

13 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT

13.1 INTRODUCTION

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by. Landscape Architect Daithi O'Troithigh MSc Urban Design, PG Dip LA, BA Larch, Dip Arch Tech, MILI, of doyle + o'troithigh landscape architecture. Daithi has prepared Landscape & Visual Impact Assessments for a wide range of projects including mixed residential, care homes, hotels, student accommodation and a number of solar projects throughout the country. The purpose of this study is to appraise the existing landscape settings of the site and to assess the likely impacts arising from the proposed development and describe the proposed mitigation measures.

This assessment should be read in conjunction with the Photomontages prepared for the scheme (refer to Appendix 13.1).

13.2 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

This assessment has been based on the following guidelines:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publication Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports - (2022) and Draft Guidelines (2017) and the accompanying Advice Notes on Current Practice in the Preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (2015 & 2017); and,
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment', 3rd Ed., The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013.

This assessment has involved:

- Undertaking a desk-top study of the site; including reviewing ordnance survey mapping and aerial photography;
- Reviewing the plans, sections and elevations of the proposed scheme;
- A review of statutory planning and other documentation in order to ascertain the local and wider; significance; and
- Visiting the site and surrounding area during the spring of 2025 and preparing a photographic record of views and landscape features.

13.2.1 Nature of Impacts

Impact on landscape arising from development has two distinct but closely related aspects. The first is impact in the form of change to character of the landscape that arises from the insertion of the proposed development into the existing context. The second aspect is the visual impact; which depends on the degree and nature of change in the visual environment. It is recognised that the combined impact on character and views will draw responses, the significance of which will be partly informed by an individual's subjective perception of how much the changes matter.

The assessment of landscape and visual impacts include:

- Direct impacts upon specific landscape elements and buildings within and adjacent to the site
- Effects on the overall pattern of the landscape elements that give rise to the character of the site and its surroundings
- Impacts upon any special features or interests in or around the site
- Direct impacts of the scheme upon views in the landscape / townscape
- Overall impact on townscape character and visual amenity.

13.2.2 Significance of Criteria

Whenever appropriate the following terms are used to describe the degree, quality and duration of an impact: (Note this is based on the EPA Advice Notes and Guidelines) and provided in Table 13.1 below.

Impact Criteria	Description
Profound	An impact which obliterates sensitive characteristics
Significant	An impact which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment
Moderate	An impact that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with the existing and emerging trends
Slight	An impact which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities
Imperceptible	An impact capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences

Table 13.1: Impact Significance Criteria

Terms used to describe the quality of change:

- Positive impact: A change that improved the quality of the environment
- Neutral impact: A change that does not affect the quality of the environment
- Negative impact: A change that reduces the quality of the environment.

Terms relating to the duration of impacts as described in the EPA Guidelines are listed as follows:

- Temporary impact: Lasting one year or less
- Short-term impact: Lasting one to seven years
- Medium-term impact: Lasting seven to fifteen years
- Long-term impact: Lasting fifteen to sixty years
- Permanent impact: Lasting over sixty years.

13.2.3 Photomontages

A collection of 18 photomontages have been prepared from 15 viewpoints surrounding the site to fully illustrate the physical and visual nature of the proposed development. The photomontages have been prepared from locations that are representative of views of the scheme from surrounding areas (Appendix 13.1). Existing views and proposed versions of each view have been provided and have been taken at the following locations:



Figure. 13.1: Location of 18 No. Photomontages Viewpoints (see Digital Dimensions submission for full map & locations)

View	Description	Location
View 1	View west from the Tain Bridge on the N52	East
View 2	View south west from the entrance to St Patrick's Cemetery	North East
View 3	View west from the Newry Road Bridge over the River Boyne on the R132	East
View 4	View east / south east from the R934 Roundabout at the slip road of Junction 17 of the M1	West / North West
View 5	View south from the R934	North
View 6	View east / south east from the Greyacre Road	West / North West
View 7	View north east from the Greyacre Road	South West
View 8	View north east from the Greyacre Road	South West
View 9	View north east from Rogans Bend	South West
View 10	View south from the junction of Mount Avenue and Castletown Road	North
View 11.0	View north from Castletown Motte	East
View 11.1	View west from Castletown Motte	East

View 11.2	Views southwest from Castletown Motte	East
View 12	View west from Cu Chulainn's Castle	East
View 13	View south west from Cu Chulainn's Castle	North East
View 15	View north west from Mount Avenue outside the disused stable block	South East
View 16	View north / north west from the end of the Cul de Sac off Mount Avenue	South / South East
View 17	View north / north west from An Bothair Dara	South / South East

Table 13.2: View Locations. Refer to Appendix 13.1 for existing and proposed Photomontages from Digital Dimensions forming part of the Planning Application.

13.3 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

13.3.1 Designated Sites

- 13.3.1.1 Sites and monuments included in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as maintained by the National Monuments Service (NMS); Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994;

Dún Dealgan Motte and Bailey Castletown in State Guardianship RPM No. LH007-118007 National Monument No. 388

Description: A large circular steep-sided mound (max. H 8.5-10m, diam. c. 43m) with external bank (Wth 3.5-5m, H c. 1.5m above surrounding ground level). A small D-shaped bailey (8m by 9m), defined by an earthen bank (Wth 5m, H 1m), adjoins the fosse of the motte at the NW. A much larger bailey existed at the E which according to Wright (1758, bk I, pl. IX) was sub-rectangular in plan, but this has now been almost totally destroyed by a modern waterworks. A slight scarp, which indicates its original limits, can still be discerned. On top of the motte are the remains of a late eighteenth century castellated house known as 'Byrne's Folly' and a peripheral bank which appears to be the same date. At the E side of the mound is a wide gap in the bank (Wth c. 4m) with a causeway across the fosse opposite it. It is uncertain whether these features are ancient or modern. A souterrain (LH007-118008) is set into the S side of the motte. (Wright 1758, bk I, 7-8, pls VIII, IX; Orpen 1908, 256-61).

RPM No. LH007-118006- : Standing stone: CASTLETOWN (Dundalk Upper By.)

Description: Situated on NE slope of ridge to NE of Dun Dealgan motte (LH007-118007-). Granitic boulder (max. dims. H 1.3m, 0.7m square in section). According to tradition (OS Memoranda 5439 C) this is 'Lia Lingadon', the stone of Lingadon, herd of the cows of Dictoire, Cu Chulainn's mother.

RPM No. LH007-118008- : Souterrain: CASTLETOWN (Dundalk Upper By.)

Description: Located in slope on S side of 'Dun Dealgan' motte (LH007-118007-). The souterrain consists of three-drystone-built passages forming a Z-shaped plan. The first passage (L 3.9m) extends SW-NE, turning sharply NW to form Passage 2 (L 7.8m). At the NW end of Passage 2 there is a sharp turn into Passage 3 (L 5.8m) which runs S-N. (CLAJ 1912, 25-6).

RPM No. LH007-118009- : Cist (present location): CASTLETOWN (Dundalk Upper By.)

Description: A cist burial discovered at Tankardsrock (see LH006-037----) was reconstructed in the avenue bank of Dun Dealgan motte (LH007-118007-).

RPM No. LH007-025-: Souterrain: NEWTOWNBALREGAN

Description: Drystone-built souterrain, cross-shaped in plan, consisting of three passages, a gallery and beehive chamber. Passage 1 (L 5m, Wth 0.7m, H 0.7m) curves gently SW-N. A gallery (L 4.5m, Wth 0.8m, H 0.7m) leads off NE from mid-passage. Passage 2 (L 0.6m, Wth 0.7m) leads off W from the middle of Passage 1 and is blocked by collapse. At the N end of Passage 1 is a beehive chamber (diam. 2.4m, H 1.2m) with the entrance to a third passage in its NW side now blocked by collapse. (CLAJ 1956, 445-7)

13.3.1.2 Protected Areas of National Importance Under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000

In total, there are 11 designated European Sites, located wholly or partly in County Louth, which form part of the Natura 2000 Network of European Sites. This network includes both Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), representing the prime wildlife conservation areas in the County which are considered to be of significant importance at both European and Irish levels.

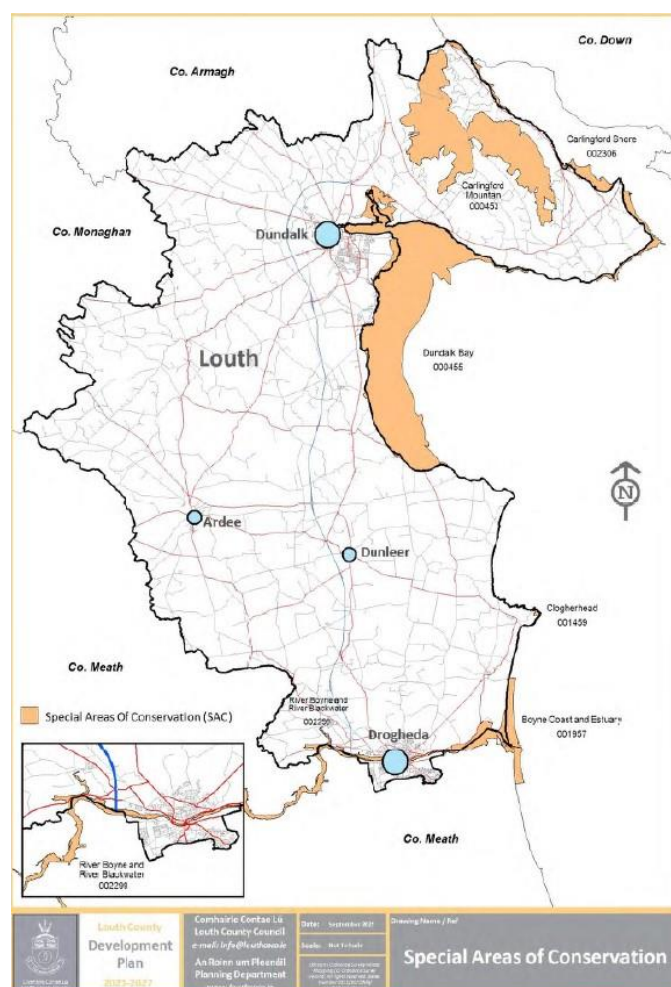


Figure 13.2: Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 Special Areas of Conservation Map

