

# BOYNE RIDGE, RATHMULLAN | LARGE-SCALE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

## ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STATEMENT

ndba





**General Note:**

Drawings/maps in this statement are for illustrative purposes only, and are not to scale. For exact site boundary and architectural details, please refer to the NDBA drawing pack\*. Copyright is reserved.

\* For mirrored house types, drawings (elevations, sections, and floor plans) are provided for one orientation only. Equivalent drawings for the mirrored arrangement can be prepared upon request.

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 OVERVIEW

This Architectural Design Statement has been prepared by NDBA on behalf of the applicant, Earlsfort Developments Drogheda Ltd., to support a planning application for a proposed Large-Scale Residential Development at a site at Rathmullan, Co. Meath. This report forms part of the suite of drawings and documents to be submitted to Meath County Council, and should be read in conjunction with the comprehensive planning application package.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Section 11.5 and DM OBJ 40 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. It is the intention of this design statement to clearly describe the design rationale of the proposed development, to outline how the design responds to the context in which it is set, and to demonstrate consistency with relevant national and local planning objectives and guidance, with reference to the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (2024) and the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The design statement will commence with a description of the subject site & its context, followed by an overview of the proposed development, and an analysis of the planning context. The report will then describe in detail and analyse the proposed development with reference to the 4 'Key Indicators of Quality Urban Design and Placemaking' as set out in the Compact Settlement Guidelines: 'Sustainable and Efficient Movement'; 'Vibrant Centres and Communities'; 'Open Space, Landscape and Heritage'; and 'Responsive Built Form'.

## 1.2 DESIGN TEAM

|                                           |                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| NDBA Architects                           | Architect                         |
| Hughes Planning & Development Consultants | Planning Consultant               |
| Waterman Moylan                           | Engineers                         |
| Cunnane Stratton Reynolds                 | Landscape Architect               |
| Chris Shackleton Consulting               | Visual Impact & Daylight Analysis |
| DNV                                       | Environmental Consultant          |
| ?                                         | Arboriculture Consultant          |

## 1.3 DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

*The proposed development consists of (i) demolition/removal of all existing farm buildings/structures and associated hard standing on site; (ii) construction of a large-scale residential development (LRD) of 249 no. units comprising 170 no. two-storey houses (including 37 no. two-bedroom houses, 111 no. three-bedroom houses and 22 no. four-bedroom houses), 16 no. three-storey duplex buildings (accommodating 16 no. one-bedroom and 16 no. two-bedroom units) and a mix of 8 no. three-storey and 3 no. four-storey apartment blocks accommodating a total of 22 no. one-bedroom and 25 no. two-bedroom apartments; (iii) construction of a new vehicular entrance and access road off Rathmullan Road with associated junction works and associated internal access road network with pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure; (iv) provision of a three-storey creche facility (411sq.m) with external play areas at ground and second floor levels and vehicular/bicycle parking area; and, (v) all ancillary site and infrastructural works, inclusive of removal of existing vehicular entrances, general landscaping and public open space provision, vehicular parking provision (396 no. spaces in total), bicycle parking, boundary treatments, foul/surface water drainage, attenuation areas, provision of a pumping station and provision of an ESB substation, as necessary to facilitate the proposed development. Each house will be served by vehicular parking to the front and private amenity space in the form of a rear garden. Each duplex building will be served by vehicular parking to the front and private amenity space in the form of balcony/terrace spaces to the rear. Each apartment block will have shared access to adjoining car parking bays with communal amenity space and bicycle/bin stores provided to the rear and each apartment will be provided with private amenity space in the form of a balcony or terrace. The development includes provision of a landscaped area of public open space to the north of the site, with 2 no. pedestrian/cyclist connections (via the northern/eastern site boundaries) to Rathmullan Road which will be subsequently ceded to Meath County Council. The application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).).*



# SITE CONTEXT



**Fig 1.1** Aerial view of site and context



# SITE CONTEXT

## 2.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The 9.2 hectare greenfield site is located within the southwestern environs of Drogheda, Co. Meath, adjacent to the Meath-Louth County Border, and c. 1.7km west of Drogheda town centre.

The majority of the site is subject to the zoning objective 'A2 - New Residential', with the northern section of the site being zoned 'F1 - Open Space' (See Section 4.1.1 for further details). To the west and south, the application site is bound by lands subject to the strategic zoning objective 'White Lands' which are not at present available for residential development. The subject site along with these adjoining lands to the west and south were formally associated with agricultural use. Currently the site is predominantly characterized by open, formerly cultivated agricultural fields. There are a number of agricultural buildings on the site, arranged in an informal cluster towards the south-eastern boundary of the site.

The site's southern boundary is defined by an established hedgerow running east-west which separates the site from existing farmland to the south. The site's western boundary is not physically defined at present. The site is situated within c. 200m of the M1 motorway to the west. There is significant planting along the M1, which provides appropriate screening to the motorway from the site. The site benefits from striking views toward the Mary McAleese Boyne Valley Bridge—a prominent cable-stayed structure that serves as a significant local landmark. This bridge forms a defining visual feature in the surrounding landscape and is visible from several vantage points across the site. Positioned on the outskirts of Drogheda, the site also benefits from views of the Boyne River and the rolling countryside beyond to the north and west.

The site is bound to the east by Rathmullan Road, which has been improved by the Planning Authority in recent years. The site's eastern boundary is defined by an established hedgerow which separates the site from Rathmullan Road.

The northern extent of the site is located c. 40m from the southern bank of the River Boyne, with the site bound to the north by the road which runs alongside the Boyne. The majority of the site is elevated approximately 10m above the banks of the river. The site exhibits a gently undulating topography, sloping from south to north, with the northern boundary of the site defined by a steeper embankment, covered in dense vegetation, which slopes down towards the road bounding the site. In addition to the established vegetation located along the site boundaries, there is a mature hedgerow running east-west across the centre of the subject site, dividing it into two separate fields.



**Fig 2.1** Aerial view of site



# SITE CONTEXT



**Fig 2.2** Selected site photographs



# SITE CONTEXT



**Fig 2.3** Selected photographs of site and context



# SITE CONTEXT

## 2.2 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The site is strategically located within the southwestern environs of Drogheda, County Meath. Positioned to the south of the River Boyne, and east of the M1, it forms part of a transitional landscape where the established urban fabric of Drogheda gives way to more expansive agricultural lands. The M1 motorway acts as a significant physical barrier between the rural countryside beyond to the west, and the suburban edge of Drogheda town. As such, the site represents an excellent opportunity to provide the town of Drogheda with a high quality, high amenity housing development within the town curtilage, representing sustainable use of undeveloped land lying between the town and the M1 motorway. Immediately east of the site are a number of existing and recently completed residential developments that are generally suburban in character, including Oldbridge Manor, Riverbank and Highlands, which together provide a mix of two-storey semi-detached and terraced housing, as well as duplex apartments.

## 2.3 AMENITIES

The site benefits from a relatively high level of amenities and is primely located on the edge of Drogheda town in a well serviced and accessible location. A number of shopping and community facilities including supermarkets, schools, childcare facilities, churches and community centres are available in the nearby town centre, and surrounding suburban areas. Further shopping facilities are provided at Drogheda Retail Park, approximately 1.6km from the site

Regarding landscape amenities and green infrastructure, the site benefits from the close proximity to the River Boyne and the adjacent Boyne greenway, which runs along the south bank of the river and provides a pedestrian/cyclist friendly route to the town centre.

## 2.4 TRANSPORT LINKS

The site benefits from good public transport connectivity. A strong feature of the site is its proximity to MacBride Train Station, which is located west of Drogheda Town Centre, approximately 3.5km from the subject site, offering a high frequency, high-capacity public transport service with direct links to Dublin City Centre and Belfast. The site is also served by Drogheda Bus Station, approximately 2.5km from the subject site, which also provides access to high frequency public transport service with links to Dublin and Belfast. The site is located 350m from the nearest bus stop, which provides access to local bus services.



# SITE CONTEXT

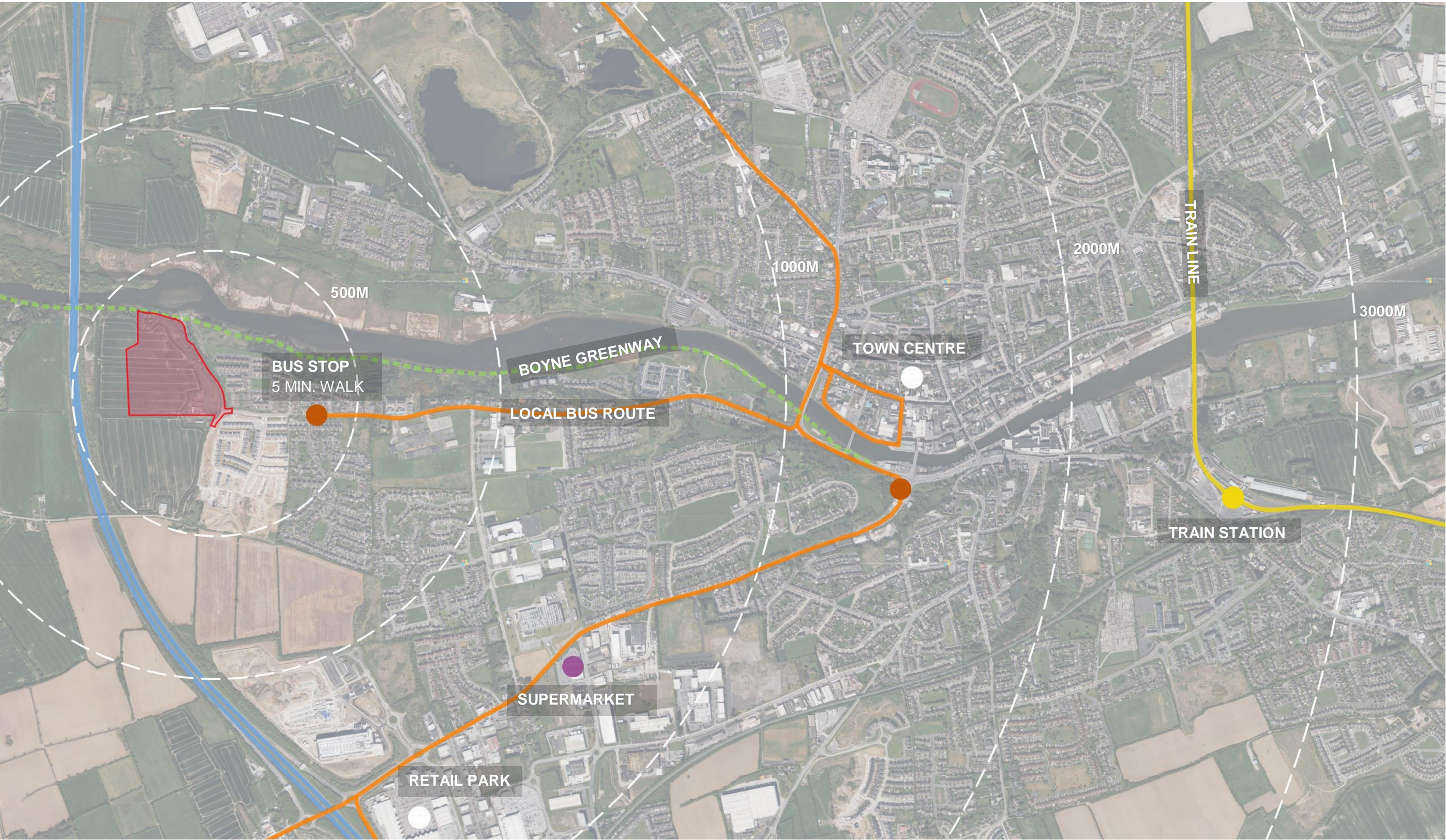


Fig 2.4 Site analysis



# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

## 3.1 OVERVIEW

The proposed development comprises a new residential neighbourhood of 249 dwellings, designed as a sustainable, low-rise, medium-density scheme that responds to the evolving suburban grain of the Rathmullan area. The scheme includes 249 dwellings in a mix of two-storey terraced and semi-detached houses, three-storey duplex blocks, and a series of carefully sited apartment buildings ranging from three to four storeys in height. These are arranged to form a coherent urban structure defined by a legible hierarchy of streets, green spaces, and public realm.

The architectural and urban design strategy seeks to create a strong sense of place, with a predominantly two-storey grain that responds to the suburban setting and scales comfortably to the surrounding landscape. Taller elements are strategically located to mark key corners, open spaces, and arrival points, serving as visual anchors and contributing to a varied roofline.

The architectural language takes cues from the suburban and rural edge setting, with a palette of pitched roof forms, gable ends, and articulated massing that breaks down the scale of the buildings. A varied material strategy using different tones and textures of brick, combined with carefully proportioned openings and simple, robust detailing, gives character and distinction to different building types while maintaining a cohesive identity across the development.

A series of connected green spaces form the spine of the development, supporting play, social interaction, biodiversity, and active travel. The northern portion of the site accommodates a large park-like open space orientated towards the River Boyne, taking advantage of the natural topography and mature boundary planting. New pedestrian and cycle routes enhance connectivity to Rathmullan Road and the nearby Boyne River greenway, supporting active travel and integration with the wider area.

Throughout the scheme, careful attention has been paid to the relationship between buildings, streets, and open spaces to foster neighbourly interaction and passive surveillance, while also supporting inclusive access and high-quality living standards



Fig 3.1 Proposed site plan

# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

## 3.2 CONCEPTS & OBJECTIVES

The following key design objectives and ambitions have underpinned the evolution of the proposed scheme. The proposal aims to:

- Take advantage of the opportunities presented by the well-serviced and accessible edge-of-town site, to provide a high quality residential scheme of enhanced scale and density, representing a sustainable intensification in land use on the site and a contribution to the urban consolidation of the broader Drogheda area.
- Create a distinct visual identity for the community and positively contribute to the legibility of the urban environment through the use of a bespoke architectural design expressed with high quality materials and finishes.
- Create a pedestrian friendly public realm with high quality, well-designed public spaces, and to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transportation.
- Encourage biodiversity and urban greening by retaining existing trees and hedgerows where appropriate, as well as providing new trees and planting.
- Create an accessible development which provides dwellings for residents with a range of needs, and ensures both visitors and residents with a range of mobility abilities can easily and independently navigate the buildings and site.
- Arrange the layout of the site to ensure public spaces and individual dwellings benefit from good access to sunlight and daylight.
- Ensure all residents are afforded a sufficient level of privacy within their dwellings, and a high level of amenity both within the common areas of the site and within their individual dwellings.
- Arrange the layout of the site to discourage anti-social behaviour by ensuring an appropriate degree of passive surveillance of all public spaces by overlooking dwellings.
- Facilitate the future integration and coordination of development on adjoining 'White Lands' by providing a permeable and adaptable site layout that supports potential future residential use, subject to future rezoning.

## 3.3 SCHEDULE OF ACCOMODATION

| Dwelling Type       | Quantity | Car Space/Unit | Car Space Total |
|---------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 Bedroom Apartment | 38       | 1              | 38              |
| 2 Bedroom Apartment | 41       | 1              | 41              |
| 2 Bedroom House     | 37       | 1              | 37              |
| 3 Bedroom House     | 111      | 2              | 222             |
| 4 Bedroom House     | 22       | 2              | 44              |
| <b>Total</b>        | 249      |                | 382             |
| <i>Creche</i>       | 1        |                | 8               |



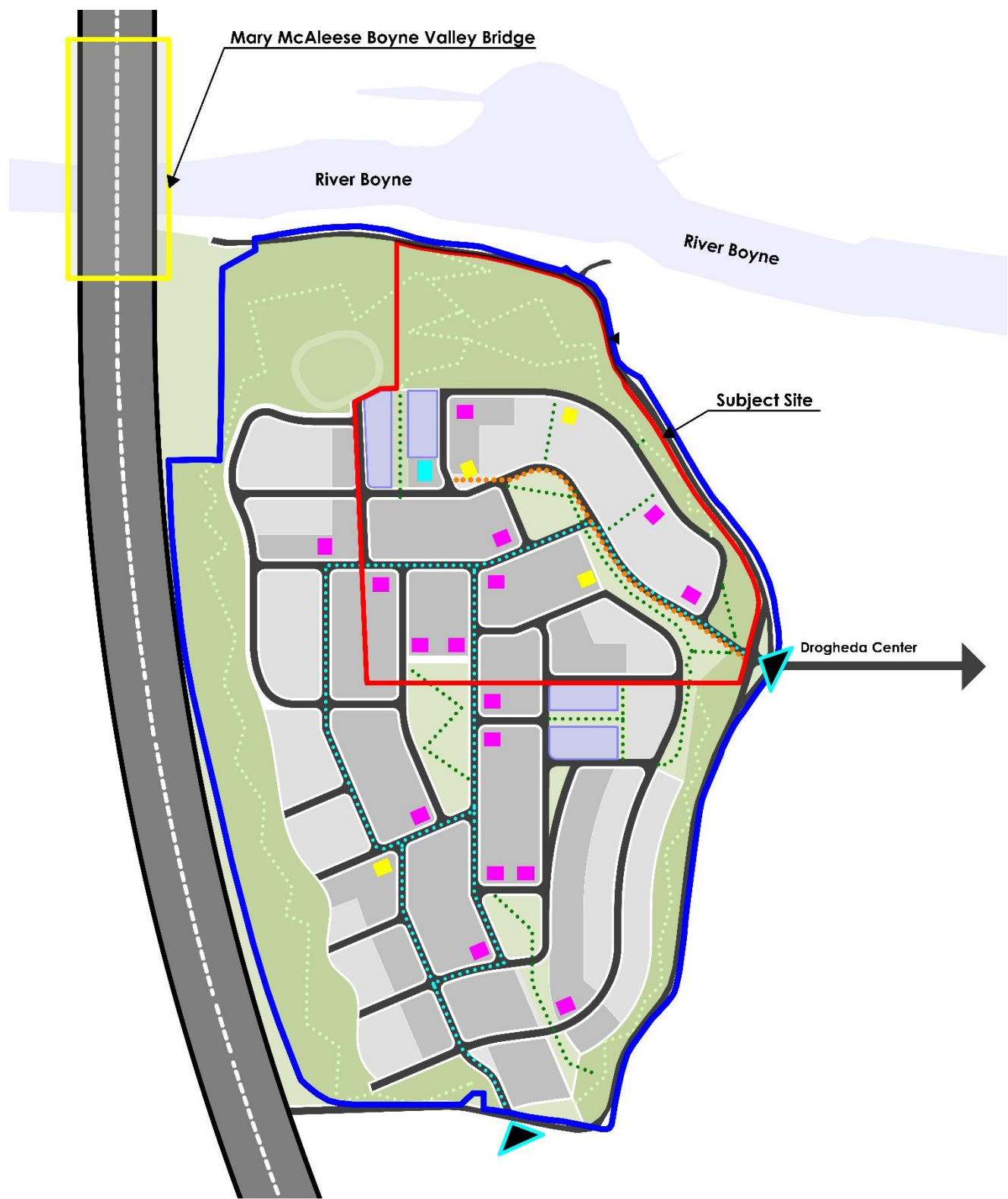
# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



**Fig 3.2** View of proposed site entrance



# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



**Fig 3.3** Indicative masterplan of potential future development, pending the future rezoning of adjacent White Lands to the east and west, and the grant of future planning permissions

## 3.4 POTENTIAL FUTURE DEVELOPMENT & CONNECTIVITY

The proposed development has been carefully designed to accommodate potential future connectivity and integration with the adjoining lands to the south and east, which are currently zoned as 'White Lands' and not available for residential development under the current Development Plan. However, these lands may be made available for residential development in a future Development Plan or zoning revision.

In anticipation of this, the site layout incorporates logical access points, route alignments, and landscape buffers at the site edges that would enable seamless expansion and integration should these lands be rezoned. An indicative masterplan for the entire site has been prepared, which focuses medium to higher density residential development towards the centre of the site, with lower-density housing and surrounded landscaped green spaces defining the site perimeter. This arrangement supports phased expansion and natural progression into adjoining lands, allowing for a coherent urban structure to evolve over time in response to strategic planning objectives..

### LEGEND:

|  |                                                       |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Site entrance                                         |
|  | Main 6m wide Roads                                    |
|  | Roads                                                 |
|  | Two-Lane Bike Path to proposed creche building        |
|  | Housing Development (Mostly Terraced Houses)          |
|  | Housing Development (Mostly Semi-Detached Houses)     |
|  | Duplex Housing Development                            |
|  | Apartment Development                                 |
|  | Landmark Apartment (Emphasizing Main Estate Entrance) |
|  | Commercial Building (proposed creche building)        |
|  | Public green area                                     |
|  | Noise Barrier green zone                              |

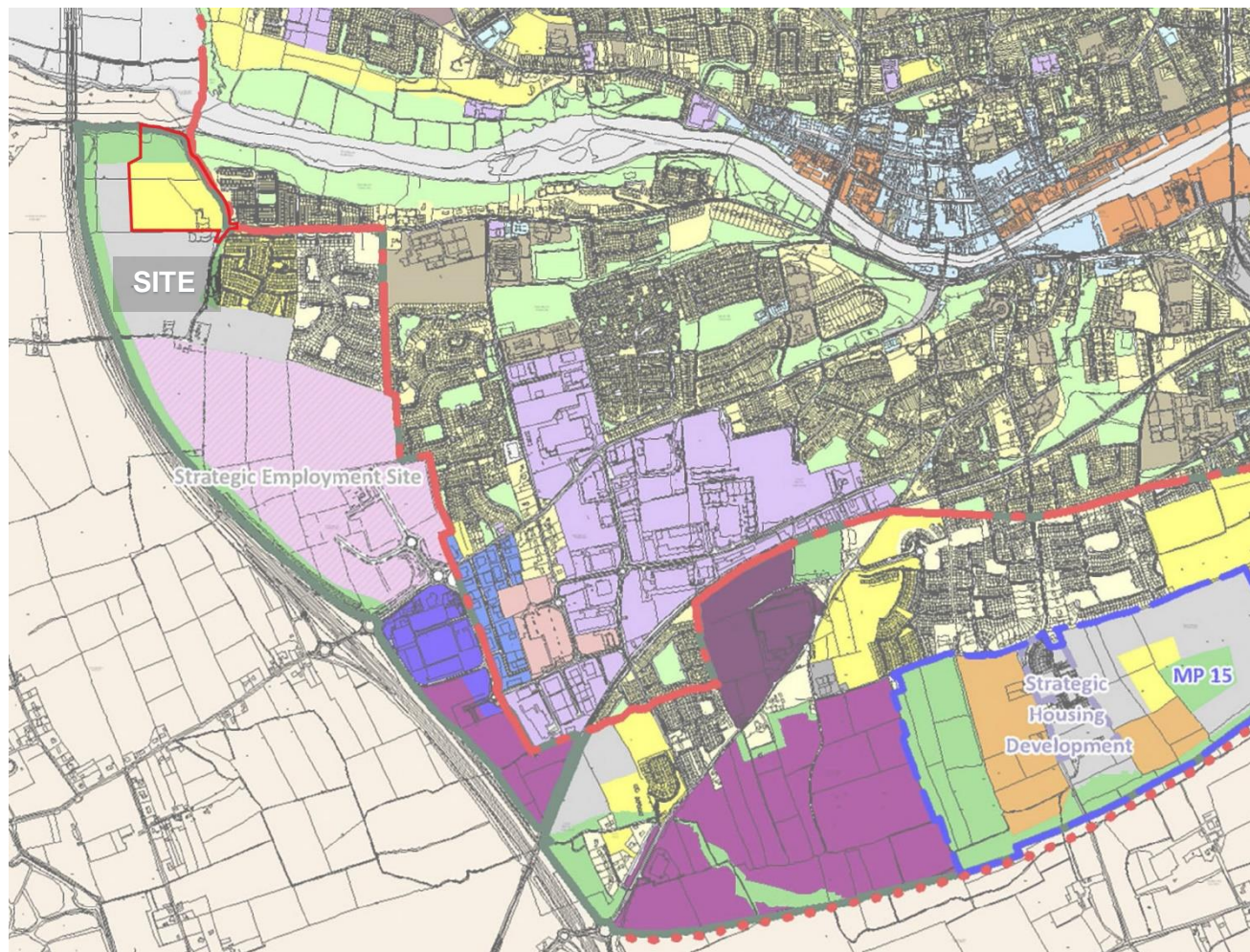


# PLANNING CONTEXT

## 4.1 MEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following section briefly outlines how the proposed development has been designed with regard to the objectives, guidance and standards set out in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. This section should be read in conjunction with the Planning Report prepared by Hughes Planning and Development Consultants Ltd., which discusses the relevant planning context in greater detail.

### 4.1.1 LAND USE ZONING OBJECTIVE



**Fig 4.1** South Environs of Drogheda - Combined Land Use Zoning Map. Subject site outlined in red.

The application site is subject to two zoning objectives. The majority of the site is zoned 'A2 - New Residential', the objective of which is to 'provide for new residential communities with ancillary community facilities, neighbourhood facilities as considered appropriate'. In line with this zoning objective, 249 dwellings and a creche are proposed on the 'A2' zoned section of the site.

The northern section of the site is zoned 'F1 - Open Space', the objective of which is to 'provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities'. In line with this zoning objective, the development includes provision of a large landscaped parkland area featuring two new pedestrian/cyclist connections to Rathmullan Road which will be subsequently ceded to Meath County Council.

### 4.1.2 DENSITY

For the purpose of calculating density, only the land zoned for residential development will be considered, which results in an effective site area of 6.92 hectares. The total number of dwellings proposed is 249, with a resultant density of **36 Units/Ha.**

This density falls within the range of 35–50 units/ha specified in the Compact Settlement Guidelines (2024) for Suburban/Urban Extension sites in Regional Growth Centres, such as Drogheda. While positioned towards the lower end of this scale, the proposed density is considered appropriate for this site, given its edge-of-town context, and transitional relationship with adjoining open lands.

Accordingly, the proposed density is consistent with both national policy guidance, and Section 11.5.3 and **DM OBJ 14** of the Meath County Development Plan, representing an efficient and contextually appropriate use of zoned residential land.

### 4.1.3 PLOT RATIO

The plot ratio for the proposed development is calculated by dividing the gross floor area (28066.6m<sup>2</sup>) by the site area (6.92 hectare) equalling a ratio of **0.4**. This is compliant with **DM OBJ 15** of the Development Plan, which specifies a maximum plot ratio of 1.0 for housing at edge of town locations.

### 4.1.4 SITE COVERAGE

The site coverage of the proposed development is 13696.3m<sup>2</sup>, or approximately **20%** of the 6.92 hectare site. This is compliant with **DM OBJ 16** of the Development plan, which specifies a maximum site coverage of 80%.

### 4.1.5 SEPARATION DISTANCES

Generally a minimum separation distance of 16m is maintained between houses/apartment blocks, in compliance with **DM OBJ 18** and **DM OBJ 19** of the Development Plan. In some circumstances at



# PLANNING CONTEXT

street corners, separation distances are reduced below 16m between side and rear elevations. In such circumstances, the side elevations are relatively 'closed' with only a few small openings into non-habitable rooms provided.

In compliance with **DM OBJ 21** a minimum distance of 2.3 metres is proposed to be provided between semi-detached and end-of-terrace dwellings.

## 4.1.6 DWELLING DESIGN, SIZE & MIX

The proposed mix is as follows:

|                     |     |     |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| 1 Bedroom Apartment | 38  | 15% |
| 2 Bedroom Apartment | 41  | 16% |
| 2 Bedroom House     | 37  | 15% |
| 3 Bedroom House     | 111 | 45% |
| 4 Bedroom House     | 22  | 9%  |

The mix proposed, including a significant number of smaller one bedroom and two bedroom dwellings, in addition to three bedroom and four bedroom dwellings, offers a range of attractive and appropriately located accommodation choices.

Dwellings have been designed with accessibility in mind, and all dwellings are in full compliance with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. Dwellings have been designed with the potential for long-term adaptability and flexibility, which allows for changes as residents' circumstances or accessibility needs alter.

Care has been taken in the detailed design of development to ensure all residents are afforded privacy within their dwellings and a high level of amenity both within the common areas of the site and within their individual dwellings. The buildings are proposed to be of solid masonry and concrete construction, with concrete block walls and, in apartment buildings, concrete floor slabs separating individual dwellings from each other. Internal partitions are proposed to be metal stud construction



Fig 4.2 Typical house design: Plans and elevations of House Type 3.6



# PLANNING CONTEXT

with acoustic insulation. This ensures that there is not excessive acoustic transmission between individual apartments, or between different rooms within the apartments, affording the residents a sufficient degree of privacy.

All dwellings in the development are provided with generous internal accommodation, which generally exceeds required minimum space provisions specified in the Meath County Development Plan and the Planning Design Standards for Apartments, 2025.

Each house is provided with an entrance porch, either recessed into the building or with a projecting canopy, to provide a degree of shelter from the weather. In most dwellings the main bedroom is provided with an en-suite bathroom, and in some of the larger houses a second bedroom is also provided with an en-suite. Storage spaces are distributed throughout the circulation areas, living spaces and bedrooms of the apartments, ensuring every dwelling is equipped with adequate storage provisions.

The architectural language takes cues from the suburban and rural edge setting, adopting a contemporary architectural language, with a palette of pitched roof forms, gable ends, and articulated massing that breaks down the scale of the buildings. Buildings are expressed through the use of high quality materials, finishes and detailing to contribute to a distinct character and sense of place for the proposed scheme.

The proposed development provides a high degree of connectivity between residential areas, open spaces and community amenities. Paths and walkways throughout the development are designed to be of sufficient width to allow for the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists, will be adequately overlooked and well lit, in accordance with **DM OBJ 22**.

In compliance with **DM OBJ 23** a detailed phasing plan has been submitted as part of the architectural drawing package, identifying the three no. proposed phases for construction of the development. All open space and infrastructure required to serve the dwellings of a given phase will be completed in full to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the succeeding phase.

In compliance with **DM OBJ 24** every house will be provided with an external wall mounted EV charging point, to serve their in-curtilage car parking space(s). Parking areas associated with the

duplexes, the apartment blocks, and the creche will be provided with the necessary wiring and ducting to be capable of accommodating future conversion to EV charging spaces, at a rate of at least 20% of the total no. of spaces, in accordance with **DM OBJ 94**.

## 4.1.7 BUILDING HEIGHT

In keeping with the existing suburban grain of the surrounding context to the east of the site, the prevailing height of the proposed development is two-storeys, consisting of pitched-roofed, gable-ended terraces and semi-detached houses. The proposed duplexes represent a modest increase in height, being three-storeys and featuring an occupied dormer roof at the second floor level. In addition, a series of carefully sited apartment blocks ranging from three to four storeys in height are proposed on corner sites and at prominent positions within the development. The increase in from the prevailing height of two storeys to three/four storeys in strategic locations is in compliance with **DM OBJ 25**, which requires proposed development in Drogheda environs to incorporate increased building heights.



**Fig 4.3** Apartment building of increased height near the entrance to the development.



# PLANNING CONTEXT



**Fig 4.4** Verified view from the Battle of the Boyne Viewpoint, Oldbridge, looking East

It should be noted that the site lies to the east of Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre. The M1 motorway, c. 200m west of the application site, marks the eastern boundary of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Buffer Zone. Given the importance and visual sensitivity of these sites, it was decided to limit the height of taller elements within the scheme to four stories. This strategy will minimise the visual impact of the scheme in particular on the Brú na Bóinne Buffer Zone. Please refer to Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Chris Shackleton Consulting for further details.

## 4.1.8 OPEN SPACE

In line with the guidance of 11.5.10 and 11.5.11 of the Development Plan, a variety of types and scales of public open spaces are provided at suitable locations and distributed throughout the proposed development. Public open spaces have been designed to cater for the active and passive

recreational needs of children and adults of all ages, accommodating walking, sitting, play, general recreation and providing visual amenity. Public open spaces have been distributed throughout the site to complement the residential layout, and to benefit from passive surveillance from overlooking by neighbouring housing.

**DM OBJ 26** requires that public open space just be provided for residential development at a minimum rate of 15% of the total site area. It is noted that any lands zoned 'F1 - Open Space' cannot be included as part of the 15%. In line with this objective, 1.17Ha of open space is provided on the lands zoned 'A2 - New Residential', representing approximately 17% of the 6.92Ha area subject to 'A2' zoning. The proposed development provides an additional 1.68Ha of public open space to the northern end of the site, which is zoned 'F1 - Open Space'. This area of open space is to be named the Boyne Valley Park, and features two new pedestrian/cyclist connections to Rathmullan Road. It is proposed that the park will subsequently be ceded to Meath County Council.

Houses within the scheme are provided with high quality private amenity spaces which meet and in most cases exceed the minimum requirements specified in **DM POL 7** and Table 11.1 of the Development Plan.

## 4.1.9 BOUNDARIES

All boundary treatments within the proposed development are to be high quality, durable and secure, in compliance with **DM POL 8**. Existing mature hedgerows positioned on the eastern and northern boundaries are to be retained where appropriate, in compliance with **DM POL 9**.

Rear and side garden walls are to be constructed in rendered concrete block, and are to be a minimum of 1.8m high, in accordance with **DM OBJ 29**. It is proposed to provide 'open plan front gardens' which generally do not feature boundary walls or fences in front of the building line. **DM OBJ 30** notes that 'open plan front gardens' are acceptable where a high level of safety is achieved, as is the case in the proposed development, where all front gardens and public paths/roads benefit from a high degree of passive surveillance.

## 4.1.10 ART WORK

In compliance with **DM OBJ 38** the applicant is willing to install a work of public art within the proposed Boyne Valley Park, or to make a financial contribution to the Local Authority to provide the artwork themselves, should this be the Council's preference.



# PLANNING CONTEXT

## 4.1.11 LIGHT AND OVERSHADOWING

None of the houses or apartments within the development are single aspect. The majority benefit from a dual aspect, and many dwellings benefit from a triple aspect. In compliance with **DM POL 11**, the design of the proposed dwellings maximises the use of natural daylight and sunlight, with well positioned and generously sized windows ensuring excellent daylight penetration into all habitable rooms. Each apartment within the scheme is arranged so that the main living space receives direct sunlight for a significant portion of the day. For more details please refer to the Daylight and Sunlight Analysis prepared by Chris Shackleton Consulting.

## 4.1.12 APARTMENTS

The proposed development includes a total of 79 apartments, accommodated in four no. duplex blocks (accommodating a total of 16 no. one-bedroom units and 16 no. two-bedroom units), and eleven no. apartment blocks (accommodating a total of 22 no. one-bedroom units and 25 no. two-bedroom units). This is in accordance with **DM POL 12** which notes that apartment schemes will be encouraged in appropriate, sustainable, accessible locations within the Drogheda environs.

**DM POL 14** notes that all planning applications which feature apartments are required to demonstrate compliance with 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments'. Please see Section 4.2 of this report for details of compliance with the Apartment Design Standards.

In compliance with **DM OBJ 39** an appropriate mix of apartment types and sizes are provided. In total, 38 no. one-bedroom units (48%) and 41 no. two-bedroom units (52%) are provided. Most apartments are dual aspect, with some being triple aspect. No single aspect apartments are proposed. Private amenity areas, room areas, and room widths in the proposed apartments are fully compliant with the requirements of the Apartment Design Standards. All apartments and duplexes are provided with an area of communal open space, proximate to the building entrances, which meets or is in excess of the minimum communal open space requirements specified in the Apartment Design Standards.

Apartments are provided with car parking at a rate of one space per dwelling. No visitor car parking is proposed. Parking areas associated with the duplexes and the apartment blocks will be provided with the necessary wiring and ducting to be capable of accommodating future conversion to EV charging spaces, at a rate of at least 20% of the total no. of spaces, in accordance with **DM OBJ 94**. Secure resident bicycle parking is provided at a rate of one space per bedroom.



**Fig 4.5** Typical four-storey apartment block



# PLANNING CONTEXT

Visitor bike parking is provided at a rate of one space per two units. All bicycle and car parking is conveniently located proximate to building entrances.

All apartments in the duplex blocks are own door units, with the upper floor units featuring a private internal staircase immediately inside the unit entrance. In the three and four-storey apartment blocks, ground floor units are own door units, and upper floor units are accessed from a shared common stairway. In the four-storey apartment blocks, two duplex units, each with an internal private staircase, are proposed at the second and third floor levels. No lifts are proposed within the apartment blocks, in compliance with Section 1.3.4.1.1(c) and Section 3 of Technical Guidance Document M 2022.

Please see Section 4.2 of this report for further details on compliance with the Apartment Design Standards.

## 4.1.13 WASTE MANAGEMENT

Every dwelling is to be provided with a dedicated three bin domestic waste storage area, to be incorporated into the kitchen area. This enables easy management and storage of waste within the dwellings. Apartment and duplex blocks are provided with bin stores, conveniently located proximate to the building entrances, in compliance with **DM OBJ 53** and **DM OBJ 54**.

All houses are to be provided with three typically sized domestic wheelie bins to be stored externally. For houses with external access to the rear garden (Semi-detached and end-of-terrace dwellings), bins will be stored in the rear gardens. For mid-terrace houses, bins are to be stored in their front gardens, and they are provided with bin enclosures to store the bins securely and screen them from view, in compliance with **DM OBJ 52**. On collection day bins will be positioned in front of the houses by residents for collection.

## 4.1.14 SAFE AND SECURE DESIGN

The proposed development has been designed in accordance with the principles set out in Section 11.5.30 of the Meath County Development Plan, with the aim of creating a safe and secure residential environment through passive surveillance, clear spatial definition, and high-quality public realm design.

All homes are oriented to provide active frontage onto streets and open spaces, ensuring natural surveillance of public and communal areas. Apartment and duplex blocks are arranged to overlook

streets and public or communal amenity spaces, while houses feature front-facing windows and entrances that engage directly with the public realm. Blank gables and recessed entrances have been avoided, and building edges are animated with windows and architectural detailing to prevent the creation of blind spots or visually inactive areas.

The layout ensures that all pedestrian and cycle routes are legible, direct, and well-overlooked, with lighting and visibility incorporated into their design. Parking areas are broken into smaller clusters and positioned within sight of dwellings to support passive monitoring. Private gardens are located back-to-back wherever possible, and clear distinctions are established between private, communal, and public open space through robust boundary treatments, landscaping, and surface materials.

Residual or leftover spaces have been eliminated through efficient and purposeful site planning, and the proposed landscaping strategy avoids the use of dense or fast-growing planting in areas where visibility or lighting could be compromised. Materials specified for shared surfaces, street furniture, and hard landscaping are durable and vandal-resistant, supporting long-term safety and maintenance.

## 4.1.15 CAR PARKING

Section 9 and Table 11.2 of the Development Plan set out a maximum parking provision of 2 spaces per unit for residential developments at intermediate and peripheral locations. In accordance with this, parking is proposed to be provided at a rate of 1 space per each apartment, 1 space per two-bedroom house, and 2 spaces per each three-bedroom and four-bedroom house.

Car parking for the houses is provided in curtilage, in accordance with **DM OBJ 93**. Parking for duplex is provided in groups of two, each serving one ground floor unit and one upper floor unit, and located proximate to the unit entrances. Parking areas for apartments are provided in small informal groups overlooked by residential units, in accordance with **DM OBJ 93**.

The creche is provided with 8 parking spaces.

Communal parking areas associated with the duplexes, the apartment blocks and the creche will be provided with the necessary wiring and ducting to be capable of accommodating future conversion to EV charging spaces, at a rate of at least 20% of the total no. of spaces, in accordance with **DM OBJ 94**. Every house will be provided with an external wall mounted EV charging point to serve their in-curtilage car parking space(s).



# PLANNING CONTEXT

In communal parking areas associated with the apartment blocks and the creche, accessible car parking spaces will be provided at a minimum rate of 5%. At least one accessible space is provided for the creche and for each apartment block. Where accessible spaces are provided, they are located proximate to the building entrances. Accessible spaces will be in compliance with the relevant provisions of Part M of the Building Regulations.

## 4.1.16 CYCLE PARKING

Section 9.3 and Table 11.4 of the Development Plan set out a minimum cycle parking provision of one space per bedroom and one visitor space per two dwellings. Resident cycle parking for apartments and duplexes is provided in communal, secure and easy to access purpose built bike stores, located proximate to building entrances, in accordance with **DM OBJ 97** and **SPPR 4** of the Compact Settlement Guidelines. Visitor parking for apartments and duplexes is provided in Sheffield stands. 10 no. cycle parking spaces associated with the creche are provided in Sheffield stands, located proximate to the building entrance. Cycle parking for houses is proposed to be accommodated in their private rear gardens.

## 4.2 APARTMENT DESIGN STANDARDS

All apartments and duplexes in the proposed development have been designed in accordance with the Specific Planning Policy Requirements outlined in the *Planning Design Standards for Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2025m* and in full compliance with the required minimum floor areas and standards set out in Appendix 1 of the 2025 Apartment Design Standards.

### 4.2.1 UNIT MIX

SPPR 1 states that housing developments may include up to 50% one bedroom or studio type units (with no more than 20-25% of the total proposed development as studios) and there shall be no minimum requirement for apartments with three or more bedrooms.

In accordance with SPPR 1, the proposed unit mix of the apartments is as follows:

|            |    |     |
|------------|----|-----|
| 1 Bed Unit | 38 | 48% |
| 2 Bed Unit | 41 | 52% |
| TOTAL      | 79 |     |

### 4.2.2 UNIT SIZE

SPPR 3 sets out the minimum floor areas for apartments, with 45m<sup>2</sup> being the minimum for a 1 Bed Unit, 73m<sup>2</sup> being the minimum for a 2 Bed. Every apartment in the proposed development will exceed the minimum apartment sizes, with 68 of the 79 units exceeding minimums by 10% or more.

### 4.2.3 ASPECT

SPPR 4 requires that a minimum of 50% of apartments in suburban locations should be dual aspect. 76 no. units in the proposed development are dual aspect (96%), and 3 no. units (4%) are triple aspect. There are no single aspect units proposed.

### 4.2.4 FLOOR-TO-CEILING HEIGHT

SPPR 5 requires minimum floor-to-ceiling heights of 2.7m for ground-floor residential units and 2.4m for upper floors. The apartment blocks propose 2.8m on all floors except the top, where 2.6m is provided. In the duplex blocks, heights are 2.8m at ground, 2.66m at first, and 2.475m at second floor.

### 4.2.5 STORAGE

Appendix 1 of *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments* outlines minimum storage requirements for apartments. Proposed storage provision is outlined below:

| UNIT TYPE  | MINIMUM         | PROVISION            |
|------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1 Bed Unit | 3m <sup>2</sup> | 3-5m <sup>2</sup>    |
| 2 Bed Unit | 6m <sup>2</sup> | 6-10.8m <sup>2</sup> |

### 4.2.6 PRIVATE AMENITY SPACE

Appendix 1 of *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments* outlines minimum private amenity space requirements for apartments. Proposed amenity provision is outlined below:

| UNIT TYPE  | MINIMUM         | PROVISION            |
|------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1 Bed Unit | 5m <sup>2</sup> | 5-6.7m <sup>2</sup>  |
| 2 Bed Unit | 7m <sup>2</sup> | 7-14.6m <sup>2</sup> |



# PLANNING CONTEXT



Fig 4.6 Typical four-storey apartment block

## 4.2.7 COMMUNAL AMENITY SPACE

Appendix 1 of *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments* outlines minimum communal amenity space requirements for apartments. Required minimum communal amenity provision for each block type is as follows:

| APARTMENT BLOCK A1/A2 |                 |                            |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| UNIT TYPE             | MINIMUM/UNIT    | REQUIREMENT                |
| 1 Bed Unit            | 5m <sup>2</sup> | 2 x 5 = 10m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 2 Bed Unit            | 7m <sup>2</sup> | 2 x 7 = 14m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Total Required        |                 | 24m <sup>2</sup>           |
| APARTMENT BLOCK A3    |                 |                            |
| UNIT TYPE             | MINIMUM/UNIT    | REQUIREMENT                |
| 1 Bed Unit            | 5m <sup>2</sup> | 2 x 5 = 10m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 2 Bed Unit            | 7m <sup>2</sup> | 3 x 7 = 21m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Total Required        |                 | 31m <sup>2</sup>           |
| DUPLEX BLOCKS         |                 |                            |
| UNIT TYPE             | MINIMUM/UNIT    | REQUIREMENT                |
| 1 Bed Unit            | 5m <sup>2</sup> | 16 x 5 = 80m <sup>2</sup>  |
| 2 Bed Unit            | 7m <sup>2</sup> | 16 x 7 = 112m <sup>2</sup> |
| Total Required        |                 | 192m <sup>2</sup>          |



# PLANNING CONTEXT

## 4.3 COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES

The proposed development has been designed with close reference to the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities. These guidelines provide national planning policy and guidance focused on sustainable residential development and the creation of compact settlements.

The proposal aligns with the overarching objectives of the Compact Settlement Guidelines by supporting the delivery of sustainable, compact residential growth within the built-up footprint of Drogheda, which is one of Ireland’s designated Regional Growth Centres under the National Planning Framework.

The development represents an efficient use of zoned land at the edge of the existing town, offering a well-integrated urban extension. It contributes meaningfully to the national objective of compact growth by concentrating a mix of housing typologies, ranging from terraced houses and duplexes to apartment buildings, on a site that is proximate to existing public infrastructure, including schools, shops, and public transport links. The site’s location supports ease of access to services, reducing the need for long commutes and private car dependency, in line with the sustainable development principles promoted in the Guidelines.

The scheme also advances objectives relating to placemaking, environmental quality, and social inclusion through the delivery of high-quality public realm, passive surveillance, and a strong emphasis on green infrastructure. It retains and reinforces existing natural features where appropriate and introduces new green corridors, open spaces, and pedestrian/cycle connections that support biodiversity and active travel.

### 4.3.1 SEPARATION DISTANCES

SPPR 1 of the Compact Settlement Guidelines state that minimum separation distances between opposing windows serving habitable rooms must be 16 metres. The proposed development is compliant with this requirement, and a separation distance of at least 16m is maintained between any opposing windows serving habitable rooms. In some circumstances at street corners, separation distances are reduced below 16m between side and rear elevations. In such circumstances, the side elevations are relatively ‘closed’ with only a few small openings into non-habitable rooms provided.

### 4.3.2 MINIMUM PRIVATE OPEN SPACE STANDARDS FOR HOUSES

SPPR 2 of the Compact Settlement Guidelines outlines minimum private amenity space requirements for houses. Houses within the scheme are provided with high quality private amenity spaces which meet and in most cases exceed the minimum requirements. Proposed amenity provision is outlined below:

| UNIT TYPE       | MIN REQUIREMENT | PROVISION     |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 2 Bedroom House | 30m2            | 35.2-91.1m2   |
| 3 Bedroom House | 40m2            | 46.3-142.3m2  |
| 4 Bedroom House | 50m2            | 54.9-151.92m2 |

### 4.3.3 CAR PARKING

SPPR 3 of the Compact Settlement Guidelines specifies that in intermediate locations the maximum rate of car parking provision shall be 2 no. spaces per dwelling. For the proposed development, this would be a maximum car parking provision of 498 resident car parking spaces. The Compact Settlement Guidelines note that, where the proposed car parking provision is near the maximum allowable provision, the applicant will be required to provide a rationale and justification for the quantum of parking proposed. The total number of car parking spaces proposed is 382, which is significantly lower than the maximum car parking provision. Car parking spaces are provided at a rate of one space per apartment, one space per two-bedroom house, and two spaces per three-bedroom and four-bedroom houses.

### 4.3.4 CYCLE PARKING AND STORAGE

The proposed development is fully compliant with SPPR 4 of the Compact Settlement Guidelines, which notes that, for all residential units that do not have ground floor level private amenity space of sufficient size, 1 secure cycle parking space per bedroom should be provided. All apartments are provided with secure bicycle parking spaces, which are located in communal, purpose built facilities conveniently located proximate to building entrances.



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS

## 5.1 KEY INDICATORS OF QUALITY URBAN DESIGN AND PLACEMAKING

Appendix D of the Compact Settlement Guidelines provides a checklist of 4 'Key Indicators of Quality Urban Design & Placemaking'. These indicators reflect the core principles of good urban design and placemaking, and are intended to support compact growth through context-sensitive, high-quality development. The proceeding section will discuss the proposed development in detail, with reference to these 4 Key Indicators.

## 5.2 SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT

The Compact Settlement Guidelines prioritise development that supports walking, cycling, and public transport over private car use. This is achieved by creating accessible, legible environments with reduced car dominance and improved connectivity to key destinations and transit infrastructure.

The proposed development is strongly aligned with the principles of sustainable and efficient movement as outlined in the Compact Settlement Guidelines. A highly permeable and legible street network has been established, prioritising active travel and public transport use. The layout provides multiple connections to Rathmullan Road, including the primary access point and two direct and convenient pedestrian and cyclist dedicated links through the newly proposed Boyne Valley Park, enhancing access to the River Boyne and the greenway. These connections serve to integrate the development with existing and future local amenities, while promoting walking and cycling as viable everyday modes of transport.

Internally, the street hierarchy has been developed in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS). The primary route into the development is designed as a Link Street, transitioning into a network of Local Streets that prioritise low vehicle speeds, safety, and a comfortable environment for vulnerable road users. These streets are reduced in size and envisioned as places instead of thoroughfares, prioritising a liveable environment with low traffic volumes.

In line with the guidance of the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (DMURS) traffic calming measures, such as a narrow carriageway, street trees, and a variety of paving finishes, help to slow traffic movements. Raised kerbs junctions are used to maintain a smooth, pedestrian-friendly experience.



Fig 5.1 Roads Masterplan



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS



**Fig 5.2** The primary route into the development is designed as a Link Street

Parking is generally proposed to be ‘in-curtilage’ which allows for a narrower carriageway and street width, reducing traffic speeds & enhancing the sense of enclosure. The street’s width-to-height ratio provides a strong suburban character and supports pedestrian activity through passive surveillance. The scale of the buildings is carefully considered to align with the sequence and hierarchy of the spaces, ensuring a balanced and integrated layout.

The site benefits from proximity to existing public transport infrastructure, located approximately 350 metres from a local bus stop offering direct services to Drogheda town centre. In addition, MacBride Train Station and Drogheda Bus Station, located 3.7 km and 2.5 km away respectively, provide access to high-frequency, high-capacity regional public transport services, including connections to Dublin and Belfast. This level of accessibility reinforces the site’s potential to support sustainable travel behaviours and reduce reliance on private cars.

Car parking is provided in line with the Compact Settlement Guidelines minimum requirements and is carefully integrated into the layout to avoid domination of the public realm. Opportunities to reduce long-term car dependency have been supported through the compact layout with access to green infrastructure, connectivity to public transport, and emphasis on walkable distances to key services and amenities.

Additionally, as noted previously, the site layout incorporates logical access points and route alignments that would enable seamless expansion and integration into the adjoining lands to the south and east, should these lands be zoned for residential use.

Overall, the movement strategy ensures that the development is future-proofed, inclusive, and sustainable—creating a safe and connected neighbourhood that supports a healthy and active lifestyle.



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS



**Fig 5.3** The majority of routes within the development are designed as Local Streets that prioritise low vehicle speeds, safety, and a comfortable environment for vulnerable road users



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS

## 5.3 MIX OF LAND USES

The Compact Settlement Guidelines promote development that supports vibrant, liveable communities through appropriate land use intensity, housing diversity, and regeneration of underutilised sites. The proposed amendments align closely with these aims.

The proposed development delivers a thoughtfully balanced mix of land uses and housing typologies, supporting the creation of a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable residential neighbourhood. While primarily residential in nature, the scheme integrates key community and recreational infrastructure, including a significant area of publicly accessible open space in the form of Boyne Valley Park and a purpose-built creche facility at the heart of the scheme, providing valuable community uses that supports family life and enables greater convenience and local living. These local community facilities are positioned for ease of access on foot or by bike, with dedicated parking and an external play area integrated into the surrounding open space network.

The residential mix is carefully calibrated to reflect both current and projected local housing demand, offering a broad range of unit types including two-, three-, and four-bedroom houses, and one- and two-bedroom duplexes apartments. This variety of dwelling types caters to a wide spectrum of household types, from first-time buyers, families, single-person households, older residents, and those with mobility needs. Notably, 38 units within the development are designed as Universal Design Homes, fully compliant with the relevant guidance of *Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland (2015)*. These units provide enhanced accessibility and adaptability. Please see *Appendix 2 – Universal Design Statement* for further details on these units.

While the site is not within an existing town centre, the proposed development supports the urban consolidation of Drogheda by intensifying residential use on zoned lands within the built-up area and establishing a new community with strong physical and visual connections to nearby amenities, transport links, and recreational assets. The development’s compact form, housing diversity, and embedded community infrastructure support the emergence of a socially resilient and mixed community over time. Importantly, the proposal aligns with Drogheda’s role as a designated Regional Growth Centre, contributing to the targeted delivery of housing and community infrastructure in a location identified for sustainable expansion at both regional and national levels.



Fig 5.4 Plans, section and elevation of proposed crèche.



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS

## 5.4 GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Compact Settlement Guidelines emphasise the integration of green and blue infrastructure into urban development, promoting design that responds to natural features, enhances ecological networks, and delivers accessible, high-quality open space. Developments should also incorporate nature-based drainage solutions and protect key landscape and heritage assets.

The proposed development incorporates a carefully considered and layered approach to green and blue infrastructure, designed to deliver a high-quality living environment that enhances residential amenity, supports ecological value, and contributes to the overall placemaking strategy of the scheme. The landscape and urban design approach recognises the site's natural softly undulating topography, and has been designed to maintain its natural elevation and contouring. With the exception of the main entrance, where level changes are more significant, re-leveling or extensive ground works have been kept to a minimum. At the entrance to the site, a carefully designed sequence of terraced landscape interventions mediates the change in level and announces the scheme with a distinctive identity. This area is framed by retaining walls, paths, planting, and street trees, creating a high-quality landscaped vista along Rathmullan Road and providing a strong sense of arrival.

Green infrastructure is integrated throughout the site in the form of tree-lined streets, pocket parks, landscaped green corridors, and communal green areas within residential blocks. These spaces are universally accessible and distributed to ensure that every dwelling is located within a short walking distance of high-quality open space. Play areas, informal recreation spaces, and seating areas are embedded into these green areas to encourage social interaction, healthy lifestyles, and a strong sense of community. Across the development, the layout ensures that all public spaces benefit from passive surveillance from adjacent dwellings and apartments, enhancing safety and reinforcing a sense of ownership among residents. Open spaces and streets have been arranged to maximise exposure to daylight and sunlight, improving comfort and usability throughout the year.

A comprehensive landscape strategy, prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds, accompanies the application and provides detailed proposals for planting, surface materials, play equipment, and ecological integration. The landscape design enhances the site's urban structure and complements the architectural character of the scheme through the use of planting to frame spaces, establish identity, and support biodiversity and amenity.

Existing trees and hedgerows are retained where feasible—particularly at boundaries and along linear parkways—to preserve ecological value and visual character. These are supplemented by extensive new tree and shrub planting, which contributes to microclimate comfort, biodiversity, and privacy, especially at ground-floor dwellings and along prominent gable elevations. Shrub planting in front of terraces and enhanced gables creates defensible space and adds texture to the streetscape.

Play and recreation are integral to the landscape strategy. In addition to formal play areas provided with fixed play equipment (see Landscape Design Strategy for full schedule), the woodland edges and natural contours of the site support imaginative, nature-based play. The landscape plan also ensures that all open spaces are fully accessible—designed to meet the needs of all users, including people with disabilities, elderly residents, and families with young children.

A Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) is embedded into the green infrastructure strategy, including swales, rain gardens, and other attenuation features that are integrated seamlessly into landscaped areas. These nature-based solutions manage runoff and improve water quality while supporting biodiversity and seasonal interest in the landscape. Please refer to the Floor Risk Assessment prepared by Waterman Moylan.



**Fig 5.5** Central landscaped square.



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS



Fig 5.6 Character Areas Plan

The landscape and public realm strategy is structured around four distinctive Character Areas, each of which contributes to the identity and functionality of the development:

- **Boyne Valley Parklands**

Located at the northern end of the site, this substantial area of public open space slopes gently toward the mature woodland edge of the River Boyne. The park is characterised by its open views to the Mary McAleese Bridge and its integration with the surrounding natural landscape. Two new pedestrian and cyclist links connect the park to Rathmullan Road, enhancing permeability. This area is intended to be ceded to Meath County Council as a public amenity and provides opportunities for recreation, ecological enhancement, and play.

**The Green**

This central residential area is structured around a formal green spine, defined by a broad boulevard with framed views toward the bridge. Housing and apartment units address the green directly, providing passive surveillance and a sense of enclosure. At the centre of this character area is a landscaped square, framed on four sides by housing. Pedestrian routes connect this space to the wider open space network, and to the Boyne Valley Park to the north.

**The West Field**

Slightly denser in built form, this area contains a mix of houses, duplex buildings, two apartment blocks, and a purpose-built creche. A series of green buffers, trees, and soft landscaping reinforce the more urban scale while offering amenity space for residents and visual relief from building massing. A linear park is provided, framed by the terraces of duplex buildings, and connected to the Boyne Valley Park. The creche is integrated into its setting with safe, landscaped access and outdoor play space.

**Central Park**

Located at the southwestern corner of the site, this area features a mix of apartment buildings and two-storey housing. This part of the scheme has been designed to enable potential future connectivity to the adjoining 'White Lands' to the west and south should they be zoned for residential use in a future Development Plan, supporting long-term integration and expansion. Landscaped green fingers and potential future routes support flexibility and cohesion.

- Throughout the development, the arrangement of buildings around public space ensures strong passive surveillance, supporting safety, ownership, and the social value of the shared environment. Street trees, planting buffers, and carefully scaled spaces contribute to a public realm that is not only ecologically functional but also visually attractive, socially inclusive, and locally distinctive.



## COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS



**Fig 5.7** Green infrastructure is integrated throughout the site in the form of tree-lined streets, pocket parks, and landscaped green corridors.



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS

## 5.5 RESPONSIVE BUILT FORM

The Compact Settlement Guidelines advocate for development that delivers a legible and coherent urban structure, activates public and communal spaces, integrates sensitively within its context, and presents a consistent, high-quality architectural language.

The proposed development demonstrates a strong alignment with the principles of responsive built form, as outlined in the Compact Settlement Guidelines. The scheme has been structured to create a coherent, legible, and contextually sensitive residential neighbourhood, where the relationship between buildings, streets, and open spaces is carefully calibrated to deliver a high-quality and enduring urban environment.

At the macro scale, the layout is informed by a clear hierarchy of streets and public spaces, supporting intuitive wayfinding, community interaction, and a varied townscape character. The primary access route is aligned centrally through the site, linking a sequence of well-defined public spaces, while a network of local streets and pedestrian routes establish a permeable and fine-grained structure. This spatial hierarchy ensures that the development feels navigable, secure and coherent, with built form and landscape working together to support legibility and placemaking.

The orientation of streets and public spaces has been designed to maximise connections to the wider landscape, including framed views of the Mary McAleese Bridge, the River Boyne corridor, and the surrounding countryside to the north and west. These visual connections support a sense of place and reinforce the site's relationship to its wider setting.

The layout responds directly to the existing softly undulating topography, using it as a positive structuring element. Subtle level changes across the site have informed building placement and orientation, allowing for a natural variation in height and roofline, particularly where stepped building groups respond to gradients. This in turn creates interest and rhythm along streetscapes and ensures that the overall massing remains appropriately scaled, avoiding excessive uniformity or monotony.

The scale and massing strategy reinforces this logic. The prevailing height across the development is two storeys, consistent with the suburban context. However, increased height is introduced selectively through the inclusion of three- and four-storey apartment buildings, located at key nodes such as open space edges, corners, and arrival points. These taller elements are carefully integrated into the

urban fabric, with stepped massing, and articulated façades, providing variety while ensuring a seamless transition between scales.

Architecturally, the scheme adopts a contemporary but contextually informed design language, drawing on local typologies while expressing them in a clean, restrained manner. Pitched roofs, gable-ended forms, and simple volumetric expressions characterise the buildings throughout the scheme, creating a unified but varied architectural identity. This approach ensures that the built form integrates naturally into its suburban edge context while maintaining a distinctive presence.

Material selection has been approached with care to ensure durability, quality, and character. Three multi-brick tones—a red multi-brick, a buff multi-brick, and a cream multi-brick—form the primary cladding material for public-facing elevations. These bricks offer a subtle variety of tone and texture, bringing visual richness and depth to façades. A projecting brick head detail is used selectively to provide articulation, compositional balance, further depth and a tactile quality. Render finishes, limited to side and rear elevations, provide contrast to the brick finishes.

Window frames and metal balcony balustrades are proposed in a dark grey finish, complementing dark grey roof tiles and reinforcing a calm and consistent secondary palette. Elevation compositions are defined by a balance of solid and void, with openings proportioned to support legibility and visual interest while maintaining privacy and natural light. The result is a calm, ordered streetscape with sufficient variation in detail and massing to support identity and visual engagement.

Hard landscaping materials have also been selected with a focus on longevity, usability, and visual quality. Paving, kerbs, and street furniture will be constructed using robust, attractive finishes suited to both residential and civic environments, contributing to the development's overall sense of permanence and care in execution.

In summary, the proposed development delivers a responsive, high-quality built form that is grounded in site-specific conditions, local character, and sound urban design principles. By shaping the layout and massing to the landscape, articulating the built form with care and consistency, and using materials that support longevity and identity, the scheme establishes a distinctive and enduring architectural character that contributes positively to the urban fabric of Drogheda.



# COMPACT SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES / KEY INDICATORS



**Fig 5.8** Pitched roofs, gable-ended forms, and simple volumetric expressions characterise the buildings throughout the scheme, creating a unified but varied architectural identity.



# URBAN DESIGN MANUAL

## 6.1 12 CRITERIA

The proposed development has been designed in accordance with the guidance of the Urban Design Manual: Best Practice Guide (2009). The guide contains advice on creating well-designed and sustainable neighbourhood, and provides guidance for the assessment of proposed residential developments with regard to 12 urban design criteria.

In accordance with Section 11.5.2 and **DM OBJ 13** of the Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027, the following section will outline how the proposed development complies with the 12 Criteria identified in the Urban Design Manual.

These criteria continue to provide a useful framework for assessing quality in new residential development and align closely with the principles set out in the more recently published Compact Settlement Guidelines. As much of the relevant content has already been addressed in Section 5 of this statement under the Compact Settlement Guidelines' Key Indicators of Quality Urban Design & Placemaking, this section will provide a brief summary of how the scheme performs against each of the 12 Criteria identified in the Urban Design Manual

### 6.1.1 CONTEXT

The development responds sensitively to its suburban edge-of-town context, with a medium-density layout, low- to mid-rise building heights, and a mix of pitched-roof and gable-ended forms. Internal streets are designed in accordance with DMURS, balancing vehicular access with attractive pedestrian environments. The scheme takes advantage of the site's topography to frame views towards the Mary McAleese Bridge and River Boyne, while strengthening green connections to surrounding landscapes.

*Refer to Sections 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 5.2 and 5.5.*

### 6.1.2 CONNECTIONS

A highly permeable layout is proposed, including new vehicular, cyclist, and pedestrian links to Rathmullan Road and the adjacent Boyne Valley Park, with potential future connectivity to adjoining White Lands. The site is well serviced, with good access to amenities and existing quality public transport infrastructure.

*Refer to Sections 2.3, 2.4, 3.4, and 5.2.*

### 6.1.3 INCLUSIVITY

The development accommodates a wide variety of residents through a diverse housing mix and accessible public realm. All dwellings and their environs are compliant with the requirements of Technical Guidance Document M – Access and Use (2002). In addition, 38 dwellings are designed as Universal Design Homes, in full compliance with Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland (2015), ensuring long-term adaptability and accessibility..

*Refer to Section 5.3 and Appendix 1.*

### 6.1.4 VARIETY

A diversity of housing types is complemented by community facilities including a crèche, high-quality public open space, and the delivery of the new Boyne Valley Park. This mix ensures an active, balanced, and sustainable neighbourhood.

*Refer to Sections 4.1.6, 4.2.1 5.3, and 5.4.*

### 6.1.5 EFFICIENCY

The scheme achieves a net residential density of 36 units/ha, appropriate for a Regional Growth Centre and in line with the Compact Settlement Guidelines. Efficient use of serviced, zoned land is combined with provision of integrated recycling and waste facilities, supporting sustainable resource use.

*Refer to Sections 4.1.2, 4.1.13, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.*

### 6.1.6 DISTINCTIVENESS

A strong sense of place is created through the integration of varied building forms, articulated massing, and carefully chosen materials (two complementary brick tones, render, and dark tiled pitched roofs). Landscape-led design further reinforces identity and placemaking across the development.

*Refer to Sections 4.1.6, 5.4 and 5.5.*

### 6.1.7 LAYOUT

A clear hierarchy of streets, ranging from a primary link street to smaller local streets, creates legibility and safe, people-friendly environments. Central and peripheral open spaces are well overlooked,



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ensuring passive surveillance. The layout encourage active travel, and also allows for potential future connectivity into adjoining lands.

*Refer to Sections 4.1.8, 4.1.14, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.*

## 6.1.8 PUBLIC REALM

High-quality open spaces — including a central landscaped green, smaller pocket parks, and the new Boyne Valley Park — provide amenity, biodiversity, and recreation opportunities. Spaces are overlooked by dwellings for safety and ownership, and high quality landscaping materials and finishes are selected for durability and attractiveness.

*Refer to Sections 4.1.8, 4.1.9, 4.1.14 and 5.4*

## 6.1.9 ADAPTABILITY

Homes are designed with flexible internal layouts and comply with accessibility standards. The layout supports future connectivity and potential expansion into adjacent zoned lands. 38 dwellings are designed as Universal Design Homes, and are particularly adaptable to residents changing needs.

*Refer to Sections 3.4, 4.1.6, and Appendix 1.*

## 6.1.10 PRIVACY AND AMENITY

Minimum separation distances are maintained, private amenity spaces exceed standards, and apartments are dual or triple aspect. Overlooking of streets and communal areas enhances safety, while orientation and site layout ensure good access to sunlight and daylight.

*Refer to Sections 4.1.5, 4.1.6, 4.1.8, 4.1.12, 4.2, 4.3 and 5.5.*

## 6.1.11 PARKING

Car parking is integrated within the site in-curtilage for houses and in small, overlooked clusters for apartments, ensuring security and visual integration. Cycle parking is also provided throughout the development. The proposed parking provision supports EV-readiness.

*Refer to Section 4.1.15, 4.1.16, 4.3.3, 4.3.4 and 5.2*

## 6.1.12 DETAILED DESIGN

A consistent architectural language of pitched roofs, brick and render finishes, and well-proportioned openings ensures a durable and attractive built environment. Landscape and streetscape design reinforce quality and identity.

*Refer to Sections 4.1.6, 5.5 and 5.4.*



**Fig 6.1** Front and side elevations of three and four storey apartment buildings.



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**Fig 6.2** An architectural language of pitched roofs, varied heights, brick and render finishes, and well-proportioned openings ensures a durable and attractive built environment.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1. UNIVERSAL DESIGN STATEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

The following Universal Design Statement addresses the accessibility and inclusivity of the proposed development. It is critical to the success of any proposed development that it accommodates building users with a full range of mobility abilities and enables them to navigate the buildings and their environs easily and independently.

The proposed development has been designed with close adherence to the guidance of Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use (2022) to ensure the proposal meets the aspirations and needs of a wide range of people and households, and to ensure the development complies with the statutory requirements of Part M of the Second Schedule of the Building Regulations (as amended).

### APPROACH ACCESS

All pedestrian access routes into and around the site's public and communal spaces are either level or gently sloping, are sufficiently wide and are free from obstructions, in compliance with the guidance of Section 1.1 of TGD M. This ensures residents or visitors with a range of mobility issues can navigate the site independently.

Public and communal spaces are clearly identifiable as such, and do not incorporate unnecessary visual or physical barriers to entry, improving the amenity value for all users. Entrances to the houses and own-door apartments are designed in accordance with Section 3.2 of TGD M, and provided with 1200x1200mm level landings in front the main entrance.

Upper floor units in the apartment blocks are accessed from shared circulation cores. Entrances to the common circulation cores are designed in accordance with Section 1.2 of TGD M with 1800x1800mm level landings provided in front of all entrances. A stairs suitable for people with ambulant disabilities serving all upper floor apartments is provided in each common vertical circulation core, designed in accordance with Section 1.3.4.3 of TGD M. No lift is proposed to be provided in shared vertical circulation cores. This is in compliance with Section 1.3.4.1.1(c) of TGD M, which states that lifts are not required to be provided in "duplex buildings with two (or less) dwellings on any one storey other than the entrance storey and with no dwelling having an entrance more than 6500mm above or below the main entrance level". Floor finishes, doors, and lighting within building common areas are designed in accordance with Section 1.3 of TGD M.

Vehicle access to the development is via Rathmullan Road, and provides vehicular access to all dwellings. Each apartment block is provided with 1 no. accessible parking bay as required by TGD M. The accessible parking bays is designed to meet the guidance of Section 1.1.5 and Diagram 9 of TGD M. The accessible spaces are well located proximate to building entrances.

### ACCESSIBLE DWELLINGS

All dwellings are designed in accordance with guidelines of Section 3 of TGD M. Corridors in all apartments are minimum 900mm wide, and all doors have a minimum clear width of 800mm. Every apartment is provided with an accessible WC designed in accordance with the guidance of 3.4 of TGD M. Accessible WCs are suitable for use by visitors and are generally accessed off the entrance hall or adjacent corridor. Doors to accessible WCs open outward, have a minimum clear width of 800mm, and each WC is provided with an unobstructed space of minimum size 750x1200mm to accommodate sideways transfer from a wheelchair. For units where this is no habitable room at entry level, the stairway providing access to the storey containing the main living room is designed to be suitable for people with ambulant disabilities, in accordance with the guidance of Section 3.3.2.2 of TGD M.

### UNIVERSAL DESIGN HOMES

While all dwellings meet the access requirements of Part M of the Second Schedule of the Building Regulations, 38 units within the development are designed to be 'Universal Design (hereafter referred to as 'UD Homes')'. The UD Homes are designed in compliance with the relevant guidance set out in Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland (2015). This ensures that the units are suitable for older people, mobility impaired people, people living with dementia and people with disabilities.

Of the 38 no. UD Home units, 16 no. are 1 bed units, 22 no. are four-bedroom units. All the UD Homes units exceed minimum unit sizes. Please see Appendix 1. Housing Quality Assessment for details on which specific units are designed to UD Home guidance. Every UD Home is provided with its own front door at ground floor level which is designed in accordance with the guidance of Section 2.1 of Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland. Entrance porches are provided to all entrances to provide improved weather protection at the doors. All doors are provided with level thresholds, and 1200x1200mm clear level landings are provided in front of doors. Doors are provided with a frosted glass vision panel, have a minimum clear width of 850mm, and are provided with a 300mm clear space on the leading edge side of the door. UD Home circulation areas have been designed in accordance with the guidance of Section 2.2. Units are all provided with a 1500x1500mm minimum space in an entrance hall adjacent to the entrance door. Corridors adjacent to the entrance hall are a minimum of



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1050mm wide. Doors that open into rooms, such as living rooms, and living rooms, are positioned so that the hinge-side of the door is adjacent to a return wall. A 300mm clear area beside the leading edge of all doors is provided. Glazed doors are proposed between circulation areas and living rooms, to provide some additional indirect daylight to circulation areas.

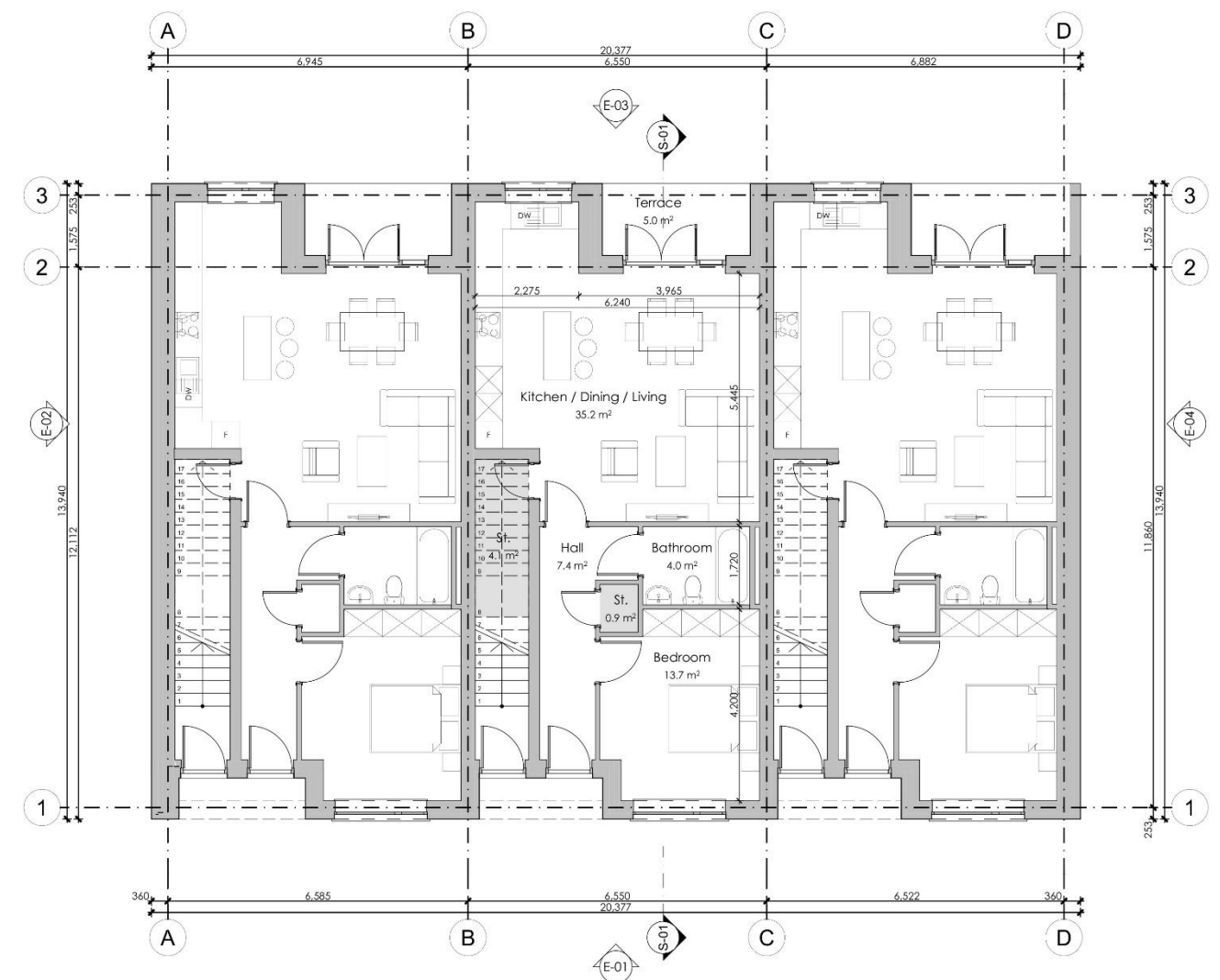
Living-kitchen-dining spaces in 'UD Home' apartments have been designed in accordance with the guidance of Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. A 750mm wide clear route between items and in front of windows and routes between doors is provided, and at least one 1500mm clear turning circles is allowed for. Dining areas are provided adjacent to the kitchen area. A 1200mm clear space is provided on at least two consecutive sides of the dining table. All kitchens in universal design units are designed to allow for easy movement. In accordance with the guidance of section 3.3, the sink is positioned with centreline more than 460mm in distance from any return in the work surface, and at least 300mm is provided on either side of the hob.

Bedrooms are designed in accordance with Section 3.5 of the Universal Design Guidelines. The main double bedroom is at least 13m<sup>2</sup>, and provided with a double bed. A clear access space 800mm wide is provided on both sides and at the end of the double bed, and a clear space for a 1500mm turning circle is provided in every bedroom. The bathroom is located immediately adjacent to the main bedroom, with a full height door or 'soft spot' between them provided for future installation of a door. 'Hard spots' are provided in the ceiling at the main bedroom and at the adjacent bathroom to allow a hoist-track to be installed supported by the ceiling construction. Light switches are provided at the entry door and on both sides of the double bed.

Bathrooms in 'UD Home' units are designed in accordance with Section 3.6, specifically the guidance for UD Home bathrooms as opposed to shower rooms. Bathrooms are at least 2100x2400mm in size, and are provided with a clear space for a 1500mm turning circle. The bathroom doors open outwards into common corridors or bedrooms, and open against a return wall.

All walls will be constructed to be strong enough to take fittings and rails, and 'hard spots' are provided in the ceiling to allow a hoist-track to be installed supported by the ceiling construction. Provision is made for future adaptation to a shower room by providing a capped outlet for future installation of a floor drain and tanking of walls and floors. Baths are provided with an adjacent clear activity space of 1100x700mm, and a 400mm min transfer space is provided at the end of the bath. A minimum clear activity space of 1100x700mm is provided in front of the sink. Toilets are provided 400mm from the

edge of a wall, a clear access zone of minimum 1100x700mm is provided in front of the toilet. The bathroom is located immediately adjacent to the main bedroom, with a full height door or 'soft spot' between them provided for future installation of a door.



**Fig A1** One-bedroom ground floor 'UD Home' apartments



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## APPENDIX 2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

### INTRODUCTION

This appendix outlines the main alternatives considered during the design development of the proposed scheme and sets out the rationale for the final design as submitted. In accordance with best practice and statutory guidance, the alternatives are grouped under the following headings:

- Alternative Locations
- Alternative Uses
- Alternative Processes
- Alternative Designs and Layouts

#### **Alternative Locations**

Given the zoning of the subject site under the Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027, and having regard to the project’s objectives, no reasonable alternative locations were considered. The rationale for the proposed development is to provide a high-quality residential scheme with ancillary facilities and integrated green infrastructure, located in a strategically positioned, zoned, and serviced landholding on the western edge of Drogheda. The site offers the opportunity to deliver compact growth in line with national policy and is well-placed to accommodate potential future integration with adjoining lands, should they be brought forward for development under future plans.

#### **Alternative Uses**

While other land uses are permitted in principle on A2-zoned lands, it was not considered that an alternative use would represent the optimal outcome for this site—particularly in light of the urgent national and regional need for housing. The surrounding context is primarily residential in character, with some commercial and community uses dispersed in the wider area. In this context, the proposed residential-led scheme is considered the most appropriate and sustainable use of the land, aligning with both the zoning objective and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

#### **Alternative Processes**

No reasonable alternative processes were considered, as the proposed scheme follows standard development procedures for residential schemes on zoned lands. The nature of the development and

the characteristics of the site did not lend themselves to consideration of significantly different project delivery mechanisms or alternative development processes.

#### **Alternative Designs and Layouts**

A range of alternative designs and layouts were considered and evolved throughout the design process in order to minimise potential environmental impacts and optimise the development response to the site’s context. The initial design stages involved a comprehensive constraints analysis, examining factors such as:

- The site’s topography
- Proximity to the M1 motorway to the west
- The presence of sloping open space zoned lands to the north, leading to the River Boyne
- Opportunities to frame and respond to the Mary McAleese Bridge, a significant visual and infrastructural landmark

Design development progressed through an iterative process, informed by input from the wider design team, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAR) consultants, and pre-application engagement with Meath County Council, including the Section 32 LRD meeting held on 5 March 2025.

The evolving layout was shaped by considerations such as site permeability, housing mix, public open space distribution, urban form, and integration with green and blue infrastructure. Revisions incorporated feedback from the Planning Authority and specialist inputs, including landscape, transport, and ecology. The result is a scheme that balances density and amenity, responds to the site’s physical characteristics, and aligns with broader planning policy objectives.

The key alternatives and design decisions taken during the development of the proposal are described in more detail in the sections that follow.



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Fig A2 Site Plan | Option 1

## OPTION 1 – INITIAL DESIGN SOLUTION

The first design option explored by NDBA Architects focused on establishing a strong visual axis from the primary site entrance towards the Mary McAleese Bridge, using it as a focal point and vista terminus. Housing and apartment buildings were arranged on either side of this central spine, with open spaces set out in a linear format—one adjacent to the main access road and another alongside Rathmullan Road, leading down toward the River Boyne. However, in early consultation with Meath County Council, it was felt that the treatment of the entrance lacked definition and that the apartment elements were not well integrated within the overall scheme.



Fig A3 Site Plan | Option 2

## OPTION 2 – DEVELOPED DESIGN SOLUTION

The second design option developed by NDBA Architects sought to respond to feedback on the initial layout by softening the geometry of the street network, introducing curved streets and a more organic movement through the site. A larger central open space was introduced, serving as the focal point for the neighbourhood, complemented by a smaller pocket park at the south-western corner of the site. This supported improved permeability and potential future connectivity with adjacent 'White Lands' to the west and south. The number of apartment buildings was significantly reduced and repositioned closer to the site entrance, establishing a clearer sense of arrival while addressing earlier concerns around their siting.



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**Fig A4 Site Plan | Option 3**

## OPTION 3 – FURTHER DEVELOPED DESIGN SOLUTION

The third design option built further upon the principles established in Option 2, refining the approach to open space and built form. The curvilinear street layout was reinforced to support legibility and place identity, while the central open space was expanded to incorporate portions of the previously proposed linear green corridor, creating a larger and more multifunctional landscape amenity at the heart of the development. The south-west pocket park was reconfigured as a series of green spaces along the western boundary, enhancing passive amenity and maintaining opportunities for future linkages. The apartment buildings were better integrated into the overall layout, repositioned as book-end elements or focal points that terminate key views and draw the eye toward the central open space, thereby anchoring them more meaningfully within the scheme's urban structure.