



# URBAN DESIGN AND TALL BUILDING STATEMENT

THE RAILYARD APARTMENTS, ALBERT QUAY, CORK


August 2024

URBAN  
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STUDIO

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## About this Document

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This document was prepared by Urban Initiatives Studio in support of the planning application for 'The Railyard Apartments' Scheme on Albert Quay by Progressive Commercial Construction Limited.

This document has two principal parts:

- **Part 1** is the **Urban Design Statement** and
- **Part 2** is the **Tall Buildings Statement**.

## Urban Initiatives Studio Expertise and Role

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Urban Initiatives has a long history of working in Cork. In 1993 we prepared the Cork Historic Centre Action Plan that started the regeneration of the city centre and our involvement led to many projects contributing to the vibrancy that characterises the city centre of Cork today. In 2001 we developed the strategy for the regeneration of Cork Docklands as a new mixed use urban extension to Cork City Centre that laid the foundation for the Docklands Local Area Plans. Over the years we have continued to advise Cork City Council, prepared plans for University College Cork and private developments in the city.

Recently we supported three successful planning applications for tall buildings in Cork; the Strategic Housing Development on this site, the subsequent Commercial Development application on the same site, and the mixed use regeneration of the Custom House site. Our expert input on urban design and tall buildings was instrumental in the success of these proposals.

Our long-standing involvement in Cork comes with a deep-seated responsibility for the city, which chimes with our practice ethos to always look at the bigger picture and to consider the place as our true client. We are proud to be working as urban design experts on The Railyard Apartments. We have brought our expertise and understanding of the city right from the start of the project and worked intensely in a collaborative process with the design team to develop what we believe is an exceptional and well designed scheme that will support Cork's wider development aspirations and planned growth in the City Centre and Docklands.

We are experts in providing strategic tall building's

advice to Local Authorities in the UK and Ireland. We have a long track record of preparing tall buildings strategies often in places that experience significant pressures for tall buildings in sensitive townscape and heritage contexts. This includes the London Boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea, Islington, Camden, Westminster, Tower Hamlets and Greenwich, and the cities of Bath, Liverpool, Derby, Bournemouth and Poole, Cambridge and others.

One of the first tall buildings strategies that Urban Initiatives prepared was for the City of Cork in 2001, which has informed development in Cork and policy contained within the Cork City Development Plan. Since then the city has changed considerably with new development shaping its character and vitality.

A new city development plan has been adopted in Cork (2022) since the Albert Quay scheme was permitted, and we have been brought in by Progressive Commercial Construction Limited to provide an up-to-date urban design and tall building statement in support of this application.



## Urban Initiatives Studio's Expertise:

### Knowledge of Cork



Cork Docklands Masterplan



Cork High Buildings Study



Albert Quay SHD



Custom House Tower

### Tall Buildings Experience: Advising Local Authorities



Belfast



Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown



Liverpool



Bath



Tower Hamlets (London)

# 01 The Site and its Context

## 1.1 Site location

The site subject to this application is situated on the corner of Albert Quay and Albert Street. It is bound by Albert Quay to the north, Albert Street to the west, Albert Road to the south and the Navigation Square development to the east.

The site currently accommodates buildings of the former Carey Tool Hire, now occupied by Park Facilities Management Ltd.



Figure 1.1: Site location plan (site shown in red)

 Site boundary

## 1.2 Proposal

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Progressive Commercial Construction Limited (“the developer”) intends to enter into a project agreement with Cork City Council, to deliver The Railyard Apartments scheme, pursuant to the requirements of Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001.

The Railyard Apartments proposed development comprises of the construction of 217 no. apartments comprising 25 no. studio units; 92 no. 1-bed units; 88no. 2-bed units; and 12no. 3-bed units apartments in a building that ranges in height from 8 to 11 to 24 storeys over ground floor at the former Carey Tool Hire site, currently principally occupied by Park Facilities Management Ltd, Albert Quay, Cork City.

The development site, measuring approximately 0.2744 hectares, is bounded by Albert Quay East to the north, Albert Street to the west, the former Blackrock and Passage Railway Terminus – Ticket Office, a Protected Structure, Ref. No. PS 1138, and which is also a Recorded Monument, C0074-119002, the two-storey former Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway Offices, Protected Structure, Ref. No. PS 1137, and the Albert Road Post Box, which is also a Protected Structure Ref. No. PS942 and Albert Road to the south, and Navigation Square to the east. The site is accessed by Albert Quay East and Albert Street. The proposed works include:

- The construction of 217no. apartments [25no. studio units; 92no. 1-bed units; 88no. 2-bed units; and 12no. 3-bed units] in a building that ranges in height from 8 to 11 to 24 storeys over ground floor.

- The provision of external balconies on the east, west and south elevations to the 12th floor on the east and west elevation, and to the 9th floor on the southern elevation.
- The provision of an external public realm area at ground level, an eastern laneway for servicing of the proposed development, in addition to its use as a pedestrian link.
- The provision of internal communal space areas at ground floor, 1st floor, and 2nd floor, and 2no. external rooftop terraces on the 9th floor and the 12th floor.
- The provision of a ground floor community/arts use, with external seating area and a ground floor creche with external covered play area.
- The provision of ground level plant, ancillary uses, and bin store.
- Bicycle spaces at lower ground floor and ground floor level; and additional visitor bicycle spaces, and a set down delivery area at ground floor level on Albert Street.
- All site development, public realm and landscaping works.
- The proposed development also involves the demolition of the existing two-storey Carey Tool Hire building, currently principally occupied by Park Facilities Management Ltd.



Proposed development, 'The Railyard Apartments'

Throughout the document the proposed development is either identified as 'proposed development' or 'The Railyard Apartments'.

The site is subject to a permission of a Strategic Housing Development, ABP Ref. No. ABP-305779-19 of similar scale, massing and layout to the proposed development.



### 1.3 Policy review

*'Cork already performs well as a major urban centre in Ireland and the City has positioned itself as an emerging medium-sized European centre of growth and innovation. Building on this potential is critical to further enhancing Ireland's metropolitan profile.'*  
National Planning Framework 2040

#### Cork City Development Plan (2022)

The new Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 has been adopted in 2022 and sets out the planning policy for development in the city. The Plan includes a number of policies and supporting texts that are relevant for the height and design of buildings. These are captured by the review below.

#### Land Use Zoning

The site is situated in the City Centre, zoned as ZO 05. The Development Plan Objectives are to consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area and to promote its role as a dynamic mixed used centre for community, economic, civic, cultural and residential growth.

#### Key Growth Areas & Neighbourhood Development Sites

The site is also situated in the City Dock's Regeneration Area. The plan states that this is the largest regeneration project in Ireland and will bring significant investment to Cork between now and its build out. The regeneration of the City Docks is central to the ambition for Cork set out in the National Planning Framework and will provide significant strategic value and local

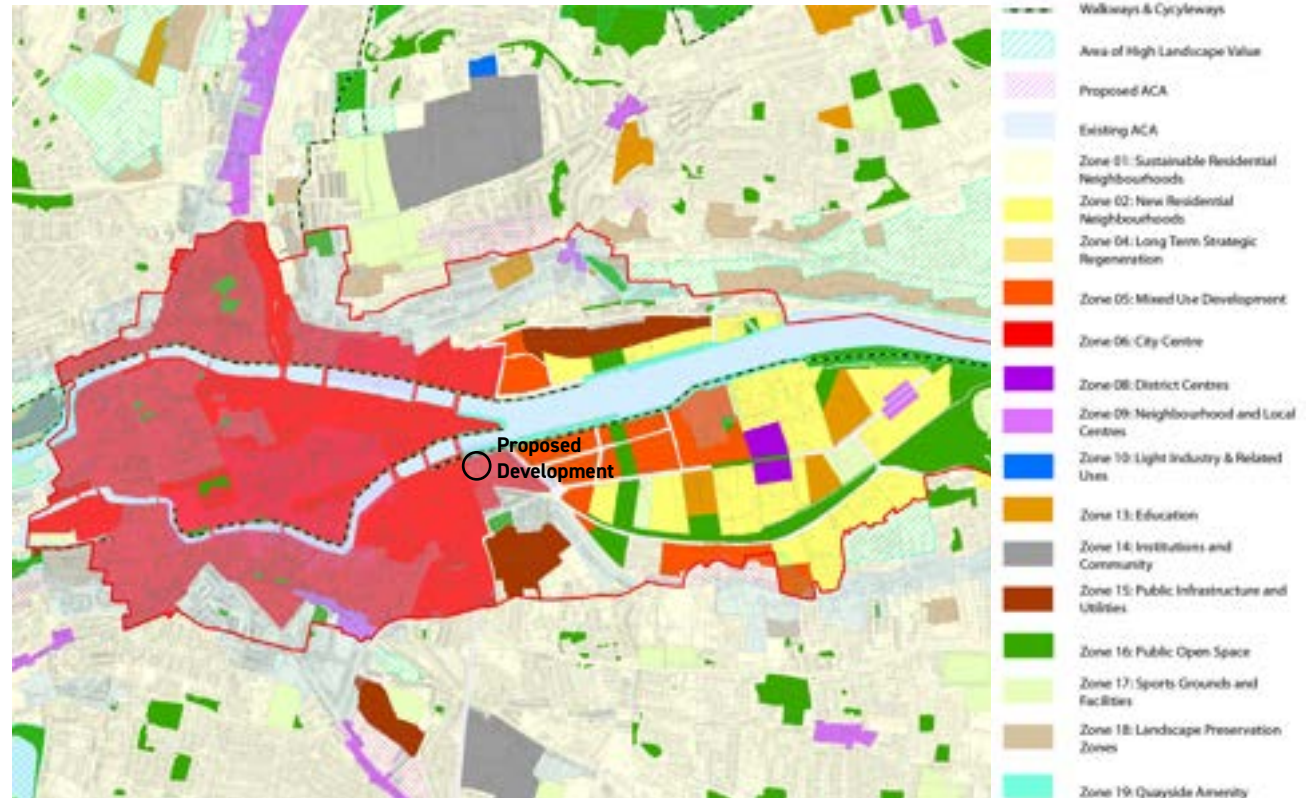


Figure 1.2: Extract Cork City Development Plan: Cork City Zoning Plan

benefits. The ambition for the City Docks is to be an exemplar development for regeneration and design quality in Europe.

One of the main aims of the Development Plan is to provide for the regeneration and consolidation of the City Centre by increasing its residential population and improving its potential as a desirable place to live. The City Centre is the most environmentally sustainable, residential location in the City, and as such represents

an opportune location for future growth, situated at the heart of the City's travel networks (10.8).

The safety and security of residents and visitors is a key consideration of the plan and it encourages safe streets and an attractive public realm with active frontages providing surveillance and overlooking. The importance of Cork's maritime heritage and enhancement of the waterfront will also be a key objective in increasing its attractiveness as a place to meet and spend time (10.10).



## Building Height

The Cork Development Plan states that well-conceived designs for new buildings should be informed by the prevailing urban characteristics of the neighbourhood they would inhabit (11.27). An understanding of the character of an area is essential to inform strategies for the development of sites and areas. The Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Building Study 2021 sets out an assessment of prevailing height based upon an analysis of building heights in Cork City's 44 neighbourhoods (11.31).

Prevailing heights in any given area determines what is considered 'tall' in different parts of Cork City. Analysis on prevailing heights has been carried out at sub-area level and at neighbourhood level, to provide a more accurate description of each place. Figure 1.3 provides an extract of the Prevailing Heights Plan of the city development plan. The site is situated in the South City Docks Area. The average height in this area is 3.9 storeys, which is the area with the greatest prevailing height of all areas in Cork.

The development plan states that the phased redevelopment of the South Docks industrial area will generate a new character and a radical transformation. As such, the area is significantly less sensitive to change and is correspondingly the most appropriate location for taller and tall buildings in the City.

The plan stipulates that the majority of new buildings should range generally in height from 6 to 10 storeys with exceptional opportunities for tall buildings at appropriate locations within the area. Similarly to the North Docks and the City Centre area, riverside development should step down, generally to 6 storeys. (11.36)

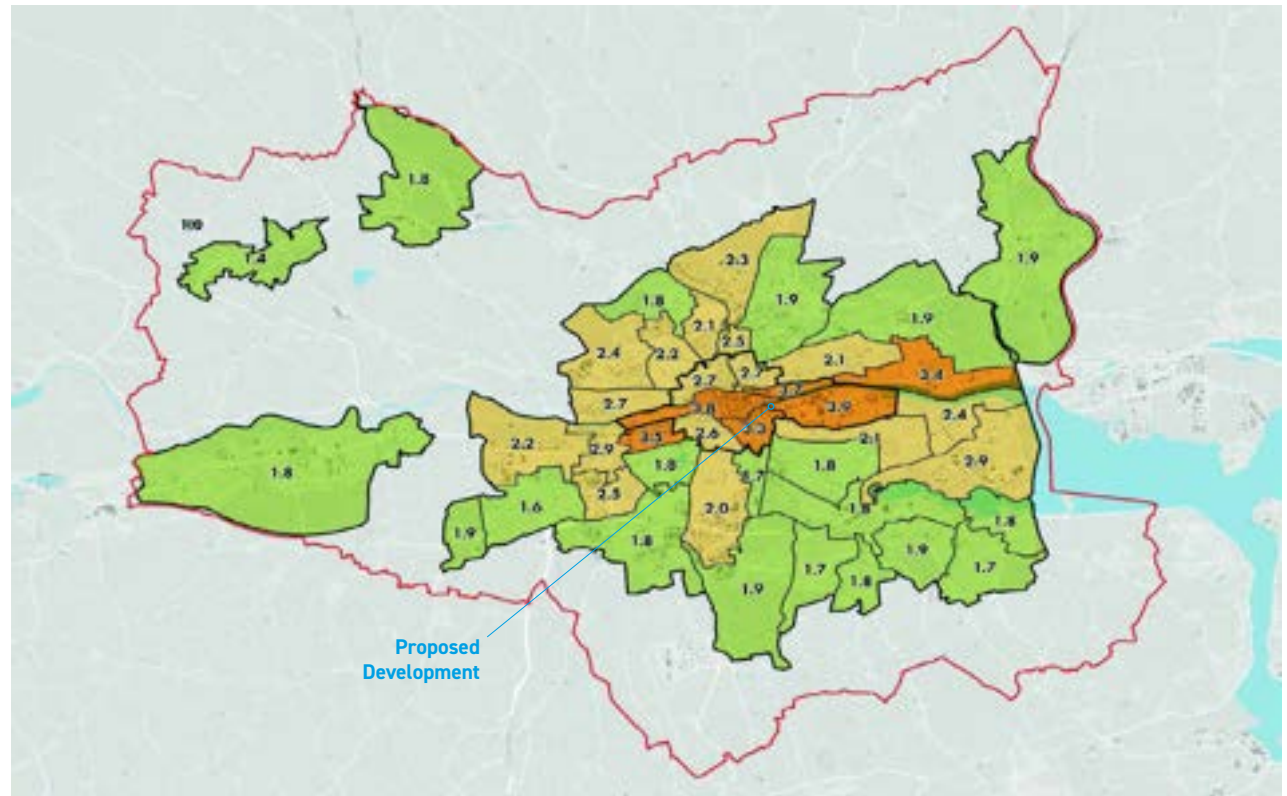


Figure 1.3: Extract Cork City Development Plan: Cork City Prevailing Height Plan

## Tall Buildings

The Development Plan refers to The Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Buildings Study 2021 as forming the basis for the Plan's approach to tall buildings. The Plan defines tall buildings as a building that is equal to or more than twice the prevailing building height in a locality. Within Cork City a building would only be considered a 'tall building' with a height above 18m (6 residential storeys) and only if significantly higher than those around them. (11.44 to 11.46)

The Development Plan states that whilst high density does not imply high rise, tall buildings can form part of a plan-led approach to facilitating regeneration opportunities and managing future growth, contributing to new homes and economic growth, particularly in order to make optimal use of the capacity of sites which are well-connected by public transport and have good access to services and amenities (11.42).

Tall buildings can help people navigate through the city by providing reference points and emphasising the hierarchy of a place, such as its main centres of activity, and important street junctions and transport interchanges. Tall buildings that are of exemplary architectural quality, correctly sited, can make a positive contribution to the cityscape. However, they can also have detrimental visual and environmental impacts if in inappropriate locations or of poor design quality (11.48).

The Development Plan identifies the City Docks as a strategic area for tall buildings in Cork. Four zones appropriate for tall buildings are outlined. These



Figure 1.4: Zone where tall buildings are considered most appropriate in the City of Cork, Extract from the The Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Buildings Study 2021

zones will be the focus for tall buildings in the City Docks, which will provide landmarks for the area (11.49). One of these zones is the Tip of the Island / Warehouse Quarter, where the site is situated. This area is considered as an existing cluster of tall buildings comprising The Elysian and several planning commitments (11.50).

Tall buildings should only be developed in suitable locations identified in the development plan. Tall building proposals outside of the locations specified are not generally considered to be appropriate as they would likely conflict with the overall building height strategy for Cork (11.51). The City Docks Tall Building Zones are the only locations considered appropriate for this densest form of development in Cork (11.52).

## Tall Building Assessment Criteria

The plan provides a criteria-based approach to the assessment of tall buildings that covers the following topics (11.54 to 11.60):

- Visual Impact
- Functional Impact
- Environmental Impact and Impacts on Microclimate
- Cumulative Impacts with other buildings
- Public Access
- Application Process
- Development Guidance



### View Management Framework

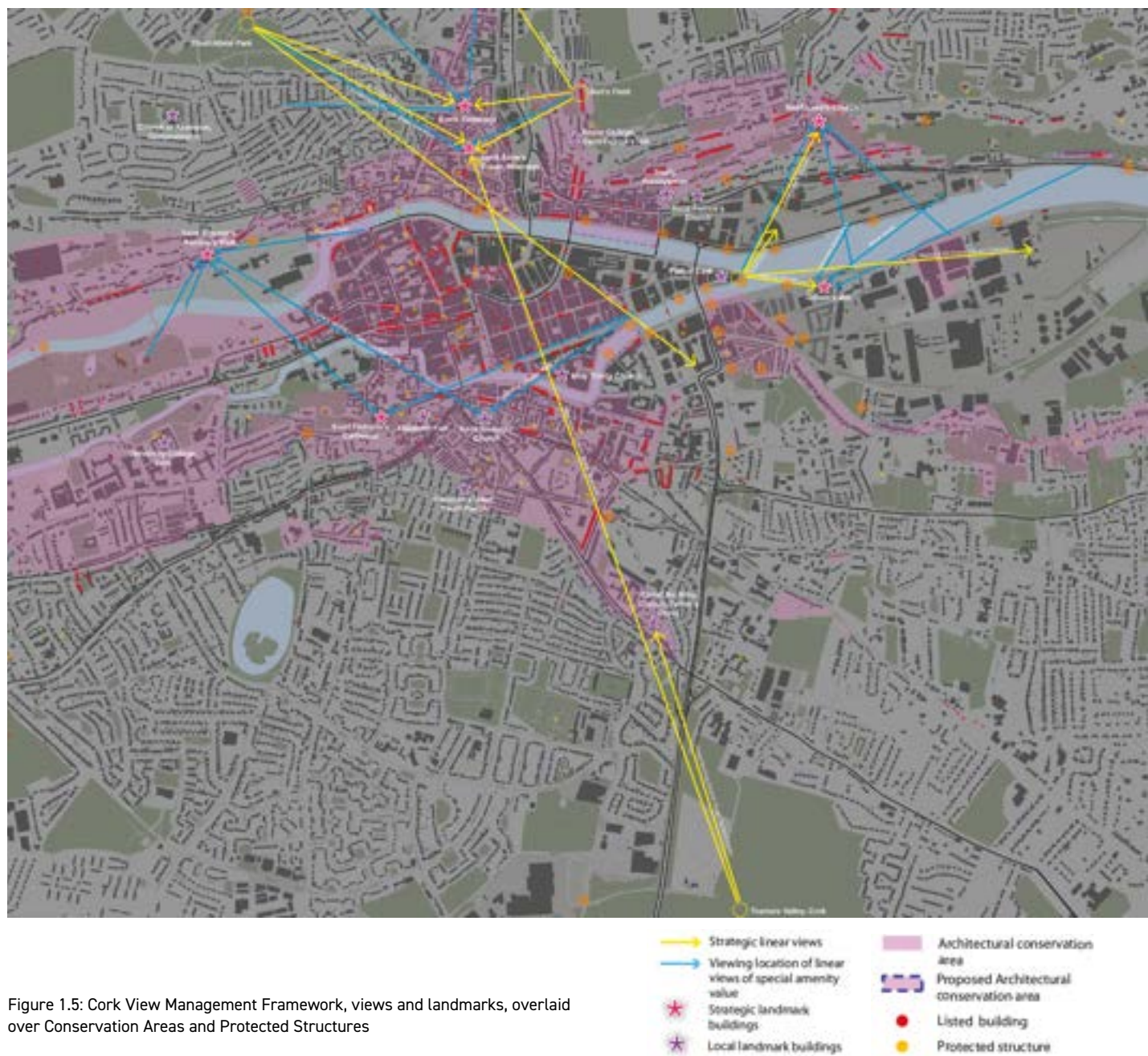
The City development plan sets out a view management framework. Its objective is to protect the views and prospects of special amenity value, and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest, specifically where these are not protected by other objectives of this Plan.

