

Landscape Strategy

Introduction

The design for the Proposed Development has been fully informed by the context of the site, its relationship to surrounding townscape and countryside. The existing site characteristics and landscape features have been assessed and taken into account as an integral part of the proposals. Retaining and protecting appropriate existing landscape elements, complemented by new features and planting, are important factors in creating a sense of place and in maintaining and enhancing environmental quality.

Landscape Baseline

The existing landscape features of the Mungret Lands essentially comprise average quality edge-of-town countryside, characterised by an irregular agricultural field pattern defined by hedgerows, mostly allowed to grow to maturity. Occasional rows of formal boundary trees extending from the adjoining Mungret College campus reinforce the structure. The existing Mungret Observatory, formerly associated with Mungret College, is located in the northeastern part of the site.

In terms of topography the landscape is gently undulating with a general overall slope to downwards to the south. A ridge line runs roughly east to west through the north of the site with a pocket beyond this sloping downwards to the north. The local undulations provide further interest and variety to the overall pattern of the landscape.

Views into the area from the north are limited due to the topography namely the east-west ridgeline in the north of the site. Views from other orientations are largely restricted by the mature hedgerow pattern and localised topography. There are long distance views available from the south and east. Views from the site include the built forms of the adjacent Mungret College, as well as long distance views of hills such as Keepers Hill and Knockfeerina Hill to the east and south.

There are no protected views within the site. However, the views from Mungret College toward Mungret Abbey to the north of the site are protected.

The alignment of a former townland boundary passes along the eastern edge of the site. The markers for this townland boundaries are defined by a lane adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site.

The landscape adjoining the Mungret lands comprises a sports pitch and Mungret College and Mungret Park to the north. Mungret Park is a large 11 ha public park. It contains 2km of pedestrian and cycle path, adult fitness equipment, large open grass spaces and a large 3,00m² playground and a car park. The play equipment is suitable for both, and encourages

dual use by, able-bodied and non-able-bodied children, while there is a sensory area for children on the autistic spectrum. This park, including the playground, is within 400m of the proposals. As such, in relation to the proposals, this park meets the requirements of both a 'Small Park' and 'Local Park' set out in Table DM 2: *Open Space Hierarchy within Residential Estates* of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 (LDP).

