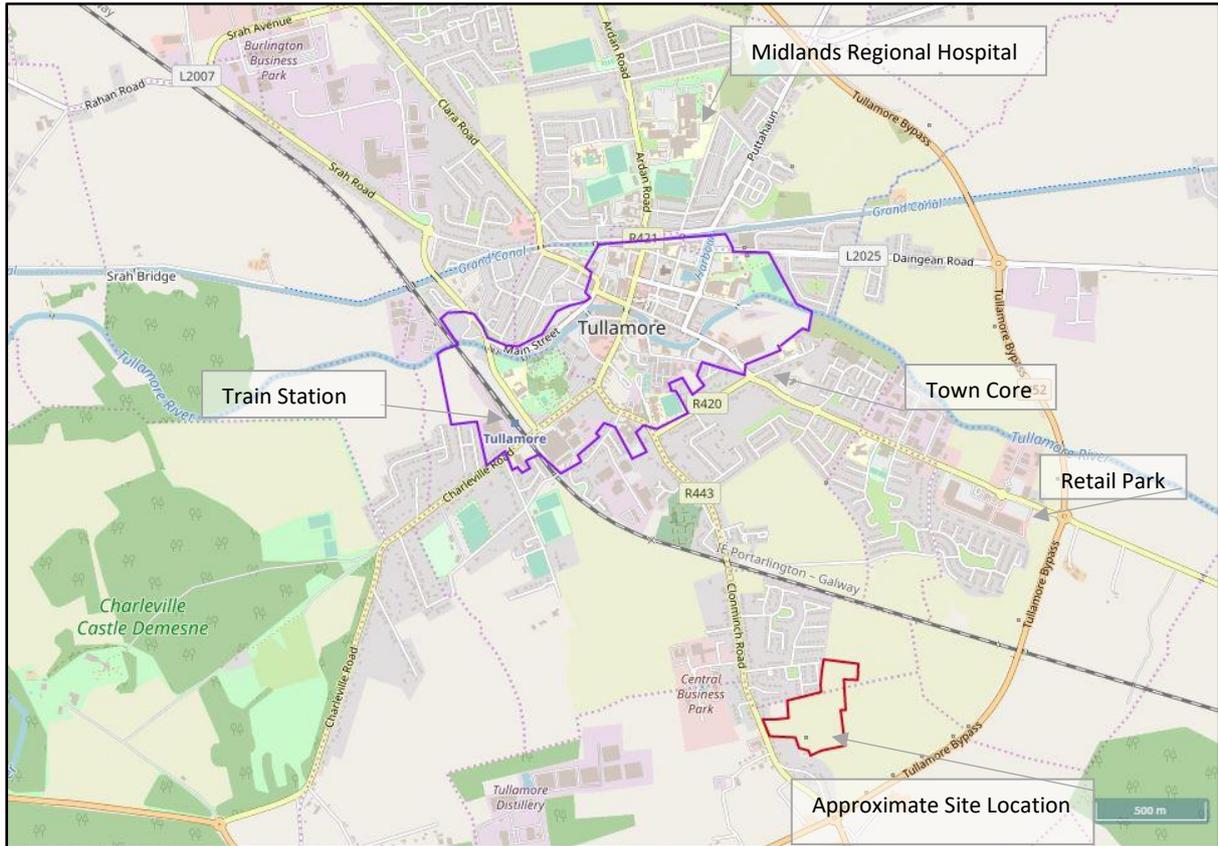


**3.0 INTRODUCTION TO SITE AND PROJECT**

In the interest of brevity, a detailed description of the application site, its location and the proposed project is provided by this chapter of the EIAR and is not repeated in each individual chapter.

This Chapter also details the reasonable alternatives considered for the proposed project and reasons for the chosen option.

**3.1 Description of the Location of the Proposed Development**



*Figure 3.1 - Application site (outlined red) in context of urban area of Tullamore*

The application site is located to the south east of Tullamore Town Centre to the east of the Clonminch Road (R443). The immediate area is characterised by linear residential development along the Clonminch Road with low density housing developments to the east of Clonminch Road including Limefield and Clonminch Wood. A Part 8 housing development has approval on lands to the immediate north of the application site entrance which has been designed for housing the elderly. Opposite the site entrance is a large and imposing commercial building of modern design which acts as a gateway building on entrance to Tullamore from the south via the N52 junction to the south of the application site. Developments to the west of the Clonminch Road behind residential dwellings fronting onto the R443 consist of employment uses within the Central Business Park where the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and Revenue Irish Tax and Customs offices are located together with the Department of Finance offices in addition to Teagasc. This is a significant centre of employment for Tullamore.

William Grant & Sons Whiskey distillery and warehouse maturation facility is located to the south west. This facility is regarded as a lower tier COMAH establishment. A site specific Risk Assessment has been undertaken with respect to this facility.

The wider area within which the application site is located is characterised and largely defined by infrastructure routes with the Dublin-Galway train line to the north and N52 orbital route to the east and south, forming a physical barrier surrounding the settlement of Tullamore and marking a transition to more rural landscape beyond. There is full footpath connectivity from the application site into Tullamore Town Centre and a regular bus service (835) provides easy access to services in the town including the train station and retail services to the east.

