

Whitebox Student Campus

GROODY ROAD, CASTLETROY, LIMERICK

PLANNING SUBMISSION

Landscape Report

29th January 2025



Landscape Report

Contents

<i>Item</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
1.0	Existing Landscape	3
1.1	Overview and Landscape Character	3
1.2	Existing Trees and Vegetation	3
2.0	Landscape Strategy	4
2.1	General aims	4
2.2	Spatial Uses	4
3.0	Open Space Design	5
3.1	Courtyard 1	5
3.2	Courtyard 2	6
3.3	Courtyard 3	7
4.0	Planting Strategy	8
4.1	Ecology and Biodiversity	8
4.2	Planting Design	9

Kennedy Fitzpatrick Landscape Architecture Ltd. has been commissioned by the applicant to provide landscape architectural consultancy in relation to a planning application for the proposed student accommodation at Groody Road, Co.Limerick. This report should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

KFLA Drawing, 0527_100_Landscape Masterplan

KFLA Drawing, 0527_101_Detail Area - Courtyard 1

KFLA Drawing, 0527_102_Detail Area - Courtyard 2 and 3

KFLA Drawing, 0527_103_Landscape Sections - Part 1

KFLA Drawing, 0527_104_Landscape Sections - Part 2

1.0 Existing Landscape

1.1 Overview and Landscape Character

The subject site is located on the outskirts of Limerick City, close to the area of Castletroy. The site sits between Groody and Road and the River Groody. To the north of the site, there are various industrial and commercial buildings, which are clustered along the R445 Road. To the south, the lands are greenfield. They are not intensively grazed, and are predominantly in an idle state. There is also a large area of hardstanding in one of the fields to the south of the site. Groody road is located to the east of the subject lands, while beyond this, there a number of existing student accommodation complexes, commercial developments and housing. The Groody River and its banks bound the subject lands to the west.

In the wider landscape, the River Shannon, its flood plains and estuary are located to the north of the subject lands, along with the University of Limerick to the north-east. To the south, there is a mixed land use, including educational, greenfield sites, industrial and commercial developments on the city outskirts and farmland further south. To the east the development is predominantly residential, along with some recreational green space such as Castletroy Golf Club. Limerick City and its centre is located to the west of the subject lands.

1.2 Existing Trees and Vegetation

The tree cover on the site is primarily composed of scrub planting, including small trees and shrubs. The higher, central part of the site has an abundance of noxious weeds and emerging scrub vegetation typical of unused land, while along the River Groody, the vegetation is predominantly riparian. There are an existing line of existing street trees just outside of the site boundary, which run alongside Groody Road.

2.0 Landscape Strategy

2.1 General Aims

The character of the landscape proposed is one of large trees, copses of native trees, formal clipped hedges, ornamental shrub and groundcover planting, woodland planting and native hedgerows. The landscape strategy aims to integrate the proposed residential development with the existing landscape and create a network of attractive and useable open spaces while contributing to local biodiversity. The green areas are designed as landscape spaces that offer the opportunity for meeting, walking, exercise and informal play.

2.2 Spatial Uses

There are 4 main open spaces which are evenly distributed across the scheme and are well linked to the pedestrian and cycle connections. 3 of these are gated courtyards accessed only by residents of the associated apartment blocks. Just west of these, along the River Groody, is a large parkland space where the levels have been carefully considered to accommodate generous flat areas for passive recreation, informal play and ball games. Overlooking the lawn spaces, seating spaces are located including benches, ornamental planting, flowering trees and feature paving.

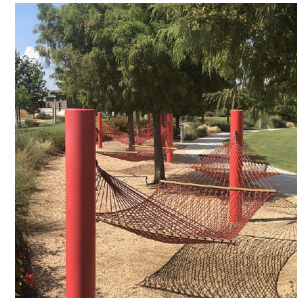
Large areas of woodland planting are located throughout the space providing habitat for local biodiversity. Native hedgerows provide spatial boundary to park and provides green infrastructure link through site. Proposed wetland planted with native species creates interesting and unique habitats, contributing to local biodiversity and ecology. These also act as places for residents to explore and experience nature. There are many sub-spaces within the park including an outdoor gym, incidental seating areas along the path way and secondary seating spaces within the newly created habitat.

The desire lines through the landscape spaces are reflected in the path layout and will integrate with the general street layout to provide a high level of pedestrian permeability. Pedestrian permeability throughout the site and to adjoining sites has been provided linking with the existing and future proposed footpath network.

