Spencer Place North, City Block 2, Spencer Dock, Dublin 1 Landscape & Visual Impacts Assessment August 2019



Image by Visual Lab

Prepared on behalf of Spencer Place Development Company Limited

by



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1 Introduction

This report assesses the landscape and visual impacts likely to arise from the proposed amendments to the scheme permitted by Dublin City Council Ref. DSDZ2896/18 as amended by Ref. DSDZ4279/18, located at Spencer Dock City Block 2, Dublin 1.

Landscape and visual impact assessment addresses two separate but closely related aspects: the first is visual impacts focusing on the extent to which new development can be seen, potential loss of existing site features and the introduction of new site features; the second aspect is impact on the landscape's character, the changes development will bring to the landscape, the impact of those changes upon nearby views, and the perception and responses that are felt towards the combined effects of the new development.

This latter topic is complex because it encompasses many other environmental topics such as ecology, archaeology and architectural history and because attempts to scientifically measure feelings and perceptions are not universally reliable.

This report has been prepared by Chris Kennett CMLI, director of Kennett Consulting Limited.

2 Study Methodology

While not part of an EIS, this report has been prepared with reference to guidance outlined in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publication "Draft Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports" (EIAR) (2017) and the current "Advice Notes on Current Practice in the Preparation of Environmental Impact Statements" (2003). Consideration is also given to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

An initial desk study has been undertaken to establish an understanding of the site and surroundings, its planning context and to make an initial assessment of the likely visual envelope i.e. areas from which the site might be seen. Relevant maps, development plans and other published documents were used for this purpose and are referenced at the end of this report.

The potential impact of development on the landscape has been assessed with reference to the following landscape factors:

- **Context**: This is a factual description of the site and its surroundings.
- **Character**: This identifies one or more distinct landscape units within the site and/or its surroundings and outlines the defining features of each landscape.
- **Significance**: This is based on whether part of the local landscape been designated as 'high amenity' or something similar; is a scarce or unique landscape; or whether it is 'ordinary' or even 'derelict'.
- Vulnerability: Landscapes vary in their sensitivity change and development. This examines
 existing pressures for change and the damage likely to arise from such change.

Potential changes in character, visibility and land use patterns have been considered first, including indirect, secondary and cumulative impacts. This has given direction to proposed mitigation measures, which have been discussed with the project design team and incorporated into the

development proposal; the subsequent assessment of likely landscape and visual impacts takes account of the proposed mitigation measures.

Mitigating potential impacts on the landscape may include one or more of the following:

- Avoid, reduce or minimise development in sensitive or prominent landscapes
- Avoid, reduce or minimise visually intrusive projects
- Reduce and minimise the visibility of the project, avoid insensitive design
- Add value or character to a landscape as part of the proposed development

Terminology includes the following terms:

- 'Visual Intrusion': a proposed development may feature within in an existing view.
- 'Visual Obstruction': a proposed development may partly or completely obscure an existing view.

The degree of impact is described using the following scale:

- 'None': No material change to the landscape or view arises from the development.
- 'Imperceptible': Change is immeasurable with no bearing on a landscape or view.
- 'Low' ('Slight'): Measurable but insignificant change to the landscape or view.
- 'Moderate': Measurable change to the nature of a landscape or view.
- 'High' ('Significant'): Substantial change occurs to the landscape or view.
- 'Profound': The character or content of a view changes completely.

The nature of an impact is described in one of three ways:

- 'Neutral' impacts neither enhance nor detract from the landscape.
- 'Positive' impacts improve or enhance the existing landscape.
- 'Negative' impacts detract from the existing landscape.

The duration of an impact is described according to the following scale:

'Temporary': 1 year or less
'Short-term': 1-7 years
'Medium-term': 7-20 years
-'Long-term': 20-50 years
'Permanent': 50+ years

The significance of impacts on the landscape depends on a broad range of objective factors as outlined above, but can also depend on more subjective value judgements about 'good design' and how much changes will matter.

3 The Receiving Environment

3.1 Character

The proposed development site comprises a vacant plot occupying the eastern half of City Block 2 in the North Lotts & Grand Canal Strategic Development Zone. It is part of a wider area within the Dublin

Docklands North character area that has witnessed significant change in the last twenty years. It is a modern and changing urban fabric with recent and emerging contemporary buildings accompanied by derelict and vacant city blocks.

The application site forms the north-eastern quarter of a larger city block identified as Block 2 in the North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme. The Block Numbers Plan contained in the SDZ Scheme (annotated below) usefully illustrates the site in its wider SDZ context.



Figure 1: SDZ Scheme – Block Numbers. The proposed development site is highlighted (source: North Lotts & Grand Canal SDZ Planning Scheme, Figure 30A)



Figure 2: The site and its immediate surroundings, viewed from the southeast (source: Google Maps 3D)

City Block 1 to the west comprises modern high-density apartments up to ten storeys high; to the southwest lies Block 6 comprising the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) and the PWC building, the latter extending to eight commercial storeys. These, along with the new linear park at Spencer Dock itself, comprise the principal elements (so far) of the new Spencer Dock hub and make a mostly positive contribution to the urban fabric of this city quarter.

To the south of the site lies City Block 7, part occupied by historic buildings (Protected Structures) comprising the former London and North Western Hotel, the former North Wall Quay Station and the former Woolstore, but otherwise is vacant and used as a temporary car park. A mix of commercial and residential development has been permitted on this site and is currently under construction. The historic buildings make a significant positive contribution to the character of this City Block and the River Liffey waterfront. However, the vacant nature of the remainder of the site detracts from the urban character and quality of the Spencer Dock hub.

To the southeast of City Block 2 lies City Block 8 with the now completed Central Bank of Ireland building; other buildings are currently under construction within this block.

West of Block 2 lies City Block 3 which has the North Bank Apartments development at its north-eastern corner. It is otherwise currently vacant with derelict industrial units (single storey) fronting Sheriff Street Upper and the northern portion of New Wapping Street, though a mix of office and residential development has been permitted here. There are also terraces of Victorian houses 2-3 storeys high fronting onto New Wapping Street. The Victorian houses make a positive contribution to local urban character while the vacant and derelict lands behind them are to the detriment of the urban character and quality of the Spencer Dock hub.

While City Blocks 1-3 and 6-8 comprise the Spencer Dock hub, further blocks to the east comprise the Point Village hub. The northern City Blocks 4 and 5 are mostly developed, while City Block 9 lies mostly vacant/derelict at present. City Block 10 contains the Three Arena and Point Square, where the Exo building is currently under construction.

Beyond Sheriff Street Upper lies the somewhat different urban landscape of East Wall. In the first instance this comprises long-established pockets of industrial uses and former railway yards immediately north of Sheriff Street Upper, which then give way to the wider residential area characterised by mainly two-storey terraced houses with pockets of modern apartment development.

Good public transport connectivity is provided by the LUAS and future DART Underground at Station Square. The LUAS here connects the city centre and the entertainment hub of the Point Village.

3.2 Visibility

The existing site is well-contained visually - views of the existing site are most readily obtained from adjoining and nearby streets. Sheriff Street Upper defines the site's northern site boundary with partial views extending in both directions. Similarly, New Wapping Street defines the site's eastern boundary with partial views extending to North Wall Quay and beyond. Mayor Street Upper defines the site's southern boundary and affords partial views on both directions, which is also the route of the LUAS.

In addition, there are glimpses of the site from immediately north along East Road – due to its angle of approach to Sheriff Street Upper, it is directly aligned with the site. Occasional glimpses towards the site occur within other parts of East Wall.

Most views towards the proposed development site are public views from the streets and nearby open spaces. Key private views will be from the residential properties on New Wapping Street adjoining the site's eastern boundary, and from the modern Spencer Dock apartments at City Block 1, overlooking the site from the west.

The surrounding derelict/vacant City Blocks allow a significant degree of visual permeability through the Spencer Dock hub towards the proposed development site, notably from the south and southeast, though views will become heavily restricted in the future as each of these blocks is developed. At present, some such views also occur from south of the River Liffey, aided by the open panoramas across the river and vistas along the river.

Existing views from a range of vantage points described here can be found in the Photomontage Booklets prepared by Visual Labs. The photomontages themselves are discussed later in this report.

3.3 Planning context

Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022

The Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 provides the initial planning context for the site.

While the site itself falls into SDRA 6, relevant context includes the Conservation Areas along the Royal Canal / Spencer Dock and the River Liffey quays (nearby to the west and south of the site), and pockets of residential conservation areas (zoned Z2) amongst the wider residential areas (Z1) to the north and west of the SDRA.

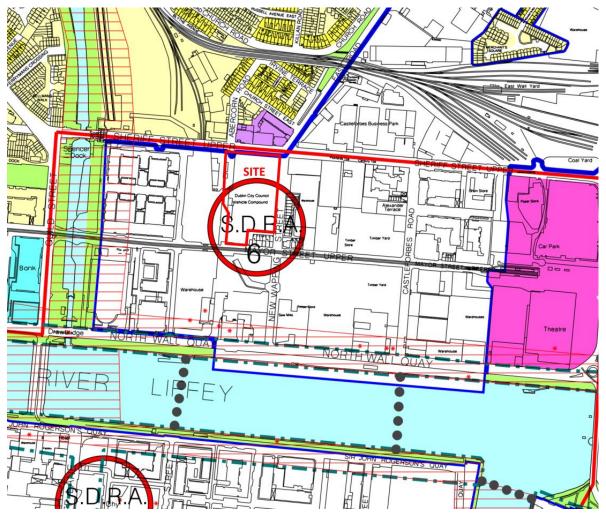


Figure 3: Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022, Map E (extract)

Chapter 4 of the Development Plan addresses the Structure and Shape of the city, containing the following key policies and objectives concerning the impact of development on the character and visual amenity of the city.

