

# PART 8 SUBMISSION – Proposed branch library at the former an Post sorting office, Seamus Ennis Road, Finglas, Dublin 11

## Crean Salley Architects – architect’s appraisal



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
**Dublin City Council**



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## 1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared to accompany the Part 8 submission for the proposed development at the former An Post sorting office, Seamus Ennis Road, Finglas, Dublin 11, commissioned by Dublin City Council. The report is to be read in conjunction with Architectural drawings and other documents as listed below. The report is prepared by Crean Salley Architects in conjunction with Dublin City Libraries. Accompanying Documents attached in the Appendices:

Architectural Drawings:

PL 001	Site Location Map	Size: A3, Scale = 1:1000
PL 002	Existing Site Plan	Size: A3, Scale = 1:200
PL 003	Proposed Site Plan	Size: A3, Scale = 1:200
PL 004	Context elevation – proposed & existing	Size: A3, Scale = 1:250
PL 010	Existing ground floor plan	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PL 011	Existing roof plan	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PL 012	Existing section and elevations	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PL 013	Existing elevations - 2	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PL 020	Proposed ground floor plan	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PL 021	Proposed roof plan	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PL 022	Proposed section and elevations	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PL 023	Proposed elevations – 2	Size: A3, Scale = 1:125
PP 01C	Existing and proposed views	Size: A3, Scale = NTS

Other documents to be read in conjunction with this report, included in Appendices:

Photos of Existing Building

## 2.0 Scope & context

The primary aim of the project is to provide a new location and suitable accommodation for the existing Finglas branch library. This entails the relocation of the existing branch from the first floor of the nearby Finglas Shopping Centre to the new proposed location on Seamus Ennis Road. The building proposed for the new library is an existing disused sorting office formerly occupied by an Post. The project therefore includes a change of use of this existing building to allow for the proposed library use. However, no extension is proposed and no new floor area is to be added. Alterations will be minimal, and works confined to repair and upgrading of the existing fabric on a like-for-like basis to bring the building up to contemporary performance standards. The strategy therefore is to 'upcycle' the existing building, to foreground its inherent virtues and to focus particularly on energy saving measures, pairing retrofitted insulation with modern mechanical & electrical provision.

The existing building has compatibility with the proposed new use. It is approximately 40 years old and largely intact. It includes a double height main hall, formerly the sorting office itself, which is adaptable as a public space and is proposed as the new main reading room. The location is on the

opposite side of Seamus Ennis Road to two existing schools, and is on a bus route with a stop immediately in front. The site includes a rear yard suitable for service vehicles and staff parking. A generous lawn area sits to the front of the building and this can be adapted for accessibility and for bicycle parking. A local government facility lies immediately to the west and a recycling centre to the east. A telecoms facility in use by Eir lies to the north and shares a party line with the proposed site, but this area does not form part of this application.

This proposal is intended to revive and exploit the unique virtues of the existing space, while providing appropriate and modern services and back of house areas. The design and construction of the building and access elements will:

- Be of highest architectural and urban design quality, relating meaningfully to the building’s characteristic architectural form.
- Demonstrate compliance with and best practice in the areas of design.
- Be designed and constructed to conform in all aspects with the requirements of all relevant statutory provisions and regulations as defined under the relevant Acts and Standards current at the time of issue.

### 3.0 Site Characteristics

In the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 the site is located within Zoning Z4: Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods. In this case the Key District Centre (KDC) is the adjacent village of Finglas. The ‘library’ use is permissible within Zoning Z4 under community facilities and cultural & recreational buildings and uses. This proposal is in fact a relocation of the established library use from the existing branch at the nearby Finglas Shopping Centre

The proposal is to provide full access to the facility, and to refurbish the main building retaining its character and role in the streetscape. No extension or additional floor area is proposed under this application. The proposal’s site characteristics are in line with Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022, and summarised as follows:

Zoning:	Z4 – to provide for and improve mixed services facilities
Site Area:	1594 m2 (0.16 ha)
Existing Gross Floor Area of Building:	395 m2
Area of demolitions:	-
Proposed Overall Gross Floor Area:	395 m2
Existing & Proposed Plot Ratio	0.25
Proposed Site Coverage:	25%
Number of storeys:	1

## 4.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening

The project site does not lie within any Natura 2000 Site. The nearest Natura 2000 sites are approximately 5km away (South Dublin Bay SAC, and North Dublin Bay SAC)

There will be no habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, or species disturbance as a result of the proposed project.

