

8.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Introduction

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Mitchell + Associates was engaged by Sandyford GP Limited (acting in its capacity as general partner for the Sandyford Central Partnership) between January 2019 and November 2019 to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the development of a Build-to-Rent residential development incorporating associated facilities on a site located between Blackthorn Drive and Carmanhall Road in the Sandyford Business Estate, Co. Dublin. Mitchell + Associates had previously prepared an LVIA for the current permitted residential development on this site (ABP. Ref. PLo6D.301428). The LVIA has taken account of the design changes occurring between January and November 2019.

This report represents an assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on the landscape character and visual amenity of the site and on the contiguous urban landscape and its environs. It describes the landscape character of the subject site and its hinterland, together with the visibility of the site from significant viewpoints in the locality. It includes an outline of the methodology utilised to assess the impacts, a description of the receiving environment (baseline) and of the potential impacts of the development upon it. Mitigation measures introduced to ameliorate or offset impacts are outlined and the resultant predicted (residual) impacts are assessed.



Figure 8.1: Site Location and Context.

This report should be read with reference to the photomontages produced by Visual Lab, which are included with the planning application. It should also be read in conjunction with the Architectural Design Statement prepared by Henry J Lyons Architects which also accompanies the planning application.



Figure 8.2: Detailed Site Location.

8.2 Methodology

8.2.1 Introduction

This assessment was carried out between January and October 2019. It takes account of the capacity of the existing site and environs to accommodate the proposed development, the sensitivities involved and it assesses its impacts upon the broader existing urban landscape. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) includes consideration of two main aspects:

- Landscape Character Impact – an assessment of effects on the character of the landscape arising from the insertion of the proposed development into the existing landscape context. This 'landscape' aspect is relatively subjective and can be described broadly as the human, social and cultural experience of one's surroundings. These combined impacts will elicit responses whose significance will be partially dependent on how people perceive a particular landscape and how much the changes will matter in relation to other senses as experienced and valued by those concerned. Despite the extremely large part played by our visual experience in forming our views on landscape, one's perception and indeed memory also play an important part if the changes brought about in landscape character are to be fully understood. It follows therefore that different people doing different things will experience the surrounding landscape in different ways. Such sensitivities and variations in response, including where and when they are likely to occur, are taken into consideration in the assessment.

- Visual Impact – an assessment of effects of the proposed development on the visual environment and visual amenity as evidenced by the comparison of baseline (existing) images and photomontages illustrating the proposed development in context. This second aspect is somewhat less subjective in that direct 'before and after' comparisons can be made. Visual impact occurs by means of visual intrusion and/or visual obstruction and the distance between subject and viewpoint has a bearing on the scale of such impact.

It is appropriate that aspects of architectural context and design approach are addressed when assessing the impact of proposed building development on the landscape, particularly so in an urban context. In this regard, aspects of the architectural design rationale and the specific architectural responses to the site and context are referred to within this report.

The standard evaluation methodology used in the preparation of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for inclusion within an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is utilised for this assessment. The evaluation methodology is therefore based on the following:

- '*Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements*' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2002.
- '*Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements*' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2003.
- '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*', prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, published by Routledge, 3rd Edition 2013.
- Reference is also made to the DRAFT '*Revised guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements*' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2015 and to the DRAFT '*Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), August 2017

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment involved:

- Visiting the area in February, May and September 2019, including preparation of a supplementary photographic record of the main landscape features;
- Undertaking a desk study of the subject site and its immediate environs in relation to its local and broader significance using the information gathered from the site visits, studying aerial photography, historic and Ordnance Survey mapping;
- Establishing and describing the receiving environment in terms of the existing urban landscape and its visual amenity;
- Assessing the nature, scale and quality of the proposed development through examination of the design team's drawings, illustrations and descriptions of the proposed scheme;
- Assessing potential viewpoints, choosing and agreeing those which could be considered most important and most representative in terms of visual impact; and
- Assessing the landscape impacts of the proposed development and the visual impacts through consideration and interpretation of the photomontages (included with the planning application submission documents).

8.2.2 Selection of Views

In order to provide a full and detailed assessment of the proposal, a total of 20 No. photomontages were prepared. The views were chosen to accurately represent the likely visual impact from a variety of viewpoints and directions around the subject site. In accordance with the guidelines, views from the public domain were given priority, particularly those from main thoroughfares and public places.



Figure 8.3: Selected Viewpoints (Views 1 - 6 incl.)

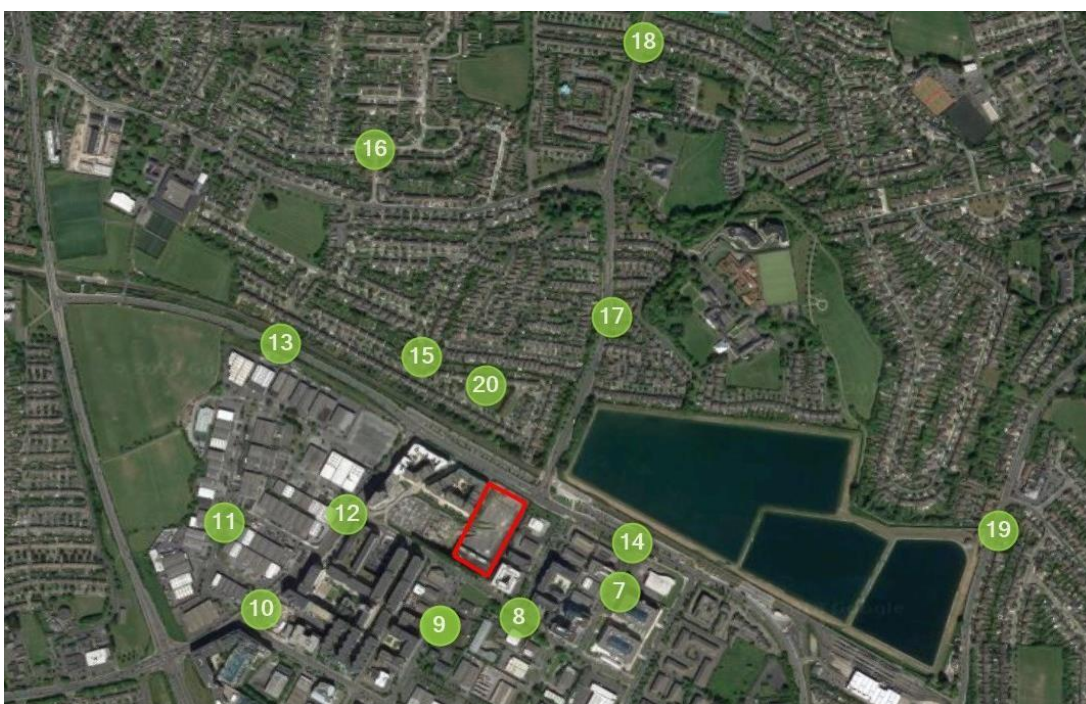


Figure 8.4: Selected Viewpoints (Views 7 - 20 incl.)

