

gannon + associates

+ 087 910 1600
+ info@gannonandassociates.ie
+ 6 Lower Kimmage Road, D6W
+ gannonandassociates.ie

Townscape & Visual Impact Assessment

FOR

RATHCOOLE AGE-FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT
TAY LANE, NEWCASTLE ROAD,
RATHCOOLE, DUBLIN 24

On behalf of

Riverside Projects Limited

AUGUST 2022

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1.0 TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT APPRAISAL

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (TVIA) is to identify and determine the potential effects on the character and visual amenity of the townscape as a result of the development of *inter alia* an apartment scheme, comprising 58 No. units, at Tay Lane, Rathcoole, Co. Dublin.

This report describes the methods used to assess the existing baseline conditions of the site and surrounding area; predicted effects on townscape character, predicted visual effects; the mitigation measures required to prevent, reduce or offset any significant negative effects; and the likely residual effects after these measures have been adopted.

This report and its associated figures should be read in conjunction with the plans and particulars that accompany the application.

1.2 Assessment Methodology

1.2.1 General Approach

The methodology for the TVIA has been derived from *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013) (GTVIA3)*.

The townscape has been appraised to allow it to be described and classified into townscape areas that in turn enable the classification of townscape quality. The capacity of the townscape to accept change of the type proposed is assessed by determining the sensitivity of each area.

Assessment of the townscape has been undertaken through analysis of:

- Up to date digital copies of Ordnance Survey maps;
- Aerial photography;
- *South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028*;
- Study of the subject site and its environs in relation to its local townscape significance;
- Assessing the effects of the proposed development through analysis of baseline photography;
- Assessment of the proposed development through analysis of detailed drawings; and
- The *design drawings*, included as part of this application.

1.2.2 Identifying Effects

Assessing the significance of an effect is a key component of the TVIA and is an evidenced based process combining professional judgment on the nature of a townscape or visual receptor's sensitivity, their susceptibility to change and the value attached to the receptor. It is important to note that judgment in this TVIA are impartial and based on professional experience and opinion informed by best practise guidance.

1.2.3 Assessment Criteria

The objective of the assessment process is to identify and evaluate the predicted significant effects arising from the proposal. Significance is a function of the:

- Sensitivity of the affected receptors; and
- Scale or Magnitude of Impact that they will experience.

These definitions recognise that areas vary in their capacity to accommodate different forms of development according to the nature of the receiving townscape and the type of change being proposed.

Significance is not graded in bands, and a degree of informed judgement is required. Even with the application of pre-defined criteria, interpretation may differ between individuals, but this allows the process of reaching these conclusions to be transparent.

1.2.4 Townscape Impact Assessment

The TVIA firstly assesses how the proposed development would impact directly on any features and resources. This category of effect relates to specific elements and features (e.g. woods, trees, walls, hedgerows, watercourses) within the site boundary that are components of the existing townscape that may be physically affected by the proposed development. Physical effects are restricted to the area within the site boundary, and are the direct effects on the fabric of the site.

The TVIA then considers impacts on townscape character at two levels. Firstly, consideration is given to how the townscape character is affected by the removal or alteration of existing features and the introduction of new features. This is considered to be a direct impact on townscape character.

Secondly, the indirect impacts of the proposal on the wider townscape are considered. It is acknowledged there is an overlap between perception of change to townscape character and visual amenity, but it should be remembered that townscape character in its own right is generally derived from the combination and pattern of elements within the view.

The significance of effects on features and townscape character is determined by cross-referencing the sensitivity of the feature or townscape character with the magnitude of impact.

Consideration of the sensitivity of the resource against the magnitude of impact caused by the proposal is fundamental to townscape and visual assessment and these two criteria are defined in more detail below.

1.2.5 Townscape Sensitivity

The determination of the sensitivity of the townscape resource is based upon an evaluation of each key element or characteristic of the townscape likely to be affected. The evaluation reflects such factors as its quality, value, contribution to urban character and the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted.

For the purpose of this assessment, townscape quality is categorised as:

Very High: Areas of especially high quality acknowledged through designation. These are of townscape significance within the wider region or nationally;

High Quality: Areas that have a very strong positive character with valued and consistent distinctive features that gives the townscape unity, richness and harmony. These are of significance within the district;

Medium Quality: Areas that exhibit positive character but which may have evidence of alteration/degradation or erosion of features resulting in a less distinctive townscape. These may be of some local significance with some positive recognisable structure; and

Low Quality: Areas generally negative in character, degraded and in poor condition. No distinctive positive characteristics and with little or no structure. There may be scope for positive enhancement.

As previously discussed, townscape sensitivity is influenced by a number of factors including value, condition and the type of change brought about by the proposal. In order to assist with bringing these factors together the following five-point scale has been used. **Table 1.1** defines the criteria that have guided the judgement as to the Sensitivity of the Townscape Resource.

Definition		Sensitivity
Townscape Resource Sensitivity	Townscape Resource Value	
Exceptional quality, no or limited potential for substitution. Key elements / features well known to the wider public. Little or no tolerance to change.	Nationally/internationally designated/valued townscapes, or key elements or features of national / internationally designated. Little or no tolerance to change.	Very High
Strong / distinctive character; absence of detractors. Low tolerance to change.	Regionally / nationally designated / valued townscapes. Low tolerance to change.	High
Some distinctive characteristics; few townscape detractors. Medium tolerance to change.	Locally / regionally designated / valued townscapes. Medium tolerance to change.	Medium
Absence of distinctive characteristics; presence of townscape detractors. High tolerance to change.	Undesignated townscape of low quality. High tolerance to change.	Low
Absence of positive characteristics. Significant presence of townscape detractors. High tolerance to change.	Undesignated townscape of very low quality and condition. High tolerance to change.	Negligible

Table 1.1: Sensitivity of the Townscape Resource Criteria

1.2.6 Magnitude of Townscape Impacts

Direct resource changes on the townscape character are brought about by the introduction of the proposal and its impact on the key townscape characteristics. The categories and criteria used are given in **Table 1.2** below.

Definition	Magnitude
Total change to the key characteristics of the townscape character; proposed development will introduce elements totally uncharacteristic to the receiving townscape; and/or will result in a substantial or total loss, alteration or addition of key elements/features/characteristics.	Large
Partial change in the key characteristics of townscape character; proposed development will introduce elements partially uncharacteristic to the receiving townscape; and/or will result in partial loss, alteration or addition of key elements/features/characteristics.	Medium
Small change to the key characteristics of the townscape character; proposed development will introduce elements that are not uncharacteristic of the receiving townscape; and/or will result in a small loss, alteration or addition of elements/features/characteristics.	Small
Very minor / discernible change to the key characteristics of the townscape character; proposed development will result in a discernible alteration to the townscape character through the addition of elements or features present in the existing pattern of the baseline.	Negligible
The proposals will not cause any change to the townscape character/ elements/ features/ characteristics.	No change

Table 1.2 – Magnitude of Townscape Effect

1.2.7 Visual Impact Assessment

The assessment of effects on views is an assessment of how the introduction of the proposed development will affect views within the townscape. Assessment of visual effects therefore needs to consider:

- Direct impacts of the proposed development upon views through intrusion or obstruction;
- The reaction of viewers who may be affected, e. g. residents, walkers, road users; and
- The overall impact on visual amenity.

All viewpoints have been located within the public domain and are representative of views available from main thoroughfares and pedestrian areas within the vicinity of the proposed development.

1.2.8 Photomontages

The photomontages submitted as part of the Application were prepared by GNET 3D¹. The methodology used to develop the photomontages is based on the “Visual Representation of Development Proposals” Guidance note by the Landscape Institute, 2019.

Photography

The photography was carried out on the July 25th, 2022, using Sony 7RIII full frame camera.

A 24mm wide angle lens was selected for all the photography to provide more information on the context around the proposed development. The horizontal field of view of these photographs is 74°. The above-mentioned guidance note suggests that 40° angle is the closest to human eye vision and is recommended for the verified photomontages. In the cases where the wide lens is used, there should be an indication of 40° field of view, which is shown on the bottom of all the views.

A recommended viewing distance of the photomontages taken using 24mm lens is 300mm from eyes when printed on A3 paper.

Leica GS08plus Smart Antenna was used to accurately record the viewpoint coordinates and height levels. Viewpoint locations are indicated in the viewpoint map and at the table to the right.

Modelling

Preparation of an accurate 3D model of the proposed apartment development, including landscape and infrastructure.

Setup

The following information is used to accurately position the model of the proposed development into the photographs:

- Site survey,
- Photographs,
- Verified viewpoint coordinates and height levels are accurately marked on the location OSi map.

To match the 3D camera view with the photograph we take the following steps:

The camera height is taken from information gathered on the levels from where the photos are taken (table below). The height levels of the proposed development are outlined on the site. Focal length is based on the photograph EXIF info.

This data is imported into our 3D software and the 3D camera is matched with the selected photographs. To match the 3D camera accurately we use all the above data and the reference 3D models. The reference 3D models are existing structures i.e. buildings, roads, lamps, etc which are visible on the photographs. These items are modelled based on the survey information. After all the above conditions are fulfilled and we are satisfied that the camera matches correctly, we proceed to the next step.

Rendering

¹ GNET 3D, Herbert Hall, 16 Herbert Street, Dublin 2.

We apply the materials and textures prior to rendering the photomontage images. Light settings are adjusted to match the brightness of the photographs and sun is positioned according to the date and time the photo was taken.

Post processing

This process means incorporating a 3D image of the proposed development into the photograph to achieve the final result.

1.2.9 Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is defined with reference to the sensitivity of the viewpoint location and the view available from that location. Other factors affecting visual sensitivity include:

- The context of the viewpoint;
- The type of view available, whether it is filtered, framed or open;
- The number of viewers experiencing the view, whether this is Few, Moderate or Many;
- The occupation or activity of the receptor; and
- The importance of the view.

Although the interpretation of viewers' experience can have preferential and subjective components, there is generally clear public agreement that the visual resources of certain townscapes have a high visual quality.

Viewer sensitivity, as set out in **Table 1.3**, is a combination of the sensitivity of the human receptor (for example resident, commuter, tourist, walker, recreationist or worker, and the numbers of viewers affected) and viewpoint type or location (for example house, workplace, leisure venue, local beauty spot, scenic viewpoint, commuter route, tourist route or walkers' route).

Definition		Sensitivity
Visual resource sensitivity	Visual Receptor sensitivity	
Views of remarkable quality, of and within international designations or key features or elements of nationally designated townscapes that are well known to the wider public. Little or no tolerance to change.	Observers, drawn to a particular view, including those who have travelled to experience the views. Little or no tolerance to change	Very High
Views from residential property, public rights of way, National Trails, long distance walking routes and nationally designated townscapes with public access. Low tolerance to change.	Observers enjoying views from their homes or pursuing quiet outdoor recreation are more sensitive to visual change. Little tolerance to change	High
Views from local roads and routes crossing designated townscapes and 'access land' as well as promoted paths. Medium tolerance to change.	Observers enjoying views from vehicles on quiet/ promoted routes are moderately sensitive to visual change. Medium tolerance to change	Medium
Views from work places, main roads and undesignated townscape features. High tolerance to change.	Observers in vehicles or people involved in frequent or infrequent repeated activities are less sensitive to visual change. High tolerance to change	Low
Views from within and of undesignated townscapes with significant presence of townscape detractors. High tolerance to change.	Observers in vehicles or people involved in frequent or frequently repeated activities are less sensitive to visual change. High tolerance to change	Negligible

Table 1.3: Viewer Sensitivity

1.2.10 Magnitude of Visual Impacts

The magnitude of impact on the visual resource results from the scale of change in the view, with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view, and changes in the view composition.

Important factors to be considered include: proportion of the view occupied by the proposal, distance and duration of the view. Other vertical features in the townscape and the backdrop to the proposal will all influence resource change. Magnitude of visual impact is defined in **Table 1.4**.

Definition	Magnitude
Complete or very substantial change in view, dominant, involving complete or very substantial obstruction of existing view or complete change in character and composition of baseline, e.g., through removal of key elements	Large
Moderate change in view: which may involve partial obstruction of existing view or partial change in character and composition of baseline, i.e., pre-development view through the introduction of new elements or removal of existing elements. Change may be prominent, but would not substantially alter scale and character of the surroundings and the wider setting. Composition of the view would alter. View character may be partially changed through the introduction of features which, though uncharacteristic, may not necessarily be visually discordant	Medium
Minor change in baseline, i.e. pre-development view - change would be distinguishable from the surroundings whilst composition and character would be similar to the pre-change circumstances.	Small
Very slight change in baseline, i.e. pre-development view - change barely distinguishable from the surroundings. Composition and character of view substantially unaltered.	Negligible
No alteration to the existing view	No change

Table 1.4 – Magnitude of Visual Impact

1.2.11 Significance of Effects

The purpose of this TVIA is to determine, in a transparent way, the likely significant townscape and visual effects of the proposed development.

GTVIA3 states that

“The Regulations require that a final judgment is made about whether or not each effect is likely to be significant. There are no hard and fast rules about what effects should be deemed ‘significant’ but ... should always distinguish clearly between what are considered to be significant and non-significant effects”.

Significance can only be defined in relation to each particular development and its specific location. The relationship between receptors and effects is not typically a linear one. It is for each TVIA to determine how judgements about receptors and effects should be combined to derive significance and to explain how this conclusion has been arrived at. Consideration must also be given as to whether the effect is positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) in their consequences for townscape or for views and visual amenity.

As a general guide it is considered that the following are likely to be considered effects of the greatest significance:

- Major loss or irreversible negative effects, over an extensive area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character of nationally valued townscape; or
- Irreversible negative effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in view, on recognised and important viewpoints or scenic routes, large-scale change which introduces non-characteristic, discordant or intrusive elements into the view.

The identification of significant effects would not necessarily mean that the effect is unacceptable in planning terms. What is important is that the likely effects are transparently assessed and understood in order that the determining authority can bring a balanced, well-informed judgement to bear when making the planning decision.

The significance of effects on townscape, views and visual amenity are evaluated according to a six-point scale: Substantial, Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible or None.

For those effects indicated as being Moderate to major the assessor will exercise professional judgement in determining if the effect is considered significant.

For the purposes of this assessment those effects indicated as being of Substantial, Major to Substantial are considered significant as per **Table 1.5**. Effects of 'Moderate' and lesser significance have been identified in the assessment, but are not considered significant upon the character and quality of the townscape and on views although they remain worthy of consideration throughout the decision-making process.

Magnitude of Impact	Sensitivity				
	Negligible	Low	Medium	High	Very High
No Change	None	None	None	None	None
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Minor
Small	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate to Major
Medium	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major to Substantial
Large	Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major to Substantial	Substantial

Table 1.5 – Significance of Effect Matrix

A conclusion that an effect is 'significant' should not be taken to imply that the proposal is unacceptable. Significance of effect needs to be considered with regard to the scale over which it is experienced and whether it is beneficial, neutral or adverse.

1.3 Cumulative Impacts

The methodology for assessment of cumulative impacts has been derived from *Guidelines for Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition* (The Townscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013) (GTVIA3).

The purpose of the Cumulative Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CTVIA) is to consider the townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development when viewed in context with other similar development.

Cumulative effects consist of direct effects on the physical character of the site containing the development, and indirect, perceived effects on the character of areas from which the developments would be visible. GTVIA3 identifies:

Cumulative effects as *'the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments, taken together'* (SNH, 2012:4);

Cumulative townscape effects as effects that *'can impact on either the physical fabric or character of the townscape, or any special value attached to it'* (SNH, 2012:10);

Cumulative visual effects as effects that can be caused by combined visibility, which *'occurs when the observer is able to see two or more developments from one viewpoint'* and/or sequential effects which *'occur when the observer has to move to another viewpoint to see different developments'* (SNH, 2012:11).

The significance of any identified cumulative townscape and visual effect has been assessed as per the main TVIA methodology. These categories have been based on the same combination of receptor sensitivity and predicted magnitude of impact in order to identify the residual significance of effects.

1.3.1 Cumulative Baseline

At the time of this assessment, it was established that there is 1 No. permitted development located within close proximity to the proposed development site, that could have the potential to contribute to cumulative effects in combination with the proposed development.

On 2 Nov 2018, An Bord Pleanála (ABP) issued a grant of permission to LBJ Properties Limited in respect of Application Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036 (ABP Ref. PL06S.300068) for development consisting of a 58 No. bedroom Aparthotel with reception, restaurant/coffee shop and bar on ground floor function room on first floor with 9 No. retail units and outdoor market stalls. This followed an earlier grant of permission issued by South Dublin County Council (SDCC) on 02 Oct 2017.

The permitted scheme occupies a site directly to the south of the proposed development site and includes The Glebe House (a Protected Structure). The site is principally bounded to the north by the subject site, to the east by Tay Lane, to the west by Eaton Drive and to the south by Main Street with the exception of the relatively

new, two-storey, Four Corners credit union building, which opens directly onto the footpath.

As part of the assessment on townscape and its character, we consider not only the existing and the proposed development, but also the proposed development in combination with the development permitted under Application Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036 (ABP Ref. PL06S.300068).

Similarly, as part of the visual impact assessment, we consider not only the existing and the proposed development, but also the proposed development in combination with the development permitted under Application Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036 (ABP Ref. PL06S.300068).

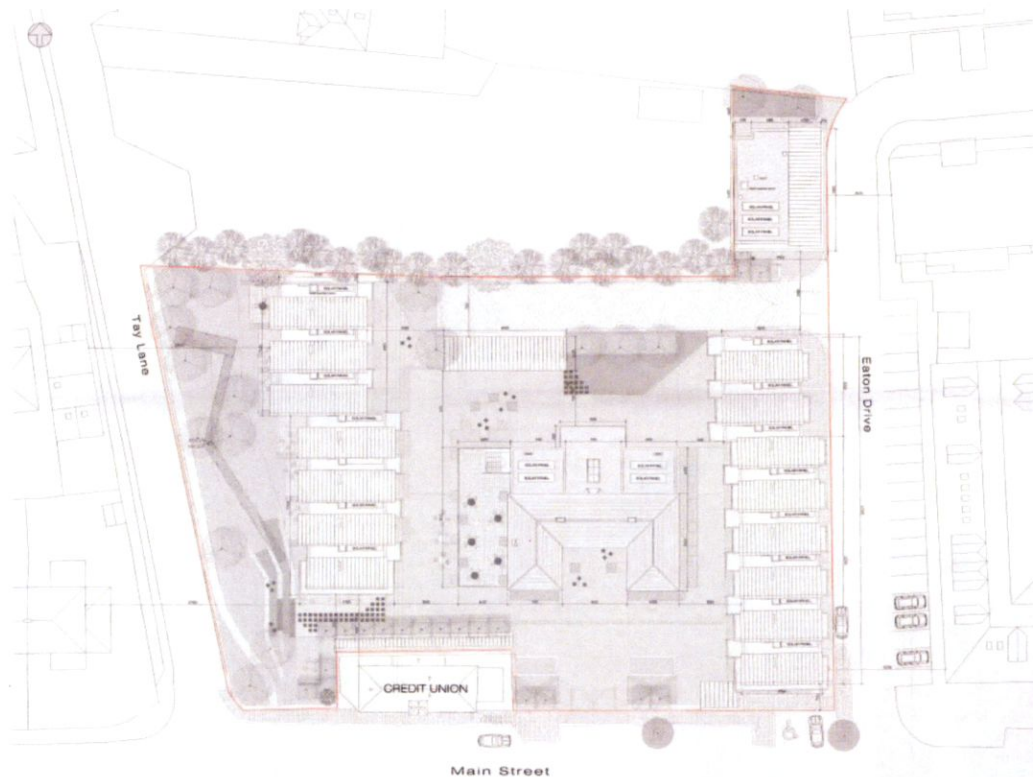


Figure 1.1: Extract of Dwg. No. AI 916-06 Rev. A by Roisin Hanley Architects.

2.0 TOWNSCAPE IMPACT

2.1 Subject Site

The subject site is located on the north side of Main Street, within the village of Rathcoole, Co. Dublin. The subject site comprises an irregular shaped site bounded: to the north by the M7 Dual Carriageway; to the east by Tay Lane; to the west partly by a single storey retail building and partly by Eaton Green – a 4 storey (with a set-back top floor) apartment building; and to the south by a brownfield site that includes The Glebe House (a Protected Structure).

2.2 Policy Context

The proposed development site lies within the area covered by the *South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028*. A review of the *Development Plan* has established that the proposed development site is situated in an area zoned *Objective 'RES' which seeks 'To protect and/or improve residential amenity.'*

The Development Plan includes the following relevant policies:

"Policy NCBH14: Landscapes

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."

"NCBH14 Objective 1:

To protect and enhance the unique 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 (2021)."

"NCBH14 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 (2021) in accordance with Government guidance on Landscape Character Assessment and the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025."

"NCBH14 Objective 3:

To ensure that development respects and reinforces the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Landscape Character Types and retains important characteristics such as habitats, landform, vernacular heritage and settlement patterns."

"NCBH14 Objective 4:

To require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany all planning applications for significant proposals, located within or adjacent to sensitive landscapes and to provide mitigation measures to address any likely negative impacts."

“NCBH14 Objective 5:

To protect skylines and ridgelines from development.”

2.3 Protected Structures and Monuments

The subject site does not contain any protected structures. However, the Rectory/Glebe House (Ref. No. 313 in the Record of Protected Structures) is located within the site directly south of the subject site.

Moreover, the subject site does not contain any monuments. However, there is an historical holy well located to the western boundary of the proposed site. (Ref. DU021-030004 - St. Brigid's Well on the Record of Monuments and Places within Schedule 1.) The holy well has been filled in by the Local Authority. As a result, there are no visible surface remains.

(Note: The historical context of the site and its wider environment is described in detail in the Archaeological Report by Colm Flynn Archaeologist that accompanies this application.)

2.4 Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)

The subject site is not located within the Rathcoole Village Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). However, the ACA bounds the subject site to the south.

2.8 Description of the Proposed Development

The development will consist of:

- The construction of a four-storey residential scheme comprising 58 No. apartments (20 No. one-bedroom apartment and 38 No. two-bedroom apartments);
- A community facility;
- 30 car parking spaces;
- 48 Bicycle parking spaces;
- Landscaping; and
- All other associate site development works.

2.8.1 Design, Built Form and Location

The proposed development has been designed having regard to its surrounding context. Its scale and massing relate appropriately to the existing building. Existing tree planting will provide screening and enable the proposed extension to be concealed within the existing environment.

Having regard to the historical and modern context, the proposed building will be a maximum of four storeys in height. The building from comprises two blocks connected by a central circulation core. The proposed form provides visual and physical relief,

appropriate separation from surrounding forms (existing and permitted) and will maximise sunlight and daylight availability.

2.8.2 Materiality and Expression

The materials and facade treatment proposed have been carefully considered to provide a building/structures that appear neutral and assimilate into the surrounding context. This will be accomplished through: uncomplicated design to provide clarity in the broader landscape; and use of appropriate tones, colour and materials.

2.9 Description of the Sources of Impact

The extent to which the proposed development has the potential to appear intrusive and hence, detrimental to the townscape character is limited. The development form is visually contained by surrounding townscape, restricting visibility to those localised areas which have an unrestricted view towards the development. Significant effects upon townscape character are expected to be restricted to the immediate vicinity of the site due to the nature of the townscape elements surrounding the site.

2.10 Effects upon Townscape Character

It is an Objective of the Development Plan to ensure that development is assessed against Townscape Character, Townscape Values and Townscape Sensitivity. The subject site is identified as being a Coastal Character Type, which is a highly sensitive townscape character area.

2.10.1 Landscape Character Area - Highly Sensitive Character Types

The Landscape Character Assessment for South Dublin County was reviewed and updated as part of this County Development Plan review process. The LCA defines five Landscape Character Areas in the County. The proposed development is located within Athgoe and Saggart Hills Landscape Character Area. The Development Plan states:

“Athgoe and Saggart Hills

This LCA comprises foothills and hills that form a backdrop and setting for the greater Dublin area. The hills host a variety of uses including agriculture, forestry and recreation as well as important ecological services associated with their habitats. The LCA is diverse and offers access into the more strongly rural areas of the County and beyond. Long views over the lowlands and south to the Wicklow Mountains are an important characteristic. The integrity of the landscape character is derived from agriculture combined with other rural land uses including coniferous plantations. The integrity of its character, and of its value as a landscape setting have been compromised by housing developments in the area and through the use of nonvernacular styles very much in conflict with the local character.”

The LCA states:

“The character around Rathcoole and Saggart is busy and active with noise from the N7 and flight paths a constant feature. The urban fringe and access roads into Rathcoole have a variety of landscape and boundary treatments.”

It further states the Landscape Character Area has a “medium to high” sensitivity.

2.10.2 Landscape Character Types - Urban

Although the subject site is located within the Athgoe and Saggart Hills Landscape Character Area, the LCA confirms that Rathcoole comprises an “urban” Landscape Character Type within this area. The urban landscape character type states “n/a” when considering its sensitivity.

Therefore, in our opinion, Rathcoole is an urban settlement within the Athgoe and Saggart Hills Landscape Character Area, comprising somewhat of an exception to the general description and sensitivities of the landscape character area.

Nevertheless, the LCA states:

“Rathcoole and Saggart constitute valuable components of the landscape as historic centres (royal demesnes). Their legacy has been muted by contemporary developments and steps should be taken to ‘salvage’ some recollection of their former historical importance.”

The proposed development is within the built-up area of the town centre and seeks to consolidate and strengthen its identity as an urban area within the wider landscape.

2.10.3 Assessment of the likely effect of the proposed development on Townscape Character

The extent to which the proposed development has the potential to appear intrusive and hence, detrimental to the townscape character is limited. The development form is relatively small and is, in general, visually contained by surrounding townscape.

The likely effect of the proposed development on the character area is considered to be negligible.

3.0 VISUAL IMPACT

3.1 Viewpoints

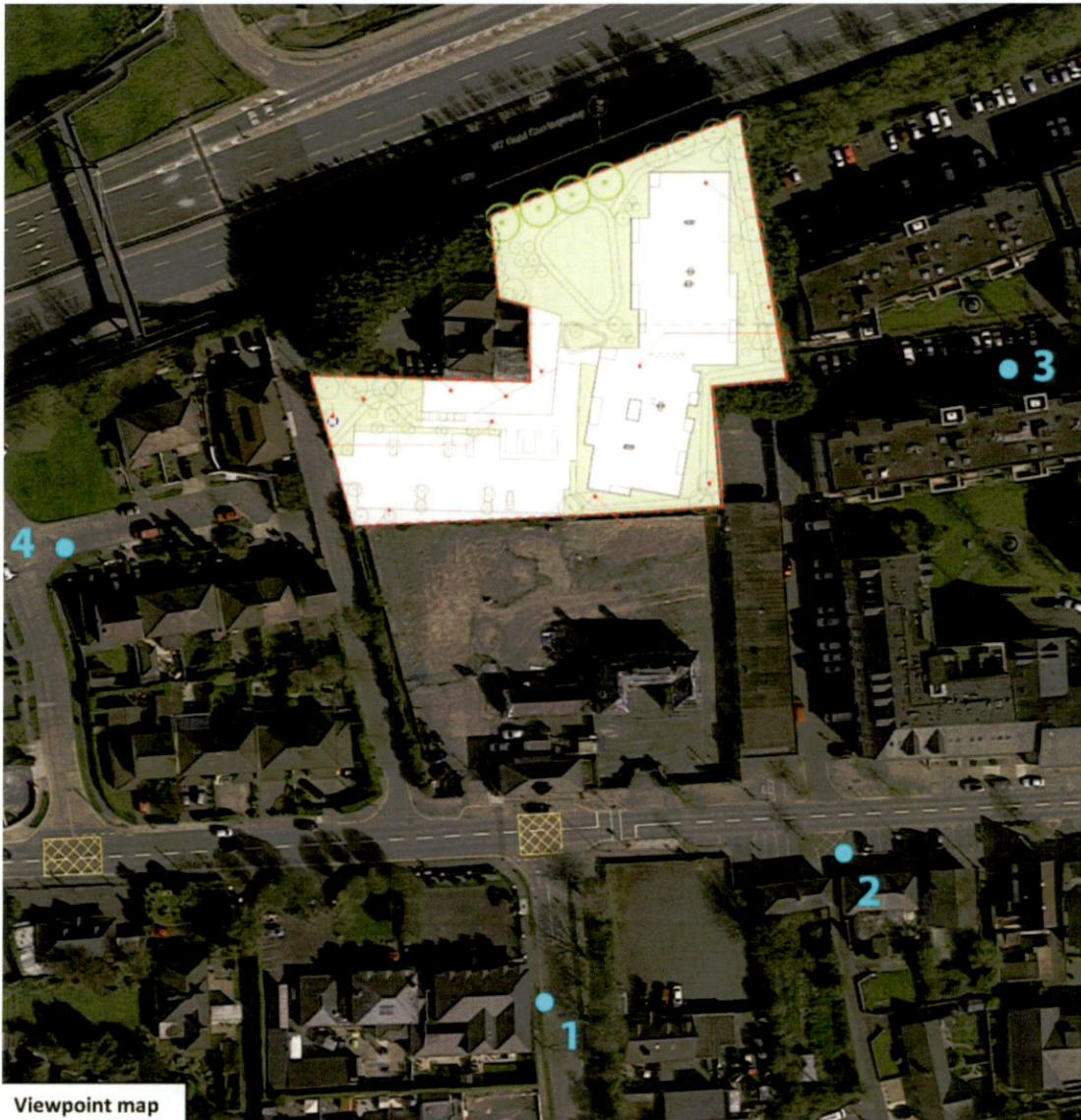


Figure 3.1: Viewpoint locations.

The assessment of effects on views is an assessment of how the introduction of the proposed development will affect views within the townscape. Assessment of visual effects therefore needs to consider:

- Direct impacts of the proposed development upon views through intrusion or obstruction;
- The reaction of viewers who may be affected, e. g. residents, walkers, road users; and
- The overall impact on visual amenity.

In selecting the viewpoints, reference has been made to the development plan context and the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). The ZTV has been established using mapping, images and through site inspection. This exercise assisted in determining

the non-visibility and the theoretical visibility of the proposed development in the townscape.

The viewpoints assessed below, represent locations from which the proposed development has the potential to be visible from the surrounding townscape. All viewpoints have been located within the public domain and are representative of views available from main thoroughfares/ pedestrian areas/ key viewpoints within the vicinity of the proposed development.

We assess visual impact below.

3.2 Viewpoint 1: View from Forrest Hills (looking north towards Main Street)



View 1: Existing



View 1: Proposed



View 1: Proposed with Permitted Development (Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068).

Viewpoint Description:

The viewpoint is located Forrest Hills close to its junction with Main Street. The viewpoint is located approximately 50m south of the proposed development site.

The subject site is not visible from this location. The view is occupied by the existing Four Corners credit union building. The Glebe House is also visible in the centre of the image to the right and behind the credit union building. The view is framed by existing vegetation to the right and by a boundary wall and gateway to the left.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

The viewer sensitivity is considered to be **low**.

Visual Effects during Construction:

Construction phase activities associated with site works may be partially visible within the view from this location. Cranes associated with construction phase activities may become apparent within a portion of the view, above intervening built form as building works progresses. However, this is considered to be a short term, temporary effect within the overall view, with existing buildings along Main Street forming the main visual draw.

Predicted Effects during Operation:

- a) ***Proposed View (Without Permitted Development Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068)***

No portion of the proposed development will be visible in views from this location due to intervening built form. The development form is visually contained by surrounding townscape.

b) *Proposed View (With Permitted Development Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068)*

No portion of the proposed development will be visible in views from this location due to intervening built form. Therefore, the proposed development does not have the potential to contribute to cumulative effects in combination with the permitted scheme under Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068.

Magnitude of Impact:

The magnitude of visual impact during the construction phase of the proposed development is considered to be none.

The magnitude of visual impact during the operational phase is considered to be no change.

Significance of Effect:

Negligible, temporary, adverse effect during the construction phase of the proposed development.

None during the operational phase of the proposed development.

3.3 Viewpoint 2: Main Street (close to its junction with An Pháirc Thiar)



View 2: Existing



View 2: Proposed



View 2: Proposed with Permitted Development (Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068).

Viewpoint Description:

The viewpoint is located on Main Street close to its junction with An Pháirc Thiar looking north-west towards the subject site. The viewpoint is located approximately 60m south-east of the proposed development site.

The subject site is not visible from this location. The centre of the view is occupied by hoarding of retail units along Eaton Drive. The right side of the view is framed by an existing three-storey building with street trees framing the left of the view. The foreground is occupied by Main Street and associated parking.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

The viewer sensitivity is considered to be **low**.

Visual Effects during Construction:

Construction phase activities associated with site works may be partially visible within the view from this location. Cranes associated with construction phase activities may become apparent within a portion of the view, above intervening built form as building works progresses. However, this is considered to be a short term, temporary effect within the overall view.

Predicted Effects during Operation:

- c) ***Proposed View (Without Permitted Development Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068)***

The proposed development is partially visible within the view, above and behind the existing block of retail units facing Eaton Drive. The subject site and the proposed building(s) is significantly set back from Main Street.

Where visible, the proposed development provides a modern, contemporary elevation. It provides a positive contribution to the streetscape. The use of brick and an appropriate solid-to-void ratio in façade design ensure that the proposed development relates to its neighbours. The proposed development also provides a shoulder height to match that of the buildings in the vicinity of the proposed development.

d) *Proposed View (With Permitted Development Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068)*

The proposed development is partially visible within the view, beyond the Permitted Development (Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068) facing Eaton Drive. However, the proposed development is largely screened from view by the permitted development.

Again, where visible, the proposed development provides a modern, contemporary elevation to Eaton Drive. The design, scale and height of the proposed development is commensurate with its existing surroundings and the proposed development also relates well to the buildings(s) permitted under Reg. Ref. SD17A/0036; ABP Ref. PL06S.300068.

Cumulatively, the permitted and proposed development provide a positive contribution to the streetscape

Magnitude of Impact:

The magnitude of visual impact during the construction phase of the proposed development is considered to be small and adverse.

The magnitude of visual impact during the operational phase is considered to be small and positive.

Significance of Effect:

Minor, temporary, adverse effect during the construction phase of the proposed development.

Minor, positive effect during the operational phase of the proposed development.

3.4 Viewpoint 3: From within the Subject Site looking south



View 3: Existing



View 3: Proposed

Viewpoint Description:

The viewpoint is located at Eaton Drive looking west towards the subject site. The viewpoint is located approximately 30m east of the proposed development site.

Existing evergreen trees on the subject site are visible from this location. The view is largely occupied by the existing four-storey apartment blocks at Eaton Drive, with the associated access road and car parking visible to the centre and right foreground of the view.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

The viewer sensitivity is considered to be **medium**.

Visual Effects during Construction:

Construction phase activities associated with site works may be partially visible within the view from this location. Cranes associated with construction phase activities may become apparent within a portion of the view, above intervening built form as building works progresses. However, this is considered to be a short term, temporary effect within the overall view.

Predicted Effects during Operation:

The proposed development will be visible from this location. The proposed development forms a modern, contemporary elevation, to Eaton Drive. The use of brick and an appropriate solid-to-void ratio in façade design ensure that the proposed development relates to its neighbours. The permitted scheme is commensurate in scale to the existing development(s) at Eaton Drive.

Magnitude of Impact:

The magnitude of visual impact during the construction phase of the proposed development is considered to be medium.

The magnitude of visual impact during the operational phase is considered to be medium

Significance of Effect:

Moderate temporary, adverse effect during the construction phase of the proposed development.

Moderate, positive effects during the operational phase of the proposed development.

3.5 Viewpoint 4: View from Tower Street at the Entrance to the Subject Site



View 4: Existing



View 4: Proposed

Viewpoint Description:

The viewpoint is located at Hillview looking east towards the subject site. The viewpoint is located approximately 30m west of the proposed development site.

Existing vegetation with the subject site is visible from this location in the centre of the view. The right and left sides of the view are framed by an existing two-storey residential terrace dwellings.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

The viewer sensitivity is considered to be **medium**.

Visual Effects during Construction:

Construction phase activities associated with site works may be partially visible within the view from this location. Cranes associated with construction phase activities may become apparent within a portion of the view, above intervening built form as building works progresses. However, this is considered to be a short term, temporary effect within the overall view.

Predicted Effects during Operation:

The proposed development is partially visible within the view, above and behind the existing boundary wall facing Hillview. The subject site and the proposed building is significantly set back within the site and therefore its visual impact from this viewpoint is limited.

Where visible, the proposed development provides a modern, contemporary elevation. Façades include solid and void elements, ensuring that their visual mass is reduced. New planting helps assimilate the proposed development into its environment.

Magnitude of Impact:

The magnitude of visual impact during the construction phase of the proposed development is considered to be medium and adverse.

The magnitude of visual impact during the operational phase is considered to be small and positive.

Significance of Effect:

Moderate, temporary, adverse effect during the construction phase of the proposed development.

Minor, positive effect during the operational phase of the proposed development.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed development aims to create and deliver a high quality sustainable residential development within a strategic infill site at Tay Lane, Rathcoole, Co. Dublin.

The proposed design is contemporary and will provide a high-quality residential environment while respecting the scale and significance of the adjacent buildings including the Protected Structure to the south of the subject site.

The proposed development has been designed having regard to its surrounding context. Its scale and massing relate appropriately to the surrounding environment. The materials and facade treatment proposed have been carefully considered to provide a building/structures that appear neutral and assimilate into the surrounding context.

During the construction phase, the townscape and visual impact of the proposed development will have a short-term adverse effect but this is generally viewed as a temporary and an expected and accepted feature of construction in the urban setting.

During the operational phase, the townscape and visual impact of the proposed development will generally have a positive beneficial effect on the townscape, respecting and enhancing the existing townscape characteristics and values.

The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) associated with the proposed development is limited due to the presence of intervening built form and vegetation. The photomontage views submitted as part of the planning application show that the potential impact of the proposed development on historic buildings, streetscapes and townscapes would be minimal.

Signed:

Jonathan Gannon
Director
Gannon + Associates

Landscape Architect



Gannon + Associates
6 Lower Kimmage Road
Harold's Cross
Dublin 6W
Ireland