

TWIA

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Stradbroom
Strategic Housing
Development

South County Dublin



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LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Landscape/Townscape and Visual impact Assessment report has been prepared in respect of the Stradbroke Strategic Housing Development (SHD) at Blackrock Rugby club, Stradbroke Road, South County Dublin. This report describes the townscape/visual context of the proposed development and assesses the likely impacts of the scheme on the receiving environment, in terms of both townscape character and visual amenity.

Landscape/townscape assessment relates to changes in the physical environment, brought about by a proposed development, which may alter its character. This requires a detailed analysis of the individual elements and characteristics of a landscape/townscape that go together to make up the overall character of that area. By understanding the aspects that contribute to this character it is possible to make judgements in relation to its quality (integrity) and to identify key sensitivities. This, in turn, provides a measure of the ability of the landscape/townscape in question to accommodate the type and scale of change associated with the proposed development, without causing unacceptable adverse changes to its character.

Visual Impact Assessment relates to changes in the composition of views as a result of changes to the landscape/townscape, how these are perceived and the effects on visual amenity. Such impacts are population-based, rather than resource-based, as in the case of landscape impacts.

1.1 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

This Landscape/Townscape and Visual Assessment report was prepared by Macro Works Ltd of Cherrywood Business Park, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18; a consultancy firm specialising in Landscape and Visual Assessment and associated maps, graphics and verified photomontages. Relevant experience includes a vast range of infrastructural, industrial and commercial projects since 1999, including numerous mixed-used development projects.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed mixed-use development at a site of some 0.4813 ha on Stradbroke Road, Mountashton, Blackrock, Co. Dublin will comprise: the demolition of existing buildings and surface car park, and the construction of: 108 No. Build-to-Rent residential senior living apartments (83 No. 1-bed apartments and 25 No. 2-bed apartments), with balconies / winter gardens at all elevations, across 2 No. blocks ranging between 3 to 7-storeys with set back at sixth-floor level and additional basement storey. The proposal also includes for 148 No. secure bicycle parking spaces, 55 No. underground car parking spaces, a two-way vehicular entrance ramp and bin storage, circulation areas and associated plant at basement level; a self-contained office unit, a residential staff management suite, resident's facilities, residents' communal amenity rooms, and residents' communal open space, as well as 13 No. surface car parking spaces (incl. 1 No. accessible commercial car parking space and 12 No. car parking spaces for use by the adjoining creche (incl. 1 No. accessible)), 24 No. secure cycle spaces within separate bike store, separate bin store for office use, 30 No. short-term bicycle parking spaces, and 3 No. ESB substations at ground floor level; additional communal amenity rooms at first, second, third, fourth and fifth-floor levels; roof gardens / terraces at third, fourth and sixth-floor levels; green roofs; and PV panels on third, fourth and sixth-floor roof-level; amendments to existing boundary wall to provide new vehicular and pedestrian entrances; provision of security gates; and associated site landscaping, lighting and servicing, and all associated works above and below ground.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

Production of this Landscape/Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment involved:

- A desktop study to establish an appropriate study area and relevant landscape and visual designations in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-22;
- Fieldwork undertaken in April 2022 to study the receiving environment;
- Assessment of the significance of the landscape impact of the proposed development as a function of landscape sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the landscape impact;
- Assessment of the significance of the visual impact of the proposed development as a function of visual receptor sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact.

This document uses methodology as prescribed in the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and landscape Institute (UK) 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA-2013).

Although this is principally a 'townscape' assessment, it utilises the same outline methodology as would be employed for the more familiar Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of developments in rural settings. The justification for this approach is provided below.

It is important to note that the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA-2013) follow the European Landscape Convention (ELC) definition of landscape: *'Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'* (Council of Europe, 2000). Thus, GLVIA-2013 covers all landscapes from *"high mountains and wild countryside to urban and fringe farmland (rural landscapes), marine and coastal landscapes (seascapes) and the landscapes of villages towns and cities (townscapes)"* - whether protected or degraded.

In the case of this project, the study area is overwhelmingly that of an urban setting or 'townscape' and this is defined in GLVIA-2013 in the following manner (Section 2.7):

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

1.3.1 Landscape/townscape Impact Assessment Criteria

When assessing the potential impacts on the townscape resulting from a proposed development, the following criteria are considered:

- Landscape/townscape character, value and sensitivity;
- Magnitude of likely impacts;
- Significance of landscape effects.

The sensitivity of the townscape to change is the degree to which a particular setting can accommodate changes or new elements without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. Landscape/townscape Value and Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1: Landscape/Townscape Value and Sensitivity

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

The magnitude of a predicted landscape/townscape impact is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed Development. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape/townscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the immediate setting that may have an effect on the townscape character. **Table 1-2 below** refers.

Table 1-2: Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Impacts

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale with the loss of critically important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of important townscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale involving the loss of landscape characteristics or elements that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to changes in landscape character, and quality.
Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements.
Negligible	Changes affecting small or very restricted areas of landscape character. This may include the limited loss of some elements or the addition of some new features or elements that are characteristic of the existing landscape or are hardly perceivable.
Positive	Changes that restore a degraded landscape or reinforce characteristic landscape elements.

The significance of a landscape/townscape impact is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The significance of landscape impacts is arrived at using the following matrix set out in **Table 1-3**.

Table 1-3: Impact Significance Matrix

	Sensitivity of Receptor				
Scale/Magnitude	<i>Very High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Negligible</i>
<i>Very High</i>	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Minor
<i>High</i>	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-imperceptible

<i>Medium</i>	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible
<i>Low</i>	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
<i>Negligible</i>	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

Note: The significance matrix provides an indicative framework from which the significance of impact is derived. The significance judgement is ultimately determined by the assessor using professional judgement. Due to nuances within the constituent sensitivity and magnitude judgements, this may be up to one category higher or lower than indicated by the matrix. Judgements indicated in orange are considered to be ‘significant impacts’ in EIA terms.