Identified views are seen from places that are publicly accessible and well used and include significant buildings or urban landscapes that help to define Cork City at a strategic level (4.27).

Four types of views have been identified in the plan (6.28):

- Panoramas that offer expansive views of the City.
- Linear views to landmark buildings.
- River corridor views.
- Scenic hinterland routes.

These views are listed in the Cork City Development Plan, Volume 3: Built Heritage Objectives (6.33).





## Cork City Urban density, Building Height and Tall Building Study (2021)

This document was prepared to serve as evidence for the Cork City Development Plan. Part of the document is the Tall Building Strategy.

### Definition

The Tall Building Strategy defines tall buildings as 1.5x the prevailing height and above 6 storeys or 18m. This is less than the definition by the development plan that defines a tall building at least as 2x the prevailing height of an area.

### Appropriate location for tall buildings

It further identifies locations that are potentially appropriate for tall buildings. It identifies the City Docks as the most appropriate area in Cork for new tall buildings. Within the City Docks area the strategy highlights three sub-areas that could be considered more favourably for "more focussed clusters or districts of tall buildings". One of these is the western extent of the City Docks area that includes Kent Station, Horgan's Quay, Penrose Quay area on the North Docks, the Custom House Quay site on the City Centre Island tip and the South Docks area of Kennedy Quay, Albert Quay and the Elysian site.

The site of The Railyard Apartments is situated in this zone identified as favourably for tall buildings.

### Contextual Criteria

The strategy sets out a number of contextual criteria for tall buildings. Tall buildings should:

- "Present a clear townscape merit and justification for their height which ought to be proportional to their role and function in the immediate and broader context.
- Integrate taller elements within larger blocks with varied massing which can mediate between the scale of proposed developments and existing buildings.
- Seek to retain or improve the cross-sectional profile and character of existing streets.
- Reinforce the spatial hierarchy of the city centre and wider context by aiding legibility and way finding, particularly in relation to the riverside and arrival to the city by rail or water."

### Cluster Criteria

In areas where taller buildings may be clustered, then the strategy encourages "that these be designed with varied heights to provide visual intricacy across the existing skyline. In such instances, it is advantageous to position the apex of proposed building heights closer to the centre and lower building heights towards the periphery of the cluster."

### Visual Impact Criteria

The strategy requires tall building proposals to "evidence how they respond sensitively to the local character through visual impact testing of linear views of landmarks; panoramic views; river prospects; townscape and landscape features; and approach road views."

### Community Impact Criteria

The strategy further sets out that successful tall buildings are those which are integrated well within neighbourhoods, balancing the interests of occupants and providing a good living/working (use dependant) environment while strengthening the sense of local community.

### Urban Design Criteria

To establish a positive relationship with their surroundings, proposals for tall buildings should:

- Analyse the nearby urban morphology and, where possible, adopt a finer grain of building footprints, ideally through a masterplanning led approach.
- Provide new or extend existing linkages to roads, pavements and crossings encouraging active travel.
- Improve permeability through the site and assert pedestrian priority where possible.
- Ensure that the width of foot ways are proportional

to their role in the overall movement network.

- Create new, publicly accessible landscaped open spaces that are well-designed and enhance the outdoor amenity.
- Avoid ill-defined areas that have no clear function.
- Introduce soft-landscaping, tree-planting, sustainable urban drainage and other measures which enhance the natural character of the site whilst providing essential urban greening.
- Ensure that the quality and amenity of adjacent buildings and outdoor spaces are not diminished with regards to privacy, overlooking and overshadowing.
- Offer a mix of uses, particularly at ground level, to animate the street and to encourage wider social and economic interactions.
- Embrace opportunities for contextually informed design innovation.

### Architectural Design Criteria

The strategy sets out that tall buildings should distinctly articulate the top, the middle and the base of a tall building. It sets out the following respective criteria:

- The **top** of the building provides opportunities for new inflection points in Cork's skyline. The extent to which it is iconic or sympathetic to the local character should depend on the role of the tall building in relation to its position and wider context. It is preferable that the uppermost floors (which also form part of the top) should be articulated and distinct in material and form to the middle. Roof-top telecoms and mechanical equipment (such as plants, BMUs and lift overruns) ought to be integrated and concealed by parapets.
- The **middle** of the building comprises the main building volume. The building envelope should balance the internal programmatic requirements with outward elegance and appearance to and from surrounding buildings, streets and spaces. A harmonious modulation of elements such as balconies, recesses, and fenestration is desirable.
- The **base** creates a sense of belonging to one's home which is important for the sustained care and longevity of the built fabric. The public realm around the building and its entrance should provide a welcoming arrival experience. Front of house areas

including the entrance lobby, circulation and shared spaces should be safe and well lit. Communal spaces should be easy to access, inclusive and animate the surrounding streets. And back of house areas should be well organised and sufficiently large to accommodate essential functions such as bike storage, bin storage, car parking and refuse collection.

### Other Criteria

The strategy provides further guidance on broader issues, including Safety and Management, Sustainability and Micro-climate and Design Review.

# PART 1

## URBAN DESIGN STATEMENT



# INTRODUCTION

This Urban Design Statement provides the urban design rationale for The Railyard Apartments site.

It comprises the following sections:

**02 The City Context** – this provides an overview of the wider context, the city of Cork, including its historical evolution, topography, character and strategic road network.

**03 Urban Design Analysis** – this describes the site and its immediate surrounding, and sets out constraints and opportunities.

**04 Urban Design Approach** – this sets out a vision for the site, an urban design strategy and principles for development. It assesses how The Railyard Apartments scheme successfully responds to its context and supports place making

**05 Conclusion** – this provides the conclusion of the Urban Design Statement.

## 02 The City Context

### 2.1 Historical evolution of the city

Figure 2.1 shows a map of how Cork has evolved over the centuries. Medieval Cork developed on islands in the River Lee and its original layout survives in the historic core of the city. Medieval Cork was a walled city and the shadow of the wall remains today, influencing the streetscape and street pattern. From the later 17th century, the city gradually reclaimed the river marshes to the west and east. The newly reclaimed areas were separated by river channels which were used by the expanding shipping trade. As trade grew, and as ships grew larger, the port activities moved downriver to the east.

Cork's Georgian City is largely comprised of merchant or residential urban extensions on reclaimed land (now the City Centre Island) and areas of reclaimed land with river frontage (e.g. Grenville Place). Many of the river channels were covered over in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, becoming the wider streets that are the focal places for this area of the city, like St. Patrick's Street, Grand Parade, South Mall, Cornmarket Street and Emmet Place. This area is of great significance to the city as, in the main, it is what today is called the commercial core (or City Centre) with high status buildings and the city's landmark streets.

The mills, warehouses, distilleries, breweries and other industrial buildings which survive in many parts of Cork bear witness to the great economic expansion of the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of these buildings, as well as being of industrial archaeological importance,



Figure 2.1: Historical growth of Cork (site location indicated with red circle)

are also of significant architectural and social interest, and contribute greatly to the city's character. The lanes of small single and two storey houses provided homes for the industrial workers and formal groups of artisan housing extended outwards from the centre from the 1890s onwards.

The twentieth century saw Cork expand significantly beyond the ridges and escarpments that defined the walkable nineteenth century city, particularly after the arrival of the car. The Ford Factory complex (1919)

and Turner's Cross Christ The King church (1931) are two twentieth century buildings considered to be of international architectural significance.

The proposed development is situated in an area developed during the second half of the 19th century.

## 2.2 Topography

A major determinant of the city's character is its distinctive topography. The principal features are the dramatic east-west ridges exceeding 100m at Gurranabraher/Fairhill and Montenotte/Mayfield immediately north of the city centre and the distant Tramore Ridge south of the city suburbs. The ridges place the bulk of the city in a contained east-west corridor. Local changes in topography are significant and have greatly influenced the location and form of city development. Within the corridor are the main water bodies, The Lee along its broad valley, The Bride through the narrow north-south valley of Blackpool and Shandon and The Tramore River, south of the main body of the city.

The proposed development is situated at the bottom of the valley next to the river Lee.



Elevated views over the city are an important aspect of Cork's character

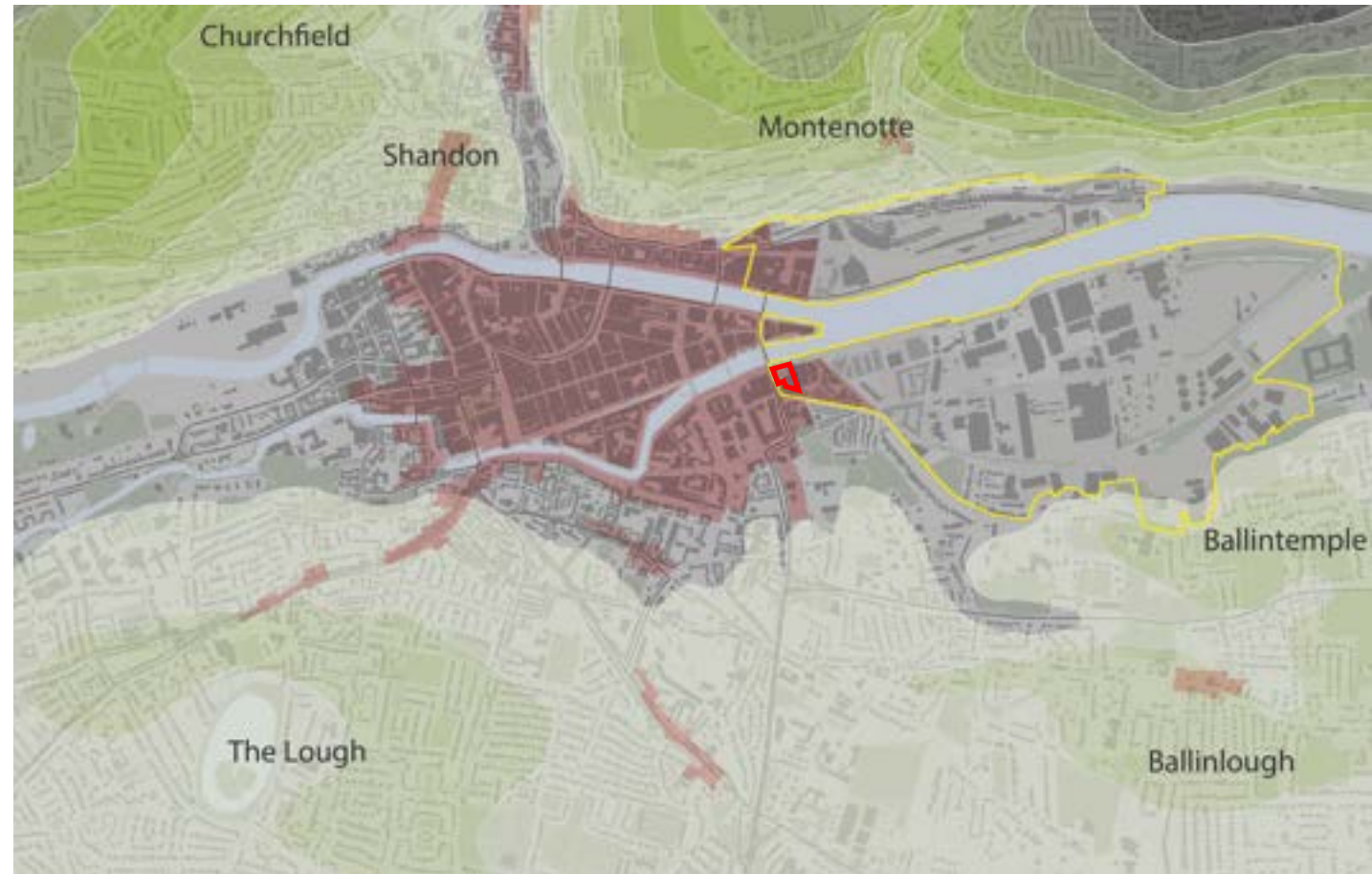
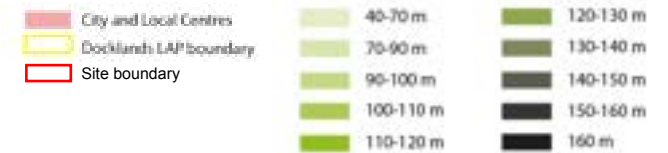


Figure 2.2: Topography





## 2.3 City Character Areas

Figure 2.3 shows our analysis of Cork's Character, identifying the following character areas:

- **Old Town** - this covers the historic core of Cork with a medieval street pattern and a fine grain cohesive urban fabric of great heritage significance;
- **City retail and leisure core (St Patrick's Street and Oliver Plunket Street Area)** - this is part of Cork's Georgian expansion area and the present day retail and leisure core of the city centre. It is characterised by a mixture of fine, medium and larger grain development with many historic buildings. The area has some degree of variation in height and a fairly consistent character, especially along the city's Landmark Streets. Development along Lavitt's Quay and Merchant's Quay are of a greater variety in scale and quality. Key landmarks are the English Market, Crawford Art Gallery and Cork Opera House;
- **South Mall area** - this is also part of Cork's Georgian Expansion, today a focus of commercial activities. The area comprises a mixture of fine and medium grain development with many historic buildings especially along the grand South Mall Street. The area has a relatively coherent height and a strong historic character. Holy Trinity Church spire is an outstanding landmark in the area;
- **Mixed commercial fringe** - this character area is situated between the city centre and surrounding residential areas, adjoining the north and south channels of the river. It comprises a broad mix of former industrial, commercial and housing developments from different periods. It offers a



The Mixed Commercial Area, situated between the historic core and the Inner City Residential Area, has a broad mix of buildings from many periods, including recent urban scale large footprint developments at the interface with the docklands

- less coherent character and some variation in height, with many older and derelict buildings. The area also comprises large scale commercial and institutional developments and sites targeted for redevelopment. The City Hall, Custom House and Bonded Warehouses are important landmarks in this area;
- **Fine Grain Inner City Residential Areas** - these cover the residential areas around the city centre and its commercial fringe, primarily made up of compact terraced housing of two to three storeys. In many places they have a fine grain urban fabric and a very consistent character. This character area is home to many of the city's landmark churches;
- **Suburban Residential Area** - this covers areas of semi-detached and detached housing in low densities, which provide quality residential environments in the suburbs ;
- **Docklands** - this covers the former port and industrial area, now targeted for comprehensive redevelopment. A few industrial heritage buildings such as the Ford Factory provide character to this area.

The proposed development is situated in the Mixed Commercial Fringe Character Area.

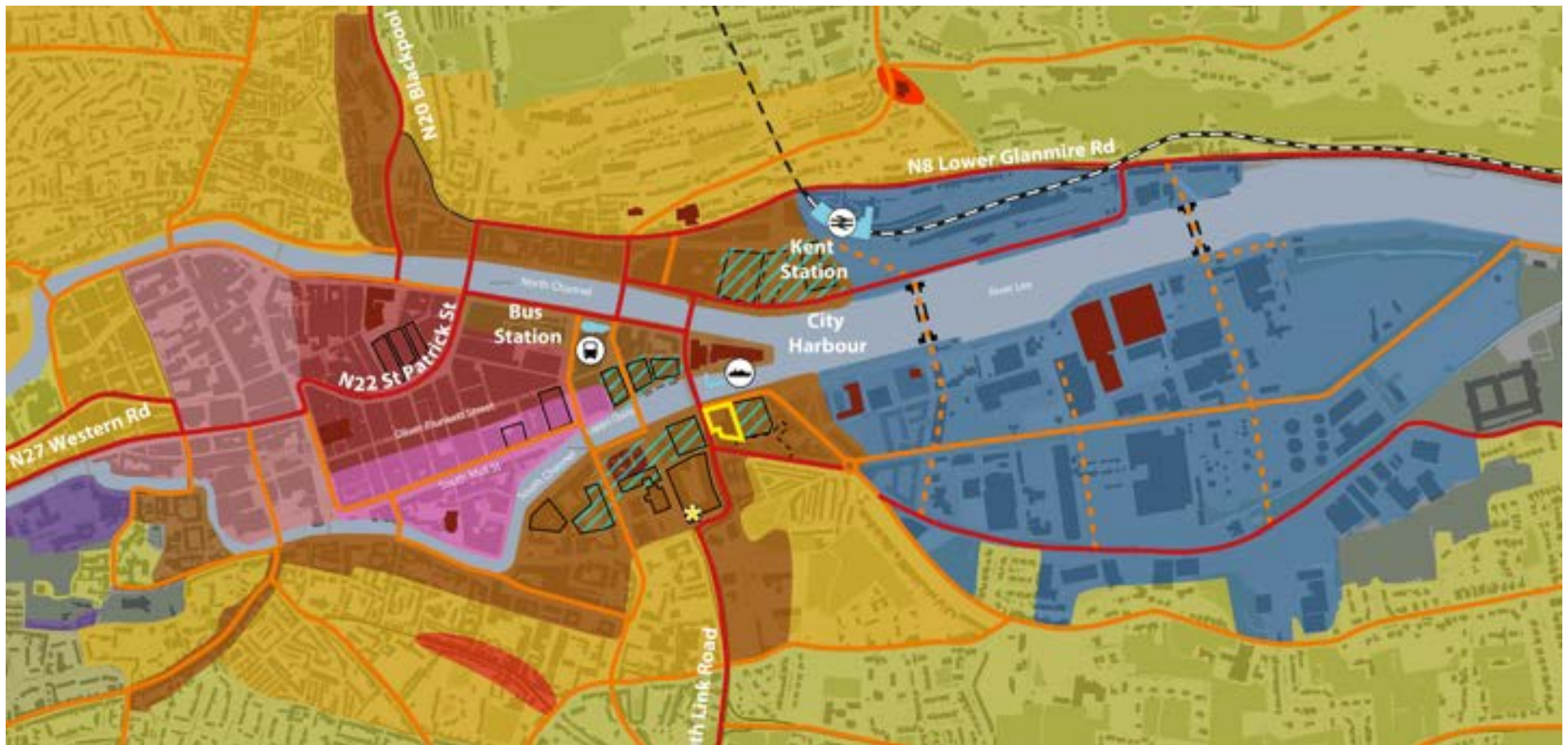


Figure 2.3: City-wide character areas



## 2.4 Strategic road network

The city centre is accessed by four strategic roads. These are Back Watercourse Road from the north, Lower Glanmire Road from the East, South Link Road from the south and Western Road from the West. The roads intersect to the north of the city centre island on the banks of the River Lee North Channel.









The site of The Railyard Apartments is located at the South Link Road which connects the city centre with the N40 and the airport. It is further situated at the intersection with the secondary road network that connects the city centre with the Docklands.



The arrival point of the South Link Road into Cork is marked by the Elysian tower



Figure 2.4: City-wide strategic road network

-  Site boundary
-  Principal road network
-  Secondary road network
-  Proposed road
-  Proposed bridges
-  Underground rail line
-  Overground rail line
-  Transport hub

## 2.5 City public transport network

Cork city centre benefits from high public transport accessibility. It is served the Kent Railway Station and the Bus Station as well as numerous bus routes, which converge in the city centre.

