

## **Chapter 6**

# **Landscape And Visual Impact Assessment**

## 6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was prepared by Richard Butler of Model Works Ltd. Richard has degrees in Landscape Architecture and Town Planning, is a member of the Irish Landscape Institute and the Irish Planning Institute and has 20 years' experience in development and environmental planning, specialising in LVIA.

### 6.2 STUDY METHODOLOGY

The LVIA was prepared with reference to the Landscape Institute's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013.*, the EPA draft *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2017* and the European Commission *Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, 2017*.

The draft EPA guidelines provide a general methodology and impact ratings for all types of specialist assessments. The GLVIA provides specific guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessments. Therefore, a combination of the draft EPA guidelines, the Landscape Institute guidelines and professional experience has informed the methodology for this assessment.

#### 6.2.1 Key Principles of the GLVIA

##### 6.2.1.1 Use of the Term 'Effect' vs 'Impact'

The GLVIA requires that the terms 'impact' and 'effect' be clearly distinguished and consistently used. 'Impact' is defined as the action being taken, e.g., the introduction buildings, infrastructure, or landscaping to the landscape. 'Effect' is defined as the change resulting from those actions, e.g., change in landscape character or in the amenity value of a view.

##### 6.2.1.2 Assessment of Both 'Landscape' and 'Visual' Effects

The GLVIA requires that effects on views/visual amenity be assessed separately from the effects on landscape, although the two topics are linked. 'Landscape' results from the interplay between the physical, natural, and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations and spatial distribution of these elements create variations in landscape character. Landscape impact assessment identifies the changes to these elements and characteristics which would result from a proposed development and assesses the significance of those changes on the landscape as a resource. Visual impact assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on the area's visual amenity.

#### 6.2.2 Methodology for Assessment of Landscape Effects

Assessment of potential landscape effects involves (a) classifying the sensitivity of the landscape resource, (b) classifying the magnitude of landscape change which would result from the development, and (c) combining these factors to arrive at a classification of significance of the effects.

##### 6.2.2.1 Landscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the landscape is a function of its land use, patterns and scale, visual enclosure and the distribution of visual receptors, and the value placed on the landscape. The nature and scale of the proposed development is

also taken into account, as are any trends of change, and relevant policy. Five categories are used to classify sensitivity (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1: Categories of Landscape Sensitivity**

Sensitivity	Description
<b>Very High</b>	Areas where the landscape exhibits very strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics that combine to give an experience of unity, richness and harmony. The landscape character is such that its capacity to accommodate change is very low. These attributes are recognised in policy or designations as being of national or international value and the principle management objective for the area is protection of the existing character from change.
<b>High</b>	Areas where the landscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics. The landscape character is such that it has limited/low capacity to accommodate change. These attributes are recognised in policy or designations as being of national, regional or county value and the principle management objective for the area is the conservation of existing character.
<b>Medium</b>	Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong, or has evidence of alteration, degradation or erosion of elements and characteristics. The landscape character is such that there is some capacity for change. These areas may be recognised in policy at local or county level and the principle management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change.
<b>Low</b>	Areas where the landscape has few valued elements, features or characteristics and the character is weak. The character is such that it has capacity for change; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes are generally unrecognised in policy and the principle management objective may be to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration or enhancement.
<b>Negligible</b>	Areas where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features or characteristics. The character is such that its capacity to accommodate change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes include derelict industrial lands, as well as sites or areas that are designated for a particular type of development. The principle management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the landscape through development, repair or restoration.

The definitions of the classifications in Table 6.1 (townscape sensitivity), 6.2 (magnitude of townscape change), 6.5 (viewpoint sensitivity) and 6.6 (magnitude of visual change) are not taken from either the GLVIA or the EPA Draft *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, 2017. Both of these guidance documents require that classifications of sensitivity and magnitude of change (such as high, medium, low, etc.) be used in the assessment process (see EPA Draft Guidelines Figure 3.5 and GLVIA Box 3.1, Paragraph 3.26 and Figure 3.5), but neither guidance document provides definitions for such classifications.

The GLVIA specifically avoids being prescriptive in this regard (GLVIA paragraph 1.20): *“The guidance concentrates on principles while also seeking to steer specific approaches where there is a general consensus on methods and techniques. It is not intended to be prescriptive, in that it does not provide a detailed ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation. It is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstances.”* (emphasis added)

The EPA’s Draft Guidelines state (Section 3, p.49): *“While guidelines and standards help ensure consistency, the professional judgement of competent experts plays a role in the determination of significance. These experts may place different emphases on the factors involved. As this can lead to differences of opinion, the EIAR sets out the basis of these judgements so that the varying degrees of significance attributed to different factors can be understood.”* (emphasis added)

The GLVIA and EPA Draft Guidelines thus require that the factors used in arriving at significance conclusions (i.e. sensitivity and magnitude) should be explained in the EIAR, but the guidelines do not provide the explanations themselves. It is for this reason that the definitions in Tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.5 and 6.6 are provided. These definitions have been developed and refined by various LVIA practitioners in Ireland, including the chapter author, over

decades of practice. They are not standard, i.e. the classifications/definitions used in this assessment may differ from those used by other practitioners. However, the author considers these definitions to be reasonable and appropriate for the purpose of classifying the significance of landscape/townscape and visual impacts. The same definitions have been used in many previous LVIA reports/chapters prepared by the author and accepted by the planning authorities.

### 6.2.2.2 Magnitude of Landscape Change

Magnitude of change is a factor of the scale, extent and duration of change imposed on the landscape by a development, with reference to its key elements, features and characteristics, and any affected surrounding character areas (also known as 'landscape receptors'). Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2: Categories of Landscape Change**

Sensitivity	Description
<b>Very High</b>	Change that is large in extent, resulting in the loss of or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of large elements considered totally uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in fundamental change in the character of the landscape.
<b>High</b>	Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of large elements considered uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape.
<b>Medium</b>	Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape.
<b>Low</b>	Change that is moderate or limited in scale, resulting in minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape.
<b>Negligible</b>	Change that is limited in scale, resulting in no alteration to key elements features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic of the context. Such development results in no change to the landscape character.

### 6.2.2.3 Significance of Effects

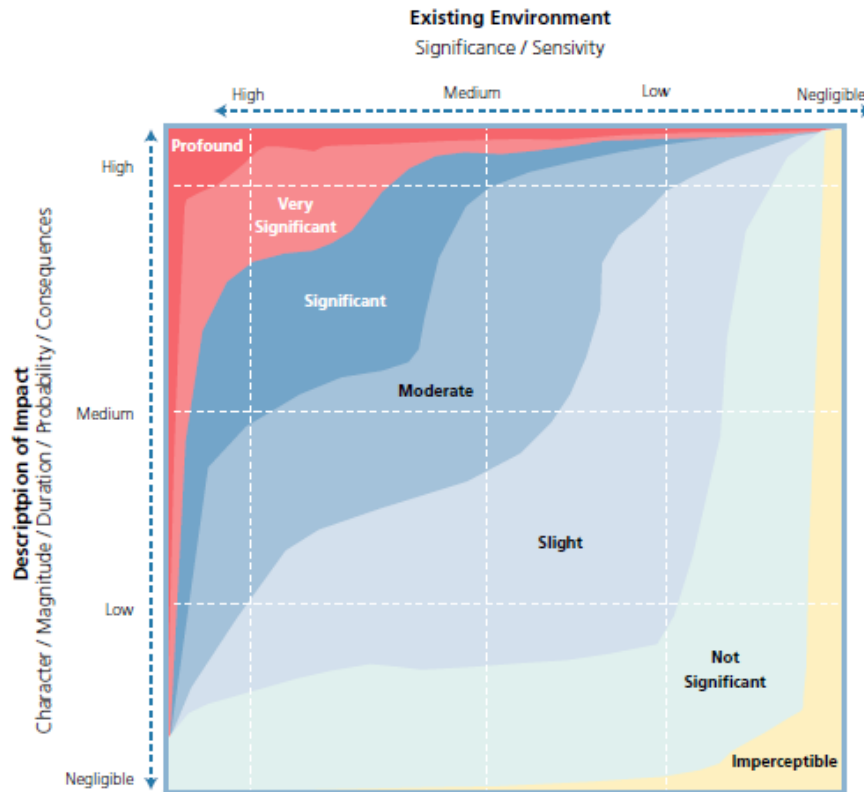
To classify the significance of effects (for both townscape and visual impacts) the magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the receiving environment/receptor using the guide in Table 6.3 below.

**Table 6.3: Guide to Classification of Significance of Townscape and Visual Effects**

		Sensitivity of the Townscape/View				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Townscape/Visual Change	Very High	Profound	Profound to Very Significant	Very Significant to Significant	Moderate	Slight
	High	Profound to Very Significant	Very Significant	Significant	Moderate to Slight	Slight to Not Significant
	Medium	Very Significant to Significant	Significant	Moderate	Slight	Not Significant
	Low	Moderate	Moderate to Slight	Slight	Not significant	Imperceptible
	Negligible	Slight	Slight to Not Significant	Not significant	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

This matrix is derived from the EPA’s Draft *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, 2017 (specifically Figure 3.5 of the Guidelines – see Figure 6.1 below). The matrix and the EPA’s chart (Figure 6.1) are only a guide to the classification of impact significance. The assessor also uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable. In the EPA guidelines the chart above is accompanied by a footnote that states: “The depiction of significance classifications is indicative and should not be relied on as being definitive. It is provided for general guidance purposes” (EPA draft guidelines Section 3, page 53).

**Figure 6.1: ‘Chart showing typical classifications of the significance of impacts’ (Source: Figure 3.5 of the EPA’s Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2017)**



The impact significance classifications, i.e. imperceptible to profound, are taken from the EPA Guidelines. The Guideline defines the classifications as follows (Table 6.4):

**Table 6.4: Impact Significance Classifications**

Significance	Description
<b>Imperceptible</b>	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
<b>Not significant</b>	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
<b>Slight</b>	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
<b>Moderate</b>	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
<b>Significant</b>	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
<b>Very Significant</b>	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
<b>Profound</b>	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.

### 6.2.3 Methodology for Assessment of Visual Effects

Assessment of visual effects involves identifying a number of key/representative viewpoints in the site's receiving environment, and for each one of these: (a) classifying the viewpoint sensitivity, (b) classifying the magnitude of change which would result in the view (informed by photomontages of the proposed development), and (c) combining these factors to arrive at a classification of significance of the effects on the view.

#### 6.2.3.1 Sensitivity of the Viewpoint/Visual Receptor

Viewpoint sensitivity is a function of two main considerations:

- **Susceptibility of the visual receptor to change.** This depends on the occupation or activity of the people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the views or visual amenity they experience at that location. Visual receptors most susceptible to change include residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on the landscape (e.g. trail users), and visitors to heritage attractions and places of congregation where the setting contributes to the experience. Visual receptors less sensitive to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes), people engaged in outdoor recreation where the surrounding landscape does not influence the experience, and people in their place of work or shopping.
- **Value attached to the view.** This depends to a large extent on the subjective opinion of the visual receptor but also on factors such as policy and designations (e.g. scenic routes, protected views), or the view or setting being associated with a heritage asset, visitor attraction or having some other cultural status (e.g. by appearing in arts).

