

Section 9: Landscape and Visual Impact

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the EIS has been prepared by Kennett Consulting Ltd., Chartered Landscape Architects, who specialise in visual impact assessment and landscape masterplanning.

This chapter makes reference to a number of Figures 9.1 to 9.16. These figures are enclosed at the end of this chapter.

9.2 METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the EIS document has been carried out in accordance with the Guidelines on Information to be Contained in an Environmental Impact Statement (EPA 2002) and Advice Notes On Current Practice (in preparation of Environmental Impact Statements) (EPA 2003).

An initial desk study was undertaken to establish an understanding of the site and surroundings, its planning history and context and to make an initial assessment of the likely visual envelope i.e. areas from which the site might be seen. Reference was made to a number of publications, including Adopted and Draft Development Plans for Dublin and Dublin City Council's "Report of the Special Housing Task Force" 2008. A list of references is included at the end of this Section.

The site and surroundings were the subject of a field surveys during 2009 and 2010, examining the nature of the local topography, vegetation, the river and the built environment, considering the contribution that each component makes to local landscape character, and exploring the potential for views of the subject site from the surrounding area. A representative selection of key vantage points were identified and photographed, and will be used in support of this written assessment.

The potential impact of development on the landscape has been assessed with reference to the following landscape factors:

- **Context:** This is a factual description of the site and its surroundings;
- **Character:** This identifies one or more distinct landscape units within the site and/or its surroundings and outlines the defining features of each landscape;
- **Significance:** Has any part of the local landscape been designated as 'high amenity' or something similar; is it a scarce or unique landscape; is it 'ordinary' or even 'derelict'?
- **Vulnerability:** How sensitive is the local landscape to changes? What type or extent of change is likely to be damaging to the landscape?

Potential changes in character, visibility and land use patterns have been considered first, including indirect, secondary and cumulative impacts. This has given rise to proposed mitigation measures, which have been discussed with the project design team and incorporated into the development proposal; these are included in the subsequent assessment of likely landscape and visual impacts.

Mitigating impacts on the landscape may include one or more of the following:

- Avoid, reduce or minimise development in sensitive or prominent landscapes;
- Avoid, reduce or minimise visually intrusive projects;
- Reduce and minimise the visibility of the project, avoid insensitive design;
- Development should seek to add value or character to a landscape.

Terminology

- 'Visual Intrusion': a proposed development may feature within in an existing view;
- 'Visual Obstruction': a proposed development may partly or completely obscure an existing view.

Degree of Impact

- 'None': No material change to the landscape or view arises from the development;
- 'Imperceptible': Change is immeasurable with no bearing on a landscape or view;
- 'Low' ('Slight'): Measurable but insignificant change to the landscape or view;
- 'Moderate': Measurable change to the nature of a landscape or view.
- 'High' ('Significant'): Substantial change occurs to the landscape or view;
- 'Profound': The character or content of a view changes completely.

Nature of Impacts

- 'Neutral' impacts arise where changes neither enhance nor detract from the landscape;
- 'Positive' impacts arise where changes improve or enhance the existing landscape;
- 'Negative' impacts arise where changes detract from the existing landscape.

Duration of impacts

- 'Temporary': 1 year or less;
- 'Short-term': 1-7 years;
- 'Medium-term': 7-20 years;
- 'Long-term': 20-50 years;
- 'Permanent': 50+ years.

The significance of impacts on the landscape depends on a broad range of objective factors as outlined above, but can also depend on more subjective value judgements about 'good design' and how much changes will matter.

9.3 THE BASELINE ENVIRONMENT

This topic has two separate but closely related aspects. The first aspect to be considered is visual impacts focusing on the extent to which new developments can be seen, the second aspect is impacts on the character of the landscape, examining responses which are felt towards the combined effects of the new development.

This latter topic is complex because it encompasses many other impacts such as noise, odours, ecology, history and because attempts to scientifically measure feelings and perceptions are not reliable. Cross reference with appropriate specialist topics such as ecology, archaeology and architectural history have been made where appropriate.

The following account is based on both fieldwork and desktop research. A key reference document is the Draft Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017, including proposed amendments, which at the time of writing in early December 2010 is due for adoption shortly; this is referred to hereafter as 'the Draft Development Plan'.

9.3.1 CONTEXT & CHARACTER

Proposed Development Site & Environs

The proposed development site is located to the west Dublin city centre in an inner suburban context. The site lies at the heart of a residential area on the western side of Stoneybatter, with Phoenix Park to the west, while Collins Barracks, the River Liffey, the St. James Gate Brewery and the Heuston rail terminus all lie to the south.

Immediately west, north and northeast of the proposed development site lies a residential conservation area, extending along the eastern side of Infirmary Road, both sides of North Circular Road and to either side of Oxmantown Road (Stoneybatter). Between O'Devaney Gardens and Infirmary Road to the southwest lies an area of one- and two-storey cottages; similar dwellings make up the 'suburb' of Stoneybatter to the east (see Figures 9.10 and 9.11). North Circular Road is characterised by Victorian-style red brick terraces two and three storeys high (see Figure 9.12), many of which are designated Protected Structures. North Circular Road is a major thoroughfare, lined with street trees, and here at its western end the west-bound vista is terminated by a fine view of the Wellington Memorial.

