Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed Large-Scale Residential Development at Blackglen Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18

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MODEL WORKS

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APPENDIX 1 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY ii

1.0 Introduction

This report discusses the potential townscape and visual impacts of a proposed Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) of 192 no. dwellings on a site of 3.7 ha at Blackglen Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18.

1.1 Proposed Development

The development will consist of 192 no. residential units ranging from 2-5 storeys in height, associated resident amenity facilities, a childcare facility, all boundary treatment and landscaping works, site services connections and all site development works to include:

a) Construction of 192 no. residential units, in the form of 6 no. new apartment buildings (A1 – B4), 40 duplexes (C1, C2, C2A) and 14 houses (D1& D2), to include 33 no. 1-beds, 84 no. 2 -beds, 61 no. 3-beds and 14 no. 4-beds as follows:
   - Block A1 (4 storeys) comprising 15 no. apartments (3 no. 1 bed units, 6 no. 2 bed units & 6 no. 3 bed); a crèche facility of approx. 378 sq. m with associated outdoor play space of approx. 170 sq. m; and resident amenity facilities of approx. 33.3 sq. m.
   - Block A2 (3-4 storeys) comprising 26 no. apartments (2 no. 1 bed units, 20 no. 2 bed units and 4 no. no. 3 bed units) and resident amenity facilities of approx. 353.6 sq.m.
   - Blocks B1 and B2 (2-5 storeys) comprising 51 no. apartments (15 no. 1 bed units, 29 no. 2 bed units, 7 no. 3 bed units).
   - Blocks B3 and B4 (2-5 storeys) comprising 46 no. apartments (13 no. 1 bed units, 23 no. 2 bed units and 10 no. 3 bed units).
   - Duplex Units C1 (4 storeys), C2 and C2A (3 storeys) comprising 40 duplexes (6 no. 2 bed units, 20 no. 3 bed units and 14 no. 4 bed units).
   - House Units D1 and D2 (2 storeys) comprising 14 houses (14 no. 3 bed units).

b) Total Open space (approx. 10,854 sqm) is proposed in the form of public open space (approx. 8, 686 sqm), and residential communal open space (approx. 2,168 sqm). Each residential unit is afforded with associated private open space in the form of a garden/terrace/balcony.

c) The development will be served via a new vehicular access via Blackglen Road. This will be designed as a priority junction with pedestrian and cycle crossings where required to tie in with the Blackglen Road Improvement Scheme.

d) A new toucan crossing is proposed across Blackglen Road just to the east of the new vehicular access. This toucan crossing has been designed as per TL607 of the Cycle Design Manual to allow crossing of pedestrians and cyclists to the northern side of Blackglen Road for improved public transport access.

e) Emergency access only is proposed via Woodside Road.

f) A dedicated wildlife corridor is proposed to the east/south-east side of the site and a public open space (approx. 307 m in length) tree trail to the west/north-west side of the site.

g) Basement/Podium car park areas are proposed below Blocks B1, B2, B3 and B4. A total of 234 no. car parking spaces are proposed, which includes 2 no. car club spaces, 12 no. accessible spaces and 47 no. EV charging spaces (206 no. long-stay spaces, 18 no. visitor space & 10 no. car parking spaces for creche use), in addition to 9 no. motorcycle spaces.

h) A total of 484 no. bicycle spaces are proposed in the form of 442 no. long stay bicycle spaces 42 short-term stay visitor parking.

i) 2 no. ESB substations at surface level.

j) Bin Storage areas for the Duplex blocks are proposed at ground level adjacent to the Duplex blocks.

k) All associated site and infrastructural works to include provision for water services; foul and surface water drainage and connections; internal roads, attenuation proposal; permeable paving; all landscaping works including green infrastructure zones; green roofs; and general plant areas; photovoltaic panels; landscaped boundary treatment; footpaths; public lighting; and electrical services.

1.2 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

The assessment was carried out with reference to the Landscape Institute *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* 2013 (GLVIA) and the EPA *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* 2022. The assessment methodology including explanation of the criteria and terms used is provided in Appendix 1. The assessment was carried out by Richard Butler MILI MIPI of Model Works Ltd.

The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*". The GLVIA requires that the effects on views and visual amenity be assessed separately from the effects on the landscape, although the topics are linked:

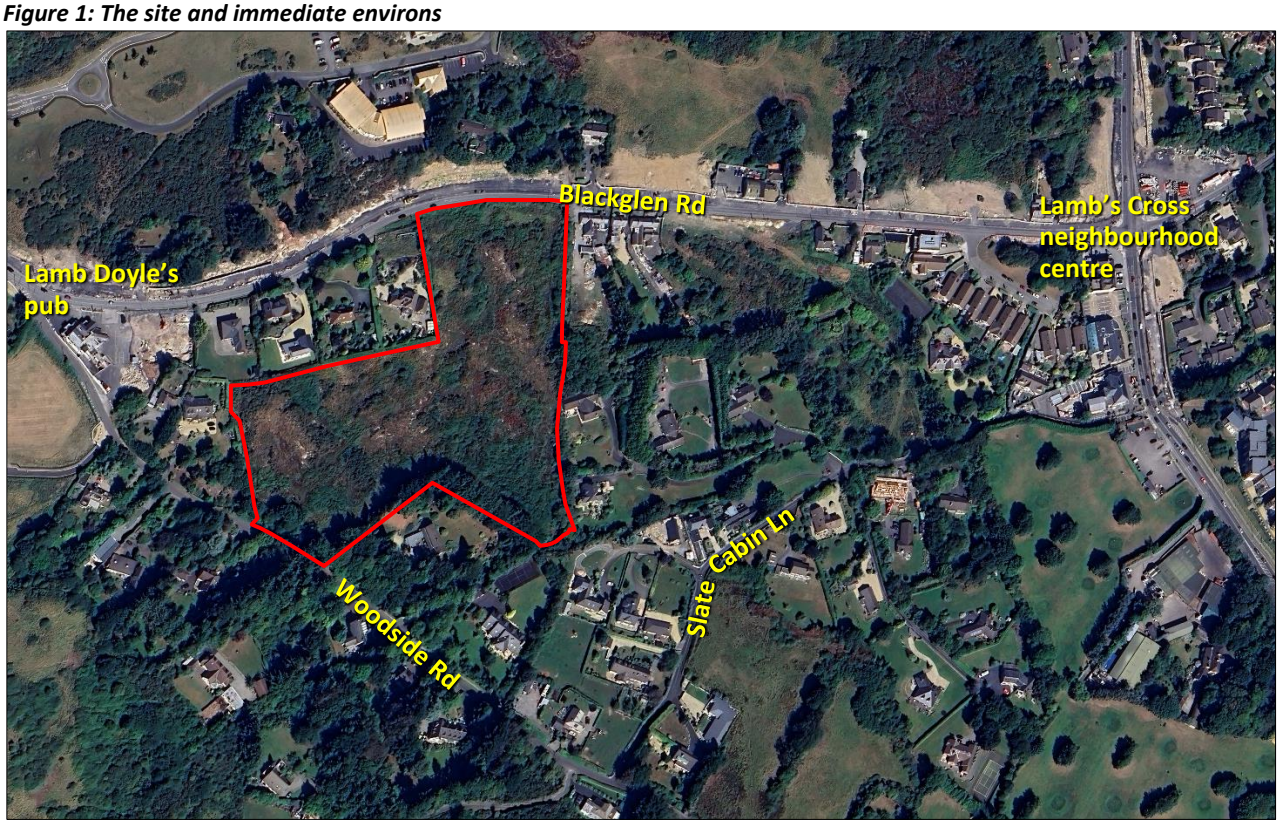
- Visual impact assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to those changes and the overall effects on the area's visual amenity. The potential effects on 32 no. viewpoints in the receiving environment are assessed in Chapter 5, informed by verified photomontages (provided under separate cover).
- Landscape results from the interplay between the physical, natural and cultural components of our environment. Different combinations of these elements create variations in landscape/townscape character. Landscape impact assessment is concerned with the effects of a proposed development on the character and value of the landscape as an environmental, cultural and economic resource. The potential landscape impact of the proposed development is assessed in Chapter 6.

2.0 Receiving Environment

2.1 The Site

The site is an irregularly shaped greenfield land parcel of 3.7 ha. It is located on Blackglen Road some 400m to the west of the Lamb's Cross neighbourhood centre, and just to the east of Lamb Doyle's pub at the junction of Blackglen Road and Woodside Road. The site also has frontage to Woodside Road to the south.

Figure 1: The site and immediate environs



Although the lands surrounding the site have been developed (mostly for low density residential use), the site has never been developed and is also not in agricultural or other use. It is covered in gorse-dominated scrub. Apart from small trees growing in the scrub there are few trees on the site. The most significant vegetation feature is a belt of trees along the frontage to Woodside Road. There is also scrubby vegetation along the site boundaries but any substantial trees are mostly located on the neighbouring properties.

The site's most distinctive characteristic is its topography. At its highest point near the west boundary it is approximately 160m above sea level. The land falls to the east and north, at varying gradients, to a low point of approximately 139m in the north east corner off Blackglen Road.

Figure 2: Site topography



2.2 Surrounding Landscape Character

The site lies within the urban edge of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, but in a transitional zone where urban generated development bleeds into the rural landscape of the Dublin Mountains foothills. **This peri-urban landscape, of urban-generated but low density development, can be clearly seen in the area between Blackglen Road and Woodside Road west of Lamb's Cross and the Enniskerry Road** (the area shaded pink below). It also extends to the south along Barnacullia Road. To the west and east the urban-rural edge is more clearly defined, by the M50 and the Enniskerry Road respectively.

Figure 3: The site's wider landscape context

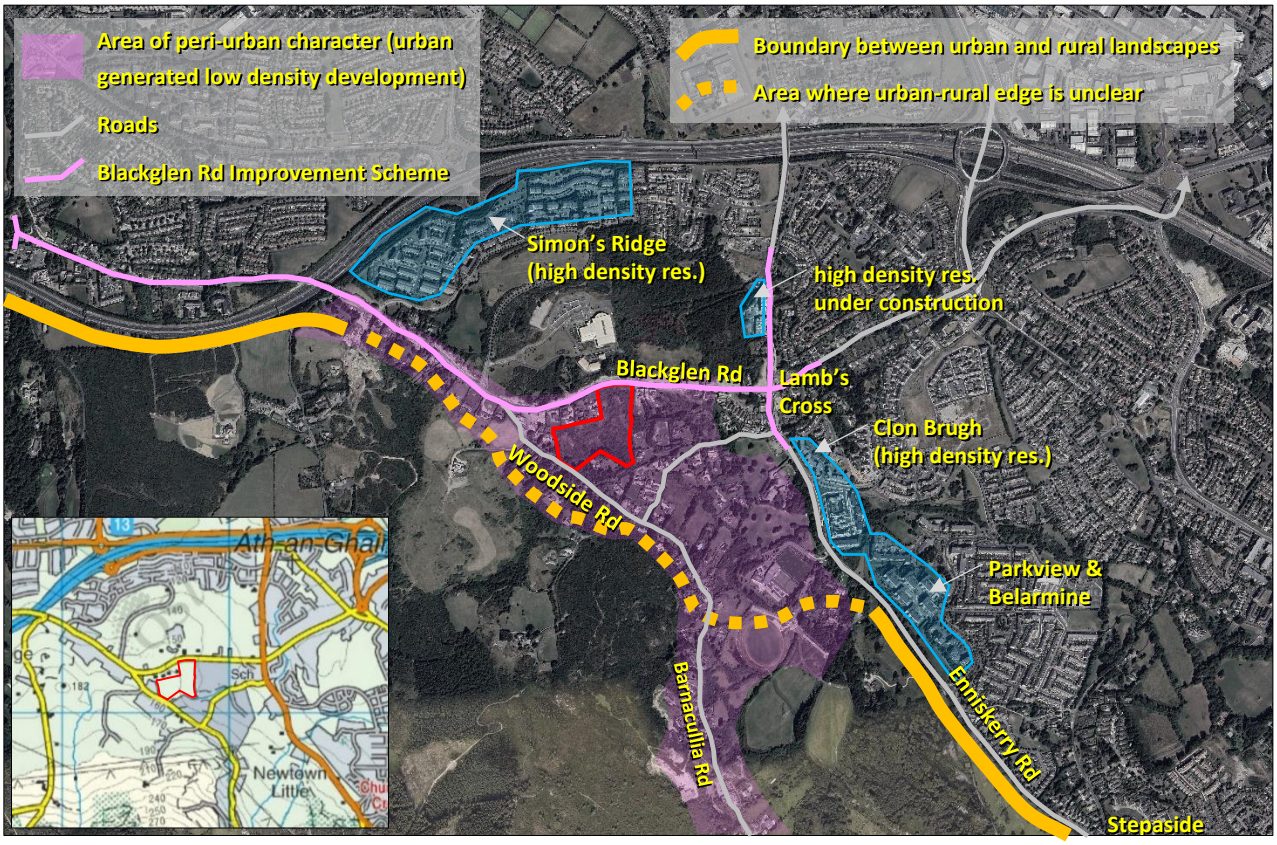
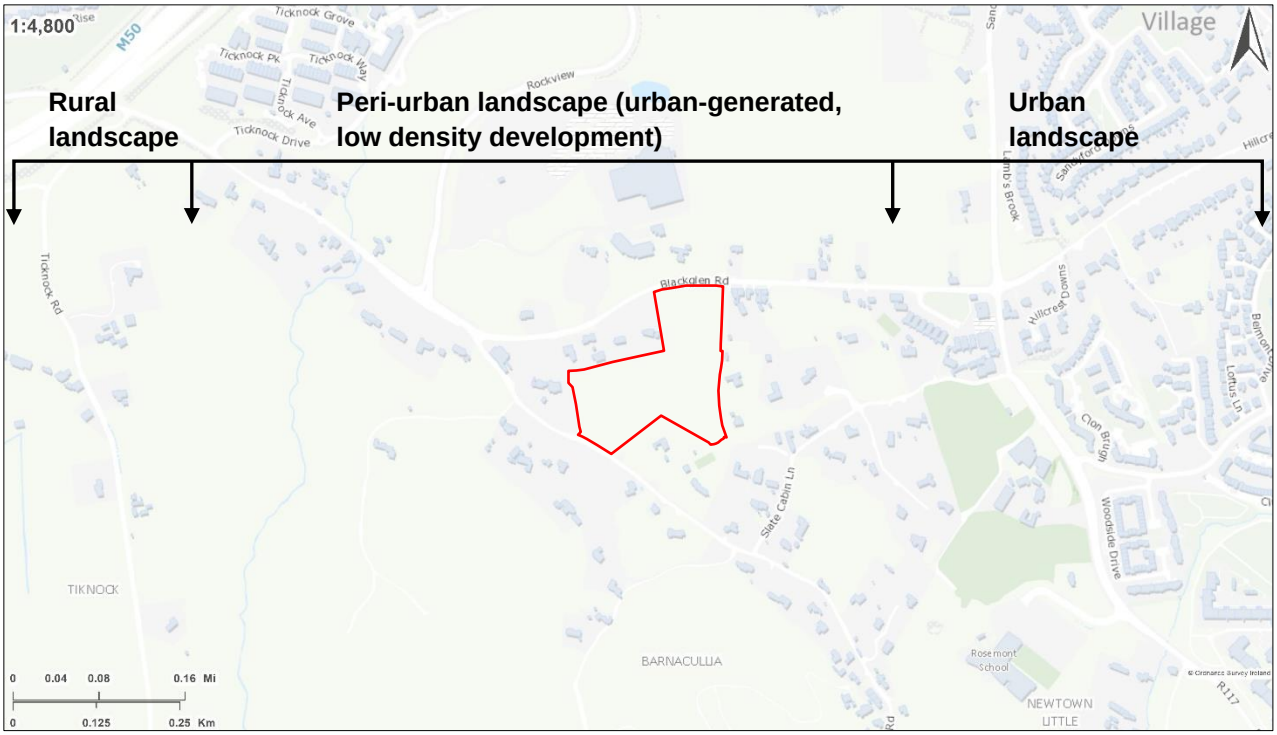