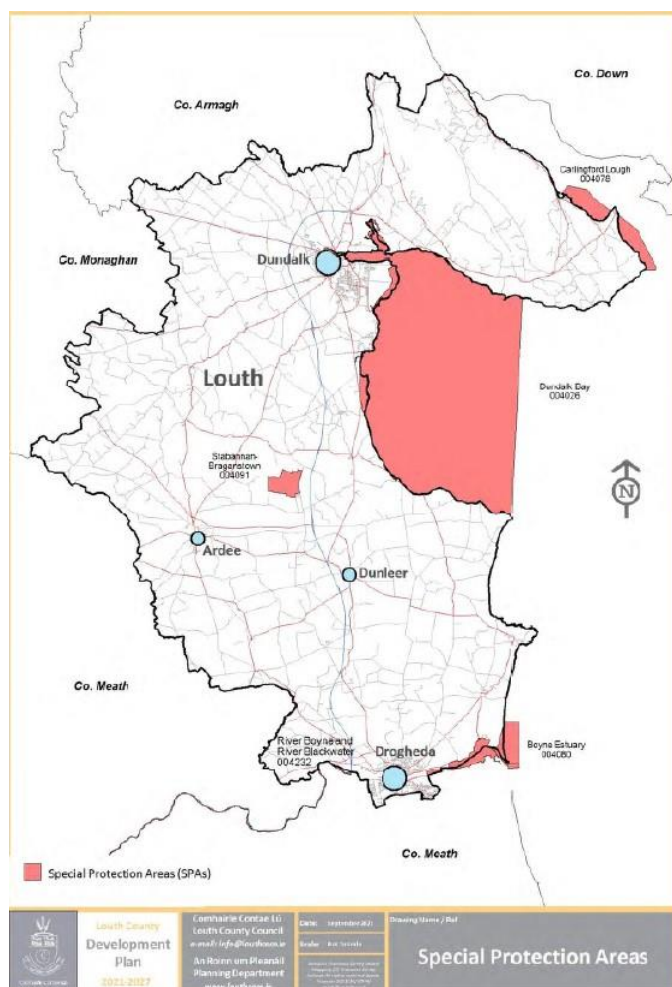


Figure 13.3: Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 Special Protection Area Map

The site is not within or adjacent to any area that is designated for nature conservation at a national or international level. However, the Castletown River bordering the north western boundary has a direct pathway to Dundalk Bay SPA and Dundalk Bay SAC.

Dundalk Bay SAC Site Code Name 000455

The site is selected for the following habitats/species listed in Annex I/II of the EU Habitats Directive: Estuaries, Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats, Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks, Salicornia Mud as well as Atlantic and Mediterranean Salt Meadows. Saltmarshes occur in four areas and two types are presented. Shingle beaches are well represented and support a range of species. There are over 4000ha of sandflats and mudflats. The site is internationally important for waterfowl because it regularly holds over 20,000 birds.

Dundalk Bay SPA Site Code Site Name 004026

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Great Crested Grebe, Greylag Goose, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull and Herring Gull.

The site is of international importance because it regularly supports an assemblage of over 20,000 wintering water birds. It also qualifies as a site of international importance for supporting populations of Lightbellied Brent Goose (370), Knot (9,710), Black-tailed Godwit (1,100) and Bar-tailed Godwit (1,950) – all figures, unless stated otherwise, are five-year mean peaks for the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000. A variety of other species occur in numbers of national importance.

Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) and Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)

The term 'Natural Heritage' covers wildlife (plants, animals and their habitats) in addition to geological and geomorphological sites. Wildlife sites of national importance including both ecological and geological sites are designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Sites identified but not yet designated as NHAs are known as 'proposed Natural Heritage Areas' (pNHAs) and these are protected from development only by inclusion in a development plan. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) proposed 24 Natural Heritage Areas in Louth, which are shown in Figure 13.4 below. There are no such areas impacted by the proposed development on the subject site.

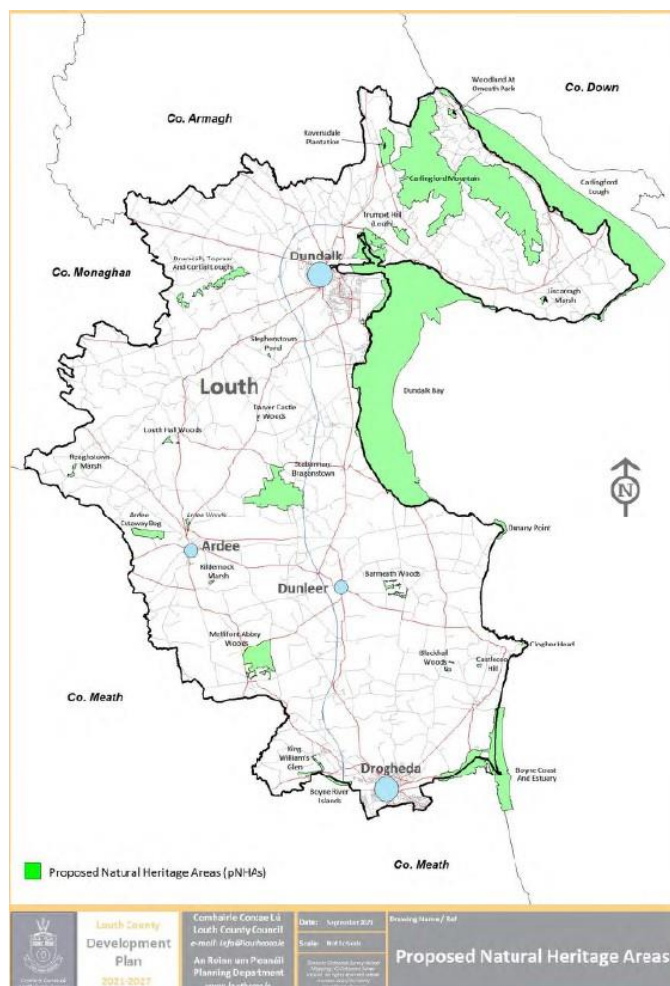


Figure 13.4: Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 Proposed Natural Heritage Area Map

13.4 LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

The Development Plan zoning map as shown in Figure 13.5 below with the subject lands outlined in red, shows that the Mount Avenue lands are zoned “A2 – New Residential”, “H1 – Open Space”, and “G1 – Community Facilities”.

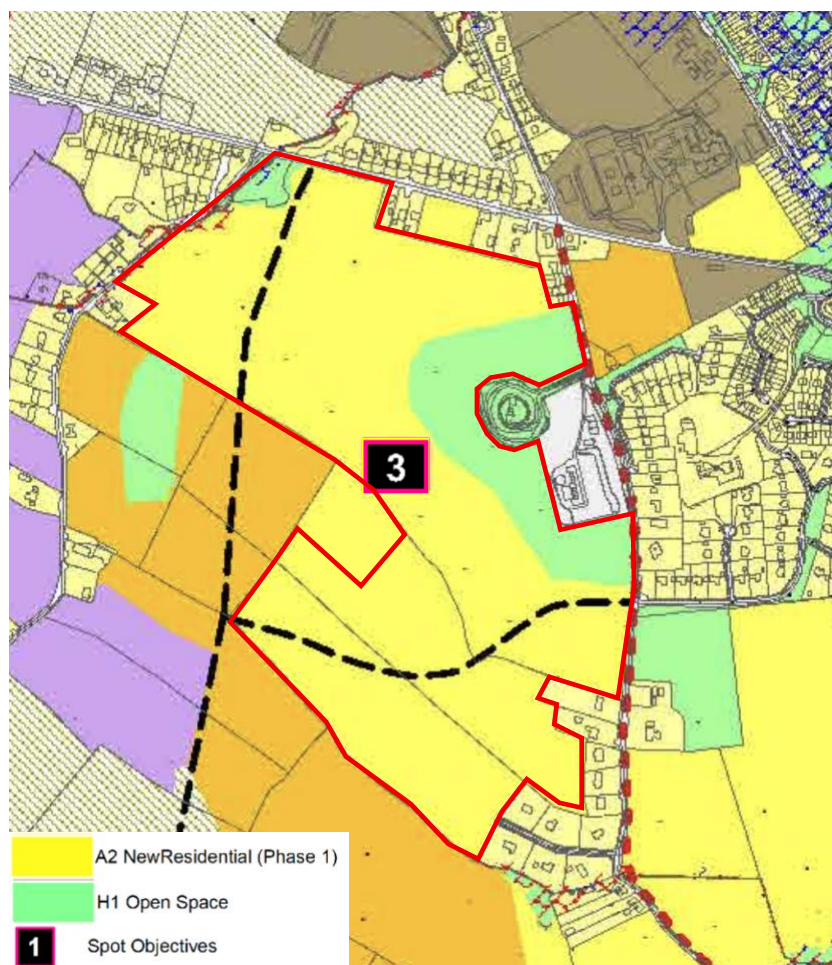


Figure 13.5: Extract, Zoning Map, Louth County Development Plan, 2021 - 2027

The site is subject to zoning objectives as follows:

'A2 – New Residential: To provide for new residential neighbourhoods and supporting community facilities'

'H1 – Open Space: To preserve, provide, and improve recreational amenity and open space',

Spot Objective 3

"To require the provision of neighbourhood and community facilities in a centrally located part of the Masterplan area convenient for future residents. These facilities shall be adjacent to each other to promote synergy between the uses. The neighbourhood facilities shall consist of a Neighbourhood Centre, consisting of a local shop(s) and services with the potential uses and floorspaces to be based on the 'Generally Permitted' or 'Open for Consideration' uses for B2 Neighbourhood Centre land use zoning as set out in the County Development Plan. Community Facilities shall consist of a 1.3hectare site to be reserved for future education facilities (i.e. school or other educational use). A playing pitch shall also be provided, with an opportunity to co-locate this pitch with the future school (education facility)."

13.4.1 Landscape Related Policy Objectives

The Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 contains a number of landscape related objectives relevant to the Proposed Development, extracts of which are set out in the following sections.

