

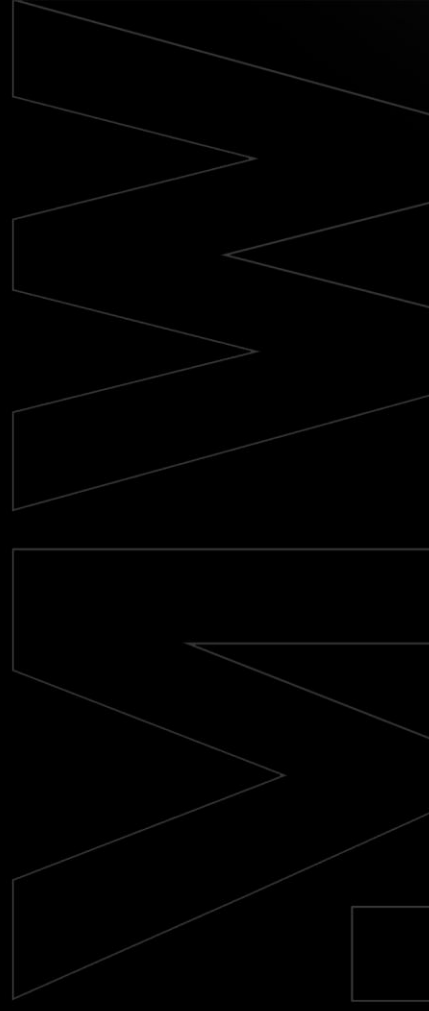
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed Large-Scale Residential Development at Old Connaught, Bray

Prepared by Model Works Ltd for

Castlethorn Old Conna ULC

September 2026



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1.0 Introduction

This report assesses the potential landscape and visual impacts of a proposed large-scale residential development at Old Connaught, Bray, in the jurisdiction of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

1.1 Development Description

The proposed development comprises 271no. dwellings in a mix of houses and duplex / apartment units, including 103no. 2 to 3-storey houses (22no. 4-bedroom, 68no. 3-bedroom and 13no. 2-bedroom), 162no. apartments (113no. 2-bedroom and 49no. 1-bedroom) across 4no. blocks ranging from 1-5 storeys in building height and 6no. 3-bedroom duplex units; 1no. creche (c. 574 sqm) at ground floor of Apartment Block 3; and all associated and ancillary site development and infrastructural works including on site attenuation, hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment works, including: public open space; communal open space; components of the regional attenuation pond; public lighting; surface car parking spaces; bicycle parking spaces/stores for houses and duplex / apartment units; 5no. ESB substations; bin stores; vehicular access via existing Old Connaught Avenue and a proposed new primary north-south street into the eastern portion of the Central Character Area. The proposed development also includes the construction of a new pumping station, associated single storey building, twin rising mains extending circa 400m along Old Connaught Avenue under the M11 connecting to the existing gravity foul network on Old Connaught Avenue 125m east of the M11 bridge and associated storage, together with all ancillary site development and reinstatement works required to facilitate these elements.

1.2 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

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

The GLVIA requires that the effects on views and visual amenity be assessed separately from the effects on the landscape, although the topics are linked:

- Visual impact assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views¹, the response of people to those changes and the overall effects on the area's visual amenity. The effects on 15 no. representative viewpoints in the receiving environment are assessed in Section 5, informed by verified photomontages (provided under separate cover).
- Landscape impact assessment is concerned with the effects of a proposed development on the *character and value* of the landscape as an environmental, cultural and economic resource. The potential effects on the landscape are assessed in Chapter 6.

1.2.1 LVIA Author Credentials

This report was prepared by Richard Butler (BLArch (Hons) Landscape Architecture, MSc Spatial Planning, Member of the Irish Landscape Institute, Member of the Irish Planning Institute) of Model Works Ltd. The author has over 25 years' experience in development and environmental planning, specialising in LVIA. In the last number of years the author has prepared LVIA reports and EIAR chapters for the following projects among others:

¹ The GLVIA emphasises that assessment should focus on views from publicly accessible places such as public roads, footpaths and public open spaces. Paragraph 6.17 of the GLVIA states: *"The emphasis in assessing visual effects should be on public visual amenity, although it may sometimes be appropriate to consider private views, especially where the change would be particularly severe or affect a large number of people"*.

- Bluebell Waterways (DCC & LDA), Dublin;
- Fassaroe Phase 1 SHD, Bray, Co. Wicklow;
- Sea Gardens, Phase 2, Bray, Co. Wicklow;
- Project Montrose LRD, former RTE lands, Donnybrook, Dublin;
- Pembroke Quarter (Irish Glass Bottle and Fabrizia sites) Phases 1, 1B, 2, A, Poolbeg West SDZ, Dublin;
- St Vincent's Hospital and Residential Development, Fairview, Dublin;
- Guinness Quarter, the Liberties, Dublin;
- Independent House LRD, Abbey Street, Dublin;
- Prussia Street LRD, Stoneybatter, Dublin;
- O'Devaney Gardens SHD, Dublin.

2.0 Receiving Environment

2.1 Site Location & Strategic Context

The site is located in Old Connaught, a townland to the west of Bray and at the southern edge of Co. Dublin, in the jurisdiction of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCC).

Historically, the townland included Old Connaught House (a Georgian country house and its associated estate), the village of Old Connaught and a sizeable hinterland with several other big houses. The landscape has since evolved to include a large school campus (St Gerard's), a sports club (Bray Emmets GAA), Old Conna Golf Club, some modern residential development (Old Connaught House and Ferndale Court), and the Festina Lente equestrian and horticultural centre. The M11 motorway also traverses the townland north to south, roughly along the townland's eastern boundary. The majority of the townland remains greenfield in character, however.

Figure 1: Location of Old Connaught in relation to Bray



Since the early 2000s, Old Connaught has been identified as a strategic residential growth area, to provide (in part) for the substantial population growth potential of Bray. Bray's potential derives from its strategic position/function as the southern gateway and satellite urban centre of the Dublin Metropolitan Area (see Figure 2 overleaf), and its road and rail connectivity to the city (DART, bus and future Luas services). The town's physical expansion is constrained to the east and south, by the sea and mountains (Bray Head, Little Sugarloaf). Therefore, the expansion of the urban area to the west of the M11, into the Old Connaught and Fassaroe areas, is required (along with infill/densification of the existing town).

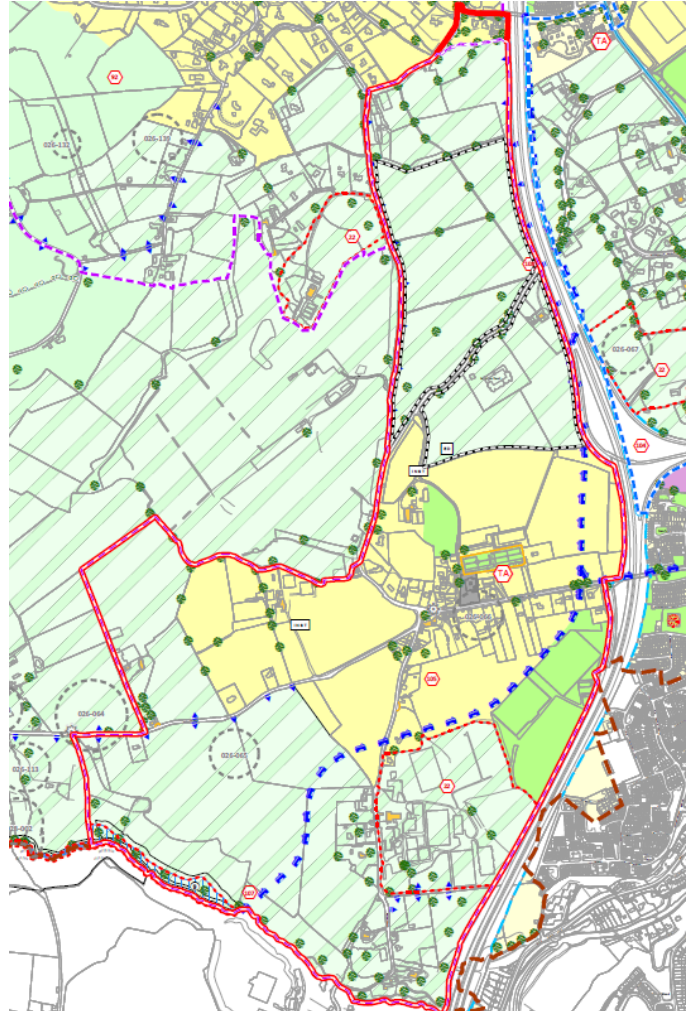
Accordingly, in 2025 DLRCC adopted the Old Connaught Local Area Plan (LAP) to provide a spatial framework for the area's development. The vision for the area, as stated in the LAP, is as follows:

“The Vision for Old Connaught is to support the growth of the area as a sustainable urban village with a strong sense of place and integrating both the existing and planned new communities. It is to incrementally grow the area to attract a variety of residents and families, providing opportunities to avail of good access to neighbourhood facilities, transport options, social infrastructure and recreational and amenity assets.”

Figure 2: Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 graphic of the Dublin Metropolitan Area showing the status of Bray in the city-region



Figure 3: Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028 land use zoning map showing the residential zoning of Old Connaught and the outline of the Old Connaught LAP area



The landscape of Old Connaught is thus greenfield surrounding Old Connaught House, walled garden and village, but is designated - in local, county and regional policy - for transformation into a new residential-led urban area.

2.2 The Landscape Character of Old Connaught

The existing landscape of Old Connaught is described in the LAP as follows (the text most relevant to this assessment is underlined):

“The existing landscape within the Plan area is distinctly rural in form and character with an open landscape and agricultural activities and a rural type of road system. The landscape in the Old Connaught area is strongly influenced by the undulating form of underlying dark blue-grey slate, phyllite and schist. The area is in a transition zone between the uplands to the west and the lowlands to the east. This gives the area a distinct physical character connected to the local environment.

The character of Old Connaught is predominantly one that was created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Old Connaught evolved into a landscape characterised by large private houses set on

generous grounds. The Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1843 to the present day illustrates the area as a landlord-dominated landscape with the presence of many large houses, for example, Old Connaught House, Jubilee Hall, Knocklinn and Thornhill (currently St. Gerard's school). The impact of parklands and demesne land on the landscape still remains evident today, particularly the walled gardens of Old Connaught House. It was also during this period that the triangular green space at the western end of Old Connaught Avenue was formed, which today characterises the core of Old Connaught.

Unlike the area immediately around Bray Town, the Plan area has experienced little population growth or changes in road patterns over the centuries. Changes that took place in the twentieth century were mainly small individual infill developments. The introduction of these features has not fundamentally altered the character of the area.

The core of Old Connaught is contained along Old Connaught Avenue and its junction with Thornhill/Ballyman/Ferndale Roads. Existing residential development in the area largely consists of detached and some semi-detached dwellings and is focused along the main roads in the area. The dwellings along Old Connaught Avenue mainly front onto the roadway, whereas the residential development along the three remaining roads, consists primarily of large, detached dwellings set back from the road. The landscape is punctuated with protected structures, which is reflective of the demesne history of the area.

The topography of Old Connaught slopes generally downwards from west to east, with relatively steep levels along the Ballyman and Ferndale Roads. The topography of the area provides a number of views and prospects which are a particular feature including views to the east toward the Irish Sea, south towards the Wicklow Mountains and west towards Carrickgollogan Hill. The majority of the flat and gently sloping lands consist of undulating farmland, laid out in large arable fields, and delineated by low hedges and trees. The topography of the Old Connaught area is illustrated in Figure 1.6.

The open upland habitats to the west of Old Connaught merge with small scale fields of low intensity agriculture, to provide suitable habitats for a range of flora and fauna. The area has a number of woodland areas and hedgerows which are a strong element of the landscape and have a habitat value. The southern boundary of the Plan area is formed by the steep-sided scrub-covered valley of the County Brook River (Ballyman Glen) which delineates the boundary between Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and County Wicklow.

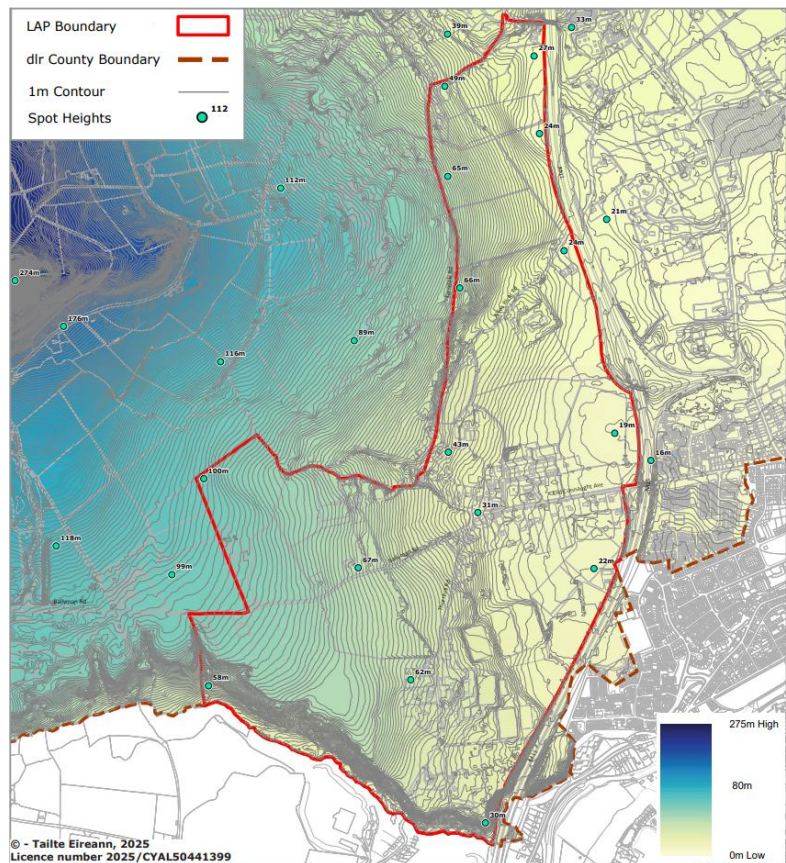


Figure 4: Old Connaught LAP Figure 1.6 – topographic map of the Old Connaught LAP area

Some of the landscape features around Old Connaught have survived for considerable periods. This includes boundary lines, stands of trees, individual buildings, vegetation patterns and some settlements with a long

history of habitation. The present day landscape is an amalgam of elements passed down through centuries of change, but the overarching pattern is one of continuity rather than change.”

The LAP describes the current character of Old Connaught as a landscape that has remained largely unchanged since its formation in the 18th and 19th centuries – a landscape of elevated, steeply undulating grassland fields rising to the west, with larger, flatter tillage fields against the M11 to the east, a village core and suburban style housing along Old Connaught Avenue, with the historic house and walled garden both remnants of the area’s cultural history and a centre of activity.