The viewpoints chosen are considered to be the most important and representative, having regard to the requirement to examine the likely significant impacts. Location maps of the final selected viewpoints are illustrated in Figures 8.3 and 8.4 (above) and are also included with the photomontages in the A3 photomontage document enclosed as Appendix 8.1.

Given the relatively short interval since the preparation of the photomontages for the permitted scheme, the re-use of the same baseline images is, in this context, considered generally to be acceptable and appropriate - this also facilitates comparison with the permitted scheme. However, in the interim between then and now, the baseline landscape has changed in several (relatively small) ways. This has necessitated up-dated baseline images for two viewpoints (Views 8 and 14) and these up-dated baselines are now used as the context basis for the relevant 'proposed' images from the same viewpoints. This will only be apparent when comparing the current set of photomontage images with say, the photomontages produced and included in the application for the permitted scheme. The selected views had been previously submitted to Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council during the pre- planning consultative process, and confirmed as acceptable for the purposes of the impact assessment process.

The process of view selection paid particular regard to Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's policies in respect of views and prospects as set out in the *Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016 - 2022*. The guidance on viewpoint selection and baseline photography requires that the proposed development is considered in context and that photomontages used to illustrate the proposed development include sufficient landscape context for proper assessment.

8.2.3 Photomontage Methodology

The primary method adopted for Visual Impact Assessment relies largely on a comparative visual technique, whereby accurate photomontages, incorporating the proposed development are compared to the existing corresponding baseline photograph so that an assessment of impact can be made. These 'before' and 'after' images are prepared for a number of selected viewpoints. A simplified generic methodology for the preparation of photomontages, including site photography, 3D computer modelling and rendering of views, is outlined in Appendix 8.2 of this document; however the specific detailed methodology employed by Visual Lab for this project is described in their original A3 photomontage document (Appendix 8.1).

8.2.4 Methodology for Rating of Impacts

An assessment is made in respect of the significance, scale or magnitude of predicted impacts which is set against an assessment of the quality/sensitivity of the impact. For each view, the scale/magnitude of impact is related to the simple quantum of change within the field of view and to the nature and sensitivity of such change in respect of the respective receptors, in the context of the existing (receiving) environment. Therefore, whilst the significance or scale of impact may range from 'imperceptible' to 'profound' and these may in part be related to distance and proximity, it should be remembered that the nature of the change and the sensitivities of the viewers also play a part in this aspect of assessment for each view.

The quality of impact can be assessed as 'positive' or 'negative' depending on whether the

change is considered to improve or reduce the quality of the landscape character or visual environment. The quality of impact may also be assessed as 'neutral' if the quality of the environment is unaffected. The assessment of quality in particular, needs to consider and weigh-up a range of issues and potentially conflicting standpoints. The nature of the proposed change, its context, appropriateness, quality of design and the sensitivities of the viewers are all important considerations for this aspect of assessment.

This latter issue of sensitivity can however create emotive responses that often have little or no regard for the appropriateness and/or design of the proposal; however the assessment needs to be considered in that context. In such cases, issues of appropriateness and design quality become more influential in the assessment of impact and the assessment of the designed scheme. The subtleties of design and detail in such circumstances are important in mitigating potentially negative impacts and ultimately, in determining appropriateness.

It should also be remembered that the primary purpose of this report is to assess the impact of the proposed development in terms of the existing current landscape and visual context and not the existing current planning context.

The duration of impact is a third aspect of assessment to be considered and impacts may range from temporary to permanent. In this case, the proposed development has a design life probably exceeding 60 years and so its impact is likely to be long term to permanent. The temporary/short term impacts during the construction of the proposed development are also considered in this assessment.

The significance criteria used for landscape and visual assessment are based on those given in the EPA '*Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements*', 2002, (Section 5 Glossary of Impacts) as refined by the Draft '*Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), August 2017. These are outlined in Appendix 8.3.

8.3 The Receiving Environment

8.3.1 Site Location, Built Form and Planning Context

The subject site occupies a prominent position on the northern edge of Sandyford Business Estate which is located between the south-east fringe of Dublin City and Dun Laoghaire to the east. The area is undergoing a change in character driven primarily, in more recent years, by the *Sandyford Urban Framework Plan (SUFP) 2016-2022*. Up until the late 1990's the area was dominated by low density and low rise manufacturing sites. In the interim, the Business/Industrial Estate has been gradually developed into the Sandyford Business District with the introduction of medium to high density technology units, office, retail and medical developments as well as more recent residential developments. It is gradually becoming a place to live as well as work.

Figure 8.5 (below), illustrates the contrast between the bigger footprints of individual developments within the emerging Business District and the older lower rise suburban residential developments around it. Good road connections around the site reinforce the links with the city to the north and across the M50 to the south where Sandyford residential development was previously concentrated and somewhat separated from the business core.