Chapter 3 Housing

The following Development Plan policy objective regarding Housing is relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

“Policy Objective HOU 24 To require the provision of high-quality areas of public open space in new residential developments that are functional spaces, centrally located, and passively overlooked.”

Chapter 8 Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

The following Development Plan policies and objectives regarding Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure are relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

“Policy Objective NBG2 “To promote and implement the objectives of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021 -2027 and any subsequent Louth Biodiversity Action Plan published during the life of this Plan.”

“Policy Objective NBG 23 “To ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to its character, value and objectives in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the Louth Landscape Character Assessment and by ensuring that new development meets high standards of siting and design and does not unduly damage or detract from the character of a landscape or natural environment.”

“Policy Objective NBG 24 “To ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements, which contribute to their distinctiveness such as scenic quality, habitats, settlement pattern, historic heritage and land use.”

“Policy Objective NBG 25 “Where appropriate, require that landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals be submitted with development applications, which may have significant impact on landscape character areas, especially in highly sensitive areas.”

“Policy Objective NBG 29 “To protect trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seek to designate additional Tree Preservations Orders (TPO), where appropriate.”

“Policy Objective NBG 30 “To protect trees and woodlands of special amenity value. Review and where appropriate make Tree Preservation Order(s) in relation to trees of special amenity value.”

“Policy Objective NBG 31 “Where in exceptional circumstances, trees and or hedgerows are required to be removed in order to facilitate development, this shall be done outside nesting season and there shall be a requirement that each tree felled is replaced at a ratio of 10:1 with native species and each hedgerow removed is to be replaced with a native species. In Drogheda and Dundalk, replacement trees will be required at a ratio of 5:1 where the removal of trees is required in order to facilitate development. On smaller, more constrained sites where there are limited space/opportunities for planting new trees, consideration may be given to reducing the ratio of trees to be planted on an application site if an alternative location for the shortfall of trees to be planted is identified and the consent of the landowner, on whose lands the trees are to be planted, is provided as part of a planning application.”

“Policy Objective NBG 33 “To assess the implications of proposed development on significant trees and hedgerows located on lands that are being considered for development, seeking their incorporation into design proposals where appropriate and in compliance with procedures detailed in Appendix 6.”

“Policy Objective NBG 34 “To increase native tree coverage in the County to also act as carbon sinks by promoting the planting of suitable native trees and hedgerows along public roads, residential streets, parks and other areas of open space.”

“Policy Objective NBG 38 “Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views and prospects listed in Tables 8.14 – 8.18 of this Plan that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape, from inappropriate development.”

“Policy Objective NBG 48 “All future development proposals shall require within the overall design Scheme the integration of environmental assets and existing biodiversity features including those

identified in Table 9 of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 8, Volume 3, to enhance the quality, character and design of the proposal."

"Policy Objective NBG 49 To require the integration of green infrastructure and inclusion of native planting schemes in all development proposals in landscaped areas, open spaces and areas of public space."

"Policy Objective NBG 51 To require the integration of climate change mitigation measures in any future spatial plans and climate change adaptation measures in proposed developments."

Chapter 9 Built Heritage and Culture

The following Development Plan policies and objectives regarding Heritage and Culture are relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

"Policy Objective BHC 2 To protect the built heritage assets of the county and ensure they are managed and preserved in a manner that does not adversely impact on the intrinsic value of these assets whilst supporting economic renewal and sustainable development."

"Policy Objective BHC 3 To protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, monuments, structures and objects, having regard to the advice of the National Monuments Services of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage."

"Policy Objective BHC 6 To ensure any development, either above or below ground, adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument or a Zone of Archaeological Potential (including formerly walled towns) shall not be detrimental to or detract from the character of the archaeological site or its setting and be sited and designed to protect the monument and its setting. Where upstanding remains exist, a visual impact assessment may be required."

Chapter 11 Environment, Natural Resources & the Coast

The following Development Plan policies and objectives regarding Built Heritage and Culture are relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

"Policy Objective ENV 38 To retain and protect significant stands of existing trees/hedgerows/woodlands, and seek increased planting of native trees, where appropriate, in new developments."

"Policy Objective ENV 39 Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area."

Chapter 12 Climate Action

The following Development Plan policy objective regarding Climate Action is relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

"Policy Objective CA 5 To actively promote and encourage nature-based approaches and green infrastructure solutions as viable mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and optimize the multifaceted benefits through:

- (i) Conservation, promotion and restoration of the natural environment;*
- (ii) Integrating an ecosystem services approach and promote healthy living environments through enhanced connection with nature and recreation/amenity;*
- (iii) Enhancing biodiversity in urban and rural settings;*
- (iv) Assist with water and flood risk management; and*
- (v) Carbon storage or sequestration."*

Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value

Having regard to the important role that trees and woodlands fulfil, the Council has identified and recorded trees and groups of trees considered to be of Special Amenity Value within the County. As such, and in recognition of the value of the trees, their conservation as part of any grant of planning permission will be required.

Any development permitted by the local authority which, in exceptional circumstances, permits the removal of trees or groups of trees shall contain a planning condition requiring the planting of replacement native, semi-mature trees at a ratio of five new trees per single tree removed in Dundalk.

The Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value within Dundalk have been identified in Figure 13.6 below.

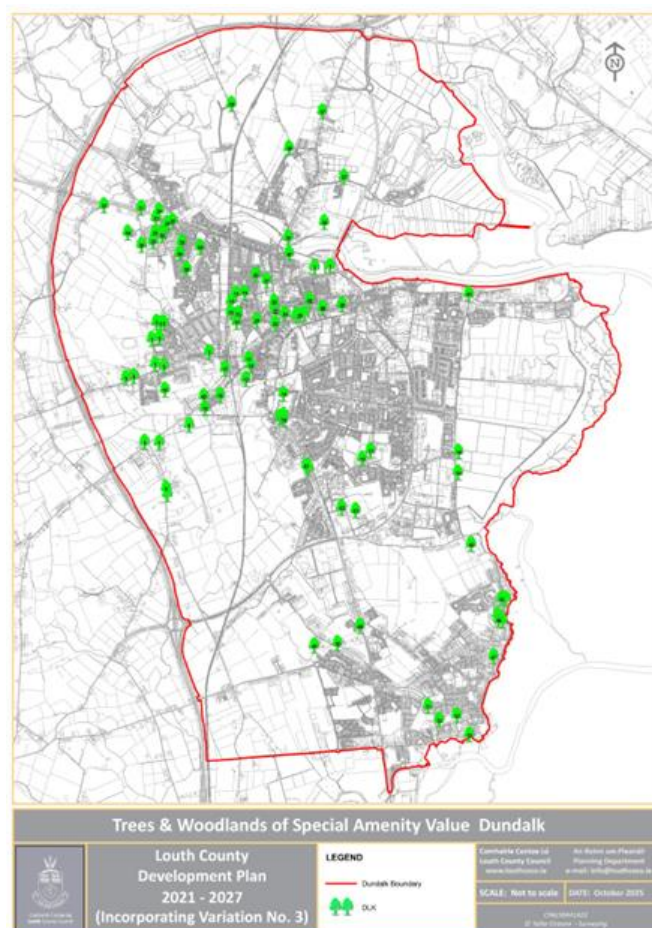


Figure 13.6 Louth CDP 2021 - 2027 Trees & Woodlands of Special Amenity Value Dundalk Map

The site features three Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value, reference nos. 30 (Trees on Mount Avenue located at the south portion of the zoned open space), 32, (Entrance to Grey Acre, Castletown Road located in the northwest corner of the site,) and 54 (Cu Chulainn's Castle Castletown around the Castletown Motte).

13.4.2 Landscape Character of the Subject Site

Louth's has nine Landscape Character Areas. The potential landscape capacity of each local character area is based on indicative types of development that are likely to occur within the study area.

The subject site is located within the designated "Muirhevna Plain" landscape character area which is designated as having "Local" importance.

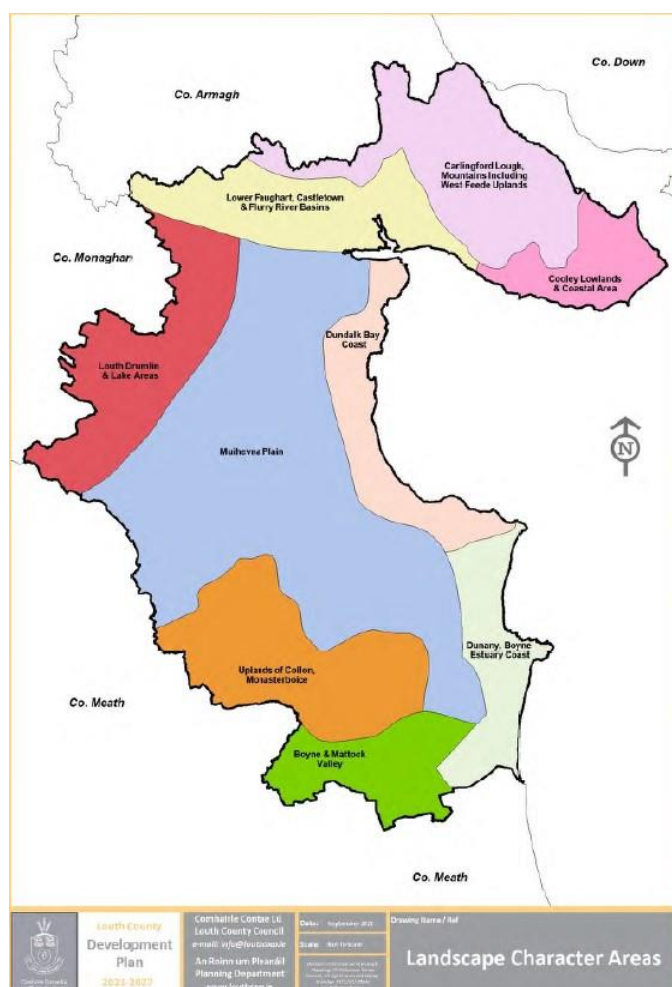


Figure 13.7: Louth County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 Landscape Character Area Map

