

**The Chairman and Members of  
North West Area Committee.**

**Meeting: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Item No: 4**

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**Initiation of Part VIII - proposed extension and alterations to An Post Sorting Office, Seamus Ennis Road, Finglas, Dublin 11 for use as a library. For information purposes only.**

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The existing building is located on the northern side of Seamus Ennis Road to the east of Finglas Village. The site is occupied by a vacant An Post Sorting Office which is set back from the road and sits on a slightly elevated position. The site is irregular in shape and is bound by a telephone exchange to the west (EIR), a recycling centre to the east and residential development (fronting onto Clune Road) to the north.

The existing building has a long, blank frontage to Seamus Ennis Road, with an access to a rear yard at the eastern end of the building.

**Development:**

The development comprises of the change of use of the existing building from An Post Sorting Office to library use.

**Content of the Submission**

The following documentation was lodged:

- Part 8 Submission – Architects Appraisal;
- Floor plans and elevations;
- E-mail from the Transportation Planning Division: dated 30/9/20;
- E mail from the Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services: dated 30/9/20;
- E mail from the Drainage Division: dated 7/10/20;
- E Mail from the City Architects: dated 8/10/20; and
- E mail from Waste Management Services: dated: 14/10/20.

**Planning Context:**

***Zoning & Policy***

The site is located in an area zoned objective 'Z4' within the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 (CDP), with the accompanying land-use objective to *'provide for and improve mixed services facilities'*. Library uses (community facility) are permissible under the Z4 zoning.

**Dublin City Development Plan 2016 - 2020 Context**

**Section 14.8.4- District Centres**

Finglas is identified as a Key District Centre (KDC 4).

As the top tier of the urban centres outside the city centre, Key District Centres have been identified which will provide a comprehensive range of commercial and community services.

In relation to community and Social Services, it is noted that Key District Centres will be encouraged to become the focal point for the integrated delivery of community and social services.

Chapter 12 of Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 sets out the following policies in relation to the development of community uses.

**SN15:** To ensure all community facilities and high-quality facilities are accessible to all.

**SN16:** provision of strategic new community infrastructure complements the range of existing neighbourhood facilities is located at the interface between communities.

**SN18:** provision of a range of community facilities in the city.

**SN24:** To support the implementation of the Dublin City Library Development Plan.

**SN29** To promote built environments and outdoor shared spaces which are accessible to all.

**CHC33:** To support the national cultural institutions and facilitate the provision of fit-for purpose, sustainable cultural infrastructure.

**CHC38:** expansion and improvement of Dublin city's library network.

Appendix 15 Access for all

The proposal is deemed to be consistent with the policies and objectives outlined in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022.

### **Assessment**

The subject site comprises an existing disused sorting office formerly occupied by An Post. The proposed development comprises of the change of use of this existing building to allow for the proposed library use. It is noted that no extension to the floor space of the existing building is proposed as part of the development.

It is noted that external alterations are proposed to be minimal, with 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 for development is 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.

### Principle of development

As has been set out, library use is permissible under the Z4 zoning which applies to the site.

### Scale and Design

The proposed development is the change of use of an existing disused An Post sorting office to use as a library. It is considered that the upgrade of an existing vacant building, on a prominent site in proximity to Finglas Village would make a positive contribution to the streetscape and the surrounding area. Notwithstanding this, there are some areas of concerns which will be elaborated on below.

The existing building has an east-west orientation with a return to the north. The east-west axis comprises of the main body of the building and has a length of c.30m and a maximum width of c.10.2m. The return to the north (rear) of the building has a length of c. 18m and a width of c.9.3m.

The main body of the building is to the front of the building and was previously used as the sorting area, offices and bike store, with the return to the rear used as staff amenities and an ESB sub-station. It is now proposed to alter the layout in the following ways:

- The east-west axis to the front of the building is proposed to house the main reading room, book shelves, study area, reception and children's play area;
- The return to the north (rear) of the building is proposed to house the bathrooms, staff facilities including a break room and meeting room.
- The ESB sub-station is to remain in place.

The building has a maximum height of c.5m with a projecting flat roof and has a floor area of c.395m<sup>2</sup>. It is not proposed to alter the height or floor area of this building.