It should be noted that the landscape is not completely unchanged. The golf club, GAA club, St Gerard’s School and a number of modern residential developments (at Old Connaught House and Ferndale Court), along with the adjacent presence of the M11, give the landscape a peri-urban character (i.e. comprised of both rural and urban-generated elements and influences). **Nonetheless, the landscape of Old Connaught is predominantly greenfield, with relatively little built development, and the implementation of the LAP will cause significant landscape and visual change in the area.**

2.2.1 The Central Character Area

The Old Connaught LAP divides the LAP area into five character areas “*based on both the existing settlement structure of Old Connaught and planned future development*”. The largest of these character areas, and the area in which the subject site is located, is the Central Character Area. The LAP describes the area as follows:

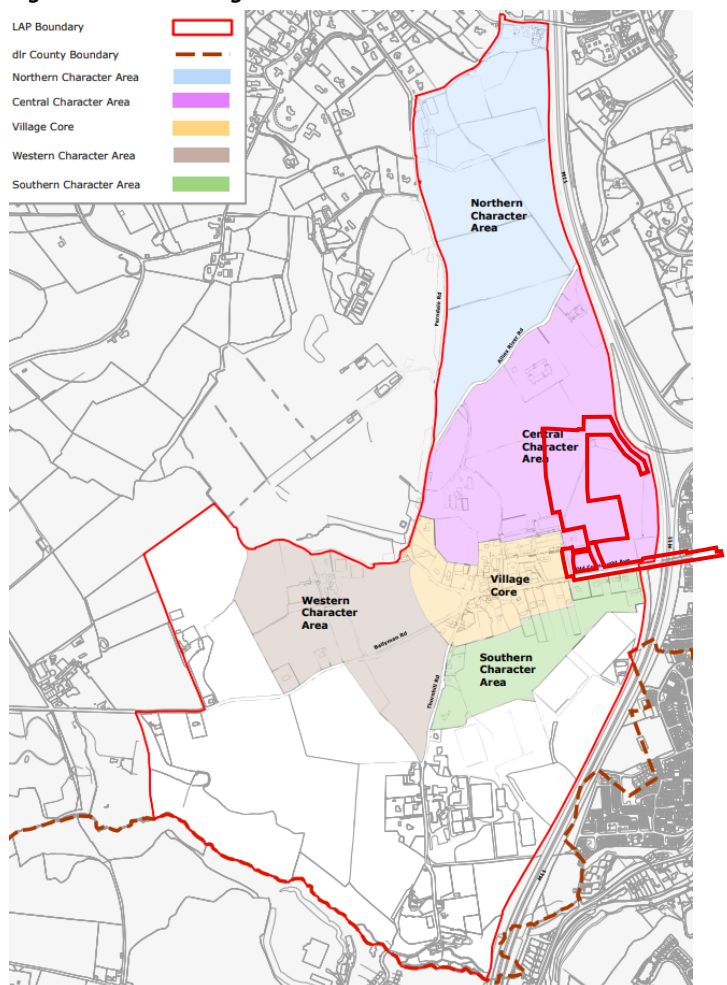
“The Central Character Area is located to the north of Old Connaught Village. The area is bordered by the M11 to the east, Ferndale Road to the west, and Allies River Road to the north. The topography of the lands rises from east to west.

The primary land use comprises managed agricultural land. Residential lands within the area include the multi-unit residential schemes of Ferndale Court and Old Connaught House (a Protected Structure). Cuilín, a Protected Structure, is located in the northeast of the Character Area. There are a variety of woodlands and individual trees which add to the character of the area. A watercourse, the Old Connaught Tributary traverses the southern extents of the Character Area.

Area Potential and Design Challenges

The Central Character Area is primarily greenfield in nature which presents an opportunity for the creation of a new residential neighbourhood with a distinct sense of place and identity informed by the natural landscape and environment of the area. The primarily undeveloped nature of the lands allows for the creation of a coherent movement strategy to serve the area with

Figure 5: Old Connaught LAP Character Areas



emphasis on an active travel network to enable future residents to move around the area in a sustainable way – along footpaths, cycle tracks and green routes.

The dlr County Development Plan 2022-2028 includes an indicative corridor for the proposed extension of the Luas Green Line through the Central Character Area. The incorporation of a reservation corridor through the lands for light rail public transport presents the opportunity for compact growth and the identification of densities across the area in a manner that maximises opportunities for the integration of land use and transport...

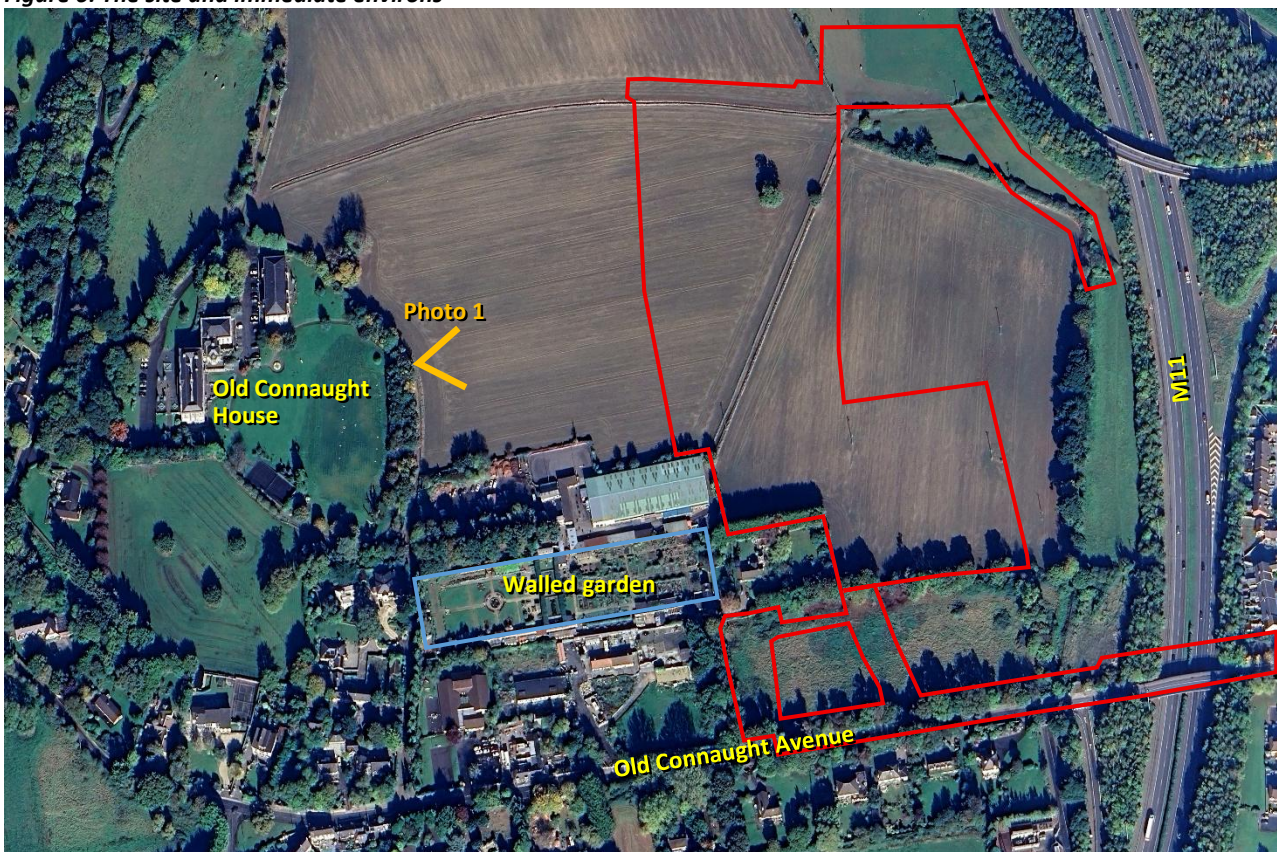
Having regard to the topography of the lands, amongst other factors, there is potential for lands in the east of the Character area to incorporate built form with comparatively increased height. Lands to the west, nearing Ferndale Road comprise a more constrained environment. Existing landscape and environmental features including topography, views, trees and hedgerows, the Old Connaught Tributary existing built heritage and potential noise impacts associated with the M11 motorway are all important considerations in the development of the Central Character Area."

Informed by this analysis of the landscape character, the LAP provides detailed guidance for the development of the Central Character Area. The aspects relevant to this assessment are summarised in Section 3.2 below.

2.3 The Site

The site is an irregular shaped land parcel in the lowest-lying, flattest part of Old Connaught, directly downslope from Old Connaught House, close to the M11 and the existing urban landscape of Bray. The site is comprised of parts of three large tillage fields to the east and north of the walled garden and Festina Lente equestrian centre. The site includes a spur leading to Old Connaught Avenue to the south (for the proposed access road), and other spurs for proposed services connections.

Figure 6: The site and immediate environs



The land is flattest in the eastern part of the site and rises to the west, but the gradient is not steep compared to the lands further west.

Photo 1: A view from a lane in front of Old Connaught House, down the slope towards the site, with the tree belt along the M11 forming the backdrop. This shows the gently sloping, open nature of the main body of the site.



2.3.1 Site Vegetation

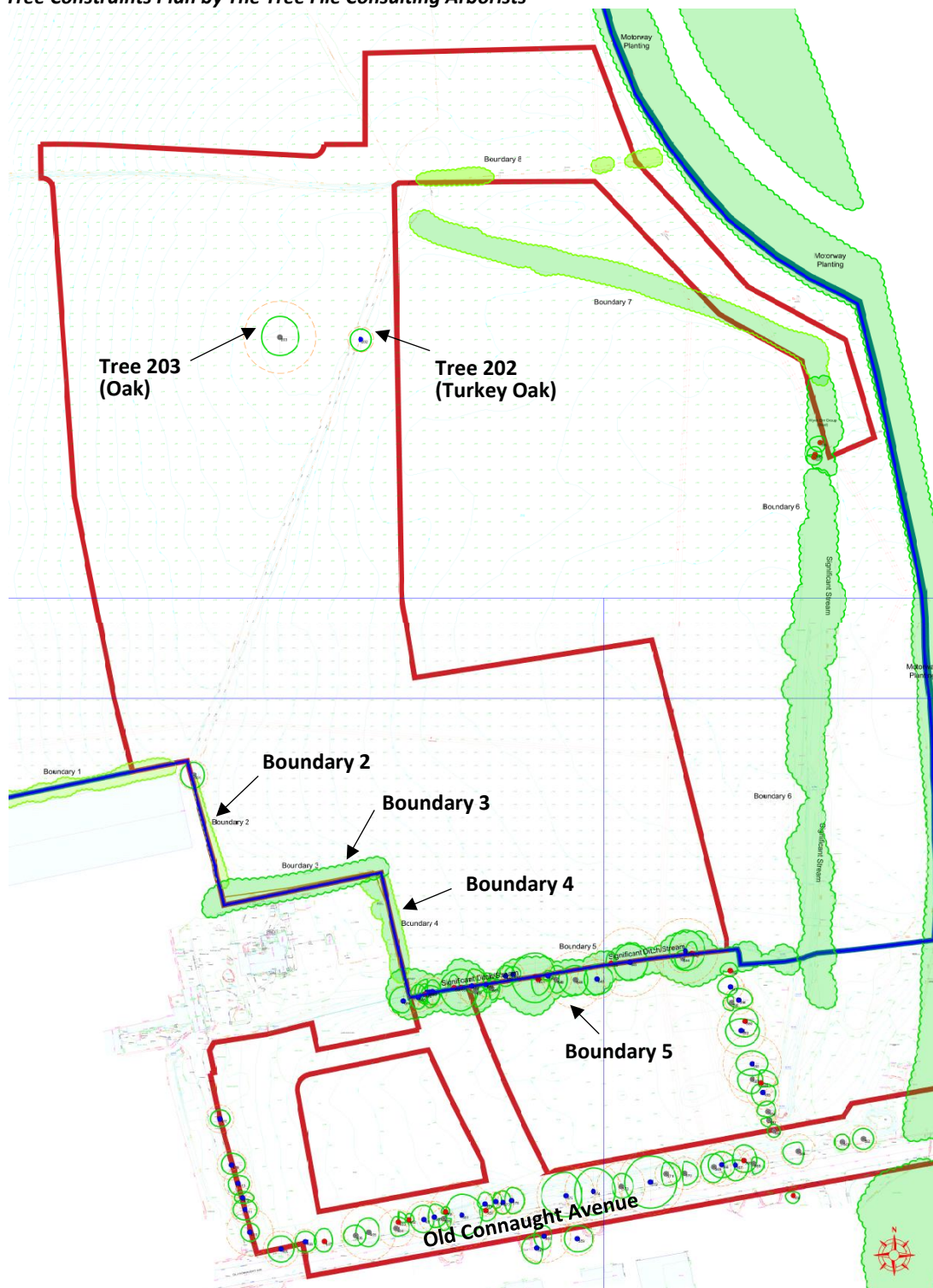
Owing to the current use of the land for tillage, and the site boundaries (mostly) not following field boundaries, there is limited vegetation within the site - including an absence of internal hedgerows. The main vegetation features of note are as follows (see Figure 7):

- A roadside hedgerow with trees of varying maturity and stature along the Old Connaught Avenue boundary (Photo 2). Most of this hedgerow/treeline is external to the site. However, a section would need to be removed to create the road entrance to the scheme.

Photo 2: The hedgerow/treeline along the site boundary to Old Connaught Avenue



Figure 7: Tree Constraints Plan by The Tree File Consulting Arborists



- A hedgerow with mature trees (Beech, Sycamore, Holly) along the south bank of a stream on the southern boundary of the main body of the site ('Boundary 5' on the Old Connaught Phase 1 *Tree Constraints Plan* by The Tree File Consulting Arborists) (Photo 3). The trees are rooted on the south bank of the ditch, i.e. external to the site – although a section of the hedgerow/treeline would need to be removed for the proposed access road to enter the scheme.
- A tall, dense Leyland cypress hedge along a boundary beside the Festina Lente centre (Photo 4) ('Boundary 3'). This feature encloses a neighbouring single dwelling property.
- Agricultural hedgerows along the west boundaries in the southern part of the site ('Boundaries 2 and 4').

Photo 3: The hedgerow/treeline on the bank of a ditch along the southern boundary of the main body of the site.



Photo 4: The Lleyland cypress hedge on the boundary shared with a neighbouring house, and a traditional agricultural hedgerow on the boundary beside the Festina Lente equestrian centre.



- A large oak tree standing alone in a field in the northern part of the site (Photo 5). The condition analysis of this tree in the Arboricultural Report by the Tree File describes the tree as follows:

“A large specimen of highly variable crown vigour with localised stag heading, dieback and deadwood development particularly about higher crown. Principal stem is littered with wounds of various ages, many supporting cavities and visually obvious decay. Tree has been subject to widespread storm damage and limb loss, particularly on western side of crown. Mid and low crown vigour appears slightly better. Tree appears to offer limited sustainability and apparent predisposition to crown failure raises concerns about any retention in areas of increased occupation and use.”

While the arboricultural assessment raises concern over the oak tree's suitability for retention in a residential setting, the tree is visually striking due to its position, size and form. Its retention in the evolved Old Connaught landscape would be desirable. The Arboricultural Report recommends that the tree crown be cleaned out and the tree reviewed for potential retention.

