



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL-501321-KE-26

Development	Construction of pastoral centre
Location	St Coca's Parish Church, Church Street, Kilcock, Co. Kildare
Planning Authority	Kildare County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2660179
Applicant(s)	Kandle Trust
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party Normal Planning Appeal
Appellant(s)	Kandle Trust
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	28/08/2026
Inspector	David Freeland

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1.0 Site Location and Description

The appeal site has a stated area of 0.388 hectares. It lies on the north-eastern side of Church Street in Kilcock, within the town core, at the junction with Mill Lane which runs north-eastwards along the south-eastern boundary of the site to Church Lane. The former Shalom Presentation Convent, also a protected structure, RPS Ref. B05-40, adjoins to the north-west and Scoil Chóca Naofa lies to the north-east.

The site contains St Coca's Catholic Church, a protected structure, RPS Ref. B05-41, and is recorded in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Reg. No. 11802021, as of Regional significance.

The site is within the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area. The church and graveyard are a recorded monument, RMP KD005-002---, and the medieval baptismal font inside the church is a separate recorded monument, RMP KD005-029.

The church is set back from Church Street with its principal elevation and tower facing south-west onto it. The main entrance is a gateway with limestone piers and cast-iron gates, inside which is a tarmacadam forecourt. A lawn with mature trees occupies the southern corner of the site. A pedestrian entrance opens onto Mill Lane beside which stands a 20th century grotto of cemented random rubble with a domed roof which is largely screened by planting. The site is bounded onto both streets by a stone wall rendered in cement and cement capping.

2.0 Proposed Development

Permission is sought for the construction of a single storey limestone pastoral centre of 315 square metres to the south of the existing limestone church, the removal of the existing 20th century grotto, the removal of a section of existing boundary wall and all associated site development works.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Kildare County Council decided to refuse permission on 15 April 2026 for one reason. The reason for refusal is as follows.

Objective AH O21 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2032-2029 is to protect the curtilage of protected structures and to refuse permission for inappropriate development that would adversely impact on the setting, curtilage, or attendant grounds of a protected structure. Objective AH O32 is to ensure new development will not adversely impact on the setting of a protected structure or obscure established views of its principal elevations. Objective AH O65 is to ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions within an ACA are sited and designed appropriately and are not detrimental to the character of the structure or to its setting or the general character of the Architectural Conservation Area. The proposed development, by reason of its siting, scale, massing and monolithic block form within the constrained curtilage of St. Coca's Church, a Protected Structure (RPS Ref. B05-41), would obscure the south-west (front) and south-east (side) principal elevations when viewed from Church Street and Mill Lane, respectively. Furthermore, Objective AH O31 seeks to protect the designed landscapes associated with protected structures and retain important elements of the built heritage including historic stone walls. In this context, it is considered the extent of stone wall to be removed to facilitate the proposed development is excessive.

Having regard to the foregoing, it is considered that the proposed development would significantly detract from the setting and character of both the Protected Structure and the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area. The proposal would therefore materially contravene Objectives AH O21, AH O31, AH O32 and AH O65 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

There is one Planner's Report on file, dated 13 April 2026. It is summarised as follows.

- **Zoning and principle of development.** The report accepts the principle of the development having regard to the 'E – Community and Educational' zoning of the site.
- **Planning history.** The report states that a similar development was permitted under Reg. Ref. 19/1196, that the final grant date was 3 February 2020 and that the permission has since lapsed. It states that 19/1196 was assessed and granted under the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023.
- **Architectural heritage and design.** The report includes an extract of the Architectural Conservation Officer's report and concludes that "the report of the Kildare County Architectural Conservation Officer is noted and its conclusion regarding the proximate siting to the Church, scale, massing, monolithic form and material choice is considered reasonable and appropriate".
- **Archaeology.** The report notes the Rubicon assessment and the reports of the Heritage Officer and the Development Applications Unit, and raises no objection subject to conditions.
- **Water services.** The report states that no report has been received from the Water Services Section or from Uisce Éireann. The report does not raise any objection in relation to water services.
- **Transportation.** The report notes the comments of the Municipal District Engineer and of the Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces Department, the latter of which considered that further information should be requested on walking objectives, traffic types and volumes, car parking and electric vehicle charging, cycle parking and the provision of a Construction Management Plan.

- **Landscaping.** The report notes the Arboricultural Assessment and states that it should be accompanied by a landscape plan but none appears to have been submitted with the application.
- **Screening.** An Appropriate Assessment screening and an EIA screening are appended to the report. Both screen out.
- **Conclusion and recommendation.** The assessment and concerns raised by the Architectural Conservation Officer are considered appropriate having regard to multiple objectives within the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, and refusal is recommended for the single reason set out above.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Heritage and Nature Unit (Architectural Conservation Officer): Report dated 24 March 2026 – Refuse Permission

The Conservation Officer made the following comments.

(a) The proposed development is located within the curtilage of St. Coca's Church, a Protected Structure. The site lies to the south-east of the church, tightly positioned between the building and the boundary wall along Mill Lane.

(b) While a pastoral centre in this general location, designed in a contemporary architectural style, may be acceptable in principle, the design as currently presented should be set significantly further back from the nave to reduce its visual impact on the Protected Structure. It is acknowledged that the spatial requirements shown on the drawings are unlikely to fit comfortably within the constrained site. The proposed building extends forward of the nave and aligns with the south-west façade of the church tower. Its overall massing would have a significant negative impact on the Protected Structure and the character of the Kilcock ACA, as it would obscure the south-west (front) and south-east (side) principal elevations when viewed from both Church Lane and Church Street. This would substantially detract from the setting and does not comply with Objective AH O21 or Objective AH O32. The

obstruction of key views within the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area also fails to align with Objective AH O65.

(c) In principle, the partial removal of the boundary wall to allow pedestrian access may be acceptable. However, the extent of removal proposed is excessive and, as currently presented, would not comply with Objective AH O31. The opening should be reduced to a pedestrian-scaled access point.

(d) While the architectural approach is distinctly modern and does not compete with the 19th-century Gothic Revival architecture of the church, the design should be revised away from the current monolithic block form given its close proximity to the Protected Structure. A lighter, more visually permeable architectural treatment is recommended, incorporating surrounding trees and greenery and integrating screening where possible.

(e) The applicant is advised to resubmit a revised layout ensuring that the tower and the full front face of the nave remain clearly visible from Church Street.

The Conservation Officer recommended that permission be refused.

- Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces Department: Report dated 2 April 2026 – Request Further Information

The further information related to six issues: proposals for Walking Objective MTO 17 of the Kilcock Local Area Plan on the development of shared surfaces in School Street, Church Lane and Mill Lane; details of traffic types and volumes; the location and level of car parking against the standards in Chapter 15 of the Development Plan; details of electric vehicle charging and ducting; the level of cycle parking; and a Construction Management Plan, with particular regard to construction traffic through Mill Lane and Church Street.

- Heritage Officer: Report dated 24 March 2026 – No objection subject to conditions
- Maynooth Municipal District Engineer: Report dated 26 March 2026 – No objection subject to conditions

- Water Services: Report dated 10 March 2026 – No objection subject to conditions
- Environment Section: Report dated 6 March 2026 – No objection subject to conditions
- Fire Service: Report dated 1 April 2026 – No objection subject to a condition

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit: Report dated 18 March 2026 – No objection

3.4. Third Party Observations

None.

4.0 Planning History

4.1.1. Subject Site

P.A. Ref. 19/1196: Permission Granted for the construction of a single storey limestone pastoral centre of 315 square metres to the south of the existing limestone church, the removal of the existing 20th century grotto, the removal of a section of existing boundary wall and all associated site development works.

The final grant was issued on 3 February 2020. The permission was not extended.

The Conservation Officer's report, dated 9 December 2019 had no objection subject to six conditions relating to the appointment of a conservation architect, a method statement, monitoring of the works, a measured and photographic record of the areas of change including a record of the grotto to be demolished, an updated NIAH-format record of the protected structure, and a compliance report on completion. The Conservation Officer's reason was given "in the interest of protecting the existing special architectural character of the protected structure and P1, P2, PS3, PS7, PS8, PS15, PS16" of the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023.

