

## LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ANALYSIS BACKGROUND

### FOREWARD

Forestbird Design (a fully qualified Landscape Architectural practice and member of the Irish Landscape Institute) has been engaged to carry out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the proposed mixed-use development located at the northeast end of Athlone town.

### METHODOLOGY

Assessment methodology follows the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *Guidelines for Visual Assessment* and the Department of the Environment Community, Local Government (DOE) *Guidelines on Landscape Assessment*. Where no Irish guidelines are available, it also utilises methods outlined in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA, 3rd edition, UK)

The assessment process involves thoroughly reviewing the site, environs (ca. 5km radius) and statutory documents for any sensitive locations. Nearby Protected Views, Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, town approaches, public gathering areas, tourist walking routes, shopping districts and areas of cultural heritage have been considered. At close range, the pedestrian viewpoint was the primary perspective considered, with vehicular views from the major roads. This resulted in a series of *View Receptors*, of which 12 were selected to develop accurate, verifiable photomontages. The selection process includes identifying the important components for each view receptor and how the proposed development impacts these views. The site and environs were visited in both winter and summer of 2021.

Once the receptors have been identified, the greatest information arrives in the form of *Degree of Impact*. This weighs sensitivity, visibility and duration, resulting in one of five levels of impact. Description of the view on receptors on the following pages conclude by identifying the level of impact. These levels are described in the table below.

Level of Impact	Criteria
Imperceptible	An impact capable of measurement, but without noticeable consequences. No discernable deterioration or improvement in the existing view.
Slight	An impact which causes noticeable changes in the environment without affecting its sensitivities. The impact has been minimised by its scale or intervening topography and vegetation.
Moderate	An impact that alters the character of the environment as a result of changes to an appreciable segment of the view or intrusion in the foreground.
Significant	An impact by which its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment. Where a view is obstructed or so dominated by a proposed scheme that it becomes the focus of attention.
Profound	An impact on a view that removes all sensitive characteristics or completely obstructs or alters the view.

### RESPONSE TO THE ABP FORMAL OPINION

Specific Information Item no. 4 of the formal ABP Pre-Application Consultation Opinion requests additional photomontages with images taken during winter.

We have provided 2 no. additional photomontages along the Old Rail Trail to better illustrate the relationship between Greenway users and the proposed development (View Receptors 11 and 12). The images were taken 12.Nov to minimise the degree of leaf coverage and maximise visibility and are considered 'winter views'. Our aim with the receptor locations was to find the 'worst case scenario' where gaps in the hedgerow were greatest and the full scale of development could be better ascertained.

Without entering private rear gardens, these photomontages combined with architectural sections were used to inform the LVIA and landscape design. Hedgerows on both sides of the railway line are robust, resulting in heavily filtered views when looking through in tandem. However, to ensure multiple layers of filtering vegetation long-term, the additional investigations were able to inform the design team to include a third layer of vegetation between the Greenway hedgerow and the proposed buildings. Details of this planting are provided on drawings L206 and L215.

## LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONSIDERATIONS

### STATUTORY PARAMETERS

A key determinant in the LVIA is identifying the most sensitive receptors, then assessing which of those will receive the greatest impact. Statutory designations in the *Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-27*, the *Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-20* and *Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-24* play an important role in this process. Identification of view receptors includes visiting designated *Protected Views, Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, Archaeology and National Monuments* and *Areas of High Amenity* to assess extent of visibility and key elements of their viewsheds. This is followed by areas of cultural importance (public gathering areas, Regional Sports Centre area and tourist interests). During the review, the quality of the site is defined not only by its physical characteristics, but also the impact it has on the greater statutory designations.

### SITE SETTING

The site is located within a built-up area at the northeast end of Athlone; distinctly part of the town, but not part of the historic town centre. It occupies low lying, level ground, 200m from Junction 9 off the N6 motorway. The planned Lissywollen Avenue forms the northern site boundary and is psychologically bounded by the N6 (40m to the north). The Greenway and existing residences are to the south, with a zoned / permitted residential estate to the west. Business, commerce and educational campuses fan out to the east. Despite urban continuity links back to the town centre, the site has a distinct separation from the historic core and has no visible relationship to the River Shannon. This is due to the natural terrain of the town, where modest hills create a dividing line and obscure the site from the river-oriented town centre (refer Figure L1 below). Of the 9 no. *Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)*, all appear to be either fully or substantially obscured. Thorough investigations were carried out to assess potential visibility from ACA high points at St. Mary's and upper elevations on the western bank.

A prominent contextual feature in nearly all views of the site is the *Water Tower* at Cartronroy (image at right). The LVIA will regularly reference this structure. The proposed height of the student blocks inevitably means a degree of visibility. Following the analysis methodology and initial review of over 40 potential view receptors, 12 no. have been selected for further analysis and production of photomontages. Receptor selection is based on the potential for the development to significantly alter the character of the view and/or set precedence in a manner that would require broader discussion.

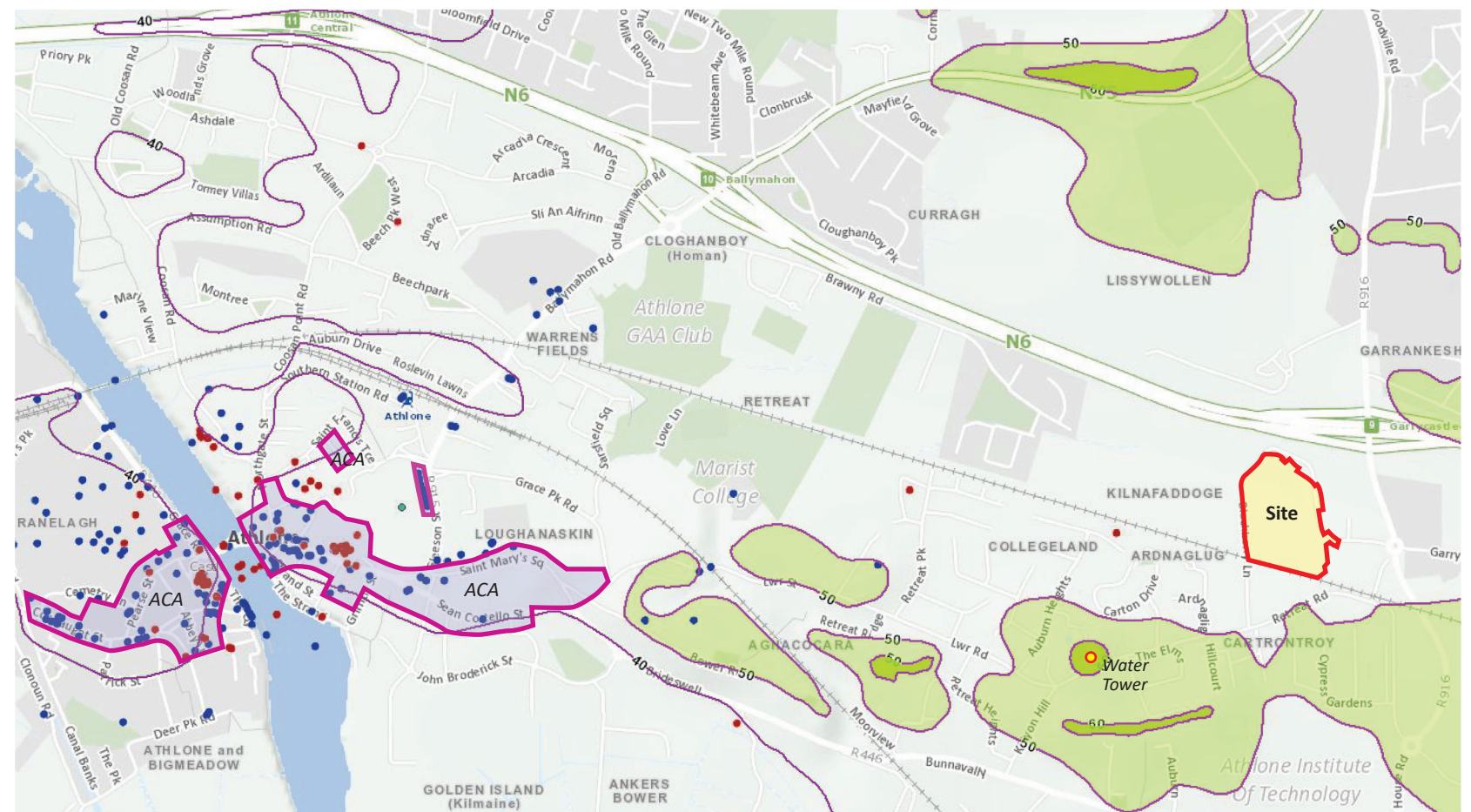
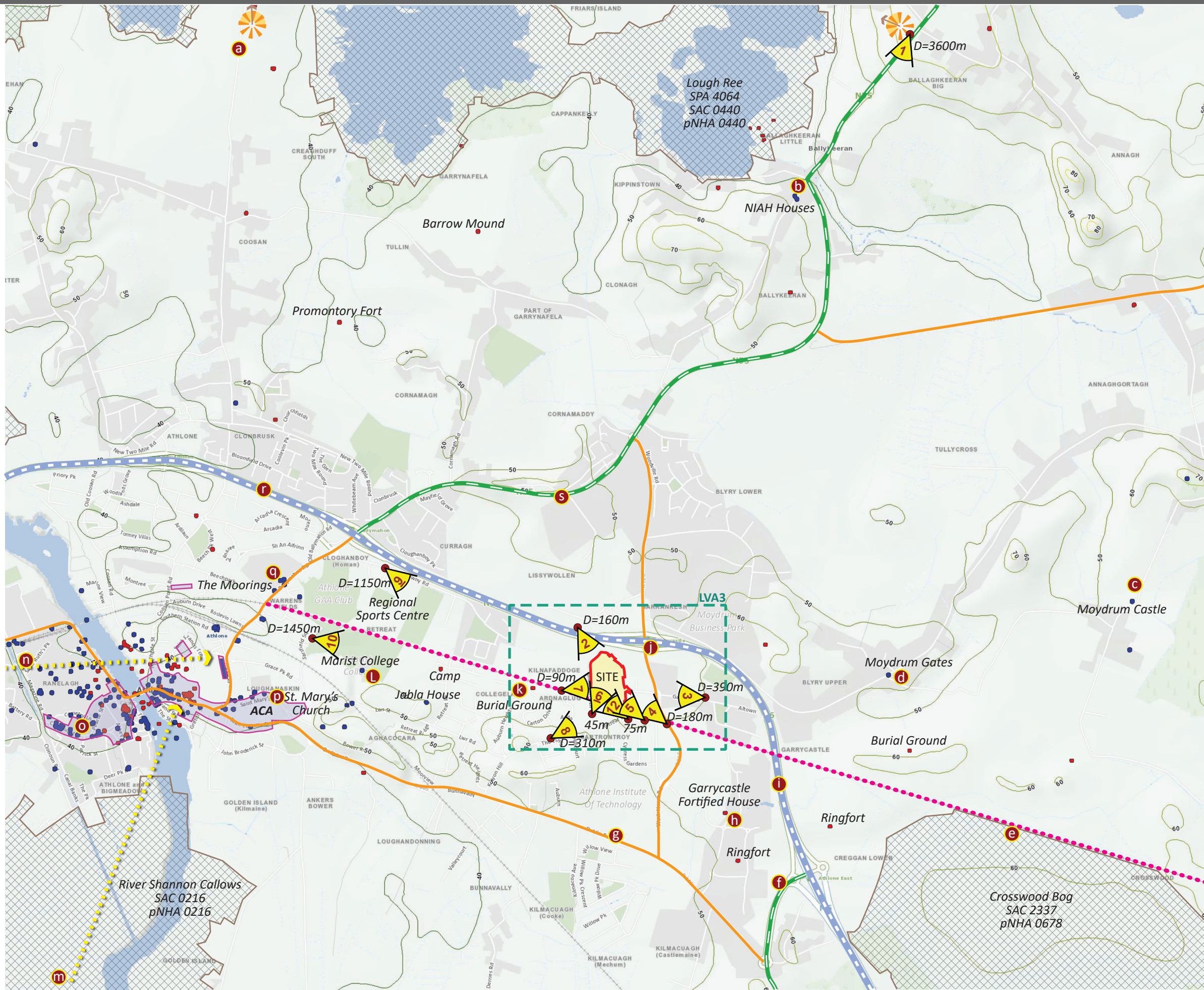