Photo 5: The veteran oak tree in a field in the northern part of the site



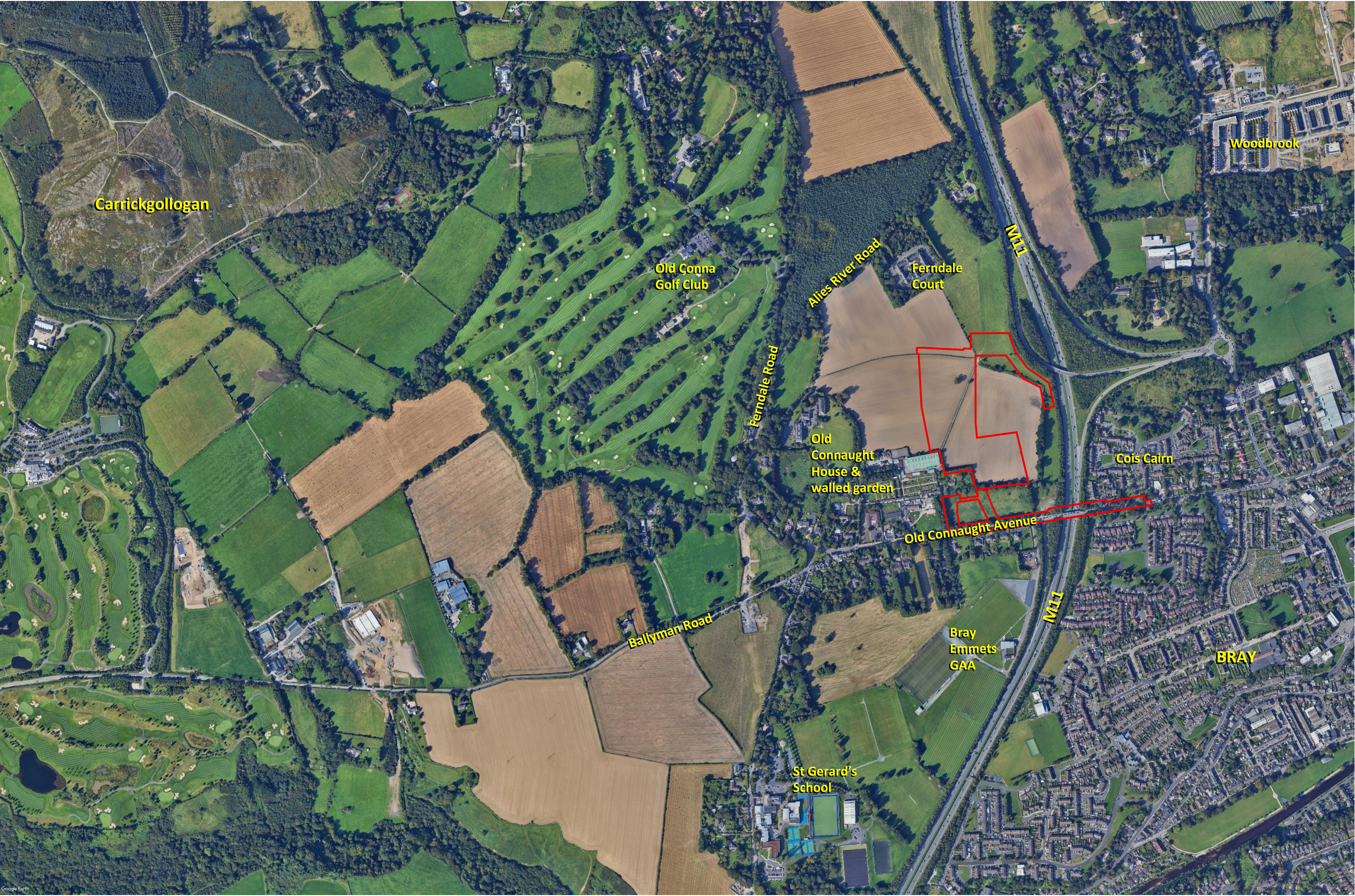
In summary, the site is located in the eastern part of Old Connaught, closest to the M11 and the urban area of Bray. It is comprised of parts of large, gently sloping tillage fields with limited internal vegetation. **Due to the low-lying, relatively flat topography and sparsity of vegetation, as well as the proximity to the M11, this area can be considered the least constrained part of the Old Connaught landscape.** However, the site's proximity to Old Connaught House and walled garden (see Figure 6 above) is a factor in considering the landscape's sensitivity.

2.4 Potential Receptors of Landscape and Visual Change

The following areas and elements are the key potential receptors of landscape and visual change in the receiving environment:

- The urban landscape east of the M11;
- The M11 corridor;
- Old Connaught Avenue and the houses on the south side of the road;
- Old Connaught walled garden and Festina Lente centre;
- Old Connaught House;
- Ferndale Road, Allies River Road and Ferndale Court residential development;
- Old Conna Golf Club;
- St Gerard's School and Bray Emmets GAA club;
- The uplands to the west of Old Connaught (including Carrickgollogan).

Figure 8: The wider receiving environment and key potential receptors of landscape and visual change



2.4.1 Urban Landscape East of M11

The nearest part of the Bray urban area to the site is the Cois Cairn residential estate. The estate is at the north western edge of Bray on the east side of the M11, across the motorway from the site. The relatively flat topography and belts of tall trees on both sides of the motorway restrict visibility across the M11. Unless it were tall, it is unlikely that development in Old Connaught would be visible from Cois Cairn or any part of the north western area of Bray.

Photo 6: A view west towards the site from the Cois Cairn estate, with Carrickgollogan on the distant horizon.



2.4.2 M11 Motorway Corridor

As it passes to the east of Old Connaught and the site, the M11 is in a deep cutting with dense belts of woodland on the embankments. With the nearest proposed buildings set back some 150m to the west of the M11, there is no potential for visibility from the motorway itself.

Photo 7: The M11 directly to the east of the site. The motorway embankments and vegetation block views toward the site.



While visibility of the proposed development from the M11 itself is not possible, the development may be visible from a fly-over onto the M11 (northbound) directly to the east of the site. This is the road route towards Dublin from the northern half of Bray. The view is experienced by a large number of road users.

Photo 8: The M11 directly to the east of the site.



2.4.3 Old Connaught Avenue and Houses

Old Connaught Avenue is the main route of access between Bray and Old Connaught. Once the road departs the Bray urban area and crosses to the west side of the M11 (over a bridge), Old Connaught Avenue has a peri-urban character, with a row of houses in large gardens on the south side and grassland fields on the north side. A hedgerow with large trees on the roadside boundary restricts views north towards the site (Photo 9). While the proposed development is separated from the road by an area of future development lands in DLRC's ownership, it is proposed to provide road access to the site from Old Connaught Avenue. This would require the removal of a section of the roadside hedgerow, which would open a view from the road towards the development.

Photo 9: A view west along Old Connaught Avenue, with suburban houses to the left and hedgerow and trees to the right



The row of houses on the south side of Old Connaught Avenue are an important, if small, cohort of potential receptors of landscape/visual change. However, most of the houses are set well back from the road in densely vegetated gardens, and they are further buffered from the site by Old Connaught Avenue itself, the roadside hedgerow/treeline, and the DLRCC lands (which lie between the road and the subject site). The occupants of the houses are therefore unlikely to experience significant impacts from development on the site, although as the wider Old Connaught LAP is implemented, their landscape context will change substantially.

2.4.4 Old Connaught Walled Garden and Festina Lente Centre

The walled garden of Old Connaught House is a protected structure and zoned open space. The garden currently forms part of the Festina Lente equestrian and horticultural centre, with access available to the public.

The garden has a long, rectangular plan form, aligned east-west, and is divided into two parts by two tall hedges that enclose a central water feature. The eastern half of the garden is currently managed as a nursery/allotment garden (Photo 10 below), and the western part is retained as a formal garden (Photo 11) with a water feature, a grid of gravel paths and seating areas beneath pergolas. The western part of the garden in particular provides a high level of landscape/visual amenity, and gives the landscape a tangible cultural value.

While the enclosing walls, internal hedges and an avenue of tall pine trees to the north of the garden limit visibility of the surrounding landscape, the alignment and layout of the garden direct views towards the southern part of the site, where any development above two storeys would likely be visible from the garden.

Figure 9: The walled garden, Old Connaught House and the Festina Lente Centre



The LAP envisages the walled garden as a focal point of the public realm of the evolved Old Connaught village core. The LAP states (Section 8.4.1.3):

“The existence of the eighteenth century dated Walled Gardens in the heart of Old Connaught is a significant asset and focal point for community activity and engagement with local heritage and landscape. The Walled Gardens Park seeks to enhance and extend the public realm setting of the Walled Gardens in a sensitive manner which protects, conserves and enhances its setting while introducing complementary uses to reflect its character and heritage.”

Photo 10: A view east from the eastern part of the walled garden, currently in use as a nursery/allotment garden.



Photo 11: A view east from the western part of the walled garden, showing its formal arrangement, high visual amenity value and a higher degree of visual enclosure.



The LAP includes an objective (HC1) to:

- *“Enhance and extend the public realm setting of the Walled Gardens*
- *Ensure that any development in proximity of the Walled Gardens, including improvements to the public realm, protects, conserves and enhances its setting.”*

The LAP does, however, recognise that implementation of the LAP will result in visible change/development in the walled garden’s setting. This is reflected in the following sketch taken from the LAP.

Figure 10: Illustration taken from the Old Connaught LAP (p.92) showing the walled garden with housing visible in the surrounding landscape. The viewpoint for this sketch is similar to that of Photo 10 above.



2.4.5 Old Connaught House

Old Connaught House is located a short distance up hill to the west of the site (refer to Figures 6 and 9). The house was built in 1783-4, and is a protected structure. It was converted into a private apartment development in the early 2000s, with a modern apartment building of similar scale introduced beside it. The two buildings orientate views eastwards from their windows and grounds, towards the site. However, the views are filtered by a dense boundary hedgerow and trees (see Photo 13).

Photo 12: Old Connaught House (left), the modern apartment building (ahead) built in the early 2000s as part of the project converting the historic house into a private apartment scheme, and the tree line on the boundary of the Old Connaught House grounds (right).



Photo 13: The view east towards the site from Old Connaught House, showing the screening effect of the hedgerow and trees on the boundary of the Old Connaught House grounds.



2.4.6 Ferndale Road, Allies River Road and Ferndale Court

Ferndale Road runs to the west of Old Connaught House (see Figure 8 above), approximately 350m the west of the site, and is enclosed for most of its length in dense vegetation. There is little prospect of development on the site being visible from Ferndale Road.

Allies River Road is a narrow road that branches off Ferndale Road and passes some 250m to the north west of the site. Similar to Ferndale Road, Allies River Road is enclosed by dense vegetation and/or high walls, which restricts lateral views from the road (see Photo 15). However, for a short stretch just east of the Ferndale Road junction, a view towards the site is afforded (Photo 14).

Photo 14: The view east towards the site from Allies River Road just east of its junction with Ferndale Road. The modern apartment building at Old Connaught House is visible to the right against a distant backdrop of Bray Head



Photo 15: A view along Allies River Road showing the road's enclosure by stone walls and vegetation, limiting views towards the site



Allies River Road gives access to Ferndale Court, a modern residential development (houses and duplex apartments) located to the north of the site. Ferndale Court is surrounded by a dense belt of trees/woodland, which limits visibility of the surrounding landscape. However, there are some gaps in the vegetation through which development on the site may be visible.

Photo 16: A view towards the site from Ferndale Court.



2.4.7 Old Conna Golf Club

Old Conna Golf Club is located on elevated land to the west of Ferndale Road. The clubhouse is set well back from the road, over 500m from the site. The framework of trees and woodland on and around the golf course limits visibility of the surrounding landscape, but in places views towards the site are afforded, with Bray and Bray Head in the background (Photo 17).

Photo 17: A view towards the site from Old Conna Golf Club.



2.4.8 St Gerard's School and Bray Emmets GAA Club

The campus of St Gerard's School is located some 800m to the south west of the site, with the school buildings at similar elevation to Old Conna Golf Club. Due to the school's elevation, development on the site may be visible in the distance to the north east, although there is abundant mature vegetation in the intervening landscape. St Emmet's GAA Club lies down the slope from St Gerards, closer to the site but at lower elevation.

Photo 18: A view towards the site from St Gerrard's School, with Bray Emmets GAA Club in the distance to the right.



2.4.9 The Uplands to the West of Old Connaught including Carrickgollogan

Further west of Old Connaught, the lands rise steeply towards Ballyman and Carrickgollogan. The landscape character is rural, with a sparse network of local roads and dispersed farms and houses. The topography is complex and extensive hedgerow and tree cover adds to the visual enclosure in this area (e.g. along Murphy's

Lane which runs around the base of Carrickgollogan). However, Carrickgollogan itself rises above the surrounding topography, and from its forest tracks and waymarked ways there are panoramic views in all directions, including east towards the site. Any development on the site is likely to be visible from Carrickgollogan, but would be seen against a backdrop of the Bray urban area.

Photo 19: A view east from the peak of Carrickgollogan over the Old Connaught townland and Bray towards the Irish Sea



3.0 Relevant Policy

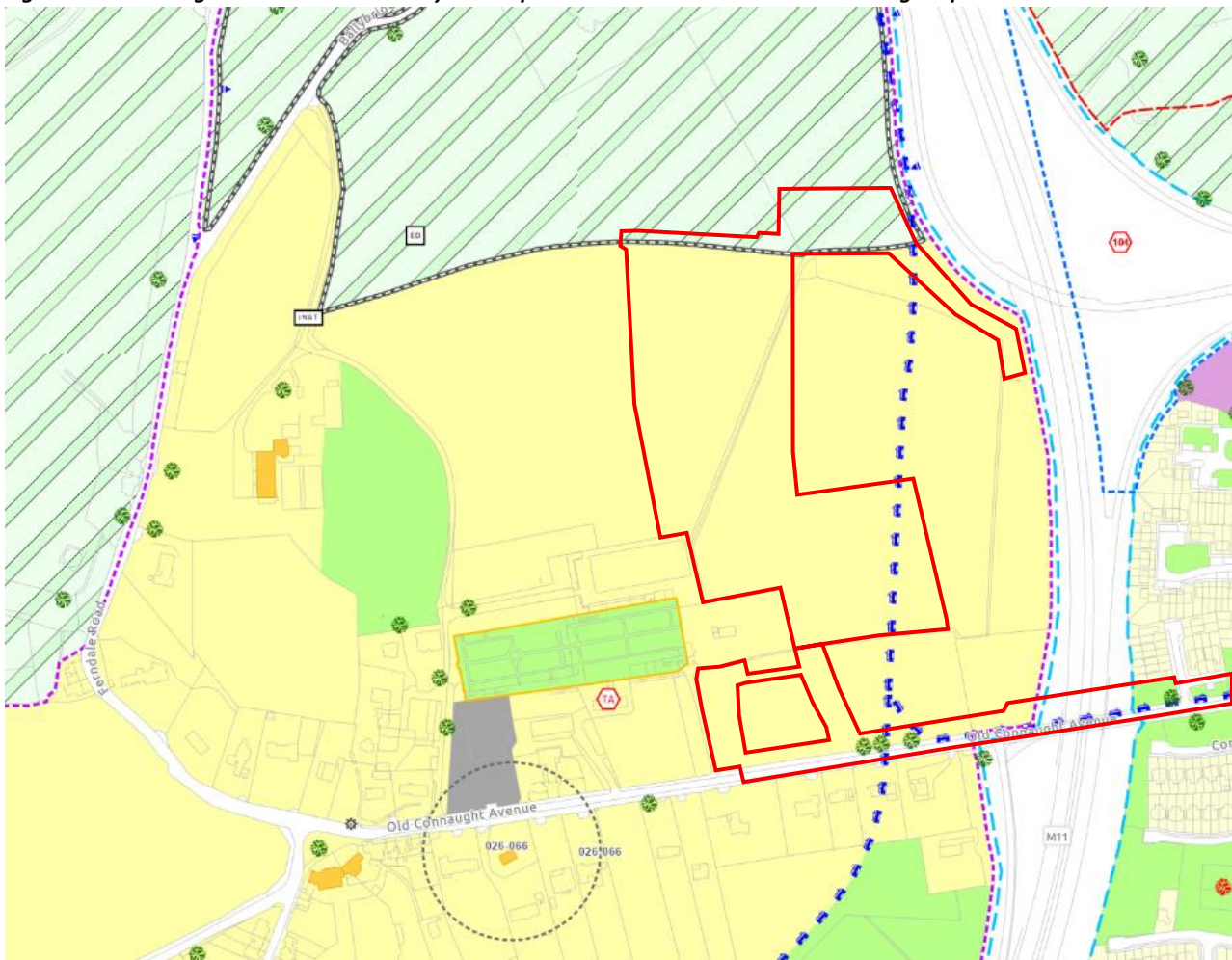
3.1 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028

3.1.1 Land Use Zoning

The site falls within the boundary of the Old Connaught Local Area Plan and is zoned A1 in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028 (DLRDP), with the objective: *“A1 To provide for new residential communities and Sustainable Neighbourhood Infrastructure in accordance with approved local area plans”*.

The lands to east, between the site and the M11, are similarly zoned A1, as are the lands to the west between the site and Ferndale Road (this area includes Old Connaught House). The strip of land to the south, between the site and Old Connaught Avenue, is also zoned A1. Therefore, the site is to form part of a large new residential-led urban area extending west from the M11 as far as Ferndale Road, and south of Old Connaught Avenue.

Figure 11: Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028 land use zoning map



Also of note on the zoning map are the following:

- The open space zoning (Objective F: *“To preserve and provide for open space with ancillary active recreational amenities”*) of the green space east of Old Connaught House and inside the walled garden.
- The protected structure designation of Old Connaught House and the walled garden.
- Indication of a route for a ‘Proposed Luas Line Extension’ running north to south through the site.
- An area of ‘Green Belt’ and ‘Strategic Land Reserve’ to the north of the site, between the site and Allies River Road. This area includes Ferndale Court.

