



BELGARD SQUARE EAST, BLESSINGTON ROAD & BELGARD ROAD, TALLAGHT, DUBLIN 24

AN BORD PLEANÁLA

MAY 2022

DESIGN, TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Prepared by Citydesigner for Ravensbrook Limited

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I.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Citydesigner ('the consultancy') has been commissioned by Ravensbrook Limited ('the applicant') to provide townscape and visual assessment advice on the proposed development of the site at Belgard Square East, Belgard Road and Blessington Road, Dublin 24.
- 1.2 The site (marked in red in Fig. 1.1) lies within Tallaght town centre. It is bound by Belgard Road to the east, Blessington Road to the north and Belgard Square East to the west, and is in an undeveloped, brownfield condition. The development, designed by Henry J Lyons Architects, comprises a mixed-use development including 310 no. "Build-to-Rent" residential apartments and retail/commercial use (c. 2,289 sqm) on a c. 1.25 ha site.
- 1.3 During the design process for this proposed development, the consultancy has assisted the architects, Henry J Lyons Architects ('the architects'), by providing assessment, feedback and collaborating on their design proposals. This Design, Townscape and Visual Assessment (DTVA) forms part of the planning application.
- 1.4 Chapter 3.0 provides an overview of the history of the site and its surroundings. This is followed in Chapter 4.0 by an assessment of the design quality of the proposals.
- 1.5 The potential visual effects of the scheme on the townscape are illustrated and assessed in Chapter 5.0. Chapter 2.0 sets out the methodology used for these assessments. Concluding comments are provided in Chapter 6.0.

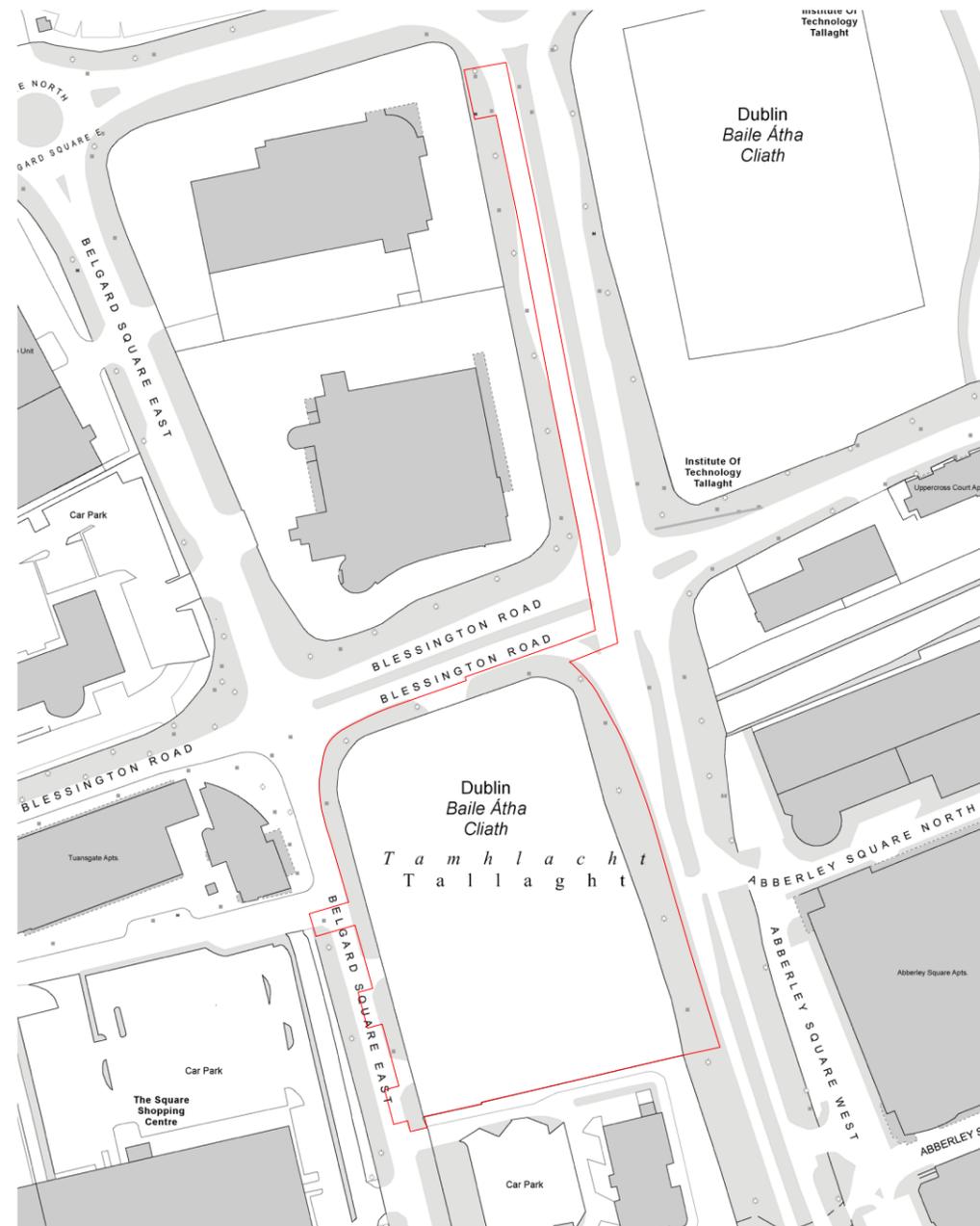


Fig. I.1: Site location plan with the extents of the site is marked in red.

2.0 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Introduction

2.1 This chapter sets out the methodology developed by the consultancy to assess the likely effects of new development on surrounding townscape and on visual amenity. It draws upon best practice guidance set out in 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA), Third Edition, 2013, and takes into account relevant national, regional and local planning policies and guidance set out in paragraph 2.3.

Planning policy and guidance

2.2 The design, townscape and visual assessment (DTVA) methodology and the process undertaken takes into account relevant planning policy and guidance, in particular those relating to townscape, urban design and significant views. The following policy and guidance is relevant:

International level:

- The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment UK, Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Third Edition, 2013; and
- The Landscape Institute, Townscape Character Assessment Technical Information Note 05/2017 (Revised 2018).

National Level:

- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended);
- Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act, 2016;
- Government of Ireland, Project Ireland 2040, National Planning Framework, 2018;
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2011; and
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, December 2018;

Regional and Local Level:

- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031;
- South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022;
- Tallaght Town Centre Local Area Plan 2020; and
- Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Defining the Study Area

2.3 The 'study area' for the townscape and visual assessments in this report has been decided based on the professional judgement of the assessor and informed by site visits, desktop research of the immediate and wider

context, land contours, map analysis and early extrapolations from computer model view studies in order to views that may potentially be affected by the proposed development, depending on their sensitivity and their location in relation to the site.

Design quality and its relevance to assessments

2.4 The final design is assessed in Chapter 4.0 of this report, taking into account national, regional/strategic and local policy requirements. The material used to undertake the assessment includes the drawings prepared by Henry J Lyons Architects and Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) produced by visualisation Visual Lab.

2.5 The consultancy has worked with the architects and design team to fully understand the proposed development and to provide feedback on design throughout its development, as well as on the potential effects on townscape and visual amenity. Through this process, the intention has been to achieve a high quality of design in order to maximise the beneficial effects of the proposed development on townscape and views.

2.6 Computer models were used during the design process to test how different iterations of the design would affect views. This information was used to make early assessments of the effects and thereby inform modifications to the design.

Townscape and Visual Assessment

2.7 Townscape and visual assessment considers the likely townscape and visual effects of the proposed development, i.e. identifies how and to what degree it would affect the elements that make up the townscape, its aesthetic and perceptual aspects, its distinctive character, and the changes in visual amenity resulting from the proposed development as seen from a specific viewpoint. It assesses the effect of changes in the view on the people experiencing views. It involves quantitative, qualitative and perceptual measurements. It is not possible to apply the qualitative or perceptual measurements wholly scientifically, but they are worth assessing since judgements are informed by them.

2.8 The visual assessment was carried out using:

- (i) the existing fully surveyed view photograph; and
- (ii) a photorealistic montage; or a wire-line outline.

2.9 The assessment commentary includes:

- (i) a description of the existing view ('Existing');
- (ii) a description of how the proposal will change the view ('Proposed'); and
- (iii) the effect of the proposal on human perception ('Effect').

2.10 The assessment is based on representative Accurate Visual Representation (AVR) images of the proposed development from 16 viewpoints.

2.11 The AVRs represent a general spread of views which illustrate the urban relationships likely to arise between the proposal and its surroundings. Each viewpoint position was chosen to represent 'maximum exposure' of the proposed development and its 'maximum conjunction' with sensitive townscape elements within its context, including heritage assets. The AVRs were created by incorporating a computer model of the proposal accurately into surveyed photographs of the chosen views. Visual Lab's methodology for creating AVRs is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

2.12 It is acknowledged that the viewers of the images presented in Chapter 5.0 may have different responses to the appearance of the proposals, depending on their circumstances and personal aesthetic preferences. This form of presentation has the aim of addressing this factor by first providing the reader with objective evidence of the physical scale of the development, its visibility and likely appearance from key viewpoints. Professional opinion, which may be considered to be more subjective, provides a second stage of the assessment, presented accompanying commentary.

2.13 It is important to note that the written assessments are not assessments of the AVRs but are of the view as experienced from the actual viewpoint in a 'real-life' sense. The AVRs are used only as a tool for assessment; the assessor has visited each viewpoint, and it is recommended that the reader of this document similarly visits each viewpoint to fully understand how the development affects the view.

Professional Standpoint of the Author

2.14 Assessments in this DTVA are made from a professional point of view and from a particular standpoint. The standpoint is that of a townscape and heritage consultant employed by the applicant to quantitatively and qualitatively assess and advise on the design, as it was being developed by the architects and following feedback from consultees. The DTVA presents, therefore, the results of the townscape and heritage consultant's independent professional advice. In accordance with guidance, however, the townscape and visual assessments are undertaken on an independent and transparent basis and weigh up both the positive and negative effects of the proposed development.

2.15 Naturally, for the qualitative assessments to be of substance and more than merely subjective, the assessor must have the necessary skills. Citydesigner is a consultancy of experienced professionals from the areas of architecture, urban design and heritage, all trained in townscape and architectural assessments by its founder, Richard Coleman Dip. Arch. Cant. RIBA RIAI, former Deputy Secretary of the Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC), former CABE Expert Advisor, former Chairman of World Architecture News and Dep. Chairman of the Architecture Club UK. Richard has 35 years experience of design assessment; 13 at the RFAC and 22 as a Consultant, including 13 years of advising on several major projects in Dublin.

