are an initial proposal to protect the special significance of the building from accidental damage caused during or by the works:

- Protection of wall surfaces, doors and windows and irreplaceable old glass from mechanical damage by enclosing some features with a temporary protective cover of insulation quilt and plywood during the works.
- Protection of internal spaces and finishes from dust and weather by careful timing of works to the roof, provision of temporary protection, good housekeeping during construction stage and regular cleaning.
- Protection from accidental fire damage by daily removal of all rubbish and debris from the building, avoidance of all hot-works within the building, and training of staff to deal with any emergency that might arise during the works to save lives and protect the building.

9. Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

The following is an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment of the proposed works:

| Proposed works to the site | Impact on the building / feature on site |
|---|---|
| Demolition of the existing outbuildings | Minimal impact – the removal of modern outbuildings would restore the yard to a semblance of its previous condition. However, the demolition would probably cause some damage to the stone boundary wall which was incorporated into the modern buildings during their construction. (Demolition) |
| Excavation of the ground to the desired levels to accommodate the new extension, and to allow for level access throughout. | Significant impact – the removal of waste would change the appearance of the site and could impact on underground archaeology (Demolition, Insertion) |
| Works to any existing trees and boundaries described above | Minimal impact – there is only one tree stump on the site with no sign of life or new growth (N / A) |
| Works to install new underground services / cables and ducts, and above-ground mechanical and electrical services | Average impact – the installation of underground services would require excavation and monitoring by an archaeologist but ducts would be invisible afterward. Lights, CCTV and electrical services are necessary for the building's future security and use. The installation of new mechanical and electrical services in the existing building will require new holes and chases to be made in the existing walls and plaster. Wherever possible, existing holes, cavities and chases will be re-sued, and the architect will endeavor to minimise the impact on existing built fabric. (Intervention, Insertion, Addition) |
| The demolition of a 2.4 metre x 2.4 metre section of the rere wall of the former judge's robing room to allow for a new connection between the existing building and the proposed extension | Average impact - the proposed demolition works to this part of the existing wall would be reversible, although some loss of original material would be inevitable. Also, the demolition is of the back wall, does not involve the loss of any important wall surface or important decorative detail. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | (Demolition, Installation) |
| The proposed access ramp to the main entrance | <p>Significant impact – the installation of the new ramp will be very visible from the public side of the street and forecourt. It will impact on existing views of the front of the building. It will also partly conceal and make redundant the existing granite steps to this entrance.</p> <p>To mitigate this, the proposed ramp would be constructed of light materials: perforated stainless steel, which would be easily distinguishable from the existing fabric as a modern insertion, and would be reversible.</p> <p>(Intervention, Insertion, Addition)</p> |
| The proposed works to the roof covering | <p>Significant impact – The works to the roof would involve removal of the entire existing roof covering and its replacement on a like-for-like basis with a non-asbestos containing material.</p> <p>In mitigation, the new roof covering would be of similar profile, size, shape and pattern, would gradually weather back after some years, and would provide a better weather protection to the interior of the building.</p> <p>(Demolition, Addition)</p> |
| The proposed works to make the interior of the building more accessible: proposed access ramp to the existing stage, alterations to the existing joinery, new automatic door opening mechanisms, and works to the existing floor. | <p>Average impact – The works to repair or replace the structurally defective floor of the former courtroom is essential for public safety.</p> <p>The proposed intervention of a new ramp to the stage would be of the matching material: timber and would be reversible, albeit with some loss of existing material.</p> <p>The repair of the existing joinery and reinstatement of lost and inappropriate ironmongery would improve operation, accessibility and restore the interiors to a previous known condition.</p> <p>(Intervention, Insertion, Restoration Addition)</p> |

Proposed Mitigation Measures

The proposal shown on the documentation for the Part VIII public consultation process has a number of mitigating features as noted below:

- The proposed development is part of a wider intention to improve the legibility of and access to the building for workers and visitors to it.
- The proposed development would remove modern additions and accretions to the site during recent decades but which have not added to its significance or special interest.
- The proposed development would have a small amount of new landscaping which would improve the microclimate, the legibility and presentation of the site
- All works would be carried out using sympathetic materials and would be executed to the best conservation standards. The works will be carried out by competent contractors and inspected and monitored by design professionals.
- All works will be recorded by photograph and record so that the pre-existing condition is known and understood for future generations. All works will be reversible in so far as possible.

10. Impact of the proposed works on buildings outside the proposed development site

The proposed works would have a minimal impact on buildings around the development site. The proposed extension will be single-storey, and will be almost invisible except from the yard behind the building and from the existing lane to the side of the building

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