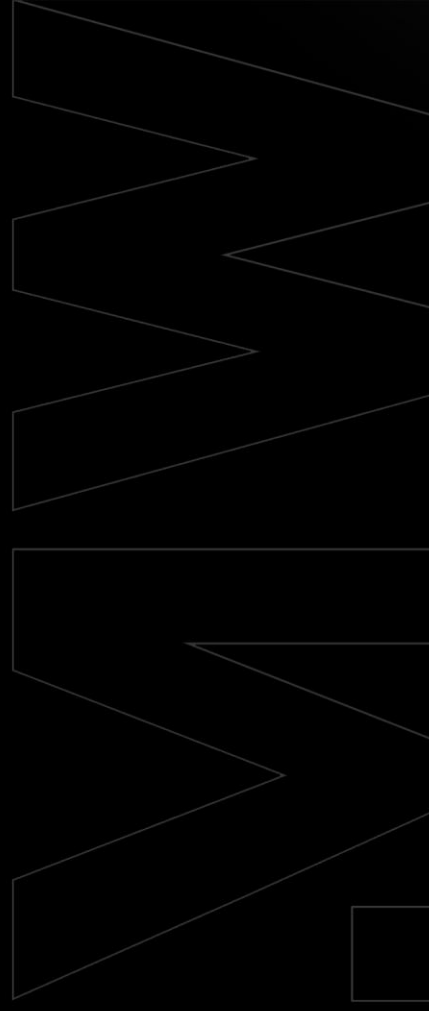


Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed Development at Greenfields, Swords

Prepared by Model Works Ltd for

Jackie Greene Construction Limited
May 2026



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WORKS**

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1.0 Introduction

This report assesses the potential landscape and visual effects of a proposed 'Large-Scale Residential Development' (LRD) development at Greenfields, Swords.

1.1 Development Description

The proposed development will principally consist of the construction of a mixed-use development that constitutes a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) at a site of 2.22 Ha principally located at Swords Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin. The development consists of 289 No. residential apartments (60 No. 1-bed, 158 No. 2-bed and 71 No. 3-bed); retail/commercial unit (701 sq m); and crèche (418 sq m) with outdoor play area (42 sq m). Heights range from 1 No. to 9 No. storeys. External open spaces include hard and soft landscaping, including public open space, communal amenity space at-grade and roof gardens atop Block D and Block E and incidental open space.

1.2 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

The assessment was carried out with reference to the Landscape Institute *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* 2013 (GLVIA) and the EPA *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* 2022. The assessment methodology including explanation of the criteria and terms used is provided in Appendix 1. The assessment was carried out by Maria Donohoe MILI of Model Works Ltd.

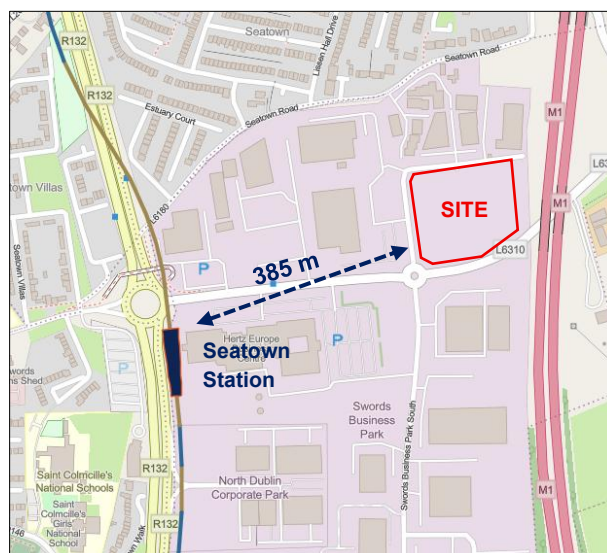
The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. The GLVIA requires that the effects on views and visual amenity be assessed separately from the effects on the landscape, although the topics are linked:

- Visual impact assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to those changes and the overall effects on the area's visual amenity. The potential effects on 14 no. viewpoints representative of the receiving environment are assessed in Chapter 5 below, informed by verified photomontages (provided under separate cover).
- Landscape impact assessment is concerned with the effects of a proposed development on the character and value of the landscape as an environmental, cultural and economic resource. The potential effects of the proposal on the landscape are discussed in Chapter 6 below.

1.2.1 The Transitional Condition of the Receiving Environment

The site is located on Swords urban area edge within the Metro economic corridor. The Swords Metro Economic Corridor is an area strategically designed to leverage the upcoming MetroLink rail line to support massive population and employment growth. The corridor stretches from Santry to Lissenhall, targeting the expansion of Swords into a city of 100,000+ people. It focuses on high-density residential and commercial development along the R132 route. The site and surrounding lands are thus designated for transformation from their current greenfield and mixed use light industrial condition into a new urban area, as prescribed in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP). The site is located approximately 385m east of the proposed Seatown metro station.

Figure 1: MetroLink Railway Order – Seatown station



2.0 Receiving Environment

2.1 The Site

The proposed development site is located at Greenfields, Seatown, Swords, Co. Dublin, and extends to approximately 2.22 hectares. The site comprises an undeveloped greenfield parcel within an established business park setting on the north-eastern edge of Swords urban area, surrounded by a mix of industrial, commercial and professional service uses, with residential and agriculture in the wider area.

The site has substantial frontage of approximately 170 metres to Mantua Road along its southern boundary, a key urban thoroughfare connecting Estuary Road to Swords town centre. To the north and west, the site fronts the internal road network of the business campus, with the western boundary defined by an established line of early-mature trees providing a well-developed green edge. The eastern boundary is defined by a belt of motorway screen planting, beyond which the M1 motorway forms a prominent transport corridor and a defining element of the local townscape context.

Photo 1: Looking northwards across the site from Mantua Road



Photo 2: Looking eastwards across the site from business campus



2.2.1 Natural Heritage

A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Assessment Impact Report was prepared in June 2025, noting that the site's tree resource is concentrated mainly within belts and groups along the boundaries, together with a large central willow, *Salix caprea*. The boundary planting includes species typically associated with screening, such as Italian alder, pedunculate oak and wild cherry, with occasional self-seeded sycamore and scattered native shrubs including elder and dog rose. Proposals will seek to retain as much existing woodland vegetation as possible as well as the large mature Willows (*Salix caprea*) in the central part of the site. Tree removals resulting from development will be minimised, inline with BS 5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations)

Figure 2: Tree Survey



All maps in this report show the approximate outline of the main application/development area only, and not the full application red line. For the full red line boundary please refer to the Site Location Map.

Photo 3: A line of early mature trees at the south west corner of the site fronting Mantua Road and the access road along the west boundary.



Photo 4: Mantua Road looking east towards the site



Photo 5: From the estuary recreational path on the estuary south shore looking west



Photo 6: Looking north from the M1 approaching the site



2.2 Key Elements and Features in the Receiving Environment – The Main Receptors of Landscape and Visual Change

2.2.1 Urban Edge and Metro Economic Corridor

The development site is located on the north-eastern edge of the Swords urban area. It forms part of a consolidating urban fringe characterised by a predominantly low density commercial and light industrial built environment, alongside the M1 road infrastructure - a strong linear edge which clearly defines the eastern urban limit of Swords at this location.

Surrounded by low-rise warehouse type units of functional rather than architectural merit, extensive areas of hardstanding, surface car parking, and landscaped boundary treatments that provide effective visual screening, enhance biodiversity, and contribute positively to local visual amenity. This character is broadly representative of the established land-use pattern along the corridor between the R132 (Swords bypass) and the M1 motorway, which has largely developed as retail parks, commercial centres, and industrial estates, reflecting the urban fringe condition typical of the outer edges of Irish towns and cities.

The site is zoned Metro and Rail Economic Corridor (MRE) with stated objective of this zoning is to *"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."* This designation represents a significant planning policy direction toward intensification and transition away from the existing low-density, single-use industrial character of the area. The MRE zoning is further reinforced by Objective EEO16 of the Development Plan, which requires:

"high quality urban design proposals within the Metro and Rail Economic Corridor Zoning, incorporating exemplary public spaces, contemporary architecture and sustainable places within a green landscape setting".

The proposed MetroLink light rail system is a particularly significant transformative context for the receiving environment, and the wider Swords context - reinforcing the strategic importance of this area. The Seatown area is one of three key strategic development areas within the Metro North Economic Corridor, noting that the lands are *"strategically located between the M1 and the R132"* and form a direct *"interface with the M1 which forms the eastern edge of Swords Town"* (Yours Swords Strategic Vision 2035). The Swords Masterplan (FCC, 2019) notes that Seatown Road provides the principal east–west connection between the urban area and the M1 motorway and identifies the Seatown area as a priority zone for renewal in the context of emerging Metro connectivity. The planned Seatown Station is located adjacent the Seatown Road roundabout (the junction of Mantua Road and the R132) – 385 metres from the proposed site and will serve the residential areas of north swords as well as local retail and business parks.

From a landscape and visual perspective, this policy-driven transition implies a future receiving environment of increased building mass, height, and urban complexity, with attendant changes to the scale, massing, and skyline legibility of the north-eastern urban fringe of Swords.

2.2.2 Malahide Estuary

The most significant component of the green/blue infrastructure in receiving environment in the wider study area is the Malahide Estuary, located broadly east of the site. The estuary is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC, Site Code: IE0000205) under the EU Habitats Directive, encompassing an area of approximately 787.99 hectares, of which approximately 90% comprises marine habitat, and has been designated since December 1999 (EUNIS / Natura 2000 Standard Data Form, Site Code IE0000205). The Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029 lists the Malahide/Swords/Broadmeadow Estuary within its schedule of protected SAC, SPA, and pNHA sites. The SAC is recognised for its Atlantic salt meadows, shifting dunes, fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation, and intertidal mudflats and sandflats — habitats of European importance listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive. The estuary is additionally designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA, Site Code: 004025) under the EU Birds Directive, affording protection to internationally important populations of wintering waterbird species. The combined SAC and SPA designation reflects the exceptional ecological value of the

estuarine landscape and underscores its sensitivity as a component of the visual and landscape receiving environment.

The landscape character of the estuary edge is open, low-lying, and expansive, presenting a strongly contrasting setting to the planned, built fabric of the Swords urban edge. The open and undeveloped character of this landscape reinforces its visual role as a counterpoint to the urban edge condition of the site and its immediate surroundings.

Photo 7: Malahide Estuary



2.2.3 Broadmeadow River

The Broadmeadow River forms a further significant green infrastructure element to the north of the site. The NTA Swords Development Area Study (2021) notes the Broadmeadow River as one of the two principal watercourses traversing the study area, within a broadly low-lying topography. The river is tree-lined in parts, creating a riparian corridor that functions as a linear green network element connecting westward to the Broadmeadow River Valley Linear Park and eastward toward the Malahide Estuary. The Broadmeadow River Valley Linear Park is a key objective of the green infrastructure strategy for Swords, including, in the context of the estuary environs, the MRE and Seatown development areas. Although the riparian corridor is geographically separated from the subject site, it is a relevant feature of the wider green infrastructure network and contributes to the mosaic of natural and semi-natural habitats that characterise the transitional zone between the urban edge of Swords and the estuarine landscape to the north east and east.

2.2.3 High Amenity and Green Belt at Seatown East

East of the development lands of the Seatown area [and east of the M1] is a zone of High Amenity (HA) and Green Belt (GB) lands which serve a dual function as both an ecological buffer zone and a zone of visual separation between the built urban edge and the estuary. These lands are characterised by an established field pattern of small to medium pastoral fields with hedgerow boundaries — some intact, some gapped — and some stands of trees around Seatown House (Sites and Monuments Record DU012-021) and occasionally along boundary lines. The overall character of this landscape is rural and open in nature, low-lying and in agricultural use.