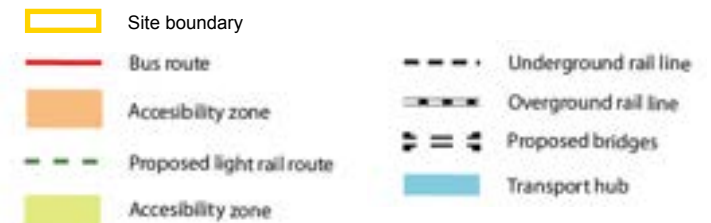
The Cork Metropolitan Area's transport strategy has identified significant improvements to the public transport provision in the city. This will include the development of an improved cross-city bus network with bus priority measures and increased service frequency on routes serving the city centre, especially in a north-south direction.

A new light rail system is proposed to connect the city centre, the Docklands and its suburbs in an east-west direction. The transport strategy promotes the better integration of land use development with sustainable transport provision. As such, growth should be consolidated and intensified around suburban rail, light rail and high frequency bus corridors.

The proposed development is within the city centre, near to the bus and railway station and will benefit in the future from improved cross city bus connectivity.



Figure 2.5: City-wide public transport network





## 03 Urban Analysis

### 3.1 Site location within the wider city

Figure 3.1 shows the location of the proposed development in relation to Cork's city centre, its landmarks, routes and spaces.

The site of The Railyard Apartments assumes a prominent waterfront location on the South Channel directly opposite Custom House and the Bonded Warehouses.

It is directly accessible from the principal road network and located at one of the principal bridges over the river Lee.

The site is in walking distance of the city centre with its amenities and facilities and located in close proximity to the city's two transport hubs, the bus station and the railway station.

The site is situated in an area that has seen significant change in the last two decades and is going to evolve further in the future as older industrial and commercial buildings and vacant sites are redeveloped with modern mixed use buildings of an urban scale.

The site is adjacent to One Albert Quay and Navigation Square, both modern office buildings of 6-7 storeys. Diagonally opposite the South Channel is a string of modern office and hotel developments with heights of six to eight storeys, and on Horgan's Quay to the north of the river, new office and residential development rises to 10 commercial storeys.

Directly south and west of the site are the former Blackrock railway terminus (Protected Structure and



Figure 3.1: Context plan





The site is situated opposite the Custom House site, which has permission for a 34-storey tower



Recent development on Horgan's Quay has introduced a new scale of buildings into this part of Cork



The site assumes a prominent location on the River Lee waterfront



Lapp's Quay opposite the site is a popular waterfront promenade with 6-7 storey buildings

Recorded Monument) and station offices (Protected Structure) respectively. These buildings establish a human scale urban edge along Albert Road and Albert Street. Whilst outside this application, these buildings have prior permission to be refurbished and converted into a bar / restaurant and office building.



The site is in walking distance of the bus station

To the south west of the site is the 17-storey residential Elysian, the first tall building in the city centre. Directly opposite on the Custom House site, the 34-storey Custom House tower with 5\* hotel, restaurant, cafe and other uses has been permitted. To the north west, next to the bus station, The Prism, an 15 storey office



The neighbouring Elysian development was the first tall building in Cork city centre and has set the precedent for other permissions for tall buildings in this area

building has commenced construction.

The site itself has permission for a 25 storey residential building (which is very similar to this application) and a subsequent permission for a 17 storey office building.



### 3.2 Land uses

Figure 3.2 sets out the existing land uses around the proposed development site. The area is characterised by a broad mix of uses.

The site itself, and the shed immediately adjoining the site to the south, was until recently used by a tool-hire business (now by Park Facilities Management Ltd.). Carey House, adjoining the site to the west, contains a few small office suites in interim occupation.

The plots immediately to the east and west of the site consist of modern large floor plate Grade A offices. Further west, bounded by Eglington Street and Anglesea Street is Cork City Hall, a fire station and a police station. Directly south is the National Sculpture Factory that provides studio spaces to artists.

The area to the south west and east is residential in nature. To the west it includes a large apartment block and tower (the Elysian), and also contains some ground floor retail/food and drink units. To the east it contains the Hibernian Buildings, a triangle of late 19th century artisan cottages.

To the east in the Docklands, a new mixed use quarter is emerging on Kennedy Quay, where a number of planning applications have been submitted, including for a rehabilitation hospital, residential and office buildings.



Figure 3.2: Local land uses



### 3.3 Urban grain

Figure 3.3 shows an assessment of the urban grain around the proposed development site.

In general, the area is characterised by a mix of medium to large grain buildings fronting onto the River Lee. A few remnants of finer grain historic development exist in-between larger buildings.

The site itself and its immediately adjoining area to the south and west consist of a collection of sheds of medium grain and the fine grain former station office.

To the east on Victoria Road and to the south on Albert Road (the Hibernian Quarter) are larger fragments of contiguous fine grain development.



The medium to large grain development of One Albert Quay and Navigation Square characterise the riverfront on either side of the site.



Figure 3.3: Local urban grain





### 3.4 Height and massing

Figure 3.4 shows the existing height and massing around the proposed development site. The area surrounding the site comprises of range of heights.

Medium and high development are concentrated along the river frontages. Whereas low development height can be found to the south of the site and in the north of the eastern tip of the central island.

To either side of the site large office buildings, One Albert Quay and Navigation Square, rise to a height of 7 commercial storeys (equivalent of 9 residential storeys). The Elysian apartment scheme to the south is 8 storeys with a 17 storey tower.

Development on Victoria Road and in the Hibernian Quarter is 2-3 storeys. The height of the existing buildings on site, and the adjoining Carey House and former rail station are 1 to 2 storeys.



New development of the Navigation Square, One Albert Quay and the Elysian contrast with the lower existing buildings on site



Figure 3.4: Local height plan



### 3.5 Road network

Figure 3.5 shows the existing road network around the proposed development site. The site sits within a high quality and permeable network of strategic roads and streets.

The South Link Road (N27) bounds the site to the west and connects the city centre with N40 and Cork airport to the south.





Albert Quay and Albert Road, respectively to the north and south of the site, form part of a gyratory of one-way streets that connect the city centre with the Docklands.



The site is accessible from the strategic road network



Figure 3.5: Strategic and local road network

-  Principal road network
-  Secondary road network
-  Tertiary road network
-  Site boundary

### 3.6 Public transport

Figure 3.6 shows the public transport network around the proposed development site.

The site is well located with regard to the city's bus network, being served by both primary and secondary bus routes. The Bus Eireann bus station on Merchants Quay is a five minute walk from the site which provides inter-city travel.

A pleasure boat pier is located on the northern side of the River Lee on Custom House Quay, allowing for water based transport.

Cork Kent Railway Station is 10min walk away.



The city's bus station is five minutes walk away from the site



Figure 3.6: Local public transport

- Primary bus route
- Secondary bus route
- Transport hub
- Site boundary



### 3.7 Walking and cycling network

Figure 3.7 shows the walking and cycling network around the proposed development site.

The site is located within a permeable and walkable network of urban blocks. The riverside promenades provide the main walking routes westward into the city centre. A promenade and public space on Lapp's Quay provides a quality walking link with the city centre. An extension of the promenade eastward is planned to coincide with the redevelopment of the Docklands. A signed east west cycle route passes the site, providing access to the city's wider cycle network.



The site is in easy walking distance of the city centre and connected by cycling routes



Figure 3.7: Local walking and cycling network

- |  |                       |   |                              |
|--|-----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| <span style="border: 1px solid red; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> | Site boundary         | <span style="border-bottom: 2px solid green; width: 20px; display: inline-block;"></span>             | Secondary pedestrian route   |
| <span style="color: blue; font-size: 24px;">➔</span>   | Promenade             | <span style="color: yellow; font-size: 24px;">➔</span>  | Existing two way cycle route |
| <span style="color: blue; font-size: 24px;">⋯➔</span>  | Proposed promenade    | <span style="background-color: lightgreen; width: 20px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> | Existing public/green space  |
| <span style="color: green; font-size: 24px;">➔</span>  | Main pedestrian route | <span style="border-bottom: 4px solid green; width: 20px; display: inline-block;"></span>             | Proposed greenway            |



### 3.8 Conservation and heritage

The proposed development site is situated within the Albert Quay, Albert Road, Victoria Road Architectural Conservation Area. To the south adjoins the Albert Road Conservation area (Hibernian Buildings) and to the southeast the Victoria Road Conservation Area and.

Whilst the site itself does not include heritage assets, it directly adjoins two Protected Structures, the former Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway Offices, Ref. No. PS 1137, which is also a Recorded Monument, CO074-119002, and the former Blackrock and Passage Railway Terminus – Ticket Office, Ref. No. PS 1138, which itself also includes the Albert Road Post Box, which is also a Protected Structure Ref. No. PS942.



The former Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway Terminus, a protected structure, is adjoining the site

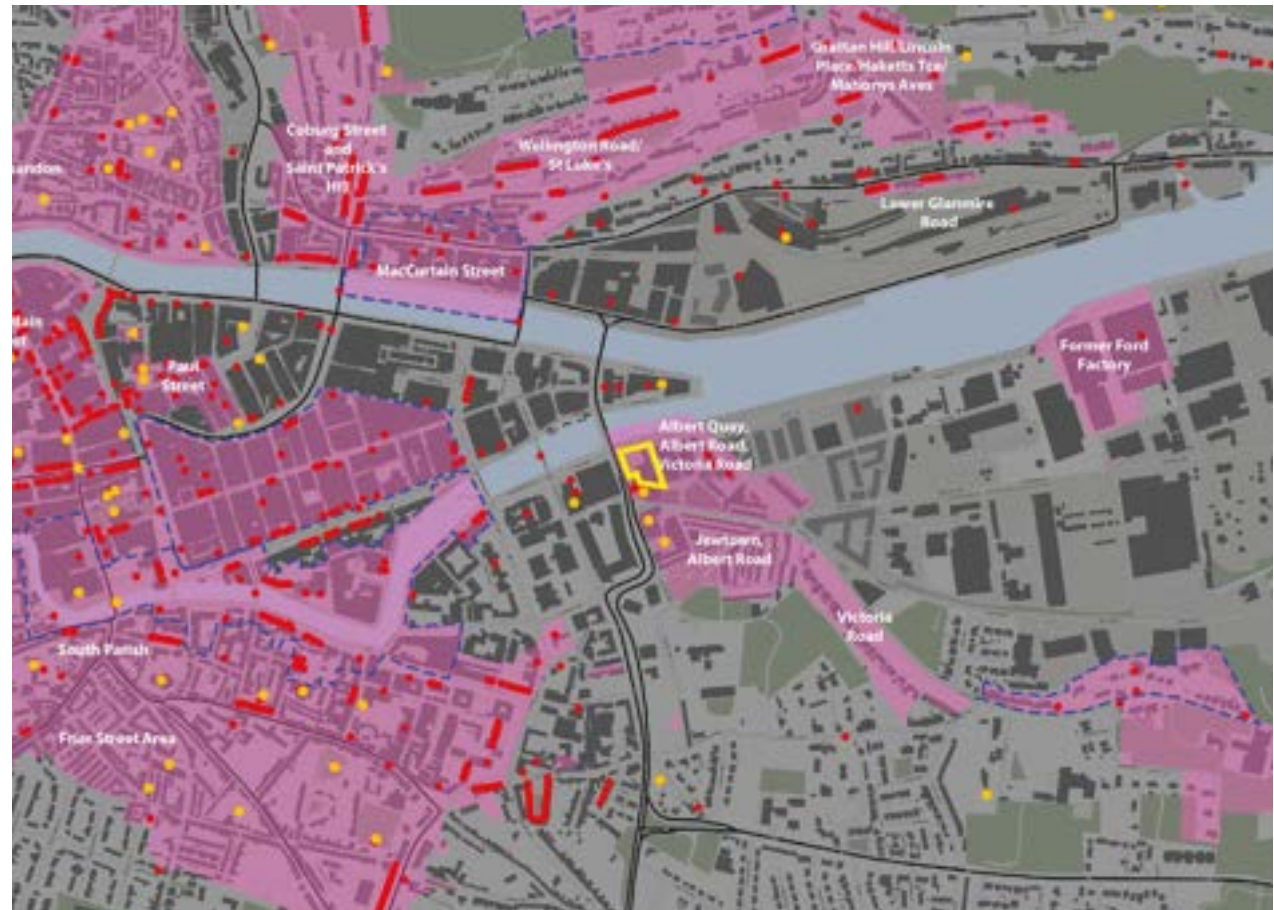
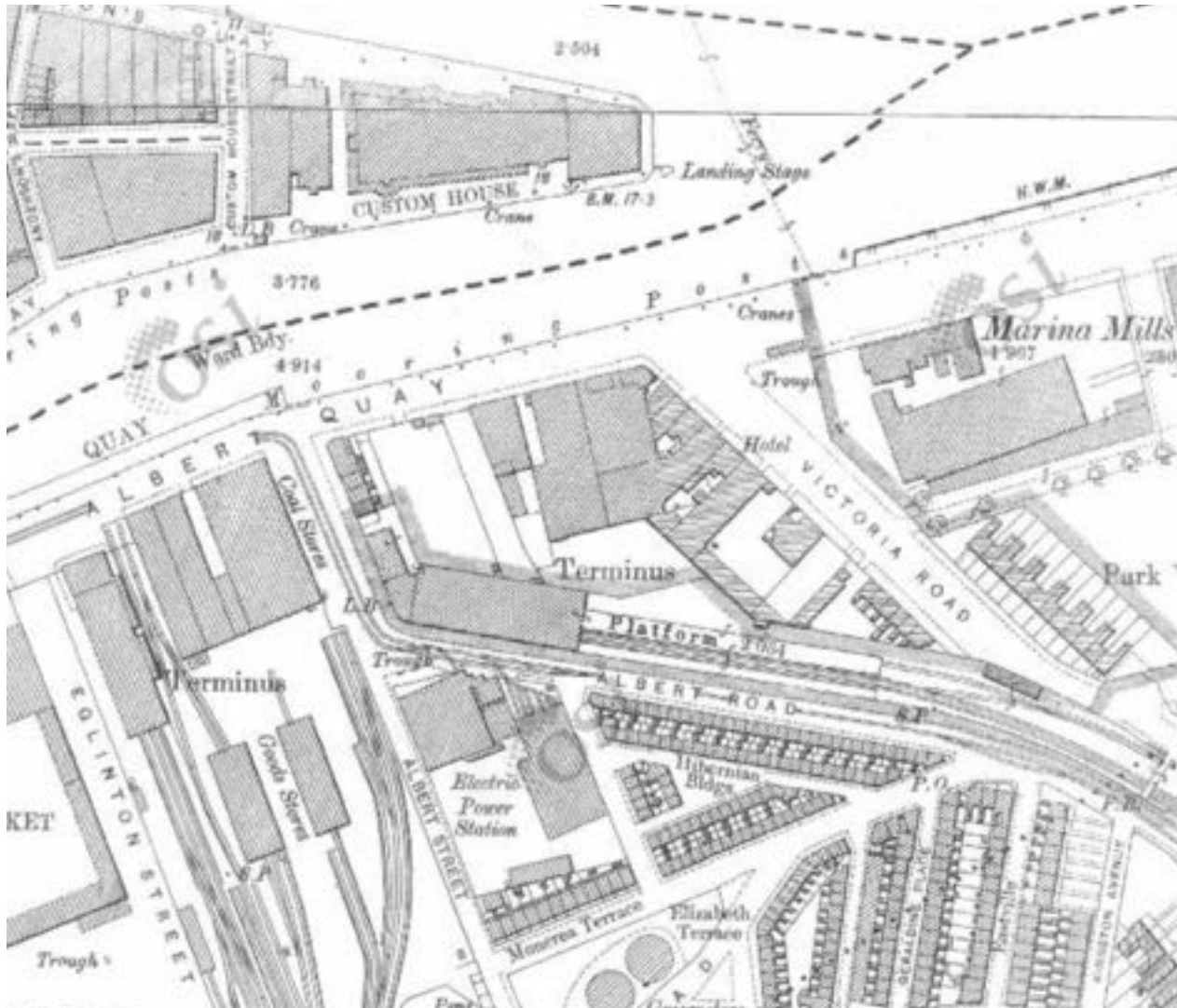


Figure 3.8: Heritage designations

- Architectural conservation area
- Proposed Architectural conservation area
- Listed building
- Protected structure
- Site boundary



1899-1900 OSI map of Albert Quay, showing the rail station and office in use  
(Source: Ordnance Survey Ireland)



The former Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway Offices on Albert Street and Railway Terminus are protected structure



The Albert Road Post Box is also a Protected Structure





Figure 3.9: Constraints



### 3.9 Constraints and Opportunities

The following constraints and opportunities have been identified:

## CONSTRAINTS

- Site surrounded by busy and noisy strategic roads;
- Roads are barriers to pedestrian movement;
- Site situated within the Albert Quay, Albert Road, Victoria Road Conservation Area, and adjacent to Albert Road and Victoria Road Architectural Conservation Areas;
- Site directly adjoins protected structures including the Former terminus of the Cork, Blackrock & Passage Railway Line on site (National Monument);
- Low scale development to the south east of the site; and
- Sensitive views from South Mall, the River Lee and Custom House.



Busy and noisy roads



Protected structures adjoining the site



Hibernian buildings to the south of the site are of smaller scale and grain



Roads are barriers to pedestrian movement



Site situated in sensitive views from South Mall towards the City Hall and the Montenotte Ridge



Site situated in sensitive view from the northern quayside to the city and its church spires





Figure 3.10: Opportunities



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Situated at the entrance to Cork's emerging mixed use South Docks Quarter, so there is an opportunity to deliver a landmark building that signals the gateway into this area;
- Opportunity to bring forward a high density residential development in a sustainable city centre location that will bring vitality to this area;
- Underutilised brownfield site with capacity for intensification;
- Prominent waterfront location with an attractive outlook and access to future riverfront promenade;
- Visually prominent location on the river and at the intersection of strategic roads;
- Active ground floor uses can benefit from footfall along routes between the city and Docklands and attract workers from surrounding office buildings;
- Opportunity to internally connect with neighbouring Navigation Square and create permeability through the block and quiet connections with Shalom Park.
- Opportunity to create its own internal south facing space; and
- Adjoining heritage structures contribute to a strong character.



Situated in Cork's emerging central business district



Prominent waterfront location



Potential to integrate with the Navigation Square development



Transformative new development on Penrose Quay  
(Source: JCD Group)



Lapp's Quay waterfront amenity spaces nearby



In easy walking distance to the city centre







## 04 Urban Design Approach

### 4.1 Our vision for the site

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Through our analysis, our understanding of the city and in collaboration with the design team the following vision for the proposed development was established.

Our Vision is:

- 1) To create a high quality residential led development that supports the economic growth of Cork in a highly sustainable city centre location, served by public transport and facilities nearby.
- 2) To regenerate the urban fabric and contribute to the establishment of a vibrant urban mixed use quarter at the cusp of the historic city centre and the Docklands expansion area.
- 3) To contribute to the city's skyline with a tall building of exceptional quality, which marks the gateway into the city and the entrance to the Docks, helps orientation and way finding, and acts as a catalyst for regeneration.
- 4) To respond appropriately and integrate the adjoining protected structures, support the reopening of the former railway station as restaurant and bar, and to create a high quality public realm connecting with neighbouring Navigation Square.

### 4.2 Urban Design Strategy

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Based on the vision, the policy context and design best practice, a design strategy for The Railyard Apartments was established that sets out seven urban design principles. The principal aim is to ensure a high quality urban design response of the scheme and its integration with its context.

#### URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

##### **LANDMARK**

Create a distinct landmark at the Gateway into the City and Docklands

##### **HERITAGE**

Respond to and integrate heritage assets

##### **PERMEABILITY**

Create a well-connected site, permeability and legible routes

##### **URBAN GRAIN**

Complete the urban block and respond to appropriately to the surrounding urban grain

##### **PUBLIC REALM**

Create a high quality public realm around the building and in the courtyards

##### **ACTIVITIES**

Animate the street space and generate activity with a mix of uses

##### **HIGH QUALITY ARCHITECTURE**

Create a high quality architectural response to the site and its context



The site is situated at a natural gateway location

#### 4.3 LANDMARK

##### Create a district landmark at the Gateway into the City and Docklands

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The proposed development site is situated at an important gateway location in the city, at the intersection of the South Link Road with Albert Quay and at a principal bridge over the River Lee. Furthermore, the site is at the entrance point into the South Docklands and marks the intersection of the city centre and the Docklands regeneration area. Marking this site with a landmark building will make this place distinctively recognisable and emphasise it as a special location in the urban fabric.

This will enhance the legibility of the city and help people with orientation. The proposed building will become a way marker and contribute to a strong sense of identity and prominence to the maturing mixed use quarter on Albert Quay.

For a landmark to be successful it will need to be outstanding and clearly distinguishable from its surrounding urban fabric. The Railyard Apartments manages this in an exemplar way not just by its greater height, but also by its skilfully designed massing and form, the slenderness and elegance of its tower and the carefully design of its architectural expression. The reticent simplicity of the tower, with its campanile-like unidirectional design makes it instantly recognisable in views from all directions as one and the same building, which is important for a successful landmark.

Further commentary on how well the architecture and articulation of the building responds to its context and its landmark role is set out under Principle 07.

The justification for a tall building at this location, including its height and design are discussed in more detail in the Tall Buildings Statement in Part 2 of this document. This sets out that the a tall building on this site with its height and location is justified in both in townscape and policy terms, and it would positively contribute to the city's skyline and the image of Cork.

The layout, orientation and design of The Railyard Apartments will provide a new and meaningful landmark for Cork City Centre that marks an important place and gateway in the urban fabric and provides a strong sense of identity to the business quarter at the south side of the River Lee. It manages this through a elegant slender form and its reticent, unidirectional and carefully articulated design that is distinctive and instantly recognisable in views.

-  Site boundary
-  High visibility
-  Proposed landmark
-  Proposed development



Figure 4.1: Landmark principle



## 4.4 HERITAGE

### Respond to and integrate heritage assets

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Given its central location in the city harbour interface area, and with substantial buildings of urban scale on either side, this brownfield site provides a significant opportunity for intensification. nevertheless, the site is situated in the The Albert Quay, Albert Road, Victoria Road Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), and development will need to appropriately respond to its heritage context.

The Albert Quay, Albert Road, Victoria Road Architectural Conservation Area states that “the aim (of development in this area) should not be to retain all existing buildings and features but to encourage appropriate development of vacant land and under-used buildings by retaining the most significant elements of heritage interest as an integral part of the evolving character of the area. (Vol 3 of the Cork City Development Plan, 2022-2028).

The heritage strategy taken by the permitted development (ABP Ref. No. ABP-305779-19) is to retain and reuse the former Railway Terminus and Station Offices (Carey House), which are Protected Structures and also a Recorded Monument. Unsympathetic later additions to the rear of the former station shed are removed and the buildings reinstated as independent structures with their own integrity as they had when they were originally built as part of the Blackrock and Passage Railway line. Permitted changes to these structures will be implemented (by the same developer) and they establish the context for the proposed Railyard Apartments scheme.

Similar to the originally permitted housing scheme, the proposed development is set back from these historic buildings; opening up a new pedestrian route and pocket spaces, and creating separation and a respectful setting to the heritage buildings.

The bulk of the proposed development is situated on Albert Quay and the corner of Albert Street, where it provides an appropriate urban scale frontage overlooking the River Lee and closes the gap between Navigation Square and One Albert Quay. Towards the south development steps down and is characterised and inspired by the historic character and scale of the heritage buildings adjoining the site, and the tramshed opposite and the smaller scale Hibernian Buildings on Albert Road.

The permitted use of the station shed is for a restaurant and bar. This will offer access to this historic building to the wider public and bring memories of the building’s history and function back to life. The former station offices are permitted to be converted into office space for small businesses, which is an appropriate use that corresponds with its historic function.

The permitted development retains and enhances the former Blackrock railway terminus (Protected Structure and Recorded Monument) and station offices (Protected Structure) and brings them back into viable use. The proposed development is concentrated in the north of the site and a new public route is proposed that enhances the setting and integrity of the

heritage structures. With this approach the proposal responds skilfully and appropriately to the Albert Quay, Albert Road, Victoria Road Proposed Architectural Conservation Area and the heritage assets on site.

The relationship between adjoining historic structures and the proposed development is very similar to the permitted scheme. As before the Railyard Apartments scheme responds sensitively to and integrates well these adjoining heritage assets.



Former Railway Office and Terminus



The proposed development will integrate with the planned refurbished and activated former Railway Station and Station Offices

- Site boundary
- Retained Heritage building
- Proposed Development

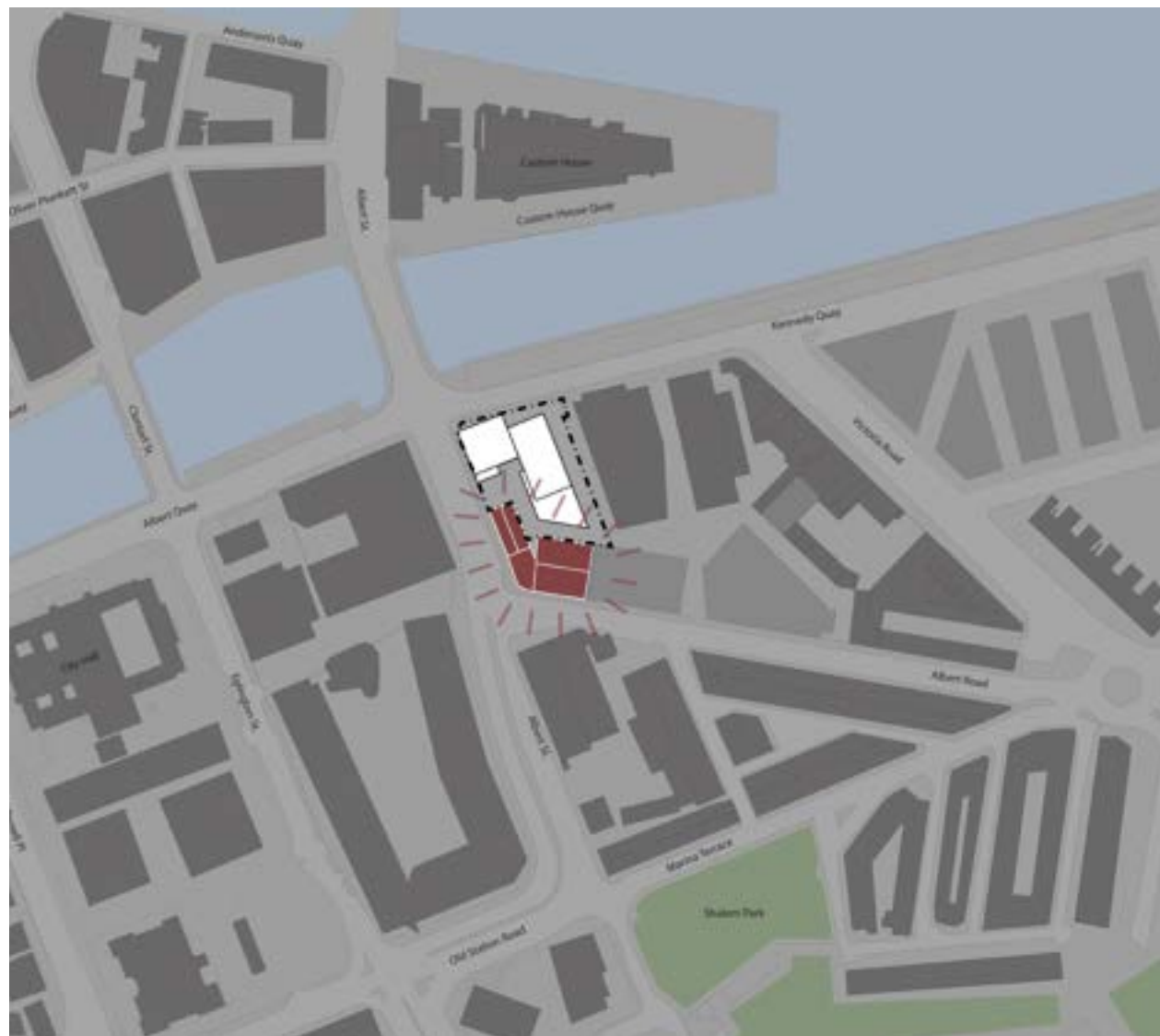


Figure 4.2: Heritage principle - respect and respond to adjoining heritage assets

## 4.5 PERMEABILITY

### Create a well connected site, permeability and legible routes

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The site is situated at a strategic junction in the route network of Cork city centre. It is situated on the ultimate bridge crossing before the Docklands and at Albert Quay with its proposed new river promenade. Albert Street and Albert Road are strategic connections with South Cork and the Docklands.

A pedestrianised lane connects Eglinton Street and the City Hall with Albert Road to the south of One Albert Quay, where a pedestrian crossing facility leads to the site. The Navigation Square development on the adjoining site to the east plans to establish a new public space in the centre of its site, with lanes linking it with Albert Quay in the north and Albert Road in the south.

The layout of the permitted development responds to the network of approaching routes with new connections. The principal frontage and front door of the development is located on Albert Quay, where the development will provide good levels of animation, overlooking and passive surveillance to the proposed new river promenade.

The development sets out a new pedestrian internal route from Albert Road towards the new public space in the Navigation Square development. The route will be attractive for people arriving via Albert Street from Albert Quay as well as from Eglinton Street. Much care went into the design of the entrance into the courtyard space to make it inviting and legible. A small sheltered plaza on Albert Street emphasises the entrance and guides people into the courtyard.



Access from Albert Street to new open space and internal route to Navigation Square

Another pedestrian lane connects with the courtyard space from Albert Quay to the east of the building. As such the permitted development will contribute to a highly permeable street block, inviting people through a pedestrianised and friendly environment of publicly accessible yet privately managed spaces of high quality. This will offer a choice of routes and short cuts across the block and into the Docklands, as well as a quiet route to Shalom Park.

The Railyard Apartments scheme responds appropriately to the sites accessibility from all directions, improves the block's permeability and connects to Navigation Square.





Proposed pedestrian connection with Albert Quay

- Site boundary
- ↔ Pedestrian route
- ↔ Pedestrianised internal route
- New public space
- Pedestrian crossing
- Proposed development



Figure 4.3: Permeability principle

## 4.6 URBAN GRAIN

### Complete the urban block and respond to appropriately to the surrounding urban grain

The proposed development responds to the retained former station shed and ticket office on Albert Road and Albert Street, and completes the street block by re-defining the corner of Albert Street with Albert Quay, and the street frontage along Albert Quay. It establishes a strong urban edge and well-defined street space along these adjoining streets. The scale of the frontages responds to the prevailing character of the street, and enhances their sense of enclosure.

The massing of The Railyard Apartments is composed by the sculptural interlocking of three visually discrete volumes. The change of colour of the lowest of the three volumes further amplifies the distinction of forms.

The Railyard Apartments creates a breathing space in-between the new and the old buildings. This separation allows the appreciation of these adjoining historic buildings in their original stand-alone setting. The development provides a playful assemblage of different scale buildings that has been well coordinated in response to the prevailing grain in the area.

On the riverfront on Albert Quay and on the northern end of Albert Street the development responds to the larger scale and grain of its neighbouring One Albert Quay and Navigation Square developments with a building of appropriate scale and stature. The new building effectively fills the gap in the frontage with two vertical volumes, the corner one rising up as a prominent landmark, and the adjoining one mediating the height with neighbouring Navigation Square.



The Railyard responds to the scale of Navigation Square and One Albert Quay and completes the frontage

On Albert Road and the southern end of Albert Street, the retained station shed and station offices continue to define the street spaces, and to provide an appropriate scale and massing response to the National Sculpture Factory and Hibernian buildings opposite.

Within the development itself a softer and more informal character is established, extending the approach already taken at Navigation Square. The development establishes a courtyard type environment with a series of irregular linked public spaces. As a pedestrianised area with a high quality public realm design and soft landscaping these will create a pleasant and complementing character to surrounding streets. The 'soft core' will offer a refuge and invite people into and through the development to escape the



The 'soft core' of the block - new green routes and courtyards

busy street environment. It offers places to sit, meet and stay and to enjoy a calm, relaxing environment with a sense of history.





## 4.7 PUBLIC REALM

### Create a high quality public realm around the building and in the courtyards

Redevelopment of the site provides an opportunity to provide a new and enhanced public realm and open space offer on the site.

The internal space takes the form of three joined-up courtyards that connect from Albert Street through to the internal space within the Navigation Square development. A linear lane connects the courtyards back to Albert Quay on the eastside of the building. The courtyards are enclosed at their southern side by the low rise former station shed and Carey House, which means that the space will receive direct sunlight over the day. Together with light reflection from the facades, this will make it a pleasant and bright environment to be in. The historic buildings will contribute to the character of this space.

The public realm design around the buildings aim to provide an inviting environment for people to meet, socialise or have a rest in an attractive and green environment. Its offer is not only for its future residents but anyone who is seeking refuge and shelter from the surrounding busy street life. Its green design with planted areas, trees and seating provides visual amenity and offers opportunities for office workers and visitors to sit out and have their lunch break here.

The space will be animated by a new community and arts use at the ground floor of the tower, and a bar and restaurant in the former station shed, that will generate footfall through the space. Both uses will provide outdoor seating and its activities will spill out into the public realm and provide animation.



Green Lane connects the space to Albert Quay

The Railyard Apartments scheme has a nursery at ground level and the courtyard will see a fair share of parents with their children pass through. The public realm design responds to this by providing a number of informal play objects integrated with the design approach. These will provide interaction and further animation of the courtyard.

The open spaces around The Railyard Apartments will contain the following sub-areas:

**1 Albert Quay** – The main building entrance is located on Albert Quay, set back underneath the tower. At the front of the building a wide pavement is provided to offer a generous entrance space and to avoid footway conflicts with passing pedestrian. The space provides visitor cycle parking, benches for people to sit, greening and tree planting. The remains of a former railway track are retained in the pavement as reference to the site's history.



The Sun Trap and Flexible Space

**2 The Entrance Plaza** – The entrance into the courtyard from Albert Street provides a welcoming transition space from the street into the courtyard. The second building entrance is accessed by a ramp and steps, and connects residents directly with this space. A raised outdoor seating area is provided next to the community and arts use at ground level of the tower. The space further provides seating opportunities, visitor cycle parking, tree planting and intense greening along the building edges. A drop-off bay is located on Albert Street to provide direct access for delivery services close to the building entrance.

**3 Carey House Yard** – This yard is characterised by two zones of intense vegetation along either building edge. Informal play objects are integral parts of the landscape design, inviting children and adults to play. Ample seating is provided alongside. Tree

planting contributes to the tranquil character of this part of the courtyard. The landscaping provides an intermediary human scale that bridges the contrasting building scales between Carey House and the residential building.

- 4 Station Yard** – This linear space to the south alongside the historic station shed provides outdoor seating to the bar / restaurant. This will generate animation and activity during the day and early evening. At the eastern edge the yard widens and provides a triangular space for people to gather, sit and rest. It also offers the opportunity to connect with the public realm of the neighbouring Navigation Square development.
- 5 Nursery Outdoor Space** – A dedicated outdoor play area is provided for the nursery at ground level. Part of this space is situated underneath a cantilever of the building, to provide weather protection.
- 6 Green Lane** – This lane provides a short cut between the Station Yard and Albert Quay. Its main purpose is to provide service access to the building including to the bin and bike stores. Landscaping is contained to the edges of this route to provide good visibility along this connection from either end. No seating is provided to limit opportunities for gathering and antisocial behaviour.

The Railyard Apartments will deliver a high quality public realm around the building. It will establish an inviting outdoor amenity space for residents and visitors alike, to pass through, sit out, play and enjoy.

Intense landscaping will give this environment a green and friendly character. Contained by lower buildings on its southern side the courtyards will act as a sun-trap, and offer a bright, protected and attractive environment.

The public realm will contribute to the distinct character of the development and the wider identity of the area.

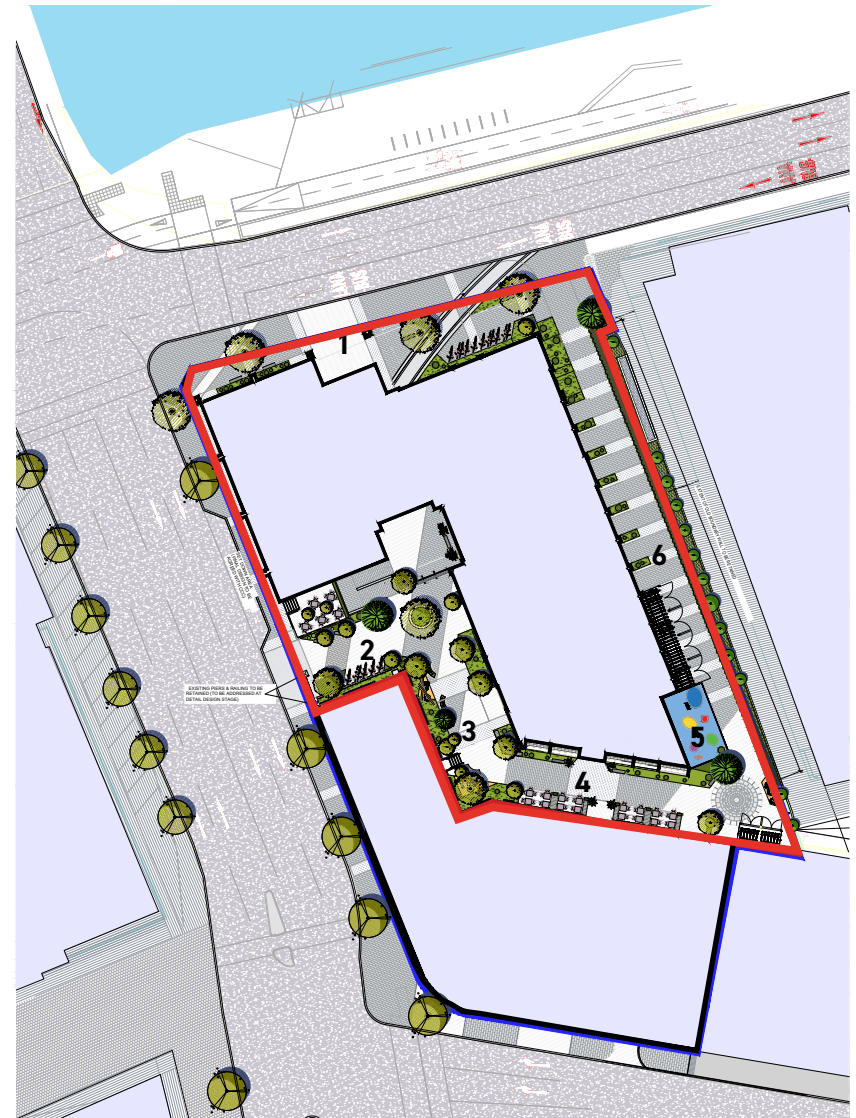


Figure 4.5: Public space principles

## 4.8 ACTIVITIES

### Animate the street space and generate activity with a mix of uses

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The City Harbour area is Cork's emerging central business district that will bring footfall, animation and greater spending power into this part of Cork city centre. The proposed development (as the existing permission) will complement the prevailing commercial uses and activity pattern and provide much needed residential accommodation in the heart of the city centre. Residents will animate the area outside office hours, and bring life to the streets especially in the evenings and during weekends.

The design of the proposed scheme has taken great care in ensuring active frontages are provided along key movement routes around and through the scheme, so that spaces are animated, feel safe and well overlooked. This is a particularly important one on Albert Quay, where the building will help to animate and overlook the planned new Dockland's promenade.

