12 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

12.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential effects of the proposed development on the landscape/ townscape character and views/ visual amenity in the receiving environment. It should be read in conjunction with the verified photomontages included as a separate standalone document entitled 'St. Joseph's House and Adjoining Properties – Verified Photomontages' prepared by Modelworks.

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 over 20 years' experience in development and environmental planning, specialising in LVIA.

12.2 Study Methodology

The assessment was carried out with reference to:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd edition, 2013 (GLVIA), published by the Landscape Institute;
- *Technical Information Note on Townscape Character Assessment*, 2016, published by the Landscape Institute;
- Draft *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, 2017, published by the EPA;
- *Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment*, 2018, published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The draft EPA guidelines provide a general methodology and impact ratings for all environmental topics covered in an EIAR; the GLVIA provides specific guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment. Therefore, a combination of the draft EPA guidelines and the GLVIA has informed the methodology for this assessment.

The GLVIA requires that effects on views and visual amenity be assessed separately from the effects on townscape, although the two topics are inherently linked. 'Landscape' (or 'townscape' in built up areas) 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/ townscape character. Landscape impact assessment identifies the changes to this character which would result from the proposed development and assesses the significance of those effects on the landscape/ townscape 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 - with particular focus on public views and public visual amenity.

Methodology for Assessment of Townscape Effects

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

Townscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the townscape is a function of its land use, patterns and scale, visual enclosure and the distribution of visual receptors, and the value placed on the townscape. 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[1] (Table 12.1).

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the townscape exhibits very strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics that combine to give an experience of unity, richness and harmony. The townscape 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 principal management objective for the area is protection of the existing character from change.
High	Areas where the townscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics. The 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 principal management objective for the area is conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the townscape 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 townscape character is such that there is some capacity for change. These areas may be recognised in policy at local or county level and the principal management objective may be to consolidate townscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change.
Low	Areas where the townscape 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 townscapes are generally unrecognised in policy and the principal management objective may be to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration or enhancement.
Negligible	Areas where the townscape 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 townscapes include derelict industrial lands, as well as sites or areas that are designated for a particular type of development. The principal management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the townscape through development, repair or restoration.

[1] The classifications used in this assessment, as defined in Tables 12.1 (categories of townscape sensitivity), 12.2 (categories of townscape change), 12.4 (categories of viewpoint sensitivity) and 12.5 (categories of 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 to arrive at conclusions as to the significance of impacts (see EPA Draft Guidelines Figure 3.5 and GLVIA Box 3.1, Paragraph 3.26 and Figure 3.5), but neither guidance document specifies or describes such classifications.

The GLVIA specifically avoids being prescriptive in this 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 classifications/conclusions (i.e. sensitivity and magnitude) should be explained in the EIAR, but the guidelines do not provide then explanations themselves. It is for this reason that the classifications in Tables 12.1, 12.2, 12.4 and 12.5 are provided in this chapter. These classifications/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 classifications/definitions have been used in many previous LVIA reports/chapters prepared by the author and accepted by the planning authorities.

Table 12-1 Categories of Townscape Sensitivity

Magnitude of Townscape Change

Magnitude of change is a factor of the scale, extent and degree of change imposed on the townscape by a development, with reference to its key elements, features, characteristics and any affected surrounding character areas (collectively known as 'townscape receptors'). Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change (Table 12.2 – please refer to footnote number 1 above regarding the definitions used in this assessment).

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

Table 12-2 Categories of Townscape Change

Significance of Effects

To classify the significance of effects the magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the townscape using the guide in Table 12.3 below. This matrix is derived from the guidance provided in Figure 3.5 (p.53) of the EPA Draft *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, 2017. The matrix is only a guide. 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.

		Sensitivity of the Townscape/View				
		Very High	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
Magnitu de of	**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

Table 12-3 Guide to Classification of Significance of Townscape and Visual Effects

Methodology for Assessment of Visual Effects

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

Sensitivity of the Viewpoint/Visual Receptor

Viewpoint sensitivity (see categories in Table 12.4 - please refer to the footnote number 1 above regarding the definitions used in this assessment) 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).

Sensitivity	**Description**
Very High	Iconic viewpoints (views towards or from a landscape 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 principal management objective for the view is its protection from change.
High	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 landscape). The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity to accommodate change may or may not be low. The principal management objective for the view is its protection from change that reduces visual amenity.

Medium	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 principal management objective is to facilitate change to the composition that does not detract from visual amenity, or which enhances it.
Low	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 principal management objective is to facilitate change that does not detract from visual amenity or enhances it.
Negligible	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 principal management objective is to facilitate change that repairs, restores or enhances visual amenity.

Table 12-4 Categories of Viewpoint Sensitivity

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).

Five categories are used to classify magnitude of visual change to a view (Table 12.5 - please refer to footnote number 1 above regarding the definitions used in this assessment):

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	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.
High	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.
Medium	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.
Low	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.
Negligible	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.

Table 12-5 Categories of Magnitude of Visual Change

Significance of Visual Effects

As for townscape 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 guide in Table 14.3 above.

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 therefore 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.

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

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 is 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.

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.

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.

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.

Presentation and Viewing

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

12.3 The Existing Receiving Environment (Baseline)

Evolution of the Townscape

The site's receiving environment has undergone several dramatic changes in modern history, resulting in a townscape of mixed character, with a blend of historic elements, 20th century suburbia, late 20th and 21st century urban development, and a strong influence of infrastructure.

19th Century

The Ordnance Survey 6 inch map (Figure 12.1), surveyed between 1837 and 1842, shows the area of Tipperstown to have been rural in character, comprised of mostly large fields, with few trees, or

dwellings or other structures in the landscape. A single road (now Brewery Road) ran north to south through the area. To the north the concentration of development increased towards Booterstown on the Dublin Bay coastline. To the south lay Leopardstown demesne, comprised of extensive parklands and fields, several houses and formal gardens, enclosed by a framework of woodland.

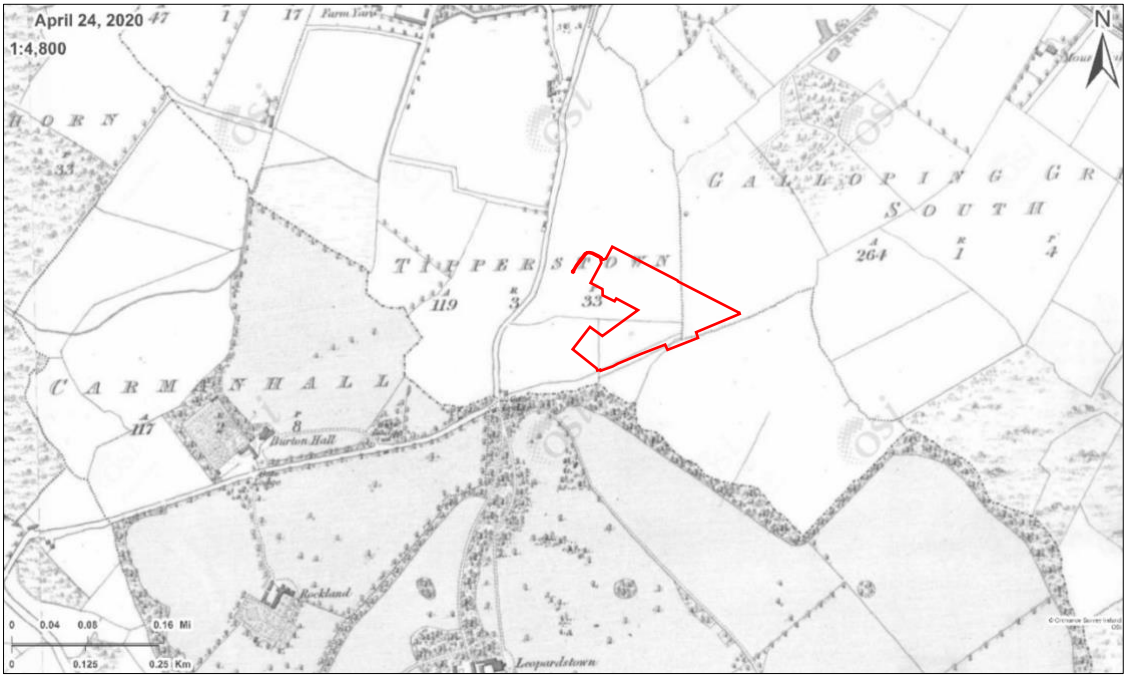

Figure 12-1 OS 6 inch map, mid 19th century

The 25 inch map (Figure 12.2), surveyed between 1888 and 1913, shows several important changes in the area. Most transformative was the Dublin & South Eastern Railway, with stations at Stillorgan adjacent to Tipperstown, and Foxrock & Leopardstown at the newly developed Leopardstown Racecourse. The alignment of the railway line has shaped the townscape ever since; to this day it remains a strong edge in the urban structure, between the evolving Sandyford and Leopardstown urban district south of the line, and a suburban landscape to the north.

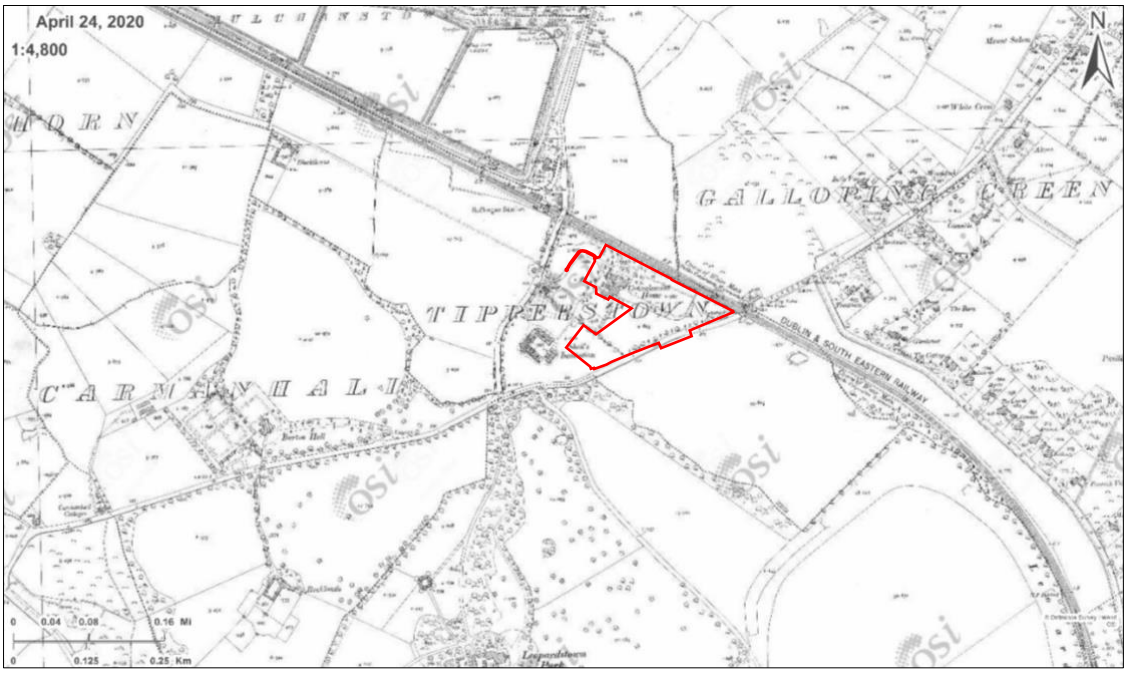

Figure 12-2 OS 6 inch map, mid 19th century

Another large piece of infrastructure was the Stillorgan Reservoirs, serving the rapidly developing southern suburbs of the city. Early suburban development can be seen in the form of rows of houses along the expanding road network.

