14.0 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL

14.1 INTRODUCTION

This Landscape / Townscape and Visual impact Assessment describes the townscape/visual context of the proposed power plant and assesses the likely impacts of the plant on the receiving environment, in terms of both townscape character and visual amenity.

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

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

14.1.1 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

This Landscape/Townscape and Visual Assessment report was prepared by Macro Works Ltd of Cherrywood Business Park, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18; a consultancy firm specialising in Landscape and Visual Assessment and associated maps and graphics. Relevant experience includes a vast range of infrastructural, industrial and commercial projects since 1999, including numerous residential mixed-used development projects.

14.2 METHODOLOGY

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

- A desktop study to establish an appropriate study area and relevant landscape and visual designations in the South County Dublin Development Plan 2016-2022;
- Fieldwork to study the receiving environment;
- Assessment of the significance of the landscape impact of the proposed development as a function of landscape sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the landscape impact;
- Assessment of the significance of the visual impact of the proposed development as a function of visual receptor sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact.

This document uses methodology as prescribed in the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and landscape Institute (UK) 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA-2013).

Although this is principally a 'townscape' assessment, it utilises the same outline methodology as would be employed for the more familiar Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of developments in rural settings. The justification for this approach is provided below.

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

In the case of this project, the study area is peri-urban in nature, but with a marginally more dominant urban setting or 'townscape.' This is defined in GLVIA-2013 (Section 2.7) as:

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

14.2.1 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE IMPACT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

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

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

The sensitivity of the townscape to change is the degree to which a particular setting can accommodate changes or new elements without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. Landscape/townscape Value and Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in Table 14.1.

Table 14-1: Landscape/Townscape Value and Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a very low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value townscapes, protected at an international or national level (e.g. World Heritage Site), where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value townscapes, protected at a national or regional level, where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character.

Medium	Areas where the townscape character exhibits some capacity and scope for development. Examples of which are townscapes, which have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value and use.
Low	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated townscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas of townscape character that include derelict sites and degradation where there would be a reasonable capacity to embrace change or the capacity to include the development proposals. Management objectives in such areas could be focused on change, creation of townscape improvements and/or restoration.

The magnitude of a predicted landscape/townscape impact is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed power plant. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape/townscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the immediate setting that may have an effect on the townscape character. Table 14-2 refers.

Table 14-2: Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Impacts

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale with the loss of critically important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of important townscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale involving the loss of landscape characteristics or elements that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to changes in landscape character, and quality.
Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements.
Negligible	Changes affecting small or very restricted areas of landscape character. This may include the limited loss of some elements or the addition of some new features or elements that are characteristic of the existing landscape or are hardly perceivable.
Positive	Changes that restore a degraded landscape or reinforce characteristic landscape elements.

The significance of a landscape/townscape impact is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The significance of landscape impacts is arrived at using the following graph set out in Table 14.3.

Table 14-3: Impact Significance Graph

	Sensitivity of Receptor				
Scale/Magnitude	*Very High*	*High*	*Medium*	*Low*	*Negligible*
Very High	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Minor
High	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-imperceptible
Medium	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
Negligible	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

Note: The significance matrix provides an indicative framework from which the significance of impact is derived. The significance judgement is ultimately determined by the assessor using professional judgement. Due to nuances within the constituent sensitivity and magnitude judgements, this may be up to one category higher or lower than indicated by the matrix. Judgements indicated in orange/mustard are considered to be 'significant impacts' in EIA terms.

14.2.2 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

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

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

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

Susceptibility of Receptors

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

- "Residents at home;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Those locations which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria are likely to be of higher sensitivity. No relative importance is inferred by the order of listing. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

14.2.3 IMPACT MAGNITUDE

The visual impact magnitude relates to the scale and nature of the visual change brought about by the proposal and this is reflected in the criteria contained in Table 14.4 below.

Table 14-4: Magnitude of Visual Impacts

Criteria	Description
Very High	The proposal alters a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most distinctive element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene
High	The proposal alters a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also likely to be generated, appreciably reducing the visual amenity of the scene

Medium	The proposal represents a moderate alteration to the available vista, is a readily noticeable element and/or it may generate a degree of visual clutter or disharmony, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene.
Low	The proposal alters the available vista to a minor extent and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene.
Negligible	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not detract from, and may even enhance, the visual amenity of the scene.
Positive	Changes that enhance the available vista by reducing visual clutter or restoring degraded features.

14.2.4 VISUAL IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE

As stated above, the significance of visual impacts is a function of visual receptor sensitivity and visual impact magnitude. This relationship is expressed in the same significance matrix and applies the same EPA definitions of significance as used earlier in respect of townscape impacts (Table 14.4 refers).

14.2.5 QUALITY OF EFFECTS

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

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

14.2.6 EXTENT OF STUDY AREA

It is anticipated that the proposed power plant is not likely to give rise to significant landscape/townscape or visual impacts beyond approximately 1km. However, out of an abundance of caution, a 2km-radius study area is used in this instance.

Figure 14-1: - Study Area

14.3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

The landscape/townscape baseline represents the existing context and is the scenario against which any changes to it, brought about by the proposed power plant, will be assessed. A description of the landscape/townscape context of the proposed site and wider study area is provided below. Although this description forms part of the landscape/townscape baseline, many of the elements identified also relate to visual receptors i.e. places from which viewers can potentially see the proposed power plant. The visual resource will be described in greater detail in Section 14.8.

14.3.1 IMMEDIATE SITE CONTEXT

The site is set within a 100 acre (40.5 Ha) fully enclosed, partially-developed private business park (i.e. Profile Park) in a peri-urban setting of west Dublin. Within Profile Park the proposed

power plant will be located on greenfield lands to the immediate north of an existing, fully constructed, Digital Realty data centre. The site, which was in agricultural use within the last 15 years, is close to the eastern periphery of the Park, with Grange Castle Golf Club located within 120m east of the site.

Figure 14-2: – Site context within Profile Park.

Figure 14-3: –Site. Note: the Digital Reality data centre to the immediate south of site

Figure 14-4: –Site.

The site is ostensibly flat, or slightly sloping, being at a marginally lower elevation to the surrounding Profile Park road and footpath infrastructure. At its lower point, in the site's southeast corner, water tends to accumulate after periods of prolonged rain. While greenfield by nature, the site is nonetheless a highly modified, utilitarian and anthropomorphic landscape; even prior to the removal of historical hedgerows within the site several years ago (i.e. when Park was being modified from agricultural use).

As is consistent with its business park setting, there is a negligible degree of naturalistic, ecological or scenic value associated with the site. Fitting to its unmanaged, non-utilised character, the site is mostly made up of self-seeded wild grass varieties, along with some rushes, reeds, weeds, gorse and young self-seeded saplings, as well as low levels of stone and gravel. At present, there is no physical demarcation (e.g. fence or railing) between the site and the road/footpath, but it is separated from the adjacent data centre by a retaining wall and tall paladin fencing. In terms of landscape character, while the site is within 120m of a golf course, the site and its hinterland is distinctively peri-urban industrial-commercial in nature. To the immediate west of Profile Park is Grange Castle Business Park, with no 'through road' yet established between the two business parks.

