



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report

### ABP-306664-20

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<b>Development</b>	Construction of 73 dwellings
<b>Location</b>	Whiterock South, Wexford Rural, Co. Wexford.
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Wexford County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	20191031
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Oli Developments Ltd
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission.
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Grant with Conditions
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Denise Codd C/O Whiterock South Property Management Company.
<b>Observer(s)</b>	None
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	14/05/20
<b>Inspector</b>	Caryn Coogan

## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site is located in an elevated part of Wexford town and Environs, called Whiterock Hill. It is located south-west of the historic core of Wexford town on a high point overlooking the town the harbour. The site is located above the 70metres contour level. Whiterock Road is a residential road, which supports one off housing and a number of housing estates. There is a national school at the Wexford town end of the road and a GP's surgery at the top of the hill. The existing housing estates on Whiterock Hill are medium to low density, most of which are setback from the public road and all of which include two storey dwellings, detached, semi-detached and terraces.
- 1.2. The subject site 1.66 Ha is currently used as playing pitches and includes a number of temporary changing rooms. The site is orientated to the west and has a public footpath along the road frontage. The road frontage is circa 110metres. The site rises from north to south across the road frontage. The site is positioned at a higher ground level than the public road.
- 1.3. There is a sharp curve on Whiterock Hill fronting the site, with resulting restricted visibility to the north. There is no significant vegetation on the site. The current roadside boundary is an earthen berm. A portion of the landholding to the south is been reserved to provide access to St. Joseph's GAA Club positioned to the rear of the site. The access road and club facilities were permitted under planning reference **20170184**, and has not been developed to date.
- 1.4. There is an existing vehicular access point off Whiterock Hill into the site, with a hard surface access road to the temporary club house. This is positioned at the southern end of the roadside boundary.
- 1.5. The location is served by a local bus link. It is within walking distance of a community centre, a national school, and a GP practice. There will be a GAA sports grounds to the rear of the site, and beyond that is Wexford Golf Club. Tesco and SuperValu are within 2km of the site.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. The proposed development includes for 73No. dwelling units comprising of:

- 40No. two and three bedroom dwellings;
- 33No. 1 and 2 bedroom apartments within 3-4 storey apartment blocks positioned along the road frontage of the site.

All associated site works which includes the removal off site all of the temporary structures associated with St. Josephs GAA club.

It is proposed to transfer 7 No. housing units to Wexford Co.Co. after construction as part of Part V agreement.

## 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

### 3.1. Decision

Wexford Co. Co. granted the proposed development subject to 22No. standard conditions associated with housing estates.

### 3.2. Planning Authority Reports

#### 3.2.1. Planning Reports

- The proposal is acceptable in terms of local and national planning policy.
- The proposal includes three new buildings designed to address the streetscape along the road frontage, which are three and four storeys in height, and these are not typical of the area but represent a more suitable and sustainable form of development. The development includes 2 storey dwelling houses to the rear of the apartment blocks.
- Density is in line with national policy.

#### 3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Irish Water: Proposed Connection can be facilitated.

Housing Section : No objections

Chief Fire Office: No objections

### 3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

Dept of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht recommends further information regarding potential archaeological findings. Following a request for further information requiring an Archeologically Impact assessment, a report was submitted on 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2020.

### 3.4. **Third Party Observations**

There were 4No. this party submissions with generally the same concerns which are included in this appeal and are listed below:

- May impact SPA and bird species
- Stage 2 AA required
- Does not address previous refusal
- Traffic hazard
- Adverse impact on Residential character and amenity
- Two accesses and access to future development lands requires an explanation
- Apartment blocks out of character with the area.
- Boundary treatments

## 4.0 **Planning History**

### ***Planning Reg. No. 20190025***

Permission **REFUSED** for the construction of 60No. fully serviced dwelling units comprising of dwellings, apartment blocks and site development works. It was refused on the basis of design, layout and orientation which would provide for a poor

quality streetscape that would conflict with the policies of the Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2009.

***Planning Reg. No. 20064305***

Permission granted for 62No. four bedroom dwellings and all associated site development works.

