

Architects Design Statement

The School House Community and Enterprise Centre

Rathvilly, Co. Carlow

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COMHAIRLE CONTAE
CHEATHARLACH
CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

odla
O'Driscoll Lynn Architects



Brennan
Associates



BOWE
Consulting Engineers
Civil and Structural

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1. Site and Existing Building Analysis



Rathvilly is located in North Carlow bordering counties Kildare and Wicklow. It is surrounded by a strong agricultural hinterland. The River Slaney passes northwest and west through the town centre, while the N81 traverses the town centre.

Fig. 1.1 Site Location

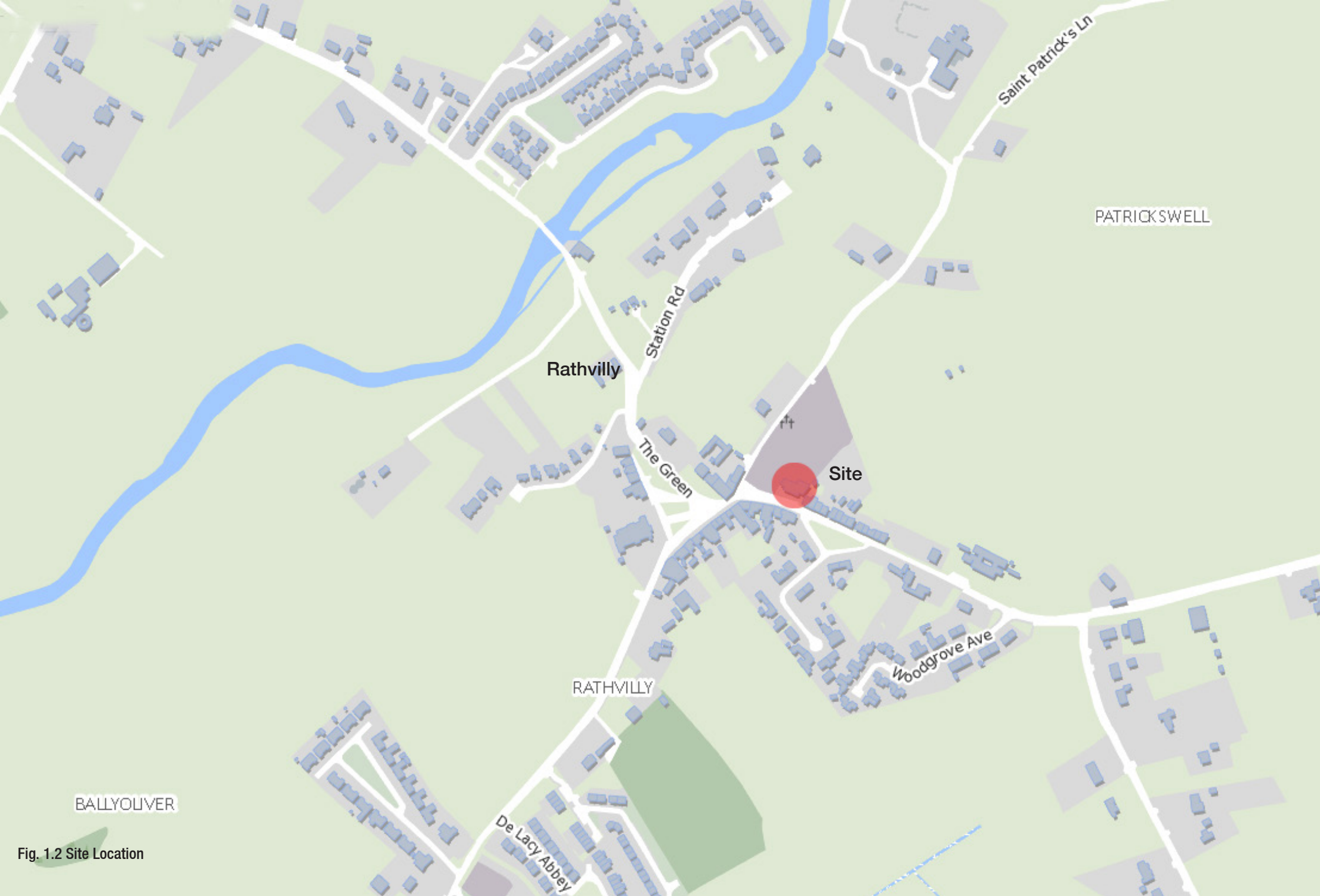


Fig. 1.2 Site Location



Fig. 1.3 Site Aerial View (Site Highlighted in Red)