1.3.2 Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

As with the landscape/townscape impact, the visual impact of the proposed development will be assessed as a function of sensitivity versus magnitude. In this instance the sensitivity of the visual receptor, weighed against the magnitude of the visual effect.

1.3.2.1 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Unlike landscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric (human) basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape/townscape context of the viewer, the likely activity they are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape. A list of the factors considered by the assessor in estimating the level of sensitivity for a particular visual receptor is outlined below to establish visual receptor sensitivity at each VRP:

1.3.2.2 Susceptibility of Receptors

In accordance with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (“IEMA”) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (3rd edition 2013) visual receptors most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are:

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

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

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

1.3.2.3 Values Associated with the View

Recognised scenic value of the view

(County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards etc). These represent a consensus in terms of which scenic views and routes within an area are strongly valued by the population because in the case of County Developments Plans, for example, a public consultation process is required;

Views from within highly sensitive townscape areas

These are likely to be in the form of Architectural Conservation Areas, which are incorporated within the Development Plan and therefore subject to the public consultation process. Viewers within such areas are likely to be highly attuned to the townscape around them;

Primary views from residential receptors

Even within a dynamic city context views from residential properties are an important consideration in respect of residential amenity;

Intensity of use, popularity

This relates to the number of viewers likely to experience a view on a regular basis and whether this is significant at a national or regional scale;

Viewer connection with the townscape

This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the townscape i.e. commuters hurriedly driving on busy roads versus tourists focussed on the character and detail of the townscape;

Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views

This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;

Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity

Receptors taking in a remote and tranquil scene, which is likely to be fairly static, are likely to be more receptive to changes in the view than those taking in the view of a busy street scene, for example;

Degree of perceived naturalness

Where a view is valued for the sense of naturalness of the surrounding landscape it is likely to be highly sensitive to visual intrusion by distinctly manmade features;

Presence of striking or noteworthy features

A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape / townscape feature such as a cathedral or castle;

Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance

Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;

Rarity or uniqueness of the view.

This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain townscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;

Integrity of the townscape character

This looks at the condition and intactness of the townscape in view and whether the townscape pattern is a regular one of few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;

Sense of place

This considers whether there is special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location;

Sense of awe

This considers whether the view inspires an overwhelming sense of scale or the power of nature.

Those locations which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria are likely to be of higher sensitivity. No relative importance is inferred by the order of listing. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

1.3.3 Visual Impact Magnitude

The visual impact magnitude relates to the scale and nature of the visual change brought about by the proposal and this is reflected in the criteria contained in **Table 1.4** below.

Table 1.4: Magnitude of Visual Impacts

Criteria	Description
Very High	The proposal alters a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most distinctive element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene
High	The proposal alters a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also likely to be generated, appreciably reducing the visual amenity of the scene

Medium	The proposal represents a moderate alteration to the available vista, is a readily noticeable element and/or it may generate a degree of visual clutter or disharmony, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene.
Low	The proposal alters the available vista to a minor extent and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene.
Negligible	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not detract from, and may even enhance, the visual amenity of the scene.
Positive	Changes that enhance the available vista by reducing visual clutter or restoring degraded features.

1.3.4 Visual Impact Significance

As stated above, the significance of visual impacts is a function of visual receptor sensitivity and visual impact magnitude. This relationship is expressed in the same significance matrix and applies the same EPA definitions of significance as used earlier in respect of townscape impacts (see **Table 1-3** above).

1.3.5 Quality and Duration of Effects

In addition to assessing the significance of landscape/townscape effects and visual effects, EPA Guidance for EIAs requires that the quality of the effects is also determined. This could be negative/adverse, neutral, or positive/beneficial.

Whereas, the introduction of new built elements into countryside areas more often results in negative landscape and visual effects, in urban and/or peri-urban settings, development proposals are often replacing one built feature with another. The consequence for the townscape character and visual amenity is often beneficial, or may be a combination of positive effects and negative effects for different receptors. In the context of this assessment, the judgment of the quality of the effects is made in combination with the significance judgement for both landscape/townscape impacts and visual impacts (e.g. Moderate / Positive or Moderate / Negative).

Landscape and Visual effects are also categorised according to their duration:

- 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; and
- Permanent – Lasting over sixty years.

1.3.6 Extent of Study Area

Owing to the scale of the built-up development in this locality, it is anticipated that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to significant landscape/townscape or visual impacts beyond approximately 1km. As a result, a 1km-radius study area is used in this instance.



Figure 1.0 - Study area for the proposed development

1.4 THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The landscape/townscape baseline represents the existing context and is the scenario against which any changes to it, brought about by the proposed development, will be assessed. A description of the landscape/townscape context of the proposed site and wider study area is provided below in Section 1.4.1. Although this description forms part of the landscape/townscape baseline, many of the elements identified also relate to visual receptors i.e. places from which viewers can potentially see the proposed development. The visual resource will be described in greater detail in Section 1.8.

1.4.1 Baseline Environment

1.4.1.1 Immediate Site Context

The site itself is contained in the existing car park and access areas of Stradbrook Rugby Club and also incorporates park of the Links Childcare facility (building and car park). Immediately to the east and northeast are the club rooms and rugby pitches used by Stradbrook / Blackrock College rugby clubs, beyond which is the cul-de-sac residential enclave of Brook Crescent. Similar mid to low density cul-de-sacs of semi-detached housing occur to the north and northwest of the site (Wynberg Park, Stradbrook Grove, Rowan Park Avenue) as well as to the southeast of the site (Windsor Park, Ashton Park). Higher density apartments and terraced houses occur across Stradbrook Road to the west at Rockford Manor with Rockford Manor Secondary School to the south of that.



Figure 1.1 – The site at Stradbrook / Blackrock Rugby Club looking north

1.4.1.2 Broader Townscape Context

The same pattern of generally mid to low density residential development interspersed occasionally by sports pitches / open spaces and institutional uses continues throughout the wider study area. Notable commercial areas and neighbourhood centres occur at Monkstown Village (800m northeast) and Deansgrange (1km south), whilst the larger Blackrock Village is just beyond the study area to the northwest. Other notable features include a small section of the coastline at Seapoint Beach at the northern periphery of the study area as well as an equally short section of the coastal Dart line in that same area. The extensive Deansgrange Cemetery occupies a substantial portion of the southwestern extents of the study area.