***Adjoining site to the east 20190025***

Permission granted to the side and rear of the proposed development for a two storey clubhouse, access road, parking, floodlights etc to St. Joseph's GAA club.

## **5.0 Policy Context**

### **5.1. Development Plan**

5.1.1 The lifetime of Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 was extended until 2019.

There is no evidence to indicate the Wexford County Development 2013-2019 has been extended at the time of this report.

5.1.2 According to **Zoning Map 19** the subject site is located on lands zoned for residential development (Medium Density).

According to the Written Statement Zone 19 Development Plan objectives include:

The Development of land (identified on Map 19) will be subject to the delivery of social and physical infrastructure and will not be considered until there is:

- 1) Adequate provision of social infrastructure
- 2) Upgrading of road junctions
- 3) Development would be dependent on delivery of inner relief road
- 4) Provision of local shopping facilities within the development or at neighbourhood centres
- 5) Provision of capacity in the sewer network

- 6) Structural stormwater attenuation measures and studies to ensure capacity exists in the Bishopswater attenuation pond to accommodate maximum rainfall projections.
- 7) Long term reservation adjacent to N11/25 as required for future road improvements.

The following applies in terms of the Medium Density Zoning objective:

Indicative Residential Density

Zone	*Maximum Dwelling units per		Indicative appropriate locations
	Hectares	Acre	
Super-Low Density	2.5	1	
Low Density Residential	10	4	Outer edge of the Urban-Rural transition.
Medium Density Residential	17 - 25	7 - 10	Generally new zoning within towns except where it is an urban - rural transitional area or a strategic location.
Higher Density Residential (town centre/neighbourhood centres/strategic locations.	>27	>11	At strategic locations including transport nodes and town centre and neighbourhood centres.

## 11.08.02 Layout

## 11.08.03 Design

The design of dwellings in residential estates should bear a relationship to the nature, scale and form of the existing built fabric within the settlement. Any proposals for modern developments must be in harmony with existing dwellings and the surrounding built environment. A variety of dwelling types, sizes and designs will be encouraged.

## 11.08.05 Public Open Space Areas

## 11.08.13 Apartments

The Council will consider such developments provided they are compatible with surrounding areas, would not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenities of the adjoining properties or on areas or structures of historic or architectural interest, and can be provided with adequate car parking facilities.

All relevant extracts of the development plan are included in the Appendix of this report.

## **5.2 National Guidance**

### **5.2.1. National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040**

The National Planning Framework (NPF) recommends compact and sustainable towns/ cities and encourages brownfield development and densification of urban sites. Policy objective NPO 35 recommends increasing residential density in settlements including infill development schemes and increasing building heights. Other relevant policies from the NPF include the following:

NPO 6 – Regenerate/ rejuvenate cities, towns and villages.

NPO 13 – Relax car parking provision/ building heights to achieve well-designed high-quality outcomes to achieve targeted growth.

**Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS).**

**Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Cities, Towns & Villages) (DoEHLG, 2009)**

**Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide (DoEHLG, 2009).**

These Guidelines promote higher densities in appropriate locations. A number of urban design criteria are set out, for the consideration of planning applications and appeals. Quantitative and qualitative standards for public open space are recommended. Increased densities are to be encouraged on residentially zoned lands, particularly city and town centres, significant 'brownfield' sites within city and town centres, close to public transport corridors, infill development at inner suburban locations, institutional lands and outer suburban/greenfield sites. Higher densities must be accompanied in all cases by high qualitative standards of design and layout. Chapter 6 of the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas sets out guidance for residential development in small towns and villages.

**Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (DoEHLG, 2007).**

These guidelines provide for a range of information including detailing minimum room and floor areas.

### **5.3 Natural Heritage Designations**

There is none on the subject site.

The following Natura 2000 sites are located in the general vicinity of the proposed development site:

The Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000781), approximately 1.7km east of the site.

The Wexford Harbour and Slobbs Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004076), approximately 1.7km east of the site.

