

# TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL STATEMENT



**Proposed Monaghan  
County Council  
Civic Offices.**

Monaghan,  
Co. Monaghan.



Registered  
Landscape  
Architect

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# 1. TOWNSCAPE & VISUAL STATEMENT

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

This Townscape and Visual Statement has been prepared in respect of the proposed development of new County Council Headquarters and Civic Offices on lands adjacent to St. Davnet's Row and Infirmary Hill, Monaghan.

The proposed scheme has been subject to a collaborative design process and ongoing dialogue with Monaghan County Council (MCC). The scheme's Architects (Henry J Lyons), Landscape Architects (The Paul Hogarth Company), Consulting engineers (CORA) together with various other consultant inputs have sought to develop proposals for a County Civic Offices complex that is distinctive, and which embeds environmental and commercial sustainability, and has an architectural character befitting of its function as a centre of administration for the county.

### 1.1.1. Scope of this statement

Through pre-application consultation, MCC confirmed that they required an assessment that describes the change to the townscape and visual environment to sit alongside the Architectural Design Statement, and the series of photomontages produced as part of the planning application.

The narrative provided in this statement is consistent with the approach advocated in the primary best practice document, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3) (LI/IEMA, 2013). GLVIA3 establishes guidelines and not a specific methodology, and its preface recognises that:

*'This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.'*

Standard methodology and criteria that has been used by the assessors in the production of numerous TVIAs, and the more familiar Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) relating to developments in rural settings, is included at Appendix A for reference.

In accordance with this published guidance, narrative around the influence of the scheme is described separately in relation to the townscape and views:

- Townscape - the influence of the proposals on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the townscape and its resulting character and quality;
- Visual - the influence of the proposals on specific views experienced by visual receptors and on visual amenity more generally.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the verified photomontages produced by Snapshot Visuals included separately with the application.

#### Area of focus

GLVIA3 advocates proportionality, and with this in mind, and considering the general diminishment of landscape and visual effects over distance, a proportionate focus is placed on the landscape/townscape within approximately 1km of the development. This area of focus contains

locations from where the development will be most visible, and beyond this distance the proposed development is not likely to be discernible.

A proportionate focus is also placed on the influence of the proposed development once established. Whilst the construction stage will influence the receiving townscape, and aspects of the proposed development’s construction will be visible, the construction stage is an inevitable consequence of the development proposal being brought forward, and is short term in duration.

**1.1.2. Statement of Authority**

This statement was prepared by Mark Salisbury, Associate Director at Macro Works Ltd of Cherrywood Business Park, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18; a consultancy firm specialising in Landscape/Townscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA / TVIA) and associated maps and graphics. Macro Works’ relevant experience includes a broad range of infrastructural, industrial and commercial projects since 1999, including numerous urban development projects.

The visual material has been produced by Antoni Dawson and Craig Scott at Snapshot Visuals, a firm specialising in the production of accurate and reliable visualisation material across a broad variety of development types, including urban development projects.

**1.2. SITE CONTEXT**

The site is located to the North of Dublin Street, Monaghan Town on the lower rising slopes of the ground associated with St. Davnet’s Hospital.

It currently comprises improved grassland with an existing agricultural access at the site of the proposed St. Davnet’s Row. A narrow footpath, Infirmary Hill, connects the site from Old Cross Square to St Davnet’s Hospital to the North. To the South of the proposed St Davnet’s Row the site abuts the rear curtilage areas associated with the properties lining Dublin Street, much of which comprises storage buildings and yards arranged along narrow passageways.

In terms of the development opportunity, it is noted that the site’s elevation, and south facing aspect affords views over the town, and the agricultural countryside beyond. Given the site’s proximity to Dublin Street and the urban area of Monaghan, it is also considered to offer great potential to provide linkages and connectivity with the wider townscape, and civic spaces that afford views over the wider town, where few are present.

Planning context

The site is located within the administrative area of MCC and is therefore subject to the land use policies and objectives of the Monaghan County Development Plan (MCDP) 2019-2025.

The MCDP provides a framework to guide future development within the county, and accordingly contains many policy objectives that deal with the strategic planning issues. Whilst it is acknowledged that the MCDP contains policy objectives that deal with many design and environmental considerations, those that are considered to be of particular relevance to townscape and visual issues are contained in Chapter 6 (Heritage, Conservation and Landscape), and Chapter 15 (Development Management).

The site is not designated for any specific landscape or visual importance, and the development is not considered to have the potential to be visible from Scenic Routes identified in MCDP. The nearest view in this regard is identified as SV9 which is cited as the “View of St. Macartan’s



Cathedral Monaghan from Berry Brae, from the R162”. At over 2km, if the development is visible from this route, it will be negligibly so, and will not obstruct or interfere with views towards the Cathedral.

