Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Proposed Strategic Housing Development
South Link Road
Cork City
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Clove Hill  
City Gate Plaza  
Dublin Port

One Albert Quay  
The Curragh  
Tawlings  
The Capitol
Statement of Competency

The companies and personnel who contributed to this report and their qualifications and experience are outlined below.

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The EIAR Screening Report has been compiled and coordinated by Jan Oosterhof and assisted by Eamonn Prenter of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds town planning consultants who are experienced in the coordination of such documents. The report has been prepared to support a SHD application under the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act, 2016.

This EIAR screening assessment has been prepared by personal with competency and experience in both the EIAR and screening processes and by those qualified in the relevant fields of technical expertise. The report / assessment has also had due regard to and is consistent with the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared by Greenleaf Ecology. A statement of competency / experience for each person involved in this EIAR screening Report, as identified in the table above, is presented below.
Eamonn Prenter, BA (Hons) Geography, MSc Planning; MRTPI MIPI. Director, Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

Eamonn is a chartered town planner with both public and private experience and over 30 years post qualification experience having undertaken a number of EISs, EIARs and screening reports for both types of documents. He has also carried out a number of SEAs (Strategic Environmental Assessments) for various planning policy documents including statutory local area and development plans.

Jim Kelly, B.Agr.Sc. (Landscape Horticulture), Diploma in Landscape Architecture, MILI ILLI. Associate Director, Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

Jim Kelly is a chartered landscape architect with 30 years of experience in the field of landscape planning, design and management. His qualifications include B.Agr.Sc. (Landscape Horticulture), from University College Dublin (1985) and a Post Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from the University of Central England, Birmingham (2005). He is a full member of both the Irish Landscape Institute (MILI) and the Landscape Institute U.K. (CMLI).

He has professional work experience in Ireland and the UK in both the public and private sectors. He has worked in the Cork office of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds for the past 12 years as Principal Landscape Architect and in his current role as Director.

Jim has prepared landscape proposals in support of planning applications for a wide range of projects in the Munster region including public and private housing schemes, commercial developments, office developments, healthcare projects, public parks, roads and streetscape projects. He has also overseen the development of detailed design packages for tendering and has fulfilled the role of employer’s representative through project implementation.

Orla O’Callaghan, BA (Hons), Masters in Planning and Sustainable Development (MPlan), MIPI. Senior Planner, Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

Orla is a qualified planner with a BA (Hons) Degree. Orla has 6 years post qualification experience. She has experience of providing inputs to both EIARs and EIAR screening from her role as a planner.

Jan Oosterhof, BSocSc (Hons), Masters in Planning and Sustainable Development (MPlan). Executive Planner, Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

Jan is a qualified planner with both public and private sector experience and has 4 years post qualification experience. Jan has experience of providing inputs to both EIARs and EIAR screening from his role as a planner.

Karen Banks, BSc, MCIEEM. Greenleaf Ecology

Karen is an ecologist with 12 years’ experience in the field of ecological assessment. She holds a BSc in Environment and Development from Durham University, and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Karen specialises in ecological field survey, is a skilled botanical surveyor and a licensed bat surveyor. In her career as an ecologist Karen has conducted Appropriate Assessments (AA) covering the transport, energy and land use sectors, with work including assessment of Plans at the national, regional and local level; and
numerous AAs of projects. Karen has conducted Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA) including those for flood alleviation schemes, housing developments, wind farms and transport infrastructure.

**John Cronin, BA, MRUP, MUBC. Principal Consultant and Managing Director, JCA Archaeology**

John Cronin holds qualifications in archaeology and geography (B.A. (UCC), 1991), regional and urban planning (MRUP (UCD) 1993) and urban and building conservation (MUBC (UCD), 1999). He has amassed twenty-five years postgraduate experience in built and cultural heritage assessment.

**Brian Johnson, BSc (Ac Eng), MIOA. Acoustic Consultant, CLV Consulting**

Brian is an internationally experienced acoustic consultant who has been working in the fields of architectural / building acoustics and noise control since 1994. He has been based in America, Europe, Asia and Australia and is a member of the Institute of Acoustics. Brian has over twenty years of experience in the field of acoustics. He has extensive knowledge in the fields of building and architectural design acoustics and worked as AECOM's acoustic specialist in the Middle East for 4+ years.

**Martin Hanley, BE (Civil Eng., Hons.), CEng MIEI. Director, MHL and Associates Ltd Consulting Engineers**

Martin is a chartered engineer and a registered Member of the Association of Consulting Engineers. Martin is qualified Road Safety Auditor (NRA approved RSA Team Member) and is Certified PSDP Designer/Manager. Martin joined MHL and Associates in 1999 and is a project manager and director.