One of the new roads was Leopardstown Road, which, along with Brewery Road and the railway line, enclosed a triangular parcel of land at Tipperstown. Within this parcel two developments had taken place. One was 'Sheil's Institution', comprised of 24 Almshouses arranged around a square. The other was the 'Stillorgan Convalescent Home', set in parkland grounds to the north of Shiel's Institution, alongside the railway line. Sheil's Institution (now known as Arkle Square) and the Convalescent Home (now St Joseph's) are protected structures, and Arkle Square is additionally protected by Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designation. Some of the trees associated with the Convalescent Home are subject to tree preservation orders, and some of the trees around Arkle Square are included in the ACA for their protection.

20th Century

Over the course of the 20th century the area became fully urbanised, although at a low density and with a zonal land use arrangement typical of the time. The 1995 Ordnance Survey aerial photograph (Figure 12.3) shows the two main changes to the area, namely the development of extensive residential estates (visible to the north, east and west of Tipperstown) and the Sandyford industrial Estate. Also evident is the strong presence of road infrastructure, to cater for the large volume of traffic generated by the land use pattern (note the scale and the severing effect of the Leopardstown roundabout to the south west of the site).

On the triangle of land at Tipperstown, infill development had taken place around Arkle Square and St Joseph's. This included a row of houses along Leopardstown Road, an estate ('Silver Pines') to the west of St Joseph's, a cluster of new institutional buildings to the south of St Joseph's (the Anne Sullivan Centre), and terraces of houses surrounding Arkle Square ('The Chase', 'Ballymoss Parade', 'Sir Ivor Mall'). The Sunshine House Children's Hospice (now the Laura Lynn Foundation) had been developed across Leopardstown Road.

Figure 12-3 OS 1995 aerial photograph

21st Century

A further evolution of the townscape took place around the turn of the century with (a) the development of the South County Business Park and Central Park fronting Leopardstown Road to the south of Tipperstown, and (b) the start of the redevelopment of Sandyford into a mixed use urban

district (see Figure 12.4 overleaf). The shift in townscape character was reinforced by the arrival of the Luas Green Line, with stops at Sandyford and Central Park (both approximately 500m from the site).

Figure 12-4 2020 Aerial Photograph Of The Receiving Environment

Central Park, with frontage to both Leopardstown Road and the Luas line, is a fine grained, high density, mixed use development with buildings of up to 17 storeys. The South County Business Park has a more traditional campus character, the large office buildings separated by surface car parks and belts of woodland planting. The Sandyford area, particularly along the Stillorgan Reservoir frontage, is in the process of transforming into a high density, mixed use neighbourhood with buildings in excess of 15 storeys.

This latest phase of change has introduced significant new elements to the townscape, including buildings of distinctly urban typology, scale and architecture, and other contemporary features such as the Luas bridge at the Leopardstown junction. The junction itself has been reconfigured, from a roundabout reflecting its 20th century function (as a gateway to an industrial park and suburban area) to an urban junction with improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The junction development also included a new public park and water feature/attenuation pond, located diagonally across Leopardstown Road from the site.

The evolution of the townscape described above has resulted in a clearly defined district of urban character – including the areas of Sandyford, Blackthorn, Carmanhall and Leopardstown - within the wider suburban environment (see Figure 12.5). The railway line forms its northern edge, and the M50 the southern boundary. Leopardstown Road is a key transport route through the area, and the Leopardstown junction an important node in the urban structure. The area is of mixed character and is in a state of transition/modernisation. There are wide variations in all key aspects of townscape character, including the land use mix, urban grain, plot and building typologies, scale and architecture. Transport infrastructure remains prominent (this is visible on the ground as well as seen from above). There are substantial areas of open space around the area.

The site location within this evolving urban district, its frontage to both Leopardstown Road and the greenway along the former railway line, and its proximity to Leopardstown junction, are important factors in this landscape and visual impact assessment.

Figure 12-5 Site location in the context of the Sandyford/Leopardstown urban district

Existing Permission for Development on Site

In 2017 planning permission was granted (D17A/ 0337) for development on a portion of the subject site, including the St Joseph's lands (see Figure 12-6). This was a further step in the transition of the townscape, recognising and reinforcing the position of Tipperstown in the emerging urban district. The permitted development comprises:

- the refurbishment and re-use of St Joseph's House for apartments, a creche and residents' clubhouse;
- three blocks of apartments of up to five storeys, arranged to the south east of St Joseph's;
- a terrace of 5 no. houses;
- various open spaces between the buildings, and the retention of many of the existing trees that characterise the site, mostly inside the north east and north west boundaries and adjacent to St Joseph's.

Figure 12-6 Layout of the permitted development (D17A/0337) on a portion of the subject site

The permitted development is – except along its relatively short road frontage – set back from Leopardstown Road, and the scale of the buildings was determined to a large extent by the requirement to protect the amenities of the neighbouring road-front houses (see Figure 12.6). Therefore, the permitted development is somewhat withdrawn from Leopardstown Road and would have limited visual presence (Figure 12.7), except at the site entrance (Figure 12.8).

Figure 12-7 Photomontage of permitted development from Leopardstown Road to the south west

Figure 12-8 Photomontage of the permitted development from the site entrance on Leopardstown Road

The addition to the site of the seven neighbouring properties along Leopardstown Road (all detached houses on large plots) allows not only for the expansion of the development. It also requires a change in the response of the development to its townscape context. Along its long south east boundary (c. 270m) the development must now address Leopardstown Road, a wide urban thoroughfare approaching a major junction/node in the urban structure.

However, while the removal of the road-front houses would remove certain sensitivities from the context, the expansion of the site onto these properties also brings the development closer to other sensitivities, notably the Arkle Square ACA and surrounding neighbourhood (The Chase, Ballymoss Parade, Sir Ivor Mall – see 2.3.2 below).

Immediate Site Environs

The three townscape areas to which the site relates most closely are (1) the Leopardstown Road corridor, (2) the triangle of land at Tipperstown - between Leopardstown Road, Brewery Road and the former railway line (now a pedestrian and cycle route), and (3) the residential estate to the north, including Leopardstown Lawn, Drive and Park.

These are the areas with which the site has a direct interface, and the area's most likely to experience landscape/townscape and visual effects as a result of the proposed development.

Leopardstown Road

Leopardstown Road is a key thoroughfare, and the Leopardstown junction a key node in the urban structure of Sandyford and Leopardstown. Developments such as Central Park and One South County have sought to address the road and junction through building line, scale and design - so that the built form responds to and complements the infrastructure. However, the road remains a dominant element in the townscape and there are related weaknesses in townscape character.

The site has some 270m frontage to Leopardstown Road. Along this stretch, approaching the junction, the road is three to four lanes wide with dedicated cycle lanes and wide footpaths on both sides (see Photos 12.1-2). The road has the design and character of a higher order urban thoroughfare, but the adjacent development does not reflect this; it is suburban in character (although the cluster of large, contemporary buildings around the junction provides some legibility). It is notable that the houses on the subject site (proposed to be demolished) are all defended from the busy road by a high stone wall and trees in their front gardens (a number of trees were removed along the site frontage when the road was widened in the late 1990s).

Figure 12-9 - A view along Leopardstown Road from a position across the road from the site. The lands to the right of the road behind the wall are part of the site. This photo illustrates (a) the dominance of the road in the townscape and (b) the site's proximity to the developing urban node around Leopardstown junction

Figure 12-10 - A view from further to the south west, showing the site frontage to Leopardstown Road and the extent to which the existing houses are set back from the road. There is a related absence of urban character approaching a key node in the townscape

Directly across the road from the site is the Laura Lynn children's hospice and foundation headquarters. To either side of this are areas of open space. Like the houses across the road (on the site), Laura Lynn is enclosed from the road by a high stone wall. Inside the wall is an internal access road and parking area behind which the low buildings are located, except for one building in the north east corner which is separated from the road boundary by only a narrow garden area. Most of the outdoor play areas are located to the rear of the complex, away from the road and the site.

While sensitive to intrusion or other disturbance, Laura Lynn is not highly susceptible to townscape and visual change on the site, being separated from the site by the wide Leopardstown Road corridor and the hospice parking area, and also due to the hospice being generally introverted in its layout.

Figure 12-11 A view north east along Leopardstown Road alongside the site, showing the extent to which the Laura Lynn facilities retreat from the road boundary

In summary:

- The urban structure and townscape character would benefit from a strengthening of built form along Leopardstown Road (approaching/departing and surrounding the Leopardstown junction) – for a better balance between built form and infrastructure, more appropriate to an urban street.
- Currently, for the 270m stretch as it passes the site there is a deliberate disconnection between the road and the properties fronting the road (the site). This quality of interface weakens the townscape character, allowing the road infrastructure to dominate.
- There are no highly susceptible visual receptors to the south east and south of the site across Leopardstown Road. In an established urban area this can be considered an opportunity for change.

Tipperstown

Within the wider context described in 12.3.1 above, the triangle of land at Tipperstown - between Leopardstown Road, Brewery Road and the former railway line (now a pedestrian and cycle route) - can be identified as a character area of its own - distinct from (a) the emerging mixed use high density urban district to the south and west of Leopardstown junction, and (b) the uniform suburban townscape of 20th century estates to the north.

For a small area, it too (like the wider area) has a wide diversity of elements (in terms of building typology and architecture) and a degree of disconnectedness internally. There is limited relationship between Arkle Square, St Josephs, Silver Pines, the Anne Sullivan Centre and the houses fronting Leopardstown Road; each is enclosed from the others, physically and visually. The one element that

binds them is the framework of mature trees that surrounds and permeates the area (see Figure 12.4 above).

The Tipperstown triangle projects into the core of the evolving urban district, placing it strategically in the urban structure and the public transport network. This was recognised in the granting of permission for Berwick Pines Phase 1. The permission also indicates recognition of the area's capacity to accommodate change.

The area has three main elements of cultural or natural heritage value, which are sensitive to change. These are:

- **St Joseph's** House (formerly the 'Stillorgan Convalescent Home' – see Photo 12.4 below). The protected structure forms part of the subject site and its refurbishment is a key element of the development proposal and the existing permission. The permission allows for a change of use of the building and substantial change in its former grounds, with the introduction of three apartment blocks and a terrace of houses.
- **Sheil's Almshouses/Arkle Square ACA** (Photo 12.5). The following excerpts are from the ACA document:

"Arkle Square forms an architectural ensemble which is quite distinct from its urban surroundings. The core characteristics which determine the significance of the complex as a heritage site are architectural, historical, artistic, cultural, social and technical interest… To adequately protect this ensemble, their individual curtilages and the surrounding green space and trees must also be included…

"The present approach to the ACA is in roughly the same location as the historical connection. Arkle Square bears no other direct relationship to the surrounding context and apart from the view to the tower from the entrance it is not visible from the neighbouring roads. The trees surrounding Arkle Square are of high quality and have a strong visual presence when seen from the surrounding areas."