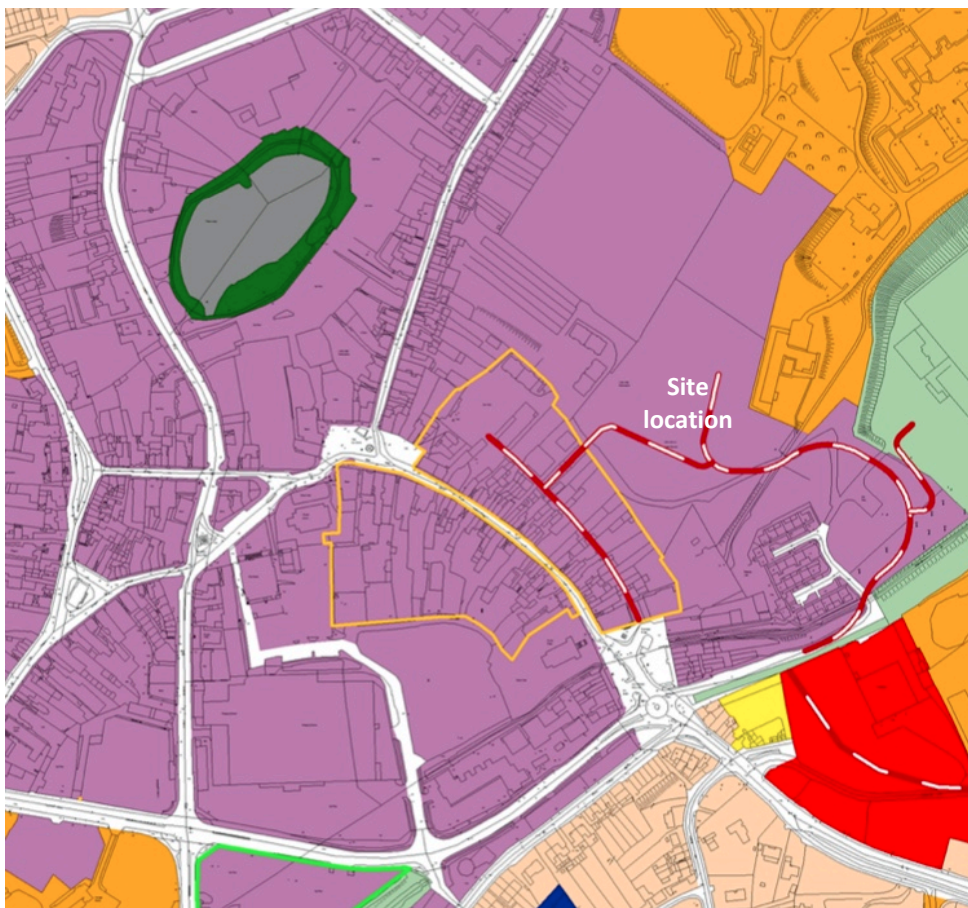
The site falls within zoning category “Town Centre”, with the objective:

*“To provide, protect and enhance town centre facilities and promote town centre strengthening. Principal permitted land use will be town centre related uses including retail, residential, commercial, social uses, cultural uses, medical/health uses, hotels, pubs, restaurants and other similar type uses”.*

The Monaghan Settlement Plan Strategic Objective ‘MTSO 1’ is:

*‘To facilitate the development of Monaghan to maintain its position as the principal town in the County at the top of the settlement hierarchy and to ensure that its expansion takes place in an orderly and sustainable fashion that will not detract from the vitality and viability of the town centre.’*

Figure 1 - Town Centre Zoning



Roosky Masterplan

The site is located within the Roosky Masterplan area, adopted under Variation No. 4 to MCDP 2019-2025. This provides for integration with the existing street network and surrounding lands, and the variation includes a new objective within the MCDP (MPO 16) as follows:

*“Ensure that all development proposals within the Roosky Lands Master Plan area have regard to the master plan strategy and development objectives of the Roosky Lands Master plan”.*

The proposals have paid due regard to this masterplan, which identifies the Civic Offices as playing a central role, and is underpinned by a strong placemaking strategy. Regard has also been made to the Dublin Street North Regeneration Plan, and has been designed to complement it.

#### Landscape Character Assessment

MCC commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment of the County in 2008 which identified nine Landscape Character Areas (LCA) representing geographical areas with a particular landscape type or types. The site is located within the 'Monaghan Drumlin Uplands' LCA which is a broad area of landscape that extends across almost the entire width of the county. It also falls within Landscape Character Type 'Urban'.

Whilst the character assessment is considered relevant at the more strategic landscape level, given the urban context of the site and the breadth of the identified areas of character described, it is not considered to be of a scale that is helpful in understanding the potential influence of the proposed development.

### **1.3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND EMBEDDED MITIGATION**

A comprehensive description of the proposed development is set out in the Planning Statement.

The proposed development comprises the construction of a new civic office building distributed over three floors which will encompass office accommodation, a Council chamber and a series of supporting spaces, plant, ESB substation and services enclosures. The development will be served by a surface car park, drop-off area and bicycle parking spaces.

Infrastructural works to the existing vehicular route on Slí Ógie Uí Dhufaigh, including the provision of a new clear span bridge over the River Shambles and a new vehicular access 'Quarry Walk' are also proposed. Permeability will be enhanced by a series of pedestrian and cycle links.

Ancillary development works include signage, earthworks, drainage, watermain, utilities, landscaping, boundary treatments, lighting and solar PV panels.

The design of the proposed development has been undertaken as part of a collaborative approach, and has been cognisant of environmental sensitivities present. Full details of the design of the development, and the detailed considerations that have underpinned it, can be found across a number of supporting documents submitted with the application. Of particular relevance are the following documents:

- Architectural Design Statement produced by Henry J Lyons
- Landscape Design Statement produced by The Paul Hogarth Company