There are a number of alterations proposed to the detail of the existing façade. These include:

- A new access ramp to the building;
- A new timber sliding gate to act as a security shutter to the front door when the library is closed;
- An enlarged window to the front of the building (addressing Seamus Ennis Road);
- A new timber sliding louvered shutter to cover the enlarged window when the library is closed;
- A new timber louvered brise soleil to the projecting flat roof;
- New stencilled signage above the front door indicating the building is a Library; and
- Some remedial works to the roof is proposed including upgrading the upper storey clear glazing which has been damaged, and the upgrade of elements of the flat roof which have been leaking.

It is noted that the building at present has a functional look with very little articulation to Seamus Ennis Road and the public realm in general, this is commensurate with its previous use as an An Post sorting office.

However, the building is proposed to change use into a public building (library) and the interaction of the building with the public realm is an important consideration, especially given its location, in proximity to Finglas Village and St. Canice's primary school (on the opposite side of Seamus Ennis Road). There is an opportunity to make this building a centre point for community activity in Finglas.

While it is considered that the proposed alterations to the front of the building would enhance the current look of the building, given the proposed public nature of the change of use to a public library, there should be further consideration of ways of enlivening this frontage. This could be done by way of including more windows to break up the frontage. Further to this, it is considered that the frontage of the building would benefit from landscaping.

Subject to the above, it is considered that the proposal could have a contemporary, inviting look, which would be an improvement to the streetscape which could become a focal point of community activity.

It is noted that the proposal would not include any car parking for the public and the number of staff car parking spaces is not outlined. However, there is a bus stop to the front of the building and there is some public car parking on the opposite side of Seamus Ennis Road (in proximity to the primary school).

Similarly, it is noted that the pre application material does not include any information on the location of, or number of bicycle parking spaces proposed. The proposal is a community facility and appropriate bicycle parking facilities should be provided.

It is noted that there is a large area of lawn area to the front of the building. The plans provided do not show any landscaping to the front of the building. It is considered that there is an opportunity to provide landscaping to front of the property that would enhance the public realm.

#### Impact on neighbouring properties

As the proposed development is a change of use and there are no floor area or building height alterations proposed, it is considered that the development would not give rise to any unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring properties. Further to this, it is considered that the proposed development would not constitute overbearing development. It is considered that the relationship of the development to neighbouring properties appears to be acceptable, in this respect.

#### Technical issues

**Transportation Planning Division:** Email dated 30/9/20. No objection.

**Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services:** Email dated 30/9/20. No objection.

**Drainage Division:** Email dated 7/10/20: No objection but a suggestion that if any works proposed to the yard or lawn it would be an ideal opportunity to incorporate some SuDS measures.

**City Architects:** Email dated 8/10/20. No objection, but a suggestion to consider referring to the lawn as part of the library/an external reading area.

**Waste Management Services:** Email dated: 14/10/20. No objection – recommendation made in the report to the absence of overhead lines etc. This must be referred to in the conclusion.

#### Requirement of Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The application has been accompanied with the following information in relation to the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment:

*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.*

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and the proximity to the nearest Natura 2000 sites, it is considered that no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is considered that the proposed development would be unlikely to have a significant effect, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, on a Natura 2000 site.

In relation to the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment it is noted that:

The projects which require EIA are listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive as amended. Projects listed in Annex I of the EIA Directive have mandatory EIA requirements. Annex II projects are considered on a case-by-case basis at national level and thresholds have been set for Annex II projects in Irish legislation. But even projects which do not meet the threshold may require an EIA if the project is likely to have significant effects on the environment (sub-threshold development).

Schedule 5 (Part 1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018 (as amended) sets mandatory thresholds for projects. The proposed development does not meet or exceed the mandatory threshold for projects set out in the Schedule therefore a mandatory EIA is not required.

Schedule 5 (Part 1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018 (as amended) sets out national thresholds none of which the proposed development appears to fall under.

Having regard to the nature of the development comprising a change of use of an existing building in an urban context, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and the need for environmental impact assessment can therefore be excluded.