Five categories are used to classify a viewpoint's sensitivity (Table 6.5):

**Table 6.5: Categories of Viewpoint Sensitivity**

Sensitivity	Description
<b>Very High</b>	Iconic viewpoints (views towards or from a townscape feature or area) that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of national value. The composition, character and quality of the view are such that its capacity for change is very low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change.
<b>High</b>	Viewpoints that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (e.g. views from houses or outdoor recreation amenities focused on the townscape). The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity to accommodate change may or may not be low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change that reduces visual amenity.
<b>Medium</b>	Views that may not have features or characteristics that are of particular value, but have no major detracting elements, and which thus provide some visual amenity. These views may have capacity for appropriate change and the principle management objective is to facilitate change to the composition that does not detract from visual amenity, or which enhances it.
<b>Low</b>	Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, and where the composition and character are such that there is capacity for change. This category also includes views experienced by people involved in activities with no particular focus on the landscape. For such views the principle management objective is to facilitate change that does not detract from visual amenity or enhances it.
<b>Negligible</b>	Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, or in which the composition may be unsightly (e.g. in derelict landscapes). For such views the principle management objective is to facilitate change that repairs, restores or enhances visual amenity.

#### 6.2.3.2 Magnitude of Change to the View

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of development into the view (relative to the other elements and features in the composition, i.e. its relative visual dominance), the

degree to which it contrasts or integrates with the other elements and the general character of the view, and the way in which the change will be experienced (e.g. in full view, partial or peripheral view, or in glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, as well as the duration and reversibility of the visual effects. Five categories are used to classify magnitude of visual change to a view (Table 6.6):

**Table 6.6: Categories of Magnitude of Visual Change**

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Very High</b>	Full or extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features or characteristics, or introduction of elements that are completely out of character in the context, to the extent that the development becomes dominant in the composition and defines the character of the view and the visual amenity.
<b>High</b>	Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.
<b>Medium</b>	Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity.
<b>Low</b>	Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.
<b>Negligible</b>	Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.

### 6.2.3.3 Significance of Visual Effects

As with landscape effects, to classify the significance of visual effects the magnitude of change to the view is measured against the sensitivity of the viewpoint, using the guidance in Table 6.3 and Figure 6.1 above.

### 6.2.4 Quality of Effects

In addition to predicting the significance of the effects, EIA methodology [draft EPA guidelines Table 3.3, p.50] requires that the quality of the effects be classified as positive/ beneficial, neutral, or negative/ adverse.

For townscape to a degree, but particularly for visual effects, this is an inherently subjective exercise. This is because townscape and visual amenity are perceived by people and are subject to variations in the attitude and values - including aesthetic preferences - of the receptor. One person's attitude to a development may differ from another person's, and thus their response to the effects of a development on a townscape or view may vary.

Additionally, in certain situations there might be policy encouraging a particular development in an area, in which case the policy is effectively prescribing townscape and visual change. If a development achieves the objective of the policy the resulting effect might be considered positive, even if the townscape character or views are profoundly changed. The classification of quality of townscape and visual effects should seek to take these variables into account and provide a reasonable and robust assessment.

### 6.2.5 Photomontage Methodology

The photomontages were produced by Model Works Ltd. The photomontage methodology is based on the Landscape Institute advice note 01/11 Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and 20 years' experience in photomontage production. The method has five main steps:

- Photography
- Survey

- 3D Modelling and Camera Matching
- Rendering and Finishing of Photomontages
- Presentation

#### 6.2.5.1 Photography

##### ***Date, Time and Conditions***

The photography is timed so that the scene conditions, weather conditions and sun position allow - as far as possible - for a clear and representative baseline photograph to be captured. The objective is to ensure that all key elements of the view are clearly visible and unobscured by, for example, vehicular or pedestrian traffic in the foreground, precipitation, darkness/shade, sun glare, etc. The date and time of each photograph are recorded so that the sun position can be accurately portrayed in the 3D model ultimately montaged into the baseline photograph.

##### ***Camera and Camera Set-up***

The photographs are taken using a Canon EOS5D Mark II camera with a 21 mega pixel sensor and image resolution of 5616 x 3744 pixels. At each viewpoint the camera was positioned on a tripod with the lens 1.65m above ground level (the level of the average adult's eyes), directed at the site and levelled in the horizontal and vertical axes.

##### ***Lenses***

Prime lenses (fixed focal length with no zoom function) are used as this ensures that the image parameters for every photograph are the same and that all photographs taken with the same lens are comparable. For the close-up to middle distant views a 24mm prime lens is normally used. This lens captures a field of view of 73 degrees. This relatively wide field of view is preferred for the purpose of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment as it shows more of the context landscape/townscape surrounding a site. For distant viewpoints a 50mm prime lens may be used, capturing a 39 degree horizontal field of view.

#### 6.2.5.2 Survey

The coordinates of each viewpoint/camera position, including the elevation, are recorded using a survey grade GPS receiver, the Trimble Geo7X, which is accurate to within 1cm. For each viewpoint, the coordinates of several static objects in the view are also surveyed (e.g. lamp posts, bollards, corners of buildings, etc.). The coordinates of these 'markers' are used as reference points later in the process, to ensure that the direction of view of the cameras in the 3D model matches the direction of view of the photographs.

#### 6.2.5.3 3D Model and Camera Matching

##### ***Creation of 3D Model***

An Autodesk Revit model of the proposed development was supplied by the architect for the production of the photomontages. Model Works exported the Revit model into the software package Autodesk 3DS Max, in which materials were applied to the model's buildings and surfaces. Model Works built a 3D model of the proposed public realm/landscaping based on AutoCAD drawings provided by the landscape architect.

##### ***3D Camera Positions***

The surveyed camera positions and the markers for each view are inserted into the 3D model, with information on the focal length of the lens attributed to each camera. For each camera/view, the date and time is set to match those of the original photograph. This ensures that the direction of sunlight and shadows in the 3D model match those of the photographs.

##### ***Camera Matching***

The photographs are then inserted as backdrops to the views of each camera in the 3D model. The direction of view of the cameras in the 3D model are matched with the direction of view of the photographs using the surveyed markers. This ensures that the camera positions, the direction of the views and the focal length of the cameras in



the 3D model are accurate, so that the proposed development appears in the correct position and scale when montaged into the photographs.

#### 6.2.5.4 Rendering of 3D Model and Finishing of Photomontages

For each view a render of the development is generated. This is the process of creating a photo-realistic image of the 3D model, as seen from each camera position, with sunlight and shadow applied to the model. The render of the development is then montaged into the photograph to create the photomontage.

#### 6.2.5.5 Presentation and Viewing

The individual photomontages are presented on A3 pages in landscape format in the accompanying booklet. For each photomontage, the viewpoint number, location description, and the date and time of photography are provided on the page.

### 6.3 THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT (BASELINE SITUATION)

#### 6.3.1 The Site

The site is located in Hacketstown on the southern fringe of the Skerries urban area, approximately 1km from the town centre (see Figure 6.2).

**Figure 6.2 – The SHD Project subject site in the context of the Skerries urban area**



The Proposed SHD site is a greenfield land parcel comprised of several grassland fields divided by hedgerows. A small stream runs just outside the northern boundary of the Proposed SHD site. The valley of the stream, which

extends into the Proposed SHD site, is the subject of a separate Section 34 application for 'Advance Infrastructure Works (AI Works) to facilitate the Proposed SHD site's development. The AI Works application (Reg. Ref. F21A/0287) was permitted by Fingal County Council (FCC) and is currently under appeal to An Bord Pleanála (Ref. ABP-312189).

**Figure 6.3 – The proposed development's immediate receiving environment (Proposed SHD site outlined in red. AI Works site outlined in blue.)**



The landform is a key characteristic of the site. The southern area is relatively high lying and flat, while the northern area falls steeply into the stream valley (see Photo 6.1 below).

The site is zoned RA (Residential Area, to “provide for new residential communities subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure”) in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 (referred to as ‘the Development Plan within’ – see Figure 6.4 below for the Development Plan land use map).

The site was previously subject to the Hacketstown Skerries Local Area Plan 2009, which has now expired. The LAP provided detailed guidance on the form of development to take place in the area.

**Figure 6.4 –Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023**



### 6.3.2 Surrounding Lands

#### 6.3.3.1 North of Site

The site of the AI Works lies immediately to the north of the SHD Project site. The AI Works comprises (a) a new road connection across the valley linking the site to the existing Ballygossan Park estate and the Golf Links Road, (b) the Regional Drainage Facility for the Hacketstown lands, comprised of two wide, shallow depressions for water attenuation, (c) the planting of the valley area as an ‘ecological corridor’, and (d) elements of the future network of footpaths through the valley parkland area. The AI Works would thus facilitate the development of the SHD Project site, providing key elements of the road and pedestrian circulation network, the drainage infrastructure and the public open space for the area.

**Figure 6.5 – Proposed layout of the AI Works to the north of the SHD Project site**



To the north across the valley is another development site (on the northern half of the now expired Hacketstown LAP lands). The eastern part of this area has been developed as a housing estate (Ballygossan Park – see Figure 6.3 and Photos 6.1 and 6.2) comprised of terraced and semi-detached houses.

The western part of the area is the subject of a separate LRD planning process (the proposed buildings shown in grey on Figure 6.5 above). That site falls into the 800m 'walking band' to the train station, and will include some higher density residential building typologies. The existing Ballygossan Park estate and the future LRD development are key potential receptors of landscape and visual change on the Project Site.

**Photo 6.1 A view from the site across the valley towards Ballygossan Park**



**Photo 6.2 A view from Ballygossan Park across the valley towards the site**



### 6.3.3.2 East and South of the Site

Golf Links Road curves around the east and south sides of the site (see Figure 6.3). The site has frontage to the road along two stretches: (a) along the easternmost boundary as the road crosses the valley (see Photo 6.3), and (b) for a stretch along the southern boundary. Along the latter stretch a mature roadside hedgerow blocks views into the site, except near the southern corner (Photo 6.4). The road users are the largest cohort of potential visual receptors of change, although road users approaching/departing an urban area are generally of low-medium sensitivity. The remainder of the eastern and southern boundary is shared with four residential properties and one farm (in the south west corner). These houses can be considered key receptors of change on the site (Photo 6.5).

**Photo 6.3 A view from Golf Links Road at the site's east boundary, with Ballygossan Park visible beyond the valley**



**Photo 6.4 A view from Golf Links Road where a field entrance allows a view across the site**



**Photo 6.5 A view along Golf Links Road alongside one of the houses beside the site**



The lands across Golf Links Road from the site are zoned Green Belt in the Development Plan. The only current land use apart from agricultural use in this area is a small primary school, which lies to the south of the site opposite one of the houses that backs onto the site.

