

13.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

13.1 Introduction

This Townscape and Visual impact Assessment report has been prepared for the Carmanhall Road Strategic Housing Development (the 'Proposed Development'). This report describes the townscape/visual context of the Proposed Development and assesses the likely impacts of the scheme on the receiving environment, in terms of both townscape character and visual amenity. The Proposed Development is located on lands at the former Avid Technology International site on Carmanhall Road, Sandyford Industrial Estate, Dublin 18, (the 'Site' / 'Application Site').

Landscape/townscape assessment relates to changes in the physical environment, brought about by a Proposed Development, which may alter its character. This requires a detailed analysis of the individual elements and characteristics of a landscape/townscape that go together to make up the overall character of that area. By understanding the aspects that contribute to this character it is possible to make judgements in relation to its quality (integrity) and to identify key sensitivities. This, in turn, provides a measure of the ability of the landscape/townscape in question to accommodate the type and scale of change associated with the Proposed Development, without causing unacceptable adverse changes to its character.

Visual Impact Assessment relates to changes in the composition of views as a result of changes to the landscape/townscape, how these are perceived and the effects on visual amenity. Such impacts are population-based, rather than resource-based, as in the case of landscape impacts.

The Proposed Development relates to the construction of a residential development within a new part six, part eight, part nine, part eleven storey rising to a landmark seventeen storey over basement level apartment building. A full description of the development is contained in Chapter 2 (Project Description) of this EIAR.

13.1.1 Statement of Authority

This Landscape/Townscape and Visual Assessment report was prepared by Macro Works Ltd of Cherrywood Business Park, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18; a consultancy firm specialising in Landscape and Visual Assessment and associated maps and graphics. Relevant experience includes a vast range of infrastructural, industrial and commercial projects since 1999, including numerous residential development projects. The following assessment was prepared by Richard Barker (MLA, PG Dip Forestry, BA Env). Richard is a Corporate Member Irish Landscape Institute and has more than 16 years' experience.

13.2 Legislative and Policy Context

13.2.1 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022

Appendix 7 of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan ('DLRCDP') identifies that there are 14 Landscape Character Areas ('LCA') within the administrative area of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. However, the LCA's relate to the rural landscape of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown jurisdictional area and are not considered to be relevant in this instance. Instead, a specific 'Sandyford Urban Framework Plan' is incorporated into the Development Plan and this is foremost in the consideration of planning / urban design policy for the area in question.

13.2.1.1 Sandyford Urban Framework Plan 2016-2022

The stated purpose of the SUFP is to '*transform Sandyford Business District from a collection of disparate, poorly connected estates, to a co-ordinated, cohesive, business district.*' And Section 1.5.1 of the SUFP contains the rationale underpinning the SUFP and includes the following:

- *'To strengthen and enhance the structure and character of the urban form through appropriate sustainable land use zoning and guidance on typology, massing, scale, height, density of the built form and by promoting excellence in design of buildings and the spaces between them.'*
- *'To protect the residential amenity of adjoining areas...'*
- *'To provide a network of 'green' routes and integrated streets linking the public open spaces, creating a legible and attractive environment...'*

The application site is situated at the central portion of the area referred to as the 'Sandyford Business Estate' (Figure 13.1 refers) where parts are *'in the process of transforming from an area of low-density freestanding buildings formed around a road network, to higher density development within a tighter urban grain.'* Building heights in this area range up to 4 /5 storeys and *'14 storeys in recently permitted schemes within Sandyford Business Estate'*.

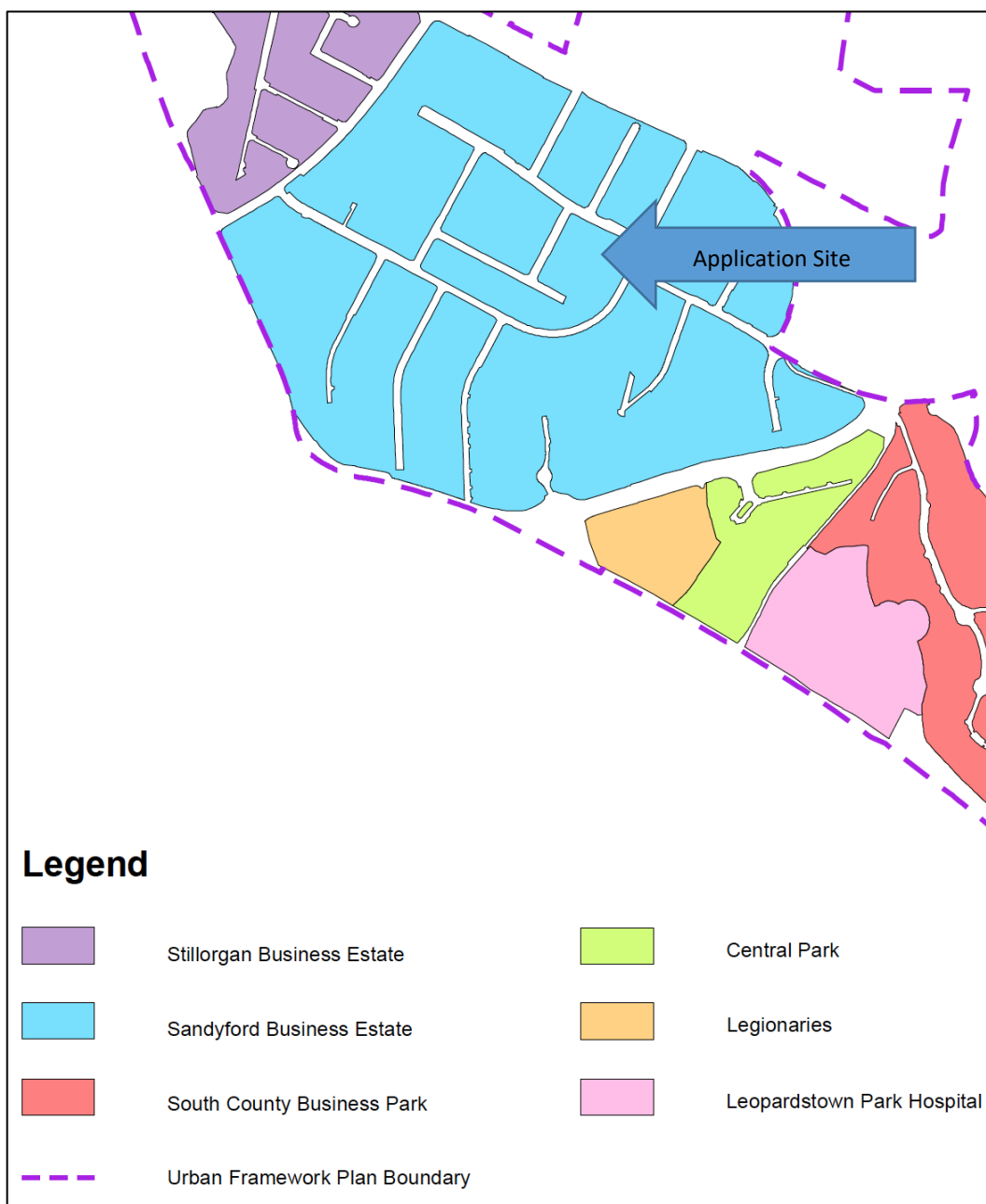


Figure 13.1: Extract from Drawing No. 1 in the SUFP

SUPP Future Land Use Zones

The land use zoning maps within both the CDP and the SUPP indicate that the site is contained within the 'Objective A2 - Residential Zone 5' area (Figure 13.2).

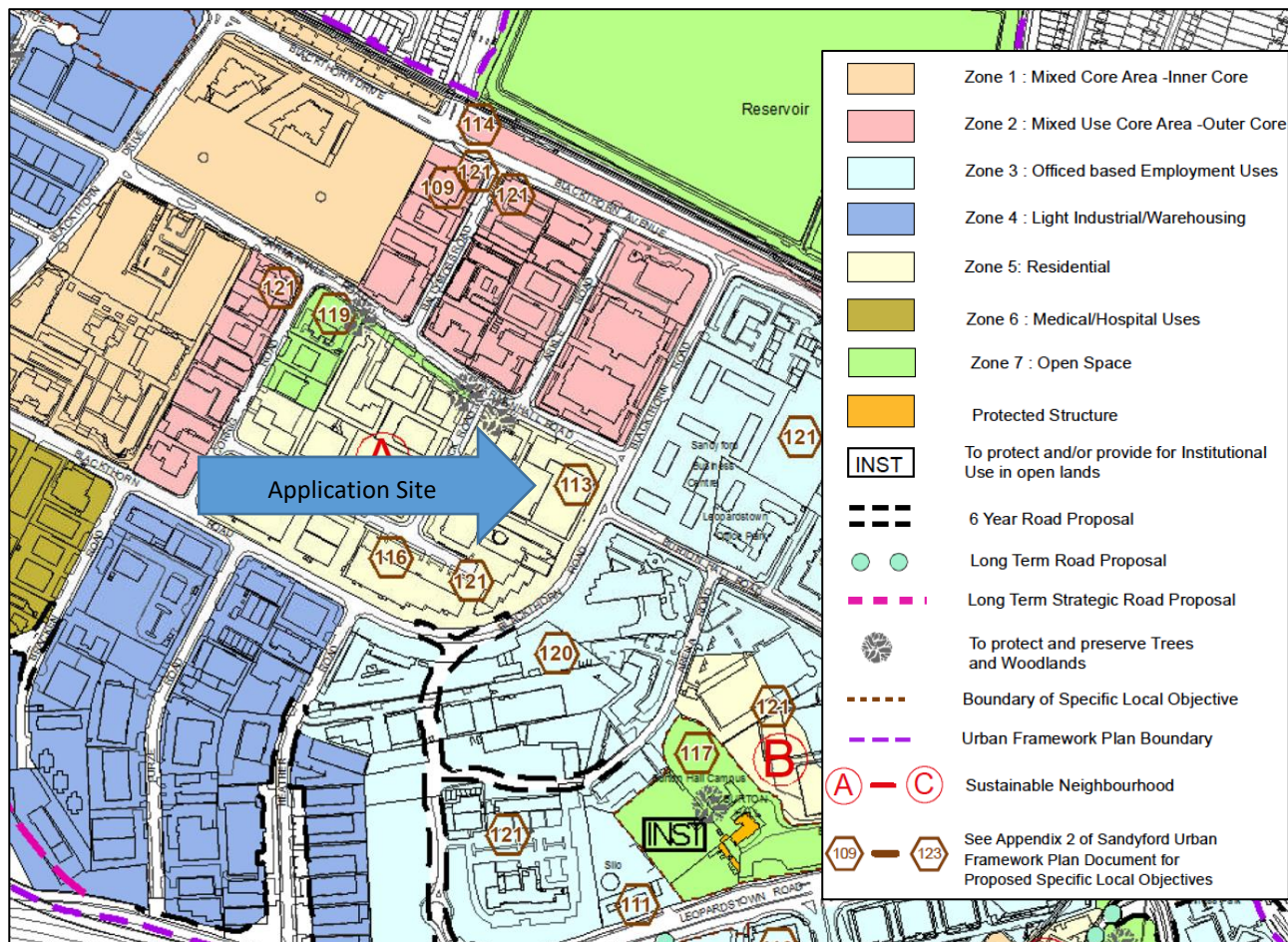


Figure 13.2: Extract from Map 1 - Land Use Zoning Map in SUPP

A2 - Residential Zone 5

The SUPP states: 'It is an objective of the Council to provide for the creation of Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods, and preserve and protect residential amenity in Zone 5 of Sandford Business District' and lists the following objectives:

- *A2 1: It is an objective of the Council to ensure the residential neighbourhoods are developed at a density that is in accordance with the density provision set out in Map 2.*
- *A2 2: It is an objective of the Council to require the provision of indoor community facilities as part of residential development schemes and in accordance with the Land Use Zoning Objectives (Appendix 1 of this Plan).*
- *A2 3: It is an objective of the Council to require all residential development within Zone 5 to benefit from public open space in accordance with the requirements set down in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan. The applicant shall set out clearly in any proposed development how this requirement is being addressed. Where the Planning Authority agrees that it is not possible to provide meaningful and useable public open space or where a specific local objective requires, the applicant shall provide indoor*

community facilities (e.g. community rooms, indoor active recreational uses for residents), or a financial contribution in lieu of open space, the nature of which should be agreed with the Planning Authority at pre-planning stage.

