

**PROJECT REPORT
&
ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**RESTRUCTURING AND RENOVATION OF THE SESSIONS HOUSE, LOGAN STREET,
THOMASTOWN**



On the instructions of Kilkenny County Council

March 2020

BLUETT & O'DONOGHUE ARCHITECTS

PLANNING PROJECT MANAGEMENT ARCHITECTURE

URBAN RURAL MARINE



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&
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	• NIAH Survey Ref. 12317058
	Appendix 2;
	• Structural Engineer's sketches

This Report, incorporating an architectural heritage impact assessment of the proposed works, together with the material listed in the Schedule of Documents below, comprises the documentation for public consultation in relation to the restructuring and renovation of the Sessions House, Logan St. Thomastown in accordance with Part XI, Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

SCHEDULE OF PART 8 CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

1. Public Notice
2. Project Report & Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment
3. Archaeological Impact Assessment Report by Kilkenny Archaeology
4. Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment Report
5. Habitats Directive Project Screening Assessment
6. Architectural Drawings;
 1. Site Location Map (scale 1:500)
 2. Site Plan (scale 1:100)
 3. Ground Floor Plan (scale 1:50)
 4. First Floor Plan (scale 1:50)
 5. Elevations (scale 1:50)
 6. Section AA, Section BB (scale 1:50)
 7. Section CC, Section DD (scale 1:50)

1.1 The Sessions House Project

The Sessions House is a key historic building in Thomastown. Currently empty, it is important to find an appropriate use for it, so that it continues to serve the community, and is preserved for the future.

The Sessions House has been vacant since use by the Courts Service ceased in 2005 and the property was subsequently transferred to Kilkenny County Council. Planning permission was granted for the conversion of the building to a Community Arts Centre in 2013 (Planning Register ref. P.13/410) but that project did not proceed. Many of the alterations to the building granted permission at that time remain relevant to the current proposal to accommodate an educational facility although there are significant additional elements including the insertion of a mezzanine within the former Court Room and the construction of small extensions to each side of the court room block at upper level.

These modifications comprise material alterations to the permitted scheme and as such, approval is sought from the Members of Kilkenny County Council under Part 8 procedures for the revised design.

The Design Team for the Sessions House Project comprises;

Bluett & O'Donoghue	RIAI Grade 1 Practice in Conservation Architecture
David Kelly Partnership	Conservation Engineer
RMCE	Mechanical & Electrical Engineers
Tyrrell & Associates	Chartered Quantity Surveyors
Kilkenny Archaeology	Project Archaeologist

1.2 The Bridewell

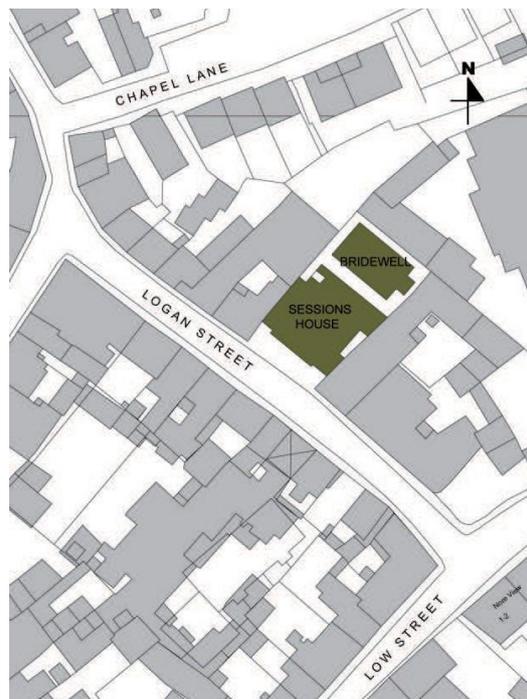
To the rear of the Sessions House is the historic Bridewell which is also in the ownership of Kilkenny County Council.

The Bridewell is a largely forgotten building within the town. It is a soundly built stone structure, which, although roofless, retains most of its original features. The structure retains a remarkable degree of historic integrity, having been abandoned for a century, and having only undergone a few minor alterations, during the years in the mid to late 20th Century, when the building appears to have been used as a store.

Due to its location at the rear of the site, the only access to carry out works to the Bridewell is through the Sessions House building. This makes it imperative that any works to the Bridewell building are completed prior to bringing the Sessions House back into use. Works to consolidate the Bridewell are currently subject of an application for funding to the Historic Structures Fund 2020 (Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) and a decision on the application is expected shortly.



The Bridewell, to the rear of the Sessions House



Location Plan, showing The Bridewell on very restricted site to the rear of the Sessions House.

2.1 Description

The Sessions House is a graceful, early 19th Century structure, the earliest purpose built civic structure in the town. It is constructed of solid, plastered masonry, with natural slate roofs. It is located on a very restricted site, with minimal external spaces to the side and rear. As a result, with the exception of the Court Room, and the staircase, which are both bright and airy, the internal spaces tend to have only limited natural light. To the rear of the Sessions House, is the Bridewell, a remarkable stone structure built to provide holding cells / lock-up / prison facilities for the Sessions House.

The symmetrical facade of the Sessions House faces onto Logan Street, and is set back from the medieval street line, to form a small urban space. The building is of three bays, dominated by the double height central bay of the Court Room. The style is a simple pared down classicism, the gable of the Court Room faces the street, and forms the most minimalist of pediments, with cut limestone coping and string course on simple piers to either side. A single tri-partite central window is set in an elliptical headed recess. At the top of the central bay, between the piers, an inscribed cut limestone band bears the name of the building.

The entire facade is painted, plastered, and lined in a cement based plaster, which is not therefore, original. All details: string courses, entablatures, copings, cills, steps and architraves are in high quality cut local limestone.

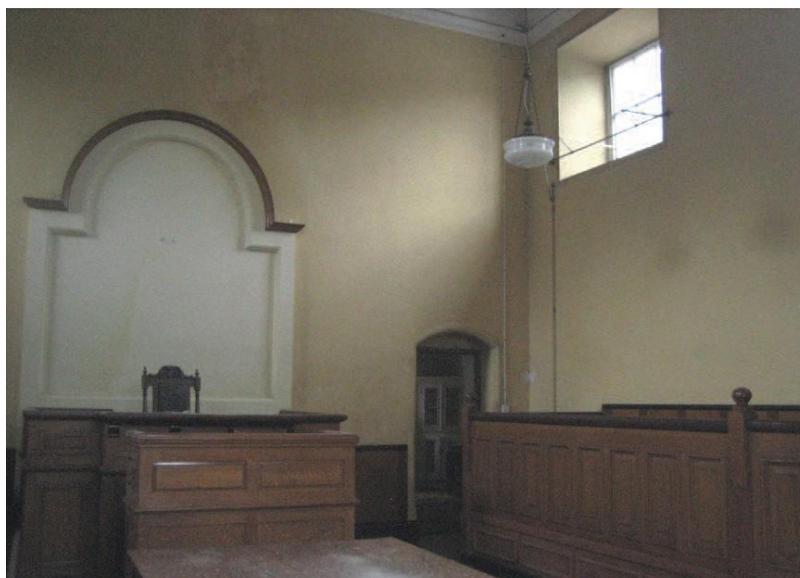


To either side of the central bay are recessed single storey entrance bays, with paneled doors. The roofs to these single storey bays are entirely concealed behind the parapets. The doors lead to tiled entrance halls, each with a double door into the Court Room. Neither of these entrance halls have any source of natural light.

The left hand bay leads on to the Jury Room / Family Law Room with a toilet beyond. A door from the Jury Room into the jury box in the Court Room is a modern alteration. The right hand bay leads into a corridor space which is a 20th Century addition, of poor quality construction. This entire area was originally an external space, and a small external space remains, between the corridor and the wall to the next door building. The corridor leads to a door into the rear two storey section of the building.