3.2 Old Connaught Local Area Plan 2025

3.2.1 The Central Character Area – Potential and Design Challenges

Regarding the 'Area Potential and Challenges', the LAP states:

"The Central Character Area is primarily greenfield in nature which presents an opportunity for the creation of a new residential neighbourhood with a distinct sense of place and identity informed by the natural landscape and environment of the area...

The primarily undeveloped nature of the lands allows for the creation of a coherent movement strategy to serve the area with emphasis on an active travel network to enable future residents to move around the area in a sustainable way – along footpaths, cycle tracks and green routes.

The dlr County Development Plan 2022-2028 includes an indicative corridor for the proposed extension of the Luas Green Line through the Central Character Area. The incorporation of a reservation corridor through the lands for light rail public transport presents the opportunity for compact growth and the identification of densities across the area in a manner that maximises opportunities for the integration of land use and transport.

Having regard to the topography of the lands, amongst other factors, there is potential for lands in the east of the Character area to incorporate built form with comparatively increased height...

The combination of the site's low-lying topography, its unconstrained greenfield condition and the presence of the future Luas corridor are factors cited in the LAP as providing opportunity for increased density and building height on the site. Accordingly, the Site Development Framework Objectives for the area specify a net density of 40-100 units per hectare, with a mix of apartments and houses, and building heights of 2-4 storeys plus setback.

Among the other Framework Objectives relevant to this assessment are:

Open Spaces, Parks and Recreation

- *"Provision of strategic open spaces – Walled Gardens Park / Allied River Road Park / Allies River Road Active Park (see section 8.4.1, Chapter 8).*
- *Public open space for residential schemes - 10% of total net residential site area. Provide for a north-south greenway spine connecting the Walled Gardens Park and Allies River Road Active Park and School.*

Heritage and Conservation

- *"Enhance and extend the public realm setting of the Walled Gardens / Ensure that any development in proximity of the Walled Gardens protects, conserves and enhances its setting (see Objective HC1, Chapter 9)."*

3.2.2 The Central Character Area – Site Development Framework

The LAP provides a number of spatial plans to give guidance to different parts of the Old Connaught area's development. The two plans below, from the LAP, show the overall 'Site Development Framework' and the 'Open Space and Environment' Framework for the Central Character Area, of which the site is a part.

The Framework Plans indicate the site area is to be accessed by a new road leading north from Old Connaught Avenue, traversing the site and connecting to Allies River Road to the north. This road forms the spine of the transport/movement network. A reservation of the future Luas line runs alongside the road. The road corridor also includes the 'Cherrywood to Bray Cycle route'.

To either side of the north-south road are orthogonal blocks of development of varying typologies and height. These include apartment blocks of four storeys plus a set-back fifth storey, and terraced houses of 2-3 storeys with three storey accent units at the corners. The apartment blocks are positioned beside the main north-south road at its northern and southern entry points to the site.

Figure 12: Old Connaught LAP Central Character Area – Site Development Framework (with site outlined red)

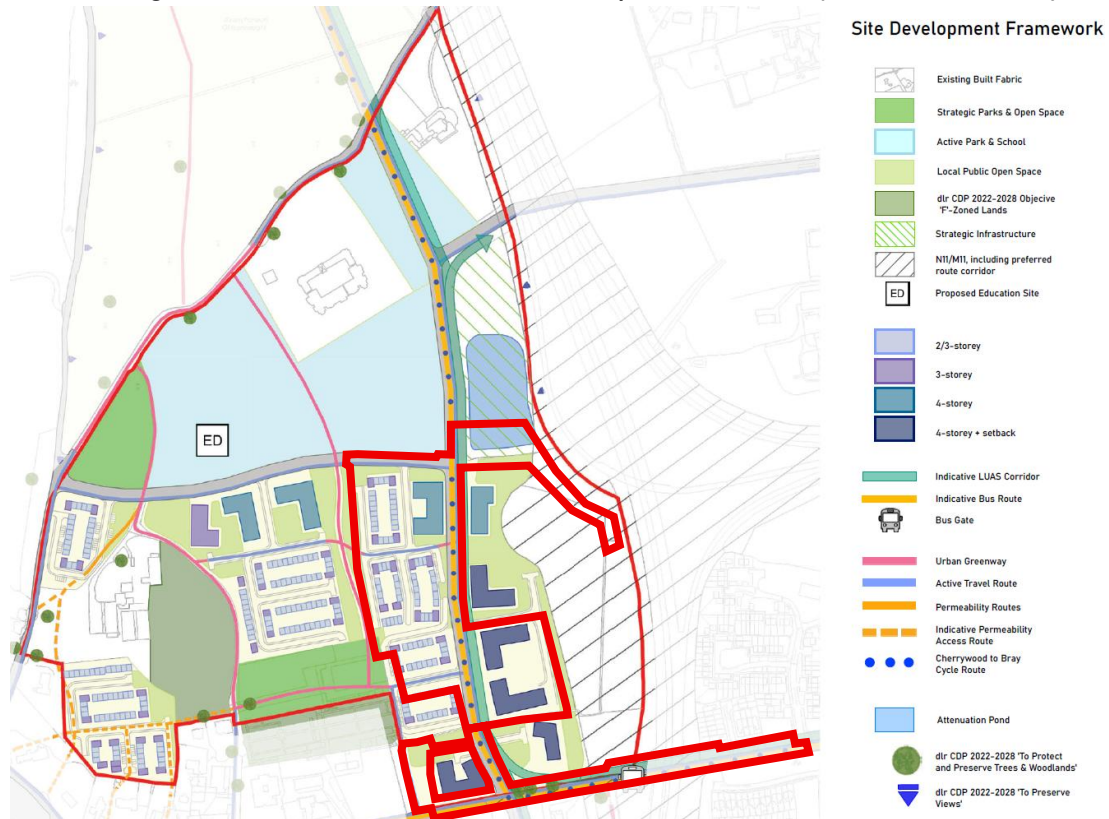
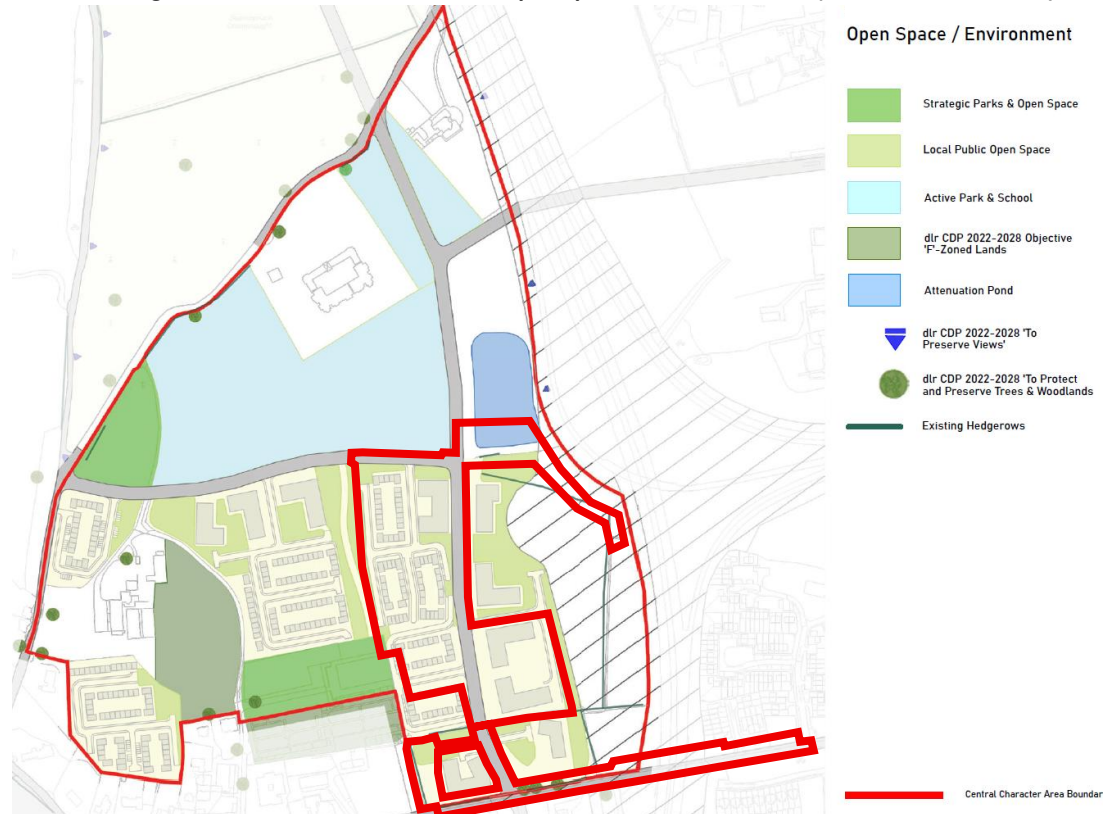


Figure 13: Old Connaught LAP Central Character Area – Open Space and Environment (with site outlined red)



3.2.3 Trees and Hedgerows

The following objectives of the LAP are most relevant:

Objective GIB7 – Trees and Hedgerows

"It is an Objective to protect and maintain important trees and hedgerows within the Plan area, where practicable, and to promote native tree/hedgerow enhancement and planting. The retention and protection of existing trees / woodlands / hedgerows shall accord with the requirements of the dlr County Development Plan 2022-2028."

Objective GIB8 – New Development

"It is an Objective to promote and encourage planting of native tree and hedgerow species and to provide sufficient buffer to allow for wildlife corridors in new developments across the Plan area."

Objective GIB9 – Boundary Treatments

"It is an Objective to:

- Require that where the boundaries of sites incorporate or are adjacent to existing trees and hedgerows to be retained, these shall be utilised as part of the boundary.*
- Encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments to prevent loss and fragmentation, where practically possible."*

There are no trees on the site specifically identified for protection in the DLRCDP (refer to Figure 11 above). There are however a number of hedgerows on the site boundary in the southern part of the site, and a tree line on the south side of the ditch/stream (see 'Boundary 5' on Figure 7 and Photo 3 above) that warrants protection.

3.2.4 Landscape Character

The site (and the majority of the Old Connaught LAP area) falls into the Ballyman Landscape Character Area (LCA No. 11) as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. The LAP identifies the following as the 'main sensitivities/strategies' for the Ballyman LCA:

- "The area is distinctively agricultural and low lying in nature with views across to Bray Head and the Sugar Loaf.*
- Some of the area falls outside the County and as such the Council shall work with Wicklow County Council on formulating policy.*
- To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Old Connaught².*
- Protect existing hedgerows particularly those identified as priority hedgerows in the dlr hedgerow survey."*

The LAP states:

"The HLCA makes a number of recommendations to sustain the historic landscape character of the area including the protection of the historic landscape, morphology and overall architectural character of the Old Connaught area; and that new development in the area should be sufficiently sympathetic to emphasise, strengthen and enhance the established character of the area."

² During the preparation of the LVIA, attempts were made to obtain the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Old Connaught. The document is not available online. DLRC was also contacted but was not able to provide the document.

While the protection of the historic structures in the area is necessary (and realistic), and elements such as the historic field pattern and boundaries to an extent, it must be recognised that ‘protection of the historic landscape and overall architectural character’ of the area is not compatible with the development of Old Connaught as a 21st century mixed density residential neighbourhood.

The introduction of the estimated 2,350 housing units (including apartment buildings up to five storeys tall), ancillary uses, transport (e.g. Luas) and other infrastructure and a network of public open space, it is unavoidable that the landscape character of Old Connaught will be significantly altered/evolved.

The ideal would be that the historic structures, road network, field pattern, drainage lines and vegetation would be incorporated into the evolved landscape, lending maturity, cultural and natural heritage value, character and visual amenity to the new urban area.

3.2.5 Views and Prospects

The LAP states:

“Old Connaught benefits from upland and seascape views and prospects which contribute positively to the character of the area. The dlr County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 includes Policy Objective GIB6: Views and prospects – “...to preserve, protect and encourage the enjoyment of views and prospects of value.”

Roads or other public areas from which there is a view worthy of protection are indicated on the County Development Plan Maps. Locations within the LAP area with the Development Plan objective “to preserve views” include views north and south along part of Ballyman Road; views from Love Lane off Thornhill Road; views eastwards from Ferndale Road; and views westwards from the M11.

The area also contains important prospects i.e. prominent landscapes or areas of special amenity value, or special interest which are widely visible from the surrounding area. Prospects, identified in the dlr County Development Plan 2022-2028 for protection, which are relevant to the Plan area, include the following:

- *Carrickgollogan from Bray Road (Shankill to Bray area); and,*
- *Carrickgollogan from Ballyman Road.*

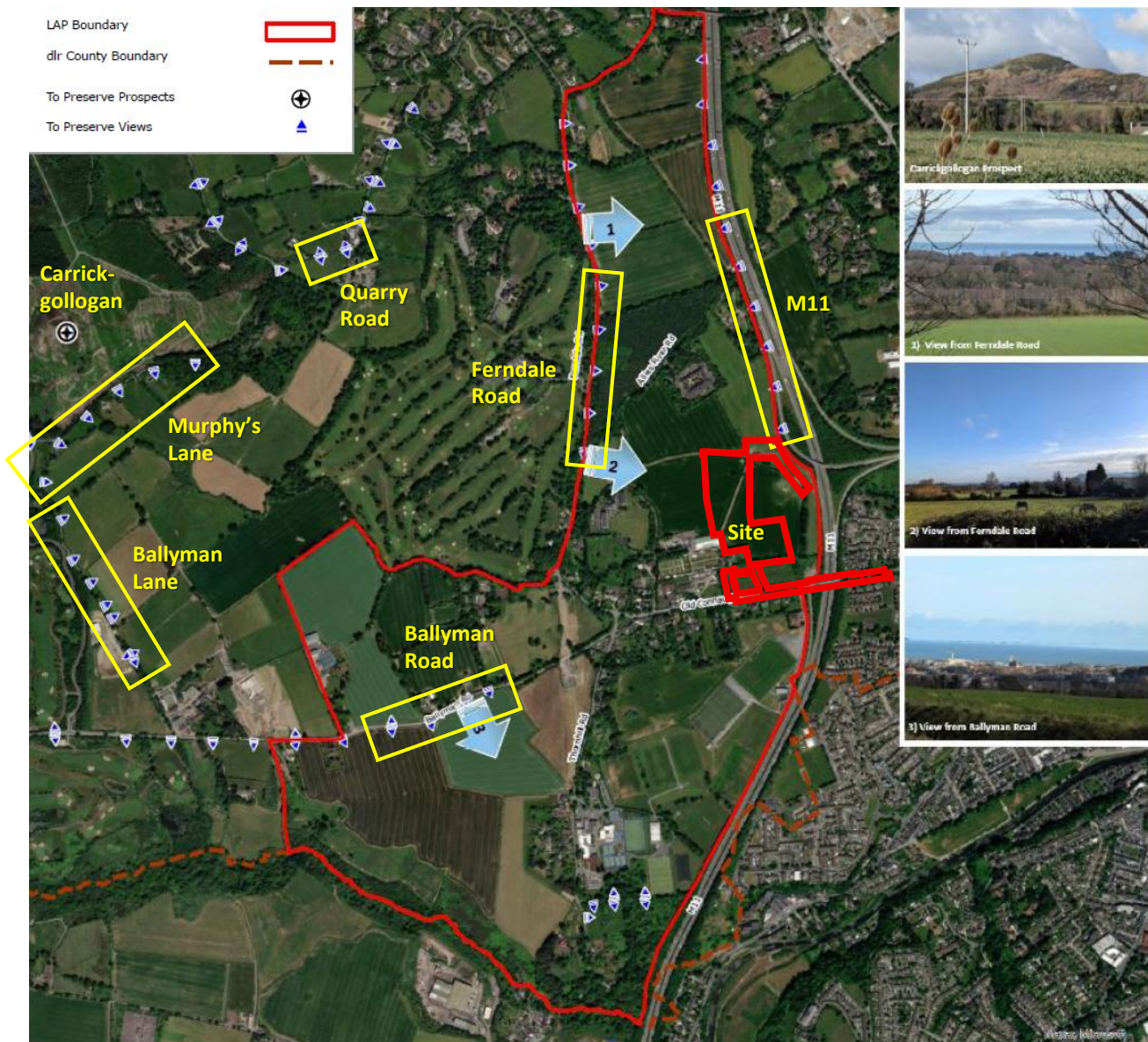
Views and prospects identified in the dlr County Development Plan 2022-2028 were taken into consideration in the preparation of the Site Development Frameworks for the Plan area – see Chapter 4. It is an objective that views and prospects are further assessed as part of the development management process for planning applications in the Old Connaught area. Where possible, the Planning Authority will seek to integrate the viewing potential of existing views and/or prospects.