### **5.4 EIA Screening**

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity, the absence of any connectivity to any sensitive location, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required

## **6 The Appeal**

### **6.3 Grounds of Appeal**

Whiterock South Property Management Company Limited is made up of Directors and residents from the Hillview Housing Estate which includes 10No. detached dwellings units on approximately 2acres positioned immediately adjoining the subject site to the south.

The matters raised in the original letter of objection to the proposed development do not appear to have been taken into consideration by the planning authority. It is requested that the 4No. objections to the proposed development be considered under the appeal. A summary of the relevant issues raised in the appeal is outlined below.



The relevant development plan for the area is Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015, Zoning Map 19. The Plan has not been reviewed since 2009. In respect of Zone 19 (where their homes and the site are located). The proposed development of this scale and density should not proceed until a relief roadway is provided. It states on Map 19 indicates that the development of zoned lands on the would be dependent on delivery of an inner relief road.

At present Whitework Hill is oversaturated with traffic. The road is winding and dangerous, and there have been several serious accidents on the road. There are long tailbacks on the Whiterock Road due to the Gaelscoil and the newly constructed Loretta College. Whiterock Road is a rat run for people trying to access the town without driving along Wexford Quays which is very congested in the mornings.

The planning report on file expresses concern regarding the density on the site which represents 44No. units per hectare, and exceeds the requirements of the Wexford Town Development Plan 2009-2015.

A summary of the letters of objection content:

- Traffic intensification on a poor road
- Possible future linkages to adjoining lands is not fully explained in the application, this should be fully clarified
- The 1.8m wall should run the entire length of the south-western boundary.
- The proposed density is too high
- The three-storey apartment building is out of character with the area
- Strongly opposed to the establishment of four storey apartment blocks in the area.
- There are discrepancies in the drawings, some refer to a 1.8m boundary wall while another refers to a landscaped area.

#### **6.4 Applicant Response**

The subject site is close to many amenities, St. Joseph's GAA, Gaelscoil and St. Joseph's Community Centre. It is 1.2m from St. Aiden's Shopping Centre and

1.5Km from Tesco's. The site is within a 50 kph speed limit, and the area is served by a local buslink.

The local road is one of a number of distributor roads that serves to ease congestion in the town.

The apartment blocks represent a strong design solution to the density issue and a strong elevation onto Whiterock Hill. Taking into account site contours, the height of the proposed four storey building would be similar in ridge height to the adjoining Hillview. The nearest dwelling in Hillview is 40metres away which is significant in an urban context.

## **6.5 Planning Authority Response**

None

## **7 Assessment**

7.1 The main issues that arise for assessment in relation to this appeal can be addressed under the following headings:

The following are the principal issues to be considered in this case:

- Principle, Quantum and Density of Development
- Design and Layout of Residential Development
- Impacts on Visual and Residential Amenities
- Roads and Traffic / Transport Impacts
- Other Matters

Appropriate Assessment

These matters may be considered separately as follows.

## 7.2. Principle, Quantum and Density of Development.

### 7.2.1. The site is within the boundary of the **Wexford Town and Environs LAP 2009-**

**2015** (as extended to 2019). As per **Zone Map 19**, the distinct zoning objectives applicable to the site, is Medium Residential. The lands to the east are recreational, and include planning permission for a GAA Club facilities, and pitches, with Wexford Golf Club further east, and to the south, north and west are low density residential developments in the form of one off housing and residential estates, all within the Medium Residential zoning objective of the LAP. The overall zoning for the Whiterock Hill area should be considered in terms of Maps 19 and 20 of the LAP.

The Medium Density zoning relates to existing residential lands. The subject site is currently been used as playing pitches for a local sports club. However, prior to the adoption of the Wexford Town and Environs LAP in 2009, the subject lands had the benefit of planning permission for a residential estate of 62No. four bedroomed detached dwellings, planning reference 20062305, albeit a larger site area.