2.0 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY (CONTD.)

Photography in AVR production and assessment

- 2.16 In order to replicate, as near as possible, the experience of a human being when standing at a particular viewpoint, the AVRs in this DTVA have been produced in accordance with recognised good practice set out in the Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note (2019). The two-dimensional nature of an AVR and its limited field of view cannot, however, fully convey the visual experience of a new development in the townscape. For this reason, it is recommended that readers of this document and decision makers visit each viewpoint to fully understand the effects illustrated by each AVR. The AVR can be considered on site alongside the associated commentaries, which describe the effects likely to be experienced. It is understood, however, that not everyone is able to do this, and for those readers, the AVRs and associated commentaries remain an essential tool.
- 2.17 For an easy reading of the assessment commentaries, the AVRs provided in this document are laid out next to the assessment text and are not bled to the full size of the page. To support decision makers, we can provide, on request, proposed AVRs bled to the edge of the page, which can be comfortably held up at the viewpoint to allow the effect to be understood within the real context.
- 2.18 It is often said that a photograph makes the subject look further away. This is true only in regard to a cursory comparison. If the photograph which is monocular is held at the correct distance to the eye which is binocular, it will replicate the view provided the viewer closes one eye. A person will tend to zoom in on the subject and is able to appreciate much greater detail than is normally possible with a photograph. In certain circumstances, where this is important to illustrate, zoomed photographs may be included in the assessment, or can be separately provided on request.
- 2.19 In the current GLVIA (2013) and the Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note (2019) it is accepted that the field of view and image size of photographs and photomontages should be selected to give a reasonably realistic view of how the townscape will appear when the image is held at a comfortable viewing distance from the eye (usually between 300 and 500mm). Good practice for townscape photomontage usually gives rise to a lens with a field of view of between 68 and 73 degrees so that sufficient context can be included to make the assessment meaningful. The field of view may be reduced to as little as 40 degrees in the case of particularly long-distance views. Accordingly, the lens sizes for AVRs in this report have been chosen with consideration of the particular nature of the site, location, surrounding context, view distance and the height of the proposed development. The visualisation specialist's methodology takes the guidance note into account and is included at Appendix 1 of this document.

Using an original copy of this document

- 2.20 The AVRs in this DTVA originate from high resolution photographs. It is important to use an original copy printed at high resolution so that the detail can be fully understood. For this reason, the 'Contents' page of top-quality copy versions includes a Citydesigner hologram which guarantees the highest resolution. Photocopies or downloaded versions may not depict such a high level of definition.

3.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND DESIGNATIONS

3.1 This chapter provides an overview of the history of the site and its surrounds, and identifies designated heritage assets located in the surrounding context. The analysis is based on historical plans, maps and photographs. Further details have been sourced from the publication *Tallaght Architectural Conservation Area* by South Dublin County Council and South Dublin County History (online).

3.2 The site is situated to the west of the historic village of Tallaght (Fig. 3.1). Records of the early history of Tallaght dates back to the 8th century with the foundation of the Early Christian monastery by St Maelruain. Founded on the site of the present day St. Maelruain’s Church, graveyard and tower, the monastery was an important centre of learning and piety, known as one of “the two eyes of Ireland”, Finglas being the other.

3.3 The present day Church of St Maelruain was built in 1829 and replaced an earlier one to which the four storey tower formed a part. Within the churchyard lies the remains of the “Fosse”, the ancient curved bank that enclosed Maelruain’s monastery.

3.4 Following the Anglo-Norman invasion in 1179, much of the lands of Tallaght became the property of the Archbishop of Dublin. A castle (Fig 3.2) was built by the Anglo-Normans to defend the town from the nearby mountain Irish tribes. By 1729 the castle, found to be in ruins, was replaced by the former Archbishop’s Palace which was subsequently replaced in 1821 by Tallaght House. Comprising a mansion, school house and several cottages, Tallaght House is now incorporated into the buildings of St Mary’s Priory. In 1855 the Dominicans purchased the property and founded St Mary’s Priory, opening the present building in 1864. Tallaght experienced new prosperity in the 17th and 18th centuries with the opening of mills along the River Dodder and the construction of the tramway to Dublin in 1888.

3.5 Whilst this prosperity and connectivity brought new housing development to the village, the biggest changes took place in the 20th century. In the 1960s Dublin County Council decided that a new town was to be built around Tallaght village. This was followed by further construction of several major developments in the 1990s, including Tallaght University hospital, the Square Shopping Centre (Fig 3.5), and the TU Dublin campus. The development site lies at a key junction between the former two developments. South Dublin County Council was established through local government reorganisation in 1994, its headquarters now based in Tallaght, a mere 300m west of the development site.

3.6 Historic maps and aerial photographs (Fig 3.3 and 3.4) show that the site remained undeveloped as open fields until the 1990s, before it was finally developed and came to host a number of industrial units (Fig 3.6), which are no longer standing, the site now cleared of development (Fig 3.7).

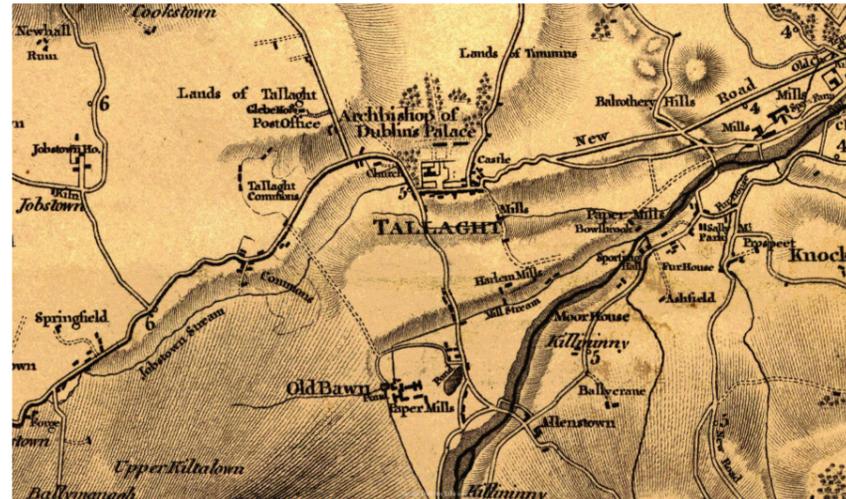


Fig. 3.1: 1816 John Taylor’s map of Dublin showing the historic settlement of Tallaght with a number of mills in proximity to the River Dodder to the south (South Dublin County Maps).

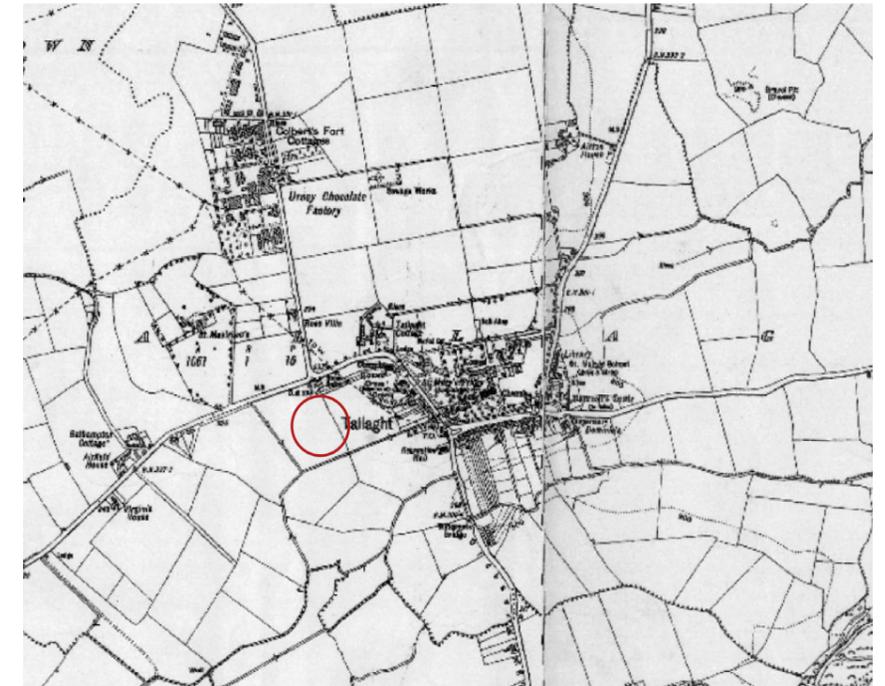


Fig. 3.3: 1938 OS Map (South Dublin Historical) with the approximate position of the site denoted in red.



Fig. 3.2: Engraving executed in 1879 well after the demolition of Tallaght Castle. It is considered to reflect a degree of imagination by the artist of the castle’s magnificence (F.E Ball, 1905).



Fig. 3.4: Tallaght village aerial view from 1977 (South Dublin County Maps). The development site appears at the very right of the view, where it forms part of an expanse of open fields.

3.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND DESIGNATIONS (CONTD.)

