



SHD Planning Application to An Bord Pleanála

on behalf of Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd

Lissywollen, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN RATIONALE
January 2021



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1.0 Introduction, Site & Context



Overview

The development area is located approximately 1.2km East of Athlone town centre and forms part of the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024. It comprises approximately 17.64 hectares in total site area. The applicant lands are bounded to the north by the N6, Athlone Relief Road, and to the south by the Old Rail Trail Greenway that forms a section of the Galway - Dublin National Cycle Network (NCN). The western boundary of the plan area is formed by the existing Athlone Town Football ground, the regional sports centre and Scoil na gCeithre Maistri. General access into the site is currently limited to an existing distributor road serving the Brawny residential area and the sports and recreational facilities. Access to the R916 to the east of the plan area has been created via a recently constructed roundabout; this spur also provides access to Garrycastle stores and the ESB networks site.

The overall development site is bisected by the existing Brawny housing, consisting of two clusters of terraced and semi-detached houses which sit North and South of a central park-land area.

The proposed development is for 576 residential units with two creches and associated openspaces, parking and landscaping, roadwork connections, green infrastructure including pedestrian and cycle tracks and paths, along with a new Lissywollen Avenue street which traverses the site east to west, connecting into the existing public road network.



Site - Aerial View 1

Site - Aerial View 2

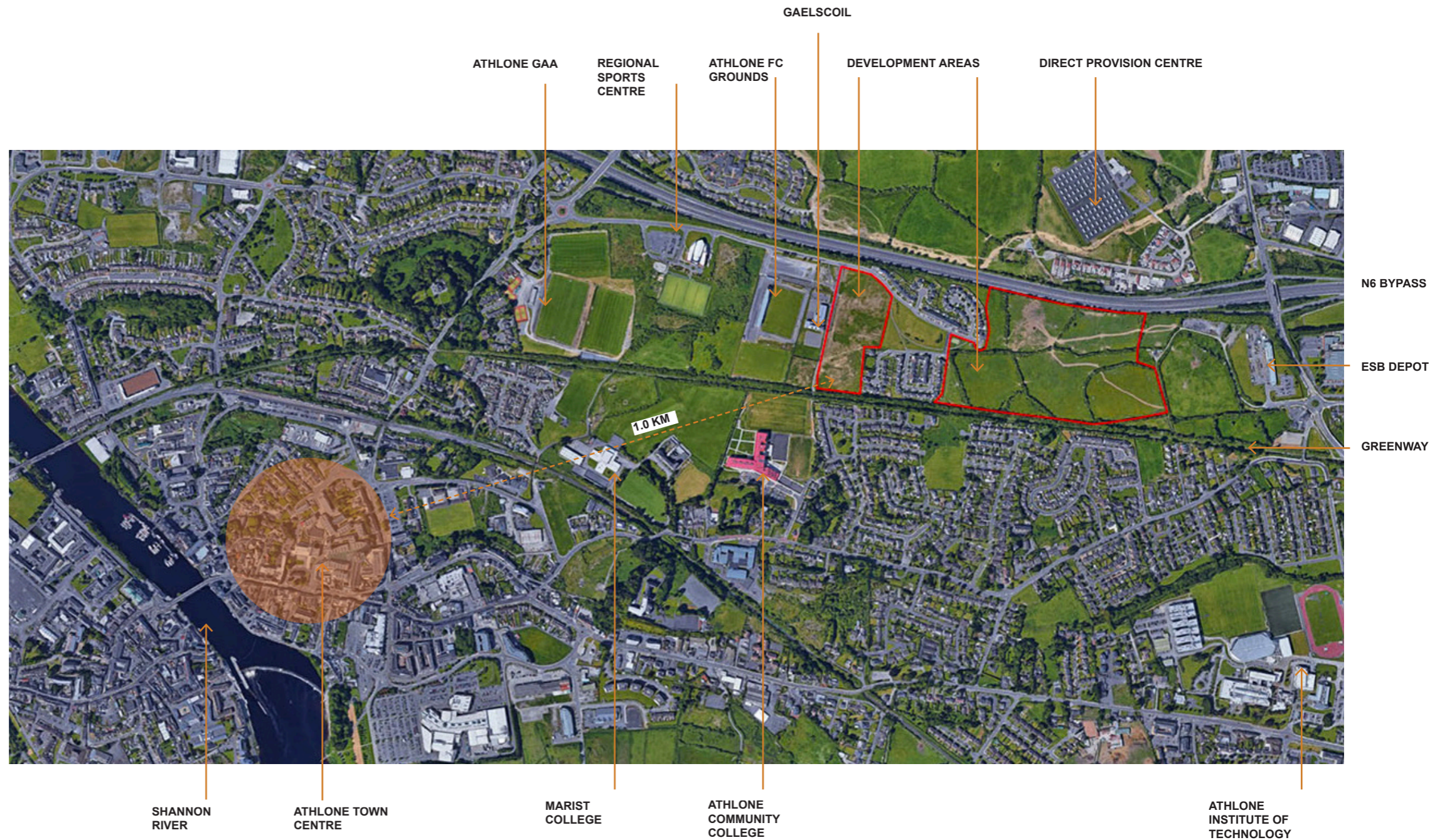


Site Context & Existing Buildings

The development area lies in a zone of 1.0-1.4km from the town centre- within 12-15 mins walking distance.

The existing building stock [built originally in the 1990's] is typically 2 storey semi-detached and terraced houses, book-ended with small three storey corner apartments with own door access. Finishes are brick and render with sparse landscaping giving a barren feel to the roads and open spaces. Parking is on curtilage or on street and is well catered for.

Proximity of the site to services, shops and education is very good and there is a regular bus service to the Town Centre. The site is also with 5 minutes walk to two GAA clubs, the regional sports centre, Athlone Town FC, three schools, Athlone IT and other local recreational facilities.



1.3 Site Analysis

Site Analysis- Constraints, Sunlight, Wind, Infrastructure

The site is an open, greenfield site with some existing hedgerows and tree features. It has one main vehicular access point from the West and a well used pedestrian route that crosses the Greenway and gives access to the Town Centre.

The site has a flat topography, is unprotected by features and suffers from lack of enclosure. Existing hedgerows are flat/shallow and in reasonable condition and only serve to define existing land parcel boundaries.

The existing housing is clustered into two separate unconnected groupings separated by a large, unkept greenspace. The Northern cluster backs on to the busy N6 main road without any noise barrier or protection, exposing the private open space of residents.



N6 Main Road
- noise
- exhaust pollution

Evening Sun

Prevailing S/W wind



Midday Sun

Greenway
- connection to
Athlone IT



Overall Site - Context View from North West with An Gaelscoil and the Brawney Housing Development in the foreground



Site View from East



Site View from West - Entrance at Brawney Road



Site View from South West - Entrance at Old Rail Trail Greenway

2.0 Design Proposal



Initial Design Concept

Given the nature and character of the site, a number of criteria have informed the design response for the proposed development. In essence, our intention is to create a new, high quality sustainable neighbourhood that compliments the existing Brawney housing and integrates into the existing landscape features, characterised by distinct housing designs, contemporary landscaping and public spaces.

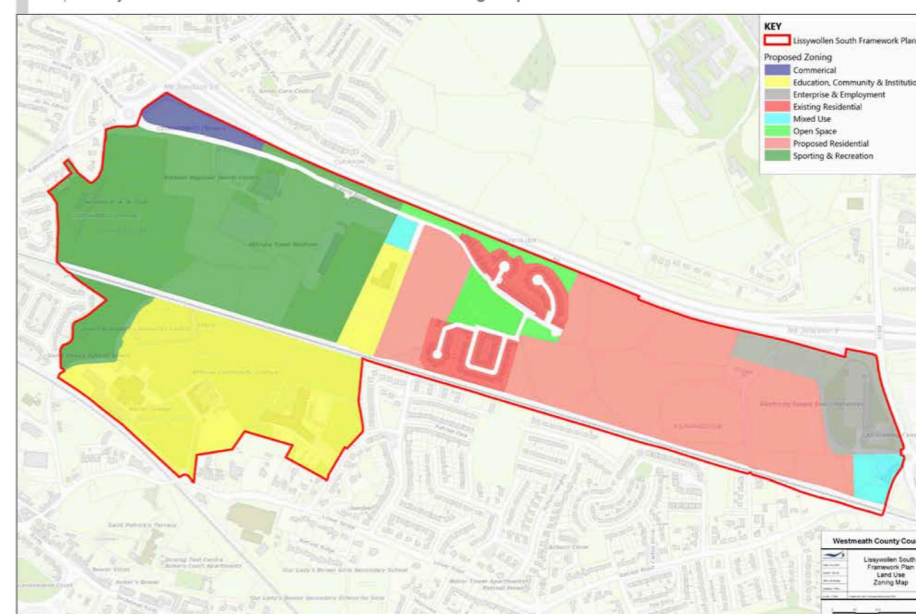
The key urban design moves towards this goal are:

- create a new sequence of streets running through the scheme linking the Garrycastle Road to the East and the Brawney Road to the West, referred to as 'Lissywollen Avenue,' developing the masterplan as illustrated in the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024
- create distinct new character areas within the development to foster new communities
- enhance existing and create new links to the Old Rail Trail Greenway
- enhance and create strong pedestrian and cycle linkages throughout the site
- respect, enhance and integrate with the existing Brawney housing development
- improve vehicular circulation and parking at Gaelscoil na gCeithre Máistrí
- maintain and enhance existing green spaces through enclosure and passive supervision
- maintain all existing hedgrows trees and landscape features insofar as possible
- provide high quality, well lit, mixed tenure houses and apartments in a sensitively designed landscape
- majority of houses, duplexes and apartments to have direct view to public open spaces



Initial Concept Sketch - Site Plan

Map 4 Lissywollen South Framework Plan: Landuse Zoning Map



Masterplan & Design Changes Post ABP Preapplication Consultation

The proposal was developed and submitted to ABP as part of the SHD preplanning process. Following feedback and comment from the ABP preapplication consultation, significant improvements and changes were made to the site strategy, urban design and architectural design of the scheme.

The ABP Opinion issued raised specific comments and observations, which are answered below [*in italics*] and throughout this Design Rationale document.

[from An Bord Pleanála Opinion ABP-305726-19]

An Bord Pleanála considers that the following issues need to be addressed in the documents submitted that could result in them constituting a reasonable basis for an application for strategic housing development.

1. Further consideration/justification of the documents as they relate to the overall layout of the proposed development particularly in relation to the 12 criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual which accompanies the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, and compliance with the local policy document Lissywollen South Framework Plan. Specifically, further consideration/justification in relation to:

(a) Site layout plan and design of the east-west link road/Lissywollen Avenue. This should be designed as a street and not as a distributor road, with an active and strong urban edge, and further consideration should be given across the development to achieving an appropriate level of enclosure of streets and open spaces (proposed and existing) through the built form, in addition to landscaping. This may involve a realignment of the east-west route, re-examination of the location and scale of the proposed central public open space, and re-examination of the layout of the building blocks relative to streets and open spaces.

The east-west link road, known as Lissywollen Avenue, has been redesigned as a street, through realignment and the introduction of multiple junctions, with a strong and active urban edge, enclosure through appropriate building heights and enhanced urban landscaping. This redesign is elaborated in detail throughout this Design Rationale document.

(b) Car Parking Strategy, which should be re-examined in accordance with DMURS, with a focus on a layout which is not car dominant and which considers the level of in-curtilage parking across the site, including the potential for additional communal parking options such as positioning of car parking behind the building line and in carefully designed courtyards, as well as in communal areas along the street.

The carparking strategy has been redesigned to be varied street by street, with a mixture of on-curtilage and on-street parking, incorporating some basement parking under the higher density apartments, off street courtyard parking to the rear of apartment blocks, and perpendicular and parallel street parking. The updated design of the parking is illustrated in this design statement and in the traffic engineer's report included in the application.

(c) Pedestrian and Cyclist Movement across the site, specifically north south across the proposed east-west Lissywollen Avenue.

Pedestrian and cycle movement throughout the proposed development has been prioritised, with multiple new routes traversing the site leading to 6 new connections into the Old Rail Trail Greenway, providing high connectivity from north to south across each character area. A number of shared surface, pedestrian and bicycle priority areas have also been introduced. These design updates are illustrated in detail in the architect's drawings, engineer's drawings and within this Design Rationale document.

(d) Open Space Strategy, which details the hierarchy, function and usability of open space across the development, and consideration of the requirement for direct overlooking, surveillance and greater sense of enclosure from the surrounding built form of open spaces and removal of inappropriately located turning heads/parking bays within open spaces.

Given the presence of the large open greenspace between the two parts of the adjoining Brawny housing development, the open/green spaces within the development have been designed as a network of smaller, more intimate and enclosed areas that relate in scale directly to the housing to which surrounds them. They are well orientated, facilitate passive supervision and are spread evenly throughout the proposal so that each house is within a maximum 3 minute walk to a green space. Parking is minimised around these spaces to ensure maximum accessibility and turning heads have been omitted through redesign and relocation of roads. This is illustrated in more detail in this Design Rationale and in the Landscape Architect's information.

Westmeath County Council - Housing Department Report

The WCC Housing Department report noted comments relating to the proposal, specifically

- Lissywollen Avenue layout and connections to existing roads around Brawny
- Acoustic concerns to residential units to the north boundary of the site adjacent to the N6 bypass
- Detail design of specific apartment blocks within proposal

Lissywollen Avenue

The proposal has significantly changed and improved, so that a more integrated and connected street running along the southern edge of Brawny greenspace is created, resolving issues of access and improving vehicular movement locally.

Acoustic Concerns

The updated design proposal includes for landscape design mitigation of noise impacts from the N6 bypass and provision of triple glazing to all facades of residential units on the north boundary where required to achieve acoustic comfort. Please refer to the Noise chapter of the EIAR for details.

Detail Design

A comprehensive and detailed planning set of drawings indicating each building proposed at a scale of 1/200 minimum is included as part of the application. These drawings also indicate compliance with all required spatial, light and design standards in residential apartment and housing design.

The above responses are elaborated further in this document and on the Architect's drawings submitted as part of the application.



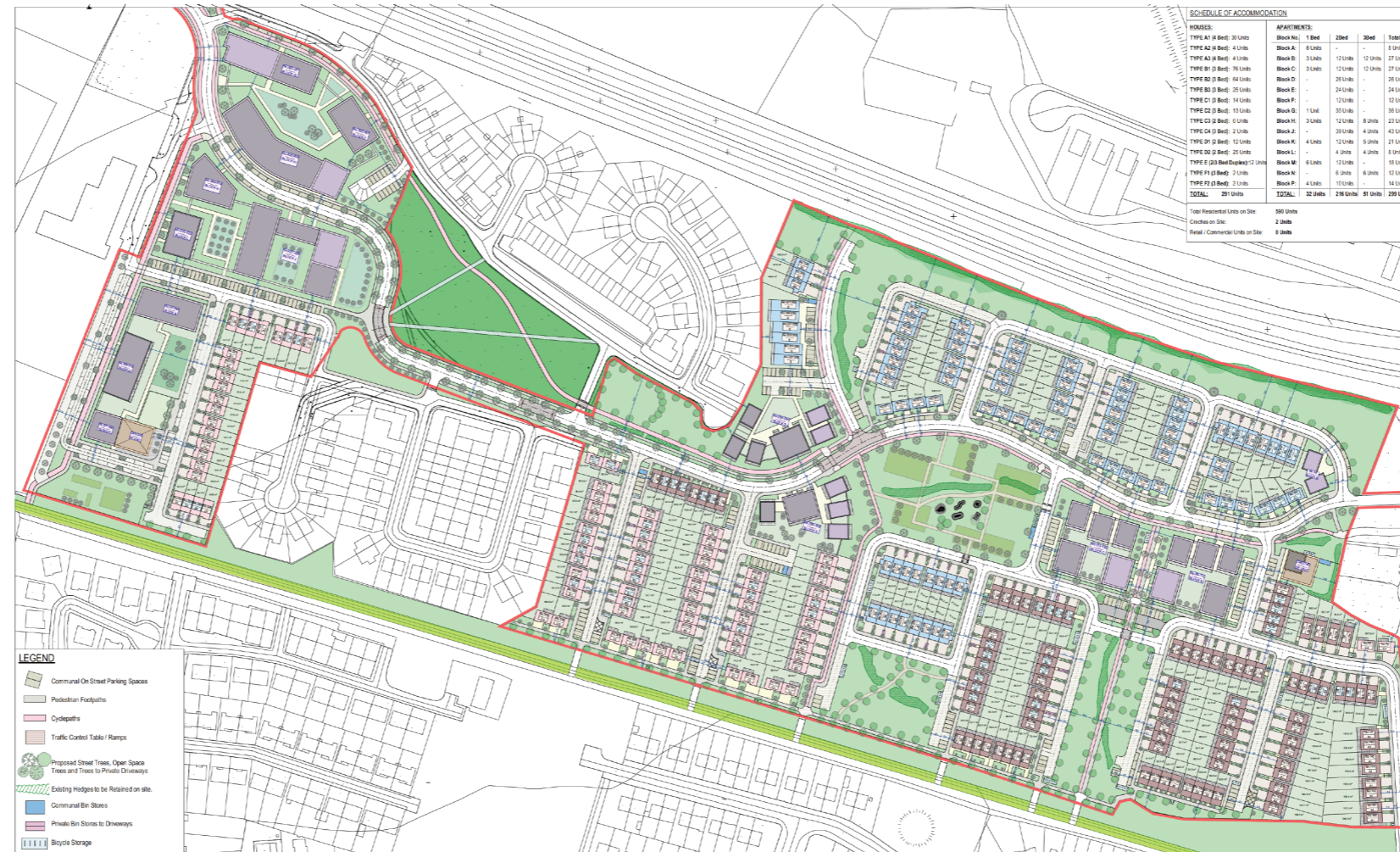
Masterplan Changes Post ABP Preplanning Meetings

The proposal was developed and submitted to ABP as part of the SHD process. Following feedback and comment from the ABP preapplication consultation, significant improvements and changes were made to the site strategy and plan.

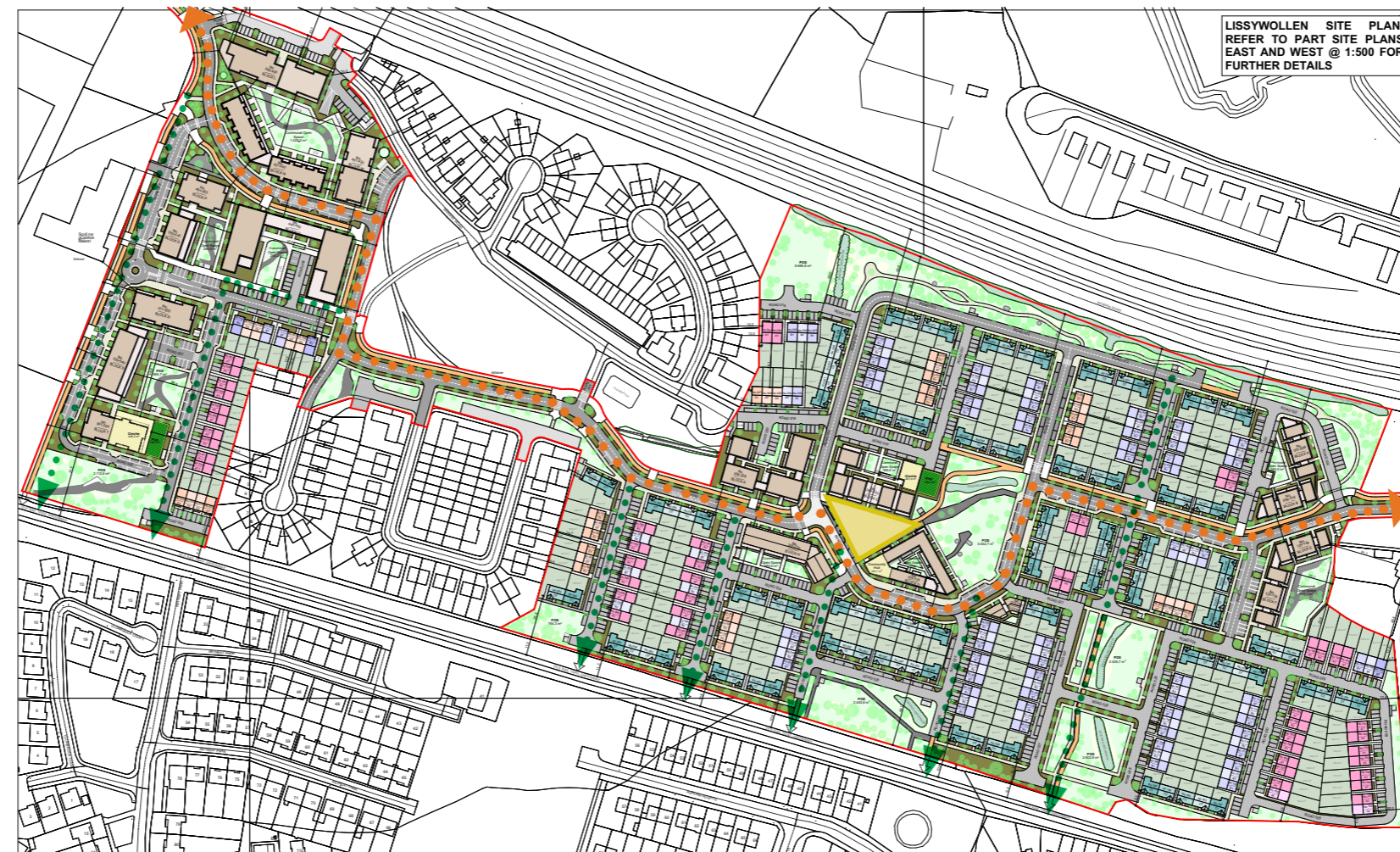
The three significant improvements were-

1. Improvement of the streetscape of the Avenue and changing its character from a 'distributor road' to enclosed urban street in keeping with DMURS and good urban design principles
2. Improved and increased cycle and pedestrian links across the site to the Old Rail Trail Greenway
3. Provision of a new urban plaza [The Triangle] with Community Hub building at the east of the development site to improve local amenity

ABP Preplanning Consultation 2 - Site Plan as submitted



Site Plan Post ABP Preplanning Consultation 2 - key updates



Four primary design principles are applied to the site:

1. Urban Street Network

A sequence of linked streets is assembled, traversing the site East - West, to link the Garrycastle Road [east] with Brawney Road [west]. A key part of the development plan for the area, it will facilitate improved public transport, ease traffic congestion locally and improve connectivity and access to local amenities, services and facilities.

A North- South series of residential streets, home zones and shared surface areas plug into this route, creating connections to the Old Rail Trail greenway, Brawney and the schools to the west end of the site. This creates an urban grid across the site which is unified by its transversal street.

Most importantly, this new network plugs into the existing Brawney roads and streets, tying the two parcels of housing into the new development as a unified part of the wider Athlone urban fabric.

GREENWAY CONNECTIONS



EAST WEST STREET - LISSYWOLLEN AVENUE



CYCLE ROUTE



2. Public Space Network

A series of public green spaces are positioned across the site in such a way that all houses and apartments have a minimal walk to access a meaningful green space.

As there is a substantial green space amenity in existence in the centre of the Brawney development, the proposed new spaces are smaller in scale, allowing a better frequency throughout the scheme.

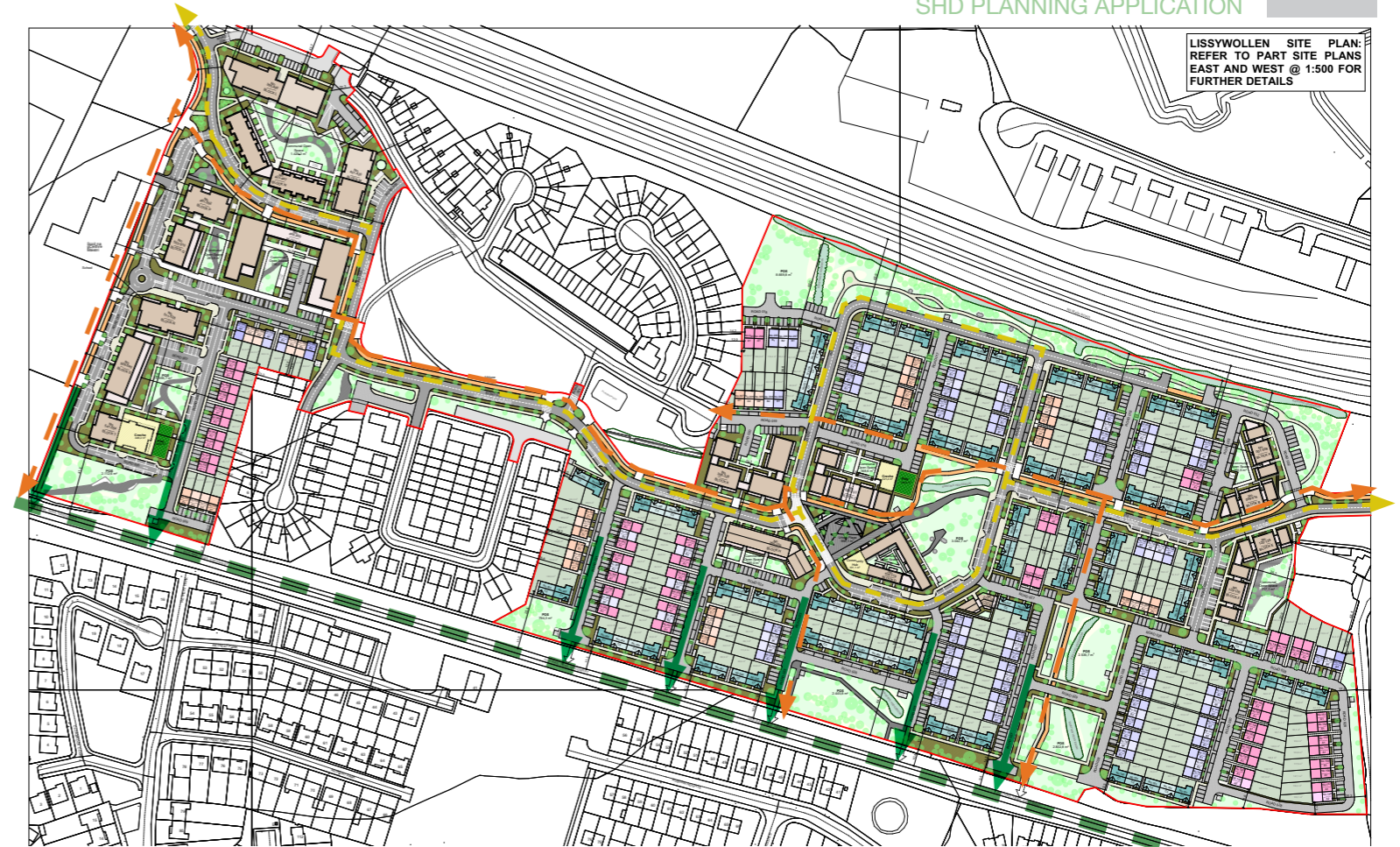
The spaces are generally enclosed by buildings, with good passive surveillance, carefully landscaped with play areas for children, public seating and extensive tree planting. Original hedgerows also form part of each space, promoting biodiversity.

A new urban plaza is also proposed, forming a central public space and creating an identifiable 'centre' to the east end of Lissywollen. It is carefully designed with a mixture of hard and soft landscaping, casual sitting areas and trees, enclosed by residential and community buildings.

PUBLIC GREEN SPACES



PUBLIC URBAN SPACE



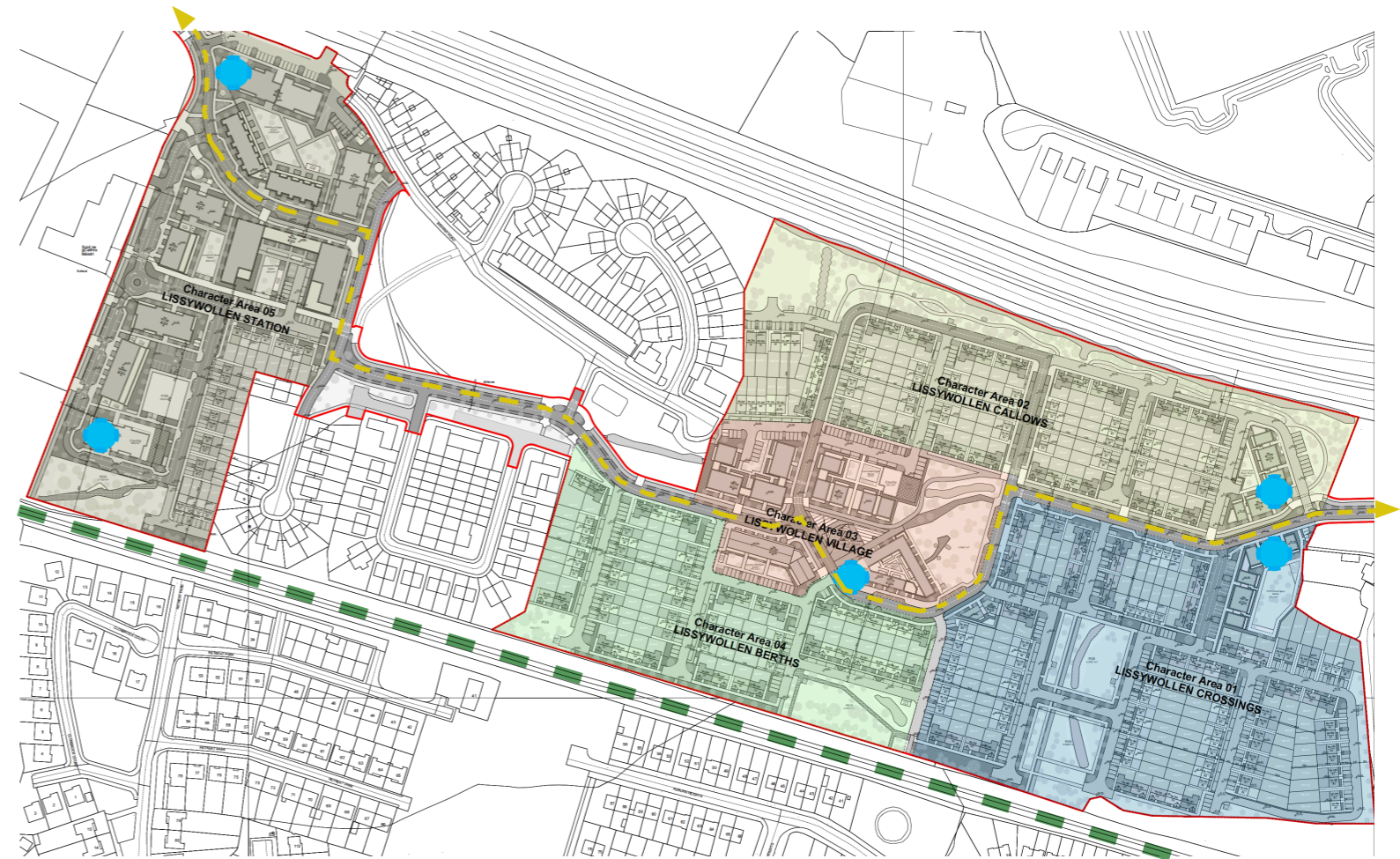
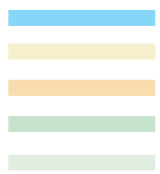
3. Placemaking- Character Areas and Landmark Buildings

The site is divided into five distinct character areas [colour toned], each with its own architectural identity.

The western end of the site, closest to Athlone town centre and the local schools, contains the highest density of residential units and is one character area in itself. This part of the development is identified by a five storey building, marking the entrance to the scheme from the town centre.

The eastern part of the site is of a lower density, containing a higher number of houses and has 4 character areas. These are arranged around the central area, 'Lissywollen Village,' a higher density zone of apartments and duplexes, which contains a public plaza and Community Hub building, forming a new heart for the scheme. The entrance to the development from the east is marked by two apartment buildings sitting tight to the street and reflective of the overall urban character of the proposal.

- Lissywollen Crossings
- Lissywollen Callows
- Lissywollen Village
- Lissywollen Berths
- Lissywollen Station



Character Areas

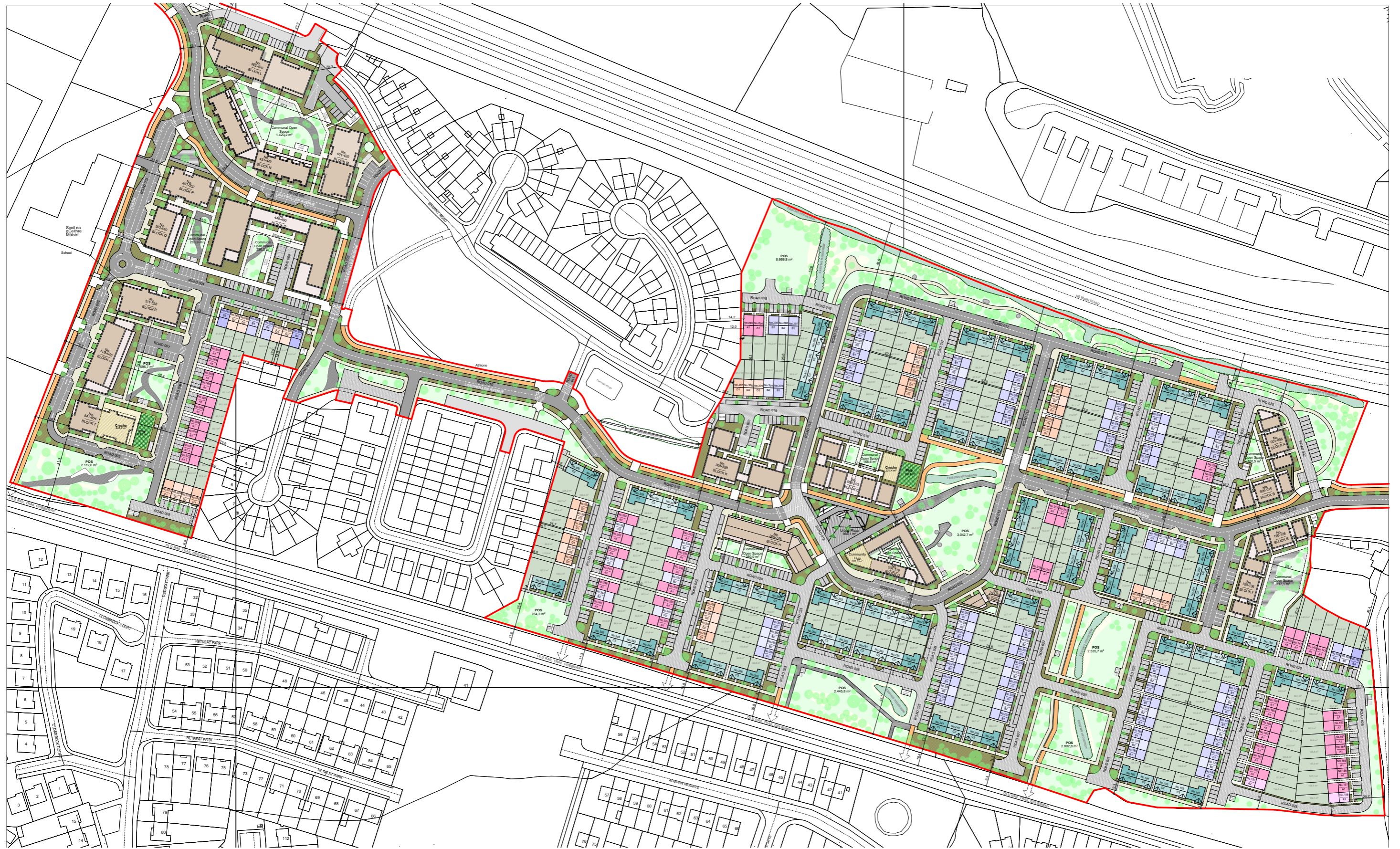


View of western entrance to site to landmark building at Character Area 5



View of eastern entrance to the proposal site to apartment buildings of Character Area 2





Proposed site plan of overall development



Future Public / Community Buildings

Brawney Central Green Space

Triangle Public Space
Community Hub +
Creche



Aerial view / axonometric diagram of proposed scheme in context from south west

Landmark Building 

Lissywollen Avenue 

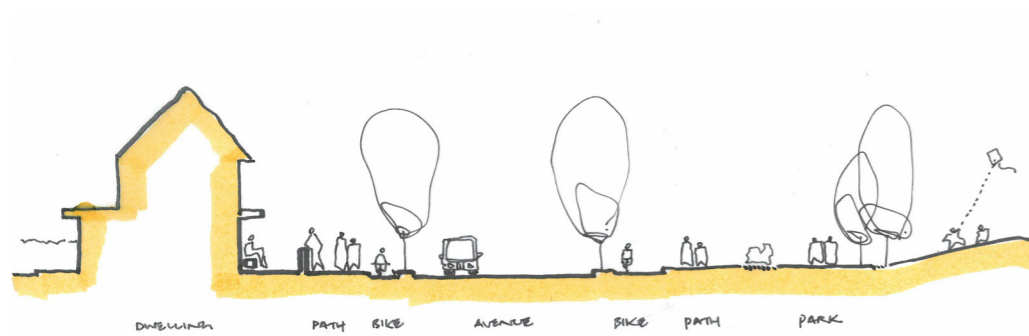


4. Streetscape Design - Creating Community Spaces

A central tenet of this proposal is the design of Lissywollen Avenue and the surrounding residential streets. Creation of well supervised, active, comfortable and liveable streets contributes to high quality sustainable communities.

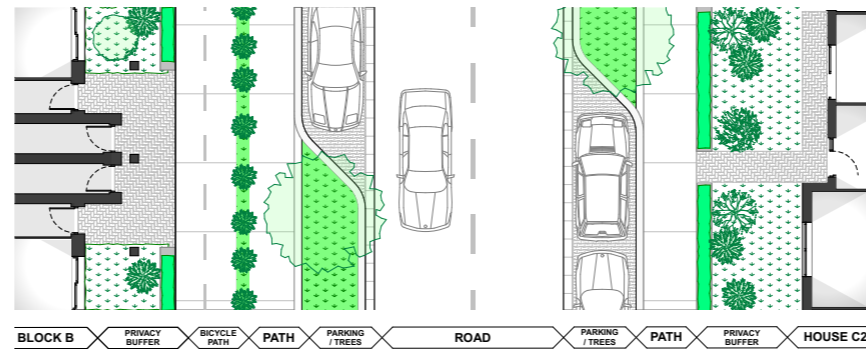
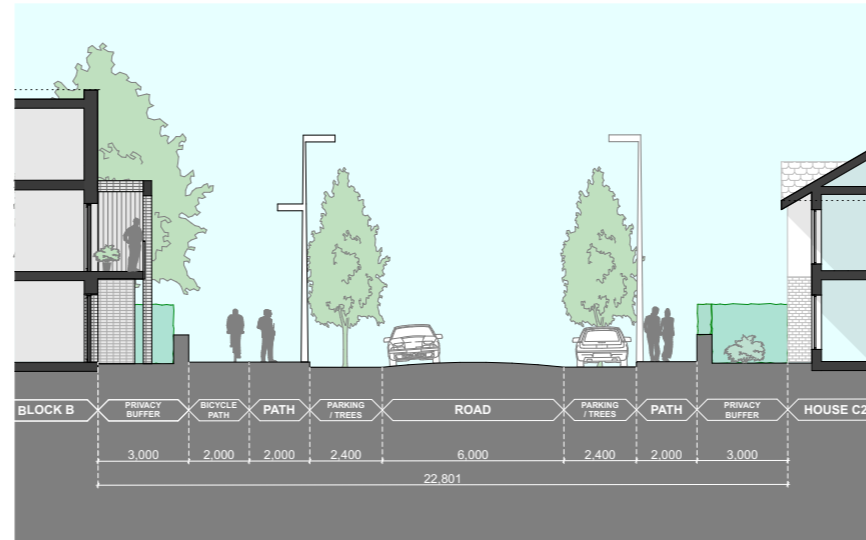
Each street typology has been considered carefully so as to balance street enclosure and width with residential ground floor privacy and amenity.

Setbacks from the edge of the path/ street are kept to between 2-4 metres, allowing the provision of a semi-private interstitial zone between public space and the main building facade. This space will typically be enclosed by a solid fence or low wall, combined with hedging, and will accommodate bike or bin storage, casual sitting or small urban garden space.

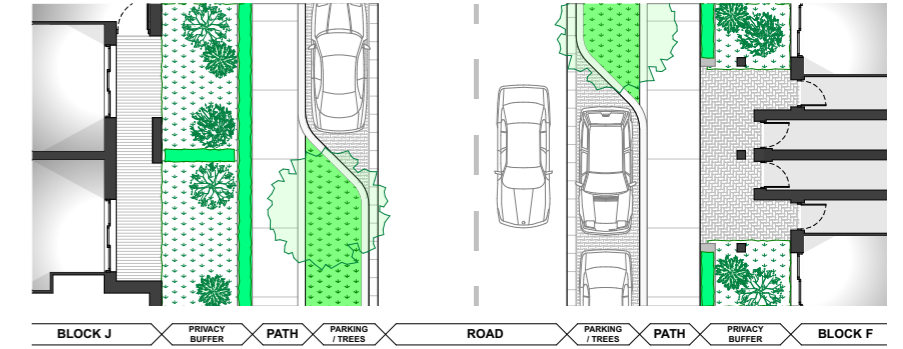
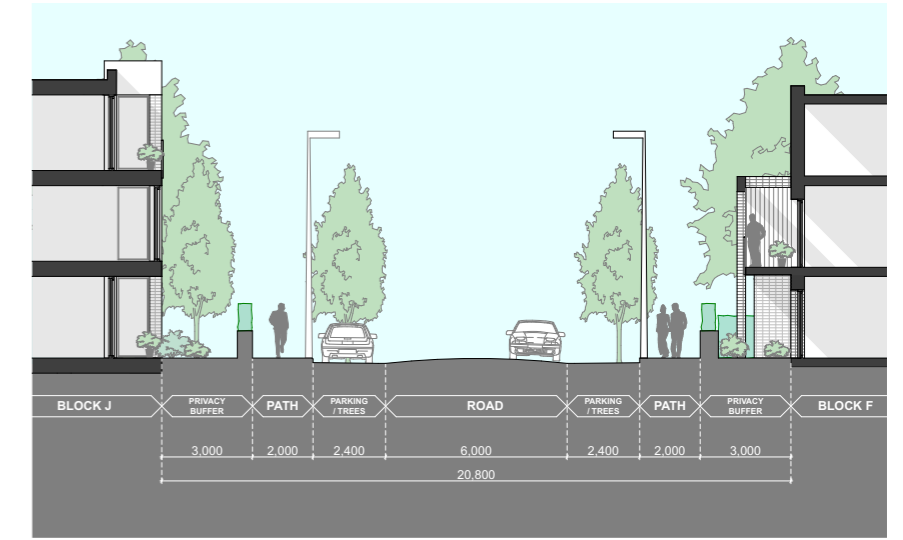


Typical street- concept sketch

Paths and cycle tracks are layered into the street with tree planting/SUDS zones, ensuring a reasonable separation and buffering from vehicular traffic. On smaller residential streets, homezones and shared surface areas have been introduced wherever possible to ensure pedestrian and cyclist priority and promote low vehicular speeds.



Typical street sections



Typical residential street view indication house, path and parking arrangement

Lissywollen Avenue

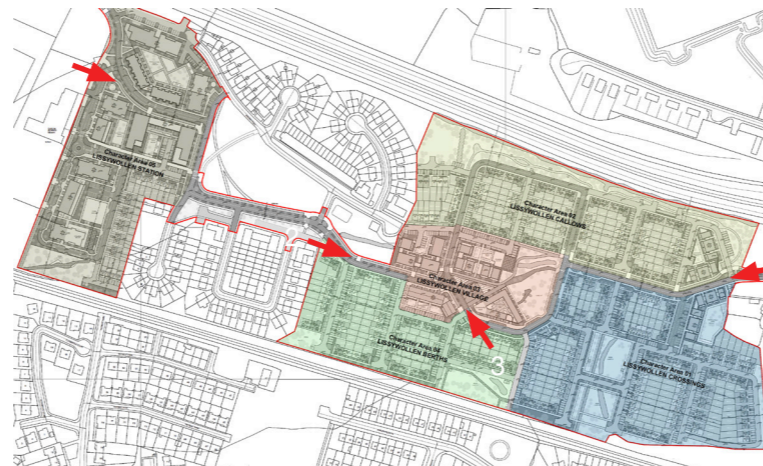
As part of the framework plan for the Lissywollen area, an east-west link road must be provided to facilitate easing of current traffic problems, improvement of pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and through-linking of public transport.

Known as 'Lissywollen Avenue,' this road has been designed as a continuous chain of linked streets, very much part of the urban fabric, rather than a traditional 'distributor road' typology. There are 5 significant junctions and 18 street connections along its entire length, punctuated with 14 pedestrian crossing points, ensuring control of vehicle speeds and traffic calming.

The Avenue connects into each of the character areas, as well as the Brawney housing parcels, and is enclosed by them, resulting in a varying streetscape as one moves from east to west, low density to high. Heights of buildings vary from 2 storeys to 5, with a tenure mix of private terraced houses, own door accessed duplexes and single floor apartments as part of larger residential blocks.

Setbacks from the edge of the path/ street are kept to between 2-5 metres, with the inclusion of a semi-private interstitial zone between public space and the main building facade, balancing the requirement for street enclosure versus ground floor residential privacy.

Upper floors have living and balcony spaces addressing the street, ensuring a lively facade overlooking the pedestrian path, cycleway and vehicle parking. These elements are softened with extensive tree planting and landscaping along its length, complimenting the building facades and enhancing the streetscape.



Avenue Views- Key Plan



Street View 1



Street View 2



Street View 3



Street View 4

Lissywollen - Development Entrances and Approaches

The development is approached and accessed by 3 main entrance points - two vehicular and one from the Greenway - each of which is defined by a landmark building.

The approach from the West passes the Athlone Regional Sports Centre, Athlone Town Football Club and Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maistri which are set back from the road and surrounded by parking areas and grounds. The new proposal establishes a strong urban edge of residential accommodation facing the Gaelscoil and future community building sites. A five storey apartment building is placed on the corner of the development site at the end of the current Brawney Road, creating a dramatic elevation as one drives from the town centre eastwards.

A new park space and apartment building containing one of the two creches in the development is located at the south-west corner of the site, at the junction with the Old Rail Trail greenway. This important node is also a point of connection to Retreat Avenue, which accesses Athlone Community College, and on to Retreat Road which continues into the town centre. The park will have a strong connection to the greenway and will be further enclosed by future community buildings proposed as part of the Framework Plan for the area.

The east end of the site will be approached through existing lands that are in agricultural use or fallow. Again, the creation of a strong urban edge with three storey buildings addressing the corner and Lissywollen Avenue present an attractive and interesting entrance



CGI View of approach to development from Brawney Road, with Gaelscoil and Athlone Town grounds on right



CGI View of development from greenway at southwestern corner



CGI View of approach to development from Garrycastle road to the east



3.0 Character Areas



Lissywollen Crossings- Character Area 1

Area 40.976,6 m2 / 4.1 ha
131 units (110 houses + 21 apartments)

This character area occupies the South Eastern corner of the development area and abuts the Greenway to the South. As a lower density area, the majority of units are a mix of semi-detached and terraced houses, though it does have a small quantum of duplex apartment units, organised in a North South orientation, facing on to the main entrance street at the eastern corner. The apartments are arranged as own door accessed units, with high quality, East/ West facing private open spaces provided for resident for social interaction and relaxation.

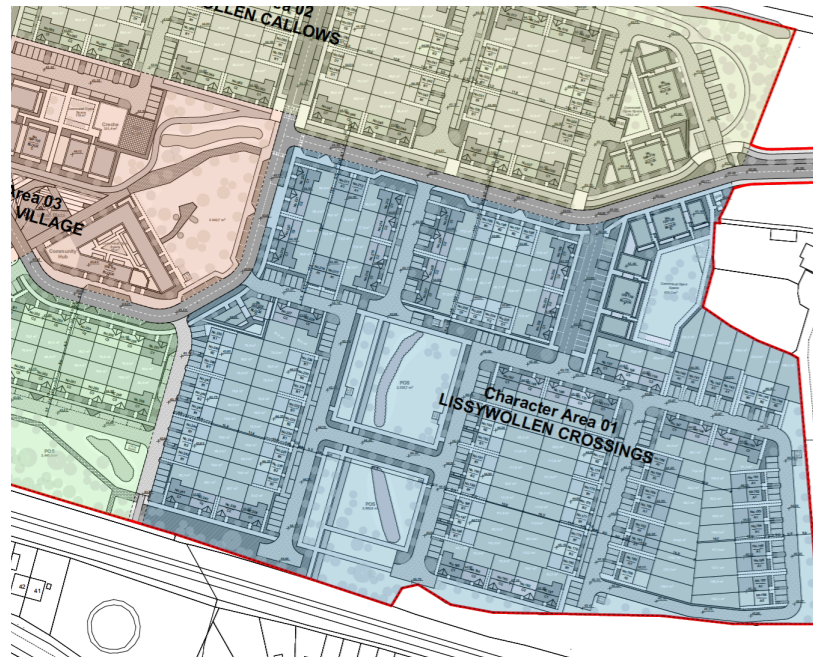
The residential streets created across the area enclose a generous public open space, which in turn links into the Greenway. Houses facing directly on to the Greenway utilise common parking to the sides of the terraces which facilitates a closer position to the path and ensures an attractive elevation with good passive supervision.

Houses on the Eastern boundary address an existing path/track that will in time be upgraded as part of the overall area masterplan. This will in turn link back across the Greenway, connecting into the existing Ashgrove and on to Cartronroy Road.

Parking is a mix of on curtilage and on street for both houses and apartments, with shared surface and homezone areas indicating pedestrian and cyclist priority.



View of public open space looking south to Old Rail Trail Greenway



Site Layout Key Plan



Brid's Eye View from South

As with the terraced and semi-detached units throughout the scheme, roofs are pitched and finished with a quality dark coloured slate. The proposed brick is a sharp edged buff with a strong texture which works well in contrast with the white render finish, giving a distinct visual identity to the area.



Facade Brick Sample



Typical Corner Condition



Typical Terraced Houses Type



Contiguous elevation through greenspace



Lissywollen Callows - Character Area 2

Area: 35.909,7 m2 / 3.6 ha
103 units (87 houses + 16 apartments)

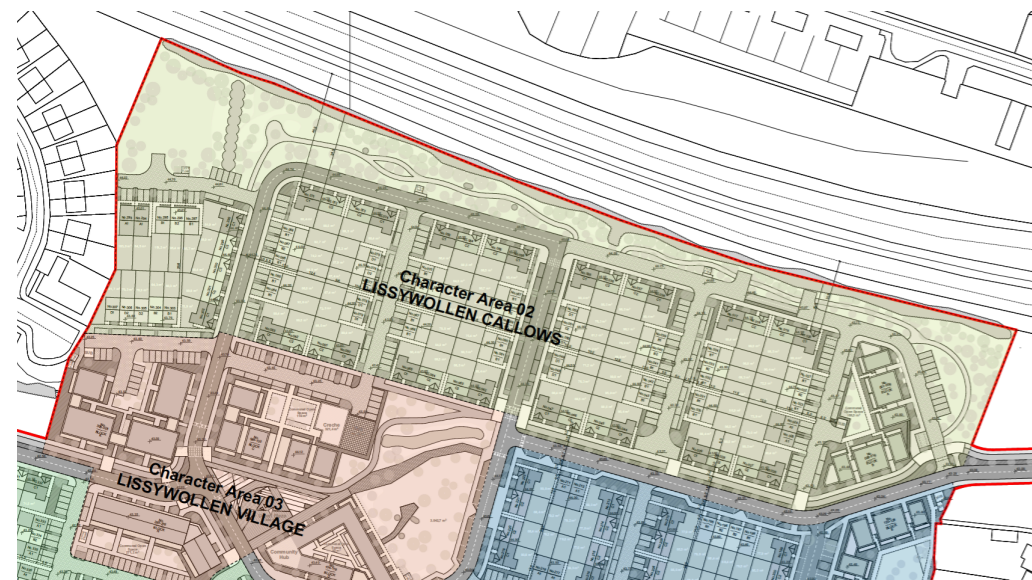
Directly abutting the N6 bypass, this character area has a high percentage of terraced houses, with a L shaped terrace of duplex apartments enclosing a triangular shaped greenspace on the Eastern edge forming the entrance to the development. The shape of the character area is dictated by the location of the main entrance street and the N6 Main Road, resulting in a series of short North-South oriented streets of terraced houses, with smaller terraces of shallow front houses facing on to Lissywollen Avenue. The houses are also pulled back from the N6 boundary and separated from the busy road by a landscaped, linear greenspace with landscaping and mounding for noise mitigation along the northern edge.

The eastern end of this character area is the entrance to the development from the Garrycastle Road area, which is marked by the duplex apartment buildings. The apartments are arranged as own door accessed blocks, with high quality, south and west facing private open spaces provided for residents overlooking a west facing common garden.

Parking is a mix of on street and on curtilage for both houses and apartments, with exception of the houses facing Lissywollen Avenue which have easily accessible common parking adjacent to each terrace.



View of duplex apartments facing on to Lissywollen Avenue



Site Layout Key Plan



Brid's Eye View from South

The terraced houses throughout this character area have pitched roofs finished with a quality mid grey coloured slate. This compliments proposed brick- a very light buff-white textured- which works in unison with the white render finish, giving a softer finish and visual identity to the area.

Duplex apartments are proposed in the same palette, seamlessly tying into the house terraces.

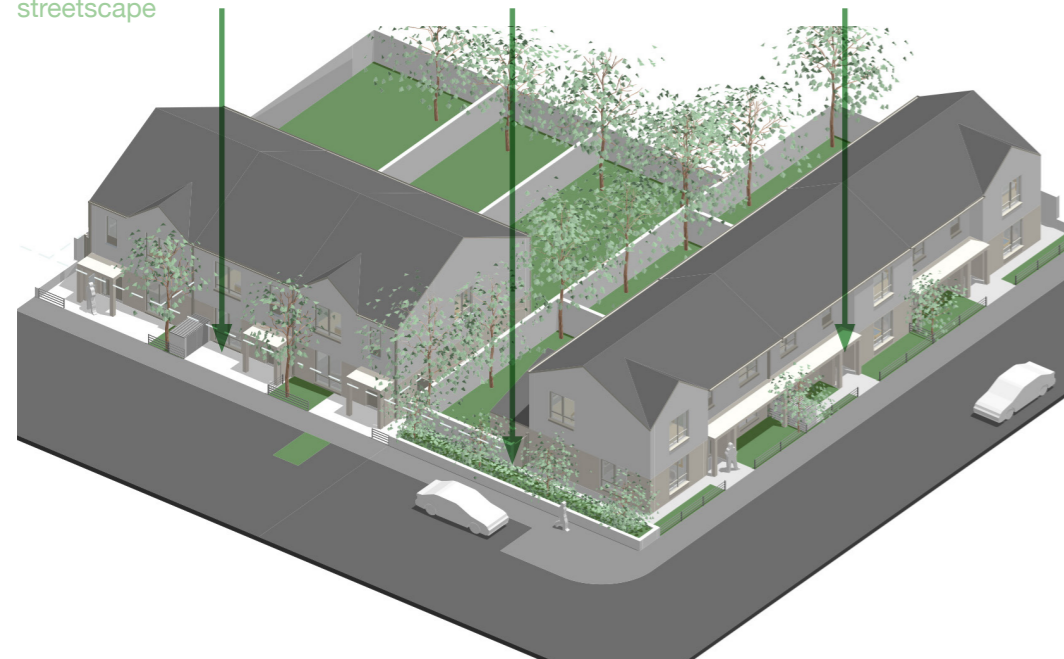


Typical Brick Palette

Terraced Houses with on street parking and shallow front gardens to enhance streetscape

Low wall with planting to side of house as transition zone to path condition

Wide Front Houses as bookends to streets



Typical Corner Condition



Typical Terraced Houses Type



Contiguous elevation through N6 greenspace buffer and typical street



The public domain is carefully considered, mixing on-curtilage and on-street parking with street landscaping and trees, and varied shared surface areas that are pedestrian and cyclist friendly. This encourages active streets and promotes a strong sense of ownership and community.



View of typical street condition showing on-street parking and landscaping approach



View of duplex apartments and terraced houses overlooking common public space



Lissywollen Village - Character Area 3

Area: 16.178,6 m² / 1.6 ha
64 units (64 apartments)

This character area is located in the central section of the eastern end of the development site, connecting to the adjacent Brawney open space. As the higher density centre of the east of the development, it has a mix of own door accessed apartment and duplex buildings, of three storeys in height, which is also commensurate with the existing housing height and scale.

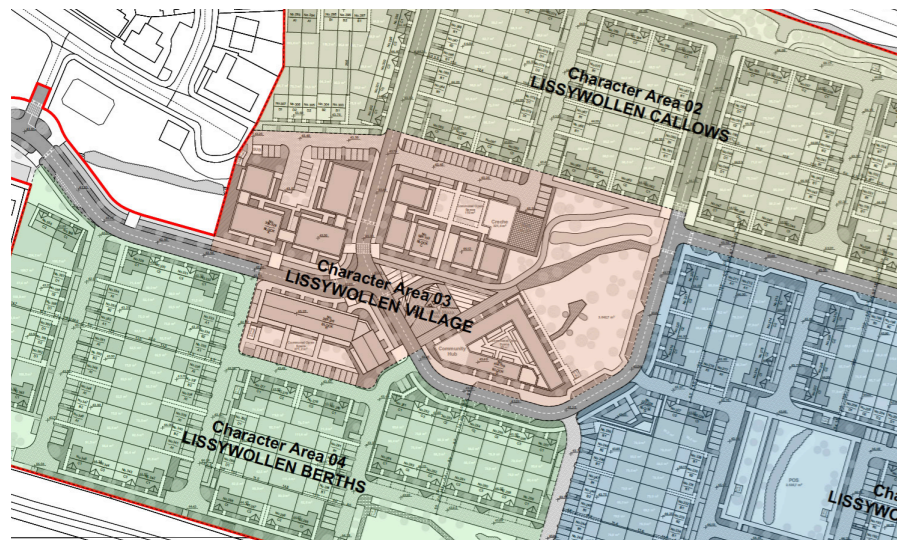
The area is conceived as the 'village centre' of the area, defined by the Triangle urban space, and Community Hub building occupying its main corner, addressing the triangle and street. A creche also addresses the triangle and adjacent public open space, providing additional varied use to the predominantly residential area.

While designed as a centre and hub for the locale, the scale of the buildings and space is deliberately small as there is a designation for a new series of significant public buildings at the western end of the development, beside the Greenway and Gaelscoil, as part of the overall development plan for the Lissywollen area.

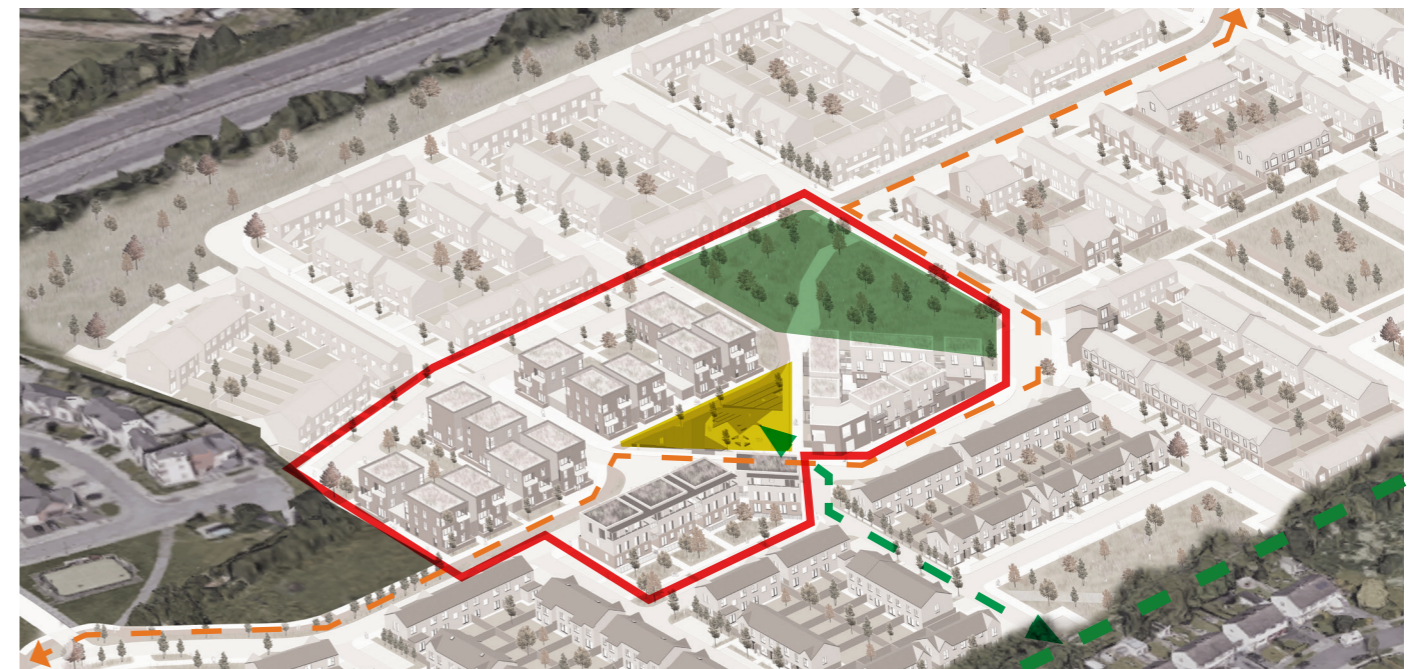
The apartments and duplexes are arranged around the public space, with own door access, high quality, south facing private open space and communal garden spaces provided for residents. These spaces are carefully designed with timber and brick screen walls to create optimum privacy given their proximus location beside the public open space. Parking is on street and located behind and adjacent to each building, away from the main street elevations. Bicycle parking is secure and enclosed within the apartment blocks, near entrances and with extensive screen planting to ensure integration into the landscaped common areas.



View of Triangle Public Space look east, indicating soft and hard landscaping



Site Layout Key Plan



Brid's Eye View from South

Lissywollen Village- Character Area 3

As the higher density centre of the east end of the development, it contains own-door accessed apartments and duplexes arranged around the Triangle public space, creche and Community Hub building. Each cluster of units has its own semi private landscaped space, overlooked by the apartments, with private balconies generally orientated South or to the street.

Materials proposed for the buildings is simple palette of white brick with white render. These materials serve as a backdrop for the proposed landscaping and west facing urban space. Roofs are flat to minimise overshadowing of surrounding two storey houses and facades of the blocks are separated to allow light penetration into the courtyard spaces behind.



View of Triangle Public Space



View of Triangle Public Space looking north



Typical Brick Palette



Contiguous Elevation





View of typical streetscape of apartments

View into Triangle public space looking west
from adjoining greenspace



Apartment elevation to Triangle public space



**Lissywollen Village -
The Triangle Public Space and Community Hub**

The central public area for the east of the scheme is the 'Triangle' public space. The space is deliberately small in scale, in keeping with the scale of the surrounding apartment buildings, to give it a more intimate and village-like character. Its south west orientation concentrates the sunlight from lunchtime until evening, encouraging day long use; its street furniture, raised planters and hard landscaped areas have been designed for sitting casually and encouraging neighbourly interaction. Trees are introduced to provide cover and shade, movement and shadow, while creating a dramatic canopy when lit at night.

A Community Hub building has been positioned at the south west corner of the square, addressing Lissywollen Avenue. The current residents of Brawney have a lively and active residents' association and there is currently no dedicated space for them, or any other local group, to meet [the local creche is currently utilised and is not fit for this purpose]. This bright open building is conceived as a flexible space, with two open floor plates at ground and first floors that are subdividable and can operate independently or as a whole. It is envisaged that the hub will have the potential for use by any local group, complimenting the Triangle space and become the local centre of the development.

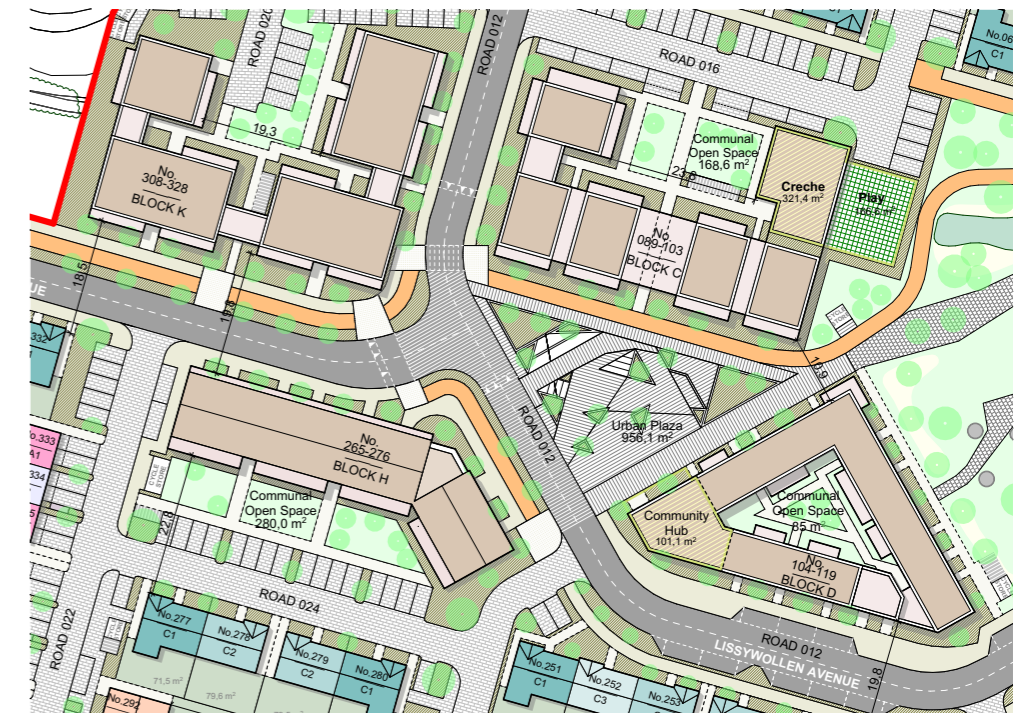
Refer to Landscape Architects drawings for further public space details



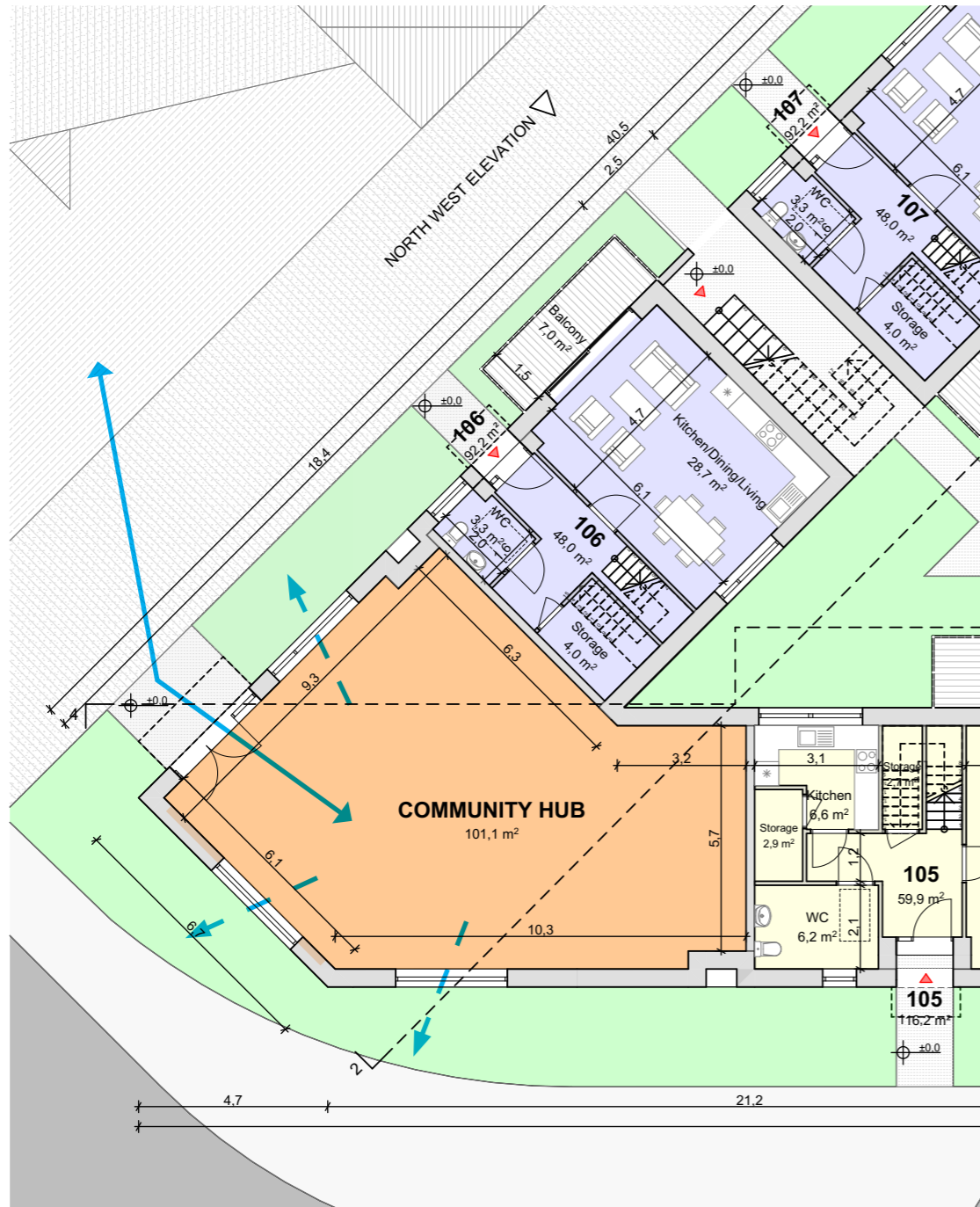
CGI of the Community Hub Building on the triangle and Lissywollen Avneue



Reference Image



Site Plan



Ground Floor Plan - Community Hub



Axonometric view from west

Elevations - Community Hub



Lissywollen Berths - Character Area 4

Area: 22.341,7 m² / 2.2 ha
66 units (66 houses)

This area is part of the central section of the development site, immediately adjacent to the existing Brawney housing scheme, Lissywollen Main Street and Triangle public square and Old Rail Trail Greenway. It has a mix of own door accessed terraced and semi-detached houses, similar in scale with the existing housing height and volume.

In addressing the main street, the terraced housing also fronts directly on to it, creating an attractive residential street frontage with the introduction of a shallow private front area. This facilitates a layer of privacy to the front of the house while giving a strong residential streetscape.

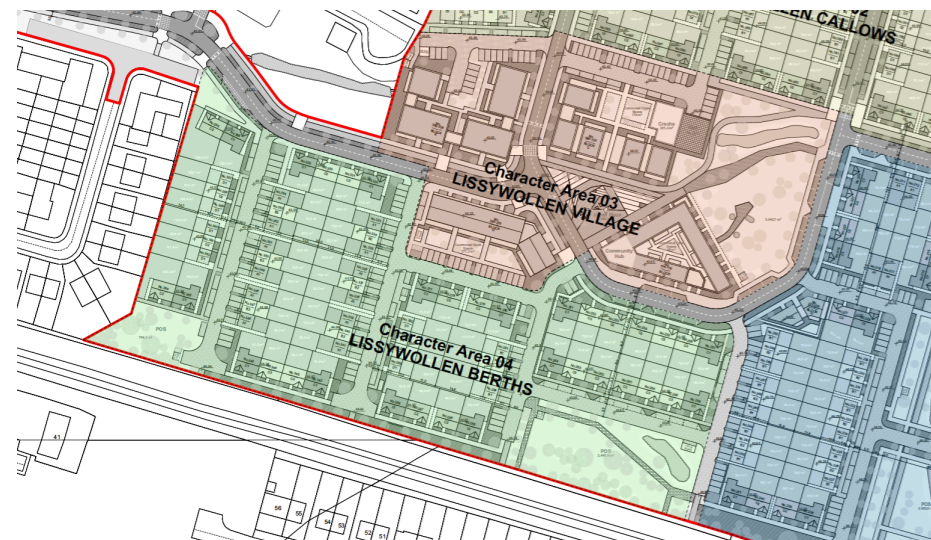
Two public green spaces are located to the south east and south west corners, directly abutting the greenway. Streets are generally shared surface spaces that link the greenway to the main street at four locations, providing excellent pedestrian and cycle permeability. Parking varies between on street and on curtilage with extensive bicycle parking provided adjacent to all houses and the public space.

Houses facing directly on to the greenway utilise common parking to the sides of the terraces which facilitates a closer position to the path and ensures an attractive elevation with good passive supervision of the greenway.

The proposed material finish to the residential units is a sharp contemporary red brick, which will contrast well with the white render finish and dark slate roofs.



View looking east of Lissywollen Avenue
UPDATE



Site Layout Key Plan



Brid's Eye View from South

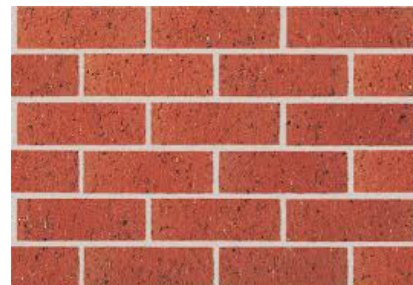




Typical Terraced Elevation [Type B House]



Typical Terraced Elevation [Type B House]



Typical Brick Palette

Wide Front Houses facing on to greenway

Low wall with planting to side of house as transition zone to path and parking

Terraced Houses with on street parking and shallow front gardens to enhance streetscape



View of character area connection to greenway along southern boundary



Lissywollen Station - Character Area 5

Area: 37.904,6 m2 / 3.8 ha
212 units (22 houses + 190 apartments)

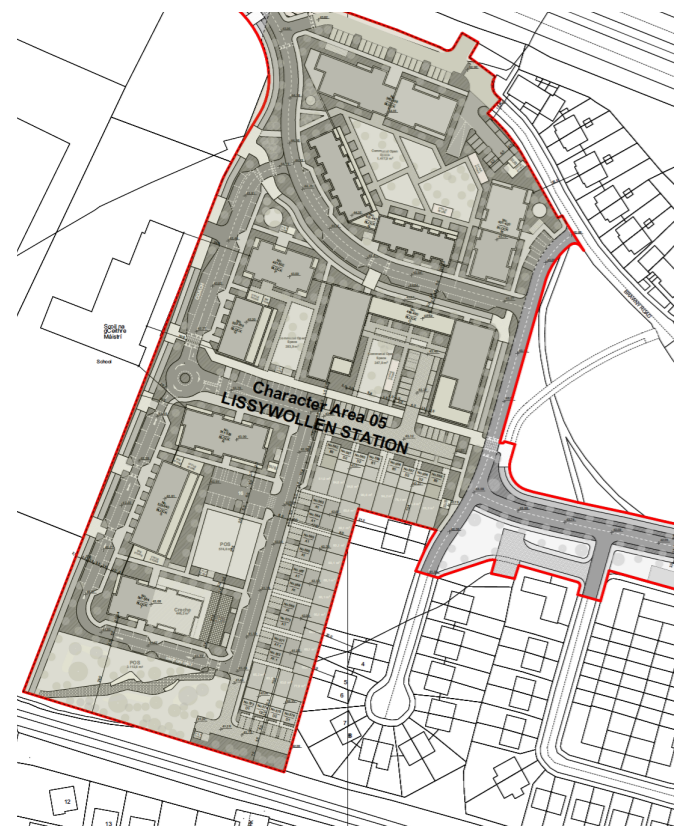
This area is the Western most section of the site and closest to Athlone Town centre. It is also the most dense, with a high percentage of apartments and duplex unit types, and also with 26 terraced and semi-detached houses backing on to the existing Brawney housing development.

The apartment and duplex buildings are typically three to five storeys in height, which is commensurate with the scale and height of the existing housing stock. This rises to 4 and storeys at the North West corner of the site, where there is a landmark apartment building [Block L] marking the entrance to the development.

Apartments and duplexes are arranged typically in a courtyard type layout, providing controlled private open space for residents. Parking is on surface and located adjacent to each building, with the houses having on curtilage spaces. Bicycle parking is located throughout the scheme, close to apartment entrances.

A medium sized public space is located to the South West corner, adjacent to the Greenway and with a good Southerly aspect. The first of two creches in the development is located here on the ground floor of the apartment building [Block K], with a controlled playspace to the rear, facing on to the private open space of the duplexes and apartments.

The architecture of the apartments and duplexes is distinctly contemporary, with a mix of brick and render elevations and incorporating stepping balconies and terraces which provide privacy for occupants.



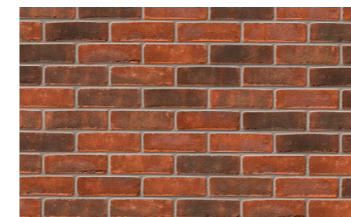
Site Layout Key Plan



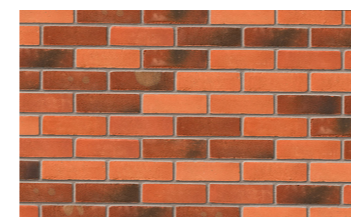
Western corner view of landmark apartment building [Block L]

Brick Palette by Area:

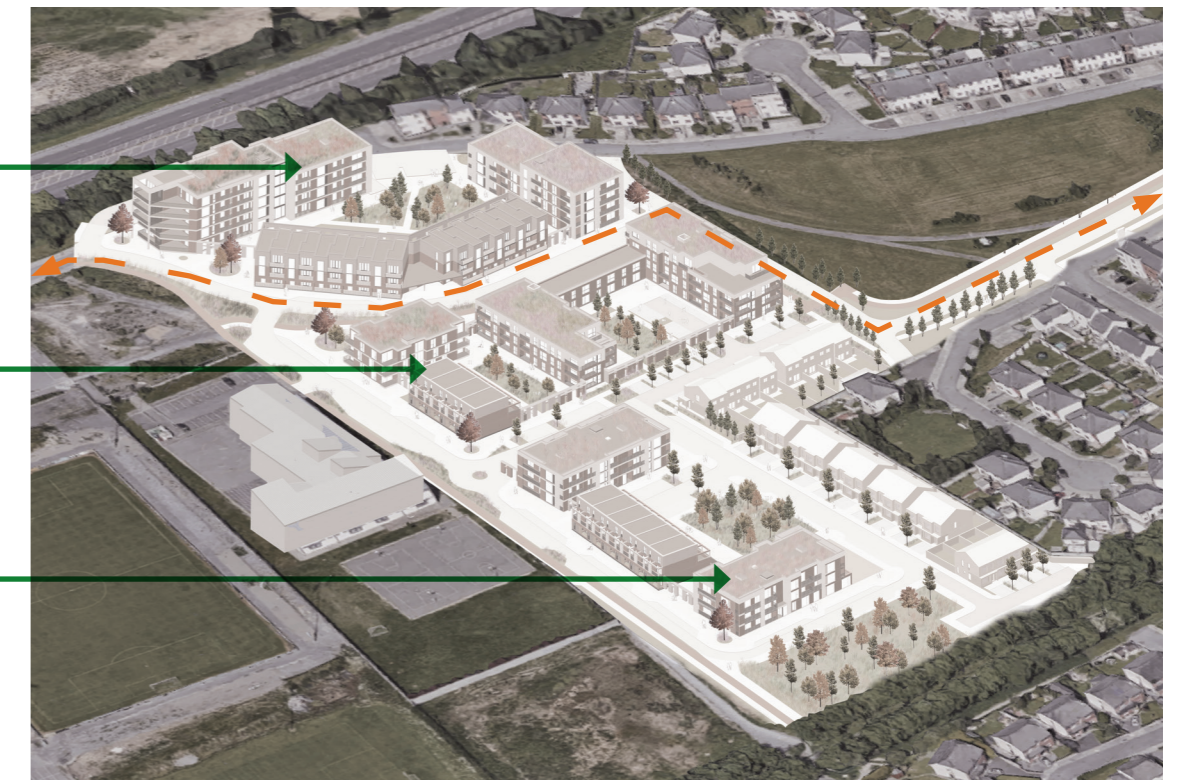
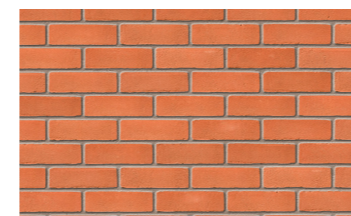
North



Middle



South



Axonometric Aerial View

North Zone - Apartment Blocks L, M, N

Located at the top of Character Area 5, this part of the development forms the entrance from Brawney Road. It consists of three apartment blocks arranged around a central courtyard open space. The apartments address the existing Brawney Road and form the street facade of Lissywollen Avenue.

The building heights vary from 5 storeys at the front corner of Block L, to 3 storeys facing on to Lissywollen Avenue and the existing houses on Brawney Road. The apartment blocks have been separated where they come closest to the existing houses on Brawney Road. This affords good light penetration to the front of the houses and addresses any issues of significant over-bearing or over-shadowing.

The blocks are arranged on the site in such a way that there are breaks in the building line that facilitate access points to the courtyard, stair cores and for sunlight penetration. Roofs are flat and parapets are kept to a minimum height to lower the impact of the buildings volumetrically.

Ground floor apartments are generally own door accessed where possible to ensure an active ground floor facade facing the street. The buildings are held back from the street edge to create a small semi-private interstitial space, a privacy layer to the front of the apartment which also gives a strong residential streetscape. Upper floor apartments have large balconies that face out to the street, again enhancing the residential character.

The apartments surround a landscaped courtyard which provides a high quality and well overlooked amenity space for residents. It has a mix of hard and soft landscaping, facilitating children's play areas as well as general seating.

Vehicular parking is part on-street and in-basement under Block L. There is also a significant provision of bicycle parking for each block, both within the buildings and adjacent in the courtyard area.



Part Site Plan showing blocks L, M and N, surface and bicycle parking, and the landscaped courtyard



Street View looking west along Lissywollen Avenue



Street View looking North to landmark 5 storey building on Lissywollen Avenue/ Brawney Road



Courtyard Views



Axonometric View- Block L landmark corner



Typical Elevations Block L



Contiguous Elevation - Lissywollen Avenue





Typical Elevations Block M



Axonometric Block M



Lissywollen Avenue elevations Block N



Space between buildings - paths and lanes

The apartment blocks are situated on the site to facilitate good pedestrian permeability and access from street to semi public areas. The paths and lanes created in these in-between spaces are enclosed, but well supervised, with landscaping and high quality public lighting to make them attractive and welcoming at all times of the day.



View of Lissywollen Avenue looking west with Blocks O [left] and M [right]



Mid Zone - Apartment Blocks O, P, Q

Located in the middle of Character Area 5, this part of the development addresses the Gaelscoil and forms a formal streetscape to Lissywollen Avenue to the north, while opening up to the street with residential amenity spaces to the south.

The building heights are 3 storeys across each apartment block affording good light penetration to the residential units and streets on all sides. Blocks are orientated generally north-south, maximising orientation and relationship with the south facing courtyards. Roofs are flat and parapets are kept to a minimum height to lower the impact of the buildings volumetrically.

Ground floor apartments are generally own door accessed where possible to ensure an active ground floor facade facing the street. The buildings are held back from the street edge to create a small semi-private interstitial space, a privacy layer to the front of the apartment which also gives a strong residential streetscape. Upper floor apartments have large balconies that face out to the street and into the courtyards, providing good passive surveillance.

The apartments surround a landscaped courtyard which provides a high quality amenity space for residents, with a mix of hard and soft landscaping, facilitating children's play areas as well as general seating.

Vehicular parking is on-street with a significant provision of bicycle parking for each block, both within the buildings and adjacent in the courtyard areas.

Additional on-street parking is provided for the Gaelscoil to facilitate the extra traffic loading during morning and afternoons. A coach parking space is also included directly outside the school. Enhanced pedestrian and cycle paths linking to the school will increase accessibility to the school, both from the Greenway and overall development.



Part Site Plan showing blocks O,P and Q, surface and bicycle parking, and the landscaped courtyards



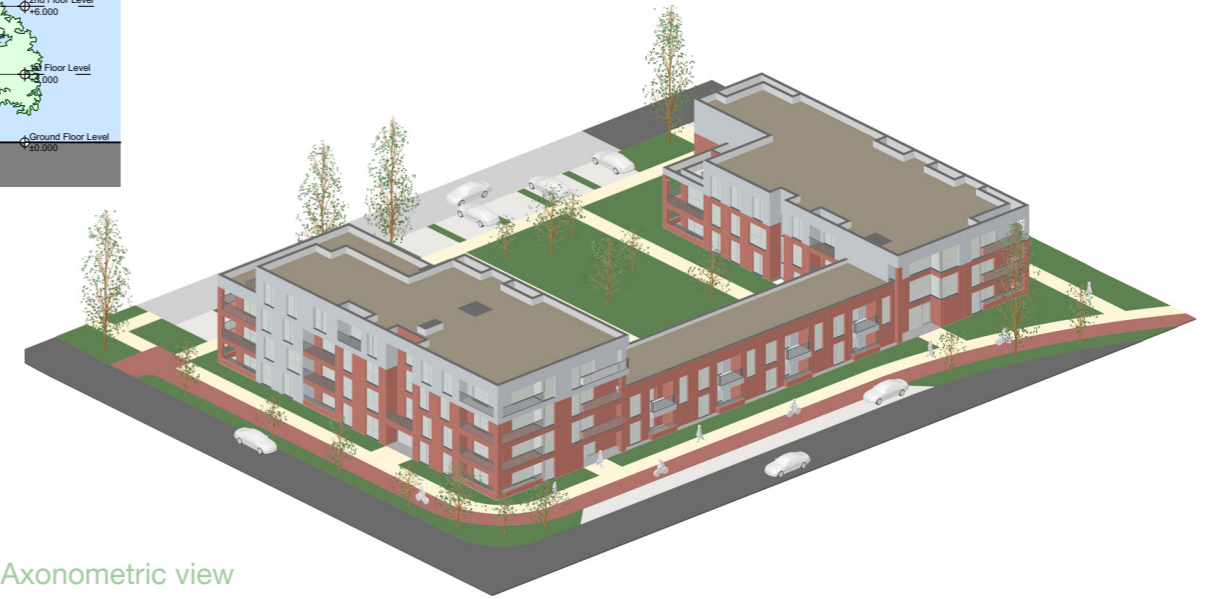
Street View looking north to Block P, with the cycle track and Gaelscoil to the left



Street View looking west along Lissywollen Avenue



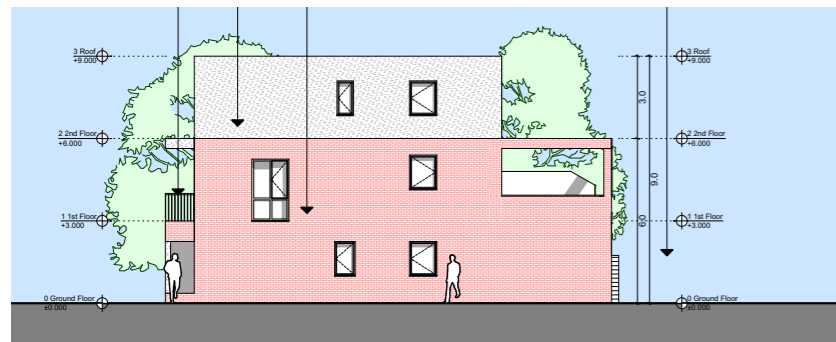
Block O - Lissywollen Avenue elevation



Block O - Axonometric view



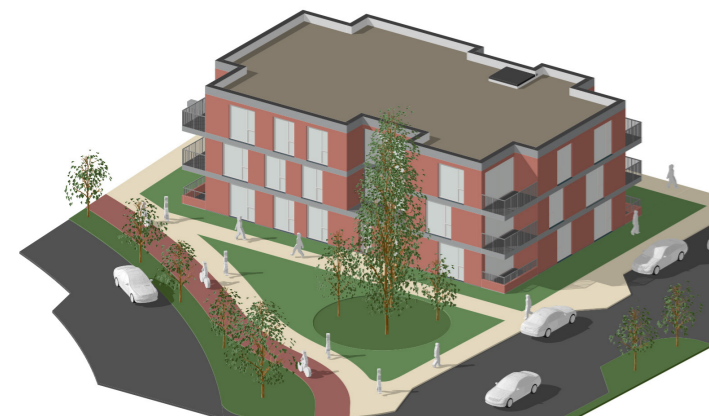
Block O - courtyard section



Block Q - gable and front elevations



Block Q - Axonometric view



Block P - Axonometric view



Block P - Lissywollen Avenue elevation



**South Zone - Apartment Blocks R, S, T,
Terraced, Semi-detached housing units**

The south zone of Character Area 5 sits adjacent to the Old Rail Trail Greenway, backing on to the existing Brawny housing development.

A sequence of 3 apartment and duplex blocks are arranged around an east facing landscaped courtyard. A series of terraced and semi-detached houses back on to the existing houses, forming a residential street which leads to a public open space, which in turn links into the greenway.

The building heights are 3 storeys across each apartment block affording good light penetration to the residential units and streets on all sides. Roofs are flat and parapets are kept to a minimum height to lower the impact of the buildings volumetrically. The houses are all two storey with pitched roofs. Both are in keeping with the scale and height of the existing development in Brawny.

Ground floor apartments are generally own door accessed where possible to ensure an active ground floor facade facing the street. As with other apartment buildings in the proposal, facades are held back from the street edge to create a small semi-private interstitial space. with upper floor apartments having large balconies that face out to the street and into the courtyards, providing good passive surveillance.

Block T apartments includes the creche, located adjacent to both the public open space and courtyard surround a landscaped courtyard which provides a high quality amenity space for residents, with a mix of hard and soft landscaping, facilitating children's play areas as well as general seating.

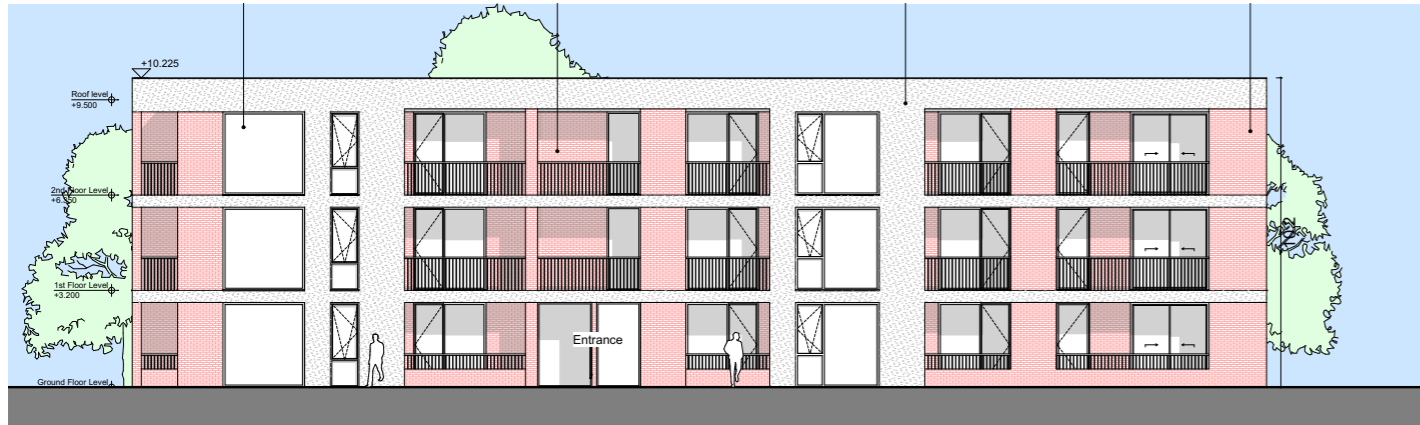
Vehicular parking is primarily on-street with a significant provision of bicycle parking for each block, both within the buildings and adjacent in the courtyard areas. Some on curtilage parking is provided for the houses.



Part Site Plan showing apartment blocks R,S and T, two storey housing units, surface and bicycle parking, and landscaped open spaces



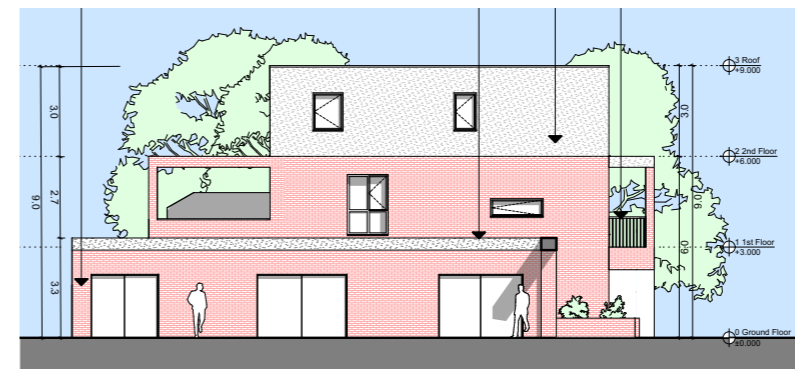
Contiguous west elevation



Sample Elevations Apartment Block R



Sample Elevations Duplex Block S



View of Block T with public open space
from junction with Greenway

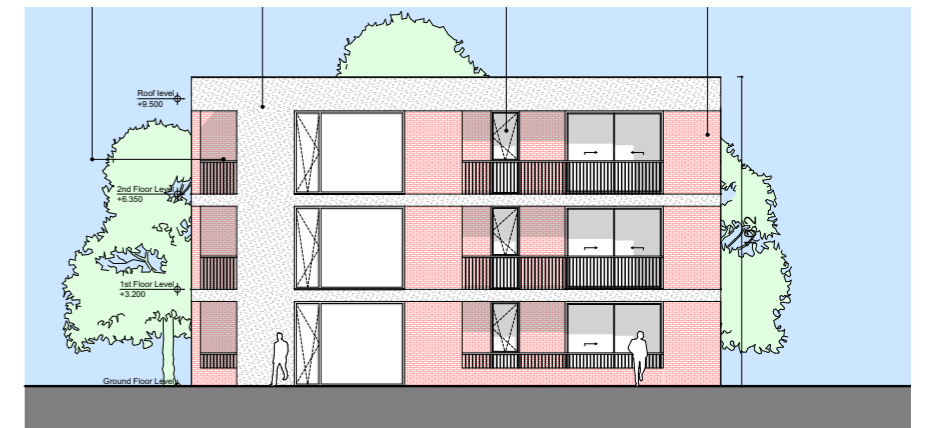




View looking North of Block T, with the Creche and play area



Block R, S, T communal garden with terraced houses completing enclosure of space



Sample Elevations Apartment Block R



4.0 Urban Design Criteria Assessment



URBAN DESIGN MANUAL: URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

Introduction

In order to assist in the assessment of the subject application the development proposal is assessed in this appendix against the 12 Design Criteria and Indicators contained in the Urban Design Manual – Best Practice Guide (DEHLG, 2009).

