

12 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

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12.1 Introduction

This chapter has been prepared by ARC Architectural Consultants.

ARC Architectural Consultants Ltd has been commissioned by the Applicant, KW PRS ICAV acting for an on behalf of its sub-fund KW PRS Fund 10, to carry out an analysis of the visual impacts of the proposed development on lands adjacent to 'The Grange', Brewery Road, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.

12.2 Study Methodology

A survey of the potential visibility of the proposed development was carried out having regard to the contents of the *Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2016-2022* and *Stillorgan Local Area Plan 2018-2024* (including in particular the location of key views and prospects, protected structures and conservation areas). A survey of the potential visibility of the proposed development was carried out by ARC on several dates in August and September 2018.

Before visiting the surrounding area, ARC carried out mapping analysis to identify locations surrounding the application site, which would be representative of the extent of visibility of the proposed development, including locations from which views of the proposed development were likely. Photomontages were prepared by ModelWorks Media from these view locations and these photomontages are submitted with this application. ARC had regard to those photomontages in the preparation of this Visual Impact Assessment.

Definition of Visual Impacts

The assessment of visual impacts on landscape and on the built environment had regard to the *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency (Draft of 2017), and to Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) on the assessment of the likely effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

The list of definitions given below is taken from *Table 3.3: Descriptions of Effects* contained in the *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency. Some comment is also given below on what these definitions might imply in the case of visual impact or landscape and visual impact. The definitions from the EPA document are in italics.

Imperceptible: *An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.* The definition implies that the development would be visible, capable of detection by the eye, but not noticeable to the casual observer. If the development were not visible, there could be no impact.

Not Significant: *An effect which causes noticeable² changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences (the footnote "2" to the word "noticeable" is: "for the purposes of planning consent procedures").* The definition implies that the development would be visible, capable of detection and of being noticed by an observer who is actively looking for the development with the purpose of assessing the extent of its visibility and visual effects.

Slight: *An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.* For this definition to apply, a development would be both visible and noticeable, and would also bring about a change in the visual character of the environment. However, apart from the development itself, the visual sensitivity of the surrounding environment would remain unchanged.

Moderate: *An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.* In this case, a development must bring about a change in the visual character of the environment; and this change must be consistent with a pattern of change that is already occurring, is likely to occur, or is envisaged by policy.

Significant: *An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.* The definition implies that the existence of the development would change an important characteristic of the visual environment in a manner that is not "consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends". Whether an effect might or might not be significant can depend on the

response of individual observers, since what one person might regard as a sensitive aspect of the visual environment, another might not. A conservative approach, classifying effects as significant even though many observers might not regard them as significant, is taken here.

Very Significant: An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment. The definition implies that the existence of the development would substantially change most of the visual characteristics of the environment in a manner that is not “consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends”.

Profound: An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics. In visual terms, profound impacts are only likely to occur on a development site, in that it is only on the site that all previous visually sensitive characteristics could be obliterated. Outside the site, some visual characteristic of the original environment is likely to remain.

The range of possible effects listed above deal largely with the extent of impact; and the extent of the impact of a development is usually proportional to the extent to which that development is visible. The extent of impact will also, in part, depend on the sensitivity of the spaces from which the development is seen. This proportionality may be modified by the extent to which a development is regarded as culturally or socially acceptable. The character of the impact: positive, negative or neutral, will depend on how well a development is received by the public, and on the general contribution of the development to the built environment. The character of a visual impact, and even the duration of a visual impact, is very dependent on the attitude of the viewer. If a viewer is opposed to a new building for reasons other than visual, that viewer is likely to see the building in a negative light, no matter how beautiful the building might be. Though buildings are intended to be permanent, and will be permanently visible, the extent of visual impact associated with a building often diminishes with time as further development in the area takes place.

Statutory Context and Planning Precedent

As noted above, lands at The Grange, and on the opposing side of the N11 at Beechwood Court, have been developed with taller and higher density predominantly residential developments than that typical of the surrounding low density housing estates. However, an application for the construction of a further development of a 5 and 9 storey residential blocks at The Grange (an amended proposal for 5 and 7 storey blocks being put forward on appeal) was refused by both the Planning Authority and An Bord Pleanála (DLRCC Reg. Ref. D07A/1771; ABP Ref. PL06D.228499). This is addressed in more detail in the Planning Report prepared by Brock McClure Planning and Development Consultants, but, for the purpose of this report, it is worth noting that An Bord Pleanála refused permission, inter alia, for the following reason:

“1. Having regard to the scale and height of buildings adjacent to the site, it is considered that by reason of height, scale and massing, the proposed development fails to respond to the pattern of development in this part of the overall site, would have an overbearing impact on the adjoining property and would constitute an overly obtrusive and incongruous feature in the area, in particular with regard to the view from Brewery Road The proposed development would, therefore, seriously injure the amenities of the area and of property in the vicinity and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.”

Since that decision was made, the planning policy context relevant to the assessment of the visual impact of development on the built environment has changed considerably. The *Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2016-2022* includes a Building Heights Strategy at Appendix 9, which, at Section 4.8.1: Upward Modifiers provides that consideration may be given to allowing for height over and above the benchmark heights for development, which would contribute to higher densities within 500 m of the N11.

The *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (December 2018) require Planning Authorities to drive general increases in building height (see Specific Planning Policy Requirement 1) and provide that “Locations with the potential for comprehensive urban development or redevelopment (e.g. brownfield former industrial districts, dockland locations, low density urban shopping centres etc) should be identified where, for example, a cluster of higher buildings can be accommodated as a new neighbourhood or urban district or precinct.” The development that has

already taken place at The Grange and, indeed, on the opposing lands at Beechwood Court has already created such a cluster of taller buildings (i.e. taller than the prevailing height of the surrounding context) and the subject application seeks to consolidate development on this site. In this regard, it is noted that the DEGW report *Managing Intensification and Change: A Strategy for Dublin Building Height*, prepared for Dublin Corporation in 2000, was in strong support of the clustering of higher buildings stating: “High rise buildings fulfil primarily an image or landmark function in townscape terms and do not have a significant impact in terms of increasing density (i.e. the amount of accommodation or activity)... On the other hand a core or cluster of buildings can generate its own environment and hence lead to the creation of a new place even within an existing historic context. Whereas the single building has an impact on a specific location and environment but cannot generate on its own a new place.”

In addition to changed policy on density and building height, new statutory planning policy on how development should address street frontage was published by the then Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has been published during the period since 2007. The *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (DMURS, 2013) is highly critical of frontage-free streets as, while this design approach was believed to reduce risk, it serves to increase speeding. DMURS states: “Frontage-free streets (such as distributor roads) are not recommended, as they can be unsafe for pedestrians (especially after dark) and can result in a hostile environment.” Section 2.2.1 ‘Place’ as Part of the Design Equation of DMURS provides as follows:

“Designers must broaden the scope of issues that are considered throughout the design process. Whilst the movement of traffic is still a key issue, there are several others, including the ‘sense of place’, which are of core significance to the creation of safe and more integrated street designs... The elements of place can be difficult to define as they often relate to the ‘feel’ of a particular area. More tangible elements of place can be measured and relate to connectivity, the quality of the built environment, how buildings and spaces interact with each other and the levels of pedestrian activity that occur. These tangible or quantifiable elements of a street highlight four interlinked characteristics that influence the sense of place within a street...:

Connectivity

The creation of vibrant and active places requires pedestrian activity. This in turn requires walkable street networks that can be easily navigated and are well connected.

