

TWIA

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Clonbrone Residential Lucan, County Dublin



Registered
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April 2023

Visual Impact Assessment
In respect of a Request for Further Information
Clonbrone Residential, Lucan
By Macro Works, April 2023



1 Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Assessment is prepared in response to a Request for Further Information (RFI) in respect of a proposed development to demolish an existing dwelling and replace it with 7 no. two storey dwellings and associated site development works at Clonbrone in Lucan Village, Co. Dublin. The request for further information received from South Dublin County Council includes five items, with 'Item 3(i)' requesting a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to be carried out by an appropriately qualified consultant.

Landscape/townscape assessment relates to changes in the physical environment, brought about by a proposed development, which may alter its character. Visual Impact Assessment relates to changes in the composition of views, how these are perceived and effects on the visual amenity. Such impacts are population-based, rather than resource-based, as in the case of landscape impacts.

1.1 Statement of Authority

This Visual Assessment Statement is prepared by Richard Barker (MLA MILI), Managing Director of Macro Works Ltd. Macro Works is a specialist LVIA company with over 20 years of experience in the assessment of effects from a variety of energy, infrastructure and commercial developments including numerous Townscape and Visual Impact Assessments (TVIA) for residential developments within and around Dublin City.

2 Baseline Context

The proposed development is located on elevated ground at the south-eastern outskirts of Lucan Village, where it is currently the site of a large, detached dwelling known as Clonbrone. There is a similar sized residential property immediately to the west of the site (Clonard) and both are flanked to the north by a dense band of mature woodland trees that occupy sloping ground down to the R835 Lucan Road. Across this main road into Lucan Village from Dublin, the slope continues down towards the Sarsfield Park residential housing estate and on towards the River Liffey. Another dense band of mature woodland vegetation also flanks the northern side of the Lucan Road.

To the south and east of the site is the residential housing estate of Esker Lawns, which comprises two storey semi-detached dwellings whose back gardens abut the site boundary. The Lucan-Newlands Road snakes up from Lucan Village and runs to the southwest of the site. It is from this road that the proposed housing development will be accessed via the current access point to the site. Large detached dwellings can be found on the opposite side of this road within a similar sylvan setting to the proposed development.



Figure 1 – Site Context

To the northwest of the site, just beyond the neighbouring residential site of Clonard, is a small wooded park that occupies sloping ground between the Lucan-Newlands Road and the lower lying Lucan Road and there is a pedestrian path that makes its way between them. This pocket park also enjoys elevated views to the northwest across Lucan Village and towards the River Liffey.



Figure 2 – View east towards site past the 'Clonard' residence from the Lucan-Newlands Road



Figure 3 – View northwest towards site from Esker Lawns estate



Figure 4 – Elevated view over Lucan Village from pocket park to the northwest of the site



Figure 5 – Uphill view towards the pocket park from the Lucan Road

2.1 Landscape Policy Context

The proposed development site is contained within the planning jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council. Within the land use zoning maps (Map 1), the site is contained within a general residential zoning – *'Objective RES: To protect and/or improve residential amenity'*. There is an 'Open Space' zoning a short distance to the northwest and within that zoning there is a Specific Local Objective associated with that open space. This is; *'NCBH 15 SLO 3: To consider the inclusion of a new view and/or prospect of the River Liffey and Liffey bridge in Lucan Village from adjoining roads through an assessment carried out by an independent professional'*.



Figure 6 – Excerpt from Map 1 of the South Dublin County Development Plan (2022-2028)

A Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared for South County Dublin and is included as Appendix 9 in the South Dublin County Development Plan. Within the Landscape Character Assessment, the site is identified as being contained in the Urban Fringe/ Periurban Landscape Character Type (LCT), which covers most urban areas of the jurisdiction. It is in close proximity to the 'Historical Urban' LCT associated with the core of Lucan Village. Geographically specific landscape Character Areas (LCA) are also identified and the site is contained within the LC1 Liffey Valley LCA.