### **3.2 Description of the Project**

The proposed development has a combined gross floor area (GFA) of 40,015.70m<sup>2</sup>. The project has been designed as a new urban neighbourhood within a parkland setting and adheres to the principles of Urban Design. The DMURS compliant road hierarchy and generous public open space areas will create a calm and pleasant environment. High quality materials and finishes are proposed through the scheme as detailed in the Architects Design Statement under separate cover.

The proposed development is of a residential nature with supporting neighbourhood services comprising:

- 196 houses
- 153 apartments
- Two neighbourhood centre buildings which provide for local shops, medical centre, gym and business hub.
- A local shop
- Crèche for 100 children

Proposed buildings on the site will range between 1 – 4 storeys in height. All buildings have provision for photovoltaic/solar panels. The final position of these panels will depend on orientation. Parking to serve the proposed development is provided in-curtilage, at basement level and at surface level with landscaping to reduce its visual impact. Dedicated car parking is provided for the neighbourhood centre and crèche and is located so it is not visually intrusive. Public open spaces will be provided throughout the development including two large public parks named Clonminch Square and St.Columba's Green in addition to communal open space provided for apartment residents and a tree lined cycle path.

### **3.2.1 Vehicular Access**

A new vehicular access point is proposed from the Clonminch Road (R443) via a new signal controlled junction. The junction will operate as a three arm junction with reserved capacity for a fourth arm to be implemented at a future date to facilitate development of lands west of Clonminch Road. Provision has also been made for two new bus stops in the vicinity of the proposed new site access junction. Shared cycle/pedestrian facilities are proposed on all approaches to this new junction with Toucan crossings on all arms of the signal controlled junction.

There are no vehicular, pedestrian or cycle links proposed as part of this planning application to the adjoining residential area Clonminch Wood / Limefield as these developments have not been taken in charge. However, the layout does allow for future connections to both existing residential development and onward connection within the Eastern Node to the north, south and east of the development area. All road and footpaths will be brought to the site boundary to enable seamless connection.

### **3.2.2 Improvement Works to Clonminch Road (R443)**

Improvement works are proposed to Clonminch Road over a length of c.1,700m to allow for cycle tracks to be provided as part of the proposed development. The proposed cycle scheme will commence approximately 100 metres south of the proposed site access junction and continue along Clonminch Road to tie into the existing road carriageway at a location approximately 80metre northwest of the Bachelor's Walk junction.

The cycle facilities proposed on Clonminch Road comprise predominantly segregated cycle tracks except for an approach to the town centre where the available carriageway width narrows, a shared cycle / pedestrian facility is proposed in the northbound direction over a distance of approximately 190m which is generally 3 metres wide. For a short 90m section south of the Bachelor's Walk junction, the narrow carriageway width at this section results in southbound cyclist having to share the road with vehicular traffic. It is considered this is a successful solution given the cycle lanes are being retrofitted into existing road and built infrastructure.

In order to facilitate the proposed segregated cycle infrastructure proposals, all space facilitating the existing right turn pockets have been reassigned to accommodate the introduction of high quality cycle facilities. Cycle tracks are generally 2m in width (reducing to 1.75m and over a short section 1.5m where available carriageway width is restricted) and segregated vertically and / or horizontally from the vehicular carriageway. Vehicular traffic lanes have been designed to a standard width of 3m in each direction as per the guidelines set out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets for "Arterial and Link streets". The proposed improvement works to provide cycle lanes on Clonminch Road are illustrated by DBFL Consulting Engineers Drawings 180002-DBFL-RD-SP-DR-C-1009 to 180002-DBFL-RD-SP-DR-C-1013 with cross sections detailed by drawing 180002-2014.

### 3.2.3 Pumping Station and Groundworks

Infrastructure proposed as part of the development includes a pumping station to the north of the main development area and rising main. This pumping station is required due to the topography of the site and will pump foul water to the existing foul network on Clonminch Road. The development includes the undergrounding of ESB lines that currently traverse the site, subject to agreement with ESB and all associate site development works with the provision of the development outlined above.

### 3.3 Breakdown of Development Proposed

The proposed development has a combined gross floor area (GFA) of 40,015.70m<sup>2</sup> which can be broken down as follows:

- 349 No. residential units                      GFA 35,653.70m<sup>2</sup>
- Non Residential                                      GFA 4,362m<sup>2</sup>
- Total GFA 40,015.70m<sup>2</sup>

Table 3.1 below contains a summary of the principle measurements that apply to the residential element of the project.

Density	35uph
Plot Ratio	0.39
Site Coverage	20%
Public Open Space	16%

*Table 3.1: Principle Figures*

The following sections set out more information on the land uses and key elements proposed in the planning application.

#### 3.3.1 Residential

The proposed development provides a mix of dwelling types to include detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings and 153 apartments within six buildings. This mix avoids the creation of a homogenous residential development. Rather the mix enables the creation of a more diverse population profile that assists the development of an integrated community. Households can move within the development as families expand and contract.

The breakdown across the 349no units is-

Proposed Mix of Residential Units		
1-Bed	41	12%
2-Bed	103	30%
3-Bed	155	44%
4-bed	50	14%
<i>Total</i>	349	100%

*Table 3.2: Proposed Development – Mix of Dwelling Size*

Unit Type	Number of Units	Percentage of Development	
Apartments	153	44%	
Detached House	5	1%	56%
Semi-Detached House	48	14%	
Terrace Houses	143	41%	
Total	349	100%	

*Table 3.3: Breakdown of Residential Accommodation Type*

As illustrated by architect drawing no. 1757-PA-008 there are a variety of house designs proposed. In addition to the various unit types and finishes, house types vary in height to increase variety and provide a strong urban edge and orientation within the development.