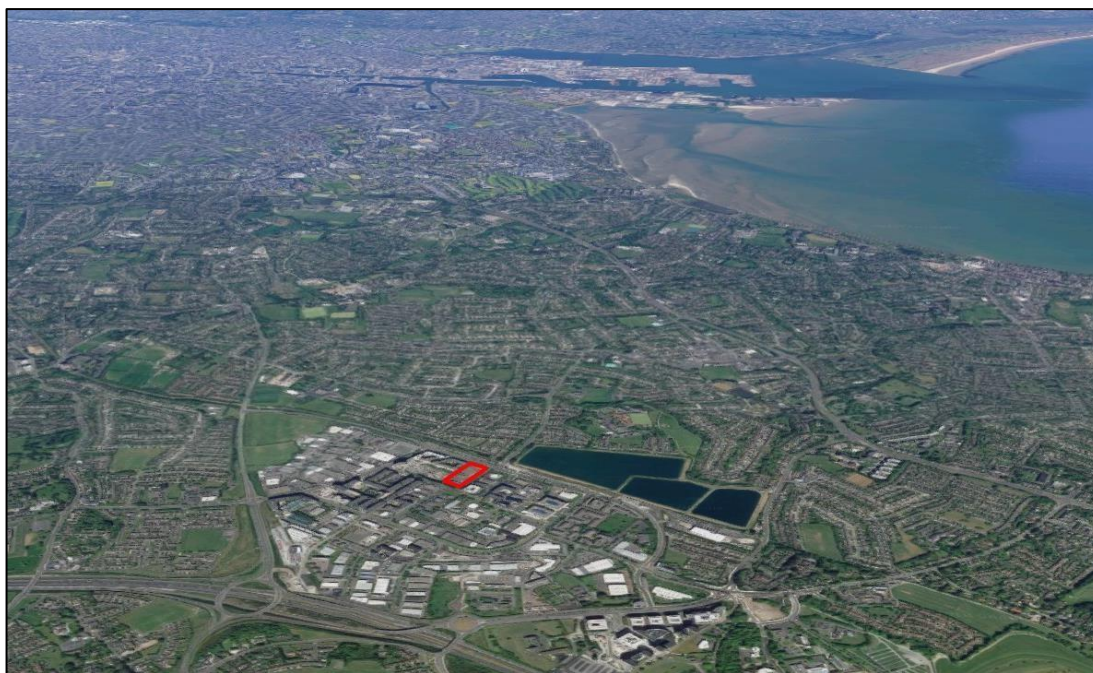


Figure 8.5: Oblique View (Google Maps) of the Application Site from the South.

The subject site proposed for development is one of a number of vacant and hoarded sites which had been prepared for development prior to the financial crash which commenced 11 No. years ago. It forms part of the Mixed Inner Core Area of the Business District outlined in the SUFP 2016-2022. As such, the SUFP envisages high rise, high density residential development for this site, with a supporting mix of facilities including an active commercial component at ground level.

The northern edge of the site sits along Blackthorn Drive/Blackthorn Avenue which is one of the main distributor roads in the area, linking into the city via Benildus Avenue and St. Raphaela's Road/Kilmacud Road Upper. This is flanked to the north by a car park and then the dedicated LUAS Green line along the southern edge of the 2-storey Lakelands housing estate.

East of the site is characterised by relatively ill-defined low-rise development with a mix of earlier 2-storey industrial/commercial businesses and more recent 4-storey offices. This area is zoned as a Mixed Outer Core Area of the Sandyford Business District.

South of the site, each side of the Corrig Road features smaller low-rise commercial units which are earmarked under the SUFP for Mixed Outer Core development west of the road and for a park/open space to the east (at the junction with Carmanhall Road).

West of the site the existing 5-storey residential over double height retail development along Blackthorn Drive is setback and rising up to 10 storeys plus, further back into the site.

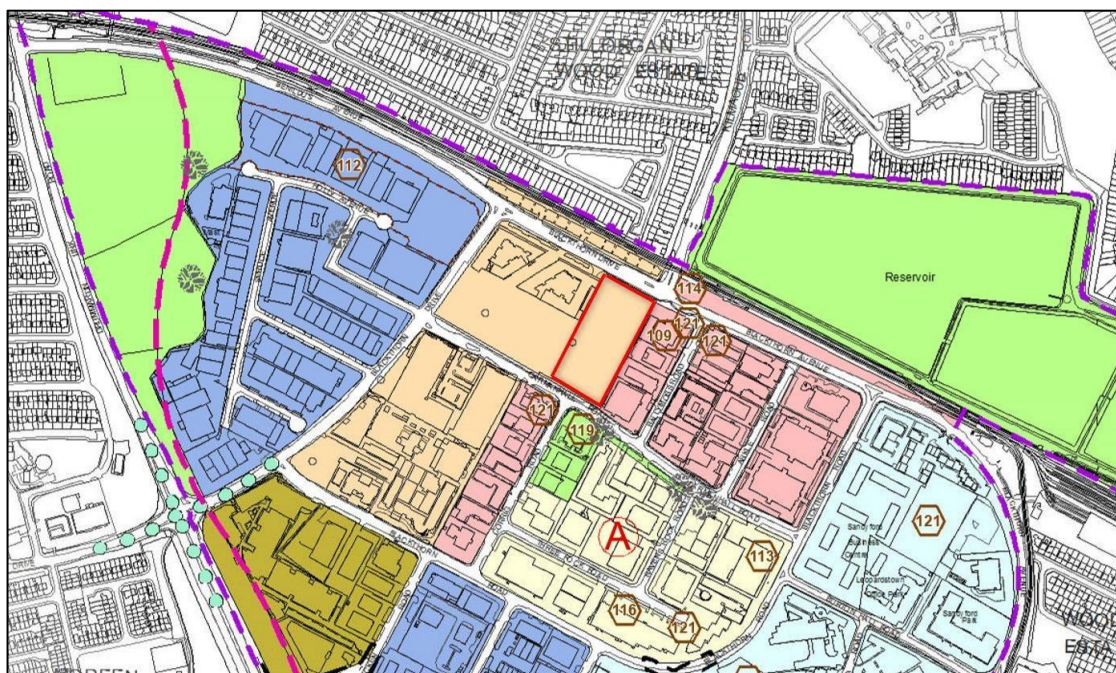


Figure 8.6: Extract from *Sandyford Urban Framework Plan 2016-2022* (the Subject Site is Outlined in Red)

The general building forms in the Business District are large scale and higher rise i.e., in the order of 4-10 storeys, though the Beacon Tower building is clearly identifiable as significantly taller than this. The current SUPP indicates allowable building heights of up to 14 storeys in the inner core area. Building materials within the area are greatly varied and tend to be manufactured brick, concrete, glass and steel.

8.3.2 Topography, Morphology and Vegetation

The Sandyford Business District area sits at a slightly elevated level above the city and coastal zone and occupies a relatively flat plain which falls gradually to the north-east. Lands to the south-west, beyond the M50 motorway rise more rapidly up towards the Dublin and Wicklow mountains.

The history of the site and surrounding area for commercial/industrial development has not been conducive to the retention or cossetting of any significant number of mature existing trees which might conceivably have once been a feature of say, an earlier agricultural landscape. North of the Blackthorn Drive surface car park area, a thin band of mature specimens along the rear of Lakelands Close in the Stillorgan Wood housing estate assists in visually reinforcing the separation between the housing estate and the Business District. Along the southern edge of the subject site, a row of semi-mature conifers provides a very dense green band along Carmanhall Road.

A general desire to improve the visual appearance of the urban area of the Business District has led to the planting of a significant number of street trees which are maturing and quite effective in both reinforcing the street form and tempering the greater scale and harder characteristics and form of the buildings.