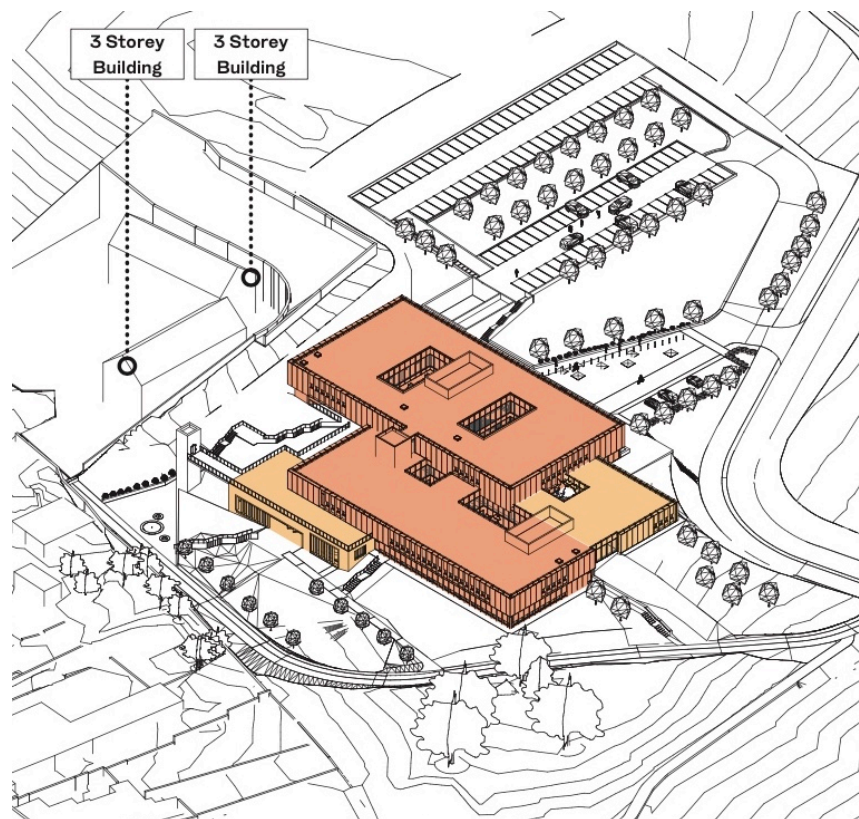
This section considers the key characteristics of the development that are considered of particular relevance to its integration with the surrounding townscape, and its visual influence.

The siting and layout of the building has sought to work with the existing topography of the site, and create a development that 'nestles' into its hillside setting, whilst also being cognisant of its proximity to existing properties on Dublin Street and the adjacent apartments at The Diamond Centre.

In this regard, the scale and mass of the building has been considered carefully, and broken down into three volumes that layer themselves up the hillside. These present themselves as a series of platforms that work with the prevailing topography and are sympathetic in scale with the adjoining

buildings. At a finer level of detail, the building facades have been considered carefully, such that they help break up the horizontal and vertical proportions of the building.

*Figure 2 - Scale and massing*



The proposed building has been designed to ensure all frontages are active, and material selection has sought to generate a warm inviting presence. The use of pale stone and bronze toned cladding aim to generate a sense of robustness and durability, whilst having a natural quality that will sit comfortably within its vegetated context, and help the development have a muted presence in views from distance.

As a civic building, physical connectivity and pedestrian movement has underpinned its design, with the opportunity to generate connectivity across the site and with the town centre integrated into the proposals. In this regard, the design of the building has been undertaken in tandem with a robust landscape strategy, that has sought to create a series of interlinked public spaces that take advantage of views over Monaghan and its wider agricultural setting, and create rich spaces that are meaningful, and adaptable for the community to benefit from events. Careful design has ensured that the challenging topography is accessible.

Planting has been integrated to assimilate the development into its hillside context and generate a transition in character from the north to the south of the site. This planting also seeks to mitigate views of the development from adjacent residential receptors.

**1.4. PHOTOMONTAGE LOCATIONS**

The influence of the development is communicated through a series of 8nr photomontages generated at representative locations identified through desk based analysis and site work, and agreed through consultation with MCC.



The photomontages seek to reflect a range of views and receptor types at varying distances and orientations from the site. Their locations have also been cognisant of protected structures and Architectural Conservation Areas within the town.

In the context of this urban environment, views will be available from within residential properties albeit these will vary as a result of orientation and distance. The montages are considered to allow an interpretation of the likely degree of visibility that would be experienced.

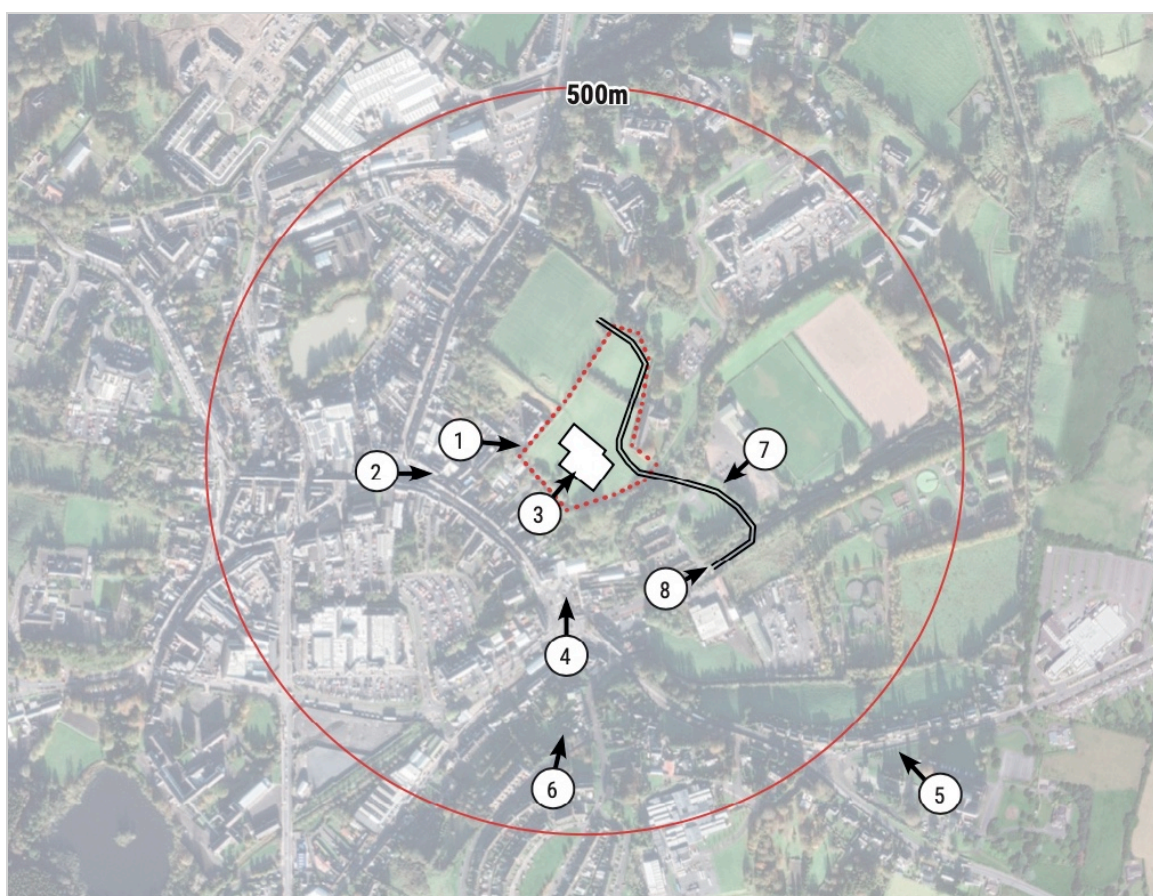
For each location an existing (baseline) view is presented, together with photomontages that provide a 'photo-real' depiction of the scheme within the view utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the development, that has been geo-referenced to allow accurate placement and scale.