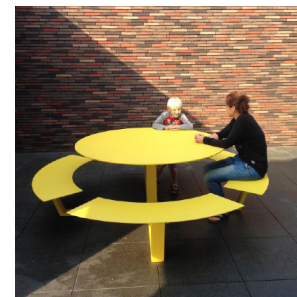


3.0 Open Space Design

3.1 Courtyard 1



This courtyard is located to the north of the development and has been designed in a contemporary style with opportunities for gathering in groups in mind. A fire tender route has been designed into the space seamlessly allowing space for group activities in the centre of the courtyard. A linear curved seating wall defines the east of the courtyard and overlooks the event space.



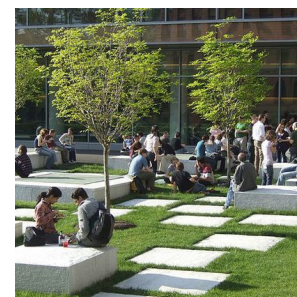
There are outdoor 'chill out' rooms located along the bedrooms. These are intended to be quieter, more intimate spaces for individuals or small groups. Some spaces will be multi-functional with seating and tables while others will have hammocks or other equipment to lounge on.



There is a larger active zone located along the library side of the courtyard. This area is intended to be more colorful and creates space for larger groups to gather. Bold and colourful street furniture is intended for this space with an area for outdoor games also. Coloured paving defines the space and connects it to other active zones.



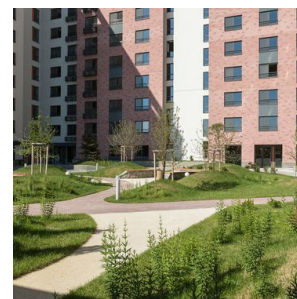
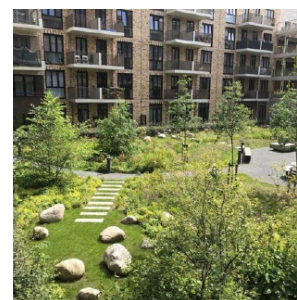
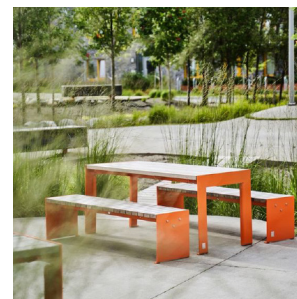
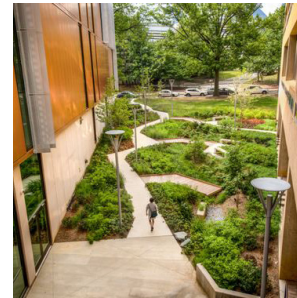
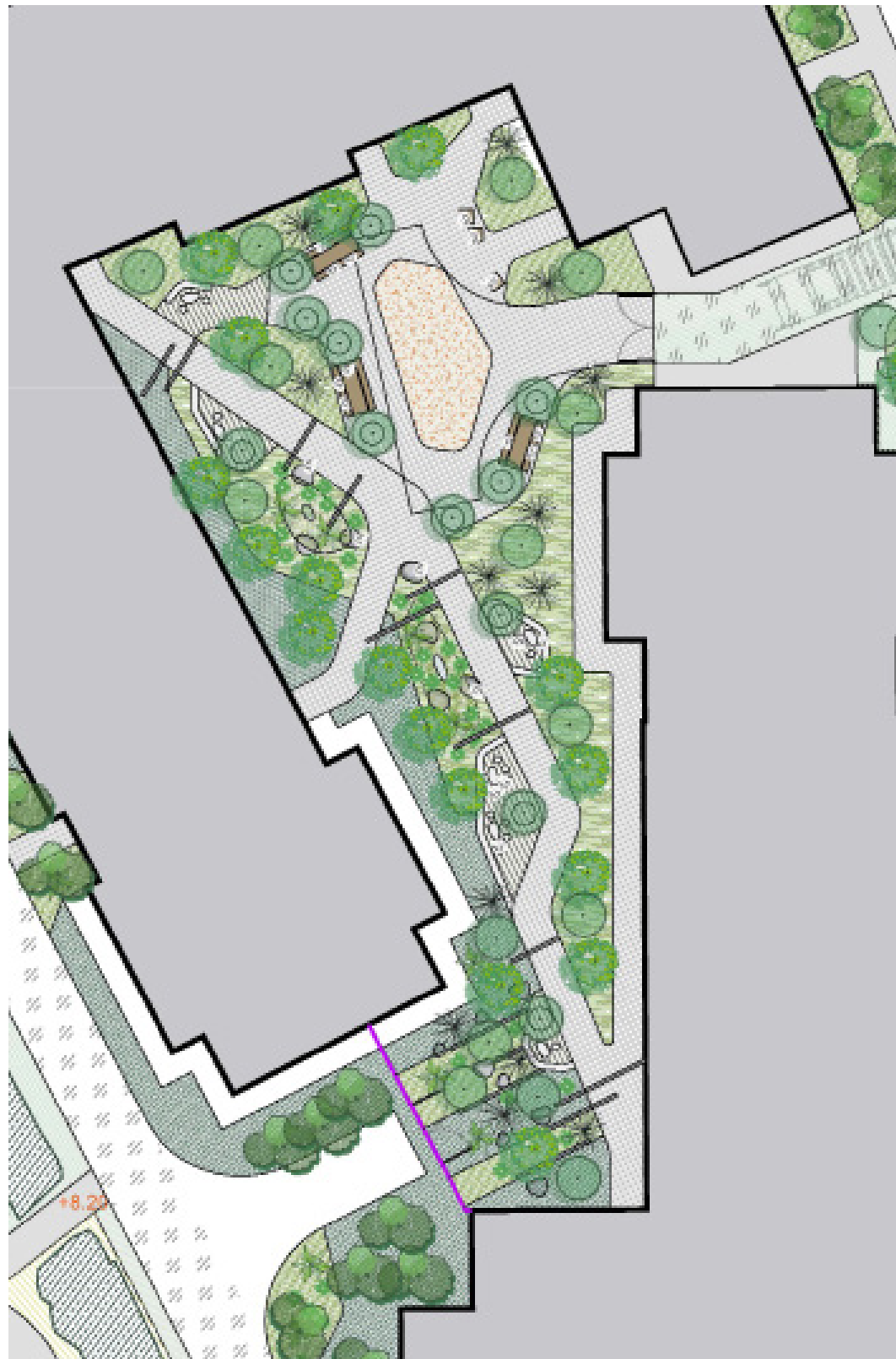
Transitional zones are defined by colourful seating and tree planting. This creates areas to stop and gather while maintaining a route through the space.



