

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
of a proposed strategic housing development at
Karuna and Glenina,
Sandyford Road,
Sandyford,
Dublin 18
for Midsal Homes Ltd.

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LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Introduction

Mitchell + Associates was engaged by Midsal Homes Ltd., to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for a Strategic Housing Development and associated facilities on a site located at Sandyford Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) summarises the impact of the proposed development on the landscape character and visual amenity of the site and on the contiguous urban landscape and its environs. It describes the landscape character of the subject site and its hinterland, together with the visibility of the site from significant viewpoints in the locality. It includes an outline of the methodology utilised to assess the impacts, descriptions of the receiving environment (baseline) and of the potential impacts of the development. Mitigation measures introduced to ameliorate or offset impacts are outlined and the resultant predicted (residual) impacts are assessed.

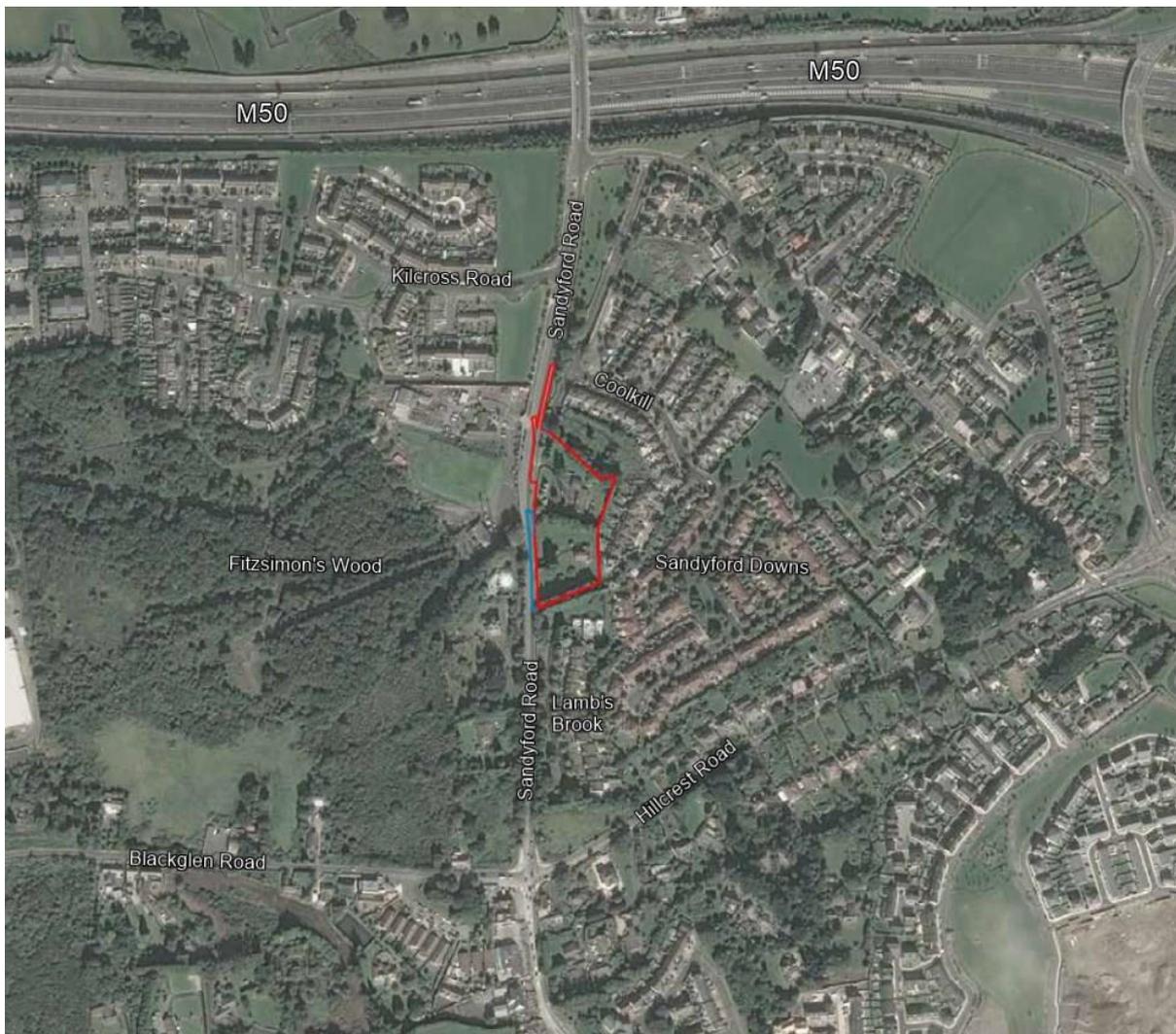


Fig.1 Site location and context (Source: Bing maps with annotation by Mitchell + Associates)

This report has been prepared as part of the planning submission and should be read with reference to the photomontages included in the separate A3 report produced by 3D Design Bureau Ltd., which accompanies the submission. It should also be read in conjunction with the Architectural Design Statement prepared by Horan Rainsford Architects which also accompanies the submission. This LVIA has been prepared in response to Item no. 16 of An Bord Pleanála's Opinion.