Landscape Character Areas	Importance
Carlingford Lough and Mountains incl. West Feede Uplands	International
Boyne & Mattock Valley	National
- Dundalk Bay Coast - Dunany to Boyne Estuary Coast - Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice	Regional
- Cooley Lowlands and Coastal Area - Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry River basin - Louth Drumlin and Lake Areas - Muirhevna Plain	Local

Table 13.3: Louth County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 Landscape Character Areas Importance

13.4.3 Views and Prospects

The protected Views and Prospects as set out in the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating Variation No. 3) can be seen in Figure 13.7

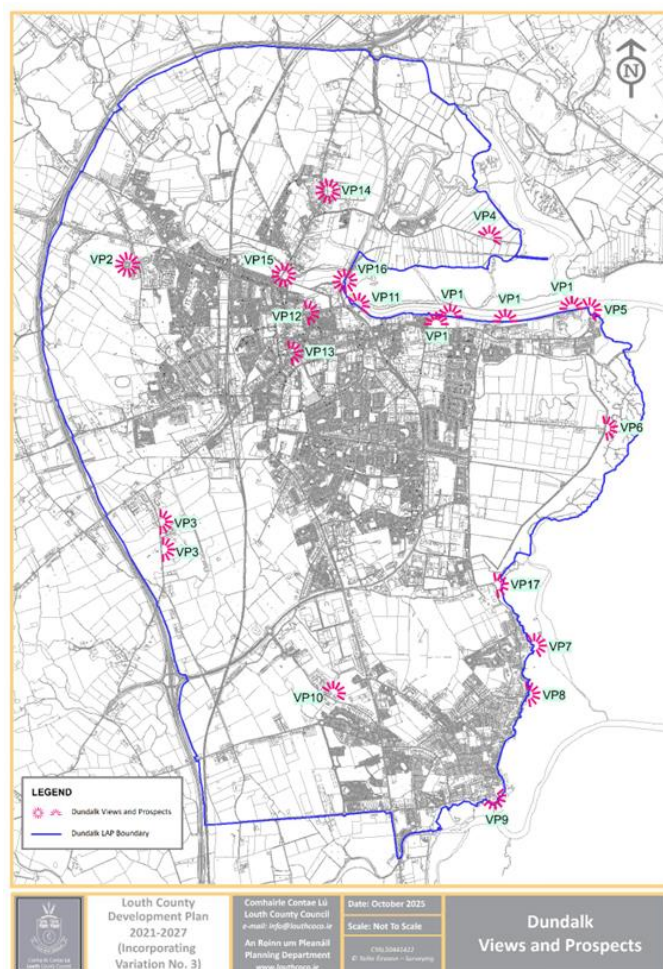


Figure 13.7: Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (Incorporating Variation No. 3) Dundalk Views & Prospects

The following Local Area Plan objective from chapter 10 Culture & Heritage regarding Dundalk Views and Prospects is relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment.

Policy Objectives CH 12 *“To protect views and prospects from inappropriate development that would either obstruct the view/prospect from the identified vantage point or form an obtrusive or incongruous feature in that view/prospect.”*

The photomontage view location points have been selected to align with the following protected views and prospects which are relevant to the proposed development: -

- Views and Prospects VP2 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating Variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the Cooley Mountains, and the Ring of Gullion.
- Views and Prospects VP14 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating Variation No. 3) which protects views of the Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains.
- Views and Prospects VP15 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating Variation No. 3) which protects views of the Castletown River, Castletown Motte, Ring of Gullion, the Cooley Mountains, and views into Town.
- Views and Prospects VP16 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating Variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the River, Castletown Motte, Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains.

13.5 DUNDALK LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025-2031 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

Chapter 3 | Key Development & Character Areas

The following Local Area Plan policies and objectives regarding Key Development & Character Areas are relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

KDCA 1

"To support and promote the development of the following 'Key Development Areas' in Dundalk:

- i) Mount Avenue Area*
- ii) Raynoldstown Village*
- iii) St. Nicholas Quarter*
- iv) The Long Walk Quarter*
- v) Park Street-Francis Street-St. Patrick's Church*
- vi) Dundalk Port*

into successfully socially integrated neighbourhoods which deliver quality, functional housing, public spaces, services, amenities, and employment opportunities as applicable to each area."

KDCA 3

"To require the preparation of a masterplan for the Mount Avenue Area in accordance with the details set out in Section 3.2.1 'Mount Avenue Key Development Area' and Section 3.4 'Masterplans and Spot Objectives' (as relevant to the Mount Avenue Area)."

Mount Avenue Masterplan Area

"Located to the west of the town centre, the Mount Avenue area of Dundalk consists of c.35ha of land zoned for new residential development and open space, with a requirement to provide associated neighbourhood and community facilities on the lands by way of Spot Objective F".

Spot Objective F of Dundalk Local Area Plan 2025 - 2031

"To require the provision of neighbourhood and community facilities in a centrally located part of the Masterplan area convenient for future residents. These facilities shall be adjacent to each other to promote synergy between the uses. The neighbourhood facilities shall consist of a Neighbourhood Centre, consisting of a local shop(s) and services with the potential uses and floorspaces to be based on the 'Generally Permitted' or 'Open for Consideration' uses for B2 Neighbourhood Centre land use zoning as set out in the County Development Plan. Community Facilities shall consist of a 1.3hectare site to be reserved for future education facilities (i.e. school or other educational use). A playing pitch shall also be provided, with an opportunity to co-locate this pitch with the future school (education facility)."

An important landmark in the area is Cúchulainn's Castle, which stands on top of the mound of Castletown Motte, which is a national monument, is surrounded by Trees of Special Amenity Value whose landscape, amenity and biodiversity value is recognised. The Stone of Lingadan/Standing Stone, located within the site is listed as a protected structure. The Stone of Lingadan is safeguarded for its archaeological and historical significance.

There are four scheduled monuments in the vicinity of the Castle and part of the Mount Avenue lands fall within a Zone of Archaeological Potential.

In order to preserve its character and setting a buffer of land around the motte has been zoned for open space which could be developed as a heritage park. The area will include a network of green spaces with permeable links between each of the spaces.

Chapter 5 | Sustainable Neighbourhoods and Communities

The following Local Area Plan policies and objectives regarding Sustainable Neighbourhoods and Communities are relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

Castletown Motte “To provide a multi-functional heritage park as part of the development of the residential lands in the Mount Avenue Masterplan area, which allows for the creation of open space whilst retaining the sites intrinsic cultural heritage value. ”

Policy Objective SC 34 “To provide public and private open space in accordance with the provisions for new residential developments in accordance with Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2024).”

Chapter 9 | Infrastructure

The following Local Area Plan policies and objectives regarding Infrastructure are relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

Policy Objective INF 27 “To ensure that, where feasible, no development, including clearing or storage of materials, takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from the bank of any river, stream, or watercourse unless the development is water compatible. New developments shall seek to incorporate the ‘Four Steps to Good Riparian and River Planning for Urban Areas’ as set out in ‘Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment’ (Inland Fisheries Ireland, 2020).”

Chapter 10 | Culture & Heritage

Zones of Archaeological Potential. In addition to noting upstanding remains, zones where likely subsurface archaeological remains exist, were also identified and included in the Record of Monuments and Places. These recorded monuments in the Plan are referred to as Zones of Archaeological Potential. There are two large Zones of Archaeological Potential in Dundalk, one of which, Castletown the site of the original Dundalk, extends over the north western portion of the subject site as shown in Figure 13.8 below.

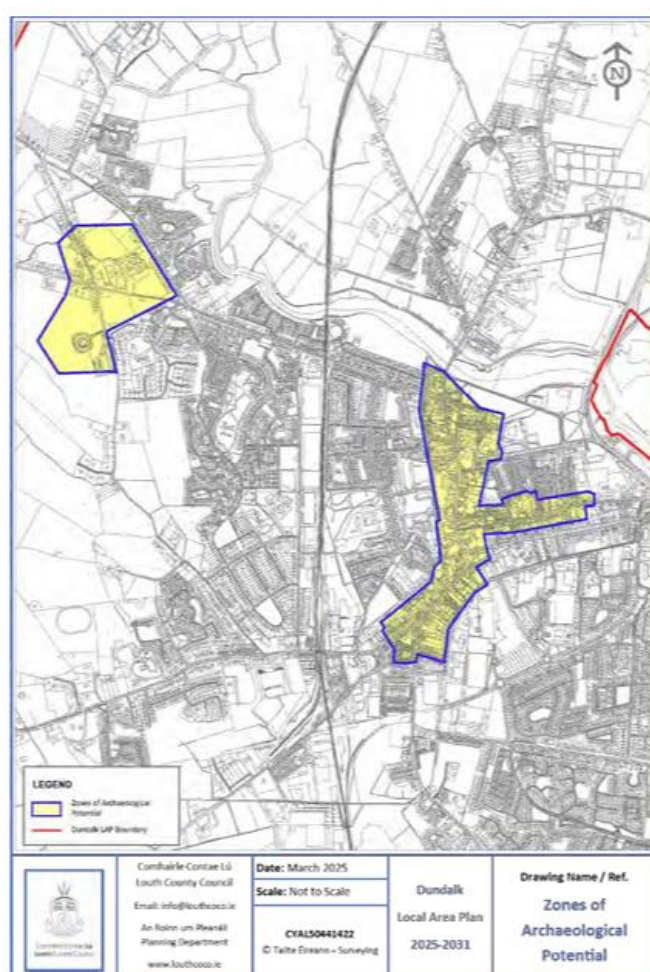


Figure 13.8 Dundalk Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031 Zones of Archaeological Potential

The following Local Area Plan policies and objectives regarding Culture and Heritage are relevant to the landscape visual impact assessment: -

“Policy Objectives CH 19 To protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, monuments, structures and objects, having regard to the advice of the National Monuments Services of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage including the guidance and principles set out in ‘The Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage’ (1999).”

“Policy Objectives CH 20 To protect the archaeological assets of Dundalk and ensure they are managed and preserved in a manner that does not adversely impact on the intrinsic value of these assets whilst supporting economic renewal, tourism and sustainable development.”

