



Architectural Report

for

Proposed development of 36 dwellings & associated site works

at

Seatown Road, Swords, Co. Dublin.

Fingal County Council Architects Department

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1. Description of Proposed Development:

This report should be read in conjunction with all other documentation included with the Part XI Planning Application.

Site:

The proposed development is comprised of two sites, located either side of St. Columcille's drive in the town of Swords, Co Dublin. Site No 1 has an area of approx. 2090 Sqm / 0.21 ha and Site No 2 has an area of approx. 1816 sqm/0.18 Ha. Both sites are bounded to the southeast by residential properties and to the northwest by Seatown Road. Site No 1 is bounded to the northeast by Aldi Supermarket and to the southwest by St Columcille's Drive. Site No 2 is bounded to the northeast by St Columcille's Drive and to the southwest by County Hall.

Zoning:

In the Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) the site is zoned as MC - Major Town Centre. It is designated as a level 2 Town Centre (Level 01 is Dublin city centre). The aims of this designation are as follows.

Objective: Protect, provide for and/or improve major town centre facilities.

'Consolidate the existing Major Towns in the County, (Blanchardstown, Swords, and Balbriggan). The aim is to further develop these centres by densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, residential uses, and urban streets, while delivering a quality urban environment which will enhance the quality of life of resident, visitor, and workers alike. The zone will strengthen retail provision in accordance with the County Retail Strategy, emphasise urban conservation, ensure priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists while minimising the impact of private car-based traffic and enhance and develop the existing urban fabric.'

Site No.2 and the western corner of Site No. 1 are located within the Zone of Archaeological Notification.

The proposal for housing in this area will rely on good transport connections and sheltered cycle storage will be provided to encourage cycling as a means of travel to minimise the impact of use of private cars by the residents.

Proposal:

The proposal which accords with the Development Plan policies and objectives, is comprised of two sites either side St. Columcille's Drive. The proposed works include the demolition of total 12 no. existing 2-storey semi-detached dwellings on Site 1 (6 no.) & Site 2 (6 no.) and the proposed construction of two no. 4-storey apartment buildings (total 36 units), landscaping works for both sites including boundary walls, SUDS drainage, and all associated site works.

Site No 1 includes 20 No 2 bed (4 person) apartments across 4 floors with stairs / lift / external walkway access and hard and soft landscaping with 10 No car parking spaces and a communal bin store to the southeast of the site; and secure bike stores to the northeast of the site; and communal landscaping to the northwest of the site.

Site No 2 includes 8 No 2 bed (4 person) apartments and 8 No 2 bed (3 person) apartments across 4 floors with stairs / lift / external walkway access and hard and soft landscaping with 8 No car parking spaces and bin store, secure bike stores and communal landscaping to the southeast of the site and communal landscaping to the northwest of the site.

Space Standards:

Space standards within dwellings and provision of private and shared open space meet the requirements of the Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) and Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG, 2020) - See Appendix A - Schedule of Areas for the table of space standards.

Site Services:

The site will be serviced by ESB, EIR, GNI utilities which are available on public roads adjacent to the site. Public lighting within the site will be designed and installed to the standards of the Public Lighting Section in Fingal County Council Operations Department. A site lighting scheme will be included in the detailed design to ensure safety and security at night.

Refer to the drawings, calculations and report prepared by Lohan and Donnelly Consulting Engineers included with the Part XI Planning Information for details on the proposed drainage & civil works.

2. Architectural Design Statement:

Introduction:

Both sites are in a prominent location within a Major Town Centre Zoning and front onto the proposed Swords Cultural Quarter building currently in the Part XI planning process. The relationship of the proposed apartment buildings to County Hall and the proposed SCQ building has been carefully considered in terms of massing, form and height. One of the objectives in the Swords Masterplan (2019) is to gradually build the urban scale along the gateway routes into Swords town centre. The proposal includes two linear apartment buildings comprising of 36 apartments across 4 storeys which reinforce the existing building line and streetscape while creating an urban scale, stepping up in height to both County Hall and the proposed SCQ building. This is in line with the Urban Development and “Building heights” – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2018 Specific Planning Policy Requirements SPPR1.

The **Development Plan** notes:

“NPO 35 of the NPF seeks to increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights. The development of small infill sites in urban centres provides significant scope for well-designed residential development, including opportunities for older members of the community to avail of appropriately sized housing options in town centre locations with the benefits of proximity to community infrastructure, services, transport links and recreational amenities.”

