Ecological Statement

FOR

PROPOSED STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

AT

ST MICHAELS HOSPITAL CAR PARK, DÚN LAOGHAIRE

December 2020

ON BEHALF OF

FITZWILLIAM DL

Prepared by
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1 BACKGROUND

Enviroguide Consulting was commissioned by Fitzwilliam DL Ltd. to prepare an Ecological Statement with respect to the Site of a Proposed Strategic Housing Development at St. Michaels Hospital Car Park, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

This biodiversity ssessment assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Development on habitats and species; particularly those protected by national and international legislation or considered to be of particular nature conservation importance. The report describes the ecology of the Proposed Development Site, with emphasis on habitats, flora and fauna, and assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Development on these ecological receptors.

Ecological surveys of the Site were conducted in November and December 2020, including habitat, invasive flora species, bird and fauna surveys.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The Site is comprised of developed lands which currently exist as a surface car park occupying lands to the north of St Michael's hospital, accessed from Crofton Road, Dun Laoghaire. The Site also includes an unoccupied 2 no. storey dwelling located within the north eastern corner, as well as a small number of trees and grassed areas within the surface car parking. The Site is bound by a wall to the east, beyond which lies Harbour View residential apartments, with Charlemont Terrace and Charlemont Avenue to the west, and St. Michael's Hospital to the south. The Site extends to approximately 0.42 ha.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Proposed Development will consist of the demolition of an existing 2 no. storey house on the Site and the construction of 102 no. build-to-rent residential apartments (80 no. 1-bed and 22 no. 2-bed units) across 2 no. buildings (Building 01 and Building 02), along with ancillary residential amenities and a publicly accessible café on a c. 0.42ha site. Building 01 to the north extends to part 5, part 6, part 8 and part 13 no. storeys in height. Building 02 to the south extends to part 8, part 9 no. storeys in height, with setback 9th storey.

Residential amenity space in the form of a reception, co-working/study space, gym, games area, lounge/kitchen area, and multi-purpose recreational space is provided at ground floor level of Building 01, alongside a reception and postal storage area. External roof terraces are included at storeys 6 and 9 at Building 01, with an enclosed glazed amenity space at 13th storey level, with external terrace. An external roof terrace is provided at 9th storey level at Building 02.

The Development includes a vehicular right of way providing access to St. Michael's Hospital along the western perimeter of the site, accessed from Crofton Road. This provides access to 3 no. car parking spaces (including 1 no. disabled space) located between the two buildings. A secondary right of way is provided via a landscaped pedestrian route along the eastern perimeter of the site providing access to St. Michael's Hospital. A total of 150 no. bicycle parking spaces are provided at the ground floor level of Building 02 (alongside a bicycle repair area), 26 no. within the central courtyard and 8 no. adjacent to the café at the northern perimeter.

The Development also includes an ESB substation, bin store, services and drainage infrastructure, boundary treatments, access provision at Crofton and all ancillary development works necessary to facilitate the development.

