

Proposed Local Authority Own Housing
Development at Dolphin House (Block 1B)
Biodiversity Statement

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1 Introduction

Dublin City Council (DCC) proposes to develop new housing at Block 1B, Dolphin House in Dublin 8. The site is located between Dolphin's Barn Street (to the east) and Dolphin House (to the north), with Dolphin Road and the Grand Canal to the south. The existing Dolphin House apartment complex borders the subject site to the west.

This report comprises a **biodiversity statement** prepared to accompany the Dublin City Council Part 8 documentation. It has been prepared by Matthew Hague BSc MSc Adv. Dip. Plan. & Env. Law CEnv MCIEEM, Senior Ecologist and Associate with Brady Shipman Martin. Matthew is a highly experienced and qualified ecologist, with a master's degree in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management. He has over 20 years of experience in ecological and environmental consultancy, across a wide range of sectors. Matthew is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). Matthew has also completed an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law, at King's Inns and is a member of the Irish Environmental Law Association (IELA).

A bat survey report has been prepared by ecologist and bat specialist Faith Wilson CEnv MCIEEM and is submitted separately. The results of the bat survey are referred to in this report as appropriate.

2 The site

As set out in the DCC Architectural Report prepared for the proposed development, this Part 8 proposal relates to a c.0.2Ha site to the west of the Dolphin Estate facing onto Dolphins Barn Road and adjacent to Dolphin's Barn Bridge and the Grand Canal. (refer to **Figure 2.1 and 2.2** below).

The Dolphin Estate is a large c.7.5Ha social housing complex located in the south-west inner city bounded by Dolphin's Barn to the east, the South Circular Road to the north, Herberton Park to the west and the Grand Canal to the southern boundary.

The estate, originally made up of 436 dwellings, 392 social apartments and 44 senior citizen bedsits is part of a large regeneration project, the first phase of which was completed in 2018 and consisted of a mix of 100 retrofitted and new build dwellings. A new senior citizen development was completed in 2020 and catered for the existing community living in the former Dolphin Park.

The subject site comprises a small area of amenity grassland at the edge of the Dolphin Estate. It is bounded by a concrete wall and steel fence of approximately 2 metres in height to the east (adjacent to Dolphin's Barn Road (the R110)). A paladin fence of approximately 2 metres also separates the subject site from the existing Dolphin House apartment complex to the west.

The site is listed as a Strategic Development and Regeneration Area (SDRA 12) in the Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028. The site is zoned 'Z14', (refer to Zoning Map E of Volume 3 of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028), which, as per Chapter 14 of the Written Statement of the Development Plan, has an overall objective to *'seek the social, economic and physical development and/or regeneration of an area with mixed-use, of which residential would be the predominant use.'*

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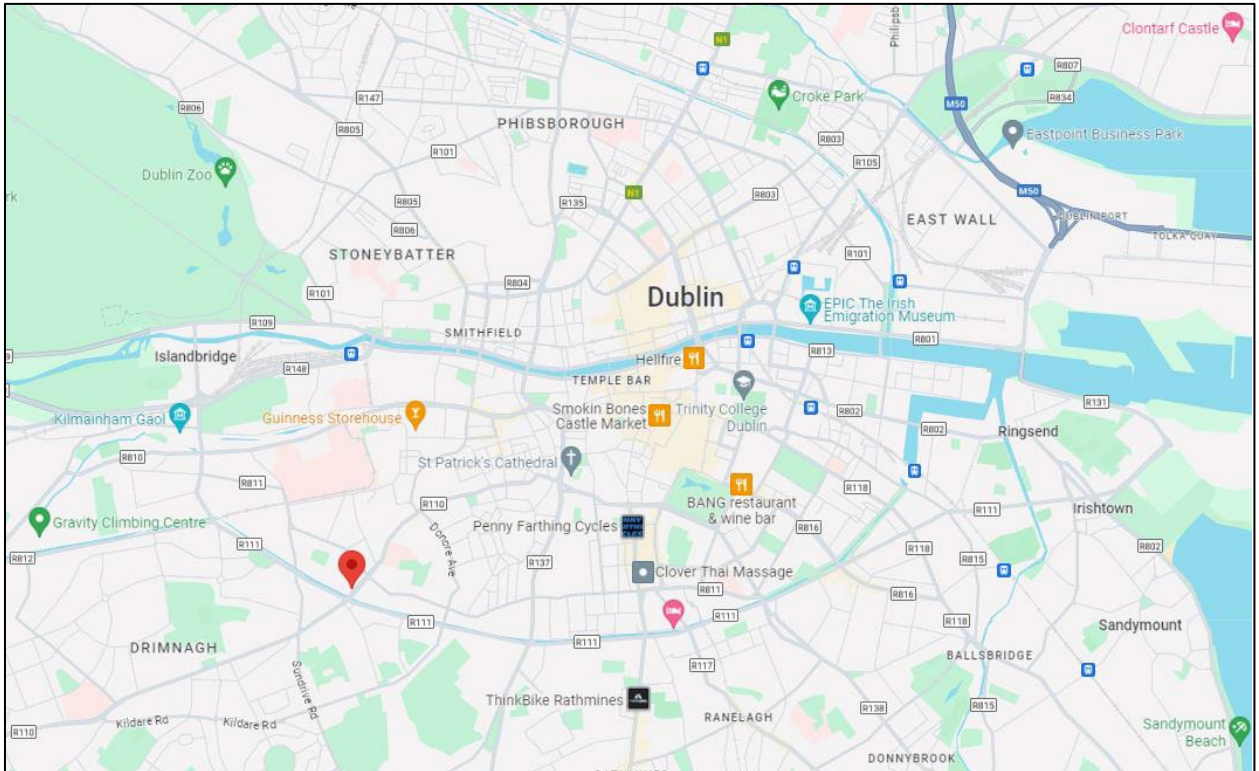