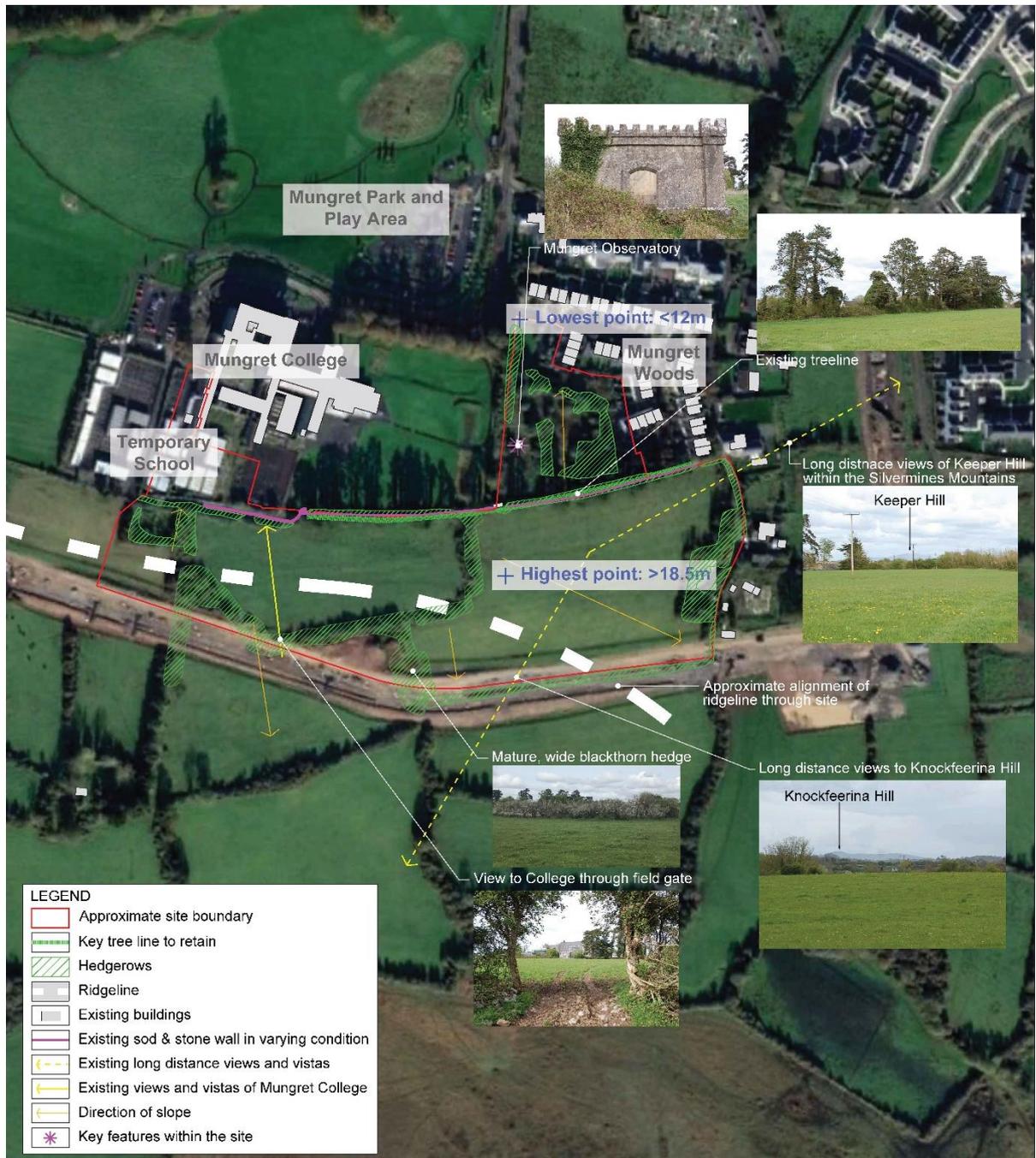


Figure 1 – Landscape Appraisal

The historic area of Mungret Abbey is also located just beyond the College and the Park. To the east, south and west of the site are located pastoral fields through which the newly constructed LIHAF Road slices. These fields are zoned for housing and form part of the

Residential Zoned Land for the area. The LIHAF Road forms the southern boundary to the site and divides the site area from the wider fields to the south. Beyond the fields and LIHAF Road to the east is the built form of Dooradoyle, on the outskirts of Limerick City.

The dominant existing vegetation species, aside from the pastoral fields, are Austrian Pine, Sycamore, Ash, Blackthorn and Whitethorn as identified in the Tree and Hedgerow Survey.

Landscape Framework

The proposed soft and hard landscaping is illustrated in Dwgs. MP-L-001 & MP-L-002. The landscape principles that have been adopted to guide the Proposed Development include:

- the wider landscape setting of the site and opportunities for enhancement of local character and amenity and, where relevant, biodiversity and green networks
- creation of an attractive, coherent landscape and open space structure for the development
- appropriate, high quality treatment of individual areas or elements
- good standards of implementation, and
- arrangements for and resourcing of aftercare and maintenance.



Figure 2 – Dwg. MP-L-001-G Hard and Soft Landscaping

The landscape framework of the site has been defined by the existing line of Austrian Pines in combination with the site boundaries and the alignment of the newly constructed LIHAF

Road along the southern boundary of the site. It is proposed to retain the existing mature trees wherever possible. This is in accordance with *Objective EH O10 Trees and Hedgerows* and *Objective MF O1 Mungret Framework* of the LDP. The retention of the Austrian Pine trees to the southeast of Mungret College maintains the existing setting and character of the college within the landscape, especially when viewed from Mungret Park. These existing trees will provide an immediate setting and context to the proposals. This will be further enhanced by the proposed open spaces and additional tree and hedge planting.