Enclosure

A sense of enclosure spatially defines streets and creates a more intimate and supervised environment. A sense of enclosure is achieved by orientating buildings toward the street and placing them along its edge. The use of street trees can also enhance the feeling of enclosure.

Active Edge

An active frontage enlivens the edge of the street creating a more interesting and engaging environment. An active frontage is achieved with frequent entrances and openings that ensure the street is overlooked and generate pedestrian activity as people come and go from buildings.” [Emphasis added.]

12.3 The Existing Receiving Environment (Baseline)

The application site comprises a large brownfield site at the northern end of Brewery Road, where it approaches the junction with the Stillorgan Road, the N11 National Primary Route. The site adjoins the existing residential development at The Grange, a mixed use commercial and residential development comprised of apartments in 9 no. blocks (ranging in height from four to ten storeys) and 1 no. commercial block fronting on to the Stillorgan Road (five storeys in height). The site currently accommodates 1 no. two storey house at Brewery Road (the Gate Lodge, proposed for demolition), 1 no. single storey marketing suite (proposed for demolition), 1 no. two storey commercial building at Brewery Road (Oaktree Business Centre, proposed for demolition) and most of the single storey terrace at Grange Cottages (i.e. Nos. 2 and 3) at Stillorgan Road (to be retained).

The application site comprises part of the lands associated with the house known as The Grange, which was constructed by Henry Darley around 1830¹. The Grange was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Esso Headquarters Office Building, which operated from the site until 2000, when it was demolished to make way for the existing development at The Grange permitted under DLRCC Reg. Ref. D03A/0750; ABP Ref. PL06D.206308, as subsequently amended. While planning permission was granted, as part of the 2003 permission, for a nursing home on part of the application site, permission was subsequently sought but refused for further residential development under DLRCC Reg. Ref. D07A/1771; ABP Ref. PL06D.228499. Where relevant, this decision is discussed below.

The character of the area surrounding Stillorgan has changed profoundly since the 1950s. Stillorgan is an ancient place, known to have been continuously inhabited for at least a millennium and likely much longer. Francis Elrington Ball in his paper of 28th September 1897 entitled *Stillorgan Park and its History* (as published in Volume 28 of *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries*) explains:

“Stillorgan, which is a corruption of the Irish word, Tigh Lorcaín or the house of Laurence, has probably been the site of a human habitation from a remote period, and, as was proved by the discovery there, of an ancient and remarkable tomb, was chosen, in very early times as the burying place of some great Irish or Danish chief. A church, which was dedicated to Saint Brigid, and which occupied the ground on which the present church is built, existed there at the time of the Norman Invasion.”

Samuel Lewis in his 1837 publication *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* appears to make reference to the tomb mentioned by Ball (understood to have been discovered by Sir Thomas Molyneux in 1716) and also makes reference to evidence of an ancient battle site on lands on what is now known as Brewery Road: *“Adjoining the grounds of Waltersland is a field called Silver Park, from the great number of silver coins and ornaments found there. On clearing the rocky ground, more than 100 graves were discovered, together with numerous spear-heads and other warlike instruments, confirming a tradition that a battle was once fought here; there were also discovered some urns of baked clay containing ashes and burnt bones, and a small chamber about a foot and a half square, formed of four upright stones, with one on the top and one at the bottom.”*

In his 1902 publication, *A History of the County of Dublin*, Ball goes on to state that: *“There was to be seen, in the centuries succeeding the Conquest, a fortified house, surrounded by a bawn, with the usual manorial adjuncts of a mill and a dovecote, while not far off, on the site of the modern church, stood a primitive place of worship nestling amidst a thick wood.”* In *The History of the County of Dublin* (1838), John D’Alton makes further reference to the ancient church, believed to have been dedicated to St. Brigid and, as mentioned by Ball, on the site of the existing St. Brigid’s Church built in the early eighteenth century, stating that *“In 1216 Raymond de Carew granted the church of “Stacklorgan,” with the advowson and the land around it called Athnakill, to the priory of the Holy Trinity.”*

¹ Source: <http://www.youwho.ie/grange.html>

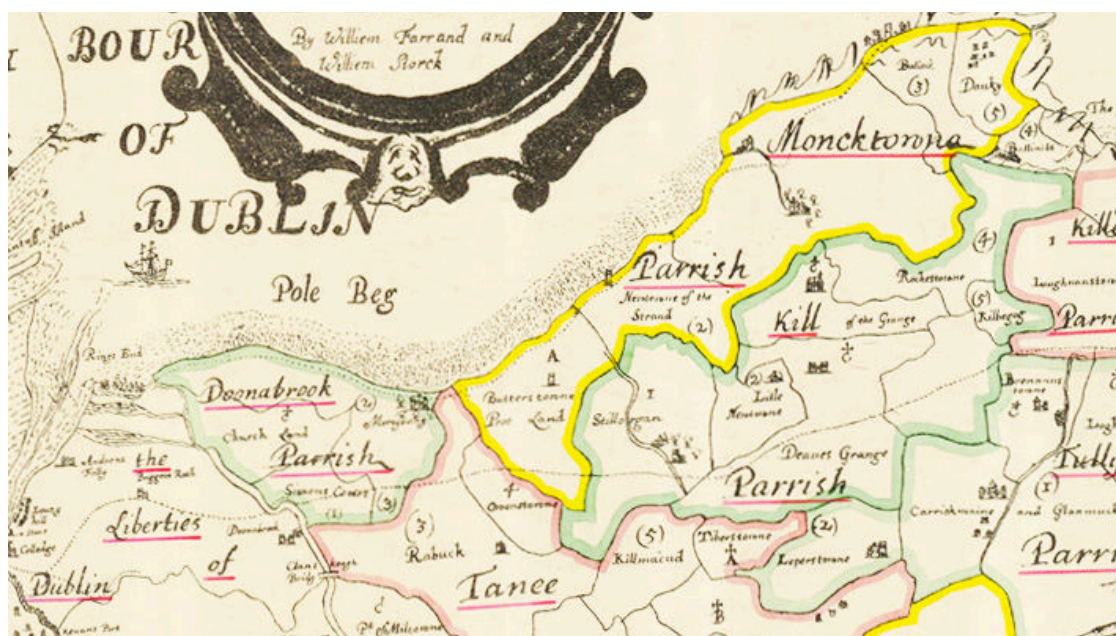


Figure 12.1: Extract from the Down Survey of Ireland (1656-58) showing Stillorgan in “Kill Parrish” (Source: The Down Survey Project, Trinity College Dublin)