Taking the above into account, we believe that the design response needs to address the below primary criteria.

1. Building Heights.

Due to the prominence of the sites at the edge of the proposed new Swords Cultural Quarter, the residential buildings will, along with the new proposed cultural centre, define a reimagined public realm for Swords at this location. The Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) recommends a height of three to five storeys for the sites - The proposal of 2 No 4 storey buildings is in line with this.

2. Increased Residential density.

This density is in line with the Swords Masterplan (2019) which recommends net densities ranging up to 110 units/hectare. The proposed density for Site No 1 is 86 dwellings per hectare and for Site No 2 is 84 dwellings per hectare, with a combined density of 85 dwellings per hectare - Refer also to Section 3, Housing Quality Assessment.

3. Public Realm / Materials.

In line with the prominent location, we are proposing a brick finish with full height windows to the main facades and integrated balconies with rendered finishes and metal handrails. High-quality landscaping is proposed along the interface with Seatown Road. The main habitable spaces of the apartments are also oriented towards Seatown Road, which assists with passive surveillance of the public realm.

Proposal – Planning Objectives:

The proposal, which supports the provision of necessary housing, aims to balance the above criteria through appropriately considered scale, form and use coupled with high-quality materials and public landscaping. Both buildings are set back from the road to create a green buffer between the road and the new apartments. The design process has been directly guided by the relevant Planning Objectives as set out in the Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) as follows:

(A) Objective SPQH032 – Quality of Residential Development

The building has been designed to have a strong visual presence with a high-quality brick façades and integrated balconies fronting onto Seatown road. The apartments have been designed to ensure high quality living environments for all residents in terms of space standards, shared communal landscaping and overall quality of finishes. The apartments are designed to the standards set out in the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, DEHLG (2009) and the accompanying Urban Design Manual – A best Practice Guide and the Design Standards for New Apartments (DHLGH as updated 2020). - Refer also to section 3 for further information.

(B) Objective SPQH033 - Integration of Residential Development.

The building has been positioned to give a strong frontage onto Seatown Road. There is a green buffer between the road and the proposed buildings, which is in line with the recommended target of 15% of green space, tree coverage and public space associated with every new residential development. The proposed landscape areas exceed the 15% target recommended.

The buffer also acts as a continuation of an existing 'green zone' which starts at Seatown Terrace and continues up past Aldi and now past the proposed development to County Hall. The proposal, as such, recognises the importance of high-quality, integrated landscaping which relates to the public realm, and which softens the interface between the proposed apartments and the streetscape.

(C) Objective SPQH031 - Property Management

The sites will be managed by a property management company to ensure the satisfactory security and maintenance of proposed communal areas and the bin and bike stores.

(D) Objective SPQH032 – New residential Development and energy efficiency

The proposal includes green roofs to both buildings with photovoltaic panels for renewable energy as part of the strategy to achieve NZEB standards. Due to the linear plan the apartments are all dual aspect, therefore benefit from passive solar design and natural ventilation.

Proposal – General Considerations:

In addition to being guided by the relevant Planning Objectives the following has been considered:

- The buildings have been designed so that habitable spaces generally address the public street whereas the access route is via external walkways to the south in order to mitigate against overlooking of adjacent residential properties along St Columcille's Drive.
- The apartments have been designed with strong lateral separation between integrated balconies throughout the scheme.

- All permanent dwellings throughout the development are dual aspect for light and ventilation purposes. All ground floor dwellings have been designed with 2.7m floor to ceiling heights, to maximise natural daylight penetration into the spaces.
- The proposal has been designed to be climate-friendly with high levels of insulation, high performance windows and doors, solar panels, and SUDs drainage throughout.

A Flood Risk Assessment has also been carried out by Lohan and Donnelly Consulting Engineers – Refer to engineer’s documentation included with Part XI Planning Information.

- The proposal has been screened for Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment (Refer to reports included with Part XI Planning Information)
- The proposal has been audited by an external consultant (AFEC Engineering) to ensure compliance with Parts B (Fire) & M (Access and Use) of the building regulations. A lift has also been provided so that all dwellings are wheelchair accessible and Age Friendly.