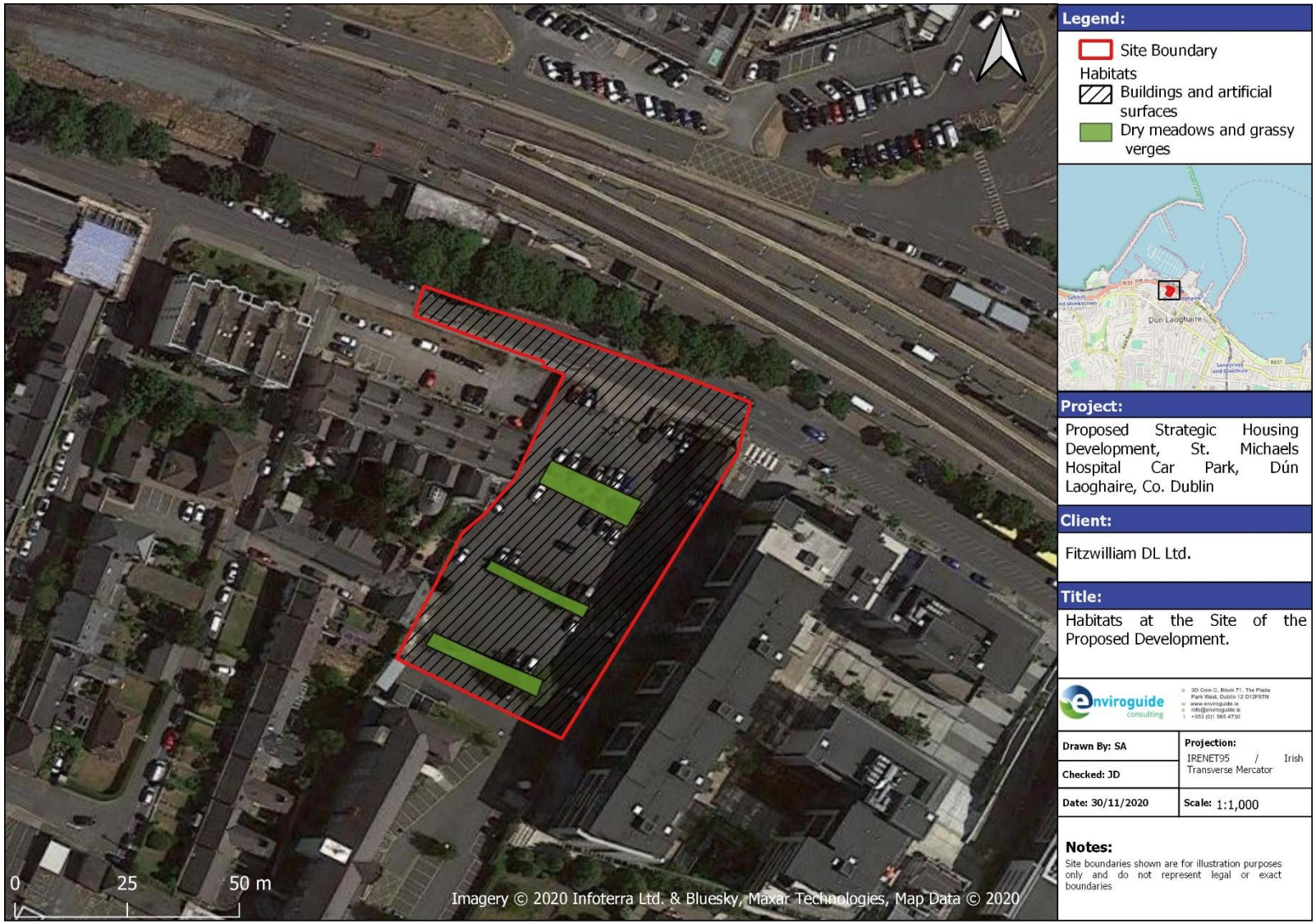

Figure 1. Habitats at the Site of the Proposed Development

4 METHODOLOGY - SITE SURVEYS

Enviroguide Ecologist Siobhan Atkinson carried out an ecological survey of the Site on the 26th November 2020.

Flight line surveys of the Site were carried out on the 26/11/2020; 30/11/2020 and 02/12/2020 to determine whether any bird species were traversing the Site, and therefore may be potentially affected by it. Tall structures such as electrical pylons, wind farms and tall buildings can lead to fatal collisions with commuting bird species. This is particularly true for those species considered to be "poor" fliers, with relatively low manoeuvrability compared to other more agile bird species (see Eirgrid, 2012). Some of the most at-risk groups (classified as 'medium' and 'high' collision risk species) include wader species; waterfowl such as geese, swan and duck species; and some raptor species. Gulls such as Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull are classed as 'low' collision risk species due to their superior manoeuvrability when flying (Eirgrid, 2012). The focus of the flight line surveys here was on the most at-risk species noted above.

The surveys on the 26th of November and 2nd of December commenced at sunrise and were carried out for 15 minutes every hour over the course of six hours. The survey carried out on the 30th of November commenced six hours before sunset and was carried out for 15 minutes every hour until sunset. All surveys were completed from one vantage point location overlooking the Site.

An external and internal examination of the two-storey building designated for demolition was carried out on the 26th November 2020 to assess its potential for roosting bats. The survey methodology followed that of the Bat Conservation Trust *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, 2016).

5 RESULTS & PREDICTED IMPACTS

Habitats

There are two habitat types at the Site of the Proposed Development, namely *Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)* and *Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)* as per Fossitt (2000). Buildings and artificial surfaces is the dominant habitat type at the Site (Figure 1). The habitats at the Site are of minimal biodiversity value and of little to no value to local fauna including birds. Several trees have been planted within the Dry meadows and grassy verges habitat and at the margins of the Site, namely ornamental cherry *Prunus* sp., birch *Betula* sp. and Leyland cypress *Cupressus* × *leylandii*.

Due to the low biodiversity value of the Site, significant impacts to habitats are not anticipated.

Figure 2. Site of the Proposed Development. St. Michaels hospital is located in the background to the right, and Harbour View apartments are located to the left.

Birds

Several bird species were recorded at the Site during the ecological survey. These included Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, Magpie *Pica pica*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Feral Pigeon *Columba livia f. domestica*, Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii* and Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*.

It is noted that the ecological survey was carried out outside of the breeding bird season and so has possibly missed any species that have since migrated. However, it is deemed that the Proposed Development will not have any significant effects on breeding bird species due to the general lack of any significant areas of suitable habitat at, or immediately adjacent to, the Site, and the overall low quality of the man-made habitats present.

No medium or high collision risk species were recorded during the flight line surveys of the Site. Herring gull were recorded, however, as noted above these are classed as 'low' collision risk species. Furthermore, given the general heights of the surrounding buildings, it is not considered that the Proposed Development will constitute a significant collision risk for bird species (Figure 3).

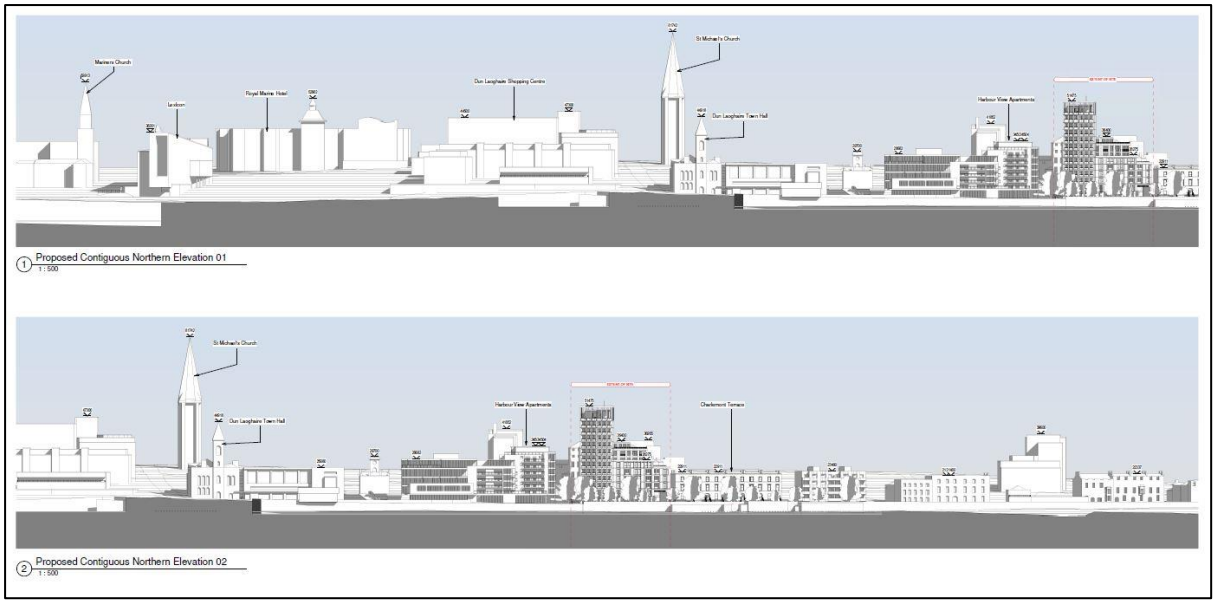

Figure 3. Proposed contiguous northern elevation of the Site. The Site is indicated in red. (Reddy Architecture and urbanism, 2020).

