TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

For

Proposed Strategic Housing Development at Citywest Road and Magna Drive, Citywest, Dublin 24

Prepared by Model Works Ltd for

Glenveagh Properties Plc

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report assesses the potential townscape and visual effects of a proposed strategic housing development on a site of 7.3 ha on Citywest Road and Magna Drive, Citywest, Dublin 24.

The assessment was carried out with reference to the Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition 2013 and Technical Information Note Townscape Character Assessment, 2017, and the EPA draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2017. A detailed methodology including explanation of the criteria and terms used in the assessment is provided in Appendix A.

The assessment was prepared by Richard Butler of Model Works Ltd. Richard has degrees in Landscape Architecture and Town Planning, is a member of the Irish Landscape Institute and the Irish Planning Institute, and has 20 years’ experience in development and environmental planning, specialising in landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA).

2.0 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Townscape Character

The site occupies a central position in the recently developed and still evolving urban area of Citywest. Development in the area began in the 1990s (at the same time as the Citywest business campus) with the construction of Citywest Road and the Corbally and Veschoyle estates to the south and west of the site. These developments were followed by the Magna business park and Belfry estate to the east and south of the site in the early 2000s.

Figure 1 Evolution of the site’s urban context – 2000 and 2005

The Citywest shopping centre was completed in 2006 at the junction of Citywest Road and Citywest Drive/Fortunestown Lane, establishing the core of a new urban/district centre. This was reinforced in 2012 with the construction of the Luas Red Line including the Fortunestown stop across the road from the shopping
Development surrounding the site is ongoing, with the recent completion of the Scoil Aoife national school and a new supermarket to the north east. The ‘Citywest Village’ residential estate is also nearing completion, filling in the gap between the Citywest district centre and Citywest business campus to the north.

Figure 2  Evolution of the site’s urban context – 2018
The district centre will soon undergo further development in accordance with its land use designation – following the grant of permission for a strategic residential scheme (ABP ref. 305556) of 290 apartments in two clusters of new buildings (of 4-7 storeys) in currently unused spaces around the shopping centre.

These buildings (particularly Blocks E and F fronting Fortunestown Lane) will dramatically change the face of the shopping centre, strengthening the urban character of the district centre and the Citywest area overall.

In summary, there is now a wide variety of development typologies on the lands surrounding the site (see Photographs 1-6 below):

A. **Late 20th century low density estates**, e.g. Verschoyle and Corbally, characterised by two storey, red brick and render houses. These estates form an extensive area of low density suburban residential townscape character to the west of the site, directly across Citywest Road from the site (along the full Citywest Road frontage of the site, some 400m in length). This is one of the key interfaces of the site with its context townscape.

B. **21st century mixed density estates**, e.g. Belfry to the south, Carrigmore and Fortunes Walk/Lawn to the west, Citywest Village (under construction) to the north and Mac Uilliam to the north east. These are characterised by two storey houses interspersed with three storey duplex blocks and apartment buildings of up to five storeys.

C. **Retail/mixed use developments**, e.g. Citywest shopping centre and Lidl. The permitted high density residential development on the unused spaces around the shopping centre will change the character of a key land parcel in Citywest, from suburban style shopping centre, to mixed use urban district centre.

D. **Institutional developments**, e.g. Scoil Aoife national school.

   There is a corridor of mixed use, mixed density development (comprised of types B, C and D) to the north of the site, with Citywest Drive and the Luas line forming a dual transport spine. The junction of Citywest Road and Citywest Drive (and adjacent Luas stop) is the core of this area. This is the evolving urban core of Citywest, where a concentration of mixed uses is emerging, supported by the surrounding residential areas. This area, which extends to the northern boundary of the site, is a distinct townscape character type to which the proposed development must respond.

   There is a mixed density residential area (with neighbourhood retail) to the south of the site at Belfry. The site faces the higher density element of this area directly across Magna Drive along its southern boundary.

E. **Business and industrial parks**, e.g. Magna to the east of the site, characterised by large footprint industrial and office buildings, parking/hard standing areas and green strips that are now reaching maturity.

The above developments, all of which took place since the 1990s, have enveloped the subject site into the urban area of Citywest. However the site itself has remained unused and the large area of rough grassland appears increasingly incongruous in the evolving townscape.

Due to the wide variety of development typologies in the area (A-E above, and Figure 2), as well as the extensive undeveloped lands, the townscape has an indistinct or mixed character, somewhat lacking in cohesion. There
are few notable built elements or features; the Citywest shopping centre is the most prominent building. The large, low forms of the Magna industrial and commercial buildings are also visible from much of the area.

There is a general absence of built enclosure in the townscape and therefore limited urban-style streetscapes. The houses in the estates (e.g. Verschoyle) are well set back from the main roads behind fences and green strips. The business parks are also characterised by wide green strips along the roads and around the boundaries. The shopping centre is set back from the junction/public realm behind its parking area. Implementation of the recent planning permissions will address this to some extent – establishing an urban frontage to some of the roads - but the area will remain characterised by wide spaces between mostly low buildings.

The Dublin Mountains to the south of Citywest are a prominent element of the townscape and views. The mountains along with the green spaces along the roads and property boundaries, and the extensive unused lands, result in a visible presence of green infrastructure in the area. While the various green elements do not form a cohesive whole, this characteristic of the area is valuable and worthy of development.

Photo 1  The Luas line approaching Citywest shopping centre and Fortunes Walk apartments near the site, with the Dublin Mountains in the distance. This shows the emerging but not yet fully realised urban townscape in the site vicinity.

Photo 2  The school, supermarket and the Mac Uilliam mixed density residential development north of the site along Citywest Drive. This is further illustration of the emerging urban character.
2.2 The Site

The site slopes down from the south east corner towards the west and north, falling some 9m across the length of the site (some 400m). The most significant feature of the site is the Upper Baldonnell River which flows south to north inside the western boundary, in a narrow channel following a meandering course. There is also a large attenuation pond (receiving runoff from the Magna industrial park) in the north eastern corner. The site is covered in rough grassland and scrub, with scattered trees in places but no significant/valuable tree stands or specimens.

There are informal walking routes across the site between the north western corner (near the Citywest shopping centre/district centre) and the Magna business park to the east.

The site interface with the surrounding urban area is varied:

- The western boundary is over 400m in length and runs along Citywest Road. Across the road is the Verschoyle estate, arguably the most sensitive potential receptor of landscape and visual change on the site. The two storey estate houses orientate towards the road (and the site) but are mostly set back from Citywest Road (and the site) behind a green strip. This combines with the low density housing typology to generate a distinctly suburban character, in contrast to the urban area adjacent to the north.
back behind a green strip lending Citywest Road a suburban character. The avenue of trees along the road contributes to this character. The Upper Baldonnell River runs inside the site’s western boundary across the road from Verschoyle.

- The southern boundary is 120m in length and runs along Magna Drive, a broad boulevard with three rows of trees. South of the road is the higher density element of the Belfry estate, a four storey block of apartments set back from the road behind a wide green strip. Due to the development typology, the separation distance and the three rows of trees between the apartment block and the site, the Belfry apartments are less sensitive to change than the Verschoyle houses.