### **Conclusion**

While the proposal would appear to be broadly consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area the following issues should be addressed prior to the submission of the final application, as follows: -

- The southern elevation of the building presents a 'dead frontage' to the public domain. Further consideration should, therefore, be given to the articulation of this elevation to provide for a community building that serves to animate the public domain;
- Consideration should be given to the provision of SuDs(as per email from Drainage Division);
- Consideration should be given to the use of the front lawn area as part of the library/an external reading area (as per email from City Architects); and
- Ensure compliance with Appendix 15 – Access for All – of the Dublin City Development Plan.

Note: The Applicant should note that Article 81(2)(ca) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) require that public notices indicate the conclusion under article 120(1)(b)(i) of the Planning and Development (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 as follows:

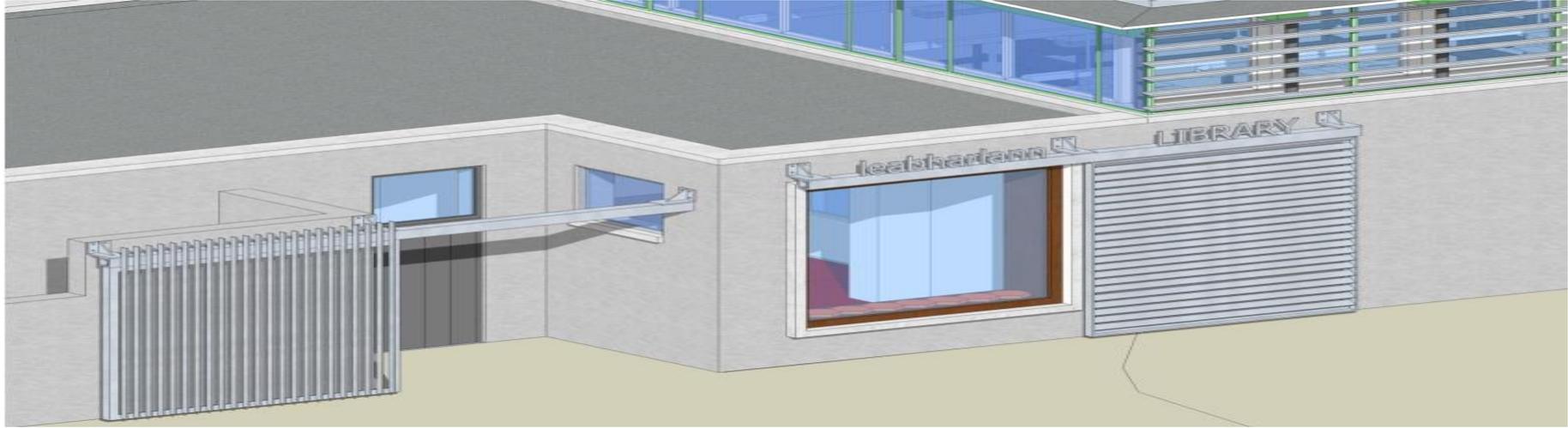
It has been concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment and as such an EIAR is not required.

Ronan Murphy  
Executive Planner

Siobhán O'Connor  
Senior Executive Planner



Proposed – Front Entrance



Proposed – Front Entrance (Close Up)



