# Ballybin Road LRD Ratoath, Co. Meath –

## Visual Impact Assessment

## Final

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## Revision history

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| S3-P03 / 21/06/2024 | Draft Report | Steering group |
| S3-P03 / 24/06/2024 | Final Report | Steering group |
| | | |

## Contract

This report describes work commissioned by Marshall Yards Development Company Ltd (the Client), by an email dated 10/06/2024. The Client's representative for the contract was Colm McEldowney. Christos Papachristou and Bernadette O'Connell of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

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Director

## Purpose

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## Executive summary

This Visual Impact Assessment identifies the potential impacts on visual amenity of the proposed development at Ratoath, Co. Meath. This report will form part of the planning application and aims to address clause (p) of the LRD Opinion on the proposed development. In that clause the council raised concerns over significant negative impacts arising from the proposed development in the vicinity of the site.

The study area was defined as an approximate proportional visual envelope reaching 100m outside the boundary of the proposed development. This aimed to include the adjacent clusters of residences and open spaces. It also aimed to include the visual thresholds between the urban area of Ratoath and the surrounding rural landscape along the carriageways.

An initial high-level assessment was carried out by the assessors to identify locations that the visual impact could be reaching higher significance. The outcome was communicated with the design team along with a series of suggested changes to the design that would act as a means to protect the existing visual amenity of the adjacent visual envelope post construction in line with Co. Meath's CDP and the County's Landscape Character Assessment.

A number of viewpoints were selected for the production of verified photomontages. The location of the viewpoints was decided based on the Guidelines for Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) to best represent views towards the proposed development from public areas, that could also act as an indicator of potential impacts to the visual amenity from private locations.

The main sensitive receptors within the study area include residents at home. No permanent significant negative visual impacts are expected to arise from the proposed development from the public areas of the study area. The expected impact to the visual amenity from private residential locations have not been assessed. Nonetheless, it has been commented upon to inform this report. Any potential negative visual impacts arising during the construction stage are expected to be heightened from private locations and appropriate screening should be provided during this time. Upon completion of construction, the proposed substantially tall tree planting is expected have an immediate positive influence on the visual amenity and is expected to restore the visual amenity to a lower negative significance from the baseline situation.

The assessment concludes that the average expected negative visual impact of the proposed development in the study area is **Slight** in Year 1 and Year 5, to **Imperceptible** in Year 10 from the completion of construction. The highest negative visual impacts in public areas are expected to be **Moderate** in Year 1 post-completion of construction. These are expected to be experienced from the open spaces to the west of the proposed development.

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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CDP | County Development Plan |
| GLVIA | Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment |
| JBA | JBA Consulting Engineers and Scientists Ltd |
| LCA | Landscape Character Assessment |
| LRD | Large Residential Development |
| MCC | Meath County Council |
| MYDC | Marshall Yards Development Company Ltd |
| VIA | Visual Impact Assessment |
| ZTV | Zone of Theoretical Visibility |

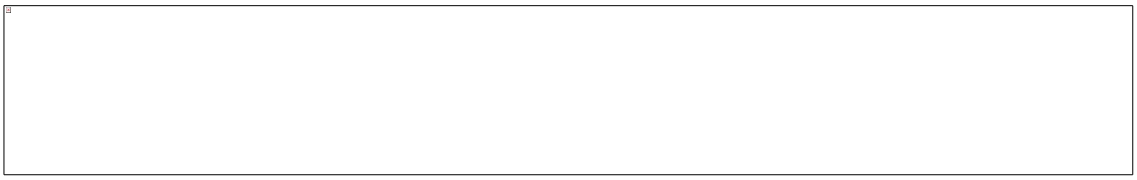
# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Marshall Yards Development Company Ltd commissioned JBA through their agent. to undertake a VIA in relation to the construction of a LRD on the eastern fringe of the town of Ratoath, Co. Meath.

The VIA aims to identify the potential impacts on the visual amenity of the receptors in the relevant visual envelope as they arise from the design included in the proposed development.

This VIA report will form part of the planning application and specifically aims to address clause (p) of the LRD Opinion on the proposed development;



This report should be read in conjunction with the relevant drawings and visual material produced post the receipt of the Opinion and include:

- The verified photomontages prepared by G-Net 3D;
- The site layout, sections and plans prepared by JFA Architects; and
- The landscape plans prepared by NMP.