Figure 4: Variations in character in the site's landscape context



Figures 3 and 4 show that while the site environs have remained peri-urban, there has been consolidation of the urban area to the east inside the R117/Enniskerry Road, and to the north west along the M50.

The north/east side of the Enniskerry Road between Lamb's Cross and Stepaside is now characterised by contemporary, mixed density development. This includes apartment developments (e.g. Clon Brugh, Parkview and Belarmine) a similar distance from the M50 as the site, and at similar elevation (see Figure 3). The main differences between their location and the site's are (a) their position alongside the Enniskerry Road, and (b) their consolidated urban context.

Photo 1: Belarmine and Parkview apartments



Like all development in the area these apartment complexes are notable for their response to the steep topography and the elevation. The buildings step down the slope and height is used to make the most of the views over the city. Developments such as Parkview, Belarmine and their adjoining lower and medium density estates contribute to the clear definition of the urban edge to the east of Lamb's Cross. Such a strong, legible boundary between the urban and rural landscapes is a positive quality both from a landscape character perspective and in terms of sustainable development.

An important change is currently taking place in the site environs with the construction of the Blackglen Road Improvement Scheme. When completed this will see the road widened, with the addition of dedicated cycle lanes and pedestrian paths on both sides (see Figure 5). The existing bus stop 25m from the site will be upgraded. The upgraded Blackglen Road will be of urban character (as a streetscape) and capacity, facilitating pedestrian and cycle movement and the use of public transport, and it will tie the adjacent lands - including the site - into the urban area.

Figure 5: Drawing of the Blackglen Road Improvement Scheme works in the vicinity of the site

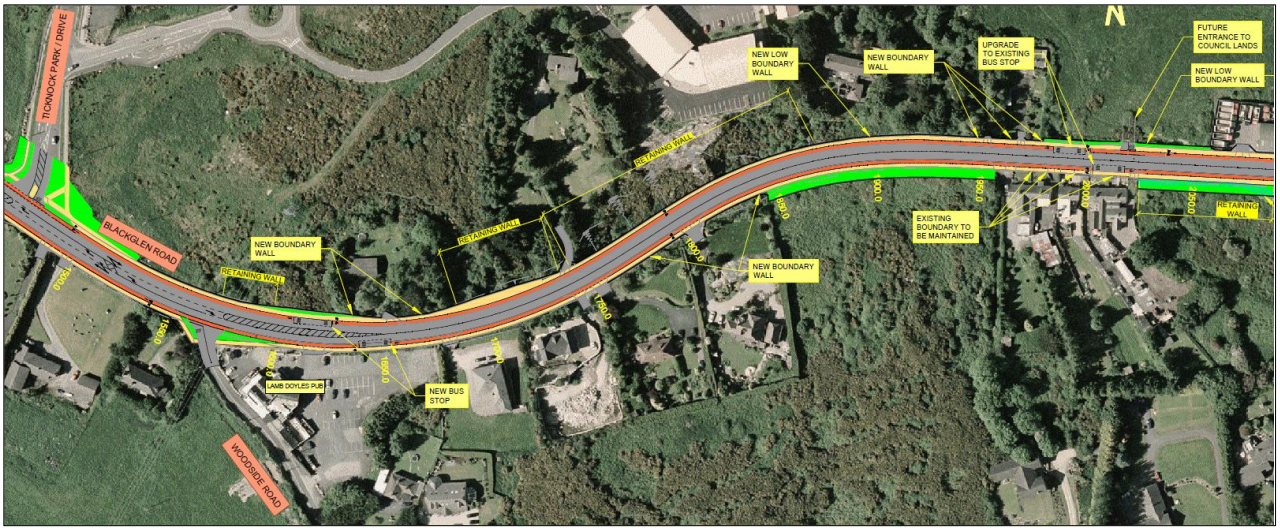


Photo 2: The Blackglen Road Improvement works nearing completion in the vicinity of the site



To the south and west of Blackglen Road and Woodside Road the landscape is rural in character (see Figure 3 above). This area comprises rough grassland fields, widely dispersed farm houses and farm building clusters, large areas of heather and scrub, and conifer plantations. The land rises steeply into the mountains.

There is an opportunity – arguably a requirement, given the national policy of compact growth – to capitalise on the opportunity presented by (a) the partly built-up (peri-urban) condition of the site environs, (b) the proximity to a neighbourhood centre and (c) the improvements to Blackglen Road, to consolidate the urban area between Blackglen Road, Woodside Road and Lamb's Cross/Enniskerry Road.

This would strengthen the urban-rural edge in an area where currently that definition is weak, improving the urban structure of not only the local area but also the wider Dun Laoghaire Rathdown townscape.

2.3 Potential Receptors of Landscape and Visual Impacts

The key elements and character areas in the receiving environment are as follows:

- Lamb's Cross and Blackglen Road to the east of the site
- Lamb Doyle's pub and Blackglen Road to the west
- Woodside Road
- Slate Cabin Lane
- Cullen's Way and Barnacullia
- Rockview Road and Explorium
- Ticknock Road and Ticknock Forest
- North of the M50 – Ballinteer and Sandyford

2.3.1 Lamb's Cross and Blackglen Road to the East of the Site

Lamb's Cross

400m to the east of the site along Blackglen Road is Lamb's Cross (see Figure 1 above and Figure 7 below). This is a long established village centre (historic maps show a school and library near the junction) with a small shopping centre at the junction and the Sandyford Community Centre in the former library (a protected structure). The urban core extends south along the Enniskerry Road beyond the community centre and school, to a large transport business premises and a pitch and putt course with roadside parking area. Across the road from these is the Clon Brugh residential development, which includes apartment buildings of six storeys. The DLR County Development Plan 2022 allows for expansion of the mixed use core around the junction, and planning permission has been granted (Reg. Ref. D23A/0456) for a mixed use development of up to six storeys at the junction, opposite the existing shopping centre. This will dramatically change the character of Lamb's Cross, and of Blackglen Road, which will be further urbanised.

Photo 3: The view from Lamb's Cross along Blackglen Road towards the site, with the existing shopping centre in the foreground. Planning permission has been granted for a mixed use development of up to six storeys on the site to the right across the road



Figure 6: Photomontage of the permitted development Re. Ref. D23A/0456 at Lamb's Cross. This will have an urbanising effect on Lamb's Cross and the Blasckglen Road corridor



Blackglen Road East of the Site

Adjacent to Lamb's Cross, to the west along Blackglen Road, is a small late 20th century estate of detached houses, Blackglen Court.

Extending to the west on the south side of Blackglen Road are several further houses forming a low density built-up strip entering/exiting the neighbourhood centre.

Figure 6: Layout of <u>withdrawn</u> Blackglen Road SHD application, on a site between Lamb's Cross and the subject site (source: https://www.blackglenroadshd.com)



An SHD planning application was lodged for a site along this stretch of Blackglen Road between Lamb's Cross and the site (see www.blackglenroadshd.com). The proposal included an apartment block of four storeys fronting the road, and terraces of houses and duplex apartments to the rear within the site. <u>The SHD application was withdrawn before An Bord Pleanala made a decision, but it gives an indication of a possible development format for that site</u>.

To the west of the above site is a row of five artisans' cottages (see Photo 2 above), with the westernmost cottage adjacent to the site's east boundary. The occupants of these cottages are key receptors of landscape and visual change on the site.

By comparison to the south side of Blackglen Road, there is limited development on the north side of the road (see Figure 4). There are only a small number of dispersed houses and the Explorium centre (see 2.3.6 below). A large undeveloped area behind and between the houses on the north side of the road is however zoned for residential development (see Figure 7). This future development site includes the road frontage opposite the cottages in Photo 2.

Also of note is a large proposed Natural Heritage Area (Fitzsimon's Wood) to the north behind the roadside properties and the residential zoned area. Access to this area has been developed from the Kilcross estate to the north. The Fitzsimon's Wood pNHA is an important consideration in the site's development in that it provides a large, accessible open space less than 200m from the site.

Figure 7: Annotated excerpt of DLR County Development Plan 2022 zoning map showing the site in relation to other potential development lands along Blackglen Road

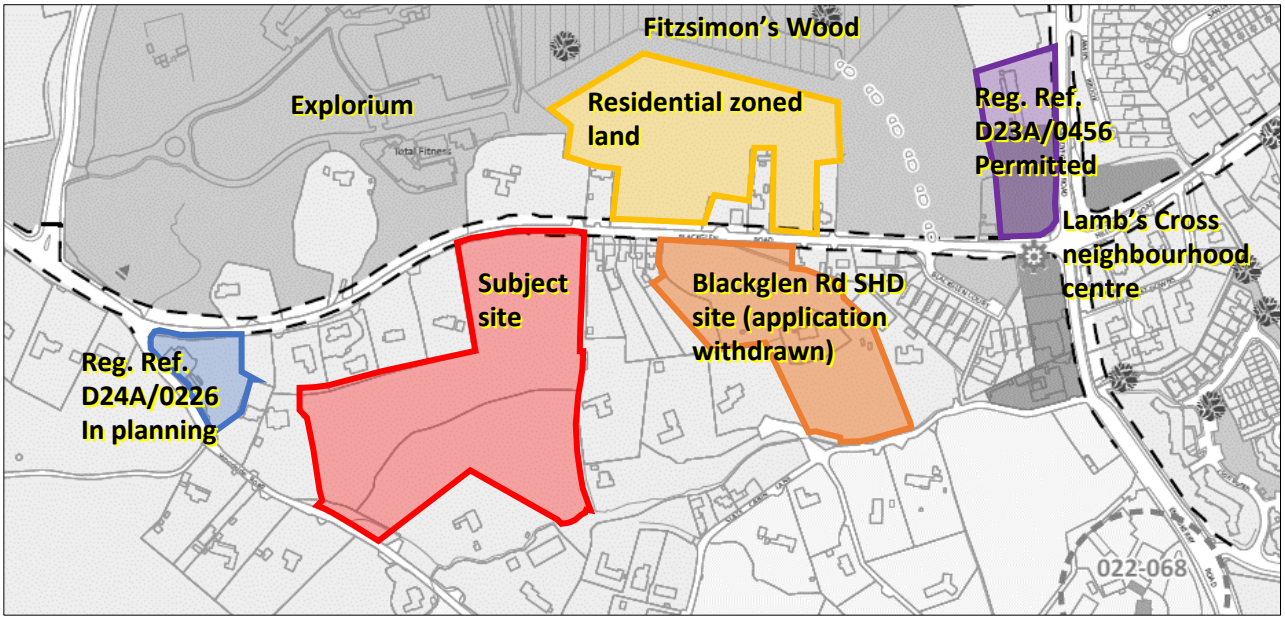


Figure 7 above shows the lands available for development/redevelopment along Blackglen Road to maximise the benefit derived from the Blackglen Road improvement scheme and the expansion of Lamb's Cross neighbourhood centre. In combination, the development of these lands would result in a significant shift in landscape/townscape character, from the currently piecemeal, peri-urban development pattern to a consolidated mixed density townscape served by a substantial neighbourhood centre, improved road and public transport access, and generous provision of open space.