Fig. 1.4 Existing Site Panoramic View - Showing original 5 Bay Schoolhouse building Center with later additions to the front and sides



Fig. 1.5 Site Panoramic View from the Graveyard to the west



Fig 1.6 Site Panoramic from Graveyard to the North



Fig. 1.7 Site Panoramic View

Site Location

The existing building sits on an important site in the centre of Rathvilly village. It is bounded by the graveyard to the North and West, There is a protected terrace to the east, (RPS No CW429 - CW 441 NIAH 10400108) which comprise 13 three-bay two-storey houses, c. 1903, with rubble granite facades arranged in three groups. Phelan Street abuts the site to the south with 2 storey terraced houses and commercial premises opposite.

Building History

The building was formerly a schoolhouse and in more recent years has been used for community services and functions

We do not have a record of when the building was first constructed on this site but we note that the building predates early Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) map records dating from 1829.

The original building was constructed using brick and natural stone solid walls with a natural slate roof. The extensions to the original schoolhouse building are of poor construction and the layouts are not conducive to providing community services with multiple inner rooms and poor circulation.

The attic space of the original schoolhouse was inspected and the King post trusses were found to mainly in decent condition.

Demolition Strategy

At schematic design stage it was determined that the original schoolhouse building should be retained and refurbished and that all later additions should be demolished. In designing a new scheme it was determined that the original fabric of the school house would be retained and highlighted with appropriate refurbishment.



Fig. 1.8 Historic Map 25 Inch 1888-1913

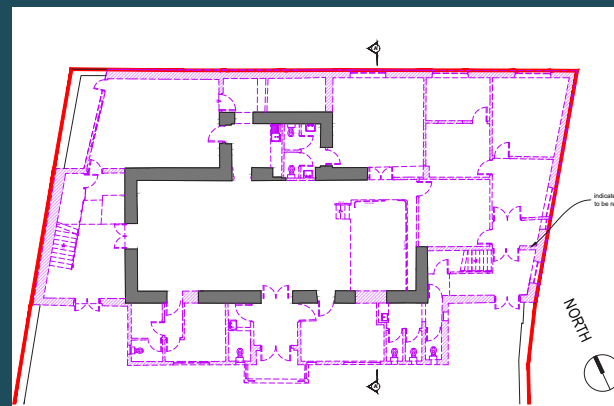


Fig. 1.9 Existing floor plan with original school building shown shaded grey and later additions to be demolished shown dashed magenta



Fig. 1.10 Existing front elevation showing proposed extent of demolition - dashed magenta

2. Carlow County Development Plan

Relevant Extracts from Carlow County Development Plan

Chapter 15: Town and Village Plans / Rural Nodes Rathvilly Plan

Vision

To support the vitality and vibrancy of Rathvilly by consolidation of the town centre with an appropriate mix of uses, to promote healthy place-making within the town core, accommodating additional population growth, promoting employment opportunities within the town, whilst pursuing a continued pattern of high quality development that respects the inherent characteristics of the natural and built environment.

15.3.1.9 Regeneration/Redevelopment Opportunities

The Council promotes and supports the use of previously developed brownfield and infill opportunity sites within the established built footprint of Rathvilly, as well as the redevelopment of existing sites and buildings.

This will contribute to:

- Securing more compact and sustainable growth.
- Enhancing the public realm and overall character and appearance of the town.
- Retaining and increasing vibrancy and vitality in the town centre, including viability for local services, shops, and public transport.
- Increased opportunities for sustainable travel such as walking and cycling.

Economic Development

It is the policy of the Council to:

RV.P9:

Support the provision of co-working spaces within the town centre facilitating the establishment of new businesses and remote working opportunities for residents of the town.

RV.P17:

Support the development of a multi-functional community centre that facilitates community, recreational and sporting activities in a shared space subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.

