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Templar Place SHD
Quay Street + High Street
Balbriggan
Co. Dublin

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Prepared for
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1 INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Ltd (CSR), landscape architects and planners.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was informed by a desktop study and a survey of the site and receiving environment in October 2020. This report identifies and discusses the townscape and the receiving environment in relation to the proposed Templar Place development at Quay Street and High Street, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin.

The subject site is approximately 0.42ha and is located on the south side of Quay Street and west of High Street, Balbriggan. The lands currently accommodate the remaining structure of the old Tesco's supermarket and a cycle shop, which is located in a shed-like building off High Street.

A Build to Rent, Strategic Housing Development (SHD) scheme is proposed for the site, comprising the following:

- Demolition of the existing buildings (former shopping centre and associated structures).
- Construction of 3 no. apartment blocks (Blocks A - C) ranging in height from 3 to 6 storeys (with Block B over 3 no. lower courtyard floors) providing a total of 101 units (19 no. studios, 41 no. 1-beds, 41 no. 2-beds).
- Provision of Resident Support Facilities/Resident Services and Amenities, 2 no. retail units, car parking (at ground floor), cycle parking, ESB substation/switch room, plant, bin stores, open space, landscaping, boundary treatments, all associated site works and services provision.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Definition of Landscape

Ireland is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention (ELC). The ELC defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. This definition is important in that it expands beyond the idea that landscape is only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity. It encourages a focus on landscape as a resource in its own right - a shared resource providing a complex range of cultural, environmental and economic benefits to individuals and society.

As a cultural resource, the landscape functions as the setting for our day-to-day lives, also providing opportunities for recreation and aesthetic enjoyment and inspiration. It contributes to the sense of place experienced by individuals and communities and provides a link to the past as a record of historic socio-economic and environmental conditions.

As an environmental resource, the landscape provides habitat for fauna and flora. It receives, stores, conveys and cleans water, and vegetation in the landscape stores carbon and produces oxygen. As an economic resource, the landscape provides the raw materials and space for the production of food, materials (e.g. timber, aggregates) and energy (e.g. carbon-based fuels, wind, solar), living space and for recreation and tourism activities.

2.2 Forces of Landscape Change

Landscape is not unchanging. Many different pressures have progressively altered familiar landscapes over time and will continue to do so in the future, creating new landscapes. For example, within the receiving environment, the environs of the proposed development have altered over the last thousand years, from wilderness to agriculture and settlement or townscape.

Many of the drivers for change arise from the requirement for development to meet the needs of a growing population and economy. The concept of sustainable development recognises that change must and will occur to meet the needs of the present, but that it should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This involves finding an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental forces and values.

The reversibility of change is an important consideration. If change must occur to meet a current need, can it be reversed to return the resource (in this case, the landscape) to its previous state to allow for development or management for future needs.

Climate change is one of the major factors likely to bring about future change in the landscape, and it is accepted to be the most serious long-term threat to the natural environment, as well as economic activity (particularly primary production) and society. The need for climate change mitigation and adaptation, which includes the management of water and more extreme weather and rainfall patterns, is part of this.

2.3 Guidance

Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity. As this report is not part of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), and is instead a standalone Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the report does not include a statement of the significance of effects. However the process by which the landscape and visual effects are identified is similar to that of a Landscape and Visual Assessment carried out as part of an EIAR.

The methodology for assessment of the landscape and visual effects is informed by the following key guidance documents, namely:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition 2013, published by the UK Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA).
- Guidelines (Draft) on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements, 2017, published by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Key Principles of the GLVIA

Use of the Term 'Effect' vs 'Impact'

The GLVIA advises that the terms 'impact' and 'effect' should be clearly distinguished and consistently used in the preparation of an LVIA.

'Impact' is defined as the action being taken. In the case of the proposed development, the impact would include the construction of the buildings and associated boundaries and external areas.

'Effect' is defined as the change or changes resulting from those actions, e.g. a change in landscape character, or changes to the composition, character and quality of views in the receiving environment. This report focusses on these effects.

Assessment of Both 'Landscape' and 'Visual' Effects

Another key distinction to make in a LVIA is that between landscape effects and the visual effects of development.

'Landscape' results from the interplay between the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations of these elements and their spatial distribution create distinctive

character of landscape in different places. 'Landscape character assessment' is the method used in LVIA to describe landscape, and by which to understand the potential effects of a development on the landscape as 'a resource'. Character is not just about the physical elements and features that make up a landscape, but also embraces the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of landscape that make a place distinctive.

Views and 'visual amenity' refer to the interrelationship between people and the landscape. The GLVIA prescribes that effects on views and visual amenity should be assessed separately from landscape, although the two topics are inherently linked. Visual assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on the area's visual amenity.

2.4 Methodology for Landscape Assessment

In Section 6 of this report the landscape effects of the development are assessed. The nature and scale of changes to the landscape elements and characteristics are identified, and the consequential effect on landscape character and value are discussed. Trends of change in the landscape are considered. The assessment of significance of the effects takes account of the sensitivity of the landscape resource and the magnitude of change to the landscape which resulted from the development.

Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource

Landscape sensitivity is a function of its land use, landscape patterns and scale, visual enclosure and distribution of visual receptors, scope for mitigation, and the value placed on the landscape. It also relates to the nature and scale of development proposed. It includes consideration of landscape values as well as the susceptibility of the landscape to change.

Landscape values can be identified by the presence of landscape designations or policies which indicate particular values, either on a national or local level. In addition, a number of criteria are used to assess the value of a landscape. These are described further in below.

Landscape susceptibility is defined in the GLVIA as *the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline scenario and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies*. Susceptibility also relates to the type of development – a landscape may be highly susceptible to certain types of development but have a low susceptibility to other types of development.

For the purpose of assessment, three categories are used to classify the landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment.

Sensitivity is therefore a combination of Landscape value and Susceptibility.

Table 1: Categories of Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
High	Areas where the landscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics. The character of the landscape is such that it has limited/low capacity for accommodating change in the form of development. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national, regional or county value and the principal management objective for the area is conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong. The character of the landscape is such that there is some capacity for change in the form of development. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the

	principal management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change.
Low	Areas where the landscape has few valued elements, features or characteristics and the character is weak. The character of the landscape is such that it has capacity for change; where development would result in a minor change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes are generally unrecognised in policy and where the principal management objective is to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration or enhancement.

Magnitude of Landscape Change

The magnitude of change is a factor of the scale, extent and degree of change imposed on the landscape with reference to its key elements, features and characteristics (also known as 'landscape receptors'). Four categories are used to classify magnitude of landscape change.

Table 2: Categories of Landscape Change

Magnitude of Change	Description
High	Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in major alteration or compromise of important landscape receptors, and/or introduction of large elements considered uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape
Medium	Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape.
Low	Change that is moderate or limited in scale, resulting in minor alteration to key elements features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape.
Negligible	Change that is limited in scale, resulting in no alteration to key elements features or characteristics of the landscape key elements features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic of the context. Such development results in no change to the landscape character.

Landscape Effects

A conclusion on the relative importance of landscape effects (either on physical landscape elements or on the landscape character) can be arrived at by combining the landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of change. This is illustrated in Figure 1. below.

As this report is not part of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), and is instead a standalone Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the report does not include a statement of the significance of effects.

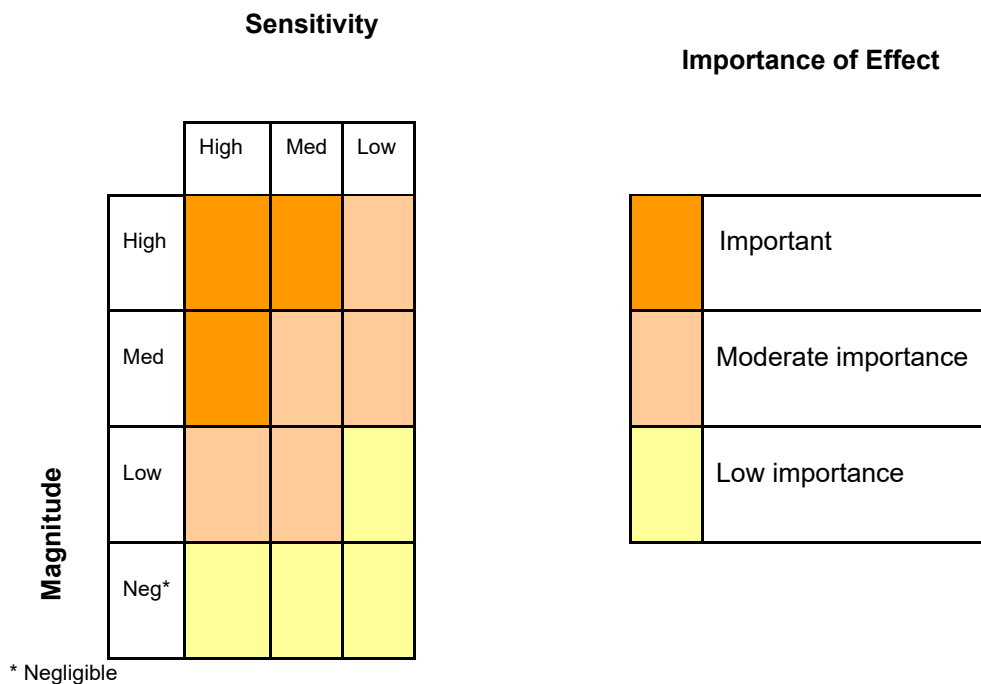


Figure 1. Guide to the classification of the level of effects

The matrix above is used as a guide only. The assessor also uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense, to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable.

Landscape effects are also classified as positive, neutral or negative/adverse (See definitions in Section 2.6). Development has the potential to improve the environment as well as damage it. In certain situations, there might be policy encouraging a type of change in the landscape, and if a development achieves the objective of the policy the resulting effect might be positive, even if the landscape character is profoundly changed.

2.5 Methodology for Visual Assessment

Visual appraisal considers the changes to the composition of views, the character of the views, and the visual amenity experienced by visual receptors. Visual receptor sensitivity is a function of two main considerations:

- *Susceptibility of the visual receptor to change.* This depends on the occupation or activity of the people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention or interest is focussed on the views or visual amenity they experience at that location.

Visual receptors most susceptible to change include residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on the landscape (e.g. trail users), and visitors to heritage or other attractions and places of community congregation where the setting contributes to the experience.

Visual receptors less susceptible to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes which would be more susceptible), people engaged in outdoor recreation or sports where the surrounding landscape does not influence the experience, and people in their place of work or shopping where the setting does not influence their experience.

- *Value attached to the view.* This depends to a large extent on the subjective opinion of the visual receptor but also on factors such as policy and designations (e.g. scenic routes, protected

views), or the view or setting being associated with a heritage asset, visitor attraction or having some other cultural status (e.g. by appearing in arts).

Three categories are used to classify a viewpoint's sensitivity:

Table 3: Categories of Viewpoint Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
High	Viewers at viewpoints that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from houses or outdoor recreation features) and views which are highly valued by the local community. This may also include tourist attractions, and heritage features of regional or county value, and viewers travelling on scenic routes. The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity for accommodating compositional change in the form of development may or may not be low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change that reduces visual amenity.
Medium	Viewers considered of medium susceptibility, such as locations where viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views. The views are generally not designated, but which include panoramic views or views judged to be of some scenic quality, which demonstrate some sense of naturalness, tranquillity or some rare element in the view.
Low	Viewers at viewpoints reflecting people involved in activities not focused on the landscape e.g. people at their place of work or engaged in similar activities such as shopping, etc. The view may present an attractive backdrop to these activities but there is no evidence that the view is valued, and not regarded as an important element of these activities. Viewers travelling at high speeds (e.g. motorways) may also be generally considered of low susceptibility.

Magnitude of Change to the View

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of development into the view (relative to the other elements and features in the composition, i.e. its relative visual dominance), the degree to which it contrasts or integrates with the other elements and the general character of the view, and the way in which the change will be experienced (e.g. in full view, partial or peripheral, or glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, the duration and the reversibility of the visual effects.

Four categories are used to classify magnitude of change to a view:

Table 4: Categories of Visual Change

Magnitude of Change	Description
High	Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other

	elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.
Medium	Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity.
Low	Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.
Negligible	Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.

Visual Effects

A conclusion on the relative importance of visual effects can be arrived at by combining the visual receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of change. This is included in Figure 1.1 above as for Landscape Effects.

As this report is not part of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and is instead a standalone Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the report does not include a statement of the significance of effects.

Quality and Timescale

Qualitative Impacts

The predicted impacts are also classified as beneficial, neutral or adverse. This is not an absolute exercise; in particular, visual receptors' attitudes to development, and thus their response to the impact of a development, will vary. However, the methodology applied is designed to provide robust justification for the conclusions drawn. These qualitative impacts/effects are defined as:

- Adverse – Scheme at variance with landform, scale, pattern. Would degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of valued features, elements or their setting or cause the quality of the landscape(townscape)/view to be diminished.
- Neutral - Scheme complements the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape(townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality.
- Beneficial – improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern, and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.