- **The mature trees.** The woodland belt around the northern and western edges of Tipperstown (both areas identified for protection and preservation on the Development Plan map), and the trees to the west and south of Arkle Square (included in the ACA for their protection) are of particular value.

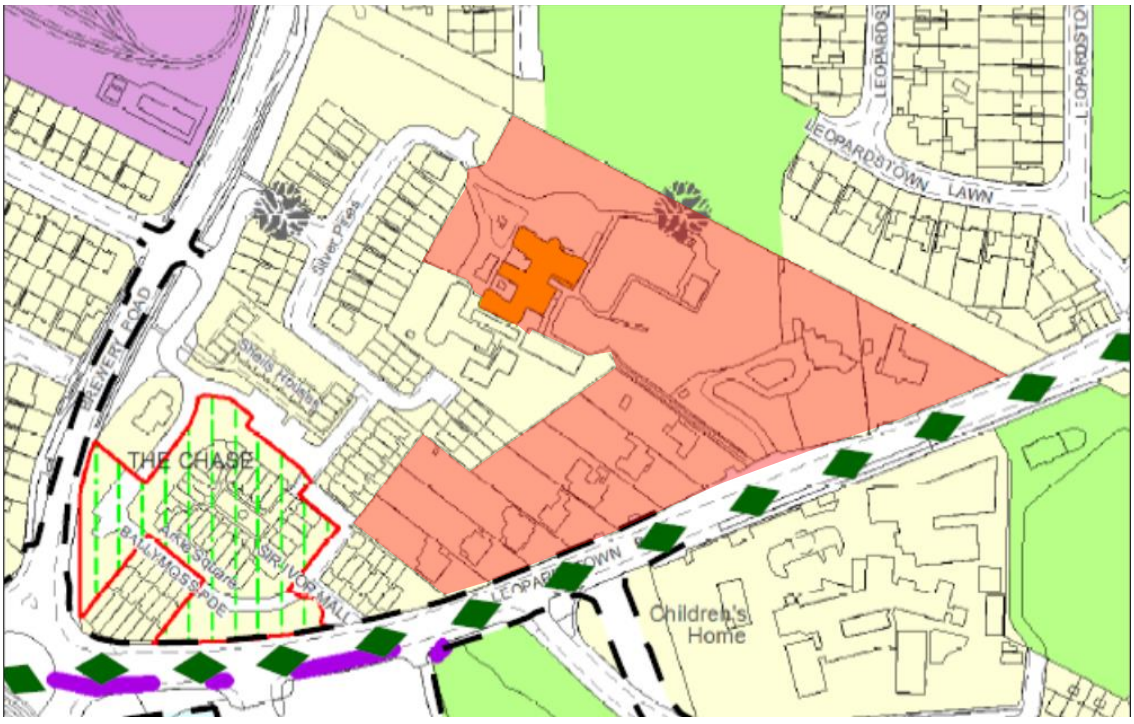

Figure 12-12 Excerpt of Development Plan map (site shaded red, Arkle Square ACA outlined red)

Figure 12-13 A view of St Joseph's from the road entrance, with the entrance to the Anne Sullivan Centre to the right

Figure 12-14 A view of Sheils's Alms-houses (one of the protected views identified in the Arkle Square ACA)

In addition to the above elements of heritage value, there are several other areas/groups of visual receptors which are sensitive to change on the site. These are:

- **Silver Pines**. This is a modern estate on part of the former grounds of St Joseph's (Photo 12.6). A number of the houses back onto the site boundary and have views towards the site from their rear windows and gardens. The other houses would be less directly affected; residents would experience varying degrees of change in views from their properties and the street.
- **Anne Sullivan Centre for people who are deafblind**. The centre is comprised of a cluster of low buildings used for residential care, education and administration. It is located adjacent to St Joseph's and accessed through the subject site. The site wraps around the northern and eastern boundary of the Centre.
- **Arkle Square** (residential neighbourhood as opposed to the conservation area). The square is located to the south west of the site. The houses, which have been modernised, are arranged around a square. This central open space is visually enclosed by the surrounding buildings. The front doors are however in the outer facades and there are

views towards the site from the north east and south east ranges of the square, and from the roads giving access to the houses.

- **The Chase/Ballymoss Parade/Sir Ivor Terrace**. There are several modern terraces of houses surrounding Arkle Square. Two of the terraces back onto the site and would have direct views into the site from their rear windows and gardens. The other houses would be less directly affected but residents would experience varying degrees of change in views from their properties and the street.

Figure 12-15 A view towards the site from Silver Pines, with the site's distinctive black pines rising to the rear of the Silver Pines houses

Estate to the North

To the north of Tipperstown beyond a greenway along the former railway line, is a large estate of two storey, semi-detached houses. The row of houses along Leopardstown Lawn present their rear facades toward the site, with only the greenway between their rear property boundaries and the site. A large green space also abuts the site across the greenway, and the houses of Leopardstown Park and Leopardstown Drive are arranged around this space. The residents of the estate have varying degrees of visual exposure to the site, from their houses, gardens, streets and open space.

The potentially most affected properties are along Leopardstown Lawn (Photo 12.7) where the houses present their rear facades towards the site, separated from it by the greenway.

Figure 12-16 A view towards the site across Leopardstown Lawn

Relevant Policy – County Level

The statutory plan for the site and environs is the *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022.* The following policy from the development plan is most relevant to this assessment.

Zoning

The site is zoned Objective A - *"To protect and-or improve residential amenity".*

Urban Design

Development Plan Section 1.2.5.1 (p.16): *"While a key strand of the overall Settlement Strategy focuses on the continued promotion of sustainable development through positively encouraging consolidation and densification of the existing urban/ suburban built form – and thereby maximizing efficiencies from already established physical and social infrastructure - the development of the new, higher density strategic growth nodes in the south and south-east of the County will be dependent on the concurrent delivery of adequate water services and upgraded /planned public transport infrastructure".* (emphasis added)

Development Plan Policy UD1: Urban Design Principles (p.166): *"It is Council policy to ensure that all development is of high quality design that assists in promoting a 'sense of place'. The Council will promote the guidance principles set out in the 'Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide' (2009)… and will seek to ensure that development proposals are cognisant of the need for proper consideration of context, connectivity, inclusivity, variety, efficiency, distinctiveness, layout, public realm, adaptability, privacy and amenity, parking, wayfinding and detailed design".*

"Permeability – A successful place provides the optimum amount of choice on how to make a journey and takes into account all forms of movement (pedestrian, cycle, public transport, car). Where possible, connections should emphasise and promote sustainable forms of transport over individual car use…

"Vitality - Places are more active when windows and doors are connected to the street. Inactive edges of blank walls, badly positioned entrances, underpasses and places lacking obvious natural or passive surveillance often generate concerns in relation to personal security and safety…

"Legibility - A successful and 'legible' development is a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand. Five elements that help create this kind of place, have been identified:

- *Paths – the routes of movement such as laneways, streets and cycle routes.*

- *Nodes – focal places such as squares and plazas which connect the paths and roads.*
- *Landmarks – buildings or places that provide local character and act as reference points.*
- *Districts – areas with distinct or recognisable characteristics such as business districts and retail cores.*
- *Edges – linear elements not used as routes like busy arterial roads, walls of buildings and railway lines."*

Architecture

Development Plan Section 8.2.3.1: Quality Residential Design (p.172): "*The objective of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council is to achieve high standards of design and layout to create and foster high quality, secure and attractive areas for living. The following criteria will be taken into account when assessing applications:*

- *Land use zoning and specific objectives contained in this Plan and any Strategic development Zone/Local Area Plan/Urban Framework Plan/ non-statutory planning guidance adopted by the Council.*
- *Density - Higher densities should be provided in appropriate locations. Site configuration, open space requirements and the characteristics of the area will have an impact on the density levels achievable.*
- *Quality of the proposed layout and elevations, the quality of the residential environment will be of primary significance in determining the acceptability of planning applications. Layouts, elevations, and plan form must be designed to emphasise a 'sense of place' and community, utilising existing site features, tree coverage and an appropriate landscape structure.*
- *Levels of privacy and amenity, the relationship of buildings to one another, including consideration of overlooking, sunlight/daylight standards and the appropriate use of screening devices.*
- *Quality of linkage and permeability – to adjacent neighbourhoods and facilities and the nature of the public realm/streets and spaces.*
- *Accessibility and traffic safety - proximity to centres and to public transport corridors, existing and proposed.*
- *Quantitative standards - set out in this Chapter and/or referenced in Government guidelines.*
- *Safety and positive edges to the public realm - opportunities for crime should be minimised by ensuring that public open spaces are passively overlooked by housing and appropriate boundary treatments applied. A safety audit may be required.*
- *Quality of proposed public, private and communal open spaces and recreational facilities…"*

Residential Density and Building Height

Development Plan Section 8.2.3.2 (ii) Residential Density (p.172): "*As a general principle, and on the grounds of sustainability, the objective is to optimise the density of development in response to type of site, location and accessibility to public transport. However, the overriding concern should be the quality of the proposed residential environment to be created and higher densities will only be acceptable if the criteria which contribute to this environment are satisfied."*

The following is taken from Appendix 9 of the current DLRCC Development Plan, the Building Height Strategy:

Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 2.2.1: Sustainability and Density (p.14): "*The sustainability approach seeks to combine high-density development juxtaposed to good social facilities to minimise the need for travel, and with high quality public transport provision to limit the use of the private car. With the need to promote the principle of sustainable growth, high density, mixed-use development*

requires to be facilitated and encouraged in town centres and around major transport interchanges and nodes."

Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 4.8 (p.28): *"Apartment or town-house type developments or commercial developments in the established commercial core of these areas to a maximum of 3-4 storeys may be permitted in appropriate locations - for example on prominent corner sites, on large redevelopment sites or adjacent to key public transport nodes - providing they have no detrimental effect on existing character and residential amenity...*

"This maximum height (3-4 storeys) for certain developments clearly cannot apply in every circumstance. There will be situations where a minor modification up or down in height could be considered. The factors that may allow for this are known as 'Upward or Downward Modifier".

Upward Modifiers (Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 4.8.1, p.28):

a) The development would create urban design benefits, for example:

- *It would enclose main public or green spaces to their benefit,*
- *It would enclose a main street or mark a major cross-roads and/or transport interchange to the benefit of the legibility, appearance or character of the area,*
- *It would beneficially frame an important view.*

b) The development would provide major planning gain, such as:

- *Significant improvements to the public realm,*
- *The provision or significant enhancement of a public transport interchange,*
- *The provision of new or improved transport infrastructure.*

c) The development would have civic, social or cultural importance, for example:

- *It would provide new facilities or enhance existing facilities in such fields as culture, education, leisure or health,*
- *It would provide or enhance public space or social facilities especially in areas where such facilities are deficient,*
- *It would enable important cultural, historic or archaeological sites, landscape and natural features or trees to be retained and enhanced.*

d) The built environment or topography would permit higher development without damaging the appearance or character of the area, for example:

- *In an area where the location or scale of existing buildings would allow the recommended height to be exceeded with little or no demonstrable impact on its surroundings,*
- *In a dip or hollow, behind a rise, or near a large tree screen, where the impact of a higher building would have little or no additional impact on its surroundings.*

e) "A development would contribute to the promotion of higher densities in areas with exceptional public transport accessibility, whilst retaining and enhancing high quality residential environments. (Areas with exceptional public transport accessibility are defined as areas within a 500m walk-band on either side of the Luas corridor, a 500m walk-band around the DART stations, a 500m walk-band on either side of the N11 and 100m walk-band on either side of a QBC). Densities should be higher adjacent to these corridors and nodes and grade down towards neighbouring areas so that they are lower in close proximity to residential areas".

f) "The size of a site, e.g. 0.5 ha or more, could set its own context for development and may have potential for greater building height away from boundaries with existing residential development".