The Railyard Apartments provides active uses at ground floor to animate and overlook surrounding streets. The main entrance into the lobby of the building is on Albert Quay and will generate footfall on the street. The lobby together with the residential amenity spaces in the first and second floors will provide a lively façade that offers animation and overlooking to Albert Quay and the waterfront promenade.

The prominent corner of Albert Quay and Albert Street will be animated by a community and arts space, which with its transparent façade offers good



The Railyard will provide overlooking and passive surveillance to the surrounding street space and the waterfront promenade

levels of passive surveillance to the street space. The community and arts space will also have an entrance and provide outdoor seating at the courtyard on Albert Street and contribute to overlooking and animation to this space.

At the corner of Albert Road and Albert Street the permitted development provides a restaurant and bar in the converted former station shed. This will provide animation to both the street and the courtyard space.

The courtyard is further animated by the second entrance into the residential lobby, a ground floor

residential gym, and a nursery with its own dedicated outdoor space. The former station offices provide small business accommodation that will also contribute to footfall on Albert Street.

The upper floors of the building have a transparent and open façade design which facilitates overlooking and contributes to a sense of safety along the river and in the wider area.





Ground floor foyer/reception and entrance into courtyard on Albert Street provides overlooking to street space

With its residential use The Railyard Apartments will enrich the mix of uses in the City Harbour area, complement commercial activity pattern and support the vitality and vibrancy of the area.

Active frontages are provided at the two street corners of the development to provide animation and overlooking to the surrounding streets. The proposed new community and arts use, restaurant (permitted in station shed) and nursery will attract footfall into the courtyard and contribute to its lifelines and safety. The public realm is further animated and overlooked by building entrances, residential communal spaces and office spaces at the ground levels.

Overall the building design of the proposed development maximises on opportunities to animate the public realm and to provide good levels of public surveillance all around.

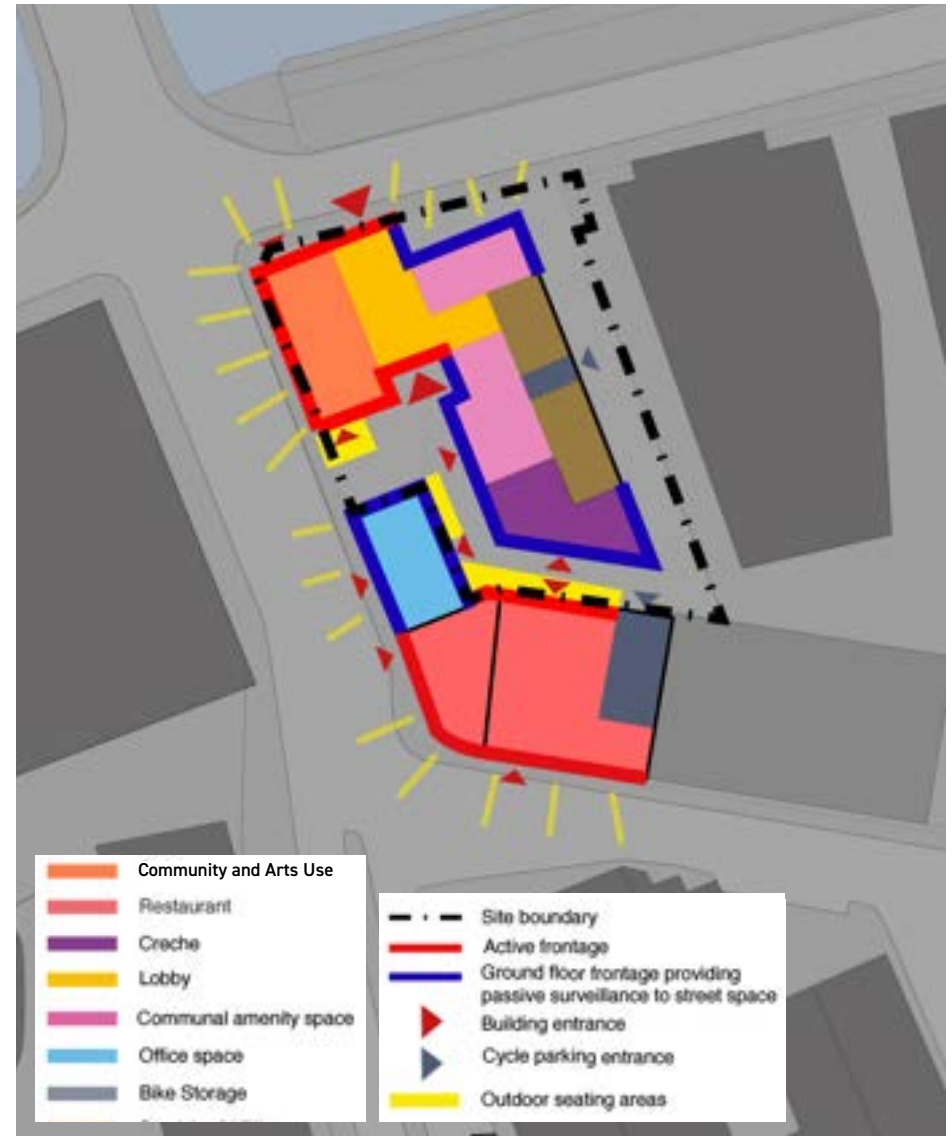


Figure 4.6: Active ground floor principle

## 4.9 HIGH QUALITY ARCHITECTURE

### Create a high quality architectural response to the site and its context

The Railyard Apartments follows the consented development in its approach to massing, form and height. It differs in subtle ways but maintains the elegance and simplicity. As in the permitted scheme it is composed of three elements with 9, 12 and 25 storeys, with the tallest sitting proudly on Albert Quay at the corner with Albert Street. The massing of the development provides a contextual response to the surrounding scale and grain of development (See Principle 04) and integrates the tower element comfortably within that context.

The tower design has been developed to be in harmony with other existing tall structures in the City including St. Ann's Church Tower and the North Cathedral tower. Its square footprint means it will have elegant proportions from wherever it is seen. It provides an appropriate and authentic appearance, expressive of its use and resolved to an elegant simplicity.

The tower remains clearly articulated with a visible distinction into a base, middle and top. Whilst these have undergone changes they maintain their distinctive articulation and a high quality of design. The top of the tower is resolved as a three storey horizontally structured and distinct element, topped by scalloped masonry cornice that create a distinctive silhouette and shadow play.

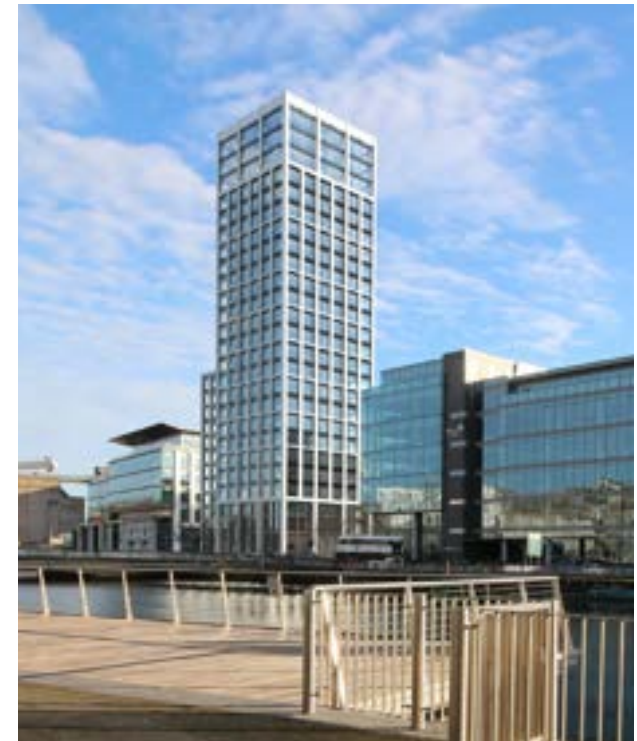
Private outdoor spaces in the tower element will be provided as loggias within the building envelope rather than as external balconies. This enhances the unidirectional design of the tower and its civic



The taller element is supported by the shoulder element that mediates the step-up in height from Navigation Square

expression in views. Modulation of the external frame into two and three storey tall units helps to subtly articulate the middle part of the tower. The base of the tower is expressed by a three storey arcaded approach that resemble in height the top element and create presence in the street space.

External balconies are provided on the two lower building parts, which will express the residential character of the building. The balconies provide depth and help to articulate the facades. They break down



The top of the tower is articulated as a special element and underpins the distinctiveness of the building on the skyline

the scale of the lower building volumes and create variety and shadow play that chimes with the smaller scale and grain of the historic buildings to the south.

High quality cast masonry frames are the primary material of the external facades. High quality aluminium framed glazing systems will be factory fitted, to deliver construction of the highest quality. A neutral colour palette of white and greys ensures the building sits comfortably with both its immediate neighbours and also within the city when seen from distance.

The proposed façade treatment is based on an analysis and interpretation of the details, proportions and materials of the surrounding area and urban context. The intention is to provide a simple yet finely-detailed façade which echoes and complements its surrounding context. The external geometries and grid of the facade are derived from an understanding and rationalisation of the internal floor layout coupled with providing appropriate floor to floor heights and floor to ceiling glazing, ensuring every unit has ample daylight provision while also maximising the views available.

The tripart composition has created a distinctive sculptural building with integrity that skilfully responds to its varied surrounding context and spaces.

It articulates an elegant landmark tower that appropriately expresses its base, middle and top. Its unidirectional design with its articulated crown will become an attractive recognisable feature on the city's skyline and sit in harmony with St. Ann's Church Tower and the North Cathedral tower.

Overall the architectural design and materiality of the facade is well considered and of high quality. A neutral colour palette of white and greys ensures the building sits comfortably with both its immediate neighbours and also within the city.



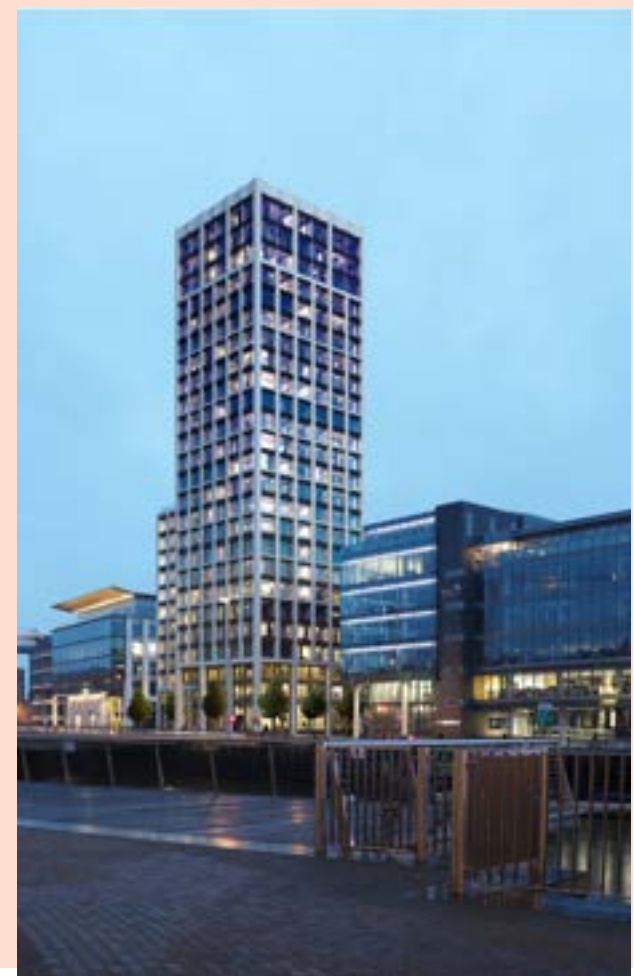
View from south - the two lower building volumes break down the overall scale of the development and step down towards the lower rise buildings to the south



## 05 Urban Design Statement Conclusion

**In summary, The Railyard Apartments comprises little variation to the previously permitted scheme. It presents an excellent urban design and architectural response to the site and its immediate and wider context:**

- Its layout, massing and height is well considered, emphasises its urban frontage onto the waterfront and skilfully steps down towards the smaller scale and fine grain context to the rear.
- The Railyard Apartments has the same relationship with the former Blackrock railway terminus and station offices as in the permitted scheme and supports their future use as a restaurant and bar by providing access and sitting out space. As before, the new building is set back respectfully behind a new courtyard space, that creates an appropriate setting for the heritage buildings and strengthens their integrity. The proposal skilfully responds to the Architectural Conservation Area and the heritage assets on site.
- The design responds to the movement routes approaching the development and creates permeability across the site with two new internal routes linking up with the adjoining Navigation Square development.
- The proposal establishes strong street frontages with good enclosure and contributes effectively to an animated and overlooked public realm. It further establishes a 'soft' environment within the core of the street block and provides protected and attractive outdoor spaces that will complement and enrich the area.
- The proposed tower is well positioned and designed, and will become an elegant, distinct and attractive landmark on Cork's skyline.
- Overall the development expresses a high level of refinement and design consideration. It will bring greater coherence to the emerging central business district of Cork and contribute significantly to the character and vitality of this part of Cork city centre.



# PART 2

## TALL BUILDING STATEMENT

Permitted Prism tower

Permitted Custom House tower

The Railway Apartments

Kennedy Quay development

Holy Trinity Church

Elysian tower

Permitted South Link Road tower

St Nicholas Church

View of the proposal from Elizabeth Fort towards the Docklands with permitted developments



# INTRODUCTION

This Tall Building Statement provides the justification for the proposed tall building at **The Railyard Apartments** site.

Part 2 of this document comprises the following sections:

**06 Tall Building Context** – this sets out the development and policy context of tall buildings in Cork.

**07 Tall Building Rationale** – this sets out a 10-point justification for a tall building on **The Railyard Apartments** site.

**08 Impact Assessment** – this assesses the proposed tall building against policy criteria set by the Cork City Development Plan.

**09 Conclusion** – this provides the conclusion of the Tall Buildings Statement.



View from Horgan's Quay towards the emerging skyline of the city centre with from left to right: Kennedy Quay development, the Elysian tower (only top visible behind Kennedy Square, the proposed Albert Quay, St Nicholas Church, Holy Trinity Church, Finbarre's Cathedral, the permitted Custom House tower, the permitted Prism tower, and the Horgan's Quay development.

## 06 Tall Buildings Context

### 6.1 Cork's tall building context

Over the past two decades Cork has evolved considerably with many ambitious new schemes that are reshaping the image and character of the city. With a strong emphasis in the National Planning Guidelines on sustainable development and the intensification of city centres, higher and taller buildings will become more common-place in cities across Ireland including Cork.

The previous development plans' approach to tall buildings was to direct development of greater height into the Docklands, to the east of Clontarf Bridge. This has resulted in several larger and taller schemes being promoted and delivered in this area.

The development of Lapp's Quay and the building of Cork City Centre's first tall building, the Elysian, have led the way in the early 2000s, with building heights of 6 to 20 residential storeys. This was followed in the last decade by the development of One Albert Quay, Navigation Square, Penrose Quay and Horgans Quay with heights that range from 6 to 9 office storeys (equivalent of 8 to 12 residential storeys).

Recently a number of tall buildings have been granted permission at the interface between the city centre and the docklands. These include the following:

- The Prism, a 15-storey office tower, adjacent to the bus station on the city centre island;
- The Custom House Tower, a 34-storey hotel

development on the Custom House site;

- South Link Road 17-storey residential tower;
- Albert Quay Strategic Housing Development, a 9-25 storey residential tower on Albert Quay (the site of The Railyard Apartments);
- Albert Quay Office Development, a 17-storey office building on Albert Quay (alternative scheme on the same site); and
- Kennedy Quay Development, mixed use development on Kennedy Quay with buildings up to 12 office storeys; and
- Gouldings Fertiliser site mixed office and residential development with buildings of 3- 8 storeys and a tall building of 14 residential storeys.

None of the above buildings have been built yet, although the Prism has technically started construction on site.

The Cork City Development Plan, 2022-2028, has updated its policy position on building height and tall buildings to respond to this emergence of taller development in the Docklands. The Plan stipulates that the majority of new development in the City Docks Area should be 6 to 10 storeys, with heights along the river normally stepping down to 6 storeys. A tall building in Cork is defined as a building of six storeys or taller and as at least twice the height of the prevailing context



Elysian building

height in the area.

The plan identifies four zones in the City Docks, where tall buildings will be appropriate. One zone, the Tip of the Island / Warehouse Quarter, which includes the site of The Railyard Apartments, is considered suitable for a cluster of tall buildings.

The Cork City Development Plan further sets out a number of policy criteria for the assessment of tall buildings (see policy review in Chapter 1. It further makes reference to the Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Building Study (2021) that provides further guidelines for tall buildings.

## 6.2 Existing Site Permission



Custom House 34 storey tower

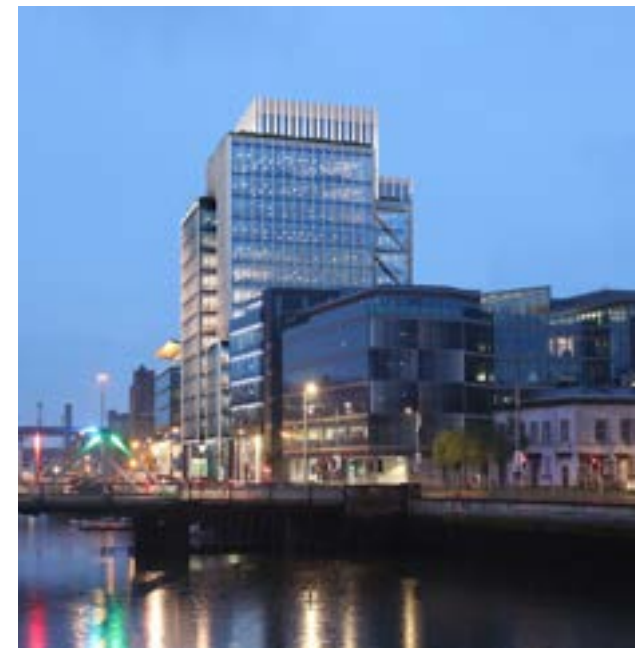
In February 2020 planning permission was granted for the Strategic Housing Development of 9-25 storeys on the Albert Quay site (the proposed development site). The Planning Inspector's report stated that, 'a clear rationale and justification has been set out for a building of this magnitude at this location'. The proposed development is an amendment to this permission. Whilst there are minor differences

between the permitted and the proposed development, their height, scale and form are almost identical.

A subsequent planning permission on the Albert Quay site exists for an office building of 17 storeys (+77.525m). This was not implemented due to viability constraints and the challenging office market.



Albert Quay - Permitted SHD development



Albert Quay - Permitted office development



# 07 Tall Building Rationale

## 7.1 Tall Building Justification Reasons

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This section of the report will set the townscape and urban design rationale and justification for the proposed tall building. This covers the following aspects:

### LOCATION

Situated in a strategic location that is appropriate for a tall building

### SUSTAINABLE LOCATION

Highly accessible location by public transport, walking and cycling

### LANDMARK

Proposed development marks a place of significance and supports legibility in the city

### HEIGHT

Proposed development height is proportionate and appropriate in its context

### CLUSTER

Proposed development integrates with the permitted cluster of tall buildings in this area

### TOWNSCAPE IMPACT

Proposed development responds well to surrounding context

### HERITAGE CONSIDERATION

Proposed development sensitively responds to the historic environment

### VISUAL IMPACT

Proposed development delivers a beneficial visual impact

### COMMUNITY IMPACT

Proposed development delivers clear regeneration benefits

### ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN

Proposed development is of high-quality design.

A detailed response to the tall building policy criteria of the Cork City Development Plan can be found in Chapter 8.



Panorama of the City Docks Area from Penrose Docks

## 7.2 LOCATION

Situated in a strategic location that is appropriate for a tall building

The Railyard Apartments is situated in the City Docks Area, at the intersection with the City Centre area. This location has numerous attributes that makes it more suitable for the development of a tall building:

### 1) PLACE MAKING

The proposed development site is situated in an area that is transitioning from a desolate commercial fringe character with many older, underused and derelict buildings, into a modern city centre district with



Lapps Quay Development

contemporary architecture, a mix of uses and higher densities. The City Docks area has been identified by the City Development Plan as the largest regeneration project in Ireland, and the area at the intersection of the City and the Docks is developing rapidly into Cork's Central Business District. New and permitted



Penrose Docks

developments bring forward buildings of a European urban scale that will transform the character of this area. A tall building in this location has the potential to positively contribute to place making by creating an attractive landmark that will enhance the visual identity of this emerging district.