The map overleaf is taken from the LAP (Figure 7.3 of the LAP). Of the protected views identified on the map, the following are potentially relevant to this assessment:

- **Views east over Old Connaught from Murphy’s Lane**, which runs around the base of Carrickgollogan. During survey for this assessment, no unobstructed views from Murphy’s Lane were found. A view from Carrickgollogan, above Murphy’s Lane, is however assessed in Section 5 (Viewpoint 19).
- **Views north and south from Quarry Road**. Viewpoint 18 in Section 5 assesses the impact on a view from Quarry Lane.
- **Views east from Ballyman Lane**. Viewpoint 17 in Section 5 assesses the impact on a view from Ballyman Lane.
- **Views north and south from Ballyman Road**. Viewpoint 16 in Section 5 assesses the impact on a view from Ballyman Road.

- **Views east from Ferndale Road north of the junction with Allies River Road.** There is no visibility of the site from this stretch of Ferndale Road. However, there is a view of the site from Allies River Road just off Ferndale Road. Viewpoint 12 in Section 5 assesses the impact on this view.
- **Views west from the M11 as it passes to the east of Old Connaught.** Due to the topography of the motorway corridor, and the now maturing vegetation on the enclosing embankments, there are no views of the site from the M11 as it passes to the east of the site (see Photo 7 above). However, Viewpoint 2 assesses a view from the overpass over the M11 directly east of the site.

Figure 14: Protected views and prospects identified in the Old Connaught LAP – annotated (site outlined thick red and relevant protected views in yellow)



4.0 Proposed Development

The proposal is described in detail in the Architectural and Landscape Design Statements and drawings accompanying the planning application. The following are the aspects of the proposal most relevant to the LVIA.

4.1 Layout

The primary arranging element of the proposed layout is the north-south aligned 'Link Street', which meets Old Connaught Avenue at a proposed new junction to the south of the main body of the site. This junction on Old Connaught Avenue would constitute an important new node in the evolved landscape of Old Connaught, providing the gateway to the new neighbourhood from the existing road network and public realm.

The Link Street passes through a future development site in DLRCC's ownership before entering the main development area of the site.

The Link Street includes a vehicular lane in each direction, a lane of parking on the west side, and segregated bike lanes and footpaths (each 2m wide) on both sides. The proposed street also includes a reservation for the future Luas line on the east side of the street. The street corridor thus has a distinctly 'urban' profile/specification.

The north-south Link Street forms the spine of the proposed layout, and a series of development blocks – formed by side streets catering for vehicular access and Active Travel - are arranged on each side of this street. The result is a simple, orthogonal urban grain that would be easily navigated and legible.

Figure 15: Proposed layout



4.2 Arrangement of Built Form and Height

The proposed development includes three apartment buildings (see Figure 16 overleaf):

- **Blocks 1 and 2** are a single building with an L-shaped footprint, designed to read as two buildings, positioned on the east side of the Link Street and at the southern edge of the main development area.
 - Block 1 faces south (towards Old Connaught Avenue and the approach along the Link Street). The building is set back from the boundary behind a strip of public open space, to protect the stream and tree line on the boundary (except where trees are required to be removed for the road). Block 1 is five storeys tall, and is intended to function - visually - as a local landmark and gateway to the scheme.
 - Block 2 is also five storeys, with a four storey connecting element attached to Block 1. Block 2 combines with Block 1 to form a gateway (in built form), and provides built frontage/enclosure to the Link Street – to strengthen the street's urban character.

- **Block 3** is a 4/5 storey building located at the northern edge of the site, to function as a local landmark and gateway to the scheme on the approaches from the north and west.
- **Block 4** is a 3/4 storey building located in the central western part of the site, providing frontage/enclosure and passive surveillance of the main open space to its north and a future open space corridor to the west.

Terraces of three storey houses provide the built frontage to the Link Street (on its west side), and further three storey houses are also proposed in the block to the east of the apartment Blocks 1 and 2, in the lowest part of the site.

The remainder of the buildings are two storey terraced houses.

Figure 16: Proposed arrangement of building height



4.3 Architecture and Materials

The proposed two storey terraced houses have a traditional form and materials. The ridge of the pitched roofs runs parallel to the terrace, with steps in the roofline (and floor level) to respond to the natural topography. The houses are clad in buff brick and the roofs covered in slate tiles.

Figure 17: Proposed two storey terraced houses



The three storey houses fronting the Link Street differ from the other houses in their roof design as well as their height. The ridges of the roofs are perpendicular to the street, so that the houses individually present a pitched gable to the street, and collectively form a serrated roofline. This is a more distinctly 'urban' design, reinforcing the status of the Link Street and strengthening its urban character.

Figure 18: Proposed three storey houses fronting the Link Street



Figure 19: A view north along the Link Street with Blocks 1 and 2 to the right, the three storey houses to the left, and Block 3 in the distance



The proposed apartment buildings are of simple, cubic form, providing strong frontage and definition to the adjacent streets and open spaces. The facades are articulated by expressed balconies with dark metal balustrades, and grids of generously sized windows. Blocks 1, 2 and 4 are clad in buff brick. Block 3 is clad in a light grey brick. An exoskeleton frame feature at the corner of the Link Street and the street connecting to Allies River Road to the west gives further emphasis to this corner.

Figure 20: A view south along the Link Street with Block 3 in the foreground and Blocks 1 and 2 in the distance to the left. The variation in brick colour and exoskeleton feature of Block 3 are intended to give the building a 'local landmark' function, improving the legibility of the new urban landscape



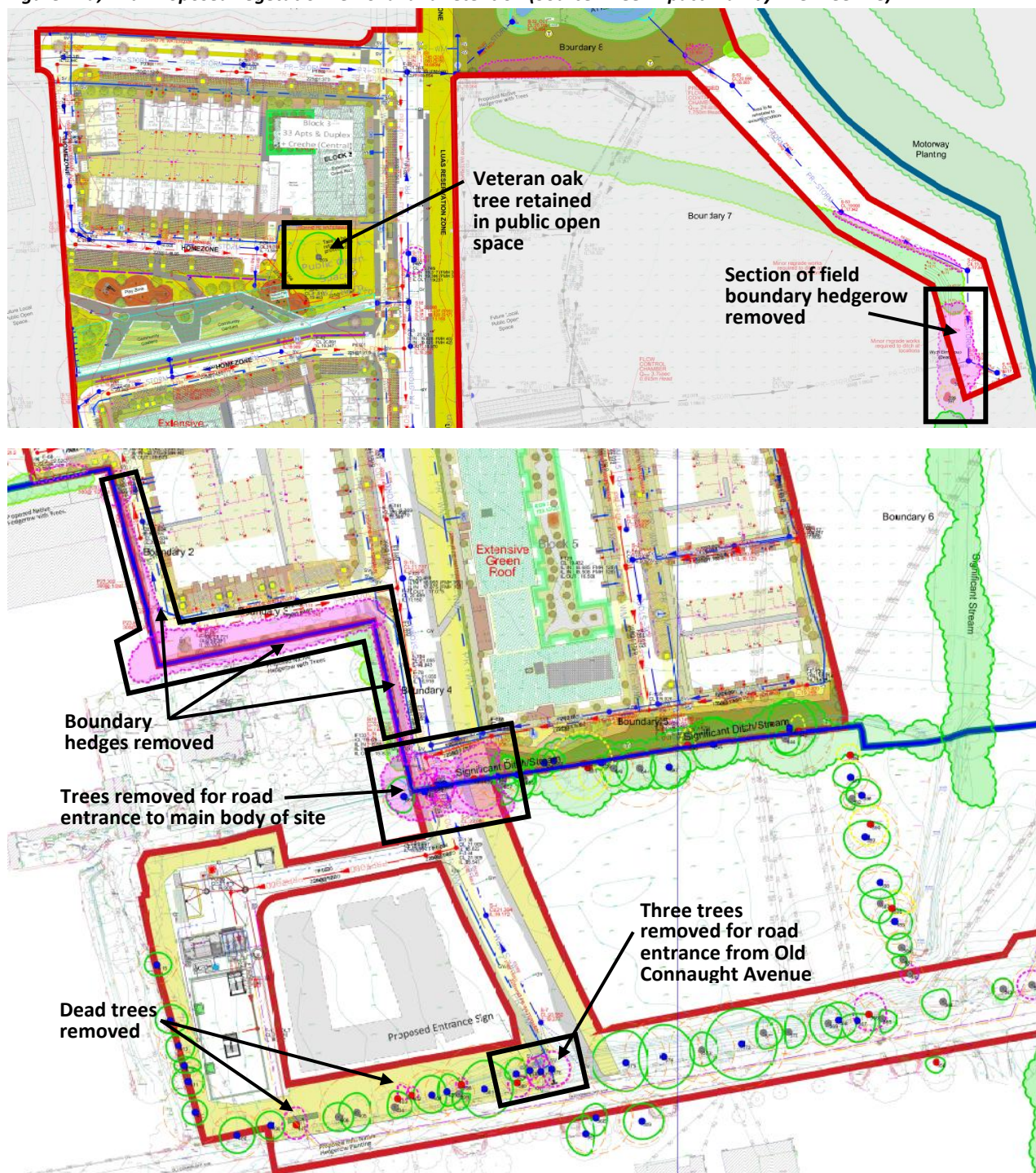
4.4 Landscape Proposals

4.4.1 Tree Removal and Retention

- It is proposed to remove a section of roadside hedgerow and three trees from the north side of Old Connaught Avenue to construct the junction of the Link Street, providing access to the site (see Figure 21a and verified photomontage for Viewpoint 6).
- Five dead trees (nos. 380, 398, 402, 403, 407) would be removed from the roadside boundary of Old Connaught Avenue in the south western part of the site.
- A section of hedgerow with a number of trees would be removed to allow for the Link Street's entry to the main body of the site. The remainder of this important tree line would be retained.
- Boundary 3 (a tall, dense Leyland cypress hedge) and Boundaries 2 and 4 (remnant agricultural hedgerows) would be removed.

The veteran oak tree (see Photo 5 above) in the northern part of the site is proposed to be retained. While this tree does have signs of storm damage, it is considered that the tree can be managed and retained as a feature of the proposed main open space, lending maturity and character to the space and wider scheme.

Figure 21a, 21b: Proposed vegetation removal and retention (Source: Tree Impact Plan by The Tree File)



4.4.2 Landscape Proposals

The key elements of the landscape proposals are as follows:

- **Main public open space (POS2, 3,287 sqm).** The main public open space is a wedge of land, aligned east-west, between two of the new urban blocks on the west side of the Link Street. The space connects the Link Street to a future corridor of open space outside the west boundary of the site (which in turn will connect to the planned central open space of the Old Connaught neighbourhood beside the walled garden to the south). The main open space has been positioned to allow for the retention of a veteran oak tree that currently stands alone in a field on the site (Photo 5). The open space includes areas of

amenity lawn, two playground areas, an area of community gardens, mental shrub planting, 28 no. new trees, and pedestrian paths and seating.

- **Southern boundary open space corridor (POS1, 1,231 sqm).** A strip of public open space is proposed inside the southern boundary of the main body of the site, in front of Block 2. This space provides a buffer between the buildings and the stream, hedgerow and tree line along the boundary. An Active Travel route runs east-west through the space, and a small playground is proposed beside Block 2.
- **Streetscapes.** The proposed streetscapes include a large number of trees, and rain gardens containing ornamental shrub and groundcover species (see Figures 17-20 above). Privacy strips of planting are proposed in front of the apartment buildings and houses, buffering the ground floor rooms and windows from the public realm.

The development would result in a significant increase in tree cover and species diversity on the site despite the change in use from agriculture to residential/urban.

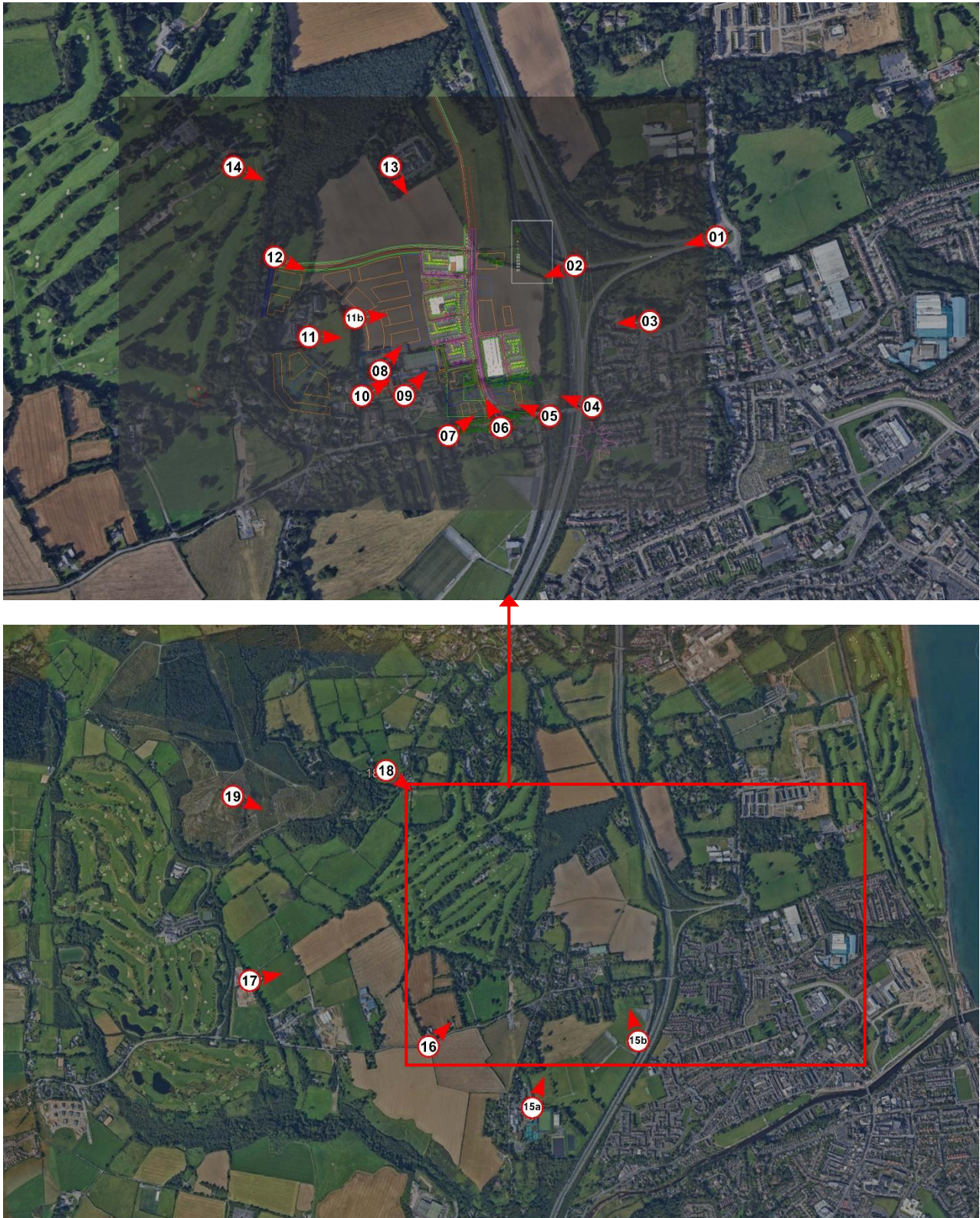
Figure 22: Proposed landscape masterplan



5.0 Visual Effects Assessment

19 no. publicly accessible viewpoints (see Figures 23a, 23b) were selected for the assessment of visual effects informed by verified photomontages. The viewpoints were selected to represent the key potential receptors identified in Section 2.4 above, and to address the DLRCDP protected views identified in the Old Connaught LAP (Section 3.2.5 above).