House Type	Quantity Proposed	
2-Bed	4	2%
3-Bed	142	72%
4-bed	50	26%
Total	196	100%

*Table 3.4: Housing Mix*

Considered separately from the housing, apartments within the proposed development have an overall mix as follows-

Apartment Type	Quantity Proposed	
1-Bed	41	27%
2-Bed	99	65%
3-Bed	13	8%
Total	153	100%

*Table 3.5: Apartment Mix*

**3.3.2 Public Open Space Provision**

The site a high level of public open spaces as illustrated below which includes tree lined cycle paths, hard surfaced urban spaces and large public parks. Play areas are provided at three locations within the development. In total, 14% of the net development area (11.4ha) is public open space. Public open space areas as detailed in Table 3.6 below amount to 16,207m<sup>2</sup> or 16% of the net residential area (10.07ha).

All public open spaces have been designed by an appropriately qualified and experienced landscape architect as an integral part of the site layout. A Landscape Rationale by Park Hood accompanies this planning application under separate cover which includes the detailed design rationale behind the creation of each of the primary open spaces as well as detailed design elements such as car parking and bin storage areas.



Figure 3.2: Extract from the Landscape Masterplan by Park Hood

The provision of artwork at key vistas within the new neighbourhood is an important feature of the landscape strategy. This will help provide the development with an identity and help orientate people within the neighbourhood.

Name/Character area	Features and Function	Size
Clonminch Square	Children's Playground and seating areas	4,131m <sup>2</sup>
St.Columba's Green	Civic Plaza with spill out area for neighbourhood uses. Natural Play area and formal lawn areas enclosed as quiet space with seating. Informal Kick about.	7,035m <sup>2</sup>
Green Street West	Seating and amenity area with informal natural play elements. This area adjoins Clonminch Wood and has been located to allow the existing area of public open space to the west to be knitted into the new neighbourhood centre in the future once Clonminch Wood is taken in charge.	2,496m <sup>2</sup>
Green Park		1,415m <sup>2</sup>
Public Square Neighbourhood Centre		1,130
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>16,207m<sup>2</sup>/16% residential site area</b> <b><i>This figure does not include incidental green space.</i></b>

Table 2.8 – Breakdown of Public Open Space

### 3.3.3 Car Parking

695no. car parking spaces are proposed to serve the new neighbourhood. The potential visual impact of car parking has been reduced by providing 278no. spaces in curtilage and 148no. spaces at basement level. Car parking courtyards have also been provided for 'off-street' parking for residents and visitors. The crèche, local shop and neighbourhood centre are all provided with adequate car parking as detailed in the Traffic and Transportation by DBFL Engineers under separate cover. Provision has been made for Electric Vehicle Charging Points and ducting throughout the development and parking for those who are mobility impaired. As detailed in the Landscape Rationale by Park Hood, the car parking has been integrated into the landscape plan with hard landscaping defining pedestrian priority zones and planting softening communal parking areas. All parking areas are overlooked.

Cycle parking is provided throughout the site as illustrated by architect drawing 1757-PA-008. A total of 315 cycle parking spaces are provided to serve the development.

### 3.4 Construction Programme/Phasing

As acknowledged by Guidelines<sup>1</sup> (para. 3.5.8), the nature of the construction process limits the amount of detail that is available at consent stage. However, in the assessment of the proposed project every effort has been made to provide precise detail to ensure the avoidance and accurate assessment of potential significant impacts.

<sup>1</sup> EPA, Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in EIAR (2017)

For this reason a preliminary construction management plan has been prepared to provide details relating to general construction activities including-

- General site set-up and pre-commencement measures
- Construction and demolition waste management
- Deliveries of materials to site
- Parking and Storage

A detailed Construction Management Plan will be prepared on receipt of planning permission by the appointed contractor. This Plan will include any conditions imposed as part of this decision as well as the mitigation measures as set out in this EIAR.

The applicant seeks a five year permission. It is anticipated that the total construction period for the proposed development will be approximately 2-4 years. The proposed phasing plan is provided below.

Phase 1

Phase 1 will provide 238no. units (68%) of the 349no. units proposed in the form of 114no. houses and 124no. apartments together with 12,076m<sup>2</sup> public open space.

Phase 1 will also include the crèche, improvement works to the Clonminch Road and the pumping station and associated infrastructure for the entire development.

