

DESIGN RATIONALE – LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Project: **PART XI CHURCH FIELDS HOUSING AND EASTERN LINEAR PARK DEVELOPMENT**

Project no.: **Fc.01**

Prepared on behalf of: **FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL**

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1 Introduction

This documentation is submitted as part of a Part 8 planning application to Fingal County Council for a site of c. 9.47 hectares. The documentation pertains to a proposed linear park which forms part of a proposed residential development. The documentation should be read in conjunction with other complementary documentation related specifically to the proposed linear park, as submitted by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects, Punch Consulting Engineers, Fallon Design, Faith Wilson Ecologist, Archaeology Plan and The Tree File Ltd. The documentation should also be read in conjunction with documentation submitted by the residential design team, which is led by Walsh Associates Architects, and which includes information related to landscape and open space issued by BSM as well as engineering proposals and other associated documentation. The proposed linear park is one of a number of open spaces included in the residential development. The other open spaces are designed by BSM. It is intended that the proposed linear park will ultimately be extended to form a larger contiguous park of c. 11.8 hectares, stretching from Church Road in the east to the Pinkeen River in the west. An illustrative plan of the overall park can be found at Appendix 1 of this document.

As part of the pre-planning consultation process, Dermot Foley Landscape Architects attended meetings and discussed proposals for the landscape, open space, play strategy and materials and planting strategies with Fingal County Council. Comments received were, where possible and in line with the overall landscape strategy, incorporated into the design proposals.

Dermot Foley Landscape Architects and design team colleagues visited the site on several occasions from March 2021 to July 2021 in order to observe conditions on site, such as existing vegetation, conditions under foot, boundaries and other items which would have a bearing on the design process.

The Tree File Arborists were commissioned before the design process began to carry out a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment in compliance with BS 5837:2012. These documents are included separately as part of this submission.

The following additional documents have been issued by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects as part of this submission:

No.	Scale	Size	Title
2002	1:500	A1+	<i>Landscape Plan</i>
2003	1:500	A1+	<i>Boundary Plan</i>
2100	1:200	A2	<i>Landscape Detail Area 1 of 2</i>
2101	1:200	A2	<i>Landscape Detail Area 2 of 2</i>
2400	1:100	A1	<i>Landscape Sections 1 of 2</i>
2401	1:100	A1+	<i>Landscape Sections 2 of 2</i>

2 Landscape Appraisal

2.1 General

The existing site falls from east to west significantly, with topography a unique quality of the place. The site has a history of demesne landscape and farmland, and paradoxically through abandonment, is developing a rich flora and fauna. The southern boundary of the site is formed by a dense and laterally spreading hedgerow. Emergent woodland is present to the north of the hedgerow. The site is not heavily used by the public. This has allowed a range of bird and mammal species to make use of the lands. These include badger, rabbit and buzzard. Oak, willow, blackthorn and hawthorn have established throughout. Ash is present in quantities at the southern boundary of the western portion of the site, which lies outside the subject site, but the ash are suffering from ash dieback and unlikely to remain viable in the long-term. There is a significant alignment of beech trees from the demesne landscape running parallel to Church Road and again, outside, but adjacent to the subject site. To the western end of the site a copse of trees is present which is dated to the 19th century and may be of historic significance. Ground conditions on site generally vary. The lands are primarily free draining throughout with the exception of areas adjacent to a temporary haul road where compacted subsoils can from time to time remain waterlogged. A number of recently formed or temporary berms exist on site, and a drainage ditch runs along the southern boundary associated with the main hedgerow. The western end of the site has been disturbed as a result of enabling works and changes in level occur in the area of a proposed new link road which is due to be constructed outside the subject site, but immediately to its west.

2.2 Boundaries

The site boundaries vary in character. The northern boundary of the lands for the proposed park is currently open meadow, subject to ongoing emergence of tree and shrub species. The eastern boundary of the lands for the proposed park is open to the existing lawn and footpath and framed by the dense alignment of mature beech trees which acts as the interface to Church Road. The southern boundary is formed by the dense hedgerow with emergent woodland to its norther edge. The western boundary is formed by temporary earthworks which have been put in place in advance of the construction of the proposed north-south link road.



Clockwise from top left: view of copse of trees to the west of the site; view looking south at the hedgerow with the Dublin Mountains visible beyond; view of beech trees from the demesne landscape at Church Road; view of emergent woodland.



From left to right: view of the southern boundary hedgerow; view at western boundary, outside the subject site, on the site of proposed road infrastructure, looking north.

