



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

03<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Trinity Hall, Dartry Development Plans

Over the past six months I have been engaged, as a stakeholder, with members of the Trinity Hall, Dartry development team, led by the Dean of Undergraduate Students, Professor Kevin O' Kelly. As Director of Trinity College Botanic Garden, I have been fully briefed with architectural and landscaping plans for the Trinity Hall Project. These briefing sessions have included full access to external building designs, on-site walk throughs with the architectural team and landscape architects and access to three-dimensional digital fly-throughs.

I was initially concerned with the impact of the 8-story north-facing student accommodation block which is positioned directly south of Trinity Botanic Garden arboretum. A detailed arborist report (by Joe McConville) and light model analysis report were commissioned to address two of my primary concerns that; (1) the proximity of the new development would be detrimental to the health of mature trees closest to the new building; and (2) that the height and positioning of the student accommodation block would severely impact the quantity and quality of light reaching the tree canopies of the arboretum collection and their understory environment which would negatively impact tree health within the arboretum and alter the temperature, light and humidity microenvironment of the ground cover plant collections and mid canopy shrubs and small trees.

Collectively the reports have allayed most of my concerns and those of my colleagues at Trinity Botanic Garden regarding the overall impact of the proposed buildings on tree health within the arboretum. We are satisfied that the trees will survive, will not be overly stressed and will receive sufficient light to photosynthesize. That said, the proposed building location and height will have an impact on the light environment of the understory and mid canopy within the arboretum by blocking light from the South, particularly in Winter, early Spring and late Autumn. It will be more akin to a fully closed forest than an open forested understory environment. I have proposed that we change the plant collections in the arboretum understory to a shade collection rich in ferns together with other appropriate shade-adapted taxa. It will incorporate both hard and soft landscaping features to change the use of the arboretum understory collection from grass and bulbs to a new woodland shade collection, rich in ferns, for research, teaching and outreach with paths and signage for interpretive trails through the arboretum and new shade collections. This will maximize the potential from the new light environment that the building will bring and will mitigate its potential negative impact on Trinity Botanic Garden.



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In summary therefore, I cannot state that the proposed new student accommodation will not have an impact on Trinity Botanic Garden. It will. However, I feel that we have been listened to in a meaningful way and that the plans and dedicated budget line put in place to mitigate negative impacts will enable us to adapt and grow the living plant collection and the overall biodiversity of the site. We will also be able to make the living collections of the arboretum and gardens more open to students and the local community as we will have sufficient funds and staff to develop interpretive trails. On balance therefore, I welcome the proposed development as a much-needed expansion of student accommodation. I am satisfied that Trinity Botanic Garden will benefit in part from the investment that the project as a whole will bring in terms of personnel and expanding the diversity and public reach of our living collections and that overall, with the agreed mitigation measures, the development is sustainable from the arboretum's perspective.

Sincerely,

Professor Jennifer C. McElwain MRIA  
1711 Chair of Botany and Head of Botany  
Director Trinity Botanic Garden