- *A2 4: It is an objective of the Council to require all residential developments to provide private open space in accordance with the requirements set down in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan.*
- *A2 5: It is an objective of the Council to require a set back of the building line along Carmanhall Road to protect the existing sylvan character and to provide a buffer from the employment uses opposite (Drawing 10).*

Other adjacent SUFP Land Use Zones

The area immediately to the north of the application site is within Zone 2 (Figure 13.2 refers) and is described in the SUFP as Zone 2: Mixed Use Outer Core (MOC). The area to the east is subject to Zone 3 and is described in the SUFP as Zone 3: Office Based Employment.

MOC - Mixed Use Outer Core Area Zone 2

The SUFP states: *'It is an objective of the Council to provide for a mix of uses, which complements the Mixed Use Inner Core, but with less retail and residential and more emphasis on employment and services.'*

OE - Office Based Employment Zone 3

The SUFP states: *'It is an objective of the Council to provide for office and enterprise development in Zone 3 of Sandyford Business District.'*

SUFP / DLRCDP Specific Local Objective

Specific Local Objective no. 113 applies to the application site as indicated on both Map 6 in the DLCPD and (Map 1 in the SUFP refers). Appendix 2 of the SUFP describes this Specific Local Objective as follows:

- *'To facilitate the provision of community infrastructure at ground floor along the eastern outer edge of the Carmanhall residential neighbourhood along Blackthorn Road, to create active street frontage and the ensure the appropriate provision of social and community infrastructure to serve the needs of the resident and employee population.'*

Building Height Policies and Objectives

Policy SUFP 3 Building Height in Sandyford Business District

The SUFP states: *'It is Council Policy that building height in Sandyford Business District accords with the height limits indicated on Building Height Map 3.'* And Map No. 3 in the SUFP indicates the site occurs within an area with 'Permitted Development Building Height Limit of 8 Storey Height'. The SUFP lists the following objectives:

- *BH1: It is an objective of the Council to ensure that Sandyford Business District is developed in accordance with height limits set out in Map 3 Building Height subject to the building making a positive contribution to the built form as set out above.*
- *BH2: It is an objective of the Council to require applicants to include with their proposals an analysis of the impact of the height and positioning of buildings on: Immediate and surrounding environment; Adjoining structures; Open Spaces; Public realm (including impact on streets, spaces, pedestrian and cycle routes, identified green routes,*
- *and with particular emphasis on shadow impact); Views and Vistas; and Impact on micro climates (such as wind funnels and overshadowing).*

- *BH3: It is an objective of the Council to consider additional height over the height limit as identified on Map 3 annotated by a star symbol, on site no.6 (Drawing no.13). Increase in building height shall be limited to an element of the building at this location and only where it does not have a significant adverse impact on adjacent residential properties.*
- *BH4: Buildings at locations identified on Map 3 with a triangle symbol shall be of notable design to mark its prominent location. Height limits shall accord with those shown on Map 3 and Building Height Objectives in Section 3.2 of the Plan.*

It is important to note that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government Planning Guidelines on 'Urban Development and Building Heights' from December 2018 supersede the height guidance from the SUFP. These allow for a greater degree of flexibility and generally taller buildings than otherwise indicated in the SUFP.

Public Realm Policies and Objectives

Policy SUFP 4 Public Realm

The SUFP states: 'It is Council policy to promote a high standard of public realm within Sandyford Business District' and contains the following objectives:

- *PR1: It is an objective of the Council to ensure the provision of a high quality, safe, attractive and functional public realm. This shall be achieved through the appropriate and planned use of space and structure, building interface, continuous street frontages and enclosure, hard and soft surfaces, high quality materials, textures, planting, street furniture, lighting and signage and by encouraging a positive relationship between the buildings and the surrounding environment.*
- *PR2: It is an objective of the Council to ensure the provision of local identity, distinctive places and character areas through the use of co-ordinated high quality surface materials, street furniture, public art, signage, lighting and planting.*
- *PR3: It is an objective of the Council to ensure that road design and quality of landscaping treatment reflects its role within the hierarchy of routes.*
- *PR4: It is an objective of the Council to manage street and roadside trees in accordance with best Arboricultural practice.*
- *PR5: It is an objective of the Council to endeavour to conserve all street and roadside trees where feasible and to replace all trees removed with an appropriate species, where the removal of street and roadside trees is necessary.*
- *PR6: It is an objective of the Council to implement a programme for enhanced planting along Green Routes (Drawing 10) and along all roads and streets suitable for such planting.*
- *PR7: It is an objective of the Council to provide a clear, direct, accessible and inviting pedestrian and cycle route from the planned transport interchange at Blackthorn Avenue into the centre of Sandyford Business Estate. This shall be achieved by creating a generous crossing point at the location of the interchange, clearly defined by the building edges and setting back the building line at the junction of Ballymoss Road and Blackthorn Avenue and by providing a shared surface environment along the entirety of the route.*
- *PR8: It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the provision of an urban plaza at the northern end of Ballymoss Road at the junction with Blackthorn Avenue to enhance legibility of the pedestrian and cycle route from the planned transport interchange. This civic area would both complement the proposed Civic Park and form a visual relationship with, and provide clarity to the network of routes between, Beacon South Quarter and the Rockbrook development.*

- *PR9: It is an objective of the Council to protect the mature trees and their setting at Burton Hall and along Carmanhall Road.*
- *PR10: It is an objective of the Council to design sustainable urban drainage systems in accordance with best practice. A multidisciplinary design approach should be taken to integrate run off and water attenuation requirements into: The design of a water feature in the civic park; The design of the capacity in streetscapes for structured soils for trees; Maximise the planting of large canopy trees in accordance with the Council's Tree Strategy; and Maximising the use of green roof systems within new developments.*

Local Residential Areas

In the SUFP three distinct residential areas have been identified within the Sandyford Business District, each with potential for its own character. The application site is within 'Site 11: Carmanhall Road Residential Neighbourhood' (Figure 13.3 refers). The description of the Carmanhall Road Neighbourhood in the SUFP includes the following statements:

'The outer edge of this residential area, fronting Blackthorn Road, provides for uses that will create active street frontage and provide a transition between the residential area and the opposing employment based areas along Blackthorn Road. It is anticipated that these own door business units will provide appropriate facilities for small businesses.'

'...in accordance with urban design principles and having regard to the protection of residential amenity, and has therefore, been identified at ground floor level along the north eastern edge of this residential neighbourhood, at the junction of Carmanhall Road and Blackthorn Road.'

Design Principles and Character Areas

In regards to Design Principles and Character Areas, the SUFP, 'provides a clear set of guidelines, yet is not prescriptive'. Drawing No. 10 in the SUFP is the 'Sandyford Urban Framework Plan – Design Principles and Character Areas' (Figure 13.3 refers) and provides a general indicative illustrative overview. Guidelines in the SUFP related to 'Site 11: Carmanhall Road Residential Neighbourhood' include the following bullet pointed statements:

- *'Carmanhall Road which forms the base line for this residential neighbourhood is considered essential in enhancing connectivity and linking the different retail, commercial and residential aspects of Sandyford Business District.*
- *This residential neighbourhood shall be contained by tall buildings at either end of Carmanhall Road where the building line along the southern side of Carmanhall Road shall be set back to provide a linear greenway. This linear greenway will widen into a substantial Civic Park located at the junction of Corrig Road and the north west of Carmanhall Road. It is envisaged that the Park together with the greenway will provide high amenity open space for both the local residents and employees alike.*
- *The urban form shall provide a strong, animated and active outer edge, with commercial uses at ground floor level, to the residential neighbourhood fronting onto Blackthorn Road. This outer edge whilst promoting routes and permeability will act as a buffer to the inner residential area and the green areas of this neighbourhood.*
- *The inner 'softer centre' of the residential neighbourhood shall comprise of a number of square urban blocks in a grid pattern of suitable scale and size in order to facilitate good sun penetration to the lower floor units.*

- *To promote connectivity, the urban blocks shall be individually modelled to provide visual variety for both residents and those working within Sandford Business District. The blocks shall be of sufficient density to sustain urban living.*
- *'Street frontages shall be predominately own door access, family type units to promote active frontages with corners emphasised according to orientation.*
- *'Dwelling frontages shall be specific to the dwelling's location and orientation in relation to aspect and street hierarchy. For example, level changes should be introduced where dwellings front public spaces, which would retain privacy whilst improving surveillance.*
- *Roads within the zone to be reduced in width and be tree lined to create an Avenue effect, in consultation with the Planning Authority.'*