Figure 7.1: Public transport accessibility and accessibility zones



## 2) HIGH PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Tall buildings should be supported by nearby access to high quality public transport to facilitate sustainable lifestyles and reduce traffic. The Railyard Apartments site benefits from close proximity to the city's bus station and rail station, and is supported by a range of nearby local bus services. The Cork Metropolitan Areas transport strategy has identified significant improvements to the public transport provision in the city, including a new light rail system that is proposed to connect the city centre, the Docklands and its suburbs in east west direction. As such The Railyard Apartments site will benefit from the highest public transport accessibility in Cork in the future, and consequently presents a highly sustainable location that can support significant urban intensification, including tall buildings.

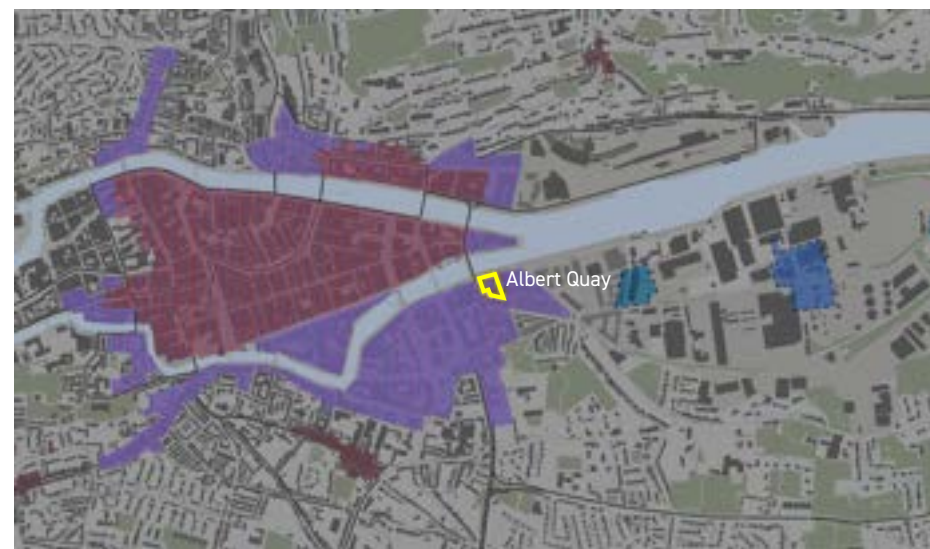


Figure 7.2: Urban centres



## 3) CITY CENTRE LOCATION

The Railyard Apartments site is situated in Cork's City Centre and in walking distance from its retail area, the commercial core, its institutions, education, health and cultural facilities and a host of other town centre amenities. As such it is a highly sustainable location that will serve its residents with a range of facilities at the doorstep, minimising the need for motorised travel. City centres are preferred locations for urban intensification and higher density development as required by national and local policy. City centre locations also benefit from higher levels of activities, and as part of their urban character have a greater capacity to accommodate increased building height and potentially tall buildings.





Figure 7.3: Heritage designations with sensitivity overlay



#### 4) LESSER HERITAGE CONSTRAINTS

The Railyard Apartments site is located outside of the city's main historic core, which is protected by Architectural Conservation Areas and contains many protected historic structures. As such this location is generally less sensitive to tall buildings. However, The Railyard Apartments site is located at the edge of the Albert Quay, Albert Road and Victoria Road Architectural Conservation Area, which contains a number of protected structures and scheduled monuments. Whilst, this does not prohibit tall buildings in principle, it denotes heritage sensitivity, which will require an appropriate response and mitigation by development.



Figure 7.4: Topography with sensitivity overlay



#### 5) LOW LYING LAND

An important characteristic of Cork city centre is its location in the river valley with land rising quickly up to the Montenotte ridge to the north. Elevated land, hill slopes and ridge lines are sensitive to tall buildings, as these would be highly prominent and could have a damaging impact on the character and visual amenity of the city. The location of The Railyard Apartments is on low-lying land by the River Lee, and as such its impact on the skyline will not be amplified by elevated topography, which makes it a more suitable location for taller buildings.

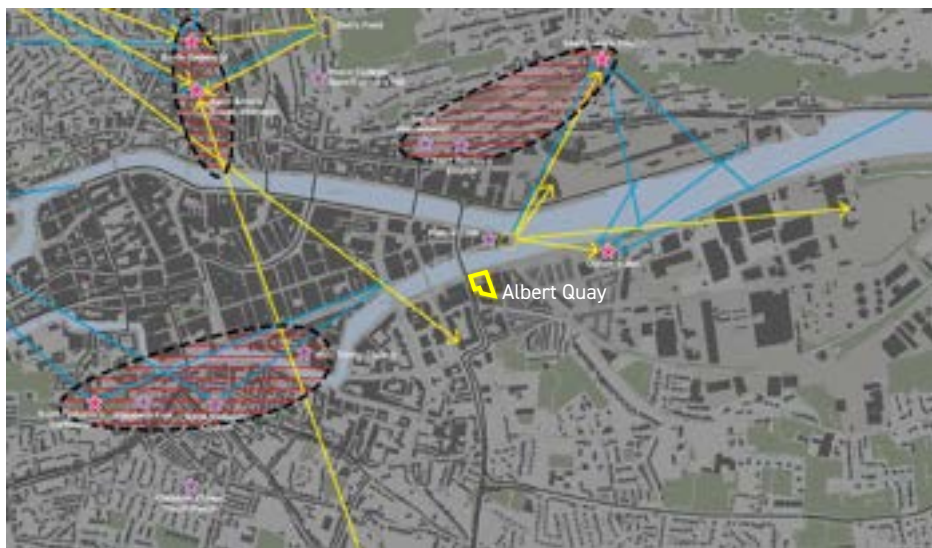


Figure 7.5: CDP landmarks and views with concentrations of historic landmarks



## 6) LESS IMPACTED BY STRATEGIC VIEWS

The City Development Plan identifies a range of sensitive views and landmarks that it seeks to protect from inconsiderate developments. This includes panoramas that offer expansive views of the city; linear views to landmark buildings; river corridor views; and scenic hinterland routes. The Railyard Apartments site is situated well away from the concentration of historic landmark buildings in the city, and as such a tall building in this location would not directly compete with any of these landmarks. Further the location is not situated in the foreground of any of the protected views towards key landmarks identified by the City Centre Development Plan.

The City Development Plan has designated the Tip of the Island / Warehouse Quarter, where The Railyard Apartments site is located, as an appropriate area for a cluster of tall buildings, confirming this strategic appropriate assessment.

In summary, The Railyard Apartments is situated in a strategic location that is appropriate for a tall building. It is situated in a highly sustainable city centre location that benefits from centrality and high public transport access; in a designated regeneration area, where a tall building can positively contribute to place making and a distinct identity; in an area of lesser visual and heritage sensitivities; and amidst an emerging character of other mid and high rise developments. Finally, the area has been identified by the City Development Plan as appropriate for tall buildings. As such The Railyard Apartments site is in principle be a suitable location for a tall building, subject to further considerations that are contained on the following pages.



### 7.3 SUSTAINABLE LOCATION

#### Highly accessible location by public transport, walking and cycling

The Railyard Apartments is located in an area with high public transport accessibility. It is situated in close proximity to the city's bus station (6 minutes walk), the Kent Railway Station (approximately 8 minutes walk when Horgans Quay is completed) and numerous bus routes.

It will directly benefit from the implementation of the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040 (CMATS) which will significantly enhance the accessibility of the city centre even further. The CMATS proposes €3.5bn of transport improvements, which will promote a greater modal shift away from the car and significantly increase public transport connectivity with the city centre.

The Railyard Apartments will benefit from adjacency to the proposed bus corridors to the Docklands / Mahon and to South Cork / the Airport. Furthermore it is in close proximity to other proposed cross-city bus corridors and the proposed light rail line from Ballincollig and Mahon Point.

As such The Railyard Apartments will benefit from exceptional levels of public transport accessibility in the future, rapidly connecting it with the majority of Cork. There will be little need for residents to use a car, supporting sustainable lifestyles and carbon reduction ambitions.

Furthermore the development is situated within easy walking distance of the city centre and its retail, cultural, social and institutional facilities. Proposed improvements to the cycling network will further improve cycle access with other parts of the city.



Figure 7.6: The application site is well served by public transport and local facilities

**The Railyard Apartments are located in a highly connected and sustainable location and the tall building will contribute to delivering compact urban growth in an area well served by public transport, and by this help deliver the growth objectives of the Cork Development Plan as well as the National Policy Guidance.**



## 7.4 LANDMARK

### Proposed development marks a place of significance and supports legibility in the city

The Railyard Apartments are situated in a strategic location suitable for a landmark development. It sits at the street corner of Albert Quay and Albert Road, itself an important node within the city centre and a gateway location in multiple ways:

- The site marks the arrival point where South Link Road, which connects the city centre with the N40 and the airport, arrives at the heart of the city centre and meets the river Lee;
- It is situated on the junction with Albert Quay, which provides the main road access into the South Docklands Development area from the N40 and the city centre;
- It is situated on the final principal river crossing before the South Docks and at the start of the planned Albert Quay South Docklands promenade;
- It is a prominent point on the waterfront, widely visible in views along the river and as such an ideal location for a landmark; and
- It is a symbolic marker of the gateway from the city into the City Docks area, the major regeneration area of the city.

Successful landmark buildings are easily recognisable, contrasting with their surroundings and are meaningful in their context. The Railyard Apartments development with its unidirectional distinctive design will provide an easily recognisable landmark within city views and on the skyline. The building can be seen in street

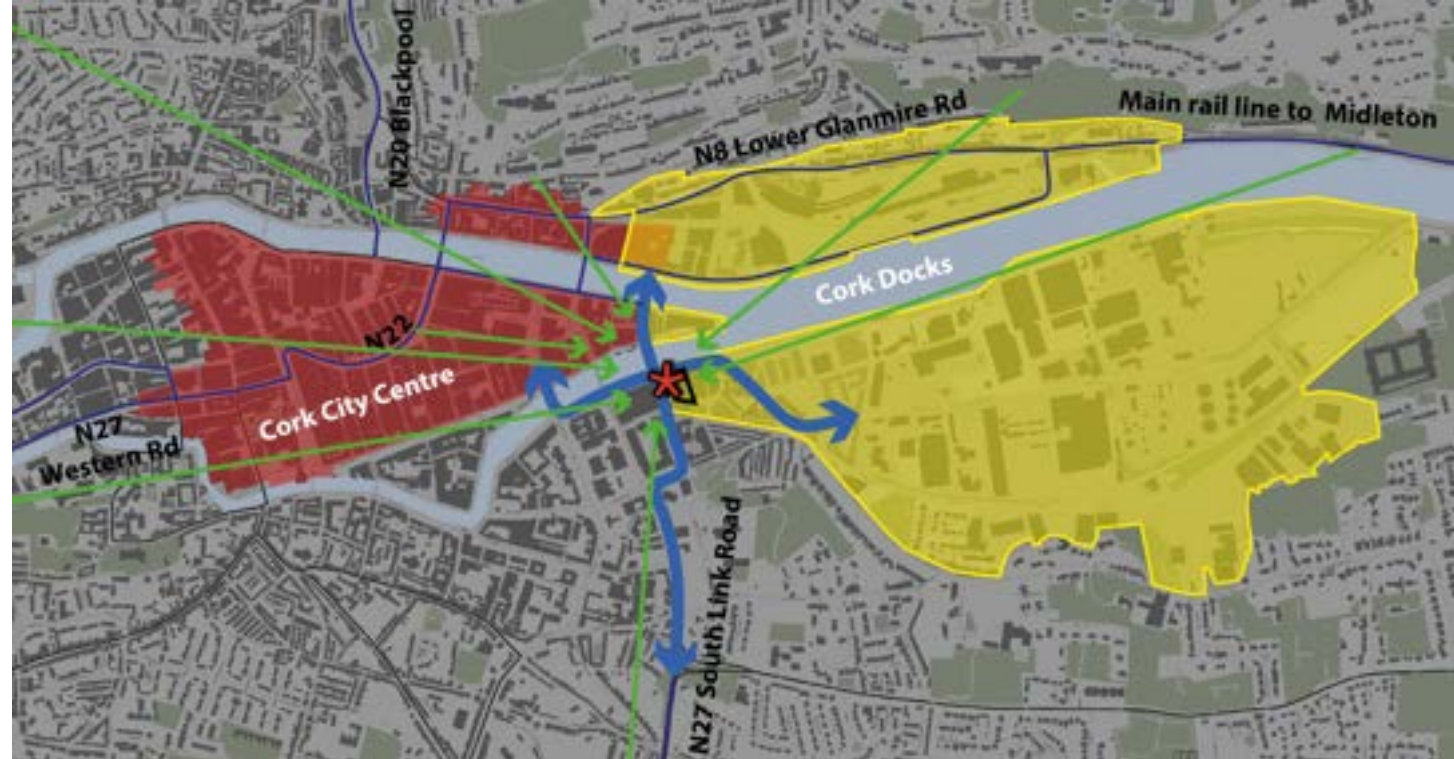


Figure 7.7: Key views towards the Albert Quay proposal, highlighting its role as a gateway building



views of the building from the built-up fabric, in open views along the river and in views from elevated vantage points and will become part of the collective consciousness of Cork's city image. By signalling the gateway into the City Docks area on the skyline it will help with orientation and wayfinding, and overall contribute to an enhanced legibility of the city.

In summary: Its strategic location within the city fully justifies the provision of a landmark building on The Railyard Apartments site. The unidirectional distinctive design will make it a ubiquitous landmark that is easily recognisable in views. The proposed tall building will enhance legibility and the understanding of the city, provide distinctiveness to a strategic node, celebrate the arrival into the city centre and enhance the gateway between the city and the Docklands.



View from Glanmire Road at Myrtle Hill Terrace



The proposal performs a wayfinding function in approaches from the south  
(View from Victoria Road)



The proposal highlights the river crossing in this view from Morrison's Quay

## 7.5 HEIGHT:

### Proposed development height is proportionate and appropriate in its context

A tall building is experienced as 'tall' relative to the prevailing height of their surrounding context. The tallness can be measured as a factor of the prevailing height. The context height ratio (CHR) provides an objective measure to classify a tall building into one of the following categories:

- Large/higher building (CHR <2);
- Local Landmark (CHR 2 to 3);
- District Landmark (CHR 3 to 5); and
- Metropolitan Landmark (CHR >5).

It is good practice that the impact of a tall building should be proportionate and meaningful in its context. As such the height of a tall building should reflect the role and significance of its location in the hierarchy of places within the wider settlement. This means that Local Landmark buildings should mark places of a local importance, District Landmarks mark places or functions that are of district wide importance, and Metropolitan Landmarks should express significance for an entire city or Metropolitan area.

The City Development Plan sets out that the current prevailing height of the South City Docks area is currently 3.9 storeys. The Plan further sets out that the majority of development in the City Docks area should range from 6 to 10 storeys, and on the riverside should step down to 6 storeys. The development on either side of The Railyard Apartments on Albert Quay is 7 commercial storeys (equivalent of 9 residential

#### TALL BUILDING - District Landmark (above 3x to 5x wider context height)



Figure 7.8: District Landmark classification diagram

storeys), whilst development to the south, on Albert Road is lower, with 2-3 storeys. Based on the above, a prevailing height of 6 residential storeys (19m) can be assumed for the location of The Railyard Apartments.

The Railyard Apartments development brings forward a building of 25 residential storeys. In the context of the prevailing height of 6 residential storeys, this results in a context height ratio of 4.16, making the proposed building a mid-range District Landmark.

The Railyard Apartments development is located at the intersection of the City Centre and the City Docks, and marks the gateway from one area to the other. In addition, it marks the arrival point of South Link road in the city centre at the River Lee. As such proposed landmark emphasises a strategic point of significance for the entire Cork city centre and Docklands areas, and as such merits a District Landmark.

In Summary: The Railyard Apartments are situated in an area with a context height of 6 storeys. Its height of 25 storeys makes it a district landmark. Given its strategic location in the city, the location of The Railyard Apartments development is appropriate for a district landmark building, and as such the proposed height is proportionate to the role of its location in the wider hierarchy of places in Cork city centre, and therefor acceptable.





As a District landmark, The Railyard Apartments will be visible from the wider area - View from Horgan's Quay

## 7.6 CLUSTER

### Proposed development integrates with the permitted cluster of tall buildings on the skyline

The Railyard Apartments development is situated in an area that has several existing and approved large and tall buildings (see Section 5.1). The City Development Plan describes this area as “an existing cluster of tall buildings comprising The Elysian and several planning commitments”. The Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Building Study (2021) sets out for areas where tall buildings may be clustered “that these (should) be designed with varied heights to provide visual intricacy across the existing skyline. In such instances, it is advantageous to position the apex of proposed building heights closer to the centre and lower building heights towards the periphery of the cluster.”

During the design process of the previously permitted tall building on the Albert Quay site (that is almost identical to the proposed development) the height of the tall building was carefully calibrated in views, considering both the building on its own as well as the cumulative impact and its relation with other permitted tall buildings.

The proposed development is located central to the emerging cluster of tall buildings. It is situated opposite the 34-storey Custom House tower, which if built, will be the tallest building in Cork. The Custom House tower is at the scale of a metropolitan landmark building and will be the beacon to the entire Cork city on a national and international stage. The proposed development with its 25 storeys is significantly lower and subordinate to



View 18 from Elizabeth Fort illustrates the central role of the Custom House tower in the City Harbour Interchange Cluster, the supporting role of the Albert Quay tower, and the South Link Road proposal located outside of the cluster

the proposed tower on Custom House Quay, thereby expressing a clear hierarchy on the skyline. In this constellation the proposed development would provide a visual stepping stone that mediates the stark height contrast of the Custom House tower with its surrounding context.

The proposed development itself will be the tallest building in respect of all other existing and permitted tall building developments in this area. It is taller than the 15-storey Prism office tower next to the bus station, the 17-storey residential Elysian tower, and the 17-storey residential South Link Road tower. As such it will concentrate greater height in the centre of the cluster and help establish the distinctive cone shaped cluster profile (central apex) referred to in CC guidance above. This applies in both scenarios, with or without the building of Custom House tower.

The context of the existing and permitted buildings confirms the complementary relationship of the proposed development with the Custom House tower and its contribution to creating a sense of visual coherence in the tall building cluster in this location.

In summary, The Railyard Apartments development makes a positive contribution to the creation of a distinctive and well-coordinated tall buildings cluster in this area. The proposed development assumes an appropriate sub-ordinate and supporting role to the city landmark, the Custom House tower. Being of greater height than the other existing and permitted tall buildings in this area, it makes sure the apex of the cluster is located central to the City Docks Business District, even if the Custom House tower is not built as permitted. The positive relationship of The Railyard Apartments development with other taller buildings on the skyline is confirmed by the cumulative visual impact assessment.





Figure 7.9: The Custom House tower (orange) will become the central focus in the City Docks Cluster, further strengthening the unifying characteristic of the cluster, while the proposed development (red) would be sub-ordinate and have a supporting role in the cluster by mitigating the scale change between the Custom House tower and the context, and reinforcing the centre of the cluster. The approved South Link Road building is situated outside the City Harbour Interchange Cluster. The tall buildings in the South Docks and North Docks development are generally of lower height, effectively stepping down from the City Docks Cluster.



## 7.7 TOWNSCAPE IMPACT

### Proposed development responds well to the surrounding context and townscape

The immediate surrounding of the proposed development is characterised by a mix of developments. Two large floor plate office developments (One Albert Quay and Navigation Square) frame the proposed development on either side on Albert Quay, and there are other larger-scale institutional, office and residential recently built schemes nearby. Development directly to the south of the site comprises of the former railway station shed, the Tramshed (the National Sculpture Factory), and other industrial sheds. To the southeast of the site adjoins a compact low-rise fine grain housing area, the Hibernian Triangle, historically home to Cork's Jewish community. To the southwest is a large mixed use apartment development with the Elysian tower. To the north the site overlooks the South Channel with the Custom House and Bonded Warehouses beyond, subject to the permission of the Custom House tower.