The Court Room is the principal space of the building, in scale, location, and detail. A bright lofty space, it is lit by six high level clerestorey windows, as well as the tri-partite window that faces the street. It retains the court furniture: Judges desk, court clerk's desk located centrally, the jury box to the left hand side and the police / defendant's box to the right hand side. This furniture, and the privacy screen at the right hand entrance are all of grained timber. and the walls below dado level are painted in the same manner.

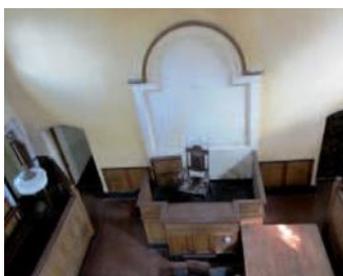
On the rear wall, to either side of the Judge's dais are arch headed doors. The left hand door leads to the Judge's Chamber and the right hand door leads to the living room of the former caretaker's apartment.



The Court Room looking towards the Judge's dais



View towards Logan Street



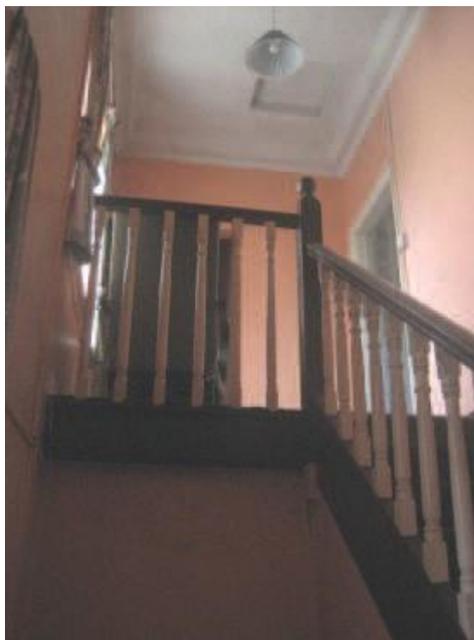
Aerial view of Court Room



Clerestorey Window

The two storey section of the building, to the rear of the site, is domestic in scale and style, and with the exception of the Judge's Chamber contains only rooms forming the caretaker's apartment. The apartment is entered through the right hand corridor into a constricted space, located at the bottom of the stair, which also leads to the kitchen and drawing room. The kitchen, which is in very poor condition, contains the only exit door to the rear of the building and the Bridewell. The drawing room has an ornate tiled 1920s / 30s fireplace and a corner cupboard.

The staircase is a domestic style timber stairs, dating from the 1920s re- build. Windows to the staircase and landing look back towards Logan Street, over the roofs of the single storey sections of the Sessions House. At first floor level there are two bedrooms and a corridor, formed from what was originally a single room, and also a small bedroom / study with a bathroom off, accessed from the landing.



The Stairs



The Jury Room / Family Law Room

2.2 Planning Context

The Sessions House is included in the record of Protected Structures for County Kilkenny, RPS ref. C228.

It is also included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, NIAH ref. 12317058 and is described as being of special architectural, artistic, historical and social interest. Ref. Appendix 1.

The property is within the Thomastown Architectural Conservation Area.

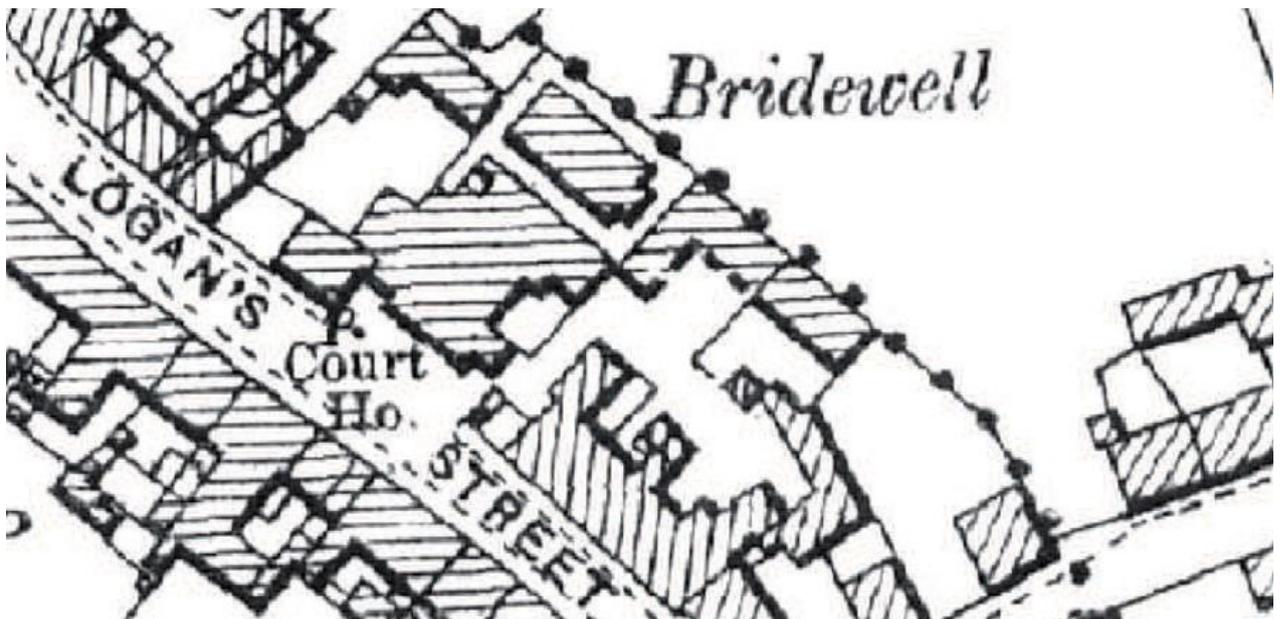
The site is zoned for Town Centre uses in the Thomastown Local Area Plan whereby educational use is permissible.

The site lies within the Thomastown zone of archaeological potential and the proposed works have been subject to archaeological impact assessment, ref. accompanying Report by Kilkenny Archaeology.

Planning permission was granted in 2013 to The Sessions House Arts Centre Forum for conversion of the building to an Arts Centre. That project did not proceed but much of the works now proposed were also included in that scheme.

2.3 History

Verbal accounts have dated the Sessions House as having been built in 1819. The NIAH dates it at 1815-1835.



Extract from 1875 25" Ordnance Survey Scale 1:1000

During the 19th Century, fortnightly petty sessions were held, with local Justices of the Peace on the bench, and quarter sessions with visiting resident magistrates in addition to the Justices of the Peace. Following Independence this was reduced to petty sessions once a month.

During the War of Independence, like many buildings representative of British Rule, the Sessions House was vulnerable to rebel attack and was heavily fortified with sandbags, barbed-wire and machine guns. In early 1922 the Courthouse, which had lain unused for some time, was repaired by the County Council, following the truce at the end of the War of Independence. However the Sessions House did not survive the Civil War unscathed and it was burned on December 23rd 1922 by Irregular troops and it was reported that nothing was left but the four walls."

The Sessions House was rebuilt in 1926. All of the roofs, and roof structures, and much of the detail of the Sessions House building, therefore, dates from the early 20th Century. However, the walls, form and layout largely reflect the original design of a century earlier.

There have been only minor alterations to the footprint of the building over the life of the building. The first edition 6" map of 1839-40 shows open space where the current Jury Room / Family Law Room is located, but this had been infilled by the time of the publication of the 1875 25" map. The principal subsequent alteration to the plan is the construction of the corridor to the right hand side of the Court Room, enclosing part of the courtyard. The small toilet however, appears on the 25" map, and is probably either original, or a very early addition.