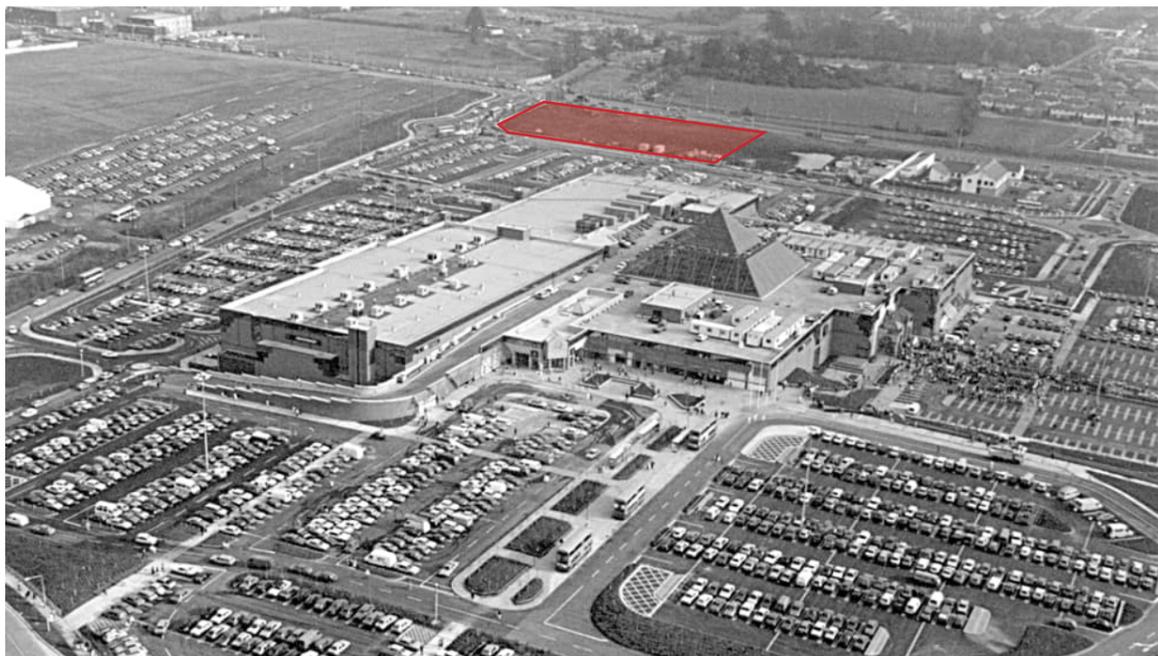


Fig. 3.5: 1990 aerial photo of the newly developed 'The Square' shopping centre, which was the central focus of the proposed new town centre for Tallaght. Springing up around the shopping centre in the years that followed were a series of large developments, including The Plaza Hotel, The Civic Theatre, Rua Red, County Hall, Tallaght University Hospital, TU Dublin Tallaght Campus and a host of diverse businesses and services. This new, vibrant town centre is now served by the Red Line Luas. The development site, still at this point devoid of built forms, is shown in red, at the top of the image.



Fig. 3.7: The development site, as it appears in its current cleared, undeveloped state.

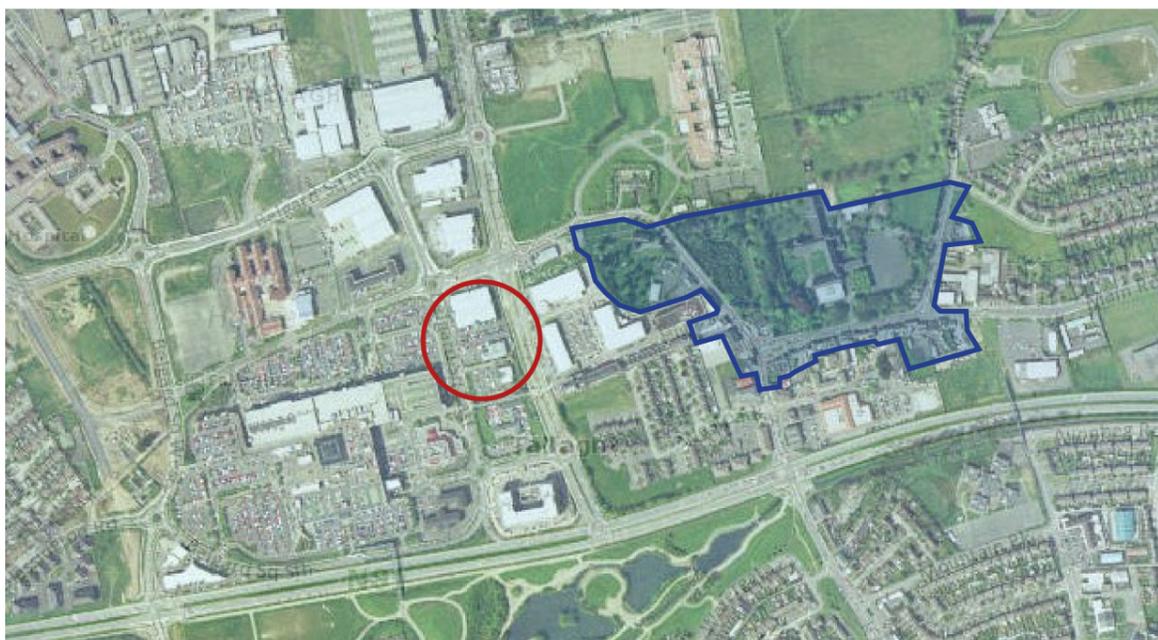


Fig. 3.6: 2000 aerial map of Tallaght showing the extent of the new town development that has taken place around the village since the 1960s. The site with its former industrial buildings (now demolished) is circled in red. The extents of the nearby Tallaght Architectural Conservation Area are shown in blue.

3.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND DESIGNATIONS (CONTD.)

3.7 Tallaght’s historic core is today designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), which extends from St. Maelruain’s Church and graveyard on the Blessington Road in the west to the Old Greenhills Road in the east, and takes in the Priory buildings and the terraced properties along the southern side of Main Street between the junctions of the Blessington Road and Greenhills Road. The ACA contains several Protected Structures, including the church and Priory. A map showing the extents of the ACA and the location those Protected Structures contained within it is provided at Fig 3.8, while images of each Protected Structure is shown at Fig 3.9 – 3.14. Of these Protected Structures, St. Maelruain’s Church (Fig 3.12) and the neighbouring semi-detached dwellings (Fig 3.13) stand in closest proximity to the development site.

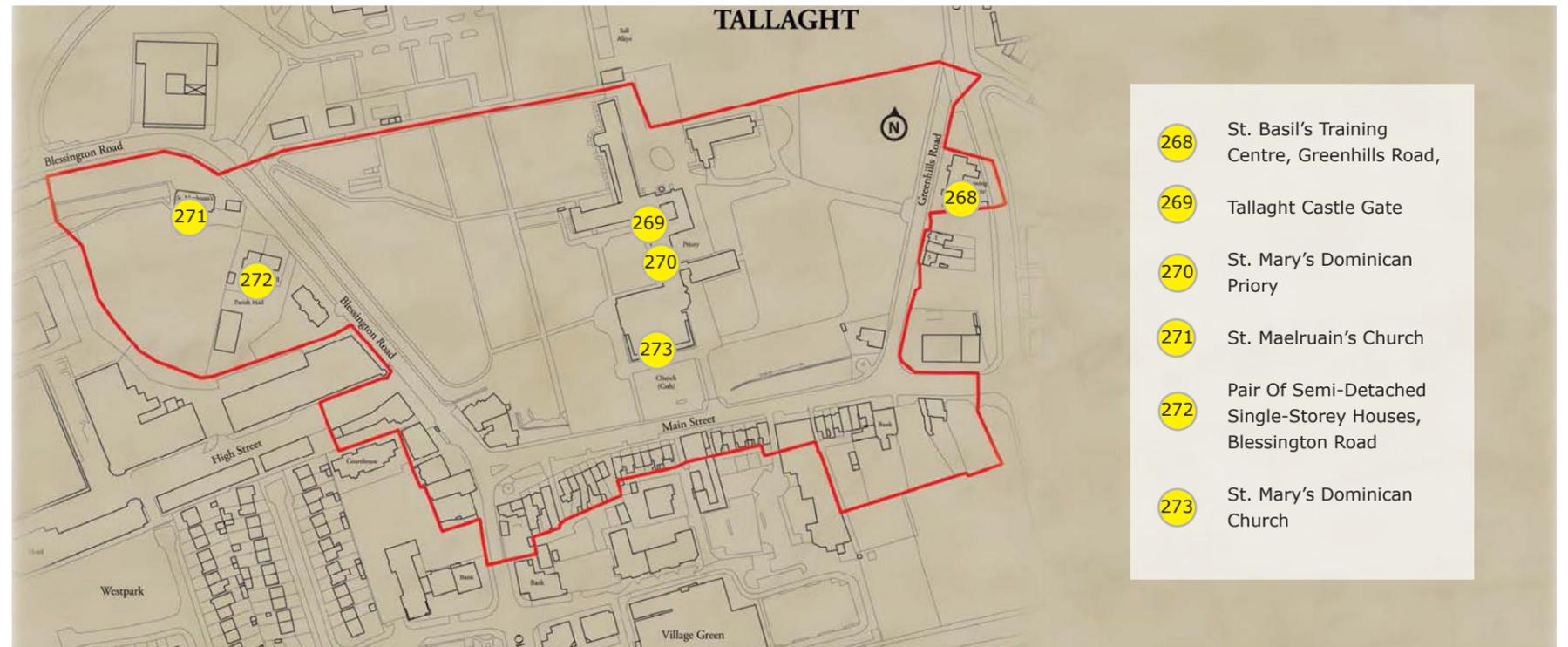


Fig. 3.8: Tallaght Architectural Conservation Area Map (South Dublin County Council) with extents of the ACA defined by the red line. The location of Protected Structures is overlaid, with each denoted by a yellow circle containing their RPS reference number.



Fig. 3.9: Tallaght Castle Gate, RPS 269 (Pinterest.ie)



Fig. 3.10: St Mary's Dominican Priory, RPS 270



Fig. 3.11: St Mary's Dominican Church, RPS 273

3.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND DESIGNATIONS (CONTD.)



Fig. 3.12: St Maelruain's Church, RPS 273. The church, tower, font, cross and graveyard are all designated under the Protected Structure.



Fig. 3.14: St Basil's Training Centre, RPS 268 (South Dublin Libraries)



Fig. 3.13: Semi-detached residences on Blessington Road, RPS 272

4.0 DESIGN QUALITY

- 4.1 This chapter offers an assessment of the architectural quality of the proposed design by Henry J Lyons Architects, a commentary on its townscape characteristics, including height, massing, scale, and materiality.
- 4.2 The proposed scheme involves the construction of a mixed-use development with commercial and retail uses at ground floor level and residential apartments above, all arranged around a central public courtyard.
- 4.3 The design for this development has been conceived from an understanding of the existing built context and an understanding of Tallaght Town Centre's status as a modern and innovative mixed-use urban centre. It is ambitious in relation to the current local plan but has been assimilated, through skilful design, with its immediate neighbours and wider townscape by one of the country's most accomplished architects, Henry J Lyons.
- 4.4 From the outset, a key design objective was to establish an appropriate urban grain along Belgard Road and Blessington Road, and to provide this prominent site with a building of high quality design and that marks the norther-eastern gateway to Tallaght Town Centre, while presenting an appropriate scale and mass to the building's contexts. The overall massing is articulated with contrasting vertical bays informed by fenestration arrangements, balcony positions, setbacks and varied materials. Landscape buffers are utilised along the development perimeters, enhancing the streetscape and presenting a human scale.



Fig. 4.2: Eastern elevation.



Fig. 4.1: Landscaping masterplan.



Fig. 4.3: Western elevation.

4.0 DESIGN QUALITY (CONTD.)



Fig. 4.4: View from junction of Blessington Road and Belgard Road.