**James Vaughan, BEng, MIEI. Project Engineer, OSL Consulting Engineers**

James is a qualified Civil and Structural Engineer qualified in 2013 and 2015 respectively. James has been employed by O’Shea Leader Consulting Engineers as a project engineer since September 2016. James has been involved in a whole series of projects ranging from Civil (Drains, sewer and mains water) to structural design projects. James has taken some of these projects from concept design to completion.
1 Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds has prepared this EIAR Screening Assessment on behalf of the applicant, Seamus and Evelyn Scally for a proposed strategic housing development of 118 no. built to rent apartments on a site bounded by South City Link Road (N27) and Gasworks Road and Rockboro Road, Cork City with a view to determining the requirement for an Environment Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

It is noted that regulations dealing with environmental screening obligations under Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 (“the 2014 Directive”) have not yet been implemented in Ireland. This screening report has had regard to Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by the 2014 Directive. The provisions of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, including the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations which came into effect on 1st September 2018, are also considered in this report with respect to EIA and EIA Thresholds.

This report outlines the methodology used to screen the proposed development in respect of environmental assessment and assesses the requirement to undertake an EIAR. It sets out the proposal, the assessment of potential environmental effects, and the outcome and conclusions of the screening process.

This EIAR Screening Statement has been prepared having regard to Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive EU 2014/52 which came into effect in May of 2017. The EIAR Screening Statement has been written to address the guidance provided by “Advice on Administrative Provisions in Advance of Transposition and Implementation of Directive 2014/52/EU on the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (EIA Directive)” and the ‘Key Issues Consultation Paper’ prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning Community and Local Government, May 2017. The EIAR has consequently been informed by the advice contained in the DHPCLG guidance to date.

1.2 What is an Environmental Impact Assessment Report

The amended directive uses the term Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) for what was formerly referred to in Irish legislation as an Environmental Impact Statement.

An EIAR is:

‘A statement of the effects, if any, which proposed development, if carried out, would have on the environment.’

The EIAR is prepared by the proposer of a development and is submitted to a Competent Authority (CA) as part of a consent process. The CA uses the information provided to assess the environmental effects of the project and, in the context of other considerations, to help determine if consent should be granted. The information in the EIAR is also used by other parties to evaluate the acceptability of the project and its effects on the environment and to inform their submissions to the
CA. The EIAR consists of a systematic analysis and assessment of the potential effects of a proposed project on the receiving environment. The amended EIA Directive prescribes a range of environmental factors which are used to organise descriptions of the environment and these factors must be addressed in the EIAR.

The key changes introduced by the amended Directive and which are relevant to the information to be contained in an EIAR relate to a range of environmental factors which are used to organise descriptions of the environment and these factors must be addressed in the EIAR. These are listed below:

1) Population and Human Health
2) Land Soils and Geology
3) Water and Services including Hydrology and Hydrogeology
4) Air Quality and Climate
5) Noise and Vibration
6) Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna)
7) Traffic, Transportation and Parking
8) Cultural Heritage
9) Archaeology
10) Waste Management
11) Material Assets
12) Visual Impact Assessment
13) Interactions

The factors as listed above have been assessed in this EIAR Screening Report.

The documents assessed in determining whether an EIAR is required as set out in this document include:

- Plans and drawings comprising the planning application
- Planning Statement by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds
- Architectural Design Statement by MDP Architects
- Natura Impact Statement by Greenleaf Ecology
- Ecological Report by Greenleaf Ecology
- Engineering Design Report by OSL Engineers
- Transport and Mobility Assessment by MHL Consulting Engineers
- Draft Construction Management Plan and Construction Environment Management Plan by OSL Engineers
- Draft Waste Management Plan
- Archaeological and Built Heritage Assessment

These documents can be found under separate cover within the submitted SHD Application Pack and should be read in conjunction with this EIAR screening report.

2 Purposes of this EIAR Screening Report

2.1 Overview

The overall purpose of this Screening Report is to identify and detail the findings of the desktop study undertaken to analyse the impacts, if any, of the proposed development on the receiving environment and, based on the results, decide whether or not an EIAR is required.

The term ‘screening’ is used to describe the process of ascertaining whether or not a proposed development requires an Environmental Impact Assessment Report to be undertaken by reference to mandatory requirements where thresholds for specified
EIA development are exceeded and sub-threshold criteria where the impact on the environment is considered to be significant. EIAR legislation sets out the types of projects that require an EIAR.

The mandatory requirement for an EIAR is based on the nature and/or scale of a development. This is addressed in EU Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directive 97/11/EC and 2014/52/EU). Regard must also be had to the criteria set out under Annex III of the EIA Directive the majority of which are also referred to under Schedule 7 of the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018. In determining whether a development requires an EIAR to be undertaken, it is first necessary to determine whether the development falls into a category of development for which an EIAR is mandatory and thereafter consider whether the proposed development would require an EIAR if the relevant spatial or area threshold for that category is exceeded. Where the development falls within the relevant area or spatial category as sub-threshold, it is then necessary to consider whether the proposed development is likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment. Such significant effects may arise by virtue of the type and scale of development proposed, and also the location of the development in relation to nearby sensitive environments as set out below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Screening Process**
2.2 Legislative Background

The Planning and Development Act, as amended and the 2001 Planning and Development Regulations, as amended, outline the requirements for the assessment of the effects of certain projects on the environment.