### 6.3.3.3 West of the Site

The railway line linking Skerries to Dublin runs along the long west boundary of the site (see Figure 6.2). The railway corridor including its densely vegetated embankments forms a barrier in the landscape, restricting movement and visibility across the line. The railway forms the western boundary of the Skerries urban area.

West of the site across the railway line is an area of tillage fields and a large quarry (Roadstone Milverton). This area is zoned Rural in the Development Plan. There are few sensitivities in this area and the railway line forms a visual barrier in views towards the site. The R127 Skerries Road traverses this area. This is the main access route to the town from Dublin and the M1. Views towards the site from the R127 are restricted by the topography and roadside vegetation, except where the road curves north to an underpass beneath the railway line (see Photo 6.6). This is an important entry point into Skerries.

**Photo 6.6a & b A view towards the site from the R127 approaching Skerries, with the roofs of the Ballygossan Park Phase 1 houses visible above the railway embankment**



A short distance further to the north west of the site is a local road that runs west along the ridgeline of Tougher Hill. There is a row of houses along the road, located to take advantage of the views east over the town towards the

coast. Like in the view from the R127, the houses of Ballygossan Park Phase 1 are visible in Hacketstown beyond the railway line.

**Photo 6.7 A view from Tougher Hill towards the site, with Ballygossan Park visible beyond the railway line**



#### **6.3.4 Landscape Character**

The site and environs fall into the 'Coastal Character Type' as defined in the Development Plan. The Development Plan states:

*"The Coastal Character Type forms the eastern boundary of the County and contains a number of important beaches, islands and headlands that together create a landscape of high amenity and landscape value. A number of important settlements are located within this area, including Balbriggan, Skerries, Rush, Malahide, Portmarnock and Howth. The land is generally low lying, with the exception of some prominent headlands and hills in the northern part of the area, Howth and the offshore islands..."*

*"The Coastal Character Type is categorised as having an exceptional landscape value. This value is arrived at due to the combination of visual, ecological, recreational and historical attributes. The area has magnificent views out to sea, to the islands and to the Mourne and Wicklow mountains and contains numerous beaches and harbours."*

The Coastal Character Type is identified in the Development Plan as having a high sensitivity to development. Regarding landscape sensitivity the Development Plan states:

*"Where a wide range of developments would sit comfortably in a particular landscape and would not interfere with a character or interfere or eliminate a value, such a landscape is deemed to be of low to medium sensitivity. On the other hand, where any proposed development would seriously damage a character or eliminate or seriously damage an irreplaceable value, such a landscape would be considered to be highly sensitive...*

*"Particular parts of these areas have a low capacity to absorb new development. The areas contained within these four character types which have a low capacity to absorb new development are identified as highly sensitive areas on the Green Infrastructure Maps..."*

It should be noted that while the site is identified as part of the Highly Sensitive Landscape on the Development Plan Green infrastructure Map 1, it is identified by its land use zoning objective RA (Residential) on the Development Plan Green Infrastructure Maps 2 and 3. This is significant in that it indicates an acceptance by Fingal County

Council of the principle of residential development on the site despite its being part of the highly sensitive coastal character type.

*It is also important to note that the entire urban area of Skerries (as well as the other coastal towns of Balbriggan, Rush, Malahide, Portmarnock and Howth) falls into the Coastal Character. Therefore, urban development per se is not precluded from the Highly Sensitive area, as that would preclude any further development/expansion of the existing urban areas - although it is required to be sensitively located and designed.*

*The Development Plan includes the following Principles for Development in Highly Sensitive character types (such as the coastal type):*

- *“Skylines, horizon and ridgelines should be protected from development.*
- *Sites with natural boundaries should be chosen, rather than elevated or open parts of fields. The form of new developments should be kept simple and they should be sited within existing shelter planting or within the contours of the land to minimise visual impact.*
- *Clustering with existing farmhouse and/or farm buildings is generally preferable to standalone locations.*
- *Field and roadside hedgerows should be retained. Proposals necessitating the removal of extensive field and roadside hedgerows should not be permitted.*
- *The retention and active management of trees and woodland blocks should be promoted.*
- *The use of trees and woodlands to contain new development should be encouraged. Strong planting schemes using native species, to integrate development into these sensitive landscapes, will be required. New planting needs to be carefully located and selected.*
- *The management of the river margins should be promoted and development along the riverside which will intrude on the character of the river valleys should be restricted.*
- *Establish riparian corridors free from new development along all significant watercourses in the County. Ensure a 10 to 15 metre wide riparian buffer strip measured from top of bank either side of all watercourses, except in respect of the Liffey, Tolka, Pinkeen, Mayne, Sluice, Ward, Broadmeadow, Corduff, Matt and Delvin where a 30m wide riparian buffer strip from top of bank to either side of all watercourses outside urban centres is required.*
- *Estuary margins and any hedgerows along the margins must not be disturbed.*
- *The special character of the coast should be protected by preventing inappropriate development on the seaward side of coastal roads.*
- *The character of the coastal visual compartments should be retained by preventing intrusive developments on headlands, promontories and coastal lands within the compartments. The coastal skyline should be protected from intrusive development.”*

*The site can be considered to be a ‘site with natural boundaries’, being defined by the railway line to the west, Golf Links Road to the east and south, and the stream valley to the north. There are adjacent buildings (houses and a farm along Golf Links Road) with which development on the site can be ‘clustered’. While the internal field boundary hedgerows are required to be removed to make the site developable, there is potential for retention and supplementation of the vegetation along the railway embankment, and the AI Works proposes tree planting in the valley to the north of the site. These trees to west and north would ‘contain’ the new development as required by the Development Plan policy.*

#### 6.3.4.1 Landscape Character Description in the Expired Hacketstown LAP 2009

The Hacketstown LAP was adopted in 2009 and has now expired and is no longer in force. However, the LAP included the following topographical description of the Hacketstown lands – and this description remains valid (i.e. the topography has not changed):

*“The subject lands are undulating, rising sharply to the north and to the south from a central valley/stream, affording sea views from the northern ridge and short distance views of the surrounding countryside. Land levels rise from 14mOD at the stream to 28mOD at the highest northern point and 26mOD at the highest southern point. The lands*



are not highly visible from distant views, being for the most part contained by the surrounding higher ground to the west and north, but are visible from the Rush-Skerries coast road to the east and from minor county roads to the south... (emphasis added)

### 6.3.5 Protected Views

The Development Plan Zoning and Green Infrastructure maps identify a protected view on a stretch of the R128 (Rush Road) 500m to the east of the site. It is the view east from this road out to sea (i.e. away from the site) that is most valued (and the reason for the protected view designation. However, the road also provides one of the few distant views towards the site (Photo 6.8).

Figure 6.6 – Location of protected view to the east of the site on the R128



Photo 6.8 The view west from the R128 Rush Road towards Hacketstown. Ballygossan Park Phase 1 is prominent on the distant hillside



### 6.3.6 Relevant Policy - Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

#### 6.3.6.1 Land Use Zoning

The site is zoned RA (Residential Area) with the objective to: *“Provide for new residential communities subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure”*.

The Development Plan zoning objectives map (Sheet No. 5 – see Figure 3 above) identifies that the site is subject to Local Area Plan 5.A, however the LAP expired in 2019.

#### 6.3.6.2 Policy on Landscape Character

The following ‘Landscape Character Assessment Objectives’ are stated in the Development Plan:

*Objective NH33: Ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to the character, value and sensitivity of a landscape when determining a planning application.*

*Objective NH34: Ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness such as geology and landform, habitats, scenic quality, settlement pattern, historic heritage, local vernacular heritage, land-use and tranquility.*

*Objective NH35: Resist development such as houses, forestry, masts, extractive operations, landfills, caravan parks and large agricultural/horticulture units which would interfere with the character of highly sensitive areas or with a view or prospect of special amenity value, which it is necessary to preserve.*

*Objective NH361: Ensure that new development does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of highly sensitive areas and does not detract from the scenic value of the area. New development in highly sensitive areas shall not be permitted if it:*

- *Causes unacceptable visual harm*
- *Introduces incongruous landscape elements*
- *Causes the disturbance or loss of (i) landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness, (ii) historic elements that contribute significantly to landscape character and quality such as field or road patterns, (iii) vegetation which is a characteristic of that landscape type and (iv) the visual condition of landscape elements.*

*Objective NH37: Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.*

*Objective NH38: Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.*

*Objective NH39: Require any necessary assessments, including visual impact assessments, to be prepared prior to approving development in highly sensitive areas.*

#### 6.3.6.3 Strategic Policy

The following are the most relevant among the Strategic Policies of the Development Plan (Section 1.6):

- *“6. Consolidate development and protect the unique identities of the settlements of Howth, Sutton, Baldoyle, Portmarnock, Malahide, Donabate, Lusk, Rush and Skerries.*
- *22. Minimise the County’s contribution to climate change, and adapt to the effects of climate change, with particular reference to the areas of land use, energy, transport, water resources, flooding, waste management and biodiversity, and maximising the provision of green infrastructure including the provision of trees and soft landscaping solutions.”*

#### 6.3.6.4 Urban Design and Architecture

*“High quality urban design is essential to achieving attractive, high quality places in which people will live, work and relax. The Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015 promotes the importance of good architecture in the creation of quality places. The Council promotes best practice contemporary architecture and the conservation of the County’s architectural heritage throughout the Plan...*

*“To achieve good urban design in developments, the 12 Urban Design Principles set out in the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009) should be taken into account in designing schemes. These principles are: Context, Connections, Inclusivity, Variety, Efficiency, Distinctiveness, Layout, Public Realm, Adaptability, Privacy/Amenity, Parking and Detailed Design. Every area of the County is different, therefore the rules of good design should, in so far as possible, respond to the characteristics, history and culture of a place to which they are applied.”*

*Objective PM31: “Promote excellent urban design responses to achieve high quality, sustainable urban and natural environments, which are attractive to residents, workers and visitors and are in accordance with the 12 urban design principles set out in the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009).”*

*Objective PM33: “Enhance and develop the fabric of existing and developing rural and urban centres in accordance with the principles of good urban design, including the promotion of high quality well-designed visually attractive main entries into our towns and villages.”*

## 6.4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The development entails 345 no. residential units comprising of 84 no. 1-bed units, 104 no. 2-bed units (68 no. 2-bed apartments and 36 no. 2-bed duplexes), 157 no. 3-bed units (118 no. 3-bed duplexes and 39 no. 3 - bed houses) ranging in height from 2 no. – 4 no. storeys on a site of 6.7 ha. located at Hacketstown in the townlands of Milverton, Townparks and Hacketstown, Skerries, Co. Dublin. The subject lands are accessed via Golf Links Road to the south and Ballygossan Park Phase 1 to the north.