To the south of O'Devaney Gardens, Montpellier Park comprises a relatively new residential area, built in the 1970s and comprising two-storey houses set around an organic arrangement of mostly cul-de-sacs (see Figure 9.5). This is a distinctly different and contemporary urban form (layout) compared to other nearby residential areas.

Immediately east of O'Devaney Gardens lies St. Bricin's Military Hospital (refer to Figures 9.7 to 9.9). St. Bricin's military Hospital was built by the British Army from 1903 and first occupied 1913. While there was an earlier hospital on the site, the current main hospital building is a U-shaped Victorian-style red brick building, whose upper floors afford panoramic views across the city, taking in the neighbouring O'Devaney Gardens. It is accompanied by a smaller and separate former TB ward, a former Chapel (built c.1930) and former nurses home (built c.1950) plus other ancillary buildings.

Green space occurs infrequently within the built-up area surrounding O'Devaney Gardens; however, the Phoenix park lies within a short walk and is one of the largest enclosed city parks in Europe (707 hectares).

O'Devaney Gardens itself is characterised by a series of four-storey residential blocks in two broad groups (north and south) with a central open space; part of the northern group blocks has been recently demolished (see Figure 9.11). Both groups of blocks are at variance with the orientation of the urban form and character of the surrounding areas. The two groups of residential blocks have different styles and finishes, suggesting that they may have been built at slightly different times, although all housing blocks within O'Devaney Gardens were built in the 1950s. The northern group is distinguished by a painted render finish and projecting private balconies (see Figures 9.1 and 9.2); the southern group of blocks is distinguished by a brick and render finish, access to each unit by way of shared balconies and each block is almost twice the length of a typical block from the northern group (see Figures 9.3 to 9.6). Some buildings have been partially or completely vacated and a significant number of units have been boarded up.

Both public and communal open space are provided with O'Devaney Gardens but all appear to be underused and somewhat neglected (see Figures 9.3 and 9.4). Several areas of open space are enclosed with security fencing and it is unclear whether these are intended to be public or communal; as there appears to be no direct access from the adjoining blocks into these spaces, they serve no useful purpose. There is no tree or shrub planting in any of the open spaces, while surfacing is either grass or tarmac. The tarmac courtyards generally have communal washing lines, which appear to be used regularly; a low level of car parking also occurs in these spaces (refer to Figure 9.2).

The hard-surfaced sports court in the central open space appears to be little used and has a major 'desire line' running diagonally through it. Lighting columns are present but some appear to be missing and it seems unlikely that they are often used, if at all. A new playground has been installed in recent years, although it is over-shadowed in winter by the nearby residential block. Refer to Figure 9.4.

One positive aspect of the proposed development site is that its slightly elevated position allows views across the city to the south, allowing clear views of the Dublin Mountains (see Figures 9.2, 9.3 and 9.6) and to the top

of the Wellington Memorial in nearby Phoenix Park (see Figures 9.4 and 9.5).

Development Plan Context

The site's context in terms of the city's Draft Development Plan points to objectives and policies that identify the values attached to the site and its surroundings, including the protection of important views and prospects, as well as a vision for its future development.

There are no Views and Prospects currently designated in the vicinity of O'Devaney Gardens or elsewhere in the city; neither are there any designated Tourist Routes. Policy SC5AA proposes *"To protect important views and view corridors into, out of and within the city, and to protect existing city landmarks and their prominence. These important views will be identified through the views and vistas programme that will be undertaken under Objective SCO6"*.

Objective SCO6 seeks *"To prepare a set of Guiding Principles for views and prospects in the City with the aim of undertaking a views and prospects study with a view to preparing a list for protection which will be integrated with and complement the building height policy in the City"*.

Chapter 6 of the Draft Development Plan 'Greening the City' includes policies and objectives that address the current lack of designated Views and Prospects within the city. Policy GC11 aims *"To protect and enhance views and prospects which contribute to the appreciation of landscape and natural heritage"*; while Objective GCO7 seeks *"To undertake a "Views and Prospects" study. Additional Views and Prospects may be identified through the development management process and during the drafting of Local Area Plans"*.

Chapter 4.4.9 of the Draft Development Plan outlines objectives and policies for 'Urban Form and Architecture'. Key relevant policies include:

Policy SC26

"To promote quality in architecture and urban design so that the citizens of Dublin can enjoy the highest quality built environment. This relates not only to the creation of new landmarks where appropriate, but more importantly to the design quality of general development across the city, with the aim of achieving excellence in the ordinary".

Policy SC27

"To promote the development of the city's urban forms so that they positively contribute to the city's neighbourhoods, public spaces and natural environment".

Policy SC28

"To promote understanding of the city's historical architectural character to facilitate new development which is in harmony with the city's historical spaces and structures".

Elsewhere in Chapter 6 of the Development Plan, Objective GCO14 proposes the provision of street trees, its aim being *"To plant appropriate trees on all streets and roads suitable for such planting, and in particular, on all residential streets. Planting on residential streets will be carried out by Dublin City Council in consultation with residents"*. (See Policy RO7).

