

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

VOLUME III APPENDICES

Appendix 9-2 Fernbank House – Architectural Heritage Assessment 2024



Architectural Heritage Assessment of former Fernbank House, Salesian School, Limerick



Structure Name: Fernbank House

Address: North Circular Road, Limerick.

Planning Authority: Limerick City and County Council

R.P.S. Reg. No.: N/A

A.C.A. Reg. No.: N/A

N.I.A.H. Reg. Ref: N/A

R.M.P. Reg. No.: N/A

Date of Site Visit: April 9th 2024

Prepared by: Shóna O’Keeffe, Executive Architectural Conservation Officer

Reviewed by: Gráinne McMahon, Senior Executive Architect

Date: 5th November 2024

Introduction

The heritage significance assessment of Fernbank House, at the former Salesian Secondary School, has been undertaken following a request from the Limerick branch of An Taisce to assess this building with a view to determining the potential for it to become a Protected Structure.

Historical Background

The subject site comprises the former Secondary School complex of the Salesian Sisters, on the North Circular Road, Limerick. Fernbank House appears to have been constructed c. 1877-78, and was the home of Alfred Newsom, of coal and ironmongery merchants J. P. Newsom & Sons, at this time. No records relating to the construction or design of the original house have been found in the preparation of this report. Valuation Office records list the house from 1878, as the home of Alfred Newsom, leased from the Marquis of Lansdowne. At this date, the total area of the site was 3 acres and 2 roods, and the rateable value of the land was £8. The buildings included the house and offices, and had a rateable value of £40.

The house was acquired by the Cleeve family in 1895. The Valuations Office provides some indication of further development on the site, including the construction of the Gate Lodge c. 1902, and the construction of the extension in c. 1905. The footprint of the original house, prior to this extension, is visible in the 25" Ordnance Survey map, extracted below.

