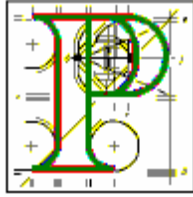


An Bord Pleanála



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTS 2000 TO 2004

Cobh Town

Planning Register Reference Number: T.P. 05/52040

An Bord Pleanála Reference Number: PL 53.214338

APPEAL by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Development Applications Section) of Dún Sceine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin and by others against the decision made on the 5th day of September, 2005 by Cobh Town Council to grant subject to conditions a permission to the Trustees of Saint Colman's Cathedral care of McCutcheon Mulcahy of 2/3 Crawford Business Park, Proby's Quay, Cork.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT: To carry out a reordering of the interior of Saint Colman's Cathedral. The proposed reordering, which is designed to meet the liturgical requirements of the cathedral as a place of worship, will include: (a) extending the sanctuary area into the nave; (b) removing and partially relocating the existing altar rails; (c) creating a permanent altar on the extended sanctuary; (d) providing a new cathedra facing the congregation; (e) locating the vesting sacristy at the base of the tower; (f) converting the Pieta Chapel to a mortuary chapel; and (g) reducing the area of the predella of the Altar of the Crucifixion in the south transept and the Altar of the Holy Family in the north transept. The extension of the sanctuary and the moving of the altar rails will involve lifting and relaying portions of the mosaic to the nave and sanctuary and providing additional mosaic to match the existing as required, all at Saint Colman's Cathedral, Cathedral Place, Cobh, County Cork. The cathedral is listed for protection in Cobh Town Council's Record of Protected Structures.

DECISION

REFUSE permission for the above proposed development based on the reasons and considerations set out below.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Saint Colman's Cathedral, Cobh, is a most important example of 19th century Gothic Revival architecture by the architects Pugin and Ashlin, which has retained the integrity of its original architectural treatment since final completion approximately 90 years ago. The building is of the finest quality, both in its exterior and interior, and is a protected structure of national importance. Having regard to the extent of the interventions proposed, it is considered that the proposed re-ordering of the interior would materially and adversely affect the character of the cathedral and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, including protection of its architectural heritage.

In deciding not to accept the Inspector's recommendation to grant permission, the Board disagreed with the Inspector's interpretation of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, in relation to the statutory delimitation of the powers of the Board to decide on the merits of a planning appeal concerning a protected structure, which is regularly used as a place of worship. Section 57(6) of the Act requires the Board to respect liturgical requirements, in addition to any other requirements of the Act. The Board considered that the obligation placed on it to respect liturgical requirements must be interpreted in the context of its other duties, as defined in the Act, including in respect of protection of the architectural heritage. The Board considered that the interpretation set out in the Inspector's recommendation would limit its functions in a manner incompatible with the Act.

The Board accepted that changes to the interior arise from liturgical requirements, but considered that this does not bind it to accept this particular design solution. Having regard to the unique importance and intact character of the interior of the cathedral and to the limitations resulting from its Gothic Revival design, and taking account of the scale and impact of the proposed works on the specific character of the cathedral, the Board decided that the proposed development - entailing large scale extension of the sanctuary into the cathedral nave and removal/relocation of significant elements of historic building fabric, including mosaics - would have an unacceptable impact on the cathedral and would constitute an excessive intervention in the protected structure.

**Member of An Bord Pleanála
duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Board.**

Dated this day of 2006.