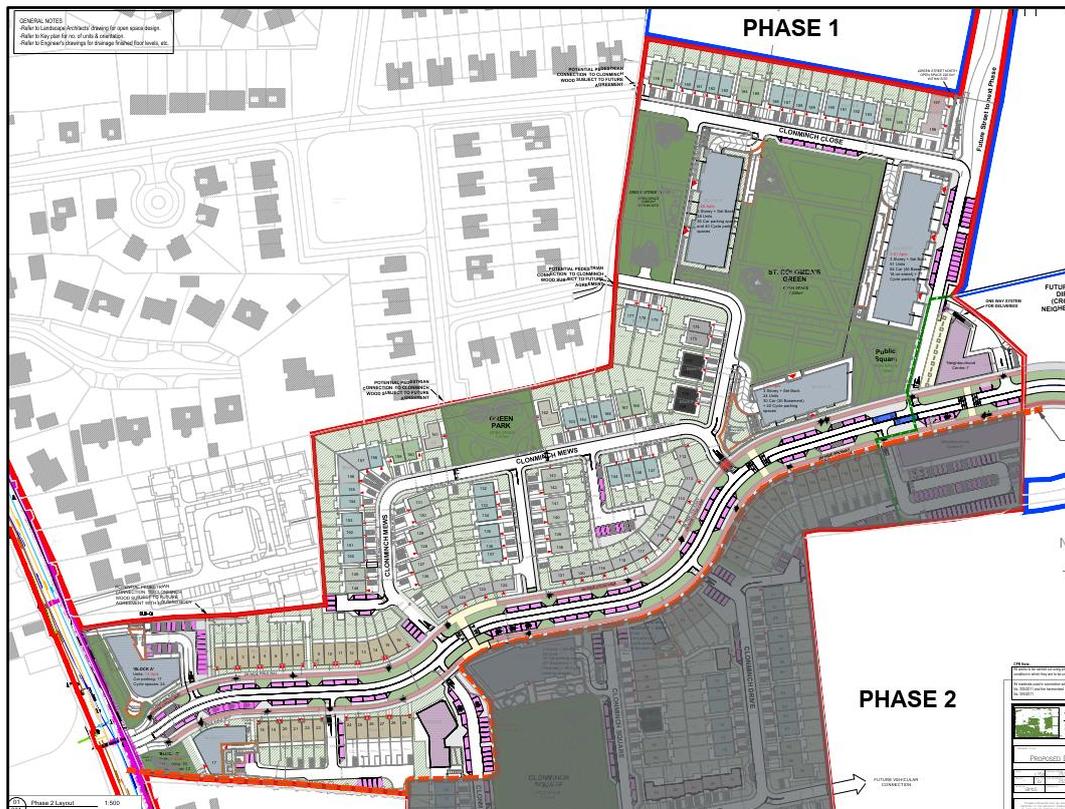


Figure 3.3: Proposed Phasing Plan – Phase 1

## Phase 2

Phase 2 will provide the balance of the residential units (111no.) consisting of 82no. houses and 29no. apartments as well as the neighbourhood centre buildings and local shop. Clonminch Square will be added to the public open space for residents in phase 2 measuring 4,131m<sup>2</sup>.

