



DEMOLITION & REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING COTTAGE AT: CHURCH STREET, LOUGHREA, CO. GALWAY

Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment 30/07/2026

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Fig.1: Contemporary aerial view of the site from above



Fig.2: Contemporary aerial view of the site from above



Fig.3: View from Church Street



Fig.4: View from rear

1.0: INTRODUCTION

This is an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment for the Demolition & Replacement of Existing Cottage At: Church Street, Loughrea, Co. Galway, by Galway County Council.

This assessment forms part of the Part 8 application for the proposed works comprising of the demolition of the existing derelict cottage and the construction of a new multi-purpose structure which closely matches the footprint, scale and proportion of the existing cottage, to enhance public engagement with the historic site and to accommodate the following: outdoor traders market, outdoor performances and community events and ancillary uses associated with the use of the Town Hall.

The assessment is to be read in conjunction with the documents and drawings prepared by Galway County Council for the Planning Application.

1.1: CONSERVATION ARCHITECT

Max O'Flaherty, Aughey O'Flaherty Architects, Grade 1 Accredited Conservation Architect has prepared this report to accompany the Part 8 application for the proposed works being submitted to Galway County Council. The assessment is based on site inspections of the site and surrounds carried out across May, June & July 2026.

1.2: DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

The Part 8 description of the development is as follows:

Permission is being sought at: Church Street, Loughrea, Co. Galway for:

- The demolition of the existing derelict cottage.
- The construction of a new multi-purpose structure which closely matches the footprint, scale and proportion of the existing cottage.
- The proposed development includes new signage, an enclosed bin store, connection to existing services, hard and soft landscaping, and all associated site works.
- The following uses will be accommodated on the site: outdoor traders market, outdoor performances and community events and ancillary uses associated with the use of the Town Hall.

This assessment reviews the impact of the removal of the historic built fabric of the cottage within the above development description.



Fig.5: Contemporary Bird's Eye View



Fig.6: Contemporary Bird's Eye View

2.0: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Statement of Significance for Loughrea contained in Galway County Council Development Plan 2022 – 2028 Appendix 7 ‘Architectural Conservation Areas’ describes the principle features of the town such as its street pattern, plot sizes, architectural coherence, distinctive landmark buildings and unique setting.

Loughrea has a designated ACA, which seeks to protect the special character of the historic core. The vast majority of buildings span the late 18th to late 19th centuries and share many characteristics. Surviving traditional shop fronts are important elements within the town. For its size, Loughrea contains a generous number of buildings of national or regional significance.

The significance of the building lies in its simple vernacular pitched form, its modest 3 bay composition and its proportions. Its restrained detailing and lack of decoration accentuate this simplicity. The significance of the building also comes from its position, proud of the adjacent buildings to the north of Church Street and aligning with the eastern gable of the Town Hall.

While the proposal involves the removal of original historic building fabric, and indeed the derelict condition requires the removal of original historic building fabric, these characteristics above which contribute to the significance can be retained or re-instated.

