

# TVA

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



## CROSS GUNS BRIDGE STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PHIBSBOROUGH DUBLIN



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# **LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This Townscape and Visual impact Assessment report has been prepared in respect of a Strategic Housing Development by Bindford Ltd. at Cross Guns Bridge, Phibsborough, Dublin 7. This report describes the townscape/visual context of the proposed development and assesses the likely impacts of the scheme on the receiving environment, in terms of both townscape character and visual amenity.

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

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

## **1.1 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY**

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

## **1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The proposal is for a Strategic Housing Development for Build-To-Rent apartments and will comprise of the demolition of all derelict buildings on site and the construction of a new residential development comprising of 3 no. blocks, ranging in height up to 12 storeys, consisting of 205 no. dwellings and associated residential amenities, basement and surface carparking with vehicular and pedestrian access from the eastern end of the site off Phibsborough Road.

There will be additional pedestrian-only accesses to the north of the site, off the Royal Canal Way. A new café/retail area will be located at the ground floor level of Block C, along with a new public open space to the east of the site. All associated site development works, landscaping and boundary treatment, children's play area, cycle parking, bin stores, substation, and services provision. A full description is set out in the statutory notices.

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In this instance there is a strong interrelationship between the ‘townscape’ and ‘cultural heritage’ assessments. However, as stated in section 5.11 of GLVIA-2013:

*“The sharing of relevant baseline information should not be confused with the need for separate cultural heritage appraisals such as historic landscape characterisation and assessment of historic townscape appraisal, or there will be a danger of both double handling and inappropriate judgements by non-experts. It is particularly important that responsibilities are clear in considering any effects on the settings and views for historic buildings, conservation areas and other heritage assets.”*

### **1.3.1 Landscape/townscape Impact Assessment Criteria**

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

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

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

**Table 1-1: Landscape/Townscape Value and Sensitivity**

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

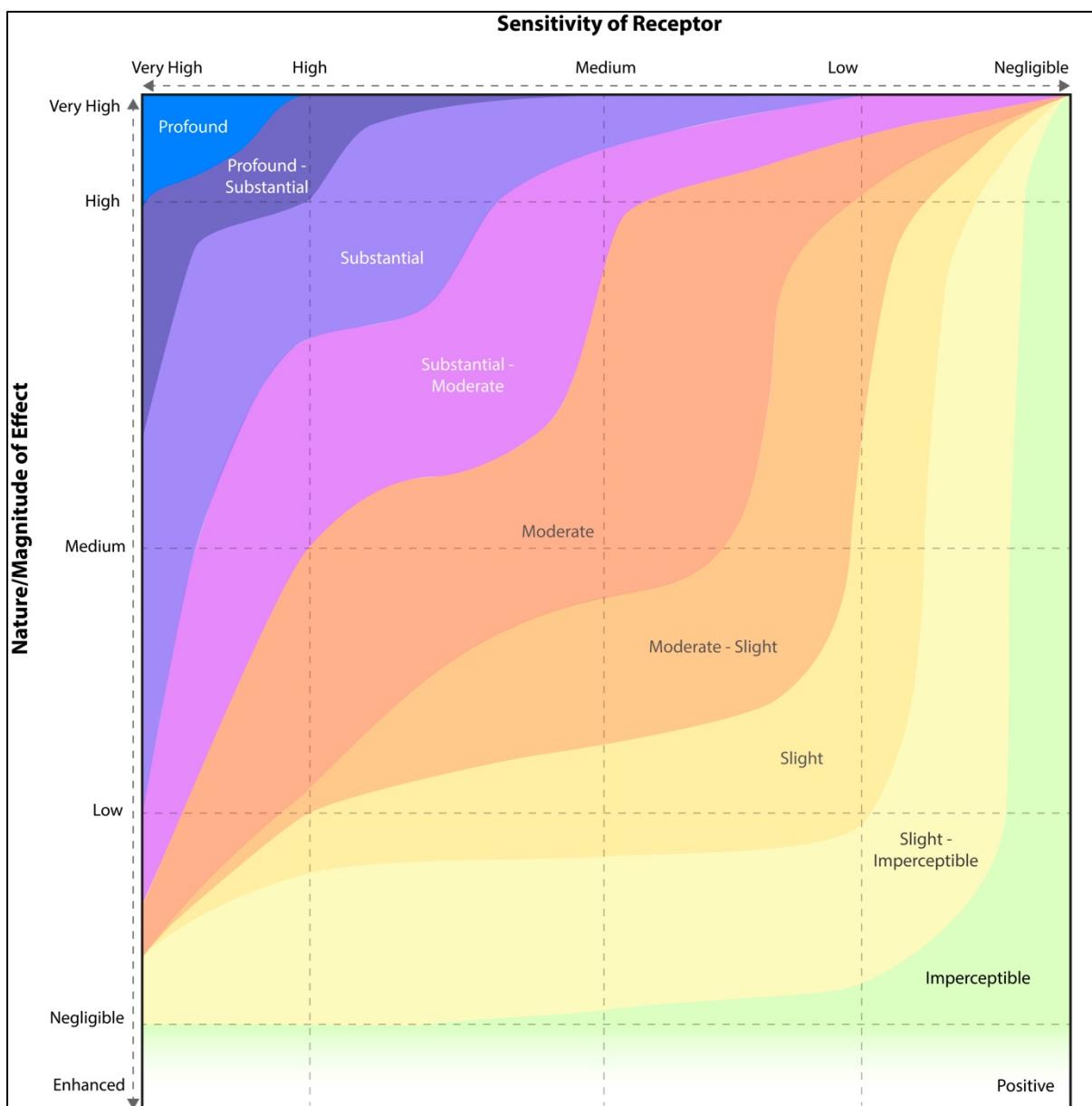
The magnitude of a predicted landscape/townscape impact is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed Development. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape/townscape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

**Table 1-2: Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Impacts**

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

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

**Table 1-3: Impact Significance Matrix**



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

### 1.3.2 Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

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

## **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors**

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

## **Susceptibility of Receptors**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views.** This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;

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

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

**Presence of striking or noteworthy features.** A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape / townscape feature such as a cathedral or castle;

**Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance.** Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;

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

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

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

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

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

### 1.3.3 Visual Impact Magnitude

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

**Table 1.4: Magnitude of Visual Impacts**

Criteria	Description
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<b>Very High</b>	The proposal alters a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most distinctive element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene
<b>High</b>	The proposal alters a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also likely to be generated, appreciably reducing the visual amenity of the scene
<b>Medium</b>	The proposal represents a moderate alteration to the available vista, is a readily noticeable element and/or it may generate a degree of visual clutter or disharmony, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene.
<b>Low</b>	The proposal alters the available vista to a minor extent and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene.
<b>Negligible</b>	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not detract from, and may even enhance, the visual amenity of the scene.
<b>Positive</b>	Changes that enhance the available vista by reducing visual clutter or restoring degraded features.

#### **1.3.4 Visual Impact Significance**

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

#### **1.3.5 Extent of Study Area**

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



Figure 1.0 - Study area for the proposed development

## 1.4 THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The landscape/townscape baseline represents the existing context and is the scenario against which any changes to it, brought about by the proposed development, will be assessed. A description of the landscape/townscape context of the proposed site and wider study area is provided below. Although this description forms part of the landscape/townscape baseline, many of the elements identified also relate to visual receptors i.e. places from which viewers can potentially see the proposed Development. The visual resource will be described in greater detail in Section 1.9.

### 1.4.1 Baseline Environment

#### 1.4.1.1 Immediate Site Context

This brownfield site area covers 0.7 ha. and is known locally as the “Old Bakery Site.” It has a relatively long, narrow profile, running in a northwest/southeast direction. It is located along the

southern bank of the Royal Canal, with access onto Phibsborough Road by Cross Guns Bridge (i.e. over the Royal Canal). A large, former bakery occupies the site, which has been derelict for more than 35 years. A greenfield site until approx. 1840, a foundry was then constructed on the site, but was soon converted into a flourmill in the 1860s. However, a new flourmill was constructed on the site in the 1930s, with a large concrete silo constructed in the 1950s. Accordingly, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century post-industrial environment within the site comprises of large, obsolete buildings, dominated by a 30m-high concrete silo, with lower (i.e. 8m high), dilapidated, warehouse-style buildings abutting its eastern and western flank (see Figure 1.1, below). On the far western end of the site is an exterior, hardscape area where vegetation has been recolonizing for several years (see Figure 1.5, below).

