

Proposed Large Scale Residential  
Development at Rathgowan, Mullingar,  
Co. Westmeath  
**Applicant: Marina Quarter Ltd.**

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# Volume II

## Main Statement

### CHAPTER 2

#### Site Location & Project Description



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## 2 Site Location & Project Description

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### 2.1 Introduction

According to the EIA Directive, an EIAR must provide a project description that includes information on the project's site, design, scale, and other relevant elements. The 2014 Directive stipulates, in Recital 22 that:

*“In order to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and human health, screening procedures and environmental impact assessments should take account of the impact of the whole project in question, including, where relevant, its subsurface and underground, during the construction, operational and, where relevant, demolition phases”.*

This chapter complies with the EIA Directive's criteria by giving information about the proposed project's location, size, and features.

#### 2.1.1 Expertise & Qualifications

This chapter of the EIAR has been prepared by Saoirse Kavanagh, Executive Planning Consultant of McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultancy. Saoirse holds a bachelor's degree in Arts (International), majoring in Geography, and a Master's in Planning and Sustainable Development. She has over 4 years' experience working with multi-disciplinary teams and has provided input into a variety of projects. In particular, she has co-ordinated the preparation of the following three Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIARs) including the completion of the Introduction, Alternatives, and Population and Human Health chapters.

- Cooldown Commons Strategic Housing Development, Citywest, Dublin.
- Parkside 5B Strategic Housing Development, Belmayne, Dublin.
- Clonattin Strategic Housing Development, Gorey, Co. Wexford.

### 2.2 Methodology

The following factors have influenced the development of the proposed design:

- Guidance documents and their relevance to the proposed development;
- Analysis of the physical site context, including detailed topographical and site survey information;
- Planning history of the subject site;
- Collaboration with design team members and relevant departments of the Local Authority, with an iterative approach to design that addresses the requirements of all disciplines in a balanced manner.

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## 2.2.1 Relevant Legislation and Guidance

The relevant guidelines to the development of the built environment in Ireland are referenced by the architect. The following documents are among them:

- National Planning Framework 2040
- Urban Development and Sustainable Residential Development in urban areas.
- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)
- Westmeath County Council Development Plan 2021-2027
- Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (as extended)

## 2.2.2 Difficulties Encountered

The subject site presented a number of design challenges which the design team has sought to resolve through our collaborative design process:

- Reaching an appropriate balance between current planning policy and density requirements while respecting the existing residential scale and context.
- Designing an appropriate drainage solution responding to both site conditions and existing limitations.

## 2.3 Need for the Scheme

The subject site belongs to Glenveagh Homes Ltd., and is zoned for residential development and is part of Westmeath County Council's core strategy and housing need/target for Mullingar. The site is a greenfield parcel of zoned residential land situated in a suburban location and well established residential area. The site has access to Mullingar town centre via the existing footpath network along the Ashe Road to the south.

The development of the Masterplan area will provide a high-quality residential development in keeping with the surrounding residential environment.

The development provides for cycle infrastructure, enhanced permeability throughout the site, and hard and soft landscaping and street landscaping which will provide for an attractive and sustainable residential environment.

## 2.4 Baseline Environment

### 2.4.1 Site Location

The subject site for Phase 1 and 2 measures 5.95ha, and forms part of a larger masterplan area of c. 17.9ha. The masterplan site is located within the townland of Rathgowan, within the development boundary of Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, to the northwest of the town centre.

The subject site (Phase 1 and 2) is located to the southeast of the R394 (known locally as the 'C-Link' road) and north of Ashe Road. The permitted Phase 3 site is located northwest of the R394. The location of the subject site and the permitted Phase 3 site area is shown in Figure 2.1.

The masterplan site is surrounded by medium density housing, mainly comprising two-storey residential buildings arranged around central green spaces in distinct neighbourhoods.

The lands immediately adjoining the subject site (Phase 1 and 2) to the east and south have been developed for residential units and generally comprising two-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings. The subject site is relatively flat and comprises grass with some hedgerows.

The lands immediately adjoining the Phase 3 site to the south and southwest consist of 5 no. residential dwellings as well as a now demolished detached house (c. 1910) that was identified as a protected structure (Ref. No. 15310001). The lands to the west and north of the Phase 2 site consist of agricultural land. The Phase 3 site also has a relatively level topography and comprises of grassland with some hedgerows/treeline boundaries.



