

LIVIA

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

St Kevin's Hospital Strategic Housing Development



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Landscape/Townscape & Visual Impact Assessment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Townscape and Visual impact Assessment report has been prepared in respect of a residential development at the site of the Former St. Kevin's Hospital and Grounds, Shanakiel, Cork (A Protected Structure, 'Our Lady's Hospital' RPS Ref. PS620). This report describes the townscape/visual context of the proposed development and assesses the likely impacts of the scheme on the receiving environment, in terms of both townscape character and visual amenity.

Landscape/townscape assessment relates to changes in the physical environment, brought about by a proposed development, which may alter its character. This requires a detailed analysis of the individual elements and characteristics of a landscape/townscape that go together to make up the overall character of that area. By understanding the aspects that contribute to this character it is possible to make judgements in relation to its quality (integrity) and to identify key sensitivities. This, in turn, provides a measure of the ability of the landscape/townscape in question to accommodate the type and scale of change associated with the proposed development, without causing unacceptable adverse changes to its character.

Visual Impact Assessment relates to changes in the composition of views as a result of changes to the landscape/townscape, how these are perceived and the effects on visual amenity. Such impacts are population-based, rather than resource-based, as in the case of landscape impacts.

1.1 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

This Landscape/Townscape and Visual Assessment report was prepared by Macro Works Ltd of Cherrywood Business Park, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18; a consultancy firm specialising in Landscape and Visual Assessment and associated maps and graphics. Relevant experience includes a vast range of infrastructural, industrial and commercial projects since 1999, including numerous residential development projects.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will convert the existing St Kevin's Hospital building to residential apartments and will provide a range of new residential buildings and associated landscaping, pedestrian / vehicle circulation areas and car parking. The schedule of accommodation units is set out below as per the planning description;

The Land Development Agency intend to apply to An Bord Pleanála (the Board) for permission for a Strategic Housing Development with a total application site area of c. 5.7 ha, on lands located at the Former St. Kevin's Hospital and Grounds, Shanakiel, Cork (A Protected Structure, 'Our Lady's Hospital' RPS Ref. PS620). The development, with a total gross floor area of c 24,344 sq m, will provide 266 no. residential units, a crèche and office enterprise centre. The development will consist of 46 no. town houses (32 no. 3 bedroom units and 14 no. 4 bedroom units) arranged in 11 no. two storey blocks; 54 no. ground floor 2 bedroom duplex apartments and 36 no. 3 bedroom and 18 no. 4 bedroom duplex townhouses above arranged in 7 no. three storey blocks; 52 no. walk-up apartments (11 no. 1 bedroom apartments and 41 no. 2 bedroom apartments) arranged in 3 no. four storey blocks. The

development will also include the conversion and renovation of the former St. Kevin's Hospital building to provide 60 no. apartments (26 no. 1 bedroom and 34 no. 2 bedroom apartments) and a 440 sq m crèche at ground floor level, with ancillary outdoor play area; The conversion of the 630 sq m former chapel building to provide a new Office Enterprise Centre. The proposed development will include 241 no. surface car parking spaces and 563 no. bicycle parking spaces.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

Production of this Landscape/townscape and Visual Impact Assessment involved:

- A desktop study to establish an appropriate study area, relevant landscape and visual designations in the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021;
- Fieldwork to study the receiving environment and to select a suitable set of viewpoints to be used for visual impact assessment;
- Assessment of the significance of the landscape/townscape impact of the proposed development as a function of landscape sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the landscape impact;
- Assessment of the significance of the visual impact of the proposed development as a function of visual receptor sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact.

This document uses methodology as prescribed in the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and landscape Institute (UK) 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA-2013). Although this is principally a 'townscape' assessment, it utilises the same outline methodology as would be employed for the more familiar Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of developments in rural settings.

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA-2013) follow the European Landscape Convention (ELC) definition of landscape: '*Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*' (Council of Europe, 2000). Thus, GLVIA-2013 covers all landscapes from "*high mountains and wild countryside to urban and fringe farmland (rural landscapes), marine and coastal landscapes (seascapes) and the landscapes of villages towns and cities (townscapes)*" - whether protected or degraded.

Townscape is defined in GLVIA-2013 in the following manner (section 2.7):

'Townscape' refers to areas where the built environment is dominant. Villages, towns and cities often make important contributions as elements in wider-open landscapes but townscape means the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban spaces, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces. There are important relationships with historic dimensions of landscape and townscape, since evidence of the way the villages, towns and cities change and develop over time contributes to their current form and character.

1.4 Landscape/townscape Impact Assessment Criteria

When assessing the potential impacts on the townscape resulting from a proposed development, the following criteria are considered:

- Landscape/townscape character, value and sensitivity;
- Magnitude of likely impacts;
- Significance of landscape effects.

The sensitivity of the townscape to change is the degree to which a particular setting can accommodate changes or new elements without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. Landscape/townscape Value and Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1: Landscape/Townscape Value and Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a very low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value townscapes, protected at an international or national level (e.g. World Heritage Site), where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value townscapes, protected at a national or regional level, where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the townscape character exhibits some capacity and scope for development. Examples of which are townscapes, which have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value and use.
Low	Areas where the townscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically this would include lower value, non-designated townscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas of townscape character that include derelict sites and degradation where there would be a reasonable capacity to embrace change or the capacity to include the development proposals. Management objectives in such areas could be focused on change, creation of townscape improvements and/or restoration.

The magnitude of a predicted landscape/townscape impact is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed development. The magnitude

takes into account whether there is a direct physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape/townscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the immediate setting that may have an effect on the townscape character. **Table 1-2** refers.

Table 1-2: Magnitude of Landscape/Townscape Impacts

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale with the loss of critically important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of important townscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an overall change of the townscape in terms of character, value and quality.
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale involving the loss of landscape characteristics or elements that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to changes in landscape character, and quality.
Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements.
Negligible	Changes affecting small or very restricted areas of landscape character. This may include the limited loss of some elements or the addition of some new features or elements that are characteristic of the existing landscape or are hardly perceivable.
Positive	Changes that restore a degraded landscape or reinforce characteristic landscape elements

The significance of a landscape/townscape impact is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The significance of landscape impacts is arrived at using the following matrix set out in **Table 1-3**.

Table 1-3: Impact Significance Matrix

Scale/Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Very High	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Minor
High	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-imperceptible
Medium	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
Negligible	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible
Positive	Enhanced	Enhanced	Enhanced	Enhanced	Enhanced

Note: The significance matrix provides an indicative framework from which the significance of impact is derived. The significance judgement is ultimately determined by the assessor using professional judgement. Due to nuances within the constituent sensitivity and magnitude judgements, this may be up to one category higher or lower than indicated by the matrix. Judgements indicated in orange are considered to be ‘significant impacts’ in EIA terms.

1.4.1 Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

As with the landscape/townscape impact, the visual impact of the proposed development will be assessed as a function of sensitivity versus magnitude. In this instance the sensitivity of the visual receptor, weighed against the magnitude of the visual effect.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Unlike landscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric (human) basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape/townscape context of the viewer, the likely activity they are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape. A list of the factors considered by the assessor in estimating the level of sensitivity for a particular visual receptor is outlined below to establish visual receptor sensitivity at each VRP:

Susceptibility of Receptors

In accordance with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (“IEMA”) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (3rd edition 2013) visual receptors most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are:

- *“Residents at home;*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*
- *Travellers on road rail or other transport routes where such travel involves recognised scenic routes and awareness of views is likely to be heightened”.*

Visual receptors that are less susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity include;

- *“People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focussed on their work or activity, not their surroundings and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life”.*

Recognised scenic value of the view (County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards etc). These represent a consensus in terms of which scenic views and routes within an area are strongly valued by the population because in the case of County Developments Plans, for example, a public consultation process is required;

Views from within highly sensitive townscape areas. These are likely to be in the form of Architectural Conservation Areas, which are incorporated within the Development Plan and therefore subject to the public consultation process. Viewers within such areas are likely to be highly attuned to the townscape around them;

Primary views from residential receptors. Even within a dynamic city context, views from residential properties are an important consideration in respect of residential amenity;

Intensity of use, popularity. This relates to the number of viewers likely to experience a view on a regular basis and whether this is significant at a national or regional scale;

Viewer connection with the townscape. This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the townscape i.e. commuters hurriedly driving on busy roads versus tourists focussed on the character and detail of the townscape;

Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views. This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;

Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity. Receptors taking in a remote and tranquil scene, which is likely to be fairly static, are likely to be more receptive to changes in the view than those taking in the view of a busy street scene, for example;

Degree of perceived naturalness. Where a view is valued for the sense of naturalness of the surrounding landscape it is likely to be highly sensitive to visual intrusion by distinctly manmade features;

Presence of striking or noteworthy features. A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape / townscape feature such as a cathedral or castle;

Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance. Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;

Rarity or uniqueness of the view. This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain townscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;

Integrity of the townscape character. This looks at the condition and intactness of the townscape in view and whether the townscape pattern is a regular one of few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;

Sense of place. This considers whether there is special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location;

Sense of awe. This considers whether the view inspires an overwhelming sense of scale or the power of nature.

Those locations which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria are likely to be of higher sensitivity. No relative importance is inferred by the order of listing. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

1.4.2 Visual Impact Magnitude

The visual impact magnitude relates to the scale and nature of the visual change brought about by the proposal and this is reflected in the criteria contained in **Table 1.4** below.

Table 1.4: Magnitude of Visual Impacts

Criteria	Description
Very High	The proposal alters a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most distinctive element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene
High	The proposal alters a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also likely to be generated, appreciably reducing the visual amenity of the scene
Medium	The proposal represents a moderate alteration the available vista, is a readily noticeable element and/or it may generate a degree of visual clutter or disharmony, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene.
Low	The proposal alters the available vista to a minor extent and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene.
Negligible	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not detract from, and may even enhance, the visual amenity of the scene.
Positive	Changes that enhance the available vista by reducing visual clutter or restoring degraded features.

1.4.3 Visual Impact Significance

As stated above, the significance of visual impacts is a function of visual receptor sensitivity and visual impact magnitude. This relationship is expressed in the same significance matrix and applies the same EPA definitions of significance as used earlier in respect of townscape impacts (**Table 1-3** refers).

1.4.4 Extent of Study Area

It is anticipated that the proposed development will be difficult to discern and not likely to give rise to significant landscape/townscape or visual impacts beyond 1.5km. As a result, a 1.5km-radius study area is used in this instance.