- The eastern boundary is some 390m in length and runs along Magna Drive, the access road to the business park which lies to the east. This is the least sensitive part of the townscape surrounding the site.

- The northern boundary is 180m in length and beyond this is a development currently under construction, between the site and Citywest Drive. The development (Reg. Refs. SD18A/0014, SD18A/0015, SD19A/0127) comprises mostly two storey houses and a four storey apartment block at the junction of Citywest Drive and Citywest Road. There is a green belt inside the southern boundary (adjacent to the site).

Photo 5  A view from within the site towards the Citywest shopping centre, marking the core of the emerging urban area at the junction of Citywest Road and Citywest Drive. The Verschoyle estate can be seen to the left.

Photo 6  A view from the eastern site boundary across Magna Drive to the neighbouring Magna business park.
3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1 South Dublin county Development Plan 2016-2022

3.1.1 Zoning

In the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022 (SDCDP) the site is zoned RES-N: “To provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved area plans”.

Figure 3  South Dublin County Development Plan Map
3.1.2 Urban Design

Section 2.2.1 of the SDCDP sets out the policy on urban design in residential developments, which should inform the consideration of potential townscape impacts. The policies include:

**H7 Objective 1:** “To ensure that residential development contributes to the creation of sustainable communities in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009) (or any superseding document) including the urban design criteria as illustrated under the companion Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide, DEHLG (2009).”

**H7 Objective 2:** “To ensure that residential development provides an integrated and balanced approach to movement, place-making and streetscape design in accordance with the requirements of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DTTAS and DEHLG (2013).”

3.1.3 Residential Density and Building Height

Section 2.2.2 of the SDCDP sets out the policy on residential density, which affects building height and thus is relevant to the consideration townscape and visual impacts. It states: "It is the policy of the Council to promote higher residential densities at appropriate locations and to ensure that the density of new residential development is appropriate to its location and surrounding context”.

The policy objectives include:

**H8 Objective 1:** “To ensure that the density of residential development makes efficient use of zoned lands and maximises the value of existing and planned infrastructure and services, including public transport, physical and social infrastructure, in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009).”

**H8 Objective 2:** “To consider higher residential densities at appropriate locations that are close to Town, District and Local Centres and high capacity public transport corridors in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009).”

In Section 2.2.3 the SDCDP sets out the policy on residential building height. It states: “Varied building heights are supported across residential and mixed use areas in South Dublin County to promote compact urban form, a sense of place, urban legibility and visual diversity”.

The policy objectives include:

**H9 Objective 1:** “To encourage varied building heights in new residential developments to support compact urban form, sense of place, urban legibility and visual diversity.”

**H9 Objective 2:** “To ensure that higher buildings in established areas respect the surrounding context.”

**H9 Objective 3:** “To ensure that new residential developments immediately adjoining existing one and two storey housing incorporate a gradual change in building heights with no significant marked increase in building height in close proximity to existing housing (see also Section 11.2.7 Building Height).”

**H9 Objective 4:** “To direct tall buildings that exceed five storeys in height to strategic and landmark locations in Town Centres, Mixed Use zones and Strategic Development Zones and subject to an approved Local Area Plan or Planning Scheme.”
H9 Objective 5: “To restrict general building heights on ‘RES-N’ zoned lands south of the N7 to no more than 12 metres where not covered by a current statutory Local Area Plan.”

The above policies on density and height (specifically H9 Objectives 4 and 5) have been superseded/supplemented by the publication of Urban Development and Building Heights – Guidelines for Planning Authorities. This national policy seeks to ensure substantially higher development density (than heretofore) in urban areas where the supporting infrastructure, particularly public transport, and services can sustain it - through increased building height.

3.1.4 Green Infrastructure

The site includes an important element of green infrastructure, the Upper Baldonnell River. Section 8.5.0 of the SDCDP sets out the policy on green infrastructure (GI) in urban areas: “The benefits of a Green Infrastructure approach in urban areas includes the greening of our urban areas, the creation of attractive open spaces, better health and human well being and local distinctiveness – all of which contribute to making the County more attractive”.

The policy objectives for urban GI include:

“It is the policy of the Council to support the protection and enhancement of Green Infrastructure in all new development in urban areas, to strengthen Green Infrastructure linkage across the wider urban network and to achieve the highest standards of living and working environments.”

G6 Objective 1: “To protect and enhance existing ecological features including tree stands, woodlands, hedgerows and watercourses in all new developments as an essential part of the design process.”

G6 Objective 2: “To require new development to provide links into the wider Green Infrastructure network, in particular where similar features exist on adjoining sites.”

G6 Objective 3: “To require multifunctional open space provision within all new developments that includes provision for ecology and sustainable water management.”

3.2 National Policy

3.2.1 Ireland 2040 - Our Plan: National Planning Framework

One of the main principles and intended outcomes of the National Planning Framework (NPF, 2018) is compact urban growth. The compact growth objective encourages higher density - and therefore taller - residential development in urban areas where supporting infrastructure and services are available.

National Policy Objective 11 of the NPF states: “In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.”

The NPF states further: “To enable brownfield development, planning policies and standards need to be flexible, focusing on design led and performance-based outcomes... planning standards should be flexibly applied in response to well-designed development proposals that can achieve urban infill and brownfield development objectives in settlements of all sizes...
“This is in recognition of the fact that many current urban planning standards were devised for application to greenfield sites and cannot account for the evolved layers of complexity in existing built-up areas. A more dynamic performance-based approach appropriate to urban location type will also enable the level of public transport service to improve as more development occurs and vice-versa.”

3.2.2 Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Section 1.2 of the Guidelines states: “A key objective of the NPF is therefore to see that significant increases in the building heights and overall density of development is not only facilitated but actively sought out and brought forward by our planning processes.”

In relation to the assessment of individual planning applications the Guidelines state: “It is Government policy that building heights must be generally increased in appropriate urban locations. There is therefore a presumption in favour of buildings of increased height in our town/city cores and in other urban locations with good public transport accessibility…

“Planning authorities must apply the following broad principles in considering development proposals for buildings taller than prevailing building heights in urban areas in pursuit of these guidelines:

- Does the proposal positively assist in securing National Planning Framework objectives of focusing development in key urban centres and in particular, fulfilling targets related to brownfield, infill development and in particular, effectively supporting the National Strategic Objective to deliver compact growth in our urban centres?

- Is the proposal in line with the requirements of the development plan in force and which plan has taken clear account of the requirements set out in Chapter 2 of these guidelines?

- Where the relevant development plan or local area plan pre-dates these guidelines, can it be demonstrated that implementation of the pre-existing policies and objectives of the relevant plan or planning scheme does not align with and support the objectives and policies of the National Planning Framework?

“In the event of making a planning application, the applicant shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority/An Bord Pleanála, that the proposed development satisfies the following criteria:

At the scale of district/neighbourhood/street

- The proposal responds to its overall natural and built environment and makes a positive contribution to the urban neighbourhood and streetscape.