Stillorgan was one of the principal medieval manor centres in the Dublin Region and appears on the Down Survey of Ireland (1658-56) (see Figure 12.1 above, which shows the castle at Stillorgan). Ball states that, by the mid-seventeenth century, “there is no doubt that ... a dwelling, larger than any in the adjacent country, with the exception of Monkstown Castle, was to be found there. It stood with its extensive slated out-offices, in the midst of a garden, while a little way off an orchard and grove of ash trees concealed from view the mill, which was still in good working order, on the river.”²

This castle is understood to have been located on lands now known as Stillorgan Park Avenue (i.e. the Rehab Group Property at Park House). Captain John Allen, 1st Viscount Allen (13 February 1660 – 8 November 1726), is understood to have replaced the castle during the years after his father’s death in 1691. According to Ball, it was understood to have been “built in a style much in vogue in the early part of the [eighteenth] century, with wings, containing on one side a miniature theatre and on the other the stables, and enclosing in the centre a large courtyard.”³ Mrs Delany (Mary Delany (née Granville) (14 May 1700 – 15 April 1788)) describes a visit to Stillorgan Park “very fine and charming prospect of the sea all the way, like the harbour of Falmouth. On a rising ground in the park there is erected an obelisk, very well built, from whence there is a very fine and extensive view. The house is like one made of cards, the gardens laid out in the old-fashioned taste, but capable of being made a fine thing; nothing can be prettier than the situation.”⁴

The 2nd Viscount Allen, Joshua Allen, is understood to have erected the Obelisk to which Mrs Delany refers in 1727 as a monument to his wife, Lady Allen, and to provide local employment during a period of famine. It is believed to have been designed by Sir Edward Lovett Pearce, a friend of Lord Allen, who is known to have resided on lands at Stillorgan Park in a house known as The Grove, understood to have been located on the site, which now accommodates Leisureplex. Ball describes the Obelisk as follows: “The obelisk resembles in its massive style, and in its excellent state of preservation, the great work of Pearce’s life. It is more than one hundred feet high, of cut granite stone, and rises from a rustic base, formed of huge uncut rocks, containing a large vaulted chamber, and having on each side a double staircase leading to a platform, from which four doorways of Egyptian design furnish entrance to a small room in the bottom of the obelisk.” While the Obelisk survives within the Carysfort Woods housing estate and a grotto understood to be designed by Pearce remains in the garden of a house on

² Stillorgan Park and its History, at page 24 of Volume 28 of The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries (1898)

³ Stillorgan Park and its History, at page 28 of Volume 28 of The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries (1898)

⁴ The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville (1868), Mrs. Delany, at page 300 of Volume 1.

Stillorgan Park Avenue, the eighteenth century house, Stillorgan Park, does not, having been demolished after having fallen into ruin during the latter half of the nineteenth century. A sixteenth / seventeenth century dwelling site (RMP Ref. DU023-012001-) and flat cemetery site (RMP Ref. DU023-012002-) at Stillorgan Park are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places.

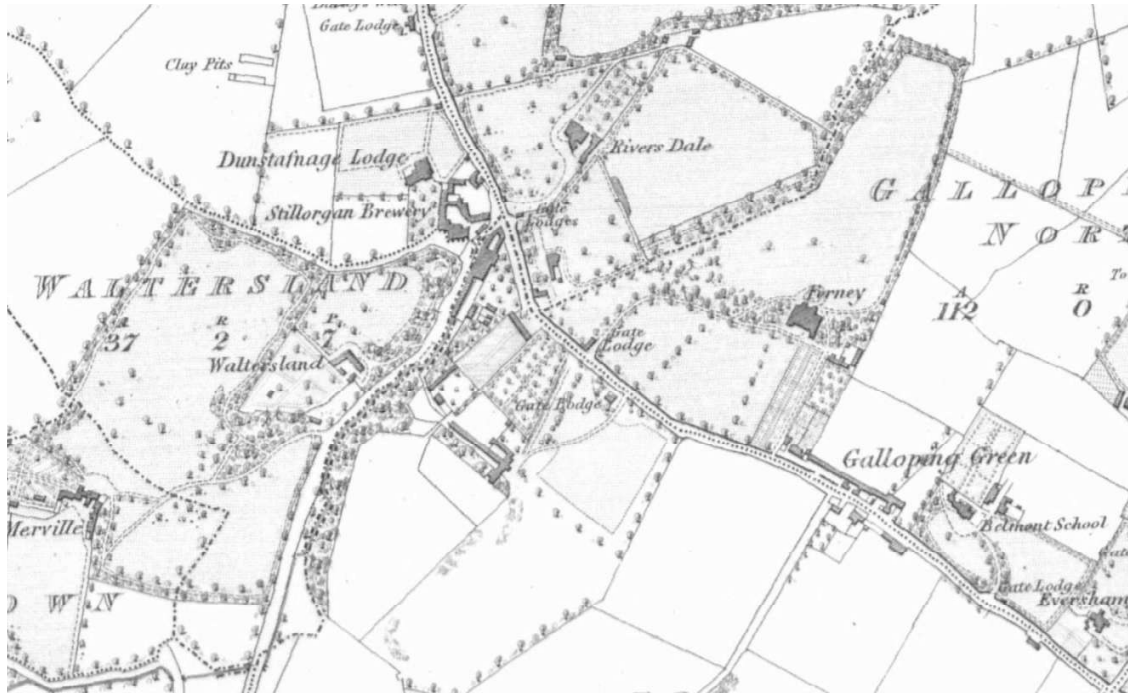


Figure 12.2 - Extract from the historic 6 inch Ordnance Survey map (1837) showing Stillorgan
(ARC OS Licence No. 0087019)