8.4 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

A comprehensive description of the design for the proposed development is contained in the Architectural Design Statement prepared by Henry J Lyons Architects. Please refer also to the design layout drawings and sections included with the application.

Sandyford GP Limited (acting in its capacity as general partner for the Sandyford Central Partnership) intend to apply to An Bord Pleanála for permission for a strategic housing development at a 1.54 ha site at the former Aldi Site, Carmanhall Road, Sandyford Business District, Dublin 18.

The development, which will have a Gross Floor Area of 49,342 sq m will principally consist of: the demolition of the existing structures on site and the provision of a Build-to-Rent residential development comprising 564 No. apartments (46 No. studio apartments, 205 No. one bed apartments, 295 No. two bed apartments and 18 No. three bed apartments) in 6 No. blocks as follows: Block A (144 No. apartments) is part 10 to part 11 No. storeys over basement; Block B (68 No. apartments) is 8 No. storeys over basement; Block C (33 No. apartments) is 5 No. storeys over lower ground; Block D (103 No. apartments) is part 16 to part 17 No. storeys over lower ground; Block E (48 No. apartments) is 10 No. storeys over semi-basement; and Block F (168 No. apartments) is 14 No. storeys over semi basement.

The development provides resident amenity spaces (1,095 sq m) in Blocks A, C and D including concierge, gymnasium, lounges, games room and a panoramic function room at Roof Level of Block D; a creche (354 sq m); café (141 sq m); a pedestrian thoroughfare from Carmanhall Road to Blackthorn Drive also connecting into the boulevard at Rockbrook to the west; principal vehicular access off Carmanhall Road with servicing and bicycle access also provided off Blackthorn Drive; 285 No. car parking spaces (254 No. at basement level and 31 No. at ground level); 21 No. motorcycle spaces; set-down areas; bicycle parking; bin storage; boundary treatments; hard and soft landscaping; lighting; plant; ESB substations and switchrooms; sedum roofs; and all other associated site works above and below ground.

8.5 Potential Impacts of the Proposed Development

The purpose of this section of the report is to describe the potential effects of such proposed development; upon the visual and landscape aspects of the immediate area, and further afield, where relevant - at both construction and operational stages. The effect of such changes may of course be positive or negative. Effects can also be short or long term; temporary or permanent.

8.5.1 Construction Phase

Potential visual impacts during the construction phase are related to temporary works, site activity, and vehicular movement within and around the subject site. Vehicular movement may increase in the immediate area, and temporary vertical elements such as cranes, scaffolding, site fencing/hoarding, gates, plant and machinery etc., will be required and put in place. All construction impacts will be temporary, and may include the following:

- Site preparation works and operations;

- Site excavations and earthworks;
- Site infrastructure and vehicular access;
- Construction traffic, dust and other emissions;
- Temporary fencing/hoardings;
- Temporary site lighting;
- Temporary site buildings (including office accommodation);
- Cranes, crash deck and scaffolding; and
- Piling rigs.

8.5.2 Operational Phase

The importance of design quality in the process of urban renewal and inserting new buildings into the city fabric should not be underestimated. Good design in such circumstances is a rigorous process involving: a deep understanding of the site, its context and existing sensitivities; testing of the range of appropriate design options; a broad knowledge of suitable design approaches and; the ability to convert these through careful detailing, materials selection and effective control throughout the construction process. These aspects of design are central to successful and appropriate integration of new development within its context. Any development has the potential to impact negatively if poorly designed. Conversely it has the potential to impact positively, indeed to inspire, if well designed.

Many aspects of the proposed scheme design at this preliminary stage are included specifically to respond to such issues and any associated concerns. The design approach and specific mitigation measures employed to address the sensitive contextual issues and to respect and enhance the local environs are outlined in Section 8.6 Mitigation, below.

8.5.3 The 'Do Nothing' Approach

If the proposed development were not to proceed, the site would presumably (in terms of its landscape/townscape impact), remain in its present form for a period. However, the existing site is currently vacant and somewhat derelict. The existing rate of degradation in such circumstances is unlikely to be arrested by doing nothing.

8.6 Mitigation (Remedial/Reductive Measures)

8.6.1 Construction Phase

The building site including a site compound with site offices, site security fencing, scaffolding and temporary works will be visible during the construction phase. The provision of site hoarding along the property boundaries will substantially address many potential effects of construction operations during the delivery stage. Construction cranes (and of

course, the emerging buildings) will become visible from neighbouring properties and also from a number of more distant vantage points as the development proceeds. The cranes and site facilities are generally viewed as a temporary and unavoidable feature of construction, particularly in urban settings.

Mitigation measures proposed during the construction stage of the development, revolve primarily around the implementation of appropriate site management procedures during the construction works – such as the control of lighting, storage of materials, placement of compounds, control of vehicular access, and effective dust and dirt control measures, etc. The Construction Management Plan for the project, submitted with the planning application, sets out the basic measures to be employed in order to mitigate potential negative effects during construction. This is a working document which is refined and added to as the project proceeds.

8.6.2 Operational Phase

The designed scheme seeks to harmonise and integrate the development within the existing landscape and the broader urban environment. The design rationale and detail employed seeks to mitigate potential negative effects on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area by:

- Establishing an integrated relationship between the proposed development and surrounding buildings and the broader urban landscape, incorporating aspects of prevalent built forms, scale, texturing, colour and materials;
- The insertion, positioning and detailed modelling of the buildings, in order to assist in the visual assimilation of their mass;
- Appropriate architectural detailing to assist in the integration of the external building facades – including the modulation of openings and fenestration in a manner that harmonises with current local proportions and rhythms;
- Rationalisation of all services elements and any other potential visual clutter and its incorporation internally within building envelopes (as far as practically possible);
- Simplification and rationalisation of the proposed roof lines;
- Use of appropriate materials. The buildings' external envelopes will consist primarily of brick in subtle and complimentary tones with harmonious variation in colour between the individual blocks. Window frames, balustrades, copings and gates are in tonal greys to tie these elements into the broader materials strategy. This is in keeping with the broad range of materials and colouring found within the Business District;
- The provision of significant additional public space at the ground level entrance from Carmanhall Road, through the development at podium level and on down to link with Blackthorn Drive. The relationship between the buildings and the adjacent newly created public realm is fully considered;
- The provision of communal/public uses within the development, in order to facilitate public access and permeability and to assist in activating public spaces.

8.7 Predicted Landscape Character Impact of the Proposed Development

The proposed development will impact on the landscape to varying degrees in terms of its perceived nature and scale. These effects are tempered and conditioned by sensitivities associated with the receptor. The duration of such impacts is however determined by the design life of the proposed development. In this case the building has a design life of up to

60 years. Impacts on landscape character are therefore deemed to be of long-term duration in this instance.

