



# Statement of Response to An Bord Pleanála's Notice of Pre-Application Consultation Opinion ABP Ref: ABP-305726-19

In respect of:

## Strategic Housing Development at Lissywollen, Athlone, County Westmeath



Prepared by:

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On behalf of the applicant:

**Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd**

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## Applicant's Response to An Bord Pleanála Pre-Application Consultation Opinion

### 1.0. Introduction

- 1.1. This statement has been prepared in response to the An Bord Pleanála's Notice of Pre-Application Consultation Opinion issued to Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd. (the applicant), with regard to the proposed Strategic Housing Development application at Lissywollen, Athlone, County Westmeath.
- 1.2. As part of the application process, 2 no. pre-application consultations were held with An Bord Pleanála in relation to the proposed development under Section 5 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016. The first of the pre-application consultations was held at the offices of Westmeath County Council in Mullingar on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019. The second of the pre-application consultations was held online via Microsoft Teams on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020. An Bord Pleanála's Case Reference for the consultations is ABP-305726-19.
- 1.3. The Board's Notice of Pre-Application Consultation Opinion, under Ref. 305726-19, was issued on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and is enclosed within Appendix C attached to the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which accompanies the application, and is referred to hereafter as "the Opinion".
- 1.4. The Opinion identifies 1 no. item that is required to be addressed as part of a Strategic Housing Development (hereafter SHD) application and 20 no. items of additional specific information. The response below describes the additional information and/or design amendments incorporated into the proposal to address An Bord Pleanála's comments and is arranged as follows:
  - Section 2 of this statement has regard to the 1 no. item that is required to be addressed as part of the SHD application.
  - Section 3 of this statement has regard to the 20 no. items of additional specific information.



## 2.0. Items to be Addressed

2.1 The Opinion states that the following issues need to be addressed in the documents submitted as part of an application for a strategic housing development:

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

2.2 The responses below describe the additional information and/or design amendments incorporated into the proposed development to address the above comments by An Bord Pleanála and are arranged under the following headings:

- (a) Site Layout Plan / Lissywollen Avenue
- (b) Car Parking Strategy
- (c) Pedestrian and Cyclist Movement
- (d) Open Space Strategy

## 2.3 Site Layout Plan / Lissywollen Avenue

2.3.1 The proposed site layout plan has been considerably revised since the pre-planning consultations were held with An Bord Pleanála. Central to the layout revisions has been the design / route of the east-west link road / “Lissywollen Avenue” (hereafter the “avenue”) throughout the scheme.

2.3.2 The avenue has been realigned to cater for a more orthogonal layout with proposed dwellings repositioned to be closer to the avenue in order to achieve the appropriate level of enclosure of streets and open spaces. The scale of the central public open space has also been adjusted and the location altered in order to create more defined open spaces which are interconnected. It is considered that the layout now put forward for permission caters for an “avenue” which acts as a “street” that provides a sense of



place and activity, and which has been designed to create a strong urban edge with continuous building frontage.

- 2.3.3** The avenue is noted in the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2014 (hereafter LSFP) as being one of the principal movement elements of the plan area. The LSFP details that the avenue shall be in the form of an an “urban boulevard” providing adequate access and permeability throughout the plan area. The LSFP also states that the avenue will need to provide for a degree of through-traffic, thus passive traffic calming measures such as deliberate changes in horizontal alignment will be required. It is also stated that the avenue shall be designed to facilitate public transport and be designed for pedestrian, cyclist, and bus priority.
- 2.3.4** The route of the avenue now put forward for permission has derived from several factors including the extent of the site, existing boundary conditions, the need to accommodate travel desire lines, the need to minimise impact on the existing landscaped areas and the need to ensure that there is little or no increase in vehicle movements along the existing residential streets at Brawny.
- 2.3.5** The avenue is designed to have a 6 meter wide carriageway, however, to ensure that the avenue does not become a distributor type road, the proposed route is orthogonal in design. This design allows the avenue to be read as a series of connected streets which provide for one permeable and legible avenue connecting the eastern and western sections of the scheme. The orthogonal layout also acts as a passive traffic calming measure, which again ensures that the avenue does not become or is envisaged as being a distributor type road. It is proposed that there will be a 30kph speed limit on the avenue.
- 2.3.6** The avenue also been designed to cater for public transport routes as required by the LSFP. Two no. new bus stops are proposed, 1 no. in the western section of the scheme (south of Block N) and 1 no. in the eastern section of the scheme (at the public space open adjacent to Block D). The strategic positioning of the 2 no. bus stops will ensure that all new and existing residents will be within 300m of a public transport passenger stop.
- 2.3.7** The layout of the avenue encourages integration between neighbourhoods located north and south of the avenue, rather than having a defined split between north and south, therefore catering for inclusivity. The site layout has also been revised to ensure that the entire length of the avenue is fronted onto by proposed houses and/or apartment and duplex buildings. Careful consideration has been given to corner locations with dual aspect / fronted dwellings provided where applicable.
- 2.3.8** The creation of a strong urban street edge to the avenue has also been a key consideration to the proposed site layout. As one enters the residential element of the proposed scheme from the west, buildings of varying height have been provided, where appropriate. Block L, being a part 4 / part 5 storey building, caters for a landmark building which acts as a defined entrance into the proposed scheme. Block L, together with the 3 storey Blocks P & N, and the 2 to 4 storey Block O form a gateway into the development along the route of the avenue as one moves from the west toward the existing Brawny residential area to the east.
- 2.3.9** A key consideration for the proposed building typologies in the western section of the scheme has been the creation of a new urban quarter for Athlone which is part of the vision for the subject lands as detailed in the LSFP. The proposed blocks at this point provide for the desired strong urban edge to the avenue.
- 2.3.10** As the avenue meets the existing public open space, a ‘T’ junction is provided (between Road No. 1 and Road No. 2 on the enclosed site layout plan prepared by Delphi Design which accompanies the application) and the avenue runs in a north-south direction along the existing public open space at Brawny. The avenue then turns to the east (at the junction between Road No. 2 & Road No. 10 on the enclosed site layout plan) and runs in an east-west direction along the existing public open space at Brawny. The rationale for the route of the avenue at this section of the scheme derived from several