It should also be read alongside the relevant CDP policies and guidelines included in:

- The Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007);
- The adopted County Meath Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (CDP);
- The Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA); and
- The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (3rd Edition).

This VIA was undertaken through a combination of desk studies by a Chartered Landscape Architect.

## 1.2 Definition of study area

This report comprises assessment of the impact to views of receptors within the proportionally immediate visual envelope in the directly surrounding area. This visual envelope has been defined to a proportional distance of 300m outside the boundary of the proposed development to define the study area. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was therefore not produced.

Within this area lie the following:

- The residences along The Road, The Lane, The Crescent and Fox Lodge Manor to the west and north of the proposed development;
- Ballybin Road and the cluster of residences on Moulden Bridge to the East; and
- Main Street, Jamestown Road, Ratoath Childcare and the residences along Jamestown Park to the south.

## 1.3 Verified photomontages

The assessment is based on the accurate depiction of the magnitude of change of views. For this reason, verified photomontages were produced from selected locations. The selection of the locations for the production of the verified photomontages was based on

the instructions included in the GLVIA. The GLVIA suggest that the worst-case scenario should be avoided and that a location and angle of view showing the average and mostly experienced situation should be shown.

The selection of the viewpoints is covering the following aspects:

- Close-up locations to allow for increased magnitude of change;
- Direct views to show the change at its most visible;
- Further distant locations to allow for appreciation of the impact from more distant locations;
- Locations from public areas where sensitive receptors are expected to be present with views from the west, east, north and south;
- Locations that include views of the important to the local landscape area hedgerows; and
- Locations along the main roads where motorists and slower moving cyclists and pedestrians are moving between the urban and rural fringe of Ratoath.

## 1.4 Approach taken

An initial high-level assessment was carried out by the assessors to identify locations that the visual impact could be reaching higher significance. The outcome was communicated with the design team along with a series of suggested changes to the design that would act as a means to protect the existing visual amenity of the adjacent visual envelope post construction in line with Co. Meath's CDP and the County's Landscape Character Assessment.

The viewpoints were then selected for the production of verified photomontages. A total of 13 No. locations where selected and are included in Appendix A.

To satisfy better the clause (p) given in the planning Opinion, a proportionate, yet stricter approach was taken for the selection of the locations for this stage's additional verified photomontages (V5 to V13). In this approach, locations with expected worse than average impacted view were selected. These locations are the ones closer to the proposed development and from locations that there is maximum intervisibility. Also, the selected angle for the production of the photomontages was not an average direction of view, but a view facing directly towards the proposed development. Therefore, this assessment is considering a heightened magnitude of change to the baseline view and therefore the average visual impact in the public areas as a result of the proposed development will be lower than the one depicted in this assessment.

Mitigation measures from the proposed design will be considered following the identification of significant and beyond negative impacts. If required, these will include screening planting around the perimeter of the site with tree and shrub planting that contains evergreen species.

## 1.5 Description of the development

The proposed development is at a site with a total area of 5.48 hectares principally located at Main Street/R125 and Ballybin Road, Ratoath, Co. Meath. The total site contains a proposed residential development site with an area of 3.66 hectares (bisected by a proposed realigned Ballybin Road) and a proposed infrastructural development site with an area of 1.82 hectares (principally for road and related works, water services and open space amalgamation). The site is generally bound by: Fox Lodge Woods and Fox Lodge Manor to the west and north; existing agricultural lands and residential development to the north and east; existing Ballybin Road and Moulden Bridge to the east; and Main Street/R125 and Jamestown Road/L1016 to the south. The site also incorporates parts of: the existing Ballybin Road (north and west of Moulden Bridge), Main Street/R125, Jamestown Road/L1016 and green open space in Fox Lodge Manor.

The proposed development principally consists of the demolition of 2 No. dwellings (594 square metres gross floor area combined) and 1 No. agricultural shed (988.7 square metres gross floor area) and the construction of 141 No. residential dwellings with a gross floor area of 12,428 square metres in buildings of 2 No. and 3 No. storeys. The dwellings include 117 No. houses (57 No. 2-bed, 52 No. 3-bed, 7 No. 4-bed and 1 No. 5-bed) and 24 No. maisonette/duplex units (18 No. 1-bed and 6 No. 3-bed).