Section 176 of the Planning and Development Act provides the initial steps in relation to the criteria of determination on whether an EIA is required. It states that:

1) the Minister may, in connection with the Council Directive or otherwise, make regulations
   a) identifying development which may have significant effects on the environment, and,
   b) specifying the manner in which the likelihood that such development would have significant effects on the environment is to be determined.

2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), regulations under that subsection may provide for all or any one or more of the following matters:
   a) the establishment of thresholds or criteria for the purpose of determining which classes of development are likely to have significant effects on the environment;
   b) the establishment of different such thresholds or criteria in respect of different classes of areas;
   c) the determination on a case-by-case basis, in conjunction with the use of thresholds or criteria, of the developments which are likely to have significant effects on the environment;
   d) where thresholds or criteria are not established, the determination on a case-by-case basis of the developments which are likely to have significant effects on the environment;
   e) the identification of selection criteria in relation to—
      i. the establishment of thresholds or criteria for the purpose of determining which classes of development are likely to have significant effects on the environment, or
      ii. the determination on a case-by-case basis of the developments which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

3) Any reference in an enactment to development of a class specified under Article 24 of the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1989 (S.I. No. 349 of 1989), shall be deemed to be a reference to a class of development prescribed under this section."

Part 10, s. 92 defines "sub-threshold development" as "development of a type set out in Part 2 of Schedule 54 which does not equal or exceed, as the case may be, a quantity, area or other limit specified in that Schedule in respect of the relevant class of development."

2.2.1 Project type

The screening process begins by establishing whether the proposal is a 'project' as understood by the Directive (as amended). Next, it must be ascertained whether the proposal is a type where EIAR is prescribed under Schedule 7 of the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 and whether it exceeds the applicable thresholds or not. The Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment Reports published by the EPA note that projects at first glance may not appear to come under the Schedule but on closer
examination when the process is further examined, they may do so because of the sensitivity or significance of the receiving environment etc.

The proposed development falls within the category of an ‘Infrastructure project’ within Schedule 5(10)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended or Schedule 7 of the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018.

2.2.2 Thresholds

The next step to screening is to determine whether the project exceeds a specific threshold. Thresholds are set out in Annex I and II of the EIA Directive, as amended.

**Mandatory EIAR**

The proposal would fall within the category of “Infrastructure Project” project under Schedule 5(10)(b) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended which states that a mandatory EIA must be carried out for the following projects:

i. *Construction of more than 500 dwelling units.*

ii. *Construction of a car-park providing more than 400 spaces, other than a car park provided as part of, and incidental to the primary purpose of, a development.*

iii. *Construction of a shopping centre with a gross floor space exceeding 10,000 square metres.*

iv. *Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.*

The area of the proposed SHD application site at 0.395 Ha is less than the current 2 Ha threshold and the proposed development at 118 no. units is less than 500 dwellings threshold. Therefore it can be concluded that an EIAR is not a mandatory requirement under Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended for the proposed residential development at South Link Road, Cork City.

While the mandatory requirements for developments are relatively straightforward, being based on type and scale, the discretionary (or sub-threshold) requirements are based on an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development at the subject site. This is assessed below.

**Sub Threshold**

Where a project is of a specified type but does not meet, or exceed, the applicable threshold identified above then the likelihood of the project having significant effects on the environment needs to be considered (both adverse and beneficial). This is done by reference to the criteria as specified in Annex III of the amended Directive.

Recital (27) of Directive 2014/52/EU states that:

“The screening procedure should ensure that an environmental impact assessment is only required for projects likely to have significant effects on the environment”.

The Guidelines go on to state that the project needs to be considered in its entirety for screening purposes. This means that all elements of an overall project must be
considered for significance of impact. Other related projects need to be identified also and appraised at an appropriate level of detail (where appropriate). This will identify the likely significance of cumulative and indirect impacts thus providing the consent authority with a context for its determination.

This screening exercise has determined that the proposed development does not meet or exceed the applicable threshold of 2 hectares in the present case.

Directive 2014/52/EU introduced a new mandatory article, Article 4(4), which states:

“Where Member States decide to require a determination for projects listed in Annex II, the developer shall provide information on the characteristics of the project and the likely significant effects on the environment. The detailed list of information to be provided is specified in Annex IIA. The developer shall take into account, where relevant, the available results of other assessments of the effects on the environment carried out pursuant to Union legislation other than this Directive. The developer may also provide a description of any features of the project and/or measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment”.

Article 4(4) introduces a new Annex IIA to be used in the case of a request for a Screening determination for Annex II projects. The information to be provided by the developer is set out below.

A description of the project is required, in particular:

1. A description of the physical characteristics of the whole project, and where relevant, of demolition works,
2. A description of the location of the project, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected,
3. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project.
   a. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the project on the environment resulting from,
   b. The expected residues and emissions and the production of waste where relevant; and
   c. The use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.

The Guidelines state that the criteria of Annex II shall be taken into account, where relevant, when assessing predicted environmental impact.

The criteria for determining whether or not a Sub Threshold EIAR is required are set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) including the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 and Annex III of the EIA Directive as amended. This report will review the development under these three main criteria.

Schedule 7 of the Planning & Development Regulations Criteria for determining whether a development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment are as follows:

i. Characteristics of Proposed Development
ii. Location of Proposed Development
iii. Type & Characteristics of Potential Impacts

3 Site Location & Context and the Proposed Development

3.1 Site Location and Context

Planning Application Site
The site is within the administrative boundary of Cork City Council at a prominent location on the South City Link Road (N27) on one of the major traffic arteries into and out of Cork City. The site itself was formerly used as a railway yard and is now vacant and therefore underutilised for such a strategically important and prominent site in the Country’s second city. A number of the former railway structures are still visible on the site and have been carefully incorporated into the scheme where appropriate. There are other off site areas included within the planning application red line including on Gasworks Road, Rockboro Road, at the junction with the Old Blackrock Road and Hibernian Road. These are areas where pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure are being proposed and/or improved to facilitate safe and convenient access to the site and landscaping works to enhance the appearance of approaches to the site.

Figure 2: Site Location Map

Immediate Site Context
The site is located just east of and adjacent to the N27 South City Link Road with the Rockboro Road and Gasworks Road on a significantly higher level and forming the eastern site boundary. There are a small number of existing houses along Rockboro Road. Three of these houses, No’s. 18-20, are designated as an Architectural Conservation Area in recognition of the materials that were used to construct them.

The southern part of the site is bounded by rockface which rises towards the rear gardens of houses on Rockboro Road and the Old Blackrock Road. There is a petrol service station and a high level footbridge that traverses the South Link connecting Hibernian Road to Gasworks and Rockboro Road to the north of the site, with
commercial and light industrial uses beyond including a car sales showroom, tyre factory and bathroom and tiles showroom. Further north on the opposite side of the N27 is the mixed use Elysian development of greater height to that proposed in this instance.

On the opposite side of the South Link Road to the west there is an elevated concrete retaining structure with commercial and industrial premised intermixed with residential uses further west. A number of the former railway structures are still visible on the site and have been carefully incorporated into the scheme where appropriate. In general the area is characterised by a typical city centre fringe mix of older residential development interspersed with commercial uses.

**Figure 3: Immediate Site Context**
3.2 Development Description

Seamus and Evelyn Scally are applying to An Bord Pleanála for permission for a Strategic Housing Development Application comprising a ‘Build to Rent’ residential development with associated facilities on a site bounded by South City Link Road (N27) and Rockboro Road and Gasworks Road, Cork.

The proposed development will consist of:

1) The construction of 118 no. build to rent apartments in two no. connected block ranging in height from 4-17 storeys comprising
   - 29 no. studio apartments
   - 42 no. 1-bed apartments
   - 37 no. 2-bed apartments
   - 5 no. 2-bed duplex units
   - 5 no. 3-bed duplex units

2) The provision of a double level courtyard at ground and first floor level with associated landscaping and communal roof terraces at 6th and 16th floor levels.

3) Proposed resident’s facilities / amenities including concierge service, laundry room, mail room, games room, communal kitchen / dining area, storage area, gym, workspaces / hot desks, bookable rooms, bookable party room and a TV/ lounge area.
4) The provision of 239 no. internally located bicycle spaces, 16 no. bicycle spaces on Gasworks Road and 5 no. car parking spaces (including 3 no. disabled spaces and 2 no. spaces reserved for service vehicles including ducting for the provision of 2 no. E Car charging points) at ground floor level.

5) A new connection to the existing pedestrian bridge that traverses the N27 linking Hibernian Road and Rockboro Road / Gasworks Road. The connection to the bridge facilitates access to the proposed development at second floor (concierge) level.

6) Improvements to local footpaths, roads and the public realm including;
   - New 1.8m footpath provided between the access to Rockboro Road and the junction with Old Blackrock Road
   - New 1.8 footpath along Rockboro Road opposite the entrance to Gas Networks Ireland
   - New raised pedestrian table along Rockboro Road providing access to Shalom Park
   - Improvement to pedestrian facilities at the existing junction of Old Blackrock Road / Boreenmanna Road
   - Improvement to pedestrian facilities at the existing junction of Old Blackrock Road / Rockboro Road
   - Improvement to pedestrian and cycle facilities at the eastern and west approaches to the pedestrian overbridge

7) The development includes a communal bin store, plant / meter room, maintenance room, service access and all associated infrastructure and site development works.

