

Design Statement

Housing Development at Marconi Ballybunion Co Kerry

Area of site 10,191m²

20 houses- type A 4no/ type A1 2 no/ type B 10no/ type C 4 no

total housing area 1743m²

Open space provided 2145m² 15% of site

We have now prepared a design statement clearly outlining the analytical approach adopted during the conceptual stages of this project. This process stemmed from a detailed brief developed through meetings with the client/the applicant. From establishment of a clear concise brief we, the designers, were then able to carry out a S.C.O.T analysis of the proposed site and devise a scheme that we believe embraces the characteristics of the existing built environment whilst implementing the principles of the Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide, the document which forms the cornerstone of our residential design layouts. In arriving at the Site Layout Arrangement currently being proposed it was essential for us to not only respond to the brief but to adhere to the ideologies set out in the aforementioned document, which involves an assessment under 12 established criteria, as follows:

1. Context.

The housing layout has been carefully designed to complement its surrounding environment, its neighbouring developments and the existing natural features of the site. The site is bounded on the south side by an existing roadway, east and west with housing developments and an access to a summer school to the north. The access to the site is from the existing estate road. To successfully create "graceful links" with the surroundings it was important for us to set back the internal estate roads and skirt the development with open space that would serve the proposed development and the existing residents by way of an 'open fronted' design. (although we do recommend that there is a boundary railing with openings to counter the present openness along the south side of the site). This also allows a transition from the roadway to the new built form and aids in the respectful addition of housing to this site. By using similar materials to those in the locality we feel the development will nestle into the area in a responsive and respectful manner. The form of architecture pays further respect to that in the area and with the open aspect along the 'site edges' we feel the development can contribute in a positive way to the existing community and improve the existing situation with a positive contribution to the character and identity of the neighbourhood.

2. Connections

The proposed housing design has pedestrian linkages which promote the sustainable practices of walking and cycling with priorities given to these links for convenience of connectivity from the adjoining housing and its established amenities. The proximity of the development to the playing fields to the north and the pedestrian routes being proposed will lend themselves to a reduction in vehicle

usage and resulting emissions. As previously mentioned, it proposed to include an open fronted design to the development with communal elements of open space along the existing estate Road. This integrated approach improves the community appeal of the estate but it should be noted that due cognisance has been afforded to the security of same with the open space throughout the development predominantly overlooked by the proposed dwellings. This provides passive surveillance and ensures a safer, more secure environment. The proposed site is within walking distance of the village and thus naturally feels like a natural extension of the existing settlement giving that necessary connection to the community.

3. Inclusivity.

The configuration of the new housing, the location of the access points and the location of the dwellings and the associated open space will result in a development inclusive in nature. Once again, the open space which will be included to benefit the local residents together with walkways and play areas along existing Marconi Estate Road will serve to promote inclusivity. The open space on the south side of the development is centrally located which will accommodate safe and secure play areas and the designed movement routes, both vehicular and pedestrian, further compliment this ethos.

All dwellings fully conform with the recommendations of TGD Part M which will ensure that homes can cater for those with movement difficulties. Furthermore, the layout of the site was heavily governed by the natural lie of the land. This determined the optimum arrangement of roads and dwellings to minimise excessive level changes or engineering to reduce same. The over-riding factor being the ease of movement throughout the site for all, regardless of mobility.

4. Variety

We have endeavoured to provide a broad housing mix within the development whilst paying respect to market demand. (single storey to the west side as a continuation of the existing adjoining development and two storey to the east side, and four house types) This variety in housing sizes provides a depth of choice appealing to a wider spectrum. This should result in a residential development with a cross section of residents contributing to a more diverse community. It was important for us to achieve a successful balance of house types and designs arranged in a complimentary fashion. Another goal in the design process was the creation of housing types which would provide a range for a varied tenure but in an indistinguishable way. All dwellings would have a unified theme and would be designed and constructed to a similar high standard despite the size or proposed tenure. The housing mix would also help to encourage a social mix and promote saleability. The entire development is residential with little need to consider mixed use due to the scale of the housing scheme and the proximity to the established village centre of Ballybunion.

5. Efficiency

With the positive advances in the building regulation requirements, particularly with Technical Guidance Documents Part L and Part F, the housing standards are improving constantly. That being said, it is still of paramount importance for us to continually exceed the regulations and continue to design and build to allow for future improvements. Sustainability, energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions remain at the core of our design process. The dwellings being proposed will be constructed to best practice and beyond with minimal environmental

impact and exceptional energy efficient construction methods. Air tight construction, reduced thermal bridging,, high levels of insulation and the implementation of renewable technologies will be utilised in achieving high performance sustainable housing.