The proposed development is set out in 8 blocks which comprise the following:

- Block A1 comprises 39 No. units at 4 storeys in height (Comprising a mix of 26 No. apartments & 13 No. Duplexes)
- Block A2 comprises 33 No. units at 4 storeys in height (Comprising a mix of 22 No. apartments & 11 No. Duplexes)
- Block B1 comprises 16 No. units at 3 storeys in height (Comprising all 3 bed Duplexes)
- Block B2 comprises 16 No. units at 3 storeys in height (Comprising all 3 bed Duplexes)
- Block C comprises 42 No. units at 2-3 storeys in height (Comprising 15 No. apartments & 27 No. Duplexes)
- Block D comprises 32 No. units at 2-3 storeys in height (Comprising 12 No. apartments and 20 No. houses)
- Block E comprises 62 No. units at 2-3 storeys in height (Comprising 38 No. apartments & 24 No. Duplexes)
- Block F comprises 66 No. units at 2-3 storeys in height (Comprising 39 No. apartments & 27 No. Duplexes)
- Block G comprises 25 No units at 2-3 storeys in height. (Comprising 20 No. Duplexes and 5 No. houses)
- Block H comprises 14 No units at 2-3 storeys in height. (Comprising 14 No. houses)
- Public Open Space of c.16,670 sqm (25% of net developable area) is proposed including the parkland and main public square, in addition to the linear park of c.2,427 sqm;
- c.2,272 sqm communal open space is proposed to serve the apartments;
- 414 car parking spaces in total are proposed including 40 visitor spaces, 3 for creche set down and 2 for creche staff parking within undercroft and at surface level.
- 802 No. bicycle parking spaces comprising including 128 No. visitor spaces and 10 No. to serve the creche;
- Childcare and community facility of c.377 sqm. located in Block C;
- Upgrades to the Golf Links Road including new pedestrian and cycle infrastructure with frontage on Golf Links Road;
- Vehicular access off the Golf Links Road is to be provided to the south east of the subject site;
- In addition the proposal will provide a new internal link road. This internal link road will connect to the adjacent lands to the north, for which a separate planning application has been made to Fingal County Council under Reg. Ref. F21A/0287 (ABP Reg. Ref. 312189-21);

The proposed apartments include the provision of private open space in the form of balconies to elevations of the proposed buildings. The development also includes vehicular, pedestrian, and cycle accesses, bicycle stores, lighting, landscaping, amenity spaces, drop off areas, boundary treatments, refuse facilities, services, utilities, substations, internal roads, footpaths and shared surfaces and all associated ancillary and site development works.

**Figure 6.7 – Proposed landscape masterplan**



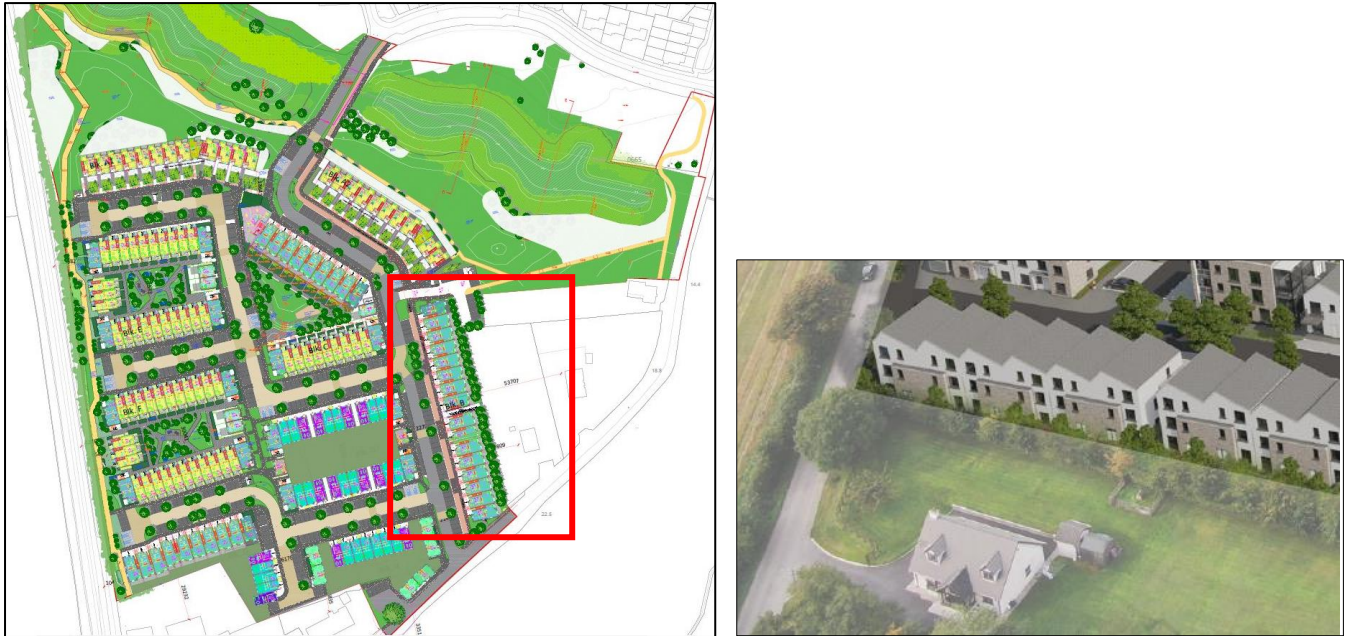
The proposal is described in detail in Chapter 2 of the EIAR. The key elements/aspects of the proposal with regard to potential landscape and visual impacts are considered in Table 6.7 below (with reference to the relevant criteria of the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009)).

#### **6.4.1 Protection of Sensitivities**

- Along the south east boundary, which is shared with a single house in a large open plot/field, it is proposed to locate a row of double-fronted duplex terraces (Block B – see Figure 6.8). These buildings front the new main street crossing the site on their other (west) side. Their location on the main street requires them to be of 'urban' typology and scale, to generate the desired streetscape character and built enclosure. The buildings are thus three storeys. While the setting of the neighbouring house would be unavoidably changed, the combination of

(a) the limited height of the buildings (three storeys), (b) the buildings facing (as opposed to backing onto) the boundary due to their double-fronted design, (c) the elevations being divided into volumes of brick and render to reduce the apparent mass, (d) the distinctive roof profile, and (e) the tree line inside the boundary, would minimise the visual impact of the development.

**Figure 6.8 – Proposed layout showing Block B adjacent to the neighbouring residential property, and an aerial view showing the relationship of Block B and the neighbouring house**



## 6.5 POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROJECT – LANDSCAPE

### 6.5.1 Zone of Influence

The areas/receptors most susceptible to change on the site (i.e. its main zone of influence) are (a) the Golf Links Road as it passes to the east and south of the site, (b) the Ballygossan Park Phase 1 estate to the north of the site, and (c) the existing houses and a farm on the west/north side of Golf Links Road. These neighbouring properties all fall into the area zoned RA in the Development Plan, and 'contained' between Golf Links Road and the railway line to the west. Two of the houses in particular share boundaries with the site and are highly exposed to any change on the site (see Figure 6.10 below).

The landscape to the east and south of Golf Links Road is largely rural in character (see Figure 6.6) and there are few receptors of change in this area. The railway line which passes to the west of the site forms a barrier in the landscape which limits the proposed development's potential influence in that direction. To the north there is a ridgeline behind Ballygossan Park Phase 1 which forms a visual barrier between the site and the existing urban area of Skerries, limiting its potential influence in that direction. There are certain distant locations outside of the main zone of influence described above (e.g. brief glimpses of the site from the R128 some 500m to the east, and glimpses of the site from the R127 and Tougher Road 200-300m to the west. However, in views from these areas the development would be seen in the wider urban context and its influence would be limited.

### 6.5.2 Landscape Sensitivity

Informed by the analysis in Section 6.3 above, and consideration of relevant policy, **the landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment can be classified 'medium'** (definition: *Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong, or has evidence of alteration, degradation or erosion of elements and characteristics. The landscape character is such that there is*

some capacity for change. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principle management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change).

The classification of medium sensitivity is based on the following key townscape characteristics:

- There are sensitivities in the area, notably (a) the stream, the vegetation and the valley topography to the north of the site (this area is the site of the AI Works application); (b) the trees along the railway line to the west; (c) a vernacular cottage on an adjacent property to the east; and (d) the other houses and the farm that share parts of the site's eastern and southern boundaries.
- It is recognised that the site and receiving environment fall into the Coastal Landscape Character Type, which is identified as 'Highly Sensitive' in the Development Plan.
- However, the GLVIA states as follows:

*"Landscape receptors need to be assessed firstly in terms of their sensitivity, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape. In LVIA sensitivity is similar to the concept of landscape sensitivity used in the wider arena of landscape planning, but it is not the same as it is specific to the particular project or development that is being proposed and to the location in question."*

The above is relevant because (a) the site lies adjacent to the urban area of Skerries, which lies entirely – along with the site – in the Coastal Landscape Character Type, (b) the site is zoned for residential development in the Development Plan (the site is thus valued as a residential land use asset; its development for residential use has been deemed an acceptable landscape change through the process of Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out during the preparation of the Development Plan), and (c) the proposed development is a residential development.

- Therefore, notwithstanding the site's location in the Coastal Landscape Character Type, for the purpose of this assessment – and in accordance with the GLVIA - the landscape is classified as being of medium sensitivity (to the type of development proposed).

### 6.5.3 Construction Phase

#### 6.5.3.1 Magnitude of Landscape Change

During construction the site and immediate environs would be disturbed by construction activities and haulage. There would be HGV movements on the surrounding roads and on the site there would be construction equipment, materials, vehicles and activity, and the incremental growth of the buildings. Construction is an inherently unsightly phase in the development process. The effects would be largely limited to the immediate environs (principally the neighbouring residential properties along Golf Links Road, the existing Ballygossan Park Phase 1 estate, and the users of the Golf Links Road).

The magnitude of landscape change would be medium in the immediate environs. While the level of landscape disturbance would be high, the medium classification takes account of the fact that this would be temporary; the construction phase is expected to be 24 months in duration. The change would decrease with distance from the site.

#### 6.5.3.2 Significance of Effects

Measuring the magnitude of change against the landscape sensitivity (refer to Table 6.3), the significance of the landscape effects during construction is predicted to be moderate negative in the immediate environs (the neighbouring residential properties along Golf Links Road, the existing Ballygossan Park estate, and the users of the Golf Links Road). The moderate significance classification takes account of the fact that the effects would be temporary. The significance of the effects would reduce with distance from the site.

## 6.5.4 Operation Phase

### 6.5.4.1 Magnitude of Landscape Change

The landscape of the large greenfield site would be permanently transformed by the construction of a new mixed density residential neighbourhood on the former agricultural fields. The internal hedgerow vegetation would be removed, the topography altered to accommodate the buildings and infrastructure, and the lands occupied by streets, blocks, a variety of building types and public realm/landscaping of urban character. The development would change the landscape character of Hacketstown from peri-urban to urban – reinforcing the change initiated by Ballygossan Park Phase 1 – incorporating the area into the townscape of Skerries. The landscape receptors most affected by the change would be the neighbouring residential properties along Golf Links Road, the existing Ballygossan Park estate, and the users of the Golf Links Road.