1.5 THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The landscape/townscape baseline represents the existing context and is the scenario against which any changes to it, brought about by the proposed development, will be assessed. A description of the landscape/townscape context of the proposed site and wider study area is provided below. Although this description forms part of the landscape/townscape baseline, many of the elements identified also relate to visual receptors i.e. places from which viewers can potentially see the proposed development. The visual resource will be described in greater detail in Section 1.9.

1.5.1 Baseline Environment

1.5.1.1 Landform and Drainage

The St Kevin's Hospital site lies on the relatively steep northern slopes above the River Lee, which runs in an easterly direction through the heart of Cork City and around which the City has formed. Immediately below the site is a weir and watersteps within the River Lee and the Old Cork Water and water race occur on the northern side of the River. The terrain on the southern side of the River Lee rises more gently and forms the base of the valley between the Sunday's Well Ridge to the north and the farmed ridges that contain the urban area to the south of the City. Just downstream of the weir, a minor branch of the River Lee diverges south-eastwards for a short distance to join the Curragheen River, which arrives from the southwest. Together these run parallel several hundred metres to the south of the River Lee and form the elongated island that hosts the Cork Central Business District before re-joining the main river on its way to the Lee Estuary.

1.5.1.2 Land use and land cover

The site itself is a collection of dilapidated and fire-damaged institutional buildings on a sloped and sprawling site of unused gravel and hard surfaced areas, regenerating grass and scrub that also contains a scattering mature broadleaf trees and tree groups. Immediately to the west is the iconic Atkins Hall site, to which St Kevin's Hospital was an extension in the 1850s. Whilst partly dilapidated and fire damaged itself, Atkins Hall and its surrounding site contain residential apartment buildings and office / commercial uses on a steep site that contains scrubby woodland above (to the north) of the series of elongated cross-slope buildings of differing vintage. A long covered colonnade (dilapidated) links west from St Kevin's Hospital to the Chapple on the Atkin's Hall site.

On the Plateau ridge to the north of the site is a residential housing estate that is flanked by a pitch-and-putt golf course to the east. Another residential enclave exists to the northeast of the site along with two large municipal water tanks, whilst large detached residences are contained within a woodland setting directly to the east. Below these are a series of terraced houses that front the Lee Road and overlook the River Lee. Amongst the attractive Victorian remains of the former Cork City Water Works that lie below the site to the south is a scattering of residential dwellings and other commercial sites.



Figure 1.1 – Landform and landuse context of the site and central study area (Googleearth)

Within the wider study area the former Cork City jurisdictional boundary occurs just to the west of Atkins Hall and thereafter agricultural land use predominates, albeit containing a scattering of rural / residential enclaves. There is a series of riverside parks and green spaces along the southern banks of the River Lee along with the prominent Kingsley Hotel, which faces the even more prominent Cork County Council Office building across the Carrigrohane Rd (N22). To the southeast of the site across the Sunday's Well Bridge are the sports fields and campus of University Collage Cork along with Fitzgerald Park on the southern banks of the River Lee. A rich and varied mixture of urban land uses including institutional sites, commercial premises, factories, and public open spaces occurs within a general matrix of mid to high density residential housing throughout northern, southern and eastern quarters of the wider study area.

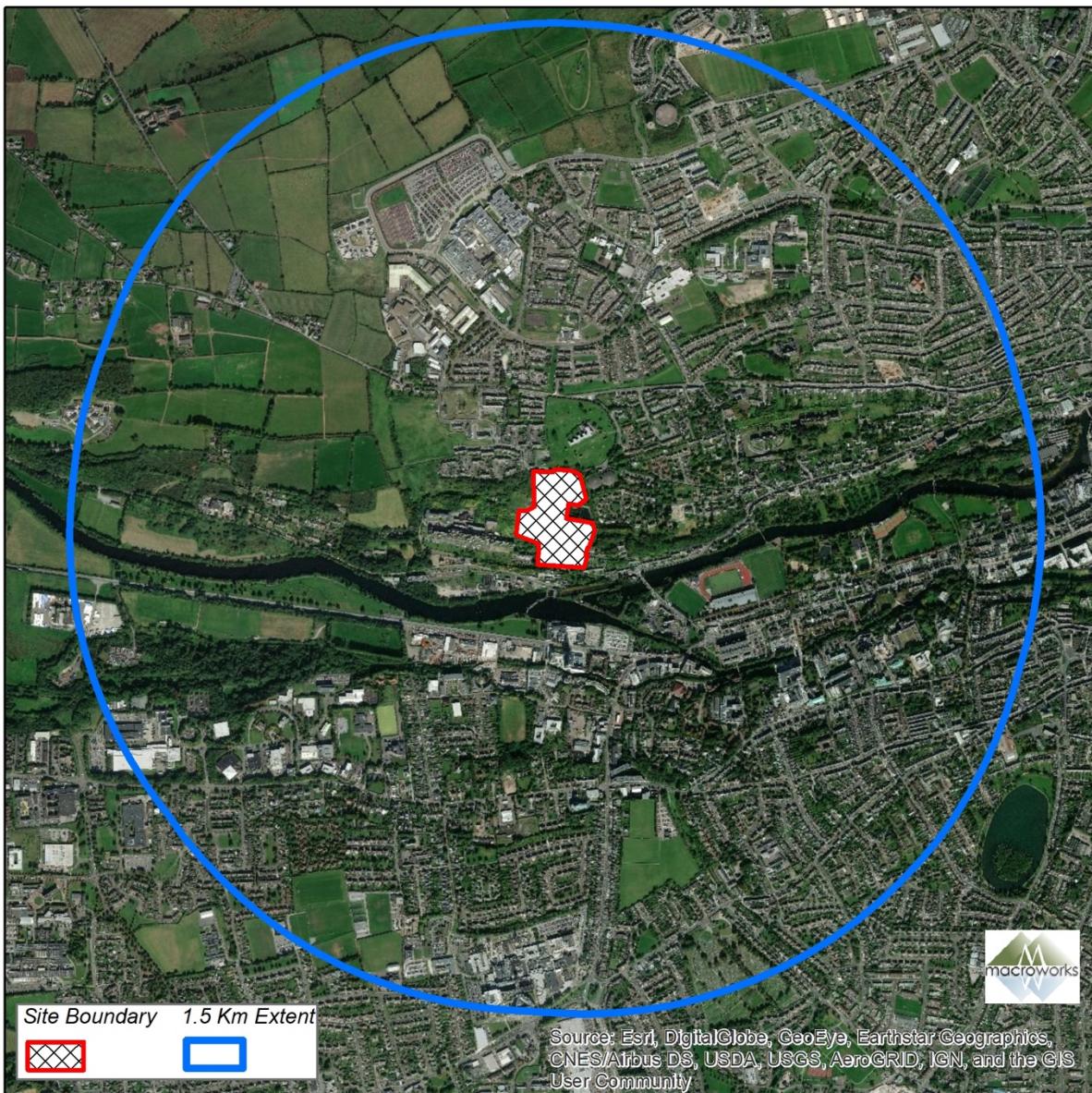


Figure 1.2 – Land use mix of the overall study area.

1.5.1.4 Transport Routes

The main transport route in the context of the proposed development is the N22 national road that exits Cork City to the west and runs parallel to south of the River Lee, where it is known as the Carrigrohane Road. It is approximately 300m to the south of the site at its nearest point. The N71 national secondary road joins the N22 from the south at the neighbourhood commercial centre of Victoria Cross around 400m to the southeast of the site.

Though only a local road where it runs 100m to the south of the site, the Lee Road becomes the R486 regional road east of its intersection with the Sunday's Well Bridge. The other notable reginal road within the study area is the R608 (Model Farm Road), which also runs parallel to the south of the River Lee, but at a nearest distance of c. 800m.

1.5.1.5 Public Amenities and Facilities.

The main public amenities and facilities within the study area relate to the River Lee

1.5.2 Historical Context of Study Area

Construction of St Kevin's Hospital was completed in 1899 and it was to function as an annex to Our Lady's Hospital (Atkins Hall), which was opened in 1852 and lies to the west of the site. Atkins Hall was designed in the 'Gothic revival style', whereas St Kevin's Hospital is an example of Victorian Architecture. As can be seen in Figures 1.2 and 1.3, these two striking and substantial mental hospitals were originally contained within a rural and demesne setting beyond the western fringe of Cork City in the area known as Shanakiel.