Figure 23a, 23b: Viewpoints for visual effects assessment



The effects on the viewpoints are individually assessed below. For the methodology, terms and criteria used in the assessment refer to Appendix 1. The assessments should be read in conjunction with the verified photomontages provided under separate cover.

For each viewpoint, the following views are provided:

1. **Existing view** (photograph taken in winter when the deciduous trees were out of leaf, therefore showing the 'worst case scenario' as regards development visibility);
2. **Proposed view** (photomontage of the proposed development);
3. **Cumulative view** (photomontage of the proposed development + massing model of the masterplan for the applicant's remaining lands in Old Connaught). The cumulative views are provided for information only, to illustrate the likely future evolution of the landscape. The potential cumulative impact is not formally assessed in this report as the future phases have not yet been designed in sufficient detail.

5.1 Viewpoint 1 – M11 Onramp from Dublin Road

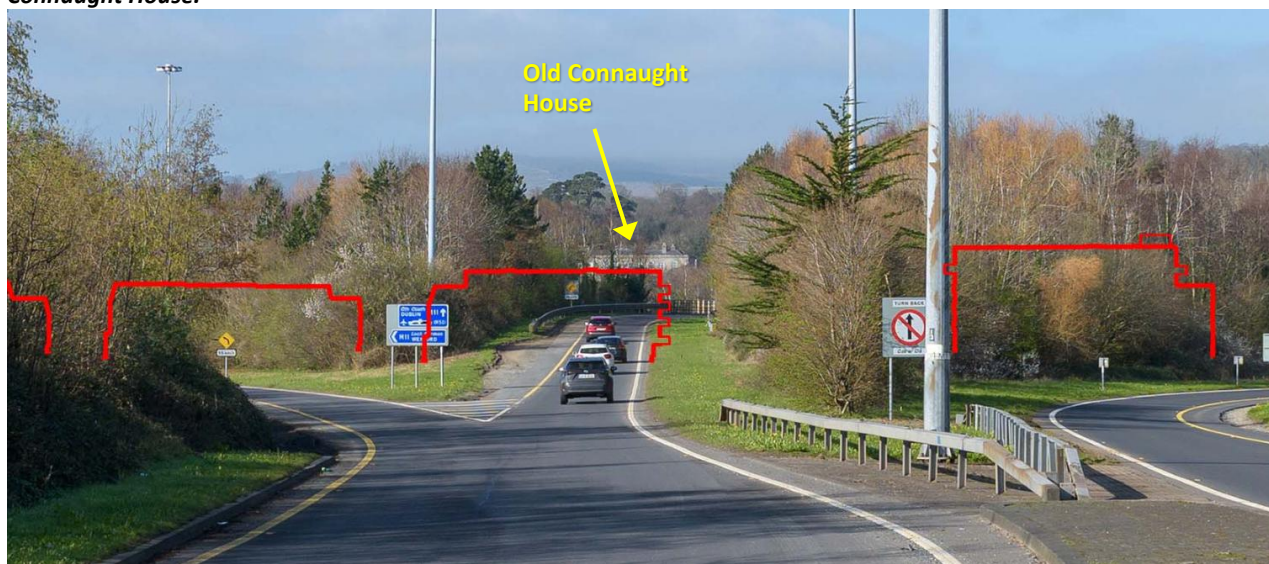
Existing View:

- The view is taken from the road leading to the M11 North and South onramps from the Dublin Road. It is one of two views (along with Viewpoint 3) included in the assessment to test the visibility of the proposed development from the Bray urban area east of the M11.
- The road is enclosed on both sides by tall, dense tree belts. These frame a view west, over the M11 which passes in a deep cutting, where Old Connaught House is discernible in the distance (approximately 850m) against a backdrop of woodland on the lower slopes of Carrickgollogan.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium.** The abundant tree cover and the distant features (Old Connaught House and Carrickgollogan) lend visual amenity, but the view is taken from the onramp to the M11, east of the motorway, in the urban area of Bray. This context demands a degree of tolerance for change.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Negligible.** The proposed development is almost entirely screened by vegetation in the intervening landscape. The roof one building may just be discernible (in winter only) in front of, but below, Old Connaught House. It would have not block the view of Old Connaught House.

Figure 24: Extract from the photomontage for View 1, showing that the development would not affect the visibility of Old Connaught House.



Significance of Effect:

- **Imperceptible, neutral.** Although theoretically visible/discernible, the development would have no material effect on the view.

Cumulative View:

- Future phases of development on the applicant's lands in Old Connaught lands would have a similarly imperceptible effect.

5.2 Viewpoint 2 – M11 Overpass

Existing View:

- The view is taken from the overpass over the M11, directly east of the site. The overpass leads to the northbound lanes of the M11, towards Dublin.
- Views west from the M11 are a protected view (see Figure 14 above), but the road runs in a cutting and the embankments and vegetation block views west from the motorway itself (see Photo 7).
- Even from the elevation of the overpass, the view west towards Old Connaught is largely blocked by trees in the motorway corridor. Old Connaught House can just be discerned through the bare tree canopy in winter.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Low-Medium.** The view from the overpass is experienced by a large number of people, but at speed, and their attention is typically focussed on the road more so than the surrounding landscape.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Low.** The majority of the development is screened by the trees beside the motorway. Only the tops of the five storey Blocks 1 and 2 protrude marginally above the tree line, to the left.

Significance of Effect:

- **Slight, neutral.** The development would have no effect on visual amenity (and no material effect on any valued feature or characteristic of the view). The main effects of the change (the partial visibility of multi-storey buildings) would be to (a) initiate a shift in character west of the M11, and (b) contribute to legibility by marking the new urban neighbourhood in the landscape.

5.3 Viewpoint 3 – Cois Cairn Estate

Existing View:

- The Cois Cairn residential estate is the nearest part of the existing Bray urban area to the site. It lies directly to the east of the site, across the M11.
- A number of mature trees were retained in the development of the estate and these lend maturity to the landscape. The estate vegetation and houses combine to close the vista to the west, although some tall conifer trees on the eastern edge of the Old Connaught lands, on the far side of the M11, protrude above the roofline of the houses. Carrickgollogan is discernible on the distant horizon (filtered by the bare tree canopy).
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium.** Residential receptors are sensitive to change in their environs. However, in the urban context there must be some tolerance for change of similar type (i.e. further residential development).

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: No change.** The proposed development is screened by the houses and vegetation in the intervening landscape.

Significance of Effect:

- **No effect.**

5.4 Viewpoint 4 – Old Connaught Avenue Bridge Over M11

Existing View:

- The bridge over the M11 is the gateway from Bray to the Old Connaught lands. The lands are however screened from view by the broad belt of tall trees on the motorway embankment. Carrickgollogan is just discernible through the dense tree canopy.
- Ahead to the left, Old Connaught Avenue is framed by a line of mature trees on its north side (right), and by garden vegetation on its south side.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Low-medium.** While the trees lend some visual amenity, the view is from a bridge over a busy motorway, in an urban context, and this lessens the sensitivity.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: No change.** The proposed development is screened by the trees in the foreground.

Significance of Effect:

- **No effect.**

5.5 Viewpoint 5 – Old Connaught Avenue South East of Site

Existing View:

- This view is taken from Old Connaught Avenue just to the west of the M11 embankment (and tree belt), where an offramp from the motorway gives access to the Old Connaught lands (and Bray North). The viewpoint thus represents an arrival point in Old Connaught.
- Across the road in the foreground is a scrubby hedgerow with a line of mature trees, which screen the Old Connaught lands to the north west.
- The road extends up the hill to the west, with a row of suburban style houses on the south side (left). Immediately to the left (out of frame) is the entrance to the Bray Emmets GAA Club.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium.** The vegetation lends visual amenity but the landscape is of mixed character (see Figure 25 below), somewhat unkempt, and there is some capacity for change.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Medium.** The five storey Block 1 is visible in the middle distance, protruding above the roadside hedgerow and another tree line (outside the southern boundary of the site). The intrusion is not substantial, but the clearly urban typology of the building draws attention (in the current context). Up the road to the left, a section of hedgerow/tree line is removed and a new junction created to give access to the scheme.

Significance of Effect:

- **Slight-moderate, neutral.** While not prominent, the development initiates a shift in character towards a more urban condition. Until further change takes place (e.g. development of the DLRCC-owned land directly across the road in the view), the development would appear somewhat isolated.

5.6 Viewpoint 6 – Old Connaught Avenue at Proposed Entrance to Scheme

Figure 25: Location of Viewpoints 4-9, showing the peri-urban character of the landscape.



Existing View:

- The view is taken from Old Connaught Avenue opposite the proposed entrance to the scheme. The viewpoint represents (a) road users and (b) the two houses across the road.
- The houses are positioned well back from the road (approximately 15m+) behind well vegetated front gardens, which provide screening.
- Across the road, in the foreground, is a hedgerow with mature trees. The roadside vegetation screens the adjacent field (a DLRCC development site) and the main body of the subject site which lies further north. The top of the tree line outside the site boundary is just visible above the foreground hedgerow.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium.** Representing residential receptors, the viewpoint is sensitive to change. It must be recognised, however, that the landscape character is peri-urban (not rural), with urban-generated housing and a GAA club on one side of the road and agricultural fields and an equestrian and garden centre on the other. The proximity to Bray and the M11 and the zoning of the lands are also factors. Overall, the viewpoint sensitivity can be considered medium.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: High.** In the foreground, the roadside hedgerow and trees are removed to make way for a new junction, with a road leading north across the zoned Old Connaught lands. In the middle distance,

Block 2 rises above the partly retained tree line on the site boundary (with trees removed for the road corridor). Block 2 is sufficiently tall to be visible from Old Connaught Avenue (thus contributing to legibility), but is well removed from the road and the existing houses south of the road.

Significance of Effect:

- **Moderate, negative & positive.** In the existing context, the development would likely be considered to have negative effect by the occupants of the houses across the road. However, the development would create a gateway to the new Old Connaught neighbourhood, initiating and facilitating a long-planned shift in landscape character towards an urban condition. This change is supported by policy, and the effect can thus equally be classified positive as the development would contribute to the realisation of the LAP. (It should also be noted that the LAP envisages the removal of the two houses opposite the junction/entrance, to allow for the new road to continue south of Old Connaught Avenue, unlocking further development lands.)

5.7 Viewpoint 7 – Old Connaught Avenue South West of Site

Existing View:

- This view is taken from Old Connaught Avenue travelling east towards the M11 and Bray. The road crosses the motorway to enter the urban area approximately 250m ahead.
- Across the road in the foreground is a now disused property entrance, and a scrubby roadside hedgerow with a line of mature trees, which screen the zoned Old Connaught lands to the north east.
- To the right is a row of suburban houses on the south side of the road. The houses are set well back from the road behind well vegetated front gardens.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium.** The vegetation lends visual amenity but the landscape is of mixed character (see Figure 25 above), somewhat unkempt, and there is some capacity for change.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Negligible.** A pumping station is proposed in the field in the foreground. The pumping station is set back from Old Connaught Avenue to avoid unnecessary loss of boundary vegetation, but one of the existing roadside trees is dead and is required to be removed. A short section of the hedgerow would be removed to install the rising main to the pumping station, with the hedgerow reinstated after construction. The pumping station is screened by the retained vegetation.
- The vegetation also screens the proposed buildings from view.
- From this angle and distance, the new junction giving access to the scheme from Old Connaught Avenue is just discernible visible ahead along the road.

Significance of Effect:

- **Not significant, neutral.** The only material change to the view is the removal of a dead tree from the roadside hedgerow in the foreground. The overall composition and character of the view are unaffected.

5.8 Viewpoint 8 – Festina Lente Centre

Existing View:

- This view is taken from the access road/parking area for the Festina Lente Centre. The access road runs parallel to the north wall of the walled garden (which is behind the viewer at this viewpoint). (In the Old Connaught LAP, the Festina Lente parking area from where this view is taken is designated a 'Strategic Open Space' - see Figures 12, 13 above.)

- To the right of the parking area in the foreground is the a large agricultural shed that functions as an indoor equestrian facility. A number of containers and prefab buildings are arranged around the boundary of the centre, and a gap between them affords a view (north east) across part of the subject site. A belt of trees is visible in the distance beyond the site.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Low.** This view is experienced by a large number of people visiting the Festina Lente Centre. However, on arrival at the centre, viewers' attention is focussed on the foreground, and the landscape (in the foreground) provides limited visual amenity.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Medium.** Framed by the foreground structures, the upper floors of the four storey Block 4 (and a small part of Block 3 in the distance) are visible on the site, along with some terraced housing.

Significance of Effect:

- **Slight, neutral.** Due to the complexity of the foreground landscape, the development is not prominent, but it does initiate a shift in character towards a contemporary urban landscape by introducing housing (including higher density typologies) to the view. Until further development/implementation of the LAP takes place, cementing the change in character, the effect can be considered neutral.

5.9 Viewpoint 9 – Old Connaught Walled Garden, Eastern Area

The walled garden is a protected structure and zoned open space. In the Old Connaught LAP, it is identified as the main open space of the 'Village Core' character area. Currently, the garden forms part of the Festina Lente Centre, with access available to the public.

The garden has a long, rectangular plan form, aligned east-west, and is divided into two parts by two tall hedges crossing the centre of the space. The eastern half of the garden is managed as a nursery/allotment garden (View 9), and the western part is retained as a formal garden (View 10).

Existing View:

- The nursery/allotment garden is enclosed by the historic wall, c. 2.5-3m tall, of brown brick with light mortar. Outside the garden, to the left, is the large agricultural shed of the equestrian centre. Ahead, to the east, is a two storey house adjoining the garden. The tall garden trees of a neighbouring house protrude above the wall.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: High.** The protected structure status and the Old Connaught LAP policy objectives for the walled garden require a high sensitivity classification. The following should be noted however:
 - This part of the garden has a functional character and the view is somewhat untidy, albeit interesting and of cultural heritage value.
 - The LAP allows for the visibility of new residential development from within the walled garden (see Figure 10 above). There is no requirement to avoid this altogether; nor would it be possible given the garden's central position in the LAP area.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Medium:**
 - Blocks 1 and 2 and some of the houses protrude above the wall, the adjacent house and the retained trees outside the wall. The protrusion is not substantial, and there is no significant increase in built/visual enclosure. The buildings are no more prominent than the existing equestrian centre shed.

- It is only the building typologies – specifically the ‘urban typology’ of the apartment buildings – that raises the magnitude of change from low to medium.
- The brick cladding of the buildings and the articulation of the facades help to blend the buildings into the landscape.

Significance of Effect:

- **Moderate, neutral.** While the degree of intrusion in the view is limited, the development nonetheless has the effect of changing the landscape character of the walled garden’s context, initiating the area’s transformation into a mixed density urban residential neighbourhood.
- Until further development/implementation of the LAP takes place – including redevelopment of the walled garden as a public open space and the removal of the equestrian centre – the proposed development may appear somewhat incongruous. However, (a) it would cause no loss of visual amenity, and (b) it would in time be comfortably absorbed into the evolved Old Connaught landscape.

5.9 Viewpoint 10 – Old Connaught Walled Garden, Western Area

Existing View:

- The tall hedge crossing the centre of the garden, the wall to the left, and the row of conifer trees outside the garden generate a high degree of visual enclosure, and a sense of seclusion. The garden has a formal layout, with a central water feature, a grid of gravel paths, and seating areas beneath pergolas. This part of the garden is managed for passive recreation primarily, and provides greater visual amenity than the eastern area closer to the site.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: High.** The western section of the garden provides a high level of visual amenity, opportunity for appreciation of cultural history, and a sense of seclusion. Additionally, The protected structure status and the policy objectives for the garden in the LAP require a high sensitivity classification. It should be noted, however, that:
 - The LAP allows for the visibility of new residential development from within the walled garden (see Figure 10 above). There is no requirement to avoid this altogether; nor would it be possible given the garden’s central position in the LAP area.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Low.** Blocks 1 and 2 (nearly 300m distant) protrude marginally above the tall hedge crossing the garden. The protrusion is minor and there is no material increase in built/visual enclosure.