Taking account of the fact that the transformation of the Hacketstown landscape has been initiated by the construction of Ballygossan Park Phase 1, and that the change is supported by the Development Plan, the magnitude of landscape change can be classified medium (definition: *Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape*).

(It should be noted that landscape impact assessment is generally concerned with change to the *landscape character of an area*, and is not limited to the change occurring on the site. Therefore, while the site itself may be fundamentally transformed – e.g. from agricultural in use to a new residential estate – it is possible that the magnitude of change at ‘the landscape scale’ might only be medium. This is the case with the proposed development, where the expansion of an existing urban area is proposed onto a contained site that is zoned for urban development.)

### 6.5.4.2 Significance of Effects

Measuring the magnitude of change against the sensitivity of the receiving environment, the significance of the landscape impacts would be moderate.


To inform the classification of the landscape effects as positive, neutral or negative, the proposal is assessed below against the relevant criteria in the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009). This is in accordance with Objective PM31 of the Development Plan, which states: *“Promote excellent urban design responses to achieve high quality, sustainable urban and natural environments, which are attractive to residents, workers and visitors and are in accordance with the 12 urban design principles set out in the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009).*



The assessment in Table 6.7 below indicates that the proposal complies with the relevant criteria of the Urban Design Manual. The landscape effects can thus be classified positive.

**Table 6.7: Assessment of proposal against relevant criteria of the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009)**

Urban Design Criteria and Indicators	Yes / No	Comment
<b>01 Context - How does the development respond to its surroundings?</b>		



01a	The development seems to have evolved naturally as part of its surroundings	Yes & No	<p>The site is contained by the railway line to the west, Golf Links Road to the south and east, and the valley (the site of the AI works application) to the north. It is thus a 'contained' site, contiguous with the urban area to the north, and can be considered a logical area in which to expand the town. This is confirmed by the site's RA zoning in the Development Plan.</p> <p>Overall, while the new mixed density neighbourhood would establish an entirely new character on the site (transforming the site from peri-urban to urban in character), the urban design appreciably takes its cue from (a) the topography, (b) the site's position with respect to the town and the railway station, and (c) the existing sensitivities (the houses along Golf Links Road).</p> <p>Its responsiveness to the context and its containment within the bounds of the railway line and Golf Links Road ensure that it would in time (with maturation) appear a natural expansion and evolution of the Skerries urban area.</p>
01b	Appropriate increases in density respect the form of buildings and landscape around the site's edges and the amenity enjoyed by neighbouring users	Yes	<p>The higher density buildings are proposed in the northern part of the site overlooking the valley park and closest to the town and the railway station. The taller buildings (Blocks A1 and A2) are positioned to provide built enclosure to the valley, and the building height decreases as the site elevation rises out of the valley towards the south.</p> <p>The northern part of the site where the apartment buildings are proposed is also furthest from the existing houses along Golf Links Road. Buildings of 2-3 storeys are proposed inside the east and south west boundaries of the site along the interface with the neighbouring residential properties. This is an appropriate transition that respects the amenities of the neighbouring houses.</p>
01c & d	Form, architecture and landscaping have been informed by the development's place and time The development positively contributes to the character and identity of the neighbourhood	Yes	<p>The proposed mixed-density residential scheme is a reflection of the current national policy of compact growth. The proposal also demonstrably responds to the site topography, the containment by the railway line and Golf Links Road, and the sensitivities in the locality. It has thus been informed by its place and time.</p> <p>The proposal includes a linear corridor of open space contiguous with the site of the AI Works application (the stream valley to the north). Together these would form a broad valley parkland which would be the defining element of the new Hacketstown neighbourhood.</p> <p>As well as providing built enclosure to the valley, the proposed Blocks A1 and A2 – as the most visible built elements of the scheme, and a unique response to the site – would create a distinct identity/sense of place for the new neighbourhood.</p>  <p>The main street crossing the site from Golf Links Road to the new bridge (proposed as part of the AI Works) is characterised by strong built frontage along its full length, but also variety in built form, with the urban character strengthening towards the north (through changes in building typology). The streetscape incorporates street trees breaking up the parking, footpaths on both sides and a dedicated cycle lane – creating an attractive main street through the neighbourhood.</p>

			
01e	Appropriate responses are made to the nature of specific boundary conditions	Yes	<p>The response to boundary conditions is evident in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The location and design of the apartment buildings, Blocks A1 and A2, and the linear open space in front of these buildings, discussed above.</li> <li>(b) The design of the proposed Block B. This is a row of duplex terraces inside the east boundary which is shared with a single residential property (a dormer house in a large plot). Block B also has frontage to the main internal street in the site, which requires it to be of 'urban' typology and scale to generate the desired streetscape character and built enclosure. The following measures were taken in response to Block B's location in proximity to the neighbouring house: (a) The duplex terraces are limited to 3 storeys (this is modest in contemporary urban development); (b) The buildings are double-fronted so that they face the boundary as opposed to back onto the boundary; (c) The buildings have a distinctive roof profile and the elevations are divided into volumes of brick and render – to break up the massing and add visual interest to the built form; (d) A closely spaced line of trees is proposed inside the boundary, which would supplement the existing vegetation in the neighbouring garden, screening the development.</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(c) A similar design response is made inside the south west boundary of the site, responding to the neighbouring house and farm.</li> <li>(d) A further response to the specific boundary conditions is the design of a small terrace of houses fronting Golf Links Road beside the entrance to the site. Their positioning (fronting the street) and architectural character respond to their location at the point of transition between the rural and urban landscapes.</li> </ul>

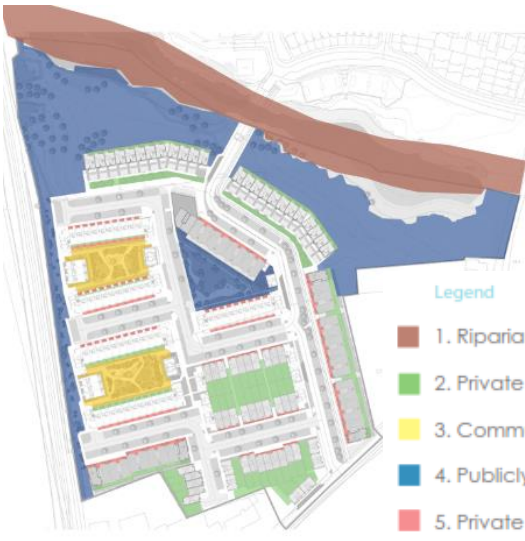


**02 Connections - How well connected is the new neighbourhood?**


02a	There are attractive routes in and out for pedestrians and cyclists	Yes	The proposed development includes dedicated pedestrian and cycle paths along the main street, and shared pedestrian and cycle paths along the edge of the valley park and alongside the railway line. These provide attractive routes in and out of the site in all directions (see diagram in 02d below).
02b	The development is located in or close to a mixed-use centre	Yes	The site is 1km from Skerries town centre.
02d	The layout links to existing movement routes and the places people will want to get to	Yes	<p>The proposed main street creates a road connection across the site between Golf Links Road and Ballygossan Park (in combination with the proposed AI Works, which incorporates a bridge over the valley).</p> <p>The proposed pedestrian and cycle routes cater for traffic to and from the town centre and the railway station, which is less than 1km from the site.</p>
02e	Appropriate density, dependent on location, helps support efficient public transport	Yes	The proposed mixed density scheme, with the higher density buildings in the northern part of the site closest to the railway station, is a direct response to the opportunity created by the public transport corridor.

**03 Inclusivity – How easily can people use and access the development?**

03a	There is a range of public, communal and/or private amenity spaces and facilities for children	Yes	The proposed development includes (1) an extensive parkland area contiguous with the site of the proposed AI Works, (2) a public square (with landscape terraces, kickabout area and playground), (3) two semi-private courtyards serving Blocks E and F, (4) private gardens for the houses in Blocks G and H, and (5) a linear open space/ greenway alongside the railway line. In combination these would provide a range of
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	<p>of different ages, parents and the elderly.</p>		<p>public, communal and private amenity spaces catering for all ages and both active and passive recreation.</p> 
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**05 Efficiency - How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?**

<p>05b</p>	<p>Landscaped areas are designed to provide amenity and biodiversity, protect buildings and spaces from the elements and incorporate SUDs</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Landscape Masterplan includes a range of open spaces of varying character designed to (a) provide passive and active recreation amenities for all age groups, (b) contribute to the area's place-identity, and (c) deliver a range of ecosystem services including habitat provision and water management (through SUDs measures).</p> <p>The parkland area in the northern part of the site includes (1) wet meadow areas (the swales), (2) wildflower meadow areas, and (3) stands of trees in line with National Pollinators Guide – all habitats of high biodiversity value. A total of 209 no. trees and 3,668 sqm of meadow planting are proposed across the site.</p> <p>The proposed SUDs measures include (1) part of a large swale which is a key element of the proposed AI Works in the valley to the north of the site; (2) rain gardens along the main street; (3) permeable paving for all parking spaces.</p> 
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**06 Distinctiveness - How do the proposals create a sense of place?**

<p>06a</p>	<p>The place has recognisable features so that people can describe where they live and form an emotional attachment to the place</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The proposed development employs variety in development typologies (e.g. lower density, higher density, mixed density) and architectural treatments, along with a hierarchical network of streets and the extensive and diverse network of open space to generate distinct internal character areas. The responsiveness of the built form and open space design to the topography in particular would contribute to a strong identity for the new neighbourhood.</p> <p>The main street crossing the site from Golf Links Road to the new bridge is characterised by strong built frontage along its full length, but also variety in built form,</p>
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			with the urban character strengthening towards the north. The streetscape incorporates street trees breaking up the parking, footpaths both sides and a dedicated cycle lane.
06b	The scheme is a positive addition to the identity of the locality	Yes	See 01a-e and 06a above.
06c	The layout makes the most of the opportunities presented by existing buildings, landform and ecological features to create a memorable layout	Yes	See 01a-e, 03a, 05b and 06a above.
06d	The proposal successfully exploits views into and out of the site	Yes	The proposal exploits the topography to maximise the visual amenity benefit of the valley park to the north, with Blocks A1 and A2 positioned along the rim of the valley, overlooking the parkland.  The apartment blocks also frame the view along the valley from Golf Links Road where it passes to the east of the site (see photomontage for Viewpoint 02).
<b>07 Layout - How does the proposal create people friendly streets and spaces?</b>			
07a	Layout aligns routes with desire lines to create a permeable interconnected series of routes that are easy and logical to navigate around.	Yes	See 02a and 02d above.
07b	The layout focuses activity on the streets by creating active frontages with front doors directly serving the street	Yes	The overall layout and individual buildings are designed to create active frontages and passive surveillance throughout the neighbourhood.  
07c	The streets are designed as places instead of roads for cars, helping to create a hierarchy of space with less busy routes having surfaces shared by pedestrians, cyclists and drivers	Yes	The proposed main street includes pedestrian and cycle paths segregated from the carriageway by green verges. The local/secondary streets have a different treatment, intended to convey the notion of “my street” or “home”. Cyclists and cars would share the central road surface. Beds of ornamental planting are proposed against the building facades to create a home threshold off the public footpaths, and street trees divide the on-street parking for further greening.