These lands contribute materially to the perceptual separation of the Greenfields site from the sensitive estuarine environment and are a relevant consideration in the assessment of both landscape and ecological sensitivity. The Your Swords Strategic Vision 2035 specifically identifies the protection of the green belt areas *"to the east between Swords-Dublin Airport and Swords-Malahide"* as a fundamental principle of the town's development

strategy, with a clear policy commitment that *"Swords Town does not further encroach on to the existing 'GB' areas to the east, south and west"* thus, placing the proposed development site at an important location - permanently demarcating the urban edge of Swords, at the interface between the consolidating MRE zone to the west and the protected High Amenity and Green Belt lands to the east, and requiring a landmark treatment that responds with appropriate architectural quality, scale, and massing to this threshold condition — one that acknowledges the sensitivity of the adjoining estuarine landscape while giving legible built expression to the emerging urban character of the MetroLink corridor.

2.2.3 Seatown Residential Receptors

The residential lands of Seatown lie to the north of the Seatown Business Campus; comprising an established suburban neighbourhood of two-storey semi-detached and detached dwellings set within a mature residential street network. This area presents a markedly different character to the functional industrial park adjacent, with front gardens, boundary hedges, and street trees contributing a softer, more suburban landscape character. The Seatown Road runs along the southern edge of the residential area and is narrow in section relative to its role as a local urban distributor road. Along much of its length the road corridor is characterised by an established tree canopy of predominantly broadleaved species on the residential side, while the northern boundary of the business campus is defined by a dense screen of *Leylandii* — a fast-growing, often troublesome, evergreen species. Together, these two layers of vegetation combine to form a near-continuous green corridor along the road, providing an effective visual screen between the residential properties to the north and the wider lands in light industrial use to the south.

The visual relationship between the residential neighbourhood and the subject site is consequently limited by this intervening tree-lined road corridor, which, while not providing an absolute barrier to views, substantially filters and disrupts sightlines across the boundary, reducing the degree of visual interaction between the residential receptors and the industrial lands to the south.

2.2.4 Swords Town Centre

Swords town centre is located less than a kilometre to the west and south-west of the subject site, within lands zoned Major Town Centre (MC) under the FDP 2023–2029. The town centre is currently undergoing a period of significant regeneration and cultural investment, driven by a combination of public sector-led initiatives and the strategic policy ambitions set out in the Swords Masterplan (FCC, 2019). The Masterplan articulates a vision for Swords as an *"emerging city,"* envisaging an expansion and diversification of civic, cultural, retail, and commercial uses within the town centre, complemented by high-quality public realm improvements along North Street and the R132 corridor. This vision is rooted in the ambition of the Your Swords Strategic Vision 2035 for *"a well-defined expanded and consolidated vibrant town core"* and represents a fundamental policy shift in the identity and functional role of Swords — from a suburban commuter settlement to a self-sustaining urban centre of regional significance — with direct implications for the townscape and development context within which peripheral sites such as the subject lands.

In early 2026, FCC began major works on the Seatown Road to Estuary Road Active Travel Scheme, which includes upgrading the road, adding cycle lanes, and introducing traffic-calming measures to improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, linking residential and employment areas.

2.2.6 Summary of Townscape Character and Sensitivity in the Receiving Environment

The immediate receiving environment has the character of an under-developed urban edge, with the outskirts and approach to Swords defined by functional architecture set on large plots. Wide road infrastructure, together with edge footpaths, planting and early-mature trees, provides some softening and a degree of visual amenity. Taken together, these features read as a sparsely populated commercial and light-industrial environment with relatively few elements that define a coherent urban character or active streetscape at the settlement outskirts.

The M1 motorway forms a strong linear feature in the landscape and acts as a clear threshold, marking the eastern urban boundary of Swords at this location. An established belt of trees along the site's western boundary, in combination with dense motorway screen planting, reinforces this edge and helps visually contain the site within the wider townscape.

Beyond the motorway, the character shifts quickly to a high-amenity rural and estuarine landscape. Pastoral fields, hedgerows and open low-lying farmland extend eastwards towards the Malahide Estuary SAC/SPA, creating a coherent rural transition and a clear contrast with the emerging townscape on the Swords side of the M1. This juxtaposition of robust urban edge and open, internationally designated estuarine habitat is a key determinant for future townscape character.

Sensitivity across the receiving environment is graduated accordingly. The business park context is of low landscape sensitivity, consistent with further development and intensification under the MRE zoning in the FDP. The residential neighbourhood to the north – due to separation distance and available vegetation are considered medium sensitivity, while the High Amenity and Green Belt agricultural lands are of medium to high sensitivity. The Malahide Estuary SAC/SPA represents the most sensitive component, carrying the highest level of international statutory landscape designations and is subject to the 'Protection of Views and Prospects' objectives in the FDP.

The site itself is of low landscape sensitivity, but its position at the threshold between the consolidating urban MRE zone and the protected open land to the east is of strategic significance. Development of this land parcel will permanently demarcate the urban edge of Swords at this location, requiring a design response of exemplary quality that reflects both the policy ambitions of the MRE zoning and the sensitivities of the wider receiving environment.

Given the planning policy context and the proposed MRE zone, rail transport and infrastructure development to take place in the area, there is a high capacity – indeed a requirement - for change of the type proposed on the site. There are landscape sensitivities in the vicinity, notably the Estuary and Green Belt lands, but the site itself is relatively unconstrained apart from a small number of trees of value. Therefore, the landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment can be classified 'Medium'.

Figure 3: Receiving Environment

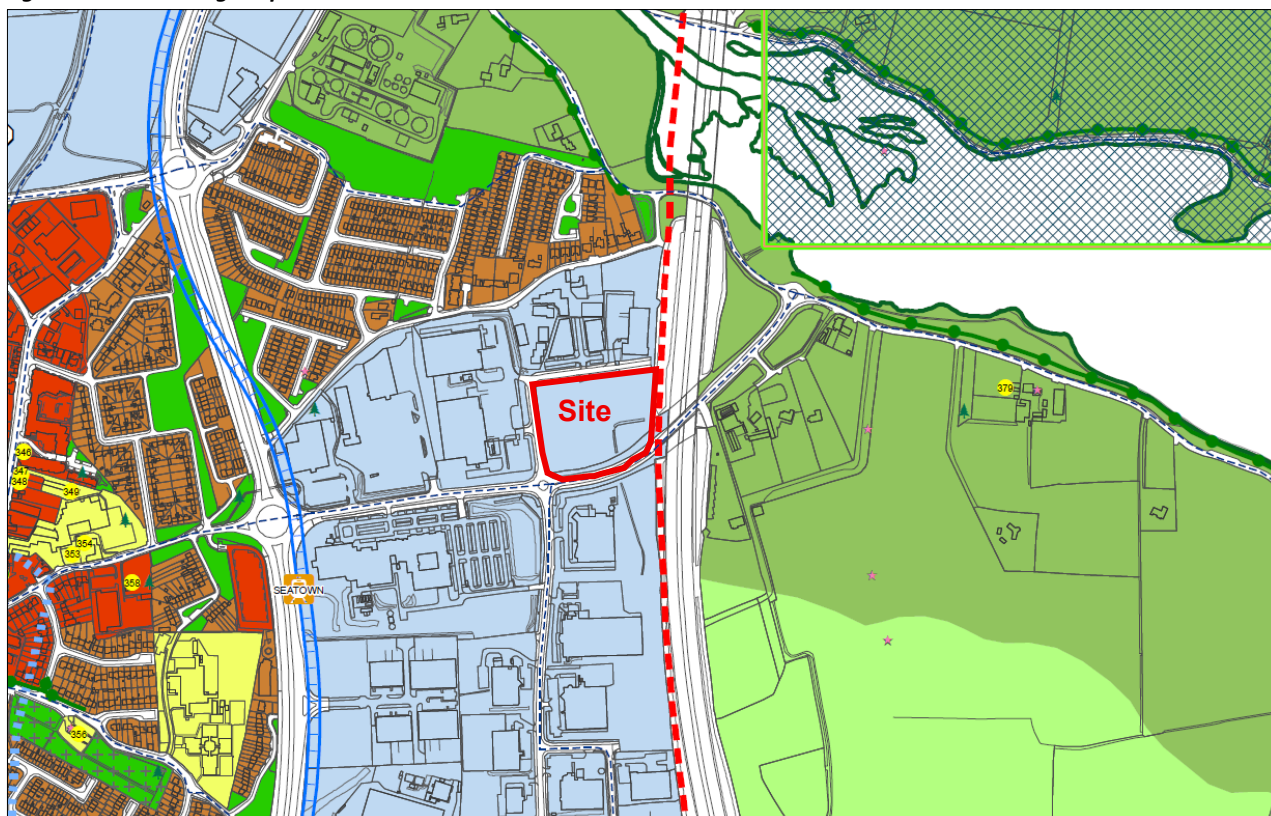


The following are the key planning/urban design policies pertaining to the character of the future urban area.

3.1.1 Land Use Zoning

The FDP 2023–2029 supports the provision of residential development within the Metro and Rail Economic Corridor (MRE) zoning, recognising the role of transit-oriented development in achieving compact, sustainable growth. The zoning objective for MRE lands provides that the Council will *"Provide for an area of compact, high intensity/density, employment generating activity with associated commercial and residential development which focuses on the MetroLink, or rail or light rail stations within settings of exemplary urban design, public realm streets and places, which are permeable, secure and within a high-quality green landscape. Landmark buildings will provide strong quality architectural features, which respect and enhance the character of the area into which they sit."* (emphasis added)

Figure 4: Land Zoning Map



All maps in this report show the approximate outline of the main application/development area only, and not the full application red line. For the full red line boundary please refer to the Site Location Map.

The Plan's Core Strategy identifies seven zoning objectives that can provide for residential use, including the MRE zone, forming part of the overall zoned land bank of c.4,953 hectares. The Plan pursues *"the higher bands of residential density appropriate to the position of the settlement in the County settlement hierarchy"* where the site and its context are considered suitable.

Objective EEO15 – Metro and Rail Economic Corridor Lands Protect the integrity of the Metro and Rail Economic Corridor from inappropriate forms of development and optimise development potential in a sustainable and phased manner.

Objective EEO16 – Design Proposals on MRE Zoned Lands Ensure high quality urban design proposals within the Metro and Rail Economic Corridor Zoning, incorporating exemplary public spaces, contemporary architecture and sustainable places within a green landscape setting.

3.1.2 Landscape Character

The FDP includes a Landscape Character Assessment, which divides the Fingal landscape into six character types. The site falls into the 'Low Lying Character Type' (see Figure 5 below), which is classified as having a Modest landscape value and being of Low Sensitivity.

Figure 5 FDP 2023 landscape character types and value and sensitivity classifications

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

Low Lying Character Type

The subject site is located within the "Low Lying Character Type" as defined in the Fingal Landscape Character Assessment. This character type is described as having an open landscape structure, characterised by large field patterns, limited tree belts, and low roadside hedgerows, and is predominantly influenced by agricultural land use interspersed with settlement. The landscape is categorised as being of modest value.

The Low Lying Character Type in Swords has experienced a progressive transition from a predominantly agricultural landscape to one increasingly shaped by strategic infrastructure with some commercial development. The 2002 image (Fig 7 below) captured during the construction of the M1 corridor - a strong linear intervention, creating a clear visual and physical break in the landscape, while later development has begun to consolidate lands between the R132 and the motorway. It is important to note that the subject site lies within the established urban envelope of Swords, broadly defined by the M1 corridor, and is therefore more urbanised in character than the wider low-lying landscape. Lands adjacent to the site and east of the M1 remain in active agricultural use and retain the defining characteristics of the low-lying landscape.

Accordingly, the character type designation should be understood as a broad landscape classification reflecting the wider receiving environment, rather than the more urbanised context of the subject site itself.