Figure L1 - Ordnance Survey map of the town overlaid with contour lines and the extent of ACAs. The highlighted contours indicate rises of 10m, with the darkest areas being the highest peaks. The red and blue dots identify the locations of protected archaeology and structures listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), making it easy to identify the historic core. The hills rising from Marist College provide a visual screen from the old town, particularly when coupled with existing vegetation and structures.


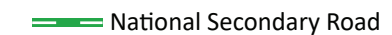

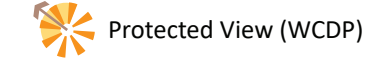

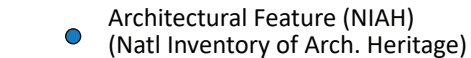
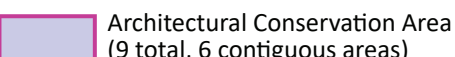

#### Notes

1. For location of site on a contextual map with proposed View Receptors, refer dwgs. LVA2 - LVA3. 12 no. photomontages with existing/proposed images are provided in an Appendix.
2. Centre of site located at ITM reference (E, N): 606350, 741550.

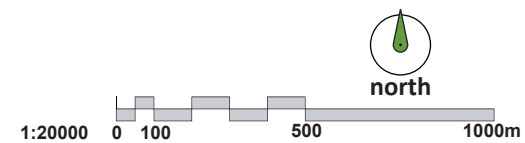




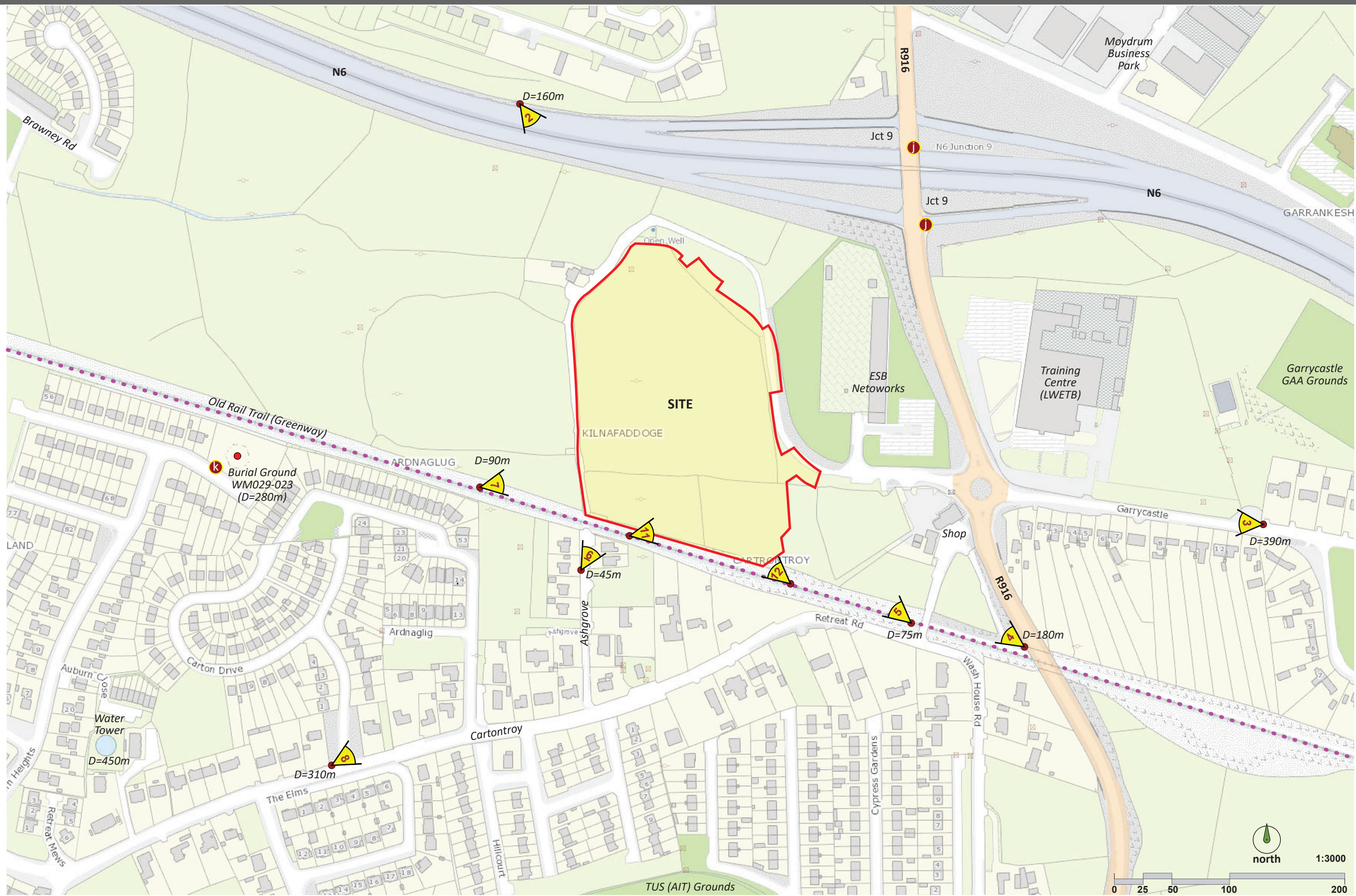
**REFERENCE PLAN LEGEND**

-  View Receptor for Photomontage (*D* = distance to site)
-  Potential Viewpoint Locations Considered
-  M6 / N6 Motorway
-  National Secondary Road
-  Regional Road
-  Old Rail Trail Amenity Route
-  Protected View (WCDP)
-  Important View (ATDP)
-  Archaeological Feature (NM) (National Monuments Service)
-  Architectural Feature (NIAH) (Natl Inventory of Arch. Heritage)
-  Architectural Conservation Area (9 total, 6 contiguous areas)
-  Proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas

NOTE: The ATDP identifies 20 no. 'Important Views and Panoramas' (Map ATC01). Only 2 no. are potentially impacted by the proposed development and are the only ones shown on this map for clarity.









# ANALYSIS OF SELECTED VIEW RECEPTORS



**VIEW RECEPTOR 1**

**View from Lough Ree Overlook (WCDP Protected View)**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** The receptor with the highest statutory designation. Users of this viewpoint look in an opposing direction, but they do inevitably look back towards town, taking in the panorama. The viewer is more than 3km away, but tall buildings could be visible and have the potential to alter (positive or negative) the perception of Athlone town.



**Analysis of Proposals:** The photomontage is presented with a red line, indicating the outline of the development. Even at this elevated position, the site is obscured by multiple layers of vegetation. In order to achieve any degree of visibility, proposed buildings would need to be in excess of 9-storeys. Consequently, the experience of the Lough Ree overlook and Protected View would not be impacted.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Imperceptible**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 2**

**View from N6 Eastbound**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** A high traffic corridor providing the modern relationship to Athlone for many road users. Both directions of the M6/N6 were reviewed to find the optimal viewing location. Westbound, the site is imperceptible. Eastbound, the site is obscured until one passes Jct 10. Northwest of the site, gaps in the roadside hedgerow provide glimpses of the site.



**Analysis of Proposals:** Traveling east on the N6, the Regional Sports Centre, stadium and Brawny Road estate are all visible through the roadside trees. The adjacent permitted development is also designed to be quite visible from the N6. These provide context for road users, providing a visual relationship to the town. Views of the site occur just before the Jct 9 offramp. At this point there are no visible structures, only a green gap before becoming urban again between junctions 9 and 8.

The proposed scheme presents several layers of buildings, where even two-storey houses become visible. Units 1-8 form the middleground, while Block R2 rises above the house rooflines to create a backdrop. The ground level is typically obscured. This layering creates a positive urban form, visually more active than an estate of uniform housing. By filling in the visual gap, the concept of the urban form of Athlone is consolidated with an improved overall identity.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Slight, Positive**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 3**

**View from Garrycastle GAA Grounds**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** The road through Garrycastle from the roundabout is directly aligned with the site. As a public gathering point, athletic grounds provide very suitable receptors with community-wide impact. Consideration also includes the impact on nearby residential lands.



**Analysis of Proposals:** This neighbourhood currently looks east towards a busy roundabout backed by a layer of trees. The proposals introduce significant building forms, with the 3 student blocks being visible. The scheme results in a change in character, as the larger structures allude to a more urban context. The R916 is a divisionary artery, so enhancement of the urban form at this location is not out of place. Closer to the roundabout, the buildings would visually increase in mass, but they become visible in the context of the Athlone Training Centre, The Spar shop and the ESB offices, diminishing the direct visual link to the residential estate and GAA grounds. The building forms appear to be well spaced and the backdrop of green trees is generally retained intact. Activity on site would not be perceptible and the last house on Moydrum Road is more than 200m away from the nearest student block. However, as an ancillary character impact, the student housing has the potential to add members to the GAA club, increasing footfall on the path.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Moderate, Neutral**



# ANALYSIS OF SELECTED VIEW RECEPTORS



**VIEW RECEPTOR 4**

**View from R916 Looking Across Greenway**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** A high traffic corridor, the northbound lane avails of an open view of the site as it passes over the Greenway (Old Rail Trail). Views impact pedestrians most, but are available to passing cars through the mesh guardrail. The context of the Greenway and the historic railway bridge give the receptor local context and meaning.



**Analysis of Proposals:** The proposed scheme is clearly visible above retained vegetation and presents a density reflecting urban development. The built forms appear distinct from residences on the south side of the Greenway. In terms of design, this is the angle where the sloping gable ends are most effective, creating a much more dynamic architectural form than a flat roof could provide. These buildings fully obscure the 2-storey housing on this site and the permitted development beyond. The cluster of student residences provides an identifiable character and being only 350m away, is likely to feel culturally linked to TUS (AIT).

Long term, this view is likely temporary as the middleground parcel (between the stone railway bridge and the site) is also zoned for development.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Moderate, Positive**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 5**

**View from Greenway (Old Rail Trail) Looking West**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** The Greenway is a high, public use corridor with a 'green' identity, resulting in a high degree of sensitivity. As pedestrians and cyclists pass under the historic stone railway bridge, views of the site from the Greenway open up. Further away, the site is partially obscured by bridges. Closer to the site, the context diminishes and the retained Greenway trees overpower development lands behind.



**Analysis of Proposals:** Respecting the visual, ecological and cultural benefit of the Greenway trees, the proposed development is designed to retain all of the trees visible from this receptor. This ensures continuation of the concept of a 'green corridor' and provides filtered screening to minimise the visual impact of proposed buildings.

The photomontage illustrates how only the upper 2-3 storeys of the student accommodation are visible and how the existing trees are still the dominant visual element. Building height is very compatible with this view. Height reduction would serve no benefit, but increased height could be accommodated without negative impact.

The grading of impact below is based on the initial introduction of background structures to where there are none (Neutral). But how with time, the enhanced secondary supervision along the Greenway and maturation of internal tree planting to further improve green coverage results in a positive impact.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Moderate, Neutral-Positive**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 6**

**View from Ashgrove Road Approaching Greenway**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** This view represents a historic road in an established neighbourhood, popular Greenway access and the nearest house to the site. The approach to the Greenway evokes a peaceful context. The aim of the photomontage is to ascertain change in character and the potential for a sense of overbearing.



**Analysis of Proposals:** Entering the Ashgrove neighbourhood from Cartronroy there is a direct view of the Greenway, but the site is typically obscured by the adjacent residences and intervening mature trees. Towards the end of the lane, the site begins to open up to road users. Visible in this viewframe are the 2-storey houses and new tree planting to the southwest corner of the site. The taller apartment blocks are located further east and do not impact the Ashgrove approach (refer Greenway views 5, 7, 11, 12 for impact on other receptors).

There is some impact with the introduction of housing onto a site that has traditionally been pastureland. However, houses are in scale and are set significantly back from the southern boundary, with multiple layers of tree planting introduced. A change in landscape character occurs where the site opens up to the L40061 (Blackberry Lane). The lane becomes a vibrant node off of the Greenway and the anticipated increase in foot traffic will be perceived from this receptor. This evolution will enhance the experience of the approach to the Old Rail Trail.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Moderate, Neutral-Positive**



# ANALYSIS OF SELECTED VIEW RECEPTORS



**VIEW RECEPTOR 7**

**View from Greenway (Old Rail Trail) Looking East**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** The Greenway is a high, public use corridor with a 'green' identity, resulting in a high degree of sensitivity. Coming from the Regional Sports Centre, the proposals are most visible at this location, viewed across the polytunnel. Intervening hedgerows obscure the site further away. The large Ash tree at the western boundary is a focal point.



**Analysis of Proposals:** With the recent removal of trees from this portion of the Greenway (adj. lands), combined with the existing poor quality hedgerow along the western boundary, views towards the site are open. The two housing types are clearly presented in this image. To the left are two-storey terraced houses with rear facades facing the viewer. To the right are the apartment blocks. The existing west boundary Ash tree and all of the Greenway trees are retained.

The visual change is abrupt, even with two-storey houses. The rear facades facing the viewer are preferable to gable ends of houses. The scheme is appropriately higher at the Greenway and evokes a sense of supervision. The retention of trees creates a buffer and significantly mitigates potential impact. New tree planting will further obscure the apartments, but a portion of the houses will always be visible.

The foreground parcel is zoned residential and will likely evolve with time. The removal of Greenway trees on this land exacerbates initial impact, but long term, the proposed scheme will be well integrated with the Greenway.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Significant, Negative-Positive**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 8**

**View from Cartronroy Southwest of Site**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** This is a high use local road, linking residential estates. The road is slightly elevated coming from the town centre, providing for long range views. A low sensitivity receptor, the aim is to ascertain the degree of development that would be visible and impact on established residential lands.



**Analysis of Proposals:** Facing away from the town centre, the proposed scheme rises in the background of Cartronroy. The horizon line is flat and characterised by tree canopies. The proposals break the horizon, introducing what appears to be a singular building to frame this edge of town. There are nuances in the architecture, adding detail and a unique form. From Cartronroy there are periodically glimpses of background warehouses at the fringe of town. The student housing is more visible than those structures, but it has a more architecturally appealing form.

When applying the development Objectives in Part 4.6.3 (LSFP), the proposals achieve many of the aims. However, in meeting the Objectives, visibility from this receptor will always be an inevitability. This clashes with the interruption in the horizon line in a residential setting. Tree coverage will improve with time, but is unlikely to mitigate the break in horizon. The impact is slight, but because it affects a large viewshed it is deemed negative.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Slight, Negative**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 9**

**View from Regional Sports Centre (RSC) at Brawney Road**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** The combination of the RSC and the Athlone Town soccer stadium make this a high-use public amenity receptor. Existing Lissywollen development is visible to the middleground. The intent is to identify the value of the horizon line in this view and the impact any proposals might have.



**Analysis of Proposals:** From this receptor, the horizon line is truncated by the N6 boundary vegetation and the RSC. Consequently, the horizon plays a different role here than in View 8. The backdrop of trees is already compromised by residential development. The permitted application between the RSC and the site will further obscure and dilute the green backdrop.

With proposals up to 7-storeys, development will form a modified horizon line. It will potentially still be visible when permitted 2-3 storey middleground development is also constructed. This layering adds character. From this receptor, infill with development in context of the sports complexes is deemed a positive urban evolution that begin to integrate the Lissywollen valley with town centre activity. With an increase in resident numbers, there is likely to be an increase in activity approaching the RSC from the east.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Slight, Positive**



# ANALYSIS OF SELECTED VIEW RECEPTORS



**VIEW RECEPTOR 10**

**View from Fringe Educational Grounds**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** A publicly accessible view across various sports grounds and the Greenway, this receptor represents a typical relationship from valley properties to the site. The view contains Marist College open space and the Community College (red building).



**Analysis of Proposals:** The photomontage is presented with a red line, indicating the outline of the development. Views from within the historical grounds of Marist College are obscured by intervening structures and mature evergreen trees. It is the same with the community college where views from the external spaces are limited. The amenity spaces of both colleges provide open views towards the site. But being on level ground, views are quickly obscured by intervening features and will be further obscured as permitted development is constructed. Buildings would have to be in excess of 9-storeys in order to be visible from the sports grounds. It should be noted that upper-storey classroom windows may obtain views of the site, but these were inaccessible and the site would be viewed across acres of permitted residential development.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Imperceptible**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 11**

**View from Old Rail Trail (Greenway) at Site Looking East**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** This view responds to the ABP Opinion. The LSFP also identifies the need for secondary supervision over the Greenway. However, minimising impact on residential amenity must also be considered. This location was selected because it contains a wide gap in the hedgerow and is able to capture Block R1. It represents the 'worst case scenario' in terms of potential visibility.



**Analysis of Proposals:** The proposed R1 (foreground) and S1 blocks sit behind the existing Greenway hedgerow. The hedgerow trees here are 6-10m in height and the proposed 6-storey building is visible behind it. The relationship to Greenway users becomes a balance of natural and urban components. Comparing the permitted development to the west, the retained trees and taller buildings create a unique setting that enhances the Greenway experience, while providing the necessary sense of supervision. Height and materials are appropriate in a new urban setting. When considering the relationship to private amenity, retention of the Greenway hedgerow is essential, allowing filtered views through two hedgerows (north and south of the tracks). As not all screening vegetation is in ownership control, a third layer of evergreen trees has been introduced between the hedgerow and buildings. A louvre system to some balconies provides additional visual filtering. The large offsets to houses combined with several layers of mitigation have consequently reduced a negative impact to a neutral impact. The open views from upper storeys would be long range and will not result in undue overbearance at close range.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Significant, Neutral**



**VIEW RECEPTOR 12**

**View from Old Rail Trail (Greenway) at Site Looking West**

**Reason for Selection of Receptor:** This view responds to the ABP Opinion. The aim of this receptor is to assess the impact on the Greenway character as a 'green' vein and the visual relationship to nearby residents. The hedgerow at this end is robust, with heights exceeding 15m. This location was selected because it includes the largest gap in the hedgerow at this end and is able to capture a portion of Block S1.

