

Visual Impact Assessment

For Development at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork

on behalf of Cetti Limited

July 2024



McCutcheon Halley
CHARTERED PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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1. Introduction

McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultants have been commissioned to undertake a Visual Impact Assessment of the proposed development, which seeks to construct a residential development up to three storeys.

The proposed development is on a vacant infill site which is 0.8ha in area and located at Scairt Cross, at the junction of Scairt Hill and Donnybrook Hill. The site is located in a suburban location in the southern environs of Cork City, approximately 1km southeast of Grange Village Centre and 2km southwest of Douglas Village.

There are no Protected Structures, designated views or scenic routes, at or close to the site. The site does not fall within an Architectural Conservation Area. The closest archaeological site is located over 530m to the southeast.

Further supporting documentation is included with this Part 8 planning application and includes:

- Planning Report and Statement of Compliance prepared by McCutcheon Halley Planning;
- Design Statement prepared by O'Mahony Pike Architects;
- Site Location Maps prepared by O'Mahony Pike Architects;
- Site layout plans, floor plans and sectional and elevational drawings prepared by O'Mahony Pike Architects.

2. Methodology

This assessment methodology follows best practice advisory guidelines set out in the following guidance documents:

- Guidelines for landscape & Visual Impact Assessment: 3rd Edition, published by the Landscape Institute (UK), - (2013).
- Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA 2022)
- Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028
- Cork County Draft Landscape Strategy (2007)

This methodology includes a desktop analysis of the existing area, including specific designations and land use patterns. 2 no. site visits were also undertaken in December 2023 to assess the likely visibility and consequent visual impact of the proposed development. O'Mahony Pike prepared viewpoints 1-3 and Tom Halley undertook visits of the site for and the surrounding area/roads in the vicinity in June 2022 for viewpoints 4-6. The weather on the day of the visit was clear/slightly overcast but with very good visibility. A follow up site visit was undertaken in December 2023 to confirm that no physical change to the environment had occurred. The images taken in 2022 were used as the light in December 2023 was of poor quality.

The location of the views is shown in Figure 1 below.

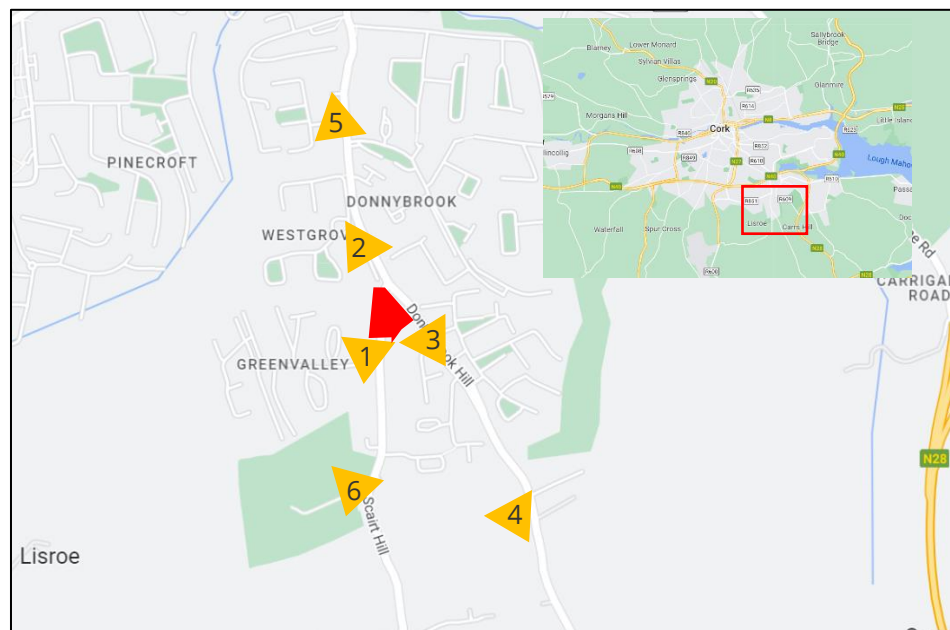


Figure 1: Location of viewpoints/receptors numbered. Site outlined in red.

In order to classify the significance of effects/impacts of the proposed development the “Guidelines on information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022)” was used, specifically Figure 3.4 as indicated below.