Timescale of the Impacts

Impacts/effects are also categorised according to their longevity or timescale:

- Temporary – Lasting for one year or less;
- Short Term – Lasting one to seven years;
- Medium Term – Lasting seven to fifteen years;
- Long Term – Lasting fifteen years to sixty years;
- Permanent – Lasting over sixty years.

A statement is made as to the appropriateness of the proposed development based on the combined assessment of the predicted landscape and visual effects. This methodology, in accordance with the various guidelines for LVIA, results in a conclusion as to the appropriateness of the proposed development based on objective assessment of its likely landscape and visual impacts.

3 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

This section is divided into a review of landscape related Planning Policy as set out in the Fingal Development Plan 2017-23 and associated documents, and a description of the study area informed by desktop assessment and windshield survey/site visit.

3.1 Relevant Planning Policy

The **Fingal Development Plan 2017-23**, **Our Balbriggan 2019 – 2025 Rejuvenation Plan** and **The Heart of Balbriggan** (2011) are reviewed in this section, in terms of relevance to the site location and its proposed development.

Fingal Development Plan 2017-23

The **Fingal Development Plan 2017-23** (hereafter referred to as **Development Plan / FDP**) contains a range of policies relevant to establishing the landscape and visual values and sensitivities for the site and site environs, and guiding the appropriate design and mitigation of impacts for the proposed development. These are set out below.

The FDP contains a range of policies relevant to establishing the landscape and visual values and sensitivities for the site and site environs, guiding the appropriate design and mitigation of impacts for the proposed development.

Section 1.4 of the Plan includes the Strategic vision for the County, which sets out to:

Consolidate urban areas to provide a vibrant, attractive environment for living and working, facilitating efficient movement by sustainable modes of transport throughout the County.

- *Create a high quality built environment integrating the conservation of Fingal's built heritage with best practice contemporary architecture and urban design.*
- *Ensure consistency with the Council's Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies to provide high quality housing of a sufficient scale and mix, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate infrastructure, services and amenities.*
- *Direct rural generated housing demand to villages and rural clusters and promote the re-use and rehabilitation of existing housing stock in rural areas in preference to new build in order to preserve and enhance the distinct character of rural Fingal.*
- *Protect Green Infrastructure and enhance Fingal's natural resources of clean water, biodiversity, nature conservation areas, landscape, coastline, greenbelts, parks and open spaces, and agricultural land.*
- *Promote active and healthy lifestyles through increased opportunities for walking, cycling and active sport and recreation.*
- *Make Fingal an attractive and vibrant place to live, work and visit.*
- *Encourage inclusive and active sustainable communities based around a strong network of community facilities.*

The Strategic Policy in Section 1.6, seeks to:

- *3. Add quality to the places where Fingal's communities live, work and recreate by integrating high quality design into every aspect of the Plan promoting adaptable residential building and ensuring developments contribute to a positive sense of place and local distinctiveness of an area.*
- *5. Consolidate the growth of the major centres of Blanchardstown and Balbriggan by encouraging infill development and intensification of development within appropriate locations.*

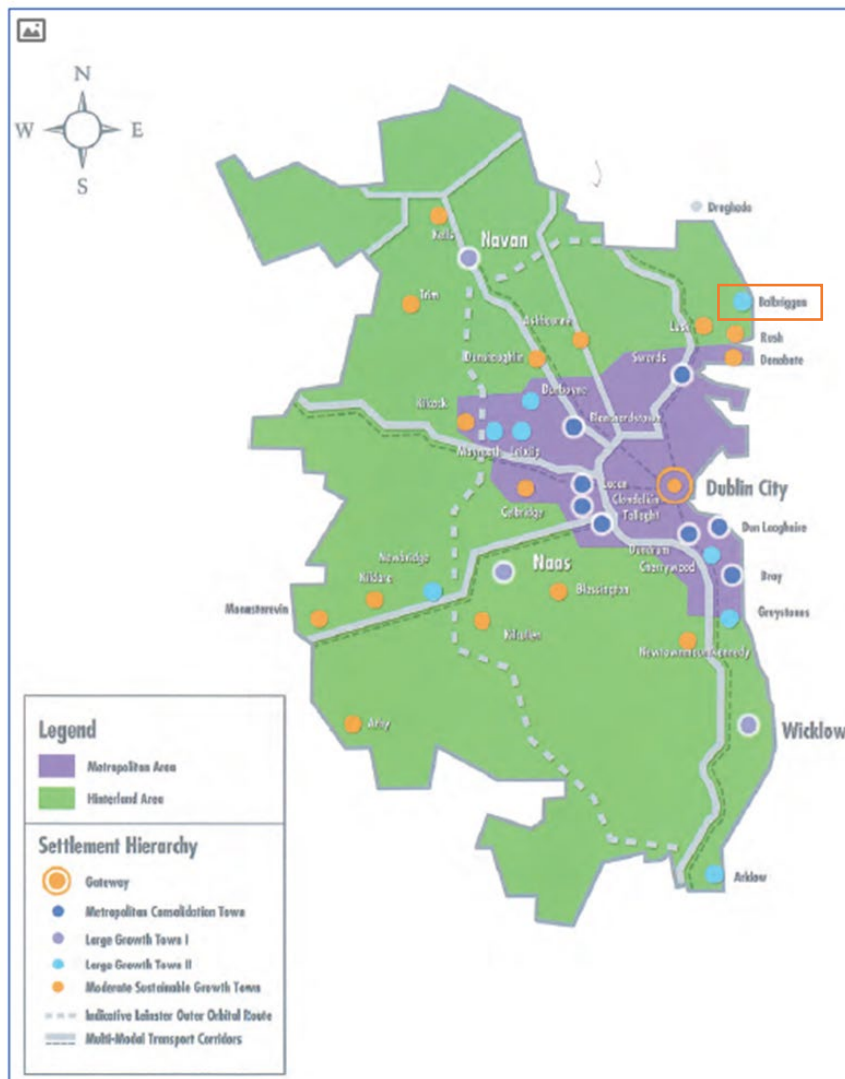
- 10. Promote enterprise and employment throughout the County, particularly in the growth centres of Swords, Blanchardstown and Balbriggan and work with the Dublin Local Authorities to promote the Dublin City Region as an engine for economic growth for the Region and the country.
- 11. Protect, maintain and enhance the natural and built heritage of the County, particularly the coastal areas which are of such importance to residents of and visitors to the Dublin region

Section 1.8 of the Plan notes that the Plan is underpinned by the principles of sustainable development, climate change adaptation, social inclusion and high quality design. The FDP notes that good design in terms of overall layouts and individual buildings in fundamental to placemaking and delivering sustainable communities with a 'sense of place' and 'local distinctiveness'.

Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy

Balbriggan is designated as a 'Large Growth Town – Level II' within the County's hinterland area. The FDP's emphasis is on the continuing consolidation of the existing zoned lands and to maximise efficient use of existing and proposed infrastructure. This is illustrated in Figure 2.1 of the plan, as shown below:

Figure 1: Settlement Hierarchy for Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022



The FDP notes that Balbriggan is categorised as a Large Growth Town.

Objective SS01: Consolidate the vast majority of the County's future growth into the strong and dynamic urban centres of the Metropolitan Area while directing development in the hinterland to towns and villages, as advocated by national and regional planning guidance.

Objective SS19: Support and facilitate residential, commercial, industrial and community development to enable Balbriggan to fulfil its role as a Large Growth Town in the Settlement Hierarchy recognising its important role as the largest town in the hinterland area.

Placemaking

Chapter 3 Placemaking contains several relevant policies and objectives. The chapter includes five main themes which are:

- Sustainable Communities,
- Public Realm,
- Sustainable Design and Standards,
- Open Space,
- Community Infrastructure, Facilities and Services

Balbriggan is designated as a Major Town Centres (MC) in the hierarchy of Urban Place Designation with the function 'main town centres of the County which offer a range of services and facilities to a large hinterland'. Relevant Policy:

Objective PM05: Develop a hierarchy of high quality vibrant and sustainable urban and village centres including the continued sustainable development and enhancement of:

- Swords as the County Town of Fingal,
- Blanchardstown as a vibrant major town centre,
- Balbriggan as a large growth town,
- The network of town, village and district centres,
- A range of local and neighbourhood centres

Objective PM17: Consider the Urban Design Framework prepared for the centre of Balbriggan to inform and guide development in this area.

The FDP sets out Design Criteria for Urban development and for Residential development. The FDP states that a key facet of the Development Plan is consolidation of the residential land in the existing urban and village areas. Relevant policies include:

Objective PM 31: Promote excellent urban design responses to achieve high quality, sustainable urban and natural environments, which are attractive to residents, workers and visitors and are in accordance with the 12 urban design principles set out in the Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide (2009).

Objective PM 39: Ensure consolidated development in Fingal by facilitating residential development in existing urban and village locations.

Open Space

The FDP notes that the increased level of urbanisation in the County means that demand for all types of open spaces is high. The provision of accessible open space is an integral part of the provision of high-quality green infrastructure for communities and forms a core element in the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the County. Standards for open space provision, design and function, are also referred to in policy as follows:

Objective PM52: Require a minimum public open space provision of 2.5 hectares per 1000 population. For the purposes of this calculation, public open space requirements are to be based on residential

units with an agreed occupancy rate of 3.5 persons in the case of dwellings with three or more bedrooms and 1.5 persons in the case of dwellings with two or fewer bedrooms.

Objective PM60: *Ensure public open space is accessible, and designed so that passive surveillance is provided.*

Objective PM61: *Ensure permeability and connections between public open spaces including connections between new and existing spaces, in consultation to include residents.*

Objective PM62: *Provide multifunctional open spaces at locations deemed appropriate providing for both passive and active uses.*

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

The Plan notes that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can best be defined as offering a 'total' solution to rainwater management and must be included in all new developments. It also notes their amenity value and notes that SuDS areas do not form part of the public open space provision, except where they contribute in a significant way to the design and quality of open space as defined by the Planning Authority. There is no specific policy relating to residential developments, however Objective SW04 in Chapter 7 also relates to SuDS and new developments:

SW04: *Require the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.*

Tree Policy

Objective PM64: Protect, preserve and ensure the effective management of trees and groups of trees.

Settlement Policies for Balbriggan

The FDP notes the existence of a number of policies to manage the growth and development of Balbriggan, in particular the regeneration of development sites within the town centre.

Relevant Policies:

Objective BALBRIGGAN 1: *Promote and facilitate the development and growth of Balbriggan as the primary service, social, cultural and local tourist centre in north Fingal.*

Objective BALBRIGGAN 2: *Facilitate the implementation of the Urban Design Framework Plan and Balbriggan Public Realm Plan for the town centre to encourage the regeneration of the identified potential development sites within the town centre.*

Objective BALBRIGGAN 11: *Ensure a safe and convenient road, pedestrian and cycle system promoting permeability, accessibility and connectivity between existing and new developments within the town.*

Land Use

The subject lands are zoned 'MC – Major Town Centre with the objective;

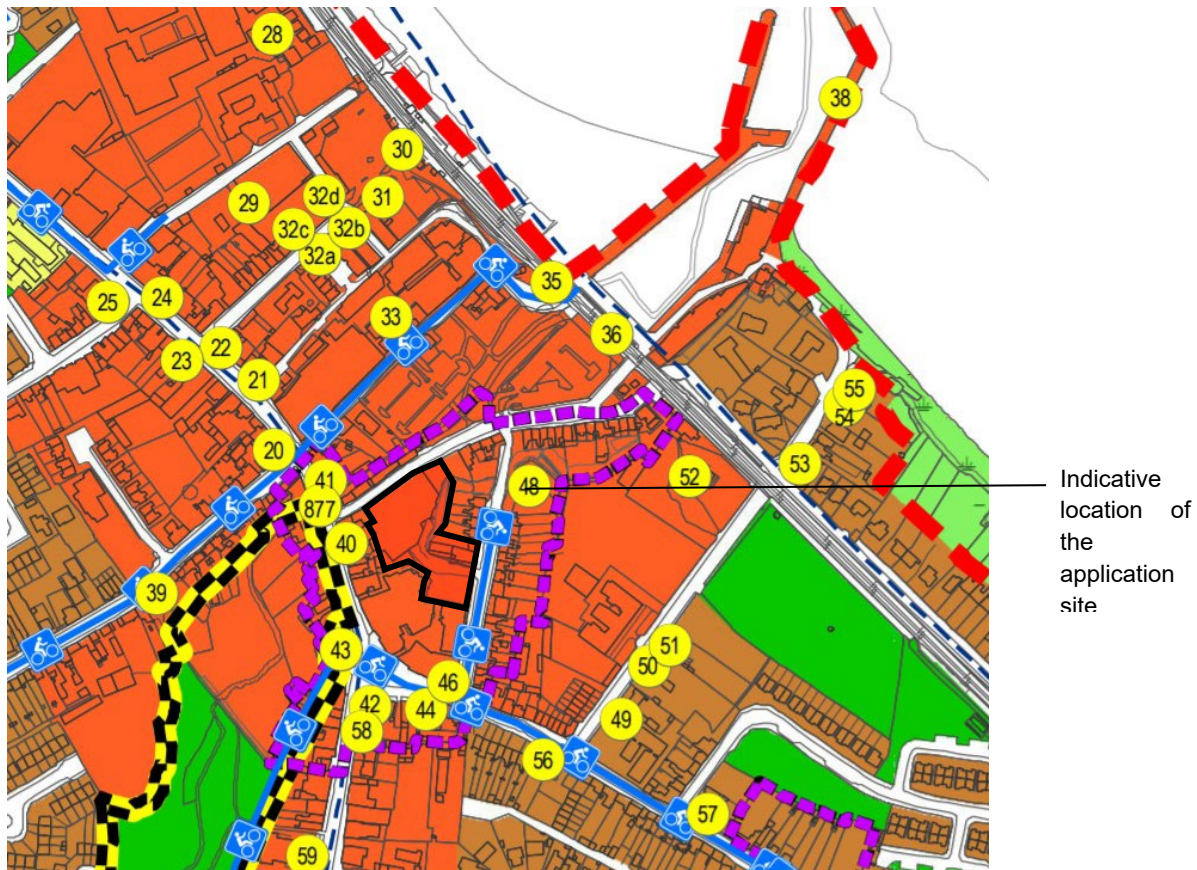
"Protect, provide for and/or improve major town centre facilities".