Figure 2.1 The location of the proposed development site in Dublin City

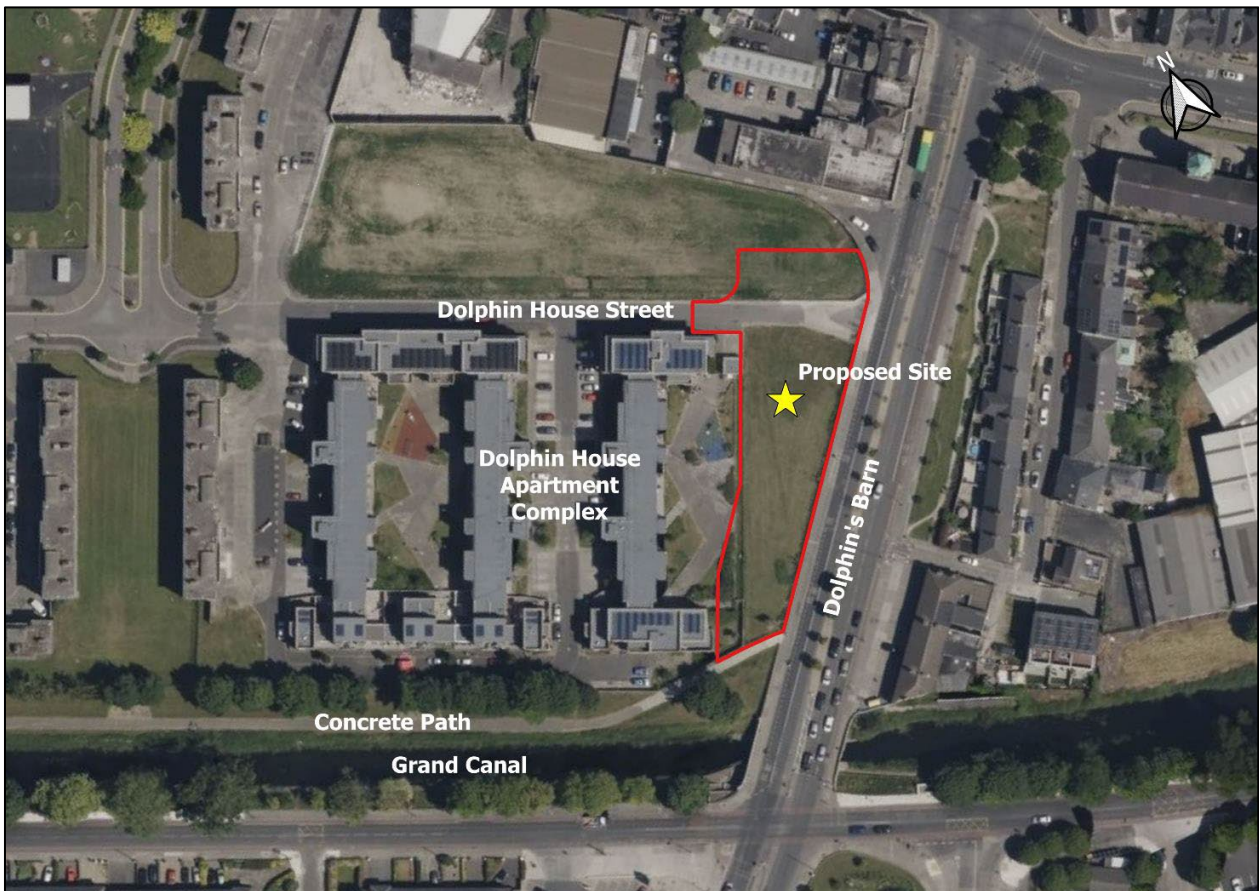


Figure 2.2 The location of the proposed development site in its local context

2.1 Development Description

The proposed development (see **Figure 2.3**) will comprise the construction of 30 no. new dwellings units, 11 houses, 1 duplex and 18 apartments on a site facing Dolphin's Barn and adjacent to the Grand Canal with associated works including hard and soft landscaping, surface car parking, cycle parking, CCTV security and public lighting.



Figure 2.3 Visualisation of the proposed development

3 Biodiversity appraisal of the site

3.1 Baseline Data Collection and Field Visits

A desk-based assessment of the subject site in Dolphin's Barn was first undertaken in September 2023. This was updated in May and June 2025 and finalised in September 2025.

In order to provide comprehensive baseline information on the local ecological environment, biodiversity surveys were undertaken at the proposed development site by Brady Shipman Martin on several dates:

- 11 September 2023;
- 5 January 2024;
- 13 May 2024;
- 16 June 2025;
- 15 September 2025.

The surveys undertaken comprised habitat, invasive species, rare and/or protected species, mammals, birds and day-time bat survey, both on the subject site itself and on the adjacent Grand Canal. Given the nature, scale and location of the subject site at Dolphin's Barn it has been possible to fully assess the ecological value of the site. With the exception of the dedicated bat surveys (carried out by bat specialist Faith Wilson), all surveys were undertaken by the author of this Technical Note, Matthew Hague of Brady Shipman Martin.

An assessment of habitat suitability for species with links to European sites was also undertaken, in order to appraise the potential for *ex-situ* effects on European sites (refer to the accompanying AA Screening Report, prepared by Brady Shipman Martin).