4.5 The three dimensional form is modulated to suit its context and broken into parts corresponding to the form and reducing the scale. Each part has good proportions generally favouring a vertical compositional emphasis. The architecture is based on a two storey reading for most elevations and balconies which frequently stagger for both practical wind and daylight reasons as well as a way of positively fragmenting the scale. Substantial masonry framing in a pale brick gives a soft and light appearance while imbuing a civic character suited to the important townscape role the site has the potential to fulfil. To that effect, the north-east corner of the site, above the ten storey base, is given townscape emphasis by introducing an articulated corner and a two-storey crown in contrasting bronzed metal with accommodation at that level set back. The whole ensemble presents a building of considerable architectural coherence while also expressing, a variety of height form and scale.

4.6 This townscape document recognises the high quality of architecture, which informs the assessment of the effects on views at Section 5.0. As a consequence, it is found that effects on views are generally of a beneficial nature.



Fig. 4.5: View from the south-east.



Fig. 4.6: View from the south-west.

4.0 DESIGN QUALITY (CONTD.)

Assessment against policy and guidance relating to design

4.7 Having considered the design, it is found that the proposed development would be in accordance with policies, objectives, and development standards of the National Planning Framework 2018, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031, and would also comply with the requirements of the 'Urban Development and Building Heights' guidelines, adopted in December 2018.

4.8 The National Planning Framework (NPF) places greater emphasis on achieving a more compact urban form and delivering effective densities and greater consolidation of urban development. National Policy Objective 11 states that "in meeting urban development requirements, there will be presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth". Objective 13 adds "in urban areas, planning and related standards, including in particular building height and car parking will be based on performance criteria that seek to achieve well-designed high-quality outcomes in order to achieve targeted growth. These standards will be subject to a range of tolerance that enables alternative solutions to be proposed to achieve stated outcomes, provided public safety is not compromised and the environment is suitably protected". Objective 35 seeks an increase in residential density in settlements through a range of measures, including 'increased building heights'. A high quality residential-led development of exemplary design, with a mixed-use ground floor, which makes optimum use of the development site, would generate further activity in this part of Tallaght and also create jobs, thereby satisfying the objectives of the NPF.

4.9 The 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines' were adopted in December 2018. The guidelines set out national planning policy guidelines on building heights in urban areas in response to policy objectives set out in the NPF. They state that an application must demonstrate compliance with a number of development management criteria, which include the following:

At the scale of the relevant city/town

- The site is well served by public transport with high capacity, frequent service and good links to other modes of public transport.

- Development proposals incorporating increased building height, including proposals within architecturally sensitive areas, should successfully integrate into/ enhance the character and public realm of the area, having regard to topography, its cultural context, setting of key landmarks, protection of key views.³ Such development proposals shall undertake a landscape and visual assessment, by a suitably qualified practitioner such as a chartered landscape architect.

- On larger urban redevelopment sites, proposed developments should

make a positive contribution to place-making, incorporating new streets and public spaces, using massing and height to achieve the required densities but with sufficient variety in scale and form to respond to the scale of adjoining developments and create visual interest in the streetscape.

At the scale of district/ neighbourhood/ street

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

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

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

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

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

At the scale of the site/building

- The form, massing and height of proposed developments should be carefully modulated so as to maximise access to natural daylight, ventilation and views and minimise overshadowing and loss of light.

- Appropriate and reasonable regard should be taken of quantitative performance approaches to daylight provision outlined in guides like the Building Research Establishment's 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight' (2nd edition) or BS 8206-2: 2008 – 'Lighting for Buildings – Part 2: Code of Practice for Daylighting'.

- Where a proposal may not be able to fully meet all the requirements of the daylight provisions above, this must be clearly identified and a rationale for any alternative, compensatory design solutions must be set out, in respect of which the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála should apply their discretion, having regard to local factors including specific site constraints and the balancing of that assessment against the desirability of achieving wider planning objectives. Such objectives might include securing comprehensive urban regeneration and or an effective urban design and streetscape solution.

4.10 Specific planning policy requirement (SPPR) 3 of the guidelines relates to the above criteria and states that where the application complies with these criteria and "the assessment of the planning authority concurs, taking account of the wider strategic and national policy parameters set out in the NPF and these guidelines, then the planning authority may approve such development, even where specific objectives of the relevant development plan, local area plan or planning scheme may indicate otherwise".

4.11 The proposed development satisfies the above criteria. Located on Belgard Road and just north-east of The Square Shopping Centre, the development benefits from several public transport options, with Tallaght LUAS stop only 380m west of the site, and multiple nearby bus stops on Belgard Road, Blessington Road and Belgard Square North which offer travel in north-south and east-west directions; it successfully integrates into and enhances the character of the local context, providing strong and attractive frontages on to the adjoining street network, and establishing an appropriate urban grain in this part of Tallaght, its form, mass and scale appropriate to its context; it has incorporated appropriate mitigation/enhancement through its design and has been tested in 16 closer and distant views; with its ground floor level retail and commercial uses, it provides active frontages along the adjoining street network, which combined with its well-considered, articulated facade treatments and new landscaping, creates visual interest in the streetscape and in distant views; it is of high quality design; and it acts as a local landmark building improving legibility along this part of Belgard Road and confidently marking the north-eastern gateway to Tallaght's civic centre.

4.12 A more detailed, in-depth assessment of the development proposals against the above 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines' development management criteria, including the 'Specific Assessments', which are omitted from the above list, can be found in the submitted 'Statement of Material Contravention' by John Spain Associates.

4.13 While it is acknowledged that the proposed building heights exceed those envisaged in the Tallaght Town Centre Local Area Plan (LAP) 2020, the skillful and sensitive manner in which this additional height has been accommodated is very much cognisant of, and responds positively to, many of the LAP's key policy criteria and considerations relating to taller buildings.

4.14 The LAP identifies the potential for higher buildings (2-4 storey increase on typical levels set in the LAP) at 'locations which are considered to be key or landmark sites, subject to exceptional design which creates a feature of architectural interest, a significant contribution to the public realm at these locations and mixed uses at ground floor level'. The LAP also provides specific guidance relating to 'Landmark Buildings', stating that 'in the interest of place making and improving legibility, Landmark Buildings are permissible at key locations that will punctuate urban areas' while recognising that 'Building design as opposed to building height is the key determinant in producing an acceptable Landmark Building and such buildings should be of high quality design'. In addition, it requires landmark buildings to 'be

4.0 DESIGN QUALITY (CONTD.)

designed in a manner that is distinctive from surrounding buildings both in terms of architectural treatment and use of materials' and to 'incorporate high quality public realm treatment in terms of surrounding street planting, furniture, lighting and materials etc.' The proposed development meets this expectation of exceptional design quality, and offers significant public realm improvements and a vibrant ground floor experience with multiple uses, and though the development site does not meet the LAP's precise definition of a 'key or landmark' site, there is much about the site location and context which lends itself to an urban marker of the scale proposed; it is situated at a key road junction where Belgard Road meets Blessington Road, at a location that marks the eastern gateway to Tallaght's new town centre when traveling westward from Tallaght's historic village core and north and south along Belgard Road, and is bounded on its eastern and northern sides by a busy, wide, multi-lane vehicular junction accommodating steady flows of traffic.

- 4.15 Section 2.6.2 of the LAP, 'Height and Built Form', requires proposed building heights to be 'evaluated against topography, culture context, key landmarks and key views'. The visual assessment at chapter 5.0, presents and assesses 16 views, which have been selected based on professional judgement and informed by site visits, desktop research of the immediate and wider context, including identification of heritage assets, map analysis, land contours, historic research and early extrapolations from computer model view studies. These views were also tested during the design process to identify how different iterations of the design would affect views. This information was used to make early assessments of the effects and thereby inform modifications to the design and reach an optimum form. Throughout the entirety of the design process, the proposed development's response to its context, including key views, have been an important consideration for the design team, and the end result is a development of architectural quality and distinction, which responds positively to the surrounding townscape and within local views.
- 4.16 The proposed development also responds positively when assessed against emerging policy in the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028. Policy QDP9 'High Quality Design – Building Height and Density' of this draft plan makes provision for landmark buildings at appropriate locations, and requires that 'applications for landmark type buildings or for amplified heights akin to a landmark, are contextually appropriate and that the proportionate function of the landmark justifies it, having regard to the primary, secondary and local landmark classifications'. The proposed development would function as a secondary landmark, the gateway nature of the site justifying a development of such status and the design displaying strong parallels with the Adamstown Avenue 'secondary landmark' example provided at page 198 of the draft plan, whereby the amplification of height and vertical expression of the mixed-use building would signal the eastern gateway to the town centre, 'the extent of height increase limited and setback from the primary massing' along the surrounding streetscape, with 'the gateway function primarily achieved by means of the vertical expression of a limited articulation of height'.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

5.1 In order to fully assess the visual effects of the proposed development on the surrounding townscape, a number of views were chosen by for visual assessment. They represent a general spread of views, which illustrate the urban relationships likely to arise between the development and the surrounding protected structures and local urban vistas. The views chosen and assessed in detail in this report represent 'maximum exposure / maximum conjunction' of the development in its context. The views were projected by incorporating a computer model of the proposed development into a series of photographs of the fully surveyed local area.

5.2 A total of 22 views were initially selected for exploratory purposes and design development. Of these, 16 views are assessed in this chapter. The assessments carried out by the consultancy are based on the methodology set out in Chapter 2.0 of this report. It is important to read this in order to understand the approach to each assessment. The consultancy has assessed the visual effect of the proposed development on the local environment, making use of both the quantitative and the qualitative material. The consultancy has considered all the views in real time over site visits. The observations have been related in writing, in conjunction with rendered views inserted over surveyed photography to give the reader a real sense of the visual effect of the proposed development. The written work includes objective and subjective commentary in accordance with the methodology set out at Chapter 2.0. The assessment is not of the two dimensional images but of the interpretation of the likely effect interpolated on site using the images as a tool. There is no substitute to actually visiting the site with this document to hand, which is highly recommended.

5.3 Each of the view illustrations contains two images:

- (i) The existing view; and
- (ii) the proposed development as a photorealistic render or wire-line outline.