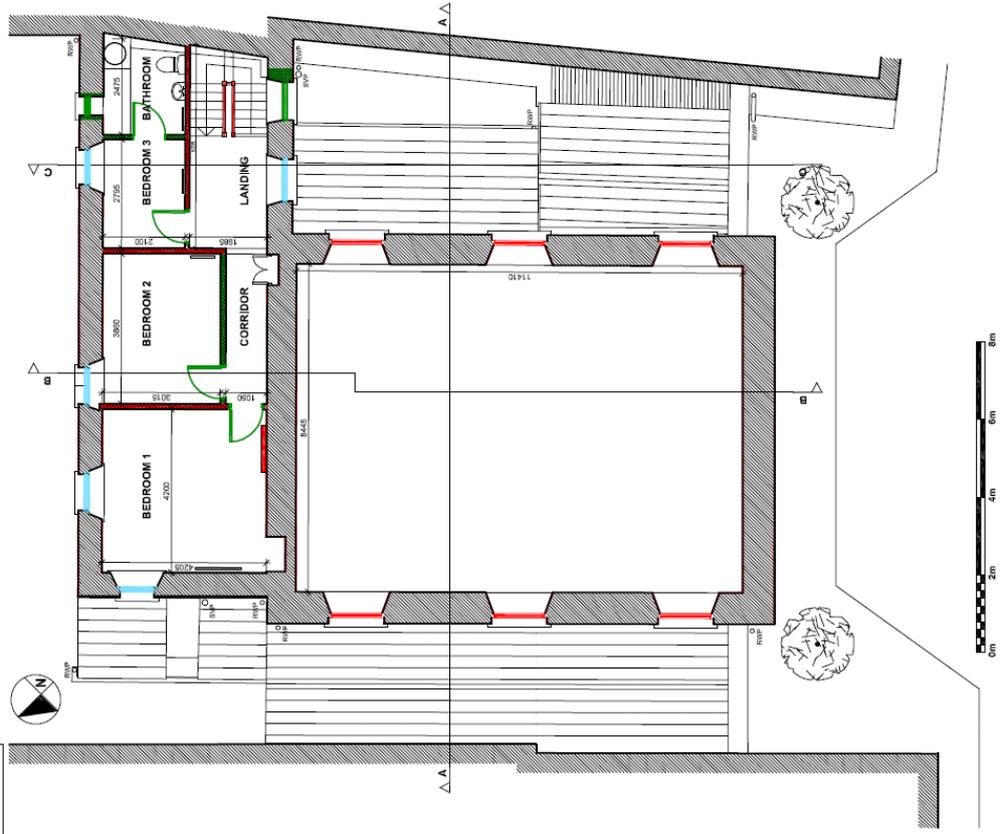
The current layout of the caretaker's apartments is likely to date largely from 1926, when the building was restored for use as a Court House, subsequent to the fire of 1922. The two bedrooms were formed from a single space, probably the "Grand Jury Room".

Plans identifying the age of the various elements of the building are illustrated in **Figure 1**.

FIGURE 1

Legend

- Original Fabric
- Late 19th C Fabric
- 1926 Rebuild
- Mid 20th C
- 1980's Works



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan

The interior of the court room dates from 1926, as evidenced by the style of the joinery. The box to the right-hand side of the judge's dais has undergone subsequent alteration. The tiled lobbies are typical of a Victorian installation and may have survived the fire. Other interior features such as fireplaces and doors are all principally from the 1920s rebuild. A number of features appear to be from the mid 20th Century: later than the original rebuild but earlier than the 1980s works detailed below. These features include:

- The single skin block wall, windows and doors to the corridor on the right of the Court Room.
- The upstairs bathroom
- The corridor leading to Bedroom 1. (The cornices show these two bedrooms were originally two rooms, joined by a door but with no corridor.)
- Alterations to the windows

A large body of work was carried out between 30 and 35 years ago. These works included;

- Dry-lining of walls and new roof and valley gutters to the Jury Room (this became the Family Law room);
- New window and doors to the front elevation to Logan Street; New concrete floor to the Court Room.

Most of the windows to the rear elevation could be earlier than the 1920s, judging by both their condition and style of construction. These may have survived the fire, or just reflect the continuity of use of sash windows in rural areas. They are not original however, as the style is not one used in the early 19th Century.

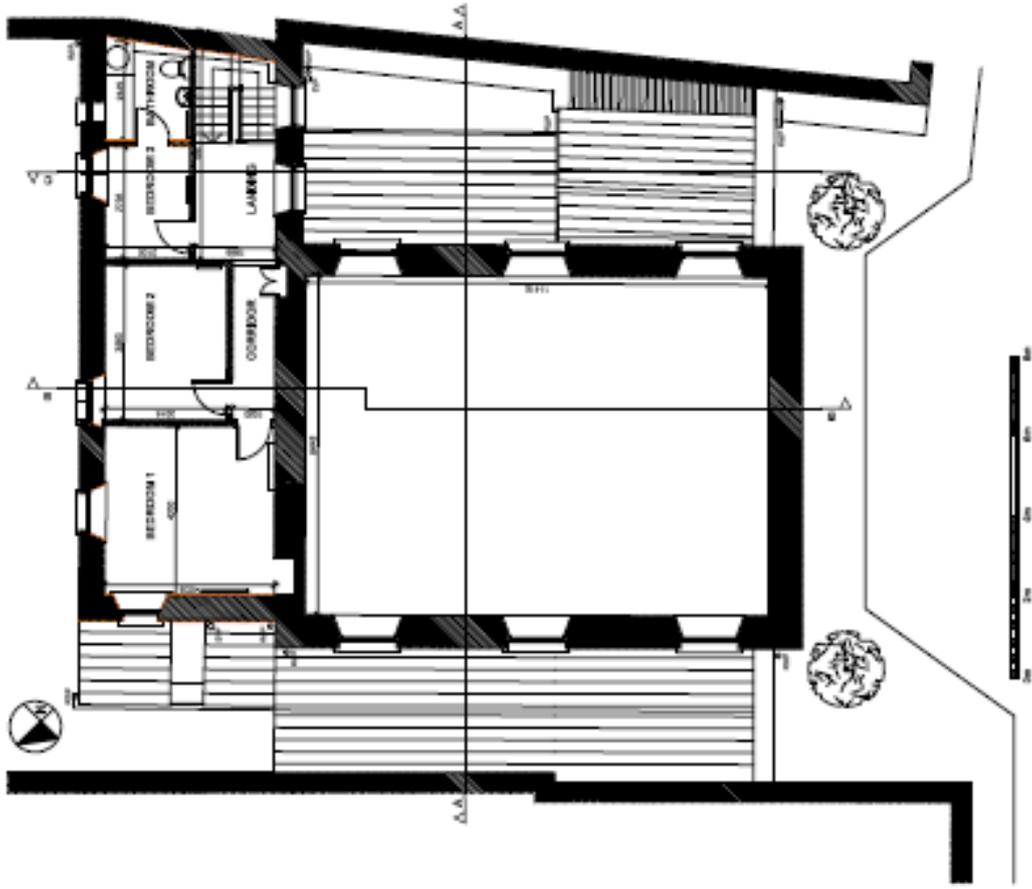
2.4 Significance

Many courthouses in Ireland date from the mid 19th Century, The Sessions House in Thomastown is a relatively early example. Although the roof structures and finishes, and most of the internal detail only dates from the 1920s, following the burning of the building during the Civil War, overall the building retains its original layout. Its public presence onto Logan Street reflects its early 19th Century design. The Sessions House is the oldest purpose built civic building in Thomastown. As such it is a building of architectural and historical significance, and of regional importance.

The relatively recent date (late 1920s) of much of the interior detail should not be seen as reason to undervalue it. Work of quality should be respected, and retained, where practical, as part of the story of the evolution of the building.

The Sessions House is of particular significance as an ensemble with the unique Bridewell structure to the rear; the two buildings being conceived as a dual institution. As far as we have been able to ascertain this Bridewell is unique, in design, construction, quality and surviving authenticity of detail, and, as such, is of national importance.