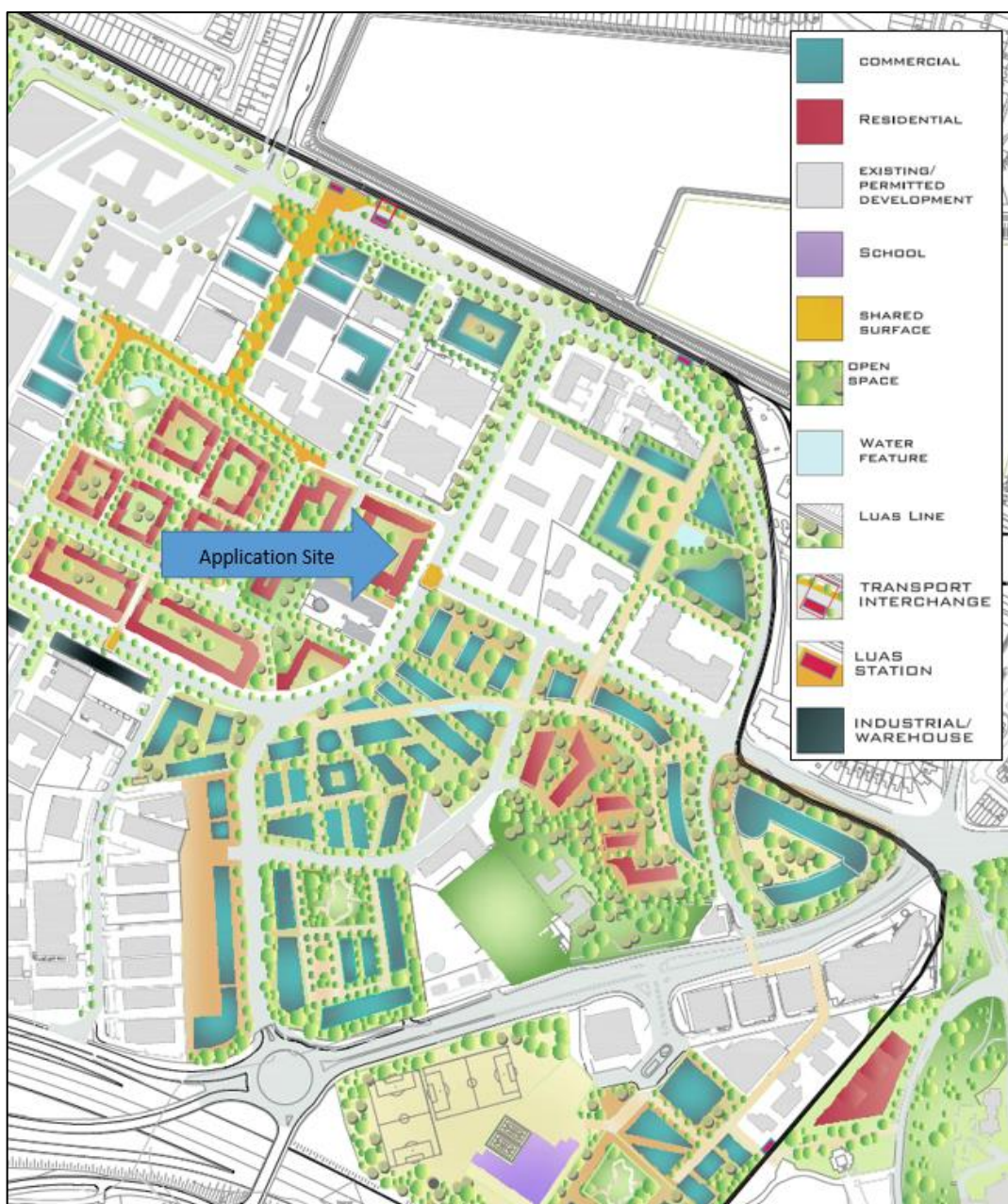


Figure 13.3: Sandford Urban Framework Plan – Design Principles and Character Areas

Other SUFP Designations

There are two other elements in the SUFP that relate to Landscape and Visual:

- *Drawing No. 2 in the SUFP indicates Carmanhall Road is an ‘Existing Walking Routes’ and that Blackthorn Road is ‘Proposed Sli Na Slainte & Proposed Cycling Route’; and*
- *Drawing No. 10 in the SUFP indicates that Carmanhall Road and a short section of Blackthorn Road (between Carmanhall Road and Burton Hall Road) are part of the ‘Green Route Network linking Open Spaces via Pedestrian and or Cycle Routes’.*

13.2.2 Visual Policy

Policy LHB6 in the DLRCDP relates to protected views and prospects and states:

- *“Policy LHB6: Views and Prospects - It is Council policy to protect and encourage the enjoyment of views and prospects of special amenity value or special interests.”*

Table 4.1.1 of the DLRCDP lists 14 of ‘Prospects to be Preserved’ but none of these occur within the study area. The DLRCDP also states ‘Roads or other public areas from which there is a View that is deemed worthy of protection are graphically shown on the Development Plan Maps’. Certain locations are identified on the DLRCDP Development Plan Maps (‘DPM’) under the heading of ‘Other Objectives’ including; ‘To preserve Views’; and ‘To preserve Prospects’. On review none of these are relevant to the Proposed Development.

13.2.3 Current Planning Status of the site

The Proposed Development Site was previously approved planning permission in 2019 for a 25,459sqm student accommodation development comprising of between 7 and 9 storey blocks.

13.3 Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

Production of this Landscape/townscape and Visual Impact Assessment involved:

- A desktop study to establish an appropriate study area, relevant landscape and visual designations in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-20221 and the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Local Area Plans²;
- Fieldwork to study the receiving environment and to select a suitable set of viewpoints to be used for visual impact assessment;
- Assessment of the significance of the landscape/townscape impact of the Proposed Development as a function of landscape sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the landscape impact; and
- Assessment of the significance of the visual impact of the Proposed Development as a function of visual receptor sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact.

This document uses methodology as prescribed in the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and landscape Institute (UK) ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA-2013)³. Although this is principally a ‘townscape’ assessment, it utilises the same outline methodology as would be employed for the more familiar Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of developments in rural settings.

¹ Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (2016) Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016 – 2022. Available from: <https://www.dlrcco.ie/en/planning/county-development-plan/county-development-plan-2016-2022>

² Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown (2019) Local Area Plans. Available from: <https://www.dlrcco.ie/en/planning/local-area-plans>

³ Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (eds.) (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Routledge, Oxon.

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA-2013) follow the European Landscape Convention (ELC) definition of landscape: *'Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'* (Council of Europe, 2000). Thus, GLVIA-2013 covers all landscapes from "high mountains and wild countryside to urban and fringe farmland (rural landscapes), marine and coastal landscapes (seascapes) and the landscapes of villages towns and cities (townscapes)" - whether protected or degraded.

Townscape is defined in GLVIA-2013 in the following manner (section 2.7):

'Townscape' refers to areas where the built environment is dominant. Villages, towns and cities often make important contributions as elements in wider-open landscapes but townscape means the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban spaces, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces. There are important relationships with historic dimensions of landscape and townscape, since evidence of the way the villages, towns and cities change and develop over time contributes to their current form and character.

13.3.1 Landscape/townscape Impact Assessment Criteria

When assessing the potential impacts on the townscape resulting from a Proposed Development, the following criteria are considered:

- Landscape/townscape character, value and sensitivity;
- Magnitude of likely impacts;
- Significance of landscape effects.

The sensitivity of the townscape to change is the degree to which a particular setting can accommodate changes or new elements without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. Landscape/townscape Value and Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1: Landscape/Townscape Value and Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape/townscape character exhibits a very low capacity for change. Examples of these include landscapes/townscapes with unique and highly valued elements / character, protected at an international or national level (e.g. World Heritage Site), where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the landscape/townscape character exhibits a low capacity for change. Examples of these include landscape/townscapes with rare and highly valued elements / character, protected at a national or regional level, where the principal management objectives are likely to be the conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape/townscape character exhibits some capacity for change. Examples of which are landscapes/townscapes, that include notable elements / character and are likely to have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value.
Low	Areas where the landscape/townscape character exhibits reasonable capacity for change. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated landscapes/townscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.

Negligible	Areas of landscape/townscape character that include derelict sites and degradation where there would be a strong capacity for change. Management objectives in such areas are likely to be focused on enhancement or restoration.
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The magnitude of a predicted landscape/townscape impact is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the Proposed Development. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape/townscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the immediate setting that may have an effect on the townscape character. Table 13.2 refers.

Table 13.2: Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Impacts

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale, involving critically important landscape/townscape elements and patterns, which may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to fundamental change of the landscape/townscape, in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be large to moderate in extent and scale, involving important landscape/townscape elements and patterns, which may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to substantial change of the landscape/townscape, in terms of character, value and quality.
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale, involving notable landscape/townscape elements and patterns, which may also involve the introduction of new, uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to distinguishable changes in landscape/ townscape character, and quality.
Low	Changes that are small in extent and scale, involving common or indistinct landscape/townscape elements and patterns, which may also involve the introduction of new elements or features that are not uncharacteristic within the receiving context and would lead to subtle changes in landscape/ townscape character, and quality.
Negligible	Changes that are small or very restricted in extent and scale involving common or indistinct landscape/townscape elements and patterns, which may also involve the introduction of new elements or features that are entirely characteristic of the receiving context and would lead to barely discernible changes in landscape/ townscape character, and quality.

The significance of a landscape/townscape impact is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The significance of landscape impacts is arrived at using the following graph set out in Figure 13.4. Impacts of 'Substantial' or greater are considered to be significant impacts in the context of this assessment and EIA terms.

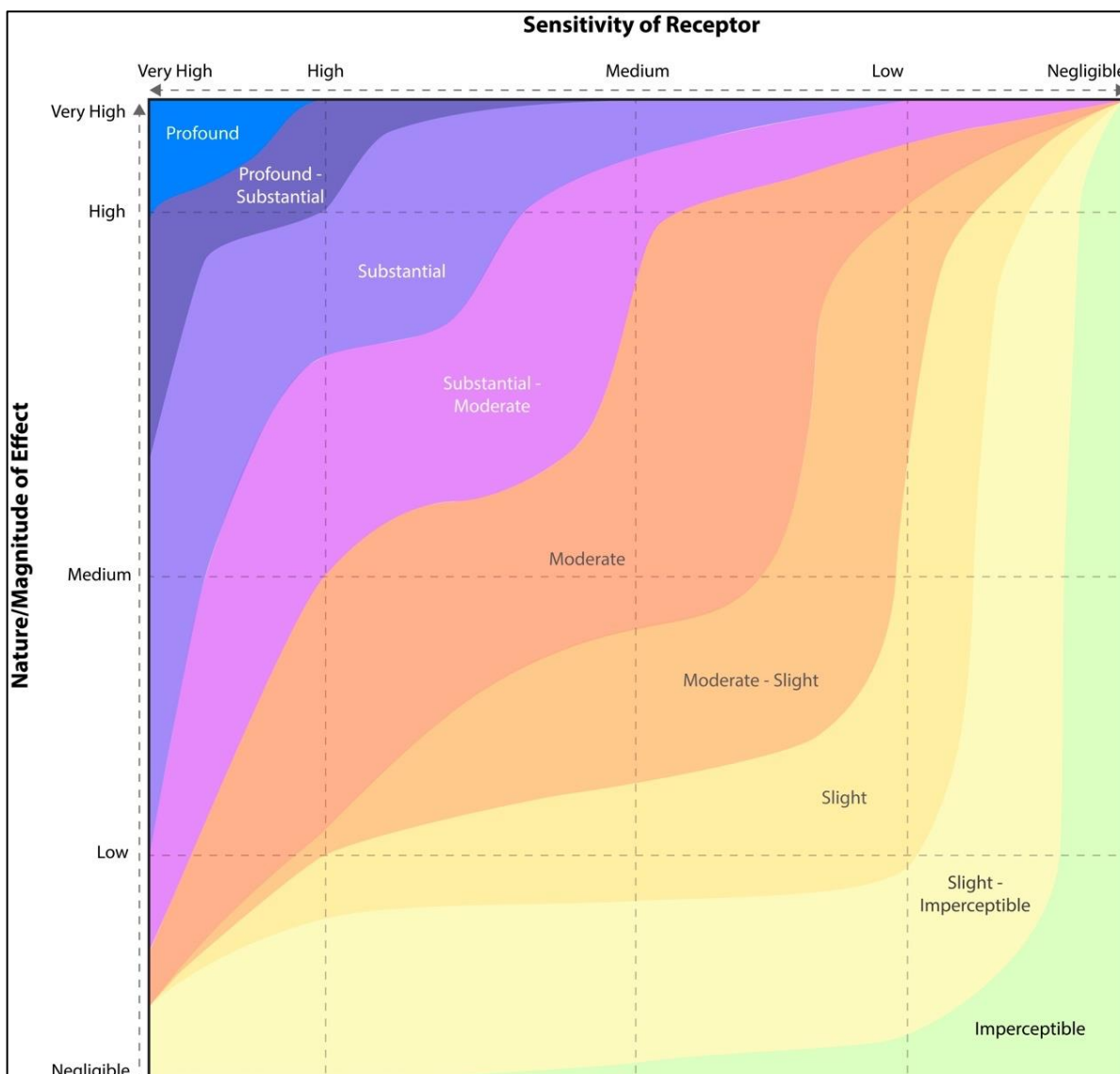


Figure 13.4: Impact Significance Graph

The impact significance graph (Figure 13.4) is derived from the Draft EPA EIA Guidelines (2017; Figure 3.5), but adapted to include more nuanced categories that better reflect the subtleties of LVIA. It also avoids the use of the category term ‘Significant’ in accordance with GLVIA 2013 recommendations (‘Substantial’ used instead) and also avoids the potentially ambiguous and seemingly unnecessary term ‘Not Significant’ between the ‘Imperceptible’ and ‘Slight’ categories.