5.4 All views assessed are of the proposed development in winter conditions, when tree coverage is at its most minimal and the proposals are most exposed and visible in views. Where wireline depictions of the proposed development are hidden behind evergreen trees and/or other buildings the lines are shown as dashed. A methodology statement by Visual Lab, setting out in detail how the verified views have been created, is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

5.5 The 16 views which are assessed on the following pages in this chapter are listed below, and their viewpoint location mapped at Figure 5.1:

View 1: The Square LUAS stop, Blessington Road, looking east

View 2: North-western corner of The Square Shopping Centre car park, looking east

View 3: Northern entrance to Tallaght Stadium, looking north-east

View 4: Looking north from Sean Walsh Memorial Park at entrance to pedestrian bridge

View 5: Looking north along Belgard Road from junction with the N81

View 6: Roundabout east of Tallaght Garda Station, looking north along Belgard Road

View 7: Looking west from outside of No.2 Main Street

View 8: Looking west from entrance to St Maelruain's Church

View 9: Looking west from the immediate north-west of St Maelruain's Church

View 10: Technological University Tallaght campus, looking south-west

View 11: Looking south from bus stop 2346 on Belgard Square North

View 12: Junction of Belgard Square East and Belgard Square North, looking south

View 13: Pedestrian crossing to The Square on Belgard Square East, looking north

View 14: Pedestrian crossing to High Street on Belgard Road, looking north

View 15: Looking south-west across the junction of Blessington Road and Belgard Road

View 16: Blessington Road near the junction with Belgard Road East, looking south-east

5.6 A view from St Mary's Priory was considered, however, preliminary photography indicated that the proposed development would not be visible from the setting of this protected structure. Visibility from the residential streets of Westpark was also considered and tested in preliminary photography, which suggested that views of the development would be limited from this neighbourhood owing to the lack of axial streets and screening capabilities of the intervening townscape. Therefore, we did not progress verified views from these locations.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

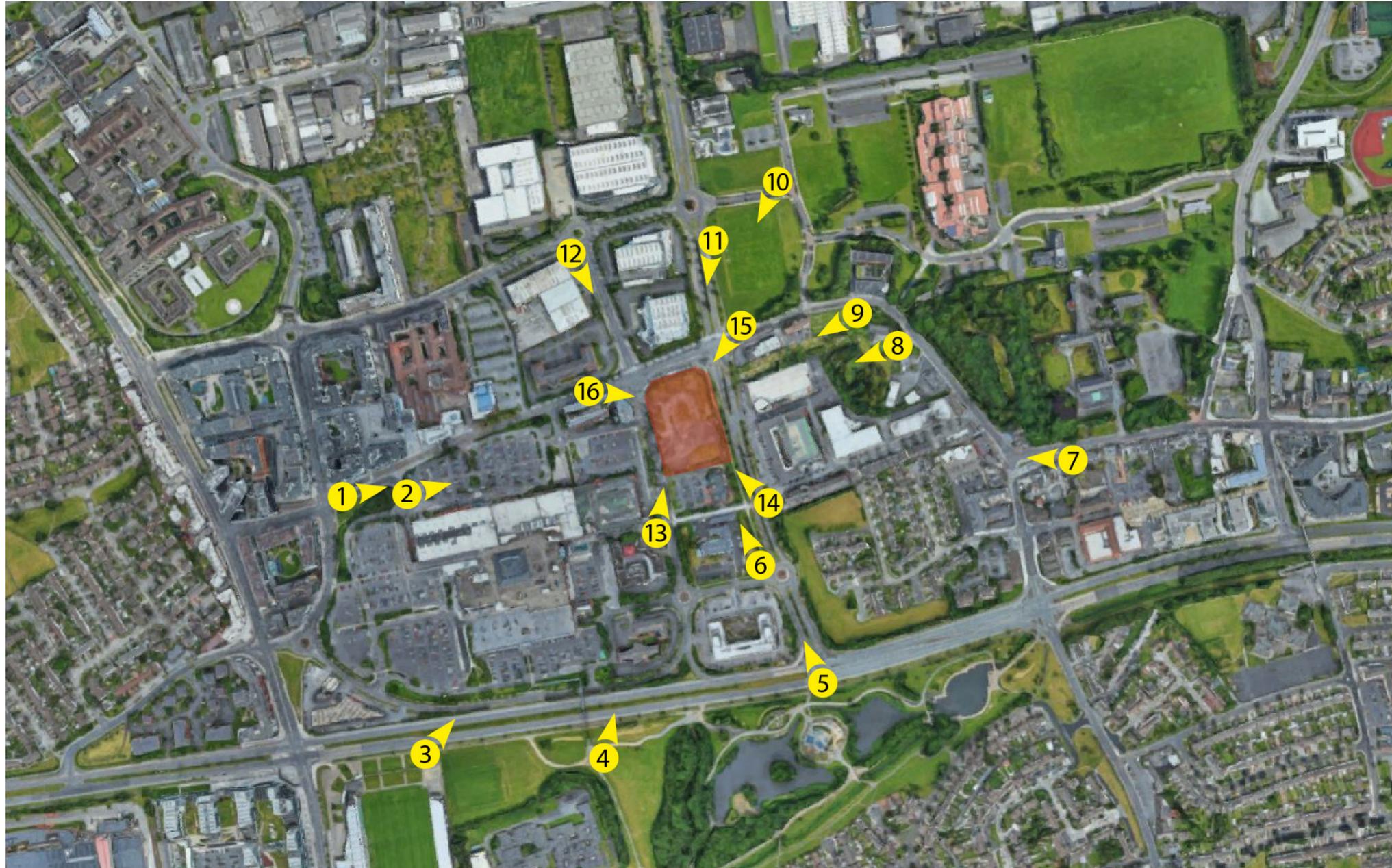


Fig. 5.1: Map showing the assessed viewpoints - see paragraph 5.5 for list of viewpoint location descriptions. The site is outlined in red.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 1: THE SQUARE LUAS STOP, BLESSINGTON ROAD, LOOKING EAST

Existing

This view, taken from the LUAS stop at The Square, looks east across the northern setting of the shopping centre, which comprises a large expanse of surface car parking enclosed by occasional areas of tree planting and hedging. The substantial horizontal form of the shopping centre can be seen at the right of the view, its red brick fabric partially visible beyond the trees. On the left, the view is framed by Talbot House, a large mixed-use development, with commercial and retail units at ground floor and apartments above. In the central distance appears the west elevation of the Tuansgate residential block, beyond which lies the development site. The view is quite cluttered across its central foreground, featuring overhead power lines and support poles associated with the LUAS line, as well as street and retail signage, lampposts, and CCTV masts, all of which combine to add much commotion and disorder to the view. In summer months, when the various deciduous trees that populate the view are in leaf, the view will take on a much more verdant character.



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 1: THE SQUARE LUAS STOP, BLESSINGTON ROAD, LOOKING EAST



Proposed

Only partial glimpses of the proposed development would be available in this view. The upper levels of the building's northern extents would provide a backdrop to the Tuansgate building, while to the right of this, the development's western elevations would emerge in the view, but be interrupted and partially obscured by trees and other intervening elements in the cluttered streetscape, including traffic lights, LUAS line poles and signage associated with the shopping centre. In summer months, those deciduous trees that stand within the shopping centre car park would significantly reduce the visibility of the proposed development.

Potential effects

The proposed development would provide a more coherent backdrop to the view and create a more defined edge to the eastern extents of the shopping centre and its expanse of surface car parking. Contextually appropriate, its scale and form would relate well to the town centre foreground context.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 2: NORTH-WESTERN CORNER OF THE SQUARE SHOPPING CENTRE CAR PARK, LOOKING EAST

Existing

This view looks east from a pedestrian entrance into The Square’s northern car park. A relatively open view, featuring a large, centrally positioned surface car park, whose spacious character is only occasionally interrupted by the intrusion of tall street light and CCTV poles. The long northern façade of the shopping centre encloses the view on its right, providing a very defined boundary along the car park’s southern side. The eastern and northern sides of the car park are more porous in character, edged by deciduous tree planting, which allows for semi-obscured views out toward the townscape. The Tuansgate development is the most prominent of those buildings visible beyond the car park perimeter planting, its bulky profile standing forthright in the central distance. In summer months, when the trees are in leaf, the view will take on a more enclosed character, with the visual connection to the townscape beyond the shopping centre car park likely to be significantly reduced.



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 2: NORTH-WESTERN CORNER OF THE SQUARE SHOPPING CENTRE CAR PARK, LOOKING EAST

**Proposed**

The very upper levels of the northern end of the development would appear behind the Tuansgate building, while semi-obscured views of the western elevations of the southern half of the development would be available through the leafless trees of the shopping centre car park. The east-west route through the development at its southern end would allow for a view through the development to the distant form of Tallaght Retail Centre. In summer, when the car park trees are in leaf, the visibility of the proposed development would be reduced, with only its very upper levels likely to be viewable.

Potential effects

The proposed development would provide a more coherent backdrop and engaging skyline to the view, while restoring the urban grain and helping to better define the eastern edge of the shopping centre car park.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 3: NORTHERN ENTRANCE TO TALLAGHT STADIUM, LOOKING NORTH-EAST

Existing

Within this view from the entrance to Tallaght Stadium on the south side of the N81, the most striking feature is the large pyramid rooflight of The Square, whose unique profile appears above the roadside trees at the left of the view. Elsewhere in the view, the townscape north of the N81 is largely obscured by tree planting, with the distant Plaza Hotel, appearing at the right of the view, the only other building to make any notable impression, though much of its form remains obscured by trees and the pedestrian bridge that traverses the broad, busy road.



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 3: NORTHERN ENTRANCE TO TALLAGHT STADIUM, LOOKING NORTH-EAST

**Proposed**

The proposed development's very upper levels would appear as a distant backdrop to the view, visible beyond, and to the right of, The Square's distinctive rooflight. While the building's lower southern extents would only be marginally visible, the taller corner elements at the building's northern end would be more prominent.

Potential effects

The building would stand as a distant but distinct backdrop feature at the centre of the view. Set away from The Square's rooflight and avoiding interference with its distinctive triangular profile, the proposed development's more rectilinear form and solid materiality would complement this existing landmark feature, and together they would combine to create a more dynamic and engaging skyline for Tallaght. Positioned at the eastern gateway to Tallaght town centre and just south-west of the university campus, the proposed development would provide enhanced legibility and act as a landmark and wayfinder in the view.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 4: LOOKING NORTH FROM SEAN WALSH MEMORIAL PARK AT ENTRANCE TO PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Existing

This view would be frequently experienced by pedestrians seeking direct access to The Square shopping centre from the sprawling residential areas on the southern side of the N81. It is captured from the western end of Sean Walsh Memorial Park, at an elevated position above the busy national road and just beside the pedestrian bridge that leads to the shopping centre car park, which is partially visible at the left of the view. The view has a strongly horizontal composition, and can be broadly broken into three distinct parts; green sloping banks with trees in the immediate foreground, then the tarmac surfaced N81 and its adjoining grass verges, and finally the mature trees of the northern side of the road, whose canopies merge with and obscure much of the townscape that lies beyond. While the upper extents of several buildings, including the Plaza Hotel (right), Hainault House (centre) and The Square shopping centre, Tunasgate building and the DDLETB Offices (left), breach these tree canopies, they provide little visual interest or delight, but rather conspire to form a poorly composed, indistinct skyline.



