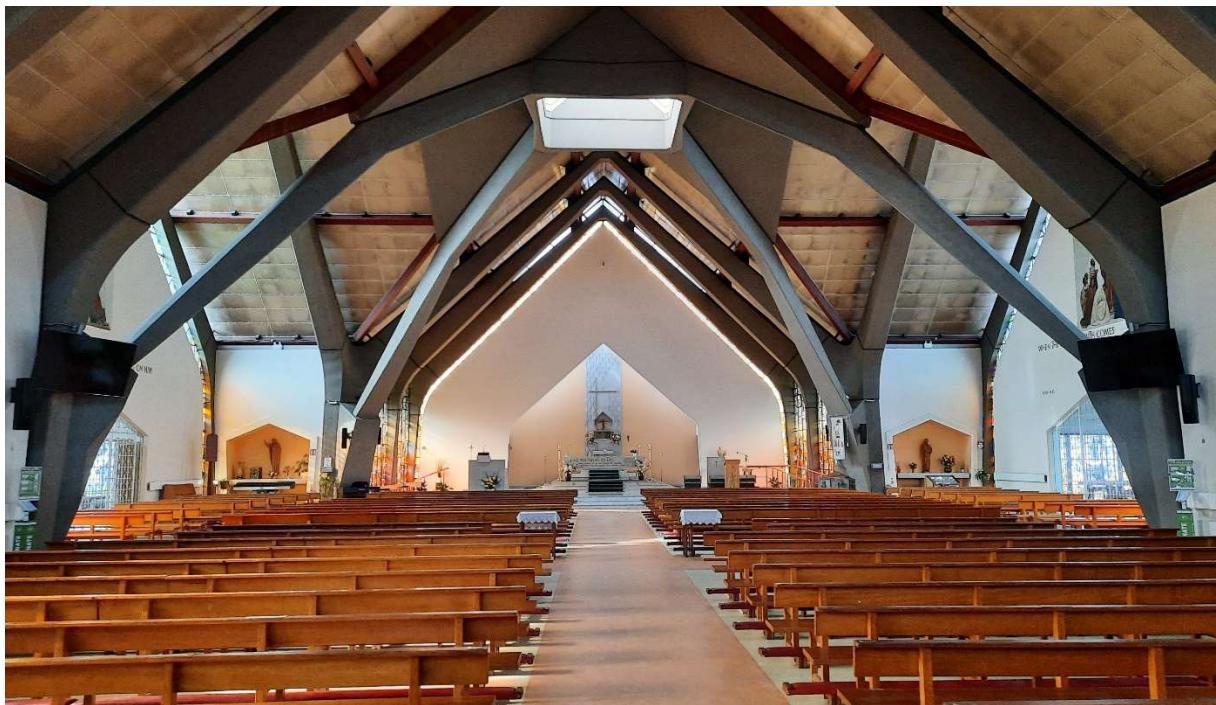


Architectural Impact Assessment Report for Proposed Upgrade Works to Ballyroan  
Community & Youth Centre on The Church of the Holy Spirit [Protected Structure, RPS 264],  
Ballyroan, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14.



Issued June 2025

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## 0.1 INTRODUCTION

### 0.2 Project Background



**Fig. 1.0:** Photograph of Church of the Holy Spirit (left) and Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre (right) taken from the Rosemount District Centre car park looking west.

The existing Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre, which is sited on parish lands within the curtilage of The Church of the Holy Spirit (Protected Structure), provides essential community services for the Ballyroan area and includes a community hall (former parish hall); community café; meeting rooms; childcare facilities; staff offices, sanitary facilities and a meals-on-wheels kitchen.

In April 2023 the Architectural Services Department (ASD) were commissioned by the Community Department of South Dublin County Council to investigate the current uses and schedule of accommodation at the centre and to make recommendations for the expansion and upgrade of the facility to meet the growing need for community services in the Ballyroan area.

This investigation process, which involved building surveys, a review of the building safety file and several meetings with the building users and the board of management of the facility, identified significant pressures on the existing facility for additional staff office space and childcare accommodation, which are currently being temporarily accommodated in community meeting rooms, which is not ideal and is limiting the availability of accommodation for community groups.

ASD's investigation also identified the need for the following:

- Additional community meeting /multi-function rooms
- Additional storage space, including dedicated external bin storage
- Accessibility improvement works to the building entrance, to better accommodate access for wheelchair users and to comply with the current Building Regulations.
- A Building Regulation compliant wheelchair accessible toilet within the facility.
- Additional solar panels, to reduce the energy demand of the facility and to help meet South Dublin County Council's energy conservation targets.

To meet the above needs and to improve the efficiency, services and output of the existing community centre building to better serve the community, ASD recommended the following proposed upgrade and extension works are undertaken, as outlined in the attached Part 8 drawings:

- i. Rearrangement /upgrade of the community centre interior.
- ii. New single-storey flat roof extension.
- iii. Accessibility enhancement works to the existing community centre entrance, and new accessible entrance to the rear of the centre (subject to landowner consent).
- iv. Minor alterations to existing parish boiler house.
- v. New external screened community centre bin store.
- vi. New solar panels to south facing pitched roof.
- vii. Refurbishment /upgrade of the existing concrete pavers to the south and west of the community centre building (subject to landowner consent and final details to be agreed with the relevant SDCC internal departments).
- viii. All associated ancillary site works as may be required in adjacent lands but not limited to foul and surface water drainage and utility supplies.