A comprehensive bat survey was undertaken by Ecological Consultant Faith Wilson. That report is submitted separately, however the findings are included in this Biodiversity Statement. The bat survey report is based on the results of a site visit by Ms. Wilson on 10 September 2025, in optimal survey conditions and builds on the results of previous bat surveys in the Dolphin Estate in 2014, 2019 and 2020.

3.2 Biodiversity Baseline

3.2.1 Habitats and flora

The proposed development site is not under any wildlife or conservation designation. Furthermore, no rare, threatened or legally protected plant species, as listed in the *Irish Red Data Book 1 – Vascular Plants* (Curtis & McGough, 1988), the *Flora Protection Order, 2022* or the *EU Habitats Directive*, are known to occur within the site and none have been recorded during any of the site visits carried out by Brady Shipman Martin between 2023 and 2025.

No species listed on the Third Schedule of the Habitats Regulations, such as giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) or three-cornered leek (*Allium triquetrum*) have been recorded by the author at the subject site. Several, including Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed, as well as rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), giant rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*), Canadian waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*), Nuttall's waterweed (*E. nutallii*) and Indian balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), have all been recorded within 10km. Of interest are records of Japanese knotweed, which is known from various locations along the Grand Canal within 500m of the site. It is not however be present within the proposed development site, nor is it currently present along the canal immediately west of Dolphin's Barn Bridge, to the south of the subject site.

The site of the proposed development comprises a single plot, triangular in shape, rising up from the north to the south. It is widest at the northern end and narrows considerably as it approaches the southern boundary.