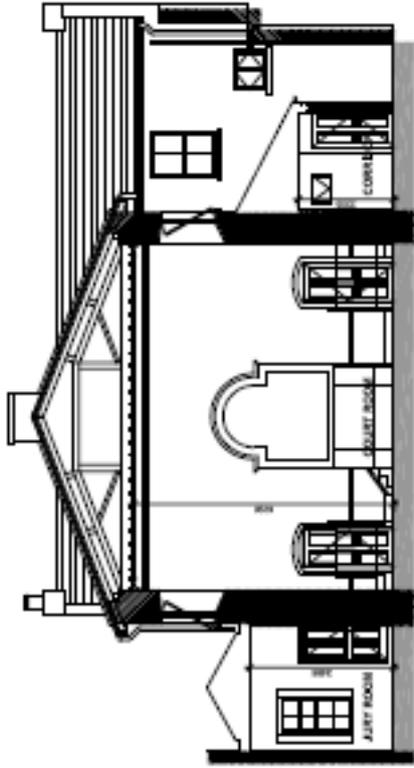
In terms of local social and historical significance, the combined institutions of the Sessions House and Bridewell have served (and confined) the local community for almost two centuries. Although principally used to serve the community in matters legal, the building was also used, in the past, for public entertainment, and the conversion to an educational use would be an appropriate development in the on-going story of the structure.



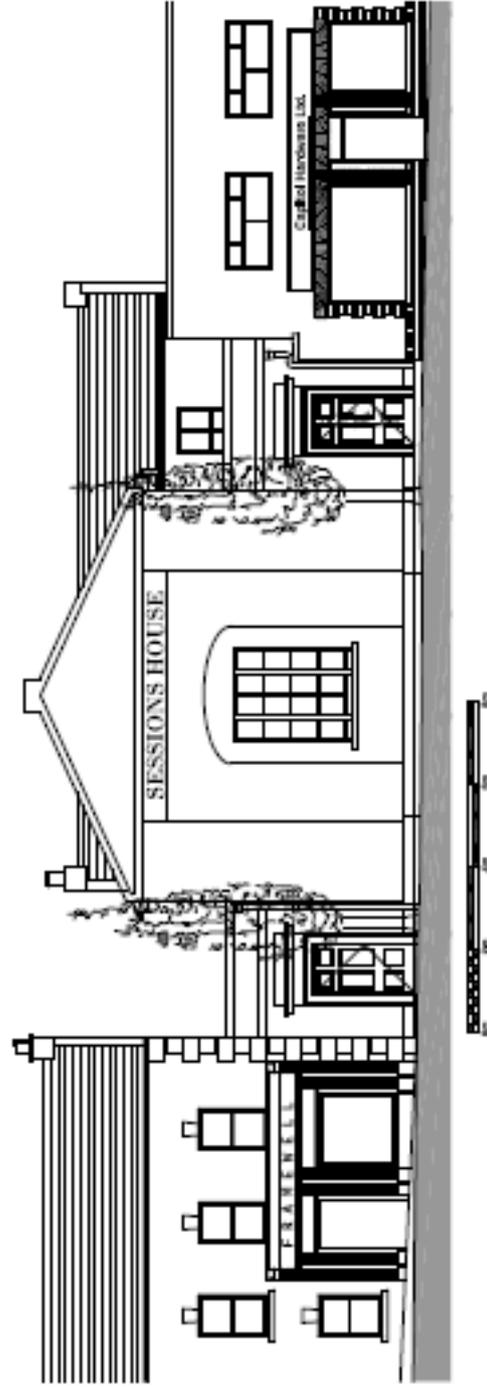
First Floor Plan



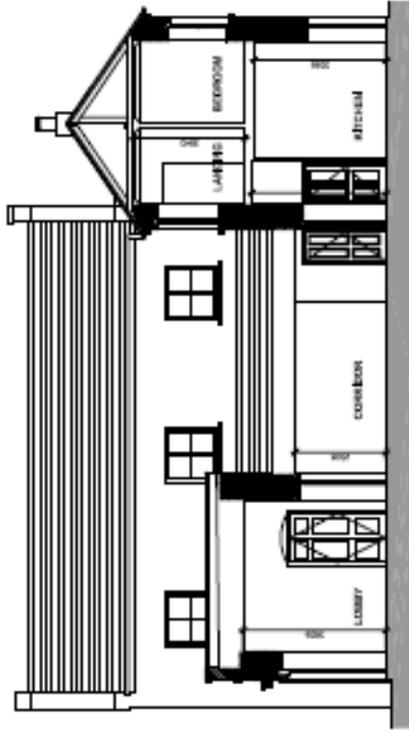
Ground Floor Plan



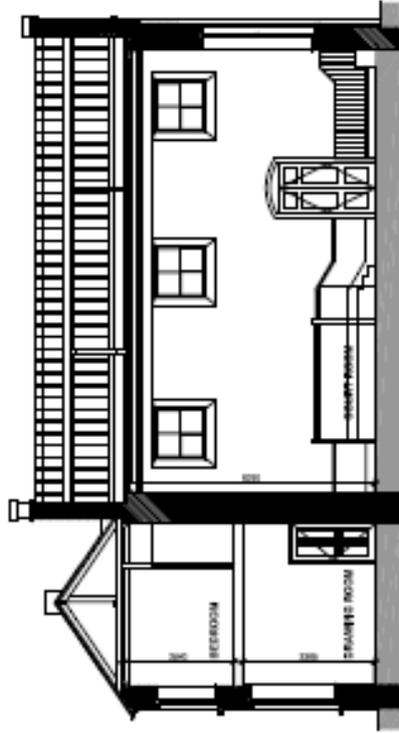
SECTION A-A THROUGH THE COURT ROOM



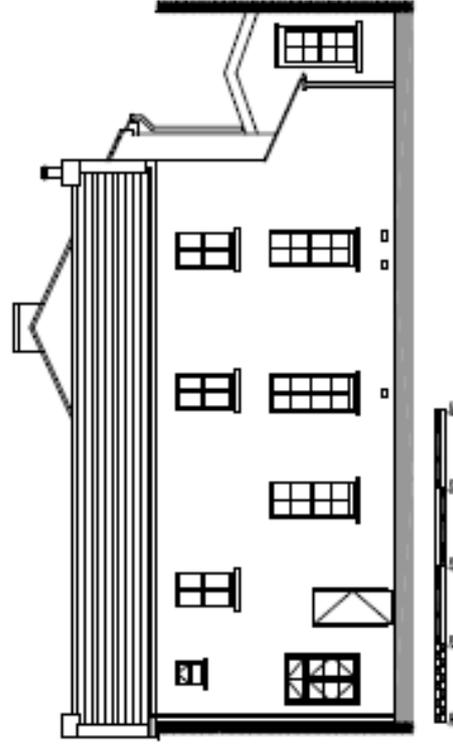
ELEVATION TO LOGAN STREET



SECTION C-C THROUGH THE SOUTH LOBBY AND REAR BLOCK



SECTION B-B THROUGH THE COURT ROOM



REAR ELEVATION



1. Elevation to Logan Street, Programmed street works will create a small plaza outside the Sessions House and level entry at each doorway.