The development also proposes a reconfiguration of the road layout at the south (Main Street/R125 and Jamestown Road/L1016) and east (Ballybin Road) of the site. Specifically, it is proposed to demolish/remove the existing 5-arm roundabout and to replace same with a new 4-arm signalised junction and reconfigured access to the existing Ratoath Childcare site. The new junction arrangement will facilitate a proposed realignment of the southern section of the existing Ballybin Road (approximately 172 metres) as the northern arm of the new signalised junction and a revised entrance for the existing dwelling to the north-east of the site at Ballybin Road (known as 'Fox Lodge Farm', Eircode A84 KF97). The proposed road infrastructure works also include: road markings, traffic signals, traffic signage, footpaths and cycle infrastructure.

The development also proposes:

- 2 No. new multi-modal accesses onto the proposed realigned Ballybin Road to serve the bisected residential site;
- 2 No. pedestrian accesses onto Main Street/R125 and 1 No. pedestrian access onto the realigned Ballybin Road;
- Relocation of existing eastbound bus stop at Main Street/R125 approximately 130 metres to the west;
- Repurposing of the closed section of Ballybin Road as a pedestrian/cycle greenway;
- Internal roads and footpaths;
- 228 No. car parking spaces;
- Cycle parking spaces;
- Hard and soft landscaping, including public open space, communal amenity space and private amenity space (as rear gardens and terraces/balconies facing multiple directions);
- Demolition of the wall at the north-west corner of the site interfacing with Fox Lodge Manor and the amalgamation of existing public open in the estate and proposed public open space;
- Boundary treatments;
- Public lighting;
- Rooftop PV panels;
- 2 No. ESB sub-stations; and
- All other associated site and development works above and below ground.


**Figure 1-1 Site layout of the proposed development**

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1 Assessment methodology

The assessment is based on the recommendations in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)[1] as published by the Landscape Institute (UK) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (3rd Edition, 2013).

The VIA was prepared through desk studies and field surveys and has been reviewed and approved by a Chartered Landscape Architect.

The initial desk-based study and identified views were then confirmed by a site visit from the photomontage specialist (G-Net 3D).

### 2.1.1 Sensitivity of visual receptors

The sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape context of the viewer, the likely activity they are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape.

Visual receptors from most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are;

- **Very high** - Residents in properties within protected landscapes and travellers on a Scenic route where awareness of views is likely to be heightened;
- **High** - Residents in properties with predominantly open views from windows, garden, or curtilage. People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and on particular views, and those on a scenic route where the view is not specifically in the direction of the proposed development;
- **Medium** - Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience, and communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;
- **Low** - People engaged in outdoor sport or active recreation on a local scale, which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; and people at their place of work whose attention may be focussed on their work or activity, not their surroundings and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life, and people travelling in vehicles where their view is limited to a few minutes at any viewpoint; and

### 2.1.2 Magnitude of visual impact

The magnitude of a visual effect is determined on the basis of several factors: the relative numbers of viewers, the distance from the viewpoint, the visual dominance of the proposed development within a view and its effect on visual amenity, as follows:

- **Very high** - The proposal intrudes into the largest proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most noticeable element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene;
- **High** - The proposal intrudes into a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also likely to be generated, appreciably reducing the visual amenity of the scene;

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1 Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition*. Routledge

- **Medium** - The proposal represents a moderate intrusion into the available vista, is a readily noticeable element and/or it may generate a degree of visual clutter or disharmony, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene. Alternatively, it may represent a balance of higher and lower order estimates in relation to visual presence and visual amenity;
- **Low** - The proposal intrudes to a minor extent into the available vista and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene; and
- **Negligible** - The proposal will be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not detract from, and may even enhance, the visual amenity of the scene.

The magnitude can also be described as:

- **Neutral** - Changes that are not discernible within the available vista and have no bearing the visual amenity of the scene; and
- **Positive** - Changes that enhance the available vista by reducing visual clutter or restoring degraded features.

### 2.1.3 Visual impact significance

The significance of visual impacts is a function of visual receptor sensitivity and visual impact magnitude. This relationship is expressed in the significance matrix as shown in Table 2-1.