2.3 Existing Trees

The southern site boundary is lined with trees, hedges and thickets, with emerging woodland developing to the north of the boundary.

Existing trees have been surveyed by The Tree File Arborists in accordance with BS 5837:2012. BS 5837:2012 calls for a realistic assessment of the viability of retaining trees in the context of proposed construction. The British Standard has been used here to rigorously assess the stock of existing trees and to make recommendations which are realistic and represent a fair assessment of the quality and long-term viability of the trees on site.

Significant new tree planting is proposed to replace any existing trees which are proposed to be removed. A schedule of proposed planting is included on *Drawing 2002 Landscape Plan*.

3 **Landscape Strategy**

3.1 **General**

The proposed park will provide a lively, innovative, and resilient landscape with high ecological metrics, which integrates the proposed development into the surrounding context and generates a strongly recognisable public open space for the existing residents, future residents and visitors to the area. The sloping nature of parts of the site presents an exciting challenge from the point of view of accessibility and usability, but that has been addressed through the creation of sub-spaces and looping circulation which allows visitors to access portions of the park without having to negotiate significant level changes. The landscape proposals have been developed by the entire design team, and together with Fingal County Council, in order to integrate planning, civil engineering and ecological considerations with improved permeability and accessibility at the forefront of the design development process. The proposed park will benefit from passive surveillance while maintaining sufficient distance between public open space and residents in order to mitigate against any potential concerns around noise. The park is proposed to vary in character in terms of use, circulation and ecology, all of which are determined by the existing topography. The park, therefore, will form a series of self-contained spaces with diverse character and function.

The overall landscape strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

1. A response to the biodiversity loss through the provision of well vegetated and contiguous corridors for local wildlife;
2. Improved permeability and accessibility throughout the park as well as the creation of a destination with a recognisable sense of place for residents and visitors;
3. A diverse range of spaces including flat open spaces, play areas and spaces with native tree planting and ground flora for ecology, with the provision of relatively self-contained spaces with diverse character and function to cater for a variety of users and age groups.
4. A safe environment which is available and recognisable to residents and visitors as public open space;
5. Substantial retention of existing trees, hedgerows, portions of newly emerging woodland and copses of trees which may have formed part of a previous historic landscape;
6. Retention and emphasis of physical characteristics of the site, most notably topography;
7. Unique elements such as large destination play structures, play hill and other experiences or facilities not easily found in the locality;
8. Detail design to bring cohesion through materials, signage, lighting and furniture;
9. The importance of signifying thresholds to the park;

3.2 Permeability

The proposed park will be an important component and experience in the day-to-day journey to and from schools, shops, church and other destinations. The cross-sectional dimension of the park varies from 30 to 50 metres, thus allowing pedestrians to cross the park safely in a very short period of time. The north-south routes are proposed to be accessible at all times of the day and night, with good public lighting and spacious paving (up to 15 metres in width). These routes are proposed to be publicly lit, in a way and at levels which will ensure that the pedestrian experience is well integrated with the surrounding housing developments. Please refer to documentation submitted by Fallon Design for more detail on proposed lighting.

3.3 Proposed Play Facilities

Play for all age groups is a central part of the programme for the proposed park. A destination play experience is proposed to be located at a central location (see location 'A' in the following play strategy diagram which illustrates the integrated strategy for play for the entire 11.8 hectare Church Fields Linear Park & Wellview Park). Natural play is proposed to be integrated into the topography in the form of climbing structures, natural trails of timber logs and balancing equipment. The proposed play equipment will be designed and manufactured in accordance with standards EN 1176 and EN 1177. Impact absorbing surface for specific fall heights from play equipment is located as required. Additionally, a flat lawn area to the west of area 'A' is proposed, for wide range of informal play and recreation. A full schedule of play equipment is included on *Drawing 2002 Landscape Plan*, by Dermot Foley Landscape Architects.



Diagram illustrating the play strategy for the overall 11.8 hectare park, which includes the portion of the park subject to this planning application. The strategy for the park forms part of a wider integrated play strategy for the surrounding residential developments, which is submitted by BSM a part of this planning application.



Above: examples of proposed natural play using timber.



Above: example of a destination play structure integrated into topography.



Above: example of a destination play structures integrated into topography.

4 Planting

Drawing 2002 Landscape Plan, includes a schedule of proposed planting and illustrates the location and extent of mown grass, managed long grass, reinforced grass, groundcover, swale, hedge and tree planting as well as existing ground flora and trees to be retained and protected.