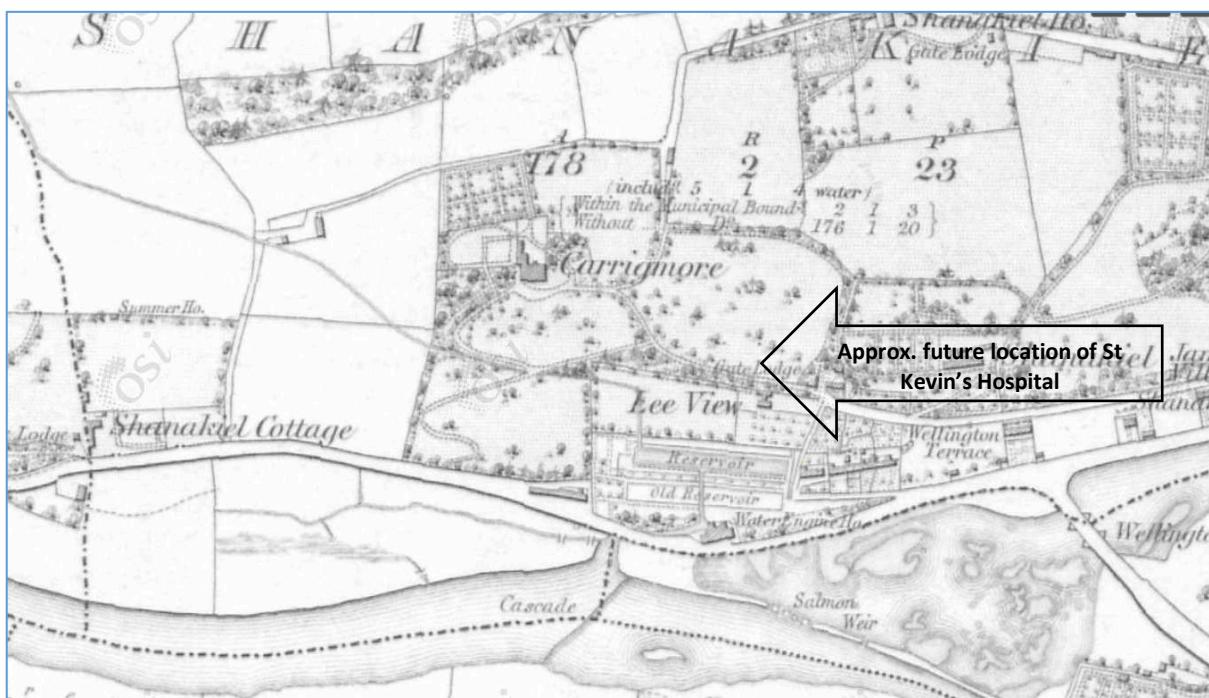


Figure 1.2 – Historical Map 1837

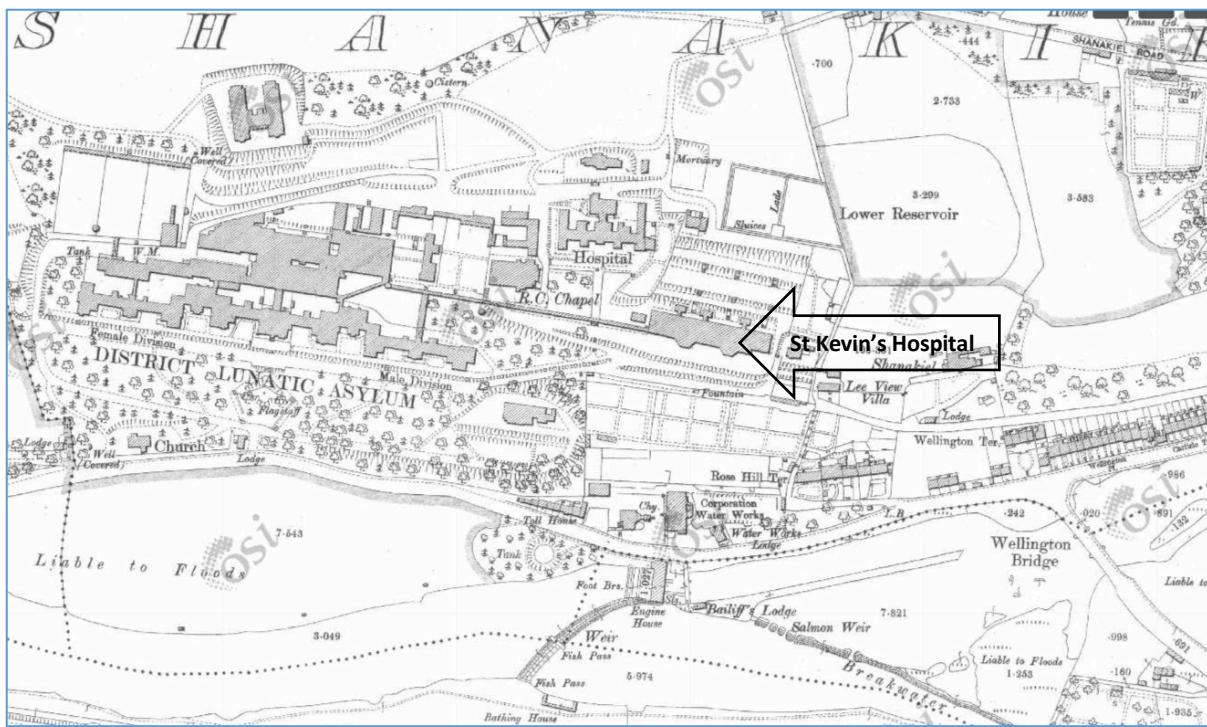


Figure 1.3 – Historical Maps 1888 - 1913

1.6 PLANNING CONTEXT

1.6.1 Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021

Landscape and visual policy is contained in Chapter 10 – ‘Landscape and Natural Heritage’ of the Cork City Development Plan (2015-2021). Overarching Objective 10.1 ‘Landscape Strategic Objectives’ is “*To preserve and enhance Cork’s landscape character and key landscape assets*” and “*To preserve and enhance Cork’s views and prospects of special amenity value*”.

1.6.1.1 Landscape Policy

The Cork City Landscape Study was commissioned by Cork City Council in 2008 to “*establish principles and provide the framework for protecting and enhancing the natural environment and positively managing its change, as well as providing the context within which the design of developments can take place in an appropriate manner. The methodology of the Study consisted of a Landscape Character Assessment; an Analysis of the Key Landscape Elements; and the identification of Key Landscape Assets and Formulation of Policy Recommendations*”.

The Landscape Character Assessment defined 8 no. Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the city as follows: *Estuarine / Riverine; Suburban residential; Natural harbour; Urban sylvan character; Historic urban core; Urban industrial / commercial; Fine-grained inner-city residential; Rural agricultural*. These LCAs are shown on Figure 10.1 of the CCDP, the relevant excerpt from which is shown in Figure 1.4 below.

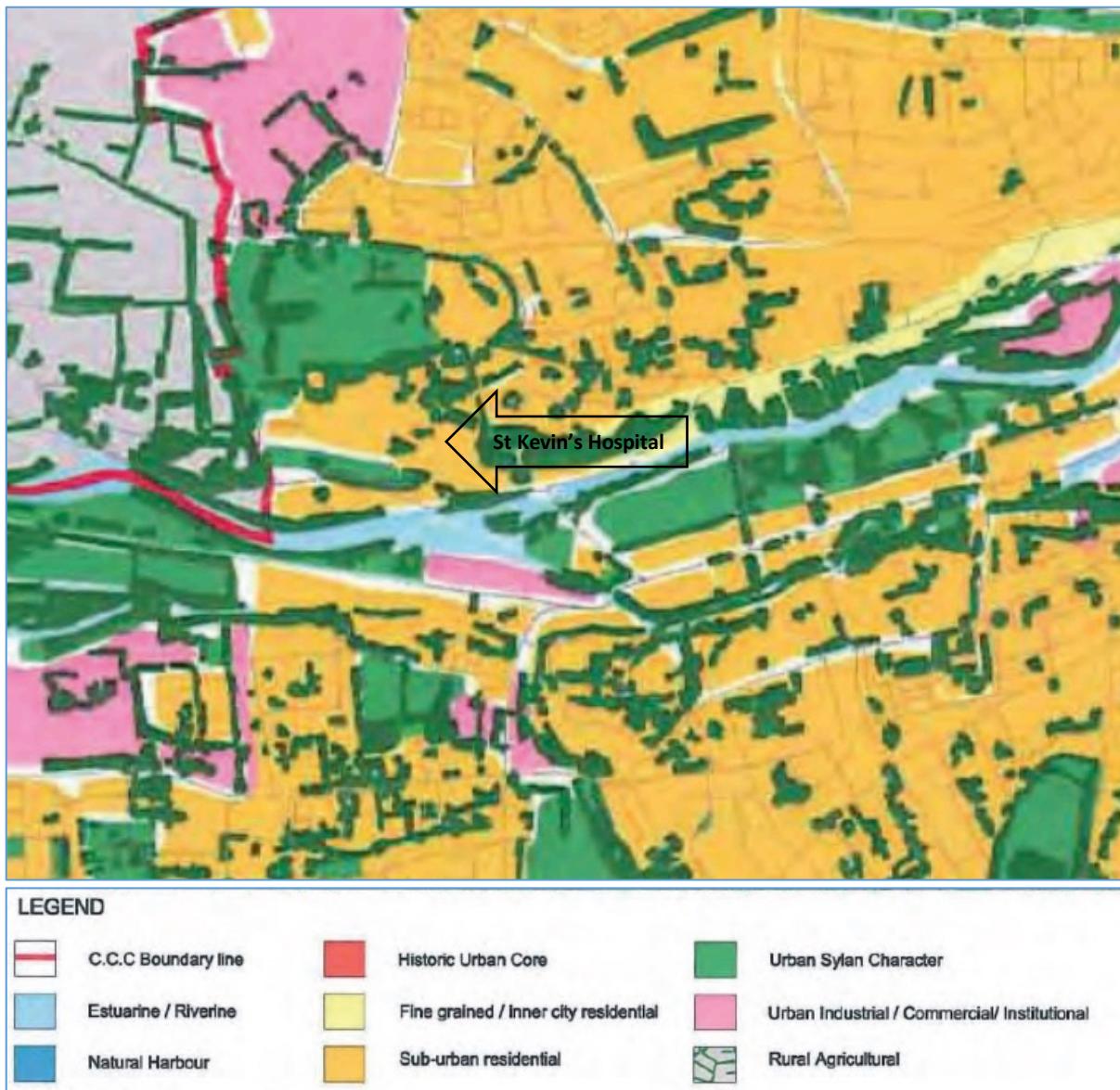


Figure 1.4 – Excerpt from Landscape Character Assessment 2008

In terms of ‘Key Landscape Assets’, the study identified the key landscape assets that combine to create Cork’s unique and distinctive cityscape. These landscape assets are identified in Table 10.1 and associated ‘Conceptual Landscape Structure Plan’ (Figure 10.2) of the CCDP, which are both provided below as Figure 1.5 and Figure 1.6 respectively.

Ref	Assets Category
A	Topography - ridges, escarpments, slopes
B	Water / River Corridors - rivers, estuary, harbour, The Lough, Atlantic Pond, Docklands, Port of Cork
C	Tree Canopy - Areas with existing woodlands or significant tree groups, or areas with potential for new woodlands.
D	Ecology - areas which provide a habitat for wild flora and fauna.
E	Visually Important Land (including Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value, Potential Vantage Points and Locally Important Views)
F	Historic Core / Townscapes / Streetscapes
G	Landmarks / Natural Features / Cultural Landscape – land forming the setting to existing landmark buildings and/or protected structures / buildings of significance
H	Public and Private Open Space footprint, including land with potential for Public Open Space
I	Institutional Open Space
J	Historic Landscapes (including monuments / historic routes)
K	Rural Character / Green Belt - proximity of rural and agricultural land uses to the city
L	Built Form
M	Public Realm
O	Gateways to the City
P	Bridges
Q	Pedestrian / Cycle Routes in the City / Access
R	Vehicular Access
S	The Railway in the City

Figure 1.5 – Landscape Assets Categories (Table 10.1 from CCDP)