**Table 2-1 - Significance of Landscape and Visual effects based on Magnitude and Sensitivity**

| | SENSITIVITY | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MAGNITUDE** | Very high | High | Medium | Low | Negligible |
| Very high | Profound | Very significant | Significant | Moderate | Slight |
| High | Very significant | Significant | Moderate | Slight | Slight |
| Medium | Significant | Moderate | Slight | Slight | Imperceptible |
| Low | Moderate | Slight | Slight | Imperceptible | Imperceptible |
| Negligible | Slight | Slight | Imperceptible | Imperceptible | Imperceptible |
| Neutral | Imperceptible | Imperceptible | Imperceptible | Imperceptible | Imperceptible |
| Positive | Positive | Positive | Positive | Positive | Imperceptible |

### 2.1.4 Impact classification terminology

Table 2-2 overleaf presents the Impact Classification Terminology as published in the EPA guidance document[2]. Standard definitions are provided in this glossary, which permit the evaluation and classification of the quality, significance, duration and type of impacts associated with a proposed development on the receiving environment.

Each impact is described in terms of its quality, significance, extent, duration & frequency and type, where possible.

[2] Environmental Protection Agency (August 2017) *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*

## Table 2-2 Impact Classification Terminology (EPA, 2017)[2]

| Impact Characteristic | Term | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Quality | Positive | A change which improves the quality of the environment |
| | Neutral | No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error. |
| | Negative | A change which reduces the quality of the environment |
| | | |
| Significance | Imperceptible | An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences |
| | Not significant | An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences. |
| | Slight | An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities |
| | Moderate | An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends |
| | Significant | An effect, which by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment |
| | Very significant | An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment |
| | Profound | An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics |
| | | |
| Extent & Context | Extent | Describe the size of the area, number of sites and the proportion of a population affected by an effect |
| | Context | Describe whether the extent, duration, or frequency will conform or contrast with established (baseline) conditions |
| | | |
| Duration and Frequency | Momentary | Effects lasting from seconds to minutes |
| | Brief | Effects lasting less than a day |
| | Temporary | Effects lasting less than a year |
| | Short-term | Effects lasting one to seven years |
| | Medium-term | Effects lasting seven to fifteen years |
| | Long-term | Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years |
| | Permanent | Effect lasting over sixty years |
| | Reversible | Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or restoration |
| | Frequency | Describe how often the effect will occur. (once, rarely, occasionally, frequently, constantly – or hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually) |
| | | |
| Type | Indirect | Impacts on the environment, which are not a direct result of the project, often produced away from the project site or because of a complex pathway |
| | Cumulative | The addition of many minor or significant effects, including effects of other projects, to create larger, more significant effects. |
| | 'Do Nothing' | The environment as it will be in the future should the subject project not be carried out |
| | Worst Case | The effects arising from a project in the case where mitigation measures substantially fail |
| | Indeterminable | When the full consequences of a change in the environment cannot be described |
| | Irreversible | When the character, distinctiveness, diversity, or reproductive capacity of an environment is permanently lost |
| | Residual | Degree of environmental change that will occur after the proposed mitigation measures have taken effect |
| | Synergistic | Where the resultant effect is of greater significance than the sum of its constituents |

## 2.2 Limitations to the study

Photography for the production of the verified views V5 to V13 was carried out during the summer, when the trees were in full leaf offering increased screening to views. A site visit during the winter for these views was not carried out to assess the views when the foliage of the existing deciduous vegetation is not present. An assumption has therefore been made that filtered views would be allowed where full screening is possible and appears to be because of the presence of deciduous vegetation.

A site visit during nighttime to create the baseline for the existing level of lighting and assess the impact of the proposed development was not carried out. It was deemed adequate that the proposed lighting design allows low lumen spillage outside the site boundary only in the northwestern corner, otherwise this is zero.

This VIA does not include cumulative impacts.

Traffic signage along Main Road that has been removed to accommodate the new alignment of Ballybin Road is expected to be reinstated to a similar degree. The final arrangement was not available at the time of the production of the verified photomontages and has not been included in the view. Therefore, any positive impacts to the visual amenity as a result of the lack of vertical traffic signage will not be considered.

# 3. Potential effects to visual amenity

## 3.1 Protected views

No protected views were identified within the study area. The nearest protected views are from the Hill of Tara and Skyrne Church that lie approximately 14km and 13km to the respectively to the north and have been scoped out from this assessment.