In assessing the landscape character impacts specifically, there are three main inter-related aspects to be addressed in considering the development proposals, namely:

- The perceived character of the area – how it is affected by the proposal;
- Effects of the proposed development on social and cultural amenity; and
- The proposed views of the development, relative to the existing site (outlined in Section 8.8.2) and the associated impact on visual amenity.

8.7.1 Construction Phase

Initially the erection of site fencing/hoarding will be completed, site access points established and site accommodation units placed. Early in the construction period, earthworks, excavations for the basement and building foundations will commence. Removal and/or storage of excavated materials from site and the delivery of construction materials will generate increased traffic within, to and from the site.

As construction progresses over the construction period, visual impacts will vary, with the on-going business of construction - delivery and storage of materials, the erection of the buildings, etc. Mitigation measures have been proposed as per Section 8.6 'Mitigation (remedial/reductive measures)' to minimise the impact of the construction works on the site environs.

The visual effects over the construction of the development will **vary from moderate and neutral to moderate and negative**, depending on one's location, the stage of construction, and the intensity of site activity. These effects will however be of **short term** duration.

8.7.2 Operational Phase

Impact on the perceived character of the area and on social and cultural amenity.

Whilst the term 'landscape character' is generally held to involve more than simply appearances, there is little doubt that a place's visual qualities contribute most to its character and this is particularly so for visitors to the area, whose experience is generally a relatively fleeting one. One might surmise that the current character of the subject site may be perceived largely by local people as a 'derelict' site sitting adjacent to several partially completed high rise developments, the visible progress of which appears to be suspended.

It would be expected that the completion of almost any proposed development on this

derelict urban site would be perceived to improve the appearance and functioning of the site and the area immediately around it, simply as a consequence of completing the work. The proposed permeability through the site and its connections with neighbouring lands and developments is a major social (and therefore landscape) improvement. However, ultimately the final development will be judged by many, primarily on its finished appearance and the impact of time, use and the elements upon it. The proposed development is well-researched and will provide living accommodation and a living environment of high quality which is both sustainable and durable. It is also designed in a manner which is respectful of its broader urban context and of the design details and fabric

that sustain it. In terms of its effects on **landscape character** it will provide **significant positive effects** - these effects will be **long term**.

8.8 Predicted Visual Impact of the Proposed Development

8.8.1 Introduction

The assessment of visual effects likely to be created by the proposed development is determined through the comparison of 'before' and 'after' photomontages – it is therefore, perhaps, a little less subjective than the assessment of effects on landscape character. It too is inevitably influenced to some extent by the standpoint of the viewer (the receptor). A total of 20 No. photomontages have been prepared that illustrate the visual effects of the proposed development on the surrounding visual environment. They are all submitted in a separate A3 document with the planning application.

The existing view from each viewpoint is shown together with the proposed development as seen from the same viewpoint. The yellow line that appears on some of the proposed photomontages indicates the location of the new development in the background, which in such cases is largely screened from view by distance, intervening buildings, vegetation and/or topography.

Because the design life of the proposed development is up to 60 years, the duration of predicted visual effects is assessed as long term, as is the case for predicted landscape character impacts.

The assessment of visual impacts through the use of comparative photomontages serves to identify impacts upon the visual environment. The photomontages are important in illustrating the impact of the proposed scheme from sensitive and protected views. In this instance, they also serve to support and illustrate an aspect of the landscape character impact assessment.

It is important to remember that while photomontages are a useful tool in illustrating comparative visual impact, they are recognised as having their limitations and potential dangers. The guidelines for their use in assessment clearly advocates their use in the context of a site visit to the viewpoint locations and point out that photomontages alone should not be expected to capture or reflect the complexity underlying the visual experience (refer to the GLVIA, 3rd Edition and the Landscape Institute's Advice Note 01/11).

The submitted A3 photomontage document prepared by Visual Lab generally includes four images for each viewpoint as follows:

1. The existing (baseline) view;
2. The proposed view as prepared for the permitted development;

3. The proposed view for this current development proposal; and
4. An image (generally zoomed-in) to show the current development proposal in the context of a red outline of the permitted scheme and a green outline of the adjacent, recently commenced, 'Rockbrook Central' development.

The first and third images for each viewpoint are the basis for this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which is required to assess impacts of the current proposal upon the existing ('receiving') landscape. The second image for each viewpoint illustrates the permitted development for this current site from each viewpoint and is provided to allow comparison of the current proposal with the permitted scheme. These are not strictly relevant to this LVIA however such comparisons do nevertheless provide a useful gauge as to appropriateness, particularly in respect of height and scale of the proposed development

in each view. The fourth view provides a more technical comparative look at the relative height and scale for this current proposal in the context of the height and scale of the permitted scheme for the current site and in the context of the height and scale of the adjacent Rockbrook Central scheme, recently commenced onsite.

8.8.2 Assessment of Views

Photomontages were prepared for 20 No. locations from a range of viewpoints. For each view, the significance/magnitude and quality/sensitivity of the impact are assessed and summarised as follows:

View 1 – Existing View

This view is taken from the upper end of Ticknock Park just off the Blackglenn Road looking north-eastwards towards the subject site. The grouping of taller buildings on the distant horizon is Sandyford Business District.

View 1 – Proposed View

The proposed development is of a similar form, scale and finish as the existing Sandyford grouping and is therefore a barely noticeable addition in that context and at this distance. The proposed scheme profile is marked by the yellow outline in the zoomed view (i.e., fourth in sequence for each viewpoint).

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **imperceptible**.

View 2 – Existing View

This view is taken from the bridge carrying the Sandyford Road (R117) over the M50 motorway, looking north-eastwards towards the subject site. The Sandyford Business District is again visible on the distant horizon in the centre of view.

View 2 – Proposed View

The proposed development is almost entirely screened from view by existing buildings - the proposed scheme profile is marked by the yellow outline.

The visual effects from this viewpoint will be **imperceptible**.

View 3 – Existing View

This is a view from the Leopardstown Road near the junction with the Kilgobbin Road looking north-east towards the Sandyford Business District which is visible in the distance, left of centre in the view. The taller grouping of buildings clearly contrasts with the lower rise urban landscape around it.

View 3 – Proposed View

The proposed development is not visible in this view, being screened by foreground garden planting. It is possible that further down this road, the proposed development may come into view, however its scale is similar to the existing building masses. The proposed scheme profile is marked by the yellow outline.