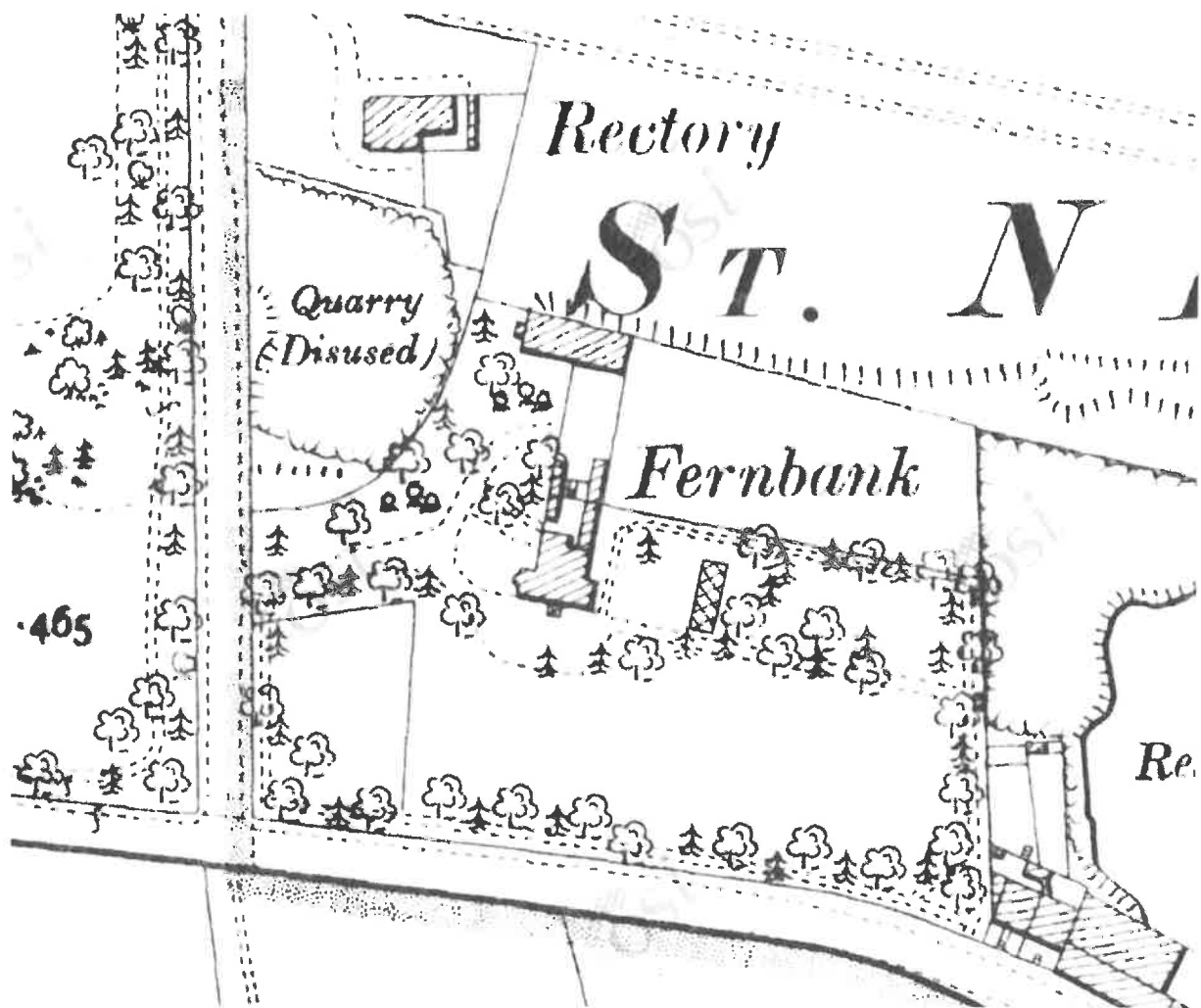


Figure 1: Detail extract from the 25" Ordnance Survey Map. © Taillte Eireann.

The addition of the Eastern extension increased the rateable value of the buildings on site to £75. The available census records provide further information on the buildings on site, and the Cleeves family and their staff in residence.