EXISTING

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 4: LOOKING NORTH FROM SEAN WALSH MEMORIAL PARK AT ENTRANCE TO PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

**Proposed**

The development would appear beyond the middle-ground elements of Hainault House and the band of tree planting that lines the northern edge of the N81. The upper levels of the 6 and 8 storey southern block would appear first in the view, behind which the development would be seen to gradually increase in height in incremental steps towards the 11 and 12 storey corner elements at the northern end of the development.

Potential effects

The proposed development would introduce a building of architectural quality and add visual interest to a view whose skyline is currently lacking in moments of distinction or elegance. The skilful and considered manner in which the development's massing has been broken down would be clearly apparent in the view, its stepped form and gradual rise from 6 storeys in the south to 12 storeys at its north-eastern corner resulting in a pleasingly articulated and dynamic upper profile. This sensitive approach to massing is complemented by the development's concise and tasteful materials palette of limestone, pale brick and bronzed aluminium, which provide the building with a distinct identity and character, and elevate it to the status of a landmark building that would enhance legibility within the view.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 5: LOOKING NORTH ALONG BELGARD ROAD FROM JUNCTION WITH THE N81

Existing

This view looks north along Belgard Road (R113), and across the N81, which it runs perpendicular to. These two significant roads combine to give the foreground a spacious and open character, which is preserved along the entirety of the view centre by the presence of the R113. At the left of the view stands the robust part-glazed, part-brick form of the Plaza Hotel, the view's most prominent building, while more distant, and largely obscured by trees, is Tallaght Retail Centre, whose upper levels of appear on the right of the view. The view currently provides little indication that Tallaght's town centre, and the many facilities and services it hosts, lies just north of the Plaza Hotel building.



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 5: LOOKING NORTH ALONG BELGARD ROAD FROM JUNCTION WITH THE N81

**Proposed**

The proposed development would stand prominently in the central distance of the view, emerging from behind the Plaza Hotel in what was previously open sky. While the surrounding road network's abundant street trees would skirt around and screen the development's lower levels, much of the development's southern elevation and longer eastern elevation would be visible above these canopies, as would parts of the internal courtyard facing elevations. The development's 12 storey north-eastern corner, with its bronzed exterior, would appear as an elegant crowning feature to the development.

Potential effects

The proposed development would bring a welcome central focus to the view, and an enhanced sense of legibility, its presence indicating that a significant townscape, i.e. Tallaght town centre, lies just beyond the Plaza Hotel building. The soft tones of the proposed development's brickwork, combined with delicate bronzed accents, would contrast pleasingly with the bolder, more heavy materiality and colouration of the Plaza Hotel building in the foreground. Its stepped form facilitates a graceful rise from 6 storeys in the south to 12 storeys at its north-east corner, appearing as a contextually appropriate addition to the townscape, which relates well to the scale of the foreground hotel building and also the 7-storey Tallaght Retail Centre to the east. Its north-eastern corner would be perfectly aligned with the north-south route of Belgard Road, and this tallest element would appear as an elegant crown to the development and a focal point within the view.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 6: ROUNDABOUT EAST OF TALLAGHT GARDA STATION, LOOKING NORTH ALONG BELGARD ROAD

Existing

This view is captured from the southernmost roundabout on Belgard Road. In spite of this roadside viewpoint location, the view is dominated by soft surfaces and landscaping, with multiple grass verges running parallel to the road and accommodating stretches of manicured hedgerow and regularly spaced street trees. Tallaght Garda Station, with its porthole window, can be viewed relatively unobscured at the left of the view, though other built forms, such as the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board and neighbouring the Tuansgate building (left of centre) and Tallaght Retail Centre (right of view) are only marginally visible through the leafless winter trees. In the central distance, the white southern elevation of Clarity House can be seen, to the fore of which appears a McDonalds takeaway totem, which with its familiar logo and bold colours, is arguably the most immediately identifiable structure in the view.



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 6: ROUNDABOUT EAST OF TALLAGHT GARDA STATION, LOOKING NORTH ALONG BELGARD ROAD

**Proposed**

The proposed development's southern elevation would be semi-observed behind the leafless winter trees, though the general composition and aesthetic of this elevation would be discernible. Views towards the upper levels of the short eastern elevation of the southern block and the longer eastern elevation of the northern block would be more open, with only ground level and the 3 storeys immediately above screened by existing street trees. The development's subtle stepping profile would be apparent in the view, culminating with the bronzed profile of the 12-storey north-east tower, which would appear in the distance, rising above the lighter brickwork that characterises the majority of its built form. In summer months the development would be much less visible, its southern elevation in particular, likely to be almost entirely screened by foliage.

Potential effects

The proposed development would provide a handsome and high quality frontage to Belgard Road and backdrop to the McDonald's restaurant and car park, establishing an appropriate urban grain and improving the general condition of the townscape. Where visible beyond the many street trees, the development's finely composed elevations would prove a visual delight, their projecting balconies, with their bronzed aluminium platforms, enlivening their pale brick facades. The bronzed aluminium tower at the development's north-eastern corner would form an elegant crowning feature in the view.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 7: LOOKING WEST FROM OUTSIDE OF NO.2 MAIN STREET

Existing

This view from within the ACA looks west along Main Street, and is taken from the southern side of the street, just opposite the Priory grounds. On the left are the two-storey terraces that characterise much of the southern side of Main Street, while the right side of the view is dominated by the mature tree planting of the Priory grounds. The view terminates at its centre with the east-facing principal elevations of the two and three-storey commercial and retail properties at the junction with Old Bawn Road.



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 7: LOOKING WEST FROM OUTSIDE OF NO.2 MAIN STREET



Proposed

The proposed development will not appear in this view.

Potential effects

There is no effect.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 8: LOOKING WEST FROM ENTRANCE TO ST MAELRUAIN'S CHURCH

Existing

Taken from just inside the entrance gates to St Maelruain's Church of Ireland, this historically rich and verdant view looks west on to the eastern elevation of the medieval church tower, which today serves a belfry. The later, 19th century church, which was designed by renowned ecclesiastical architect John Semple, frames the right of the view. The heavily wooded 'old' graveyard occupies the left of the view, comprising a gently undulating green punctuated by historic headstones and backed by mature, mostly evergreen trees. Together, the tower, church and dense tree planting effectively enclose the foreground space, giving this part of the graveyard a tranquil, insular character, where Tallaght's wider townscape remains out-of-sight. The church, medieval tower and graveyard are all captured under the same Protected Structure entry (RPS Ref 271).



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 8: LOOKING WEST FROM ENTRANCE TO ST MAELRUAIN'S CHURCH



Proposed

In winter months, the proposed development will effectively be obscured from view, with only a fractional portion of its built form, specifically the very upper part of its 8-storey stairwell element, potentially being visible through the graveyard tree planting where it would be barely discernable. The image at the bottom left zooms into where the proposals may be very marginally visible in winter months. In summer months the development will not be visible.

Potential effects

There is no effect.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 9: LOOKING WEST FROM THE IMMEDIATE NORTH-WEST OF ST MAELRUAIN'S CHURCH

Existing

Captured from within Tallaght ACA, this view looks west across the 'new' graveyard located to the immediate north-west of St Maelruain's Church. Mature evergreen trees, which are plentiful in the more verdant, sheltered 'old' graveyard to the south, frame the left of the view, while black railings set upon stone walling enclose the church grounds on its northern side. Appearing abruptly at the centre in the view is the graffitied red brick gable of the three-storey Uppercross Court apartment block, beyond which emerges the blank side elevation of the garage building at the corner of Blessington Road and Belgard Road. The equally featureless form of Tallaght Retail Centre can be seen to the left of the view, its form partially screened by tree planting. In the central distance appears the upper extents of the townscape at Tallaght town centre, including a view of the shopping centre's distinguishing pyramid top, to the immediate right of which emerges a very slight glimpse the Dublin Mountains.



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 9: LOOKING WEST FROM THE IMMEDIATE NORTH-WEST OF ST MAELRUAIN'S CHURCH



Proposed

The eastern elevations of the proposed development would feature prominently in the central distance, appearing in the space between the graveyard's mature evergreen trees and the gable of the Uppercross Court apartment block. The break in development between the southern block and more substantial northern block, which facilitates the east-west route through the development, would read particularly clearly in this view, as would the development's stepped form and vertically emphasised elevations.

Potential effects

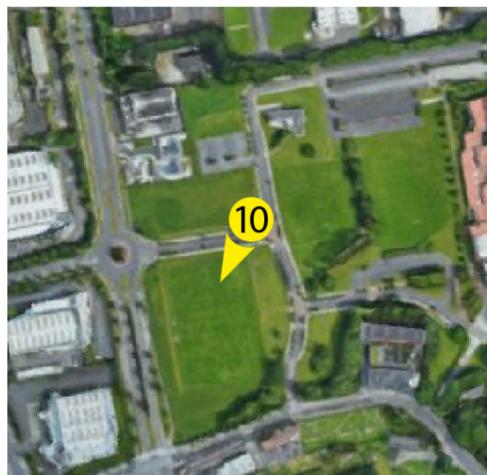
The proposed development would greatly enhance the quality of this view, providing it with an attractive and skilfully composed central focus of high quality design, and would result in a much more coherent backdrop to the graveyard and other foreground elements, enhancing the compositional value of the view in general. The vertically emphasised elevations, articulated by setbacks, projecting balconies in a staggered arrangement, and vertical bands of brickwork and limestone, combined with the physical break in development at its southern end and its stepped form, would serve to break up the massing of the proposed development and lend it a high level of elegance and refinement. The distinctive bronzed aluminium tower at the north-east corner would further contribute to this elegance and act as a landmark element in the distance, which would enhance legibility, marking the north-eastern gateway to Tallaght's civic and retail centre. Rooftop planting would provide much of the development's upper extents with a verdant quality, which would relate well to the greenery seen in the view foreground.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 10: TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY TALLAGHT CAMPUS, LOOKING SOUTH-WEST

Existing

In this view, captured from within the grounds of TU Dublin, a playing field at the western end of the campus results in a spacious foreground and allows for unhindered views towards the development site. Beyond the playing field, the view is terminated by three distinct elements; to the left is an unbroken row of tall deciduous trees; at the centre are the Dublin Mountains; and on the right stands the large business unit of Clarity House. Encroaching on the lower extents of the Dublin Mountains is the multi-storey car park at The Square, while a sequence of four evenly-spaced street lights breach the skyline along this distant landscape.