9.3.2 SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed development site lies within an established residential environment, where the protection and enhancement of residential amenity will be the principal priority. There are numerous views into the proposed development site from the edges of the residential areas that bound the site, where the existing buildings and open spaces of O'Devaney Gardens detract from local residential visual amenity - building blocks are out of character, and often out of scale, with the surrounding built fabric, while the combination of empty open spaces and extensive security fencing suggests this is perceived as a threatening environment by adjoining properties.

The proposed development site lies in relatively close proximity to Phoenix Park (west) and the River Liffey (south), both of which are major public open spaces. Also to the south, Coyningham Road and Wolfe Tone Quay along the River Liffey comprise part of a major arterial route through Dublin City, while the North Circular Road (west and north of the site) is a major secondary route through the city. In spite of this, the opportunities for views of the proposed development site from nearby major public areas are extremely limited. In spite of the site's position on gently-rising ground, the surrounding urban fabric largely screens the proposed development site from view.

The principal view of the proposed development site from a public road is from Montpellier Gardens, between the entrance from Infirmary Road and the entrance to St. Bricin's Military Hospital (refer to Figure 9.13). This is both a public view and a residential one, as Montpellier Park directly overlooks the proposed development site from here. The proposed development site at present has no positive merits in terms of its architecture and open space, particularly as a number of units have been boarded up and the open space is completely devoid of features and interest, and is a visual detractor from this vantage point.

There is a glimpsed view into the proposed development site from North Circular Road along the site's northern entrance road (see Figure 9.14). The existing view would once have included residential blocks at the western edge of the proposed development site, but these have been demolished in recent years and the view now extends across the vacant plot and central open space to the southern group of residential blocks. The view is framed by the Victorian houses to either side of the entrance road and, internally, by two exiting street trees. This is a brief and transient public view and is not of any significance from the public road.

Views from the rear of the Victorian properties along North Circular Road have open views across O'Devaney Gardens. The proposed development site as a whole presently has no positive merits in terms of its architecture

and open space, particularly as a number of units have been boarded up and there are vacant plots where buildings have been demolished. These and the remaining open spaces within the site are completely devoid of features and interest, and as a consequence there is a significant loss of private residential amenity for these adjoining properties. Many of the buildings along North Circular Road have Protected Structure status, where the outlook from, and context of, these buildings is an important consideration.

The proposed development site features in views from the neighbouring fringes of Stoneybatter, as illustrated in Figures 9.15 and 9.16. Both examples demonstrate how existing residential blocks within the proposed development site terminate views along the streets and contradict rather than complement the traditional style of the cottages and street forms.

9.3.3 SENSITIVITY

The proposed development site makes no positive contribution to the urban fabric and residential environment of this part of the city, and in itself is not sensitive to change. The dysfunctional relationship between buildings, open space and neighbouring residential areas is to the detriment of its own residential community. The proposed development site is therefore robust in terms of its capacity for change, as redevelopment will almost certainly have a positive impact upon the local communities within and outside the site boundaries.

The surrounding residential areas are almost all designated as Residential Conservation Areas on account of their (mostly) Victorian domestic architecture. The villas of North Circular Road, many of which are also Protected Structures, complement the one- and two-storey cottages of Stoneybatter's western fringes and those west of the proposed development site. All these areas are presently sensitive to the incongruous urban forms and architectural styles found in O'Devaney Gardens and should be considered robust in terms of their capacity for change, as redevelopment will bring the opportunity for sympathetic layouts and complementary architectural design to be introduced to the proposed development site. On this basis, the adjoining Residential Conservation Areas / Protected Structures are likely to benefit significantly from any redevelopment of the site.

9.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

In broad terms, the proposed development has been guided by the site's designation as a 'Strategic Development and Regeneration Area 11' (or 'SDRA 11') in the Draft Dublin City Development Plan 2011 – 2017, for which the objectives are as follows:

"1. The strategic location context of this site within the city (close to the amenities of the Phoenix Park, Heuston Station, the new emerging courts complex on Infirmary Road), its potential positive contribution to the character of the city and the potential that exists for greater synergies to Stoneybatter and Grangegorman will be valued and promoted.

"2. The development of a high quality mixed use quarter comprising of quality new homes supported by a complimentary range of mixed commercial, community and recreational facilities will be promoted for this site.

"3. The development of attractive new streetscapes with mixed typologies of high quality accommodation, a high quality public realm and active street frontages will be promoted to compliment the architectural legacy of streetscapes adjoining this location including the special streetscapes of the North Circular Road, Infirmary Road and Oxmanstown areas.

"4. Accessible locations for commercial and community facilities to encourage interaction between the site and established communities adjoining will be promoted.

"5. The development of a neighbourhood park will be integrated into the masterplan as a key feature of the design to provide recreational amenities, encourage community interaction and provide a focal point/meeting place for the wider local community. The location will be bounded by high quality streetscapes accommodating commercial, community and residential uses to generate activity, encourage active use of the space and provide passive surveillance.

"6. The established character of streets and residential amenities for adjoining residents will be respected in the urban design proposals and layout of a new development. Opportunities for new building forms to aid legibility through the scheme and create streetscapes of visual interest will incorporate appropriate height transitions from site boundaries and propose locations that avoid negative impact on adjoining residential boundaries.

"7. Permeability through the site will be promoted to integrate the location more successfully with the adjoining community. The existing bus route will be retained and incorporated along a main boulevard route connecting the North Circular Road to Montpelier Gardens. Opportunities for connections with streets to the northeast boundary, with particular emphasis on walking and cycling routes, will be encouraged.