14.3.2 *WIDER STUDY AREA*

For its 2km radius, there is considerable diversity of land use in the study area, although one with a muscular, peri-urban industrial-commercial imprint. This is consistent with Profile Park's setting, where existing tenants (and the surrounding business and enterprise parks) include Google, Microsoft, Digital Realty Trust and Telecity. Adjacent to Profile Park is the Castlebaggot 110/220 kV substation, which provides electrical transmission connectivity to the national electricity transmission grid system. The broader exception to this industrial-commercial imprint in the study area is Grange Castle Golf Club and Corkagh Park (i.e. a large, popular, public park), in the east of the study area; agricultural lands in the west of the study area and the Grand Canal corridor in the far north of the study area (i.e. more than 1.6km north of the site). The Irish military airbase that is Casement/ Baldonnel Aerodrome is located within 500m south of the site. Directly north of Profile Park is the built-up Kilbarry Industrial Park, while in the northeast quadrant there is a spread of low-density housing estates. As with most per-urban settings, the development pattern is sporadic with little in the way of established building lines and frequent vacant, disused and utilised areas.

Figure 14-5: – directly north of Profile Park is the built-up Kilbarry Industrial Park

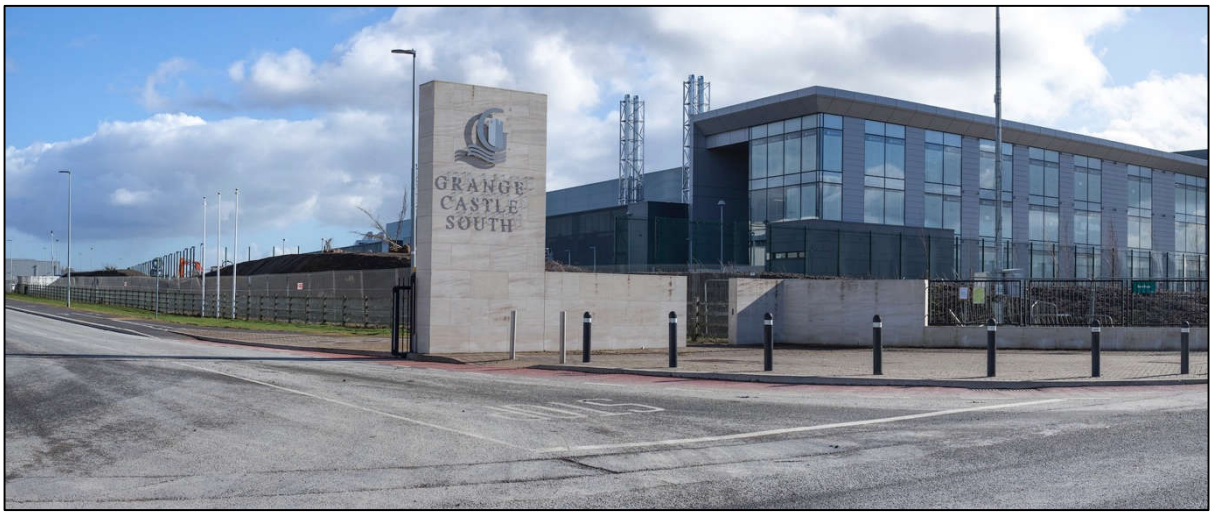

Figure 14-6: – entrance to Grange Castle South Business Park

Figure 14-7: – Grange Castle Golf Club in the east of the study area

Within the study area there are several major road routes, including the N7, which fringes the south-eastern quadrant. The R134 aligns the northern border of Profile Park, with the R120 and R136 also present in the study area.

14.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

The site lies solely within the jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council, and so its County Development Plan alone will be addressed in this section.

14.4.1 SOUTH COUNTY DUBLIN DEVELOPMENT PLAN (CDP) 2016-2022

The application site is situated within land designated as "Employment and Enterprise" by the CDP's Land Use Zoning Map no. 4.

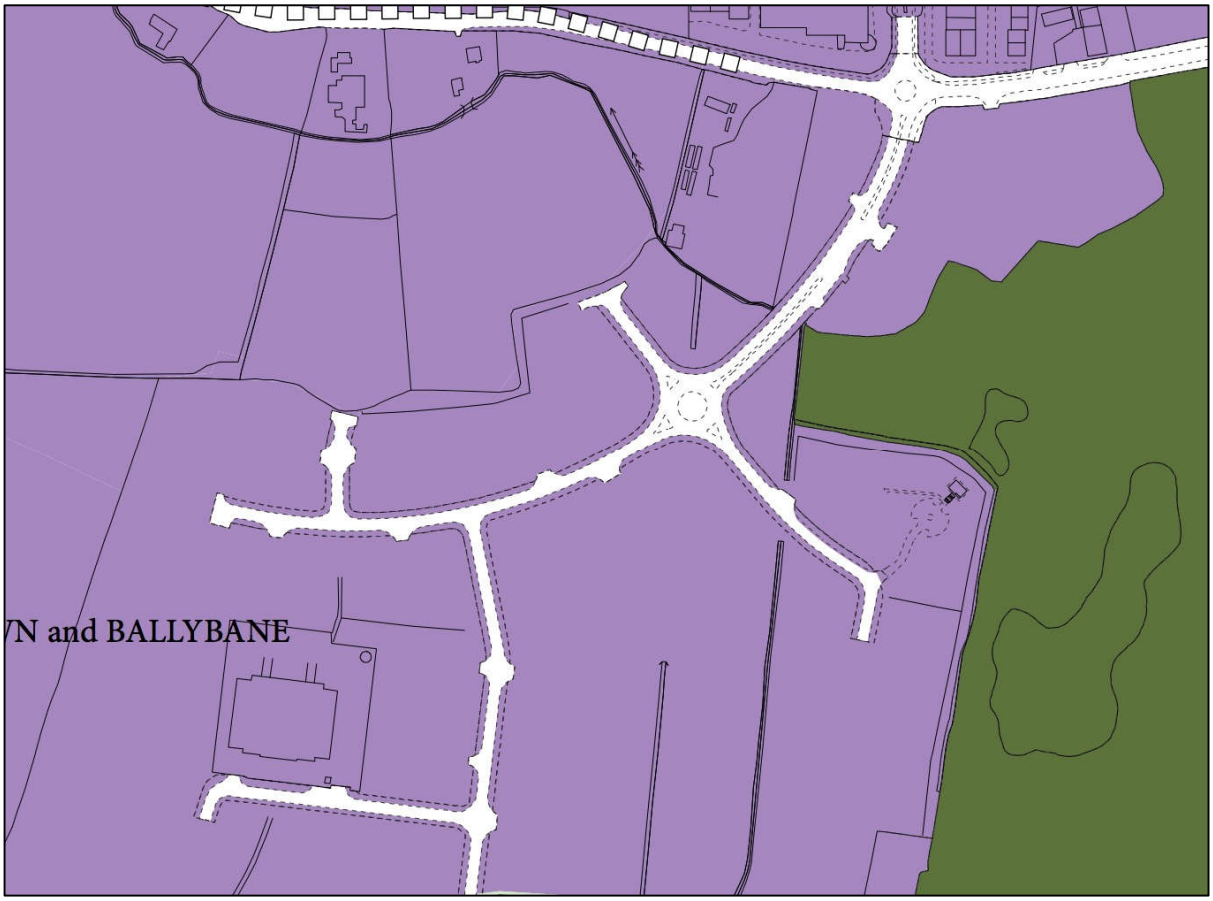

Figure 14-8: – Excerpt from Map 4 of the Land Use Zoning Maps of South County Dublin Development Plan

The objective of 'Enterprise and Employment" (EE) Zoning is to provide for enterprise and employment related uses; specifically:

"Enterprise and Employment (EE) zoned lands will accommodate low to medium intensity enterprise and employment uses. Enterprise and Employment zoned lands to the west of the County in the vicinity of the Grange Castle and Citywest economic clusters have the capacity to attract high tech manufacturing and associated strategic investments, due to the availability of large sites that are supported by high quality infrastructure and services."