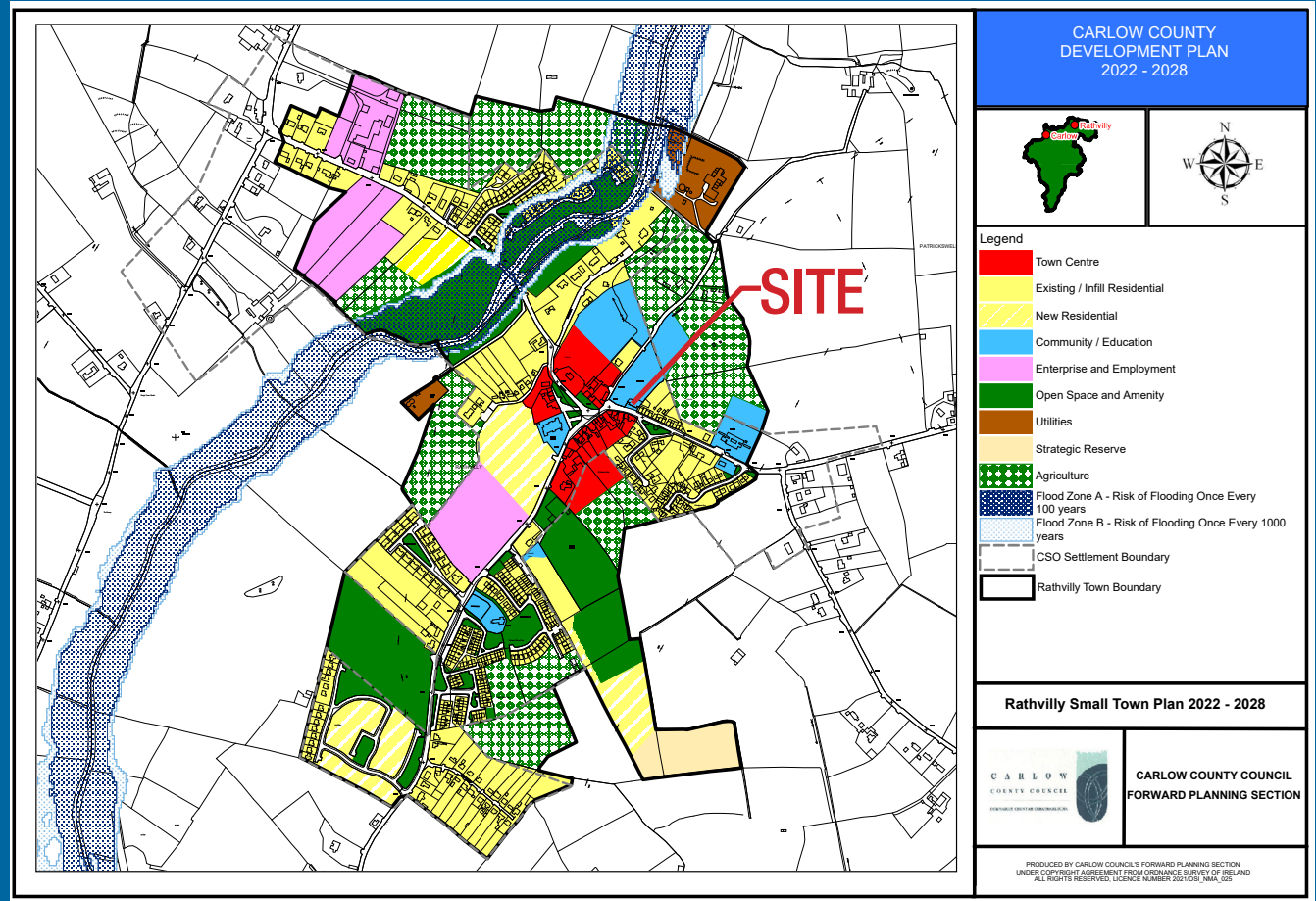


Fig. 2.1 Rathvilly Zoning Plan
Subject site is zoned Community and Education

10.11 Built Heritage

General: Built Heritage - Policies

BH. P1:

Promote the conservation and reuse of early traditional structures, roofscapes of historic centres and the recognition of interrelationships between sites and landscape features in terms of the insertion of new buildings and managing their impact on the historic environment.