2. Side Elevation (north facing)



3. Entrance door & adjacent property to north side



4. Entrance door & adjacent property to south side.



5. Rear Elevation of Sessions House, left, The Bridewell, right



6. Crack in hard cement plaster, vegetation. This will be removed and the façade rendered with insulated breathable lime plaster



7. Carved limestone surround to Entrance. Vegetation and cracks in plaster



8. 1980s window to front elevation is in poor condition



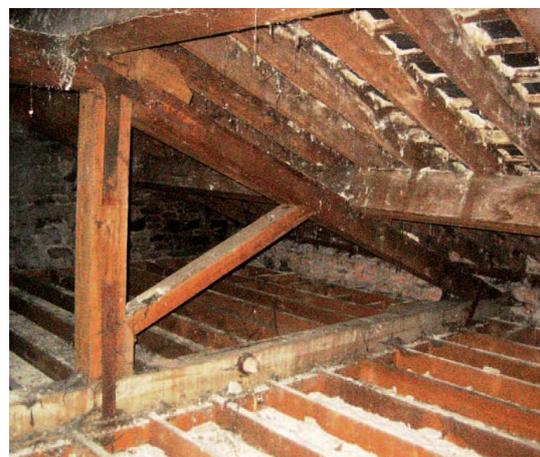
9. Flagpole and limestone details to front gable



10. 1920s casement window to rear elevation is in poor condition



11. Sash window, rear elevation. Possibly predates the 1926 rebuild.



12. The court room roof structure is in good condition but is not insulated



13. The roof above the south corridor will be partly removed to facilitate construction of upper level extension



14. The roof structure to the rear two-storey block is in good condition but is not insulated



15. South entrance lobby; original tiled floor finish remains largely intact.



16. The court room; view towards judge's dais



17. Clerestory window and opening mechanism. Mould growth due to condensation.



18. View towards Logan Street



19. Damp and plaster deterioration above main window due to water ingress via cracks in the external cement render



20. Jury box, judge's dais, police/ defendants box and large table



21. Original tiled floor finish survives



22. The jury room has a later door opening to the court room, right.



23. The fireplace in the judge's room will be retained



24. Upper flight of stairs and landing



25. Fireplace in caretakers drawing room



26. Wall paper lifting upstairs due to condensation



27. Fireplace and door upstairs



28. Recess may originally have been an access to the court room for the judge

4.1 Design Concept

The design objective for the conservation, refurbishment and conversion of the Sessions House is to make it suitable for use as an educational facility while preserving and enhancing the character of the protected structure.

The existing accommodation is very limited in area so the challenge is how to increase the capacity of the buildings without compromising the historic integrity.

After exploring several options, the proposed solution at ground floor is to provide;

- a workshop and exhibition/gallery space in the former court room
- a library in the former Jury Room
- a classroom & toilets in the rear 2-storey block
- a kitchenette/canteen in a small extension behind the Jury Room

The proposed solution at upper level is to provide;

- workshop space on a new mezzanine within the former court room
- an ancillary workshop and office in the rear 2-storey block
- a specialised workshop in an extension to the north side of court room block
- a specialised workshop in an extension to the south side of the court room block

The Mezzanine

The new mezzanine within the courtroom is the most significant element of the scheme. This is a significant intervention but is carefully designed to complement the space :

- It is less than half the floor area of the court room so the full height is retained in most of the space.
- The semi-circular balustrade is inspired by the plaster hood moulding of similar geometry above the judge's dais.

This feature, as well as the six winch-operated opening devices for the clerestorey windows will be restored and highlighted by careful detailing of the mezzanine floor. Four of the winches are outside the area of the mezzanine and can be restored for operation from the ground floor. The extension rods for the two remaining winches will be shortened so that the windows can be opened and closed on the mezzanine.

In the circumstances of an active workshop, it is proposed to protect the plaster panel and hood moulding around the judge's bench behind new high quality timber panelling which can be easily demounted in more suitable situations.

Three options for the structure of the mezzanine were examined. **Ref. Appendix 2; Structural Engineer's sketches.**

1. A mezzanine supported mainly off the walls with a pair of slender columns below the semi-circular portion (150mm diameter)
2. A mezzanine supported entirely off the walls. This requires additional 400mm deep downstand beams.
3. A free-standing mezzanine structure. This requires additional 400mm deep downstand beams and four additional columns (250mm diameter)

Option 1 impacts on the historic fabric by setting beam ends into the existing walls. However the walls at the required height are plain and sturdy and the mezzanine can be an elegant and largely clear spanning structure with minimum intrusion on the space below.

Option 2 eliminates columns altogether but the downstand beams would be visually intrusive and it would also require that the ventilation ducting to be positioned at a lower level within the space.

Option 3 has minimal impact on the historic fabric but requires an independent steel frame of columns and beams. So many structural elements would be visually imposing within a relatively small space and would limit the flexibility of use of the space. This approach also has potentially greater archaeological impact.

On balance, Option 1 was considered the most appropriate solution in this instance.

The Extensions

The small extensions flanking the courtroom at ground and upper levels are required to provide the accommodation needed for a viable educational facility.

At ground level, the extension takes in the narrow yard space beside the lean-to store and toilet off the jury room. At upper level, the extensions are set well back from Logan Street (c. 8m) to avoid impact on the streetscape. The external finishes are deliberately understated. The flat roofs are set in line with the eaves of the courtroom block. The walls towards Logan Street, which do not have windows, are simply finished in metal standing seam cladding. The front walls of the extensions align with each other to frame the court room and thus they reinforce the symmetry of the overall design.

The extensions internalise one pair of the three pairs of clerestorey windows to the court room. To mitigate against loss of light to the court room, the extensions have large rooflights in line with the clerestorey windows in order to maximise the amount of borrowed light within the court room.



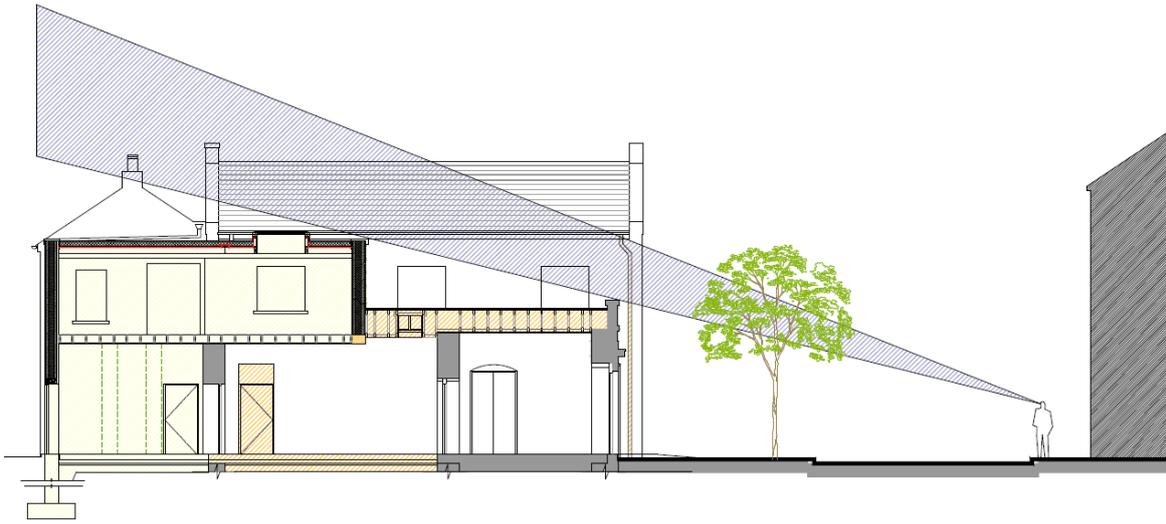
Aerial view with upper level extensions highlighted in pink. These are set back c.8m from the front of the building behind the second set of clerestorey windows to the court room.



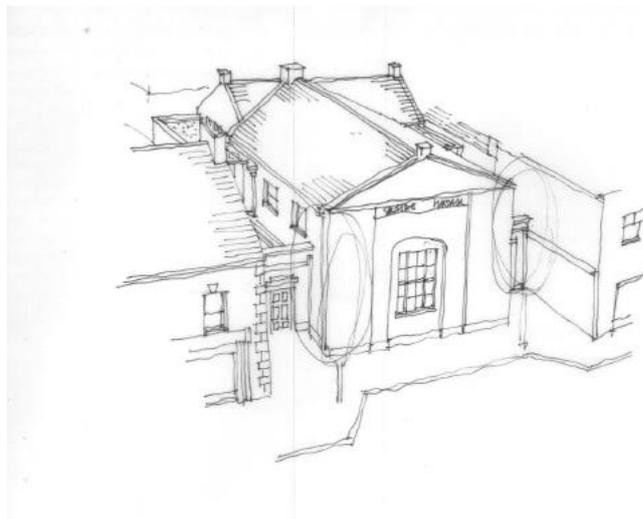
The view from Logan Street does not extend back beyond the first set of clerestorey windows and the extensions will not be visible at street level. Ref. sightline projection from the other side of Logan St. below.