## 3.2 Assessment of Visual Impact on Verified Views

**V1** – This winter view is from Main Street, by the roundabout, outside the Ratoath Childcare building, approximately 30m from the site boundary, facing northwest. The carriageway, roundabout and vertical signage are the dominant elements of this view. The mature tree vegetation lining the boundary of the site offers a pleasant backdrop in this location yet restricts views to a close- and mid-range. The presence of urbanising elements seems to be creating a rather imbalanced cacophony.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be motorists, cyclists and pedestrians as well as the occupiers of the Ratoath Childcare. The sensitivity is *Low*.

**Magnitude** - The proposals include the removal of a section of the existing, well-established line of trees along the site boundary for the accommodation of the new alignment of Ballybin Road. This is expected to contribute to the reduction of the amenity offered within this landscape character area. The retention of the linear form of the vegetated site boundary is reducing any negative impacts in this location.

The upper parts of the proposed development are directly visible with partial, mid-range views. The proposed tree planting allows filtered, partial views of the lower parts of the proposed development in the winter. The central island of the roundabout is removed and has been replaced with a crossroad. A number of lamp posts have been removed and others moved from their original location.

In summer, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will be present providing full screening, only the upper parts of the proposed development are expected to be visible.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity, the unfiltered winter views towards the proposed development will be reduced.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.

**V2** – This winter view is from Main Street, by the southwestern corner of the site boundary, approximately 20m away, facing east. Similarly to V1, the tall tree vegetation along the site boundary, the carriageway, and vertical lamp posts and railing are the dominant elements of this view. No long-range views are allowed in this location. The closer views of the ivy covering the majority and a large proportion of these trees makes this view relatable to a level of neglect and therefore reduced safety and comfort. Few gaps between the trees allow for views within the site.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The sensitivity is *Low*.

**Magnitude** – From this location any removal of the existing, well established line of trees along the site boundary for the accommodation of the new alignment of Ballybin Road is not visible. The proposed development will be visible where the gaps in the existing vegetation allow. These views are expected to be of the upper parts, partial and filtered. A number of lighting lamp posts have been removed and others moved from their original locations. The grass verge has been removed to accommodate the cycle lane increasing the pre-existing urbanising elements in this location.

In summer, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will be present providing full screening, only a very small part of the proposed development is expected to be visible.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity, the unfiltered winter views towards the proposed development will be further reduced.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.

**V3** – This winter view is from the front of Fox Lodge Manor No. 3 and the Fox Lodge Manor Playschool approximately 30m north of the site boundary, facing south. The prevailing residential views in this location face east and west, away from the proposed development. Views towards the site are partial, direct and or filtered due to the presence of the approximately 2m high boundary wall and deciduous street tree planting. The upper parts of the existing agricultural buildings and field boundary overgrown hedgerows are dominant in the allowed mid-range views. No long-range views are allowed in this location.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – The proposals include the removal of the existing boundary wall and connection of the proposed development with the existing established neighbourhood on Fox Lodge Manor. Although appearing more prominent than the previously existing farm buildings, the proposed development does not seem out of proportion to the existing built, residential environment. The mid-range views to the tall trees forming the retained field boundaries are only partially allowed between the proposed residences. The proposed vegetation is expected to further soften this view partly replicating the previously existing hedgerow.

In summer, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will be present providing full screening, views towards the proposed development are expected to be further restricted.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity, the unfiltered winter views towards the proposed development will be further reduced, yet this reduction is not expected to be noticeable from this location. The increased unobstructed view of trees in this location during summer is expected to have a prevailing positive effect.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 10: *Positive* in summer and *negligible* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Slight** in summer and **slight** in winter.
- Year 5: **Slight** in summer and **slight** in winter.

In Year 10 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent positive** in summer and **permanent negative imperceptible** in winter.

**V4** – This winter view is similar to V3. It is from the southern corner of the open space in front of Fox Lodge Manor No. 85 approximately 25m north of the site boundary, facing south. Views towards the site are partial, direct and or filtered due to the presence of the approximately 2m high boundary wall and deciduous tree planting. The upper parts of the field boundary overgrown hedgerows are visible directly. The upper parts of the existing agricultural buildings appear filtered through deciduous tree vegetation. No long-range views are allowed in this location. The adjacent to the proposed development residences are expected to have similar close- and mid-range views allowed towards the inside of the site.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and people engaged in activities. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – Unlike with V3, in this location the existing boundary wall is retained. The proposed development appears more dominant in this case fully restricting views to the retained field boundary overgrown hedgerows. It does not seem out of proportion to the existing built, residential environment. The proposed vegetation is expected to further reduce this change in the view and the proposed residences' visual dominance.