"The overall positive benefits of a development proposal would need to be of such a significance as to clearly demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that additional height is justified. It will be necessary, therefore, for a development proposal to meet more than one 'Upward Modifier' criteria."

Downward Modifiers (Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 4.8.2, p.29):

Downward Modifiers may apply where a proposed development would adversely affect:

1. Residential living conditions through overlooking, overshadowing or excessive bulk and scale.

2. An Architectural Conservation Area (or candidate ACA) or the setting of a protected structure. It is Council policy to protect its outstanding architectural heritage through Architectural Conservation Areas. Key objectives are to enhance and protect architectural conservation areas, heritage sites, Protected Structures and their settings. New developments should respond to local character and protect and enhance the built heritage, and new buildings should not have an adverse effect in terms of scale, height, massing, alignment and materials…"

3. Strategic protected views and prospects. A key objective is to protect important views identified in the Development Plan and to prevent inappropriate development from harming their character. In addition there are many local views and prospects - from the sea front, from the higher lands, along streets, which are locally important and should not be adversely affected by development. New development should not adversely affect the skyline, or detract from key elements within the view whether in foreground, middle ground or background. Well-designed and located buildings can sometimes enhance views.

4. A planning or social objective, such as the need to provide particular types of housing, employment or social facility in an area.

5. An area of particular character. These include:

(i) Coastal Fringe

(ii) Mountain Foothills

Architectural Conservation Areas

Development Plan Policy AR12 (p.151):

i. *"Protect the character and special interest of an area which has been designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).*
ii. *Ensure that all development proposals within an ACA be appropriate to the character of the area having regard to the Character Appraisals for each area.*
iii. *Seek a high quality, sensitive design for any new development(s) that are complimentary and/ or sympathetic to their context and scale, whilst simultaneously encouraging contemporary design.*
iv. *Ensure street furniture is kept to a minimum, is of good design and any redundant street furniture removed.*
v. *Seek the retention of all features that contribute to the character of an ACA including boundary walls, railings, soft landscaping, traditional paving and street furniture.*

"While the purpose of ACA designation is to protect and enhance the special character of an area, it should not be viewed as a means of preventing new development but rather to help guide and manage change to ensure developments are sympathetic to the special character of the ACA."

Tall Buildings and Conservation Areas are also addressed in Appendix 9, the Building Height Strategy:

Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 2.3.1: Tall Buildings and Conservation Areas (p.13): *"A high level of protection should be given to the most valued historic townscapes and landscapes. Therefore, new developments in conservation areas, for example, have to respond to the local character and protect and enhance the built and natural heritage. Due to their massing and height, tall buildings are likely to have a greater impact on listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and natural heritage areas than other buildings types. Tall buildings can affect the setting of listed buildings and views of historic skyline even some distance away. They can sometimes appear out of place disrupting the urban pattern,*

character, scale, roofscape and building line of historic quarters. In some historic towns and areas, the need to protect the historic environment may be of such importance that no tall buildings would be appropriate forms of new development".

Trees

Development Plan Section 8.2.8.6 Trees and Hedgerows (p.209): *"New developments shall be designed to incorporate, as far as practicable, the amenities offered by existing trees and hedgerow and new developments shall have regard to objectives to protect and preserve trees and woodlands as identified on the County Development Plan Maps."*

Views and Prospects

Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 4.8.2 Strategic protected views and prospects, p.29. *"A key objective is to protect important views identified in the Development Plan and to prevent inappropriate development from harming their character. In addition, there are many local views and prospects - from the sea front, from the higher lands, along streets, which are locally important and should not be adversely affected by development. New development should not adversely affect the skyline, or detract from key elements within the view whether in foreground, middle ground or background. Well-designed and located buildings can sometimes enhance views."*

Relevant Policy – National Level

National Planning Framework

Compact growth is one of the main principles and intended outcomes of the NPF. This encourages higher density - and therefore taller - development in urban areas where supporting infrastructure and services are available.

National Policy Objective 11 of the NPF (p.65) states: *"In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities… subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth."*

Regarding urban infill/brownfield development the NPF states (p.65): *"The National Planning Framework targets a significant proportion of future urban development on infill/brownfield development sites within the built footprint of existing urban areas…"*

Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities

The Guidelines state (in Section 1.9, p.2): *"Reflecting the National Planning Framework strategic outcomes in relation to compact urban growth, the Government considers that there is significant scope to accommodate anticipated population growth and development needs, whether for housing, employment or other purposes, by building up and consolidating the development of our existing urban areas… Therefore, these guidelines require that the scope to consider general building heights of at least three to four storeys, coupled with appropriate density, in locations outside what would be defined as city and town centre areas, and which would include suburban areas, must be supported in principle at development plan and development management levels…*

Height Guidelines Section 1.20 (p.5): *"A key objective of the NPF is therefore to see that greatly increased levels of residential development in our urban centres and significant increases in the building heights and overall density of development is not only facilitated but actively sought out and brought forward by our planning processes and particularly so at local authority and An Bord Pleanála levels."* (emphasis added)

In Section 3.2 of the Guidelines (p.13), 'development management criteria' are set out to guide the evaluation of development proposals for buildings taller than the prevailing heights in the area:

"In the event of making a planning application, the applicant shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority/ An Bord Pleanála, that the proposed development satisfies the following criteria:

At the scale of the relevant city/town:

- *"The site is well served by public transport with high capacity, frequent service and good links to other modes of public transport.*
- *Development proposals incorporating increased building height, including proposals within architecturally sensitive areas, should successfully integrate into/ enhance the character and public realm of the area, having regard to topography, its cultural context, setting of key landmarks, protection of key views. Such development proposals shall undertake a landscape and visual assessment, by a suitably qualified practitioner such as a chartered landscape architect.*
- *On larger urban redevelopment sites, proposed developments should make a positive contribution to place-making, incorporating new streets and public spaces, using massing and height to achieve the required densities but with sufficient variety in scale and form to respond to the scale of adjoining developments and create visual interest in the streetscape."* (emphasis added)

At the scale of district/neighbourhood/street:

- *"The proposal responds to its overall natural and built environment and makes a positive contribution to the urban neighbourhood and streetscape.*
- *The proposal is not monolithic and avoids long, uninterrupted walls of building in the form of slab blocks with materials / building fabric well considered.*
- *The proposal enhances the urban design context for public spaces and key thoroughfares and inland waterway/ marine frontage, thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure...*
- *The proposal makes a positive contribution to the improvement of legibility through the site or wider urban area within which the development is situated and integrates in a cohesive manner.*
- *The proposal positively contributes to the mix of uses and/ or building/ dwelling typologies available in the neighbourhood."* (emphasis added)

At the *scale* of the site/building:

- *"The form, massing and height of proposed developments should be carefully modulated so as to maximise access to natural daylight, ventilation and views and minimise overshadowing and loss of light.*
- *Appropriate and reasonable regard should be taken of quantitative performance approaches to daylight provision outlined in guides like the Building Research Establishment's 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight' (2nd edition) or BS 8206-2: 2008 – 'Lighting for Buildings – Part 2: Code of Practice for Daylighting'.*
- *Where a proposal may not be able to fully meet all the requirements of the daylight provisions above, this must be clearly identified and a rationale for any alternative, compensatory design solutions must be set out, in respect of which the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála should apply their discretion, having regard to local factors including specific site constraints and the balancing of that assessment against the desirability of achieving wider planning objectives. Such objectives might include securing comprehensive urban regeneration and or an effective urban design and streetscape solution."*

Specific Assessments:

- *"To support proposals at some or all of these scales, specific assessments may be required and these may include:*
- *Specific impact assessment of the micro-climatic effects such as downdraft. Such assessments shall include measures to avoid/ mitigate such micro-climatic effects and, where appropriate,*

shall include an assessment of the cumulative micro-climatic effects where taller buildings are clustered.

- *In development locations in proximity to sensitive bird and / or bat areas, proposed developments need to consider the potential interaction of the building location, building materials and artificial lighting to impact flight lines and / or collision.*
- *An assessment that the proposal allows for the retention of important telecommunication channels, such as microwave links.*
- *An assessment that the proposal maintains safe air navigation.*
- *An urban design statement including, as appropriate, impact on the historic built environment.*
- *Relevant environmental assessment requirements, including SEA, EIA, AA and Ecological Impact Assessment, as appropriate."*

It is noteworthy that the Height Guidelines allow for "significant increases in building height and overall development density" even within architecturally sensitive areas and suburban areas, subject to the development responding appropriately to its context. The response to these areas may include avoidance of long, uninterrupted walls of building, varied form/height and considered use of materials to achieve visual interest.

12.4 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

The development will provide for:

- The demolition of 10 no. properties and associated outbuildings at 'Madona House' (single storey), 'Woodleigh' (2 storeys), 'Cloonagh' (2 storeys), 'Souk El Raab (2 storeys), 'Welbrook' (2 storeys), 'Calador' (2 storeys), 'Alhambra' (2 storeys), 'Dalwhinnie' (2 storeys), 'Annaghkeen' (2 storeys) and 'The Crossing' (single storey) (combined demolition approx. 2,291.3 sq m GFA).
- The refurbishment, separation and material change of use of Saint Joseph's House (a Protected Structure) from residential care facility to residential use
- 463 residential (apartment) units, (in the form of 6 no. residential blocks (Blocks A-F) ranging from 2 to 10 storeys over basement as follows:
    - 85 no. studio apartments,
    - 117 no. 1 bed apartments,
    - 248 no. 2 bed apartments,
    - 13 no. 3 bed apartments
- Residential tenant amenity space of (approx. 636sq m), café (approx. 49sqm) and creche Facility (282 sq m)
- 259 no. Car Parking Spaces (232 no. at basement level and 27 no. at surface level)
- 968 no. Bicycle Parking Spaces (816 at basement level and 152 at ground level)
- 10 no. Motorcycle Spaces (all at basement level)
- Public Open Space
- Vehicular Access
- Basement Areas
- 3 no. ESB Sub Stations and 2 no. Switch Rooms
- All Associated Site Development Works

Proposed Layout, Massing and Height

The proposed layout builds on existing permission (Reg. Ref. D17A/ 0337) granted for part of the planning application site.