- The proposal is not monolithic and avoids long, uninterrupted walls of building in the form of slab blocks with materials/building fabric well considered.

- The proposal enhances the urban design context for public spaces and key thoroughfares and inland waterway/marine frontage, thereby enabling additional height in development form to be favourably considered in terms of enhancing a sense of scale and enclosure while being in line with the requirements of “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (2009).

- The proposal makes a positive contribution to the improvement of legibility through the site or wider urban area within which the development is situated and integrates in a cohesive manner.

- The proposal positively contributes to the mix of uses and/or building/dwelling typologies available in the neighbourhood.
4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The development, including the evolution of the design proposal through the pre-planning phase, is described in detail in the architectural and landscape design statements. The key elements/aspects of the proposal with regard to potential townscape and visual impacts, are the following:

- Overall layout/spatial arrangement;
- Urban grain and connectivity;
- Location of building types and scale;
- Building materials;
- Open space.

4.1 Overall Layout/Spatial Arrangement

The overall layout of the site responds primarily to:

- The surrounding urban grain, particularly the parallel roads to the west and east, i.e. Citywest Road and Magna Drive;
- The two main drainage/water features on the site, i.e. the Upper Baldonnell River which flows inside the west boundary parallel to Citywest Road, and the attenuation pond in the north east corner;
- The site’s location relative to the Citywest urban core (to the north west) and the adjacent townscape character areas (low density residential to the west, mixed density residential to the north and south, industrial to the east).

A broad landscape/green infrastructure buffer is proposed inside the west and north boundaries of the site, incorporating the Upper Baldonnell River in a linear parkland along Citywest Road, and the pond in a linear park inside the northern boundary. This open space buffer maximises the separation of the new buildings from the low density housing in Verschoyle across Citywest Road to the west, and the low density housing on the site under construction to the north.

The built elements are thus arranged/concentrated towards the eastern and southern boundaries of the site, with the dual benefit of (a) protecting and enhancing the existing drainage features and (b) protecting the residential amenities of the more sensitive neighbouring estates to the west and north.

4.2 Urban Grain and Connectivity

The proposed urban grain is a grid layout. This (a) responds to the orthogonal layout of the main roads in the vicinity, i.e. Citywest Road, Citywest Drive and Magna Drive; (b) makes the most rational and efficient
use of the roughly rectangular shaped site; and (c) is an appropriate response in an area seeking to reinforce an emerging urban character.

(It is notable that many of the suburban style estates in the area have less orthogonal layouts, often resulting in irregularly shaped open spaces and poor legibility and permeability.)

The main road entrance to the site is from Citywest Road, halfway along the west boundary. The proposed main road continues straight across the site but stops short of connecting with Magna Drive at the east boundary, to negate its potential use as a vehicular shortcut to Magna business park (while pedestrian traffic across the site for this purpose is facilitated/encouraged – see below). A 2nd vehicular entrance is proposed on the northern boundary, providing access to/from Citywest Drive via the estate to the north.

Pedestrian permeability is a key feature of the proposal. In addition to the main entrance there are four dedicated pedestrian entrances along the west boundary (from Citywest Road), leading to paths bridging the river and connecting to the internal east-west aligned streets. Therefore, pedestrian connectivity across the site between the district centre and Magna Drive is encouraged. There is also a footpath along Citywest Road for the full length of the site, and another inside the site along the side of the parkland belt parallel to the river. There are footpaths along both sides of all the internal streets and some of these streets are paved in material indicating shared use for vehicles and pedestrians.

4.3 Location of Building Types and Scale

The development is divided into two distinct character areas - a higher density area in the northern half of the site closest to the Citywest urban core (this is also the lower part of the site), and a lower density area in the southern half of the site further from the urban core (the more elevated part of the site).

There is a single taller building (Block 7) and a terrace of duplexes fronting the southern boundary opposite the Belfry apartment building. These were included in the proposal in response to the ABP opinion. They are intended to respond to the Belfry building across the road, with Block 7 providing a focal point at the Citywest Road-Magna Drive junction, which is a gateway into the Citywest area.

**Figure 5** 3D illustration of layout and massing

**Figure 6** Building typologies and height variation across the site
The higher density area is comprised of six apartment buildings (Blocks 1-6) in a grid arrangement, each rising to seven storeys in height (23.25m to parapet level). There are various set-backs in the massing/height and articulation of the facades with balconies and variations in materials, to reduce the perceived massing of the buildings.

**Figure 7  Typical apartment building elevations – Block 4**

The lower density part of the development is comprised of terraces to two to three storey houses and duplexes, with pitched roofs (some with dormer windows).

**Figure 8  Typical 3 duplex building elevations – Type D1**

**Figure 9  Typical 2/3 storey terraced house elevations – Type 2**

4.4  Building Materials

The front facades of the houses and duplexes are clad in different coloured brick, including red-brown, light buff and white, and the less visibly exposed facades are rendered. The roofs are covered in blue-black concrete tiles. Facias and gutters are coloured black and the window frames are dark grey.

The principal cladding material of the apartment buildings is brick, with patches of patterned detailing. There are variations in brick colour between the buildings (including red-brown, light buff and pale white) for visual interest and legibility.
4.5 Open Space

A key characteristic of the proposed development is the large area of open space/green infrastructure provided, and the variety of open space types:

- Alongside Citywest Road and Magna Drive there is a green verge in which an existing row of street trees is to be retained, except those that need to be removed for the new site entrances.
- Inside this formal roadside strip is the broad belt of parkland with the Upper Baldonnell River at its centre, following a meandering path. The proposed parkland belt is of naturalistic character, mostly covered in meadow grass, with an organic patchwork of various ground covers on the banks of the stream. Trees are scattered throughout the parkland in an informal arrangement. Along the eastern edge of the parkland in the southern part of the site, adjacent to the lower density housing area, an extensive playground is proposed.

**Figure 10  Landscape masterplan**

- Inside the northern boundary another large park is proposed, abutting the open space of the neighbouring estate (under construction) to form a broad wedge of open space incorporating the attenuation pond in the north east corner of the site. This parkland area is mostly covered in meadow grass, with patches of groundcover and scattered trees, and a ‘natural play’ and kick about area enclosed by earth mounds. The co-location of the proposed parkland with the neighbouring estate’s open space would benefit both neighbourhoods.
- The courtyards between the apartment buildings are for pedestrian and amenity use only (with emergency vehicle access facilitated). These garden areas providing semi-private open space contain hard surfaced areas with seating, amenity grass areas, ground cover and shrub planting and scattered trees. A playground is also proposed in one of the courtyards near the community pavilion.
- The streets in the lower density housing area are lined with street trees, and a small green area is proposed alongside a central junction, providing communal open space to complement the house and duplex gardens.
- Each of the proposed apartment buildings features green roofed elements (sedum-covered) as well as rooftop terraces/gardens providing additional shared/semi-private open space.