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 10: TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY TALLAGHT CAMPUS, LOOKING SOUTH-WEST

**Proposed**

The proposed development would appear prominently in the central distance, framed on the left by the middle ground's mature trees and on the right by Clarity House. It would stand to the fore of the Square's multi-storey car park and the distant Dublin mountains. Positioned centrally in the view would be the development's 12-storey north-eastern corner element, from which the development splays to the left and right, presenting slightly angled views of the development's northern and eastern elevations, and their stepped profiles.

Potential effects

The proposed development would have a transforming effect on the view, appearing as a high quality, centrally positioned landmark, whose refined, distinctive aesthetic would confidently mark the north-eastern gateway to Tallaght's retail and civic centre and provide a much welcome enhanced legibility to the townscape. The northern block's stepped form, culminating with the 12 storey tower at its north-east corner, serves to effectively break up the development's massing, while the carefully composed vertically of the eastern and northern elevations helps to further contribute to the development's elegance and character. A primary materials palette of pale brick, stone and bronzed aluminium gives the development a decidedly light and warm demeanour, while the use of bronzed aluminium as the primary finish on the north-eastern and north-western tower elements provides these taller parts a distinctive character that consolidates their role as elegant crowning elements. Complementing this palette of high quality materials are flourishes of rooftop planting, which serve to soften and further enhance the development's overall aesthetic, and which in this view relate particularly well to the lush foreground and tree planting along Blessington Road and Belgard.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 11: LOOKING SOUTH FROM BUS STOP 2346 ON BELGARD SQUARE NORTH

Existing

This view looks diagonally across Belgard Road, from a bus stop outside the western entrance of TU Dublin. Trees dominate the view foreground, lining either side of the dual carriageway, and planted at regular intervals along the central separation strip, which also accommodates low-lying hedgerows. Through the leafless winter trees the large, bulky white form of Clarity House can be observed on the right of the view. In the central distance, The Plaza Hotel, with its horizontal bands of red brick and glazing, features as a distant focal point, above which appears the faint outline of the Dublin Mountains.



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 11: LOOKING SOUTH FROM BUS STOP 2346 ON BELGARD SQUARE NORTH

**Proposed**

The proposed development would appear beyond Clarity House and be visible through those foreground trees that run along Belgard Road. The upper levels of the north-eastern 12-storey tower would be the most prominent element of the development, with the rest of the northern façade partially screened by the leafless winter trees and Clarity House, and the eastern elevation, which appears at quite an acute angle, also semi-obscured by trees. However, owing to the leafless state of the trees, it is still possible to decipher the building's general form and elevational compositions in a holistic manner in this winter view. In summer months, when the trees would be in leaf, a much more limited proportion of the proposed development would be visible.

Potential effects

Rising to 12-storeys at its north-eastern corner, the proposed development would confidently mark the junction of Belgard Road and Blessington Road, functioning as an elegant and distinctive landmark that would denote the north-eastern gateway into Tallaght town centre and enhance legibility within the view. Its carefully articulated and skilfully composed northern and eastern elevations would form strong and attractive frontages on to the adjoining street network, establishing an appropriate urban grain and animating the streetscape. The high quality of the architecture and its concise and tasteful materials palette would be clearly apparent in the view, the development appearing as a wholly positive, and contextually appropriate, addition to the townscape.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

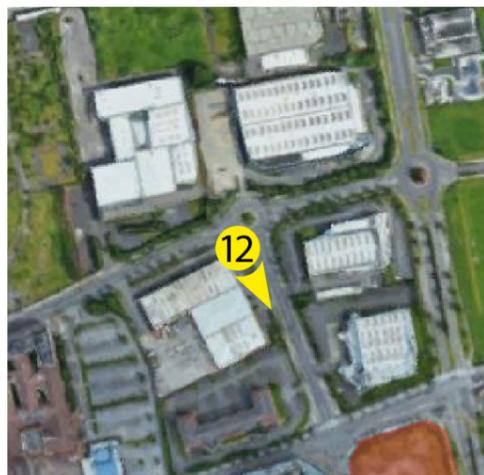
VIEW 12: JUNCTION OF BELGARD SQUARE EAST AND BELGARD SQUARE NORTH, LOOKING SOUTH

Existing

This framed view looks south down the tree-lined route of Belgard Square East and directly on to the development site. Those large business and commercial units that stand either side of the route are mostly screened by the roadside tree planting, and it is only those buildings that appear more centrally in the middle distance whose form and aesthetic can be deciphered in any meaningful way. These more exposed developments include the glazed, curved-corner profile of the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board, and the more distant, less distinctive rectilinear form of The Plaza Hotel, whose rudimentary rear elevations terminate the lower half of the view. Beyond the hotel, the Dublin Mountains provide a soft backdrop to the central part of the view, though their sweeping, horizontal flow is interrupted by the slender vertical form of Tallaght Garda Station's telecommunications mast.



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 12: JUNCTION OF BELGARD SQUARE EAST AND BELGARD SQUARE NORTH, LOOKING SOUTH

**Proposed**

The proposed development would appear in the central middle ground, its northern elevation addressing the viewer. Much of the northern-eastern extents of the development would be partially obscured by the bare winter trees, as would the lower levels of the northern-western extents. Looking down Belgard Square East an angled view of the development's western elevation would appear, from which the development's stepped profile would be apparent, the building height gradually declining as it diminishes into the distance before giving way to a framed view of the Dublin Mountains, whose distant rugged profile emerges above The Plaza Hotel building.

Potential effects

The proposed development would provide the adjoining northern and eastern roads with active frontages, providing a much improved, more defined edge to these roads and creating a more welcoming and familiar street profile. Though accommodating the development's tallest parts, the northern elevation is carefully broken down into multiple components through the establishment of contrasting vertical bays created through well-considered fenestration arrangements, balcony positions, setbacks and varied materials, resulting in an skillfully articulated massing. The high quality of the building architecture, with its carefully composed and elegant vertically-emphasised elevations would enliven the view, where its distinctive and handsome aesthetic would provide it with a landmark quality. The manner in which the proposed development's western elevation gradually steps down and diminishes into the distance, leading the eye towards, and terminating just before, the ridge line of the distant Dublin Mountains is particularly pleasing. Though this natural landscape would be less visible, the view toward the remaining visible element would be much better composed and more pleasing, framed between the modern forms of the proposed development and the existing Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board building.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 13: PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TO THE SQUARE ON BELGARD SQUARE EAST, LOOKING NORTH

Existing

This view looks diagonally across Belgard Square East towards the development site. Regular roadside trees dominate the left side of the view, but this planting momentarily ceases at the pedestrian crossing from where the view is captured. This absence of tree planting combines with the presence of a surface car park at McDonalds to allow for an open aspect across the central part of the view, where a large expanse of open sky rises above an underwhelming, low skyline of trees, street lights, and indistinct, distant buildings. At the right of the view, beyond the foreground traffic light, McDonalds takeaway can be seen, with the Tallaght Retail Centre rising up behind it in the distance.



EXISTING

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 13: PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TO THE SQUARE ON BELGARD SQUARE EAST, LOOKING NORTH



Proposed

The development's primarily 6-storey south elevation would span the central part of the view, with its slightly taller 8-storey element appearing to the right. A set-back, bronzed aluminium-clad vertical section along the southern elevation would provide a visual break midway along this southern elevation. The stepped character of the developments western side would also be decipherable in this view, its gradual rise in height apparent when looking along its angled western elevation running parallel to Belgard Square East.

Potential effects

The development would transform the centre of the view, replacing the vast open sky skirted by an ad-hoc mix of trees, street clutter, and indistinct built forms, with a coherent, attractive and contextually appropriate built form that establishes an appropriate urban grain. Its pale brick southern elevation, enlivened with bronzed aluminium balconies and fenestration, and achieving an elegant vertical emphasis through subtle vertical setbacks, carefully considered elevational arrangements, varied materials and a change of height at its eastern end, would provide the foreground area of parking with a handsome, animated backdrop. The active commercial frontages along the western elevation to Belgard Square East would result in a much improved streetscape and enhanced edge to the road, while the stepped profile of its upper levels seen along the same elevation would see the development rise in a subtle manner that successfully breaks down the building mass.

NOTE: FOREGROUND STREET LIGHT BEYOND PEDESTRIAN CROSSING OMITTED FROM VIEW TO ALLOW FOR A MORE COMPLETE APPRECIATION OF THE SOUTHERN ELEVATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT'S SOUTH-EAST CORNER.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 14: PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TO HIGH STREET ON BELGARD ROAD, LOOKING NORTH

Existing

Captured from the entrance to the pedestrianised street running south of Tallaght Retail Centre, this view looks across Abberley Square and Belgard Road, which run parallel to each other and together provide for a relatively open foreground, whose only notable moments of vertically are supplied by slender street lights and roadside trees. The latter screen much of the townscape that lies west of Belgard Road, with only partial, intermittent views available of a limited number of buildings, including McDonalds (left), the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board and neighbouring the Tuansgate buildings (centre), and Clarity House (right).



EXISTING



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 14: PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TO HIGH STREET ON BELGARD ROAD, LOOKING NORTH

**Proposed**

The proposed development would stand prominently at the centre of the view, visible above and beyond Belgard Road's street trees. At the very centre of the view would appear the 8-storey element of the southern block, from which the development drops down to 6-storeys to the left, and gradually steps up to 12-storeys to the right after an initial break in the built forms where the east-west run permits permeability through the scheme.