Key characteristics for the Liffey Valley LCA include;

- River valley of significant historical importance
- Important ecological corridor associated with the river Liffey;
- Incised valley for much of its journey through South Dublin County, the wooded and pasture slopes combined with riparian vegetation create an attractive landscape setting
- Enclosed and intimate with views to river from the Strawberry Beds and at river crossings
- Ridgelines of low hills adjoining valley form attractive setting to settlements
- Settlements of Lucan and Palmerstown with important built heritage and attractive townscapes present
- The urbanised areas contrast with pockets of rural character along the Strawberry Beds
- Major transport corridors of N4 and M50
- Visual and landscape quality reflected in designation as Special Area Amenity Order.

Of particular relevance in the discussion of the landscape Condition of the Liffey Valley LCA is the following passage;

“The historical settlements of Lucan and Palmerstown combined with a number of large houses and their parklands increases landscape interest and diversity.

The views into the river valley and across the ridges to the north are attractive features, provide a landscape setting and context and contribute significantly to the distinctive character of this landscape. It is an interesting, diverse LCA and the landform generally creates an intimate and enclosed landscape that offers occasional rather than consistent views to the river such as at river crossings or from the slopes of the valley."

The Liffey Valley LCA is identified in Figure 37 – Sensitivity Map and Table 6C of the landscape Character Assessment document as being of Medium to High Sensitivity.

3 Townscape Impact Assessment

In terms of Townscape impact the proposed development is appropriate to its land use zoning. It represents infill development of a similar scale to the semi-detached dwellings that populate the Esker Lawns housing estate to the south and east. It will not adversely impact on the wooded open space to the north and northwest of the site and takes advantage of the sylvan setting that provides residential amenity without adversely impacting on the trees that are central to its character. The development is of a modest scale and a high quality of design that is fitting to the area. A minor issue was raised in the RFI about increasing the separation distance between the nearest of the proposed houses and the nearest boundary of the Esker Lawns estate and this has been duly incorporated.

One of the main considerations is whether the proposed development complies with Specific Landscape Objective 3 (SLO3) associated with the adjacent Open Space (OS) lands or, at least, does not undermine that objective. Whilst the proposed development shares the hilltop with the Open Space zoning and SLO3, it is buffered from the accessible section of the pocket park by the adjacent Clonard residence. Furthermore, the development is located on the fully enclosed plateau above the slope, whereas, the open space occupies the upper north facing slopes of this river terrace. Thus, views to the north from the park, or across the park from the Lucan-Newlands Road, are in the opposite / oblique direction to the proposed development. For these reasons, the proposed development is not considered to have any material detrimental impact on the landscape of the open space or the visual amenity enjoyed from it (see figure & for context).



Figure 7 – Oblique aerial view towards site from the west

4 Visual Impact Assessment

Visual impacts will be assessed at six representative viewpoint (VP) locations that cover a range of viewing angles, distances and context surrounding the site. These are set out in the table below.

<i>VRP No.</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Direction of view</i>
VP1	Esker Lawns Residential Estate	W
VP2	Lucan-Newlands Road	N
VP3	Pocket Park between the Lucan-Newlands Road and Lucan Road	E
VP4	Pocket Park between the Lucan-Newlands Road and Lucan Road	SE
VP5	Lucan Road	SE
VP6	Lucan Road Opposite (Brookvale Entrance)	SE



Figure 1 – Viewpoint location map (3DDB) - See photomontage booklet for larger scale map

4.1 Visual Receptor Sensitivity

In this instance, all of the viewpoints are in relatively close proximity to each other, albeit with slightly varied context. The views from busy arterial roads (VP2, VP5 and VP6) are considered to be of Medium-low sensitivity to visual change. The view from Esker Lawns Housing Estate (VP1) has a more tranquil neighbourhood setting where residential visual amenity is more of a consideration and it is deemed to be of Medium sensitivity. Given the local objective to protect and enhance elevated views over Lucan Village from / across the pocket park to the northwest of the site, it is of a higher sensitivity than the other locations. However, as the views in question (i.e. towards the site) are in the opposite direction to the main visual amenity, the visual receptor sensitivity is deemed to be Medium, on balance, at (VP3 and VP4).

Table 1.1 Visual Impact Assessment for selected viewpoints

VP No.	Title and description of existing view	Receptor Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance of Visual Impact
VP1	<p>Esker Lawns Residential Estate This is a view across the estate road towards the gable end of a corner dwelling from a run of houses to the south of the site. The front facades of two storey semi-detached dwellings that back onto the eastern boundary of the site can be seen further to the right.</p>	Medium	<p>A small section of the roof profile of the proposed dwellings will be seen through an intervening tree (during winter months only) and between two dwellings. If noticed at all by a casual observer there will be a marginally increased intensity of residential development within the scene, but of a familiar scale and form. This increased intensity of familiar built development is likely to be slightly greater from the rear of the intervening houses, but in the context of the removal of the existing dwelling and without a sense of overlooking. For these reasons, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Low.</p>	Slight
VP2	<p>Lucan-Newlands Road This is the view presented to those moving south along the Lucan-Newlands Road in the direction of Lucan Village. The semi-detached dwellings from Esker lawns estate run away from the viewer to the east, whilst the Lucan-Newlands Road veers left downhill to the north. The large residential property of Clonard is seen on the road alignment with mature trees to the fore.</p>	Medium-low	<p>The view of the proposed development from here is of a very similar nature to that described above for VP1. There will be a small glimpse of part of the roof profile of the proposed houses between nearer building and through the winter branches of several trees. Again, there will be a minor increase in the intensity of built development in this street scene and from the rear of the intervening dwellings. However, this is of a familiar scale and nature and does not present an opportunity for overlooking. The impact is deemed to be Low.</p>	Slight
VP3 & VP4	<p>Pocket Park between the Lucan-Newlands Road and Lucan Road</p>	Medium	<p>Filtered views of part of the roof and upper storey of the proposed line of dwellings can be seen through intervening winter branches and is not likely to be seen</p>	Slight

	<p>The view from the adjacent VP3 and VP4 is very similar in nature and will be assessed together. They both view slightly upslope to the near palisade fenced boundary of the pocket park in the opposite direction to the main visual amenity afforded from here to the north west. The key feature beyond the boundary is the large detached residence of Clonard. This view is through winter vegetation and is also framed by the large mature trees that line the slope between the site and the Lucan Road (i.e. to the left of Clonard).</p>		<p>at all during summer. The development is also between and beyond intervening residential buildings and unlikely to be noticed by casual observers within the park, who are more likely to be focussed in the opposite direction. The upper level dormers will afford some visibility over the rear yard of the Clonard property, but they are oriented away from the residence itself. This degree of overlooking is commonplace in any residential estate and not considered to be a notable impediment to the enjoyment of the Clonard property particularly once proposed planting becomes fully established. The magnitude of effect is considered to be Low.</p>	
VP5	<p>Lucan Road This view lies directly across the Lucan Road from the pedestrian steps that lead up through the wooded slopes below the site and connect via the pocket park to the Lucan-Newlands Road. Clonard is just visible above the steps through winter vegetation.</p>	Medium-low	<p>Only a fraction of the roof line is potentially visible from here through a heavy veil of winter trees and there will be no view in summer. In either season the development will be barely discernible and will have even little consequence for visual amenity. Negligible impact.</p>	Imperceptible
VP6	<p>Lucan Road Opposite (Brookvale Entrance) This view is from slightly downhill to the northwest of VP5 and with a very similar context. The main difference is a more oblique view along the wooded slopes above the road such that there is less visual permeability through the trees.</p>	Medium-low	<p>There is no view of the proposed development and hence the impact is Negligible by default.</p>	Imperceptible

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed development represents modest scale infill residential development within a standard Residential land use zoning. It is of a familiar scale and form to surrounding development to the south and of a high quality of design and finish. There is considered to be no issue with the principle or design of the development from a townscape perspective in this context. A key consideration is the Open Space zoning to the northwest and a Specific Local Objective to project views over Lucan Village and the River Liffey to the northwest. The proposed development does not impede on the open space either directly or indirectly and will not undermine the SLO in any way.

The visual impact for the proposed development was undertaken using a selection of 6 viewpoints, which all afford only partial and filtered views of the upper profile of the proposed development between intervening buildings and or heavily filtered through winter vegetation (in a worst case scenario). Other than a minor sense of increase in the intensity of a familiar form of residential development, there is little effect on visual amenity with all of the viewpoints registering a visual impact of either Slight or Imperceptible.

Based on the assessment contained within this report, it is considered that the proposed development will not result in any significant townscape and visual impacts and is considered to be appropriate scale and design for the site in question.

Appendix A

Landscape / Townscape & Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

The following appendix should be read in conjunction with the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA).

Landscape Impact Assessment Criteria

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

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

The sensitivity of the landscape to change is the degree to which a particular landscape receptor, Landscape Character Area (LCA) or landscape feature can accommodate changes or new elements, without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. Landscape Value and Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in **Table 1**.

Table A1 Landscape 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 landscapes, protected at an international or national level (World Heritage Site/National Park), 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 landscapes, protected at a national or regional level (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), 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 landscapes, 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 landscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable

	quality, where landscape management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas of townscape character that include derelict, mining, industrial land or are part of the urban fringe 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 landscape improvements and/or restoration to realise a higher landscape value.

The magnitude of a predicted landscape impact is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed development. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the Application Site boundary that may have an effect on the landscape character of the area. **Table 2** refers.

Table A2 Magnitude of Landscape Impacts

Magnitude of Impact	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 landscape in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of 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 landscape 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.

The significance of a landscape 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 matrix set out in **Table A3**.

Table A3 Impact Significance Matrix

Scale/ Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	<i>Very High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Negligible</i>
<i>Very High</i>	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Slight
<i>High</i>	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-imperceptible
<i>Medium</i>	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible
<i>Low</i>	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
<i>Negligible</i>	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 are considered to be 'significant impacts' in EIA terms.

Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

As with the landscape impact, the visual impact of the proposed Development 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 basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape 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 and used in **Table 6** below to establish visual receptor sensitivity at each VRP:

1. **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; and*
- *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; and*
- *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”.*

2. **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;
3. **Views from within highly sensitive landscape areas.** Again, highly sensitive landscape designations are usually part of a county’s Landscape Character Assessment, which is then incorporated within the County Development Plan and is therefore subject to the public consultation process. Viewers within such areas are likely to be highly attuned to the landscape around them;
4. **Primary views from dwellings.** A proposed development might be seen from anywhere within a particular residential property with varying degrees of sensitivity. Therefore, this category is reserved for those instances in which the design of dwellings or housing estates, has been influenced by the desire to take in a particular view. This might involve the use of a slope or the specific orientation of a house and/or its internal social rooms and exterior spaces;
5. **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 county or regional scale;

6. **Connection with the landscape.** This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the landscape i.e. commuters hurriedly driving on busy national route versus hill walkers directly engaged with the landscape enjoying changing sequential views over it;
7. **Provision of 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;
8. **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;
9. **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;
10. **Presence of striking or noteworthy features.** A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape feature such as a promontory headland, lough or castle;
11. **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;
12. **Rarity or uniqueness of the view.** This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain landscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;
13. **Integrity of the landscape character.** This looks at the condition and intactness of the landscape in view and whether the landscape pattern is a regular one of few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;
14. **Sense of place.** This considers whether there is special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location; and

15. **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. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

Visual Impact Magnitude

The magnitude of visual effects is determined on the basis of two factors; the visual presence (relative visual dominance) of the proposal and its effect on visual amenity. The magnitude of visual impacts is classified in **Table 4**.

Table A4 Magnitude of Visual Impact

Criteria	Description
Very High	The proposal intrudes into a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most noticeable element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene
High	The proposal intrudes into 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 intrusion into 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. Alternatively, it may represent a balance of higher and lower order estimates in relation to visual presence and visual amenity
Low	The proposal intrudes to a minor extent into the available vista 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

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 in respect of landscape impacts (i.e. **Table A3**).