A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of the proposed development.
4 EIA Screening Exercise

4.1 Sub-Threshold Assessment Guidance

In considering whether the proposed sub-threshold development is likely to have significant environmental effects, it is necessary to have regard to the criteria set out under Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, including the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 or Annex III of the EIA Directive.

The criteria set out in Annex III are grouped into three categories:

i) Characteristics of Proposed Development (Project),

ii) Location of the Proposed Development (Project) and

iii) (Type and) Characteristics of Potential Impacts.

Consent authorities (CA) must have regard to these criteria in forming an opinion as to whether or not a sub-threshold development such as the proposed development, is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

4.2 Assessment Criteria

Schedule 7, of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended provide the criteria for determining whether a development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment under Articles 103, 109 and 120.

The criteria are set out as follows:
4.2.1 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

In impact terms, Schedule 7 of the 2018 regulations requires a review of a sub-threshold proposal in light of:

- the size of the proposed development;
- the cumulative impact with other proposed development;
- the nature of any associated demolition works;
- the use of natural resources;
- the production of waste;
- pollution and nuisances;
- the risk of accidents, having regard to substances or technologies used.

The amended EIA Directive 2014/52/EU, Annex III elaborates on the above and notes that:

"The characteristics of projects must be considered, with particular regard to:

a) the size and design of the whole project;
b) the cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects;
c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
d) the production of waste;
e) pollution and nuisances;
f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;
g) the risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)."

4.2.2 Location of the Proposed Development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—

a) the existing and approved land use,
b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,
c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:
   i. wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
   ii. coastal zones and the marine environment;
   iii. mountain and forest areas;
   iv. nature reserves and parks;
   v. areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive;
   vi. areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
   vii. densely populated areas;
   viii. landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.
4.2.3 Characteristics of Potential Impacts

The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development taking into account—

a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
b) the nature of the impact,
c) the transboundary nature of the impact,
d) the intensity and complexity of the impact,
e) the probability of the impact,
f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact,
g) the cumulative of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and
h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

4.3 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

The proposed development includes the construction of 118 no. built to rent apartments consisting of 29 no. studio apartments, 42 no. 1 bedroom units, 37 no. 2 bedroom units, 5 no. 2 bedroom duplex units and 5 no. 3 bedroom duplex units in two no. connected blocks ranging in height from 4 to 17 storeys. The proposed development includes resident’s facilities/amenities, double level courtyard, landscaping, bicycle storage, service access and all associated infrastructure and site works. The proposal also includes for improvements to local footpaths, roads and the public realm and a pedestrian connection to the existing bridge connecting Hibernian Road and Rockboro / Gasworks Road. The resident’s facilities/amenities include concierge service, laundry room, mail room, games room, communal kitchen / dining area, storage area, gym, workspaces, meeting rooms and a TV/ lounge area.

A detailed description of development is set out in Section 3.2 above.

Operationally the proposed residential use will result in an intensification of a currently vacant brownfield site. The proposed residential use is consistent with the zoning objective for the site and is compatible with surrounding lands uses in the area.

4.3.1 The Size of the Proposed Development

The overall red line area extends some 0.395 Ha. The scale of the development in this urban location in not significant in terms of impact. A Construction Management Plan and Construction Environment Management Plan have been prepared and details mitigation measures to minimising any potential impacts arising during the construction phase.

4.3.2 The cumulation with other Proposed Developments

In order to assess the cumulative impact of the proposed development on the receiving environment, a planning search on the City Council’s website has been undertaken as well as a site survey identifying the occurrence of site notices in the area.
A desktop search on the Council Planning System indicated that there are no planning applications for large scale development in the immediate area of the site likely to interact with the proposed development.

There is one application on the adjacent site where retention permission is sought for the service station (Forecourt Shop and Restaurant Building) and ancillary services. There are no other proposed developments on the site or known projects adjoining or near the site likely to result in cumulative impacts with this proposed development.

The City Council are not engaged in any current pre-application discussions on sites adjacent to this application site.

4.3.3 The Nature of any Associated Demolition Works

There are no demolition works proposed as part of the development.

4.3.4 The use of Natural Resources

Raw materials will be used at construction stage. Energy, including electricity and fuels, will used at construction stage. No significant impacts are anticipated during the construction phase.

No significant impacts are likely at operational stage given the proposed residential use.

4.3.5 The production of waste

Construction Waste
There will be construction waste associated with the proposed development. As there is no demolition proposed there will be no demolition waste. All waste generated on site will take the form of general builder’s rubble e.g. timber, concrete, tiles and soils etc. All waste will be segregated on site and stored according to a designated recycling and waste removal plan.