Significance of Effect:

- **Slight, neutral.** While the degree of intrusion in the view is very limited, the development nonetheless has the effect of changing the landscape character of the walled garden’s context, initiating the area’s transformation into a mixed density urban residential neighbourhood.
- In its existing context, with little other development outside the garden visible (the equestrian centre being mostly hidden), the effect of the proposed development may be considered by some to be negative (due to the ‘encroachment’ of modern development into the view from an historic enclosed garden). The planned/ changing context must however be recognised. *The walled garden has been identified as the central open space and community/cultural asset of a new mixed density urban residential neighbourhood.* The preclusion of new development from views from the garden is not realistic, nor desirable – if it is to be integrated into the evolved urban landscape, allowing it to realise its potential as a landscape/visual and cultural resource.

5.9 Viewpoint 11 – Old Connaught House

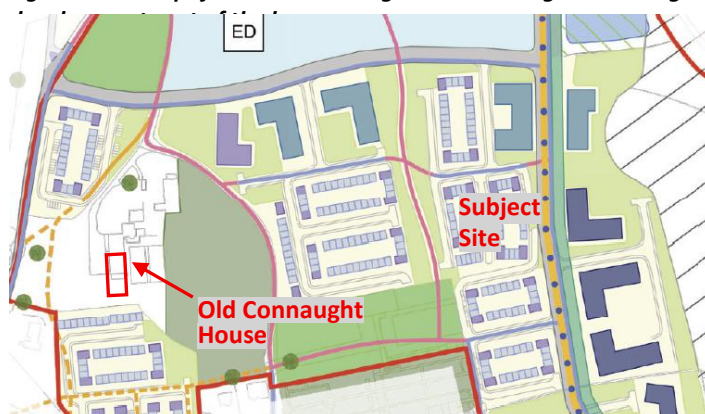
Figure 26: Location of Viewpoints 11, 12.



Existing View:

- Old Connaught House was converted into a private apartment scheme in the early 2000s, with a modern apartment building of similar scale built beside it (north east of the historic building). The two buildings orientate views east, across a communal open space, towards the site.
- Beyond the open space in the foreground is a line of deciduous trees inside a boundary hedgerow (see Photo 12 above). Even in winter, this vegetation filters the view of the landscape further east. The equestrian centre can just be discerned through the bare tree canopies, down the slope towards the M11.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: High.** Old Connaught House is a protected structure and a residential receptor. The viewpoint sensitivity is thus high.
- It should be noted, however, that the LAP envisages a large quantity of residential development directly to the east of the house. The existing communal open space east of the house is zoned 'F' (Open Space) to maintain a buffer between the

Figure 27: Excerpt from Old Connaught LAP showing the envisaged



historic house and the new development, but its context will change dramatically as the LAP is implemented.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Negligible.** The proposed development is separated from Old Connaught House by (a) the open space (zoned 'F', Open Space) attached to the historic house, and (b) a future phase of LAP development. The site is also down slope from the house. Therefore, the proposed development does not protrude above the tree line on the house's boundary. It will only be discernible through the tree canopy in winter, and entirely screened in the spring and summer months.

Significance of Effect:

- **Not significant, neutral.** The development has no significant effect on the view. Future phases of implementation of the LAP will be more prominent and will change the house's context, but the house itself is well buffered by its open space.

5.12 Viewpoint 12 – Allies River Road

Existing View:

- A short stretch of Allies River Road, east of the junction with Ferndale Road, affords a view towards the site (see Figure 26 above). (The rest of Allies River Road is enclosed by high walls and vegetation, blocking views of the surrounding landscape.)
- A grassland field beside the road is hidden by the roadside wall. Beyond this field, a discontinuous line of trees runs along a farm track past Old Connaught House. The modern (early 2000s) apartment building beside Old Connaught House is visible to the right. Part of the site can be seen through gaps in the tree line, down the slope, against a backdrop of the M11 vegetation. Some of the taller recent developments in Bray can be seen in the distance against a backdrop of the sea, with Bray Head on the skyline to the right.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium-High.** This is an attractive view of a landscape of rural character, with valued features such as the sea and Bray Head in the distance, the roadside wall in the foreground, and abundant vegetation.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Medium.** The proposed development is visible down the hill, in the middle distance. Two clusters of houses and apartment buildings frame a linear open space traversing the scheme. (Further elements of the development, to the right, are hidden by the trees along the lane passing Old Connaught House.) The buildings' rooflines remain just below the distant M11 tree line.

Significance of Effect:

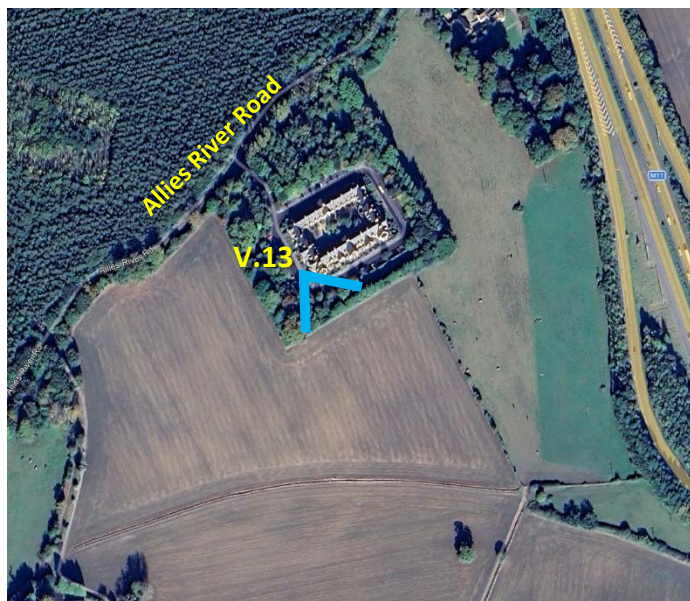
- **Moderate, neutral.** The visible elements of the development occupy a limited portion of the view, and - importantly - the existing elements that generate visual amenity (e.g. the roadside wall, the trees, the distant sea and Bray Head) are unaffected. Nonetheless, by introducing residential buildings and ancillary development (open space, roads, etc.) to currently agricultural fields, the development causes a shift in landscape character - from rural towards an urban condition. Given the land use zoning and LAP designation of the lands in view, this change is not inappropriate.

5.13 Viewpoint 13 – Ferndale Court

Existing View:

- Ferndale Court is a modern residential development (of townhouses, duplexes and apartments) located to the north of the site, accessed by Allies River Road. The scheme is enclosed by a dense belt of trees/woodland, which limits visibility of the surrounding landscape. However, at the south west corner of the scheme, a gap between the trees affords a framed view towards the site.
- The adjacent, low-lying lands to the south (including the site) are hidden by a boundary hedgerow. A distant wooded upland area forms the backdrop of the view.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium.** Although situated in a peri-urban, predominantly green landscape, Ferndale Court is an urban-generated development, of urban typology, and can be considered a forerunner to the wider Old Connaught urban area. The residents of the scheme enjoy a high level of visual amenity, but the nature and location of the scheme demand a degree of tolerance for change.

Figure 27: Location of Viewpoint 13 in Ferndale Court, relative to the site



Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Low.** The proposed development would not be visible from the majority of Ferndale Court. In this particular view, a part of the development (a five storey apartment building and houses) is visible in the middle distance, against a backdrop of wooded uplands. The proposed buildings are well removed from Ferndale Court (by 300m+). Therefore, there would be no sense of excessive scale or enclosure, but there would be an encroachment of urban development in the view.

Significance of Effect:

- **Slight, neutral.** While the majority of Ferndale Court would be unaffected, the change to this view would initiate a shift in the character of its landscape context, from peri-urban to urban. The residents of Ferndale Court may consider this a negative change, but, as an urban-generated development itself, in an area zoned for urban expansion, the change is not inappropriate. Ferndale Court would retain a high level of visual amenity.

5.14 Viewpoint 14 – Old Conna Golf Course

Existing View:

- Old Conna Golf Club is located in the foothills of Carrickgollogan to the west of Old Connaught House and Ferndale Road. From certain locations on the elevated course, panoramic views are afforded of the surrounding landscape. Viewpoint 14 is taken from a tee beside the access road not far from the club house.
- The tee and fairways occupy the foreground of the view. A framework of trees/woodland around the course largely screens the lower lying Old Connaught lands to the east, but a large part of the Bray urban area is visible in the distance, against a backdrop of the sea and Bray Head.

- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium-High.** The golf course itself, along with the landform, the abundant vegetation, the sea and the urban area combine to generate a high level of visual amenity and visual interest. (The urban area does no harm to the view; it contributes a human/cultural component to the landscape.)

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Low.** The upper floors of the apartment buildings and the roofs of some of the houses are discernible above the foreground treeline, against a backdrop of the trees along the M11. The texture and natural colour of the brick cladding help to integrate the buildings into the landscape, but they do catch the eye – although occupying only a small part of the panoramic view.

Significance of Effect:

- **Slight, neutral.** The overall view composition – of golf course, woodland, urban area, upland and sea – is unchanged, but the development does have the effect of bringing the urban area closer to the viewer. While the change is notable, it has no effect on visual amenity, which remains high.

5.15 Viewpoint 15a – St Gerard’s School

Existing View:

- The campus of St Gerard’s School is some 800m to the south west of the site. The school buildings and main parking areas are in an elevated location beside Thornhill Road, with views across the terraced sports fields towards Bray and the coastline to the east.
- In the view north east, there is a large volume of mature vegetation in the landscape (mostly enclosing the rear gardens of the houses along Old Connaught Avenue), which screens the lower-lying site from view.
- A number of high density residential developments (Woodbrook and Shanganagh) are visible in the distance above the tree line, with Killiney Hill on the distant skyline.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium.** The school’s location and landscape context provide a high level of visual amenity, but the urban development visible to the east creates some capacity to accommodate change.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: No change.** The proposed development is screened by the vegetation in the intervening landscape.

Significance of Effect:

- **No effect.**

5.16 Viewpoint 15b – Bray Emmets GAA Club

Existing View:

- Bray Emmets GAA club is down the slope from St Gerard’s School, beside the M11, accessed from Old Connaught Avenue which passes to the north.
- In the view north from the club, the houses on the south side of Old Connaught Avenue can be seen beyond the GAA pitches - the houses partially screened by the vegetation in their back gardens. A line of tall trees behind the houses indicates the alignment of Old Connaught Avenue. The site lies further to the north, approximately 350m from the Bray Emmets clubhouse.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Low-medium.** The trees in the view lend visual amenity, but the club is located adjacent to the M11 and this context reduces the viewpoint sensitivity somewhat. Additionally, sports clubs

are typically classified as lower sensitivity receptors as people are usually focussed on the sport more so than the surrounding landscape. Hence the low-medium sensitivity classification.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Low.** The five storey Block 1 apartment building (c. 370m distant) is discernible through the bare canopies of the trees long Old Connaught Avenue, beyond the existing houses in the view. (In the spring and summer months the development would be entirely screened by the trees.) The texture and natural colour of the brick cladding helps to integrate the building into the landscape.

Significance of Effect:

- **Not significant, neutral.**

5.17 Viewpoint 16 – Ballyman Road

Existing View:

- Views from Ballyman Road are protected in the DLR County Development Plan (see Figure 14 above).
- Views south from the road feature the Ballyman River Valley, the Fassaroe area (another strategic urban expansion area for Bray), and the Sugarloaf and Little Sugarloaf Mountains. In views north from the road, Carrickgollogan is prominent. The site lies to the east, towards Bray and the Irish Sea.
- For most of the length of the road, the topography hides the site from view. At the location of Viewpoint 16, the road bends and drops towards the site and the coastal plain to the east. The landscape in the foreground remains rural in character, with a high volume of woody vegetation, which screens the Old Connaught lands from view. Bray is visible in the distance to the right against a backdrop of the sea.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium-High.** The viewpoint represents a protected view. However, in the view towards the site the urban area of Bray is visible, and this contributes to some capacity to accommodate change.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: No change.** The proposed development is screened by the vegetation in the intervening landscape.

Significance of Effect:

- **No effect.**

5.18 Viewpoint 17 – Ballyman Lane

Existing View:

- Views from Ballyman Lane are protected in the DLR County Development Plan (see Figure 14 above).
- The road runs up the hill from Ballyman Road towards Carrickgollogan. For much of its length, the road is flanked by hedgerows that restrict views of the landscape to the east and west. At this location, a field entrance affords an unobstructed view east towards the site, the Old Connaught area, Bray and the Irish Sea.
- A large field slopes down away from the road. In the middle distance, a complex of large farm buildings is visible against a backdrop of tall trees. The lands immediately east of this tree line are hidden by the topography. The area hidden from view includes the Old Connaught LAP lands. Part of the Bray urban area is visible on the distant coastal plain, against a backdrop of the sea and Bray Head.

- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium-High.** The viewpoint represents a protected view. However, in the view towards the site the urban area of Bray is visible, and this contributes to some capacity to accommodate change.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: No change.** The proposed development is screened by the topography and vegetation in the intervening landscape.

Significance of Effect:

- **No effect.**

5.19 Viewpoint 18 – Quarry Road

Existing View:

- Views from Quarry Road are protected in the DLR County Development Plan (see Figure 14 above).
- The site lies to the south east of the road, down the slope. There is dense tree cover in the intervening landscape (mostly on the Old Conna golf course), which combines with the topography to hide the Old Connaught LAP lands from view.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium-High.** The viewpoint represents a protected view. There is some capacity to accommodate change due to the presence of the houses in the foreground, which lessens the sensitivity classification to medium-high.

Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: No change.** The proposed development is screened by the topography and vegetation in the intervening landscape.

Significance of Effect:

- **No effect.**

5.20 Viewpoint 19 – Carrickgollogan Peak

Existing View:

- Various forest tracks and walking trails lead to the peak of Carrickgollogan where a 360 degree view is afforded over a diverse landscape of heathland, forest, farmland and urban development stretch from Bray towards Dublin to the north.
- **Viewpoint sensitivity: Medium-High.** The combination of dramatic topography, heathland, forest, farmland, urban development, the coastline and the sea generates a high level of visual amenity. However:
 - It should be recognised that urban development provides a human/cultural element that adds to the visual amenity and visual interest. Development per se does not detract from the view.
 - There is ongoing change in the landscape. Both the Woodbrook and Shanganagh developments are visible on the coastal plain north of Bray, as is a cluster of new higher density development near the harbour in Bray. These changes do not detract from the visual amenity experienced on Carrickgollogan. The view is too vast and too complex to be harmed by such change.

Photo 21: Photograph taken with a 24mm lens from the same location as the baseline view for the photomontage. The wider field of view of the 24mm lens (compared to the 50mm lens used for the photomontage) illustrates the breadth and complexity of the view. This is just 1/5 of the 360 view available.



Proposed Change:

- **Magnitude of change: Low.** The full extent of the development is visible – the complex of apartment buildings and houses occupying an area of agricultural fields just outside the M11.

Significance of Effect:

- **Slight-Moderate, neutral.** While only a minor addition/change to the vast and already complex landscape, the development is notable as it extends the urban area of Bray across the M11 into an area hitherto largely undeveloped/rural.
- Similar to the Woodbrook and Shanganagh developments, it would briefly catch the eye, but – also similar to these developments – it would have no effect on the overall character or visual amenity of the view. The development will initiate the expansion of the urban area into the Old Connaught lands, but a clear line of delineation would remain between the expanded urban area and the wooded and agricultural lower slopes of Carrickgollogan.

