

**ST PAUL'S RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
SYBIL HILL ROAD
RAHENY**

CONSERVATION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9th October 2019

**Historic Building Consultants
Old Bawn
Old Connaught
Bray**

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Summary

This report has been produced as a historical and historic building survey of lands to the east of Sybil Hill Road, Raheny, with an assessment of the potential impact of a proposed residential development on architectural heritage in the vicinity.

The application site consists of a substantial area of land that is approximately L-shaped, together with a narrower strip that runs westward to provide for access to Sybil Hill Road. The site is adjacent to the grounds of Sybil Hill House, which is a protected structure. The main part of the site is bounded on three sides by St Anne's Park, which is a conservation area – though not an architectural conservation area.

It is proposed to provide 657 apartments on the site, comprised of nine blocks of five to nine storeys.

The proposed access will run adjacent to the buildings at St Paul's College, to the south of Sybil Hill House and will be separated from Sybil Hill House by the grounds to the front of the house. It is not anticipated that the access road would have any significant impact on the house or its setting.

The area proposed for housing is to the rear of Sybil Hill House and separated from it by trees and outbuildings. The nearest building would be about eighty metres from the rear of Sybil Hill House. It is not anticipated that the proposed development would have any significant impact on the character of the house.

The application site is bounded by St Anne's Park on the northern, eastern and southern sides. The margin of the park is marked by a belt of trees that runs along all three sides adjacent to the application site. On the southern side a long, broad avenue runs through the park, from a gateway on Sybil Hill Road towards the east and this is bounded by substantial trees. It is proposed to locate an area of public open space on the site near to this boundary. The part of the park to the east of the site is partly taken up with playing pitches and partly with the Millennium Arboretum. To the north of the site there are more playing pitches in the park. The upper part of the proposed apartments will be visible from the playing pitches, but not to the extent that they would have a significant impact on the character of the park.

Background

This report has been prepared for Crekav Trading GP Limited as part of the documentation to be submitted with a planning application.

The site was inspected for the purposes of preparing this report on 11th November 2016, 24th May 2017 and 21st August 2019 on which occasions the photographs incorporated in the report were taken and the site examined to prepare the descriptions contained therein.

Historical research was carried out on the background history of the property and the results are set down below.

While this report contains comment on aspects of the condition of the buildings it is not a condition report or a structural report and must not be read as such.

This report has been prepared by Rob Goodbody BA(mod), DipEnvPlanning, DipABRC, MA, MUBC, MIPI.

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Historical background

During the eighteenth century the land around Clontarf and Raheny became popular as the location for villas belonging to the gentry and professional classes. Houses such as Sybil Hill, Furry Park, Bay View and Verville were built during the eighteenth century and this trend continued into the opening decades of the nineteenth century with the construction of Bedford Lodge, Baymount Castle, Sea View and Mount Prospect. Some of these, including Sybil Hill House, were altered and extended in the nineteenth century, while others, such as St Anne's, were demolished and new houses built on the site.



Figure 1: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1843, with site boundary overlaid

Source: OSI

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of this area, published in 1843, shows the villas dotted around the district. In the extract from the map that is reproduced above, which covers a relatively small area, no less than thirteen villas are included, each with the extent of its grounds shown with a grey stipple, while others are just outside the area shown. The extent of the present application site is marked with a broken red line, which shows that in the mid-nineteenth century this land was partly within the grounds of Sybil Hill House, though mostly within the grounds of Maryville. In this map extract St Anne's is towards the right-hand side of the map, a little above centre; the grounds of St Anne's are shown as running westwards to the green line, which depicts the boundary between the civil parishes of Clontarf and Raheny.

At the time that the map was published St Anne's had recently been demolished and rebuilt by the Guinness family. St Anne's was inherited by Arthur Edward Guinness in 1868 and in 1874-76 he enlarged the property significantly, acquiring extensive lands to the north and west in the parish of Raheny. In 1876 he acquired the house at Sybil Hill, with its grounds, and two years later he added Maryville, which stood close to Sybil Hill House, to the east.

Having acquired a substantial area of land to add to his estate at St Anne's, Arthur E Guinness, with his wife, Olivia, laid out an extensive estate, with allées and parkland, and with extensive belts of holm oaks to give shelter from the salt-laden sea breezes. The principal avenue, 1300 metres long, ran westwards from the front of the house to the edge of the grounds of Sybil Hill House. However, he was not able to acquire the lands beyond Sybil Hill House and the entrance to St Anne's turned northwards through the grounds of Sybil Hill House to meet the Howth Road. The Guinnesses did not incorporate either Sybil Hill House or Maryville into the landscaped grounds of St Anne's and they continued to be occupied separately.

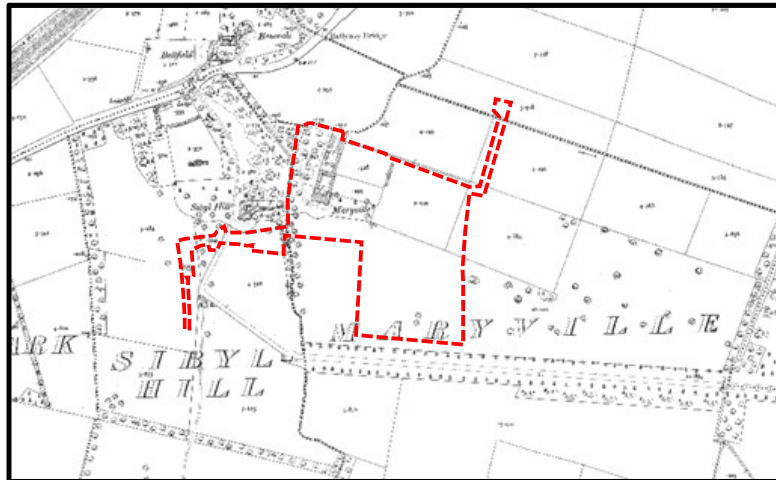


Figure 2: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1907 with site boundary overlaid

Source: OSI

The map extract above shows the approximate outline of the application site superimposed on the Ordnance Survey map of 1907. Maryville may be seen in the north-western corner of the site.

Arthur Edward Guinness was elevated to the peerage as Lord Ardilaun in 1880. After his death in 1910 Lady Ardilaun continued to live in the house until her death in 1925, though the estate was no longer kept up to its previous high standard. As the Ardilaun's were childless, the property was inherited by Lord Ardilaun's nephew, Bishop Benjamin Plunket.

In 1932, Bishop Plunket put the St Anne's estate on the market, though he found it difficult to find a buyer. In 1936 Dublin Corporation expressed an interest in acquiring it as housing land and this was pursued through the St Anne's Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), 1938, the public inquiry for which was held in September of that year. The order was initially made for 444¾ acres (180 hectares), the greater part of which was to be used for housing, while 176 acres (71.23 hectares) was to be used as a public park. The property belonging to Bishop Plunket was initially included in this total area of land covered by the compulsory purchase order, though it was acquired by agreement with Dublin Corporation and subsequently excluded from the order. Sybil Hill House was not included in the CPO as Bishop Plunket retained it as his residence. Maryville was included in the CPO, but as the Corporation's plans for the estate were put on hold due to the outbreak of the

Second World War the property was not acquired at that time. Maryville continued to be occupied by Cecil Milne, under a lease granted in 1932. Cecil Milne had run a dairy farm on the property, though during the war years he cultivated the land as a market garden and this use continued after the end of the war. Maryville was sold to Dublin Corporation in 1956.

In 1948 the Vincentian Fathers acquired 12.5 hectares of the St Anne’s estate from Dublin Corporation for the purpose of building a school. The school, which they named St Paul’s College, opened in 1952. A number of land transactions followed, as Bishop Plunket had died in 1947 and the Vincentian Fathers had been able to purchase Sybil Hill House from his family in 1950. In 1952 Corporation acquired part of the lands from the Vincentian Fathers along the western side of their property, so that they could lay out a new road to form a northward extension from Vernon Avenue – now Sybil Hill Road. To compensate for the loss of land, the fathers acquired land to the east of the school from the Corporation and this forms the southern part of the lands now the subject of the present application. The house at Maryville, with its grounds, were sold to the Vincentian Fathers in 1959. The Vincentian Fathers demolished Maryville and laid out the grounds as part of the school playing fields.