13.6 SITE DESCRIPTION

13.6.1 Lands at Mount Avenue, Castletown, Dundalk, Co. Louth

Located approximately 0.5km east of the M1 Motorway, the site is bound by Castletown Road to the north, Mount Avenue at the east, further greenfield to the south, and Greycastle Road to the west of the site.

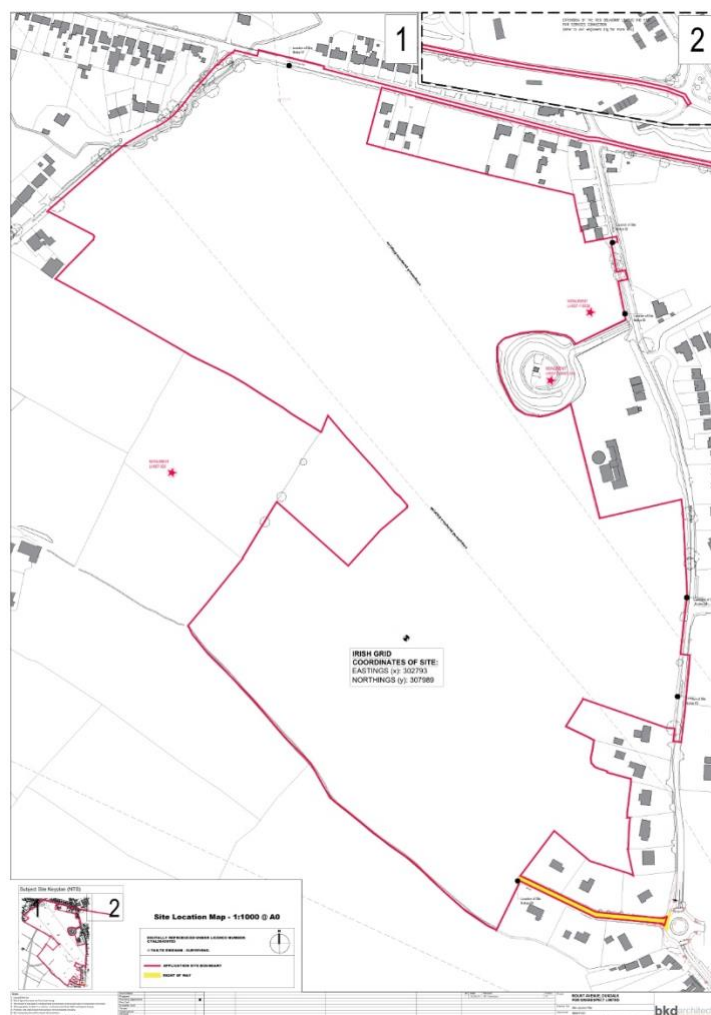


Figure 13.9: Proposed Site Red Line Boundary Mount Avenue, Dundalk (BKD Architects)

Within the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, the site is zoned A2 – ‘New Residential Phase 1’, H1 – ‘Open Space’, and G1 – ‘Community Facilities’. Similarly, within the Dundalk Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031, the site is zoned A2 and H1, with Spot Objective F stating requirements for community

and neighbourhood facilities. Both the Development Plan and the Dundalk Local Area Plan note a requirement for the development of a Link Street on the lands, connecting from Castletown Road to Mount Avenue.

13.6.2 Character and Visibility

The site is currently greenfield agricultural land of c. 39.73 hectares bounded by hedgerows. Areas of woodland and wet grassland are also present on site. The Castletown River borders the north western boundary and a riparian buffer is in place.

The site features the Townland hedgerow Newtownbalregan and three Trees and Woodlands of Special Amenity Value (ref. no. 30, 32, 54) located in the north western corner, at the Castletown Motte, and within the southern portion of the zoned open space around the Motte, all of which contribute to the sense of place and character of the area.

An important landmark in the area is Cúchulainn's Castle, which stands on top of the mound of Castletown Motte, which is a national monument, it is surrounded by Trees of Special Amenity Value. The Stone of Lingadan/Standing Stone, located within the site is listed as a protected structure. The Stone of Lingadan is safeguarded for its archaeological and historical significance. There are four scheduled monuments in the vicinity of the Castle and part of the Mount Avenue lands fall within a Zone of Archaeological Potential.

13.6.3 Receptors

Northern Receptors

The M1 motorway runs in a north-south direction from Dublin to Dundalk, connecting with the N1. It functions as a bypass around Dundalk town and is accessible via the R934 which lies to the north of the site.

There are multiple sporting grounds located north of the site, namely Dundalk Rugby Club, Naomh Moninne Hurling club, and Castletown Belles Football Club. Accessible from Mill Rd and Bellewsbridge Rd.

There are two schools located to the north of the site, De La Salle College and Louth English. De La Salle is an all-boys secondary school with operating hours of 8.50am – 3.50pm Monday to Friday, accessible via Castletown Road. Louth English is an English language school offering classes to adults with operating hours of 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday accessible via Bellewsbridge Rd.

There are two healthcare facilities north of the site, Curam Care Home and An Slí residential home for disabled people, both with operating hours of 24/7. Accessible via Riverwell Cl and Toberona Rd, respectively. Curam Care Home has a maximum occupancy of 82, and An Slí has a maximum occupancy of 8.

Accessible from Mill Rd are St Joseph's Church and graveyard, built in 1996.

Páirc Eoin Baiste, accessible via Bellewsbridge Rd provides open amenity space to the north of the site.

There are many residential developments located to the north of the site, Clós Aodhan/Emer/Croinn, comprising of three storey semidetached apartment buildings. Fatima Park/Drive/Court is made up of terraced two storey houses with open space at the centre of the development. Riverwell Close and Oldbridge both consist of two storey semi-detached houses. There are a number of detached homes located along the Tateetra road, Mill Rd, and Castletown Rd.

Castletown Road (R934) runs east to west along the part of the northern boundary of the site. It provides access to the M1 and into Dundalk town centre. Located along Castletown Road are various businesses and dwellings. There is a furniture shop, car wash, tow service, and a pub.

Southern Receptors

Located to the south of the site is Carrick Road Medical Centre (GP practitioner). Accessible from An Bothair Dara it has operating hours of 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday.

There is an ESB Substation to the south of the site, accessible via Mount Avenue.

Dundalk (Clarke) train station is located south of the site, accessible via Carrickmacross Road (R178). The train station provides services to Dublin Connolly and Belfast as well as a Dublin commuter service. It offers car parking facilities and has opening hours as follows; 5:15am – 6pm Monday to Friday, 6:45am – 5pm Saturday, and 10.30am – 2.30pm Sundays.

Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, St Brigid's Special Needs School are both accessible via Árd Easmuinn. Holy Redeemer Catholic Church was built in the 1960's and has a capacity of 1,100. St Brigid's School opened in 1970 and facilitates students with mild learning difficulties between the ages of 4 and 18. Árd Easmuinn also provides access to the Redeemers Boys' National School and Redeemers Girls' National School, which are on the same campus. These schools have operating hours of 8.50am – 2.40pm/3.30pm.

Oriel Park is a stadium is the home ground of the Dundalk Football Club, accessible via the Carrickmacross Rd. It has a capacity of 4,500 people for domestic matches and opened in 1919.

Mount Avenue provides access to multiple residential areas. Árd Easmuinn consists of bungalows and semi-detached two storey dwellings. Bothair Dara and Bothair Na Carraig consist of two storey detached and semi-detached dwellings.

Eastern Receptors

Cú Chulainn's Castle is located to the east of the site, it dates back to 1780 and is a designated National Monument. There is a Bronze Age Monolith beside the castle, which is an important historical landmark. Both of these are tourist attractions, accessible via Mount Avenue. Castletown Cemetery is another historical landmark located to the east of the site.

Mount Avenue runs in a north-south direction along the eastern boundary of the site. It provides access to residential areas Headford and The Rise, which consists of detached two storey homes.

To the east of the site, Castletown Rd continues towards Dundalk town centre. Along Castletown Rd there is a pub, a church, a creche, a Mace, a pharmacy, and a takeaway. Castletown Rd provides access to Castleross housing development which comprises of two storey semi-detached and terraced houses. The road also provides access to Barton Park, Marian Park which consist of two storey terraced houses and bungalows.

Aisling Park is located to the east of the site, accessible via Marian Park. The park contains a playground and AstroTurf pitch, as well as a large area of open green space.

Western Receptors

Greyacre Rd runs from the R934 in a southerly direction to the west of the site. There are a number of individual detached dwellings situated along this road as well as farmsteads and associated access to farm land.

The M1 Dundalk bypass also runs to the west of the site, accessible via the R934.

13.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

13.7.1 Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises 1058no. dwellings (10no. 2 bedroom bungalows, 34no. 2 bedroom 2-storey houses, 547no. 3-bedroom 2-storey houses, 174no. 4-bedroom 2-storey houses (765no. houses total), 33no. 1 bedroom duplex units, 75no. 2 bedroom duplex units, 42no. 3 bedroom duplex units (150no. duplex units total), and 78no. 1 bedroom apartment units, 65no. 2 bedroom apartment units (143no. apartment units total) across 4no. apartment blocks) including 2no. duplex units (unit type Q) with an option to accommodate a childcare facility at ground floor level; a local centre comprising ground floor retail, café, restaurant units and a medical unit at GFL; provision of a crèche facility with capacity for c. 194no. childcare spaces; all in buildings ranging in height from 1 to

6 storeys; a mobility hub with provision for EV Charging; 2020no. car parking spaces including 20% EV charging provision; 1770no. cycle parking spaces; 2no. new site entrances at Castletown Road and Mount Avenue, an Arterial Route and a Link Road, footpaths, cycle paths provision of 17% public open space (c. 5.1Ha); a Heritage Park (c. 5.44Ha) on the lands surrounding Cú Chulainn's Castle (Protected Structure) to the east; a play pitch (c. 5448sq m) and associated site reserved for the future development of an educational facility (c. 1.35ha); all associated and ancillary site development and infrastructural works, hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment works including public, communal, and private open space; public lighting; 9no. ESB substations; bin stores; provision of a foul sewage pumping station; laying a foul rising main along Castletown Road from the proposed new access to the development eastward to the Castletown Road and Bellewsbridge Road Junction.