1.4.1.3 Historic Context

The site occurs on late 19th century / early 20th century maps as farmland associated with a series of large stately houses associated with wealthy Dublin merchants of that time. These include Rockford Manor, Wynberg, Somerset and Windsor, which have often lent their names to the housing estates that have replaced or surrounded them in the present day context.

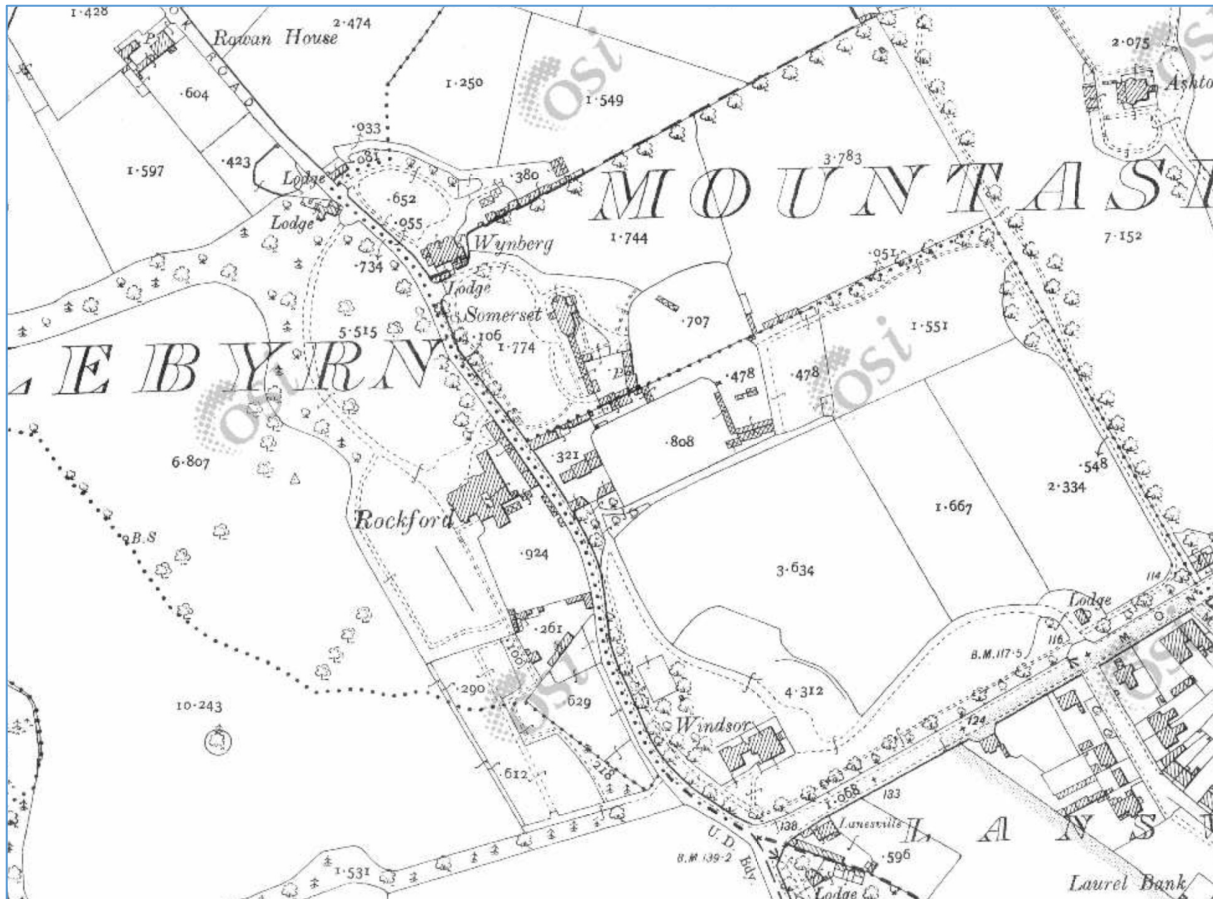


Figure 1.4 – Ordnance Survey Historic Map 25 inch (1888-1913)

1.5 PLANNING CONTEXT

1.5.1 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Development Plan 2022 – 2028

According to the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Development Plan:

- The site is zoned under Land Use Zoning Objective 'E', *'to provide for economic development and employment'* abutted to the east by Zoning Objective 'F', *'to preserve and provide for open space with ancillary active recreational amenities'*. ^[SEP]
- There are three protected structures within the vicinity, being Wynberg, Rockford Manor and Windsor. There is also a series of stately house protected structures within Monkstown Valley in the north of the study area and beyond these is the Monkstown Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). The ACA lines Monkstown Road and extends seaward towards Seapoint.

- In the near vicinity of the site is the objective to ‘Protect and Preserve Trees and Woodlands’ at several locations with the closest being immediately north near the boundary of Wynberg house.
- There are protected views within the study area, but these are elevated seaward views from Seapoint Road i.e. in the opposite direction to the site in the northern periphery of the study area.