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This assessment was carried out between April 2021 and April 2022 and assesses the potential impacts of the proposed development on the basis of the scheme design and the photomontages produced to illustrate it. The methodology adopted for the assessment takes account of the capacity of the existing site and environs to accommodate the proposed development, the sensitivities involved, and it assesses its impacts upon the broader existing urban landscape. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) includes consideration of two main aspects:

- Landscape Character Impact – the assessment of effects on the character of the landscape arising from the insertion of the proposed development into the existing landscape context. This 'landscape' aspect is relatively subjective and can be described broadly as the human, social and cultural experience of one's surroundings. These combined impacts will elicit responses whose significance will be partially dependent on how people perceive a particular landscape and how much the changes will matter in relation to other senses as experienced and valued by those concerned. Despite the extremely large part played by our visual experience in forming our views on landscape, one's perception and indeed memory also play an important part if the changes brought about in landscape character are to be fully understood. It follows therefore that different people doing different things will experience the surrounding landscape in different ways. Such sensitivities and variations in response, including where and when they are likely to occur, are taken into consideration in the assessment.
- Visual Impact – an appraisal of effects of the proposed development on the visual environment and visual amenity as evidenced by the comparison of baseline (existing) images and photomontages illustrating the proposed development in context. This second aspect is somewhat less subjective in that direct 'before and after' comparisons can be made. Visual impact occurs by means of visual intrusion and/or visual obstruction and the distance between subject and viewpoint has a bearing on the scale of such impact.

This assessment utilises the standard evaluation methodology normally used in the preparation of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) when being prepared for inclusion within an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).. The evaluation methodology for this assessment report is therefore based on the following:

- 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2002.

- 'Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2003.
- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, published by Routledge, 3rd Edition 2013.
- The DRAFT 'Revised guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2015 and to the DRAFT 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), August 2017
- Reference is also made to the 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment' (August 2018) - Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Landscape Institute UK (LI) September 2019.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has involved:

- Visiting the area, including preparation of a photographic record of the main landscape features;
- Undertaking a desk study of the subject site and its immediate environs in relation to its local and broader significance using the information gathered from the site visits, studying aerial photography, historic and Ordnance Survey mapping;
- Establishing and describing the receiving environment in terms of the existing landscape and its visual amenity;
- Assessing the nature, scale, and quality of the proposed development through examination of the design team's drawings, illustrations and descriptions of the proposed scheme;
- Assessing potential viewpoints, choosing and agreeing those which could be considered most important and most representative in terms of visual impact; and
- Assessing the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development through consideration and interpretation of the prepared photomontages.

2.2 Selection of views

In order to provide a full and detailed appraisal of the proposal, 10 viewpoints have been identified and selected for photomontage preparation. The views were chosen to accurately represent the likely visual impact from a variety of viewpoints and directions around the subject site.

In accordance with the guidelines, views from the public domain are given priority, particularly those from main thoroughfares and public places. The viewpoints chosen are considered to be the most important and representative, having regard to the requirement to examine the likely significant impacts. A location map of the final selected viewpoints is illustrated in Figure 2 (below) and is also included with the photomontages in the A3 document included in the submission. The process of view selection paid particular regard to Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's policies in respect of views and prospects as set out in the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022–2028.

The guidance on viewpoint selection and baseline photography requires that the proposed development is considered in context and that photomontages used to illustrate the proposed development include sufficient landscape context for proper assessment.

The photomontages prepared have also been used to assess the preliminary design and to inform the design team of any advisable amendments – this is an iterative process and offers an opportunity for the design team to adjust the design in mitigation of the indicated impacts.



Fig.2 Selected Viewpoints (Source: 3D Design Bureau Ltd.)

2.3 Photomontage methodology

The primary method adopted for Visual Impact Assessment relies largely on a comparative visual technique, whereby accurate photomontages, incorporating the proposed development are compared to the existing corresponding baseline photograph so that an assessment of impact can be made. These 'before' and 'after' images are prepared for a number of selected viewpoints. A general methodology for the preparation of photomontages, including site photography, 3D computer modelling and rendering of views, is outlined in Appendix 1 of this document, however the specific detailed methodology employed by 3D Design Bureau Ltd. for this project is described in their A3 photomontage document.