The photomontages have been generated at two future points in time, namely:

- on scheme completion when all construction and landscape works have been completed; and
- following a period of establishment (15 years) when planting has benefitted from a period of establishment.

This latter scenario has integrated a conservative vegetation growth rate, with the intention that this gives a realistic understanding of how vegetation will influence views over time.

*Figure 3 - Photomontage Location Plan*





*Table 1 - Outline description of Photomontage locations*

	<b>Location</b>	<b>Approx. distance from scheme</b>
<b>1</b>	Diamond Place, looking east	126m
<b>2</b>	The Diamond / Dublin Street, looking east	250m
<b>3</b>	Rear of Dublin Street, looking northeast	76m
<b>4</b>	Broad Road / Old Cross Square, looking north	190m
<b>5</b>	St Macartan’s Cathedral, looking northwest	600m
<b>6</b>	Dr. McKenna Terrace, looking north	380m
<b>7</b>	Monaghan Harps GAA Club, looking southwest	60m
<b>8</b>	Ulster Canal Greenway, looking northeast	60m

It is noted that the photography obtained for the photomontages represent winter conditions, where the effects of winter leaf drop allows a worst case level of visibility to be appreciated. Full details on how the photography and visual material was produced, is included at Appendix B.

## **1.5. TOWNSCAPE**

Effects to townscape character will naturally occur as a result of the change to the site’s undeveloped character, current condition and use, and due to the intensity of built development on the site. Effects will also be generated as a result of localised areas of vegetation removal.

However, the proposed development is of a high-quality architectural finish, and has been considered carefully in relation to its integration with the natural topography of the site, and its visual relationship with the wider townscape. The proposals have a distinct architectural character commensurate with its civic function, but which are modest in terms of its presence in views of the wider landscape. Extensive planting will assimilate the development with its wooded hillside context with maturity.

The strategic approach to the layout of the development and the disposition of public spaces around the site has sought to deliver wider benefit in terms of improved connectivity and civic spaces that afford views out over the wider landscape.

Whilst the scale and intensity of the proposed development is notable at a site level, and holds an elevated position relative to the nearby context, it will not unduly impose on the visual characteristics of the townscape, and is considered to represent a well-considered response to the site constraints.

With regard to the criteria used in assessing the townscape effects of the proposals, the addition of the proposed development is likely to only result in townscape effects at the lower end of significance, reflecting the more intensive changes at the localised site level, and then the more minor effects at the wider townscape level.

## **1.6. VISUAL**

### **1.6.1. Photomontage location 1**

This location is within the existing car parking area at The Diamond Centre, an area identified within the Dublin Street North Regeneration Plan as potentially playing host to a future public / civic space. Views towards the site are not noteworthy, and patrons of the car park, and those visiting the surrounding businesses see only the western corner of the site between the National Learning Network building and the apartment block adjoining the site boundary.

Although the development would be visible through this existing gap, it would generate very little change to the composition of the existing view. With time, vegetation would mature and break up the extent of the built form visible, and in summer conditions would substantially screen it.

### **1.6.2. Photomontage location 2**

The Diamond is a key civic square in the town, and plays host to the striking Rossmore Memorial. As demonstrated in the photomontages, views towards the site from this civic space is precluded by built form, with only glimpse views between buildings visible.

This location and the associated photomontages demonstrates the nature of views towards the site from locations within the town centre which are precluded by built form.

### **1.6.3. Photomontage location 3**

This location is along one of the publicly accessible alleyways from Dublin Street and the propose St. Davnet's Row. These alleyways are identified within the Dublin Street North Regeneration Plan as forming an important part of the long term vision for this area in terms of providing linkages between St. Davnet's Row and the town centre. They alleyways currently comprise garages, outbuildings and parking areas, and views towards the site are not noteworthy, experienced primarily by those walking in the area and accessing these outbuildings. Views towards the site from rear garden areas are likely comparable, albeit dependant on the presence of buildings and vegetation.

Given its proximity and relative elevation, the development would appear across the backdrop of the view and would be a clearly noticeable change the view. The setbacks employed in the different volumes of the building moderate its prominence in the view, with vegetation acting to break up the extent of the built form visible with maturity. In summer conditions this vegetation would provide further screening, assimilating it into the view.

### **1.6.4. Photomontage location 4**

This location is one of the key points of entrance and exit into the town, lying at the intersection of Broad Road and Dublin Street. It is known as Old Cross Square and plays host to the 17<sup>th</sup> century namesake feature visible in the view. Views towards the site are precluded by vegetation sitting in the backdrop to the buildings lining Dublin Street and Old Cross Square.

Despite some vegetation loss within the site that will result in a marginal 'lightening' of the foreground vegetation in winter conditions, this intervening vegetation will substantially preclude views of the proposed development from this locality, with only parts of the roofline being visible above the tree line. This degree of visibility would be further reduced during summer conditions when vegetation is in full leaf.