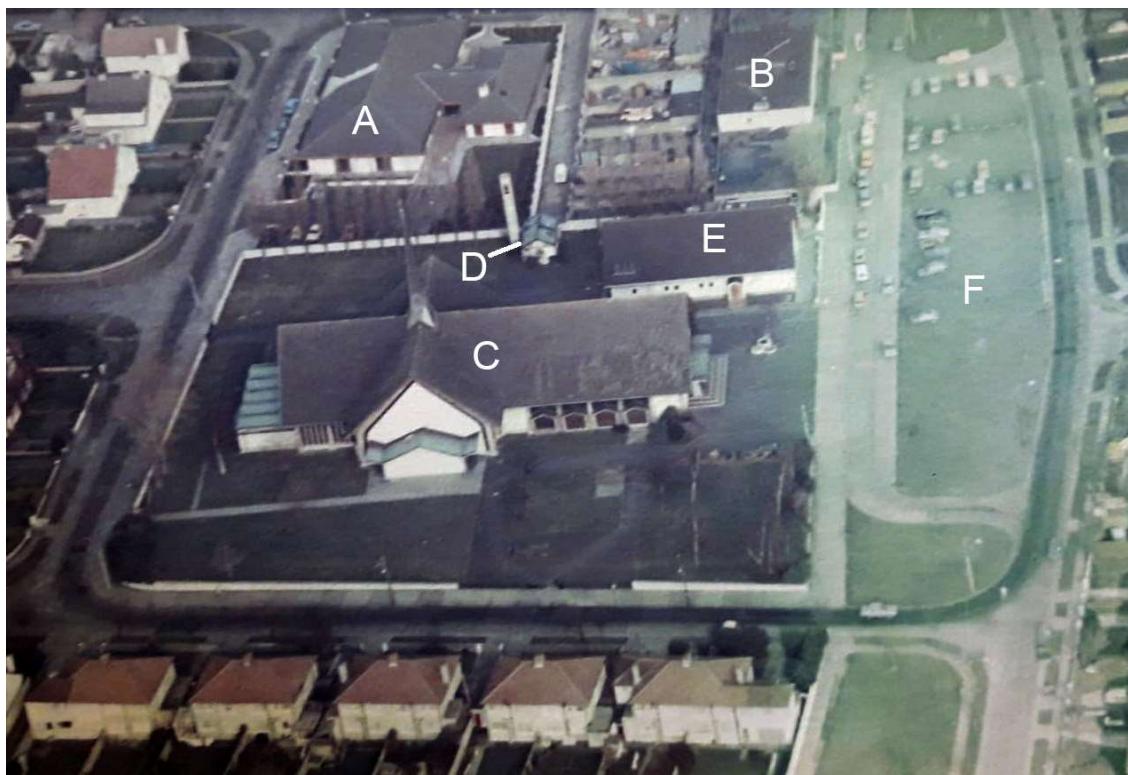
In addition to the above, documentary research was carried out by ASD to identify the heritage significance of The Church of the Holy Spirit, to help inform the upgrade works and to evaluate the architectural impact on this significance.

A draft of this report was submitted to the Council's Architectural Conservation Officer for comment, prior to publication with the Part 8.

## 1.0 HISTORY

### 1.1 Site History

The Church of the Holy Spirit, Ballyroan, Dublin 14 is a Roman Catholic church designed by Irish architect Raymond F. Mac Donnell (-2014) and was constructed in 1967 on parish lands on the southern section of the Rosemount District Centre, Marian Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14 and is a visually prominent landmark in the Ballyroan neighbourhood.



**Fig. 1.1:** Historic Aerial Photograph c.1980s of the Rosemount District Centre with (A) Public library, (B) shop units, (C) Church, (D) Church boiler house, (E) Parish Hall, (F) Public car park.

Records indicate the Rosemount District Centre development, including parish lands, was developed on a greenfield site to serve as a commercial, civic and pastoral hub for the new suburbia planned for the Ballyroan area in the mid-1960s. As indicated in the above aerial photograph (c.1980s) the neighbourhood centre was master planned to include a public library to the northwest, a row of privately owned shop units with street frontage to the northeast, a new church with boiler house and parish hall constructed on parish lands to the south, with a strip of public carparking along the eastern boundary, off Marian Road.

## 1.2 Previous Upgrade Works (2008-2010)



**Fig. 1.2:** Aerial Photograph taken from Google Maps of the Rosemount District Centre today, the Rosemount District Centre outlined in yellow and Parish lands outlined in red. Buildings indicated, include (A) Public Library upgraded by SDCC in 2010, (B) shop units, (C) Church, (D) Church boiler house, (E) Parish Hall upgraded by SDCC in 2010 as Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre, (F) Public car park recently upgraded by SDCC as part of the Rosemount District Centre enhancement works, (G) Pastoral Centre constructed by SDCC in 2010, (H) Library car park constructed by SDCC in 2010.

In 2008, Box Architects were commissioned by South Dublin County Council to upgrade the existing Parish Hall to become the new Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre, as part of a development agreement between the parish and the council, concerning the transfer of the Parish Hall into the councils ownership in exchange for a new Pastoral Centre, to be constructed on the north east corner of the parish lands. Box Architects were also commissioned by SDCC at this time, to upgrade and extend the public library. A summary of the scope of works undertaken at this time, is as follows:

1. The refurbishment and extension of the Parish Hall, to include a single-storey extension, enhanced Meals-on-Wheels kitchen, improved toilet provision, a meeting room and children's external play area. [175 sq m]
2. New single-storey Pastoral Centre with meeting rooms, kitchen / coffee area and pastoral offices. [477 sq m]
3. The refurbishment and extension of Ballyroan Library, to include a two-storey extension with meeting rooms, additional adult-education areas, staff offices, new reception and internet area. [760 sq m]

This works also included the construction of a new public car park on the library site, and public realm enhancement works on the parish lands between the Church, the Community Centre and the Pastoral Centre, and to the south of the Community Centre, which greatly improved pedestrian accessibility through the site and added new civic spaces to the area.