- **St Joseph's House** is retained in the north western part of the site, along with the surrounding trees;
- **Blocks A and B** are arranged to the south east of St Joseph's (in the same position as two buildings currently permitted), presenting their short elevations to the north east so that the built form inside the north east boundary is permeable. The two buildings are set back from the boundary so as to retain the belt of mature trees inside the boundary. Block A closest to St Joseph's is five storeys. Block B, a step removed from St Joseph's and closer to Leopardstown Road, is seven storeys, with a small volume of four storeys attached to the main body.
- **Blocks C, D and F** occupy the parts of the site that were not included in the previous permission (D17A/ 0337), i.e. the portion of the site with frontage to Leopardstown Road. The three buildings respond principally to this element of the townscape.
    - Blocks C and D are aligned parallel to the road, but are folded in plan form, to (a) create south facing, triangular green pockets in front of each building (in which a group of existing trees would be retained in front of Block D), and (b) to thereby provide relief in the built frontage to the road, avoiding excessively long buildings.
    - The buildings step in height at the folds, and the façade treatment and materials also differ either side of the folds for further visual interest in the frontage to Leopardstown Road.
    - Block C in the north east corner of the site steps up from five to seven storeys, towards Leopardstown, i.e. it is lower at the outer edge of the development, which would also be the new outer edge of the urban district, and taller towards the urban core.
    - Block D, central to the site's road frontage and closer to the urban core, steps up from five to eight storeys. Above the fold in this building, in a central position within the site, there is an accent element of 10 storeys.

Figure 12.17 A & B Proposed Site Layout And Building Heights

- **Block F** is in the south west corner of the site. In an earlier design iteration (for the SHD Stage 2 submission) a building of 3-8 no. storeys was proposed. It was identified in the preliminary TVIA report that this building would have a negative visual impact on the neighbouring houses along Sir Ivor Mall which back onto the site boundary (see Figure 12.11). This issue was also raised in the ABP Opinion. For the SHD application the proposed Block F has been reduced substantially in scale. An "L" shaped block of 3 storeys is proposed inside the boundary shared with Sir Ivor Mall and Minstrel Court (with a separation distance of 22m from the first floor windows of these houses). This is in keeping with the Building Height Guidelines which state that 'a minimum of 3-4 storeys' should be achieved even in suburban locations. Where the building fronts Leopardstown Road (and where it projects past the end of the Sir Ivor Mall Terrace) it steps up from 3 to 6 storeys, to form part of the composition of built form along the urban thoroughfare. Block F is thus intended to both protect the amenities of the neighbouring houses and address Leopardstown Road with a frontage of appropriately urban character.

Figure 12-18 Photomontage of previously proposed site interface with Sir Ivor Mall – now superseded, see Figure 12.19

Figure 12-19 Photomontage of proposed site interface with Sir Ivor Mall – showing the reduced scale of the proposed Block F

Proposed Façade Treatments

The predominant cladding material of the proposed buildings is light grey brick. This is used in the main volumes of all the buildings. Anthracite grey metal cladding would be used at the upper levels, and the balconies and window frames would be similarly coloured.

The lower volumes of Blocks C and D would be clad in Red Iron-oxide polished plaster panels, with white exoskeleton steel frames forming the balconies. These lower elements would contrast strongly with the larger, grey brick volumes (see Figure 12.20). This is intended to reduce the apparent scale/mass of each building and provide relief in the collective elevations.

The proposed facades are highly articulated, with the anthracite grey frames of the large windows standing out strongly against the light grey brick, and a combination of recessed and projecting balconies providing additional depth to the elevations.

Figure 12-20 CGI showing the proposed built form and façade treatment along Leopardstown Road

Proposed Landscape Design

With regard to potential townscape and visual impacts, the key aspects of the landscape proposals are as follows:

- A large proportion of the trees on the site would be retained including the majority of the Austrian pines surrounding St Joseph's House (A on Figure 12.21), most of the tree belt inside the north east boundary (B), the prominent copse of 11 no. trees in the north east corner of the site (C) and another small copse of 6 no. trees along the Leopardstown Road boundary (D).

Figure 12-21 Tree Impacts Plan- annotated (source: The Tree File, September 2021)

According to the Arboricultural Report prepared by the Tree File Ltd, of the 277 no. individually identified trees on the site, 136 no. (49%) would be removed. While this is a substantial number, Figure 12.21 shows that the 51% of the trees which would be retained include those which constitute the main landscape features, e.g. the trees surrounding St Joseph's House and the trees along the north eastern boundary. Many of the trees which would be removed are former garden trees of the houses fronting Leopardstown Road.

- The landscape surrounding St Joseph's House would be de-cluttered, with all informal planting adjacent to the building removed (along with several insensitive extensions to the building) and replaced with a restrained, formal landscape treatment to better complement and better reveal the protected structure.
- Along Leopardstown Road a 2.5m footpath is proposed and inside of this a wide green verge of mostly decorative shrub planting, with regularly spaced street trees in the verge. Privacy hedges would be planted around the terraces of the buildings providing private space for the ground floor apartments. At three points along the road frontage, pockets of green space are proposed (at the folds in Blocks C and D, and between Blocks D and F), one with a retained copse of mature trees. The landscape of the proposed Leopardstown Road frontage is thus entirely formal, to convey an urban character. However the breadth and layering of this landscape corridor would also provide a soft edge to the street and a buffer between the street and the apartments on the lower floors.
- Inside the north eastern and western boundaries, supplementary hedge, shrub and tree planting is proposed to complement the retained trees and provide additional visual screening, amenity and biodiversity.
- In total 188 no. trees are proposed to be planted on the site, resulting in (a) a net gain in the number of trees (with 136 no. proposed to be removed), and (b) a net gain in the condition of the site vegetation since a large proportion of the trees to be removed are Category C or U trees, i.e. trees in poor condition.

Figure 12-22 Proposed Landscape Masterplan

12.5 Potential Impact of the Proposed Development - Townscape

Construction Stage

The construction process would entail the following:

- Set up site perimeter hoarding;
- Set up site construction compound, internal transport routes;
- Demolition and site clearance;
- Excavation;
- 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 disturbed by construction activities and haulage, and the incremental growth of the buildings on site. In the earlier stages, until the buildings reach substantial height above ground, the effects would be largely limited to the immediate environs (adjoining properties and streets). As the buildings begin to grow above ground level the visual effects would become more widespread, with indirect effects on townscape character (change to the setting of existing areas).

The magnitude of change would range from high in the immediate environs to negligible or none further from the site. Therefore, the significance of the effects would also vary – although they would typically be negative during construction. Such temporary negative townscape and visual effects are unavoidable and not unusual in the urban context where change is continuous.

Operational Stage

Townscape Sensitivity

Informed by the analysis in Section 12.3 above, the sensitivity of the townscape of the receiving environment can be classified 'medium' (definition: *Areas where the landscape/ townscape 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/ townscape 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/ townscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change*).

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

- The site falls into the evolving urban district of Sandyford and Leopardstown, an area which is clearly distinct in character from the surrounding suburban townscape, with well-defined edges, i.e. the former railway line to the north (now part Luas line, part greenway), the M50 to the south, Leopardstown Racecourse to the east and Drummartin Link Road to the west (see Figure 12.5).
- The receiving environment is in a process of plan-led transformation, spurred by the road and public transport infrastructure serving the area. The 20th century zonal land use pattern of low density residential suburbs and industrial estates is being replaced by mixed use, mixed density development of urban character (in building typology, scale and architecture). However, in Tipperstown, low density estates remain the predominant housing typology.
- The County Development Plan states:
    - that a key strand of the settlement strategy is: "*continued promotion of sustainable development through positively encouraging consolidation and densification of the existing urban/suburban built form – and thereby maximizing efficiencies from already established physical and social infrastructure*", and
    - "*As a general principle, and on the grounds of sustainability, the objective is to optimise the density of development in response to type of site, location and accessibility to public transport*". This policy accords with the national policy of compact growth.

Being located close to a core (Leopardstown junction) of the evolving urban district, with frontage to a major thoroughfare and a greenway, within walking distance of two Luas stations and directly served by a quality bus route, and with direct access to existing pubic open space, the site is a prime candidate for densification of the suburban built form.

- The existing permission for mixed density development on a part of the subject site has initiated a change in character in Tipperstown, introducing higher density building typologies to the townscape. The addition of the seven neighbouring properties along Leopardstown Road allows not only for the expansion of the development. It also requires a change in the response of the development to its townscape context, particularly to Leopardstown Road.
- The site has 270m frontage to Leopardstown Road, a 3-4 lane urban thoroughfare where it passes the site. The character of the street would benefit from a strengthening of built form and enclosure as it approaches/departs the Leopardstown junction – for a better balance between built form and infrastructure, more appropriate to its status in the hierarchy of streets in the urban structure.

- Currently, where it passes the site there is a deliberate disconnection between the road and the roadside properties, with the houses defended from the road by high walls and vegetation (therefore hidden from the road). This quality of interface weakens the townscape character, allowing the road infrastructure to dominate.
- There are no highly susceptible visual receptors to the south east and south of the site across Leopardstown Road. In an established urban area this constitutes an opportunity for change.
- There are sensitive townscape receptors to the west and south west of the site, including the Arkle Square ACA, the surrounding modern residential streets (The Chase, Ballymoss Parade, Minstrel Square and Sir Ivor Mall), the Silver Pines estate and the Anne Sullivan Centre, in addition to St Joseph's itself. Despite their location close to the core of the evolving Sandyford and Leopardstown district, these areas feel somewhat removed from the surrounding urban area, and enjoy a high level of landscape and visual amenity deriving from the historic architecture and numerous mature trees.

Potential Magnitude of Townscape Change

The magnitude of townscape change which would result from the proposed development 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*).

Planning permission has been granted for residential development, up to five storeys, on part of the planning application site. The proposed development, which is on a larger site, occupying a larger portion of the Tipperstown area including the land along Leopardstown Road, includes buildings of up to 10 storeys. The development would respond to the expanded site's relationship with Leopardstown Road, establishing a strong built frontage to the road, changing its character. The expansion of the site to the south west, and the increase in building height, would also affect the character of - and views from - the residential neighbourhood to the south west (incorporating Arkle Square) and to a lesser extent the Leopardstown estate to the north of the greenway.

Significance of Potential Townscape Effects

Measuring the magnitude of change against the townscape sensitivity, the significance of the effects is predicted to be 'moderate' (definition: *An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends*), and the effects can be classified 'positive'.

National planning policy and the County Development Plan encourage compact growth and densification through infill development and increased building height. Implementation of the policy will inevitably result in changes to townscape character and the composition of views: Where an area is characterised by low density, low rise development, densification will unavoidably introduce new, taller buildings into views from both the public realm and private properties. The proposed development is a manifestation of this policy, and a considered response to the site context. While it would change the area's character, the change would be in keeping with the policy-driven transformation of the receiving environment and would be of appreciably high design and material quality. If significant negative visual effects on the adjacent residential neighbourhood (particularly the Arkle Square ACA) can be minimised – as they have been (refer to Section 12.6) - the townscape effects would be appropriate and positive.