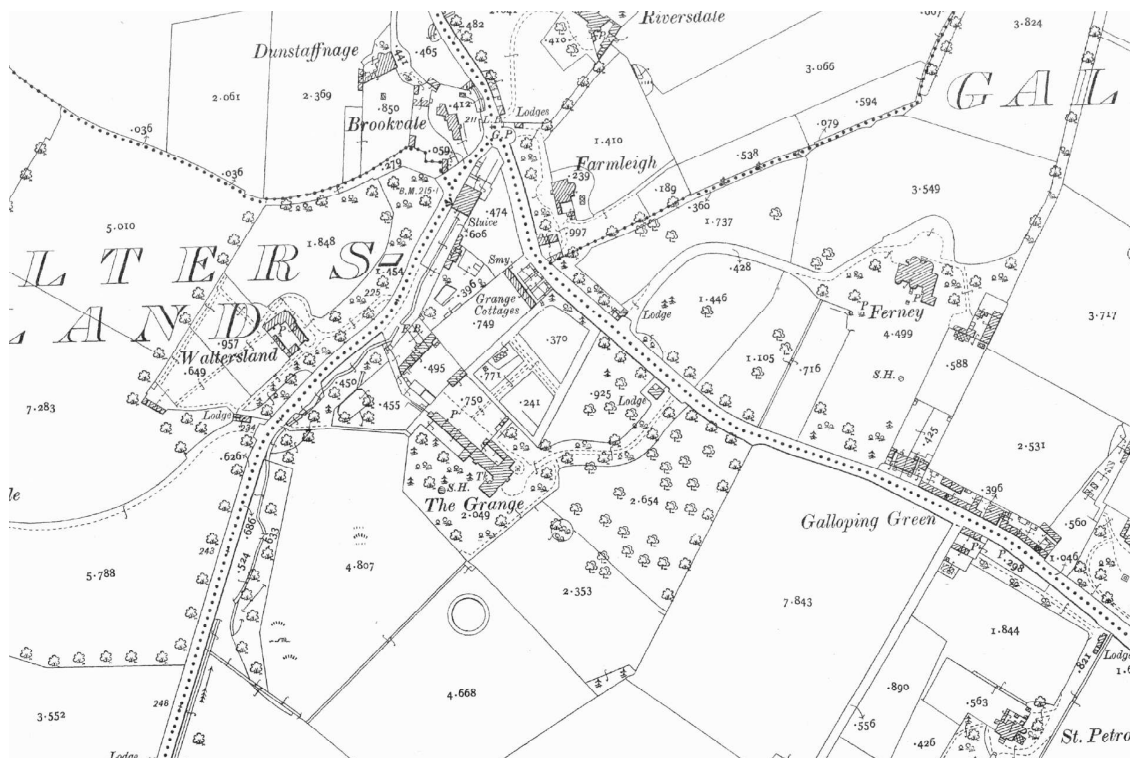


Figure 12.3 - Extract from the historic Ordnance Survey map of 1908 showing Stillorgan
(ARC OS Licence No. 0087019)

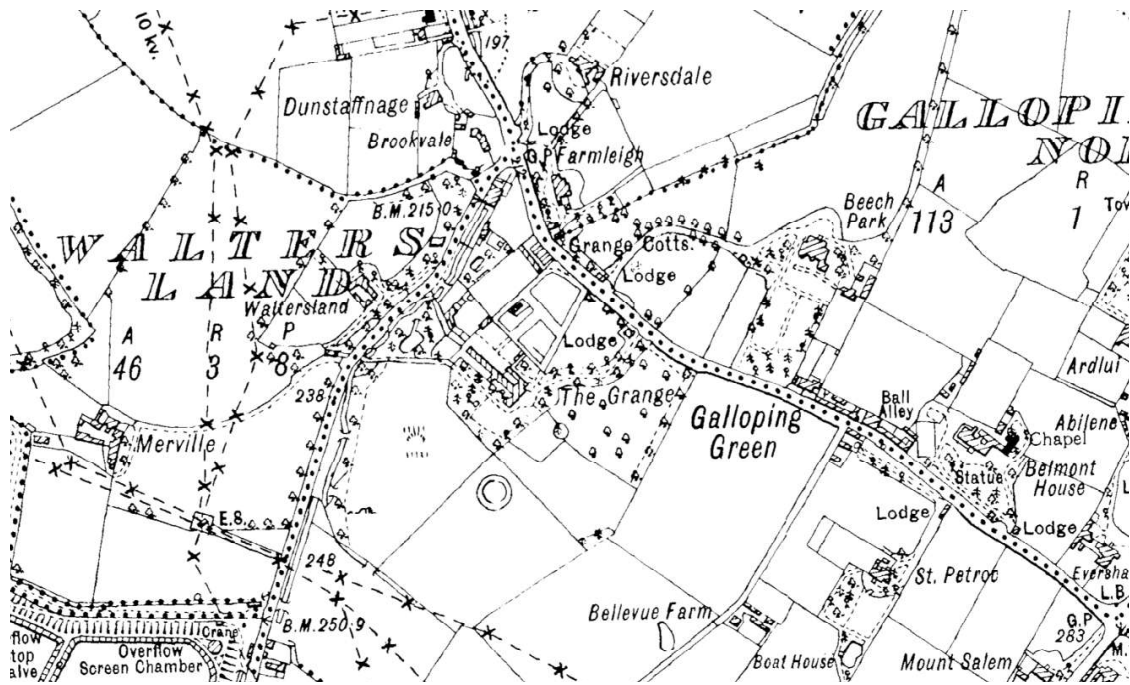


Figure 12.4 - Extract from the 1940s Ordnance Survey map showing the now demolished house at The Grange. The surrounding housing estates have yet to be constructed.

(ARC OS Licence No. 0087019)



Figure 12.5 - Extract from the 1973-1975 Ordnance Survey maps showing the now demolished Esso Headquarters at The Grange. A number of the existing neighbouring housing estates have been constructed, including those to the south and west.

(ARC OS Licence No. 0087019)

The awkwardly titled 1846 publication *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland, adapted to the new Poor-Law, Franchise, Municipal and Ecclesiastical Arrangements, and compiled with a special reference to the lines of railroad and canal communication as existing in 1844-45, illustrated by a series of maps, and other plates; and presenting the results, in detail, of the census of 1841, compared with that of 1831* provides a useful snapshot of the character of Stillorgan in the first half of the nineteenth century as a rural village of people working in agriculture and industry set amongst numerous “villas, chiefly of a superior and pretending character”:

“Stillorgan, a parish, containing a village of the same name, in the barony of Rathdown, co. Dublin, Leinster. Length, eastward, 1 1/2 mile; extreme breadth, 1 1/4; area 689 acres, 3 roads, 23 perchs, -of which 7 acres, 4 perches lie detached. Pop., in 1831, 2,145; in 1841, 1,550. Houses 264. Pop. of the rural districts, in 1831, 1,495; in 1841, 939. Houses 157. But these statements of the pop. of 1831, which are those of the Census, include the parochial chapelry of Kilmacud, whose pop., in 1831, was 144. The surface is one of the most luscious portions of the southern sea-board of Dublin bay, approaches within 3 1/2 furlongs of the shore in the vicinity of Blackrock, is traversed by the western and teeming beautiful road from Dublin to Bray, or that by way of Cabinteely, and is very nearly all occupied with villas, chiefly of a superior and pretending character. Stillorgan-park, the residence of Mr. Verschoyle, is one of the oldest residences of the district, and, when in the possession of Lord Carysfort, was one of the most ornate in Ireland; but the demesne, which even originally did not comprise 150 acres, and displayed a profusion of gardens, groves, and water, has been subdivided into a series of villa grounds, and has, in consequence, lost much of its former splendor... The principal residences, additional to Stillorgan-park, are Rivers-dale, Stillorgan-castle, Obelisk-park, Stillorgan-house, Landsend, Carysfort, Marino-house, the Cottage, Riddesdale-house, Clanmore-house, and Walter’s-Land. The village of Stillorgan stands on the road from Dublin to Cabinteely, and on that from Kingstown to Dundrum, 1 1/4 mile south-west of Blackrock, 1 1/2 east of Dundrum, 2 1/4 west of Kingstown, and 4 south-east of Dublin. A dispensary here is within the Rathdown Poor-law union, and serves for a district containing a pop. of 2,795; and, in 1839-40, it expended #67 9s., and administered to 1,210 patients. Area of village, 6 acres. Pop., in 1831, 650; in 1841, 611. Houses 107. Families employed chiefly in agriculture, 74; in manufactures and trade, 27; in other pursuits, 25. Families dependent chiefly on property and professions, 4; on the directing of labour, 28; on their own manual labour, 88; on means not specified, 6.”