2.3.2 Lamb Doyle's Pub and Blackglen Road to the West of the Site

To the west of the site fronting Blackglen Road is a row of residential properties extending to Lamb Doyle's pub. Nearest to the site, the houses are large, detached, and set in extensive gardens mostly enclosed by tall trees and shrubs. These houses are set back from the road behind roadside vegetation so there is no discernible building line. Two new houses recently constructed beside Lamb Doyles have urbanised this stretch of the road somewhat, by establishing a building line. The occupants of these houses are key receptors of change on the site, since the site wraps around them to the rear, up the hill. Lamb Doyle's is a pub at the corner between Blackglen Road and Woodside Road (Photo 6), the sprawling building surrounded by a large parking area.

A planning application has been lodged for redevelopment of the Lamb Doyle's site, to include the pub's removal and the construction of 14 no. three storey houses (see Figures 8a, b below).

Photo 5: A view along Blackglen Road to the west of the site



Photo 6: Lamb Doyle's pub at the junction of Blackglen Road and Woodside Road



Figure 8a,b: Plan and visualisation of the proposed redevelopment of Lamb Doyle's pub, Reg. Ref. D24A/0226





2.3.3 Woodside Road

Woodside Road runs to the south of the site, climbing towards the south east. It is lined on both sides – except along the site frontage – by large detached houses mostly in extensive, densely vegetated gardens. This strip of urban-generated, low density development forms the boundary between the urban area to the north and the rural landscape to the south. The area directly south of the site is characterised by particularly densely wooded gardens (see Figure 1 and Photo 7) which generate a high degree of visual enclosure. Approaching the site from the east there is a high wall along the north side of the road which adds to the enclosure (Photo 8). Further to the east (near the junctions of Cullens Way and Slate Cabin Lane) the landscape is more open, exposing views to the north over the urban area of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown.

Photo 7: A view along Woodside Road just to the west of the site showing the high degree of visual enclosure caused by the vegetation in the gardens of the residential properties neighbouring the site



Photo 8: The view along Woodside Road approaching the site from the south east



Figure 9: The site and immediate environs

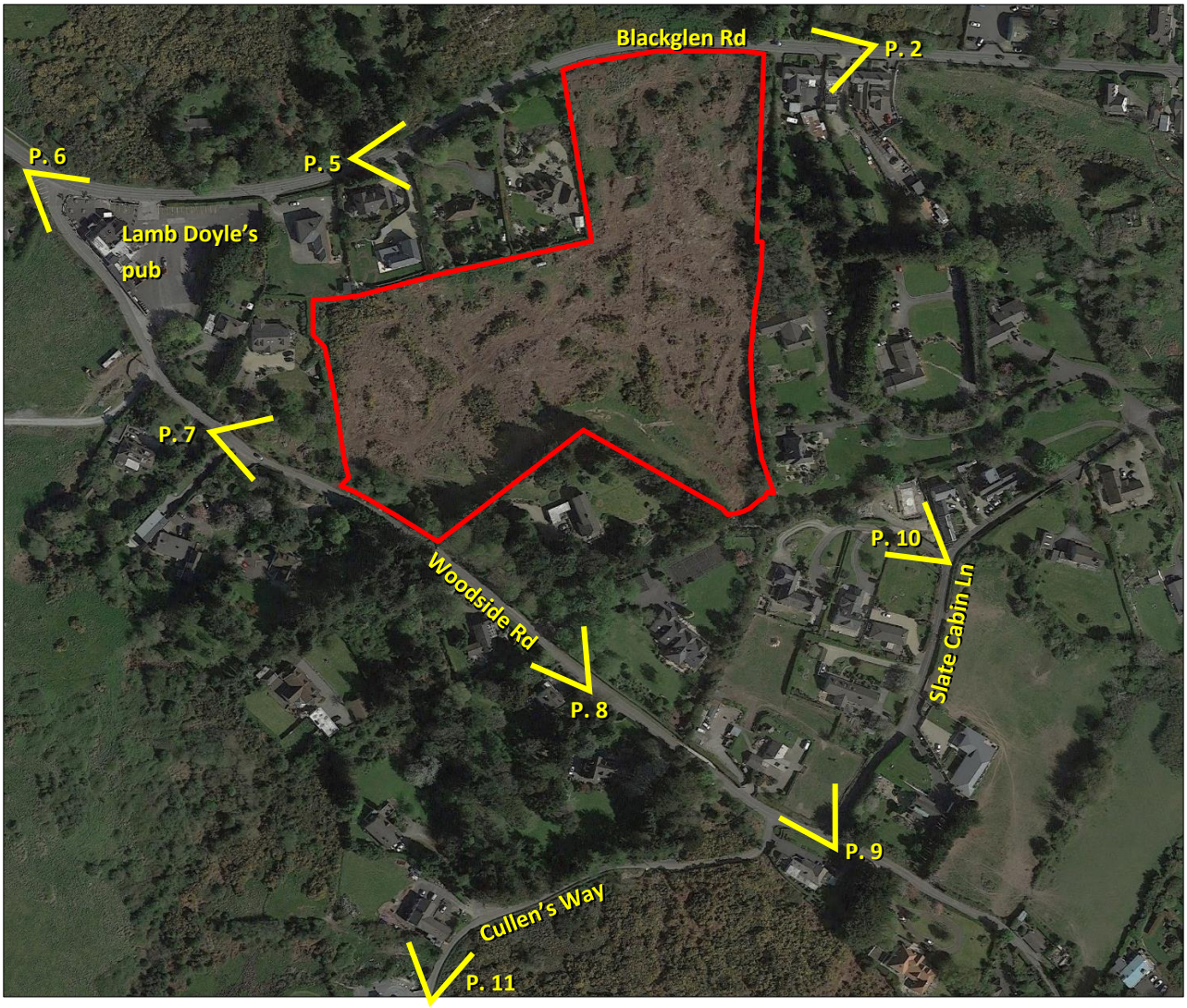


Photo 9: The view from the junction of Woodside Road and Slate Cabin Lane showing the suburban character of the Slate Cabin Lane area east of the site, and the view over the city towards Dublin Bay



2.3.4 Slate Cabin Lane

Slate Cabin Lane winds down the hill from Woodside Road through a landscape of not quite suburban character, leading to Lamb's Cross (meeting the Enniskerry Road beside the school). The area has the appearance of having developed piecemeal, with an irregular grain/layout, although one unifying factor is the houses' siting and design to take advantage of the views to the north (i.e. away from the site, which lies to the west).

Photo 10: A view west towards the site from Slate Cabin Lane



2.3.5 Cullen's Way and Barnacullia

Cullen's Way is a narrow lane that runs south up the hill from Woodside Road, serving a number of residential properties and farms on the side of Barnacullia Hill. There are walking trails from the lane leading over Barnacullia.

Photo 11: A view from Cullen's Lane towards the site, which is hidden by the trees down the slope along Woodside Road



2.3.6 Rockview Road and Explorium

A short distance to the west of the Lamb Doyle's pub at the junction of Blackglen Road and Woodside Road is the junction of Rockview Road. The road winds down the hill around a large area of open space, giving access to an extensive modern, mixed density residential neighbourhood (Blackthorn Hall, Corrig Hall, Sandyford Apartments, etc.) overlooking the M50 and Sandyford. Due to the separation distance and the intervening topography this area has no visual connection to Blackglen Road or the site.

Rockview Road also gives access to Explorium, an interactive science and sports visitor centre to the north of the site across Blackglen Road. The centre is comprised of several very large footprint buildings and a parking area set on the hillside below Blackglen Road in extensive parkland and woodland grounds. The facility attracts a large number of visitors, but (similar to the nearby residential neighbourhood) these people have limited visual exposure to the site due to the topography and vegetation in the intervening landscape.

Figure 10: The site's relationship to Explorium and Rockview Road

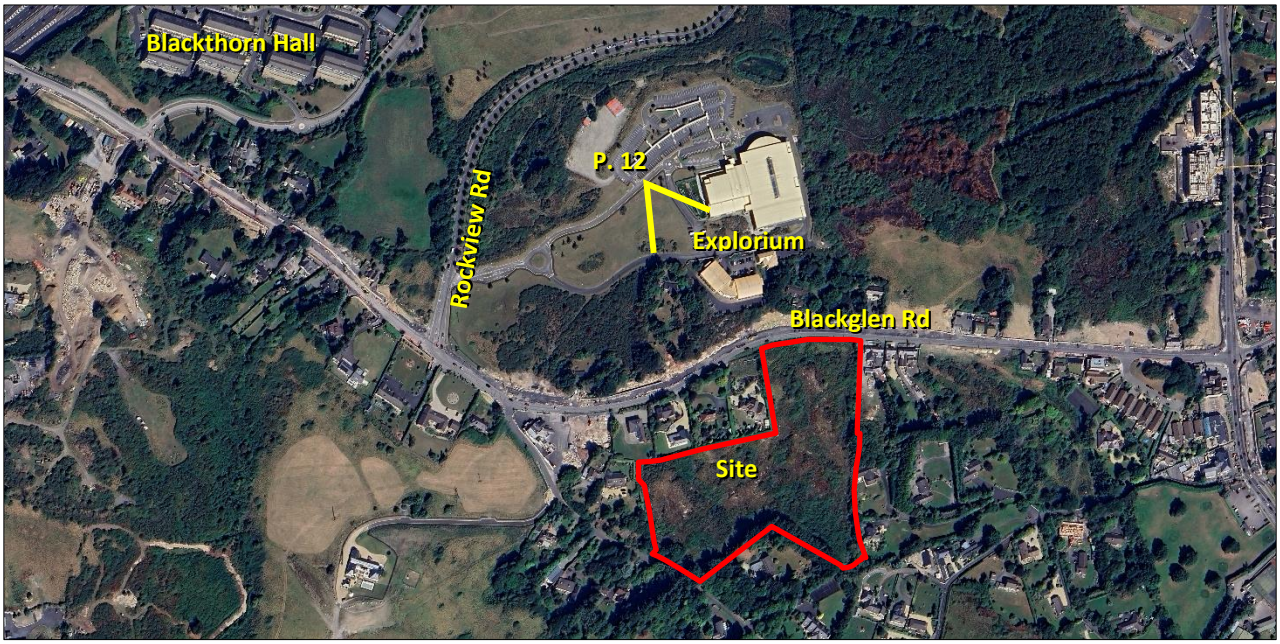


Photo 12: The view towards the site from the Explorium entrance road



2.3.7 Ticknock Road and Ticknock Forest

Some 700m to the west of the site, Ticknock Road leads south from its junction with Blackglen Road up the mountain side to Ticknock Forest. The views to east and west from the road are protected in the County Development Plan. The forest covers the summit of a prominent peak in the Dublin Mountains. It is a popular site for walking and cycling. In places there are views from the forest roads and trails between the trees over the city, and the large yellow Explorium buildings identify the approximate location of the site.

Photo 13 a & b: A view from Ticknock Forest towards the site



2.3.8 North of the M50 – Ballinteer and Sandyford

To the north of the M50 are the neighbourhoods of Ballinteer and Sandyford. From the southern parts of these areas, and from the roads crossing the M50, there are views south towards the Dublin Mountains. In these views there is a primary horizon formed by the highest peaks, and a secondary horizon formed by the foothills. The Explorium building is discernible in places on the secondary horizon (see Photo 14), and this identifies the approximate location of the site in the views.

Photo 14 a & b: The view towards the site from the Sandyford Road bridge over the M50. Note the visibility of the Explorium building on the secondary horizon



The areas and views identified in Sections 2.3.1-2.3.8 above are the main potential receptors of landscape and visual change on the site. The assessment of the proposal's townscape and visual impacts in Sections 5 and 6 below focusses on these areas.

3.0 Relevant Policy

3.1 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028

3.1.1 Land Use Zoning

The site is zoned A *"To provide residential development and improve residential amenity while protecting the existing residential amenities"*.

Figure 11: Excerpt from DLR Development Plan land use zoning map



The map clearly shows the *intended* boundary between the urban and rural landscapes (with the site in the urban area and Woodside Road and Slate Cabin Lane forming the edge), although in the vicinity of the site this is not properly realised. The urban generated but low density development bleeds into the rural landscape, blurring the boundary. Other items of note on the zoning map include the following:

- The identification of Blackglen Road and the Enniskerry Road as '6 Year Road Objective/Traffic Management/Active Travel Upgrades'. This is soon to be realised with completion of the Blackglen Road Improvement Scheme.
- The planned expansion of Lamb's Cross into a more substantial urban core (more than doubling the size of the neighbourhood centre).

- The Residential zoning of a broad belt of land on the north side of Blackglen Road between the site and Lamb's Cross (including the existing roadside houses but more significantly a large greenfield area between and behind these houses).
- The extensive open space zoning in the vicinity of the site, and the public right of way identified between Blackglen Road and Fitzsimon's Wood pNHA. There is also potential to provide an additional, more direct link between the site and this open space through the large residential-zoned site north of Blackglen Road opposite the site.

In combination these Development Plan objectives will transform the landscape character locally, with Blackglen Road forming the spine through a consolidated and evolved/modernised urban area, served by a mixed use neighbourhood centre and abundant open space.