Land Use Classes identified as 'Permitted in Principle' within EE zones include, Public Services, which is further defined as:

"*A building or part thereof or land used for the provision of public services. Public services include all service installations necessarily required by electricity, gas, telephone, radio, telecommunications, television, drainage and other statutory undertakers, it includes: public lavatories, public telephone boxes, bus shelters, bring centres, green waste and composting facilities."*

Section 11.2.5 of the CDP states:

"Enterprise and employment areas are characterised by a structure that is distinctly different to those of other urban areas. Most industrial estates are characterised by large functional

buildings that are set back from the street, extensive areas of hard surfacing and security fences. A number of industrial estates, and in particular newer business parks, incorporate extensive areas of open space to create a more attractive parkland-like setting."

According to Table 11.18 of the CDP, the key principles within Enterprise and Employment Zones entail the three broader categories of 'Access & Movement,' 'Open Space and Landscape" and 'Built Form and Corporate Identity.' The criteria of these categories are as follows:

Access and Movement:

- Major links to and through a site are provided as identified within a local plan, Masterplan and/or as determined by a site analysis process.
- The street network is easy to navigate and a clear a hierarchy is applied, identifying the function of each street.
- Individual streets are designed in accordance with the requirements of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets.
- Large areas of parking (in particular staff parking) are located to the rear of buildings and screened from the street. Smaller areas of parking can be located to the front of buildings provided they are well designed (including areas of planting) and do not result in excessive setbacks from the street.
- The design and layout of new business parks should promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport, including adequate provision of cycle and pedestrian linkages.

Open Space and Landscape:

- Creation of an open space network with a hierarchy of spaces suited to a variety of functions and activities.
- Development within business parks maintain and promote a parkland-like setting with high quality landscaping.
- Important nature features of the site such as trees, hedgerows and watercourses are retained, integrated within the landscape plan and reinforced with the planting of native species.
- Natural buffer zones and defensive planting are used to define private space and the use of fencing to the front of buildings minimised. Where fences interface with the public domain they should be of a high quality and incorporate elements of landscaping (for screening).

Built Form and Corporate Identity:

- Building heights respond to the surrounding context with transitions provided where necessary and reinforce the urban structure with taller buildings located along key movement corridors, gateways and nodes.
- Individual buildings should be of contemporary architectural design and finish (including use of colour). Various treatments should be employed to reduce the bulk, massing and scale of larger buildings.
- The layout and design of buildings maximise frontages onto the public realm and enclose private external spaces (such as service yards and car parks) and storage areas behind them.

- Signage should be simple in design and designed to integrate with architectural feature and/or the landscape setting (see also Section 11.2.8 Advertising, Corporate Identification and Public Information Signs).

Section 9.2.0 of the CDP pertains to landscape.

Heritage, Conservation and Landscapes (HCL) Policy 7 Landscapes:

"It is the policy of the Council to preserve and enhance the character of the County's landscapes particularly areas that have been deemed to have a medium to high Landscape Value or medium to high Landscape Sensitivity and to ensure that landscape considerations are an important factor in the management of development."

HCL7 Objective 1:

"To protect and enhance the landscape character of the County by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the landscape, taking full cognisance of the Landscape Character Assessment of South Dublin County (2015)."

HCL7 Objective 2:

"To ensure that development is assessed against Landscape Character, Landscape Values and Landscape Sensitivity as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment for South Dublin County (2015) in accordance with Government guidance on Landscape Character Assessment and the National Landscape Strategy."

According to the South County Dublin Landscape Character Assessment, the study area is located within the 'Newcastle Lowlands' Landscape Character Area. The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Area are:

- Low-lying and gently undulating agricultural lands over limestone
- Established communication corridors include the Grand Canal and railway corridor traverse east to west and two aerodromes at Weston and Baldonnel
- Agricultural landuse primarily pasture and tillage
- Increasing influence of urban activities closer to the motorways, national roads and regional roads
- Long history of historic settlement and human activity with medieval landscape complex associated with Newcastle village and surrounds.
- Number of demesnes associated with former country houses and institutions including reuse of older country houses at sites such as Peamount and Baldonnel.

In terms of 'Forces for Change,' these entail:

- Increasing urban influences that impact on the rural landscape character
- Fragmentation of agriculture -related habitats through piecemeal development
- Rural housing pressures
- Loss of separation distance between established urban and rural character

- The relatively flat and open landscape is vulnerable to adverse visual and landscape impacts of development

Designated Scenic Views and Prospects

In terms of visual and scenic amenity, the South County Dublin Development Plan contains designated scenic views and prospects, but none are relevant to the proposed study area.

14.5 VISUAL BASELINE

Only those parts of the receiving environment that potentially afford views of the proposed power plant are of concern to this section of the assessment. A computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility ("ZTV") map has been prepared to illustrate where the proposed development is potentially visible from. A standard ZTV map is based solely on terrain data (bare ground visibility), and ignores features such as trees, hedges or buildings, which may screen views. However, in this instance, a Digital Surface Model ZTV has been generated (see Figure 1.8 below), which takes account of the natural/vegetative and manmade (i.e. buildings, walls, embankments, structures) surfaces within the study area, to generate a more life-like/ realistic projection of likely visibility of the scheme. This Digital Surface Model ZTV captures the likely visibility of the two tallest structures associated with the proposed development: the 31.8m high exhaust stack, and the 18.5m high engine building. Consequently, it is highly unlikely that other aspects of the proposed development are likely to be visible if neither of the two tallest elements will be.