13.7.2 Cumulative

In preparing this Landscape and Visual Impact the following permitted developments awaiting commencement have been considered as regards the potential for cumulative effects.

LCC Reg. Ref. 18156/ ACP Ref. 303188

Permission granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála for proposed development comprising the demolition of an existing light industrial unit (995sqm) and development of an 88 bed nursing home and all necessary support facilities.

LCC Reg. Ref. 2460792

Further information submitted to Louth County Council on 28 July 2025 for 63 no. houses in semi-detached and terraced format and ranging in height from 2 -3 no. storeys at Mount Avenue, Farrandreg, Dundalk, Co. Louth

LCC Reg. Ref. 2360406

Permission granted on 12 January 2024 for the construction of new two-storey dwelling, new site entrance and associated site works at Castletown Cross, Castleblaney Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth.

The cumulative visual impacts of the proposed development itself are judged to be Moderate Negative in the Short-Term during the construction phase. In the wider context considering the projects identified above with the potential for cumulative effects, it is judged that the proposed development does not cumulate or add to any potential visual impacts these may have.

The cumulative visual impacts of the proposed development itself are judged to be Moderate Neutral in the Long-Term during the operational phase. In the wider context considering the projects identified above with the potential for cumulative effects, it is judged that the proposed development does not cumulate or add to any potential visual impacts these may have.

13.8 POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

13.8.1 Proposed Development

Given that the existing lands are agricultural in nature, and that the proposed development will include a large number of residential units including houses, duplexes and apartments in buildings ranging in height from 1 to 6-storeys overall, the development has the potential for a level of visual impact.

The proximity of the development to Cúchulainn's Castle, which stands on top of the mound of Castletown Motte, places it in a visually sensitive area considering the importance of this national monument and its associated heritage elements.

13.8.1.1 Construction Stage

The change of use of the site from its current form to that of a construction site has the potential to result in the following impacts:

- Visual impact due to the introduction of new structures, access roads, machinery, material storage, associated earthworks, car parking, lighting and hoarding.
- Change of character due to the change of use.
- The removal of trees and vegetation.
- Alterations to the entrance routes to facilitate the access of plant and machinery.
- Visual impacts on local roads due to the increase in traffic movements
- Change in ground levels

The construction stage impact tends to be the greatest at the initial 'site disturbance' or 'breaking ground' stage. The adjoining residential properties along Castletown Road to the north, Greyacre Road to the east, and Mount Avenue to the west will be the most impacted from the construction activity.

The development will most likely be phased and as one element is completed another will be under construction ensuring that the construction impacts will be lessened.

13.8.1.2 Operational Stage

The change in use of the site from its current form to that as described in the Summary Descriptions of Development has the potential to result in the following impacts: -

- Visual impacts due to the introduction of new building, walls, boundary treatments etc.
- Visual impacts due to the introduction of new internal roads, lighting and parking.
- Visual impacts due to the introduction of new open spaces and landscape proposals

It is considered that given the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands, the lands are positioned to somewhat 'expect' a residential scheme of this nature.

The visual impact post-construction will be the change from existing agricultural use to an extensively constructed low to medium-rise residential development. The change for adjoining residents will therefore be noticeable but will be offset to an extent by the inclusion of extensive areas of public amenity open space (exclusive of private amenity communal open space), the inclusion of the additional green infrastructure and biodiversity features proposed for the development, and a heritage park for the benefit of future residents as well as the wider local community, which will serve to integrate the scheme into the existing landscape.

Given the proposed heights of up to 6 storeys, the taller apartment buildings will be visible from a range of directions particularly from the R934 Castletown and Mount Avenue Roads. The existing nearby residential properties will be visually impacted by the development but given the short boundary with the site, and existing intervening boundary vegetation, they should not be unduly negatively visually impacted by the construction of the development. The impacts would be considered consistent with emerging building density trends of increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner while respecting existing ecological and historical elements in the landscape.

13.8.2 Cumulative

13.8.2.1 Construction Stage

Negative Temporary to Short Term Visual Impact.

13.8.2.2 Operational Stage

Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact.

13.9 VISUAL IMPACT- PHOTOMONTAGES

18 No. photomontages (Refer to Appendix 13.1) have been prepared to illustrate the physical and visual character of this residential development within its surrounds. The views were taken from publicly accessible places where it was considered that visual impacts could arise, and CGIs were prepared close to and within the site to demonstrate the appearance of the built elements and landscape treatments. A description of the visual impact from each viewpoint is illustrated below: -

Photomontage View 01	View west from the Tain Bridge on the N52
Existing View	This view location on the Tain Bridge aligns with Views and Prospects VP16 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the River, Castletown Motte, Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains. The view west from the Tain Bridge on the N52 looks upriver towards the subject site. The wooded banks of the Castletown River frame the view with the 6 / 7 storey residential and commercial building on the R132, and the ridge above Mount Avenue containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle, in the background against the skyline.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.

Photomontage View 02	View south west from the entrance to St Patrick's Cemetery
Existing View	This view location from St Patrick's Cemetery on the R132 at Dowdallshill aligns with Views and Prospects VP14 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of the Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains. The view south west from the entrance to St Patrick's Cemetery looks across the R132 towards the subject site which is screened by a row of residential properties.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.

Photomontage View 3	View west from the Newry Road Bridge over the River Boyne on the R132
Existing View	This view location from the Newry Road Bridge on the R132 aligns with Views and Prospects VP15 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of the Castletown River, Castletown Motte, Ring of Gullion, the Cooley Mountains, and views into Town. The view west looks upriver towards the subject site over the green areas and open spaces off Maxwells Row, and the existing residential developments lining the R934. The ridge above Mount Avenue containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle can be seen in the background against the skyline.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation for the most part, with a glimpse of the roof structure of a small number of building units in amongst the ridge lines of the existing residential properties in the far distance. These glimpse views of the proposed development sit below the horizon line and are visually integrated with the existing urban landscape.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view

	is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible short-term visual impact.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible short-term visual impact.

Photomontage View 4	View east / south east from the R934 Roundabout at the slip road of Junction 17 of the M1
Existing View	The view east / south east from the R934 Roundabout at the slip road of Junction 17 of the M1 looks towards the subject site with the ridge above Mount Avenue containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle visible in the background. The upper sections of the Castle can be seen through the mature trees lining the ridge. The R934 continues west with roadside planting, light columns and road signs visible. Utility poles with power cables cross the view in the middle ground.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing vegetation for the most part, with a glimpse of the roof structure of a small number of building units in amongst the existing trees and hedgerow. These glimpse views of the proposed development sit below the horizon line and do not interfere with the views of Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle in the background. Continued future growth of the existing vegetation and hedgerow will further screen the proposed development in the medium term.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view is screened by the existing vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible short-term visual impact.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view is screened by the existing vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible short-term visual impact.

Photomontage View 5	View south from the R934
Existing View	The view south from the R934 looks through an agricultural gate in the roadside hedgerow across farmland into the subject site with the ridge above Mount Avenue containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle visible in the background. The silhouette of the Castle can be seen through the mature trees lining the ridge. A utility pole with power and telecommunication cables crosses the view against the skyline.
Proposed View	The view shows the upper sections of a number of houses in the proposed development behind a boundary wall. The ridge line of the proposed houses sits below the skyline and does not obstruct views of Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle in the background. The positioning of the internal roadway in the proposed development allows for the view of the Castle to be protected through the mature trees lining the ridge. The mitigating landscape treatments include the proposed heritage park which provides a buffer zone to the Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's castle, the retention of the existing field hedgerow to screen the boundary wall, and new boundary and street tree planting. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. Residential developments of this type are a familiar element within the immediate surrounding landscape. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction given the proximity to the Castletown Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 6	View east / south east from the Greyacre Road
Existing View	The view east / south east from the Greyacre Road looks through the roadside trees and vegetation into the subject site with the ridge above Mount Avenue containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle visible in the background. The silhouette of the Castle can be seen through the mature trees lining the ridge.
Proposed View	The view shows a row of houses in the proposed development in the middle ground through the existing boundary trees and vegetation. In the foreground by way of visual mitigation can be seen one of the sites wider green areas which in this case also provides for an exclusion zone by the Castletown Stream. This green area will contain woodland walks, tree planting, recreation and natural play areas, picnic seating and grass lawn / kickabout areas, while enhancing the existing hedgerows and planting with wet tolerant species improving the natural landscape and supporting local biodiversity. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction given the proximity to the Greyacre Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 7	View north east from the Greyacre Road
Existing View	The view north east from the Greyacre Road looks through a farm access gate towards the subject site. There is a stone wall crossing the view in the middle ground with mature trees behind. The uppermost section of Cu Chulainn's Castle is visible amongst the mature trees lining the ridge above Mount Avenue. The telecommunications tower accessible from Mount Avenue can clearly be seen to the south east of the Castle.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.

Photomontage View 8	View north east from the Greyacre Road
Existing View	The view north east from the Greyacre Road looks over the roadside hedgerow across rolling farmland towards the subject site. Utility poles and telecommunication cables cross the view in two directions. Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle can be seen amongst the mature trees lining the ridge above Mount Avenue. The telecommunications tower accessible from Mount Avenue can clearly be seen to the south east of the Castle. The Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains provide the backdrop to the view.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation for the most part, with a glimpse of the roof structure of a building unit overlooking the northern edge of the subject site visible through the branches of the trees and vegetation.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible short-term visual impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view

	is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible short-term visual impact
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Photomontage View 9	View north east from Rogans Bend
Existing View	The view north east from Rogan's Bend looks towards the subject site which is screened by the boundary wall, entrance gate and associated planting of a residential property, with partial views available of the countryside further north east. A second residential property is visible in the middle ground as the road turns east. The Cooley Mountains provide the backdrop to the view.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.

