15.0 Introduction - Landscape and Visual

This Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) is written in relation to a proposed residential development on lands at Woodtown, Ballycullen, Dublin 16. Its purpose is to identify and determine the likely impacts of the scheme on the receiving environment, in terms of both townscape character and visual amenity.

The TVIA should be read in conjunction with the verified photomontages (See Appendix 15.1 – LVIA Photomontages) which illustrate how the proposed development would appear from a variety of locations in the surrounding townscape.

15.1 Description of the proposed development

The proposed development is situated south of Stocking Avenue, within the townland of Woodtown, Ballycullen, Dublin 16 (see **Figure 1** below). The site is bordered to the east by Abbots Grove Park, to the southeast by Abbots Grove Avenue, to the south by the Stocking Wood estate, and to the west by White Pines Park. Lagan Homes Ballycullen Limited intend to make a planning application for planning permission for a Large Scale Residential Development (LRD) in the townland of Woodtown, Ballycullen, Dublin 16. The lands are located to the east of Abbots Grove Park, south-east of Abbots Grove Avenue, south of Stocking Avenue and Stocking Wood estate, and west of White Pines Park.

The proposed development will consist of 502 no. residential units (108no. 1-bed, 170no. 2-bed, 162 no. 3-bed; 62 no. 4-bed) comprising 197no. 2 storey houses (terraced/semi-detached/detached) (19no. 2-bed, 116no. 3-bed; 62no. 4-bed) and 28no. 3 and 4 storey simplex/duplex apartment blocks providing 305no. apartments (108no. 1-bed apartments, 151no. 2-bed apartments, 46no. 3-bed apartments). The proposed development also includes a crèche (c.475sq.m), public open space, car parking (surface/undercroft), bicycle parking, bicycle storage structures and lockers, bin stores, and 8no. ESB substations. Vehicular access to be provided from the existing spur road connection to Stocking Avenue to the west of the site, and via Stocking Wood Drive to the east of the site (with relocation of existing ESB substation and associated works to the existing hammerhead). Additional pedestrian only routes will be provided into Abbot's Grove Park and Stocking Wood Copse with future connections provided for into Stocking Wood Manor, White Pines Park and the future school site to the north of the application site. The proposed development includes all associated site development works (including site reprofiling, retaining structures and downing of ESB overhead lines), landscaping, boundary treatments and services provision.

Full details of the proposals can be found in several supporting documents submitted with the application and Chapter 3 of this EIAR.

Figure 1 Existing Site context and location

15.2 Guidance Documents

The methodology for this TVIA is based on the primary best practice document, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3) (LI/IEMA, 2013). In accordance with this published guidance, townscape and visual impacts are assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each of these is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between townscape and visual impacts as described below:

- Townscape impacts relate to the influence of the proposals on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the townscape and its resulting character and quality;
- Visual impacts relate to the influence of the proposals on specific views experienced by visual receptors and on visual amenity more generally.

In addition to GLVIA3, in the production of the TVIA, due regard has also been made to the following guidance and policy documents:

- South Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publication 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements (2022);
- Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities by Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) (2018);

- Technical Information Note 05/17 - Townscape Character Assessment (2017);
- Technical Information Note 01/21 – GLVIA webinar Q&As;
- Technical Guidance Note 1/20 - Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs);
- Technical Guidance Note GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13, 2/13, 1/14, and 2/14

15.3 Statement of Authority

This TVIA was prepared by Richard Barker (MLA MILI), Director at Macro Works Ltd of Cherrywood Business Park, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18; a consultancy firm specialising in Landscape / Townscape and Visual Assessment and associated maps and graphics. Richards' relevant experience includes LVIA and TVIA for a broad range of infrastructural, industrial and commercial projects in Ireland over a 20 year period, including numerous urban, residential, renewable energy and mixed-use development projects.

15.4 Methodology

This document uses methodology as prescribed in the previously mentioned GLVIA3. Given the site's context, this is principally a 'townscape' assessment, albeit the assessment utilises the same outline methodology as would be employed for the more familiar Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of developments in rural settings.

GLVIA3 follows the European Landscape Convention (ELC) definition of landscape:

> 'Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Council of Europe, 2000). Thus, GLVIA-2013 covers all landscapes from "high mountains and wild countryside to urban and fringe farmland (rural landscapes), marine and coastal landscapes (seascapes) and the landscapes of villages towns and cities (townscapes)" - whether protected or degraded.

Townscape is defined in GLVIA3 in the following manner (section 2.7):

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

In the context of 'townscape' it is recognised that there is a strong interrelationship between the 'townscape' and 'cultural heritage' assessments. As stated in section 5.11 of GLVIA;

> "the sharing of relevant baseline information should not be confused with the need for separate cultural heritage appraisals such as historic landscape characterisation and assessment of historic

townscape appraisal, or there will be a danger of both double handling and inappropriate judgements by non-experts. It is particularly important that responsibilities are clear in considering any effects on the settings and views for historic buildings, conservation areas and other heritage assets."

The identification of heritage assets in this assessment is made to indicate the value and quality of the wider townscape character as well as provide an indication of areas from which views are potentially more sensitive to change.

15.4.1 Scope of the Assessment

GLVIA3 establishes guidelines and not a specific methodology. The preface recognises that:

> *'This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.'*

The methodology for this assessment has therefore been developed specifically for this assessment to ensure that it is appropriate and fit for purpose.

15.4.2 Study Area

Whilst the site's wider townscape and visual context have been reviewed, due to the combined influence of natural topography, and screening elements in the site's wider urban context, the site is not readily visible from many locations beyond the immediate locality.

With this in mind, and considering the general diminishment of effects over distance, a proportionate focus is placed on the townscape within approximately 2km of the development, mainly due to its scale, location and nature. This study area contains locations from where the development will be most visible, and beyond this distance, the proposed development is not likely to give rise to significant townscape or visual impacts. The study area is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 Site and 2km Study Area

15.4.3 Townscape Impact Assessment

This part of the TVIA provides an assessment of how the introduction of the proposed development will affect the physical features and fabric of the townscape, and then how the proposals influence townscape character with reference to published descriptions of character and an understanding of the contemporary character of the townscape as informed through desktop and site studies.

When assessing the potential townscape effects of the development, the value and sensitivity of the townscape receptor are weighed against the magnitude of the townscape impact to determine the significance of the townscape effect. The criteria outlined are used to guide these judgements.

Townscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the townscape to change is the degree to which a particular setting can accommodate changes or new elements without unacceptable detrimental effects on it's essential characteristics. The judgement

reflects such factors as its quality, value, contribution to the urban character and the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted. Townscape Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in Table 1.

Table 1 – Townscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a very low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value townscapes, protected at an international or national level (e.g. World Heritage Site), where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value townscapes, protected at a national or regional level, where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the townscape character exhibits some capacity and scope for development. Examples of which are townscapes, which have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value and use.
Low	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated townscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas of townscape character that include derelict sites and degradation where there would be a reasonable capacity to embrace change or the capacity to include the development proposals. Management objectives in such areas could be focused on change, creation of townscape improvements and/or restoration.

Magnitude of change - Townscape

The magnitude of change 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 townscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the immediate setting that may affect the townscape character. Table 2 outlines the criteria used to inform this judgement.

Table 2 - Magnitude of Change - Townscape

Criteria	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale with the loss of critically important townscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an extensive change of the townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to a considerable change of the l townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale involving the loss of landscape characteristics or elements that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to noticeable changes in townscape 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 that would lead to discernible changes in townscape character, and quality.
Negligible	Changes affecting small or very restricted areas of townscape 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 townscape or are hardly perceivable leading to no material change to townscape character, and quality.

15.4.4 Visual Impact Assessment

This part of the TVIA provides an assessment of how the introduction of the proposed development will affect views within the townscape. It 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.

It has been deemed appropriate to structure the assessment around a series of representative viewpoint locations. All viewpoints are located within the public domain and are representative of views available from main thoroughfares and pedestrian areas within the vicinity of the proposed development. The selected viewpoints are considered to be comprehensive in communicating the variable nature of the visual effects.

When assessing the potential visual effects of the development, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact to determine the significance of the visual effect. The criteria outlined below are used to guide these judgements.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

As with townscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of a visual receptor is categorised as Very High, High, Medium, Low, and Negligible. However, unlike townscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric (human) basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the townscape context of the viewer, the likely activity the viewer is engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding environment.

A list of the factors considered by the assessor in estimating the level of sensitivity for a particular visual receptor is outlined below to establish visual receptor sensitivity at each viewpoint location.

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to change

In accordance with GLVIA3, visual receptors most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are:

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

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

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

Value attached to Views

The value attached to a view is determined by considering the following:

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

- Primary views from residential receptors. Even within a dynamic city context, views from residential properties are an important consideration in respect of residential amenity;
- Intensity of use, popularity. This relates to the number of viewers likely to experience a view on a regular basis and whether this is significant at a national or regional scale;
- Viewer connection with the townscape. This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the townscape i.e. commuters hurriedly driving on busy roads versus tourists focussed on the character and detail of the townscape;
- Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views. This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;
- Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity. Receptors taking in a remote and tranquil scene, which is likely to be fairly static, are likely to be more receptive to changes in the view than those taking in the view of a busy street scene, for example;
- Degree of perceived naturalness. Where a view is valued for the sense of naturalness of the surrounding landscape it is likely to be highly sensitive to visual intrusion by distinctly manmade features;
- Presence of striking or noteworthy features. A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable townscape feature such as a cathedral or castle;
- Historical, cultural and/or spiritual significance. Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;
- Rarity or uniqueness of the view. This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain townscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;
- The integrity of the townscape character. This looks at the condition and intactness of the townscape in view and whether the townscape pattern is a regular one of a few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;
- Sense of place. This considers whether there is a special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location;
- Sense of awe. This considers whether the view inspires an overwhelming sense of scale or the power of nature.

Those locations which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria are likely to be of higher sensitivity, and no relative importance is inferred by the order of listing.

It is recognised that a viewer's interpretation and experience of the townscape can have preferential and subjective components. Where relevant, judgements are made on those elements of the townscape that are considered to contribute more prominently and positively to the visual townscape resource as well as those elements that contribute negatively. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

Magnitude of Change - Visual

The magnitude of change is again a product of the scale, extent, or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed development. This is directly influenced by its 'visual presence/prominence', as experienced by visual receptors. These terms are somewhat qualitative and essentially relate to how noticeable or 'dominant' the proposal is within a particular view. Aside from the obvious influence of scale and distance, a development's visual presence is influenced by the extent and complexity of the view, contextual movement in the landscape/townscape, the nature of the backdrop, and its relationship with other features within the view. It is often, though not always, expressed using one of the following terms: Minimal; Sub-dominant; Co-dominant; Dominant; or Highly dominant.

