

Context & Background

The Oratory, which is part of the Centre under the Trusteeship of the Diocese of Elphin, since its construction onto the existing building in the 1920's by the Mercy Order, has been used by both residents and guests as well as parishioners for personal prayer, Mass, Marriages, Baptisms and Funerals.

The Oratory has a seating capacity for approximately 130 people and has external access for the public and internal access through the Centre for residents and guests.

Due to the significant decline in public practice, the shortage of priests, etc. the Oratory is currently in use less than 0.5% of the time in any given week, notwithstanding the occasional Marriage, Baptism or Funeral which account for no more than twenty additional hours in any given year.

With the ongoing successful operation of the Centre, we have recognised the untapped potential of this space should it be integrated more into the day-to-day schedule and programming of the Centre, while still making it available to parishioners for prayer, weekly celebration of Mass and other ad hoc occasions.



Context & Background (continued)

To facilitate this integration the Oratory needs a significant refurbishment and upgrading so that, while still protecting its sacred nature, it will become a more conducive, versatile, flexible, comfortable, energy efficient and warm space, with independent services and utilities that will allow it to operate not only as an integrated part of the overall Centre but also as a standalone venue for faith development, evangelisation and mission outreach.

This would mean that the Centre can operate with dual outreach on any given occasion, accommodating residential groups as well as non-residential gatherings simultaneously.



Future Preservation and Conservation

The proposed adaptation of the building for use as a more versatile and flexible facility, in addition to its original function as an Oratory, will help to guarantee the future sustainability and viability of the Oratory for public use as a place of worship and prayer.

This new use will not only enhance the building's functionality but also ensure its continued maintenance and conservation for future generations, preserving its historical and architectural significance.

The existing configuration of the Oratory is to be utilized as much as possible with interventions kept to a minimum. Any interventions where possible will be fully reversible and of a high standard of material specification and design to complement the existing building.

The protected structure will be retained and conserved in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2004.



Future Preservation (continued)

There are several compelling reasons to adapt the Oratory's function, namely:

- a. To extend the Centre's capacity for mission and faith development.
- b. To support the Centre's economic stability and future viability.
- c. To preserve the existing and future use of the Oratory as a place of public worship and for celebration of the Sacraments.
- d. To carry out necessary structural repair and remedial work on interior walls.
- e. To enhance and modernise the space, while conserving key architectural aspects, so that it can adapt to the changing demands of the Church in the 21st Century.

Given its underutilisation, the above adaptations recommended to ensure the building's continued maintenance and preservation.



Proposed Alterations and Interventions

With the approval of Bishop Kevin Doran and the Trustees of the Diocese and the assistance of Nolan & Quinlan Architects, and McHugh & Gallagher Builders, the following works have been identified which, when implemented, will help achieve the desired new versatile and flexible structure for the Oratory while preserving its sacred nature and future viability:

Phase 1 (Remedial Works)

1. Repair of cracks and render on existing walls of the chapel which are currently in dire need of repair.
2. Remove the existing internal plaster, which is crumbling, up as far as the ledge, to allow the stone walls to breathe, and replaster the walls with lime plaster and decorate with vapour permeable mineral-based paint.
3. New wiring for sockets and lighting and repainting of all internal walls, sanctuary area and ceiling.
4. Repair ceiling where necessary and redecorate.
5. Existing moulded cornicing is in good condition. The cornicing generally will be cleaned and re-decorated.

6. Signs of water damage are evident on the internal southeast corner and must be investigated and repaired to prevent further damage to the ceiling. Visual inspection has identified the possible cause as being from the external eaves gutter serving the roof over the altar.

Phase 2 (Chapel Interventions)

Restructuring of internal Chapel space to become a more versatile and flexible space will mean:

a. The removal of the existing pews and replacing them with individual chairs (Irish Contract Seating – Christchurch Chairs with portable kneeler system). This chair was originally designed for Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin. Since then, it has been manufactured for churches all over Ireland and the UK, as well as in Australia.

b. Replacement of existing 1970s front plain basic marble altar and marble ambo with a new movable wooden oak altar, a new movable wooden ash ambo and the addition of an ash presider's chair. The original 1920s High Altar will remain untouched in its current position.



c. A small wooden, carpeted semi-circular extension to the existing sanctuary floor area to allow for more space, versatility, and flexibility for non-liturgical events such as retreat and spirituality talks, seminars, events, etc. This small floor extension will have a marble tread to enable it to aesthetically link to the existing marble sanctuary floor.

d. Carpeting of existing wooden areas of nave floor to create a more comfortable and warmer space while ensuring the conservation of the existing tiled flooring and for possible future restoration.

e. New lighting and power points as well as upgrading of sound system is also envisaged.

f. Refurbishment of Stations of the Cross.



Phase 3 (Chapel Rear Extension)

1. The construction of a 60m² extension on the rear of the Chapel that will include a new entrance lobby, toilets (male/female/accessible), a small sacristy room and a coffee dock area.

The design of the proposed extension is to present a distinct architectural style that complements the historical structure. The new foyer, which will link the extension to the chapel will feature a glazed wall with double doors, paired with smooth-rendered walls, contrasting with the pebbledash of the building's main wall finish. The use of contemporary materials, textures, and colours will create a modern contrast, intentionally avoiding a smaller, out-of-context replica of the original style. This approach ensures that the extension both harmonizes with the historical building and stands as a recognisable later addition. It is expected that this will have a neutral impact on the chapel, especially in comparison to the existing porch extension, and will offer additional necessary functionalities such as accessibility toilets, coffee/tea dock for hospitality and new sacristy. The existing sacristy to the right of the Altar will be modified into a prayer chapel which may be used for private prayer and also as a chapel for reposing the Eucharist from the main Oratory Tabernacle whenever there is a requirement to do so.

2. The removal of the external porch and modification of confessional area to allow for new entrance doors. The internal frame facade of the confessional will be maintained to ensure the conservation of much of its historic joinery. This approach is to ensure the preservation and protection of the wooden confessional structure. Retaining it will allow for its continued use as a lobby to the extension, while preserving its historical and religious significance. The confessional frontal detail, and columns will be maintained, integrating its unique character into the new design and providing a respectful transition between the existing and new spaces.

The new doors, internal and external of the proposed extension are to be of contemporary material with a texture and design to distinguish them from the historical building.



Project Details

- 1. Planning Permission Granted February 2025
 - 2. Projected Cost of Project – Costed December 2025:

Extension and Site Works (including VAT)	€365,470
Internal Renovation plus furnishings of Chapel (including VAT)	€218,080
Total	€583,550
 - 3. Once Funding is in place, plan for works initiation and completion.
 - 4. Projected beginning of works 2028.
- (Estimated time to complete project is 6 – 9 months).*



How You Can Help

If you are in a position to either give a once off donation or give regularly for a limited period, however small, it would be greatly appreciated. We realise that there are significant demands on everyone including cost of living increases, as well as many other projects locally and wider afield who are in need of your help. We have a number of choices for giving available at the donation Kiosks in the Chapel, in the Retreat Centre and on-line. For online donations please visit www.staroftheseacentre.com/donate. No donation is too small, and we are grateful for standing order payments as much as we appreciate once off donations.

We also really appreciate any help we can get in seeking the support of the wider community of faith in Ireland and abroad. You can greatly help us by spreading the word about this project and encouraging others to give their support who may be in a position to do so.

We wish to thank all who have already contributed to this project and all who have encouraged us to proceed with this project in restoring and renovating this sacred place.

All up-to-date information will be available at www.staroftheseacentre.com/donate



We entrust this project to the care of
Our Lady Star of the Sea and St. Joseph the Worker

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