The project site is in a built-up area and is an established building on its site for approximately 40 years. There are no hydrological links between the project and the Natura 2000 sites which would likely result in an impact to the latter.

There are no elements of the project, either alone or in-combination with other projects, that would likely give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 Sites.

As such, there is no requirement for Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

## 5.0 Description of Proposed Works

The existing building has not been in use for a number of years and currently lies vacant. However, the main fabric of the building is intact and the potential for 'upcycling' is readily apparent. In terms of a low energy strategy, the first and most important decision has been to retain the building and to plan for future proofing in lieu of demolition and re-build. All buildings contain a measure of 'embodied energy' which is the cumulative energy retained in the existing building materials and their manufacture and assembly. In buildings which can be adapted, the biggest energy saving available is in the retention of the building itself. In this case the building envelope – walls, floors, windows and roof – can remain or be upgraded without drastic intervention. In terms of its existing layout the building has inherent characteristics which can be turned to advantage and which lend themselves readily to re-use and adaptation. Principally, the main hall which would have housed the sorting office itself, is a fine top-lit volume appropriate for a reading room and generous public space. Undoubtedly the building has deficiencies, especially the thermal properties of the walls and roof, but these can be addressed with modern insulating and drylining systems which do not entail demolition. Likewise the electrical and heating systems will perform to contemporary standards and, together with the new insulating layers, can be expected to save more than half of the energy use which is typical for buildings of this vintage.

Notwithstanding the above, there has been some deterioration of conditions in the building which will be addressed under this proposal. Notably, there has been damage to the upper clerestory glazing, apparently as a result of vandalism, and there has also been a leak of the lower flat roof to the east resulting in water damage internally. Conditions elsewhere are however generally sound owing to the robust structural construction of the original facility. The roof and walls of the main hall and the rear return are in reasonable condition and will be retained, with thermal improvements only proposed at this time. The upper glazing at clerestory level noted above will need replacement. The existing single glazing has been extensively damaged on the frontage to the south, but repairing and reglazing the

existing frames would be neither cost effective nor thermally efficient. Therefore, new double glazed aluminium windows are proposed as direct replacement for this high level glazing.

The existing flat roof over the main hall is an intact existing slab with an overhang on all four sides. It is currently uninsulated and the existing asphalt is deteriorating. It has been assessed by specialists at Dodd Roofing Consultants Ireland and the recommendation is for a new insulated covering to be laid to falls to the existing surface water outlets.

The lower metal deck roof to the east has however failed and has leaked, causing damage internally, locally to the existing timber floor. However, the existing timber floor is intact in the main hall and can be reconditioned successfully. This lower roof and associated rooflights will need to be replaced. The existing open steel trusses are intact and sound, and will be retained. Likewise the unique structure of the main roof slab will be retained, and the original downstand beams and perimeter posts will remain a feature of the ceiling plane.

The conditions in the narrow return portion of the building to the north are reasonable, but some reduction in sanitary provision is appropriate. For instance the existing showers are to be removed and the toilet provision reduced. The staff room is to be renovated and the circular rooflights above will be replaced.

In terms of mechanical and electrical services, it is proposed to bring the existing provision up to contemporary standards which can be certified accordingly. The hot and cold water demand will be reduced by the removal of the existing showers and reduction of the number of sanitary fixtures. The foul and surface water drainage connections and routes will be retained, albeit with a lower load in terms of water usage by the proposed new occupants.

The thermal performance will benefit from retrofitted insulation - drylining the walls and insulating the existing flat roofs. A new heating system is proposed, subject to detail design, and new low voltage lighting will be routed through existing conduits where practicable.

Improvements in accessibility will be achieved through a new ramped approach to the front. Other alterations to the existing facade are modest but will improve the interface with the public realm. It is proposed to enlarge a shallow existing opening adjacent to the front door so that a new 'picture window' with a window seat can provide visual linkage with the street frontage. A new sliding gate and shutter will provide after-hours security, but will also add texture to the façade and shading to the proposed 'picture window'. Similarly, a band of louvres will provide shading to the new clerestorey glazing at high level facing south, and a degree of protection from potential malicious damage, as has been seen with the existing band of glazing boarded up.

There is further amenity potential in the rear yard and perhaps also in the lawn area to the front but these areas are not slated for any alterations other than access provision under this application.

Photo documentation of the existing building and site conditions are included in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A – existing conditions – photo gallery



Existing frontage to Seamus Ennis Road



Existing main hall space – looking west



Existing main hall space – looking east