Photomontage View 10	View south from the junction of Mount Avenue and Castletown Road
Existing View	The view south from the junction of Mount Avenue and Castletown Road looks along Mount Avenue as it rises towards the subject site and the ridge containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle. Both are screened from view by the existing mature trees and vegetation. Detached residential properties, associated boundary features and roadside vegetation fill out the view. Utility poles and telecommunication cables cross the view in two directions
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement as the proposed development is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation.

Photomontage View 11.2	Views from Castletown Motte
Existing View	This view north from Castletown Motte aligns with Views and Prospects VP2 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the Cooley Mountains, and the Ring of Gullion. The view looks from the outer lip of the Motte through a stand of mature trees. The land falls away from the ridge before rising again towards the Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains. The views are dominated by rolling farmland with a number of residential properties and farmsteads visible in the middle ground.
Proposed View	The view shows the wildflower meadow of the proposed heritage park visible in the foreground leading to partial views of residential units from the proposed development in the middle ground through the trees and vegetation encircling the outer ring of Castletown Motte. Beyond this a patchwork of agricultural fields, hedgerows and trees can be seen leading towards the Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains in the distance. The proposed residential development sits well below the skyline and there is no interruption of views of the Ring of Gullion and the Cooley Mountains. The mitigating landscape treatments include the proposed heritage park which provides a buffer zone to the Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's castle, and the retention of the existing field hedgerow to aid with screening. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. Residential developments of this

	type are a familiar element within the immediate surrounding landscape. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction given the proximity to the Castletown and Mount Avenue Roads.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 11.1	Views from Castletown Motte
Existing View	This view west from Castletown Motte aligns with Views and Prospects VP2 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the Cooley Mountains, and the Ring of Gullion. The view looks from the outer lip of the Motte through a stand of mature trees, across the subject site. The land falls away from the ridge before rising again towards the horizon. The views are dominated by rolling farmland with a number of residential properties and farmsteads visible in the middle ground.
Proposed View	The view shows the wildflower meadow of the proposed heritage park visible in the foreground with its winding accessible paths, seating and observatory viewpoints. The sloped playground comprising natural elements such as large stones and wooden structures along with an informal plaza can be seen within the heritage park. The view contains partial views of duplex units within the proposed development in the middle ground through the trees and vegetation encircling the outer ring of Castletown Motte. Beyond this a patchwork of agricultural fields, hedgerows and trees can be seen in the far distance stretching towards the skyline. The proposed development does not break the skyline and there is no interruption of views of the horizon. The mitigating landscape treatments include the proposed heritage park which provides a buffer zone to the Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's castle, and the retention of the existing field hedgerow to aid with screening. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. Residential developments of this type are a familiar element within the immediate surrounding landscape. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction give the proximity to Greyacre Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 11	Views from Castletown Motte
Existing View	This view south west from Castletown Motte aligns with Views and Prospects VP2 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the Cooley Mountains, and the Ring of Gullion. The view looks from the outer lip of the Motte through a stand of mature trees, across the subject site. The land falls away from the ridge before rising again towards the horizon. The views are dominated by rolling farmland with a number of residential properties and farmsteads visible in the middle ground.
Proposed View	The view looks the wildflower meadow of the proposed heritage park visible in the foreground with its winding accessible paths, seating and observatory viewpoints. The view contains partial views of residential units and apartment buildings from the proposed development in the middle ground

	through the trees and vegetation encircling the outer ring of Castletown Motte. Beyond this is a patchwork of agricultural fields, hedgerows and trees in the far distance stretching towards the skyline. The proposed development does not break the skyline and there is no interruption of views of the horizon. The mitigating landscape treatments include the proposed heritage park which provides a buffer zone to the Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's castle, and the retention of the existing field hedgerow to aid with screening. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. Residential developments of this type are a familiar element within the immediate surrounding landscape. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction give the proximity to Greyacre Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 12	View west from Cu Chulainn's Castle
Existing View	This view from Cu Chulainn's Castle aligns with Views and Prospects VP2 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the Cooley Mountains, and the Ring of Gullion. This view looks west, across the subject site, from the ridge containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle. The land falls away from the ridge before rising again towards the horizon. The view is dominated by rolling farmland with a number of residential properties and farmsteads visible in the middle ground.
Proposed View	The view shows the wildflower meadow of the proposed heritage park visible in the foreground. The view contains views of a row of duplex units from the proposed development in the middle ground through the trees and vegetation encircling the outer ring of Castletown Motte. Beyond this a patchwork of agricultural fields, hedgerows and trees can be seen in the far distance stretching towards the skyline. The proposed development does not break the skyline and there is no interruption of views of the horizon. The mitigating landscape treatments include the proposed heritage park which provides a buffer zone to the Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's castle, extensive semi-mature tree planting, and the retention of the existing field hedgerow to aid with screening. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. Residential developments of this type are a familiar element within the immediate surrounding landscape. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction give the proximity to Greyacre Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 13	View south west from Cu Chulainn's Castle
Existing View	This view from Cu Chulainn's Castle aligns with Views and Prospects VP2 from the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (incorporating variation No. 3) which protects views of Dundalk Bay, the Cooley Mountains, and the Ring of Gullion. This view looks south west through a stand of mature trees, across the subject site, from the ridge containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's

	Castle. The land falls away from the ridge before rising again towards the horizon. The view is dominated by rolling farmland with a number of residential properties and farmsteads visible in the middle ground.
Proposed View	The view shows the wildflower meadow of the proposed heritage park visible in the foreground. The view contains views of houses from the proposed development in the middle ground through the trees and vegetation encircling the outer ring of Castletown Motte. Beyond this a patchwork of agricultural fields, hedgerows and trees can be seen in the far distance stretching towards the skyline. The proposed development does not break the skyline and there is no interruption of views of the horizon. The mitigating landscape treatments include the proposed heritage park which provides a buffer zone to the Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's castle, extensive semi-mature tree planting, and the retention of the existing field hedgerow to aid with screening. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. Residential developments of this type are a familiar element within the immediate surrounding landscape. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction give the proximity to Mount Avenue Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 15.1	View north west from Mount Avenue outside the disused stable block
Existing View	The view north west from Mount Avenue outside the disused stable block looks into the subject site through a section of mature hedgerow which has been removed and replaced with harris fencing to facilitate infrastructure / services works. Because of this recent removal of a section of mature hedgerow, the tree lined ridge above Mount Avenue rises to the north west with the majority of the view dominated by the agricultural fields of the subject site. A utility pole with telecommunication cables crosses the view with field boundary hedgerows and mature trees visible at the horizon.
Proposed View	The view shows the entrance to the proposed development from Mount Avenue with a row of new residential units visible in the background. Sitting in front of these houses are signature architectural elements, a proposed pocket park with a mix of play elements, recreation space, communal open space, a picnic seating area, and planting. The existing roadside boundary trees and hedgerow have been retained as much as possible. The foreground consists of an area of amenity lawn, a bioretention areas with associated planting, and semi mature tree planting. The proposed development represents a continuation of the recent residential development along this part of Mount Avenue. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. The proposed development mirrors recently constructed and existing residential developments of this type which are a familiar element along this section of Mount Avenue. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction give the proximity to Mount Avenue Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 16	View north / north west from the end of the Cul de Sac off Mount Avenue
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Existing View	The view north / north west from the start of the Cul de Sac off Mount Avenue looks towards the subject site along an existing residential street with a row of detached dwellings lining the righthand side and a mature beech hedge forming the lefthand boundary inside a footpath. The subject site can be seen at the end of the cul de sac through a farm access gate with existing mature hedgerows behind.
Proposed View	The view shows the retention of existing residential street, footpath and mature beech hedge leading to the proposed development with a number of new residential units visible in the background. The northern portion of a proposed football pitch / kickabout area can be seen in front of the new residential units. The proposed development represents a continuation of the existing residential setting. The proposed development is in keeping with the zoning objectives pertaining to the lands and the impacts would be consistent with emerging building trends as regards density, increased building heights and maximising the use of development lands in a sustainable manner. The proposed development mirrors recently constructed and existing residential developments of this type which are a familiar element along this section of Mount Avenue. There may be some short-term negative impacts during construction given the proximity to Mount Avenue Road.
Impact (Construction Stage)	Negative Temporary to Short-Term Visual Impact
Impact (Operation Stage)	Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact

Photomontage View 17	View north / north west from An Bothair Dara
Existing View	The view north / north west from An Bothair Dara looks towards the subject site across a shared pedestrian and cycle path over fenced farmland towards stands of mature trees and hedgerows. There are utility poles, telecommunication cables and roadside light columns visible in the middle ground. Sections of Phase 2 of the Hearthfield Residential Development which is under construction are visible as the ground rises to the north. The ridge above Mount Avenue containing Castletown Motte and Cu Chulainn's Castle can be seen in the background against the skyline.
Proposed View	The view shows the outline of the proposed development screened from view by the existing built environment and vegetation for the most part, with a glimpse of the roof structure of a building unit overlooking the northern edge of the subject site visible through the branches of the trees and vegetation.
Impact (Construction Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible short-term visual impact.
Impact (Operation Stage)	An effect not capable of measurement for the most part as the proposed view is screened by the existing built environment and vegetation, with a very small percentage resulting in an imperceptible neutral short-term visual impact.

13.10 MITIGATION MEASURES (AMELIORATIVE, REMEDIAL OR REDUCTIVE MEASURES)

13.10.1 Proposed Development

There are a number of measures that have and can be taken to ensure that the impacts of the proposed development are minimised during construction and subsequent occupation.

13.10.1.1 Design Stage

Consideration of the impact on landscape and visual aspects has been integral in the design and layout of the scheme as the design proceeded. The design intent is to integrate the Proposed Development into its surrounding environment. This will be achieved by retaining existing vegetation and hedgerows where possible, supplementing with additional screen planting to enhance visual buffers and promote biodiversity. These measures will also support the creation of habitats for local bird and wildlife species. The layout and design of the building's vis a vis the existing landscape and the retention of a significant amount of mature tree planting at the boundaries and within the site are the main considerations in the landscape design process to minimise negative visual impacts.