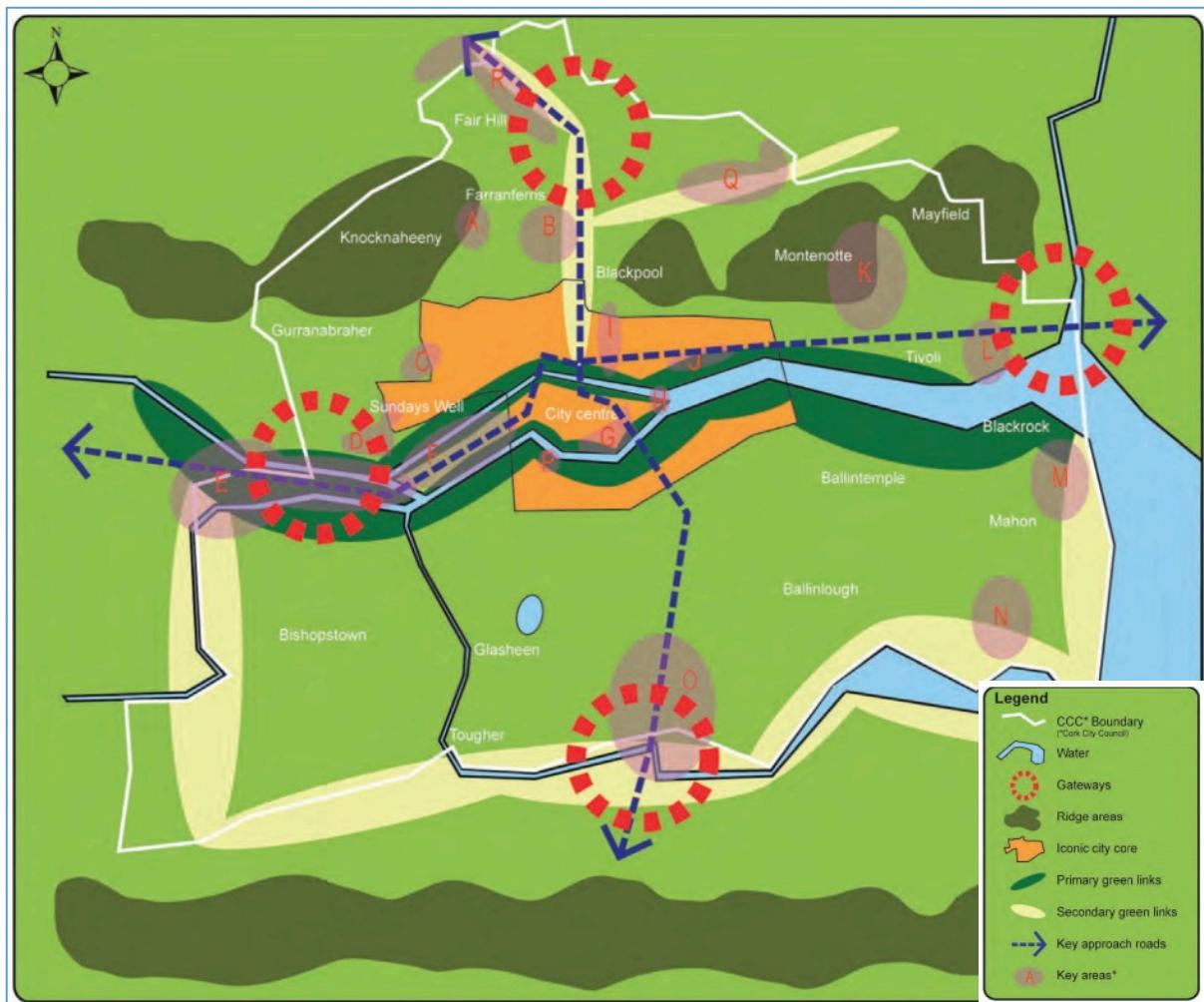


Figure 1.6 – Conceptual Landscape Structure Plan (Figure 10.2) of the CCDP

Section 10.13 in Chapter 10 of the CCDP relates to ‘Enhancing Cork’s Landscape’ and four elements of a framework to be achieved through the development management process. These elements consist of; Primary Green Links; Secondary Green Links; Key Landscape Areas, and; New Urban Woodlands. Particular areas are identified for each of these elements with the nearest to the proposed site being establishment of a ‘Primary Green Link’ along the Lee corridor. The following objectives relate to Landscape Enhancement:

Objective 10.2 Cork City Landscape

To preserve Cork’s unique and distinctive landscape character through the appropriate management and enhancement of Key Landscape Assets, (as set out in Table 10.1).

Objective 10.3 Cork City Landscape Structure Plan

To preserve and enhance Cork’s landscape and where appropriate, to increase access to and utilise the landscape for recreational purposes through the implementation of the Landscape Structure Plan.

The following section of Chapter 10 of the CCDP deal with ‘Landscape Protection’ and outlines that this will be achieved through the designation of ‘Areas of High Landscape Value’ (AHLV) where

development is tightly controlled and ‘Landscape Preservation Zones’ (LPZ), where there is a general presumption against new development. Both of these designations are shown in detail in Volume 2 of the CCDP within the North-Western suburbs mapped zoning objectives (Figure 1.7 refers).

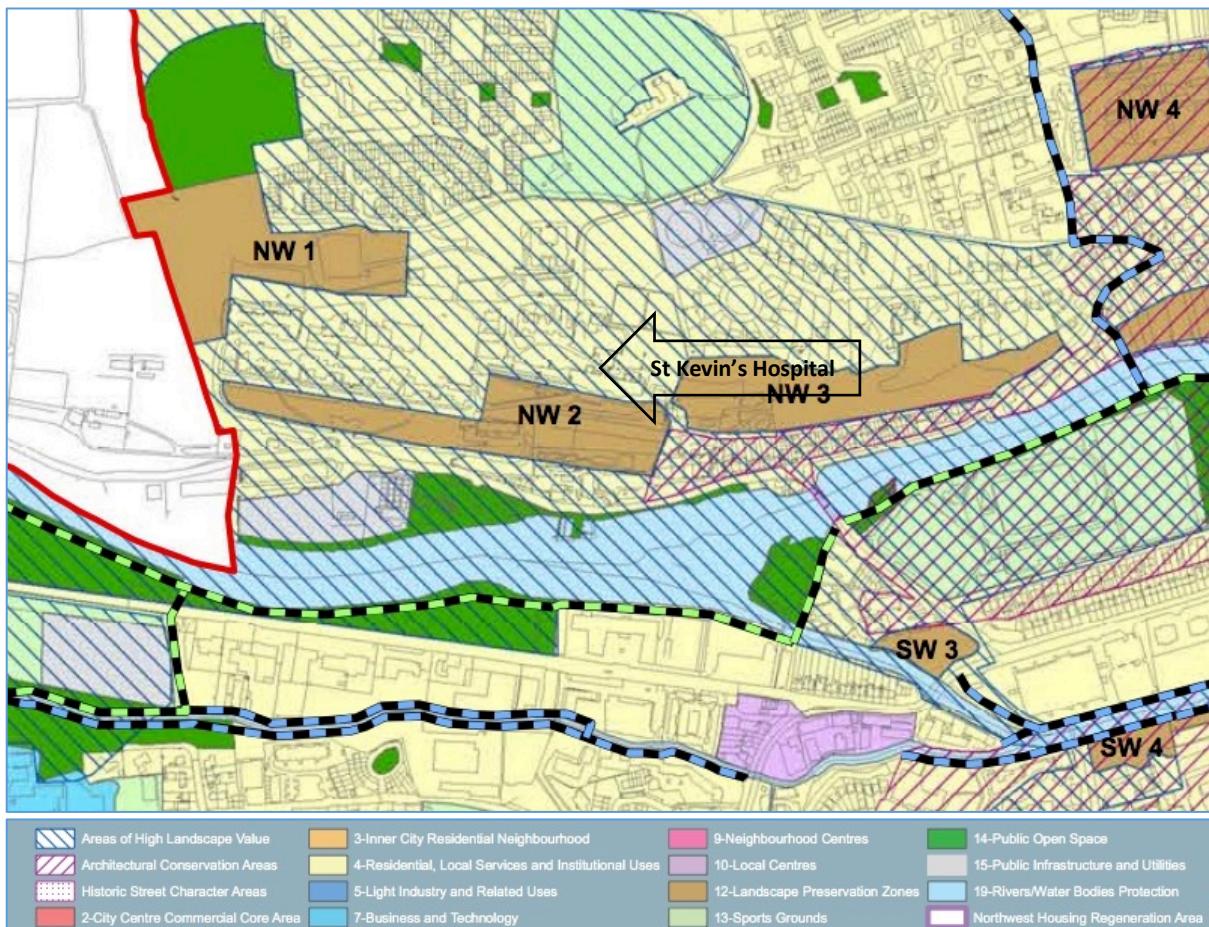


Figure 1.7 – North-Western suburbs mapped zoning objectives indicating landscape protection designations relevant to the St Kevin’s Hospital site

As can be seen from the Figure 1.7, the proposed St Kevin’s Hospital site is fully contained within a general ‘Area of High Landscape Value’ (blue hatch) and partially within ‘Landscape Preservation Area - NW2’. Specifically, the NW2 zoning lies downhill directly to the south (front) of the St Kevin’s Hospital building and also stretches to the west in front of Atkin’s Hall. Table 10.2, which should be cross referenced with Table 10.1 (Figure 1.5 above) in relation to Landscape Preservation Zone policy, indicates that there are no ‘Site Specific Objectives’ for NW2, but that the landscape assets to be protected are;

‘C’ Tree Canopy - Areas with existing woodlands or significant tree groups, or areas with potential for new woodlands;

‘E’ Visually Important Land - (including Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value, Potential Vantage Points and Locally Important Views);

‘A’ Topography - ridges, escarpments, slopes.

Relevant objectives relating to AHLV and LPZ areas include the following;

Objective 10.4 Areas of High Landscape Value

To conserve and enhance the character and visual amenity of Areas of High Landscape Value (AHLV) through the appropriate management of development, in order to retain the existing characteristics of the landscape, and its primary landscape assets. Development will be considered only where it safeguards to the value and sensitivity of the particular landscape. There will be a presumption against development where it causes significant harm or injury to the intrinsic character of the Area of High Landscape Value and its primary landscape assets, the visual amenity of the landscape; protected views; breaks the existing ridge silhouette; the character and setting of buildings, structures and landmarks; and the ecological and habitat value of the landscape.

Objective 10.5 Landscape Preservation Zones

To preserve and enhance the character and visual amenity of Landscape Preservation Zones through the control of development. Development will be considered only where it safeguards to the value and sensitivity of the particular landscape and achieves the respective site specific objectives, as set out in Table 10.2.

1.6.1.2 Views and Prospects

Protected views within Cork City are mapped in Volume 2 and listed within Volume 3 of the CCDP. There are five types of protected view and these are listed below. The most relevant to this proposed development is the first type – ‘Linear Views of Landmark Buildings’;

Linear Views of Landmark Buildings

These occur where a particular landmark/ building is the main point of focus. Views tend to be framed within relatively narrow viewing corridors such as laneways and streets. The views of landmark buildings are considered to be of particular importance and special amenity value. The majority of these views are from City Centre or inner city viewing locations.