They may be noticed from the upper level windows of the building across the street but even then, the pair of trees, one outside each entrance, will impede views of the side extensions.

The extension facades are deliberately understated and designed to blend into the background while reinforcing the symmetry of the overall composition in a subtle way.



The street trees frame the court room block but impede views of the flanking wings and the entrances.



High-level perspective incorporating the proposed upper level extensions



Example of grey metal standing seam cladding proposed for front elevations of the upper level extensions
At the Sessions House, the extension roofs will have a grey asphalt finish

It is proposed to combine the judges room and the caretakers drawing room at ground level in the rear block to create a single space large enough to function as a classroom. The dividing wall is plain without architectural embellishment and the opening up of the two spaces below a downstand accommodating the ventilation ducts from the court room will make the alteration legible and easily reversible in the future should circumstances so dictate.

Upstairs the two bedrooms and corridor have been made into a single space, reflecting the likely early 19th century plan. The 1920s cornices will be retained and repaired. As this space is to serve as a workshop, additional natural light is to be provided by new roof lights formed into the roof structure. The small rooms at the top of the stairs are to be formed into an office.

Otherwise, in terms of renovations, existing doors and windows, which mostly date from 1926, will be retained and restored as far as possible. Surplus doors will be laid aside for reuse elsewhere, such as to the toilet cubicles at ground floor.

Areas of modern hard plasters, both internally and externally are to be replaced by traditional lime plaster.

Vegetation is to be removed from limestone details, and these are to be repointed, as necessary.

The roofs to the court room and to the two-storey block to the rear are to be retained, and insulated, with eaves and valleys checked, and timbers repaired or replaced where necessary, and new cast iron rain water goods installed. The low roofs over the entrance lobbies will be renewed to the existing profiles.

The tiled floors in both entrance lobbies will be retained and cleaned. Fortunately, the sewer running below the southern lobby is in good condition and need not be opened up. Otherwise, service ducts will be routed via the new floor in the court room rather than via the lobbies and great care will be taken in excavating or drilling below the front external wall to Logan Street.

Domestic fittings, such as fireplaces and cupboards, are to be retained, as part of the building's story, wherever possible.

Services

Having been unheated and damp for many years, the masonry of the building will take a considerable length of time to warm up after a new heating system is installed. However the masonry, much of which is internal, will also have the thermal mass to retain heat once equilibrium is reached and this, combined with efficient ventilation, will greatly reduce the high levels of condensation now evident in the building.

The heating system will seek to incorporate renewable energy solutions although as a protected structure, the Sessions House is not subject to Part L of the Building Regulations. The objective will be to devise a sustainable system which has minimal impact on the historic fabric. It is proposed that the details of the heating system will be specified in consultation with the Conservation and Energy Officers of the Local Authority.

Services routes and ducts will generally be surface mounted to minimise chasing of the walls and any required coring will be at unobtrusive locations.

In addition to new heating and ventilation systems, the electrical wiring will be renewed and the appropriate life safety systems will be installed.

Enhancement of the forecourt on Logan Street

The forecourt is within the public realm and under the control of Kilkenny County Council.

Street works are programmed which will remove the end-on parking bays outside the Sessions House and introduce parallel parking.

The works will enlarge the pedestrian area outside the building, will provide level entry to both entrances and will facilitate the ducting for utilities.

These works will improve the streetscape and enhance the setting of the protected structure.

4.2 Conservation Approach and Methodologies

The Sessions House has been vacant since 2005, suffering from water ingress, wet and dry rot and lack of maintenance until emergency repairs were carried out by Kilkenny County Council. Some repairs and alterations, carried out during the mid and late 20th Century detract significantly from the original character and the appreciation of the historic building, and in the case of hard plasters and renders contribute to the poor quality of the internal environment, and the deterioration of the structure.

Nonetheless, the Sessions House is a sound and sturdy building, that has stood up well to almost two centuries of wear and tear and weather. Although there are a few minor structural cracks, these do not pose a threat to the overall stability, or long-term survival, of the building. There are, however, issues of water ingress at the roofs and valley gutters, and through cracks in the external render that are currently threatening the fabric of the building. There are also significant defects and deterioration associated with condensation, arising from lack of ventilation and heating.

When the building was originally constructed it would have been made using only locally available natural materials. Subsequent alterations have used modern materials, seen as the most effective at the time. Some of these materials, notably hard cement based and gypsum plasters, and waterproof paints are not in harmony with the original construction and are exacerbating many of the problems of damp and cracking and deterioration of finishes.

The greatest threat to the survival of this important building, however, is lack of use. A viable full-time user, such as an educational institution, presents the opportunity for the preservation of the protected structure. It is essential that the building is made weathertight and that the principal issues of damp, condensation and environmental conditions, which make the building unsuitable for use, are addressed.

In order to adapt the historic structure to a feasible and sustainable future use, repair works and alterations have to be carried out. Repair and maintenance works to the historic fabric, such as the slated main roofs, natural stone details, stairs, older windows and doors, and surviving sections of the internal lime plaster, are proposed to help underpin the historic character of the building and ensure its survival.

The works include the replacement of non-original features, such as later windows and doors, the concrete floor slab to the ground floor, the external cement render and the badly deteriorated roofs to the side bays with new fabric and features that reflect the original design intention. This is felt to contribute significantly to the overall presentation of the building.

As the building lies within an Area of Archaeological Potential, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will be notified prior to the commencement of any excavation works by the Project Archaeologist.

Where new elements are being proposed, these have been designed to be clearly in contrast to the historic elements, and to minimise interventions in the historic fabric. New walls are to be laid in lime mortar, or to be of timber frame construction to ensure reversibility and compatibility with the historic fabric.

Throughout the works, both of alteration and renovation, natural materials, compatible with the historic materiality of the building, will be specified, as far as possible. Lime mortars, plasters and renders will be used throughout. The use of cement is to be confined to new floor slabs and foundations.

The installation of the new services is to be carried out in accordance with the conservation methodology, surface mounted, to carefully designed layouts, and minimizing interventions in the historic fabric. Ventilation to the building is to be improved to reduce problems associated with condensation.

The work will follow best conservation practice, and will be overseen by an RIAI Grade 1 Accredited Practice in Conservation Architecture. Method Statements from experienced conservation contractors for each element of the works will be agreed with the Architect in every instance.

4.3 Scope of Works and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
a)	Change of use from vacant courthouse/caretakers residence to educational facility with exhibition/gallery/retail space and associated uses	Loss of some fabric and internal features. Alteration of purpose of the building.		New use as educational facility secures the future of the building and maintains public access.	Retain all features relating to former use, wherever they do not compromise the new function. Display information about the history of the building
	Removal of Court Room Furniture	Removal of features which were intrinsic to the building. Removal of well made 1920s features.		Enables the space to be used for a wide variety of activities that would severely restricted, should the furniture be retained.	Fully record prior to removal. Carefully demount, minimising damage and relocate to suitable, recorded location, preferably within Thomastown.
	Removal of modern wall panelling and hard plaster in the court room			Removal of non-original features that detract from both the presentation and environmental performance of the historic space and structure.	Fully record prior to removal.
	Repair of clerestorey windows in the court room			Opportunity to improve environmental performance of the windows. Condensation can be	Restoration of the winch operated opening devices