In terms of boundary treatment, on its northern side a stonewall separates the site from the towpath at Cross Guns Quay along the Royal Canal (see Figure 1.2, below). Along its western and southern boundaries, residential development is present, ranging from modern housing developments (i.e. to the west) to two-storey, redbrick Victorian terraced housing (to the southwest and south) (see Figure 1.4, below). To the immediate south of the site, behind Leinster Street, a gated/secured residential back lane separates these properties from the site boundary. The site ‘pinchers’ along its eastern end, where the vehicular entrance from Phibsborough Road marks the eastern edge of the site. Also along the south bank of the canal, the Mill apartment complex is located in a converted/refurbished 19<sup>th</sup> Century, 23m-tall stone mill building (and protected structure), abutting the north-eastern end of the site. In that regard, the site and its immediate context is that of an urban, multi-storey commercial and/or residential character (see Figure 1.6, below).

The most defining feature of the immediate site context is that of the Royal Canal, whose 200-year old towpath serves as a recreational hub and transport axis for the community’s walkers, runners, cyclists and fisherfolk (see Figure 1.8, below). Cyclists and walkers commuting to/from or connecting with Dublin city centre, which is located within 2km of the site, also heavily frequent the towpath. Six different canal gates are present within 100m of the site (three to the northwest; three to east).



Figure 1.1 – View of the ‘Old Bakery Site’ on the far (i.e. south) side of the Royal Canal.



Figure 1.2 – A stonewall separates the site from the towpath at Cross Guns Quay along the Royal Canal



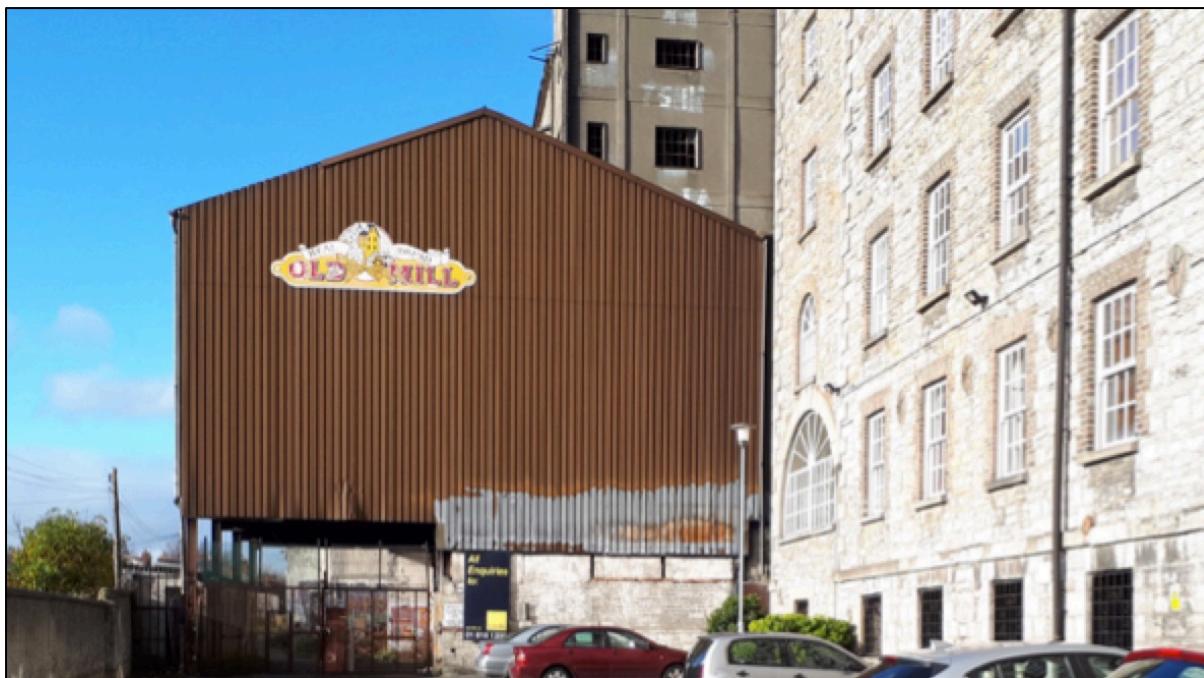
Figure 1.3 – A residential ‘back lane’ to the west of the site. Please note the 30m-high, 1950’s concrete silo in the centre distance, which is proposed to be demolished as part of the proposed development.



**Figure 1.4 – two-storey, redbrick Victorian terraced housing is prevalent to the immediate southwest and south of the site.**



**Figure 1.5 – On the far western end of the site is a former concrete slab yard where vegetation has been recolonizing for three decades,**



**Figure 1.6 – Much of the eastern end of the site is currently used as a car park for the Mill apartment block (i.e. to the right/ north of the frame). The former bakery buildings, which are proposed to be demolished, are located at the western end of this car park, and are inaccessible to the public.**

#### *1.4.1.2 Broader Townscape Context*

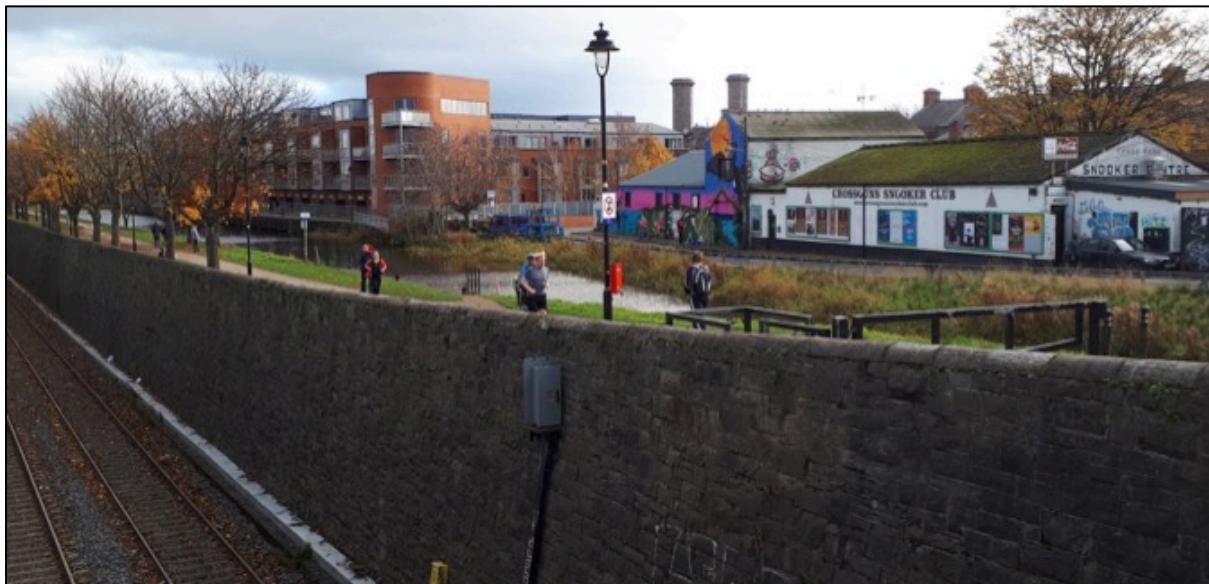
The site is located near the heart of Phibsborough, an inner suburb of Dublin city with a long established, mixed commercial and residential neighbourhood. Its topography is either flat or slightly undulating, gravitating close to the 50m AOD contour. The most notable natural watercourse within 1km of the site is the Tolka River, approx. 1km north/northeast, in Drumcondra and Glasnevin, while the closest manmade watercourse, the Royal Canal, runs adjacent to the site's northern boundary.

There are numerous important transport routes within 500m of the site, notably the R135, which links in with the southern end of the N2, and the R147/Navan Road, which links in with the southern end of the N3, both of which also serve as busy suburban roads for the community. Two major rail lines are within 100m north of the site (see Figure 1.7, above): the Western commuter Services line that runs between Pearse Street Station and Maynooth, as well as the Dublin Connolly to Longford/Sligo line. In addition, the Luas Green Line runs within 500m southwest of the site.