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The site is virtually entirely dominated by a single habitat – regularly mown grassland (corresponding to the Fossitt¹ habitat code GA2). As is to be expected on such a managed, urban site, common sown grasses dominate, but other ruderal species are also present, including dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), white clover (*T. repens*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) and occasional docks (*Rumex* spp.) and colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*). Other than a few small buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*) shrubs on the perimeters of the site, and some ornamental planting to the west, associated with the existing Dolphin Estate, there are no shrubs or trees.

Outside of the subject site, to the south, and separated from it by a fence and a concrete path there exists another small area of amenity grassland, and some young sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) trees. Beyond these trees the land slopes down to the Grand Canal itself.

- No rare habitats or habitats of any ecological value (i.e. International, National or County Importance, or Local Importance) are present, and there are no Key Ecological Receptors at the proposed development site.
- The Grand Canal (pNHA site code 002104) is the nearest feature of ecological value – it is of County Importance and acts as an important wildlife corridor through Dublin City.

3.2.2 Fauna

As set out in detail in the accompanying bat survey report, bat activity is regularly recorded along the Grand Canal. Bat surveys over the years in this area have recorded at least four species on different occasions (Leisler's bat, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and Nathusius's pipistrelle). Daubenton's bat has not been recorded recently in this area.

The bat survey report confirms that there are no trees within the site that offer roosting potential for bats (species protected under Article 12 of the Habitats Directive). Further, the sycamore trees, outside the site, near the canal, are immature and contain no crevices or cavities that could offer roosting opportunities for bats. They may provide cover, and the canal itself is an important corridor for foraging and commuting bats.

The 2025 bat survey confirmed the following:

- No bats were recorded emerging from any of the nearby buildings at Dolphin House during the detector survey.
- There was very high levels of bat activity along the Grand Canal with both Common and Soprano pipistrelle bats recorded.

The bat survey report confirms that lighting installed as part of previous works on the Dolphin Estate has been sensitively designed for wildlife and does not generally illuminate the canal – this remains a dark corridor, in so far as this is achievable in an urban centre. Plate 5 in the bat survey report highlights both the dark corridor and some light spill.

In summary, the proposed development site itself is of no value for roosting bats. However, the Grand Canal corridor is important for commuting and foraging bats.

Urban foxes are regularly sighted in the area including in the vicinity of the subject site, however the site is of no value for large mammals protected under the Wildlife Acts. There are no features suitable for use by badgers, Irish hare or any other large mammal, and no evidence of any of these species has been recorded on the site by the author, during the surveys undertaken in 2023, 2024 or 2025.

Otters (like bats, otters are protected under Article 12 of the Habitats Directive) are well-known from the Grand Canal and the author has seen otters on the canal near Harold's Cross in the past. However the subject site itself is entirely unsuited to otters (or any other protected large mammals).

¹ <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/A%20Guide%20to%20Habitats%20in%20Ireland%20-%20Fossitt.pdf>

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The author has recorded a small number of common birds on the site, mainly corvids (magpie, rook and jackdaw) as well as a single robin in September 2025. There is no habitat suitable for breeding birds on the subject site.

The proposed development site holds no key ecological features – other than commuting and foraging bats associated with the Grand Canal to the south.

Full details are included in the accompanying Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, however, none of the habitats or features present on the subject site in Dolphin's Barn are Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests in any European site within the Zone of Influence and none of these Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests present on the site. No evidence of any habitats or species with links to European sites was recorded during either the field surveys or desk study undertaken and no 'reservoir' type habitats (habitats which have the potential to support Qualifying Interest/Special Conservation Interest species in any European site) are present. There are no records of the site being used, even on a very occasional basis, by any overwintering birds, such as pale-bellied Brent goose, or any other protected bird species listed as a Special Conservation Interest (SCI) in any European site within the Zone of Influence. This is unsurprising, given the small size of the site, and its exposed nature.

The Grand Canal, of County Importance, is located within c.25m of the southern site boundary. This is the only hydrological feature of any note in the area.

A review of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web-tool indicates that there are no watercourses within or near the proposed development site. The proposed development site is located within the River Liffey and Dublin Bay catchment (in the Dodder sub-catchment and the Poddle sub-basin). The nearest mapped watercourse is the River Poddle (EPA Code: IE_EA_09P030800), c. 1km to the east according to the EPA database. However, the Poddle is culverted for much of its length in the city centre and there is no connection between the proposed development site and this watercourse.