1901 Census:

Fred. Cleeve, wife Jane, two sons Fred and Charles

+ Governess Susan Haddelsey and three servants

Recorded as a 1st class house, with 18 rooms, and 6 windows on the front facade

Five Outbuildings: 2 stables, 1 coach house, 1 harness room, 1 fowl house

1911 Census:

Frederick Cleeve, wife Jane, two sons Fred and Charles

+ four servants: Butler, Cook, Parlourmaid, Housemaid

Recorded as a 1st class house, with 18 rooms, and 14 windows on the front facade

Five Outbuildings: 1 stable, 2 coach houses, 1 harness room, 1 shed

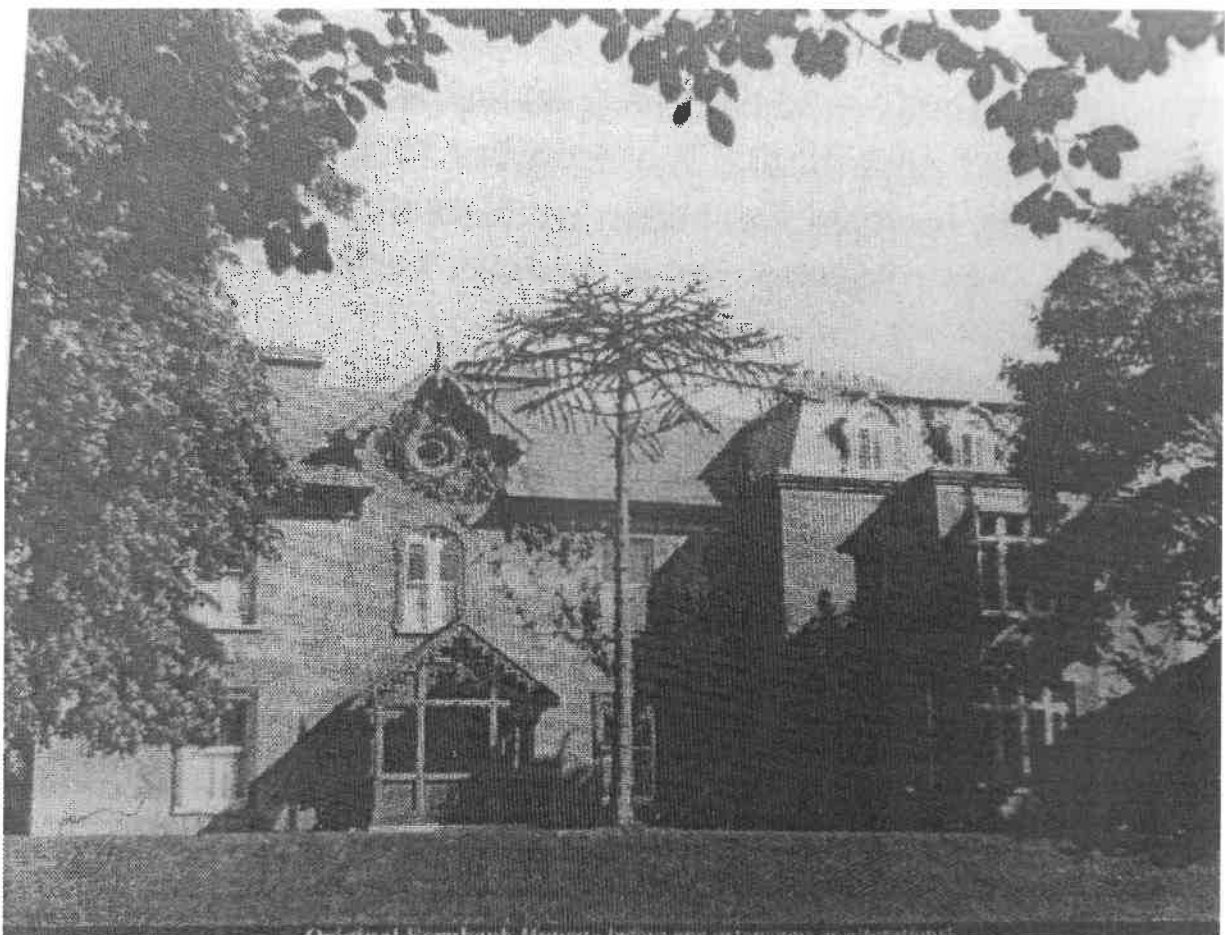


Figure 2: Undated historic photograph of Fernbank House. From 'Against the Odds: A History of the Foundation of the Salesian Sisters in Ireland'.

The house and its lands were acquired by the Salesian Sisters in 1924. An undated historic photo, included above, provides a view of the property before the Salesians' alterations and extensions to Fernbank. An advertisement in the Limerick Leader on April 16th 1924, detailing the sale of furniture and other effects from Fernbank, provides an indication of the quality and class of the house when in use by the Cleeve family.

“Fernbank”, North Circular Road: Attractive and Important Sale by Public Auction of High Class Furniture, Carpets, Silver, Plated Ware, Household Appointments and Outside Effects...