13.3.2 Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

As with the landscape/townscape impact, the visual impact of the Proposed Development will be assessed as a function of sensitivity versus magnitude. In this instance the sensitivity of the visual receptor, weighed against the magnitude of the visual effect.

13.3.2.1 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Unlike landscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric (human) basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape/townscape context of the viewer, the likely activity they are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape. A list of the factors considered by the assessor in estimating the level of sensitivity for a particular visual receptor is outlined below to establish visual receptor sensitivity at each VRP:

Susceptibility of Receptors

In accordance with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (“IEMA”) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (3rd edition 2013) visual receptors most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are:

- *“Residents at home;*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*
- *Travellers on road rail or other transport routes where such travel involves recognised scenic routes and awareness of views is likely to be heightened”.*

Visual receptors that are less susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity include;

- *“People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focussed on their work or activity, not their surroundings and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life”.*

Recognised scenic value of the view (County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards etc). These represent a consensus in terms of which scenic views and routes within an area are strongly valued by the population because in the case of County Developments Plans, for example, a public consultation process is required;

Views from within highly sensitive townscape areas. These are likely to be in the form of Architectural Conservation Areas, which are incorporated within the Development Plan and therefore subject to the public consultation process. Viewers within such areas are likely to be highly attuned to the townscape around them;

Primary views from residential receptors. Even within a dynamic city context, views from residential properties are an important consideration in respect of residential amenity;

Intensity of use, popularity. This relates to the number of viewers likely to experience a view on a regular basis and whether this is significant at a national or regional scale;

Viewer connection with the townscape. This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the townscape i.e. commuters hurriedly driving on busy roads versus tourists focussed on the character and detail of the townscape;

Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views. This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;

Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity. Receptors taking in a remote and tranquil scene, which is likely to be fairly static, are likely to be more receptive to changes in the view than those taking in the view of a busy street scene, for example;

Degree of perceived naturalness. Where a view is valued for the sense of naturalness of the surrounding landscape it is likely to be highly sensitive to visual intrusion by distinctly manmade features;

Presence of striking or noteworthy features. A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape / townscape feature such as a cathedral or castle;

Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance. Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;

Rarity or uniqueness of the view. This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain townscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;

Integrity of the townscape character. This looks at the condition and intactness of the townscape in view and whether the townscape pattern is a regular one of few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;

Sense of place. This considers whether there is special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location;

Sense of awe. This considers whether the view inspires an overwhelming sense of scale or the power of nature.

Those locations which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria are likely to be of higher sensitivity. No relative importance is inferred by the order of listing. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular. Visual sensitivity classification includes the same categories used throughout this assessment in respect of the sensitivity of receptors and magnitude of effects i.e. Very High; High; Medium; Low; and, Negligible.

13.3.2.2 Visual Impact Magnitude

The visual impact magnitude relates to the scale and nature of the visual change brought about by the proposal and this is reflected in the criteria contained in Table 13.3 below.

Table 13.3: Magnitude of Visual Impacts

Criteria	Description
Very High	The proposal alters or obstructs a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is, without question, the most distinctive element. A high degree of visual change is generated, directly and strongly altering the visual amenity of the scene
High	The proposal alters a substantial proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual change is generated that directly influences the visual amenity of the scene
Medium	The proposal represents a modest alteration to the available vista, introducing a distinguishable degree of visual change that directly influences the visual amenity of the scene
Low	The proposal alters the available vista to a minor extent and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene.
Negligible	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and would have an immaterial effect on the visual amenity of the scene.

13.3.2.3 Visual Impact Significance

As stated above, the significance of visual impacts is a function of visual receptor sensitivity and visual impact magnitude. This relationship is expressed in the same significance matrix and applies the same EPA definitions of significance as used earlier in respect of townscape impacts (Figure 13.4 refers).

13.3.2.4 Quality of Effects

In addition to assessing the significance of landscape/townscape effects and visual effects, EPA Guidance for EIAs requires that the quality of the effects is also determined. This could be negative/adverse, neutral, or positive/beneficial.

Whereas, the introduction of new built elements into countryside areas more often results in negative landscape and visual effects, in urban settings, development proposals are often replacing one built feature with another. The consequence for the townscape character and visual amenity is often beneficial, or may be a combination of positive effects and negative effects for different receptors. In the context of this assessment, the judgment of the quality of the effects is made in combination with the significance judgement for both landscape/townscape impacts and visual impacts e.g. Moderate / Positive or Moderate / Negative.

13.3.3 Extent of Study Area

It is anticipated that the Proposed Development, although potentially visible within the context of the Sandyford industrial area from some distant elevated vantage points, is not likely to give rise to significant townscape or visual impacts beyond 1 – 2 km. However, in the interests of a cautious and robust assessment the study area will be a 3km radius in this instance.

The Study Area was visited on one occasion for the purposes of the LVIA (not including photo capture by the visualisation specialists). The date of the site visit was 20/05/2020.

13.4 Baseline Conditions

The landscape/townscape baseline represents the existing context and is the scenario against which any changes to it, brought about by the Proposed Development, will be assessed. A description of the landscape/townscape context of the proposed site and wider study area is provided below. Although this description forms part of the landscape/townscape baseline, many of the elements identified also relate to visual receptors i.e. places from which viewers can potentially see the Proposed Development.

The townscape context of the study area is richly diverse and compartmentalised into various distinct and somewhat discrete areas of land use within the overall urban fabric. Chief among these is the Sandyford business district, which dominates the central study area. This is one of the largest business districts in the country having emerged in the late 1960s. It generally comprises of a mix of medium to high density office and residential development, light industry and retail warehousing in a series of precincts.

The Proposed Development site is currently a brownfield site where a former low-rise commercial premise was recently demolished. The site lies in the heart of The Sandyford business district at the eastern corner of a central medium intensity precinct of generally low to medium height retail warehousing units, industrial uses and office buildings. A similar scale and mix of development occurs to the south and east, whilst a larger scale (building heights) and more intensively developed zone of offices and apartments occurs to the north and west.

Topographically, the Sandyford business district is relatively prominent within the context of south Dublin, located at the foot of the Dublin Mountains. The landform rises steadily beyond the M50 motorway to the southwest of the central study area and falls more gently to the north and east towards central and southern Dublin and the coastline beyond.

Other than apartment buildings within the Sandyford commercial district, the nearest residential receptors are contained in traditional housing estates c.400m to the east and north, 900m to the west and 750m to the south on the opposite side of the M50 motorway. These southerly housing estates occupy the foothills of the Dublin mountains affording elevated views across the city.

Transport infrastructure is also an important element of the study area in terms of both land use and function. Ireland's busiest road, the M50 motorway, which serves as a ring road around Dublin City is located a short distance (600m) to the south of the site and traverses the southern quarters of the study area. This substantial transport corridor also serves to divide the Sandyford business district from the southerly housing estates and peri-urban fringe of the city. The Drumartin Link Road spurs northwards from the M50 and defines the western edge of the Sandyford business district. The Leopardstown Road performs a similar function spurring to the east from the M50, but has industrial / commercial developments to both the north and south of it. A combination of Burton Hall Road and Blackthorn Avenue complete the northward definition of the business district. The LUAS light rail line follows these roads through the eastern and north-central portions of the study area and is approximately 200m to the northeast of the site at its nearest point.

Other notable land uses include a municipal water reservoir to the north of the Luas line and Leopardstown Race course and its internal golf course in the south-eastern periphery of the study area. There are also several schools, parks and sports fields principally within the residential portions of the study area.



Figure 13.5: Site (red outline) in relation to the land-use and land cover within the central study area