Panoramic Views

Panoramas are wide views of the city and suburbs (often from elevated sites) featuring a varying number of city’s landmarks. These panoramic views from specified locations or ‘Panoramic Assessment Points’ are considered to be of particular importance and are important reference points from which large development proposals can be assessed in terms of visual impact.

River Prospects

River prospects are views of landmark buildings from bridges but also riverbanks and quaysides.

Townscape and Landscape Features

These are views of areas that have distinctive/ outstanding townscape or landscape features within the city including views of the city ridges.

Approach Road Views

The approach roads into Cork City offer visitors the vital ‘first impression’ of the city and glimpse of the unique topography and character of Cork. Historical routes into the city tend to be from high vantage points, whereas the national primary roads offer wider viewing corridors.

Map 14 and Map 18 of Volume 2 of the CCDP show views and prospects in the northwest and southwest of the city respectively, some of which are relevant to the proposed development (Figure 1.8 and Figure 1.9 refer). The most relevant views and prospects to this proposed project are considered to be;

Sundays Well Ridge (prospect)

WT1 – Wilton Road

Our Lady's Hospital

OL1 - Model Farm Road, down Farranlea Rd

OL2 - Bishopstown Avenue

Our Lady's Hospital (Atkins Hall), Shanakiel Ridge

LT2B – Mardyke Walk-Daly Bridge / riverside walkway

LT15 – Lee Fields / Carrigrohane Road

LT16 – Model Farm Road, down Farranlea Rd

LT17 – Bishopstown Avenue

LT17a – Western Rd/Thomas Davis Bridge

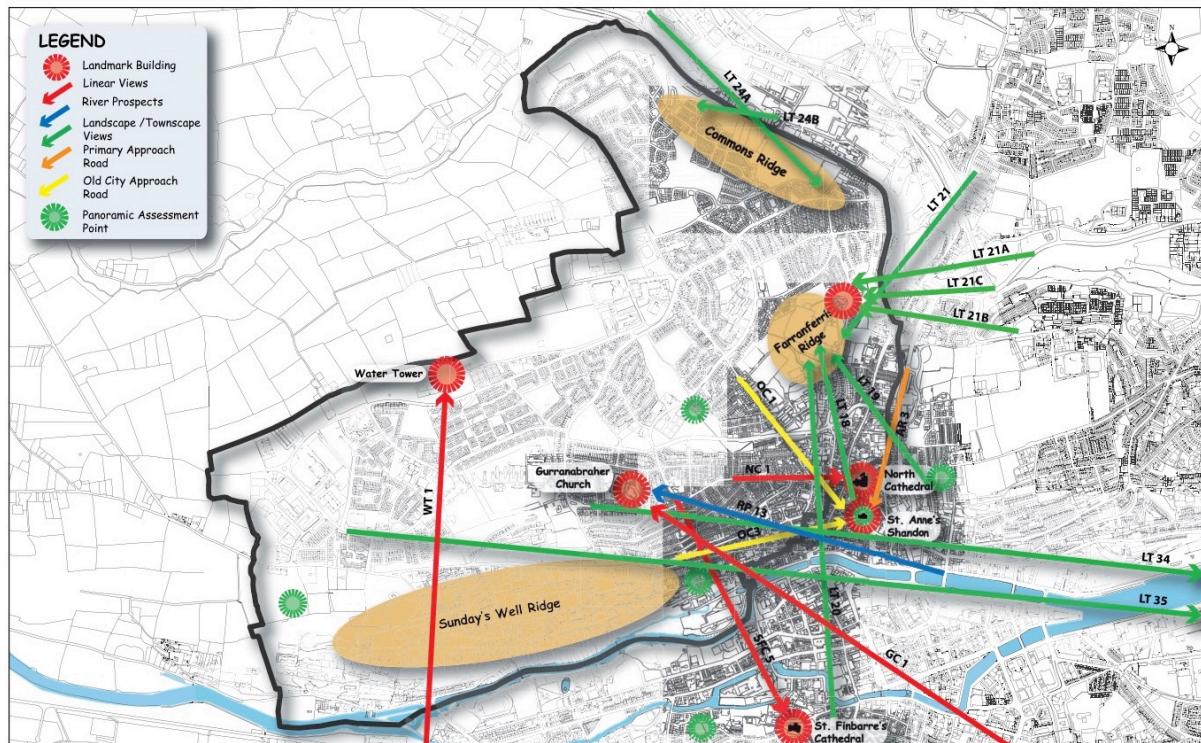


Figure 1.8 – Map 14 of the CCDP (Volume 2) showing views and prospects in the northwest of the city

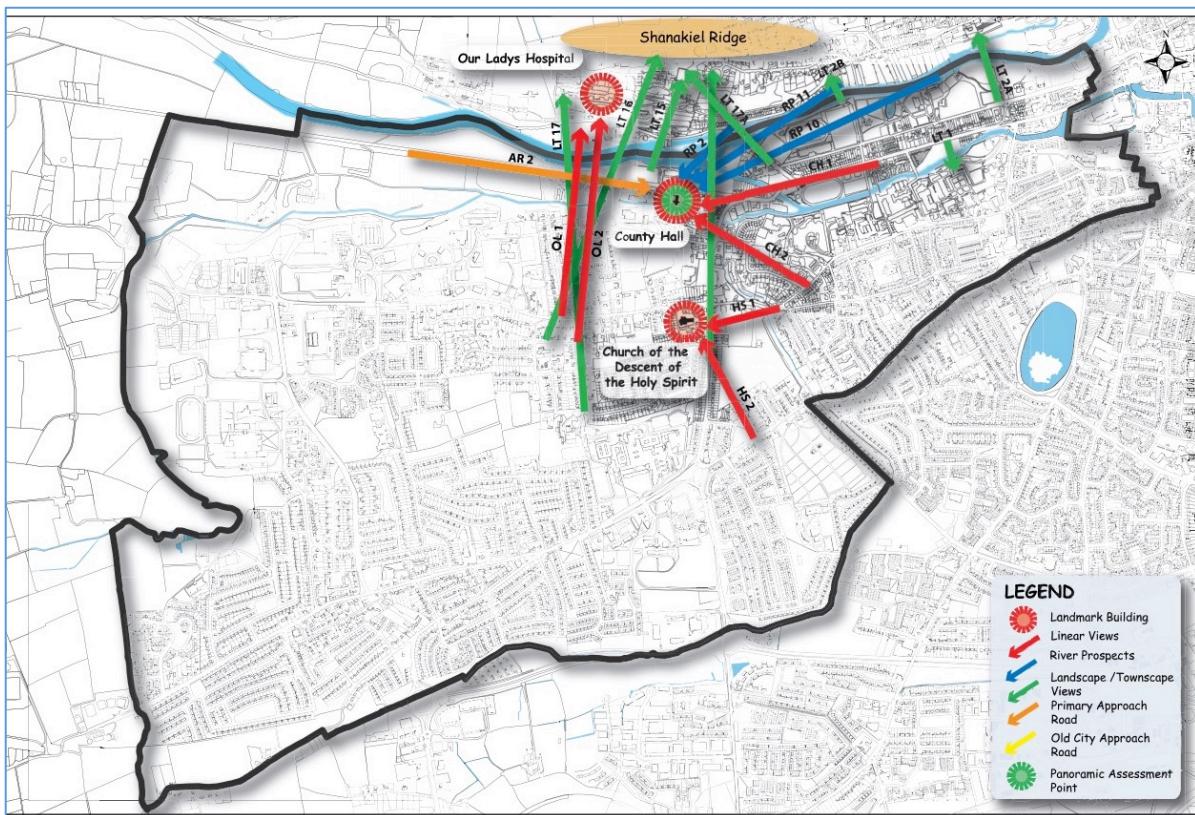


Figure 1.9 – Map 18 of the CCDP (Volume 2) showing views and prospects in the southwest of the city

The relevant Objective for Views and Prospects is;

Objective 10.6 Views and Prospects

To protect and enhance views and prospects of special amenity value or special interest and contribute to the character of the City's landscape from inappropriate development, in particular those listed in the development plan. There will be a presumption against development that would harm, obstruct or compromise the quality or setting of linear views of landmark buildings, panoramic views, rivers prospects, townscape and landscape views and approach road views. To identify and protect views of local significance through the preparation of local area plans, site development briefs and the assessment of development proposals on a case-by-case basis.

1.7 Identification of Viewshed Reference Points as a Basis for Assessment

Viewshed Reference Points (VRP's) are the locations used to study the likely visual impacts associated with the proposed development. It is not warranted to include each and every location that provides a view as this would result in an unwieldy report and make it extremely difficult to draw out the key impacts arising from the proposed development. Instead, the selected viewpoints are intended to reflect a range of different receptor types, distances and angles. The visual impact of a proposed development is assessed using up to 6 categories of receptor type as listed below:

- Key Views - from features of national or international importance;
- Designated Scenic Routes and Views;
- Local Community views;
- Centres of Population;
- Major Routes; and
- Amenity and heritage features.

The Viewshed Reference Points selected in this instance are set out in Table 1.5 and shown on Figure 1.3 below.