**Figure 2.1 Location of Subject Site and Phase 3 Site (Map Source: Bing Maps)**

## 2.4.2 Zoning

The subject site and the Phase 3 site are currently zoned 'proposed residential' under the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (as extended).

These sites are also within an Urban Design Framework Plan area. Chapter 2 of the LAP provides the following objective for this area:

*"The objective is to create sustainable communities at this location, characterised by high quality innovative design and permeable layouts, connectivity to adjoining*

residential areas and amenities, together with the provision of social, community and recreation facilities.”

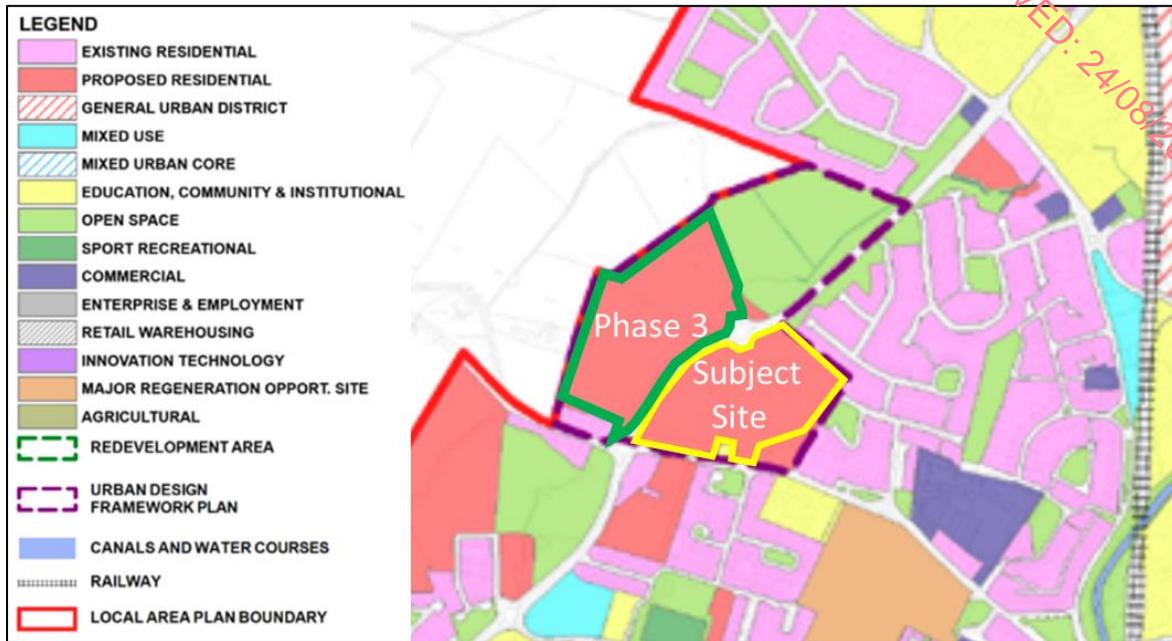


Figure 2.2 Location of subject site and phase 3 site on Mullingar LAP 2014 Zoning Map

## 2.5 Description of the Proposed Development

The overall masterplan (Phases 1, 2 and 3) comprises 394 no. residential units, a creche, and all ancillary development works including access, footpaths, cycle paths, car parking, bicycle parking, 1 no. pumping station, drainage, landscaping, lighting, and amenity areas. Access to the site will be via the existing entrance onto the C-Link road which traverses the masterplan area.

The current proposal (Phase 1 and 2) includes 181 no. residential units. The permitted Phase 3 includes 213 no. residential units and is currently under construction.

### 2.5.1 Layout

#### 2.5.1.1 Phase 1 and 2 (Current Proposal)

Phase 1 and 2 consists of 7 cells (A to G) which provide a variety of house types. These cells are arranged around a central open space.

Cell A is located along the northern boundary and is arranged to have back gardens against the site boundary and the existing back gardens of the houses to the north.

Cell B is located south of Cell A and provides semi-detached and terraced houses.

Cells C and D are located on either side of the entrance street from the C Link. Both overlook the proposed central open space to their south.