Phibsborough's character and sense of place within the study area is substantially threefold, which is reflective of its adaptability, growth and popularity over the last two centuries. Firstly, a commercial/transport nexus is centred along Phibsborough Road/Botanic Road, adjacent to the eastern end of the site. Aside from multi-storey residential blocks such as The Mill (adjacent to the site), this corridor hosts numerous commercial and retail industries - from relatively recent cafes and restaurants to multi-generational family businesses - in tandem with the aforementioned, intensely used transport routes. This includes the large, eight-storey Phibsborough Shopping Centre, which was built in the 1960s and is located within 200m south of the site. In 2018, a €50 million revamp of the shopping centre was approved by An Bord Pleanála last. This nexus also entails the sizeable, multi-storey infrastructure of both Mountjoy Prison and the Mater Hospital, located within 200m and 500m southeast of the site, respectively.

Secondly, the prevalence of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Victorian housing, which is frequently terraced, helps engender a more sedate and serene sense of place, which has attracted residents to the area for over a century. An Architectural Conservation Area is located approx. 350m south of the site, along North Circular Road, although most of these 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings are in commercial/retail, rather than residential, use.

Thirdly, the Royal canal and the broader recreational facilities and amenities also characterise the study area. Aside from the aforementioned draw of the Royal Canal corridor (see Figure 1.8 below), nearby there is also the National Botanic Gardens and the renowned Glasnevin cemetery, as well as Dalymount Park, home of Bohemian F.C, with its attendant large supporter stands, located within 250m south of the site. This trifold of factors is non-unrelated as to why Phibsborough was listed in October 2020 as one of the top 40 'coolest neighbourhoods' in the world, according to the international Time Out magazine.



**Figure 1.7 – Two major rail lines run within north 100m north of the site**



**Figure 1.8 – the Royal Canal corridor is particularly popular with the community's walkers, runners, cyclists and fisherfolk.**

## 1.5 PLANNING CONTEXT

### 1.5.1 Dublin City Development Plan (CDP) 2016-2022

In terms of land use zoning (Map E of the Dublin CDP) the proposed development is contained in ‘Zone Z1’, whose zoning objective is to “to protect, provide and improve residential amenities.” There are no additional zoning objectives relevant to the site.

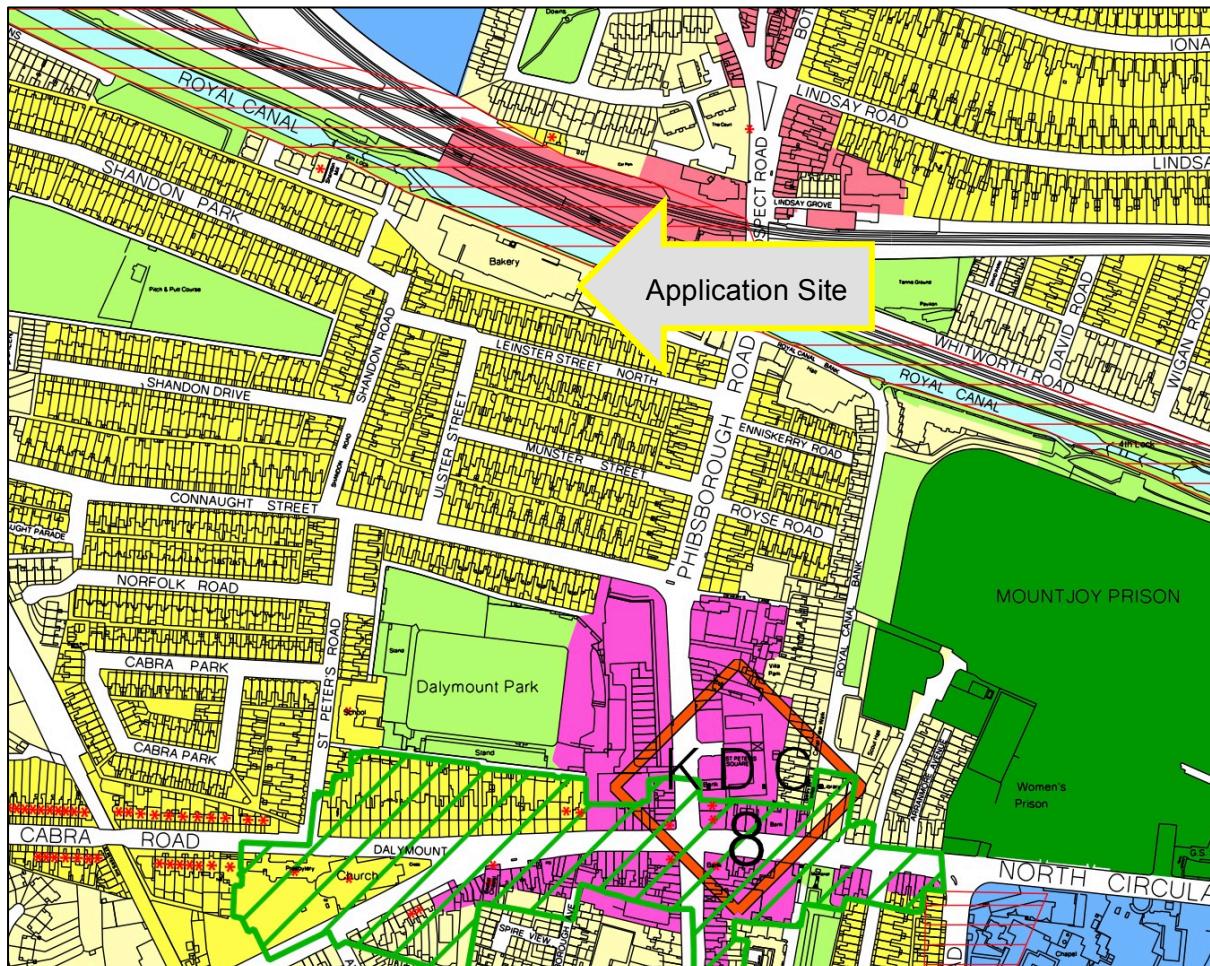


Figure 1.9 – extract of Map E of the Dublin CDP, showing how the site is contained within ‘Z1’ designation.

Chapter 4 – ‘Shape and Structure of the City’ of the Dublin City Development Plan (2016-2022) contains relevant policies in respect of Dublin’s inner suburbs and outer city. The site is located within 200m of a “Key District Centre,” although the site itself is not within one. In relation to Key District Centres, Section 4.5.2.1 of the CDP states:

*“As the top tier of urban centres outside the city centre, these will be strong spatial hubs, providing for a comprehensive range of commercial and community services [...] While some of KDCs may have an established urban form, these centres should also be capable of achieving a distinctive spatial identity with a high quality physical environment.”*

Policies and objectives relating to the inner suburbs and outer city are outlined within Chapter 4 of the development plan.

### Policies relevant to the proposed development

**SC5:** *To promote the urban design and architectural principles set out in Chapter 15, and in the Dublin City Public Realm Strategy 2012, in order to achieve a quality, compact, well-connected city.*

**SC10:** *To develop and support the hierarchy of the suburban centres, ranging from the top tier key district centres, to district centres/urban villages and neighbourhood centres, in order to support the sustainable consolidation of the city and provide for the essential economic and community support for local neighbourhoods, including post offices and banks, where feasible, and to promote and enhance the distinctive character and sense of place of these areas.*

**SC12:** *To ensure that development within or affecting Dublin's villages protects their character.*

### Objectives relevant to the proposed development

**SC04:** *To undertake a views and prospects study, with the aim of compiling a list of views and prospects for protection and/ or enhancement which will be integrated with and complement the urban form and structure of the city.*

### **Approach to Taller Buildings**

Section 4.5.4.1 specifically deals with the 'Approach to Taller Buildings' and begins with the statement that:

*"Dublin City Council acknowledges the intrinsic quality of Dublin as a low-rise city and considers that it should remain predominantly so. The vast majority of the city area is identified as not being suitable for mid-rise or taller buildings. The City Council remains committed to the need to protect conservation areas, architectural conservation areas and the historic core of the city. However, taller buildings can also play an important visual role and can make a positive contribution to the skyline of a city. Dublin City Council recognises the merit of taller buildings, including landmark buildings, in a very limited number of locations at a scale appropriate for Dublin."*

Relevant Policy in relation to building height includes;

**SC16:** *To recognise that Dublin City is fundamentally a low-rise city and that the intrinsic quality associated with this feature is protected whilst also recognising the potential and need for taller buildings in a limited number of locations subject to the provisions of a relevant LAP, SDZ or within the designated strategic development regeneration area (SDRA).*

**SC18:** To promote a co-ordinated approach to the provision of tall buildings through local area plans, strategic development zones and the strategic development and regeneration areas principles, in order to prevent visual clutter or cumulative negative visual disruption of the skyline.