Overall, a very large area of open space is proposed, incorporating the site’s key drainage/ecological features, providing a range of formal and informal recreation areas and increasing the volume of trees on the site considerably.
5.0 ASSESSMENT OF TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

5.1 Townscape Character and Sensitivity to Change

- The site is an unused parcel of land now fully enclosed by the evolving Citywest urban area, adjacent to the mixed use, mixed density district centre (with its core at the junction of the Luas line, Citywest Road and Citywest Drive), and with frontage to one of these main thoroughfares.

- There is a wide range of development types in the site’s immediate environs, including low density residential estates to the west, mixed density estates to the south, north and north west (with apartment buildings of up to five storeys), a shopping centre, supermarket, school and large industrial and office buildings in a campus-type setting. There is thus no norm in plot and building typology, building scale, architecture or materials in the area, and there are no buildings of architectural or cultural-historic importance.

- There is limited built enclosure; the area is characterised by wide spaces between the buildings and as yet there are no distinctly urban streetscapes. Along with the mix of development types this contributes to a lack of cohesion and legibility in the townscape. Due to factors including the land use mix and the generally large development plots there is also a lack of permeability.

- There is visible green infrastructure in the area in the form of the Dublin Mountains, green strips along many of the roads and property boundaries, and the Upper Baldonnell River which flows across the site. Similar to the built elements however, there is a lack of cohesion among these features.

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment notes that landscape/townscape sensitivity should be classified with consideration of ‘the particular project or development that is being proposed and the location in question’. Sensitivity of the townscape 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, or an individual element and/or feature…) 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.

Refer to Appendix A for further detail on the methodology.

In summary, the townscape character is mixed and in a process of plan-led change, therefore it is not inherently sensitive to the change of the type proposed. However, the sensitivity is somewhat elevated by a key element of the local green infrastructure (the Upper Baldonnell River) and the fact that the site is large and prominently located (therefore its development has the potential to change the townscape character of Citywest).

**Overall, the sensitivity to townscape change 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).
5.2 Magnitude of Townscape Change

The potential changes to the main elements, features and characteristics of the townscape (i.e. the key receptors of potential townscape change) are as follows:

**Table 1 Potential change to key townscape receptors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Townscape Receptor</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
<th>Description of Change &amp; Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topography</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>There would be widespread surface disturbance of the site topography, but the key features – the river and attenuation pond – would be retained and their condition improved and protected by the development. Significance: Slight, positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban grain &amp; movement patterns</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>The large, currently undeveloped area would be developed with an efficient and legible grid pattern of streets and blocks, responding to the main elements of the surrounding urban grain. The location of vehicular and pedestrian entrances and routes responds to the potential desire lines into and across the site. The resulting urban grain is (a) a logical division of the site area, and (b) a functional extension of the existing grain, improving pedestrian permeability in particular. Significance: Moderate, positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use pattern</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>An unused site in close proximity to an emerging urban core with public transport access, zoned for residential development, would be transformed into a mixed density residential neighbourhood, in accordance with the site’s zoning objective. Significance: Slight, positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot/building typologies &amp; architecture</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>A cluster of high density residential development and an estate of low-mid density development would be added to an area already characterised by mixed density and a wide range of plot/building typologies and scale. The existing mix is such that the development could not be considered out of character, although at seven storeys the apartment buildings would be higher than the established norm for apartments (up to five storeys currently). This is encouraged in principle by national policy. Significance: Moderate, positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape/ Green infrastructure</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>The site – a currently unkempt area of rough grassland and scrub with a river channel in poor condition - would be transformed into a designed and managed urban landscape informed by the principles of green infrastructure (e.g. connectivity and multifunctionality). A wide range of public and semi-private green open spaces would be created, including large parkland areas incorporating improved natural and man-made drainage features and habitats, active and passive recreation areas. Despite the part-coverage of the site by new built elements the tree cover would be considerably increased. Significance: Significant, positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual &amp; aesthetic factors</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>The aesthetic of the area would be substantially enhanced by the introduction of a development of evident design and material quality, and by increased urban activity. Legibility and navigability would be improved by the creation of new landmarks (buildings and landscape features) and pedestrian routes. Significance: Moderate, positive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the magnitude of change, given the site location, its zoning and the nature of the proposed development, can be classified ‘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).
5.3 Significance and Quality of Townscape Effects

Measuring the magnitude of change against the townscape sensitivity, the significance of the townscape 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). Considering the effects on the key townscape receptors (summarised in Table 1 above), the effects can be classified ‘positive’.

Policy Objective H7 1 of the South Dublin County Development Plan states: “To ensure that residential development contributes to the creation of sustainable communities in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas… including the urban design criteria as illustrated under the companion Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide, DEHLG (2009).”

Many of the urban design criteria in the Manual relate to a development’s landscape and visual characteristics. For a further assessment of the appropriateness and quality of the townscape change the proposed development is considered against the relevant Urban Design Manual criteria below.