consultations with local residents and the Planning Authority. It was a key concern of residents that the existing amenity of the public open space at Brawny remains intact. The route of the avenue along the existing open space at Brawny ensures that this existing amenity will not be split by the avenue, which would result in a less usable and enjoyable open space for the existing residents at Brawny. This also has the benefit of providing a strong edge to both the existing open space at Brawny and the avenue, while encouraging reduced traffic speeds through the use of junctions.

- 2.3.11** The design of the avenue has been carefully considered so as to integrate not only the existing public open space at Brawny but the existing dwellings to the north and south of the avenue. The proposed development caters for works to the existing Brawny Square and Brawny Drive (to the south of the avenue) to allow for 2 no. access points into the avenue. It is also proposed to split the existing link between Brawny Drive and Brawny Square through the construction of hammerheads / cul-de-sacs in the existing roads. Homezones are provided for on the revised Brawny Square and Brawny Drive roads. These works will ensure that the existing Brawny residents to the south of the avenue can easily access the avenue, while also ensuring that priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists with the provision of safer homezone areas adjacent to the avenue. An access point onto the avenue from the existing dwellings to the north of the public open space has also been catered for to allow existing residents to the north to adequately access the avenue.
- 2.3.12** As one moves from the existing Brawny estate into the eastern section of the scheme, continuous building frontage is provided along the southern side of the avenue to cater for passive surveillance of both the avenue and the existing public open space at Brawny.
- 2.3.13** In the central section of the avenue, 5 no. apartment/duplex blocks are proposed (i.e. Blocks K, H, C, D & G). Blocks K, H, C & D are all 3 storey buildings with Block G being a 2 storey building. Between Blocks C and D, an urban plaza is proposed. Within Block D, and adjacent to the urban plaza, a community hub is proposed. The rationale for the setting of these blocks in the central section of the avenue is to create a second 'gateway' of different building typologies linking the eastern and western sections of the scheme.
- 2.3.14** It is considered that the proposed layout in the central section of the avenue will act as a node creating a sense of place, with a more urban feel, for people to enjoy rather than having one continuous transport corridor. The proposed community hub derived from consultations with local residents with advice that there is currently a lack of community facilities in the area. The community hub is also put forward with respect to the LSFP which notes the lack of community facilities in the area and also contains objectives to provide for community facilities in the plan area. It is considered that the proposed community hub will be capable of catering for a number of potential community functions and act as a focal point within the scheme for both existing and future residents. The community hub and the adjacent urban plaza will also ensure that there is activity in the central section of the avenue. The proposed building form at this section of the avenue responds to the bends in the avenue, in particular Blocks G & H, in order to ensure that a strong urban edge is provided in the central section of the avenue.
- 2.3.15** The creation of the urban plaza at the centre of the site will act as a node for the overall scheme and immediate environs. The proposed urban plaza can be described as a node, which was explained by Kevin Lynch in his book "The City Image and Its Elements" (1960) in which he stated that a city's image could be classified into five types of elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. He defined a node as *"points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling. They may be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another"*. He goes on to state that nodes may be simply concentrations, such as a street corner hangout and described them as being *"the focus and epitome of a district, over which their influence radiates and of which they stand as a symbol"*. It is put forward that the proposed urban plaza and community hub, including their unique design, epitomises the definition of a node, which is a central tenant of urban design.





