

APPENDIX 1: Listed Building Property Evaluation

Background

The Second Survey of all of Northern Ireland's building stock, is currently underway, to update and improve on the first List of buildings of special architectural or historic interest which began in 1974. This second survey in Belfast was due to be completed in 2017 but is ongoing.

In considering whether to include a building as Listed, the Department (NIEA) takes into account the architectural and historic interest of a structure and is also given the power to consider:-

- any respect in which its exterior contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part; and
- the desirability of preserving, on the ground of its architectural or historic interest, any feature of the building which consists of a manmade object or structure fixed to the building or which forms a part of the land and which is comprised within the curtilage of the building.

Should the Department for Communities decide to list, this places certain responsibility on the owner, for example, a listed building has to be maintained in a way appropriate to its character and cannot be altered or demolished without prior approval.

The summary below is taken from the property evaluation and details the main features alongside the recommended class of listing.

1. Catholic Chaplaincy QUB, 28-38 Elmwood AVE, Belfast, BT9 6AY, HB26/28/115

Property evaluation

A two storey plus attic, 6 bay building, carefully scaled, planned and built using contemporary materials by Rooney and McConville; an infill to a gap in a Victorian terrace on Elmwood Avenue; situated within the Queens Conservation Area of South Belfast.

As described by David Evans in 'Modern Ulster Architecture' (First Edition – p. 14), "A spirit of respect and architectural good neighbourliness is evident in this elegant example of 'infill' designed by Laurence McConville." ... "The form of the Victorian canted bay window is...employed but in a daring and un-Victorian manner; raised above street level and cantilevered out, these prismatic steel and glass forms march along in rhythm with their brickwork neighbours. These two storey height bays are raised above a flat glazed façade at street level which express the form of the large main hall within. The floor to ceiling windows establish a sense of spatial continuity between the street and the cloistered courtyard and chapel beyond the main hall. The ground floor can be perceived as a series of visually-linked spaces." The proportions of the building, its scale and plan form are unique to Belfast if not Northern Ireland.

The building by known architect Lawrence McConville, once had external panelling designed by Ray Carroll, whose work also features internally in the liturgical furnishings and detailed design of the chapel. Both were part of the Catholic Churches Advisory Committee on Sacred Art and Architecture in the 1960's and contributed to the Irish Episcopal Commission for Liturgy's 'Place of Worship' Directory – the Church's own guidance document on Designing Places of Worship. The Catholic Chaplaincy embodies the recommendations made by the Committee, which requires that '...space and light, materials and furnishings, suitable places for the various liturgical activities, ambiance and atmosphere – all must combine to help Christians become what they are when they worship'. The guidance mentions the Architect and Artist – 'All the liturgical elements in the church, as well as images and shrines should be designed by artists and the work coordinated by the architect...Architects and artists give glory to God through their work.' All of the original

ornament and craftsmanship remains in situ throughout the building and also within the chapel, from the fixed liturgical furnishings through to the artist designed copper hopper which feeds rainwater into the pond within the courtyard.

The building and chapel in particular are fine examples of the design quality which was required of the building. Through form follows function where necessary, the deliberate attention to detail and craftsmanship and the high quality materials such as copper, bronze and steel used throughout the building embody the aim of the Catholic Church at the time of the building's construction to 'mediate presence'. Much importance was placed on the details of the building: 'The place of the artist can never be taken by the craftsperson or by the provider of 'religious' goods. Art builds upon craft, giving to merely practical objects a quality of transcendence that links the material and the spiritual world. The work of the artist is not a superfluous luxury.'

As such, this is an authentic, intact building of not only architectural but historical, social and cultural importance in its demonstration of the intention of the Catholic Church to embody the spirit of worship of its time through art and architecture combined, using materials which were cutting edge in Belfast in the 1970's.

The building occupies a section of what was once a mainly residential Victorian terrace on Elmwood Avenue. Though uncompromisingly modern, the large steel framed glazed bays and eaves line maintain the rhythm and scale of the terrace. The views outwards from these large windows are unique and designed to maximise visibility and appreciation of the Avenue and of the high quality buildings captured in each vista. The spatial organisation and layering of spaces from the street to chapel allows a large public space to be quietly slotted in amongst its neighbours. The scale and depth of the building, the use of brick between canted bays, the employment of dormers and the carefully subservient 'mews' chapel to the rear ally with the rhythm, pattern, materials and scale set up by the historic buildings adjacent and the wider context of the Queens Conservation Area.

Proposed NIEA listing – **B1**

Extent of proposed listing – **Chapel and ancillary accommodation**

Image:



Note:

Listed buildings in Northern Ireland are divided into four categories:

Grade A

Special buildings of national importance including both outstanding grand buildings and the fine, little altered examples of some important style or date.

Grade B+

Special buildings that might have merited A status but for relatively minor detracting features such as impurities of design, or lower quality additions or alterations. Also buildings that stand out above the general mass of grade B1 buildings because of exceptional interiors or some other features.

Grade B1 and B2

Special buildings of more local importance or good examples of some period of style. Some degree of alteration or imperfection may be acceptable.