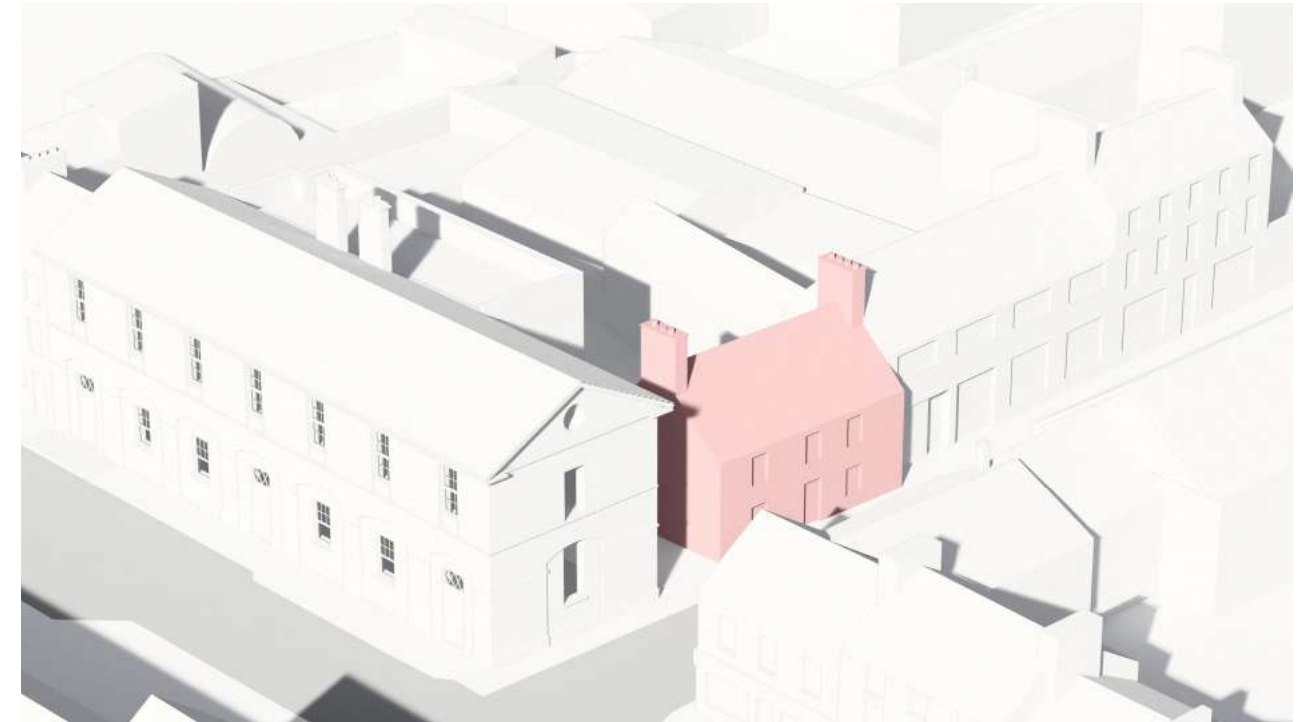


Fig.6: 3D Bird's Eye View from South East



Fig.6: 3D Bird's Eye View from North East

2.1: STATUTORY PROTECTIONS

Street: Church St; Townland: Loughrea; ITM: 562077 716506

The Cottage is located in the Loughrea Town ACA.

While there are some protected structures in the area, the cottage is not a protected structure. The Cottage is not listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

The site is located on the west side of Church Street in the south-east of Loughrea town and within the zone of notification of Recorded Monument (GA105:150----) Historic Town of Loughrea. It is situated to the SE of Church and Graveyard (GA105:150001-150009, NIAH Reg. No. 30337021/RPS 320) while Loughrea Town Hall (NIAH 30337027/RPS 315) is located to the immediate south.

The Loughrea Town Hall is on the Record of Protected Structures No. 315 and listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage No. 30337027. The NIAH records that it was built c.1860. Saint Brendan's Church of Ireland (NIAH 30337021, RPS 320) on Church Street is located 40m to the north-east of the development site.

A number of houses in the vicinity of the development site are listed in the NIAH and include the 20th century AIB building (NIAH 30337020, RS1270) on Main Street and a house (NIAH 30337041, RPS 316) on barrack Street built between 1780-1800.

The RPS also lists Beatty's (RPS 1285), a mid 18th century house located to the north of the development site.