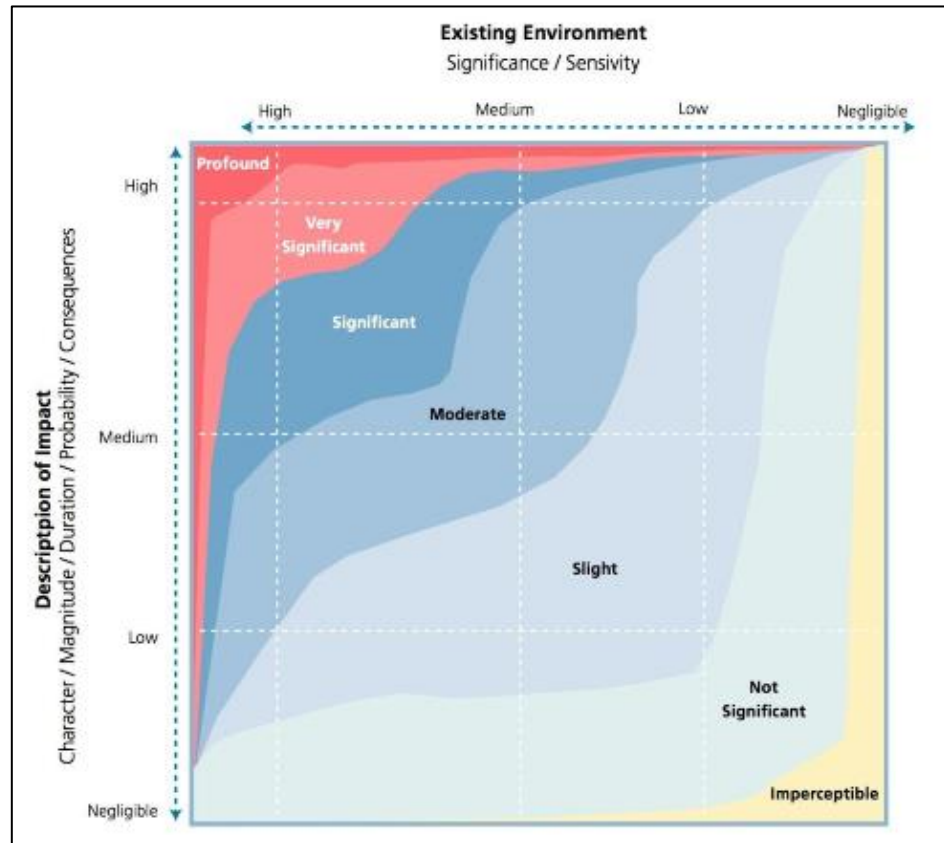


Figure 2: Classification of Significance of visual impact, EPA, 2022

3. Receiving Environment

3.1.2 Existing Context and Site Location

The subject site is located in the Southern Environs of Cork City, at Scairt Cross approximately 1km southeast of Grange Village Centre and 2km southwest of Douglas Village District Centre. The proposed development is within walking distance of both Grange and Douglas which have a wide range of convenience retail with two shopping centres and other local services.

The area surrounding the site is primarily residential in character, with the lands immediately adjoining the site to the north, south, east and west generally comprising detached and semi-detached dwellings. Other notable land uses in the area include Douglas Rugby Club and Corinthians Soccer Club.

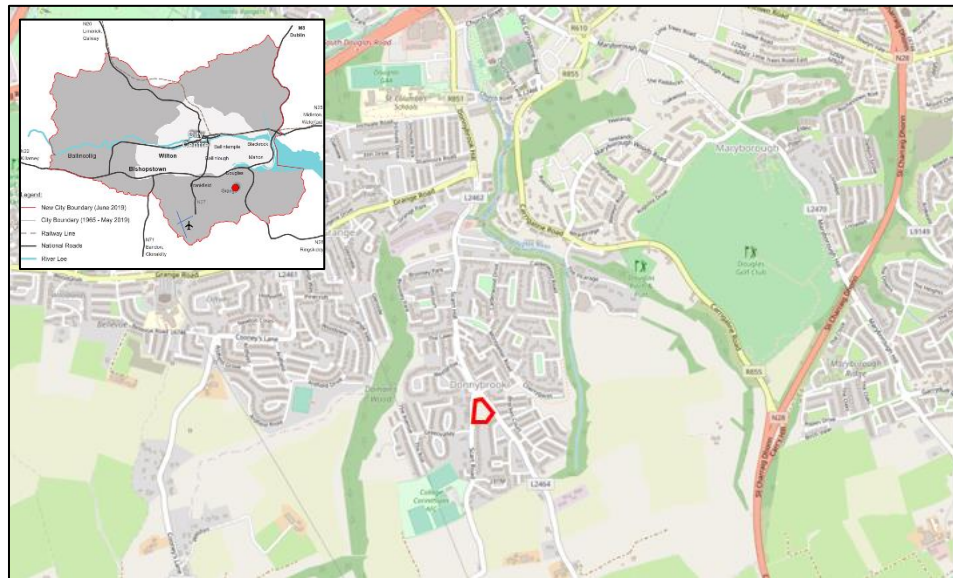


Figure 3: Indicative Site Location. Subject Site outlined in red.