3.1.2 Creation of a Compact and Connected County

Table 1.4 of the Development Plan sets out the Five Strategic County Outcomes of the Plan, including the following:

"Creation of a Compact and Connected County: One of the best ways to transition to a climate resilient County is to consolidate development within the existing urban footprint thus making best use of land. Sustainable planning policy has long been underpinned by the matching of land use and transport policies so that denser development takes place close to good quality public transport options and supporting services. This will allow those living, working and visiting the County easy access to amenities and services by way of high-quality public transport and the softer modes of walking and cycling." (emphasis added)

3.1.3 Quality Design and Placemaking

"Placemaking is supported through high quality urban design, aimed at supporting and creating vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible public spaces which promotes and facilitates social interaction. In this regard, good placemaking is a key component to promoting the creation and maintenance of sustainable residential communities. High quality design of all housing options also supports the creation of quality public spaces. High quality and inclusive urban design will aid in creating healthy, attractive and accessible places to live for all residents, employees and visitors and to the County... (emphasis added)

"Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes and establishing the processes that make successful development possible. Urban design encompasses the way places work as well as how they look. The Council is committed to ensuring that good urban design principles are applied in the design and planning of existing and new development areas...

"Adhering to good urban design principles can help ensure the delivery of high quality environments with a clear and interesting urban structure, the conservation of architectural heritage and townscape, the promotion of high standards of architectural design for new buildings and the reinforcement of local identity, pride and 'sense of place'."

3.1.4 Residential Density and Building Height

Policy Objective PHP18 states: *"It is a Policy Objective to:*

- *Promote compact urban growth through the consolidation and re-intensification of infill/brownfield sites.*
- *Encourage higher residential densities provided that proposals provide for high quality design and ensure a balance between the protection of existing residential amenities and the established character of the surrounding area, with the need to provide for high quality sustainable residential development."* (emphasis added)

Citing the 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' guidelines and the accompanying 'Urban Design Manual', the Development Plan states (p.81):

"As a general rule the minimum default density for new residential developments in the County (excluding lands on zoning Objectives 'GB', 'G' and 'B') shall be 35 units per hectare (net density)... "This density may not be appropriate in all instances but should be applied particularly in relation to 'greenfield' sites or larger 'A' zoned areas. Higher density schemes should offer an exemplary quality of life for existing and future residents in terms of design and amenity." (emphasis added)

3.1.5 Constraints to Higher Density (Development Plan p.81-)

"In older residential areas, infill will be encouraged while still protecting the character of these areas. Any new communities and additional residential units shall have regard to the character of the area and site context. All new development in established residential areas shall be designed to the highest standards, integrate well into the existing streetscape and be capable of adapting to changing household requirements." (emphasis added)

Policy Objective PHP20 states: *"Protection of Existing Residential Amenity: It is a Policy Objective to ensure the residential amenity of existing homes in the Built Up Area is protected where they are adjacent to proposed higher density and greater height infill developments."* (emphasis added)

- *"On all developments with a units per hectare net density greater than 50, the applicant must provide an assessment of how the density, scale, size and proposed building form does not represent over development of the site. The assessment must address how the transition from low density to a higher density scheme is achieved without it being overbearing, intrusive and without negatively impacting on the amenity value of existing dwellings particularly with regard to the proximity of the structures proposed. The assessment should demonstrate how the proposal respects the form of buildings and landscape around the site's edges and the amenity enjoyed by neighbouring uses.*
- *On all developments with height proposals greater than 4 storeys the applicant should provide a height compliance report indicating how the proposal conforms to the relevant Building Height Performance Based Criteria "At District/Neighbourhood/Street level" as set out in Table 5.1 in Appendix 5.*
- *On sites abutting low density residential development (less than 35 units per hectare) and where the proposed development is four storeys or more, an obvious buffer must exist from the rear garden boundary lines of existing private dwellings.*
- *Where a proposal involves building heights of four storeys or more, a step back design should be considered so as to respect the existing built heights."* (emphasis added)

3.1.6 Existing Trees and Hedgerows (Section 12.8.11)

"New developments shall be designed to incorporate, as far as practicable, the amenities offered by existing trees and hedgerows. New developments shall, also have regard to objectives to protect and preserve trees and woodlands (as identified on the County Development Plan Maps)".

"The retention of existing planted site boundaries will be encouraged within new developments, particularly where it is considered that the existing boundary adds positively to the character/visual amenity of the area."

3.1.7 Views and Prospects (Section 8.4.5)

"DLR contains many sites and vantage points from which scenic views over areas of great natural beauty, local landmarks, historic landscapes, adjoining Counties, and the City of Dublin may be obtained. In addition, the County also contains important prospects i.e. prominent landscapes or areas of special amenity value, or special interest which are widely visible from the surrounding area. Specific Views and Prospects for protection have been identified in the Plan and are considered when assessing planning applications."

Policy Objective GIB6 states*: "Views and Prospects: It is a Policy Objective to preserve, protect and encourage the enjoyment of views and prospects of special amenity value or special interests, and to prevent development, which would block or otherwise interfere with Views and/or Prospects."*

3.2 National Planning Framework

Compact growth is one of the main principles and intended outcomes of the NPF. This encourages higher density – and therefore taller - development in urban areas where supporting infrastructure and services are available.

National Policy Objective 11 states: *"In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities… subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth."*

"The National Planning Framework targets a significant proportion of future urban development on infill/brownfield development sites within the built footprint of existing urban areas…"

As a large infill site in a well-serviced urban area (refer to 3.1.1 above) with the site represents an important opportunity to achieve compact growth. The NPF allows that this may include development taller than the height limit specified in the DLRDP if the particular circumstances allow for this.

3.3 Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities

The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024) set out policy and guidance in relation to the planning and development of urban and rural settlements with a focus on residential development and the creation of compact sustainable settlements.

The Guidelines state: *"The NPF sets ambitious growth targets for cities and metropolitan areas to 2040.* ***The strategy for all cities is to support consolidation and intensification*** *within and close to the existing built up footprint of the city and suburbs area and metropolitan towns; and to support sustainable urban extension at locations served by public transport"*.

Three of the 'key priorities' of the Guidelines for Dublin city and metropolitan area are relevant to the site:

> *(d) deliver brownfield and infill development at scale at suitable strategic and sustainable development locations within the existing built up footprint of the city and suburbs area or metropolitan towns,*
>
> *(e) deliver sustainable and compact urban extension at scale at suitable strategic and sustainable development locations that are close to the existing built-up footprint of the city and suburbs area or a metropolitan town and served by existing or proposed high-capacity public transport, and*
>
> *(f) deliver sequential and sustainable urban extension at suitable locations that are closest to the urban core and are integrated into, or can be integrated into, the existing built-up footprint of the city and suburbs area or a metropolitan town."*

These priorities are relevant because the site offers the opportunity to deliver an infill development at scale within the existing built up footprint of the city (close to a local urban core at Lamb's Cross, and well served by public transport). Figures 3 and 4 above show that the area between Blackglen Road and Woodside Road *is* within the city's footprint; it is 'built-up', even if its development has been piecemeal and low density.

Table 3.1 of the Guidelines outlines residential density ranges for Dublin, with ranges provided for the following area types: 'City - Centre'; 'City - Urban Neighbourhoods'; 'City - Suburban/Urban Extension'; 'Metropolitan Town'; 'Metropolitan Village'.

The subject site can be categorised at 'City - Suburban/Urban Extension' which is defined in the Guidelines as follows:

*"Suburban areas are the lower density car-orientated residential suburbs constructed at the edge of cities in the latter half of the 20th and early 21st century, while urban extension refers to the greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built up footprint that are zoned for residential or mixed-use (including residential) development. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that residential densities in the range **40 dph to 80 dph (net)** shall generally be applied at suburban and urban extension locations in Dublin and Cork, and that densities of up to 150 dph (net) shall be open for consideration at 'accessible' suburban / urban extension locations (as defined in Table 3.8)."*

The Guidelines note that the density ranges should be considered and refined based on considerations of proximity and accessibility to services and local character and amenity of the area. The Guidelines state:

"While considerations of centrality and accessibility will have a significant bearing on density, it is also necessary to ensure that the quantum and scale of development at all locations can integrate successfully into the receiving environment. New development should respond to the receiving environment in a positive way and should not result in a significant negative impact on character (including historic character), amenity or the natural environment.

(a) The evaluation of impact on local character should focus on the defining characteristics of an area, including for example, the prevailing scale and mass of buildings, urban grain and architectural language, any particular sensitivities and the capacity of the area for change. While it is not necessary to replicate the scale and mass of existing buildings, as most urban areas have significant capacity to accommodate change, it will be necessary to respond in a positive and proportionate way to the receiving context through site responsive design.

(b) Historic environments (built and landscape heritage) can be particularly sensitive to change. It is a recommendation of these Guidelines that a Built Heritage Character Assessment inform the preparation of statutory development plans that relate to historic environments. The assessment should describe for example, the historical evolution, urban form, street pattern, building typologies and building plots that define the historic environments. This will better inform the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas under Section 84 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the integration of new buildings and street patterns with historic environments. The provisions contained within Part (IV) of the Planning and Development Act regarding architectural heritage and the requirement to protect the character and setting of a protected structure must also be considered. The Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG) provides useful guidance in relation to the protection of architectural heritage in urban areas. Shaping the Future Case Studies in the Reuse in Historic Urban Environments (DAHG) 2012 provides useful guidance where building refurbishment is proposed.

(c) Evaluation of impact on the environment and on protected habitats and species must be considered under the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Directives. Development proposals should seek to protect and enhance important natural features (habitats and species) and should avoid the degradation of ecosystems. Habitat mapping undertaken as part of a plan making process can give a good indication of natural heritage features and corridors within an area. Appendix C sets out suggested threshold for submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) and all site surveys and the associated description of the site should detail the natural features that exist within a site to allow for consideration of impact on biodiversity and natural features.

(d) It will be necessary to consider the impact of a proposed development on the amenities of residential properties that are in close proximity to a development site. The key considerations should include privacy, daylight and sunlight, and microclimate. These considerations are addressed in more detail in Chapter 5 Development Standards.

(e) In all settlements, it will be important to ensure that water supply and wastewater networks (including treatment works) can service any new development.

The companion Design Manual will address best practice approaches in relation to the preservation of local character (including historic character) and amenity in more detail.

In considering impact on character and amenity as part of the assessment of a planning application, it will be important to detail the evaluation process and to draw clear and reasoned conclusions in relation to the nature and extent of potential impacts. It may not be possible in all cases to mitigate against negative impacts on character (including historic character) and amenity. In such cases, the significance of impact will need to be determined and where it is intended to grant permission for a development justified by reasoned conclusions.

Specialist technical assessments and computer-generated visual aids can assist in the evaluation of more complex development proposals and in particular, where a proposal deviates from the established scale, mass or character or is situated in a sensitive context. In order to consider larger proposals in an integrated and informed way, an Urban Design Statement that addresses the proposal from an architectural and urban design perspective should form part of the required documentation. Refer to Appendix C for thresholds.

This LVIA report and accompanying photomontages are intended to satisfy the above requirements of the Guidelines.

3.4 Urban Development & Building Height Guidelines

The Guidelines state: *"Reflecting the National Planning Framework strategic outcomes in relation to compact urban growth, the Government considers that there is significant scope to accommodate anticipated population growth and development needs, whether for housing, employment or other purposes, by building up and consolidating the development of our existing urban areas…*

"Therefore, these guidelines require that the scope to consider general building heights of at least three to four storeys, coupled with appropriate density, in locations outside what would be defined as city and town centre areas, and which would include suburban areas, must be supported in principle at development plan and development management levels…

"A key objective of the NPF is therefore to see that greatly increased levels of residential development in our urban centres and significant increases in the building heights and overall density of development is not only facilitated but actively sought out and brought forward by our planning processes and particularly so at local authority and An Bord Pleanála levels."

In Section 3.2 of the Guidelines 'development management criteria' are set out to guide the evaluation of development proposals for buildings taller than the prevailing heights in the area:

"In the event of making a planning application, the applicant shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority/ An Bord Pleanála, that the proposed development satisfies the following criteria:

At the scale of the relevant city/town:

- *"The site is well served by public transport with high capacity, frequent service and good links to other modes of public transport.*
- *Development proposals incorporating increased building height, including proposals within architecturally sensitive areas, should successfully integrate into/ enhance the character and public realm of the area, having regard to topography, its cultural context, setting of key landmarks, protection of key views. Such development proposals shall undertake a landscape and visual assessment, by a suitably qualified practitioner such as a chartered landscape architect.*
- *On larger urban redevelopment sites, proposed developments should make a positive contribution to place-making, incorporating new streets and public spaces, using massing and height to achieve the required densities but with sufficient variety in scale and form to respond to the scale of adjoining developments and create visual interest in the streetscape."*

At the scale of district/neighbourhood/street:

- *The proposal responds to its overall natural and built environment and makes a positive contribution to the urban neighbourhood and streetscape.*
- *The proposal is not monolithic and avoids long, uninterrupted walls of building in the form of slab blocks with materials / building fabric well considered.*
- *The proposal enhances the urban design context for public spaces and key thoroughfares… thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure...*
- *The proposal makes a positive contribution to the improvement of legibility through the site or wider urban area within which the development is situated and integrates in a cohesive manner.*
- *The proposal positively contributes to the mix of uses and/ or building/ dwelling typologies available in the neighbourhood."*

It is noteworthy that the Height Guidelines allow for "significant increases in building height and overall development density" even within architecturally sensitive areas and suburban areas, subject to the development responding appropriately to its context.