Fig.11: Protected Structures on Church Street and the Vicinity of the Cottage

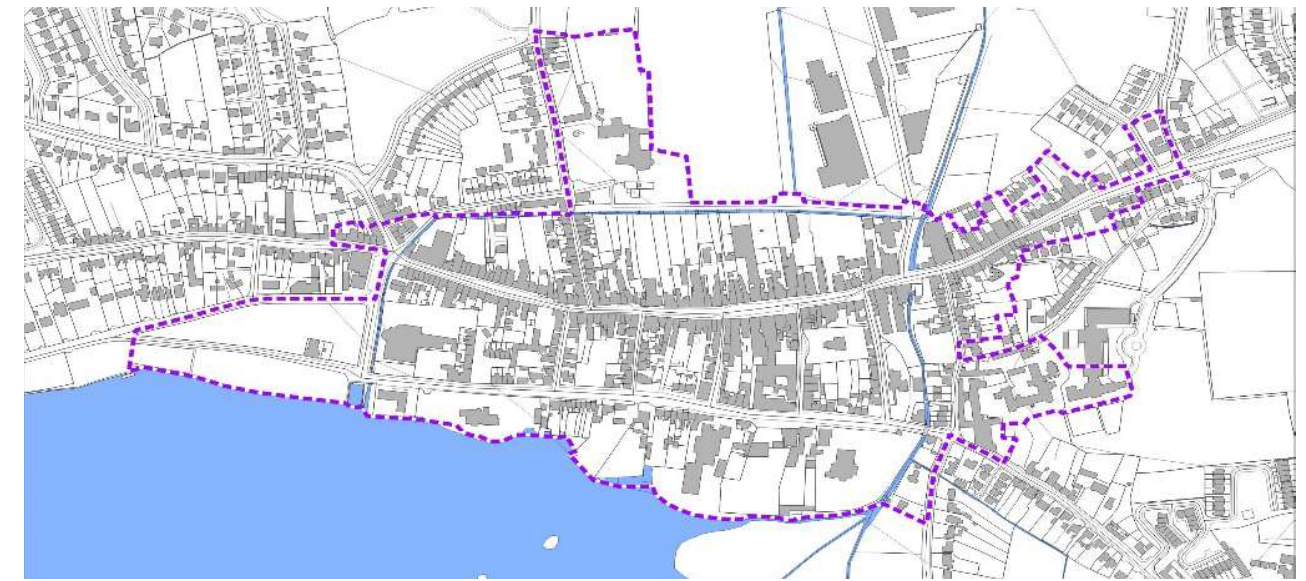


Fig.9: Loughrea Architectural Conservation Area Map, Galway County Council Development Plan 2022 – 2028 Appendix 7



Fig.10: Loughrea Architectural Conservation Area Map, Galway County Council Development Plan 2022 – 2028

2.2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Loughrea name dates back to the Anglo-Norman times, when Lord of Connaught, Richard de Burgo, chose Loughrea as the principal manor of the territory and de Burgos' castle was built there in 1236. Loughrea town was located centrally within the Anglo-Norman Cantred (later to become the Barony) of Loughrea. It was one of Richard de Burgh's principal demesne cantreds and Loughrea town the chief borough, or Caput Baroniae, of the lordship of Connacht.

A letter dating to 1574 describes the town as 'well-ditched and trenched, with walls fair begun but not finished, having three strong fair gates make like three castles'. Inside the walls was built-up with houses of stone work, which were partly destroyed and ruinous by the end of the sixteenth century.

In the 19th century Lewis Topographical Guide describes Loughrea as a flourishing town with 1,299 houses and 7,876 inhabitants. A large brewery and extensive quarries were also named as existing within the town. In 1893 a parliamentary report into the condition of agricultural labourers in Loughrea union was undertaken by Roger Richards.

Numerous houses dating to the 18th century are recorded in the town and the Loughrea Town Hall (NIAH30337027 RPS315) is located to the immediate south.

The cottage appears on several historic maps. The historic 6" survey map of 1838 show a building of similar arrangement at this location and the second edition survey 25" map of 1897 shows the cottage in its current position.



Fig.12: Extract of 1841 ed. OSI 6-inch map.

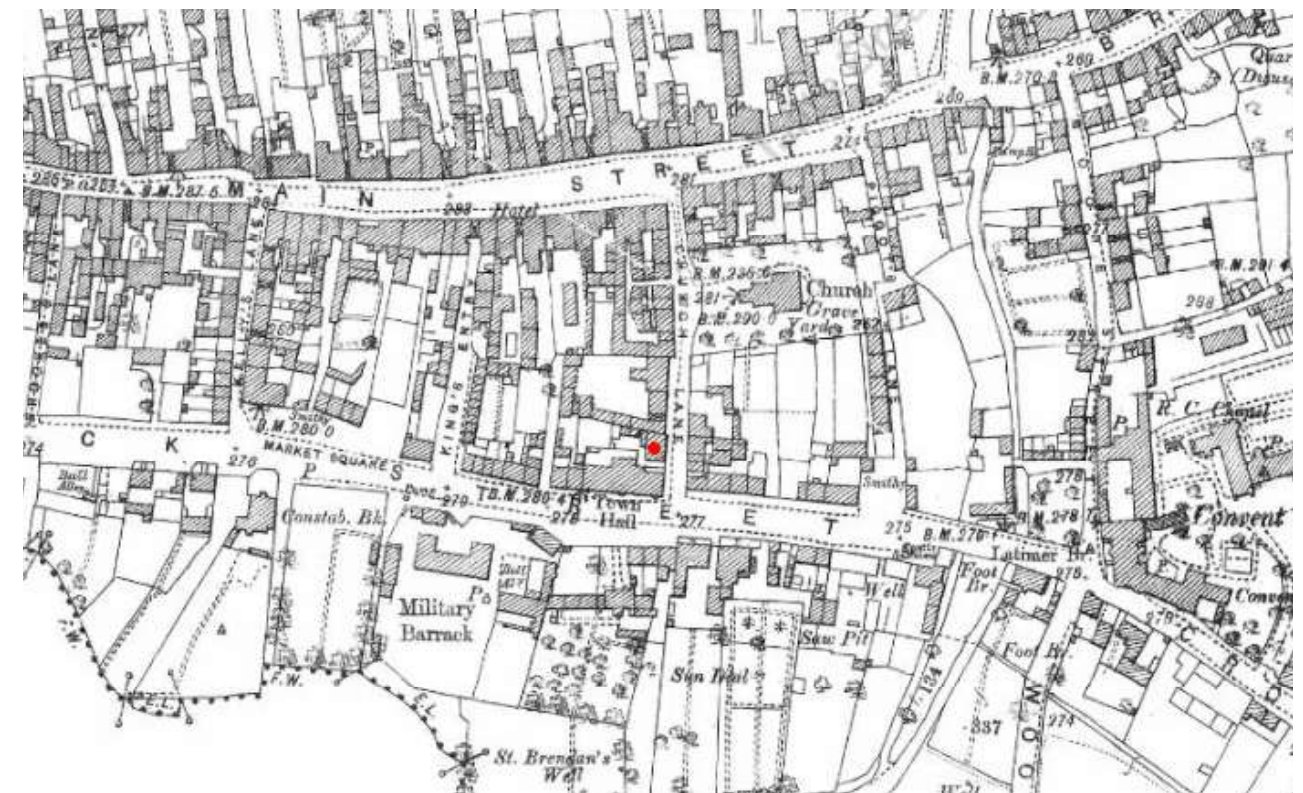


Fig.13: Image 6. Historic 25" map

2.3: DESCRIPTION OF THE COTTAGE AND SITE

The cottage is currently in a derelict state, and was recently been taken into the ownership of the Galway County Council.

The Cottage is a 3-bay two-storey building with rendered facade, a centrally positioned single leaf door flanked by two windows at entrance level and three first floor windows. It has a traditional single pitched roof with chimney stacks on each side gable. The original roof has been replaced. The current roof covering consists of corrugated metal sheets, partially missing on the rear pitch, while the original slates are missing entirely.

No ornament is visible on the main facade. The external walls are of stone construction with traditional lime render still evident in areas. The windows to the front street elevation retain only stone sills, as does one window to the rear. No original windows remain. A single storey lean-to structure of masonry construction is attached to the rear of the cottage. A single leaf door leads from the lean-to into an enclosed yard beyond where livestock would have been held. There is gated access to the south side to this rear yard. The original gates have been removed.

The northern-most gable is constructed hard up against the neighbouring building. It's placement is unusual as it stands forward of the building line on the western side of Church Street by approximately one meter. The southern gable faces onto a narrow access way between the cottage and the adjacent Town Hall.

The footprint of the Cottage on Church Street is aligned with the Facade of the Town Hall immediately to the south. The adjacent buildings to the north of the Cottage are set further back from the street alignment.

An ensemble of rubble and concrete lean-to structures were originally arranged in the yard however these have since collapsed or were removed.

The Town Hall (NIAH30337027 RPS315) is located to the immediate south of the development site (Fig. 5). The NIAH records that it was built c.1860.

Saint Brendan's Church of Ireland (NIAH 30337021, RPS 320) is located 40m to the north-east of the development site and described as 'A former Gothic Revival church, attributed to architect James Pain, which acts as a natural focal point and eye catcher for this part of the town.



Fig. 14: Contemporary view from Church Street



Fig. 15: Contemporary view from Church Street of Town Hall and Cottage



Fig. 16: Contemporary view from Rear

2.4: EXISTING CONDITION

This building has remained vacant for decades and has consequently fallen into dereliction.

It is not clear when the roof has collapsed, but the current condition is partly due to extensive water ingress to all parts of the interior through the missing roof. The entirety of the slates are missing from the roof and the condition of the primary roof timbers is beyond repair.

The interior of the building is heavily saturated and floor joists on the upper floors are partially extant and partially collapsed, and likely to be significantly weakened through rot. Most of the floorboards at first floor level appear to have been removed. The plaster and lath ceilings at both first floor and ground floor level have, for the most part, collapsed into the ground floor rooms. The timber floorboards at ground floor level are saturated and soft through rot, with gaps where the floorboards have collapsed into the floor void below.

The timber staircase appears to be collapsed also.

The structural cross walls and chimney breasts are intact and are contributing to stability of the structure. The external plaster to the Church street facade appears in poor but stable condition, while all architectural features and external joinery are missing. Established wild ivy and creepers have taken over the side and rear facades in a number of locations.

From visual inspection, we estimate that the loss of the roof covering and associated heavy water ingress took place within the last twenty years. It is possible that a single incident such as major storm damage or the theft of lead from the roof may have accelerated this deterioration. The damage to the building is considerable, and much of the architectural fabric is irretrievable. The building has received a temporary roof cover made of corrugated metal, of which a significant portion is missing at the rear, which we believe has caused further damage.

A structural engineer was appointed by Galway County Council to assess the condition of the masonry walls and to provide a structural report.

A summary of the condition of the building elements is as follows:

- 'Bellying' of the front masonry wall as structural elements have decayed and failed.
- First floor structural timber joists and internal masonry 'tie walls' have separated from the external walls.
- Leaning of the southern gable and chimney towards the town hall.
- Collapse of first floor timbers.
- Collapse of the timber staircase and landings.
- Decay and collapse of timber lintels.
- Failure and collapse of roof structure of both the cottage and lean-to extension.
- Deterioration of timber roof trusses has resulted in decay of roof covering fixings.



Fig.17: View from Church Street



Fig.18: View from Rear



Fig.19: View of collapsed Roof



Fig.20: View of overgrowth on roof and chimney



Fig.21: Interior View



Fig.22: Interior View of Collapse

3.0: THE PROPOSED WORKS & CONSERVATION IMPACT

The design solution for the remediation of the immediate context of the Town Hall came through careful consideration of the role which the cottage plays in defining the streetscape and how it contributes to the character of the broader Architectural Conservation Area. The proposal weighs up the gain of a new public civic space at the heart of Loughrea against the loss, the further loss of the historic building fabric. Scrutiny of the structural engineer's report, which states that the original fabric of the cottage is beyond repair, helped to justify and refine the design solution.

3.1: BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT

For almost a century the Loughrea Town Hall has held particular social importance within the community. After standing vacant for more than 20 years, Galway County Council's Regeneration Team has undertaken the re purposing and renovation of this neo-classical building to bring it back into community use. The neighbouring cottage was acquired by Galway County Council in the past year to facilitate construction at the Town Hall, to improve the immediate context of the historic hall, and to provide much needed community open space. The current arrangements for markets in Loughrea are unsatisfactory. They consist of fruit & vegetable stalls placed where space allows along Barrack Street. The resultant layout is spread and seemly random. It does not foster community. The location along the busy Barrack Street with its fast moving traffic is also unfortunate and discourages pedestrians. This development proposes to resolve that and to provide a cohesive safe and contained civic space in the heart of Loughrea.

The Development works proposed at the cottage will allow the formation of a 'Market Yard', which will be used as a set building and external courtyard and congregation space for patrons visiting the Town Hall, suitable for community events.

The proposed 'Market Yard' will satisfy the requirement for a town centre community open space. The open space and 'gatehouse' (replacement structure) will make a positive contribution to the setting of the restored Town Hall. The development of a community 'Market Yard' could also serve the greater surrounding area as a catalyst for the reimagination of the public realm and as a focal point for the regeneration of streets and open spaces. The Church of Ireland building further up the road is situated in a graveyard with a carpark to the front which presents an opportunity to create a series of places along Church Street for the community to use. As part of a future project, these spaces could be enhanced and connected by pedestrian focused 'linkages' which encourage social and commercial activity.

In terms of Conservation impact, this assessment recognises the further loss of historic building fabric involved, however notes that this is justified by the civic gain of a new market square / public space at the centre of Loughrea.



Fig.23: Contemporary Birdseye View from South-East



Fig.24: 3D Simulated View from South-East

3.2: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will retain this the outline of the building and is of similar scale, proportion, and form to the Cottage. However, this proposal considers the removal of the majority of the decayed and unsafe fabric of the derelict cottage to be appropriate, as it is deemed beyond repair, and provides a replacement structure which in its essence is a reflection of the original.

Some demolition of the cottage is required because it is in a serious state of dereliction and the remaining historic fabric has lost it's structural integrity. The derelict and ruined building of stone rubble construction, of nineteenth century date, with lean-to single storey brick construction attached to West is largely collapsed internally. This building has been derelict for decades, has no roof, and is heavily overgrown with vegetation, including self-seeding ivy.

The proposed structure will retain several structural elements of the original as follows:

- North side gable and chimney attached to the Beatty's building
- Masonry pillars to the front elevation, marking the original corners of the building
- Masonry pillars to the rear elevation, marking the original corners of the building

In this way the new structure maintains the original footprint of the cottage while its contemporary aesthetic will contrast and highlight the original elements, as well as the adjacent newly renovated Town Hall.

The replacement structure has been designed to convey a lightness and translucency while retaining the mass and proportion of the original building. The size and location of the original fenestration openings on Church Street are marked on the louvred timber façade and the design will aim to retain it's architectural presence along Church Street and contribute to the streetscape.

This approach is deemed to be appropriate as it provides a replacement structure which in its essence is a reflection of the original.



Fig.25: Contemporary Birdseye View from Church Street



Fig.26: 3D Simulated View from Church Street



Fig.27: 3D Simulated View from Church Street



Fig.28: 3D Simulated View from Church Street

3.3: PROJECT SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES OF CONSERVATION

The design solution for the remediation of the immediate context of the Town Hall came through careful consideration of the role which the cottage plays in defining the streetscape and how it contributes to the character of the broader Architectural Conservation Area.

Strict conservation principles should be applied throughout the works and in all aspects of workmanship. The works should generally be carried out in accordance with good building conservation principles enshrined in the ICOMOS 1964 International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter).