The Planner's Report described the siting, height and materials of the building and noted that the proposed works to the boundary wall would include removal of the

cement render, stone repair and repointing. The report considered that the removal of the wall at the corner would provide a more generous public realm and a safer pedestrian route along Mill Lane towards the school. It concluded that “the proposed pastoral centre is subservient to St. Coca’s Church and it is considered that it will not have a negative visual impact on the architectural merit of the church or its surroundings”. It found the tree removal and landscaping proposals acceptable. It recorded the Architectural/Historic Significance Report as concluding that the works would have a positive and ameliorative impact on the character of the setting of the protected structure and on the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.

Twelve conditions were attached. Condition 2 restricted the use of the parish centre to a use ancillary to the main church and prohibited commercial, industrial or residential use. Condition 3 related to the Conservation Officer’s six requirements. Condition 4 required archaeological monitoring, investigation and reporting. Condition 5 required arboricultural supervision. Conditions 6 to 12 dealt with surface water, foul drainage, road drainage, reinstatement of the public road, and construction and operational noise and dust. The development was recorded as exempt from development contributions.

Pre-planning reference PP4204. A pre-application meeting was held on 18 October 2018, attended by representatives of the Planning Department and the Conservation Officer. The meeting identified the reports that should accompany an application, asked the architects to contact the Area Engineer about the proposed public realm improvements including the footpath adjacent to Mill Lane, and asked that the diocese and the parish community confirm their agreement to the removal of the grotto.

4.1.2. Adjoining Land

ACP Ref. 500056-KE / P.A. Ref. 25/60841: Awaiting Decision following a First Party Appeal relating to the Retention for a period of one year of the removal of railings and gates and the erection of temporary security gates and fencing at Shalom Nursing Home, Church Street, a protected structure, RPS Ref. B05-40, which adjoins the appeal site to the north-west and is within the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area. Retention Permission was refused by KCC on 15 September 2025.

5.0 Policy Context

The relevant policy documents are the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 as varied, the Kilcock Local Area Plan 2015-2021, and the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011). The Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023, under which the previous permission was granted, is set out separately below.

5.1 Development Plan

Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, as varied

The Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 is the operative county plan. It has been varied, most recently by Variation No. 3, which was made to bring the Plan into line with the National Planning Framework – First Revision (2025). Kilcock is a Self-Sustaining Town in the settlement hierarchy at Table 2.7.

Variation No. 3 inserted the following paragraph at the end of Section 2.11 of the Plan:

“Kildare County Council will have regard to the provisions of any expired or existing Local Area Plan when considering proposals for new development until such time as that plan (or parts / provisions thereof) is replaced, revoked or integrated into the County Development Plan. * ‘Provisions’ refers to all aspects of the plan including Land Use Zoning objectives. However, this excludes Core Strategy allocations within expired Local Area Plans, as relevant allocations are contained in the County Development Plan.”*

Variation No. 3 also allocated additional housing growth to Kilcock and states that this will inform the preparation of a new Settlement Plan for the town in 2026 for inclusion in Volume 2 of the Development Plan.

Chapter 10 – Community Infrastructure and Creative Places

- Objectives SC O6 and SC O8 relate to the protection and provision of community facilities.
- Objective SC O6: *“Protect and enhance existing social infrastructure/community facilities and increase the provision as required in*

accessible and sustainable locations including the development of new and expansion of existing facilities and services.”

- Objective SC O8: *“Ensure that communities across the county have access to multifunctional and intergenerational community centres that provide a focal point for community activities.”*

Chapter 11 – Built and Cultural Heritage

Section 11.18 states that boundaries for Architectural Conservation Areas have been defined for eleven settlements including Kilcock, shown on Maps V1 – 11.1 to 11.12. It indicates that Statements of Character have been prepared for the Athy, Kildare and Naas Architectural Conservation Areas, and that further Statements of Character will be prepared through the roll-out of local area plans as resources allow. No Statement of Character has been prepared for the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area.

The objectives set out below relate to the conservation of protected structures, the protection of their curtilage, attendant grounds and setting, the retention of built heritage features including stone walls, the quality of design of new buildings affecting protected structures, and the siting and design of development within Architectural Conservation Areas.

- Objective AH O20: *“Conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained on the Record of Protected Structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.”*
- Objective AH O21: *“Protect the curtilage of protected structures or proposed protected structures and to refuse planning permission for inappropriate development that would adversely impact on the setting, curtilage, or attendant grounds of a protected structure, cause loss of or damage to the special character of the protected structure and/or any structures of architectural heritage value within its curtilage. Any proposed development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds must demonstrate that it is part of an overall strategy for the future conservation of the entire built heritage complex and contributes positively to that aim.”*

- Objective AH O23: *“Require an Architectural Heritage Assessment Report, as described in Appendix B of the Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), to accompany all applications with potential for visual or physical impacts on a Protected Structure, its curtilage, demesne and setting. This report should be prepared by a person with conservation expertise that is appropriate to the significance of the historic building or site and the complexity of the proposed works.”*
- Objective AH O31: *“Protect the designed landscapes associated with protected structures and retain important elements of the built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, pathways, and avenues within the curtilage and attendant grounds of protected structures.”*
- Objective AH O32: *“Ensure that new development will not adversely impact on the setting of a protected structure or obscure established views of its principal elevations.”*
- Objective AH O34: *“Encourage high quality design in relation to planning applications that are made for the construction of extensions or new buildings affecting protected structures or older buildings of architectural merit not included in the RPS. The Council will have regard for the visual impacts on the setting and character of protected structures and/or buildings of architectural merit not included on the RPS, when considering applications on neighbouring sites.”*
- Objective AH O41: *“Promote the retention of original or early building fabric including timber sash windows, stonework, brickwork, joinery, render and slate. Likewise, the Council will encourage the re-instatement of historically correct traditional features.”*
- Objective AH O43: *“Ensure that national guidelines and the principles of conservation best practice are followed in assessing the significance of a Protected Structure and in considering the impact of proposed development on the character and special interest of the structure, its curtilage, demesne and setting.”*

- Objective AH O65: *“Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions within an ACA are sited and designed appropriately and are not detrimental to the character of the structure or to its setting or the general character of the ACA and are in keeping with any Architectural Conservation Area Statement of Character Guidance Documents prepared for the relevant ACA.”*
- Objective AH O66: *“Ensure that all planning applications for new developments within or immediately contiguous to an ACA include an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment and Design Rationale addressing design considerations such as urban structure and grain, density and mix, scale, height, materials, landscape, views and landmarks and historic development.”*
- Action AH A23: *“Have regard to DHLGH Guidelines and conservation best practice in assessing the character and significance of a historic town or urban area and the formulation of an ACA or in assessing development proposals relating to an ACA.”*
- Action AH A24: *“Require where appropriate that an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment report is prepared in accordance with DHLGH Guidelines and conservation best practice to inform the visual or physical impacts of a proposed development on an ACA.”*

Chapter 5 – Sustainable Mobility and Transport

- Objectives TM O20 and TM O21 relate to permeability for walking and cycling and to pedestrian connections between existing and proposed development.
- Objective TM O20: *“Ensure new development areas are fully permeable for walking and cycling at a minimum, public transport (where appropriate) and provide for filtered permeability for private vehicle access in accordance with the NTA Permeability Best Practice Guide in order to give a competitive advantage to active travel modes for local trip making.”*
- Objective TM O21: *“Ensure site layout proposals detail present and possible future connections to pedestrian/cycle links and improve permeability between*

existing and proposed developments including adjacent developments thereby facilitating the '10-minute settlement' concept."