Criteria used to inform judgements are provided in Table 3.

Table 3 - Magnitude of Change - Visual

Criteria	Description
Very High	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.
High	A major change in the view that is highly prominent and has a strong influence on the overall view. This may involve the substantial obstruction of existing views or a complete change in character and composition of baseline, e.g. through removal of key elements or the introduction of new features that would heavily influence key elements.
Medium	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. View character may be partially changed through the introduction of features which, though uncharacteristic, may not necessarily be visually discordant.
Low	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.
Negligible	Very slight change in baseline, i.e. pre-development view - change would be barely discernible. Composition and character of view substantially unaltered.

15.4.5 Significance of Effects

The significance of a townscape or visual effect is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change and is categorised as Profound, Substantial, Moderate, Slight, or Imperceptible. Intermediate judgements are also provided to enable an effect to be more accurately described where relevant. 'No Effect' may also be recorded as appropriate where the effect is so negligible it is not noteworthy.

The significance category judgement is arrived at using the Significance Matrix in Table 4 as a guide. This applies the principle of significance being a function of magnitude weighed against sensitivity, but employs slightly different terminology that avoids the potentially confusing use of the term 'significant' (as recommended by GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13 (Landscape Institute, 10th June 2013)).

Indicative criteria descriptions used in relation to the significance of effect category are presented in Table 5.

Table 4 - Significance Matrix

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

Table 5 - Indicative significance of effect criteria descriptions

	Landscape	Visual
Profound	There are notable changes in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or a very intensive change over a more limited area.	The view is entirely altered, obscured or affected.
Substantial	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the landscape. There are notable changes in landscape characteristics over a substantial area or an intensive change over a more limited area.	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the visual environment. The proposal affects a large proportion of the overall visual composition, or views are so affected that they form a new element in the physical landscape.
Moderate	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends. There are minor changes over some of the area or moderate changes in a localised area.	An effect that alters the character of the visual environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging trends. The proposal affects an appreciable segment of the overall visual composition, or there is an intrusion in the foreground of a view.
Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the landscape without affecting its sensitivities. There are minor changes over a small proportion of the area or moderate changes in a localised area or changes that are reparable over time.	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the visual environment without affecting its sensitivities. The affected view forms only a small element in the overall visual composition or changes the view in a marginal manner.
Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences. There are no noticeable changes to landscape context, character or features.	An effect capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences. Although the development may be visible, it would be difficult to discern resulting in minimal change to views.

The likely effects of the proposals must be transparently assessed and understood so that the determining authority can bring a balanced, well-informed judgement to bear when making a planning decision. As such, whilst the Significance Matrix and criteria provide a useful guide, the significance of an effect is ultimately determined by the landscape specialist using professional judgement, and also in the context of occasionally using hybrid judgements to account for nuance.

Effects assessed as 'Substantial' or greater (shaded cells) are considered to be the most notable in townscape and visual terms and may be regarded as 'Significant', albeit it is important to note that this is not a reflection on their acceptability in planning terms.

15.4.6 Quality of Effects

In addition to assessing the significance of townscape and visual effects, the quality of the effects is also determined. Whereas, the introduction of new built elements into countryside areas often results in negative landscape and visual effects, in urban and urban edge settings, new built form through its architectural design and public realm treatment, can contribute positively to a townscape/streetscape, and generate a combination of positive and negative effects.

It is therefore noted that urban development projects can give rise to a broad spectrum of opinions ranging from strongly negative to strongly positive, with a wide range of opinions lying somewhere between these two positions. Whilst some impacts are quantifiable, other impacts (such as the influence of architecture), are more qualitative in nature, where professional judgement is required.

In determining the quality of effects in this assessment, it is noted that the authors of this TVIA are Chartered members of the Landscape Institute, experienced in large-scale public realm and urban design and regeneration projects and the production of landscape/townscape and visual impact assessments.

Within this TVIA, effects are described as negative/adverse, neutral, or positive/beneficial, and the following criteria have been used to guide these judgements.

- Positive/beneficial - A change which improves the quality of the environment, enhancing the existing view/townscape;
- Neutral - No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation e.g. will neither detract from nor enhance the existing view/townscape, or alternatively, a balance of minor positive and Negative effects;
- Negative/adverse - A change which reduces the quality of the environment, detracting from the existing view/townscape.

The judgment of the quality of the effects is made in combination with the significance judgement for both townscape and visual impacts e.g. Moderate / Positive, Moderate / Neutral, or Moderate / Negative.

15.5 **Townscape & Visual Baseline**

This section of the TVIA presents the existing townscape and visual context against which any changes brought about by the proposed development are assessed.

The Townscape baseline is described in relation to the features and characteristics of the site and its wider urban context, and presented within published descriptions of character, and understood from site visits. The visual baseline is presented in relation to visual receptors to whom the development is likely to be visible.

15.5.1 Townscape Context

The proposed development occupies approximately 10.35 hectares and the nearest point of the site lies around 100m south of the Stocking Avenue roundabout, within the townlands of Woodtown, Co. Dublin. The site is an elongated, east–west-oriented tract of agricultural land, positioned at the transitional edge between urban expansion and the rural foothills of the Dublin Mountains.

Currently under agricultural use, the land is characterized by gently undulating terrain and a well-established network of mature hedgerows that subdivide the field pattern, along with a small patch of woodland that crosses the site.

The site forms part of Dublin's suburban periphery, with its northern boundary adjoining established housing. The immediate surroundings are primarily residential in character, with housing estates extending to the east and west. These neighbourhoods are comparable in scale and use to the proposed scheme.

Across the wider study area, similar characteristics persist, albeit at a broader scale. To the north, west, and southeast, built form is predominantly composed of low-rise dwellings, typically two to three storeys in height. The urban fabric is generally regular, with intermittent commercial premises that are modest in scale. While some small-scale commercial units and associated signage are present within the study area, they are limited in extent and do not notably detract from the prevailing residential character.

To the east and south-east, the townscape begins to transition towards a more rural landscape, characterised by dispersed housing, areas of open space such as Rathfarnham Golf Club, and occasional local services.

Landform, Land Use and Drainage

The site is located on an agricultural land forming part of the gently rising foothills of the Dublin Mountains, situated at the transitional area between the suburban extent of Dublin and the more rural landscape to the south. The topography across the site is moderately undulating, with a gradual increase in elevation from approximately 106m AOD at the northern boundary to around 126m AOD at its highest point. This 23m elevation change reflects the site's position within the lower slopes of a broader upland landscape that becomes progressively steeper further south.

The southern boundary of the site is identified by a fence line and is not the natural field boundary which is instead, formed by an established hedgerow that encloses and partially screen the application site from the south due to its higher elevation than the site.

Beyond the site, the landform rises towards a series of prominent upland features within the Dublin Mountains, which include the Hell Fire Club on Montpelier Hill, which contributes to the dramatic upland backdrop of the study area. Notable high points in the wider landscape to the south include Montpelier Hill (383m AOD), Piperstown (391m AOD), Knockannavea (396m AOD) Slievenabawnoge (384m AOD), Black Hill (415m AOD), Ballymorefinn Hill (525m AOD), and Kilakee Mountain (539m AOD).

The site is characterised by its agricultural use and a field pattern defined by mature hedgerows and scattered trees. These features are reflective of the wider rural matrix to the south, which includes riparian corridors, small woodland belts, and historic estate landscapes. To the north, west and immediate east, the context is markedly more urban, comprising established suburban housing developments such as Stocking Wood, Abbots Grove Avenue, and White Pines Park.

The wider setting to the south, southeast and southwest consists of an agrarian landscape with a dispersed settlement pattern. This includes individual farmsteads, small residential clusters, and linear development along local roads.

In terms of drainage, a minor onsite channel is present within a wooded patch and there is also a stream along the eastern boundary. A number of watercourses and drainage channels are present within the study area, the closest being the Orlagh Stream, located approximately 45m west of the site. This stream flows northwards and ultimately discharges into the River Dodder, approximately 2.1 km from the site. Other notable water courses within the study area include Glendoo Brook River, located approx. 1km east of the site.

Transport Routes

The site is well-connected to the surrounding area by an established road network. The closest local roads include Stocking Avenue to the north and Ballycullen Road to the west, the latter lying beyond the immediate residential context. Several other local roads traverse the rural landscape to the north, east, and west of the site.

Within the wider study area, regional roads further dissect the landscape. The R115 runs approximately 200m southeast of the site, the R113 is located around 300m to the southwest, and the R116 lies 1km to the east. These roads (R113, R115, and R116) serve as key routes connecting the urban area to the upland landscape to the south.

The major route corridor in the study area is the M50 motorway, located approximately 450m to the east at its closest point. It runs in a north-east to south-west direction, providing a vital orbital route around Dublin City and connections between the wider Dublin region and areas beyond.

Tourism, Heritage and Public Amenities

The study area features a range of local parks, open spaces, and sporting facilities, including Knocklyon Park GAA pitches (approx. 525m north), Knocklyon United FC Ballycullen pitches (approx. 794m north), St. Anne's GAA pitch (approx. 796m southwest), Knocklyon Olympian Gymnastics (approx. 760m north), and Rathfarnham Golf Club (approx. 473m southeast).

Other amenities within the study area include the Dublin Mountain View Walk (approx. 634m north) and the Woodstown Woodland Path (approx. 406m north). Additionally, recreational trails include the Forest Loop – Hellfire Woods Trail (1.5km south), Massy Woods (1.7km south). These trails pass between the urban area and the elevated mountain landscape. The Hell Fire Club, sits atop Montpellier Hill, offers short forest trails through commercial plantations with expansive views over Dublin. This wider landscape to the south is valued for its recreational potential, with scenic vistas and opportunities for outdoor activities.

The study area also contains several archaeological and architectural landmarks, including the Woodtown Manor : country house (approx. 180m south), Murrain Cross Monument (approx. 170m southwest), and Saint Colmcille's Well : holy well (approx. 230m southwest). Other notable feature include Carthy's Castle Ruins (1.6km southwest). While the landscape hosts these historical features, its character is primarily shaped by more recent development, rather than a strong time-depth.

Figure 3 Architectural and Archaeological Features near Site

Historical Context of Study Area

The historic and cultural relevance of the site and the wider landscape is dealt with in specific detail within the Cultural Heritage Assessment. However, consideration is given to cultural associations that influence perceived landscape character.