Messrs A. J. Sexton & Son have been instructed by Mrs Cleeve to Sell by Auction the following:- 7ft serpentine fronted Sheraton Mahogany Sideboard, with Cupboard and Drawers, lion ring handles, on tapered legs; 5ft. Sheraton Mahogany carving table, on tapered legs; Mahogany side-table, with twisted Pillar legs; set of 6 Sheraton Mahogany Dining chairs, Mahogany Dining-table, with 3 loose-leaves extending to 13ft. x 5ft. wide; Mahogany Tallboy, Chest of 9 Drawers, on bracket feet with brass handles; Antique Mahogany 3-tier Circular Waiter on cabriole feet; Mahogany Butler's Tray & Stand, Carved Mahogany Couch with scroll ends on claw feet, in Tapestry, with loose end cushions; 4 Chippendale Chairs in Silk, handsomely carved rosewood Louis XVI East Chair, in Velvet, with loose cushion; Oblong Hassock in Tapestry, Sheraton Card table, with green baize top; Pair Sheraton Chairs, in Silk Tapestry; 3do., with Oval Satinwood Panels inset; Antique Mahogany Brass-bound Plate bucket, Pair Hand-painted Empire Chairs, with cane seats and loose cushions; Pair handsome Victorian Carved Mahogany Window-seats, in Silk Tapestry; Empire Occasional Chair, with cane seat and loose cushion; Antique Sheraton Mahogany slope-front bureau and bookcase on bracket feet, with brass handles; handsome Antique Mahogany XXX Table, with 2 Drawers beneath; Antique Mahogany Tea-caddy (inlaid), with M.P.; Hand-painted Oriental Electric Lamp, Sheraton semi-circular table, with tapered legs; Sheraton Side-table, Folding Card-table, with baize top; Antique Mahogany Cradle on Stand, Circular Marquetry table, with 2 tiers beneath; Electric standard lamp, Sheraton Corner Chine Cabinet, Antique Mahogany Brass-bound and mounted Chest, Rosewood Loo-table, Brass Inlaid on carved claw feet; Carved Mahogany Pole Screen, Gilt Convex Mirror, 3 Pair Silk Tapestry Curtains, lined and interlined; Steel and Coloured Engravings, after Moreland and Bartolozzi; Silhouettes, Antique China, Crown, Derby etc.; Circular Walnut Table, on carved claw feet; French gilt over mantel, carved walnut easy chairs, in Tapestry; marble mounted clock, brass tinker, Dogs and Step; Antique copper helmet-shaped coal scuttle, Chesterfield Settee in Tapestry, Circular Dwarf Mahogany Tea-table, large Brass Jardinière, with lion ring handles; XXX oak cupboard, with raised door panels, heavy XX mounts and hinges; Oak Bookshelf on top to match; handsomely-carved Bow-front Hall Press, with lion ring handles; Sheraton-cased Grandfather's Clock, with Antique Brass Dial, by James Aickin, Cork; Set 4-coloured hunting prints, Pair Waterford Cut-glass Ginger Dishes on square bases, Antique Copper Coffee Set on Salver, with claw feet; Antique Copper alms box (date, 1816); Pewter Russian Coffee Pot, Set 12 small and 3 large Antique Pewter Plates, Old Irish Silver, Boat-shaped sugar basin, with handle Georgian; Mustard Pot, and several other pieces; Sheffield and Plated Water, several Down Cushions, 3-piece handsome Inlaid Mahogany Bedroom Suite, Wardrobe, 8ft. wide, with double beveled Mirror doors; Chest of Drawers and Hat-box in centre; Dressing-table, with Oval Swing Mirror and Plate-glass top; Washstand with marble top and Mirror at back; Inlaid Bedside Pedestal and 3 chairs to match; Sheraton Mahogany Chest of Drawers, Inlaid Sheraton Mahogany Dwarf Wardrobe, with 2 Drawers; Sheraton Kidney-shaped writing-table, with 2 drawers, 4 ft.; Sheraton Mahogany Press, with 2 drawers and cupboard beneath; Antique Revolving Circular Table, with Drawers (diameter, 4ft.); Mahogany spider-table, 3ft. 6 in.; Satin Walnut 3-piece bedroom suite, with Swing Mirrors; 2 chairs and Chest of Drawers to match, 3-piece do., with Robe 5ft 6in. wide, double beveled mirror doors, and swing mirrors; Mahogany antique toilet glass, with 2 jewel drawers; Mahogany Shaving Stand, with Cupboard and Drawer; Mahogany Chest of drawers, two 3-piece 3ft. Bedroom suites, 24in. x 18 in.; Iron safe, do. 1ft. 4 in. x 2ft. (Philipps and Sons), Apex Electric Carpet Sweepers, Upright Grand Piano (Full XXX), by Knauss; etc., etc.,

Usual kitchen culinary utensils, 4 large Kitchen Tables; Pine Kitchen Cupboard, Refrigerator, Mangle, Tubs, Pots and Plants, 2 Lawn Mowers, Garden Roller, Ladders, Iron Gate.

Persian Carpet, 11ft. x 18ft.; Axminster do., 17 ft. x 6 in. x 13ft; Pink Axminster do., 18ft x 2ft, 6in; 30 yards, Axminster Stair Carpet 36 ins. Wide; 25 heavy Brass triangular Stair Rods, Axminster Carpet, 14ft x 12 ft.; do. 12ft x 9 ft.”

The Salesian order continued to develop the site throughout the 20th century, in response to the needs of the school and the convent. An overview chronological development is illustrated on the image below.



Figure 3: Overlay on the aerial view of the site from Bing Maps, showing an outline chronology of the site. The original extent of the house constructed in 1878 is shown in purple. The 1905 extension is shown in Orange. The National School, constructed c. 1947, is shown in blue, and the extensive additions to the site in c. 1955 are highlighted in yellow. The building to the right hand side of the photo, now in separate use, appears to have been constructed as a hostel c. 1958. The date for the addition of the top floor to the original house and its extension may be c. 1969. The Chapel extension to the rear of the original house (not visible in the aerial view) appears to have been constructed c. 1949, but has been altered/replaced c. 1969.

An overview history of the Salesian Sisters' foundation at Fernbank is provided by Sr. Mary Christina Merriman in *'The Story of the Salesians'*, in the Salesian Golden Jubilee publication (2006). Relevant extracts from this history are included below:

"1920's-30's

The well-known and celebrated Secondary School – the Salesians – evolved from a tiny mustard seed – yes from a small junior private school run by the Sisters in Thomas Street from 1922-25. There in Thomas Street the Salesian Sisters, newly arrived in Ireland, also ran night classes for early school-leavers who worked in factories during the day. For daytime occupation and to support themselves the Sisters started a fee-paying private school, which transferred to "Fernbank", North Circular Road, early in 1925. "Fernbank" had just been purchased from the Cleeve family – famous for their toffee! From "Fernbank" they travelled back to the night classes by pony and trap, until those classes were discontinued in 1928 as a consequence of the School Attendance Act which made attendance at Primary School compulsory.