Policy SC5: "to promote the urban design and architectural principles set out in Chapter 15, and in the Dublin City Public Realm Strategy 2012, in order to achieve equality, compact, well-connected city."

Policy SC25: "to promote development which incorporates exemplary standards of high-quality, sustainable and inclusive urban design, urban form and architecture befitting the city's environment and heritage and its diverse range of locally distinctive neighbourhoods, such that they positively contribute to the city's built and natural environments. This relates to the design quality of general development across the city, with the aim of achieving excellence in the ordinary, and which includes the creation of new landmarks and public spaces where appropriate."

Policy SC7: "to protect and enhance important views and view corridors into, out of and within the city, and to protect existing landmarks and their prominence."

Consideration has been given to whether the site, and the proposed development, might fall into any of the designated Key Views, indicated in the figure below. It is considered unlikely that the proposed development will feature in these views.

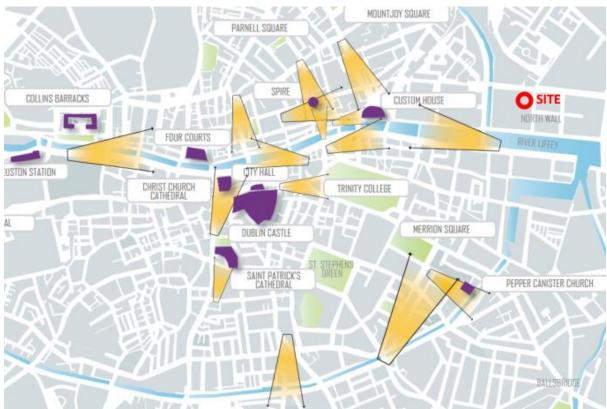


Figure 4: Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022, Figure 4 (extract): Key Views and Prospects.

Policy SC28: "To promote understanding of the city's historical architectural character to facilitate new development which is in harmony with the city's historical spaces and structures."

Chapter 11 addresses culture and heritage, including Protected Structures and Conservation Areas. Policy CHC4 seeks: "To protect the special interest and character of all Dublin's Conservation Areas (11.1.5.4). Development within or affecting all conservation areas will contribute positively to the character and distinctiveness; and take opportunities to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area and its setting, wherever possible. Development will not ... harm the setting of a conservation area [or] constitute a visually obtrusive or dominant form."

The site does not lie within or adjoin any Conservation Areas, though these lie to the west and south along the Royal Canal and River Liffey.

Chapter 16 addresses development standards and states:

"In the appropriate context, imaginative contemporary architecture is encouraged, provided that it respects Dublin's heritage and local distinctiveness and enriches its city environment. Through its design, use of materials and finishes, development will make a positive contribution to the townscape and urban realm, and to its environmental performance. In particular, development will respond creatively to and respect and enhance its context, and have regard to:

- 1. The character of adjacent buildings, the spaces around and between them and the character and appearance of the local area and the need to provide appropriate enclosure to streets.
- 2. The character, scale and pattern of historic streets, squares, lanes, mews and passageways
- 3. Existing materials, detailing, building lines, scale, orientation, height and massing, plot width
- 4. The form, character and ecological value of parks, gardens and open spaces, and
- 5. Dublin's riverside and canal-side settings."

With regard to respecting and enhancing character and context, Chapter 16 states:

"The City Council will seek to ensure that the design of new development respects and enhances these and other elements that contribute positively to the cityscape and urban realm, the settings of protected structures, areas of special interest and important views and that such design incorporates high-quality detail, materials and craftsmanship. Design must also recognise the diversity of the city environment and respond to the distinctiveness of Dublin as a capital city, a diverse residential community and a centre of business and commerce.

"In assessing new development, consideration will be given to how the design has responded to the existing context and its relationship to the established pattern, form(s), density and scale of surrounding townscape, taking account of existing rhythms, proportion, symmetries, solid to void relationships, degree of uniformity and the composition of elevations, roofs and building lines."

Finally, with regard to building height in a sustainable city, Chapter 16 states:

"Dublin City Council acknowledges the intrinsic quality of Dublin as a low-rise city and it is policy that it should predominantly remain so. There is a recognised need to protect conservation areas and the architectural character of existing buildings, streets and spaces of artistic, civic or historic importance."

It is important to protect and enhance the skyline of the inner city and to ensure that any proposals for high buildings make a positive contribution to the urban character of the city, and create opportunities for place-making and identity.

While the Development Plan goes on to provide guideline heights, the North Lotts & Grand Canal SDZ Planning Scheme provides specific details on heights for the site, as described below.

The North Lotts & Grand Canal Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) Planning Scheme

The site forms part of Block 2 in the SDZ Planning Scheme, identified on the map below.



Figure 5: SDZ Planning Scheme Figure 35 (extract)

The site comprises the eastern half of City Block 2 (2B and 2D). For the most part, City Block 2 is envisaged as 5/6 commercial storeys and 6/7 residential storeys (blue/pink in the figure above). The exception is a taller landmark building of 10-12 commercial storeys in the southwest quarter (Block 2C). This is described in more detail in Section 5.5.2 of the SDZ Planning Scheme.

In May 2019, Dublin City Council submitted to An Bord Pleanála a "Review of Building Height & Proposed Amendments" for the SDZ. Chapter 4 of that document identifies scope for additional height within City Block 2 where it fronts on Sheriff Street Upper, identifying local landmark buildings of 12 storeys as appropriate.

City Blocks 1-3 and 6-8 comprise the Spencer Dock hub. Section 4.6.5.2 describes this area as follows:

"The Spencer Dock hub exhibits distinctive qualities of a railway building complex, which along with an historic building stock along parts of the North Wall Quay, references the area's original docking function.

"The complex of buildings including the former Railway Hotel, Station Building and Woolstore lend a distinctive character to the area which sets it apart from other international dockland redevelopment and create a focal point of interest on approach to the city from Dublin Bay. Features such as the drawbridge and quay walls to the river and canal, also contribute to this unique character.

"In the surrounding areas, there is still some remaining evidence of the former residential pattern of small-scale workers' cottages which would have been an integral part of the working docklands.

"Proposals should respect the setting and visual qualities of the railway complex protected structures and provide for publicly accessible uses, active frontages and public spaces. The location of these buildings at the proposed DART Underground Station and Station Square, present an opportunity to create an attractive civic space with special qualities."

The SDZ Planning Scheme identifies shortcomings of achievements to date in the North Lotts in section 4.10.1.2. The limited roll-out of office and residential development so far has led to a fragmented urban landscape. Spencer Dock has suffered failures to animate the streets and public spaces, leaving them sterile and windswept; new development must address this. However, it also recognises the scope for intensification and scale of development in this location due to its established economic and transport focus (4.10.4.1.1), up to a suggested range of 10-12 storeys (4.10.4.1.5).

Views and prospects are also dealt with as part of the SDZ Planning Scheme. In section 4.6.5.7 'Visual Context & Landscape Setting', the "SDZ Planning Scheme promotes the Docklands' distinctive historic environment as a key driver in the sustainable regeneration of the area. In this regard, it seeks to protect the visual amenity of known heritage sites and features, as well as historic views and vistas from within and without the SDZ in order to conserve its integrity. New developments should consider and recognise the landscape qualities of the Docklands, Poolbeg Peninsula, the Liffey and Dublin Bay."

A Views and Prospects Analysis undertaken in February 2013 informed the preparation of Section 4.6.7 of the Planning Scheme, identifying thirteen existing/potential landmark features and sixteen Key Views that might be affected by new development in the SDZ. For the most part, views are focused on features in the south and east docklands, and only a small number of viewpoints are located in the north docklands near the site (see Figure 6 below).

Four key views are relevant to the proposed development: View 3 to the North Wall Quay Station complex from south of the Eastlink Bridge; View 11 extending north along Fitzwilliam Street from Leeson Street; View 12 to Boland's Mills along New Wapping Street from its junction with Sheriff Street Upper; and View 13 east along Mayor Street Upper from the Royal Canal bridge, past the site to Point Square, where the Exo Building will stand 8-17 commercial storeys high. The site falls within the wider context of the North Lotts area in View 3 and directly adjoins Views 12 and 13, while it is directly aligned with View 11.

A detailed analysis of all these viewpoints is provided in the SDZ Views and Prospects Analysis February 2013, which informed the preparation of the SDZ. Figure 1 of the Analysis - Cross Section of View 11 - identifies that a building of 56 metres above ground level at the centre of Block 2 (the proposed development site) should remain below the existing skyline of View 11, screened by Holles Street Hospital (see Figure 7 below). The proposed development reaches a maximum height of 47 metres above ground level and, on this basis, is considered likely to remain hidden from view.

The Photomontages submitted with the application address each of these views in detail. View 3 as identified in the views and Prospects Analysis 2013 is listed as view 6 in the photomontages submitted with the application, view 11 is listed as view 21, view 13 is listed as view 7 and view 12 is listed as view 9. These are assessed further in section 7.8 of this chapter.

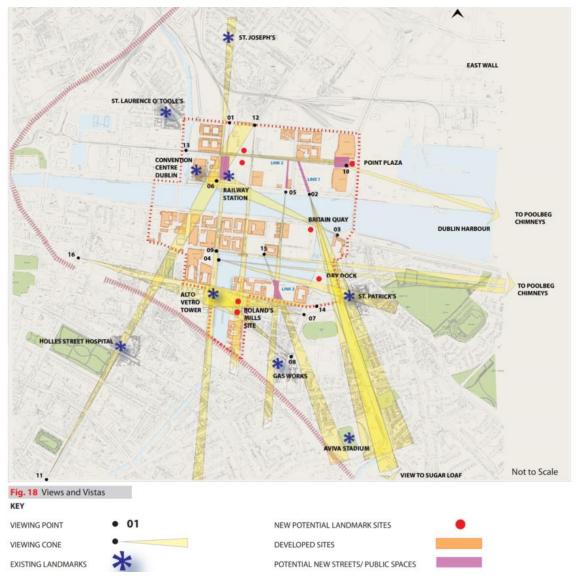


Figure 6: SDZ Planning Scheme Figure 18 'Views & Vistas'

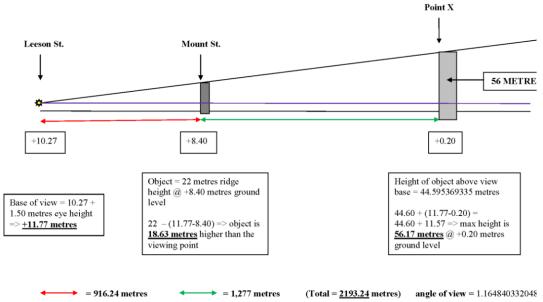


Figure 7: SDZ Views and Prospects Analysis, February 2013, Figure 1 'Cross Section of View 11'

National Planning Framework (NPF), February 2018

Section 4 of the NPF promotes making stronger urban places. Notable amongst these is National Policy Objective (NPO) 4 seeks to "ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places ...".

A more flexible approach to building height is also promoted in the NPF. NPO 11 favours development that encourages more people, jobs and activity in existing urban areas, while alongside this, NPO 13 promotes a performance-based approach to planning standards, and in particular building height, that achieves well-designed high quality outcomes that help to deliver targeted growth.

Key supporting texts to NPO 13 (extracts from page 67 of the NPF) state:

"To enable brownfield development, planning policies and standards need to be flexible, focusing on design-led and performance-based outcomes, rather than specifying absolute requirements in all cases. Although sometimes necessary to safeguard against poor quality design, planning standards should be flexibly applied in response to well-designed development proposals that can achieve urban infill and brownfield development objectives ..."

"In particular, general restrictions on building height or universal standards for car parking or garden size may not be applicable in all circumstances in urban areas and should be replaced by performance-based criteria appropriate to general location, e.g. city/town centre, public transport hub, inner suburban, public transport corridor, outer suburban, town, village etc."

"This more dynamic approach will also be applied to urban land use, where the existing character of land use in an urban area may be subject to change."

This approach is brought into sharp focus in NPO 35, which seeks to "Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights."

Finally, compact growth is the first of ten National Strategic Outcomes sought by the NPF.

Urban Development and Building Heights, December 2018

Publication of the National Planning Framework was followed by publication of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines in December 2018 (hereafter 'the Guidelines'), which sets out in detail the approach to building heights that all planning authorities should adopt going forward.

The Guidelines begin with the concern that generic maximum height limits applied by planning authorities can undermine national policy objectives for the more compact forms of urban development sought by the NPF, while also hindering innovation and encouraging poor design outcomes. 'Traditional' building heights are typically no more than 6-8 storeys in the urban centres of cities and major towns.

Para 1.11 of the Guidelines states: "These guidelines therefore set out national planning policy that:

- Expand on the requirements of the National Planning Framework; and
- Applies those requirements in setting out relevant planning criteria for considering increased building height in various locations but principally (a) urban and city-centre locations and (b) suburban and wider town locations."

The Guidelines set out a series of Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPRs). Significantly, para 1.14 states that these SPPRs "take precedence over any conflicting, policies and objectives of development plans, local area plans and strategic development zone planning schemes."

Therefore, while the proposed development is mindful of established local policy towards building height, as set out earlier in this section, it is necessarily led by new national objectives and policies set out in the NPF and these Guidelines.

Paragraph 1.10 of the Guidelines states that within the city and town centre areas, such as within the canal ring of Dublin, "it would be appropriate to support the consideration of building heights of at least 6 storeys at street level as the default objective, subject to keeping open the scope to consider even greater building heights by the application of the objectives and criteria laid out in Sections 2 and 3 of these guidelines, for example on suitably configured sites, where there are particular concentrations of enabling infrastructure to cater for such development ...".

Para 1.20 then explicitly states "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 ..."

Para 2.11 of the Guidelines emphasises the need to identify specific urban districts with an appropriate location and capacity for clusters of taller buildings. In this regard, the North Lotts & Grand Canal Dock SDZ Planning Scheme has gone some way to achieving this in terms of its masterplan for the area, but with a mostly conservative approach to building heights in the context of these new Guidelines.

National policy is stated unequivocally in para 3.1: "In relation to the assessment of individual planning applications and appeals, it is Government policy that building heights must be generally increased in appropriate urban locations. There is therefore a presumption in favour of buildings of increased height in our town/city cores and in other urban locations with good public transport accessibility."

The Planning Statement by John Spain Associates picks up on these and other points, setting out a strong case that supports higher densities and building height on this site.

Furthermore, the Guidelines recognise the role that greater building height can play in placemaking. Para 2.5 states: "... taller buildings ... can also assist in reinforcing and contributing to a sense of place within a city or town centre, such as indicating the main centres of activity, important street junctions, public spaces and transport interchanges. In this manner, increased building height is a key factor in assisting modern placemaking and improving the overall quality of our urban environments."

In terms of urban design, landscape character and visual amenity, para 3.2 requires that the proposed development demonstrate that it satisfies the following criteria (extracts from a longer list):

At the scale of the relevant city/town

- 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.
- 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 and inland waterway/ marine frontage, thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure while being in line with the requirements of "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (2009).
- 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.

The proposed development will be assessed against these and other criteria in detail in Section 6 of this report, setting out mitigation measures incorporated into the development design, and summarised in Section 7.1 of this report appraising the impact of the proposed development on landscape character.

Established Building Height

It is important to understand building heights that have been permitted, and often built, in the vicinity of the site, both in terms of how planning decisions have previously approached height in the area and as part of the contextual urban character for the proposed development.

Neighbouring permitted development at Block 3 to the east (DSDZ3357/17) comprises six commercial / six-seven residential storeys.

Neighbouring permitted development at Block 7 to the south (DSDZ2661/17) provides for up to nine storeys of commercial floorspace over lower ground floor, including mezzanine floor between ground and first floor adjacent to Mayor Street Upper. This is approximately equivalent to 13 residential floors.

Neighbouring existing development at City Block 1 to the west stands at up to 11 residential storeys, including set-back floors and commercial ground floor, and seven commercial storeys.

The PWC building at City Block 6 to the southwest stands at seven commercial storeys, roughly equivalent to 8-9 residential storeys.

The Central Bank building to the southeast stands eight commercial storeys high, roughly equivalent to ten residential storeys.

Canon Hall immediately north of the site, at the junction of Sheriff Street Upper and East Road, stands eleven residential storeys high, while the adjacent Saudi Arabian Cultural Embassy stands seven commercial storeys high, roughly equivalent to 8-9 residential storeys.

Further afield in the Dublin Docklands area, IFSC 2 west of Spencer Dock includes buildings in the range of 7-10 commercial storeys; contemporary buildings at the Google offices at Grand Canal Dock extend to 16 commercial storey; and the Exo Building at The Point extends up to 17 commercial storeys.

Therefore, in summary, the site is surrounded by buildings that already exceed the preferred minimum threshold of six storeys indicated in the Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines, but also match or exceed the indicative maximum heights set out in the SDZ for Block 2b and 2D (the site). Therefore, the effects of the proposed development upon landscape character and visual amenity will also be appraised in this context.

4 The Proposed Development

The proposed development is a modification to permitted development Ref. DSDZ2896/18 as amended by Ref. DSDZ4279/18.

The existing permission provides for 349 residential units and a 100 bedroom aparthotel, assembled as two blocks that each extend to seven storeys, with a commercial-height ground floor (including mezzanine) over basement car parking. Landscaped communal amenity space is provided within courtyards at the centre of each block, along with landscaped public street-frontages and a central public space. A new street will also run from north to south along the western edge of the site, bisecting City Block 2.

The proposed development seeks revisions to the permitted Block 1 and 2 to provide for an increase in the number of residential units from 349 no. to 464 no. and the change of use of the permitted aparthotel development to shared accommodation.

The proposed development will increase the height of the permitted development increasing the maximum height of Block 1 from 7 no. storeys (27.5 m) to a maximum height of 13 no. storeys (46.8m) and increasing the maximum height of Block 2 (27.5m) to 11 no. storeys (40.5m). The proposed development will also include the provision of a link bridge between Block 1 and Block 2 at 6th floor level, landscaping, the provision of communal open space, revised under croft level, provision of roof terraces and all other associates site development works to facilitate the development.



Figure 8: Proposed development, east elevation (source: Henry J Lyons, Architects, drawing P4-2011 rev. 01)

As a result, the proposed development will consist of the following:

Block 1 (northern block)

- 298 private residential units extending 9-13 storeys high over lower-ground and basement levels, set around a central courtyard.
- The eastern (New Wapping Street) street elevation stands 10-11 storeys high with the upper two storeys partially set back.
- The western elevation stands 11 storeys high, with a partial set-back of the upper two storeys, while extending further to 13 storeys in the northern corner.
- The southern elevation stands 11 storeys high over lower-ground level.
- The northern (Sheriff Street) elevation stands 9-13 storeys high, with eleven and thirteen storeys accentuating the northern corners of the block.
- All elevations support an extensive matrix of windows and balconies.

Block 2 (southern block)

- 119 private residential units and 47 'Part V' residential units, plus 84 co-living units, extending 7- 11 storeys high over lower-ground floor and basement levels, set around a central courtyard.
- The eastern (New Wapping Street) elevation extends to 7-9 storeys over lower ground floor, incorporating partial set-backs to the top one or two storeys, and a three-storey over lower-ground 'wing' facing the neighbouring existing houses.
- The western elevation extends 9-11 storeys high with a partial set-back to the ninth storey.
- The southern (Mayor Street Upper) elevation is largely confined to the south-western corner of the block, extending to ten storeys high with a five-storey 'wing' facing the neighbouring existing houses. The remainder of the elevation is substantially set-back within the site, behind the existing houses, standing three storeys over lower ground with a further four storeys set back behind.
- The northern elevation extends 7-11 storeys high over lower-ground level
- All elevations support an extensive matrix of windows, and balconies occur throughout except for the co-living units. The south-facing elevation behind the existing houses has almost no windows but with detailing that echoes the scale and rhythm of fenestration elsewhere.

A glazed bridge links the two blocks at sixth floor (seventh storey) between internal amenity spaces.

Materials

- Brick is used throughout as the main finish to the elevations, accompanied by matching metal window frames, mesh panels and balcony railings; the latter also informs the finishes used for

railings in hard landscaping. Subtly contrasting colours of brickwork distinguish the co-living units from the remaining residential scheme.

Landscaping scheme

- Central public plaza between the two blocks, comprising high quality formal hard and soft landscaping, including specimen trees and shrubs in raised planters.
- Formal courtyards at the centre of each block, comprising high quality formal hard and soft landscaping, including specimen trees and shrubs in raised planters, and separated from the public realm by gates and railings.
- Evergreen hedgerows enclosing paved private amenity space along western, northern and eastern street frontages and within central courtyards.
- Specimen street trees to New Wapping Street and along the proposed internal street.
- Green roofs throughout plus communal amenity space at 7/8/9th floor terraces.

A more extensive and detailed account of the design proposals is contained in the Architectural Design Statement by Henry J Lyons Architects.

5 Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts

5.1 Design phase

Potential risks to landscape character and visual amenity in this urban area, also highlighted in some of the planning policy documents, may arise from the following:

Building location, form and height (see Development Plan Policy SC5, also Chapter 16; Urban Planning & Building Height Guidelines). To avoid or minimise adverse impacts, development should:

- Contribute to a compact, well-designed city
- Protect and enhance the skyline
- Cluster taller buildings
- Make a positive contribution to the city's urban character
- Create opportunities for place-making and local identity
- Facilitate more imaginative, high-quality architecture

Design quality (see Development Plan Policy SC5, SC25, also Chapter 16). To avoid or minimise adverse impacts, the proposed development should:

- Recognise the diversity of the city
- Respond to the character of adjacent buildings, spaces and the local area
- Contribute positively to the city's built and natural heritage
- Provide new landmarks and public spaces where appropriate
- Use imaginative contemporary architecture in an appropriate context
- Achieve high quality, inclusive, sustainable urban design
- Achieve excellence in the ordinary

Built heritage / conservation areas (see Development Plan Policy SC28, CHC2, CHC4). To avoid or minimise adverse impacts, the proposed development should respect and respond to the following:

- Royal Canal Conservation Area
- Liffey Quays Conservation Area
- Protected Structures (former railway buildings) at North Wall Quay /City Block 7
- Residential Conservation Areas to north

Public and private amenity (see Development Plan; SDZ). To avoid or minimise adverse impacts, the proposed development should:

- Animate streets with activity
- Provide character, legibility, variety and visual interest at street level

Visual amenity and designated views (see Development Plan Policy SC7; SDZ). To avoid or minimise adverse impacts, the proposed development should:

- Protect key views and prospects within the wider city
- Respect setting and visual qualities of views to the former railway buildings, especially as seen from the river corridor
- Protect views south from the Spencer Dock area to landmark buildings at Grand Canal Dock –
 Boland's Mill and the Alto Vetro tower.
- Protect views east along Mayor Street Upper to Point Square
- Avoid/minimise harm to quality of existing views generally
- Avoid poor visual amenity in the new public realm

The following section on Mitigation Measures accounts for the design response to these issues.

5.2 Construction Phase

Short-term impacts upon landscape character and visual amenity are also likely during the construction phase, arising from the following:

- temporary hoardings, parking, deliveries and site offices
- demolition of existing site structures
- cranes, scaffolds and other temporary structures
- the presence of dynamic, partially-completed buildings
- construction activities at street level (deliveries & mobile plant)

By their very nature, construction impacts are temporary or short-term, where most impacts identified during the construction stage will reduce significantly or disappear once construction has ceased and the proposed development is complete.

The following section on Mitigation Measures accounts for the design response to these issues.

5.3 Operational Phase

Landscape and visual impacts arising from the proposed development potentially will be positive once the construction phase is completed. Ongoing occupation and maintenance of the building will be needed to maintain a positive impact upon the character and amenity of the adjoining streets and the setting of nearby Protected Structures.

6 Avoidance, Remedial and Mitigation Measures

The following section considers the design response to the site, the character of the surrounding area and the policy objectives outlined earlier.

To best illustrate the design response, it is useful to refer to the first of two photomontage booklets prepared by Visual Lab. The 'close-in views' are mapped at the front of the report on an aerial photograph of the site and its immediate surroundings. Photomontages of this proposed development then follow, each accompanied by a matching photomontage of the existing permitted development. Occasional references to the photomontages are made in the following text (location plan below).

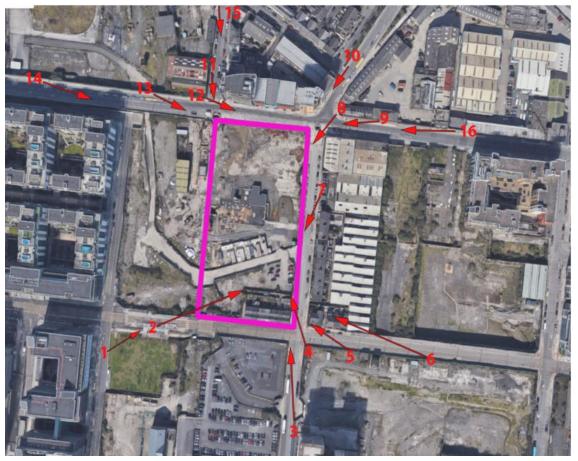


Figure 9: Photomontage View locations - close up vantage points (see booklet by Visual Lab for photomontages).

6.1 Building location, form and height

The proposed development seeks to achieve an optimal building height and form that is design-led and dynamic, which makes best use of the land resource and delivers higher residential density while:

- Contribute to a compact, well-designed city
- Protect and enhance the skyline
- Cluster taller buildings

- Make a positive contribution to the city's urban character
- Create opportunities for place-making and local identity
- Facilitate more imaginative, high-quality architecture

Height objectives set out in the SDZ Planning Scheme recognise the scope for taller buildings of 10-12 storeys in City Block 2, given its transport and economic focus within the city and new urban context. However, it is very conservative in applying these heights by confining these taller buildings to the southwest quarter overlooking Station Square, while capping building heights elsewhere within City Block 2 at six or seven residential storeys (or their commercial equivalent). It is in this context that the permitted development at seven residential storeys was secured.

The effect of building height constraints, such as those in the SDZ Planning Scheme, has resulted in the negative effects identified in the Guidelines, in that it has stifled the ability to deliver a diverse and dynamic cityscape and strength of character in this part of the Docklands. The permitted development too has a somewhat uniform roofscape with strong horizontal emphasis that is an inevitable consequence of making best use of the land resource within the SDZ height constraints. This is echoed in other parts of the Dublin Docklands.

Similar effects are seen elsewhere in the city as a result of building height standards applied in the Dublin City Development Plan. The result is a rather monotonous skyline in much of the modern city, including parts of the Dublin Docklands, where a more dynamic approach to building height would benefit a richer and more diverse cityscape. Such observations were also made in a separate landscape and visual impact assessment for City Block 7 by Richard Coleman City Designer.

The planning context has now changed significantly and the Urban Planning & Building Height Guidelines 2018 indicate that within the canal ring of Dublin, at least six storeys should be the default objective while significantly greater height in appropriate locations should also be sought. Many parts of the city within the canal ring are constrained by policy protecting the character and fabric of the historic city core, while City Block 2 just outside the canal ring has almost no such constraints.

If six storeys (minimum) is considered achievable throughout many parts of the city centre, in spite of its constraints, the relatively unconstrained neighbouring Docklands, where this site is located, seems an appropriate location for significantly greater height, given its designation as a Strategic Development Zone, the supporting SDZ policies for a high-density mixed use district of the city, and the modern city district character that is emerging. Its central location and strong transport links further reinforce its suitability as a location for greater height. The Planning Statement by John Spain Associates elaborates on these points.

Consideration must also be given to the existing and permitted built context for City Block 2, as described in the Planning Context section of this report. The site is surrounded on all sides by existing or permitted contemporary developments ranging in height from 6/7 residential storeys to the east, up to nine commercial storeys to the south, and up to eleven residential storeys to the west and north. IFSC 2 further to the west includes buildings of 7-10 commercial storeys while Grand Canal Dock south of the river includes buildings up to16 commercial storeys. The Exo building to the east at Point Square will stand 17 commercial storeys high.

Therefore, the existing built/permitted context for the site is 11 residential storeys, or their equivalent, on land adjoining three sides of the site, with taller buildings in the wider area. As a result, the currently permitted development of seven residential storeys on this site would be somewhat out of

keeping with its surroundings, a significant underdevelopment of the site that misses the opportunity now presented to establish a more dynamic built form and make a greater contribution to placemaking in this part of the Docklands.

In the context of the foregoing, the proposal for residential blocks ranging from 7-13 storeys high is much more appropriate. This will add variety to the established and complementary range of buildings heights on neighbouring plots, and will contribute to a cluster of taller buildings in the locality that reinforces a positive contemporary urban landscape character and creates strong local identity. The tallest elements of the proposed development will contribute diversity and visual richness to a contemporary skyline in this part of the city, complementing other buildings clusters nearby, such as at Grand Canal Dock, and leaving landmark buildings elsewhere to remain prominent in the landscape, including those along the Liffey Quays, at Point Square and Sir John Rogerson's Quay.

This proposal for taller buildings at City Block 2 not only complements the character of the emerging neighbourhood and its location at a growing transport hub, it is also located at a significant road junction in the Spencer Dock area, where buildings of an appropriate scale and character will aid legibility

There are only three roads that approach the North Lotts and North Wall Quay from the north. The first two are Seville Place / Guild Street to the west and East Wall Road to the east - major routes that connect to bridges across the River Liffey; Sheriff Street Upper links the two in an east-west direction, passing the proposed development site as it does so.

The third north-south link road to Spencer Dock is East Road, which links East Wall across the railway tracks to North Lotts at the junction of New Wapping Street and Sheriff Street Upper – the same junction where the proposed development site is located. The angle of East road to the remainder of the junction means that the proposed development will terminate the vista along East Road.

Given this location at a significant junction and terminating the view along East Road, it is considered appropriate for the proposed development to have a scale and form that reinforces a distinctive character and strong presence, thereby contributing to placemaking and local identity and legibility.

Additional height in itself does not make for high quality, imaginative and distinctive architecture, but lends greater opportunities to achieve these objectives. This is discussed in more detail later in later sections.

The presence of existing two-storey houses on Mayor Street Upper / New Wapping Street, at the south-eastern corner of the site, is an important consideration. The SDZ considered six and seven residential storeys being appropriate adjoining these terraces houses. The proposed development also recognises the need to respond to these dwellings and moderates building height and outlook where it adjoins the houses on Mayor Street Upper.

North of the terraced houses on Mayor Street Upper, building height is initially limited to two residential storeys above a commercial-height storey, stepping back before extending upwards by another four storeys; a substantial setback then occurs for one further storey. There is no outlook from the south-elevation to the rear of the terraces houses.

West of the terraced houses on Mayor Street Upper, the proposed co-living units is initially four residential storeys above a commercial-height storey, stepping back before extending upwards for a further five residential storeys. There is no outlook from the first five storeys above ground level.

6.2 Design quality

The design response seeks to:

- Recognise the diversity of the city
- Respond to the character of adjacent buildings, spaces and the local area
- Contribute positively to the city's built and natural heritage
- Provide new landmarks and public spaces where appropriate
- Use imaginative contemporary architecture in an appropriate context
- Achieve high quality, inclusive, sustainable urban design
- Achieve excellence in the ordinary

The site is located within a part of the city where significant change is being driven towards the creation of a major mixed-use, high density, distinctly contemporary city district. The proposed development seeks to establish a strong contemporary urban character on this site, using high-quality architecture, streetscapes and civic open spaces, to reinforce and enhance the character of the Spencer Dock area and thereby strengthen diversity of urban character in the city as a whole.

As discussed in the section on height above, a wide range of building heights have been employed that complement developments on neighbouring sites and contribute to the palette of architectural expression employed in the design process. Height contributes to the delivery of a local landmark development, particularly in its presence on Sheriff Street Upper and at the junction with East Road, but does not seek or merit the presence that other landmarks in the wider Dublin Docklands have.

A more dynamic roofscape has been achieved through a modest addition of floors throughout, dropping floors back in select locations to break up the general roofline, setting back building elevations at upper-floor levels, and accentuating the western/northern corners with further additional height. The Architectural Design Statement by Henry J Lyons Architects illustrates the evolution of building massing in more detail. Photomontage Views 1 and 6 illustrate the permitted and proposed roofscapes to good effect.

Further modulation of the roofscape and elevations of the uppermost floors is achieved through the use of contrasting materials in the building facades. Grey cladding to the set-back floors adds to the recessive appearance of these floors and emphasises both the principal elevations and taller feature corners, which are all finished in brick. In addition to modulating the roofscape, this approach is used to good effect in the relationship with adjoining two-storey houses. Photomontage Views 1, 4 and 6 demonstrate the permitted and proposed roofscapes well.

Brick is used as a principal façade materials, echoing a traditional material used in the wider Dublin Docklands for both historic and modern buildings. The texture, fine grain and colour variation within the brickwork serves to break down the elevations to a more human scale at close quarters, while this and the warmth of the colours provide a pleasing contrast to the smooth grey cladding panels used elsewhere. Subtle colour variations are used in the brickwork to distinguish between the two residential blocks and the co-living units. Photomontage View 7 illustrates the use of brick well.

Window details pick up on the grey cladding used for the set-back upper floors, using matching materials as colour accents to frame the glazing and add a variety of configurations within a regular layout of window openings. Similarly, balcony frames use matching grey materials to continue the theme throughout the façades. Selected groups of balconies are enclosed by the grey cladding to provide strong vertical elements projecting from some of the façades. Photomontage Views 2, 4 and 7 illustrate these points well.

Hard and soft landscaping plays an important part in the relationship between the buildings and adjoining streets, separating outdoor private space from the public realm and adding a stronger human-scale to the ground-level streetscape. Private terraces are raised slightly above the streetscape, separated by plinth walls, glazed balustrades and evergreen hedges. The glazed balustrades maximise the outlook and passive supervision of the street, while hedges add a soft element to the pedestrian's eye-level while street trees add colour and softness overhead. Photomontage View 7 illustrates this well.

The proposed layout of public streets and open spaces integrates well with neighbouring sites and opens up the block as a whole to greater permeability for pedestrians in particular. The new north-south street links Sheriff Street Upper with Mayor Street Upper, the LUAS stop and Station Park. This, along with the New Wapping Street frontage, will be landscaped with street trees. Along with high quality paving, hedge planting, railings and building frontages, this will create a high quality streetscape.

The central east-west public space between Blocks 1 and 2 provides traffic-free public amenity space in the form of a landscaped civic space. It forms part of an east-west pedestrian route that will ultimately extend through neighbouring blocks to both sides, to the east through City Block 3 where another civic open space will be located and west through the Spencer Dock Apartments at City Block 1. High quality paving, steps, ramps, railings, raised planters and mature planting will establish a high quality public realm for residents, local workers and visitors alike.

6.3 Built heritage / conservation areas

Refer to Development Plan Policies SC28, CHC2, CHC4. To avoid or minimise adverse impacts, the proposed development should respect and respond to the following:

- Royal Canal Conservation Area
- Liffey Quays Conservation Area
- Protected Structures (former railway buildings) at North Wall Quay /City Block 7
- Residential Conservation Areas to north

The proposed development has a high degree of physical separation from sensitive areas of conservation and built heritage and will have no direct impact upon these. The high standards of design quality and materials will make a positive contribution to the character of the site and its setting, with the intention that where there may be a visual relationship between Conservation Areas / Protected Structures and the proposed development, there will no adverse impacts upon those areas. This will be discussed later in the detailed landscape and visual impact appraisal.

6.4 Public and private amenity

The design response seeks to:

- Animate streets with activity
- Provide character, legibility, variety and visual interest at street level

Photomontage View 7, 8 and 12 illustrate some of the following points.

Streets are animated by a number of factors, including ground-floor outlook/access and the provision of a high quality public realm, in particular the east-west street / civic space.

Ground-floor terraces can be accessed from the street via gates and steps, where doors to living rooms provide access/egress from the ground-floor apartments. While this is not the primary means of access to the apartments – they are served by communal entrances and internal corridors – it is likely to encourage some residents/visitors that arrive/leave on foot to use the street entrances. This will add activity to the street.

Terraces and ground-floor living spaces provide varying degrees of outlook onto the street, ensuring there is passive surveillance of street activity. Outlook from terraces and balconies has been improved by replacing the metal balustrades of the permitted scheme with glazed ones. This encourages a sense of safety on the streets.

The provision of a high quality street and civic space running east-west between the two blocks will encourage pedestrian movement through the site and surrounding area, perhaps as a preferred alternative route to the busier trafficked streets. Connected high-quality pedestrian-friendly streets will encourage walking over driving. The ground floor café at the co-living units will also generate local footfall and activity.

Character and visual interest at street level is provided by a mix of hard and soft landscape elements as well as a dynamic interface with the adjacent buildings. Existing and new streets will be enhanced with retaining walls and evergreen hedges that alternate with communal entrances, private gates, service access and car park entrances. Street trees reinforce the separation between roadway and pavement, enhancing the sense of safety for pedestrians, while adding soft and dynamic natural elements to the landscape.

The central street and civic space will be a distinctive feature of the local urban landscape with oval raised planters containing a rich mix of trees, shrubs and perennials set in a wide paved pedestrian plaza. Only maintenance and emergency vehicles have access to this space.

6.5 Visual amenity and designated views

The design response seeks to:

- Protect key views and prospects within the wider city
- Respect setting and visual qualities of views to the former railway buildings, especially as seen from the river corridor

- Protect views south from the Spencer Dock area to landmark buildings at Grand Canal Dock –
 Boland's Mill and the Alto Vetro tower.
- Protect views east along Mayor Street Upper to Point Square
- Avoid/minimise harm to quality of existing views generally
- Avoid poor visual amenity in the new public realm

The visual qualities of the proposed development are outlined in detail above and it is considered likely to significantly enhance the character and quality of existing streets. In a wider context, there are designated views to be considered, as well as general views from the public realm.

A comprehensive range of views will be addressed in detail in Section 7 of this report.

6.6 Construction Phase

The construction phase will be completed quickly through careful construction planning and management prior to commencing on site and throughout the construction phase. Even with all reasonable mitigation measures in place, construction activities will most likely have significant negative effects on visual amenity for adjoining properties and public roads, therefore the sooner construction is complete the sooner negative visual impacts will be reduced or removed completely.

The implications of design changes in terms of urban landscape character and visual amenity will be considered prior to committing those changes in order to maintain the intended visual qualities of new structures and open spaces.

Where practical, contractors' compounds, site offices and parking areas will be located where they will be least overlooked from nearby streets and dwellings.

6.7 Operational Phase

Once the construction phase has been completed, there are no specific mitigation measures that need be undertaken in order minimise impacts on landscape character and visual amenity. Regular maintenance of the external building fabric and landscaping will be undertaken to maintain the highest standards of building presentation and streetscape quality.

7 Residual landscape and visual impacts

A series of photomontages have been submitted in two standalone booklets and are referenced in the following text where appropriate. This section refers to the second booklet containing photomontage views from the site's surrounding and wider area. The following map, which also appears on the first page of the booklet, identifies the location and reference number of the viewpoints.

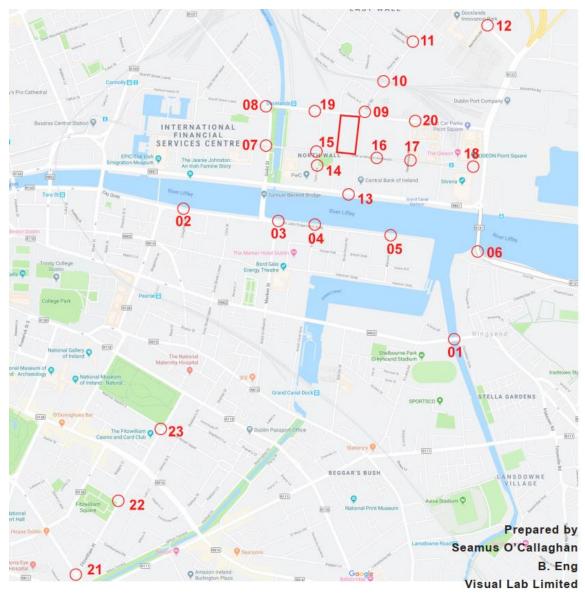


Figure 10: Photomontage View Locations – Distant Views (see booklet by Visual Lab for photomontages; source - Google Mans)

Each viewpoint is illustrated by photomontages of the proposed development accompanied by a matching photomontage of the permitted development for comparison.

7.1 Impacts on Landscape Character

The site sits within a fragmented and rapidly changing landscape, where contemporary offices and apartments sit alongside vacant land and construction sites. The streets are not very pedestrian-friendly, often barren and windswept with vacant ground-floor retail units and little interaction or visibility between building and street. It is perhaps temporary as the outlook for further development is positive, but for the moment it is a poor-quality urban landscape which the site currently contribute to.

The proposed development is a logical evolution of the permitted development. The basis for this has been set out in the Planning Context at section 6.3 above, which makes the case for additional height amongst other things, while a detailed account of the carefully considered design approach is set out

at section 6.7 above (Avoidance, Remedial & Mitigation Measures) should also be read in conjunction with the following summary.

Paragraph 3.2 of the Urban Planning and Building Height Guidelines requires proposed development to demonstrate how they address a series of design objectives, key excerpts of which are listed towards the end of section 6.3 'Planning Context' earlier in this report. The proposed development has responded as follows.

At the scale of the relevant city/town, the Urban Development and Building Heights guidelines seeks:

- "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."
- "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."

Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.3 above established that the site is located within a rapidly changing part of the city, a strategic development zone with a planning scheme that seeks the regeneration of the Dublin Docklands. That planning scheme is well under way and a distinctly modern new urban landscape is emerging. City Blocks to the west of the site have largely completed their redevelopment, while to the west redevelopment has been more piecemeal until recently. New momentum has returned to development the City Blocks, including the site at City Block 2, City Block 7 to the south and City Block 8 to the southeast.

Examining the site and its context in planning terms has included a review of building heights in neighbouring city blocks, revealing that the site is surrounded on three sides by existing or permitted developments equating to eleven residential storeys, with 2-6 residential storeys close to the fourth side.

In response, an increased range of building heights is considered more appropriate for the site at City Block 2 in the range of 7-11 storeys increasing up to 13 storeys in limited locations. Localised stepdowns / step-backs bring heights down to 3-5 storeys close to neighbouring houses. This range of heights complements neighbouring building heights and would be an expression of the importance of this location at a major transport hub/intersection close to the city centre. Clustering taller buildings with those on neighbouring City Blocks will help reinforce urban character and local identity.

The site is located such that it has little scope to interfere with key landmarks and its cultural context is also limited. A small number of views are designated in the SDZ Planning Scheme - chiefly the vista south along New Wapping Street to Grand Canal Dock / Boland's Mill, and the vista east along Mayor Street Upper to Point Square. The absence of buildings on the existing site currently weakens these vistas. However, the proposed development does not obstruct or intrude upon these views but defines a new streetscape that frames these views and channels them towards their desired prospect.

The proposed development incorporates a structured public and private realm that is complementary to neighbouring plots and wider objectives within the SDZ. A new north-south link along the western edge of the site will improve vehicular and pedestrian permeability in this part of Spencer Dock, while

a pedestrian-only street running east-west between the two building blocks will contribute to a wider east-west pedestrian corridor / pubic plaza and encourage movement between public spaces within the northern Docklands. Enhancements to existing streets by way of street trees and high quality paving will also be provided.

At the scale of district/ neighbourhood/ street, the Urban Development and Building Heights guidelines seeks:

- "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 and inland waterway/ marine frontage, thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure while being in line with the requirements of "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (2009)."
- "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.

At the street/neighbourhood scale, the varied storey heights accompanied by a series of set-backs and contrasting façade materials create a complex but harmonious roofscape and break down the building mass into an apparent series of complementary interlocking building volumes. This effect modulates the appearance of the skyline, building elevations and broad streetscape to avoid a monolithic appearance and incorporate visual richness at the larger scale and in wider views.

At a finer level of detailing, window and balcony frames are detailed to complement the colour and finish of the cladding panels used selectively across the upper levels of the two blocks. Brick panels with projecting headers add texture and detail to the brick facades, breaking them down to a more human scale.

At present, the streets adjoining the site have little or no built edges to frame the street, channel views along them, add character and visual interest or provide street life. The absence of buildings and public/communal spaces starves the streets of legibility and any sense of place or purpose.

The proposed development provides an important step towards delivering much more interesting, engaging and lively streets in conjunction with its neighbouring City Blocks. The proposed development will give the streets height and volume, spaces within which street trees can grow, provide shelter and visual interest, and provide visual and physical interaction between building, terrace/balcony and street. Hard and soft landscaping define private realm and a transition to street level, raised levels and hedges giving privacy to residents while still providing outlook onto the street.

The central east-west street is a slender public plaza, affording permeability through the site, rich visual interest through the interplay of hard and soft landscaping, and space to socialise and play.

Building height, modulated roofscape, distinct material combinations, detailing, and active, safe, green streets have all been delivered to strengthen local identify of City Block 2 and its neighbouring City Blocks.

Almost all city blocks have been cleared of the former industrial/commercial premises that once stood here, except where they are of historic interest, and there is little greenspace except for Station Square and the canal banks to the west; there are very few street trees. Additional greenspace / planting is to be provided in the civic street that runs between the two blocks, and through new street trees along New Wapping Street and the new north-south street. Hedgerows outlining areas of private amenity will also add greenspace to the streets.

The combined effects of the above are expected to lead to a highly positive impact upon landscape character and satisfy the requirements of the Urban Planning and Building Height Guidelines.

7.2 Visual Impacts – Sheriff Street Upper & New Wapping Street

Refer to Photomontage Report (Distant Views) Views sequence 19, 9 and 20 – existing, permitted development and proposed development views.

Photomontage View 19 (existing) illustrates the view from Sheriff Street Upper adjoining the new apartments at City Block 1, overlooking the site. Contemporary developments at North Bank and Castleforbes Road (City Block 3 and 4) form a backdrop along with extensive construction in City Blocks 8 and 10. Visible in the middle-ground is part of the Victorian terrace on New Wapping Street, while the Spencer Dock apartments at City Block 1 frame the right side of this view, with the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau on the left.

Photomontage View 19 (proposed) illustrates how the proposed development has a major positive impact upon this view, introducing a new building (Block 1) with Block 2 mostly out of sight at from this particular vantage point. The architecture is distinct from its neighbours, exhibiting a boldly articulated roofscape and contrasting 'layered' elevations. The tallest corner of the building occupies a prominent position on the street, emphasised by the contrasting and set-back upper storeys adjoining it. The proposed development demonstrates a much greater degree of individuality, character and presence compared to the permitted development illustrated in View 19 (granted), therefore significantly aiding legibility in the local area.

Photomontage View 9 (existing) illustrates the view from the end of East Road at its junction with Sheriff Street Upper. The view extends along New Wapping Street and across much of the proposed development site. The site's vacant and derelict character is clearly evident, to the detriment of the urban landscape, while the presence of tower cranes on City Block 7 signals imminent change. There are glimpses to the roofs and chimneys of the historic former railway buildings fronting North Wall Quay at City Block 7, which will be hidden by imminent development in that City Block. The PWC building at Block 6 forms a backdrop to the right-hand side.

Views extend beyond New Wapping Street to contemporary office buildings on Sir John Rogerson's Quay, south of the River Liffey. Between and beyond them, new construction at Boland's Mill can be

seen. This vista is a designated view in the SDZ Planning Scheme, which seeks to preserve and enhance views along New Wapping Street to the growing cluster of buildings at Grand Canal Dock / Boland's Mill.