BH. P4:

Support the development of sustainable infill in town back lands that is appropriate in scale and character to that of the historic centre, that transitions and accommodates surviving structures and retains the historic street scape form particularly within sensitive areas of built and archaeological importance.

10.13 Architectural Heritage

PS. P6:

Require that development proposals do not obscure views of the principal elevations of protected structures.

10.18 Vernacular Architecture

Vernacular Architecture - Policies

VA. P1:

Promote the protection, retention, public awareness, and appropriate renewal and regeneration of the vernacular architecture of the County, including the heritage-led revitalisation of the historic built fabric of urban areas.

VA. P4:

Facilitate appropriate, high-quality design solutions for adaptations of vernacular buildings that carefully consider their vernacular qualities in terms of design, scale, setting and finishes. While new design can be expressed in contemporary architectural language, consideration should be given to exploring the use of appropriate vernacular features, building techniques and materials.

VA. P9:

Support proposals to retain, repair and refurbish vernacular buildings or structures that are in a rundown or derelict condition, subject to the use of appropriate traditional building materials and methods and provided that proposals for extensions are of an appropriate design and do not detract from the character of the original building or structure.

Chapter 12: Urban Design and Place-making

Aim: To ensure the use of good urban design and place-making in Carlow's towns and villages, which protects and enhances their unique character and heritage, contributes to the achievement of compact growth, improved health and wellbeing, and to attractive, vibrant and inclusive environments in which to live and work.

12.5 Town and Village Centres

Town and village centres provide vitally important functions comprising centres of economic and tourist activity, transport hubs, focal points for local communities, places to live, and places for recreation and amenity. Retaining vibrancy and vitality has proved challenging with declining residential populations, a growth in suburban areas, and reduced retail activity. These trends have contributed to loss of attractiveness, vitality and live-ability with knock-on effects for the character and appearance of urban centres.

There is now a need for a major focus on regenerating original town centre and village centre areas, with a view to creating more attractive, desirable places that people want to live and spend time in, for work, shopping or recreational purposes. A new emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements will be required, rather than continual expansion and sprawl of towns and villages.

In this regard, urban design, place-making and public realm will play a vital role in helping to define the town and village centres so that they present as attractive locations for people to live, work and visit.

Town and Village Centres – Policies

TVC .P4:

Promote the consolidation of town and village centres with a focus on the regeneration of underused / vacant buildings and strategic sites and the establishment of a mix of uses to encourage greater vibrancy outside of business hours.

Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration Policies

CGR. P1:

Promote and support the regeneration of underused town centre, village centre and brownfield/infill lands, in conjunction with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands.

CGR. P2:

Facilitate the delivery of compact and sequential growth and urban regeneration in towns and villages by consolidating the built footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of key infill /brownfield /back land sites.

The Proposed development of a multi-functional community and enterprise centre supports the economic development objectives of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028, Chapter 15: Town and Village Plans / Rural Nodes Rathvilly Plan.

The proposed works are also aligned with Chapter 15 of the development plan (Town and Village Plans / Rural Nodes - Rathvilly Plan) in that it is proposed to redevelop an existing building and site.

Chapter 10 of the Carlow County Development Plan outline policies around the built heritage. It is proposed to retain the fabric of the existing original structure. The later single storey addition to the south and the 2 storey additions to the east and west are to be demolished and replaced with a single storey extension with a more appropriate architectural treatment. The original king post trusses in the roof structure will refurbished and exposed to a new 2 storey volume housing the main assembly space. The original structure is to be wrapped with a circulation space and an ancillary small assembly space (The Kevin Barry Room). This will present opportunity for highlighting the original structure within the building circulation; the deep opening reveals to the main assembly will be retained and highlighted and there may be opportunity to expose some of the original stonework.

The scale of the proposed additions is modest and the important vista from the village to the protected terrace of houses to the east is maintained. (Carlow County Development Plan: 10.13 Architectural Heritage. Policy P6: Requires that development proposals do not obscure views of the principal elevations of protected structures.)