**Fig. 1.3:** Photographs taken at completion of 2010 phase of works by Box Architects. (A) Pastoral Centre with upgraded pedestrian links, (B) West facing gable of the Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre with screened children's play area, (C) Pastoral Centre and the BCYC screened children's play area, (D) Upgraded pedestrian link between the Church and BCYC taken at night. Photographs by Paul Tierney

There have been little alterations to the Pastoral Centre, the Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre or the Public Library since the completion of these works in 2010.

## 2.0 ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 The Church of the Holy Spirit [Protected Structure, RPS 264]

The Church of the Holy Spirit designed by Irish architect Raymond F. Mac Donnell (-2014), is well maintained and has remained largely unchanged since it was constructed in 1967. The building is cruciform in plan with nave orientated east to west and comprises an exposed concrete post and beam structure with non-structural infill walls with pebble dashed finish, expansive stained glass curtain walling and a clay tiled pitched roof with deep overhanging eaves and a slender copper clad spirelet at the roof crossing.



**Fig. 2.01:** View of the east facing gable of the Church of the Holy Spirit (left), with detail (right) of the post and beam structure.

As indicated in the above photograph (Fig. 2.01), the elegantly sculpted concrete post and beam structure is fully expressed on the building gables and tapers to a point at ridge level, where the expansive clay tiled pitched roof with deep overhanging eaves appears to float in the air, an illusion made possible through the clever use of clerestory glazing set between purlins, resulting in a playful form 'reminiscent of birds wings' that is echoed in the concrete copper clad roof canopies of the entrance porches to the east, south and north facing gables. The east facing gable and main elevation fronting onto the Rosemount District Centre is surmounted with a stylized depiction of the Holy Spirit as a dove descending from the heavens over a plain crucifix with sunburst pattern.



**Fig. 2.02:** View of the south facing elevation of the Church of the Holy Spirit (left), with detail of the copper clad spirelet and skylights (right).

The clay tiled pitched roof, is surmounted with a spirelet (Fig 2.02), clad in copper, folded into a striking herringbone pattern, with cleverly integrated skylights at its base allowing natural light to illuminate the sanctuary below.

Along the south and north external elevations (Fig 2.02, Fig 2.03), the non-load-bearing external walls, are exploited with expansive full height-stained glass windows set between the tapered concrete posts. Flanking the north and south elevations of the nave, the stained-glass curtain walling is punctuated with playfully designed pitched roofed concrete confessionals, which push out through the building envelope and cantilever over the grass verge landscaped exterior. Each confessional is stylishly clad with bronze paneling, which conceals a secret entrance door and side porch along the northeast elevation.



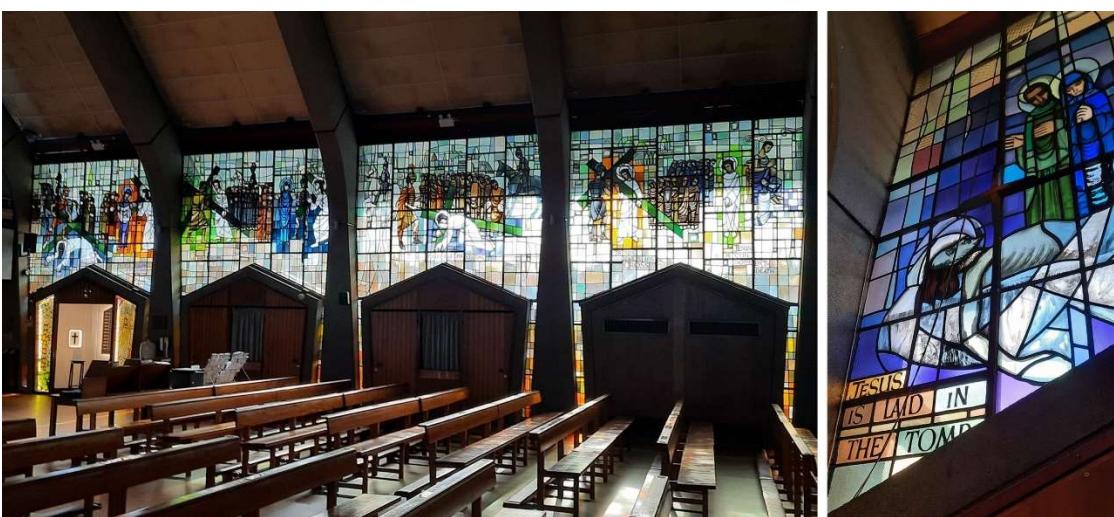
**Fig. 2.03:** North facing elevation of the Church of the Holy Spirit (left), with projecting confessionals and detail (right) of the bronze clad secret entrance door.



**Fig. 2.04:** West facing elevation of the Church of the Holy Spirit (left) taken from the southwest, with detail (right) of the copper clad saw tooth roof with clerestory glazing of the sacristy.

