



The Butler Gallery at the Evans Home

Conservation Report on the Conservation and Extension of the Evans Home, Kilkenny for the Butler Gallery.

1.0 Introduction.

The proposal for the Butler Gallery in the Evans Home in Kilkenny will have an impact on the conservation character of the Evans Building and its context within the overall curtilage of the site. The project has been designed carefully in line with the principles of the Venice Charter. The works are designed to conserve the character of the existing building and minimize the impact of new work; limited new construction proposed will be carefully designed to work in a pleasing conjunction with the existing building, being sympathetically designed in the best spirit of sensitive modern intervention.

2.0 Existing Evans Home.

2.1 Exterior.

The H-shaped building will be conserved in all of its essential character. The nature of the project is such that the building will be refurbished and conserved on a phased basis. It is intended that the exterior will be re-rendered. Studies are being undertaken to determine the mix of the original render; this mix will be the basis of the re-rendering. The building will be repointed before the render is applied; this will involve the removal of the ribbon pointing on the elevations. Observation of the building exterior has highlighted certain areas where there are remains of existing render; the extent of render related to the opes and coigns has been determined.

The existing roof will be repaired using the existing slates; new slates will be chosen to match the existing in size and material; existing chimneys will be repaired using lime mortar. A limited number of powder-coated metal rooflights and vents (colour to match the roof finish) will be included in the completed roof in association with the new uses.

The two open escape staircases to the rere of the building will be removed; the opes in the wall here will be returned to be window opes ; a revised fire strategy that allows this to happen is discussed below. There are four original external doors to the building; these will be conserved and incorporated into the completed building. There are a limited number of original windows remaining in the building; these are located on the rere elevation. The remainder of the windows in the building date to the mid 20th century and are of no architectural merit; these windows will be replaced with windows to match the original design.

One window in the rere elevation from the proposed education room is lowered to form a door; this door will be formed to incorporate the existing window joinery within it. There is a universal access ramp from this door. Universal access ramps with a steel finish are shown from this door to the rere garden. There are two universal access ramps to a similar design from the front garden to the main front entrances.

2.2 Interior.

The building is divided into three blocks for the purposes of description, Block A, Block B and Block C. The general approach to the conservation is as follows::

It is proposed that the interior of the building will be conserved, with existing joinery and finishes maintained where feasible. All dry and wet rot will be addressed as a part of the conservation of the building.

Internal window joinery will be conserved; existing internal doors will be conserved (subject to final fire certification).

Most of the fireplaces in the building are of mid 20th century date; these will be removed and the opes blocked up. Full exploration of all of the fireplaces opes will be undertaken as part of opening-up works; any original fireplace surroundings will be refurbished and retained in situ.

Existing wall plaster will be retained where it is sufficiently stable; new plaster used in the building will be lime plaster.

The fire strategy for the building utilizes the two existing stone staircases; the corridor zone in Blocks A and C is formed into a protected corridor with fire rated doors giving access to rooms.

The environmental performance of the existing building will be substantially upgraded as a part of the works. This will be achieved by the incorporation of hemp insulation to the ceiling void and behind the window joinery.

Demolition works includes the removal of the library shelving within Block B. Selective opes and voids will be opened within existing walls to support the new use of the building. These will be cut within a wall zone to leave a framing of original fabric and be finished in lime plaster. The location and extent of these opes is shown on the submitted drawings. The only systematic removal of fabric will be in the small bathroom/WC zones at either end of the corridors on each level; the internal wall between the small rooms here is removed to provide a larger WC area.

In Block A, the proposed use is for a restaurant/café on the ground floor, with storage rooms; the first floor will be used as a climate controlled gallery space. A double height void is formed in Room EG. Walls are removed on both sides of the chimney breasts on the ground floor; the majority of the wall between DG and CG is also removed. This pattern is repeated on the first floor. The gallery space on the first floor will be internally lined out to provide a modern 'box-in-box' construction.