07d	Block layout places some public spaces in front of building lines as squares or greens, and some semi private space to the back as communal courts	Yes	See diagram in 03a above.
<b>08 Public Realm - How safe, secure and enjoyable are the public areas?</b>			
08a	All public open space is overlooked by surrounding homes so that this amenity is owned by the residents and safe to use. Play areas are sited where they will be overlooked, safe and contribute to the amenities	Yes	Apart from the east and west extremities of the linear park all open space and play areas are overlooked. See diagrams in 03a and 07b above.
08b	The public realm is considered as a usable integrated element in the design of the development	Yes	See 03a and 07b.
08d	There is a clear definition between public, semi private, and private space	Yes	See 03a.
08e	Roads and parking areas are considered as an integral landscaped element in the design of the public realm	Yes	See 07b and 07c.
<b>12 Detailed Design - How well thought through is the building and landscape design?</b>			
12a	The materials and external design make a positive contribution to the locality	Yes	The drawings, design statements and the photomontages prepared for the LVIA show that the proposed buildings and landscape are of appreciably high design and material quality. The development would be a positive addition to the urban landscape of Skerries.

Based on the assessment in Table 6.7 above the landscape effects can be classified positive.

### 6.5.5 Indirect Impacts

There would be no indirect effects on the landscape or visual amenities.

### 6.5.6 Worst Case Scenario

The worst case scenario would be if construction were to be stalled at any point during the construction process leaving the site landscape in a disturbed condition.

### 6.5.7 Secondary Impacts

There would be no secondary effects on the landscape or visual amenities.

### 6.5.8 Cumulative Impacts

The proposed development would deliver a large part of the residential neighbourhood envisioned for the Hacketstown area – as indicated by the RA zoning of the lands. A Planning application for the AI Works was permitted by the local authority and is currently the subject of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party appeal. An LRD application is in the process of preparation for the Ballygossan Park Phase 2 site. In combination these three developments, along with Ballygossan Park Phase 1, would transform the Hacketstown area into a contemporary residential neighbourhood of high environmental quality, with the central valley parkland a defining feature, tying the neighbourhood together and linking it to the surrounding area.

In combination the magnitude of landscape change (resulting from the proposed development, the AI Works and the likely future residential scheme to the north alongside Ballygossan Park Phase 1) would be high. The sensitivity of the receiving environment is medium (see Section 6.5.2 above). Therefore, the cumulative effects of the three proposed developments on the landscape would be significant and positive.

## 6.6 POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROJECT – VISUAL AMENITY

### 6.6.1 Construction Phase

The construction process would entail the following:

- Set up site perimeter hoarding;
- Set up site construction compound, internal transport routes;
- Site clearance;
- Excavation/grading/levelling;
- Site services installations;
- Construction of new buildings, frames and envelopes;
- Interior fit-out of buildings;
- Exterior streetscape, landscaping and site boundary works.

During construction the site and immediate environs would be heavily disturbed by construction activities and the incremental growth of the buildings on site.

The magnitude of change would be high in the immediate environs, particularly affecting the occupants of the neighbouring houses along Golf Links Road, the houses of Ballygossan Park Phase 1 and users of the Golf Links Road. The magnitude of change would reduce with distance from the site. Residential receptors are of high sensitivity to visual change, while road users are of lower sensitivity.

The significance of the visual effects on the occupants of the neighbouring houses and Ballygossan Park Phase 1 would be high, and the effects on the road users would be slight. The effects would be negative but temporary. Such temporary negative visual impacts are unavoidable and not unusual in the urban context where change is ongoing. The site development and construction phase for the Project will take place over a 5 year period.

### 6.6.2 Operation Phase

11 no. viewpoints were selected for assessment the proposed development's visual effects (see Figure 6.9). The viewpoints represent the key landscape character areas and groups of visual receptors in the receiving environment. The selection is also intended to provide visualisations from a range of angles and distance from the site.

**Figure 6.9 – Viewpoints for visual effects assessment**



The viewpoints are individually assessed in Table 6.8 below. For the methodology and criteria and terms used, refer to Appendix A.

The assessment should be read in conjunction with the verified photomontages provided under separate cover. For each viewpoint three images are provided:


- Baseline view – A photograph of the existing environment.
- Proposed view – Photomontage showing the proposed development and the proposed AI Works. (The two proposed developments are interlinked; showing the proposed development without the proposed AI Works would not be a realistic scenario.)
- Cumulative view – Photomontage showing the proposed development, the proposed AI Works, and the proposed Ballygossan Park Phase 2 development. (The proposed Ballygossan Phase 2 development is shown at its current pre-planning stage in the LRD process. It is therefore subject to change, but represents a likely future scenario.)



**Table 6.8: Visual effects assessment (Operational phase)**

Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude & Duration of Change	Significance of Effects	Cumulative Effects (including AI Works & Ballygossan Park Phase 2)
<b>01</b> Golf Links Road approaching entrance to Ballygossan Park	<p>The Ballygossan Park houses are to the right behind a low stone boundary wall and an internal access road.</p> <p>As the road passes the entrance to Balygossan Park (and the future entrance to the site) it dips into the valley and then curves around the site's east boundary.</p> <p>The roof of a vernacular cottage neighbouring the site is visible through the trees in the valley.</p> <p>The site is on the far side of the stream, the land rising out of the valley, partially hidden by the vegetation in the valley and around the cottage.</p> <p>The vegetation along the railway corridor is visible along the site's west boundary and a low, rounded hill forms the horizon beyond the site.</p>	Medium	<p>Block A2 is prominent on the far side of the valley, the long building folded to follow the contour, providing a strong built frontage to the linear open space.</p> <p>The deeply recessed balconies and large windows add to the articulation of the façade, breaking up the building's mass. The building typology is urban, the architecture distinctive, with a coastal character.</p> <p>In front of the building the land falls away into the wide valley park (to be maintained as meadow grassland with stands of woodland trees which in time will mature to partially screen and soften the buildings enclosing the valley).</p> <p>Up the hill behind Block A2, the distinctive roofline of the Block B duplexes is visible above the retained trees surrounding the neighbouring houses.</p> <p>Although the landscape would be substantially changed (in accordance with the zoning in the Development Plan), the combination of distinctive architecture and extensive open space would create an attractive new neighbourhood.</p>	Medium (permanent)	Moderate Positive	<p>A three storey duplex block is proposed beside the entrance to the Hacketstown lands. This building would be prominent in the foreground, forming a gateway with the existing house to the right.</p> <p>The Ballygossan Park Phase 2 buildings would largely screen the proposed development from view, but a glimpse of the valley park and Block A2 would be afforded at this point.</p> <p>In combination the three developments would complete the creation of a new residential neighbourhood characterised by variety in built form, distinctive architecture, extensive open space and a high quality public realm.</p> <p><u>Significance of Cumulative Effects: Significant positive.</u></p>
<b>02</b> Golf Links Road east of the site	<p>As the Golf Links road dips to pass through the valley there is a brief glimpse over the roadside hedgerow along the length of the valley.</p> <p>The site is to the left up the valley slope (beyond the</p>	Medium	<p>Block A2 is a prominent addition to the view, the linear block aligned with the contour of the valley edge, providing built enclosure/ definition to the broad valley parkland (complementing the Ballygossan houses across the valley).</p>	Medium (permanent)	Moderate Positive	<p>The Ballygossan Park Phase 2 development would be to the right of the valley. Most prominent is the distinctive form of the creche, positioned alongside the road crossing the valley. The apartment block</p>

Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude & Duration of Change	Significance of Effects	Cumulative Effects (including AI Works & Ballygossan Park Phase 2)
	<p>garden vegetation of the vernacular cottage in the foreground).</p> <p>The houses of Ballygossan Park Phase 1 are visible to the right and the railway embankment vegetation is in the distance.</p>		<p>The distinctive four storey, linear building has a disaggregated form with deep recesses creating variations in shadow and light, emphasised by the variations in materials. Large picture windows and metal railings around the recessed balconies add to the articulation of the building.</p> <p>Block B can be glimpsed behind Block A2. The building has similar materials but a distinctive asymmetrically pitched roofline.</p>			<p>would be discernible in the distance but would have limited presence in the view.</p> <p>As the trees in the valley park mature the buildings on both sides would be partially screened/softened. The view shows that the broad valley park would have the desired effect of giving the Hacketstown area a spacious, green character.</p> <p><u>Significance of Cumulative Effects: Moderate positive.</u></p>
<p><b>03</b> Golf Links Road beside house neighbouring the site</p>	<p>The road has a rural character along this stretch – winding, narrow and enclosed by hedgerows, except where it passes the house at this location.</p> <p>Approaching the site, the house stands in a very large garden enclosed by a hedgerow with scattered trees. The site lies beyond the boundary hedgerow and extends to the roadside.</p> <p>This house is the most exposed visual receptor to the site. Its setting and views will be changed no matter what form development takes on the site.</p>	High	<p>Block B would be a prominent addition to the view, the three storey duplex terrace protruding well above the retained hedgerow and garden trees, transforming the composition and character of the view.</p> <p>The facade is highly articulated, with variations in materials and an asymmetrically pitched roofline adding visual interest. A row of closely spaced trees inside the site boundary would in time mature to soften the building's presence further.</p> <p>While the considered layout, high quality architecture and a fence and screening vegetation on the boundary would mitigate the visual impact to an extent, this house is highly exposed and would experience a reduction in visual amenity. This is an unavoidable outcome of the site's RA zoning in the Development Plan.</p>	High (permanent)	Significant negative	<p><u>n/a</u></p> <p>The other developments would not be visible.</p>

Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude & Duration of Change	Significance of Effects	Cumulative Effects (including AI Works & Ballygossan Park Phase 2)
			<p>In the middle distance, the two houses of Block H create a new urban frontage to Golf Links Road, reinforcing the change in landscape character.</p>			
<p><b>04</b>                  Golf Links Road at site entrance</p>	<p>The viewpoint represents the future view from Golf links Road at the entrance to the site and the wider Hacketstown neighbourhood.</p> <p>Currently, the view from the road is blocked by the roadside hedgerow.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>The view would be transformed by the development, with the roadside hedgerow removed to reveal a street traversing an attractive new residential neighbourhood.</p> <p>The wide street is tree-lined and incorporates dedicated cycle and pedestrian paths alongside the road, generating an urban streetscape character.</p> <p>The buildings provide strong built frontage to the street (and the façade designs turn the corners to avoid blank gable walls), reinforcing the urban character.</p> <p>The buildings are of varied design and all are of appreciably high design and material quality.</p>	<p>Very High (permanent)</p>	<p>Significant Positive</p>	<p><u>n/a</u></p> <p>The other developments would not be visible.</p>

Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude & Duration of Change	Significance of Effects	Cumulative Effects (including AI Works & Ballygossan Park Phase 2)
<b>05</b> Golf Links Road approaching the site from the west – west of the railway line	The view is taken from the road outside the golf course clubhouse.  As the road approaches the railway it rises to bridge the line. The combination of the topography, roadside hedgerow and the trees along the railway embankments screens the site from view.	Medium	The roofs of the houses of Blocks F and G in the south west corner of the site would protrude marginally above the railway embankment vegetation.  The magnitude of change would be negligible and the change would not be inappropriate, the development signalling the road's approach to the urban area (refer to Figure 6.2, which shows how the railway line forms the western edge of the Skerries urban area).	Negligible (permanent)	Not Significant neutral	<u>n/a</u>  The other developments would not be visible.
<b>06</b> Golf Links Road approaching the site from the west - outside St Michael's school	The view is taken from the roadside parking outside of St Michael's school – approximately 30m from the site.  A large bungalow across the road is partially hidden by the roadside hedgerow and trees, which also screen the site from view.	Medium	Two semi-detached houses would be visible ahead along the road (with parts of the Block G buildings behind them), signalling the entry to the urban area.  The scale and character of the road-front houses is appropriate to the location at the point of transition between the rural and urban landscapes. The composition and character of the view would change but there would be no reduction in visual amenity.	Low-Medium (permanent)	Moderate neutral	<u>n/a</u>  The other developments would not be visible.
<b>07</b> Golf Links Road at south west corner of site	Where the road passes the corner of the site a break in the roadside hedgerow affords a view across the site. The houses of Ballygossan Park Phase 1 can be seen in the distance.	Medium	The landscape would be transformed by the development, with the two houses fronting the road the most significant additions to the view. The Block B duplex terrace is visible further along the road beyond the new entrance to the neighbourhood (see Viewpoint 4), and to the left the rear elevation of a terrace of houses can be seen.  In the foreground a small parking area off the road is concealed by a wide planted verge including a row of evergreen trees.	High (permanent)	Significant positive	<u>n/a</u>  The other developments would not be visible.

Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude & Duration of Change	Significance of Effects	Cumulative Effects (including AI Works & Ballygossan Park Phase 2)
			The view reveals a diversity of house types and the design and material quality of the proposed buildings and landscape/ public realm.			
<b>08</b> Ballygossan Park	<p>The view is taken from a road within the existing Ballygossan Park estate.</p> <p>The foreground houses frame the view south across the valley towards the site. The steep slope of the valley side in the northern part of the site is evident in this view. A hedgerow bordering the lower field is prominent.</p>	Medium	<p>The four storey apartment building (Block A2) would be prominent on the far side of the valley, enclosing and overlooking the valley park.</p> <p>The main street can be seen curving up the hill around the side of Block A2 (adding to legibility), enclosed on the far side by a duplex terrace with the creche at the end of the terrace.</p> <p>There is both variety in the buildings and a distinct theme to the architecture, which would generate a sense of place.</p> <p>The context of Ballygossan Park would be transformed, with the fields and hedgerows across the valley replaced by the new/ expanded residential neighbourhood. However, the combination of valley topography, diverse buildings of high design quality, legible streets, generous open space and trees would generate a residential environment of high quality and visual interest.</p>	Medium-High (permanent)	Significant positive	<p>The proposed creche building in Ballygossan Park Phase 2 would be a prominent addition to the view, its distinctive pyramidal roof adding to its presence – and adding to the character and legibility of the neighbourhood. The creche building would partially block the view of the proposed development across the valley, but a large area of open space would remain visible to the left.</p> <p><u>Significance of Cumulative Effects: Significant positive.</u></p>

Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude & Duration of Change	Significance of Effects	Cumulative Effects (including All Works & Ballygossan Park Phase 2)
<b>09</b> Railway footpath entry into Ballygossan Park	<p>The view is taken from the footpath (leading from Millers Lane and the train station) as the path enters the Ballygossan Phase 2 site.</p> <p>The area to the left is disturbed by construction works, and the existing Ballygossan Park houses are visible in the middle distance.</p> <p>To the right the vegetation on the railway embankment frames the view south across the valley towards the site.</p>	Medium	<p>The four storey apartment blocks (A1 and A2) are prominent on the far side of the valley. The linear buildings are folded to follow the contour of the valley's edge, providing definition to the broad open space.</p> <p>The extent to which the topography has influenced the proposed layout and design is evident in this view. It is also clear that the wide valley can comfortably accommodate the four storey buildings without any sense of excessive enclosure.</p> <p>While providing a strong built frontage to the valley, the linear forms of the buildings are given articulation and rhythm – and a strong identity - by the vertical projecting volumes of brick.</p> <p>Through the gap between the two buildings the distinctive roofline of Block B can be seen in the distance, adding to the variety of built form in view.</p>	Medium-High (permanent)	Moderate positive	<p>The new 'Railside Walk' footpath winds down the valley side parallel to the railway line, and can be seen climbing up the far valley side giving access to the site.</p> <p>Beyond a new house in the foreground, a four storey apartment building is prominent on the near side of the valley, set back from the railside walk behind a public open space connecting to the valley parkland.</p> <p>The view illustrates the extent of change which would result from the three developments in combination – with the currently peri-urban landscape transformed into a diverse, high quality, mixed density residential neighbourhood – characterised by an abundance of open space.</p> <p><u>Significance of Cumulative Effects: Significant positive.</u></p>
<b>10</b> Tougher Hill -west of the site	Due to the railway line, the topography and the land use pattern there are relatively few visual receptors west of the site that could be affected by the development. However the road over Tougher Hill (lined by houses on both sides)	Medium	<p>A small part of Block A1 and the roofscape of the buildings further north in the site protrude marginally above the railway embankment vegetation.</p> <p>This would amount to a negligible change, with no significant effect on the character or quality of the view.</p>	Negligible (permanent)	Not significant neutral	The Ballygossan Phase 2 apartment building would be a prominent addition to the view, in front of the existing Ballygossan Park houses. The building can be seen stepping down the valley side, and the façade is highly articulated to

	<p>affords a view east towards the site.</p> <p>In the foreground is an undulating agricultural landscape. The trees to the right screen a large quarry from view. In the distance beyond the railway line the houses of Ballygossan Park are prominent, and the sea can be seen on the horizon.</p>					<p>reduce the massing. The creche building with its distinctive pyramidal roof is visible to the side of the apartment block, adding to the diversity of built form in view.</p> <p>The developments in combination would change the character of the view, strengthening the urban edge without any compromise of the attractive rural landscape in the foreground. It is also fortunate that the sea would remain visible on the horizon.</p> <p><u>Significance of Cumulative Effects: Moderate positive.</u></p>
<p><b>11</b> R128 Rush Road east of the site</p>	<p>The view <u>east</u> from the Rush Road towards the sea is a protected view.</p> <p>The road also provides a long distance view west towards Hacketstown where the Ballygossan Park houses are prominent on the hillside beyond an allotment site on low-lying ground in the middle distance. The site is largely hidden from view by banks of mature trees in the intervening landscape.</p> <p><u>The view west towards the site is not as sensitive as the view east towards the sea – hence the medium sensitivity classification.</u></p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Small parts of Block A2 and the Block B duplex terrace protrude above the tree line in the distance.</p> <p>At this distance, in a panoramic view which already incorporates the urban-rural interface, this would amount to a negligible change, with no significant effect on the character or quality of the view.</p>	<p>Negligible (permanent)</p>	<p>Not significant neutral</p>	<p>Parts of the Ballygossan Phase 2 development would be visible to the side of the existing Ballygossan Park estate.</p> <p>In combination the developments would expand and consolidate the urban area (as prescribed by the Development Plan) in the view, but there would be no compromise of the rural landscape in the foreground or the protected view east towards the sea.</p> <p><u>Significance of Effects: Slight neutral.</u></p>

## **6.7 DO NOTHING IMPACTS**

The site would remain in agricultural use and there would be no change in landscape character (currently peri-urban) or views in the site environs. The Development Plan's residential land use objectives for the site would be unrealised.

## **6.8 AVOIDANCE, REMEDIAL AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **6.8.1 Construction Phase**

During construction the site and immediate environs would be heavily disturbed by construction activities and the incremental growth of the buildings on site, causing negative landscape effects of moderate significance and significant negative visual effects for some receptors (the houses nearest to the site).

Such impacts are an unavoidable consequence of development and there is limited potential for mitigation. Site hoarding would screen ground level activity, stockpiles, vehicles, etc. but once the buildings grow above ground floor level they would be visible above the hoarding, as would cranes, scaffolding and construction activity on the buildings themselves.

No landscape or visual-specific mitigation is recommended other than standard best practice construction site management, which should include the erection and maintenance of hoarding on the site boundaries.

### **6.8.2 Operation Phase**

The potential landscape effects of the proposed development have been classified as being of moderate significance and positive (based on an analysis of the proposal against the relevant criteria in the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009)).

The urban design criteria place considerable emphasis on a proposed developments' responsiveness (in layout, built form, architecture and landscape design) to the landscape context and sensitivities in the receiving environment. Such responsiveness is effectively 'embedded mitigation' in design. The analysis in Table 6.7 above shows that the proposed development responds appropriately and effectively to its context.

Only one negative potential visual effect has been identified. This is Viewpoint 3, which represents a house neighbouring the site. The house stands in a large open plot/garden and shares a 100m long boundary with the site (i.e. it is highly visually exposed to the site). Currently, due to its separation from the main urban area the landscape context of the house appears rural (although the landscape context is rather peri-urban, i.e. a combination of rural and urban-generated elements and characteristics, typical of the outskirts of a town) and the view from this property is over rolling agricultural fields (the current site condition).

The proposed development would see two duplex terraces (comprising Block B) located on the site side of the shared boundary. The landscape context of the property would be urbanised, and views from the property dramatically changed. Considering the current condition, the visual effects can only be classified as significant negative. This does not mean that the change is inappropriate. The following factors should be considered: (1) with most urban expansion/consolidation projects – particularly in peri-urban contexts where there might be a number of houses already existing in the expansion area - there are unavoidable impacts on those existing houses, due to the encroachment of new development into their immediate environment; (2) the site is zoned for residential development; (3) any development of sustainable density on the site would result in similar impacts on this highly exposed neighbouring property; (4) the design of Block B and the treatment of the shared boundary have sought to minimise the visual impact.



Therefore, while a negative effect on this neighbouring property is acknowledged, no further mitigation (other than the embedded mitigation in the design of the proposal) is recommended. Overall, the proposed development represents a considered an appropriate response to the landscape context and sensitivities.