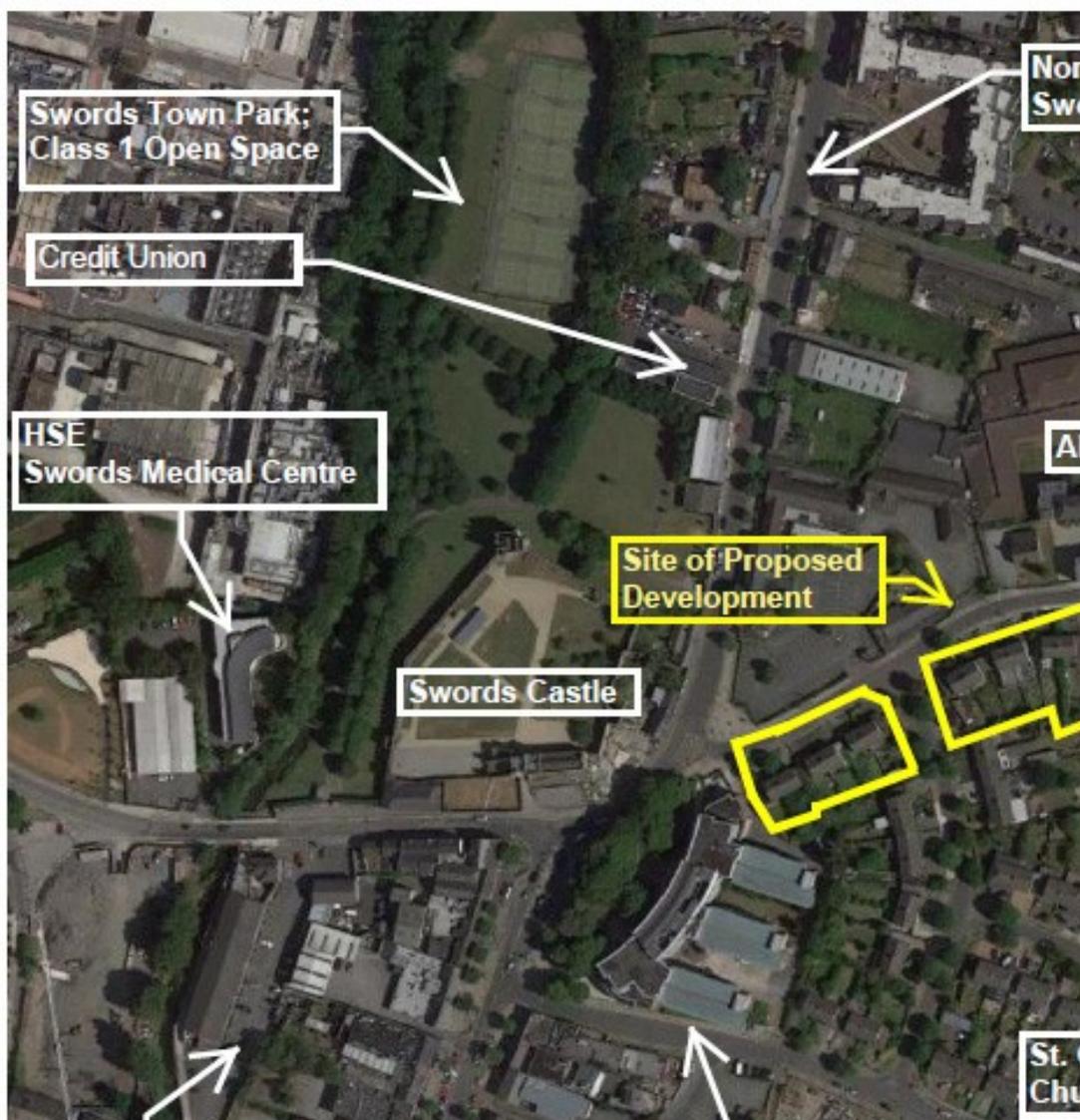
3. Housing Quality Assessment:

a. Residential Zoning:

In the Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029), the site is Zoned MC - Major Town Centre '*Protect, provide for and/improve major town centre facilities.*' - The proposal accords with the Use Classes for the Development Plan Zoning which allows for residential development.

Sustainable Community Proofing

The site is located at the heart of Swords, 200m from Main Street with shops, pharmacies, medical services, and banks. It is generally accepted that 400m (5-minute walk) to 800m (a ten-minute walk) represents the 'pedshed' - a suitable distance for residents to access local services and convenience shopping. This extract from google maps (Fig. 1) shows services and facilities within 400m of the site.



The sites proximity to services and its accessibility by foot or bicycle is in line with the vision for Major town centre sites.

“Emphasise urban conservation, ensure priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists while minimising the impact of the private car-based traffic and enhance and develop the existing urban fabric.”