### **Designated Scenic Views and Prospects**

Also contained within Chapter 4 is a map illustrating views and prospects for protection. However, there are no designated views and prospects within the study area.

### **1.5.2 Urban Development and Building Heights – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2018)**

The Urban Development and Building Guidelines were adopted in December 2018 by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government “*to secure better and more compact forms of future development.*”

Policies stated within the UDBH guidelines that may be relevant to the proposed development are included below:

**SPPR1:** *In accordance with Government policy to support increased building height in locations with good public transport accessibility, particularly town/city cores, planning authorities shall explicitly identify, through their statutory plans, areas where increased building height will be actively pursued for both redevelopment and infill development to secure the objectives of the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and shall not provide for blanket numerical limitations on building height.*

**SPPR 2:** *In driving general increases in building heights, planning authorities shall also ensure appropriate mixtures of uses, such as housing and commercial or employment development, are provided for in statutory plan policy. Mechanisms such as block delivery sequencing in statutory plans<sup>2</sup> could be utilised to link the provision of new office and residential accommodation, thereby enabling urban redevelopment to proceed in a way that comprehensively meets contemporary economic and social needs, such as for housing, offices, social and community infrastructure, including leisure facilities.*

Section 3.2 of the UDBH guidelines also lists development management criteria from the city/town scale to the site/building scale in which “*the applicant shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority/ An Bord Pleanála, the proposed development satisfies the following criteria...*” Those criteria deemed relevant to this visual impact assessment and the proposed development are included below.

**At the scale of the relevant city/town:**

- *Development proposals incorporating increased building height, including proposals within architecturally sensitive areas, should successfully integrate into/ enhance the character and public realm of the area, having regard to topography, its cultural context, setting of key landmarks, protection of key views. Such development proposals shall undertake a landscape and visual assessment, by a suitably qualified practitioner such as a chartered landscape architect.*
- *On larger urban redevelopment sites, proposed developments should make a positive contribution to place-making, incorporating new streets and public spaces, using massing and height to achieve the required densities but with sufficient variety in scale and form to respond to the scale of adjoining developments and create visual interest in the streetscape.*

## **1.6 Identification of Viewshed Reference Points as a Basis for Assessment**

Viewshed Reference Points (VRP's) are the locations used to study the likely visual impacts associated with the proposed development. It is not warranted to include each and every location that provides a view as this would result in an unwieldy report and make it extremely difficult to draw out the key impacts arising from the proposed development. Instead, the selected viewpoints are intended to reflect a range of different receptor types, distances and angles. The visual impact of a proposed development is assessed using up to 6 categories of receptor type as listed below:

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

The Viewshed Reference Points selected in this instance are set out in Table 1.5 and shown on Figure 1.10 below.

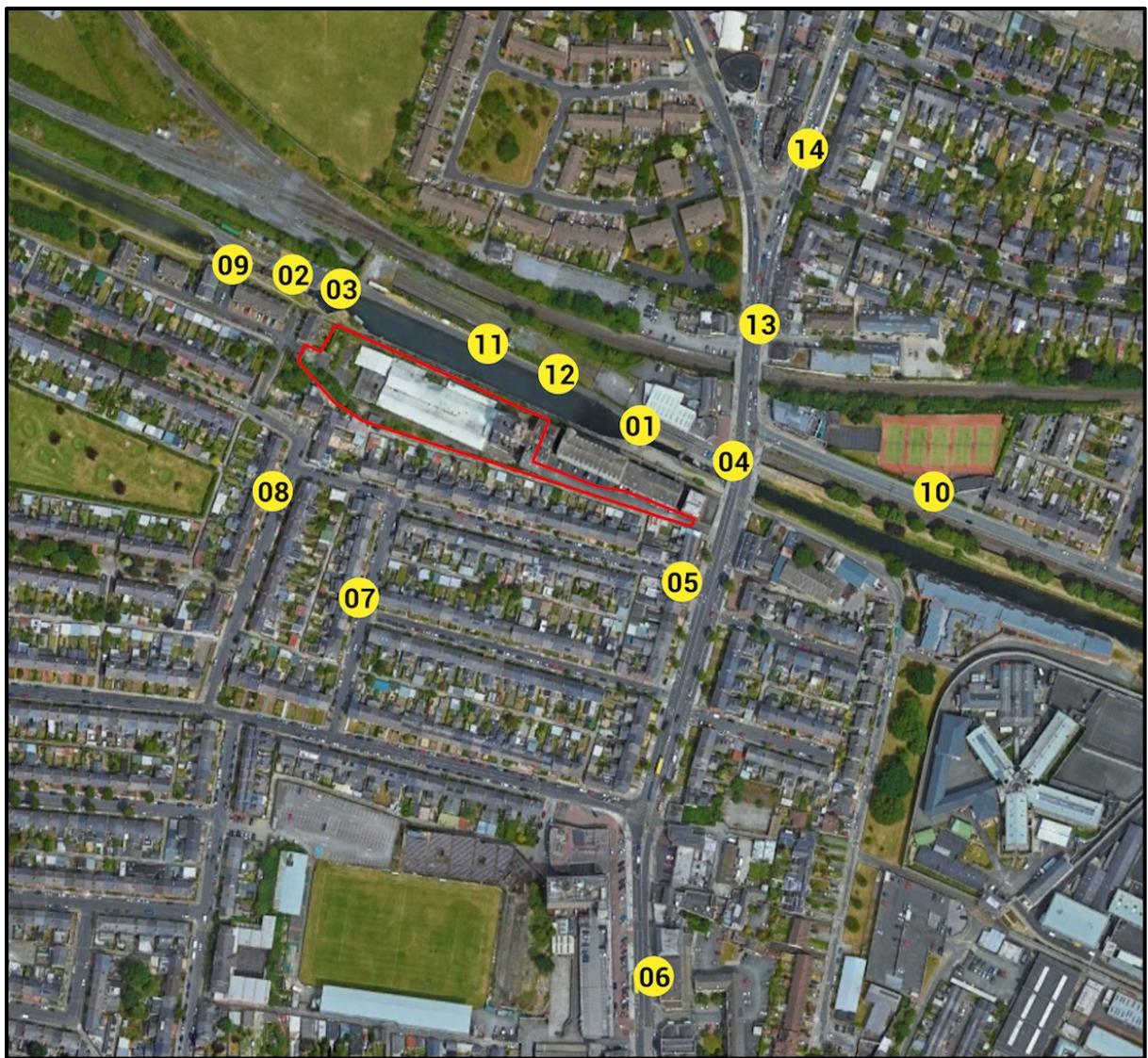


Figure 1.10 – Viewpoint Selection Map

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

<i>VRP No.</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Direction of view</i>
VP1	Royal Canal Way, looking northwest	NW
VP2	Royal Canal Way, looking southeast	SE
VP3	Royal Canal Way, looking south	S
VP4	Phibsborough Road by Royal Canal Way	NW

<b>VP5</b>	Junction of Phibsborough Road and Leinster Street North	NW
<b>VP6</b>	Phibsborough road by Phibsborough Shopping Centre	N
<b>VP7</b>	Ulster Street	N
<b>VP8</b>	Shandon Road	N
<b>VP9</b>	Royal Canal Way, looking southeast	SE
<b>VP10</b>	Whitworth Road	W
<b>VP11</b>	Royal Canal Way, looking southeast	SE
<b>VP12</b>	Royal Canal Way, looking southwest	SW
<b>VP13</b>	Botanic Road near Cross Guns Bridge	SW
<b>VP14</b>	Botanic Road by Finglas Road junction	SW

## 1.7 PREDICTED IMPACTS

### 1.7.1 Landscape/townscape Impacts

#### 1.7.1.1 Landscape/townscape value and sensitivity

In accordance with Section 5.5 of the GLVIA-2013, a townscape character assessment requires a particular understanding of, among other criteria, “the context or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape.” In a city that has evolved over millennia, the study area is a relatively recent addition. Phibsborough’s sense of place has strong overlaps with other of Dublin’s redbrick inner suburbs that were developed primarily through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, engendering a balance between proximity to the city centre with palpable professional, community and recreational opportunities, set along numerous aforementioned transport routes. As previously covered in Section 1.6.1.2, its character has also been informed by a trifold of factors: a commercial/transport nexus centred the Phibsborough Road corridor, where multi-storey commercial, institutional and residential use commonly occurs; the prevalence of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Victorian housing, which is frequently terraced; and, lastly, the Royal canal and the broader recreational facilities and amenities that populate the study area.