Proposed – Overview

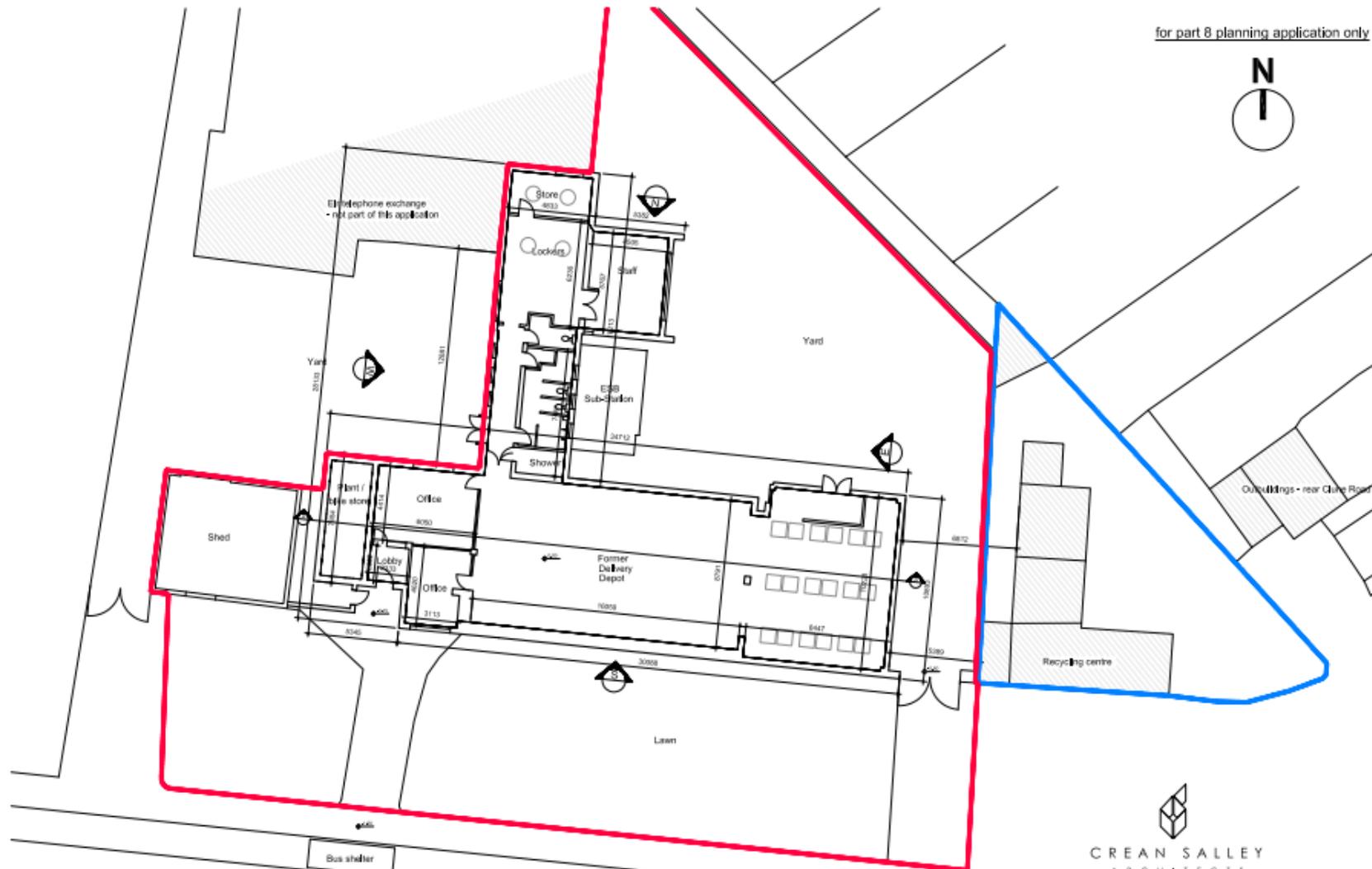


Proposed – Cross Section



Proposed – Indicative Layout

for part 8 planning application only



Existing site plan  
1:200 @ A3

SEAMUS ENNIS ROAD

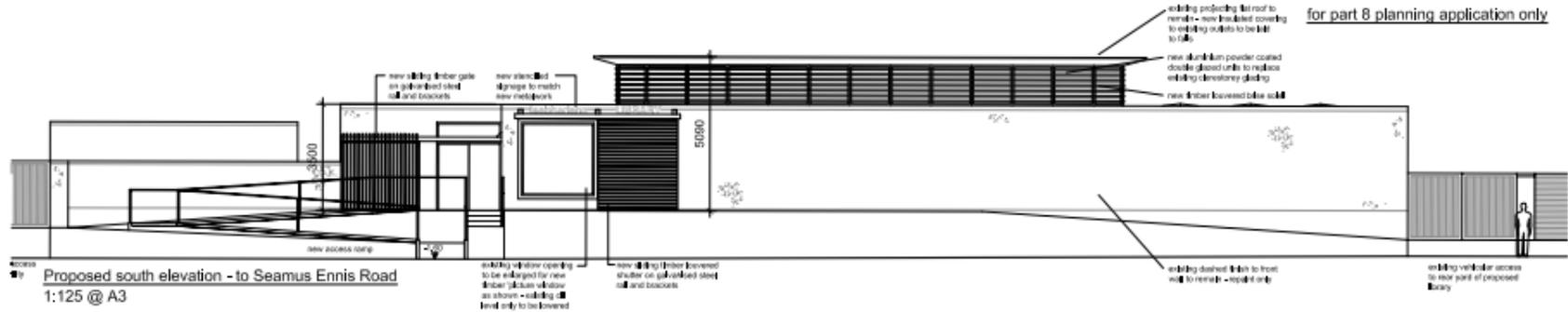
- 1. All areas shown in red are proposed and other colored drawings are not shown.
- 2. All areas shown in blue are not shown.
- 3. All areas shown in green are not shown.
- 4. All areas shown in yellow are not shown.
- 5. All areas shown in grey are not shown.

NO.	DATE	BY	REVISION

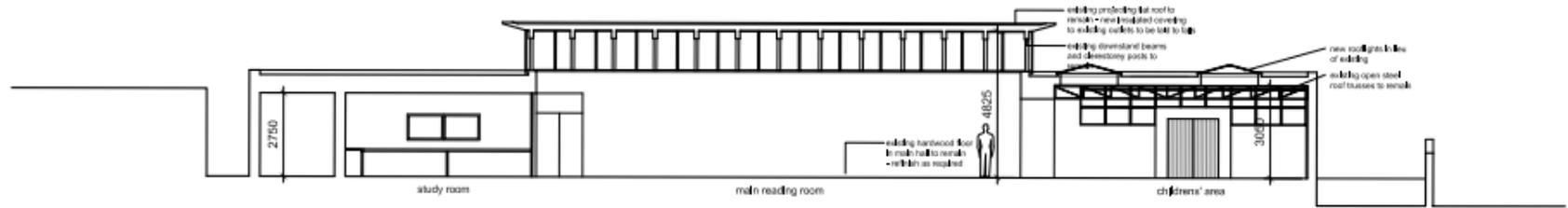


Project: PROPOSED DRIVEN LIBRARY, SEAMUS ENNIS ROAD, DUBLIN 11  
 Client: DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL  
 Drawing: 33326-PL-002  
 Date: 28.05.2020  
 Drawn By: [Name]  
 Checked By: [Name]  
 Project No: 33326-PL-002

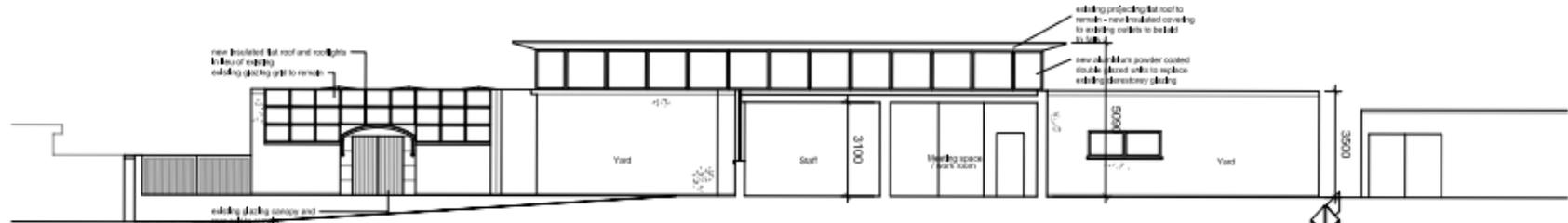




Proposed south elevation - to Seamus Ennis Road  
1:125 @ A3



Proposed section A-A  
1:125 @ A3



Proposed north elevation  
1:125 @ A3

- 1. Refer to associated site drawings and other context drawings and site location.
- 2. Refer to the plan for scale of drawings of this drawing.
- 3. Any alterations to the drawings of this drawing are to be referred to notes for alterations.
- 4. Do not scale the drawings. Dimensions on drawings to be checked on site.
- 5. The drawings are for information only.

Rev.	Date	Drawn

CREAN SALLEY  
ARCHITECTS

Project	PROPOSED BRANCH LIBRARY, SEAMUS ENNIS ROAD, DUBLIN 11	Drawing No.	Rev.
Client	DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL	33326-PL-022	
Design	STEPHEN SULLIVAN ARCHITECTS		
Scale	1:125 @ A3	Date	SEP, 2020
		Drawn By	