Figure 6: FDP LCT (approx. site location Identified in red)



Figure 7: Year 2002



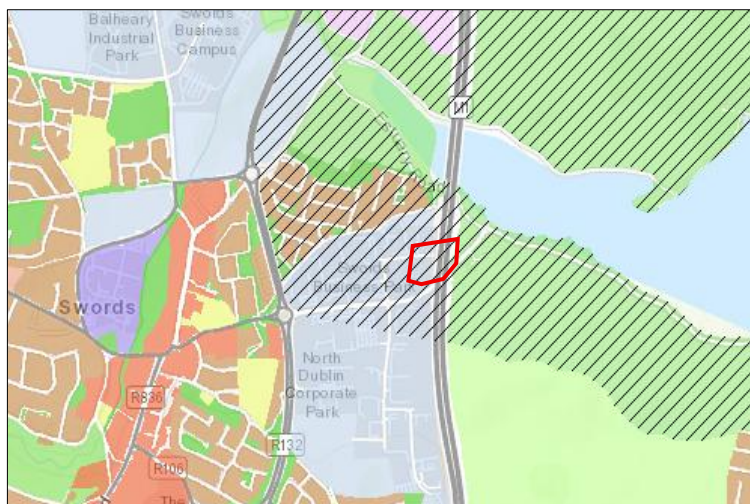
Figure 8: Year 2025



Highly Sensitive Landscape

The site falls within this designation applied at county scale, which does not differentiate the local character types – see hatched area in Fig 9 opposite. These landscapes are subject to environmental considerations where fragile landscapes, such as nature conservation areas, character types with high sensitivity or where views are to be preserved. A highly sensitive landscape is likely to be vulnerable to change, however, a landscape character type with a low sensitivity such as the Low Lying Character Type of the site is likely to be less at risk from change.

Figure 9 FDP 2023 Highly sensitive landscape



Planning Policy Context

The Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029 contains a number of objectives and policies relevant to the landscape and visual assessment of the proposed development. The most pertinent of these, in the context of landscape character, visual amenity, and the potential impacts arising from the proposed development, are identified overleaf.

3.1.2 Highly sensitive areas

Objective GINHO59 – Development and Sensitive Areas

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.”

In addition to the landscape character type classifications, the FDP Green Infrastructure maps indicate additional ‘Highly Sensitive Landscape’ areas. The site does not fall into such an area.

3.1.3 Landscape Assets

Objective DMSO140 – Protection of Existing Landscape

Protect existing landscape features such as scrub, woodland, large trees, hedgerows, meadows, ponds and wetlands which are of biodiversity or amenity value and/or contribute to landscape character and ensure that proper provision is made for their protection and management.

Objective DMSO143 – Habitat Facilities for Wildlife Species

Require all new developments to incorporate habitat facilities for wildlife species as appropriate including Kestrel, Peregrine, Swifts, House Sparrows, Swallow, Starling, Bats and insects in or on buildings facades.

Objective DMSO151 – Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan

Applicants should consult the Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan to ascertain its implications for any planning proposals.

Objective GINHO20 – Green Infrastructure and Recreation Where new residential development is proposed, seek, where appropriate to maximise the use and potential of existing parks, open spaces and recreational provision, by upgrading and improving the play and recreational capacity of these existing facilities through development contributions in lieu of new open space or play provision.

Objective GINHO21 – Integration of Green Infrastructure Avoid the fragmentation of green spaces in site design and to link green spaces/greening elements to existing adjacent green infrastructure/the public realm where feasible and to provide for ecological functions.

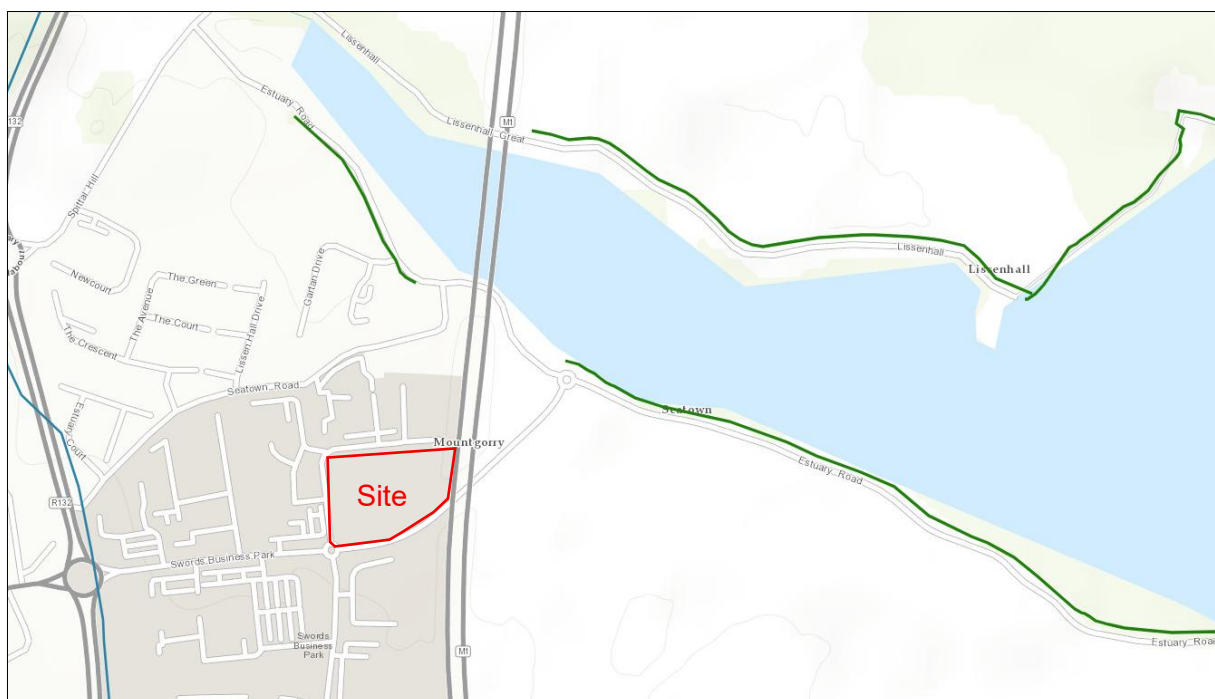
Policy GINHP12 – Protected Sites Protect areas designated or proposed to be designated as Natura 2000 sites (i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Statutory Nature Reserves, and Refuges for Fauna.

Objective DMSO138 – Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity Ensure all development and infrastructure proposals include measures to protect and enhance biodiversity leading to an overall net biodiversity gain.

3.1.4 Views and Prospects / Protected Views and Vistas

Views and prospects for protection have been identified by a green line on the Green Infrastructure Maps and zoning maps of the Development Plan (see fig 10 below).

Figure 10: Draft Specific objective lines – Preserve views [Green line along the estuary shore]



Policy GINHP26 – Preservation of Views and Prospects Preserve views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest including those located within and outside the County.

Objective GINHO60 – Protection of Views and Prospects Protect views and prospects that contribute to the character of the landscape, particularly those identified in the Development Plan, from inappropriate development.

Objective GINHO61 – Landscape/Visual Assessment Require a Landscape/Visual Assessment to accompany all planning applications for significant proposals that are likely to affect views and prospects.

Objective GINHO63 – SAAOs Prioritise the Rogerstown, Malahide and Baldoyle Estuaries for Special Amenity Area Orders, reflecting the high amenity and visual sensitivity of the estuarine landscapes adjacent to the subject site.

3.1.5 Trees and Hedgerows

Protection of Trees and Hedgerows offer a wide range of services and value of trees and hedgerows, including "establishing a sense of place and providing healthy environments," contributing to "visual amenity in built-up areas," performing a vital role as wildlife habitats and biodiversity corridors, and contributing to the mitigation of climate change through carbon sequestration.

Policy GINHP21 – Protection of Trees and Hedgerows 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 in line with the adopted Forest of Fingal — A Tree Strategy for Fingal

Policy GINHP22 – Tree Planting Provide for appropriate protection of trees and hedgerows, recognising their value to our natural heritage, biodiversity and climate action and encourage tree planting in appropriate locations.

Objective GINHO46 – Tree Removal Ensure adequate justification for tree removal in new developments and open space management and require documentation and recording of the reasons where tree felling is proposed and avoid removal of trees without justification.

Tree Policy recognises that trees add 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.

Key objectives include:

Objective DMSO125 – Management of Trees and Hedgerows Protect, preserve and ensure the effective management of trees, groups of trees and hedgerows.

Objective DMSO126 – Protection of Trees and Hedgerows during Development Ensure trees conditioned for retention are fully protected in accordance with BS5837:2012.

Objective DMSO127 – Use of Native Species in New Developments Require the use of native species where appropriate in new developments in consultation with the Council.

Objective DMSO128 – Demarcation of Townland Boundaries Ensure trees, hedgerows and other features which demarcate townland boundaries are preserved and incorporated where appropriate into the design of developments.

Objective DMSO130 – Planting of Large Canopy Trees 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.

Objective DMSO131 – Street Tree Planting Plans Street tree planting plans shall accompany developments over 50 units. Constructed tree pits will be required where trees are planted in hard surfaces and grass verges less than 1.2m wide. These plans will include the location of each constructed tree pit of a minimum rooting volume of 16 cubic metres, lamp standards and underground services. The location of tree planting in proximity to built features including footpaths must refer to BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations. The width of grass verges where tree planting is proposed must be labelled on landscape plans.

Objective DMSO132 – Planting along Distributor Roads Ensure new distributor roads or similar provide for grass verges of a minimum width of 2.4 metres to allow for avenue tree planting 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.

Objective DMSO133 – Location of new Trees *Where new trees are being planted, these will be located so they do not cause future interference to streetlights, typically trees shall be located so there is a distance of no less than 7m from the centre of the main stem to the lighting pole.*

Objective DMSO134 – Site Summary of Specimen Removal, Retention and Planting

Regardless of development size or type, applicants must submit an overall site summary quantifying and detailing the following:

- *tree and hedgerow removal;*
- *tree and hedgerow retention; and*
- *new tree and hedgerow planting.*

This information will be submitted in a digital format agreed with the Council to allow amalgamation and reporting on tree and hedgerow cover within the County over time.

Objective DMSO136 – Tree Selection within Developments *Tree planting within developments shall adhere to the 30:20:10 rule in relation to tree election in order to prevent an over reliance on certain genera or species in the existing stock and to combat climate change. Species and varieties will be selected to meet the requirements of the 30:20:10 rule – no more than 30% of trees from any one family, 20% from a single genus or 10% from a single species.*

3.1.6 Residential Development and Urban Design

Objective SPQHO34 – Integration of Residential Development *Encourage higher residential densities where appropriate ensuring proposals provide for high quality design and ensure a balance between the protection of existing residential amenities and the established character of the surrounding area with a target minimum amount of 15% (except in cases where the developer can demonstrate that this is not possible, in which case the 12% to 15% range will apply) amount of green space, tree coverage and public space associated with every residential area.*

Policy SPQHP35 – Quality of Residential Development

Promote a high quality of design and layout in new residential developments at appropriate densities across Fingal, ensuring high-quality living environments for all residents in terms of the standard of individual dwelling units and the overall layout and appearance of developments. Residential developments must accord with the standards set out in the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG 2009 and the accompanying Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide and the Sustainable Urban Housing; Design Standards for New Apartments (DHLGH as updated 2020) and the policies and objectives contained within the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines (December, 2018). Developments should be consistent with standards outlined in Architectural Design Statement.

Policy SPQHP38 – Compact Growth, Consolidation and Regeneration *Promote compact growth in line with the NPF and RSES through the inclusion of specific policies and targeted and measurable implementation measures that: “ Encourage infill/brownfield development ” Focus growth on the County’s designated strategic development areas identified in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan ” Promote increased densities along public transport corridors.*

Policy SPQHP39 – Co-Ordinated Development *Promote residential development addressing shortfalls in housing provision and meeting target guidance figures through a co-ordinated planned approach to developing appropriately zoned lands at key locations including regeneration areas, vacant and underutilised sites.*

3.1.7 Land Use, Density and Building Height

All applications for residential and mixed use development should demonstrate compliance with national guidance documents including the Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities Best Practice Guidelines 2007, the 2024 Compact Settlements Guidelines, and the 2025 Apartment Design Guidelines

4.0 Proposed Development

4.1 Layout

4.1.1 Urban Structure

The proposed development has been designed to establish a coherent urban structure that responds to site context, promotes permeability, and integrates public realm throughout the scheme.