In 1924 the North Circular Road consisted of only a few of what might be termed gentlemen's residences, set in their own grounds, with gate-lodges at the entrance. The Ennis Road was something similar...

Housing Developments – 1940s

In the 1940s a spate of house building began in the Ennis Road-Shelbourne Road and North Circular Road areas, which meant an increase in population needing schools and a Church. At the request of the parish priest of St. Munchin's, Monsignor Moloney, the National School was started in 1947 in a single storey newly built school. The enrolment at that time was 140 pupils. Sunday Masses were offered in the new school building while the Holy Rosary Church was under construction. In August 1950 one of the first big celebrations in that new Church – from the Salesian point of view – was the celebration of the canonization of St. Mary Mazzarello, foundress of the Salesian Sisters.

Secondary Top – 1950s

Now, how does all this lead to our Secondary School? Soon after the National School was approved, the Private School ceased to exist, but some of its pupils had reached secondary stage and even sat the matriculation exam. The children in the National School soon reached Secondary level and continued to study in what was then called a Secondary Top. In those days before Donogh O'Malley, a Limerick man and Minister for Education introduced free second-level education, Secondary Tops were quite common and pupils gained Intermediate and Leaving Certificates through the free National School system. As there was not enough room in our new Primary School building, some of these Secondary classes were held in outhouses – or 'sheds' as pupils good-humouredly called them... Not having an examination centre in the school, the pupils went out to St. Mary's or Laurel Hill to sit the examinations.

By the year 1954 this was the situation of Secondary education in "Fernbank" – or 'the Salesians' as the complex is more popularly known. In that year the foundation stone for a new building was laid. The architect was Chevalier P.J. Sheahan. This new building went up on the other side of "Fernbank" house facing Cleeve's factory. This meant the greenhouse had to go – and the orchard – and the hen run! – as well as several lovely trees! This new building would be the nucleus of the present Secondary School, providing accommodation for resident aspirants to the Salesian Congregation as well as a few classrooms. At last the pupils could be moved from the 'sheds', which were later demolished to make way for the present Infants' School.

1955 – Meán Scoil Maria Auxiliatrix is born!

The autumn of school year 1955-56 was a busy one. The year began on 8th September – Our Lady's Birthday – with Mass, after which Monsignor Moloney blessed the new classrooms. Ninety-six pupils had enrolled... on 5th October no less a person than the Minister for Education, General Richard Mulcahy, arrived to officially open the newbuilding. It was a rather solemn occasion, reported in both local and national newspapers and highlighted by several photographs. The Irish Press carried an inside heading: "First Stone of Building for Girls: Wing for Salesians", while The Examiner printed a clear photo of Minister Mulcahy addressing the assembled pupils. The Limerick Leader's banner heading was "Minister for Education at Three Ceremonies in Limerick Today"...

Present at our official opening were Architect P.J. Sheahan, Mayor George Russell, Parish priest Monsignor Molony, and the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, M.J. Keyes, as well as the Superiors of the Sisters, Sr. Andreina Ariagno and Sr. Esterina Cena – and, of course, the pupils and teachers. The main door of this new school was that leading into what is now the infant school playground.

It was not until December, however, that a letter from the Department of Education declared the school officially recognised as a Secondary School – Meán Scoil Maria Auxiliatrix. The letter came as a

surprise Christmas present, as normally recognition would not be given until a year after inspection... This new school was, of course, fee-paying as were all Secondary Schools at the time...

Boarders 1959

In 1959 the aspirants (girls who felt they were called to join the Salesian Sisters) moved from "Fernbank" to the midlands to form a school of their own. This meant a big drop in numbers in our school, just four years after it was recognised! A solution was to accept boarders – three in 1959, increasing to twelve the following year, and then eight Americans, whose parents were based in military camps in Germany, came to swell the numbers, until eventually by 1969 there were forty boarders. At the same time the number of day pupils had increased, requiring more classrooms, although three had been added in 1958. Eventually it was decided to cease taking boarders to as to make more space for day pupils."