Above: example of large swale with informal planting. Knockrabo, Dermot Foley Landscape Architects.

4.1 Canopy Cover

The proposal for the Church Fields Linear Park is to increase the overall canopy cover from its current quantum of approx. 3745sqm. The southern boundary of the linear park is formed by a dense hedgerow which is being retained. There is evidence of an emergent woodland to the north of the hedgerow. The proposal for the linear park signifies the emergent woodland area with a threshold of a timber rail to minimise interference and disruption in these locations. A total of 163 new individual trees are proposed elsewhere to improve the species mix and the canopy percentage in the park. The proposed canopy cover quantum will be approx. 7280sqm. Increasing the overall canopy cover percentage from its current quantum by approx. 95%.

4.2 Proposed Tree planting

Proposed tree species are selected for longevity, suitability to public open space, local soil conditions, microclimate and biodiversity (native species). Proposed tree sizes range from semi-mature (35-40cm girth), to extra heavy standards and multi-stemmed trees. A total of 163 new individual trees are proposed to improve the species mix and the proportion of native species. The species mix of proposed trees is substantially native. Significant areas of existing but emergent trees are also proposed to be retained and protected. These trees are mainly located to the north

of the southern boundary hedgerow where they are colonizing the site in a northerly direction. Typical proposed species are illustrated on the following pages.

4.2 . Hedge, Groundcover and Bulb Planting

Low level and groundcover planting is proposed to be utilized: to make and reinforce sub-spaces within the larger more extensive landscape; for visual screening and visual interest; for ecological purposes; to colonise swales and other sustainable drainage elements and; to guide or direct people's movement. The planting is conceived as a subtle layering of greens within the open spaces which will create space but not block views or visual links. The proposed planting is normally layered as follows: lowest - bulb planting; medium - groundcover planting; highest - clipped hedge planting. Ground flora, which will include a high proportion of indigenous species, is also proposed to be encouraged to generate naturally in strips that are managed specifically for that purpose at the margins of hedgerows and lawns. This will greatly improve the pollinator capacity of the proposed park.

5 Hard Landscape Materials and Finishes

The approach to the use of hard landscape materials is governed by the scale of the proposed park, and the requirement to integrate with surrounding public realm and streetscape, as well as the requirement to develop a palette of materials for the overall Church Fields Linear park and Wellview Park. It is proposed to use landscape materials to facilitate accessibility, circulation and specific facilities, but at the same time to minimise the surface area of hard landscape in order to maximise the 'green', 'natural' or ecological characteristics of the park.

The selection of paving and other landscape materials is determined by function, resilience, longevity and durability. The extent of materials and the locations where a transition is made from one material to another are determined by technical issues such as sustainable drainage, or proposed changes in the direction of the circulation, or by level change. Paving materials, where practical, are proposed to be constructed in a way which is sensitively integrated with lawn and soft landscape, in order to minimise the impact of hard landscape surfaces. It is intended to use sustainable aggregates in new concrete and/or to recycle concrete. Boardwalks are proposed in selected ecological or arboriculturally sensitive areas in order to minimise the impact on tree roots and ground conditions. Refer to *Drawing 2002 Landscape Plan* for the locations of proposed boardwalks. Primary pedestrian routes are proposed as geometrically regular, in-situ concrete panels with selected decorative finishes. Secondary pedestrian routes are proposed as random format or with a more idiosyncratic geometry, using recycled paving materials and/or a mix of paving and mown or lawn paths in otherwise longer swards.

Permeable, self-binding aggregate is also proposed at selected areas as a surface into which trees and other vegetation can be planted. This material is a low-cost, local, effective and accessible hard surface which tends to be sympathetic to the creation of a softer or more 'natural' experience and character.

A range of sample images are included below to illustrate the general characteristics of the proposed materials.

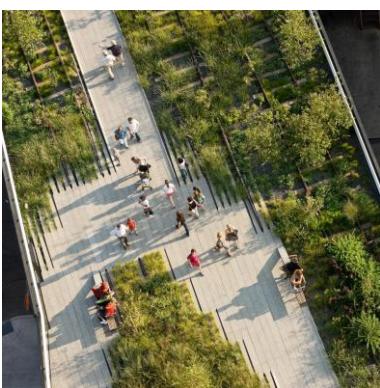


Above left: an example of the use of recycled fragments of paving at a publicly accessible space in north Dublin.

Above right: an example of in-situ concrete with a decorative finish at a publicly accessible space in north Dublin.



Above: examples of integrating paving and lawn.