"8. To have regard to the physical integration and regeneration potential of Manor Street/Stoneybatter as important streets / radial routes in the redevelopment proposals for this area."

Further general guidance has been taken from Chapter 16.1 of the Draft Development Plan 'The Public Realm, Urban Form and Architecture'.

The master plan for the proposed development site is to regenerate the estate in a total of two main phases. Phase 1 is proposed in two parts (A and B) at the north end of the site, connecting with the established streets adjoining the site's north-eastern boundary, maximising connections between the site and its surroundings to encourage integration of communities. Amenities and facilities will be developed in tandem with Phase 1 for both existing residents on site, new residents of the scheme

and the wider neighbourhood to change the isolated character of the site and encourage further integration of communities.

Phase 1A will consist of a mixed social and private/affordable housing development and a new public park. The housing type will consist of family own door accessed units for the most part. Attractive terraced residential streets will be built with quality apartments overlooking the park.

Phase 1 B will be a site sold for commercial development in tandem with Phase 1A. This site will be sold with a building agreement to provide a mixed use neighbourhood centre inclusive of shopping facilities, office space and community spaces. A residential scheme for the elderly will also be considered at this phase. At this location, new high quality homes for the elderly will be adjacent to new shops, community facilities and the neighbourhood park. These homes will also assist in completing the streetscape beside the neighbourhood centre and encourage a good social mix and community activity on site at an early stage of the programme.

The site of Phase 2 will remain occupied by the four existing apartment blocks for the duration of works on the site of Phase 1A and Phase 1B. The residents waiting for a transfer to the new social units will relocate to their new houses on Phase 1A once they are completed. The blocks on Phase 2 will then be demolished once they are vacated and the site will be sold for re-development in accordance with the overall master plan. A high quality residential scheme is envisaged for Phase 2 with possibilities for office uses intermixed. It will be an objective of the master plan to integrate Phase 2 and Phase 1 seamlessly.

A more detailed description of the proposed development is set out in Chapter 2 of this EIS.

9.5 POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This section provides a description of the potential specific, direct and indirect, impacts that the proposed development may have on the Landscape. This is provided with reference to both the Receiving Environment and Characteristics of the Proposed Development sections while also referring to the (i) magnitude and intensity, (ii) integrity, (iii) duration and (iv) probability of impacts. Impact assessment addresses direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term permanent, temporary, positive and negative effects as well as impact interactions.

9.5.1 CONSTRUCTION PHASE

By their very nature, construction impacts are temporary or short-term, where most impacts identified during the construction stage will reduce significantly or disappear once construction has ceased and the proposed development (or phase or development) is complete. However, it is also recognised that the proposed development will take place over a number of successive phases. Individual construction phases are likely to be

completed in the short term, while the development as a whole is likely to be completed in the medium term.

There will potentially be significant negative temporary or short-term landscape and visual impacts arising from the following elements of the construction phase:

- Erection, presence and removal of temporary hoardings, contractors compounds, site offices, etc;
- Earthworks - excavation of service trenches and building foundations;
- Installation of subsurface infrastructure (drainage, sewerage, power supplies, telecoms, etc.);
- Delivery and temporary storage of materials and equipment;
- Traffic and parking generated by site personnel;
- Presence and operation of heavy construction plant and equipment on site, including one or more fixed tower cranes;
- Presence of incomplete buildings and other structures;
- Lighting associated with construction activities and site security;
- Works to the streetscape and park, including new paving and planting.

Each of these elements are transitory elements of the construction phase, where change can happen quickly and achieving performance and programme objectives generally takes precedence over other factors including landscape character and visual amenity. For the most part, these elements of the proposed development during construction will detract from the established urban landscape character and from the visual amenity of the adjoining areas. Temporary and incomplete structures, including those being demolished, have an unrefined and often dirty appearance compared to the surrounding urban environment, while materials, equipment and vehicles can create a high level of visual clutter.

Other potential environmental factors, such as the generation of dust, can add to the impact upon visual amenity, while noise from machinery and operatives also adds significantly to the impact upon landscape character and visual amenity - i.e. the construction phase can make this a 'noisy landscape' in general, or particular noises emanating from the construction site can draw people's attention away from other more positive (but quieter) aspects of the local area.

Negative landscape and visual impacts, arising from the construction phase, are potentially highly or profoundly negative in the immediate surroundings of the proposed development site. However, mitigation measures are proposed to reduce and minimise such impacts and are set out in Section 9.8 below.

There are no trees proposed for removal during the construction stage of Phases 1A and 1B. During the future development of Phase 2, it will be necessary to remove the line of semi-mature trees within the lands donated by St. Bricin's Military Hospital, which will open up views between the hospital and the proposed development site.

9.5.2 OPERATIONAL PHASE

Once construction is completed, including all buildings and external works, the 'operational phase' of the development will commence. Proposed residential units will be occupied, the new community centre will open and ground-floor retail units will be occupied.

Potential impacts upon landscape and visual amenity may arise from the following:

- The height, scale and massing of new buildings - do they reflect and/or respect the scale, massing and arrangement of the adjoining urban fabric?
- Form and detailing for new buildings - do the proportions of buildings, roofline, materials, window details and entrances reflect and/or respect the character of the adjoining urban area?