2.4 Methodology for rating of impacts

An assessment is made in respect of the significance, scale and magnitude of predicted impacts which is set against an assessment of the quality/sensitivity of the impact. For each view, the scale/magnitude of

impact is related to the quantum of change within the field of view and to the nature and sensitivity of such change in respect of the respective receptors, in the context of the existing (receiving) environment. Therefore, whilst the significance or scale of impact may range from 'imperceptible' to 'profound' and these may in part be related to distance and proximity, it should be remembered that the nature of the change and the sensitivities of the viewers also play a part in this aspect of assessment for each view. This latter issue of sensitivity can however create emotive responses that often have little or no regard for the appropriateness and/or design of the proposal; however, the assessment needs to be considered in that context. In such cases, issues of appropriateness and design quality become more influential in the assessment of impact and the appraisal of the designed scheme. The subtleties of design and detail in such circumstances are important in mitigating potentially negative impacts and ultimately, in determining appropriateness.

The quality of impact can be assessed as 'positive' or 'negative' depending on whether the change is considered to improve or reduce the quality of the landscape character or visual environment. The quality of impact may also be assessed as 'neutral' if the quality of the environment is unaffected. The assessment of quality needs to consider and weigh-up a range of issues and potentially conflicting standpoints. The nature of the proposed change, its context, appropriateness, quality of design and the sensitivities of the viewers are all important considerations for this aspect of assessment.

The duration of impact is a third aspect of assessment to be considered and impacts may range from temporary to permanent. In this case, the proposed development has a design life up to and possibly exceeding 60 years and so its impact is likely to be long term to permanent. The temporary/short term impacts during the construction of the proposed development are also considered in this assessment.

The significance criteria used for this landscape and visual assessment are based on those given in the EPA 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements', 2002, (Section 5 Glossary of Impacts) as refined by the Draft 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), August 2017. These are outlined in Appendix 2.

3. Description of Receiving Environment

3.1 Site location and landscape context

The site for the proposed development comprises the land associated with two existing properties; 'Glenina' and 'Karuna', located on Sandyford Road, Dublin 18, which sit approx. 300m south of the M50 motorway. The area to the east of the road is a mature residential area of primarily detached, 2-storey properties, each with its own garden. To the west of the road, opposite the subject site and behind a high concrete wall and railing, the Parks Department of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council has a depot. Above this, there is an electricity sub-station and a construction site (Whinsfield House). Individual properties are relatively secluded both from the public realm and from one another. Ranged around the

site to the north, east and south are the residential areas of Cul Cuille (under construction), Coolkill/Sandyford Downs and The Pastures/Lamb's Brook, respectively.



Fig.3 'Glenina', looking south-east from Sandyford Road



Fig.4 View from front gate of Glenina, looking south-west



Fig.5 'Karuna', looking north-east from Sandyford Road

3.2 Topography

Sandyford Road leads south from Dundrum, crosses the M50 and starts to rise towards Lambs Cross, from a point just north of the site. The level difference across the site from north to south is a rise of approx. 6 metres. There is a modest fall of approx. 1.5 metres across the site from the road.

3.3 Vegetation

The mature gardens contain a wide variety of shrubs and trees in variable condition. The tree survey and report records that there are circa. 27 no. individual trees and 14no. tree groups/hedges that comprising multiple specimens. The site vegetation is of diverse species, age, size and condition, however the condition of the tree specimens among them is generally poor with 5% in category 'U', the majority (78%) in category 'C', with only 17% in Category 'B' and none in Category 'A'.

3.4 Planning Context

The Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022–2028 indicates the subject site and the adjacent lands as having the zoning objective A – 'To provide residential development and improve residential amenity while protecting the existing residential amenities.' (refer to Figure 6, below).



Fig. 6: Extract from Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022–2028. The subject site is indicated by the red outline.

There is a 6 year road objective within the plan for Sandyford Road. There is a proposed Natural Heritage Area (Fitzsimon's Wood) beyond the narrow zone of 'Objective A' lands along the western edge of Sandyford Road. There are protected and preserved trees and woodlands to the west side of Sandyford Road, opposite the site and to the north of the site on the east side of the road.

There are no preserved prospects or preserved views in proximity to the site, however there is a preserved view from Woodside Road, east of the Slate Cabin Lane junction, which overlooks the verdant environs of the site, some 800 metres distant, and takes in Dublin Bay, framed by Ringsend and Howth Head in the distance. There are no protected structures close to the site.

4. Characteristics of the Proposed Development

4.1 Introduction

A comprehensive description of the design for the proposed development is contained in the Architectural Design Statement prepared by Horan Rainsford Architects. Please refer also to the design layout drawings, sections and elevations included with this planning application.

4.2 Proposed development

The proposed development is a strategic housing development on the site of 0.829 Ha approx., currently comprised of the properties known as 'Karuna' and 'Glenina' at Sandyford Road, Dublin 18. Works are also proposed at Sandyford Road, which include the removal of a wall and the creation of a new pedestrian connection to the existing cul-de-sac adjacent to 'Cul Cuille' to the north (0.016 Ha approx.) and at the footpath at Sandyford Road to provide a new multi-modal entrance, pedestrian/cycle entrances and landscaping (0.015 Ha approx.). In addition, works are proposed for water services (0.05 Ha approx.): water supply to be sourced by way of a new connection to the existing 250 mm diameter water main across from the proposed main entrance at Sandyford Road; surface water drainage network to discharge to the existing 525 mm diameter surface water sewer located to the north of the site at Sandyford Road via a new 150 mm surface water sewer; and foul water to discharge to the 225 mm diameter foul sewer under construction at Sandyford Road. An additional 0.01 ha has been assigned for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council to undertake road works to upgrade Sandyford Road. The residential development site, pedestrian connection, entrance works, water services and road works area will provide a total application site area of 0.92 Ha.

