

Conservation Section, Property, Enterprise & Economic Development Department
Civic Offices, Wood Quay, Dublin 8

An Rannóg Caomhantais, An Roinn Phleanála, Maoine, Fiontraíochta & Forbairt Eacnamaíochta
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27th of February 2017

To the Chairperson and Members of the Central Area Committee

Recommendation:

Addition of: 76 Gardiner Street Upper (former convent) including chapel to rear, Dublin 1 to the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

PHOTO OF STRUCTURE



Introduction

It is proposed to initiate procedures under Section 54 and Section 55 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 to add 76 Gardiner Street Upper, Dublin 1 to the Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

Request for Addition

- Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage).
- Motion passed by Central Area Committee 12/07/2016
- Graham Hickey, Dublin Civic Trust, 4 Castle Street, Dublin 2 (in conjunction with the Mountjoy Square Society)

Summary of Applicants Reasons for Seeking Addition

- Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht: List of recommendations for inclusion on the RPS of structures deemed as being of 'Regional' significance or higher identified during Phase 1 & 2 of the Dublin Survey carried out by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. 76 Gardiner Street Upper has been assigned a Regional rating.
- Dublin Civic Trust and the Mountjoy Square Society wish to request the immediate addition of the Sisters of Charity Convent and School at 76 Gardiner Street Upper/Belvedere Court, Dublin 1 to the Record of Protected Structures.

This fine late Georgian complex with associated Victorian chapel and ancillary buildings has been listed for sale with Farley Property agents. Extraordinarily, it has emerged that this important suite of historic institutional buildings are not Protected Structures, neither listed individually or in totality.

This anomalous situation appears to be a legacy of the inconsistent manner in which buildings were listed in Dublin prior to the implementation of the 2000 Planning & Development Act. As a result, the landmark St. Francis Xavier Church and its associated presbytery to the north, facing Upper Gardiner Street, are both Protected Structures, however the matching convent to the south of the church, also addressing Upper Gardiner Street and forming a key component of the architectural composition, is not. The convent is neither listed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) nor marked as such on the associated Development Plan map.

The Trust and the Society are both extremely concerned about the future survival of the historic fabric, internally and externally, of this historic complex which is one of the last of its kind in Dublin to retain such a high level of authenticity and original features. This is of particular concern in the context of the extent of unauthorised, substandard and inappropriate development presently taking place across the north Georgian – particularly the proliferation of student hostels, student housing, unauthorised conversions from bed-sits, and short-term/temporary accommodation – many of which are occupying vulnerable, protected Georgian properties with no recourse to planning or building regulations. We have little doubt that this may become the fate of the convent, which we understand is for sale with offers in the region of a modest €1.5 million.

Both our groups actively support and encourage an appropriate and dynamic new use for the Upper Gardiner Street complex, however this must be carried out within a strong building conservation framework. Based on the heritage significance outlined below, there is no question that these structures should be added to the RPS with immediate effect.

Architectural Significance

The convent buildings are architecturally important historic structures, rated by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) as being of Regional significance. They comprise part of a wider landmark complex of religious and institutional functions on Upper Gardiner Street developed over the first half of the 19th century - comparable with St. Saviour's Church and friary on Dominick Street and S.S. Augustine & John (John's Lane) Church and presbytery on Thomas Street. Significantly, the Gardiner Street complex is older than most Victorian religious complexes in the city, and as such represents the first tentative steps in church and institutional building following Catholic Emancipation.

The convent facing Upper Gardiner Street comprises a rare set in Dublin of late Regency style mansions, designed in an austere idiom as a matching pair, featuring handsome doorcases, railings and granite stonework. They form one of the most impressive early 19th-century streetscapes in Dublin and a consciously designed, dignified foil to the Church of St. Francis Xavier.

Internally, the buildings are notably intact, having been kept in good order by the Sisters of Charity since the buildings were erected from 1828 to c.1840. The interiors almost entirely retain their original floor plan, with good historic door joinery, cast-iron, marble and stone chimneypieces, original historic glass fanlights and many examples of robust early 19th-century plasterwork.