Chapter 15 – Development Management Standards

Section 15.17.1.2, which deals with development within the curtilage, attendant grounds and setting of protected structures, provides that *"High quality design will be a foremost consideration, with particular emphasis on siting, building lines, proportions, scale, massing, height, roof treatment and materials. This does not preclude innovative contemporary buildings. High quality contemporary interventions will be encouraged over historic pastiche."*

Section 15.17.2 deals with development in Architectural Conservation Areas. It provides that applications for developments in an ACA should have regard to Section 11.18 of the Plan, and that applications for developments in or immediately contiguous to an ACA are required to be accompanied by an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report as described in Appendix B of the 2011 Guidelines. It provides that the Council *"will normally only permit development proposals for new buildings, alterations, extensions and changes of use where the proposal is sympathetic to the special character of the ACA and where the design is appropriate in terms of scale, height, density, layout, materials and finishes having regard to the advice contained within each ACA document"*. In an ACA the Council will have regard to the effect of the development on buildings and the surrounding environment, the impact on the immediate streetscape in terms of design, scale, height, plot, width, roof treatment, materials, landscaping, mix and intensity of use, and the extent to which new alterations and extensions complement existing structures.

Table 15.8 sets out maximum car parking standards. The rate for a community centre or library is one space per 10 sq m of gross floor area and for a church or other place of worship one space per four seats. The Plan states that *"the maximum provision of parking should not be viewed as a target. Lower rates of parking and car-free developments should be considered in the first instance, particularly where such developments are close to and can avail of public transport"* and lists the proximity of the site to the town centre, the potential for linked trips, the nature of the

use, the potential for dual use of parking spaces and proximity to public car parking among the matters to which the Council will have regard.

5.2 Previous Development Plan

Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

This Plan is no longer in force. However, it remains relevant because the previous permission on the site, P.A. Ref. 19/1196, was assessed and granted under it.

Relevant Policies and Objectives

- Policy PS 1: *“Conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained on the Record of Protected Structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.”*
- Policy PS 2: *“Protect the curtilage of protected structures or proposed protected structures and to refuse planning permission for inappropriate development within the curtilage or attendant grounds of a protected structure which would adversely impact on the special character of the protected structure including cause loss of or damage to the special character of the protected structure and loss of or damage to, any structures of architectural heritage value within the curtilage of the protected structure. Any proposed development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds must demonstrate that it is part of an overall strategy for the future conservation of the entire built heritage complex and contributes positively to that aim.”*
- Policy PS 3: *“Require that new works will not obscure views of principal elevations of protected structures.”*
- Policy PS 7: *“Promote best practice and the use of skilled specialist practitioners in the conservation of, and any works to, protected structures. Method statements should make reference to the DAHG Advice Series on how best to repair and maintain historic buildings ...”*
- Policy PS 8: *“Encourage high quality design in relation to planning applications that are made for the construction of extensions or new buildings affecting protected structures or older buildings of architectural merit not included in the RPS.”*

- Policy PS 15: *“Require an Architectural Heritage Assessment Report, as described in Appendix B of the Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DAHG (2011), to accompany all applications involving a protected structure.”*
- Policy PS 16: *“Protect and retain important elements of the built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, landscapes and demesnes, and curtilage features.”*
- Policy ACA 2: *“Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions within an ACA are sited and designed appropriately, and are not detrimental to the character of the structure or to its setting or the general character of the ACA and are in keeping with any Architectural Conservation Area Statement of Character Guidance Documents prepared for the relevant ACA.”*

5.3 Local Area Plan

Kilcock Local Area Plan 2015-2021

Status of Plan

The Local Area Plan states that its period is six years from the date of its adoption, or until it is reviewed or another plan is made, unless it is extended under section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. It was adopted in 2015 and has expired. Under Section 2.11 of the Development Plan as varied, set out above, the planning authority continues to have regard to its provisions, including its land use zoning objectives, until it is replaced. A new Kilcock Settlement Plan is to be prepared for inclusion in Volume 2 of the Development Plan.

Zoning and Site Designations

Under the LAP the site is zoned ‘E – Community and Educational’, with the objective *“To provide for institutional, community and educational facilities.”* The zoning objective provides for *“civic, religious, community and educational facilities including health care, child care, fire station, courthouse, schools, churches, meeting halls and other community facilities, ancillary neighbourhood uses and services.”*

The site is within the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area, shown on Maps 10 and 11 of the Plan.

Relevant Policies and Objectives

The policies and objectives set out below relate to the protection of protected structures and their setting, the character of the Architectural Conservation Area, the conservation of townscape features including stone walls, the protection of views and town landmarks, and the provision of pedestrian routes and shared surfaces in the town core.

- Policy HC 4: *“To maintain and enhance the potential of protected structures and other buildings of architectural/historic merit which contribute to the cultural character and identity of Kilcock.”*
- Policy HC 5: *“To ensure that development proposals do not adversely affect the character of a protected structure or the setting of a protected structure, where the setting is considered to be of importance.”*
- Policy HC 6: *“To require that any alterations or interventions to protected structures are executed to the highest conservation standards in order to protect their significance or value. Applications for development affecting a protected structure shall be accompanied by an assessment carried out in accordance with the Council’s requirements, by an accredited conservation consultant.”*
- Policy HC 13: *“To protect the special interest and character of Kilcock’s Architectural Conservation Area in the development management process.”*
- Policy HC 14: *“To discourage any development that would adversely affect the character of the Architectural Conservation Area, and seek to prevent the demolition or partial demolition of any building or structure within the Architectural Conservation Area that contributes to its character.”*
- Policy HC 15: *“To require new development proposals within the Architectural Conservation Area assimilates sensitively into the existing built fabric and utilises the highest quality materials.”*
- Policy HC 16: *“To require that development proposals within the Architectural Conservation Area appropriately conserves and protects features of the townscape such as stone walls, pillars, piers, stiles, bridges, kerbing, cobbles,*

gates, railings, wells, post-boxes, memorials, milestones, benchmarks, streetlights, manhole covers, ventilation pipes etc.”

- Objective HCO 12: *“To carry out an inventory of the features and structures of significance and prepare a Character Statement of significance for Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area.”*
- Policy SK 3: *“To protect the grain, scale and vitality of the town core.”*
- Policy SK 7: *“To develop a network of safe, clean, attractive pedestrian routes, lanes and cycle ways in order to make the town more coherent, navigable and connected.”*
- Policy SK 8: *“To protect important views and view corridors into, out of and within Kilcock, and to protect existing town landmarks and their prominence.”*
- Objective MTO 17: *“To ensure the development of ‘shared surface’ and similarly passively calmed environments throughout the town core area. Candidate streets for shared surface include but would not be limited to School Street, Church Lane and Mill Lane.”*
- Policy MT 18: *“To consider the relaxation of normal road and car parking standards where compatible with road safety within the Architectural Conservation Zone, to retain its attractive townscape quality.”*

5.4 National Guidance

Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)

The Guidelines are issued by the Minister under section 52 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and are the principal national guidance on the assessment of development affecting protected structures and Architectural Conservation Areas. Planning authorities and the Commission are required to have regard to them. Chapter 13 addresses the curtilage and attendant grounds of a protected structure and Chapter 3 addresses development within Architectural Conservation Areas. Appendix B sets out the content of an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment report. The following paragraphs are of particular relevance.

Paragraph 13.5.1: *“Proposals for new development within the curtilage of a protected structure should be carefully scrutinised by the planning authority, as inappropriate development will be detrimental to the character of the structure.”*

Paragraph 13.5.2: *“Where a formal relationship exists between a protected structure and its ancillary buildings or features, new construction which interrupts that relationship should rarely be permitted ... Similarly, the relationship between the protected structure and the street should not be damaged. New works should not adversely impact on views of the principal elevations of the protected structure.”*

Paragraph 13.6.1 addresses features within the attendant grounds of a protected structure and explains that designed landscapes forming the attendant grounds may form part of a unified design concept, in which the landscape and the structures are complementary and interdependent.