Table 2 Assessment of townscape change against Urban Design Manual criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Design Criteria and Indicators (Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide)</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>01 Context - How does the development respond to its surroundings?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01a The development seems to have evolved naturally as part of its surroundings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The layout responds to (a) the surrounding urban grain, particularly the adjacent main roads, and (b) the site’s significant topographical features, the Upper Baldonnell River and the attenuation pond. The density (and associated massing/height strategy) responds to the site’s position close to the urban core of Citywest. The local townscape character is varied, with a mix of development types including lower and mixed density residential estates with apartment buildings of up to five storeys, and larger buildings (e.g. Citywest shopping centre and Magna business park). The proposed development would not be out of place in this context. It represents an appropriate transition (in scale and layout) between the Verschoyle estate to the west, Belfry to the south, Magna industrial park to the east and the district centre to the north west. While the apartment buildings are taller than the established norm in the area, this is encouraged by national policy. Additionally, this is supported by SDCDP policy: H9 Objective 1: “To encourage varied building heights in new residential developments to support compact urban form, sense of place, urban legibility and visual diversity.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01b Appropriate increases in density respect the form of buildings and landscape around the site’s edges and the amenity enjoyed by neighbouring users</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Wide parkland belts are proposed inside the site’s west and north boundaries - to protect the amenities of the existing low density estates to the west and north from the taller development on the site (while concentrating the taller/higher density development as close as possible close to the urban core to the north west). Where the site faces existing higher density development (Belfry to the south), the density increases in response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01c Form, architecture and landscaping have been informed by the development’s place and time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The built form achieves the site’s zoning objective (and national policy of compact growth) while responding to the surrounding townscape character. The architecture is of the 21st century but uses traditional materials (e.g. brick and render) characteristic of existing residential development in the area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The landscape strategy follows the principles of green infrastructure, embracing and improving the significant existing features. The landscaping varies from naturalistic, e.g. in the river parkland, to a refined modern urban garden character in the courtyards between the apartment buildings - to provide variety and a wide range of ecosystem services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01d The development positively contributes to the character and identity of the neighbourhood</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Urban character, identity and legibility in the Citywest area would be strengthened by the addition of a distinct new neighbourhood of strong urban grain, a pattern of massing and height that responds to the context, buildings of strong architectural identity and a unique green infrastructure component.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01e Appropriate responses are made to the nature of specific boundary conditions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Wide parkland belts are proposed inside the west and north boundaries in response to the neighbouring low density estates. The northern parkland area incorporating the attenuation pond adjoins the open space of the estate to the north, to form a large, shared public open space. The western river parkland transitions to a formal avenue alongside Citywest Road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Connections - How well connected is the new neighbourhood?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02a There are attractive routes in and out for pedestrians and cyclists</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Generous provision of dedicated pedestrian routes is a characteristic of the development, with all potential desire lines catered for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02b The development is located in or close to a mixed-use centre</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The Citywest district centre is directly across Citywest Road from the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02c The development’s layout makes it easy for a bus to serve the scheme</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>There is easy pedestrian access from all parts of the site/development onto Citywest Road and Citywest Drive, both served by bus routes. Additionally, the site is less than 5 minutes' walk from the Fortunestown Luas stop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02d The layout links to existing movement routes and the places people will want to get to</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The layout caters for all potential desire lines across the site, including the route between the district centre (and Luas stop) and Magna Business Park. The development would substantially enhance pedestrian connectivity and permeability in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02e Appropriate density, dependent on location, helps support efficient public transport</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The proposal incorporates a mix of high, medium and lower density residential typologies, with the higher density buildings generally located closest to the district centre and Luas stop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Efficiency - How does the development make appropriate use of resources, including land?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05a The proposal looks at the potential of higher density, taking into account appropriate accessibility by public transport and the objectives of good design</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>See 01b and 02e above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05b Landscaped areas are designed to provide amenity and biodiversity, protect buildings and spaces from the elements and incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The proposed development is an exemplar of green infrastructure design for urban residential contexts. A wide range of public and semi-private green open spaces would be created for active and passive recreation. Large parkland areas are proposed, incorporating improved natural and man-made drainage features, and a variety of habitats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05c Buildings, gardens and public spaces are laid out to exploit the best solar orientation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The apartment buildings and house and duplex terraces are aligned north-south to maximise the penetration of sunshine between the buildings and minimise north facing facades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Distinctiveness - How do the proposals create a sense of place?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The place has recognisable features so that people can describe where they live and form an emotional attachment to the place</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06b</td>
<td>The scheme is a positive addition to the identity of the locality</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 06c | The layout makes the most of the opportunities presented by existing buildings, landform and ecological features to create a memorable layout | Yes | There are no buildings on the site (or buildings of note in the area) which can be retained or employed to create identity. The development must generate its own identity.  
- The Upper Baldonnell River and attenuation pond are both incorporated as central features of the development’s signature parkland.  
- In the southern corner of the site the frontage to the gateway junction of Citywest Road and Magna Drive is exploited by Block 7, a building of scale, distinct identity and design quality, to generate identity/legibility. |
| 06d | The proposal successfully exploits views into and out of the site | Yes | Visibility and recognisability of the river corridor from positions outside of the site (e.g. Citywest Road) would be enhanced. The broad open space would also form a landscape and visual buffer between Verschoyle and the development, avoiding any sense of overbearance of the new buildings over the existing houses.  
A large number of the new apartments and houses would have views of the river parkland to the west, towards the Dublin Mountains to the south, and towards the urban core to the north – providing visual amenity to the residents and enhancing the sense of place. |
| 06e | There is a discernible focal point to the scheme, or the proposals reinforce the role of an existing centre | Yes | In spatial terms the focal point of the scheme is the river. The presence of the development would reinforce the role of the nearby district centre. |
| 07a | Layout aligns routes with desire lines to create a permeable interconnected series of routes that are easy and logical to navigate around. | Yes | See 02a and 02d above. |
| 07b | The layout focuses activity on the streets by creating active frontages with front doors directly serving the street | Yes | See 07c. |
| 07c | The streets are designed as places instead of roads for cars, helping to create a hierarchy of space with less busy routes having surfaces shared by pedestrians, cyclists and drivers | Yes | Shared surfaces are proposed at all junctions and on parts of the road network through the lower density area, and all buildings have frontage to the streets.  
In the higher density area the courtyards between the buildings are designed for pedestrian priority and active use as public open space. |
<p>| 07d | Block layout places some public spaces in front of | Yes | See 07c. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building lines as squares or greens, and some semi private space to the back as communal courts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>08 Public Realm - How safe, secure and enjoyable are the public areas?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>08a</strong> All public open space is overlooked by surrounding homes so that this amenity is owned by the residents and safe to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08b</strong> The public realm is considered as a usable integrated element in the design of the development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08c</strong> Children’s play areas are sited where they will be overlooked, safe and contribute to the amenities of the neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08d</strong> There is a clear definition between public, semi private, and private space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08e</strong> Roads and parking areas are considered as an integral landscaped element in the design of the public realm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>12 Detailed Design - How well thought through is the building and landscape design?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>12a</strong> The materials and external design make a positive contribution to the locality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12b</strong> The landscape design facilitates the use of the public spaces from the outset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12c</strong> Open car parking areas are considered as an integral element within the public realm design and are treated accordingly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assessment of the proposed development against the Urban Design Manual criteria confirms that the potential townscape effects can safely be classified positive.
6.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

To assess the effects of the proposed development on visual amenity in the area, 11 no. viewpoints (see map overleaf) have been identified for detailed assessment informed by verified photomontages. The viewpoints were selected to represent the main groups of visual receptors in the area:

**Emerging urban centre to the north:**
- Viewpoint 1 - Citywest Road approaching the central junction from the north;
- Viewpoint 2 – Citywest Drive directly north of the site;
- Viewpoint 3 – Citywest Road outside the shopping centre;

**Residential areas to the west:**
- Viewpoint 4 – Carrigmore estate pedestrian route to shopping centre;
- Viewpoint 5 and 6 – Verschoyle estate houses facing the site;
- Viewpoint 7 – Verschoyle houses with view of southern site boundary;

**Residential areas to the south:**
- Viewpoint 8 – Elevated position in Corbally;
- Viewpoint 9 – Belfry Avenue;

**Streets approaching the passing by the site** (in addition to Viewpoints 1, 2 and 3):
- Viewpoint 10 Citywest Road approaching Magna Drive roundabout junction;
- Viewpoint 11 - Magna Drive east of site.

As well as representing the main groups of potentially affected visual receptors, the viewpoint selection ensures that the photomontages show the development from a range of angles and distances, as required by the GLVIA.

The viewpoints are individually assessed below. For the methodology, criteria and terminology used in the assessments refer to Appendix A. The assessments should be read in conjunction with the photomontages provided in Appendix B under separate cover.

A number of CGI views from positions internal to the site/development are also provided in Appendix B, to illustrate the intended character of the development.
Figure 10  Viewpoint for Visual Effects Assessment
Viewpoint 1: Citywest Road approaching Citywest Drive junction from the north

**Description of Existing View**
- In the middle distance beyond the Luas crossing and the road junction the shopping centre and an adjacent apartment building mark the Citywest urban centre.
- The newly completed houses in the foreground to the left provide some enclosure to the street, further contributing to the emerging but as yet not fully realised urban character.
- In its undeveloped condition the site can’t be discerned, but a row of houses and part of an apartment building in the Belfry estate are visible in the background beyond the site.
- The Dublin Mountains are a co-dominant element in the view, complementing the evolving urban cluster and lending the view some visual amenity and distinct character.