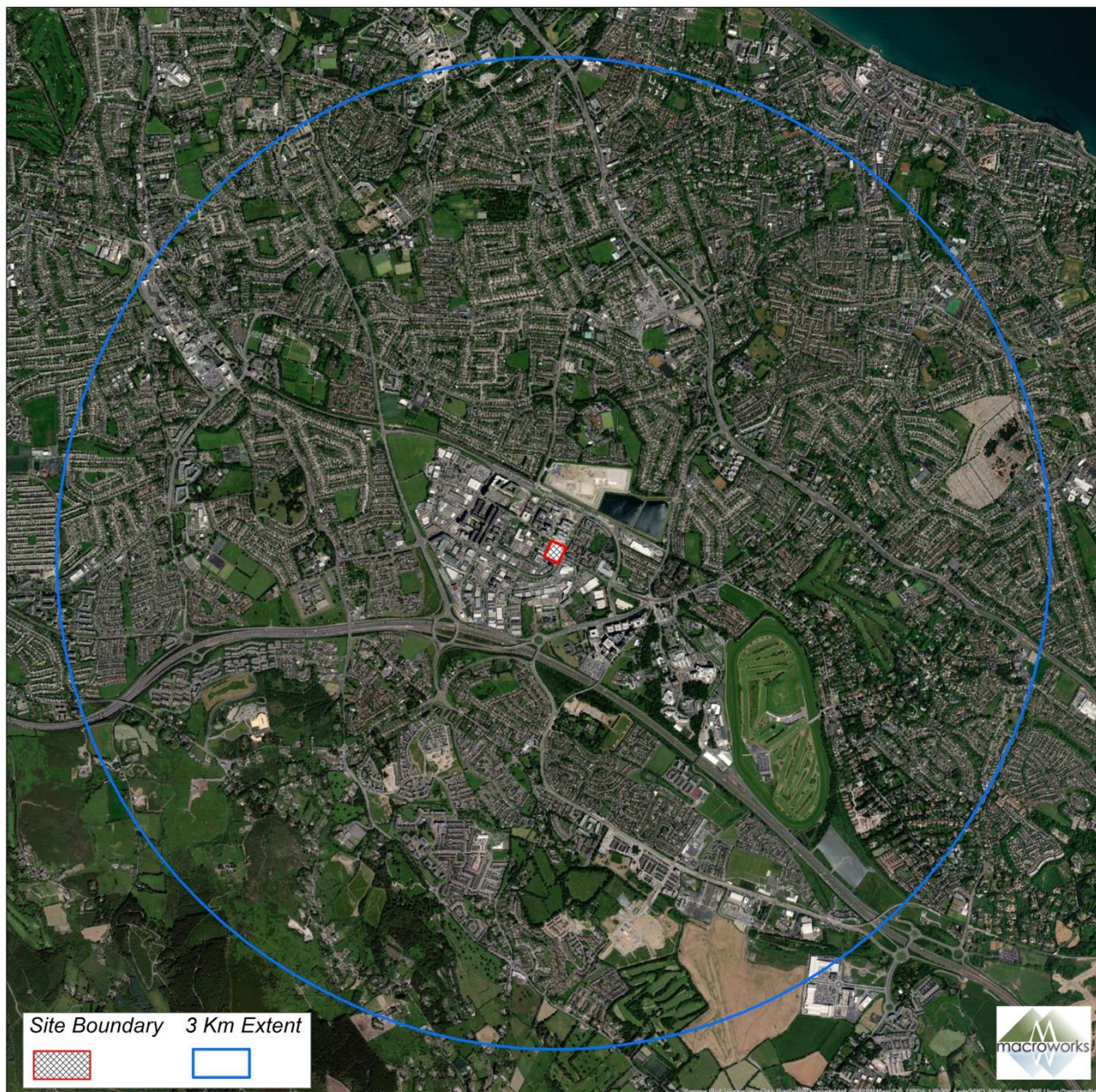


Figure 13.6: Site (red outline) in relation to land use mix within the 3km radius study area (blue circle)

13.5 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will comprise of:

(i) construction of a Build-To-Rent residential development within a new part six, part eight, part nine, part eleven storey rising to a landmark seventeen storey over basement level apartment building (40,814sq.m) comprising 428 no. apartments (41 no. studio, 285 no. one-bedroom, 94 no. two-bedroom & 8 no. three-bedroom units) of which 413 no. apartments have access to private amenity space, in the form of a balcony or lawn/terrace, and 15 no. apartments have access to a shared private roof terrace (142sq.m) at ninth floor level;

(ii) all apartments have access to 2,600sq.m of communal amenity space, spread over a courtyard at first floor level and roof terraces at sixth, eighth and ninth floor levels, a 142sq.m resident's childcare facility at ground floor level, 392sq.m of resident's amenities, including concierge/meeting rooms, office/co-working space at ground floor level and a meeting/games room at first floor level, and 696sq.m of

resident's amenities/community infrastructure inclusive of cinema, gym, yoga studio, laundry and café/lounge at ground floor level. The café/lounge will primarily serve the residents of the development and will be open for community use on a weekly/sessional basis;

(iii) provision of 145 no. vehicular parking spaces (including 8 no. mobility parking spaces, 2 no. club-car spaces and 44 no. electric charging spaces), 5 no. motorcycle parking spaces, bin stores, plant rooms, switch room and 2 no. ESB sub-stations all at ground floor level; provision of bicycle parking (752 no. spaces), plant and storage at basement level; permission is also sought for the removal of the existing vehicular entrance and construction of a replacement vehicular entrance in the north-western corner of the site off Carmanhall Road;

(iv) provision of improvements to street frontages to adjoining public realm of Carmanhall Road & Blackthorn Road comprising an upgraded pedestrian footpath, new cycling infrastructure, an increased quantum of landscaping and street-planting, new street furniture inclusive of bins, benches and cycle parking facilities and the upgrading of the existing Carmanhall Road & Blackthorn Road junction through provision of a new uncontrolled pedestrian crossing; and,

(v) All ancillary works including provision of play equipment, boundary treatments, drainage works - including SuDS drainage, landscaping, lighting, rooftop telecommunications structure and all other associated site services, site infrastructure and site development works. The former Avid Technology International buildings were demolished on foot of Reg. Ref. D16A/0158 which also permitted a part-five rising to eight storey apartment building. The development approved under Reg. Ref. D16A/0158, and a subsequent part-seven rising to nine storey student accommodation development permitted under Reg. Ref. PL06D.303467, will be superseded by the Proposed Development.

The key characteristics of the Proposed Development from a Landscape / Townscape and Visual perspective include the above ground built elements and associated short-term elements and activities associated with the construction phase and the above ground built elements and landscaping associated with the operational phase.

Chief among the built elements will be the tallest 17 storey building, which has the most potential of all of the proposed buildings to be seen from wider distances. In order to determine the likely visibility of the Proposed Development from within the surrounding landscape / townscape setting, Zone of Theoretical Visibility analysis was undertaken. This also aided the selection of viewpoints for the visual impact assessment.

13.5.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

Only those parts of the receiving environment that potentially afford views of the Proposed Development are of concern to visual impact assessment. A computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map has been prepared to illustrate where the Proposed Development is potentially visible from. Whilst a standard ZTV map is based solely on terrain data (bare ground visibility), and ignores features such as vegetation and buildings, this is of little value in a medium to high density urban setting such as the Sandyford business district. In this instance Digital Surface Model (DSM) data, which does account for the surrounding surface elements of vegetation and buildings, has been used to prepare the ZTV map (Figure 13.7).

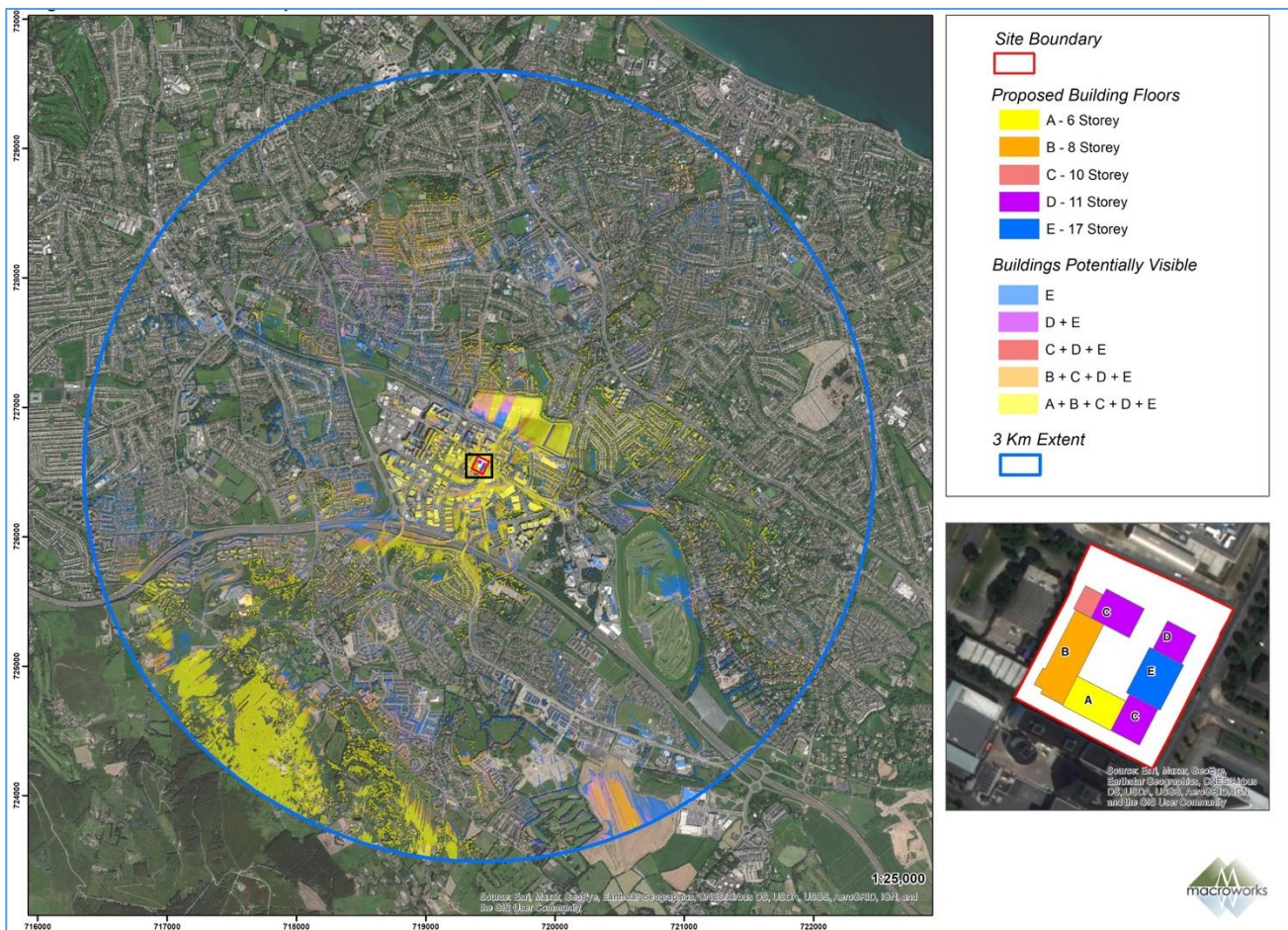


Figure 13.7: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map based on Digital Surface Model (DSM) data – (Black square denotes building height inset)

The ZTV map at Figure 13.7 shows that the vast majority of potential visibility of the development occurs within the Sandyford business district and generally within 500m of the site. The open and elevated Stillorgan reservoir stands out as being afforded relatively comprehensive scheme visibility, but this is not an areas that contains sensitive visual receptors. The yellow pattern that predominates within the Sandyford business district indicates a view of the substantial portion of proposed buildings, whereas the blue pattern that occurs within the wider reaches of the study area indicates visibility of only the tallest 17 storey buildings above other intervening vegetation and buildings. There is relatively little visibility shown from within the housing estates that surround the Sandyford business district and that which does occur relates to roof tops rather that the ground plane. At most this suggests some views from first floor windows but not from streets, parks or ground floor windows.

13.5.2 Identification of Viewshed Reference Points as a Basis for Assessment

Viewshed Reference Points (VRP's) are the locations used to study the likely visual impacts associated with the Proposed Development. It is not warranted to include each and every location that provides a view as this would result in an unwieldy report and make it extremely difficult to draw out the key impacts arising from the Proposed Development. Instead, the selected viewpoints are intended to reflect a range of different receptor types, distances and angles. The visual impact of a Proposed Development is assessed using up to 6 categories of receptor type as listed below:

- Key Views - from features of national or international importance;
- Designated Scenic Routes and Views;

- Local Community views;
- Centres of Population;
- Major Routes; and
- Amenity and heritage features.

The Viewshed Reference Points selected in this instance are set out in Table 13.4.