3.1.3 Planning Policy

In the Cork City Development Plan 2022, the site is zoned for Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods under Z0 01 where it is an objective to “*protect and provide for residential uses and amenities, local services and community, institutional, educational and civic uses*”. As can be seen from Figure 4 below, there is a significant amount of residential zoning proposed to the east of the site, which will maintain the continued residential expansion at this location.

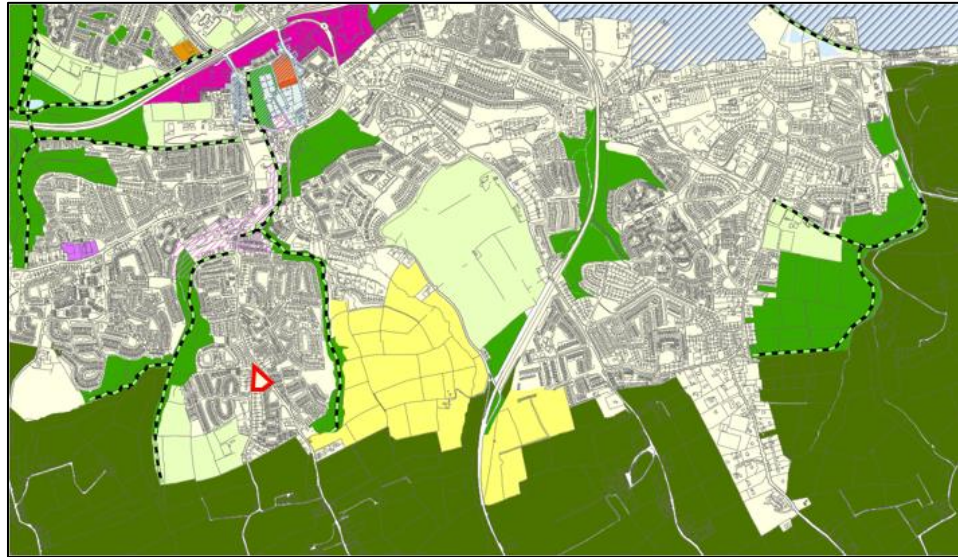


Figure 4: Extract from the relevant Cork City Development Plan Zoning Map

A Planning Report and Statement of Compliance (in a tabular format), accompanies this application and demonstrates compliance with the relevant planning/Development Plans objectives for the site/area.

3.1.4 Zone of Visual Influence and Potential Visual Receptors

The zone of visual influence is the extent of potential visibility of the site from the surrounding area and is contained by topography and built structures.

With respect to the subject site this visual envelope is defined principally by the geography and topography of the area. This contains a steeply sloping hillside to the north. Most of the views to/from the site are short-medium distance views, with some long-distance views to the city to the north.

Within the surrounding area there are no scenic routes/protected views. Figure 5 below includes an extract from the relevant City Development Plan

map, with all of the designated views in the area, located further north of the subject site.

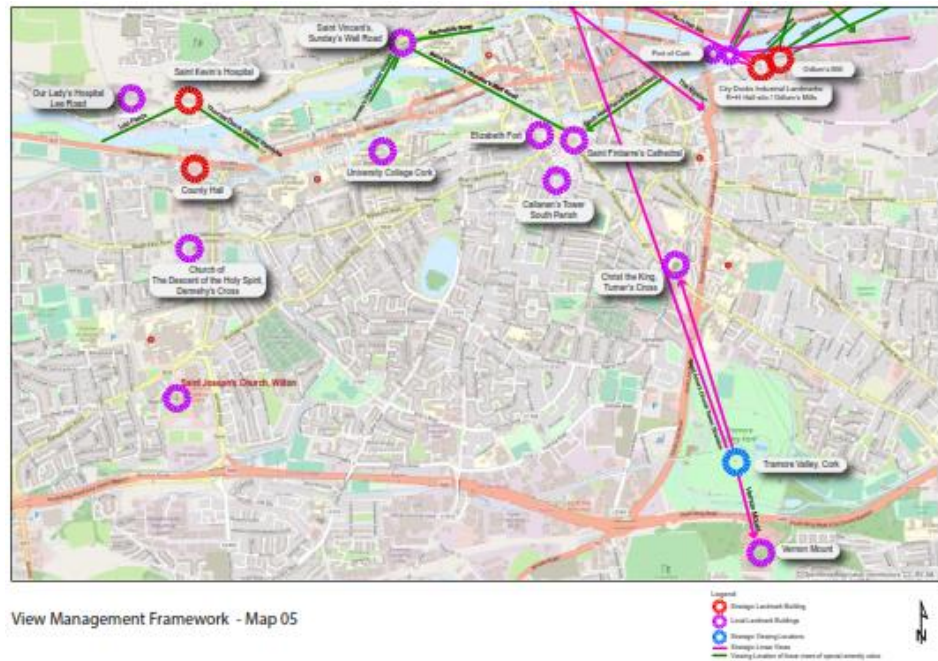


Figure 5: Extract from Cork City Development Plan showing views and prospects to the south of Cork City