- The proposed mixed use development comprises five blocks arranged in two distinct compositional zones: Blocks A, B, and C form a rigorous northern composition of repeating elements (6-7 storeys), while Blocks D and E establish a southern composition of L-shaped forms (6-9 storeys) linked by a single storey commercial plinth that defines and encloses the central open space.
- The development establishes a legible urban edge to the north, west, and south, with appropriate setback from Mantua Road respecting the existing wayleave corridor, thereby maintaining visual separation and landscape buffer to the southern boundary.
- Continuous pedestrian routes at ground level are integrated between blocks, promoting permeability, accessibility, and passive surveillance while enhancing visual connectivity and legibility within the public realm.
- The interface between built form and public realm has been designed to maximise frontage activation, visual oversight, and pedestrian amenity through coordinated placement of footpaths, seating, and landscaped zones.

Figure 11: Proposed masterplan showing the site layout



4.1.2 Built Form and Architecture

The architectural strategy employs massing articulation and material differentiation to reduce visual bulk, establish visual coherence, and respond appropriately to the scale and character of the receiving landscape.

- The massing strategy incorporates stepped profiles in plan and elevation, articulating each block into sub-elements that reduce perceived scale and mitigate visual bulk within the receiving landscape and from key visual receptors.
- Recessed façade planes, parapet modulation, and panelised compositions introduce layered depth and visual rhythm, enhancing architectural legibility and reducing the visual prominence of built mass within the streetscape and wider visual context.
- A coherent architectural language is achieved through repetition of materials, fenestration types, and balcony treatments, establishing visual unity and continuity across the scheme.
- Material differentiation—off-white brick to Blocks A, B, and C; red brick to Blocks D and E—reinforces the compositional distinction between northern and southern zones while contributing to visual variety and local distinctiveness.
- The building-to-public-realm interface prioritises passive surveillance, frontage definition, and clear spatial delineation between public and private domains, contributing to a secure and legible residential environment.

Figure 12: South façade of Blocks D and E front Mantua Road



Figure 13: North façade of Blocks A, B and C



Figure 14: Proposed Blocks A, B and C from the north west corner



4.1.3 Façade Treatment

The façade design employs a restrained material palette and compositional rhythm to establish visual coherence, proportional balance, and architectural clarity throughout the development.

- Façade composition employs carved panels and frames to organise repetitive elements (balconies, winter gardens), with proportional balance achieved through full-height fenestration arranged singularly or in vertical pairs connected by metal panels, establishing vertical rhythm and visual coherence.
- Dark contrasting brick at ground and first floor levels, and within recessed planes, introduces tectonic articulation and visual hierarchy, with green brick applied to childcare facilities to reinforce function and contribute local character.
- Black window frames, rainwater goods, and ancillary elements provide tonal contrast while maintaining a restrained material palette that supports visual cohesion and architectural clarity.
- Private amenity spaces are differentiated by orientation: glazed winter gardens address outward-facing elevations towards the road network, while balconies are positioned on inward-facing elevations, enhancing visual amenity and overlooking of communal open space.

Figure 15: Proposed façade treatment



Figure 16: The façade treatment of Block D when entering the Swords urban area from the east



4.2 Landscape and Public Realm Proposals

4.2.1 Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy integrates ecological retention, biodiversity enhancement, and high-quality public realm to contribute positively to landscape character, environmental resilience, and residential amenity.

The design proposes a nature corridor wrapping around the west, south and east boundaries of the site, linking with the eastern boundary and the wider green infrastructure associated with the motorway corridor. This edge treatment is intended to provide ecological continuity, soften views, create naturalistic buffering, and establish a perimeter loop walk that connects residents with nature at the edge of the scheme.

Figure 17: Landscape Masterplan



4.2.2 Biodiversity

Biodiversity on site is reinforced by a planting strategy that seeks to reflect the existing character of the site and its surroundings, maximise biodiversity, and use species drawn from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021–2025 and other native or naturalised palettes appropriate to the wider ecological network. Use of rooftop areas for semi-private gardens and biodiverse green/brown roofs, and the provision of a bioretention area within the northeast car parking zone as part of the site's SuDS strategy. Incorporation of trees and tree pits in accordance with Fingal's Tree Strategy 'The Forest of Fingal'. Several bat boxes and swift boxes are dispersed across the development site.

4.2.3 Trees Retained

A mature Willow tree centrally located between Blocks D and E is retained as a principal landscape feature, contributing ecological value, visual amenity, and reinforcement of local landscape character.

The existing mature tree screen along the southern boundary is retained to provide visual filtering, soften the urban edge, and maintain landscape continuity with the surrounding context.

Photo 8: Mature willow on site to be retained

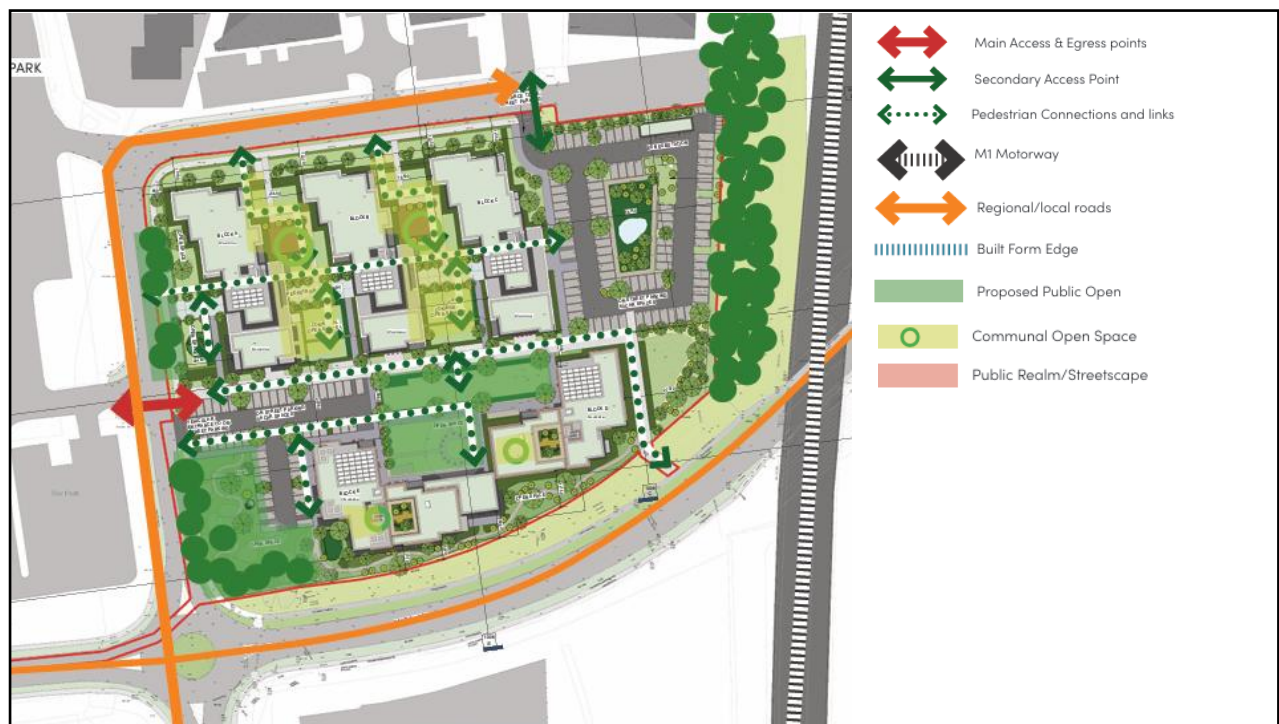


4.2.4 Public Open Space

The landscape strategy integrates a network of public open spaces along the western boundary, aligned with the retained tree line and fronting Blocks A and E, where childcare and retail uses provide activation and natural surveillance at the principal entrance.

- The open space network extends eastward via a landscaped pedestrian route then connecting southwards to the Mantua Road active travel corridor and the wider Broadmeadow Estuary amenity network, supporting ecological connectivity and landscape permeability.
- Public and private realms are clearly defined through built form and landscape treatment, ensuring visual clarity, passive surveillance, and spatial legibility throughout the scheme.
- All residential units are positioned within close proximity to open space areas with direct visual relationships to landscaped zones, enhancing residential amenity and contributing to natural surveillance.

Fig 18: Circulation Plan



4.2.5 Green Roofs

Communal roof terraces at sixth floors levels (Blocks D and E only) provide elevated amenity space with panoramic visual receptors to the south and east, incorporating opportunities for rooftop planting and biodiversity enhancement. The majority of roof areas incorporate permeable green surfaces, contributing to environmental resilience, climate adaptation, biodiversity uplift, and visual amenity when viewed from elevated receptors.

4.2.6 SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems)

The proposal integrates green and blue infrastructure throughout the open space network, enhancing biodiversity, environmental resilience, and landscape sustainability.

SuDS features at ground level include permeable paving to on-street parking areas, increasing natural infiltration and reducing surface water runoff, thereby contributing to site-wide drainage strategy and environmental performance.

Figure 19: CGI of the proposed internal landscape treatment



The landscape design and treatment of existing natural landscape assets deliver a strong, cohesive green structure that retains and reinforces local landscape character. The overall effect is to create a compact residential landscape with strong green structure, a clear hierarchy of spaces, and a nature-based setting that responds to both the site's urban edge condition and its exposure to the motorway corridor.

The development is well located to support strong connections between future residents and the wider landscape, with direct and convenient access to the estuary, the Broadmeadow River Valley Linear Park and its associated amenities, as well as the robust new cycling infrastructure along the R132. Together, these assets provide attractive opportunities for everyday walking and cycling, promote sustainable travel choices, and reinforce the relationship between the new neighbourhood and its surrounding coastal and river valley landscapes.

The proposed open space network and embedded green infrastructure consolidate environmental and visual sustainability, contributing positively to local landscape character, ecological function, and visual amenity within the receiving landscape.

5.0 Assessment of Visual Effects

15 no. viewpoints (see Figure 17 overleaf) were selected for visual impact assessment informed by verified photomontages. The viewpoints were selected to (a) represent the key receptors of change, as discussed in Section 2.2 above, and (b) allow for assessment of the proposal's compliance with the relevant Planning Scheme guidance/objectives.

1. **Viewpoint 1:** Seatown road roundabout at the R132.
2. **Viewpoint 2:** Seatown Road looking east.
3. **Viewpoint 3:** Seatown Road mini roundabout adjacent to site.
4. **Viewpoint 4:** Swords Business Park looking north.
5. **Viewpoint 5:** Seatown Road on approach to Swords urban area.
6. **Viewpoint 6:** M1 motorway south of the site.
7. **Viewpoint 7:** M1 looking south
8. **Viewpoint 8:** Hutchinson's Strand – north of the estuary
9. **Viewpoint 9:** Estuary Road – south of the estuary
10. **Viewpoint 10:** Seatown East
11. **Viewpoint 11:** Gartan Court
12. **Viewpoint 12** Lissen Manor.
13. **Viewpoint13** Swords Business Park
14. **Viewpoint14** Business campus access road adjacent to site
15. **Viewpoint15** Drone shot from the M1

The effects on the viewpoints are individually assessed below. For the methodology, terms and criteria used in the assessment refer to Appendix 1.

The assessment should be read in conjunction with the verified photomontages provided in A3 format under separate cover. For each viewpoint the following images are provided:

- Existing view (photograph).
- Proposed view (photomontage of proposed development).

Figure 20: Viewpoints for visual effects assessment



5.1 Viewpoint 1 – Seatown roundabout at the R132

Existing View:

- View 01 is taken from east of the Seatown Road roundabout looking towards the development site in the middle distance, approximately 400 m ahead. This road serves the surrounding industrial area, and functions as an arterial route, connecting to Estuary Road beyond the M1.
- The movement corridor is wide, with continuous footpaths present, and strongly tree-lined along both sides with early deciduous trees and hedgerows forming a largely continuous vegetated edge.
- Trees are in early spring condition, with buds and emerging foliage visible but not yet in full leaf, resulting in a relatively open canopy and largely filtering views of the light industrial and retail units beyond.
- Vertical elements are provided by evenly spaced public lighting columns, traffic lights and regulatory signage, reinforcing the formal, managed character of a main road.
- The overall townscape character is that of a busy urban edge commuter road with strong roadside vegetation, limited built form visible, and long views along the straight alignment towards the distant junction where the site is located.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. The landscape is dominated by standard transport infrastructure, the view is an ordinary urban/suburban approach road with no designated scenic status, landmark features or recognisable structures. Viewers are primarily vehicle occupants and road users - a receptor group generally classed as low sensitivity as their attention is focused on driving and way-finding.