The west facing gable contains a single-storey sacristy extension, with copper clad saw tooth roof, projecting copper gutters, slender downpipes and clerestory glazing (Fig 2.04).

On the church interior, the expansive floor plan is laid out with rows of timber pews to seat 1,000. The stained-glass curtain walling to the south and north of the nave is masterfully executed by Murphy-Devitt Studios with artistic depictions of the Stations of the Cross, framed by the vertical tapered posts and punctuated by the pitched roof confessionals, which are clad in vertical tongue and groove timber boarding.



**Fig. 2.05:** View of the south elevation of the nave, with full height stained-glass panels, punctuated by pitched roof confessionals (left). Detail of the stained-glass panels, depicting the Stations of the Cross by Murphy-Devitt Studios.



**Fig. 2.06:** View from the entrance of the nave towards the sanctuary and sculpted precast concrete post and beam structure and skylight (left). View of the north facing elevation of the nave (right) with timber clad confessionals punctuating the stained-glass curtain walling.

Toward the sanctuary, the spirelet with skylight is dramatically supported by secondary sculpted concrete beams, which spring out from the base of the main posts, like branches on a structural tree, executed in a highly technical fashion. Adorning the cross walls hang two murals by Irish romantic-realist painter Seán Keating (1889-1977), which are dramatically framed by strips of light from the glazed shadow gaps between the post and beam structure and the non-structural infill gable walls.



**Fig. 2.07:** View from nave toward the sanctuary with skylight from the base of the spirelet (left). View from the interior towards the north facing gable wall (right), with side chapel and murals (one of two) by Irish romantic-realist painter Seán Keating (1889-1977).

## 2.2 Church Boiler House

This modest building is a simple in-situ concrete structure with infill blockwork gable walls, vaulted ceiling, pebble dashed render and tongue and groove boarded gables and timber panelled doors. The clay tiled roof is framed by an in-situ concrete ring beam with concealed gutters and concrete rain spouts on the east and west elevations. Alongside the boiler house is a 12m high standalone in-situ concrete board marked chimney stack, styled to resemble a bell tower. The boiler house interior is subdivided into two sections; one to house the boiler and the other as a garden shed to store equipment for the maintenance of parish grounds. The records indicate that the existing boiler house, which serves the church has remained largely unchanged since it was constructed in 1967 and is in moderate condition.



**Fig. 2.08:** View of the church boiler house and free-standing chimney stack, taken from the west looking east.

As indicated in the site photographs below (Fig. 2.09), there is a secondary access door to the boiler house on the east facing elevation, which is currently accessible through the fire escape gate in the timber fencing of the children's play area and is secured behind a timber clad metal gate on the community centre side. This east facing elevation also contains the gas meter serving the parish boiler. The current access is cumbersome and would better serve the parish and the community centre, if the gas meter was moved outside of the community centre site and an alternative boiler access door provided on the north facing gable of the boiler house, so that parish staff can have better access to the gas meter and boiler when required outside of the community centre operating hours. This is also needed, to make way for the proposed community centre single storey extension, explained below.



**Fig. 2.09:** View of the east facing elevation of the boiler house, with gas meter and access door secured behind a timber clad metal gate, accessed from the children's play area within the community centre site.

### 2.3 Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre (Former Parish Hall)

The records indicate the parish hall to the northeast of the church, was constructed with materials and technology of its time. Its original main structure is an in-situ concrete post and beam frame, infilled with non-structural solid blockwork with a pebble dashed external finish. The hall interior has a vaulted ceiling with exposed steel trusses, which is infilled on the western end with a first-floor meeting room and timber staircase. The proportion and incline of the clay tiled pitched roof echoes the design, angle and proportions of the neighbouring church, forming an attractive composition on the street front.

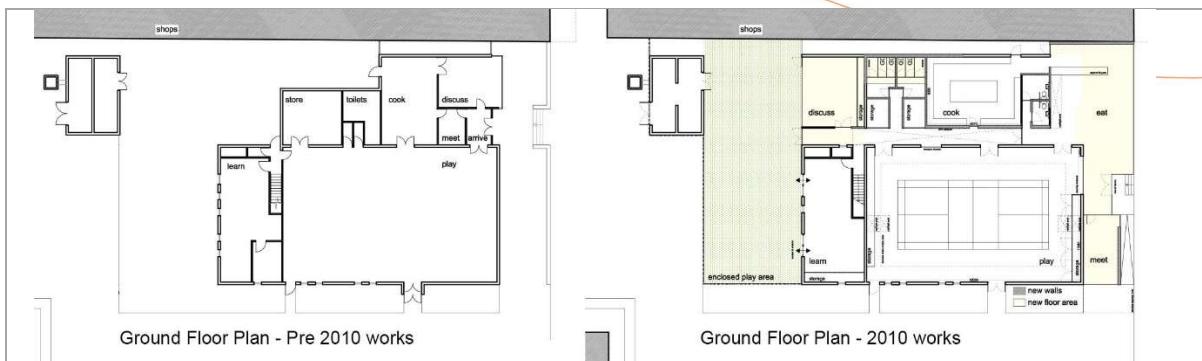


**Fig. 2.10:** Front elevation of the Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre, with detail (right) of the entrance steps requiring upgrade works to improve wheelchair accessibility.



**Fig. 2.11:** View of the south facing elevation of the Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre, which faces onto the Church of the Holy Spirit. Details (right) of projecting eaves with clerestory glazing, echoing the roof design of the neighbouring church.