The area around the proposed development site is similar to the wider characteristics of the Mixed Commercial Fringe area, as it does not have a single coherent built form. Instead, its townscape encompasses an eclectic mix of old and new development. The juxtaposition of smaller scale historic buildings with larger scale contemporary development is a central part of the emerging new character in this new city district. Key to a successful development is providing a considerate response to the height, form and grain of its varied context.

Towards Albert Quay and the river, and on the top end of Albert Street, the scale and form of The Railyard Apartments respond to and complement



Figure 7.10: Tall Building impact on surrounding character areas



the neighbouring Navigation Square and One Albert Quay developments. The proposed development establishes a coherent development frontage towards the waterfront. Towards the south it steps down and reduces in scale, and as such responds well to the lower rise historic buildings and smaller scale housing on Albert Road. More detail on how the development integrates with the different scales in its surrounding context is provided in Part 1 under Principle 04.

The proposed tower element is situated in a part of the site that is characterised by larger scale contemporary, principally commercial buildings, as well as the open river to the front. As such it is located in an area with a robust urban fabric that can successfully accommodate its height.

The character of the small-scale residential terraces of the Hibernian Buildings Triangle to the south of the site ordinarily would be more sensitive to the impact of a taller building looming over its fine grain fabric. However,

since its construction of the Hibernian buildings in the 19th century, this area has been situated in the context of the Cork Docklands with its large-scale structures and tall ships, including the R&H Hall grain silo, that has for a long time been visible over its roofscape. As such dramatic changes in scale are an integral part this area's history and character over the periods. In more recent years the Elysian and the Navigation Square development have also become contextual features of greater scale. In this context the proposed tower will be perceived as an additional contextualising element. The location of the Albert Quay tower in the north-west corner of the site - being the furthest away from the Hibernian Triangle, helps to keep its visual presence at a similar level as the Elysian. Its impact is further mitigated by the lower rise massing of the building that steps down and creates together with the Navigation Square development an intermediary layer of development.



Impact of the buildings on the Hibernian Triangle is considered as contextual

In summary, The Railyard Apartments development, despite its height, responds positively to the surrounding townscape character. To the north its scale and massing is in keeping with the robust urban scale on the riverfront. The retention of the former station buildings at its southern edge (part of the previously permitted scheme) creates an appropriate response to the smaller scale developments on Albert Road and mitigates

its immediate impact. The impact of the proposed development on the modest terraces of the Hibernian Buildings to the south of the site are in keeping with their historically evolved setting of being seen in the context of similar larger scale building in the Docklands and nearby. As such The Railyard Apartments development responds appropriately and integrates well with its surrounding context and townscape character.

## 7.8 HERITAGE CONSIDERATION:

### Proposed development sensitively responds to the historic environment

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The Railyard Apartments development is considered in the context of the already altered architectural context with the Elysian and One Albert Quay developments, the ongoing Navigation House development, and the permitted Custom House tower and South Link Road tower.

The architectural response of the proposed development fully retains both adjacent Protected Structures, and holds the building line back and provides an attractive landscaping proposal in which the Protected Structures can be fully appreciated in their entirety.

The Planning Report concludes that the proposed development will make a positive contribution to the evolving urban character of the area in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy.

**In Summary, The Railyard Apartments will make a positive contribution to the evolving urban character of the area in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy.**



Preservation and Integration of heritage on site (above), proposed reuse of former Terminus buildings as a bar and restaurant as permitted (below);





Figure 7.11: Heritage Context

## VISUAL ANALYSIS

The Railyard Apartments development is almost identical in height, scale and massing to the permitted SHD scheme, although there are minor variations, including in the expression of the top of the tower and the presence of balconies on the lower parts of the building.

The proposed development can be successfully absorbed into the existing and permitted environment in which it is located for the following reasons:

- It comprises distinct volumes which break down the scale of the building, emphasise its verticality, and relate it to scale of neighbours.
- Its elevation reflects internal floor heights comparable to the adjacent quayside development.
- The crown of the proposed development with its fine pattern and vertical emphasis gives it a distinctive character.
- It relates well to the neighbouring quayfront buildings – Navigation Square & One Albert Quay – with which it now creates a quayside ensemble.
- It supports orientation around this strategic location when viewed both locally and from across the city.
- The dramatic change in scale, land use and building form is consistent with the 'zone of transition' between city centre and port activities.
- The quality of the architectural interface including the set-backs and elevational treatments.
- It contributes to the coherence of the tall buildings cluster in the transition zone between the city centre and docklands.
- It operates visually as an intermediary between other major developments of quite different scale, form and character. This works to bring contemporary mid- and high-rise developments in the city into some correspondence both with each other and with the existing fabric of the city.
- It complements the approved-high rise development at Custom House Quay, establishing a building of intermediate height and scale between it and the surrounding quayside development.





Figure 7.12: Viewpoints of the proposed development overlaid on heritage designations and relevant protected views from the Cork City Development Plan







View 13



View 14



View 15



View 18



View 22



View 23



View 25



View 26



View 27





View 28



View 29



View 30



View 31



View 32



View 33



View 34



View 35



View 36





## 7.9 COMMUNITY IMPACT

### The Railyard Apartments deliver clear regeneration benefits for the local community

The Railyard Apartments development (including previously permitted development that will be delivered as part of this scheme) will bring significant regeneration benefits to the city both of a strategic and local nature. These are:

- Deliver 217 new apartments that provide significant and much needed housing in the city centre, where residents can benefit from high public transport accessibility and easy walking and cycling access to the city's facilities and amenities;
- Provide ample communal amenity spaces for residents, including spaces for relaxation, reading, working, TV etc. and two roof terraces with views over the city and the docklands;
- Deliver a new community/arts (proposed development) and a bar and restaurant (permitted development), that will provide eat and drink provision in this otherwise poorly served area, supporting people working and living in the area;
- Provide a 165m<sup>2</sup> privately run creche that will provides child care for residents and the public;
- Providing small office suites in Carey House to support local businesses (permitted development);
- Create a high quality and well managed public space that is accessible to the general public, and that will provide a refuge from the hectic streets around the sites, and provide a green courtyard amenity space for use by residents, office workers and visitors



Animation of Albert Quay, with the building entrance, lobby and communal spaces, and Albert Street, with a community and arts use

- alike, and informal play objects for children;
- Bring forward a complex underutilised urban brownfield site and help deliver the city's vision for the regeneration of City Docks area;
- Repair the urban fabric at a key location in the city that at present detracts from the character and identity of the area;
- Create a visual beacon to the regeneration of the Docklands, that will instil confidence and act as a catalyst for further development in the area;
- Enhance the legibility of a major arrival point into the city and the transition area between the city centre and the docklands;
- Provide animation and overlooking to the waterfront



Re-use of the Terminus buildings as bar and restaurant (as permitted)

- promenade and surrounding streets and enhance attractiveness and perceived safety of this presently peripheral part of the city centre, especially outside office hours in the evenings and during weekends;
- Refurbish and bring back into a meaningful use the protected structures, allowing public access and their appreciation, and preserving them for future generations (permitted development);
- Provide permeability and potential to introduce a future connection with Navigation Square;

In summary, The Railyard Apartments and associated development will deliver significant regeneration benefits for the local community, which directly and indirectly are linked to the delivery of the proposed tall building.





Refurbish and bring back into a meaningful use the protected structures and preserving them for future generations (permitted development)



Attractive street environment and welcoming entrance to the proposed public space



The new courtyard spaces provide a place to rest and enjoy the city



## 7.10 ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN

### Proposed development is of high-quality design

The Urban Design Statement in Part 1 of this document demonstrates that the proposed development responds successfully to its wider and immediate context and delivers a comprehensive solution of the highest quality in respect of its urban and architectural design.

The Railyard Apartments development responds successfully to its surrounding context and contributes significantly to the establishment of a coherent character of the emerging quarter. It achieves this by:

- Complementing existing new development of Navigation Square and Albert Quay with buildings of sympathetic scale and grain;
- Providing a mix of residential and commercial uses that will contribute to the overall vibrancy and vitality of the urban quarter;
- Completing the frontage on Albert Quay and providing good enclosure and overlooking to the proposed Dockland's Promenade;
- Responding appropriately to lower rise development to the south by stepping the massing down;
- Creating a well defined urban frontage along surrounding streets with appropriate street enclosure;
- Providing connectivity within the street block and joining up the network of routes and spaces at the neighbouring Navigation Square development;
- Establishing a new internal public space and a high quality public realm within the site as place for people to meet, sit out and enjoy;



The proposed development is elegant and slender, well articulated, with clearly expressed base, middle and top

- Preserving the historic station building and offices and bringing them back into meaningful use (delivered as already permitted); and
- Establishing a well-designed ensemble of buildings that will become a distinctive and fitting landmark for this important street corner and waterfront location in Cork.

The architectural design assessment by Citydesigner states that:

- "The height and plan size of the tall element gives rise to a slender form which has been designed to

be in harmony with other existing tall structures in the City, including St. Anne's Church Tower, and the North Cathedral. It has elegant proportions from wherever it is seen. It's relationship with its companion buildings provide a visually supportive context and enhances this elegance.

- The tower is square in plan and consists, in each of the elevations, of six window bays defined by an expressed grid of cast masonry which also plays a structural role. The principle grid and tertiary divisions together give rise to a richness



The proposed development will enrich the skyline of Cork and be a beacon of the new Docklands' Quarter

of architectural detail. The six bays are variously expressed vertically in groups of two and three floors. These groupings and their positioning within the height of the tower, have been very carefully composed to provide interesting overall proportions and to create a rhythmic transition from the base to the top. This irregular spacing anticipates and supports the three storey arcaded base and the three storey top element. The supportive and complementary two blocks, stepping down from the tower, have more regular grids while externally expressed balconies seek, on the east south and west, to provide the equivalent modulation to these parts.

- The top the tower has been changed from the permitted scheme, it still retains its distinctive three storey expression, defined by a change to the vertical grid below and thus more open areas of glass. It now has a 'crowning cornice' which is

additional detail applied sculpturally rather than in a rational way, in order to provide a meaningful relationship with the sky. The scalloped parapet, therefore, has the effect of dematerialising the otherwise rectilinear forms to achieve this relationship.

- The Railyard Apartments achieves an appropriate and authentic appearance, befitting the place, expressive of its residential use, and resolved to an elegant simplicity, which is particularly appropriate in this part of post-industrial Cork. Henry J Lyons Architects have skilfully aligned all the complex requirements a building of this size requires, from intelligent analysis to provide a creative synthesis resulting in a building with 'firmness, commodity, and delight' in the words of Vitruvius' definition of architecture.
- The Railyard Apartments has been achieved successfully, giving rise to attributes of composition, balance, proportion, scale, identity and division. The parts each have their own identity; horizontal and vertical elements are in balance. The representation of scale, between the parts and within the parts, gives rise to pleasing proportions, the latter through a sophisticated pattern of vertical and horizontal division which encompasses a base, middle and top in classic proportions. The middle portion goes further in relating itself to the base and the top through a rhythmic differential in the spacing of horizontal elements. This is most visible in views across the river where the two visible elements each exhibit their own individual elegance. Similarly, in views from the south, the transition of scale from the retained historic railway buildings, through the new southern wing of 9 storeys and the east wing

on 12 storeys, setting up the context for the tall element of 25 storeys, all adds up to a balanced composition. The grouping also provides visual clues of urban legibility leading to the proposed townscape space enclosed within the centre of the site.

- Overall, the development incorporates a very high level of strategic and detailed design thinking, that has been applied to optimising this site, adding qualitatively and meaningfully to the City and for setting a high standard of design for other projects in and around the former docklands, to aspire to."

In Summary, tall buildings by nature of their greater height and prominence must be buildings of exceptional and high quality design, capturing the minds and hearts and have a positive impact onto the place they are located within. The Railyard Apartments development is of the highest quality of urban and architectural design, befitting its special location and landmark role in Cork City Centre. The outstanding quality of its architectural design is further detailed and demonstrated by the architectural design statement by HJL and Citydesigners.

## 08 Impact Assessment

The Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) provides criteria to assess the impact of tall buildings in the city. This chapter assesses the proposed development and provides responses to the assessment criteria together with reference to other relevant documents submitted as part of the planning application.

	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.54	<b>Visual Impact</b>	
11.54 / 1	The views of buildings from long-range, medium-range and the immediate context should not be adversely affected by the building.	The views of The Railyard Apartments from long-range, medium-range and the immediate context are not adversely affected.
11.54 / 2	Whether part of a group or stand-alone, tall buildings should reinforce the spatial hierarchy of the local and wider context and aid legibility and wayfinding.	<p>The proposed development is situated in a strategic location within the city that is justified to be marked by a landmark building. The unidirectional distinctive design will make The Railyard Apartments development an ubiquitous landmark that is easily recognisable in views. It will enhance legibility and the understanding of the city, provide distinctiveness to a strategic node, celebrate the arrival into the city centre and enhance the gateway between the city and the Docklands.</p> <p>The Railyard Apartments development makes a positive contribution to the creation of a distinctive and well-coordinated tall buildings cluster in this area. The proposed development assumes an appropriate sub-ordinate and supporting role to the city landmark, the Custom House tower. Being of greater height than the other existing and permitted tall buildings in this area, it makes sure the apex of the cluster is located central to the City Docks Business District, even if the Custom House tower is not built as permitted.</p> <p>See also Sections 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 of the Tall Building Statement for more information.</p>



	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.54 / 3	Architectural quality and materials should be of an exemplary standard to ensure that the appearance and architectural integrity of the building is maintained through its lifespan.	<p>The form of the proposed development follows that consented through the SHD procedure on 26th February 2020 (ABP-305779-19). It differs in subtle ways but maintains the elegance and simplicity as before with the three elements at 9, 12 and 25 storeys remaining as contextual responses and in integrating the tower element comfortably within that context.</p> <p>The proposed development remains with a visible base, middle and top through these have undergone changes while maintaining a high quality of design.</p> <p>The primary materials of the proposed development are that of a high quality cast masonry frames into which high quality aluminium framed glazing systems will be factory fitted, to deliver construction of the highest quality. A neutral colour palette of white and greys ensures the building sits comfortably with both its immediate neighbours and also within the city when seen from distance.</p> <p>Within the glazed elements are two distinct modules albeit of equal dimensions. One type will accommodate a swing door with Juliette balcony or bolt on balcony and the other will have an inward tilting opening section. Vents for the apartment mechanical ventilation system will be integrated discretely within the facade typically and within glazing louvers at the top 3 levels.</p> <p>The façade treatment of the proposed development is based on an analysis and interpretation of the details, proportions and materials of the surrounding area and urban context. The intention is to provide a simple yet finely-detailed façade which echoes and complements its surrounding context. The external geometries and grid of the facade are derived from an understanding and rationalisation of the internal floor layout coupled with providing appropriate floor to floor heights and floor to ceiling glazing, ensuring every unit has ample daylight provision while also maximising the views available.</p> <p>Materials have been selected for their appropriateness to the project, longevity and design aesthetic.</p> <p>See also Architectural Design Statement.</p>
11.54 / 4	Proposals should take account of, and avoid detrimental impact to, the significance of Cork City's heritage assets and their settings. The buildings should positively contribute to the character of the area.	<p>The proposed development will make a positive contribution to the evolving urban character of the area in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy.</p> <p>The proposed development responds positively to the surrounding townscape character. To the north its scale and massing is in keeping with the robust urban scale on the riverfront. The retention of the former station buildings at its southern edge (as permitted) creates an appropriate response to the smaller scale developments on Albert Road. The proposed development is in keeping with the historically evolved setting of the modest terraces of the Hibernian Buildings to the south of Albert Road, being seen in the context of similar larger scale building in the Docklands and nearby. As such proposed development responds appropriately and integrates well with its surrounding context and townscape character.</p> <p>See also Section 6.7 of the Tall Building Statement for more information.</p>

	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.54 / 5	Buildings should protect and enhance the open quality of the River Lee and the riverside public realm, including views, and not contribute to a canyon effect along the river.	While the tower of the proposed development introduces a new vertical element to the quayside frontage of the River Lee, this operates to provide a figural landmark rather than a sense of enclosure to the river corridor. This is due to the design's particular combination of slender proportions, square plan and identical elevations, characteristics which it shares with designated Strategic Landmarks such as St Anne's Tower (Shandon Bells) and the North Cathedral. This creates a landmark appropriate to its location at the intersection of the key north-south vehicular route with the east-west quays, and close to the convergence of the North and South Channels of the River Lee, and enhances strategic views along the river corridor, particularly on open approaches from the east and upstream views along the river, as well as wayfinding across the city more generally. The shoulder elements of the proposed development also work to relate the landmark scale of the tower to the massing of the quay frontage on either side.
11.54 / 6	Buildings should not cause adverse reflected glare.	The facade expression of the proposed development has been designed to provide an open frame utilising the frame to throw shadow and depth across the facade with the ever moving light across the surfaces owing to the daily rhythm of natural light. Glare is minimised so as not to cause an adverse reflected glare.
11.54 / 7	Buildings should be designed to minimise light pollution from internal and external lighting.	External lighting is provided at street level and terrace levels utilising lighting poles and feature lighting within landscaped areas. Lighting is designed to meet the minimum requirements from a lux level and be sympathetic to the surrounding environs. No excessive lighting will be utilised and all lighting would be standard to the receiving urban environment.
11.55	<b>Functional Impact</b>	
11.55 / 1	The internal and external design, including construction detailing, the building's materials and its emergency exit routes must ensure the safety of all occupants.	<p>The proposed development is designed to meet all of the technical and regulatory requirements of a building of this nature. Materials have been selected for their appropriateness to the project, longevity and design aesthetic.</p> <p>All emergency access routes are designed to prove safe and legible egress routes from the building for all occupants.</p>

	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.55 / 2	Buildings should be serviced, maintained and managed in a manner that will preserve their safety and quality, and not cause disturbance or inconvenience to the surrounding public realm. Servicing, maintenance and building management arrangements should be considered at the start of the design process.	<p>Servicing and maintenance of the proposed development has been considered during the design process.</p> <p>A dedicated set down delivery area and route have been incorporated to minimise disruption to the building user and public realm. Periodic cleaning of the building has been considered and the necessary access requirements allowed for in the design of the building and its curtilage. The façade will be cleaned using a combination of abseiling and ground driven MEWP's for the lower levels.</p> <p>A single access point is proposed to facilitate service vehicle and cycle access, which will immediately transition vehicles into an environment where the hierarchy of priority is weighted towards pedestrians and cyclists. Delivery, waste and service vehicles will access the ground floor of the building via the laneway located to the east of the building, with volumes anticipated to be low. The building operator will manage the use of this laneway to ensure no unauthorised use or illegal parking occurs.</p> <p>The potential future owners of the proposed development, an AHB, have been consulted during the design process to ensure their day to day operational and management requirements have been incorporated into the design.</p>
11.55 / 3	Entrances, access routes, and ground floor uses should be designed and placed to allow for peak time use and to ensure there is no unacceptable overcrowding or isolation in the surrounding areas.	<p>The impact on the road network will be insignificant in the operational stages of the project, as no carparking is associated with the development. The proposed development will generate no additional traffic during the operational phase except for the occasional service and maintenance vehicle which will access the site.</p> <p>Delivery, waste and service vehicles will access the ground floor of the building via the laneway located to the east of the building, with volumes anticipated to be low. The building operator will manage the use of this laneway to ensure no unauthorised use or illegal parking occurs.</p> <p>The layout provides sufficient footway space outside the main entrances to proposed development to avoid overcrowding or footway conflicts with passing pedestrian. All entrances are clearly legible and accessible from the public realm and the internal courtyard, and routes area appropriately lid, animated and overlooked.</p> <p>See also Sections 4.7 and 4.8 of this Urban Design Statement for more information.</p>



	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.55 / 4	It must be demonstrated that the capacity of the area and its transport network is capable of accommodating the quantum of development in terms of access to facilities, services, walking and cycling networks, and public transport for people living or working in the building.	<p>The proposed development is located on the eastern fringe of Cork City Centre, placing the city centre within a short walking distance, but also ensuring that major transport hubs such as Parnell Place Bus Station, Kent Railway Station and St. Patrick's Street (a key city centre bus interchange location) are easily and readily accessible. It is bordered on three sides by public roads and on the fourth by a pedestrian walkway to the west of the Navigation Square office development.</p> <p>At street level, communal space is located at prominent locations on Albert Quay and Albert Street to provide active frontages to these important locations. Also at street level, the site is permeable for pedestrian movement, with an internal circulation route that links Albert Street and Albert Quay East. A single access point is proposed to facilitate service vehicle and cycle access, which will immediately transition vehicles into an environment where the hierarchy of priority is weighted towards pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>Secure cycle parking spaces are proposed at ground floor level, which will encourage the use of cycling for prospective residents on site.</p> <p>In addition, the proposed Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvements Scheme along Albert Quay East have been considered by the design team. This scheme includes a proposed contra-flow bus lane on Albert Quay East which will pass along the northern site frontage, and a two-way cycle track and extensive pedestrian public realm improvements along the northern side of Albert Quay East. This scheme received planning permission through the Part 8 process in September 2019. The Railyard Apartments site is excellently positioned to avail of these significant improvements to facilities designed to promote walking, cycling and public transport. These proposals have been considered during the development of the site frontage on Albert Quay East, including the facilitation of wide footpaths for pedestrian comfort, high quality public realm design, and the inclusion of active frontage.</p>
11.55 / 5	Buildings, including their construction, should not interfere with aviation, navigation or telecommunications, and should avoid a significant detrimental effect on solar energy generation on adjoining buildings.	The proposed development is designed to respond to the receiving urban environment and has been designed to not interfere with aviation, navigation or telecommunications, and avoids any significant detrimental effect on solar energy generation on adjoining buildings.

