

Chapter 6:

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Brady Shipman Martin and provides an assessment of the impact of the proposed development of residential apartments above the previously permitted podium car park (Phase 2 residential), together with alterations to the permitted apartments (Phase 1 residential) (Reg. Ref.: D17A/0950 & ABP Ref.: 300745-18) from second to fourth floor levels of the *Rejuvenated Frascati Centre*, and on the townscape character and visual amenity of the surrounding environment.

A full description of the proposed development and the construction methodology is included in the *Project Description* and the planning drawings.

The assessment should be read in conjunction with the *Planning Report / Statement of Consistency* and the *Architectural Design Statement*, and also in conjunction with the photomontages prepared for the scheme including in the accompanying *Appendix 6.1 - Photomontages*.

The following aspects are particularly relevant to the landscape and visual assessment:

- Design:
 - Form and massing of the proposed development;
 - Façade on all above ground structures; and
 - Cognisance of how design elements impact on views of the proposed development and any effects on the receiving environment, including landscape character.
- Operation:
 - Views of the proposed development and any effects on the receiving environment, including landscape character.
- Construction:
 - Views of the proposed development and any effects on the receiving environment, including landscape character; and
 - Loss or change of existing features that contribute to the receiving environment.

Brady Shipman Martin has been commissioned to prepare this chapter of the EIAR on behalf of IMRF II Frascati Limited Partnership acting through its general partner Davy IMRF II GP Limited. It was carried out by John Kelly, B.Arch, MRIAI.

6.2 STUDY METHODOLOGY

6.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The landscape assessment has considered the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the landscape as an environmental resource and the visual assessment has considered the effect of visual change on relevant receptors. Landscape and visual effects have been considered for the construction and operation of the proposed development.

To support the assessment, a series of photomontages, illustrating the physical and visual appearance of the proposed development, has been prepared from a range of publicly accessible locations that are representative of views in the surrounding environment. The Photomontage views are included in the accompanying *Appendix 6.1 - Photomontages*.

The following guidelines were considered and consulted for the purposes of the report:

- Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022
- Blackrock Local Area Plan 2015 - 2021
- Environmental Protection Agency, (2017) Draft Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.
- Environmental Protection Agency, (2015) Draft Advice Notes for preparing Environmental Impact Statements.

- Landscape Institute (UK) and Institute for Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition.
- European Commission (2017) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report; and
- Government of Ireland (2018) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (August 2018).

The methodology used for the landscape assessment entailed:

- Desktop studies of the site in relation to its overall context locally, regionally and nationally;
- Pre-application consultations with the Planning Authority and An Bord Pleanála; and
- Visiting the site and its environs in between September 2019 and August 2020 to assess the following:
 - Quality and type of views in the area;
 - The extent of the visual envelope, i.e. the potential area of visibility of the site in the surrounding landscape; and,
 - The character and quality of the surrounding landscape in relation to the position of the proposed development.

6.2.2 NATURE OF IMPACTS

Impacts on landscape/townscape arise in two distinct but closely related aspects. The first is impact on the character of the landscape/townscape arising from the insertion of new development or the alteration of elements within an existing context. The second aspect is visual impact, which arises as a result of changes or insertions within a view. The impact on the view depends on the degree and nature of the change and such changes may rise from either 'visual intrusion' (i.e. alteration without appreciable blocking) or 'visual obstruction' (i.e. alteration with a notable extent or full blocking).

It is recognised that as with all landscape/townscape and visual considerations, impacts will be influenced and informed, to some degree, by subjective perceptions of how the overall change(s) matter to any given individual.

The assessment of landscape/townscape and visual impacts includes:

- Direct impacts upon specific landscape/townscape elements within and adjacent to the site
- Effects on the overall pattern of the landscape/townscape elements which give rise to the character of the site and its surroundings
- Impacts upon any special interests in and around the site
- Direct impacts of the scheme upon views, and
- Overall impact on townscape character and visual amenity

6.2.3 CATEGORISATION OF THE BASELINE ENVIRONMENT

The landscape and visual assessment involved visiting the site and its environs between September 2019 and August 2020, to review the nature and scale of existing development surrounding the site, to identify landscape features, local character and land uses, to identify key views to and from the proposed development, and to note receptor sensitivity.

This site based assessment was augmented by reviewing aerial photography, publications and reports and project information included within the planning application and in this EIA Report.

6.2.4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The landscape and visual impact assessment for the proposed development takes account of the character and nature of the existing site and its surrounds, the location of sensitive landscapes and visual receptors, the sensitivity and significance of the site, and its vulnerability to change.

Classification of significance of effects or impacts are based on *Figure 3.5 of the Draft Guidelines on information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, 2017), as copied below

in Table 6.1, and on the professional experience of the author in carrying out landscape and visual assessments for over 25 years.

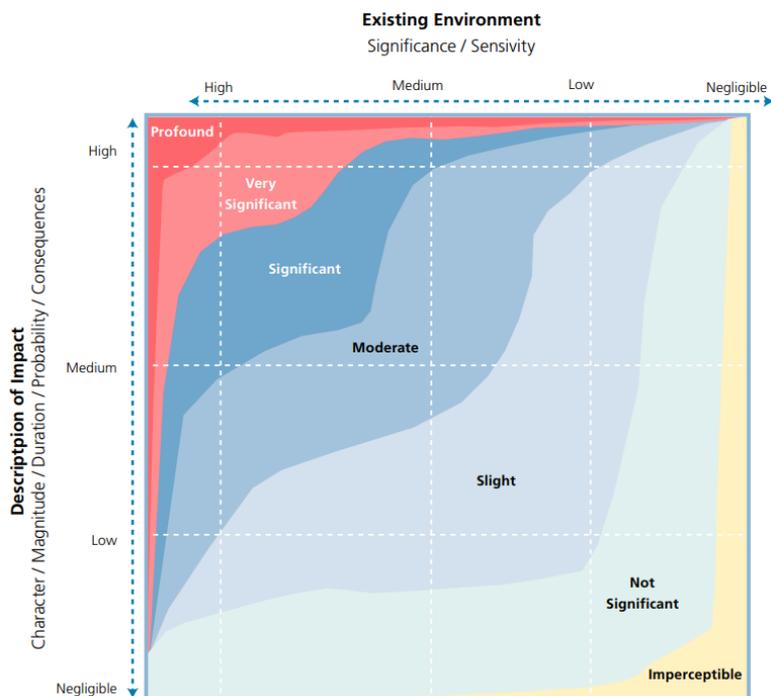


Table 6.1: Significance of Effects, extract, Figure 3.5, EPA Draft EIA Report Guidelines 2017.