The aerial photograph below shows the Salesian foundation in April of 1955, with construction underway in areas.



Figure 4: April 1956 Aerial View. Morgan Collection, National Library of Ireland. NPA MOR2240.

The character of Fernbank House, and its early 20th century extension, appears to have remained largely intact during much of the 20th century. However, the addition of a new upper storey to the buildings, and resultant loss of their original roofs, detracted considerably from their architectural character and quality. The date for this alteration is not known, but appears to have been in the latter half of the 20th century. A 1957 photograph, published in 2019 from the Limerick Leader archives, shows the earlier character of the original house and its extension within the school development.



Figure 5: 1957 Photo of 'Mother Caroline at Salesians Convent in 1957', published in the Limerick Leader, 22nd June 2019.

The Salesian secondary school at Fernbank closed in the early 2010s, and this portion of the site has remained vacant since this date. The primary school, in the western portion of the original site, remains in use.

Overview Description of the Site

The site comprises a multi-phase development, with numerous adjoining buildings of different dates. As such, a detailed room-by-room description will not be provided. A representative sample of photographs, both internal and external, is appended below.

Externally, the original facades of Fernbank House and its 1905 extension have been altered through the late 20th century addition of a Second Floor. This has resulted in the loss of architectural features and detracted from the proportions and design of the original elevations. The porch to Fernbank House, despite some minor alterations being evident, is considered to be of interest.

The interiors are largely functional spaces with little or no architectural quality or significance. However, there are some internal spaces that are considered to be of interest, including the Entrance Hall and Stair Hall. While the layout of the Entrance Hall appears to have been altered from its original form, both rooms retain decorative joinery of quality and interest. There are also some fittings, including a carved timber mantelpiece, at Ground Floor Level of Fernbank House which are of interest.



Figure 6: Representative photos showing the Entrance Hall, Staircase and carved timber mantelpiece.

The former Chapel has been deconsecrated, and the original fittings removed. There are relatively standard stained glass panels on the western wall. The Chapel is not considered to be of particular architectural quality or significance.



Figure 7: Representative photos showing the interiors of the modern spaces, including the Chapel, a cell and a staircase.

As illustrated in the photos included above, and appended below, the interiors of the building are generally considered to be standard for the period in which they were built, and of limited interest. The spaces are largely functional, and lacking in architectural features or ornamentation.

Assessment of the Heritage Significance of the Site

The significance of Fernbank and its site has been assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in 'Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2011) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Act requires that a protected structure be of special interest under one or more of the following categories.

- a) Architectural;
- b) Historical;
- c) Archaeological;
- d) Artistic;
- e) Cultural;
- f) Scientific;
- g) Technical;
- h) Social.

The subject site will be assessed under each of these special interest categories and with reference to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines (2011).

1. Architectural Interest

The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines provide the following criteria for assessing Architectural Interest:

- a) *"a generally agreed exemplar of good quality architectural design;*
- b) *the work of a known and distinguished architect, engineer, designer or craftsman;*
- c) *an exemplar of a building type, plan-form, style or styles of any period but also the harmonious interrelationship of differing styles within one structure;*
- d) *a structure which makes a positive contribution to its setting, such as a streetscape or a group of structures in an urban area, or the landscape in a rural area;*
- e) *a structure with an interior that is well designed, rich in decoration, complex or spatially pleasing."*

The structures on the subject site are not considered to be of particular architectural significance under these criteria, as described below:

- a) The extent of alteration and extension carried out to the original Fernbank House throughout the 20th century is such that the existing structure comprises a disharmonious mixture of architectural styles and forms. The structure cannot be considered to be a generally agreed exemplar of good architectural design.
- b) The architects for some of the extensions and additions to the site are known, however the original architects for the 1878 house or the 1905 extension are not known. The architect associated with many of the more substantial mid-20th century works to the site is P. J. Sheahan. Sheahan worked extensively with local authorities in Ireland, but also had strong links with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1957 Pope Pius II conferred the title of Chevalier of the Order of St. Sylvester on Sheahan in recognition of his achievements as an ecclesiastical architect, the first Irish architect to receive this recognition. Having said that, the surviving buildings by Sheahan at the subject site are not considered to be exemplars of his work, and are very standard of their time and typology. Further alterations have been carried out to many of the buildings on site, detracting from their original design intent.