## **6.9 PREDICTED IMPACTS**

### **6.9.1 Landscape Effects**

Since no mitigation measures are recommended, the predicted landscape impacts are the same as the potential impacts identified in Section 6.5 above.

#### **6.9.1.1 Construction Phase**

The landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment has been classified as medium (see Section 6.5.1 above).

The magnitude of landscape change during construction has been classified as medium (see 6.5.2.1). This takes account of (a) the fact that effects would be largely limited to the immediate environs (principally the neighbouring residential properties along Golf Links Road, the existing Ballygossan Park Phase 1 estate, and the users of the Golf Links Road) and (b) the temporary duration of the construction phase.

Measuring the magnitude of change against the landscape sensitivity (refer to Table 6.3), the significance of the landscape effects during construction is predicted to be moderate negative.

#### **6.9.1.2 Operation Phase**

The landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment has been classified as medium (see Section 6.5.1 above).

The magnitude of landscape change in the operation phase has been classified as medium (see 6.5.3.1). This takes account of the fact that the transformation of the Hacketstown landscape has been initiated by the construction of Ballygossan Park Phase 1. Additionally it should be noted that landscape impact assessment is generally concerned with change to the *landscape character of an area*, and is not limited to the change occurring on the site. Therefore, while the site itself may be fundamentally transformed – e.g. from agricultural in use to a new residential estate – it is possible that the magnitude of change at ‘the landscape scale’ might only be medium. This is the case with the proposed development, where the expansion of an existing urban area is proposed onto a contained site that is zoned for urban development.

Measuring the magnitude of change against the sensitivity of the receiving environment, the significance of the operation phase landscape impacts would be moderate. To inform the classification of the landscape effects as positive, neutral or negative, the proposal has been assessed against the relevant criteria in the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009) (see Table 6.7). The assessment in Table 6.7 indicates that the proposal complies with the relevant urban design criteria, and the landscape effects can thus be classified positive.

### **6.9.2 Visual Effects**

The residual visual effects during construction and operation are summarised in Table 6.9 below.

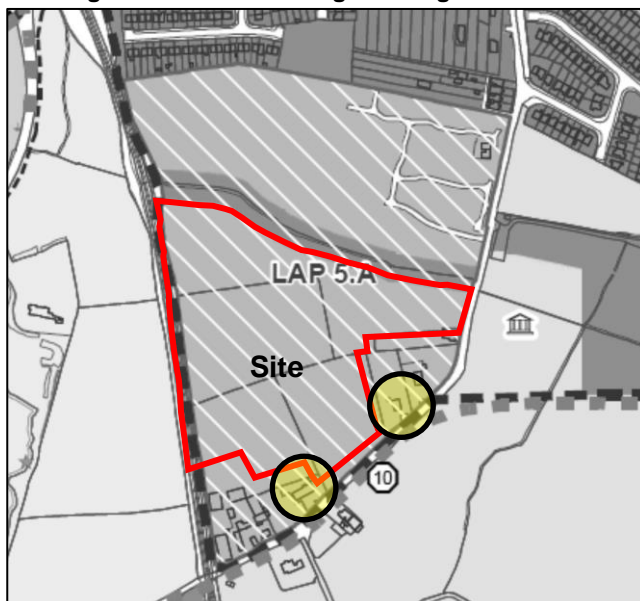
**Table 6.9: Summary of residual visual effects (construction and operational phases)**

Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Proposed Development CONSTRUCTION PHASE (Temporary)		Proposed Development OPERATION (Permanent)		Cumulative Developments (with proposed AI Works & Ballygossan Park Phase 2)	
		Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
01 Golf Links Road approaching entrance to Ballygossan Park	Medium	Medium	Moderate Negative	Medium	Moderate Positive	High	Significant Positive
02 Golf Links Road east of the site	Medium	Medium	Moderate Negative	Medium	Moderate Positive	Medium	Moderate Positive
03 Golf Links Road beside house neighbouring the site	High	High	Significant Negative	High	Significant Negative	None	n/a
04 Golf Links Road at site entrance	Medium	Very High	Significant Negative	Very High	Significant Positive	None	n/a
05 Golf Links Road west of the railway line	Medium	Negligible	Not Significant Negative	Negligible	Not Significant Neutral	None	n/a
06 Golf Links Road approaching the site from the west - St Michael's school	Medium	Low-Medium	Moderate Negative	Low-Medium	Moderate Neutral	None	n/a
07 Golf Links Road at south west corner of site	Medium	High	Significant Negative	High	Significant Positive	None	n/a
08 Ballygossan Park	Medium	Medium-High	Significant Negative	Medium-High	Significant Positive	Medium-High	Significant Positive
09 Railway footpath entry into Ballygossan Park	Medium	Medium-High	Moderate Negative	Medium-High	Moderate Positive	Very High	Significant Positive
10 Tougher Hill - west of the site	Medium	Negligible	Not significant Negative	Negligible	Not significant Neutral	Medium	Moderate Positive
11 R128 Rush Road east of the site	Medium	Negligible	Not significant Negative	Negligible	Not significant Neutral	Low	Slight Neutral

The key findings of the visual effects assessment are as follows:

- A combination of the topography of the site and the wider landscape, the land use pattern and the mature vegetation along the railway corridor and Golf Links Road restricts the number of visual receptors potentially affected by the proposed development.
- The only significant visual effects would be experienced by three groups of people:
  - **Users of the Golf Links Road:** The road is due to be upgraded as part of the Southern Relief Road project. The users of the road are the largest cohort of potential receptors of change on the site, but road users entering or exiting an existing urban area have a low sensitivity to the type of development proposed (i.e. an expansion of the urban area). The assessment of Viewpoints 1, 2, 4 and 7 shows that the visual effects on this group, while significant in places (e.g. Viewpoint 4 at the new road entrance to the neighbourhood), would be positive. The layout, architecture and landscape proposals are appropriate to the site location at the interface between the rural and urban environments, and the development would be an attractive addition to the road corridor in this location.
  - **Ballygossan Park:** This estate was the first phase of development of the now expired Hacketstown LAP lands and the occupants of the houses are the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest cohort of potential visual receptors. As part of the Hacketstown area they are unavoidably exposed to development of the remainder of the area (and would benefit from the completion of the new neighbourhood). The assessment of Viewpoints 8 and 9 shows that the visual effects on this group would be moderate to significant and positive. The context of Ballygossan Park would be transformed, with the agricultural landscape across the valley replaced by the new/ expanded residential neighbourhood. However, the combination of the valley topography, diverse buildings of high design and material quality, legible circulation networks, generous open space and trees would generate a residential environment of high amenity value.
  - **Existing houses along Golf Links Road:** There are a small number of houses and a farm along Golf Links Road and adjoining the site. (One of the houses is the 'vernacular cottage' identified in the now expired LAP; the proposal would have no negative impact on this cottage.) Two of the houses – to either side of where the site has frontage to Golf Links Road (see Figure 6.10 below) - are highly exposed to the site.

**Figure 6.10 – Development Plan land use zoning map, showing the two affected neighbouring houses**



The assessment of Viewpoint 3 (representing one of these houses) indicates that it would experience a high magnitude of visual change and a reduction in visual amenity as a result of the development. Currently, due to its separation from the main urban area the landscape context of the house appears

rural (although the landscape context is peri-urban) and the view from this property is over rolling agricultural fields (the current site condition). The proposed development would see two duplex terraces (comprising Block B) located on the site side of the shared boundary, in direct view from the house. In considering this effect the following factors should be noted: (1) with most urban expansion/consolidation projects – particularly in peri-urban contexts where there might be a number of houses already existing in the expansion area - there are unavoidable impacts on those existing houses, due to the encroachment of new development into their immediate environment; (2) the site is zoned for residential development; (3) any development of sustainable density on the site would result in similar impacts on this highly exposed neighbouring property; (4) the design of Block B and the treatment of the shared boundary have sought to minimise the visual impact.

In conclusion, while there would be some negative impacts on two residential properties adjoining the site, the proposed development would make a significant positive contribution to the evolving landscape/ neighbourhood of Hacketstown, enhancing the urban landscape and visual amenities of the area.

### **6.9.3 Indirect Impacts**

There would be no indirect effects on the landscape or visual amenities.

### **6.9.4 Worst Case Scenario**

The worst case scenario would be if construction were stalled at any point during the construction process leaving the site landscape in a disturbed condition.

### **6.9.5 Secondary Impacts**

There would be no secondary effects on the landscape or visual amenities.

### **6.9.6 Cumulative Impacts**

The proposed development would deliver a large part of the residential neighbourhood envisioned for the Hacketstown area (as indicated by the RA zoning of the lands). A Planning application for the AI Works was permitted by the local authority and is currently the subject of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party appeal. An LRD application is in the process of preparation for the Ballygossan Park Phase 2 site. Visual impact in terms of respective view points summarised in Table 6.9 above.

#### **6.9.6.1 Landscape Effects**

The cumulative landscape change (resulting from the proposed development, the proposed AI Works and proposed Ballygossan Park Phase 2) would be high. The sensitivity of the receiving environment is medium (see Section 6.5.1 above). Therefore, the cumulative effects of the three proposed developments on the landscape would be significant and positive.

#### **6.9.6.2 Visual Effects**

The photomontages prepared for this assessment include a 'cumulative view' for each viewpoint, showing the three proposed developments in combination. The potential cumulative effects were assessed for each viewpoint in Tables 6.8 and 6.9 (refer to these tables for detail). For five out of the six viewpoints which would experience a cumulative impact the effects were classified positive. For the one other view the effects would be neutral.

## **6.10 MONITORING**

No monitoring of landscape or visual effects is proposed.

## 6.11 REINSTATEMENT

No reinstatement is required assuming the development would be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans.

## 6.12 INTERACTIONS

- **Population and Human Health.** The proposed development would deliver a high quality mixed density residential neighbourhood well served by public and communal open space and within 1km of the town centre and Skerries train station. The related change to the landscape character, i.e. the planned expansion of the urban area (as indicated by the site's RA zoning) into a previously peri-urban landscape, would have significant positive population and human health benefits (by providing homes offering a high level of residential amenities).
- **Biodiversity.** The proposed Landscape Masterplan includes a range of open spaces of varying character, which, in addition to providing recreation amenities and contributing to the area's place-identity, would deliver a range of ecosystem services. These include habitat provision and water management (through SUDs measures). The parkland area in the northern part of the site includes (1) wet meadow areas (the swales), (2) wildflower meadow areas, and (3) stands of trees in line with National Pollinators Guide – all habitats of high biodiversity value. A total of 209 no. trees and 3,668 sqm of meadow planting are proposed across the site.
- **Water.** The proposed SUDs measures include (1) part of a large swale which is a key element of the proposed AI Works in the valley to the north of the site; (2) rain gardens along the main street; (3) permeable paving for all parking spaces.

## 6.13 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN COMPILING

No difficulties were encountered in carrying out the assessment.