The RATHMINES INITIATIVE

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Report on Public Realm Trees & Planting in Rathmines

1. Background:

The Rathmines Initiative (R.I.) was formed in 1998 by a number of local residents' associations in response to an invitation from Dublin Corporation to provide input into a Local Development Plan. The Rathmines Initiative is now a group of local individuals of different backgrounds seeking to enhance the quality of life of the whole community in Rathmines by working in collaboration with statutory, voluntary and commercial bodies and public representatives.

1. Trees in Rathmines – Recent Incidents:

(a) Leinster Rd., eastern end

In Winter 2023 – Spring 2024, 8 or so trees were felled on the eastern end of Leinster Rd. We understand that the reason for this was that they were too close to the walls of private properties. The tree stumps were unsightly, but in fairness to Dublin City Council it later commissioned wood-carvings of animals to adorn the tree-stumps, which have proved popular. From an aesthetic perspective, this initiative livened up this stretch which had looked desolate after the trees were felled. However, dead trees do not perform the same ecological service (e.g. air quality, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, mitigation of storm run-off, etc.) as living trees. Therefore, we call on Dublin City Council to also plant replacement trees, as per the recommendation of the Dublin City Arboricultural Officer, who concluded as follows:

> *'In these circumstances, I recommend the removal of the eight [trees]. Unfortunately at the moment there is no space to plant new trees in these locations but* ***I recommend that 8 trees be planted in suitable locations in Rathmines in order to compensate for the loss of these street trees****.'*[1]

(b) Leinster Rd., western end

In Spring 2026, 14 or so trees were inadvertently 'pollarded' or 'topped' – or at any rate, severely cropped – on the western end of Leinster Rd. We understand that his happened ***by mistake***. Dublin City Council had intended for some trees to be cut back on 'Leinster Rd. West', which is an entirely separate, parallel street. (This was due to those trees being too close to certain houses and blocking light and/or breaking up footpaths and/ or interfering with drains.)

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[1] Ludovic Beaumont, Dublin City Arboricultural Officer, published Arboricultural Report to DCC re Trees on Leinster Rd., 03/10/2023 (emphasis added).

However, it appears that the tree-cutting took place on Leinster Rd. ***in error***. While we accept that human error can occur, it is an unfortunate outcome that two rows of healthy trees were severely cropped for no good reason.

(c) <u>Lower Rathmines Rd.</u>

In 2025, a tree on Lr. Rathmines Rd. (at the Grove Pk. junction) was severely hacked and effectively destroyed. Gardai investigated the incident *qua* criminal damage.[2] (This was the second time that this tree had been hacked without Council permission.)

2. <u>Recommended Planting</u>

<u>RI now calls on DCC to investigate the potential for planting more trees in Rathmines, with a view (i) in part to remediate the above three situations, but (ii) also more generally to enhance the public realm in Rathmines.</u>

(a) <u>Tree Strategy</u>[3]

We refer to the Dublin City Tree Strategy 2016-2020 in this regard. With regard to **(i) remediating tree loss**, the Strategy states that '*every tree felled should be replaced*' [subject to budget, and not always in the exact same location] (para. 3.8.1 on Replacement Planting) and that '*areas targeted for new tree planting shall be those where trees have been removed* [*inter alia*]' (para. 3.8.2 on Targeted planting). With regard to **(ii) strategic new planting,** the Tree Strategy states: '*The city council will identify opportunities for new tree-planting to ensure continued regeneration of tree cover across the city.'* (para 3.4.1, on Opportunities for New Tree Planting).