These effects, which in nature may be positive, neutral or negative/adverse, are described as follows:

- Imperceptible:** An effect capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences.
- Not significant:** An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without noticeable 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 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 the majority of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
- Profound:** An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.

In terms of **duration** effects are considered as follows:

- Momentary:** lasting seconds to minutes.
- Brief:** lasting up to one day.
- Temporary:** lasting up to one year.
- Short-term:** lasting one to seven years.
- Medium-term:** lasting seven to fifteen years.
- Long-term:** lasting fifteen to sixty years.
- Permanent:** lasting over sixty years.

Further aspects of effects including their **magnitude** (i.e. extent, frequency, and context); **probability** (i.e. likely, indeterminable); and **type** (i.e. cumulative, interaction (synergistic), residual, indirect, etc.) are also considered in the assessment, where appropriate in accordance with those descriptions outlined in the EPA guidance¹.

There were no particular limitations or constraints in carrying out the assessment.

¹ See Section 2.1 above

6.3 THE EXISTING RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT (BASELINE SITUATION)

6.3.1 SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The proposed development is located at the Frascati Centre – formerly known as the Frascati Shopping Centre – in Blackrock in County Dublin. Blackrock is a suburban village of two distinct but connected parts.

Blackrock Village Environs

The traditional village area established as a seaside village in the 18th and 19th centuries. It comprises substantially two storey traditional buildings, and is centred along Rock Hill, Main Street and Temple Road. The village also connects directly to the seafront and railway along the north eastern side. Residential streets, terraces and more modern housing estates developed and expanded over time to the south and west.

The northern and western edges of Blackrock village are markedly different in character to the core village area, having been substantially altered during the late 20th century with the development of the Frascati Road, or Blackrock bypass. The bypass severed a number of established residential streets on the south western side of the village, and necessitated demolition of a number of properties along its alignment. The bypass also influenced new developments in the area such as the Frascati Shopping Centre and the Blackrock Shopping Centre at the northern end of the village. Additional larger scale and multi-storey commercial and residential buildings were also developed along the bypass. Collectively, the bypass and new developments introduced a modern, large scale retail and commercial character along the south western side of the village core, and one that is strongly vehicle-centric.

Beyond the village core and bypass, the Blackrock area comprises extensive residential streets and institutional grounds and buildings. Blackrock Park is located to the north of the village and provides a substantial amenity overlooking Dublin Bay.

Mature trees are a feature of the Blackrock environs, particularly along the established residential streets, the institutional grounds and Blackrock Park.

Recent Changes

In more recent times, there has been significant new focus on further redevelopment and regeneration of the modern buildings along the Frascati Road, and including upgrades to the environment of the road corridor itself.

The Frascati Road carriageway has been rationalised to provide fully segregated pedestrian and cycle facilities, together with centre median and verge landscaping. Vehicular traffic has been calmed, and high quality pedestrian crossing facilities are in place at junctions and at key desire lines, including between the two shopping centres. The function and character of the original Blackrock bypass corridor has changed, in part at least, from being a high capacity vehicular roadway to a more pedestrian and cycle friendly streetscape. Such changes have resulted in a stronger sense of pedestrian connectivity, and perceived connectivity, between the two shopping centres and beyond to the traditional village area.

The former Frascati Shopping Centre has been redeveloped and extended in a manner that has replaced the previous surface car parking with contemporary building frontage along the Frascati Road, and this new frontage incorporates landscaped pedestrian friendly public space between the new building and the carriageway. The Blackrock Shopping Centre regeneration is at an advanced stage of construction, and will also provide high quality contemporary building frontage and a landscaped public space between the buildings and the road. Enterprise House, adjacent to the Blackrock Shopping Centre, has been redeveloped, and is part of a new and contemporary commercial character of the Frascati Road.

The construction of the structural elements of the Phase 1 residential permission commenced in March 2020, under Reg. Ref.: Reg. Ref.: D17A/0950 & ABP Ref.: 300745-18, and are evident on site at present. The proposed alterations relate to non-structural elements, primarily relating to the internal layout of units and external finishes / winter gardens. The proposed alterations to Phase 1 do not seek to alter the height or overall massing of the permitted residential scheme, as the alterations are primarily internal or external treatment changes.

Development Site

The Frascati Centre is bounded by the Frascati Road to the east, and by the rear boundaries of residential properties along Mount Merrion Avenue, Frascati Park and George's Avenue to the north, southwest and southeast respectively. The proposed development area includes the north eastern portion of the lands, fronting the Frascati Road, as well as the northern part of the site over the existing podium carpark.

Blackrock Shopping Centre is located on the north eastern side of Frascati Road, directly opposite the Frascati Centre, and is currently undergoing redevelopment. The recently redeveloped commercial Enterprise House adjoins the Blackrock Shopping Centre and extends its frontage along the Frascati Road.

The Frascati Centre comprises elements of the original Frascati Shopping Centre, but most of these have been incorporated within the more recent redevelopment project known as the *Rejuvenation Scheme*. The Frascati Centre presents to the Frascati Road as a distinctive new two storey contemporary retail building with landscaped public space between the building and the road edge.

A mixed belt of mature trees defines the southern and western boundaries of the Frascati Centre. The majority of these trees are Sycamore and Norway maple, with some Rowan, Horse Chestnut, Lime and Cherry. In summer, these trees provide significant screening from adjoining residential properties, although given their deciduous nature, views are more open during winter.

The northern boundary is more open, particularly along the western section where there are no boundary trees. Tree planting further east along the northern boundary is generally of a younger age class and as such, the site is overlooked from the rear of properties, including the Lisalea Apartments, and the terrace along Mount Merrion Avenue.

Residential Context

Residential developments surround the Frascati Centre on three sides. George's Avenue and Frascati Park are to the southeast and southwest/west of the lands. These streets are narrow, and defined by two storey residential properties with pitched roofs, and with private landscaped front gardens incorporating driveways. Views into the site from these streets are either screened or moderated by the built enclosure of the dwellings and the mature trees located on the boundary between the shopping centre site and the residences.

St Andrew's Church and Presbytery is distinctive landmark at the corner of Merrion Avenue and Frascati Park to the northwest of the site.

Mount Merrion Avenue, north of the site, is a busy route to Blackrock Village. It is characterised by fine terraced properties that are mainly two-storey over basement, and with private landscaped front gardens with railings and pedestrian gates to the street. The rear of the easternmost terrace of five such properties, and Lisalea, a modern four-storey apartment development at the junction of Mount Merrion Avenue and Rock Road, overlook the northern part of the site where the existing surface and podium car parking are located.

The Rock Road approaches from the northwest to Mount Merrion Avenue and the Frascati Centre and is, in part, open to Dublin Bay over Blackrock Park, and in part, defined by a mix of building scales and substantial lines of mature trees. Along this approach, the existing Lisalea apartment building is clearly visible at Mount Merrion Avenue, and the Blackrock Shopping Centre and Frascati Centre become increasingly visible with proximity.

6.4 LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT AND LAND USE ZONING

6.4.1 DUN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016-2022

Under the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022, the site is zoned predominantly Objective DC '*To protect, provide for and/or improve mixed-use district centre facilities*', with a small section of the car park zoned objective A- Residential. The DC zoning also extends east of the N31 and includes much of the lands between the N31 and Main Street/Temple Road, as well as the eastern side of Main Street/Temple Road.

All of the residential areas to the north, west and south are zoned Objective A '*To protect and-or improve residential amenity*'. St Andrew's Church and Presbytery and the residential terraces along the eastern end of Mount Merrion Avenue, including Nos. 8 to 16 Merrion Avenue directly north of the site are listed as Protected Structures. Three properties on the south eastern side of George's Avenue, Nos. 66, 68 and 73, are also identified as Protected Structures.

Development Plan mapping indicates an objective to protect and retain existing mature trees along the southern and western boundaries of the site.

Blackrock Park to the northeast is zoned Objective F '*To preserve and provide for open space with ancillary active recreational amenities*'.

Section 5.3.3 (Policy RES3: 'Residential Density') of the County Development Plan '*to generally promote higher residential densities provided that proposals ensure a balance between the reasonable protection of existing residential amenities and the established character of areas, with the need to provide for sustainable residential development*'.

The County Development Plan has objectives for the Conservation and Development of important public parks, including Blackrock Park to the northeast of the site on the opposite side of the N31.

6.4.2 BLACKROCK LOCAL AREA PLAN, 2015-2021

Frascati Shopping Centre also falls within the boundary of the Blackrock Local Area Plan, 2015-2021. The Blackrock LAP recognises the Frascati and Blackrock shopping centres as fundamental to the economic well-being of Blackrock, and seeks to improve the relationship between Main Street and the shopping centres, particularly in terms of legibility and pedestrian permeability. The severance effect of the bypass is noted, and the establishment of a more walkable urban structure is seen as fundamental to the promotion of a sustainable urban village.

POLICY BK03 seeks to ensure that Blackrock develops a coherent urban form focused on a high quality built environment of distinct character and function.

Objective UDS1 of the Council is '*... to strengthen the urban structure of Blackrock by ensuring that any new development incorporates a coherent, legible and permeable urban form that protects and compliments the character of the street or area in which it is set - in terms of proportion, enclosure, building line, design and by the marrying of new modern architecture with historic structures*'.

POLICY BK05 seeks '*... ensure that Building Height within future developments in Blackrock makes a positive contribution to the built form of the area and do not adversely impact on local amenity*'.

Map 12, Existing and Proposed Building Heights, identifies the Frascati Shopping Centre site as suitable for 5 storey development including ground floor, and a perimeter buffer along the boundaries of George's Avenue and Frascati Park is identified, with a recommended step down to 2 storeys.

In general terms, building height is to be assessed having regard to the building's function, location, setting and whether it can be successfully integrated into the existing streetscape without being unduly overbearing, obtrusive or impacting adversely on existing amenities.

Under Section 7.4 Core Retail Area, POLICY BK21 seeks '*... ensure that retail in Blackrock remains concentrated within the Core Retail Area as identified on Map 15, in accordance with The Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012), The Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016 and the County Development Plan 2010-2016*'.

Objective FR1 of the Council is '*... ensure that any redevelopment of the Frascati and Blackrock Shopping Centres is carried out in an integrated manner having regard to the Development Guidance set out in Section 7.7.2. Any redevelopment shall enhance the streetscape and public realm and assist in improved movement between the two centres. Any redevelopment proposals should focus on providing an attractive and legible streetscape and public realm. Details of the proposed public realm should form part of any redevelopment application*'.

Section 7.7.2 sets out detailed and specific guidance in relation to any significant redevelopment of the Blackrock and/or Frascati shopping centres, including:

Height	Guideline height of between two and five storeys, graduating down to 2 storeys along mutual residential boundaries.
Mix of Uses	Redevelopment to incorporate a mix of uses, including evening uses, which enhance the vitality and viability of the area, and any comprehensive redevelopment to incorporate an element of high quality residential development, a community / exhibition room and a crèche / childminding facility.
Design Guidance	Removal of surface car parking and creation of new building lines and an attractive and active streetscape along the Frascati Road, while respecting the existing streetscape in terms of height, scale and massing, and also the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.
Public Realm	Public Realm along the Frascati Road boundary to include high quality public lighting, hard and soft landscaping, and attractive paving materials and street furniture.

Refer to the *Planning Report* prepared by John Spain Associates for a more detailed discussion of the appropriateness of the proposed development with respect to the planning policy context.

6.4.3 LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE AND SENSITIVITY

As both an established and recently redeveloped shopping centre incorporating surface, basement and podium car parks, the site itself is not considered sensitive to the proposed development.

It is noted that planning permission has previously been granted for development of three floors of residential apartments over the northeast and part of the southeast of the shopping centre, facing the Frascati Road and George's Avenue respectively. The proposed development includes modifications to this permitted development, however, these modifications do not include any changes in building footprint or height to that previously permitted, and from a landscape and visual perspective, will only alter details of the elevational treatment of the apartments facing Frascati Road. In this regard, the southern part of the proposed development, as perceived from George's Avenue, will not materially differ from that already permitted.

The site does have important urban street frontage to the Frascati Road, and existing mature trees located along the south western and south eastern boundaries of the site help to protect the adjoining residential character of peripheral streets and are important in providing visual screening from properties into the site area.

As an established shopping centre with surrounding car parks, and with the permitted *Rejuvenation Scheme* nearing completion, the site itself is not of particular significance. Similarly on the eastern side of the N31, the Blackrock Centre which is also being redeveloped, is not of particular significance. The site does have important urban street frontage to the N31 Frascati Road and existing mature trees located along the western and southern boundaries of the site help protect the residential character of adjoining streets and are important in providing visual screening from properties into the site area.

Therefore, particular landscape / townscape sensitivity relates to:

- the presence of adjoining residential properties to the north, southwest/west and southeast, including potential visual impact from same;
- the existing mature trees located along the southern and western boundaries of the site; and,
- the character of the Frascati Road, and extending to the Rock Road.

6.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The development comprises two distinct but connected parts, referred to as Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Phase 1, along the Frascati Road, includes modifications to the previously permitted residential development of 45 no. apartments over the existing shopping centre, including:

- internal alterations to the permitted units to change unit sizes and layouts;
- external alterations to provide winter gardens to each permitted unit;
- physical connection at second floor level between Phase 1 and Phase 2; and,
- alterations to associated site development works to cater for both phases.

Phase 2, to be developed over the podium carpark within the Frascati Centre, including:

- 57 no. apartments, above the existing and permitted podium carpark, arranged around a central communal courtyard space;
- building heights of three to five levels over existing and permitted podium carpark;
- balconies over the central courtyard, and on the south eastern and north western elevations;
- perimeter and site landscaping, including the western and northern boundaries, the proposed communal courtyard, and associated areas of the surface carpark; and,
- soft landscaping of balconies and gable walls facing Frascati Park.

Access to the proposed apartments will be from the permitted entrance to Phase 1, via a new stairs and lift core from the basement/lower ground floor and leading through the retail levels to the new apartment levels above. A physical connection will be provided at second floor level between Phase 1 and Phase 2, and also to the communal open space. Secondary accesses are provided to Phase 2 via lift / stair cores from the basement / podium car parks below.

Horizontal circulation to the front doors of apartments will be via external deck access overlooking the communal courtyard spaces of both phases, and over the retail and podium carpark developments beneath. All apartments will be dual aspect.

The proposed residential floor levels of Phase 1 are designed as high quality residences that reflect the contemporary expression of the retail floors below when viewed from the Frascati Road, and continue the materials of the retail floors to achieve an appropriate consistency in the design and composition. The residential floors step back at the north western and south eastern ends of the building to reduce overall scale and height of the development when viewed from the adjoining residential properties. Phase 2 is arranged as a three-sided courtyard, with blocks on the southern, eastern and northern sides stepping from five, to four and three storeys respectively. The blocks are set back from the site boundaries by differing amounts – see drawing *AR-08-PL-003* – so as to maintain an appropriate buffer to adjoining properties, complemented by existing and proposed planting. Additionally, the courtyard is open on the western side so as to reduce the overall scale of Phase 2.

Full details of the proposed development are provided in the accompanying *Architectural Design Statement*.

6.6 LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Intensification and extension of development within an established urban context will always have potential for landscape/townscape and visual impacts. It is noted that the Main Street of Blackrock, by virtue of its orientation, compact nature, and separation from the development site by the Blackrock Shopping Centre and Enterprise House, will not be impacted by the proposed development. Potential impacts at the Frascati Centre are mitigated by the existing developed and developing nature of the site; by the existing grant of permission for Phase 1 of the residential development; by avoidance of impact on the trees along the south eastern and south western residential boundaries of the site; and by the detailed architectural treatment of proposed facades.

Nevertheless, the scheme does have potential for direct visual impacts, and for impact on landscape/townscape character.

6.6.1 DO-NOTHING SCENARIO

Should the proposed development not be granted, the *Rejuvenation Scheme* that is currently nearing completion will be fully completed. The granted Phase 1 development is under construction and will be completed as permitted, but without the modifications currently proposed. Thus, the visual impact of Phase 1 will be similar in a do-nothing scenario.

6.6.2 CONSTRUCTION STAGE

During the construction phase, landscape/townscape and visual impacts are related to the visual and physical disruption arising from temporary and short-term works; general construction site activity; vehicular movements; the use of cranes; views of the emerging building and scaffolding; and lighting etc. All of these aspects have the potential for significant visual impact particularly for immediately adjoining properties.

Potential construction impacts will be similar in nature to those associated with the almost completed *Rejuvenation Scheme* and permitted Phase 1 residential development, for which construction has commenced, and will arise from:

- Establishment of scaffolding and site enclosures at ground level and above the existing buildings on site;
- General construction, emergence of new built elements, car parking and site infrastructure.
- Craning activities, site lighting, etc.

Potential construction stage impacts, though visually significant, will be temporary to short-term and are commonplace within the urban environment.

6.6.3 OPERATION STAGE

Given the established shopping centre, the near complete *Rejuvenation Scheme*, and the granted Phase 1 development for which the structural elements are currently being constructed, it is considered that the potential for landscape / townscape and visual impact during operation stage is reduced. The proposed external elevational changes to Phase 1 – the provision of winter gardens in lieu of the permitted recessed balconies and minor external alterations arising from internal design changes– will have a nominal and neutral effect on the streetscape character of the Frascati Road. Nevertheless, the proposed development includes an additional phase of residential development over the podium carpark at the northern part of the site, and a commensurate increase in the intensity of development on the site.

The proposed development has potential to result in substantial change both in the appearance of the Shopping Centre from Frascati Road, and in the townscape experience along the N31, and also in the intensity of development towards the northern part of the site. The range and extent of influence of such impacts is substantially restricted to the N31 corridor and to immediately adjoining residential properties to the southeast and northwest.

6.6.4 AVOIDANCE, REMEDIAL AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The principal mitigation measures have involved mitigation by avoidance in the planning, design and layout of the scheme. Additional measures have been included into the scheme design, as summarised below, to provide for mitigation of potential adverse impacts both during construction and operation.

Phase 1 represents an extension of the *Rejuvenation Scheme*, and save for some internal and external alterations, is substantially the same as the previously permitted Phase 1. The taller elements of the development are focussed along the Frascati Road frontage, with the returns at either end stepping back so as to reduce the apparent height and scale when viewed from the residential properties to the southeast and the northwest. Phase 1 avoids impact on the existing mature tree belt located along the south eastern and south western site boundaries, thereby ensuring the integrity of existing boundary trees and the screening they provide.

Phase 2 is designed as a three sided courtyard development over the existing and permitted podium carpark towards the north of the site, and will be open along its western side towards Frascati Park. The three blocks around the courtyard step from three storeys on the northern side facing Lisalea, to four storeys on the east facing Frascati Road, and to five storeys where it adjoins the existing retail development. Access to the apartments will be via external walkways at each level within the communal courtyard, minimising potential overlooking of established residential properties. The three storey northern block is set back from the rear of the terraced properties on Mount Merrion Avenue by a varying distance of c. 35m to over 50m. The living room windows are splayed to orient the rooms to the northwest and not directly towards the existing properties. The north eastern corner of Phase 2 facing Lisalea comprises a

series of setbacks on plan and in elevation so as to maintain adequate separation between Phase 2 and Lisalea. Apartment windows are also located so as to maintain appropriate separation distances and to avoid overlooking – see drawing *AR-08-PL-003*.

The western elevations of the five and three storey elements of Phase 2, facing Frascati Park, will incorporate continuous planters at each floor level, contiguous with the inner courtyard balconies, and planted with shrubs as well as trailing an climbing species so as to establish a green wall facing the established residential properties.

The north western site boundary facing Frascati Park and the access road to Lisalea is currently defined by a simple masonry wall. Mitigation proposals include the removal of parking spaces along the boundary and the establishment of a new landscape buffer that will be similar to the established landscaped boundary along the south western and south eastern sides of the site. This will introduce a new layer of landscape screening at this part of the site boundary, where none currently exists, that will provide visual screening between the established residential properties and the proposed development.

Thus, no additional construction or operational related mitigation measures are required from a landscape and visual impact perspective.

6.7 PREDICTED IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.7.1 VISUAL IMPACT

The assessment of visual impact is made with cognisance of the almost completed *Rejuvenation Scheme* on the site, together with the previously permitted Phase 1 residential development. The assessment also makes use of a series of Photomontages (see *Section 6.7.2* below and the accompanying *Appendix 6.1 Photomontages*) prepared so as to illustrate the likely physical and visual nature of the proposed development within its setting. The photomontages show the As Existing (construction nearing completion), the As Permitted (*Phase 1*), and the As Proposed (*Phase 1 modified and Phase 2*).

As noted above, Main Street in the traditional core of Blackrock village, is separated and screened from the development site by virtue of its orientation, compact urban form, and also the present of the Blackrock Shopping Centre and Enterprise House between Main Street and the proposed development site.

From the Frascati Road, the proposed development will be most visible, however, this is also the least visually sensitive receptor. The *Rejuvenation Scheme* is nearing completion, and the completed retail floors present a high quality contemporary character to the road. Construction of the proposed development above the retail buildings will be readily visible, particularly when approaching along the Frascati Road. Closer to the Frascati Centre however, the completed retail frontage and landscape public space will provide a substantial degree of separation between the streetscape and the construction activity. Landscape/townscape and visual impacts will moderate and negative, but will be temporary in nature and not significant in the context of the Frascati Road and the ongoing redevelopment.

On completion and during operation, the landscape/townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development from the Frascati Road will be substantially the same as the previously permitted Phase 1 development, or moderate and positive. The development will extend the almost completed *Rejuvenation Scheme* to provide a distinctive high quality residential element that compliments the overall development, reinforces the built edge of the Frascati Road, and increases animation of the façade during and beyond normal retail opening hours.

From the Rock Road, approaching from the northwest, the proposed development will become partially visible with proximity to Mount Merrion Avenue. The Rock Road at this location is of low sensitivity, and the transitional character of the roadway is already apparent with increasing visibility of the Blackrock Shopping Centre, Frascati Centre, Enterprise House and the Lisalea apartment building all indicating a change in the built environment of the roadway. Construction of the proposed development, when approaching Mount Merrion Avenue, will be partially visible, particularly as the buildings approach their final heights. Closer to Mount Merrion Avenue, the Lisalea apartment building will substantially screen the emerging Phase 2 building, and Phase 1 will be seen in the context of the ongoing redevelopment of the streetscape. Landscape/townscape and visual impacts will slight/moderate and negative, but will be temporary in nature and not significant in the context of the Rock Road.

On completion and during operation the landscape/townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development from the Rock Road will be similar to that of the previously permitted Phase 1 development, and with the additional Phase 2 element presenting a further intensification of development.

Mount Merrion Avenue leads from the N11 to the Rock Road, and is notable for its linear character, aligned on Dublin Bay, and defined by a mixture of residential typologies and established landscaping. Although the terrain is elevated towards the N11, the visual corridor is strongly contained by buildings and landscape, with only occasional localised glimpse views beyond the building lines. At the junction with Frascati Park, a localised break in the building line of Mount Merrion Avenue permits views into Frascati Park and to parts of the Frascati Centre. During construction, there may be glimpse views of tower cranes and elements of the emerging development, however, these will be occasional and localised, and will not detract from the character of Merrion Avenue.

On completion and during operation the landscape/townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development from Mount Merrion Avenue will also be of an occasional and localised nature, and will not detract from the character of Mount Merrion Avenue.

From George's Avenue and the southern part of Frascati Park, views are unlikely to be altered to any appreciable extent, given the relatively narrow streetscape and the continuous nature of two storey residential properties that define the streetscape. Landscape/townscape and visual impacts will be substantially the same as for the previously permitted Phase 1 development. Construction stage impacts will arise from the presence of cranes over the ridges of residences, however such impacts will be temporary / short-term. Operational stage impacts will be slight to none.

Visibility from the rear of properties towards the northern end of George's Avenue and facing the site boundary will be the same as per the previously permitted Phase 1 development. Views from these properties into the site are substantially screened during the summer months by the existing mature boundary trees when the trees are in leaf, and are filtered in winter months when the trees are bare. Construction stage impacts are likely to be the most significant during winter months as cranes and the emerging development will be partly visible through the boundary trees. Operational stage impacts will be moderate to slight depending on the time of year as the boundary trees will permit filtered views of the development during winter months but will effectively screen views of the development in summer months.

The northern part of Frascati Park is similar in character to George's Avenue with a narrow streetscape defined by two storey residential properties. At the bend between the northern and southern parts of the road, and towards the northern end where a private access road leads to the Lisalea apartment building, longer diagonal views across the street are possible, permitting localised glimpse and more open views towards the northern part of the Frascati Centre site. The Frascati Centre and the existing surface and podium carparks are more readily visible from properties on Frascati Park and along Mount Merrion Avenue, including the Lisalea apartments.

The proposed Phase 2 residential apartment development over the podium carpark will present a substantial new built element from this locality, and particularly where the break in the streetscape at the Lisalea access road affords greater visibility over the Frascati Centre site. The extent of change will be locally significant by virtue of the increased scale of built form, and where longer views are possible, the uppermost levels of parts of the development may be partially visible beyond the established streetscape. These elevations will include soft landscape treatment as described above in *Section 6.6.4* so as to soften the appearance of the western elevations of Phase 2. The proposed new boundary landscape screening will providing visual screening between the established residential properties and the proposed development, and infill the long standing gap in boundary screening at this location. It is noted that the built form of the proposed development will be of a contemporary residential development, presenting a finer grain and scale than the established retail building.

Night-time Impact

The existing site and emerging *Rejuvenation Scheme* operates as a shopping centre within a highly illuminated urban environment. The proposed development includes extension of the permitted scheme along the N31 frontage and this will include new residences at second, third and fourth floor levels with increased illumination from rooms and balconies at these upper levels. This will assist in animating and enlivening the building and will increase the urban street nature of this section of Frascati Road.

The proposed development will not give rise to any significant change to the existing environment along Frascati Park and George's Avenue. From the rear of properties at the northern end of George's Avenue and facing the site boundary, there will be some additional lighting from the second and third floor levels (the fourth floor being set back and out of view) during winter months as the boundary trees will filter but not screen such illumination. Similarly, from the rear of properties along the northern part of Frascati Park, there will be additional lighting from within the site arising from the Phase 2 residential development and including the courtyard.

6.7.2 PHOTOMONTAGES

A series of 11 Photomontages of the proposed development have been prepared and provided in the accompanying *Photomontages* brochure. The locations are representative of the most open views available in the surrounding area and includes views along the Frascati Road, Rock Hill and Rock Road to the northeast of the proposed development, and also from Mount Merrion Avenue, Frascati Park and George's Avenue to the southwest and southeast.

In each case, the Photomontages show the As Existing (construction nearing completion), the As Permitted (*Phase 1*), and the As Proposed (*Phase 1 modified and Phase 2*).

Views from Frascati Road / Rock Road (Views 1, 2, 4 & 5)

This series of the photomontages clearly illustrate the anticipated change in the streetscape arising from the proposed development.

The development reinforces the built edge of the Frascati Road, creating a focal point from certain distance views; adding visual interest to the streetscape; and establishing a distinctive building that will reinforce the identity of this important district centre location. The Phase 1 residential use at the new upper levels facing the Frascati Road, and Phase 2 within the site, will intensify the urban character of the site and provide increased animation both during and beyond normal retail opening hours. The differences between the permitted and proposed Phase 1 development are nominal, with the recessed balconies of the permitted scheme becoming glazed but incorporating opening sections. The Phase 2 development will be screened by Phase 1, becoming partially visible towards the Rock Hill and Rock Road areas where it will present as a finer grain residential block than the larger scaled existing retail blocks, and intensifying the urban character.

The assessment of Visual Impact and Landscape / Townscape Impact is considered to be moderate and long-term.

Views from Mount Merrion Avenue (Views 6 & 7)

View 6 is from Mount Merrion Avenue opposite St Andrew's Church and Presbytery. Phase 2 of the proposed development will be locally visible at opposite St. Andrew's Church and approaching Frascati Park. The residential nature of the building, and the architectural treatment of the facades including landscaping is such that the building will present as an intensification of the evolving urban character beyond the immediate streetscape. The assessment of Visual Impact and Landscape / Townscape Impact is considered to be slight/moderate and long-term.

View 7 is from c. 150m further west, and shows the linear nature of the street, focussed on Dublin Bay and the spire of St. Andrew's Church, with strong building lines and distinctive landscape substantially enclosing the street corridor. There is a glimpse view between the trees and beyond a terrace of houses, in which the tower crane associated with the *Rejuvenation Scheme* can be seen. Similarly, upon completion of the proposed development, there will be a glimpse view of parts of Phase 2, however, the Landscape / Townscape Impact is considered to be slight and neutral as the development will not alter the character of the street.

Views from Frascati Park (View 8 & 9)

View 8 and 9 are from the northern end of Frascati Park in the vicinity of the private roadway that leads to the Lisalea development, and from the bend in the road between the northern and southern parts of Frascati Park.

View 8 shows the break in the built edge along Frascati Park at the access roadway to Lisalea, permitting greater visibility into the Frascati Centre site area. The permitted Phase 1 development presents a slight to moderate and neutral effect of the streetscape, and the modified Phase 1 included as part of the proposed development will be substantially the same.

Phase 2 of the development will introduce a substantial new building within the Frascati Centre lands that will screen the Phase 1 development and will be visible from the local streetscape. While Phase 2 of the proposed development is larger in scale, it is of a finer grain and detail than the existing retail buildings on the site. The introduction of the new residential block is consistent with the growth and intensification of the modern urban core of Blackrock. The architectural design is cognisant of the established residential context, with the communal courtyard being open towards Frascati Park, moderating the overall massing of the development, and the layout minimising any potential overlooking onto established residential properties.

The elevational treatment of the building facing Frascati Park includes use of a light grey as well as a white colour so as to further articulate projecting elements and introduce a finer grain. Additionally, extensive spandrel plant boxes that are aligned with the walkway balconies within the courtyard area. These introduce strong horizontal secondary elements across the end elevations that mitigate the overall perceived height. The plant boxes will incorporate a mix of species including trailing and climbing plants, and shrubs. A grid of stainless steel cables will be fixed to the balconies to provide vertical support for foliage. The landscaping will provide a green wall character that will soften and mitigate the appearance of the built forms, and will also establish visual screening to mitigate overlooking. The communal courtyard will incorporate landscaping, with larger scale planting located along the open edge of the courtyard so as to provide visual separation between the established residences and the communal courtyard.

Boundary landscaping is also proposed along the immediate property boundaries where none is currently present. The row of existing carpark spaces along the site boundary will be omitted to provide tree screening that will be similar in nature to that existing at the rear of properties along George's Avenue, and thereby continuing the tree screening between the dwellings on Frascati Park and the Frascati Centre. Trees will be mixed deciduous and evergreen species, and will be planted as semi-mature trees in the first instance so as to provide an immediate visual foil, and will establish to provide stronger screening.

View 9 is from the bend in Frascati Park where the northern and southern part of the road join. At this localised vantage point, and by virtue of the geometry of the road, a longer diagonal view across the street are possible with c. 40m to the ridgelines of dwellings rather than the more typical c. 20m distance looking directly across the street, and with a consequent shallower vertical angle to the ridgelines of existing properties. View 9, as proposed, indicates the upper floors of the northern and southern blocks of Phase 2 being partially visible beyond the intermediate ridgelines, at c. 80m distance from the viewer.

As part of an established and evolving urban and residential context, the proposed development will present a significant change, and may be perceived negatively at first, however, it will be consistent with the co-location of established residential properties and new commercial development that is already evident from George's Avenue where the commercial developments along Frascati Road are clearly visible at the end of the street.

The development will introduce a compact form of residential dwellings between the established residences and the larger and singular use retail development. The boundary tree planting proposed in place of the existing car parking, will in time afford a similar landscape buffer between the established residential properties and the new development.

The assessment of Visual Impact and Landscape / Townscape Impact is considered to be moderate/significant and long-term, however, the establishment of the proposed landscaping along the boundary and as part of the building will soften and integrate the building in time.

Views from George's Avenue (Views 10 & 11)

Views 10 and 11 are from the residential street of George's Avenue, near the junction with Frascati Park, and halfway along George's Avenue. The streetscape is strongly defined and enclosed by the terraced dwellings along the street. The newly redeveloped Enterprise House is visible at the end of the street and signals the higher density urban core of the locality. The proposed development is essentially the same as the previously permitted development, with some elements of the uppermost proposed floor of Phase 1 being partially visible between and beyond the chimneys of the residential properties along the street, but not detracting from the existing streetscape.

The assessment of Visual Impact and Landscape / Townscape Impact is considered to be neutral/slight and long-term.

View from George's Avenue at Frascati Road (View 3)

View 3 is from the northern end of George's Avenue where it joins Frascati Road, and is in line with the front building line of properties on the eastern side of the street and representative of the view from the front windows and doors of those properties. The proposed development is essentially the same as the previously permitted development, save for the slight difference in appearance of the permitted recessed balconies onto Frascati Road compared to the proposed modification to winter garden. Phase 2 of the proposed development will not be visible.

The assessment of Visual Impact and Landscape / Townscape Impact is considered to be slight/moderate and long-term.

Residential Properties at the northern end of George's Avenue

Towards the northern end of George's Avenue, the rear of a number of properties face the site boundary. The views from these properties towards the site are dominated by the existing mature boundary trees that are at a minimum distance of c. 14m from the rear building lines. The trees will appear significantly higher in perspective to a viewer located in the private rear gardens and rooms of these properties by virtue of their proximity to the trees compared to View 3 where the distance to the trees is much greater. The tree canopies, viewed from the rear of these properties, will be substantially higher in perspective than the skyline of the proposed (and permitted) Phase 1 development as the latter will be behind the trees and more than twice the distance from the viewer than the boundary trees. Phase 2 of the development will not be visible.

Views from these properties into the site are substantially screened during the summer months when the trees are in leaf, and are filtered in winter months when the trees are bare. Construction stage impacts are likely to be the most significant during winter months as cranes and the emerging development will be visible filtered through the boundary trees. It is considered that operational stage impacts will be moderate to slight depending on the time of year as the boundary trees will permit filtered views of the development during winter months but will effectively screen views of the development in summer months.

6.7.3 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE IMPACT

The Frascati Centre is a long established and continually evolving part of the urban fabric of Blackrock.

The north eastern frontage onto the Frascati Road has always been an important element of the streetscape along the Frascati Road. The almost completed *Rejuvenation Scheme* has brought the Frascati Centre more notably forward as a prominent feature within the streetscape facing the Frascati Road and the Blackrock Shopping Centre. The redeveloped shopping centre, together with the new landscaped public space, has enhanced the character of the streetscape and brought animation closer to the street, with a stronger sense of connection to Blackrock Shopping Centre and the traditional village core.

The proposed development includes modifications to the previously permitted Phase 1, together with Phase 2 which will be developed over the existing and permitted podium carpark.

Phase 1 is focussed along the Frascati Road frontage, and includes three residential floor levels over the existing retail building. The architectural expression of Phase 1 builds on the almost completed *Rejuvenation Scheme*, continuing the dark stone cladding from the retail levels to define the floor and roof levels of the residential floors. Glazing between these dark stone elements includes full height fixed glazing

to internal rooms, and fixed glass balconies with sliding glass upper panels to the winter gardens. The sliding panels at the winter gardens can be partially or fully opened, and the pattern of open and closed will change depending on occupant preference and weather, providing a dynamic and finer grain that differentiates the residential floors from the larger scaled retail floors.

Visually, the proposed Phase 1 is substantially the same as the previously permitted scheme, save for the elevational treatment of the winter gardens. As before, the Phase 1 development, together with other completed and emerging redevelopments, will assist in establishing a stronger identity for this important district centre location. These developments collectively contribute to creating a better defined and proportioned streetscape along the Frascati Road, reducing the relative prominence of the roadway over the adjacent land uses, and making the roadway more street-like.

Phase 2 of the proposed development is set deeper into the Frascati Centre lands, and will not generally be as visible as Phase 1. Approaching the Frascati Road from Rock Hill, Phase 2 will present as a separate but connected residential block between Phase 1 of the development and the adjoining Lisalea apartment building. As discussed above in Section 6.7.2, Phase 2 will be locally more apparent at the northern part of Frascati Park.

Construction stage impacts on landscape / townscape are considered to be temporary to short-term and not significant in the context of the established site and continually evolving urban context. Operational stage impacts will vary from slight to locally moderate/significant, reducing in time as the green wall establishes, and the new boundary planting matures, to moderate.

6.7.4 IMPACT ON LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

It is considered that the proposed development respects existing sensitive features, including the mature trees and the objective for their protection and retention. The established trees will protect the amenity of adjoining residential properties, and the proposed new perimeter tree planting and landscape mitigation has been designed to protect that of properties that have had a more open aspect to the site area. Aspects of potential visual impact on properties have been considered as slight to moderate/significant under Sections 6.7.1 and 6.7.2 above.

While the proposed development does not step down from five to two storeys at the site perimeter, it does not extend to the perimeter, and does step down towards the sensitive edges and retains an appropriate setback distance from established properties.

The scheme further delivers on the aims for rejuvenation of the centre, strengthening the mixed use profile of the area, and for provision for greater pedestrian linkage and animation. The scheme has no impact on Blackrock Park.

6.8 RESIDUAL IMPACTS

The proposed development at the Frascati Centre expands on the almost completed *Rejuvenation Scheme*, and on the previously permitted Phase 1 development. Development in an established urban context will always have potential for landscape/townscape and visual impact.

Phase 1 of the proposed development comprises a modification of the previously permitted development, and is focussed towards the Frascati Road where the road is considered to have the visual capacity to readily accommodate such development and also to benefit from it in terms of urban structure and form, and in increased vitality and vibrancy. The proposed development will have a moderate and positive impact on the Frascati Road corridor.

Phase 2 of the proposed development will intensify the land use of the northern part of the Frascati Centre, in a manner that is consistent with the permitted and proposed development on the southern portion of the site. There will be localised areas at in the vicinity of Frascati Park, Mount Merrion Avenue and the Lisalea apartment building where Phase 2 will present a significant change, however, mitigation proposals are inherent in the architectural design and further extended in the proposed landscaping. The residential nature of Phase 2 contrasts with the existing large scale retail building and associated car parking facilities on the lands, and while the scale of Phase 2 will be substantial, the building will have a finer grain and detailing that is more suitable to its residential neighbours.

The residential streets to the southeast and southwest of the site are substantially screened from the site area by the residential properties themselves. The proposed development will typically have slight or no impact from these streets, however, the development will be partially visible at localised areas of the northern part of Frascati Park where impacts will be moderate/significant, reducing in time as the green wall establishes, and the new boundary planting matures, to moderate.

A number of properties towards the northern end of George's Avenue have rear gardens that face the site boundary in the vicinity of Phase 1 of the proposed development. While the proposed development includes modifications to the permitted Phase 1, there will be no change as perceived from these properties, and Phase 2 will be entirely out of view.

6.9 MONITORING

The principal monitoring from a landscape and visual consideration is focused on the ongoing protection of trees to be retained under the parent permission of the *Rejuvenation Scheme*, as well as implementation of additional boundary planting proposed under the Phase 1 residential permission. The proposed development also includes new areas of boundary planting, and the provision of extensive greening along the western elevations of Phase 2.

Monitoring of landscape protection, proper implementation and establishment of all new planting, and on-going maintenance, including replacement of any trees or plants that might fail to establish, is important to ensure the effectiveness and vitality of proposed landscape treatments.

6.10 INTERACTIONS

The key interactions in respect to landscape and visual aspects of the proposed development related to the architectural design and landscaping proposals for the site, as summarised in the design related avoidance and mitigation measures above.

6.11 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The site of the proposed development is part of an established and continually evolving urban locality that includes shopping centres, commercial and residential development, and roads and streets. Beyond the immediate locality, Blackrock also includes the more historic village core, an extensive mixture of traditional and more contemporary residential development, a range of commercial, educational and institutional developments, as well as open space, playing fields and parks.

It is noted that there are both recent developments and existing permissions for substantial developments both at and directly opposite the Frascati Centre. Some of these developments are complete, and others are at various stages of construction, and collectively will be prominent new and extended building elements along the N31 providing stronger and more contemporary definition along the N31. These will contribute to the ongoing consolidation of the built fabric of the locality, and to the transformation of the N31 from a vehicle dominated bypass road to a more pedestrian and cycle friendly streetscape.

The proposed development including Phase 1 (modified) and Phase 2, in combination with permitted developments, including the permitted Phase 1, will further contribute to this change in the nature, character and presentation of the emerging streetscape, giving rise to positive landscape and visual impacts as the N31 environment evolves as a finer grained and less vehicle dominated urban extension of Blackrock. The incorporation of residential uses within the overall mix of uses will increase the level of animation along the street during the daytime but also at night when the commercial and retail elements are closed. Modifications to Phase 1 will have negligible impact on the residential areas bounding the site, however, Phase 2 will be locally prominent from the northern end of Frascati Park, resulting initially in localised moderate and negative impacts that will be moderated over time as the proposed boundary landscape treatment and green wall landscaping matures.

6.12 REFERENCES

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (2016): Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022.

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (2015): Blackrock Local Area Plan 2015-2021

Environmental Protection Agency: Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports. (2017)

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Landscape Institute (UK) and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013): Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition.

Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (2018).

APPENDIX 6.1- Photomontages