In summer, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will be present providing full screening, views towards the proposed development are expected to be further restricted.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity and breaks ridge, the unfiltered winter views towards the proposed development will be further reduced, yet this reduction is expected to be noticeable only when the trees appear taller than the ridge of the proposed residences.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and *negligible* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Slight** in summer and in winter.

**V5** – This summer view is from Ballybin Road, approximately 70m east of the site boundary, facing west. Views towards the site are partial, direct and or filtered due to the presence of mainly deciduous overgrown hedgerow forming the field boundary. The high voltage cables, post and wire fence and carriageway reduce the otherwise purely rural setting. No other built element is noticeably visible in this location.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be motorists and cyclists. The highest sensitivity is *Low*.

**Magnitude** – In this location, a section of the existing field boundary hedgerow is removed to accommodate the new Ballybin Road alignment with the new entrance to the proposed development. The removal of the vegetation is noticeable increasing in that way the urbanising character of this view. The overall view remains largely rural. This is mainly due to the retention of the larger part and pattern of the field boundary vegetation. The view would be closer to a clear threshold between a rural area and an urban fringe, which appears to be in line with the objectives of the zoning of the area and the key characteristics of the location's Landscape Character Area. The proposed vegetation is expected to gradually incorporate the proposed built environment to the context of the site.

In winter, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will be absent providing only partial screening and filtering of views, the proposed development is expected to be more noticeable within this view, heightening in that way the urbanising elements.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity, the unfiltered winter views towards the proposed development will be further reduced, yet this reduction is expected to be noticeable only when the trees appear taller than the ridge of the proposed residences.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Slight** in summer and in winter.

**V6** – This summer view is from outside Moulden Bridge residences No. 57 and 58 approximately 50m east of the site boundary, facing west. Views towards the site are fully screened by the presence of mainly deciduous vegetation lining Ballybin Road. The main views of the residences in this location are to the north and south, away from the proposed development.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and people engaged in activities. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – In summer, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation is present providing full screening, views towards the proposed development are not expected to be allowed.

In winter, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will not be present, any allowed views are expected to be filtered by the existing and proposed vegetation.

The prevailing views will remain close- to mid- range within the visual envelope created by the residences.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Neutral* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 5: *Neutral* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 10: *Neutral* in summer and *negligible* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Imperceptible** in summer and **slight** in winter.
- Year 5: **Imperceptible** in summer and **slight** in winter.
- Year 10: **Imperceptible** in summer and **slight** in winter.

**V7** – This summer view is from Main Street, outside the Ratoath Childcare playground, approximately 280m from the site boundary, facing west. Similarly to V1 that was taken approximately 200m west of this location, the existing trees lining the site, the carriageway, vertical signage as well as the overhead powerlines are the dominant elements of this view. Views are close- and mid-range in this location. The presence of urbanising elements seems to be creating a similarly unpleasant, yet expected in this urban fringe of Ratoath.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be motorists, cyclists and pedestrians as well as the occupiers of the Ratoath Childcare. The sensitivity is *Low*.

**Magnitude** - The visible proposals include the rearrangement of public lighting to what appears to be a less cluttered view. This is not going to be accounted for in this assessment though as the proposed lighting is not depicting the candidate posters on the lamp posts which would be expected to contribute to the enhanced visibility of the proposals. Views towards the proposed residences within the site are fully screened by the presence of mainly deciduous vegetation lining Ballybin Road

In winter, the southern most part of the proposed development is expected to be visible and these views are expected to be filtered through the retained deciduous vegetation. The remaining built elements of the proposed development will remain fully screened by the existing residences on Moulden Bridge.

When compared to V1, views represented in V7 appear to have a lower magnitude of change. This can be attributed to the different angle and increased distance from the proposed development.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.

**V8** – This summer view is from Jamestown Road, outside the access to Jamestown Park, approximately 120m from the site boundary, facing northeast. Similarly to V1 that was taken approximately 100m northeast of this location, dominant elements of this view are the mature trees at the boundary of the site, the carriageway, footpath and cycleway as well as the vertical traffic signage and lamp posts. A small portion of the southwest-most residence on Moulden Bridge is also visible. Views are close- and mid-range in this location. The presence of urbanising elements seems to be creating a similarly visually noisy view. This is yet expected in this urban fringe of Ratoath.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The sensitivity is *Low*.