As explained above and indicated in the floor plans by Box Architects below, the 2008-2010 parish hall upgrade works involved a new single-storey flat roof extension to the north of the parish hall, which consolidated various ad-hoc extensions, and extended along the street elevation to align with the adjacent shop fronts to the north. The extension work included a new community café and small staff office on the street front, and new meetings room to the rear of the building, with enclosed children's play area, as it remains today.



**Fig. 2.12:** Ground floor plan of the parish hall and church boiler house before (left) and after (right) the 2010 upgrade works. Drawing by Box Architects.

As part of the upgrade works, the parish hall underwent fabric upgrade works to improve its thermal performance, achieving an A3 BER rating. Solar panels were added to the south facing pitched roof elevation, while rooflights were added along the ridge line to illuminate and ventilate the hall, with 3no. roof lights added along the western end south facing roof, to illuminate the first-floor meeting room. It should be noted that the solar panels were carefully designed to sit in line with the clay tiles of the roof rather than mounted on the surface of the tiles with a metal frame as is often the norm with such installations and significantly reduces their visual impact on the church adjacent.



**Fig. 2.13: Image Left** - View of the Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre, with screened external children's play area and the boiler house with chimney stack, taken from the southwest looking northeast.  
**Image Right** - Detail of the solar panels and roof lights to the south facing pitched roof.

In 2014, the management of the Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre commissioned a health and safety review of the existing community centre, who advised that a guarding be placed on the flat roof of the new extension to provide safe access for roof maintenance, which was installed c.2014 by the BCYC management. The guarding, as indicated in the photographs below (Fig. 2.14) is a ballasted system with extruded aluminium railings and freestanding counterbalance weight assembly. This system is referred to under EN Standards as a 'temporary edge protection system' with no permanent fixings in the roof membrane or structure and can be dismantled and removed when required.



**Fig. 2.14:** View of Ballyroan Community Youth Centre front elevation, with safe access guarding to single storey flat roof (left). Close up image of the ballasted guardrail system (right)

#### 2.4 Pastoral Centre

The Pastoral Centre which was completed in 2010 and designed by Box Architects is a clean profiled double height single-storey flat roofed building executed with a limited palette of delicately assembled materials of brick, render, timber and glass and was conceived as a 'precious modern object set within the grounds of the church'. The building was carefully sited on the northwest corner of the parish lands to draw people from the front of the church, by the community centre, into a shared central square and into the library.

The centre contains a large meeting room, large hall, café, smaller meeting rooms and sanitary facilities.



**Fig. 2.15:** Image left - View of the civic space on parish lands looking towards the north facing gable of the church, with east facing elevation of the pastoral centre on the right and the church boiler house with chimney stack to the left of image. Image right – view of the Pastoral Centre when completed in 2010 (Photo by Paul Teirney).

## 2.5 Concrete Paving on Parish Lands

As noted in the photograph above (Fig. 2.15), the civic square and pedestrian link created as part of the 2010 works was finished with 600 x 600mm shallow concrete paving flags, bedded on sand and gravel and grouted with cementitious grout and replaced what was previously a mix of earth and grass verges and black tarmac pathways as indicated in the 'before and after' site photographs below.



**Fig. 2.16:** View of pedestrian link from the Rosemount District Centre to south of the community centre looking east before (left) and after (right) the 2010 works. After photo on right taken in May 2025.



**Fig. 2.17:** View of civic square before (left) and after (right) the 2010 works. After photo on right taken in May 2025.

As noted in the condition survey photographs below (Fig 2.18), the grout between these pavers have washed away, while several others have cracked, subsided and lifted, which are unsightly and may present a trip hazard. It is proposed that as part of the planned upgrade works, these pavers, which cover an area of approximately 620 sq.m., will be refurbished or replaced with a more durable and accessible surface finish such as coloured asphalt, with details to be agreed with Ballyroan Parish as the landowner and the relevant SDCC internal departments, including SDCC conservation officer.



**Fig. 2.18:** Site photographs taken in May 2025, indicating selection of cracked, subsided and lifted pavers

### 3.0 ARCHITECTURAL APPRAISAL

#### 3.1 Statutory Protection

The Church of the Holy Spirit is protected under the Planning and Development Acts as: the "Church of the Holy Spirit, Marian Road, Rathfarnham" and is referred to in the Council's Record of Protected Structures (R.P.S. No. 264) (Map 06) under the County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 – Appendix 3A: Record of Protected Structures, as "Detached Cruciform Plan Catholic Church". In the maps of the County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 the lands around the church are zoned "To protect, improve and provide for the future development of Local Centres" (Objective LC).

The structure is identified in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) survey of the South Dublin County Area, under Registry Number 11216039. The NIAH rates the structure as being of Regional Rating, and being of architectural, artistic, social and technical interest.