Cell E is located within the south-western corner and includes two apartment blocks to provide a strong frontage to the C Link and Ashe Road. A plaza is provided in front of these apartment blocks.

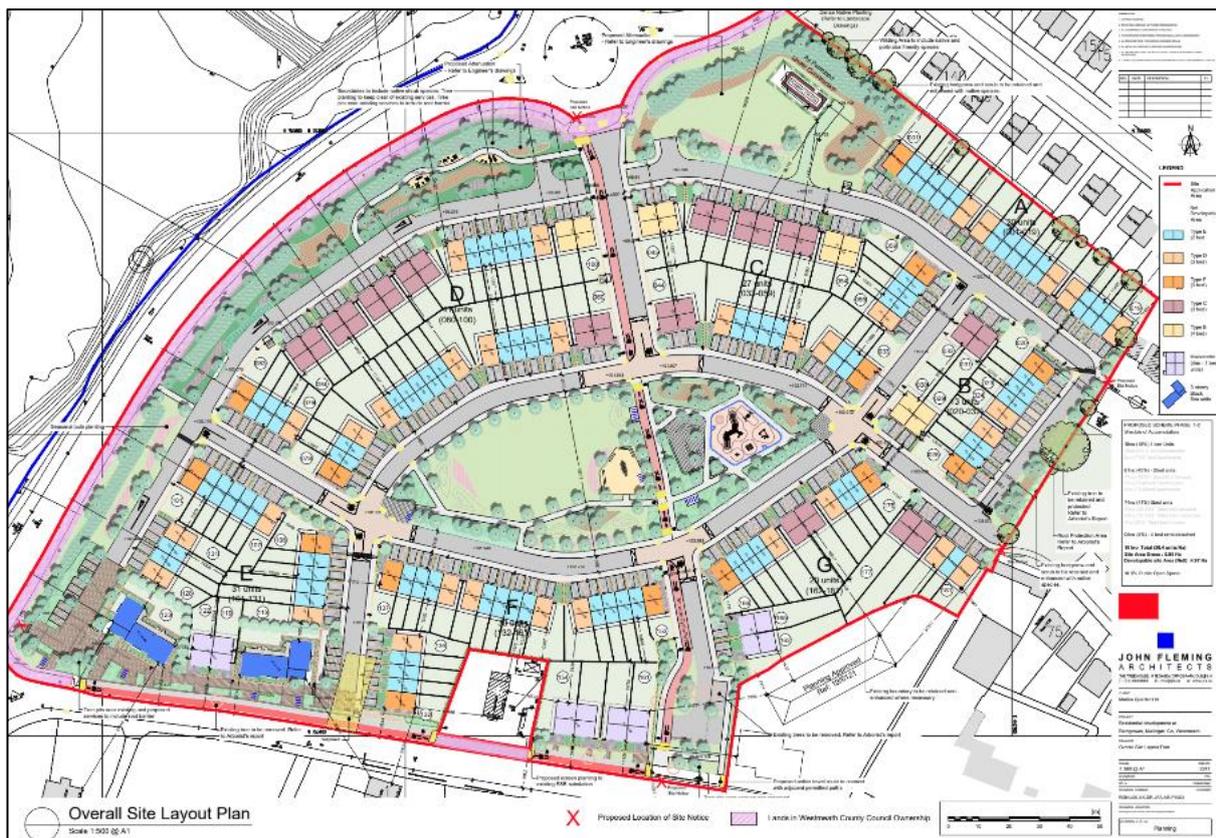
Cell F is located along the southern boundary and wraps around the existing dwelling on Ashe Road. The maisonettes proposed in the west of this Cell have been located to continue the building line set by the existing dwelling.

Cell G has been designed in response to the permitted apartment block located to the south of the site (reference: 19/6121).

A landscaped buffer strip is provided along the western boundary to the C-Link which will act as a noise and visual buffer. This buffer strip has been designed to provide some areas of useable public open space with seating providing.

A pumping station is located in the northern corner of the site, to the east of the site access. The area around this pumping station will be landscaped to provide a high quality public open space.

A central cycle route is provided through the site in a north-south direction which will provide an alternative pedestrian and cyclist access to the Ashe Road to the south.