Informal native planting provides privacy and screening between chill out rooms and bedrooms while also providing dense habitat for local ecology to move freely. Green buffers are provided to the edge of all apartment blocks to provide substantial privacy to ground floor apartments.

Various native broadleaf and coniferous trees have been proposed around the space to help create subspaces within the courtyard and provide some screening to upper floors.

3.2 Courtyard 2



This courtyard is located to the centre of the development and has been designed with a more organic approach. It differs from the other courtyard spaces giving it a unique character and identity.

Planted mounds and Multi-functional dining furniture frame the event space to the north of the courtyard. The space has been carefully considered to allow for fire tender access. The use of a reinforced grass surface allows the fire tender track to sit into the space discreetly and feel more green and natural.

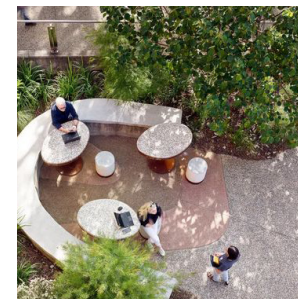
Rain gardens have been incorporated into the courtyard to act as both an attenuation feature and a refuge for local biodiversity. Boulders have been located through the planting providing secondary seating options.

Various materials have been used throughout to create visual interest as you move through the space. A change in surface to a compacted gravel defines the central event space. Various other seating options have been provided around the courtyard with picnic benches and informal cube seating set into the various planting beds. These smaller, more intimate seating areas are framed and sheltered by trees and groundcover planting.

Green buffers are provided to the edge of all apartment blocks to provide substantial privacy to ground floor apartments. Various native broadleaf and coniferous trees have been proposed around the space to help create subspaces within the courtyard and provide some screening to upper floors.

More active spaces located in northern section of courtyard to receive most sunlight. Central area highlighted by colourful surface provides multi-functional space for events, Space framed and overlooked by colourful seating and benches.

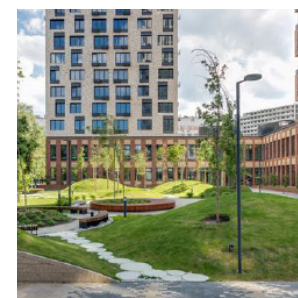
3.3 Courtyard 3



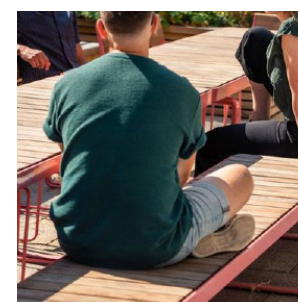
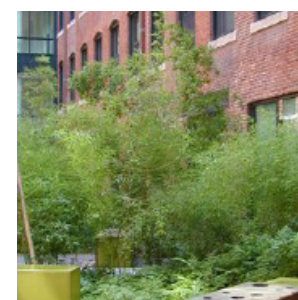
This is the smaller of the courtyards with various options for sitting and meeting. A centrally located raised planter with multi-stemmed trees defines the courtyard. South-facing benches are positioned around this creating sub-spaces within the courtyard for individuals and small groups to relax.