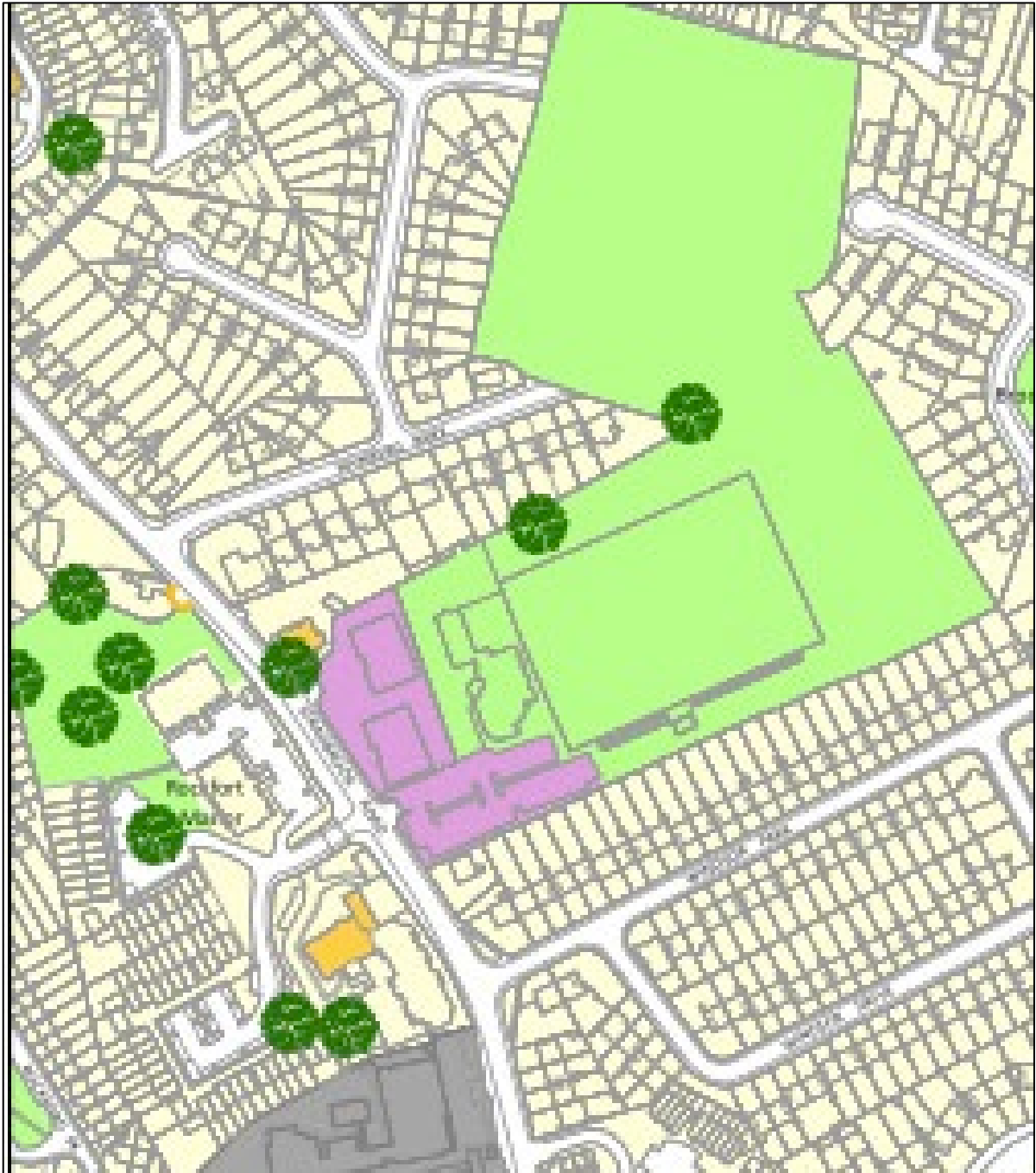


Figure 1.13 – extract of the development plan's Map 3

1.5.1.1 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Building Heights Strategy

The Dun Laoghaire CDP contains a Building Heights Strategy in Appendix 5, which also acknowledges the national ‘Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines’ (2018). Within the CDP building

Heights Strategy specific Local Area Plans and Urban Framework Plans are identified in terms of policies. The site is not contained within any of these areas, but Architectural Conservation Areas such as the Monkstown ACA, from which the proposed development is potentially visible, are also covered. The following Policy applies:

Policy AR8: Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) states that it is Council policy to protect the special character of places, areas, groups of structures or townscapes, which have been designated as Architectural Conservation Areas. While the purpose of a designation is to protect and enhance the special character of an area, it is important to stress that this does not preclude any appropriate forms of new development. Impact on ACAs is included in the Performance Based Criteria set out in Section 5.

The 'Coastal Fringe' is also specifically identified in terms of potential impacts from tall buildings;

"Most of the County's outstanding architectural heritage is located along the coast. In particular, the high quality building stock in Booterstown, Blackrock, Monkstown, Dún Laoghaire, Dalkey and Killiney has created a unique waterfront of high architectural and historical value. Views from the Irish Sea and East Pier capture the remarkable coastline with its historic seafront. Impact on the Coastal fringe is included in the Performance Based Criteria set out in Section 5".

As the site is not contained within a specific LAP of UFP area, Policy Policy 'BHS 3 is relevant;

BH3 Building Height in Residual Suburban Area - It is a policy objective to promote general building height of 3 to 4 storeys, coupled with appropriate density in what are termed the residual suburban areas of the County provided that proposals ensure a balance between the reasonable protection of existing amenities including residential amenity and the established character of the area. Having regard to the Building Height Guidelines and more specifically in order to apply SPPR 3 there may be instances where an argument can be made for increased height and/or taller buildings in the residual suburban areas. Any such proposals must be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out below in table 5.1 as contained in Section 5. The onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate compliance with the criteria. Within the built up area of the County increased height can be defined as buildings taller than prevailing building height in the surrounding area. Taller buildings are defined as those that are significantly taller (more than 2 storeys taller) than the prevailing height for the area.

With regard to the 28 separate criteria contained in Table 5.1 of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Building Height guidelines, it is considered that the most relevant to townscape and visual impact are;

"Proposal must respond to its overall natural and built environment and make a positive contribution to the urban neighbourhood and streetscape".

"Proposal should not be monolithic and should avoid long, uninterrupted walls of building in the form of slab blocks".

"Proposal must make a positive contribution to the improvement of legibility through the site or wider urban area. Where the building meets the street, public realm should be improved".

“Proposal must positively contribute to the mix of uses and /or building/dwelling typologies available in the area. Design Statement. Proposal should provide an appropriate level of enclosure of streets or spaces”.

“Proposal should ensure no significant adverse impact on adjoining properties by way of overlooking overbearing and/or overshadowing”.

“Proposal should not negatively impact on an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) or the setting of a protected structure”.