**Figure 2.3 Proposed Phase 1 and 2 Site Layout**

The proposed development intends to achieve a high-quality design whilst optimizing the appropriate use of the site, which will help meet increasing demand for residential accommodation while remaining sympathetic to context. The design treatment aims to achieve the highest standards in

energy efficiency, also the selected brick finishes, window selection, will complement the current building stock in the area. Materials are selected to be traditional, simple, and sympathetic to the surrounding context. The buildings feature a palette of brickwork, render, and zinc detailing. Doors and windows are a mix of timber and metal finish.

### 2.5.1.2 Phase 3 (Permitted)

The permitted Phase 3 layout includes a range of unit types arranged in blocks throughout the site. It includes four areas of public open spaces which are dispersed throughout the site to ensure every home has easy access to a useable open space. The permitted creche is located along the northern boundary of the site, adjacent to the vehicular access to the site. A landscaped buffer strip is provided along the eastern edge of the site, providing a buffer between the R394 and the permitted development.

Construction has commenced on this phase of development.



Figure 2.4 Extract from Permitted Phase 3 Layout

### 2.5.2 Unit Mix and Type

The current proposal provides a mix of 1 bed, 2 bed, 3 bed, and 4 bed residential units. The table below provides the overall unit mix breakdown in the current application, the permitted Phase 3, and the overall masterplan area.

Table 2.1 Unit Mix Breakdown

Unit Size	Phase 1 and 2 (Current Proposal)	Phase 3 (Granted)	Total
1 bed	18 no. (10%)	11 no. (5%)	29 no. (7%)
2 bed	81 no. (45%)	47 no. (22%)	128 no. (32%)
3 bed	74 no. (41%)	127 no. (60%)	201 no. (51%)
4 bed	8 no. (4%)	28 no. (13%)	36 no. (9%)

Unit Size	Phase 1 and 2 (Current Proposal)	Phase 3 (Granted)	Total
Total	181 no. (100%)	213 no. (100%)	394 no. (100%)

The current proposal and masterplan area provides a mix of apartments/maisonettes and houses, as shown in the table below.

**Table 2.2 Unit Type Breakdown**

Unit Type	Phase 1 and 2 (Current Proposal)	Phase 3 (Granted)	Total
Houses	155 no. (89%)	201 no. (94%)	356 no. (90%)
Apartments	26 no. (11%)	12 no. (6%)	38 no. (10%)
Total	181 no. (100%)	213 no. (100%)	394 no. (100%)

The houses and apartments/maisonettes have all been designed in line with the relevant standards and can be adapted to meet the future needs of residents.

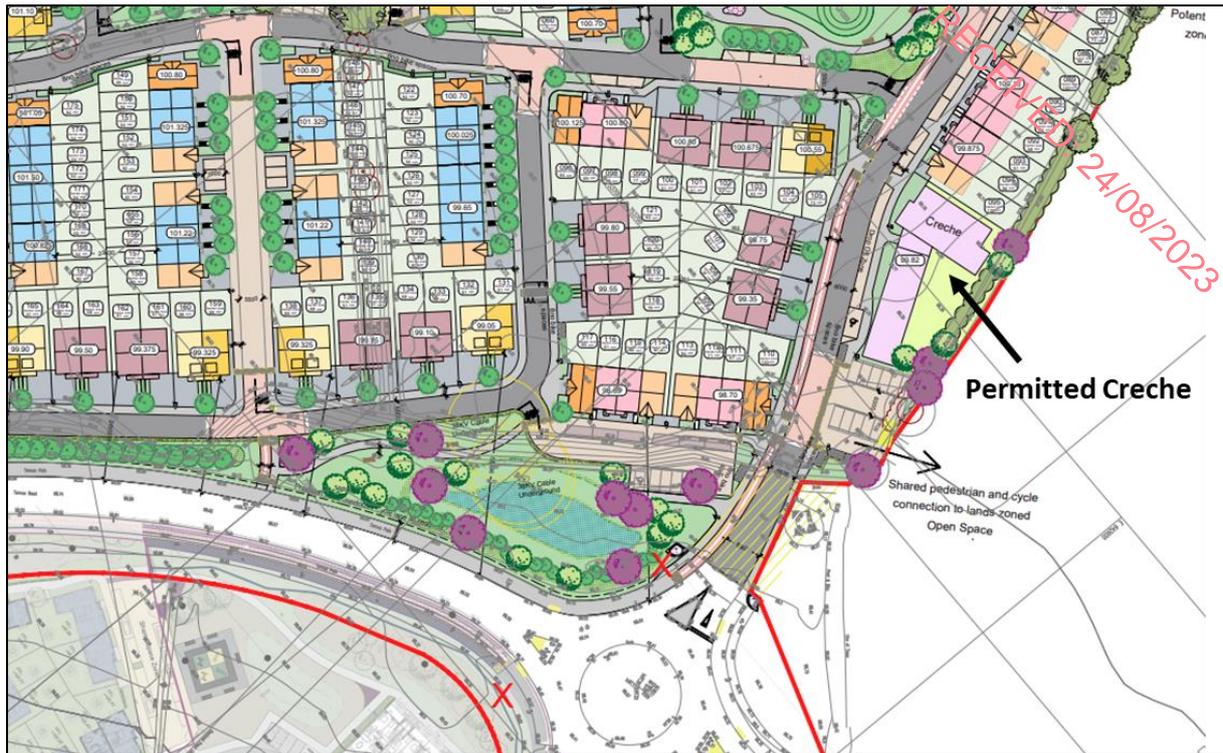
The units will be constructed to a high standard with regard to energy efficiency. The building envelopes will avoid air leakage and have a high standard of thermal insulation, reducing energy consumption over the lifetime of the dwelling.

