

17th May 2023
Ref: S1289 PAC33

Note for PAC on Whitehall College of Further Education

Whitehall College of Further Education, a prefabricated two storey structure, was constructed circa 2006 by Western Buildings Systems under a design and build contract with the OPW. The previous building was demolished due to asbestos levels. The building is currently being maintained by City of Dublin Education and Training Board.

A report was commissioned by Western Building Systems in 2009 and conducted by the NSAI. This report was not accepted by Western Building Systems and was subsequently forwarded by the OPW to the Principal of Whitehall in May 2013. An independent report was commissioned by City of Dublin Education and Training Board - TJ O'Connor and Associates, Consulting Engineers carried out this report. The report was finalised on 25th September 2013. The report raised issues in relation to the structure of the building and its fire safety. A copy of the report and the original NSAI report was sent to the OPW on 1st October, 2013 and a meeting arranged between City of Dublin and OPW.

A brief summary of issues identified were:

- No damp proof course in the walls leading to moisture difficulties and consequent steelwork corrosion.
- No vapour barrier resulting in condensation in the cavity.
- No breather membrane which would allow moisture out of the building but prevent rain entering the building.
- A structural column in the building plan was not in place and there is stress in the structure although the structure is not in imminent danger of collapse.
- The water tank is of a size that, when full, it places stress on the structure that the structure is unable to fully support.
- The building modules are not connected to each other. The first floor sits on the ground floor and is only kept in place by its own dead weight.
- The external walls are not insulated from the higher ground around the walls, and this has resulted in ponding under the building. There is evidence of mould growth and decay.
- A number of services are inappropriately routed through fire zones.
- Cabling and trunking is not fire blocked.
- The steel structure is not properly galvanised.



- Inappropriate wall panels. These panels should expand and lock into position in a fire situation. The panels in situ do not operate to this standard and will pop out of the wall in a fire situation thus facilitating the transfer of fire.
- The structure is not painted with compliant fire retarding paint and in some places is not painted at all.

The College was vacated at end of academic year 2014 and works began on the refurbishment of Colaiste Caoimhin and students moved to the new location in September 2014.

It was confirmed at a meeting with the Department of Education in October 2022 that the building remains the subject of a High Court Action. Plans for the building are dependent on the outcome of the High Court case between the OPW and the contractor.