The above assessment is supported by the proposed development's compliance with – or contribution to the realisation of – the following policies (note, these are the policies most relevant to this assessment of townscape and visual impacts):

Policy	Assessment
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022	
Quality Residential Design (Development Plan p.172): *"Quality of the proposed layout and elevations, the quality of the residential environment will be of primary significance in determining the acceptability of planning applications…* *"Layouts, elevations, and plan form must be designed to emphasise a 'sense of place' and community, utilising existing site features, tree coverage and an appropriate landscape structure."*	The proposed layout responds to the context, particularly to (a) St Joseph's House and its setting and (b) the opportunity provided by the 270m frontage to Leopardstown Road on the approach to the Leopardstown junction. The layout and landscape proposals would deliver a permeable, legible and attractive residential environment. The proposed elevations are of appreciably high design and material quality. The proposed development incorporates and makes features of (1) St Joseph's House and (2) the key groups of trees including (a) the Austrian pines that characterise the site, (b) two important stands of trees along Leopardstown Road, and (c) the trees inside the north east boundary along the greenway. These retained site features along with the strength of concept/ character of the buildings would generate a distinct sense of place (and maturity and quality) for the new neighbourhood.
Trees and Hedgerows (Development Plan p.209): *"New developments shall be designed to incorporate, as far as practicable, the amenities offered by existing trees and hedgerow and new developments shall have regard to objectives to protect and preserve trees and woodlands as identified on the County Development Plan Maps."*	A large proportion of the trees on the site would be retained including the majority of the Austrian pines surrounding St Joseph's House (see 'A' on Figure 12.21), most of the tree belt inside the northeast boundary ('B'), the prominent copse of 11 no. trees in the north east corner of the site ('C') and another small copse of 6 no. trees along the Leopardstown Road boundary ('D').
Development Plan Policy UD1: ***Urban Design Principles*** (p.166): *"Vitality - Places are more active when windows and doors are connected to the street. Inactive edges of blank walls, badly positioned entrances, underpasses and places lacking obvious natural or passive surveillance often generate concerns in relation to personal security and safety…"*	The site is currently characterised by high walls along the Leopardstown Road boundary (and low buildings hidden behind the walls and roadside trees). This deadens the street alongside the site. The proposed development would bring windows and doors to the street-front (although buffered by wide green verges, street trees and privacy hedges), generating an urban streetscape character and adding vitality to the streets on the approach to the Leopardstown junction.

Policy	Assessment
Development Plan Policy UD1: ***Urban Design Principles - continued*** (p.166): *"Legibility - A successful and 'legible' development is a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand. Five elements that help create this kind of place, have been identified:* *Paths – the routes of movement such as laneways, streets and cycle routes.* *Nodes – focal places such as squares and plazas which connect the paths and roads.* *Landmarks – buildings or places that provide local character and act as reference points.* *Districts – areas with distinct or recognisable characteristics such as business districts and retail cores.* *Edges – linear elements not used as routes like busy arterial roads, walls of buildings and railway lines."*	Internally the proposed development would be highly permeable, with ample paths between the buildings and open spaces. Additionally the site would connect to Leopardstown Road to the east, to the greenway and open space to the north, and to Silver Pines (and Brewery Road) to the west, making for an easily navigable environment. The strong built frontage to Leopardstown Road would create a new landmark, at a gateway to the Sandyford-Leopardstown-urban district (where the road crosses the former railway line, now the northern edge of the evolving district). The building line along the greenway would contribute to the strengthening of this edge.
Building Height - Upward Modifiers (Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 4.8.1, p.28 *a) The development would create urban design benefits, for example:* *It would enclose main public or green spaces to their benefit,* *It would enclose a main street or mark major cross-roads and/or transport interchange to the benefit of the legibility, appearance or character of the area,* *b) The development would provide major planning gain, such as:* *Significant improvements to the public realm,* *c) The development would have civic, social or cultural importance, for example:* *It would enable important cultural, historic or archaeological sites, landscape and natural features or trees to be retained and enhanced.* *d) The built environment or topography would permit higher development without damaging the appearance or character of the area, for example:* *In an area where the location or scale of existing buildings would allow the recommended height*	In addition to marking the northern edge of the Sandyford-Leopardstown district, the development would provide built definition/enclosure to Leopardstown Road (see photomontage for Viewpoints 1 and 2), improving the street's enclosure and legibility. It would also provide enclosure/definition to the Leopardstown Park open space to the north (see photomontage for Viewpoint 9). The public realm along Leopardstown Road would be positively transformed by a new pedestrian footpath 2.5m wide, a wide green verge with street trees, and the added vitality of windows and doors facing the street. St Joseph's House and many of the most valuable trees on the site would be retained and enhanced by improved management. The built environment – particularly (a) the width of Leopardstown Road, and (b) the high degree of enclosure of the Arkle Square ACA from its surroundings – facilitates the introduction of taller buildings.

Policy	Assessment
to be exceeded with little or no demonstrable impact on its surroundings, *In a dip or hollow, behind a rise, or near a large tree screen, where the impact of a higher building would have little or no additional impact on its surroundings.* *e) A development would contribute to the promotion of higher densities in areas with exceptional public transport accessibility, whilst retaining and enhancing high quality residential environments. (Areas with exceptional public transport accessibility are defined as areas within a 500m walk-band on either side of the Luas corridor, a 500m walk-band around the DART stations, a 500m walk-band on either side of the N11 and 100m walk-band on either side of a QBC). Densities should be higher adjacent to these corridors and nodes and grade down towards neighbouring areas so that they are lower in close proximity to residential areas…* *f) The size of a site, e.g. 0.5 ha or more, could set its own context for development and may have potential for greater building height away from boundaries with existing residential development...* *"The overall positive benefits of a development proposal would need to be of such a significance as to clearly demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that additional height is justified. It will be necessary, therefore, for a development proposal to meet more than one 'Upward Modifier' criteria."*	The mature trees on the site provide screening in views from the north, east and west. The site has exceptional public transport access: (a) being served by a quality bus route along Leopardstown Road, (b) being approximately 500m from two Luas stops, and (c) opening directly onto a greenway. At over 2.5 ha the site can set its own context and is large enough to allow for taller buildings to be positioned some distance away from sensitive boundaries. This factor is reinforced by the site's long boundaries along a major thoroughfare and a greenway. The analysis above shows that the site meets several of the upward modifier criteria.
Building Height - Downward Modifiers (Development Plan Appendix 9 Section 4.8.2, p.29): *2. An Architectural Conservation Area (or candidate ACA) or the setting of a protected structure. It is Council policy to protect its outstanding architectural heritage through Architectural Conservation Areas. Key objectives are to enhance and protect architectural conservation areas, heritage sites, Protected Structures and their settings. New developments should respond to local character and protect and enhance the built heritage, and new buildings should not have an adverse effect in terms of scale, height, massing, alignment and materials…"*	The site is located in close proximity to the Arkle Square ACA. However, the following excerpts from the Council's policy document for the ACA are pertinent: *"Arkle Square forms an architectural ensemble which is quite distinct from its urban surroundings… To adequately protect this ensemble, their individual curtilages and the surrounding green space and trees must also be included…* *"Arkle Square bears no other direct relationship to the surrounding context and apart from the view to the tower from the entrance it is not visible from the neighbouring roads."* The development is outside of the ACA and would have no direct effect on the buildings, their curtilage or the green space and trees that make up

Policy	Assessment
	the ACA. The development would be visible from only a very small part of the ACA, and none of the Key Views of/within the ACA would be affected. Additionally, since the ACA is visually enclosed from the surrounding roads, the development would not affect any views of the ACA from the public realm.
Building Height Guidelines Section 3.2 Criteria (most relevant to the assessment of townscape and visual effects)	
"At the scale of district/neighbourhood/street: *The proposal responds to its overall natural and built environment and makes a positive contribution to the urban neighbourhood and streetscape…* *The proposal is not monolithic and avoids long, uninterrupted walls of building in the form of slab blocks with materials / building fabric well considered…* *The proposal enhances the urban design context for public spaces and key thoroughfares and inland waterway/ marine frontage, thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure...* *The proposal makes a positive contribution to the improvement of legibility through the site or wider urban area within which the development is situated and integrates in a cohesive manner…* *The proposal positively contributes to the mix of uses and/ or building/ dwelling typologies available in the neighbourhood."*	The proposed development responds particularly to: (a) St Joseph's House and its setting, making the protected structure a signature element of the new neighbourhood; (b) the site's strategic location within the Sandyford-Leopardstown urban district, at a gateway to the district where Leopardstown Road crosses the former railway line approaching a key junction/node in the area; (c) the opportunity provided by the 270m frontage to Leopardstown Road on the approach to the Leopardstown junction, (d) the opportunity to retain as features of the new neighburhood many of the mature trees that characterise the site. In consideration of this policy and the site's long north east and south east boundaries (creating potential for 'long slab blocks'), the buildings are well separated, the elevations are folded, their height is stepped, and there are variations in façade treatment and materials. As a result the proposed buildings are not monolithic in appearance. The design achieves visual interest, identity and legibility while also establishing strong building lines around the boundaries. The urban design/townscape character of Leopardstown Road would be transformed by the built enclosure and animation generated by the development. The photomontages (see Viewpoints 1-5) show that the width of the road is such that the buildings can be comfortably accommodated without excessive enclosure.

Table 12-6 Proposed development's compliance with relevant policy

12.6 Potential Impact of the Proposed Development – Visual Amenities

Construction Stage

During construction the site and immediate environs would be disturbed by construction activities and haulage, and the incremental growth of the buildings on site. In the earlier stages, until the buildings reach substantial height above ground, the effects would be largely limited to the immediate environs (adjoining properties and streets). As the buildings begin to grow above ground level the visual effects would become more widespread.

The magnitude of change would range from high in the immediate environs to negligible or none further from the site. Therefore the significance of the effects would also vary – although they would typically be negative during construction. Such temporary negative visual effects are unavoidable and not unusual in the urban context where change is continuous.

Operational Stage

18 no. viewpoints have been selected to assess the proposed development's potential visibility and visual effects. The viewpoints represent the key townscape areas and groups of visual receptors in the receiving environment and provide visualisations from a range of angles and distances from the site.

Viewpoints 15H, 16H, 17H and 18H were selected by the conservation consultant specifically to address the effects on St Joseph's House and the views identified as Key Views in the *Arkle Square ACA Character Appraisal and Policy Framework*.

Figure 12-23 Aerial Photograph showing 18 no. Viewpoint

The viewpoints are assessed in Table 12.7 below. The assessment should be read in conjunction with the baseline views and verified photomontages provided in the attached A3 Photomontages booklet, prepared by Model works. The methodology and the criteria and terms used, refer to Appendix A.