Buildings in the vicinity are between one and three storeys high and generally built in the late 19th century or early 20th century; many have Residential Conservation Area or Protected Structure status and are laid out in a traditional grid arrangement. The proposed development should be cognisant of the traditional layout, forms and materials and seek to complement these.

- Will the completed development obstruct or intrude upon views, buildings or landmarks of unique and/or historic character or other cultural significance?

There are views of the Wellington Memorial in Phoenix Park from a number of locations within the proposed development site; these should be treated as a site asset and accommodated by the proposed development, particularly from key public vantage points within the proposed development. The same approach should be adopted for views of the Dublin Mountains in the distance.

There are no landmark buildings or features in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site that are likely to be interfered with.

- Will the proposed development intrude upon or obstruct views from neighbouring or nearby properties, in particular residential properties and properties of notable historical or cultural significance?

The existing buildings within the proposed development site may be considered intrusive on account of the scale, character and layout. The proposed development should adopt an approach that facilitates views from neighbouring properties and/or creates an attractive outlook from them.

- Will the proposed development intrude upon the character and visual amenity of nearby public open spaces?

There are no significant public open spaces in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site. Phoenix Park lies only a short distance away to the west, but the proposed development is not expected to feature in views from there.

9.6 'DO NOTHING' IMPACT

The proposed development site has been partially cleared of existing buildings and other structures and would now be classified as a 'vacant lot' awaiting redevelopment. It is surrounded by security fencing and contains only amenity grass that has no public access. In the absence of development, this open space will continue to be unavailable for public use and will have a slightly negative visual impact on account of the perimeter security fencing. There is a risk that in the long-term, management reduces or ceases and the site becomes overgrown with scrub.

The majority of the proposed development site is occupied by partially or completely vacant residential blocks, many with windows that are boarded-up. In the absence of either development or occupation, it is likely that these buildings and the open spaces around them will become an increasing focus for vandalism and anti-social behaviour. This will compound the moderately negative visual impacts on landscape character and visual amenity that arise from the proposed development site on account of its poor urban form, architecture and public open space.

9.7 CUMULATIVE IMPACT

In accordance with Schedule 6, Part 2(c) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, this Section has considered the cumulative impact of the proposed Phase 1 development in conjunction with future phases of development. This relates to the cumulative impact on the subject site itself and on surrounding sites.

The European Commissions report of May 1999 'Guidelines for the Assessment of Indirect and Cumulative Impacts as well as Impact Interactions' defines cumulative impact as follows:

"Impacts that result from incremental changes caused by other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions together with the project".

With regard to the cumulative impact of proposed future phases on landscape and visual amenity, future phases of development will take place on a brownfield site and will form part of the comprehensive redevelopment and rejuvenation of the existing social housing at O'Devaney Gardens. In this regard, the cumulative impact of the overall development is expected to be moderately positive.

It is considered that there will be short to medium term moderate negative impacts associated with the construction phase of the project over all phases of development. Subsequent construction phases are likely to occur sequentially after the completion of Phase 1A, therefore extending

construction activities in this area, and the impacts that typically arise from them, into the medium-term beyond that of Phase 1A.

It is considered that there will be a long term positive impact as a result of the proposed development, due to the modern residential facilities being provided, the improved visual amenity and outlook from the surrounding area, creation of an integrated streetscape and attractive, useable public realm, and the provision of commercial, retail and community floorspace to serve the needs of the local community.

9.8 AVOIDANCE, REMEDIAL AND MITIGATION MEASURES

9.8.1 DESIGN STAGE

The layout, height, massing, and detailing of the proposed development is designed to integrate the proposed development into the local urban fabric in a seamless manner.

The proposed road layout will provide continuity within adjoining streets, particularly those to the northeast, providing a logical and integrated pattern of streetscapes. The selection and arrangement of house types at the site margins seek to reinforce this pattern of legible inter-connected streets and completes blocks of housing that presently back onto the site or terminate abruptly at the site boundary.

Building heights and footprints have been designed to complement the grain of the surrounding urban fabric. Building heights step up no more than one floor between existing dwellings at the site margins and proposed residential units, while the layout of terraced blocks of houses reflects the patterns of nearby and adjoining dwellings.

A clearly-defined central spine road with secondary roads extending from it creates a clear road hierarchy. This hierarchy is reinforced by the proposed residential accommodation, which sets out apartment blocks along the spine road and houses along the quieter secondary roads. Placing the commercial centre, community facilities and principal public open space all adjacent to the spine road and centrally within the site is a natural arrangement of the proposed urban fabric. The overall result is a robust and legible masterplan for the site that respects and responds to its urban residential context.

The central public open space is designed to be both functional and aesthetically pleasing, providing a pleasant outlook from neighbouring residential developments and acting as a focus for pedestrian movements throughout the site. A small 'plaza' is proposed in front of the adjoining retail/commercial units, while the bulk of this space will comprise a multi-purpose 'civic square', children's playground and areas of amenity grass and tree/shrub planting. Passive supervision from neighbouring properties is intended to create a sense of safety and encourage its use throughout the day.