The single storey additions are designed to enhance rather than detract from the character of the original building.

Chapter 12: Urban Design and Place-making of the Carlow County Development Plan promotes good urban design and place-making in Carlow's towns and villages. This proposal both in it's use and design is very much focused on the regeneration of an existing vacant building located on an important strategic site in Rathvilly.



Fig. 2.2 Photo-montage View looking from village towards protected terrace (13 three-bay two-storey houses) showing proposed Community and Enterprise Centre in foreground
See also Fig. 3.10 Photo-montage View from St. Patrick's Park

3. Design



Fig. 3.1 Former Market House Wexford Town



Fig. 3.2 Court House Clonmel



Fig. 3.3 Market House Middleton, Co. Cork



Fig. 3.4 Butter Market, Cork

Design References



Fig. 3.5 Market House Kilworth Village, Co. Cork



Fig. 3.6 Three Bay Market House Drogheda, Co. Louth



Fig. 3.7 Market House Monaghan

Design References



Fig. 3.8 3D view of proposed development

Design Strategy

At schematic design stage it was decided that the proposed alterations to the building should include for the stripping back of the later additions and the restoration of the 5 bay form of the original school building.

The proposed Community and Enterprise centre building is located on an important site and will bring additional vitality to the village centre. Consequently we felt the Market House form would generate a recognisable language for the building making it identifiable as an important and accessible public building.

(Market houses are typically found in prominent locations at the centre of Irish towns and villages. Many of these buildings remain in use and are an essential part of the economic and community based activity of the village and towns of Ireland.)

Form and Mass

In the proposed design the original 5 bay 2 storey structure is emphasized and additions are restricted to single storey. Figure 3.9 shows the proposed Community and Enterprise Centre viewed from the village center. The scale and form are clearly aligned with the existing surrounding fabric and architecture.

Composition

In analysing the options for form and composition of the new build we again employed elements of the Market House typology. The ground floor street facing elevation is a five bay symmetrical assembly with large round headed windows. The round headed window is further employed on the gable ends of this single storey block. Room uses behind these large windows will be office and meeting based to ensure these active spaces address the public street.

The single storey element is articulated with a raised corbel detail running continuously below parapet level. The central entrance bay is recessed to provide further articulation and covered protection at the entrance doors.



Fig. 3.9 Photo-montage View showing proposed Community and Enterprise building looking from village



Fig. 3.10 Photo-montage View from St. Patrick's Park

Materials

Materials and finishes have been selected to reflect the local vernacular. The proposed extensions will be finished in render. The round headed windows will be hardwood. The capping detail at the single storey extension will be in granite. The existing granite stone wall on the site boundary will be rebuilt and added to where required. The extensions to the original schoolhouse have over time compromised the granite boundary walls. The proposals include for replacement of these wall and rebuilding of existing stone walls.

Existing natural roof slates will be salvaged and complimented with new matching natural slates on the South, East and West elevations and cement fibre slates to the rear.

Existing Residential Amenity

The existing east facing structure has first floor windows overlooking the rear gardens of the adjacent protected terrace. The replacement with a single storey extension will eradicate this overlooking and visual intrusion.

Building Forecourt

It is proposed to provide a set down area in front of the building entrance. A dropped kerb will be provided to facilitate accessibility with a gently sloping access route to the entrance doors. The paved forecourt will link with the existing path at the adjacent terrace of house to the east and also to a future path at the west side of the south thereby providing a link to the village centre.

Parking

It is not proposed to provide dedicated parking within the site boundary however the community and enterprise center is located within the village centre and within walking distance of all areas of the village. The proposed uses of the building will be intermittent rather than all-day business use with consequential staggered parking demand. There is currently public parking available in the village. Bicycle parking will be provided in the forecourt area.



Fig. 3.11 3D view of proposed development from the west



Fig. 3.12 Aerial 3D view of proposed development



Fig. 3.13 3D view of proposed development

odla

O'Driscoll Lynn Architects

O'Driscoll Lynn Architects
Knockenhoy Business Park
Sinnottstown Lane
Drinagh, Wexford, Y35 VNK0
053 914 4912
info@odla.ie