Operation Waste
The proposed development will also produce waste when operational. All apartments will have a 3-compartment bin system in place so residents can segregate their waste before disposing of same using appropriate bins in the communal bin store located at ground floor level.

4.3.6 Pollution and Nuisances

The construction works associated with the proposed development have the potential to cause nuisance related to noise, dust or pollution. Site works and any risk of nuisance and/or pollution such as litter, vermin, odour etc during the construction period will be mitigated against by on-site controls and adherence to best practice guidelines. Best practice guidelines will be implemented and adhered to ensure that the proposed development does not lead to any form of pollution or nuisance. A draft Construction Management Plan has been prepared and outlines mitigation measures to minimise the impacts arising from pollution and nuisances.
4.3.7 The Risk of Accidents, Having Regard to Substances or Technologies Used

This risk of accidents having regard to the substances or technologies used is imperceptible in the context of the proposed development and as such the risk of accidents associated with the development is minimal and would not cause unusual, significant or adverse effects on the environment or local population.

4.3.8 The risks to Human Health

The proposed development is not of a form / type that would be expected to have an impact on human health. It is expected that the proposed development will have a positive impact on the local population through the provision of new accommodation and the provision of housing at this location.

It is not expected that the proposed development will have any significant adverse impacts on the existing environment. There will however be certain impacts associated with the construction of the new development, these will temporary in nature and a series of mitigation measures will be introduced to address any negative impacts during the construction phase of the development. Please refer to the Draft Construction Management Plan and Construction Environmental Management Plan prepared by O’Shea Leader Consulting Engineers enclosed which includes measures to mitigation against the impacts associated noise, air pollution and ground water contamination.

In terms of Construction Impact, the applicant, in order to minimise impact on nearby properties with residential elements will ensure that all noise and dust emissions are minimised to within acceptable standards.

No significant negative impacts to Human Health are likely.

4.4 Location of Development

The location of development is set out in Section 3.1 above. The application site consists of a brownfield site in the urban area of Cork City. A service station abuts the northern boundary. There is some existing residential development to the south and east and the N27 South Link Road lies to the west.

It is not considered that there are any sensitive environmental receptors in the immediate area.

4.4.1 The existing and approved land uses

The site is currently vacant.

The proposed development will result in the development of a site on land zoned ‘City Commercial Core Area’ (CCCA) in the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021. The objective for these sites is to support the retention and expansion of a wide range of commercial, cultural, leisure and residential uses in the commercial core area (apart from comparison retail uses). The proposed development comprises a residential use which is consistent with the zoning objective for the site and compatible with surrounding land uses.
4.4.2 The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area

No significant impacts are likely.

4.4.3 The absorption capacity of the natural environment

The proposed residential development is a residential type development located on appropriately zoned lands. The development as proposed is considered to be in keeping with the local environment and allows for the use of brownfield site.

The site is not located within a designated SAC or SPA or any environmentally or archaeological designated area.

An Ecology Report and Natura Impact Statement has been in respect of the proposed development.

The Ecology Report concludes that with the implementation of suggested mitigation measures;

“it is not anticipated that there will be any significant negative ecological impacts as a result of the proposed Strategic Housing Development at South City Link, Cork.”

The NIS concludes;

“with the implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures there will be no potential for direct, indirect or cumulative impacts arising from the proposed SHD at South City Link, Cork either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects. The integrity of Great Island Channel SAC or Cork Harbour SPA will not be adversely affected. No reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such adverse effects.”

4.5 Characteristics of Potential Impacts

The potential impacts are discussed with respect to the characteristics identified within the legislation as discussed in Section 4.2.3.

4.5.1 Magnitude and spatial extent of the impact

The application site including the public realm improvements in the vicinity of the site measures 0.395 Ha. The proposed residential use is consistent with the locality. The construction of the development is not expected to have any significant impacts on the local population. There will be some impacts at construction stage but these are temporary in nature and will not be significant. The implementation of mitigation measures and best practice as detailed in the Draft CMP and CEMP will limit any significant issues from noise/pollution at construction stage to ensure that is as little disruption as possible caused to local residents. No significant negative cumulative or otherwise impacts are likely.

The proposed development would deliver 118 no. residential units in a City Centre location and provide much needed residential accommodation. The proposed
development will deliver housing at an appropriate density reflecting the urban location and national guidance promoting compact urban growth.

4.5.2  The Nature of the Impact

Measures will be put in place to mitigate any potential for nuisance arising from the construction stage. No significant negative impacts are likely.

4.5.3  Transboundary nature of the impact

The transboundary nature of the impact is not a relevant consideration when considering the proposed development.