- c) The grouping of buildings on the subject site is not considered to have a harmonious interrelationship, and the gradual addition to the original house over the course of the 20th century has resulted in a confused and unattractive plan-form and mixture of styles.
- d) The construction of new modern structures in the front setting of the site has detracted from the relationship between the structures and the streetscape. The structure has limited architectural style and quality externally, and does not contribute to the streetscape. The external porch, although small in size, retains its architectural quality and makes a positive contribution to the front setting of the former house.
- e) The interior generally is not considered to be well-designed. There are some surviving architectural and decorative features that are of interest, however these are limited to a small area at Ground Floor Level.

Architectural features including the entrance porch and internal fittings such as the carved timber staircase and fireplace are considered to be of architectural interest, however these fittings are not of sufficient interest to warrant the inclusion of the building on the Record of Protected Structures.

2. Historical Interest

The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines provide the following criteria for assessing Historical Interest:

- a) *"A structure may have historical interest as the location of an important event that occurred in, or is associated with it, or by its association with a historic personality. Some events or associations may be so important that the place retains its significance regardless of subsequent alteration. Where an otherwise unremarkable structure has historical associations, it may be more appropriate to commemorate the association with a wall-mounted plaque. Where the decision is difficult, it is helpful to discover whether other buildings connected with the personality or event still exist (and if they are protected) and to make an assessment that takes account of the value of such a group."*
- b) *A structure may have influenced, or been influenced by, an historic figure. Important people may have lived in the structure or have been otherwise associated with it – for example its patron, designer or builder. Places in which evidence of an association with a person survive, in situ, or in which the settings are substantially intact, are of greater significance than those which are much changed or in which much evidence does not survive.*
- c) *Historical interest can be attributed where light is thrown on the character of a past age by virtue of the structure's design, plan, original use, materials or location.*
- d) *A structure may be a memorial to a past event;*
- e) *A structure itself may be an example of the effects of change over time. The design and fabric of the structure may contain evidence of its former use or symbolic meaning. This may be the case with former gaols or churches that have since changed and, in so doing, illustrate a historic development.*
- f) *Some fixtures and features may survive, for example in consistory courts and courts of law, that are important evidence of former liturgical or legal practice and may have special historical interest for that reason;*
- g) *Some unusual structures may have historical or socio-historical interest, for example, early electricity substations, 'Emergency' era military pillboxes or sentry-boxes. Although not yet of popular heritage significance, such structures can nonetheless have special historical and social interest.*
- h) *Special historical interest may exist because of the rarity of a structure. Either few structures of an identifiable type were built at a particular time, or few have survived. In either case, the extant structure may be one of the few representative examples of its time that still exists in*

the national, regional or local area. The rarity of surviving examples of a building type can ensure that special historical interest accrues to them. A planning authority should give careful consideration to protecting any examples of rare structures in its area, bearing in mind the degree to which past interventions may have altered their character."

The historical association of the former Fernbank House with the Cleeve's family is not considered to be significant, based on the relatively short period of time in which the Cleeve family was resident, and the considerable alterations and extensions to the site in the intervening years.

None of the structures or features on the subject site meet these criteria. The site is not considered to be of historic interest.

3. Archaeological Interest

The earliest structure on the subject site dates to the late 19th century. There are no structures or features of archaeological interest on the subject site.

4. Artistic Interest

The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines provide the following criteria for assessing Artistic Interest:

"Special artistic interest may be attributed to a structure itself, or to a part of a structure, for its craftsmanship, design or decoration. Examples could include:

- a) examples of good craftsmanship;*
- b) decoratively carved statuary or sculpture that is part of an architectural composition;*
- c) decoratively-carved timber or ceramic-tiled shopfronts;*
- d) ornate plasterwork ceilings;*
- e) decorative wrought-iron gates;*
- f) religious art in a place of public worship such as the Stations of the Cross or stained-glass windows;*
- g) fixtures and fittings such as carved fireplaces, staircases or light-fittings;*
- h) funerary monuments within a graveyard;*
- i) the relationship of materials to each other and to the totality of the building in which they are situated, if these have been designed as an ensemble."*

Features within the footprint of the former Fernbank House are of some artistic interest, including the carved timber fixtures and fittings in the Entrance and Stair Hall, and the carved timber fireplace to the Ground Floor Eastern Reception Room in the early 20th century addition to the house. The modern stained glass windows to the former Chapel are also considered to be of some artistic interest. However, these fittings are not of sufficient interest to warrant the inclusion of the building on the Record of Protected Structures.