400 to 800m (10 minutes’ walk)

The site is approx. 800m walking distance from the Pavilions Shopping centre. Bus routes 33, 33A, 33B, 41C, 43 are available adjacent to the site on North Street; Bus Routes 41, 41B, 196 and 197 are available on Main Street Swords.

Given its proximity to numerous retail, educational, recreational, and healthcare facilities and the availability of Public Transport, development of the site as residential use would contribute to the creation of sustainable mixed communities in accordance with statutory planning policy SPQHO30 and raises no concerns as to sustainable community proofing.

800 to 1200m (20 minutes’ walk)

Regarding proximity to schools, there are primary, community and infant Montessori schools within walking distance of 1.2 km from the proposed sites. St. Finian’s community school is 1.2 km, St Columcille’s girls national is within 200m, Old borough national school within 550m and swords Montessori school and creche within 1km.

Therefore, given its proximity to the numerous retail, educational, recreational, and healthcare facilities located close-by and its location close to public transport, the development of the site for social housing would contribute to the creation of sustainable mixed communities in accordance with national and local statutory planning policy, and raises no concerns as to sustainable community proofing.

b. Dwelling Types:

All permanent residences are 2 bedrooms (4 or 3 person occupancy) which has been confirmed by Fingal Housing Department as being in line with the housing need for the area.

c. Residential Density:

Site No. 1 has an area of 2090 Sqm / 0.21 Ha, which equates to a density of 86 units per hectare. Site No.2 the area is 1816 Sqm / 0.18 Ha, which equates to a density of 85 units per hectare. This density is deemed appropriate in this case, for the following reasons:

- The site is proximate to the centre of a large town (200m to Main Street Swords)
- The site is 200m from main street for bus routes 41, 41B, 196 and 197 providing and bus routes 33, 33A, 33B, 41C and 43 are available adjacent to the site on north street providing good public transport connectivity.
- This density is in line with the Swords Masterplan 2019 which recommends net densities ranging up to 110 units/hectare.

d. Public Open Space:

The sites are within 100m of Swords Community Park and within a 1km of the larger regional park Ward River Valley park. This is compliant with Table 4.2 of the development plan.

e. Separation Distances:

Windows from habitable spaces generally face away from adjacent residential properties and County Hall to mitigate against overlooking. A small number of kitchen / bedroom windows face towards windows in adjacent residential properties, however they are of such a distance as to be of no concern.

f. Site Safety and Security:

Passive surveillance is achieved to all communal external areas within the curtilage of the site including the parking area and bin and bicycle storage via windows and external circulation routes. A site lighting scheme will be included in the detailed design to ensure safety and security at night.

g. Accessibility:

As noted in Section 2 above the proposal and been audited for compliance with Part M (Access and Use) and Part B (Fire) of the building regulations. All access routes to dwellings and spaces within dwellings are designed to be accessible/visit-able along with providing safe escape routes in case of fire as required by Building Regulations. A lift has also been provided to make all units accessible by wheelchair / Age-Friendly.

h. Communal Amenity Space:

The shared communal amenity space within the development is more than 500 Sqm which surpasses the requirements of the Fingal Development Plan (Min 10% of site area – i.e., Site No.1 = 209 Sqm & site No.2 =181.6 Sqm) and Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (Min 7 Sqm per 2 bed unit 4 person and 6 sqm per 2 bed 3-person, Site No.1 – 140 Sqm & Site No.2 – 104 Sqm).

i. Bicycle Storage:

The Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) refers to an improvement to bicycle parking provisions to negate the need for excessive number of parking spaces in MC zones (Major Town Centre zones)

“Provision of high quality, safe, secure, and convenient bicycle parking is essential to support sustainable transport including cycling, walking and public transport. High-quality bicycle parking is an obvious extension of the ambitious public transport, cycle and walking network that is contained within this Plan and wider policy generally.”

In line with Table 14.17 of the Development Plan, 3 No. long stay bicycle parking bays per 2-bedroom apartment has been provided in secure stores with double-stacked gas-assisted bicycle racks. (1 plus, 1 per bedroom). There is also provision for 0.5 bicycle bays for visitor parking.

For site No.1 this equates to 60 No. long stay bicycle bays and 10 No. short stay visitor bays. For Site No.2 this equates to 48 No. long stay bicycle bays and 8 No. short stay visitor bays.

We have provided storage lockers for bicycle accessories, we have indicated one storage locker per apartment. This equates to 20 storage lockers in Site No. 1 and 16 storage lockers in Site No.2. The bicycle stores will be well lit spaces with CCTV cameras installed to act as a deterrent to thieves. All residents will have keypad access to the secure bicycle stores. We will ensure there is a dedicated management company for the development to ensure bicycle stores are safe and secure for residents.

j. Car Parking:

As the site is within a Major Town centre zone there is an aspiration to provide high quality bike storage facilities and to ensure good transport connections are in place to reduce the number of car parking bays in developments.

Refer to the Fingal Development plan (2023-2029)

Objective CMP25 – *“Implement a balanced approach to the provision of car parking with the aim of using parking as a demand management measure to promote a transition towards more sustainable forms of transportation, while meeting the needs of businesses and communities.”*

Objective CMO30 – *“Implement a appropriate car parking standards for a range of land-use types, where provision is based on factors such as site location, level of public transport accessinility and impact of parking provision on local amenity.”*

In reference to the Fingal Development plan in table 14.19 Carparking Standards, which requires 1–2-bedroom residential homes to have a minimum of 0.5 parking spaces.

Site No.1 has 20 No. 2 bedroom apartments, therefore we have allowed for 10 parking spaces. Site No.2 has 16 No. 2 bedroom apartments, therefore we have allowed for 8 parking spaces. Both sites include a minimum of 1 No Part M compliant accessible spaces.

Access routes from parking spaces to the building entrances comply with Part M (Access and Use) of the Building Regulations and provision by way of ducting will be made for electric charging points at each parking space.

k. Refuse Storage and Bins:

On both sites, a roofed and ventilated bin store is located within a dedicated structure adjacent to St Columcille’s Drive for access by refuse trucks. Both bin stores have been sized to allow operation of a three-bin system for the collection of missed dry recyclables, organic waste, and residual waste with capacity to serve all units. The bin stores will be well lit and will not be accessible to the public. Bin stores will include drainage connections to provide washing down facilities with wastewater discharging to the sewer.

l. Management Company:

A management company will be engaged to maintain all communal amenity spaces within the development.

m. Gross Floor Areas of Dwellings:

In reference to the document (Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for new apartments 2020) it states *“The majority of all apartments in any proposed scheme of 10 or more apartments shall exceed the*

minimum floor area standard for any combination of the relevant 1-, 2- or 3-bedroom unit types, by a minimum of 10%”

Therefore, as the scheme contains 10 units or more, an additional 10% floor space has been calculated for the majority of the units (19 number) and distributed evenly across all units. Due to the mix of apartments, 8 of the units are of 63 Sqm and 11 are 73 Sqm. $(8 \times 63) + (11 \times 73) = 1307$ Sqm.

As the number of units is between 10 and 100, 10% of the overall area ($1307 \times 10\%$) 130.7Sqm can be divided across the units. This gives a minimum additional floor space of 3.63Sqm per unit ($130.7\text{Sqm}/36$) which is provided in all cases.

Due to the requirement note all units exceed the minimum Gross Floor Areas of 73 Sqm for two-bedroom (4 person) apartments and 63 Sqm for 2-bedroom (3 person) apartments as set out in the Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) and Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG 2020).

Refer to Appendix A: Schedule of Areas

n. Space Standards:

The apartments have been planned to ensure compliance with space standards in the Fingal Development Plan (2023-29) and Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG 2020).

- Gross floor areas
- Individual room sizes
- Aggregate room areas
- Principal room dimensions
- Storage areas

Refer to Appendix A: Schedule of Areas / Widths to Dwellings

o. Layouts of Dwellings:

The dwelling layouts have been designed to demonstrate:

- Principal room widths
- Typical arrangement of furniture
- Appropriate living / kitchen / dining space

- Adequate space within bathrooms
- Adequate storage facilities

p. Aspect of Dwellings:

All units are dual aspect for light and ventilation purposes.

q. Ceiling Height:

Ground floor units have ceiling heights of 2.7m, whilst first, second and third floor units have ceiling heights of 2.55m.

r. Kitchens:

The layouts provide for open plan kitchen/living/dining arrangement. The kitchens sizes and layouts have been designed in compliance with the Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) and Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG 2020) and include for:

- Adequate high level and low-level storage
- Adequate worktop surface
- Adequate space for appliances

s. Internal Storage:

Each dwelling meets the internal storage requirements of Fingal Development Plan (2023-2029) and Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG 2020).

Refer to Appendix A: Schedule of Areas / Widths to Dwellings

t. Private Amenity Space:

Each dwelling is provided with Private Amenity Space in the form of private balconies. Areas of Private Amenity Space for each unit exceed the minimum requirement of 7 Sqm for 2 bed 4 person units and 6 sqm for 2-bedroom 3 person units, as noted in Fingal Development Plan and Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG 2018).

Refer to Appendix A: Schedule of Areas / Widths to Dwellings

u. Daylight, Sunlight:

All units are dual aspect and have generous ceiling heights and high-performance openable windows and patio doors. The following guidance and standards have been considered in the design of the proposed development:

- Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice (B.R.209, 2011).
- B.S. 8206 Lighting for Buildings, Part 2 2008: Code of Practice for Daylighting.

A daylight and sunlight assessment has been carried out by GIA Chartered Surveyors Ltd. (Refer to report included with Part XI Planning Information)

v. Acoustic Privacy:

To ensure compliance with Part E (Sound) of the Building Regulations, the form of construction will be in accordance with guidance and testing of the completed building will be carried out to demonstrate this compliance.

w. Energy Performance:

All dwellings will achieve high levels of occupant comfort, and compliance with the relevant parts of the building regulations as follows:

- Part F: Ventilation
- Part J: Heat Producing Appliances
- Part L: Conservation of Fuel and Energy

x. Design Standards:

The following documents have been consulted in the pre-planning design stage:

- Fingal Development Plan (2023-29)
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (DHPLG 2020)
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas; Planning Authority Guidelines (DEHLG 2009)
- Recommendations for Site Development Works for Housing Areas (DOELG 1998)
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS 2013)

APPENDIX A

Proposed Apartment Development, Seatown Road, Swords;														
Table of Space Standards.														
Apartment Type:	Gross Floor Area (GFA)	Aggregate Living Area (sqm)	Aggregate Bedroom Area (sqm)	Single Bedroom	Double Bedroom	Twin Bedroom	Storage (sqm)	Living Room Width	Single Bedroom width	Double Bedroom width	Private Amenity Space (sqm)	Communal Amenity Space	Quantity	Dual Aspect Apartment?
Two Bedrooms (4 person) Apartment														
DHPLG, FDP; (minimum)	76.63*	30	24.4	N/A	11.4	13	6	3.6	N/A	2.8	7	7	20	Yes
Unit Type 1	79.3	28.9***	25	N/A	11.9	13.2	6	4	N/A	2.83	18.3 / 23.8 / 9.8	7		
% Exceeded	2.67	-1.1	0.6	N/A	0.5	0.2	0	0.4	N/A	0.03	11.3	7		
Unit Type 2	78.5	30.1	25	N/A	12.5	12.5	6.09	4	N/A	2.83	11.1	7	4	Yes
% Exceeded	1.87	0.1	0.6	N/A	1.1	-0.5	0.09	0.4	N/A	0.03	4.1	7		
Unit Type 3	79.3	30.1	25	N/A	12.5	12.5	6.09	4	N/A	2.83	17.1	7	4	Yes
% Exceeded	2.67	0.1	0.6	N/A	1.1	-0.5	0.09	0.4	N/A	0.03	10.1	7		
Two Bedrooms (3person) Apartment														
DHPLG, FDP; (minimum)	66.63*	28	20.1	7.1	N/A	13	5	3.6	2.1	2.8	6	7	8	Yes
Unit Type 3	69.8	28.8	21.7	9.23	N/A	12.5	5.08	4	2.12	2.82	11.1	7		
% Exceeded	3.17	0.8	1.6	2.13	N/A	-0.5	0.08	0.4	0.12	0.82	5.1	7		

* 73 + 3.63 Sqm (10% of (73 x 11) + (63 x 8)/36 units) = 76.63 Sqm per unit for 2 bed 4 person –

**63 + 3.63 Sqm (10% of (73 x 11) + (63 x 8)/36 units) = 66.63 Sqm per unit for 2 bed 3 person –

*** Note - 5% differentiation allowed as long as overall areas are achieved

Site 1 of Proposed Works:	2090
Site 2 of Proposed Works:	1816
Total Curtilage area of proposed development	3906
Site 1 Building footprint area:	837
Site 2 Building footprint area:	650.9
Total Buildings footprint area:	1487.9
Site 1 Communal Amenity space	140
Site 2 Communal Amenity space	112
Total Communal Amenity space	252