4.5.4  Intensity and complexity of the Impact

The primary impact of the proposed development is likely to take place during the construction phase which will be short term in nature. The impacts of the development when complete and operational will be minimal.

4.5.5  Probability of Impact

It is considered that the probability of potential impacts would be likely in a number of instances. It is likely that there will be some short-term nuisance due to the presence of construction contractors on site along with their temporary compound and associated construction traffic during the works. These will be short term temporary minor impacts, any such impact will be mitigated against through the monitoring of on-site practices and methodologies.

4.5.6  The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact

The proposed development will result in a number of permanent structures on site and will have long term effects which are irreversible. Construction impacts will be temporary in nature and the incorporation of mitigation measures will limit the potential for any negative effects.

4.5.7  The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment

There are no large scale construction projects within the immediate area of the site. No significant negative impacts cumulative or otherwise are likely.

4.6  Other consideration of significant likely effects

4.6.1  Population and Human Health

The proposed development will increase the population in the area.
The proposed development involves construction practices, which will cause short-term temporary impacts on the environment and local population. These impacts will be closely monitored to ensure that there is as little disruption to the surrounding environment and population as possible. The long-term effects of the proposed development will be positive in that the site will be brought forward for development.

The proposed development will have a positive impact in that it will deliver high quality housing in a sustainable location in Cork City. The scheme will contribute to the supply of housing in Cork City where there is an increasing demand for accommodation. This development reflects national policy and the drive for high quality development in urban areas to meet the projected increase in population.

The potential for the development to cause significant negative effects on the environment is unlikely given the residential use.

4.6.2 Land, Soil, Water and Geology

The potential for impacts on land, soil, water and geology are assessed in the NIS prepared by Greenleaf Ecology enclosed with the application.

The NIS states:

“The groundwater vulnerability at the site is described as ‘high/ extreme’, meaning that the site and its environs are vulnerable to pollutants discharged at ground level, based on the hydrological, geological, hydrogeological and soil properties. The topography of the site is level and the local topography is of a gentle slope in a northerly direction towards the River Lee, which flows into Cork Harbour SPA c. 4.2km downstream.

By extension, the waters of Cork Harbour SPA provide indirect, but remote, connectivity to the nearest sections of the Great Island Channel SAC, which are located c. 8.3km east of the proposed site. Therefore, the proposed development may, in the absence of best practice and mitigation measures, impact indirectly on Cork Harbour SPA and by extension Great Island Channel SAC through indirect connectivity maintained by the underlying groundwater.”

The NIS and Draft CMP and CEMP details mitigation measures to avoid potentially deleterious substances entering the groundwater and in turn Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel SAC.

The proposal will connect to existing foul and surface water infrastructure and water supply. No objection to the development by Irish Water has been received.

No significant impacts are considered to occur provided the mitigation measures outlined in the NIS, CMP and CEMP are implemented.

4.6.3 Air Quality and Climate

No significant impact on air quality and climate is expected as part of the proposed development. The proposal is for a residential scheme and as such is not expected to have any impacts inconsistent with the surrounding area.
4.6.4 Noise and Vibration

Some disturbance might be experienced from construction activities from the build stage however mitigation measures will be implemented to minimise the impacts relating to noise and vibration. Please refer to the Draft CMP and CEMP enclosed which details mitigation measures.

An Inward Noise Impact Assessment has been prepared by CLV Consulting to assess the likely inward traffic noise impact expected to be experienced by the development from the N27 South Link Road. The internal and external noise levels should comply with the noise level criteria provided the mitigation measures outlined in the assessment are implemented. No likely significant impacts are considered to occur.

4.6.5 Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna)

Greenleaf Ecology undertook a site survey and prepared an Ecology Report a Natura Impact Statement for the application.

No High Impact or Third Schedule invasive species were recorded within the proposed site or its immediate environments. The Medium Impact invasive species Butterfly Bush and Traveller’s Joy are both present on the old quarry face to the south of the site. There is potential for the proposed development to cause the spread of Medium Impact invasive species during the construction phase.

The following measures are recommended:

- Undertake further invasive species survey prior to the commencement of construction;
- An Invasive Species Management Plan should be prepared and implemented by the Contractor. This should include plant specific control measures for any invasive species identified. Noxious weeds and Medium impact species recorded on site, namely Traveller’s Joy and Butterfly Bush should be managed in accordance with best-practice bio-security measures as set out in National Roads Authority (2010) Guidelines on The Management of Noxious Weeds and Non-native, Invasive Plant Species on National Roads;
- Biosecurity measures will be undertaken to prevent the importation of invasive species from contaminated areas into the study area. For any material entering the site, the supplier must provide an assurance that it is free of invasive species.
- Machinery or plant to be inspected upon arrival and departure from site and cleaned when necessary.
- Ensure all site users are aware of invasive species management plan and treatment methodologies. This can be achieved through “toolbox talks” before works begin on the site.
- Adequate site hygiene signage should be erected in relation to the management of non-native invasive species material.