Table 13.4: Outline Description of Selected Viewshed Reference Points (VRPs)

VRP No.	Location	Direction of view
VP1	Burton Hall Road	NW
VP2	Blackthorn Road	SW
VP3	Arkle Road	SE
VP4	Carmanhall Road	SE
VP5	Blackthorn Road	N
VP6	Carmanhall Road opposite site	SW
VP7	Leopardstown Road / Leopardstown Rise	NE
VP8	Moreen Park	E
VP9	Saint Raphaela's Road	S
VP10	Blackthorn Road / Blackthorn Avenue junction	SW
VP11	Burton Hall Hospital	NW
VP12	Burton Hall Road / Leopardstown Road junction	NW
VP13	Designated Scenic route at Newtown little	NE
VP14	Designated Scenic Route at Burrow Road	N

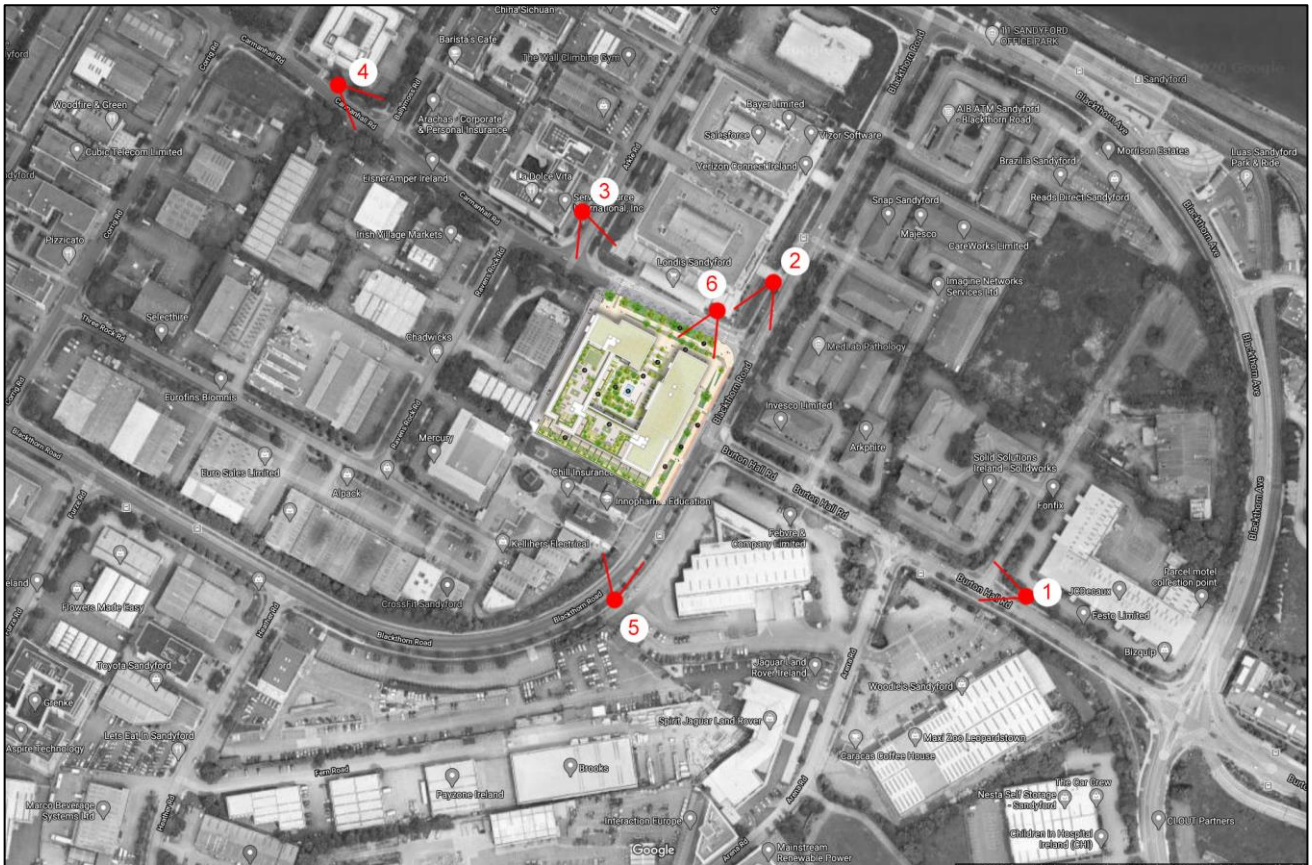


Figure 13.8: VP Location Map – close view points



Figure 13.9: VP Location Map – mid distance view points



Figure 13.10: VP Location Map – distant view points

13.6 Potential Effects

13.6.1 Landscape/townscape Impacts

13.6.1.1 Landscape/townscape value and sensitivity

In accordance with Section 5.5 of the GLVIA-2013, a townscape character assessment requires a particular understanding of, among other criteria, “the context or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape”. In this case the principal relationship is to the Sandyford business district to which the site is a central and integral locality. This is an area of relatively high density office and light industry uses, which is established over 50 years as the main business hub of South Dublin. It is surrounded and traversed by major transport routes, which have formed in response to the hub and which separate and buffer the business district from surrounding residential neighbourhoods. The main townscape values associated with the Sandyford business district relate to its function as a vibrant hub for South Dublin business and to an increasing degree, community. It is not associated with recreational, amenity, heritage or scenic and naturalistic values.

In terms of condition and integrity, up until 2008 building work within the Sandyford business district was moving at a fast pace with ever increasing scale and intensity of buildings. However, following the 2008 recession there was a noticeable degree of dereliction in the form of partially completed building shells, unkempt back areas and vacant sites. Since around 2014 there has been a gradual return of development work and rejuvenation of derelict buildings and sites within the Sandyford business district.

Within the wider portions of the study area, beyond the Sandyford business district is a suburban landscape of generally medium to low density housing estates. In these residential housing estates townscape values relate closely to aspects of residential amenity such as open space and recreation, tidiness, safety and convenience to neighbourhood service centres. On the southern side of the M50 motorway there is value associated with the rural hinterland of Dublin City as well as physical and visual proximity to the Dublin Mountains. There is also some degree of scenic amenity / value associated with broad views across Dublin City and coastline from these elevated residential areas within the foothills of the Dublin Mountains, but with the Sandyford business district a long established features of such vistas.

Although the wider residential aspects of the study area are considered to be more sensitive in a general sense and also in a particular sense to the scale and nature of development proposed, they are also at notable contextual and physical remove for the Proposed Development site. The Sandyford business district, in which the site is centrally contained, is the principal context of this Proposed Development. This townscape context is considered to be of **Low** sensitivity to the familiar form of development proposed.

13.6.1.2 *Magnitude of Landscape/townscape effects* Construction Phase

There will be permanent physical effects to the land cover of the site, but this is a currently a cleared brownfield site destined for redevelopment. There is a cluster of existing trees at the north-western corner of the site that are identified in the CDP for protection and these will be retained and protected during the construction stage for later incorporation within the landscaped street frontage of the development. During the construction stage of the Proposed Development there will be construction-related activity within and around the site, including approach roads. This will include, but is not limited to:

- 1 The construction of the new buildings, paths and landscaping
- 2 HGVs transporting materials to and from the site;
- 3 Movement of heavy machinery and tower cranes on-site;
- 4 Temporary storage of construction materials on-site;
- 5 Security fencing/hoarding and site lighting.

In terms of duration, it is predicted that the construction stage for the proposed project will last for approximately 24 months which will be 'short-term' (i.e. lasting 1-7 years), in accordance with the EPA definitions of impact duration. Furthermore, the context of this construction activity is within a medium to high density urban business district where such activity is a regular, on-going, occurrence.

On the basis of the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts is deemed to be **Medium-low** and **Short-Term**. When combined with the **Low** sensitivity of the receiving townscape, the overall significance of construction stage townscape impacts is considered to be **Slight / Negative**, in accordance with the criteria contained in Section 1.5.

Operational Phase (Post Construction)

The Proposed Development will add considerable scale and intensity of built development to this site and its immediate surroundings, but in the context of other tall and bulky buildings fronting the western side of Blackthorn road and northern side of Carmanhall Road. It will generate a more abrupt, but highly legible transition between the taller buildings and higher plot ratios of Sandyford business district 'inner core' and 'outer core areas, which occur to the north and west and the lower buildings and plot ratios of the 'office based employment zone that occurs to the east and south of Blackthorn Road.

The fact that the development sits at the eastern edge of the higher intensity zone makes it relatively prominent within the surrounding townscape to the east, particularly from one of the main entrance avenues into the Sandyford business district along the Burton Hall Road from Leopardstown. Thus, it will be something of a landmark building and its design is unapologetic in this regard employing one tall (14 storey) element on this alignment and fronting the corner Blackthorn Road and Carmanhall Road.

Planning policy relating to this site and its immediate environs *"provides for uses that will create active street frontage and provide a transition between the residential area and the opposing employment based areas along Blackthorn Road"*. This is achieved by a generous setback from Blackthorn Road and Carmanhall Road creating a pedestrian plaza that serves own-door offices and restaurants at ground floor level. There is a grand terraced entrance to the internal courtyard from the northern (Carmanhall Road) streetscape. The set back and human-scale urban design of the street scape around the outward facing northern and eastern aspects of the site, serves to counter the potential for overbearing from the tallest corner building of the development.

In terms of the wider landscape context of the residential neighbourhoods that border the Sandyford business district, the uppermost elements of the development are likely to noticeably alter the medium distance skyline. A skyline that is already characterised by medium and tall buildings from the long established Sandyford business district, which serves as a visual node or landmark within broader views across South Dublin. The Proposed Development will include one of the taller buildings within this context, but represents only a minor and characteristic change to the urban massing of central Sandyford.

Once operational the Proposed Development represents a permanent and not readily reversible impact in the townscape setting of the central Sandyford business district, but one that is appropriate in terms of design, scale and context to this progressive business / community hub setting.

On balance of the increased intensity and scale of built development represented by this proposal versus its appropriate design response to the zoning and policy context of this site and locality, the nature / magnitude of townscape impact is deemed to be Low and of a Positive quality.

13.6.1.3 Significance of Landscape/townscape effects

In accordance with the Landscape/Visual significance graph (Figure 13.4), the combination of a 'Low' townscape sensitivity judgement and a 'Low' magnitude of impact on the townscape character is considered to result in an **Slight-imperceptible** significance and **Positive** quality of impact at operational stage.

13.6.2 Visual Impact Assessment

13.6.2.1 Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Table 13.5: Analysis of Visual Receptor Sensitivity at Viewshed Reference Points

Scale of value for each criterion

Strong association	Moderate association	Mild association	Negligible association

Values associated with the view	VP1	VP2	VP3	VP4	VP5	VP6	VP7	VP8	VP9	VP10	VP11	VP12	VP13	VP14
Susceptibility of viewers to changes in views														
Recognised scenic value of the view														
Views from within highly sensitive landscape areas														
Primary views from residences														
Intensity of use, popularity (number of viewers)														
Viewer connection with the landscape														
Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views														
Sense of remoteness / tranquillity at the viewing location														
Degree of perceived naturalness														
Presence of striking or noteworthy features														
Sense of Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance														
Rarity or uniqueness of the view														
Integrity of the landscape character within the view														
Sense of place at the viewing location														
Sense of awe														
Overall sensitivity assessment	L	L	L	L	L	L	ML	ML	L	L	ML	L	HM	HM

N = Negligible; L = low sensitivity; ML = medium-low sensitivity M = medium sensitivity; HM = High-medium sensitivity; H = high sensitivity; VH = very high sensitivity

13.6.2.2 Magnitude of Visual Effects

The assessment of visual impacts at each of the selected viewpoints is aided by photomontages of the Proposed Development (provided in Appendix 13.1). Photomontages are a 'photo-real' depiction of the scheme within the view utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the development, which has been geo-referenced to allow accurate placement and scale. For each viewpoint, an existing view has been produced. Where there is no visibility of the Proposed Development from that viewpoint, an outline view has also been produced. Where there is visibility, however partial, a photomontage view has also been produced.