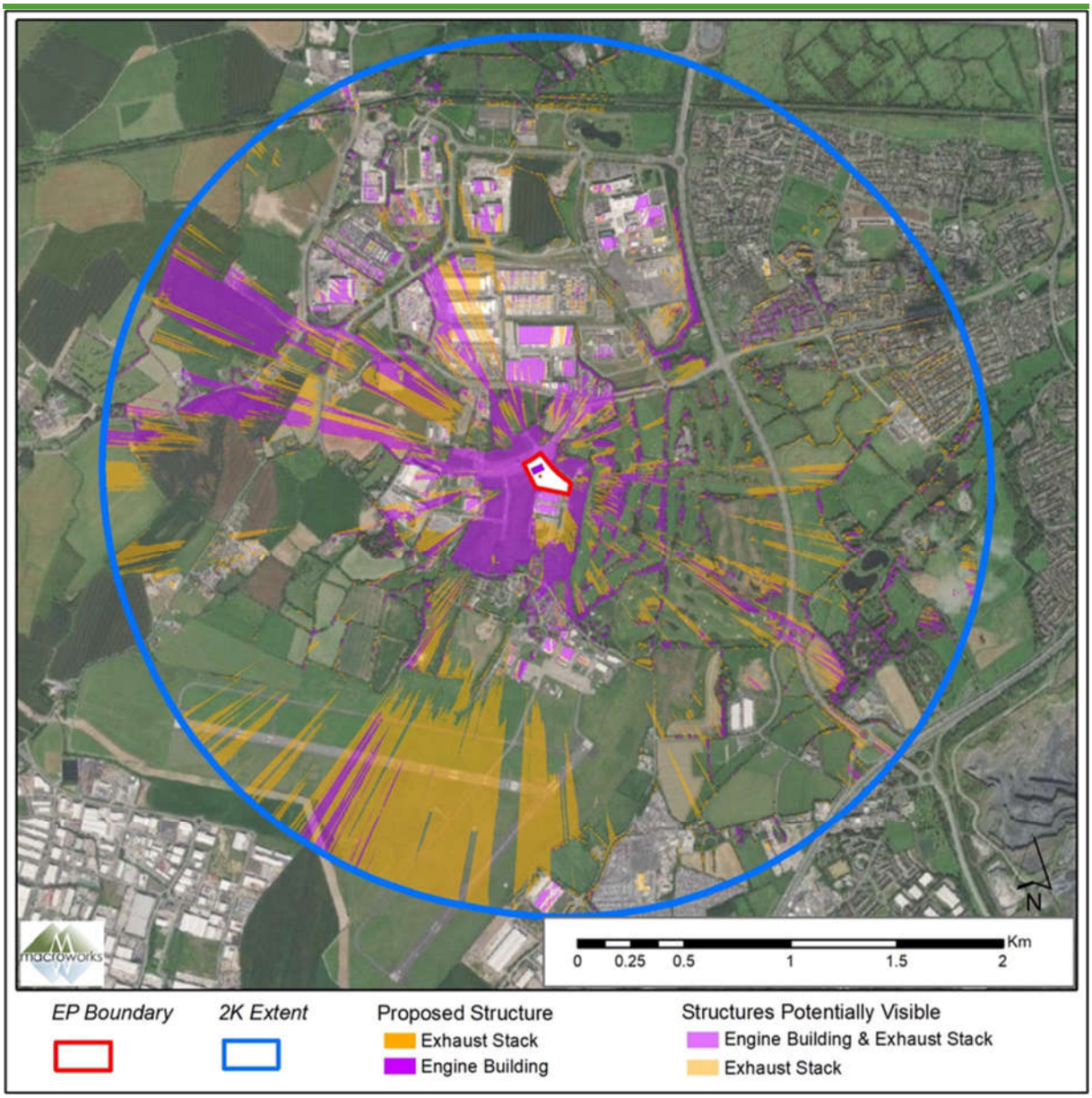

Figure 14-9: – Digital Surface Model ZTV of the study area

The key points in relation to Figure 14.9 pertain to:

- The vast majority of the study area will not experience any likely visibility of the proposed development, including most areas of residential development;
- The highest likely visibility of the proposed development will be from within Profile Park, and this primarily entails views of the proposed engine building and exhaust stack;
- Aside from tree tops, only thin, isolated shards of likely visibility of the proposed development will be attainable from within Grange Castle Golf Club or Corkagh Park;
- The Grand Canal is unlikely to experience any visibility of the proposed development;
- Where likely visibility of the proposed development will be attained from within the grounds of Baldonnel Aerodrome, it almost exclusively pertains to the proposed exhaust stack only.

14.5.1 IDENTIFICATION OF VIEWSHED REFERENCE POINTS AS A BASIS FOR ASSESSMENT

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

- Key Views - from features of national or international importance;
- Designated Scenic Routes and Views;
- Local Community views;
- Centres of Population;
- Major Routes;
- Amenity and heritage features.

The Viewshed Reference Points selected in this instance are set out in Table 14.5 and shown on Figure 14.10.

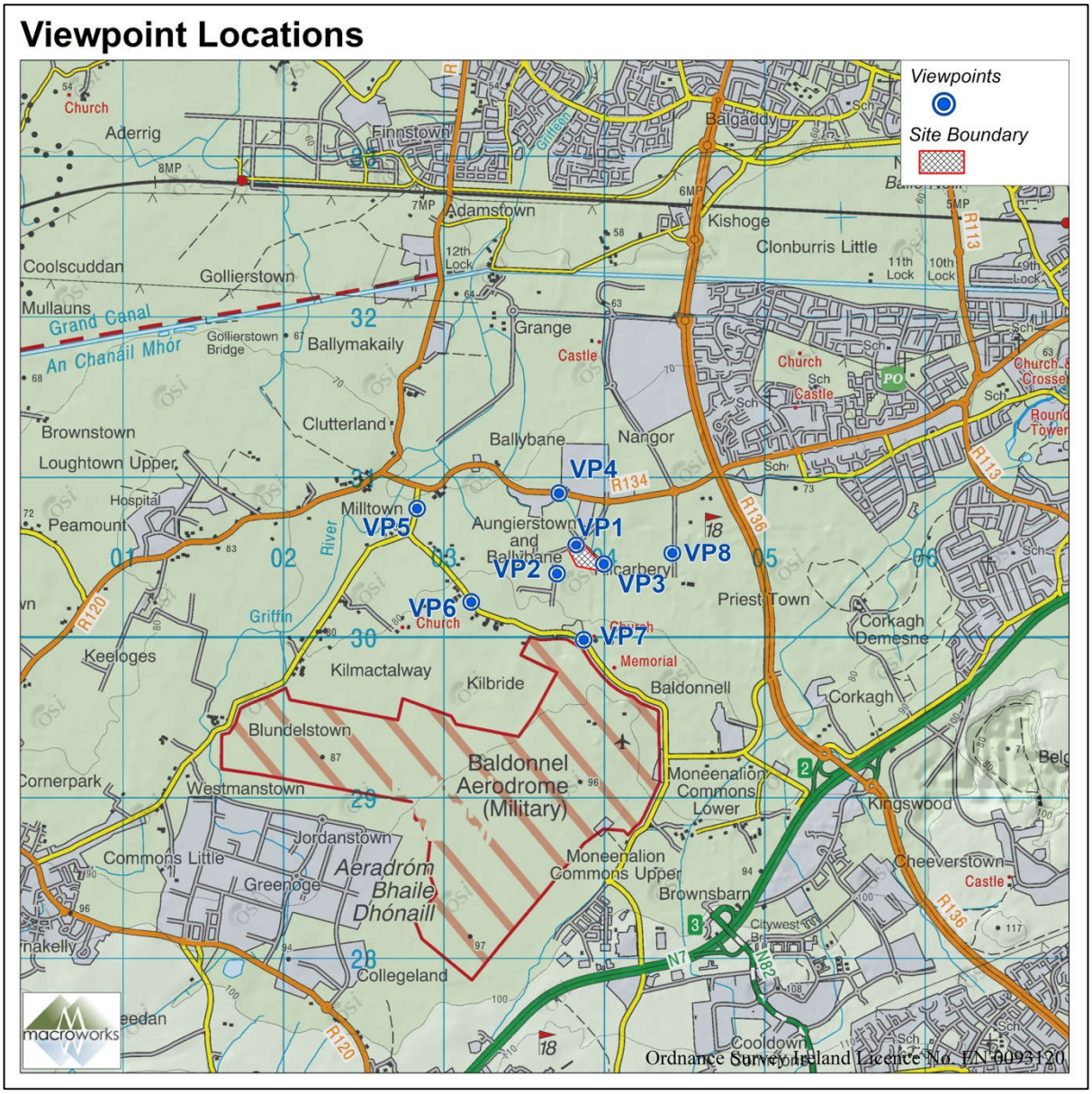

Figure 14-10: – Viewpoint Selection Map

Table 14-5: Outline Description of Selected Viewshed Reference Points (VRPs)

VRP No.	*Location*	*Direction of view*
VP1	Profile Park, adjacent to northern site boundary	S/SE
VP2	Profile Park, road west of the site	NE
VP3	Profile Park, adjacent to eastern site boundary	W/NW

VP4	R134 by Kilbarry Industrial Park	SE
VP5	Entrance to Grange Castle Business Park	SE
VP6	Entrance to Junior Genius crèche	NE
VP7	Lay-by adjacent to Baldonnel Aerodrome	N
VP8	Grange Castle Golf Club	W

14.6 MITIGATION AND MONITORING MEASURES

The main mitigation by avoidance measure employed in this instance is the siting of the proposed power plant in a robust, appropriately zoned business park that avails of topographic screening to minimise open visibility from within the study area, as well as availing of existing vegetative screening so that the proposed plant will not be prominent within the surrounding landscape.