4. Proposed Development

The proposed development will comprise of:

The construction of:

- 5 no. 3 bed dwelling houses;
- 3 no. 2 bed dwelling houses;
- 2 no. apartment blocks (Blocks A and B), ranging in height from 2 to 3 storeys, comprising:
 - 24 no. 2-bedroom apartments;
 - 22 no. 1-bedroom apartments;
- Provision of 44 no. car parking spaces and 94 no. bicycle parking spaces.
- All ancillary site works, and signage as outlined in the plans and particulars.



Figure 6 Proposed Site Plan

The proposed schedule of accommodation is as follows:

BLOCK A	1 BED APT	2 BED APT 3P	2 BED APT 4P		Total
Apartments					
Level 00	10		1		11
Level 01		1			1
Level 02		1			1
Duplexes					
Level 00					
Level 01			10		10
Level 02					
TOTAL	10	2	11		23

BLOCK B	1 BED APT	2 BED APT 3P	2 BED APT 4P		Total
Level 00	4	2	1		7
Level 01	4	4	1		9
Level 02	4	3			7
TOTAL	12	9	2		23

APARTMENTS TOTAL	22	11	13		46
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HOUSES		2 BED		3 BED	Total
Level 00		3		5	8
TOTAL		3		5	8

RESIDENTIAL TOTAL	22	14	13	5	54
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Figure 7 Extract from Schedule of Accommodation by O'Mahony Pike Architects

Each unit has access to a private amenity space. Along with private amenity space, the units will have access to landscaped open spaces. Windows are sited to prevent overlooking into adjacent private gardens. Homes will have adequate storage areas and areas for sorting of recyclables.

The proposed development includes a large open space area located to the west. 44 no. car parking spaces and 94 no. bicycle spaces are proposed as part of the development.

Heights are graduated across the site, so that the taller (3 storey) apartment blocks are located on the eastern part of the site. The heights graduate down to the 2 storeys along Scairt Hill. Dwellings located on the site also consist of 2 storeys along the southern boundary.

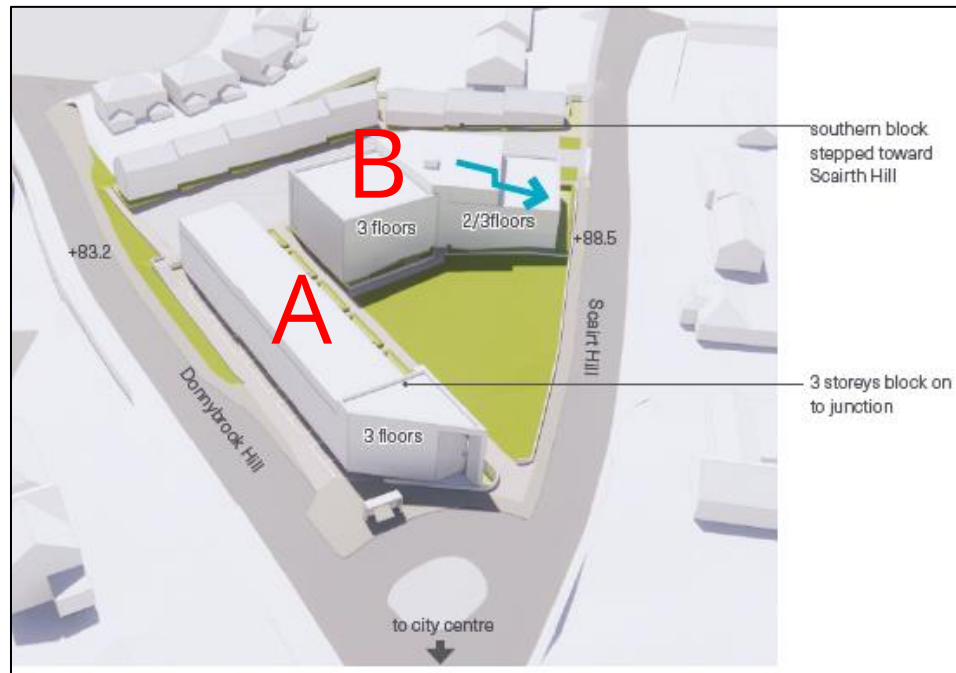


Figure 8 Isometric view of proposed development

5. Visual Impact Assessment

5.1 Viewpoints

In order to determine the potential visual effects on views and visual amenity a number of viewpoints were determined to represent key visual receptors in the receiving environment.

