

AN TAISCE- THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR IRELAND.

Our Ref 2D) 050@19-S3-S2@40

Mr. Paraig Lynch
Town Hall
Lynch's Quay
Cobh
Co Cork

19 August 2005

REF: OS/S2C

RE: Re-ordering of St. Colman's Cathedral

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter requesting comment on the above.

St Colman's, designed by Edward Welby Pugin and completed by Ashlin and Colman Architects in the early 20th century is one of the small number of Gothic revival churches in Ireland of international significance. Its importance is all the greater because it has escaped the poorly considered "reordering" which has affected a number of the other major 19th century Roman Catholic cathedrals including Armagh and Killarney which was characterised by the large scale removal of major architectural features and loss of architectural character.

Lack of Information *on* Congregation and Public Consultation

This is a major proposal affecting the cathedral. There is no reference to any consultation or the results of any such consultation between the congregation or the people, the population of Cobh or the Coyne Diocese. The only reference to "pre-application consultations" referred to in the letter of 15 July 2005 from McCutcheon Mulcahy is with the Planning Authority. We have been forwarded a letter dated 5 August 2005 from "Friends of St Colman's Cathedral" stating that the current *"plans are being strongly opposed by the overwhelming majority of the people of Cobh and the Diocese of Coyne. 24,124 signatures were collected in opposition to these radical changes to a beautiful cathedral which is a heritage and listed building protected under the 1999/2000 Local Government Planning Act"*.

The pro cathedral is subject to extensive grant funding from the Heritage Council which restricted alterations to the cathedral. The application particulars fail to address the legal issues arising from this.

Justification for Proposal *on* basis of Second) Vatican Gounod The proposal is being justified as with a large number of alterations already accommodated in Irish Roman Catholic churches on the basis of the Second Vatican Council. It is instructive to note that the major historic churches of Rome have not been subject to the level of alteration and removal of features which has occurred in so many

Irish churches and would be involved in this proposal for Cobh. Accordingly the nature and extent of the proposed alterations and removal of features has not been justified with regard to any Vatican 2 of liturgical requirements.

Conflicting Data *in* Photographic Survey submitted by Professor Cathal O'Neill & Associates Architects, June 2005

This purports to be a photographic survey showing the interior of the cathedral at the time of the application. However the photographs were clearly taken on two dates since the first two photographs - the overall views and the sanctuary and crossing - show the timber platform and altar in the area of the crossing which has since been removed, whereas the other photographs show an altar over the mosaic patterned area at the bottom of the high altar steps.

Assessment of Impact of Proposed Works

We consider that the proposed works would have a significantly negative impact on the architectural character of this internationally important Gothic revival interior. The proposal would involve extensive and undesirable removal of mosaic floor surfaces and would be contrary to the spatial layout and design conception of the cathedral interior.

Provisions off Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Architectural Heritage Protectors Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2005 with regards to "Places of Worship".

Sect on 5.2.2 makes provision for a planning authority to "*respect liturgical requirements*".

While Section 5.2.4 refers to the provisions relating to declarations, it must be deemed applicable to considering planning applications including the requirement "*the basic considerations are the effects, if any, of the proposed works and special interest and structure including its interior, and whether the proposed alterations are necessitated by the liturgical requirements of worship*". We consider that the proposed works would significantly diminish the special interest of Cobh Cathedral as an intact Gothic revival interior and that the nature and extent of the proposed works have not been justified on liturgical or practical grounds. The provision in the DoEHLG Guidelines "*to minimise the impact of the proposed changes*" has not been complied with.

Recommendations

We consider that this application has not been justified and would contravene the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2005 on the grounds that it would radically diminish the special interest of the interior of Cobh Cathedral as an internationally significant Gothic revival cathedral interior.

We recommend that the application be refused. Please acknowledge our submission. Yours sincerely,

Ian Lumley

Heritage Officer