13.6.2.3 Construction Phase Visual Impacts

Note that in accordance with normal practice for LVIA, construction stage photomontages have not been prepared as the ever-changing nature of the site works and activity cannot be readily illustrated in a static image. The nature of the 'Short-term' construction phase works is described in section 13.6.1.2 – Magnitude of landscape / Townscape Impacts (Construction Stage). It is considered that where visible, the construction stage visual impacts will be in general accordance with the townscape impacts predicted in that section i.e. **Slight** significance of a **Negative** quality, but of a **Short-term** duration.

13.6.2.4 Operational Phase Visual Impacts

Operational phase visual impacts, assessed in conjunction with the Photomontage set, are provided below in respect of each representative viewpoint.

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP1	Burton Hall Road	250m	NW

Representative of: • Local Views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is an axial view from mid-way along Burton Hall Road looking directly towards the site. The view is framed by street trees and contained in the distance by medium to high rise buildings within the commercial core of Sandyford business district. The development that flanks either side of the road is low rise light industry and retail warehousing.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The Proposed Development will rise prominently above the ‘T’ intersection at the end of Burton Hall Road in the middle distance providing a higher degree of containment to the overall view. The building has a rich variation of profile, façade depth and materials, which offsets its bulk. The taller central elements also terrace down to the south in a transition of scale to surrounding buildings. As a termination feature of this axial approach view to Sandyford’s business district core the proposed building serves as a proud threshold marker without appearing over-scaled within the surrounding context.

Overall, the Proposed Development is considered to have a **Negligible** visual impact.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Sensitivity	Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Low		Negligible	Imperceptible / Positive

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP2	Blackthorn Road	75m	SW

Representative of: • Local Views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is a slightly uphill view along Blackthorn Road with medium height office buildings strongly containing the street scene to the west (right) and lower rise light industry / retail warehousing providing a lesser degree of containment to the east. There is a noticeable gap between the buildings fronting the western side of the road in the near middle distance at the corner of Carmanhall Road. A brief glimpse of the Dublin Mountains is also afforded between street trees and buildings in the distance.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development From this distance and angle the Proposed Development presents as a terracing series of, prominent, tall and relatively narrow buildings, which are clearly residential in function (window layout and balconies), particularly compared to the foreground office buildings. The gap on the western side of the street scene is filled, but a sense of permeability is maintained by a view between the buildings of the Proposed Development. There is a consolidation of the building line along the western side of the street and a more abrupt, but legible transition to the light industry zone to the east of the road. This is considered to be an appropriate manifestation of the edge between the core and light industry zoning contained within the CDP and the provision of a landmark building (tallest tower) at a key intersection and central point along the eastern edge of the core.

On balance of the increased scale and intensity of development within view and the street scene consolidation that results from this development, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor	Visual Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Impact Significance	Low	Negligible	Imperceptible / Positive

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP3	Arkle Road	61m	SE

Representative of: • Local Views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This view from the uphill approach to the intersection between Arkle Road and the busier Carmanhall Road is strongly contained on either side by close mid height office buildings. However, the view is relatively open beyond the intersection with only low rise buildings and vegetation providing any containment.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The proposed buildings stand as a prominent feature of this view occupying a sizeable portion of the heretofore open aspect of the view. Unlike the view from VP2, the buildings mass together from this angle and form substantial, but not overbearing bulk. The bulk and massing is also relieved somewhat by the variation in façade projections and materials of the various buildings. Furthermore, in the context of closer bulky buildings the Proposed Development appears comparable in scale and presence. Although the sense of openness is considerably lessened this is a business district setting and the development does not obstruct distant views. Thus, the degree of visual change does not correlate to the magnitude of visual impact, which is deemed to be **Low-negligible**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Low	Low negligible	Slight-imperceptible / Negative

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP4	Carmanhall Road	154m	SE

Representative of: • Local Views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is a pleasant street scene of lawn areas and mature trees flanking Carmanhall Road looking east. There is a notable degree of containment by substantial office buildings on the northern side of the road with low rise development on the southern side affording a greater sense of openness.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The Proposed Development will substantially fill the open section of sky in the near middle distance on the southern side of the street generating a stronger sense of enclosure, but also consolidation of the street scene. Although it presents with substantial bulk from this angle the development does not appear overly tall in relation to foreground buildings. The variations in façade /roofline profile and materials breakdown the massing of the buildings and generate visual interest.

The Proposed Development appears appropriate to this business district setting and although it represents a notable increase in the volume and intensity of built development, this is considered to have a **Negligible** effect on visual amenity in this locality.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
	Low		Negligible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP5	Blackthorn Road	78m	N

Representative of: • Local Views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is a view from the bend in Blackthorn Road just to the south of the site. On the marginally lower eastern side of the road is low-rise commercial development that offers little containment. Whereas, a series of mid-rise office buildings present a relatively consolidated building line and spatial containment on the western side of the road. Nonetheless, there are some noticeable gaps in the building line in the foreground and in the middle distance.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The Proposed Development will rise prominently within the middle distance gap in the current building line and maintains a consistent setback from the road. In terms of scale, the proposed building are clearly taller than their existing counterparts. However, due to relative distance and perspective there is a legible sense of scale transition from the smaller, closer buildings to the proposed buildings just beyond. Given the window array and frequency of balconies for the Proposed Development, it reads as a residential structure, particularly relative to the nearer office buildings. Thus, form follows function in a legible manner and the variation in land use is readily apparent adding richness and variation to the heretofore commercial scene.

The proposed buildings contribute to a stronger and more consolidated edge to the ‘outer core’ area of the Sandyford business district, which is also defined by Blackthorn Road. This is consistent with the CDP zoning for this locality and represents the built form realisation of the zoning. The tallest central building serves as a landmark feature at a key intersection between Burton Hall Road and Blackthorn Road announcing arrival at the core of the Sandyford Central business district.

Overall, visual amenity is considered to be Negligible for the Proposed Development within this street scene.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Sensitivity	Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Low		Negligible	Imperceptible / Positive

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP6	Carmanhall Road opposite site	15m	SW

Representative of: • Local Views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is a view from immediately opposite the development site on the Carmanhall Road, close to its intersection with Blackthorn Road. It is currently an unremarkable view of the site hoarding the top of an office building penetrating just above.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The Proposed Development will impart a dramatic visual change to this corner site locality, but not an unwelcome one. The nearest buildings rise prominently against a backdrop of sky and will force the viewer to look up to take in the upper floors. There is a slight sense of spatial dominance from the proposed buildings, but this is considered to be an appropriate design response for this node which serves as a landmark transition from high-rise Sandyford (west) to Low rise Sandyford (east).

From this close distance the wood finish within the cocooned balconies gives a sense of warmth and human scale to the active façade of the building, thereby differentiating it from surrounding office buildings. Likewise there is “a strong, animated and active outer edge, with commercial uses at ground floor level” as dictated by the specific zoning objective for this corner site. This is further enhanced by landscaping that softens the built form and aids the transition to a human scale for the street level.

Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development is the appropriate design response for this important corner site, which fulfils the clear zoning and policy brief of the CDP. Though it represents dramatic visual change this is considered to be an **Medium-low** magnitude of impact for this street scene and of a Positive quality.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Low	Medium-low	Slight / Positive

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP7	Leopardstown Road / Leopardstown Rise	799m	NE

- Representative of:**
- Local Community Views
 - A major route (Leopardstown Road - R113)

Receptor Sensitivity **Medium low**

Existing View This is a slightly elevated view from just within the housing estate at Leopardstown Rise above the Leopardstown Road. Whilst the M50 motorway runs along lower ground between here and the Sandyford business district, the motorway is not visible and the business district is a prominent feature of the middle ground. Indeed the tall buildings from the core of Sandyford business district partially obscure the broad views of the city beyond. To the right of this array of tall buildings can be seen Dublin Bay and Howth Head in the far distance.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The proposed buildings serve as a relatively prominent eastern book-end to the other tall buildings within the Sandyford business district core. They appear less bulky, but of an increased height even in the context of being at a slightly greater distance and lower elevation relative to the existing buildings. They will add marginally, yet noticeably, to the scale and intensity of development within the business district, but they have a compatible form and function.

The key consideration at this locality is that the proposed buildings will partially obscure the view of Dublin Bay and Howth Head beyond and this is considered to marginally reduce visual amenity for residents and road users.

Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Low**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Sensitivity	Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Medium low		Low	Slight / Negative

Impact Significance

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP8	Moreen Park	899m	E

- Representative of:**
- Local Community Views
 - A recreational area

Receptor Sensitivity **Medium low**

Existing View This is a view across Moreen Park that is afforded to park users, road users and local residents within this housing estate. The open foreground of the park allows a view of the upper storey profile of the buildings within the core area of the Sandyford business district, which rise to a modest degree above the stone wall and vegetation that define the opposite side of the park .

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The uppermost storeys of the tallest of the proposed buildings will penetrate above intervening skyline elements. This building is seen with less bulk and a comparable height to surrounding buildings within the Sandyford business district. Other than a fractionally increased sense of visual enclosure within the open view to the east, it is not considered that there will be any material detriment to visual amenity at this location. and thus, the impact is deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Medium low	Negligible	Imperceptible / Neutral

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP9	Saint Raphaela's Road	810m	S

- Representative of:**
- A major route
 - Local community views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is a contained view along Saint Raphaela's Road from a locally elevated section that affords views towards Sandyford business district. The view is road is flanked by street trees and houses in the fore-to-middle ground and the tops of buildings within the Sandyford business district provide a very minor degree of containment on-axis.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development Due to screening by foreground elements, only the uppermost storeys of the tallest building from the Proposed Development will be visible from here. This will serve as a distant focal point to anchor the axial view along this busy road and as a landmark to better highlight the core of the Sandyford business district, which is the likely designation of many using this road. It will marginally increase the intensity of development in the context of the lower rise residential area in the fore-to-middle ground, but without material consequence for visual amenity. Thus, the visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Sensitivity	Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Low		Negligible	Imperceptible / Neutral

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP10	Blackthorn Road / Blackthorn Avenue junction	255m	SW

Representative of: • Local views

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is an uphill view along Blackthorn road from the LUAS line / Blackthorn Avenue. On the left hand side of Blackthorn road is a thick band of tree planting which substantially masks the modest scale commercial development beyond. To the right is a fairly consistent building line of c. 6-7 storey office buildings – a brief gap – then similar development further up the hill. Containing the view in the distance is a section of the Dublin Mountains.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development This is a similar viewing angle to VP 2, which is closer to the site. The tallest of the proposed buildings presents with a relatively narrow profile, but prominent height, which is emphasised by the rising terrain. It is consistent with the established building line and fills the gap in western street scene, albeit blocking the view of the more distant commercial buildings. It also partially obscured the existing view of the Dublin Mountains, whilst also channelling and focussing the viewers’ attention along the avenue towards them.