Image 1 – Existing Austrian Pine trees forming backdrop to Mungret College grounds with the site beyond the tree line.

The alignment of the former townland boundary to the east of the site will be strengthened. This will be achieved through the implementation of a new more structured hedge along the western edge of the lane to the rear of the eastern most properties within the site.

Four ‘Pocket Parks’¹ have been integrated into the landscape framework in accordance with *Objective SCS1 O21 Improve Open Space Provision* and *Table DM 2: Open Space Hierarchy within Residential Estates* of the LDP. The existing Mungret Park serves as a ‘Small Park’ and ‘Local Park’. It is within 400m of all proposed homes within the proposal.

Homezone shared surfaces connect the three main open spaces, as well as connecting the majority of the homes with these open spaces. An off-road path also runs along the

¹ ‘Pocket Parks’ are small residential areas of Public Open Space as set out in the LDP.

proposed greenspace on the southern edge of the existing treeline to south of the Mungret College grounds. This provides access to the fourth Pocket Park Open Space. Mungret Park is connected to the site in the east through the northernmost block of housing and to the west by a new proposed off-road formal path. The first connection also provides connectivity with the existing housing at Mungret Woods. This will ensure sustainable integration with the existing site context. This network of paths will accord with *Objective SCS1 O28 New amenity walkways*, *Objective TR O8 Walking and Cycling Infrastructure* and *Objective MF O1 Mungret Framework* of the LDP.



Image 2 – Example of a homezone at Adamstown, Dublin.

Landscape Components

The landscape framework is composed of a Public Square, four 'Pocket Parks' and areas of informal greenspace. This series of public open spaces is described in the following paragraphs.



Figure 3 – Dwg. MP-L-006 Hard and Soft Landscaping - Materials Palette

1) Public Square

A new public square is proposed in the west of the site, between the southern edge of Mungret College and the proposed Link Street. This area is approximately 2,000m² in size. It would be a hard-landscaped space defined by the proposed Independent Living for Older Persons development to the east and the currently undeveloped zoned residential lands to the west. A new pedestrian path is proposed off the northern side of the square providing a strong connection between the square, the College buildings, and Mungret Park beyond. The mostly hard paved nature of the proposed square will allow for the potential use of the square for community events and markets.

Split up into angular shapes defined by likely desire lines across the square. A main access runs from the path to the north of the square across to the footpath along the LIHAF Road at the southeast. This would be wide enough to hold events such as markets or community festivities. This access would be framed on either side by low seating walls associated with the soft landscaped spaces. These soft landscaped angular shaped spaces would rise up from ground level at the outside edges of the square to meet the tops of the seating walls along the main access. This adds vertical interest to the horizontal expanse of the square.



Image 3 – Precedent image of angular, sloping soft landscaped areas amongst hard paving (San Girolamo Urban Garden, Italy).

The contrast of the hard and soft landscaped areas provides areas of alternating functionality throughout the year. The hard-landscaped spaces will be more functional during the wetter months of the year, whilst the grassed areas will be more attractive spaces to interact with on sunnier days. The smaller shrub/perennial areas will add colours, scents, and some biodiversity to the square. The hard-paved areas will be surfaced using granite aggregate, large format, PCC slabs to distinguish it as a key space.

Further vertical interest will be added by feature lighting columns and the tree line along the western edge of the square. The feature lighting will be different from that of the Link Street and the wider housing areas, providing individual character and hierarchy to the square. The line of trees will form a green connection from the College southwards across the square. They will also provide an element of visual interest throughout the year through their leaf colour and flowers.

The area to the north, outside the proposed Community Facility, will be paved with the granite aggregate PCC slabs to match the Main Square and carry the character of the Square across the road. An off-road formal path connects northwards through the walled garden grounds of Mungret College. This provides a connection to the proposed Crèche, and on to the main College buildings and the Park beyond. This will also be surfaced using the same granite aggregate PCC slabs as the Square to maintain the higher level of quality due to the relationship with the College building. The path is broken at the entrance to the Crèche by a strip of coloured PCC textured paving slabs. This strip of paving leads into the Crèche Courtyard and provides an element of fun for the children. The paving slabs are the same type as the footpaths around the wider proposal, just using different, more vibrant colours and sizes.

The north-south tree line is continued through this area but using fruit trees which are more appropriate to the walled garden nature of the space. The beds on either side of the path will be planted with perennial plants in keeping with the walled garden nature. The selection of plants will provide year-round colour and interest as well as being pollinator friendly.

2) Four Pocket Parks

a) Northern Pocket Park

The northern park is set in the centre of development area A2 of the proposed housing. It is approximately 685m² in size.



Image 4 – The existing visual relationship between the College and the Observatory would be retained.

The park is overlooked on all sides by the proposed housing ensuring very good passive security.

The northern side of this open space will be lined with tree planting softening the interface between the open space and the proposed housing. An area of car parking on the eastern side is encompassed by shrub planting and bookended by trees softening and providing containment to the car parking. The shrub planting will also provide an element of protection to any vehicles parked in the spaces from activities within the park, such as ball games.

A small play area is also contained within this area of open space. This will include a minimum of two pieces of permanent play equipment with a focus on toddler equipment given the proximity of the larger Mungret Park play area. The play area will be surfaced with wet pour safety surfacing that meets the relevant fall height requirements of the play equipment.

The Observatory, associated with Mungret College, forms a focal point within the wider open space to the west of the Pocket Park and is essentially a continuation of the Pocket Park. A sweeping path has been set around the observatory

acknowledging its status as a key existing element of the landscape and providing it with an appropriate setting within the wider open space. This path also provides a section of off-road path through the open space leading northwards on to Mungret Woods, the Park and the associated playground. The path would be surfaced in resin bound gravel ensuring it is sympathetic to the historic nature of the Observatory.

The visual connection between the observatory and the college is retained as part of the proposals. The boundary between the two is currently formed by a post and wire fence which will be replaced by a new post and wire mesh fence ensuring the visual connection between the two building is retained.

A further area of grassed open space is also located further north of this pocket park, at the northern edge of the Proposed Development, adjacent to Mungret Woods. This area of informal greenspace measures a further 808m².

The combination of these two areas in Area A2 make up the 1,493m² of Public Open Space (POS) 2 as described in other documents associated with this proposal.

b) Eastern Pocket Park

This park is located in the southeast of the proposals in development area A1. It is approximately 1,323m² in size. The park is largely comprised of an open flexible grassed area. The eastern edge is formed by the existing vegetation along the eastern boundary between the site and the adjacent lane that delineates the former Townland Boundary.

The southern edge is defined by a wall with shrub planting and a tree line to the park side. This not only provides a barrier between the park and the LIHAF Road to the south, but this stone wall provides a gateway along the LIHAF Road to the proposal when approaching from the east. The shrub planting softens the hard form of the wall on the park side. The wall and trees will help reduce the noise of the LIHAF Road experienced from the park.

Further tree lines are located within the western and northern edges of the park, lining the adjacent streets. As with the Northern Pocket Park, a toddler play area is located within the park and will contain a minimum of two pieces of equipment. This is located in the northeastern corner, well away from the LIHAF Road for safety. The play area will be surfaced with wet pour safety surfacing that meets the relevant fall height requirements of the play equipment.

The park is overlooked along the western and northern edges providing good passive

security. This area of public open space, when combined with the Central Pocket Park and the Northwestern Pocket Park below, makes up the 2,547m² of POS 1.

c) Central Pocket Park

This park is located in the centre of the proposals between development areas A1 and A3. It is approximately 776m² in size. It is divided into northern and southern sections by a path that connects the cores of the A1 and A3 homezones. As with the other parks this is largely comprised of amenity grass to provide flexible community spaces suitable to children's play, ball games, community events, sunbathing, socialising, etc.

A shared surface street forms the western boundary with a tree line along this edge of the open space. Areas of parking are located to the northern and southern ends of the park. These have been segregated from the park by blocks of shrub planting to both screen the parked vehicle from the park whilst also providing an element of protection to the vehicles from park activities such as ball games.

A play park is located in the centre of the park on the southern side of the central path. As with the other Pocket Parks this will focus on toddler play equipment and will contain a minimum of two pieces of equipment and will be surfaced with wet pour safety surfacing that meets the relevant fall height requirements of the play equipment.

As set out above, this area of public open space, when combined with the Eastern Pocket Park above and the Northwestern Pocket Park below, makes up the 2,547m² of POS 1.

d) Northwestern Pocket Park

This park is located to the north of development area A3 along the southern edge of the existing mature Austrian Pine trees. It is approximately 448m² in size. An informal gravel path runs along the southern side providing separation from the street beyond. There are pedestrians crossings located on raised junctions on the street to the west and east of the park providing easy access from the properties in Phase 2. The park is overlooked by the properties to the south.

The Pocket Park forms part of a wider greenspace along the length of the existing treeline. It is comprised of meadow grassland with pockets of amenity grassland located off the path. These pockets will contain lengths of tree trunks and tree limbs forming elements of nature-based play such as log balance beams, climbing structures and stepping logs. These lengths of tree trunk and tree limbs will be sourced from the existing mature Austrian Pine nearby on site that is to be felled to

provide the road access between development areas A1 and A2.



Image 5 – Large felled tree trunks forming informal play equipment.

As set out above, this area of public open space, when combined with the Eastern Pocket Park and Central Pocket Park above, makes up the 2,547m² of POS 1.

3) Informal greenspace/linear park

To the east of the Northwestern Pocket Park, the greenspace continues in the form of a narrow linear park along the southern edge of the mature Austrian Pine treeline to the northeastern edge of development area A1. This space, combined with the Pocket Park, provides a green transition between the built form of the proposal and the college grounds to the north. The space would transition from amenity grassland adjacent to the street to shade tolerant, meadow grassland beneath the trees. The existing stone wall would be retained and repaired where necessary.



Image 6 – Image of a linear greenspace with informal path providing an off road pedestrian/cycle route.

A new hedge and tree line is proposed along the western end of the Pocket Park. This will continue the eastern interface between the proposed development and the Mungret college grounds to the north.

An offroad self-bound gravel path will extend through the western part of the linear greenspace. This path will provide definition between the two areas of grassland. The path also provides an offroad path connection between the proposed Public Square and the homezones of A1, A2 and A3.

The retention of the existing mature Austrian Pine trees along this edge will filter views of the proposed homes from the College buildings to the north. This will limit the visual impact on the setting of the college.

The eastern section of this linear greenspace will remain as an informal naturalised greenspace under the canopy of the trees. There is the potential however, that future connectivity could be provided along here if appropriate and attractive to the wider community.

Tree and Structure Planting

As part of the proposals one tree will be removed and approximately 7,523m² of overgrown hedgerow vegetation (Dwg. MP-L-005) and some scrub vegetation in the northern part of the site. The proposed landscaping associated with the proposed development includes approximately 170 new trees, 1,320m² of proposed structure planting, 322m of new hedge



Public Square Tree -
Tilia cordata 'Greenspire'



Street Tree 1 - *Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata'



Street Tree 2 - *Carpinus betulus* 'Columnaris'



Feature Tree - *Fagus sylvatica* 'Dawyck Purple'



Park Tree - *Prunus avium Plena*



A2 Boundary Tree -
Sorbus aria



Homezone Tree 1 -
Betula pendula 'Spider Alley'



Homezone Tree 2 -
Liquidambar orientalis



Homezone Tree 3 -
Sorbus aucuparia 'Fastigiata'

Image 7 – Proposed tree species

Flowering cherry trees (*Prunus avium Plena*) have been specified to the Public Open Spaces to provide an ornamental and aesthetically pleasing character. This is a variety of the native Irish wild cherry.

A row of narrowly conical, medium-sized small-leaved limes is proposed in the Public Square. A mix of fruit trees lines the pedestrian route northwards to the crèche. This is in keeping with the walled garden nature of this space. These two elements of tree planting will provide a clear, defined continuation from the agricultural land to the south to Mungret Park to the north.

A smaller version of the Himalayan birch has been selected within the front courtyard of the crèche and the apartment parking area. These will provide some dappled shade without towering over the outdoor spaces of the crèche to the west or obstructing views of the College to the north. The peelable bark and the rustling sound of the wind through the trees will also provide an element of interest for the children in the crèche.

There are two areas of proposed structure planting, further to the proposed public open spaces described above. The first of these is located on the northern side of the eastern

length of the mature Austrian Pine trees, in the Root Protection Zone between the tree line and the backs of the rear gardens of the proposed homes to the north. As this is essentially an area of negative space, it is proposed to plant this with native, thorny structure planting, such as Hawthorn, Holly, Blackthorn, Dog Rose and Gorse, all of which are present in the wider area. The thorny nature of these plants will discourage people from accessing this area and provide security to the rear of these properties. This planting would be carried out in the first planting season of the proposed works to provide it with the as much time to establish prior to completion of the works.

The second area of structure planting comprises hedge and tree planting along the western edge of Phase 1B. As previously mentioned under the northern pocket Park, the central section of this edge is being left open to retain the visual connection between the Observatory and the College. In contrast the proposed hedge and tree planting to the north and south will partially filter and soften views of the proposed housing when viewed from the college.



Figure 5 - MP-L-003 Planting Plan

Independent Living for Older Persons Courtyard

The central courtyard to this development has been subdivided into a series of spaces

defined by elements of the building layout, namely the stairwells as the routes between these are likely to be the main desire lines through the space (see Dwg. MP-L-002). An outer path runs around the whole space connecting each of the units within the development.



Figure 6 – Dwg. MP-L-002 Hard and Soft Landscaping A4 & S1

The spaces transition from a formal, hard paved, seating area in the west, adjacent to the community areas of this development, to more casual areas in the east, such as allotments. The western, hard paved, seating area extends from the community rooms within the development forming a triangular area which relates to the building outline. Low seating walls provide definition between this outdoor seating area and the spaces beyond. These walls could also incorporate inbuilt barbecue areas away from the building.

To the north of the outdoor seating area is a kitchen garden area containing herbs such as Rosemary, Thyme, Oregano, Chives, etc (See Dwg MP-L-004 for the Planting Plan). A small bay tree will provide a feature element in the centre of this herb bed. Not only will this area provide the residents with fresh herbs for culinary purposes, but it will also provide colour and scent as well as plants that are pollinator friendly.



Image 8 - Informal gravel surfacing providing a games area for playing Petanque.

Conclusion

The following paragraphs conclude by setting out how the landscape proposals achieve the six qualities of Placemaking.

Distinctive

Do the proposals create or enhance a sense of identity? Has the development been designed to make the most of its setting and do the landscape and planting proposals respect and reflect this wider site context? Is there a cohesive landscape structure that creates a sense of place?

The landscape framework incorporates the existing mature Austrian Pine tree line and associated stone wall, maintaining the immediate landscape setting of Mungret College and a visual separation from the proposed housing. Proposed tree and hedge planting softens views of the housing from the College whilst the open views between the College buildings and the Observatory are retained. These measures ensure the proposals retain and enhance the existing sense of identity whilst integrating the proposals into the existing setting.

The Public Square and associated northern connecting path provide a cohesive connection between the existing College buildings and the proposal, whilst connectivity is provided through the north of development area A2 between the main block of proposed homes and the larger open space of Mungret Park to the north. The Central Pocket Park provides a core

to the larger area of housing of A1 and A3, whilst the Eastern Pocket Park provides a quieter park in the eastern corner of the proposals and the Northwestern Pocket Park provides a more natural space with the Public Square then forming a formal open space in the west.

The above elements all contribute to provide a cohesive landscape structure which combined with the retention of existing site elements creates a strong sense of place.

Safe and pleasant

Are new spaces safe, attractive, useable and at the right scale? Is there a clear distinction between public and private spaces? Will footpaths, open spaces and play areas feel secure? Does new planting enhance amenity and provide delight?

The proposed housing will look out on to the areas of open space and avoids orientating the rear of the homes on to areas of open space. This ensures overlooking of the proposed open spaces and associated paths, ensuring they feel secure. The variety in the types of open spaces across the site, including Pocket Parks, linear greenspaces and the more formal Public Square enhances the amenity and enjoyment that can be gained from interaction with the landscape.

Welcoming

Have good landscape features or views etc. been retained and made the most of? Have new landmarks or gateways been created which will help people to find their way around? Have opportunities been taken for creating distinctive art works or allow for community growing initiatives?

The existing Observatory has been set within an area of open space whilst views between it and the College Buildings have been retained. The stone wall along the mature line of Austrian Pine trees will be retained and repaired where necessary. The stone wall to the south of the Eastern Pocket Park will provide a gateway feature when approaching along the Link Street from the east whilst the Public Square acts as a gateway from the west. Feature lighting is proposed within the Public Square whilst the Observatory forms a focal point adjacent to the Northern Pocket Park.

Easy to get to and move around

Is there a well designed network of paths and cycle routes linking open spaces and facilities within the development and the surrounding area? Will there be access for people with disabilities?

The shared surface homezones reduce the priority of the vehicle user and provide more importance to the pedestrian or cyclist. A couple of offroad paths are also provided linking the Public Square with the housing to the east and the College Buildings to the north. This

combination of shared surface homezones and offroad paths provides strong connectivity both within the Proposed Development and to the surrounding area. The shared surface homezones provide easier access for people with disabilities due to the absence of kerbs.

Adaptable

Will there be opportunities to make external areas adaptable to a variety of future uses?

The proposed Public Square provides a flexible hard paved open space located in the centre of the Proposed Development that could be utilised for a variety of uses. The nature of the open grassed parks also provides a series of flexible green open spaces that would be adaptable to a variety of community events or uses.

Resource efficient

Has the opportunity been taken to minimise energy use e.g. exploiting solar gain, using existing landform or planting to provide shelter or creating new shelterbelts? Have existing landscape features of value been retained and safeguarded? Have opportunities been taken to improve habitats and support wildlife? Are the materials specified for external works available from local or sustainable sources? Have ongoing maintenance costs been carefully considered and funding secured?

The existing mature Austrian Pines and the associated stone wall have been retained where possible. This also provides an immediate element of shelter to parts of the Proposed Development. The south facing nature of the slope that forms much of the site helps to maximise solar gain within the Proposed Development. A variety of open space types have been proposed incorporating habitats such as amenity and meadow grassland and native shrub planting, as well as retaining the nearby felled tree as play structures. This is in accord with *Objective EH O4 Creation of New Habitats of the LDP* and will help to improve habitats and support wildlife within the Proposed Development. The hard-paving materials proposed are available from companies with rain water harvesting and incorporating recycled aggregates.

In conclusion the proposal accords with the various objectives of the Local Area Plan and addresses the six qualities of Placemaking. It draws on existing landscape elements to provide a pleasant, distinctive and diverse landscape framework and open space layout that respects the surrounding context.