From the surrounding community, the proposed power plant may appear to be 'clustered' with the pre-existing Digital Realty data centre, located to the immediate south of the site, so both developments will read as one coherent and legible industrial/commercial complex. This is further reinforced by the choice of high quality cladding evident on the proposed structures (specification to be confirmed by SDCC), similar to the Digital Realty data centre. In that regard, there is a strong tonal and textural relationship with adjacent land use, and, when viewed from outside the business park, will read as a modest increase to the visual envelope of development.

Furthermore, mitigation has been embedded into the colour scheme of the proposed structures. This has been partly informed by the colour scheme of large buildings existing within the business park, but also through a form of horizontal stratification of the proposed colour scheme. By adopting a tonal transition, from darker tones to lighter shades from the ground upwards, it will help diminish the perceived height of taller structures such as these. In summary, the lighter shades on the tallest structures (i.e. from about 7m high upwards) help to 'visually merge' with the sky backdrop; mid-layer tones are designed to merge with building and tree tops, while lower down (e.g. the bottom 2-3m of each structure) the darker tones help assimilate to earthy soil tones and/or vegetation. In addition, the proposed tanks will alternate between two different tones, to help deter perceptions of 'massing.'

A Landscape Mitigation Plan has also been prepared for the proposed power plant, which incorporates a buffer of native woodland thicket on the road-facing sides of the site. Along with a proposed native hedgerow and wild grass seeding elsewhere on the site, it will soften the appearance of buildings and to help integrate the site into the surrounding landscape setting.

Overall, the landscape proposals serve to add a high quality landscape finish to the apron of the facility and help to anchor and establish it within its business park setting. However, the site landscaping is mainly apparent within the immediate visual context of the facility and is not intended as screen planting in respect of receptors within the wider area.

14.7 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

14.7.1 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

14.7.1.1 Landscape / Townscape Value and Sensitivity

In accordance with Section 5.5 of the GLVIA-2013, a townscape character assessment requires a particular understanding of, among other criteria, "the context or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape." In a city that has evolved over millennia, the built infrastructure of the study area is a relatively recent addition. Having been primarily farmland up until at least the 1990s, most of the study is reflective of the peri-urban setting of west Dublin; a setting that has evolved rapidly and radically over the last quarter century.

While markers such as the Grand Canal and a small number heritage/period properties, such as that now housing the Junior Genius crèche, represent rich built legacies from the 18th and 19th Century, the study area has transformed unrecognisably with over the last half century. Consistent with such peri-urbanism, this overt, muscular industrial-commercial imprint is dominant within the study area, and has consequently devalued the hitherto landscape sensitivity of this locale. However, there is also room for extensive residential developments as well as recreational outlets (e.g. public parks, private golf course – as previously covered in this LVIA) about the study area. In addition, the military and transport infrastructure associated with Baldonnel Aerodrome occupies much of the southern half of the study area.

As stated in Country Development Plan (in Section 1.5.1 of this report) such a peri-urban setting as this is "*characterised by large functional buildings that are set back from the street, extensive areas of hard surfacing and security fences,"* as well as the presence of *an "increasing influence of urban activities closer to the motorways, national roads and regional roads."*

Nonetheless, this industrial / commercial sense of place also supports the urban economy of the local area and further afield. Thus, there is something of a productive value that is likely to be almost as important to local residents as the residential areas in which they live. But this is not a study area containing architectural conservation zones, or high-end/cutting-edge commercial office developments. It is more a diverse urban neighbourhood, in which places of residence and places of work co-exist. Thus, townscape values are likely to be, overall, more utilitarian than scenic or amenity based.

As previously discussed the site itself is a highly modified, utilitarian and anthropomorphic landscape whose integrity and landscape condition has been considerably degraded this century.

In summary, the site and Profile Park are considered to have a **Low** landscape sensitivity. However, the presence of recreational spaces/routes, some heritage features and farmland in the wider study area indicate a **Medium-low** townscape sensitivity, overall.

14.7.1.2 Magnitude of Landscape / Townscape Effects

Pre-Construction

The pre-construction phase of development includes preparatory works (e.g. post planning surveys and reporting) and consultation with statutory bodies and the public. Following this process, site clearance activities will commence.

Prior to the commencement of construction activities, the area for development will be fenced off. The footprint of the proposed power plant will require clearing and levelling.

Mobilisation will include the putting in place of staff, temporary facilities, plant and equipment, materials, and systems for construction. A temporary contractor's compound will be erected on site for the duration of the construction works and will include temporary site offices (i.e. portacabins), staff welfare facilities, car parking, and equipment laydown areas.

Construction Phase

There will be permanent physical effects to the land cover of the site, which are not readily reversible. To begin with, no demolition is required. However, during the construction stage of the proposed development, which is estimated to take 20 months, there will be intense construction-related activity within and around the site, including approach roads. This will include, but is not limited to:

- HGVs transporting materials to and from the site;
- Movement of heavy earth-moving machinery and tower cranes on-site;
- Temporary storage of excavated materials and construction materials on-site;
- Gradual emergence of the proposed power plant, and associated works;
- Security hoarding and site lighting.

Whilst the physical impacts to the site's land cover will be permanent, and not readily reversible, the site is already a much-modified, anthropomorphic site zoned for such purposes. Construction stage impacts on landscape/townscape character will be 'short-term' (i.e. lasting 1-7 years), in accordance with the EPA definitions of impact duration. Furthermore, the context of this construction activity is within an industrial area where HGV movements are frequent and the will be no site access through residential streets/estates.

There is likely to be minor impacts on the character of the recreational land use areas to the east of the site (i.e. Grange Castle Golf Club), due to the presence of tall tower cranes above the near skyline trees and as the proposed development reaches it's full height. However, there is inherent screening along the adjoining boundary (i.e. between Profile Park and the Golf Club), so much of the clutter and activity of construction stage works will be out of view and perceptually contained within a commercial-industrial context. In addition, such construction-stage activities are a relatively regular experience for Profile Park, whose multiple vacant sites are being gradually developed, and have been over the last decade. The power plant will comprise of the following main components:

- Site Entrance;
- Engine Hall comprising up to 6 no. gas engines and 1 no. exhaust stack cluster;
- Electrical Annex Building;
- Workshop Building;
- Radiator Coolers;
- 110 kV Electrical Transformer(s);
- Gas AGI;
- Tank Farm;
- Fencing;

- Car Park.

On the basis of the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts is deemed to be Medium-low within the immediate industrial context of the site and its surrounds of Profile Park, and Low within the context of the wider study area. When sensitivity and magnitude judgements are combined it results in a Slight significance of townscape impact at construction stage for the site, Profile Park and the wider study area.

Operational Phase

Following the completion of the proposed works, landscape/townscape impacts will relate entirely to the development's impact on the character of the receiving landscape/townscape and whether this is positive or negative.

The most notable landscape/townscape impacts of the proposed development will result from the permanent presence of a power plant, with stacks up to almost 32m in height. However, such a power plant will be set within a dedicated business park designed for compatible purposes, and will be adjacent to similar large scale industrial looking buildings and structures. Indeed, adjacent to Profile Park is the Castlebaggot 110/220 kV substation, while directly north of Profile Park is the built-up Kilbarry Industrial Park. In terms of impact upon the landscape character of the wider study area, this is a locale characterised by a muscular, peri-urban industrial-commercial imprint. Upon completion of construction, the proposed development will become one of the taller developments in this industrial-commercial locality, marking a modest escalation and intensification of that fabric within the study area. In addition, the prosed development will be replacing a highly modified vacant site that, at present, contributes little to Profile Park or the wider study area.