The visual effects from this viewpoint will be **imperceptible**.

View 4 – Existing View

This is a view from the Drummartin Link Road at its junction with the adjacent intersection/roundabout over the M50 motorway. The taller built forms create a high rise urban skyline peppered with cranes and partially completed buildings.

View 4 – Proposed View

The proposed development marginally extends that urban skyline but will not stand out or differentiate itself in any particular way from the existing group of buildings, at this distance.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **slight and neutral**.

View 5 – Existing View

This is a view from the Leopardstown Road (R113) looking north over the M50 towards the Sandyford Business District which occupies the whole of the horizon in this view. The building forms, finishes and tones vary greatly with no particular building dominating the skyline.

View 5 – Proposed View

The proposed buildings appear as a relatively slender grouping from this angle but harmonise with the existing built context and represent a minor extension of the higher rise elements already in place.

The visual effects from this viewpoint will be **slight and neutral**.

View 6 – Existing View

This view is taken from Murphystown Way (near the Glencairn LUAS stop) looking northwards. The buildings of the Sandyford Business District are clearly visible in the distance, just left of centre in the view.

View 6 – Proposed View

The proposed development will extend the higher rise element towards the centre of view with the taller (part 16/part 17 storey) Block D forming a more distinctive and prominent end-piece at the right hand side of the new added buildings. The darker tones of Block F tend to identify it as a more visually separate block and this has an effect in slightly sublimating the remainder of the built elements. The proposed development is quite distant, occupying a small portion of the field of view and is also partially screened by newly planted trees and the boundary wall at the edge of the road.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **slight and neutral**.

View 7 – Existing View

This view is taken from Arkle Road within the Sandyford Business District, looking north-west through a gap between existing buildings. As such, it is a glimpsed view and is therefore unlikely to be a significant viewpoint. The existing residential block beyond the subject site can be seen between the commercial and office properties which occupy the foreground and frame the view. Its white square blank gable appears somewhat unfinished and is not an attractive aspect to the building finish.

View 7 – Proposed View

A small part of the proposed development (the 10 storey Block E) is visible in this view and almost completely masks the existing residential building beyond. It presents a considered and modulated finish with dark-toned vertical elements sub-divided by lighter toned vertical cores, creating a slim vertical aspect to the façade. The scale of the proposed building is appropriate and not in any way overbearing. Its finishes compliment and harmonise with the existing adjacent buildings in the view.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **slight and positive**.

View 8 – Existing View

This view looks north-west along the Carmanhall Road towards the subject site which lies beyond the 4-storey office block in the foreground (recently shrouded with new façade treatment). This is a maturing business district with the existing street trees softening the harder building edges. The as yet unfinished high rise Sentinel building in the distance adds a slightly disconcerting stop to the view further along the street (this is partially concealed by the foreground tree in full leaf, left of view in the recently updated baseline image).

View 8 – Proposed View

The proposed development has the effect of filling in the gaps along Carmanhall Road in this view and provides a sense of completing the built form in this section of the Business District. The massing of the higher elements and the finishes employed work well to provide a sense of rhythm within the new development and to articulate the individual blocks with the existing buildings. The variation in tone between the proposed visible blocks presents them as appropriately related but distinctive. The darker façade finishes of Block F, separated by the lighter toned cores creates a vertical emphasis which assists in mitigating the potential massing of this block from this viewpoint. The Sentinel building also seems to sit well in the ensemble.

The visual effects of the proposed development from this viewpoint will be **moderate and positive**.

View 9 – Existing View

This view is taken from Corrig Road within the Sandyford Business District, looking northwards towards the subject site beyond the existing dense line of conifers. The existing residential development west of the site can be seen in the distance in the gap in that tree/hedge line. The lower rise foreground commercial buildings to the left of view are zoned for outer core development under the Sandyford Urban Framework Plan. The existing developments to the right are zoned for open space use.

View 9 – Proposed View

The proposed development will make a significant change to this view as Block A (11 storeys) and Block F (14 storeys) are brought up close to the edge of Carmanhall Road which contrasts with the existing development in this view. However, the new buildings do not appear unduly over-bearing and are quite appropriate to the scale of the road and to other buildings in the vicinity (not in view). The façade design distinguishes between a visually subdued but activated ground floor and the lighter toned residential accommodation above. The fenestration and the arrangement of light and dark tones across the facades emphasise slim verticality which creates a pleasant composition in this view. Block D (up to 17 storeys), stands clearly as an identifiable vertical built element at the far end of the scheme and is totally in scale in this view. This viewpoint tends to exaggerate the effect of the proposed development because of its evident contrast with its adjacent unfinished site (left of view). The completion of development adjacent to the proposed scheme will tend to create a sense of continuity from this viewpoint. The public realm route into and through the proposed development is very clearly discernible, welcoming in appearance and a positive aspect of the composition from this viewpoint. It offers a positive amenity value to the proposed development in this context.

The visual effects from this viewpoint will be **moderate and neutral**.

View 10 – Existing View

This view is taken from the junction of Blackthorn Drive and Blackthorn Road, close to the Beacon Hospital and looking north-eastwards. The view focuses on the higher rise section of the Sandyford Business District.

View 10 – Proposed View

The proposed development is not visible in this view, being totally screened by the existing building left of centre in the view.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **imperceptible**.

View 11 – Existing View

This view is from Spruce Avenue in the Stillorgan Industrial Estate, looking eastwards along Maple Avenue. The as yet unfinished Sentinel building is prominent on the horizon and the subject site lies beyond it.

View 11 – Proposed View

A very small part of the proposed development will be just visible above the blue fascia of the single storey tan brick-finished commercial building in the centre of this view – its roof profile is indicated by the yellow line.

The visual effects of the proposed development from this viewpoint will be **imperceptible**.

View 12 – Existing View

This view is taken from the junction of Blackthorn Drive and Carmanhall Road looking eastwards. The Sentinel building is in the foreground at the left edge of the view and the subject site is located in the open gap site to the right of this, extending up to the edge of Carmanhall Road (marked by the line of conifers in the centre of view). The existing residential development sitting just west of the subject site can just be seen peeking beyond the edge of the Sentinel building. The view conveys a general sense of unfinished development in this area.

View 12 – Proposed View

The proposed development is clearly visible in the view and provides an appropriate scale of building mass in this context. Continuity of development along Carmanhall Road is a positive aspect of the proposed building complex. The façade treatment offers a high level of finish despite the prospect of future development totally screening it from this viewpoint. The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **moderate and positive**.