No breeding birds were recorded within the site during the course of the site survey. There are no record of bats from the vicinity of the site.

The NIS concludes;
“Conclusion of this NIS is that with the implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures there will be no potential for direct, indirect or cumulative impacts arising from the proposed SHD at South City Link, Cork either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects. The integrity of Great Island Channel SAC or Cork Harbour SPA will not be adversely affected. No reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such adverse effects.”

Subject to the implementation of mitigation measure it is not anticipated that there will be any significant negative ecological impacts as a result of the development.

4.6.6 Traffic Transportation and Parking

The development provides 3 no. disabled car parking spaces and 2 no. car parking spaces for service vehicles. The development is effectively a car free development which is appropriate given the location of the development within close proximity to Cork City Centre and the accessibility of the site to public transport modes. No significant adverse impacts are expected.

4.6.7 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

An Archaeological and Built Heritage Assessment has been prepared by John Cronin and Associates. The application site historically forms part of a lime quarry and lime works in the 19th Century and was used as locomotive yard in the early 20th Century. The most significant element of the site, in terms of cultural heritage merit, is the remains of a water storage facility in the form of four stone-built supporting arches with brick voussoirs. No structures on the site are listed in the Record of Protected Structures in the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021 and the arched structures are not listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). The arch structures have been incorporated into the design of the proposed development.

The nearest recorded archaeological sites consist of two boundary stones (RMP Nos. C0074-06707 & C0074-06702-) which are located over 100 metres to the south. These will not be impacted upon.

No likely significant impacts are considered to occur.

4.6.8 Material Assets

The land on which the site is situated is a material asset and is zoned ‘City Commercial Core Area’ (CCCA) in the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021. The objective for these sites is to support the retention and expansion of a wide range of commercial, cultural, leisure and residential uses in the commercial core area and the use of this material asset in a manner compatible with the zoning designation is entirely appropriate. There will be a significant positive impact on land use.

4.6.9 Landscape

There are two views and prospects outlined in the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021 which could potentially be affect the proposed development. An LVIA has been prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds.
With respect to visual impacts there are two short term adverse results recorded as part of the assessment (Views 14 & 27). These views relate to the receiving environment on Rockboro Road. The medium to long terms impacts for these viewpoints are recorded as neutral. Some 27 viewpoints were assessed and the medium to long term impact will be: no changes for 7 viewpoints, medium beneficial for 1 viewpoint, high beneficial for 3 viewpoints, medium neutral for 2 viewpoints and high neutral for the remaining 14 viewpoints.

The LVIA concludes that the proposed development “will be acceptable in the context of the receiving environment.”

4.6.10 Interactions of the Foregoing

Based on the finding of the desktop study it is concluded that the proposed development will not result in likely significant effects on the environment through interaction of the foregoing and a sub threshold EIAR is not warranted. Directive 2014/52/EU requires assessment of impact on climate change under each of the EIA/EIAR chapter headings. It is considered that there are no likely significant effects on the environment in terms of each of the chapter headings, individually or cumulatively.

This section considers the significant interactions of impacts between each discipline. In operation many impacts have slight or subtle interactions with other disciplines. The matrix below highlights those interactions which are considered to potentially be of a significant nature with a tick, interactions which are considered to not be significant with an x and no interaction with n/a.

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4.6.11 Cumulative Impacts

There are no other proposed developments on the site or known projects adjoining or near the site likely to result in cumulative impacts with this proposed development. No significant negative impacts are likely to occur cumulatively or otherwise.

5 Screening Conclusion and Reasons
The proposed development is considered to be a sub-threshold development. The characteristics of the proposed development are not considered to be significant, due to the fact that the site is located on a brownfield site in the urban area of Cork City on appropriately zoned lands. Temporary traffic disruption will also occur in the immediate area due to construction related traffic, again this will be minor and temporary in nature.

In relation to the location of the proposed development, the residential development is located 2.1km north-west of Cork Harbour SPA. The NIS found that with the “implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures there will be no potential for direct, indirect or cumulative impacts arising from the proposed SHD at South City Link, Cork either alone or in combination with any other plans or projects. The integrity of Great Island Channel SAC or Cork Harbour SPA will not be adversely affected.”

Characteristics of the potential impacts of the proposed development are unlikely to be significant in this urban location. Any impact associated with noise, vibration, air, and traffic are likely to be insignificant and will be managed at construction and operation stages.

Having regard to the criteria outlined in Section 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, it is concluded that the proposed development will have no likely significant effect, indirect or direct, on the receiving environment, either on its own or cumulatively with other development and that having regard to the effects of the proposal it is our professional opinion that no adverse impacts occur such as to warrant an Environmental Impact Assessment Report for a sub threshold development.