With the Vision as follows:

Consolidate the existing Major Towns in the County, (Blanchardstown, Swords and Balbriggan). The aim is to further develop these centres by densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic,

cultural, leisure, residential uses, and urban streets, while delivering a quality urban environment which will enhance the quality of life of resident, visitor and workers alike. The zone will strengthen retail provision in accordance with the County Retail Strategy, emphasise urban conservation, ensure priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists while minimising the impact of private car based traffic and enhance and develop the existing urban fabric. In order to deliver this vision and to provide a framework for sustainable development, masterplans will be prepared for each centre in accordance with the Urban Fingal Chapter objectives.

Figure 2: Land Use Zoning for site and surrounds



Zoning Objectives		Specific Objectives	
CI - Community Infrastructure	Provide for and protect civic, religious, community, education, health care and social infrastructure	Burial Site	Indicative Cycle/Pedestrian Route
CB - Greenbelt	Protect and provide for a Greenbelt	Development Boundary	Indicative Metro Route
CE - General Employment	Provide opportunities for general enterprise and employment	Masterplan Area	Indicative Route for new Metro North
HA - High Amenity	Protect and enhance high amenity areas	Zone of Archaeological Notification	Quality Bus Corridor
HT - High Technology	Provide for office, research and development and high technology/high technology manufacturing type employment in a high quality built and landscaped environment	Subject to Local Area Plan	Road Proposal
LC - Local Centre	Protect, provide for and/or improve local centre facilities	Inter Airport Noise Zone	Preserve Views
MC - Major Town Centre	Protect, provide for and/or improve major town centre facilities	Outer Airport Noise Zone	Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Cycle Network
ME - Metro Economic Corridor	Facilitate opportunities for high density mixed use employment generating activity and commercial development, and support the provision of an appropriate quantum of residential development within the Metro Economic Corridor	Inner Public Safety Zone	Outer Public Safety Zone
OS - Open Space	Preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities	Note : For further detail please refer to the Written Statement, Written Statement Appendices and the Green Infrastructure Maps For further details of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Cycle Network please refer to Sheet 14 Green Infrastructure Map 1 To view details of Recorded Monuments and Places see www.archaeology.ie/publications/forms/legislation/recordofmonumentsandplaces	
RA - Residential Area	Provide for new residential communities subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure		
RC - Rural Cluster	Provide for small scale infill development serving local needs while maintaining the rural nature of the cluster		
RS - Residential	Provide for residential development and protect and improve residential amenity		
RU - Rural	Protect and promote in a balanced way the development of agriculture and rural-related enterprise, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage		
RW - Retail Warehousing	Provide for retail warehousing development		

Archaeological Resource

The Council is committed to the protection and conservation of buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of archaeological, architectural, historical, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical

interest. Under which the “safeguarding archaeological sites, monuments, objects and their settings listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and any additional newly discovered archaeological remains, and by identifying archaeologically sensitive historic landscapes” remains one of the top priorities for the council.

Objective CH02: Favour the preservation in situ or at a minimum preservation by record, of archaeological sites, monuments, features or objects in their settings. In securing such preservation the Council will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of the Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Objective CH05: Ensure archaeological remains are identified and fully considered at the very earliest stages of the development process, that schemes are designed to avoid impacting on the archaeological heritage.

Objective CH07: Ensure that development within the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Notification does not seriously detract from the setting of the feature, and is sited and designed appropriately.

Objective CH09: Recognise the importance of archaeology or historic landscapes and the connectivity between sites, where it exists, in order to safeguard them from developments that would unduly sever or disrupt the relationship and/or inter-visibility between sites.

Architectural Heritage

The site falls within the *Balbriggan Historic Town Core Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)*. The existing structures on site are not designated Protected Structures.

Relevant Policies:

Objective CH20: Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a Protected Structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, is compatible with the special character, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, materials, impact on architectural or historic features, and junction with the existing Protected Structure.

Objective CH21: Seek that the form and structural integrity of the Protected Structure is retained in any redevelopment and that the relationship between the Protected Structure and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, or designed views or vistas from or to the structure is conserved.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) seeks to identify and to understand the historic development of today's landscape by placing emphasis on the contribution that past historic processes make to the character of the landscape as a whole, not just selected 'special sites'. It therefore contributes to a broader assessment and understanding of landscape character.

Relevant Policies:

Objective NH41: Ensure that the results of the Historic Landscape Character studies undertaken in the County are taken into account in the development of plans and in the assessment of projects on an ongoing basis.

Objective NH42: Ensure development reflects and reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of identified historic landscape character types, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the results of the historic landscape characterisations carried out in the County.

Green Infrastructure

Chapter 8 of the FDP contains policies and objectives relating to Green Infrastructure. Section 8.2 8.2. lists several themes identified by the Council and includes a range of objectives and actions which relate to these themes:

- *Biodiversity,*
- *Parks, Open Space and Recreation,*
- *Sustainable Water Management,*
- *Archaeological and Architectural Heritage,*
- *Landscape.*

Objectives G1 04: *Seek a net gain in green infrastructure through the protection and enhancement of existing assets, through the provision of new green infrastructure as an integral part of the planning process, and by taking forward priority projects including those indicated on the Development Plan green infrastructure maps during the lifetime of the Development Plan.*

Objectives relating to architectural heritage are as follows:

Objective GI34: *Ensure, wherever possible and appropriate, that elements of the archaeological and architectural heritage are fully integrated into proposals for new developments at the project design stage.*

Objective GI35: *Seek to provide and/or enhance access to archaeological and architectural heritage assets in a sustainable manner, where appropriate, thus facilitating opportunities for education and understanding.*

Objectives relating to landscape are as follows:

Objective G136: *Ensure green infrastructure provision responds to and reflects landscape character including historic landscape character, conserving, enhancing and augmenting the existing landscapes and townscape of Fingal which contribute to a distinctive sense of place.*

Natural Heritage

Chapter 9 Natural Heritage includes policies and objectives relating to natural heritage and the landscape.

The Development Plan's Statement of Policy includes to conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity. The Plan emphasises that it is not only protected sites which are valuable, and that rivers and streams function as ecological 'corridors' which enable species to move from place to place. Wetlands associated with rivers and streams, such as wet grasslands and marshes, also provide many benefits. The FDP also notes the importance of ecological corridors - linear landscape features such as rivers, hedgerows and road verges that enhance the movement of wildlife through the landscape. It also notes that stepping stones comprise a series of smaller landscape features such as small woodlands, areas of scrub, wet grassland and marshes.

Specific objectives include:

Objective NH27: *Protect existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows which are of amenity or biodiversity value and/or contribute to landscape character and ensure that proper provision is made for their protection and management.*

Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape policy promotes a unified approach to landscape planning and management, to provide an understanding of Fingal's landscape in terms of its inherent and unique character and ensure that Fingal's landscape is appropriately protected, managed and planned.

A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for Fingal was carried out, and provides for the classification of Fingal's landscapes into types and values and sensitivities. The LCA divides the County into 6 Landscape Character Types representing generic areas of distinctive character that makes one landscape different from another such as uplands or the coast.

The LCA places a value on each landscape character type ranging from exceptional to low. Subsequent to the type and value being identified, the sensitivity of each character type is defined as its overall ability to sustain its character in the face of change. Sensitivity is evaluated using criteria ranging from high to low. It should however be noted, that the GLVIA (2013) states that sensitivity of a landscape is linked directly to the proposed change. The proposed development lies within the LCA Coastal Character type.

LCA – Coastal Character Type

The Coastal Character Type forms the eastern boundary of the County and contains a number of important beaches, islands and headlands that together create a landscape of high amenity and landscape value. A number of important settlements are located within this area, including Balbriggan, Skerries, Rush, Malahide, Portmarnock and Howth. The land is generally low lying, with the exception of some prominent headlands and hills in the northern part of the area, Howth and the offshore islands. Most of the Howth peninsula is covered by the 1999 Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO).

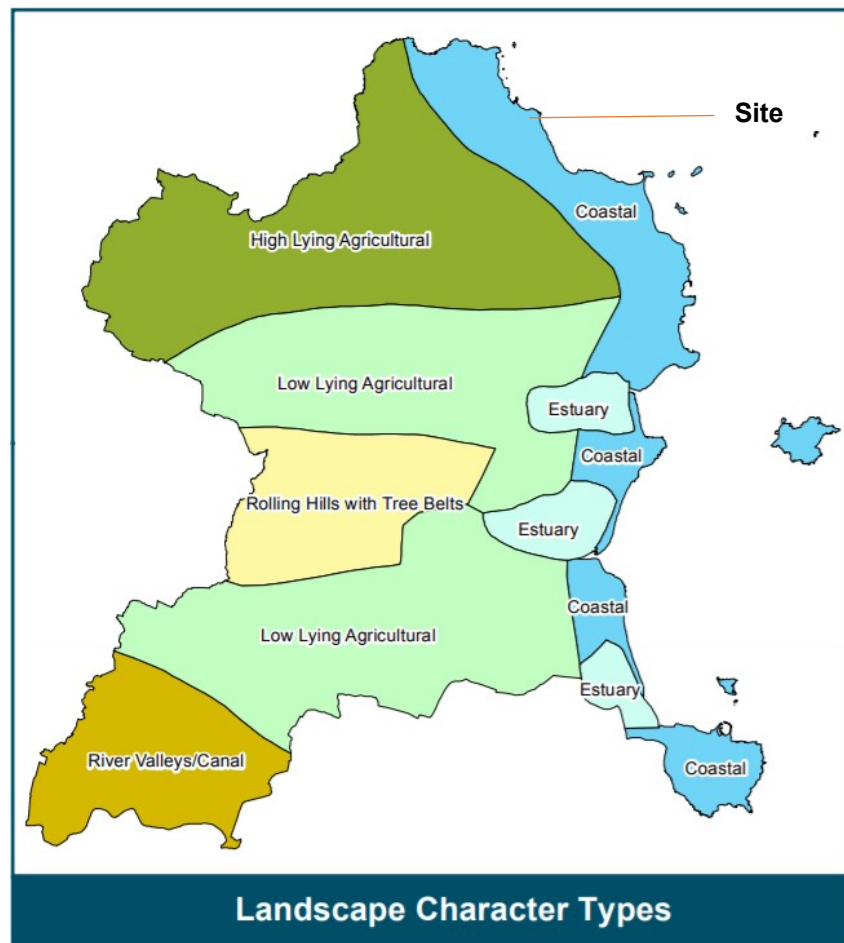
There are a number of important demesne or estate landscapes containing important woodlands in or adjoining this area at Ardgillan, Hampton, Milverton and Portrane. Horticulture (around Rush), golf courses and individual dwellings are prevalent land uses in the area also. Views along the coast are generally contained within headlands, ridgelines and harbours, creating a number of visual compartments.

The Coastal Character Type is categorised as having an exceptional landscape value. This value is arrived at due to the combination of visual, ecological, recreational and historical attributes. The area has magnificent views out to sea, to the islands and to the Mourne and Wicklow mountains and contains numerous beaches and harbours. The area's importance is highlighted by the High Amenity zoning covering substantial parts of the area. The area is rich in archaeological, architectural and natural heritage and is of high ecological value.

Figure 3: Landscape Character Assessment Summary - Extract from FDP.

Landscape Character Types	Landscape Value	Landscape Sensitivity
Rolling Hills Type	Modest	Medium
High Lying Type	High	High
Low Lying Type	Modest	Low
Estuary Type	Exceptional	High
Coastal Type	Exceptional	High
River Valley and Canal Type	High	High

Figure 4: Landscape Character Types – Extract of FDP.

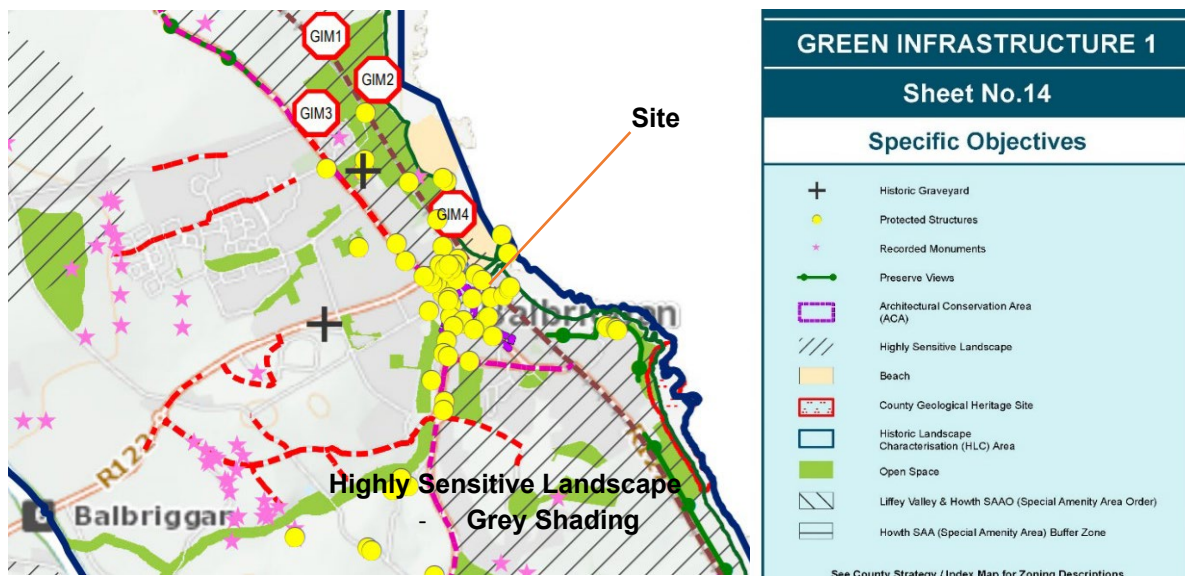


The Coastal Character LCA is categorised as a '**Highly Sensitive Character Type**' in the FDP (See Figure 5 below). Following is an extract text from the FDP:

Particular parts of these areas have a low capacity to absorb new development. The areas which have a low capacity to absorb new development are identified as highly sensitive areas on the Green Infrastructure Maps. It should be noted that the Landscape Character Types identified as low to medium sensitivity may have small pockets of highly sensitive areas, which is reflected on the Green Infrastructure Maps. It is a challenge to locate new development in these areas without it becoming unduly obtrusive. Views of the high lying areas are available from long distances and panoramic views are available from the uplands to the surrounding areas. The coastal fringe is very sensitive to development due to the exposed nature of many of the coastal and estuarine areas making them particularly vulnerable to intrusive development. Finding sites for new development along the coast will be difficult as new development is likely to be conspicuous. The setting and character of coastal areas are particularly sensitive and could easily be damaged by inappropriate development. The river valleys and canal have particular qualities, such as steep banks and mature woodland, which makes them particularly sensitive to development.

Uses such as houses, forestry, masts, extractive operations, landfills, caravan parks and large agricultural/horticulture units have the potential to give rise to substantial impacts in the highly sensitive areas shown on the Green Infrastructure Maps.

Figure 5: Extract from Sheet No 14 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 Green Infrastructure



The FDP includes the following principles for development for this LCA:

Principles for Development

- *Skylines, horizon and ridgelines should be protected from development.*
- *Sites with natural boundaries should be chosen, rather than elevated or open parts of fields. The form of new developments should be kept simple and they should be sited within existing shelter planting or within the contours of the land to minimise visual impact.*
- *Clustering with existing farmhouse and/or farm buildings is generally preferable to stand-alone locations.*
- *Field and roadside hedgerows should be retained. Proposals necessitating the removal of extensive field and roadside hedgerows should not be permitted.*
- *The retention and active management of trees and woodland blocks should be promoted.*
- *The use of trees and woodlands to contain new development should be encouraged. Strong planting schemes using native species, to integrate development into these sensitive landscapes, will be required. New planting needs to be carefully located and selected.*
- *The management of the river margins should be promoted and development along the riverside which will intrude on the character of the river valleys should be restricted.*
- *Establish riparian corridors free from new development along all significant watercourses in the County. Ensure a 10 to 15 metre wide riparian buffer strip measured from top of bank either side of all watercourses, except in respect of the Liffey, Tolka, Pinkeen, Mayne, Sluice, Ward, Broadmeadow, Corduff, Matt and Delvin where a 30m wide riparian buffer strip from top of bank to either side of all watercourses outside urban centres is required.*
- *Estuary margins and any hedgerows along the margins must not be disturbed.*
- *The special character of the coast should be protected by preventing inappropriate development on the seaward side of coastal roads.*
- *The character of the coastal visual compartments should be retained by preventing intrusive developments on headlands, promontories and coastal lands within the compartments. The coastal skyline should be protected from intrusive development.*
- *Protect, enhance and sustainably manage the coastline and its natural resources.*

The Landscape Character Assessment Objectives are as follows:

Objective NH33: *Ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to the character, value and sensitivity of a landscape when determining a planning application.*

Objective NH34: *Ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness such as geology and landform, habitats, scenic quality, settlement pattern, historic heritage, local vernacular heritage, land-use and tranquillity.*

Objective NH35: *Resist development such as houses, forestry, masts, extractive operations, landfills, caravan parks and large agricultural/horticulture units which would interfere with the character of highly sensitive areas or with a view or prospect of special amenity value, which it is necessary to preserve.*

Objective NH36: *Ensure that new development does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of highly sensitive areas and does not detract from the scenic value of the area. New development in highly sensitive areas shall not be permitted if it:*

- *Causes unacceptable visual harm*
- *Introduces incongruous landscape elements*
- *Causes the disturbance or loss of (i) landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness, (ii) historic elements that contribute significantly to landscape character and quality such as field or road patterns, (iii) vegetation which is a characteristic of that landscape type and (iv) the visual condition of landscape elements.*

Objective NH37: *Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design*

Objective NH38: *Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.*

Objective NH39: *Require any necessary assessments, including visual impact assessments, to be prepared prior to approving development in highly sensitive areas.*

Views and Prospects

The FDP identifies views and prospects. The Development Plan notes that in assessing views and prospects it is not proposed that this should give rise to the prohibition of development along these routes, but development, where permitted, should not hinder or obstruct these views and prospects and should be designed and located to minimise their impact. Relevant Policy:

Objective NH40: *Protect views and prospects that contribute to the character of the landscape, particularly those identified in the Development Plan, from inappropriate development.*

Landscape Designations - High Amenity Zoning

The site is about 300m from the coastal area and the coastal area is zoned 'High Amenity' areas.

Chapter 11 notes that the objective for these areas is to protect and enhance high amenity areas. The FDO also states that the vision is to:

Protect these highly sensitive and scenic locations from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place in recognition of the amenity potential of these areas opportunities to increase public access will be explored.

The Development Plan applies this zoning to areas of the county of high landscape value. These are described as areas which consist of landscapes of special character in which inappropriate development would contribute to a significant diminution of landscape value in the County. According to the FDP, these landscape areas meet one or more of the following criteria:

- *Contain scenic landscape of high quality,*
- *Afford expansive or interesting views of surrounding areas,*
- *Are components in important views and prospects,*
- *Are unique or special within the County,*
- *Are important elements in defining the coastal character of the County,*
- *Act as a backdrop to important coastal views,*
- *Contain important groups of trees or woodland,*
- *Are elevated or ridge sites on which development would be obtrusive*
- *Provide public access to interesting attractive landscapes or to semi-natural areas.*

Relevant objectives are as follows:

Objective N51: *Protect High Amenity Areas from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place*

Objective N52: Ensure that development reflects and reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of High Amenity areas, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements which contribute to its distinctiveness such as geology and landform, habitats, scenic quality, settlement pattern, historic heritage, local vernacular heritage, land-use and tranquillity.

The High Amenity Zoning is located south of the harbour area and north of the beach – i.e. the beach and harbour area which is where the town centre meets the coast is not part of this designation.

Development Management Standards:

Chapter 12 outlines development management standards. This chapter outlines the development standards and criteria to ensure development occurs in an orderly and efficient manner.

The development plan notes that trees provide both valuable amenity and wildlife habitat and that they contribute visually to an area, softening the impact of physical development on the landscape while also fulfilling an important role in the improvement of air quality in urban areas and providing wildlife habitats. 'The Forest of Fingal – A Tree Strategy for Fingal' is referred to in the FDP, and this document sets out the Council's policy for street tree planting, management and maintenance.

Relevant standards include the following objectives relating to trees, hedgerows and landscape proposals:

Objective DMS77: *Protect, preserve and ensure the effective management of trees and groups of trees*

DMS78: *Ensure during the course of development, trees and hedgerows that are conditioned for retention are fully protected in accordance with 'BS5837 (2012) Trees in relation to the Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations' or as may be updated.*

DMS79: *Require the use of native planting where appropriate in new developments in consultation with the Council.*

DMS80: *Ensure trees, hedgerows and other features which demarcate townland boundaries are preserved and incorporated where appropriate into the design of developments.*

DMS81: *Consider in tree selection the available rooting area and proximity to dwellings or business premises particularly regarding shading of buildings and gardens.*

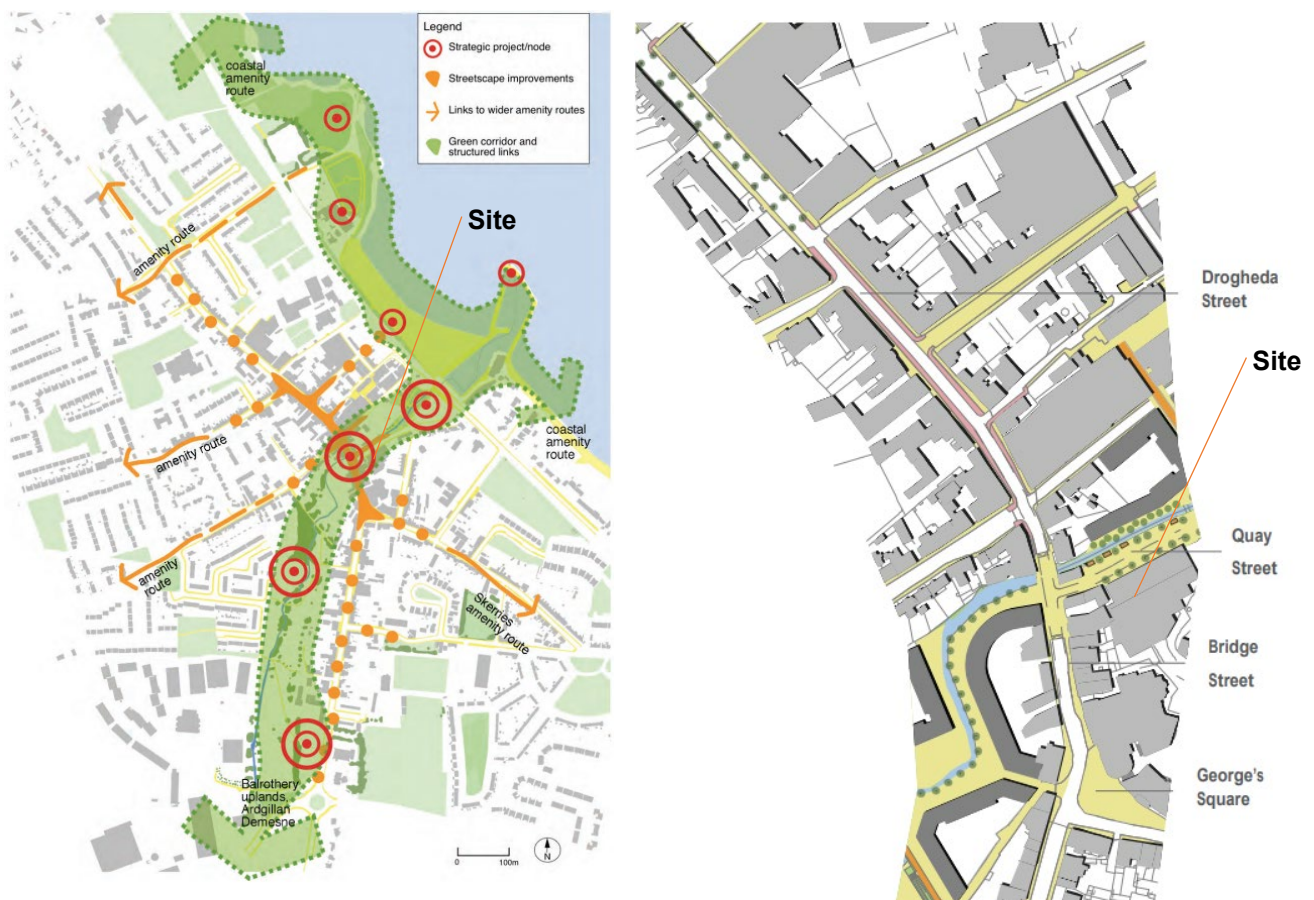
DMS82: *Promote the planting of large canopy trees on public open space and where necessary provide for constructed tree pits as part of the landscape specification.*

DMS 83: *Ensure roadside verges have a minimum width of 2.4 metres at locations where large trees are proposed and where necessary provide for constructed tree pits as part of the landscape specification. Road verges shall be a minimum of 1.2 metres wide at locations where small canopy trees are proposed.*

The Heart of Balbriggan (2011)

A plan for streets and public spaces in Balbriggan Town Centre called 'The Heart of Balbriggan' was published by FCC in 2011. The river, park, the main street (Dublin Road, Bridge Street, Drogheda Street) and Quay Street are among the three main elements of the town's urban and landscape structure, which have the greatest need and potential for improvement. The strategy recognises the importance of addressing vacancy and improving the attractiveness of buildings and streets.

The physical and visual 'bottleneck' near the Bridge Street/The Quay junction is highlighted as a key point of concern in Balbriggan and future plans aim to achieve a shared surface arrangement which opens up the vista and physical connection to the harbour.



Figures 6 and 7: The Heart of Balbriggan – Strategic concept and an excerpt from the framework plan indicating location of potential improvements to pedestrian environment.

As part of the plan, a new Heritage trail for the town is proposed which takes in Quay Street.

Our Balbriggan 2019 – 2025 Rejuvenation Plan

The Our Balbriggan Plan was published in 2019 in response to the “*need for a sustained focus on rejuvenating the original town centre and main street and how they relate to the expanded town, with a view to creating a more attractive, connected place that people want to live and spend time in for work, shopping or recreational purposes*” (p6). The document outlines a vision for Balbriggan, which states,

“Building on its rich history and its diverse and growing talent base, Balbriggan will be an ambitious, inclusive and prosperous community, harnessing its economic and physical advantages and enabling an excellent quality of life for all its people” (p6). Extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the development of the rejuvenation plan. Priority projects were Redeveloping the heart of the Main Street, with 73% of participants placing this in their top 4 most preferred choices, followed by Reimagining the Harbour area (68%), Transforming Quay Street (52%) and the cycling and walking Coastal Greenway from Balbriggan to Skerries (48%). Place-making, and the involvement of the people of Balbriggan in that process was identified as a principle requirement going forward. The transformation of Quay Street is identified as the 6th project to be realised as part of the plan as follows;

“TRANSFORM QUAY STREET

Widen footpaths and increase flow and visibility from main street to a transformed Quay Street, Viaduct and Harbour area. Maintain car park amenity, remove kerbing, enabling its usage in evenings and weekends as a quality civic and meeting space. Develop linear park featuring seating, planting and other green features along the river bank” (p25).



Figure 8: Our Balbriggan Town Rejuvenation Map

Summary of Policies or Objectives:

- The subject site is zoned as ‘Major Town Centre’
- The Development Plan supports the principle of infill development and consolidation of town centres

- The site also falls within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Area – The safeguarding of archaeological sites, monuments, objects and their settings listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and any additional newly discovered archaeological remains, and by identifying archaeologically sensitive historic landscapes, remains a top-priority for the council.
- The structures on-site are not protected, however the site sits adjacent to a Protected Structure.
- The site is located within the 'Coastal Character Type' within wider Landscape Character Areas and is categorised as a 'Highly Sensitive Character Type' requiring the preparation of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
- Proximity to High Amenity (HA) - located to the east along the coast, about 200m away from the site.
- The streets adjacent to the site, and the development's relationship with these streets play a key role in the delivery of The Heart of Balbriggan public realm strategy and The Our Balbriggan 2019-2025 Plan.

3.2 Description of Receiving Environment

The site and its environs are described below

Location and Immediate Environs

The proposed development site is located between Quay Street and High Street, in Balbriggan town centre, with frontages on both aforementioned streets. The site is just east of Drogheda Street, which is Balbriggan's main thoroughfare and west of the railway viaduct and harbour. The Bracken River flows to the north of High Street through Quay Street Park to the north of the site.

Figure 9: Site Location

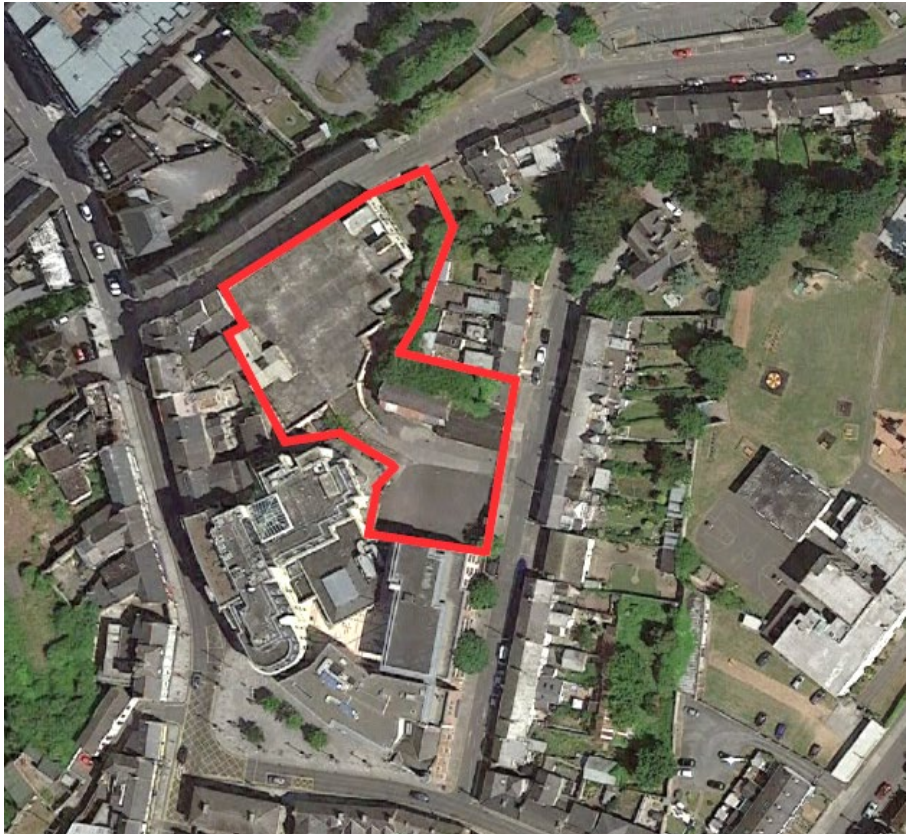


Figure 10: Images depicting the characteristics of Balbriggan taken from The Heart of Balbriggan study (2011)



The development site is in Balbriggan town centre. Balbriggan, in The Heart of Balbriggan report (2011) is described as *“Balbriggan town centre is a place of unique character and qualities, held together by a strong, diverse and coherent community. Its historical development is unique and this is evident in its rich natural, built and cultural heritage. However, there are large areas of under-utilised space (including Mill Park, the Harbour, the Beach and Martello Tower area and Viaduct car park), which are poorly-connected to the town or to each other, yet which have considerable potential to be improved for the benefit of the town as a whole”* (p.1).

The site over time

The preliminary Heritage Appraisal conducted by Molloy & Associates described the evolution of Balbriggan in relation to the development site.

“The present form of Balbriggan town was developed in the in the mid eighteenth century by Alexander Hamilton, who bought the land and developed it from a small fishing village to a commercial town centred around a prosperous textile and hosiery industry. This industrial heritage shaped the development of the town and remains evident today in the form of mill buildings, industrial chimneystacks, rows of worker’s housing and the railway infrastructure. This period of prosperity funded the construction of the significant civic buildings on Georges Square, due south of the applicant site.

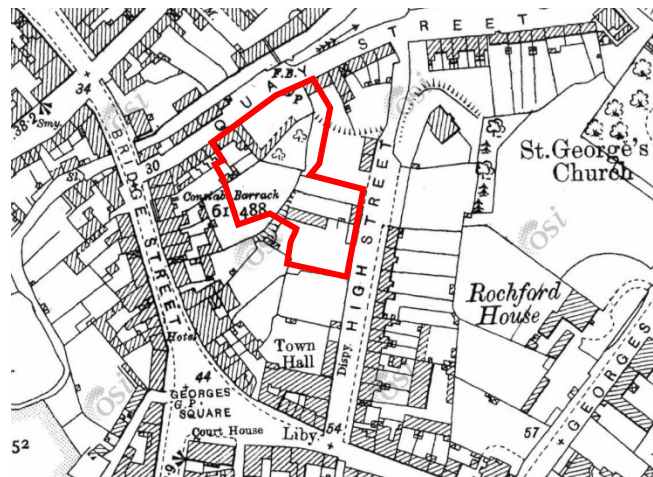


Figure 11: Historic Core of Balbriggan (site in red) (25inch map 1890-1900)

The subject site is positioned within a triangular shaped block, in the historic town centre. The site was largely undeveloped until originally c1982, and originally formed part of the rear gardens of the Bridge Street properties.”

Over time, the development lands were used and developed for different purposes. A school is evident on Quay Street on the 1843 map, its grounds extending into the lower elevations of the development site. The 25-inch map (1890-1900) – see figure 11 - shows the development of commercial properties on Quay Street and the use of No.11 as a barracks. The vacant Balbriggan Shopping Centre (leased by Tesco) was constructed c.1982 and is of no architectural interest. It currently lies vacant and has done for some years. At present, modified outbuildings on Quay Street are used as an angling and cycling shop. The cycle shop occupies the oldest part of the building, a modified farm building. The angling shop occupies an extension.

Today, the townscape in the immediate site environs is part of the Balbriggan Historic Centre ACA. As described by Molloy & Associates *“The buildings with the ACA vary from the predominantly civic buildings on Georges Square to the modest terraced cottages along Quay Street and High Street. This diversity brings a rich character to the historic core. The residential buildings have traditional, vernacular forms which sit in pleasing contrast against the monolithic form of the courthouse and more the whimsical Carnegie Library, complete with turreted clock tower.*

The historic maps depict fine grain plots fronting onto Bridge Street. Today, this traditional plot grain remains apparent in the vicinity of Quay Street junction but diminishes further south, where a number of plots have been amalgamated to form the Bracken Court Hotel. The traditional plots are typically occupied by two-bay, two-storey commercial buildings, punctuated by three and four storey structures bay, plots two storey plots. The stepping of the differing heights has the effect of increasing the visibility of the gables of the traditional building forms featuring pitched roofs and central chimney stacks”.

The Bracken Court Hotel, and the existing (albeit of low architectural quality) Balbriggan Shopping Centre sets a precedent in the town regarding the scale and massing of buildings within the ACA and town centre. However, these interventions do not always contribute positively to either the streetscape or local views. For example, rear and gables of the Bracken Court Hotel create prominent, solid, rectilinear forms in views from the north, contrasting with the pitched roofs of historic Balbriggan. The façade of the Balbriggan shopping centre fails to respond to existing grain.



Plate 1: Georges Square



Plate 2: Drogheda Street looking south



Plate 3: The Carnegie Library from Hampton Street



Plate 4: Quay Street Park from the viaduct

Materiality

The predominant building materials used within the town are; limestone, with rubble walls and cut detailing on buildings, renders in a range of earthy tones and bright colours, and brick. Portmarnock brick has been used on the Carnegie library, industrial chimneys and smaller scale residential properties in the area. A single, detached house is located on bluff north High Street is stone built as are coursed walls containing the River Bracken in Quay Street Park and the rather charming bridges that span it. The bridges and park have been subject to some insensitive additions over time which detract from its character.



Plate 5: Cottages and terraces on High Street



Plate 6: Rubble limestone walls on High Street

Topography and Hydrology

The application site slopes down from south to north. The application site is higher at High Street and the elevation almost drops 9m to Quay Street. The Bracken River flows towards the sea north of the site and in parallel to Quay Street. Currently hidden from view by existing buildings, the river emerges into Quay Street Park opposite the northern tip of the development site. Making the river accessible and visible from Quay Street north is a fundamental piece within the Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan (2019-2025).

At present, the yard access from High Street is level with the rooftop of the existing derelict Tesco building on Quay Street. To the east of the building there is a steep embankment which slopes from the rear back garden boundary of the properties on High Street to a level which is approximately the same as Quay Street. To the southwest of the site, over the wall of the Tesco building, it is possible to see into the backyard spaces and sheds of properties on Bridge Street. There is also a series of metal stairs and concrete steps that are likely to have formed part of the Tesco entrance and / or fire escape route. High Street slopes downhill and to the north to meet Quay Street northeast of the development site.



Plate 7: The Bracken River with the existing Balbriggan Shopping Centre in the background



Plate 8: Rear garden of No. 11 Quay Street demonstrating the level change between High Street and Quay Street

Vegetation and Green Infrastructure



Plate 10: The vegetated embankment within the development site



Plate 11: Semi-mature trees on High Street



Plate 12: The Bracken River looking north towards the beach. Stone bridges, mature trees and planting are attractive landscape features.



Plate 13: Mature trees on the embankment south of Quay Street – and west of High Street, and of Saint George's Church create east-west green infrastructure.

The development site includes a steep and narrow embankment between the rear property boundaries along High Street and the western edge of the existing Balbriggan Shopping Centre. The embankment has been colonised by self-seeded vegetation. Three semi-mature (*Acer* spp. – likely Sycamores) have been planted on High Street. There is very little space for their canopies, a position which threatens their longevity.

On Quay Street, the development is opposite the southern tip of Quay Street Park, which is an important, highly valued park in with its potential recognised as an important piece of the Our Balbriggan rejuvenation plan (2019-2025). Presently, the park is organised around the Bracken River which flows under the imposing stone-built railway viaduct down to the harbour and sea. The park contains several mature and semi-mature trees, lawns and planted areas and is an important piece of green infrastructure connecting through the town from the south-west to the north-east.

Vegetation along the railway line, open spaces adjacent to it, the mature trees of the embankment south of Quay Street (and west of High Street), and of Saint George's Church create green infrastructure that connects through the town from south-east to north-west. The mature trees in the churchyard and the embankment from the skyline in views from the harbour, the viaduct and from the north.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

The site is visible from long-distance views, predominantly from the north at the Lighthouse, the harbour, from the viaduct and when moving along Quay Street, High Street and through Quay Street Park in a southerly direction. The site is presently not visible from Drogheda Street or Bridge Street, except for at the junction with Quay Street. Glimpses of the site are available when looking north along High Street at the junction with Hampton Street where the north-eastern façade of what was Balbriggan Shopping Centre is visible.

Landscape Character – Wider Context

A number of local landscape character areas have been mapped, for the purposes of describing the area (see figure 12). The site is located within the historic town core, which has been described above and largely relates to character area 1.

The harbour and beach are impressive, characterful and highly valued parts of Balbriggan. According to the Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan (2019-2025), people place huge value on the beach. The viaduct and railway divides the town centre from the beach and harbour. One of the principle aims of the transformation of Quay Street is to “widen footpaths and increase flow and visibility from main street to a transformed Quay Street, Viaduct and Harbour area”(p.46).

The main streets of Balbriggan include Drogheda Street, Bridge Street and Dublin Street, which all form a connected although curving spinal route through the town centre. Bridge Street is lowest in elevation and the town rises more steeply south than it does north from there. It is this sloping, hilly character which makes the town particularly distinctive allowing the stepping of building heights and rooftops.

Quay Street Park is flanked to the north by a mixture of generally more modern and higher development. Presently, there are a number of surface car parks located along the river bank car parks which accommodate approximately the same extent of land as the park itself.

The character area around St. Georges Church is a historic but more residential character area containing local parks and a school.

Figure 12: Site Context and Local Landscape Character Areas

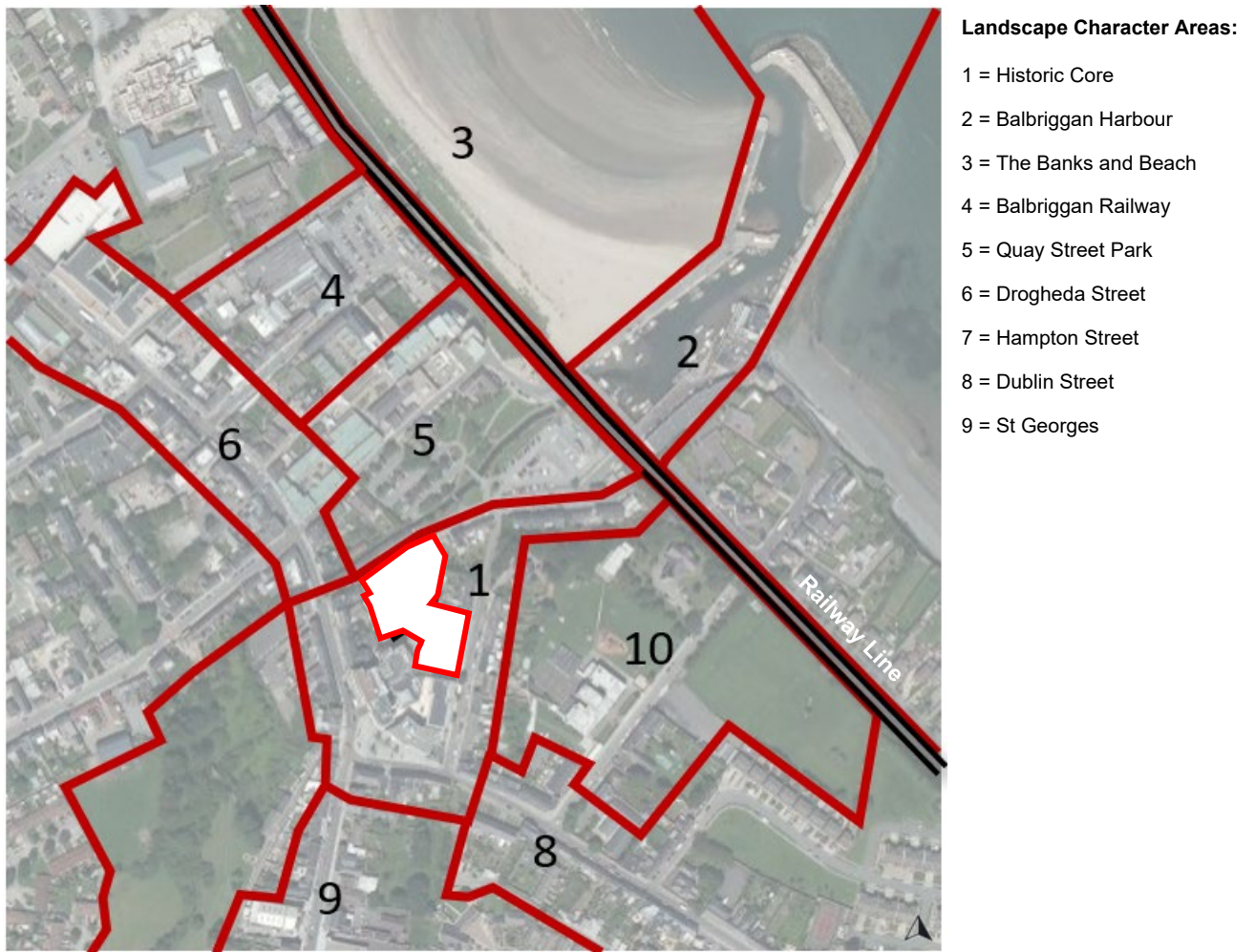


Plate 14: The harbour



Plate 15: The beach

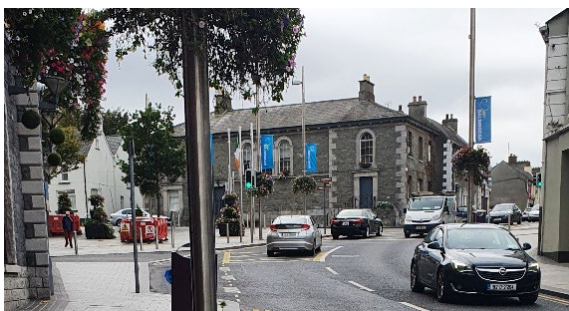


Plate 16: Bridge Street / Dublin Road



Plate 17: Mill Street

Landscape Character Summary

The development site itself is of little or no value in terms of landscape and townscape character. All its strengths and sensitivities relate to either its boundaries or buildings and spaces close by. The location of the development site within the historic core of Balbriggan and within close proximity to several of its key assets – the main street, Quay Street Park and the harbour mean that it has huge potential to improve the immediate site and its environs but also contribute to the rejuvenation of Balbriggan as a whole.

3.3 Summary of Landscape Characteristics and Values

The conservation and enhancement values of the Receiving Environment are set out in this section. The conservation values indicate those aspects of the receiving environment which are sensitive and could be negatively impacted on by the proposed development. These values form the potential landscape and visual constraints to the proposed development.

The enhancement values reflect change that is occurring in the landscape and its inherent robustness.

3.3.1 Conservation Values

- The character and setting of the historic town core.
- Mixed low-rise residential and larger / higher town centre buildings within a tight urban grain in the immediate vicinity of the site.
- The strong historic character of the areas surroundings with particular sensitivity to the Architectural Conservation Area and protected structures.
- A sensitivity to views from Bridge Street, Quay Street Park, the viaduct, the coast, the Lighthouse and Harbour.
- Distinctive variance in height, footprint and articulation of buildings and local topography resulting in a stepped and changing roofscape.

Although the site is in the highly sensitive landscape area of the Coastal Character LCA and the requirement for a landscape and visual impact assessment – its town centre location diminishes the relevance of the sensitivities that are focused on hinterland and more rural landscapes.

3.3.2 Enhancement Values

The values to be enhanced represents the site's capacity to accommodate change and therefore reflects landscape susceptibility. These include:

- The current condition of the lands are poor and are in need of change. They do not compliment the character of the ACA or Balbriggan town. A significant body of policy and zoning supports the development of the lands.
- The overall vision to rejuvenate Balbriggan and enhance and activate Quay Street.
- Streetscape, built form and public realm in the vicinity of Quay Street and High Street is of varying use, scale, content and quality and therefore can be improved.
- The rear facades and the massing of the Bracken Hotel are not reflective of Balbriggan's historic grain. Some views towards the rear elevation of the hotel are unattractive,
- The existing site is primarily unvegetated, except for the steep embankment.

4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is for a Build to Rent (BTR) Strategic Housing Development (SHD) scheme comprising the;

- Demolition of the existing buildings (former shopping centre and associated structures).
- Construction of 3 no. apartment blocks (Blocks A - C) ranging in height from 3 to 6 storeys (with Block B over 3 no. lower courtyard floors) providing a total of 101 units (19 no. studios, 41 no. 1-beds, 41 no. 2-beds).
- Provision of Resident Support Facilities/Resident Services and Amenities, 2 no. retail units, car parking (at ground floor), cycle parking, ESB substation/switch room, plant, bin stores, open space, landscaping, boundary treatments, all associated site works and services provision.

The proposal aims to create a large semi-private courtyards nestled within the heart of the development with high quality street frontages on Quay Street and High Street and upper level roof terraces. The courtyard gardens will be fully enclosed and access points onto the street will be gated. The roof itself will be developed as a green area with attenuation and biodiversity functions.

The architectural design for the development has been developed by MDO Architects and a landscape masterplan prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds.

5 POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Key elements of the development relevant to its landscape and visual impact include:

- The re-development of a predominantly derelict and unsightly site.
- The effect of a development 3-6 storeys in height in relation to the character of the townscape and streetscape and public open spaces including Quay Street Park, the harbour and the beach.
- The effect of the development in relation to the existing Bracken Hotel and the effect on views towards it.
- Design quality – elevational treatment, distinctive built form and layout responding to local urban grain and topography – the local architectural heritage.

Key sensitivities identified in the analysis include:

- Effects on the Coastal Character LCA
- Effects on surrounding urban centre including historical, commercial and residential streets.
- Effects on adjacent public realm – main street and Bracken River corridor.
- Coastal High Amenity Zones
- Key routes through the town e.g. the railway.
- Effects on local heritage and the Architectural Conservation Area

The key issue relates to whether the scale, massing, rhythm and materiality compliments the historic core and wider townscape and key views within it.

6 PREDICTED LANDSCAPE IMPACTS

The sites Enhancement Values reflect a body of policy that is supportive of landscape change at this location (and its environs) as part of general town centre development of Balbriggan as a Large Town. The existing urban form has a high heritage value and although varying in quality/condition, its distinctive topography suggest the need for a distinctive response architecturally to a prominent site that complements Balbriggans distinctive character.

The sites Conservation Values predominantly reflect the core elements of the local Architectural, Heritage and Landscape designations and the distinctive urban form and character of Balbriggan which are positive aspects of the towns character, albeit in varying condition as described above.

The impact of the development is the change of the site from its current poor quality and derelict condition to a contemporary new residential, town centre building cluster, that complements and enhances the existing town centre form and character. The new development has been laid out to reflect existing landscape features such as topography and urban grain. The proposed development reflects best practice national guidelines – Urban Design Guide 2009 by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The proposed elevations rise to 4 stories on Quay St with an additional set back fifth floor and further set back sixth floor. On High St elevations rise to 3 stories with a set back fourth floor and significantly set back fifth floor. Coupled with distinctive variations in materials / cladding breaking up the building facades this results in the presentation of each building (Blocks A & B) on the two respective streets as being comfortable and complementary to existing materials, grain and patterns whilst, through set back upper floors and using the topography, also optimising the development potential of such a key urban site.

The site layout incorporates new landscape elements within the building cluster animating the local streetscape and enhancing residential amenity for new and surrounding residents.

6.1 Landscape Sensitivity

6.1.1 The Site and Environs

The site is located within a historic town centre. The Architectural and heritage designations reflect the historic built inheritance of the town. The town is not in stasis and there are ambitious ongoing plans underway to improve and enhance it. The proposed site in its current form would be a detractor from these elements and its redevelopment part of this enhancement subject to appropriate architectural design and change in use.

The wider Coastal Character Area relates more generally to the softer rural landscape between enclosing coastal ridges and the coast / seafront and the potential for new development to erode the characteristics of those areas. In this regard Balbriggan is one of several coastal towns and villages which are set in this context but contrast with its character – this juxtaposition of rural and urban is what adds value to both landscape and townscape. This can be seen in how the zoning of the High Amenity Zone associated with the coast stops south of the harbour area and continues north of the beach where the town centre meets the coast. Therefore, development that is complementary to existing and evolving character of Balbriggan will have a limited effect on the Coastal Character Area.

Localised sensitivities within the receiving environment are assessed in the Visual Impacts section 7.0 below.

The receiving landscape is classified as Medium Sensitivity - *Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong. The character of the landscape is such that there is some capacity for change in the form of development. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principal management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change.*

6.2 Magnitude of Landscape Change

The Magnitude of Change is classified as Medium – *Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape.*

6.3 Predicted Landscape Effect

6.3.1 The Site and Environs

The importance of the proposed development is considered to be Moderate

The quality of the effect is primarily visual in the immediate vicinity of the site, where the scale and size of the proposed building contrasts or complements the character and scale of the immediate surroundings. The development would however replace a currently derelict or underused and visually poor site, and would contribute positively to the local urban structure and urban renewal policy objectives. The building cluster although large is designed to reflect the organic and hap-hazard local roofscape and built form arranged on local hills within the centre of Balbriggan. The materials proposed break up a potentially large structure with locally common finishes, renders and brickwork, allowing it to sit comfortably in the receiving environment. The landscape / townscape is therefore considered Beneficial - *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Localised visual impacts and effects are considered in more detail in the visual assessment in Section 7.

6.4 Mitigation Proposals

Mitigation is integral to the architectural design and associated landscape proposals to ensure the scheme is of a high architectural merit and complementary to the local area character. Key elements include elevational design, locally common(and some contemporary) finishes and materials, and new street paving and where feasible on High Street, tree planting.

The proposed development is expected to have a temporary adverse effect on the landscape resource during construction. Upon operation and into the future, the development is expected to have a beneficial long term / permanent effect on the landscape and townscape resource in the area.

7 PREDICTED VISUAL IMPACTS

7.1 Zone of Visual Influence and Potential Visual Receptors

Based on the assessment of the landscape characteristics, values and sensitivities, 14 representative viewpoints were selected to assess visual impact and effects. These are scheduled and mapped below. Existing photographs and proposed photomontages are provided by DED.

Verified views were captured in October 2020. The landscape architect's site survey was conducted in October 2020.

The assessed viewpoints are shown on Figure 8 overleaf and are listed in Table 7 below. A sensitivity rating has been ascribed to each visual receptor based on the definitions provided in Table 4. A rationale for the sensitivity rating is provided under the description of each existing view below.

Table 3: Proposed Viewpoints

VP	Description of viewpoint	Rationale for selection	Visibility	Approx. distance from site boundary
1	From the lighthouse	Local landmark	Partial – distant view	400m
2	Harbour Road	Edge on ACA, gateway into Balbriggan town.	Partial	140m
3	Quay street / High Street	Representative of views from junction within ACA	Partial, mid-range, oblique	50m
4	High Street	Close proximity residential receptor	Visible	32m
5	High Street / Hampton Street	Representative of views from junction within ACA	Partial, mid-range, oblique	61m
6	Hampton Street	Demonstrate lack of interference with view to library	None likely	130m
7	St. Georges Square	View north from within the ACA	Potential glimpse through buildings	94m
8	Bridge Street / Quay Street	Close proximity residential receptor / street view	Visible, oblique view	30m
9	Clonard Street	Residential receptor / representing views from SW	None likely	178m
10	Drogheda Street	Most elevated position – high street character	Partial	152m
11	Quay Street	Representing residential views and views from the park	Visible	89m
12	Mill Street	Representing residential views from Mill Street	Partial views over and through trees	74m
13	Viaduct walkway	Viewpoint / pedestrian path	Visible	154m
14	Quay Street Park	Public path	Visible	80m

Figure 13: Location of viewpoints



Photography and presentation of viewpoints

Each Viewpoint is illustrated by a photograph showing the existing view and the photomontage, or technical visualisation, showing the proposed development.

Photographs and photomontages have been produced by D3D Design and are presented in a separate booklet with a map of their locations. Verified photographs and photomontages have been taken with a wide-angle focal length (FL) and prime lens to allow representation of the development within its context. In all visualisations, the extent of the 50mm FL view has been indicated for reference, which is broadly equivalent to the c.40° Horizontal Field of View (HFOV) and is representative of what the human eye perceives and reflects the requirements of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on Visual Representation 2019.

Each viewpoint is described below in two parts, firstly its existing (baseline) condition, and secondly to describe the predicted effects or change brought about by the proposed development. The descriptions,

including the change / effects, focus primarily on the extent of the 50mm view but refers also to the wider context provided by the visualisation, as appropriate, to inform analysis.

To correctly view the photomontage at the appropriate scale the extents of the 50mm FL lens or 40° HFoV should be extended to A3 in size and viewed at arm's length. This can be done by printing a hard copy or, more easily, digitally on screen, allowing reference back to the wider angle visualisation to help understand the context.

Viewpoint 1 - Looking south-west from the Lighthouse

Existing View

The view is located at the Balbriggan Light House. The view looks west towards the town centre.

The view is looking at Balbriggan Beach, the Harbour and the Viaduct. In the background to the left, the Spire of the Saint George's Church and some mature trees within the Church lands are visible, in the middle, behind the Viaduct the upper floors of the Bracken Court Hotel (south/south-west of the application site) is visible, and to the left in the wider field of view a high-rise apartment building on George's Hill is visible.

Overall, the view is dominated by the harbourside and beach landscape east of the viaduct which obscures views to the town centre area. The viaduct illustrates the valley setting as it links the elevated landscape to the north and south. The prominent and intrusive high-rise apartment building to the north of the viaduct behind the beach indicating the high land here and the church the high lands to the south (and west). Overall the view is an attractive maritime / working harbour town composition.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

There would be little change to the view. The upper floor of Block B to High Street (left) and to a lesser extent Block A to Quay Street (right) would be seen peeping above the Viaduct, similar to other buildings in the town centre. It is interesting to note that as the viewer moved closer to the viaduct from this location, the upper floors would disappear behind it due to the angle of view.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *The views are generally not designated, but which include panoramic views or views judged to be of some scenic quality, which demonstrate some sense of naturalness, tranquillity or some rare element in the view.*

The magnitude of change would be Low – *Minor intrusion of the development into the view or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.*

The importance of the change is Low in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Neutral i.e. *Scheme complements the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape(townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality.*

Viewpoint 2 - Looking south-west from Harbour Road

Existing View

This view is from a public footpath along Harbour Road just west of the viaduct. The view is looking west towards the town centre and the application site.

In the foreground can be seen Harbour Road and a low stone wall separating the road from the adjacent public car-park. Centrally in the view can be seen a row of red bricked two storey terraces fronting Quay Street at the end of Harbour Road. To the left (east) of these smaller cottages with rendered facades can be seen, and some local feature trees, to the right (west) High Street travels uphill and south from a partly hidden junction and further vernacular buildings can be seen fronting Quay Street and, overlooking these and also fronting Quay Street, the large cream-coloured buildings currently occupying the site. Quay Street continues towards Bridge Street and the organic and attractive form of the towns vernacular buildings can be seen. Behind the built street frontage there is a sense of a hill and trees enclosing the view to the south.

The view is partly utilitarian – roads and car-park - but not unattractive, the prominent features are the scale and enclosure of the mixed brick clad and rendered vernacular styled buildings and associated trees and sense of topography. The buildings currently occupying the site are of poor quality but are not prominent features.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The new building would replace the existing cream coloured building occupying the site. From this view the soft coloured, brick clad gable rising to 4 storeys would be visible and above that, each stepping back from the brick elevation, are two further floors clad in metal and glass. The building would not be seen meeting the street in this view but rising above the adjacent vernacular buildings. The building is large in comparison to its neighbours but broken up materially and in form. It does add a new, prominent and positive addition to this view and urban composition, enhancing the sense of a hillside setting and potentially framing the future extended park. All other elements in the view remain unchanged.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium – *Viewers are at slow speeds or just arriving in the town / parking etc, or just coming through the viaduct from the harbour and beach area and the view is an encounter with the urban area of Balbriggan.*

The magnitude of change would be Medium – *Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity.*

The importance of the change would be Moderate in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Beneficial i.e., *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Viewpoint 3 – Looking south from the junction of Quay street / High Street

Existing View

This view is from the junction of Quay Street and High Street. The view is looking south at the steep hill that is High Street, towards the site.

In the foreground can be seen the narrow lane that is High Street bounded each side by distinctive stone walls and overhanging garden vegetation. To the right can be seen the gable of a cottage on the corner with Quay Street. In the middle distance at the top of the hill can be seen a terrace of red brick cottages as the street flattens out and the site location is indicated by the For Sale signs visible. In the distance some street trees close the view.

The stone walls, overgrown vegetation and cottages create an attractive timeless character.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The red brick clad facade and gable of the new building, matching its neighbours here, can be seen rising to 3 stories fronting onto High Street. Above this, stepped back, can be partly seen the upper metal/grey and glass clad upper floors and evidence of the roof terrace vegetation.

The new building is prominent and represents major change to this view. Whilst the change is important for the content and character of the view, this change reflects local policy for the towns development (as a Large Growth Town). Buildings of this scale are part of the change and this building materially, in form, and in response to its context and the local topography is respectful of place and setting.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium – *Viewers are at slow speeds or just arriving in the town / parking etc, or just coming through the viaduct from the harbour and beach area and the view is an encounter with the urban area of Balbriggan.*

The magnitude of change would be High – *.....introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.*

The change is Important in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Neutral i.e. *Scheme complements the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape(townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality;*

Viewpoint 4 – Looking south from High Street

Existing View

This view is from a public footpath along the upper, flatter part of High Street (above Viewpoint 3). The view is looking south from the entrance gateway of Kincora (a residential house on its own grounds overlooking Balbriggan Harbour).

In the foreground can be seen High Street stretching into the middle distance. This is enclosed to the left (east) in the wider view by redbrick and other 2 storey terraces opening on to the street. To the right of the street (west) can be seen initially single storey cottages. Beyond the cottages and in the middle of the view, the existing site entrance and mix of cream coloured structures is visible. Beyond the site as High Street progresses towards St Georges Square a 4-storey apartment block can be seen adjacent the site. A row of trees are associated with this stretch of street.

Overall, this is the view of a typical urban/town centre residential street with a mixed range of building styles and elements creating a varied but interesting character. The existing central semi-derelict buildings occupying the site are the main detractors. The view is representative of views experienced by residential receptors, and by road users and pedestrians.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The brick clad and part rendered elevation and gable details of the new building can be seen rising to 3 stories fronting onto High Street. Above this, stepped back, can be partly seen the upper metal/grey and glass clad upper floors and evidence of the roof garden vegetation, although given the proximity of the viewpoint these upper flowers are only visible in the wider field of view.

The new building replaces the existing semi-derelict structures and represents major change to this view. Whilst the change is high for the content and character of the view, this change reflects local policy for the towns development (as a Large Growth Town). Buildings of this scale are part of the

change and this building materially, in form, and in response to its context and the local topography is respectful of place and setting. Its residential use and similar scale to the adjacent recent development reflecting this approach.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is High – *Views from houses.*

The magnitude of change would be High – *Extensive intrusion of the development in the view..... to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.*

The change is Important in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Beneficial i.e. *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Viewpoint 5 – Looking north from the junction of High Street / Hampton Street

Existing View

This view is from the junction of High Street and Hampton Street looking north along High Street.

The view foreground is formed by High Street itself and its enclosing buildings. The right (east) side of the view is formed by two-storey terraced houses. To the left, in the foreground the Balbriggan Library building is visible with its attractive mellow Portmarnock brickwork and stone detailing. Beyond the library is the apartment block described in Viewpoint 4 above before the location of the site and its neglected buildings, which is only partly visible behind the central street trees. In the distance, centrally but low, in the view can be seen the distinctive railway viaduct.

Overall, as Viewpoint 4, this is the view of a typical urban/town centre partly residential street, partly civic, with a mixed range of building styles and elements creating a varied but interesting character. The view is representative of views experienced by local residents as well as visitors to the adjacent town centre area - Hampton Street / St Georges Square.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The new building will be inserted beyond the apartment building and trees in the middle of the view and will only be partly visible at this location. The sites partly visible semi-derelict buildings will be removed and replaced by the new residential apartment building. There will be little impact on this view. The montage booklet also contains a CGI with the street trees in a winter (leafless) state, and although there are increased filtered views to the new development, this is also quite limited, The screening effect of the trees in leaf or in winter will increase over time as they mature.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *viewers travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views.*

The magnitude of change would be Low – *Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.*

The importance of the change is Low in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Beneficial i.e. *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Viewpoint 6 – From the junction of Hampton Street and Church Street

Existing View

This view is from the public footpath at the junction of Hampton Street and Church Street further east from Viewpoint 5. The view is representative of views experienced by road users and pedestrians.

The foreground and middle ground is occupied by Hampton Street and the enclosure created by the colourful terraced housing to the right (north) culminating in the attractive round corner tower of the public library. The flags associated with the small plaza at St Georges Square close the centre of the view at the town centre.

The view is representative of views experienced by local residents as well as visitors to the adjacent town centre area.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The proposed development would not be visible from this location. There would be no change to the view.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *viewers travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views.*

There would be no change to the view.

Viewpoint 7 – Looking north from St. Georges Square

Existing View

This view is from the public footpath on Dublin Street opposite St Georges Square. In the foreground can be seen the road marking and junction. Across the junction can be seen the recently paved St. Georges Square and its attractive paving, trees and furniture.

Beyond that, the view is closed by the Bracken Court Hotel (the hotel is located south / south-west of the application site). The site lies behind the hotel and is not visible. In this view the topography is sloping down northwards. In the wider view to the right can be seen the modern extension to the adjacent public library.

The view is of the town centre area and the Architectural Conservation Area, and is an attractive solid urban outlook.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

A very small part of the proposed development would be visible between the hotel building and the Library building, from this location. There would be minimal change to the view.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views.*

The magnitude of change would be **Negligible** – *Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view.*

The importance of the change is **Low** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be **Neutral** i.e. *Scheme ...maintains landscape quality;*

Viewpoint 8 – Looking east from R132

Existing View

This view is from the public footpath on the west side of Drogheda Street. This view looks east along Quay Street towards the viaduct in the distance (the reverse of Viewpoint 2). The proposed development site and the existing supermarket building, rising to approximately three stories, can be seen centrally in the view facing on to Quay Street. Whilst part of an Architectural Conservation Area the buildings are in varying condition with the former supermarket in poor condition and contributing little to the streetscape. Its volume and scale contrasting with the smaller scale of the vernacular structures.

Albeit retaining some potentially attractive vernacular buildings and the distant viaduct as a focal point, the view is unattractive and uninviting.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The run-down former supermarket would be replaced by an attractive new façade rising to 4 stories with a further two stories set back with balconies and terraces. Unlike the bland façade of the existing building the proposed façade is articulated with inset balconies and different volumes and materials presenting to the street. Although a large new building, these architectural treatments link the building materially and in scale to the surrounding urban patterns – the attractive soft buff brick and rendered sections as well as the more contemporarily clad set back floors. The local topography also means the building appears similar in height to the retained vernacular buildings on the corner whilst not intruding on distant links to the viaduct and harbour area. Quay Street appears widened and new quality paving draws the eye towards the harbour and park.

The proposed building transforms the street in a positive way.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium** - *Viewers considered of medium susceptibility, such as locations where viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape. Views experienced regularly by some residents and businesses.*

The magnitude of change would be **High** – *Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.*

The change is **Important** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be **Beneficial** i.e. *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Viewpoint 9 – Looking east from Clonard Street

Existing View

This view is from the public footpath on Clonard Street approximately 175m from the junction of R132/Dublin Street and Clonard Street. The view looks east towards the town centre and the application site.

In the foreground and middle ground can be seen Clonard Street itself bounded either side by local vernacular terraced and individual houses, cottages and terraces. Centrally in the view adjacent a single storey cottage can be seen boundary walls and remnant structures with trees and garden areas behind closing the view.

The view is of an urban residential street with some partly neglected plots centrally in the view but otherwise typical in character of residential urban streets just off the town centre. Although residential in character there are detractors to the view and its proximity to the town centre creates a more urban quality.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The proposed development would not be visible from this location. There would be no change to the view

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - Viewers considered of medium susceptibility, such as locations where viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape.

There would be no change to the view.

Viewpoint 10 - Looking south from R132/Drogheda Street junction with Railway Street

Existing View

This view is from the public footpath at the junction of the R132 with Railway Street. The view is looking south towards the town centre and the Architectural Conservation Area.

In the foreground and centre of the view can be seen the R132, Balbriggan's main street. The street is bounded by mostly vernacular 2 and 3 storey building mostly in retail and creating busy commercial character. The varying building heights create an interesting roofscape culminating in the prominent upper gables of the Bracken Hotel and the numerous phone masts. The elevated location illustrates the underlying topography of the town. The application site and its current supermarket building is not visible from this location.

The view is along an interesting urban street with many positive elements and some detracting features.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The topmost floor of the proposed development and its glazed façade would be partly visible from this location. This glazed façade would be visible behind the Bracken Hotel complex which it would slightly overtop.

It would add another element to the varied roofscape visible from this location and would further contribute to the sense of enclosure in the main street and the concentration of larger buildings and elevated topography around Georges Square.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *Viewers considered of medium susceptibility, such as locations where viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views.*

The magnitude of change would be Negligible – *....introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.*

The importance of the change is Low in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Neutral i.e. *Schememaintains landscape quality.*

Viewpoint 11 – Looking west from Quay Street

Existing View

This view is from the public footpath along the north side of Quay Street. The view is looking west at the application site.

The view is completely occupied by Quay Street in the foreground and middle distance, bounded on the left (south) by terraced housing and the disused former Balbriggan Shopping Centre. At the end of Quay Street the junction with Drogheda Street can be seen. To the right (north) a local green and trees lies adjacent the street and opposite the old shopping centre some old buildings currently used as a casino.

The view is a transitional point from the harbour area to the town centre but is bleak and uninteresting with the former shopping centre creating a significant detractor from the view. Nonetheless it adjacent an amenity area and a local residence (no 11)

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The run-down former supermarket would be replaced by an attractive new façade rising to 4 stories in brick with a further two stories set back with balconies. Unlike the bland façade of the existing building the proposed façade is articulated with balconies and different volumes and materials presenting to the street. Although a large new building these architectural treatments – soft buff brick and render - link the building materially and in scale/grain to the surrounding urban patterns. The eastern gable and corner adds interest to the view in its elevations and window patterns. The local topography also means the building appears similar in height to the buildings on Drogheda Street where the topography is higher.

The proposed building transforms and animates the street in a positive way creating an attractive new and sensitively composed landmark.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *Viewers considered of medium susceptibility, such as locations where viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views.*

The magnitude of change would be High– *Extensive intrusion of the development in the view.*

The effect is Important in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Beneficial i.e. *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Viewpoint 12 - Looking south from Mill Street

Existing View

This view is from outside the Intreo office on Mill Street. It looks south across the town car-park towards the development site. There are also a number of residence on upper floors at this location.

In the foreground can be seen the car-park which is well provided for with trees which, although still semi-mature, enclose the view and block distant views above street level. To the left (east) of centre of the view a small pedestrian bridge leads across the Bracken River to Quay Street. The buildings along Quay street can only be partly seen – typically half of the ground floor beneath the tree line. To the right of the view, can be seen the rear of the casino building and above that the staggered roofscape and upper floors of the Bracken Court Hotel. The former shopping centre site is only partly viable at ground level on Quay Street

Although a utilitarian piece of infrastructure the car-park is well provided with trees and greenery and the view is soft and pleasant.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The proposed new building would rise on Quay Street behind and above the casino building in this view. The upper stories of an attractive new façade rising to 4 stories in brick and render with a further two stories set back with balconies and terrace spaces would replace the current view of the back of the Bracken Court Hotel. As described for other viewpoints looking at Quay Street, the proposed façade is articulated with balconies and different volumes and materials presenting to the street. Although a large new building these architectural treatments link the building materially and in scale/grain to the surrounding urban patterns. From this location it presents a wide new frontage to the viewer rather than the rear structures of the adjacent hotel. From this viewpoint it would be closer to the viewer than the hotel and appear a little higher and creating a strong urban enclosure and place-making statement to the view across the car-park.

The proposed building transforms and animates this view and frames the urban space occupied by the car-park in a positive way.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *Viewers considered of medium susceptibility, such as locations where viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views.*

The magnitude of change would be High– *Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.*

The effect is Important in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Beneficial i.e. *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Viewpoint 13 - Looking south-west from the Viaduct

Existing View

This view is from the footpath over the viaduct. This view is an elevated location representative of views experienced by pedestrians and commuters of the Dart and train.

The townscape and the characteristic topography of the town is evident in the view. In the foreground can be seen the Quay Street Park, playground, the Bracken River and the Quay Car Park and a residential dwelling. There are many trees in this area giving an attractive leafy setting to the hill town character of Balbriggan beyond. In the middle ground, Quay Street and its terraces are visible left of centre in the view and High Street rising up behind. To the right (west) of High Street a more urban area typical of the town centre is visible including the blank gable of the recent apartments on High Street, the rear of the extended public library at St Georges Square and further west the staggered and haphazard structures that form the rear of the Bracken Court Hotel. These buildings are interspersed with occasional trees, further west the town centre disappears behind intervening trees.

The proposed development site is only partly perceivable behind trees and existing buildings.

Although with gable and back end buildings as detractors this is a panoramic view of the town and its distinctive form and setting.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The proposed development will see a dramatic transformation of the entire built form between High Street and Quay Street. The upper half of the cluster of new buildings that form the development will be seen above the lower roofscapes and trees. And they will screen current views to the rear of the buildings behind, which currently detract from the panorama. Unlike the existing larger buildings visible there are no blank gables as the architecture negotiates the site perimeter with animated facades of windows, balconies, planting and distinctive volumes that, despite the overall size of the development, fit comfortably within the urban grain.

The building is large but responds to its setting and local distinctiveness. The upper glazed floor of the Quay Street block reflects the lower broken up building volumes and overall the building makes a positive contribution to the composition of a new townscape panorama from this location, emphasising the local topography. The image is consistent with that of a large growth centre.

Visual Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is Medium - *Viewers considered of medium susceptibility, such as locations where viewers are travelling at slow or moderate speeds through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views.*

The magnitude of change would be High – *Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.*

The effect is Important in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Beneficial i.e. *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

Viewpoint 14 - Looking south-west from the Quay Street Playground

Existing View

This view is from the path along the river and adjacent to the Quay Street Playground. The view is looking south-west towards the town centre.

In the foreground can be seen the Bracken River stone boundary walls and railings, pedestrian bridge, and the surrounding park area of lawns and trees. In the centre of the view on Quay Street can be seen the large and ugly walls of the Balbriggan Shopping Centre, currently occupying the site. The Bracken Court Hotel can be seen rising behind the shopping centre structure.

The foreground park view is very attractive with much potential and the play area a local amenity the built backdrop currently provides a very poor outlook.

Proposed Changes and Impacts

The proposed development would dramatically transform the focal point of this view. Previously occupied by the former shopping centre structure and the back of the Bracken Court Hotel, the full façade to Quay Street would now provide a dramatic and attractive new composition with the adjacent trees and river. The built forms break up the building and changes in materiality mean the large building cluster reads at a grain or scale appropriate to its distinctive setting – the attractive articulated buff brick gable/corner creating a distinctive landmark. It is a place-making intervention of scale both in this view and also for the town, and transforms the “back of town” character of this area.

Visual Impacts and Effects

The viewpoint sensitivity is High - *Viewers at viewpoints that that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from houses or outdoor recreation features) and views which are highly valued by the local community. This may also include tourist attractions, and heritage features of regional or county value, and viewers travelling on scenic routes.*

The magnitude of change would be High – *Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.*

The change is **Important** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact would be Beneficial i.e. *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

7.2 Summary of Visual Effects

The following table summarises the results of the assessment of the effects of the proposed development on the visual resource.

Table 4: Summary of Visual Effects

VP No.	Location	Sensitivity	Degree of Change	Importance and Quality		
				Short	Medium	Long
1	From the lighthouse	Medium	Low	Low and Neutral		
2	Harbour Road	Medium	Medium	Moderate and Beneficial		
3	Quay street / High Street	Medium	High	Important and Neutral		
4	High Street	High	High	Important and Beneficial		
5	High Street / Hampton Street	Medium	Low	Low and Beneficial		
6	Hampton Street	Medium	No Change	No Change		
7	St. Georges Square	Medium	Negligible	Low and Neutral		
8	Bridge Street / Quay Street	Medium	High	Important and Beneficial		
9	Clonard Street	Medium	No Change	No Change		
10	Drogheda Street	Medium	Negligible	Low and Neutral		
11	Quay Street	Medium	High	Important and Beneficial		
12	Mill Street	Medium	High	Important and Beneficial		
13	Viaduct walkway	Medium	High	Important and Beneficial		
14	Quay Street Park	High	High	Important and Beneficial		

The proposed development is expected to have a temporary adverse effect on the visual resource during construction. Upon operation and into the future, the development is expected to have a neutral or beneficial long term / permanent effect on the visual resource.

8 PREDICTED EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Landscape Effects

The importance of the proposed development in terms of its effect on the landscape / townscape is considered to be Moderate

The quality of the effect is primarily visual in the immediate vicinity of the site, where the scale and size of the proposed building contrasts or complements the character and scale of the immediate surroundings. The development would however replace a currently derelict or underused and visually poor site, and would contribute positively to the local urban structure and urban renewal policy objectives. The building cluster although large is designed to reflect the organic and hap-hazard local roofscape and built form arranged on local hills within the centre of Balbriggan. The materials proposed break up a potentially large structure with locally common finishes, renders and brickwork, allowing it to sit comfortably in the receiving environment. The landscape / townscape is therefore considered Beneficial - *improves landscape(townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.*

8.2 Visual Impact and Effects

14 viewpoints were assessed for visual impacts and effects. Two recorded no change to the view – the development was not visible.

Eight recorded Moderate to Important visual effects. Seven of these were Beneficial and one Neutral. Of the remaining three viewpoints, two were of Low Importance and Neutral and one of Low Importance and Beneficial

In other words from a visual effect perspective, where the effect is most Important it is also Beneficial to the view – a positive addition and change.

8.3 Summary

The design has undergone many iterations to achieve an elegant design in this town centre site. The development is a large intervention in the town however its effects on the local townscape are broadly Beneficial and no Adverse effects predicted.

It therefore represents, from a landscape and visual effect perspective, an appropriate new development within the receiving environment and addition to Balbriggan's distinctive townscape.