

**Bluett O'Donoghue Architects,
Two Johns st.,
Kilkenny,
Co. Kilkenny**

February 12th, 2021.

Re : Landscape Architect's Initial Observations Athy Model School site.

Please find attached overview of the site at the Athy Old Model school in relation to existing vegetation / trees on site. These recommendations are intended as initial observations in order to inform decisions on the retention / removal of existing vegetation and parameters to factor into the external works arrangement for the site :

Comments and Observations :

- The most important cluster of trees on the site are the very large mature trees facing onto the Dublin Road. **(See ITEMS No 1, 2, 3 and 4 on attached plan)**
- The trees alongside the outer roadside wall are Lime trees (Tilia) **(See ITEM No 3 on attached plan)** and appear in reasonable condition, although have been somewhat prevented from reaching their natural growth form by the adjoining conifers. Lime would be a typical tree type planted in estates of the period.
- The two large conifers adjacent to the Limes are exceptionally tall specimens. From initial external observations these are Monterey Cypress trees **(See ITEM No 2 on attached plan)**, (Cupressus macrocarpa), *(Access wasn't possible to the site internally to examine the foliage / needles in detail, the precise variety can be confirmed on closer inspection)*. They are fine mature specimens. They don't however have a spreading growth habit that mature Monterey Cypress of that age can have as a parkland tree. This is most likely due the close proximity of the adjacent Lime trees to the south east and also the proximity of the building. The Cupressus add character and maturity to the façade / streetscape interface at present but it is recommended that these be reviewed regularly by an arborist as remedial works may need to be undertaken periodically.
- A solitary Yew (Taxus baccata) **(See ITEM No 1 on attached plan)** is positioned close to the building at the front. This would be an important tree to retain and maintain. A ramp and footpath is proposed, and it would be important to consider root protection within the vicinity of this tree. If roots are severed in a linear fashion it can have a detrimental effect on the total root to shoot ratio and the tree can go into decline.
- A mid sized Cedar is located in close proximity to the Cupressus trees and adjacent Limes **(See ITEM No 1 on attached plan)**. This is most likely either a Cedar of Lebanon (Cedrus libani) or Deodar cedar (Cedrus deodara) which can be ascertained upon more detailed examination. It appears in good condition, although some remedial works may need to be carried out to this and adjacent trees in this area as each becomes larger and competition for light increases.

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- The root protection areas for the larger Cypress, Cedar and Lime trees extends to quite an area, covering most of the area between the front of the building and the Dublin road wall.
- Further to the south along the Dublin road there is a small multi-stemmed Lime (*Tilia*) (**See ITEM No 5 on attached plan**) near the existing gate. It is in reasonable condition but is a relatively poorly formed crown most likely due to having been cut back severely in the past and allowed to regenerate into multi-stemmed trees. It doesn't seem to interfere with the site plan however, except perhaps to be aware of the root zone with adjacent attenuation.
- Along Geraldine road there are some Acer trees (most likely self seeded Sycamores). They are close to both the boundary wall and the building. They are still relatively young but some quite substantial in size. Most likely they would not have been intentionally planted and they can grow quite rapidly. One in particular is quite a tall multiitem tree with numerous stems, (**See ITEM No 7 on attached plan**) which will not result in a easily manged tree in the long term. All of these Acers may be considered for removal in terms of their appropriates for the setting and the building, and factoring in the long term maintenance requirement. However they do provide a sense of maturity and when in leaf a pleasant green softening of the building along Geraldine road. Acers are tolerant of regular pruning and do regenerate from tough pruning so it would be possible to manage them if retained.
- There is a single Birch (*Betula*) (**See ITEM No 8 on attached plan**) near the pedestrian gate along Geraldine road also. This is a fine textured tree with relatively light foliage, branch structure and poses little threat to the surrounds. In my view this should be retained but will have a shelf life of another 20-30 years or so.
- The remaining tree is in the western comer at the crèche entrance. Again this is an Acer / Sycamore. (**See ITEM No 9 on attached plan**) It's a fine specimen with a good crown shape and a single trunk. It offer a good degree of vertical greenery on this comer and doesn't seem to interfere with usage and proposals for this area so I recommend it be retained.
- There are number of insignificant scrub area / overgrowth on site (**See ITEM No 10 on attached plan**). It is recommended the areas be made good and this type of vegetation removed to facilitate the new site uses.

These are intended as initial observations to inform the design process. Note these are guideline observations from a landscape architect's perspective and do not constitute a detailed arborists tree survey to BS 5837 or comment on individual tree condition, tree diseases or defects. I would recommend that the trees are evaluated by an arborist to examine each tree in more detail in terms of condition and disease, and at intervals post construction when the facility is operational in order to spot any developing defects or underlying conditions requiring remedial action that needs to be taken.

Overall from a landscape architect's perspective I would recommend the trees along the Dublin road and frontage to the building (Limes/ Cedar and the Yew tree) are worthy of retention in the long term and the Cupessus for retention in the medium term or until such time as the trees show evidence of senescence. It is important to protect these trees during construction from damage (compaction / site traffic / storage, diesel spillages/ accidental machinery damage).

All of the others trees are less valuable, but do provide a good degree of visual softening, adding character and a degree of instant maturity that new tree planting would not provide for quite some time, the most western Acer at the creche end being the best of the remaining trees. Again if retained, a protective fence to protect the tree and its rootzone would be important during the construction phase.

Yours sincerely,



Anthony Ryan.

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