Proposed Change:

- From this viewpoint location the upper storeys and roofline of the proposed buildings are discernible above and between the existing roadside vegetation on the left (north) side of the road, occupying a modest portion of the central field of view. A red wireline outlines the proposed built form to indicate the extent of the proposed development.
- Early-season foliage and hedgerow structure continue to provide substantial screening to lower storeys and ground-level activity, so that built form is perceived mainly as a series of articulated blocks emerging above a continuous vegetated edge. (Lighting columns, traffic signals and signs remain prominent foreground verticals, visually mediating between road users and the new development).
- Against the wide sky backdrop the development introduces a clearer urban edge and some additional mass on the skyline, but it does not break the overall horizontal emphasis of the corridor or interrupt long views towards the M1 embankment vegetation in the distance; the road itself and tree lines still organise the composition.
- Overall, in the context of an urban-edge commuter route with strong roadside vegetation and limited existing built exposure, the proposal is noticeable yet not visually dominant, reading as a consolidated urban backdrop rather than as an intrusive or over-scaled feature in the view.

Magnitude of change: Low.

Significance of Effects:

Slight positive. The proposed development would be noticeable within the view, introducing a new built element on lands zoned for potential residential use under the relevant MRE corridor objectives. While the scheme would result in a perceptible change to the existing view, this change would be consistent with the planned urbanising context and would contribute to a more consolidated and coherent settlement edge.

5.2 Viewpoint 2 – Mantua Road looking east

Existing View:

- Viewpoint is located on Mantua Road, looking eastwards along the main arterial route, a two-lane carriageway with footpaths along both sides. The site is located to the left of the roadside at an approximate distance of 150 metres.
- An entrance to the commercial units and an intermittent tree line in early spring condition with buds and emerging leaves with partly open canopies allow glimpsed views beyond the roadside vegetation. The built elements in this view are a logistics and storage facility, gates and directional signage.
- Overall, the visual character at baseline is managed, functional, semi-mature, and tree-lined where vegetation provides a softening framework around large footprint buildings in a sparsely developed urban setting.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. The viewer experience is primarily that of a road user moving through a transitional edge-of-town environment. Road users - a receptor group generally classed as low sensitivity as their attention is focused on driving and way-finding.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would introduce a limited and contained built element within the distant part of the view, with only a small portion of the scheme visible above the existing tree line.
- The visual change would be modest in scale and extent, as the intervening vegetation would continue to provide a strong degree of screening and visual containment.
- The development would be perceived within an established and evolving urban context, consistent with the planned pattern of growth and the use of appropriately zoned lands.
- The proposal would result in a slight but legible intensification of the built environment, without materially altering the overall composition, character, or visual amenity of the view.

Magnitude of change: Low

Significance of Effects:

Slight positive. The development would begin the planned transformation and densification of the Swords urban edge, aligning with the intended pattern of growth for this area. Its character, derived from the urban edge context, existing vegetation and contemporary architecture, would distinguish it from the Seatown North residential area and the surrounding light-industrial buildings, thereby supporting a more varied and richer urban environment.

5.3 Viewpoint 3 – Roundabout on Mantua Road adjacent to site

Existing View:

- This view represents users approaching the site on Mantua Road from the south, with the proposed development site addressing both the main carriageway towards the M1 overpass and the access road serving light industrial/commercial units to the north.
- The central island planted with two cherry blossoms in an early spring condition provide a soft focal point within an otherwise road infrastructure-led scene. A dense belt of deciduous trees wraps around the south west corner of the site, filtering views beyond.
- Additional roadside elements include lighting columns, traffic signs and low roadside verges, reinforcing the functional character of the junction and approach to the M1 overpass.

- Overall, the baseline character is that of a road junction framed by semi-mature vegetation, offering some visual amenity but limited built frontage or active edges.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. The townscape character is predominantly open in an undeveloped condition. There is a high capacity for change, and the view would benefit from development that reinforces the emerging urban character.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would establish a new, well-defined built edge to the road, replacing the current more open and underdeveloped frontage with a stronger urban form that would positively contribute to enclosure, legibility, and streetscape definition.
- The 8-storey element at the corner would act as a clearly identifiable marker building, providing visual emphasis at a key junction or corner location, while the articulated built form would step down and away to reduce perceived scale and provide a more responsive transition to adjoining areas.
- The use of brown and buff brick and bronze fenestration elements would introduce a robust and contextually appropriate material palette, helping to break down the visual mass of the development and provide warmth, texture, and variation within the streetscape.
- The retention of important vegetation in the south-western corner of the site would provide visual continuity and landscape structure, soften the appearance of the proposed built form and maintain an established green element within the view.
- The introduction of new landscape treatment would further enhance the visual setting of the development, contributing to streetscape quality, visual amenity, and integration, and supporting a more coherent and attractive urban environment.

Magnitude of change: Medium

Significance of Effects:

Moderate positive. Overall, the proposal would introduce a positive urbanising change, strengthening built enclosure, legibility and townscape quality in the view. The taller buildings provide a measured degree of street enclosure, delivering a distinctive, materially rich architectural and public realm composition.

5.4 Viewpoint 4 – Swords Business Park looking north

Existing View:

- This view represents users of Swords Business Park travelling north towards the Mantua Road roundabout, with the proposed development site located straight ahead at approximately 170 metres.
- The same roundabout as the previous view forms the focal point in the mid ground, where a flowering cherry on the central island is read in combination with boundary vegetation to signal the junction.
- Roadside vegetation on both sides is characterised by a line of birch trees in early spring leaf and a continuous hedgerow, creating a strong green edge and partially filtering views into adjoining plots.
- To the right, a single storey, large footprint warehouse building addresses the road behind the hedgerow and narrow grass verge, contributing to the established light industrial character of the business park.
- Overall, the baseline character is that of a functional road framed by a well-structured tree and hedgerow corridor, with intermittent visibility of commercial and warehouse uses beyond.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. The landscape in the foreground is in a well maintained condition with some urban elements. The tree line and vegetation generate a high level of visual amenity, and these are a valuable visual resource.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would introduce a new, articulated residential built form within the direct line of view, providing a stronger and more coherent visual termination to the road corridor while contributing to the planned densification of the area in line with policy.
- The development would be seen in the context of the existing functional business park character, where large-format buildings are already present beyond the roadside hedgerows and tree planting.
- The retained vegetation would continue to provide a strong green framework while visually filtering and softening the appearance of the proposed blocks and helping to integrate it into the existing townscape.
- The proposed use of buff brick elements and black fenestration would introduce tonal contrast and more refined architectural palette than the existing light industrial frontage, contributing positively to the visual quality of the approach.

Magnitude of change: Low.

Significance of Effects:

Slight positive. In visual terms, the scheme would represent a beneficial urbanising intervention, reinforcing enclosure, wayfinding and townscape coherence. The view would be substantially reshaped by new built form that frames the street, safeguards the characteristic boundary trees, and adds variety, quality materials and a well-designed public realm.

5.5 Viewpoint 5 – Emerging from M1 underpass to Swords urban area

***Also see Presentation View which accompanies photomontages booklet.**

Existing View:

- This view represents users of Mantua Road as it emerges from the M1 underpass; this is the Swords urban area. The proposed development site extends 170 m along the entire northern side of the road, from the underpass to the roundabout. The site boundary is defined by wooden fence and scrubby vegetation. The trees on the site comprises of short stretch along the sites southern boundary on Mantua Road and more extensively along the adjoining industrial park access road. A single willow tree, located within the site, is visible in the middle of this view.
- The same cherry tree on the central island of the Mantua Road roundabout is visible in the distance, while the wide carriageway and footpaths on both sides emphasise the role of this route as a key distributor corridor.
- The townscape is characterised by short distance views across a low-lying landscape, with dense roadside vegetation providing visual amenity and largely screening nearby structure's, this is broadly consistent with the "Low Lying Agriculture" landscape character type identified for this area.
- These lands are zoned ME – Metro Economic Corridor, intended to facilitate opportunities for high-density development, signalling an emerging shift from open agricultural edges towards a more urbanised streetscape.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. As with View 4, the townscape in the foreground is in a well maintained road corridor with limited urban elements and some early mature vegetation generates a reasonable level of visual amenity.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would establish a clear urban edge along the northern side of Mantua Road, replacing the existing fence line and scrubby boundary vegetation with a coherent built frontage on approach into Swords.
- The scheme would contribute to a stronger sense of arrival and defined transition into the urban area, reflecting the role of Mantua Road as a key corridor and supporting the planned evolution of the Metro Economic Corridor.
- The articulated built form, together with black fenestration and brown/buff brick elements, would provide visual interest, rhythm, and material warmth, helping to avoid a monolithic appearance and improving the quality of the streetscape.
- Existing (retained tree lines along the south and west boundaries, and, the single willow feature tree) and proposed vegetation would continue to provide landscape structure and visual softening, helping to integrate the new built edge within the established roadside green corridor.
- Overall, the proposal would result in a noticeable but beneficial townscape change, marking the transition from a low-lying agricultural edge east of the M1 to a more urbanised, policy-supported corridor while enhancing enclosure, legibility, and approach character.

Magnitude of change: Medium.

Significance of Effects:

Moderate positive. Overall, the proposal would result in a positive urbanising change, enhancing the sense of built enclosure, legibility, and streetscape. The development would have a transformative effect on the view, delivering a number of urban design gains including: (a) a measured degree of built enclosure to the street, (b) retention of the boundary trees - a key landscape feature, (c) distinctive design to achieve a rich urban diversity, (d) a high quality of materials in the buildings and public realm.

5.6 Viewpoint 6 – M1 motorway north bound.***Existing View:***

- This view is taken from the M1 motorway as it passes the Swords Business Park. The proposed development site at the Swords north eastern urban edge, where the M1 functions as a strategic corridor and a clear limit to outward urban expansion.
- A gap in the motorway vegetation allows a partial view of the roof and upper façade of a single storey, large footprint warehouse building within the Swords Business Park, indicating the presence of commercial activity to the west of the carriageway.
- The proposed development site and wider urban edge are largely screened by a thick belt of motorway planting comprising birch and other native species, which forms a continuous vegetated buffer along the roadside in a strongly infrastructure dominated view.
- Overall, the baseline view for motorway users is of a high speed transport corridor flanked by robust roadside planting, with only fleeting, filtered glimpses of adjacent warehouse and business park development beyond the vegetation.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. Glimpsed views of the townscape west the M1 - dominated by standard transport infrastructure. The view is an ordinary urban corridor with no landmark features or recognisable structures. Viewers are primarily vehicle occupants and road users - a receptor group generally classed as low sensitivity as their attention is focused on driving. There is capacity for change in this area, and the view would benefit from change that consolidates the emerging urban character.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would introduce a new residential built form within the mid-distance view, seen beyond and partially filtered by the existing motorway vegetation, thereby adding a strong urban element to a glimpsed view from the motorway corridor.
- The taller elements of the scheme would act as legible visual identifiers of the Swords north east urban edge, strengthening the transition from the motorway corridor towards the established and emerging urban area.
- The black fenestration and brown/buff brick elements would provide a warm and ordered architectural expression, offering a more refined built form than the existing glimpsed warehouse frontage within the business park.
- The existing belt of motorway planting would continue to provide substantial visual containment and screening, ensuring that the proposed development would be experienced as a filtered and intermittent element rather than a dominant feature.

Magnitude of change: Low

Significance of Effects:

Slight positive. Overall, the proposal would result in a noticeable but contained townscape change, reinforcing the planned urban edge of Swords while maintaining the strong vegetated buffer and infrastructure character that define the baseline view.