### **1.6.5. Photomontage location 5**

This location is cited at the entrance to St. Macartan's Cathedral, a key feature within the town and one of few location in the town that afford longer ranging views. Given the comparable elevation, views are available over the site, where the wall is a distinct feature. It is noted that the main axial view from the cathedral lies to the west, channelled between an avenue of mature yew trees.

The development would be a noticeable addition to the view, albeit its location on the lower slopes means that it sits against a landform/vegetated backdrop, and its terraced staging and the natural tones of its materiality would moderate its prominence in views. Vehicular activity associated with the car park area would be noticeable from this location, albeit with maturity, vegetation planted throughout the site would significantly reduce the degree to which this is notable. This vegetation would help to further assimilate the development with the wider woodland context, and complement the character of the existing view.

#### **1.6.6. Photomontage location 6**

This location (Dr. McKenna Terrace) illustrates one of only a few elevated views towards the site possible, and are comparable to those from St. Macartan's Cathedral, albeit the angle of the view results in the wider parcel of elevated lands to the west of St. Davnet's Hospital to be understood. The location is a residential street, and so views are not of notable importance in a wider sense, but enables an understanding of the views that would be possible for residential receptors in the wider townscape where properties orientate towards the site.

As described at location 5, the development would be a noticeable addition to the view. From this angle the terraced arrangement is not so apparent, albeit the architectural layering is visible, and with façade treatments that act to moderate its perceived scale. The natural tones employed moderate the prominence of the development against its wooded backdrop, and with maturity, vegetation planted around the site would assimilate the development as part of a wider wooded backdrop to the town.

The building commands a level of prominence appropriate to its function, whilst being of a character that appears modestly in views of the urban area and its containing rural surrounds.

#### **1.6.7. Photomontage location 7**

This location is at the entrance to the Monaghan Harps GAA Club, looking southwest. Views are currently over the ground's car parking area and the linkage with Sli Ogie Ui Dhufaigh which connects into Old Cross Square. Coniferous vegetation in the view relates to that present to the north of the Ulster Canal Greenway which runs along the southern boundary of the grounds.

The development will result in the loss of vegetation along the Ulster Canal Greenway to facilitate the proposed approach road, the bridge across the Shambles River, and the attenuation basin. However, the approach road will gradually rise along the western edge of the car park boundary, and will be planted with a shrub mix and tree planting, with a new native species hedgerow along the edge of the car park. The proposals incorporate a new vehicular entranceway at the southern edge of the car park, with entrance planting, and a new stepped pedestrian access to the approach road that aligns with the former entrance.

With maturity, planting will reinstate a secluded vegetated character and screen views of the road.

#### **1.6.8. Photomontage location 8**

This location is on the Sli Ogie Ui Dhufaigh / Ulster Canal Greenway looking northeast. The road turns sharply to the north at which point the greenway continues via a combined pedestrian and cycle track along the Shambles River.



The change to the view will essentially comprise a continuation of the road, with existing vegetation screening views of the approach road, the bridge across the Shambles River, and the attenuation basin. Whilst there will be a degree of vegetation loss as a result of the new approach road, new planting will maintain a vegetated character.

#### **1.6.9. Adjacent residential receptors**

It is recognised that the development is within relatively close proximity to the rear of existing properties on Dublin Street, and apartments within the Diamond Centre to the north west. Sections and photography presented at Appendix C aim to demonstrate the relationship with these adjacent properties.

Monaghan's urban area is concentrated primarily along the lower lying areas of this drumlin landscape, and sprawl up the adjacent hillsides. In this regard, most properties within the town are overlooked to some degree given the sharply rising nature of the topography.

In terms of the visual receptors within properties on Dublin Street, the first elevation of the proposed building is over 95m distant. At around 69m AOD, potential viewers within the civic offices will be only around 4m higher than existing residents in the upper floors of those properties. With regard to potential issues of overlooking, the proximity and elevation difference is considered modest, and the building has been terraced such that other potential viewers within the offices complex are progressively distant. Planting undertaken within the intervening slopes will with maturity limit inter visibility.

The closest neighbours are the apartments to the west which are cut significantly into the hillside. Whilst parts of the proposed building are at closer proximity, the main elevation where overlooking is possible is over 45m distant, with internal viewers here at a comparable elevation as those in the upper floors of the apartments. With regard to potential issues of overlooking, roof windows in the apartments are for light only and are not directly influenced by the development in this regard. Within other parts of the apartment block, views will be screened by native mixed hedgerow planting along the western boundary of the site, and tree groups in the intervening landscape strip.

#### **1.6.10. Summary**

Although noticeable, and potentially influencing an appreciable segment of the overall view, due to the scale of the proposed built form, and the distances at which it is located from existing properties, the proposals are not considered to have the potential to be visually obtrusive, or overbearing from properties nearest the site.

Despite the development's location on the lower slopes of a hillside, from the vast majority of publicly accessible locations in the wider landscape/townscape views of the proposed development will not be possible due to the screening influence of built form and vegetation.

The development will be most noticeable from elevated locations in the surrounding landscape where views towards the site are less influenced by built form and vegetation that preclude views. This relates primarily to views from residential properties and curtilage areas, rather than publicly accessible locations.

Whilst the visual influence of the development will inherently vary from location to location, many of these locations are beyond 500m from the site, where it will be seen as a relatively minor

component of a sprawling urban context that weaves its way along the base and sides of this drumlin landscape.

The integration of the development with the topography of the site and the considered architectural treatments will moderate the prominence and influence of the development. In addition, the extensive landscape proposals would further assimilate built form into the visual context and progressively provide a degree of screening.