The design and layout of the development proposal for 576 no. dwellings, community hub & 2 no. creche units has been guided by the policies and objectives contained in the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2022 which is the local area plan governing the subject lands. The framework plan relates to 78 hectares of strategically located, underutilised and largely undeveloped lands located to the immediate northeast of Athlone town centre. The vision statement for the framework plan is;

‘To create a vibrant and sustainable residential quarter which supports and encourages economic, social and community development, and which is attractive to residents and visitors alike, maximises connectivity to both the town centre and Old Rail Trail and offers a high level of environmental quality to ensure an excellent quality of life for all’

As detailed in the above planning report the lands subject to the development proposal, which form part of the framework plan lands, are zoned for residential development therefore the subject application is compliant with the core development objectives of the framework plan. Throughout the design process great consideration has been given to the unique parameters of the subject site and the proposed layout, density, height and style of the development pays cognizance to;

- The need to protect and enhance the amenity and enjoyment for the existing residents of Brawny estate which dissects the subject lands
- Proximity of the site to the N6, Athlone Relief Road, and the need to ensure noise mitigation measures for same
- Framework plan requirements to facilitate connections to the Old Rail Trail Greenway that forms a section of the Galway - Dublin National Cycle Network (NCN)
- The need to provide for greater connectivity to the framework plan lands to ensure safe access & movement throughout the plan lands
- Given the capacity of the subject lands, the need to provide for variety throughout the subject lands in regard to density, housing typology, style and mix

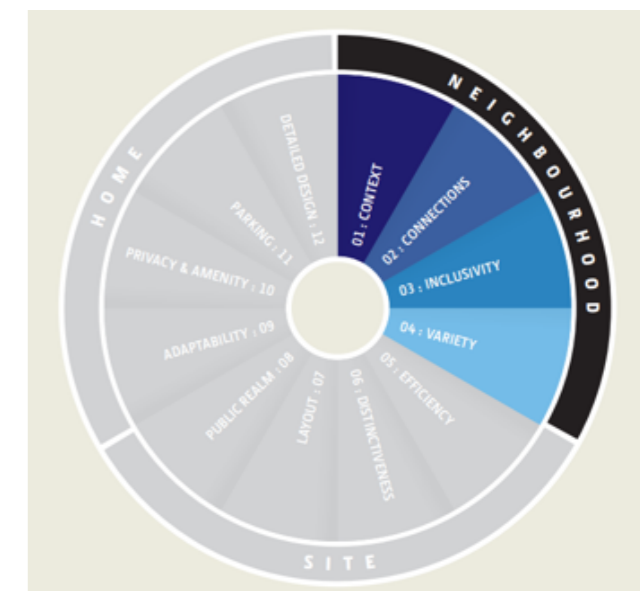


1.1. Neighbourhood

A good neighbourhood is the foundation of a happy, safe, sustainability and successful community. While it is difficult to define a 'good' neighbourhood, it is generally seen as one which promotes a sense of place throughout by virtue of its style and form, one which is easily to navigate and access, one which provides for facilities within easy reach and one which has a high quantity & quality of public and private open spaces to ensure that future residents and visitors alike can enjoy leisure time within their neighbourhood.

The lands subject to this application have the benefit of a coherent and detailed Local Authority led Framework Plan which has greatly analysed the context of the lands and designated specific land-use zonings to individual parcels. As previously stated, the subject lands within this application are zoned for residential development which provides a strong guideline for the type of development required in order to ensure efficient development of the lands. In this regard the proposed development is greatly assisted by its proximity to the services hub of Athlone Town Centre, the existing sports, recreational and educational facilities located to the immediate west of the site, the existing employment lands to the immediate east of the site, and the existing high quality transport connectivity in the form of the N6 (to the north) and the Old Rail Trail Greenway (to the south).

The zoning and scale of the subject lands does, however, provide challenges. A development proposal for 576 no. dwellings requires sufficient variety in housing style, typology, mix, density and building height in order to avoid architectural monotony and create a vibrant, sustainable residential quarter based upon several attractive and unique character areas. The subject lands in this application transcend several 'parcels' of land contained within framework plan with each parcel having different development strategy outcomes desired for the objectives of landuse & function, landscape & form, access & movement. The development proposal has therefore taken the approach of designing the proposed layout and housing typology based upon five character areas and, as discussed in the Section 11 of the planning report, the proposed development is in compliance with the aforementioned development strategy outcomes which will ensure that the subject lands can be successfully developed in several neighbourhoods each with there own sense of place and community.



1.1.1. Context

How does the development respond to its surroundings?

- *The development seems to have evolved naturally as part of its surroundings*
- *Appropriate increases in density respect the form of buildings and landscape around the site's edges and the amenity enjoyed by neighbouring users*
- *Form, architecture and landscaping have been informed by the development's place and time*
- *The development positively contributes to the character and identity of the neighbourhood*
- *Appropriate responses are made to the nature of specific boundary conditions*

While it is not abnormal to have a development site abutting existing development, the development proposal is unique in that the subject lands are dissected by the existing Brawny estate. This estate contains approximately 160 no. traditional 2 storey detached, semi-detached & terraced family houses. The proposed development has taken great care in ensuring that the existing residential amenity and quality of life for Brawny residents is not only protected, but enhanced, while also recognising that the housing needs and styles have greatly changed since the estate was built. The existing form of residential development has informed the housing typology proposed. It is recognised that there is a need for higher densities and building heights given the current housing conditions in the country, however, there is also a need to ensure that the proposed development is not entirely out of step with the prevailing development in the area and the need to protect the amenity of existing residents at Brawny including the functioning of the existing primary school to the immediate west. As such, the proposed development caters for 12 no. apartment/duplex blocks, 11 no. of which are 3/4 storey in height with 1 no. 5 storey building (Block L) acting as a landmark building for the development at the sites northwest entrance.

One of the key objectives of the area framework plan is for the development of a new east-west distributor road across the plan lands which is much needed for increased accessibility and safe movement throughout the plan lands. Given the existing constraints of the plan lands, this new street [Lissywollen Avenue] is routed through the existing open space which divides the Brawny estate. To mitigate any potential negative effects several consultations were held with residents of Brawny throughout the design process in order to ensure the proposed road layout was satisfactory to existing residents and that existing amenity value of the open space dividing the Brawny estate was maintained as best it could, while also delivering the new avenue. To further supplement this, the proposed layout has designated a large network of centrally located accessible green areas as new public open spaces either side of Brawny.

The remainder of the subject lands are undeveloped greenfield land which are characterised by existing hedgerows. These hedgerows have been maintained where feasible and where they have a high natural heritage value. Any loss of existing hedgerows will be supplemented by additional planting in line with the enclosed landscaping proposals. The landscaping strategy also responds appropriately to the existing context of the site by providing for landscape buffers between proposed dwellings and the N6 to the north (to ensure noise mitigation) as well as a buffer between proposed dwellings and the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south (to protect & enhance the amenity value of the greenway). The development proposal caters for pedestrian /bicycle connections to the greenway and the site layout has been designed to allow for future permeability into adjacent developable lands as outlined in the Lissywollen Framework plan for the area. A pedestrian/ cycle connectivity is provided for along the Lissywollen Avenue to facilitate access to the town and greenway and create permeability ensure safe movement throughout the site.

In regard to density, the development proposal recognises the need for variation in density in order to offer distinct physical characteristics throughout the development lands and as detailed in the planning report, the approach to vary density throughout the subject lands is compliant with the objectives for density and land use strategy in the framework plan. The proposed development is of a scale which adheres to the housing targets of the CDP's Core Strategy & Settlement Hierarchy. The design of the proposed development will offer a new high density urban form in the western part of the land while offering more traditional housing in the eastern part of the lands which will have variety and avoid architectural monotony, again this is compliance with policy objectives for the plan lands. By varying the density and housing typology throughout the site, based upon the 5 character areas discussed in the planning report, the proposed development will achieve the framework plan's vision to create a vibrant new residential quarter in Athlone and contribute positively to existing character and identity of Brawny and the environs of the site. .

In summary the development responds to its context by:

- respecting, enhancing and integrating the development proposal with the existing Brawny estate
- providing appropriate densities and building heights which met the objectives for new urban forms while also protecting the amenity of the existing residents at Brawny estate.
- enhancing and creating strong pedestrian and cycle linkages throughout the site
- enhancing existing, and creating new links, to the Old Rail Trail Greenway
- maintaining all existing hedgerows trees and landscape features insofar as possible, and supplementing with new planting
- creating a new Lissywollen Avenue, in the form of an east-west street, running through the scheme which connects the subject lands to existing housing, employment and recreational developments



1.1.2. Connections

How well connected is the site/new neighbourhood?

- There are attractive routes in and out for pedestrians and cyclists
- The development is located in or close to a mixed-use centre
- The development's layout makes it easy for a bus to serve the scheme
- The layout links to existing movement routes and the places people will want to get to
- Appropriate density, dependent on location, helps support efficient public transport

The framework plan for the lands at Lissywollen notes that current access to the lands is limited to the existing Brawny Road to the northwest of the site and an old boreen to the east of the site. The key transport objective of the framework plan is for the provision of a new strategic east-west access street which maximises connections to the wider environs. This new route, referred to as Lissywollen Avenue, is described as forming the spine of the plan lands which will open up a considerable land bank for development. The development proposal caters for Lissywollen Avenue as described by the framework plan and will ensure safe and efficient transport links from Ballymahon Road to the west of the site to Garrycastle to the east of the site. The proposed is also earmarked for, and will be capable of, a new bus route which will provide greater bus connectivity to Athlone town centre from both the subject site and lands to further east. It will therefore increase accessibility to commercial centres, employment opportunities, local neighbourhood facilities and improve connectivity to adjoining neighbourhoods.

This new route will provide a high quality tree-lined boulevard which will not only open up access from the east and west of the site but also provide for an efficient distribution of local access roads to the proposed residential dwellings and connect into existing roads to form a new through road for the locality, which will significantly improve vehicular and pedestrian connectivity. The proposed street network is DMURS compliant and provides for legible streets and spaces that will provide a safe and attractive environment for cyclists and pedestrians as well as convenient vehicular access to individual dwellings.

A key feature of the subject site is its location next to the Old Rail Trail Greenway which forms part of the of the Galway - Dublin National Cycle Network (NCN). The proposed scheme is designed to tie into existing paths and green infrastructure, particularly the Greenway, which provides a pedestrian and cycle link to the Athlone Town centre. There are 6 proposed new links to this green infrastructure from the development with all streets and lanes designed to maximise ease of use for the new communities within the development.

1.1.3. Inclusivity

How easily can people use and access the development?

- New homes meet the aspirations of a range of people and households
- Design and layout enable easy access by all
- There is a range of public, communal and/or private amenity spaces and facilities for children of different ages, parents and the elderly
- Areas defined as public open space that have either been taken in charge or privately managed will be clearly defined, accessible and open to all.
- New buildings present a positive aspect to passers by, avoiding unnecessary physical and visual barriers

The proposed development includes a wide mix of dwelling types / sizes including 1, 2, 3 & 4 bed houses, duplexes and apartments in a wide variety of formats. The proposed housing typologies have been designed to provide for the lifecycle requirements of families and will ensure that the development proposal can cater for single workers, students, young couples, families and older generations who may be looking to downsize. The provision of lifelong housing is inline with the objective of the framework plan and will ensure that new communities to occupy Lissywollen will be capable of supporting local services and facilities.

The provision of the new Lissywollen Avenue, will form a much need spine for the road layout which will provide enhanced public transport connectivity and ensure that the overall site has a central transport route which will make it easy to navigate for visitors and residents alike. All of the proposed houses have their own in-curtilage car parking spaces while the location of on-street parking for duplex and apartment units will has been designed to ensure they are visible and easily accessible. Natural falls and gradients will be minimised wherever possible on site and level access will be provided at all parking locations and at front doors of all units and all units within the development will meet the requirements of Part M of the Technical Guidance Documents where accessibility is concerned. Again, this will ensure universal access for all future residents of the area.

The provision for public open space is compliant with the relevant development management guidelines and all areas of proposed public open spaces are overlooked and provide provide active and passive surveillance for safe and accessible environments to both residents and visitors. Areas of public open space to be taken in charge are clearly defined on the enclosed drawings. The landscaping strategy also responds appropriately to the existing context of the site by providing for landscape buffers between proposed dwellings and the N6 to the north (to ensure noise mitigation) as well as a buffer between proposed dwellings and the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south (to protect & enhance the amenity value of the greenway). The development proposal caters for pedestrian /bicycle connections to the greenway and the site layout has been designed to allow for future permeability into adjacent developable lands as outlined in the Lissywollen Framework plan for the area. A pedestrian/ cycle connectivity is provided for along the Lissywollen Avenue to facilitate access to the town and greenway and create permeability ensure safe movement throughout the site. The proposed pedestrian and cycle connections to surrounding areas will encourage movement through the scheme and promote the use of the proposed public spaces.

Private amenity spaces are of a size and standard which are compliant with the relevant development management standards. Boundary treatments of rear gardens will ensure privacy while front gardens and side gardens will also be private but their boundaries will be defined by low railings and/or walls for maximum visibility and visual connectivity to the public spaces and street.

1.1.4. Variety

How does the development promote a good mix of activities?

- **Activities generated by the development contribute to the quality of life in its locality**
- **Uses that attract the most people are in the most accessible places**
- **Neighbouring uses and activities are compatible with each other**
- **Housing types and tenure add to the choice available in the area**
- **Opportunities have been taken to provide shops, facilities and services that complement those already available in the neighbourhood**

The development proposal caters for 576 no. dwelling and 2 no. creche facilities and is put forward in recognition of the designated zoning objectives for the subject lands as allocated by the Local Authority led Lissywollen Framework Plan 2018-2022. The development site is strategically located just outside of Athlone town centre and the proposed development is greatly assisted by its proximity to the services hub of Athlone Town Centre, the existing sports, recreational and educational facilities located to the immediate west of the site, the existing employment lands to the immediate east of the site, and the existing high quality transport connectivity in the form of the N6 (to the north) and the Old Rail Trail Greenway (to the south). Given its location it is envisaged that the majority of employment and recreational activity for future residents will take place outside of the development and in the town centre itself. As such the proposed development will contribute to the quality of life in the locality by providing much needed housing for an established urban area and the creation of a new residential neighbourhood at Lissywollen will support the existing services and facilities in Athlone town centre to the southeast of the subject site, which provides for a large range of retail and commercial services.

Nevertheless, the proposed development caters for a public open space provision which is compliant with the relevant development management guidelines and all areas of proposed public open spaces are overlooked and provide provide active and passive surveillance for safe and accessible environments to both residents and visitors. This will provide important recreational amenity space for children and adults.

The proposed development includes a wide mix of dwelling types / sizes including 1, 2, 3 & 4 bed houses, duplexes and apartments in a wide variety of formats. The proposed housing typologies have been designed to provide for the lifecycle requirements of families and will ensure that the development proposal can cater for single workers, students, young couples, families and older generations who may be looking to downsize. To ensure maximum variation, the proposed development has been subdivided into 5 architectural character areas. A different range of residential unit types and densities will be delivered in each area, as discussed in the planning report, to create a sustainable mix and achieve variety across the development.

The series of character areas are defined by their location within the development. The definition of these places is provided by the design of hard and soft landscape, and the architectural treatment and modelling of the adjoining buildings. The combination of these factors will give these places definition and legibility within the wider development. These are described more fully in the character area descriptions in the accompanying documentation.





1.2. Site

Site design and spatial scale can make a huge difference to a person's quality of life. Therefore, site design and scale need to consider how the layout, public realm and intensity of development can best create compact, strong, distinctive and successful communities. Design considerations at this scale should build on decisions taken at the neighbourhood level and address the orientation and alignment of streets, blocks and spaces, public safety and security, landform and landscape design, the distinction between public and private space and development densities. Once again, a key requirement of a successful development is that creation of a development which fosters a strong sense of belonging and ownership in those that live there.

The proposed development has greatly considered the scale of existing development in the environs of the subject lands and the need to integrate what is proposed with what is already existing. The proposed density, layout, design, dwelling mix and building heights are put forward in recognition of the need provide a vibrant new residential quarter as per the vision statement of the Lissywollen South Framework which can be accessed and navigated easily, and provide a high quality of living for future residents and visitors to the development.

1.2.1. Efficiency

How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?