The magnitude of operational stage landscape/townscape impacts is deemed to be Medium-low within the context of the site and Profile Park, where townscape sensitivity is judged to be Low. However, the magnitude of operational stage landscape/townscape impacts is deemed to be Low within the context of the wider study area, where townscape sensitivity is judged to be Medium-low.

When sensitivity and magnitude judgements are combined in accordance with the criteria contained in Section 1.5, it results in a **Slight** significance of townscape impact at operational stage for the site, Profile Park and the wider study area.

Decommissioning Phase

The power plant is expected to be operational for at least 25 years. On cessation of activities, the plant will either be redeveloped as a power related facility or the site would be redeveloped in an alternative form. In the event that the facility is decommissioned, the following programme will be implemented:

- All plant equipment and machinery will be emptied, dismantled, and stored under appropriate conditions until it can be sold;
- If a buyer cannot be found, the material will be recycled or disposed of through licensed waste contractors and hauliers;
- If plant and machinery is required to be cleaned on site prior to removal, all necessary measures will be implemented to prevent the release of contaminants;

- All waste will be removed from the facility and will be recycled wherever possible. Licensed waste contractors will control all waste movement, recycling, and disposal operations;
- The site and all associated buildings will be secured.

14.8 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

14.8.1 VISUAL RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY

In this instance all of the viewpoints are located within relatively close proximity to each other and the site. Consequently, the receptors being represented and their associated viewing scenarios are similar for several of them. However, these receptors fall into two broader categories: that of Profile Park and its immediate hinterland, and that of the visual context beyond Profile Park.

In the first instance (i.e. that of Profile Park and its immediate hinterland), these account for VP1, VP2, VP3 and VP4, which are overwhelmingly industrial-commercial in setting and character, with a negligible degree of scenic amenity. Thus, their visual receptor sensitivity is deemed to be Low.

However, marginally out from this context VP5, VP6 and VP7 are along partially tree-lined roads, which retain some remnants of the rural/agricultural sphere to their immediate west and south. As an overview of these three receptors, a modest degree of visual amenity is attainable, albeit in a somewhat disjointed, peri-urban setting. Thus, their visual receptor sensitivity is deemed to be Medium-low.

Lastly, VP8 is from Grange Castle Golf Club. While it's broader setting is also peri-urban, receptors (i.e. golfers) in this context will be experience a marginally higher degree of visual sensitivity. Thus, their visual receptor sensitivity is deemed to be Medium.

14.8.2 MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL EFFECT

The assessment of visual impacts at each of the selected viewpoints is aided by photomontages of the proposed development. Photomontages are a 'photo-real' depiction of the scheme within the view, utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the development, which has been geo-referenced to allow accurate placement and scale. For each viewpoint, the following images have been produced:

- Existing View
- Outline view
- Montage View upon completion and maturation of proposed mitigation planting

Photomontages in support of the visual assessment provided in the following pages are provided in Appendix 14.1. A Landscaping Plan and Sections are provided in Appendix 14.2.

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP1	Profile Park, adjacent to northern site boundary	14m	S/SE
Representative of:	• A commercial / Industrial business park		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Low**		
Existing View	The context of this view is from within a fully enclosed and secured, private business park in peri-urban West Dublin. In that regard, the only receptors likely to be present are those working in the park, as no through-drive traffic nor non-authorised members of the public are permitted within this private commercial/industrial setting. In the foreground of a partially developed business park is a vacant, greenfield site, with no boundary demarcation (e.g. fencing) between it and the footpath. Fitting to its unmanaged, non-utilised character, self-seeded wild grass varieties, along with some rushes, reeds, weeds, gorse and young self-seeded saplings are visible, as well as low levels of stone and gravel. In the site's southeast corner, water accumulates in a pond-like fashion. To the immediate south of the site, but within the park, is a fully constructed Digital Realty data centre, and two other similar tech-centred industrial buildings further west. Overall, the site and the wider commercial/industrial setting is one of distinctively low visual amenity.		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	Set behind green palisade fencing, the large proposed engine hall for the site will be a highly notable element within this scene. At a height of approx. 18.5m and length of 56.0m, the proposed block-like engine hall will have a conspicuous presence from this roadside location that aligns the site boundary. However, owing to its setback from the street and the context of this commercial/industrial setting, the proposed development will not be spatially overbearing. Rather, it will be one of several such structures in a park specifically built and managed for such developments. This will be, in part, be achieved through the horizontal stratification of the proposed colour scheme for the project. By adopting a tonal transition, from darker tones to lighter shades from the ground upwards, it will help diminish the perceived height and bulk of taller structures such as these. The high quality cladding is also evident on the building (specification to be confirmed by SDCC). Be that as it may, the adroit form and strong perpendicular lines (i.e. either verticals or horizontals) of the proposed engine hall will be evident. However, the proposed development will not block or intrude on any valued aspect of the view, and will introduce more coherency and legibility to the vacant, unmanaged site. The function and purpose of the site will now be cogent		

	to the public, and the proposed development will appear as fitting and in-scale with its broader industrial setting. Nonetheless, the proposal still remains an important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **High-medium**. However, this is a consistent form of peri-urban development within a zoned industrial park and thus, the quality of the impact is deemed to be only marginally negative (**Neutral-Negative**).		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	Following the establishment of proposed mitigation planting, the adroit form and strong perpendicular lines of the proposed engine hall have been considerably softened and ameliorated by the proposed native woodland mix, which also introduces a modest aesthetic amenity to the site that had hitherto been absent. The proposed native woodland mix will screen the proposed palisade fencing, while the darker tones of the lower part of the proposed engine hall with partially visually 'merge' with that of the proposed planting. Be that as it may, even in the context of a private business park, from this location the proposal remains a readily noticeable element in the scene. As a result of these factors, the post-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium** with the quality of the impact remaining **Neutral - Negative**.		
Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**
Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Low	High-medium	**Moderate /** **Neutral -Negative**
Residual Significance	Low	Medium	**Moderate-slight /** **Neutral -Negative**

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP2	Profile Park, road west of the site	131m	NE
Representative of:	• A commercial / Industrial business park		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Low**		
Existing View	Set more than 100m to the west of the site, this location is along a further 'arm' of this business park, all of which end in a cul de sac (i.e. within a fully enclosed and secured, private business park in a peri-urban context). The roadside here is marginally more elevated that than of the site itself. From what can be discerned of the site, it is unkempt and under-utilised with little visual amenity in itself to offer. To the immediate south of the site, but within the park, is a fully constructed Digital Realty data centre. In the distance, a very modest degree of visual amenity is provided in this scene in the form of mature trees between this business park and the adjacent Grange Castle Golf Club, with the building line of Kilbarry Industrial park evident in the distant northeast of the scene.		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	The overt, muscular infrastructure of the proposal will be evident in this scene. The proposal will represent a conspicuous increase in built intensity in the view, albeit in the context of this commercial/industrial setting, but will not be visually dominant. Beyond a palisade fence, the engine hall building will have a height of 18.5m, with each engine having an exhaust flu that will connect into the 31.8m tall stack; a steel structure with high quality cladding (all cladding specification to be confirmed by SDCC). This stack will be the tallest structure within the park and will consequently be a noticeable element. However, owing to its setback from the street and the context of this commercial/industrial setting, the proposed development will not be incongruous nor visually dominant, but will read as a relatively consistent and compatible land use to that site to its' immediate south (i.e. Digital Realty data centre). The perceived diminished height of the tall structures within the site (i.e. engine hall building, stack and tanks) will be achieved through the horizontal stratification of the proposed colour scheme for the project (i.e. adopting a tonal transition, from darker tones to lighter shades, from the ground upwards). In addition, the proposed tanks will alternate between two different light tones, to help deter perceptions of 'massing.' However, the original/pre-existing source of modest inherent visual amenity in this view (i.e. mature trees between this business park and the adjacent Grange Castle Golf Club) will be curtailed as a result of the proposal reducing the visual amenity of the scene.		