The land transferred to the Vincentian Fathers in 1952 extended into what is now the Millennium Arboretum area within the park and did not allow for an efficient layout for playing fields. A further transaction was entered into with the Corporation in 1953 to swap that eastern part of the lands transferred in 1952 with an area to the north. This is clarified in the map below.

The spur of land within the present site that provides the access from Sybil Hill Road was formerly part of the grounds of Sybil Hill House.

St Anne’s Park now extends to approximately 110 hectares, as compared with the 71.23 hectares originally envisaged when the lands were acquired.

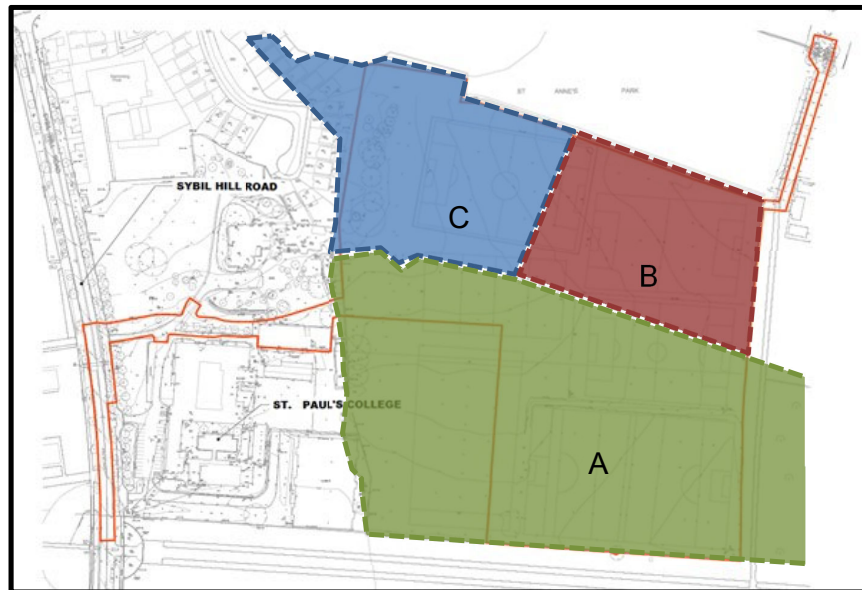


Figure 3: Summary of land acquisition

The map above summarises the various land transactions relating to the present site.

- A. Land acquired from Dublin Corporation in 1952 to compensate for land sold to the Corporation for the laying out of Sybil Hill Road. This acquisition included land now occupied by the Millennium Arboretum.
- B. Land acquired from Dublin Corporation in 1953 in a land swap, with the Corporation receiving the land now occupied by the Millennium Arboretum, to the east of the present site, and shown as the green area at bottom right in the map above
- C. Lands acquired in 1959 with Maryville.

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Hankinson, C F J (ed.), *Debrett's Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage and Companionage*, Odhams Press, London, 1953.

Irish Times 7th September 1938

Leases relating to the property

Lennon, Colm, *That Field of Glory – the story of Clontarf from battleground to garden suburb*, Wordwell, Dublin, 2014.

Sharkey, Joan Ussher, *St Anne's – the story of a Guinness Estate*, Woodfield Press, Dublin, 2002

St Anne's Park website, <http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-services-recreation-culture-dublin-city-parks-visit-park/st-annes-park>

Conservation context

Record of Protected Structures

Sybil Hill is a protected structure and is included in the Record of Protected Structures, within the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022, under reference 7910. This building is marked with a red asterisk on the extract from the development plan map B, which is reproduced below.

Conservation areas

Sybil Hill is not located within an architectural conservation area and neither is the application site. The adjacent lands within St Anne's Park are designated as a conservation area on the development plan maps, indicated by red hatching; however, this is not an architectural conservation area.



Figure 4: Detail of development plan map with application site outlined in red

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage has not yet included the Raheny area.