The proposed development principally consists of the demolition of the existing dwelling and ancillary buildings known as 'Glenina', the existing dwelling known as 'Karuna' and the existing boundary wall fronting Sandyford Road, and the construction of a residential development principally comprising 137 No. apartments (32 No. 1-bed units, 78 No. 2-bed units and 27 No. 3-bed units) in 4 No. blocks ranging in height from part-1 No. storey to part-6 No. storeys with a part-basement/part-undercroft level (at Blocks B, C and D).

The proposed development which has a gross floor space of 13,144 sq m (over a part-basement/part-undercroft level measuring 4,508 sq m, principally providing car and cycle parking and plant) also includes: internal communal amenities and support facilities (404 sq m); 137 No. car parking spaces, which include 127 No. spaces and 6 No. GoCar spaces located at basement level (accessed beneath Block B) and 4 No. set down spaces located at surface level adjacent to Block A; motorcycle parking spaces; cycle parking spaces; bin store; substation; switch room; meter rooms; plant rooms; new telecommunications infrastructure at rooftop level including microwave link dishes concealed in shrouds; hard and soft landscaping, including communal amenity space; private amenity space with balconies facing north, south, east and west; boundary treatments; and all associated works above and below ground.

The dwelling units will be spread over four apartment blocks as follows (see Figure 7, below):

- Block A will be 5 storeys in height dropping down to 3 storeys, with an overall height of 16.8m;
- Block B will be 5 storeys in height dropping down to 3 storeys, with an overall height of 19.65m;
- Block C will be 6 storeys in height dropping down to 4 storeys, with an overall height of 19.2m;
- Block D will be 6 storeys in height dropping down to 1 storey, with an overall height of 20.25m.



Fig. 7: Building height diagram, indicating nos. of storeys (Source: Architectural Design Statement) – note the 4 and 5 storey buildings south of the proposed development (to the right), are the neighbouring proposed 'Pastures' development, Sandyford Road – ABP ref. PL06D.312990, for which permission has been granted under D21A/0595 and is currently under appeal.



Fig. 8: Contextual contiguous elevation along Sandyford Road (Source: Architectural Design Statement)

5. Potential Impacts of the Proposed Development

The purpose of this section of the report is to describe the potential effects of such proposed development upon the landscape and views/visual amenity within the area, and further afield, where relevant - at both construction and operational stages. The effect of such changes may of course be positive or negative. Effects can also be short or long term; temporary or permanent.

5.1 Construction phase

Potential impacts during the construction phase are related to temporary works, site activity, and vehicular movement within and around the subject site. Vehicular movement may increase in the immediate area, and temporary vertical elements such as cranes, scaffolding, site fencing/hoarding, gates, plant and machinery etc., will be required and put in place. All construction impacts will be temporary to short-term, and may include the following:

- Site preparation works and operations
- Site excavations and earthworks
- Site infrastructure and vehicular access
- Construction traffic, dust and other emissions
- Temporary fencing/hoardings
- Temporary site lighting
- Temporary site buildings (including office accommodation)
- Cranes, crash deck and scaffolding

5.2 Operational phase

The scale of the proposed development is significantly greater than the buildings currently occupying the site. The main issues regarding potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed scheme will therefore include:

- Scale, height, and massing of the proposed development, particularly in the existing context, which is predominantly 2-storey residential development;
- Impacts on the visual amenity of the existing neighbouring residential developments and of people travelling on Sandyford Road;
- Visual impacts along Sandyford Road;
- Appropriateness and quality of the design, detail and finishes.

The importance of design quality in the process of inserting new buildings into the urban/suburban fabric should not be underestimated. Good design in such circumstances is a rigorous process involving: a deep understanding of the site, its context, and existing sensitivities; testing of the range of appropriate design options; a broad knowledge of suitable design approaches and; the ability to convert these through careful detailing, materials selection and effective control throughout the construction process. These aspects of design are central to the appropriate and successful integration of new development within its context. Any development has the potential to impact negatively, if poorly designed. Conversely it has the potential to impact positively, indeed to inspire, if well-designed.

Aspects of the proposed scheme design are included specifically to respond to such issues and any associated concerns. The basic design approach and mitigation measures employed to address potentially sensitive contextual issues and to respect and enhance the local environs are outlined in Section 6, below.

6. Mitigation (remedial/reductive measures)

6.1 Construction phase

The building site including a site compound with site offices, site security fencing, scaffolding and temporary works will be visible during the construction phase. The provision of site hoarding along the property boundaries will substantially address many potential effects of construction operations during the delivery stage. Construction cranes and of course, the emerging buildings will become visible from neighbouring properties, along Sandyford Road and from a number of more distant vantage points as the development proceeds. The cranes and site facilities are generally viewed as a temporary and unavoidable feature of construction. Mitigation measures proposed during the construction stage of the development, primarily revolve around the implementation of appropriate site management procedures during the construction works – such as the control of lighting, storage of materials, placement of compounds, control of vehicular access, and effective dust and dirt control measures, etc. A Construction and Environmental Management Plan for the project has been prepared and is included with the planning submission, which sets out the basic measures to be employed to mitigate potential negative effects during construction. This is a working document which is refined and added to as the project proceeds.

6.2 Operational phase

The designed scheme seeks to harmonise and integrate the development within the existing landscape and the broader environment whilst adhering to national planning policy which seeks residential densification and the provision of increased height on appropriate urban sites. The design rationale and detail employed, seeks to mitigate potential negative effects on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area by:

- Establishing an integrated relationship between the proposed development and surrounding buildings and the broader landscape beyond, incorporating aspects of current and emerging trends in built-form, scale, texturing, colour and materials;
- The insertion, positioning and detailed modelling of the buildings, in order to assist in the appropriate visual assimilation of their mass (eg. the taller built elements are located along the Sandyford Road, which is itself the object of a planned road scheme, and the proposed buildings closer to existing residential properties are lower in height);
- Appropriate architectural detailing to assist in the integration of the external building facades – including the modulation of openings, balconies and fenestration, and variation in material types (render and brick) and colour (light red and cream);
- Simplification and rationalisation of the proposed roof lines;

- Rationalisation of all services elements and any other potential visual clutter and its incorporation internally within building envelopes (as far as practically possible), including the concealment of the proposed new telecommunications infrastructure at rooftop level within designed shrouds;
- Use of appropriate materials;
- The provision of significant additional communal with pedestrian and cycle linkage;
- The inclusion of a considered landscape design which deals appropriately with the relationship between the buildings and the adjacent newly created communal spaces (which includes semi-private buffering where appropriate between external and internal living areas at 'ground' level);
- The provision of linked, communal open spaces within the development which are located adjacent to the site boundary, thereby reducing impact of the proposed buildings on existing neighbouring residential properties.

7. Predicted effects of the proposed development

7.1 Effects on landscape character

In assessing the landscape character effects, there are three main inter-related aspects to be addressed in considering the development proposals, namely:

- The perceived character of the area – how it is affected by the proposal
- Effects of the proposed development on social and cultural amenity
- The proposed views of the development, relative to the existing site (outlined in section 7.2) and the associated effects on visual amenity.

A person's experience of 'landscape' may be described as an individual's response (sometimes an emotional response) to their surroundings. It is a complex concept which involves individual perception, social amenity, memory, beliefs, allegiances etc.

The proposed design seeks to integrate the new development into a relatively verdant and mature residential landscape. The range of mitigation measures incorporated within the proposed design seeks to ensure that the potential impacts are kept to a minimum and that indeed many aspects of the experience of this site are enhanced. Whilst the vast majority of existing trees/tree groups will be removed, the substantial proposed planting, including 134 new trees, assists greatly in the integration of the proposed scheme into its landscape context. The proposed design is generally of high quality and effectively addresses these issues.

The potential impact of the proposed development upon the residential amenity of existing neighbouring residential properties contributes something to local sensitivities in this regard but is not considered a major aspect of impact upon the landscape or indeed upon the general visual amenity within the area. The scale of the proposed buildings is larger than the prevailing norm for the area, however the planning context for this site anticipates additional residential development in this area and the additional scale and height that is likely to accompany that.

7.2 Effects on views and visual amenity

The assessment of effects on views created by the proposed development is determined through the comparison of 'before' and 'after' photomontages – it is therefore, perhaps, a little less subjective than the assessment of effects on landscape character. It too is inevitably influenced to some extent by the standpoint of the viewer (the receptor). Photomontages are important in illustrating the impact of a proposed scheme from the more sensitive and/or protected viewpoints. In this instance, they also serve to support and illustrate an aspect of the landscape character impact assessment.

It is important to remember that while photomontages are a useful tool in illustrating comparative visual impact, they are recognised as having their limitations and potential dangers. Guidelines for their use in assessment, advocate a site visit to the viewpoint locations and point out that photomontages alone should not be expected to capture or reflect the complexity underlying the visual experience (refer to the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', 3rd Edition and 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals': Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Landscape Institute UK, September 2019). One might imagine the effect of the proposed development on the visual environment is readily assessed by way of a perusal of the prepared photomontages, however a full examination involves walking the area and viewing the images from the respective viewpoint locations and then imagining and interpolating the sequential experience of the proposed development in context, when moving around it. This is particularly important in trying to appreciate the dynamic relationship between a set of buildings and their landscape context. The assessments made for each view have taken this into account.