	On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium**. Within this peri-urban industrially zoned site where similar scale / nature developments already exist, the quality of the impact is deemed to be **Neutral-Negative**.		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	With the exception of a proposed native hedgerow aligning the western boundary of the site, the proposed mitigation planting will have little in the way of visual amenity in the post-mitigation scenario, and neither will it screen the proposed development. However, it will assist in marginally reducing the perceived diminished height of the tall structures within the site. Thus, the post-mitigation magnitude of visual impact remains **Medium** and with a quality of **Neutral-Negative**.		
Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**
Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Low	Medium	**Moderate-slight / Neutral -Negative**
Residual Significance	Low	Medium	**Moderate-slight / Neutral -Negative**

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP3	Profile Park, adjacent to eastern site boundary	28m	W/NW
Representative of:	• A commercial / Industrial business park		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Low**		
Existing View	In the foreground of a partially developed business park is a vacant, greenfield site, with a timber post and rail fence between it and the footpath. Fitting to its unmanaged, non-utilised character, self-seeded wild grass varieties, along with some rushes, reeds, weeds, gorse and young self-seeded saplings are visible, as well as low levels of stone and gravel. In the site's southeast corner (i.e. the foreground), there is a drop in height to the localised terrain of the site. To the immediate south of the site, but within the park, is a fully constructed Digital Realty data centre, and two other similar tech-centred industrial buildings further west. Overall, the site and the wider commercial/industrial setting is one of distinctively low visual amenity.		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	Set behind green palisade fencing, the proposed development will be a conspicuous element within this scene; one that will considerably increase the scale of built intensity in the scene. Multiple bulky tanks (over 12m tall), a 31.8m tall stack and the proposed 18.5m high engine hall will be the most noticeable elements within the site (all cladding specification to be confirmed by SDCC). However, the context of this commercial/industrial setting, the proposed development will not be visually dominant. Rather, it will be one of several such structures in a park specifically built and managed for such developments. This will be, in part, be achieved through the horizontal stratification of the proposed colour scheme for the project. By adopting a tonal transition, from darker tones to lighter shades from the ground upwards, it will help diminish the perceived height of taller structures such as these. Be that as it may, the industrial scale of the proposed engine hall will be evident. On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium**, but the quality of the effect is only **Neutral-Negative.**		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	Following the establishment of proposed mitigation planting, the visual intensity and scale of the proposal will have been considerably softened and ameliorated by the proposed native woodland mix, which also introduces a modest aesthetic amenity to the site that had hitherto been absent. The proposed native woodland mix will screen the proposed palisade fencing, while the darker tones		

	of the lower part of the proposed engine hall with partially visually 'merge' with that of the proposed planting. In addition, the proposed tanks will alternate between two different light tones, to help deter perceptions of 'massing.' Be that as it may, even in the context of a private business park, from this location the proposal remains a readily noticeable element in the scene. As a result of these factors, the post-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low** and still **Neutral-Negative** in terms of the quality of the effect.		
Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**
Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Low	Medium	**Moderate-Slight / Neutral-Negative**
Residual Significance	Low	Medium-low	**Slight / Neutral-Negative**

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP4	R134 by Kilbarry Industrial Park	356m	SE
Representative of:	• Major route • Local community views		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Low**		
Existing View	The context of this regional road (also known as 'New Nangor Road') is a former country road that now winds through numerous built-up industrial developments in peri-urban West Dublin. At and near this location, south of the road is Profile Park, with Kilbarry Industrial Park to its' north, and a car yard to the southwest. Over a low roadside hedge, a flat large pastoral field is evident for over 200m (i.e. also part of Profile Park, and zoned for industrial/commercial development). A mid-distant line of mature trees obscures some views in the direction of the site, but more than 400m away, the aforementioned Digital Realty data centre can be seen. The rim of the distant Dublin hills, combined with the treelines in the foreground field, allow for a modest degree of inherent visual amenity. However, it is also worth noting that this view is at an acute angle to road users line of sight.		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	Located over 350m away, what will chiefly be discerned of the proposal from this location are the proposed 31.8m high stack silhouetted clearly on the skyline, with the considerable bulk of the engine hall building set below it. However, some of that building will be obscured by intervening existing vegetation, while elements of the proposal are likely to be fully screened. It is worth noting, too, the role that the 'winter trees' will play in screening the proposal, as screening is likely to be considerably more robust from late spring to autumn. This stack will be the tallest structure within the park and will consequently be a noticeable element, but in the context of this commercial/industrial setting, the proposed development will not be incongruous nor visually dominant, but will read as a relatively compatible land use to the industrial development evident to road users, on both sides of this road. The perceived diminished height of the tall structures within the site (i.e. engine hall building, stack and tanks) will be achieved through the horizontal stratification of tones, meaning lighter sky-like tones on the upper heights of the proposed structures. However, the original/pre-existing main source of modest inherent visual amenity in this view (i.e. the skyline of Dublin hills) has been curtailed, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene, albeit at an acute angle for road users. On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**. On balance of this a being a compatible		

	development within this visual setting, but interrupting the distant Dublin Mountains skyline, the quality of the effect is deemed to be **Neutral-Negative**.		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	Owing to the distance of the proposed development combined with the vertical scale of the proposal (in relation to mitigation planting), the post-mitigation magnitude of visual impact remains **Medium-low** and the quality of the effect, **Neutral-Negative**.		
Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**
Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Low	Medium-low	**Slight / Neutral-Negative**
Residual Significance	Low	Medium-low	**Slight / Neutral-Negative**

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP5	Entrance to Grange Castle Business Park	990m	SE
Representative of:	• Local Community views		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Medium-low**		
Existing View	This scene is that presented to road users at the entrance to Grange Castle Business Park. In terms of context, to the immediate west of Profile Park is Grange Castle Business Park, with no 'through road' yet established between the two business parks. However, both parks 'terminate' very close to one another, so may be perceived from broader distances as effectively being the one business park. In this view, the wide, high-spec entrance of the park is evident in the foreground, in terms of walls, piers, bollards, street lights etc. Within the park, to either side, mid-rise commercial/office-type buildings are apparent, screening out longer-distant views. In terms of built design and the sense of place it engenders, Grange Castle Business Park is of a high-quality IDA-supported business-orientated focus, in comparison to the more energy and/or data centre focused profile Park.		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	Almost 1km away, the upper margin of the proposed stack within the site will be discerned over industrial-like buildings/structure within Grange Castle Business Park. While visible, it will not be noticeable, as the sky-like tones of the stack will help it to blend or merge towards a backdrop of sky. In the context of this commercial/industrial setting, the proposed development will not be incongruous. Rather, it will be one of several such structures in a peri-urban setting with two adjacent business parks specifically built and managed for such developments. In addition, the proposed structure will not inhibit or detract from any source of inherent visual amenity in the scene. On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Low**. The quality of the effect in this compatible scene is considered to be only marginally negative i.e. Neutral-Negative.		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	Owing to the height of the proposed stack within the site, and the intervening structures, the proposed mitigation planting will have no bearing upon the visual amenity of the scene. Thus, the post-mitigation magnitude of visual impact remains **Low** and the quality of effect, **Neutral-Negative**.		

Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**
Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Medium-low	Low	**Slight-imperceptible / Neutral-Negative**
Residual Significance	Medium-low	Low	**Slight-imperceptible / Neutral-Negative**

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP6	Entrance to Junior Genius crèche	693m	NE

Representative of:	• Local Community Views		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Medium-low**		
Existing View	By way of context, a former country road snakes to the south of both Grange Castle Business Park and Profile Park. Mostly tall roadside vegetation and trees are found to either side of this narrow road, while at this location is the entrance road to Junior Genius crèche, which is located away from the roadside and behind swathes of tall trees. Across the road from the crèche entrance road, a gap in the trees in the northern side of the road allows for views in the direction of the site. Behind roadside brambles and bushes, a recolonizing/self-seeded earth stockpile can be discerned, as can one commercial/industrial building each for both business parks. However, it is also worth noting that this view is at an acute angle to road users' line of sight.		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	At approx. 700m distance, behind foreground vegetation, the upper margin of the proposed stack has the capacity to be faintly discerned to the stationary observer. However, it is worth noting the role that the 'winter vegetation' will play in partially screening the proposal, while leaf cover will entirely screen the proposal from late spring to autumn. In summary, the proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and it would not detract from the visual amenity of the scene. On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible** and the quality of the effect, **Neutral**.		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	Post-mitigation, the magnitude of visual impact remains **Negligible / Neutral.**		
Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**
Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Medium-low	Negligible	**Imperceptible / Neutral**

Residual Significance	Medium-low	Negligible	**Imperceptible / Neutral**

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP7	Lay-by adjacent to Baldonnel Aerodrome	443m	N

Representative of:	• Local Community Views		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Medium-low**		
Existing View	This marginally elevated lay-by is on a former country road that snakes to the south of both Grange Castle Business Park and Profile Park, while to the immediate south of this road is Casement Aerodrome (i.e. military airport). Beyond a foreground of traffic-deterrent boulders, a field of pasture and an aged farmyard can be seen, to the south of Profile Park. Visible in the centre of the scene is the fully constructed Digital Realty data centre, to the immediate south of the site, but within Profile Park. What limited visual amenity within this scene is attained in the mid-distance, in the pasture between road and business park, as well as the treelines to the east of the business park (i.e. in Grange Castle Golf Club).		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	The most visible element within the proposed development will be the proposed stack within the site, followed by the roofline of the engine hall building. While visible, both structures will not be particularly noticeable, as the sky-like tones will help them to blend or merge towards a backdrop of sky. In the context of the adjacent and highly visible commercial/industrial setting, as well as the muscular infrastructure of Casement Aerodrome even closer to this viewpoint location (but to the south), the proposed development will not be incongruous. In addition, the aforementioned inherent sources of visual amenity in this scene remain unaffected by the proposed development. On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Low** and the quality of the effect, **Neutral-Negative**.		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	The proposed mitigation planting will have no bearing upon the visual amenity of the scene. Thus, the post-mitigation magnitude of visual impact remains **Low / Neutral-Negative**.		
Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**

Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Medium-low	Low	**Slight-imperceptible / Neutral-Negative**
Residual Significance	Medium-low	Low	**Slight-imperceptible / Neutral-Negative**

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP8	Grange Castle Golf Club	460m	W

Representative of:	• Heritage & Amenity feature		
Receptor Sensitivity	**Medium**		
Existing View	Grange Castle Golf Club lies adjacent to the eastern boundary of Profile Park. From within the course, the commercial/industrial infrastructure of this peri-urban setting is frequently visible. In this instance, the Digital Realty data centre, to the immediate south of the site, is discernible between intervening golf course vegetation. However, views in the direction of Profile Park are not the main source of visual amenity at this location.		
Visual Impact (pre-mitigation)	Faintly discernible behind intervening vegetation, the vague outline of the upper heights of the proposal's structures will be capable of being perceived from this location, albeit at almost a half kilometre distance. However, when trees are in leaf, this will not be the case. Even if seen, then in the context of this commercial/industrial setting, the proposed development will not be incongruous, but will be read as a relatively compatible land use to this peri-urban setting. In addition, it will not be readily noticeable, as the sky-like tones of the stack will help it to blend or merge towards a backdrop of sky. Even if seen, the proposed development will not materially detract from the main source of visual amenity at this location. On balance of the factors listed above, the pre-mitigation magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Low-negligible** and with a quality of effect that is **Neutral-Negative**.		
Visual Impact (post-mitigation)	Post-mitigation, the magnitude of visual impact remains **Low Negligible / Neutral-Negative**.		
Summary	Based on the assessment criteria the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.		
	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	**Significance / Quality of Visual Impact**
Impact Significance (Pre-mitigation)	Medium-low	Low-negligible	**Slight-imperceptible / Neutral-Negative**

Residual Significance	Medium-low	Low-negligible	**Slight-imperceptible / Neutral-Negative**

14.9 OVERVIEW OF LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

In terms of landscape setting, most of the study area reflects the peri-urban setting of west Dublin; a setting that has evolved rapidly and radically over the last quarter century. Consistent with such peri-urbanism, an overt, muscular industrial-commercial imprint is dominant within the study area, and has consequently reduced the hitherto landscape sensitivity of this locale. Thus, townscape values are, overall, more utilitarian than scenic or amenity based. The site itself is a highly modified, utilitarian and anthropomorphic landscape whose integrity and landscape condition has been considerably degraded this century. Accordingly, the site and Profile Park are considered to have a 'Low' landscape sensitivity. However, the presence of recreational spaces/routes, some heritage features and farmland in the wider study area indicate a 'Medium-low' townscape sensitivity, in the wider context.

In terms of landscape impacts, the magnitude of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts was deemed to be 'Medium-low' within the immediate industrial context of the site and its surrounds of Profile Park, and 'Low' within the context of the wider study area. When sensitivity and magnitude judgements are combined, it resulted in a 'Slight' significance of townscape impact at construction stage for the site, Profile Park and the wider study area.

Concurrently, the magnitude of operational stage landscape/townscape impacts was deemed to be 'Medium-low' within the context of the site and Profile Park, where townscape sensitivity is judged to be 'Low.' However, the magnitude of operational stage landscape/townscape impacts was deemed to be 'Low' within the context of the wider study area, where townscape sensitivity was judged to be 'Medium-low.' Thus, when sensitivity and magnitude judgements are combined, it results in a 'Slight' significance of townscape impact at operational stage for the site, Profile Park and the wider study area.

In terms of visual receptor sensitivity, depending on the context varying between the business park and its immediate vicinity, or surrounding road-based receptors, or the adjacent Grange Castle golf club, visual sensitivity ranged from 'Low' to 'Medium.' It should be noted that the gas connection and electrical grid connection will result in a neutral effect given that these ancillary parts of the development will not result in a permanent change in the landscape or visual setting.

Unsurprisingly, the highest levels of Visual Impact Significance derived from within the vicinity of the site, within Profile Park Business Park (i.e. VPs 1-3). The post-mitigation/residual visual impact significance arising from VP1 and VP2 was 'Moderate-slight' with VP3 registering 'Slight'. However, the 'Low' visual sensitivity of these three receptors was a sizeable factor in the significance of visual impact not being higher (i.e. from within the business park), but for similar reasons of compatibility, precedence and zoning objectives the quality of the effect is deemed to be only marginally negative i.e. Neutral-Negative. VP4, located along a public road to the immediate north of the business park was deemed to have a 'Slight' significance of visual impact, while VP5, VP7 and VP8 had a 'Slight-imperceptible' significance of visual impact with the quality of the effect generally Neutral-Negative. The lowest significance of visual impact was found at VP6, which was 'Imperceptible.'

In light of the sizeable nature of the proposed development - reaching over 30m height for one proposed structure - and that all the visual receptors were located within 1km of the site, the proposed development is likely to have a particularly modest impact upon visual amenity within the study area.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development is an appropriate contribution to both the existing and likely future built fabric of this peri-urban area and it will not result in any significant residual townscape or visual impacts.