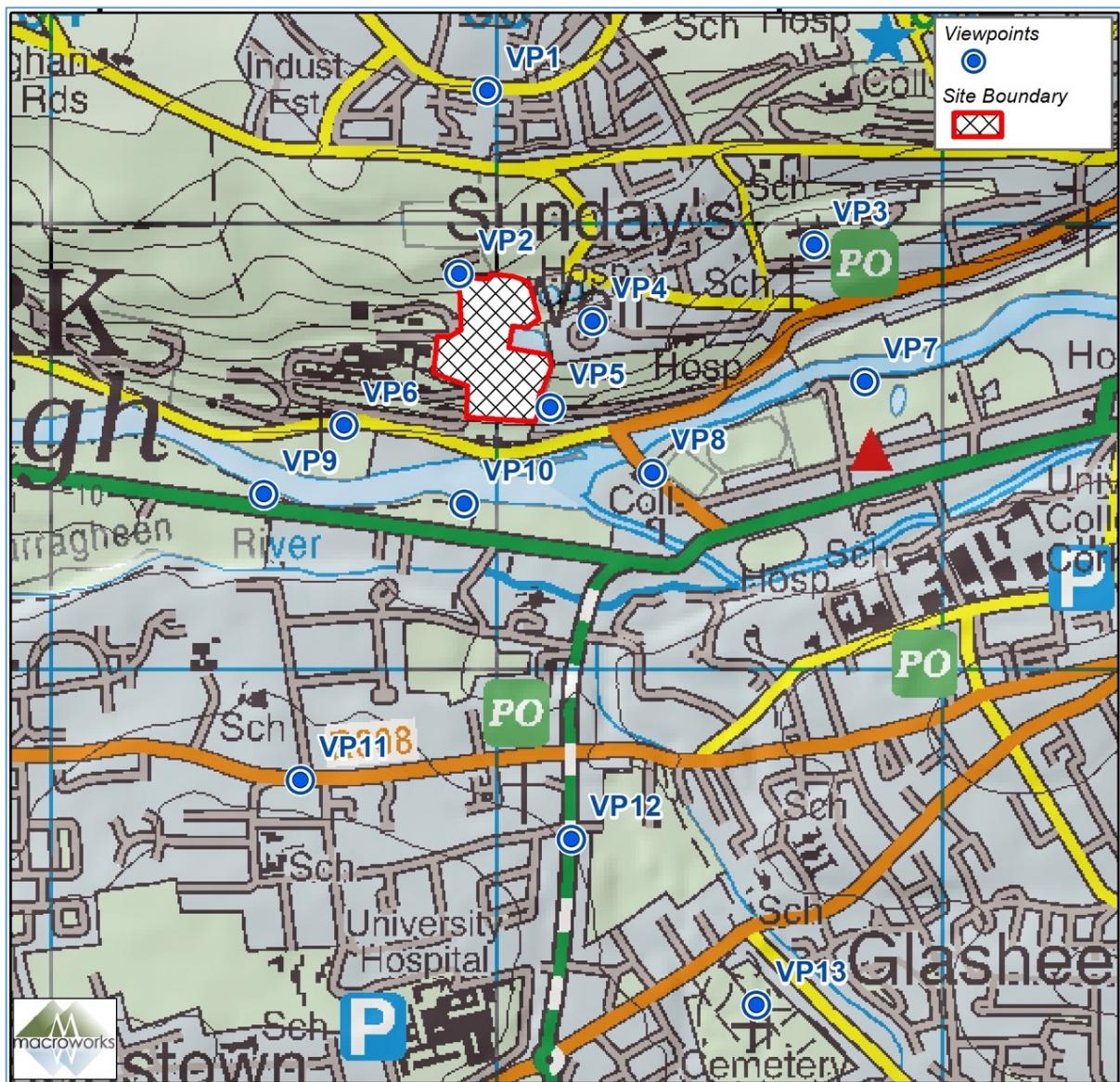


Figure 1.3 – Viewpoint Selection Map

Table 1-5 Outline Description of Selected Viewshed Reference Points (VRPs)

VRP No.	Location	Direction of view
VP1	Local road / residential housing estate 500m north of site (Scenic View LT35)	S
VP2	Residential housing estate immediately northwest of site	SE
VP3	Cork City Gaol (Museum)	SW
VP4	Residential housing estate east of site	W
VP5	Residential road at Rose Hill Upper	NW
VP6	Lee Road 300m southwest of site	NE
VP7	River Lee walkway 750m east of site	W
VP8	R846 – Western Road approaching Sunday's Well Bridge (scenic View LT17a)	NW
VP9	River Lee walkway / N22 - Carrigrohane Road 500m southwest of site	NE
VP10	River Lee walkway 200m south of site (Scenic View LT15)	N
VP11	R608 – Model Farm Road 900m south of site (Scenic Views OL1 & LT16)	N
VP12	N71 - Wilton Road 1.1km south of site (Scenic View WT1)	N
VP13	St Finbarr's Cemetery	NW

1.8 PREDICTED IMPACTS

1.8.1 Landscape/townscape Impacts

1.8.1.1 *Landscape/townscape value and sensitivity*

In accordance with Section 5.5 of the GLVIA-2013, a townscape character assessment requires a particular understanding of, among other criteria, “the context or setting of the urban area and its relationship to the wider landscape”. In this case there are several key and somewhat competing factors relating to the value and sensitivity of this site and its immediately surrounding context. These

include, the obvious architectural heritage value of St Kevin's Hospital in-combination with Atkins Hall and the Chapel all within a remnant 'parkland / demesne' landscape setting with some remaining mature broadleaf trees and tree groups. However, the resolute and austere appearance of this complex of substantial scale heritage buildings standing proudly above the River Lee belies the dereliction that is much more apparent from close quarters and within the site of St Kevin's Hospital itself. Indeed, the landscape and visual designations contained within the CCDP that are relevant to this distinctive heritage complex appear to relate as much to 'what was' and 'what could be' as to 'what currently is'.

An important aspect of the townscape value of the St Kevin's Hospital site is its relationship to surrounding landscape features and heritage buildings / sites. In terms of function St Kevin's hospital is an extension to Our Lady's Hospital (Atkins Hall) and form follows function in terms of their close physical relationship with linking colonnade. Both buildings have very long and narrow east – west form responding to the prevailing slope as well as presenting to the River Lee and maximising views across it. The fact that the earlier Atkin's Hall is designed in the Gothic Revival style and the later St Kevin's Hospital building represents Victorian Architecture is an honest reflection of the timeline of the heritage complex (the latter doesn't attempt to mimic the former).

The relationship of both buildings to the River Lee is also important and it is not by chance that they form a commanding presence over the river and western approach to Cork City immediately above the historic Cork Water Works site and a short distance west of Cork Gaol. Indeed, the western outskirts of the city must once have been considered a hub for grand scale institutional land uses. All of these aspects understandably influence the landscape designations contained within the CCDP, which considers the wider context of the site to be an Area of High Landscape Value. The finer scale Landscape Preservation Zone (NW2) considers the 'Tree Canopy' blanketing much of the slopes within, but mainly around the site to be a valued asset. It also considers 'Topography' in the form of steep slopes rising above the River Lee to be integral to its landscape value. And finally, the reference to 'Visually Important Land' is clearly a reflection of the commanding complex of heritage buildings, including St Kevin's Hospital, that stand sentry above the River Lee.

Outside of the heritage complex that governs the site and its immediately surrounding context, the land use of the wider study is a richly varied mix of commercial, residential, institutional, educational and recreational land uses. This is a vibrant part of the city that is relatively near to both the city centre along the River Lee to the east, as well as to its rural hinterland just to the west. Much of the recreation and amenity relates to the River Lee and the sense of enclosure from its steep and populated northern slopes adds distinct character to this wider landscape / townscape setting. Whilst there are some derelict sites scattered throughout the study area, these are not a defining element. Instead they tend to reflect a dynamic townscape in constant transition.

On the basis of the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the site and its immediate heritage context are very sensitive to change that might undermine or dilute the strong sense of heritage character and their sense of commanding presence above the River Lee and western environs of Cork City. They are also sensitive to further neglect that might undermine the structures themselves due to further dereliction. In that sense the St Kevin's Hospital site and adjacent Atkin's Hall site are in need of some form of rejuvenation and preservation of particularly the structures. On balance, therefore,

the landscape / townscape sensitivity of the site and its immediate context is deemed to be **High-medium**.

1.8.1.2 Magnitude of Landscape/townscape effects

Construction Phase

There will be permanent physical effects to the land cover of the site including the removal of scrubby vegetation, grassed areas and gravel areas as well as some trees. The most substantial groups of trees downslope in the south of the site and upslope in the north will be retained for amenity purposes and to satisfy the ‘Tree Canopy’ aspect of the Landscape Preservation Zone. Existing trees will also be retained around the north-eastern boundary and the at the southwestern corner of the site (See Landscape Framework Plan). With the exception of St Anne’s Chapel and the main St Kevin’s Hospital building, all other structures and remnant structures will be demolished and removed from site.

During the construction stage of the proposed development there will be construction-related activity within and around the site, including approach roads. This will include, but is not limited to:

- The refurbishment of the existing St Kevin’s Hospital building;
- The construction of new buildings, roadways, paths and amenity features
- HGVs transporting materials to and from the site;
- Movement of heavy machinery and tower cranes on-site;
- Temporary storage of construction materials on-site;
- Security fencing/hoarding and site lighting.

This is currently a relatively tranquil and static site and the intensity and scale of construction related works and activity will generate a noticeable impact on the site. The construction stage for the proposed project will be ‘short-term’ (i.e. lasting 1-7 years), in accordance with the EPA definitions of impact duration. Furthermore, the context of this construction activity is within a general urban area where such activity is a regular, on-going, occurrence.

On the basis of the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of construction stage landscape/townscape impacts is deemed to be **Medium-low**. When combined with the **High-medium** sensitivity of the receiving townscape, the overall significance of construction stage townscape impacts is considered to be **Moderate**, in accordance with the criteria contained in Section 1.5.

Operational Phase (Post Construction)

The proposed development will repair and refurbish the existing fire damaged and derelict St Kevin’s Hospital building ensuring that it will remain a bastion of the heritage built fabric of Cork City’s western fringe in perpetuity. This can only be considered a positive effect in its own right. The newly propose residential apartment buildings and houses will line the slopes above St Kevin’s Hospital and generally on the same east-west cross slope alignment established by both Atkins Hall to the west and the St Kevin’s Hospital building.

The ‘Block R’ duplex apartments will occupy the space between the Hospital Building and the Chapel but, is setback and set down from the front building line of the Hospital in a subordinate manner. The

other upslope lines of buildings are of a modest height and bulk such that they will not be perceived to crowd or impose on the dominance of the heritage hospital building or the chapel. They are also arranged in a loose enough layout to afford opportunities for roadways parking, pedestrian pathways and landscaping to run across the slope between the building lines. Of particular importance is the lines of street trees which will reinforce the sense of layered separation and break down the bulk and massing of the overall development when buildings are seen stacked by perspective across the River Lee from the south. A central spine of roadway and then pedestrian / amenity staircase will lead from the northern upper sections of the site down to the western end of the hospital building further teasing the built elements of the site apart in the form of a green link.

The proposed development will add markedly to the scale, intensity and extent of development on the site, whilst safeguarding its key assets in accordance with the NW2 Landscape Preservation Zone. Those being the relative dominance of the St Kevin's Hospital building, the chapel and their physical and contextual connection to the adjacent Atkins Hall building / site such that these remain austere sentries above the River Lee and the western suburbs of Cork City. The other key landscape / townscape assets that have been retained through considered design are the 'Topography' of the site and important areas of mature tree canopy. The former is safeguarded by the incremental terracing of the site to mirror the underlying landform rather than attempting to 'flatten' areas of the site to maximise use through excessive excavation. The latter is safeguarded by avoiding built development in the more heavily vegetated sections of the site (northern upper slopes and southern lower slopes as well as retaining vegetation around the north-eastern and south-western boundaries of the site. Existing tree canopy is supplemented by newly proposed treeline planting within and around the site.