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Description of Proposed Change**
- A row of street trees in the foreground largely screens the cluster of apartment buildings on the site in the distance. The row of houses beyond the apartments, fronting the river parkland, are barely discernible.
- In time the trees in the parkland belt around the north and west sides of the development will mature and partly screen or filter the buildings in the view.

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Significance of Effects**
- ‘Slight’ and positive: Although seen from a distance and partly screened, the development would contribute to the further urbanisation of the landscape, introducing a new, identifiable built element (without undue increase in built enclosure), thereby improving legibility. There would be no loss of valued elements, features or characteristics of the view. Since the site is within the existing urban area (with development visible beyond the site), its development would consolidate the built up area and not expand it, strengthening the distinction between the urban and rural character areas in view.

Viewpoint 2: Citywest Drive approaching Citywest Road junction, north of site

**Description of Existing View**
- Across the street is the site of the mostly low density residential estate currently under construction immediately to the north of the site.
- The road past the side of this construction site leads to the school (out of sight to the left) and continues to the subject site boundary (where a connection is proposed, linking the site to this road).
- To the right of the view is the shopping centre, marking the local urban centre.
- The rough grassland and scrub of the site can currently be seen beyond the building site, although it will be entirely hidden by the new houses when completed.
- The Belfry apartments and houses are visible in the distance beyond the site.
- The Dublin Mountains lend the view some visual amenity and distinct character.

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Description of Proposed Change**
- In this view (photograph taken 28th August 2019) the cluster of apartment buildings would have been visible in the middle distance beyond the construction site. However, Once the development in the foreground is completed the buildings will screen the development entirely from view.

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Significance of Effects**
- No effect, neutral: Once the development on the neighbouring site in the foreground is completed, the development will be screened.
Viewpoint 3: Citywest Road approaching site from the north, beside shopping centre

**Description of Existing View**
- Citywest Road is lined on both sides by rows of closely spaced Hornbeam trees, generating a high degree of visual enclosure.
- To the right of the street is the shopping centre and a small (2-4 storey) office building adjacent.
- To the left across the street is the mostly low density residential development under construction adjacent to the site. Rows of houses (similar to those visible in View 1) are to be built facing the shopping centre, set back behind an internal access road.
- The site is hidden from view by the street trees in the foreground. The Dublin Mountains are partially hidden but do lend the view some visual amenity.

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Description of Proposed Change**
- The cluster of apartment buildings would be largely screened by the street trees and the new houses in the foreground to the left. They apartment buildings would protrude sufficiently, and would form a cluster of sufficient scale, to indicate a place of significance in the townscape.
- In time the trees in the parkland belt around the north and west sides of the development will mature and contribute to a recognisable green corridor alongside Citywest Road.

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Significance of Effects**

'Slight' and positive: Although partly screened, the development would contribute to the further urbanisation of the landscape, introducing a new, identifiable built element (without undue increase in built enclosure), thereby improving legibility. The river parkland belt, as it matures, would also add a new, recognisable green infrastructure feature to the townscape. There would be no loss of valued elements, features or characteristics of the view.

Viewpoint 4: Carrigmore pedestrian route to shopping centre

**Description of Existing View**
- The view is taken from the eastern pedestrian entrance to the Carrigmore estate. From this point there is a pedestrian route to the shopping centre and the Luas stop at the core of the emerging urban area. The side of the shopping centre building is visible to the left.
- The rough grassland area at the centre of the view is zoned for District Centre development (and is the subject of a pending SHD application, ABP ref. 305556).
- The trees bordering this area screen the houses of the Verschoyle estate from view, and also screen the site (beyond Citywest Road).

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Description of Proposed Change**
- The apartment buildings (Blocks 3 and 6) would protrude above the tree line in the middle distance. In time the trees in the parkland belt along the west side of the development will mature and add to the bank of vegetation in the view.
- If the application for development of the site in the foreground is permitted the 5/6 storey buildings will block the view of the proposed development.

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Significance of Effects**

'Slight' and positive: Although largely screened, the development would contribute to the planned further urbanisation of the landscape, introducing a new, identifiable built element, thereby improving legibility. There would be no loss of valued elements, features or characteristics of the view.

In the event of SHD application ref. 305556 being permitted the development would be screened and there would be **no effect** on the view.
Viewpoint 5: House fronting Gleann Verschoyle

**Description of Existing View**
- There is a row of 12 no. houses fronting Gleann Verschoyle, set back from Citywest Road behind a green strip, opposite the site.
- The site is largely screened by the double row of street trees along Citywest Road, and further vegetation in the estate open space in the foreground. (In the winter months when the trees lose their leaves the site would be more exposed to view.)

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Description of Proposed Change**
- The apartment buildings (Blocks 3 and 6) would protrude above the tree line. At a distance of some 100m from the Verschoyle houses the buildings would be prominent but not overbearing.
- The steps in height and the set backs and articulation of the facades would successfully reduce the massing of the buildings without compromising their strong, distinctive form.
- In time the trees in the parkland belt along the west side of the development would mature and add to the bank of vegetation in the intervening landscape.

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Significance of Effects**

'Significant' and neutral: 'Significant' and neutral: While the composition and character of the view would be substantially altered the change is not inappropriate (given the SDCDP development objective for the site and national policy encouraging compact growth). The separation distance and the considered design of the buildings combine to preclude any sense of overbearance or overdevelopment of the site.

Viewpoint 6: Verschoyle Crescent

**Description of Existing View**
- There is a crescent of houses around the entrance to Verschoyle, with trees lining the entrance road and a hedge inside the estate boundary fence.
- The site is largely screened by this vegetation and the double row of street trees along Citywest Road. (In the winter months when the trees lose their leaves the site would be more exposed to view.)

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Description of Proposed Change**
- The development would be largely screened by the foreground vegetation - the houses (to the right) fully screened and the cluster of apartment buildings protruding marginally above the tree line.
- Although well removed from the viewer and partly screened (or filtered through the bare crowns of trees in the winter) the presence of the buildings would indicate a new place in the townscape and represent the further urbanisation of the area.
- In time the trees in the parkland belt between Citywest Road and the buildings would contribute to the further greening of an already well vegetated townscape.