Photomontages of the 10 views selected have been included with this submission in a separate A3 document prepared by 3D Design Bureau Ltd. The numbered viewpoint locations are illustrated in the Selected Viewpoints map (Figure 2). The views selected are from all directions around the proposed development site to provide a representative selection of the views which are potentially most impactful.

The existing view from each viewpoint is shown together with a 'proposed' view of the proposed development as seen from the same viewpoint. The red line that appears on one of the 'proposed' photomontages indicates the location and profile of the proposed new development in the background, which in this case is largely screened from view by intervening buildings and vegetation.

A supplementary set of photomontages (included in the separate A3 document prepared by 3D Design Bureau Ltd.) illustrates the profile of adjacent developments which are considered likely pending or permitted development of a similar nature which could have a bearing on the assessment of the proposed development – these are outlined in section 8.2 'Cumulative effects related to the proposed development'.

The projected visual impact (in terms of magnitude and quality) for each view is outlined below – for clarification of the significance criteria used in the assessment of impacts please refer to Appendix 2. Because the life of the proposed development is up to 60 years, the duration of visual effects is assessed as long term.

View 1

This is a view from Sandyford Road, approx. 50 metres south of the M50, looking southwards. The existing baseline view illustrates the existing residential character of this area with predominantly 2-storey houses set back and separated from the road by black railings on plinth walls. These have the effect of accentuating the dominance of the road as a corridor cutting through the housing. The site for proposed development is in the centre of view and is surrounded by housing and mature garden planting. The Dublin mountains in the distance provide a dramatic backdrop in the view, sullied only by the construction cranes for the current construction site across the road from the subject site.

A part of the proposed development will be visible above the existing development and associated trees, however its subdued and mixed colouring renders it rather low key and not dominant in the view.

The impact from this location is assessed as slight and neutral.

View 2

This is a view from the junction of Coolkill and Sandyford Downs, looking west. This residential area of 2-storey, largely brick-finished houses has an air of maturity with significant street tree planting and trees and shrubs within the gardens to front and rear.

The upper level of the proposed development just becomes visible above the roof lines of the existing houses in the Coolkill estate. However, what can be seen of it through the veil of tree branches is lighter-toned and tends to visually recede well beyond the existing houses and when seen against the light of the sky.

The impact from this location is assessed as slight and neutral.

View 3

This is a view from Sandyford Downs (a location south of View 2), looking west. The viewpoint is set back from the existing houses in order to maximise the potential for seeing the proposed development some 100 metres beyond.

The red line in the proposed image represents the outer profile of the proposed development which will not be visible in this view.

The impact from this location is assessed as imperceptible.

View 4

This is a view from Sandyford Downs (a location south of View 3), looking north-west. Again, the baseline image viewpoint is setback from the houses and aligned to a gap between the 2-storey elements, looking through towards the proposed site for development, beyond.

The upper levels of the proposed development are visible in the gap between the existing houses. The step-downs within the proposed design are evident and are very effective at reducing the potential for visual impact from this viewpoint and it would seem, from the rear gardens of these foreground

properties. The massing of the proposed development blocks coupled with the mix of brick and render finishes in harmonious light tones is also effective in integrating the proposed development in this view.

The impact from this location is assessed as moderate and neutral.

View 5

This is a view looking north from the entrance off the road to a private residence, approx. 100m north of the crossroads junction with Hillcrest Road. The dense conifer and hedge plantings visually enclose and encroach into the road corridor to intensify the sense of constrained road width – something the planned roads proposals will address in due course. The subject site is approx. 130 metres further down the road from this location.

The uppermost levels of the proposed development will be visible on the right side of the road, beyond the existing roadside planting adjacent to the Pastures and Lamb's Brook residential developments. The proposed development is set back behind the newly proposed tree planted roadside strip. The light-toned finishes to the buildings effectively reduces their visual impact when seen against the light of the sky.

The impact from this location is assessed as slight and neutral.

Cumulative effects: the green line shown on the supplementary photomontage indicates the profile of the 'Pastures' development which is currently under appeal. This development if granted, will partially mask the proposed development on the subject site and will present an element of continuity of similar type and scale of development along Sandyford Road. The blue line on the supplementary photomontage indicates the profile of the 'Whinsfield' development which, whilst not visible in this view, is nevertheless currently under construction across the road from the proposed development and is not dissimilar in scale.

View 6

This is a view from Sandyford Road at the southern edge of the site. It is taken from a location which is too close to the site to allow the proposed development to be seen in sufficient landscape context to allow full and proper assessment. This view could, however, be considered an accurate (verifiable) computer generated image (CGI) of the proposed development. As such, it provides an illustration of the modulated design and detail of the facades presenting unto Sandyford Road and an indication of the broader relationship of the proposed development with the road. The illustration clearly indicates how the scheme interface with the road has been well-considered and how in this context the scheme does not appear overbearing in scale.

View 7

This is a view from Sandyford Road at the northern edge of the site. It is taken from a location which is too close to the site to allow the proposed development to be seen in sufficient landscape context to allow full and proper assessment. This view also, can be considered an accurate (verifiable) CGI of the proposed development and as for View 6, it illustrates how the façade design and intervening soft landscape between road and buildings, present a well-considered and designed development, appropriate to the scale of its roadside context.

View 8

This is a view from a location on Sandyford Road (approx. 65 metres north of the site), looking southwards. The recently constructed residential development at Cul Cuille sits just foreground of the subject site which appears densely planted from this viewpoint.

The proposed development will be visible in this view, sitting in behind the Cul Cuille development and retained trees within that site. The set back of the proposed development from the road is evident in this view. The bend in the road around the proposed development enhances the sense of space in front and the proposed planting within this strip provides a softening green interface between the western elevation of the development and the road. The potential massing of the development is effectively broken down by the sub-division into the four blocks and the sub-division within them, particularly Block A in this instance. The subtle variation which accompanies this further accentuates this effect.

The impact from this location is assessed as moderate and neutral.

View 9

This is a view from the Sandyford Road/Kilcross Road junction (approx. 160 metres from the site), looking south. This view is similar in many respects to View 8, however it allows assessment of the visual impact of the proposed scheme in context of the broader landscape within which it sits, including the adjacent mature residential developments and the broad backdrop of the Dublin mountains.

The proposed scheme again peeks out beyond and above the Cul Cuille development and the retained boundary trees on that site, which assist in visually anchoring the proposed development and limiting the area of exposed facades to view from this northern end of Sandyford Road. The set back of the western elevation from the road is also evident in this view. Whilst the proposed development is clearly taller than those currently around it, its façade treatments and light-toned colouring in a subdued and harmonious mix, are effective in minimising its potential visual impact. It does not appear to dominate in the view, rather it occupies a very small part of the overall field of view.

The impact from this location is assessed as slight and neutral.

View 10

This is a view from open green space at Kilcross Avenue, looking south-east, across the Parks Department depot operated by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

A part of the proposed development is marginally visible above and beyond the depot, however the depot buildings in the foreground, tend to take the eye and degrade the view quality, and the proposed development does not register much in the view.

The impact from this location is assessed as slight and neutral.

8. Cumulative Effects

8.1 Introduction

Current guidelines suggest that a determination should be made as to whether cumulative effects are likely to occur – these are outlined in the current GLVIA guidelines (3rd edition) as *'additional effects caused by the proposed development when considered in conjunction with other proposed developments of the same or different types'*. It has become accepted practice that such a determination generally needs to be made as to whether any likely pending or permitted development of a similar nature will have any bearing on the assessment of the proposed development and this is subject to the assessor's judgement in the matter.

8.2 Cumulative effects related to the proposed development

Several residential developments are currently in the planning process or under construction in close proximity to the proposed development. As the developments under construction are not completed nor clearly defined within the baseline photography for photomontages, they are considered in this report to be developments which may have a bearing on this aspect of the assessment.

Whinsfield House, Sandyford Road - D17A/1003: across Sandyford Road, to the south-west

Stage: Under Construction

Permission for a residential development consisting of the demolition of the existing dwelling house and sheds and the construction of 67 no. apartments in 3 no. 3-storey plus penthouse blocks (Blocks A, B & C) containing in total 5 no. one bed units, 48 no. two bed units and 14 no. three bed units. The development will also include a basement (under blocks B & C), on surface car parking, the construction of a new site entrance from the public road and all associated site and landscaping works on a 1.09 Ha site.

This development is indicated in the supplementary photomontages by a blue profile line. This development of 3 no., 3-storey plus penthouse apartment blocks, creates and confirms a changing landscape context for the subject site, whereby development of a similar nature and scale is currently under construction just across Sandyford Road.

Cul Cuille, Sandyford Road - D14A/0843: adjoining the site to the north

Stage: Under Construction

Demolition of former residence and construction of 6no. 2-storey 4 bedroom houses (in 2 terraces of 3 houses each) as well as 4no. apartments (2no. one bedroom apartments, 2no. two bedroom apartments) and 2no. three bedroom duplexes in a 2/3 storey building and associated site development works.

The Pastures, Sandyford Road – ABP ref. PL06D.312990, adjoining the site to the south

Stage: Granted under D21A/0595, under appeal (to be decided by 14.07.2022)

The development will principally consist of the demolition of the single storey dwelling known as 'The Pastures' and ancillary garage (241 sq m) and the construction of a residential development comprising 33 no. apartments (10 no. one bedroom units, 20 no. two bedroom units and 3 no. three bedroom units) in 2 no. apartment blocks ranging in height from part 3 no. to part 5 no. storeys. The development proposes a total gross floor area of 3,112 sq m. The development also proposes public and communal

open space, 26 no. car parking spaces; bicycle parking; hard and soft landscaping; and all other associated site works above and below ground.