Photomontage View 9 (proposed) demonstrates the profound change the proposed development will bring to the visual amenity of New Wapping Street and its junction with Sheriff Street Upper. In the first instance, the proposed development gives the streets definition and enclosure. Richer detailing to the brickwork and a change to balustrade details strengthen the character, contrast and transparency of the elevations when compared to the permitted scheme in View 9 (granted). The additional height in the proposed scheme is not particularly apparent in this view.

The removal of the vacant site, enclosing and enriching the streetscape and framing the long vista along New Wapping Street will have a highly positive impact upon the visual amenity in this location. By framing the long view southwards along New Wapping Street and avoiding interrupting views of Boland's Mill, the proposed development does not adversely impact upon this vista but rather adds focus and positive landscape context for this view.

Photomontage View 20 (existing) illustrates the view from Sheriff Street Upper approaching the proposed development site from the east, overlooking City Block 3 and adjoining the apartments contained within City Block 3. City Block 1 (Spencer Dock apartments) and City Block 6 (including the PWC building) form the backdrop with Canon Hall framing the northern side of Sheriff Street Upper to the right of the view. The principal visual detractor in this view is the derelict factory site in the middle-ground.

Photomontage View 20 (proposed) illustrates how the proposed development consolidates the backdrop to this view, defining a strong skyline with a stepped and layered approach to height, roofscape and elevations. The more restrained scale of Block 2 (to the left) is apparent in its concession to neighbouring houses (out of view), while Block 1 (to the right) is more prominent. The accented height of the northern corner faces across Sheriff Street Upper to Canon Hall, which together frame and focus the view along the street.

This is likely to be a short-term view, as permitted development for City Block 3 in the foreground will obscure most of the proposed development, revealing only the northern (right-hand) part of Block 1. In the short term before City Block 3 is developed, the enclosure and bold presence of the proposed development will have a moderately positive visual impact, reducing to a slightly positive or neutral visual impact once City Block 3 is developed.

7.3 Visual Impacts – Mayor Street Upper & Station Square

Refer to Photomontage Report (Distant Views) Views 14 to 17 – existing, permitted development and proposed development views.

Photomontage View 14 (existing) illustrates the view from the temporary park at the north-western corner of City Block 7, overlooking Mayor Street Upper and the Spencer Dock LUAS stop. Views extend across City Block 2 to a backdrop formed by Canon Hall and the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau, while North Bank stands to the right. The park provides a pleasing outlook from this position but lacks a built context (in this view) to frame and focus upon it, and it is somewhat 'lost' as a result.

Photomontage View 14 (proposed) demonstrates how the proposed development adds a strong and dynamic backdrop that goes part of the way to providing a setting for the park. The articulation of the roofscape resulting from varied heights and set-backs together with subtle material contrasts create a pleasing outlook from the park, though the hoardings and vacant land in the middle-ground will remain until such time as the western half of City Block 2 is developed. The architecture contributes much stronger character and visual richness to the urban landscape that the permitted developed illustrated in View 14 (granted), and as a result, visual impacts are highly positive.

Photomontage View 15 (existing) illustrates the view approaching the Spencer Dock LUAS stop from immediately to the west. The hoardings surrounding City Block 2 provide a weak edge to the streetscape and create a confusing backdrop in conjunction with the modern development beyond at North Bank / Castleforbes Road. The clutter of lighting and overhead power lines adds to this confusion. Emerging development at City Block 8 is evident at the right of this view. Trees to the right signal the presence of Station Square.

Photomontage View 15 (proposed) illustrates the proposed development as a bold intervention in the urban landscape. The dynamic roofscape of Block 2 (Block 1 is hidden from view) is evident and the layered effect of storey heights, set-backs and contrasting façade materials/colours provide a visually rich architectural composition. A contrast of brick colour and the absence of balconies subtly draw a distinction between the co-living units and adjacent apartments. There is significantly greater visual richness to the proposed development compared to the permitted scheme illustrated in View 15 (granted).

In due course the future development of the southern portion of Block 2 is likely to screen the proposed development from view. In the meantime, the proposed development will have a highly positive visual impact upon the urban landscape and reinforce the sense of place at Station Square.

Photomontage View 16 (existing) illustrates the view along Mayor Street Upper towards City Blocks 1 and 2, with City Block 8 framing the left edge of this view and City Block 3 occupying the right side. Housing and garages along Mayor Street Upper define a small pocket of a more traditional streetscape at this location but the backdrop of the Spencer Dock apartments diminishes this traditional character.

In Photomontage View 16 (proposed), the proposed development redefines the backdrop and brings the skyline much closer to the viewer. The proposed development appears as a series of stepped and interconnecting volumes with a complementary range of contrasting details and finishes. Building height generally appears to increase as it steps back from the street, leaving the co-living units as a prominent feature in the streetscape. There is a marked contrast of scale between the proposed development as a whole and the neighbouring houses, but the stepped building volumes and heights provide a visual transition between the two.

The proposed development exhibits greater strength of character and visual richness than the permitted development illustrated in View 16 (granted) and as such makes a greater contribution to local urban character and identity. Visual impacts arising from the proposed development are therefore considered moderately positive.

Photomontage View 17 (existing) illustrates the view from the junction of Mayor Street Upper and Castleforbes Road looking northwest. The view extends across City Block 3 encompassing apartments at North Bank to the right, Canon Hall and the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in the

background at the centre and the Spencer Dock Apartments in the background to the left. The streetscape is poorly defined by the lack of buildings, though new development is under way on City Block 8 at the left edge of this view.

Photomontage View 17 (proposed) illustrates the view across City Block 3 encompassing the entire eastern elevation of the proposed development. The dynamic design of the roofscape and facades is very evident in this view, creating a complex but coherent architectural composition with a strong visual richness. A comparison with the same view of the permitted development in View 17 (granted) clearly illustrates how constrained building height in the permitted scheme limited the scope for creative architectural expression has produced a monotonous skyline.

Photomontage View 17 (proposed) is likely to be a short-lived view, as the development of City Block 3 in the foreground will obscure almost all of the proposed development. In the meantime, visual impacts are considered to be highly positive.

7.4 Visual Impacts – River Liffey corridor & Ringsend

Refer to Photomontage Report (Distant Views) Views 1 to 6 – existing, permitted development and proposed development views. This sequence of views demonstrates that the proposed development, despite its additional height, is frequently obscured by intervening buildings along the riverfront.

Photomontage Views 1a/1b (existing) illustrate a view from the bridge over the River Dodder on Ringsend Road, looking northwest across the River Liffey, encompassing part of Sir John Rogerson's Quay in the middle-ground and Spencer Dock in the background. This view has changed very significantly in the last four years, during which time extensive development has occurred at Sir John Rogerson's Quay, including the recently completed Capital Dock. The proposed development is completed obscured by intervening buildings as illustrated in Photomontage Views 1a/1b (proposed), therefore there will be no visual impacts upon this view.

Photomontage View 2 (existing) illustrates the view from City Quay looking east along the River Liffey. This is an iconic vista where the Campshires, the Jeanie Johnson, the Convention Centre Dublin and the Samuel Beckett Bridge are all distinctive features. Photomontage View 2 (proposed) demonstrates that the proposed development lies sufficiently north of the river to be completely screened from view by existing waterfront buildings, as indicated by the red outline, with no impact upon visual amenity.

Photo View 3 (existing) illustrates the view from Sir John Rogerson's Quay at the junction with Cardiff Lane, part of a major transport route between the south and north sides of the River Liffey, via the Samuel Beckett Bridge. Prominent features in this view include the Convention Centre Dublin (left, largely out of shot), the PWC building (left), the former North Wall Quay Station (centre), former North Western Hotel (right of centre) and the Central Bank of Ireland building (right). The latter occupies City Block 8 where extensive development is ongoing, as evident in this view.

Photomontage View 3 (proposed) demonstrates that the proposed development remains substantially screened behind the PWC building, but part of the southern façade of Block 2 can be glimpsed between and beyond the PWC buildings and former railway station building. Even in this small glimpsed, the dynamic façades and roofscape are evident, and more visually rich than the permitted development illustrated in View 3 (granted).

This is, however, likely to be a temporary view as part of City Block 7 in the foreground is under construction and likely to substantially obscure the proposed development. In the meantime, the proposed development does not contribute significantly to the view or detract from either the modern or historic waterfront buildings. Visual impacts are therefore slight and neutral.

Photomontage View 4 (existing) is taken on Sir John Rogerson's quay directly across the River Liffey from Block 7, incorporating views of the PWC building (far left), former North Wall Quay Station (left), former North Western Hotel (centre) and Central Bank of Ireland building (right). In the background is a glimpse of Canon Hall on Sheriff Street Upper. The two tower cranes at the centre are part of the construction that has started at City Block 7.

Photomontage View 4 (proposed) shows the proposed development as a modest addition to the view, appearing between the former North Wall Quay Station and hotel towards the left of this view. The dynamic character of the buildings are evident in the modulated roofscape and building volumes, aided by the contrasting palette of façade materials, characteristics that are largely absent in the view of the permitted development (View 4 (granted)).

Despite the additional height proposed as part of the proposed development, it remains unimposing upon views from the river such as this and makes a balanced and positive contribution to the composition of contemporary buildings emerging in this view. The view will soon be substantially obscured by substantial development in the foreground (City Block 7). In the meantime, visual impacts are slightly positive.

Photomontage View 5 (existing) illustrates the view from Britain Quay towards its eastern end near the junction with Benson Street, looking northwest. The Central Bank of Ireland building dominates the waterfront along with its neighbour to the right, while further development is taking place further to the right. The result of the new waterfront development is that the proposed development is completely screened from view and there are no visual impacts arising from it as a result, as demonstrated by Photomontage View 5 (proposed).

Photomontage View 6 (existing) illustrates a view from the East Link Road immediately south of the bridge and close to York Road. There is an extensive vista along the River Liffey taking in a large proportion of the north quays along with Capital Dock at the left of this view. The Convention Centre Dublin, PWC building and Central Bank of Ireland building lie at the centre of the view with further new development taking place to the right of them. The proposed development lies behind the buildings currently under construction and will be entirely screened from view, as demonstrated by Photomontage View 6 (proposed).

Photomontage View 13 (existing) illustrates a glimpsed view towards the site from North Wall Quay along what will be a new street once City Block 7 in the foreground is developed; current construction work here is evident between the former railway hotel and station, which also offers a glimpse to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau building in the background.

Photomontage View 13 (proposed) illustrates a glimpse to the western and part of the southern elevation of the proposed development. At this angle, the dynamic roofscape and building elevations are partially evident and the greater visual richness of the architectural composition is evident when compared to the permitted development illustrated in View 13 (granted). Part of this view may remain when City Block 7 is developed, though it will be largely confined to the western elevation and

streetscape. In the context of this vista along a new street, visual impacts will be slightly positive as the proposed development contributes to the street's setting.

7.5 Visual Impacts – East Wall approach

Refer to Photomontage Report (Distant Views) Views 10 to 12 – existing, permitted development and proposed development views.

Photomontage View 10 (existing) illustrates an elevated view from East Road above the railway line, encompassing Canon Hall and the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau (centre/right), the Spencer Dock apartments (right); the PWC building (centre) and the tower cranes at City Block 7 towards the left. While strictly outside the Dublin Docklands area, its elevated position and close proximity to Sheriff Street afford it significant influence from changing Docklands landscape.

Photomontage View 10 (proposed) illustrates the proposed development terminating the vista along East Road where PWC building is now screened entirely from view. The proposed development provides strong definition to junction of New Wapping Street and Sheriff Street Upper, which is currently missing. The permitted scheme (View 10 (granted)) also achieved this.

Canon Hall in the foreground of Photomontage View 10 (proposed) is now matched and exceeded in scale and height by the proposed development, while the combined effect of these with other buildings in this view describes a strong sense of arrival at a place, which is also currently missing. Buildings up to nine commercial storeys will feature behind the proposed development in the near future and further reinforce this sense of place. On this basis, the visual impact of the proposed development is considered to be moderately positive

Photomontage View 11 (existing) illustrates a view from East Road north of the railway line. There are partial views of the PWC building (terminating the vista along the road), Canon Hall to the right, and and new construction neighbouring the Central Bank of Ireland in the background to the left. A vacant development plot and hoarding in the foreground detract from the character and quality of this view.

Photomontage View 11 (proposed) shows the proposed development now screening the PWC building entirely from view, replacing it as the terminating feature of this view along with Canon Hall. The proposed development now contains the vista and suggests a clear destination for those travelling along the road. The stepped roofscape and elevations combined with a contrast of colour and materials to establish a strong urban character that contrasts with the approach along East Road and improves upon that delivered by the permitted development (see View 10 (granted)). Visual impacts are considered to be highly positive as a result.

Photomontage View 12 (existing) illustrates a vista long the residential street Merchant's Road from East Wall Road. The proposed development site in fact lies slightly to the right of this vista and is screened by intervening buildings, as illustrated by the red outline on Photomontage View 12. There will be no visual impacts from the proposed development as a result.

7.6 Visual Impacts – Point Village approach

Refer to Photomontage Report (Distant Views) View 18 – existing, permitted development and proposed development views.

Photomontage View 18 (existing) shows the existing view from the square at the Point Village looking west, encompassing the LUAS stop, the vista along Mayor Street Upper, new construction at City Block 8 to the left, the Three Arena at the very left, recent apartments towards the right and the Point Village at the right. A distant view to the southern end of the Spencer Dock Apartments terminates this view.

Photomontage View 18 (proposed) demonstrates that the southern end of Block 2 will be visible in front of the Spencer Dock Apartments. This element of the proposed development is the co-living units that faces adjoining houses and has limited in its detailing with few windows. However, it is also a very small part of this vista with a slight and neutral visual impact arising as a result.

7.7 Visual Impacts – North City approach

Refer to Photomontage Report (Distant Views) Views 7 and 8 – existing, permitted development and proposed development views.

Photomontage View 7 (existing) illustrates the view from Mayor Street Lower approaching Guild Street. Spencer Dock linear park lies to each side of the road bridge in the middle-ground and the Convention Centre Dublin lies at the right with the PWC building behind it. Spencer Dock Apartments and adjacent commercial buildings lie to the left. The vista along Mayor Street Upper beyond the canal extends past the site.

Photomontage View 7 (proposed) demonstrates that a small part of the proposed co-living units will be visible behind the commercial building at the centre of this view. There is little to draw attention to it, easily complementing nearby buildings, and it doesn't intrude significantly upon the streetscape of Mayor Street Upper. Visual impacts are therefore slight and neutral.

Photomontage View 8 (existing) illustrates the view from Seville Place at the junction with Sheriff Street Upper and Guild Street. The vista along Sheriff Street Upper is framed by the lifting bridge with the Spencer Dock Apartments as a backdrop to the right. This is a major approach to the quays and the south city.

Photomontage View 8 (proposed) illustrates the proposed development framed by the lifting bridge. At this distance, the grain and materials of the proposed development complement that of the apartments in the foreground, making the development appear a natural extension of the residential streetscape on the south side of Sheriff Street Upper. It also suggests a destination for the road which currently, as it rises over the railway tracks, appears to go nowhere.

The intervening bridge structure interrupts the view of the proposed development, making it difficult to appreciate the form of the proposed development or compare its merits to the permitted development (illustrated in View 8 (granted)). The proposed development makes a small contribution to this view, where visual impacts will be slight and positive.

7.8 Visual Impacts – 'Georgian Mile'

The vista along Fitzwilliam Place / Fitzwilliam Street is a Key View identified in the Views and Prospects Analysis February 2013, which seeks to protect the existing roofscape and skyline,

particularly that above Holles Street Hospital which terminates the vista. Three Photomontage Views have been prepared to support the following analysis.

Photomontage View 21 (existing) illustrates the view along Fitzwilliam Place/Street from the pedestrian island at its junction with Leeson Street. This long street is framed to both sides by Georgian buildings standing four storeys over basement, with Holles Street Hospital terminating the view at 900 metres from the viewer; there is a high degree of consistency and continuity in the building character, height and roofscape of the street.

The red outline superimposed on Photomontage View 21 (red line) represents the position and scale of the proposed development, which lies at 2.2km from the viewer. It demonstrates that the proposed development is screened from view by Holles Street Hospital, with only the very slightest occurrence at the skyline.

Photomontage View 21 (proposed) develops this view further, demonstrating that no perceptible change occurs to the view along Fitzwilliam Place/Street as a result of the proposed development. A detailed examination of the image will reveal only the slightest presence of the parapet level of the 13 storey elements on the north west corner of the proposed Block 1, which occur as thin pale lines running along the ridge of Holles Street Hospital. They lack scale and against the sky they are virtually invisible. In the context of the wider view of Fitzwilliam Place/Street, as seen by the naked eye, these features will not be distinguishable as new features at the skyline. Visual impacts will therefore be imperceptible and neutral.

Photomontage Views 22 and 23 (existing) illustrate views from Fitzwilliam Street approaching Holles Street Hospital. Photomontage View 22 (proposed) from the junction with Fitzwilliam Square North incorporates a red outline of the proposed development, demonstrating that it is entirely screened from view by intervening buildings, including Holles Street Hospital. Similarly, Photomontage View 23 (proposed) at the junction with Merrion Square South incorporates a red outline of the proposed development, demonstrating that it is entirely screened from view by Holles Street Hospital. In both cases, there will be no visual impacts as a result of the proposed development.

Therefore, the 'Georgian Mile' identified as View 11 in the Views and Prospects Analysis 2013 will not experience any perceptible or adverse visual impacts as a result of the proposed development.

8 Conclusion

The proposed development has succeeded in reworking the permitted development in light of new planning policy and guidance on building heights to deliver a significant improvement to its architectural expression and contribution to the urban landscape of Spencer Dock while also optimising use of the land resource at a prime location within the central city.

In reworking the design of the permitted development, the proposed development has delivered significant enhancements that include the following:

- Recognising the city's diverse urban landscape
- Responding successfully to the character of adjacent buildings, spaces and the local area
- Protecting and enhancing the city skyline
- Clustering taller buildings at the heart of a major city hub

- Contributing positively to the city's architectural heritage
- Providing a new local landmark and high quality public & communal spaces
- Delivering imaginative contemporary architecture in an appropriate context
- Reinforcing place-making and local identity
- Achieving high quality, inclusive, sustainable urban design
- Demonstrating excellence in the ordinary
- Animating streets with activity
- Providing character, legibility, variety and visual interest at street level
- Protecting and enhancing key views and prospects within the wider city
- Respecting the setting and visual qualities of the former railway buildings at North Wall Quay
- Protecting views south from the Spencer Dock area to landmark buildings at Grand Canal Dock Boland's Mill and the Alto Vetro tower.
- Protecting views east along Mayor Street Upper to Point Square
- Protecting views along the 'Georgian Mile' at Fitzwilliam Place / Fitzwilliam Street
- Avoiding/minimising harm to quality of existing views generally
- Avoiding poor visual amenity in the new public realm

As a result of these, the impacts of the proposed development upon landscape character are likely to be highly positive. Visual impacts will vary from neutral to highly positive, with some views being short-term until neighbouring development substantially obscures the proposed development from view.