The 6-inch OSI map (1837–1842) indicates that the site was once part of a broader agricultural landscape with areas of wooded patches in the vicinity and little built development, as depicted in **Figure 4** below.

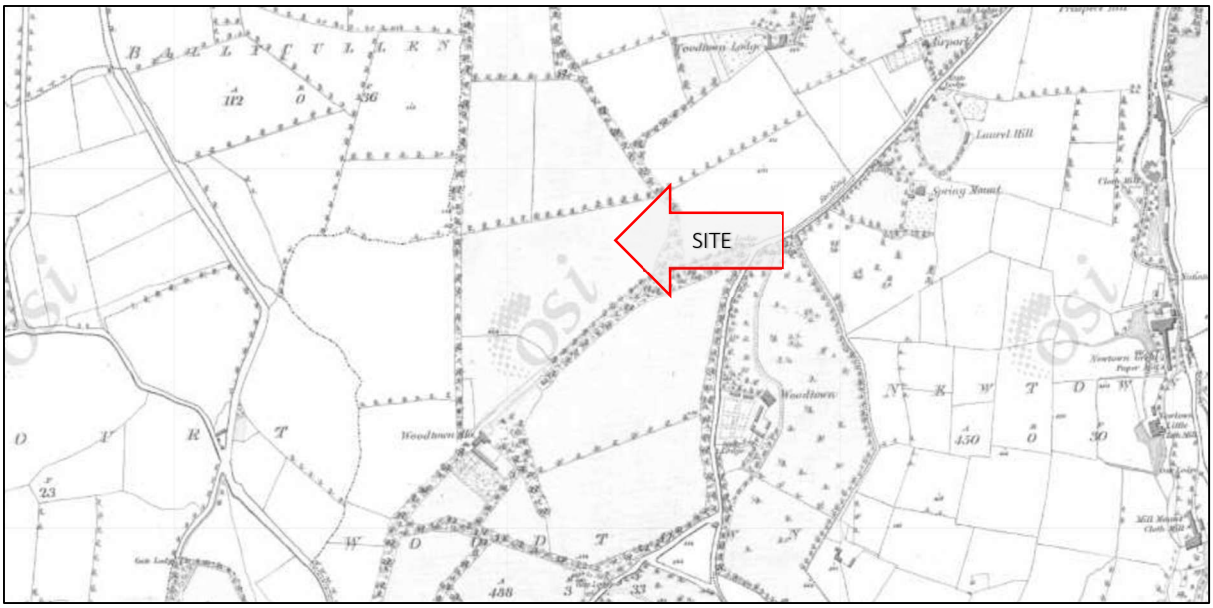

Figure 4 Historic 6-inch Map

Figure 5 illustrate aerial views of the landscape from 2000, highlighting the residential development that has taken place over the past two decades. Historic maps suggest that the landscape to the north of the site was gradually subsumed by Dublin's rapid 20th-century expansion, characterised by the spread of low-rise suburban terraced housing that typifies much of the city's residential fabric today. The analysis of 21st-century aerial imagery further confirms that the surrounding area has undergone significant transformation due to ongoing development pressures and urban expansion, with the construction of the M50 motorway further accelerating this change.

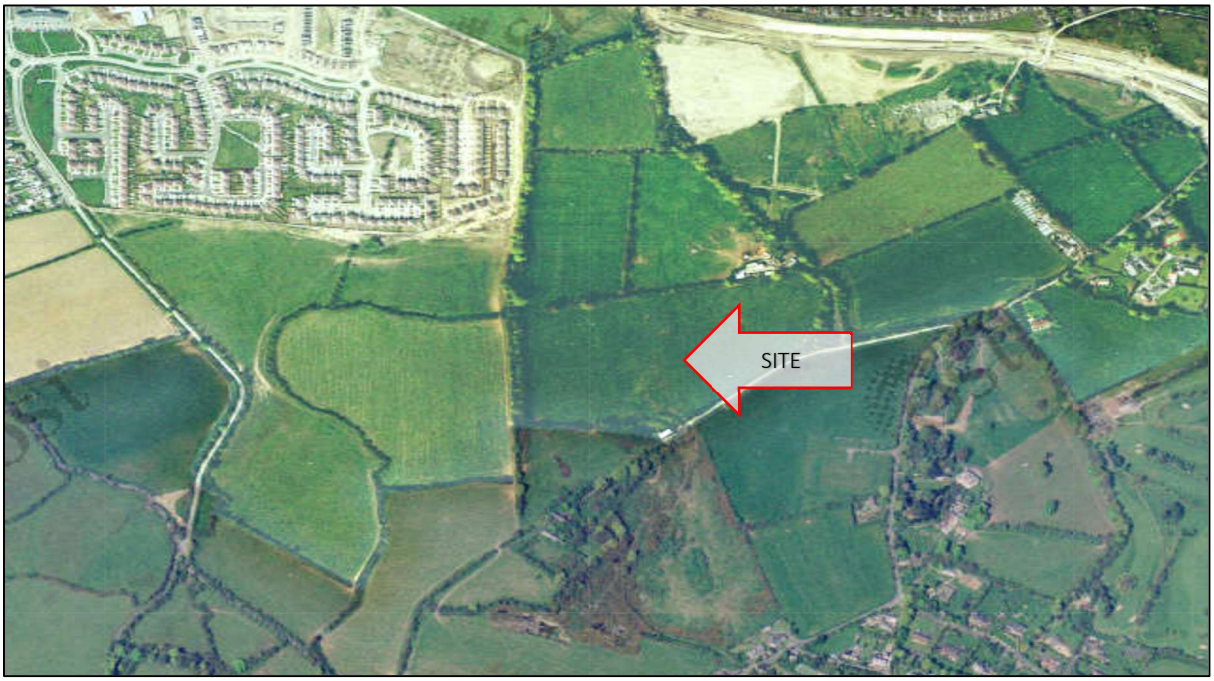

Figure 5 Ortho 2000 map (source: Historicenvironment.ie)

15.5.2 Planning Context

The site is located within the administrative boundary of South Dublin City Council and is therefore subject to the land use policies and objectives of the South Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028.

South Dublin City Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028

The South Dublin CDP seeks to provide a framework that guides future development and accordingly contains many policies and objectives that deal with the strategic planning issues. Relevant to this assessment, are policies and objectives contained in Chapters 3 (Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage), 6 (Housing), 8 (Community Infrastructure and Open Space), and 12 (Implementation and Monitoring).

In terms of land use zoning and Council Policy, this is addressed more comprehensively elsewhere in the application. However, for context it is noted that the site is zoned 'RES-N' – *'To provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved area plans.'* Residential development is permitted in principle under this zoning objective.

Zoning Objective RES-N is highlighted in yellow in the excerpt of the SDCDP land use zoning interactive mapping shown in **Figure 6** below.

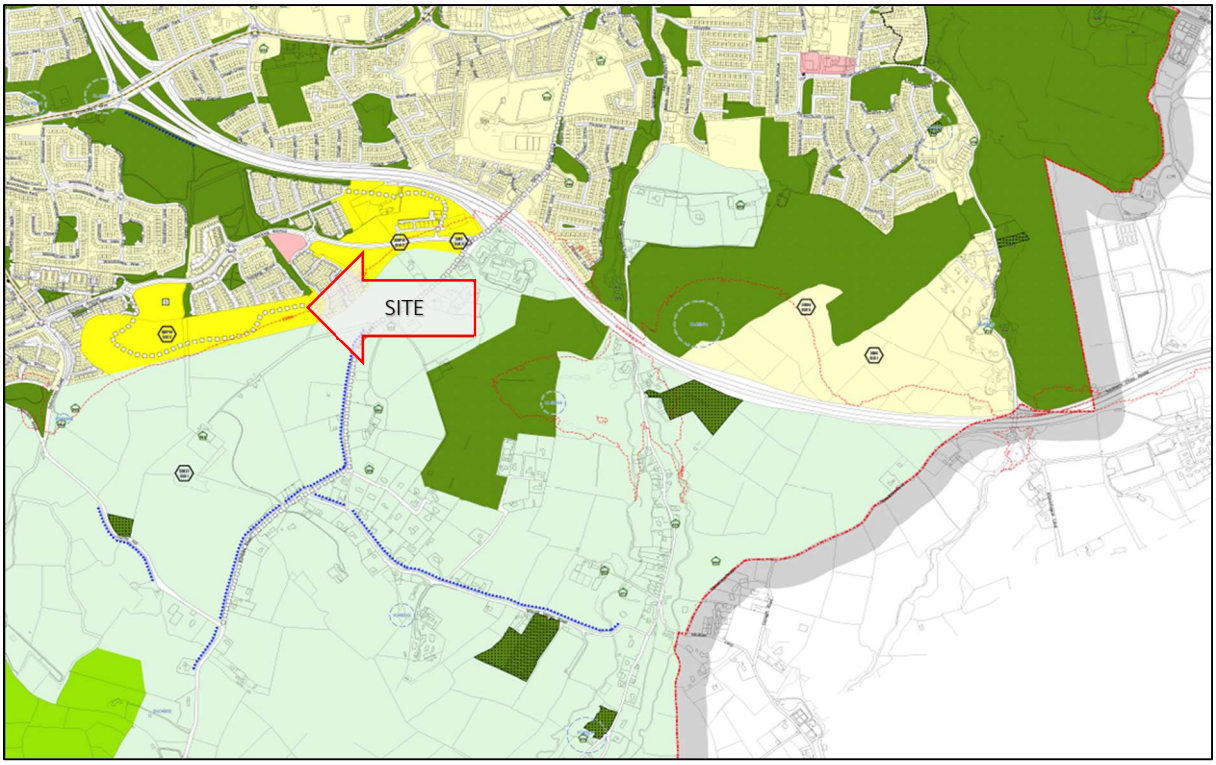

Figure 6 Land Use Zoning Map 10 (Source: South Dublin CDP 2022-2028)

Landscape Character Area

Appendix 9 of the SDCDP contains the Landscape Character Assessment for the county, which identifies and categorises ten Landscape Character Types (LCT), and five primary Landscape Character Areas (LCA) in South Dublin. This assessment provides a broad overview of the landscape character, condition, and sensitivity for each LCA and is a useful document in terms of baseline assessment of the study area.