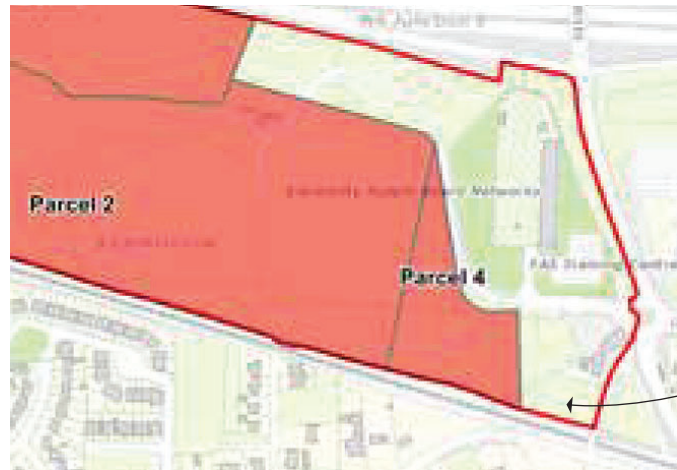


**Analysis of Proposals:** The eastern hedgerow is 3-5m taller than the western portion, resulting in considerable screening of the proposed S1 block. The skewed orientation of this block also allows for a smoother transition to the Lissywollen development zone. At this location, only the upper two storeys are partially visible. This recedes such that Block R1 is partially visible. In summer, Block R1 would be imperceptible at this angle. With investigations identifying the benefit of a third layer of tree planting, specimen conifers are proposed between the existing hedgerow and S1. With retention of the hedgerow, the view corridor, natural biodiversity and change in seasons cherished by Greenway users is retained. The introduction of background activity and buildings gives the sense of habitat flourishing in an urban environment and not just the countryside. This compatibility is important in delivering successful development under the Lissywollen South Framework Plan. The abrupt change results in a neutral impact early on. But, the proposals are neither overbearing nor damaging to the character of the Greenway or adjacent residents to the south (60m away). Long term positive impacts with arise from the proposals.

**Predicted Impact (level, type of impact): Moderate, Neutral-Positive**



LISSYWOLLEN SOUTH FRAMEWORK PLAN - PARCEL 4



Extract from Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024 (LSFP), Figure 6 (Part 4.1), illustrating the extent of Parcel 4 (purpose built student quarter).



Aerial photograph illustrating Parcel 4 relative to the actual piece of ground represented in the LSFP concept sketch.



Extract from LSFP, Figures 8/9/10 (Part 4.6), illustrating a conceptual student quarter interaction with the Old Rail Trail.

In reviewing visual and landscape character impact, it is important to consider the objectives in the LSFP. One item of clarification falls under Parcel 4 (student quarter). In this, a sketch concept is provided alluding to an open interaction with the Old Rail Trail (Greenway). However, this sketch corresponds to a piece of land that lies outside of Parcel 4 (east of it). The actual location does not contain a boundary hedgerow (visible in View Receptor 5) and does not reflect the actual site conditions of Parcel 4.

With this information and details from the Tree Survey and Ecology report, the responsible design response is to retain the mature hedgerow along the Greenway. Consequently, the LVIA responds to the design intent to retain and enhance the hedgerow rather than assessing compatibility with the open design presented in the sketch.

OLD RAIL TRAIL HEDGEROW IMAGES



Drone view of Greenway looking west. Illustrating how hedgerows are an important character feature of the Greenway and how hedgerow density is substantial both sides of the path.



Pedestrian view of Greenway looking east. Looking at R1, this illustrates the embankment and vegetation along the south side of the tracks adjacent to residential lands.

EXAMPLES OF OTHER RECEPTORS CONSIDERED



Our intent was to include a photomontage from the edge of St. Mary's Church grounds, as it is a Protected Structure and forms the outer extents of the ACA. However, from all points of the property the site is obscured by intervening structures (particularly the Intreo building to centre of photo). Due to this imperceptibility and sensitivities with private lands, this photomontage is not included as it would not inform the application.



This is the closest National Monument (Burial Ground, WM029-023) to the site. It is located within a housing estate and being generally at the same elevation, the proposed development is obscured.



View from the southern end of the Ashgrove neighbourhood coming from Cartronroy Road. Layers of houses and trees make the site less visible than when closer to the Greenway.

Notes

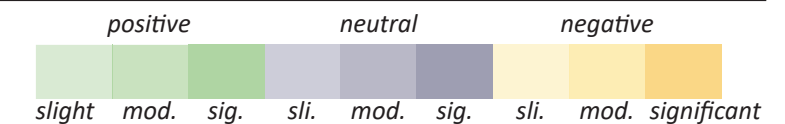
1. For location of View Receptors on plan, refer dwgs. LVA2-LVA3.
2. Refer *Booklet of Photomontages* by Pedersen Focus for existing and proposed visualisations at full A3 size.
3. Hedgerow images were taken during the winter period for greatest visibility.



# CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

## SUMMARY OF KEY VISUAL RECEPTORS

Receptor No.	Title of Receptor	Distance from Site	Receptor Sensitivity	Degree of Visible Change	Predicted Impact and Duration				Key Factors Contributing to Predicted Impact
					construction	short	medium	long permanent	
1	Protected View - Lough Ree Overlook	3600m	Very High	Low	Neutral	Imperceptible			Development does not break horizon line or intermediate tree line. No impact on Lough Ree experience.
2	N6 National Primary Road	160m	Low	Medium	Neutral	Slight, Positive			Visible through gaps in roadside trees. Layered building heights punctuates edge of town concept at Lissywollen.
3	Garrycastle GAA	390m	High	High	Neutral	Moderate, Neutral			Focal point at end of road; rooflines differentiate from foreground residences; height creates a transition zone.
4	R916 Southeast of Site	180m	Medium	Medium	Negative	Moderate, Positive			High traffic volume; appealing composition of buildings while retaining a green foreground.
5	Old Rail Trail East	75m	Very High	Medium	Neutral	Moderate, Neutral-Positive			Building setback and retention of Greenway trees minimise impact; gateway to urban element of Greenway experience.
6	Ashgrove Road	45m	High	Medium	Negative	Moderate, Negative-Positive			While planting is immature, impact is increased. After 5-10 years, the green framework is enhanced.
7	Old Rail Trail West	90m	Very High	High	Negative	Significant, Negative-Positive			Retention of large boundary trees key to minimising impact. Building heights balanced in context. Initial change abrupt.
8	Cartrontrony	310m	Medium	Medium	Neutral	Slight, Negative			Proposals rise above foreground residential plots and break horizon line without town centre context.
9	Regional Sports Centre	1150m	Medium	Low	Neutral	Slight, Positive			RSC benefits from added development context; gable ends provide quality scale.
10	Educational Grounds	1450m	High	Low	Neutral	Imperceptible			Terrain and intervening structures limit visibility from Marist College, Community College and local pitch.
11	Old Rail Trail at R1	5m	Very High	High	Neutral	Significant, Negative-Neutral			Retention and supplement of Greenway trees combined with extensive mitigation reduces impact from negative.
12	Old Rail Trail at S1	10m	Very High	Medium	Neutral	Moderate, Neutral-Positive			Transition to urban setting still dominated by landscape, supplemental Greenway trees enhances the layering.



### OTHER VIEW RECEPTORS CONSIDERED

The following locations were assessed in person as potential View Receptors due to their statutory or sensitive nature. All were discounted due to lack of site visibility or negligible impact.

- A - WCDP Protected View over Lough Ree at Coosan (3700m away)
- B - NIAH Houses on N55 (2700m away)
- C - NM Moydrum Castle ruins (2650m away)
- D - NM Moydrum Castle Gates (1350m away)
- E - SAC/pNHA Crosswood Bog (1600m away)
- F - N62 at N6 Overpass (1200m away)
- G - Athlone Institute of Technology (500m away)
- H - NM Garrycastle Fortified House (700m away)
- I - M6 / N6 westbound (3000-800m away)
- J - N6 Jct 9 Overpass (160m away)
- K - NM Burial Ground at Cartron Heights (280m away)
- L - NIAH Marist College (1100m away)
- M - ATDP Protected View at County Boundary (3000m away)
- N - ATDP Protected View at R446 Western Gateway (4500m away)
- O - ACA West Bank of Historic Town Centre (2400m away)
- P - ACA and PS St. Mary's Church (1650m away)
- Q - NIAH The Moorings houses (1650m away)
- R - N6 eastbound (3000-200m away)
- S - N55 road to Ballymahon (1100m away)

### CONCLUSION

Athlone is imbued with numerous historical buildings and cultural sites. However, these generally fall within the Shannon River valley. The Lissywollen site lies over the hill from the river and town centre on peripheral agricultural lands. Consequently, this location has a limited visual relationship with the statutory designations of the town centre. It does not impact Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) or Important Views. The nearest structure on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is 850m away (Jabla House) and only a single National Monument sits within 600m (Burial Ground embedded within an estate, 280m away). The potential for impact on designated features is very low.

Despite the low sensitivity, the site has a potential landscape and visual impact locally as an eastern gateway to the town. Development of the N6 and regional road network combined with evolution of the Old Rail Trail has resulted in defined parameters for the site. These also provide modern view receptors that need to be considered in the analysis. 9 of the 12 View Receptors are within 400m of the site.

With structures up to 7 storeys in height, the proposals will inevitably be visible from a number of locations. Visibility is not necessarily negative. Key considerations are whether the proposals alter the experience from the receptor, compromise the character of a receptor or have undue impact on adjacent users.

As you can see in the table above, some receptors receive a Positive impact. This is primarily a result of placemaking and complementary scale in context of retained peripheral mature hedgerows. Some receptors also receive a Negative impact, particularly in the short term while vegetation matures. Negative impact is often rooted in the change from a greenfield site to a fully developed parcel. Retention of additional existing vegetation internally would not mitigate this impact.

Cumulative impact plays an important role in the assessment. When viewed in consideration of adjacent permitted development, many negative impacts disappear and become Neutral or even Positive. The site achieves the gateway identity, placing high activity student housing as a centrepiece. Building height and mass appear appropriate in achieving this. Lower buildings would dilute this aim. Residents to the south will also perceive a degree of change. But with large offsets, full retention of the Greenway hedgerows and significant mitigation measures in place, visual filtering is robust to eliminate undue overbearance. The level of visual change is mitigated and reasonable in an evolving urban context.

In summary, the proposed development has little to no impact on statutorily designated receptors. The proposals create some visible change at the periphery of town, impacting landscape character and the perception of an eastern gateway. With retention of the Greenway and Lissywollen Avenue hedgerows, the proposals create a dynamic experience not only for residents but for the general public, which contributes to the concept of the Lissywollen development corridor.