**Magnitude** - The visible proposals include the rearrangement of public lighting to what appears to be a less cluttered view. As per V7, this positive change is not going to be accounted for in this assessment. The removal of the section of the line of trees to accommodate the new alignment of Ballibin Road is the most visible change as a result of the proposed development. The overall reduction of the quality of the view, although noticeable, it is not out of proportion. The remaining trees maintain the previously dominant field boundary pattern. Views towards the proposed residences within the site allowed and are expected to remain unchanged as there is no additional proposed tall vegetation visible from this angle.

Apart from the proposed residences that are directly viewed from this location in summer, in winter, an additional portion of the south most part of the proposed development is expected to be visible. These views are expected to be filtered through the retained deciduous vegetation.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Low* in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: *Low* in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: *Low* in summer and in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.

**V9** – This summer view is from outside Jamestown Park residences No. 90 and 95 approximately 120m south of the site boundary, facing north. Views towards the site are fully screened by the presence of mainly evergreen vegetation lining the boundary of this estate. The main views of the residences in this location are to the northwest and southeast, away from the proposed development.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and people engaged in activities. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – In summer, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation is present providing full screening, views towards the proposed development are not expected to be allowed.

In winter, when the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will not be present, any allowed views are expected to be filtered by the existing and proposed vegetation and only the upper parts of the proposed development are expected to be visible.

The prevailing views will remain close- to mid- range within the visual envelope created by the residences.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Neutral* in summer and *negligible* in winter.
- Year 5: *Neutral* in summer and *negligible* in winter.
- Year 10: *Neutral* in summer and *negligible* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.

- Year 5: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Imperceptible** in summer and in winter.

**V10** – This summer view is from the open space at the junction of The Close and The Road in Fox Lodge Woods, approximately 85m west of the site boundary, facing east. Views towards the site are fully screened by the residences along The Road with only the upper parts of the evergreen vegetation acting as a visual barrier and boundary to the site. This is expected to be more evident for the residences 1 to 15, odd numbers only, along The Road. The prevailing residential views in this location face west and east, with the eastern views being towards the proposed development. These views are expected to be either fully screened or where allowed partial, direct and or filtered due to the presence of the approximately 2m high boundary wall running along the back gardens. The upper parts of the existing agricultural buildings and field boundary overgrown hedgerows are dominant in the allowed mid-range views. No long-range views are allowed in this location. Residences along The Road are expected to be only allowed no, or close-ranged easterly views past the existing estate boundary wall.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – The proposals include the removal of the evergreen section of boundary tree vegetation and its replacement with deciduous tree planting in the proposed residences' back gardens, at the locations where the evergreen trees were previously standing. From this location the removal of the evergreen line of trees is changing the skyline, making more dominant the presence of the existing residences along The Road. This is expected to be noticeable although not to a degree that will be detrimental for the visual amenity offered in this location. Any views towards the proposed residences are only expected from the gaps between the existing residences along The Road.

In winter the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will not be present, allowing in that way filtered views towards the proposed development.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity, the unfiltered winter views towards the proposed development will be further reduced. This reduction is expected to be noticeable only for close-range views.

It is worth commenting more specifically on the impact the proposed development is expected to have in the vicinity of this location from privately owned areas[3].

The views from the back gardens of the residences along The Road will have the existing evergreen visual barrier removed. The original 2m tall boundary wall is expected to remain. The original proposals that were lacking any tree planting in this location would allow direct views of the upper parts of the proposed development. Although the proposed residences along this western boundary are pushed further back that the evergreen trees, they similarly fully screening any mid- to long-range views. Also, the removal of hedgerows, even if in this case it is comprised of non-native Leylandii, could be perceived as a removal of a characteristic element of the landscape fabric of this landscape character area. For these reasons, the original design would have been expected to have the potential of high magnitude of change to some of the views from these residences. Following the Opinion given by MCC and the engagement of the visual impact specialist, the design team amended the design of the proposed development to include for the replacement of the removed vegetation. The planting included in the amended design

[3] The assessment of private views from residential properties falls under a different, more specific assessment that is the Residencial Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA). The RVAA is a stage beyond LVIA and focusses exclusively on private views and private visual amenity. The LVIA can only comment on private views.