In summary, other than for the presence of commuting and foraging bats in the vicinity (particularly along the Grand Canal the proposed development site is of no ecological importance, in accordance with the ecological resource valuations presented in the *Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes*².

3.3 European Sites and Appropriate Assessment Screening

As set out in detail in the accompanying AA Screening report, prepared by Brady Shipman Martin, no sites designated for nature conservation under the EU Habitats Directive are present on the site. No significant effects on European sites will arise as a result of the development, and it will not be necessary to undertake Appropriate Assessment, which would require the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). The AA Screening Report conclusions are as follows:

In view of best scientific knowledge this report concludes that the proposed development at Dolphin House, Phase 1B, individually or in combination with another plan or project, will not have a significant effect on any European sites. This conclusion was reached without considering or taking into account mitigation measures or measures intended to avoid or reduce any impact on European sites.

It is considered that this report provides sufficient relevant information to allow the Competent Authority (Dublin City Council) to carry out an AA Screening under Section 177(U) of the Planning Acts and reach a determination, under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, that the proposed development will not have any likely significant effects on European sites in light of their conservation objectives.

² (NRA, 2009 (Rev. 2) <https://www.tii.ie/technical-services/environment/planning/Guidelines-for-Assessment-of-Ecological-Impacts-of-National-Road-Schemes.pdf>)

3.4 Habitat loss and disturbance within the site

The proposed development will require site clearance and reprofiling, and the replacement of the existing grassland habitat with new buildings, hard standing and associated landscaping. The existing habitats are of no ecological value and their replacement with new development including landscaping and blue roofs is not considered to be a significant ecological impact. The landscape design, which will incorporate the recommendations of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025, will include new, ecologically diverse planting (see Section 4.2).

No impacts are expected on roosting bats as a result of the construction (or operation) of the proposed development – no bat roosts will be lost or impacted in any way. While it is also not expected that there will be any significant effects on commuting or foraging bats (or on otters or any other protected species) within the subject site itself, given the level of bat activity along the Grand Canal, with both soprano and common pipitrelle recorded foraging or commuting bats there, badly designed lighting could impact on bats. There is therefore a requirement to maintain a dark corridor along the canal at this location.

There is no potential for any impacts on nesting birds, given the negligible value of the existing site for birds.

There will be no impacts on otters, badgers or other large mammals, amphibians, reptiles, lepidoptera or any other species groups as a result of the proposed development, given the negligible value of the existing site for birds.

There will be no transfer of invasive plant material during the construction phase that could potentially lead to such species becoming established in the area. The construction methodology will ensure that no invasive species are introduced, either deliberately or inadvertently, to the site.

There will, similarly, be no impacts on watercourses or the water environment in general as a result of the proposed development, either during construction or operation. As set out in Section 7 of the Engineering Services Report, prepared by RPS Consulting Engineers and submitted separately, the existing ground levels outside the site to the east (the public road) and south (the area between the subject site and the Grand Canal will be retained unaltered, through the construction of retaining walls. Despite its proximity to the Grand Canal (located c.25m to the south of the site boundary), there is no realistic pathway for surface water arising at the construction site to enter the canal. There will be no surface water outfall to the canal during construction or operation, and as the site slopes upward from north to south (with a high point on the southern site boundary) there is no realistic possibility that significant volumes of contaminated surface water would arise at the construction site and flow up towards the southern site boundary and on to the canal.

Furthermore, the Grand Canal is a contained (fully lined) feature, and there is no potential for hydrological/hydrogeological connectivity between the proposed development site and the canal.

Once complete, the drainage design for the proposed development, which incorporates the provision of Sustainable urban Drainage (SuDS) measures including blue roofs, will be in full compliance with the requirements of Dublin City Council and the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS).

4 Mitigation measures

4.1 Designated conservation areas

No designated conservation areas will be impacted in any way by the proposed development and no specific mitigation measures are required for the protection of such sites, including European sites. Full details in relation to European sites are provided in a separate Appropriate Assessment Screening Report that is submitted with the planning application.

4.2 Fauna and Habitats

All site clearance and landscaping works will comply with current legislative requirements and best practice. However, there are no ecological features of any significance on the site and no seasonal restrictions (to protect

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birds, bats or other fauna) are required or proposed. As confirmed in the separate bat survey report it will not be necessary to apply to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for a derogation licence under Regulation 54 or 55 of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011* (S.I. 477/2011) in order to disturb or to remove any bat roosts.