Potential effects

The skilful and considered manner in which the proposed development's mass is broken up would be particularly evident in this view, a combination of setbacks, vertical rhythms along the façades, stepped upper profiles and a break in development at the entrance to the east-west route, all combining to form an elegant and visually engaging landmark development. The eastern elevation would provide a much improved edge to Belgard Road, while the distinctive 12-storey tower at its northern end would be visual delight, handsomely crowning the development. The southern elevation would comprise a similarly strong and attractive façade, its fenestration and residential balconies providing passive surveillance to the urban context to the south and generally proving an enhancement this townscape setting.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 15: LOOKING SOUTH-WEST ACROSS THE JUNCTION OF BLESSINGTON ROAD AND BELGARD ROAD

Existing

This short-range view towards the development site looks across the junction of Blessington Road and Belgard Road. The foreground is cluttered with traffic lights, railings and bollards, while trees occupy the outer edges of the view. Centrally, the undeveloped state of the application site allows for relatively unhindered views towards The Square shopping centre, whose distinctive pyramid roof light can be observed breaching the profile of the Dublin Mountains, which provide a distant backdrop to the view. However, the manner in which these two entities meet, and foreground street clutter that they are subjected to, means that the background to the view is generally lacking coherency and compositional value. To the right of the shopping centre, appearing more prominently in the view, are the offices of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board, whose primarily glazed façade wraps around the corner of Blessington Road and Belgard Road East.



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 15: LOOKING SOUTH-WEST ACROSS THE JUNCTION OF BLESSINGTON ROAD AND BELGARD ROAD

**Proposed**

The proposed development's 12-storey north-eastern corner would stand centrally in the view, acting as a focal point, from which the development's eastern, and shorter northern elevations, would splay outwards, both characterised by vertical rhythms across their facades and stepped changes in height across their extents.

Potential effects

The previous poorly composed and much compromised view through to the distant elements of The Square and the Dublin Mountains would be replaced by a more immediate and better composed central focus, where the development's scale and high quality design would successfully subdue the prominence of the foreground's many traffic lights. The proposed development would greatly enhance this immediate townscape setting, offering handsome elevations of high quality composition and materiality to Blessington Road and Belgard Road, and providing these main routes with a much improved, more defined edge, with retail and commercial uses at ground level and an improved public realm, enlivening the streetscape and helping to create an appealing and pedestrian-friendly street environment. Above these ground floor uses, the equally animated residential upper levels, with their series of vertically-emphasised bays, rhythmic fenestration and balcony arrangements, and high quality, well-considered materials palette of pale brick, bronzed aluminium and stone, with flourishes of occasional rooftop planting, provide the proposed development with an elegant and handsome aesthetic, while its stepped form, culminating in the 12-storey tower at the north-east corner, successfully breaks up the mass of the development.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 16: BLESSINGTON ROAD NEAR THE JUNCTION WITH BELGARD ROAD EAST, LOOKING SOUTH-EAST

Existing

In this short-range view, the red brick Tuansgate development, with its ground level commercial uses and upper level apartments, occupies the right side of the view and guides the eye forward towards the development site, which in its current undeveloped state forms a void in the townscape. On the opposite side of the road, and characterising the left of the view, is a broad footpath accommodating roadside bollards, street trees and lamp posts. A metal gridded fence, fronted by planting and backed by mature trees, edges the footpath and screens views of the townscape to the north. Under the open skies at the view centre, glimpses of the townscape east of the development site can be gained, though there is little of quality or distinction to be appreciated in this distant townscape.



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS (CONTD.)

VIEW 16: BLESSINGTON ROAD NEAR THE JUNCTION WITH BELGARD ROAD EAST, LOOKING SOUTH-EAST

**Proposed**

The proposed development's north-western corner, with its series of vertical steps, would emerge from beyond the red brick Tuansgate development at the right of the view foreground, occupying the previously open void in the townscape. Above the 10-storey brick-finished principal form would emerge a slight view of the set-back, 11-storey element at the northwest corner of the development.

Potential effects

The proposed development's emergence just beyond the Tuansgate development, would establish an appropriate urban grain at the northern end of the site, and resolve the unsatisfactory manner in which the townscape currently appears to abruptly cease beyond this red brick foreground building. Following a similar building line to the Tuansgate development, and of a height and scale that stands comfortably in the view, the proposed development would appear as a contextually appropriate addition to the townscape and would have a harmonious relationship with, and provide a much improved backdrop to, the foreground context. The series of vertical setbacks provide the north-western corner with an elegant, articulated profile, while the development's materials palette of pale brick, stone and bronzed aluminium offers a lightness of character that contrasts pleasingly with the deeper tones of the red brick and grey tiles that characterise the Tuansgate building.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This fully illustrated document examines the visual effects plus the townscape and design qualities of the proposed scheme, for which planning permission is to be sought. It does so by extracting the essential illustrative material from the architect's Design Statement, adding further visual material and by assessing 16 views with accurate representations of the design realistically superimposed on them
- 6.2 A methodology for the assessment is set out, together with the skills applied to accomplish it. The scheme is found to be of a high order of design quality in a number of ways using this method. This is analysed in Section 4.0 under 'Design Quality'.
- 6.3 The success of the design as a high quality and contextually appropriate addition to the townscape is confirmed both in the Design Quality section and in the assessments set out with the images of the 16 views. In each case it has been possible to be positive about the scheme, in terms of its height, massing, elevational compositions, materiality and landscaping. Views 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 are the key views which most fully illustrate these successes. When assessed against design-related planning policy, including the 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines' (2018) and the draft SDCC Development Plan 2022-2028, the proposals perform well, as detailed in para 4.7-4.16.
- 6.4 The building's distinctive form with high quality public realm and a mix of ground floor uses, would stand as an elegant focal point and waymarker in views looking both north and south along Belgard Road (Views 5, 6, and 11 at chapter 5.0), and also in views looking west when approaching the Town Centre from Tallaght's historic core (View 15 at chapter 5.0). Similarly, the proposed development, by way of its high quality design, and carefully-considered approach to height and massing, would assist with legibility in views from TU Dublin (View 10 at chapter 5.0), providing a visual link between this key local educational institution and the town centre. In those two cases where the development occludes views of the Dublin Mountains, even a four storey development would have a similar screening effect.
- 6.5 It has been possible through these objective studies to provide the application with full support and to highly recommend it to An Bord Pleanála for their positive consideration.

APPENDIX I - VISUAL LAB METHODOLOGY

Photomontage Methodology

3D Modelling

2D CAD drawings were supplied by Henry J. Lyons Architects. Visual Lab used these drawings to produce a detailed 3D model of the proposed building and associated landscaping. Existing topographical surveys were also provided by Henry J. Lyons Architects.

Photography

All photographs were taken by BML Media using a high resolution Sony 7R2 35mm Camera with a 24 mm Cannon mark 2 shift lens.

A plumb line was used to mark the position of the centre of the camera and to confirm a camera height of 1.6m. A mark was sprayed on the ground at each camera position and a photograph taken of the camera position for reference. Additional detail photographs of the site area and surrounds were also taken for reference purposes using a variety of lenses.

Survey Information

In all cases the camera positions and control points were surveyed by CSS Surveys. Key static points that were visible in the photographs were also surveyed to serve as control points. The camera positions and control points were then related back and aligned into the Base Model (all at National Grid).

Base Model

The provided topographical survey and proposed model were over-laid and aligned to create a 'Base' model file. This Base model allowed for the accurate alignment of the proposed buildings, camera positions and reference points. This Base model was updated throughout the design process.

Photo matching

Using 3D Studio Max software a virtual camera was positioned using the camera locations from surveyed information and an accurate fit between the camera and the photograph was achieved by precisely matching the surveyed static features (control points) in the rendering to the corresponding points in the background photograph.

Rendering

The models were textured and rendered using VRAY rendering engine. The materials and lighting were adjusted to try and mimic real work scenarios - building within the scene were used as a reference to obtain valuable visual clues as to how the light would react with the proposed building. A computer image was produced (rendered) and then combined with the background photograph using digital compositing software. Using the detail photographs for reference the images were then cropped to remove any parts that would be screened by existing trees, topography or buildings, leaving only the parts, which would be visible. The photomontages are presented as "proposed", with additional proposed planting.

Presentation

As photography cannot present what the eye sees in reality, it is intended that the photomontages are used as a tool to aid visual assessment. They should be viewed on site and compared with the real scene.

Each view is presented on 2 sheets:

Sheet 1 - Existing site pre construction

Sheet 2 - Proposed scheme

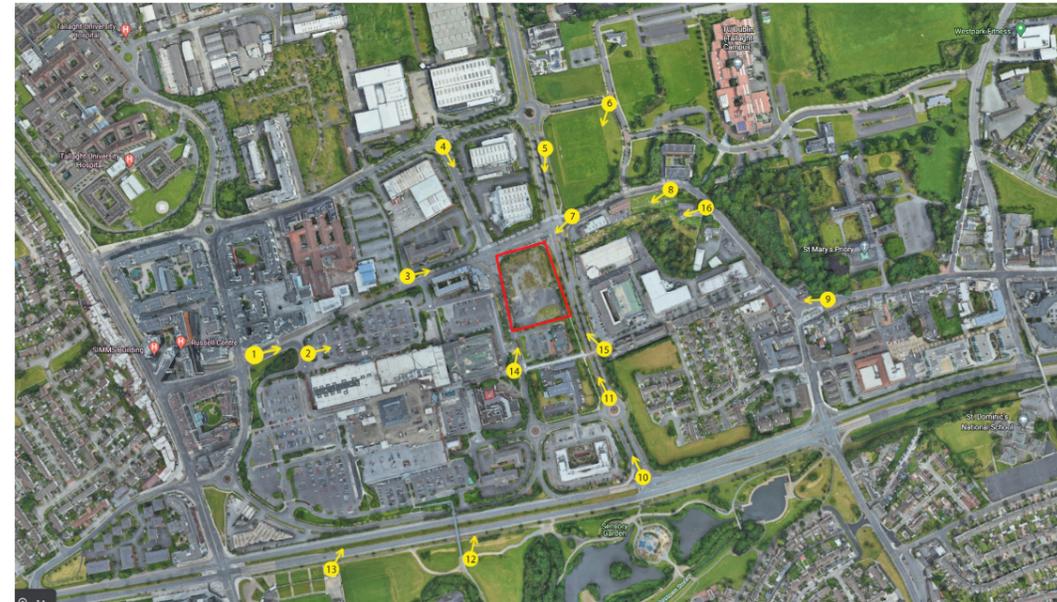
Conclusion

We have outlined our procedure for the generation of the photo-match. We have re-verified our results and we are confident that these images give a fair and true representation of the proposed development.

Notes

Subject to accurate survey information, the position and scale of a building in a scene can be verified mathematically. Whilst position, height and scale will be objectively accurate, subjective judgement must be used when lighting is being assessed and therefore a definitive and objectively verified agreement on lighting is not possible.

Visual Lab recommends that all parties are mindful that Environmental Statement photomontage should be used as a complement to site based assessment.



Location of Camera's

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