In this regard, the site and its immediate surrounds (i.e. within 100m) are hugely and highly representative of the suburb of Phibsborough, in that it lies at an intersection of major transport nodes, the Phibsborough Road commercial corridor and the royal canal corridor, while being less than 100m from streets of 19<sup>th</sup> Century redbrick housing. In terms of built form in the immediate

area there is complex and eclectic array of buildings of different sizes and styles marking their various periods. While Dublin City attracts large volumes of tourists and visitors in the course of a year, and much of the draw relates to its low-rise townscape character, neither of these factors is evident within the study area. Aside from the Botanic Gardens and soccer-supporters attending Dalymount Park, there is a dearth of tourist/visitors attractions within the study area, while there are, as previously covered, several multi-storey commercial, residential buildings present.

Regarding sensitivity, this is an evolving townscape subject to near constant changes in the built environment and thus, it is not inherently sensitive to change. While there is an Architectural Conservation Area designation located approx. 350m south of the site, this is not reflective of the built environment in the vicinity of the site.

On balance of the factors outlined above, the sensitivity of the receiving townscape setting is considered to be **Medium-low**.

#### *1.7.1.2 Magnitude of Landscape/townscape effects*

##### **Construction Phase**

There will be permanent physical effects to the land cover of the site, which are not readily reversible. During the construction stage of the proposed development, which is estimated to take 24 months, there will be intense construction-related activity within and around the site, including approach roads. This will include, but is not limited to:

- HGVs transporting materials to and from the site;
- Movement of heavy earth-moving machinery and tower cranes on-site;
- Temporary storage of excavated materials and construction materials on-site;
- Gradual emergence of the proposed apartment complex, and associated works;
- Security fencing and site lighting.

Whilst the physical impacts to the site's land cover will be permanent, and not readily reversible, the site is already a much-modified, brownfield, post-industrial site that does not enrich the overall landscape character of the area. Construction stage impacts on landscape/townscape character will be 'short-term' (i.e. lasting 1-7 years), in accordance with the EPA definitions of impact duration. Furthermore, the context of this construction activity is within the grounds of an urban centre where such activity is a regular occurrence.

On the basis of the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts is deemed to be **Medium**. When combined with the Medium-low sensitivity of the receiving landscape, **the overall significance of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts** is considered to be **Moderate**, in accordance with the criteria contained in Section 1.5.

##### **Operational Phase**

Following the completion of the proposed works, landscape/townscape impacts will relate entirely to the development's impact on the character of the receiving landscape/townscape and whether this is positive or negative.

The most notable landscape/townscape impacts of the application site will result from the permanent 3 no. blocks ranging in height from 4 storeys to 12 storeys. The 9.63m increase in height from the roof of the concrete silo currently on site, to that of the tallest proposed building is worthy of note, but is, nonetheless, not a substantial increase (i.e. an increase from 30.37m to 40.0m, for the tallest of the three proposed blocks, with the remaining two blocks being less than 27m height). However, it does represent a continuation of, and compatibility with, the existing land use and townscape fabric and character within the study area, where multi-storey residential blocks are present. These include the 23m-tall The Mill apartment block, abutting the north-eastern end of the site, but also the multi-storey infrastructure of several aforementioned buildings (in Section 1.6.1.2) within 500m of the site. Upon completion of construction, one of the three proposed blocks will become the tallest multi-storey development in the locality, marking an escalation and intensification of that fabric within the study area, while being attuned to and compatible with it.

In terms of the broader effects on landscape/townscape character, the proposal represents the maintenance of an established, multi-storey residential use that already feeds into the character of its immediate environs. Whilst the proposal will result in a distinct increase in the scale and intensity of development within the application site, and its immediate surrounds, such a development is to be expected in a vibrant, dynamic and evolving settlement inner suburb such as Phibsborough, and will knit into the prevailing urban fabric rather than contrasting against it.

For the reasons outlined above, the **magnitude of operational stage landscape/townscape impacts** is considered to be **Medium-Low**.

#### *1.8.1.3 Significance of Landscape/townscape effects*

In accordance with the Landscape/Visual significance matrix contained in Table 1.3, the combination of a ‘Medium-low’ townscape sensitivity judgement and a ‘Medium-low’ townscape impact magnitude judgment results in a **Moderate-slight** overall significance of townscape impact.

## **1.8 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **1.8.1 Visual Receptor Sensitivity**

In consideration of the visual receptor criteria set out in section 1.4.1, the main variation in the nature of views and those availing of those views, in this instance, relates to an overt sense of place. As previously set out in Section 1.6.1.2, Phibsborough’s character and sense of place is substantially threefold within the study area. Accordingly, the resulting visual receptor sensitivity of all 14 viewpoints will be informed by this.

To begin with, the most sensitive receptors/viewpoints are deemed to be those on the Royal Canal corridor. As with many canal-based views from about the city and country, while these are “heritage based” (i.e. an 18<sup>th</sup> century canal and tow path), they are also frequently subject to conspicuous development from subsequent centuries in the direct vicinity. In the case of the Royal Canal, this includes the aforementioned 23m-tall Mill apartment block, Mountjoy Prison and one of the largest sporting stadia in Europe: Croke Park, 1.4km southeast of the site. On balance, views along this receptor (i.e. VPs 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 12) are deemed to be of ‘Medium’ visual sensitivity.

Views from along two-storey, 19<sup>th</sup> Century, red brick residential streets are also overtly “heritage based,” and engender a richly residential and sedate sense of place. Yet these streets have been

subject to conspicuous development in their immediate vicinity (i.e. the 1960s eight-storey Phibsborough Shopping Centre). Overall, views within this receptor (i.e. VPs 7 & 8) are deemed to be of ‘Medium-low’ visual sensitivity.

Similar or less sensitive receptors are considered to occur along the commercial/transport nexus centred along Phibsborough Road/Botanic Road (i.e. VPs 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14). In general, busy city streets heavily influence these less iconic streetscapes with retail uses at the street level. Whilst there can be a character or charm to views from such receptors, there is less inherent visual amenity to hand than other receptors in the study area. Thus, along this receptor a ‘Medium-low’ or ‘Low’ visual receptor sensitivity is attributed, as viewpoint locations vary between the commercial hub near Phibsborough Road’s junction with North Circular Road, graduating to more redbrick residential character closer to Botanic Road.

### **1.8.2 Magnitude of Visual Effect**

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

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

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
<b>VP1</b>	Royal Canal Way, looking northwest	42m	NW

**Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Commuters/walkers/runners/cyclists

**Receptor Sensitivity    Medium**

**Existing View** By way of context, this location along the Royal Canal Way is adjacent to Lock 5. Royal Canal Way has long served as a recreational hub and transport axis for the community’s walkers, runners and cyclists, including commuters connecting with Dublin city centre.

In this view, the looming presence of the Mill apartment block is conspicuous to the southern side of the canal. It’s six-storey (plus basement) profile sits adroitly against the even, level planes of the Royal Canal and attendant towpath. At the western end of this former 19<sup>th</sup> Century mill, a

strong vertical seam is marked by a castle tower-like termination, beyond which the derelict concrete silo reads, from this angle, as an ill-fitting 20<sup>th</sup> Century extension to the site. Within the site, behind a much-graffitied stonewall, the dilapidated, warehouse-style buildings and unkempt vegetation of the site can be seen, in stark contrast to the well managed/maintained Mill apartment block. Furthermore, west of the concrete silo there is a discernible ‘gap’ in the canal-side urban fabric until the lower storey of Shandon Mill (residential complex) can be spied alongside Lock 6, approx. 200m away. In the immediate foreground, the tip of the canal gates of Lock 5 is also apparent.

**Visual Impact of proposed development**

Over 40m away, the proposed contemporary, multi-storey residential block, exceeding, in places, the height of the Mill apartment block, will be conspicuous. Following the demolition and removal of the large, derelict and unattractive buildings on site, the proposed buildings will dramatically change this canal bank scene, but the degree of visual change is not tantamount to the degree of visual impact. Firstly, the presence of the proposed buildings will not obscure or obstruct more distant views of any aesthetic merit. Secondly, there will be a more consistent degree of visual enclosure when viewed from this section of the Royal Canal Way, in tandem with a noticeable increase in the scale and intensity of built development overall.