5.7 Viewpoint 7 – M1 motorway south bound.

Existing View:

- This view is taken from the M1 looking south, approximately 250 metres from the proposed development site, where a change in topography elevates the carriageway above the fluvial delta of the estuary mouth.
- The scene is dominated by the M1 road infrastructure, including multiple traffic lanes, concrete bridge structures, safety barriers and tall lighting columns.
- Tree tops of early-mature roadside planting form a continuous vegetated edge above the road level, visually softening the embankments along both sides and partially enclosing the corridor.
- In the distance, gantry-style overhead signage on the northbound carriageway forms the tallest element on the skyline, reinforcing the strongly infrastructure-led character of the view.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. Overall, users experience a high-speed, elevated motorway environment with limited awareness of the wider landscape or the proposed development site beyond the roadside vegetation and level changes.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would introduce a new residential built form in the mid-distance, visible above and beyond the existing roadside vegetation, thereby providing a clear marker of the Swords urban edge from the motorway corridor.
- The taller elements of the scheme would act as a successful visual identifier for the transition towards the wider Dublin region, reinforcing the perception of movement through the rural landscape towards a more metropolitan context.

- The variation in building height and modulation of forms effectively breaks up the overall massing, introducing visual interest and articulation while preventing a continuous, monotonous roof profile when viewed from this location
- The development's interface with this stretch of the M1 would be particularly successful in townscape terms, as the built form would provide a legible urban marker.
- The façade treatment would provide a warm, ordered and visually recessive material palette, helping the scheme to sit comfortably behind the existing vegetated edge while still contributing positively to visual interest and urban identity.

Magnitude of change: Low

Significance of Effects:

Slight positive. This view is experienced as standard transport infrastructure with no landmark features or notable recognisable structures that would elevate its sensitivity. Within this context, the proposed development would be noticeable within the view, introducing a new residential built form on lands aligned with the planned urbanising context of the MRE corridor. The change would contribute positively to the definition of the Swords urban edge, reinforcing a more consolidated and coherent settlement pattern while improving legibility on the approach towards the wider Dublin metropolitan area.

5.8 Viewpoint 8 – Hutchinson's Strand – north of the estuary

Existing View:

- This view is taken from Hutchinson's Strand on the northern shore of Malahide Estuary, looking south-west across the tidal waters towards the Swords urban edge, approximately 550 metres from the proposed development site.
- This stretch of the estuary is noted in the FDP under Draft Specific Objective Lines: Preserve Views (*Policy GINHP26 – Preservation of Views and Prospects – Preserve views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest including those located within and outside the County*).
- The foreground and mid-ground comprise the calm estuarine waterbody, exposed mudflats and fringing saltmarsh, which together create a wide, open expanse with a strong sense of tranquillity and naturalness.
- The distant shoreline contains a low band of settlement along Estuary Road, transport infrastructure - including the M1/Malahide Estuary crossing and substantial motorway vegetation is visible on the far side of the estuary.
- FDP Objective GINHO63, which seeks to prioritise Malahide and its estuary for Special Amenity Area Orders (SAAOs), recognising the high amenity value and visual sensitivity of these estuarine landscapes. The proposed SAAO status, combined with existing European and national nature designations for Malahide Estuary (SAC, SPA), underlines the importance of preserving the scenic quality, long estuary views and perceived separation between the coastal amenity landscape and the emerging Swords urban edge.

Viewpoint sensitivity: High. The viewpoint location is identified in the development plan as part of a designated high value estuarine amenity landscape and is the subject of objectives to preserve key views and prospects, meaning that inappropriate changes on the distant urban edge have the potential to affect perceived landscape quality and the appreciated setting of Malahide Estuary.

Proposed Change

- The proposed development would introduce a new built form on the distant Swords urban edge, beyond the estuarine mudflats and distant shoreline vegetation, and would provide a legible definition to the settlement edge when viewed from Hutchinson's Strand.
- The stepped variation in height and the articulation of built forms serve to fragment the overall massing, creating a more dynamic composition and avoiding the formation of a uniform or unrelieved roofline across the development.
- The taller element would act as a carefully placed urban identifier, visually marking the transition between the open estuarine landscape and the plan led MRE corridor development on the horizon, while remaining visually associated with the existing cluster of settlement, transport infrastructure elements and motorway vegetation across the estuary.
- The proposal would support the MRE zoning objective by contributing to a compact, higher-density and well-designed urban form, with landmark elements providing architectural emphasis in a location identified for planned growth.
- The built form would be perceived as a distant and contained townscape addition, allowing the broad estuarine waterbody, mudflats, saltmarsh and open sky to remain the dominant components of the view.
- The key element of the composition is the enhanced legibility and navigability of the new Swords urban townscape.

Magnitude of change: Low.

Significance of Effects:

Moderate positive. The proposal would occupy a small portion of the view, the landscape change is moderate and limited in scale from this distance, introducing elements characteristic of the emerging context. The development would have a limited effect on the view; focus will remain on the open waters and the larger experience of the estuary. The proposal will deliver a number of urban design gains (and MRE Zone requirements) signalling the Swords urban area. This change would be consistent with the planned urbanising context and would contribute to a more consolidated and coherent settlement edge without having a dominant or overbearing impact on the protected view.

5.9 Viewpoint 9 – Estuary Road – south of the estuary

Existing View:

- Viewpoint from Estuary Road on the southern shore of the Estuary, approximately 400 m from the proposed development site, looking towards the Swords urban edge.
- Foreground characterised by a wide, grassed open space and a well-used waterside footpath, providing an attractive recreational setting for walkers, joggers and cyclists along the estuary edge.
- While this viewpoint is subject to Draft Specific Objective "Preserve Views" (*Policy GINHP26 – Preservation of Views and Prospects*), the designated views are primarily oriented towards the estuary and its scenic waterfront, rather than towards the urban edge and proposed development site.
- The middle distance includes occasional one-off houses, where rooftops are interspersed with hedgerows and scrubby vegetation.
- A thick belt of roadside and motorway vegetation aligned broadly north–south screens most of the M1 corridor, helping to separate the estuarine amenity landscape from the strategic transport infrastructure and the Swords townscape.

Viewpoint sensitivity: High. This is a popular estuary-edge path and open space where users are engaged in recreation and appreciation of the waterside amenity, giving a high susceptibility to changes on the distant urban edge that could affect perceived amenity and landscape quality. The viewpoint location is identified in the development plan as part of a designated high value estuarine amenity landscape.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would occupy a small portion of the view and introduce a new residential built form within the mid-distance view, seen beyond and partially filtered by the existing motorway vegetation, and would read as a new urban element within an already influenced visual context.
- From the recreational path, views are generally orientated towards the water, with the proposed development forming a secondary element in the wider composition rather than the primary focus of the view.
- The proposed buff brick façade, combined with contrasting brown brick and fenestration elements, would present a legible and well-balanced architectural palette, adding depth, texture and a refined residential character to the east facing elevation.
- Only the tallest element of the scheme would be noticeable from this vantage point, and this building would act as the first legible visual identifier of the plan led strengthening Swords urban edge.

Magnitude of change: Low

Significance of Effects:

Moderate Neutral. In the foreground, Seatown East [and east of the M1] is a zone of High Amenity (HA) and Green Belt (GB) and these lands will serve a dual function as both an ecological buffer zone and a zone of visual separation between the built urban edge of Swords metropolitan area and the estuary. In this view, the proposal would result in a noticeable but contained townscape change, supporting the planned densification of the Swords urban edge while maintaining the strong vegetated buffer, infrastructure character and the wider recreational amenity value of the view. When oriented in the opposite direction, a view from the same footpath, slightly further along, opens towards the Malahide urban area, and such alternating views of adjoining settlements are a typical feature of the north Dublin context.

Photo 9: A view from the path looking east towards the Malahide urban area



5.10 Viewpoint 10 – Seatown East

Existing View:

- Located a short distance from Viewpoint 9, this view is taken from a cul-de-sac section of the former estuary road serving a small cluster of residential properties.
- Views towards the Swords urban edge are largely terminated by the raised alignment of the M1 motorway, which forms a continuous embankment across the mid-ground, flanked by a thick belt of roadside vegetation.
- Beyond the motorway planting, only limited distant elements of infrastructure are discernible.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. The townscape character at this viewpoint is that of a transitional edge-of-settlement space influenced by adjacent motorway infrastructure and local access functions, with low amenity value and limited visual relationship to the wider estuarine or urban landscapes.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would introduce a new residential built form within the mid-distance view, seen above the motorway infrastructure and roadside vegetation, and would add a legible urban element to the available view towards the Swords urban area.
- The stepped arrangement of buildings and heights would provide a graduated and articulated built profile, and the tallest element of the scheme would act as a clear visual identifier of the planned Swords urban edge, while the remaining buildings would be noticeable across the horizon as part of a coherent and emerging urban edge.
- The development would be seen in the context of the raised M1 embankment, motorway infrastructure and established roadside vegetation, which already strongly influence and contain the character of the view.

Magnitude of change: Low.

Significance of Effects:

Slight, Neutral. The proposal would result in a noticeable but contained townscape change, supporting the planned densification of the Swords urban edge while maintaining the strong vegetated buffer and infrastructure character that define the baseline view.

5.11 Viewpoint 11 – Gartan Court

Existing View:

- Viewpoint from Gartan Court looking south, approximately 250 m from the proposed development site.
- A large central green space, enclosed by two-storey semi-detached houses define a coherent, suburban residential enclave where the rising topography from the Broadmeadow valley to the north is evident.
- Boundary planting, ornamental trees and garden vegetation provide a soft, leafy setting that encloses the space and screens wider views to the south.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium. The view is of mature suburban residential area with no direct visual relationship to the wider landscape or to the proposed development on the urban edge

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would be perceptible in two limited and localised parts of the view (outlined with a red wireline), with only minor portions of the built form discernible beyond the intervening houses, boundary planting and garden vegetation.

- The change would be experienced as a minor visual intrusion within an otherwise enclosed suburban setting, where the large central green space, two-storey housing and leafy residential character would remain the defining elements of the view.
- The visibility of the proposal would reflect the planned densification associated with the MRE zoning objectives, introducing a modest indication of the emerging urban edge beyond the established residential enclave.
- Existing boundary planting, ornamental trees and garden vegetation would continue to provide visual containment and softening, helping to filter and reduce the prominence of the proposed development in the view.

Magnitude of change: Low.

Significance of Effects: Slight, neutral

Slight, neutral. Overall, the proposal would result in a limited and contained visual change, with the baseline suburban character and green open-space setting remaining clearly legible while the wider planned urban growth of the MRE corridor becomes modestly perceptible.

5.12 Viewpoint 12 – Lissen Manor

Existing View:

- Viewpoint from Lissen Manor, approximately 175 m from the proposed development site, on a short residential street of terraced homes which orientate towards the proposed development site.
- The baseline character is that of a mature suburban edge, with well-established garden boundaries, hedges and ornamental planting defining a leafy streetscape. Although many of the boundary trees are out of leaf, their height and density still provide substantial screening of the site and wider urban edge from this location.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium. A definable part of the suburban residential landscape, where viewers are locally sensitive to change but have only a limited visual relationship with the proposed development site.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would be barely noticeable within the view, with any visibility limited to very small and filtered elements beyond the established garden hedge and ornamental planting, and boundaries treatment.
- From this residential street, the mature suburban edge and leafy streetscape would remain the dominant visual characteristics, with existing vegetation continuing to provide substantial screening and visual containment.

Magnitude of change: Negligible

Overall, the proposal would result in no notable intrusion in the view, with the baseline residential character and sense of enclosure remaining effectively unchanged at this distance.

Significance of Effects: Imperceptible, neutral

Imperceptible, neutral. Overall, the proposal would result in no notable intrusion in the view, with the baseline residential character and sense of enclosure remaining effectively unchanged at this distance.

5.13 Viewpoint 13 – Swords Business Park

Existing View:

- This is an open view from within the Swords Business Park, approximately 75 m from the site, looking along an access road framed by large-footprint warehouse and office-style units.
- The viewpoint is dominated by hardstanding's, parked vehicles, loading/service areas and simple commercial façades, giving a strongly functional, employment-area character with open views out towards the site and wider landscape.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. Users are primarily employees and visitors focused on work-related activities in a low density commercial setting, with limited susceptibility to change in the wider view.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would introduce a new built form in the near distance, replacing open views across the undeveloped site with a more defined and coherent urban frontage within the Swords urban edge setting.
- The arrangement of buildings would retain a clear gap between blocks, allowing the distant skyline to remain visible and preserving a subtle sense of openness within the otherwise continuous urban frontage.
- The taller elements of the scheme would act as legible landmark identifiers, supporting the MRE zoning objective for compact, higher-density development with strong architectural features in an area planned for urban intensification.
- The articulated and stepped form reduces the perceived mass of the development, introducing variation that moderates any sense of bulkiness.
- The articulated built form, together with its residential character, black fenestration, and brown/buff brick finishes, would provide a positive and complementary contrast to the prevailing functional employment-area townscape.