A number of mitigation measures have been addressed at design stage including: -

- The landscape proposals in this case have been designed by Gannon and Associates having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and the LAP. The provision of a high-quality public realm is a key element of this proposal.
- Enhanced boundary treatments with existing trees, hedgerow and water courses to be retained and protected as per the Tree Survey and Constraints Plan prepared by CMK Horticulture & Arboriculture.
- A Woodland Walk riparian buffer zone along Greyacre Road with mitigation measures to protect the Castletown River and downstream designated sites.
- Proposed new green infrastructure networks and the addition of wildlife corridors with proposed native hedgerow and tree line links.
- The proposed development includes areas of public amenity open space (exclusive of private amenity communal open space) for the benefit of future residents as well the wider local community, and to integrate the scheme into the existing landscape. Approximately 5.45Ha of public open space will be provided, which equates to c. 18% of the development site.
- The landscape design draws from the cultural and historical significance of Cú Chulainn's Castle at the Castletown Motte. The zoned open space surrounding it is designed to enhance this existing built heritage feature. In order to preserve its character and setting a buffer of land around the motte has been zoned for open space uses which could be developed as a heritage park. The area will include a network of green spaces with permeable links between each of the spaces.

"In the Heritage Park, the design focuses on a central space featuring a sloped playground and an informal plaza. Pathways were created from this area, weaving through the park with seating, observatory viewpoints, and retaining walls integrated into the layout. The walkway has been designed to follow the sloping topography, winding through the Heritage Park. It provides a route for fitness and also serves as an observation trail, creating connections across the park. The design incorporates seating areas and viewpoints, seamlessly integrating the park with its historical context." g + a Landscape Architecture.



Figure 13.10: Gannon and Associates Proposed Site Masterplan with Landscape Features

13.10.1.2 Construction Stage

Appropriate measures will be taken to mitigate' any potentially adverse construction-related effects on immediately adjoining neighbours. Operation of a well-managed organised and planned construction site, with adequate control of construction traffic and working activity, is key to avoiding or minimising impact. A preliminary Construction Management Plan (CMP) is being submitted with the planning application, which details construction management measures during the construction phase. Other measures shall include:

- Adequate measures to protect existing mature trees including the provision of hoarding / tree protection fencing where there could be damage from delivery vehicles or site vehicles. The Arboricultural Assessment included within the application has been prepared by Mr. Ciaran Keating of CMK Horticulture & Arboriculture. The associated Tree Survey & Constraints Plan to be implemented during the construction phase can be seen in Figure 13.11 below.
- Excavated soil, rubble or rubbish shall not be tipped against any hedgerow, into any ditch or stream nor under the canopy of any tree. No store, cabin or compound shall be erected against any hedgerow, nor under the canopy of any tree. No machinery shall be parked under any tree.
- Use of hoarding for screening works and higher-level webbing on scaffolding to prevent materials falling from a height endangering road and footpath users close to the site.
- Directing site lighting away from surrounding properties.
- Phasing development to reduce impacts on adjoining residential properties.

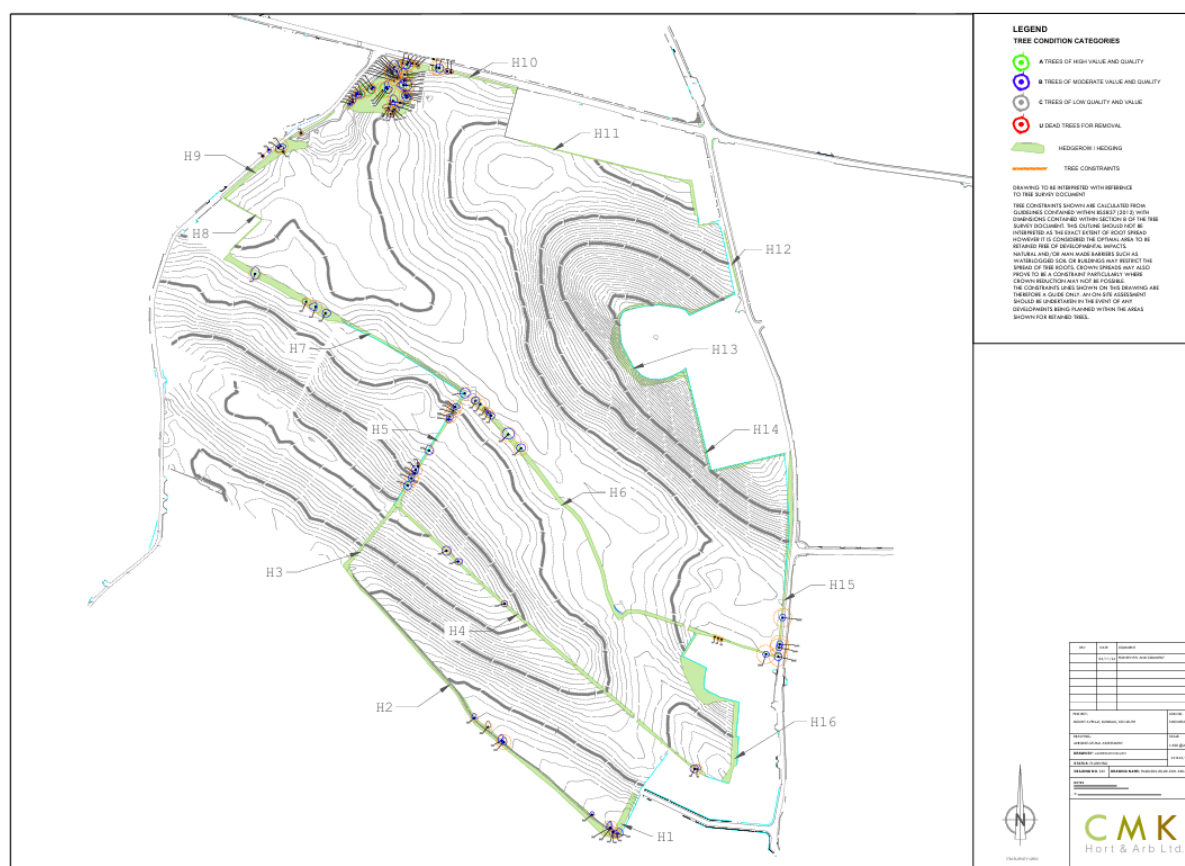


Figure 13.11 CMK Horticulture & Arboriculture Proposed Tree Survey & Constraints Plan

13.10.1.3 Operational Stage

Consistent and effective maintenance of hard and soft landscape areas, (in particular entrance areas, open space area and gathering spaces) together with quality site and building management are key to avoiding or minimising negative landscape and visual impacts arising from the operation of the proposed development.

The landscape contractor and future landscape maintenance providers will be required to adhere to the project "Landscape Specification and General Maintenance" standards.

Adopting ongoing maintenance and management of hedgerows through the wider site should only be carried out by reputable tree surgeons and works shall be carried out in accordance with BS 3998(2010) Tree Works Recommendations. Long term tree and hedgerow management will be

required along the boundaries to ensure that a continual robust and bio-diverse vegetation screening edge is achieved.

In order to provide for the successful establishment of the soft landscape scheme the following defects liability periods post construction and instillation will apply:

The defects liability period shall be twelve months from completion of top soiling and tree, shrub / hedgerow planting. Any of the works found to be defective within this period due to materials or workmanship

13.11 RESIDUAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

13.11.1 Proposed Development

The predicted negative impacts as shown in photomontages 5, 6, 11, 11.1, 11.2, 12, 13, 15.1 & 16 are primarily short term at the construction stage where the land is transformed from agricultural use into a medium density residential area. The photomontages 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 17 show that the proposed development is effectively screened by existing vegetation and buildings to the east beyond Mount Avenue Road, to the west beyond the initial section of Greyacre Road as it leaves the R934 Castletown Road, and to the south beyond the initial section of the R934 Castletown Road as it leaves the junction with the M1 Motorway.

The primary visual impacts are therefore restricted mainly to the Castletown Motte, to Cú Chulainn's Castle, to sections of Mount Avenue Road directly adjacent to the site, sections of Greyacre Road directly adjacent to the site, and to sections of the R934 Castletown Road directly adjacent to the site. This amounts to a relatively small area albeit these are areas where there is a national monument and its associated heritage elements, existing residential development, and busy roads. The mitigating factors include enhanced boundary treatments with existing trees, hedgerow and water courses to be retained and protected, a woodland walk riparian buffer zone along Greyacre Road, proposed new green infrastructure networks and the addition of wildlife corridors, and setting a buffer of land around the motte which has been zoned for open space uses and which will be developed as a heritage park including a network of green spaces with permeable links between each of the spaces.

Overall as the proposed development moves into the operational phase it is considered that the impact significance is moderate in that it is "an impact that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with the existing and emerging trends" and that the quality of the impact is neutral in that it constitutes "a change that does not affect the quality of the environment" It is further considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the various landscape and visual objectives, policies and land use zonings pertaining to the site and as set out in the Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.

13.11.2 Cumulative

13.11.2.1 Construction Stage

Negative Temporary to Short Term Visual Impact.

13.11.2.2 Operational Stage

Moderate Neutral Medium to Long-Term Visual Impact.

13.12 MONITORING

13.12.1 Proposed Development

13.12.1.1 Construction Stage

As the construction works are undertaken the landscape works proposed to mitigate the visual impact of the development will be monitored by the project landscape architect to ensure that these works are undertaken correctly to ensure that the proposed mitigation measures are executed as part of the construction works.

13.12.1.2 Operational Stage

Soft landscape works will be monitored to check establishment during the first 12 months post-planting. Plant failure during this defect's liability period shall be replaced within the following planting season (i.e., November to March) as necessary.

Aftercare to a high standard of both hard and soft landscape elements throughout the scheme will form part of the annual management/maintenance programme which shall be adopted as part of the scheme.

Regular monitoring of existing trees on site shall be carried out as necessary to ensure the tree stand is largely maintained. The ongoing monitoring shall identify trees which will require surgery works/potential removal which will be essential for the ongoing duty of care associated with the site. Paving will also require ongoing maintenance with the high level of through pedestrian traffic linking the various parts of the site.

13.13 REINSTATEMENT

There is no requirement for reinstatement.

13.14 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

No difficulties were encountered in compiling this assessment.