

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

**Commission Order
PL-501431-KE-26**

Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Planning Authority: Kildare County Council

Planning Register Reference Number: 26/60250

Appeal by Mark Proctor against the decision made on the 1st day of May, 2026 by Kildare County Council in relation to an application for development comprising internal works to a protected structure (reference number NS19-006). Works consist of re-ordering of internal furniture layout involving removal of existing timber pews and replacement with loose chairs. Removal of existing raised pulpit area and enclosure, and replacement of missing timber floorboarding following its removal. The salvaging of surrounding panels to form bench storage area and wall panelling. The construction of a fixed screened area for audio equipment area to rear, all at The Presbyterian Church, North Main Street, Naas, County Kildare (which decision was to grant permission for the removal of six rows of pews (pews 3-8 and 10-15), the alteration and reuse of pews 1 and 1 as an audio desk and the relocation of two number pews along the perimeter walls, as it is retains historic fabric within the building and to refuse permission for the proposed removal of the existing original pulpit and the associated floor repairs including the installation of carpet tiles).

Decision

REFUSE permission for the above proposed development in accordance with the reasons and considerations set out below.

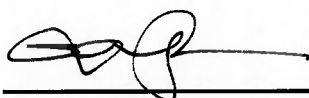
Reasons and Considerations

The proposed development by reason of works to the interior of this protected structure, involving the removal of existing original timber pews, the removal of the existing raised pulpit area and enclosure, the introduction of loose replacement seating and the covering of the floor with carpet tiles would result in the loss of original fixtures and features of the protected structure. It is considered that these works would have a serious and detrimental impact on the internal layout and character of this protected structure and would be contrary to best conservation practice. The proposed development would be contrary to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 Policy AH P6 to protect, conserve and manage architectural heritage, Objective AH O20 to conserve and protect buildings on the Record of Protected Structures and Objective AHO41 promoting the retention of original or early building fabric of protected structures. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

In deciding not to accept the Inspector's recommendation to grant permission the Commission, having examined the application details and all other documentation on file including the submission received in relation to the appeal, the reports of the planning authority, the Inspector's report, and having regard to the relevant regional and national policies and guidance carried out a de novo assessment of the proposed development as per Section 37 (1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000. The Commission considered the planning authority's split decision to grant permission for the removal of the majority of the pews and to refuse permission for the removal of the pulpit and covering the floor with carpet tiles and noted the applicant's grounds of appeal which requested that all elements of split decision should be reviewed together. The Inspector considered that the proposed development including the proposed removal of the pulpit does not constitute works that would detract from the special interest of the Protected Structure and that it would achieve a more flexible internal space. The Commission noted that the planning authority considered that the pulpit is an integral element of the church interior which is original to the building and contributes significantly to the architectural and liturgical character of the church, that its removal would not be reversible, the additional space requirement put forward does not constitute exceptional circumstances and that the removal of the pulpit would therefore result in an unwarranted loss of historic fabric and would materially diminish the character of the Protected Structure. The Commission also noted the planning authority's Conservation Officer's assessment that the interior was designed to be simple and modest, with fine detailing to the purpose built elements. The Commission further noted the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) states that the pews and pulpit are original to the church and agreed with the assessment of the planning authority's Architectural Conservation Officer that the furniture contributes both to the character and to the integrity of the Protected

Structure. The Commission agreed with the Conservation Officer's assessment that the proposal to remove the purpose built pews and pulpit and replace them with stackable chairs would "undoubtedly have a significant impact on the character of the church". The Commission also agreed with the planning authority's assessment that the installation of carpet tiles would further erode the architectural quality of the space. The Commission did not agree however, with the Conservation Officer's assessment that the proposed retention of one pew (number 09) and retention of the pulpit and enclosure would sufficiently mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the character of the church and agreed with the appellant that this configuration would be problematic and unworkable. The Commission determined that the loss of rows of pews in their entirety would dilute the overall unified vision for the church, and when combined with the proposed removal of the pulpit and proposed introduction of carpet tiles, would detract from the reflective and ceremonial ambience appropriate to a place of worship and would furthermore create a more secularised domestic treatment of the church interior and therefore would have a serious and detrimental impact on the internal layout and character of the church. In reaching its determination, the Commission had regard to Section 57 (6) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 which states that when considering an application for permission which relates to (a) the interior of a protected structure and (b) is regularly used as a place of public worship that liturgical requirements shall be respected. Due cognisance was given to the stated Church's ethos and functional requirements as outlined in the application and appeal documentation however the Commission determined, in the absence of supporting documentation such as copies of correspondence or evidence of support from the relevant Historic Churches Advisory Committee or central office of the denomination, as outlined in Section 7 of the Conservation of Places of Worship, (Advice Series, Department of the Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, 2011) that it has

not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed works are necessary for liturgical requirements. In coming to its decision, the Commission sought to balance the stated needs of the users with a respect for the character and special interest of the historic building and concluded that the extent of intervention is excessive in the context of the building's significance without sufficient justification and therefore a refusal of all elements of the proposed development is warranted as stated in the reasons for refusal outlined above.



Emer Maughan

Planning Commissioner of An Coimisiún

**Pleanála duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Commission.**



Dated this 22nd day of September 2026.