Magnitude of change: Low The proposal would contribute to a more integrated and mixed-use urban environment, reflecting the planned transition of the Metro Economic Corridor towards higher-density residential and employment-generating activity in a high-quality urban setting.

Significance of Effects:

Slight neutral. The proposed development would be noticeable within the view, introducing a new built element on lands zoned for potential residential use under the relevant MRE corridor objectives. While the scheme would result in a perceptible change to the existing view, this change would be consistent with the planned urbanising context and would contribute to a more consolidated and coherent settlement edge.

5.14 Viewpoint 14 – Business campus access road adjacent to site

Existing View:

- This view was captured at the north-west corner of the site on the business campus access road, where the road wraps around an open, scrubby greenfield plot.
- The site itself presents as disturbed grassland and rough ground with scattered low vegetation, and reads as a gap within the otherwise sparsely developed business campus
- A line of trees along the western boundary, together with substantial motorway planting on the raised M1 embankment beyond, forms a strong vegetated edge that clearly defines the outer limit of the urban area.

Viewpoint sensitivity: Low Users are primarily employees and visitors engaged in work-related activities within a commercial setting, with limited susceptibility to change in the wider view.

Proposed Change

- Due to their colouring and higher density, the proposed buildings would have a stronger visual presence than the existing warehouse-type commercial units, which are typically less textured and finished in more muted, metal tones.
- The proposed development would introduce a new, articulated residential built form within the direct line of view, providing a stronger and more coherent streetscape and road frontage, while contributing to the planned densification of the area in line with policy.
- The development would be perceived within the context of the existing functional business park character, where large-format buildings are already present behind roadside hedgerows and tree planting.
- The retained and proposed vegetation would form a strong green framework, visually filtering and softening the appearance of the proposed blocks and helping to integrate the scheme into the existing environment.
- The proposed use of buff brick elements and brown fenestration would introduce a warmer and more refined architectural palette than the existing light-industrial frontage, contributing positively to the overall visual quality of the area.

Magnitude of change: Medium.

Significance of Effects:

Moderate positive. The development would deliver a number of urban design gains including: (a) a measured degree of built enclosure to the street, (b) retention of the boundary trees - a key landscape feature, (c) distinctive design to achieve a rich urban diversity, (d) a high quality of materials in the buildings and public realm.

5.15 Viewpoint 15 – Drone shot from the M1

Existing View:

- Elevated drone view taken from above the M1 motorway, looking over the proposed development site which currently presents as an open greenfield parcel in an overgrown, disused condition.
- The landform is low-lying and falls gently northwards towards the Broadmeadow River valley, giving a broad, open aspect across rough grassland and scrub with occasional isolated trees and treelined boundaries.
- Bright, large-footprint warehouse buildings within Swords Business Park form a clear strip of built form to the right of the view, providing some legibility to the existing urban edge against the otherwise open landscape.
- Site boundary trees are out of leaf but form a continuous, dense belt, effectively screening most views to further development beyond and reinforcing the perception of a well-defined vegetated edge to the site.
- Viewpoint sensitivity: Low. This elevated transport-corridor view is useful for demonstrating the potential urban-edge condition, but is experienced mainly by fast-moving motorists and commuters whose attention is focused on travel rather than the wider landscape, giving a low susceptibility to change in the view.

Proposed Change:

- The proposed development would replace the existing open greenfield edge with a prominent, mid-rise residential frontage, creating a much stronger built presence along the roadside corridor.

- The articulated arrangement of blocks, varying in height and depth, would frame views along the road and establish a more urban character, in contrast to the current low, undeveloped lands.
- The buff and darker brick façades, together with extensive glazing, would introduce a contemporary architectural expression that visually distinguishes the site from the surrounding light-industrial and commercial units.
- The inclusion of new landscape treatment of tree and shrub planting around the buildings would soften the transition from the road, helping to anchor the development within the green roadside setting while reducing the perceived bulk of the built form.

Magnitude of change: Low.

Significance of Effects:

Slight positive. Overall, the proposed development would give rise to a slight positive visual effect. While it would noticeably intensify the built presence on this currently open site, the scale, articulation and materiality of the buildings, together with the proposed landscape framework, would reinforce the planned urban edge and improve the legibility and visual coherence of the streetscape. Consequently, the change is judged to make a modest but beneficial contribution to the character and visual quality of the receiving environment.

6.0 Assessment of Landscape Effects

6.1 Landscape Character and Sensitivity to Change

The *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* state that landscape sensitivity should be classified with consideration of ‘the particular project or development that is being proposed’, and ‘the location in question’. Sensitivity of the landscape is determined by two factors:

1. Susceptibility to change: *“This means the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area...) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape policies or strategies”.*
2. Value of the landscape/townscape receptor: This can be indicated by designations or, where there are no designations, by judgements based on criteria that can be used to establish landscape value.

- The site itself is considered of ‘Low’ landscape sensitivity, reflecting its existing agricultural and light-industrial character at an under-developed urban edge where large-plot, functional buildings and wide roads already define a robust settlement threshold and justify a strengthened urban edge condition through consolidation and design-led development.
- The site defines the Swords urban edge yet lies within the Low-Lying Character Type, a modest-value landscape that can accommodate appropriately scaled development, provided that the design and interface treatment respect and do not erode the prevailing rural character of the adjacent lands to the east.
- The MRE zoning confirms that compact growth and densification are specifically anticipated and encouraged at this location, with the planned urbanisation of Seatown – including development of the subject lands – identified in the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029 as an appropriate and acceptable form of landscape change that will be reinforced by future higher-order public transport provision.
- The site forms part of a Highly Sensitive Landscape, where landscape sensitivity increases considerably towards the Malahide Estuary SAC/SPA and associated High Amenity and Green Belt lands; however, a

well-defined band of motorway planting and intervening agricultural lands functions as a vegetated buffer zone, providing an effective separation between the consolidating urban edge and the internationally designated estuarine landscape in line with recognised best practice for conservation buffer areas.

- While the wider business-park context is of low sensitivity, several mature and early-mature trees within and along the boundaries of the site contribute positively to townscape quality and should be retained, protected and integrated into the layout, with the established tree belt and motorway screen planting continuing to provide a green, visually containing edge to the M1 corridor.
- The nearest residential properties in Seatown are located some 150m from the subject lands, laid out with the existing agricultural field patterns and are separated by commercial uses, vegetation and transport infrastructure, such that the character and sensitivity of these dwellings is read as distinct from, and only indirectly influenced by, the low-sensitivity, light-industrial urban edge in which the site is situated.

In summary, the landscape has a high capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed, and the sensitivity of the receiving environment can be classified 'Medium' (definition: *Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong, or has evidence of alteration, degradation or erosion of elements and characteristics. The landscape character is such that there is some capacity for change. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principle management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change*).

6.2 Magnitude of Landscape Change

The *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* state that the magnitude of landscape change should be classified based on (1) the size or scale of the physical change which would take place in the landscape, (2) the geographical extent over which that change would be perceived, and (3) the duration and reversibility of the landscape effects.

6.2.1 Size/Scale of Change

- The site occupies an important place in the urban structure – at the gateway to Swords urban area and along its interface with M1 motorway.
- In the context of Swords, the site is not a large development plot, however, it does benefit from frontage of c. 170m to Mantua Road, (a key thoroughfare in the emerging Swords urban structure), and it c. 385m to the permitted Seatown Metro Station.
- Although the proposed buildings are of modest height (one to nine storeys, in keeping with the planned height for the Swords urban area), due to the site's exposure to the public realm, its role in defining same, and its important position in the urban structure, it would cause a moderate magnitude of landscape change *at the local level*.

6.2.2 Geographical Extent Over Which the Change Would be Perceived

- By contemporary urban standards the proposed buildings are not tall.
- The Swords Masterplan 2019 for the Metro North Economic Corridor identifies this area for compact, high-intensity, mixed-use and employment-generating development focused on the Metro, within a setting of exemplar urban design, thereby establishing clear policy support for taller buildings
- The site is low lying and benefits from a degree of enclosure by the rising landform and associated vegetation of the M1 motorway embankment.
- The development will be visible from the north shore of the estuary, which is subject to Objective GINHO60 – Protection of Views and Prospects; however, it constitutes appropriate, plan-led

development under the MRE zoning and will read as a distinct, coherent marker at the urban edge, comparable in scale and legibility to views of the Malahide urban area when the cone of view is orientated south-east, and at a separation distance of c.525m it will not intrude unduly upon the wider estuarine panorama.

- Therefore, while the development would be highly visible in its immediate context due to its exposure to the adjacent public realm, the geographical extent of visibility would remain limited, with the scheme primarily perceived as part of the emerging Swords urban edge in the distance of views from the estuarine landscape.

6.2.3 Duration and Reversibility

- The development would cause a permanent, irreversible change to the landscape (transformation of the site from disturbed greenfield to urban). However, this change is (a) planned/prescribed in the Fingal County Development Plan, and (b) in keeping with the proposed trend of change in the area, (.

In summary, the magnitude of landscape change which would result from the development is ‘medium’ (definition: *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 Significance and Quality of Landscape Effects

Measuring the magnitude of change against the landscape sensitivity (refer to Section 2.3, Table 3 and Figure 1 in Appendix 1), **the significance of the landscape effects is predicted to be ‘moderate’** (definition: *An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.*

A landscape impact of such significance can be expected - and indeed is the intention - of a development of the scale and prominence (locally) as that proposed. The more pertinent question is whether the effects of the change would be positive, neutral or negative.

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Section 5.37) state: *“One of the more challenging issues is deciding whether the landscape effects should be categorised as positive or negative. It is also possible for effects to be neutral in their consequences for the landscape. An informed professional judgement should be made about this and the criteria used in reaching the judgement should be clearly stated. They might include, but should not be restricted to:*

- *the degree to which the proposal fits with existing character;*
- *the contribution to the landscape that the development may make in its own right, usually by virtue of good design, even if it is in contrast to existing character...*

6.3.1 Fit with Existing Character

The “existing character” envisaged by the plan-led Metro North Economic Corridor zoning objectives has not yet been established, as there has been no substantial development permitted or constructed in the area. The degree to which the proposal fits with existing character cannot therefore be assessed.

(The only existing ‘character area’ in the vicinity of the site is the light industrial estates and Seatown neighbourhood to the north. Comparison of the proposal with that area is not appropriate as it evolved under a previous planning/development paradigm and the density is unsustainably low. It also predated the Seatown Road, the Metro North permission, the M1 motorway and other transport infrastructure improvements, which led to the adoption of the Metro North Economic Corridor).

6.3.2 Contribution to the Landscape Through Good Design

The proposed development makes a positive contribution to the landscape through good design by delivering plan-led, policy-compliant urban consolidation at appropriate density for Swords, with articulated street elevations, strong active frontage to Mantua Road, and building forms and layouts shaped by permeability objectives that create a legible, walkable neighbourhood with direct routes along key desire lines, enhanced public realm surveillance, and a high-quality landscape treatment that provides visual amenity, identity and coherent townscape enclosure. The present proposal will in turn establish the new baseline townscape context against which future development proposals in the area, including any subsequent plans for the adjacent lands, will be assessed.