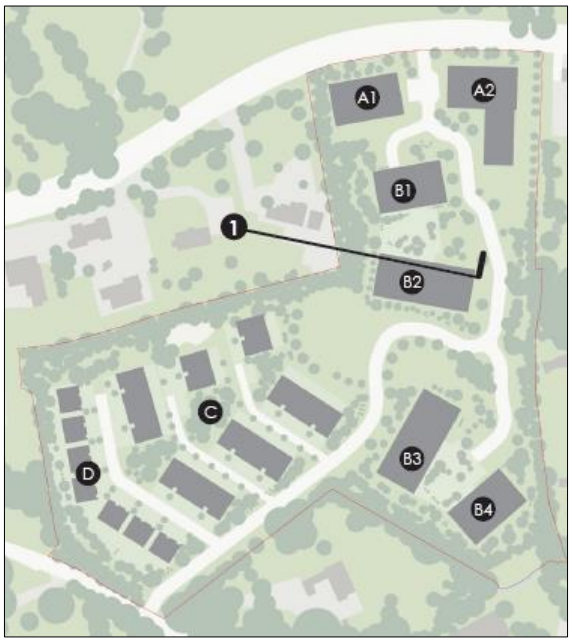
4.0 Proposed Development

The proposed LRD scheme is a modification of the SHD scheme that previously was refused planning permission (in part due to its potential landscape and visual impacts). The key changes from the SHD scheme are (a) the replacement of three apartment blocks (C1-3 – up to six storeys tall) with three rows of split level duplex and a row of semi-detached houses in the south western part of the sire, and (b) a reduction in height across the apartment buildings so that no block is more than five storeys tall. The changes are made to introduce a gradation of density – reflected in the building typologies and height – between Blackglen Road, which is urban in character, and Woodside Road, which marks the boundary between the urban area and the rural landscape to the south.

4.1 Site Layout, Massing, Height and Architecture

The site is divided into four main character/development areas (A, B, C, D) based on its shape, topography, and the character and sensitivities of the adjacent lands.

Figure 12: The four character areas, A, B, C, D



4.1.1 Area A

Area A is the part of the site fronting Blackglen Road. This is the part of the site exposed to the largest number of visual receptors, the users of road. Area A thus has the greatest potential for changing the character of the landscape locally. Immediately to the east is the row of cottages fronting the road, and to the west is a row of large detached houses set back from the road, at higher elevation in large gardens with numerous mature trees.

The design objectives for Area A are to (1) address the upgraded Blackglen Road with an urban-type built frontage, (2) respond to the neighbouring houses, particularly the cottages, which are distinctive, and (3) to form an 'arrival court' at the main entrance to the neighbourhood.

The proposal for Area A is to position two buildings along the street-front, adopting the building line of the neighbouring row of cottages. Building A2 (closest to the cottages) is three storeys fronting the street (with a four storey return volume extending back inside the east boundary. The gap between the buildings forms the 'arrival court' where the main entrance is proposed. The buildings are contemporary in typology, scale and architecture but they adopt certain characteristics of the cottages including the pitched roofs and rendered facades. The balconies are enclosed (as opposed to expressed/projecting) to simplify the form of the buildings, again with reference to the neighbouring cottages. The built frontage is softened by a strip of ornamental planting with scattered trees between the building line and the street. The ground floors of the buildings are occupied by a creche and residents' amenity space for an active street frontage.

Figure 13: Proposed Buildings A2 and A1 fronting Blackglen Road beside the neighbouring row of cottages



Figure 14: The arrival court between Blocks A1 and A2



4.1.2 Area B

Area B is the eastern part of the site behind the roadside portion, rising up the hill. The northern part of Area B is between the long back gardens of the cottages to the east and the houses along Blackglen Road to the west. The southern part of Area B faces the Slate Cabin Lane area to the east and borders two large residential properties fronting Woodside Road to the south. This is a substantial development area and the design objectives for Area

B are to (1) optimise the residential use of the land and derive maximum amenity benefit for the dwellings, and (2) avoid excessive impacts on the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties.

It is proposed to position two pairs of apartment buildings (B1 and B2 forming one pair, and B3 and B4 the other) in this area. Each pair is separated by a courtyard on the roof of an undercroft. The footprints of each pair are slightly splayed, and the buildings are orientated to respond to the slope of the site. The B blocks are up to five storeys tall, with the top floor set back, and the height stepping down to the east. This arrangement of form and height is intended to present a stepped and permeable massing to the sensitive receptors to the west and east. The facades of Buildings B1-4 are clad in a mottled tan brick, and the top floors bronze-coloured metal.

Figure 15: CGI of the proposed Area B buildings, showing the stepping of the building height reflecting the topography and responding to the sensitive Slate Cabin Lane area to the east



4.1.3 Area C

Area C is the broad, elevated south western part of the site. It is located up the hillside behind the houses along Blackglen Road. Similar to Area B, the design objectives for Area C are to (1) optimise the residential use of the land and derive maximum amenity benefit for the dwellings, and (2) avoid excessive impacts on the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties.

Figure 16: The Area C duplex blocks



It is proposed to build three rows of split level duplex units in Area C, with the rows divided in the centre by a wide green wedge. The duplex blocks are 2/3 storeys to the 'rear' (upslope) and 3/4 storeys to the front (downslope). In keeping with their wooded hillside setting, the upper volume of the blocks is clad in dark stained timber, while the lower volumes are a light tan/grey brick.

Figure 17: The lower duplex block of Area C beside Block B3



Figure 18: The upper duplex block in Area C facing the Area A houses across an internal access road



4.1.4 Area D

Area D is the elevated south western part of the site, part of which has frontage to Woodside Road. In response to the urban edge location, it is proposed to locate a row of semi-detached houses – the least dense, most 'suburban' typology used in the scheme – inside the south west boundary. The houses are set well back from the boundaries of the neighbouring properties and from Woodside Road. The houses have a simple, 'traditional' form, with pitched roofs, and are clad in a mix of white concrete render and white brick, with slate roof tiles.

An important aspect of the proposal is the retention of the existing hedgerow vegetation along the Woodside Road boundary. This would provide screen or filter views of the houses from Woodside Road, thereby preventing excessive change in character along the road.

Figure 19: A view of the Area D houses from Woodside Road adjacent to the site



Figure 20: Diagram showing the varied building typology across the site, responding to the different character of the surrounding landscape and the topography of the site



4.2 Landscape Proposals

The key elements of the landscape masterplan with respect to the potential landscape and visual impacts are as follows:

- **Perimeter woodland belt**. It is proposed to establish a woodland belt around the perimeter of the site. These multi-canopy, mixed native species woodland belts are sufficiently broad that they would form a dense, tall visual screen as they mature, complementing the existing vegetation in the neighbouring gardens.
- **Blackglen Road streetscape**. The Blackglen Road streetscape combines elements such as broad paving areas and beds of ornamental planting, with numerous, informally arranged trees, seeking to reference and blend the urban and naturalistic influences in the local landscape.
- **Woodside Road landscape corridor**. The planting of the landscape strip inside the Woodside Road frontage focusses on screening as opposed to 'streetscape'. This recognises the character and function

of Woodside Road as a local road at the urban edge, in contrast to the newly urban character of Blackglen Road.

- **Central public open space**. At the centre of the site beside the internal access road (which also functions as a public through-route), a public open space is proposed. This comprises a lawn area and a playground surrounded by a framework of trees.

Figure 21: Proposed landscape masterplan



Overall the development would result in an increase in accessible open space and in tree cover on the site (323 no. new trees are proposed), delivering a range of ecosystem serves in addition to their visual screening function.

5.0 Visual Impact Assessment

For the previous SHD application for the site, 23 no. viewpoints were assessed for potential visual impact informed by verified photomontages. The same viewpoints – selected to represent the key receptors and sensitivities in the receiving environment - are assessed below for the current/subject application.

Additionally, in pre-planning consultation DLRCC was invited to request additional viewpoints to inform the assessment. The Council requested 5 no. additional views. These are included in the set as Viewpoints 05b, 08b, 10b, 11 and 24b.

The viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 22 overleaf.

The visual impacts on these viewpoints are assessed in Table 1 below. For the methodology, terms and criteria used in the assessment refer to Appendix 1.

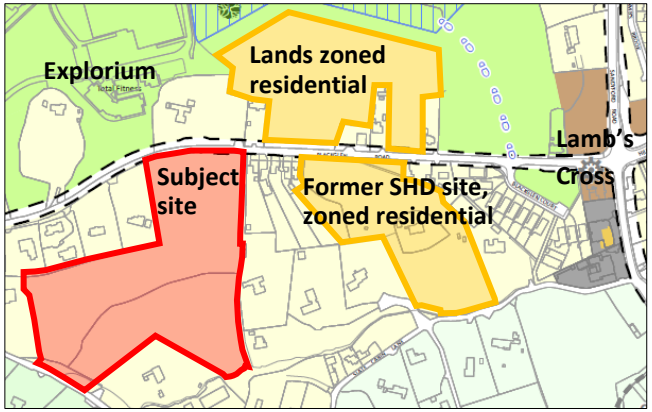
The assessments should be read in conjunction with the baseline photographs and verified photomontages provided in A3 format under separate cover.

Figure 22: Viewpoints for visual impact assessment

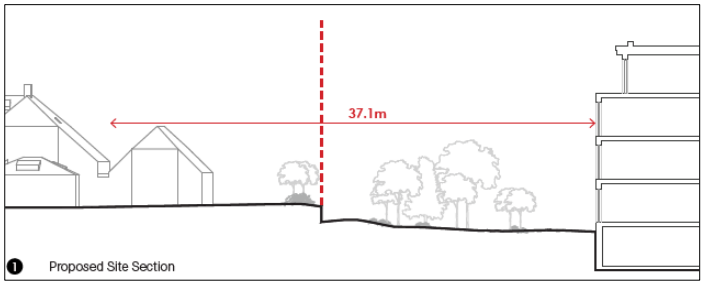


Table 1: Assessment of Visual Effects

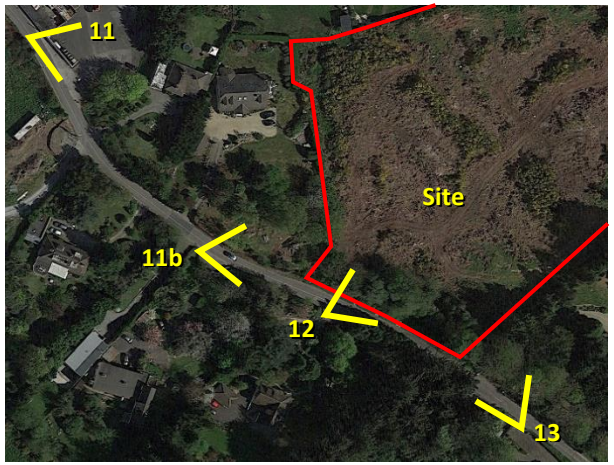
No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
Views from Lamb's Cross and Blackglen Road to the east of the site					
01	Lamb's Cross (Sandyford) neighbour-hood centre	Medium	• In the foreground to the left is the shopping centre, beyond which are the community centre and school (out of frame to the left), together forming the urban core of Lamb's Cross. The sites across the road to the right (out of view), and diagonally across the junction from the existing centre are also zoned neighbourhood centre (see Figure 11). Once those sites are developed, Lamb's Cross will become a more substantial urban core, and more contemporary-urban in character. • The upgrading of Blackglen Road is well advanced, and the existing/baseline view shows the urbanising impact that this project is having on the landscape. • In the proposed view, the 3-4 storey Block A2 can be seen in the distance up the road, protruding approximately 1 storey over the roofs of the existing houses along the road. The white facades and dark slate roof of the building help to integrate it into the landscape. • Further back in the site, slightly upslope, the 5 storey Block B1 is visible, adding to the cluster of built form but having limited visual presence from this distance. • In the complex and changing view, the magnitude of change is low, and the significance of the impacts is slight and neutral. Future development in Lamb's Cross and along Blackglen Road will further diminish the development's impacts.	Low	**Slight neutral**
02	Enniskerry Road entering Lamb's Cross neighbour-hood centre	Medium	• Entering Lamb's Cross neighbourhood centre along the Enniskerry Road from the east, there is a distinctly urban character as the road passes the Clon Brugh apartments to the right and then the imposing St Mary's National School, the community centre and the shopping centre beside the crossroads. • This position was selected to test the proposal's visibility along the face of the hillside, from the edge of the neighbourhood centre where there is (briefly) no enclosure of the road by trees or buildings. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**
03	Blackglen Road approaching the site from the east	Medium	• This view is taken from the bus stop across the road from the cottages east of the site. With the absence of visible development around them the cottages and their setting appear rural. However, the upgrade of Blackglen Road has initiated a changed in character. Additionally, the cottages' positioning close to the road, their terracing and uniformity, lend them to an urban setting. • The proposed Block A2 would be a prominent addition to the road corridor, advancing the shift towards an urban condition. The development shares the same building line as the cottages, and adopts certain traditional characteristics, e.g. the pitched roofs and render finish. The step up in height from the cottages to the 3/4 storey building is notable but not excessive – and not unusual in an urbanising landscape. The composition of older and modern building typologies and architecture adds visual interest to the view.	Medium-High	**Moderate positive**