The envelopment of the hospital building by residential buildings to the north will slightly dilute the visual presence of the heritage structure as its current backdrop / framing when viewed from the south tends to be vegetation within a substantially open site. However, the added weight of built development also adds to the overall visual presence and intensity of the site whilst allowing the hospital building to remain chief of these structures. It is also important to consider that this is ostensibly an urban setting and additional built development is not contrary to the nature and character of the study area.

For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the increased intensity of built development within this site is not inappropriate in terms of scale, form and function and has been thoughtfully designed to complement and reinforce the key heritage and landscape assets of the site. Any minor dilution of the open setting of the hospital building is balanced by the refurbishment that will take place to this derelict building and its unkempt site. Consequently, the magnitude of landscape impact is deemed to be Negligible or even Positive.

1.8.1.3 Significance of Landscape/townscape effects

In accordance with the Landscape/Visual significance matrix contained in Table 1.3, the combination of a 'High-medium' townscape sensitivity judgement and a 'Negligible-positive' magnitude of impact on the townscape character is considered to result in a **Imperceptible-enhanced** significance of impact.

1.9 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Table 1-7 Analysis of Visual Receptor Sensitivity at Viewshed Reference Points

Scale of value for each criterion

Strong association	Moderate association	Mild association	Negligible association

Values associated with the view	VP1	VP2	VP3	VP4	VP5	VP6	VP7	VP8	VP9	VP10	VP11	VP12	VP13
Susceptibility of viewers to changes in views													
Recognised scenic value of the view													
Views from within highly sensitive landscape areas													
Primary views from residences													
Intensity of use, popularity (number of viewers)													
Viewer connection with the landscape													
Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views													
Sense of remoteness / tranquillity at the viewing location													
Degree of perceived naturalness													
Presence of striking or noteworthy features													
Sense of Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance													

Rarity or uniqueness of the view														
Integrity of the landscape character within the view														
Sense of place at the viewing location														
Sense of awe														
Overall sensitivity assessment	HM	ML	HM	ML	M	M	HM	M	HM	H	M	M	M	M

N = Negligible; **L** = low sensitivity; **ML** = medium-low sensitivity **M** = medium sensitivity; **HM** = High-medium sensitivity; **H** = high sensitivity; **VH** = very high sensitivity

Magnitude of Visual Effects

The assessment of visual impacts at each of the selected viewpoints is aided by photomontages of the proposed development. Photomontages are a ‘photo-real’ depiction of the scheme within the view utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the development, which has been geo-referenced to allow accurate placement and scale. For each viewpoint, an existing view has been produced. Where there is no visibility of the proposed development from that viewpoint, an outline view has also been produced. Where there is visibility, however partial, a photomontage view has also been produced.

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP1	Local road / residential housing estate 500m north of site (Scenic View LT35)	412m	S

Representative of:

- A designated scenic view
- Local community views

Receptor Sensitivity **High medium**

Existing View

This is the view from the top of a green link park that divides two relatively dense housing estates that line the Shanakiel ridge. The designated view in this instance is shown in the CCDP to be in a south-easterly direction towards the City Centre, but equally it could apply to the vast panorama across the western suburbs which lie on lower ground to the south. Such views are only likely to be readily afforded to those dwellings lying along the southern edge of each estate. Other dwellings like those in the foreground are only afforded partial long distance vistas between intervening buildings. The city scape is contained in the distance by a farmed ridge to the south of the city.

Visual Impact of proposed development The proposed development will not be visible / discernible from here due to the combination of intervening terrain buildings and vegetation as the site is contained below the brow of the hill on the relatively steep slopes to the south. Thus, there will be no intrusion on views across the city and the magnitude of visual impact is Negligible by default.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	High-medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP2	Residential housing estate immediately northwest of site	9m	SE

Representative of:

- Local Community Views
- A recreational facility (pitch and putt course)

Receptor Sensitivity **Medium low**

Existing View This is a view from a residential road adjacent to the upper northern boundary of the site. Even though there are dwellings and pitch-and-putt golf course located on the uphill side of this road they are not afforded views of the slopes below – only distant glimpsed views across the city above a paladine fence and dense vegetation that lines the downhill (southern) side of this road.

Visual Impact of proposed development The roof line of several of the proposed blocks of residential dwellings at the highest northern end of the site can be vaguely made out through the winter branches of intervening vegetation. Indeed, it is just a slightly reduced sense of openness beyond the fence line that is the main visual effect here and it is not considered that there is any material intrusion on views or loss of visual amenity for surrounding residents or golfers on the pitch and putt course. For these reasons, the visual impact magnitude is deemed to be Negligible.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium-low	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP3	Cork City Gaol (Museum)	639m	SW

Representative of:

- A tourism and heritage feature (old Cork Gaol)

Receptor Sensitivity High-medium

Existing View This is a view from within the walls of the old Cork Gaol, which is now a tourist feature. This is an enclosed setting behind high stone walls and even from this parapet only glimpses of a chapel spire to the south and tree canopies to the west is afforded.

Visual Impact of proposed development The proposed development will be fully screened from view by intervening terrain, buildings and vegetation and thus, the magnitude of visual impact is Negligible by default.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	High-medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP4	Residential housing estate east of site	122m	W

Representative of:

- Local Community Views

Receptor Sensitivity Medium-low

Existing View This is a westward view from a leafy crescent of detached residential dwellings that lies immediately to the east of the site. Views within this estate are insular and focus on the circular green in the middle of the enclave. Terrain and mature vegetation back these dwellings limiting open views in

most other directions. There is a minor degree of openness in the direction of the site, but even the nearest dwellings are unlikely to have clear views over the site – just upper sections of existing buildings.

Visual Impact of proposed development

Only the upper roof profile of one of the nearest proposed residential blocks to the southwest can be glimpsed between intervening houses and vegetation from this precise location and this has no material bearing on visual amenity experienced within this cul-de-sac. However, several dwellings at the western side of the estate appear to have relatively open views in the direction of the site. Aside from a minor increase in the sense of enclosure to the west they may have views of the upper section of the hospital building that will be obscured/partially obscured by new buildings at least from upper storey windows. Nonetheless, these are not high amenity views across the St Kevin's Hospital site and the increased intensity of proposed built development brings with it the rejuvenation of a derelict site and buildings. On balance, the magnitude of visual impact from several residences in this street is deemed to be **Low-negligible**, whilst the remainder of residences and public realm will experience no material effects on visual amenity.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium-low	Low-negligible	Slight-imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP5	Residential road at Rose Hill Upper	23m	NW

Representative of:

- Local Community Views

Receptor Sensitivity Medium

Existing View

This is a view to the west from the end of a quiet residential cul-de-sac that contains an eclectic array of large detached residences, small cottages and occasional derelict buildings. Whilst some of these residences are heavily enclosed, some, including those in the immediate vicinity of the viewpoint have relatively clear views downhill to the south across the city, particularly from upper level windows. Immediately to the west is the ornate and commanding façade of St Kevin's Hospital building. Whilst it adds to the diverse character of this setting it is not a key feature of views. Instead, it

appears to line up side-by-side with the foreground dwellings to enjoy the same views to the south across the city.

Visual Impact of proposed development

Other than the much-needed refurbishment and reinstatement of burnt out roof sections of St Kevin's Hospital the view for residents in this locality will not markedly change. The portion of the site to the front of St Kevin's Hospital will remain undeveloped and tree cover will also be retained and supplemented in this portion of the site. If there is any visibility of new residential buildings uphill to the northwest (behind the hospital) this is likely to be very limited and in the opposite direction to the main amenity views. Consequently, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible - positive**.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium	Negligible-positive	Imperceptible-enhanced

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP6	Lee Road 300m southwest of site	232m	NE

Representative of:

- Local Community Views

Receptor Sensitivity Medium

Existing View

This view is afforded from a minor local road that diverges from the Lee Road, which can be seen in the lower foreground beyond the car park that separates them. Further south, the River Lee can be seen intermittently through winter vegetation with the Cork County Council building rising prominently on the far side amongst other dense commercial and residential development. A green strip on the far bank is a riverside park. Uphill to the northeast is a series of commanding heritage buildings behind a tall stone wall, chief of which is Atkin's Hall (Our Lady's Hospital) with its austere gothic revival style. Just to the east of Atkin's Hall, St Kevin's Hospital can be glimpsed though a heavy veil of winter branches mainly as a bulky presence.

Visual Impact of proposed development

The only perceptible change to this view, and one which is likely to go unnoticed for the casual observer, is that the burnt-out roof section of the St Kevin's Hospital building will be reinstated. This is inconsequential for visual

amenity at this location and the magnitude of effect is judged to be Negligible-positive.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium	Negligible-positive	Imperceptible-enhanced

Viewshed Reference Point	Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP7 River Lee walkway 750m east of site	704m	W

Representative of:

- A designated scenic view (LT2B – Mardyke Walk-Daly Bridge / riverside walkway)
- A recreational amenity

Receptor Sensitivity **High-medium**

Existing View

This is a view to the west from the Fitzgerald Park section of the Lee River Walkway, which affords pleasant and open views across the River towards the heavily populated and vegetated northern bank / slopes. A car park and the graffitied walls of the Mardyke sport grounds can be seen on the near side of the river. A distant glimpsed view of the upper storeys of the Cork County Council building is also afforded through winter branches to the west.

Visual Impact of proposed development

The proposed development will not be visible from here due to a combination of terrain and dense vegetation screening and thus, the magnitude of visual impact is **Negligible** by default.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	High-medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point	Viewing distance	Direction of View

VP8	R846 – Western Road approaching Sunday’s Well Bridge (scenic View LT17a)	287m	NW
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Representative of:

- A designated scenic view

Receptor Sensitivity Medium

Existing View This is a view to the northwest from near the southern end of the Sunday’s Well bridge. This is a busy scene dominated by foreground traffic. Beyond the bridge on the far side of the River Lee (not visible from here) are steep slopes occupied by a dense matrix of vegetation and residential dwellings. Standing proudly above these slopes in silhouette against the sky is the prominent form of St Kevin’s Hospital with its distinct red-brick façade.