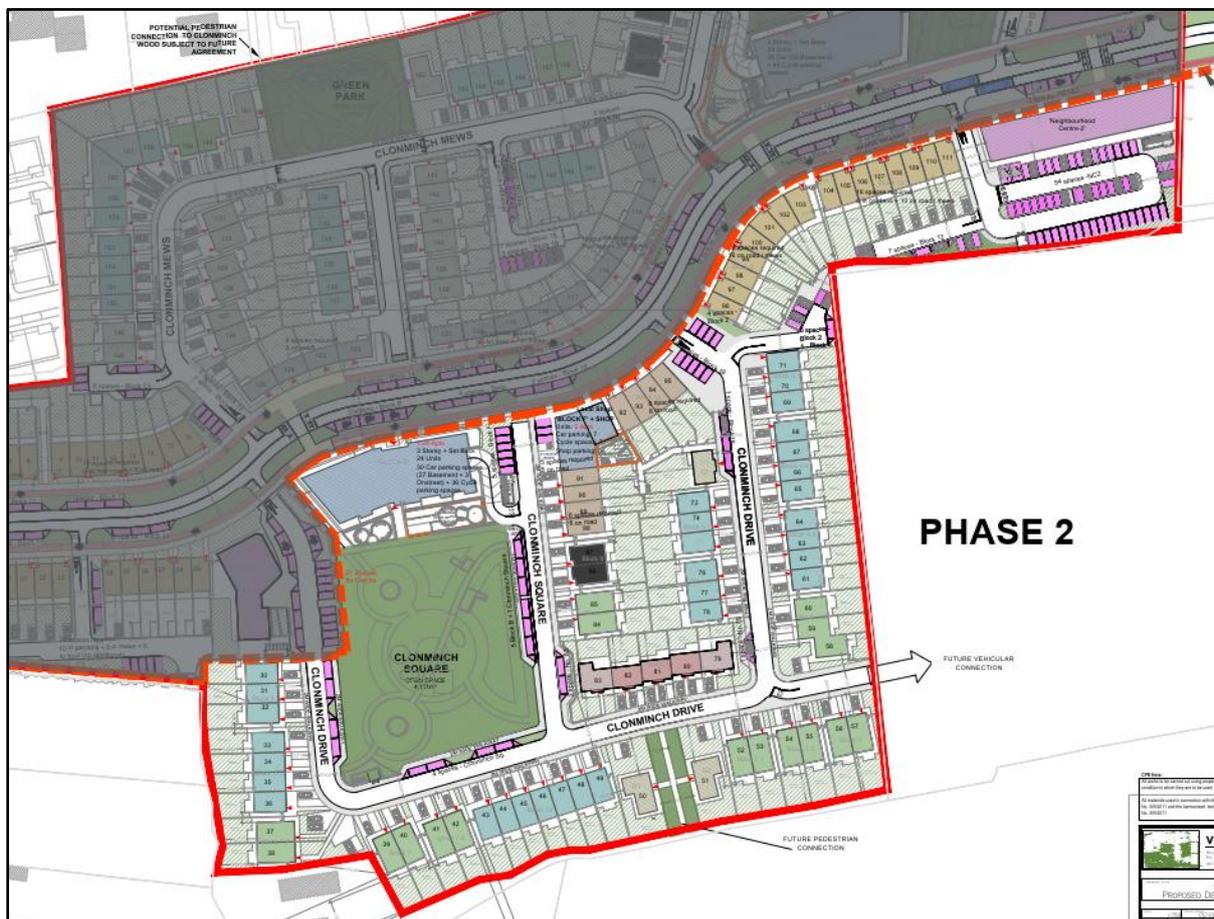


Figure 3.4: Proposed Phasing Plan – Phase 2

### 3.5 Main Characteristics of Operational Phase

The proposed development will create a new neighbourhood consisting of residential dwellings and supporting neighbourhood land uses together with associated roads, landscape and infrastructure. The primary source of potential significant impacts on the environment will be at construction stage. The proposed development will connect to the public foul drainage network and apply Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to the surface drainage network. With the implementation of mitigating measures as outlined by this E.I.A.R and best practice techniques, it is not envisaged that the proposed development will have any significant impact on the environment during operational phase.

The likely significant impacts of the operation of the proposed development on each environmental factor are fully addressed in this E.I.A.R document. The potential for cumulative, secondary and indirect impacts particularly in relation to traffic has also been assessed in the context of the proposal.

### 3.6 Description of the Reasonable Alternatives

Impact avoidance is principally achieved by consideration of alternatives<sup>2</sup>. The approach to identifying alternatives is project specific.

Schedule 6 (1) (d) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) was amended following the transposition of Directive 2014/52/EU and requires an Environmental Impact Assessment Report to include:

*“a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the person or persons who prepared the EIAR, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and in indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the proposed development on the environment”.*

By way of explanation or amplification of the above information, Schedule 6 (2) (b) states;

*“a description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of project design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the person or persons who prepared the EIAR, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects”.*

#### **The ‘Do-nothing’ Scenario**

The ‘do nothing’ scenario or ‘no Project’ alternative describes what would happen should the Project not be implemented at all. It is submitted that there is identified need for the proposed project and as such the ‘do-nothing’ scenario would not be desirable. The application site is zoned and serviceable with existing residential development adjoining the site to the east. The project will have positive benefits to the community by way of the improvement works to the Clonminch Road and new neighbourhood facilities proposed as well as the provision of a crèche. The proposal for a Strategic Housing Development in Tullamore is in keeping with National, Regional and Local Planning Policy. In the ‘do-nothing’ scenario, the only potential environmental impact would be as a result of agriculture practice relating to soil. It is considered that any potential impact would be neutral and imperceptible.

#### 3.6.1 Alternative Sites

The applicant is the owner of the main development area and adjoining lands as outlined on the site location map at appendix 3.1. It is submitted it would be unreasonable to consider alternative sites in Tullamore outside the applicant’s ownership that could not realistically be brought forward. We also note that it would not possible to accommodate a development of the size proposed on any of the opportunity sites as contained in the Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan. The largest site identified as Site 7 on Map 7.3 is currently the subject of a planning application for a retail led mixed use development (P.A. Ref. 19-96/ABP 306395) and occupied by a Dunnes Department Store, McDonalds Restaurant and Lidl Supermarket.

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<sup>2</sup> Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports – Draft – EPA – 2017, para. 2.4.1

The application site is located on appropriately zoned lands within the urban area of Tullamore which are serviceable via public mains drainage and water supply. The application site is currently in agricultural use. Habitats identified are mostly of low ecological value. The site is surrounded by urban development with a rail line to the east and north, the N52 to the south and R443 to the west. Lands to the west of Clonminch Road are zoned for employment uses. While the project will result in the increased urbanisation of this area it is submitted that it will not result in the significant or material loss of productive agricultural lands and represents an efficient use of land in a designated growth centre that has not performed as anticipated with regard to population growth or housing supply. It is submitted that the proposed development of a planned extension to Tullamore in line with a Nodal Masterplan that provides supporting neighbourhood uses is a sustainable form of development and preferable to ad hoc development that does not relate to its surroundings.

### 3.6.2 Alternative Design and Layout

#### **Baseline Studies and Environmental Constraints**

Baseline studies were undertaken in the areas of archaeology and ecology to inform the design and layout of the proposed development together with a tree survey. The application site is largely featureless and is of low ecological value. Geophysical testing and trench testing has been undertaken of the application site. While existing trees and hedgerows were not of particular importance in terms of their biodiversity or quality, these features have been integrated wherever possible. It is also proposed to maintain the existing field boundary to the south of the application site. There were no other environmental constraints to development identified.