In designing the housing layout, we focused on the natural assets of the site. The area of the site was fully used with maximum densities proposed for efficient employment of land. All dwellings will have sufficient area to allow for refuse, composting and recycling storage within the associated plot. The solar orientation was instrumental in deciding the eventual layout. House nos 1-2 & 7-14 all have south facing rear elevations, while 3-6 & 15-20 are east-west which will also benefit from the southerly aspect. The intention is to provide a housing development with minimal impact on the environment with dwellings requiring low levels of energy for daily operation.

Sustainable methods of drainage have been designed for the site with attenuation proposed by the consulting engineers in the landscaped areas. The large areas of open space will be landscaped to promote biodiversity within the site while the sites location will ideally promote more sustainable modes of transport and help reduce vehicle related emissions.

6. Distinctiveness

The design process was guided by a need to meet the client's brief, achieve a sustainable density but also create a distinct sense of place and provide a positive addition to the locality. The surrounding environs have an established character so the housing development was designed to nestle into its context and compliment rather than compete with its environment. The materials would tie the aesthetic while the housing design would provide individuality.

The open fronted aspect of the design would set back the housing and the landscaping will provide a strong identity. The proposal is to construct low level boundary walls or provide railings on top of walls where the levels dictate the height. This will allow views into the site from the road creating a 'link' with the development. Conversely this strategy will also provide views out of the site which will connect the estate visually to its surroundings and reduce any potential social divisions.

7. Layout

The nature of the site and the adjoining features influenced the eventual housing layout. In order to provide a development that would respond to its context, avail of the solar orientation, pay respect to the necessity for passive supervision and the decision to incorporate 'active-frontages', we arrived at an estate arrangement with set-back housing lines which overlooked the open space which effectively skirted the perimeter. The houses overlook the open space and passively surveil all access ways. Housing is provided on short cul-de-sac road on the west side to allow for possible future access to the playing fields to the north. (this is already informally established)

By ensuring that all open space areas are overlooked by houses the potential for anti-social behavior will be greatly reduced. As previously stated, several pedestrian linkages are proposed which should discourage traffic movements.

8. Public Realm

The afore-mentioned open spaces are intended to provide enjoyable amenity space for the residents but will also help define the development. The majority of the housing overlooks open space which is a desirable feature for dwellings. The boundary wall will correspondingly reduce in height to allow the intended integration and a relationship with same. The open space will be suitably bounded on the roadside to enhance safety but allow connectivity. Further to the public open space provision, all dwellings are provided with private space to the rear which will be suitably screened to ensure privacy, prevent overlooking and define the spaces.

9. Adaptability

The housing will exceed the regulations with regard to energy performance (to achieve NZEB rating) and to further future proof it would be intended that the dwellings will fulfill changing functionality throughout its life cycle. The housing is designed to be generous in space with intelligent arrangements including central stairwells to facilitate change and adaptation. Gardens are predominantly large to again cater for rear extensions should the occupant's needs outgrow the current housing.

10. Privacy and Amenity

The layout, whilst open in aspect has been designed to strike a careful balance to maintain adequate privacy where necessary. Gardens will be screened and the houses will have private open space with separation distances ensuring the prevention of overlooking.

Internally the dwellings are so designed to buffer with the use of hallways on adjoining houses. Party walls will be detailed and constructed to meet the requirements of TGD Part E and minimize the transmission of sound from unit to unit.

11. Parking.

The goal with the provision of parking was to ensure all dwellings had adequate parking for 2no. cars but to provide same in a location that was convenient for the residents to their respective front doors. Security is guaranteed as the parking is close to the houses and the appearance of the development remains uncluttered without overwhelming the kerb appeal with excessive parking throughout. Variations of the parking arrangements, have been allowed for to reduce the regimented appearance and small outdoor spaces included to the front of the dwellings which could accommodate small grassed/planted area thus reducing the dominance of hardscaping. It would also be proposed to provide tree planting to soften the impact further to the streetscape. The provision of parking within the individual housing plot will satisfy consumer demand but also eliminate issues relating to contention over availability and the maintenance/taking in charge of same.

12. Detailed Design

The eventual layout has been produced hand in hand with the landscaping and the material selection all to make a positive contribution to this established locality. The overall scheme will create a useable and appealing public realm with the landscaped areas providing enjoyable, functional and a visually appealing environment. The ideology of the layout was to root it in its context, create a sense of place all while making a positive contribution to the existing built environment.