### 2.5.3 Creche

The granted Phase 3 development included a creche which was designed to cater for the entire masterplan development (i.e. all 3 phases). This permitted creche measures 429sqm and will cater for c. 97 no. children. The creche also includes a 491sqm external play area. This creche is located at the entrance to the Phase 3 site and will be easily accessible to both the permitted Phase 3 and proposed Phases 1 and 2.

The creche rooms open out onto play areas and landscaped open space, and are designed to be bright, spacious, and connected to the natural environment. Materials used in the creche have been selected to be simple and sympathetic to the surrounding context and features a simple palette of render, stone and zinc detailing. The creche is linked to the surrounding residential neighbourhoods using dedicated cycle lanes and footpaths, to encourage walking and cycling trips and minimise car movements.

It is expected that the construction of this creche will be completed in Q1 2024, prior to the last part of (Phase 3) housing being completed, subject to an operator coming on board.



**Figure 2.5 Extract from site layout submitted with Phase 3 application showing permitted creche location.**

## 2.5.4 Open Space

The current proposal includes a total of 0.85ha (8,500sqm) public open space. This includes a large central open space which provides a kickabout area, a teen area, a playground, and seating. A separate kickabout area is provided in the north of the site, east of the site entrance, and an outdoor gym is provided to the west of the site entrance. In addition, a public plaza is provided in the south-western corner of the site, in front of the proposed apartment blocks.

The permitted Phase 3 application includes a total of 1.087ha public open space which represents 16.1% of the Phase 3 site area. Overall, the entire masterplan area provides 1.937ha (19,370sqm) public open space.

All houses and apartments in both the permitted Phase 3 development and the proposed Phases 1 and 2 are provided with private open space in line with the relevant standards.

## 2.5.5 Parking

The proposed Phase 1 and 2 development includes 300 no. cycle parking spaces and 265 no. car parking spaces.

Phase 3 provides a total of 661 no. cycle parking spaces (including 371 no. spaces provided via rear garden access) and 336 no. car parking spaces.

The overall masterplan area therefore will provide a total of 961 no. cycle parking spaces and 601 no. car parking spaces.

The table below provides a breakdown of the permitted and proposed cycle and car parking provision.

**Table 2.3 Permitted and Proposed Cycle Parking**

	Phase 1 and 2 (Current Proposal)	Phase 3 (Granted)	Total
Cycle Parking	300 no.	661 no.	961 no.
Car Parking	265 no.	336 no.	601 no.

### 2.5.6 Access & Infrastructure

The proposed layout seeks to create a number of different neighbourhoods with pedestrian and cycle connections between. A dedicated cycle lane runs along the central primary access roads, and this connects to the neighbourhood landscaped spaces and pedestrian and cyclist priority spaces. The permitted creche facility is located adjacent to the main entrance of Phase 3, to minimise vehicle traffic and encourage pedestrian and cycle activity.