View 13 – Existing View

This view is taken from Benildus Avenue, looking south-eastwards. This is an unattractive road corridor with enclosing side walls with planting and boundary palisade fencing behind. The approach to Sandyford Business District is only apparent through the visibility of the Sentinel building and the nearer existing residential development in the distance, beyond the road edge.

View 13 – Proposed View

The taller (16/17 storey) Block D is the only part of the proposed development visible. It appears as a tall building element which relates well to the other existing tall built elements in this view. It does not appear out of scale or out of context. Indeed, coupled with the curve of the road it offers a sense of expectation of arrival along what is otherwise a fairly grim prospect. The paler tones of this landmark element do however assist in reducing its apparent scale and mass when seen against the paler sky.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **slight and positive**.

View 14 – Existing View

This view is taken from Blackthorn Avenue just west of the junction with Blackthorn Road, looking westwards. The top of the Sentinel building is just visible in the distance (right of centre) beyond a street tree. The Business District built form appears somewhat open and fractured. There is a general lack of unity of both form and finish and there is no sense of

focus in the view, apart from the road itself, which tends to dominate.

View 14 – Proposed View

The proposed development is seen 'broadside' in this view, however it sits well within the existing context. Block D offers an element of focus along Blackthorn Avenue/Blackthorn Drive and the tonal treatment of the fascia creates a measure of vertical banding which presents the block as several slimmer vertical elements rather than one broad block. The contrast in tone between Block D and the remainder, further back from the road, also assists in separating it out as a landmark element. The overall scheme provides an appropriately scaled infill development linking well with existing buildings in the view. The variation in height and finish across the scheme are well handled and provide a harmonious mix of rhythm and variation, suggesting a series of individual but related buildings. This is particularly important from this angle of view where a poorly designed building might have read as a megastructure extending across the full depth of the site.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **moderate and positive**.

View 15 – Existing View

This view is taken from Lakelands Crescent near the junction with Lakelands Close looking south-east. The unfinished Sentinel building and the upper edge of the existing residential development north of it are visible over the roof line of the 2-storey residential properties in the foreground.

View 15 – Proposed View

The proposed development is only marginally visible between the roof lines of the existing houses (left of centre) in Lakelands Close – the scheme profile is indicated by the yellow line.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **slight and neutral**.

View 16 – Existing View

This view is taken from Hazel Avenue looking southwards along Kilmacud Avenue. The Sentinel building can be clearly seen on the sky line in the distance.

View 16 – Proposed View

The proposed development cannot be seen from this viewpoint. Its profile is indicated by the yellow line.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **imperceptible**.

View 17 – Existing View

This view is looking south along St. Raphaela's Road towards the junction with Blackthorn Drive/Blackthorn Avenue. The road and its associated tree planting act as a visual focus

leading to the Sandyford Business District as represented by a medium rise building and a distinctive pine tree. The Dublin Mountains are a backdrop beyond in the distance.

View 17 – Proposed View

Block D presents as a landmark building which accentuates and enhances the existing focussed view. It represents a point of arrival into the Business District. Block E to its left, being slightly lighter toned, contrasts with Block D's darker toned elements and will also visually recede against skylight around it. This has a small effect in separating Block D from the remainder of the proposed development and accentuating its relative slenderness. The fenestration and vertical expression of the Block D façade further accentuates these qualities.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **significant and positive**.

View 18 – Existing View

This view is taken from the Lower Kilmacud Road at its junction with Kilmacud Road Upper (R826) looking southwards.

View 18 – Proposed View

The proposed development is largely screened by intervening trees and is not really discernible from this distance.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **imperceptible**.

View 19 – Existing View

This view is taken from the Brewery Road looking westwards along the approximate line of the LUAS (Green line) south of the existing reservoirs. The location of the existing Business District beyond in the distance is just discernible.

View 19 – Proposed View

The proposed development is perceivable in this view but is somewhat lost amongst the LUAS catenary poles. This view is however also a side-on glimpsed view which significantly reduces any sensitivity attached to it.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **slight and neutral**.

View 20 – Existing View

This view is taken from the northern edge of the open green space embraced by Lakelands Close, looking south towards the subject site, which lies beyond the two storey houses in the foreground and the road and car park behind them. The existing residential development west of the subject site can just be seen between the semi-detached blocks. The Sentinel building which can be seen over the roof lines of the two storey houses, is partially screened by trees planted in the foreground. The open expanse of grass offers foreground space which maximises the potential for greatest impact of the proposed scheme beyond.

View 20– Proposed View

The majority of the proposed development is marginally visible above the roof lines of the two storey houses, however Block D rises well above the existing roof lines and appears as a separate building, almost echoing the Sentinel building to the right of view. The façade treatment emphasises the verticality of the Block and is quite effective in mitigating the building mass in this view. The lighter tones of the Block D facades now render it more tonally recessive and somewhat complimentary to the existing foreground residential finishes. The distance separation between the two storey foreground houses and the proposed development is likely in reality to be further accentuated by the mature trees located between the two.

The visual effects of the proposed development on this view will be **significant and neutral**.

8.9 Monitoring

The success of the proposed development is dependent on the proposals being properly executed as approved. Detailed agreement on finishes and materials to be employed needs to be ensured through the provision of and on-going adherence to reference samples provided on site for the duration of the construction works and defects period.

8.10 Interactions

It is important to note that the proposed design has responded to the findings of the wind study undertaken. In particular, the final planting incorporated into the design will significantly mitigate the wind effects around and within the scheme – this is outlined in the wind assessment carried out in Chapter 13.

8.11 Cumulative Effects

8.11.1 Introduction

Current guidelines suggest that a determination should be made as to whether cumulative effects are likely to occur – these are outlined in the current GLVIA guidelines (3rd edition) as “*additional effects caused by the proposed development when considered in conjunction with other proposed developments of the same or different types*”. It has become accepted practice that such a determination generally needs to be made as to whether any likely pending or permitted development of a similar nature will have any bearing on the assessment of the proposed development and this is subject to the assessor’s judgement in the matter.

8.11.2 The Changing Baseline and Cumulative Effects

A total of eleven other development schemes proposed in this area, (i.e., either permitted or in the planning system) were considered as potentially contributing to such cumulative effects (refer to Figure 8.7 below). Whilst all of these will contribute in some small measure to a denser and higher set of buildings in Sandyford, they do tend to reflect the planning strategy for the area. There are however limits to how far an application should go in

illustrating such effects and there are no clearly defined guidelines in this regard. Most of the eleven other schemes are considered too far away from the subject site or are below a certain height or scale to warrant such consideration.