Six viewpoints were selected for visual impact assessment informed by photomontages of the proposed development. These images are presented as a before and after analysis for Viewpoints 1 to 3. For Viewpoints 4 to 6 there is no visibility of the site/proposed development and therefore no difference between the with and without development scenarios.

In the case of each of the views, a description is provided identifying the following:

- Key elements and characteristics of the existing view;
- Sensitivity of the view;
- Proposed change to the view;
- Conclusion of the significance of the potential visual effects.

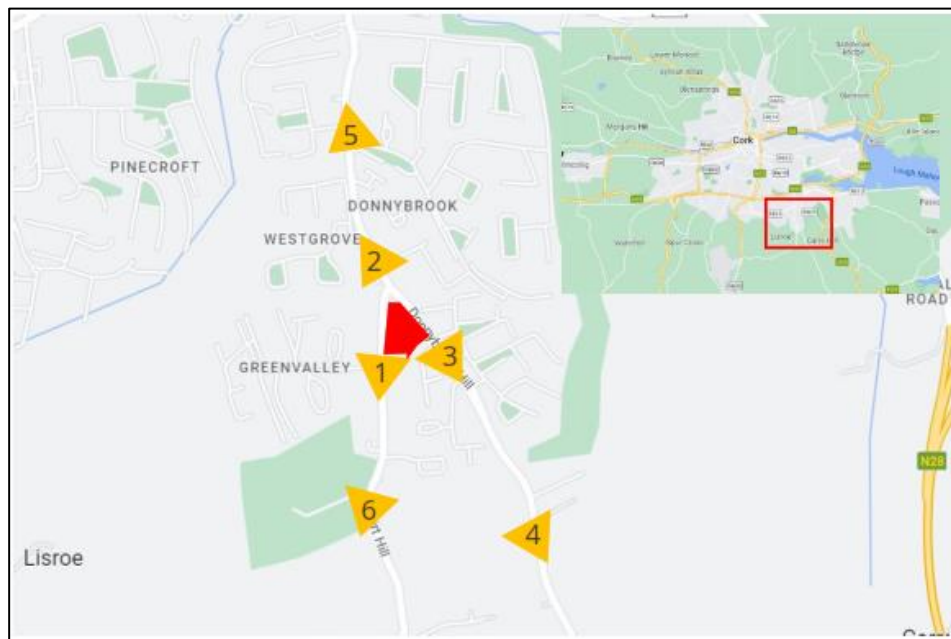


Figure 9 Location of Viewpoints

5.1.1 Viewpoint 1 (Scairt Hill)

Viewpoint 1 is taken at the southwestern corner of the site looking north towards Scairt Cross.



Figure 10 Existing view from Scairt Hill looking north.



Figure 11 Proposed view from Scairt Hill looking north.

Existing View:

Viewpoint 1 is taken at the southwestern corner of the site looking north towards Scairt Cross with longer distance views of the city in the background. In the foreground there is low-density housing fronting on to the public road with footpaths on both sides and rendered block walls on the front boundaries of the houses opposite the site. The site has a low-level hedgerow with some whitethorn on the boundary with timber electricity/telecom poles and wires over.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

Given the established residential environment and built-up/suburban character of the area and infill nature of the site, Viewpoint Sensitivity is classified as Low-Medium.

Proposed Change:

Although the proposed development introduces a taller building height than the surrounding properties, the heights are graduated across the site from 1 to 3 storeys.

From Viewpoint 1, the 2-storey element of the Block B building will be visible along Scairt Hill before extending to 3-storeys as it progresses further into the site. Landscaping will be implemented along the western boundary to provide screening. The removal of the hedgerow to facilitate a widened public footpath, landscaping and low-level wall and railing, will soften the appearance of the proposed development and help to assimilate it into its existing suburban residential context.

The magnitude of proposed change/visual impact is considered to be Moderate.

Conclusion/Summary:

Viewpoint 1 is taken at the site from an established residential, suburban location where Viewpoint Sensitivity is classified as Low-Medium. While the proposed development introduces a taller building height than the surrounding properties, the heights are graduated across the site from 1 to 3 storeys, commensurate with the topography of the site. The landscaped buffer along Scairt Hill will soften the appearance of the proposed development at this location and therefore the magnitude of proposed change/visual impact is considered to be Moderate.

5.1.2 Viewpoint 2 (Donnybrook Hill/ Westgrove)

Viewpoint 2 is taken from Donnybrook Hill looking south towards Scairt Cross, approximately 90 metres from the site.



Figure 12 Existing view from Donnybrook Hill looking south.



Figure 13 Proposed view from Donnybrook Hill looking south.

Existing View:

Viewpoint 2 is taken from Donnybrook Hill looking south, approximately 90 metres from the site/development. From this viewpoint, the site acts as a terminus or focal point from this section of Donnybrook Hill, which has a very wide carriageway and public footpaths on both sides of the public road and is also the location for a terminus bus stop (including a turning area) for the public bus route servicing the area.