Visual Impact of proposed development The only discernible visual change brought about by the proposed development will be the restoration of the hospital building and in particular the reinstatement of its burnt-out roof sections. There may be partial glimpses of roof sections of other new buildings beyond the main hospital buildings, but not when trees are in-leaf and with no consequence for the relative dominance of the hospital building within this scene. Consequently, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Negligible-positive.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium	Negligible-positive	Imperceptible-enhanced

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP9	River Lee walkway / N22 - Carrigrohane Road 500m southwest of site	467m	NE

Representative of:

- Recreational amenity area

Receptor Sensitivity High-medium

Existing View This is a view from the Lee Fields waterside park that runs along the southern banks of the River Lee in this locality. The view north across the river is

dominated by the ornate and commanding façade of Atkin's Hall (Our Lady's Hospital), which runs for a considerable length across the steep slopes that rise above a band of dense and mature riparian vegetation at the waters edge. Adding to the sentry-like presence of heritage buildings overlooking the River Lee and western suburbs of Cork City is St Kevin's Hospital, which is distinctive within this scene more so for its red-brick façade than its scale in the context of the nearer and more prominent view of Atkin's Hall. Also visible nearer the river corridor to the east is the historic tower from the old Cork Water Works.

Visual Impact of proposed development

Aside from the reinstatement of the burnt-out roof sections of the St Kevin's Hospital building, the only other noticeable element of the proposed development is a partial glimpse of new residential building to the rear of the hospital. This fills a minor gap that currently exists between the eastern end of the Atkin's Hall and western end of St Kevin's Hospital. The new building has a similar red-brick finish to St Kevin's Hospital and remains distinctly subordinate to both Atkins Hall and St Kevin's Hospital. On the one hand it could be considered to marginally diminish the standalone presence of each of these separate, but related heritage buildings. On the other hand it consolidates and complements the line of heritage buildings that stand so proudly above the river without diminishing their stature. At a very pragmatic level, the scale and nature of visual change is minimal within this scene and is considered to have a **Negligible** effect on visual amenity.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	High-medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP10	River Lee walkway 200m south of site (Scenic View LT15)	194m	N

Representative of:

- Recreational amenity area

Receptor Sensitivity **High**

Existing View

This view is afforded from the Lee Fields riverside park directly south across the River lee from the proposed development site. The weir in the river and old Cork Water Works buildings can be seen within the river corridor and on

the opposite bank. Further upslope are a range of buildings from different periods set amongst mature broadleaf vegetation. Chief among these is the St Kevin's Hospital building, with comparatively little intervening vegetation, and Atkin's Hall (our Lady's Hospital) further to the west. The combination of all of these substantial heritage buildings adjacent to, and rising above, the River Lee provides for a distinct and picturesque visual setting. There is a strong sense of a commanding and long established presence providing a gateway and backdrop to the western approaches of the City.

Visual Impact of proposed development

One of the most noticeable visual changes will be the restoration of the burnt-out roof sections of the St Kevin's Hospital building, which will have a positive effect on the view. Another noticeable change will be the replacement of the existing red brick structure between St Kevin's Hospital and St Anne's Chapel with a new but comparable scale residential block with a biscuit coloured brick exterior. The alternative brick colour is visually recessive / subordinate relative to the Hospital building and helps to break down the overall massing. Other small gaps in the skyline beyond these foremost buildings will also be partially filled by new, but subordinate residential buildings further upslope. This will result in the St Kevin's Hospital building appearing slightly less solitary, but providing the overall site with a marginally higher intensity of development, which contributes to the sense of commanding presence. New tree planting within and around the site, particular to the fore of St Kevin's Hospital, will help to blend and bed the development into the slope in a manner that is consistent with surrounding sites.

Overall, the visual change is very subtle, is in keeping with the scale and appearance of existing structures and results in the rejuvenation / replacement of derelict structures. Consequently, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible-positive**

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	High	Negligible-positive	Imperceptible-enhanced

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP11	R608 – Model Farm Road 900m south of site (Scenic Views OL1 & LT16)	893m	N

Representative of:

-
- A designated scenic view
 - Local Community Views

Receptor Sensitivity Medium

Existing View This is the slightly elevated northward view from a busy intersection on the model Farm Road. The complex foreground is dominated by intersecting road corridors and a pub and cafe on each corner. Residential housing is largely obscured within the gently descending middle ground, but rising above the residential rooftops on the opposing slopes of the River Lee can be seen the prominent heritage buildings of Atkin's Hall and St Kevin's Hospital. These structures are backed by a band of broadleaf woodland, whilst the Shanakiel ridge is topped by residential housing estates.

Visual Impact of proposed development Due to relative elevation and viewing angle, much of the proposed development can be seen from here. Aside from the replacement of the damaged roof sections of St Kevin's Hospital the most noticeable aspects of the development include replacement of the existing derelict structure between St Kevin's Hospital and St Anne's Chapel with a similar scale / biscuit coloured brick exterior residential terrace. Above and beyond these frontal buildings can be seen a series of terraced residential buildings stacked in perspective across the upper slopes of the site. Though they rise to a higher elevation than St Kevin's Hospital, they are setback into the slope and remain subordinate to it in terms of scale and prominence. Indeed, the northerly buildings appear to form up in an orderly fashion behind the Hospital building rather than crowding above it. This effect is aided by the proposed tree planting within the site which serves to separate the terraces and highlight the depth and dispersion of the building layout.

St Kevin's Hospital was marginally more prominent than Atkin's Hall in this view, due to relative elevation and brighter red brick façade. Now, the greater extent and intensity of built development within the St Kevin's Hospital site accentuates its relative prominence, though not in a manner, which dilutes or undermines the commanding presence of either heritage building on the northern slopes above the River Lee. Instead, it appears almost as an institutional campus with a combined weight of cohesive buildings.

On balance of the factors outlined above, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP12	N71 - Wilton Road 1.1km south of site (Scenic View WT1)	940m	N

Representative of:

- A designated scenic view
- Local Community Views

Receptor Sensitivity Medium

Existing View

This view extends northwards down Wilton Road, which is flanked by semi-detached dwellings on both sides at this point. Beyond the roofs of the nearest dwellings on the western side of the road can be seen the domed top and towers of the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit. Further along the same die of the road, the upper most storeys of the Cork County Council building rise into view. Further distant again on the south facing, substantially vegetated, slopes above the River Lee is the distinctive red brick façade of St Kevin's Hospital. Residential development tops the Shanakiel ridgeline above and beyond the hospital.

Visual Impact of proposed development

Beyond the restored roofline of the fire-damaged St Kevin's Hospital building can be seen a series of new rooflines from a sequence of proposed residential terraces that make their way upslope to the north within the site. Without obscuring any aspect of the hospital building, there is a minor degree of blurring and ambiguity regarding the various rooflines and which one belongs solely to the heritage building. The minor increase in the apparent intensity of built development within site does not materially detract from the commanding presence of St Kevin's Hospital.

Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Low-negligible.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium	Low-negligible	Slight-imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
VP13	St Finbarr's Cemetery	1.4km	NW

Representative of:

- Place of quiet reflection
- Local Community Views

Receptor Sensitivity Medium

Existing View This is a view from within St Finbarr's Cemetery, which also dominates the foreground of the view. Beyond is partial, but relatively extensive visibility of ascending slopes of vegetation and residential development on the northern slopes above the River Lee. Aside from the water tower above the Shanakiel ridge, the only other distinctive building, is the distant St Kevin's Hospital on the midslope and mainly due to its red-brick façade.

Visual Impact of proposed development The restored roofline of the fire-damaged St Kevin's Hospital building may be just discernible from here and so to, the series of new rooflines from residential terraces that stack closely behind it. There is a very minor degree of ambiguity as to the proximity and relationship of these rooflines to the heritage building, but it remains the most prominent structure within the site. At this distance and in the context of filtered and complex views to the north, the proposed development will not have a material effect on visual amenity and thus, the magnitude of impact is deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Impact Significance	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

1.10 CONCLUSION

The impact of the proposed development on Landscape / Townscape has been considered at both construction stage and operational stage (post-completion). It has also been considered in respect of physical effects on the landform and land cover of the site as well the contribution of the proposed development to wider townscape fabric and character.

Due to the typical clutter and activity associated with major refurbishment and construction projects of this scale and in this prominent location, which is deemed to be of ‘High-medium’ sensitivity, construction stage townscape impacts are deemed to be ‘Moderate’ negative. However, such effects are inevitable and, most importantly, are temporary / short term in duration.

Once completed (operational), it is considered that the proposed development will have either an Imperceptible or Enhancing effect on the prevailing landscape / townscape of the site and its surrounds. This is on the basis that there will be an increased intensity of built development within the site, but this is not deemed inappropriate in terms of scale, form and function and has been thoughtfully designed to complement and reinforce the key heritage and landscape assets. Any minor dilution of the relatively open/discrete setting of St Kevin’s Hospital is balanced by the refurbishment that will take place to this derelict building and its neglected site.

The visual impact of the proposed development was assessed from 13 viewpoints representing a range of receptors, viewing distances and directions including relevant designated viewpoints from the Cork City Development Plan.

The range of receptor sensitivity at viewpoints range widely between High and Medium-low depending on whether they represented iconic and designated views towards the site, or more typical or partial obscured views from residential housing estates where the St Kevin’s Hospital site does not materially contribute to visual amenity. Those viewpoints at the higher end of the sensitivity spectrum are typically designated views from south of the River Lee looking northwards across the river corridor to where St Kevin’s Hospital and the neighbouring Atkin’s Hall (Our Lady’s Hospital) present a commanding duo of heritage facilities standing sentry over the western sector of the city. Those at the mid to lower end of the sensitivity spectrum are typically downslope or cross-slope and partially obscured views towards the site from residential housing estates on the northern side of the River Lee.

The magnitude of visual impact is not considered to range as widely as receptor and is deemed to be ‘Negligible’ or ‘Positive’ in all but one instance. This is either due to the proposed development being barely discernible and/or having no material effect on existing visual amenity as is typically the case from the residential receptors on the northern side of the River Lee. Alternatively, the positive visual effects will be experienced where the St Kevin’s Hospital building remains the most prominent feature of the site and its burnt-out roof sections are seen to be restored. The only negative impact - a very minor one - occurs in respect of VP12, where the rooflines of new residential terraces stack up beyond St Kevin’s Hospital. These slightly blur the distinction of the roofline of the heritage building, albeit without obscuring any aspect of the heritage structure or diminishing its dominant status within the site. The result is deemed to be a Slight-imperceptible visual impact.

1.11 OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACT

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant residual townscape or visual impacts. Instead, such impacts will generally be imperceptible or result in minor enhancement of the townscape and visual setting through refurbishment and consolidation of the site and its key structures. The most important townscape and visual consideration in this instance is whether the commanding stature of St Kevin’s Hospital in conjunction with Atkin’s Hall (Our lady’s

Hospital) rising above the River Lee and Cork City's western suburbs, is diminished in any material way. Based on the assessment herein, it is not considered that this commanding presence is diminished by the proposed development and instead, it will be restored and consolidated for future generations.