This development, as granted permission (currently under appeal), is indicated in the supplementary photomontages by a green profile line. This development of 2no. apartment blocks up to 5 storeys, is a neighbouring development of similar nature and scale to the proposed development on the subject site and if granted, would represent further confirmation of the actual and planned landscape changes for this area.

9. Conclusion

The proposed development represents a relatively large insertion into the existing residential area. Whilst this will potentially impact the greatest number of people travelling along Sandyford Road, it will potentially have the most residual effect on existing occupiers of neighbouring residential properties. However, the design incorporates many aspects of mitigation of the potential for high levels of visual impact due to height or massing and would appear to be successful in appropriately integrating the proposed buildings into their local landscape. This is so for both users of Sandyford Road and for existing, neighbouring residential occupiers. For both sets of receptors, the views of the proposed development also reveal a well-conceived and considerably designed scheme which successfully mitigates potential visual impacts.

10. References

1. Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2002.
2. Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2003.
3. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, published by Routledge, 3rd Edition 2013.
4. DRAFT 'Revised guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), September 2015.
5. DRAFT 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), August 2017
6. 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment' (August 2018) - Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.
7. Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Landscape Institute UK (LI) September 2019.
8. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Appendix 1: A general methodology for the production of photomontages

Photography of Site

1. Photographs are taken from locations (as advised by the person carrying out the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment) with a professional SLR digital camera. The photographs are taken horizontally with a survey level attached to the camera. The photographic positions are marked (for later surveying), the height of the camera and the focal length of the image recorded.

2. In each photograph, a minimum of 2 No visible fixed points are marked for surveying. These are control points for model alignment within the photograph.

3. The photographic positions and the control points are geographically surveyed and these positions are plotted on the site survey drawing as supplied by the Architect/Engineer.

3D Computer Model, Rendered Views and Photomontage Preparation

4. The buildings are accurately modeled and materials applied according to plans, elevations and finishes supplied by the Architect and aligned to the survey drawing with the camera positions.

5. Within the 3d software virtual 3d cameras are positioned according to the survey co-ordinates. The focal length of the photograph is input. Pitch and rotation are adjusted using the survey control points to align the virtual camera to the photograph.

6. The proposed development is output from the 3D software using this camera and the image is then blended with the original photograph to give an accurate image of what the proposed development will look like in its proposed setting. A highly accurate 3D-computer model of the proposed development is created with photo-realistic materials, finishes and colours. Rendered views of the proposed scheme are produced, accurately representing the 'proposed' view from the original baseline camera locations at the selected viewpoints.

7. In the event of the development not being visible, the roof line profile of the development will generally be outlined in the proposed view.

8. A document is usually produced with the following information:

a) Site location map with view locations plotted.

b) Photomontage sheet showing:

- Existing and proposed conditions
- View with surveyed control alignment points
- Reference information including field of view/focal length, range to site/development
- Date of baseline photograph.

9. All surveying is carried out by a qualified topographical surveyor. Where GPS devices are used they are Survey grade.

Appendix 2: Significance criteria for the Rating of Impacts

The appropriate significance criteria for this landscape and visual appraisal (LVIA) are based on those given in the EPA 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements', 2002, (Section 5 Glossary of Impacts) and the DRAFT 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), August 2017. For this LVIA they may be described as follows:

Degree or magnitude of effects (significance)

Imperceptible / Not Significant: The development proposal is either distant or adequately screened by existing landform, vegetation or built environment.

Slight Effects: The development proposal forms only a small element in the overall panorama / field of view, or there is substantial intervening screening by the existing landform, topography and/or vegetation. The view or character of the landscape is noticeably changed but without affecting its sensitivities.

Moderate Effects: An appreciable segment of the existing view is affected by the proposed development or the development creates visual intrusion in the foreground. The view or the character of the landscape is altered but in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.

Significant Effects: Effects which, by their character, magnitude, duration or intensity alter a sensitive aspect of the environment.

Very Significant Effects: Effects which, by their character, magnitude, duration or intensity alter most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.

Profound Effects: Effects which obliterate sensitive characteristics.

Quality of effects

The quality of potential visual and landscape effects are assessed according to EPA guidelines as follows:

Positive Effects: Changes which improve the quality of the landscape/view.

Neutral Effects: Changes which do not affect the quality of the landscape/view.

Negative Effects: Changes which reduce the quality of the visual environment or adversely affect the character of the landscape.

Duration of effects

Potential effects arising from a proposed development may also be considered in terms of duration as described in the EPA Guidelines:

Temporary: Effects lasting less than one year

Short-term: Effects lasting one to seven years

Medium-term: Effects lasting seven to fifteen years

Long-term: Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years

Permanent: Effects lasting over sixty years