In Block B, the proposed use is for an Education Department on the ground floor and the administration on the first floor level. On both floors, an ope is formed in the wall between the two central rooms. As noted above, one window in the Education department is lowered to form an access door to the garden.

In Block C, there is the same pattern of removal of walls as in Block A; these are shown on the submitted drawings. The uses include archive and a screening room at ground floor level and artists studios at the first floor level.

3.0 Perimeter Walls.

The perimeter walls of the Evans Home are important in the overall character of the building and also contain a significant amount of historic fabric. Intervention and change to this perimeter wall is minimal. Please note that the site perimeter to the East is formed by hedging within the enclosure and does not run to the edge of the site. The conservation of the perimeter walls will be undertaken on a phased basis. The approach to conservation will include:

Removal of excess vegetation. Re-pointing of perimeter wall with lime pointing. Renewal of cappings will be undertaken with an appropriate mix of concrete and stone. Sections of perimeter wall at the South East corner of the site contain significant amounts of medieval fabric; no conservation work will be undertaken on this section of the wall without further licence.

A new metal gate is proposed for the arched gateway. Three new opes are proposed within the perimeter wall to increase the public permeability of the site. These are :

- One no. 2.0m wide ope in the Western wall from Back Lane to give access to the entrance/reception area of the new building.
- One no. 2.5m wide ope in the Southern wall to give access to the loading bay of the new gallery.
- One no. 2.0 m wide gate in the Southern wall to give access to the universal access ramp from the lower car park.

It is also proposed that the unroofed triangular garden building in the North-West corner of the site will be refurbished and re-roofed as a garden store in association with the renewal of the garden.

4.0 Garden area.

The garden around the Evans Home will be refurbished on a phased basis and used for the external display of art. Existing habitats will be respected; existing trees on site will be retained with the exception of the two large trees directly in front of the front elevation of the Evans Home. New trees to agreed specification will be planted and are shown on submitted drawings. In general, existing green areas to the sides and rear of the Evans Home will be retained and refurbished. A small timber art 'pavilion' is proposed to the Eastern side of the Evans Home. The zone between the front of the Evans and the Southern perimeter wall will be landscaped as follows:

- Retention of stone mound and planted area and trees at South Eastern corner of the site. Location of bin store.
- Provision of limited car parking (including universal access spaces) adjacent to Southern boundary of the site. Gravel area; car parking spaces outlined in metal.
- Selected river gravel area directly in front of Evans Home.
- Incorporation of new ramp with stone surface from lower car park area.
- Provision of area of stone and concrete paving directly outside façade of the new building on the Southern boundary (with water tank under)

5.0 New Building.

The new building for the Butler Gallery is located in the South-Western corner of the site. The reason for the new building is that the function requires it. The existing building provides insufficient large and flexible spaces for the display of art in the permanent and the temporary collections. There is also a requirement that the art displayed is in a controlled environment such as a new building can provide. One gallery space is proposed within the existing building, but the requirements of environmental control would, if extended to the whole of the Evans Home, destroy its integrity. The location of the new building on the site- at the South-western corner- was chosen for the following reasons:

- Smallest amount of archaeology on site (ref archaeology report)
- No overshadowing of garden or Evans Home.
- Natural angle at the corner of the site to create an urban forecourt against the façade of the Evans.
- New building visible as symbol of the new Butler in Kilkenny.
- Natural entrance to whole facility.

The character of the new building is very simple, an elegant abstract box of metal cladding with opes where appropriate. Secondary smaller boxes provide entrance-reception and WC's; together they are like a growth or 'culture' along the perimeter of the site. It is the relationship between the new building and the old- rather than the character of each independently- that will release the full potential of the architecture.

The fine detail and material of the Evans will be countered by the simplicity of the new; the form of the new creates a new urban courtyard within the site. Functionally they are closely linked; the entrance to the whole complex is through the new building and into the old; there are several potential secondary entrances to the existing building directly; both form a seamless set of routes and spaces. The proposed double height within the existing building is close by the new building- the old responding to the new; the double height is an important part of the spatial sequence between new and old.