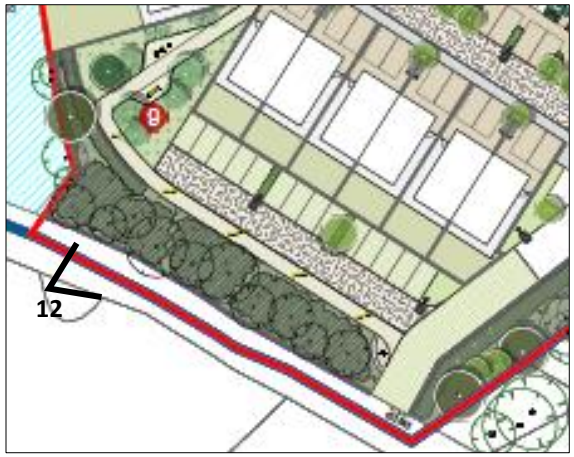
No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
			• Further back in the site, the top of Block B2 protrudes slightly above the cottages' roofline. • It should be noted that the lands to the right across the road, opposite the cottages, are part of a large undeveloped area zoned residential. The vacant site in the foreground to the left (in View 03) is also zoned residential and was the subject of a withdrawn SHD application. The future development of those lands – and therefore the further urbanisation of the Blackglen Road corridor - can be expected • The proposed change would be of medium-high magnitude. The composition and character of the view would be dramatically changed, but (a) the change follows that initiated by the road improvement scheme, (b) the development clearly responds to the context and is of high design and material quality, and (c) the resulting composition is visually pleasing. The impact can be classified of moderate significance and positive. 		
04	Blackglen Road along the site frontage – Looking east	Medium	• The view shows the site in its undeveloped condition beside the road in process of upgrade to an urban streetscape, with segregated footpaths, cycle lanes, etc. A bus stop can be seen just ahead, across the road from the site. • The neighbouring house is visible beyond the site, set on a platform overlooking the roadside portion of the site, and the road. In the distance to the left the land rises steeply into the Dublin Mountains. • The natural elements (topography and vegetation) generate a high level of visual amenity. However, the upgraded streetscape appears somewhat incongrous, awaiting complementary development on the adjacent vacant sites (which are marked by unsightly security fences). This creates some capacity for change. (It should also be noted that the Explorium can be seen across the road from the site.) • The proposed view shows the new built frontage to Blackglen Road, with Blocks A1 and A2 separated by a wide gap forming the entrance court. The architecture of the buildings is distinctive and attractive, and the materials of high quality. The ground floors of the buildings are occupied by a creche and residents' amenities to provide an active frontage to the street. • The buildings are set back behind a wide pedestrian pavement with beds of ornamental planting and scattered trees, which soften the built frontage. • A part of Block B1 is visible behind the entrance court, and one of the Area C duplexes can be seen up the hill.	High	**Significant neutral**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
			• The magnitude of change would be high. The composition and character of the view would be dramatically changed, but (a) the change follows that initiated by the road improvement scheme, and is in keeping with the land use zoning for the site, and (b) the buildings and public realm are of high design and material quality. What was previously an attractive rural scene would be changed to an attractive urban scene – with a generous quantity of vegetation, dramatic topography, etc. The visual impact can be classified significant neutral.		
05, 05b	Blackglen Road along the site frontage – Looking west	Medium	• View 05 is illustrative of the site's proximity to Lamb's Cross. The growing neighbourhood centre is a short walk away. It also shows the urbanising effect of the road improvement sceheme on the landscape. • The site in its undeveloped condition does contribute to a high proportion of natural elements in view (particularly in View 05b), which lends visual amenity. Howeverm it also appears somewhat incongruous in the evolving landscape. There is capacity for change. • The proposed views shows the new built frontage to Blackglen Road, with Blocks A1 and A2 separated by a wide gap forming the entrance court. In neither view is the built enclosure excessive; the 3 or 4 storey height is comfortable accommodated on the widerend road. • The architecture of the buildings is distinctive and attractive, and the materials of appreciably high quality. The ground floors of the buildings are occupied by a creche and residents' amenities to provide an active frontage to the street. • The buildings are set back behind a wide pedestrian pavement with beds of ornamental planting and scattered trees, which soften the built frontage. • In View 05b Block B1 is prominent on the axis of entrance to the site. A small part of the Dublin Mountains can be seen in the gap to the left. • The magnitude of change would be high. The composition and character of the views would be dramatically changed, but (a) the change follows that initiated by the road improvement scheme, and is in keeping with the land use zoning for the site, and (b) the buildings and public realm are of high design and material quality. The visual impact can be classified significant neutral.	High	**Significant Neutral**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
Views from Lamb Doyle's Pub and Blackglen Road to the west of the site					
06	View from Blackglen Road – entrance to neighbouring property	Medium	• The view is taken from Blackglen Road across from the entrance to the neighbouring residential property west of the site. The house is set back a long distance from the road, up the hillside in a large, landscaped garden. • The proposed 5 storey Blocks B1 and B2 are positioned over 37m to the side of the neighbouring house, at lower elevation and presenting their shorter elevations to the property. Nonetheless, the view shows that they would be prominent additions to views from the property. • Building A1, set down the hill fronting the road, would also be prominent. • The development would change the character of the house's setting and the composition of views from the property. Such change is unavoidable in the process of urban consolidation and densification. • In recognition of the potential impact, the embedded mitigation includes the setback of B1 and B2 from the shared boundary, their positioning to present a permeable built frontage to the house, the high quality of the facades (design and materials), and - importantly - the proposed screening vegetation. The photomontage shows the short term impact of the buildings' introduction to the landscape. In the medium to long term the multi-layered woodland planting inside the site boundary would mature to soften the buildings' presence. • The landscape character and the views from the property would thus be changed, but not inappropriately in the evolving/urbanising context, and the house would retain a high level of residential and visual amenities.  	High	**Significant neutral**
07	Blackglen Road approaching the site from the west	Medium	• This view is taken from Blackglen Road approximately 65m west of Viewpoint 05 (the width of one residential property). It shows the high degree of visual enclosure where roadside garden vegetation has been retained in the road improvement scheme. • Block A1 would be visible ahead along the road, sitting comfortably in the road corridor and framed by vegetation. A part of Block B2 would be visible up the hillside to the right, behind the neighbouring house.	Low	**Slight neutral**

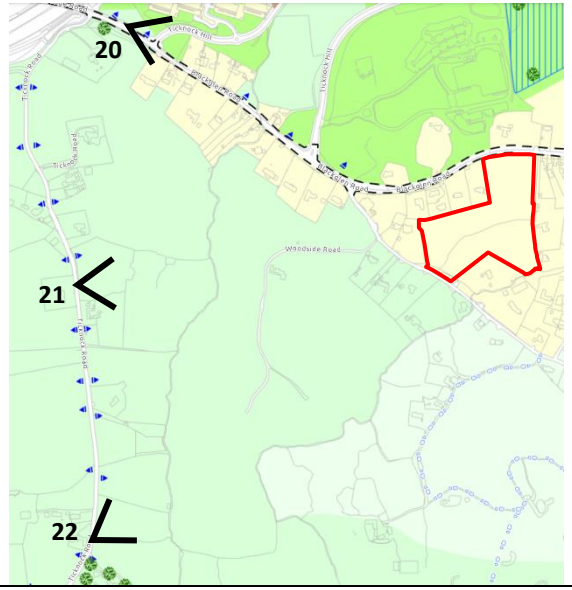
No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
			• Neither building is particularly prominent, and nor do they look out of place beside the widened, upgraded road. The development would contribute to an ongoing shift in character towards a more urban condition, with no loss of visual amenity.		
08	Lamb Doyle's at the junction of Blackglen Road and Woodside Road	Medium	• The pub is positioned facing the junction, surrounded by parking areas.Two houses have recently been built beside the pub, fronting Blasckglen Road, and the roofs of further houses can be seen down the road. • The contrast between the upgraded Blackglen Road and Woodside Road (to the right) is evident in this view – the former a streetscape of increasingly urban character, the latter winding rural road. • Small parts of Block B2 and a duplex block are visible between the buildings in the foreground. The upgraded Blackglen Road provides favourable context for further development, and the development would amount to a negligible to low magnitude of change with no significant effect on landscape character or visual amenity.	Negligible-Low	**Slight neutral**
08b	Blackglen Road outside Lamb Doyle's	Medium-Low	• This view was requested by DLRCC in pre-planning consultation. The camera is directed between Lamb Doyle's and the two newly built houses on Blackglen Road, diagonally across the Lamb Doyle's parking area. The two houses up the hill beyond the parking area are accessed from Woodside Road. • One of the duplex blocks protrudes marginally above the hip of the roof on the new house neighbouring Lamb Doyle's. A small part of one of the B blocks is also discernible to the left above the Blackglen Road houses' roofline. • This amounts to a negligible magnitude of change, with no significant effect on landscape character or visual amenity.	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
Views from Blackglen Road to the west of the site, Rockview Road and Explorium					
09	Blackglen Road at Rockview Road junction	Medium	• The top of Rockview Road affords a panoramic view north over Dublin. This is identified as a protected view in the DLR Development Plan. In the view east, Lamb Doyle's pub can be seen at the junction of Blackglen Road and Woodside Road. • The majority of the development would be hidden by the topography. A very small part of one building would be discernible in a gap between the existing buildings and vegetation in the intevening landscape.	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
10	Explorium entrance road	Medium	• Explorium attracts a large number of visitors and although the activities are concentrated indoors the location affords panoramic views both over the city to the north and into the mountains to the south. This visual amenity contributes to the experience. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
10b		Medium	• This view was requested by DLRCC in pre-planning consultation. • The view is taken from the Explorium access road, which also provides access to an apartment development, Simon's Ridge, in the Explorium grounds. • The Simon's Ridge building is to the right. A combination of topography and tall, mostly evergreen trees blocks the view of Blackglen Road and the site to the south. The Dublin Mountains rise to form the horizon between the trees. • The development would not be visible. 	None	**No effect**
Views from Woodside Road					
11	Woodside Road approaching the site from the west - A	Medium	• This view was requested by DLRCC in pre-planning consultation. It is taken from a bus stop on Woodside Road to the rear of Lamb Doyle's pub. There is a large house beside the pub, which combines with the abundant tall trees and the topography to screen the site from view. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**
11b	Woodside Road approaching the site from the west - B	Medium	• This view shows the high degree of visual enclosure along Woodside Road in the vicinity of the site. There are houses to both sides of the road but they are set back from the road in densely vegetated gardens, restricting visibility across the landscape. • The development would effectively be screened by the tall hedge and trees to the left of the road. • Ahead, the addition of a timber fence along the site buondary would be the only noticeable change. The existing roadside vegetation is proposed to be retained, and the Area D houses are positioned well back from the road behind this vegetation, out of view. • This amounts to a negligible magnitude of change, with no significant effect on landscape character or visual amenity. 	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
12	Woodside Road opposite site frontage	Medium	 • This view is taken from the entrance to the driveway of a house across Woodside Road from the site. (The house itself is 35m back from the road and enclosed by trees in the garden.) • There is a ditch and overgrown hedgerow on the site boundary, which contributes to the rural character of the road. • It is proposed to erect a traditional timber fence to mark the estate boundary, and to retain the hedgerow vegatation as a visual screen. The Area D houses (set back 24m from the road edge) would be discernible but heavily filtered by this vegetation. • The magniture of change would be low. There are already houses on both sides of Woodside Road along this stretch, and the measures taken to lessen the impact of the development - specifically (1) locating a traditional house type inside the sputh west boundary, (2) setting the houses back 24m from the road, and (3) retaining the existing overgrown hedgerow on the boundary – are shown by this view to be effective. The significance of the impact would be slight moderate. • With a separation distance of some 68m between the Area D houses and the existing house across Woodside Road, and with a densely vegetated landscape between them, the visual impact on the house would be imperceptible.	Low	**Slight neutral**
13	Woodside Road approaching the site from the east	Medium	• Like View 11b this view shows the high degree of enclosure along Woodside Road on the approach to the site. • The only perceptible change would be the addition of a timber fence on the site boundary (outside of the retained hedgerow), and the addition of a new entrance to the site. This amounts to a negligible magnitude of change, with no significant effect on landscape character or visual amenity.	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
14	Junction of Woodside Road and Cullens Way	Medium	• This view is taken from a position 200m to the east of View 13, at the junction with Cullens Way. The existing view highlights the peri-urban character of the area, being neither rural, nor urban or suburban. It also shows the gradient of the land and the visual enclosure along the road and around the individual properties. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
Views from Cullens Way and Barnacullia					
15	Cullens Way	Medium	• The view is from roughly half way up Cullens Way just above a cluster of houses beside the lane. The viewpoint represents the residents and also hill walkers who access Barnacullia from Cullens Way. This is ostensibly a rural area although a proportion of the housing along the lane appears to be urban-generated (there are more houses than farms). • The view is dominated by the tall trees on the south side of Woodside Road. At a gap in the tree line the roof of the Explorium building can be seen, and beyond that Dublin (with the larger buildings of the port, the Docklands and the city centre discernible). • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**
16	View from walking trail at the summit of Barnacullia above Cullens Way	High	• The elevation and the lack of trees and buildings at the top of the hill combine to afford a panoramic view over the city and Dublin Bay. • As a walking trail valued specifically for the views, this viewpoint is of high sensitivity. That sensitivity relates principally to any potential change in the foreground, which might block or substantially intrude in the view. Beyond the foreground there is considerable capacity for change, i.e. development can take place without causing harm - due to the breadth and complexity of the view. • Although out of frame in the view towards the site, the urban core of Lamb's Cross is prominent in views from Barnacullia. Sandyford and Leopardstown are also prominent. • It is also notable that to the north east there is a visible edge between the rural and urban landscapes (the edge formed by the Enniskerry Road) – whereas in the view north (towards the site and the Blackglen Road area) the landscape character is mixed/indistinct (with a scattering of houses and the Explorium prominent). • The proposed buildings closest to Blackglen Road (A2, B1, B2) would be visible protruding above the trees at the foot of Barnacullia, in front of the Explorium buildings. Although relatively close to the viewer, in the wide panorama of a vast urban area, the development would amount to a low magnitude of change, with no significant effect on landscape character or visual amenity.	Low	**Slight neutral**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
Views from Slate Cabin Lane					
17	Slate Cabin Lane - A	Medium	• The view is along a driveway off Slate Cabin Lane leading to a cluster of houses to the east of the site. These houses are positioned on the side of the hill to take advantage of the view north (afforded by the combination of elevation and falling topography). The houses have large gardens which are mostly enclosed by hedges or trees. • The upper floors of B Blocks would be visible to the west along the face of the hill, arranged in two pairs - B3 and B4 higher up the hillside and closer to the houses, and B1 and B2 lower down. - The wide gap between the two pairs and the splayed arrangement of each pair makes the built form permeable despite the high density typology. - The stepping of the buildings, reflecting the topography, combined with the setback of the top floor and the varied materials, disaggregates the built form and reduces the massing. - The material textures and colours (with light coloured brick the predominant material) are effective in further softening the buildings' presence. • Although the development typology is markedly different to the houses, the buildings are responsive to the context, attractive and distinctive. • The magnitude of change would be medium and would cause a shift in character towards a more urban condition. This is not inappropriate in the already evolving, peri-urban landscape. • In this future scenario, the area north of Woodside Road is consolidated and densified (in accordance with national policy). Within this landscape there will be areas of low density, high amenity houses coexisting with areas of higher density housing - also of high quality and also providing a high level of residential amenity. • The existing houses would not be devalued by this change. They would retain most of the qualities that generate their residential amenity, i.e. large dwellings, generous gardens, and views over the city. The neighbourhood would lose the perception of being in a rural setting, but that is a necessary change and would not itself diminish their visual or residential amenities. The mere presence of buildings of contemporary urban typology and scale should not be considered negative in a modern urban context. • Therefore, while the composition and character of the view would be changed, due to the high quality of the new elements, the effect can be considered neutral.	Medium	**Moderate neutral**
18	Slate Cabin Lane - B	Medium	• The view is from Slate Cabin Lane a short distance to the east, down the slope towards Lamb's Cross. • At this location the development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary		Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
View from Fernhill Park						
19	View from the oval open space in Fernhill Park	High	• Fernhill Park is a public park of exceptional amenity value. One of its attributes is the panoramic views afforded from parts of the park. It was selected as a viewpoint to test whether the development would be visible to the west along the face of Barnacullia. (The site is some 550m from the park.) • The development would not be visible.		None	**No effect**
Views from Blackglen Road and Ticknock to the west						
20	Blackglen Road public viewing point	High	• <u>During the planning process for the previous SHD application, DLRCC requested that this view be assessed</u>. The viewing point provides a panoramic view over Dublin to the north. • The development would not be visible.		None	**No effect**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
21	Ticknock Road A	High	• Views along the full length of Ticknock Road are protected in the DLR Development Plan. • This view is from a point on the road at similar elevation to the site, and one of the few views east that is unobstructed by roadside vegetation. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**
22	Ticknock Road further south, up the hill	High	• This viewpoint was requested by DLRCC in the planning process for the previous SHD application. • Ticknock Road is lined by hedgerows for much of its length and this restricts lateral views from the road. At this location a combination of factors combine to afford a panoramic view over the city and Dublin Bay. • The development would not be visible. It appears from the two views (Viewpoints 21 and 22) that there are no views from Ticknock Road in which the proposed development would be visible.	None	**No effect**
23	Ticknock Forest	High	• Ticknock Forest is a popular recreation area and one of its attractions is the views that the upland forest affords over the city to the north and into the mountains to the south. Due to the forest trees surrounding the roads and trails there are few open/unobstructed views; views are generally framed or filtered by foreground trees. The position of this viewpoint was selected as the Explorium buildings were visible, idenitfying the site location. • The proposed development would be largely hidden by the foreground trees in this view. If the trees were not blocking the view (as may be the case elsewhere around Ticknock), the buildings may be discernible. However, in the vast and complex panorama this would amount to a negligible change.	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
Views from North of the M50					
24	Ballinteer Road roundabout	Medium	• This location affords a view south across the M50 and up towards the Dublin Mountains. The Rockview apartments can be seen just beyond the M50. • The proposed development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**
24b	R826 directly north of site		• This viewoint was requested by DLRCC in pre-planning consultation. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**
28	Blackthorn Grove/ Moreen Park	Medium	• This viewpoint was selected to assess whether the open space of Moreen Park in front of the Blackthorn Grove houses would afford a long distance view of the development. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Commentary	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
Views from Sandyford Road					
25	Sandyford Road bridge over the M50	Medium	• The elevation of the bridge and the lack of foreground obstructions combine to afford a panoramic view south towards the Dublin Mountains. There is a belt of mixed density development on the south side of the M50 to the right. To the left along Sadyford Road (which leads up to Lamb's Cross) a new apartment development is under construction. • In addition to the primary horizon formed by the highest peaks there is a secondary horizon formed by the foothills of the mountains. The Explorium building is discernible on this secondary horizon and this identifies the approximate location of the site in the view. • The development would not be visible.	None	**No effect**
26, 27	Sandyford Road south of the M50	Medium	• DLRCC requested the assessment of views from Sandyford Road south of the M50 during the previous SHD planning process for the site. • Due to a ridgeline between Sandyford Road and Blackglen Road (and the site), the development would not be visible from Sandyford Road as it climbs the hill to Lamb's Cross.	None	**No effect**