No direct vehicular connections are provided between the proposed development and adjoining existing neighbourhoods, but pedestrian/cyclist connectivity is provided to further encourage pedestrians and cyclists. The design approach ensures passive surveillance of all pedestrian footpaths within the site which aims to stimulate connectivity between the adjoining developments.

Landscaped open spaces are designed to open and connect with adjoining open spaces, to improve permeability between new and existing neighbourhoods.

The development will have access to Mullingar town centre via existing pedestrian routes available along the Ashe Road.

There are existing power lines running along the eastern boundary of the site, this development proposes to underground the power line. There is a 10kV line running from south to north through the site that will also need to be undergrounded. There will be new substations constructed on site to cater for the new development load.

The development will be served by and connected to the pumping station already permitted as part of Phase 3.

## 2.6 Construction Stage

The proposed construction of the entire masterplan area is expected to take approximately four years. Access to the site will be via the existing entrances onto the C-Link Road which traverses the masterplan area.

### 2.6.1 Overview of the Construction Site Establishment

A temporary site compound will be set up during the construction stage of the works. A temporary site compound is currently located on the Phase 3 lands to facilitate the construction of the Phase 3. This will be relocated to the central open space within the current subject site to facilitate the construction of Phase 1 and 2.

Proposed works will include construction of a site compound, perimeter hoardings, provision of site security and access points, and erection of cranes as necessary. Safeguards will be put in place to protect the site, the works, materials and plant. Existing buildings, persons and access will be protected during the works.

### **2.6.2 Working Hours**

The proposed construction working hours will be from 8am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. No construction work will take place on Sundays or public holidays, except works necessary for health and safety reasons or to protect the environment. An Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan has been prepared by Tobin Consulting Engineers and is submitted with the planning application.

### **2.6.3 Demolition**

No demolition works are proposed.

### **2.6.4 Earthworks**

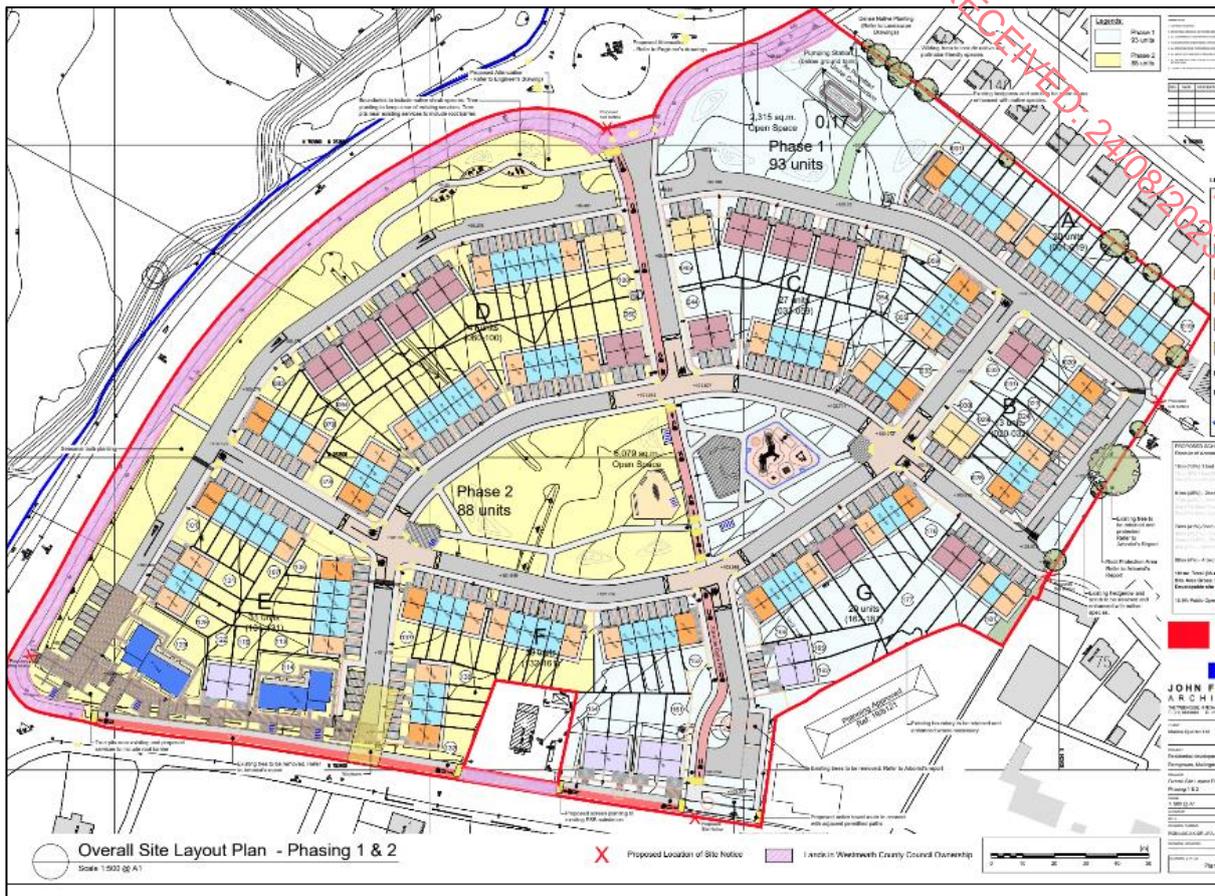
During construction of foundations, underground services and utilities, and flood attenuation tanks, site earthworks will be required. Initial topographical and utility surveys have been carried out by Tobin Consulting Engineers. Further site investigations will be carried out by the contractor prior to construction. Any contaminated soils will be segregated and removed off-site in accordance with relevant waste legislation.