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
1	Leopardstown Road north east of site – 110m from site	As Leopardstown Road approaches the site it widens to four lanes. In the foreground beside the junction with Leopardstown Lawn there is a terrace of business premises, and in the distance the cluster of large, modern buildings gives further indication of the road's approach to an urban centre. The trees in the north east corner of the site, and along the north east boundary (to the right, marking the alignment of the greenway to Sandyford), are a valuable feature of the view.	Medium	The buildings would protrude marginally above the retained trees in the corner of the site and along the north east boundary fronting the greenway. Along Leopardstown Road the buildings would add form and enclosure to the streetscape, shifting its character from mixed/suburban to urban, complementing the cluster of buildings ahead at the Leopardstown junction. To the right along the site interface with the greenway and Leopardstown Lawn, the gaps between the buildings' north facades makes for a softer edge to the development. The development would signify a transition in townscape character, appropriate to the location, and there would be no loss or compromise of any valued feature or characteristic of the view.	Low	Slight positive
2	Leopardstown Road near north east corner of site – 35m from site	As the road crosses the historic alignment of the railway line, the greenway connecting to Sandyford is visible to the right. The trees in the site's north east corner, and extending along the boundaries, is a key feature of the view. The other main elements of the composition are (a) the distinctly urban road corridor, three lanes wide with cycle lanes and footpaths on both sides, and a green verge, and (b) the cluster of large, modern buildings, Luas bridge and signage 400m ahead. These elements indicate the road's approach to an urban centre. However, there is an absence of built form along the road, with the existing houses set	Medium	The copse of trees in the corner of the site, behind a portion of the boundary wall, would be retained. Beyond these trees Blocks C, D and F would stand prominently along the road-front, behind a line of formally arranged/ spaced trees in a wide green verge. The capacity of the wide street to accommodate buildings of the proposed height is evident in this view; there is no sense of excessive enclosure. The steps in height, variations in façade treatment and materials, and the high degree of articulation of the facades add visual interest to the view. From this proximity the design and material quality of the buildings and landscaping would be appreciable. The composition and character of the view would be transformed, positively, from mixed/suburban to urban, and no valued feature	High	Significant positive

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
		back and defended from the road by a high wall.		or characteristic of the townscape would be lost or compromised.		
3	Leopardstown Road at site entrance	The existing view at the proposed site entrance comprises the road in the foreground, the tall boundary walls and gateways of the roadside properties, one of the houses and in the distance the Austrian pine trees around St Joseph's House. The permitted development would transform this view (see Figure 8 above). The high stone wall would be retained except for a wide entrance through which the internal access road would lead to St Joseph's in the distance, framed by the new apartment blocks to the right and the terrace of houses to the left (the terrace presenting its gable wall to Leopardstown Road).	Low	A key change to the view would be the removal of the boundary wall, so that the buildings address the street from behind a wide green verge with street trees. Without other buildings in view the development can establish its own character, and the character and width of Leopardstown Road are such that the increased height of the buildings and their more direct interface with the street, are appropriate. There would be no loss of visual amenity and the composition of built form, materials, streetscape and landscaping would be pleasing.	Medium	Slight positive
4	Leopardstown Road opposite site – View along road to north east	Travelling north east from the Leopardstown junction the character of the street changes suddenly (having passed by Central Park and One South County), with a notable absence of buildings fronting the wide road, on either side. The numerous mature trees on the site (two groups of trees in particular) lend the composition some visual amenity, but for an urban area the character is indistinct – the houses hidden behind high walls and vegetation, contrasting with the urban scale of the road.	Medium	The streetscape would be transformed, with Blocks C and D prominent along the road behind a line of formally arranged/spaced trees in a wide green verge. The capacity of the wide street to accommodate buildings of the height proposed is evident in this view. The steps in height, folded elevations, variations in façade design and materials and the high degree of articulation all add visual interest to the composition. It is also significant that the two most valuable groups of trees would be retained, lending character and maturity to the development. Overall, the design is particularly successful from this persepctive. The change would be dramatic but in the context (Leopardstown Road near a	High	Significant positive

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
				major junction/node in the urban structure) it is appropriate.		

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
5	Leopardstown Road south west of site – View along road to north east	The view is taken from the footpath outside the public open space beside One South County. The extensive road junction, the Luas bridge and the tall buildings of Central Park are behind the viewer. Ahead to the right is the entrance to Leopardstown Racecourse and business park. To the left of the road there is a two storey house in the foreground (a house on Sir Ivor Mall) presenting its gable to the road, and beyond that is the site, with a high wall and trees fronting the road. The absence of built form along the main thoroughfare close to a key netral junction/ node in an urban distict is notable. 	Medium	As in View 4, the streetscape would be transformed, with Blocks F, C and D prominent along the road, set back behind a wide green verge featuring a line of street trees. The capacity of the wide road corridor to accommodate the building height is evident; there would be no sense of excessive enclosure. The steps in height, folded elevations, variations in design and materials and the high degree of articulation in the facades would add visual interest to the composition. At this location (unlike Views, 2, 3 and 4), there is an existing building in view (the house to the left). Whereas in the previous views the development can establish its own character without constraint, in this view the building typology and height of Block F are emphasised by its position near the neighbouring house. This was recogised in the design/ EIA/ pre-planning process and the scale of Block F has been reduced to avoid too pronounced a transition in typology and scale. Nonetheless, it is appropriate that a building of urban typology and scale be positioned in this corner of the site fronting Leopardstown Road and close to a key node in the urban district (see aerial photo to left). In these locations such a juxtaposition in typology, scale and architecture is not unusual, nor undesirable. The change would be noteable but not inappropriate, and overall the visual amenity of the road corridor would be improved.	High	Significant positive

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
6	Burton Hall Road junction with Leopardstown Road and Brewery Road	Approaching the Leopardstown junction from Sandyford, One South County is prominent beyond the junction. To the right (out of view in the photomontage) is the Luas bridge and the tall buildings of Central Park fronting Leopardstown Road on route to the M50. The townscape in view is an evolving urban hub characterised by buildings of large scale and contemporary architecture.	Low	The development would protrude marginally above the roofline of the modern houses on Ballymoss Parade in the middle distance. There would be no significant change to the composition or quality of the view, only a minor shift in character, in keeping with the trend of change in the area.	Low	Not significant neutral
7	Brewery Road opposite entrance to Silver Pines and Arkle Square	n/a	Medium	No change	None	No effect
8	Brewery Road north west of site	n/a	Medium	No change	None	No effect
9	Leopardstown Park open space/playing field	The open space is enclosed to the north, west and east by the houses of the estate (the houses to the north and east backing onto the open space, a sub-optimal arrangement in urban design terms) and to the south by a belt of mature trees along the greenway (the former railway line) and inside the site's northern boundary. The Austrian pine trees on the site are particularly prominent.	Medium	Blocks A, B and C would protrude above the tree line along the greenway at the edge of the park – an appropriate change in the urban context, with the development marking the line of transition between the low density suburban area to the north, and the new urban district to the south. The articulated facades and variations in height would add visual interest to the composition. There would be no sense of excessive enclosure, and no valued feature of the view would be	Medium	Moderate positive

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
				compromised. A development of appreciable design and material quality would be introduced to the view.		
10	Leopardstown Lawn at Leopardstown Drive junction	There is a row of 12 no. houses to the north of the site beyond the greenway, backing onto the greenway and presenting their rear facades towards the site. In the view across the street towards the site the trees along the greenway are visible between the houses, while the tall pine trees inside the site's north east boundary protrude well above the houses' roofline, adding character and visual amenity to the view.	High	Blocks B and C (both seven storeys) would protrude above the tree line, some 40m to the rear of the houses (and buffered by the retained trees inside the site boundary and along the greenway), presenting their narrow elevations towards the houses – thus avoiding a substantial increase in visual enclosure. The composition and character of the view would be changed, but in the context the change would not be inappropriate.	Medium	Moderate neutral
11	Silver Pines estate road	There is a high degree of visual enclosure on the estate, generated by the large houses and an abundance of mature street trees and garden vegetation. In the view south east towards the site the majestic pine trees add to the visual enclosure, and to visual amenity.	High	The proposed apartment buildings are well removed from Silver Pines, beyond St Joseph's House, with the massing arranged to address Leopardstown Road to the south east. The development would not be visible from the estate road, and may only be glimpsed from the rear gardens and windows of the houses backing onto the site.	Negligible-Low	Not significant neutral
12	The Chase/Sheils Houses estate road	The estate road is enclosed by modern houses to the left and ahead, terminating the vista, and by the north elevation of the almshouses to the right (out of view). The mature trees add visual amenity and contribute to an enclosed, intimate suburban setting.	Medium	The 3 storey Block F would protrude above the roofline of the houses at the end of the street, presenting its narrow northern façade. The reduction in height of Block F for the SHD application (on foot of the ABP Opinion) has reduced the extent of protrusion of Block F in this view. The minor intrusion would now constitute a low magnitude of change, and such compositions are not unusual in the urban context. There would be no negative impact on visual amenity.	Low	Slight neutral

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
13	Sir Ivor Mall adjacent to Arkle Square	The view is taken from the end of Ballymoss Parade, and represents views from the Sir Ivor Mall terrace of houses (to the right) which back onto the site. The extent of views from the gardens is limited by the boundary walls and vegetation, beyond which is the site, currently occupied by houses in large gardens.	High	The 3 storey element of Block F can be seen 22m to the rear of the first floor of the house to the right. The step up in height towards Leopardstown Road is also visible. The effect on this view was previously assessed as negative (in an earlier design iteration submitted at Stage 2 in the SHD process) when Block F was considerably larger and would have resulted in excessive enclosure in the view. Block F has been reduced in scale for the final proposal (the subject of this assessment) and that change is significant. While the building would be prominent in views from the rear of the Sir Ivor Mall houses, the enclosure would not be excessive. The proposal is supported by national policy (the Building Height Guidelines require that building heights of 'at least three to four storeys, coupled with appropriate density' be achieved even in suburban locations – and this location is not suburban; it is close to the core of an evolving urban district). While the composition and character of the view would change, such change is unavoidable and not inappropriate in the townscape and policy context, and can be classified as neutral. Additionally, the trees proposed inside the boundary would in time mature to soften the development's presence in the views.	Medium	Moderate-Significant neutral

No	Viewpoint Location	Baseline View	Sensitivity	Proposed Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
						
14	Site entrance via Silver Pines – View of St Joseph's House	The view is taken from the western road entrance to the site. The west and north facades and the complex roof structure of the building are revealed, framed by majestic pine trees. The building is partly hidden by garden vegetation and insensitive modern extensions. The parking areas, bin store and a shed detract further from the protected structure's setting.	High	The unsightly extensions and garden vegetation would be removed, revealing the refurbished facades of the protected structure and de-cluttering its immediate setting. The apartment buildings in the middle distance would protrude above a part of the roofline and extend to the sides of the building, but due to the contrast in form and materials St Joseph's would remain legible against the changed backdrop. The development would enhance the protected structure itself and add visual interest to the composition, resulting in a net gain in visual amenity. The photomontage shows that one Austrian pine tree is required to be removed to facilitate the development. This would constitue a loss from the landscape, but the other improvements in the view (and the wider landscape proposals including a net increase in the number and quality of trees on the site) compensate for this loss	Medium	Significant positive

Viewpoints for Conservation Assessment – The following views were included in the assessment as they are specifically identified for protection in the *Arkle Square ACA Character Appraisal and Policy Framework*.						
No	**Viewpoint Location**	**Baseline View**	**Sensitivity**	**Proposed Change**	**Magnitude of Change**	**Significance of Effects**
15 H	St Joseph's House	The view is taken from a garden area, across a car park towards the north facade of the protected structure. The pine trees are a key feature of the view, complementing the building.	High	The refurbishment of the building and the de-cluttering of its immediate setting would allow for better appreciation of the protected structure. Block A and the accent element of Block D would be visible to one side of the building, beyond an area of open space in which the existing pine trees would be retained, supplemented by new planting. The development would enhance the protected structure itself and add visual interest to the composition without compromising the appearance or legibility of the building.	Medium	Significant positive
16 H	Arkle Square ACA View 1 – Approach from Brewery Road	n/a	High	No change	None	No effect
17 H	Arkle Square ACA View 2 – The west elevation	n/a	High	No change	None	No effect
18 H	Arkle Square ACA View 3 – South elevation	n/a	High	No change	None	No effect

Table 12-7 Visual effects assessment

12.7 Potential Cumulative Impacts

The assessment has taken account of the ongoing shift in character in the Sandyford/Leopardstown urban district, including (a) One South County and other developments in South County Business Park, (b) the development of the Central Park quarter, and (c) the permissions and ongoing redevelopment of sites in Stillorgan in that area's transformation into a high density, mixed use quarter.