#### **Planning Policies and Objectives**

The applicant's landholding lies entirely within the Eastern Node of the Southern Environs Masterplan Area of Tullamore. This Masterplan, contained at Chapter 5 of the Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan, sets out the basic structure envisaged for the area. The following elements were determined by existing planning policy and planned infrastructure objectives of the Development Plan and influenced the site layout plan and selection of the site area-

- Link road and railway crossing
- School site
- Neighbourhood centre
- Public Open Space

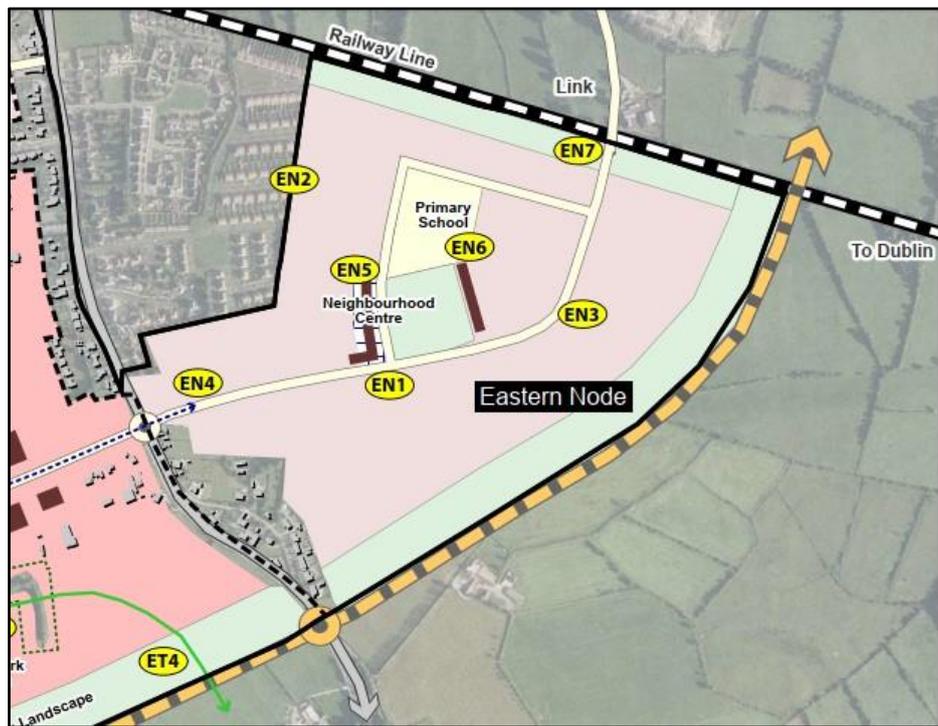


Figure 3.5: Extract from the Southern Environs Masterplan

### Project Size and Scale

Chapter 5 also includes an 'Overall Proposed Phasing Map of Masterplans' illustrating the preferred sequence/phase of development of all Masterplan lands within Tullamore. This map was applied to all Masterplan lands regardless of their zoning objective. The Eastern Node in which the applicant's lands are situated are designated first sequence/phase and third sequence/phase. The sequence phasing illustrated by the 'Overall Proposed Phasing Map of Masterplans' was used by the Core Strategy to limit the level of residential development within the Masterplan areas over the lifetime of the Development Plan. According to the Core Strategy, only 25% of residential zoned lands within sequence phase 1 of Masterplan lands could be brought forward and any lands outside of these areas would not be considered under the lifetime of the plan.

The applicant's lands are divided by the application of the 'Overall Proposed Phasing Map of Masterplans' between the first sequence/phase and the third sequence/phase. The dividing line between the two sequence phases is based on the development plan objective to provide a link road through the eastern node from Clonminch Road to the west to a bridge crossing to the north east which would ultimately join to new road infrastructure on Chancery Lane. It is noted the dividing line is not based on any existing manmade or natural features. On the ground, this left a very narrow parcel of land at the entrance to the Eastern Node on the Clonminch Road and within the applicant's ownership within sequence phase one. The balance of lands within the Eastern Node with frontage to Clonminch Road are in the ownership of Offaly County Council.

As illustrated by initial layout drawings, consideration was given to developing a housing scheme with lands in the ownership of Offaly County Council in order to create an entrance to the application site and Eastern Node on lands within the first sequence phase. It was clear from the start that the provision of the link street in the position indicated by the Development Plan was dominating the layout and the restriction of the sequence phasing resulted in a linear development that did not provide a high quality development. Roads infrastructure and public open space provision resulted in low residential densities of 29-31 dwellings per hectare which were regarded as unsustainable in the context of Tullamore.



Figure 3.6: 97 units on 3.397ha – Density 28.5units/hectare  
(Approximate boundary of OCC lands outlined with dashed blue line)



Figure 3.7: 117 units on 3.775ha – Density 31units/hectare  
(Approximate boundary of OCC lands outlined with dashed blue line)

There were several advantages to moving the development southwards into lands in the ownership of the applicant-

- Instead of following an arbitrary line of a proposed road which had no detailed design, the application site now had a physical boundary to demarcate the development area along the southern boundary. This corresponded to the land ownership.
- If developed as per the phasing diagram, lands immediately abutting and to the south of the link street at the entrance to the Eastern Node and application site would remain undeveloped for a considerable period of time. These lands are closer to the Clonminch Road, employment opportunities and proposed cycle infrastructure but would not be used while development would extend in an elongated pattern away from the Clonminch Road.
- If undeveloped, this area would be difficult to maintain, would have a negative impact on the visual amenity of future residents and restrict opportunities for place making and establishing an identity for this new neighbourhood.
- Through discussions with Offaly County Council the applicants design team became aware that Offaly County Council intended to develop housing on lands in their ownership fronting Clonminch Road. For this reason these lands were separated and given their own entrance. This too signalled a move southwards on the applicants lands.



*Figure 3.8: Development of lands south of the sequence/phase line.*

*(Approximate boundary of OCC lands outlined with dashed blue line)*

This assessment and development boundary was submitted to Offaly County Council who were at the time in agreement with this approach.