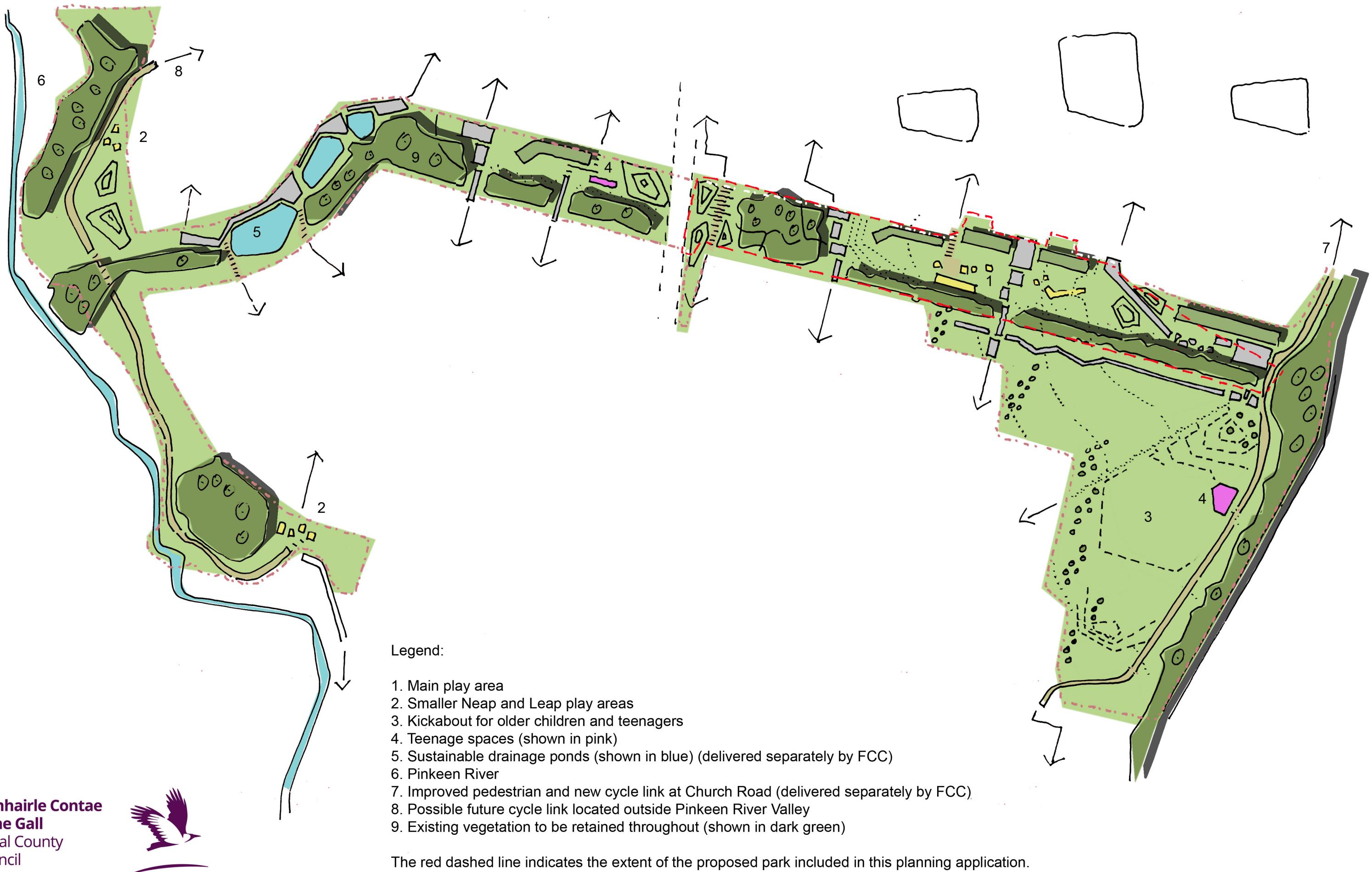
Above: examples of hard landscape paving integrating with planting. The highline New York, Piet Oudolf.



Above: examples of and self-binding aggregate with furniture and integrated tree planted at a publicly accessible space in north Dublin.

Appendix 1

Illustrative Plan of Church Fields Linear Park and Wellview Park.



Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall
Fingal County
Council



DERMOT FOLEY
Landscape Architects

CHURCH FIELDS PHASE 3 HOUSING AND EASTERN LINEAR PARK - ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN OF OVERALL CHURCH FIELDS LINEAR PARK & WELLVIEW PARK
(Not to scale)