The site lies within LCT referred as 'Foothills' which is described as *"Foothills Bedrock largely sedimentary sandstones, shales and greywackes. These foothills rise well above 150m. Landcover increasingly rough pasture with coniferous plantations at hilltops. Recreation use with forest walks".*

The site lies within LCA referred as 'River Dodder and Glenasmole Valley' which is described as: "*… a highly scenic and distinctive glacial valley with a variety of attractive features, and enclosed fields contrasting with the upland blanket bog areas. Distinctive stone cut cottages and boundaries are present along the along the valley floor, while the area also contains significant archaeological clusters. This LCA offers varied and extensive views across Dublin Bay and to the Wicklow mountains and is an important recreational and ecological landscape, evidenced by its statutory designations. It forms a significant backdrop to the greater Dublin area and is a remarkable landscape in its wildness and remoteness so close to heavily urbanised areas. Its character and integrity are of importance to local residents, and it is a very significant resource for recreation users and for tourism. The objective of managing this LCA is to preserve its overall character and the features and values that contribute to its uniqueness."*

Appendix 10 of the SDCDP contains the Building Height and Density Guide 2022 which outlines and advocates a contextual analysis and criteria-based approach to design, such that reasoned justification for increased height and density forms part of a development proposal.

The Building Height and Density Guide 2022 includes a toolkit that has been written to complement the Urban Design Manual (2009), and the 12 criteria outlined within it, which follow a shared vocabulary for widely accepted best practice urban design and placemaking principles. The toolkit has been written as a complementary expansion of the Urban Design Manual criteria based analysis, that further guides design towards a justification for increased height by presenting questions and considerations that promote iterative interrogation.

The most relevant Objective relating to the 'RES-N' zoning includes one site specific objective QDP 14 SL03 which states;

- *QDP 14 SL03: That the provisions of the Ballycullen - Oldcourt Local Area Plan (2014) as extended, in respect of the steep topography in the lands zoned RES-N between Stocking Lane, Ballycullen Road and the M50 (Map 10) remain in force during the lifetime of this Plan having regard to ministerial guidelines.*

Also relevant is QDP8 Objective 2;

- *QDP8 Objective 2: In accordance with NPO35, SPPR1 and SPPR3, to proactively consider increased building heights on lands zoned Regeneration (Regen), Major Retail Centre (MRC), District Centre (DC), Local Centre (LC), Town Centre (TC) and New Residential (Res-N) and on sites demonstrated as having the capacity to accommodate increased densities in line with the locational criteria of Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2020) and the Urban Design Manual – Best Practice Guidelines (2009), where it is clearly demonstrated by means of an urban design analysis carried out in accordance with the provisions of South Dublin County's Building Height and Density Guide that it is contextually appropriate to do so.*

Designated Scenic Views and Prospects

A review of the designated "Prospects to be Preserved and Protected," as outlined in Section 9.2.1 of the South Dublin County Development Plan, identified five scenic views within the study area. The closest of these is located approximately 590m north of the site, facing away from the proposed development, and offers views of the Dublin Mountains. Another view, situated about 540m to the south along the R113, looks toward the site and captures a broad downhill vista over Dublin City. A third view, approximately 560m to the southwest, is directed toward existing woodland areas and does not face the proposed development. The designated scenic views beyond 1km include a downhill vista of the Dublin cityscape, located approximately 1.9km southwest of the site, which does not face the proposed development. The final designated scenic view in the study area is oriented towards Montpelier Hill and the Dublin Mountains Way, situated about 1.8km south of the site.

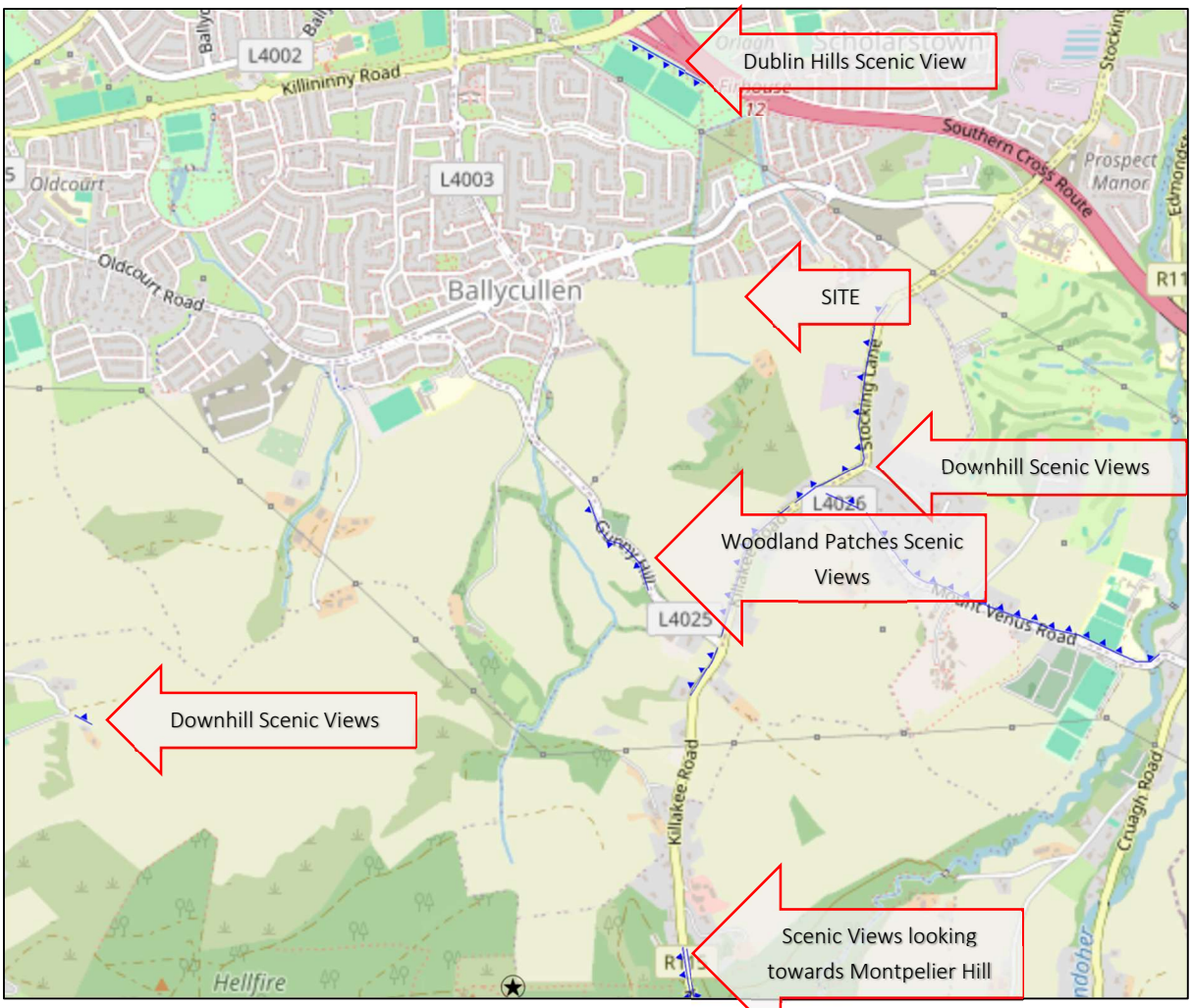

Figure 7 Designated scenic views in the vicinity of the Site

Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)

The UDBH Guidelines were adopted in December 2018 by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government "to secure better and more compact forms of future development."

Policies stated within the guidelines that may be relevant include:

- SPPR1: In accordance with Government policy to support increased building height in locations with good public transport accessibility, particularly town/ city cores, planning authorities shall explicitly identify, through their statutory plans, areas where increased building height will be actively pursued for both redevelopment and infill development to secure the objectives of the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and shall not provide for blanket numerical limitations on building height.

Section 3.2 of the guidelines lists the following development management criteria, that need to be satisfied as part of the application process.

At the scale of the relevant city/town

- The site is well served by public transport with high capacity, frequent service and good links to other modes of public transport.
- Development proposals incorporating increased building height, including proposals within architecturally sensitive areas, should successfully integrate into/ enhance the character and public realm of the area, having regard to topography, its cultural context, setting of key landmarks, protection of key views.
- Such development proposals shall undertake a landscape and visual assessment, by a suitably qualified practitioner such as a chartered landscape architect.
- On larger urban redevelopment sites, proposed developments should make a positive contribution to place-making, incorporating new streets and public spaces, using massing and height to achieve the required densities but with sufficient variety in scale and form to respond to the scale of adjoining developments and create visual interest in the streetscape.

At the scale of district/neighbourhood/street

- The proposal responds to its overall natural and built environment and makes a positive contribution to the urban neighbourhood and streetscape
- The proposal is not monolithic and avoids long, uninterrupted walls of building in the form of slab blocks with materials / building fabric well considered.
- The proposal enhances the urban design context for public spaces and key thoroughfares and inland waterway/ marine frontage, thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure while being in line with the requirements of "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (2009).
- The proposal makes a positive contribution to the improvement of legibility through the site or wider urban area within which the development is situated and integrates in a cohesive manner.
- The proposal positively contributes to the mix of uses and/ or building/dwelling typologies available in the neighbourhood.

At the scale of the site/building

- The form, massing and height of proposed developments should be carefully modulated so as to maximise access to natural daylight, ventilation and views and minimise overshadowing and loss of light.
- Appropriate and reasonable regard should be taken of quantitative performance approaches to daylight provision outlined in guides like the Building Research Establishment's 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight' (2nd edition) or BS 8206-2: 2008 – 'Lighting for Buildings – Part 2: Code of Practice for Daylighting'.

- Where a proposal may not be able to fully meet all the requirements of the daylight provisions above, this must be clearly identified and a rationale for any alternative, compensatory design solutions must be set out, in respect of which the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála should apply their discretion, having regard to local factors including specific site constraints and the balancing of that assessment against the desirability of achieving wider planning objectives. Such objectives might include securing comprehensive urban regeneration and or an effective urban design and streetscape solution.

15.5.3 Visual Context

In the townscape surrounding the site, views towards the site are restricted from many locations in the wider area of the townscape. Visibility is largely confined to the immediate context, particularly within 500m of the site boundary, where the site may be glimpsed from adjacent residential streets. To the south, more distant views are afforded from elevated positions in the Dublin Mountains—most notably from Montpelier Hill (near the Hell Fire Club) and an elevated point west of Rockbrook—though intervening vegetation and topography reduce visibility beyond these locations. Woodland patches across the study area further contribute to screening.

Given that the proposed development is taller than the prevailing residential context and situated on slightly higher ground than the dwellings to the north and west, it is acknowledged that there will be locations where the development will become visible. Visual receptors, including motorists and cyclists on the road network, and residents in the surrounding townscape, have the potential to obtain views.

Whilst the study area placed a proportionate focus on the townscape within approximately 2km of the site, it is likely that the proposed development would be most visible and influential on views within around 500m of the site given the presence of other built form, vehicular movement, activity associated with the surrounding residential landcover, and other characteristics of the townscape. Beyond this distance, views of the development would be partial and unlikely to be readily discernible in the context of wider views containing other more prominent features.

SDCDP Prospects to be Preserved and Protected

A review of the designated "Prospects to be Preserved and Protected," as outlined in Section 9.2.1 of the South Dublin County Development Plan, identified five scenic views within the study area. The closest of these is located approximately 590m north of the site, facing away from the proposed development, and offers views of the Dublin Mountains. Another view, situated about 540m to the south along the R113, looks toward the site and captures a broad downhill vista over County Dublin. A third view, approximately 560m to the southwest, is directed toward existing woodland areas and does not face the proposed development. The designated scenic views beyond 1km include a view towards the downhill vistas of the Dublin cityscape, located approximately 1.9km southwest of the site, which does not face the proposed development. The final designated scenic view in the study area is oriented towards Montpelier Hill and the Dublin Mountains Way, situated about 1.8km south of the site.

15.6 Representative Assessment Viewpoints

It is not warranted to include every location that provides a view towards the proposed development as this would result in an unwieldy report and make it extremely difficult to draw out the key impacts arising from the proposed development. Instead, the assessment of visual impacts is structured around a series of representative assessment viewpoint locations.

Representative assessment viewpoints seek to reflect a range of different receptor types, distances and orientations, to help to inform the conclusions being made. Where views are precluded by built form and vegetation, they seek to demonstrate the absence of visibility. Viewpoints are detailed in Table 6 and illustrated in **Figure 8**.

For each of the representative viewpoints, an existing (baseline) view is presented, together with a Photomontage that superimposes the proposed development within the view. Photomontages provide a 'photo-real' depiction of the scheme within the view utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the development, which has been geo-referenced to allow accurate placement and scale.

Where there is no visibility of the proposed development, an outline view has been produced to illustrate where the proposed development lies relative to intervening screening.

Table 6 Outline description of representative Viewpoints

VRP No.	Location	Representative of	Direction of View
VP1	View from Stocking Wood park at Woodtown (approximately 156m)	Park visitors, and residents	South
VP2	View from local road (Abbots Grove Park) at Ballycullen (approximately 48m)	Road users and residents	East
VP3	View from local road (Abbots Grove Park) at Oldcourt (approximately 45m)	Road users and residents	East
VP4	View from The Rock Meadow Park at Scholarstown (approximately 598m)	South Dublin CDP Designated scenic route (Dublin Mountain View Walk at Scholarstown), Park visitors, and residents	South
VP5	View from Woodstown Meadow park at Ballycullen (approximately 361m)	Park visitors, and residents	South-Southeast

VP6	View from local road (Stocking Well) at Woodtown (approximately 250m)	Road users and residents	South
VP7	View from local road (Ballycullen Rd) at Oldcourt (approximately 253m)	Road users and residents	Southeast
VP8	View from local road (Stocking Wood Dr) at Woodtown (approximately 50m)	Road users and residents	South
VP9	View from R113 at Motorway (M50) Overhead Bridge (approximately 800m)	Major route users	South
VP10	View from R115 at Newtown (approximately 255m)	Major route users and residents	Northwest
VP11	View from local road (Woodstown Rise) at Ballycullen (approximately 375m)	Road users and residents	South
VP12	View from 'Forest Loop' trail, Hell Fire Club & Massy's Estate (approximately 1.5km)	Recreational receptors/visitors	Northeast
VP13	View from local road (White Pines Park) at Woodtown (approximately 28m)	Road users and residents	West
VP14	View from local road (Stocking Wood Rise) at Woodtown (approximately 83m)	Road users and residents	South
VP15	View from local road (Abbot's grove Avenue) at Ballycullen (approximately 48m)	Road users and residents	South
VP16	View from R115 at Woodtown (approximately 565m)	South Dublin CDP Designated scenic route (R115 at Woodtown) and Major route	North-Northwest
VP17	View from Stocking Avenue roundabout at Ballycullen (approximately 119m)	Road users and residents	South

A 17 number of viewpoints were selected for the proposed development. These are shown in **Figure 8** below.

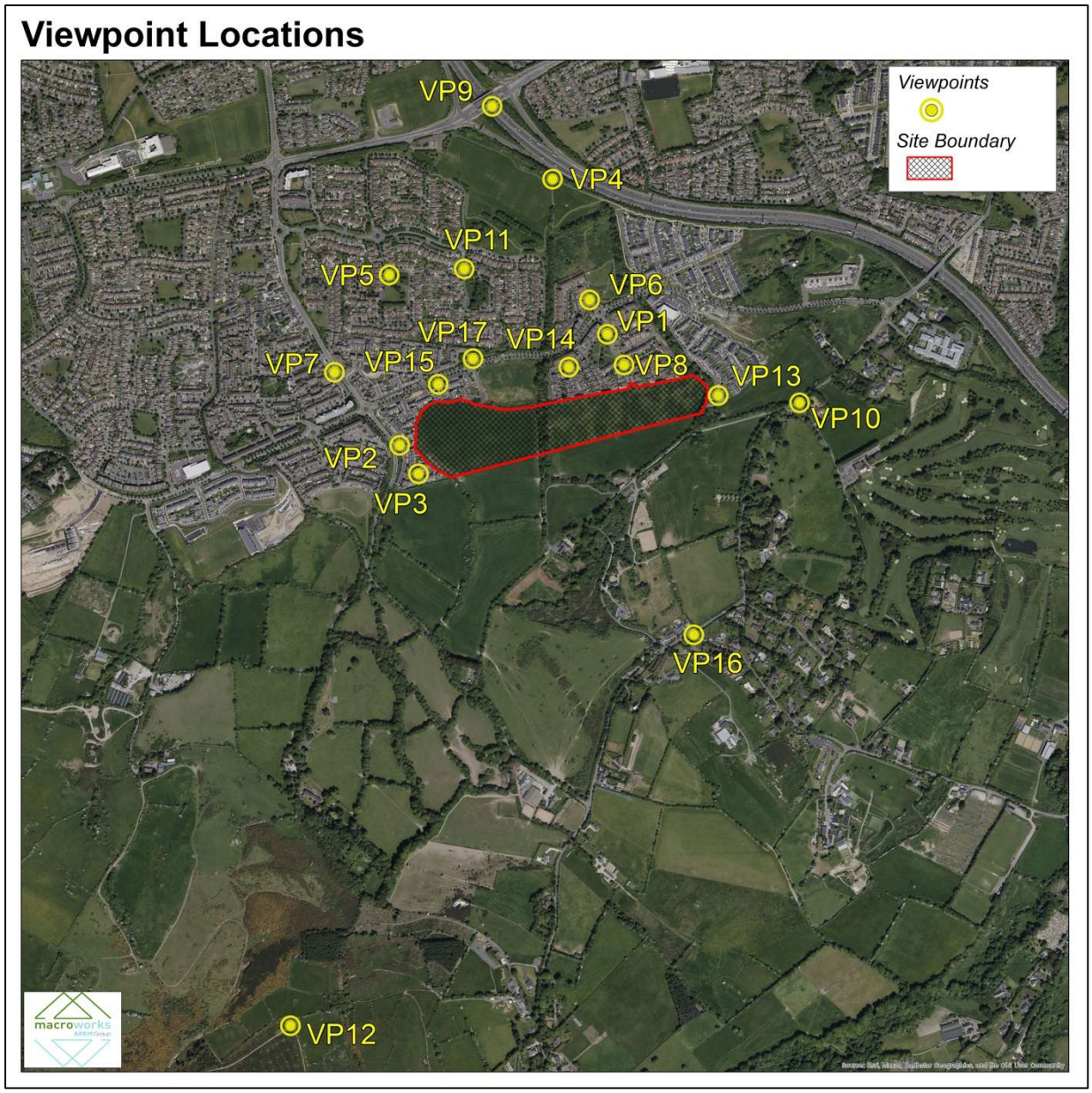

Figure 8 Selected Viewpoints Location Map

15.7 The Design Proposals and Embedded Mitigation

Full details of the proposed development, and its architectural design, can be found in the supporting Architectural Design Statement. The design of the proposals has been subject to an iterative design approach, with contextual analysis underpinning the proposals ensuring that careful consideration has been given to the receiving townscape.

The proposals have sought to deliver a high-quality, contemporary, residential development in line with the ambitions for this semi-urban area, and capitalise on the development potential of this site. The architectural design of the buildings, has also sought to respond positively to the urban characteristics of the surrounding area.

Building layouts and heights have been carefully designed to optimise daylight access to these proposed developments, while minimising overshadowing and loss of light. The arrangement of the blocks provides generous spacing, allowing for extensive landscaping opportunities, including broad paved areas with tree planting, ornamental shrub beds, and ground cover.

These landscaped areas not only contribute to a human-scaled and inviting environment within the development but also enhance visual and physical permeability across the site from adjoining areas. Additionally, a retained woodland patch is incorporated as a natural amenity space, offering a visually rich area with mature vegetation that contributes to the overall character and ecological value of the scheme.

15.7.1 Proposed Landscape and Visual Mitigation Measures

It is not considered that there are any additional mitigation measures required to reduce the anticipated construction phase townscape/visual effects over those that would be considered standard best practice construction management measures. It is anticipated that this may include aspects such as the timing of construction activities, which will be restricted per local authority guidance, and will likely be consistent with those enforced on nearby sites. A site hoarding will also screen ground level clutter and activity from view.

Landscape and urban design measures are integral to the development and will help to soften and assimilate the built form within its surrounding context in a general sense whilst adding to the quality of the development. However, it is not a case where the consideration of landscape and visual impacts before and after landscape planting establishment would result in a materially different impact judgements.

Other than those features and characteristics of the development proposals that have been embedded into the design of the scheme, there are no specific townscape and visual mitigation measures considered necessary in this instance.

15.8 **Townscape Impact Assessment**

15.8.1 Townscape Sensitivity

In accordance with Section 5.5 of the GLVIA-2013, a townscape character assessment requires a particular understanding of, among other criteria, “the context or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape.”

The site is currently contained within an agricultural field, albeit the southern boundary is defined by a fence and established hedgerow field boundary is further to the south on higher ground where it encloses the site. It is located in a strategic area of zoning ‘RES-N’ that is to provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved area plans.

In terms of the wider area of townscape, it comprises a mix of building types, heights, and characteristics. Whilst residential areas are present, this is interspersed by a more dominant matrix of rural land. Its condition and character is variable. The site and local townscape is subject to busy road network, the audible and visual influence of which is notable at a local level.

The townscape of Stocking Avenue contains some elements of a recognisable quality and is considered to have local value, given community buildings and commercial premises that are present in this area. However, it is not designated for any particular townscape value or importance.

The site itself is situated in a landscape influenced by the contrast between the urban townscape to the north and agricultural land to the south, with patches of Woodland within and in the vicinity of the site. Positioned on a gently sloping part of this landscape with hedgerow boundary above, the site is strongly influenced by its proximity to the urban development, contributing modestly to the scenic value due to its visibility and proximity to the Dublin Hills where several designated scenic views have been identified.

It is noted that the site is zoned as 'RES-N' within the SDCDP 2022-2028, which establishes a strategic ambition for the development of the site for residential purposes. Whilst this zoning objective is not a specific reflection on the value or quality of the landscape, to some degree it is a reflection on the comparative capacity that this part of the landscape has to accommodate change of the type proposed.

On the balance of these factors and in accordance with the criteria outlined in the methodology, the landscape sensitivity of the site and its immediate urban edge landscape context is deemed to be **Medium-Low**.

15.8.2 Construction Phase Landscape Effects

During the construction stage construction-related activity within and around the site, and nearby approach roads and roundabout is anticipated. This will include, but is not limited to:

- Site preparation works and groundwork operations;
- Intrusive foundation work including the installation of foundations and services;
- HGVs transporting materials to and from the site;
- Presence of tower cranes
- Movement of heavy machinery on-site;
- Temporary storage of construction materials on-site;
- Security fencing/hoarding and site lighting.

Construction phase effects will be at their greatest when the main building structures emerge above the surrounding existing buildings but remains veiled in the temporary clutter of scaffolding and dust/debris sheets. Construction work on sites throughout this wider peri-urban area is a constant feature as the townscape fabric evolves and is rejuvenated over time.

In terms of townscape character, construction activities tend to not to be strongly associated with townscape detriment as they are temporary/short term and transient (relates to different sites at different times) and can be associated with positive progression and / or rejuvenation. Notwithstanding, during the construction period of this urban project within an outer suburb of the city, the proposed development combined with site activity and movement of machinery will detract from the character of the immediate townscape.

Construction stage impacts on landscape/townscape character will be 'short-term' (i.e. lasting 1-7 years), in accordance with the EPA definitions of impact duration.

Based on the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of change is deemed to be no greater than **Medium** in the immediate context of the site, which when combined with the Medium-Low sensitivity of the receiving townscape, results in a **Moderate / Negative** significance and quality of effect. Within both the urban and rural contexts surrounding the site, construction phase landscape effects will dissipate quickly with distance and will be not greater then Slight / Negative beyond 500m of the site.

15.8.3 Operational Phase Landscape Effects

Following the completion of the proposed works, townscape impacts will relate entirely to the development's impact on the character of the receiving townscape and whether this is positive or negative. The most notable impact in this regard will result from the permanent presence of the new residential buildings and associated landscaping measures.

The proposed development is of a high-quality design and finish, that enhances the character of the road frontages and overall townscape of Ballycullen in a manner that is promoted by the underlying 'RES-N' zoning. It has a simple, elegant character, with architectural treatments employed to reduce perceived massing, and establish the development into the surrounding streetscape and urban areas.

The proposed development will generate the most notable influence on the immediate area of townscape, as experienced within approximately 500m. In this area, the development will be most visible, and the prominence of the development will be most notable. Beyond approximately 500m, although visible, the influence of the development reduces and it is perceived as part of the wider townscape fabric, where other prominent features are also influential on the character of the townscape. The development is a departure from the agriculture land use that currently occupies the site and its surroundings to the south. In this regard the taller and more intensive form of the development stands in modest contrast to its surroundings and will alter the townscape character to the south. Notwithstanding, towards the north, there are a number of residential schemes which are similar in scale and nature. However, this contribution, aside from being of generally greater intensity and scale, is of an equal or higher quality of design and material finish. There will also be a stronger sense of utility for this marginal and underutilised indent in the urban edge.

The most notable impacts will result from the permanent presence of new dwelling houses and associated infrastructure and landscaping. This will add intensity of built development to this area of urban fringe when considered against its former agricultural use. However, the intensity of built development is moderated by the open space interspersed through the development and is consistent with other residential development along the urban edge. The scale and form of the building proposals are considered appropriate to both its adjoining urban setting and the underlying zoning objectives and have been considered in relation to the rising topography. Given that the site is located in an area that combines various types of development, including older houses, newer residential schemes, and adjacent rural land, this mix presents an opportunity for the proposed residential scheme to serve as a natural extension, expanding the urban area and consolidating the transition between urban and rural spaces, thereby contributing to a more consolidated urban edge.

Based on the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of change is deemed to be **Medium** in the immediate site context. When combined with the Medium-low sensitivity of the receiving townscape to the north, the overall significance of effect is considered to be **Moderate-slight.** Within the immediate rural surrounds to the south of the site the effect will be **Moderate** as the sensitivity is marginally higher (Medium). Effects will reduce with distance as the development becomes a smaller and less distinctive component of the wider townscape fabric. The quality of the effect is deemed to be **Neutral to Positive** on the basis that the high quality development enhances the quality and utility of this slightly underutilised urban edge area in a manner that is consistent with its underlying zoning and surrounding urban fabric.

15.9 Visual Impact Assessment

The assessment of visual impacts at each of the selected viewpoints is aided by photomontages of the proposed development (included Appendix 15.1 – LVIA Photomontages). Photomontages are a 'photo-real' depiction of the scheme within the view, utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the development, which has been geo-referenced to allow accurate placement and scale. For each viewpoint, the existing view is presented, alongside a version that contains the proposed development.

15.9.1 Visual Receptor Sensitivity

All of the viewpoints are located within a relatively contained urban area, with a key differential in visual receptor sensitivity relating to whether or not the viewpoint represents residential receptors or people travelling along residential streets or located within other parts of the surrounding townscape.

In terms of visual receptor sensitivity, it is noted that the site is located in a peri-urban context where visual receptors are influenced by a mix of built forms and architectural characteristics, including low-rise residential and commercial premises and the rural setting. This is also set within a busy road network, the audible and visual influence of which is notable at a local level.

On the basis of the factors outlined above, visual receptor sensitivity is generally considered to range between Medium-low and Low sensitivity, but with designated views attributed a high-medium sensitivity. Specific receptor sensitivity is assigned to each viewpoint using the factors outlined in methodology section.

15.9.2 Construction Phase Visual Effects

Effects during construction will be highly variable depending on the activity taking place, the angle of the view, and the degree to which the activity would be visible. Visual effects will arise as a result of the highly visible construction-related plant, views of fencing/hoarding, site lighting and temporary structures, and movement associated with the intensity of activity at the site. They will also relate to the emergence of the partially completed structures draped in dust sheets and scaffolding and surrounded by tower cranes. As a result of the layers of vegetation in the landscape, much of the ground-level activity on the site will be screened or partially screened, which will moderate the degree to which it affects views.

Construction phase visual effects are an inevitable consequence of the development proposal being brought forward, and there are a range of standard best practice construction management measures able to moderate these during construction. Many views from the townscape surrounding the site are not immune to the influence of comparable construction activity given the works undertaken elsewhere in the area.

Construction stage visual effects will be most noticeable in the immediate landscape/townscape setting of the site, and key approach roads where increased construction traffic volumes may also be noticeable. The highest magnitude of construction stage visual impacts will occur when the site is at its peak of construction activity but this is only a short-term impact (1-7 years in accordance with EPA Guidance).

Based on the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of change is deemed to be no greater than **Medium** for visual receptors immediately surrounding the site and reducing with increased distance and visual context. When combined with the generally Medium-Low and Low sensitivity of closest visual receptors, the overall significance of effect is considered to be no greater than **Moderate / Negative** and will reduce rapidly with distance. Higher sensitivity scenic designations are contained at a considerable remove from the site, hence the magnitude of impact is lower and the overall effect does not increase with sensitivity. There is not considered to be any significant visual effects during the construction phase.

15.9.3 Operational Phase Visual Effects

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

For each viewpoint, the existing view is presented alongside the view of the development once established. Table 7 presents the judgements made with regard to the operational phase visual effects from the viewpoint locations.

Whilst the visual effects of the development will inherently vary from location to location, from many locations in the wider townscape, the built form is either not visible or only forms a minor component in the overall view. The most notable visual influence relates to views experienced from the immediate area of townscape.

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP1	**View from Stocking Wood park at Woodtown (approximately 156m from site)** This view encompasses a residential street scene with a park situated to the southwest. Modern two-storey houses, featuring brick and render facades, line both sides of the street. Mature trees frame the view, with additional trees dispersed within the park. Views towards the site are partially obscured by the intervening buildings. Limited views of agricultural land on a sloping hill are visible in the midground through gaps between the houses.	Medium-Low	The proposed development will be partially visible, introducing new apartment blocks primarily situated behind the existing front-line housing within the scene. While the scale of the new apartment buildings generally aligns in perspective with the adjacent two-storey houses, the roofline introduces a slightly different profile. Additionally, the new built form occupies previously open rural space, infilling views toward the background and enclosing the view with new development. This alters the spatial relationship between the existing houses and the green spaces beyond. Although the height and massing are somewhat consistent with the surrounding developments, the new blocks are prominent, marking a shift in the visual character and density of this part of the residential area. Nevertheless, the inclusion of semi-mature trees helps mitigate the visual impact, softening the overall effect. The magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium**, with a **Negative** quality, given the consideration that the development increase built intensity in this area and reduces the openness of the semi-rural view.	Moderate-slight/ Negative/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP2	**View from local road (Abbots Grove Park) at Ballycullen (approximately 48m from site)** Viewpoint VP2 presents a typical suburban residential streetscape, characterised by two-storey dwellings of contemporary design, featuring a mix of brick and render finishes. Mature trees are integrated within the street view. In the midground, beyond the immediate residential area, a sloping rural field is visible through intervening trees. Vegetation and buildings on the far side of the field contain the view at a modest distance.	Medium-Low	The introduction of new dwellings, while consistent in scale with the surrounding residential context, creates a noticeable change in the view, particularly in the midground, where it limits views of the rural landscape beyond. This development introduces a new layer of built form, transforming the urban fringe streetscape into a more consistent urbanised setting, altering the visual connection to the open, rural landscape. The scale and architectural form is sympathetic to the immediate context an of a high quality that incorporates additional landscape planting. There is not a sense of overbearing or overlooking from the proposed dwellings which are consistent with the underlying zoning objective and therefore, not an unexpected feature. On balance, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed as **Medium**, with a slightly negative quality i.e. Neutral-Negative.	Moderate/ Neutral-Negative/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP3	**View from local road (Abbots Grove Park) at Oldcourt (approximately 45m)** Viewpoint VP3 presents a view along a residential cul-de-sac. Two-storey semi-detached and terraced houses, primarily constructed of brick and plaster, line both sides of the narrow road. Mature trees are interspersed, though somewhat sparse, along the street and within some front gardens.	Medium-Low	The montage illustrates the proposed development, located at the end of the residential cul-de-sac, establishing it as a new focal point within the view. Situated directly at the termination of the cul-de-sac, the new development alters spatial character by confining views within the cul-de-sac. **The scheme exhibits a scale and form that aligns with the established residential character of the streetscape in terms of building height and massing and is of a high quality finish.** There is not a sense of overbearing or overlooking from the proposed dwellings which are consistent with the underlying zoning objective and therefore, not an unexpected feature. On balance, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed as **Medium**, with a slightly negative quality i.e. Neutral-Negative. .	Moderate/ Neutral-Negative/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP4	**View from The Rock Meadow Park at Scholarstown (approximately 598m from site)** This designated scenic view looks across open, undulating grassy parkland in the foreground. The mid-ground is characterised by a horizontal band of mature, mixed deciduous trees and hedgerows, which partially screens the landscape beyond, alongside infrastructure including an electricity pylon. The background is dominated by the rolling upland slopes of the Dublin Mountains, providing a naturalistic backdrop to the view. There is surprisingly little built development visible within this view given the density of development that surrounds the park.	**High-Medium**	Visibility of the proposed development is highly restricted by intervening vegetation, which also represents a worst-case in the photomontages being during winter months with bare trees. Views of some small sections of the development are afforded above and between intervening vegetation. **Crucially, from this location, the visible portions of the development sit directly between the viewer and the background upland landscape.** While substantial screening limits the overall extent of visibility, **where the development is seen, it partially obscures / replaces the rural setting in the lower portion of the Dublin Mountains backdrop.** There will be a noticeable increase in the intensity of built development within this view. The character and composition of the view would be altered, but in a context where the residential development sits at the base of the rural upland slopes as a legible part of the urban edge of the city where it does not appear to unduly encroach of the rural upland backdrop.. For the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed **Low**. The quality of the effect is deemed marginally **negative i.e. Neutral-Negative.**	Moderate-Slight/Neutral-Negative/Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP5	**View from Woodstown Meadow park at Ballycullen (approximately 361m from site)** This view is experienced by park visitors and the local community. The foreground features an open, grassy area of the park with scattered mature trees, offering glimpses of residential houses through vegetation gaps. A park track bisects the view, leading towards two-storey residential dwellings in the mid-distance, which largely screen views beyond. To the south, limited views towards the Dublin Mountains are afforded through gaps in the vegetation and beyond the mid-ground housing.	Medium-Low	The proposed development will not be visible from here due to the intervening vegetation, thus, the magnitude of visual impact is **Negligible** by default.	Imperceptible/ Neutral/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP6	**View from local road (Stocking Well) at Woodtown (approximately 250m)** This view is experienced by local road users and nearby residents, presenting a roundabout within a residential area. In the foreground, a stone archway marks the entrance to the Stocking well. Beyond it, a mix of two to three-storey residential buildings with diverse architectural styles (featuring brick, render, and stone detailing) line the road. Mature trees are scattered throughout the view. Further beyond the roundabout, views extend over a sloping agricultural field bordered by mature vegetation.	Medium-Low	The proposed development is partially visible in the middle distance, situated beyond the existing residential buildings and rising above intervening vegetation and structures through a gap in the built profile. It introduces a consistent scale of built form within the scene, effectively infilling a space between existing developments and contributing to a more continuous urban edge. While the development introduces an additional built element to the view, its visual prominence is minimised by substantial screening from existing vegetation and a scale that generally aligns with the surrounding residential context. It's different colour palette does attract the eye, along with being positioned on slightly elevated terrain compared to the developments in the foreground. However, these attribute add to visual interest and the quality and diversity of built form within the scene. The development impedes views towards the more rural sloping agricultural land, diminishing the visual connection to the rural landscape at this urban fringe location. There is not a sense of overbearing or overlooking from the proposed residential development, which is consistent with the underlying zoning objective and therefore, not an unexpected feature. On balance, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed as **Low**, with a **Neutral** quality.	Slight/Neutral /Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP7	**View from local road (Ballycullen Rd) at Oldcourt (approximately 253m)** This view is experienced by local road users and nearby residents. It presents a sloping local road extending into the distance, flanked by footpaths with a grassy verge and roadside vegetation on the right. Two to three-storey residential buildings border both sides of the road, leading to a roundabout further along. Beyond the roundabout, views extend over a sloping agricultural field and a wooded area on the hill.	Low	The proposed development will not be visible from here due to the intervening vegetation, thus, the magnitude of visual impact is **Negligible** by default.	Imperceptible/ Neutral/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP8	**View from local road (Stocking Wood Dr) at Woodtown (approximately 50m from site)** This view is experienced by local residents. Viewpoint VP8 presents a typical suburban residential streetscape in an urban fringe setting, characterised by two-storey dwellings of contemporary design, featuring a mix of brick and render finishes. Mature trees are integrated within the street view. In the midground, beyond the immediate residential area, a sloping rural field is visible which is topped by a hedgerow field boundary on its far side and contains the view at a modest distance.	Medium-Low	The introduction of new apartment buildings creates a noticeable change in the view, particularly in the middle ground where it encloses the scene and occupies the open agricultural fields to the south. This development sits on a slightly elevated terrain in comparison to the other surrounding developments and introduces a new layer of built architectural form, contributing to a more urbanised setting and altering the visual connection to the previously more open, sloping rural landscape. Nonetheless, the modest height apartment blocks do not contribute unduly to a sense of overbearing or overlooking of the foreground residential area. The scale and architectural form are generally sympathetic to the immediate context and terraces uphill with strong permeability between buildings with the open areas generously landscaped. The development exhibits a different architectural finish and design, along with a contrasting colour palette, which makes it visually distinct and adding richness to the form and finish of the high quality of residential development in this view. Although the rural fringe qualities of this view have been diminished, the form and function of the proposed development is consistent with the underlying zoning objective and therefore, not an unexpected feature. Overall, the visual impact is deemed to be **High-Medium**, with a marginally **Negative** quality.	Moderate-Slight/Neutral-Negative/Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP9	**View from R113 at Motorway (M50) Overhead Bridge (approximately 800m)** This view is experienced by the overhead bridge users. Looking down, the multiple lanes of the M50 motorway are the main feature, extending into the distance. The edges of the motorway corridor are defined by tall mature trees and vegetation, which form a dense screen along the roadside, effectively screening views beyond the immediate road infrastructure. In the distance, the Dublin Mountains provide a backdrop.	Low	The proposed development will not be visible from here due to the intervening terrain and vegetation, thus, the magnitude of visual impact is **Negligible** by default.	Imperceptible/ Neutral/ Long-term
VP10	**View from R115 at Newtown (approximately 255m)** This view is experienced by regional road users and visitors to the Rathfarnaham Golf Club. The foreground features a road bordered by roadside vegetation. Through gaps in this vegetation, fleeting glimpses of panoramic views across the built-up area of Dublin city can be seen.	Medium-Low	The proposed development will not be visible from here due to the intervening terrain and vegetation, thus, the magnitude of visual impact is **Negligible** by default.	Imperceptible/ Neutral/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP11	**View from local road (Woodstown Rise) at Ballycullen (approximately 375m)** Experienced by local road users and residents, this view depicts a residential area with brick and rendered dwellings bordering the road, often featuring front gardens and low brick walls. Similar residential development lines the opposite side of the street, with mature trees interspersed throughout. In the background, a gentle, tree-lined sloping hill provides a semi-rural backdrop.	Medium-low	The proposed residential development introduces discreet, but noticeable changes to the existing view, particularly beyond the end of the housing estate in the middle distance where alterations to the rural views and building massing are apparent rising above the intervening vegetation and buildings. While mature trees and intervening vegetation offer visual screening, the increase in building intensity and volume will be discernible. Furthermore, the development, situated on slightly elevated terrain compared to its surroundings, impacts views towards the Dublin Mountains beyond, resulting in a partial obstruction of the rural foothills, though still allowing views of the hills in the background. The magnitude of visual impact is deemed as **Low**, with a **Neutral** to marginally **Negative** quality.	Slight/Neutral-Negative/Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP12	**View from 'Forest Loop' trail, Hell Fire Club & Massy's Estate (approximately 1.5km from site)** Viewpoint 12 is taken from the popular 'Forest Loop' trail, Hell Fire Club & Massy's Estate. It is representative of views that would experience by recreational receptors in this elevated part of the Dublin Mountains on Montpellier Hill, affording expansive views north over the wider urban landscape of Dublin City.	High-Medium	The proposed development will be visible from this location, appearing as part of the urban fringe within expansive views over the wider Dublin cityscape. The views of the development will be partially restricted by vegetation in the intervening landscape. While the development will be visible from here, it would remain integrated within the broader views of the Dublin cityscape and generates a more consolidated urban edge. Given the elevation and the expansive nature of these views, the development is not considered to notably alter the character or composition of the scene. The magnitude of the visual impact is deemed**-negligible**, with the quality of the impact deemed to be **Neutral**.	Slight-Imperceptible/ Neutral/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP13	**View from local road (White Pines Park) at Woodtown (approximately 28m from site)** Experienced by local road users and surrounding residents, this view opens from a residential laneway that serves a small cluster of houses. To the southwest, two-storey houses with brick facades line the road. Looking west, the view extends down a hill through gaps in mature trees, offering glimpses of further residential dwellings and more mature trees and vegetation lower down the slope.	Medium-Low	The proposed development, with a scale and nature comparable to nearby residences, noticeably alters the view from here but not markedly so. Despite some screening from mature trees, its verticality and mass are evident beyond the foreground street scene, impacting an area previously defined by open space and downhill urban fringe views. The degree of visibility will be much less during summer months when the intervening trees are in-leaf While the dwelling's architectural style and materials show some alignment with the dwellings in the vicinity and a high standard of architectural finish, its introduction shifts spatial relationships, particularly concerning the more rural views. Although its scale is consistent with nearby residential developments, the placement of dwellings on a lower site results in them having a subordinate scale to foreground structures. The magnitude of visual impact is deemed as **Medium-low**, with a marginally **Negative** quality.	Moderate-slight/ Neutral-Negative/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP14	**View from local road (Stocking Wood Rise) at Woodtown (approximately 83m from site)** This view is experienced by surrounding residents where a local access road defines the centre of the view with scattered trees and shrubs in the middle ground which partly encloses the view and provides glimpses of agricultural land beyond. Semi-detached houses with red brick facades are lined on both sides of the narrow road.	Medium-Low	Proposed apartment blocks will be partially visible in short-range views, rising prominently above intervening vegetation. However, belts of existing vegetation and buildings in the intervening landscape will partially restrict views of the site. The development introduces a sense of enclosure, enhancing the sense of place by filling a currently open section of the skyline to the further SE of the view. While this contributes to the continuity of the built environment, it also blocks views of the more rural elements in the scene. The design and architectural treatment quality prevent it from appearing overly bulky, despite its slightly elevated position relative to the surrounding residential houses. Furthermore, the orientation of the apartment blocks relative to the foreground street scene, prevent a sense of overlooking. The colour scheme somewhat contrast from nearby residential schemes, though still allowing the development to integrate well with its surroundings and adding rich variety to the scene. Although the rural fringe qualities of this view have been diminished, the form and function of the proposed development is consistent with the underlying zoning objective and therefore, not an unexpected feature. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed as **Medium**, with a marginally **Negative** quality.	Moderate-slight/Neutral-Negative/Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP15	**View from local road (Abbot's grove Avenue) at Ballycullen (approximately 48m from site)** This view is similar to VP14 but at a slightly closers distance. It is experienced by surrounding residents where a local access road runs through the centre of the view with scattered trees and shrubs along the fence line in the middle ground which partly encloses the view and provide glimpses of agricultural land beyond. Semi-detached houses with brick and render finish are lined on both sides of the road	Medium-Low	The view is similar to VP14 but observed from a closer distance, where the proposed development will be partially visible in short-range views, rising above the intervening fence and vegetation. The development introduces a sense of enclosure by filling a currently open section of the skyline to the southeast. While this addition supports the continuity of the built environment, it also reduces the sense of belong located at the rural fringe of the city. The design and architectural quality of the development ensure that, despite its elevated position relative to surrounding residential properties, it does not appear overly bulky / intrusive or a sense of overlooking. Its colour scheme provides contrast with the nearby developments, which adds a welcome richness to the architectural finishes evident in this scene. Although the rural fringe qualities of this view have been diminished, the form and function of the proposed development is consistent with the underlying zoning objective and therefore, not an unexpected feature. The magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium**, with a **Negative** quality.	Moderate-slight/ Negative/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP16	**View from R115 at Woodtown (approximately 565m)** This view is somewhat similar to VP 10 where the view is experienced by regional road users surrounding residents. The foreground features residential dwellings beyond which panoramic views across the built-up area of Dublin city can be seen.	Medium-Low	The proposed development will not be visible from here due to the intervening terrain and vegetation, thus, the magnitude of visual impact is **Negligible** by default.	Imperceptible/ Neutral/ Long-term

Table 7 Operational Phase Visual Effects

	Existing view	Sensitivity	Description and Magnitude of Visual impact	Significance
VP17	**View from Stocking Avenue roundabout at Ballycullen (approximately 119m)** Experienced by local road users and nearby residents, this viewpoint represents a roundabout within a suburban residential area. Surrounding it are two to three-storey residential buildings of varying architectural styles, including brick and render with pitched roofs, interspersed with mature trees along the roadside. Beyond the roundabout, the view extends over a sloping agricultural field towards the Dublin Mountains in the background, framed by mature vegetation.	Medium-low	The proposed development, clearly visible beyond the existing residential buildings and roundabout, introduces a new residential estate of varying heights into the midground beyond an open field that will remain in agricultural use (for the time being) and across the intersection. The nearest apartment structure and surroundings two storey dwellings rise at a prominent scale, obscuring views of some of the agricultural fields currently in view, thereby altering the previously open visual connection with the surrounding landscape and contributing to a more continuous built environment. The architectural design contrasts with the existing two to three-storey, pitched-roof dwellings, introducing a more linear form that draws the eye and accentuates the visual change. However it also adds to the architectural variety of form an finish in a manner that aids the distinct sense of place, The development diminishes the sense of openness to the semi-rural landscape beyond, replacing it with an increased scale and intensity of development that is nonetheless of a characteristic form in this scene. On balance, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed as **High-Medium**, with a **Negative** quality due to the loss of views toward the more open rural landscape albeit in a manner that is consistent with the underlying zooming objective.	Moderate / Negative/ Long-term

15.10 **Potential Cumulative Effects**

Within a cumulative assessment, the baseline against which landscape and visual effects are assessed is extended to consider other relevant schemes that are not currently present but that are subject to a valid planning application (or have been permitted) as being operational. Cumulative effects therefore represent any increased effects that may be generated by the development in a scenario where other relevant schemes in the locality are operational.

In accordance with GLVIA3, schemes that are at feasibility and pre-planning are not generally considered to be appropriate in the context of a cumulative assessment due to a lack of certainty that they will come forward and because of an absence of detail that enable any meaningful judgements to be made. The cumulative assessment follows the same process with the exception that the baseline is extended to assume this development is built and is present in the baseline view.

As is typical of any evolving urban environment, it is acknowledged that there are numerous development projects planned and permitted within the wider urban area. However, in this case there are no other projects of scale within the study area that would have clear intervisibility with the proposed development and with which material cumulative effects are likely to occur.

15.10.1 Urban Design and Building Heights

The proposed development has been designed in conjunction with the principles outlined in the Urban Design and Building Height Guidelines, and from a townscape and visual perspective are considered to respond positively to them.

At the scale of the relevant city/town, the following is noted:

- The development is considered to make a positive contribution to the streetscape of Stocking Avenue road and Ballycullen, incorporating a vibrant, active relationship with the built form and internal spaces;
- Built form has employed a variety of architectural treatments, material applications, set-backs, and height stepping, to generate variety and visual interest, and ensure the built form has a sensitive relationship with adjacent built form and streetscape.

At the scale of district/neighbourhood/street, the following is noted:

- Through a contextually sensitive design, the proposed built form responds to its urban environment and makes a positive contribution to the streetscape placemaking within Ballycullen when considered within the wider suburban context and the underlying residential zoning objective.
- The proposal has incorporated architectural treatments that break up the massing of the building and generate a scale that is consistent with underlying zoning objectives. In no instance does the built form have uninterrupted facades;

- The proposal has considered in detail the opportunities to enhance the public realm and streetscape surrounding the building.

At the scale of the site/building the following is noted:
In terms of townscape and visual impacts, detailed consideration has been given to the form, massing and height of the building so that it sensitively integrates with the surrounding built context and underlying zoning objectives, and does not significantly adversely influence streetscape views. However it acknowledged that some negative visual impacts will arise purely out of the proposed development encroaching on current rural outlooks in this urban fringe setting.

15.11 **Conclusion**

15.11.1 Townscape Effects

Effects on townscape character will naturally occur as a result of the change to the site's character, current condition and use, and due to the scale and intensity of the built development on the site. During the construction stage the significance of townscape effects is deemed to be **Moderate** and of a **Negative** quality due to the clutter, complexity and activity associated with the work. However, once operational the proposed development is considered to have a **Moderate-slight** and **Marginally Positive** significance and quality of effect on townscape character. This is on the basis that it will fill something of an indented perceptual void of agricultural land at the urban edge of the city providing a consistent and consolidated built edge that conforms with the underlying residential zoning objectives of the site.

15.11.2 Visual Effects

The visual impact of the proposed development has been assessed on the basis of 17 representative viewpoint locations. The sensitivity of these receptor locations is moderated by the dynamic peri-urban setting where change is constant and expected. In most instances the sensitivity judgements were deemed to range between Medium-low for predominantly residential areas, while for VP4 and VP12 it was deemed to increase to High-medium as they represent designated scenic views.
From the vast majority of the representative viewpoints, the proposed development rises to fill the rural area beyond adjacent streets with a marginally increased scale and intensity of built development, but with a high quality of architectural design and finish that contributes to the sense of place and visual interest. Even though the proposed development consists of apartment blocks that are set back into the centre of the site on the eastern side of the site with a perimeter of two storey housing protecting residential amenity to the north with a specific design that lowers their FFL. The apartment blocks on the west side address the site entrance but do not abut the existing housing, Consequently, there is not a sense of overbearing and overlooking relative to the surrounding existing residential neighbourhoods.

It is recognised that an important aspect of views from the urban area, is the backdrop of the Dublin Mountains and that the site forms part of the lower agricultural slopes in that regard. Apart from the immediate area, whilst the proposed development would be visible (to varying degrees), it would in most instances, not obscure views of the more elevated parts of the landscape, nor notably alter the character and composition of views which would remain strongly influenced by them.

The most notable visual impacts occur in relation to visual receptors (residents) in the immediate urban area to whom the proposals will invariably result in an intensification of urban development in views that currently contain at least some of the open agricultural surroundings in the urban fringe locality. The loss of this rural outlook will result in negative visual effects that outweigh the quality and finish of the proposed development. This highlights the difference between the townscape effect where the proposed development is considered to make a marginally positive contribution to the peri-urban townscape fabric. Contrastingly, from many of the immediately surrounding residential visual receptors, the loss of their rural outlook and sense of openness can only be considered negative, but generally only marginally negative (Neutral-Negative) on balance of competing factors. From more distant visual receptors, the magnitude of effects are lower, but the quality of effect is Neutral because the consolidation of the urban edge is apparent and there is not the same sense of rural outlook.

A key consideration, is that the proposed development reflects exactly the scale and nature of built development intended for this site by its underlying zoning objectives. In this regard, the proposed development and its associated townscape and visual effects would not be an unexpected evolution of this peri-urban setting.

15.11.3 Summary

The proposed development is not expected to give rise to any significant negative townscape or visual impacts. While there may be negative visual impacts in the immediate vicinity due to the loss of rural outlook, the wider urban area has accommodated numerous similar existential projects over the past two decades, that have gradually expanded the wider townscape in line with the strategic direction for this part of the administrative area. The proposed development of this site is not considered to generate any operational landscape or visual effects greater than Moderate, and no effects are considered to have the potential to be significant.