The following conservation principles apply to the works:

- Minimal intervention is the concept of low-key intervention which involves keeping as much and changing as little as possible. However, the decay beyond repair and consequential loss of the original fabric dictated the removal of same.
- Repair rather than replace: Good conservation practice always seeks to retain old fabric that contributes to the special interest of a building. Replacement fabric will never have the authenticity of the original. However in this case, the scrutiny of the structural engineer's report, which states that the original fabric of the cottage is beyond repair, helped decide on removal of all unsafe elements of the building fabric.
- Honesty of repairs and alterations
Repairs and alterations to old buildings should generally be of their time. New interventions or additions do not need to look old. Attempts to disguise or artificially age interventions should be avoided.
- The use of appropriate materials and methods in repairs and interventions is essential in order to ensure the long-term survival of an old building. Where specific repair work is to be carried out (such as locally to stonework or mortars) the specification of such work should be the faithful replacement of what exists, or did exist, as is appropriate to good conservation practice, i.e; repair with like materials or replace with what was - and in like manner - where at all possible.

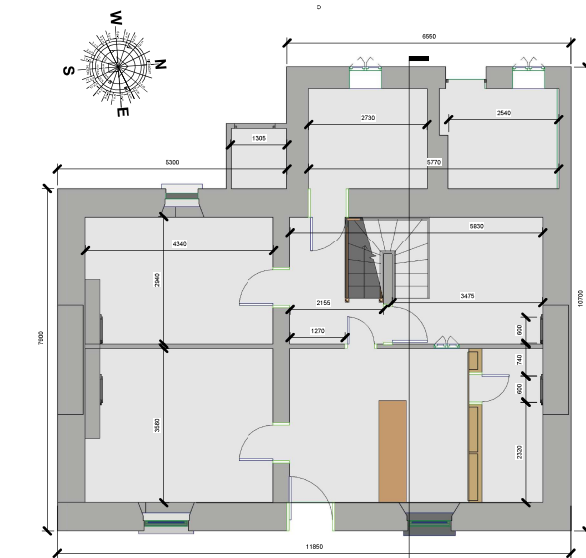


Fig.29: Existing Floor Plan NTS

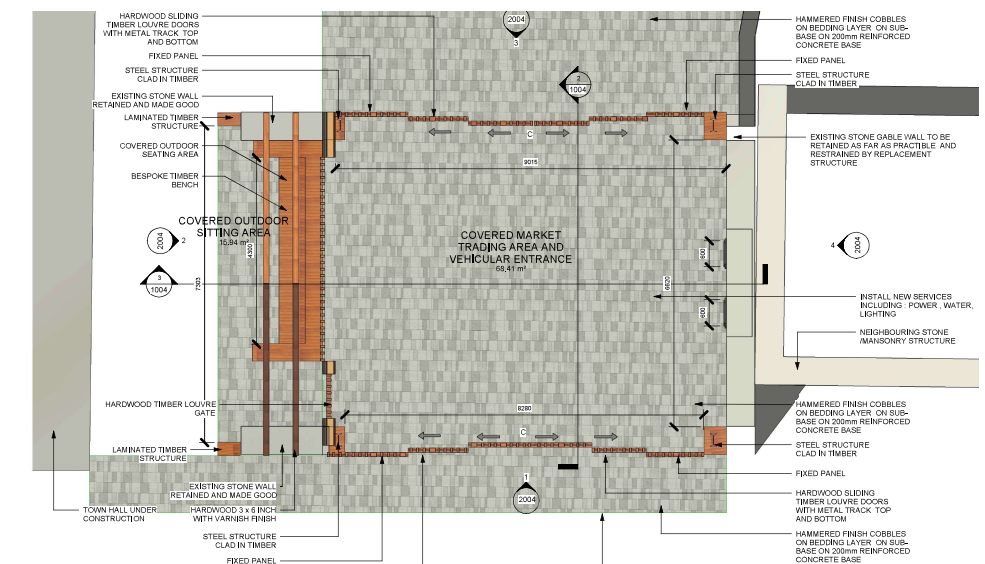


Fig.30 Proposed Floor Plan NTS

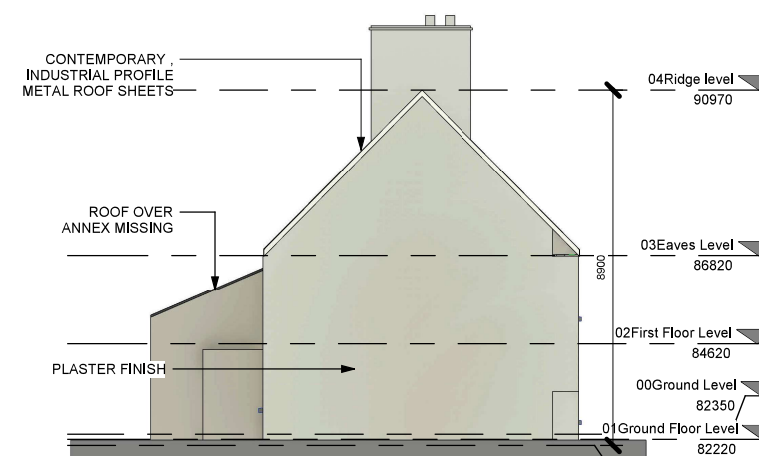


Fig.31: Existing South Elevation NTS

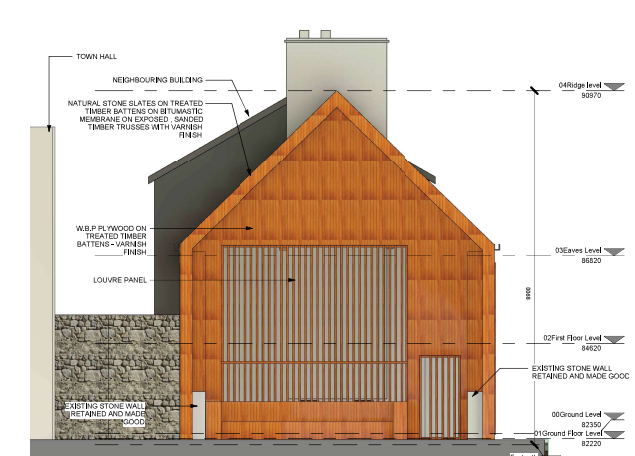


Fig.32: Proposed South Elevation NTS

4.0: RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

All works should be carried out in accordance with current best practice and, in particular, in accordance with the following publications:

- Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, Architectural Heritage Protection - Guidelines for planning Authorities, 2011.
- Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, Advice Series.

The general contractor and all site operatives should be clearly advised of the importance of the fabric of the historic structures within and surrounding the site.

Observation notes and a photographic record should be maintained throughout the project which should be certified on completion.

None of the proposed works will adversely affect the character of the ACA or any historic adjacent building and which contribute to its special interest, subject to careful ongoing detailed design, supervision and construction.

The proposed works will:

- be carried out according to best conservation practice using specialist repair techniques,
- be carried out by contractors who have extensive experience in the repair of historic buildings
- be overseen by a conservation repair specialist with extensive experience in the repair of historic buildings
- be overseen by a RIAI Grade 1 Conservation Architect.

It is to be noted that strict conservation principles must apply to the works which will conserve the retained structures and contribute to their sustainable use in this heritage context.

The proposed works will not adversely affect the special character of this site. While historic fabric will be lost, the characteristics which contribute to the significance of the building can be retained or re-instated.

The proposed works will solve a problem in Loughrea and will provide a cohesive safe and contained civic and social space in the heart of the town.

The proposed works are consistent with the objectives of Galway County Council County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts.



Fig.33: 3D Simulated View from Church Street



Fig.34: 3D Simulated View from Church Street