The secondary streets are intended to carry low volumes of traffic and will employ traffic-calming measures to slow or restrict vehicular movement - such measures will include pinch-points with appropriate landscaping and changes to road surface materials. High quality pavements and kerbs together with street trees planted where appropriate will create an attractive streetscape and pedestrian environment.

Underground and overhead services will be routed (at detailed design stage) to accommodate a comprehensive and consistent approach to street tree planting.

9.8.2 CONSTRUCTION STAGE

A construction management plan will be prepared and will address the detail of mitigation measures that can be employed to reduce and minimise potentially negative impacts upon landscape character and visual amenity. These should include the following considerations.

- Ensure each phase of development will be completed quickly – construction sites will most likely have a significant negative impact on visual amenity for adjoining properties roads and the public realm, therefore the sooner construction is complete and the site occupied, the sooner negative visual impacts are reduced or removed completely;
- Ensure any design changes during the construction phase do not reduce the visual qualities of new buildings;
- Where possible, complete early stages of construction that will screen construction activities behind them. For example, completing the construction of housing blocks A and D first would afford neighbouring existing dwellings a degree of screening during the construction of Apartment Blocks B and C. Planting boundaries or open spaces as far in advance of construction as possible can deliver additional screening during the construction phase and a mature landscape by the time buildings are occupied;
- Where practical, locate contractors' compounds, site offices and parking areas where they will be least overlooked from nearby roads and dwellings. Careful management of parked and waiting vehicles, particularly HGVs similar large construction traffic, will be required to avoid or minimise negative visual impacts extending beyond the site boundaries;
- Review and adjust site lighting on site to minimise light (and noise from generators) spilling onto neighbouring dwellings; minimise security lighting.

9.8.3 OPERATIONAL PHASE

All buildings and public areas should be maintained to a high standard to ensure: the successful establishment of new planting; a continuing high standard of finish to built structures, pavements and furniture; and avoidance of a build-up of litter or graffiti.

Some of the public open spaces may be used to accommodate temporary activities, events or structures, or there may be permanent changes deemed appropriate in the future. New negative visual impacts can be avoided or minimised by ensuring that temporary uses of these spaces do not cause any permanent damage to them, and where damage does occur, these must be rectified immediately and in accordance with the original design detailing. Deliberate and permanent changes to public open spaces, or indeed any of the adjoining buildings, must not degrade the quality and character of the proposed development.

9.9 PREDICTED RESIDUAL IMPACTS

This section draws upon the assessment of potential impacts and the measures adopted to mitigate against such potential impacts, as outlined above. The net effect of this is to predict the likely impacts of the proposed development upon landscape character and visual amenity.

9.9.1 CONSTRUCTION PHASE

On account of the screening afforded by the surrounding urban fabric, impacts of the proposed development upon urban landscape character and visual amenity will be principally confined to the residential areas surrounding the proposed development site. The visual envelope within which visual impacts are likely to occur extends no further than Infirmary Road to the southwest, Oxmantown Road to the northeast, properties on the south side of North Circular Road properties at Montpellier Park to the south.

There are no long-term construction-stage impacts anticipated. Typically, it is the loss of existing trees and vegetation that is the lasting legacy of the construction phase; however, there is virtually no existing vegetation other than amenity grass within the proposed Phase 1 development. During Phase 2, there will be a requirement to remove existing semi-mature trees on lands that were formerly within the grounds of St. Bricin's Military Hospital; however, the plan is to plant replacements that will replace these trees in the medium and long term.

Short-term impacts upon the local urban landscape character will include the introduction of transitory landscape comprising temporary structures in a relatively permanent urban context - site hoardings, site offices, construction plant (tower cranes) and incomplete building structures, the consequence of which will be a slightly negative impact upon local urban landscape character.

The initial phase of works will comprise securing the site of the remaining residential blocks in Phase 1 and undertaking their demolition (the demolition does not form part of this application). By definition this will be a relatively noisy and dusty operation, with the breaking plant, partially demolished structures and dump trucks removing demolition materials from site, all giving rise to a highly negative visual impact for the streets and properties in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site. However, this will be a very short-lived stage of the construction phase.

Construction traffic is likely to have a slightly negative impact upon the streetscape of some neighbouring areas. A construction management plan will be prepared and will dictate those areas where construction traffic is prohibited. However, it can be anticipated that construction traffic will access the proposed development site from North Circular Road and/or Infirmary Road/Montpellier Gardens. In either case the movements of HGVs and the arrival/departure of construction plant will have a slightly or moderately negative visual impact upon the visual amenity of those streetscapes; Montpellier Gardens is likely to be the most sensitive in this respect.

Initial construction activities will occur at and below ground level, with the excavation of foundations and service trenches. Visual impacts arising directly from these activities will be neutral. However, one or more tower cranes will be installations on site early in the construction phase, and as the tallest elements of the construction phase, these are likely to have a moderately negative visual impact in the short-term.

Emerging building structures, extending to a maximum of four storeys high, will increasingly dominate the proposed development site, typically enclosing and concealing the tower cranes at lower levels, and establishing a skeletal building framework. At this stage, the proposed development is likely to have a moderately or highly negative visual impact upon adjoining properties in the short-term, particularly while many construction personnel and activities within the building will be visible from neighbouring properties and the public realm.