6.0 Landscape Impact Assessment

6.1 Landscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the receiving environment can be classified Medium (definition: '*Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong, or has evidence of alteration, degradation or erosion of elements and characteristics. The landscape character is such that there is some capacity for change. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principle management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change*' – refer to Section 2.1, Appendix 1).

The sensitivity classification takes account of the following main factors:

- The site is a greenfield site within the boundary of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown urban area, and is zoned for residential development.
- The receiving environment – which includes the Blackglen Road corridor between Lamb's Cross and Lamb Doyle's, and the area between Blackglen Road and Woodside Road - is currently peri-urban in character. The urban-generated low density development in the area occurred piecemeal over the course of the 20th century. The area is in an unsustainable, transitional stage between rural and urban in character.
- There is a related weakness in the boundary between the urban and rural landscapes in the site environs. This is highlighted by the comparatively strong/legible urban boundary to the east and west, where consolidation/densification has taken place right up to the edge of the urban area (see Figures 3,4 above).
- A combination of DLR Development Plan objectives, including:
  - the site's residential zoning,
  - the residential zoning of a large site to the east (the site of a withdrawn SHD application) and a broad belt of land on the north side of Blackglen Road between the site and Lamb's Cross,
  - the zoning for the expansion of Lamb's Cross into a substantial urban core,
  - the Blackglen Road Improvement Scheme, and
  - the provision of extensive areas of open space in the locality,

  … will transform the landscape character of the receiving environment.
- In this planned future scenario, Blackglen Road will form the spine of a consolidated and evolved urban area, served by a substantial mixed use urban neighbourhood centre, bus services and a range of open spaces.
- The widening and upgrade of Blackglen Road, to provide segregated footpaths, cycle lanes and allow improved bus services, has initiated this shift in character towards an urban condition.
- At 3.7 ha the site is of a scale that its development can:
  - establish (or contribute to the establishment of) a new context, i.e. contribute to the evolution of the receiving environment as opposed to being perceived an anomaly within it, and
  - protect the neighbouring properties by (a) varying the development/building typologies in response to the differing character/sensitivity surrounding the site, (b) setting buildings back from the boundaries, (c) stepping down in height towards the boundaries, and (d) introducing belts of vegetation inside the boundaries for visual screening.
- In the wider area there are examples of high density development a similar distance from neighbourhood centres and from the M50, and at similar elevation to the site (e.g. Clon Brugh, Parkview and Belarmine). The main difference between these developments and the site is their position adjacent to the Enniskerry Road. The Blackglen Road Improvement Scheme will result in the road being of urban character (as a streetscape) and capacity, facilitating pedestrian and cycle movement and the use of public transport -

tying the adjacent lands into the urban area. The site context will then be similar to that of the aforementioned developments – although with an as yet unconsolidated urban structure.

- The main sensitivities in the area are the existing low density residential properties to the east and west along Blackglen Road, to the south east in the Slate Cabin Lane area, and along Woodside Road. While low density residential use is generally sensitive to the introduction of higher density development typologies, there are factors that indicate there is some capacity (and requirement) to accommodate change:
  - Generally, the existing houses' amenities derive principally from (a) their detached typology and large size, (b) their large gardens which are well vegetated, limiting visibility of the surroundings apart from framed views, (c) the views north over Dun Laoghaire Rathdown towards Dublin Bay afforded by their elevation, and (d) the generally high degree of visual enclosure generated by the quantity of trees in the area (refer to Photos 5-11).
  - The existing peri-urban development pattern cannot be considered sustainable and the area is due to undergo substantial, planned change (see 4th bullet above).
  - It is county-level and national policy to consolidate and densify the urban area to make the most efficient possible use of physical and social infrastructure. The implication of this is that new high density typologies - i.e. larger buildings - will be introduced to previously low density areas, unavoidably changing their character and the composition of views from the public realm and private property.
  - Due to the factors identified above, urban consolidation and densification can occur without significant loss of the neighbouring residential properties' amenities – if the development is of high design quality responsive to the sensitivity of the neighbouring properties.
- Another sensitivity is the area's proximity to the High Amenity zoned rural area to the south west across Woodside Road. The site, while adjoining this area (across Woodside Road), is *outside* of it, and the rural high amenity zone would be better served by there being a clear dividing line between the rural and urban areas rather than the gradual transition which currently occurs between Woodside Road and Blackglen Road. The proposed development poses no threat to the High Amenity area; it rather provides potential for better delineation of the area.

In summary, the local receiving environment is in a transitional stage between rural and urban. Its existing character is a result of 20th century urban-generated development, which occurred piecemeal. This use of the land resource and services is unsustainable and the Development Plan includes a range of objectives which will transform the area into an urban environment. Due to its scale and frontage to Blackglen Road the site has a significant role to play in the evolution of the area towards an urban condition. While the existing residential properties in the vicinity are individually sensitive to landscape and visual change, as a whole the peri-urban landscape is not a valued character type. Additionally there are several factors that indicate these houses can accommodate change in their setting without unacceptable impact on their amenities.

6.2 Magnitude of Landscape Change

The magnitude of landscape change which would result from the proposed development is Medium (definition: '*Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape''* – refer to Section 2.2, Appendix 1).

The development would see the introduction of a cluster of buildings of contemporary urban typology and architecture in a framework of open space and screening vegetation, to a large site in a currently low density, peri-urban landscape - consolidating the urban area through infill:

- At the local scale - specifically: (a) Blackglen Road as it approaches and passes by the site (Viewpoints 03, 04, 05, 05b, 06), (b) the neighbouring residential properties on Blackglen Road to east and west (Viewpoints 03, 06), and (c) a part of the Slate Cabin Lane area (Viewpoint 17) – the introduction of the Area A and B apartment buildings would cause a shift in character from currently peri-urban towards a more definitively urban condition.

  The upgraded Blackglen Road, and the zoning of substantial unused areas north and south of the road between the site and Lamb's Cross, provides favourable context for this change.

  Additionally, the proposal displays moderation in the buildings' height, and their presence would be further softened by their separation from the boundaries and the planting of a woodland belt around the perimeter, for screening, visual amenity and various ecosystem services.

- **Importantly, (a) the row of semi-detached houses in Area D inside the south west boundary - including along Woodside Road, (b) the retention of the Woodside Road boundary vegetation (overgrown hedgerow), and (c) the use of the split level duplex typology in Area C, minimises the proposal's impact on Woodside Road and the sensitive rural landscape south of the road**. There is a clear gradation of development intensity across the site, from dense/urban along the Blackglen Road frontage, to suburban along the Woodside Road frontage. This is an appropriate response to the varied context.

- The development would have very limited impact outside of these immediate environs. The general reduction in height across the site (all buildings apart from Blocks A1 and A2), compared to the previous SHD proposal, is effective in minimising the development's visibility from the wider surroundings.

These facts are borne out by the summary of the visual impact assessment below. Note the generally low magnitude of change, apart from the close-up views (Viewpoints 03-06 and 17).

Table 2: Summary of visual effects assessment

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
Views from Lamb's Cross and Blackglen Road to the east of the site				
01	Lamb's Cross (Sandymount) neighbourhood centre	Medium	Low	**Slight neutral**
02	Enniskerry Road entering the neighbourhood centre	Medium	None	**No effect**
03	Blackglen Road approaching the site from the east	Medium	Medium-High	**Moderate positive**
04	Blackglen Road along the site frontage – looking west	Medium	High	**Moderate positive**
05	Blackglen Road along the site frontage – looking east	Medium	High	**Significant neutral**
05b	Blackglen Road along the site frontage – looking south into the site	Medium	High	**Significant neutral**
Views from Lamb Doyle's Pub and Blackglen Road to the west of the site				
06	View from Blackglen Road – entrance to neighbouring property	Medium	High	**Significant neutral**
07	Blackglen Road approaching the site from the west	Medium	Low	**Slight neutral**
08	Lamb Doyle's at the junction of Blackglen Road and Woodside Road	Medium	Negligible-Low	**Slight neutral**
08b	Blackglen Road outside Lamb Doyle's	Medium	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
Views from Blackglen Road to the west of the site, Rockview Road and Explorium				
09	Blackglen Road at Rockview Road junction	Medium	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
10	Explorium entrance road	Medium	None	**No effect**

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
10b	Simon's Ridge/ Explorium north of site	Medium	None	**No effect**
Views from Woodside Road				
11	Woodside Road approaching the site from the west – A	Medium	None	**No effect**
11b	Woodside Road approaching the site from the west - B	Medium	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
12	Woodside Road opposite site frontage	Medium	Low	**Slight neutral**
13	Woodside Road approaching the site from the east	Medium	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
14	Junction of Woodside Road and Cullens Way	Medium	None	**No effect**
Views from Cullens Way and Barnacullia				
15	Cullens Way	Medium	None	**No effect**
16	View from a walking trail at the summit of Barnacullia above Cullens Way	High	Low	**Slight neutral**
Views from Slate Cabin Lane				
17	Slate Cabin Lane - A	Medium	Medium	**Moderate neutral**
18	Slate Cabin Lane - B	Medium	None	**No effect**
View from Fernhill Park				
19	View from the oval open space in Fernhill Park	High	None	**No effect**
View from Blackglen Road and Ticknock to the west				
20	Blackglen Road public viewing point	High	None	**No effect**
21	Ticknock Road	High	None	**No effect**
22	Ticknock Road further south, up the hill	High	None	**No effect**
23	Ticknock Forest	High	Negligible	**Not significant neutral**
Views from north of the M50				
24	Ballinteer Road roundabout	Medium	None	**No effect**
24b	R826 directly north of site	Medium	None	**No effect**
28	Blackthorn Grove/ Moreen Park	Medium	None	**No effect**
Views from Sandyford Road				
25	Sandyford Road bridge over the M50	Medium	None	**No effect**
26	Sandyford Road south of the M50	Medium	None	**No effect**
27	Sandyford Road south of the M50	Medium	None	**No effect**

6.3 Significance of Landscape Impact

Measuring the magnitude of change against the sensitivity of the receiving environment, the significance of the landscape effects is predicted to be 'Moderate' overall (definition: *'An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends'*.