A larger entrance plaza is located just north of this separated by bands of native and ornamental planting. Copses of native trees help break up the space while also providing screening to ground floor apartments and casting dappled shade on the courtyard space.



The paved areas area is organic in layout helping create a comfortable and interesting space for residents to be in for residents.



4.0 Planting Strategy

4.1 Ecology and Biodiversity

All of the various landscape spaces and typologies in this development have been designed to consider local biodiversity and ecology. Maintaining and creating natural habitats for native flora and fauna and creating ecological networks is an essential element of the landscape strategy.

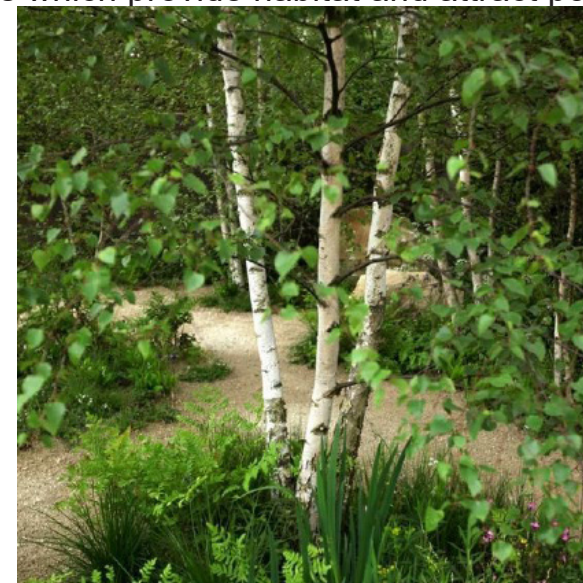
Retaining and strengthening existing native vegetation, as well as proposing new native woodland, creates biodiversity rich, native habitats and ecological green corridors which run through the site and link with external landscape features. Where vegetation that is contributing to wildlife corridors and green infrastructure has been removed or fragmented, replacement planting has been proposed to compensate for any loss.

Proposed Woodland - Woodland is designed with native species only and includes a range of species to provide layers including large trees, understorey trees and shrubs and groundcovers. Care has been taken to include pollinator friendly plants and a varied age structure to ensure longevity of the woodland. Habitat creation is prioritised through the use of bird and bat boxes, insect hotels and deadwood and log piles. Saplings will be laid out in clumps and groups to mimic the natural patterns of a woodland.

Constructed Wetlands - These areas are designed primarily to increase the complexity of local habitats and ecosystems. This is done primarily by diversifying the types of flora to provide for a range of fauna including mammals, birds, amphibians, insects and fungi. Habitat features unique to wetland areas such as varying water depths, mudflats, shallow pools, hollows, rock piles and deadwood will be provided to further enhance habitat creation. Buffer zones of wet meadow, wet woodland and scrub provide further protection to the wetland and flood zones for high rainfall events. Native species only will be used in the wetlands and a range of plant types including emergent plants, floating plants, submerged plants, wetland trees and shrubs and riparian plants such as sedges, reeds, grasses and perennials will be used.

Hedgerow - Hedgerow will be composed primarily of woodland transplants and include a mix of small trees and shrubs. Emphasis will be placed on proposing trees and shrubs which bear fruit to attract pollinators. Where possible meadow buffers of approximately 500mm width will be introduced alongside hedgerows to include grasses and perennials.

Wildflower Meadow - These areas include a range of flowering perennials and grasses which provide habitat and attract pollinating insects.



4.2 Planting Design

The plant species are chosen to respect the local environment while providing suitable vegetation that is harmonious with a residential area and will be successful through all stages of its maturity. Therefore, the planting palette has a limited number of species chosen for their appropriateness and with a preference for native planting. Various types of planting are used to create different atmospheres for certain spaces, and to serve various functions throughout the site.

Throughout the public open spaces, a mix of broadleaf deciduous trees will be planted that will increase the woodland cover while facilitating safe use of the spaces. Some more ornamental trees will be utilized for their visual quality and to provide interest around the seating areas. There will be areas of dense woodland and understory planting to create visual screening and improve biodiversity. Formal clipped hedges are used throughout the development to define spaces and create boundaries. These hedges will complement the character of the site. Evergreen shrub mixes are also used as robust structural planting to define the streetscape and spatial uses. Ornamental and groundcover planting will be used to frame seating areas.

Boundary treatments include native hedgerows, formal hedges and woodland belts. Native plants Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Hazel and Holly are all used in the hedgerow mix and tree-planting in the hedgerows consists of Common Birch, Native Oak and Common Alder. Formal hedges form boundaries to more open public parts of the site.

Note that all planting proposed as part of this development is to be of native species and native provenance. Particular attention was given to introducing certain pollinator species to various plant mixes in woodland and hedgerow areas as outlined and in referral to the **‘Councils: actions to help pollinators; All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025’**