It is a specific objective for the Eastern Node to seamlessly integrate into adjacent mature residential areas (EN1). Due to the land ownership of the applicant extending northwards along the boundary with existing residential development, there was an opportunity to further integrate the new development under consideration into the existing residential development of Clonminch Wood by extending the development site northwards. It was therefore decided that the site area would be increased to allow for a meaningful connection to Clonminch Wood which would also achieve a road network objective of the Development Plan.

### Project Design

The layout illustrated by figure 3.9 was progressed in advance of a Section 247 meeting with Offaly County Council where it was presented with a view to progressing the planning application under the Strategic Housing Development provisions. This proposal included 374no. residential units and crèche with c.12,600sq.m public open space resulting in a density on the 9.2hectare site of 38 dwellings per hectare. Dwelling types included semi-detached and terraced units as well as apartments. The design focused on a perimeter block design with large centrally located public open spaces. At this time it was proposed to provide a vehicular link from the application site west to Clonminch Wood and a pedestrian link along the site's northern boundary into Clonminch Wood.



Following the meeting held with Offaly County Council on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 and Minutes issued, the design was revised to take account of concerns of the Local Authority relating to-

- Position and accessibility of public open space/introduction of pocket parks
- Length of internal roads
- Long runs of terraced housing
- Centralised entrance/access road

This resulted in the site layout illustrated below which was submitted to An Bord Pleanála as part of a pre-application consultation request.



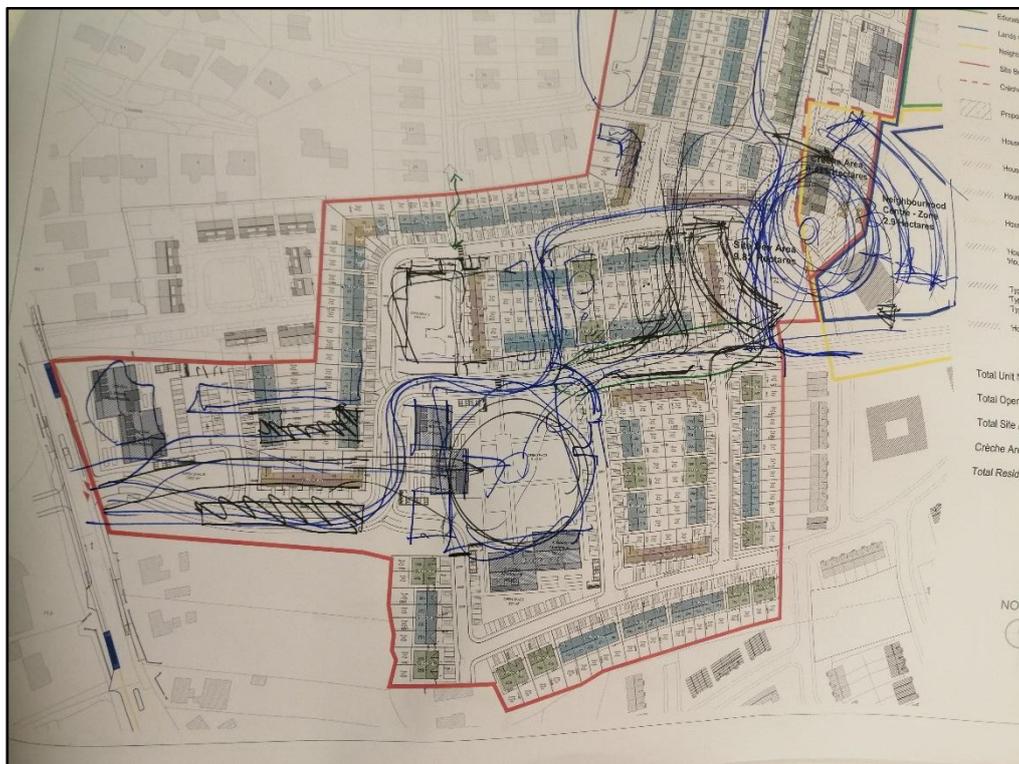
*Figure 3.10: Layout submitted with pre-application consultation request to An Bord Pleanála*

**Pre-Application Proposal:** The layout submitted for consideration at pre-application stage had a density of 35 dwellings per hectare and 344 dwellings. There was a mix of houses (212no.) and apartments (132no.) with heights ranging from 2-4 storeys on a net development area of 10.25hectares.

**Written Opinion of An Bord Pleanála:** Following the tripartite meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 and written opinion issued by An Bord Pleanála, the site layout and design was amended (please see Response to Opinion under separate cover for full detail). Key changes introduced were as follows-

- Provision of cycle lanes along Clonminch Road to Town Centre
- Provision of a neighbourhood centre building with medical centre at first floor level
- Revised and increased open space provision across the application site.

Following the Tripartite meeting the design team were also informed that as Clonminch Wood had not been taken in charge. Therefore, the vehicular, pedestrian/cycle lane and joining of public open space at this junction could not be proposed as part of the proposed SHD planning application. However, the ability to connect to existing development in the future is maintained in the proposed layout. This will become increasingly important as the Eastern Node develops, the school is required and neighbourhood centre is built out.



*Figure 3.11: Team Meeting post-Written Opinion Stage*

**Layout submitted under ABP-307832:** figure 3.12 illustrates the design of the proposed development considered under ABP-307832. An Bord Pleanála refused planning permission for this proposed development and the scheme has gone through further amendments to ensure the stated reasons for refusal and concerns of Offaly County Council at pre-application stage together with the Written Opinion of An Bord Pleanála (309529-21) have been fully considered.



Figure 3.12: Final Layout

**Final Layout:** In conclusion, the design of the final site layout as attached at Appendix 1.2 is the product of a long and considered process from baseline studies, consultation with Offaly County Council and An Bord Pleanála and is in line with the recommendations of the Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 and Section 28 Government Guidelines. The design has been influenced by the proposed route and the scale and pattern of development in the area and development permitted under Part 8 by Offaly County Council. Alternative designs were continually reviewed throughout the process including the results of later reports undertaken the findings of this EIAR.

### 3.6.3 Alternative Uses

The majority of the development area (c.10ha) is zoned 'Residential'. According to paragraph 15.3.6 of the Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan, the Residential Zoning Objective and land use 'residential' *"shall be taken to primarily include the use of land for domestic dwellings (including meeting housing needs of members of the travelling community), religious and civic residences. It may also provide for a range of other uses particularly those that have the potential to foster, enhance and supplement the development of new residential communities for example, schools, crèches, local convenience store, doctor/dental surgeries, open space (formal and informal) etc"*.

The proposed development of residential zoned lands for housing, a crèche and local shop is fully in keeping with the objectives of the TTEDP. In accordance with Table 15.1 of the TTEDP, these lands are not suitable for retail and employment uses such as Retail (Shop – Large), Retail Warehousing, Warehousing, Warehousing (Retail/Non-food), Cash & Carry/Wholesale Outlets, Industry – General, Motor sales/showrooms, Research and development, Science and Technology Based enterprise, or Workshops.

Approximately 6,500m<sup>2</sup> of the development area is zoned 'Neighbourhood Centre' on which neighbourhood buildings are located. According to the TTEDP (15.3.9), the neighbourhood centre lands in the Eastern Node and which fall partly within the application site, are one of six locations throughout the town and environs area with this zoning. *"The zoning provides principally for the development of new neighbourhood centres to serve the needs of the residential areas in which they are located. A mix of retail, community and recreational uses will be encouraged within these areas. The neighbourhood centres are intended to serve the immediate needs of a localised catchment i.e. the local working and residential population and complement, rather than compete with the similar retail uses within the established town centre. **Medical clinics, professional offices**, childcare facilities (crèche), **small convenience stores, local shops and cafes** are envisaged for these particular areas"* (emphasis added).

The proposed development of two three storey neighbourhood buildings for uses including medical centre, small convenience store, local shops and cafes is fully in keeping with the objectives of the TTEDP.

In accordance with Table 15.1, lands zoned Neighbourhood Centre are not suitable for retail and employment uses such as Cash & Carry/Wholesale Outlets, Industry – General, Motor Sales/showrooms, Office based industry, Retail Warehouse, Warehousing, Warehousing (Retail/Non-food), Research and development, Science and Technology Based enterprise or Workshops.

In comparison, the large land bank located to the west of Clonminch Road and zoned 'Business/Employment' permits all of the retail and employment uses not supported by the Residential and Neighbourhood Centre zoning objectives. This clearly establishes the desire to develop the Enterprise node of the Southern Environs for business/employment and the Eastern node in which the application site is located for residential and supporting uses.

### **3.7 Main Reasons for Chosen Option**

The objective of the examination of alternatives is to adopt a combination of options that presents the best balance between avoidance of adverse environmental effects and achievement of the objectives that drive the project (EPA, para. 2.4.1). It is submitted that the examination of alternative outlined above demonstrates the chosen option is the most appropriate for the following reasons-

- The proposed layout is considered the most practical and feasible having regard to site constraints, and limited alternative layout(s) options due to the permitted route of the access road, location of the school site and neighbourhood centre together with the desire to connect to exiting residential developments to the north and east in the future.
- The mix of uses proposed is fully compliant with the zoning objectives for the application site and will assist in the creation of a new neighbourhood with supporting services and provide employment opportunities.
- The location of the neighbourhood buildings will be well located relative to future development of the Nodal Masterplan Lands and reflects the position dictated by the TTEDP.
- Careful consideration has been given to ensure the areas of public open space provided are of appropriate size, are usable and functional and located in areas which benefit from passive surveillance.
- The proposal will result in the improvement of Clonminch Road (R443) to provide cycle tracks. The site boundary includes lands required to delivery this proposal.
- The layout proposed will achieve an average density of 35 dwellings per hectare across the site. Lower density housing is proposed adjacent to existing housing with higher density to the centre and north of the site where the school site and commercial core will be located in relation to the Eastern Node.
- The proposal provides a range of designs with different house types ranging from one bed apartments to four bed detached houses. The broad range of dwelling sizes and types will ensure the development is able to cater for a variety of family types from different socio-economic groups.
- The landscape rationale takes full account of existing hedgerows and trees and will introduce pollinator friendly planting.
- The phasing plan ensures delivery of a mix of uses across the site and the timely completion of the improvements to Clonminch Road and infrastructure services required to support the development.

**References**

- Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in EIAR (EPA, 2017)
- Planning and Development Regulations (2001, as amended)
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2009).
- Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 (as varied and extended).