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
				reduced if it feasible to fit slimline double glazing	
b)	Construction of new mezzanine within the former court room	<p>Spatial subdivision across half the space</p> <p>Reduced light below the mezzanine</p>		Provides required accommodation for new use to secure the future of the building	<p>Semi-circular balustrade of mezzanine makes reference to round arched hood moulding above the judge's dais.</p> <p>Mezzanine to be carefully detailed to preserve hood moulding and window opening mechanisms</p>
c)	Removal of single storey lean-to structures on the north side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels.				<p>Provides required accommodation for new use to secure the future of the building</p> <p>The extension facades are understated, designed to blend into the background while reinforcing the symmetry of the overall composition in a subtle way.</p> <p>Permits creation of functional space and</p>

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
					<p>additional safe exit from rear of the building.</p> <p>Roof to be designed to improve safety of access to valley gutters for maintenance.</p>
d)	Removal of single storey structure to yard on the south side of the building and construction of extensions at ground and upper levels	Loss of early masonry, possibly an outside privy originally.	<p>Remove poor quality modern elements and finishes</p> <p>Wall and roof date from mid.20th. century and are of poor quality</p>	<p>Provides required accommodation for new use to secure the future of the building</p> <p>Return closer to original layout which had courtyard in this location.</p> <p>Roof to be designed to improve safety of access to valley gutters for maintenance.</p>	<p>Provides required accommodation for new use to secure the future of the building</p> <p>The extension facades are understated, designed to blend into the background while reinforcing the symmetry of the overall composition in a subtle way.</p> <p>Permits creation of functional space and additional safe exit from rear of the building.</p> <p>Roof to be designed to improve safety of access to valley</p>

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
					gutters for maintenance.
e)	Installation of new mechanical and electrical services	Some coring of walls required at low level		Control of condensation and improved comfort levels for occupants Introduction of the appropriate life safety systems	Services to be surface mounted to minimize chasing of walls. Coring to be at unobtrusive locations. Ventilation ducts to be routed below cornice level on the line of the dividing wall between the judge's room and the caretaker's drawing room.
		Installation of roof mounted PV arrays		Provision of a source of renewable energy to heat and power the building and reduce running costs	Panels to be located out of sight on the low reconstructed roofs behind the parapets to Logan St. and/or to the back roof pitch of the rear two-storey block
f)	Restoration, alteration and refurbishment of the existing structures				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewal of external renders • Replacement of cement external render with traditional lime render 	Loss of late 19 th Century detail		Return to early 19 th Century detail; plaster compatible with masonry structure. Improvement in the environmental performance of building	Record existing lining of elevations, and reproduce in new lime finish. Carefully remove existing plaster to avoid damage to limestone detailing. Take samples of any

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
				Solve issue of water ingress through cracks in plaster	surviving lime render and analyse. Use local aggregates, if available and suitable, for new lime renders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewal of roofs over entrance lobbies; refurbishment of eaves, gutters, downpipes; insulation of all roof spaces, 		Replacement of 1920s and 1980s roof structures.	Prolong the life of building by addressing water ingress.	Exposure of masonry walls during works may contribute to understanding of history of the structure. Retain and reuse good quality slates
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair of windows generally or replication incorporating slimline double glazing in exceptional cases (Ref. Photo No.10) 	Potential loss of 1920s windows, if these prove unsuitable for repair.		Opportunity to improve environmental performance of windows and reduce condensation.	If a window requires replacement, agree design of new unit in consultation with the Conservation Officer.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alterations to internal layouts and internal and external door openings to improve accessibility and fire safety 	Minor loss of original fabric		Improved functionality, access for the disabled and fire safety. Alterations to be legible and reversible.	Doors to be reused wherever possible
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of internal concrete floors 	Risk of disturbing historic fabric of masonry walls.	None of the floors to be replaced are original	Improve thermal performance and reduce dampness	Excavations to be carefully supervised to minimise risk to historic fabric and to monitor potential archaeology.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of timber floor in judge's room with insulated concrete 	Loss of early fabric		Eliminate risk of dry rot. This floor has no	Fully record prior to removal.

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
	floor			means of underfloor ventilation and presents a high risk of outbreak of dry rot. Provision of ventilation by means of vertical ducts within the room would be unsightly and unreliable	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form vestibule within the southern entrance lobby incorporating internal sliding glass doors. 	Minimal alteration to historic fabric to facilitate installation of glass doors.		Retain innate symmetry of elevation, while permitting more welcoming entrance, when the facility is open.	Careful detailing of glass door.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widen door opening between the stairwell and the classroom in the rear two-storey block 	Loss of original masonry wall fabric. Removal of 1920s door. Minor alteration to plan form		Enables accessibility and fire safety of this part of the building. Upgrades to public scale a formerly domestic area.	Record opening before and during works. Make good masonry using lime mortar and salvaged brick or stone.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convert former kitchen to circulation, fire exit and sanitary facilities. 	Alteration to plan form.	This area shows evidence of previous alterations, and the proposal can be seen as the latest stage in the evolution of this service area of the building.	Provides essential sanitary facilities, including ambulant cubicle. Facilitates creation of protected stairs for fire safety.	Record all material prior to removal. Carefully remove kitchen cupboard for use elsewhere.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional handrail to stairs 	New element in existing feature	Stairs are attractive but unremarkable 1920s feature.	Improves accessibility of upper floor.	Design to be clearly new but complementary in

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
					design
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove or lower hearth within the caretaker's drawing room. Ref. Photo No.25 	Small loss to "story" of building.		Elimination of trip hazard within the new layout.	Record prior to alteration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove crosswall between the Drawing Room and the Judge's Room to create Classroom 	Alteration to plan form. some loss of historic masonry fabric		Improves flexibility of use of the building	Record opening up. Make good masonry using lime mortar and salvaged brick or stone. Express former plan form in ceiling downstand.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove 20th Century partitions between bedrooms and corridor at upper level to form a single workshop space 	Removal of 1920s wall	Removal of mid-20 th Century wall to corridor	Return to likely original plan form	Retain cornices to tell "story" of changes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install rooflights into roof over workshop 	New feature on rear elevation		Improve quality of light for creative activities in new studio space	Chose traditional style rooflights, that fit close to profile of roof. Minimise alterations to roof structure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install fire doors to the stairwell at upper level. 		Existing doors are not historic	Improved fire safety and means of escape.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern entrance door from Logan St. to be re-hung to open outwards 		Alteration to 1980's door	Improved fire safety and means of escape.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form 1600mm wide opening from former bedroom to new extension 	Alteration to plan form. some loss of historic masonry fabric		Improved functionality and fire safety	Record opening up. Make good masonry using lime mortar and salvaged brick or stone.

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

	WORKS ITEM	POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS	POTENTIAL NEUTRAL EFFECTS	POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECTS	MITIGATING MEASURES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in ground level and formation of French drain along the rear of the building 			<p>Current outside ground level is above internal floor level and this is a source of dampness in the external wall.</p>	<p>Rear walkway will be finished with stone slabs on pea gravel</p>

Refer to Photographic Survey and Proposal Drawings

7. Conclusion

This Report has outlined the history of the Sessions House and described its current condition. The chronology of development is traced in Figure 1. The architectural, social and historical significance of the Sessions House is acknowledged and the increased heritage value in tandem with the adjacent Bridewell is evident.

The Sessions House has been vacant since 2005. A project to convert the building for use as an Arts Centre in 2013 did not proceed but the opportunity now exists to accommodate an educational use and this can secure the future of the building in the longer term.

The works to convert the Sessions House are described and the impact on the architectural heritage significance of the building is considered.

The positive and negative impacts on the heritage significance have been objectively assessed and mitigation measures are recommended where appropriate.

On balance, it is considered that the best interests of the protected structure are well served by conversion of the building to educational use in a manner that will maintain and enhance its historic character.