The character of the area is formed by predominantly 2 storey suburban housing. Westgrove housing estate is located in the foreground (RHS) on slightly elevated ground behind a masonry wall faced with natural stone with a metal rail over. The boundary on the opposite/eastern side of Donnybrook Hill has a mixture of boundary treatments including post and panel, stonework and landscaped boundaries.

This viewpoint represents a lower elevated receptor commonly viewed in transit/approaching the site and acts as a terminus or focal point when viewed from this section of Donnybrook Hill.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

Given the established residential environment and built-up/suburban character of the area, Viewpoint Sensitivity at this location is classified as Low-Medium.

Proposed Change:

The proposed development introduces a taller building height than the surrounding properties. From Viewpoint 2, the 3-storey element of Block A will be visible along Donnybrook Hill and will act as a focal point for this viewpoint.

The very generous carriageway width combined with footpaths on both sides of the approach road to the site, means that the 3-storey building is proportionate to its receiving environment. Given the existing landscaping/trees on both sides of Donnybrook Hill, the proposed development will be partially screened and only visible in part. This mitigates the visual impact of the proposed development and means that it will not dominate views from this viewpoint.

The magnitude of the proposed change/visual impact from this viewpoint is therefore, considered to be Moderate.

Conclusion/Summary:

Viewpoint Sensitivity at Viewpoint 2 is considered as Low-Medium. The site/development acts as a focal point from Viewpoint 2 and given the very wide carriageway with public footpaths on both sides of the public road, the development is proportionate to its receiving environment with the existing landscaping/trees, which mitigates the visual impact and can be assimilated successfully into its context at this location. The magnitude of the proposed change/visual impact from this viewpoint is therefore, considered to be Moderate.

5.1.3 Viewpoint 3 (Donnybrook Hill/ Bracken Court)

Viewpoint 3 is taken at the south-eastern corner of the site looking northwest towards Scairt Cross.



Figure 14 Existing view from Donnybrook Hill looking northwest



Figure 15 Proposed view from Donnybrook Hill looking northwest

Existing View:

Viewpoint 3 is taken at the south-eastern corner of the site on Donnybrook Hill approximately 60 metres to the nearest proposed dwelling, looking northwest towards Scairt Cross. Due to the lower elevation of the viewpoint, there are no longer distance views beyond the site, and only short-medium distance views to the turning area/terminus for the bus stop serving the area.

Springbrook housing estate is located in the (western) foreground, with blank gables and high level dashed rendered walls comprising prominent features on to the public road. On the eastern side of the public road, there is an older and lower-level stone wall with lime mortar fronting on to the public road and Bracken Court housing estate behind it.

This section of Donnybrook Hill has a very wide carriageway with a grassed verge, public lighting and footpaths on both sides of the public road. At the site, there is a sloped embankment leading up to the site which is at a higher elevation than the adjoining public road.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

Given the established residential environment and built-up/suburban character of the area and infill nature of the site, Viewpoint Sensitivity is classified as Low-Medium.

Proposed Change:

The two-storey housing on the southern portion of the site is screened by existing trees which means that there are only partial views of the proposed development when looking northwest towards Scairt Cross. The two-storey housing proposed along the southern portion of the site in turn screens the apartment blocks located on the northern section of the site.

From Viewpoint 3, the development is set back along Donnybrook Hill, and will have a landscaped buffer which will be planted with trees to soften the appearance of the proposed development and help to assimilate it into its existing suburban residential context.

The magnitude of proposed change/visual impact is considered to be Moderate.

Conclusion/Summary:

Given the established suburban character of this part of Donnybrook Hill, Viewpoint 3 is considered to have a Low-Medium Sensitivity. The proposed two-storey housing acts as a screen for the proposed development and with existing and proposed landscaping, it means that there are only partial views towards the proposed development and the magnitude of proposed change/visual impact is considered to be Moderate.

5.1.4 Viewpoint 4 (Donnybrook Hill South)

Viewpoint 4 is taken approximately 350 metres to the south of the site looking northwest towards the site.

