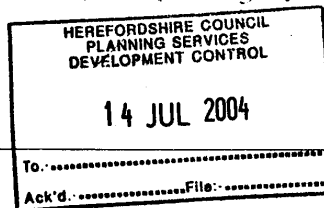




St. Joseph's Convent, Ross-on-Wye.

Tree Survey & Arboricultural Assessment



June 2004

3 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

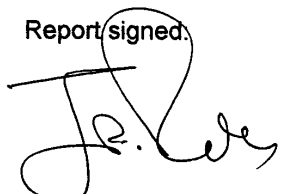
- 3.3 While the tree schedule provides detailed information on the individual trees, some more general discussion of the tree cover is provided here:
- 3.4 The site as existing comprises the attractive building of St. Joseph's Convent itself, together with an annexe to the adjacent school, a more recent construction situated to the north of the main house. The trees that form the main part of this report are situated near the western boundary of the property, fronting Walford Road. These trees, together with banks of shrubs (mainly Laurel with some Philadelphus) form a very well established, high and dense screen, with the trees basically forming a double row a short distance inside the boundary retaining wall above the footpath to Walford Road. Most of the component trees and shrubs are all well on in maturity and many in the row nearest the road are rather poor, some showing dieback and others with dense ivy and structural imbalances. While individually poor, they do however provide a dense bank of foliage that screens the property very effectively. How beneficial this screening is must remain a matter of opinion; the foliage is nondescript in appearance, especially as viewed from the west, while due to its density and considerable height it hides an interesting and attractive building.
- 3.5 While maintaining some degree of privacy for residents must be an important consideration, I believe there is scope for some improvements to be made to this grouping. It will in any event be necessary to carry out some works merely to keep them in an acceptably safe condition, but it is my opinion that consideration might be given to some felling and replanting. A number of the trees in the front (western) row could be removed, along with some of the poorer specimens at the rear, but taking care to retain and improve the growing conditions of the better specimen trees. In order to maintain an acceptable degree of privacy some new planting could be carried out. This should be designed largely to consolidate low-level growth, although the establishment of some young trees that can act as eventual replacements for older, existing specimens could also be considered.
- 3.6 As well as the more nondescript trees along the road frontage, there are a number of considerably more striking specimens, notably the very well established Thujas (or Western Red Cedars) nearer the buildings. These are identified here as two trees 23 & 24; although they comprise over twenty individual stems, these evidently originated from two specimens that produced numerous sub-stems from low lateral branches that have subsequently layered themselves to create a small grove of sweeping sub-stems. These occupy a considerable area and it is appreciated that they may limit the opportunities to adapt or develop the site. While unconsidered removal of sub-stems could seriously harm the integrity and appearance of the stand, there may be some opportunity for one or two of the more strongly leaning, outermost stems to the north-west to be removed without having any serious impact upon the group as a whole.
- 3.7 The existing entrance drive passes between the two trees, while close to tree 24 is a tarmac-surfaced footpath that runs alongside the annexe building. The rooting area of these trees is thus somewhat disrupted and compacted and



some abrasion of exposed roots has occurred. Although the trees appear to be generally sound and healthy at this time, they would be vulnerable to root damage in the event of these surfaces being adapted or upgraded (or even removed). Care should therefore be taken to minimise potentially harmful earthworks and other activities in their vicinity.

- 3.8 Tree 27, a Wellingtonia (or Giant Redwood – *Sequoiadendron gigantea*), is the other tree of particular note. This is not within the actual survey area, but it is close to it and of a size such that its presence must be considered when considering alterations to the site. The species generally forms a tall, slender spire, but this specimen has an uncharacteristically low, spreading form. Clearance under the rather low canopy of this tree must be carefully considered as, due to its form, unconsidered branch removal could have harmful and unsightly results. In addition (and like the Thujas) it is close to an existing driveway and it would be vulnerable to root damage in the event of this being upgraded.
- 3.9 Finally I must draw attention to some other trees that are not within the survey area but whose condition could impact upon the site. These are a group of Lawson Cypress trees that form a screen to the north of Lawfords House, a property adjoining to the south. These are generally rather untidy in appearance but two trees within the row are dead or dying. Inspection revealed that they have been infected by Honey Fungus (*Armillaria sp.*), a potentially fatal fungal disease that can spread from an infected tree or stump to other nearby trees. A number of shrubs in the vicinity showed signs of dieback and it is quite possible that the fungus is actively spreading from these infected trees. As both existing and proposed new trees within the survey area could become infected, it is recommended that the attention of the owners be drawn to this situation and appropriate action taken. (Note that there is a Yew tree at one end of the row of Cypresses: Yews are generally rather resistant to Honey Fungus and, even if the Cypresses were to be removed, the felling of the Yew should *not* be necessary on grounds of plant hygiene.)

Report signed.



J.P. Ross B.Sc. F.Arbor.A.
17 March 2004