The development would change the character of the landscape locally. However, given that (a) the existing peri-urban landscape is neither a valued character type nor a sustainable use of the urban land resource, (b) the affected area is due to undergo a process of urban consolidation facilitated by the DLR Development Plan and the Blackglen Road Improvement Scheme, and (c) the proposed development is demonstrably responsive to its context and local sensitivities and of high design and material quality, the change can be considered appropriate. **In conclusion, the predicted landscape effects are moderate and positive**.

APPENDIX 1 LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The TVIA methodology is informed by the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment,* 3rd edition 2013 (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA) and the EPA *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, 2017.

The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"*. This expands beyond the idea that landscape is only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity. It recognises landscape as a resource in its own right, providing a complex range of cultural, environmental and economic benefits to individuals and society.

The word 'townscape' is used to describe the landscape in urban areas. The GLVIA defines townscape as *"the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open space".*

1.0 Key Principles of the GLVIA

1.1 Use of the Term 'Effect' vs 'Impact'

The GLVIA requires that the terms 'impact' and 'effect' be clearly distinguished and consistently used. 'Impact' is defined as the action being taken, e.g. the introduction to the landscape of buildings, infrastructure or landscaping. 'Effect' is defined as the change resulting from those actions, e.g. change in landscape character or in the composition of views.

1.2 Assessment of Both 'Landscape' and 'Visual' Effects

The GLVIA prescribes that effects on views and visual amenity should be assessed separately from the effects on landscape/townscape, although the two topics are inherently linked.

'Landscape/townscape' results from the interplay between the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations and spatial distribution of these elements create variations in landscape/townscape character. 'Landscape/townscape character assessment' is the method used in LVIA to describe landscape/townscape and by which to understand the effects of development on the landscape/townscape as a resource.

Visual assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on the area's visual amenity.

2.0 Townscape Effects Assessment

Assessment of potential landscape/townscape effects involves (a) classifying the sensitivity of the receiving environment, and (b) identifying and classifying the magnitude of landscape/townscape change which would result from the development. These factors are combined to arrive at a classification of significance of the landscape/townscape effects.

2.1 Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the landscape/townscape is a function of its land use, landscape patterns and scale, visual enclosure and the distribution of visual receptors, and the value placed on the landscape/townscape. The nature and scale of the development in question is also taken into account, as are any trends of change, and relevant policy. Five categories are used to classify sensitivity (Table 1).

Table 1 Categories of Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape exhibits very strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics that combine to give an experience of unity, richness and harmony. The landscape character is such that its capacity to accommodate change in the form of development is very low. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national or international value and the principle management objective for the area is protection of the existing character from change.
High	Areas where the landscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics. The landscape character is such that it has limited/low capacity to accommodate change in the form of development. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national, regional or county value and the principle management objective for the area is the conservation of existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong, or has evidence of alteration, degradation or erosion of elements and characteristics. The landscape character is such that there is some capacity for change. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principle management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change.
Low	Areas where the landscape has few valued elements, features or characteristics and the character is weak. The character is such that it has capacity for change; where development would make no significant change or could make a positive change. Such landscapes are generally unrecognised in policy and the principle management objective may be to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration or enhancement.
Negligible	Areas where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features or characteristics. The landscape character is such that its capacity to accommodate change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes include derelict industrial lands or extraction sites, as well as sites or areas that are designated for a particular type of development. The principle management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the landscape through development, repair or restoration.

2.2 Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Change

Magnitude of change is a factor of the scale, extent and degree of change imposed on the landscape/ townscape with reference to its key elements, features and characteristics (also known as 'landscape receptors'). Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change (Table 2).

Table 2 Categories of Landscape/Townscape Change

Magnitude of Change	Description
Very High	Change that is large in extent, resulting in the loss of or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape and/or introduction of large elements considered totally uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in fundamental change in the character of the landscape.

High	Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape and/or introduction of large elements considered uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape.
Medium	Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape.
Low	Change that is moderate or limited in scale, resulting in minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape.
Negligible	Change that is limited in scale, resulting in no alteration to key elements features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic of the context. Such development results in no change to the landscape character.

2.3 Significance of Landscape/Townscape Effects

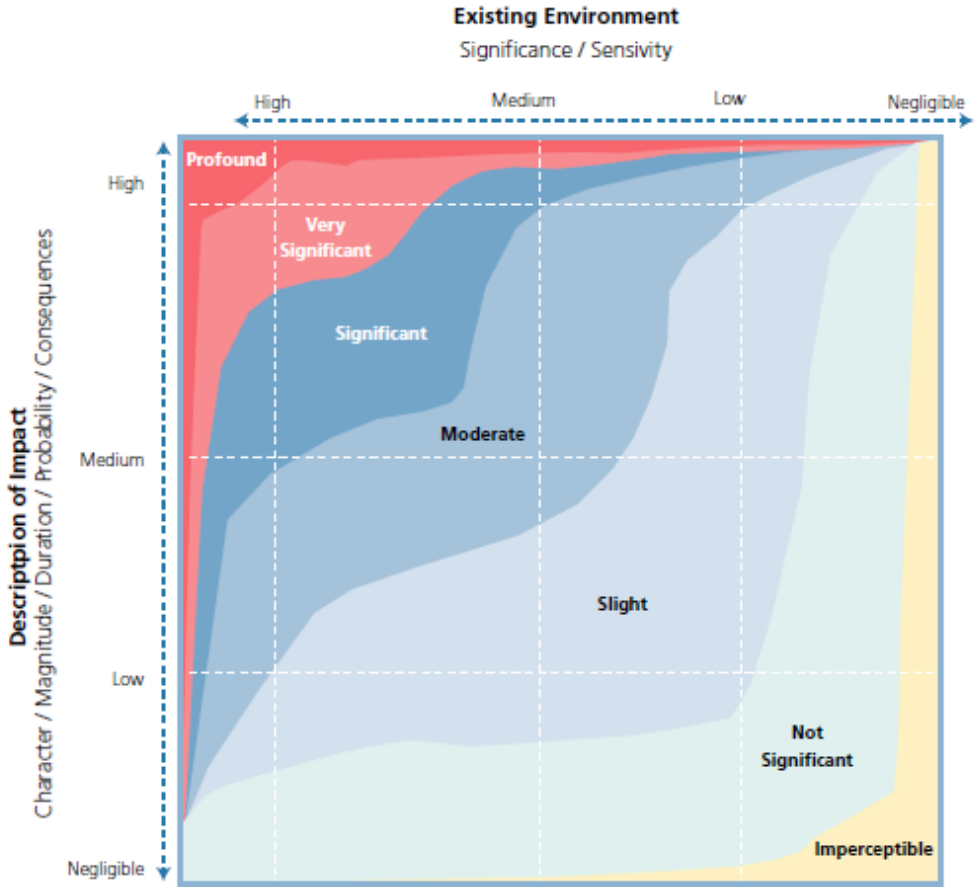
To classify the significance of effects the magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape/townscape using Table 3 and Figure 1 as a guide. The significance classification matrix (Table 3) is derived from the EPA's Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2017 (specifically Figure 3.4 of the Guidelines – see Figure 1 below). In addition to this guidance the assessor uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable.

There are seven classifications of significance, namely: (1) imperceptible, (2) not significant, (3) slight, (4) moderate, (5) significant, (6) very significant, (7) profound.

Table 3 Guide to Classification of Significance of Landscape/Townscape and Visual Effects

		Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource/View				
		Very High	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
Magnitude of Change	**Very High**	*Profound*	*Profound to Very Significant*	*Very Significant to Significant*	*Moderate*	*Slight*
	High	*Profound to Very Significant*	*Very Significant*	*Significant*	*Moderate to Slight*	*Slight to Not Significant*
	Medium	*Very Significant to Significant*	*Significant*	*Moderate*	*Slight*	*Not Significant*
	Low	*Moderate*	*Moderate to Slight*	*Slight*	*Not significant*	*Imperceptible*
	Negligible	*Slight*	*Slight to Not Significant*	*Not significant*	*Imperceptible*	*Imperceptible*

Figure 1: 'Chart showing typical classifications of the significance of impacts' (Source: Figure 3.4 of the EPA's Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2022)



The impact significance classifications are taken from the EPA Draft Guidelines, which define the classifications as follows (Table 4):

Table 4 EPA definitions of environmental impact classifications

Significance Classification	Description
Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
Not significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
Moderate	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
Very Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
Profound	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.

3.0 Visual Effects Assessment

Assessment of visual effects involves identifying a number of key/representative viewpoints in the site's receiving environment, and for each of these: (a) classifying the viewpoint sensitivity, and (b) classifying the magnitude of change which would result in the view. These factors are combined to arrive at a classification of significance of the effects on each viewpoint.

3.1 Sensitivity of the Viewpoint/Visual Receptor

Viewpoint sensitivity is a function of two main considerations:

- ***Susceptibility of the visual receptor to change***. This depends on the occupation or activity of the people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the views or visual amenity they experience at that location. Visual receptors most susceptible to change include residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on the landscape (e.g. trail users), and visitors to heritage or other attractions and places of community congregation where the setting contributes to the experience. Visual receptors less sensitive to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes), people engaged in outdoor recreation or sports where the surrounding landscape does not influence the experience, and people in their place of work or shopping where the setting does not influence their experience.
- ***Value attached to the view***. This depends to a large extent on the subjective opinion of the visual receptor but also on factors such as policy and designations (e.g. scenic routes, protected views), or the view or setting being associated with a heritage asset, visitor attraction or having some other cultural status (e.g. by appearing in arts).

Five categories are used to classify viewpoint sensitivity (Table 5).

Table 5 Categories of Viewpoint Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Iconic viewpoints (views towards or from a landscape feature or area) that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of national value. The composition, character and quality of the view are such that its capacity for change in the form of development is very low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change.
High	Viewpoints that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from houses or outdoor recreation features focused on the landscape). The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity for accommodating change in the form of development may or may not be low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change that reduces visual amenity.
Medium	Views that may not have features or characteristics that are of particular value, but have no major detracting elements, and which thus provide some visual amenity. These views may have capacity for appropriate change and the principle management objective is to facilitate change to the composition that does not detract from visual amenity, or which enhances it.
Low	Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, and where the composition and character are such that there is capacity for change. This category also includes views experienced by people involved in activities with no particular focus on the landscape. For such views the principle management objective is to facilitate change that does not detract from visual amenity, or enhances it.
Negligible	Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, or in which the composition may be unsightly (e.g. in derelict landscapes). For such views the principle management objective is to facilitate change that repairs, restores or enhances visual amenity.

3.2 Magnitude of Change to the View

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of development into the view (relative to the other elements and features in the composition, i.e. its relative visual dominance), the degree to which it contrasts or integrates with the other elements and the general character of the view, and the way in which the change will be experienced (e.g. in full view, partial or peripheral view, or in glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, as well as the duration and reversibility of the visual effects. Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change to a view (Table 6).

Table 6 Categories of Visual Change

Magnitude of Change	Description
Very High	Full or extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features or characteristics, or introduction of elements that are completely out of character in the context, to the extent that the development becomes dominant in the composition and defines the character of the view and the visual amenity.
High	Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and/or the visual amenity.
Medium	Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity.
Low	Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.
Negligible	Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.

3.3 Significance of Visual Effects

To classify the significance of visual effects, the magnitude of change to the view is measured against the sensitivity of the viewpoint, using the guidance in Table 3 and Figure 1 above.

4.0 Quality of Effects

In addition to predicting the significance of the effects on the landscape and views, EIA methodology requires that the quality of the effects be classified as positive/beneficial, neutral, or negative/adverse.

For landscape effects to a degree, but particularly for visual effects, this is an inherently subjective exercise since landscape and views are perceived and therefore subject to variations in the attitude and values of the receptor. One person's attitude to a development may differ from another person's, and thus their response to the effects of a development on a landscape or view may vary. Additionally, there might be policy encouraging a particular development in an area, in which case the policy is effectively prescribing landscape change. If a development achieves the objective of the policy the resulting effect might be considered positive, even if the landscape character is profoundly changed. The classification of quality of landscape and visual effects should seek to take these variables into account and provide a reasonable and robust assessment.