	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.56	<b>Environmental Impact and Impacts on Microclimate</b>	
11.56 / 1	Wind, daylight, sunlight penetration and temperature conditions around the building and neighbourhood must be carefully considered and not compromise comfort and the enjoyment of open spaces including water spaces around the building.	<p><b>Wind impact:</b> Refer to the Wind Microclimate Report that states that the proposed development is designed to be a high-quality environment for the scope of use intended of each areas/building (i.e. comfortable and pleasant for potential pedestrians), and that the development does not introduce any critical impact on the surrounding buildings, or nearby adjacent roads.</p> <p><b>Daylight and Sunlight:</b> Refer to the Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing Report prepared by IES. This states that no additional shading is visible from the proposed development on existing properties on Albert Street and Albert Quay throughout the year. On March 21st, 96% of the combined proposed private amenity areas situated within the development site will receive at least 2 hours of sunlight over their total area. Thus, complying with the BRE recommendations. When considered individually, all private amenity areas are also exceeding the BRE guidelines. The proposed development will have no impact to the sunlight received to the existing residential properties. Day and sunlighting to the proposed development is acceptable.</p>
11.56 / 2	Air movement affected by the building should support the effective dispersion of pollutants, but not adversely affect street-level conditions.	<b>Air movement:</b> the proposed development will not give rise to nuisance or contravene any air quality standards.
11.56 / 3	Noise created by air movements around the building, servicing machinery, or building uses, should not detract from the comfort and enjoyment of open spaces around the building.	<p><b>Development noise</b> emissions during the operational phase of the proposed development are expected to be from two primary sources as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Services Plant</li> <li>• Bar / Restaurant Activity Noise</li> </ul>

	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.57	<b>Cumulative Impacts with other Tall Buildings</b>	
11.57 / 1	The cumulative visual, functional and environmental impacts of proposed, consented and planned tall buildings in an area must be considered when assessing tall building proposals and when developing plans for an area. Mitigation measures should be identified and designed into the building as integral features from the outset to avoid retro-fitting.	<p><b>Visual Impact</b></p> <p>The tower element of the proposed development operates visually as an intermediary between the existing skyline/roofscape and the approved developments. This works to bring the approved contemporary mid- and high-rise developments in the city into some correspondence both with each other and with the existing fabric of the city, including the many spires, belfries, industrial buildings and other landmarks of the city. The proposed development also contributes to the coherence of the configuration of tall buildings existing and approved, particularly in the transition zone between city centre and docklands. This coherence can take the form of a sequence along the N27, or of a cluster around the interface of merchant city and docklands, or it can take the form of an array delineating a whole area of regeneration in the city.</p>
11.57 / 2		<p><b>Functional Impact</b></p> <p>The building is situated on a self-contained site within a developed context, and only comprises one tall building. The functional impact of proposed development has been appropriately considered (see responses to 11.55).</p>
11.57 / 3		<p><b>Environmental Impact and Impacts on Microclimate</b></p> <p>The proposed development is situated on a self-contained site within a developed context, and only comprises one tall building. The Environmental Impact and Impacts on Microclimate of The Railyard Apartments development has been appropriately considered (see responses to 11.56). Other proposals or permissions for tall buildings are situated some distance away.</p>



	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.58	<b>Public Access</b>	
11.58 / 1	Consideration should be given to incorporating publicly-accessible areas into tall buildings where appropriate. The incorporation of publicly accessible areas in tall buildings should be considered where appropriate particularly in more prominent tall buildings, where they should normally be located at the top of the building to afford wider views across Cork.	<p>Throughout the proposed development publicly accessible elements are provided, with reception areas, a community and arts use, a bar / restaurant and crèche being provide for in the overall development.</p> <p>As the residential element of the proposed development will be private residential accommodation, so as to not have an adverse impact on the resident's security and private residential amenity, no public access will be provided to the upper floors of the building.</p>
11.59	<b>Application Process</b>	
11.59 / 1	Proposals for individual tall buildings must be supported by a strategic design process for the relevant character area to provide the basis for a coherent design strategy for the tall building. Detailed design for a tall building will respond to the principles established.	<p>The design of proposed development has been guided by a coherent design strategy, that is set out in detail in the Urban Design and Tall Building Statement in Part 1 of this document. Based on an urban design analysis of the wider and surrounding site context, a vision was established, supported by clear urban design principles that will ensure that development responds well, integrates and positively contributes to its context. The proposed development responds to these principles, which is demonstrated in Section 04 of this Urban Design Statement.</p> <p>Urban Initiatives Studio, the authors of the Urban Design and Tall Building Statement, have been integral part of the design process, and informed and critically reviewed design decisions all the way through from inception to application submission. The same team was involved in guiding and reviewing the urban design approach of the permitted residential scheme, and the permitted commercial scheme for the same site. Consistent design review has ensured a coherent urban design strategy has been applied by The Railyard Apartments.</p>

	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.59 / 2	Cork City Council is committed to achieving excellence in the design of all developments and exemplary standards in the design of tall buildings given their visual prominence and civic and city-scape status. Cork City Council may utilise a Design Review process for the design of tall buildings and major developments.	<p>The proposed development site is zoned City Centre in the Cork City Development Plan 2022 and is located in Docklands. Section 11.49 of the Plan notes that The Railyard site is located in the 'Tip of the Island/Warehouse Quarter' of the City, which is identified as a suitable location for Tall Buildings by reason of the cluster of existing and permitted tall buildings.</p> <p>The proposed development has the benefit of a live SHD permission (ABP-305779-19) for a tall residential building (8, 11 and 24 storeys over ground floor), and a live permission for a tall office building up of to 17 storeys over ground floor (PA Ref. No. 21/40237, permitted on 20th April, 2022).</p>
11.60	<b>Development Guidance</b>	
	Tall buildings should be designed to ensure that:	
11.60 / 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They are of exemplary design quality and benefit from a positive design review process;</li> </ul>	<p>Tall buildings by nature of their greater height and prominence must be buildings of exceptional and high quality design, capturing the minds and hearts and have a positive impact onto the place they are located within. The proposed development is of the highest quality of urban and architectural design, befitting its special location and landmark role in Cork City Centre.</p> <p>The proposed development has been subject to regular scrutiny during an internal design review process, involving Citydesigner (Richard Coleman) - on architectural design quality, and Urban Initiatives Studio (Matthias Wunderlich)- urban design, tall buildings, visual and townscape impact, throughout the design development up to planning submission. This has ensured that the delivery of exemplar design quality of The Railyard.</p> <p>The quality of the urban design is set out in Part 1 of this document. The quality of the architectural design is summarised in Part 2, Section 7.11 of this document.</p> <p>For further detail refer to HJL Design Statement rev C – Section 3.00; and Citydesigner Design Assessment.</p>

	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.60 / 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The design process analyses the nearby urban morphology and, where possible, adopts a finer grain of building footprint and slender form;</li> </ul>	<p>The proposed development establishes a fitting response to the varied scale and grain around the site. Towards Albert Quay it establishes a coherent urban frontage and closes the gap between Navigation Square and One Albert Quay, marking the strategic location with a landmark building. Towards the south the retention of the former station terminus and offices continues to provide an appropriate smaller scale and grain response to the historic environment on Albert Road. The proposed tall building with its square footprint and unidirectional and carefully articulated design has a elegant and slender form, that responds well to its context.</p> <p>See also Sections 4.1, 4.6 and 7.7 of this Urban Design and Tall Building Statement for more information.</p>
11.60 / 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They integrate positively into Cork's cityscape at a strategic, district and local scale, contribute positively to their immediate context and have a positive relationship with the street and public realm</li> </ul>	<p>The proposed development design has been developed to be in harmony with other existing tall structures in the City including St. Ann's Church Tower and the North Cathedral tower. It has elegant proportions from wherever it is seen. It provides and appropriate and authentic appearance, expressive of its use and resolved to an elegant simplicity.</p> <p>The proposed development responds positively to the surrounding context. To the north its scale and massing is in keeping with the robust urban scale on the riverfront. The retention of the former station buildings at its southern edge creates an appropriate response to the smaller scale developments on Albert Road. The proposed development is in keeping with the historically evolved setting of impact of the modest terraces of the Hibernian Buildings to the south of Albert Road, being seen in the context of similar larger scale building in the Docklands and nearby. As such the proposed development with its tower responds appropriately and integrates well with its surrounding context and townscape character.</p> <p>The proposed development has a positive relation ship with the street and public realm around the development. Active frontages are provided at the two street corners of the development to provide animation and overlooking to the surrounding streets. The proposed new community and arts use, restaurant and nursery will attract footfall into the courtyard and contribute to its lifelines and safety. The public realm is further animated and overlooked by building entrances, residential communal spaces and office spaces at the ground levels.</p> <p>See also Sections 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 of this Urban Design and Tall Building Statement for more information.</p>



	Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
11.60 / 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Their architectural strategy effectively provides a top, middle and bottom to the building;</li> </ul>	<p>The design of the proposed development tower remains consistent with three main elements making up the base, middle and top of the tower. The design aims to combine distinctive yet complimentary components to create a cohesive composition which is elegant and balanced.</p> <p>The top three floors of the tower are articulated with a triple height and double width bay with full expanse of glazed curtain walling and finished with a scalloped profiled capping which crowns the building.</p> <p>The main body of the tower is composed of double and triple storey matching framework which is so arranged as to provide a transition from bottom to top, in 'anticipation' of both and to modulate the sense of moving from gravity to levity. It also ties the body of the tower together visually and also unifies it with the lower blocks elements both base and top. Different colour in the cladding is used both to unify and set apart different sections of the development.</p> <p>The base of the tower, with its triple height columns, which provide a base of appropriate scale, with distinctiveness and grandeur suitable for a tall building on this important city corner. Set within the columns and slightly set back is a distinct facade of glass and steel, with detailing referencing the industrial heritage of the site.</p> <p>The quality of the architectural design is summarised in Part 2, Section 7.11 of this document.</p> <p>For further detail also refer to HJL Design Statement; and Citydesigner Design Assessment.</p>
11.60 / 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They are energy efficient in terms of:</li> </ul>	
	a) longevity (designed to last a long time)	<p>The proposed development is designed to incorporate the guidance; best practice principles to ensure that the long term fire safety, durability and maintenance of materials is an integral part of the design and specifications of The Railyard Apartments</p> <p>High quality reconstituted stone/concrete is proposed on the external facade. This will require no ongoing maintenance or associated costs other than periodic cleaning. The use of highly specified, robust factory finished and fitted windows and doors, glass balustrade Juliette balconies and powder coated aluminium balconies will also reduce ongoing maintenance costs.</p> <p>Please also refer to HJL Design Statement – Section 4.05</p>
	b) embodied energy	<p>The proposed development has been designed to utilise Modern Methods of Construction to reduce both embodied carbon and carbon emissions from deliveries to the construction site. Manufacturing in a controlled environment reduces waste, and it can enable the use of lower-carbon materials. The use of volumetric modular construction (MMC Category 1) for balconies, facades, bathroom and utility pods etc – can cut the number of deliveries required for a typical city centre residential apartment building by up to 85%.</p>

Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria	Response
c) energy consumption	<p>The proposed development has been designed to be exemplary in its operational energy requirements. Each individual apartment is to be provided with best in class mechanical and electrical solutions providing heating and lighting from renew-able sources minimising the long term carbon impact of the building.</p>
d) glazing ratio	<p>Glazing ratios have been designed to meet the day lighting requirements for residential properties of this nature. High quality naturally light spaces are achieved throughout the development. Refer to the IES day lighting report for further information.</p> <p>Within the glazed elements there are two distinct modules albeit of equal dimensions. One type will accommodate a swinging door with Juliette balcony or external balcony and the other will have an inward tilting opening section. Vents for the apartment mechanical ventilation system will be integrated discretely within the facade.</p>
e) amenity space provision for the enjoyment of occupiers	<p>The proposed development has been designed to meet all of the design criteria as outlined in The Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments.</p> <p>The front of house zone of the scheme begins with the public realm around the building and in particular the courtyard within the scheme. The courtyard is designed to be welcoming and calm a place of refuge from the surrounding busy streets. There are a number of resident amenity facilities located on the ground floor and include a gym, a crèche and publicly accessible community and arts use and a bar and restaurant.</p> <p>The entrance and reception are located prominently at the base of the tower. The reception area is designed to have a light and welcoming ambience with a double height space allowing visual and physical connection from the quay side through to the courtyard beyond.</p> <p>There are additional internal amenity spaces provided at first and second floor of the tower.</p> <p>Roof terraces for residents use are located at the 9th and 12th floor. They provide expansive outdoor areas for socialising, recreation and relaxing.</p> <p>Carefully selected planting, hard landscaping and furniture will provide a mix of spaces and will harness the views offered while offering shade and shelter from the elements. Both terraces, due to their elevated positions, will benefit from sunshine throughout the day.</p> <p>Please also refer to HJL Design Statement</p>

	<b>Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Response</b>
	f) nature of micro-climate impacts	As above, under 11.56.
	g) impacts on the amenities enjoyed by neighbouring properties	The proposed development has been designed to positively contribute to its receiving environment, through the provision of high quality public accessible spaces and uses. There is no impact on existing amenity spaces.
11.60 / 6	Additional guidance can be found in the Cork City Urban density, Building Height and Tall Building Study (2021).	<p>This Urban Design and Tall Building Statement responds to the Tall Building Assessment Criteria set out in the Cork City Urban density, Building Height and Tall Building Study (2021).</p> <p>Responses to the following topics can be found in the respective sections of this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contextual Criteria: Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.7 and 7.8</li> <li>- Cluster Criteria: Section 7.6</li> <li>- Visual Impact Criteria: Section 7.9</li> <li>- Community Impact Criteria: Section 7.10</li> <li>- Urban Design Criteria: Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8</li> <li>- Architectural Design Criteria: Section 4.9 and 7.11, and HJL Design Statement; and Citydesigner Design Assessment</li> <li>- Other Criteria: Captured with references in Chapter 08 Impact Assessment</li> </ul>





## 09 Tall Building Statement Conclusion

The Tall Buildings Statement establishes that The Railyard Apartments scheme with its height is appropriate. It sets out the rationale for the proposed tall building, and provides an assessment against tall building criteria from the Cork City Development Plan.

The tall building rationale and assessment establishes the following points:

- The Railyard Apartments is situated in a location that has been identified in the Cork City Development Plan as appropriate for a cluster of tall buildings
  - The Railyard Apartments has the benefit of a live SHD permission (ABP-305779-19) for a tall residential building (8, 11 and 24 storeys over ground floor), and a live permission for a tall office building up to 17 storeys over ground floor (PA Ref. No. 21/40237, permitted on 20th April, 2022 on this site. Whilst there are minor differences between the SHD permission and proposed development, its height, scale and form are almost identical.
  - The strategic assessment of Cork City Centre indicates that the location of The Railyard Apartments is suitable for tall buildings, due to
    - its highly sustainable city centre location which benefits from centrality and high public transport access;
    - being part of a designated regeneration area,
- where a tall building can positively contribute to place making and a distinct identity;
- low lying topography and the lesser visual and heritage sensitivities in this area; and
  - an emerging character that comprises other mid and high rise developments.
- The Railyard Apartments is located in a highly connected and sustainable location and the tall building will contribute to delivering compact urban growth in an area well served by public transport, and by this help deliver the growth objectives of the Cork Development Plan as well as the National Policy Guidance.
  - Its strategic location within the city fully justifies the provision of a landmark building on The Railyard Apartments site. The unidirectional distinctive design will make it a ubiquitous landmark that is easily recognisable in views. The proposed tall building will enhance legibility and the understanding of the city, provide distinctiveness to a strategic node, celebrate the arrival into the city centre and enhance the gateway between the city and the Docklands.
  - The Railyard Apartments is situated in an area with a context height of 6 storeys. Its height of 25 storeys makes it a district landmark. Given its strategic location in the city, the location of The Railyard Apartments is appropriate for a district
- landmark building, and as such the proposed height is proportionate to the role of its location in the wider hierarchy of places in Cork city centre, and therefore acceptable.
- The Railyard Apartments makes a positive contribution to the creation of a distinctive and well-coordinated tall buildings cluster in this area. The proposed development assumes an appropriate sub-ordinate and supporting role to the city landmark, the Custom House tower. Being of greater height than the other existing and permitted tall buildings in this area, it makes sure the apex of the cluster is located central to the City Docks Business District, even if the Custom House tower is not built as permitted.
  - The Railyard Apartments, responds positively to the surrounding townscape character. To the north its scale and massing is in keeping with the robust urban scale on the riverfront. The retention of the former station buildings at its southern edge creates an appropriate response to the smaller scale developments on Albert Road. The impact of the proposed development is in keeping with the historically evolved setting of the modest terraces of the Hibernian Buildings to the south of Albert Road, being seen in the context of similar larger scale building in the Docklands and nearby. As such The Railyard Apartments with its tower responds

appropriately and integrates well with its surrounding context and townscape character.

- As with the permitted SHD scheme, The Railyard will make a positive contribution to the evolving urban character of the area in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy.
- The proposed development will deliver significant regeneration benefits for the local community, which directly and indirectly are linked to the delivery of the proposed tall building.
- The proposed development is of the highest quality of urban and architectural design, befitting its special location and landmark role in Cork City Centre. The outstanding quality of the architectural design is further detailed and demonstrated by the architectural design statement by HJL and Citydesigners.

As such, the proposed development successfully responds to the tall building criteria contained within the Cork City Development Plan, which is evidenced in Section 08, Tall Building Assessment.

Further, the proposed development has followed the guidance contained in the Cork City Urban density, Building Height and Tall Building Study (2021), which is demonstrated in Part 1, Urban Design Statement, and Section 7, Tall Building Rationale.



Concluding from the above The Railyard Apartments development delivers successfully against Cork City tall building policy criteria and guidance, and as such is justified and should be permitted.



Proposed development seen from Elizabeth Fort, together with the Prism (permitted), the Custom House Quay tower (permitted), the South Link tower (permitted) and other permitted development at Horgan's Quay, Penrose Quay, Navigation Square, Kennedy Quay and Gouldings Site