- 2.3.16** As one continues eastward, the avenue bends in a northerly direction and provides for a 'T' junction between Road No. 12 and Road No. 13 of the avenue. The route of the avenue at this section of the scheme is compliant with the principles of DMURS, as it will encourage reduced traffic speeds at an appropriate location, and ensures that the avenue does not represent one continuous distributor type road.
- 2.3.17** An area of public open space, to the northeast of Block D, is provided to cater for a link between the more traditional residential housing in the eastern section of the scheme and the more urban central section of the scheme. This public open space caters for pedestrian and cyclist permeability to the urban plaza to the northwest of Block D.
- 2.3.18** Continuous residential frontage is provided along the avenue as one continues eastwards. At the eastern extent of the residential layout, Blocks A, B, E & F (all 3 storey buildings) provide a gateway to the lands to the east of the application site, while also respecting the form/heights of the adjacent houses proposed in the eastern section of the scheme.
- 2.3.19** A key consideration in the design of the avenue has been the prioritisation of pedestrians and cyclists. Segregated cycle routes and footpaths are proposed to the north and / or south of the avenue. The routes also move off the avenue, through the proposed public open space / urban plaza in the centre of the scheme, allowing for an more convenient route for pedestrians / cyclists moving from east-west and catering for enhanced pedestrian / cyclist permeability. The provision of these pedestrian / cyclist routes along the avenue ensures that there will be a consistent level of activity between the avenue and the proposed dwellings.
- 2.3.20** Another key consideration for the proposed street network has been connectivity between the avenue and the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south of the application site. To cater for same, homezones are proposed on Roads No.'s 21-30 of the proposed scheme. The use of homezones ensure that reduced vehicular speeds are encouraged as vehicles moves off the avenue towards the southern section of the scheme. The use of homezones gives pedestrians / cyclists priority on the approaches to the access points to the Old Rail Trail Greenway.
- 2.3.21** Road No. 14 of the scheme is also proposed to be a homezone with a cul-de-sac end fronting onto the public open space. The rationale for same is to ensure that pedestrians / cyclists moving off the avenue, where the avenue is located at a more northern point in the scheme, can be provided with a safe route through the homezone and onto the proposed pedestrian / cycle route which runs through the public open space in the eastern section of the scheme.
- 2.3.22** In total, 5 no. formal pedestrian / cyclist access points are proposed between the development and the Old Rail Trail Greenway (at Road No.'s 21, 22, 23, 25 and at the public open space in the eastern section of the scheme). The provision of these pedestrian / cyclist routes will ensure safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists from east to west along the avenue and from north to south between the avenue and the Old Rail Trail Greenway, encouraging sustainable transport modes within the scheme.
- 2.3.23** To summarise, the route of the proposed avenue has been a key consideration throughout the design process. The avenue provides for one permeable connection between east and west but can be read as a series of streets to ensure that the avenue does not result in a distributor type road which splits north and south. Pedestrians / cyclists have been prioritised in the design of the avenue and throughout the scheme generally. It is considered that the proposed layout provides for a strong frontage onto the avenue with proposed dwellings / buildings adequately located along the avenue to give definition, while also allowing for activity along the avenue.



## 2.4 Car Parking Strategy

- 2.4.1** The site layout plan now put forward for permission caters for car parking strategy which is compliant with the principles of DMURS and does not result in a layout in which car parking dominates the building frontage or street character.
- 2.4.2** Full details of the car parking strategy for the proposed development can be found in Chapter 5 of the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers – please refer to same, in addition to the comments in this statement.
- 2.4.3** The LSFP seeks to facilitate a positive modal shift in favour of more sustainable modes of transport, however, the document acknowledges the current reality of car ownership. Therefore, the LSFP seeks to strike a balance between on-street and off-street parking. The LSFP notes that on-street parallel and perpendicular parking may be adequate in areas of lower density, while car parking on-site will be required on the surface or in basements in areas of higher density.
- 2.4.4** The proposed scheme caters for total of 752 no. car parking spaces, including 34 no. basement car parking spaces which form part of Block L. The car parking scheme also includes for dedicated disabled, E-car charging, visitor and car club spaces.
- 2.4.5** A key consideration in the layout now put forward for permission has been the design of the avenue. The avenue is designed to have an urban feel with a sense of place and activity. The avenue has also been designed to prioritise pedestrians / cyclists. As such, car parking along the route of the avenue has been kept to a minimum, with 37 no. parallel car parking spaces provided along the the avenue. These car parking spaces generally serve adjacent dwellings. It is considered that the minimum provision of car parking spaces along the avenue, which is one of the key elements of the proposed development, will ensure that the avenue is not dominated by cars and that the sense of pedestrian / cyclist priority is emphasised.
- 2.4.6** In total, 455 no. car parking spaces are provided for the proposed houses, which is compliant with the standards of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020. This provision equates to a parking ratio of 1.6 spaces per house. Car parking for the proposed houses is in the form of both in-curtilage and on-street parking.
- 2.4.7** Of the 455 no. car parking spaces for the houses 212 no. spaces are in-curtilage parking spaces with 243 no. on-street parking spaces. The rationale for the ratio of on-street car parking spaces is to cater for a scheme which reduces car parking fronting onto the main avenue and public open spaces. It is considered that the parking layout for the houses caters for an appropriate provision of car parking, while also maximizing the amenity of public open spaces, protecting the visual amenity of the Old Rail Trail Greenway, and catering for strong frontage onto the avenue. The parking layout, together with the provision of homezones, also aid the creation of a scheme where the pedestrian / cyclists are given priority.
- 2.4.8** In relation to the apartment/duplex blocks, 295 no. car parking spaces are provided for the 291 no. apartments and duplex units which equates to a ratio of 1.01 parking spaces per dwelling. The quantum of parking proposed for the apartment and duplex units is put forward with regard to the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018). Within same, the development site can be considered a “*Peripheral and / or Less Accessible Urban Location*”. Section 4.22. of the guidelines state that the benchmark for such locations is 1 no. car parking space per unit, together with an element of visitor parking. Section 4.23 of the guidelines also states that:

*"For all types of location, where it is sought to eliminate or reduce car parking provision, it is necessary to ensure, where possible, the provision of an appropriate number of drop off, service, visitor parking*





*spaces and parking for the mobility impaired. Provision is also to be made for alternative mobility solutions including facilities for car sharing club vehicles and cycle parking and secure storage. It is also a requirement to demonstrate specific measures that enable car parking provision to be reduced or avoided."*

- 2.4.9.** The parking provision for the apartment and duplex units complies with the recommended standard of 1 no. car parking space per unit and is put forward in support of the recommendation of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018) which generally seek to reduce the number of car parking spaces to ensure that new development proposals are not dominated by car parking.
- 2.4.10.** With regard to the requirement to demonstrate specific measures that enable car parking provision to be minimised, it is considered that the site location, which is adjacent to the Old Rail Trail Greenway and in close proximity to Athlone town centre, justifies the quantum of car parking proposed. The development caters pedestrian / cycle routes throughout, provides for 5 no. new access points to the Old Rail Trail Greenway, caters for an ample provision of bicycle parking, and is within walking distance of a number of existing services and employment centres.
- 2.4.11.** The parking strategy also includes for club car sharing, parking for mobility impaired, and visitor parking within the scheme. Furthermore, the proposed avenue has been designed to accommodate public transport bus routes and includes for 2 no. bus stops. The strategic positioning of the 2 no. new bus stops ensures that all new and existing residents will be within 300m of a bus service which caters for easy access to public transport.
- 2.4.12.** The Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers, which accompanies the application, includes for an assessment of the Census 2016 car ownership data which concludes that the proposed quantum of car parking is adequate to cater for the development – for full details please refer to same. The application is also accompanied by a Mobility Management Plan prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which seeks to reduce the dependency on private car use by promoting sustainable travel alternatives – please refer to same for additional details.
- 2.4.13.** To summarise, it is considered that the car parking proposals for the development are appropriate and will result in new neighbours which are not dominated by car parking, with the proposed layout promoting a shift to sustainable transport modes. For full details of car parking provisions please refer to the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which is enclosed with the application.

## **2.5 Pedestrian and Cyclist Movement**

- 2.5.1.** The prioritisation of pedestrians / cyclists has been a key consideration in the design of the proposed scheme. The central movement element of the scheme is the provision of the avenue. Segregated cycle routes and footpaths are proposed to the north and / or south of the avenue. These routes also move off the avenue, through the proposed public open space and urban plaza in the centre of the scheme, allowing for a more convenient route for pedestrians / cyclists moving from east to west and catering for enhanced pedestrian / cyclist permeability. The provision of these pedestrian / cycle routes along the avenue ensures convenient and safe movement of pedestrians / cyclists from east-west throughout the scheme.
- 2.5.2.** Another key consideration in the design has been connectivity between the avenue and the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south. To cater for same, homezones are proposed on Roads No's. 21-30 in the eastern section of scheme. The use of homezones ensure that reduced vehicular speeds are encouraged as



vehicles moves off the avenue towards the southern section of the scheme thereby giving pedestrians / cyclists priority on the approaches to the the Old Rail Trail Greenway.

- 2.5.3.** In total, 5 no. new formal pedestrian / cyclist access points are catered for between the development and the Old Rail Trail Greenway (at Roads 21, 22, 23, 25 and at the public open space in the eastern section of the scheme).
- 2.5.4.** Road No. 14 of the scheme is also proposed to be a homezone will a cul-de-sac end, fronting onto the public open space in the eastern section of the scheme. The rationale for same is to ensure that pedestrians / cyclists moving off the avenue, where the avenue is located at a more northern point in the scheme, can be provided with a safe route through the homezones and onto the pedestrian / cycle route which runs through the public open space in the eastern section of the site. The provision of these pedestrian / cycle routes will ensure safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists from east to west along the avenue and from north to south between the avenue and the Old Rail Trail Greenway encouraging sustainable transport modes within the scheme.
- 2.5.5.** With regard to pedestrians / cyclist movement in the northern part of the scheme (i.e. to the north of the avenue) homezones are catered for on Road No.'s 32, 33 & 15 (to the northeast of the scheme) which provides for pedestrian / cyclist priority for those entering from the east and seeking to move off the avenue into the northern section of the site. A pedestrian / cycle only link is catered for between Road No. 32 & Road No. 12, along the public open space / habitat buffer at the northern boundary, to provide for permeability and pedestrian / cyclist prioritisation. Homezones are also proposed on Road No.'s 16 - 20 in the northern section of the scheme which again encourages pedestrian / cyclist prioritisation adjacent to the main avenue.
- 2.5.6.** In the western section of the scheme, pedestrian / cyclist movement is catered for along the route of the avenue and via a cycle route at the boundary with Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí which connects into the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south.
- 2.5.7.** With regard to pedestrian / cyclist movement in a north-south direction across the avenue, a total of 6 no. controlled crossing facilities (Zebra) are proposed along the avenue each located on key pedestrian / cycle travel desire routes. These formal facilities, supplemented by courtesy crossings, will provide a high degree of permeability with safe crossing points integrating the residential areas located to the north and south of the avenue – please refer to the transportation drawings prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which accompany the application for further details.
- 2.5.8.** The development also caters for the provision of new bicycle infrastructure along Brawny Road and Blackberry Lane linking the existing bicycle infrastructure at the R915/east. This new bicycle infrastructure will benefit future residents of the development to access the existing amenities to the northwest and northeast in addition to providing new sustainable routing opportunities for both existing residents of the area and visitors / patrons of the leisure facilities currently located along Brawny Road.
- 2.5.9.** To summarise, the prioritisation of pedestrians / cyclists has been a key consideration in the design of the scheme. Segregated pedestrian / cycle routes are catered for along the route of the main avenue. Where appropriate, pedestrian / cycle routes through public open spaces also catered for. It is considered that the proposed street network promotes the prioritisation of pedestrians / cyclists. 5 no. new access points to the Old Rail Trail Greenway are catered for within the scheme. 6 no. controlled crossings on the avenue are catered for within the scheme. It is considered that the proposed development promotes ease of safe movement for pedestrians / cyclists travelling from east to west and from north to south.