In proximate locations such as around the Monaghan Harps GAA and along the Ulster Canal Greenway, changes to the visual environment will be localised as a result of the new approach road, but views will remain influenced by the context of road infrastructure. The proposals work with the existing topography, and benefit from new planting that will with time assimilate the development within its vegetated hillside context.

In all views where the development is visible, these are influenced by extensive human intervention in the landscape, and both the architectural and landscape proposals are considered to complement the existing context. With regard to the criteria used in assessing the visual effects of the proposals, the addition of the proposed development is likely to only result in visual effects at the lower end of significance, reflecting a change in the visual environment that does not affect its sensitivities, and forming a small element in the overall visual composition.

## **1.7. CUMULATIVE TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL ISSUES**

Within a cumulative assessment, the baseline against which townscape and visual effects are assessed is extended to consider other relevant schemes that are not currently present in the landscape but that are subject to a valid planning application (or have been permitted) as being operational. Cumulative effects therefore represent any increased effects that may be generated by the development in a scenario where other relevant schemes in the locality are operational.

In accordance with GLVIA3, schemes that are at feasibility and pre-planning are not generally considered to be appropriate in the context of a cumulative assessment due to a lack of certainty that they will come forward and because of an absence of detail that enable any meaningful judgements to be made. The cumulative assessment follows the same process with the exception that the baseline is extended to assume this development is built and is present in the baseline view.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there are numerous development projects underway and planned in Monaghan, the key cumulative scheme considered to be of relevance is the South Dublin Street and Backlands project (JA18.314501) lodged in August 2022.

*Figure 4 - South Dublin Street and Backlands project*



This scheme covers an area of townscape around Castle Road and Broad Road Parking area, and would comprise predominantly of streetscape improvements, and the removal of a small section of terraced properties along Dublin Street to facilitate the creation of a new civic space called ‘Gavan Duffy Place’.

This scheme would be consistent with the ambitions of the Dublin Street Regeneration Plan and would improve the character of the townscape against which the proposed scheme is considered. The proposed scheme would connect into this new civic space, and reinforce the strategic ambitions regarding connectivity.

It is not considered that the Proposed Development would result in any cumulative townscape of visual issues in light of a baseline that considers this scheme built and operational.



*Figure 5 - Visual of Gavan Duffy Place looking towards the site*



**1.8. SUMMARY**

The proposed development is not considered to have the potential to generate any notable townscape or visual effects, with the most notable relating to the visual effects received by residential receptors in the surrounding townscape. In this regard, the proposed development of the site is consistent with the planned objectives for the site, and design considerations have been incorporated to mitigate adverse effects.

It is considered that the design of the scheme has capitalised on the qualities and characteristics of this site, and that the architectural character and landscape setting of the building has to potential to generate a positive and distinctive addition to the urban area of Monaghan Town, commensurate with its function as a County Council Civic Office complex.

## 2. APPENDIX A - METHODOLOGY

### 2.1.1. METHODOLOGY

Through pre-application consultation, Monaghan County Council confirmed that they required a narrative statement that described the change to the townscape and visual environment, to be read alongside the visual material being produced.

Narrative provided in this statement is informed by the approach advocated in GLVIA3, and follows a methodology (outlined in this appendix) that has been used by the assessors in the production of numerous Townscape and Visual Impact Assessments, and the more familiar Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of developments in rural settings.

GLVIA3 follows 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 GLVIA3 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.*

In the context of ‘townscape’ it is recognised that there is a strong interrelationship between the ‘townscape’ and ‘cultural heritage’ assessments. As stated at section 5.11 of GLVIA;

*“the sharing of relevant baseline information should not be confused with the need for separate cultural heritage appraisals such as historic landscape characterisation and assessment of historic townscape appraisal, or there will be a danger of both double handling and inappropriate judgements by non-experts. It is particularly important that responsibilities are clear in considering any effects on the settings and views for historic buildings, conservation areas and other heritage assets.”*

The identification of heritage assets in this assessment is made in order to indicate the value and quality of the wider townscape character as well as provide an indication of areas from which views are potentially more sensitive to change.

### 2.1.2. Townscape Impact Assessment

A Townscape Impact Assessment outlines how the introduction of a proposed development will affect the physical features and fabric of the townscape, and then how the proposals influence townscape character with reference to published descriptions of character and an understanding of the contemporary character of the townscape as informed through desktop and site studies.

When assessing potential townscape effects, the value and sensitivity of the townscape receptor is weighed against the magnitude of the townscape impact to determine the significance of the townscape effect. Criteria outlined below are used to guide these judgements.

Townscape Sensitivity

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. The judgement reflects such factors as its quality, value, contribution to urban character and the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted. Townscape Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in Table 2.

Table 2 - Townscape Sensitivity

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Very High</b>	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.
<b>High</b>	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.
<b>Medium</b>	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.
<b>Low</b>	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.
<b>Negligible</b>	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.

Magnitude of change - Townscape

The magnitude of change 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 townscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the immediate setting that may have an effect on the townscape character. Table 3 outlines criteria used to inform this judgement.



*Table 3 - Magnitude of Change – Townscape*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Very High</b>	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.
<b>High</b>	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.
<b>Medium</b>	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.
<b>Low</b>	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.
<b>Negligible</b>	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.

### 2.1.3. Visual Impact Assessment

A Visual Impact Assessment outlines how the introduction of the proposed development will affect views within the townscape. It therefore needs to consider:

- Direct impacts of the proposed development upon views through intrusion or obstruction;
- The reaction of viewers who may be affected, e.g. residents, walkers, road users; and
- The overall impact on visual amenity.

It has been deemed appropriate to structure the narrative around a series of representative viewpoint locations. All viewpoints are located within the public domain and are representative of views available from main thoroughfares and pedestrian areas within the local townscape. The viewpoints are considered to be comprehensive in communicating the variable nature of views.

When assessing potential visual effects, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact to determine the significance of the visual effect. Criteria outlined below are used to guide these judgements.

#### Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

As with townscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of a visual receptor is categorised as Very High, High, Medium, Low, and Negligible. Unlike townscape sensitivity however, 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 townscape context of the viewer, the likely activity the viewer is engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding environment.

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 viewpoint location.

### Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to change

In accordance with GLVIA3, 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”.*

### Value attached to Views

The value attached to a view is determined by considering the following:

- 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 Development 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, and no relative importance is inferred by the order of listing.

It is recognised that a viewers’ interpretation and experience of the townscape can have preferential and subjective components. Where relevant, judgements are made on those elements of the townscape that are considered to contribute more prominently and positively to the visual townscape resource as well as those elements that contribute negatively. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

Magnitude of Change - Visual

The magnitude of change is again a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed development. Criteria used to inform judgements are provided in Table 4.

Table 4 - Magnitude of Change - Visual

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Very High</b>	Complete or very substantial change in view, dominant, involving complete or very substantial obstruction of existing view or complete change in character and composition of baseline, e.g., through removal of key elements.
<b>High</b>	A major change in the view that is highly prominent and has a strong influence on the overall view. This may involve the substantial obstruction of existing views or a complete change in character and composition of baseline, e.g. through removal of key elements or the introduction of new features that would heavily influence key elements.
<b>Medium</b>	Moderate change in view: which may involve partial obstruction of existing view or partial change in character and composition of baseline, i.e., pre-development view through the introduction of new elements or removal of existing elements. Change may be prominent but would not substantially alter scale and character of



	the surroundings and the wider setting. View character may be partially changed through the introduction of features which, though uncharacteristic, may not necessarily be visually discordant.
<b>Low</b>	Minor change in baseline, i.e. pre-development view - change would be distinguishable from the surroundings whilst composition and character would be similar to the pre change circumstances.
<b>Negligible</b>	Very slight change in baseline, i.e. pre-development view - change would be barely discernible. Composition and character of view substantially unaltered.

Significance of Effects

The significance of a townscape or visual effect is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change, and is categorised as Profound, Substantial, Moderate, Slight, or Imperceptible. Intermediate judgements are also provided to enable an effect to be more accurately described where relevant. ‘No Effect’ may also be recorded as appropriate where the effect is so negligible it is not noteworthy.

The significance category judgement is arrived at using the Significance Matrix at Table 5 as a guide. This applies the EPA assessments principles of significance being a function of magnitude weighed against sensitivity, but employs slightly different terminology that avoids the potentially confusing use of the term ‘significant’ with the categories themselves (as recommended by GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13 (Landscape institute, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013)).

Indicative criteria descriptions used in relation to the significance of effect category are presented at Table 6.

Table 5 - Significance Matrix

	<b>Sensitivity of Receptor</b>				
<b>Magnitude</b>	<b>Very High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Negligible</b>
<b>Very High</b>	<i>Profound</i>	<i>Profound-substantial</i>	<i>Substantial</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Slight</i>
<b>High</b>	<i>Profound-substantial</i>	<i>Substantial</i>	<i>Substantial-moderate</i>	<i>Moderate-slight</i>	<i>Slight-imperceptible</i>
<b>Medium</b>	<i>Substantial</i>	<i>Substantial-moderate</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>
<b>Low</b>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate-slight</i>	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Slight-imperceptible</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>
<b>Negligible</b>	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Slight-imperceptible</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>	<i>Imperceptible</i>

Table 6 - Indicative significance of effect criteria descriptions

	<b>Townscape</b>	<b>Visual</b>
<b>Profound</b>	<i>There are notable changes in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or a very intensive change over a more limited area.</i>	<i>The view is entirely altered, obscured or affected.</i>
<b>Substantial</b>	<i>An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the townscape. There are notable changes in landscape / townscape characteristics over a substantial</i>	<i>An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the visual environment. The proposal affects a large proportion of the overall visual composition, or views</i>

	<i>area or an intensive change over a more limited area.</i>	<i>are so affected that they form a new element in the physical landscape.</i>
<b>Moderate</b>	<i>An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends. There are minor changes over some of the area or moderate changes in a localised area.</i>	<i>An effect that alters the character of the visual environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging trends. The proposal affects an appreciable segment of the overall visual composition, or there is an intrusion in the foreground of a view.</i>
<b>Slight</b>	<i>An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the landscape without affecting its sensitivities. There are minor changes over a small proportion of the area or moderate changes in a localised area or changes that are reparable over time.</i>	<i>An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the visual environment without affecting its sensitivities. The affected view forms only a small element in the overall visual composition or changes the view in a marginal manner.</i>
<b>Imperceptible</b>	<i>An effect capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences. There are no noticeable changes to landscape context, character or features.</i>	<i>An effect capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences. Although the development may be visible, it would be difficult to discern resulting in minimal change to views.</i>

It is important that the likely effects of the proposals are transparently assessed and understood in order that the determining authority can bring a balanced, well-informed judgement to bear when making a planning decision. As such, whilst the Significance Matrix and criteria provide a useful guide, the significance of an effect is ultimately determined by the landscape specialist using professional judgement, and also in the context of occasionally using hybrid judgements to account for nuance.

Effects assessed as ‘Substantial’ or greater (orange cells) are considered to be the most notable in townscape and visual terms, and may be regarded as ‘Significant’, albeit it is important to note that this is not a reflection on their acceptability in planning terms.

**2.1.4. Quality of Effects**

In addition to assessing the significance of townscape and visual effects, the quality of the effects is also determined. Whereas, the introduction of new built elements into countryside areas often results in negative landscape and visual effects, in urban and urban edge settings, new built form often results in a combination of positive and negative effects.

Urban and residential projects (such as that proposed) often involves the incorporation of new built form which through its architectural design and public realm treatment can contribute positively to the receiving townscape.

