

Rosemount House, Northern Cross, Malahide Road, Dublin 17

Proposed Mixed-Use Strategic Housing Development

## Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

for

Walls Construction Ltd.

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## LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 1. Introduction

Mitchell + Associates was engaged by Walls Construction Ltd., in February 2022 to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for a proposed Strategic Housing Development (SHD) on the site of their current offices at Rosemount House, Northern Cross, Malahide Road, Dublin 17. This LVIA report forms part of the planning application for this proposed development to An Bord Pleanála and assesses the impact of the proposed development on the landscape character and visual amenity of the current site and on the contiguous area and the site environs. It considers these in the context of the site, within the Northern Cross development area. It describes the landscape character of the subject site and its environs, together with the visibility of the site from selected viewpoints in the locality. An outline of the methodology utilised to assess the impacts and descriptions of the receiving environment (baseline) and of the potential impacts of the development, is included. Mitigation measures introduced to ameliorate or offset impacts are considered and the resultant predicted (residual) impacts outlined. This report should be read with reference to the photomontages, which are contained in a separate A3 report prepared for Plus Architecture by Digital Dimensions Ltd. This assessment was carried out between March 2022 and August 2022.



Figure 1: Site location and context (Source: Bing maps with text and red line overlay by Mitchell + Associates)

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) includes consideration of two main aspects:

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

It is appropriate that aspects of architectural context and design approach are addressed when assessing impact of proposed development on the urban landscape. In this regard, the architectural design rationale and specific architectural responses to the site and context, are considered within this report.

The evaluation methodology used in the preparation of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is based on the techniques developed for the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIARs) and refers to the guidelines developed over recent years setting out the standards necessary to meet the requirements of the relevant legislation. In this regard Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is one aspect of Environmental Impact Assessment which has developed specific guidelines in respect of the principles and process which should be adopted in order to achieve the required standards for this specialist discipline. The evaluation methodology adopted is therefore based on the following:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, published by Routledge, 3rd Edition 2013.
- 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), May 2022.

This preliminary Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment involved:

- Visiting the area in March and July 2022, and recording the main landscape features;
- Undertaking a desk study of the subject site and its immediate environs in relation to its local and broader significance using the information gathered from site visits, studying aerial photography, historic and Ordnance Survey mapping;
- Establishing and describing the receiving environment in terms of the existing landscape, its visual amenity and its significance;
- Assessing the nature, scale and quality of the proposed development through examination of the design team's outline drawings, illustrations and descriptions of the proposed scheme;
- Assessing the selected viewpoints and agreeing those which could be considered most important and most representative in terms of visual impact; and
- Assessing the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development through consideration and interpretation of the prepared photomontages.

## 2.2 Photomontage Methodology

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

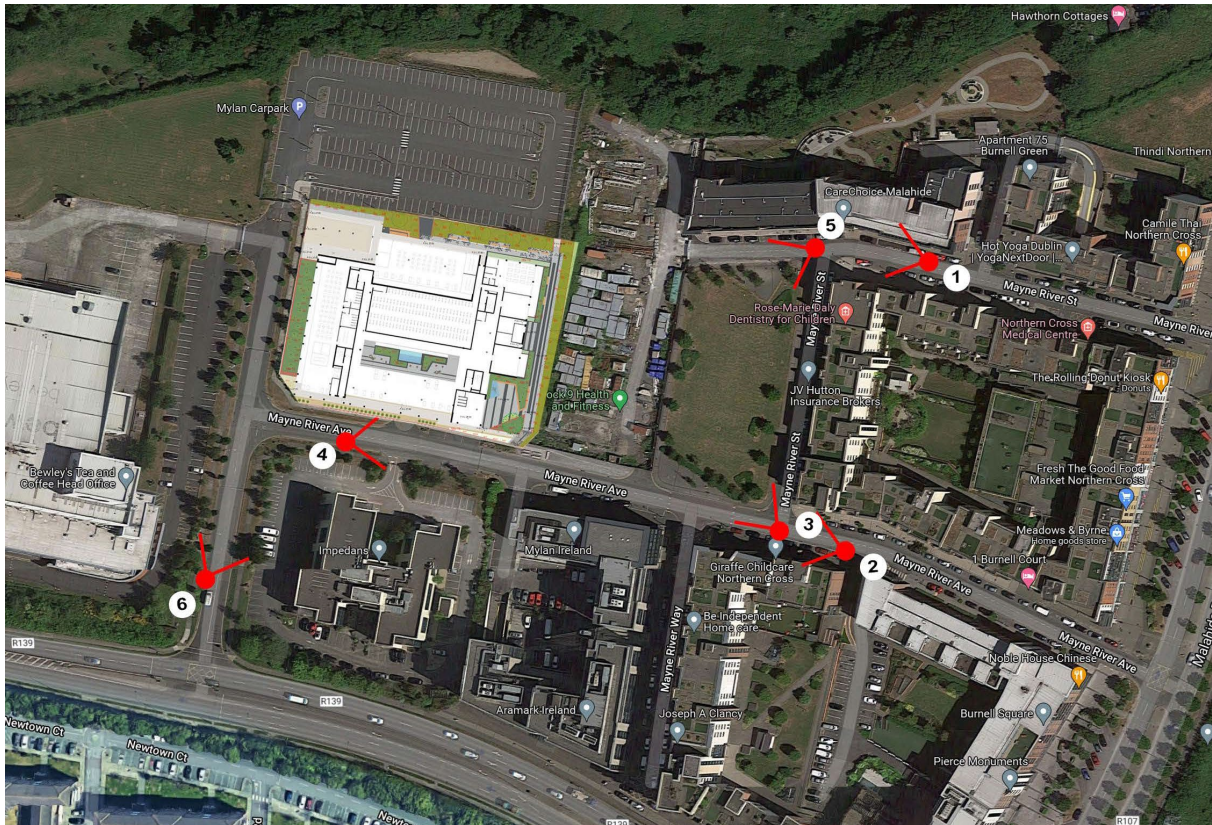
## 2.3 Selection of Views

To enable the assessment of the development proposal, a total of 6 views were selected for photomontage preparation. Figure 2 below, illustrates the viewpoint locations (indicated in red) of the photomontages (verified views) submitted during the planning process and as part of the planning application. The views are assessed in section 8.2 of this report.

In accordance with the guidelines, views from the public domain were given priority, particularly those from main thoroughfares and public places. The guidelines also require that the proposed development is considered in context and that photomontages illustrate the proposed development with sufficient context for proper assessment. The photomontages (verified views) submitted are considered to be representative, having regard to the requirement to examine the likely impacts. The views have been selected to represent the visual impact of the proposed development from a variety of directions around the site.

The photomontages prepared were used to assess the design and to inform the design team of any advisable amendments – this is an iterative process and offers an opportunity for the design team to adjust the design if considered necessary. A location map of the selected viewpoints is also included with the photomontages in the separate A3 document prepared by Digital Dimensions Ltd, submitted with the planning application.





**Figure 2: Selected viewpoints:** photomontages for these viewpoints are included with the planning application (Source: Digital Dimensions Ltd.)

## 2.4 Methodology for Rating of Impacts

The significance of predicted effects is assessed by setting the magnitude/character of landscape and visual impacts/effects against the sensitivity (or nature) of the existing baseline landscape and visual receptors. The predicted effects are further assessed and ascribed a value for quality and duration of effect.

The quality of impact can be assessed as 'positive' or 'negative' depending on whether the change is considered to improve or reduce the quality of the landscape or visual environment/amenity. The quality of impact may also be assessed as 'neutral' if the proposed changes do not affect the quality of the landscape or visual environment/amenity. The assessment of quality needs to consider and weigh-up a range of issues and potentially conflicting standpoints. The nature of the proposed change, its context, appropriateness, quality of design and the sensitivities of the viewers, are all important considerations for this aspect of assessment.

The duration of impact is a third aspect of assessment to be considered and may range from temporary to permanent. In this case, the proposed development is likely to be 'long term' or 'permanent', however the effectiveness of the proposed planting in assimilating the scheme into the existing landscape context, albeit a small effect in this case, will presumably develop and mature over time. The temporary/short term impacts during the construction of the proposed development are also considered.

The assessment of landscape effects is based on the scheme design and the impact it will potentially make on the existing landscape (and the human experience of the landscape) and the elements that contribute to it. The assessment of visual effects is primarily based on the photomontages provided which compare the existing (baseline) views before development, with the 'proposed' views illustrating the proposed development placed into the existing context. For each view, the scale/magnitude of impact is related to the quantum of change within the field of view and to the nature and sensitivity of such change as experienced by the respective receptors, in the context of the existing (receiving) environment. Therefore, whilst the significance of effects may range from 'imperceptible' to 'profound' and these may in part be related to distance and proximity, it should be remembered that the nature of the change and the sensitivities of the viewers also play a part in this aspect of assessment for each view.

This latter issue of sensitivity can however create emotive responses which often have little or no regard for the appropriateness and/or design of the proposal and the assessment needs to be considered in that context. For example, in this case of a primarily residential development proposed for this mixed commercial and residential area, the interests or concerns (sensitivities) of say, a business owner in the area may differ somewhat from those of an existing local resident or potential apartment buyer/renter. The full reconciliation of such sensitivities may be considered unlikely, in which case, issues of appropriateness and design quality become more influential in the assessment. The quantum, scale and proximity of proposed development are important aspects to be considered in terms of the carrying capacity of any sensitive landscape. The scheme design of the whole development (buildings, roads, planting etc) and the subtleties of detail design in such circumstances are important in mitigating potentially negative impacts and ultimately to an extent, in determining appropriateness.

The criteria used for landscape and visual assessment are based on those provided in the EPA 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), May 2022 (Table 3.4 Descriptions of Effects, pp 50-52 inc.). For this assessment these criteria are adapted to relate specifically to landscape and visual aspects and are outlined in Appendix B.

### **3. Description of Receiving Environment**

#### **3.1 Site Location and Landscape Context**

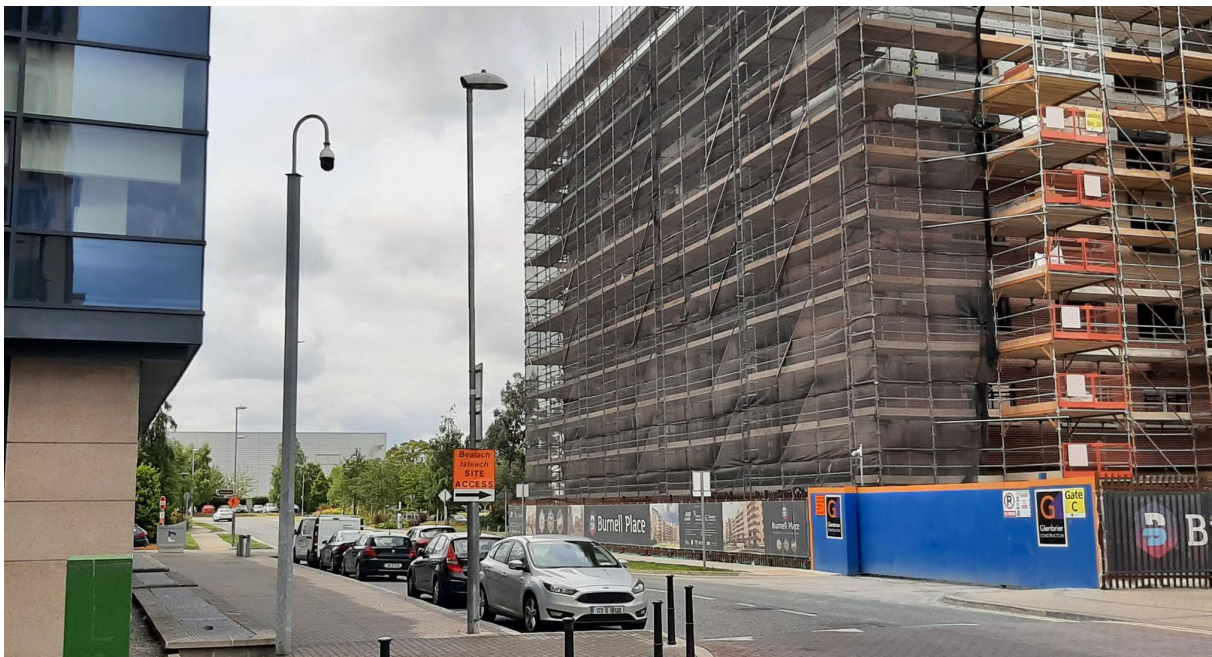
The proposed development occupies a site of 0.6462 ha located in the western part of the Northern Cross development area, north-west of the major crossroads of Malahide Road and the R139/N32 (at the Clarehall Shopping Centre). The site is currently occupied by an existing 3-storey office block (c. 20 yrs old) which is bounded to the west and south by Mayne River Avenue. The site lies within an area of existing office and commercial developments to the west and south across Mayne River Avenue and adjoins fairly recent residential development (primarily apartments of 4-5 storeys over ground floor commercial) to the east. Immediately east of the subject site, a new residential development of 191 no. units in one block (known as 'Block 2') is currently under construction. Adjoining the northern boundary of the subject site, an existing surface car park is currently in use as the site/construction compound for this 'Block 2' scheme. A planning application has been lodged to develop this site also for future residential development. Beyond this site, further north, lies the largely wooded Mayne River valley.



Beyond this, to the north, the former Belcamp estate is under construction for the provision of residential development.



**Figure 3: View from Mayne River Street looking west.** The existing apartment developments and the 'Block 2' development (under construction), now frame the open green space, and the subject site lies beyond this ensemble.



**Figure 4: View from Mayne River Avenue, looking north-westwards.** The subject site lies beyond the 'Block 2' development which is on the right of view.

The topography of this developed and developing area is relatively flat with only the Mayne River valley to the north offering any mature vegetation of note. The more recent residential development in the area has provided street tree planting and associated open spaces, with one substantial public open grassed



space (with associated planting) to the east of the 'Block 2' site. The office/commercial developments in the area also generally have boundary screen and decorative planting. The R139/N32 south of the site also has maturing roadside planting to each side.



**Figure 5: View from Mayne River Avenue, looking north-eastwards.** The subject site is the existing office block with surrounding planted car parking areas, centre and left in the view, with the 'Block 2' development under construction behind.

### 3.2 Planning context

The current planning context is set out in detail within the 'Planning Report and Statement of Consistency with Planning Policy' prepared by John Spain Associates, included with the application. The site falls within Strategic Development and Regeneration Area (SDRA) 1 of the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 and within the Clongriffin-Belmayne (North Fringe) Local Area Plan 2012-2018, extended to 2022.

There are no protected or preserved trees, woodlands or hedgerows on or adjacent to the site for proposed development, however the wooded area along the Mayne River approx. 100 metres north of the site is zoned 'open space' and along with the woodland of the former Belcamp College site, is a designated Nature Development Area within the Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023.

The nearest Protected Structure to the site is Belcamp Hall, across the Mayne River, some 350 metres north-west of the subject site.

## 4. Characteristics of the Proposed Development

### 4.1 Introduction

A comprehensive description of the design for the proposed development is contained in the Architectural Design Statement prepared by Plus Architecture Ltd, which is included with the planning submission. The Architectural Design Statement outlines; the site context and emerging development context; how the designed scheme meets the required urban design criteria; the local planning and buildings context; the development strategy for the site; and the design rationale and detail for the proposed scheme. Please refer also to the design layout drawings and sections included with the submission. The proposed development comprises:

- Demolition of existing c. 3,315 sq.m, 3 storey office building on site and existing ancillary facilities and the construction of a single mixed-use block (Block A) of up to 9 storeys (over basement), consisting of a 4-sided structure based around a central courtyard area.
- c. 1,060 sq.m. of office space at ground floor level with own door access and associated infrastructure including staff kitchen, meeting rooms and designated car parking (7 spaces) at basement level.
- A café unit of c. 143.7 sq.m at ground floor level with own door access to the south and east, accessed via proposed public open space.
- 176 no. residential units from 1st to 8th floor level comprising 72 no. 1 bed units (41%), 57 no. 2 bed units (32%) and 47 no. 3 bed units (27%) [each with private amenity space in the form of balcony or terrace], with separate access to the proposed commercial uses at ground floor level.
- c. 1,846 sq. m. of communal open space at ground floor, first floor podium, 4th floor and 7th floor level, and public open space of c. 1,577 sq.m. at ground floor level, including a public courtyard area located to the southeast of the proposed block.
- Resident amenity and support services are proposed at ground floor level to include a cinema room, post room, games room, co-working spaces, gym and concierge services.
- 134 no. car parking spaces, 7 of which are accessible, and 6 no. motorcycle parking spaces, located at basement level and accessed by a vehicular ramp via Mayne River Avenue to the west (with a vehicular set down areas fronting Mayne River Avenue), in addition to 2 no. car club spaces at the southern boundary.
- 424 no. bicycle parking spaces, 416 of which at ground floor and at surface level and 8 no. spaces at basement level.
- All associated vehicular and pedestrian access routes (including links to the adjoining site to the north), external communal play facilities, E.S.B substation, Meter rooms, foul and surface water drainage, hard and soft landscaping, lighting, plant at basement level, bin stores, PV panels and green roof, telecommunications infrastructure all associated and ancillary site works.

### 4.2 Context and broad design characteristics

The designed scheme seeks to harmonise and integrate the development within the existing urban landscape – this includes proposing a building height and scale in keeping with adjacent existing and permitted buildings and the integration of social functions at ground level. The architectural detail design approach includes a mix of integrated contemporary building forms and façade materials which seek to visually integrate the proposed development within the existing architectural character of the area. The height of the building is proposed at 8-9 storeys on the east and west wings. This drops to 7 storeys on the north wing and down to 4 storeys on the south wing of the block. A courtyard is proposed to further reduce the overall massing of the building and allow natural light to the centre of the block.



**Figure 6: Aerial view of proposed development scheme.** Note: the proposed development is illustrated in context of both the permitted 'Block 2' building (currently under construction) shown to the right of the proposed building block, and the development proposed under the parallel planning scheme for the adjacent site north of the proposed development. (Source: Plus Architecture Ltd.)



**Figure 7: South elevation of the proposed development in context.** Note: The permitted scheme for 'Block 2' (Planning ref. ABP 307887-20) is illustrated on the right and the development proposed under the parallel planning scheme for the adjacent site north of the proposed development is indicated behind. (Source: Plus Architecture Ltd.)





**Figure 8: East elevation of the proposed development in context.** Note: The development proposed under the parallel planning scheme for the adjacent site to the north is indicated on the extreme right. (Source: Plus Architecture Ltd).

## 5. Potential Impacts of the Proposed Development

A proposed development such as this has the potential to impact significantly upon the landscape and visual aspects of the existing environment in a number of ways, at both construction and operational stages. Effects can be short or long term; temporary or permanent. The purpose of this section of the report is to describe the potential effects of such proposed development; upon the visual and landscape aspects of the immediate area, and further afield, where relevant.

### 5.1 Construction Phase

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

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

### 5.2 Operational Phase

The proposed development will consist of the insertion of a new residential development of one substantial block, with associated external public realm, communal open space/courtyard, site infrastructure and ancillary elements onto the subject site, which will replace the existing office block building, its associated surface car parking and planting. The proposed scheme at up to 9 storeys is of significant height in the existing context, however the existing neighbouring residential blocks generally rise to maximum of 6 storeys and the more recently permitted 'Block 2' scheme on the neighbouring site, which is currently under construction will be 7-9 storeys in height. Whilst the proposed development will appear taller and is bulkier than the existing building it proposes to replace, it is nevertheless largely in



keeping with the existing buildings in this area and is certainly of similar height and bulk to that currently under construction next door. The design rationale and architectural approach to the design of the proposed building and the details employed, seek to respond to such issues and to mitigate negative effects on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area – these are outlined in more detail in Section 6.2 Mitigation – Operational Phase.

### 5.3 The 'Do Nothing' Approach

If the proposed development were not to proceed, the site would presumably (in terms of its landscape impact), remain in its present form for an unspecified period. In such circumstances the current office uses would also presumably continue. All existing boundary planting and trees would presumably continue to grow and mature, subject to their continued maintenance and management regime.

## 6. Mitigation (remedial/reductive measures)

### 6.1 Construction Phase

The building site including a site compound with site offices, site security fencing, scaffolding and temporary works will be visible during the construction phase, from a range of viewpoints. Such elements are generally viewed as temporary and unavoidable features of construction in any setting. The site hoarding will screen from view much of the day-to-day construction activity and materials at ground level. Other mitigation measures proposed during this delivery stage of the development, revolve primarily around the implementation of appropriate site management procedures during the construction works – such as the control of lighting, storage of materials, placement of site offices and compounds, control of vehicular access, and effective dust and dirt control measures, etc. Such mitigation will be set out in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan prepared for the scheme. This will be a working document which will be continually reviewed and amended to ensure effective mitigation throughout the construction period. The planning application includes an Outline Construction and Environmental Management Plan, prepared by DBFL Consulting Engineers, which specifically references construction phase mitigation measures as relevant to the assessment of Landscape and Visual impact.

### 6.2 Operational Phase

The design rationale and details employed seek to mitigate negative effects on the landscape character and upon visual amenity of the area by incorporation of the key aspects of the proposed scheme design as outlined above in Section 4.2, and by the following considerations of detail;

- the use of harmonising light-toned finishes generally, together with localised highlight metal finishes, the combination of which will assist in visually integrating the proposed building in its existing context, whilst ensuring its individual identity;
- employing variation of tone, colour and texture across the facades, in order to further reduce the apparent scale and massing – this includes the use of yellow brick with white cladding panels generally with black brick on the four-storey south elevation;

- rationalisation of all services elements and any other potential visual clutter and its incorporation internally within the building envelope (as far as practically possible);
- the incorporation of a well-considered landscape design for the public realm, shared and private spaces which takes into account the broader planning aspirations in and around the site;
- the provision, maintenance and management of a sensitively considered soft landscape design for the development, which assists in the integration of the building within the existing landscape, particularly at the lower levels and improves the amenity for both residents and the public at large.

## **7. Predicted Landscape Character Impact of the Proposed Development**

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

- The perceived character of the existing landscape – how it is impacted by the proposals;
- Impacts of the proposed development on social and cultural amenity and;
- The proposed views of the development, relative to the existing site (outlined in Section 8.2, below) and the associated impact on visual amenity.

### **7.1 Construction Phase**

Initially the erection of site hoarding will be completed, site access points established, and site accommodation units placed. Early in the construction period, excavations for building foundations will commence. Removal and/or storage of excavated materials from site and the delivery of construction materials will generate increased heavier traffic to and from the site.

As construction progresses over the construction period, visual impacts will vary, with the on-going business of construction – the delivery and storage of materials, the erection of the buildings, etc. Mitigation measures have been proposed as per Section 6.1 (Mitigation) to minimise the impact of the construction works on the site environs.

People living in the existing housing and working in, or visiting the offices and shops around the site will be impacted negatively to a slight extent by the construction of the proposed development. Impacts are likely to vary from slight and neutral to moderate and negative, depending on the stage of construction, and the intensity of site activity. The construction impacts will be of short-term duration.

### **7.2 Operational Phase**

Whilst the term ‘landscape character’ is generally held to involve more than simply appearances, there is little doubt that a place’s visual qualities contribute most to its character. This is particularly so for visitors, whose experience is often relatively fleeting. In the context of the proposed development, impacts will typically be felt most by people who live nearby. However, the ground floor commercial and office elements designed into the proposed scheme will create a greater sense of town centre activity and

appeal – this will be perceived as a positive benefit of the scheme and is in keeping with the local planning strategy for this area. In addition, the proposed scheme is appropriately considered and well-designed in respect of its visual appeal.

The scale, height and massing of the proposed building on the subject site may initially be of some concern, primarily to residents of the existing neighbouring apartments, however the permitted 'Block 2', under construction just to the east, will largely screen the proposed development from their view. Where the proposed development is visible, as previously outlined in the Mitigation section 6.2 above, the architectural design effectively reduces the potential effects of the proposed building over-dominating. The prepared photomontages for the selected viewpoints tend to bear this out.

The duration of such impacts is determined by the design life of the proposed development as tempered by the mitigating effect of the maturing designed landscape proposed as an integral part of the development. In this case the operational phase of the proposed development will have an approx. expected life of up to 60 years. Impacts on landscape character are therefore deemed to be of long-term duration.

## **8. Predicted Visual Impact of the Proposed Development**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The assessment of visual impact is determined through the comparison of 'before' and 'after' photomontages – it is therefore, generally, a little less subjective than is the assessment of landscape character. It too is inevitably influenced to some extent by the standpoint of the viewer (the receptor). The assessment of visual impacts created by the proposed development includes a consideration of the visual impacts on the visual environment likely to be impacted. A total of 6 viewpoints have been selected for which photomontages (verified views) have been prepared - these are included in the planning application and they illustrate the visual impact of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape. The photomontages are contained in a separate A3 report, prepared by Digital Dimensions and submitted with this planning application for the proposed development. In that photomontage report, for each of the six viewpoints, three views are provided; the existing view; the existing view with 'Block 2' completed and; the proposed view (again with the Block 2 scheme in place). As the Block 2 scheme is under construction and therefore effectively part of the receiving environment, it is appropriate to illustrate it in place and completed. The illustration of the Block 2 scheme is an accurate depiction of the permitted scheme.

Because the expected life of the proposed development is up to 60 years, the duration of predicted visual impacts is assessed as long term, as is the case for predicted landscape character impacts (as outlined in Section 7.2, above).

The assessment of visual impacts, using comparative photomontages serves to identify impacts upon the visual environment. The photomontages are important in illustrating the impact of the proposed scheme from the more sensitive viewpoints. In this instance, they also serve to support and illustrate an aspect of the assessment of impact on landscape character. It is important to remember that whilst photomontages

are a useful tool in illustrating comparative visual impact, they are recognised as having their limitations and potential dangers. The guidelines for their use in assessment clearly advocate their use in the context of a site visit to the viewpoint locations and point out that photomontages alone should not be expected to capture or reflect the complexity underlying the full visual experience (refer to the GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).

## 8.2 Assessment of views

Photomontages have been prepared for the 6 selected viewpoints. An assessment of the visual impact of the proposed development from these viewpoints is provided at this stage, as follows:

### *View 1*

This is a view from Mayne River Street looking westwards. The existing view shows the existing 3 storey office block on the subject site, beyond the black construction hoarding of the Block 2 site. The green space in front of this, negotiates a transition from the high-rise apartment development in the foreground to the rather more commercial/office development beyond. However, the 'Block 2' view illustrates the 7-9 storey Block 2 scheme currently under construction, as it will appear in the near future and which terminates the view with further high-rise apartments in similar finishes. The red line on the 'Proposed' view indicates the profile of the proposed (subject) development which will be totally screened from view by the Block 2 scheme.

The visual effect of the proposed development from this viewpoint is **imperceptible**.

### *View 2*

This is a view from Mayne River Avenue looking westwards. The existing view shows the existing 3 storey office block on the subject site, beyond the black construction hoarding of the Block 2 site and the green space in front of it. The 'Block 2' view illustrates how that scheme, currently under construction, will totally screen the existing office building on the subject site. The 'proposed' view illustrates how the proposed new development, in extending outwards to include the car parking and planting areas around the existing building, will directly front onto Mayne River Avenue with the southern façade being essentially contiguous with that of the Block 2 building. The proposed development is of a similar scale and height to the Block 2 building.

The visual effect of the proposed development from this viewpoint is **slight** and **neutral**.

### *View 3*

This is a similar view to View 2, but from a closer location on Mayne River Avenue, again looking westwards. The existing view shows the existing 3 storey office block on the subject site (left of centre), beyond the black construction hoarding of the Block 2 site and the green space in front of it. The 'Block 2' view illustrates how that scheme, currently under construction, will totally screen the existing office



building on the subject site. The 'proposed' view illustrates how the proposed new development, in extending outwards to include the car parking and planting areas around the existing building, will directly front onto Mayne River Avenue with the southern façade being essentially contiguous with that of the Block 2 building. The proposed building development is of a similar scale and height to the Block 2 building, however the reduction to 4 storeys in the middle section of the southern block, has some effect in reducing the apparent massing of the proposed building along Mayne River Avenue. The proposed street tree planting, whilst illustrated as rather mature, will soften the front façade along the avenue and assist in integrating the building within the adjacent street.

The visual effect of the proposed development from this viewpoint is **moderate** and **neutral**.

#### **View 4**

This is a view from Mayne River Avenue, just in front of the subject site, looking eastwards. The existing view shows the existing 3 storey office block, car parking and planting (left of view) in context of the existing apartment buildings beyond, to the east of the subject site. The Block 2 view illustrates how the Block 2 building, currently under construction, will obscure the view of much of the existing apartment blocks and remove the existing sense of space beyond the existing offices on the subject site - the new Block 2 building creates a rather more abrupt visual boundary to the subject site, along its eastern edge. In the proposed view, only a small portion of the proposed building development can be seen on the left, however this view does illustrate something of the appropriate relationship between it and the Block 2 building currently under construction. The proposed development is however not fully included within the view and does not show it within its landscape context.

Whilst this is a useful illustration, the viewpoint does not provide enough context to render it assessable. However, view 6 illustrates a view from a broadly similar angle but is far enough back to provide sufficient landscape context for assessment.

#### **View 5**

This is a similar view to View 1, but from a closer location on Mayne River Street, again looking westwards. The existing view shows the existing 3 storey office block on the subject site, beyond the black construction hoarding of the Block 2 site and the existing green space in front. The 'Block 2' view illustrates the Block 2 scheme currently under construction, as it will appear in the near future. The red line on the 'Proposed' view indicates the profile of the proposed (subject) development which will be totally screened from view by the Block 2 scheme.

The visual effect of the proposed development from this viewpoint is **imperceptible**.

## View 6

This is a view from Mayne River Avenue, close to the junction with the R139/N32 and just south-east of the Bewleys building, looking north-east. The existing view shows the rather verdant tree-lined road accessing this local area of fairly recent commercial and office development. The existing 3 storey office building on the subject site is just about visible behind the trees planted on its fringes. The Block 2 view indicates by way of a red line, the profile of the Block 2 building currently under construction – it will not be visible from this viewpoint. The proposed view shows the 8-9 storey western section of the building, stepping down to the 4 storey middle section along the southern part of the proposed building. These two visible parts of the building have contrasting finishes as well as heights, which does much to suggest the visible western part stands alone. This has the effect of reducing the overall massing and scale of the building whereby it appears to be totally appropriate in this context.

The visual effect of the proposed development from this viewpoint is moderate and neutral.

## 9. Conclusions

The proposed development represents the continuing change in the planned and developing urban landscape of this area. It represents a clear increase in the scale, height and quantum of the building occupying the existing site, however it is in keeping with the trends in this regard for the area. The predicted effects on the local landscape are assessed however, as being of some positive benefit in how the proposed development relates to adjacent developments, to the emerging community and in how it addresses the introduction of new built elements in a developing, planned urban context. The architectural design of the proposed development is effective in mitigating its potential visual impact in this changing context.

## 10. Monitoring

The effective use of new planting to screen and assist the integration of the building proposal into the existing streetscape and to successfully create the proposed series of external communal open spaces, is an important aspect of the proposed scheme design. The success of the proposed scheme is dependent on this being properly executed. Whilst the applicant intends to employ all reasonable and effective tree and planting establishment measures as an integrated part of the construction work, , an approved system of monitoring the on-going health and vigour of the proposed planting would also be appropriate. The timely planting and the maintenance and management required to successfully establish new planting with the projected rates of growth and general performance required, needs a significant and effective input from professionals with the necessary expertise to ensure it is effectively delivered. The monitoring of the planting performance and suitably appropriate responses to ensure same will be essential to the success of the development as proposed.

## 11. Cumulative Effects

### 11.1 Introduction

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

### 11.2 Cumulative Impacts related to the proposed development

Both the Site 10 proposal north of the subject site and the Block 2 scheme currently under construction to the east will clearly have some bearing on the assessment of the proposed development.

Whilst the Site 10 scheme is not 'permitted', development, proposals for it have just been lodged seeking planning permission for similar scaled residential development. This will, together with the Block 2 scheme, visually embrace the proposed development on the north and east sides. The design of the proposed development takes both of these schemes into account. Together, they represent an overall increase in the scale and massing of residential development in this area but not one which would be considered inappropriate, either in terms of its landscape or visual impact for this location or in the context of the planned development for this area. These two adjacent schemes will largely obscure views of the proposed development from the north and the east and may also be marginally visible themselves, beyond the proposed development when viewed from the west or south.

Because the construction of the Block 2 scheme is well advanced, i.e., to a point where its full block massing can be clearly seen, it has essentially been considered in this assessment as a significant part of the receiving environment, rather more so than a cumulative element.

There are no other 'permitted' developments in this area which could be assessed as having any bearing in respect of the Landscape and Visual Impact of the proposed development.

## **12. References**

1. 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, published by Routledge, 3rd Edition 2013.
2. 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), May 2022.
3. Visual Representation of Development Proposals: Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Landscape Institute UK (LI) September 2019.
4. Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022.
5. The Draft Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028.
6. Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023.



## **Appendix A: A general methodology for the production of photomontages**

### **Photography of Site**

1. Photographs are taken from locations as advised by client with a professional SLR digital camera. The photographs are taken horizontally with a survey level attached to the camera. The photographic positions are marked (for later surveying), the height of the camera and the focal length of the image recorded.
2. In each photograph, a minimum of 2No visible fixed points are marked for surveying. These are control points for model alignment within the photograph.
3. The photographic positions and the control points are geographically surveyed and these positions are plotted on the site survey drawing as supplied by the Architect.

### **3D Computer Model, Rendered Views and Photomontage Preparation**

4. The buildings are accurately modeled and materials applied according to plans, elevations and finished supplied by the Architect and aligned to the survey drawing with the camera positions.
5. Within the 3d software virtual 3d cameras are positioned according to the survey co-ordinates. The focal length of the photograph is input. Pitch and rotation are adjusted using the survey control points to align the virtual camera to the photograph.
6. The proposed development is output from the 3D software using this camera and the image is then blended with the original photograph to give an accurate image of what the proposed development will look like in its proposed setting. A highly accurate 3D-computer model of the proposed development was created with photo-realistic materials, finishes and colours. Rendered views of the proposed
7. In the event of the development not being visible, the roof line of the development will be outlined in red if requested.
8. A document is produced with the following information:
  - a) Site location map with view locations plotted.
  - b) Photo-montage sheet showing:
    - Existing and proposed conditions
    - View with surveyed control alignment points
    - Reference information including field of view/focal length, range to site/development
    - Date of photograph.
9. All surveying is carried out by a qualified topographical surveyor. Where GPS devices are used they are Survey grade.

## **Appendix B: Criteria for the Rating of Impacts**

(Based on the EPA 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' 2022, (Section 3.7 Assessment of Effects) - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), May 2022 and with reference to Table 3.4 Descriptions of Effects. For this LVIA the effects are specifically described as follows:

### **Degree or magnitude of effects**

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

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

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

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

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

Profound Effects: Effects which obliterate sensitive characteristics of the landscape and/or view.

### **Quality of effects**

The quality of potential visual and landscape effects are assessed as follows:

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

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

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

### **Duration of effects**

Potential effects arising from the proposed development may also be considered in terms of duration as follows:

Temporary: Effects lasting less than one year

Short-term: Effects lasting one to seven years

Medium-term: Effects lasting seven to fifteen years

Long-term: Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years

Permanent: Effects lasting over sixty years

