

Wicklow County Council  
County Buildings  
Wicklow

29<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Re: Request for Further Information (Planning Ref.: 23/60219) Proposed development at Tinakilly, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow (Applicant: Keldrum Ltd)**

Dear Sir/Madam

I write in relation to the above Request for Further Information, issued by Wicklow CC on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and specifically to point 5 of the request, as per the below:

*5. A number of third party observations have raised concerns with regard to the removal of a tree located centrally within the southern field which has been referred to as a fairy tree of local significance.*

*It is noted that the tree survey and arboriculture report prepared by The Tree File does not include the tree referred to as the Fairy Tree and it is not clear why it has been excluded.*

*The applicant is required to submit an updated arborist report in relation to the tree, including any relevant historical information and if appropriate put forward mitigation measures to protect/preserve the tree.*

With regards to the above, I write in particular reference to historic information relating to the identified 'Fairy Tree'.

I note that the tree is described in one of the planning submissions (Cllr. Mary Kavanagh) as 'The area known as the Fairy Field, which is home to a large iconic landmark Hawthorn tree known as the Fairy Tree should be protected as a remnant of local folklore.'

A further submission (Armstrong Planning), notes the following 'We understand that this tree, known locally as 'The Fairy Tree' is of genuine local significance. Its presence predates the collective memory of residents of Rathnew Village, who hold a deep reverence for this tree (cherishing not just its physical existence, but also the captivating folklore that surrounds it, particularly its associations with fairies).'

As author of the Cultural Heritage Chapter of the EIAR submitted as part of the planning application, I can confirm, that whilst the tree may have local cultural heritage significance to the

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current population of Rathnew, I can find no record of historic references to this tree during the course of research. One of the key resources for understanding local folklore, is the Schools Collection, published on ducas.ie. The 1930s record for Rathnew School has been reviewed and the 'Fairy Tree' at Tinakilly is not included in any of the accounts.

The tree itself is not marked as a Fairy Tree within any of the historic mapping of the proposed development area. The lands in question formed part of the demesne associated with Tinakilly House, which would not have historically been accessible to members of the public. In addition, no footpaths are marked within the historic mapping that would have provided access to the location of the tree. The tree, which is Hawthorn, would not be a tree commonly planted as part of a demesne landscape. Specimen species such as Oak, Beech and Chestnut were commonly used, such as those mature examples along the avenue at Tinakilly, with examples also located along the field boundaries. It is highly likely that the Hawthorn tree post dates the establishment of the demesne landscape as a whole, with any cultural heritage associations with fairies being established more recently, due to the specimen type.

Hawthorn trees are mentioned multiple times within the above Schools Collection of Irish Folklore, as being associated with buried pots of gold, or associated with the death of someone who cut a Hawthorn down. Bringing the flowers of the tree into the home was considered to be very bad luck. The tree is also associated with spring, and are often called 'May Trees' and these trees or bushes were often decorated by children on 1<sup>st</sup> May (a practice mentioned in the Schools Collection from Rathnew School, although the 'May Bush' is noted as being cut and put into the ground).

In summary, it appears that the notion of the 'Fairy Tree' at Tinakilly, seems to be relatively recent in terms of origin, with no record of antiquity associated with the site.

We trust the above to be in order but if you have any queries then please do let me know.

Kind Regards



**Faith Bailey**  
**Associate Director**