Nonetheless, the proposed buildings will represent consolidation of the inconsistent building line and gap filling along this urban canal bank, between the Mill apartment block and Shandon Mill (residential complex). Tall and contemporary, the proposed buildings will permeate a high quality finish and light-infused fenestration that complements the reflective, calm waters of the canal, while aptly contrasting and off-setting the more muscular, multi-storey 19<sup>th</sup> century stone hulk to its immediate east.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

**Summary**

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Medium	Medium-low	<b>Moderate-slight</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>	<b>Viewing distance to</b>	<b>Direction of</b>
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		site boundary	View
VP2	Royal Canal Way, looking southeast	45m	SE

**Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Commuters/walkers/runners/cyclists

**Receptor Sensitivity**    **Medium**

**Existing View**    This location along the Royal Canal Way is adjacent to Lock 6, 45m north of the northwest corner of the site. The still, reflective waters of the Royal Canal fasten the visual amenity of this urban scene, with the gates of Lock 6 in the immediate foreground. The three-storey Shandon Mill (residential complex) is noticeable to the south of Lock 6, with the clean lines of its gable end foreshadowing more distant gable ends to its east. To the rear/east of Shandon Mill, the warehouse-style buildings and unkempt vegetation of the site can be seen, which are abutted on their eastern end by a tall, industrial-looking concrete silo, beyond which sits the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century, multi-storey Mill apartment block. Further east, lower, multi-storey residential development can be spied, along with Mountjoy Prison and the Poolbeg's iconic "chimney" towers. North of the Royal canal Way (i.e. to the left of this scene), the absence of even modest-sized built development is notable, in light of this inner-suburb city setting (i.e. Dublin City centre being within 2km of this location).

**Visual Impact of proposed development**    From this angle and location, the proposed buildings will stamp a conspicuous vertical imprint on this scene, but without detracting from the inherent visual amenity of this waterside setting, which was and remains derived from the canal. There will be a visible 'tiering' in height of the proposed blocks, from Shandon Mill eastwards, which will also soften any potential massing of these large structures. The nearest proposed block will be similarly "stacked" as it descends on its southern side, while its bright gable end will link-in with that of Shandon Mill in the foreground.

Although generating a hard-to-miss increase in the concentration of built development along the canal bank, the proposal will incur substantial visual change to the scene but without obscuring or obstructing more distant views of any aesthetic value. Similar to the Mill apartment block on its eastern end, the clean lines of the proposed blocks will inform a sharp perpendicular profile (i.e. the transition between vertical and horizontal planes) fitting for such an urban waterway.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

**Summary** Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Medium	Medium-low	<b>Moderate-slight</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
<b>VP3</b>	Royal Canal Way, looking south	28m	S

- Representative of:**
- Local community views
  - Commuters/walkers/runners/cyclists

**Receptor Sensitivity** Medium

**Existing View** This location is along the Royal Canal Way and is also adjacent to Lock 6, 28m north of the northwest corner of the site. This view is centred upon the rear gardens of the three-storey Shandon Mills, behind which, and mostly out of site, is a hardscape yard-like facility within the western end of the site, which has largely been recolonized by vegetation in recent decades. Further east are the relatively low (i.e. approx. 8m high) dilapidated, warehouse-style buildings within the site. In the foreground are the marooned ruins of a stone buttress latterly constructed within the canal, and which once supported a rail line in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, linking the major rail lines within 50m north of this location with the flourmill then occupying the site of the proposed development. Although a canal bank setting, this view offers a somewhat limited degree of visual amenity, even for an urban context.

**Visual Impact of proposed development** Viewed from this angle, the transition between the seven-storey, proposed western block and the existing residences at the three-storey Shandon Mills will be softened by the ‘tiering’ of the block, so that it graduates from four-storeys to seven, rather than a single, abrupt transition. Be that as it may, the proposed block appears to be visually dominating, in its immediate context of Shandon Mills. The proposed development will mark a stark degree of visual change in this view, but without markedly decreasing the hitherto limited degree of visual amenity. Tall and contemporary, the

proposed block will permeate a high quality finish and fenestration, generating a distinctively residential tone, with its bright gable end tying-in with that of Shandon Mill.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium**.

**Summary** Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Medium	Medium-low	<b>Moderate-slight</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
<b>VP4</b>	Phibsborough Road by Royal Canal Way	45m	NW

**Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Major route

**Receptor Sensitivity    Medium-low**

**Existing View** From this view where the busy Botanic and Phibsborough Roads meet at Cross Guns Bridge, the commercial and residential development aligning the southern bank of the Canal is evident, along with the two-storey retail aligning the western side of Botanic Road. There is a clear sense of gradual “tiering” of the buildings along the southern side of the canal, as their height increases the more westward from Cross Guns Bridge they are. As little can be seen of the concrete silo on site, the Mill apartment block’s six-storey (plus basement) profile sits as the tallest structure upon the bank. At the western end of this former 19<sup>th</sup> Century mill, a strong vertical seam is marked by a castle tower-like termination. Furthermore, west of the concrete silo there is a discernible visual ‘gap’ in the canal-side urban fabric until the lower storey of Shandon Mill (residential complex) can be discerned approx. 300m away. In the immediate foreground, the tip of the

canal gates of Lock 5 is also apparent, but the waters of the water itself are not visible.

### **Visual Impact of proposed development**

Owing to the aforementioned gradual “tiering” of the buildings along the southern side of the canal, the proposed multi-storey residential development will be highly visible, but not prominent or overbearing. More than 100m away, the tall and innovative proposed apartments will infuse a high quality finish and fenestration, while aptly contrasting and off-setting the more muscular, multi-storey 19<sup>th</sup> century stone building to its immediate east.

There will be a more consistent degree of visual enclosure when viewed from this section of the Royal Canal Way, in tandem with a noticeable increase in the scale and intensity of built development overall, as the proposed buildings will represent consolidation of the inconsistent building line and gap filling along this urban canal bank, between the Mill apartment block and Shandon Mill (residential complex). Lastly, the presence of the proposed buildings will not obscure or obstruct more distant views of any scenic appeal.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

### **Summary**

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Medium-low	Medium-low	<b>Moderate-slight</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
VP5	Junction of Phibsborough Road and Leinster Street North	34m	NW

### **Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Major route

**Receptor Sensitivity**    **Low**

**Existing View** While this view is of a relatively quiet suburban residential street, it is also at a junction of the busy, built-up Phibsborough Road. A row of two-storey, 19<sup>th</sup> Century redbrick housing can be seen, in what is a very common sight across this locality, once away from the commercial/retail nexus of Phibsborough Road. Peeping above the rooftop of a more modern, two-storey, white commercial building in the foreground is the upper levels of the large concrete silo within the site. Between foreground buildings, the upper storey of the Mill apartment block can be spied.

**Visual Impact of proposed development** Above the rooftop of a more modern, two-storey, white retail building, a contemporary, multi-storey residential block will be partially visible and quite noticeable, exceeding the height of the Mill apartment block. The proposed development will represent a distinct escalation in the height of all visible buildings in this scene, but will not be visually dominant or overbearing. The proposal will mark a palpable increase in the scale and intensity of built development, but will also serve to contrast and offset the more sedate, 19<sup>th</sup> Century sense of place of this road. At 12 storeys high and with its contemporary design, it will be a highly evident element from along this street, but will not be the only multi-storey development visible to viewers from this junction (i.e. the Phibsborough Shopping Centre will also be visible from this junction). In addition, in comparison to the baseline, the proposed development is considerably more aesthetic and high quality, as well as more fitting to a suburban residential context.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

**Summary** Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Low	Medium-low	<b>Slight</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
VP6	Phibsborough Road by Phibsborough Shopping Centre	276m	N

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**Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Major route

**Receptor Sensitivity**    **Low**

**Existing View**      The dark concrete bulk of the eight-storey Phibsborough Shopping Centre is the focal point of this scene, which is in the commercial/retail heart of the locality, along the N2 and within 100m of its busy junction with North Circular Road. The fore-mid ground is a notably active one, between shops, traffic and car parking. Almost 300m north of this location, above two-storey redbrick housing, the concrete silo within the site is visible, along with the roof/highest storey of the Mill apartment block. However, owing to the far more immediate and imposing presence of the Phibsborough Shopping Centre, the concrete silo within the site is not striking.