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Significance of Effects**

'Slight' and neutral: Similar to Viewpoint 5, this view illustrates the benefit of the broad corridor of open space proposed along the Upper Baldonell River, which combines with the Citywest Road corridor to form an effective buffer between Verschoyle and the proposed new buildings. Despite their height the buildings would not be obtrusive and would not unduly increase visual enclosure.
### Viewpoint 7: House fronting Verschoyle Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Existing View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 12 no. houses in the south east corner of Verschoyle overlook a corner open space and the wide roundabout junction of Citywest Road and Magna Drive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beyond the open space in the foreground two rows of street trees can be seen along Magna Drive, the formality lending the street an urban character, reinforced by the Belfry apartments to the right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a degree of disconnectedness/inconsistency in townscape character in the view, between the suburban estate in the foreground, the open space of the site across the road and the urban elements (Belfry and the wide roads).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint Sensitivity</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Proposed Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Block 7 in the south west corner of the site would stand prominently in the view, across Magna Drive from the Belfry apartments, with a distinct architectural style, angled to address the Citywest Road-Magna Drive junction and presenting its west elevation to Citywest Road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A large number of trees in an informal arrangement is proposed in front of the building (see excerpt of proposed landscape plan) and these would mature to soften its presence over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The naturalistic landscaping of the river parkland alongside Citywest Road would be discernible from this angle (although hidden by the van in the photograph).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Significance of Effects | 'Significant' and positive: The composition and character of the view would be substantially altered by the introduction of a building of urban character and scale, with associated landscaping. Along with the Belfry apartments this would indicate a significant place in the townscape – a gateway to Citywest – reinforcing the emerging urban character and improving legibility. Ample open space and vegetation would remain key characteristics of the view. While the change would be significant, no valued elements, features or characteristics would be lost or compromised. |
Viewpoint 8: House fronting Corbally Drive

**Description of Existing View**
- The Corbally estate is situated on a rise to the south of the site, where the land rises towards the Dublin Mountains. At the northern edge of the estate a panoramic view north is afforded, over the Citywest Road/Magna Drive junction with the Belfry apartments to the right and the Verschoyle houses to the left, across the wide green area of the site towards the Magna business park and the wider urban area of Citywest beyond (the shopping centre can be discerned beyond Verschoyle).
- A key characteristic of the view - for an urban area - is the extent of open space and the volume of trees. While contributing amenity value to the view this does result in a somewhat disconnected townscape of no clear character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint Sensitivity</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Description of Proposed Change**
- The new apartment buildings would be prominent, particularly Block 7 fronting the Citywest Road-Magna Drive junction opposite the Belfry apartments, the others leading the eye along Citywest Road towards the urban centre. The rooftops of the houses and duplex terraces would also protrude above the tree line.
- The development would screen the Magna business park and several other existing buildings beyond the site (e.g. the school off Citywest Drive).
- In time the trees in the parkland would mature to reinforce the green corridor along Citywest Road.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Significance of Effects**
- **‘Significant’ and positive:** The composition and character of the view would be substantially altered by the infill of the open area in the townscape, with the introduction of a cluster of mixed density development. The townscape would shift towards a more urban character, with a gateway to Citywest area clearly marked at the junction of Citywest Road and Magna Drive. The key characteristic of ample open space and vegetation along the Citywest Road corridor would be retained - and emphasised by the framing/enclosure of the new buildings.

Viewpoint 9: Belfry Avenue

**Description of Existing View**
- The view is taken from the Belfry estate one block in from the edge of the estate on Magna Drive, between the neighbourhood shop and the central open space. The Belfry apartment building is to the left and to the right (out of view) is a row of houses and duplex units set back behind a parking area.
- In its undeveloped condition the site appears as a green space in the middle distance beyond Magna Drive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewpoint Sensitivity</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Description of Proposed Change**
- A terrace of duplex units in the south east corner of the site would be visible through the foreground trees. All other built elements of the development would be hidden from view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Significance of Effects**
- **‘Slight’ and neutral:** From within the Belfry estate (the streets and open space) and from most houses in the estate the development would have minimal effect.

Only from the northern edge of the Belfry estate, fronting Magna Drive (where Block 7 would be visible, with similar prominence to that experienced at Viewpoint 7) would there be any noticeable change in view composition and character of the view.
**Viewpoint 10: Citywest Road approaching Magna Drive junction from the south**

**Description of Existing View**
- Descending the hillside towards the junction with Magna Drive the road is enclosed by an avenue of trees which (in spring, summer) restrict visibility of the adjacent development.
- Between and beneath the tree canopies (and filtered by the branches in the winter) are the Corbally houses to the left and the four storey Belfry apartment buildings to the right.
- In the middle distance beyond the junction and to the right of the road is the vacant site.
- The Citywest shopping centre is indistinctly visible in the distance.

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of Proposed Change</strong></td>
<td>Block 7 fronting the southern site boundary would protrude above the foreground trees, angled towards the street and the junction, its scale and distinctive architecture appreciable.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All other built elements of the development would be hidden from view.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In time the new trees in the parkland alongside Citywest Road would mature to contribute further to an already well vegetated road corridor.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significance of Effects</strong></td>
<td>'Moderate' and positive: The composition of the view would not be substantially altered by the intrusion of one building. However, the character of the view would change, shifting towards the urban, the new building signaling the gateway to the urban area as intended.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Viewpoint 11: Magna Drive east of site**

**Description of Existing View**
- Magna Drive runs along the site’s east boundary, giving access to Magna business park. There is an avenue of trees in wide green verges along the road and across the road from the site (out of view to the right) is the business campus comprised of large office, factory and warehouse buildings.
- To the left is the broad expanse of the site, sloping down to the north and west (left), covered in rough grassland and scrub.
- Ahead in the distance the houses of Citywest Village can be seen and to the left on the far side of the site the shopping centre and adjacent office building are visible.

**Viewpoint Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of Proposed Change</strong></td>
<td>The view would be transformed, with a new landscape of buildings, streets and landscaping occupying the formerly greenfield site, screening the distant buildings to the west and north from view.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A strong building line would be established fronting Magna Drive, with a terrace of houses in the foreground and an apartment building further on set back behind a tree lined internal estate road, all partially screened by the boundary railing and trees.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Built/visual enclosure would be increased but not excessively. Magna Drive with its wide verges and trees can comfortably accommodate the houses and apartments.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Magnitude of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negligible</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significance of Effects</strong></td>
<td>'Moderate' and positive: The character of the street and the wider townscape would be transformed from disconnected, peri-urban to urban. From close up the design and material quality of the buildings and landscaping would be evident.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of national policy of compact urban growth, as required by the NPF and the Building Height Guidelines, must inevitably lead to change in townscape character. It is the specific intention of these policies and guidance that taller buildings than heretofore (particularly residential buildings) be introduced in all urban areas - from city centres to the inner suburbs, district and neighbourhood centres and suburban/edge locations.

The objective is to increase density/land use yield where (a) public transport, services, employment, etc. are available to support the resulting population growth, (b) there are no insurmountable environmental constraints, and (c) the development meets a range of quantitative and qualitative standards.

In townscape and visual terms the site and its receiving environment present an opportunity for compact growth. Citywest is a recently developed and not yet fully realised urban district. It is well served by bus routes and the Luas red line. The townscape character is mixed; it includes low density residential estates; mixed use, mixed density developments, and industrial estates. There is no norm in plot or building typology; mixed use, architecture or materials. There are no buildings of architectural or cultural-historic importance. Although low density housing predominates there are some apartment buildings up to five storeys in height. There is limited built enclosure; the area is characterised by wide spaces between the buildings and as yet there are no distinctly urban streetscapes. These characteristics contribute to a lack of cohesion and legibility in the townscape, and there is also poor permeability.