Paragraph 13.8.2: *“New development both adjacent to, and at a distance from, a protected structure can affect its character and special interest and impact on it in a variety of ways ... Alternatively, it may take the form of a new structure within the attendant grounds of the protected structure.”* Paragraph 13.8.3 provides that the extent of the potential impact will depend on the location of the new works, the character and quality of the protected structure, its designed landscape and its setting, and the character and quality of the ACA, and that proposals *“should not have an adverse effect on the special interest of the protected structure or the character of an ACA”*.

Paragraph 3.10.1 deals with new buildings in an Architectural Conservation Area. It provides that where there is an existing mixture of style *“a high standard of contemporary design that respects the character of the area should be encouraged”*, that the scale of new structures *“should be appropriate to the general scale of the area and not its biggest buildings”*, and that the palette of materials and typical details should generally reinforce the area’s character.

5.4 Natural Heritage Designations

The site is not located within or adjacent to any European site or (proposed) Natural Heritage Area. It is located c. 113 m north of the Royal Canal pNHA (Site Code: 002103). The closest European site is the Rye Water Valley/Carlton SAC (Site Code: 001398), located c. 6.3 km to the east.

6.0 EIA Screening

The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendices of this report). The proposed development is of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but is sub-threshold being a Class 10(b)(iv) 'Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere'. Having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required

7.0 The Appeal

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

A first party appeal was received by the Commission on 12 May 2026. The grounds are summarised as follows.

- **The scheme is a re-submission of a permitted development.** The application is a re-submission of the development permitted under Reg. Ref. 19/1196. That permission was not implemented because of delays caused by Covid-19 which began shortly after the permission was granted and because of the time taken to raise parish and community funds which are now in place.
- **Loss of the ability to extend the permission.** The permission would have been extended, as would have been possible historically but for recent changes which now prevent this.
- **The consequences of the refusal.** Significant and costly work on design development and fundraising has been undertaken since the planning authority consented to the proposals. The planning authority has had no

regard to this. It is disappointing that an outright refusal issued instead of a request for further information which would have allowed the concerns to be discussed and addressed.

- **The objectives relied on are not new.** Objectives AH O21, AH O31, AH O32 and AH O65 are referred to in the decision as if they were new policy. They are not. They are redrafted statements of policy which rely on the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), which have been the national policy basis for local authority heritage decisions since 2011. Paragraph 13.5.1 of those Guidelines already required that development within the curtilage of a protected structure be carefully scrutinised. The previous Conservation Officer was well acquainted with that guidance when he recommended that the scheme be granted. The current interpretation seeks to preclude development to the side of a protected structure.
- **Massing and siting.** The building is diminutive. It has been deliberately set back from the front building line, which is formed by the tower and not by the nave, which is recessed behind it. Its height and canted roof mean that it cannot obscure and is barely visible in views from Church Street.
- **Views.** The suggestion that views will be obscured is misleading and a mischaracterisation of the proposals. It is disproved by the verified photomontages and photographs submitted with the application, which the Architectural Conservation Officer did not address and to which the CO made no reference. The setting assessment in the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment, which qualifies the significance of the setting to the front and to the side and of the views towards the church, was not addressed or responded to by the Architectural Conservation Officer.
- **The side elevation is not a principal elevation.** There is only one principal elevation to the church, which is to the front. Views towards it are of primary significance. The side and rear elevations are secondary. The side elevation is already obscured by the modern planting scheme, by the grotto and by the Shalom building. The low height of the proposed building means that more of that elevation, the clerestory and the roofs will be visible when the works are

complete. The suggestion that a side elevation of a church is a principal elevation is incorrect, and the consequence of that interpretation, that any development which obscures it is precluded, conflicts with Departmental guidance.

- **The boundary wall.** The comment on the boundary wall is a mischaracterisation. The wall was originally much higher and of random rubble limestone but has been covered in cement, which diminishes the character of the boundary as it presents itself on Church Street. It is proposed to remove that cement and reveal the original stone along Church Street and Mill Lane. Sections have been proposed for removal in order to enhance and make safe the public realm at an important junction. The comment is arbitrary and fails to recognise those proposals.
- **Design and materials.** The architectural approach is not a 20th century modern one. It rejects concrete, steel and glass and uses sustainable, locally sourced material. The coursing of the large blocks, some split-faced and some dressed, expresses its stone construction. The building requires privacy and functionality; it is not a transparent pavilion. Transparency is provided by the atrium at the entrance on Mill Lane, which frames the secondary side entrance porch. The specimen trees are retained and hedging is introduced, both of which the Architectural Conservation Officer ignored. The building will be constructed of many stones with different dressings and faces and cannot be considered any more monolithic than the church itself.
- **Precedent.** There are numerous precedents for the development of protected structures at their secondary elevations since the 2011 Guidelines, including St Sylvester's Parish Centre in Malahide, the parish centre to the side of Donnybrook Church, and the extension adapting the Medieval Mile in Kilkenny.
- **Conclusion.** The appellant asks the Commission to review the process followed by the planning authority, which conflicts with the principle of good planning. Work was done in good faith and funds put in place on the basis of the previous consent. The assessment of the proposals, which ignored the

possibility of a further information request, was wholly inadequate and included statements about the proposal which are not true.

Appendix II of the appeal contains letters of support: from Fr George Augustine PP dated 12 May 2026, describing the community need, the fundraising of approximately €360,000 already raised, and the public safety benefit of a pedestrian route to Scoil Chóca Naofa; from Linda Daly, Principal of Scoil Chóca Naofa, dated 11 May 2026, describing the school's position at the end of a narrow cul-de-sac, the long-standing use of the church grounds as a safe pedestrian route, and the loss of the alternative route through the neighbouring Shalom property following its sale; and a joint letter of 8 May 2026 from Minister James Lawless TD, Councillor Paul Ward and Councillor Donna Phelan supporting the development.

7.2. Planning Authority Response

The planning authority responded on 9 June 2026. It confirms its decision and asks the Commission to refer to the Planner's Report and to the technical department reports.

7.3. Observations

None.

7.4. Further Responses

None.

8.0 Assessment

- 8.1.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the appeal, the reports of the local authority, and having inspected the site, and having regard to the relevant local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the substantive issues in this appeal to be considered are as follows:

- Zoning and the principle of development

- Impact on the protected structure, its setting and the Architectural Conservation Area
- Archaeology
- Trees and landscaping
- Traffic, access and car parking
- Services, surface water and other matters
- Material Contravention

8.2. Zoning and the principle of development

- 8.2.1. The site is zoned 'E – Community and Educational' under the Kilcock Local Area Plan 2015-2021. The Local Area Plan has expired. Under Section 2.11 of the Development Plan, as inserted by Variation No. 3, the planning authority will have regard to the provisions of an expired Local Area Plan, including its land use zoning objectives, until it is replaced. The Local Area Plan is not a statutory plan in force, but it remains the source of the land use zoning for the town and it indicates the Council's approach in Kilcock. I have had regard to it on that basis. A new Kilcock Settlement Plan is to be prepared for Volume 2 of the Development Plan.
- 8.2.2. The zoning objective is to provide for institutional, community and educational facilities and expressly includes religious and community facilities and meeting halls. A pastoral centre serving the adjoining church is such a use. The planning authority accepted the principle of the development and so did the Architectural Conservation Officer.
- 8.2.3. The proposal is also supported by Objectives SC O6 and SC O8 of the Development Plan, which seek to protect and enhance existing community facilities and to ensure that communities have access to multifunctional community centres providing a focal point for community activities. Kilcock is a Self-Sustaining Town with a growing population and the parish, the school and the local public representatives have all identified a need for a facility of this kind.
- 8.2.4. I am satisfied that the principle of the development is acceptable.