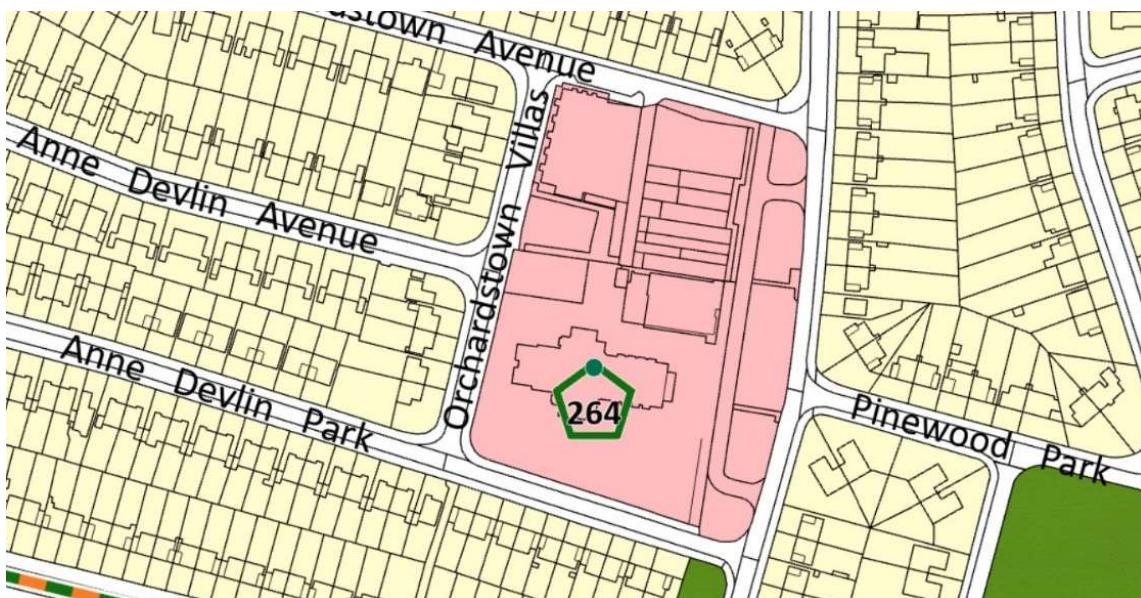


Fig. 3.01: An extract from in the County Development Plan 2022 – 2028. The location of R.P.S. No. 264.

Under the County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, the church and its site are not part of an Architectural Conservation Area (A.C.A.), Special Area of Conservation /Protection Area and does not contain a registered Monument on the site.

#### 3.2 Statement of Significance

The Church of the Holy Spirit is one of the youngest protected structures in Ireland and received protected status due to its highly technical and imaginative modern design which is richly decorated using modern materials and expansive areas of stained glass. The building is of architectural, technical, social and artistic interest and has been noted in the NIAH survey as a 'future gem of Ireland's architectural and ecclesiastical heritage'.

## 4.0 PROPOSED WORKS

### 4.1 Site Layout Plans – Existing & Proposed

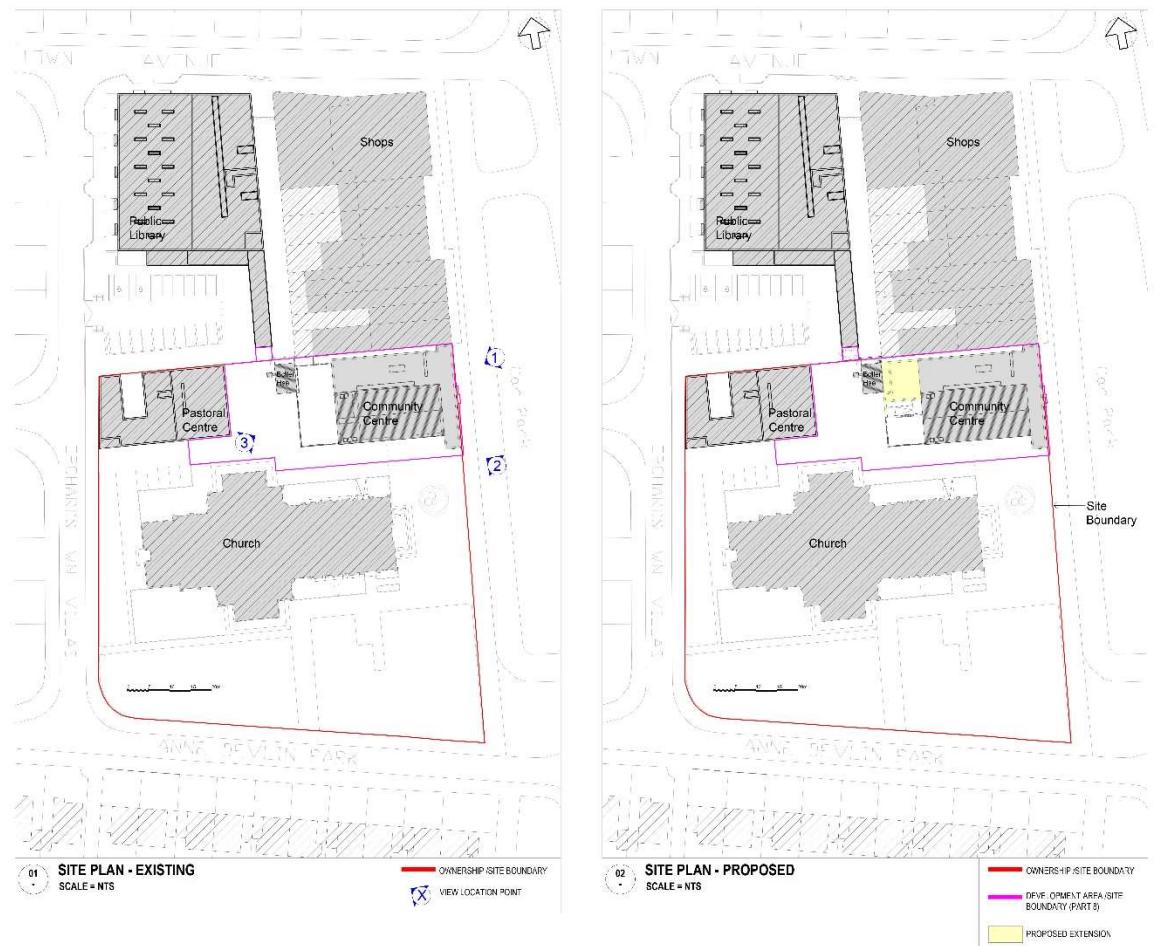


Fig. 4.01: Extract from Part 8 drawings, indicating the existing and proposed site layout plan.