<u>Possible locations for new trees:</u>

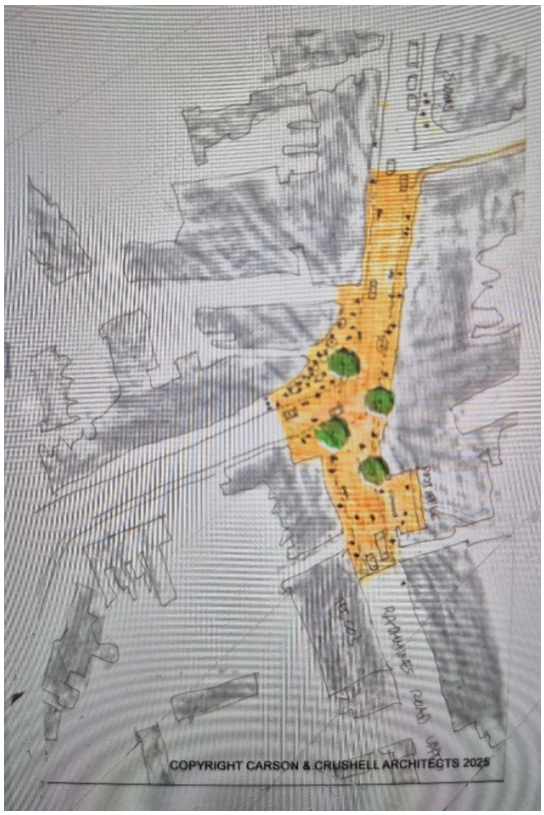
Some suggested locations for new trees are below. **We call on DCC to assess the suitability of these <u>and/or</u> other locations in Rathmines**, taking into account DCC's local knowledge (e.g. of property ownership, underground utility cables etc.).

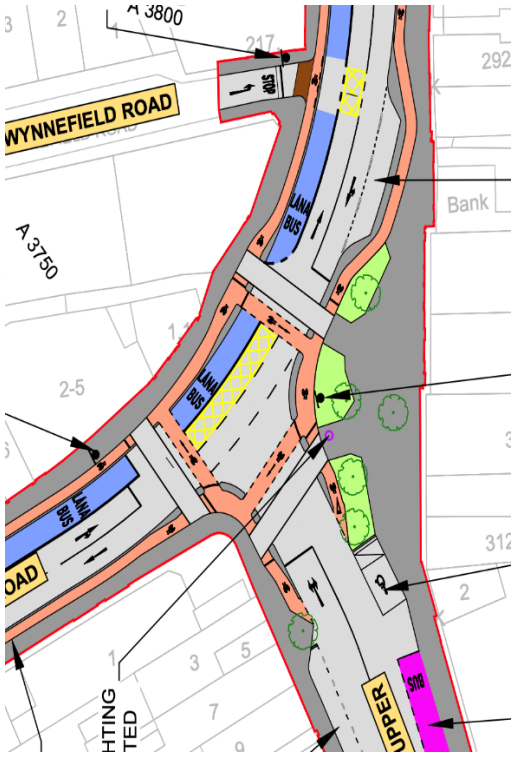
- <u>Junction of Lr. Rathmines Rd., Upr Rathmines Rd. and Rathgar Rd.</u> The 1st diagram below suggests four corners for potential planting. Bus Connects' own plans show future planting on the eastern side (2nd diagram below) including 5 trees. Admittedly, there are complicating factors at all corners, ranging from drains to utilities to a variety of street furniture. However, perhaps smaller trees or even shrubs could be considered for these sites? Furthermore, could DCC liaise with BusConnects to ensure that future anticipated construction works (including any diversion of underground services) do not further inhibit future tree-planting there? Also, could DCC provide clarification on whether the southwestern corner (photo below) is owned by DCC, or otherwise?

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[2] As reported by the Dublin Inquirer, 30/10/2025.

[3] Although we await with interest the promised new updated version of the Tree Strategy, the 2016-2020 document we reference is the latest, publicly-available version of the Tree Strategy.

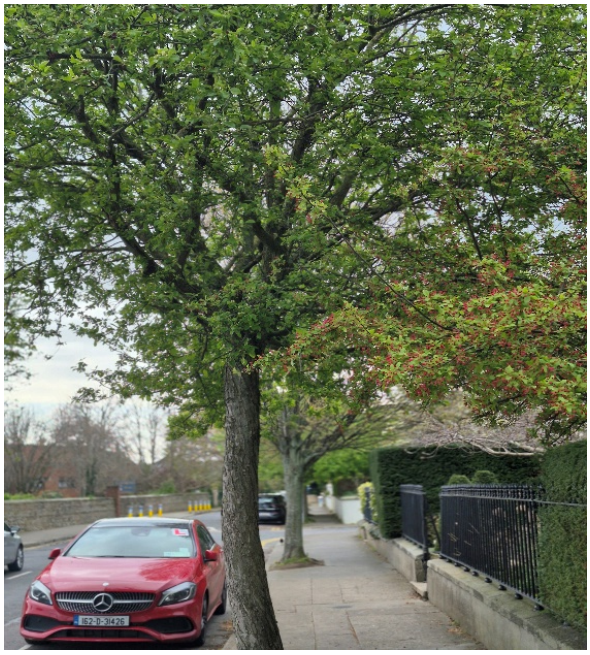
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- <u>Leinster Rd., at its east end</u>, on the stretch between where trees were felled and the Charleville Rd. junction. There appears to be ample room for trees on this stretch, with no overhead wires in the way. (See 1st photo below.) If trees were planted on the outer part of the footpath, they would not interfere with property walls. A sample of such planting (on nearby Charleville Rd.) is shown in the two lower photos underneath:







- <u>Along the side of Rathmines Library building and former *conservatoire*</u>. Although there are bicycle stands on part of this stretch, there is still ample room for some form of planting. Could trees be planted instead of the rows of bollards currently delineating the boundary between the curtilage of this building and the public footpath? Could this be done in partnership with of the Dept. of Education, who (we assume) owns the former *conservatoire*? Additionally, there is room for a big tree (an oak?) near the side-gate (as 'pointed-to' in the 2nd photo below), without impeding passage to that gate. We understand that this gate is currently in use by John Scottus school, and due regard would be had to the needs of that school community of course. (See next page.)





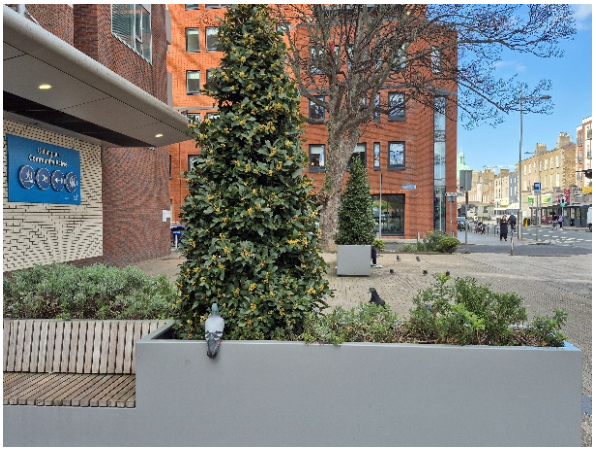
- <u>On the roundabout at the junction of Grovenor Pl. & Grosvenor Rd.</u>:
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(b) <u>Other Urban Planting:</u>

Planting smaller plants & shrubs in public areas is also important. In this regard, **we commend several recent initiatives by DCC and others**, such as:

- <u>Swan Leisure</u>: benches incorporating planters (photo on left) , which in turn are nicely complemented by the planters installed by the Hopsack Café (photo on right):





- Also near Swan Leisure: low raised-bed-planting around base of a tree:



- A few stand-alone planters near the small ‘green belt’ on Leinster Rd., near the school crossing:



- And a row of planters with grasses outside Butler’s Café on Lr. Rathmines Rd.:



- Rathmines Library / former *conservatoire*: For years there have been two unsightly sandboxes in front of the side-entrance / portico, presumably to deter people from sleeping in this porch. In recent days, flowers have been planted in them, presumably by the owner of the former *conservatoire* (*viz.* Dept. of Higher Education) and/or John Scottus school. We welcome this development.

While acknowledging progress thus far, there remains much scope in Rathmines for further greening. Here are a few ideas, to start:

- As an alternative to trees, planters could be placed on the stretches outside the library/*conservatoire*/school building, both to the east and west of the portico. Would a joint initiative by DCC and Dept. of Higher Education be possible here? (The stretch to the east of the portico is a sunny south-facing spot and consideration could even be given to installing a combined bench/planter here, although school safety and litter prevention would need due consideration when assessing the bench option.)





- In the front yard of the *conservatoire*/school building, there are parking spaces. We appreciate that these may be needed by school or library staff. However, in the long-term might it be possible to convert a couple of the parking spaces into a 'parklet' or raised-bed? Such a scheme would suit this space, as it is in on view to the public when they access the library extension.
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3. **<u>Conclusion:</u>**

Although we are not tree experts, **we urge DCC to ascertain whether trees and/or other plants could be planted in central Rathmines, at the locations we suggest <u>and/or elsewhere</u>.**