The landscape plan prepared by Dublin City Council (drawing DMP-1B-ZZZ-DR-DCC-AR-0101) includes the following tree, shrub and grass species:

- Reed grass *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora*);
- Euonymus 'Emerald Gaiety' (*Euonymus fortunei*);
- Smokebush Cotinus 'Grace' (*Cotinus* sp.);
- Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*);
- Aucuba 'Rozannie' (*Aucuba japonica*);
- Upright myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia rigida*);
- Lilyturf (*Liriope muscari*);
- Bergenia (*Bergenia cordifolia*);
- Six hills giant catmint (*Nepeta x faassenii*);
- Silver birch (*Betula pendula*);
- Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer');
- Blue Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca');

Additional pollinator-friendly species should also be included as part of the landscape design for the proposed development to incorporate a range of species that will attract feeding invertebrates, including moths, butterflies and bees taking account of and implementing the relevant objectives of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025 as well as the relevant green infrastructure objectives of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (specifically the numerous policies relevant to biodiversity and sustainable development, such as Policy Objective CA9, SI21, SI22, GI3, GI5, GI8, GIO7, GIO8, GI16, GI24, GI32, GI34 and GI41) as well as the Technical Guidance Note on Biodiversity for Development Management in Dublin City³ (DCC 2021) and the Dublin City Council Parks Strategy 2017-2022⁴.

All planting plans and landscaping proposals will further ensure that no new invasive species are introduced, either deliberately or inadvertently, to the site.

Blue roofs will also be provided as part of the development as part of the SuDS strategy for the proposed development. Full details on all SuDS measures are provided elsewhere in the Part 8 documentation

Although not required to mitigate potential impacts on biodiversity, nesting and roosting opportunities should be provided for both bats and birds (swifts, house sparrow, starling and swallow) within the new buildings on the site. These might include nest boxes, bat boxes and the incorporation of specialised bricks/pre-constructed opportunities in the walls of the new buildings. These should be specified by an ecologist at detailed design stage. While these features are not required to mitigate any ecological impacts, they are proposed as biodiversity enhancement measures.

4.3 Lighting

The proposed lighting for the proposed development shall be designed in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Bats and Lighting – Guidance Notes for Planners, Engineers, Architects and Developers (Bat Conservation Ireland, 2010)⁵;

³ https://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/technical-guidance-note-on-biodiversity-for-development-management-in-dublin-city_v1published_nov2021.pdf

⁴ <https://www.dublincity.ie/parks-and-nature/strategies-and-policies/parks-strategy>

⁵ https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/BCIrelandGuidelines_Lighting.pdf

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- Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night, Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2023⁶;
- Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01-21 (Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2021)⁷;
- Dark Sky Ireland's Environmentally Friendly Lighting Guide⁸.

The proposed lighting will have the following characteristics (all of particular relevance to the Grand Canal corridor to the south of the site):

- The minimum level of lighting will be provided within the developed areas, within the lux level criteria required by Dublin City Council (DCC).
- The light temperature of all fittings will comply with the specifications required by DCC.
- No flood lighting will be provided within the proposed development and all light fittings will be LED and are designed to shine downwards and will avoid sky glow and light spill.
- A warm white spectrum shall be adopted to reduce blue light component.
- Luminaires shall feature peak wavelengths higher than 550 nm.
- Lighting will be directed onto the roadways and paths – and away from the Grand Canal to the south of the site – in so far as is achievable this will be retained as a dark corridor, with no additional light spill from the proposed development

5 Conclusion

The proposed development will result in the removal of a small area of regularly mown amenity grassland and some buddleia bushes, of no significant ecological value. A new residential development and associated landscaping and blue roofs will be provided. There will be no long-term residual impact on any ecological receptors, either within or in the vicinity of the site, or associated with any site designated for nature conservation, including the Royal Canal pNHA, as a result of the proposed development.

⁶ <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

⁷ <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/>

⁸ <https://www.darksy.ie/lighting-documents/#guidelines>

Plates (September 2025)



Plate 1 – View of the existing site, looking north from the southern boundary



Plate 2 – View of existing habitats on the site, looking south, rising towards the southern boundary

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Plate 3 – View towards the Grand Canal s the southern boundary of the subject site

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