Another significant future development is the former FAAC site some 250m to the west of the subject site beyond the Leopardstown junction, where a development of three buildings of up to 6 storeys is permitted (Reg. Ref. D17/1060).

Along with the site, all of these developments fall into the Sandyford/Leopardstown area and at a macro level their cumulative effect will establish an extensive, diverse, high density mixed use urban district. The proposed development would take place comfortably in this context and contribute positively to the evolving character.

At the local level (in the site's immediate environs), there are no known proposed or permitted developments with which the proposed development would interact causing townscape or visual effects of greater significance that those identified in this chapter.

12.8 Do Nothing Scenario

The permitted development for part of the site (D17A/ 0337 – see Figure 12.6-8 above) would likely be implemented. This would change the townscape character of the Tipperstown triangle of land in keeping with the evolution of the wider Sandyford/Leopardstown urban district.

The seven large, detached houses on large plots fronting Leopardstown Road (i.e. the part of the site added subsequent to the granting of the above permission) would remain in use as individual dwellings. This would (a) not fully realise the potential of the subject site for sustainable residential use, and (b) not change the character (for the better) or improve the quality of the Leopardstown Road streetscape to the extent that the proposed development would.

12.9 Risks to Human Health

N/A

12.10 Mitigation Measures

Construction Stage

Apart from (a) the measures incorporated in the proposed design (see 12.10.2 below), (b) the measures for tree protection (as recommended in the Arboricultural Report prepared The Tree File Ltd), and (c) standard best practice construction site management (e.g. erection and maintenance of site hoarding, orderly storage of materials and vehicles, etc.), no additional mitigation measures are proposed for townscape and visual effects.

Operational Stage

The townscape and visual effects on all receptors are predicted to be neutral or positive. Therefore, no mitigation measures other than those incorporated into the design proposal are considered necessary. Some of the key mitigation measures built into the proposal include:

- **The retention, refurbishment and reuse of St Joseph's House as an integral part of the development.** The condition of the building and its immediate surroundings would be improved, with the dual intention of (a) conserving the building as a cultural/ architectural

asset, and (b) lending maturity, identity/ character, landscape and visual amenity to the new neighbourhood.

- **The retention of the key groups of trees on the site** (refer to Figure 12.14). The retention of the trees would (a) conserve a key landscape feature/ characteristic of the site, (b) retain some of the site's biodiversity value, (c) function as a landscape/ visual buffer for the new buildings (as shown by the photomontages for Viewpoints 1, 2, 9, 10, 11), and (d) provide landscape and visual amenity for the new neighbourhood.
- **The considered arrangement of built form and height along Leopardstown Road, along with the steps in height, folded elevations, variations in façade design and materials and the high degree of articulation**. The photomontages for Viewpoints 1-5 show that while the proposed development would change the character of the wide urban thoroughfare by enclosing the street on one side, the collective street elevation of Blocks C, D and F would form an attractive, visually interesting composition.
- **The landscape treatment of the Leopardstown Road streetscape**. The proposed Blocks C, D and F are sufficiently set back from the street edge that a substantial green frontage to the street can be established, incorporating low ornamental shrub planting, a line of street trees, some retained trees and privacy hedging for the ground floor apartments. This design solution allows the buildings to address the street in a way that will generate urban character while also softening the street-building interface and enhancing visual amenity.
- **The reduction in scale of Block F**. The greatest potential for negative visual impacts (and other impacts on existing residential amenities) is in the south west corner of the site where two terraces of houses back onto the site boundary (Sir Ivor Mall and Minstrel Court). A previous assessment, carried out for the design iteration submitted at Stage 2 in the SHD process, identified the potential for a negative visual effect on the houses of Sir Ivor Mall, which would have resulted from the 3-8 storey Block F which was proposed at that time. Block F has been redesigned and scaled down to 3-6 storeys to mitigate this impact. The assessment of Viewpoint 13 found that the effects can now be classified neutral.

12.11 Predicted Impacts of the Proposed Development

Construction Stage

During construction the site and immediate environs would be disturbed by construction activities and haulage, and the incremental growth of the buildings on site. In the earlier stages, until the buildings reach substantial height above ground, the effects would be largely limited to the immediate environs (adjoining properties and streets). As the buildings begin to grow above ground level the visual effects would become more widespread, with indirect effects on townscape character (change to the setting of existing areas).

The magnitude of change would range from high in the immediate environs to negligible or none further from the site. Therefore, the significance of the effects would also vary – although they would typically be negative during construction. Such temporary negative townscape and visual effects are unavoidable and not unusual in the urban context where change is continuous.

Operational Stage – Townscape Effects

No mitigation measures have been recommended for townscape effects. Therefore, the predicted effects are the same as the potential effects described in Section 12.5.2 and summarised below.

The townscape sensitivity of the receiving environment can be classified 'medium' (i.e. there is capacity to accommodate change). The magnitude of townscape change which would result from the development would also be 'medium'.

Measuring the magnitude of change against the townscape sensitivity, the significance of the effects is predicted to be 'moderate' (*an effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is*

consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends). Based on an assessment of the proposal's compliance with key county and national policy (see Table 12.6) the townscape effects are predicted to be positive.

Operational Stage – Visual Effects

No mitigation measures have been recommended for visual effects. Therefore the predicted effects are the same as the potential effects described in Section 12.6.2 and summarised in Table 12.8 below.

No	Viewpoint Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance & Quality of Effects		
				Construction (Temporary)	Operation (Permanent)	Residual (Permanent)
1	Leopardstown Road north east of site	Medium	Low	Slight negative	Slight positive	Slight positive
2	Leopardstown Road near north east corner of site	Medium	High	Moderate negative	Significant positive	Significant positive
3	Leopardstown Road at site entrance	Low	Medium	Moderate negative	Slight positive	Slight positive
4	Leopardstown Road opposite site	Medium	High	Moderate negative	Significant positive	Significant positive
5	Leopardstown Road south west of site	Medium	High	Moderate negative	Significant positive	Significant positive
6	Burton Hall Road junction with Leopardstown Road	Low	Low	Not significant neutral	Not significant neutral	Not significant neutral
7	Brewery Road opposite entrance to Silver Pines	Medium	None	No effect	No effect	No effect
8	Brewery Road north west of site	Medium	None	No effect	No effect	No effect
9	Leopardstown Park open space/playing field	Medium	Medium	Slight negative	Moderate positive	Moderate positive
10	Leopardstown Lawn at Leopardstown Drive junction	High	Medium	Slight negative	Moderate neutral	Moderate neutral
11	Silver Pines estate road	High	Negligible-Low	Not significant neutral	Not significant neutral	Not significant neutral
12	The Chase/Sheils Houses estate road	Medium	Low	Slight negative	Slight neutral	Slight neutral

No	Viewpoint Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance & Quality of Effects		
				Construction (Temporary)	Operation (Permanent)	Residual (Permanent)
13	Sir Ivor Mall adjacent to Arkle Square	High	Medium	Moderate negative	Moderate-Significant neutral	Moderate-Significant neutral
14	Site entrance via Silver Pines – View of St Joseph's	High	Medium	Moderate negative	Significant positive	Significant positive
15 H	St Joseph's House	High	Medium	Moderate negative	Significant positive	Significant positive
16 H	Arkle Square ACA View 1	High	None	No effect	No effect	No effect
17 H	Arkle Square ACA View 2	High	None	No effect	No effect	No effect
18 H	Arkle Square ACA View 3	High	None	No effect	No effect	No effect

Table 12-8 Summary of visual effects assessment

Of the 18 no. viewpoints assessed, it was found that visual amenity would be improved at eight locations. These include (a) the views along Leopardstown Road approaching and passing by the site from both directions, and (b) the view from the Leopardstown Park open space to the north of the site across the greenway. In these views the development would create enclosure to the street and open space, introducing buildings and landscaping of high design and material quality, their character appropriate to the location. A positive visual effect was also predicted for the close-up views of St Joseph's House, in which the improvements to the building and its setting would be visible.

Importantly, it was found that none of the Key Views identified in the *Arkle Square ACA Character Appraisal and Policy Framework* would be affected by the development. Neither would any views of the ACA from the wider public realm be affected; Arkle Square is effectively hidden from the surrounding roads by vegetation which the ACA designation specifically protects.

Viewpoints 11, 12 and 13 assess the effects on the existing residential neighbourhood to the north west and west of the site. Due to mitigation measures taken in the design process (specifically with regard to proposed Block F) the visual effects on these areas would be neutral. No negative effects were identified.

12.12 Monitoring

Construction Stage

The retention of existing trees on site is an important element of the proposal. Any unplanned loss of trees could result in negative townscape and visual impacts.

The planning application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Report prepared by The Tree File Ltd., which includes a detailed Tree Protection Plan (in Appendix 1). It includes the requirement that (a) all tree works should be undertaken under the guidance of the project arborist, (b) that site works potentially affecting the trees to be retained should be monitored, and (c) that on completion of site works the retained trees are to be reviewed and their future management needs specified.

The implementation of the Tree Protection Plan is the only monitoring required in respect of potential townscape and visual impacts.

12.13 Reinstatement

No reinstatement works are required following implementation of the development as proposed.

12.14 Interactions

Biodiversity

It is proposed to remove 136 no. (49%) of the 277 no. existing trees on the site to facilitate the development (and/or due to their current poor condition). The strategy is to retain as many as possible of the better quality specimens (in the most important tree groups) and remove mostly Category U and C (low quality) trees where necessary. It is also proposed as part of the development to plant 188 no. new trees. This would result in (a) a net gain in the number of trees, and (b) a net gain in the condition of the site vegetation since a large proportion of the trees to be removed are in poor condition. This would have biodiversity benefits.

Population and Human Health

The proposed development would introduce a new, high density residential neighbourhood to the townscape, making more sustainable use of the valuable urban land resource. The proposal includes a substantial area of communal and public open space internally and provides direct access to an adjacent greenway and a large area of public open space. These resources would encourage outdoor activity, with positive human health impacts. The location of the new neighbourhood in a large, evolving urban district would encourage sustainable mobility, with additional positive effects on the health of the population (and on the county's contribution to greenhouse gas reduction).

Cultural Heritage

The proposed development would retain St Joseph's House as a signature feature. The condition and setting of the protected structure would be improved by the development.

12.15 Difficulties Encountered

No difficulties were encountered in the preparation of the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment chapter.

12.16 References

1. *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022*, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council;
2. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd edition (2013), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
3. *Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment*, 2018, published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.
4. *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (2017), Environmental Protection Agency.
5. *National Planning Framework - Ireland 2040* (2018), Government of Ireland.

6. *Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (2011), Landscape Institute.
7. *Townscape Character Assessment*, Technical Information Note 05/2017 (2017), Landscape Institute.
8. *Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide* (2009), Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
9. *Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2018), Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.