However, where a proposed/permitted scheme is likely to make a significant impact in a selected view (over and above the existing baseline view), such potential impacts are

considered. The considered scheme Nos. 1, 4 and 5 (refer to Figure 8.7 below), fall into this category, however No. 4 (Beacon South Quarter - Irish Residential Properties REIT PLC) is excluded as the intervening developments in the relevant view effectively screen the subject proposed development – ref. View 10 in Visual Lab’s photomontage report included with this submission.

The ‘Rockbrook Central’ residential scheme, part of the Rockbrook development by Ires (No. 1, in Figure 8.7 below), adjoining the subject development on its western boundary, has been approved with a total complement of 428 no. apartments in blocks of 5 to 14 storeys in height. It has now recently commenced construction and will be expected to have a significant bearing on this proposed development in terms of its visual impact, particularly in respect of Views 9, 11 and 12. In View 9 it will be visible to the left of view, adjacent to Block A of this current proposed scheme and will be of similar scale and massing. In Views 11 and 12, the permitted development will largely mask the current proposed development from these viewpoints. The design for this current proposed development also takes into account the form, scale and massing of the permitted development and its public realm design also makes appropriate linkages with that of the existing and permitted Rockbrook developments.

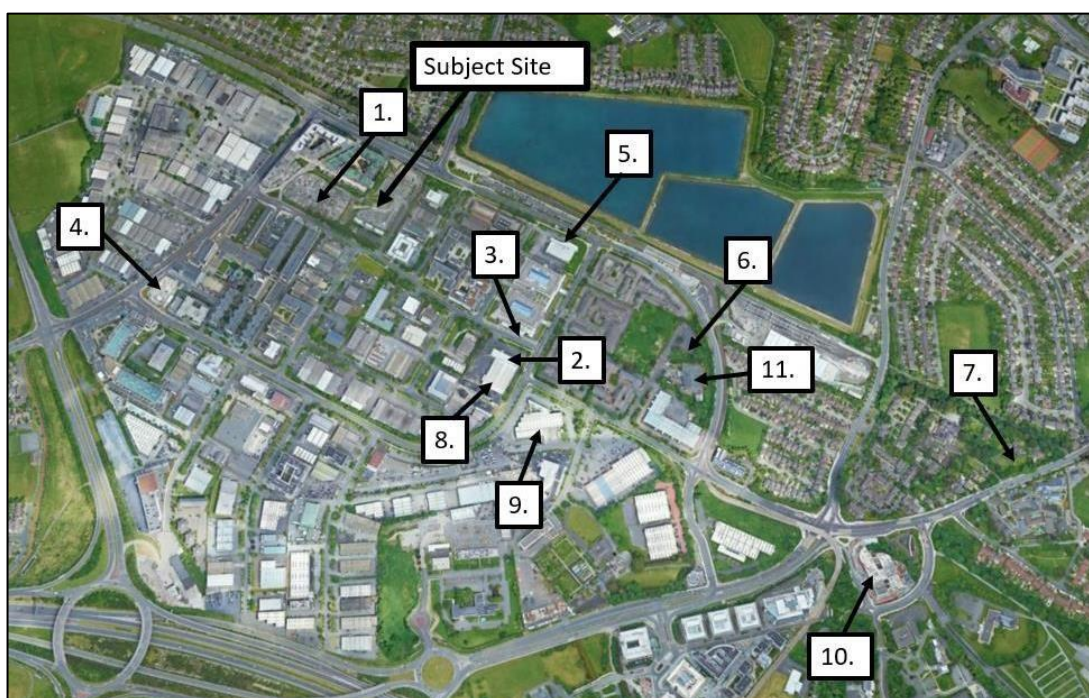


Figure 8.7: Map indicating location of 11 granted/pending planning applications –

Source: Google maps annotated by Thornton O’Connor Town Planning.

The former two-storey Innovation House building some 300 metres along Blackthorn

Avenue to the east of the subject site, has been demolished since the baseline image was obtained and the hoarding for the construction site of the 'Termini' development (No. 5, in Figure 8.7 above) has been erected. This represents a noticeable change to the baseline relating to View 14, wherein the former, now demolished 2-storey building in the left foreground of the view, will be replaced ultimately by the permitted 6-storey replacement building. Its future finished presence in this view will reduce the relative scale of the proposed scheme when viewed from View 14.

8.12 Summary of Effects

The insertion of the proposed development into the Sandyford Business District is entirely in keeping with the existing built context and the future planned context for the area.

The proposed development is a well-researched and well-conceived scheme. It is sensitive to the context in which it sits but is not afraid to declare its presence. The case for such higher rise development in this part of the Sandyford Business District has a number of precedents and contributes positively to the planned urban context.

In relation to the issue of height, the building design broadly meets the criteria the Council considers important as set out in the *Sandyford Urban Framework Plan (2016-2022)*. Whilst Block D as proposed currently exceeds the 14 storey height limitation for the lands as included in the *Sandyford Urban Framework Plan*, the Plan nevertheless envisages high rise, high density residential development for this site and the additional height proposed is appropriate in the circumstances - it sensitively conveys a gateway to the Sandyford Mixed Inner Core Area of the Business District at its main point of arrival. In addition, the proposed scheme is of high quality design; it is appropriately contemporary and stylish; and it makes a positive contribution to the existing skyline.

One might imagine the effect of the proposed development on the **visual** environment is readily assessed through an examination of the prepared photomontages; however a full examination involves walking the area and viewing the images from the respective viewpoint locations and then imagining and interpolating the sequential experience of the buildings when moving around them. This is particularly important in trying to appreciate the dynamic relationship between a set of buildings and their urban context. The assessments made for each view have taken this into account and are generally **positive**.

The visual environment does not however represent in full the experience of landscape which could be described as an individual's response (often an emotional response) to their surroundings. It is a complex concept which involves individual perception, social amenity, memory, beliefs, allegiances etc. Unplanned events have been considered throughout this chapter. The overall impact of the proposed development on the existing urban landscape and the **landscape character** of this part of the city is assessed as **moderate and positive**. This is so, partly because the development will help in populating and activating this area but also because the design of the building and its associated public spaces are so well considered in their context.

8.13 References

1. *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2002.*
2. *Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2003.*
3. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, published by Routledge , 3rd Edition 2013.*
4. *DRAFT 'Revised guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2015.*
5. *DRAFT 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), August 2017*
6. *Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - Landscape Institute (UK) Advice Note 01/11.*
7. *Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016 - 2022.*
8. *Sandyford Urban Framework Plan 2016 – 2022.*