### 4.2 Entrance Upgrade Works

The proposed entrance upgrade works concerns minor modifications to the existing entrance steps, gentle slope, railings and entrance door to enhance access into the building for wheelchair users and to comply with the current Building Regulations. The proposal includes metal railings and integrated granite clad seating with timber lining, to animate the street front, and to match the existing material palette.

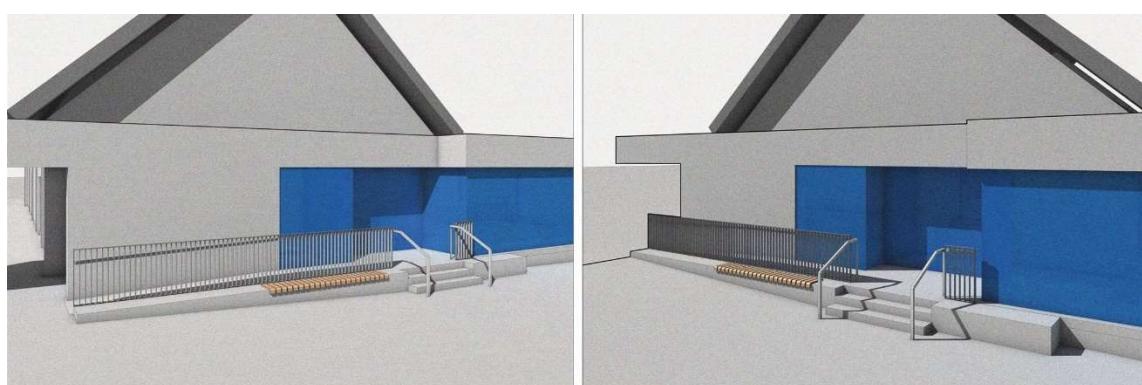


Fig. 4.02: 3D images of proposed Community Centre entrance enhancement works.

#### 4.3 Internal Re-ordering Works

The proposed internal reordering works concern the reconfiguration of the internal layout of the community centre to provide additional office space, meetings rooms and childcare rooms to meet the increase in demand for community services in the Ballyroan area. As indicated on the attached Part 8 drawings, the proposed reordering works and extension includes the following proposals:

- Existing staff office to be extended into the main hall, to create a new community meeting room and new front-of-house reception desk.
- Existing store to be converted into new wheelchair accessible WC.
- Existing 2no. first floor meeting rooms to be refurbished as 1no. staff office and 1no. manager's office.
- Existing meeting room to rear of the centre, currently operating as a childcare room to be refurbished and extended as part of the extension works for additional childcare accommodation.

#### 4.4 Proposed Extension

The proposed new build concerns the extension of the existing single-storey flat roof extension constructed in 2010, west into the northern section of the children's external play area to abut the eastern elevation of the parish boiler house. The new building will be hidden behind the existing screened children's play area and will be finished in a carefully selected palette of materials: brick, render, timber and glass, to tie in with the 2010 works. The flat roof will be dropped in height where it abuts the boiler house if necessary, so ensure minimal impact to the boiler house roof. The extension will include a rain planter and permeable paving to meet the SuDS requirements, and a new dedicated universally accessible access gate from the west, subject to agreement with Ballyroan parish as landowner.