8.3. Impact on the protected structure, its setting and the Architectural Conservation Area

- 8.3.1. The reason for refusal relates to two aspects of the development. The first is the impact of the siting, scale and massing of the pastoral centre on the protected structure, its setting and the Architectural Conservation Area. The second is the removal of a section of the boundary wall.
- 8.3.2. The first aspect of the reason for refusal is that the development, by reason of its siting, scale, massing and monolithic block form within the constrained curtilage of the church, would obscure the south-west (front) and south-east (side) principal elevations when viewed from Church Street and Mill Lane. The objectives relied on are AH O21, AH O32 and AH O65.
- 8.3.3. The same development was permitted on this site under P.A. Ref. 19/1196. The description of development is word for word the same. The floor area, the siting, the height, the form and the materials are the same. The Design Report, the archaeological assessment, the arboricultural assessment and the engineer's report submitted with this application are the 2019 documents. The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment is the report of October 2019, re-titled and re-dated February 2026; I have compared the two documents and the assessment appears unchanged. The architectural drawings have been re-issued dated November 2025 but no revisions are evident on any of them. The development before the Commission is the development that was permitted in 2019.
- 8.3.4. That permission was granted under the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023. I have compared the current policies and objectives with the policies under the previous Plan. AH O31 was previously PS 16 and both name stone walls. AH O65 was previously ACA 2 and is near identical to it. AH O21 and AH O32 were previously PS 2 and PS 3.
- 8.3.5. As suggested by the appellant, paragraph 13.5.2 of the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines has provided since 2011 that the relationship between a protected structure and the street should not be damaged and that new works should not adversely impact on views of its principal elevations, and paragraphs 13.8.2 and 13.8.3 have addressed the effect of new development on setting since the same date. Neither Plan contains any objective directed at grottos or other devotional structures, and neither contains any requirement to retain curtilage features of a particular period beyond the requirements of AH O31 and PS 16.

- 8.3.6. It is also understood that no local policy has changed. Policies HC 13 to HC 16 of the Kilcock Local Area Plan were in force in 2019 and remain the Council's stated approach today. The Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area was designated then and is designated now in Section 11.18 of the Development Plan.
- 8.3.7. The Conservation Officer's (CO) report relating to P.A. 19/1196 gave their reasons by reference to PS 2, PS 3, PS 15 and PS 16, among others. The CO had no objection subject to six conservation conditions. The assessment on that application was in the Planner's Report which concluded that the pastoral centre was subservient to the church and would not have a negative visual impact on its architectural merit or on its surroundings.
- 8.3.8. The reasons for the departure from the previous decision, on a largely unchanged scheme and under a policy framework that has not materially changed are not clear. The report of the Architectural Conservation Officer does not mention the previous permission. The Planner's Report records it and indicates that it was permitted under the previous Development Plan but neither report identifies any significant change in policy.
- 8.3.9. The following provides an assessment of the key aspects of the reasoning for refusal.

Siting

- 8.3.10. The Architectural Conservation Officer's objection is that the building extends forward of the nave, aligns with the south-west façade of the tower and should be set significantly further back. Drawing A638-1201 shows the front wall of the pastoral centre approximately on the line of the tower with the nave recessed behind it. The appellant's response is that the tower, not the nave, is the front building line of the church. I consider that the tower is the forward element of the church on the Church Street side and the nave is set back behind it. The new building does not come forward of the church as a whole and it does not encroach on the forecourt or on the front setting.

Scale and massing

- 8.3.11. The building is single storey. Its maximum height is 5.49 metres at the front and it falls to 2.58 metres at the rear. The nave of the church is a double-height volume

with a clerestory and the tower rises well above it. The pastoral centre sits along the boundary wall below the eaves of the church and reads as an ancillary structure. I do not accept that its massing would have a significant negative effect on the protected structure.

Form and materials

- 8.3.12. The Architectural Conservation Officer describes the form as monolithic and recommends a lighter and more visually permeable treatment. The building is to be constructed in structural limestone in two finishes, the same material as the church, with a glazed atrium at the Mill Lane entrance framing the side porch. Section 15.17.1.2 of the Development Plan states that the requirement for high-quality design does not preclude innovative contemporary buildings and that high quality contemporary interventions will be encouraged over historic pastiche. Paragraph 3.10.1 of the 2011 Guidelines encourages a high standard of contemporary design where there is an existing mixture of style. Having regard to the Gothic Revival church, the Gothic Revival former convent and the cottages on Mill Lane, I am satisfied that the design is of a high standard and that it is appropriate to the Architectural Conservation Area.

Views

- 8.3.13. The impact on views forms part of the first aspect of the reason for refusal. The reason states that the development would obscure the south-west (front) and south-east (side) principal elevations when viewed from Church Street and Mill Lane respectively.
- 8.3.14. The application is accompanied by photomontages prepared by Digital Dimensions, drawings A638-1301 to A638-1309, dated 29 April 2025. Four of them, A638-1306 to A638-1309 are the enlarged perspective views that were submitted with the 2019 application re-dated. Drawings A638-1301 to A638-1305 are new. They are verified photomontages which include the existing view with the proposed view from four viewpoints with a view of the proposed south entrance. The report of the Architectural Conservation Officer does not refer to them. The Planner's Report includes one of them in their report, showing the proposed corner of Church Street and Mill Lane but does not assess it. The following provides an examination of the views provided.

- 8.3.15. View B is taken from Church Street to the front of the main gates. That is the view which the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment identifies as the most significant view of the church and it is the view of the principal elevation. In the proposed view the front elevation, the porch and the tower are unchanged. The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment states that a small section of the pastoral centre will be visible above the hedge line at the entrance. On the photomontage it is barely discernible and it does not affect the reading of the church.
- 8.3.16. View A is taken from Church Street at its junction with Bridge Street, to the south-west. The tower is visible above the trees in the existing view and is equally visible in the proposed view. The proposed view also shows the works at the corner, where the section of wall to be removed makes way for a widened footpath, a new pedestrian entrance to the church grounds and a seating area at the junction. I am satisfied that this element of the proposal is acceptable and that it would improve the public realm at this junction.
- 8.3.17. View C is taken from inside the grounds at the front gates. The front elevation and the tower are unchanged, and a small part of the roof of the pastoral centre appears above new hedge planting to the right. Until such time as the hedging matures to that illustrated in the image, it is at this location and closer to the church building that the development will be most visible. A building of this size within the grounds of the church will be seen from within those grounds. However, I am satisfied that its scale and design are respectful of the church.
- 8.3.18. Based on the photomontages provided and on the elevational drawings, I do not agree with the planning authority that the development would obscure the front elevation of the church from Church Street.
- 8.3.19. View D is taken from the south-east, from Church Lane close to its junction with Mill Lane, looking towards the church. In the existing view the eastern side of the church is largely screened by a mature tree and by other planting. In the proposed view the pastoral centre appears as a low stone building in front of the church, with the glazed atrium framing the side porch. Trees and vegetation will be removed and the tower and the roof of the nave are more visible than they are at present.
- 8.3.20. I do not consider that the side elevation is a principal elevation, particularly based on the surrounding built context. The axial nature of the building results in the principal

elevation being to the south-west, addressed by the gates, the forecourt and Church Street. Objective AH O32 protects established views of principal elevations. The south-east elevation faces a narrow lane, is already screened by planting and by the grotto and is not aligned with either Mill Lane or Church Lane. I do not accept the characterisation of it as a principal elevation and I agree with the appellant that treating it as one would mean that limited development could be built to this side of the church.

- 8.3.21. From Mill Lane itself the building will be seen along the boundary. That is the substantial change to the church and associated curtilage and the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment acknowledges this assessing the impact on Mill Lane as moderate and positive. Mill Lane is at present a narrow lane. The proposal exposes and repoints the stonework of the wall, provides a pedestrian route inside the boundary and places a low stone building behind it. On balance it is acceptable and would not adversely affect the protected structure or its curtilage.
- 8.3.22. The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment states that the setting of the church has already been substantially altered. The boundary wall has been reduced in height and rendered in cement, the front entrance arrangement was altered after the 1970s and the grounds were planted in the 1990s. The proposals suggest reversing part of that. The render of the wall will be removed, the stonework repointed and left exposed as it was historically, and limestone paving will replace part of the tarmacadam forecourt.
- 8.3.23. Taking the development as a whole, I am satisfied that it would not adversely affect the setting of the protected structure, would not obscure established views of its principal elevation and would not be detrimental to the character of the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area. It aligns with the objectives of the Development Plan which protect the curtilage and setting of protected structures, protect established views of their principal elevations, encourage high quality design in new buildings affecting them, and require development within an Architectural Conservation Area to be sited and designed so as not to be detrimental to the character of the area. It aligns also with the policies of the Local Area Plan which protect the setting of protected structures, protect the special interest and character of the Architectural Conservation Area, require new development to assimilate

sensitively into the existing built fabric and protect important views and town landmarks.