While the area surrounding Stillorgan was rural in character, the wider area surrounding Stillorgan accommodated a few notable industrial developments during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the extensive Darley’s Brewery, from which Brewery Road draws its name; the Stillorgan / Vartry reservoir and the Harcourt Street Railway Line.

During the twentieth century, Stillorgan was subjected to major redevelopment and experienced a period of rapid and profound change, including the demolition of much of Stillorgan Village to make way for the Stillorgan Bowl, Stillorgan Shopping Centre, Stillorgan Plaza and the original development of the Blakes site. On the lands to the south of Stillorgan, few of the large villas and houses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries survive in their original use or, indeed, at all. With the exception of Brookvale and Dunstaffnage, it seems that any surviving houses are now in institutional or community use, such as Stillorgan Castle and Riversdale (both now part of the St. John of God’s Hospital Complex) and Glen Albyn (or Glenalbyn, which is in community use). Many others were demolished and the lands split up for the development of the substantial residential estates that now surround the lands at The Grange. As noted above, The Grange itself was demolished in 1960 and Esso operated their Irish Headquarters on the site in a modern structure until 2000.

The Stillorgan Bypass (i.e. the N11 National Primary Route) opened during the 1970s. In recent decades, following the opening of the Stillorgan Quality Bus Corridor in 1999, numerous sites fronting on to the N11 National Primary Route near Stillorgan have been developed with high density residential developments, including the seven storey apartment blocks at Beechwood Court at Galloping Green; the six to eight storey Thornwood apartments and the five to seven storey Booterstown Wood apartments at the junction of Booterstown Avenue with the N11 and the five to seven storey Merrion Hall. Moreover, at Stillorgan, permission has previously been granted for a four to nine storey development was recently permitted on the site (ABP Ref. ABP-300520-17) on the former Blakes and Esmonde Motors sites and a six to twelve storey development was also previously permitted on the Blakes site in 2005 (DLRCC Reg. Ref. Do4A/0674; ABP Ref. PL06D.210848).

There are no protected structures on or adjoining the application site and the application site is not located in an Architectural Conservation Area or a Candidate Architectural Conservation Area. There are no views or prospects over the application site identified for protection in the *Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2016-2022* and *Stillorgan Local Area Plan 2018-2024*.



Figure 12.6 - Seven storey apartment blocks at Beechwood Court at Galloping Green on the N11 National Primary Route.



Figure 12.7 - Seven storey apartment blocks at Beechwood Court at Galloping Green on the N11 National Primary Route.



Figure 12.8 - The six to eight storey Thornwood Apartments (left) and the five to seven storey Booterstown Wood apartments (right) at the junction of Booterstown Avenue with the N11 National Primary Route.



Figure 12.9 - The six to eight storey Thornwood Apartments (left) and the five to seven storey Booterstown Wood apartments (centre) at the junction of Booterstown Avenue with the N11 National Primary Route and the five to seven storey Merrion Hall (right)

12.4 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

In summary, the project provides for the demolition (total c.1,398 sq m GFA) of:

- The Grange Select Marketing Suite' (1 storey)
- 'Oaktree Business Centre' (2 storeys)
- 'The Lodge' (2 storeys)

and the construction of a new 'Build to Rent' residential scheme of 287 residential apartment units; residential tenant amenity space of 961.5 sq m; a crèche facility of 658 sq m; and a substation of 96.5 sq m in the form of 6 new blocks (Blocks H, J, M, N, P and Q) ranging in height from 1 - 11 storeys. The residential element of the scheme provides for the following development mix:

- 19 x Studio Units (6.6%)
- 125 x 1 Bedroom Units (43.6%)
- 143 x 2 Bedroom Units (49.8%)

A total of 100 no. car parking spaces, 596 no. cycle spaces and 5 no. motorcycle spaces are also proposed together with all associated site development works.

12.5 Potential Impact of the Proposed Development

Construction Stage

The subject development proposes the demolition of existing modern structures on the application site and the construction of a new residential development in five new blocks. These works will give rise to the usual visual impacts to be expected from a large construction project, including the normal visual impacts associated with hoarding, tower cranes, construction traffic and emerging and unfinished structure. Having regard to the general nature of the construction works as described above and as more fully described in Chapter 3 of this EIAR and having regard to statutory planning policy for the densification of the urban area, it is considered that the potential impact of the proposed development during the construction phase will be "moderate" in extent under a worst case scenario. The character of visual impacts during the construction phase is likely to be wholly negative at first, becoming neutral to positive as work proceeds and the new structure becomes apparent.

Operational Stage

This section provides a description of the potential specific, direct and indirect impacts that the proposed development is likely to have on the visual environment.

The extent of potential visual impact of the proposed development on the built environment from locations around the proposed development is discussed below. The view locations discussed below are representative of locations from which it was suggested by mapping analysis that development might be visible.

In the do-nothing scenario, no development will take place, and the present character of the site will remain.

The character of the impact: positive, negative or neutral, will depend on how well a development is received by the public, and on the general contribution of the development to the built environment. The character of a visual impact, and even the duration of a visual impact, is very dependent on the attitude of the viewer. If a viewer is opposed to a new building for reasons other than visual, that viewer is likely to see the building in a negative light, no matter beautiful the building might be.

Overview of Visual Impact on the Built Environment

While a prominent site surrounded by development sensitive to visual change (i.e. buildings in residential use), the capacity of the application site to absorb the impacts of buildings higher than that of the surrounding low density residential estates is considerable given the character of the lands at The Grange and, indeed, the opposing site at Beechwood Court, as a cluster of taller and higher density buildings. The impact of the proposed development on the visual environment is likely to be largely restricted to the local area surrounding the application site, from elevated locations, across open foregrounds or at the ends of streets aligned towards the application site. Where streets or urban spaces are aligned towards the site, and where the buildings at the end of these alignments are relatively modest in height, there is a potential for taller elements of the development to be visible above lower intervening buildings. This potential increases with the length of the alignment, but reduces with distance from the site. It follows that for tall structures⁵ to be openly visible in a built up area, they must be seen across an open foreground or at the end of a long vista or alignment. Where visible, the potential impact of the proposed development is likely to be consistent with emerging trends for development on the application site and along the N11 National Primary Route, particularly given that the site already accommodates a ten storey structure.