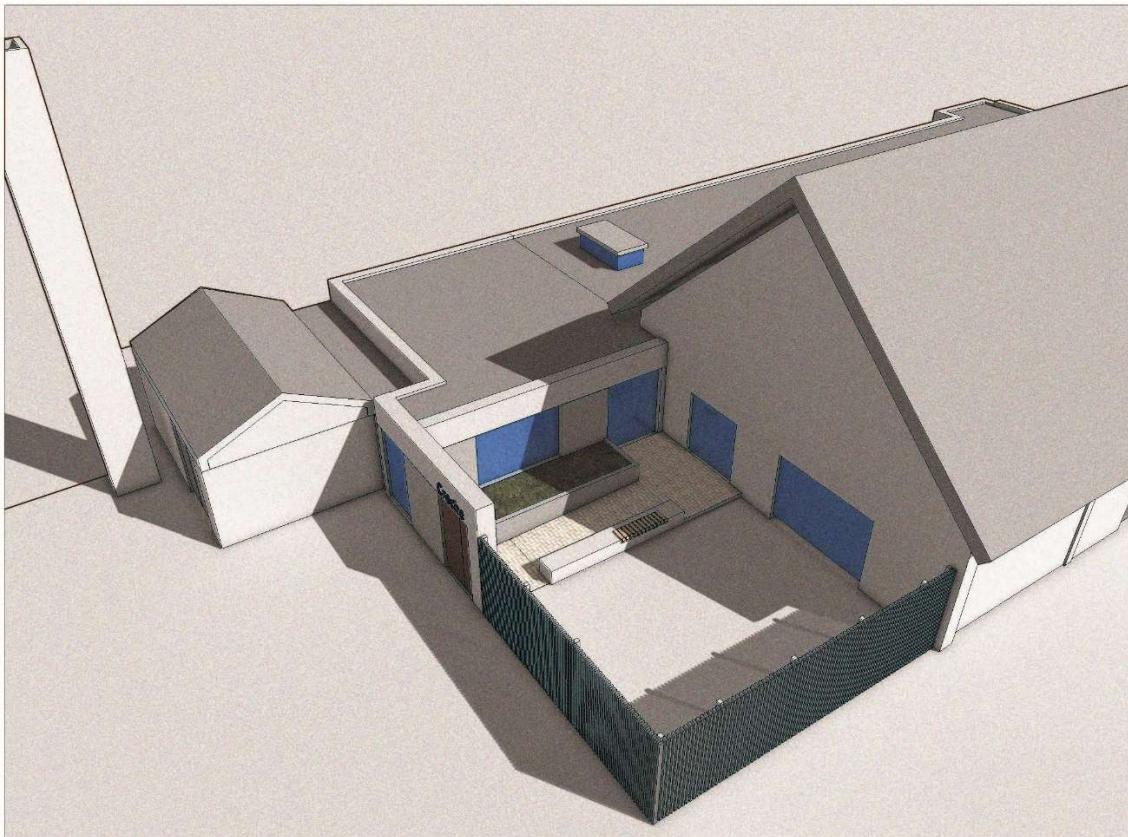


Fig. 4.03: 3D images of proposed Community Centre extension.

#### 4.5 Modifications to Boiler House

Works to the boiler house are necessary to accommodate the proposed new flat roof extension noted under Item 4.4 above. This work is minor and concerns the infilling of the existing boiler house maintenance access door along the east facing elevation, which is currently accessed through the children's play area and the creation of a new door opening along the north facing gable, which is hidden from the civic space and will have no visual impact on the area. The boiler house door is required as a fire escape from the boiler house and for future maintenance access.

#### 4.6 External Screened Bin Store

Currently, the bins for the community centre are stored behind a timber screen off the children's play area. As space within the centre is limited and this area is required to accommodate the new extension, it is proposed that a new external bin store is created at the southern gable of the flat roofed library storage unit on SDCC library lands, to be screened behind a new larch timber batten enclosure to match the existing timber screen of the children's play area.

#### 4.7 Additional Solar Panels

In accordance with the targets set out in the South Dublin County Council Climate Action Plan 2024, the council are seeking to decarbonise their existing building stock including community centres as a step towards achieving climate neutrality no later than 2050 with a 51% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030. As a step towards fulfilling this objective, it is proposed to install additional solar panels along the south facing pitched roof of the community centre roof as illustrated on the Part 8 drawings. To minimize the visual impact of the panels on the adjacent church, it is proposed that the panels will be carefully aligned under the line of the existing ridge level roof lights, and will be designed to match the existing solar panels (Fig 2.13) where possible i.e. they will be inset within the line of the clay tiles rather than mounted on a steel support frame as a measure to help minimize their visual impact (subject to further review at design development stage and details to be agreed with SDCC conservation officer).

#### 4.8 Resurfacing Works on Parish Lands

As indicated under Item 2.5 above, the existing concrete pavers, which were laid as part of the 2008-2010 works, require refurbishment /upgrade. As this area provides an important pedestrian access link connecting the Rosemount District Centre Plaza, the Church of the Holy Spirit, the parish centre, the community centre and the library, it is considered appropriate that the existing pavers are carefully removed and replaced with a more durable and accessible surface finish such as coloured asphalt, which is consistent with the original finishes of the 1967 works, when the Church of the Holy Spirit and church grounds were completed. Details concerning finishes, to be agreed with Ballyroan Parish as the landowner and the relevant SDCC internal departments, including SDCC conservation officer.

### 5.0 CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Architectural Design Statement

The 2008-2010 works designed by Box Architects and documented above, involved the construction of clean rectangular forms, executed with a restrained palette of high-quality materials of brick, render, timber and glass. This restrained design approach ensured that the new buildings did not visually compete with the adjacent protected structure but rather created a harmonized backdrop with pleasant civic spaces and new pedestrian links which compliments and showcases the heritage significance of the Church of the Holy Spirit.

Appreciating the success of the 2008-2010 works, SDCC Architects Department have employed a similar design approach for this phase of upgrade works, which have been carefully considered to tie in with Box Architects original design, by employing the same palette of materials and keeping within the height and scale of the existing building forms.

## 5.2 Architectural Impact Assessment

The proposed works are required to meet the urgent need for the expansion of community services at the Ballyroan Community & Youth Centre. SDCC Architects' Department's design has been carefully considered to accommodate the expansion of community services within the footprint of the existing community centre site, by working within the scale and height of the existing building, with a carefully selected palette of high-quality materials to match the existing. The design has been coordinated with the many stakeholders who use the Community & Youth Centre and the neighbouring parish and public library representatives. The proposed works are minor in nature and any direct visual impact on the Church of the Holy Spirit [protected structure] will be minimal or negligible.

It is noted that the proposal to fit solar panels on the south facing slope of the community centre pitched roof could have negative visible impact on the church, however this potential impact is proposed to be mitigated by installing the panels in line with the existing clay tiles, to give them a streamlined appearance and are to be carefully aligned beneath the ridge height roof lights for visual continuity and order. Should these measures be taken, ASD are of the view that any direct visual impact will be minimal and is justified by potential environmental benefits for the community centre.

Report prepared by Eoghan Broderick MRIAI on behalf of South Dublin County Council, Architectural Services Department.