7.2.2 There are 4 different Residential Zonings in Wexford Town and Environs LAP, Super Low, Low, Medium and Higher and the quantitative thresholds of each density is outlined in in section 11.08.01 of the LAP. It is envisaged a density of 17-25 units per hectare on the subject site. In relation to quantum of development, *The Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines (2009)* set out density standards for urban areas. The subject site is located within a moderately built up area of Wexford town, within the environs of the town. The subject site is 1km of a national school and a Community Centre. Tesco's is within 1.5Km of the site, and Whiterock Road is serviced by the local Buslink service. The Guidelines recommend net densities of 35-50 dwellings per hectare on outer suburban/ greenfield sites in Large Towns. The proposed density is 44 units per hectare, is higher than the indicative density in the LAP, but in line with National Planning Policy. I consider the density to be acceptable having regard to the locational context of the site, and in line with the National Planning Framework which seeks to promote sustainable patterns of settlement in urban areas.

As stated above, there are a number of residential planning histories relating to the subject site. In 2007, under planning reference 20062305 a low density residential development was granted on the subject site, this permission was not implemented.

In 2019, under planning reference **20190025** Wexford Co. Co. refused planning permission on the subject site for 60No. residential units for one reason relating to the poor standard of design which would create a poor streetscape in conflict with the policies of LAP. The Board should note this current proposal under appeal aims to address the design shortfalls of the previous application assessed and refused by the PA under planning reference 20190025. I will deal with this issue in the next section.

In principle, the current proposal complies with the zoning objective for the area and is within the acceptable density ranges set out in national planning policy.

### **7.3 Design and Layout of Residential Development**

#### **7.3.1 Context**

At the junction of Whiterock Road and the R733 at St. Joseph's Community Hall (Distillery Road), the contour level of Whiterock Road is 20metre and this rises to 70metres on approach to the subject site over a road length of 0.75km. Effectively, the topography is rising quite dramatically moving southwards along Whiterock Hill towards the subject site, and levels off covering Pembrokestown townland a short distance from the site. The subject site is located at the 69.5m contour and it continues to rise gradually southwards to 75.5metres.

The pattern of residential developments in the area is mainly one-off housing on both sides of the road punctuated by a number of housing estates, which all consist of two storey dwellings set back from Whiterock Road. This is a very important feature of the area. The residential development in the area has evolved incrementally and it respects the topography of the area. As one exits the roundabout off Distillery Road up onto Whiterock Hill, the road is aligned with modest one-off houses on various sized curtilages and with a variety of building line setbacks. On the uphill approach to the site, the context is more sylvan in character until the entrance of *Luis Mor*, two storey residential estate with contemporary design and finishes. The next estate on Whiterock Road, is *Whitebrook*, located opposite the subject site, and the building line of the estate, commences a minimum 100metres deep into the site.

The subject site is currently an open greenfield site with no roadside hedgerow or fencing. Hillview housing estate, which is a small cul de sac of two storey houses, is immediately to the south of the site, and screened from the site by mature trees.

Whiterock Hill levels out past the site, and the pattern of low-medium density dwellings continue south towards Pembrokestown townland.

### 7.3.2 Visual Impact

The proposed development introduces three and four storey apartment blocks along a road frontage of circa 110metres on Whiterock Hill at an elevated location. Four storey apartments would be a new design concept to Whiterock Hill which is predominantly two storey in profile, and these are been introduced on an elevated location within Wexford Town. Four storey apartments have been introduced elsewhere in Wexford town centre and at lower levels in Wexford environs, not on elevated sites.

The proposed elevations have a vertical emphasis through the use of timber and metal cladding with a flat roof. Given the sensitivity of the site and its context, I would have considered a Visual Appraisal of the proposed development should have been submitted with the planning application. The Visual Appraisal would have included photomontages and sections to assess the potential visual impact of the development on the receiving landscape.

Drawing P08 includes street elevations of the proposal. According to Drawing P08, the finished roof level of Block 1 will be 16metres high when measured from the existing footpath and Block 2 will be just under 16metres high, both of which will be a 3metres setback distance only from the new roadside boundary fence. Given that the road frontage is circa only 110metres and the apartments are positioned on the road frontage within a restricted setback, the apartments will create a monolithic legibility in the context of the surrounding area and on approach from the south and north along Whiterock Road. The submitted street elevation drawing gives an indication of the level of fill required to address the natural contours of the site when constructing the apartment blocks. It is clear the proposed apartments are in conflict with the natural contours of the site, and will be oppressive when viewed from Whiterock Road.

In my opinion, having regard to the topography and contours of the area and the site, the existing single and two storey pattern of development in the area, the limited road frontage and change in ground levels along the road frontage, the proposed massing height and scale of the apartment blocks will be incongruous to area, and

will create a significant oppressive visual impact that will militate against the visual amenities of the area.

The design of the proposed streetscape layout is inappropriate across the ascending contours of road frontage, the massing and scale of the development when viewed from outside of the site, is not a natural progression of the residential development in the area, and the proposed height and scale of the development is more urban centre than suburban. The design fails to appreciate the elevated location and contours of the site and it is inappropriate given the constraints of the elevated location.

Whilst I appreciate the design and layout are to meet with higher density planning standards, I consider the three apartment blocks along the streetscape of Whiterock Hill at this elevated location, to be a crude design response and completely out of context and character with the area. In my opinion, the overall design has to respect the existing built environment on Whiterock Hill by providing a softer articulation in design, that is compatible with the area's undulating morphology.

I have visited the site and viewed it from a variety of locations within the Whiterock Hill townland approach roads. The proposed development will be highly visible from the surrounding area, and will create an obtrusive and disconcerting impact when approached from Wexford town and the south. It will also be visible from the adjoining residential properties and open space areas. There is no graduation of views or approaches to the site due to the ascending topography, therefore the proposed apartment blocks will be a stark and aggressive building envelope within the existing character and setting of Whiterock Hill, which in my opinion, will not enhance the visual qualities of the area, but in fact seriously erode the existing ambience and character of the area. I am recommending the proposed development be refused on this basis.

Section 11.08.13 of the Wexford Town and Environs LAP states as regard Apartments '*The Councils will consider such developments provided they are compatible with the surrounding areas*'. I conclude having regard to the existing pattern of residential development in the area, the contours and elevated nature of the location, the lack of setback from Whiterock Road, the proximity and massing of the apartment blocks to each other and Whiterock Road along the streetscape, the

proposed development will seriously injure the visual amenities of the area and represent an incongruous monolithic design response on the site.

Behind the apartments there are two storey dwellings proposed, which are laid out in a courtyard style, with a row of dwellings backing to the GAA pitches along the eastern site boundary, and houses along the northern and southern site boundaries. The southern site boundary is a road access to the GAA pitches and this provide a buffer area between the proposed development and the adjoining Hillview estate which backs onto the access road. There is mature planting and tall trees along this communal boundary that provides good screening from the proposed development. To the north there is a greenfield. I consider the design of the two-storey element of the proposed development to be acceptable, and in keeping with the general pattern of residential development in the area.

#### 7.4 Quality of Residential Development

7.4.1 The following assessment considers the quality of the proposed scheme with regard to *Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartment Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018* and *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*, and the Wexford Town and Environs LAP.

Residential Mix provided for in the scheme:

<b>Beds</b>	<b>No. Units</b>	<b>%</b>
One Bed Apart.	11	15
Two Bed Apart	22	30
Two Bed D/H (adaptable)	6	8
Three Bed D/H (2 of which adaptable)	34	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100%</b>

The proposed density is 44No. units per hectare. There are 33No. apartments proposed which accounts for 45% of the residential units proposed. The apartments exceed the minimum standards in terms of floor areas, and all are dual aspect. There are 19No dwelling units proposed as adaptable dwellings to comply with Policy C12 of the Wexford Town and Environs Plan as varied.

The public open space area amount to 11% of the total site area which is in line with wit public open space requirements. There is only one of the 4No.propsoed amenity areas, a true public open space area, i.e. No. 4 which is a small pocket park to the rear of the layout. The other 3 designated amenity areas are on residual land surrounding the 3No. apartment blocks located alongside the main road and main access to the entire development. It is not a workable public open space layout in terms of providing safe playing areas for children. There is a community hall within walking distance of the site, and GAA pitches to the rear of the site that will support the recreational needs of future residents.

The private open space areas are in line with the standards set out in section 11.08.06 of the LAP.

7.4.2 Throughout the design of the scheme there is a strong emphasis on carparking, with all 130No. carparking spaces following the route of the access road and building line of the dwellings. The development plan requires 2No. carparking spaces per dwelling and 1.5 per apartment. With a density of 44Dwellings per hectare on site, compliance with the development plan carparking provision which is more suited to lower and medium densities, creates a greater emphasis on carparking through the scheme.

There are no cycle parking bays proposed or electric car charging areas, I consider the proposal requires a more current day approach to proposed onsite facilities. The proposed layout is dominated by roads and parking with little in the way of street hierarchy, which, together with inadequate pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the site, would be contrary to the provisions of the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*, issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2013. The proposed development would be contrary to these Ministerial guidelines. In my



opinion, it is difficult to design a higher density development and to simultaneously comply with outdated development plan policies relating to car parking requirements.

7.4.3 The proposed development includes a dedicated bin storage area associated with the 3No. apartment blocks. When one examines the elevations of the two storey dwellings, which in my opinion, are very basic and plain, I would be concerned about the visual impact to include a bin storage area to the front of each dwelling. This part of the design is included on the layout drawings but omitted from the street elevations, and unfortunately the wheelie bin storage to the front of the dwellings, may be convenient for collection, but it will be unsightly as planned, and needs further consideration.

#### 7.4.4 Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing

The proposed development is positioned sufficient separation distances from adjoining properties to ensure no undue loss of light as a result of overshadowing, or no undue loss of privacy due to overlooking.

The overall layout provides a satisfactory standard of accommodation and facilities throughout the scheme to cater for future residents and it will not impact negatively on the residential amenities of adjoining properties.

### 7.5 **Transport and Traffic**

7.5.1 As stated earlier, the local area is served by a local bus link, the WX1 Drinagh Loop. However, although there are a number of community facilities within walking distance of the site, given its elevated location and distance from the town centre, the proposed development is car dependent, and will generate a considerable number of new trips onto Whiterock Road. Whiterock Road has adequate width and surfacing to cater for the proposed development. In addition there are footpaths both sides of the road. There is a considerable quantum of land zoned for residential development on Whiterock Hill, therefore it is considered the proposal is acceptable in terms of traffic volume.

7.5.2 The proposed development is to be served by a new entrance positioned centrally along the site's frontage onto Whiterock Road. There was no comment from the PA regarding the proposed access/ sightlines. The issue of traffic was raised in the third

party appeal. Having regard to the curvature of the road fronting the subject site, I am concerned about the sightlines at the proposed entrance, in particular to the north. I noted on my inspection, one of the dwellings opposite side of the road to the subject site has a boundary wall setback, possibly to allow for future road realignment, however it may have been to provide a sightline, in any case it looks out of place because there is a large section of unused land between the dwelling boundary wall and the public footpath.

7.5.3 Drawing P04 of the submitted documentation illustrates the proposed layout for the entrance with Drawing No. PO6 detailing the entrance design. The layout drawing is misleading, in that a hatched black line states '*Sightline in Excess of 65M to north (proposed beech hedge setback behind same.)*', effectively leaving the front building of the four storey apartment block only 2metres and 3metres each from the new roadside boundary edge, which in my opinion is totally unacceptable in terms of setback given the curvature of the public road and the height of the proposed apartments. Furthermore, it would appear from the drawings, that a large proportion of the proposed setback along the road frontage is included in Amenity Area 1. Furthermore, the sightline is not 65metres to the north as stated, unless significant levelling of existing roadside boundary to the north is carried out, and the street elevation drawing of the apartments would indicate that filling will occur at this portion of the site also, without section drawings including finished levels, it is difficult to assess. I am not satisfied the access and roadside boundary treatment has been fully considered, and it would appear from the drawings the site is a level terrain, when it is clearly indicated on the site layout drawing the northern extremity of the road side boundary is on the 69metres contour, and southern extremity is on the 75.5m contour, again with no proper cross sections to illustrate the impact of the development, or the relationship of the access/ sightlines, levels and curvature of the public road. In addition, the proposed beech hedge flies in the face of a four storey apartment block streetscape, it is more conducive to the single dwelling. I would be concerned about the security of the ground floor apartments with such an open arrangement proposed along the roadside boundary of the site.

7.5.4 A clear roadside boundary setback is required. In addition, the public footpath should be brought in alongside the new roadside boundary wall, to ensure the clear definition of the roadside boundary in terms of pedestrian safety.

7.5.5 Having regard to the complexity of the issues involving the proposed access, the vertical and horizontal alignment of Whiterock Road in the vicinity of the site, gradients, setbacks required to provide adequate sightlines, levelling and lack of detail regarding a clearly defined new roadside boundary, I consider the proposal should be refused on traffic safety grounds, as the proposals are submitted are substandard and it has not been demonstrated a 65metres sightline can be provided to the north given proposed setback will require levelling, and the proposed apartment blocked within 3metres of the setback roadside boundary will require filling. I do not consider this issue can be dealt with by way of condition, and should be refused on this basis.

## 7.6 Other Issues

7.6.1 The proposed development will connect to the public foul drainage and water supply networks Full details are set out in the engineering drawings accompanying the planning application. There was no comment from the PA or Irish Water regarding services. The attenuated stormwaters will discharge to the existing public stormwater network, northwest of the subject site .

7.6.2 *Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltachta* requested an Archaeological Impact Assessment be requested as further information because archaeological artefacts were previously found during archaeological monitoring of site to the south of subject site. The report was submitted to the PA on 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, unfortunately it was not referred back to the Department for recommendations. The submitted report indicated 16No. trenches were dug on the site in December 2019, and no potential archaeological features or deposits were noted. The Board should note the site has been previously disturbed particularly to the north and west of the site. The report recommended that no further archaeological mitigation is required. The PA did not include any conditions regarding archaeology and the excavation works.

7.6.3 In terms of Part V, the applicant and the PA have agreed the provision of 7No. dwelling units for Social Housing in accordance with the Housing Strategy.

7.6.4 There is knotweed on the subject site, and it will be dealt with under Regulations 49 and 50 of the EU (Bird and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

## **7.7 Appropriate Assessment**

7.1 The subject site is located within 1.7km of the Slaney River Valley SAC (Site Code 000781) and the Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA (Site Code 004076). The habitat of the subject site is mainly amenity grassland with areas of scrub, and hard surfacing. It is of low ecological value for terrestrial bird species. There are no drainage ditches or streams on or adjacent to the site. There is no direct hydrological linkage from the development site to the Slaney River Valley SAC or Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA.

7.2 Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, the availability of public services, the nature of the receiving environment, and the proximity of the lands in question to the nearest European site, it is my opinion that no appropriate assessment issues arise and that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on any Natura 2000 site.

## **8.0 Recommendation**

8.1 Having inspected the area, and the subject site, and assessed the relevant planning issues of this case, I recommend the Board refuse planning permission for the proposed development for the following reasons.

## **9.0 Reasons and Considerations**

1. Having regard to the elevated location of the site, the established character of the residential developments on Whiterock Hill, it is considered the proposed development consisting of four storey buildings with a flat roof along the street frontage with a restrictive setback from Whiterock Road, would be incongruous in terms of its design to the existing character of the area, and would set an undesirable precedent for future development of this area. The proposed development would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area and would be contrary to the stated policy of the Wexford Town and Environs Development plan in

relation to apartments and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. The proposed development, in particular the proposed three and four storey apartment blocks along the streetscape, by reason of scale, massing, bulk, height and setback from the public road , would represent a poor design concept that would create an oppressive monolithic streetscape on a constrained site which rises in gradient across the width and streetscape of the site, and would be inconsistent with the existing pattern of residential development in the area and be inappropriate at this elevated location, and would therefore seriously injure the visual amenities of the area, and be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
3. It is considered the proposed development would endanger public safety by reason of a traffic hazard because of the additional traffic turning movements onto Whiterock Road at a point where the road is poorly vertically and horizontally aligned restricting the sightlines in a northern direction.

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Caryn Coogan  
Planning Inspector

20<sup>th</sup> of May 2020