Views from the Stillorgan Road / N11 National Primary Route (see ModelWorks Photomontage Views 01, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10 and 11)

Due to the curved alignment of the N11, the topography of lands surrounding Stillorgan and intervening development and mature trees, the proposed development is likely only to be visible from a relatively short section of the N11 to the north and south of the application site in proximity to the junction of the N11 with Brewery Road. In general, the development now proposed is likely only to be visible from the N11 from locations from which the existing development at The Grange is already visible. From locations close to the junction of the N11 with Brewery Road (e.g. see ModelWorks Photomontage View 01), much of the northern and western facades of the proposed Block J and M is openly visible.

Notwithstanding the prominence of this junction, visibility of the proposal from locations north of the junction is likely to be restricted by the intervening dense planting and mature trees along the edge of the N11, particularly during the summer months when deciduous trees are in leaf (e.g. see ModelWorks Photomontage Views 06 and 07). Approaching Stillorgan, the alignment of the N11 curves so that, from the junction of the N11 with the Lower Kilmacud Road, the proposed development is unlikely to be visible, but will be obscured by intervening trees.

To the south, existing development on The Grange site is likely to obscure visibility of the proposed development in views looking northwest along the N11, with only the very uppermost elements of the proposed Block M appearing above the ridge of the existing Blocks F1/F2 (office block) and the most northern elements of the proposed Block J being visible forward to the front facade of the existing Block F1 (office block) (e.g. see ModelWorks Photomontage Views 08, 09 and 10). From more distant locations on the N11 to the south/east, visibility of The Grange site is restricted by the intervening dense planting and mature trees along the northern boundary of the residential estates at Rocwood and Laurleen.

The proposed development will form part of the cluster of taller and higher density development at The Grange and Beechwood Court. As stated above, there is considerable planning policy context supporting the development of taller and higher density development in general (i.e. the *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines*). There is also planning precedent for taller development on the lands at The Grange. However, even if this were not the case, it is notable that numerous developments of similar height and scale have been permitted fronting on to the N11 nearby, including Beechwood Court, Thornwood, Booterstown Wood and Merrion Hill. Permissions have also been granted for landmark buildings at the junction of the N11 and the Lower Kilmacud Road (e.g. six to twelve storey development permitted under DLRC Reg. Ref. D04A/0674; ABP Ref. PL06D.210848 and the four to nine storey development permitted under ABP Ref. ABP-300520-17). Given this, ARC's analysis indicates that, where visible, the visual impact of the proposed development on views from

⁵ Taller structures meaning structures taller than the prevailing height of the surrounding built environment, which in the case of the wider Stillorgan area is two storeys.

the N11 is likely to be consistent with emerging trends for development on the N11 and, therefore, “moderate” in extent.

Views from lands immediately adjoining the application site at Grange Cottages

While Nos. 2 and 3 Grange Cottages are located within the application site, No. 1 Grange Cottages is not within the ownership of the Applicant. It is understood that No. 1 Grange Cottages is occupied in residential use. While the construction of the proposed development has the potential to result in a considerable change to the visual environment as viewed from No. 1 Grange Cottages, it is notable that the subject application does not propose new structures opposing the rear boundary of No. 1 Grange Cottages at close proximity unlike the previously refused proposal (DLRCC Reg. Ref. D07A/1771; ABP Ref. PL06D.228499). Instead, the subject application proposes to locate a large central garden adjoining the boundary of the rear of No. 1 Grange Cottages. The subject application proposes that the closest new structures to No. 1 Grange Cottages will be the proposed Block J (26.5 m to the west of the southwestern corner of the house at No. 1) and the proposed Block M (33 m to the southeast of the southeastern corner of the house at No. 1). Given that the proposed new blocks are proposed as similar in scale and character to development already constructed on lands at The Grange and having regard to the statutory planning context for the consolidation of the urban area and for higher density on public transport corridors, the potential impact of the proposed development on views from No. 1 The Grange is likely to be “moderate” or consistent with emerging trends for development.

Views from lands immediately adjoining the application site at The Grange

The subject application site comprises a portion of the original package of lands for which permission was sought under DLRCC Reg. Ref. D03A/0750; ABP Ref. PL06D.206308, together with some additional lands along Brewery Road. Given that the subject application proposes development on lands, which formed part of the parent permission but on which development was never completed, it is inevitable that a change in the visual environment will occur. The proposed Block M has the potential to be intermittently visible from some north-facing windows within the existing Block G and from the eastern facades of Blocks F1 (office) and F2 at The Grange, but visibility of the proposed development is likely to be partially obscured by existing mature tree planting to the north of Block G. There is also a potential for the proposed Blocks H and J to be obliquely visible from north-facing windows and openly visible from west-facing windows within the existing Block G. The proposed Blocks H and J may also be just visible from some windows within the existing Blocks F1 and F2, but visibility is likely to be highly restricted given that existing tree planting and the proposed Block M is likely to intervene in views. The proposed Blocks P and N are also likely to be visible from some south and west-facing windows with the existing Block G, the existing Block D and possibly the existing Block C, although it is noted that the proposed Block N is low in height and will be screened with trees and that the proposed Block P is likely to be largely obscured by existing intervening trees. Visibility of new structures proposed as part of the subject application from other parts of the lands at The Grange is likely to be relatively restricted due to existing intervening development. The design of the proposed development is similar in scale and character to development already constructed on lands at The Grange. Given this and having regard to the statutory planning context for the consolidation of the urban area and for higher density on public transport corridors, the potential impact of the proposed development on views from within the existing development at The Grange is likely to be “moderate” or consistent with emerging trends for development under a worst case scenario.

Views from lands east/north of the N11 National Primary Route (see ModelWorks Photomontage Views 05 and 12)

There is a potential for the proposed development to be visible from any locations from which the existing development at The Grange is already visible. This would include buildings fronting on to the N11 Primary Route (e.g. Beechwood Court, Belmont Terrace and Belmont House) or lands or buildings in close proximity to the N11 Primary Route (such as those at Farmleigh Avenue and Close and at the Galloping Green Apartments). As noted above, visibility of the proposed development is likely to be

largely restricted to the local area, with some possibility of longer distance views where streets are aligned towards the application site, from elevated lands or across large areas of open space.

The proposed development is also likely to be visible from the Beechwood Court apartments located in blocks fronting on to the N11 as these blocks directly oppose the application site. Where visible, the proposed new blocks will be visible in the context of the existing development on the site at The Grange. The proposed development is also likely to be just visible in views along the internal access road aligned towards the site within Beechwood Court looking southwest through gaps in the blocks fronting on the N11. The proposed development has the potential to be visible in views looking southwest along the axis of Farmleigh Avenue, particularly west of the roundabout. Visibility from other areas at Farmleigh Avenue and Close is likely to be limited by intervening trees, particularly during periods when trees are in leaf, although the taller elements of the proposed development are likely to be intermittently visible from lands and some houses in this area.