**Visual Impact of proposed development**      While the increase in height of the most eastern block of the proposed development will be evident, it will not be visually dominating from this location. The proposed tall, contemporary residential apartment blocks will permeate a high quality finish that will be noticeable from this distance. They will also provide a more contemporary visual interest to the skyline of the community, in the process providing a more aesthetic counterpoint to the 1960s concrete mass of the Phibsborough Shopping Centre, and assist in northbound orientation along this busy section of the Phibsborough Road. Primarily owing to the more immediate and imposing presence of the Phibsborough Shopping Centre, followed by the intensity of large buildings found in this area of Phibsborough, the proposed development will not detract from the inherent visual amenity of the scene.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Low-negligible**.

**Summary**

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Low	Low-negligible	Slight

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP7	Ulster Street	106m	N

**Representative of:**

- Local community views

**Receptor Sensitivity**    **Medium-low**

**Existing View**      Over the rooftops of this quiet, redbrick terraced, residential street, the ominous bulk of the concrete silo is evident. Not only it is the highest building in sight, its notably industrial, anaesthetic profile is at odds to the streetscape below. While the upper floor of the Mill apartment complex is also visible above rooflines, it appears more fitting theme (i.e. residential) and period (i.e. 19<sup>th</sup> Century) than the 1950's silo tower within the site.

**Visual Impact of proposed development**      Above the terraced, two-storey housing at the end of this street, the proposed residential development will be highly evident, being directly in the line of sight for road-users and pedestrians alike. However visual change is not equivalent to visual impact, and the presence of the proposed buildings will not obscure or obstruct more distant views of any aesthetic merit, while replacing a large non-aesthetic concrete silo from this scene. Above the foreground housing, the clean horizontal lines will mirror the residential rooflines below it. Tall and contemporary, the proposed block will permeate a high quality finish and fenestration, generating a distinctively residential tone that is more fitting to these streets. However, while not spatially or visually dominant, the proposed development has the potential to be that for residents at the northern end of Ulster Street. While the proposed apartment blocks will provide a sharp and dynamic contrast to this 19<sup>th</sup> Century streetscape, it will also have the potential to reduce the more sedate, low rise and "old world" visual amenity frequently enjoyed along this street as well as contributing to a noticeably increased level of enclosure / containment.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium**.

**Summary**      Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
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<b>Impact Significance</b>	Medium-low	Medium	<b>Moderate</b>
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<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
VP8	Shandon Road	70m	N

**Representative of:** • Local community views

**Receptor Sensitivity** Medium-low

**Existing View** This low-rise, redbrick residential scene allows for a strong, suburban 19th Century visual amenity. The intimate terraces and small, iron-railed front gardens, accompanied by street tress and a paucity of traffic, set an envitably quiet and sedate tone for residents living within 2km of any city centre. Indeed, were it not for parked cars and some street signage and markings, this is a near identical visual setting to what it likely was more than 100 years ago. This does not, by default, make any urban or rural scene automatically aesthetic, but in this instance it does create a very distinct and specific visual appeal.

**Visual Impact of proposed development** Less than 100m away, the proposed apartment blocks will be a conspicuous sight near the northern end of Shandon Road. Although the contemporary proposed blocks will generate a high quality residential land use that is in-tune with these streets, the abrupt visual transition and lack of discernible (built form) context is likely to result in the loss of some visual amenity. Indeed, the proposal will alter an important part of the available vista to become one of the most noticeable elements in this scene whilst generating a noticeably increased sense of enclosure.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **High-medium**.

**Summary** Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
Medium-low	High-medium	<b>Moderate</b>	

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
VP9	Royal Canal Way, looking southeast	69m	SE

**Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Commuters/walkers/runners/cyclists

**Receptor Sensitivity**    **Medium**

**Existing View**    Similar to VP2 and VP3, this location is also adjacent to Lock 6, though at a marginally higher elevation, 69m northwest of the northwest corner of the site. In the foreground, the historic lock takes centre stage, followed by the two- and three-storey housing at Shandon Mill, aligning the southern bank of the canal. To the rear/east of Shandon Mill, the warehouse-style buildings of the site can be seen, which are abutted on their eastern end by a tall, industrial-looking concrete silo, whose non-aesthetic, industrial profile stands tall on the skyline. Beyond the silo sits the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, multi-storey Mill apartment block, the more distant roof of a canal-side Croke Park and a canal-side, lower, multi-storey residential development can be spied, along with Mountjoy Prison and the Poolbeg's iconic "chimney" towers. Once again, the canal itself fastens the visual amenity of this urban scene, along with the intermittent, 200 year old locks.

**Visual Impact of proposed development**    A contemporary, multi-storey residential block will be conspicuous within the site, and will dramatically change this canal bank scene, marking a distinct increase in the scale and intensity of built development along it. Nonetheless, the proposed buildings will represent a consolidation of the inconsistent building line and gap filling along this urban canal bank. The unappealing concrete hulk of the silo on site will be replaced by a taller, more contemporary and aesthetic apartment complex that will shore-up the building line of the canal bank with a detailed and high quality frontal façade and will not obscure or obstruct more distant views of any aesthetic merit. In terms of the wider urban fabric, it will be likely to give a sense of extending and bookending the multi-storey infrastructure running along the southern side of the canal, from Mountjoy westward.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

**Summary**    Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Medium	Medium-low	<b>Moderate-slight</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
<b>VP10</b>	Whitworth Road	154m	W

**Representative of:** • Local community views

**Receptor Sensitivity** Medium-low

**Existing View** This view is from Whitworth Road, approx. 120m east of Cross Guns Bridge, which aligns the northern side of the aforementioned rail line, which, in turn, aligns the north of the Royal Canal. This location is adjacent to Charleville Tennis Club, upon a residential street that sees a regular flow of traffic connecting the N1 and N2, and Phisborough with Dorset Street. In this view, a tree-lined canal bank leads the eye towards Cross Guns Bridge (out of sight), beyond which the solid stone structure of the Mill apartment block can be seen, with the tip of the concrete silo on the site, peering above it. On the western side of Botanic road (i.e. the end of Whitworth Road), more modern commercial/retail buildings can be discerned. As the Royal Canal is not visible from along this road, in tandem with other elements in this scene, there is somewhat limited inherent visual amenity associated with it.

**Visual Impact of proposed development** More than 200m away, the proposed contemporary, multi-storey residential block will be noticeable, exceeding, in places, the height of the Mill apartment block. The proposed development will represent a notable escalation in the height of all visible buildings in this scene. It will also offer a more consistent degree of visual enclosure and gap filling along this urban canal bank, in tandem with a palpable increase in the scale and intensity of built development. The proposed development will aptly contrast and offset the multi-storey 19<sup>th</sup> century stone Mill apartment block to its immediate east. Beyond the tower-like 14-storey peak of the most eastern proposed block, the roofline will generate a strong sense of diminishing perspective. The proposed development is not overbearing in a spatial sense and neither its scale nor design is particularly remarkable in this highly built-up, inner

suburban context.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

### **Summary**

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Medium-low	Medium-low	<b>Slight</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>		<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
<b>VP11</b>	Royal Canal Way, looking southeast	25m	SE

### **Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Commuters/walkers/runners/cyclists

### **Receptor Sensitivity      Medium**

### **Existing View**

In this view, owing to the proximity of this location with the site, the visually and spatially imposing concrete silo casts a large shadow upon this urban waterside setting. The nature of the view is one intrinsically connected with dereliction and dilapidation; a theme that partially infects this section of the much-loved and -used amenity of the Royal Canal. Above a much-graffitied boundary wall, the unkempt, overgrown vegetation on site spills out. Aside from security railings within the site, and the abandoned warehouse-type buildings, the hulking concrete mass of the silo is ominous. Further east, sits the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century, multi-storey Mill apartment block, beyond which is a lower (2-3 storey residential block) and similarly low, residential development that can be spied, along with Mountjoy Prison, down the more distant, southern bank of the canal.