8.4. Removal of the boundary wall

- 8.4.1. The second aspect of the reason is that the extent of stone wall to be removed is excessive, contrary to Objective AH O31. This relates to the comments of the Architectural Conservation Officer, who accepted the partial removal of the wall for pedestrian access in principle but considered the extent of removal excessive and said the opening should be reduced to a pedestrian-scaled access point. It did not form part of the reason the CO recommended. The planning authority included it as part of its reason for refusal.
- 8.4.2. Objective AH O31 is to protect the designed landscapes associated with protected structures and to retain important elements of the built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, pathways and avenues within the curtilage and attendant grounds. Policy HC 16 of the Local Area Plan requires development in the Architectural Conservation Area appropriately to conserve and protect townscape features such as stone walls.
- 8.4.3. I do not agree with the planning authority's refusal which references the site as being a designed landscape associated with the Protected Structure. Although generally attractive and well laid out, the grounds comprise a tarmacadam forecourt, a lawn and relatively recent planting. The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment suggests that they have no particular significance. The wall is a roadside boundary wall. The AHIA suggests that it has been reduced from its original height, rendered in cement and given a cement capping. In its present condition its contribution to the setting of the church and to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area is limited. The historic photograph from the Eason collection reproduced in the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment shows the wall at approximately twice its present height and in exposed rubble.
- 8.4.4. Two openings are proposed. The first is the widening of the existing pedestrian entrance onto Mill Lane to 6 metres. It is understood that entrance is formed in blockwork with modern concrete-capped piers and is a late 20th century insertion so its widening involves no loss of historic fabric. A further length of wall alongside it is to be taken down and rebuilt after the pastoral centre is constructed.

- 8.4.5. The second opening is at the Church Street and Mill Lane corner.
- 8.4.6. The purpose of the corner opening is to widen the public footpath at a tight bend, to form a seating area at the junction and to provide a pedestrian route through the church grounds towards Scoil Chóca Naofa. The Principal of the school states that the school lies at the end of a narrow cul-de-sac, that the parish has for many years allowed pupils and parents to walk through the church grounds, and that the alternative route through the neighbouring Shalom property has been closed following its sale. There is a narrow footpath on Mill Lane with limited usage for purposes of students attending Scoil Chóca Naofa. I consider that to be of immediate public benefit.
- 8.4.7. The proposal is also supported by policy. Objective MTO 17 of the Local Area Plan seeks shared surface and passively calmed environments in the town core and names Church Lane and Mill Lane as candidate streets. Policy SK 7 seeks a network of safe, attractive pedestrian routes and lanes to make the town more coherent and connected. Objectives TM O20 and TM O21 of the Development Plan require development to be fully permeable for walking and cycling and require site layouts to detail present and future pedestrian connections and to improve permeability, so as to facilitate the ten-minute settlement concept. The pedestrian route through the church grounds aligns with these policies.
- 8.4.8. On balance the loss of a length of a reduced and cement-rendered boundary wall is regrettable. However, it is considered a modest loss. It is compared against the removal of the cement render from the remainder of the wall, the repointing and exposure of the original stonework and a safer pedestrian environment at a junction which at present has limited pedestrian infrastructure. The proposals conserve and protect the wall in the manner that Objective AH O31 and Policy HC 16 intend. I do not consider that the extent of removal is excessive.
- 8.4.9. If permission is granted, the Commission may consider that it may be appropriate for a condition requiring the extent of wall to be removed at each location to be agreed in writing with the planning authority before development commences, together with conditions requiring the salvage and reuse of the stone, the careful taking down and rebuilding of the section alongside the Mill Lane entrance, and the supervision of all works to the wall by a conservation-accredited practitioner.

8.5. Removal of the grotto

- 8.5.1. The removal of the grotto forms part of the description of development but no part of the reason for refusal. Neither the Architectural Conservation Officer nor the Heritage Officer objected to it and the planning authority did not raise it. There is no objective in the Development Plan, in the previous Development Plan or in the Local Area Plan directed at grottos, shrines or other devotional structures.
- 8.5.2. The grotto is a single-cell structure of cemented random rubble with a domed roof. The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment dates it from cartographic evidence to between 1909 and 1939, the 1939 Ordnance Survey map being the first record of it. It is not referred to in the NIAH record for the church. It is set behind trees and shrubs and is not visible in any significant view within the Architectural Conservation Area.
- 8.5.3. Policy HC 14 of the Local Area Plan seeks to prevent the demolition or partial demolition of any structure within the Architectural Conservation Area that contributes to its character. This structure does not significantly contribute to the character of the area. Its loss is regrettable in the sense that any loss of a devotional structure in the grounds of a church is regrettable but I do not consider it to be of architectural significance and it is positioned where the new building and the widened pedestrian entrance are proposed.
- 8.5.4. The 2019 Conservation Officer required a survey at a suitable large scale and a photographic record of the grotto before demolition. I consider this to be the correct approach and I recommend a condition requiring this.

8.6. **Archaeology**

- 8.6.1. The church and graveyard are a recorded monument, RMP KD005-002---, and the medieval font inside the church is a separate recorded monument, RMP KD005-029. The application was accompanied by an Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment by Rubicon Heritage Services. That report found that the grotto is of no archaeological significance but that there is moderate potential for sub-surface archaeological features or artefacts, and it set out a mitigation strategy.
- 8.6.2. The Heritage Officer and the Development Applications Unit of the Department conclude similar. Both have no objection subject to archaeological monitoring of all

groundworks, with provision for the investigation and recording of any material encountered and for a report on the results. That is the same conclusion as in the application under Reg. Ref. 19/1196. I recommend a condition accordingly.

8.7. Trees and landscaping

- 8.7.1. The Arboricultural Assessment records 28 trees on the site. Twelve are to be removed, amounting to 42.8 per cent of the stock. The summary table in that report states that those twelve comprise seven of moderate quality and five of low quality, and records two trees of the best quality, grade A, neither of which is to be removed. The report includes root protection areas, protective fencing details and a method statement.
- 8.7.2. Drawing A638-1218, Proposed Landscape Layout, dated November 2025, forms part of the Proposed Plans, Sections and Elevations.
- 8.7.3. The loss of 12 trees from a small urban site is not insignificant. The trees shown for retention on the tree retention plan include the specimen trees on the Church Street frontage, and new hedge planting is proposed along the Mill Lane boundary and around the front lawn. The verified views show the effect of that planting. There is no doubt that the building will be visible along Mill Lane once the trees are removed and it is built. On balance I consider the tree removal and the replacement planting acceptable subject to conditions requiring arboricultural supervision and the implementation of the landscape layout.

8.8. Traffic, access and car parking

- 8.8.1. The Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces Department sought further information on six matters. The planning authority did not pursue them and refused permission on heritage grounds.
- 8.8.2. There is no change to the vehicular entrance off Church Street and no additional vehicular access is proposed. The works at the Church Street and Mill Lane corner widen the public footpath at a tight bend and improve visibility for road users. The pedestrian route through the grounds to the school removes the need to walk on the carriageway of Mill Lane. Objective MTO 17 of the Local Area Plan and Objectives TM O20 and TM O21 of the Development Plan support that. I am satisfied that the development would improve rather than harm pedestrian safety in this area.