allows for large deciduous tree planting in the back gardens along the boundary wall. This largely replicates the linear hedgerow like pattern previously existing in this location. The large, proposed specimens are also partly replicating the screening qualities to a lesser degree. Therefore, the planting included in the amended drawings is expected to soften the easterly views from these locations. The amended design is expected to reduce the originally heightened magnitude of change to Medium.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Low* in summer and *medium* in winter.
- Year 5: *Low* in summer and *medium* in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Slight** in summer and **moderate** in winter.
- Year 5: **Slight** in summer and **moderate** in winter.
- Year 10: **Slight** in summer and **slight** in winter.

**V11** – This summer view is from the open space at the junction of The Close and The Road, approximately 135m west of the site boundary, facing east. This view is taken approximately 50m further to the west from V10. Views towards the site appear similar to the views of V10 with the only difference being that there are no close-range views, only mid-range.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – Similarly to V10 the removal and replacement of the evergreen line of trees is changing the skyline, making more dominant the presence of the existing residences along The Road. This is expected to be noticeable although not to a degree that will be detrimental for the visual amenity offered in this location. Any views towards the proposed residences are only expected from the gaps between the existing residences along The Road.

In winter the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will not be present, allowing in that way greater intervisibility and filtered views towards the upper parts of the proposed development.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity, the unfiltered winter views towards the upper parts of the proposed development is expected to be further reduced.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Low* in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: *Low* in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Slight** in summer and in winter.

**V12** – This summer view is from the open space at the junction of The Crescent and Fox Lodge Manor, approximately 140m northwest of the site boundary, facing southeast.

Views towards the site are fully screened by the presence of the residences in this location. The upper parts of the evergreen trees lining the western boundary of the site is partly visible.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – Similarly to V10 and V11 the removal and replacement of the evergreen line of trees is changing the skyline, only that in this occasion the removal is forming an even smaller part of the view. All the proposed residences are remaining fully screened by the existing mainly deciduous vegetation and built environment.

In winter the foliage of the deciduous vegetation will not be present, allowing in that way greater intervisibility and only filtered views towards the upper parts of a small section of the proposed development.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 5: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Slight** in summer and in winter.

**V13** – This summer view is similar to V4. It is from the southern corner of the open space in front of Fox Lodge Manor No. 97 approximately 60m west of the site boundary and 50m north of V4, facing south. Similarly to V4, views towards the site are partial, direct and or filtered due to the presence of the approximately 2m high boundary wall and deciduous tree planting. The trees forming the field boundaries within the site are visible directly. The upper parts of the existing agricultural buildings are fully screened by the built environment and existing deciduous vegetation. No long-range views are allowed in this location.

**Sensitivity** - Receptors would be residents at home, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and people engaged in activities. The highest sensitivity is *High*.

**Magnitude** – Similarly to V3, the proposed development appears to replace the softer vegetation and is therefore reducing the visual amenity in this location. From this more distant location the proposed development appears again proportionate to the existing built environment. The proposed vegetation is softening the view further reducing this change and the proposed residences' visual dominance.

Over time, as the proposed vegetation reaches maturity, it is expected that the proposed development will appear further assimilated to the landscape.

In accordance with the methodology the magnitude of change per Year would be:

- Year 1: *Low* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 5: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.
- Year 10: *Negligible* in summer and *low* in winter.

**Effect** - In accordance with Tables 2-1 & 2-2 the highest effect is expected to be **permanent**, **negative** and:

- Year 1: **Slight** in summer and in winter.

- Year 5: **Slight** in summer and in winter.
- Year 10: **Slight** in summer and in winter.

# 4. Mitigation and residual effects

## 4.1 Mitigation measures to visual amenity

According to this assessment, no significant negative effects are expected from the proposed development to the visual amenity of the assessed study area post construction. The proposed planting, as amended is expected to sufficiently address any consideration regarding visual amenity. Any potential negative visual impacts arising during the construction stage are expected to be heightened from private locations and appropriate screening should be provided during this time.

## 4.2 Residual effects

No significant impacts have been identified from this assessment and therefore, no mitigation is required. Consequently, no permanent significant residual effects are expected to arise from the proposed development.

## Appendices

# A. Verified photomontages

## B. Proposed Landscape Plan


**Figure B-1 General arrangement of landscape proposals**

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