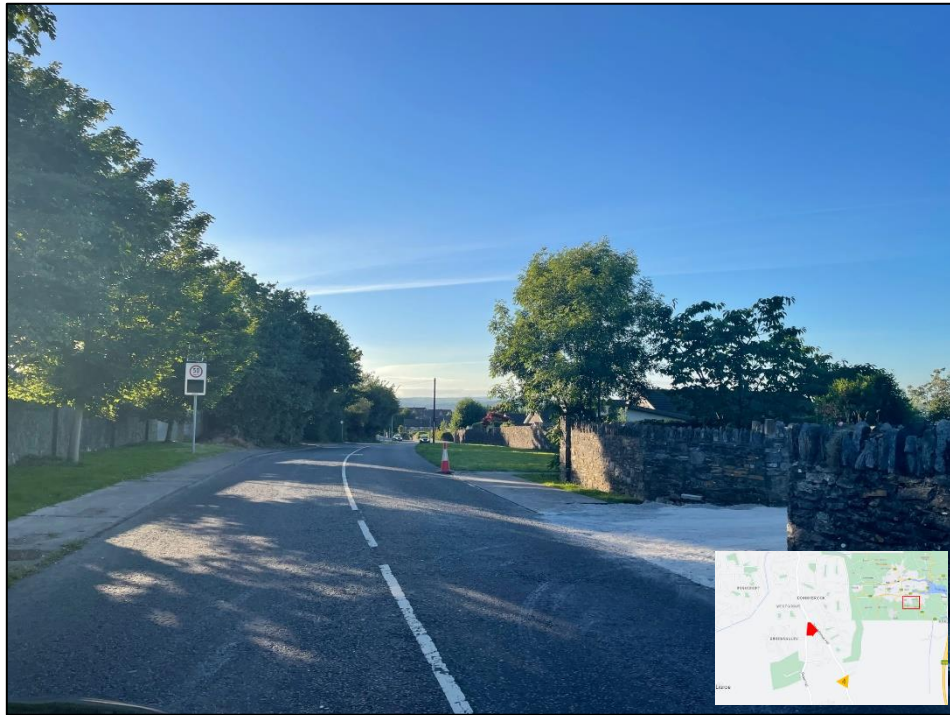


Figure 16 Existing/Proposed view from Donnybrook Hill looking northwest

Existing View:

Viewpoint 4 is taken approximately 350 metres to the south of the site looking northwest towards Scairt Cross. This section of Donnybrook Hill has a narrower carriageway with narrow footpaths on one (eastern) side only. Bracken Court housing estate and larger detached dwellings are located in the (eastern) foreground, with a low-level rubble stone wall with lime mortar bounding the public road. On the western side of the public road, the boundary comprises a mix of a low-level stone wall with a grass verge and trees, fronting on to the public road.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

Given the established suburban character of the area, existing trees/landscaping and distance to the proposed development, this Viewpoint Sensitivity is classified as Low.

Proposed Change:

Due to the topography, existing housing and mature trees, there are no views to the site or the proposed development. As the proposed development is neither visible nor does it break the skyline, the Magnitude of change is classified as Negligible.

Conclusion/Summary:

The significance of the visual impact at this location would be Imperceptible.

5.1.5 Viewpoint 5 (Donnybrook Hill North)

Viewpoint 5 is taken approximately 300 metres to the north of the site looking south towards Scairt Cross.

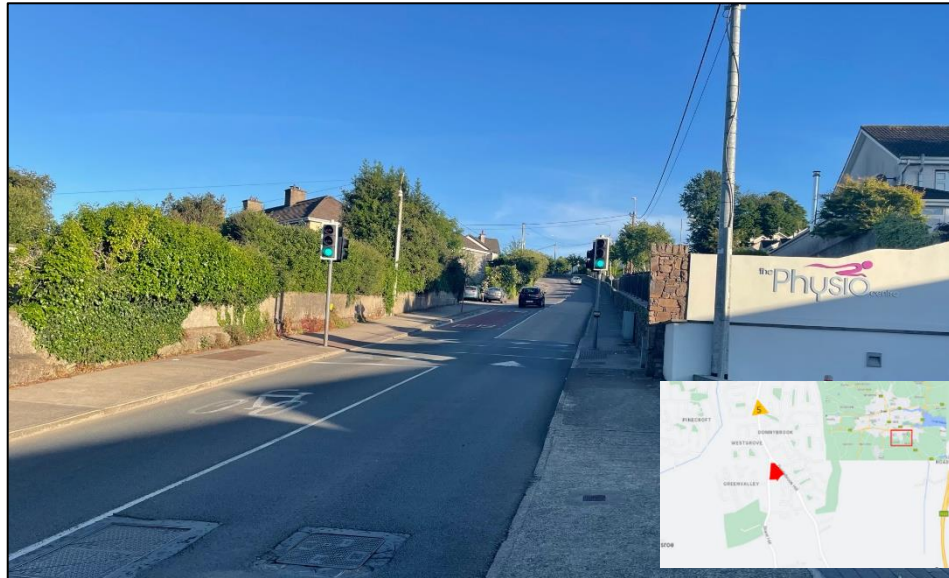


Figure 17 Existing/Proposed view from Donnybrook Hill looking northwest.

Existing View:

Viewpoint 5 is taken approximately 300 metres to the north of the site looking south towards Scairt Cross. The view is a lower elevated receptor commonly viewed in transit/approaching the site.

This section of Donnybrook Hill, which generally has a wide (i.e. 6-7 metre) carriageway with footpaths on both sides of the public road. The character of the area is formed by predominantly 2 storey suburban housing. Westgrove housing estate is in the foreground (RHS) on a slightly elevated ground behind a masonry wall faced with natural stone with a metal rail over. The boundary on the opposite/eastern side of Donnybrook Hill has a lower dashed/rendered wall.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

Given the established suburban character of the area, the Viewpoint Sensitivity is classified as Low.

Proposed Change:

Due to the lower elevation, topography, existing housing and boundary treatments, there are no views to the site or the proposed development. As the proposed development is neither visible nor does it break the skyline at this location the Magnitude of change is therefore classified as Negligible.

Conclusion/Summary:

The significance of the visual impact at this location would be Imperceptible and Neutral.

5.1.6 Viewpoint 6 (Corinthians Football Club)

Viewpoint 6 is taken approximately 350 metres to the southwest of the site at the entrance to Corinthians AFC, looking northeast towards Scairt Cross.

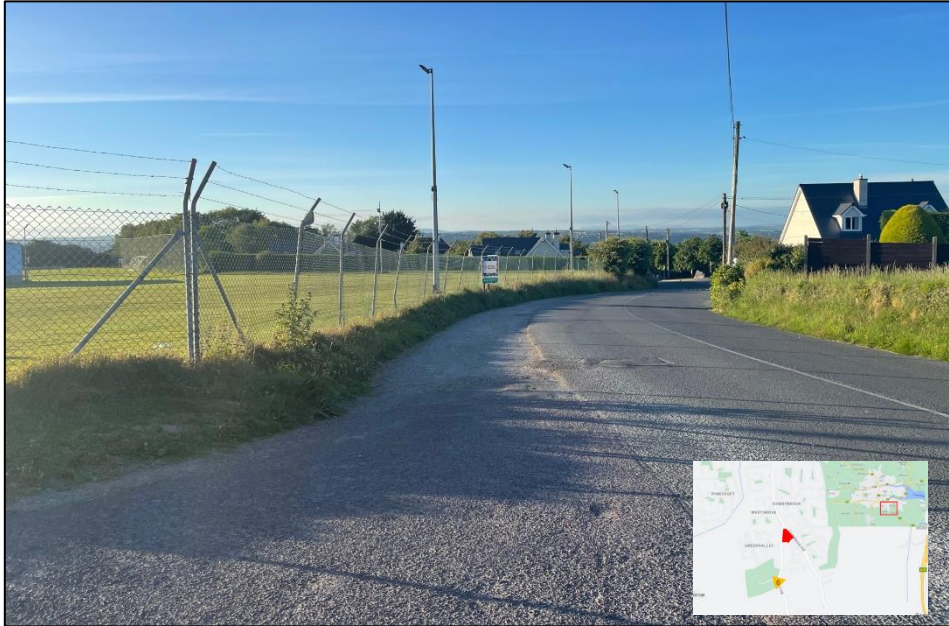


Figure 18 Existing/Proposed view from Corinthians Football Club looking northeast

Existing View:

Viewpoint 6 is taken from Scairt Hill, at the edge of the southern environs of the city, approximately 350 metres to the southwest of the site at the entrance to Corinthians Football Club, looking northeast towards Scairt Cross. This section of Scairt Hill has a narrower carriageway with no footpaths and is characterised by low density ribbon development on the eastern side and by the open character of the playing pitches of the soccer club on the western side of the public road. There are long distance views to Cork City, which act as a backdrop to the features/buildings in the foreground.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

Given the established peri-urban character of the area, existing trees/landscaping, Viewpoint Sensitivity is classified as Low-Medium.

Proposed Change:

Due to the existing housing and mature trees/hedgerows, there are no views to the site or the proposed development. As the proposed development is neither visible nor does it break the skyline at this location, the Magnitude of change is therefore classified as Negligible.

Conclusion/Summary:

The significance of the visual impact at this location would be Imperceptible and Neutral.

6. Summary and Conclusion

Overall, of the six selected viewpoints the significance of the predicted visual impact on three will be Low-Moderate or Moderate. The Impact on the remaining three viewpoints is classified as Imperceptible and Neutral.

The proposed development will provide a high-quality residential scheme for this area with contemporary materials contributing positively to this suburban residential location.

Given the merits of the proposed development, including high quality architectural finishes to the buildings, the development of a vacant, infill site located at the terminus of a bus route and the provision of landscaping and tree planting, will substantially outweigh the relatively limited visual impacts of the proposal.

The conclusion of this Visual Impact Assessment of the proposed development is that it will not result in a significant or adverse change to the continued residential expansion of this part of the City.