The Victorian chapel located to the rear is an excellent example of its type, dating to c.1880, and retains most of its original features including roof trusses, marble reredos and mosaic floors, stained glass and joinery. The sacristy to the rear is particularly intact, with high quality Victorian cabinetry and decorative windows.

The complex also retains its historic open space to the rear, set out as a formal garden providing access to the chapel, ancillary buildings and the Belvedere Court laneway.

Conclusion

The convent complex is currently recommended by the NIAH for inclusion on the RPS based on its 'Regional' significance rating. Based on our informed knowledge of its historic interiors through recent site visits and its wider importance to the city's architectural heritage, there is no question that all buildings are deserving of full Protected Structure status.

Recent Planning History

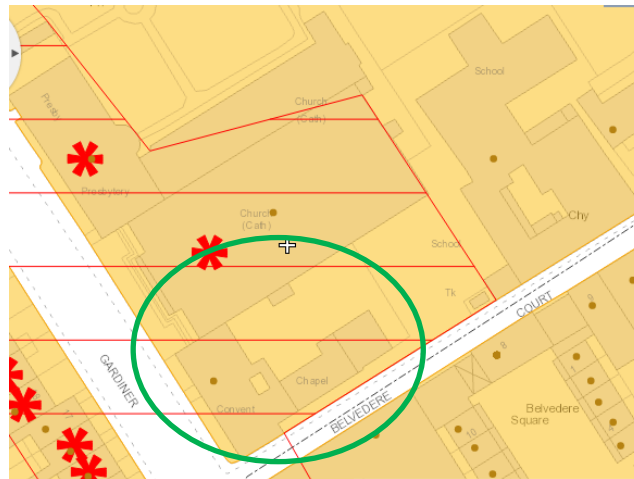
Planning Ref	Description	Decision
2067/11	Gardiner Street Primary School, 76, Gardiner Street Upper, Dublin 1. PROTECTED STRUCTURE-Permission sought for construction of a new single storey double glazed main entrance porch, of total area c.8sqm with ancillary site works to provide for universal access to the existing primary school which is a protected structure, all on a site of c.3392sqm.	Grant permission 15-Mar-2011
3476/14		Application declared invalid 10-Oct-2014
3543/14	Gardiner Street Primary School, 76, Upper	Grant permission 26-

Planning Ref	Description	Decision
	Gardiner Street, Dublin 1. Permission sought for conversion & refurbishment of existing food centre & ancillary spaces of total area c.254.7 sq.m to 3 no. resource rooms, 1 no. classroom, toilets and store, including extensions of total area c. 10.3 sq.m consisting of a new lobby of area c. 4.2 sq.m and a c. 6.1 sq.m extension to an existing annex to provide additional toilets. Works to include alterations & repairs to existing doors & windows, the stripping out of non-original internal partitions, the formation of new internal door opes, the taking down of a single-storey external wall & reconstruction of same in insulated cavity wall construction, the renewal of selected floor, wall & ceiling finishes, and other works of decorative/ remedial/ ancillary nature at the existing Primary School, all on a site of c.3392 sq.m.	Nov-2014
3683/14	76, Gardiner Street Upper, Dublin 1. Construction of a new vehicular gate entrance onto Belvedere Court, Dublin 1, the building of a wall separating the convent from the adjoining primary school site and the provision of 3 carparking spaces within the site.	Grant permission 14/01/2015
2646/15	76, Gardiner Street Lower, Dublin 1 - backing onto Mabbot Lane. PROTECTED STRUCTURE: Planning permission is sought for a change of use and refurbishment of the existing building at 76 Gardiner Street Lower, Dublin 1, a Protected Structure, from office use to use as a guesthouse in association with the neighbouring guesthouse at 75 Gardiner Street Lower. The building is a 4 storey over basement building and the site backs onto Mabbot Lane.	Grant Permission 15-Jun-2015
3392/15	76, Gardiner Street Lower, Dublin 1. PROTECTED STRUCTURE: Change of use and refurbishment of the existing building, from office use to use as a fully contained guesthouse. Permission was previously granted (reg.ref. 2646/15) to use this building as a guesthouse in association with the guesthouse use in 75 Gardiner Street Lower. The building is a 4-storey over basement building and the site backs onto Mabbot Lane.	Refuse Permission 30-Sep-2015
4122/15	76, Gardiner Street Lower, Dublin 1. PROTECTED STRUCTURE: Planning permission is being sought for the proposed change of use from office to guesthouse use, internal refurbishment with minor alterations to front and rear elevations to 76 Gardiner Street Lower, Dublin 1 (a Protected Structure).	Grant permission 29-Jan-2016
3871/16	Rear of 76, Gardiner Street Lower/ 4 Mabbot Lane, Dublin 1. PROTECTED STRUCTURE: Permission for development consisting of the proposed demolition of the existing wall onto no. 4 Mabbot Lane and the construction of a five storey over basement guesthouse building, linking into 76 Gardiner Street Lower at ground floor rear return level, with alterations to the ground floor of 76 Gardiner Street Lower to facilitate the	Grant permission 18-Jan-2017


Planning Ref	Description	Decision
	proposed link.	

Site Location & Zoning Map

The area is zoned Z8: *To protect the existing architectural and civic design character, to allow only for limited expansion consistent with the conservation objective. To allow primarily residential and compatible office and institutional uses.*
It is also included in the hatched Conservation Area zoning



Summary Description and Historical Background (taken from NIAH inventory)

<p>76 Gardiner Street Upper, Dublin 1</p> <p>NIAH Ref No: 50010823</p> <p>Rating: Regional</p> <p>Importance Values: Architectural & Artistic</p>	
<p>Description:</p> <p>Corner-sited pair of four-bay three-storey houses over exposed basement, built c.1828, now combined to form convent, with doorway of southern house now blocked up to form window, and with further storey to northern three bays of front elevation. Attached chapel to rear. Flat roof to four-storey section and pitched roof to remainder, hidden behind raised parapet wall with granite coping. Cast-iron and replacement uPVC rainwater goods breaking through parapets to front and south gable. Yellow brick walls laid in Flemish bond with rusticated granite quoins to either end and continuous granite sill band to first floor. Granite plinth course above rusticated cement rendered basement walls. Masonry name plaque to south gable: 'GARDINER-ST CONVENT NATIONAL SCHOOLS'. Gauged brick flat-arched window openings having render reveals, granite sills and replacement uPVC windows. Steel grilles to basement windows. Gauged brick round-headed window openings to rear stair hall. Gauged brick three-centred arched door opening with moulded masonry surround and painted masonry doorcase, with original timber door with four flat panels, bolection mouldings and brass furniture. Door flanked by paired plain pilasters each surmounted by over-sized scrolled console brackets supporting plain frieze and lintel cornice with original cobweb fanlight. Door opens onto granite platform with cast-iron bootscraper and four granite steps bridging basement area. Platform and basement area enclosed by original wrought-iron railings and cast-iron corner posts on moulded granite plinth wall. Interior retains polished timber panelled doors and architrave surrounds, dog-leg open-string timber stair with turned balusters and continuous polished handrail, and some slate and cast-iron fire surrounds. Chapel has pitched slate roof with copings and carved stone cross finials, red brick walls with yellow brick bands at sill, impost and eaves levels, paired pointed-arch windows with ashlar block-and-start stone surrounds, mullions and sills, doorway with shouldered flat-headed doorway, and with lower two-storey link to convent building proper with similar details, and paired round-headed windows to upper gable with margined one-over-one pane timber sliding sash windows.</p>	
<p>Appraisal:</p> <p>The site of this convent was initially leased from the Earl of Blessington and later bought outright by the Sisters of Charity in 1828 when construction of the current building began. Employing a largely Georgian residential architectural language, the convent tries to stitch itself into the typology of the streetscape. The convent and adjoining chapel form part of an ecclesiastic group with the adjacent Saint Francis Xavier Church and presbytery. The austere façade is enlivened by granite embellishments and quoins, and the unusually proportioned masonry doorcase adds further interest. The chapel to the rear has contrasting red and yellow brick walling and typical ecclesiastical details such as pointed and shouldered openings. The contribution made by the convent to the social and cultural history of the area is significant, while continuing to make a notable impression on the streetscape.</p>	

**Assessment of Special Interest under the Planning & Development Act 2000
(identified by the NIAH)**

- The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage has assigned this building the following categories of special interest: Architectural, Artistic & Social

Significance/NIAH Rating:

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) has been carried out for this area. The NIAH uses eight categories of special interest (architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical & social) and identifies five categories of rating in seeking to rank buildings. The NIAH rating values are International, National, Regional, Local and Record Only (I, N, R, L, O). Structures which are considered of International, National, and Regional significance are deemed worthy of inclusion on the RPS.

The NIAH has assigned 76 Gardiner Street Upper a Regional rating. These are structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area.

Conclusion:

The Conservation Section have considered the applicants' reasons for seeking addition along with the NIAH assessment and concluded that the structures merit inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures.

Recommendation:

Addition of: 76 Gardiner Street Upper (former convent) including chapel to rear, Dublin 1 to the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

**Paraic Fallon
Senior Planner**

Location of existing protected structures & proposed protected structures

The location of the proposed protected structure is shown on the map below in green.



The area is zoned Z8: *To protect the existing architectural and civic design character, to allow only for limited expansion consistent with the conservation objective. To allow primarily residential and compatible office and institutional uses.*

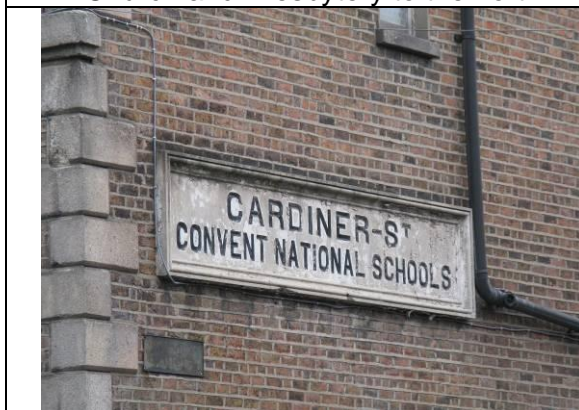
Photographs



Context photo with neighbouring protected structures of Church St. Francis Xavier Church and Presbytery to the north



South side elevation onto Belvedere Court



Sign for national school at the rear of the complex



Front elevation of convent



South side elevation onto Belvedere Court



Rear elevation of convent with chapel and rear entrance



Main entrance door



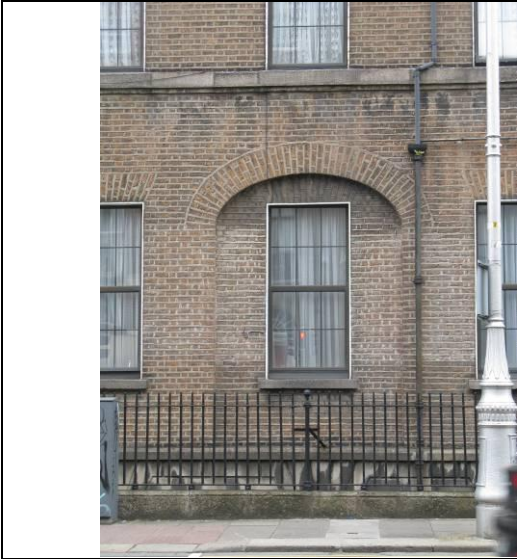
Original cast-iron boot scaper



Front basement area



Front railings



Former doorway



View from south



Rear elevation and Victorian return



Rear site with Victorian chapel and entrances to National School



Modern vehicle gates to rear site



Pedestrian entrance with granite surround



Attic storey to main convent



Chimney detail & natural slate roof to chapel



Entrances to National School in rear site



Historic blocked entrance at National School end of site