Mammals (excl. bats)

No signs or evidence of any mammal species were recorded at the Site during the survey. Given the lack of suitable habitat for any mammal species at the Site, it is anticipated that mammals will not be impacted by the Proposed Development.

Bats

On external examination of the 2-storey building at the Site, it is concluded that the building holds little bat potential. All roof slates were observed to be intact with no breaks or gaps that would allow entry to the building interior by bats via the roof. The windows were all sound and/or boarded up, and the building appeared to be well sealed overall (Figure 4). One section of potentially suitable roost habitat was observed where some rotting of the eaves had occurred at the south-west corner of the building (Figure 5).

Figure 4. Photograph of the 2-storey building at the site. Image taken 02/12/2020.

Figure 5. Photograph showing a hole in building eaves which may provide bat roosting habitat. Image taken 26/11/2020.

No evidence of bats (live/dead animals, droppings, urine stains, feeding remains etc) was observed within the building itself, however, due to health and safety considerations it was not possible to fully assess the attic of the building and the chimney.

Overall, it is concluded that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in any significant impacts to bats due to the apparent lack of use by, and unsuitability of the Site for bats. The surrounding environment is busy and highly urbanised in nature, with street lighting within close proximity to the building.

Amphibians

No species were recorded and there is no suitable habitat for amphibians on-site.

Other

No other species were recorded at the Site of the Proposed Development.

Invasive Species

One non-native species of plant; Buddleia or 'Butterfly bush' *Buddleja davidii,* was recorded at the Site in the form of a small bush growing within the dry meadows and grassy verges habitat within the carpark. Buddleia is a medium impact invasive species and is not listed on the Third Schedule of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations* 2011 (SI 477 of 2011, as amended).

6 MITIGATION MEASURES

Birds

Although it is noted that there is a general lack of *significant* areas of suitable habitat, there are trees at the Site and some ivy growth on the walls which may offer some habitat for nesting birds. In addition, it is noted that no cowls were covering the chimneys of the building marked for demolition at the time of survey. The building should be checked by a qualified ecologist for nesting birds prior to demolition. Ideally, any clearance of vegetation or demolition should

be carried out outside the main breeding season, i.e. 1st March to 31st August, in compliance with the Wildlife Act 2000. Should any vegetation removal or demolition be required during this period, the vegetation and/or building should be checked for nesting birds by a qualified ecologist, and if any are noted during this evaluation prior to removal, a derogation licence will be required from the NPWS.

As collision risk is not predicted to present a significant risk to bird species at this site, no mitigation measures are proposed.

Bats

Although the existing Site structure appears on both internal and external examination to hold little to no bat roost potential; it is recommended that, prior to the beginning of any demolition works; a full roost survey is carried out. Should any signs of roosting bat be observed then no works can take places until a derogation licence is obtained from the NPWS. Suitable compensation e.g. bat boxes/bat bricks will need to be incorporated, where suitable and appropriate, into the project design if bat roosting habitat will be compromised by the Proposed Development.

Invasive Flora

Although not considered a high impact invasive species, Buddleia is a highly adaptable and easily spread non-native plant that will occupy any disturbed ground habitats made available to it. As such, removal and disposal of Buddleia at the Site should be carried out in accordance with appropriate guidelines such as TII (formerly NRA) *Guidelines on The Management of Noxious Weeds and Non-Native Invasive Plant Species on National Roads* (2010), with consideration given to the prevention of spread of this plant.

7 CONCLUSION

Subject to the successful implementation of the above mitigation measures, it can be concluded that the Proposed Development will not cause any significant negative impacts on habitats, legally protected species, or any other features of ecological importance.

8 REFERENCES

Collins (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Eirgrid. (2012). Ecology Guidelines for Electricity Transmission Projects. A Standard Approach to Ecological Impact Assessment of High Voltage Transmission Projects

Fossitt, J. A. (2000). A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. Kilkenny: The Heritage Council.

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