### **Visual Impact of proposed development**

The proposed buildings will radically alter this canal bank scene, but the degree of visual change does not equate to the degree of visual impact. In essence, the true nature of the stark visual change is replacing a visually and spatially imposing obsolete, industrial-scale silo with a visually and spatially dominant series of contemporary, high-quality, light-infused apartment

blocks that, in turn, engender a more pleasing and secure sense of place along its immediate canal corridor; one that is also more reflective of and suitable to Phibsborough character and sense of place. Unlike the large structures previously occupying the site, there will be clear, light filled spaces between each blocks, which will avoid “massing” while assisting legibility of this built form.

Although the upper levels of the 12-storey block (to the east/right) are not visible in this scene, a ‘tiering’ in height will be evident along the south bank of the canal. The rough and degraded boundary treatment of the site along the canal will be replaced by a more aesthetic low stone wall and highly transparent railing, which allows for a reciprocal visual ‘flow’ between the ground floor apartments and the canal banks. The clean lines of the proposed blocks will delineate a sharp perpendicular profile (i.e. the transition between vertical and horizontal planes), more apposite to a suburban waterside setting of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century European capital.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible-positive**.

#### **Summary**

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

<b>Impact Significance</b>	<b>Visual Receptor Sensitivity</b>	<b>Visual Impact Magnitude</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Impact</b>
	Medium	Negligible-positive	<b>Positive</b>

<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>	<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
VP12 Royal Canal Way, looking southwest	24m	SW

#### **Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Commuters/walkers/runners/cyclists

**Receptor Sensitivity    Medium**

#### **Existing View**

Similar to VP11, this viewpoint is located less than 30m from the site of the proposed development, and is a scene that is informed by dereliction and

dilapidation. Owing to the nature, scale and proximity of the buildings/structures within the site, along with the Mill apartment block, they are visually and spatially dominant. However, the viewer at this location is almost inevitability in transition / movement along the Royal Canal Way, so that within less than 100m east/west of this location, such dominance is not the case. Above a much-graffitied boundary wall, the unkempt, overgrown vegetation on site spills out. Aside from security railings within the site, and the abandoned warehouse-type buildings, the hulking concrete mass of the silo is ominous, although its upper heights are not visible in this view. The more pristine and well-maintained Mill apartment complex stands in stark contrast to the obsolete buildings within the site.

#### **Visual Impact of proposed development**

The proposal will incur substantial visual change to the scene, while opening up much needed space and light, in the form of an urban plaza between the most eastern proposed block, and the existing Mill apartment block. The creation of this civic space allows for much needed, palpable room between the existing and proposed structures, while also opening up views towards the upper storey of 19<sup>th</sup> Century terraced housing south of the site. In turn, such virtual “breathing room” between these two large, impressive buildings will greatly assist in the appreciation and liveability of the Mill apartment block, and not just the proposed development. The dilapidated boundary treatment of the site along the canal will be replaced by a more visually appealing low stone wall and semi-transparent railing, which allows for a reciprocal ‘flow’ between the ground floor and the canal banks, opening the site back out to the canal rather than cold shouldering it. It is worth noting that as the proximity to the site shortens, the more positive aspects of the nature of visual impact associated with the proposed development become more apparent.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Positive**.

#### **Summary**

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
<b>Impact Significance</b>	Medium	Positive	<b>Positive</b>

Viewshed Reference Point	Viewing distance to site boundary	Direction of View
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<b>VP13</b>	Botanic Road near Cross Guns Bridge	121m	SW
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**Representative of:**

- Local community views
- Major route

**Receptor Sensitivity**    **Medium-low**

**Existing View**    This view is from the busy Botanic Road, close to Cross Guns Bridge. Across the road, a public house and car park are apparent, as is two-storey period housing across the rail bridge. Behind and above this housing, the hulking frame of the Mill apartment block is apparent, along with the industrial monolith of the concrete silo within the site. West of the concrete silo there is a discernible ‘gap’ in the canal-side urban fabric until the lower storey of Shandon Mill (residential complex) further along the canal (please note, the canal itself is not visible from this location). The space allowed by the car park for the foreground public house results in views in the direction of the site being largely open at this location, although this is not representative of views from Botanic Road.

**Visual Impact of proposed development**    Although over 100m away, a contemporary, multi-storey residential block, exceeding, in places, the height of the Mill apartment block, will be very noticeable element from this location, owing to the untypical space opened up along Botanic Road by the aforementioned car park. The proposed buildings will noticeably change this view, but the scale of visual change is not analogous to the scale of visual impact. There will be a more consistent degree of visual enclosure (i.e. between the Mill and Shandon Mill residential blocks), in tandem with a palpable increase in the scale and intensity of built development in this scene. Tall and contemporary, the proposed buildings will permeate a high quality finish and light-fused fenestration that will be more fitting for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century, ever-evolving inner-suburb of the nation’s capital. In addition, the presence of the proposed buildings will not obscure or obstruct more distant views of any aesthetic merit.

For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

**Summary**    Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
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<b>Impact Significance</b>	Medium-low	Medium-low	<b>Moderate-slight</b>
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<b>Viewshed Reference Point</b>	<b>Viewing distance to site boundary</b>	<b>Direction of View</b>
<b>VP14</b> Botanic Road by Finglas Road junction	220m	SW

- Representative of:**
- Local community views
  - Major route

**Receptor Sensitivity** Medium-low

<b>Existing View</b>	At the heavily-used junction of Botanic and Finglas Road/N2, views in the direction of the site are afforded owing to the discernible gap in the roadside trees, combined with a lack of roadside development at one location. At a distance of over 200m, the only partially visible structure/building within the site is the disused concrete silo, above the intervening vegetation. It is the only visible industrial structure within this suburban residential and commercial setting.
<b>Visual Impact of proposed development</b>	While the increase in height of the most eastern block of the proposed development will be evident, it will not be visually dominant when viewed from this location. The proposed tall, contemporary residential apartment blocks will permeate a high quality finish that will be noticeable from a distance of over 200m. While clearly the tallest structure/building in this view, it will not be out of context for an inner suburb of a modern city, and is in a locality (i.e. Phibsborough) where there are numerous multi-storey developments also evident. In addition, for road users and pedestrians, this view of the proposed development will be relatively fleeting, and is not representative of views along Botanic Road. However, if viewed from this location, the proposed development will have no bearing upon the inherent visual amenity of the setting.
	For the reasons outlined above the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be <b>Low</b> .
<b>Summary</b>	Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at <b>Section 1.3</b> the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium-low	Low	Slight

## 1.10 CONCLUSION

Based on the assessment contained herein, it is considered that although the proposed development is one of considerable scale, it is not untoward in its townscape setting of a progressive and ever-evolving inner suburb of a modern European capital. In cold, clinical terms: within the context of land use in the immediate vicinity of the site, the proposed development will serve to infill a veritable gap in this residential, canal-side setting, with a well designed and suitably placed multi-storey apartment complex less than 2km from the city centre.

However, context remains key: although the proposed development is a contemporary, high quality residential development, it is important to remember that it is replacing an obsolete, unattractive industrial facility that has darkened Phibsborough's skyline for decades, as well as being an undignified presence upon the banks of the much-loved Royal Canal. The permanent removal of these out-dated and dilapidated structures is an intrinsic and crucial aspect of the proposed development. Thus, both the sensitivity of the receiving townscape setting and the magnitude of operational stage landscape/townscape impacts were considered to be 'Medium-low,' resulting in a 'Moderate-slight' overall significance of townscape impact.

In a general sense, visual impacts associated with the proposed development tended to be a balance of the obvious increase in scale and intensity of development versus the consolidation of a multi-storey, residential canal bank setting with an appropriate scale and nature of development. However, on a more specific sense, the proposed development resulted in a diverse range of visual impact significance on visual settings that are all less than 300m from the site. Although the visual sensitivity only varied between 'Medium' and 'Low' for all receptors, the resulting visual impact significance varied from 'Positive' to 'Moderate.' This relates far less to the visual change experienced from these viewpoints, rather than the detailed and nuanced nature of that change, and, more importantly, how it will likely affect each location's inherent visual amenity. As just one case in point, the likely visual impact from the 7 no. canal-side viewpoint assessed varies from 'Positive' to 'Moderate-slight.'

However, taken in the broader context of the visual impact assessment, 12 of 14 No. viewpoints are not likely to have a visual impact significance any higher than 'Moderate-slight.' In light of the considerable scale of the proposed development, such a relatively modest likely visual impact is an apt reflection of how well-designed and -positioned the proposed development is likely to be.

## 1.11 OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACT

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development is an appropriate contribution to the built fabric of this suburb that will not result in any significant townscape or visual impacts.