There is also a possibility that the proposed development will be visible from some elevated locations such as the viewing platform of the Obelisk (RPS No. 1336) on Carysfort Avenue. There is a potential for the proposed development to be visible from the St John of God's Hospital complex (including the former Riversdale, a protected structure, RPS No. 1420), although much of the site is surrounded by mature trees. While there is a potential for the proposed development to be obliquely visible from south-facing windows at Belmont Nursing Home, the modern nursing home will intervene in views from the associated chapel, a protected structure (RPS No. 1451). Similarly, although likely to be visible from some apartments within the Galloping Green apartments, particularly those on upper floors oriented towards the application site, the Galloping Green apartments will obscure visibility of the proposed development from Abilene Lodge at Newtownpark Avenue (a protected structure, RPS No. 1450).



Figure 12.10 - View of the Obelisk constructed in 1727 in honour of Lady Allen on the lands of Stillorgan Park now accessed from Carysfort Avenue.

While glimpses of the proposed development may just be possible from some restricted locations, ARC's analysis suggests that the construction of the proposed development is unlikely to result in any material change in the visual environment within the Belmont and Ardagh housing estates due to the extent of tree planting and intervening development, particularly at Beechwood Court and on lands at The Grange.

ARC's analysis indicates that the impact of the proposed development on views from lands to the east of the N11 will range from none to "slight" to "moderate". Under a worst case scenario, having regard to the character of development already constructed on the application site and along the N11 corridor and having regard to the *Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines*, the impact of the proposed development on views from lands east of the N11 is considered to be consistent with emerging trends for development and, therefore, "moderate" in extent.

Views from Brewery Road (see ModelWorks Photomontage Views 02, 03 and 04)

The proposed Blocks H, J and N will be openly visible in views along the axis of Brewery Road, while the upper elements of the proposed Block P will be just visible above the high, stone wall and through gaps in intervening trees in views to the east looking across the public park.

Much of the section of Brewery Road, which borders the application site, (i.e. the section between the N11 and No. 1 Brewery Road) is bounded by high wall with few entrances or is, at least partly, 'frontage-free' within the meaning of the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (DMURS, 2013). DMURS is highly critical of frontage-free streets stating: "Frontage-free streets (such as distributor roads) are not recommended, as they can be unsafe for pedestrians (especially after dark) and can result in a hostile environment." The demolition of the Oaktree Business Centre, a two storey commercial building (now vacant) set well back from Brewery Road, and the construction of apartment blocks fronting on to Brewery Road in its place is intended to provide an improved street frontage on to Brewery Road. Providing a street frontage where no active street frontage existed before will result in a considerable change to the visual environment to this section of Brewery Road. Specifically, while the development at The Grange is already openly visible from Brewery Road, the subject proposal will bring development closer to the street edge in line with the recommendations of DMURS. Having regard to the comments set out in DMURS regarding the dangers associated with a frontage free street and having regard to the improvements in public realm now proposed (including increased permeability through the lands at The Grange), many travelling on Brewery Road, particularly cyclists and pedestrians, are likely to regard this change in the visual environment positively.

Due to the curvature of Brewery Road, open visibility of the proposed blocks fronting on to the street (i.e. Blocks H, J and N) is likely to be restricted to areas in close proximity to the application site. While there is a potential for intermittent visibility of the uppermost elements of the proposed development from locations as far south at Leopardstown Inn, visibility of the proposed development at road level south of that point is likely to be obscured by intervening development and trees (particularly when the trees are in leaf). There is a potential that proposed development may be just visible from higher ground on Brewery Road, such as from the Vartry Waterworks Screen Chamber, part of the Vartry Waterworks Complex (RPS No. 1524). Where visible, the proposed development is likely to appear as part of a cluster of the existing cluster of taller and high density development at The Grange and beyond at Beechwood Court. Given this and given that the very extensive and much more intensive development of Sandyford would also be visible from the Vartry Waterworks Complex, it is considered unlikely that the proposed development will result in a material change in the setting of the protected structure complex.

Overall, ARC's analysis indicates that the impact of the proposed development on views from Brewery Road will range from none to "slight" to "moderate". Under a worst case scenario, having regard to the character of development already constructed on the application site and along the N11 corridor and having regard to the *Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines*, the impact of the proposed development on views from lands east of the N11 is considered to be consistent with emerging trends for development and, therefore, "moderate" in extent.

Views from lands west/south of the N11 National Primary Route

To the north of the site, visibility of the proposed development from St Brigid's Church Road are likely to be restricted by the topography, intervening development and existing mature trees. The proposed development is unlikely to be visible from within the complex of St Brigid's Church (RPS No. 1358; RMP Ref. DU023-011001; DU023-011002; and DU023-011004-) due to intervening trees and development. The principal windows of Brookvale (RPS No. 1428), which is located near the junction of St Brigid's

Church Road with Lawnswood Park, do not face towards the proposed development and so the potential for the proposed development to result in impacts on views to and from principal rooms within the protected structure is limited. While there is a potential for the proposal to be visible from within the curtilage of Brookvale, it is noted that considerable tree planting along the boundary of the curtilage and intervening trees between Brookvale and the application site are likely to obscure visibility of the proposal. As such, the visual impact on views from the road at St Brigid's Church Road, on most buildings on the road and on the setting of protected structures is likely to range from none to "slight".

There is potential for the proposal to be visible from the upper floors of apartment developments along St Brigid's Church Road including Woodview Court and Dunstaffnage. Given that development at The Grange is already visible from some locations, there is also a potential for the upper elements of the proposal to be glimpsed along the alignments of housing estate roads to the north (e.g. Waltersland Road, Oaktree Road and Merville Avenue). Given that the proposed development will be visible in the context of the existing cluster of taller and high density development at The Grange, the potential visual impact of the proposed development on views from the upper floors of residential buildings on St Brigid's Church Road will, therefore, range from none to "moderate".

Also to the north / northwest, the proposed development has the potential to be visible from the rear of the houses at Nos. 14 to 29 Lawnswood Park. The proposed development also has the potential to be glimpsed from the road and from lands at Nos. 1 to 13 Lawnswood Park through the gaps in existing houses at Nos. 14 to 29 Lawnswood Park. While the proposed development will come to the street edge and, therefore, is likely to be considered more prominent in views from Lawnswood Park, it is noted that the existing development at The Grange is already visible from the rear of these houses. It is further noted, however, that views of the application site and of the wider development at The Grange from these houses are likely at least partly obscured by existing tree planting in many of the rear gardens. Where visible, the development now proposed will be visible in the context of existing taller and higher density development on the lands at The Grange or will obscure pre-existing views of development on lands at The Grange. Given this and having regard to statutory planning policy for the consolidation of urban areas and for the development of taller buildings at public transport nodes, the potential impact of the proposed development on views from Lawnswood Park is likely to range from none to "slight" in the case of views from the road and houses at Nos. 1 to 13 and from "imperceptible" to "moderate" in the case of views from Nos. 14 to 29 Lawnswood Park, depending on the extent to which existing trees obscure views of the site.