5. Cultural Interest

The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines provide the following criteria for assessing Cultural Interest:

- a) "those structures to which the Granada Convention refers as 'more modest works of the past that have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time';*

- b) *structures that have literary or cinematic associations, particularly those that have a strong recognition value;*
- c) *other structures that illustrate the development of society, such as early schoolhouses, library buildings, swimming baths or printworks. If these associations are not related to specific aspects of the physical fabric of a structure, consideration could be given to noting them by a tourism plaque or other such device."*

Fernbank House is not considered to meet the above criteria, and therefore is not considered to be of cultural significance.

6. Scientific Interest

The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines provide the following criteria for assessing Scientific Interest:

- a) *"the results of scientific research may be seen in the execution of the structure;*
- b) *the materials used in the structure may have the potential to contribute to scientific research, for example extinct pollen or plant species preserved in the base layers of ancient thatch roofs;*
- c) *the structure may be associated with scientific research that has left its mark on the place, such as early Ordnance Survey benchmarks carved into stonework."*

None of the structures or features on the subject site meet these criteria. The site is not considered to be of scientific interest.

7. Technical Interest

The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines provide the following criteria for assessing Technical Interest:

- a) *"it displays structural or engineering innovation evidenced in its design or construction techniques such as the use of cast- or wrought-iron prefabrication or an early use of concrete;*
- b) *it is the work of a known and distinguished engineer;*
- c) *it is an exemplar of engineering design practice of its time. For example, a bridge may be a masonry arch, an iron suspension or a concrete span;*
- d) *it displays technically unusual or innovative construction or cladding materials, such as early examples of glazed curtain walling, prefabricated concrete plank cladding or Coade stone;*
- e) *contains innovative mechanical fixtures, machinery or plant or industrial heritage artefacts that describe the character of production processes. The specifically industrial aspect of some sites like mill buildings, mill-ponds, tailings or derelict mines can often have a technical heritage value;*
- f) *purely special technical interest can be ascribed to the innovative engineering qualities of a structure, as distinct from the building's appropriateness for use, or its appearance or form."*

None of the structures or features on the subject site meet these criteria. The site is not considered to be of technical interest.

8. Social Interest

The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines provide the following criteria for assessing Social Interest:

"The characteristic of special social interest embraces those qualities for which a structure, a complex or an area has become a focus of spiritual, political, symbolic or other sentiment to any group of people. A community may have an attachment to a place because it is an essential reference point for that community's identity, whether as a meeting place or a place of tradition, ritual or ceremony. The configuration, disposition or layout of a space or group of structures, where they facilitate behaviour that would otherwise be difficult or impossible, may be of social interest. This category of special interest may sometimes not be directly related to the physical fabric of a particular structure or structures and may survive physical alteration. Care should be taken to recognise the pattern or internal relations of the parts of the structure that constitute its special interest, in order to ensure that they be conserved.

The fixtures and features that testify to community involvement in the creation of a structure, or have a spatial form or layout indicating community involvement in the use of a structure, could include such elements as memorials, statues or stained-glass panels."

The subject site is of some social interest as a former School and former home to the Salesian Sisters community in Limerick. As noted in the criteria in the Guidelines, this interest does not necessarily relate to the physical fabric of the structure. There are no known features such as memorials, statues etc. which testify to community involvement.

Recommendation

The significance of the structures on the subject site has been assessed under various headings, in accordance with the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines* (2011). This assessment has found that the site is of some social interest and that some surviving architectural and decorative features and fittings are of some architectural and artistic interest. This interest is limited however, and is not considered sufficient to warrant inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures. The site has been extensively altered and developed throughout the 20th century, with the result being a disharmonious complex of low architectural quality.

The social interest of the association with the school can be recognised and commemorated through a plaque, or similar.

The features of architectural and/or artistic interest that survive should be salvaged for re-use within any potential future development of the site. The outline salvage schedule includes, but is not limited to:

- The timber stair case
- Carved timber fixtures and fittings in the Ground Floor Entrance Hall
- The carved timber fireplaces
- The modern stained glass windows to the Chapel
- The timber entrance porch

In light of the findings of this assessment, I do not recommend the former Fernbank House for addition to the Record of Protected Structures.

Signed: 
Shóna O'Keeffe, Executive Architectural Conservation Officer

Date: 5/11/2024

Signed: 
Gráinne McMahon, Senior Executive Architect

Date: 5.11.2024