### **2.6.5 Construction Sequencing and Phasing**

The masterplan area will be constructed in 3 phases. Each phase will commence with enabling works (consisting of site establishment and utility diversions where required) followed by earthworks, access, foundations, superstructure, fitting out, and landscaping works, in that order. Please refer to the accompanying Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) by Tobin Consulting Engineers in Appendix 13.2.

Phase 3, located north of the current subject site, was granted by Westmeath County Council in December 2022 and is currently under construction on site. Glenveagh Homes intends to have 50-100 homes completed and occupied by December 2023.

The current application consists of Phase 1 and Phase 2. It is intended that Phase 1 will commence following a grant of permission with Phase 2 commencing as Phase 1 is completed. Phase 1 will include a portion of the central open space to ensure the residents in Phase 1 will have a public amenity space while Phase 2 is under construction.



**Figure 2.6 Phasing Plan**

## 2.6.6 Traffic Management

An Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan has been completed by Tobin Consulting Engineers which notes the following:

- Due to the well-established arm in existence of the roundabout on the R394 road, it is proposed to utilise this existing entrance for vehicular access to site.
- Provision will be made onsite for a construction staff carpark within the Contractor's compound. No parking of vehicles will occur along the existing roads or neighbouring estates.
- All existing footways are to be maintained adjacent to the boundary of the site. Drop kerbs and tactile paving are present at the existing site entrance utilising the splitter Island. These facilities shall be maintained throughout the duration of the construction stage.
- During the Construction stage of the project advanced warning signs will be required on the approach to the roundabout from both directions indicating access points for Construction traffic. It is not proposed to divert cyclists from their current routes as a result of the construction phase of the development as the cyclists will be able to maintain the current arrangements along the R394 road.
- Construction activities will be undertaken during daylight hours for all construction stages. It is not anticipated that construction works will be carried out on Sunday, or Bank Holidays or that any construction works will be carried out in hours of darkness.

The contractor will be contractually required to ensure that the elements of the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be incorporated into the final TMP. The contractor will also be required to promote sustainable travel to site and introduce a mobility management plan for its workforce to encourage alternative access to the site other than by car.

### **2.6.7 Construction Management Plan**

A Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan has been prepared by Tobin Consulting Engineers and is included as Appendix 13.2.

### **2.6.8 Site Services**

Refer to accompanying Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan prepared by Tobin Consulting Engineers. Refer also to the Material Assets Service Infrastructure and Utilities chapter of this EIAR.

### **2.6.9 General Principles of Operational Waste Management Strategy**

Refer to accompanying Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Construction, Demolition & Operational Waste Management Plan prepared by Tobin Consulting Engineers. Refer also to the Material Assets: Service Infrastructure & Utilities and Material Assets: Waste chapters of this EIAR.