## 2.6. Open Space Strategy

- 2.6.1.** Full details of the open space strategy for the proposed development can be found in the Landscape Rationale and the associated landscaping drawings prepared by Ronan MacDiarmada + Associates - please refer to same in addition to the comments in this section.
- 2.6.2.** The proposed development caters for public open space throughout and is provided for at a standard which complies with LSFP requirement of 15% public open space provision. For a detailed breakdown of the calculation of public open space provision please refer to Section 11.1. of the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which accompanies the application.
- 2.6.3.** The LSFP states that a network of passive and active open spaces, which are central to the design of development proposals, is required to positively contribute to the quality of life of future residents of the plan area while also enhancing the natural environment. Careful consideration has been given within the proposed scheme to ensure that a variety of interconnected public open spaces which support sustainable transport modes are catered for.
- 2.6.4.** The proposed scheme caters for a hierarchy of usable and diverse public open spaces. The development caters for 5 no. pocket parks, 1 no. urban plaza, 1 no. parkland area and 1 no. habitat area, which are distributed throughout the scheme in order to provide proximate and accessible open space areas to all of the future residents of the development. Details of these open space areas can be found in Table 1 below:

| Public Open Space Designation | Quantum of Space (m <sup>2</sup> ) | Location in Relation to Site Layout              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Habitat / Buffer              | 8,669.8                            | Along the northern boundary, adjacent to the N6  |
| Parkland                      | 3,042.7                            | Northeast of Block D                             |
| Urban Plaza                   | 956.1                              | Northwest of Block D                             |
| Pocket Park                   | 2,112.6                            | South-west corner of the scheme, south of Road 5 |
| Pocket Park                   | 764.3                              | West of Road 21                                  |
| Pocket Park                   | 2,445.8                            | South of Road 26                                 |
| Pocket Park                   | 2,802.8                            | South of Road 29                                 |
| Pocket Park                   | 2,535.7                            | North of Road 29                                 |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>23,329.8</b>                    | -  |

*Table 1- Public open spaces.*

- 2.6.5.** 5 no. pocket parks are catered for along the southern boundary of the scheme adjacent to the Old Rail Trail Greenway. These pocket parks are designed, and strategically located, to provide for a welcoming visual amenity / recreation spaces for users of the Old Rail Trail Greenway as they enter and exit the development. While being generally 'smaller' green areas the pockets parks are of a size which caters



for functional and enjoyable open space areas. Footpaths and cycle routes are provided where appropriate to allow for permeability between the open spaces, homezones areas, and to and from the Old Rail Trail Greenway.