On the southern side of the N11 to the east of the lands at The Grange, lands are characterised by very substantial housing estates at Rocwood and Laurleen. There is some potential that the proposed development will be just visible in some views from these housing estates (e.g. looking along roads aligned towards the applications), but it is likely that existing development at The Grange will intervene in any potential views. As such, the potential impact of the proposed development on views from this location is likely to range from none to "slight".



Figure 12.11 - View from the path outside St Brigid's National School looking south towards the application site. The existing Block G is just visible.



Figure 12.12 - View from St Brigid's Church Road opposite the lands at Dunstaffnage. The boundary of Dunstaffnage is lined with large mature trees.



Figure 12.13 - View from the gate to Brookvale (RPS No. 1428) looking towards the application site. The view of the lands at The Grange is obscured by existing intervening trees, particularly when the trees are in leaf.



Figure 12.14 - View from Merville Avenue showing development at The Grange just visible in the distance.

Views from lands to the south of the application site

The application site is bounded by a public park to the south. The existing development on lands at The Grange is openly visible from this park. The proposed development will appear in views from this public park as part of the cluster of taller and higher density development at The Grange. Given this and given the statutory policy context for the densification of the urban area, particularly in proximity to high quality public transport links, the proposed development has the potential to result in a “moderate” change to the visual environment or one which is consistent with emerging trends for development.

As noted above, lands surrounding the application site are characterised by large two storey housing estates, including addresses at Leopardstown Oaks, Leopardstown Gardens, Leopardstown Grove,

Leopardstown Avenue and Leopardstown Drive. The construction of the proposed development is likely to result in a “moderate” change to views looking north along the road of Leopardstown Oaks, where the upper elements of the proposal have the potential to be visible above the tree line, although it is noted that none of the houses at Leopardstown Oaks face towards the application site.

Where existing development on lands at The Grange is visible, there is a potential for the proposed development to be visible. For example, there is a potential for the proposed development to be visible looking north along the alignment of Leopardstown Gardens in proximity to the Leopardstown Inn. It is also possible that the proposed development will be visible from the upper windows of some houses at Leopardstown Gardens (and, indeed, No. 8 Leopardstown Oaks). Most views from this residential estate, however, will be no more than glimpses of the upper elements of the proposal or will be obscured by existing development on lands at The Grange. Given this, ARC’s analysis indicates that the impact of the proposed development on residential estates to the south is likely to range from none to “slight”, with a potential for “moderate” impacts from a small number of locations in proximity to the application site.

Distant views

To the west of the application site, there are a number of locations from where there is the potential for the proposed development to be visible along an alignment, across open ground or from elevated locations. For example, the existing development at The Grange is just visible in the distance near the entrance to Cherrygarth in Mount Merrion, although it is noted that visibility of development at The Grange from lands at Stillorgan and Mount Merrion is very restricted due to intervening development and existing tree planting. There is a potential for the proposed development to be visible from the upper floors of taller structures within Sandyford Industrial Estate. Where visible, views from these locations will be distant and the proposed development will appear as part of the cluster of taller and higher density residential development at The Grange and Beechwood Court, forming only a minor element in the view. The potential impact of the proposed development on more distant views from the wider area is, therefore, likely to range from none to “imperceptible” to “slight”.

12.6 Potential Cumulative Impacts

A review of the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council online planning register did not identify any developments for which permission has been granted, which, in combination with the development now proposed, would have the potential to result in material cumulative impacts on the visual environment surrounding the application site.

Existing Grange Development

The existing development at the Grange (the permitted 506 units) has been considered within this EIAR as part of the existing/receiving environment for landscape and visual impact assessment.

Future Phase 2 Development

The Design Statement, prepared by OMP Architects and submitted with this application, outlines a masterplan for the possible future development of lands to the north of the current application site. The potential cumulative visual impact of the development now proposed and any future phase of development on lands to the north will depend on the detailed design of any future phase of development and will be assessed as part of any future application for these lands.

12.7 Do Nothing Scenario

In a “do nothing” scenario, the existing visual environment will remain unchanged.

12.8 Risks to Human Health

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland in *Health Impacts of the Built Environment: a review* highlights the implications of visual amenity and attractiveness within the built environment for human health as follows: “Deteriorating physical features of urban environments, vandalism, graffiti and litter can harm health. Studies have highlighted how such environments can impact on both mental and physical health through reduction in physical activity, increased anxiety among residents and increased social disorder.” The document also notes that people are more like to exercise, *inter alia*, “if the scenery is enjoyable”. Whereas *Health Impacts of the Built Environment* notes that the visual environment plays a role in human health, it does not provide any recommendations with regard to the visual environment and human health

In this regard, it should be noted that the character of the impact of changes to the visual environment on human health (positive, negative or neutral) will depend on how well a development is received by the public, and on the general contribution of the development to the built environment. The character of a visual impact, and even the duration of a visual impact, is very dependent on the attitude of the viewer. If a viewer is opposed to a new building for reasons other than visual, that viewer is likely to see the building in a negative light, no matter how beautiful the building might be.

12.9 Mitigation Measures

Construction Stage

The subject application does not propose any relevant mitigation measures at construction stage.

Operational Stage

The subject application proposes the development of lands on and immediately adjoining a substantial and strategically located infill site, which was the subject of major re-development in order to accommodate medium and high density residential development in recent years. In these circumstances, during the construction or operational phases scope for mitigation measures, scope for mitigation measures, which would preserve a sustainable level of density, is limited.

12.10 Predicted Impacts of the Proposed Development

Construction Stage

As no ameliorative, remedial or reductive measures are now proposed, the predicted visual impact of the proposed development on the built environment will be as described under Section 12.5 above.

As no ameliorative, remedial or reductive measures are now proposed, the predicted cumulative visual impact of the proposed development (when considered in combination with any permitted developments in the area) on the built environment will be as described under Section 12.6 above.

Operational Stage

As no ameliorative, remedial or reductive measures are now proposed, the predicted visual impact of the proposed development on the built environment will be as described under Section 12.5 and 12.6 above.

As no ameliorative, remedial or reductive measures are now proposed, the predicted cumulative visual impact of the proposed development (when considered in combination with any permitted developments in the area) on the built environment will be as described under Section 12.6 above.

12.11 Monitoring

Construction Stage

Monitoring of avoidance, remedial and mitigation measures is not relevant to the assessment of visual impacts on the built environment in the case of the subject application.

Operational Stage

Monitoring of avoidance, remedial and mitigation measures is not relevant to the assessment of visual impacts on the built environment in the case of the subject application.

12.12 Reinstatement

Reinstatement is not relevant to the assessment of visual impacts on the built environment in the case of the subject application. It is intended that the proposed development will be permanent.

12.13 Interactions

As is always the case where a development will result in a change to the visual environment of an area, the visual impacts of the development on the built environment will result in interactions with population and human health and cultural heritage.

12.14 Difficulties Encountered

As is the case in any urban area, it was neither possible nor practical for the Design Team to gain unfettered access to every parcel of private property within the study area surrounding the application site in order to carry out visibility analysis and take photography for the purposes of preparing photomontages.

12.15 References

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