6.4 Significance and Quality of Visual Effects

Summary of visual effects

Table 1: Summary of visual effects

No.	Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
1	Seatown roundabout at the R132	Low	Low	Slight positive
2	Mantua Road looking east	Low	Low	Slight positive
3	Roundabout on Mantua Road adjacent to site	Low	Medium	Moderate positive
4	Swords Business Park looking north	Low	Low	Slight positive
5	Emerging from M1 underpass to Swords urban area	Low	Medium	Moderate positive
6	M1 motorway north bound.	Low	Low	Slight positive
7	M1 motorway south bound.	Low	Low	Slight positive
8	Hutchinson's Strand – north of the estuary	High	Low	Moderate Neutral
9	Estuary Road – south of the estuary	High	Low	Moderate Neutral
10	Seatown East	Low	Low	Slight Neutral
11	Gartan Court	Medium	Low	Slight Neutral
12	Lissen Manor	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible, neutral
13	Swords Business Park	Low	Low	Slight Neutral
14	Business campus access road adjacent to site	Low	Medium	Moderate positive
15	Drone shot from the M1	Low	Low	Slight positive.

The assessment shows that the key receptors of change, i.e. the stretches of Mantua Road, within and around the business park, and approaching and passing by the site along the M1 (represented by Viewpoints 1-7 and 14 & 15) would experience positive visual effects ranging from 'slight' to 'moderate'. The estuary south shore, the views from residential areas in Seatown and Swords Business Park (represented by Viewpoints 9 – 13) would experience neutral visual effects ranging from 'Imperceptible' to 'slight' to 'moderate'.

This reflects the facts that:

- (a) The site is highly exposed to the above elements of the future public realm;

- (b) The proposal responds to this with a design that is both sensitive and alert to the opportunities presented by the unique landscape setting (specifically a contained greenfield site with road infrastructure on three sides);
- (c) The proposal is demonstrably responsive to/compliant with the key urban design guidance of the county development plan, for example Sustainable Urban Drainage and permeability requirements;
- (d) The proposed buildings and landscape are of high design and material quality.

None of the protected views or sensitive landscape features identified in the FDP 2023 - 2029 would be negatively affected by the proposal. Only positive (or neutral) landscape and visual effects have been identified.

In conclusion, the proposed development would make an important, positive contribution to the realisation of the vision for the emerging Seatown urban edge and Swords as a whole.

APPENDIX 1 LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The TVIA methodology is informed by the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd edition 2013 (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA) and the EPA *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, 2022.

The European Landscape Convention 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 expands beyond the idea that landscape is only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity. It recognises landscape as a resource in its own right, providing a complex range of cultural, environmental and economic benefits to individuals and society.

The word ‘townscape’ is used to describe the landscape in urban areas. The GLVIA defines townscape as “*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 space*”.

1.0 Key Principles of the GLVIA

1.1 Use of the Term ‘Effect’ vs ‘Impact’

The GLVIA requires that the terms ‘impact’ and ‘effect’ be clearly distinguished and consistently used. ‘Impact’ is defined as the action being taken, e.g. the introduction to the landscape of buildings, infrastructure or landscaping. ‘Effect’ is defined as the change resulting from those actions, e.g. change in landscape character or in the composition of views.

1.2 Assessment of Both ‘Landscape’ and ‘Visual’ Effects

The GLVIA prescribes that effects on views and visual amenity should be assessed separately from the effects on landscape/townscape, although the two topics are inherently linked.

‘Landscape/townscape’ results from the interplay between the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations and spatial distribution of these elements create variations in landscape/townscape character. ‘Landscape/townscape character assessment’ is the method used in LVIA to describe landscape/townscape and by which to understand the effects of development on the landscape/townscape as a resource.

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.

2.0 Townscape Effects Assessment

Assessment of potential landscape/townscape effects involves (a) classifying the sensitivity of the receiving environment, and (b) identifying and classifying the magnitude of landscape/townscape change which would result from the development. These factors are combined to arrive at a classification of significance of the landscape/townscape effects.

2.1 Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the landscape/townscape is a function of its land use, landscape patterns and scale, visual enclosure and the distribution of visual receptors, and the value placed on the landscape/townscape. The nature

and scale of the development in question is also taken into account, as are any trends of change, and relevant policy. Five categories are used to classify sensitivity (Table 1).

Table 1 *Categories of Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity*

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape exhibits very strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics that combine to give an experience of unity, richness and harmony. The landscape character is such that its capacity to accommodate change in the form of development is very low. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national or international value and the principle management objective for the area is protection of the existing character from change.
High	Areas where the landscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics. The landscape character is such that it has limited/low capacity to accommodate 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 principle management objective for the area is the conservation of existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong, or has evidence of alteration, degradation or erosion of elements and characteristics. The landscape character is such that there is some capacity for change. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principle 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 is such that it has capacity for change; where development would make no significant change or could make a positive change. Such landscapes are generally unrecognised in policy, and the principle management objective may be to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration or enhancement.
Negligible	Areas where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features or characteristics. The landscape character is such that its capacity to accommodate change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes include derelict industrial lands or extraction sites, as well as sites or areas that are designated for a particular type of development. The principle management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the landscape through development, repair or restoration.

2.2 Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Change

Magnitude of change is a factor of the scale, extent and degree of change imposed on the landscape/ townscape with reference to its key elements, features and characteristics (also known as 'landscape receptors'). Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change (Table 2).

Table 2 *Categories of Landscape/Townscape Change*

Magnitude of Change	Description
Very High	Change that is large in extent, resulting in the loss of or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape and/or introduction of large elements considered totally uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in fundamental change in the character of the landscape.
High	Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape 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, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic of the context. Such development results in no change to the landscape character.

2.3 Significance of Landscape/Townscape Effects

To classify the significance of effects the magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape/townscape using Table 3 and Figure 1 as a guide. The significance classification matrix (Table 3) is derived from the EPA's Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2022 (specifically Figure 3.4 of the Guidelines – see Figure 1 below).

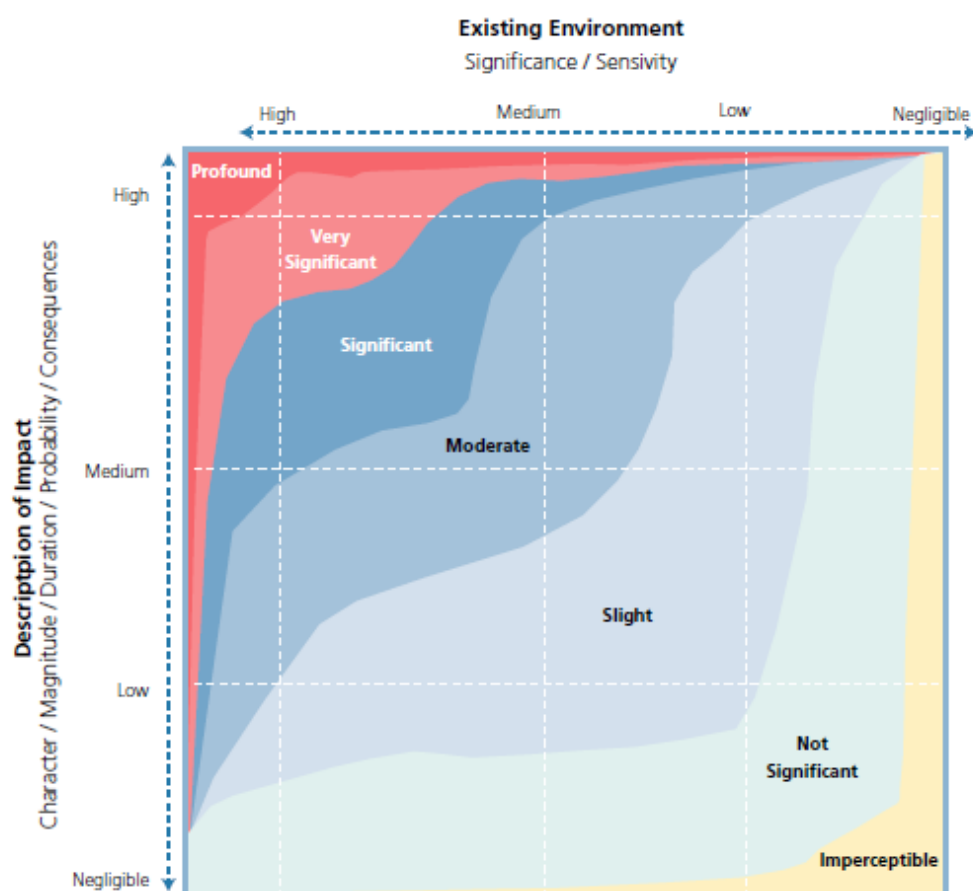
In addition to this guidance the assessor uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable.

There are seven classifications of significance, namely: (1) imperceptible, (2) not significant, (3) slight, (4) moderate, (5) significant, (6) very significant, (7) profound.

Table 3 Guide to Classification of Significance of Landscape/Townscape and Visual Effects

		<i>Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource/View</i>				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
<i>Magnitude of Change</i>	Very High	<i>Profound</i>	<i>Profound to Very Significant</i>	<i>Very Significant to Significant</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Slight</i>
	High	<i>Profound to Very Significant</i>	<i>Very Significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Moderate to Slight</i>	<i>Slight to Not Significant</i>
	Medium	<i>Very Significant to Significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Not Significant</i>
	Low	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate to Slight</i>	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>
	Negligible	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Slight to Not Significant</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>

Figure 1: 'Chart showing typical classifications of the significance of impacts' (Source: Figure 3.4 of the EPA's Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2022)



The impact significance classifications are taken from the EPA Draft Guidelines, which define the classifications as follows (Table 4):

Table 4 EPA definitions of environmental impact classifications

Significance Classification	Description
Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
Not significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
Moderate	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
Very Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
Profound	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.

3.0 Visual Effects Assessment

Assessment of visual effects involves identifying a number of key/representative viewpoints in the site's receiving environment, and for each of these: (a) classifying the viewpoint sensitivity, and (b) classifying the magnitude of change which would result in the view. These factors are combined to arrive at a classification of significance of the effects on each viewpoint.

3.1 Sensitivity of the Viewpoint/Visual Receptor

Viewpoint 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 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 sensitive to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes), 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).

Five categories are used to classify viewpoint sensitivity (Table 5).

Table 5 *Categories of Viewpoint Sensitivity*

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Iconic viewpoints (views towards or from a landscape feature or area) that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of national value. The composition, character and quality of the view are such that its capacity for change in the form of development is very low. The principle management objective for the view is its protection from change.
High	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 focused on the landscape). The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity for accommodating 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	Views that may not have features or characteristics that are of particular value, but have no major detracting elements, and which thus provide some visual amenity. These views may have capacity for appropriate change, and the principle management objective is to facilitate change to the composition that does not detract from visual amenity, or which enhances it.
Low	Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, and where the composition and character are such that there is capacity for change. This category also includes views experienced by people involved in activities with no particular focus on the landscape. For such views the principle management objective is to facilitate change that does not detract from visual amenity, or enhances it.
Negligible	Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, or in which the composition may be unsightly (e.g. in derelict landscapes). For such views the principle management objective is to facilitate change that repairs, restores or enhances visual amenity.

3.2 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 view, or in glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, as well as the duration and reversibility of the visual effects. Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change to a view (Table 6).

Table 6 *Categories of Visual Change*

Magnitude of Change	Description
Very High	Full or extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features or characteristics, or introduction of elements that are completely out of character in the context, to the extent that the development becomes dominant in the composition and defines the character of the view and the visual amenity.
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/or 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.

3.3 Significance of Visual Effects

To classify the significance of visual effects, the magnitude of change to the view is measured against the sensitivity of the viewpoint, using the guidance in Table 3 and Figure 1 above.

4.0 Quality of Effects

In addition to predicting the significance of the effects on the landscape and views, EIA methodology requires that the quality of the effects be classified as positive/beneficial, neutral, or negative/adverse.

For landscape/townscape effects to a degree, but particularly for visual effects, this is an inherently subjective exercise since landscape and views are perceived and therefore subject to variations in the attitude and values of the receptor. One person's attitude to a development may differ from another person's, and thus their response to the effects of a development on a landscape or view may vary.

Additionally, there might be policy encouraging a particular development in an area, in which case the policy is effectively prescribing landscape change. If a development achieves the objective of the policy the resulting effect might be considered positive, even if the landscape character is profoundly changed. The classification of quality of landscape and visual effects should seek to take these variables into account and provide a reasonable and robust assessment.