The proposed building generates a more abrupt transition and stronger edge between the higher intensity / scale development of the Sandyford business district core and its low density light industry precinct to the east. It also serves as a sentinel-like landmark building at a key intersection entering the Sandyford business district core. This is appropriate to the zoning and policy context of this area and on balance the visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Sensitivity	Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Low		Negligible	Imperceptible / Positive

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP11	Burton Hall Hospital	300m	NW

Representative of: • Local Community Views

Receptor Sensitivity **Medium low**

Existing View This is something of an enclave of low density development and green space within the heart of the Sandyford business district. The open foreground allows near middle distance views of the upper levels of surrounding office buildings through a sporadic veil of tree tops.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development Only the upper levels of the tallest of the proposed buildings is potentially visible from here above intervening development and even then it is partially obscured by mature vegetation. It will generate a marginally increased sense of enclosure within the comparatively open view to the northwest and an associated increase in intensity of built development. This represents a minor contribution to the gradual enclosure of this institutional facility contained, as it is, within the wider Sandyford Industrial area.

Overall the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Low-negligible.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Impact Significance	Medium low	Low-negligible	Slight-imperceptible / Negative

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP12	Burton Hall Road / Leopardstown Road junction	509m	NW

- Representative of:**
- Local views
 - A major route and easterly entrance to Sandyford business district

Receptor Sensitivity **Low**

Existing View This is a channelled avenue view along Burton Hall Road from adjacent to the LUAS overpass of Leopardstown Road and is the first approach view towards the Sandyford business district from the east. The foreground is strongly contained by the LUAS abutment to the left and a wall and coniferous vegetation to the right. The view then opens up slightly across the light industry retail warehousing precinct of the Sandyford business district. The view is contained in the distance by higher office buildings within the Sandyford core area.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The Proposed Development will present its tallest building directly on alignment with the road and this will be an intentionally prominent landmark feature of this scene even in the context of the considerable viewing distance. The overall development has considerable bulk when viewed from this direction, but this is somewhat offset by the tall and slender profile of the central tower, which avoids squat proportions. Furthermore, the scale of the proposed building is not at odds with surrounding development and serves to emphasise its role as a sentry-like threshold development at the eastern edge of the Sandyford core area. It generates a more abrupt by legible transition between that zone and the light industry zone to the fore. It will not block important distant views and has a stronger presence than the commercial buildings that contain this important axial view at present.

Overall, the Proposed Development is considered to alter this view in a manner that is consistent with the zoning and policy context of the townscape in view. The magnitude of impact is deemed to be Medium-low, but of a Positive quality.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Sensitivity	Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
Low		Medium-low	Slight / Positive

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP13	Designated Scenic route at Newtown little	2.32km	NE

Representative of: • Designated Scenic View

Receptor Sensitivity **High-medium**

Existing View This is a vast vista across the suburbs of South Dublin towards Dublin Bay with Howth Head in the far distance. There is a degree of framing in the foreground from nearby vegetation, which is typical of this scenic route where only windows of open visibility occur. Also running downhill across the foreground of this vista is a line of large electricity pylons. The tall buildings of the Central Park quarter of Sandyford Business District as well as those from the core of the Sandyford business district rise out of discrete portions of the middle ground built fabric.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The Proposed Development and principally the tallest landmark building, rise above the surrounding apron of built development to penetrate the waters of Dublin Bay and the base of Howth Head beyond. This is not the first or only development to be seen against a backdrop of the bay and it has slender proportions. The development also bridges the space between the core building and Central Park buildings of the wider Sandyford estate, however, it does this more in a manner of relieving visual tension between them than filling the gap. In the context of the vast and complex view across Dublin, the pro Proposed Development is a very minor component and its influence on visual amenity tends to be more on the negative side than the positive. For these reasons, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Low-negligible.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor	Visual Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / Quality of Visual Impact
High-medium		Low-negligible	Slight-imperceptible / Negative

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP14	Designated Scenic Route at Burrow Road	2.56km	N

- Representative of:**
- Designated Scenic View
 - A recreational amenity

Receptor Sensitivity **High-medium**

Existing View This is a broad view across the Burrow pitch and putt golf course on the gently descending slopes in the foreground. Between foreground trees within the golf course can be seen sections of the suburbs of South Dublin with portions of Dublin Bay visible in the distance. Howth Head, on the opposite side of Dublin Bay, can be seen just to the right of the tallest buildings within the nearest Central Park quarter of Sandyford Business District. Other tall buildings from the core of Sandyford Business district can be seen further to the left with the Poolbeg Chimneys rising between in distant perspective.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development The Proposed Development and mainly its tallest building will be see just to the right of the Poolbeg Chimneys penetrating above the landward extents of Dublin Bay. In this respect it does not noticeably intrude on views of Dublin Bay which tend to be more eastward from this viewpoint in any event. Indeed the Proposed Development is a minor and indistinct element in the context of the vast and varied view afforded from here and the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Negligible as a result.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
High medium	Negligible	Imperceptible / Neutral

13.6.3 Cumulative Impact Assessment

Several permitted / under construction developments of a relevant scale and nature have been identified within the surrounding area principally relating to residential apartment developments. These are identified as DLR 1 – DLR 4 in Chapter 15 of the EIAR (Interactions, Cumulative and Combined Effects). Cumulative Impact. The nearest of these (DLR1 and DLR2) are located on slightly lower ground to the northwest approximately 300m from the Proposed Development site. DLR3 and DLR4 are located beyond 750m away to the southeast on the opposite side of the M50 motorway.

Aside from a general sense of increase in the scale and intensity of development within and around the Sandyford industrial area there are no material cumulative impacts in relation to landscape and visual effects in-combination with the Proposed Development. Within the context of close views of any of these developments the proposed development is likely to be either not visible or an indistinct background feature of the broader urban fabric. The same applies to close views of the Proposed Development. Only within more distant, elevated and open vistas are all of these developments likely to be visible in-combination. In such circumstances they will each contribute to a modification and intensification of built profile of the Sandyford business district, but in a consistent and consolidated manner that will not notably reduce the visual amenity of distant viewers enjoying broad vistas from the likes of the Dublin Mountains.

For the reasons outlined above, significant cumulative impacts are not likely to occur as a result of the Proposed Development. Instead, the cumulative impact in relation to the identified developments is deemed to be Imperceptible.

13.6.4 'Do-Nothing' Scenario

In a Do-Nothing scenario, it is likely that the extant permission relating to this site will be constructed or another similar scale development consistent with the underlying land use zoning objectives will be proposed / constructed. It is very unlikely that this strategically placed site will remain undeveloped beyond a short-term time horizon. The consequence in terms of Landscape / Townscape and Visual effects is that a development with a similar scale and nature of impact will almost inevitably occupy this site in the future.

13.7 Mitigation and Management

The mitigation in respect of Landscape / Townscape and Visual effects is wholly embedded in the design of the development that has been assessed and it is not considered necessary or beneficial to the development to propose specific landscape and visual mitigation in this instance.

13.7.1 Monitoring

As there is no specific landscape and visual mitigation proposed, there is no requirement for ongoing maintenance or management. Landscape treatments proposed for amenity rather than mitigation purposes in this instance will be subject of a standard contractor defects and liability period as well as an ongoing maintenance regime.

13.8 Residual Effects

On the basis that there are no specific landscape and visual mitigation measures proposed, the impacts assessed in the Section 13.6 – 'Potential Effects' are also considered to be the residual effects of the development.

13.9 Difficulties Encountered

There were no particular difficulties encountered in the undertaking of this assessment.

13.10 Summary and Conclusions

The impact of the Proposed Development on Landscape / Townscape has been considered at both construction stage and operational stage (post-completion). It has also been considered in respect of physical effects on the landform and land cover of the site as well the contribution of the Proposed Development to wider townscape fabric and character.

Due to the typical clutter and activity associated with major construction projects and in this prominent location, which is deemed to be of 'Low' sensitivity, construction stage townscape impacts are deemed to be 'Slight' negative. However, such effects are unavoidable and relatively familiar in this area. More importantly, they are 'short term' in duration.

Once completed (operational), it is considered that the Proposed Development will have a Slight-imperceptible significance and Positive quality of effect on the prevailing landscape / townscape of the site and its surrounds. This is on balance of the notably increased scale and intensity of built development within the site, but its appropriate form and townscape function, which is a bold design response to the zoning and policy context of the locality.

The visual impact of the Proposed Development was assessed from 14 viewpoints representing a range of receptors, viewing distances and directions within and around the Sandyford business district. The range of receptor sensitivity at viewpoints varied between Low within the business district, medium-low within surrounding residential areas where the business district already influences views and High medium from two designated scenic routes within the foothills of the Dublin Mountains. It should be noted that there are not considered to be any issues with potential overlooking from the Proposed Development as it is surrounded on two sides by business park roads and on other sides by mid-rise commercial developments. Thus, there are no low-rise residential developments in the vicinity, where residential amenity could be significantly impacted by potential overlooking from the Proposed Development.

The significance and quality of visual impacts ranged between Slight / Negative and Slight / Positive across the viewpoint set. Only from the elevated VP7 at Leopardstown Rise on the opposite side of the M50 is the Proposed Development considered to contribute a Slight / Negative visual impact. In this particular instance the uppermost sections of the proposed buildings book-end the eastern portion of existing high rise development of the Sandyford business district core and, in doing so, they also partially obscure the view towards Dublin Bay and Howth Head. Slight-imperceptible impacts were also considered to occur at VP11 within the grounds of Burton Hospital and from VP13 within the Dublin Mountains context.

From those viewpoints within the Sandyford business district, the development is considered to contribute either Neutral or Positive quality of change even where the degree of change is distinct. It serves as a sentry-like threshold development to the Sandyford business district when approaching from the east (VP1 and VP12) and when viewed along Blackthorn Road (VP2, VP5 and VP10) it consolidates the partially established building line and forms a more abrupt and legible transition between the core area of the Sandyford business district and its low-rise light industry precinct to the east. In this respect it represents the physical manifestation of the zoning and policy context for this locality.

13.10.1 Overall Significance of Impact

Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant townscape or visual impacts. Instead, such impacts will generally be imperceptible or result in enhancement of the townscape and visual setting. It is important to reiterate, particularly for this scale of development, that 'Imperceptible' significance is not tantamount to a barely discernible degree of visual change. Instead, it reflects that the nature of the sometimes considerable visual change is compatible and consistent with the receiving townscape setting.

13.11 References

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (Draft 2017)

Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and Landscape Institute (UK) – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines (2013)

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016 – 2022. Available from: <https://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/planning/county-development-plan/county-development-plan-2016-2022>

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Local Area Plans. Available from: <https://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/planning/local-area-plans>