Building survey



Plate 1: Gateway and railings at access from Sybil Hill Road

The site that is the subject of this assessment consists of a sub-rectangular area of ground to the east of St Paul's College and Sybil Hill House, with a narrow strip of ground that joins it westwards to Sybil Hill Road. The narrow strip at the western end of the site runs to the north of St Paul's College and to the south of the protected structure at Sybil Hill House. The present driveway leads in from Sybil Hill Road and turns a little northward to run to the house at Sybil Hill. The gateway is flanked by brick piers that support steel gates, while the front boundary runs in each direction, marked by a steel fence rising from a concrete plinth wall (plate 1). The gates, piers and railings date from the time that Sybil Hill Road was laid out in the early 1950s.



Plate 2: Site for proposed access, with St Paul's School to right and Sybil Hill House to left

Where the driveway turns northward there is an area of grass directly ahead, to the east, interrupted by a number of trees (plate 2).



Plate 3: Site of proposed access road, with ha-ha at left

To the north of this strip there is a ha-ha that separates the grass strip from the parking area to the front of Sybil Hill House (plate 3). To the south of this access strip is St Paul's College, which dates from the 1950s (plate 4). The ha-ha delineates the setting of Sybil Hill House, which is on an elevated site on extensive landscaped grounds and separates the grounds from the adjacent school complex.



Plate 4: St Paul's College



Plate 5: Sybil Hill House, with southern elevation at right and western elevation at left

Sybil Hill House, which lies to the north of the proposed access to the site, is an eighteenth-century, two-storey villa, which was substantially altered and extended in the nineteenth century to give it its present appearance. The house is rendered externally and has its main entrance facing southwards, towards the proposed access and St Paul's College (plate 5). The western elevation is also significant and looks over a small area of parkland towards a grove of trees. The northern elevation is of somewhat lesser significance but was nonetheless intended to be seen from with the grounds of the house, particularly as the original driveway ran southwards past the front of the house from Howth Road (plate 6).



Plate 6: Northern elevation of Sybil Hill House



Plate 7: Eastern elevation of Sybil Hill House

The eastern side of the house is more utilitarian and there are several outbuildings and additions to the house on that side, beyond which are trees within the grounds (plates 7 and 8).



Plate 8: Eastern side of Sybil Hill House, seen from application site



Plate 9: Prefabricated classrooms

There is a block of prefabricated classrooms on the site of the proposed access route and these are depicted in plate 9.



Plate 10: Brick-faced wall near northern boundary

The application site, other than the strip proposed as the access, was formerly laid out as playing fields. This is a substantial flat area of land measuring approximately 300 metres from north to south and 260 metres from east to west. This area is surrounded on the northern, eastern and southern sides by trees within the grounds of the adjacent St Anne's Park. On the western boundary there are trees along much of the boundary, particularly the northern section, which adjoins 'The Meadows' housing estate and the central section, which adjoins Sybil Hill House and its outbuildings. The southern part of this boundary runs to the rear of St Paul's College.

Just beyond the northern boundary of the application site is a high wall that is faced with brick on the southern side and with brick and stone on the northern side (plate 10). This is the surviving northern wall of the walled garden associated with Maryville and is the only extant remnant associated with Maryville. The mode of construction is typical of garden walls of the period, with the wall built in stone, which was relatively cheap, but faced with brick on the side facing the garden, as brick is good for heat retention and its use to face the wall, particularly a south-facing wall, enabled the growth of plants that would not otherwise have survived in our climate.



Plate 11: Gates to St Anne's Park

To the south of the application site is the entrance to St Anne's Park from Sybil Hill Road. This is marked by a set of gates, piers and railings that are of late twentieth century date. The gateway opens to the avenue, which was laid out in the 1880s, originally leading to the mansion house at St Anne's, though not forming a direct connection to a road at the western end. This avenue is lined with evergreen oaks and pine.



Plate 12: Eastward view along avenue



Plate 13: Boundary of park with application site at south-eastern corner

The application site is separated from St Anne's Park by a metal fence, though the extensive tree cover along the boundary minimises the extent to which this is visible from the park. The fence is seen in the lower parts of the photographs above and below.