SIGNED



DATE: 26th. March 2020

CORMAC O'SULLIVAN,
B.Arch, M.Phil, MRIAI, MIPI, IHBC.
Bluett & O'Donoghue Architects

- **APPENDIX 1; NIAH Survey Ref. 12317058**

Thomastown Courthouse, Logan's Street, THOMASTOWN, Thomastown, County Kilkenny



Survey Data

Reg No **12317058**

Rating **Regional**

Categories of Special Interest **Architectural Artistic Historical Social**

Original Use Court house

In Use As Court house

Date 1800 - 1832

Coordinates 258582, 141959

Date Recorded 18/05/2004

Date Updated --/--/--

Description

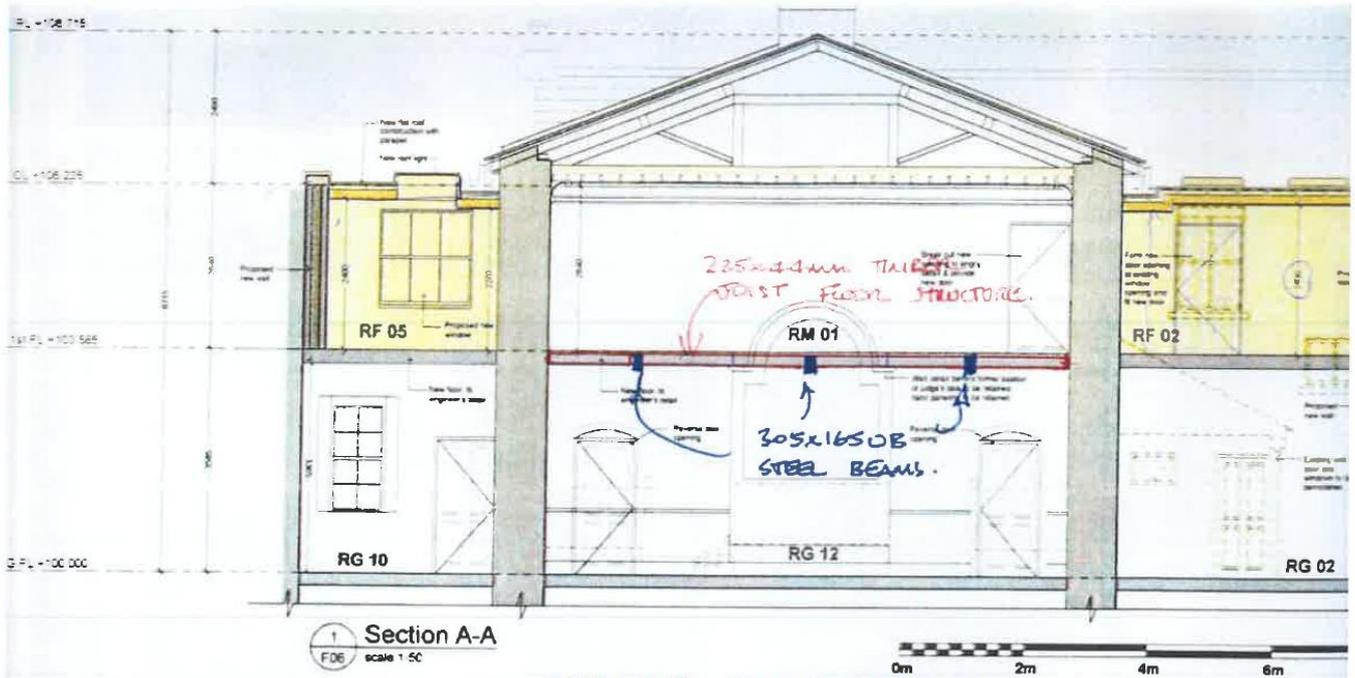
Attached single-bay (two-bay deep) double-height courthouse, ----, on a symmetrical plan with single-bay single-storey recessed porches. Vacant, 1901. Occupied, 1911. Pitched (gable-fronted) slate roof with clay ridge tiles, and cast-iron rainwater goods on timber eaves boards on box eaves retaining cast-iron octagonal or ogee hoppers and downpipes. Rendered, ruled and lined walls to front (south) elevation on cut-limestone plinth with rendered, ruled and lined monolithic piers to ends supporting block finial-topped cut-limestone pediment; rendered, ruled and lined surface finish (remainder).

Square-headed window opening in tripartite arrangement in elliptical-headed recess with cut-limestone sill, timber mullions, and concealed dressings framing four-over-four timber sash window having two-over-two sidelights. Square-headed door openings (porches) with cut-limestone thresholds, and cut-limestone surrounds with thumbnail beaded cornices on blind friezes framing timber panelled doors. Street fronted with limestone flagged footpath to front.

Appraisal

A courthouse representing an important component of the early nineteenth-century built heritage of County Kilkenny with the architectural value of the composition, 'a neat modern building to which is attached a small bridewell' (Lewis 1837 II, 621-2), confirmed by such attributes as the symmetrical footprint centred on an arcaded tripartite window; the deep grey limestone dressings demonstrating good quality workmanship; and the pedimented roofline. Having been well maintained, the elementary form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, both to the exterior and to the interior, thus upholding the character or integrity of a courthouse making pleasing visual statement in Logan's Street. NOTE: A grant of £530 11s. 8d. was made in 1832 by the Board of Works (established 1831) for the erection of an adjacent bridewell (First Annual Report of Commissioners of Public Works 1833, --).

• APPENDIX 2
Structural Engineer's sketches



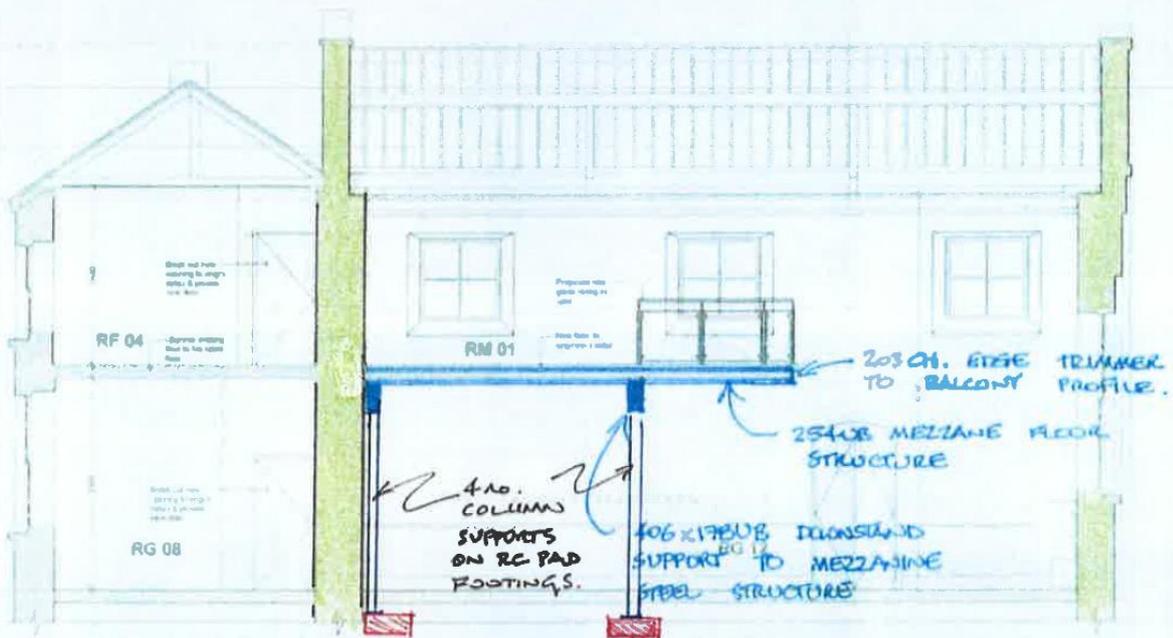
PROJECT: 19174
ARCH: '20
1974 - SK. 03



Proposed Extension

Existing Building

Proposed Extension



2 Section B-B
F06 Scale 1:50

ALTERNATIVE MEZZANINE STRUCTURE --- FREE STANDING STRUCTURES.

Existing Building