5.21 Summary of Visual Impact Assessment

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
1	M11 onramp from Dublin Road	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible neutral
2	M11 overpass	Low-Medium	Low	Slight neutral
3	Cois Cairn estate	Medium	None	No effect
4	Old Connaught Avenue bridge over M11	Low-Medium	None	No effect

No.	Viewpoint Location	Viewpoint Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
5	Old Connaught Avenue south east of site	Medium	Medium	Slight-Moderate neutral
6	Old Connaught Avenue at proposed entrance to scheme	Medium	High	Moderate negative & positive
7	Old Connaught Avenue south west of site	Medium	Negligible	Not significant neutral
8	Festina Lente Centre	Low	Medium	Slight neutral
9	Old Connaught Walled Garden, eastern area	High	Medium	Moderate neutral
10	Old Connaught Walled Garden, western area	High	Low	Slight neutral
11	Old Connaught House	High	Negligible	Not significant neutral
12	Allies River Road	Medium-High	Medium	Moderate neutral
13	Ferndale Court	Medium	Low	Slight neutral
14	Old Conna Golf Course	Medium-High	Low	Slight neutral
15a	St Gerard's School	Medium	None	No effect
15b	Bray Emmets GAA Club	Low-Medium	Low	Not significant neutral
16	Ballyman Road	Medium-High	None	No effect
17	Ballyman Lane	Medium-High	None	No effect
18	Quarry Road	Medium-High	None	No effect
19	Carrickgollogan Peak	Medium-High	Low	Slight-Moderate neutral

6.0 Landscape Effects Assessment

6.1 Landscape Sensitivity

The landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment can be classified ‘medium’.

Medium sensitivity 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 principal management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change.

The sensitivity classification is based on the following factors:

- The site is located in the eastern part of the Old Connaught lands, close to the M11 and the existing urban area of Bray, at relatively low elevation (compared to the rest of the Old Connaught townland and the wider landscape west of Bray and the M11).
- The landscape character of the Old Connaught area can be described as peri-urban, comprised of both rural and urban elements and influences. While the site itself is largely in agricultural use, in its immediate environs there are urban-generated uses such as the Festina Lente equestrian and garden centre, Old Conna Golf Club, Bray Emmets GAA club, St Gerard’s School, a number of modern multi-unit residential developments (Old Connaught House and Ferndale Court), and a quantity of suburban-style housing. The landscape’s mixed character (between rural and urban), its proximity and road connection to Bray and the M11, and its low-lying topography all indicate that the Old Connaught area is suitable for the necessary, sequential urban expansion of Bray.
- These factors were recognised in the identification of Old Connaught as a strategic growth area for Bray during the preparation of the Greater Dublin Area Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) in the 2000s. The strategy was embedded in planning policy in the DLRCDP 2010-2016 and the Bray Town Development Plan 2011-2017. The lands have been zoned for residential development for multiple cycles of the DLRCDP, and the Greater Dublin Area Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 specifically identifies Old Connaught as a ‘strategic development area’.
- To facilitate the area’s urban development, the Old Connaught LAP was adopted in 2025. The site falls into the ‘Central Character Area’, of which the LAP states:
 - *“The Central Character Area... presents an opportunity for the creation of a new residential neighbourhood with a distinct sense of place and identity informed by the natural landscape and environment of the area...”*
 - *The dlr County Development Plan 2022-2028 includes an indicative corridor for the proposed extension of the Luas Green Line through the Central Character Area...*
 - *The incorporation of a reservation corridor through the lands for light rail public transport presents the opportunity for compact growth...*
 - *Having regard to the topography of the lands, amongst other factors, there is potential for lands in the east of the Character area to incorporate built form with comparatively increased height...”*

In summary, the combination of the site’s low-lying topography, its unconstrained greenfield condition and the presence of the future Luas corridor are factors cited in the LAP as providing opportunity for increased density and building height on the site.

- The above factors point to a consensus on the capacity of the landscape to accommodate change. There are, however, a number of landscape receptors in the receiving environment, which are valued and/or sensitive to inappropriate change. These include (a) Old Connaught House (protected structure), (b) the

Old Connaught House walled garden (protected structure), (c) the hedgerows and trees on the site, and (d) the nearest existing residential receptor (e.g. the houses along Old Connaught Avenue, the Old Connaught House residential scheme and Ferndale Court). These receptors require consideration in the development of the site, to avoid excessive impact and/or to integrate them appropriately into the evolved landscape of Old Connaught.

6.2 Magnitude of Landscape Change

The magnitude of landscape change which would result from the proposed development can be classified 'medium-high'.

Medium magnitude 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.*

High magnitude definition: *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.*

- With a net site area of c. 3.6 ha (and overall site area of c. 6.9 ha), and comprised of three apartment buildings up to five storeys tall, several blocks of terraced houses and duplexes (totalling 271 no. residential units), a network of streets (with a reservation for a future Luas line) and Active Travel routes, a network of open space and all ancillary development, the proposed development is of substantial scale.
- Introduced to a landscape of peri-urban character, the development would initiate the transformation of the Old Connaught LAP area into a mixed density urban residential neighbourhood west of the M11, expanding and diversifying the Bray urban landscape.
- The development would include important elements of the new urban landscape, such as the road access from Old Connaught Avenue, a section of the main north-south street (and Luas reservation) through the area, a network of Active Travel routes, public open spaces, and buildings of distinctly urban typology and scale to function as local landmarks.
- While, in its composition and function, the landscape of Old Connaught would be substantially altered, an important finding of the assessment is that the visual impact of the development would be limited. The only exception to this is at the proposed entrance to the scheme from Old Connaught Avenue (Viewpoint 6), where a high magnitude of change would be experienced. For the most part, the separation distance from receptors, the site's low-lying topography, and the visual screening provided by the surrounding landform and vegetation, would limit the visibility of the development (refer to the Visual Impact Assessment summary in Section 5.21 above). This reduces the magnitude of landscape change to 'medium-high' (as opposed to 'high').

6.3 Conclusions - Significance and Quality of Landscape Effects

Measuring the magnitude of landscape change against the sensitivity of the receiving environment, the significance of the landscape effects is classified 'moderate'.

EPA definition of moderate significance: *"An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends"*).

It is reasonable to conclude that a development of the type and scale proposed would cause a change in landscape character of some significance. The pertinent question is whether the landscape change can be considered positive, neutral or negative. In that regard:

- **The proposed land use (residential) is in accordance with the land use objective for the site (A1: “To provide for new residential communities and Sustainable Neighbourhood Infrastructure in accordance with approved local area plans”)** in the DLR County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- **The proposed layout is in accordance with that envisioned/illustrated in the Old Connaught LAP Site Development Framework for the Central Character Area.** The rational, orthogonal urban grain, with a central main street running north-south, and side streets and Active Travel routes running east-west, would deliver a permeable and legible urban landscape. The layout prioritises Active Travel and allows for the future construction of the Luas line, which will realise the objective of integrated land use and transport.
- **The arrangement of building typologies and height is similar to that envisioned/illustrated in the LAP Site Development Framework for the Central Character Area.** The apartment buildings are positioned fronting the main street (to provide built enclosure/spatial definition and reinforce the street’s status in the townscape) and to mark key junctions and form gateways. The five storey height is sufficient for the buildings to function as local landmarks, but low enough to avoid excessive prominence or visibility over a long distance.
- **All possible measures have been taken to retain and protect the existing trees on and adjacent to the site.** Most notably, the lone oak tree (Tree 203) has been retained in the main public open space.
- **The CGI views and photomontages show that the proposed buildings and landscape/public realm are of high design and material quality.** The architecture is contemporary, but the principal façade material (brick of varying shades) is a traditional material, the texture and colours of which will help to integrate the buildings into the landscape. Section 9.4.4 of the LAP states: *“The Council also supports the potential role of high quality contemporary architecture which has regard to Old Connaught’s historical character and contributes new elements to the visual landscape”* [emphasis added].
- The most valued landscape receptor in the receiving environment is the Old Connaught House walled garden (protected structure), which lies to the west and south of the site. Blocks 1 and 2 would be visible from within the walled garden, but would not be prominent, protruding only marginally above the garden wall and the trees in a neighbouring garden to the east. **The visual impact has been assessed as ‘moderate neutral’ for the eastern half of the walled garden (Viewpoint 9) and ‘slight neutral’ (Viewpoint 10) for the more formal western half.** The impact may be considered by some to be negative (due to the intrusion of modern development into the view from an historic enclosed garden). However, the planned/changing context must be recognised. The walled garden has been identified as a central, signature open space and community/cultural asset of a new urban neighbourhood. The preclusion of new development from views from the garden is not realistic, nor desirable – if the garden is to be integrated into the evolved landscape, allowing it to realise its potential as a landscape/visual and cultural resource.
- **The proposed development would have no significant impact on Old Connaught House** (protected structure) located up slope from the site, to the west. The site is separated and buffered from the historic house by (a) a zoned open space in front of the house, (b) a hedgerow and tree line on the boundary of this space, and (c) a future phase of LAP development.
- **None of the protected views on the lower slopes of Carrickgollogan to the west of the site would experience any visual impact** (Ballyman Road, Ballyman Lane, Quarry Road - Viewpoints 16, 17, 18 respectively).

- **The only potentially negative impact identified is to the view from Old Connaught Avenue at the proposed entrance to the scheme (Viewpoint 6).** The viewpoint represents road users and the two existing houses across the road from the proposed entrance. A section of hedgerow and a number of hedgerow trees would be removed to allow for construction of a new junction and the road giving access to the LAP lands. The impact would likely be considered negative by the occupants of the two houses across the road. However, the development would create a gateway to the planned/new Old Connaught neighbourhood, initiating and facilitating the long-planned urban development of the area. This change is supported by policy, and the effect could thus equally be classified positive - as the development would contribute to the realisation of the LAP. (It should also be noted that the LAP envisages the removal of the two houses opposite the entrance, to allow for the new road to continue south of Old Connaught Avenue, unlocking further development lands.)

In conclusion, **the overall landscape effects are classified ‘moderate neutral’, and the proposal can be considered an appropriate intervention in the landscape.** The development would initiate the planned urban expansion of Bray into the Old Connaught area and would establish a high standard of design (for layout/urban grain, architecture and the public realm/landscape) that would serve as a benchmark for subsequent phases. While the development may initially appear somewhat incongruous in the peri-urban landscape, this is unavoidable for the first phase of a planned urban expansion. As the LAP is further implemented, the development would be increasingly integrated into the evolving landscape and would contribute positively to the creation of a coherent, attractive and distinctive new neighbourhood.

APPENDIX 1 LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

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

The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as “*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*”. This expands beyond the idea that landscape is only a matter of aesthetics and visual amenity. It recognises landscape as a resource in its own right, providing a complex range of cultural, environmental and economic benefits to individuals and society.

The word ‘townscape’ is used to describe the landscape in urban areas. The GLVIA defines townscape as “*the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open space*”.

1.0 Key Principles of the GLVIA

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

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

1.2 Assessment of Both Landscape/Townscape 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 effects on the area’s visual amenity.

2.0 Townscape Effects Assessment

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

2.1 Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the landscape/townscape is a function of its land use, landscape patterns and scale, visual enclosure and the distribution of visual receptors, and the value placed on the landscape/townscape. The nature and scale of the development in question is also taken into account, as are any trends of change, and relevant policy. Five categories are used to classify sensitivity (Table 1).

Table 1 Categories of Landscape/Townscape Sensitivity

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

2.2 Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Change

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

Table 2 Categories of Landscape/Townscape Change

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

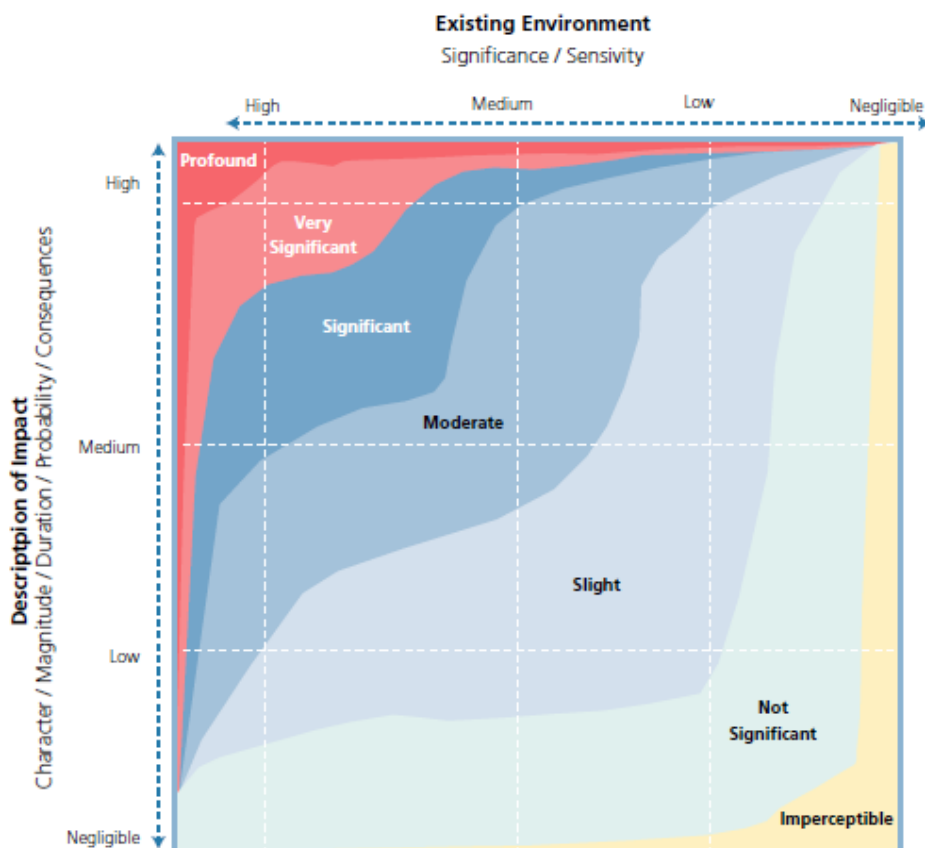
2.3 Significance of Landscape/Townscape Effects

To classify the significance of effects the magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape/townscape using Table 3 and Figure 1 as a guide. The significance classification matrix (Table 3) is derived from the EPA's *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*, 2022 (specifically Figure 3.4 of the Guidelines – see Figure 1 below). In addition to this guidance the assessor uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable.

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

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

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



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

Table 4 EPA definitions of environmental impact classifications

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

3.0 Visual Effects Assessment

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

3.1 Sensitivity of the Viewpoint/Visual Receptor

Viewpoint sensitivity is a function of two main considerations:

- **Susceptibility of the visual receptor to change.** This depends on the occupation or activity of the people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the views or visual amenity they experience at that location. Visual receptors most susceptible to change include residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on the landscape (e.g. trail users), and visitors to heritage or other attractions and places of community congregation where the setting contributes to the experience. Visual receptors less sensitive to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes), people engaged in outdoor recreation or sports where the surrounding landscape does not influence the experience, and people in their place of work or shopping where the setting does not influence their experience.
- **Value attached to the view.** This depends to a large extent on the subjective opinion of the visual receptor but also on factors such as policy and designations (e.g. scenic routes, protected views), or the view or setting being associated with a heritage asset, visitor attraction or having some other cultural status (e.g. by appearing in arts).

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

Table 5 *Categories of Viewpoint Sensitivity*

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

3.2 Magnitude of Change to the View

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of development into the view (relative to the other elements and features in the composition, i.e. its relative visual dominance), the degree to which it contrasts or integrates with the other elements and the general character of the view, and the way in which the change will be experienced (e.g. in full view, partial or peripheral view, or in glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, as well as the duration and reversibility of the visual effects. Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change to a view (Table 6).

Table 6 *Categories of Visual Change*

Magnitude of Change	Description
Very High	Full or extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features or characteristics, or introduction of elements that are completely out of character in the context, to the extent that the development becomes dominant in the composition and defines the character of the view and the visual amenity.
High	Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and/or the visual amenity.
Medium	Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity.
Low	Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.
Negligible	Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.

3.3 Significance of Visual Effects

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

4.0 Quality of Effects

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

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

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