- 2.6.6.** The pocket parks will be planted with trees, wildflowers, blub and shrub planting, and provide for kick about space and informal play areas as appropriate. Where feasible existing planting has been retained. Seating offering respite to users of the Old Rail Trail Greenway, as well as future and existing residents, is also catered for. It is considered that the pocket parks cater for a soft welcoming landscape adjacent to the Old Rail Trail Greenway which will promote the use and enjoyment of the greenway.
- 2.6.7.** In the centre of the scheme an urban plaza (to the northwest of Block D) and a parkland area (to the northeast of Block D) are catered for. These open space areas are connected for pedestrian / cyclist use only to allow for enhanced permeability and usability. The urban plaza represents a formal urban landscape area which will act as a focal point for the scheme in conjunction with the proposed community hub in Block D. The urban plaza caters for seating while a variety of high quality landscape materials and changes in landform will delineate different congregation spaces. These features will aid the creation of a sense of place which is visually attractive and welcoming for people to meet. Natural and formal tree and shrub planting will soften the appearance of the plaza and introduce biodiversity to the the area. The adjacent parkland area is an open grassy area which will be defined by paths and semi-mature trees. The parkland allows for an active recreation space and a green focal point which contrasts with the urban plaza. Existing hedgerows have been retained where feasible and the addition of new wildflower and blub planting will create a biodiversity friendly area in the centre of the scheme. A natural play area, multi-use games area, outdoor gym equipment and seating are proposed to ensure that there is activity in the centre of the scheme adjacent to the avenue.
- 2.6.8.** Along the northern boundary of the scheme, adjacent to the N6, a habitat buffer is catered for. Existing hedgerows has been retained to provide a screen between the development and the N6. While the habitat buffer has the benefit of acting as a noise mitigation measure from the N6, the design of the habitat buffer ensures that it is a usable, attractive, space. A woodland walk is catered for along the length of the habitat buffer to provide for off road permeability. To create activity, kickabout areas, a natural playground, outdoor gym equipment and seating are proposed. New wildflower planting, in combination with existing planting, create a visually pleasant and biodiversity friendly area for recreation and relaxation.
- 2.6.9.** With regard to the eastern section of the scheme (i.e. to the east of the existing Brawny estate) open spaces are strategically located and interconnected via the proposed street and pedestrian / cycle network. Pedestrian / cyclist prioritisation has been a key consideration for the open space strategy. Homezones are provided for in appropriate locations which interconnect open spaces in the eastern half of the scheme.
- 2.6.10.** The habitat buffer provides for a continuous open space / walking route in the eastern section of the scheme. Future users of the development can safely move from the habitat buffer at the northern boundary of the scheme through the homezones on Road No. 14 & Road No. 15 to the pedestrian / cycle routes on the public open spaces adjacent to Road No.'s 27 & 28 and access the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south of the scheme.
- 2.6.11.** Pedestrian connectivity is provided for between the 3 no. pocket parks in the eastern section of the scheme which are bounded by the Old Rail Trail Greenway. The homezone on Road No. 27 provides a link between the open spaces at Road No. 27 / 28 and the parkland area to the northeast of Block D. Pedestrian / cyclist permeability is catered for between this parkland space and the urban plaza to the northwest of Block D.



- 2.6.12.** It is considered that the open spaces in the eastern section of the scheme provide for a variety of spaces (pocket park, habitat, parkland and urban) which can be easily moved between by pedestrian / cyclists.
- 2.6.13.** With regard to the western section of the scheme (i.e. to the west of the existing Brawny estate) cognizance has been paid to the large area of existing public open space at Brawny. The route of the main avenue has ensured that this open space remains largely intact (please refer to the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design for a rationale of same). The rationale for building typologies proposed in the western section of the scheme is to provide for a more urban area with higher density as envisaged by the LSFP. As such the western section of the scheme largely provides for private / semi-private communal open spaces associated with individual apartment/duplex blocks. These communal areas provide for usable recreational space for residents of the apartments/duplexes and are provided for in addition to the other areas of existing and proposed public open space.
- 2.6.14.** Notwithstanding same, due consideration has been given to the importance of providing welcoming spaces adjacent to the Old Rail Trail Greenway in the western section of scheme with a pocket park proposed in the southwest corner of the scheme which is located next to the existing access point onto the Old Rail Trail Greenway.
- 2.6.15.** To summarise, the open space strategy for the scheme caters for a variety of appropriately scaled, usable, spaces with the proposed street network and pedestrian / cycle routes promoting connectivity between these spaces. All open spaces are directly overlooked by dwellings with the positioning of the dwellings / street network providing definition and a sense of enclosure to these open spaces.
- 2.6.16.** It is considered that the design and setting of each proposed open space accords with the guidance of the LSFP which seeks to provide for a network of passive and active open spaces throughout the plan area to positively contribute to the quality of life of future residents, while also maintaining and enhancing the natural environment
- 2.6.17.** For further details on the open space rationale please refer to the Landscape Rationale prepared by Ronan MacDiarmada + Associates which is enclosed with the application.



### 3.0 Additional Specific Information

The following additional specific information was sought, as per the Opinion:

#### 3.1 Item 1

*“Cross sections and visualisations across the site and a report that addresses/rationalises the site layout with regard to the design of streets, positioning of the built form relative to the streets, overlooking of streets and public open spaces, and design and positioning of car parking, in accordance with the Lissywollen Framework Plan, Urban Design Manual accompanying the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009, and DMURS.”*

##### 3.1.1 Item 1 Response

Cross sections and visualisations for the proposed development have been prepared by Delphi Design, Ronan MacDiarmada + Associates and 3D Design Bureau, all of which are enclosed with the application. A full schedule of drawings/details submitted as part of the application is set out in the cover letter which accompanies the application – please refer to same.

The application is also accompanied by an Architectural Design Rationale prepared by Delphi Design as well as a Statement of Compliance with DMURS prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers. These documents address / rationale the site layout with regard to the design of streets, positioning of the built form relative to the streets, overlooking of streets and public open spaces, and design and positioning of car parking. The Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design also considers the above, while further details of the design of street can be found in the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which accompanies the application.

#### 3.2 Item 2

*“A detailed Car Parking Strategy identifying parking provision and allocation for apartments and houses.”*

##### 3.2.1 Item 2 Response

Details of the car parking strategy for the proposed development can found in Chapter 5 of the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which accompanies the application – please refer to same for full details.

The proposed layout caters for total of 752 no. car parking spaces, including 34 no. basement car parking spaces which form part of Block L. 455 no. car parking spaces are provided for the proposed houses which is in compliance with the standards of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020. 297 no. car parking spaces are provided for the proposed apartment and duplex units which is put forward in compliance with the recommendations for car parking as detailed in the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018). For full details please refer to the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which accompanies the application.





### 3.3 Item 3

*“Pedestrian and Cyclist Strategy, which considers north-south as well as east-west movements and re-consideration of the location of the cycle lane relative to the school site.”*

#### 3.3.1 Item 3 Response

The pedestrian and cyclist strategy is detailed in Sections 9.2.3.-9.2.6 of the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which is enclosed with the application – please refer to same for full details. The pedestrian and cyclist strategy is also considered in the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design – please refer to same. The development proposes 5 no. cycle / pedestrian access points between the development site and the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the immediate south, ensuring excellent cycle / pedestrian accessibility and maximization of this amenity adjacent to the site. The proposed layout has been designed to give pedestrians and cyclists priority and ensure travel desire lines are accommodated which will enhance the safety of movement with the scheme. Dedicated pedestrian / cycle paths are proposed throughout the scheme, providing a traffic free routes and permeability throughout the development.

A total of 6 no. controlled crossing facilities (Zebra) are proposed along the avenue each located on key pedestrian / cycle travel desire lines/routes. These formal facilities, supplemented by courtesy crossings, will provide a high degree of permeability with safe crossing points, integrating the residential areas located to the north and south of the avenue.

The location of the cycle lane relative to the school site is detailed on Drawing No. 180176-DBFL-RD-SP-DR-C-1001 prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers – please refer to same. The position of this cycle lane has been re-aligned in layout put forward for permission with the cycle lane now located along the western boundary of the scheme. It is considered that this alignment caters for a safe segregated route for cyclists in the western part scheme who are seeking to enter/exit the Old Rail Trail Greenway.

### 3.4 Item 4

*“Cycle Parking Strategy to be submitted and considered in accordance with national guidance.”*

#### 3.4.1 Item 4 Response

The cycle parking strategy for the proposed development is addressed in Section 5.3 of the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which is enclosed with the application – please refer to same for full details. The proposed development caters for 1,602 no. cycle parking spaces (comprised of a mix of Sheffield Stands and single / double stacked Cardiff Stands) consisting of 1,574 no. residential and 28 no. creche cycle parking spaces. The 1,574 no. residential cycle parking spaces comprise 1,260 no. long term secured / sheltered spaces and 314 no. short term parking spaces.

The proposed layout has been designed to ensure cycle parking spaces are conveniently located in close proximity to block access locations and are within the recommended distances of 25m for short stay cycle parking spaces and 50m for long stay cycle parking spaces. The details of the proposed cycle parking strategy can also be found in Appendix D & E of the Traffic and Transport Assessment. The specific locations of the proposed on-site bicycle parking facilities are illustrated on Drawing No. 180176-DBFL-TR-SP-DR-C-1001 and Drawing No. 180176-DBFL-TR-SP-DR-C-1002 prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which are enclosed with the application.



### 3.5 Item 5

*“Review all corner sites and open spaces to ensure dwelling designs provide sufficient overlooking and definition of spaces and are of dual aspect design where required, minimising dominance of boundary walls onto streets.”*

#### 3.5.1 Item 5 Response

The proposed site layout plan has been revised in the time since the pre-application consultations were held with An Bord Pleanála and careful consideration has been given to ensure that the proposed dwellings sufficiently overlook open space and roads. The enclosed site layout plan has been designed to ensure that dwellings front onto public open spaces and streets. Dual aspect units are provided at corner locations to further ensure same. The proposed boundary treatment plans have taken into account the above and sought to minimise the dominance of boundary walls onto streets.

### 3.6 Item 6

*“Noise impact assessment in relation to proposed houses to the north, adjacent the N6.”*

#### 3.6.1 Item 6 Response

A noise impact assessment has been prepared for the proposed development and is included for in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which accompanies the application. The noise impact assessment can be found in Chapter 9 of the submitted EIAR.

### 3.7 Item 7

*“Childcare demand analysis and the likely demand for childcare places.”*

#### 3.7.1 Item 7 Response

A Childcare and Schools Demand Assessment has been prepared by Delphi Design and is enclosed with the application – please refer to same.

### 3.8 Item 8

*“Sunlight-daylight analysis in relation to apartments proposed and neighbouring residential dwellings.”*

#### 3.8.1 Item 8 Response

A Sunlight, Daylight and Shadow Assessment for the development has been prepared by Chris Shackleton Consulting and is enclosed with the application – please refer to same.



### 3.9 Item 9

*“Additional details in relation to issues raised in the report issued by the Roads and Transportation Department dated 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020.”*

#### 3.9.1 Item 9 Response

Issues raised in the report from the Roads and Transportation Department dated 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 are addressed in Section 9.3 of the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which is enclosed with the application – please refer to same.

### 3.10 Item 10

*“Additional details in relation to issues raised in the report issued by the Housing Department dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020.”*

#### 3.10.1 Item 10 Response

Issues raised in the report from the Housing Department dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 are addressed in the Architectural Design Rationale prepared by Delphi Design which is enclosed with the application – please refer to same.

### 3.11 Item 11

*“Additional details in relation to surface water management and SUDS strategy.”*

#### 3.11.1 Item 11 Response

Details of surface water management and SUDS strategy can be found in the Engineering Services Report and accompanying drawings prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers – please refer to same.

### 3.12 Item 12

*“A building life cycle report shall be submitted in accordance with section 6.3 of the Sustainable Urban housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018). The report should have regard to the long term management and maintenance of the apartments proposed in the scheme. The applicant should consider the proposed materials and finishes to the scheme including specific detailing of finishes, the treatment of balconies in the apartment buildings, landscaped areas, podium design, pathways, and all boundary treatments. Particular regard should be had to the requirement to provide high quality and sustainable finishes and details which seek to create a distinctive character for the development.”*

#### 3.12.1 Item 12 Response

A Building Life Cycle Report has been prepared by Delphi Design and is enclosed with the application. The Building Life Cycle Report is submitted in accordance with Section 6.3 of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018). The Building Life Cycle Report has regard to the long term management and maintenance of the proposed apartments and considers the proposed materials and finishes as requested.



### 3.13 Item 13

*"Mobility Management Plan."*

#### 3.13.1 Item 13 Response

A Mobility Management Plan has been prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers and is enclosed with the application – please refer to same.

### 3.14 Item 14

*"Ecological impact assessment including inter alia a bat survey and ecological connectivity across the site, specifically addressing trees/hedgerows that are to be removed and to be retained."*

#### 3.14.1 Item 14 Response

An ecological impact assessment has been included for in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which accompanies the application. The ecological impact assessment can be found in Chapter 5 "Biodiversity" of the EIAR. The assessment includes details of the bat survey undertaken and ecological connectivity across the site, specifically addressing trees/hedgerows that are to be removed and to be retained. Supplementary to same, a tree and hedgerow survey and tree protection plan has been prepared by Arbor Care and is enclosed with the application.

### 3.15 Item 15

*"Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan."*

#### 3.15.1 Item 15 Response

A Construction and Waste Management Plan has been prepared by Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd. and is enclosed with the application – please refer to same.

### 3.16 Item 16

*"Land ownership/consent submitted to include road network to west and east."*

#### 3.16.1 Item 16 Response

We enclose with the application a letter of consent from the landowner (Westmeath County Council), dated 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 which confirms that the enclosed letter applies to all the lands within the red line boundary of the application site.



### 3.17 Item 17

*"A map indicating the net development area."*

#### 3.17.1 Item 17 Response

A map indicating the net developable area with the application is enclosed with the application. The net developable area can be found on Drawing No. D1408-19-PL11 '*Net Developable Area*' prepared by Delphi Design. Details of the gross site area and the net developable area can be found in Section 6.3 of the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which is also enclosed with the application.

### 3.18 Item 18

*"Consideration to be given to e-car infrastructure."*

#### 3.18.1 Item 18 Response

E-car infrastructure has been considered in Section 5.1.9 of the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which is enclosed with the application. 10% of the proposed car parking spaces allocated to the apartment and duplex units will be electric vehicle car parking. i.e. 30 no. car parking spaces. These car parking spaces are illustrated on Drawing No. 180176-DBFL-RD-SP-DR-C-1003 and Drawing No. 180176-DBFL-RD-SP-DR-C-1004 prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers which accompany the application. The proposed houses have the option of fitting their own electric vehicle point as and when the requirement arises.

### 3.19 Item 19

*"A detailed schedule of accommodation which shall indicate compliance with relevant standards in the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2018."*

#### 3.19.1 Item 19 Response

We enclose a Quality Housing Assessment for the development which has been prepared by Delphi Design. The enclosed Quality Housing Assessment details compliance with the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018) and, where applicable, the Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities - Best Practice Guidelines (2007).

### 3.20 Item 20

*"A detailed phasing plan, including proposals in relation to the east-west Lissywollen Avenue and upgrades to the existing roundabouts at both access points, in addition to the associated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure."*

#### 3.20.1 Item 20 Response

We enclose a proposed phasing plan for the development which can be found on Drawing No. D1408-19-PL12 '*Phasing Plan*' prepared by Delphi Design. Details of the proposed phasing for the development can also be found in Section 15 of the Planning Report prepared by Delphi Design which is enclosed with the application.



#### **4.0 Application Distribution / Prescribed Bodies**

**4.1** Finally, the Opinion issued by An Bord Pleanála set out the prescribed bodies to be notified of the making an application.

1. Irish Water
2. Transport Infrastructure Ireland
3. National Transport Authority
4. Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
5. Coras Iompair Eireann
6. Westmeath County Childcare Committee

**4.2** We confirm that each of the prescribed bodies listed above have been contacted prior to the lodgement of the subject application and that a copy of the application has been sent to the prescribed bodies identified by the An Bord Pleanála. Copies of the cover letters sent to the above prescribed bodies are enclosed with the application.