- 8.8.3. No car parking is proposed. Table 15.8 of the Development Plan sets maximum, not minimum, standards and the Plan states that the maximum provision should not be viewed as a target and that lower rates of parking and car-free development should be considered in the first instance, having regard among other things to the proximity of the site to the town centre, the potential for linked trips, the nature of the use and the potential for dual use of parking. Policy MT 18 of the Local Area Plan provides for the relaxation of normal road and car parking standards within what it calls the Architectural Conservation Zone, where this is compatible with road safety, in order to retain the attractive townscape quality of the area.
- 8.8.4. The pastoral centre is in the town core, adjoins the church it serves and is to be used ancillary to it. It will largely serve the same congregation. No car parking layout is shown on the drawings and the application documents do not identify where those attending the church park at present. Parking standards for a community centre would allow a maximum of 32 spaces. Car parking on that scale, or anything approaching it, could not be provided in the forecourt or elsewhere within the curtilage without adversely affecting the setting of the protected structure and the character of the Architectural Conservation Area. Having regard to the location within the town centre with existing on-street car parking and to ensure protection of the Protected Structure, I do not consider that additional car parking is warranted in this instance.
- 8.8.5. Condition 2 of P.A. Ref. 19/1196 restricted the parish centre to a use ancillary to the main church and prohibited commercial, industrial and residential use. A use ancillary to the church would include the parish and community activities for which the centre is intended. I recommend a condition in similar terms.
- 8.8.6. Cycle parking, electric vehicle charging provision where any parking is provided, and a construction management plan dealing with construction traffic on Mill Lane and Church Street are all matters that can be dealt with by condition.

8.9. **Services, surface water and other matters**

- 8.9.1. The development would connect to the existing public water main, the public foul sewer and the public surface water system. Water Services has no objection subject to seven conditions dealing with sustainable drainage, and relies on the strategy in the Engineer's Report of August 2019. The Environment Section has no objection

subject to four conditions dealing with foul drainage, dust and noise control, waste management and construction noise limits. The Maynooth Municipal District Engineer has no objection subject to four conditions dealing with drainage, spoil, storage of materials and relocation of services. The Fire Service has no objection; a Fire Safety Certificate is required under the Building Control Acts and is not a matter for a planning condition.

8.9.2. No report was received from Uisce Éireann. The development is a small extension of an existing connected use in the town core and no capacity issue has been raised by any party. On Reg. Ref. 19/1196 Irish Water had no objection. I do not consider that the absence of a report precludes a grant of permission.

8.9.3. The site is not in a flood zone and there are no records of flooding at the site.

8.9.4. The development is exempt from development contributions under the Council's scheme as was recorded on Reg. Ref. 19/1196. That is a matter for the planning authority.

8.10. Material Contravention

8.10.1. The planning authority refused permission on the basis that the proposed development would materially contravene Objectives AH O21, AH O31, AH O32 and AH O65 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

8.10.2. Having regard to the assessment undertaken in this report, I am satisfied that the proposed development is in compliance with the relevant provisions of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, including those relating to protected structures, their curtilage and setting, to Architectural Conservation Areas and to the provision of community facilities.

8.10.3. While I note the terms of the reason for refusal, I am not satisfied that the proposed development would give rise to any material contravention of the Development Plan or of the relevant national guidelines. The provisions of section 37(2)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 are not required to be engaged. I consider the proposed development is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

9.0 AA Screening

I have considered the proposed pastoral centre within the grounds of St Coca's Parish Church, Church Street, Kilcock, Co. Kildare in light of the requirements of section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The site is located within the town centre of Kilcock. It is not within or adjacent to any European site.

The European site closest to the appeal site is:

- Rye Water Valley/Cartron SAC (Site Code: 001398) – c. 6.3 km to the east.

There are no water features within the appeal site. Foul drainage from the development would discharge to the public foul sewer and surface water to the public surface water network, incorporating sustainable drainage measures.

The proposed development comprises a single storey pastoral centre of 315 sq m within the grounds of an existing church in a serviced town centre, together with the demolition of a 20th century grotto, the removal of two sections of a roadside boundary wall and associated site works. No concerns about impacts on European sites were raised by any party. The planning authority screened the development and concluded that there was no potential for significant effects on any European site.

Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any effect on a European site. The reasons for this conclusion are as follows:

- the small scale and nature of the proposed development, within the grounds of an existing serviced building in a town centre;
- the distance between the appeal site and the nearest European site and the absence of any direct connection to it;
- the screening determination by the planning authority.

I conclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Likely significant effects are excluded and

therefore Appropriate Assessment under section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, is not required.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

An assessment of the proposed development has been carried out in accordance with Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive and relevant EPA guidance, including best practice in sustainable drainage design.

The development incorporates appropriate surface water management measures. These measures ensure that there will be no increase in pollutant loading, no alteration of the receiving waterbody's hydrological regime, and no risk of deterioration in water quality or ecological status. Any residual risks identified during the assessment are capable of being addressed through standard mitigation measures and best practice construction management,.

The proposed development will not impact on the achievement of environmental objectives for any water body and is therefore considered compliant with the requirements of Article 4.

11.0 Recommendation

I recommend that permission be Granted for the reasons and considerations set out below and subject to the conditions set out below.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the location of the site within Kilcock town core, to the provisions of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 relating to protected structures and to Architectural Conservation Areas, to the objectives of that Plan supporting community facilities and pedestrian permeability, and to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), the provision of a pastoral centre serving the adjoining church is considered acceptable in principle.

Having regard to its impact on the protected structure and the Architectural Conservation Area, account has been taken of the single storey scale, form and stone construction of the building, of its position below the eaves of the church, of

the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment and photomontages submitted, and of the proposals to expose and repoint the stonework of the roadside boundary wall. It is considered that the development would not adversely affect the setting or character of the protected structure, would not obscure established views of its principal elevation and would not detract from the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.

The development would also improve the public realm at the junction of Church Street and Mill Lane and would provide a pedestrian route from Church Street through the church grounds to Scoil Chóca Naofa, increasing permeability within the town core. It would be acceptable in terms of traffic and pedestrian safety and adequately serviced. The proposed development would therefore be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The pastoral centre shall be used as a facility ancillary to the adjoining church and for community purposes only. It shall not be used for commercial, industrial or residential purposes. Any change of use shall be the subject of a separate application for planning permission.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, to regulate the use of the development, and in the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3. Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall submit for the written agreement of the planning authority drawings at a scale of not less than 1:50 showing the precise extent of the boundary wall to be removed at (a) the junction of Church Street and Mill Lane and (b) the existing pedestrian entrance onto Mill Lane,

together with the profile and detailing of the new wall ends at each opening. The extent of removal shall be the minimum necessary to provide the pedestrian access, seating area and footpath widening proposed, and shall not exceed the extents shown on the drawings lodged with the application.

Reason: To control the extent of removal of the roadside boundary wall, in the interest of protecting the setting of the protected structure and the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.

4. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit for the written agreement of the planning authority:

(a) confirmation that the development will be monitored by a suitably qualified architect with conservation expertise and accreditation, and that competent site supervision, project management and crafts personnel, suitably qualified and experienced in conservation works, will be engaged;

(b) a detailed method statement covering all works to be carried out within the curtilage of the protected structure, to include a full specification of materials and methods to ensure that the works are carried out in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities and current conservation practice, the removal by hand of the cement render and capping from the retained boundary walls and the repointing of the stonework in lime mortar, the salvage, storage and re-use of the stone arising from the sections of wall to be removed, the taking down and rebuilding of the section of wall alongside the Mill Lane entrance, and the methodology for recording and retaining any concealed features or fabric exposed during the works; and

(c) samples of the stone, mortar and workmanship proposed for the new building and for the repair of the boundary walls.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of architectural heritage, in accordance with the provisions of the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

5. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall make a record of the areas of the protected structure and its curtilage affected by the development

and of the structures to be removed. The record shall comprise (a) a full set of survey drawings, to include elevations, plans and sections of the grotto and of the sections of boundary wall to be removed, and (b) a detailed, labelled photographic survey of those structures and of the curtilage. A copy of this record shall be submitted to the planning authority prior to commencement of development and to the Irish Architectural Archive.