1.5.1.1 National ‘Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines’ (2018)

The Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines include policies that would, where appropriate, permit additional heights over those permissible under current Local Authority development plans. These Guidelines state that; In the event of making a planning application, the applicant shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority/ An Bord Pleanála, that the proposed development satisfies the following criteria:

There are seventeen criteria then set out with the most relevant being:

At the scale of the relevant city/town

The site is well served by public transport with high capacity, frequent service and good links to other modes of public transport

Development proposals incorporating increased building height, including proposals within architecturally sensitive areas, should successfully integrate into / enhance the character and public realm of the area, having regard to topography, its cultural context, setting of key landmarks, protection of key views. Such development proposals shall undertake a landscape and visual assessment, by a suitably qualified practitioner such as a chartered landscape architect.

At the scale of district/ neighbourhood/ street:

The proposal positively contributes to the mix of uses and/ or building/ dwelling typologies available in the neighbourhood

At the scale of the site/building:

The form, massing and height of proposed developments should be carefully modulated so as to maximise access to natural daylight, ventilation and views and minimise overshadowing and loss of light

The above factors will be considered in the context of the following assessment sections of this report.

1.6 Identification of Viewshed Reference Points as a Basis for Assessment

Viewpoints (VPs) are the locations used to study the likely visual impacts associated with the proposed development. It is not warranted to include each and every location that provides a view as this would result in an unwieldy report and make it extremely difficult to draw out the key impacts arising from the proposed development. Instead, the selected viewpoints are intended to reflect a range of

different receptor types, distances and angles. The visual impact of a proposed development is assessed using up to 6 categories of receptor type as listed below:

- Key Views - from features of national or international importance;
- Designated Scenic Routes and Views;
- Local Community views;
- Centres of Population;
- Major Routes;
- Amenity and heritage features.

The Viewpoints selected in this instance are set out in Table 1.5 and shown on Figure 1.14 below.

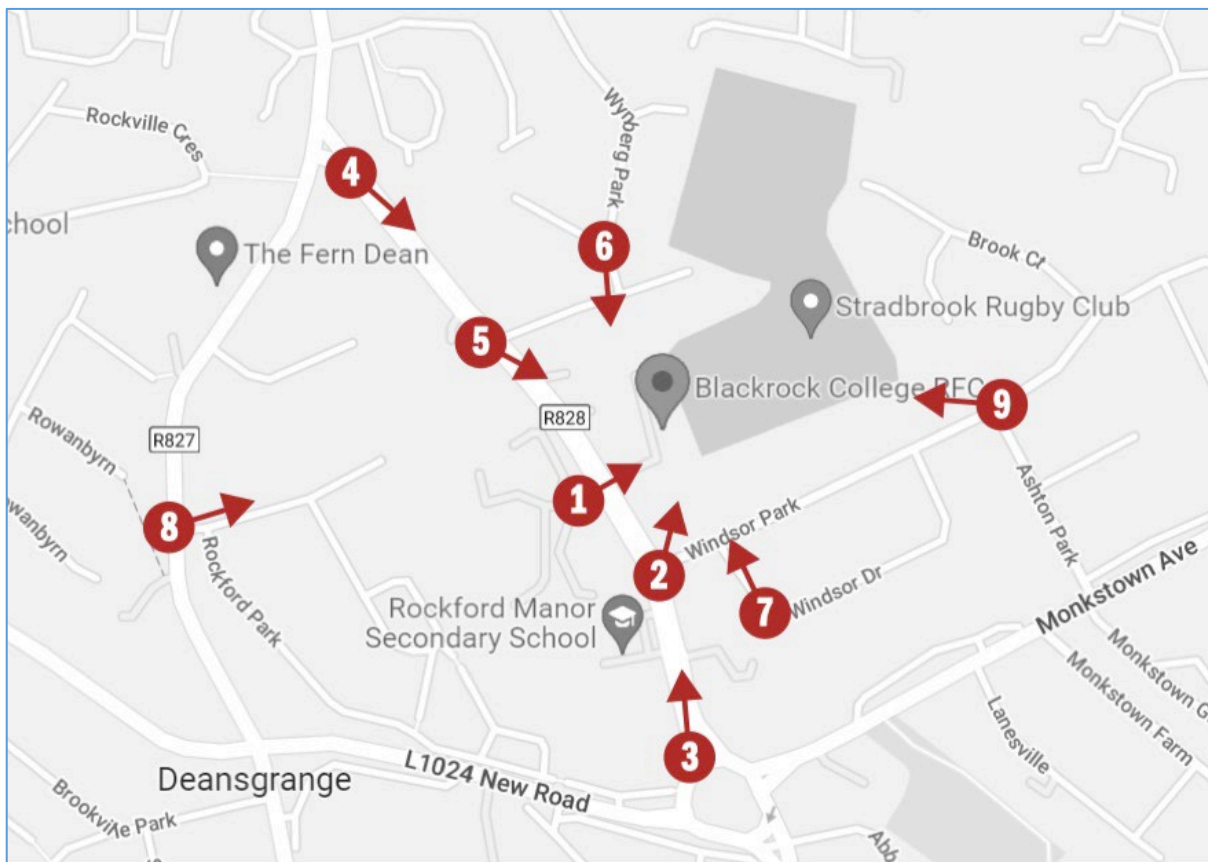


Figure 1.14 – Viewpoint Selection Map (Source: Redline Studios)

Table 1-5 Outline Description of Selected Viewshed Reference Points (VRPs)

VRP No.	Location	Direction of view
VP1	Rockford Manor	NE
VP2	Stradbroke Road - opposite Windsor Park Entrance	N

VP3	Stradbroke Road - opposite Rockford Manor Secondary School	N
VP4	Stradbroke Road (north)	SE
VP5	Stradbroke Road - at Wynberg Park Entrance	SE
VP6	Wynberg Park	S
VP7	Windsor Drive	NW
VP8	Rockford Park Entrance	NE
VP9	Ashton Park	W

1.7 PREDICTED IMPACTS

1.7.1 Landscape/townscape Impacts

1.7.1.1 Landscape/townscape value and sensitivity

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

The site and its immediate surrounds is a mix of typical suburban land uses, but principally mid to low density semi-detached housing estates surrounding Stradbroke Rugby Club. The site has evolved from farmland over the past century where it was associated with the wealthy Dublin merchant houses that were originally scattered around Monkstown Village.

Whilst the surrounding urban area is a relatively consistent and generally unremarkable matrix of housing estates consisting of detached, semi-detached and terraced two storey housing, the townscape in the northern extents of the study area has a more varied character of overlapping architectural eras and coastal influence. The area contained within the Monkstown ACA and the coastal band between there and Seapoint Beach is the most distinct and sensitive portion of the study area. However, due to the intervening terrain and mature vegetation of Monkstown Valley coupled with ground levels that fall towards the sea north of Monkstown Road, the site is relatively discrete from this more sensitive ACA and coastal zone in both a contextual and visual sense.

For the reasons outlined above, the receiving townscape setting is considered to be **Medium-low** in terms of sensitivity.

1.7.1.2 Magnitude of Landscape/townscape effects

Construction Phase

There will be permanent physical effects to the land cover of the site, which are not readily reversible following the construction stage. The hard and soft landcover of the site along with the existing creche building will be excavated / demolished to make way for a basement car park and high density apartment build and associated podium level courtyard landscaping.

During the construction stage of the proposed development, which is estimated to take approx. 18-24 months, there will be intense construction-related activity within and around the site, including approach roads. This will include, but is not limited to:

- HGVs transporting materials to and from the site;
- Movement of heavy earth-moving machinery and the erection of tall tower cranes on-site;
- Temporary storage of excavated materials and construction materials on-site;
- Gradual emergence of the proposed apartment building draped in scaffolding and debris barrier;
- Security fencing and site lighting.

Early construction stage effects will mainly relate to the comings and goings of construction vehicles to and from the site and the presence of tower cranes. Much of the basement and ground level work as well as the movement of machinery / workers and stockpiling of materials will occur behind site perimeter hoardings. Construction stage impacts will be greatest as the emerging, scaffolding covered, apartment building shell rises into view for surrounding receptors and contribute negatively to views and townscape character. However, construction stage impacts on landscape/townscape character will be 'short-term' (i.e. lasting 1-7 years TBC), in accordance with the EPA definitions of impact duration. Furthermore, the context of this construction activity is within a broad suburban context where the construction of multi-storey buildings has been established and is a familiar feature.

On the basis of the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts is deemed to be **Medium**. When combined with the Medium-low sensitivity of the receiving landscape, the overall significance of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts is considered to be **Moderate**, of a **Negative** quality and a **Short-term** duration.

Operational Phase

Following the completion of the proposed works the former rugby club car park and creche building will be permanently transformed and occupied by a substantial apartment buildings, parking areas, vehicle / pedestrian circulation routes as well as intensive landscaped courtyards. There will be a much stronger element of built form addressing Stradbroke Road at a point where it will be a key feature of the street scene approaching the bend in the road from both the north and south. The Stradbroke Rugby clubrooms and pitches will be overlooked by the apartment building which will serve as a westerly backdrop to the view across the sports pitches. It will also serve as a more abrupt entry threshold to the sporting venue. There will be an increased scale and intensity of built development in this immediate locality, but it will be somewhat balanced by the 4 storey apartment buildings of the Rockford Manor development on the opposite side of the Stradbroke Road.

Within the wider context, the most notable townscape impacts of the proposed development will

result from the permanent presence of a new residential apartment development rising to between 3 and 7 storeys in height either within the Stradbrook Road street scene or above vegetation and houses from surrounding housing estates. The proposed development will introduce an increased scale and density of residential development into a suburban setting that is principally defined by lower density housing estates of terraced and semi-detached dwellings fronting distributor roads or contained within looping estate roads and cul-de-sacs. However, there is some diversity of scale and function in the immediate vicinity of the site in the form of apartment buildings (Rockford Manor), a rugby club with associated pitches and clubrooms and commercial buildings (creche and offices), as well as a secondary school. In this regard the site is contained within one of the more diverse areas of land use and built form within the overall study area (1km radius).

Whilst the scale of the tallest seven storey apartment block of the proposed development is a notable uplift in built form intensity for the area, there is a deliberate terracing down in the scale of built elements closer to the boundaries (3 storeys), which is supported by varied tones and textures of the façade elements for each block. This helps to integrate and assimilate the development into its receiving environment and breaks down the bulk and massing of the structures.

The scale and nature of the proposed development is by no means incongruous in the wider context of the study area where there has been a recent trend in both the construction and permission for residential apartment developments (Dalguise Site, Monkstown Valley; Fern Dean on Rowan Park, and; Deansgrange). Furthermore, the proposed development represents a high quality of design and materials that transforms the site from a slightly ambiguous and evolved (rather than designed) arrangement of predominantly car parking and unremarkable commercial buildings.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development will have a townscape impact of **Medium** magnitude within the central study area (c <200m) and thereafter, the impact will reduce to Slight and Imperceptible with increasing distance as the development becomes a proportionally smaller component of the broader landscape fabric.

When coupled with the Medium-low townscape sensitivity judgement, the Medium townscape impact judgement is deemed to result in an overall significance of townscape effect that is no greater than **Moderate-slight** i.e. in the immediate context. On balance of the scale and intensity of the development weighed against its overall quality of design and materials, the quality of effect is deemed to be marginally Negative – i.e. **Negative-Neutral**.

1.8 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1.8.1 Visual Receptor Sensitivity

In consideration of the visual receptor criteria set out in section 1.3, there is little material variation in the sensitivity of receptors. Whilst Stradbrook Road is a relatively busy distributor road it is still principally defined as a residential road with residential receptors and thus the visual sensitivity is equivalent to the surrounding residential housing estates. Residential receptors are amongst the more sensitive receptor types identified in the relevant guidelines, but the other consideration is the value of views on offer. In the context of the selected viewpoint set there are no protected views, Architectural Conservation Areas or rare and distinctive features. Instead, they can all be classified as

typical and relatively contained suburban views in a dynamic setting where a degree of visual change in the form or development / redevelopment is frequent and expected. For these reasons the sensitivity of visual receptors is deemed to be **Medium-low** in all cases.

1.8.2 Magnitude of Visual Effect

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

1. Existing View
2. Montage View upon completion of all proposed works

VP No.	<i>Title and description of existing view</i>	<i>Receptor Sensitivity</i>	<i>Description and Magnitude of Visual impact</i>	<i>Residual Significance / Quality / Duration of Visual Impact</i>
VP1	Rockford Manor - This is a view from the opposite side of the Stradbroke Road at the entrance to the Rockford Manor housing estate. Beyond the treelined road corridor is the entrance to Stradbroke Rugby Club flanked by a c. 2m high stone wall back by dense vegetation.	ML	The proposed apartment buildings will rise prominently, but not overbearingly into view just beyond the roadside wall on the eastern side of Stradbroke Road. The entrance to the site is widened and a modest lateral proportion of the overall development can be seen between intervening street trees rising to 6 storeys plus penthouse level. The building presents with a high quality of design and materials and does not appear as an ambiguous scale or form of development in this suburban setting. However, it does increase the intensity and scale of development in a general sense. On balance of these factors the magnitude of visual change is deemed to be High-medium and the quality of the effect marginally negative i.e. Neutral-Negative	Moderate / Neutral-Negative / Permanent
VP2	Stradbroke Road - opposite Windsor Park Entrance - This is a view along Stradbroke Road in a northward direction where a terrace of residential development frames the left hand side of the view beyond a roadside stone wall. The opposite side of the road is defined by block and stone walls with dense vegetation behind. The nearest dwellings for the Windsor Park Housing estate gable on to the road.	ML	The proposed apartment buildings will rise as a distinct and prominent feature in the near middle distance and will contribute a degree of enclosure to the road that was heretofore not present. Nonetheless, it does not present with an undue degree of bulk or massing to the street scene and there is a welcome terracing up in building height away from the viewer. This terracing makes for an appropriate transition of scale up from the foreground residential dwellings and also allows for a variation in materials and massing that generates visual interest and deemphasises bulk and scale. Again, the scale and intensity of development is considerably increased in the street scene. It reads as infill development, but with a step up in scale from the mid to low	Moderate / Neutral-Negative / Permanent

			density development that currently defines this setting. On balance of these factors the magnitude of visual change is deemed to be Medium and the quality of the effect marginally negative i.e. Neutral-Negative.	
VP3	Stradbroke Road - Opposite Rockford Manor Secondary School - This view has a similar context to VP2, but is slightly further away from the site on the opposite side of Stradbroke Road. There are two storey terraced houses with front yards / driveways to the right and Rockford Manor Secondary School to the left with residential development beyond. The chimney pots of Rockford Manor (House) can be seen rising beyond the school roof. The road alignment is distinct in the absence of development beyond roadside vegetation as the road veers downhill to the left.	ML	The proposed apartment building will present as a distinct yet modest scale termination feature on the road alignment. The terracing up of its built elements away from the viewer works in combination with the descending terrain to generate a balanced transition of built form scale up from the residential dwellings that lie to the fore of it. This transition is aided by the considered use of façade materials and tones for each distinct element and in turn this also reduces the overall sense of massing, whilst providing visual interest. The scale and form of the proposed building is not necessarily consistent with other built development in this street scene, but it is an eclectic mix of development and the obvious residential function is compatible. Overall, the magnitude of visual change is deemed to be Medium-low and of a marginally negative quality.	Moderate-slight / Neutral-Negative / Permanent
VP4	Stradbroke Road (north) - This is a view back upslope along Stradbroke Road from northwest of the site. It is a more enclosed and consistent setting than the previous views along Stradbroke road from the south. The right hand side of the road is framed by mature trees whilst the left hand side is defined by large, elegant semi-detached dwellings with Dutch gables and front dormers tucked behind stone walls and ornamental planting.	ML	The proposed apartment building nestles into the street scene in a comfortable manner in terms of both scale and tone / texture and also complements the degree of enclosure at the near end of the street. The built form of the apartment block contrasts with that of the foreground dwellings, but both are of a high quality and the diversity adds some richness to the scene rather than ambiguity. On balance of these reasons the magnitude of visual change is deemed to be Medium-low and the quality of effect Neutral.	Moderate-slight / Neutral / Permanent
VP5	Stradbroke Road - at Wynberg Park Entrance - Moving closer to the development from VP4, this	ML	The proposed apartment building has a stronger visual presence and rises more prominently above intervening	Moderate-slight /

	view also swaps sides of the road and takes in the junction with Wynberg Park in the immediate foreground. Large two storey dwellings of differing design styles flank either side of the road behind tall stone walls and amenity tree planting. Indeed, it is the roadside walls and vegetation that define the curving road corridor in the middle distance rather than the dwellings beyond.		houses and vegetation than for VP4. It is an oblique view of the front façade and a more direct view of the northern façade. There is noticeable terracing up and away from the viewer and foreground dwellings that serves as a transition of scale. Although this terracing and the varied façade treatments is not as pronounced as the terracing viewed from the southern end of Stradbroke Road, it is aided by the inclining terrain, which gives the incremental height increase a sense of legibility. The intensity and scale of built development in the street scene will be noticeably increased with built form that departs from that currently in view. However, the proposed development is not an ambiguous or over-scaled feature in this setting. Overall, the magnitude of visual change is deemed to be Medium-low and of a marginally negative quality.	Neutral-Negative / Permanent
VP6	Wynberg Park – This is an enclosed residential setting within the Wynberg Park housing estate, which consists of typical semi-detached dwellings, low boundary walls and driveways. There is a high degree of vegetation within private gardens and also in the form of street trees.	ML	The proposed development will not be visible from here due to intervening screening by buildings and vegetation. The magnitude of impact is Negligible by default.	Imperceptible / Neutral
VP7	Windsor Drive – This is a view from the nearest residential housing estate to the south of the site. It is slightly more open than the view from Wynberg park due to the absence of street trees, but otherwise the nature of development is similar with semidetached dwellings lying beyond low roadside walls, hedges and driveways. In this view from Windsor Drive, the dwellings from Windsor Park run	ML	The proposed apartment building will rise above and just beyond the series of two storey semi-detached dwellings that cross the view on the opposite side of Winsor Park. The building terraces up in an appropriate transition of scale from the smaller residential dwellings to the fore. This terracing is emphasised by alternate dark and light façade treatments that also alternate between brick and metal cladding. Together the varied built form and façade treatment help to break down the scale and massing of the	Moderate / Negative / Permanent

	perpendicular to the view beyond the nearby intersection of the two streets.		proposed development so that it does not appear overbearing within the street scene or from the dwellings that back onto it. The design of the structure and placement of windows for the nearest elements avoids undue overlooking of these properties. The proposed development is a departure from the current scale and nature and design of built form visible from within this mid to low density residential neighbourhood. However, the apartment building is not an ambiguous feature in this setting and is clearly located beyond the immediate residential enclave. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium and of a negative quality.	
VP8	Rockford Park Entrance – This is a slightly uphill view along Rockford Park from the busier distributor road of Grange Terrace. There are small communal grassed areas at the entrance to the estate backed by mature specimen trees. The estate itself consists of terraced dwellings beyond low walls and front garden driveways and associated amenity planting. A line of tall conifers defines the backdrop of the view.	ML	The upper penthouse level of the proposed apartment building will rise just above the distant roofline of a terrace of dwellings in the middle distance. The similarly dark tone of the proposed metal cladding and the intervening roof tend to marry them together visually, such that the apartment building is not an overt feature of the view and may not be noticed by a casual observer. Other than adding very marginally to the intensity and diversity of built development within this scene there is little effect on visual amenity. Consequently, the magnitude of visual change is deemed to be Low-negligible and the quality of effect, Neutral.	Slight-imperceptible / Neutral / Permanent
VP9	Ashton Park – This is a view from within the same housing estate as VP7, but further to the east where Windsor Park merges into Ashton Park. The view takes in the Windsor Park road corridor lined by detached and semi-detached two storey houses. At the head of the street can be seen duplex dwellings from the Rockford Manor	ML	In a similar manner to VP8 (albeit closer), a small portion of the upper penthouse level of the proposed apartment building will rise into view just above and between the gabled roofs of intervening dwellings. Again, the dark tone merges with that of the intervening roofs such that the development will not catch the eye. It will have little bearing on this street scene and visual amenity other than a very	Slight-imperceptible / Neutral /

	Housing development on the opposite side of Stradbroke Road.		marginal increase in the intensity and diversity of built form. Consequently, the magnitude of visual change is deemed to be Low-negligible and the quality of effect, Neutral.	Permanent
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1.10 CONCLUSION

This assessment has considered townscape impacts (townscape character) and visual impacts separately in accordance with the relevant guidelines. In terms of townscape impacts the proposed development will introduce an increased scale and density of residential development into a suburban setting that is principally defined by lower density housing estates of terraced and semi-detached dwellings fronting distributor roads or contained within looping estate roads and cul-de-sacs. However there is some diversity of scale and function in the immediate vicinity of the site in the form of apartment buildings (Rockford Manor), a rugby club with associated pitches and clubrooms and commercial buildings (creche and offices), as well as a secondary school. In this regard the site is contained within one of the more diverse areas of land use and built form within the overall study area (1km radius).

Whilst the scale of the tallest section of the proposed apartment building is a notable uplift in built form and intensity for the area, there is a deliberate terracing down in the scale of built elements closer to the boundaries, which is supported by varied tones and textures of the façade elements. This helps to integrate and assimilate the development into its receiving environment and breaks down the bulk and massing of the structures. It also prevents the development from unduly imposing on the setting of protected heritage structures in the vicinity; ‘Wynberg’ to the north, ‘Rockford Manor’ across Stradbroke Road to the west, and Windsor to the south, which are already nestled in an eclectic suburban townscape fabric. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development will have a townscape impact of Medium magnitude within the central study area (c <200m) and thereafter, the impact will reduce to Slight and Imperceptible with increasing distance as the development becomes a proportionally smaller component of the broader landscape fabric.

In terms of Visual Impacts, nine representative viewpoints (VPs) were selected for assessment within the surrounding area. These represent a variety of viewing distances and angles as well as different viewing contexts, in particular, the Stradbroke Road street scene and the nearest residential housing estates.

The magnitude of visual change ranges between ‘Moderate’ (VP1, VP2 and VP7) and ‘Imperceptible’ (VP6) with the remainder registering either ‘Moderate-slight’ change (VP3, VP4 and VP5) or ‘Slight-Imperceptible’ change (VP8 and VP9). The quality of the visual impact ranges between Negative and Neutral with several marginally negative (Neutral-Negative) judgements, which tend to relate to the context of the view. Where the development appears as a cohesive addition to the busy and diverse Stradbroke Road street scene, the quality is generally Neutral or Neutral-Negative on balance of the fact that the development is an appropriate addition to the street scene, but its intensity and scale is a departure from the baseline setting. When it appears in a less contextual fashion rising above intervening semi-detached dwellings and vegetation, (only at VP7) the quality is deemed Negative. Indeed, the highest significance of impact is at VP7 from the Windsor Park housing estate, where the effect is deemed Moderate and Negative. Whilst the upper storey of the proposed apartment block rises just into view above intervening residential rooftops at VP8 and VP9, which are similar residential settings to VP7, only a small fraction of the development will be visible and it will be visually absorbed against the tone of the roofs. Consequently, both VP8 and VP9 are deemed to experience Slight-imperceptible / Neutral visual effects.

1.11 OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACT

Based on the assessment contained herein, it is not considered that there will be any significant townscape or visual impacts resulting from the proposed development.

1.12 REFERENCES

Relevant Guidelines & Legislation

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028

‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA-2013)(Third Edition) by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (UK)

Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines’ (2018)