7.1 Predicted Townscape Effects

The townscape is in a process of plan-led change and the site is zoned for residential development; therefore the receiving environment is capable of accommodating change of the type proposed. However, three factors elevate the sensitivity of the area somewhat. These are (a) the Upper Baldonnell River which flows through the site (an important ecological/green infrastructure element); (b) the neighbouring low density residential estates to the west and north of the site (with established expectations for residential/visual amenities); (c) the fact that the site is large and prominently located in Citywest, so its development has the potential to change the townscape character.

Overall, the sensitivity to further townscape change can be classified ‘medium’.

The potential effects of the development on the receiving environment’s key townscape elements, features and characteristics were individually assessed:

- **Topography**: While there would be widespread surface disturbance of the topography, the site’s key features – the Upper Baldonnell River and the attenuation pond – would be retained and their condition improved, and public access provided.

- **Urban grain**: The site would be developed with an efficient, legible grid pattern of streets and blocks, responding to the main elements of the surrounding urban grain and appropriate in an area seeking to reinforce an emerging urban character. The location of vehicular and pedestrian entrances and routes responds to the potential desire lines into and across the site. Permeability in particular would be improved.

- **Land use**: An unused site close to an emerging urban centre with public transport access, zoned for residential development, would be transformed into a mixed density residential neighbourhood* in accordance with the site’s zoning objective.

  * The division of the site into two distinct sub-neighbourhoods is significant. The development must deliver high/sustainable density. However, due to the site size, there is a risk that if developed at high density in its entirety, it could come to dominate the townscape. By dividing the site into a higher
density area closest to the district centre and a lower density area towards the outer edge of the urban area, this prospect is avoided. Additionally, the objective to provide a range of unit types is met, as is the key townscape objective of creating identifiable ‘places’. Uniformity of built form across such a large site, or alternatively the intermixing of building types, would fail to meet this objective.

- **Plot/building typologies.** A cluster of high density residential development and a related but separate estate of low-mid density development would be added to an area already characterised by mixed density and a wide range of building typologies and scale. At seven storeys the apartment buildings would be higher than the established norm for apartments (up to five storeys currently). This is encouraged in principle by national policy.

- **Landscape/green infrastructure.** The site would be transformed into a designed and managed urban landscape informed by the principles of green infrastructure (e.g. connectivity and multifunctionality). A wide range of public and semi-private green open spaces would be created, including large parkland areas incorporating improved natural and man-made drainage features and habitats, active and passive recreation areas.

- **Perceptual and aesthetic factors.** The aesthetic of the area would be substantially enhanced by the introduction of a development of evident design and material quality, and by increased urban activity. Legibility and navigability would be improved by the creation of new landmarks (buildings and landscape features) and pedestrian routes.

Overall, the magnitude of change can be classified ‘medium’.

Measuring the magnitude of change against the townscape sensitivity, the significance of the townscape effects is predicted to be ‘moderate’ and positive.

The proposed development was also assessed against the Urban Design Criteria contained in the *Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide* (DEHLG 2009) to further evaluate the quality of the change. It was found that the development complies with the relevant criteria.

### 7.2 Predicted Visual Effects

The visual effects on 11 no. viewpoints in the receiving environment were assessed, informed by verified photomontages. The results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
<th>Significance of Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Citywest Road approaching Citywest Drive junction from the north</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Slight, Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Citywest Drive approaching Citywest Road junction, north of site</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No Effect, Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Citywest Road approaching site from the north, beside shopping centre</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Slight, Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Carrigmore pedestrian route to shopping centre</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Slight, Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>House fronting Gleann Verschoyle</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Significant, Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Verschoyle Crescent</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Slight, Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>House fronting Verschoyle Park</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium,</td>
<td>Significant, Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>House fronting Corbally Drive</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Significant, Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Belfry Avenue</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Slight, Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The visual effects can be divided into two categories. The viewpoints in the emerging urban centre near the junction of Citywest Road and Citywest Drive (Viewpoints 1-4) would experience a low magnitude of change and the change would have only positive effects, including reinforcing the emerging urban character, contributing to placemaking and legibility.

The character area to the west and south west of the site would experience more significant change. This area is distinctly suburban currently, characterised by low density housing, wide areas of open space and a large volume of trees. The site nearby, in its undeveloped condition, contributes to this character but also to a disconnectedness and typically suburban lack of legibility in the townscape. Its development, incorporating urban building typologies and scale, would inevitably change the composition and character of views from this area (e.g. Viewpoints 5-8). However, due to certain elements of the proposed development, specifically the inclusion of a broad parkland belt inside the west and north boundaries of the site, undue negative visual effects would be avoided. Views from the potentially most exposed part of the Verschoyle estate (the houses fronting Citywest Road directly west of the site, e.g. Viewpoints 5 and 6), show that the development can be comfortably accommodated. In a very small number of views where there is limited foreground screening (e.g. Viewpoints 7 and 8), the development would be more prominent, but while tall for the context (due to the historic development pattern), dominance or excessive enclosure by the new buildings would be avoided.

In conclusion, the proposed development can be considered an appropriate change in the evolving Citywest urban district. The townscape and visual effects would be positive.
APPENDIX A  TOWNSCAPE AND 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 draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2017.

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”.

A.1 Key Principles of the GLVIA

A.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.

A.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.

A.2 Methodology for Landscape/Townscape Effects Assessment

Assessment of potential landscape/townscape effects involves (a) classifying the sensitivity of the resource, 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.
A.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 Categories of Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.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 Categories of Landscape Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.2.3 Significance of Effects

To classify the significance of effects the magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape/townscape using the guide in Table 3 overleaf. The matrix (Table 3) is only a guide. The assessor also uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource/View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound to Very Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Significant to Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The EPA draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, 2017 describes the significance classifications as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperceptible</td>
<td>An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not significant</td>
<td>An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
<td>An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A.3 Methodology for Visual Effects Assessment

Assessment of visual effects involves identifying a number of key/representative viewpoints in the site’s receiving environment, and for each one 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.

A.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 a viewpoint’s sensitivity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very High</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

A.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 5 Categories of Visual Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.3.3 Significance of Visual Effects

As for landscape 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 guide in Table 3 above.
A.4 Quality and Duration 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 effects to a degree, but particularly for visual effects, this is an inherently subjective exercise. This is because 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, in certain situations 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.

EIA methodology also requires that effects be categorised according to their duration. The EPA Guidelines provide the following classifications of duration:

- Momentary – Effects lasting from seconds to minutes;
- Brief – Effects lasting less than a day;
- Temporary – Effects lasting less than a year;
- Short-term – Effects lasting one to seven years;
- Medium-term – Effects lasting seven to fifteen years;
- Long-term – Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years;
- Permanent – Effects lasting over sixty years;

It may also be relevant to consider the following:

- Reversibility – Whether the effects can be readily undone, for example through restoration;
- Frequency of effects – how often will the effect will occur (once, occasionally, frequently, constantly, or hourly, weekly, monthly, annually).