Plate 14: South-eastern corner of application site, seen from within park

None of the boundaries of the application site are of historical significance. The surviving wall of the walled garden of Maryville is of historical significance but is outside the boundary of the application site.

Proposed development

It is proposed to develop the larger area of land at the eastern end of the site for residential purposes, to include nine apartment buildings of five to nine storeys each in the northern part of the site. This would provide a total of 657 residential units. The development will also include a crèche. The narrow strip connecting to Sybil Hill Road would provide for the access road leading in to the site.

The proposal will involve the demolition of the single-storey disused classroom block in the area adjacent to where the access road meets the greater part of the site.

An access road will be provided from Sybil Hill Road, running to the north of the main St Paul's College building to reach the main part of the site. This access road would include new accesses to Sybil Hill House and to the college and it would consist of a carriageway with footpath and cycleway, bounded by walls and railings, with pedestrian and vehicular gates at the entrances to Sybil Hill House and St Paul's College.

Potential impact of the development

From a built heritage perspective there are two issues that need to be examined in assessing the potential impact of the proposal – the protected structure and the conservation area within St Anne's Park, adjacent to the site. In examining these issues, the principal issue relates to the operational element of the proposal. The impacts during the construction phase are not considered to have any specific impact in relation to built heritage.

Potential impact of access road on Sybil Hill House

The house at Sybil Hill is set in its own grounds, separated from St Paul's College by a driveway, a parking area and an area of lawn, with groves of trees. To the front of the house there is a ha-ha that separates the grounds of the house from the college grounds to the south. While this was constructed at a late date, when the college was built, it nonetheless forms a definite demarcation between the grounds of the protected structure and the twentieth-century college buildings and grounds. The proposed access road would run between the ha-ha and the college building, at a distance of almost forty metres from the house. As such, the access roadway would have little impact on the character of the protected structure or its setting. The gateway is of mid-twentieth century origin and is not of heritage significance and its removal in order to provide for a wider access would not be a conservation issue.

Potential impact of residential development on Sybil Hill House

The nearest proposed building to Sybil Hill House would be apartment block 1, which would run north-south directly to the east of the rear of Sybil Hill House and

at a distance of approximately 80 metres and a height of five storeys at this location. The eastern side of Sybil Hill House is the least significant side; the other three sides are designed to be seen from the parkland that runs around the house, while the eastern side faces into the courtyard of utilitarian structures and was clearly never meant to be a significant side of the house. Conversely, the principal views from inside the house are to the south, west and, to a lesser extent, the north, while the east does not feature significant views. It is also noted that there are trees planted to the east of the house and these provide screening.

It is not anticipated that the presence of Block 1 would have any significant impact on the character of the protected structure, given the nature of the house and the distance that would separate the new building from the protected structure.

Potential impact of development on St Anne's Park conservation area

St Anne's Park is an important park and provides amenities for a substantial area in the north-eastern part of Dublin City. The park includes extensive parkland, with walkways and lawns, it has a significant rose garden and the Millennium Arboretum. Sections of the park are also given over to use as playing fields.

To the south of the application site there is a broad avenue that runs roughly east-west, from a gateway fronting Sybil Hill Road at the western end, towards the site of St Anne's House to the east. This avenue is flanked by lines of substantial holm oak and pine trees that provide a high evergreen wall on either side of the avenue or allée. The proposal would also locate public open space in the area adjacent to this avenue.

To the north of the application site there are playing pitches in the park, with a belt of trees along the boundary line. On the eastern side the application site has more playing pitches adjacent to the northern end of the eastern boundary, while the southern part of the site abounds the Millennium Arboretum, which is a substantial area covered with young trees.

The public open space within the proposed development will be in an area that is well screened by the high holm oak and pine trees to the south and the Millennium Arboretum to the east and will not be visible to any significant extent from the park. The proposed landscape scheme includes for the planting of an additional evergreen hedge along the existing boundary fence with the avenue. The apartments would be higher and their location, on the northern side of the site, is not as comprehensively screened at the margin of the park. While all areas of the park are used for walking, those areas used for pitches are not as sensitive as the parkland, the rose garden and other high-quality elements of the park and it is not considered that the proposed development would have a significant impact on the character of the park.