- The proposal looks at the potential of higher density, taking into account appropriate accessibility by public transport and the objectives of good design
- Landscaped areas are designed to provide amenity and biodiversity, protect buildings and spaces from the elements and incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems
- Buildings, gardens and public spaces are laid out to exploit the best solar orientation
- The scheme brings a redundant building or derelict site back into productive use
- Appropriate recycling facilities are provided

The proposed development has a net residential density of circa 43 dwellings per hectares. However, it should be noted that the proposed density for the development varies across the subject lands in compliance with the objectives of the Framework Plan which calls for variation in density. For instance, Objective P1-KS07 of the Framework Plan notes that consideration should be given to higher density units adjoining existing public open space area to the east of Parcel 1 of the Framework Plan lands i.e. the west of the site which borders Scoil Na Gceirthe Máistrí. As such, Character Area 1 of the development proposal has a net density of circa 54 dwellings per hectares which will create a strong streetscape and gateway into the proposed lands as desired by the Framework Plan - please also refer to Section 11.4.3 (in the Statement of Consistency) which sets out the compliance of the proposed development with the Framework Plan in terms of density. This strategy ensures that the subject lands will be developed in an efficient manner which respects the existing context of the development site.

Landscaped areas within the development have maintained existing natural heritage features, such as hedgerows where feasible and where they have a high natural heritage value. Any loss of existing features will be supplemented by additional planting in line with the enclosed landscaping proposals. The landscaping strategy also responds appropriately to the existing context of the site by providing for landscape buffers between proposed dwellings and the N6 to the north (to ensure noise mitigation) as well as a buffer between proposed dwellings and the Old Rail Trail. All areas of public open space are overlooked by proposed dwellings to ensure for passive surveillance and enhanced security. This landscaping approach will protect existing and proposed buildings/spaces from the elements and all of the proposed areas of open space incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems as per the enclosed engineering details. SUDS areas and green swales are proposed within the site, along with the retention of hedgerows and trees, which will create attractive zones for biodiversity.

The proposed housing is predominantly orientated east-west which provides for morning and evening sunlight but also eliminates the requirement for excessive retaining walls. As such, the potential for passive solar gain has been maximized without compromising the site layout and topography. Each housing unit has been designed to allow for either side access to the rear garden for refuse/recycling bins or bin stores to the front of the unit and will be built to the most up-to-date building standards to ensure energy efficiency throughout the site.

The provision of the new east-west distributor street i.e. Lissywollen Avenue, together with appropriate level of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and links will maximise movement throughout the development and encourage a decrease in commuting times.

1.2.2. Distinctiveness

How do the proposals create a sense of place?

- The place has recognisable features so that people can describe where they live and form an emotional attachment to the place
- The scheme is a positive addition to the identity of the locality
- The layout makes the most of the opportunities presented by existing buildings, landform and ecological features to create a memorable layout
- The proposal successfully exploits views into and out of the site
- There is a discernable focal point to the scheme, or the proposals reinforce the role of an existing centre

Given the scale of the development proposed, and the vision/objectives for the lands contained within the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2022, the proposed development has taken a character area based approach to ensure that all future residents can avail of a sense of community and place which avoids monotonous rows of similar housing styles and typologies. A series of character areas are defined by their location within the development. The definition of these places is provided by the design of the hard and soft landscape, and the architectural treatment and modelling of the adjoining buildings. The combination of these factors will give these places definition and legibility within the wider development. These are described more fully in the character area descriptions. The western section of the subject lands (west of the Brawny estate) in particular will provide for an existing new urban form which will compliment the recreational and educational facilities located to the immediate west of the site.

To the east of the existing Brawny estate the proposed central urban space will be largely defined by apartment and duplex units which will provide a focal point for the more traditional housing located to the northern and southern boundaries of the site and give a focal point on Lissywollen Avenue which is to run through the site. The central public open spaces will include a play area, public seating and with complimentary hard and soft landscaping. The design of the many amenity spaces combined with the surrounding street elevations will create a distinctive, interesting and recognisable places within the development.

1.2.3. Layout

How does the proposal create friendly streets and spaces?

- Layout aligns routes with desire lines to create a permeable interconnected series of routes that are easy and logical to navigate around.
- The layout focuses activity on the streets by creating active frontages with front doors directly serving the street
- The streets are designed as places instead of roads for cars, helping to create a hierarchy of space with less busy routes having surfaces shared by pedestrians, cyclists and drivers
- Traffic speeds are controlled by design and layout rather than by speed humps
- Block layout places some public spaces in front of building lines as squares or greens, and some semi private space to the back as communal courts

The proposed development caters for a much needed new east-west distributor road which is one of the key objectives for the subject lands contained within the local policy documentation. This new road, designed as a street, will open up a significant land bank of inaccessibility land to allow for the development of the area in line with the vision statement of the Framework Plan. The proposed new route will be built to a standard which is capable of becoming an important bus transport corridor which will allow for efficient movement between the Athlone town centre, the subject site and lands further east. The new route will also provide for pedestrian / cycle infrastructure which will encourage active travel methods and ensure safe use. Appropriate traffic calming measures will be put in place as per the enclosed traffic and transport details and where possible subtle methods such as use of curves, are favoured over more obtuse ramps. The provision of this new route will provide a focal point for a hierarchy of local roads which will follow the principles of DMURS and ensure traffic speeds are minimised and that the pedestrian/cyclist is favoured. Sections of straight road are limited wherever possible. Secondary roads have incorporated offset elements where longer road sections could not be avoided.

The proposed roads are overlooked by dwellings and include tree lines and generous footpaths as standard. The character of individual roads varies depending on whether they are bound by formal or informal public open spaces or facing houses, and the width, length and alignment of the road as well as materials e.g. shared surfaces. Existing trees / hedgerows are to be retained throughout the site as much as is possible while new planting will supplement any loss. The new distributor road running through the site will be tree lined as per the enclosed landscaping details to create a sense of place and enjoyment. The provision of links to the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south of the site has been a crucial factor in the designing of the pedestrian/cycle layout.

The central urban space and park area is located at the heart of the development and is in easy walking distance of all units. This is supplemented by a network of pocket parks distributed throughout the development to ensure proximity of all units to a green amenity space. These spaces incorporate play areas and are overlooked in all cases by residential units for active supervision. Formal and informal public open spaces also vary in character depending on their landscaping and function. All of the proposed public open spaces are overlooked and incorporate existing landscape features where appropriate. These areas shall be landscaped to provide attractive amenity spaces that encourage appropriate recreational uses.



1.2.4. Public Realm

How safe secure and enjoyable are the public areas?

- All public open space is overlooked by surrounding homes so that this amenity is owned by the residents and safe to use
- The public realm is considered as a usable integrated element in the design of the development
- Children's play areas are sited where they will be overlooked, safe and contribute to the amenities of the neighbourhood
- There is a clear definition between public, semi-private, and private space
- Roads and parking areas are considered as an integral landscaped element in the design of the public realm.

As previously stated, all areas of public open space will be overlooked by proposed dwellings to ensure passive surveillance and the provision of safe and accessible environments to both residents and visitors. The primary open space areas are located at the heart of the development and are in easy walking distance of all units. These open spaces and the network of secondary parks and green spaces throughout the development incorporate a playground for children which will also be overlooked by units on all sides for active supervision.

The proposed roads are overlooked by dwellings and include tree lines and generous footpaths as standard. The character of individual roads varies depending on whether they are bound by formal or informal public open spaces or facing houses, and the width, length and alignment of the road as well as materials e.g. shared surfaces. Lamp standards will be provided within the public realm and will ensure all public areas are lit to an appropriate level. Existing trees / hedgerows are to be retained throughout the site as much as is possible while new planting will supplement any loss. The new distributor road running through the site will be tree lined as per the enclosed landscaping details to create a sense of place and enjoyment.

All of the proposed houses have a mix of in-curtilage and on-street car parking spaces while the location of on-street parking for duplex and apartment units will have been designed to ensure they are visible and easily accessible. Natural falls and gradients will be minimised wherever possible on site and level access will be provided at all parking locations and at front doors of all units. Boundary treatments of proposed dwellings will ensure that there is full privacy for future residents in the rear gardens while the boundary treatment for side and/or front gardens will incorporate a low wall and/or railing to ensure that there is passive surveillance as well as a level of privacy.





1.3. Home

While the previous sections looked at the high level design elements regarding the neighbourhood and the site, the home is ultimately where future users will make their lives and ensure they are happy, healthy and of a high quality. Therefore homes need to be of a sufficient size to enable people to live comfortably both in the present and as their needs change over the course of the lifecycle. Homes need to be capable of adapting to changing needs or requirements imposed by environmental or technological changes. The architectural design and landscaping design of each individual property is also vitally important element in ensuring high levels of satisfaction.

The proposed development has taken great care to cater for a wide mix of dwelling types / sizes including 1, 2, 3 & 4 bed houses, duplexes and apartments in a wide variety of formats. The proposed housing typologies have been designed to provide for the lifecycle requirements of families and will ensure that the development proposal can cater for single workers, students, young couples, families and older generations who may be looking to downsize. To ensure maximum variation, the proposed development has been subdivided into architectural character areas. A different range of residential unit types and densities will be delivered in each area, as discussed in the planning report, to create a sustainable mix and achieve variety across the development.

1.3.1. Adaptability

How will the buildings cope with change?

- Designs exploit good practice lessons, such as the knowledge that certain house types are proven to be ideal for adaptation
- The homes are energy-efficient and equipped for challenges anticipated from a changing climate
- Homes can be extended without ruining the character of the types, layout and outdoor space
- The structure of the home and its loose fit design allows for adaptation and subdivision, such as the creation of an annexe or small office
- Space in the roof or garage can be easily converted into living accommodation

The proposed dwellings have been designed to provide for long term family accommodation that caters for the changing requirements of evolving households. A variety of 1,2,3 & 4 bedroom house, duplexes and apartments are proposed in a wide variety of formats. This housing mix allows for potential residents at all stages of the lifecycle and of all needs the opportunity to live in the development proposal. Each of the proposed dwellings has a generous ground floor living accommodation which meets with and/or exceeds the minimum standards required for dwellings and their individual rooms which is fully detailed in the enclosed Quality Housing Assessment.

All of the proposed dwellings are designed to maximise light, views and ventilation while allowing for extension to the rear without distancing the centre of the house from natural light. Each of the proposed houses is provided with large rear gardens which offer the opportunity for future house extensions (under Exempted Development Regulations) without impacting on the character of the streets. As such, the character of the proposed dwellings can be maintained whilst providing an opportunity to extend, if required by the homeowner. All of the proposed apartment and duplex units are design the standard of the most recent Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines which were adopted last year.

The bedroom accommodation in the proposed houses includes a master bedroom and 2 / 3 no. secondary bedrooms, one of which is suitable for use as a home office or other similar uses. The houses have been designed to provide for easy access to attic space, which can be easily converted into habitable living space subject to future individual planning applications. All of the proposed houses and duplex units comprise own-door access and have been designed to facilitate universal access.

Internal walls are lightweight partition walls which could facilitate internal alterations in the future and allows for adaption and subdivision. These units could be reconfigured with additional accessibility measures to cater for elder residents or occupants with disabilities. The units are designed with an average 'A' BER rating and will use air-to-water heat pumps, exhaust air heat recovery pumps or PV panels to meet renewable requirements. The proposed dwellings have been designed to meet building regulation standards and will achieve a high energy rating.

1.3.2. Privacy and Amenity

How does the scheme provide a decent standard of amenity?

- Each home has access to an area of useable private outdoor space
- The design maximises the number of homes enjoying dual aspect
- Homes are designed to prevent sound transmission by appropriate acoustic insulation or lay-out
- Windows are sited to avoid views into the home from other houses or the street and adequate privacy is affordable to ground floor units.
- The homes are designed to provide adequate storage including space within the home for the sorting and storage of recyclables.

The proposed houses have been designed to comply with the private open space standards of the County Development Plan and include rear gardens which are typically orientated in an east, west or south direction. This amenity space is directly accessible and visually connected to the ground floor kitchen/dining/living area to the rear of the proposed dwellings. The proposed duplex units have an enclosed semi-private amenity space for the benefit of these residents located between blocks. Proposed apartment units are provided with private terrace at ground floor level and balconies on the upper levels. The private amenity spaces of both the apartment and duplexes units meets with and/or exceed the standards set in the 2018 new apartment guidelines published by the DHPLG.

The vast majority of proposed dwellings benefit from dual aspect with a number of triple aspect units. Opposing first floor rear windows have a minimum separation distance of 22 metres and front room windows are typically set back from the street and in the case of corner dwellings also comprise a privacy strip to eliminate any undue overlooking. Particular care has been given to the location of the proposed apartment blocks to ensure there is no undue overlooking or overshadowing.

Party walls have been designed in accordance with Parts B & E (fire and sound) of the Building Regulations and are designed to ensure that sound transmission between dwellings is minimized. These are matters that will be subjected to the Building Regulations.

Storage space has been provided within each dwelling unit to comply with the storage space standards of the DoEHLG guidelines – Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities and the 2018 new apartment guidelines published by the DHPLG. This storage includes built in storage within bedrooms, utility storage and kitchen storage as well as attic storage. All of the proposed houses are provided with either side passages for access to bin storage or built bin storage units to the front of mid terraced houses. Communal bin storage areas are provided for each apartment/duplex block in a location which is easily accessible for all residents.

1.3.3. Parking

How will the parking be secure and attractive?

- Appropriate car parking is on-street or within easy reach of the home's front door.
- Parked cars are overlooked by houses, pedestrians and traffic, or stored securely, with a choice of parking appropriate to the situation
 - Parking is provided communally to maximise efficiency and accommodate visitors without the need to provide additional dedicated spaces
 - Materials used for parking areas are of similar quality to the rest of the development
- Adequate secure facilities are provided for bicycle storage

For the proposed houses, car parking provision is predominantly in the form of 2 no. in-curtilage car parking spaces per dwelling. For the proposed duplex units and apartments, parking is proposed at surface level (no basement parking proposed), in the form of grouped private car parking. Car parking provision has been designed to be overlooked by dwellings and visible from the public realm. Parking areas will be well lit and the location of on-street parking for duplex and apartment units will have been designed to ensure they are visible and easily accessible. Visitor car parking and spaces for electric charging points will be incorporated into the proposal and distributed across the site.

In order to reduce the visual impact of car parking, permeable car parking bays which are distinguished from the road surface are proposed with tree planting and defensive planting providing further visual relief. It is proposed that bicycles are parked in the rear of houses which are accessible from the side passages. A series of secure / enclosed bike shelters will be located between the apartment and duplex blocks for the use of these residents along with allocated visitor cycle spaces by way of provision of sheffield stands at select locations throughout the development.



1.3.4. Detailed Design

How well thought through is the building and landscape design?

- The materials and external design make a positive contribution to the locality
- The landscape design facilitates the use of the public spaces from the outset
- Design of the buildings and public space will facilitate easy and regular maintenance
- Open car parking areas are considered as an integral element within the public realm design and are treated accordingly
- Care has been taken over the siting of flues, vents and bin stores

As previously stated, the proposed layout and design is based upon 5 differentiating character areas in order to provide variety and ensure a sense of place and community throughout the development. The proposed development will therefore be designed to allow for variations in the use of materials, composition of openings and façade treatment, whilst maintaining an overall coherency in terms of scale and form, the overall palette of materials used and landscaping treatment. This approach will provide for architectural variety and whilst maintaining an overall sense of place will also create a number of communities within the development proposal.

The detailed design of individual dwelling seeks to provide a robust range of units types and sizes to reflect the needs of a range of households, living arrangements and economic situations. The design of the proposed units also seeks to minimize the visual impact of services. As such, the storage of bins is proposed in the rear gardens with access to the front of the dwelling provided via side passages. For terraced houses, specifically designed bin storage to the front will be provided. Bin stores will be provided for the duplexes and apartments. Flues and vents shall be located on gable and rear walls in order to minimize their visual impact.

Passive surveillance of adjoining public and private space has been a key driver in design development through the maximalisation of active frontages and the siting of entrances and windows. The landscaping proposals for the development have been identified in tandem with the scheme design and as such compliment the design of the proposed dwellings. The proposed dwellings employ durable high quality materials such as brick and render, which can be easily maintained by property owners, as required. Equally, the public open spaces have also been designed to minimize maintenance requirements whilst providing for attractive and functional amenity areas. Public open space shall be grassed and planted with selected tree species appropriate to their location.

Car parking provision has been designed to be overlooked by dwellings and visible from the public realm. Parking areas will be well lit and the location of on-street parking for duplex and apartment units will have been designed to ensure they are visible and easily accessible. In order to reduce the visual impact of car parking, permeable car parking bays which are distinguished from the road surface are proposed with tree planting and defensive planting providing further visual relief.