In this regard, these types of projects can give rise to a broad spectrum of opinions ranging from strongly negative to strongly positive, with a wide range of opinions lying somewhere between these two positions. Whilst some impacts are quantifiable, other impacts (such as the influence of architecture), are more qualitative in nature, where professional judgement is required. In determining the quality of the effect, it is noted that the authors of this TVIA are Chartered members of the Landscape Institute, experienced in large-scale public realm and urban design and regeneration projects and the production of landscape/townscape and visual impact assessments.

Effects are described as negative/adverse, neutral, or positive/beneficial, and the following criteria has been used to guide these judgements.

- *Positive/beneficial - A change which improves the quality of the environment, enhancing the existing view/townscape;*
- *Neutral - No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation e.g. will neither detract from nor enhance the existing view/townscape;*
- *Negative/adverse - A change which reduces the quality of the environment, detracting from the existing view/townscape.*

The judgment of the quality of the effects is made in combination with the significance judgement for both townscape and visual impacts e.g. Moderate / Positive, Moderate / Neutral, or Moderate / Negative.

### **3. APPENDIX B – VISUALISATION PRODUCTION**

#### **3.1.1. Photography and Visual material**

This statement has been produced to accompany the suite of visual material included with the application. The locations associated with the visual material were identified in consultation with Monaghan County Council, and are considered to be representative of the type variable nature of views that will be experienced towards the scheme.

Photography was undertaken by The Paul Hogarth Company, and the Visualisations have been produced by Snapshot Visuals.

#### **3.1.2. Photography**

Photography has been undertaken in accordance with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 – Visual representation of development proposals (TGN 06/19). This guidance advocates a proportionate approach and appropriate levels of accuracy.

Photography has been undertaken as per the guidance, i.e. full frame sensor and fixed 50mm lens and fixed 35mm lens on cropped frame sensor. The equipment used to obtain the photography is as follows:

- Camera: Canon EOS 6D Mark II 26.2 Megapixel Full Frame Sensor.
- Lens: Canon EF 50mm F/1.8 STM Lens.
- Tripod and camera mount: Manfrotto MT190XPRO3 tripod with Manfrotto 302 panoramic head and leveller.

All photographic images have been taken in landscape format.

A high level of locational accuracy has been obtained through the use of a Garmin GPSMAP 66sr Global Positioning System (GPS), and verified by the camera's in-built GPS. A photograph of the camera set up in position has been provided for reference.

The approximate elevation was also recorded from the GPS system and checked against OS mapping, topographic survey information (where this was available), and features associated with the viewpoint that might influence elevation.

#### **3.1.3. Visual material**

Visual material presented has been produced in accordance with TGN 06/19. As recommended the type of visualisation was determined early in the project, considering the purpose and users of the visual material, as follows:

- Purpose: accompanying an LVIA for planning (users include decision makers and consultees).
- Indicative sensitivity/magnitude: medium sensitivity, medium magnitude of change.
- Indicative effects: moderate to minor effects or lower.

Type 1 visualisations (annotated viewpoint photographs) are presented for all photograph locations. Winter photography has been digitally stitched (in accordance with TGN 06/19) to present panoramas that present the wider context of the view.



Type 3 visualisations (photomontages) have been presented for all photograph locations to indicate the appearance of the proposed development.

#### Production of 3D model and environment

Plans and elevations for the proposed development were supplied in PDF and DWG format along with a 3D Revit model. A topographical survey and OS Terrain 5m contours were used to create the digital terrain model (DTM). This DTM was used as the basis on which to align the development proposals. The relevant infrastructure and planting proposals were then aligned to the DTM using the supplied layout plan.

The site photography was supplied in both jpg and RAW format. The relevant images were selected and edited in Adobe Photoshop to adjust the levels and exposure where necessary. Images were not cropped in any way.

#### Photographic alignment within the 3d environment

A variety of data sources have been used to align the development proposals to the existing photography. This includes:

- The supplied topographical survey.
- 1m LIDAR DSM point cloud.

The 3d model and point cloud data are combined into one 3d file, the whole model is then imported to 3DS Max, a 3d visualisation software. A virtual camera was created within 3ds Max using the surveyed camera location, recorded target point and field of view (FOV) based on the camera and lens combination selected for the shot.

The baseline photograph was attached as a background to this view, to assist the Visualiser in aligning the point cloud to each corresponding background point, based on the Camera Matching Technique. At this stage, a second member of the visualisation team cross-checked the camera alignment to verify the view was correctly set.

#### Final rendering and post-production

The photomontages were produced in line with TGN 06/19. The final renders were exported to the same resolution as the baseline photography. Multi pass renders are exported to give the visualiser more control in enhancements of the final image. These multi passes may include but not limited to Reflections, Refractions, Shadows, Lighting, Ambient Occlusion and Global Illumination.

The multi pass renders are layered within Adobe Photoshop and blended together to produce the correct level of detail and photo-realistic feel. Finally, masking is applied to the image. Endless aesthetic effects can be applied to the rendered image to enhance the realism of the final image and/or make adjustments as a result of proposed material choices. However, the visualiser always attempts to be faithful to the proposed design within its chosen site.

The final image is verified by a second visualiser to check the appearance, masking, and form of the development. The final photomontages are then saved in an appropriate format for inclusion within the relevant document.

#### Software

Software used:

- AutoCAD.
- 3ds Max 2021.
- V-Ray Next for 3ds Max.
- Adobe Photoshop.
- Adobe InDesign.
- PTGui 12.8.

#### Presentation of visual material

The visual material has been inserted into an Adobe InDesign file in accordance with TGN 06/19, with relevant information presented accordingly. Photomontages are presented with a 90 degree horizontal field of view and a 96% enlargement factor with the intention of providing a printed image that gives a realistic impression of scale and detail, whilst also providing visual context.

## **4. APPENDIX C – SECTIONS AND SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHY**