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Landscape Design Rational – Landscape Architecture

Project:

Strategic Housing Development at Millfield Service Station, Redforge Road,
Blackpool, Cork

Prepared on behalf of: Bellmount Developments Limited

Prepared by:

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1.0 Introduction

The objective of the design rationale is to describe the landscape and external works as part of the proposed mixed-use Build to Rent development, which will include the demolition of existing structures on site and the construction of 114 build to rent apartments (comprising a mix of 1 and 2 bed apartments). Residential amenity facilities will include a reception, residents' gym, lounge area and shared workspace.

The provision of landscaping and amenity areas will include an enclosed courtyard and a rooftop garden with landscaping works extending into the public realm along Redforge Road and the access road to Blackpool Retail Park. These public realm improvements will include widened footpaths and pavement improvements, pedestrian crossing, tree planting, raised tables/planters and seating areas.

The landscape plan also includes associated ancillary development such as pedestrian/cyclist facilities lighting, drainage, boundary treatments, bin and bicycle storage, ESB Sub-station and plant at ground floor level.

This report should be read in conjunction with documents issued and included in this submission by Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects, McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultants, Butler Cammoranesi Architects, and others.

Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects visited the site in July and October 2020 in order to observe conditions on site, such as existing trees and the urban environment, giving context with respect to adjoining sites, boundaries, and other items, which would have a bearing on the design process.

The following additional documents have been issued by Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects as part of this submission:

No.	Scale	Size	Title
2014-LA-P001	A1	Various	Street & Ground Floor Landscape Layout
2014-LA-P002	A1	Various	Roof Garden Landscape Layout
2014-LVIA	-	A4	Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

2.0 Landscape Appraisal

2.1 General

The site for the proposed development extends to 0.73Ha and is bounded to the east by the Redforge Road and to the south by the access lane to the Blackpool Retail Park. To the west and north the boundary to the site is composed of the tall blank façade of the Argos building and to its north by the adjacent boundary treatments to the derelict Millfield Cottages.

The site currently contains a petrol station and convenience shop. These facilities are complimented by associated ancillary services including a car wash, car vacuum and tyre pumps and a large extent of hard surfaced/tarmacked yards.

The site contains very limited existing vegetation as the forecourt is mostly composed of macadam and block paving. However present onsite are 4Nr semi-mature Quercus (Oak) sp, a semi mature Prunus (Cherry) sp, a semi mature Betula (Birch) sp and a semi mature Fagus (beech) Sp . Some ornamental planting exists in a linear bed parallel to the Redforge Road. An overgrown Grisellinia hedge also exists on the northern site boundary.

For further site information and wider site context see accompanying Landscape Visual Impact Assessment.



Existing conditions, the site viewed from Redforge Road



Existing conditions showing site use with Petrol Station and Shop and hard surfaced yard.



Existing conditions showing derelict Millfield Cottages to west.

2.2 Strategic Location/Policy Context

In the Cork City Development Plan the site is located in the north of the City in the North Central Suburbs and is zoned as Objective 8, “District Centres”. It should be noted that “In addition to retail uses, District Centres will also provide a focus for other uses, including: retail warehousing, retail office, commercial leisure, services, (e.g. libraries, hotels, personal and medical services) and residential uses”.

Goal 5 of the Core Strategy (Chapter 2, P.15) of the Cork City Development Plan, states that “There are ... opportunities for creation of new character areas in locations such as Docklands, Mahon and Blackpool and at the arrival points or gateways into the city”.



Adjacent blank façade of Argos to west.

2.3 Existing Boundaries

Northern and Western Boundaries. These boundaries are currently formed by a 2.4M high Green Steel Palisade fence. Overgrown planting currently softens this appearance.

Southern Boundary – The boundary to the Access Road to the Blackpool Retail Park is composed of an un-rendered block wall. This varies in height between approximately 1.5 and 2 Meters. Sections of this wall are currently in a poor condition and have been externally buttressed to hold them in place.

Eastern boundary- An existing .5m high block wall forms the boundary to the Redforge Road. This boundary is interrupted by two accesses to the Petrol Station and contains ornamental planting.



Southern Boundary to Blackpool Retail Centre Access Road.



Northern Boundary to adjacent Millfield Cottages

3.0 Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy is driven by 3 key components:

- Establishment of a high quality streetscape to settle the building within the existing environment. This will include a generous building setback to allow for widened footpaths and provision of street furniture along the busy Redforge Road.
- Provision of a ground floor courtyard as a high quality central core allowing access for service vehicles and an open space for gatherings.
- Creating a semi-private roof garden which provide spaces for residents to use.

3.1 Proposed Boundaries

The setback of the buildings on the eastern, southern and northern boundaries will provide widened public footpaths and street furniture for public use. New entrances will open onto the streetscape allowing access into the building core. Adjacent to the carriageway heavy reconstituted concrete kerbs will form physical barriers with the roads, these will be enforced by the use of coloured steel planters to stop vehicular access along the footpath.

The Western boundary will be composed of hardwood timber salts tied with internal steel rods to soften this aspect from the courtyard. This boundary will be augmented with adjacent planting as indicated in 2014-LA-P001.

3.2 Public Space Design: Streetscape

The public realm will be defined by the use of exemplary materials to complement and reflect the proposed architectural finishes and existing urban landscape context.

The carriageway width will be reduced to 6M with new footpaths catering for increased pedestrian use. The proposal makes provision for considered street crossings, traffic calming measures and robust materials including high quality paving materials street tree planting and raised planters with robust timber seating elements.

These necessary urban interventions and the increased usage will animate the neglected Redforge Road turning an existing backstreet into a lively component of an expanding city neighbourhood.

The majority of the site will be paved using reconstituted concrete pavers with granite aggregate – a material that is sympathetic with much of the streetscape improvement works currently being undertaken by Cork City Council. Here these pavers will be used with a 400 x 200mm light grey slab forming the outer walkable footpath with a stripe of 400 x 200mm slabs in mixed greys used to create a

feature zone closer to the building interspersed with street furniture and raised planters.

As mentioned previously textured concrete and granite aggregate kerbs are proposed to separate the road from the footpath but as the majority of the road frontage (Redforge Road) has been designed to mitigate vehicular speed this will be treated with paved entry ramps and level surfaces (with the footpath) a bus pull in / bus stop and a drop of area these will also be paved to aesthetically widen the public realm. These will be paved using a heavy duty 100 x 200mm dark grey block paver. This smaller unit will also be used at the emergency vehicular entrance to the site. A proposed crossing at the south west will link to Blackpool retail park.

Street trees will be planted to the front of the footpath close to the carriageway to allow for a wide walkable area, planted at regular intervals the trees will create a rhythm along the frontage and soften the proposed built facade while allowing space between trees for street furniture. Contemporary steel furniture has been chosen to provide robust seating options with timber benches allowing the addition of seating and stainless steel cycle racks allowing secure bike parking.



Bespoke street furniture with benches and planters

3.3 Semi Private Spaces: Courtyard

The ground floor courtyard forms a central core tying together the back of the new buildings and providing space for service vehicles to access the site. Linking to the streetscape to the North, South and East these accesses will be paved using the same high quality paving materials as the streetscape with 100 x 200mm heavy duty paving blocks. These will be laid in alternating tones of grey the paving forms directional stripes and defines the area adding interest to an open space which has been largely dictated by emergency vehicle access.

The center of this new courtyard will be subdivided into 3 distinct spaces allowing for semi private gatherings. All spaces will be edged in flush granite stone edging to delineate these spaces from the wider courtyard and will be complimented with seating and ornamental planting.



Long timber benches to the courtyard with adjacent planted spaces

3.4 Semi Private Spaces: Roofgardens.

A new roof garden will be created on the 4th floor (320m²) of the development. This will be secured with a 1.8m high glass balustrade to the outer edge of the space and surfaced in a mix of materials including concrete /aggregate pavers and hardwood timber decking.

Raised planters at 450mm high soften the outer edge of the garden while allowing the internal space to remain physically open while changes in surfacing material divide the roofgarden into defined areas.

Paths are paved in 600x300mm contemporary grey flags with feature paving areas in a larger, lighter grey, 900 x 600mm natural stone flag.

Bespoke furniture located on the roofgarden will include, Lounger Seating, Cast Stone Pebble Seats, as well as Hardwood Cube seats.



Roofgarden materials, steel planters with pebble seats.

4.0 Planting

Landscape Plans, drawing number's 2014 LA-P001 and 2014 LA-P002 show planting locations and include a schedule of proposed ornamental planting and trees.

4.1 Tree planting

As the site currently contains an extensive tarmacked footprint the only existing Tree planting are adjacent to the site boundaries. Given the requirement to provision for widened footpaths on the site periphery it is not possible to retain these species and it is proposed to clear this vegetation and plant new appropriate street tree species.

Proposed tree planting will see trees selected for different landscape characters suited to specific areas:

Streetscape trees

-Street trees: Sixteen *Tilia Cordata* (Lime) Trees are proposed to strengthen the streetscape facing with the Redforge Road, having a tight conical form the trees will add rhythm and structure to the streetscape while the clear stem allows unrestricted views along the street. These will be planted at 20-25 cm girths, 4.5-5M high and will be guyed underground to avoid using tree stakes in such a prominent area.

Groundfloor Courtyard:

One Mature feature tree will be housed in the corner of the courtyard within a raised planter. *Robinia Pseudoacacia* (Black Locust) is a hardy tree that will grow well in this confined, enclosed space and also add stature to the open courtyard. Planted at 40-45cm girth the 7M high tree will provide immediate impact and will be clear stemmed to 3M to avoid conflict with adjacent activity.

Three *Quercus Paulustris* (Pin Oak) trees will be planted on the periphery to the courtyard on the western boundary. This will be complimented with two groups of *Betula Albonensis* (Birch) trees. These will be planted at 20-25cm girth and 16-18cm girth, 4-4.5M high and spaced to allow ample room for rooting space.

Roofgarden Trees:

Three small growing ornamental trees have been selected for use in the roof garden's raised planters. These will be multi stemmed offering a lot of structural interest. *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis* (Chinese Dogwood) will be planted at 2M high and will offer a rounded compact shape with large white flowers and a slightly larger *Amelanchier lamarckii* (Juneberry), planted at 2.5-3M high provides a light, leafy structure with small, delicate white flowers. These will be complimented with *Acer Palmatum*.

All trees will be guyed securely within the planters to help counteract wind pressure.



Amelanchier lamarckii for roof garden



Tilia Cordata clear stemmed for Streetscape

4.2 Ornamental shrub, Grass and perennial planting

Ornamental planting is proposed at specific locations to introduce some diversity to the landscape with a series of hardy, low maintenance plants chosen and arranged in site specific mixes to soften, add drama or define a character area. The planting choice will provide year round interest with lively pops of seasonal colour and retained winter structure.

At ground and street level 4 planting mixes have been composed, three of these offer a mix of architectural grasses and perennials, 1 mix suited to sunny, light conditions and two to more shaded areas. The fourth mix contains hardy semi-evergreen shrubs and perennials.

Within the roof gardens raised planters will house a mix of softer ornamental grasses with light pink, purple and yellow flowering perennials adding a delicate color mix.



Mixed ornamental grasses and perennials for use in the raised planters

5.0 Implementation

It is proposed that the full landscape planting be undertaken to the later stages of the building works to ensure the safety of trees and softer planting materials. Note all planting and landscaping is to be completed before practical completion of the development.

All bare root trees shall be planted from October to March while potted planting material may be planted year round.

Planting to streetscape, courtyard and riverside will be carried out in conjunction with the development of specific units, close to the end of the development, ensuring minimal damage to the vegetation.

6.0 Maintenance

6.1 After Care Period:

The Aftercare Period shall extend for an 18 month period. During the Aftercare Period maintenance visits shall be carried out, at least monthly from March to October and twice during the dormant season to carry out the following operations to establish healthy growing plants in weed free areas. Maintenance operations shall include: watering, firming-up, pest and disease control, grass cutting, general pruning, weed control, top up mulch and autumn tidying.

Replacement Planting. All plants, which have died, are missing or have failed to thrive, shall be noted and replaced with the same size and species as originally planted, as soon as failure has been observed or if in winter in the following planting season.

6.2 Scope of work

The maintenance of trees, shrubs and perennials for the period of each contract.

During this period the contractor shall keep all footpaths clear of weeds, mulch and rubbish from site at the conclusion of each day's work.

6.3 Trees and Shrubs

Shrubs and trees loosened by wind, frost or any maintenance operations shall be firmed up. This shall be carried out at least four times a year. If any plants have been completely lifted out of the ground they shall not be replanted but replaced. A 500 mm diameter circle shall be kept free of grass around the base of each tree to facilitate grass cutting and root development of the tree.

6.4 Perennials and Ornamental Grasses

All perennial plantings shall be maintained in a weed free state by hand removing weeds. No herbicide shall be used within perennial beds. All perennials shall be pruned annually in February each year, by cutting to their base. Arising's shall be removed off site and disposed of in accordance with legislation. All exposed soil shall be topped up with 50mm of fine-composted bark mulch and maintained to this height.

6.5 Drainage and Irrigation

-Maintenance, All gardens require a minimum of two inspections a year to ensure that the irrigation and drainage outlets etc. are maintained, maintenance regime to be confirmed with manufacturer.

6.6 Furniture

All external furniture shall be checked annually to ensure that all material is of sound condition, and has not been damaged during the maintenance and/or operations periods.

6.7 Paving and footpaths

All paving and footpaths shall be maintained in a weed and mould free condition and shall be power hosed at a minimum of once per year. Cleaning frequency may need to be increased to ensure that all paths remain clean and tactile.

6.8 Weed Control

Any weed growth occurring during the maintenance period shall be spot treated with a glyphosate free herbicide – “Basta” or similar approved. All herbicide shall be applied to the manufacturer’s instructions.

6.9 Plant deaths

All tree and shrub losses to natural causes after planting shall be replaced by the contractor within the following season with plants equal in size and shape to those lost.

6.10 Pests and diseases

Experienced personnel shall inspect all plants at least twice a year for the presence of pests and diseases. If either or both are present the contractor shall report the conditions and implement the appropriate control measures immediately.

Any heavily infested plants may need to be removed and replaced with clean stock.