As construction progresses and the skin and roof of each building is completed, construction activities will be largely focused on the building interior and will be screened from public view. Impact upon visual amenity will decrease at this stage, perhaps being only slightly negative, when each proposed building structure appears relatively complete.

The final stages of the construction phase will comprise the completion of works to the public realm. It may be possible to complete some or all of the central public open space while building construction works take place elsewhere; this will be an objective of the construction management plan, with a view to having an established public open space when Phase 1 construction is complete. Streetscapes and smaller incidental open spaces will be completed one building construction is finished. Completion of the public realm will constitute the final 'reinstatement' of the proposed development site and will have a moderately positive impact upon landscape character and visual amenity.

9.9.2 OPERATIONAL PHASE

The completed development is likely to have a highly positive impact upon local landscape character. Ageing sub-standard residential accommodation and inadequate public/communal open space will have been removed, resulting in a significant positive impact upon landscape character and visual amenity.

The likely impacts upon visual amenity are illustrated by a series of photomontages that are presented in Figures 9.13B to 9.16B. In addition, a number of computer generated images (CGIs) have been prepared to illustrate the character within the proposed development and are presented as Figures 9.18 to 9.24. Figure 9.25 is a key plan to the photomontage and CGI views. These Figures should be referred to in conjunction with the following text.

A new urban framework of streets and buildings will have been established on the site, providing a natural extension to the surrounding residential areas, improving legibility and accessibility. Buildings heights and arrangements will respect the local urban fabric, avoiding abrupt changes of height and creating integrated and completed 'blocks' of housing. This consolidation of the urban fabric will have a highly positive impact upon local urban landscape character for the long-term.

The detailing of buildings will be complementary to the adjoining residential areas, adopting a contemporary style while incorporating traditional materials. Brick and tile are used extensively throughout the houses and apartments, with small amounts of render to live-work and residential units overlooking the central open space (refer to Figures 9.17 and 9.18). The proposed streetscapes will also adopt a relatively traditional character, with gardens walls and gates, quality pavements, kerbs, islands of street planting and occasional groups of street trees (refer to Figures 9.19 and 9.20). The impact upon landscape character will be highly positive and long-term.

New residential accommodation will be complemented by lively street-level commercial units (Phase 1B), community facilities and a spacious high-quality and multi-functional public realm, including central public open space and play area. This will be a natural focus for the neighbourhood, an active and sociable space, and will have a highly positive impact upon landscape character. The central open space and adjoining buildings are illustrated in Figures 9.17 and 9.18.

The proposed central spine road will be lined with an avenue of street trees, reinforcing its status in the local road hierarchy and, in conjunction with the later Phase 2, will complete a link between North Circular Road and Montpellier Gardens / Infirmary Road. The avenue of trees will complement the landscape character of North Circular Road itself.

Impacts upon local visual amenity are likely to be comprehensively positive. The proposed development will make significant changes to the views from neighbouring residential areas, but very much for the better.

Views of the incongruous and unattractive old four-storey residential blocks within the proposed development site will be replaced by vistas along new or extended streets and into public open spaces. Dwellings on Findlater Street, Ashford Street and Thor Place will no longer back onto anonymous public streets and open spaces but will enjoy a residential outlook beyond their back gardens. Visual impact upon adjoining residential

neighbourhoods will therefore be moderately or highly positive in the long term. The detail of key views from the surrounding area are illustrated by photographs and photomontages in Figures 9.13 to 9.16 and described below.

The view from North Circular Road into O'Devaney Gardens is illustrated in Figure 9.13A. The existing view is a mere glimpse of the proposed development site, although the view is uninviting and has a slightly negative visual impact on the amenity of North Circular Road at this junction. During construction, this is likely to be used for site access, with a consequence that the Phase 1 construction phase is likely to have a moderately negative visual impact at this junction. Once Phase 1 is completed (refer to Figure 9.13B), a new tree-lined avenue will provide an attractive invitation into the proposed development site, potentially extending to meet North Circular Road, which itself is characterised by a mature avenue of London Plane trees. This view into the proposed development will encompass the new Block B on the right-hand side, its brick elevation complementing the Victorian houses in the foreground; the northern corner of Block B is most prominent in this view, and standing four storeys high is of a complementary height to the Victorian houses (three storeys mostly) and allows them to remain the principal features of this view. The proposed future commercial centre will be located to the left of the avenue and will remain largely out of sight, screened by existing and proposed trees and by intervening buildings. Visual impacts arising from the proposed development will therefore be moderately positive.

The views from Ashford Terrace (Figure 9.14A) and Swords Street / Thor Place (Figure 9.15A) demonstrate the highly negative visual impact that occurs as a result of the existing residential blocks within the proposed development site. Visual impacts during their demolition are likely to be highly negative in the short-term, while construction impacts will be slightly or moderately negative. However, once the proposed development is completed, both streets will be extended and enjoy views into an attractive new residential area and into the central public open space.

The view of the proposed development from Ashford Terrace (Figure 9.14B) will encompass the northern edges of Blocks C and D to the left, distinguished by their red brick elevations and the rendered upper-floor of Block C; to the right lies the proposed future retail centre with Block B beyond it. In front of the proposed retail centre lies the "retail concourse", which form the northern part of the central public open space, most of which remains out of view. Street trees frame the view into the proposed development and mark a subtle transition from the existing residential area. The removal of the old residential blocks and boundary railings and their replacement with a continuous and inviting streetscape adjoined by more domestic-scale architecture will have a moderately positive impact upon visual amenity in this view.

