

Margaret Baker's submission to Oral Hearing.

SUBMISSION TO AN BORD PLEANÁLA, 1st MARCH 2006

My name is Margaret Baker. I am a company director at an advertising agency in Cork.

This submission is made also on behalf of Michael O'Connell and Anne Stack, who are well known business people in Cobh.

We are all parishioners of St. Colman's Cathedral.

We support the Appeal put before you by the Friends of St. Colman's Cathedral against the granting of planning permission for the reordering.

We submit that the radical and intrusive changes proposed are not only out of character with this heritage building, but are not justified in the cause of public worship, which has been conducted satisfactorily in St. Colman's Cathedral for over a century.

We contend that the new and so-called 'enhanced' liturgy requiring these changes appeals to a certain school of thought, whose interpretation is not shared by the proven majority of parishioners upon whom the changes would be imposed. For example - the extended sanctuary, very exposed and devoid of altar rails, discourages people from kneeling, which we do to show reverence. As I understand it, the new thinking on the liturgy is to have an open sanctuary and the altar rails are seen as a barrier. Those beautiful altar rails are not a barrier, they are a support for the faithful and a protection for the sacred, this is their meaning for us.

We further contend that the granting of this planning permission was not properly considered, as it was stated publicly that the Architect who recommended it read only 140 of the letters of objection received. The remaining one-third of the letters may have presented material which could have affected the decision.

One last observation - it is ironic that the proposed new sanctuary is apparently intended to bring clergy and congregation closer together, when in fact the proposal is having the opposite effect. I believe I speak for many people in Cobh who are regular worshippers when I say that we have wonderful priests at the Cathedral, I respect them and appreciate them. It is reasonable to assume that, whatever their personal views, they would feel duty bound to support the Bishop. It is very saddening that this situation can create, indeed is creating, division.

(I would like to add here that, along with the Friends of St. Colman's Cathedral, I am not against the Bishop as a person.)

In conclusion, we earnestly appeal to An Bord Pleanála to overturn this planning permission.