Reason: In order to establish a record of this protected structure and in the interest of the protection of architectural heritage.

6. The developer shall engage a suitably qualified, licence-eligible archaeologist to monitor, under licence under the National Monuments Acts, all site clearance, demolition, topsoil stripping and groundworks associated with the development. Prior to the commencement of such works the archaeologist shall consult with, and forward a method statement for the written agreement of, the planning authority and the National Monuments Service. Should archaeological remains be identified in the course of monitoring, all works shall cease in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of the planning authority, in consultation with the National Monuments Service, as to appropriate mitigation, and the developer shall facilitate the archaeologist in recording any remains identified. Following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation analysis, the planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of the monitoring and of any subsequent investigative work. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation, either in situ or by record, of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.

7. (a) The site shall be landscaped in accordance with a comprehensive scheme of landscaping, details of which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This scheme shall include the following: (i) a plan to a scale of not less than 1:200 showing existing trees, hedgerows and stone walls, specifying which are proposed for retention as features of the site landscaping, and the measures to be put in place for the protection of these landscape features during the construction period; (ii) the

species, variety, number, size and locations of all proposed trees, shrubs and hedging; (iii) hard landscaping works, specifying surfacing materials, furniture and finished levels; and (iv) details of any external lighting proposed, including the location, type, height, intensity and direction of all fittings and the measures proposed to avoid light spill onto the protected structure and onto adjoining property.

(b) All tree removal, tree protection and landscaping works shall be carried out under the supervision of a suitably qualified arboriculturist and in accordance with the arboricultural method statement contained in the Arboricultural Assessment submitted with the application. Prior to commencement of development, all trees and hedges which are to be retained shall be enclosed within protective fencing, and no plant, materials, spoil or fuel shall be stored, and no fires lit, within the fenced areas.

(c) All planting shall be adequately protected from damage until established. Any plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased within a period of five years from the completion of the development shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and biodiversity and in order to protect the setting of the protected structure and the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.

8. (a) Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit for the written agreement of the planning authority details of the pedestrian route through the church grounds between the new entrance at the junction of Church Street and Mill Lane and the entrance onto Mill Lane. The details shall include surfacing materials, levels, boundary treatment and the arrangements for the management and maintenance of the route and for its availability for public use. The route shall be provided before the development is brought into use. (b) Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit for the written agreement of the planning authority details of the widened public footpath and the seating area proposed at the junction of Church Street and Mill Lane, including surfacing materials, kerbing, levels and the treatment of the interface with the public road. These works shall be carried out at the developer's expense and shall be completed before the development is brought into use. (c) Secure cycle parking shall be provided within the site. Details of the number, location, type and finish of the cycle parking shall be submitted to, and

agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to the commencement of development.

Reason: In the interest of pedestrian safety and permeability, to secure the public realm improvement proposed, and to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport.

9. (a) All foul sewage and soiled water shall be discharged to the public foul sewer. (b) Only clean, uncontaminated storm water shall be discharged to the surface water drainage system. (c) Drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services.

Reason: In the interest of public health.

10. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit for the written agreement of the planning authority a Construction Management Plan, which shall be adhered to during construction. The plan shall provide details of the intended construction practice for the development, including, noise and dust management measures, the routing, parking and management of construction traffic having regard to the width of Mill Lane and Church Street, the location of the site compound and of areas for the storage of plant, materials and deliveries, measures to prevent the deposit of spoil, dirt or debris on the public road and footpath, the protection of the retained boundary walls and of the trees to be retained, the maintenance of pedestrian access to the church and to Scoil Chóca Naofa during the works, and the management and off-site disposal of construction and demolition waste in accordance with a Resource and Waste Management Plan prepared under the EPA Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects (2021). Any damage caused to the public footpath, kerb or carriageway in the course of construction shall be made good at the developer's expense.

Reason: In the interest of public safety, the amenities of property in the vicinity, the protection of architectural heritage and the proper management of waste.

11. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Friday inclusive, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times

will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

Reason: In order to safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.

12. Development Contribution: The developer shall pay to the Planning Authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the Planning Authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the Planning Authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the Planning Authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Coimisiún Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under Section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.”

David Freeland
Planning Inspector

02/09/2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-501321-KE-26
Proposed Development Summary	Construction of pastoral centre
Development Address	St Coca's Parish Church, Church Street, Kilcock, Co. Kildare
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA?	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2. ☐ No, No further action required.
1. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1.	NA
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
☐ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	NA
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	NA
☒ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)	10(b)(iv): Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.
3. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes ☐	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No ☒	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2: Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	PL-501321-KE-26
Proposed Development Summary	The proposed development includes the construction of a single storey limestone pastoral centre of 315 square metres to the south of the existing limestone church, the removal of the existing 20th century grotto, the removal of a section of existing boundary wall and all associated site development works.
Development Address	St Coca's Parish Church, Church Street, Kilcock, Co. Kildare
This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
Characteristics of proposed development (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).	The proposed development comprises the construction of a single storey pastoral centre of 315 square metres within the grounds of St Coca's Church, a protected structure, to provide a hall, an entrance hall with a glazed atrium, a reception, a display area, an office, a meeting room and welfare facilities. It also provides for the removal of the 20th century grotto, the removal of two sections of the roadside boundary wall to widen the existing pedestrian entrance onto Mill Lane and to form a new pedestrian entrance, seating area and widened public footpath at the junction of Church Street and Mill Lane, and connections to the public water, foul and surface water networks. The site has a stated area of 0.388 hectares and is located in the town core of Kilcock. Demolition works comprise the grotto and two sections of the roadside boundary wall. The works are confined to the grounds of the existing church, and 12 of the 28 trees on the site are to be removed. Construction would be short-term and small in scale and would not require the use of substantial natural resources. The building would be constructed in native structural limestone. Surface water would be managed on site in accordance with the sustainable drainage strategy submitted with the application and discharged to the public surface water network. Foul drainage would discharge to the public foul sewer. The development comes forward as a standalone project. It does not give rise to a significant risk of pollution or nuisance. The development, by virtue of its type, does not pose a risk of major accident or disaster and is not vulnerable to climate change. It presents no risk to human health.
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas)	The site is located within the town core of Kilcock and is in established use as the grounds of St Coca's Church. The church is a protected structure (RPS Ref. B05-41; NIAH Reg. No. 11802021) and the site is within the Kilcock Architectural Conservation Area. The church and graveyard are a recorded

likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).	monument (RMP KD005-002---) and the medieval baptismal font within the church is a separate recorded monument (RMP KD005-029). The site is not located within or immediately adjacent to any European site. The nearest European site is the Rye Water Valley/Carlton SAC (site code 001398), which is approximately 6.3 kilometres to the east. The Royal Canal proposed Natural Heritage Area (site code 002103) lies approximately 113 metres to the south. There are no water features within the site and surface water and foul drainage would discharge to the public networks. The proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, on any European site. The grounds comprise a tarmacadam forecourt, a lawn and planting of relatively recent date and contain no habitats listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive. The site is not within a flood zone and there are no records of flooding at the site. The proposed development would connect to the public water and wastewater networks.
Types and characteristics of potential impacts (Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	The proposed development is small in scale and is confined to the grounds of an existing church within an established town centre. Effects during construction would be limited to noise, dust, construction traffic on Church Street and Mill Lane and the potential disturbance of sub-surface archaeological material. These effects would be temporary, localised and of low magnitude and are of a type routinely controlled by standard construction management measures and by archaeological monitoring. Operational effects would be limited to the traffic, lighting and activity associated with a local community facility used ancillary to the adjoining church. There would be no transboundary effects. Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, the character of the receiving environment, the likely limited magnitude and spatial extent of effects and the absence of significant in-combination effects with other plans or projects, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environmental factors listed in section 171A of the Act.
Conclusion	
Likelihood of Significant Effects	Conclusion in respect of EIA
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA is not required.

Inspector: _____ Date: _____