The proposed development is illustrated in the context of a view from Swords Street / Thor Place in Figure 9.15B. This approach to the proposed development will afford a view into the central public open space framed by an avenue of trees. This avenue marks the transition between Phase 1 and

subsequent phases of the proposed development. The photomontage in this Figure illustrates the detail of Phase 1 buildings to the right-hand side of the avenue, while simple block models of the subsequent phases of development describe only the broad scale and massing of what is proposed for those phases. Phase 1 will introduce a slight reduction in the height and massing of buildings beyond the cottage on Thor Place, where Block D and the upper floor of Block C are visible. The brick finish of Block D and the proposed avenue of trees add a degree of 'warmth' and softness to this view, while the avenue of trees and a distant view of the proposed art feature at the centre of the public open space draw the viewer onwards. Phase 2 will introduce a more significant degree of urbanisation to the view, counter-balancing Blocks C and D. In its final form, visual impacts are likely to be slightly positive.

The view north from Montpellier Park (Figure 9.16) will change little as a consequence of the proposed Phase 1A development, which will occur in the northern half of the site; visual impacts will be slight and neutral at this stage. Phase 2 will introduce more dramatic change, with demolitions and construction occurring in close quarters. Construction impacts will be highly, even profoundly, negative in the short-term, but will give way to moderately or highly positive visual impacts once the proposed Phase 2 development is completed. A new green public open space will be created along the northern side of Montpellier Gardens (at the left of this view), with new apartment blocks set back from the road behind it. The proposed tree-lined spine road will join Montpellier Gardens at this point, where it is proposed to continue the avenue along Montpellier Gardens. In this way, the visual amenity of Montpellier Park will be significantly improved.

Figure 9.22 gives only a very simplistic impression of the proposed development, this view being dominated by Phase 2 onwards. Development on the left of this view is likely to be similar to the proposed Block A of Phase 1A - two-storey terraced houses with front and rear gardens; these will replace the ugly rear boundaries of properties in Montpellier Gardens. To the right of the road, apartments are expected to adopt a similar character to the proposed Block B of Phase 1A and will replace the existing residential blocks; they will overlook a new public green space. The view along the new road focuses on Block B itself, framed by the Phase 2 buildings and by occasional street trees. Overall, a new contemporary built environment will replace the existing degraded estate. In combination with green front gardens and a new public open space, the likely impact upon visual amenity will be moderately or highly positive.

9.10 MONITORING

During the construction phase, careful project and programme management will be required in order to complete the construction in as short a timeframe as possible and to ensure that all likely impacts upon urban landscape character and local visual amenity are avoided or minimised.

During the operational life of the proposed development, there is likely to be a measure of 'wear and tear' on the fabric of the buildings and the public realm arising from day-to-day use by the local community and environmental factors such as weather; factors such as potential vandalism should also be taken into account. Therefore, it will be necessary for both the community and local authority / management company to ensure that the highest standards of maintenance and repair are employed through the lifetime of the proposed development. By quickly responding to the need to repair or replace elements of the proposed development (e.g. keeping it free of litter and graffiti, or replacing trees that die or are damaged), the local sense of ownership and pride is also likely to be maintained and is likely to minimise the reoccurrence of such problems.

9.11 REINSTATEMENT

There is no reinstatement work to be carried out as part of the proposed development. However, subsequent phases of development (Phase 1B and Phase 2) may result in damage or disturbance to the public realm in particular. Clear responsibility for reinstatement of any such damage or disturbance must be established prior to works commencing, together with a pre-commencement survey.

9.12 INTERACTIONS

Existing habitat appears poor for bats. Introduction of street trees and other green space should increase opportunities for foraging. Opportunities for foraging and shelter should also be increased for other fauna, including insects and birds, on account of proposed extensive tree and shrub planting, the use of native tree and shrub species where possible and the inclusion of flowering shrubs in proposed planting. Avoiding or minimising lighting in quieter parts of the site will be addressed at the detailed design stage, in combination with proposed planting, to afford opportunities for songbirds to nest.

9.13 DIFFICULTIES COMPILING THIS SECTION

There were no difficulties encountered in compiling this Section of the EIS.

9.14 REFERENCES & SOURCES

- "Dublin City Development Plan 2005-2011" (Dublin City Council);
- "Draft Dublin City Development Plan 2011-2017" (including proposed amendments) (Dublin City Council);
- "Guidelines for Information to be Contained in an Environmental Impact Statement" (Environmental Protection Agency, 2002);
- "Advice Notes On Current Practice in preparation of Environmental Impact Statements" (Environmental Protection Agency, 2003);
- "Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment" (Second Edition, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2002);
- Online mapping current, historical, aerial (Ordnance Survey Ireland, 2010);
- Online mapping current, historical, aerial (Google Maps, 2010);

- Online mapping current, historical, aerial (Bing Maps, 2010);
- Dublin Visitor Map (online), (Dublin City Business Association, 2010).
- "Dublin: the city within the Grand and Royal Canals and the Circular Road with the Phoenix Park" (Christine Casey, 2005)